More resilient, still vulnerable

Taking stock of prevention of violent extremism programming with youth in Tripoli, Lebanon

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Taking stock of prevention of violent extremism programming with youth in Tripoli, Lebanon

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Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

CVE	Countering violent extremism
FGD	Focus group discussion
KII	Key informant interview
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PVE	Prevention of violent extremism
UN	United Nations

Executive summary

Projects around prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in Lebanon and globally are common; however, exactly what impacts they are having is not entirely clear. This research critically assesses PVE programming targeting youth and its underlying theories of change. The aim of this research is to inform more nuanced, effective and sustainable youth-focused programming that addresses the root causes and drivers of violent extremism in Lebanon. It intends to do this by increasing critical understanding of PVE programming involving youth among policy-makers, practitioners and donors, as well as by informing the planning, monitoring, adaptation and evaluation of PVE interventions.

The research methodology was developed in collaboration with a core group of organisations implementing PVE projects in Lebanon. The research was conducted between December 2017 and July 2018 in Lebanon's second-largest city, Tripoli. A mixture of methods was used, including a literature review, a survey with 143 respondents, eight focus group discussions (FGDs) and eight key informant interviews (KIIs). Research participants were Lebanese and Syrian youth residing in Tripoli and the neighbouring areas of Beddawi and Wadi Nahleh. All respondents were aged 14–16; 52% were male and 48% were female. A comparative approach was used involving a treatment group of youth beneficiaries of PVE projects and a control group of youth who participated in non-PVE interventions.

The research used a resilience and vulnerability framework,[1] and was informed by a literature review of the latest publications on resilience and vulnerability to violent extremism. The main resilience factors to violent extremism were identified as: psycho-social resilience, community cohesion and positive networks, tolerance and support of diversity, understanding and respecting human rights, sense of belonging, ability to understand and deal with conflict non-violently, and positive relations with authorities. The key vulnerability factors were defined as: sense of political marginalisation, unequal treatment by security forces, sense of social and economic injustice, lack of access to employment opportunities, degradation of educational infrastructure and opportunities to learn, lack of future prospects, and disruptive social context and experiences of violence. The study also assessed the correlation between high resilience to violent extremism and outlooks on key vulnerabilities and attitudes to violence.

It was found that participants of PVE programmes demonstrated higher resilience, manifested as a higher sense of purpose, belonging and trust in the municipality. Other aspects of resilience, however, such as the ability to set goals and problem solve were comparable for beneficiaries of PVE and non-PVE interventions, highlighting the potential of traditional educational programmes in building essential life skills related to resilience.

Views of participants on injustice were similar in the treatment and control groups, highlighting widespread perceptions and experiences related to the lack of economic opportunities and political marginalisation. PVE programme beneficiaries are more likely to want to fight injustice than beneficiaries of non-PVE programmes are; however, the prevalent feeling in both groups is that there is little one can do. Only one resilience factor – sense of purpose – was found to have a positive correlation with one's ability to fight injustice, while other factors, such as enrolment in education, appear to have little impact. Problem solving, the ability to set objectives and sense of belonging to the community were found to have no correlation to one's belief that one can fight injustice.

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1   United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Alert, Improving the impact of preventing violent extremism programming: A toolkit for design, monitoring and evaluation, Oslo: UNDP, 2018, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/undp-ogc/documents/PVE_ImprovingImpactProgrammingToolkit_2018.pdf

Similarly, higher resilience does not necessarily affect whether young people support violence and armed groups. Violence is experienced as an intrinsic part of everyday life, and is used to "defend oneself, friends and family", "demonstrate masculinity" or "stand one's ground" – participation in PVE projects thus appears to have little effect on this understanding. The only resilience factor that correlates with weaker support of violence is one's ability to befriend people of other nationalities.

Overall, participants from both treatment and control groups demonstrated high resilience; however, the prevalence of violence in their families, schools and neighbourhoods was more influential in shaping their attitudes to violence. This was especially pronounced among male youth – almost twice as many males as females were supportive of hitting someone "who hits you first", and 25% more males believed that "the only way to defend one's community and family is through the use of force".

View from above, Tripoli, Lebanon
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1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism[2] has put PVE and the related concept of countering violent extremism (CVE) at the heart of the political and international development agenda. The Middle East became a major arena for prevention efforts following the proliferation of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. Although the number of fighters from Lebanon remains small and communities tend to identify more pressing problems, such as the lack of job opportunities, donor organisations are including PVE and CVE in their funding priorities, and local, national and international organisations are taking the opportunity to reframe their work to focus on PVE in Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian communities.

Violent extremism is defined in Lebanon's new national strategy for PVE as the "spread of individual and collective hatred", "rejection of diversity", "the use of violence as a means of expression and influence", and "a behaviour that threatens societal values ensuring social stability".[3] Other definitions include the use of "ideologically motivated or justified violence to further political, economic or social objectives",[4] and the targeting of civilians to rectify grievances.[5] In the design of this research, violent extremism is understood as a phenomenon that includes support of violence and armed groups, whereby armed groups are associated

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2   United Nations General Assembly, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.
       asp?symbol=A/70/674

3   Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Republic of Lebanon, The national strategy to prevent violent extremism, Beirut: Presidency of
       the Council of Ministers, 2017, p.1

4   United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The development response to violent extremism and insurgency:
       Putting principles into practice, USAID Policy, Washington DC: USAID, September 2011, p.2, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/
       documents/1870/VEI_Policy_Final.pdf

5   Ibid., p.4; UNDP and International Alert, 2018, Op. cit., p.16

by research participants with local politically backed groups in Tripoli, and to a lesser extent with militant organisations active in Syria.

Many of the PVE projects in Lebanon have been implemented in the so-called "hotspot" areas, including Tripoli, Sidon and Majdal Anjar, which share a similar confessional make-up, recent experiences of violent clashes,[6] and a sense of political and economic marginalisation. Parallel to the implementation of various projects, the Lebanese government developed a broad national strategy for PVE, which was officially endorsed by the Council of Ministers in March 2018.

An initial mapping in 2016 of CVE and PVE projects in Lebanon by International Alert followed by discussions with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors demonstrated that most of the projects were centred on social change more broadly and promoted social stability, social cohesion, human rights, good governance or peacebuilding. PVE is often seen as an add-on objective or an assumed result of promoting values of peace, tolerance and non-violence. Furthermore, many of the projects were found to target youth, collectively seen as being vulnerable to violent extremism in the hotspot areas.[7] Across organisations and approaches, monitoring systems were found to be nascent and – with a few exceptions – there was no evidence that the interventions were contributing to prevention of violent extremism.

This research was thus designed to fill the gap in evidence of the impacts of PVE and CVE interventions in Lebanon. Although donor agencies continue to use different terms – with many adopting PVE in line with the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action and others referencing CVE in their strategic documents – following the initial mapping and collaborative research design,[8] this research narrowed its focus to PVE. This was intended to gain a broader understanding of prevention at individual, community and structural levels, and to reflect the language of Lebanon's national strategy for PVE.[9]

The research aims to critically assess PVE programming and the underlying theories of change in order to inform more nuanced, effective and sustainable youth-focused programming that identifies and addresses the root causes and drivers of violent extremism in Lebanon. The specific objective is to increase critical understanding of the impact of PVE programming involving youth among policy-makers, practitioners and donors, and to inform the planning, monitoring, adaptation and evaluation of PVE interventions.

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6   In Tripoli, fighting between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen reignited in 2011–15, and Sidon witnessed clashes between the supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and the Lebanese Armed Forces in 2013. In Majdal Anjar, tensions rose in 2015 when fighting intensified across the border in Syria.

7   International Alert, CVE/PVE project mapping, London: International Alert, June 2017 (unpublished)

8   This was done by a core group of five organisations that implement projects related to PVE. The methodology was approved by an Institutional Review Board in November 2017.

9   Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2017, Op. cit.

Two children looking over a football game from their house damaged by clashes, Tripoli, Lebanon
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2. Objectives and methodology

2.1 Conceptual framework

This research focuses on primary prevention programmes aimed at protecting communities from the risks of violent extremism.[10] Falling under the framework of resilience to violent extremism, such programmes are often concerned with resilience factors – whether social, psychological or physical – that enable vulnerable individuals to resist violent extremism.[11] The drivers of resilience indicate both what motivates people to join extremist groups and what allows individuals and groups to resist narratives around violent extremism and recruitment efforts by armed groups.[12]

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10   Primary prevention is aimed at healthy people and prevents them from developing a given problem, while secondary prevention is aimed at stopping progress towards a given problem among those for whom warning signs have been identified. Tertiary prevention is the "remediation of a problem for those who concretely manifest a given problem". M.J. Williams, J.G. Horgan and W.P. Evans, Evaluation of a multi-faceted, U.S. community-based, Muslim-led CVE program, Washington DC: US Department of Justice, June 2016, p.104, https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249936.pdf

11   L. Carter and P. Dininio, An inventory and review of countering violent extremism and insurgency monitoring systems, Washington DC: USAID, 2012, p.53, https://sprw.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/an-inventory-and-review-of-countering-violent-extremism-and-insurgency-monitoring-systems_2012.pdf. For examples of resilience factors, see: Ibid.; M. Aubrey, R. Aubrey and F. Brodrick, Why young Syrians choose to fight: Vulnerability and resilience to recruitment by violent extremist groups in Syria, London: International Alert, 2016; Mercy Corps, Youth and consequences: Unemployment, injustice and violence, Edinburgh: Mercy Corps, 2015; Social Media Exchange (SMEX), #HACKINGEXTREMISM: A Participatory Symposium on Countering Violent Extremism Online, Beirut, 14–16 April 2016 (interview with author); National Counterterrorism Center, Countering violent extremism: A guide to practitioners and analysts, McLean, VA: National Counterterrorism Center, 2014

12   L. Slachmuijlder, Transforming violent extremism: A peacebuilder's guide, 1st edition, Washington DC: Search for Common Ground, 2017, https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Transforming-Violent-Conflict-1.pdf

Organisations implementing resilience-building projects in Tripoli helped to identify the priority resilience factors among youth in the city. Although some of these organisations have made progress measuring the resilience of their beneficiaries, there has been no systematic effort to monitor vulnerabilities, or to assess the interaction between the resilience built through the projects and the key vulnerabilities to violent extremism.

This research therefore sought to gather evidence on the types of resilience built through different project approaches, and the dynamic between resilience and vulnerability to violent extremism. While vulnerability and resilience do not necessarily have a binary relationship (i.e. that a deficit in one resilience area automatically increases vulnerability in a corresponding vulnerability area to the same degree, or vice versa), they do have a relationship.[13] Vulnerabilities often include a mixture of drivers at the individual, community and structural levels, which may not translate into resilience factors. The priority vulnerability factors were identified by the group of practitioners from the organisations implementing resilience-building projects in Tripoli and updated based on an initial validation process, including a literature review and KIIs.

The selection of Tripoli as the study site was driven by the established proliferation of PVE-related interventions in the city. Practitioners tend to explain this focus on Tripoli and other Sunni-majority areas with the donor understanding of violent extremism as related to militant Sunni groups, with many organisations concerned with such targeting as well as the risk of stigmatising the Sunni community in Lebanon. Furthermore, both peacebuilding practitioners and researchers have highlighted the similarities in the factors driving support for violent extremist groups and support for other political groups in Lebanon that overtly or covertly support the use of violence to achieve political goals.[14]

Based on an analysis of resilience and vulnerability factors, the research tested three hypotheses, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Research hypotheses

Objective: To critically assess CVE/PVE programming and the underlying theories of change and inform more nuanced, effective and sustainable youth-focused PVE programming, which identifies and addresses the root causes and drivers of violent extremism in Lebanon.

13   M. Aubrey, R. Aubrey, F. Brodrick and R. Simpson, Teaching peace, building resilience: Assessing the impact of peace education for young Syrians, Background Paper, London: International Alert, May 2016, p.6, http://international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Syria_PeaceEducationImpact_EN_2016.pdf

14   Interviews with researchers and organisations working on PVE, Beirut, Lebanon, February – August 2017, which informed the development of the research conceptualisation.

