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# Political Cleavages and Social Inequalities in Algeria, Iraq and Turkey, 1990-2019

Lydia Assouad, Amory Gethin, Thomas Piketty and Juliet-Nil Uraz

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Comparative Inequality Conference - February 24, 2023

## Plan
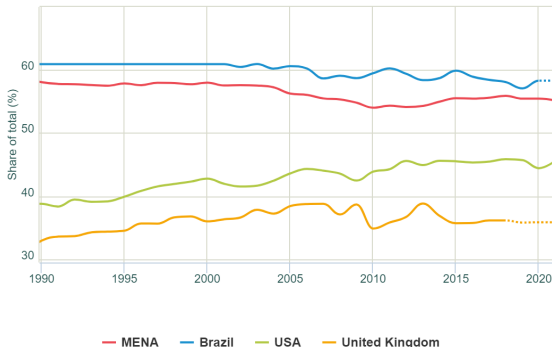
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# Inequality dynamics in the MENA

▸ One of the most unequal regions in the world (Alvaredo et al. 2018, Moshrif 2020, WIL 2021)

**Top 10% national income share**



Graph provided by www.wid.world

MENA by countries    MENA without Gulf

# Inequality dynamics in the MENA

- ▸ One of the most unequal regions in the world (Alvaredo et al. 2018, Moshrif 2020, WIL 2021)

- ▸ The new Arab Springs: political crisis and demands for fairer redistribution



**Source:** Reuters, Algeria - 04/23/19 and Iraq - 10/03/19

# Electoral dynamics in the MENA

- ▸ Identity-based voting
  - ▸ **Ethno-religious identity**: Sunni-Shia / Arab-Kurd-Berber
  - ▸ **Political Islam**: FIS (AL - 1991), Dawa (IQ - 2005) & AKP (TR - 2002)



Istanbul - March 31, 2018 (AP news)

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# Research Question

How has social polarization in terms of income and education interacted with changes in political cleavages in the Middle East and North Africa region?

**Case-studies: Algeria, Iraq and Turkey (1990-2019)**

▸ *Descriptive work* -> no causal inference

▸ *Flexible definition of "cleavages"* (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) -> socio-political literature: income / education / ethno-religious divide

▸ *Simple measures of inequality* -> decile approach (top 10% v. bottom 50%)

# A multi-country project: 50 countries 1948-2020

Comparative book on 50 countries (Harvard University Press - 2021) following Piketty "Brahmin Left versus Merchant Right" - 2018

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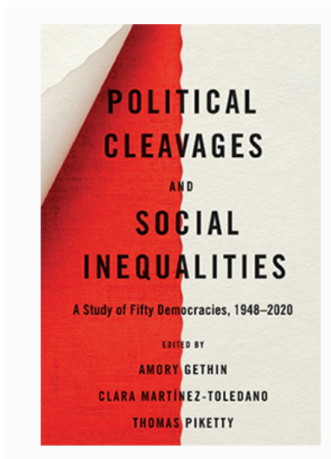
## Research approach

*Political cleavages*

- ▸ Some durable dimension of the political conflict revealed by election outcomes & socioeconomic determinants of voters that could relate to inequality dynamics

*Inequality dynamics*

- ▸ Question on vote choice/party preferences

- ▸ Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

- ▸ Identity components (religiosity / region / language)

Harmonization issues -> decile approach (Methodology)

# Data overview for the MENA paper

▸ Three nationally-representative **opinion surveys**:
World Values Survey / Arab Barometer / Comparative Studies
of Electoral System

▸ Call in the literature not to discard MENA data (Benstead 2018;
Cavatorta 2020; Tessler 2020)

|  | **Turkey** | **Iraq** | **Algeria** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Surveys timeline | 1990 - 2018 | 2004 - 2019 | 2002 - 2019 |
| Nb. of general elections covered | 8 over 9 between 1991 and 2018 (2002 missing) | 5 over 5 between 2005 and 2018 | 3 over 4 between 2002 and 2017 (2007 missing) |
| Sample size | 10,948 | 9,921 | 4,843 |

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# Does class matter in voting in the Middle East?

