Changing Perceptions of Sectarian Inequality in Lebanon: Shared Economic Interests, Persistent Political Divides

Lydia Assouad Augustin Bergeron
Giulia Buccione Salma Mousa

September 2, 2026

Abstract

When thinking about economic inequality, citizens form beliefs not only about individuals' economic position, but also about the economic position of salient social groups—such as ethnicity, caste, or religion—which can in turn impact their policy and political preferences. We study this in Lebanon, where citizens perceive substantial economic differences between Christians, Sunnis, and Shias despite considerable overlap in their observed income distributions. In a face-to-face survey with 3,300 adults in Greater Beirut, respondents are randomly assigned to watch a seven-minute video showing that Lebanon is highly unequal but that inequality is concentrated within rather than between religious sects. The intervention reduces perceived between-sect inequality by 0.40 standard deviations, with no effect on perceived overall inequality. It also increases support for progressive redistribution and strengthens class identification. These responses are not explained by how redistribution affects respondents' own sect, pointing instead to a broader class-based response. Yet the shift in economic preferences and identity does not translate into political realignment: we find no comparable change in preferences over sectarian institutions, candidate choice, or real-stakes engagement with non-sectarian organizations, while religious identity remains unchanged. The results show that greater perceived economic commonality across social groups can reshape redistributive preferences and class identity without displacing the group allegiances that structure political life.

*Assouad (l.assouad@lse.ac.uk) - London School of Economics; Bergeron (abergeron@fas.harvard.edu) - Harvard University and NBER; Buccione (gbuccion@stanford.edu) CEMFI; Mousa (smousa@g.ucla.edu) University of California, Los Angeles. We thank Michael Callen, Melani Cammett, Frederico Finan, Asim Khwaja, Gilat Levy, Eoin McGuirk, Benjamin Marx, Stelios Michalopoulos, Suresh Naidu, Christiana Parreira, Imran Rasul, Sandra Sequeira, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Noam Yuchtman, as well as seminar and conference participants at the American University of Beirut, Columbia University, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the London School of Economics, Stanford University, and the University of Southern California. For outstanding research assistance, we thank Pearl Anson-Tsang, Gabriele Mole', Eleanor Siegel, Maria Clara Souza Rocha, Kevin Tannous, and Nicole Zamani. This study has been approved by the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Los Angeles (IRB approval IRB-25-0513) and the London School of Economics Research Ethics Committee (REC Ref. 169747). We gratefully acknowledge funding from the Agence Française de Development, J-PAL Governance Initiative, and the Templeton Religion Trust. The Pre-Analysis Plan was submitted to the EAE RCT Registry on June 23, 2025; AEARCTR-0016272.

1 Introduction

Economic inequality has risen sharply in many countries over the past decades (Alvaredo et al., 2018; Chancel et al., 2022). How citizens respond depends not only on the income distribution itself, but also on what they believe about it. A large literature shows that beliefs about the extent of income inequality, one's own position in the income distribution, and economic mobility shape redistributive preferences (Cruces et al., 2013; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Karadja et al., 2017; Alesina et al., 2018; Fehr et al., 2022; Alesina et al., 2023). This literature has largely studied inequality across individuals: how far apart citizens believe the rich and poor are and where they place themselves in the distribution.

Yet in many societies, economic inequality is understood through the lens of salient social groups, such as ethnicity, caste, or religion. Where these groups structure social and political life, citizens may form beliefs not only about who is rich and poor, but also about which groups are rich and poor. If economic position is perceived to align with group membership—for example, if one religious group is believed to be systematically richer than another—redistribution may be understood partly as a transfer across groups, making common economic interests less salient and leaving group membership, rather than economic position, as the dominant basis for political organization. Group-based politics can therefore persist even when the underlying economic gap cuts across groups (Horowitz, 1985; Fearon and Laitin, 2000).[1] We study whether correcting beliefs about between-group inequality—the perceived correspondence between group membership and economic position—shifts support for redistribution, the relative salience of social class as an identity organized around economic position, and group-based political alignment.

Lebanon offers a particularly well-suited setting to study this question. Its population is divided among three sects of roughly equal size—Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims.[2] The country is also among the most unequal in the world (Assouad, 2023). Sect has long been associated with economic position, with Christians historically seen as the wealthiest group (Nasr, 1976, 1985; Wenger, 1990). Yet recent survey data show that Christians, Sunnis, and Shias are, in fact, similarly represented

[1] This demand-side mechanism complements accounts in which politicians and media activate and mobilize group identities (Murphy and Shleifer, 2004; Glaeser, 2005; Padro I Miquel, 2007).

[2] We use "sect" throughout to refer to religious community.

throughout the income distribution.[3] Political life, by contrast, remains organized around a confessional system, in place since the civil war ended in 1989, that allocates political representation and major state offices by religious affiliation; sectarian parties continue to mediate access to jobs, public services, and political patronage.

We conduct a face-to-face survey experiment with 3,300 adults in Greater Beirut. Respondents are randomly assigned either to watch a seven-minute treatment video or to a no-video control group. The video conveys a simple message grounded in existing data (Assouad, 2023; Mazjoub et al., 2022): Lebanon is highly unequal, but inequality is concentrated *within* rather than *between* sects. It has two parts. The first presents statistical evidence on aggregate inequality and on the near-equal representation of the three sects across the income distribution. The second is a fictional narrative, produced with the *Beirut Film Society*, portraying three young men—one Christian, one Sunni, and one Shia—facing similar economic hardship. We combine statistical and narrative evidence because narratives make information more memorable and persistent, with corresponding downstream effects on policy-relevant beliefs (Graeber et al., 2024; Rahmani et al., 2025), while quantitative evidence increases the relatability and impact of narratives (Andries et al., 2026). Before treatment, we elicit respondents' beliefs about the sectarian composition of the poor, the middle class, and the rich. We then measure effects on beliefs about between-sect inequality, redistributive preferences and class identity, political preferences and candidate choice, and real-stakes civic engagement.

We estimate intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, controlling for religion, the randomization stratum, and pre-treatment covariates selected using post-double-selection LASSO, with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Our main specification excludes pilot respondents. Results are robust to the inclusion of the pilot, controlling for residual covariate imbalance, and adjusting for multiple hypothesis testing. Several checks make experimenter demand or social-desirability responding an unlikely explanation for the results: effects are no larger among respondents more susceptible to social-desirability bias, estimates are stable to enumerator fixed effects, and open-ended responses rarely describe the video as intended to promote redistribution or class identity.

[3]Data on the economic position of religious groups in Lebanon were limited until recently: the country has not conducted a census since 1932. The historical association between sect and wealth had already weakened before Lebanon's recent economic crisis—one the World Bank ranked as "likely to be ranked in the top 10, possibly top 3, of the most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century" (World Bank, 2020)—which plausibly finalized this convergence by compressing incomes across all three sects.

We obtain four main results. First, we document respondents' beliefs about between-sect inequality prior to the intervention. Which sect a respondent perceives as richest or poorest depends systematically on the respondent's own sect: Sunni and Shia respondents perceive Christians as the richest group and their own sects as the poorest, while Christian respondents perceive Shias as the richest and Sunnis as the poorest. For 75 percent of respondents, the average gap between the most- and least-represented sect within each of the three income groups we elicit—the poor, the middle class, and the rich—exceeds 12 percentage points. This is large relative to the actual economic distance between sects, which is small: each sect is represented in similar proportion across these income groups. We also document correlates of these beliefs. Perceived between-sect inequality varies with respondents' economic position, but is especially strongly related to their exposure to and embeddedness in sectarian social and political environments: it is lower among those with greater cross-sectarian contact, and higher among those with stronger sectarian attachment and greater reliance on sectarian networks. These descriptive results are a contribution in their own right, given the scarcity of comparable data from the Middle East and the difficulty of collecting household survey data in Lebanon during the recent war.

Second, the intervention substantially changes these beliefs. Assignment to the video reduces perceived between-sect inequality by 0.398 standard deviations ($p < 0.001$) and increases perceived economic similarity with the two other sects by 0.196–0.288 standard deviations. We find similar effects for each of the three sects and throughout the distribution of prior beliefs, rather than only among respondents with the largest initial perceived between-sect inequality. By contrast, perceived overall inequality is essentially unchanged (-0.019 standard deviations, $p = 0.544$). The intervention therefore changes perceptions of *where* inequality lies—between versus within sects—without changing perceptions of its overall level.

Third, the intervention increases support for progressive redistribution and raises the relative importance respondents place on social class as an identity. Support for raising the top marginal income-tax rate increases by 0.094 standard deviations ($p = 0.006$), and support for expanding social protection increases by 0.078 standard deviations ($p = 0.023$). We check whether these responses reflect sect-based material interest—the idea that a respondent's support for a policy shifts with how it affects her own sect—using each respondent's baseline beliefs about her own sect's representation among the poor and the rich. Sect-based material interest predicts weaker gains in support for transfers

to the poor among respondents who overestimated their sect's poverty and were induced by the treatment to revise that perception downward, and larger gains in support for taxing the top among those who overestimated their sect's wealth and similarly revised that belief downward after treatment. We find no such heterogeneity along either margin. These responses are therefore difficult to reconcile with redistributive preferences responding mechanically to sect-based material interest. The evidence instead points toward a broader, class-based response: in a forced allocation of 15 identity points across class, religion, and nationality, treated respondents allocate 0.076 standard deviations more to social class ($p = 0.027$). Open-ended responses, analyzed at scale with large language models, point in the same direction: 99 percent of references to the poor and rich refer to those groups broadly rather than in association with any specific sect. Taken together, these results indicate that reducing perceived economic differences across sects increases support for redistribution organized more strongly along class lines.

To characterize this class-based response more precisely, we draw on historical accounts of class formation, which emphasize two distinct dimensions: horizontal solidarity with those facing economic hardship, and vertical antagonism toward those at the top of the economic hierarchy (Thompson, 1963; Hobsbawm, 1984; Sewell, 1980). We test for each directly, using separate measures of empathy toward the poor and anger toward economic elites. The results point more strongly toward the vertical dimension: anger toward economic elites rises by 0.090 standard deviations among respondents in the bottom three quartiles of the income distribution ($p = 0.020$), while empathy toward the poor does not increase. The class-based response, then, appears to reflect a sharper perceived divide between economic elites and the rest of society more than any increase in solidarity with the poor.

Fourth, this economic realignment does not translate into political realignment. We test for political change along three increasingly demanding margins: self-reported attitudes, candidate choice under explicit trade-offs, and real-stakes civic engagement. First, the treatment leaves preferences over sectarian versus civil governance and support for civil marriage unchanged, and does not increase support for Nawaf Salam, a prominent reformist politician outside Lebanon's traditional sectarian parties. Second, a conjoint experiment measures political choice under explicit trade-offs. Respondents choose between candidates whose religion, political affiliation, and policy platform—including redistribution—are independently randomized, revealing whether

respondents become more willing to trade sectarian alignment for economic policy. We find no evidence of such a shift: treated respondents remain equally likely to favor co-religious and sectarian candidates. Third, we measure real-stakes civic engagement, in partnership with secular, well-established civil society organizations. Respondents can opt in to interfaith volunteering opportunities offered by *Adyan*; reserve a place at an anti-sectarian and anti-corruption workshop organized by the *Gherbal Initiative*; attend that workshop; or express interest in and apply to *Tamkin*, a civic training program promoting non-sectarian political participation. These outcomes require progressively greater commitment. Support for these organizations is high, but participation falls sharply as the required commitment increases. Treatment effects on the lower-cost behavioral outcomes are close to zero, while take-up of the highest-cost outcomes is too low for precise inference.

These null political effects are informative rather than simply underpowered. Ex-post minimum detectable effects for the stated political and lower-cost behavioral outcomes range from 0.082 to 0.098 standard deviations, close to the preregistered target of 0.095 and to the magnitude of the redistribution and identity effects documented above. Thus, while we cannot rule out smaller political responses, we find no political response comparable in magnitude to those effects.

The difference between the effects on economic and political preferences suggests that greater class salience need not displace the identities that sustain sectarian politics. In fact, the treatment raises the weight respondents place on class without reducing the weight they place on religion. National identity, if anything, declines slightly, though the estimate is only marginally significant ($p = 0.097$). This is consistent with the political nulls: religious identification is, in the cross-section, strongly associated with support for sectarian governance, opposition to civil marriage, and reluctance to engage with non-sectarian organizations—precisely the outcomes the treatment leaves unchanged. The fact that religious identity remains unchanged may thus help explain why the political outcomes most closely associated with it also do not move. Sectarian embeddedness—reliance on co-sectarian social networks, clientelism (*wasta*), and partisan media—shows a related but more limited pattern: real-stakes engagement responds more weakly among more embedded respondents, though stated political preferences remain flat regardless. These relationships are descriptive rather than causal, but they are consistent with sectarian attachments remaining unchanged and, if anything, limiting the translation of greater class salience into political change. The qualitative

evidence offers a complementary interpretation of the gap between the effects on policy and political preferences. Treated respondents describe shared economic hardship across sects and express predominantly negative sentiment about economic conditions, but rarely use language oriented toward collective or political action. This pattern is consistent with a broader sense of political discouragement, which may help explain the limited take-up of higher-cost engagement opportunities. This discouragement, however, cannot be fully attributed to the treatment: baseline trust in government is low across the full sample (18 percent), suggesting a prevailing political mood that predates the intervention. We also find little support for other explanations of the political null, including the absence of viable reformist options, distrust of out-group politicians, or offsetting changes in perceived group size.

The paper contributes to three literatures. First, the paper contributes to the literature on perceived inequality and its consequences. Existing work has largely examined beliefs about aggregate income inequality, individuals' own position in the income distribution, and economic mobility, and whether correcting these beliefs shifts redistributive preferences (Cruces et al., 2013; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Karadja et al., 2017; Alesina et al., 2018; Fehr et al., 2022).[4] We study a different dimension of inequality beliefs—where citizens perceive social groups, rather than individuals, to lie in the income distribution. While existing work documents correlations between economic disparities across social groups and redistribution or public-goods provision (Alesina et al., 1999; Baldwin and Huber, 2010; Morgan and Kelly, 2017), we provide causal evidence that changing perceived economic disparities across groups shifts redistributive preferences and class identification. We also trace the effects further downstream than most of the literature, studying effects on political attitudes, candidate choice, and real-stakes civic engagement. Despite substantial belief updating and changes in economic preferences and identity, political outcomes remain unchanged. The experiment therefore locates the break between economic and political responses downstream of belief updating and class-based preference formation, rather than in citizens' willingness to update or draw economic consequences from their beliefs. In doing so, it contributes to work showing that information and belief updating can have limited or unintended political effects (Kendall et al., 2015; Barrera et al., 2020; Egorov et al., 2026).

[4]This contribution also relates to a broader literature on misperceptions about policies, norms, values, and out-group behavior (Burzstyn et al., 2020; Stantcheva, 2021; Bursztyn and Yang, 2022; Alesina et al., 2023).

Second, the paper contributes to work on social identity and political conflict, which emphasizes that ethnic and religious identities often dominate material interests in shaping political behavior (Klor and Shayo, 2010; Sambanis and Shayo, 2013; Shayo, 2020; Genicot and Ray, 2020; Bonomi et al., 2021). Prior work shows that economic inequality between groups can reinforce ethnicized politics and reduce support for redistribution (Hubert and Suryanarayan, 2016). We test the reverse: whether reducing perceived between-group economic inequality weakens sectarian identity and its political salience. We find a more nuanced answer: reducing perceived between-sect inequality strengthens class identification and support for class-based redistribution, but does not weaken sectarian identity itself. These findings also speak to theories in which individuals choose among competing social identities (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Shayo, 2009; Atkin et al., 2021), and highlight a less studied feature of endogenous identity choice: strengthening one social identity need not weaken the identity it most directly cuts across, and adjustment may instead occur along other identity dimensions.

Third, the paper contributes to the literature on social cohesion and intergroup relations. A rich tradition in social psychology and political science suggests that highlighting shared experiences and identities can reduce prejudice and strengthen social cohesion, through strategies such as intergroup contact (Mousa, 2020; Lowe, 2021; Ghosh, 2025) and perspective-taking (Alan et al., 2021). Much of this work centers on shared national identity, which can strengthen solidarity among citizens (Charnysh et al., 2015; Robinson, 2016; Depetris-Chauvin et al., 2020; Bazzi et al., 2019) while also increasing exclusion of non-citizens (Rosenzweig and Zhou, 2021)—a particular concern in Lebanon, which hosts the world's largest concentration of refugees per capita. We instead study shared economic position and economic class as an alternative basis for cross-group commonality, avoiding this trade-off. The intervention increases class identification and class-based redistributive preferences, but these changes do not extend to greater cross-sect solidarity measured by trust, comfort with intermarriage, or willingness to give to an out-group member. The results therefore show that recognizing shared economic interests can strengthen class-based identification without substantially increasing solidarity across sects.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the institutional setting. Section 3 presents the survey and experimental design. Section 4 documents beliefs about cross-sect inequality. Section 5 reports treatment effects on beliefs. Sec-

tion 6 reports effects on redistributive preferences and class identity, and Section 7 reports effects on political preferences and real-stakes engagement. Section 8 examines the wedge between economic and political responses. Section 9 concludes.

2 Institutional Setting

Lebanon is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The top 1 percent receives approximately 25 percent of national income, while the ratio of income at the top decile to that at the bottom decile is approximately 12 (Assouad, 2023). These levels are comparable to those in Brazil and South Africa and substantially exceed those in the United States, China, and France (Figure A.1). Economic hardship has intensified further since the onset of the economic crisis in 2019. The collapse of the banking system, sharp depreciation of the Lebanese pound, and contraction in economic activity led to a dramatic deterioration in household living standards. By 2021, 74 percent of the population lived below the poverty line, and median household income subsequently fell roughly fourfold, to approximately $122 per month, with particularly large declines among poorer households (Appendix Figure A.2; World Bank, 2024). The experiment therefore takes place in a setting where economic inequality and material hardship are both severe and highly salient.

Lebanon's population is divided among three large religious communities—Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims—each accounting for roughly one third of the population. Sect has historically been associated with economic position. Differences in colonial relationships, access to education, occupational specialization, migration, and political power generated durable associations between religious affiliation and class or social status (Nasr, 1976, 1985; Wenger, 1990). Christians in particular came to be associated with greater wealth and status, while Sunni and Shia communities were more often associated with economic disadvantage.

The contemporary income distribution, however, is substantially less differentiated along sectarian lines than these historical associations imply. In both Gallup World Poll and Human Rights Watch survey data, the income distributions of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias overlap considerably (Mazjoub et al., 2022). The three groups are similarly represented among households below the poverty line, and income dispersion within each sect closely resembles dispersion in the population as a whole. The ratio of income in the top to the bottom decile is approximately 11 among Christians and Shias

and 12 among Sunnis, compared with 12 nationally. Appendix Figure C.5 reports the underlying income distributions.

Despite the substantial overlap in contemporary income distributions, perceptions of economic differences across sects remain part of contemporary understandings of Lebanon's social structure: sect continues to serve as a shorthand for class, status, and regional hierarchy (Deeb, 2020). In fact, contemporary public discourse continues to associate religious communities with relative wealth and poverty. Figure A.4 provides illustrative examples from recent social-media discussions in which participants explicitly debate the economic standing of different sects. This persistence creates a wedge between perceived and observed economic divisions across sects that motivates our experiment: we test whether reducing perceived economic distance between sects shifts redistributive preferences, class identity, and political alignment.

Economic convergence across sects has not been accompanied by a comparable decline in the political importance of sect. Lebanon's political system formally organizes representation around religious affiliation (Salibi, 1988; Corm, 2012; Leenders, 2012). The confessional system allocates the country's principal political offices across religious communities and reserves parliamentary representation according to sectarian quotas. The post-civil-war settlement institutionalized in the Taif Accord preserved this basic structure, making sect an organizing principle of both electoral competition and access to political office (Corm, 2012; Leenders, 2012).

Political parties operate within this institutional structure and mobilize voters primarily along sectarian lines. Traditional parties are closely associated with particular religious communities, and co-sectarian affiliation remains an important determinant of electoral choice (Cammett et al., 2022). Sectarian parties also mediate access to jobs, public services, and other material resources, reinforcing the connection between religious affiliation and political networks (Leenders, 2012; Parreira, 2020; Cammett et al., 2024). Political competition is therefore organized much less around economic class than Lebanon's high level of inequality might suggest (Traboulsi, 2012). This persistence is especially notable because dissatisfaction with the political establishment is widespread: citizens report high levels of perceived corruption and low confidence in political institutions, yet traditional sectarian parties remain central to electoral politics (Arab Barometer, 2024; Oxfam, 2022).

Our survey data illustrate the reach of these arrangements. Sixty-one percent of respondents report feeling personally insulted when their religious group is criticized,

while only 28 percent, on average, believe that politicians from another major sect care about members of their own community (Table 1). Respondents report relying on *wasta*—personal or political connections—for 69 percent of the services we measure, including 72 percent for electricity and 80 percent for education. Social networks also remain segmented: respondents report fewer than two close friends from other religious groups on average, and only 36 percent live in neighborhoods that are mixed or predominantly composed of other sects. Together, these patterns highlight the continued importance of sectarian identity and networks in structuring social and political life.

The persistence of sectarian intermediation coincides with weak public-service provision and recurrent institutional crises. Over the past decade, Lebanon has experienced prolonged breakdowns in waste collection and electricity provision, the collapse of its banking system, and repeated failures of basic emergency services during severe weather events. Figure A.3 illustrates these problems through the 2015 garbage crisis, chronic electricity and infrastructure failures, restrictions on depositors' access to bank savings following the financial collapse, and failures of emergency response during major storms and flooding. Together, these episodes illustrate a broader governance environment characterized by limited state capacity and extensive reliance on private, communal, and political networks for basic services.

3 Survey and Sample

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

We conducted 3,300 face-to-face interviews in Greater Beirut between May and July 2025 in partnership with *IPSOS Lebanon*. The study population consists of adults ages 18–45 who self-identify as Christian, Sunni, or Shia, the three largest religious communities in Lebanon. We imposed quotas by religion and gender, yielding 1,100 respondents from each sect and an approximately equal number of men and women.[5]

Table 1 describes the sample. Average respondents are 31 years old, live in households of roughly four members, and 29 percent have completed university. Monthly household income averages approximately $1,000, although there is meaningful variation across sects. The table also illustrates several features of the Lebanese setting

[5]The age restriction and sampling frame were specified before the main fieldwork. The study focuses on the three religious groups for which the treatment presents comparable income-distribution data.

described in Section 2. Sixty-one percent of respondents report feeling personally insulted when their religious group is criticized; respondents report fewer than two close friends from other sects on average; and 69 percent of the basic services we measure are obtained through *wasta*, or personal connections. Exposure to the recent war with Israel was also widespread: 89 percent report at least one form of direct impact, including displacement, financial strain, emotional strain, or disruption to daily life.

Although our sampling frame is restricted to Greater Beirut and respondents ages 18–45, the sample closely resembles comparable respondents in nationally representative surveys.[6] Appendix Tables B.1 and B.2 compare our sample with respondents in the same age range in the Gallup World Poll and Arab Barometer. Demographic characteristics are broadly similar, with the correspondence particularly close when the comparison samples are restricted to Beirut, Greater Beirut, or urban areas. These comparisons suggest that, within the age range and geographic population targeted by the study, the experimental sample is not unusually selected on basic observable characteristics

3.2 Eliciting Prior Beliefs

Before treatment assignment, we elicited respondents' beliefs about the economic position of the three sects. For each of three income groups—the poor, the middle class, and the rich—respondents were asked:

> "Imagine 100 Lebanese in this group. How many are Shia, Sunni, and Christian?"

Repeating this elicitation across the three income groups recovers each respondent's perceived sectarian composition of the income distribution. We use these beliefs in two ways. First, they provide the basis for the descriptive analysis in Section 4, where we characterize perceived economic differentiation across sects. Second, because the beliefs are elicited before treatment assignment, they allow us to examine whether treatment effects vary with respondents' priors and, in particular, whether the average effects are driven by respondents who initially hold unusually extreme beliefs.

[6] The age restriction aligns with eligibility criteria for our behavioral outcomes, specifically applying for the *Tamkin* civic internship program.

Table 1: Summary Statistics by Religious Group

Notes: The table reports sample means for the full sample and by religious group. The final three columns report the difference in means between the named group and the other two groups. The sample comprises 3,300 respondents, 1,100 from each religious group. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

	All	Sunni	Shia	Christian	Sunni - others	Shia - others	Christ. - others
Demographics							
Age	30.93	30.87	30.75	31.15	-0.08	-0.26	0.34
HH size	4.16	4.27	4.32	3.90	0.15***	0.24***	-0.40***
Completed at least primary school	0.97	0.96	0.95	0.99	-0.02**	-0.02***	0.04***
Completed at least secondary school	0.74	0.71	0.70	0.81	-0.05***	-0.06***	0.11***
Completed university or higher	0.29	0.28	0.25	0.34	-0.01	-0.07***	0.08***
Monthly HH income (USD)	1001.61	943.75	982.97	1078.80	-87.29***	-27.83	115.64***
Poor (less than 350 USD)	0.16	0.19	0.19	0.12	0.04**	0.04***	-0.07***
Identity and networks							
Feels insulted when group criticized	0.61	0.56	0.62	0.64	-0.07***	0.02	0.05***
Number of outgroup close friends	1.85	2.12	1.60	1.82	0.42***	-0.37***	-0.05
Neighbourhood mixed or mostly other sect	0.36	0.55	0.39	0.15	0.28***	0.03*	-0.32***
Clientelism and wasta							
Relies on wasta for electricity	0.72	0.75	0.65	0.77	0.03*	-0.10***	0.07***
Relies on wasta for trash collection	0.53	0.54	0.50	0.56	0.01	-0.05**	0.04*
Relies on wasta for education	0.80	0.80	0.75	0.84	0.01	-0.07***	0.07***
Share of services via wasta (0 to 1)	0.69	0.70	0.64	0.72	0.02	-0.07***	0.06***
Trust, politics, media							
Supports a political party	0.34	0.22	0.40	0.41	-0.18***	0.09***	0.09***
Voted in the 2022 elections	0.57	0.50	0.58	0.61	-0.09***	0.02	0.07***
High trust in central government	0.18	0.20	0.04	0.31	0.03*	-0.21***	0.19***
Believes outgroup 1 politicians care about ingroup	0.28	0.24	0.23	0.38	-0.07***	-0.08***	0.15***
Believes outgroup 2 politicians care about ingroup	0.28	0.30	0.29	0.25	0.03	0.02	-0.04**
Exposure to political media	0.64	0.55	0.62	0.75	-0.13***	-0.03	0.16***
War exposure							
Any impact from war with Israel	0.89	0.92	0.95	0.81	0.04***	0.09***	-0.13***
Displacement	0.37	0.23	0.65	0.22	-0.21***	0.43***	-0.22***
Emotional strain	0.78	0.81	0.82	0.72	0.04**	0.06***	-0.10***
Financial strain	0.58	0.60	0.72	0.42	0.04*	0.21***	-0.24***
Disruption to daily routine	0.47	0.52	0.52	0.36	0.08***	0.08***	-0.16***
Observations	3300	1100	1100	1100			

3.3 The Experimental Intervention

Respondents were randomly assigned at the individual level to watch the seven-minute treatment video or to a no-video control group. We chose a no-video control because an active placebo would require content that affects respondents' attention and survey experience without itself affecting the political attitudes we study. Constructing such content is particularly difficult in Lebanon, where even ostensibly nonpolitical domains of public policy and service provision are closely intertwined with sectarian institutions and political networks (Cammett and Issar, 2010; Corstange, 2016). An active placebo could therefore constitute a substantive intervention in its own right, potentially shifting political or cross-sectarian attitudes and obscuring the relevant counterfactual. We instead follow closely related survey-based information experiments in comparing treated respondents with a no-information control group (Kuziemko et al., 2015; Stantcheva, 2021; Alesina et al., 2024). Given that the treatment lasts only seven minutes, the difference in survey exposure across arms is limited, reducing concerns about differential survey fatigue or attention (Haaland et al., 2023).

