



# 2022 LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Milestones and Lessons Learned



**Thanks are due to:**

Mr. Walid Hussein, Journalist

Ms. Nora Mourad, (UNDP) Senior Electoral Officer

Ms. Guilnard Asmar, (UNDP) Media and Communications Officer

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# Executive Summary

In light of Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis, holding parliamentary elections is considered a success, despite all of the obstacles and lack of clarity in the electoral calendar regarding whether such elections should be held or not. The general political climate, the amendment to the electoral law, and the postponement of the adoption of the electoral budget all had a negative impact on the electoral campaigns and general atmosphere of the elections, leaving their fate unknown.

The Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) could not begin its work as its appointment was delayed and funds were not allocated on time. Its lack of administrative and financial autonomy contributed to its limited oversight, particularly given Lebanon's inability to monitor and control electoral spending as a result of the banking crisis.

Despite widespread allegations of vote buying and the provision of assistance/services, the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE) was unable to monitor or prosecute any candidate or electoral list. Furthermore, the high electoral spending ceiling continues to undermine the principle of equal opportunity for candidates, as well as the legal mechanisms in place to provide services to voters.

Due to limited capacity of official public media and the private media's noncompliance with the law in terms of open spaces for all, the candidates' media appearances continue to be unevenly distributed.

Women's participation in elections was notable, but it did not translate into an increase in the number of women in Parliament. Women continue to face inequities in political parties and society, and patriarchal mentalities continue to limit their access to positions of power. Despite improvements in some of the measures taken by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) to ensure easy access to polling stations for persons with disabilities with dignity and independence, only 143 out of 1734 polling centers used the ground floors as polling stations.

# Introduction

In the framework of the evaluation of the general parliamentary elections that was held in Lebanon on May 15, 2022, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the financial support of the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Cooperation and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, organized two workshops. The first workshop (June 30, 2022) focused on the electoral administration and the work of the Supervisory Commission for Elections, monitoring of electoral campaigns and media, and electoral spending, while the second workshop (July 6, 2022) covered the political participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

The workshops hosted official entities responsible for organizing the elections, namely representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), and representatives of the Supervisory Commission for Elections (SCE), in addition to representatives of civil society organizations concerned with the elections, as well as representatives of the international community and donors.

The two workshops aimed to conduct an extensive legal, technical, and logistical reading of the elections in order to identify the successes, shortcomings, and problems encountered during the elections. Furthermore, the objective was to benefit from the lessons learned and avoid the problems in the next elections, whether the municipal elections scheduled for next year or the parliamentary elections which are supposed to be held after four years, in accordance with the provisions of Lebanese laws.

The workshops, held in Beirut on June 30 and July 6, 2022, hosted representatives of the international community and electoral experts, in order to benefit from their technical and logistical expertise to ensure

the proper conduct of the upcoming elections, assist the Lebanese administration on how to implement the reforms, and to avoid the shortcomings that occurred in the elections held in May 2022.

After an in-depth reading of the various aspects of the electoral process by the relevant stakeholders on the ground, a number of recommendations were issued which are included in the present report, following a general reading of the elections according to the highlights of the discussions, which were concluded by the two aforementioned workshops.

# Organizations Participating in the Two Workshops

Electoral Administration <i>30 June</i>
UNSCOL
Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)
Maharat Foundation
UNESCO
Lebanese Transparency Association
French Embassy
European Union
National Democratic Institute (NDI)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
LEB- CAAP
Madanyat
Democracy Reporting International
Embassy of the United States of America
Director General of Political Affairs and Refugees, Faten Younis Intervention by the Director General of Civil Status, General Elias Khoury
FiftyFifty
Head of the Supervisory Commission for Elections Judge Nadim Abdelmalak SCE Member Dr. Arda Ekmekji
UN Women

Participation of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities <i>6 July</i>
British Embassy
French Embassy
Maharat Foundation
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Madanyat
European Union
Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)
Democracy Reporting International
United Nations Election Observation Mission
Embassy of the United States of America
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Lebanese Transparency Association
FiftyFifty
UNSCOL
UN Women
Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD)
LEB- CAAP
Gender Expert Abir Chbaro
Elections Expert Mohamad Chamseddine

# Overview

Nearly a year and a half after the 2018 elections, Lebanon witnessed a series of financial, economic, and health crises, which had repercussions on the preparations for the parliamentary elections that took place on May 15, 2022.

In mid-October 2019, three days before the start of the so-called “17 October Uprising,” the Lebanese government decided to impose a tax on WhatsApp’s phone calls, which are free of charge globally, followed by a series of street protests that lasted for several months. The protests were preceded by massive wildfires that raged in Meshref area near the town of Damour on the Chouf coast. The wildfires lasted for about two days while the media and citizens were reporting the incident on a daily basis which has become a common practice in Lebanon for the past years: the failure of the government, and the corruption of the people in power, the cabinet and relevant bodies. The incident and its aftermath joined a series of scandals that have been unfolding for many years and in various fields.

After October 17, Lebanon witnessed a series of demonstrations, street protests, and civil unrest until early 2020. In addition to the emergence of a global health crisis characterized by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in decisions to impose a country wide lockdown. Furthermore, the protests subsided until August, which was marked by the deadly Beirut Port explosion and the destruction of many neighborhoods in the capital city. As a result, and due to the on-going government crisis, the Cabinet formed in early 2020, headed by Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned.

Once again, Lebanon experienced a constitutional vacuum after the port explosion, as officials were unable to appoint a new Prime Minister to form a government until the end of July 2021. Prime Minister

Najib Mikati was then assigned to form a cabinet which was accomplished in early September. The new cabinet’s mandate continued throughout the preparation for the parliamentary elections in May 2022.

During all the phases leading up to the 2018 elections and the preparations for the 2022 elections, Lebanon experienced an economic and financial crisis that affected the preparations of the elections, which ultimately took place officially on the scheduled date in May 2022.

The events negatively affected the inability of the Electoral Administration (MoIM and SCE) to establish a clear timeline for the elections, due to the delay in allocating a budget for the elections, and the disruption of State administrations.

