



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Department of Political Science

# The Good News is... it's Complicated: Why the Israeli Arab Minority Votes Less, and Why it's Not as Simple as You Think

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## Abstract

Between the 1990's and the 2000's, the Arab minority in Israel has experienced a sharp decline in voter turnout. We sought out to study this phenomenon from the perspective of Dalton's theory of Duty Citizenship vs. Engaged Citizenship, which predicts declining turnout rates as the population grows more educated and as younger voters change their preferred way of political participation. Using data on 25 Arab localities and 25 Jewish localities taken from two elections (1996 and 2009), along with census data (from 1995 and 2008), we found that Dalton's theory does not apply in this case. A more important finding was that when taking into account factors such as share of degree holders, age and socioeconomic status, locality type (Arab or Jewish) plays little part in affecting turnout – a finding which goes against many recent scholars which sought to explain the decline in Israeli Arab turnout with nationalistic or ethnic explanations.

## Theoretical Background

In this study, we set out to examine possible reasons and explanations for the decline in the political participation turnout of Israel's Arab minority, as reflected in a decline of general elections turnout in the time period between the 1990's, which were characterized by higher turnout rates than the 2000's.

Specifically, we wanted to see whether we can apply Dalton's theory of changes in models of political participation to the case of the Arab minority in Israel, and argue that similar processes that have taken place in other western countries, with regard to voting turnout and changes in models of political participation, have also taken place amongst this group – and that the Arab minority is not unique in its falling turnout rates.

### Changes in political participation in western democratic countries, 1990-2010

Lijphart (1996)<sup>1</sup> reviews the subject of electoral participation and notes that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when voting rights were significantly broadened, the basic assumption was that the educated public would not bother to exercise its right to vote, based on the rational understanding that the influence of a single vote is negligible. Empirical studies (Arneson, 1925; Harold F. Gosnell, 1927; Tingsten, 1937; Seymour Martin Lipset, 1960; Gary A. Steiner, 1964) found the opposite to be true: Gosnell concluded that "the more schooling the individual has the more likely he [or she] is to register and vote in presidential elections" (Gosnell); while Tingsten identified "the general rule that the voting frequency rises with rising social standard." He argued, along with other scholars (such as Alexander K. Mayer [2011]), that the decline in voting turnout that had been measured over the years was associated with the lower socio-economic strata and younger voters. He maintained that the

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<sup>1</sup> Lijphart A., 1997. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (March, 1997), pp. 1-14.

correlation between a high level of education/high socio-economic level and voting participation remained positive even during the '90s.

However, a gradual decline in voting turnout over the course of the '80s and '90s, and especially since 2000, has led to a rekindled discussion on this issue, and other positions have been presented. ( Dalton (2006), Richard Topf (1995) Tenn (2007), and to a certain extent also Kam and Palme [2008], show a different relationship). In contrast to conventional wisdom and the modernization theory which propose a positive relationship between education and participation, these studies showed that along with a rise in the level of education there had been a decline in the level of political participation and voter turnout. Putnam's conclusion (2000) is that

“Declining electoral participation is merely the most visible symptom of a broader disengagement from community life. Like a fever, electoral abstention is even more important as a sign of deeper trouble in the body politic than as a malady itself.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Participation in Israeli elections and education: 1996-2006

In Israel, as in all western countries, there has been a significant decline in political participation, most noticeably around the first years of the new millennium.

**Voter turnout** – With regard to the exercising of the right to vote, we find that in Israel – as in other western countries – there has been a decline from an average turnout of 80% up until the mid-'90s, to an average of 64.6% since 2000. (The actual figures are: 1959–81.6%;

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in: Dalton, Russell J. 2006. "Citizenship Norms and Political Participation in America: The Good News Is ... the Bad News Is Wrong". University of California, Irvine. CDACS Occasional Paper 2006-01 (October 2006), p. 8.

1988–79.7%; 1999–78.7%; 2001–62.3%; 2003–67.8%; 2009–64.8%.<sup>3</sup>) Yishai (2010) notes that Israel ranks in the bottom third of western democratic countries in terms of voter turnout.<sup>4</sup>

**Education** – as in other countries of the West, the decline in voter participation has taken place concurrently with a process of rising levels of education. Since the mid-'90s there have been very significant jumps in various parameters, as noted by the Shochat Committee appointed by the Israeli government in 2007 to examine the academic system in Israel. Two parameters are particularly notable in their indication of growth: one is the number of students eligible for a matriculation certification (in 1994 there were 46,900 eligible 18-year-olds; in 2003 there were 67,000 eligible 18-year-olds); the other is the number of students studying towards an undergraduate degree (1994–86,320 undergrad students at universities and colleges; by 2003 the number had grown to 155,900).<sup>5</sup>

#### The Arab minority in Israel – turnout and education

The same decline in voter turnout that has characterized the Israeli elections in general has also been reflected amongst Israel's Arab minority. Several scholars (Al-Hajj, Salim Brik, Elie Rekhess, and others<sup>6</sup>) have addressed this phenomenon.