Figure: Income and educational divides
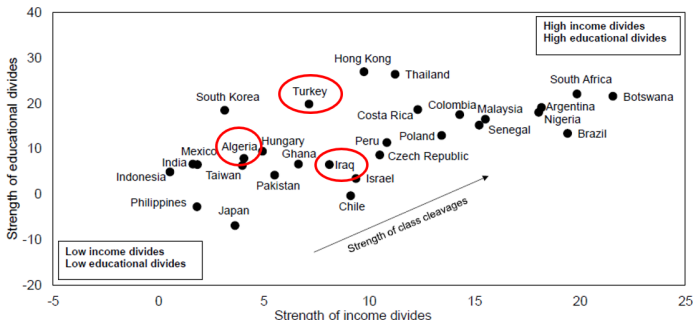


**Source**: authors' computations using the World Political cleavages and Inequality Database (see wpid.world).
**Note**: the figure represents the difference between the share of low-income (bottom 50%) and high-income (top 50%) voters voting for selected "pro-poor parties" (see table 1.1) on the x-axis, and the same difference between lower-educated (bottom 50%) and higher-educated (top 50%) voters on the y-axis in non-Western democracies. South Africa and Botswana display particularly strong income and educational divides, while education and income only play a minor role in determining electoral behaviors in Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Income and education are shown as identical for Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal given lack of data on income.

Religious-secular    Socio-ethnic

# Turkey: A new role for religiosity?

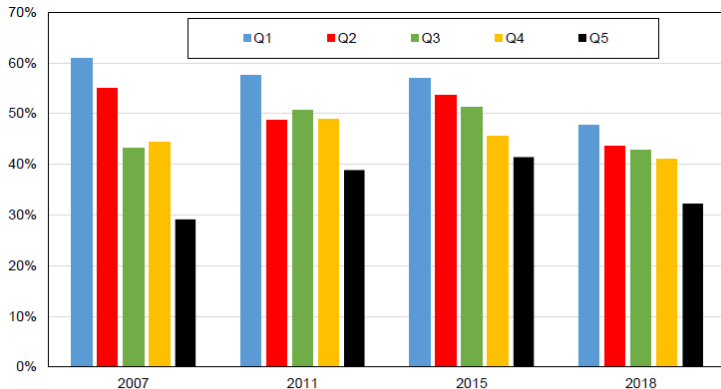Figure: The religious cleavage in Turkey
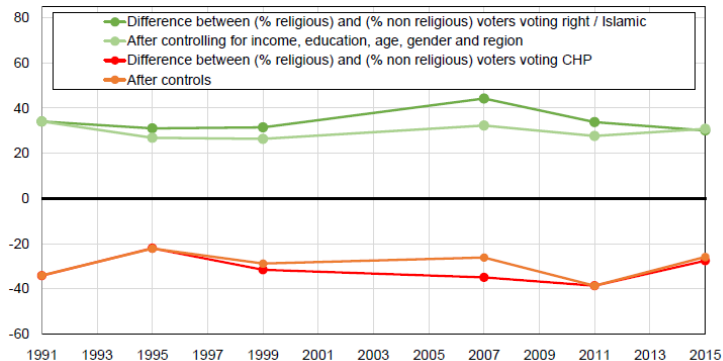


Source: authors' computations using Turkish political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between the share of religious voters and the share of other voters voting for right-wing and Islamic parties, and the same difference for the CHP, before and after controls. Religious voters are defined as those who declare being "A religious person" (World Values Survey) or "Very religious / Somewhat religious" (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems).

# Turkey: the Poor & Pious and the AKP

Figure: Vote for AKP by income quintiles



Source: authors' computations using Turkish political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by the AKP by income quintile.

Education   Income   Poverty   Kurds

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# Gecekondu resettlement & "the Disaster of The Century"



**Hatay - Feb 6, 2023 - Reuters**

# Iraq - a sectarian political system



**Mosul, Iraq - May 5, 2018 - Reuters**

# Iraq: Extreme ethno-religious divides

Figure: Vote for Shia Islamic lists by region
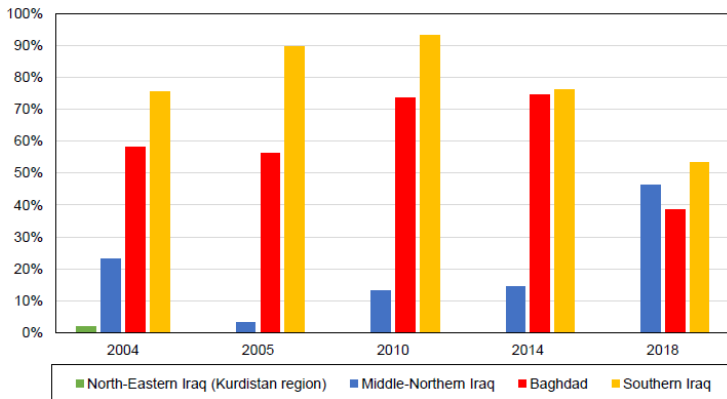


Source: authors' computations using Iraqi political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by Shia Islamic lists by region. Middle-Northern Iraq is predominantly Sunni, Baghdad is mixed, Southern Iraq is predominantly Shia.