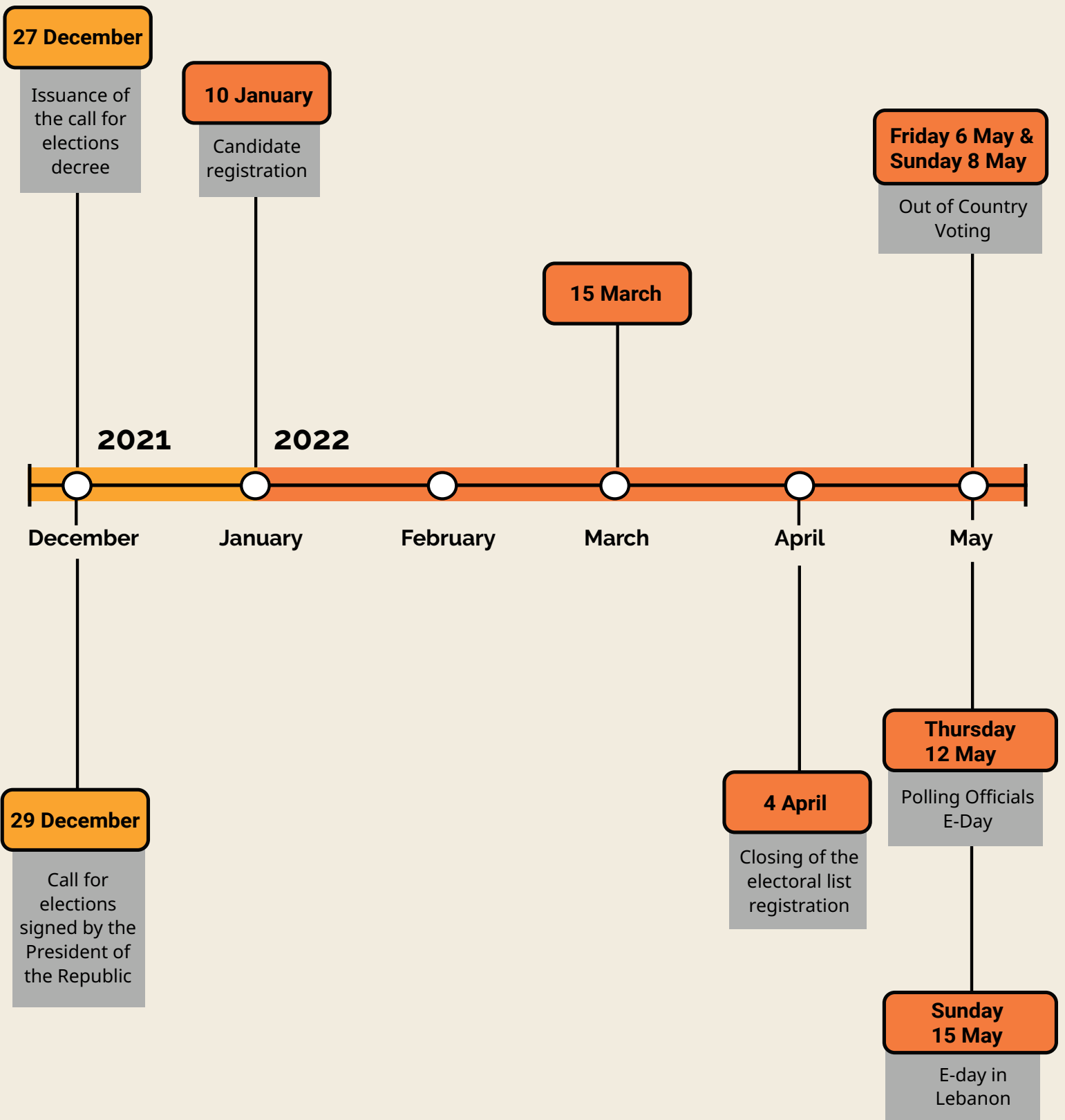
On a positive note, the events resulted in an increase in women and youth participation compared to previous cycles, as well as the emergence of new political forces that participated in the elections in several electoral lists in the name of change. As a result, 13 deputies won the elections who identify themselves as “deputies of change”, an event Lebanon witnessed for the first time.

Despite the crises and difficult conditions that Lebanon has gone through amid the financial collapse and fears of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the parliamentary elections took place. However, the general course accompanying those elections was subject to lot of confusion and uncertainty on whether to conduct the elections or not. The media witnessed an outburst of rumors about postponing the elections, due to the lack of a clear plan on conducting of the elections. This contributed to keeping matters unclear even before the out-of-country elections date. The question that preoccupied the Lebanese, the international community, and the candidates was whether the elections would be held on time or postponed for logistical, financial, or even security reasons. This brought to memory the experience of extending the Parliament mandate in 2013, when elections were held abroad in two countries and the Parliament returned and extended their mandate.

# First Stage of Preparation for Elections

Perhaps the most significant observations about the pre-election phase are not only limited to rumors on the possibility of elections' postponement, but also include the amendment of the electoral law in less than eight months before the end of the Parliament mandate. Not only that, but the process of registering Lebanese expatriates abroad preceded the amendment of the electoral law in the Parliament, and this led to considerable confusion on whether to register or not. The following points were noted in the dates preceding the call for election:

- 1.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants announced the start of the registration period for the Lebanese expatriates between September 20 and November 20, 2021.
- 2.** The expatriate registration process began 18 days before the Parliament amended the election law 44/2017 adopted at its plenary session on October 19. The amendment allowed for elections to be held on March 27 and kept the out-of-country voting for Lebanon's 15 electoral districts. This was rejected by political forces that called for the implementation of the law in force in accordance with its 2017 articles, on the basis of which the general elections were held in 2018.
- 3.** After the amendment of the law by the Parliament, President Michel Aoun signed Decree No. 8421 on October 22, 2021, and the amendment of the law was referred to the Parliament for review.
- 4.** The Parliament reinstated the amendments and the law became legally effective on November 3, 2021. The pace of expatriate registration, which started very slowly at the beginning, accelerated out of fear of any amendment to the law that would cancel their right to vote for electoral districts in Lebanon.
- 5.** On November 17, before the expiry of the 15-day deadline after publication of the law in the Official Gazette, Free Patriotic Movement MPs filed an appeal to the Constitutional Council against the amendments to the election law and the voting mechanism at the Parliament in regards to the majority counting.
- 6.** Expatriates registration continued at a good pace until November 20th, when the registration deadline expired for 225,000 Lebanese who registered to vote in Lebanon.
- 7.** The Constitutional Council did not take any decision to appeal and the deadline expired on December 21st, during the Parliament's open sessions, without a decision being reached. The amended law remained in force with its amended deadlines allowing for elections to be held on March 27, 2022.
- 8.** The Minister of Interior, Bassam Mawlawi, signed the call for elections decree on December 27, 2021 inviting the voters to elect members of the Parliament: E-Day for Lebanese expatriates on Friday May 6th, and Sunday May 8th; E-Day for the polling officials, on Thursday May 12th; E-Day for Lebanese residing on Lebanese territory, on Sunday May 15th.
- 9.** The President of the Republic signed the decree on December 29th, 2021.





# Second Stage Following the Call for Election

Nearly two weeks following the signature of the call for election decree, the Minister of the Interior Bassam Mawlawi issued a decree announcing the opening of candidacy for elections on January 10 until March 15, 2022, and the notification of withdrawal of candidacy on March 30, 2022. The deadline for registration of the electoral lists was set on April 4, 2022 that is, forty days before the scheduled date for elections, as stipulated in the Parliamentary Elections Law, Article 54 thereof.

Once again, the registration process of candidates slowly started, as did the registration of electoral lists. And although the slow pace of registration was due to negotiations usually conducted by all political and civil forces, however the absence of a clear calendar for holding the elections, the persistence of political discussions to amend some of the articles in the law, such as the creation of the “Megacenter”, the failure to approve the election budget, and the continuous speculations on the postponement of elections have affected how candidates and lists registered, and have also affected the launching of the electoral campaigns, which seriously started one month before the E-Day.

The last day of candidate registration which extended until midnight (March 15th, 2022) witnessed a high number of candidates, many of whom came from abroad, that reached 296 applicants. This brought the total number of candidates to 1044, including 157 women candidates, which is equivalent to 15%. In 2018 parliamentary elections, the number of candidates reached 976, including 113 women (12%). However, the number decreased after the closure of electoral lists registration and after 597 candidates continued to compete, including 86 women who were distributed on 77 lists in different districts.

On April 4, 2022, the electoral list registration wrapped up at 103 lists that counted 719 candidates, including 118 women, after 42 candidates withdrew, and 284 others did not join any list and therefore inevitably were counted as withdrawn. Despite the call for election and the opening of candidates and electoral lists registration, the fate of the elections remained unknown:

**1.** No new commission was appointed to supervise the elections. According to the amended law, the commission is supposed to be appointed six months before the election date, that is, on December 15, 2021 and its mandate expires six months after the election. However, the amendment opened the door for the former commission to continue its duties until a new one was appointed. This created a problem in terms of retaining the current commission or appointing another one. This came at a time when the commission lost its quorum with the resignation of its former members.

**2.** Failure to allocate a clear budget for the elections, a clear lack of figures on the cost of holding the elections, the ambiguity in the government’s position on the appointment of a new commission to supervise the elections, the lack of clarity on the fate of the existing SCE, which announced the start of its work, while the issue of vacancies and the availability of a quorum remained unclear, and the failure to disburse the necessary funds for the supervisory commission.