Hypothesis	Detail	Analysis	Planned	Actual
H1: Young men and women who participated in PVE-related resilience-building and civic engagement projects demonstrate higher personal resilience than youth who participated in non-PVE youth engagement projects in Tripoli	Personal resilience factors • Psycho-social resilience (ability to take decisions, set goals and have dreams, problem solve, communicate in a positive way, trust oneself and others, work in a team) • Community cohesion and positive networks • Tolerance, pluralism, understanding diversity as an asset • Understanding and respecting human rights • Sense of belonging • Ability to understand and deal with conflict non-violently • Positive relations with the government, trust in the institutions and citizenship	Compare resilience of beneficiaries of PVE-related and non-PVE youth projects (control group)	Survey of 200 youth (100 in the treatment group and 100 in the control group) FGDs (4 with the treatment group and 4 with the control group) KII	Survey of 143 youth (88 in the treatment group and 55 in the control group) FGDs (4 with the treatment group and 4 with the control group) 8 KIIs (validation stage)
H2: Individuals with high personal resilience perceive, experience and respond to key vulnerabilities to violent extremism in a more nuanced way	Vulnerability factors • Sense of political marginalisation • Unequal treatment of security forces • Sense of social and economic injustice • Lack of access to employment opportunities • Degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn • Lack of future prospects and sense of social and personal worth and purpose • Disruptive social context and experiences of violence	Compare views on vulnerability and ability to challenge injustice between respondents with high resilience and respondents with low resilience	As above	As above
H3: Youth with higher personal resilience are less likely to support use of violence and armed groups	• Supporting violence • Supporting specific groups/ individuals/ideas	Compare views on violence between respondents with high resilience and respondents with low resilience	As above	As above

2.2 Research design

The research employed a mixed methods approach and included a literature review on PVE concepts and evaluation of PVE programmes, and eight KIIs with individuals familiar with the Tripoli context and the challenges faced by youth, at the validation stage. Based on findings from this stage, the resilience and vulnerability factors were updated and the research tools developed.

Eight FGDs and a quantitative survey were conducted with youth aged 14–17 who took part in programming in 2017 (and were aged 14–16 at the time of their participation in NGO-led activities). Young Lebanese and Syrians of both genders were included, and focus groups were divided by nationality and gender.

Research participants were divided into a treatment group and a control group (see Table 2). The treatment group was made up of youths who participated in resilience-building programmes, which the implementing organisations understood as directly or indirectly linked to PVE. The control group was made up of youths of the same demographics who took part in other interventions, unrelated to PVE, specifically vocational education, computer literacy classes, and basic literacy and numeracy classes. Access to all research participants was facilitated by the organisations implementing the programmes. While the research methodology borrows from evaluation methodologies and all research participants were beneficiaries of youth projects, the study does not constitute an evaluation of any one programme or approach.

Table 2: Treatment and control group participants

	Type of project	Specific topics	Research methods and participants
Treatment group	PVE-related/resilience building	Peace education and psycho-social support Sports and life skills training	88 survey respondents 4 FGDs: 1 with Lebanese boys, 1 with Lebanese girls, 1 with Syrian boys, 1 with Syrian girls
Control group	Non-PVE	Basic literacy and numeracy classes Vocational training and life skills Computer literacy	55 survey respondents 4 FGDs: 1 with Lebanese boys, 1 with Lebanese girls, 1 with Syrian boys, 1 with Syrian girls

All researchers and survey enumerators obtained child-protection certification. Verbal consent was obtained from survey respondents and FGD participants, and complaint mechanisms were put in place. Trained researchers and enumerators conducted the survey and FGDs in Arabic. Data security was ensured by conducting all surveys and FGDs in a safe space where responses could not be overheard, anonymising data and storing it in password-protected files.

Quantitative data were analysed using exploratory data analysis and results were triangulated with findings from the FGDs. Cross tabulations were limited given the small sample size and, based on the results, only a limited number of indicative survey questions was used in the analysis (see Appendix). Treatment group participants were recruited from two projects implemented in 2017, with a total number of 602 beneficiaries. The sample of 88 treatment group respondents is representative with a confidence level of 90% and a 8% margin of error.

Control group participants were recruited from two non-PVE projects, also implemented in 2017, with a total of 55 respondents surveyed. A total of 143 respondents were surveyed, of whom 52% were male and 48% were female.

The research team was composed of International Alert staff who led on the methodology development, a lead researcher (consultant on the project) who led the qualitative data collection and the data analysis, a quantitative research consultant and four local enumerators managed by the latter who were responsible for administering the survey questionnaire. Researchers and survey enumerators conducted the field research in May and July 2018.

2.3 Research limitations

Achieving the desired sample size was not possible, particularly for the control group, as attempts to reach additional organisations that have worked with youth were not successful. Organisations not working on PVE were less interested in the research and, as they were not involved in its design, were naturally less committed to providing support. The organisation that committed to supporting the research was not able to provide access to the planned number of respondents. This was mostly due to the specific age range selected for the research, as beneficiaries of vocational training and other job-creation programmes tend to be older and participants in child-protection interventions tend to be younger. Although the research was planned for Tripoli, due to challenges with reaching the planned number of research participants, the area was expanded to include participants from the neighbouring areas of Beddawi and Wadi Nahleh. Analysis of the results based on location, however, was not possible, as the tools did not include questions on place of residence.

Organising logistics and managing FGDs was challenging. The challenges included large numbers of participants cancelling at the last minute, staff of local organisations not always being present to welcome and organise participants, FGDs not starting on time causing those who were punctual to get bored waiting, and discussions being interrupted by late arrivals or early departures.

Male youths were suspicious of research activities in general and felt they were being targeted or asked about sensitive issues. This was not strictly in relation to the topic of violence,[15] but did demonstrate that overall young people are wary of interventions and are concerned that research could be a way of gathering information that is used against them rather than to support them.

While the research sought to compare experiences of Lebanese and Syrian youth, many of the Syrian participants were born in Lebanon or grew up in Lebanon, and some had Lebanese mothers. An eighth of the Syrian survey participants were born in Lebanon and around half of the FGD participants had lived in Lebanon the majority of their lives. This decreased the importance of comparing results based on nationality, as the experiences of some Syrian youth were very similar to the Lebanese.

The separation between the control and treatment groups was not always as well defined or delineated as intended. Some control group FGD participants for example indicated that they have taken part in activities with organisations other than those participating in the research which covered topics that are normally covered in PVE programmes like life skills training. In some other cases FGD participants could not recall the content or learning from all activities due to the time passed. Given the concentration of programming in Tripoli, finding control participants who have participated in a single type of activity was challenging. This could also be indicative

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15   One FGD participant talked about a previous FGD that was being recorded, in which he was asked sensitive questions in relation to the use of drugs, after which he chose to leave. In another FGD – when the discussion moved to the use of violence – young people again asked for the recording to be stopped.

of implementers targeting the same individuals based on similar and broad vulnerability criteria, and the perennial challenge of working with "the same faces" and not accessing hard-to-reach young people.

The survey questionnaire was tested, and some questions and answers were adapted. However, as some questions were not adequately edited, this left them open to various interpretations. Furthermore, some questions had a large number of possible answers, which resulted in a spread of the answers, and, given the small sample size, limited the ability to cross tabulate these answers with other variables given the 8% margin of error.

The small sample size made it difficult to make statistically relevant comparisons. Therefore, only differences of 10% and more were considered in the analysis. As such, the quantitative results should be read as indicative of youth attitudes, but they are only representative of the youths who participated in the selected programmes. It thus might not be accurate based on the results of the quantitative side of the study to make generalisations about youth participating in PVE programmes more broadly, but results remain useful in describing general trends.

Buildings in the centre of the city, Tripoli, Lebanon
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3. Findings

3.1 Context

Tripoli, the second-largest city in Lebanon, is home to around half a million inhabitants, and hosts an additional 70,000 Syrian refugees and around 30,000 registered Palestinian refugees living in one camp and five gatherings.[16] The city has been "left out of any political, social, or economic development priorities"[17] and was the scene of multiple rounds of violent clashes that led to lasting perceptions among non-Tripolitans that the city is a hub of violence and insecurity. Hostilities between the neighbourhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen date back to the civil war, more specifically to the mid-1980s, when the Lebanese Alawites in the Jabal-Mohsen-based Arab Democratic Party aligned with Syria fought alongside the Syrian Army against the Sunni Islamist Tawhid Movement, which was based mainly in Bab al-Tabbaneh.

Between 2008 and 2014, 20 cycles of fighting took place between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, resulting in many deaths, injuries and economic damage in an already impoverished area. Following the implementation of a security plan by the Lebanese government in April 2014, the Lebanese Army was deployed in Tripoli to restore stability. However, some in the Sunni community accused the army of siding with other communities and disproportionately targeting the Sunnis in its security operations.[18]

16   K. Ismail, C. Wilson and N. Cohen-Fournier, Syrian refugees in Tripoli, Lebanon, Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2017, http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/Tripoli-FINAL-5-July.pdf

17   B. al-Ayoubi, Roadmap to reconciliation in Tripoli: Creating an inclusive process for launching a communal reconciliation in Tripoli, April 2017, p.5, https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/the_roadmap_to_reconciliation_in_tripoli_2017.pdf

18   On perceptions of the army among Sunnis in Tripoli, see R. Lefèvre, The roots of crisis in northern Lebanon, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, April 2014, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/crisis_northern_lebanon.pdf

Poverty remains prevalent in Tripoli, with 57% of the Lebanese in Tripoli and Mina living on below US$4/day.[19] Social tensions are on the rise, with 29% of respondents in a representative perceptions survey describing relations between local Lebanese and the Syrian refugees as positive or very positive, a decrease from 38% between February and May 2018.[20]

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained in this research provide a snapshot of some key characteristics of young people living in marginalised urban areas of Tripoli and its surroundings, and their relationship with their environment (see Figure 1). The findings of this study can only be fully understood in the context of poor educational opportunities and the widespread use of violence to which youth –particularly boys – are exposed.

Figure 1: Snapshot of the youth surveyed

30% are out of school (comprising 33% of all male and 26% of all female respondents)

27% are working full time or part time (47% of all male and 6% of all female respondents)

78% live in households that depend on income from the father's employment

51% have moved houses at least once in the past five years

27% have lost a close relative or friend in acts of violence or war

40% own a telephone

19   UN-Habitat Lebanon, Tripoli city profile 2016, Beirut: UN-Habitat Lebanon, 2017, p.36, https://unhabitat.org/tripoli-city-profile-2016/
20   UNDP/ARK, Regular perception surveys on social tensions throughout Lebanon, Waves 3 and 4, April and July 2018

3.2 Impact of PVE-related projects on personal resilience

> **Hypothesis 1:** Young men and women who participated in PVE-related resilience-building and civic engagement projects demonstrate higher personal resilience than youth who participated in non-PVE youth engagement projects in Tripoli.

Personal resilience is the ability of individuals to resist drivers of violent extremism (see Box 1). The priority resilience factors specific to Lebanese and Syrian youth in Tripoli were identified by practitioners and validated in interviews with key informants familiar with the context of youth development in Tripoli.

Box 1: Priority resilience factors influencing violent extremism in Tripoli

- **Psycho-social resilience (ability to take decisions, set goals and have dreams, problem solve, communicate in a positive way, trust oneself and others, work in a team)**
- **Community cohesion and positive networks**
- **Tolerance, pluralism, understanding diversity as an asset**
- **Understanding and respect for human rights**
- **Sense of belonging**
- **Ability to understand and deal with conflict non-violently**
- **Positive relations with the government, trust in the institutions and citizenship**

3.2.1 Psycho-social resilience

In terms of personal resilience, young people seem to be generally well supported and show high resilience. The majority (71%) of those surveyed reported going to a parent or an older sibling for help, and only 2% said they have nobody to go to, with no significant difference observed between the treatment and control groups. Mothers were the number-one support providers for both male and female participants, although more male youth were found to ask their fathers for help (25% versus 9%), or resort to a friend of the same age (11% versus 6%). (See Figure 2.)

In FGDs, most participants mentioned that their family members are supportive. Parents were not absent, but rather perceived as overly protective at times. The reluctance of youth to seek support from teachers and NGO staff, such as educators and coaches, was notable and indicative of the troubled relationship that youths have with school administrations and their teachers.