The video conveys two facts simultaneously: income inequality in Lebanon is extremely high, but economic differences across the three major sects are small relative to the inequality within them. It then frames these facts in terms of shared economic interests across sectarian lines: economically disadvantaged Lebanese have much in common with similarly situated members of other sects, while substantial economic differences exist within each sect. The full English-language transcript of the treatment video is reproduced in Appendix C.3.1.

The first, approximately four-minute, component presents statistical evidence on the structure of inequality. It begins by documenting the severity of aggregate inequality: the top 1 percent receives approximately 25 percent of national income, 74 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and income in the top decile is approximately 12 times that in the bottom decile (Figure C.1). It then turns to differences across sects. Christians, Sunnis, and Shias are similarly represented among households below the poverty line, and the dispersion of income within each religious group closely resembles that in the population as a whole: the top-to-bottom-decile ratio is approximately 11 among Christians and Shias and 12 among Sunnis (Figure C.2). These comparisons illustrate the central contrast of the treatment: substantial economic inequality within each sect alongside relatively limited economic differences across sects.

The second, approximately three-minute, component reinforces this message through

a locally produced fictional narrative. Produced with the *Beirut Film Society*, it follows three young Lebanese—one Christian, one Sunni, and one Shia—who face similar problems of underemployment, inadequate earnings, and economic insecurity (Figure C.3). The concluding segment then connects their experiences back to the statistical evidence, emphasizing shared economic hardship across sects, the concentration of wealth at the top, and the economic commonalities linking similarly situated Lebanese across sectarian lines (Appendix Figure C.4). The statistical and narrative components thus convey the same underlying contrast through different forms of evidence. Narratives can make information more memorable and persistent (Graeber et al., 2024), while combining statistical information with narrative content may increase its relevance and impact (Andries et al., 2026). Because the video combines information about the distribution of income with a narrative and an explicit cross-sectarian class framing, the experiment identifies the effect of exposure to the intervention as a whole. We therefore cannot separately identify the effects of correcting beliefs about inter-sect inequality, the narrative presentation of shared hardship, or the class-based framing of those facts, instead leveraging best practices across different evidence bases to maximize the potential for durable effects.

Randomization produced treatment and control groups that are similar on pre-treatment characteristics (Appendix Table C.1). We assess balance across 41 measures spanning demographics and socioeconomic status, identity and social networks, reliance on *wasta*, political attitudes and media exposure, and exposure to the recent war with Israel. Four differences are statistically significant at the 10 percent level, close to what would be expected by chance given the number of comparisons. As described in Section 3.5, we assess sensitivity to these chance imbalances by augmenting the preferred specification with the imbalanced covariates. The estimates are essentially unchanged.

3.4 Outcomes

We organize the outcomes into four increasingly downstream families. The first measures whether the intervention changes beliefs about the economic distance separating sects. The second examines whether these belief shifts are accompanied by changes in redistributive preferences and class identity. The third asks whether these class-based responses extend to political alignment and candidate choice. The fourth moves beyond stated preferences and hypothetical choices to consequential forms of civic and political

engagement. This progression allows us to trace how far responses to the intervention extend—from beliefs, to economic preferences and identity, to politics, and ultimately to costly action. The experiment and main outcome families were specified in a pre-analysis plan completed before the main fieldwork. Appendix **??** documents departures from the pre-analysis plan and maps the preregistered analyses to those reported in the paper. All outcome questions are reproduced verbatim in Appendix C.2.

Beliefs about inequality. Our first-stage outcomes capture how respondents understand the economic structure of Lebanese society. We measure perceived income inequality between sects, perceived overall income inequality, and the perceived economic position of the respondent's own sect relative to each of the two other major sects. The latter measures distinguish whether respondents view other communities as economically better off, worse off, or broadly similar to their own. Together, these outcomes allow us to distinguish changes in perceived economic distance across sectarian boundaries from changes in beliefs about the overall level of inequality.

Redistributive preferences. We measure redistributive preferences along three distinct margins of fiscal policy. Respondents evaluate whether Lebanon should increase the marginal tax rate on income above $150,000, whether and how far income-tax exemptions should extend across the lower part of the tax schedule, and whether the government should expand social protection. The questions are designed around concrete policy choices rather than abstract support for redistribution. Respondents are shown the existing Lebanese income-tax schedule before stating their preferred tax policy, while the social-protection question explicitly notes that expansion may require higher taxes, additional public debt, or cuts to other public services. These measures therefore capture willingness to make the tax-and-transfer system more progressive under explicit fiscal trade-offs.

Class identity and economic grievances. We measure the salience of economic class using a forced-allocation identity task. Respondents receive 15 "identity points" and allocate them across religion, social class, and national identity. Because the total number of points is fixed, greater weight on class necessarily comes at the expense of another identity. The task therefore captures changes in the relative position of class within respondents' broader identity structure. We complement this measure with two affective responses to economic inequality: empathy toward those facing economic

hardship and anger toward those with wealth and power. Together, these outcomes capture whether greater perceived economic similarity across sects strengthens class-based identification and whether it redirects solidarity toward those at the bottom or grievances toward those at the top.

Political alignment and sectarian preferences. We measure political alignment along several margins that capture support for Lebanon's sectarian political order and for alternatives to it. Direct survey questions first ask whether respondents prefer the existing confessional system, in which political representation and major state offices are allocated by religious affiliation, or a civil or secular alternative. We also measure support for civil marriage, a salient institutional reform because personal-status law in Lebanon is administered through religious communities rather than a unified civil code. Finally, we measure support for Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's recently appointed prime minister and a prominent reform-oriented figure outside the traditional sectarian party establishment. Taken together, these outcomes capture willingness to move away from sectarian institutions, sect-based regulation of social life, and established sectarian political actors.

We complement these stated preferences with a conjoint experiment in which respondents repeatedly choose between hypothetical political candidates. Candidate profiles independently vary religion, political affiliation, policy platform, gender, age, and political experience. Political affiliations span traditional sectarian parties, independent candidates with sectarian leanings, and explicitly non-sectarian alternatives; economic platforms emphasize either redistribution, private-sector growth and employment, or national security. The conjoint therefore places sectarian affiliation and economic policy in direct competition. It allows us to ask whether respondents are willing to trade off a candidate's religious or partisan alignment against a platform or party type that better reflects their economic preferences, while holding other candidate characteristics constant.

Real-stakes political and civic engagement. Finally, we examine whether changes in beliefs and stated preferences translate into consequential behavior outside the survey. In partnership with Lebanese civil-society organizations working on interfaith cooperation, government accountability, and non-sectarian political participation, we designed a sequence of engagement outcomes that require progressively greater investments of time and effort. These range from expressing support for an organization's

mission and consenting to future contact, to registering for and attending an in-person political workshop, and ultimately to completing an application for an intensive civic-training program. This progression allows us to distinguish low-cost expressions of support from willingness to undertake increasingly demanding forms of non-sectarian civic and political engagement.

At the lowest-cost margin, respondents report their support for the mission of the *Adyan Foundation*, a Lebanese organization that promotes interfaith dialogue and serves vulnerable populations irrespective of religious affiliation. They can also opt to have their contact information shared with Adyan after being presented with concrete volunteering opportunities, including assisting with food distribution through the organization's soup kitchen. Opting in therefore has a consequence beyond the survey: respondents authorize us to transmit their contact information to Adyan and may subsequently be contacted about volunteering.

A similarly low-cost outcome captures willingness to RSVP to a two-hour municipal-accountability workshop organized by the *Gherbal Initiative*, a Lebanese transparency and anti-corruption organization. The workshop provides practical training in monitoring municipal budgets, obtaining public records, and using administrative data to hold local officials accountable.

The higher-cost outcomes require substantially greater commitment. We observe whether respondents actually attend the Gherbal workshop, which requires traveling to the event and devoting two hours to participation; attendees receive only a $5 transportation reimbursement. We also offer respondents the opportunity to apply to *Tamkin*, a competitive three-month civic-education program run by Citizens & Politics. The program consists of weekly sessions on democratic participation, local governance, and anti-sectarian political organizing. Applying requires respondents to complete a separate online application and submit a short motivation essay, while participation entails a sustained three-month commitment. Together, these higher-cost outcomes capture willingness to invest meaningful time and effort in non-sectarian civic and political engagement.

Taken together, these measures span a wide range of political expression: stated institutional preferences, candidate choice under explicit trade-offs, low-cost willingness to be contacted by a cross-sectarian organization, attendance at an accountability workshop, and application to an intensive civic-participation program. This breadth allows us to distinguish changes in attitudes from changes in political choice and,

ultimately, from willingness to incur real costs in pursuit of non-sectarian political engagement.

3.5 Empirical Strategy

Our main estimand is the intent-to-treat effect of assignment to the video. For each outcome, we estimate

$$y_{ik} = \alpha + \beta \, \text{Video}_{ik} + X_i'\gamma + \delta_k + \varepsilon_{ik}, \tag{1}$$

where y_{ik} denotes the outcome for respondent i in randomization stratum k, Video_{ik} is an indicator for assignment to the treatment, and δ_k denotes fixed effects for the religious-group strata used in randomization. The coefficient β therefore captures the average causal effect of assignment to the video. To improve precision, we include a set of pre-treatment covariates, X_i, selected using post-double-selection LASSO. The candidate set includes demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, measures of social networks and reliance on *wasta*, baseline political attitudes and engagement, media exposure, and exposure to the war with Israel. Because treatment is randomized at the individual level, inference is based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

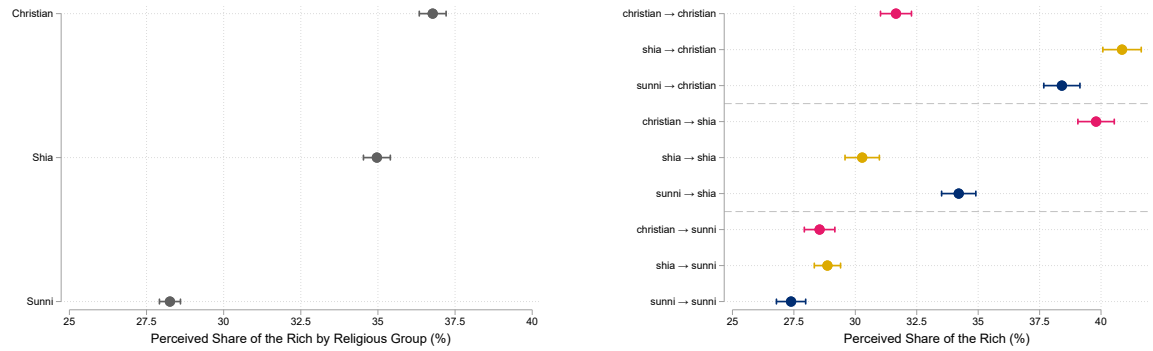
Our preferred specification excludes respondents who participated in the pilot phase, leaving 3,198 of the 3,300 interviews in the baseline estimation sample. For all outcomes, we assess the sensitivity of the estimates to three alternative specifications. First, we include pilot respondents. Second, we augment the baseline specification with controls for pre-treatment covariates exhibiting chance imbalance across treatment arms (Appendix Table C.1). Third, we include enumerator fixed effects, which absorb systematic differences across interviewers and provide an additional check on interviewer-induced response patterns. We return to related concerns about experimenter demand and social desirability in Section 6.

Because we examine multiple outcomes within each stage of the response to treatment, we account for multiple inference using Westfall–Young family-wise-error-rate adjustments based on 1,000 resamples (**?**). We first adjust separately within each prespecified outcome family: beliefs, redistribution, identity, emotions, political preferences, and real-stakes engagement. Because our main substantive conclusions concern broader economic and political responses, we additionally adjust jointly across redistribution and identity outcomes, and separately across political-preference and real-stakes

outcomes. Appendix Tables J.1 and J.2 report conventional and adjusted p-values. Unless otherwise noted, the text reports conventional p-values.

4 Descriptive Statistics: Beliefs about Cross-Sect Inequality

Moving beyond anecdotal evidence, we find that respondents perceive a pronounced economic hierarchy across Lebanon's three major sects. Figure 1 reports beliefs about the religious composition of the rich. Sunni and Shia respondents perceive Christians as substantially overrepresented among the rich, whereas Christian respondents perceive Shias as the richest group. These patterns are visible in the pooled responses (Panel A) but become especially clear when beliefs are disaggregated by the respondent's own sect (Panel B). Perceived economic position is therefore not simply a common ranking shared by all respondents; it is structured in part by respondents' own religious affiliation.



Panel A: All Respondents

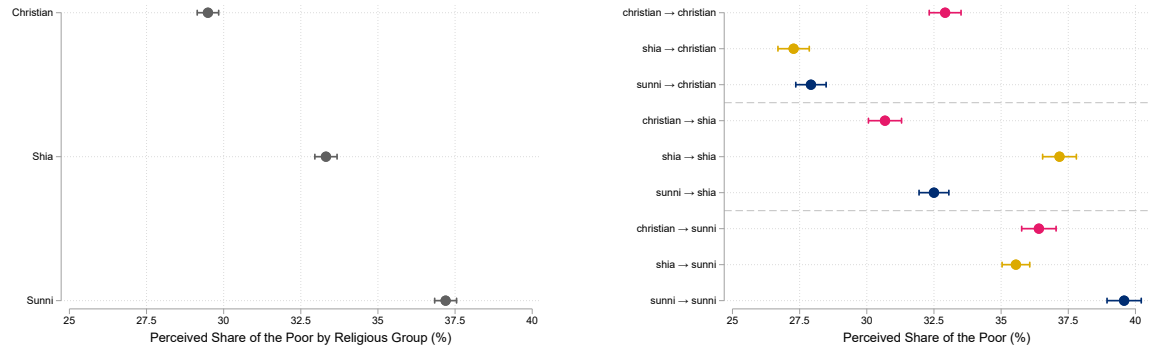
Panel B: By Denomination

Figure 1: Perceived Religious Composition of the Rich

Notes: Perceived shares of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias among the rich, elicited as the number of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias among 100 Lebanese in that income group. Panel A pools all respondents; Panel B splits by the respondent's denomination.

Beliefs about the poor reveal a complementary pattern. Sunni and Shia respondents each perceive their own sect as overrepresented among the poor, while Christian respondents perceive Sunnis as the poorest group (Figure 2). In particular, the two Muslim groups do not simply share a common ranking of sects: each views its own community as relatively disadvantaged. By contrast, respondents perceive the middle

of the income distribution as considerably more balanced across sects (Appendix Figure D.1). Perceived sectarian differentiation is therefore concentrated primarily at the top and bottom of the income distribution.



Panel A: All Respondents

Panel B: By Denomination

Figure 2: Perceived Religious Composition of the Poor

Notes: Perceived shares of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias among the poor, elicited as the number of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias among 100 Lebanese in that income group. Panel A pools all respondents; Panel B splits by the respondent's denomination.

These perceived differences are quantitatively large and widespread. Figure 3 summarizes, for each respondent, the dispersion in perceived sect shares within the three income groups. For 75 percent of respondents, the average within-income-group dispersion exceeds 7 percentage points. With three groups of approximately equal population size, this corresponds to a perceived gap of roughly 12 percentage points between the most- and least-represented sect. Substantial perceived differentiation is therefore not confined to a small tail of respondents; it is a common feature of beliefs in the sample. Appendix Figures D.2, D.3, and D.4 report the corresponding distributions separately for the rich, poor, and middle class.

To summarize the extent to which respondents perceive economic position to differ across sects, we construct a measure of perceived between-sect inequality. Let $\tilde{p}_{i,s,k}$ denote respondent i's perceived share of sect s in income group $k \in \{\text{poor, middle, rich}\}$. We define

$$B_i \equiv \frac{1}{3} \sum_k \left[\max_s \{\tilde{p}_{i,s,k}\} - \min_s \{\tilde{p}_{i,s,k}\} \right]. \tag{2}$$

The measure averages, across the three income groups, the perceived gap between the most- and least-represented sect. It equals zero when a respondent reports identical sect shares in every income group and increases as the respondent perceives economic

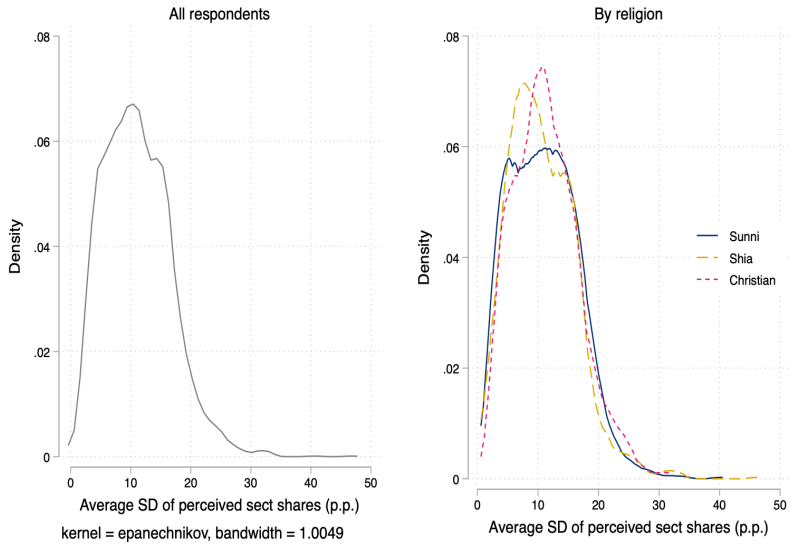


Figure 3: Perceived Sect Inequality Is Substantial

Notes: Distribution of the average within-income-group dispersion of perceived sect shares across respondents. For 75 percent of respondents the average dispersion exceeds 7 percentage points, implying perceived gaps between the most- and least-represented sect of roughly 12 percentage points.

position to be more strongly differentiated by sect. This is the main pre-treatment measure of perceived between-sect inequality used in the analysis below.

We next ask which respondents perceive larger economic differences across sects. Figure 4 reports partial associations between respondent characteristics and B_i, with the outcome standardized and all listed covariates included jointly. Several patterns stand out. Perceived between-sect inequality is larger among older respondents and displays a non-monotonic relationship with income: both poorer and higher-income respondents perceive smaller economic differences across sects. It is also lower among respondents with greater contact with members of other sects and among those more exposed to the recent war with Israel, while it is higher among respondents with stronger sectarian attachment and greater reliance on *wasta*. The same broad patterns appear within each religious community (Appendix Figure D.6) and when perceived differentiation is measured separately among the rich, poor, and middle class (Appendix Figures D.7, D.8, and D.9).

These associations are descriptive, but they provide useful context for the experi-

ment. Respondents whose social environment—whether through poverty, war victimization, or political activism—brings them into greater contact with members of other sects tend to perceive less economic differentiation across religious groups, whereas respondents more closely tied to sectarian identity and institutions tend to perceive more. The next section asks whether these beliefs are similarly persistent when respondents are exposed to direct information about the economic distribution across sects.

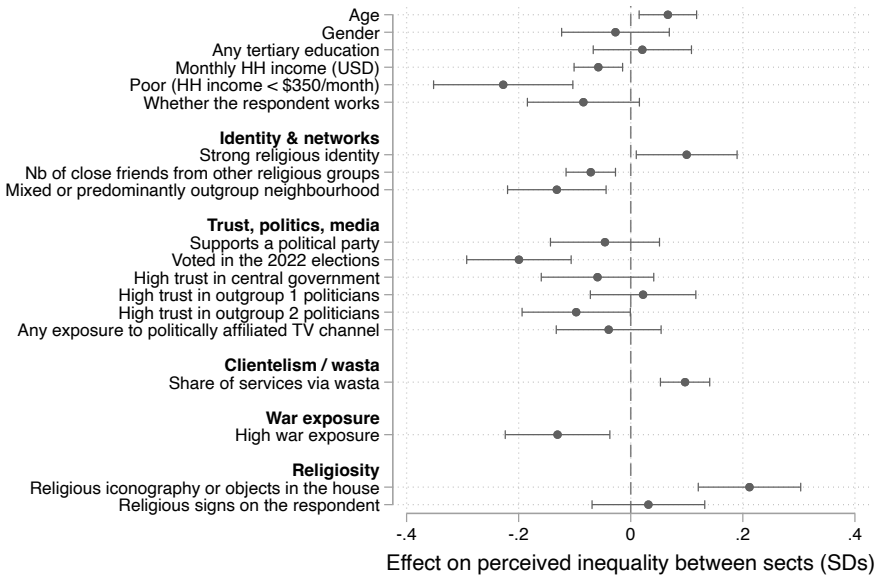


Figure 4: Correlates of Perceived Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Each marker reports the coefficient on the named characteristic from a regression of perceived between-sect inequality, standardized to have mean zero and standard deviation one, on all listed characteristics jointly. Sample: all respondents.

5 Belief Updating

We begin by establishing that respondents understood the intervention and updated the beliefs it was designed to change. Across three post-treatment comprehension questions covering both the statistical and narrative components of the video, 78 percent of responses are correct (Appendix Figure E.1). Open-ended responses provide a complementary measure of what respondents took away from the intervention. When asked to describe what they learned or thought about while watching the video, treated respondents frequently refer to shared economic hardship across sects and to economic inequality, consistent with the video's central contrast between high aggregate inequal-

ity and limited economic differences across religious groups (Appendix Figure F.1). The intervention's message therefore appears to have been both understood and salient to respondents.[7]

5.1 Effects on Perceived Inequality Between Sects

The video produces a large shift in beliefs about economic differences across sects. Figure 5 reports intent-to-treat effects on perceived between-sect inequality and on perceived economic similarity between the respondent's own sect and each of the two other major sects. Perceived inequality between sects falls by 0.398 standard deviations ($p < 0.001$). The complementary similarity measures move in the opposite direction: perceived economic similarity with the first out-group rises by 0.288 standard deviations ($p < 0.001$), and similarity with the second by 0.196 standard deviations ($p < 0.001$). The intervention therefore shifts both respondents' overall assessment of inequality across sects and their perceived economic distance from specific out-groups. These are effects are sizable: a seven-minute intervention moves beliefs associated with longstanding sectarian economic stereotypes by roughly two- to four-tenths of a standard deviation. The estimates are highly stable across the alternative specifications described in Section 3.5; including pilot respondents, controlling for chance covariate imbalance, or adding enumerator fixed effects yields nearly identical estimates. Nor is the average effect driven by a particular religious community. Perceived between-sect inequality falls significantly among Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents alike (Appendix Figure E.4; Appendix Table H.1, Panel A).

5.2 Updating Across Prior Beliefs

The average first-stage effect could conceal substantial heterogeneity in updating. In particular, the treatment might primarily correct respondents with unusually large perceived sectarian differences, in which case the average effect would reflect adjustment in the upper tail of the prior-belief distribution rather than a broad shift in perceptions of economic distance across sects.

Figure 6 shows that this is not the case. The treatment reduces perceived between-sect inequality throughout the distribution of prior beliefs, including among respon-

[7]The main results are very similar when we exclude respondents who answer all three comprehension questions incorrectly (Appendix Figure E.2).