**3.** The issue of the establishment of the “Megacenter” was reopened, which sparked lengthy discussions and the decision was made not to proceed with its implementation during the Cabinet session on March 10, 2022, less than two months before the elections.

# Civil Society Action

In light of the uncertainty and the absence of a clear timeline confirming the holding of timely elections, the Electoral Reform Alliance (the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections, the Lebanese Transparency Association, and the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities and Maharat Foundation), held, on February 14, the Lebanese government as a whole, the Parliament, and the SCE responsible for any delay in holding elections. The alliance expressed its fear of “volatilizing” the elections under various pretexts. Here are extracts from some of the alliance statements in the run-up to the elections:

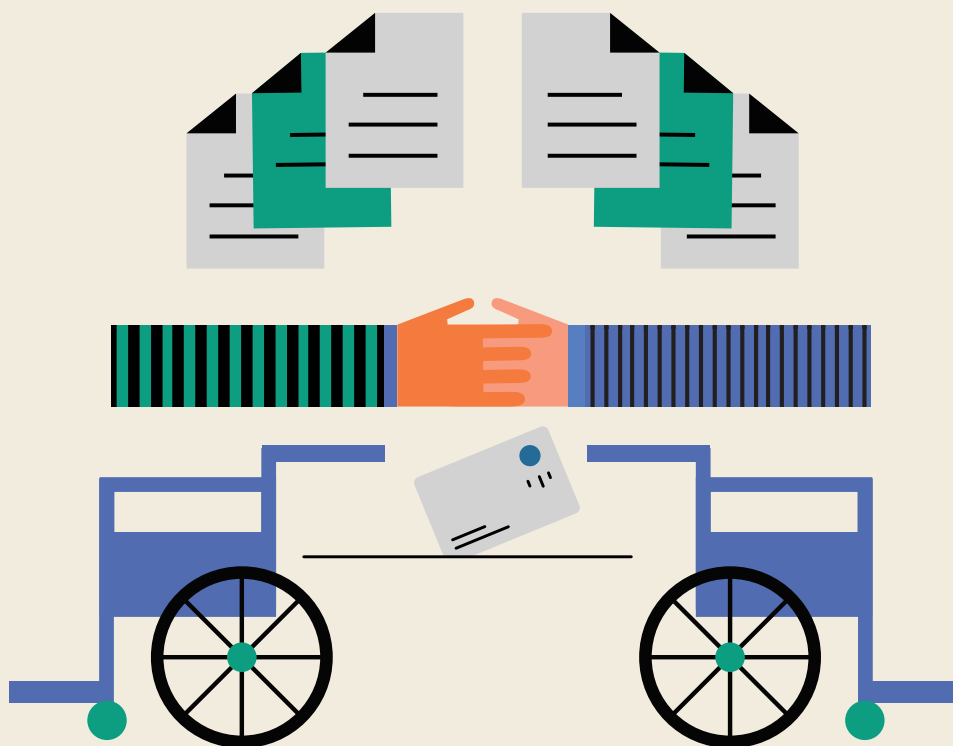
Here are extracts from some of the alliance statements in the run-up to the elections:

1.

On February 17th, the Electoral Reform Alliance expressed concern that putting the issue of the Megacenters on the discussion table less than three months before E-Day would pave the way for postponing the elections.

2.

On March 9th, the Alliance reiterated that the performance of the political authority raises a lot of confusion about the extent of the actual readiness of the concerned authorities to organize the elections at the required level.



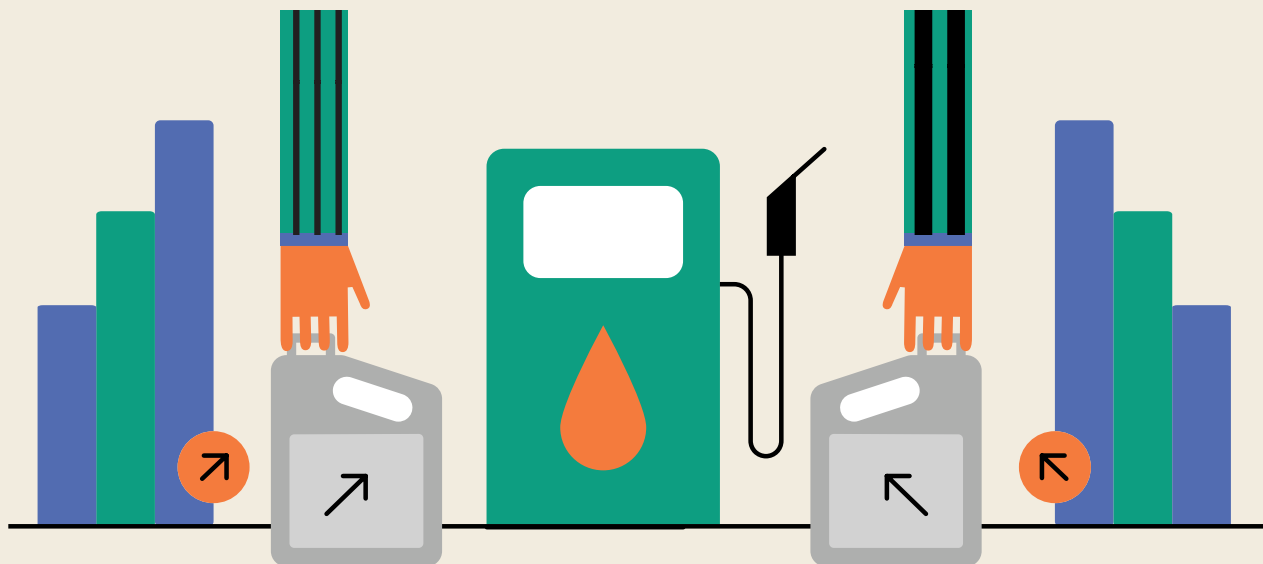
However, the Alliance actors cooperated with the Electoral Administration, and this was evident during the E-Days through the measures of the MoIM to ensure the smooth conduct of the electoral process, or in terms of the cooperation of the MoIM with the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities in order to equip the ground floors in many polling stations, with the aim of providing accessible polling stations for persons with disabilities.

# General Atmosphere of E-Days Abroad and in Lebanon

Participants in both workshops unanimously agreed that the organization of the elections in itself was an achievement, to which UNDP substantially contributed. As part of the preparations for the elections, the MoIM, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, organized an election forum that was held in two sessions (on November 8, 2021, and February 15, 2022), in the presence of foreign ambassadors in Lebanon, donors and representatives of CSOs involved in the elections. UNDP also established an electoral working group that kickstarted in September 2021 with the participation of relevant CSOs, donors and electoral experts, amongst others. More than 8 sessions were held with the objective of discussing the preparations for elections and sharing relevant activities and areas of cooperation.

Fears of postponing the elections were very high, given the economic conditions, the financial collapse in Lebanon, and the disruption of public administrations due to the non-attendance of employees at their duty stations, due to the high price of gasoline. This in addition to the delay in approving the electoral budget, and the faltering in launching the work of the SCE. Despite all the crises and political tension in the

country, and the spread of speculations about the postponement of the elections for security or even logistical reasons regarding the administration's inability to hold elections (lack of electricity and internet for polling stations and the inability of employees to participate in the elections process due to the high fuel prices, as well as the spread of a new wave of COVID-19 pandemic), E-days were conducted on time and no major security breaches were recorded. However, the elections were accompanied by some inconsistent functioning in the electoral processes at the polling centers and polling stations and this was evident during the two election days of May 6th and 8th abroad, and during the E-day in Lebanon on May 15th. Most of the polling officials were not well-versed in their legal duties in terms of guiding voters and applying the text of the law to deal with violations that occurred inside the polling stations: candidates' agents interfered in the electoral process and accompanied voters behind the voting booth without the polling officials intervention to maintain order and apply the legal text, and lack of knowledge about dealing with cases of people with disabilities and of writing the irregularities in the polling form, and lack of sufficient knowledge about counting ballots and cancelling votes, or even guiding voters to ensure the secrecy of the electoral process.