Figure 2: Who youth resort to for help when faced with a problem
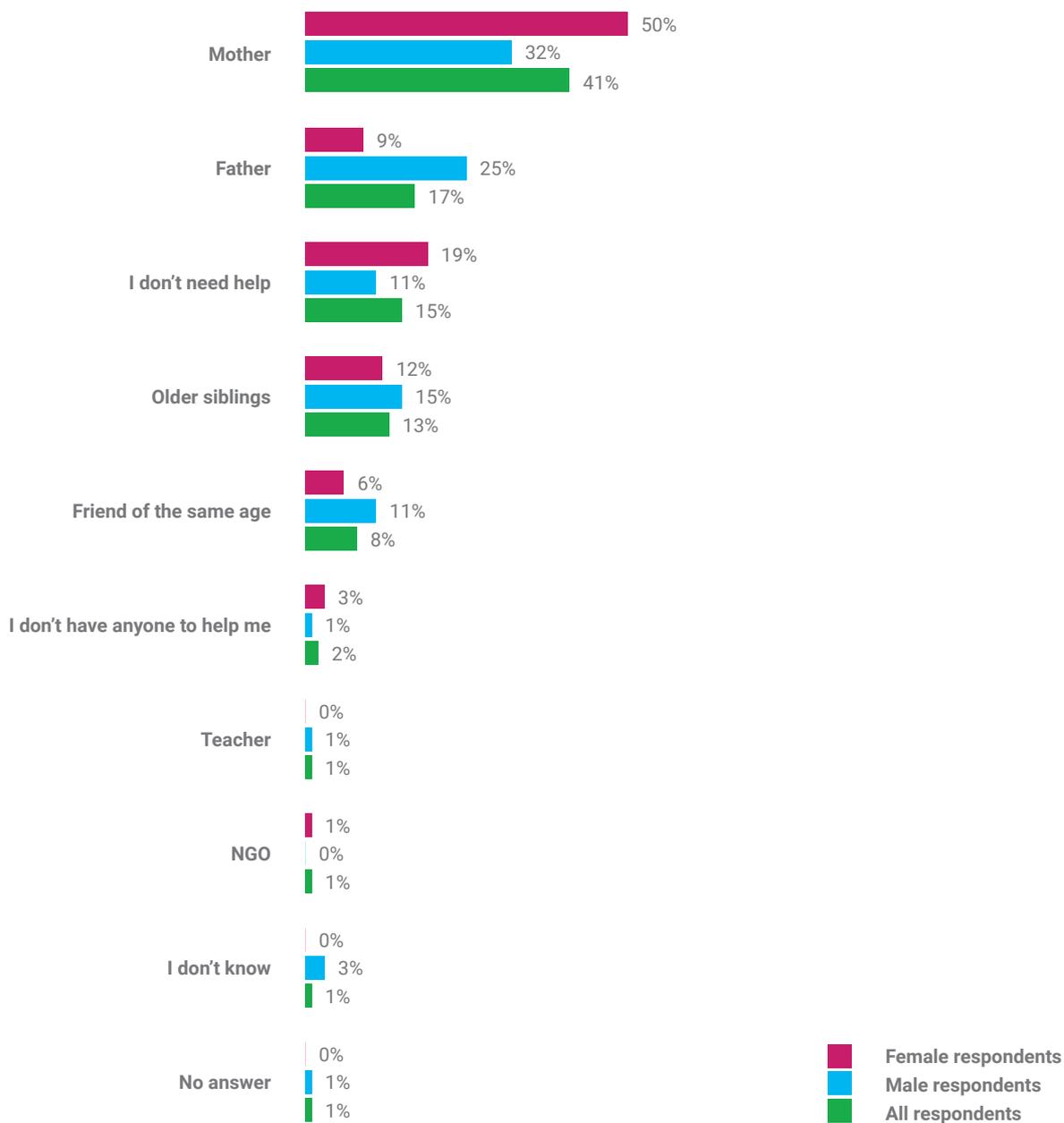
When asked questions related to their ability to solve problems and set goals and around general life satisfaction, the majority of young people responded very positively, with no significant difference between the treatment and control groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Youths' ability to problem solve and set goals and their general life satisfaction

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

My parents support me and listen to me
- 89%
- 86%
- 87%

I can think of different solutions to a given problem
- 87%
- 84%
- 85%

There are always different solutions for one problem
- 82%
- 77%
- 79%

I can achieve my objectives
- 82%
- 85%
- 84%

I am satisfied with my life
- 75%
- 81%
- 78%

■ Control group
■ Treatment group
■ All respondents
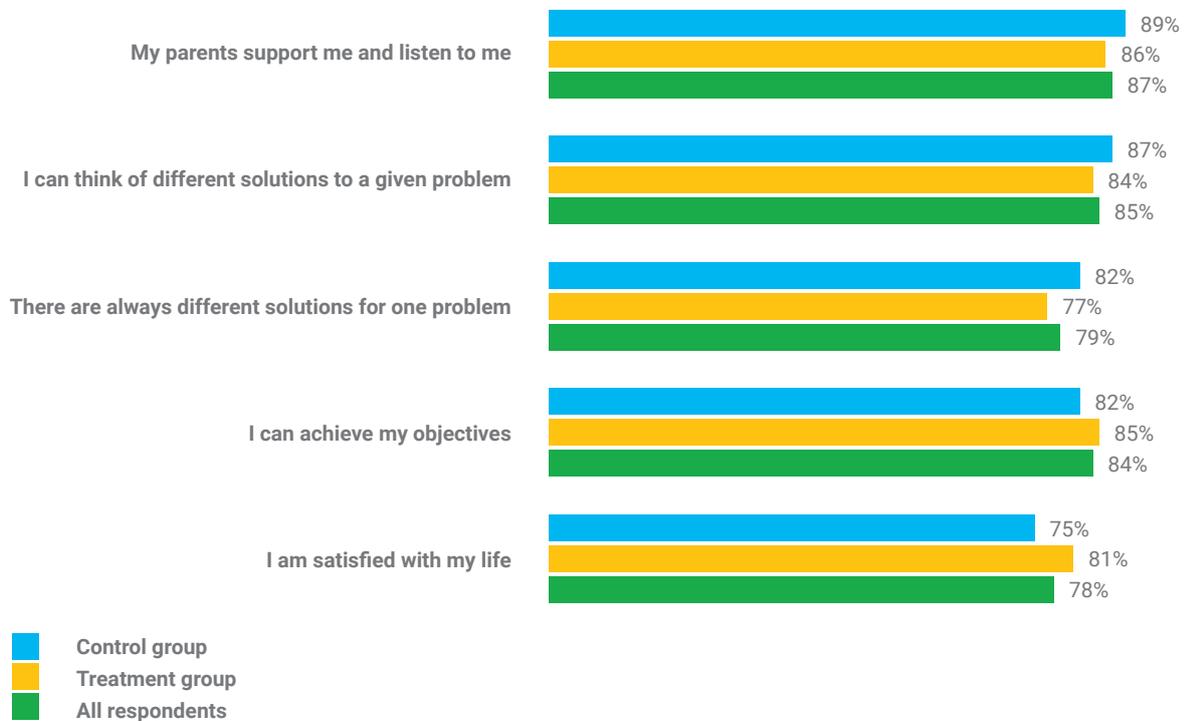
3.2.2 Self-confidence and sense of purpose

FGD participants in the treatment group elaborated on the value of the programmes they took part in and the details of what these programmes covered. Primarily, they stated these had a positive impact on their confidence and ability to speak up. Others highlighted the acceptance of others, particularly from different areas, nationalities and confessions – especially between Sunnis and Alawites. One Syrian male participant explained that he learned "how to protect oneself, how to communicate with others, and how to have peace in one's heart and in relationships with others".

Survey results confirm that PVE programmes have more of a positive impact on related resilience indicators, particularly those around sense of purpose and personal empowerment. Education enrolment does correlate with a higher sense of purpose among youth; however, the correlation is stronger with participation in PVE programming (see Figure 4). While respondents who are enrolled in education are 9% more likely to have a strong sense of purpose, participants in PVE programmes are 37% more likely to have a strong sense of purpose compared to participants in non-PVE programmes.

Figure 4: Youths' response to the statement "little of what I do has importance"

Youth who disagree/ strongly disagree	20%	57%	43%
	Control group	Treatment group	All respondents
Youth enrolled in education who disagree/strongly disagree	26%	61%	52%
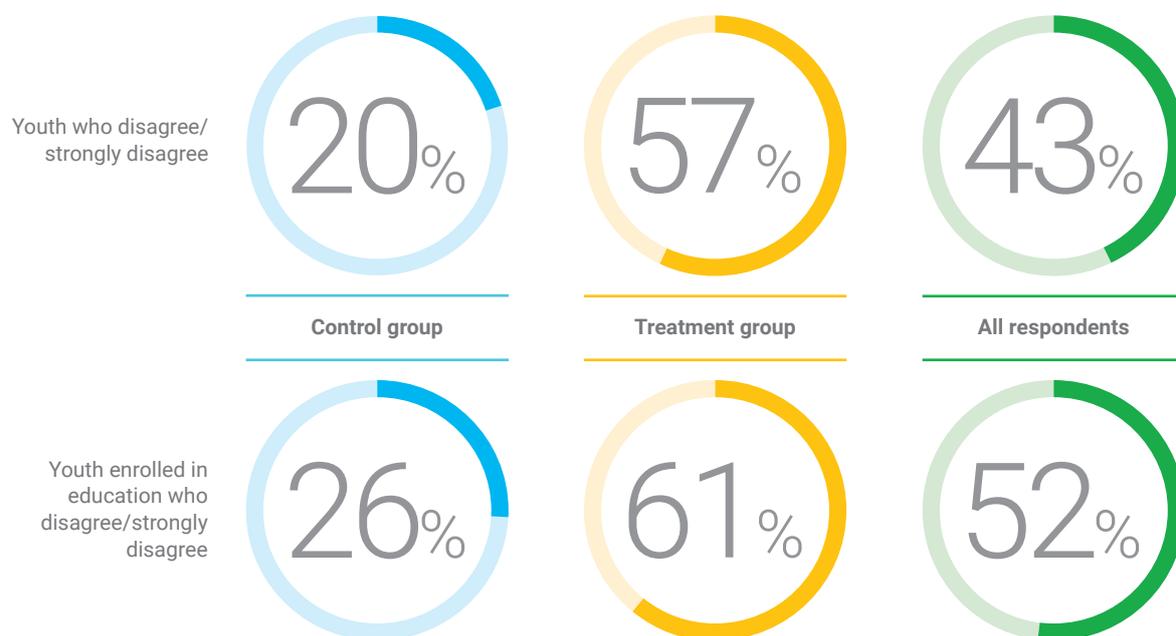
3.2.3 Community, insecurity and sense of belonging

FGD participants focused on three main aspects when describing their communities, namely, social relations, the environment and security. Participants were asked to discuss their community, and to describe aspects in it that they liked or disliked. Several spoke of communal solidarity in times of trouble as the key positive factor; however, many – particularly females – described tensions between neighbours mostly on issues related to cleanliness and use of space. Female participants spent more time at home and focused on domestic relationships and relationships in the neighbourhood, expressing discomfort with cafés that were often the source of harassment and where fights started. They also complained of social restrictions, mostly due to gossip that leads to families further restricting their daughters' movements. Male participants often spoke of public and hangout spaces, including cafés, and sports and gaming places, as the favoured parts of the community where they meet friends. In terms of the environment, piles of garbage and noise were common concerns for young people, often cited as evidence of recklessness of residents as well as neglect by the authorities. Participants expressed particular appreciation and pride in public gardens or historical sites if these were close to their homes.

Insecurity was a major concern for most of the youth, although this differed from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Several areas were named as problematic,[21] with residents of neighbouring areas saying things like: "I like nothing in my neighbourhood" and "the situation is such that I don't want to even leave the house, I feel I run the risk of getting a bullet in my head if I go out". Although youth spoke of a calm and supportive home environment, the reality of their violent neighbourhood affects school life, public life and relations between neighbours in ways that are beyond their control. Almost all FGD participants could easily recount violent incidents taking place in their neighbourhood in the previous week, including armed clashes that they had witnessed. Several reported carrying knives and two male participants reported using a knife in a fight. Whether or not they condoned violence, most male participants explained that being able to navigate the violent landscape in which they live is a necessary skill,

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21   This includes Bab al-Tabbaneh, Qobbe and al-Masaken, to name a few.

and that shying away from the use of violence or the inability to respond to it would result in their being labelled as cowards and being bullied. Although the FGD guide did not introduce this line of questioning, several youths spoke of the wide use of drugs. While this is not necessarily a sign that youth use drugs, several young people were aware how much certain drugs cost, commented on drug abuse habits of people they know, or gave examples of fights that escalated due to one involved party being on drugs.

Indicators on sense of belonging and participation were less positive than those on psycho-social resilience, but also showed some positive impact of PVE programming, particularly around having friends and feeling close to people in their neighbourhood (see Figure 5). Staff of organisations implementing PVE programmes explained that taking part in group activities not only introduces people to new friends, but also helps to build social skills around how to make friends, how to approach people, how to be sensitive and caring, and the common concerns and dreams of peers. This is a desired outcome of most youth programmes, particularly ones that have a life skills component.