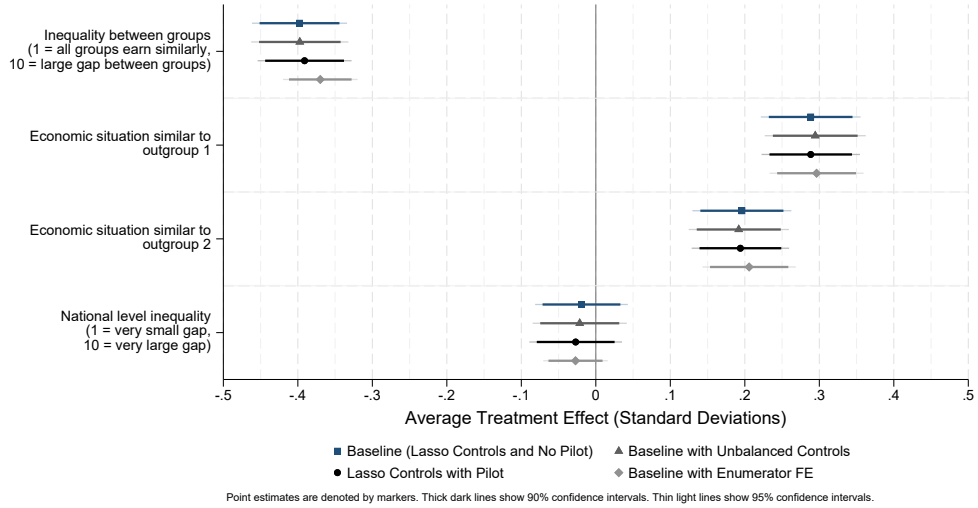


Figure 5: The Video Reduces Perceived Inequality Between Sects

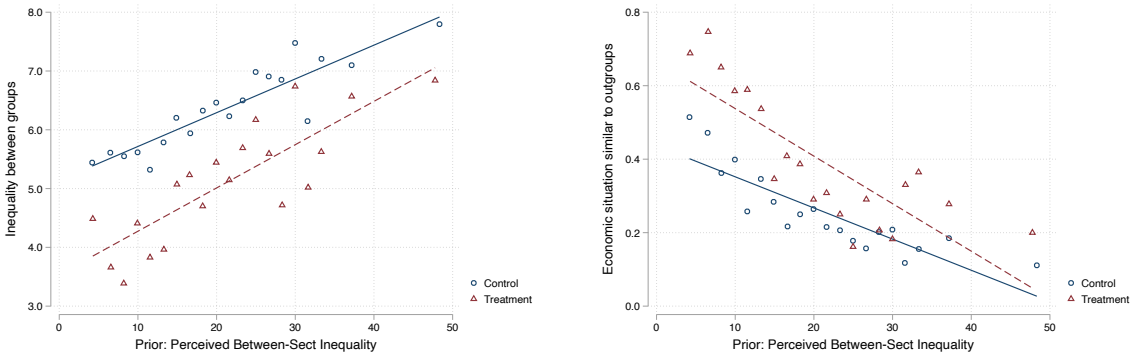
Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, from equation (1). The baseline specification uses LASSO-selected controls, religion (randomization-strata) fixed effects, robust standard errors, and excludes the pilot; the other series add the pilot, controls for imbalanced covariates, or enumerator fixed effects. Thick dark lines show 90 percent confidence intervals; thin light lines show 95 percent confidence intervals.

dents who initially perceive relatively modest differences across sects. The increase in perceived economic similarity with out-groups is similarly broad-based. Thus, the first-stage effect is not driven by respondents with extreme priors. The same conclusion holds when we organize respondents by the accuracy rather than the level of their initial beliefs: Appendix Figure E.3 shows updating throughout the distribution of the misperception measure M_i.

This pattern matters for the interpretation of the downstream effects. The intervention does not simply correct a small group of respondents with unusually extreme or inaccurate beliefs. Instead, it shifts perceived economic distance across sects across a broad range of initial beliefs. The treatment therefore generates meaningful variation in the belief dimension of interest throughout much of the sample, rather than only among respondents in the tails of the prior distribution.

5.3 Between-Sect versus Overall Inequality

Ex ante, there was reason to expect that perceptions of overall inequality might respond to the treatment as well. The video explicitly presents salient evidence that inequality



Panel A: Perceived Inequality Between Sects

Panel B: Perceived Similarity with Out-Groups

Figure 6: Belief Updating Is Broad-Based Across Prior Beliefs

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, by the respondent's prior perceived between-sect inequality. Estimated from equation (1) with LASSO-selected controls.

in Lebanon is extremely high, including the concentration of national income at the top and the large gap between the top and bottom of the distribution. Yet perceived national-level inequality is essentially unchanged. Figure 5 reports an estimated effect of -0.019 standard deviations ($p = 0.544$), close to zero across all four specifications. This contrasts sharply with the 0.398-standard-deviation decline in perceived inequality between sects.

A natural interpretation is that aggregate inequality was already highly salient and relatively well understood. Respondents enter the experiment perceiving national inequality to be high (Appendix Figure D.10), leaving comparatively little scope for updating on this margin despite the video's explicit emphasis on severe aggregate inequality. By contrast, beliefs about how inequality maps onto sectarian boundaries move substantially. The intervention therefore changes respondents' perceived *structure* of inequality—how strongly economic position is associated with sect—without changing their assessment of how unequal Lebanon is overall, as the video likely did not provide new information in this regard.

This distinction sharpens the interpretation of the downstream results. Any subsequent response cannot be attributed to a general change in perceived inequality. What changes is the perceived correspondence between economic position and religious affiliation: respondents come to see sect as less informative about where individuals lie in the income distribution. Section 6 asks whether weakening this perceived link changes redistributive preferences and class identity.

6 Economic Preferences: Redistribution and Class

We next examine whether changing the perceived economic relationship between sects alters how respondents understand their material interests. The intervention shifts redistributive preferences in a more progressive direction. We first ask whether these responses reflect respondents revising the expected consequences of redistribution for their own sect. They do not. Instead, class becomes more salient as a basis for identification. We then examine the affective content of this class-based response.

6.1 Support for Redistribution

Reducing perceived economic differences across sects increases support for progressive redistribution. Figure 7 reports treatment effects on four policy outcomes. Support for increasing the marginal tax rate on income above \$150,000 rises by 0.094 standard deviations ($p = 0.006$). Support for expanding social protection rises by 0.078 standard deviations ($p = 0.023$), despite the question explicitly noting that expansion may require higher taxes, additional public debt, or cuts elsewhere in the budget. The two outcomes governing the scope of income-tax exemptions are individually imprecise but move in the direction of more targeted relief: support for exempting income below \$4,000 rises by 0.038 standard deviations ($p = 0.275$), while support for exemptions extending further up the income distribution falls by 0.039 standard deviations ($p = 0.257$).[8]

Taken together, the estimates indicate a shift toward greater fiscal progressivity: higher taxation at the top, greater social protection, and more narrowly targeted tax relief at the bottom. Importantly, these outcomes concern concrete features of the fiscal system rather than abstract support for redistribution. Appendix Figure C.6 reproduces the tax schedule presented to respondents, while Appendix Figure C.7 places the relevant thresholds against the income distribution in our sample and in the Gallup World Poll.

The response is broad-based. Treatment effects are similar among Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents (Appendix Table H.1) and display no systematic heterogeneity

[8] The evidence is strongest for taxation at the top. The top-tax effect remains statistically significant after Westfall–Young adjustment both within the redistribution family ($p = 0.020$) and jointly across redistribution and identity outcomes ($p = 0.038$). The evidence for social protection is weaker after adjustment ($p = 0.075$ within the redistribution family and $p = 0.121$ jointly across redistribution and identity outcomes); see Appendix Table J.1.

with respect to prior perceived between-sect inequality (Appendix Figure H.1). As with the belief updating documented in Section 5, the shift toward redistribution is therefore not driven by a particular sect or by respondents who entered the experiment with especially large perceived economic differences across groups.

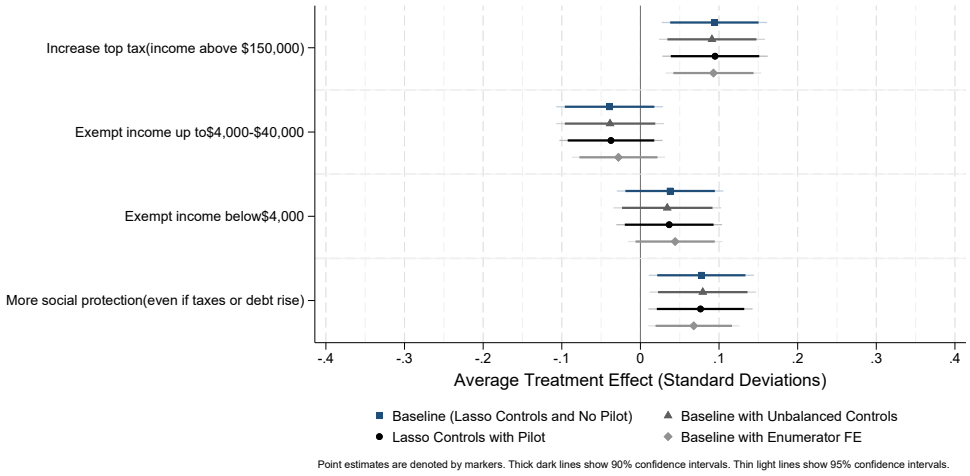


Figure 7: Greater Support for Redistribution

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

6.2 Sect-Based Material Interests

A first explanation is that respondents revise their perceived material interests as members of particular sects. Because we elicit beliefs about the economic position of respondents' own sect before treatment, this mechanism generates directional predictions at the individual level. Consider a respondent who overestimates the share of her own sect among the poor. The treatment reveals that fewer co-sectarians are poor than she had believed, reducing the perceived own-group benefit from policies targeted toward low-income households. Sect-based, material self-interest therefore predicts a smaller treatment effect on support for such policies. Conversely, a respondent who overestimates the share of her own sect among the rich learns that fewer co-sectarians are exposed to taxation at the top than she had believed. For these respondents, the treatment should generate a larger increase in support for the top tax.

Figure 8 tests these predictions. Panel A splits respondents according to whether they initially overestimated the share of their own sect among the poor; the material-

interest mechanism predicts a negative interaction with treatment. Panel B performs the analogous exercise for respondents who overestimated the share of their own sect among the rich; here the predicted interaction is positive. We find little evidence of either pattern. The conclusion is unchanged when we use the magnitude rather than only the direction of respondents' own-group misperceptions. Appendix Figure H.2 allows the predicted differential response to vary with the size of the implied revision in own-sect exposure to the relevant policy. Appendix Figure H.3 applies the same logic to beliefs about the representation of the own sect in the middle of the income distribution and preferences over the broader income-tax exemption. Neither exercise reveals the directional heterogeneity implied by sect-based material self-interest.

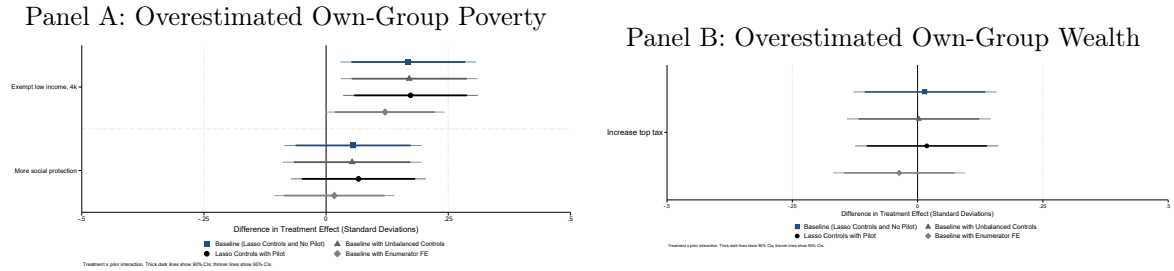


Figure 8: Prior Beliefs Do Not Support Sect-Based Self-Interest

Notes: Treatment-effect heterogeneity by the direction of the respondent's own-group misperception. Self-interest predicts a negative interaction in Panel A (any overestimation of own-group poverty, pro-poor policy) and a positive interaction in Panel B (any overestimation of own-group wealth, top tax). Estimated from equation (1) with LASSO-selected controls.

These tests do not rule out a role for material interests in redistributive preferences more generally. They do, however, provide little support for the more specific explanation that the treatment changes policy preferences because respondents revise how taxes and transfers affect their own religious community. This opens a different possibility: reducing the perceived correspondence between sect and economic position may change the social category through which respondents understand their economic interests.

6.3 Class Identity

The identity results support the social recategorization interpretation. Figure 9 reports effects from a constant-sum allocation in which respondents distribute 15 importance points across social class, religion, and Lebanese national identity. Because the total number of points is fixed, greater weight on class must come at the expense of

another identity. The measure therefore captures a change in the relative salience of class rather than a general tendency for respondents to report stronger identities after treatment. Treated respondents allocate 0.076 standard deviations more to social class ($p = 0.027$).[9] Religious identity is essentially unchanged (-0.010 standard deviations, $p = 0.766$), while Lebanese national identity falls by 0.058 standard deviations ($p = 0.097$).

Thus, reducing perceived economic differences across sects strengthens class identification without displacing religious identity; the increase comes primarily at the expense of national identity. Open-ended responses point in the same direction: although respondents rarely invoke class identity explicitly, 99 percent of references to the poor and rich are non-sectarian, describing these groups without attaching poverty or wealth to particular religious communities (Appendix Figure F.5). We return to this distinction in Section 8 when examining why the shift toward class-based economic preferences does not extend to political alignment.

The class response is concentrated among respondents in the lower 75 percent of the income distribution (Appendix Figure H.4). This pattern is consistent with the treatment making an economic cleavage more salient rather than simply increasing the appeal of class as an abstract identity. At the same time, the response cuts across sectarian lines: treatment effects are similar among Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents (Appendix Table H.1) and do not vary systematically with prior perceived between-sect inequality (Appendix Figure H.5). Together with the redistribution results and the rejection of the own-sect material-interest mechanism above, these findings point to a broader reorganization of economic interests. As sect becomes less informative about economic position, class becomes more salient both as a basis for redistribution and as a social identity.

6.4 What Kind of Class Frame Emerges?

The increase in class salience leaves open the nature of the class-based response. Historical accounts of class formation emphasize two distinct dimensions: horizontal solidarity with those facing economic hardship and vertical antagonism toward those at the top of the economic hierarchy (Thompson, 1963; Hobsbawm, 1984). Our survey

[9]The class-identity estimate is less precise after adjustment for multiple outcomes: the Westfall–Young adjusted p-value is 0.062 within the identity family and 0.121 when redistribution and identity outcomes are considered jointly (Appendix Table J.1).

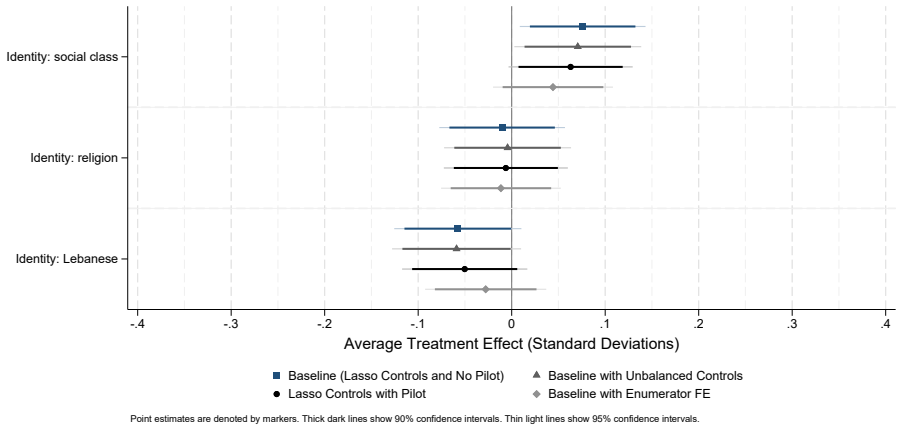


Figure 9: Class Becomes More Salient

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, on the allocation of 15 importance points across religious, class, and national identity, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

measures each separately through empathy toward the poor and anger toward economic elites. This allows us to ask whether reducing perceived economic differences across sects strengthens solidarity at the bottom, antagonism toward the top, or both. The distinction also connects to recent work on how empathy and emotions shape policy preferences (Andries et al., 2026; Algan et al., 2026).

Respondents' open-ended descriptions of the video contain both themes. Among responses that mention the poor (36 percent), sympathy, sadness, and anger on their behalf represent the dominant sentiment; among those that mention the rich (27 percent), anger, resentment, and blame are instead the most common emotional reactions (Figure F.6). Both horizontal solidarity and vertical antagonism are therefore salient ways in which respondents interpret the video's economic message.

The treatment effects, however, point more strongly toward the vertical dimension. Figure 10 shows that anger toward economic elites rises by 0.090 standard deviations among respondents in the bottom 75 percent of the income distribution ($p = 0.020$), while the estimate in the top quartile is small and negative (-0.031 standard deviations, $p = 0.676$). The full-sample estimate is positive but less precise (0.054 standard deviations, $p = 0.115$).[10] By contrast, empathy toward the poor is essentially unchanged overall and among respondents in the bottom 75 percent of the distribution:

[10]The income split is defined only for respondents with non-missing income; the two groups together account for 3,111 of the 3,171 observations in the pooled anger regression.

the estimates are −0.027 standard deviations in the full sample ($p = 0.421$) and 0.001 in the bottom 75 percent ($p = 0.987$). Among respondents in the top quartile, the estimate is more negative, at −0.080 standard deviations, although it is imprecisely estimated ($p = 0.202$).

The pattern therefore points more toward vertical antagonism than horizontal solidarity. Anger toward economic elites rises among respondents below the top quartile, while empathy toward the poor does not increase. This asymmetry is consistent with the treatment making the divide between economic elites and the rest of the distribution more salient. Among top-income respondents, the empathy estimate is negative, although imprecisely estimated. One possible interpretation is that respondents closer to the top react defensively to a message emphasizing concentrated wealth and widespread hardship, but the data do not allow us to distinguish this from sampling variation.

We therefore treat the income heterogeneity in the emotion outcomes as suggestive rather than definitive.[11] The emotion effects also do not vary systematically by sect or by prior perceived between-sect inequality (Appendix Table H.1; Appendix Figure H.6). Viewed alongside the redistribution and identity results, the evidence helps characterize the class-based response generated by the treatment: greater perceived economic commonality across sects is associated more with a vertical distinction between economic elites and the rest of the distribution than with a generalized increase in sympathy toward the poor.

6.5 Experimenter Demand and Social Desirability

A natural concern is that the effects on redistribution and class identity reflect experimenter demand or socially desirable responding. Several features of the design weigh against this interpretation. Respondents received only a broad description of the study as examining economic perceptions, policy preferences, and intergroup attitudes, without revealing the specific policy or identity outcomes of interest. Moreover, although the treatment emphasizes common economic circumstances across sects, it neither advocates redistribution nor mentions any of the specific fiscal policies we subsequently elicit. Consistent with this, respondents rarely mention redistributive policies or class when asked in open-ended questions what they learned or thought about while watch-

[11] Consistent with this interpretation, the bottom-75-percent anger estimate has a Westfall–Young adjusted p-value of 0.102 within the emotions family (Appendix Table J.1).

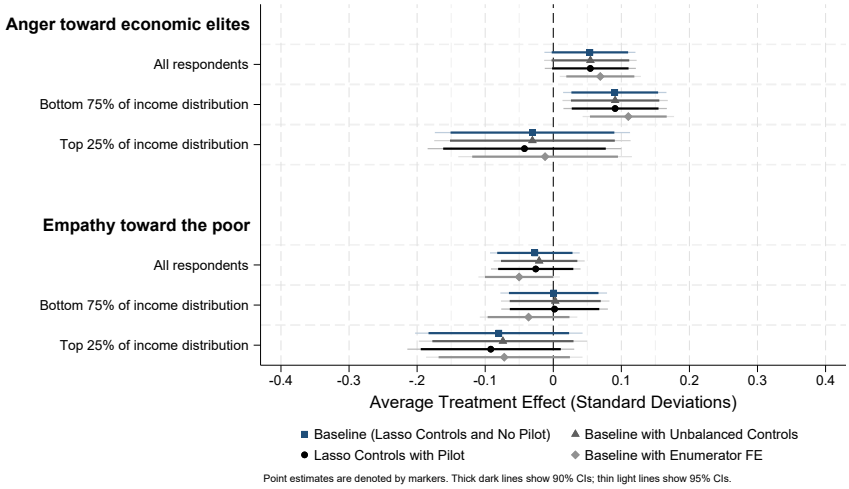


Figure 10: Vertical Antagonism Rises; Horizontal Solidarity Does Not

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, on anger toward economic elites and empathy toward the poor, for all respondents and by income group, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5. The income split is defined for respondents with non-missing income.

ing the video (Appendix Figures F.3, F.4, and F.5).

The broader pattern of results is also difficult to reconcile with a generic demand or social-desirability response. Despite the video's emphasis on common economic circumstances across sects, we find no increase in out-group trust, giving to a poor out-group member, or comfort with inter-sect marriage (Appendix Figure G.1).[12] Within the identity allocation, class gains at the expense of national rather than religious identity, contrary to what a mechanical response to the video's class-versus-sect framing would predict. Effects are also not systematically larger among respondents more susceptible to socially desirable responding (Bernardi, 2006; Dalton and Ortegren, 2011; Kuziemko et al., 2015), and are essentially unchanged with enumerator fixed effects (Appendix Figures G.2 and G.3; Figures 5, 7, 9, and 10). Taken together, these patterns provide little evidence that the effects on redistribution and class identity primarily reflect experimenter demand or social desirability.

[12]In Section 7.2 we present further evidence against the presence of Social Desirability Bias (SDB). Conjoint experiments limit the likelihood of SDB by presenting respondents with multiple dimensions, making it more difficult to infer the social-desirable outcome (Hainmueller et al., 2014; Stantcheva, 2023). Consistently with previous results, in a conjoint experiment on the choice of a preferred political candidate we found that the video treatment did not reduce the probability of choosing a candidate from the same religion (Figure 12b).

7 Treatment Effects on Political Preferences

The class-based economic responses documented in Section 6 do not translate into political realignment. We examine this contrast along three increasingly demanding margins: stated political preferences, candidate choice, and real-stakes engagement with non-sectarian civic organizations. Across all three, the treatment effects are small and statistically indistinguishable from zero.

7.1 Stated Political Preferences

We begin with stated political preferences, the margin on which political realignment is least costly to express. Figure 11 reports effects on preferences over Lebanon's political institutions, civil marriage, and support for Nawaf Salam. None changes meaningfully. Support for sectarian governance changes by -0.009 standard deviations ($p = 0.803$), while support for civil or secular governance rises by 0.046 standard deviations ($p = 0.194$). Support for civil marriage changes by -0.039 standard deviations ($p = 0.216$), and support for Nawaf Salam changes by 0.022 standard deviations ($p = 0.440$).

The contrast with the economic results is sharp. The same intervention that increases support for progressive redistribution and strengthens class identification does not reduce support for sectarian political institutions, increase support for civil marriage, or increase support for a reform-oriented political figure outside the traditional sectarian party establishment. The shift toward class-based economic preferences therefore does not extend even to low-cost expressions of political realignment. The null effects are similar across Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents (Appendix Table H.1), so the pooled estimates do not mask offsetting responses across sects.

7.2 Candidate Choice

The conjoint experiment provides a more demanding test of political translation. Respondents repeatedly choose between candidates whose religion, political affiliation, policy platform, gender, age, and political experience are independently randomized. Political affiliation ranges from traditional sectarian parties to independent sect-leaning and explicitly non-sectarian candidates, while policy platforms emphasize redistribution, growth and employment, or national security. The design therefore allows us to separately identify the weight respondents place on sectarian alignment and economic

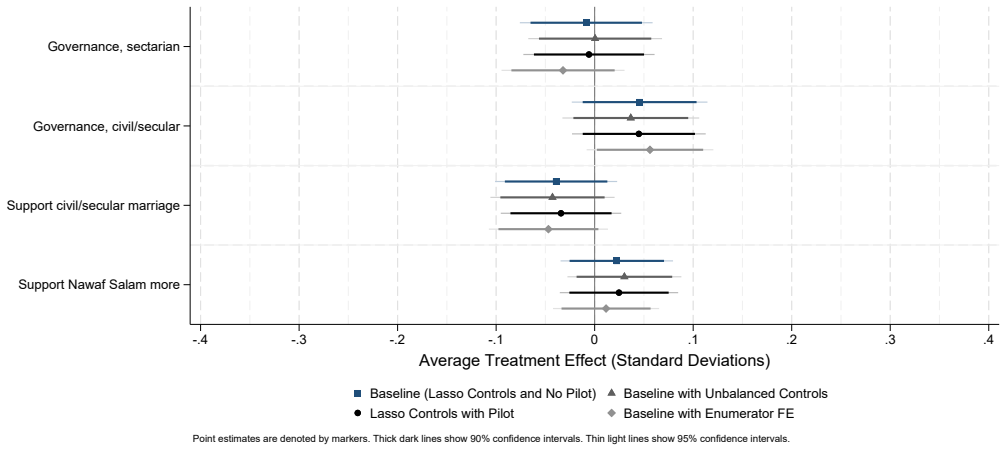


Figure 11: Political Preferences Do Not Change

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

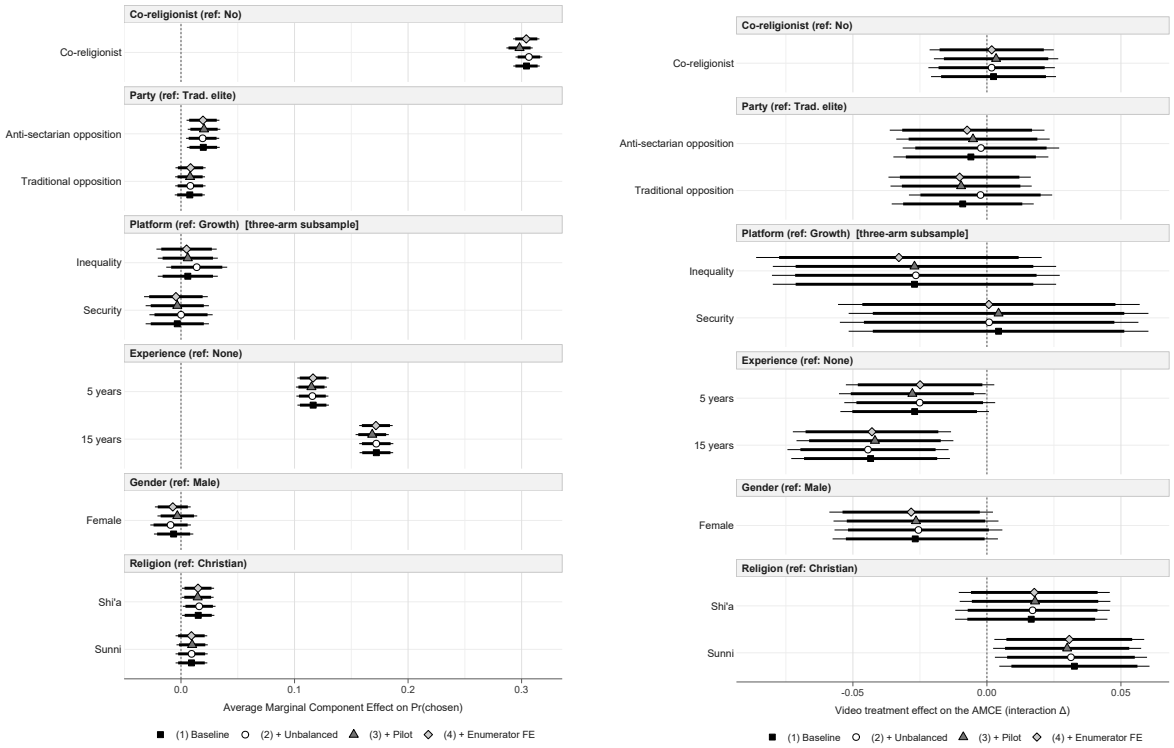
policy in candidate choice.

