

THE (SECTARIAN) POLITICS OF PUBLIC-SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN BAHRAIN

GRM

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Question

- Contributors to (youth) unemployment and underemployment in the Gulf context:
 - ▣ Continued recruitment of expatriate labor
 - ▣ Traditional gender roles
 - ▣ Rent-funded welfare state
 - Lack of incentive for educational achievement
 - Lack of incentive for work generally
 - ▣ ... other Gulf-specific social, political, economic factors

Question

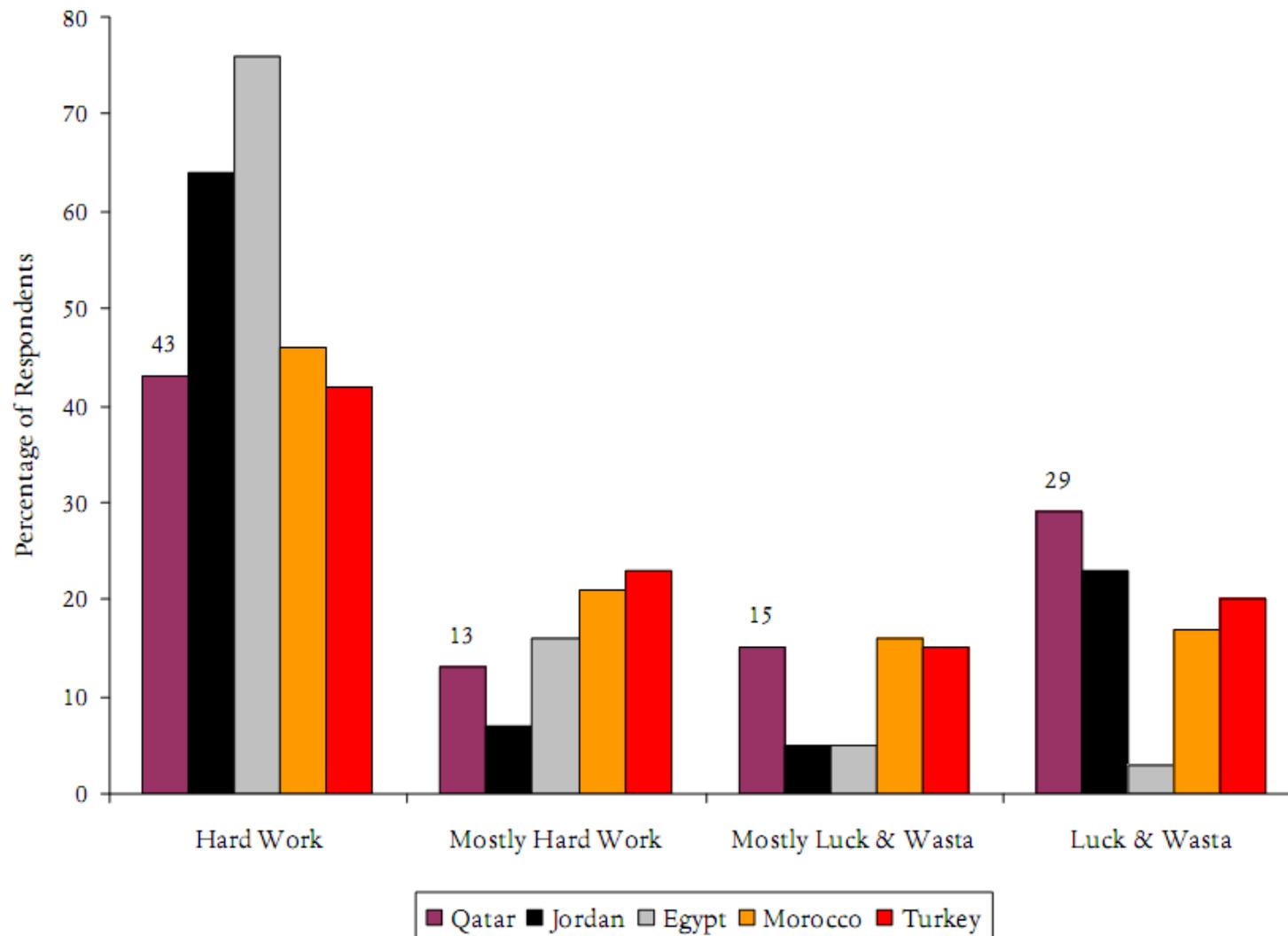
- So, why then the omission of another important institutional characteristic of the Gulf state?
 - ▣ Social/political divisions on the basis of ascriptive social categories such as religious (Bahrain, Saudi, Kuwait), tribal (Qatar, UAE, Oman), and regional affiliations (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait)
 - ▣ Employment decisions, especially when concerning the public sector, are not removed from politics

Overview

- Introduction
 - ▣ In practice, what factors affect employment among Gulf citizens and among Bahrainis specifically?
- Is government employment a cause or an effect?
- Evidence from the first mass political survey of Bahrain (2009)
 - ▣ The (sectarian) politics of employment
 - Empirical Sunni-Shi'i disparity in employment
 - Empirical disparity in professional level
- Conclusion: So what?