Figure 5: Youths' sense of belonging

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

	Control group	Treatment group	All respondents
I have a group of friends that I can trust	49%	72%	63%
I often feel close to people who live in my neighbourhood	64%	75%	71%
The municipality is usually interested in helping	31%	60%	49%
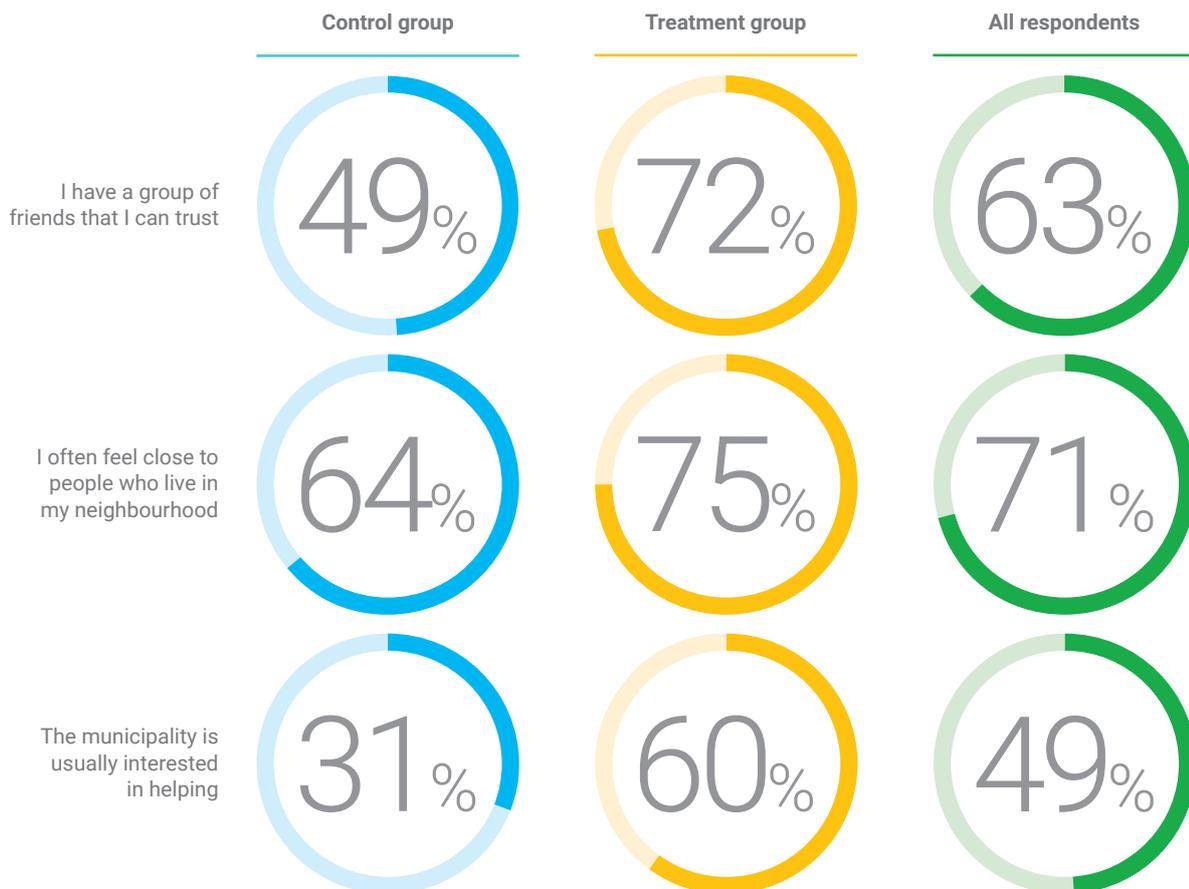
3.2.4 Relationships with and trust in state institutions

Survey results generally show little or no difference between treatment and control groups in terms of relationships with the state and state security institutions (see Figure 6). It is therefore not possible to correlate participation in PVE programmes with more positive perceptions of security actors.

Understandably, Syrian respondents were less comfortable than the Lebanese in seeking out security actors, with 41% of Syrians indicating that they are comfortable or very comfortable going to the police compared to 61% of the Lebanese.

Figure 6: Percentage of youths that feels comfortable seeking out security institutions

	Control group	Treatment group
Army point	64%	64%
General security	71%	63%
Police	47%	51%
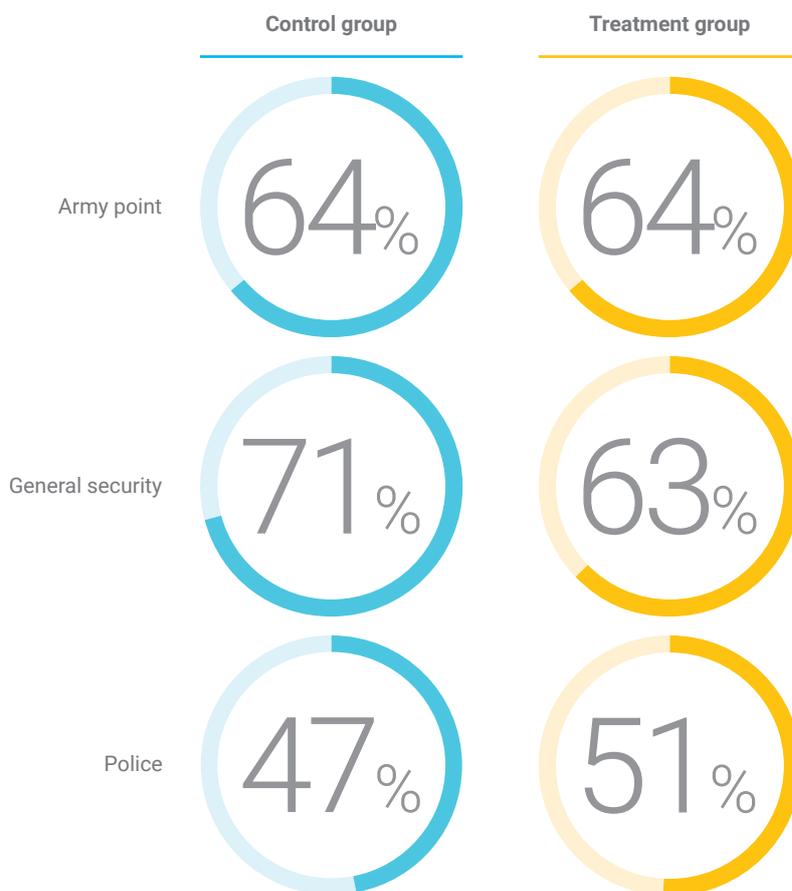
The FGDs revealed contradictory attitudes relating to young people's relationships with the army and police. While some youths expressed feeling comfortable when the army and police are stationed close to their place of residence or work and expressed frustration that their areas are neglected by security forces, several said they did not trust the army, citing examples of biased treatment, and its presence negatively affecting the image of their neighbourhood. Some described the security forces as inefficient, joking that, if they were to call the police or army when there was a fight, it would arrive long after the fight was over and the parties had reconciled.

Some respondents also talked about the commonality of shooting during election periods and the police never interfering due to the shooters being protected by the candidates. Others expressed a more problematic relationship with the state, not only in the de facto control of certain politicians, but also in relation to their neighbourhood in

particular. One youth, for example, said that the "state only enters our neighbourhood on a tank", rhetorically asking if the "state has the right to just shoot" the way it had in previous incidents in the area. The comment was particularly potent indicating resentment of the securitised attitude towards the areas in which they live. This securitisation, alongside many complaints in the same FGD relating to the quality and management of the public school and repeated crackdowns on drug use among youth, was described in contrast to the long-time neglect of the area by state institutions.

PVE programmes were found to have a clear correlation with attitudes towards the municipality, with almost double the respondents from the treatment group (60%) believing that the municipality is interested in helping them as compared to the control group (31%). Municipalities, particularly the one in Tripoli, were involved in the youth programmes implemented, either by hosting, attending or facilitating sports competitions. This resulted in more youth recognising the involvement of the municipality, leading to a better outlook on its work and intentions.

Overall, beneficiaries of PVE programmes in Tripoli demonstrated higher personal resilience in terms of a sense of purpose, sense of belonging and trust in the municipality than beneficiaries of non-PVE programmes. Regarding other aspects of personal resilience, such as the ability to set goals, solve problems and seek support, youths who participated in both PVE programmes and non-PVE programmes were found to have similarly high indicators of resilience. Youth attitudes towards security forces were found to be contradictory, expressing feelings of comfort when the army and/or police is stationed close by, alongside feelings of mistrust and accusations of biased treatment. Survey results generally showed little or no difference between treatment and control groups in terms of youths' relationship with the state and state security institutions, with the exception of the significantly higher confidence in the municipality's interest to help youth among PVE programme beneficiaries.

3.3 Resilience and vulnerability

Hypothesis 2: Higher personal resilience correlates with more nuanced perception, experience and response to key vulnerabilities.

Research participants were found to experience all vulnerabilities identified in the methodology (see Box 2). The lack of learning opportunities was associated with a poor quality of education and use of violence at school.

Box 2: Priority vulnerability factors influencing violent extremism in Tripoli

- **Sense of political marginalisation**
- **Unequal treatment of security forces**
- **Sense of social and economic injustice**
- **Lack of access to employment opportunities**
- **Degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn**
- **Lack of future prospects and sense of social and personal worth and purpose**
- **Disruptive social context and experiences of violence (linked to death of immediate family member (sibling/parent) or a close friend as a result of the war/fighting, experiences of displacement or own town/community being in a state of war)**

3.3.1 Degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn

Of 143 respondents, 43 (30%) were out of school (see Figure 7). While this is understandable given that the control group was chosen from participants in vocational training activities, the percentage of out-of-school youth was still high even from the treatment group (22%). During FGDs, participants explained that, after years of repeating their classes, they eventually quit after failing, indicating that the level of education they attained was much lower than that indicative of their age. While school dropout is sometimes linked to youth from poor families needing to work and supplement the income of their family, only 25% of out-of-school youth reported working full time.

Rather than pull factors in the marketplace, FGD participants linked school dropout almost predominantly to push factors in the school, including poor quality of education, unfair and humiliating treatment, excessive use of violence, and, in some cases, school interruption due to the security situation in Lebanon or Syria. Participants complained of the lack of commitment and limited supervision of teachers whom they described as only being interested in "receiving their salary at the end of the month". They spoke of a lack of academic support and frequent experiences of being ridiculed for poor performance. They described the school environment as violent, particularly for boys, where corporal punishment was widely used by teachers and where students – and in some cases their parents – also often reacted violently to teachers, administrators and other students.

Although this was the case among both Syrian and Lebanese youth, Syrian youth more frequently cited the disinterest of teachers, poor curriculum and experiences of humiliation. Girls, both Syrian and Lebanese, complained of harassment outside the school and, in one case, the enforcement of a conservative veil at a private school.

Figure 7: Length of time youths have been out of school (n=43)
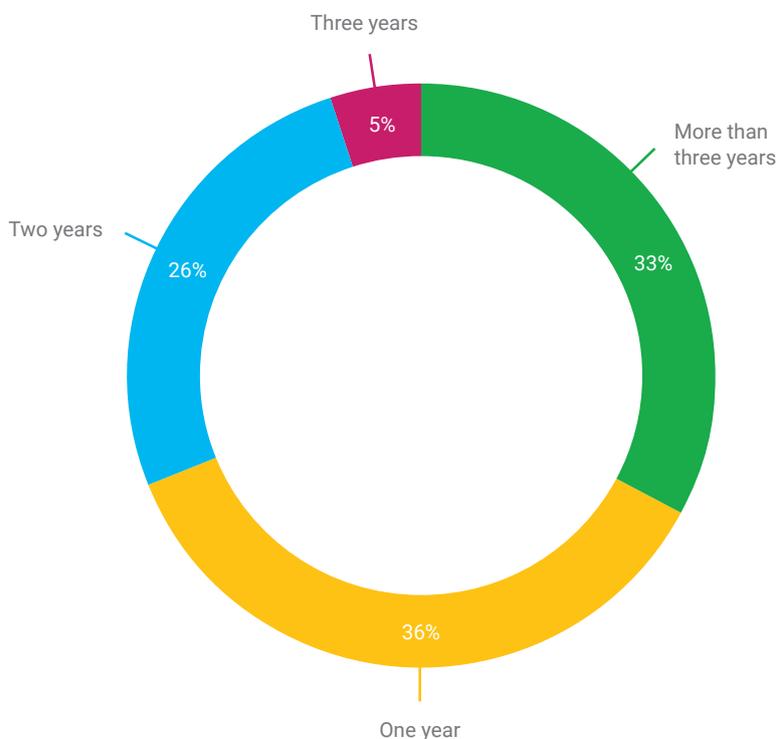
3.3.2 Future aspirations and ability to achieve them

Responses around future plans and aspirations, and ability to achieve them, varied between FGD participants according to gender and nationality. Lebanese male youth expressed feelings of a lack of prospects. They said that they either wished to immigrate so they can live "in dignity" and "have some worth", or alternatively, they wished that there would be work opportunities in Lebanon. They explained how unemployment and poverty were rampant, seeing this as evidence of state negligence. Syrian males predominantly wanted to travel, mostly back to Syria where they would have, according to them, the opportunity to start businesses. As one respondent expressed: "one's dream can only be realised in their country". Some Syrian and Lebanese male youths, despite a desire to travel, expressed concern over how they would be perceived and treated as "Muslims" abroad.

Girls on the other hand, both Syrian and Lebanese, were more positive. The majority discussed plans of gaining a specific degree or profession, such as becoming a teacher, accountant or starting a beauty salon. Some wanted jobs with the police or army, although all agreed for the need for *wasta*.[22] A few expressed more ambitious aspirations like travelling to "see the world", starting a charity to take care of orphans or "becom[ing] successful and famous".