Panel A of Figure 12 shows the underlying structure of candidate preferences, restricted to the control group to show untainted preferences. Co-religion is the strongest predictor of candidate choice: respondents are 30 percentage-points more likely to select candidates from their own religious group, while political affiliation and policy platform receive an order of magnitude less weight. Electoral choice in the conjoint is therefore structured primarily along sectarian rather than economic lines.

Panel B asks whether the treatment changes these weights. It does not. Most directly, although the intervention increases support for redistribution when economic policy is considered in isolation, treated respondents do not place greater weight on a redistributive platform relative to a growth-oriented platform when choosing between multidimensional candidates. Nor do they become less responsive to co-religion or sectarian political affiliation. The treatment therefore shifts redistributive preferences without changing how economic policy and sectarian alignment are weighted in candidate choice.

7.3 Real-Stakes Political Engagement

We next examine whether the treatment changes behavior outside the survey. As described in Section 3.4, respondents are offered opportunities to engage with Lebanese civil-society organizations working on interfaith cooperation, government accountabil-



(a) Pooled AMCEs (b) Treatment interactions

Figure 12: No Shift Away from Co-Religious or Sectarian Candidates

Notes: Treatment effects on candidate choice in the conjoint experiment, which randomizes candidates' political affiliation (traditional sectarian, independent sect-leaning, non-sectarian), policy platform (redistribution, growth and jobs, national security), religion, and demographic characteristics.

ity, and non-sectarian political participation. The outcomes span increasingly costly margins, from expressing support and consenting to future contact to attending an in-person workshop or applying to a multi-month civic-training program.

The lower-cost measures already go beyond stated preferences because an affirmative response has consequences outside the interview: respondents may subsequently be contacted by the organization or must take additional steps to participate. They also generate substantial separation between broad attitudinal support and willingness to act. Average support for Adyan is very high—4.26 on a five-point scale—yet only 9 percent of respondents agree to be contacted about volunteering opportunities. Similarly, only 20 percent reserve a place at the Gherbal municipal-accountability workshop. These measures therefore distinguish widespread support for the organizations'

objectives from willingness to take a concrete step toward participation.

Figure 13 reports treatment effects on these margins. Support for Adyan changes by 0.020 standard deviations ($p = 0.553$). The probability of opting in to volunteering opportunities with Adyan changes by -0.017 standard deviations ($p = 0.613$), and the probability of reserving a place at the Gherbal workshop changes by 0.012 standard deviations ($p = 0.719$). All three estimates are close to zero. Effects are similar across Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents (Appendix Table H.1).

Take-up falls further at the higher-cost margins. Only eight respondents ultimately attend the Gherbal workshop, and four apply to the Tamkin civic-training program. These outcomes therefore provide little power for estimating treatment effects. Their levels are nevertheless informative about the sharp decline in participation as engagement becomes more demanding: very few respondents in either treatment arm move from broad support to costly political action.

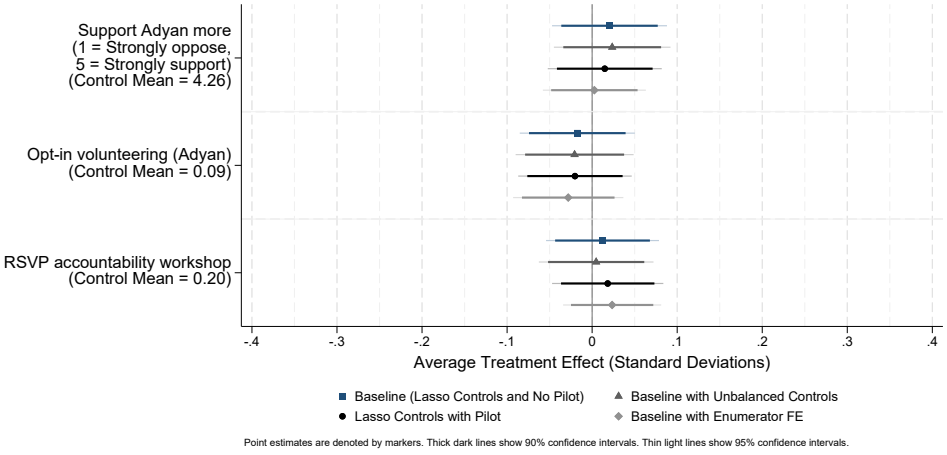


Figure 13: No Change in Lower-Cost Real-Stakes Engagement

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

7.4 How Informative Are the Political Nulls?

The political nulls are informative because the design is sufficiently precise to detect effects of the magnitude observed on the economic outcomes. Appendix Table J.3 reports ex-post minimum detectable effects of 0.082 to 0.098 standard deviations for the stated political and lower-cost real-stakes outcomes, closely matching the preregistered target of 0.095 standard deviations. These thresholds are of the same order as the

treatment effects on the top tax, social protection, and class identity, all of which the experiment detects.

The absence of political effects therefore reflects a difference in magnitude rather than simply a lack of statistical power. We cannot exclude smaller responses, but the data provide no evidence of political changes comparable to the economic responses documented in Section 6. The treatment produces a large change in beliefs and detectable shifts in redistribution and class identification, while any corresponding change in political alignment must be substantially more limited. The central empirical pattern is therefore not simply that some outcomes are statistically significant and others are not; it is that the intervention generates economically meaningful movement in class-based preferences without a comparably sized political response.

8 Why Support for Redistribution Changes but Political Preferences Do Not?

A striking contrast emerges between the economic and political responses to the intervention. Correcting beliefs about inequality across sects increases support for progressive redistribution and strengthens class identification, yet produces no comparable change in stated political preferences, candidate choice, or real-stakes behavioral change. The preceding sections rule out two mechanical explanations for this contrast: the political nulls do not reflect a failure to update beliefs, and the experiment was sufficiently powered to detect political effects of approximately the magnitude observed for the economic outcomes. We now examine why greater recognition of shared economic interests may nevertheless stop short of political realignment.

8.1 Class Salience Rises Without Displacing Sectarian Identity

A first explanation for the economic–political contrast comes from the identity results themselves. The treatment increases the relative salience of class, but leaves religious identity unchanged. In the forced allocation of identity points, the increase in class comes primarily at the expense of Lebanese national identity; the treatment effect on religious identity is essentially zero (Figure 9). Thus, the intervention makes class more salient without weakening the identity around which Lebanese political competition is organized.

The cross-sectional relationships show why this distinction may matter for political translation. Respondents who attach greater importance to their religious identity are more supportive of sectarian governance, less supportive of civil marriage and of the reformist candidate Nawaf Salam, and less likely to opt in to interfaith volunteering or reserve a place at the non-sectarian accountability workshop (Appendix Figure I.1). These relationships are descriptive, but they establish that the identity left unaffected by the treatment is strongly associated with precisely the political outcomes that do not respond.

In-group favoritism exhibits the same pattern. The treatment does not increase trust in members of other sects, giving to a poor out-group member, or comfort with inter-sect marriage (Appendix Figure G.1). These measures of cross-sectarian attachment are themselves strongly related to support for sectarian governance in the cross-section (Appendix Figure I.2). Greater perceived economic commonality therefore does not weaken either religious identification or preferential attachment to one's own sect.

These results suggest that class and sectarian identity are not necessarily substitutes. The treatment makes class a more salient basis for understanding economic interests, but leaves intact the sectarian attachments associated with political choice. Respondents can therefore become more class-oriented in their redistributive preferences without becoming correspondingly less sectarian in their political allegiances.

8.2 Sectarian Embeddedness and Political Translation

A second possibility is that changing beliefs about economic similarity does little to alter the social and material relationships through which sectarian politics operates. As described in Section 2, sectarian networks structure not only social interaction but also access to parties, services, and political intermediaries. If these relationships constrain political translation, treatment responses should weaken among respondents more deeply embedded in sectarian networks.

We examine this prediction using two indices. *Social embeddedness* combines the concentration of close friends within the respondent's own sect, residence in a religiously homogeneous neighborhood, and visible religious markers. *Political embeddedness* combines reliance on *wasta*, support for a sect-aligned political party, and exposure to partisan media. The indices capture distinct ways in which respondents' social and material environments are organized along sectarian lines.

The heterogeneity follows the predicted pattern on the outcomes for which the treat-

ment has scope to vary. Greater social embeddedness is associated with weaker belief updating (Appendix Figure H.7). On the real-stakes outcomes, treatment effects decline with both social and political embeddedness (Appendix Figure H.9). By contrast, stated political preferences remain close to zero throughout the embeddedness distribution, with little systematic heterogeneity (Appendix Figure H.8).

Because embeddedness is measured rather than randomly assigned, these interactions do not identify the causal effect of sectarian networks. They nevertheless show that political translation is, if anything, weaker among respondents more deeply embedded in sectarian social and political networks, consistent with such networks limiting the political consequences of greater recognition of shared economic interests.

8.3 Shared Grievances Without Political Activation

A distinct possibility is that the treatment heightens grievance without increasing political efficacy. Treated respondents frequently emphasize shared economic hardship and express negative affect, but rarely use language oriented toward collective or political action (Appendix Figure F.7). The extremely low take-up of the more demanding engagement opportunities is consistent with a setting in which limited hope or perceived efficacy constrains the translation of grievance into political action. Because we do not directly measure hopelessness or political efficacy, this mechanism remains suggestive rather than identified.

8.4 Pre-Registered Alternative Explanations

We finally examine three alternative explanations for the absence of political responses that were specified in the pre-analysis plan.

Absence of a credible political alternative. One possibility is that respondents become more receptive to class-based politics but lack a viable political vehicle through which to express that preference. This explanation is somewhat unlikely ex ante, however, because reformist candidates and coalitions, including Shamaluna and Taqaddom, had demonstrated electoral viability in recent years. The previously documented null effect on support for Nawaf Salam is also informative in this respect. Salam is a prominent reform-oriented figure outside the traditional sectarian party establishment, yet the treatment does not increase support for him (Figure 11). This makes it difficult

to attribute the absence of political realignment solely to a lack of credible reformist alternatives.

Distrust of out-group politicians. A second possibility is that respondents recognize shared economic interests but distrust politicians from other sects sufficiently to prevent political realignment. This account predicts a stronger political response among respondents who already trust politicians from both out-groups. We find no evidence of such heterogeneity: treatment effects on stated political preferences and real-stakes engagement are no larger among these respondents (Appendix Figure H.10). Distrust of out-group politicians therefore does not appear to explain the absence of an average political response.

Offsetting updates about group size. A final possibility is that the video changes beliefs about the relative population shares of Lebanon's sects. Such updating could alter perceived political influence or electoral incentives and offset the political consequences of greater perceived economic similarity. The treatment, however, has essentially no effect on perceived sect population shares (Appendix Figure I.3). We therefore find no evidence of an offsetting group-size channel.

9 Conclusion

This paper studies how beliefs about economic inequality across social groups shape economic and political preferences in a deeply divided society. In Lebanon, citizens perceive substantial economic differences between Christians, Sunnis, and Shias despite considerable overlap in their observed income distributions. A seven-minute intervention combining statistical evidence with a narrative of shared economic hardship substantially reduces perceived inequality between sects and increases perceived economic similarity across them.

Changing these beliefs shifts economic preferences. Treated respondents become more supportive of progressive redistribution and place greater weight on economic class as a social identity. These responses are difficult to explain by revisions in the perceived material interests of respondents' own sect and instead point toward a broader class-based response. Yet they do not produce comparable political realignment: we detect no change in sectarian political preferences, candidate choice, or behavioral en-

gagement with civic organizations. Greater class salience also leaves religious identity and in-group favoritism intact. The results therefore suggest that changing how citizens understand their economic interests is easier than changing the identities and relationships through which those interests are politically expressed.

This distinction speaks to broader questions about the relationship between economic and social cleavages and about the limits of information interventions. Correcting beliefs about group inequality can reveal material interests that cut across religious, ethnic, or other social boundaries and can strengthen class-based preferences and identification. But a more salient economic cleavage need not displace an entrenched social cleavage, nor need changes in beliefs and policy preferences translate into political choice. Political realignment may depend not only on what citizens believe about their economic interests, but also on the identities, organizations, and networks through which those interests are represented.

More broadly, the results caution against equating recognition of common material interests with the emergence of class politics. Citizens may come to see that economic divisions cut across social-group boundaries and adjust their redistributive preferences accordingly, while continuing to organize political choices around longstanding group allegiances. Whether shared economic interests ultimately become a basis for political realignment may depend on forces that our intervention does not change: the availability of organizations capable of mobilizing those interests, the material dependence of citizens on existing political networks, and the persistence of social identities built over much longer horizons. Understanding when these conditions permit economic commonality to become political commonality is an important question for future research.

References

Akerlof, G. A. and Kranton, R. E. (2000). Economics and identity. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115(3):715–753.

Alan, S., Kusculu, S., and Kubilay, E. (2021). Building social cohesion in ethnically mixed schools. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4):2147–2194.

Alesina, A., Baqir, R., and Easterly, W. (1999). Public goods and ethnic divisions. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(4):1243–1284.

Alesina, A., Ferroni, M., and Stantcheva, S. (2024). Perceptions of racial gaps, their causes, and ways to reduce them. *Working Paper*.

Alesina, A., Miano, A., and Stantcheva, S. (2023). Immigration and redistribution. *Review of Economic Studies*, 90(1):1–39.

Alesina, A., Stantcheva, S., and Teso, E. (2018). Intergenerational mobility and preferences for redistribution. *American Economic Review*, 108(2):521–554.

Algan, Y., Davoine, E., Renault, T., and Stantcheva, S. (2026). The rise of anger: Emotions and policy views. Working paper, Harvard University.

Alvaredo, F., Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., and Zucman, G. (2018). *World Inequality Report 2018*. World Inequality Lab.

Andries, M., Bursztyn, L., Chaney, T., Djourelova, M., and Imas, A. (2026). In their shoes: Empathy through information. *Working Paper*.

Arab Barometer (2024). Arab barometer wave vii lebanon country report. Survey data accessed through Arab Barometer. Indicators include trust in government, perceived corruption, and satisfaction with services.

Assouad, L. (2023). Rethinking the lebanese economic miracle: The extreme concentration of income and wealth in lebanon, 2005–2014. *Journal of Development Economics*, 161.

Atkin, D., Colson-Sihra, E., and Shayo, M. (2021). How do we choose our identity? a revealed preference approach using food consumption. *Journal of Political Economy*, 129(4):1193–1251.

Baldwin, K. and Huber, J. D. (2010). Economic versus cultural differences: Forms of ethnic diversity and public goods provision. *American Political Science Review*, 104(4):644–662.

Barrera, O., Guriev, S., Henry, E., and Zhuravskaya, E. (2020). Facts, alternative facts, and fact checking in times of post-truth politics. *Journal of Public Economics*, 182:104123.

Bazzi, S., Gaduh, A., Rothenberg, A. D., and Wong, M. (2019). Unity in diversity? how intergroup contact can foster nation building. *American Economic Review*, 109(11):3978–4025.

Bernardi, R. A. (2006). Associations between Hofstede's cultural constructs and social desirability response bias. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 65(1):43–53.

Bonomi, G., Gennaioli, N., and Tabellini, G. (2021). Identity, beliefs, and political conflict. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4):2371–2411.

Bursztyn, L. and Yang, D. (2022). Misperception about others. *Annual Review of Economics*, 14:425–452.

Burzstyn, L., Gonzalez, A. L., and Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2020). Misperceived social norms: Women working outside the home in saudi arabia. *American Economic Review*, 110(10):2997–3029.

Cammett, M. and Issar, S. (2010). Bricks and mortar clientelism: Sectarianism and the logics of welfare allocation in lebanon. *World Politics*, 62(3):381–421.

Cammett, M., Kruszewska-Eduardo, D., and Parreira, C. (2022). Coethnicity beyond clientelism: Insights from an experimental study of political behavior in lebanon. *Politics and Religion*, 15(2):417–438.

Cammett, M., Parreira, C., and Atallah, S. (2024). Is clientelism (only) for the poor? insights on class and clientelism from a survey experiment in lebanon. *Journal of Politics*.

Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., and Zucman, G. (2022). *World Inequality Report 2022*. World Inequality Lab.

Charnysh, V., Lucas, C., and Singh, P. (2015). The ties that bind: National identity salience and pro-social behavior toward the ethnic other. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(3):267–300.

Corm, G. (2012). *Le Liban contemporain: histoire et société*. Découverte/Poche: Essais.

Corstange, D. (2016). *The Price of a Vote in the Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press.

Cruces, G., Perez-Truglia, R., and Tetaz, M. (2013). Biased perceptions of income distribution and preferences for redistribution: Evidence from a survey experiment. *Journal of Public Economics*, 98:100–112.

Dalton, D. and Ortegren, M. (2011). Gender differences in ethics research: The importance of controlling for the social desirability response bias. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 103(1):73–93.

Deeb, L. (2020). Beyond sectarianism: Intermarriage and social difference in Lebanon. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52(2):215–228.

Depetris-Chauvin, E., Durante, R., and Campante, F. R. (2020). Building nations through shared experiences: Evidence from african football. *American Economic Review*, 110(5):1572–1602.

Egorov, G., Guriev, S., Mironov, M., and Zhuravskaya, E. (2026). Marshall lecture 2025: Political information and network effects. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 24(1):82–121.

Fearon, J. D. and Laitin, D. D. (2000). Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity. *International Organization*, 54(4):845–877.

Fehr, D., Möllerström, J., and Perez-Truglia, R. (2022). Your place in the world: Relative income and global inequality. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 14(4):232–268.

Genicot, G. and Ray, D. (2020). Aspirations and economic behavior. *Annual Review of Economics*, 12(1):715–746.

Ghosh, A. (2025). Religious division and production technology: Experimental evidence from india. *Journal of Political Economy*.

Glaeser, E. L. (2005). The political economy of hatred. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120(1):45–86.

Graeber, T., Roth, C., and Zimmermann, F. (2024). Stories, statistics, and memory. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 139(4):2181–2225.

Haaland, I., Roth, C., and Wohlfart, J. (2023). Designing information provision experiments. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 61(1):3–40.

Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., and Yamamoto, T. (2014). Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments. *Political Analysis*, 22(1):1–30.

Hobsbawm, E. (1984). *Workers: Worlds of Labour*. Pantheon Books, New York.

Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press.

Hubert, J. D. and Suryanarayan, P. (2016). Ethnic inequality and the ethnification of political parites: Evidence from india. *World Politics*, 68(1):149–188.

Karadja, M., Möllerström, J., and Seim, D. (2017). Richer (and holier) than thou? the effect of relative income improvements on demand for redistribution. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 99(2):201–212.

Kendall, C., Nannicini, T., and Trebbi, F. (2015). How do voters respond to information? Evidence from a randomized campaign. *American Economic Review*, 105(1):322–353.

Klor, E. F. and Shayo, M. (2010). Social identity and preferences over redistribution. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(3–4):269–278.

Kuziemko, I., Norton, M. I., Saez, E., and Stantcheva, S. (2015). How elastic are preferences for redistribution? evidence from randomized survey experiments. *American Economic Review*, 105(4):1478–1508.

Leenders, R. (2012). *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon*. Cornell University Press.

Lowe, M. (2021). Types of contact: A field experiment on collaborative and adversarial caste integration. *American Economic Review*, 111(6):1807–1844.

Mazjoub, A., Simet, L., and Root, B. (2022). Lebanon: Rising poverty, hunger amid economic crisis. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/12/lebanon-rising-poverty-hunger-amid-economic-crisis. Human Rights Watch report using household survey data collected in partnership with the Consultation and Research Institute (CRI), November 2021 – January 2022. Accessed June 2025.

Morgan, J. and Kelly, N. J. (2017). Social patterns of inequality, partisan competition, and latin american support for redistribution. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(1):193–209.

Mousa, S. (2020). Building social cohesion between christians and muslims through soccer in post-isis iraq. *Science*, 369(6505):866–870.

Murphy, K. M. and Shleifer, A. (2004). Persuasion in politics. *American Economic Review*, 94(2):435–439.

Nasr, S. (1976). *Les classes sociales au Liban*. Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris.

Nasr, S. (1985). Roots of the Shi'i movement. *MERIP Reports*, (133):10–16.

Oxfam (2022). Analyzing voter turnout in lebanon: Political change in times of crisis. Accessed: 2025-06-19.

Padro I Miquel, G. (2007). The control of politicians in divided societies: The politics of fear. *Review of Economic Studies*, 74(4):1259–1274.

Parreira, C. (2020). The art of not governing: Local politics in postwar lebanon. *Working Paper*.

Rahmani, B., Montano, B., Groves, D. W., and Green, D. P. (2025). The persuasive effects of narrative entertainment: A meta-analysis of recent experiments. *Behavioural Public Policy*, pages 1–23.

Robinson, A. L. (2016). Nationalism and ethnic-based trust: Evidence from an african border region. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(14):1819–1854.

Rosenzweig, L. R. and Zhou, Y.-Y. (2021). Team and nation: Sports, nationalism, and attitudes toward refugees. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(12):2123–2154.

Salibi, K. (1988). *Histoire du Liban. Du XVIIème siècle à nos jours*. Naufal, Paris.

Sambanis, N. and Shayo, M. (2013). Social identification and ethnic conflict. *American Political Science Review*, 107(2):294–325.

Sewell, William H., J. (1980). *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Shayo, M. (2009). A model of social identity with an application to political economy: Nation, class, and redistribution. *American Political Science Review*, 103(2):147–174.

Shayo, M. (2020). Social identity and economic policy. *Annual Review of Economics*, 12:355–389.

Stantcheva, S. (2021). Understanding tax policy: How do people reason? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4):2309–2369.

Stantcheva, S. (2023). How to run surveys: A guide to creating your own identifying variation and revealing the invisible. *Annual Review of Economics*, 15:205–234.

Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The Making of the English Working Class*. Victor Gollancz Ltd, London.

Traboulsi, F. (2012). Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon. *Heinrich-Boll Stiftung Middle East*, pages 1–133.

Wenger, M. (1990). Primer: Lebanon's 15-year war, 1975–1990. *Middle East Report*, 20(162):23–25. Compiled with Julie Denney.

World Bank (2020). Lebanon economic monitor, fall 2020: The deliberate depression. Technical report, World Bank, Washington, DC.

World Bank (2024). Lebanon economic monitor: Mounting burdens on a crisis-ridden country. Economic monitor, World Bank, Washington, DC. Fall 2024 Edition.

A Additional Context

Lebanon is not unique in combining salient perceptions of economic differences across social groups with much smaller measured gaps. In the United States, for example, 96 percent of inequality arises from within-group rather than between-group variation (Galor and Wainstock, 2025). In India, Hindu–Muslim economic differences have figured prominently in public and political narratives surrounding religious conflict, even though the measured income gap was about 5 percent in the 2011 NSHIE and below 1 percent in the 2022–23 ICE 360 survey (National Council of Applied Economic Research, 2011; Shukla, 2024). Historical accounts of Rwanda similarly emphasize perceptions of Tutsi economic dominance despite an estimated Hutu–Tutsi income difference of only about 4 percent before the 1994 genocide (Prunier, 1995). Related perceptions of group wealth have also shaped hostility toward Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Jews in Europe (Panossian, 2006; Toch, 2013). These examples illustrate a broader distinction underlying our setting: economically salient group hierarchies can persist even when most inequality lies within rather than between groups.

Lebanon combines this limited between-sect inequality with exceptionally high aggregate inequality. Figure A.1 places Lebanon in international perspective by comparing the income share accruing to the top 10 percent with that in selected countries. The concentration of income at the top is among the highest in the comparison set (Assouad, 2023). The economic crisis that began in 2019 further compressed incomes and increased economic insecurity. Median household income fell roughly fourfold, to approximately $122 per month, with particularly large declines among poorer households (Figure A.2; World Bank, 2024). The treatment therefore takes place in a setting characterized simultaneously by severe aggregate inequality and comparatively limited economic differentiation across the three major sects.

The same period has also been marked by repeated failures of public provision and financial intermediation. Figure A.3 illustrates four prominent episodes discussed in Section 2: the waste-collection crisis, prolonged electricity shortages, the collapse of the banking system, and wildfires that exposed weaknesses in emergency-response capacity. These episodes provide context for the widespread reliance on informal and political networks documented in our survey. They are manifestations of a broader institutional environment in which access to basic services and economic security often depends on alternatives to effective centralized state provision.

Finally, the limited measured economic distance between sects has not eliminated longstanding perceptions of sectarian economic hierarchy. Historical accounts associate sect with class, status, occupation, and region, and these associations remain visible in contemporary public discourse. Figure A.4 provides illustrative examples from recent social-media discussions in which participants explicitly debate the relative economic standing of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias. The examples are not intended to measure the prevalence of these views; rather, they illustrate the continued availability of sectarian economic stereotypes in the contemporary discourse to which respondents are exposed.

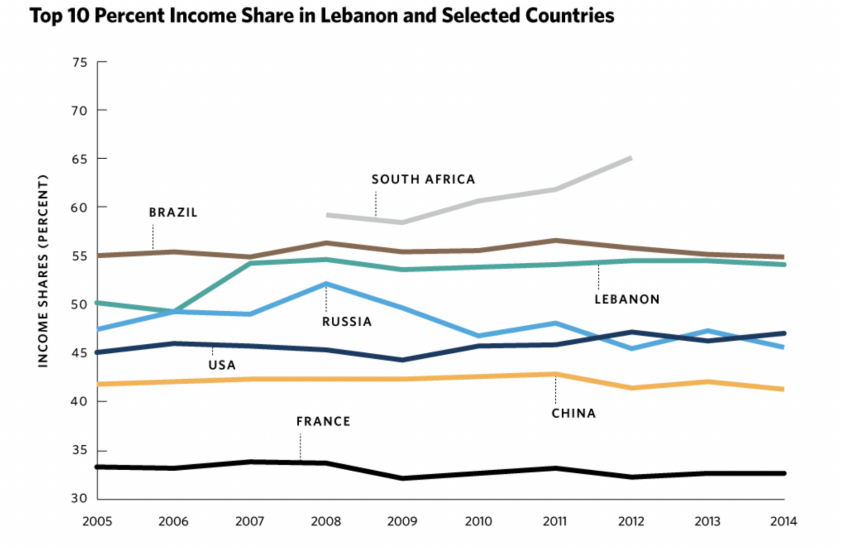


Figure A.1: Top 10 Percent Income Share in Lebanon and Selected Countries

Notes: The figure plots the share of national income received by the top 10 percent of the income distribution in Lebanon and selected comparison countries. Source: Assouad (2023).