**Voting data** – Elections for the 17<sup>th</sup> Knesset were held on March 28, 2006. Rekhess's (2007) analysis of the data shows that Arab and Druze voters together comprised 13% of Israel's total voting population (585,000 out of 4.5 million). However, only about 56% of these potential Arab and Druze voters actually exercised their democratic right and voted. Rekhess views this data as a further stage in the trend that became apparent over the course of the

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Website of the Israel Democracy Institute, Israeli democracy index for 2003, 2009.  
[http://www.idi.org.il/elections\\_and\\_parties/Pages/elections\\_and\\_parties\\_main.aspx](http://www.idi.org.il/elections_and_parties/Pages/elections_and_parties_main.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Yishai, Y. 2001. "Bringing Society Back In: Post Cartel Parties in Israel". *Party Politics*, vol. 7 (6), p. 162

<sup>5</sup> Committee for Examination of the Higher Education System in Israel, final report, 2007, pp. 161-178.

<sup>6</sup> Rekhess, E. (ed.) 2007. *"The Arab Minority in Israel and the Elections for the 17th Knesset"*. Tel Aviv University, Conrad Adenauer Foundation

decade in question. Over the four Knesset elections preceding the 2006 elections, voter turnout amongst the Arab population had seen a steady decline of 21% - from a 77% turnout in the elections for the 14<sup>th</sup> Knesset (1996) to 56% in the elections for the 17<sup>th</sup> Knesset (2006).<sup>7</sup>

**Education in the Arab sector** –Scholars note data that run counter to the conventionally-held link between education and voting participation. Neuberger (1998)<sup>8</sup>, for instance, notes:

"Contrary to the theory maintaining that in democratic countries there will be a high level of correlation between the level of modernization and the rate of participation in elections, we find that amongst the Arab sector, up until 1996, voting turnout and participation rates approximated those of the Jewish sector, even though the level of modernization amongst Arab society (in terms of education, income, etc.) is low."

Rekness (2007) expands on Neuberger's puzzlement and argues that the Arab sector actually displays an inverse correlation, whereby it is specifically during the years when the level of modernization was low (from the 1950s up until the mid-'90s) that Arab voter turnout was at its highest - 91% (1955), 80% (1973), 77.3% (1996). According to his view, the reasons for this were a weak society, fear of the regime (military administration), and the mobilizing power of the clan. In later years the situation was reversed: as the level of education and the standard of living rose, voter turnout levels fell. We will examine Rekness's explanation for this process below.

**Data on education amongst the Arab sector, 1990-2007** – The report of the Committee for Examination of the Higher Education System in Israel (2007) points to growth in the scope of

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<sup>7</sup> Rekness, E. (ed.) 2007. "The Arab Minority in Israel and the Elections for the 17th Knesset". Tel Aviv University, Conrad Adenauer Foundation. Introduction.

<sup>8</sup> Neuberger, B. 1998. "The Arab Minority in Israel: Alienation and Integration". Tel Aviv: The Open University., Pp. 118-133.

learning and acquisition of higher education amongst the Arab sector during the '90s and the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is important to note that there is a significant discrepancy between the levels of education among the Arab and Jewish populations; nevertheless, an examination of Arab schooling patterns over the course of this decade and a half shows significant growth in the rate of students completing 12 years of schooling and in the matriculation rate.

The rate of 17-year old Arab students attending high-schools in 2004 was 82%, up from 41% in 1991. (In comparison, the corresponding figures for the Jewish sector were 92% in 2004 and 81.6% in 1991). The rate of 18-year old Arab students eligible to matriculate was 31% in 2004, compared with 13% in 1991. (The corresponding figures for the Jewish sector were 53% in 2004 and 38% in 1991).

As to higher education, the Committee presented partial though somewhat representative data concerning the Arab sector. In comparing the rate of Arab high-school graduates who commenced academic studies within two years of completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade, they committee found that while in 1990 the figure was 10.7%, by 1997 it had risen to 18.8%.<sup>9</sup>

In relation to the rest of the western world, the question arises concerning Israeli society in general and the Arab minority in particular: how are we to explain the negative relationship between the increasing levels of education and decreasing turnout, defying classic modernization theories which expect to find a positive relationship instead? There are several possible explanations.

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<sup>9</sup> Committee for Examination of the Higher Education System in Israel, Ibid. p. 180.

## Minority theory

Many scholars (Al-Hajj, Brik, Rekhess, Neuberger and others) have attempted to understand the behavior of the Arab minority and have proposed explanations that focus mainly on minority-majority relations, in terms of alienation vs. identification of the Arab minority with the State of Israel and its ruling majority.