When asked what job they would like to do in the future, respondents cited specific professions, mostly realistic ones that they have been trained to do or are doing already, such as working in a sweet shop, as a car mechanic, a civil or military servant, or a hairdresser. This largely explains why, when youths were asked if they think they will be able to achieve their aspirations, less than 20% said that they would not be able to do so. Youths from the treatment group appeared to be more confident about the possibility of their dreams coming true. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8: Youths' responses to whether they will be able to have their ideal job in 10 years' time
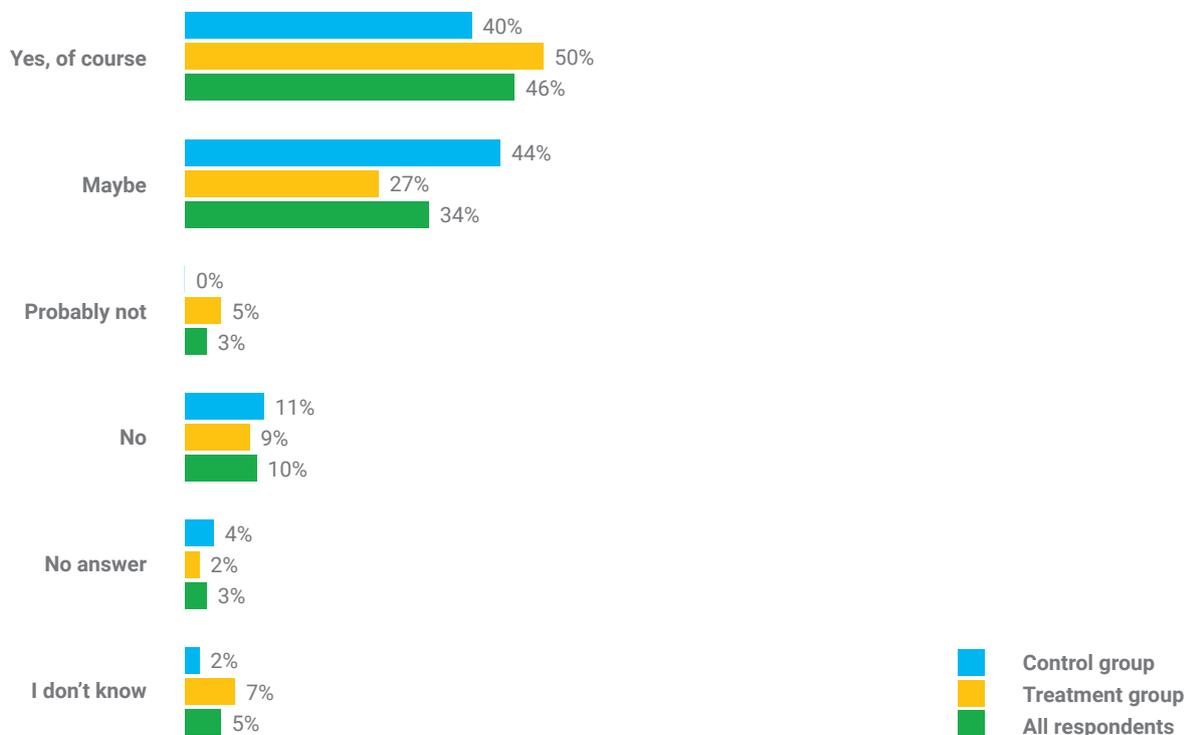
22   Personal connections used to get things done, often related to clientelistic relations with politically influential individuals.

Family members were found to be the preferred role models (see Figure 9). Parents were praised for their kindness, tolerance, integrity and ethics, followed by public figures who were largely admired for their success and fame. There were significant differences when comparing by nationality. Lebanese youth predominantly chose their parents as role models and only one Lebanese female youth chose a teacher or supervisor. Syrian youth had a wider spectrum of role models including teachers and employers, which included mostly NGO staff and teachers in private schools. Notably, 38% of all respondents said they had no role model. In the FGDs this was explained by wanting to be their "own selves", that they did not want to resemble others; however, for many others it was more to do with a lack of inspiring individuals around them. Whether there is a correlation between lower resilience and lack of role models is inconclusive.

A significant proportion of youths chose cousins as role models due to their educational achievements. Such role models represented attainable aspirations, given that those who have achieved them came from a similar context. It also demonstrates the role of wider family networks in building resilience.

Figure 9: Youths' preferred role models
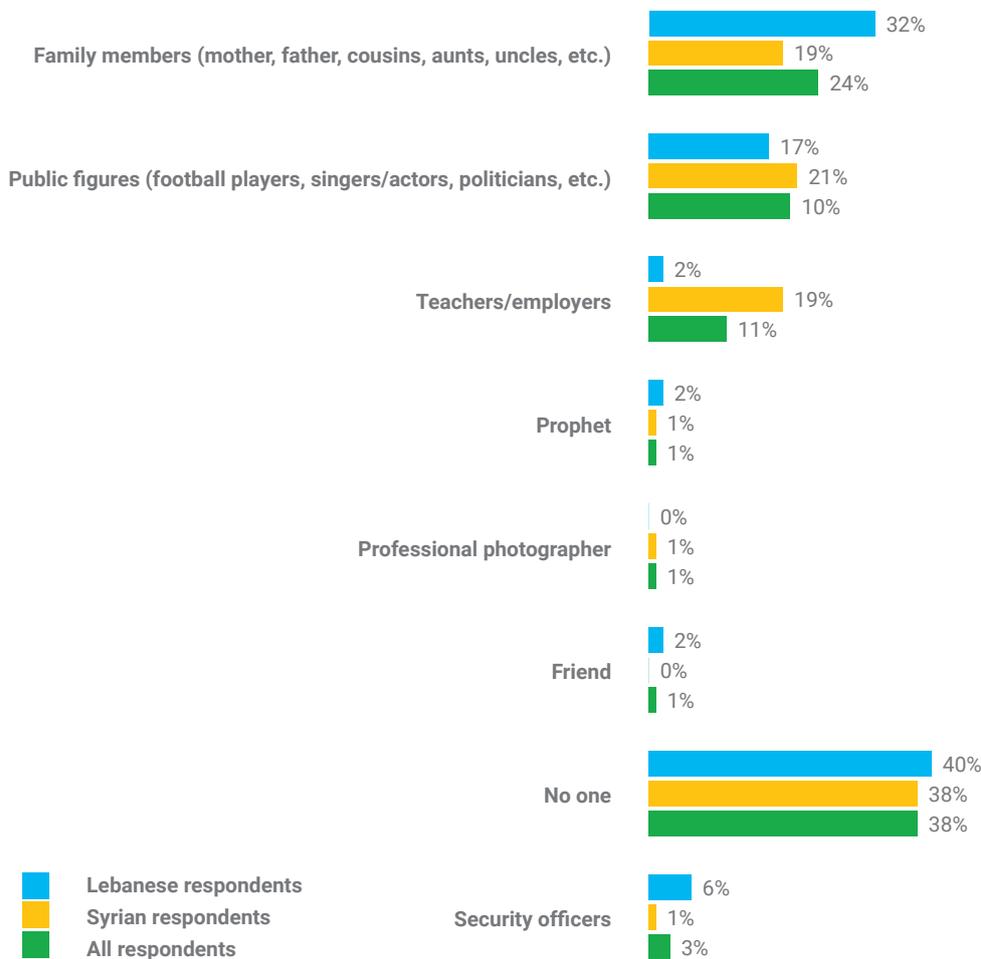
3.3.3 Views on marginalisation and injustice

Most youths described their areas as being in a worse condition than other parts of the country, only faring better than areas of Tripoli seen as more disadvantaged or insecure. Some compared their neighbourhood to other areas of Tripoli that are calmer or more affluent, while others compared it to the whole of Tripoli, to the country's capital Beirut, or to nearby "Christian" areas like Zgharta, Koura and Batroun. In describing her neighbourhood, one FGD participant said: "It is full of garbage, the streets are full of holes and are not properly paved…go to a Christian area and compare, it feels like you have been to another country."

One participant attributed the city's troubles to its residents failing to take care of it or keep it clean. Another blamed uninterested politicians who did not speak up on behalf of their constituency. As one female FGD participant explained: "the voices of Christians are better heard, they have parliamentarians who raise [issues]". A third perspective framed the condition of their neighbourhood as structural discrimination against Muslims, with an FGD participant claiming that Christians needed lower qualifications than Muslims to join the army.

Similar views on injustice were found among treatment and control groups, showing that PVE programming has little impact in this regard (see Figure 10). Injustice was felt by at least 50% of the respondents on most issues (including the perception that one's confession was the most vulnerable, that politicians neglect one's neighbourhood, or that discipline at home was suffocating). Unemployment was the one issue on which there was consensus, with 90% of survey respondents indicating that many people in their neighbourhood are struggling to find a job. Nevertheless, in FGDs, participants did not focus on this, which can possibly be explained by their age – while they recognize this as a key issue in their community from experiences of parents, older siblings and others, they have not yet been affected by this personally.

Treatment by the police and prisoners in Roumieh came up during two FGDs, many describing the detentions – be it on drug or "terrorism" charges – as unfair. One female participant spoke of a friend's father who was imprisoned before the start of the Syrian crisis for 10 years, only to be found not guilty. Others claimed that the state targets them, imprisoning many young men in their area, some of whom have confessed guilt, but many others who have done nothing wrong, and even some who were under 18 at the time.

A higher percentage of Lebanese youths as compared to Syrian youths perceived their neighbourhood and community as being marginalised. For example, 71% of the Lebanese believed their neighbourhood is not taken care of by politicians and does not receive any services compared to 56% of Syrians. In addition, 69% of the Lebanese believe their sect and its members are the most vulnerable and victimised compared to 51% of Syrians. The marginalisation of Syrian youths was perceived as being linked to their nationality. One Syrian male participant, for example, expressed that:

"In one's own country it is different. You wouldn't leave your house to find a thug threatening you with a knife or stealing your money, you would know the place better. Take a Lebanese person, for example. If he is faced with a problem, he reaches out to the Lebanese Army and they resolve it for him, but when a Syrian is involved, the army does not interfere."

Figure 10: Views on marginalisation and injustice in the regions and neighbourhoods of youths' residence

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

Many people in my region struggle to find a job
- Control group: 91%
- Treatment group: 90%
- All respondents: 90%

Only wealthy people get quality education in my region
- Control group: 58%
- Treatment group: 57%
- All respondents: 57%

Only wealthy people get quality health services in my region
- Control group: 58%
- Treatment group: 53%
- All respondents: 55%

I think the army and police do not treat people from all parts of the city equally
- Control group: 45%
- Treatment group: 48%
- All respondents: 47%

My neighbourhood, more than most other areas in Lebanon, is neglected by political leaders and receives no services
- Control group: 67%
- Treatment group: 60%
- All respondents: 63%

My sect and its members are marginalised in Lebanon today
- Control group: 64%
- Treatment group: 56%
- All respondents: 59%

People from my neighbourhood are more often sent to jail than people from other neighbourhoods
- Control group: 49%
- Treatment group: 43%
- All respondents: 45%

Legend:
- Control group
- Treatment group
- All respondents

3.3.4 Ability to fight injustice and challenge marginalisation

A difference between the control and treatment groups was observed in relation to the ability to fight injustice and challenge marginalisation: 71% in the control group believed there is nothing they can do to fight the injustice they are suffering compared to only 50% in the treatment group (see Figure 11). This is consistent with the empowering impact of PVE programming noted generally, with other variables, such as enrolment in education, appearing to have little impact on that perception. A slightly larger percentage of females (62%) compared to males (55%) tended to agree that there is nothing one can do to fight injustice. The empowering impact of participation in PVE programmes on the ability to fight injustice, as the section below indicates, increases young people's inclination to use violence to counter injustice.

Figure 11: Youths' ability to fight injustice and challenge marginalisation

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

	Control group	Treatment group	All respondents
Impossible to counter injustice without violence	24%	26%	25%
I feel like there is nothing I can do to fight the injustice I am suffering from	71%	50%	58%
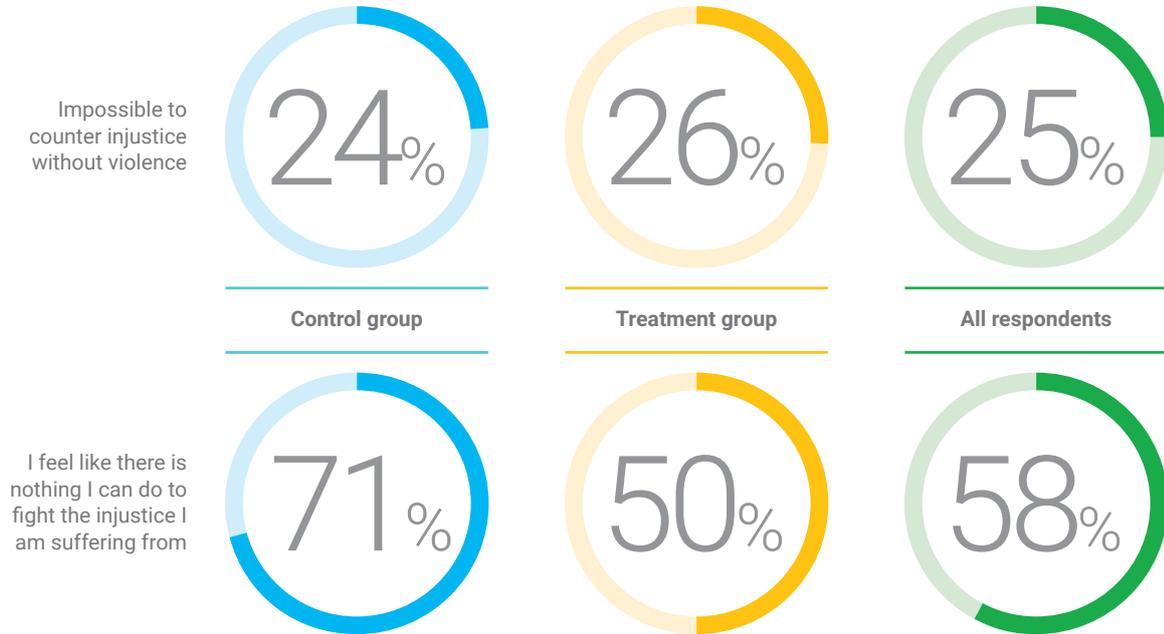
3.3.5 Correlation between resilience and vulnerability

In general, no major correlation was observed between higher resilience and more nuanced outlooks on vulnerability. The only resilience factors that correlated with one's ability to fight injustice are sense of purpose, ability to express emotions, and ability to accept people from other confessions and nationalities. There was no observable correlation between vulnerability and other resilience factors, including problem solving and goal setting, which are skills developed through life skills training programmes, and a greater sense of belonging (e.g. feeling close to people in your neighbourhood), which do not appear to correlate with one's belief that injustice can be confronted.