# Iraq: Reconfiguration of the opposition & income cleavage

Figure: Vote for secular & anti-sectarian lists among poorer voters
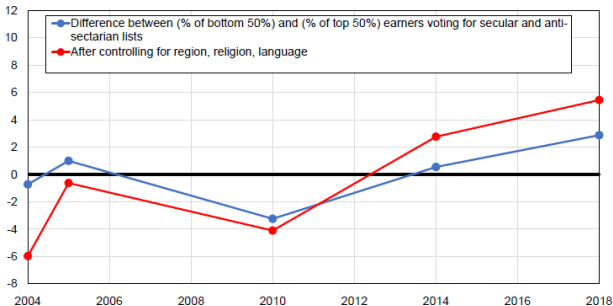


Source: authors' computations using Iraqi political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between the share of bottom 50% voters and the share of top 50% voters in terms of income voting for secular and anti-sectarian lists, before and after controlling for ethno-religious identity.

Map    Education    Discontent    Abstention

# Algeria: Cross-class features of the regime

Figure: Vote for ruling parties (FLN/RND) among top-income voters
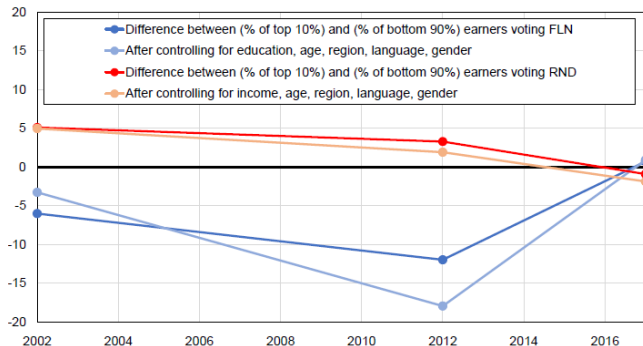


**Source**: authors' computations using Algerian political attitudes surveys.
**Note**: the figure shows the difference between the share of top 10% earners voters and the share of other voters voting for the FLN and the RND, before and after controls.

Age | Political Activism | Education | Islamic Parties | Abstention | Berber

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# Conclusion

▸ High interconnections between identity-based voting &
  social inequalities → **identity lens not enough in itself**

▸ MENA: understudied in comparative politics &
  quantitative research -> call for **data use & collection**!

  Abstention in Iraq    Political Activism in Algeria    Socio-exclusive parties

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# Let's the data speak!

Interested? Play with the data → explore.wpid.world

# Let's the data speak!

Interested? Play with the data → explore.wpid.world

Thank you!

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# MENA dynamics



**Top 10% national income share**

Graph provided by www.wid.world
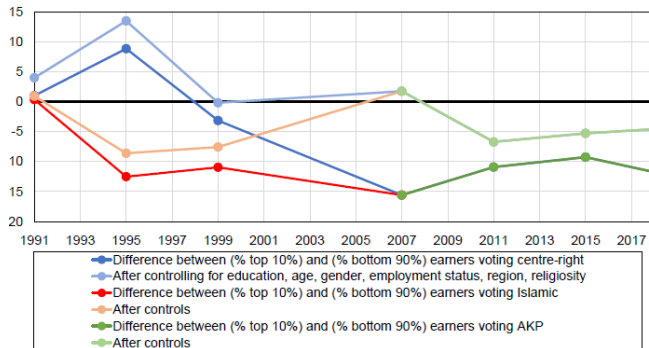
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# MENA dynamics: Gulf countries

Figure: Gulf and Non-gulf countries: Top 10% income share, 1990-2019
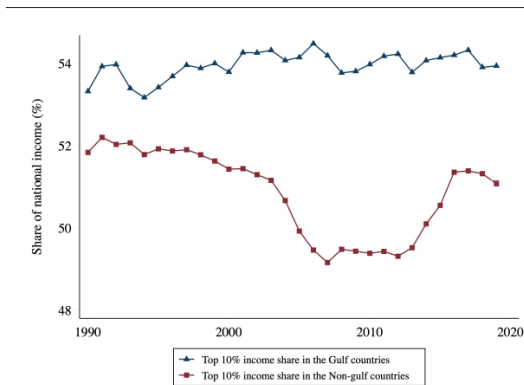


Source: Source: World Inequality Database (https://wid.world ); See (Moshrif, 2020).