**Lack of political participation:** Al-Hajj and Rekhess (2007)<sup>10</sup> each offer explanations from different perspectives to explain the changes in voter turnout amongst the Arab sector. They base their discussion on a distinction between boycott behavior and lack of voting participation. Both scholars view both explanations as elements of a broader picture that is needed for an understanding of the question – or, as Rekhess remarks: "The issue of boycotting elections, which is very important for our discussion, is addressed in Aziz Hidar's article." Their explanations attempt mainly to present the motives for the Arab population's lack of participation where this behavior is *not* intended as a boycott. (The methodological problem that we detect here, which is not addressed by either scholar, is the lack of any proof for the existence of these two types of populations –"non-participants" and "boycotters"; there is also no indication of the relative weight of each group within the overall total of non-voters.)

It is important to note that Rekhess's article adopts the modernization theory which anticipates an increasing correlation between level of education and voter turnout.

The following explanations are proposed by Al-Hajj and Rekhess:

1. **Alienation:** The main reason that Al-Hajj and Rekhess offer for the decline in voter turnout while the level of education and standard of living were rising is a growing

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Hajj, M. 2007. "Trends in Arab Voting for Knesset in Israel" In Rekhess E. 2007. (ed.), *The Arab Minority in Israel, and the Elections for the 17th Knesset*". Tel Aviv University, Conrad Adenauer Foundation. Pp. 17-21.



politico-national awareness and sense of alienation towards the state. Voting is interpreted as an inner – and also outer – sign of belonging to Israeli society, integration, liberation from pariah status, approaching consensus. According to Rekness, this trend has developed since the signing of the Oslo Accords, and involves a synthesis between "Israelization" and "Palestinianization" – i.e., a sense that Arabs are an integral part of the State of Israel, and this fact finds expression in their participation in its institutions. The inverse is also true: refraining from voting is interpreted as defiance towards the state, or voluntary exclusion. In other words, Arab citizens took their citizenship seriously: sending representatives to the Knesset, even if their influence will be limited, is an expression and reinforcement of the civic bond between the State of Israel and its institutions, on one hand, and the Arab citizen, on the other. Since the Arab citizen is aware that he does not share equal status in Israel, he refrains from voting.

2. **Apathy:** Political apathy and avoidance of all political activity. This trend, which characterized Israeli society as a whole during the relevant period, is attributed by the scholars to a general sense of being sick of politics. This is also expressed in the apathy of the youth and the younger generation, the Internet generation, towards politics, and a preference to spend the Election Day in recreational activities.
3. **Disappointment at the Arab parties and their ability to influence:** This explanation views low voter turnout as a protest for one or more of the following reasons: negligence on the part of Arab MKs; their being out of touch with the people; neglect of everyday problems in favor of the nationalistic issue; their lack of influence and exclusion from decision-making forums (no Arab MK has ever joined the government or coalition); disappointment at old establishment parties; disappointment at the multiplicity of internal schisms among the Arab parties.

4. **Effectiveness of voting:** Al-Hajj adds another reason which he does not base on evidence, but rather as a personal insight which is instructive for our discussion. He states, "Having studied local government and such issues as higher education, employment, and schooling, I have come to the conclusion that the main achievements of Arabs in Israel were attained through extra-parliamentary struggle, rather than through parliamentary struggle."

**Boycott:** As noted above, to complete the picture Rekhess refers us to Aziz Hidar. Hidar and Al-Hajj offer two types of reasons for the Arab Israeli public's boycotting of elections: the first is the ideological aspect – meaning, reasons pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict, such that participation and voting imply recognition that the fate of Arabs in Israel is different from the fate of other Palestinians. The other aspect is religious, pertaining to the Islamic view (the Abnaa el-Balad movement, and later on - the northern branch of the Islamic movement), or as a protest against the Arab parties and/or the Arab leadership (Abnaa el-Balad in 2006).

#### Duty Citizenship, Engaged Citizenship Theory

What do we mean by the term political participation? Political participation is the primary expression of citizenship in a democratic country. Responsible, aware citizens are expected to maintain some level of political participation; this is what keeps a democracy alive.<sup>11</sup> Political participation is generally described in terms of civic duties, with its most basic expression and in fact its main yardstick represented by citizens exercising their right to vote. The reason for this relates mainly to the perception that through voting, the citizen participates in choosing the country's administration and policy – which is what differentiates representative democracy from a dictatorship, monarchy, or any other non-democratic form of government. Beyond the act of voting it is generally accepted that there

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<sup>11</sup> Dalton, Russell J., 2006. Ibid. , p. 2.

are other frameworks within which a higher level of involvement and a greater commitment to good citizenship may find expression, such as membership in political parties, participation in election campaigns, etc., all the way to personal involvement in politics.

Nevertheless, voting is perceived as the broadest and most fundamental expression of political participation, and it is for this reason that, as noted at the outset, many scholars address the sorry state of western democracies owing to a most significant decline in the level of political participation of their citizens, as expressed in the decline in voter turnout and declining involvement in political parties.