In terms of existing correlations, a weaker sense of purpose correlates with higher vulnerability. Those who believe that little of what they do has value were more likely to believe that there is nothing they can do to fight injustice (76% compared to 58% of all respondents). They were also more likely to believe that the only way to fight injustice is through the use of violence (45% compared to 25%). (See Figure 12.)

A second correlation was observed in relation to the ability to express emotions: 68% of those who cited difficulty in expressing emotions believed that there is nothing they can do to fight injustice, compared to 58% of all participants.

The third and most evident correlation was in relation to the ability to make friends with people of other nationalities or confessions. Those who believed that it was difficult to make friends with either group tended to have a stronger perception of being discriminated against, and expressed a greater inability to fight injustice and more prevalent perception of violence being the only way to fight injustice. (See Figure 13.) This correlation does not mean that there is necessarily a causal relationship between acceptance of others and the ability to fight injustice. FGDs

indicate that it is possibly the greater sense of injustice that causes some youth to not want to interact with people from other confessions and nationalities. Youths in some neighbourhoods indicated that they are often singled out as trouble-makers by the authorities and by other communities, making it harder for them to venture beyond their narrow community.

Figure 12: Youths' views on fighting injustice

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

There is nothing I can do to fight injustice

76%

58%

Those who agreed/strongly agreed with the statement: "Little of what I do has value"

All respondents

The only way to fight injustice is through the use of violence

45%

25%
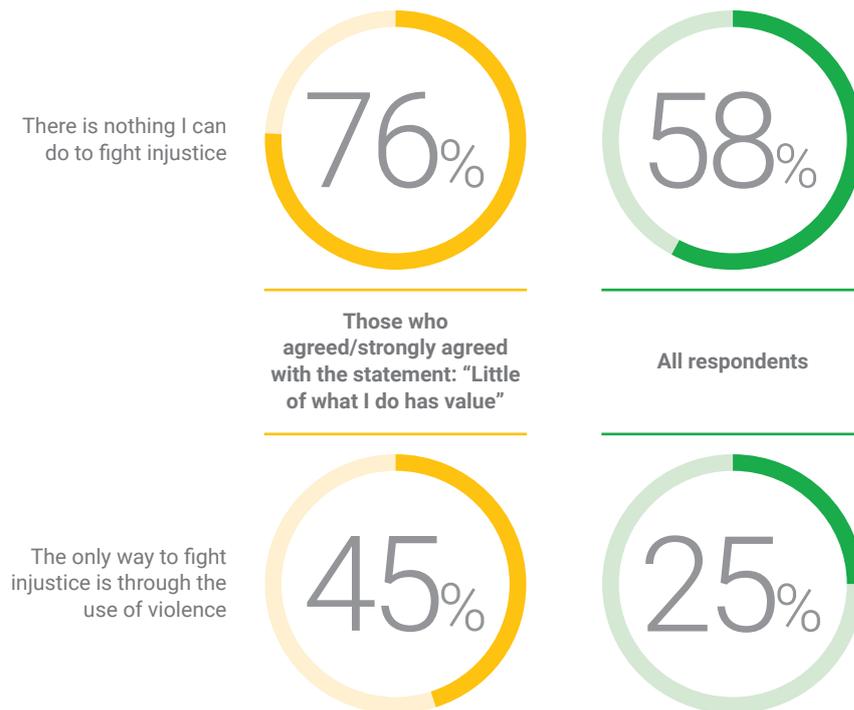
It was found overall that higher personal resilience does not directly correlate with a more nuanced perception, experience and response to key vulnerabilities related to violent extremism. While a stronger sense of purpose has a positive correlation with the belief that one can fight injustice, other aspects of resilience, such as the ability to problem solve or a strong sense of belonging, were not found to lead to being empowered to fight injustice. Overall, marginalisation and lack of prospects were perceived similarly by beneficiaries of PVE and non-PVE programmes, indicating that PVE interventions targeting youth do not impact either the structural causes of violent extremism or the ways these are seen by beneficiaries. Most youths described their areas as being in a worse condition than other parts of the country, mostly blaming this on neglect by politicians and highlighting the poor quality of education, including excessive use of violence in schools, as well as limited employment opportunities as the key problem areas.

Figure 13: Youths' perceptions of making friends with people from other confessions and nationalities and how these affect their views on marginalisation

Agree/strongly agree with the below statements

	Those who agreed/strongly agreed with: "It is difficult to make friends from other confessions"	Those who agreed/strongly agreed with: "It is difficult to make friends of other nationalities"	All respondents
Police do not treat all people equally	57%	54%	47%
I feel there is nothing I can do to fight injustice	70%	69%	58%
The only way to fight injustice is through the use of violence	40%	42%	25%
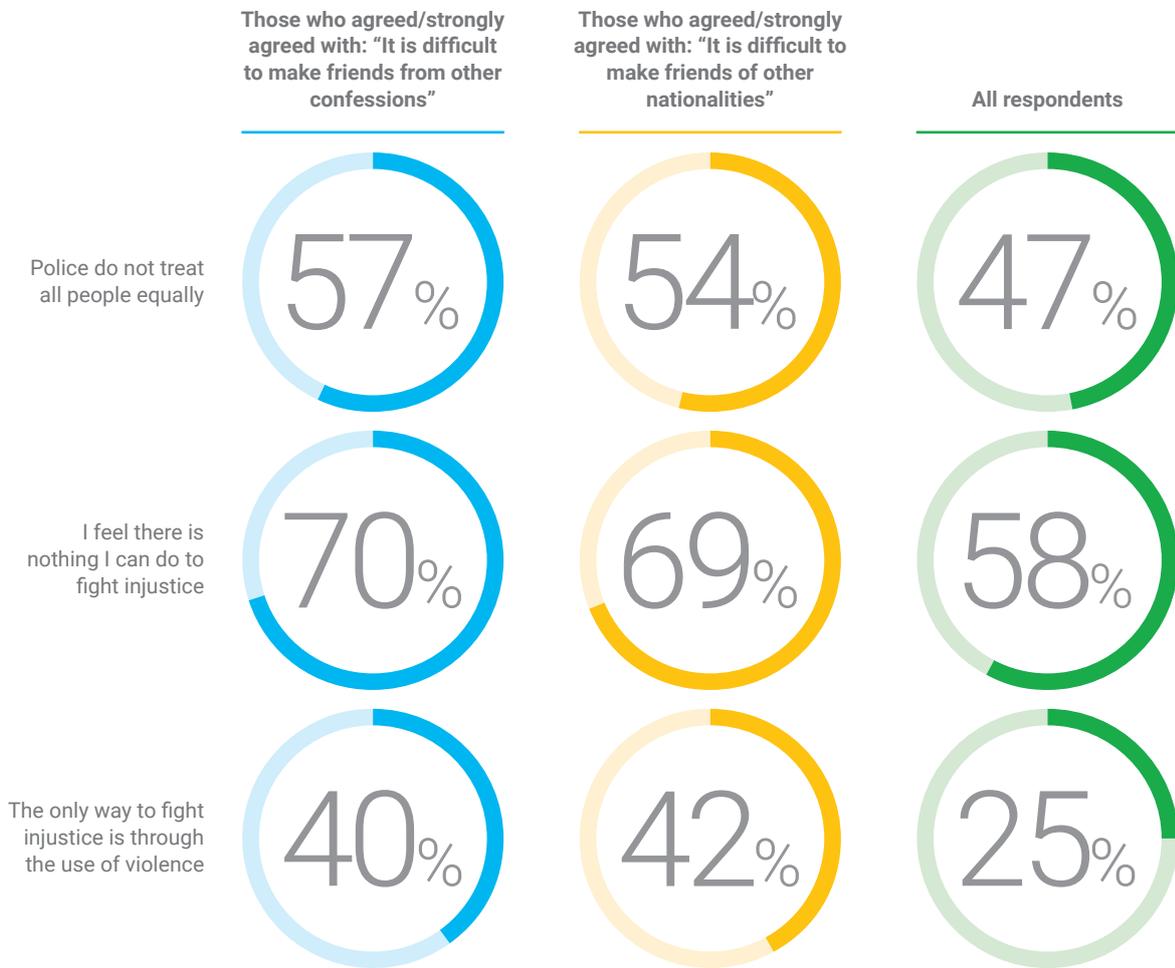
3.4 Violence and armed groups: an intricate understanding

Hypothesis 3: Higher personal resilience correlates with lower support for violence and armed groups.

Support for violence was measured through scenario-based questions exploring when it is acceptable to use physical violence. Supporting armed groups was mostly measured qualitatively, as survey questions referring to specific political actors or groups were found to be too sensitive by the organisations supporting the research.

3.4.1 Everyday fighting and use of violence

Youths in FGDs showed a nuanced understanding of violence and its use. They elaborated on why young people resort to violence, which included "showing off", "demonstrating masculinity", "defending themselves, friends

and family", and "standing one's ground". The examples that FGD participants gave were mostly in this category, including in response to provocations or insults, or romantic relationships, where, for example, young men fought with the young men who courted their sisters. When asked why young people fight, survey respondents most commonly cited self-defence and defending friends and family. (See Figure 14.)