# Comparative Table Between 2018 and 2022 Elections

## 2018 Elections

## 2022 Elections

### Male and Female Candidates

Number of candidates 597	Number of candidates 719
Number of women candidates 86	Number of women candidates 118
Number of electoral lists 77	Number of electoral lists 103
Candidature of 17 Ministers including the Minister of Interior & Municipalities	Candidature of 1 minister, the Minister of Industry

### Parliament

Six women MPs entered the parliament	Eight women MPs entered Parliament
One MP representing the civil movement groups won	13 MPs from the forces of change won
64 new MPs	57 new MPs

### Registered Voters and Actual Voters

Number of registered voters 3.746.483	Number of registered voters abroad 225.277
Number of registered voters abroad 82.965	Number of actual voters 1.951.683
Number of actual voters abroad 46.799	Number of actual voters abroad 142.041
Blank ballot papers 15.029	Blank ballot papers 19.308
Invalid ballot papers 38.909	Invalid ballot papers 57.700

## Electoral Spending Ceiling

Fixed lump sum of 150 million LBP

A variable sum of 5,000 LBP for each registered voter in the big electoral district

Fixed lump sum of 750 million LBP

A variable sum of 50,000 LBP for each registered voter in the big electoral district

## Candidature fee

8 million LBP

30 million LBP

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# Electoral Management and Administration

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The workshop, held on June 30th, addressed the problems encountered in the elections, to learn from them and benefit from the experience. The MoIM presented the stages undertaken by the administration to conduct the elections: preparation of the decree inviting the electorate in Lebanon and abroad, the draft decree forming the Supervisory Commission for Elections, the draft decrees of Higher and Primary Registration Committees through correspondence with the Ministry of Justice, Central Inspection, the General Directorate of Civil Status and the governorates,

the drafting the letter of the allocated budget necessary for the conduct of elections, the distribution and allocation of polling stations, the issuance of eligible voters lists based on the voters' rolls, the preparation of circulars for voters, candidates and employees, the request of governors and district commissioners to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities, and a letter to the Ministry of Justice requesting the public prosecution to counter bribery, and other decisions and circulars, and last but not least, notification letters to the Parliament and the Constitutional Council on the elections final results.

## Elections Budget

According to the MoIM, the challenges revolved around the delay in issuing the elections' budget at the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, which reflected on the ability of MoIM to prepare for the elections.

The elections' budget varied between 2018 and 2022, possibly because in 2018 the elections were held according to the proportional law for the first time, which necessitated spending funds to establish a software to issue results, purchase televisions, indelible ink, training allowances for head officers of polling stations, and other expenses that UNDP assumed in the 2022 elections. However, the existence of a post-election financial audit allows to determine the amount of funds and the cost of the elections in order to develop scenarios for the upcoming elections. The discussion addressed the need to accelerate the budget approval process and not wait until the last weeks before E-Day with matters remaining unresolved as it happened in the current elections.



## Training of Polling Officials

Challenges also emerged with regard to weak staff training as it was evident that many polling officials were unfamiliar with the electoral processes on E-day, as a result of difficult health and economic conditions, which led to the training of staff through two videos covering the entire electoral processes, one dedicated for the polling officials abroad and another dedicated to the E-Day in Lebanon. Around 15,000 employees did not have the means to go to Beirut to receive their training due to the high prices of fuel and the inability of the government to pay transportation allowances, as was done in 2018. The timing of the training coincided with the month of Ramadan, Easter holidays and the COVID-19 outbreak, which made the video the best possible solution. Nevertheless, work must be done in the future to avoid the challenges that have occurred and which were noticed by the electoral observers, such as how to place the voting booth in order to preserve the secrecy of the ballot and to prevent party agents from entering with voters behind the voting booth. It is worth noting that polling officials hold the authority within their polling station.

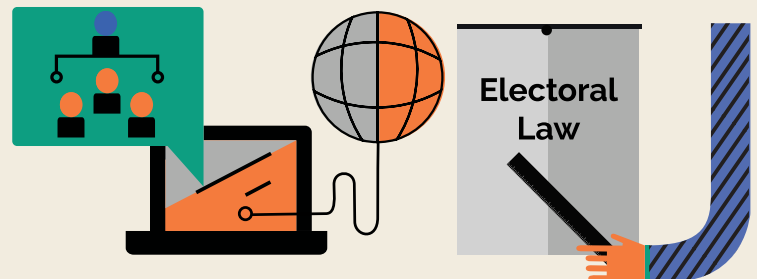
# Establishment of the “Megacenter”

Challenges emerged regarding the establishment of the “Megacenter” and prevented its adoption. On March 4th, the Council of Ministers appointed a committee that included the MoIM, the Ministry of Tourism, the Directorate General of Civil Status and the Directorate General of Political Affairs and Refugees, which was supposed to adopt the voters’ pre-registration method. However, there were objections on adopting the magnetic card, and the committee did not reach a unified decision on the issue, and decided on the 10th of March not to adopt the “Megacenter”. Nevertheless, the matter had already triggered a debate and confusion that prompted the Electoral Reform Alliance to express its fear that raising the issue of the “Megacenter” could pave the way for the postponement of the elections.

For its part, the MoIM confirmed in the workshop that the ministry holds a study ready for the implementation of the “Megacenter”, but it requires a specific budget and a voting method to be implemented. Financial allocations are essential in the electoral processes, while the election budget was not approved until two

months before E-Day.

The establishment of the “Megacenter” is a technical measure that not only facilitates the voting of citizens at their place of residence, but also reduces the pressure of political machines on voters and limits bribery that occur by transporting voters from their place of residence to their place of registry in order to cast their votes. The adoption of the “Megacenter” is also considered a positive measure for persons with disabilities. The workshop attendees unanimously agreed on the importance of this procedure to ensure the principle of transparency of the electoral process, even if it is implemented through the method of voters’ pre-registration, similar to the registration of expatriates, and that the adoption of the magnetic card is difficult to achieve in light of the financial and economic challenges that Lebanon is facing.



## Voter Education

One of the challenges the MoIM faced in the elections was the weakness in educating voters about the new law and how to vote, especially since the election results revealed that the number of invalid ballots was 57,700, and this number is considered high compared to the previous round, especially since the parliamentary elections are being held for the second time according to the proportional system.

Problems emerged in the elections in terms of voter education. The problem was not the educational material, but its dissemination and presentation to the general public. It was only displayed on social media, when it should have been better shown on TV stations. The TV stations displayed some election-related advertising videos, but not educational materials. Also, the official public television station, Tele Liban, did not allocate spaces as it did in the 2018 elections, perhaps because of problems in its board of directors and the problems of the public sector employees, which was reflected in the lack of programs dedicated to the current elections. Nevertheless, there has been an important development in the current elections at the level of voter education materials. For the first time, UNDP worked to place the logo of the Supervisory Commission for Elections alongside the logo of the MoIM on videos dedicated to voter education, to give the SCE its role enshrined in the electoral law, unlike the 2018 elections, when the MoIM was displaying and broadcasting voter education



campaigns without indicating any role of the SCE.

In addition, UNDP worked on the use of sign language and friendly means for persons with disabilities in the voter education campaign that was circulated, in order to make educational materials inclusive, especially for people with hearing impairments.

## Voter Education and Ballot Papers

With regard to determining valid and invalid ballot papers and how to count them, the MoIM worked with UNDP to distribute leaflets explaining and simplifying this matter. The number of invalid ballots was supposed to be less since the pre-printed ballot paper was adopted in the last elections. However, the strict manner in which the registration committees were counting the votes led to an increase in the number of invalid ballots, which calls for a review of how to adopt specific methods and to ensure respect for the intention of voters to cast their votes.