Securing Employment in Practice

FIGURE 5. *What Helps Most to Bring Success: Hard Work, or Luck and Wasta?*



Securing Employment in Practice

In the past five years, have you used *wasta* to solve a personal, family-related, or neighborhood problem?

	Yes	No
Kuwait	51%	44%
Morocco	40	58
Bahrain	30	66
Algeria	29	62
Jordan	23	76
Palestine	17	83

Source: Arab Democracy Barometer, First Wave

Securing Employment in Practice

Use of *Wasta* in Bahrain, by Community

Affiliation	Yes	No
Sunni	35%	61%
Shi'i	26	71

Notes: $N = 413$; Pearson's χ^2 test statistic (with 1 d.f.): 4.54; $p = 0.033$

Securing *Government* Employment

- Prevailing conception: Gulf and other *rentier* governments use state employment to help create political allies (or help avoid political enemies)
 - ▣ Beblawi 1989: “Every citizen” of a rent-based state “has a legitimate aspiration to be a government employee; in most cases this aspiration is fulfilled.”
- But is government employment a tool to promote socially- and politically-desirable behavior? or a reward for it?

Securing *Government* Employment

- “There is a small percentage who do not have loyalty to the state. Sometimes, for good reasons, you have to be careful who you employ.”
 - Bahrain Minister of Industry & Commerce Hasan Fakhro to *The Telegraph* amid opposition protests, July 2007
- If political cleavages fall along social categories in which membership is outwardly-observable (by name, language, dress, etc.), then employment decisions can also be made along these lines.
 - ▣ Especially true in positions touching on national security; requirements of “certificates of good behavior”

Securing *Government* Employment

- Witness the aftermath of Bahrain's 2011 uprising
 - ▣ 2,462 private-sector workers fired (as of Nov. 2011)
 - ▣ 1,945 public-sector workers fired
 - ▣ 57 union leaders (26% of total union leadership) fired
 - ▣ Doctors and nurses at public hospital arrested and convicted for treating protesters
 - ▣ Scholarships revoked for students studying abroad
 - ▣ Students dismissed from public university, required to sign loyalty pledge as condition of reinstatement
- So sweeping that the AFL-CIO filed a legal dispute claiming Bahrain violated its FTA with the U.S.

Securing *Government* Employment

- Moreover, Shi'a citizens were already disproportionately excluded from power ministries (Justice, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Interior) and almost entirely absent from the ranks of the police and military.
 - ▣ Separate, unarmed “community police” for Shi'a
- Shi'a more generally excluded from security services and militaries across the Gulf on account of fears of Iranian subterfuge
 - ▣ Even in countries with small Shi'a populations

Securing *Government* Employment

- Top military spenders as a proportion of GDP (decade between 2001-2011):
 - 1. Oman
 - 2. Saudi Arabia
 - 4. United Arab Emirates
 - 6. Kuwait
 - 11. Bahrain
 - 30. Qatar (incomplete data)
- So the extent of this exclusion is not insignificant

Research Questions

- Empirically, how does communal affiliation affect a Bahraini's prospects for employment in the government sector?
- How does communal affiliation affect the professional status/level of his employment?