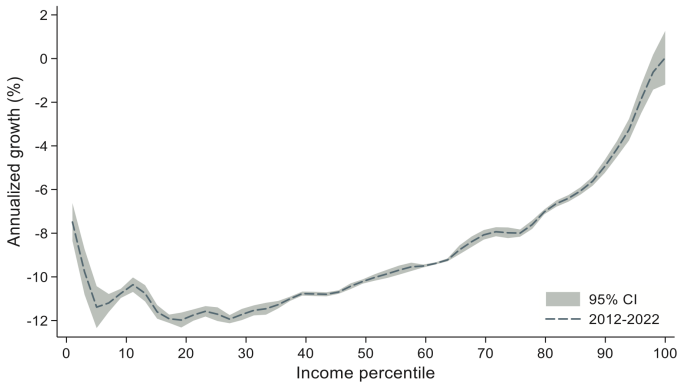


Figure A.2: The Ongoing Crisis Further Accentuated Inequalities

Notes: The decline in household incomes during the Lebanese economic crisis. Source: World Bank (2024).

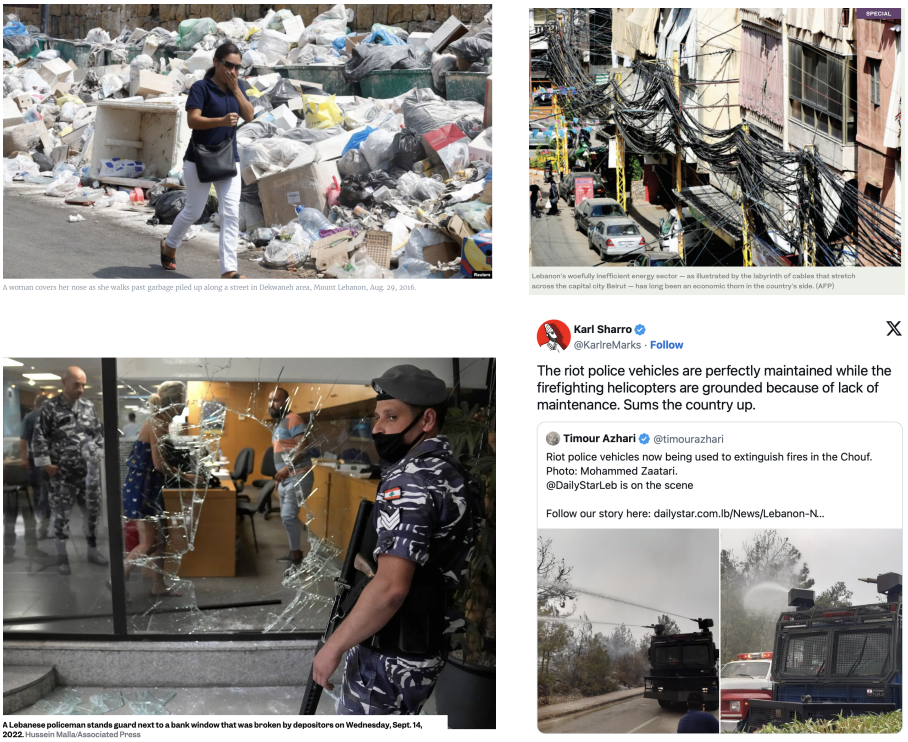


Figure A.3: Chronic Governance Fragility

Notes: Photographs of the waste-collection, electricity, banking, and wildfire crises.

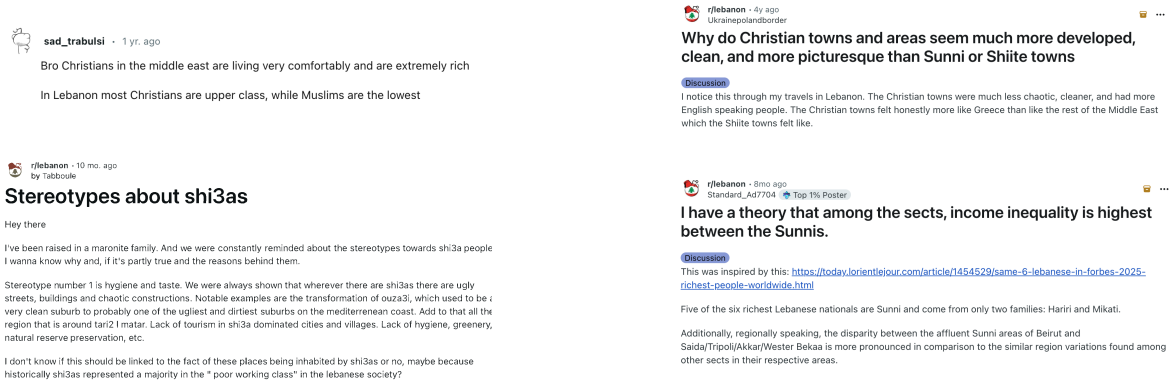


Figure A.4: Historical Economic Stereotypes in Contemporary Social Media

Notes: Screenshots of social-media discussions of the perceived economic standing of Lebanon's religious groups.

B Sample Representativeness

Tables B.1 and B.2 compare the demographic composition of our sample with respondents of comparable ages in the Gallup World Poll and the Arab Barometer (Arab Barometer, 2024). We report comparisons both with the national samples and, where possible, with geographically closer benchmarks—the Beirut governorate in Gallup and the urban subsample in Arab Barometer.

The demographic composition of our sample is broadly similar to these external benchmarks. The correspondence is particularly close when the comparison is restricted to Beirut or urban respondents, which more closely matches the population from which our sample is drawn. These comparisons do not establish representativeness of treatment effects beyond our sampling frame, but they provide reassurance that the experimental sample is not unusually selected on basic observable characteristics relative to comparable respondents in Lebanon.

Table B.1: Sample Comparison with the Gallup World Poll

Notes: The table compares sample means in our survey with the Gallup World Poll for Lebanon and for the Beirut governorate. The final two columns report p-values from Welch t-tests of equality of means. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, following the p-values shown.

	Own Survey		Gallup Lebanon		Gallup Beirut		p-value (Welch t-test)	
Variable	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	vs. Gallup Leb.	vs. Gallup Beirut
Demographics								
Age	30.92	3,298	31.09	9,406	31.33	2,283	0.290	0.067
Female	51.8%	3,298	53.2%	9,406	51.0%	2,283	0.148	0.570
Household size	4.15	3,288	4.38	8,752	4.25	2,036	<0.001***	0.010**
Location								
Beirut sample / governorate	100.0%	3,298	24.3%	9,406	100.0%	2,283	–	–
Education								
No formal	0.7%	3,298	0.6%	7,554	0.3%	1,587	0.651	0.043*
Primary/Basic	14.4%	3,298	16.2%	7,554	9.3%	1,587	0.018*	<0.001***
Secondary	32.3%	3,298	37.2%	7,554	35.3%	1,587	<0.001***	0.033*
Tertiary/Technical/University	52.6%	3,298	46.0%	7,554	55.1%	1,587	<0.001***	0.105
Employment								
Currently working	60.9%	3,296	59.8%	8,201	68.5%	1,812	0.249	<0.001***
Unemployed	7.8%	3,296	6.9%	8,201	4.6%	1,812	0.115	<0.001***
Out of labor force	31.3%	3,296	33.3%	8,201	26.9%	1,812	0.036*	<0.001***
Income								
Monthly household income in USD	1,002	3,225	1,844	991	2,503	89	–	–
Religion								
Sunni	33.4%	3,298	29.5%	9,406	31.7%	2,283	<0.001***	0.186
Shia	33.3%	3,298	25.1%	9,406	27.1%	2,283	<0.001***	<0.001***
Christian	33.4%	3,298	45.4%	9,406	41.2%	2,283	<0.001***	<0.001***
Religion important / religious	79.8%	3,292	85.7%	8,810	83.1%	2,193	<0.001***	0.002**

Table B.2: Sample Comparison with the Arab Barometer

Notes: The table compares sample means in our survey with the Arab Barometer for Lebanon and for its urban subsample. The final two columns report p-values from Welch t-tests of equality of means. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, following the p-values shown.

	Own Survey		Arab Barometer Lebanon		Arab Barometer Urban		p-value (Welch t-test)	
Variable	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	vs. Arab Leb.	vs. Urban
Demographics								
Age	30.92	3,298	32.12	1,292	32.21	1,156	<0.001***	<0.001***
Female	51.8%	3,298	51.7%	1,292	52.1%	1,156	0.973	0.853
Household size	4.15	3,288	3.95	1,292	3.91	1,156	<0.001***	<0.001***
Location								
Urban respondent	–	–	89.5%	1,292	100.0%	1,156	–	–
Education								
No formal	0.7%	3,298	0.9%	1,292	0.7%	1,156	0.676	0.901
Primary/basic	14.4%	3,298	21.1%	1,292	19.9%	1,156	<0.001***	<0.001***
Secondary	32.3%	3,298	27.2%	1,292	26.8%	1,156	<0.001***	<0.001***
Tertiary/Technical/University	52.6%	3,298	50.8%	1,292	52.6%	1,156	0.264	0.994
Employment								
Currently working	60.9%	3,296	53.2%	1,283	54.2%	1,149	<0.001***	<0.001***
Unemployed	7.8%	3,296	11.2%	1,283	10.6%	1,149	<0.001***	0.006**
Out of labor force	31.3%	3,296	35.6%	1,283	35.2%	1,149	0.006**	0.017*
Income								
Monthly household income in USD	1,002	3,225	773	1,292	804.95	1,156	–	–
Religion								
Sunni	33.4%	3,298	35.1%	1,292	32.8%	1,156	0.274	0.724
Shia	33.3%	3,298	35.6%	1,292	35.1%	1,156	0.140	0.261
Christian	33.4%	3,298	29.3%	1,292	32.1%	1,156	0.008**	0.431
Religion important / religious	79.8%	3,292	82.1%	1,291	81.6%	1,155	0.074	0.197
Political party								
Christian-associated bloc	42.3%	1,037	24.7%	639	27.9%	560	<0.001***	<0.001***
Shia-associated bloc	39.7%	1,037	43.7%	639	43.8%	560	0.546	0.649
Sunni-associated bloc	17.9%	1,037	31.6%	639	28.4%	560	<0.001***	<0.001***

C Design Details

C.1 Balance

Table C.1 reports balance on characteristics measured prior to treatment assignment. Consistent with random assignment, treatment and control respondents are similar across the large majority of baseline characteristics. Our robustness specifications additionally control for the small number of characteristics exhibiting chance imbalance, as described in Section 3.5.

Table C.1: Baseline Balance by Treatment Status

Notes: Each row reports the number of observations, the control-group mean, and the coefficient and standard error from an OLS regression of the named covariate on treatment assignment. Unlike the outcome regressions, the balance regressions do not include randomization-strata (religion) fixed effects. The sample consists of all 3,300 interviews, including pilot respondents. Robust standard errors. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Variable	Obs.	Control mean	Treatment effect	SE
Demographics				
Age	3300	30.853	0.146	0.286
Gender	3300	0.510	0.015	0.017
HH size	3290	4.114	0.073*	0.043
Reside in Beirut	3300	0.381	0.023	0.017
Reside in Baabda	3300	0.359	-0.027	0.017
Reside in Matn	3300	0.261	0.004	0.015
Completed at least primary school	3300	0.968	-0.003	0.006
Completed at least secondary school	3300	0.733	0.018	0.015
Completed university or higher	3300	0.275	0.032**	0.016
Monthly HH income (USD)	3227	1007.519	-11.833	21.374
Monthly income per capita (USD)	3219	267.224	-4.189	6.756
Bottom 5% of per capita income	3219	0.069	-0.005	0.009
Bottom 10% of per capita income	3219	0.114	-0.007	0.011
Bottom 20% of per capita income	3219	0.239	0.021	0.015
Bottom 25% of per capita income	3219	0.245	0.023	0.015
Below median per capita income	3219	0.473	0.011	0.018
Poor (less than 350 USD HH income)	3227	0.173	-0.017	0.013
Whether the respondent works	3298	0.609	0.001	0.017
Identity & networks				
Feels insulted when group criticized	3268	0.594	0.023	0.017
Number of outgroup close friends	3300	1.865	-0.036	0.042
Number of close friends who are Shia	3300	1.769	-0.033	0.052
Number of close friends who are Sunni	3300	1.393	0.013	0.045
Number of close friends who are Christian	3300	1.399	0.039	0.051
Neighbourhood mixed or mostly other sect	3300	0.359	0.011	0.017
Clientelism / wasta				
Relies on wasta for electricity	3232	0.713	0.022	0.016
Relies on wasta for trash collection	3166	0.523	0.021	0.018
Relies on wasta for education	3225	0.795	0.005	0.014
Share of services via wasta (0 to 1)	3269	0.678	0.015	0.013
Trust, politics, media				
Supports a political party	3177	0.337	0.014	0.017
Voted in the 2022 elections	2439	0.555	0.022	0.020
High trust in central government	3218	0.172	0.025*	0.014
No trust at all in central government	3218	0.450	0.010	0.018
High trust in outgroup 1 politicians (agree or strongly agree)	3256	0.271	0.021	0.016
High trust in outgroup 2 politicians (agree or strongly agree)	3256	0.267	0.024	0.016
Exposure to political media	3300	0.637	0.008	0.017
War exposure				
Number of war impacts experienced (0 to 5)	3300	2.232	0.026	0.045
High exposure to war	3300	0.678	0.008	0.016
Any impact from war with Israel	3300	0.889	0.010	0.011
Displacement	3300	0.378	-0.021	0.017
Emotional strain	3300	0.762	0.038***	0.014
Financial strain	3300	0.566	0.023	0.017
Disruption to daily routine	3300	0.473	-0.010	0.017

C.2 Survey Outcome Questions

This section provides the wording and response scales for the principal survey outcomes.

Policy preferences.

- *Increase top marginal rate*: 5-point item from "significantly decrease" to "significantly increase."
- *Tax relief*: choice over exemption thresholds of USD 4,000, 10,000, or 20,000, or no exemption.
- *Expand social protection*: 5-point item from "drastically downsize" to "greatly increase."

Political preferences.

- *Governance system*: preference among the existing sectarian system, a civil or secular system, and a sectarian federal system.
- *Civil marriage*: 4-point support item from "strongly oppose" to "strongly support."
- *Support for Nawaf Salam*: favorability toward Nawaf Salam, with higher values indicating greater support.

Social cohesion and prosociality.

- *Interreligious marriage*: "How comfortable would you be with your child marrying someone from another religious group?" measured on a 4-point scale.
- *Prosociality*: unincentivized allocation: "Imagine you have $100 to give away. How much would you give to a poor Lebanese person from another religious group? The rest goes to a person from your religious group."
- *Out-group trust*: "How much do you trust members of other religious groups?" measured on a 4-point scale.
- *Tax morale*: "Which of the following statements aligns most closely with your view? (i) Citizens should always pay their taxes, even if they disagree with the government; (ii) Citizens should only pay taxes if they agree with the government."

Identity salience.

- *Importance of identities*: 5-point Likert items measuring the importance of religion, social class, and Lebanese national identity.
- *15-point allocation task*: constant-sum allocation of 15 importance points across religion, social class, and Lebanese national identity.

C.3 The Treatment Video and Its Underlying Data

Figures C.1–C.4 provide additional detail on the treatment intervention described in Section 3.3. Figures C.1 and C.2 reproduce the statistical components of the video. The first presents evidence on the high level of overall inequality in Lebanon; the second presents evidence that economic differences across Christians, Sunnis, and Shias are comparatively limited. Figure C.3 shows the narrative component, produced with the Beirut Film Society, in which three fictional characters from the three major sects face similar economic difficulties. Figure C.4 reproduces the concluding segment, which brings the statistical and narrative components together by emphasizing shared economic hardship across sects and the concentration of wealth at the top.



Figure C.1: Statistical Evidence in the Treatment Video: Overall Inequality

Notes: Still from the statistical component of the treatment video documenting overall income inequality in Lebanon. Sources: Assouad (2023) and World Inequality Lab.

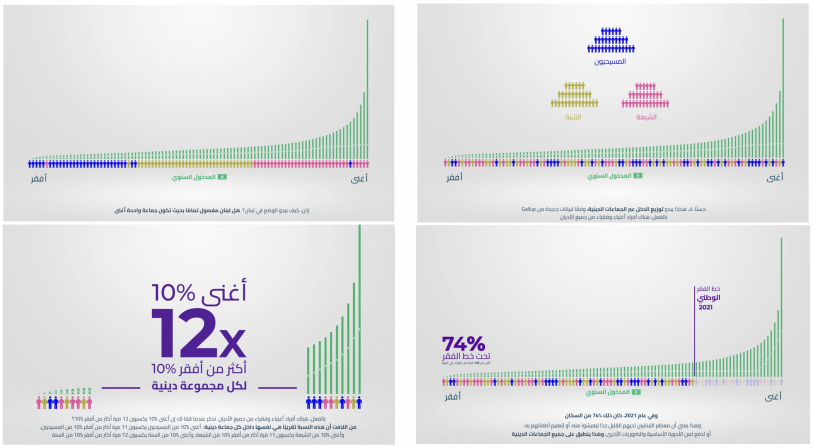


Figure C.2: Statistical Evidence in the Treatment Video: Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Still from the statistical component of the treatment video documenting economic differences across religious groups. Sources: Gallup World Poll and Human Rights Watch.

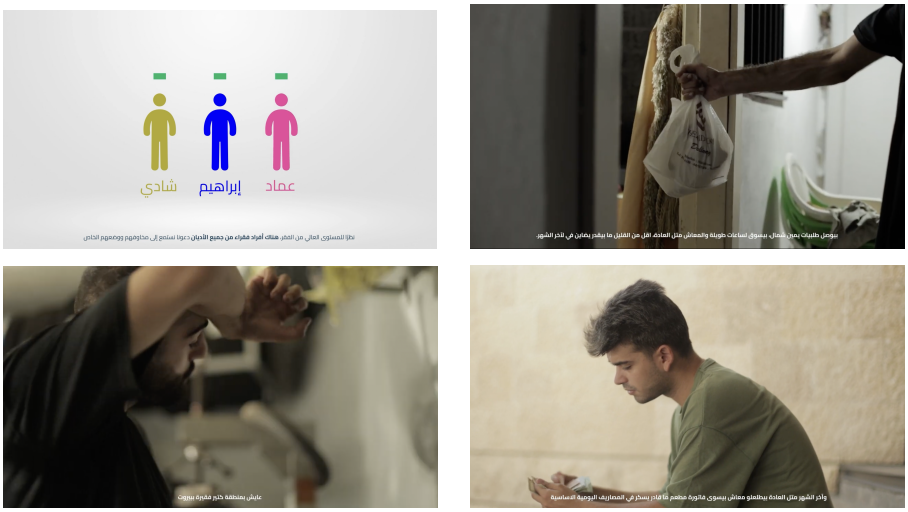


Figure C.3: The Narrative Component of the Treatment Video

Notes: Stills from the narrative component of the treatment video, produced with the Beirut Film Society. Three fictional characters—one Christian, one Sunni, and one Shia—face similar problems of underemployment and insufficient income.



Figure C.4: Concluding Segment of the Treatment Video

Notes: Still from the concluding segment of the treatment video, emphasizing shared economic hardship across sects and the concentration of wealth at the top.

C.3.1 Video Transcript

The full English-language transcript of the treatment video is reproduced below. The transcript follows the sequence described in Section 3.3: statistical evidence on overall inequality, statistical evidence on inequality across sects, the narrative segment, and the concluding message.

> What are the income disparities between religious groups in Lebanon? In other words, are some religious groups economically better off than others? Income disparity means that some groups earn significantly more than others. Until recently, it was very difficult to measure income inequality and understand the extent of it in Lebanon. But a new set of data by the independent economic research centre World Inequality Lab, in collaboration with Gallup, a global company that collects data for the UN, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization, sheds light on Lebanon's income inequality.
>
> To simplify, let's imagine that Lebanon's 5.5 million people are represented by 100 individuals. We'll arrange these 100 people by income, from the poorest (on the left) to the richest (on the right), and look at how the national income, 52 billion dollars in 2019, is divided among them. If there were complete income equality, each person would receive the same amount.
>
> But reality is different. Lebanon is one of the most unequal countries in terms of income, according to World Inequality Lab data. The richest 1 percent of

Lebanese earn 25 percent of the national income. And according to a Human Rights Watch report from December 2021, the gap between rich and poor is growing. The report shows that the top 10 percent earn at least 12 times more than the bottom 10 percent.

But so far, we haven't talked about religious groups. This brings us to the question: how does this income inequality play out across religious groups? Are some groups better off than others? In Lebanon, there are three main religious communities: Christians, Sunnis, and Shias.

Let's imagine each group has a different color. Is one group richer than the others? If, say, the pink group were significantly wealthier than the blue and yellow ones, we'd see most of the pink individuals clustered at the top of the income distribution. If the blue group were the poorest, we'd see most of them at the bottom of the distribution, on the left. In an entirely segregated society, one group (the blue) would be the poorest, another (yellow) would be the middle class, and the last (pink) would represent the rich. But what's the actual situation in Lebanon? Is Lebanon so segregated that one religious group is richer than the others?

The answer is no. This is what the income distribution across religious groups looks like, based on the new Gallup data. In reality, there are rich and poor people in every religious group. Remember how we said the top 10 percent earn 12 times more than the bottom 10 percent? Interestingly, this ratio is almost the same within each group. Among Christians, the richest 10 percent earn 11 times more than the poorest 10 percent. Among Shias, the richest 10 percent earn 11 times more than the poorest 10 percent. Among Sunnis, the top 10 percent earn 12 times more than the bottom 10 percent.

And at the same time, the vast majority of Lebanese are struggling financially. According to UN data, in 2019, 28 percent of Lebanon's population lived below the poverty line. In 2020, that figure rose to 55 percent. By 2021, it had reached 74 percent. These figures highlight just how difficult life is for most Lebanese, whether in terms of basic living, education, or even access to essential medicine. And this situation affects all religious communities. Poverty rates are roughly equal and spread across all sects.

Now let's take a small sample of society and hear their concerns, to get a clearer picture of their situation. Meet Shadi, a 19-year-old living in a very poor area of Beirut. He works day and night, but his salary doesn't cover even the most basic expenses. Exhaustion and sleep deprivation follow him to class, his night shift keeps him from concentrating, and he's struggling to juggle work and studies.

Meet Ibrahim, Shadi's friend, who lives nearby. He's around 20 and also lives below the poverty line. His situation is just as bad, if not worse. If he ever shows up late to class because of work, he's dismissed without anyone asking what kept him. He finishes class and rushes to his job without rest. He delivers orders non-stop, drives for hours, and, like always, his salary is barely enough to get by. Then there's Imad, who they met by chance. He's also from the same area, 18 years old. His story is the same as Shadi and Ibrahim's, and like every young Lebanese person their age. Same struggle, same hardship. He runs around day and night at a restaurant. His tasks vary, dishwashing, cleaning, waiting tables, dealing with endless customer requests. At the end of the month, his salary equals a single restaurant bill. He can't even cover basic daily expenses.

These three young men, Imad the Shia, Ibrahim the Christian, and Shadi the Sunni, live the same social and economic conditions. If it weren't for the religious labels beside their names, you'd think they were from the same family.

So, in Lebanon, we can't say that income inequality stems from one religious group being richer than the others. In fact, we can conclude that within each group, there are very rich and very poor people.

At the same time, Lebanon has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, and also one of the highest concentrations of billionaires. Did you know that the wealth of the six richest Lebanese families makes up a third of the national income? According to Forbes, these six families represent the three main religious groups in Lebanon. The average Lebanese person has more in common with someone from a different religious group than with the rich elites of their own sect. There is, in fact, a poor class that spans Shias, Sunnis, and Christians equally.

Among Sunnis there are two problems: widespread poverty and extreme wealth. Among Shias there are also two problems: widespread poverty and extreme wealth. Among Christians: same thing, widespread poverty and extreme wealth. So we can sum up and say: The Lebanese society faces two problems, widespread poverty and extreme wealth.

And yet, people keep talking about religion. In Lebanon, we often forget how much Lebanese people actually share, especially when it comes to their economic and living conditions. This leads us to a fundamental question: When will Lebanese people start prioritizing their shared economic class over their divided religious sects?

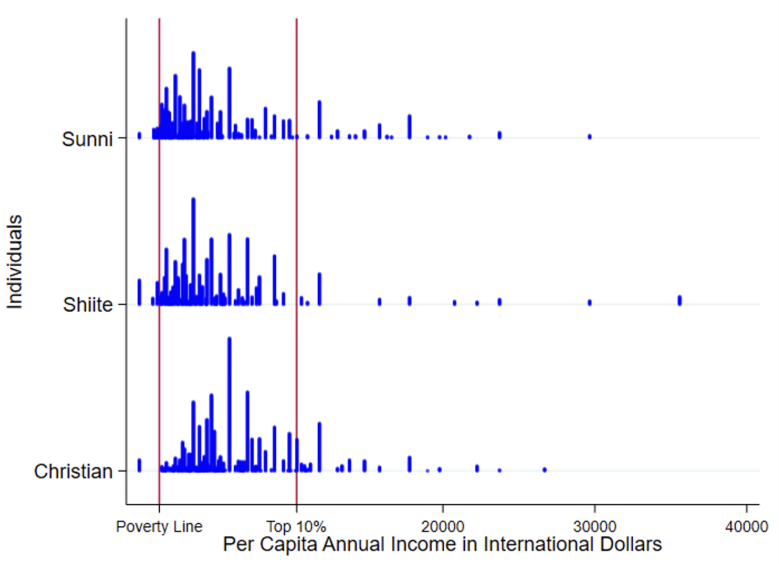


Figure C.5: Gallup World Poll 2019: Income Distribution by Sect

Notes: Income distributions by religious group in Lebanon. Source: Gallup World Poll 2019.