## Judges and Ballot Boxes Counting

During the workshop discussions, challenges arose regarding how judges would count and cancel ballot boxes. Although the Constitutional Council can re-examine the decisions of judges in the primary and higher registration committees to determine the extent to which the cancellation or counting of these boxes affects the election results, this can only happen if there is an appeal from the losing candidates. E-Day proceedings revealed that there were no uniform standards and instructions for judges on how to cancel ballot boxes. This calls for working with the Ministry of Justice to train judges on these details in order to avoid any mistakes that may occur.

## Amendment of the Electoral Law

One of the challenges from which lessons could be drawn in order to be avoided in the future is the amendment of the electoral law and the shortening of deadlines. In setting the date for the elections, a conflict occurred between the Parliament and the MoIM which has the mandate to suggest the E-Day date. This makes it necessary to intervene in order to establish legal grounds that prevent the amendment of the electoral law in the last year of the end of the Parliament mandate, which gives the MoIM stability for the proper logistic preparation for such entitlement, as well as the candidates and voters in terms of their knowledge of how to vote and run for the elections.





# Out-of-Country Voting

Holding elections abroad has not been easy to achieve. Under the current electoral law, electoral arrangements are needed for the preparation of polling stations abroad, as well as the voter registration process. Moreover, problems often arise after the out of country voting in the unavailability of forms and minutes of some of the polling stations for different districts. For instance, in 2018 there was an ineffectiveness in terms of training the head officials of polling stations abroad, and the procedures were unclear, with regards to writing the forms of each station, and polling officials did not know their duties. The situation changed in 2022, as a result of various measures being adopted. But among the problems that occurred was the embassies resorting to individuals from the Lebanese community to appoint them as polling officials and not from the diplomatic missions' staff, because of the cut off and short of budget.

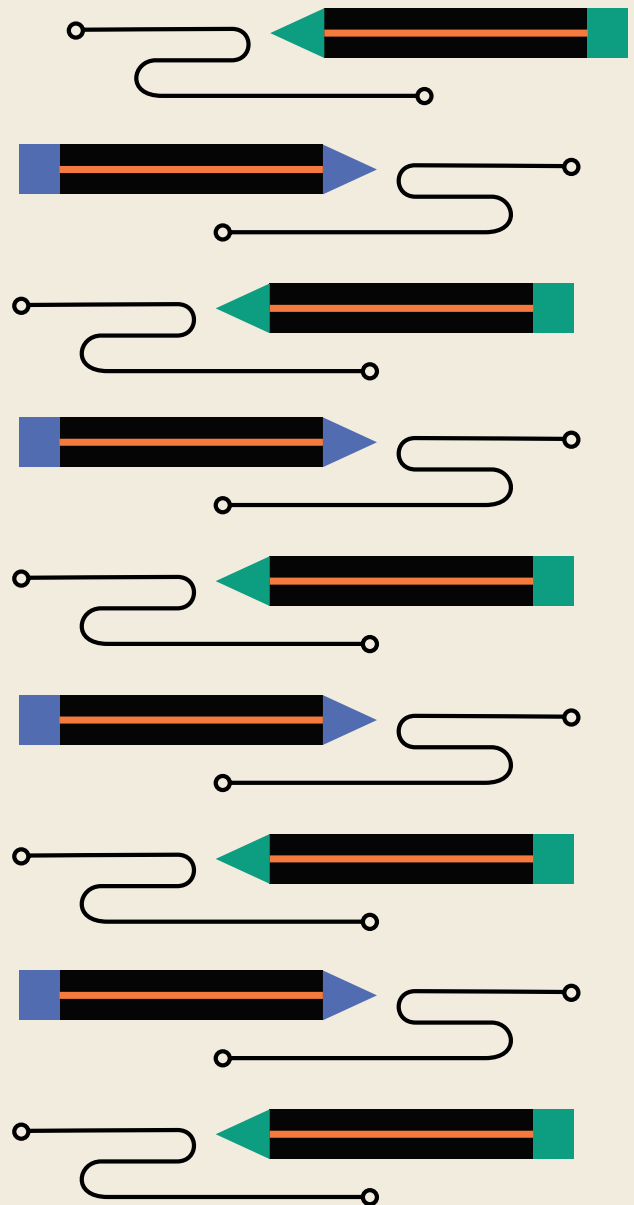
In addition, the six dedicated expat seats article in the amended current electoral law was frozen, and the final decision on whether or not to adopt them came late. The government should not wait for 2026 to re-

discuss the out-of-country voting and the distribution of seats. Work must be done on this issue to avoid problems and allow the MoIM to prepare well for the out-of-country elections.

The procedure of the out-of-country counting should be clarified in the law especially at the level of Higher Registration Committee in Beirut. And in the event of adopting the six dedicated expat seats, a specific mechanism must be established on how to count votes abroad or in Lebanon.

# Overcrowding at Polling Stations

Many polling stations were overcrowded due to the number of party agents assigned to each candidate and electoral list. In general, there was a big number of delegates in comparison to the moderate space of the polling stations. This is due to the fact that in some districts, 11 electoral lists competed, making the number of delegates more than a hundred per station. This calls for reconsidering this aspect, and setting a specific proportion for each electoral list correspondent to the size of the district, the number of seats and the number of electoral lists.



# Supervisory Commission for Elections

The workshop addressed the problems that impeded the work of the Supervisory Commission for Elections, and how its members were to be appointed, the vacancy that prevented a quorum, and the non-disbursement of the necessary funds to the Commission.

The current elections eased political pressure on the SCE, owing to the non-candidacy of ministers, when only one minister ran for the elections, the process of appointing its members and non-disbursing its budget had implications on its work. Unlike 2018, when 18 ministers including the Minister of Interior himself, had already ran for elections, which at the time raised many questions on how to conduct the elections in a transparent and fair manner, and on the nature of the relationship with SCE.

The workshop raised a number of questions regarding the role and functions of the SCE, and the date it started its functions. Is it with the call for elections decree on December 27, or with the start of candidate registration on January 10, 2022? And did it determine the estimated figures of the amounts

spent by candidates and electoral lists on their election campaigns, to match them with the monthly statements and the comprehensive accounting statement as provided for in the law? Did the SCE publish complaints received in cases related to its functions, such as monitoring electoral spending and how to address them? And did it refer to the violations it issued to the competent judicial authorities, or to the MoIM? Did it take action against the media, advertising and statistics companies that did not comply with the electoral law? Leading to questions about the SCE fate and whether a commission with full powers is supposed to be formed to administer the elections instead of the MoIM.

During the workshops discussions, the head of the SCE presented the problems encountered by the Commission, which can be summarized as the fact that the procedures that allow them to carry out its tasks were all delayed. And without UNDP's assistance, SCE would not have been able to carry out its mandate.

## SCE Limited Powers

SCE is considered permanent and independent but not entirely autonomous as it carries out its functions in coordination with the MoIM, which provides it with an independent headquarters and attends its meetings. In other words, it is neither financially nor administratively independent. And all previous recommendations to modify the powers and functions have not been implemented.

The oversight role of the SCE regarding electoral

spending is limited, since the law does not give it enforcing powers. This is in addition to the lack of funds to enable it to recruit observers. What happened was that the SCE was given a financial advance and no funds were approved for it. This is while UNDP provided support to recruit media observers, otherwise the elections would have been impossible to hold or could have been legally challenged. UNDP also introduced an accreditation system for local and international media and observers.