Employment in Bahrain – Data

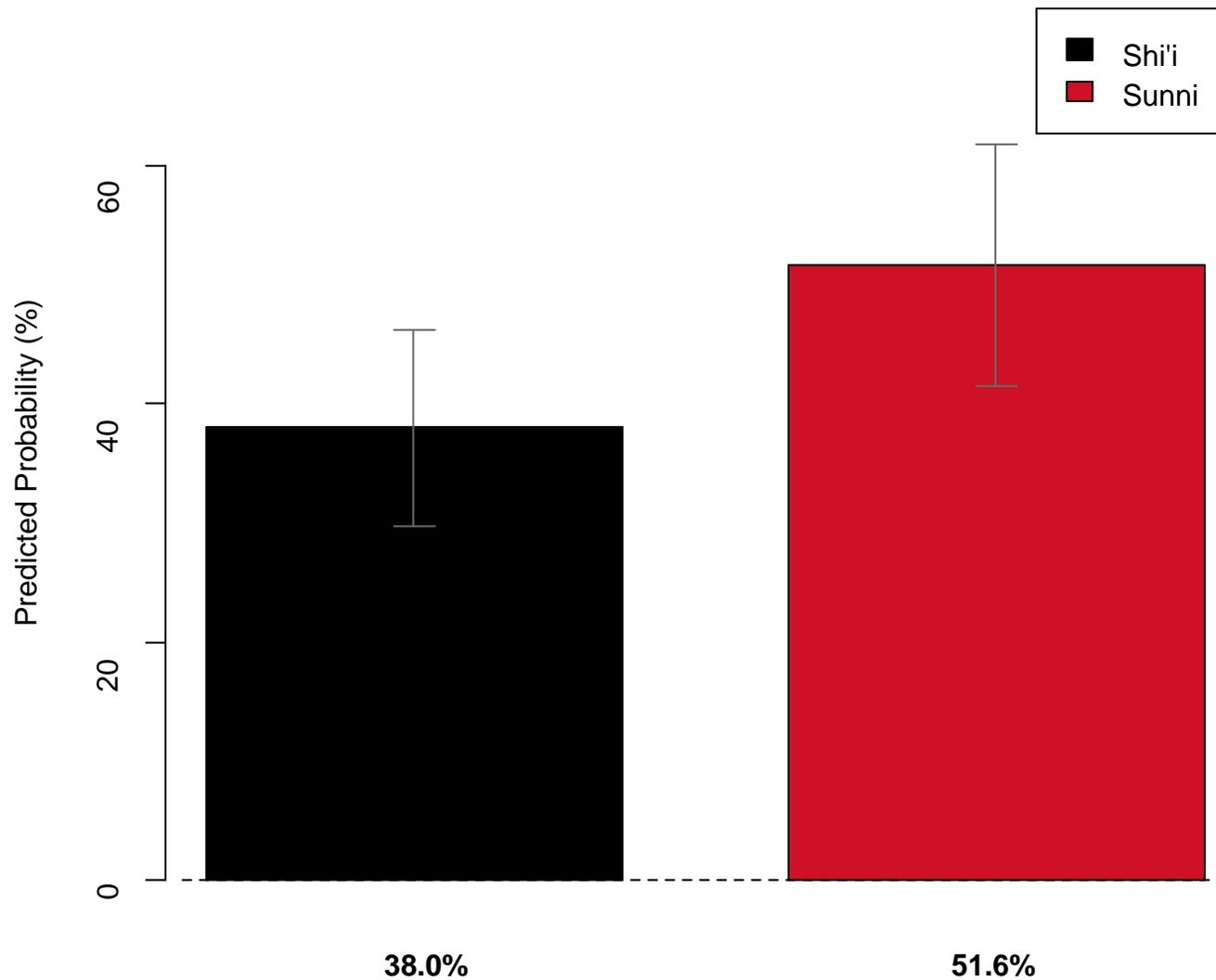
- Mass survey of Bahraini citizens carried out in 2009
- Representative sample of 435 households
- Employed the standard Arab Democracy Barometer survey instrument
 - ▣ Demographic information
 - ▣ Social, political, and religious orientations
 - ▣ Economic condition, views about the economy, employment status, sector of employment, and position of employment (and also about spouse's employment)
- Local Bahraini field interviewers