In contrast to such claims, Dalton argues in his article, "Citizenship Norms and Political Participation in America: The Good News Is ... the Bad News Is Wrong" that there is a fundamental error in the way we understand and define citizenship, and hence also political participation; we are therefore mistaken in our assessment of the political reality. Dalton proposes that there are two types of norms when it comes to our perception of good citizenship: one is civic duty; the other is engaged citizenship. He explains at length that the difference between these two norms pertains to the question of whether citizenship is viewed as a duty or as an expression of involvement. The roots of this difference, to his view, are anchored in two social elements: one is the period of social attachment; the other is the level of education. According to studies that he presents regarding the US, as an example, older citizens (aged 40+), as well as less educated citizens, view good citizenship in terms of civic duty, and its classic expressions – such as voting in elections – as one of their civic duties, just like the duty to report a crime. They are more submissive and less critical towards the administration and the elites. According to these studies, younger voters (up to the age of 30+) and more educated citizens view the norm of good citizenship more in terms of involvement, or – to use his term – "engaged citizenship". The primary expression of good citizenship, in this view, is not necessarily the act of voting (perhaps it is even the act of non-

voting), which this group regards as civic passivity and non-participation during the periods in between elections. Rather, it is reflected in ongoing civic engagement in the form of direct politics, lobbying and pressure groups, petitions and demonstrations, political boycotts, activity in extra-parliamentary organizations, etc. Therefore, Dalton proposes that the level of political participation be measured using additional tools, beyond the traditional yardstick of voter turnout. He presents the various types of political participation that exist currently in western democratic society by identifying more specific forms of activity associated with each citizenship norm.

### Duty citizenship

1. **Voting** – The most basic act of political participation in a representative democracy.

In casting his vote, the citizen expresses his views as to the main players who he wants to see active in the political arena for the period set down by law. As noted above, the act of voting is perceived by those who maintain the "civic duty" approach as the most significant act of political participation – it is almost a religious act. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980: 7-8) describe turnout in these terms:

“[T]he most important benefit of voting [is] . . . a feeling that one has done one’s duty to society . . . and to oneself”.

Andre Blaise (2000: 92) sees duty-based voting in even stronger terms:

“To use a religious analogy, not voting can be construed as a venial sin: it is a wrong, one that weak human beings should be urged not to commit but may be forgiven for if they indulge in it.”<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, those of the "engaged citizenship" persuasion might not rule out participation in the elections, and may even go and vote, but they will not view this

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<sup>12</sup>Cited in: Dalton, Russell J., 2006. Ibid, p.9

as a significant act. This is because voting is regarded as an act that is very limited (once in a long time), with a low level of influence on the political situation (no control over the policy that is actually implemented); the parties, comprising professional politicians, wield a strong influence, but the citizenship has little ability to understand the parties' political intentions. With a note of irony, Dalton sums up the situation as follows:

"If one is dissatisfied with the policies of the Bush (or Clinton) administration, waiting several years to vote in the next election as a means of political participation seems like political inaction".

2. **Party membership** – The discrepancy between the two views here is similar but even more acute, especially in light of the perception that the parties have become places of professional employment for politicians. The "civic duty" group views party membership as important and significant activity (albeit less so than voting), while the "engaged citizenship" group attaches no importance to it, perhaps even viewing the parties as places of work for opportunist politicians. As a result, many western countries have seen a significant decline in rates of party membership.
3. **Participation in election campaigns** – As above, aiding parties' election campaigns is viewed by the "civic duty" group as important and positive activity; not obligatory, but nevertheless an act of good citizenship. The "engaged citizenship" group views such activity as possessing no inherent positive value, nor as any sort of expression of good citizenship.

## Engaged Citizenship

1. **Direct political activity, involvement in individual frameworks and pressure groups**
  - Under this category we might include the following types of activity: signing petitions; participation in legal or illegal demonstrations; direct appeals to public officials or government representatives; political economics (boycotts or consumption in support of a political agenda); contributions to political organizations and activities; membership in associations, organizations, non-profit frameworks, and pressure groups advancing a political agenda; Internet activity (propaganda, e-mail lists, etc.); voluntary community activity undertaken with no organizational basis.
2. **Formation of an independent, critical political opinion and keeping informed of the political situation on an ongoing basis** – In Dalton's view, this is a major criterion differentiating the "engaged citizenship" group from proponents of "civic duty". The latter tend to accept the authority of the ruling elites and to respect them, thereby adopting political passivity, the former essentially feel obligated to form an opinion, remain up-to-date, and express criticism, and not to rely on the ruling elite.

Dalton summarizes as follows the ramifications of these differing norms on voting turnout:

"Duty-based norms of citizenship apparently once were the basis of stimulating political engagement, especially turnout in elections. The decline of these norms thus may contribute to the erosion of electoral participation. In contrast, engaged citizenship may be shifting the style of political action; engaged citizens are not drawn to elections but prefer more direct forms of political action, such as working with collective groups, boycotts, or contentious actions. As a result, a shifting

balance of these two patterns of citizenship should reshape the patterns of participation."

It is important to note that similar ideas, albeit in slightly different form, appear in Jan E. Leighley's article (1995).