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# Identify cleavages

$$\underbrace{\beta}_{\text{Vote share difference}} = \underbrace{E(Y|X = 1)}_{\text{Share of voters with } X=1} - \underbrace{E(Y|X = 0)}_{\text{Share of voters with } X=0}$$

$\beta \rightarrow$ Vote gap along the distribution of a variable that captures
some inequality dimension

$\beta \rightarrow$ direct estimation by Ordinary Least Squares with
heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors

Decile harmonization -> Considering a categorical variable *x* and
assuming that the population is uniformly distributed within each
category, one can apply a reweighing scheme for approximating
quantiles while accounting for the initial distribution of the sample
along this variable. <span>Back</span>

# Turkey: income

Figure: Vote for right-wing and Islamic among top-income voters
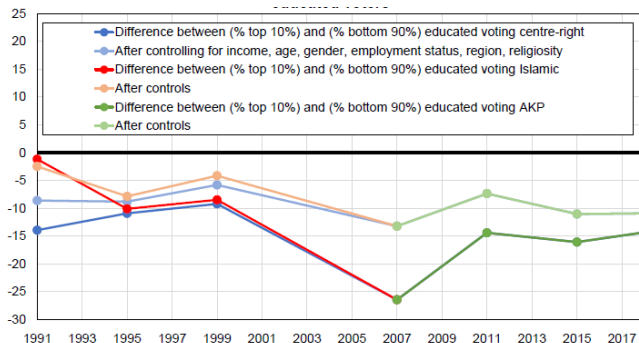
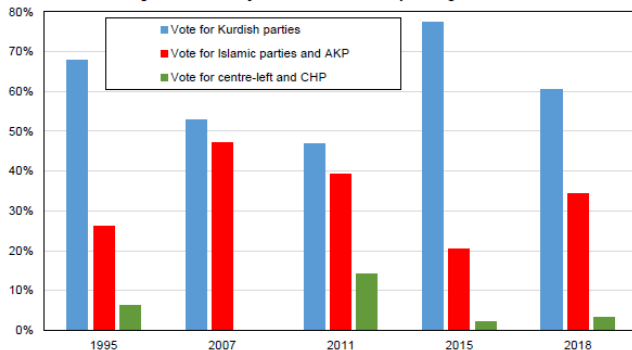

Source: authors' computations using Turkish political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between the share of top 10% earners voters and the share of other voters voting for centre-right (DYP/ANAP) and Islamic (RP/FP) parties before 2007 and for the AKP after that date, before and after controlling for other variables.

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# Turkey: education

Figure: Vote for right-wing and Islamic among highest-educated voters



Source: authors' computations using Turkish political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the difference between the share of top 10% educated voters and the share of bottom 90% educated voting for right-wing (DYP/ANAP) and Islamic (RP/FP) parties before 2007 or for the AKP after that date, before and after controls.
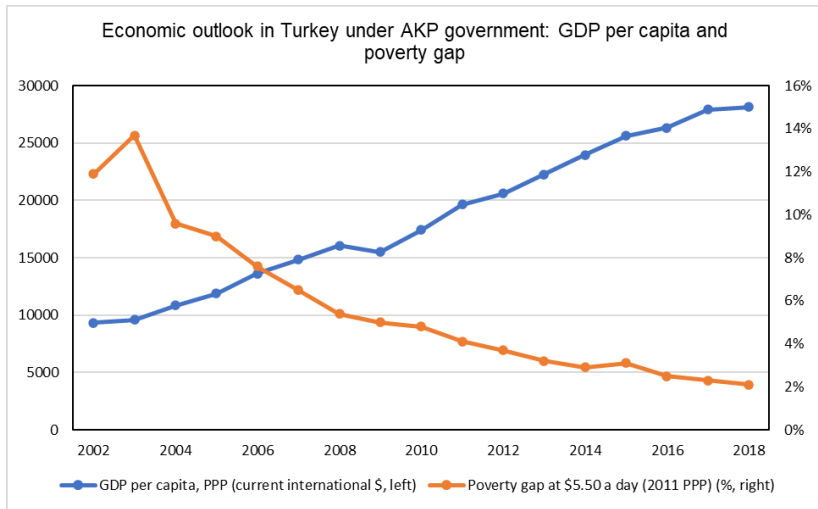
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# Turkey: Kurdish cleavage