Employment in Bahrain

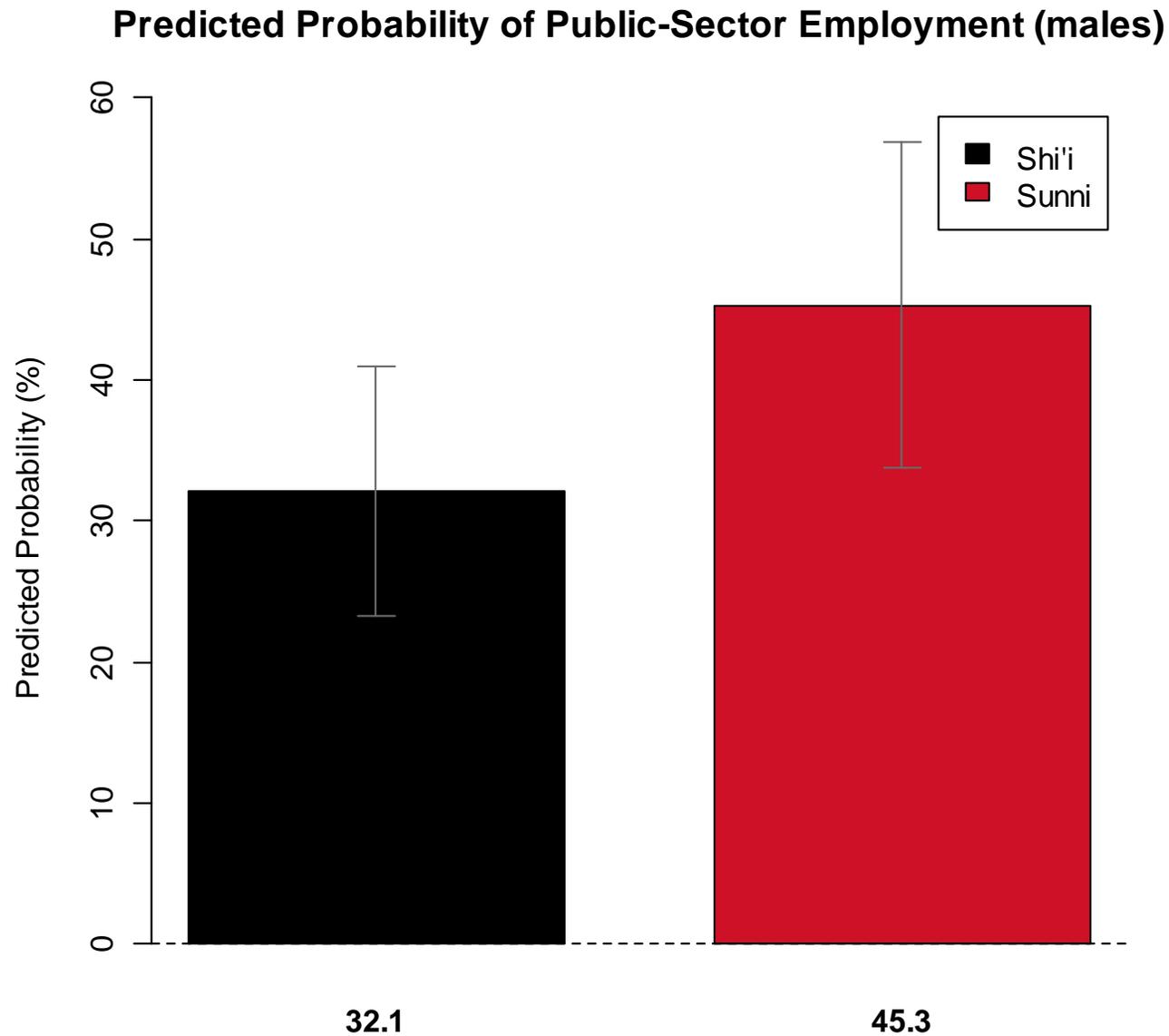
- No difference by religious group membership
 - ▣ ~61% of sampled Shi'is and 57% of Sunnis employed
 - ▣ Difference of means not statistically significant (one tailed, $p=0.18$)
- But what about sector and professional level of employment?
 - ▣ ~38% of Shi'is and 50% of Sunnis employed in the public sector
 - ▣ Difference is statistically significant ($p=0.031$)
 - ▣ But what after we control for relevant factors that might affect employment and/or public-sector employment?