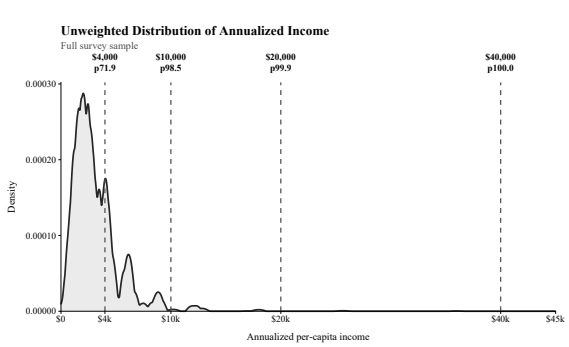
C.4 The Tax Schedule and Income Distribution

Figures C.6 and C.7 provide additional context for the redistributive-policy outcomes. Figure C.6 reproduces the Lebanese income-tax schedule underlying the top-tax and exemption-threshold questions. Figure C.7 places the relevant income levels against the distribution of household income in our survey and, as an external benchmark, the Gallup World Poll for Greater Beirut.

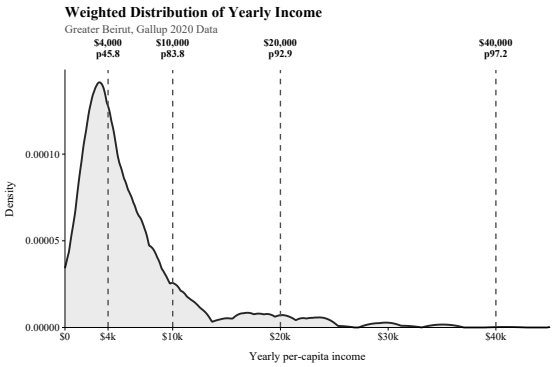
Annual Income (USD)	Arabic	Tax Rate
$0 – $4,000	من 0 إلى 4,000 دولار أمريكي	2%
$4,001 – $10,000	من 4,001 إلى 10,000 دولار أمريكي	4%
$10,001 – $20,000	من 10,001 إلى 20,000 دولار أمريكي	7%
$20,001 – $40,000	من 20,001 إلى 40,000 دولار أمريكي	11%
$40,001 – $80,000	من 40,001 إلى 80,000 دولار أمريكي	15%
$80,001 – $150,000	من 80,001 إلى 150,000 دولار أمريكي	20%
Above $150,000	أكثر من 150,000 دولار أمريكي	25%

Figure C.6: Income Tax Schedule

Notes: Lebanon's income-tax brackets, underlying the top-tax and exemption-threshold outcomes.



Panel A: Survey Sample



Panel B: Gallup World Poll (Greater Beirut)

Figure C.7: Income Distribution: Survey Sample and Gallup World Poll

Notes: Annualized income distributions in the survey sample (Panel A) and in the Gallup World Poll for Greater Beirut (Panel B).

C.5 Real-Stakes Engagement Materials

Figure C.8 reproduces the materials used for the higher-cost real-stakes engagement opportunities described in Section 3.4. The left panel shows the invitation to the municipal-accountability workshop organized by the Gherbal Initiative, for which we observe both reservation and subsequent attendance. The right panel shows the invitation to the Tamkin civic-training program run by Citizens & Politics, for which respondents could subsequently submit an application.





Figure C.8: Real-Stakes Engagement Opportunities

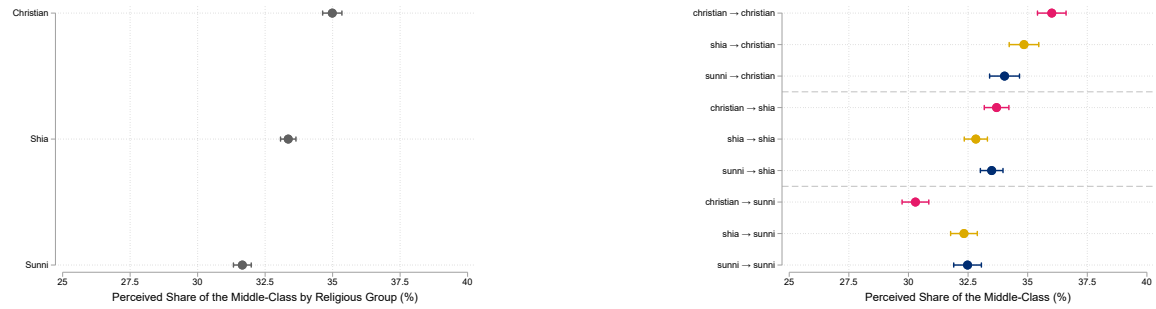
Notes: Invitation materials for the Gherbal Initiative municipal-accountability workshop (left) and the Tamkin civic-training program run by Citizens & Politics (right).

D Additional Descriptive Evidence on Beliefs

This appendix provides additional descriptive evidence supporting Section 4. We first report beliefs about the middle class and the distribution of perceived sectarian differentiation within each income group. We then show that the correlates of perceived between-sect inequality are broadly similar across respondents' religious groups and across the rich, poor, and middle class. Finally, we report the raw levels of perceived national and between-sect inequality used to interpret the first-stage results in Section 5.

D.1 Beliefs Across the Income Distribution

Figure D.1 reports respondents' perceptions of the religious composition of the middle class. In contrast to beliefs about the rich and the poor, the three sects are perceived as considerably more evenly represented in the middle of the income distribution. This reinforces the pattern documented in Section 4: perceived sectarian differentiation is concentrated primarily at the top and bottom of the distribution.



Panel A: All Respondents

Panel B: By Denomination

Figure D.1: Perceived Religious Composition of the Middle Class

Notes: Perceived shares of Christians, Sunnis, and Shias among the middle class. Panel A pools all respondents; Panel B splits by the respondent's denomination.

Figures D.2–D.4 report the distribution of perceived sect-share dispersion separately for the rich, poor, and middle class. The distributions confirm that perceived differentiation is greater at the two ends of the income distribution than in the middle.

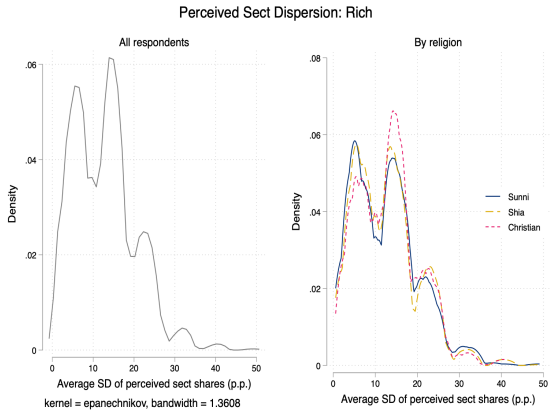


Figure D.2: Perceived Between-Sect Dispersion: The Rich

Notes: Distribution of the dispersion of perceived sect shares among the rich.

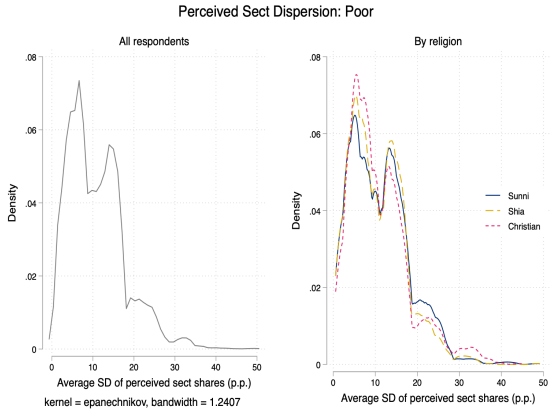


Figure D.3: Perceived Between-Sect Dispersion: The Poor

Notes: Distribution of the dispersion of perceived sect shares among the poor.

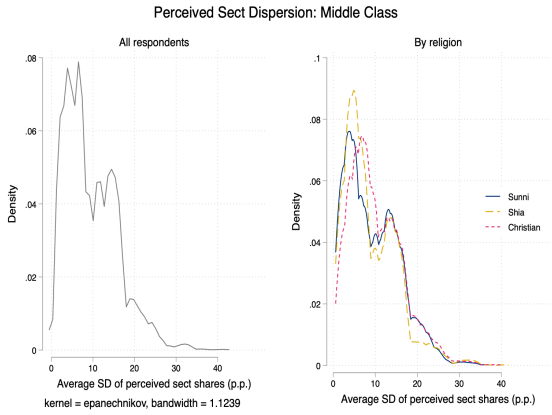


Figure D.4: Perceived Between-Sect Dispersion: The Middle Class

Notes: Distribution of the dispersion of perceived sect shares among the middle class.

Figure D.5 reports the distribution of the summary measure of perceived between-sect inequality, B_i, defined in equation (2). The distribution shows substantial variation across respondents, which motivates the treatment-effect heterogeneity analysis by prior beliefs in Section 5.

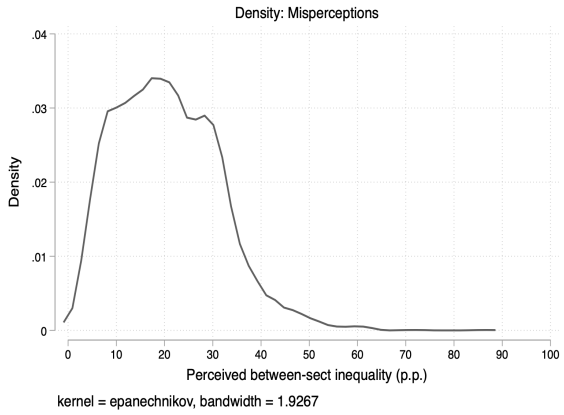


Figure D.5: Distribution of Perceived Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Distribution of the perceived between-sect inequality measure B_i defined in equation (2).

D.2 Correlates Across Religious Groups and Income Categories

Figure D.6 extends the correlational analysis in Figure 4 by estimating the same specification separately for Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents. The broad relationships are similar across religious groups, although their magnitudes and precision vary. In particular, greater out-group contact tends to be associated with lower perceived between-sect inequality, while stronger sectarian attachment and greater reliance on *wasta* tend to be associated with higher perceived differentiation.

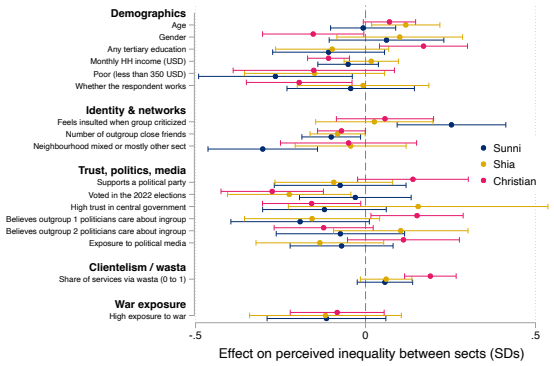
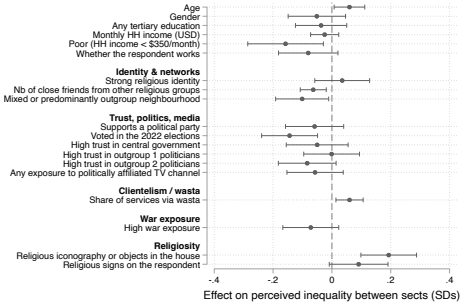


Figure D.6: Correlates of Perceived Between-Sect Inequality, by Religious Group

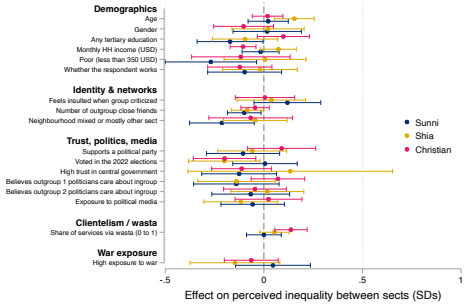
Notes: As Figure 4, estimated separately by the respondent's denomination.

Figures D.7–D.9 repeat the analysis separately for perceived sectarian differentiation

among the rich, poor, and middle class. The same broad correlates appear across the three income categories, indicating that the relationships documented in the pooled measure B_i are not driven by beliefs about a single part of the income distribution.



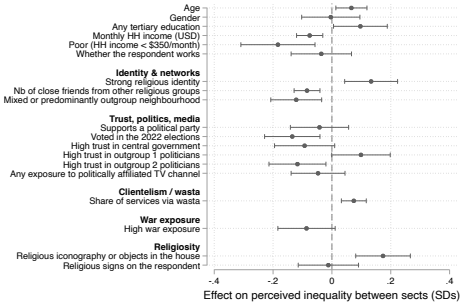
Panel A: All Respondents



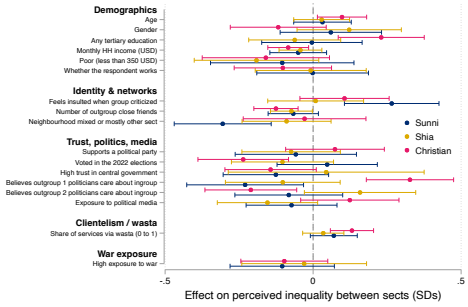
Panel B: By Denomination

Figure D.7: Correlates of the Perceived Sect Gap: The Rich

Notes: As Figure 4, for perceived sectarian differentiation among the rich.



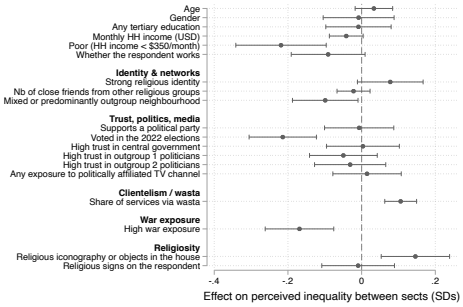
Panel A: All Respondents



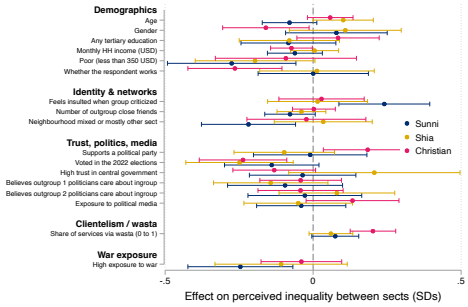
Panel B: By Denomination

Figure D.8: Correlates of the Perceived Sect Gap: The Poor

Notes: As Figure 4, for perceived sectarian differentiation among the poor.



Panel A: All Respondents



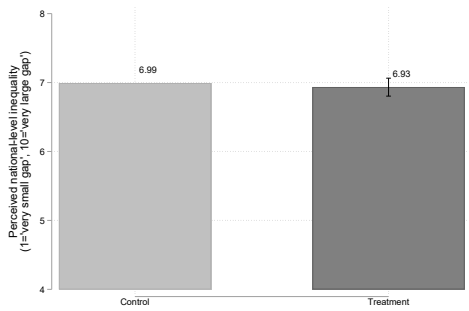
Panel B: By Denomination

Figure D.9: Correlates of the Perceived Sect Gap: The Middle Class

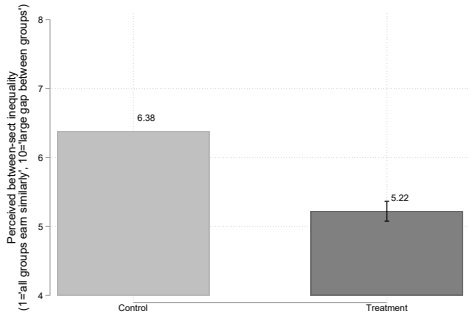
Notes: As Figure 4, for perceived sectarian differentiation among the middle class.

D.3 Levels of Perceived Inequality

Figure D.10 reports the raw levels of perceived national and between-sect inequality. Respondents enter the experiment with high perceived national-level inequality, providing context for the absence of a treatment effect on this outcome in Section 5. Perceived between-sect inequality is also substantial, leaving considerably more scope for the intervention to change beliefs about how aggregate inequality maps onto sectarian boundaries.



Panel A: National-Level Inequality



Panel B: Between-Sect Inequality

Figure D.10: Perceptions of National-Level and Between-Sect Inequality: Levels

Notes: Raw levels of perceived national-level inequality (Panel A) and perceived between-sect inequality (Panel B).

E Belief Updating: Robustness

Figure E.1 reports the three treatment-comprehension questions. Figure E.2 shows that the main results are unchanged when respondents who answered all three comprehension questions incorrectly are dropped. Figure E.3 shows that belief updating is broad-based across the misperception measure M_i, complementing Figure 6. Figure E.4 reports first-stage effects separately for each sect. Figure E.5 reports effects on perceived overall inequality by prior between-sect inequality and by misperception.

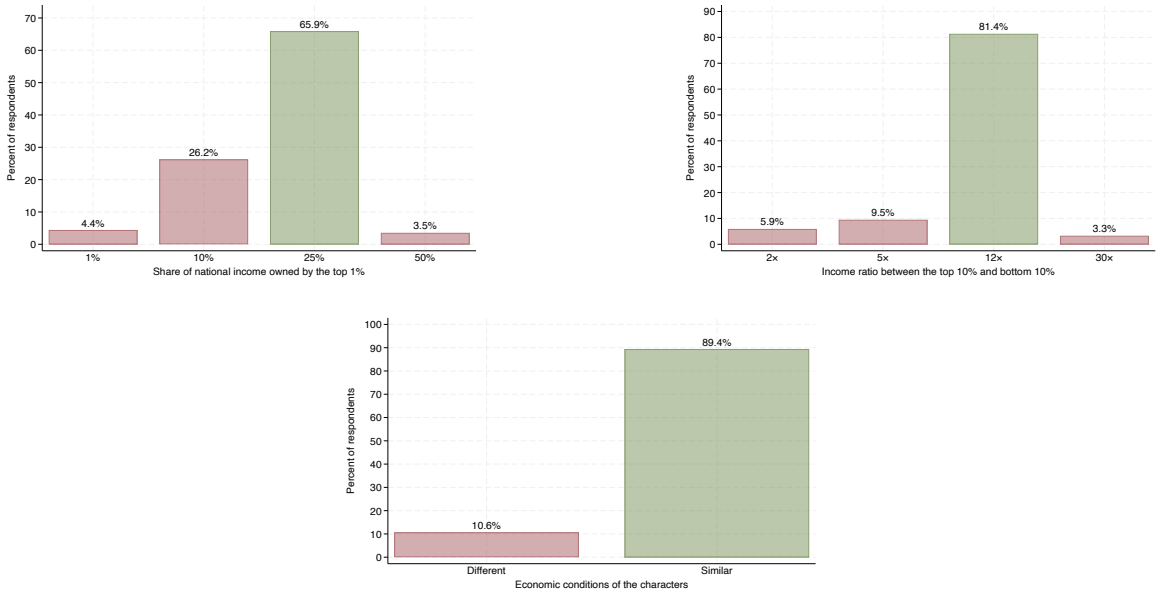


Figure E.1: Treatment Comprehension Questions

Notes: Responses to the three comprehension questions administered after the video. Across the three questions, 78 percent of responses were correct.

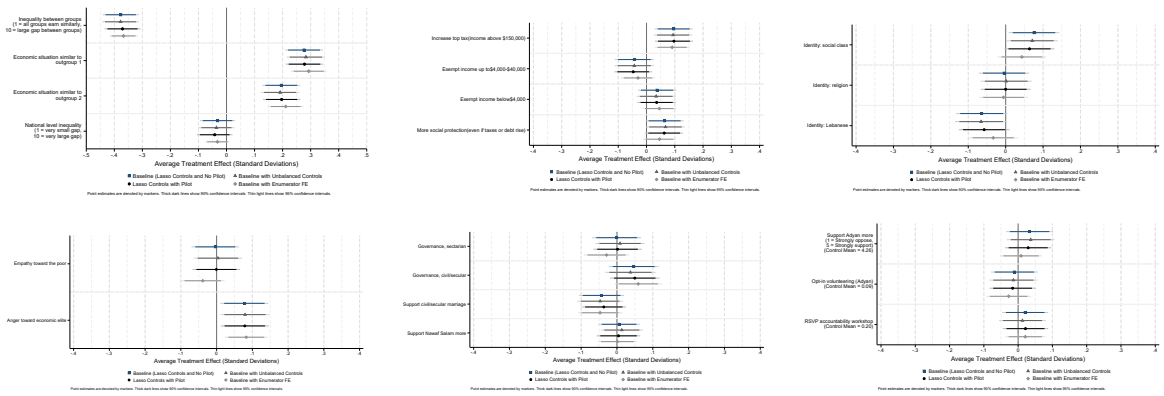
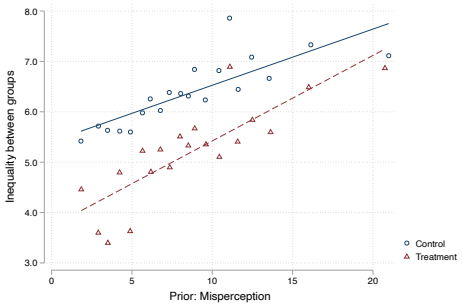
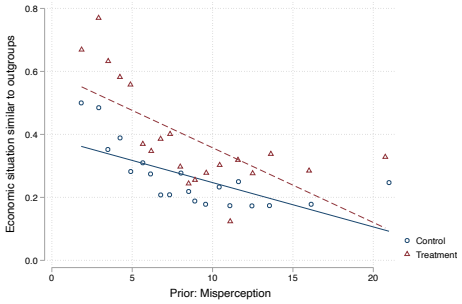


Figure E.2: Dropping Respondents with Low Comprehension

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects, in standard deviations, dropping respondents who answered all three comprehension questions incorrectly. Specification as in Figure 5.



Panel A: Perceived Inequality Between Sects



Panel B: Perceived Similarity with Out-Groups

Figure E.3: Belief Updating Is Broad-Based Across Misperceptions

Notes: As Figure 6, splitting by the misperception measure M_i.

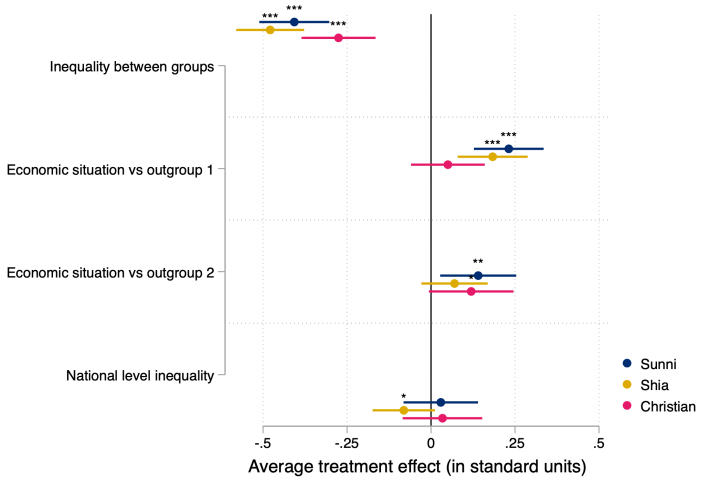
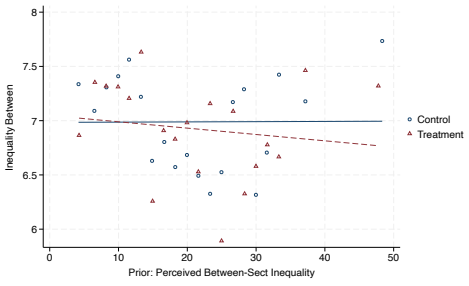
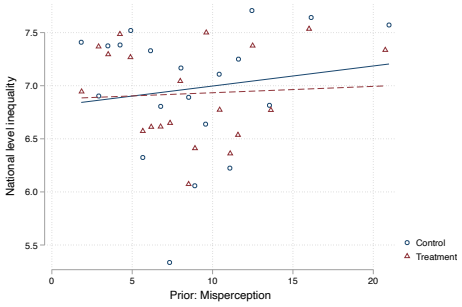


Figure E.4: Effects on Perceived Inequality, by Sect

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects on the first-stage outcomes, in standard deviations, estimated separately for Christian, Sunni, and Shia respondents. Specification as in Figure 5.



Panel A: By Prior Between-Sect Inequality



Panel B: By Misperception

Figure E.5: Perceived Overall Inequality: Heterogeneity by Priors and Misperceptions

Notes: Effects on perceived national-level inequality by prior perceived between-sect inequality (Panel A) and by misperception (Panel B).

F Open-Ended Responses

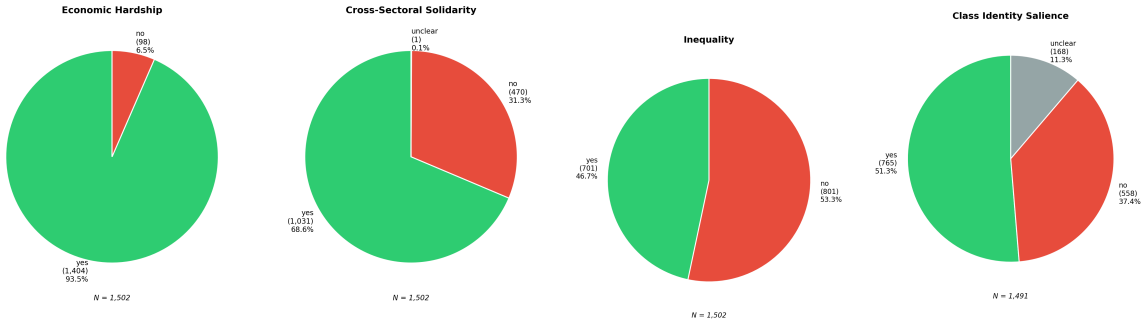
Treated respondents were asked to describe the intervention in their own words immediately after viewing the video:

"Name three things you learned or thought about while watching the video."

We code these responses using the Google Gemini API. This appendix reports the coded outcomes used throughout the paper to characterize how respondents interpreted the treatment, assess whether the downstream effects reflect mechanical recall or priming, and examine the affective and action-oriented content of respondents' reactions.