Figure: Party choice of Kurdish-speakers



Source: authors' computations using Turkish political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the distribution of the party choice among Kurdish speaking population. No data available in 1991 and 1999.

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# Turkey: Kurdish cleavage

Figure: Geogaphical distribution of GDP per capita in Turkey, 2017



Source: authors' computation, Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK)

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# Turkey: macroeconomic dynamics



Economic outlook in Turkey under AKP government: GDP per capita and poverty gap

# Iraq: identity map

Figure: Geographical distribution of main ethno-religious groups in Iraq
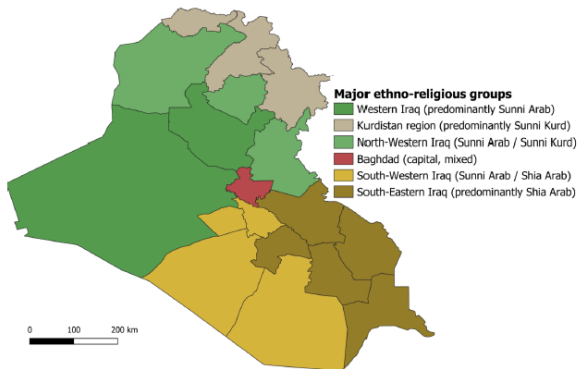


Source: authors' computations.

# Iraq: poverty map

Figure: Geographical distribution of multidimensional poverty in Iraq in 2017
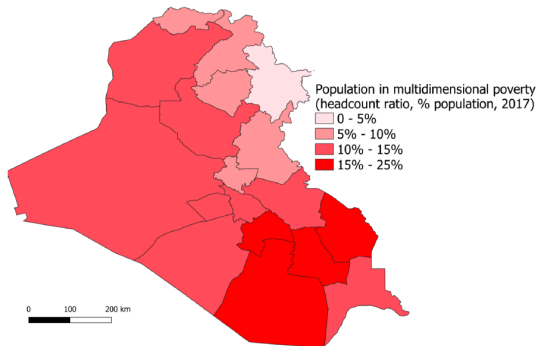


**Source**: authors' computation using subnational decomposition of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (University of Oxford).
**Note**: The Muldimensional Poverty Index is an international measure of acute poverty that identifies deprivation across health, education and living standards.

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# Iraq: education

Figure: Vote for secular and anti-sectarian lists by education group
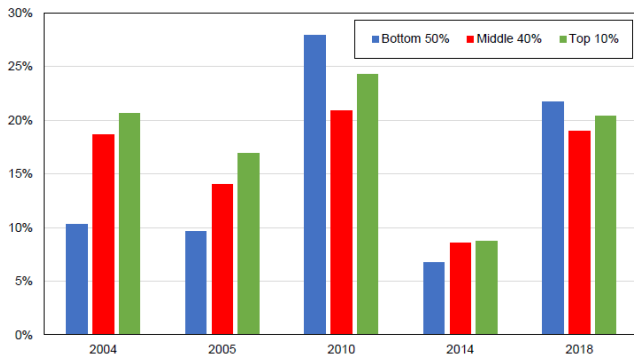


Source: authors' computations using Iraqi political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by secular and anti-sectarian lists by education group.

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# Iraq: discontent

Figure: Trust deficit towards the government by region
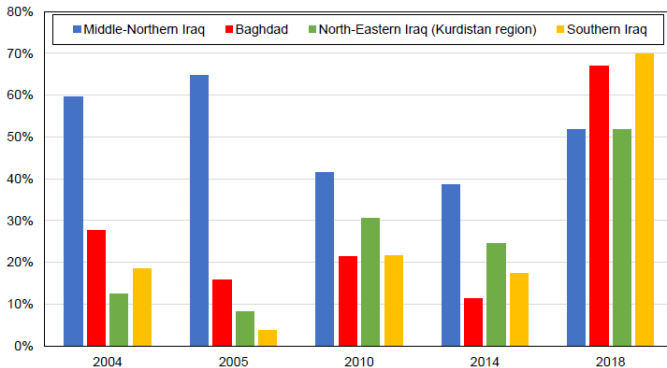