Sector of Employment

**Predicted Probability of Public-Sector Employment
(after controlling for relevant factors)**

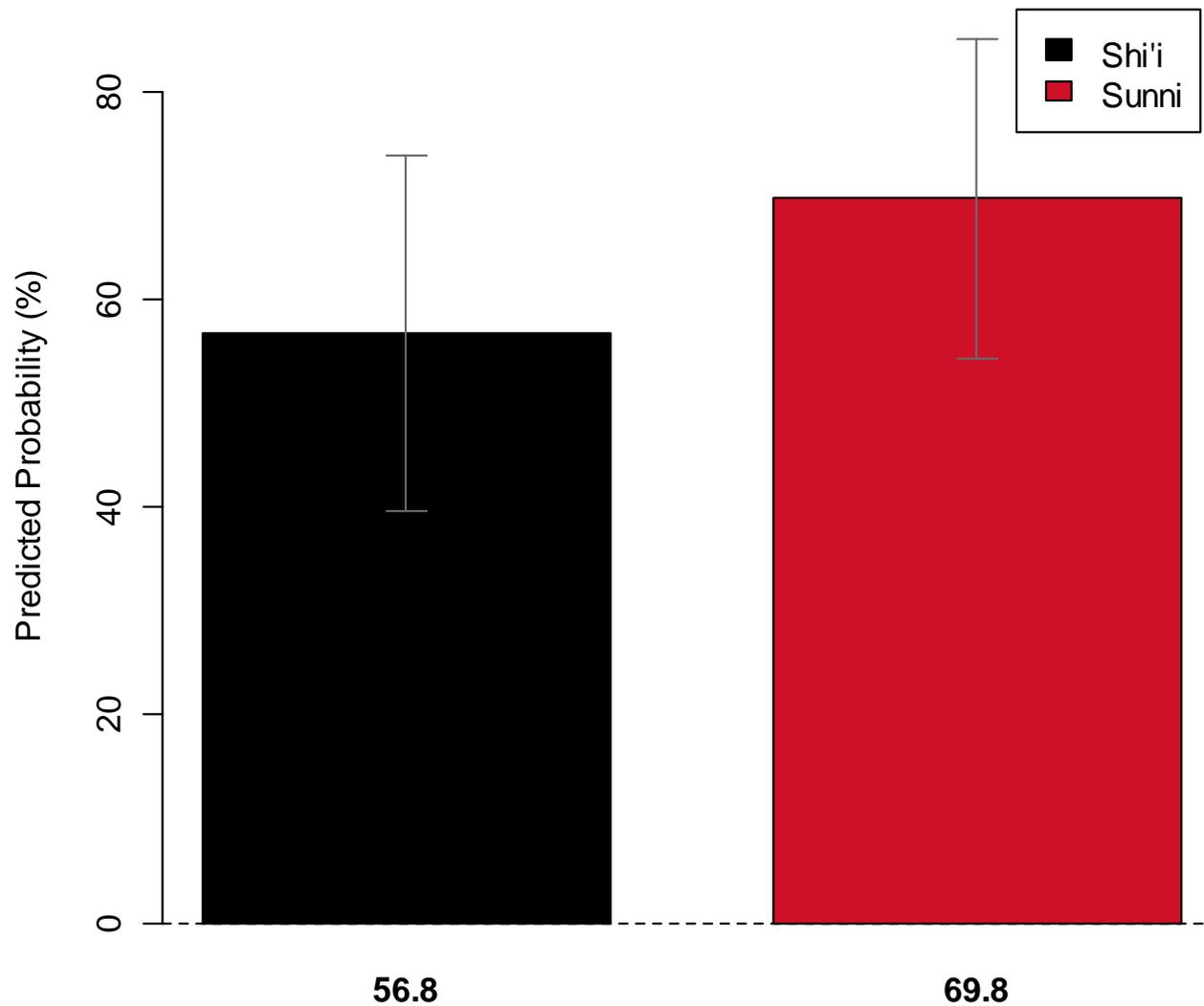


Sector of Employment



Sector of Employment

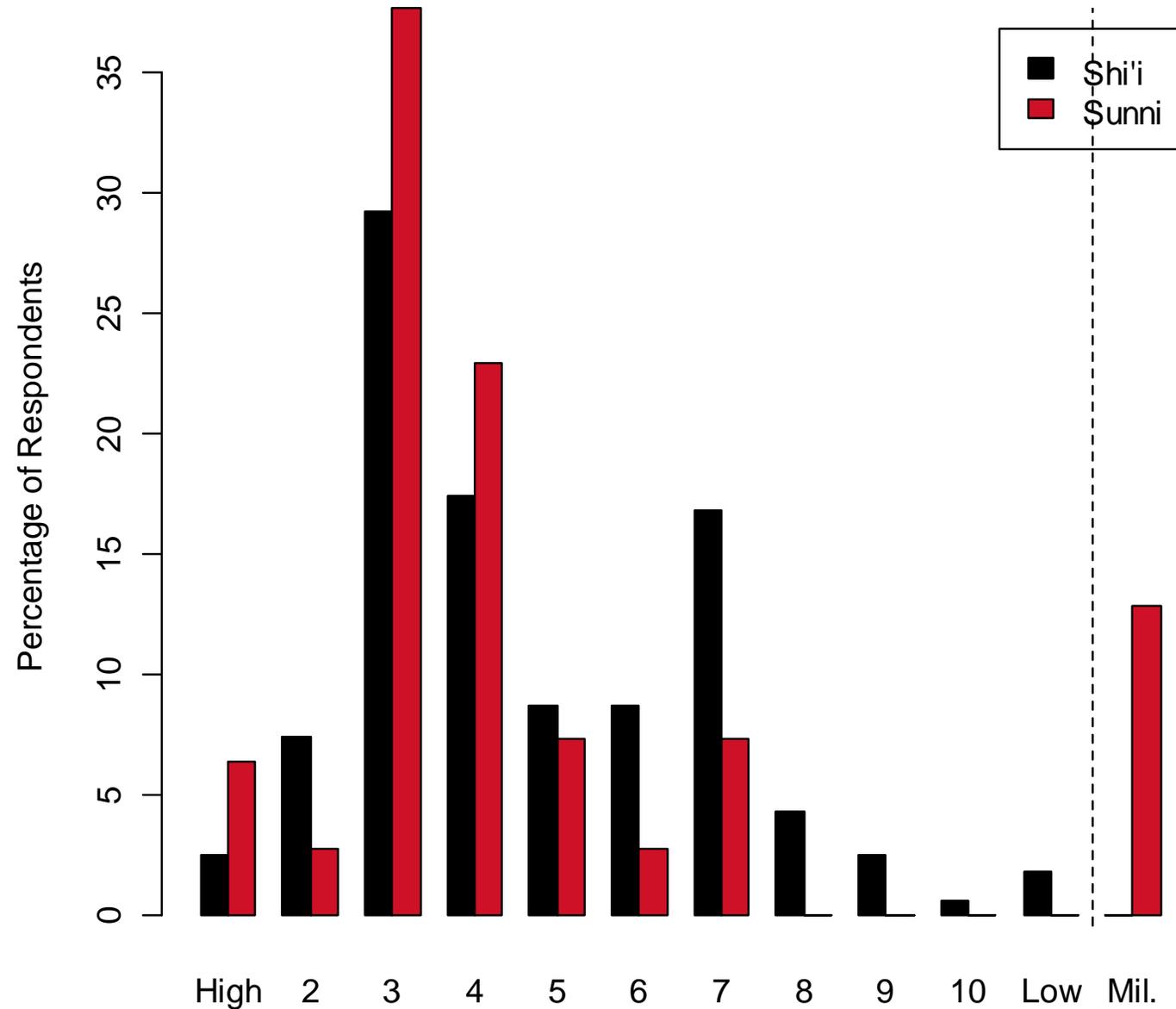
Predicted Probability of Public-Sector Employment (females)



Sector of Employment

- So, the impact of communal affiliation on sector of employment?
 - ▣ A Sunni is an estimated 36% more likely to be employed in the public sector than a Shi'i of identical age, education, gender and underlying probability of employment.
 - ▣ For males only: more than 41% more likely
 - ▣ For females only: 23% more likely
- In relation to other factors:
 - ▣ About $\frac{1}{2}$ the impact of being a male vs. female
 - ▣ About 3 categories on a 7-point education scale (but education is not a statistically-significant determinant)

Nature of Employment



Professional Categories:

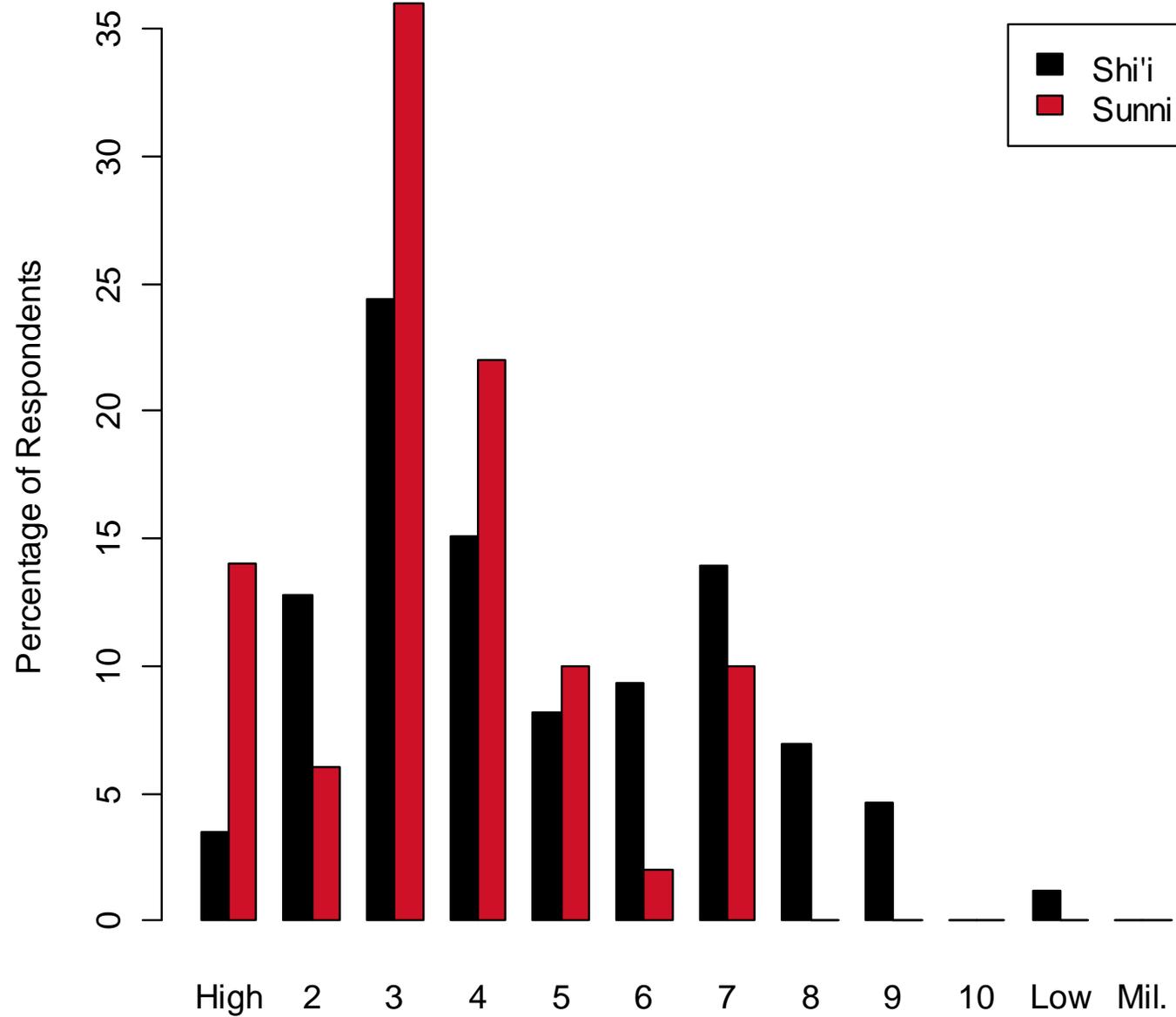
1. Employer/manager 10+
2. Employer/manager < 10
3. Professional
4. Office supervisor
5. Office non-supervisor
6. Non-office supervisor
7. Skilled manual
8. Semi-skilled manual
9. Unskilled manual
10. Owns private farm
11. Agricultural worker
12. Police/military

Nature of Employment

- Overall across both sectors (excluding military):
 - ▣ Mean Sunni category: ~3.6
 - ▣ Mean Shi'i category: ~4.6
 - ▣ Difference (~28%) significant at $p=0.0001$
- Military and Police:
 - ▣ 13% of 131 working Sunni households have at least one member in police/military (1 in every 8¼ Sunnis)
 - ▣ 0 Shi'i respondents (among 117 working Shi'i males who offered professional data) reported working for the security services or military

Nature of Employment (Private)