F.1 Overview and Economic Interpretation

Figure F.1 provides an overview of the themes that respondents spontaneously invoke. The coded responses capture references to shared economic hardship, cross-sect solidarity, inequality, and the salience of class identity. These responses provide a complementary measure of treatment comprehension because they do not prompt respondents to reproduce any particular element of the video's message.



Panel A: Economic Hardship

Panel B: Cross-Sect Solidarity

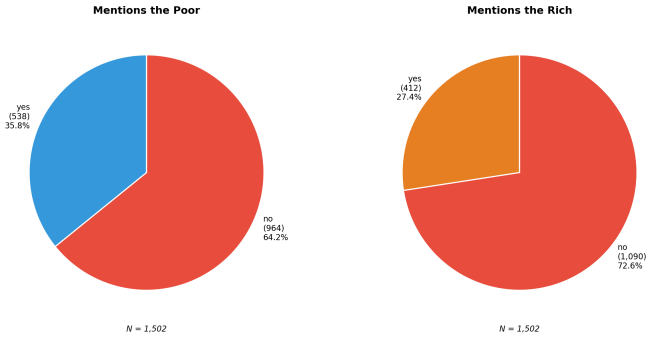
Panel C: Inequality

Panel D: Class-Identity Salience

Figure F.1: Open-Ended Responses: Overview

Notes: Themes in treated respondents' open-ended descriptions of the video. Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

Figure F.2 focuses on references to economic groups. Thirty-six percent of responses mention the poor and 27 percent mention the rich. These relatively frequent spontaneous references provide additional evidence that respondents interpreted the intervention in distributional terms rather than solely as a message about relations among religious groups.



Panel A: Mentions of the Poor

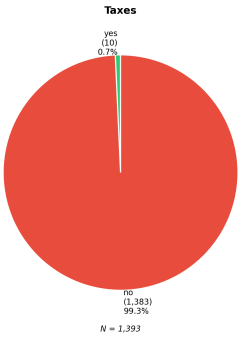
Panel B: Mentions of the Rich

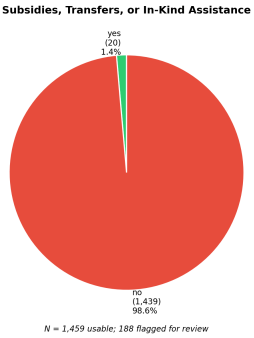
Figure F.2: Mentions of the Poor and the Rich

Notes: Shares of treated respondents' open-ended descriptions referencing the poor (Panel A) and the rich (Panel B). Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

F.2 Mechanical Recall and Class Priming

The open-ended responses also help assess whether the treatment effects on redistribution and class identity simply reflect respondents reproducing language or policy prescriptions made salient by the intervention. Figures F.3 and F.4 examine spontaneous references to specific redistributive policies. If the policy effects documented in Section 6 primarily reflected mechanical recall, respondents should frequently reproduce the relevant policy content when describing what they learned from the video. Instead, relatively few responses spontaneously mention taxes, subsidies, pensions, or the minimum wage.

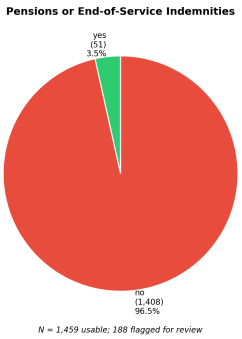


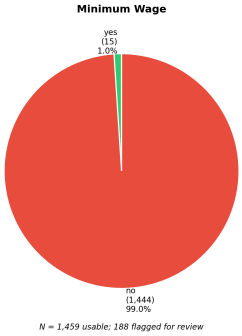


Panel A: Taxes Panel B: Subsidies

Figure F.3: Redistribution Effects Are Unlikely to Reflect Mechanical Recall (I)

Notes: Shares of treated respondents' open-ended descriptions mentioning taxes (Panel A) and subsidies (Panel B). Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.





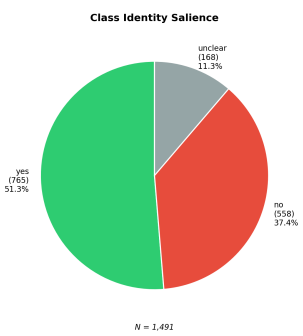
Panel A: Pensions Panel B: Minimum Wage

Figure F.4: Redistribution Effects Are Unlikely to Reflect Mechanical Recall (II)

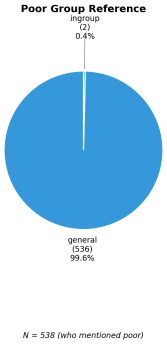
Notes: Shares of treated respondents' open-ended descriptions mentioning pensions (Panel A) and the minimum wage (Panel B). Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

Figure F.5 provides an analogous check for the class-identity result. Few respondents explicitly invoke class identity when describing the video (Panel A). At the same time, when respondents refer to the poor or the rich, 99 percent of these references characterize them in non-sectarian terms (Panels B and C). The increase in class identification therefore does not appear to arise from respondents simply repeating explicit class-identity language supplied by the intervention. Rather, respondents spontaneously describe economic groups largely without attaching them to particular sects, consistent with the broader class-based interpretation of the treatment effects in

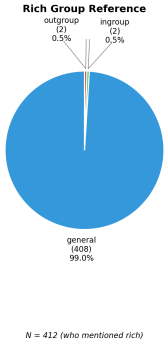
Section 6.



Panel A: Class-Identity Salience



Panel B: Group Referenced as Poor



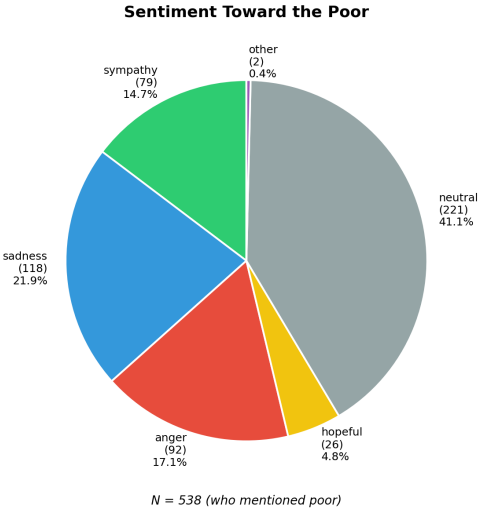
Panel C: Group Referenced as Rich

Figure F.5: Open-Ended Responses Are Consistent with a Class Frame

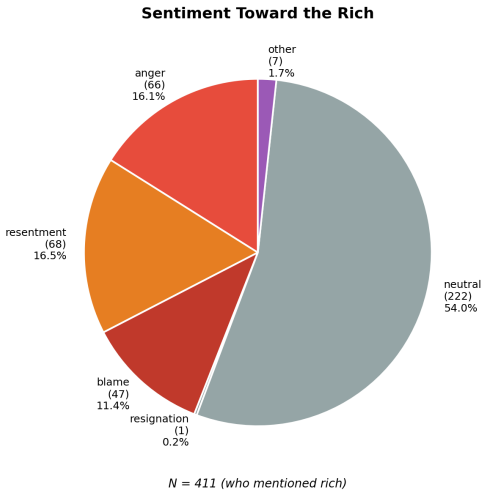
Notes: Explicit invocations of class identity (Panel A) and the groups referenced as poor and rich (Panels B and C) in treated respondents' open-ended descriptions. Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

F.3 Affective Content of the Class Response

The open-ended responses also help characterize the affective content of the class-based response documented in Section 6. Figure F.6 separates the sentiment associated with references to the poor and the rich. Among responses that mention the poor, sympathy, sadness, and anger on their behalf are prominent. Among responses that mention the rich, anger, resentment, and blame are the dominant reactions. The qualitative evidence therefore contains both dimensions discussed in the main text: horizontal solidarity with those facing economic hardship and vertical antagonism toward those at the top of the economic distribution.



Panel A: Sentiment in References to the Poor



Panel B: Sentiment in References to the Rich

Figure F.6: Affective Content of References to the Poor and the Rich

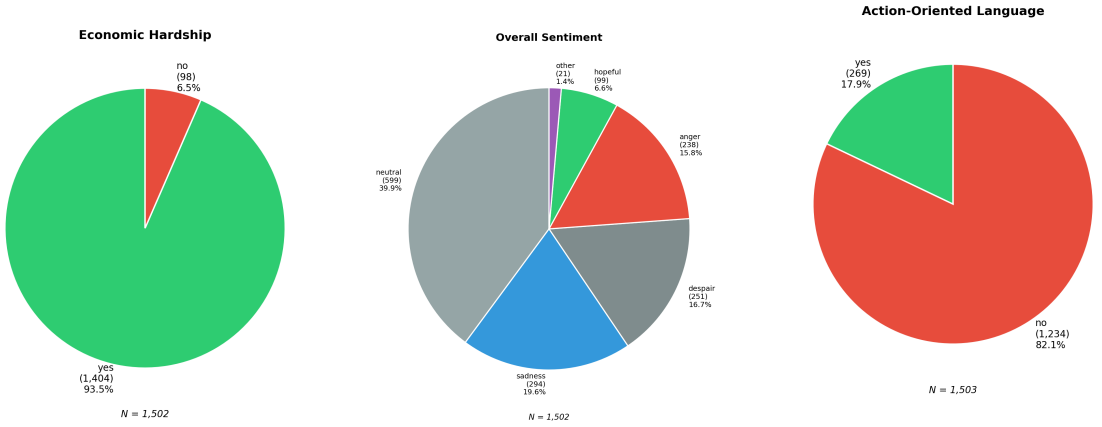
Notes: Sentiment in treated respondents' open-ended descriptions of the video, conditional on responses referencing the poor (Panel A) or the rich (Panel B). Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

F.4 Shared Grievances and Political Activation

Finally, the open-ended responses provide evidence on how respondents connect the video's economic message to political action. Figure F.7 juxtaposes three features of their responses. Respondents frequently emphasize shared economic hardship across sects (Panel A), and their descriptions are predominantly negative in sentiment (Panel B). Yet relatively few responses contain language oriented toward collective or political action (Panel C).

This pattern is consistent with the interpretation developed in Section 8. The intervention appears to make common economic grievances salient without generating a comparably strong orientation toward political mobilization. One possibility is that greater recognition of shared hardship produces a predominantly pessimistic response rather than greater political efficacy or optimism about collective action. The open-ended evidence cannot establish this mechanism causally, but its pattern is consistent with the real-stakes outcomes: participation falls sharply as engagement becomes more

demanding, and take-up of the highest-cost opportunities is minimal.



Panel A: Economic Hardship

Panel B: Overall Sentiment

Panel C: Action-Oriented Language

Figure F.7: Shared Grievances, Limited Political Activation

Notes: Treated respondents' open-ended descriptions of the video: mentions of shared economic hardship (Panel A), overall sentiment (Panel B), and action-oriented language (Panel C). Responses were coded using the Google Gemini API.

G Demand Effects and Social Desirability

Two response-bias concerns deserve direct treatment.

Experimenter demand. Respondents may infer the "desired" response. The survey introduction does not cue redistribution or class identity, and treated respondents rarely describe the video in terms of redistribution or class identity (Appendix F, Figures F.3–F.5).

Social desirability. Respondents may give socially desirable answers. Three pieces of evidence weigh against this reading. First, there is no broad shift toward socially desirable outcomes: despite the video's emphasis on cross-sect similarity, out-group trust, giving to a poor out-group member, and comfort with inter-sect marriage show no increase (Figure G.1). Second, effects are not stronger for groups more prone to social desirability: they are similar for women and by baseline religiosity (Bernardi, 2006; Dalton and Ortegren, 2011; Kuziemko et al., 2015) (Figures G.2 and G.3). Third, there is little evidence of interviewer-driven response bias: effects are essentially unchanged with enumerator fixed effects (the fourth series in every coefficient plot).

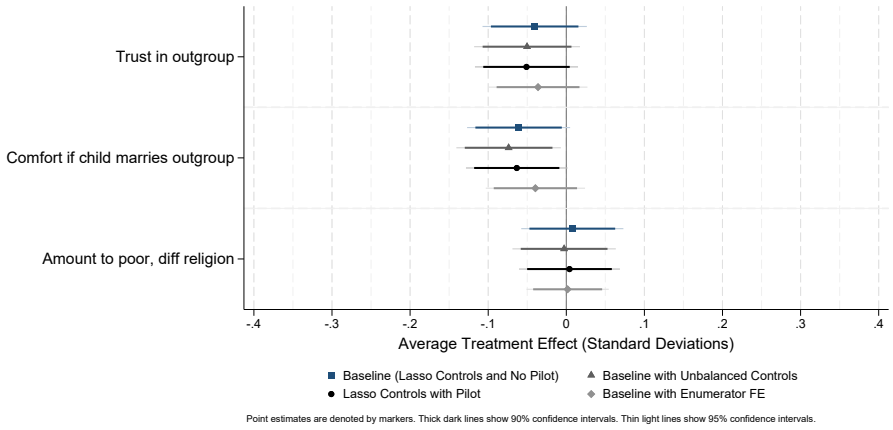


Figure G.1: No Increase in In-Group Favoritism

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, on the social-cohesion outcomes, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

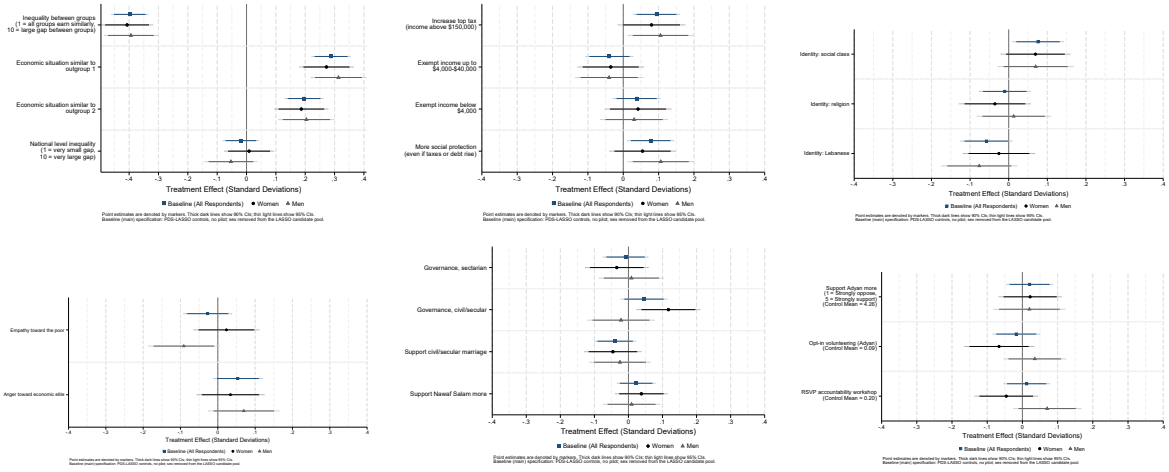


Figure G.2: Heterogeneity by Gender

Notes: Treatment effects by gender across the six outcome families, in standard deviations, alongside the baseline estimates. Specification as in Figure 5.

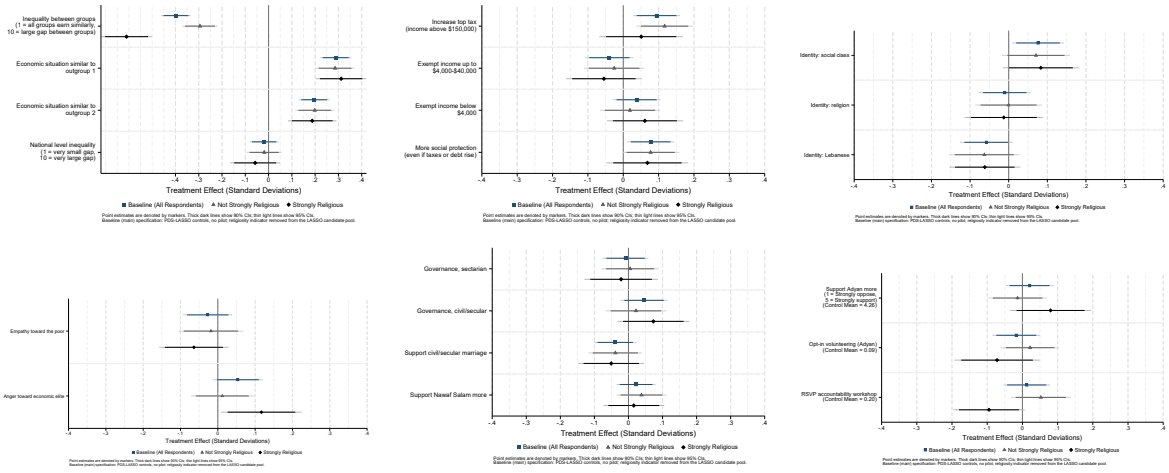


Figure G.3: Heterogeneity by Religiosity

Notes: Treatment effects by baseline religiosity across the six outcome families, in standard deviations, alongside the baseline estimates. Specification as in Figure 5.

H Heterogeneity

Table H.1 reports intent-to-treat effects estimated separately for Sunni, Shia, and Christian respondents, for all outcome families, together with pairwise tests of equality across groups.

Figure H.1 reports redistribution effects by prior perceived between-sect inequality. Figures H.2 and H.3 extend the self-interest tests of Section 6: using the magnitude, rather than the direction, of own-group misperceptions, and using overestimation of the own group in the middle class. Figure H.4 reports the class-identity effects by income group, and Figure H.5 identity effects by prior between-sect inequality. Figure H.6 reports the emotions outcomes by prior between-sect inequality.

Table H.1: Treatment Effects by Religious Group

Notes: Each cell reports the intent-to-treat effect of video assignment estimated separately for Sunni, Shia, and Christian respondents, with its standard error and p-value; the final three columns report p-values from pairwise tests of equality of the group-specific coefficients. Values are reproduced from the authors' output at two-decimal precision [AUTHOR CHECK: estimating specification for this table not documented in slides].

Main Outcomes	ITT Sunni	SE Sunni	p Sunni	ITT Shia	SE Shia	p Shia	ITT Christ.	SE Christ.	p Christ.	p Sunni = Shia	p Sunni = Christ.	p Shia = Christ.
Panel A: First Stage												
National-level inequality	0.00	0.06	0.968	-0.10	0.05	0.050	0.03	0.07	0.637	0.207	0.697	0.125
Inequality between groups	-0.44	0.06	0.000	-0.56	0.06	0.000	-0.25	0.06	0.000	0.154	0.026	0.000
Economic situation similar to outgroup 1	0.36	0.06	0.000	0.29	0.06	0.000	0.21	0.06	0.001	0.364	0.074	0.388
Economic situation similar to outgroup 2	0.28	0.06	0.000	0.12	0.06	0.059	0.12	0.06	0.030	0.068	0.055	0.984
Panel B: Policy												
Top tax increase	0.06	0.06	0.380	0.08	0.07	0.207	0.08	0.06	0.173	0.747	0.806	0.919
Exempt middle income (4k-20k)	-0.02	0.07	0.732	-0.06	0.07	0.396	0.02	0.06	0.784	0.719	0.661	0.411
Exempt low income (4k)	0.06	0.06	0.339	0.00	0.06	0.941	0.00	0.06	0.953	0.469	0.458	0.988
More social protection	0.04	0.06	0.450	0.06	0.06	0.324	0.06	0.06	0.306	0.839	0.830	0.993
Panel C: Political												
Prefers Sectarian government	-0.03	0.07	0.593	0.05	0.06	0.396	-0.01	0.06	0.870	0.331	0.776	0.469
Prefers secular government	0.12	0.06	0.063	-0.06	0.06	0.356	0.04	0.06	0.537	0.047	0.370	0.278
Support civil marriage	0.03	0.05	0.527	-0.06	0.05	0.200	-0.07	0.07	0.324	0.183	0.243	0.925
Support Nawaf Salam more	0.09	0.06	0.125	0.06	0.05	0.180	-0.01	0.06	0.840	0.717	0.230	0.333
Panel D: Cohesion												
Give to poor of other religion	0.04	0.06	0.521	-0.04	0.06	0.535	-0.05	0.06	0.476	0.372	0.337	0.913
Trust toward outgroups	-0.08	0.06	0.190	-0.19	0.06	0.001	0.06	0.06	0.327	0.214	0.107	0.004
Comfort if child marries outgroup	-0.16	0.06	0.005	-0.10	0.06	0.077	-0.01	0.06	0.934	0.484	0.072	0.258
Panel E: Behavioral												
Support for interfaith NGO like Adyan	0.01	0.06	0.844	-0.07	0.06	0.292	0.07	0.06	0.234	0.379	0.502	0.113
Volunteer: Adyan contact	0.07	0.06	0.239	-0.03	0.06	0.549	-0.07	0.07	0.299	0.207	0.120	0.659
RSVP anti-corruption workshop	0.00	0.06	0.952	0.06	0.06	0.273	0.00	0.07	0.947	0.459	0.991	0.502
Panel F: Identity (Importance)												
Lebanese identity importance	0.04	0.06	0.558	0.05	0.06	0.420	0.01	0.06	0.904	0.882	0.733	0.619
Social class identity importance	0.07	0.06	0.207	-0.02	0.06	0.715	0.08	0.06	0.188	0.256	0.968	0.240
Religious identity importance	0.02	0.06	0.806	0.02	0.06	0.797	0.06	0.05	0.275	0.991	0.605	0.618
Panel G: Identity (Forced Points)												
Identity points: Religious group	-0.05	0.06	0.430	0.02	0.07	0.766	0.02	0.05	0.628	0.448	0.356	0.966
Identity points: Social class	0.12	0.06	0.055	0.03	0.06	0.644	0.02	0.05	0.774	0.305	0.203	0.868
Identity points: Lebanese national identity	-0.06	0.07	0.395	-0.05	0.06	0.468	-0.04	0.05	0.436	0.916	0.823	0.914
Panel H: Perceived Population Shares												
Perceived share Christians	-0.01	0.06	0.838	0.00	0.07	0.963	-0.09	0.06	0.145	0.920	0.374	0.352
Perceived share Shia	0.02	0.06	0.685	-0.08	0.07	0.277	0.13	0.06	0.032	0.266	0.196	0.028
Perceived share Sunni	0.00	0.06	0.968	0.05	0.06	0.393	0.01	0.06	0.835	0.570	0.905	0.654
Perceived share others	-0.02	0.06	0.731	0.05	0.07	0.488	-0.09	0.06	0.123	0.461	0.454	0.129
Panel I: Emotions												
Empathy toward poor	-0.06	0.07	0.348	-0.06	0.06	0.339	0.04	0.06	0.473	0.965	0.238	0.235
Anger at rich and powerful	0.10	0.07	0.133	0.00	0.06	0.948	0.04	0.06	0.516	0.244	0.459	0.624

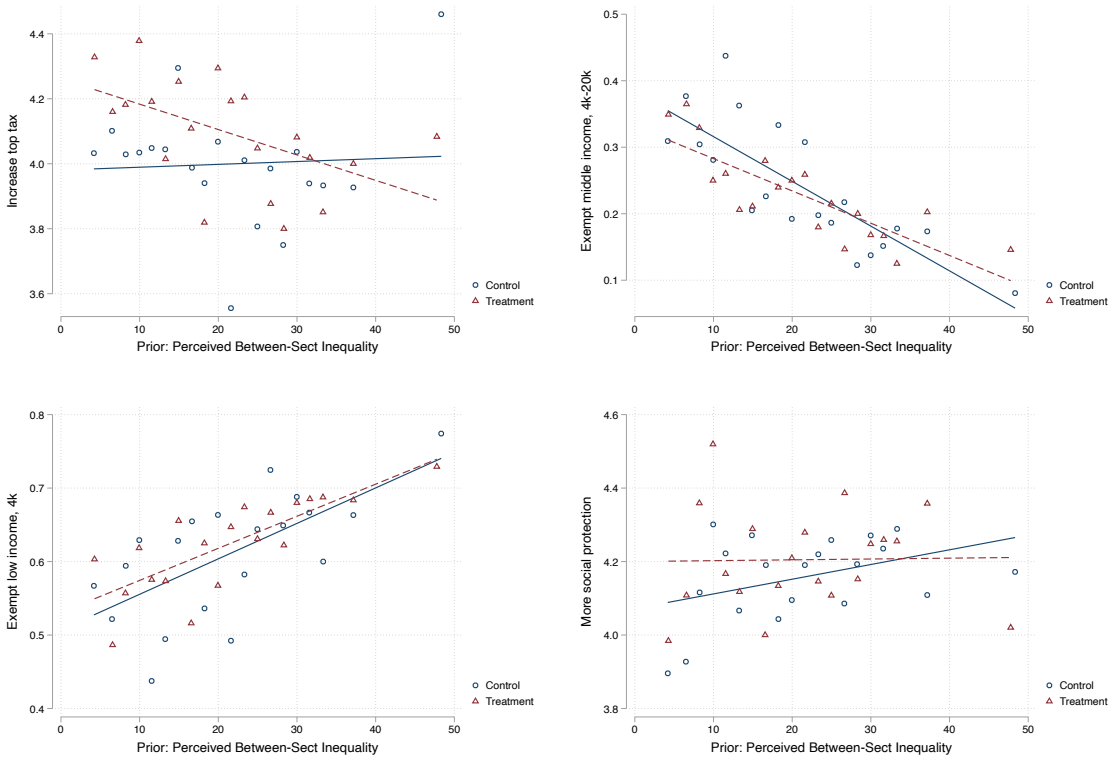


Figure H.1: Redistribution: Heterogeneity by Prior Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Treatment effects on the redistribution outcomes by prior perceived between-sect inequality, in standard deviations. Specification as in Figure 5.