Source: authors' computations using Iraqi political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the regional decomposition of trust deficit expressed towards the government in the Iraqi adult population. Middle-Northern Iraq is predominantly Sunni, Baghdad is mixed, Southern Iraq is predominantly Shia.
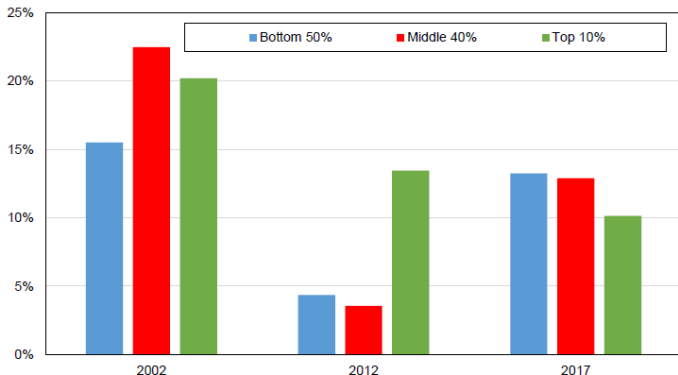
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# Iraq: abstention

Figure: Abstention by region
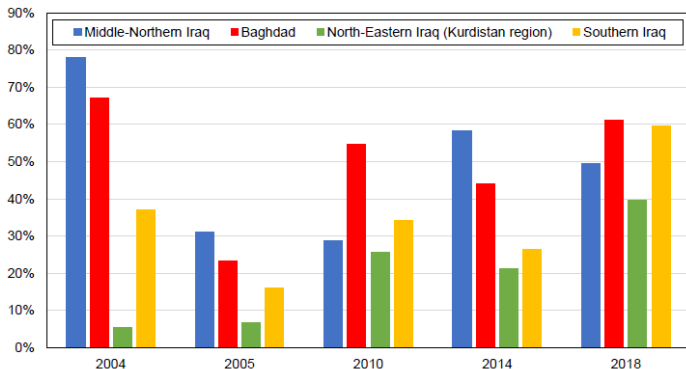


Source: authors' computations using Iraqi political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the share of voters who declared having not voted in the last elections by region.
Middle-Northern is predominantly Sunni. Baghdad is mixed. Southern Iraq is predominantly Shia.

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# Algeria: Islamic

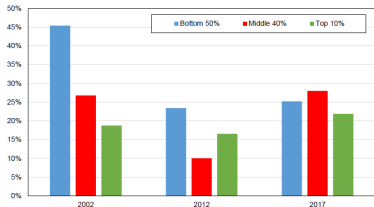Figure: Vote for Islamic parties by income group



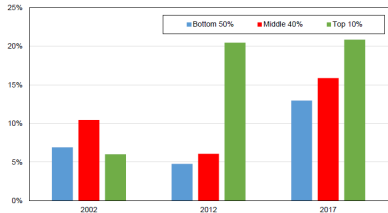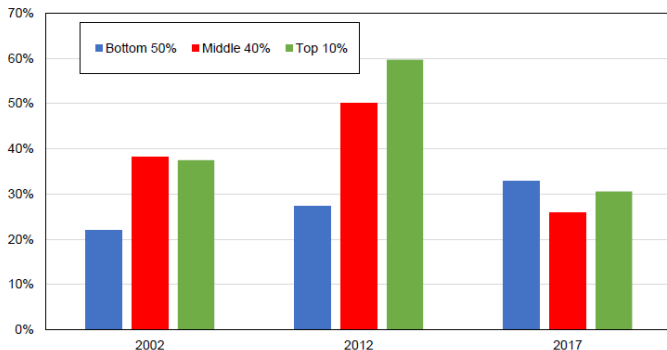**Source**: authors' computations using Algerian political attitudes surveys.
**Note**: the figure shows the share of votes received by the Islamic opposition parties by income group.

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# Algeria: Education

Figure: Vote for FLN (left) and RND (right) by education group



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# Algeria: Political activism



Figure: Political activism by income group

Source: authors' computations using Algerian political attitudes surveys.
Note: the figure shows the share of individuals declaring having already attended a demonstration or signed a petition by income group.