Other reasons were also given. One Lebanese youth explained that he carries a knife with him as he finishes work late and has to walk through neighbourhoods he perceives as unsafe: "in this country, you need to carry something to defend yourself". Another described using a knife in a fight to defend his cousin who was targeted by the brother of a girl he was talking to. He felt so shaken and disturbed by the incident, however, he told his father what happened and went to apologise to the family of the young man he injured. The explanation of "defence" parallels youths' descriptions of the context in which they live, where violence is widely used in day-to-day interactions and where responding violently is necessary. Male FGD participants almost unanimously agreed that, if they did not stand their ground, they would be subject to repeated harassments and be branded as cowards.
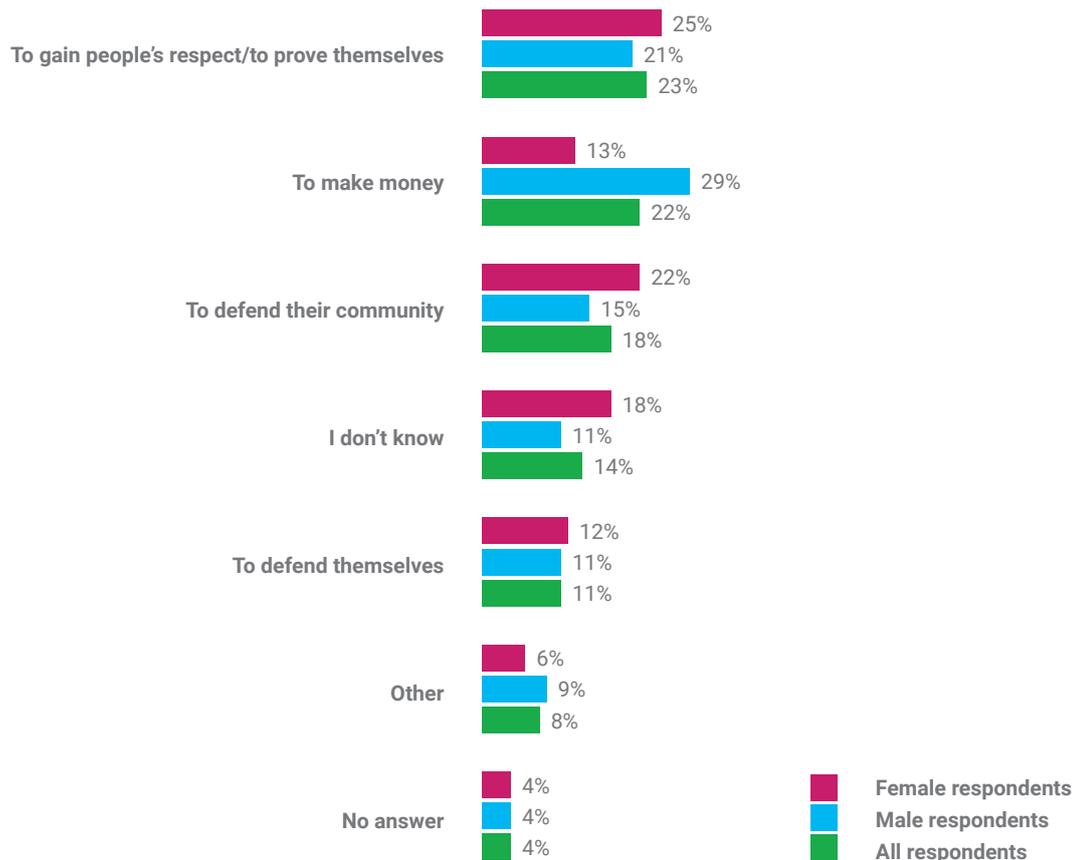
Figure 14: Why young people fight
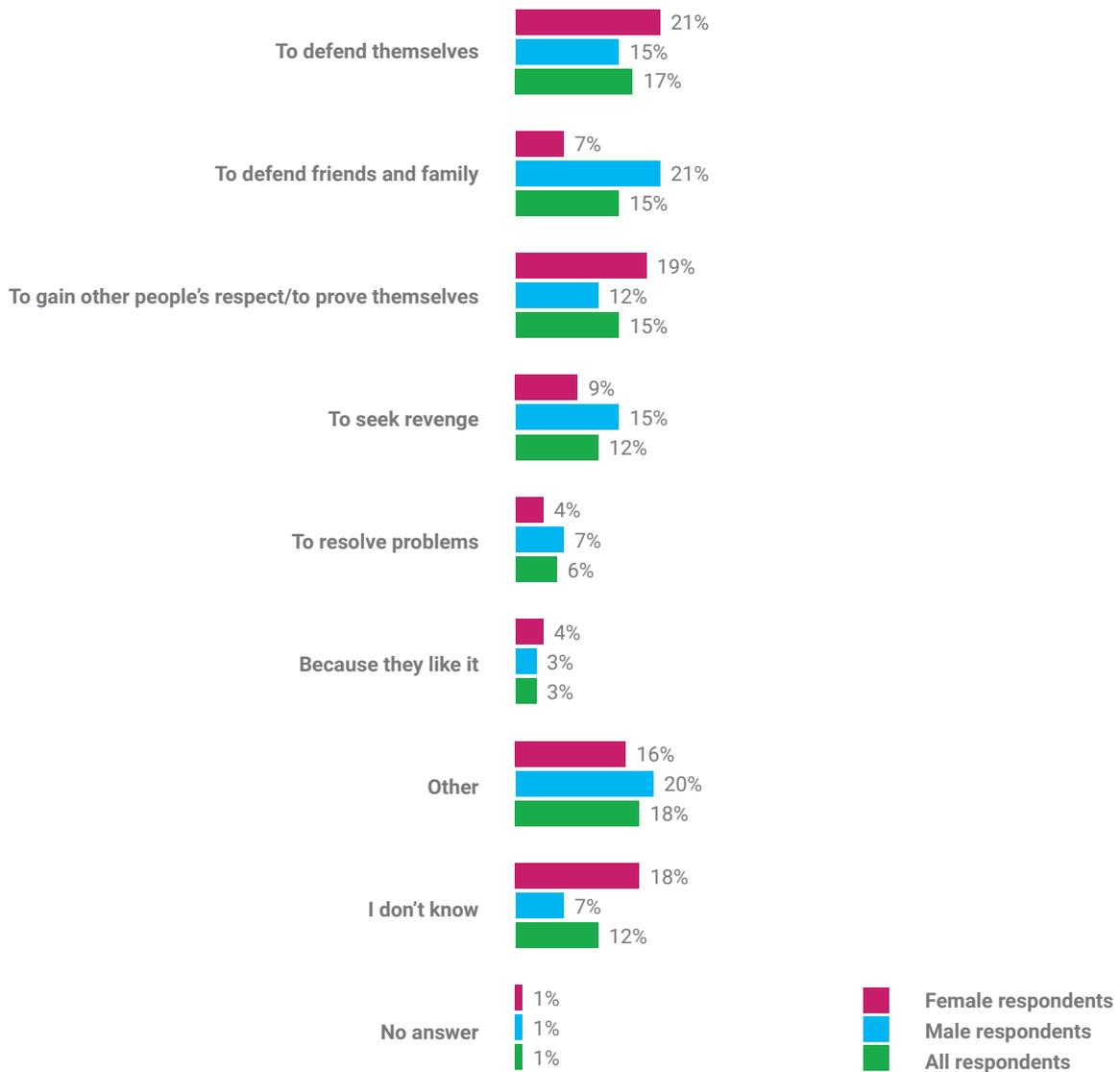
Female respondents stressed the "showing off" and "demonstrating masculinity" elements of young people's use of violence, with some of the young men confirming this, explaining that when girls are present they are more likely to escalate a fight to show off. Sometimes this demonstration of masculinity is used in the house, with several girls expressing frustration at their brothers' authoritarian attitude towards them, with two girls saying they are thankful they have no brothers. At least two female FGD participants explained that their brothers were harsher and stricter than their fathers, while others expressed fear that when fights start in the neighbourhood their brothers might become involved.

3.4.2 Joining an armed group for financial gain

Survey participants' responses around why people carry arms further reflected the tendency to use violence as a way of "showing off", with some respondents believing that carrying arms would give them more value. (See Figure 15.) Participants did not necessarily agree, however, that carrying guns actually makes you more worthy of respect, but rather that some of the youth who did it were motivated by such thinking. One even compared the various ways of "showing off" between Tripoli and his northern village, arguing that in the village people showed off through the display of wealth, whereas in Tripoli violence and arms were more commonly used.

Figure 15: Reasons young people carry arms or join an armed group

To gain people's respect/to prove themselves
- Female respondents: 25%
- Male respondents: 21%
- All respondents: 23%

To make money
- Female respondents: 13%
- Male respondents: 29%
- All respondents: 22%

To defend their community
- Female respondents: 22%
- Male respondents: 15%
- All respondents: 18%

I don't know
- Female respondents: 18%
- Male respondents: 11%
- All respondents: 14%

To defend themselves
- Female respondents: 12%
- Male respondents: 11%
- All respondents: 11%

Other
- Female respondents: 6%
- Male respondents: 9%
- All respondents: 8%

No answer
- Female respondents: 4%
- Male respondents: 4%
- All respondents: 4%

Female respondents
Male respondents
All respondents

FGDs further highlighted the difference between "joining an armed group" and "carrying arms". Participants named various local leaders who perform strong-arm racketeering and engage in violent activities on behalf of a political figure, and support him during election periods, and who have a following or a group of members most of whom are armed and perform services on the local leader's behalf. Some older youth in the neighbourhoods work for such local leaders – including, for example, the brother of one of the female FGD participants. Such employment was seen as a "security job" and did not necessarily have ideological or political motivations, but rather clientelistic attachments to a leader who both controls and provides support to the area where young people live. These comments correlate with findings that male youth were more likely to explain the joining of an armed group with the need to make money (29%, more than double the percentage of female respondents). Followers of various groups sometimes clashed, most recently during the election period.

Young people's opinion of joining such groups varied, and again showed an intricate understanding of local dynamics. The key motivating factors are the stamina of the leader and financial benefits, although some believe that fighters are manipulated by politicians who use them in their political feuds. For some – and mostly depending on the neighbourhood – such local leaders provided services to the community and supported its residents financially, particularly in times of crisis, as in the case of an urgent medical need or if they were in trouble with the authorities. One local leader was described as a Robin Hood figure who "takes from the rich and gives to the poor", and several youth saw him as a role model, "because all people like him" and because "he is there for people in need". They acknowledged he commits racketeering but excused it as it was not against the people of his own neighbourhood, and even asserted that the "state" is with him given that he has support of some politicians.

In other cases, youth excused the local followers of such networks, echoing sympathetic statements like "what else can he do, he needs to feed his children", but did not excuse the leader. Particularly in relation to Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, money was seen as the main motivator for joining an armed group.

In a similar vein, participants explained why people joined groups fighting in Syria. Participants said their neighbourhoods were poor and that US$200 was enough to persuade some people. Others explained that some went because they believed it was the right thing to do due to their "faith". The latter also explains why some women went, as it was either with their husbands or to marry men there. All expressed their disillusionment with the Islamic State (IS), telling stories of those who went and realising that:

> *"Now we know that there is no Islamic State. It is all lies. The Islamic State does not burn people. Does not kill people."*

Communities have been scarred by the few cases of young people who joined IS. FGD participants lamented that those who should now be in their 20s and early 30s, and their brothers and cousins who should be guiding and supporting them, are now missing, having either been killed in Syria or held in prison in Lebanon. As one male Lebanese FGD participant described it:

> *"It was the best neighbourhood ever, and the guys in it were some of the best. They were people we learned from and they helped us understand life. They never made us feel like we were children. We used to hang out in the computer place and play games. Half of these men are in jail. The other half went to Syria."*

Participants also complained that, since the start of the crisis in Syria, their community has been a target of Lebanese security operations and continuously raided not only on terrorism-related charges but also on drug-related ones, with arrests often unjustified.

3.4.3 Attitudes towards the use of violence

Less than 50% of the youth surveyed believed that it is okay to hit someone who hits you first, and even less believe that the only way to defend one's community is through the use of force, further confirming that their own opinions around violence do not correspond with their assessment that they need to use violence. (See Figure 16.) The gender and nationality differences here are notable, with considerably more male (60%) than female (35%) youth believing that it is okay to hit someone who hits you first and more Lebanese (56%) than Syrians (43%) believing this.
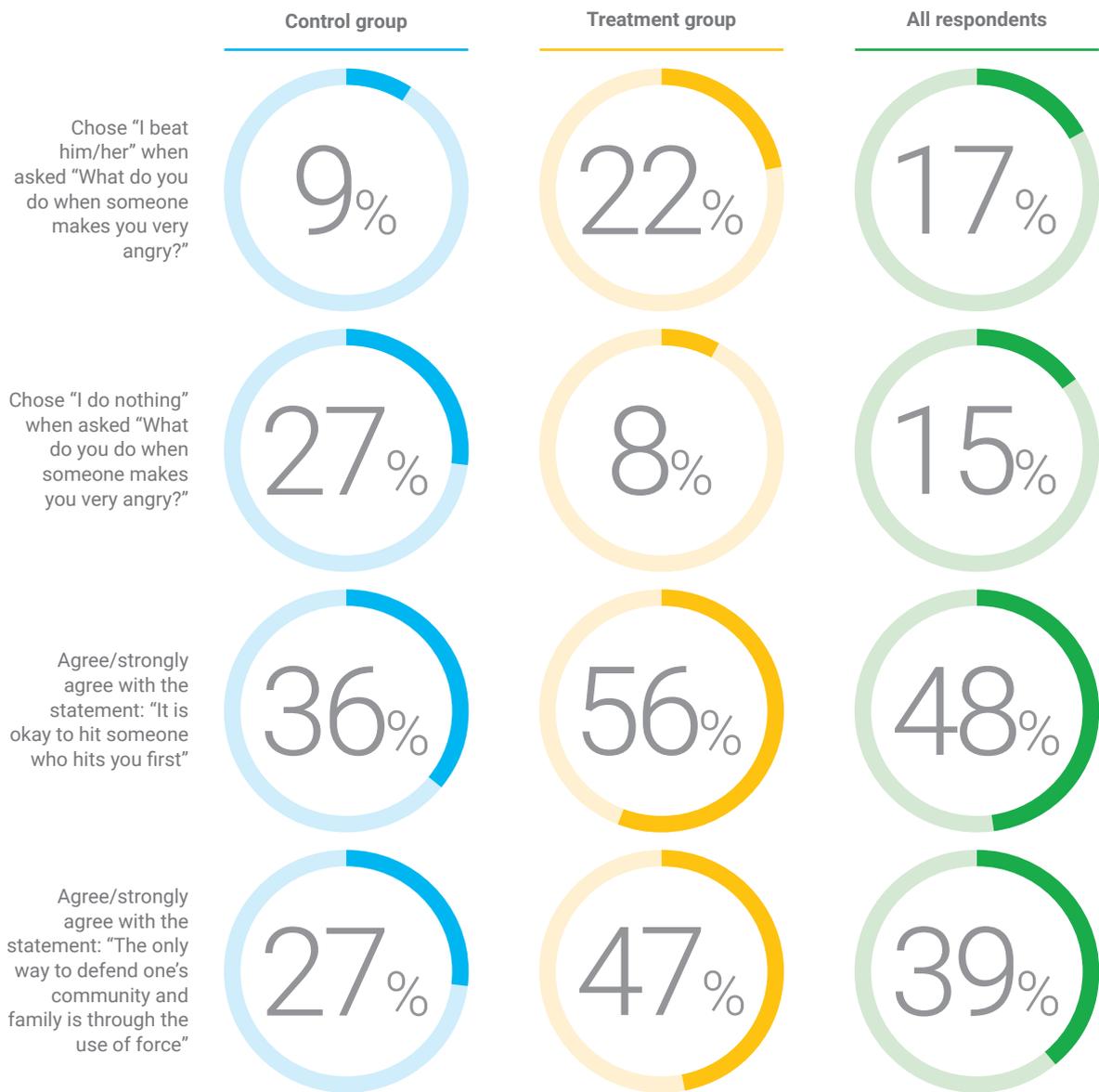
Figure 16: Youths' views on the use of violence