# Media Monitoring

The SCE was provided with logistics to monitor the media and the candidates' appearances which enabled it to perform a better screening. But it received the equipment late, which calls for learning for the upcoming elections in order to improve its performance and give it enough time. The Commission selected 30 media observers and subjected them to a week-long training course on a high-precision program adopted in the parliamentary elections in Morocco, sponsored by UNDP, which also assumed the costs of the course, program costs, and the fees of media and advertising observers. The work of media and advertising observers was not organized and was delayed for more than two months, in addition to the lack of securing funds for the Commission (until the date of the workshop), with the exception of securing an advance for the Commission of 300 million Lebanese Pounds, and all this negatively reflected on the Commission's work.



# SCE Measures

During the electoral campaign, the Commission noted the following:

1. The non-compliance of most media, advertising and opinion polling institutions with legal provisions.
2. The failure of the media to adhere to the principle of justice and fairness in terms of media appearances between candidates and lists. The non-compliance of the various media outlets with the laws and regulations governing electoral competition.
3. The non-compliance of the media with the provisions related to electoral advertising by resorting under the guise of public information to broadcast a hidden advertising and electoral propaganda.
4. The existence of legal violations by investing billboards for electoral advertising on public roads without permission and in places non-designated for them.
5. During the period of electoral silence, SCE was appalled by the magnitude of the violations committed by all media outlets in breaching the electoral silence.
6. The spread of the phenomenon of electoral money and the vote buying, affecting the electoral competition between electoral lists and candidates, without SCE being able to control it by the means at its disposal.

In light of all of the above, SCE dealt with these violations in accordance with the powers bestowed upon it (- referral to the Court of Publications and referral to the competent Public Prosecution), and referred the violations of the media to the competent court of publications:

86

Referral of 86 violations of defamation, libel and slander, and hate speech, and violations of opinion polling institutions and others.

8

Submission of 8 criminal complaints to the competent public prosecutors in relation to bribery and other criminal offences.

249

Referral of 249 violations during the electoral silence

## Electoral Silence

SCE approved the period of electoral silence in several stages, beginning on Wednesday May 4th, prior to the expatriate elections on May 6th, and ending with the closing of the ballot boxes. The second phase of the electoral silence began midnight on Friday May 6th, in preparation for the second expatriate elections on May 8th. The third phase began on Tuesday May 10th, in preparation for the polling officials' elections on May 12th. The fourth phase began on Friday May 13th, in preparation for the general elections on May 15th. In practice, the electoral silence lasted for about 11 days, with intervals lasting for hours without silence. SCE worked hard through its decision on electoral silence and considered that it strived to enforce the law in the best way, unlike in 2018. But this was seen as a loophole as the electoral silence was not applied to men and women candidates but exclusively to the media. SCE was not pursuing candidates but only the media outlets. SCE's 2018 recommendations were to amend the law and give powers to the Commission to prosecute offending candidates. But decisions are one thing and implementing them on the ground is another.

## Electoral Media and Advertising

Civil actors monitored electoral media and political propaganda, particularly on social media and through television monitoring, in order to gauge the balance in coverage between competing forces, the type and size of such coverage, and the extent to which candidates were able to appear and present their programs. The group of social media players and influencers was identified during the election campaigns. The observation period spanned from April 1 to May 15, and included politicians, candidates, and social media influencers.

According to the monitoring results of Maharat Foundation, the political propaganda addressed the economic and financial collapse, especially after the emergence of new political forces demanding the overthrow of the corrupt political system. A growing demand for change and accountability and their promotion through the media was noted. It was evident from the political positions that there is a divergence in the vision about the nature of the government, its role, neutrality, sovereignty, and Lebanon's foreign relations.

## Restraining SCE Role

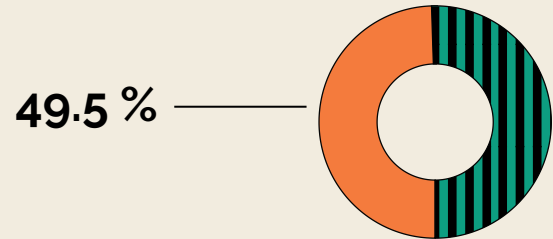
Discussions at the workshop addressed the election law and possible amendments related to the SCE powers. In its current form, it is financially and logistically constrained, and there may be a political will for it to remain so. The problem is that SCE has no autonomous enforcing power, this requires for it to become a permanent independent body with a budget separate from that of the MoIM, and become a moral personality for litigation and prosecution, and implementation of its decisions in a timely manner, and to be assigned an administrative body that complies with its decisions and implements them on the ground. This is while public opinion is not kept informed of these matters, and here comes the responsibility of the SCE to protect the democratic process, expose the problems that occur to the public opinion, and put the officials in front their responsibilities.



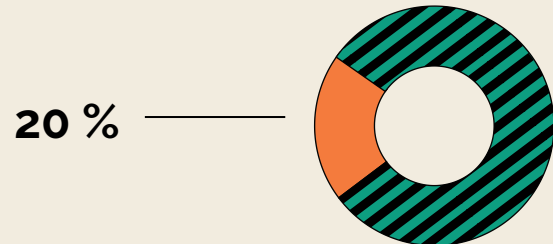
# Political Propaganda

According to Maharat foundation monitoring, the distribution of the type of political propaganda observed for the sample of candidates and politicians on the social media platforms “Facebook” and “Twitter”, which amounted to 1943 posts, was as follows:

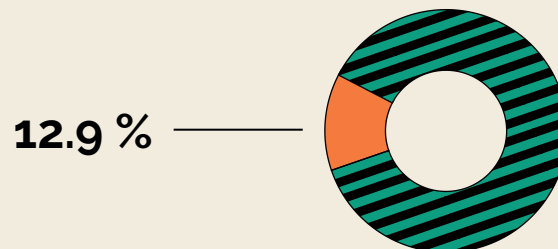
The percentage of political propaganda based on hate speech and stirring up emotions reached 49.5%. This discourse is based on attacking and accusing specific political opponents or posting negative and stereotypical images of them to damage their reputation and distort their political image in front of public opinion.



In second place came the electoral advertising discourse (electoral advertising) with 20%, which varied between different actors.



Political discourse based on punitive voting recorded 12.9% of political propaganda based on the launch of accusations and general projections against the system and the political authority, which was held responsible for the collapse in the absence of a legal accountability mechanism and based on the slogan of #كلن\_يعني\_كلن (all means all).



The total political discourse associated with electoral programs and the proposal of solutions and alternatives amounted to 8% of the total political discourse observed by political actors on social media.



## Cash Economy and Electoral Spending

Monitoring financial spending through the banking system was impossible in the current elections after Lebanon transitioned to cash economy due to the crisis in the banking system. According to SCE, about seventy percent of the candidates' bank accounts did not move and remained zero balance. The spending was in cash, which makes it difficult to track down and know the size of the exchange and transactions. This is considered a struggle for SCE, because any candidate who does not declare is neither fined nor prosecuted.

On the other hand, SCE reviewed all the candidates' data into the database, through the information they declared, and through the advertising companies that announced contracts with candidates and electoral lists. SCE also estimated the candidates' hidden expenses, to determine the electoral spending ceiling that the candidates are supposed to have spent on their electoral campaigns. However, assessing the hidden visibility of candidates is problematic in terms of how to determine the amount for each man/woman candidate. In addition, the period of studying the comprehensive accounting data for the files of all candidates and electoral lists, set at thirty days, is considered short. According to the law, in the event that SCE does not review it, it shall be considered as completed. This calls for an amendment to this deadline, or the empowerment of SCE with a large administrative body to carry out this task.

## Spending Ceiling and Equal Opportunity

Discussions addressed the principle of equal opportunity in electoral expenditures which cannot be secured under the current law. Spending ceiling was already high before the law was amended (in the latest amendment, the Parliament raised the fixed spending ceiling to 750 million LBP, and a variable sum of 50,000 LBP for each registered voter in the major electoral district). Although the spending ceiling is lower than it was in 2018, with regards to the deterioration of the local currency, the purchasing power of the spending ceiling for 2022, after the difference in the dollar exchange rate in the black market, is higher than the spending ceiling for 2018, at a time when the ceiling was already high and recommendations were issued to reduce it.