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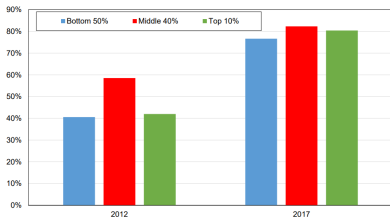# Algeria: Age



Figure: Vote for FLN by age group

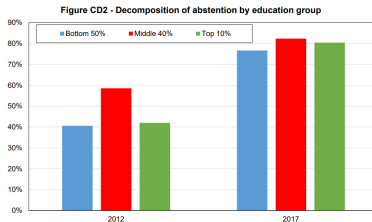**Source**: authors' computations using Algerian political attitudes surveys.
**Note**: the figure shows the share of votes received by the FLN by age group.

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# Algeria: abstention

Figure: Abstention by education (left) and income (right)



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# Algeria: Amazigh
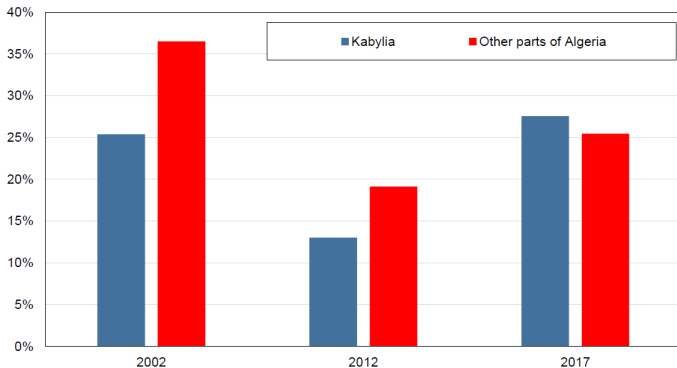
Figure: Vote for FLN by region / language (Kabylia vs non-Kabylia)



**Source**: authors' computations using Algerian political attitudes surveys.
**Note**: the figure shows the share of votes received by the FLN parties by region. In 2002, speaking Amazigh at home is taking as a proxy as the regional decomposition is not available.

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# Religious cleavage in perspective

Figure: Religious-secular cleavages



**Source**: authors' computations using the World Political cleavages and Inequality Database (see wpid.world).
**Note**: the figure represents the evolution of the vote of religious minorities or non-religious voters in Israel, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Malaysia. In the past decades, religious cleavages have risen in India, Pakistan, and Malaysia, while they have remained stable at high levels in Indonesia, Turkey, and Israel. INC: Indian National Congress; PDI-P: Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle; DAP: Democratic Action Party; PKR: People's Justice Party; PPP: Pakistan Peoples Party.

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# The rise of 'socio-exclusive' parties

Figure: Sociocultural cleavages and disadvantaged minorities
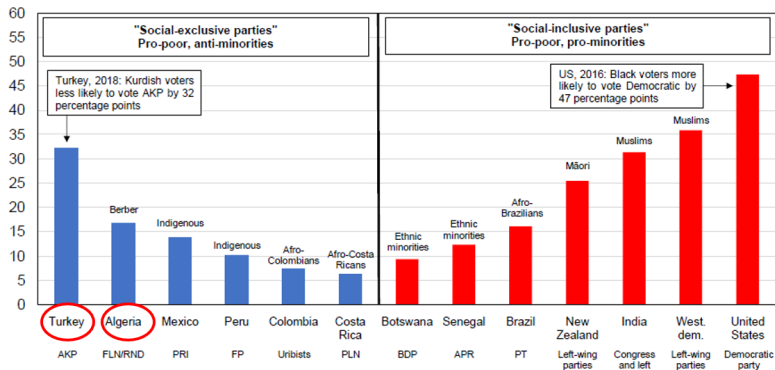


**Source**: authors' computations using the World Political cleavages and Inequality Database (see wpid.world).
**Note**: the figure represents the difference between the share of specific sociocultural minorities and the share of other voters voting for selected "pro-poor" parties in the last election available. The Turkish AKP corresponds to a "social-exclusive party": it is supported by low-income voters of the majority but not by the disadvantaged Kurdish minority. The Democratic Party in the United States is a "social-inclusive party", supported by both low-income voters and disadvantaged Black voters. Ethnic minorities correspond to non-Tswana groups in Botswana and speakers of Fulani / Serer / Mande languages in Senegal.