This brings us back to our research question: Can we apply Dalton's theory to the case of the Arab minority in Israel, and argue that similar processes that have taken place in other western countries, with regard to voting turnout and changes in models of political participation, have also taken place amongst this group?

In an article entitled, "Non-Governmental Organizations as a Political Alternative – A Critical View"<sup>13</sup>, Yousuf Jabarin reviews a broad process of development of civic society and alternative political activity taking place amongst Arab society in Israel during the decade 1996-2007 – the same period for which we observe a significant decline in voter turnout. The process he describes essentially reflects what Dalton defines as engaged citizenship. To illustrate the scope and significance of the process, the following are its main points (it is important to note that Jabarin's review is based on his own personal involvement – or, in his words, "personal impressions and insights based on my afore-mentioned involvement in civic social action").

1. Non-profit organizations active in representation and litigation on behalf of the Arab sector in general, especially in the Israeli Supreme Court: Examples include Adallah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; the Mossawa Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel; and the Karameh Organization for Human Rights.
2. Civic monitoring groups and pressure groups in various spheres, including:

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<sup>13</sup> Jabarin, Y. 2007. , "Non-Governmental Organizations as a Political Alternative – A Critical View". In Rekhess E. 2007. (ed.), *The Arab Minority in Israel, and the Elections for the 17th Knesset*". Tel Aviv University, Conrad Adenauer Foundation. Pp. 93 -99.

- a. Arab education and culture: The Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education; Altafula Center.
- b. Social research: Ibn Khaldun organization; the Galilee Society; the Arab Society for Human Rights; the Emile Touma Institute.
- c. Land and planning: The Arab Center for Alternative Planning; the Association of Forty; the Organization for Displaced Persons.
- d. Empowerment of Arab women: Women Against Violence; Kayan Feminist Organization
- e. Empowerment of Arab Journalism and journalists: I'lam Media Center; Mossawa Center
- f. General organizations described by Jabarin as very active, but which he does not designate as belonging to any particular category: Sikkuy Association; the Center for Jewish-Arab Economic Development; the Association for Civil Rights in Israel; the Arab Association for Civil Rights; Adallah; Mossawa; the Association of Forty; the United Arab Organizations; and the Coalition of Organizations for Advancement of the Status of Arab Women in Israel.

Along with significant growth in the scope of organizations and groups active in alternative political realms and activities, Jabarin also notes activity on the international level in a range of spheres, especially representation in UN and EU institutions, and the organization of public events:

"Most of the organizations mentioned here arose during the past decade (1996-2007). While Arab social organizations had existed previously, these were popular, public, voluntary organizations that focused on politico-public protest, and some of them are still active today. There seems to be a change in the activity of these



organizations as discerned in a shift from an overtly political and national character to a socio-civic one."

"In recent years Arab organizations have made a tremendous contribution to advancing the rights of the Arab minority in Israel and increasing awareness of the Arab public of its rights, especially amongst the younger generation. As noted, organizations are active in a range of spheres: legal representation; lobbying in the Knesset; community representation; empowerment of women; empowerment of social activists; children's rights; empowerment of journalists; Arab education; planning and building; and more. The range of their activities is broad and impressive. They have become an integral part of the social, public, and political reality of Arab society in Israel."

Jabarin concludes by addressing the reciprocal relations between these organizations and institutionalized politics, noting that along with cooperation on the basis of joint interests and agendas there are tensions between these two systems, comprising various aspects: Firstly, there is the issue of credit. The Arab sector perceives the achievements of these organizations over the course of a decade of activity as surpassing the totality of what has been achieved by Arab MKs since the establishment of the state. Another issue is the transition of many political activists to activity within civic society, as an alternative to political activity, with a resulting weakening of the parties.

Jabarin's survey clearly matches Dalton's theory. We believe that a review of the four main explanations proposed by Rekhess and Al-Hajj for the decline in voter turnout, and their analysis in light of Dalton's approach, may offer support for our thesis:

1. **Alienation:** Growing political and national awareness, with a sense of alienation towards the state, is the main explanation proposed by Al-Hajj and Rekhess. We

believe that in light of Dalton's approach, the issue of alienation can be dismissed, while leaving intact the issue of political awareness and the understanding that there are more effective channels for influence – as indeed arising from Jabarin's analysis of flourishing civic activity.

2. **Apathy:** The general apathy of Israeli society during the period in question is attributed by Al-Hajj and Rekhess to a sense of being sick of politics, with citizens preferring to spend the Election Day public holiday on recreational activities. The fact that there has been significant growth in civic channels of activity suggests that Dalton's broadening of the definition of political participation offers a better explanation of the situation than the claim of apathy does.
3. **Disappointment in Arab parties and their ability to exert influence:** This explanation sits well with the critical approach and high level of political awareness that Dalton identifies as engaged citizenship. The group identified with the "civic duty" approach is less affected by disappointment, since this group tends to be obedient and disciplined, and not to undermine the establishment.
4. **Effectiveness of voting:** Al-Hajj states, "Having studied local government and such issues as higher education, employment, and schooling, I have come to the conclusion that the main achievements of Arabs in Israel were attained through extra-parliamentary struggle, rather than through parliamentary struggle." This conclusion is fully and broadly compatible with Dalton's approach. It represents the understanding that there is a different, better, and more effective way of attaining influence and achieving political goals than through old, classic politics.