The new amended electoral law also raised the candidacy fee to 30 million LBP, which was high for independent candidates compared with the financial crisis. In other words, the candidacy fee does not secure the principle of equal opportunity, as does the ceiling of electoral spending. This is while the Parliament did not amend the election law to raise the value of fines for candidates in the event of their late submission of comprehensive accounting data. In addition, the law allows candidates to spend transportation expenses for party agents, electoral machine teams, and voters, which leads to the purchase of votes in a legalized manner.

In view of the difficulty of monitoring electoral spending, even before the transition to a cash economy, due to the crisis of the banking system, the requirement to lift bank secrecy from the accounts of candidates and their descendants is essential for controlling and monitoring electoral spending. Noting that even under the best electoral law and a technically equipped and autonomous SCE, spending cannot be monitored without lifting bank secrecy.

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# Political Participation: Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

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## Women in Politics

Women have long suffered from political marginalization, although women consist of half of society. Their representation since 1952, when women gained the right to vote, remains to this day poorly underrepresented, despite the increase in the number of women MPs in the 2022 elections.

Since the independence, women in Lebanon stood out as participants in the public field. During the period of the civil war, they participated as fighters and paramedics. But after the end of the war, they were not represented in any dialogue table to rebuild peace, nor in any of the pivotal milestones that Lebanon has gone through, to this day. Women are represented in many unions, but at the lowest decision-making scale. According to a report by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), in the companies' boards of directors, most of which are family-owned in Lebanon, there is a near-absence of women who make up 14% of all boards of directors. And, since the independence until today, 19 women have served as ministers in cabinets. Since 1953 to date, only 19 women have entered the Parliament, seven of whom have been re-elected, and eight of whom are directly linked to political leaders, such as a wife, sister or daughter. This leads to the fact that political families/dynasties play a negative role in the representation of women.



## Misleading Increase in Percentages

Although the number of women candidates for the electoral process has increased over time, the number of women who reached Parliament is still very low. In previous years, the percentage of women winners out of the number of women candidates was much higher than today. The chart below shows that as the number of women candidates has increased in the last two parliamentary cycles, the percentage of women winners has dropped significantly: in 2000 there were 15 women candidates in Lebanon and three women won at 20%. In 2005, only 16 women ran and six women candidates won at 37.5%. In 2009, 13 women ran and four women candidates won at 30.77%. While in 2018, 86 women ran and six of them won at 6.98%, as well as in the 2022 elections when 118 women ran and eight women won at 6.78%. This means that the high number of women candidates does not denote anything about women’s representation in the absence of gender quota.

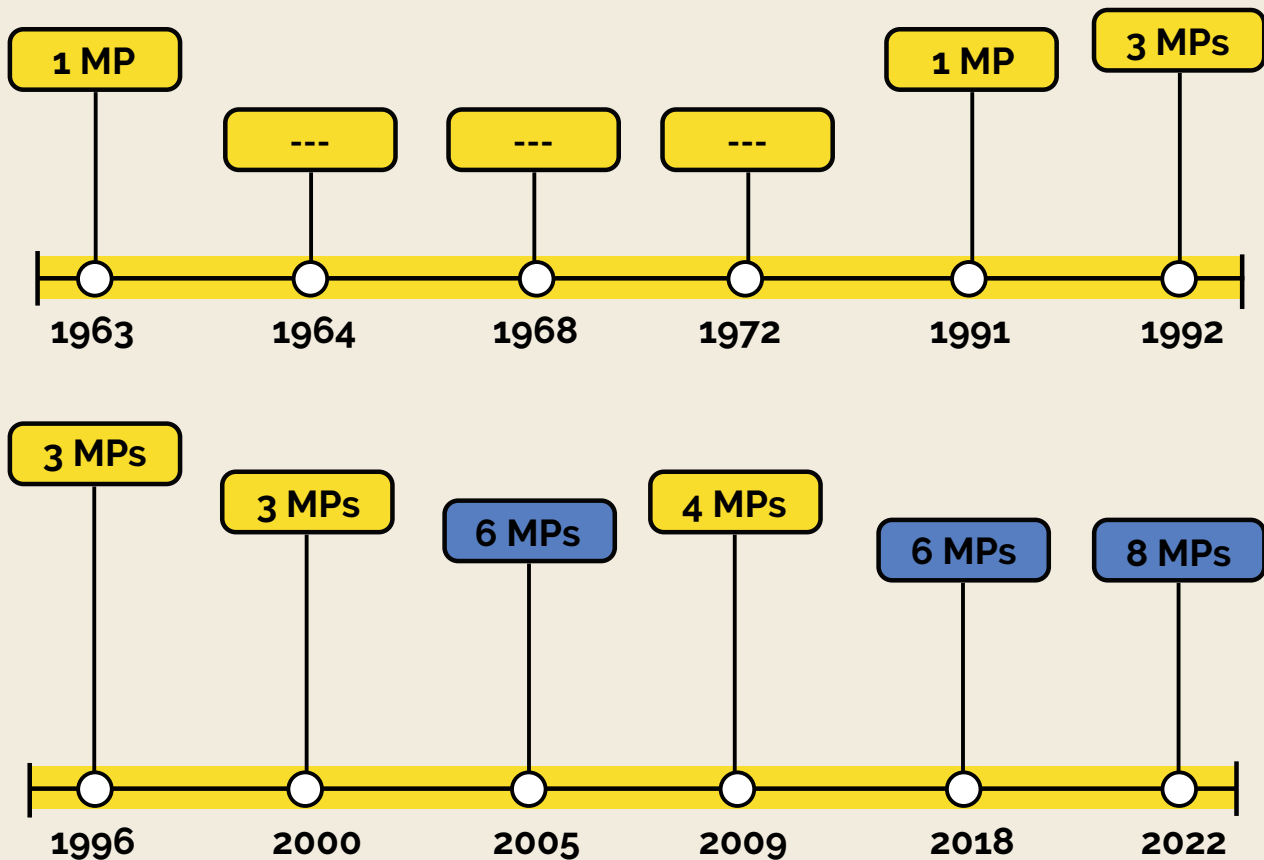
Year	Women Candidates	Total Candidates	Winning Women	Percentage of Women Candidates	Percentage of Winning Women Candidates
1960	2	279	One woman won by acclamation	0.72	50
1964	1	274	0	0.36	0
1968	2	262	0	0.76	0
1972	3	366	0	0.82	0
1992	6	408	3	1.47	50
1996	10	599	3	1.67	30
2000	15	545	3	2.75	20
2005	16	484	6	3.31	37.5
2009	13	702	4	1.85	30.77
2018	86	597	6	14.41	6.98
2022	118	718	8	16.43	6.78

*Distribution of women candidates and winners during the electoral cycles 1960 - 2022*

# Women in Parliament

Women entered Parliament for the first time in 1963 through the acclamation of MP Myrna Bustani in the Chouf district. In the years 1992, 1996, and 2000, women were represented by three deputies, and in 2005 the number of women deputies increased to six out of 128 deputies. The number dropped to four women in Parliament in 2009, and increased back again to six in 2018.