Private

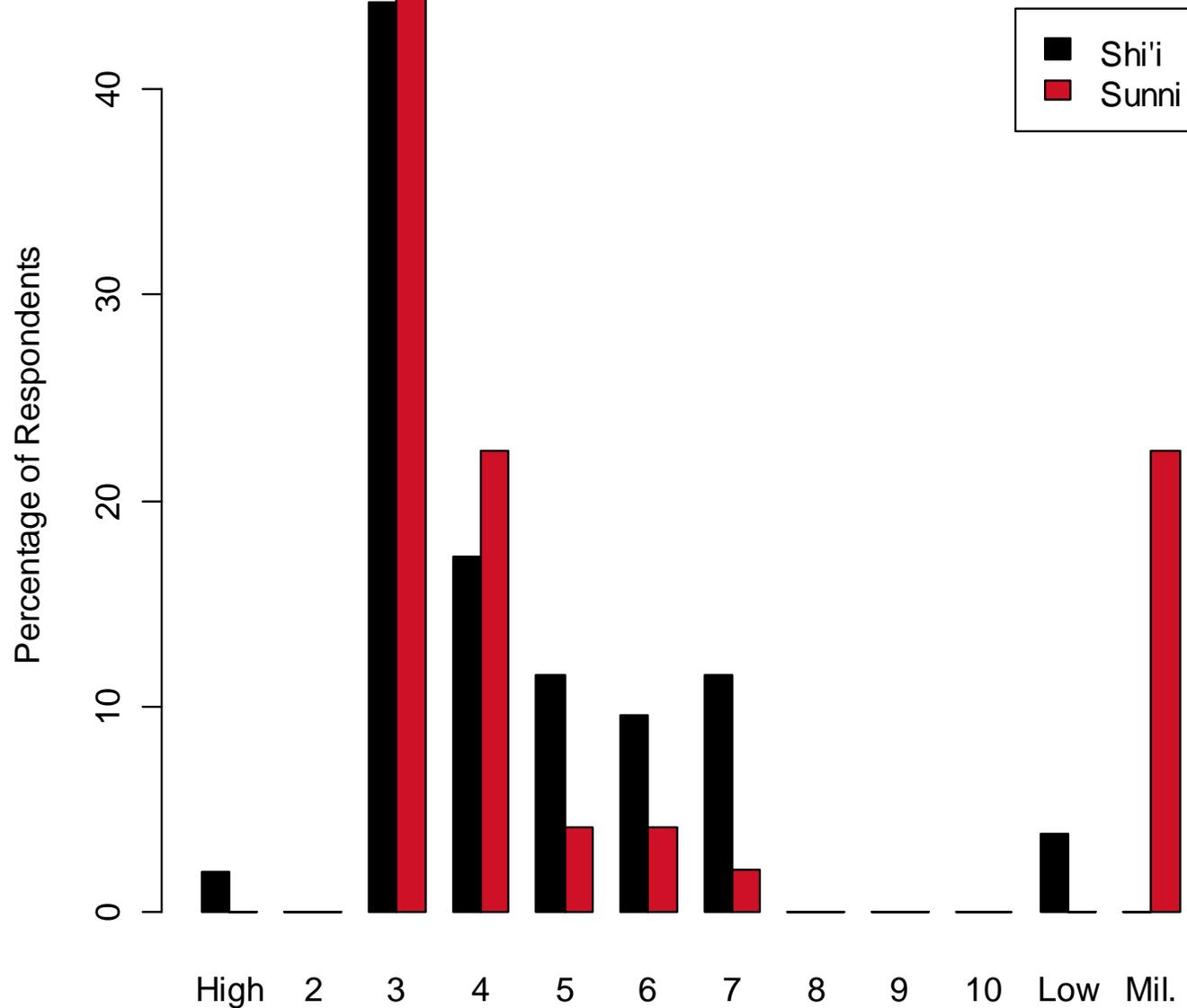


Nature of Employment (Private)

- Results of multivariate regression analysis
 - ▣ Sunni affiliation associated with a position that is about 0.6-category higher on the 11-point scale (~15%)
 - ▣ Higher education associated with 0.7-category improvement for every 1-unit increase in 7-point scale
 - ▣ Older age improves job status (10-year age advantage equals about 0.5-category improvement)
 - ▣ Gender unassociated with job status

Nature of Employment (Public)

Public



Nature of Employment (Public)

- First, some issues: outliers, how to handle mil/police?
- Results of multivariate regression analysis
 - ▣ Sunni affiliation associated with a similar advantage (1/2-category) as seen in public sector (~13%)
 - ▣ Education again the largest substantive factor: 1/2-category improvement for each 1-unit change
 - ▣ But now age is unrelated to position (no “seniority”)
 - ▣ And now being female is associated with a higher professional status (more likely to be office workers)

Conclusion

- Sector of employment
 - ▣ All else equal, a random Sunni citizen is **more than a third more likely** to be employed in the public sector as compared to a random Shi'i.
 - ▣ Yet Shi'i citizens are **no less likely** to be employed overall; so there is something about the public sector that systematically hinders the employment of Shi'a.
- Profession of employment
 - ▣ All else equal, the occupation of a random Sunni is estimated to be **~15% higher** on our 11-point scale as compared to a Shi'i (in both public and private sector)
 - ▣ About **1 in 8** surveyed Sunnis is employed in police or military; compared to **0** surveyed Shi'is.

Conclusion: So What?

- In analyzing the determinants of employment in the Gulf—youth or otherwise—one cannot omit politics (even if its importance varies across societies)
- Such is especially true as regards the public sector
 - ▣ Jobs, especially those that involve the exercise of state power, are not distributed in a politically-agnostic way
 - ▣ The unparalleled scope of the security sectors in GCC economies mean that these decisions have big effects
- Efforts to address (youth) unemployment must ask whether all segments of a society are affected equally, and the (often uncomfortable) reasons why