### Hypotheses

Following Dalton's theory of Duty citizenship vs. Engaged citizenship, we hypothesized that we will find a positive relationship between age and turnout, as well as a negative relationship between education and turnout (hypothesis 1).

In the context of Israeli Arab turnout, we hypothesized that the decline in electoral participation by Israeli Arabs in the Knesset elections from the 1990's to the 2000's could be explained by a decline in the average age of the Arab minority and a rise in the average level of education (hypothesis 2).

Finally, we hypothesized that that decline is not different from the parallel decline in voting in the non-Haredi population in Israel (hypothesis 3). This hypothesis is based on the fact that in most studies, the participation of the Arab minority was compared to the general voter turnout in the Israeli population. This may point only to the growth of the Haredi population, which is known to have extraordinary levels of turnout, as well as lower levels of modernization. In the non-Haredi population, which is becoming more and more educated from the 1990's forward, we may see the same pattern of declining turnout as in the Arab society. This would support the claim that the decline in turnout of the Arab minority is not abnormal.

## Method

### Data sources and data selection

In order to test these hypotheses, we used data on election results from the Israeli Central Bureau for Statistics and the National Election Commission and census data from the Israeli Central Bureau for Statistics.

To analyze our first two hypotheses, we had to reduce the election data in a way which will enable us to focus on the Israeli Arab population and the general, non-Haredi Jewish population. To do so, we focused on the national elections results by town/city, and aimed to find 25 Israeli Arab cities and towns and the 25 Jewish cities and towns which have the lowest percentage of Haredi and Arab populations. We used the election results from 2013 (which we didn't use in other parts of the analysis) to find the cities and towns which

have very high (over 74%) vote share going to Israeli Arab parties, as well as the cities and towns which have the lowest (under 7%) vote share going to both Israeli Arab parties and Haredi parties. In order to make sure our analysis is not biased by considering very small towns, as well as to make sure we have necessary census data (which is collected differently in different localities or different sizes) we decided to only consider towns in which more than 4,000 citizens have voted.

### Data analysis

In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted three different regression analyses on the 50 chosen localities: one testing between-locality differences in the 1996 elections (chosen because of its proximity to the 1995 census); a second testing between-locality differences in the 2009 elections (chosen because of its proximity to the 2008 census); and a third testing changes in turnout over time (from 1996 to 2008).

In all analyses, we compiled demographic measures from the relevant census year. The independent variables entered into the model were the two main expected effects – age (as measured by median age) and education (as measured by percentage of population over 17 holding a B.A. or higher). Regarding age, the median age measure is not the measure we would have preferred to use; a measure which includes data about cohorts would have enabled us to focus on the 18-35 age cohorts, which includes young adults voting for the first time and starting their path of higher education. However, cohort-level data was not available for small localities, which limited our choice. Regarding education, we chose to focus on higher education instead of other variables (for example, high school diploma eligibility) because higher education is the variable which changed the most (both for Israeli Arabs and Jews) from the 1990's to the 2000's.

Another variable entered into the model was the interaction of education and locality type (Arab vs. Jewish localities), in order to measure Rekhess' argument that with Israeli Arabs, the relationship between modernization (as measured by education here) and turnout would be different than the same relationship with Jewish Israelis.

Finally, we entered locality type (Arab or Jewish, dummy coded so that Arab Localities = 1), and two control variables: population size and socioeconomic cluster (a variable scaling from 1 to 10, based on a combination of various socio-economic variables and compiled by the CBS, with cluster 10 localities being the most economically advantaged and cluster 1 localities being the most economically disadvantaged).

Because we had no hierarchical hypotheses, all variables were entered into the model simultaneously.

## Results

### 1996 Election Turnout Analysis

Regression analysis to predict the 1996 election turnout resulted in only one significant coefficient: a negative coefficient between age and turnout ( $\beta = -0.4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), meaning that localities with a smaller median age had smaller turnout. Socioeconomic cluster population size and population share of degree holders did not have any significant relationship with turnout (all  $p$ 's  $> 0.17$ , see table 1 for all results).

These results provide limited support to a part of Dalton's theory (young localities vote less), but fail to provide evidence for any relationship between education and turnout (the insignificant coefficient was actually positive). These results also support the narrative that Israeli Arabs vote less, although this is a within-election analysis, in an election that preceded the major drop in Israeli Arab turnout.