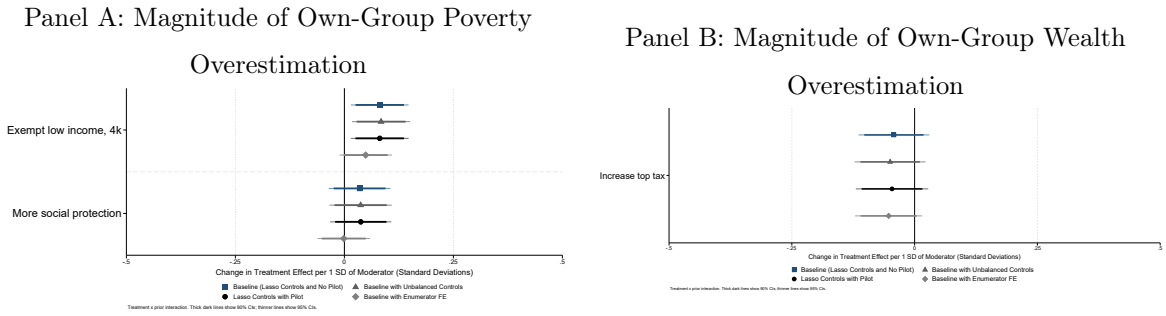


Figure H.2: Self-Interest Tests: Magnitudes of Own-Group Misperception

Notes: As Figure 8, using the signed magnitude of the own-group misperception. Self-interest predicts a negative interaction in Panel A and a positive interaction in Panel B.

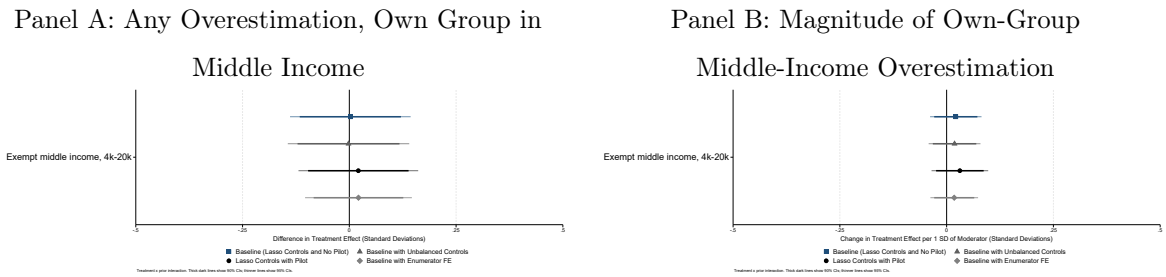


Figure H.3: Self-Interest Tests: Own Group in the Middle Class

Notes: Treatment-effect heterogeneity by overestimation of the own group among the middle class, as a dummy (Panel A) and as a signed magnitude (Panel B).

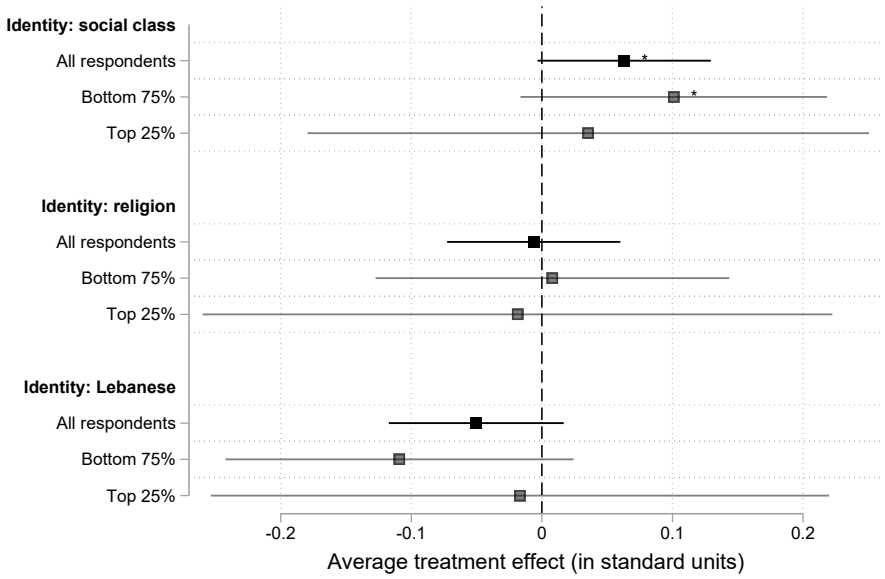


Figure H.4: Class Identity by Income Group

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects on the forced allocation of identity points, in standard deviations, by income group. Specification as in Figure 5.

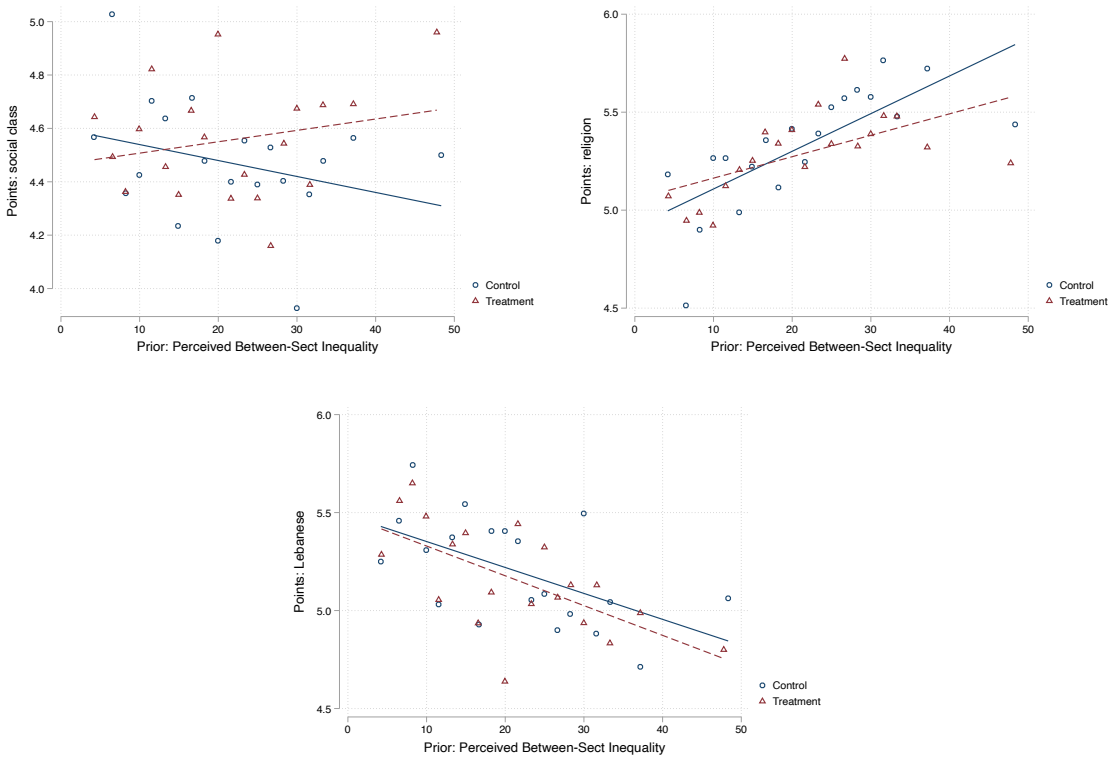


Figure H.5: Identity: Heterogeneity by Prior Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Treatment effects on the identity-points outcomes by prior perceived between-sect inequality, in standard deviations. Specification as in Figure 5.

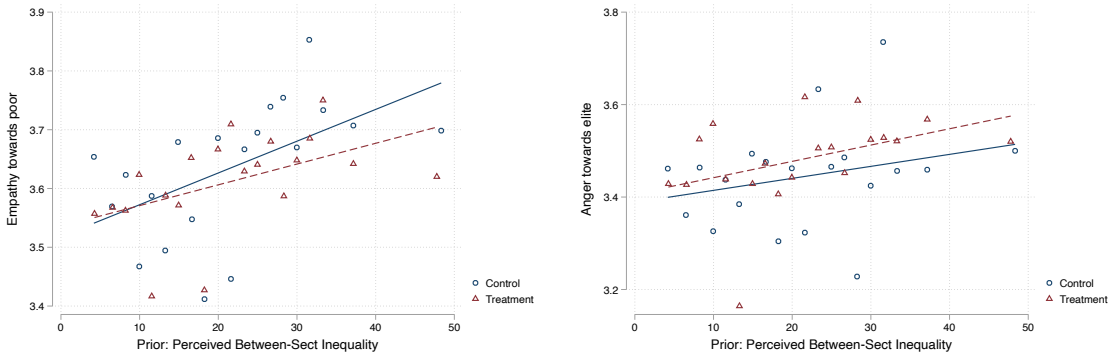
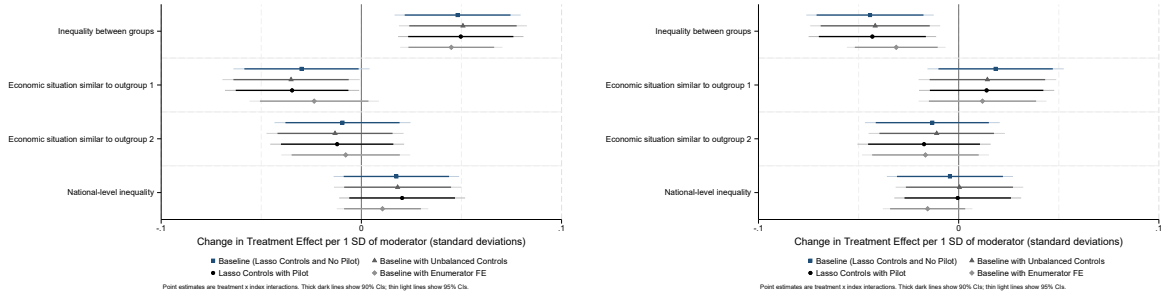


Figure H.6: Emotions: Heterogeneity by Prior Between-Sect Inequality

Notes: Treatment effects on empathy toward the poor and anger toward economic elites by prior perceived between-sect inequality, in standard deviations. Specification as in Figure 5.

Figures H.7, H.8, and H.9 report heterogeneity by the two sectarian-embeddedness indices used in Section 8: effects on beliefs, stated political preferences, and real-stakes engagement, by social and political embeddedness. Figure H.10 reports political and real-stakes effects by trust in out-group politicians, the test used in Section 8.

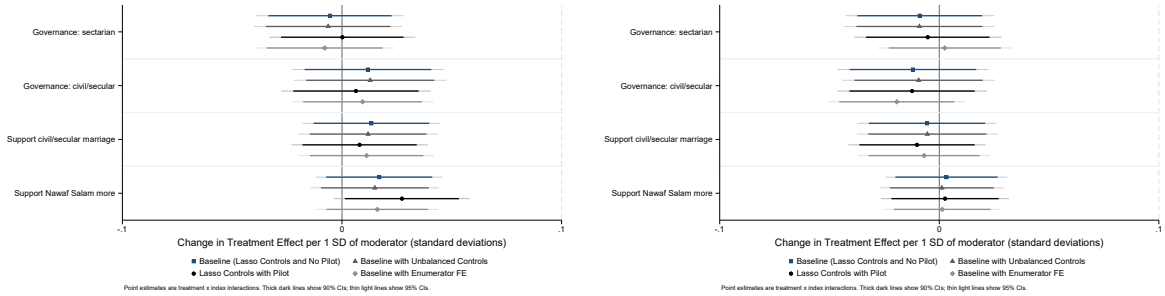


Panel A: Social Embeddedness

Panel B: Political Embeddedness

Figure H.7: Heterogeneity by Sectarian Embeddedness: Beliefs

Notes: Treatment effects on the first-stage outcomes by the standardized social-embeddedness index (Panel A) and political-embeddedness index (Panel B). Specification as in Figure 5.

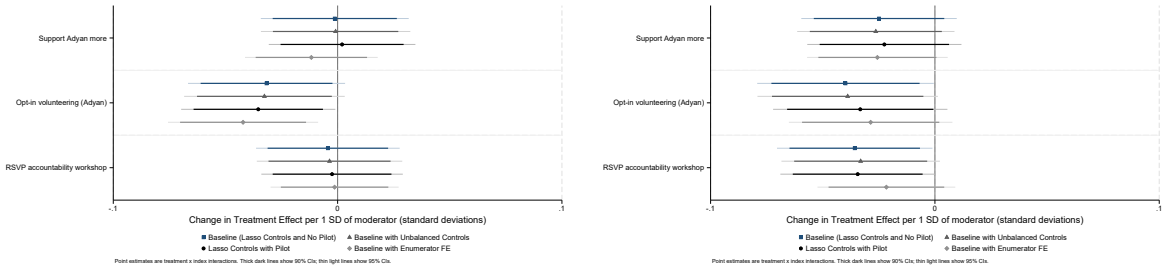


Panel A: Social Embeddedness

Panel B: Political Embeddedness

Figure H.8: Heterogeneity by Sectarian Embeddedness: Stated Political Preferences

Notes: Treatment effects on the stated political-preference outcomes by the standardized embeddedness indices. Specification as in Figure 5.



Panel A: Social Embeddedness

Panel B: Political Embeddedness

Figure H.9: Heterogeneity by Sectarian Embeddedness: Real-Stakes Engagement

Notes: Treatment effects on the real-stakes engagement outcomes by the standardized embeddedness indices. Specification as in Figure 5.

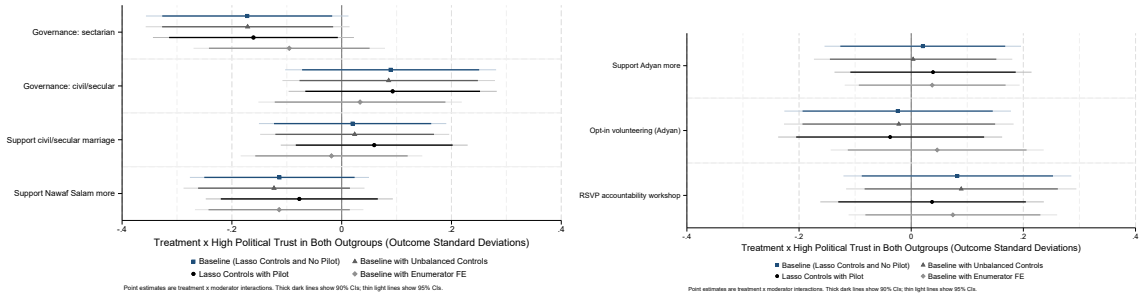


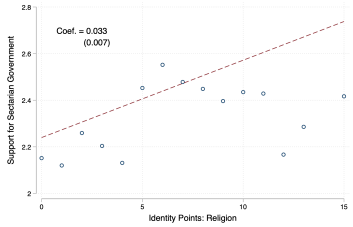
Figure H.10: Heterogeneity by Trust in Out-Group Politicians

Notes: Treatment effects on the stated political-preference outcomes (left) and the real-stakes engagement outcomes (right) by whether the respondent expresses high trust in the politicians of both out-groups. Specification as in Figure 5.

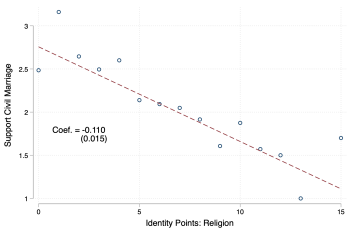
I Sectarian Identity and Politics

This appendix reports the correlational and experimental evidence behind Section 8. Figure I.1 shows that religious identity predicts support for the sectarian political status quo: respondents with stronger religious identity are more supportive of sectarian governance, less supportive of civil marriage and of the reformist candidate, and less likely to volunteer with an interfaith organization or attend a non-sectarian workshop. Figure **??** shows the preference structure in the conjoint experiment: co-religion is the main predictor of candidate choice. Figure I.2 shows that in-group favoritism likewise predicts support for sectarian arrangements. Figure I.3 shows that the treatment does

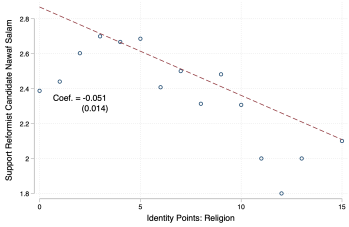
not change perceived sect population shares.



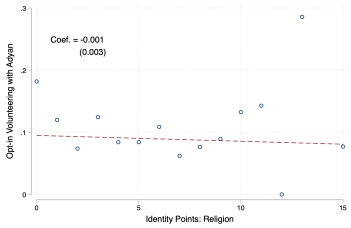
Panel A: Support for Sectarian Governance



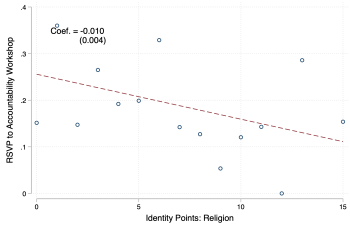
Panel B: Support for Civil Marriage



Panel C: Support for Reformist Candidate



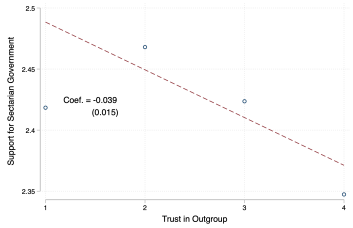
Panel D: Interfaith Volunteering



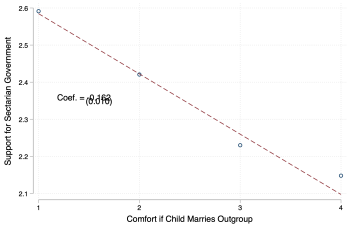
Panel E: RSVP to Non-Sectarian Workshop

Figure I.1: Religious Identity and Sectarian Preferences

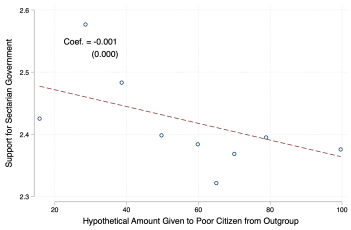
Notes: Correlations between the strength of religious identity and support for the sectarian political status quo, across stated and real-stakes outcomes.



Panel A: Trust in Out-Group



Panel B: Comfort with Out-Group Marriage



Panel C: Giving to Poor Out-Group Member

Figure I.2: In-Group Favoritism and Sectarian Preferences

Notes: Correlations between in-group favoritism and support for sectarian governance.

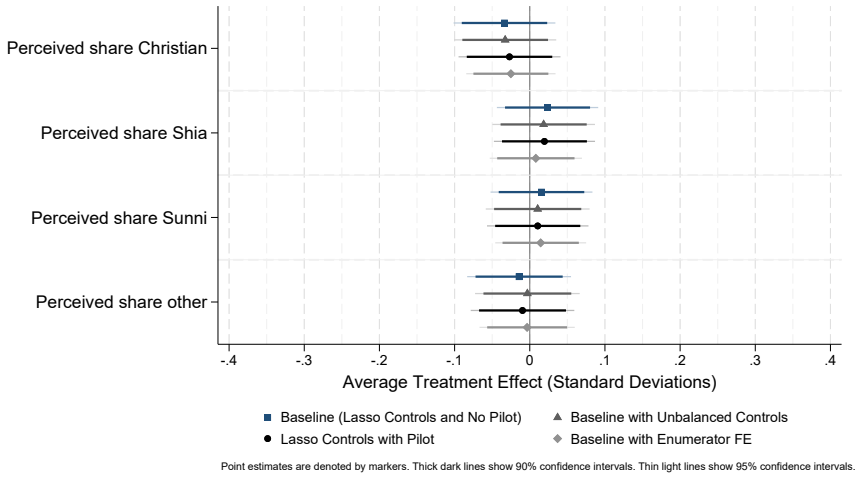


Figure I.3: Treatment Effects on Perceived Group Size

Notes: Intent-to-treat effects of video assignment, in standard deviations, on perceived sect population shares, from equation (1). Specifications and confidence intervals as in Figure 5.

J Inference

Tables J.1 and J.2 report Westfall–Young multiple-testing adjusted p-values (Westfall and Young, 1993) for the belief, redistribution, identity, and emotions outcomes, and for the political and real-stakes outcomes. Table J.3 reports ex-post minimum detectable effects for the political and real-stakes outcomes against the pre-registered target.

Table J.1: Baseline Estimates and Westfall–Young Adjustments (1/2)

Outcome variable	Estimate	Baseline p	Grouping (a)	Grouping (b)	Grouping (c)
Beliefs Updating Outcomes					
Inequality between groups	−0.398	< 0.001	0.000	—	—
Economic situation similar to outgroup 1	0.288	< 0.001	0.000	—	—
Economic situation similar to outgroup 2	0.196	< 0.001	0.000	—	—
National level inequality	−0.019	0.544	0.539	—	—
Redistribution Outcomes					
Increase top tax (income above $150,000)	0.094	0.006	0.020	0.038	—
Exempt income up to $4,000–$40,000	−0.039	0.257	0.388	0.543	—
Exempt income below $4,000	0.038	0.275	0.388	0.543	—
More social protection	0.078	0.023	0.075	0.121	—
Identity Outcomes					
Identity: social class	0.076	0.027	0.062	0.121	—
Identity: religion	−0.010	0.766	0.789	0.789	—
Identity: Lebanese	−0.058	0.097	0.169	0.293	—
Emotions Outcomes					
Anger toward economic elites — All respondents	0.054	0.115	0.390	—	—
Anger toward economic elites — Bottom 75%	0.090	0.020	0.102	—	—
Anger toward economic elites — Top 25%	−0.031	0.676	0.896	—	—
Empathy toward the poor — All respondents	−0.027	0.421	0.747	—	—
Empathy toward the poor — Bottom 75%	0.001	0.987	0.988	—	—
Empathy toward the poor — Top 25%	−0.080	0.202	0.512	—	—

Notes: The table reports the baseline point estimate and p-value, followed by Westfall–Young (1993) multiple-testing adjusted p-values based on 1,000 resamples. Specification (a) adjusts separately within each outcome family; (b) jointly adjusts Redistribution and Identity outcomes; and (c) jointly adjusts Political Preferences and Real Stakes outcomes. An em dash denotes that the outcome is not a member of the relevant combined family. Values are rounded to three decimal places. Baseline p-values below 0.001 are displayed as < 0.001; adjusted p-values shown as 0.000 are recorded as zero.

Table J.2: Baseline Estimates and Westfall–Young Adjustments (2/2)

Outcome variable	Estimate	Baseline p	Grouping (a)	Grouping (b)	Grouping (c)
Political Preferences Outcomes					
Governance, sectarian	−0.009	0.803	0.791	—	0.964
Governance, civil/secular	0.046	0.194	0.518	—	0.736
Support civil/secular marriage	−0.039	0.216	0.518	—	0.758
Support Nawaf Salam more	0.022	0.440	0.678	—	0.930
Real Stakes Outcomes					
Support Adyan more	0.020	0.553	0.914	—	0.964
Opt-in volunteering (Adyan)	−0.017	0.613	0.914	—	0.964
RSVP accountability workshop	0.012	0.719	0.914	—	0.964

Notes: The table reports the baseline point estimate and p-value, followed by Westfall–Young (1993) multiple-testing adjusted p-values based on 1,000 resamples. Specification (a) adjusts separately within each outcome family; (b) jointly adjusts Redistribution and Identity outcomes; and (c) jointly adjusts Political Preferences and Real Stakes outcomes. An em dash denotes that the outcome is not a member of the relevant combined family. Values are rounded to three decimal places. Baseline p-values below 0.001 are displayed as < 0.001; adjusted p-values shown as 0.000 are recorded as zero.

Table J.3: Ex-Post Minimum Detectable Effects

Outcome	N	ITT (SD)	SE	MDE	Planned MDE
Political Preferences Outcomes					
Governance: sectarian	2946	−0.009	0.034	0.096	0.095
Governance: civil/secular	2946	0.046	0.035	0.098	0.095
Support civil/secular marriage	3165	−0.039	0.032	0.089	0.095
Support Nawaf Salam more	3089	0.022	0.029	0.082	0.095
Real Stakes Outcomes					
Support Adyan more	3152	0.020	0.034	0.097	0.095
Opt-in volunteering (Adyan)	3198	−0.017	0.035	0.097	0.095
RSVP accountability workshop	3198	0.012	0.034	0.095	0.095

Notes: All outcomes are standardized (Mean 0, SD 1). N is the outcome specific realized estimation sample. ITT is the OLS coefficient on video assignment estimated in the Baseline specification (PDS-Lasso controls, no pilot, no enumerator FE). SE is heteroskedasticity-robust standard error obtained from the OLS regression. MDE is the ex-post minimum detectable effect at 80% power, two-sided 5% significance, where MDE $= (z_{0.975} + z_{0.80}) \times SE \approx 2.80 \times SE$. *Planned MDE* is the standardized pre-registered ex-ante target from the Pre-Analysis Plan (PAP - Table 1). Relying on a sample size of $N = 3{,}300$ and no attrition, the PAP reports a planned MDE of 4.4 percentage points on a binary reference outcome with control-group mean $p = 0.69$, retrieved from Alesina et al., 2024. The standardized is equivalent obtained as $0.044/0.462 \approx 0.095$ SD where SD$=\sqrt{p(1-p)} = \sqrt{0.69 \times 0.31} \approx 0.462$.

References

Arab Barometer (2024). Arab barometer wave vii lebanon country report. Survey data accessed through Arab Barometer. Indicators include trust in government, perceived corruption, and satisfaction with services.

Assouad, L. (2023). Rethinking the lebanese economic miracle: The extreme concentration of income and wealth in lebanon, 2005–2014. *Journal of Development Economics*, 161.

Bernardi, R. A. (2006). Associations between Hofstede's cultural constructs and social desirability response bias. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 65(1):43–53.

Dalton, D. and Ortegren, M. (2011). Gender differences in ethics research: The importance of controlling for the social desirability response bias. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 103(1):73–93.

Galor, O. and Wainstock, D. C. (2025). Anatomy of US inequality. Working paper, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Kuziemko, I., Norton, M. I., Saez, E., and Stantcheva, S. (2015). How elastic are preferences for redistribution? evidence from randomized survey experiments. *American Economic Review*, 105(4):1478–1508.

National Council of Applied Economic Research (2011). National survey of household income and expenditure (NSHIE). Household survey dataset, National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, India. https://feeds.ncaer.org/ncaer/national-survey-of-household-income-and-expenditure-marketinformationsurvey/-of-households.

Panossian, R. (2006). *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Prunier, G. (1995). *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Shukla, R. (2024). The declining income gap between Hindu and Muslim families in India. Policy Brief, People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE). https://www.price360.in/blog/the-declining-income-gap-between-hindu-and-muslim-families-in-india/.

Toch, M. (2013). Jewish migration, medieval era. *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*.

Westfall, P. H. and Young, S. S. (1993). *Resampling-Based Multiple Testing: Examples and Methods for P-Value Adjustment*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.

World Bank (2024). Lebanon economic monitor: Mounting burdens on a crisis-ridden country. Economic monitor, World Bank, Washington, DC. Fall 2024 Edition.