It's okay to hit someone who hits you first

| Female | Male | All respondents |
| 35% | 60% | 48% |

The only way to defend one's community and family is through the use of force

| 31% | 56% | 39% |
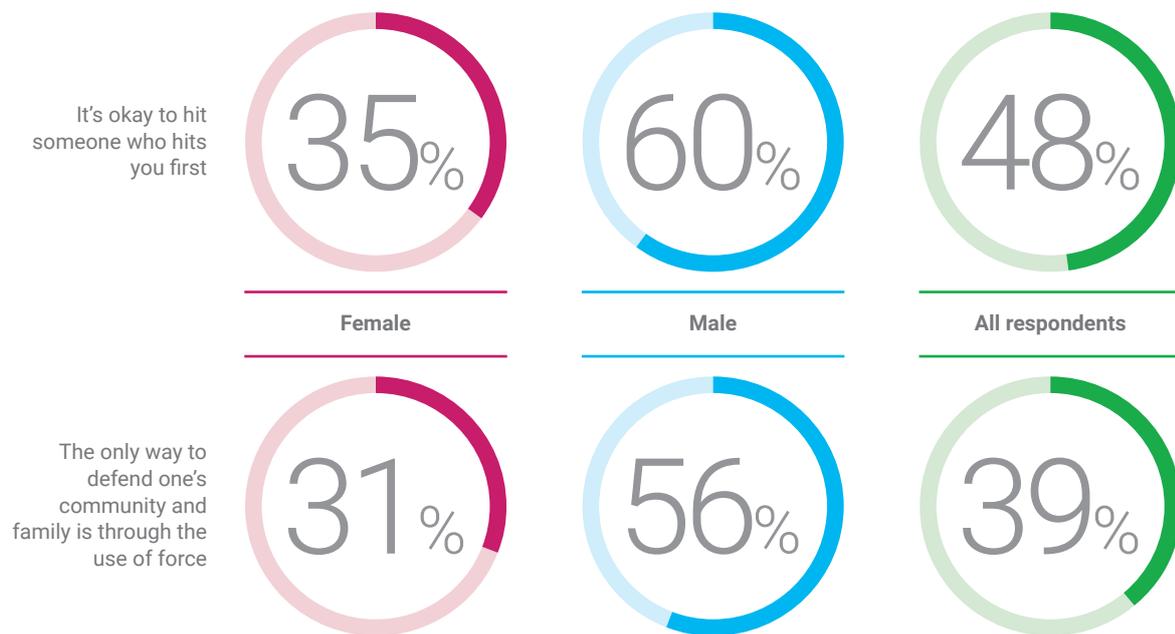
It is also notable that participation in PVE programming seems to result in a more favourable attitude towards violence, with 13% more participants in PVE programmes than those in the control group choosing to "beat" somebody if they make them angry, and 20% more in the former group believing that it is okay to hit someone who hits you first and that the only way to defend one's community and family is through the use of force.

Given the widespread use of violence, some of these beliefs could be the result of young people becoming empowered through PVE programme activities, rather than due to the "acceptance of violence" per se. Given that the inability to face violence was described as a sign of weakness, it is possible that youth who have been through an empowering experience might be more willing to respond to perceived injustice, as evident from the much lower percentage of treatment group (8%) compared to control group (27%) participants who choose to "do nothing" in a situation where someone makes them angry. (See Figure 17.) Programme staff of one of the participating organisations indicated that youth participants of PVE programmes are encouraged to fight for their rights, refuse injustice, protect themselves against any impending harm, take care of themselves and value their lives. Participants in PVE programmes may therefore be led to believe that they should defend their rights in any way, even with violence, if that is what is needed. Such an attitude might also be influenced by sports coaches (an integral part of one of the PVE programmes selected for this research was sports training). Sports coaches – who were difficult to recruit and came from a physical education background and not a peacebuilding one – sometimes encouraged self-defence, even if that meant using violence, and/or used violent coaching methods.

Figure 17: Youths' attitudes towards the use of violence

	Control group	Treatment group	All respondents
Chose "I beat him/her" when asked "What do you do when someone makes you very angry?"	9%	22%	17%
Chose "I do nothing" when asked "What do you do when someone makes you very angry?"	27%	8%	15%
Agree/strongly agree with the statement: "It is okay to hit someone who hits you first"	36%	56%	48%
Agree/strongly agree with the statement: "The only way to defend one's community and family is through the use of force"	27%	47%	39%

3.4.4 Correlation between resilience, vulnerability and attitudes towards the use of violence

Survey results showed no correlation between the majority of resilience and vulnerability indicators and attitudes towards the use of violence. Questions were asked around the ability to express one's own feelings; perception of parents' support; ability to problem solve and life satisfaction; as well as relations with state institutions; level of frustration with, and possible responses to, injustice; the ability to challenge marginalisation; and sense of belonging and productivity. Only two correlations were observed: a larger percentage of those who had difficulties making friends with people of other nationalities believed that it is okay to hit someone who hits you first (65% compared to 48% of all respondents) and that violence is the only way to defend one's community (58% compared to 39% of all respondents). (See Figure 18.)

Figure 18: Attitudes towards the use of violence among all respondents and those who believe making friends of other nationalities is difficult

Agree/strongly agree that it is okay to hit someone who hits you first

65%

48%

Agreed/strongly agreed that it is difficult to make friends with other nationalities

All respondents

Agree/strongly agree that violence is the only way to defend one's community

58%

39%

Violence is an integral part of young people's lives and a necessary survival skill for "defending themselves, friends and family", "demonstrating masculinity" and "standing one's ground". No correlation was observed between higher resilience and a decreased support of violence and armed groups. One exception is the link between intercommunity trust and potential use of violence: youth who find it difficult to make friends with peers of other nationalities are more likely to express that the use of violence is acceptable. Participation in PVE programmes correlated with a stronger support of violence, which is likely to be due to the empowerment effect of the programmes and the absence of targeted activities to discourage the use of violence.

Joining an armed group was seen as different and described as a form of employment. Such employment was seen as a "security job" – mostly by male respondents – and did not necessarily have any ideological or political motivation, but rather clientelistic attachments to a leader who both controls and provides support to the area where young people live. This demonstrates that supporting armed groups is often the result of structural vulnerabilities, such as limited access to employment opportunities and services, and is mostly linked to local thugs with political backing rather than armed groups fighting in Syria.

One of the city's narrow and overcrowded neighbourhoods, Tripoli, Lebanon
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4. Conclusions

The research established that beneficiaries of PVE projects display a higher sense of purpose, belonging and trust in the municipality – elements identified in the conceptual framing as resilience factors contributing to PVE. In contrast, other aspects of personal resilience, such as the ability to set goals, problem solve or seek help when needed, were similar for beneficiaries of both PVE and non-PVE projects. This indicates the ability of educational programmes to build resilience through life skills training and their potential to address other resilience factors if they borrow from PVE resilience-building methodologies. Trust in the state, including security forces, is not higher among PVE project beneficiaries, although it is recognised as a significant resilience factor. The exception is trust in the municipality, which is visibly pronounced among PVE project beneficiaries, possibly due to the association between implementing organisations and local authorities. Another key finding is that participation in PVE programmes correlates with stronger relations with friends and people from one's neighbourhood, which are seen as indicators of a sense of belonging and relates to social cohesion approaches applied in PVE programming.

While PVE project beneficiaries appear to have higher resilience, this resilience does not correlate to a more nuanced experience or response to key identified vulnerabilities relating to violent extremism. Beneficiaries of PVE and non-PVE projects share very similar vulnerabilities, such as a lack of employment opportunities (90%) and disregard of one's neighbourhood by politicians (63%). The only resilience factor that PVE projects seem to influence and that correlates with the individual ability to fight injustice is sense of purpose. Overall, youth-focused PVE interventions do not seem to impact vulnerabilities to violent extremism.

Similarly, no correlation was observed between higher resilience and a decreased level of supporting violence and armed groups. The one positive correlation found was that youth who find it difficult to make friends

with peers of other nationalities (a factor of weak resilience) are more likely to condone violence. Surprisingly, beneficiaries of PVE programmes demonstrated a more favourable attitude towards violence. While this could be a result of young people being empowered and refusing "to do nothing", it also indicates that youth-focused PVE projects are not successfully challenging prevalent attitudes that violence is an acceptable means for seeking justice. Beneficiaries of both PVE and non-PVE projects showed a nuanced understanding of violence and its use, but confirmed that violence is common in everyday life and is used to "defend oneself, friends and family", "demonstrate masculinity" and "stand one's ground" so as to not be labelled as cowards. Joining an armed group, however, was not associated with fighting injustice but rather seen as a "security job" and a clientelistic attachment to a leader who both controls and provides support to the area where young people live. More than anything, youth resilience, vulnerability and attitudes towards violence were influenced by the prevalent use of violence in their schools and neighbourhoods, compelling youth to use violence as an adaptation strategy, and highlighting the need for systemic interventions to create supportive school and family environments alongside building individual resilience.

The evidence that emerged from this research highlights that PVE programmes are successful in building some aspects of individual resilience that other youth programmes do not achieve. Alongside individual resilience, PVE programmes targeting youth need to strengthen key aspects of community resilience such as community cohesion and positive networks, and the ability to understand and deal with conflict non-violently. The increase in individual resilience in itself does not lead to a change in how key vulnerabilities are perceived, as these remain unaddressed, and does not affect attitudes to violence that prevail in the community. Parallel work on addressing vulnerabilities to violent extremism is needed to achieve effective prevention, including through increasing economic opportunities, improving the quality of education and strengthening the rule of law.

Appendix:

Questions chosen as indicative

A. Personal resilience	Question 105: Are you in formal schooling?
	Question 110: How many times have you moved in the past five years?
	Question 204: "I do nothing" in response to "What do you do when someone makes you really angry?"
	Question 204: "I beat him/her" in response to "What do you do when someone makes you really angry?"
	Question 206: Disagree/strongly disagree with the statement "I find it difficult to express my feelings clearly"
	Question 207: Agree/strongly agree with "I have a group of friends that I trust"
	Question 208: Agree/strongly agree with "My parents are supportive and they listen to me"
	Question 209: Agree/strongly agree with "I can think of many ways to get out of a difficult situation"
	Question 212: Agree/strongly agree with "I am satisfied with my life"
	Question 215: Disagree with "Little of what I do with my time has value"
B. Relations with the community	Question 301a: Comfortable/very comfortable in answer to "How comfortable would you feel if you had to go to the municipality?"
	Question 302: Agree/strongly agree with "Municipality is willing to help"
	Question 302: Agree/strongly agree with "Municipality treats everybody equally"
	Question 303: Agree/strongly agree with "I generally feel close to people who live in my neighbourhood"
	Question 306: Disagree with "I think it is difficult to make friends with people from a different nationality"
	Question 307: Disagree with "I think it is difficult to make friends with people from a different confession"

C. Vulnerabilities	Question 402: Agree/strongly agree with "in the area where I live only wealthy people get quality education"
	Question 403: Agree/strongly agree with "In the area where I live only wealthy people receive quality health services"
	Question 404: Agree/strongly agree with "The army and police do not treat people from all parts of the city equally"
	Question 405: Agree/strongly agree with "My neighbourhood, more than most other areas in Lebanon, is neglected by politicians and receives no services"
	Question 406: Agree/strongly agree with "It is impossible to counter injustice without violence"
	Question 407: Agree/strongly agree with "My sect and its members are marginalised in Lebanon today"
	Question 408: Agree/strongly agree with "People from my neighbourhood are more often sent to jail"
	Question 409: Agree/strongly agree with "I feel there is nothing I can do to challenge the injustice that my community faces"
	Question 411: Agree/strongly agree with "I have often been insulted, humiliated or beaten outside of the house (on the street, school, work)"
	Question 414: Agree/strongly agree with "In the past, there were days when I could not go to school for security reasons"
	Question 415: Agree/strongly agree with "I often feel like suffocating because of the strict discipline in my house"
	Question 416: Have you lost a relative or a close friend during the war or due to acts of violence?
D. Attitude towards the use of violence	Question 204: Chose "I do nothing" when asked "What do you do when someone makes you really angry?"
	Question 204: Chose "I beat him/her" when asked "What do you do when someone makes you very angry?"
	Question 503: Agree/strongly agree with "It is okay to hit someone who hits you first"
	Question 504: Agree/strongly agree with "The only way to defend one's community and family is through the use of force"

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