**Table 1**

Variable	Beta	t-value	Significance
Locality type	-0.65	-1.3	0.2
Socioeconomic cluster	-0.07	-0.17	0.87
Population size	-0.18	-1.4	0.17
Share of degree holders	0.46	0.65	0.52
Median age	-0.4	-2.05	0.047
Interaction between locality type and share of degree holders	0.17	0.19	0.85

Model Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.41$

### 2009 Election Turnout Analysis

Regression analysis to predict the 2009 election turnout resulted in one significant coefficient and two marginally significant coefficients: a positive coefficient between population share of degree holders and turnout ( $\beta = 1.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), meaning that the more well educated localities had higher turnout rates; a negative coefficient between locality type and turnout ( $\beta = -1.03$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ); and a positive coefficient between the locality-education interaction and turnout ( $\beta = 1.06$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ), meaning that the relationship between share of degree holders and turnout was stronger within Arab localities than within Jewish localities. All other coefficients were not significant (all  $p$ 's  $> 0.26$ , see table 2 for all results).

These results are, first and foremost, a sharp departure from Dalton's theory. Not only was age a non-significant predictor of voting, but education was significant in the opposite direction than what Dalton's theory predicts. However, the difference between Arab and Jewish localities was not significant, which is different than common perception.

Although turnout was indeed lower in Arab localities (59%) than in Jewish localities (70%), this difference is a result of a vast difference in population share of degree holders (10.2% in Arab localities, versus 36.6% in Jewish localities). We will discuss the possible meaning of these results in the discussion chapter.

Another conclusion from these results is that the argument that education (as a proxy for modernization in this analysis) does play a different role in Arab and Jewish populations, but not in the direction Rekhess (2007) was suggesting: it seems that Arab localities benefit more from having more degree holders than do Jewish localities.

This is also the only analysis in which the type of locality was found to play a role in determining turnout, and we do see that Arab localities have smaller turnout rates even when taking into account other variables. This may be explained by the proximity of the 2009 elections to operation Cast Lead, which may have promoted boycotting of the elections – although this is merely a suggestion and the actual explanation is, of course, unknown.

**Table 2**

Variable	Beta	t-value	Significance
Locality type	-1.03	-1.85	0.07
Socioeconomic cluster	-0.24	-0.41	0.69
Population size	-0.14	-1.14	0.26
Share of degree holders	1.15	2.64	0.01
Median age	-0.26	-0.96	0.34
Interaction between locality type and share of degree holders	1.06	1.73	0.09

Model Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.42$

### Analysis of change in turnout

To analyze change in turnout across two elections, we calculated changes in our two main predictors (growth in population share of degree holders and any changes in median age), as well as in population size. Locality types did not change over the course of these 13 years, so locality was entered as is. Some changes in socioeconomic cluster did happen in the 13 years between elections, but they were not large, and so socioeconomic cluster was entered according to 2008 levels.

The analysis yielded no significant coefficients (all  $p$ 's > 0.34, see table 3 for all results). Although there were changes in all predicting variables as well as in the predicted variable, it seems that no variable had any predictive power. The most interesting result is the fact that locality type did not predict lower turnout, despite there being noteworthy differences between Jewish localities (a drop of 16% in turnout) and Arab localities (a drop of 21.2% in turnout). This is probably explained by the involvement of other variables: Arab localities and Jewish localities had experienced different growth in degree holders (a 14.45% increase in Jewish localities versus a 6.31% increase in Arab localities) and different changes in median age (3.82 years in Jewish localities versus 1.56 years in Arab localities). This means that the difference in turnout between Jewish and Arab localities may be attributed to various differences between these localities other than being of different ethnic makeup.

In any case, these results do not support Dalton's theory, but do provide some counter-evidence to theories suggesting that the decline in voting of Israeli Arabs is simply the result of growing alienation or other variables unique to Israeli Arabs.



**Table 3**

Variable	Beta	t-value	Significance
Locality type	-0.5	-0.97	0.34
Socioeconomic cluster	-0.06	-0.12	0.9
Population size difference	-0.14	-0.92	0.36
Share of degree holders difference	0.17	0.68	0.5
Median age difference	-0.4	-0.21	0.83
Interaction between locality type and share of degree holders difference	0.13	0.33	0.74

Model Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.08$

### Discussion

The data we have gathered has provided little support for Dalton's theory of the shift from Duty based citizenship to Engaged citizenship. We see some evidence in support of the theory that younger citizens vote less than older citizens, but that evidence is limited to only one of three analyses. The theory that the more educated citizens are, the less they will tend towards duty based citizenship, has no supporting evidence, and our results seem to support the theory that education is a predictor of higher, not lower, turnout. The conflicting results regarding the relationship between education and turnout is as evident in our data (with different elections showing different relationships) as it is in the literature, and this raises the question on whether we can claim there is a universal, one-way relationship between education and turnout, or whether that relationship is moderated or facilitated by many other variables.

Regardless, our data does deviate significantly from Dalton's predictions. One explanation for the difference between Dalton's data and our data is in that Dalton measures intentions and perceived importance of different aspects of citizenship, while not measuring actual behavior: people are known to behave not according to their stated preferences, and this may be just one example. It is possible that younger and more educated people do not report voting as an activity to which they ascribe too much importance, but when election day arrives they vote, whether out of social pressure or any other reason.

Another explanation may be a difference in macro-level patterns vs. micro-level patterns: generally, western society has seen a concurrent expansion of education (specifically higher education) and a decline in turnout; but this may be a correlation which does not imply and sort of actual relationship between the two variables, which is why we don't see such a connection in micro-level analyses such as the ones we have conducted here. In the same way, we may have concluded that it is indeed the rise in matriculation eligibility and higher education which has caused the drop in Israeli Arab turnout, since these are two changes which happened in the 1990's and 2000's.

It bears mentioning that some of our assumptions about the demographics of the Israeli Arab population were not correct. The most obvious example is that the median age of the Israeli Arab population has risen between 1995 and 2008, albeit slower than in the Jewish population. The increase in higher education was also milder than we would have expected. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the change in these variables does not predict change in turnout, and further research is still needed to find the factors which do, indeed, affect turnout.

However, the results still do not refute Dalton's theory completely. It is still possible that the Engaged citizenship model is true – and an analysis of the effect of age and

education on active forms of civil participation may yield supporting evidence. Age and education may not wholly explain lower turnout, but they may still explain more active participation by other means. This suggests several opportunities for further research – for example, an individual-level study measuring political participation, or a national-level study focusing on the relationship between age, education and social activism as seen in the activity level of the Israeli non-profit sector. This is supported by Jabarin's (2007) survey of the rise of Arab non-profit activity in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

The most interesting result from this study, however, is the pattern of Israeli Arab turnout versus Jewish turnout. It seems that while there are turnout differences between the two groups, these differences are not merely a result of the ethnic difference, but more likely a combination of various different factors. This is supported by the fact that we found a significant correlation between locality type and turnout only in one specific case – which may tell us that this really is a complex issue, and that turnout in different elections is affected by different factors.

As to explaining the drop in Israeli Arab turnout, the explanations focusing on the alienation of Israeli Arabs still merit further research, but more empirical evidence must be gathered to support it. It may well be that alienation and apathy are relevant not only to the Israeli Arab population, but to the rest of the Israeli population as well. That is just as relevant when talking about discontent from the Israeli Arab parties, considering Jewish Israelis may be just as discontent with the Jewish parties. These alternative explanations both require further research.

Another direction for further research is the municipal level. The turnout levels of Israeli Arabs in municipal elections are higher than they are in national elections (Al-Hajj, 2007), and research comparing the two may shed some light on the factors affecting turnout. This difference in turnout of the same population in different types of elections

(especially when there is higher turnout in municipal elections, which traditionally draw lower turnout) supports the alienation theory, but also requires further research on the effects of closer, more traditional communities on turnout. A comparison with the similarly traditional Haredi population is also required in this respect.

### Limitations

This research is merely a first probe at a very complex subject, and is very limited due to our examining of only two elections. The data which was available to us was limited (a census occurring only roughly once a decade) and has not enabled us to study more elections effectively, nor perform more complex, robust analyses. With more available data, more complex analyses (for example, time series analyses) of more elections could possibly give us a better understanding of how education, age and socio-economic status affect turnout in Israel.

Another limit on our ability to study the effect of age on turnout is in our use of median age as a measure for a locality's population age. As we've mentioned before,

### Conclusion

As we've said before, this is only a first attempt at reexamining the question of declining turnout in the Israeli Arab population. We didn't find a clear answer as we had hoped, but we did manage to show that whatever is causing the sharper decline in turnout in the Israeli Arab population, it cannot be simply attributed to ethnic differences. We have provided several directions for further research, and hopefully shed a little more light on this issue.

## Appendix – List of Localities used

<b>Jewish Localities</b>	<b>Arab Localities</b>
Alfei Menashe	Ar'ara
Ariel	Arraba
Binyamina-Giv'at Ada*	Baka el-Garbiya***
Efrat	Deir Hanna
Even Yehuda	Ein Mahil
Givatayim	I'billin
Herzliya	Jadeidi-Makr
Hod HaSharon	Kabul
Kfar Saba	Kafr Kanna
Kiryat Bialik	Kafr Manda
Kiryat Motzkin	Kafr Qara
Kiryat Ono	Kafr Yasif
Kiryat Tiv'on	Ma'ale Iron
Kokhav Ya'ir	Nazareth
Mazkeret Batya	Qalansawe
Meitar	Rahat
Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut**	Reineh
Ness Ziona	Sakhnin
Omer	Shefar'am
Ra'anana	Tamra
Ramat Gan	Tayibe
Ramat HaSharon	Tira
Rishon LeZion	Tur'an
Shoham	Umm al Fahm
Tel Mond	Yafa

\*In 1995 was separated into two localities, which were combined for analysis

\*\*In 1995 Modi'in was not yet populated.

\*\*\*in 1995 was separated into two localities, the data for one of which was missing.

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