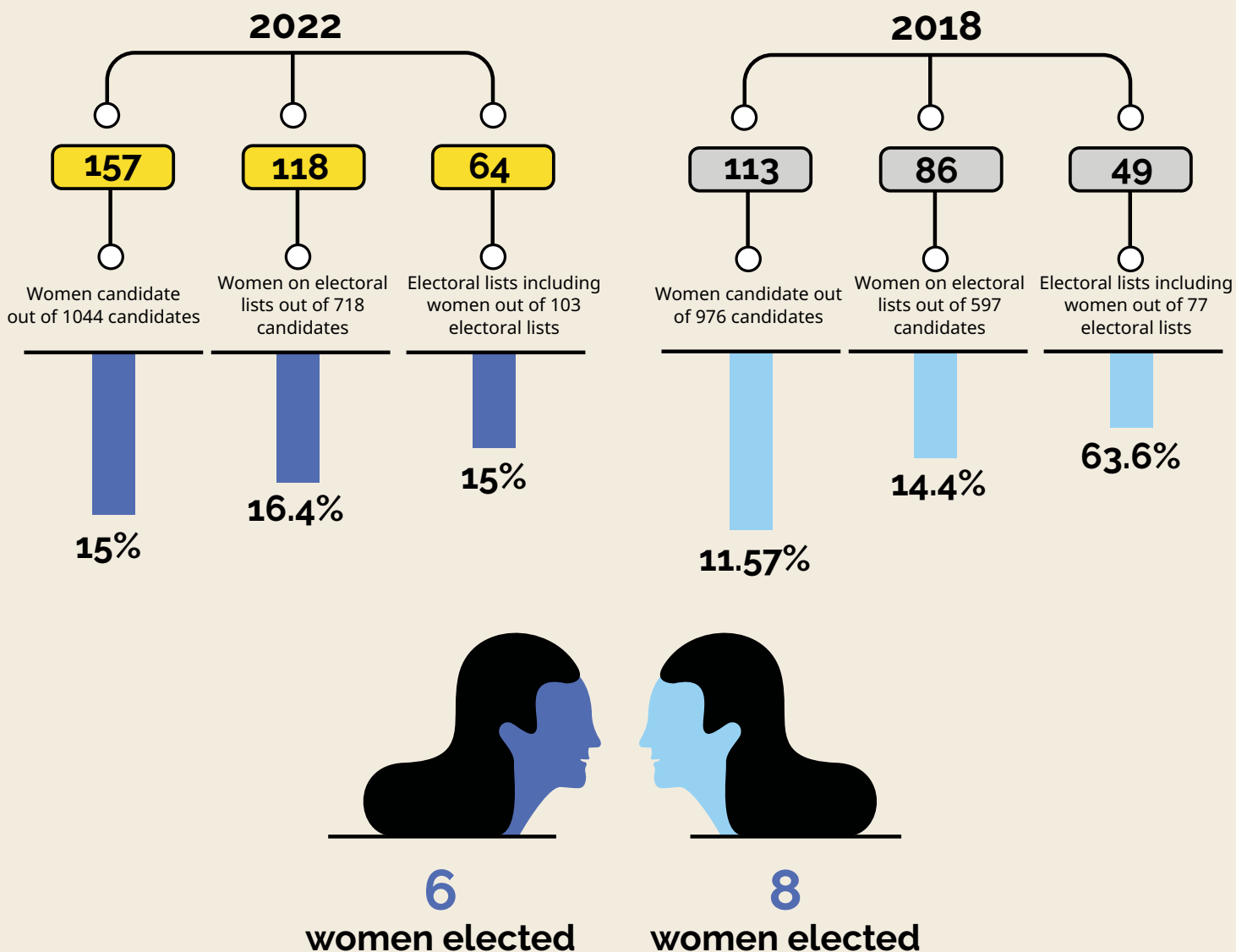
In the 2022 elections, eight women reached the Parliament, five of whom are new. This is the highest number of women recorded in the Parliament's history. Despite this, Lebanon is still at the bottom of the list of countries in terms of women's representation, ranking 171st out of 190 countries, according to the open data of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.



In the 2022 elections 8 women reached the Parliament. 5 of whom are new, which is the highest number of women recorded in the Parliament's history.

As for the number of candidates running for the elections, the nomination period was closed at 1,044 candidates, an increase of 68 candidates from the 2018 parliamentary elections, including 157 women, which represents 15% of the total candidates. 118 women continued with their candidacy joining 64 out of 103 electoral lists; whereas in 2018, 113 women ran for the elections out of whom 86 joined electoral lists.

**2018 - 2022 Parliamentary Elections Comparative Table**



Although the percentage of women’s participation, which is reflected in the high number of winning women deputies and candidates, is higher than in the past, it is considered to be low compared to the significant participation of women in the 17 October Uprising, as many women have stood out in the public life distinctly than from previous years.

# Campaigns Supporting Women

During the period leading up to the October 17 Uprising, the work of civil society organizations supporting women's quota focused on supporting women with the aim of having an increased number of women in the Parliament.

In the year preceding the elections, CSOs pushed the Parliament to create a supportive environment for women to run for elections. The activity focused on the development and submission of a quota law to Parliament, with the support of UNDP.

A year before the elections, "FiftyFifty" brought together more than two hundred women in order to

support them, and they underwent training in electoral media campaigns. Women developed national policies, conducted advocacy and media campaigns, and worked with media professionals to intensify the appearance of women in the media and conducted interviews in the regions. Women's campaigns were launched on social media and national policies were developed to set solutions to the existing challenges in Lebanon. A network of about six hundred women was established. This contributed to the formation phase of the electoral lists, and 118 women continued to run as candidates.

## Non-Adoption of the Gender Quota Law

In 2021, the former Parliament was supposed to introduce the gender quota according to the proposal that civil society associations worked on in cooperation with UNDP, and which was submitted by MP Inaya Ezzedine. The proposal was accepted by the majority of key actors. Meetings were held with political forces and parties, and they were all supportive of women. However, the law was not adopted. When the law was resubmitted to the Parliament session that was devoted to amending the law on October 19, the deputies postponed again the gender quota discussion to the 2026 elections. The gender quota proposal stipulates 26 reserved seats for women out of the 128 parliamentary seats, distributed among the 15 electoral districts as well as requiring electoral lists to nominate 40 percent of women.

## Gender Justice

The gender quota is fundamental, but the electoral law must be reconsidered from a gender perspective in terms of the preferential vote which goes mostly to men, or in terms of the high electoral spending ceiling. Having more women does not mean that gender justice is achieved. The quota is not intended to bring in a large number of women, but rather it is a measure to achieve the principle of equal representation and inclusion of gender issues in political life and public affairs; provided that this positive measure is applied for a specific period of time, that is, for three electoral cycles.

# Supportive Change in the Public Behavior

Out of the 118 women candidates, only eight made it to the Parliament. This means that any gender quota law without reserved seats in Parliament cannot lead to women winning and securing gender justice. In other words, the quota on candidacy and committing electoral lists with a certain number of women candidates do not necessarily lead women to the Parliament. The experience of the current elections has proven this. Out of the 103 electoral lists, 49

won the electoral quotient, with 31 lists including 64 women and the remaining 18 lists not including any women. Only eight women won parliamentary seats. This means that gender quota on candidacy alone is not sufficient.

As for the votes cast for the winning women, the number reached 127,000 votes in 2022 while they received 89,000 votes in 2018. This reflects a change in voters' behavior in the 2022 elections.

## Women Candidates and Winners

According to the geographical distribution of women candidates in the electoral districts, in Beirut I, two out of eleven women candidates won. In Mount Lebanon IV, two out of twelve women won. In Mount Lebanon I, one out of eight women candidates won. In North III, one out of thirteen candidates won. In South I, one out of three women candidates won. In South II, one out of four women candidates won. This is while there were no women winners in the other electoral districts, despite the high number of women candidates such as in Beirut II, which topped all districts with the participation of 23 women candidates, none of whom won. This was the case of the North II district, where none of the eleven women candidates won, and Mount Lebanon II, where none of the eight women candidates won, and also Mount Lebanon III, where none of the two women candidates won, and North I with six women candidates, and the Bekaa Districts I (eight women candidates), II (seven women candidates) and III (two women candidates).



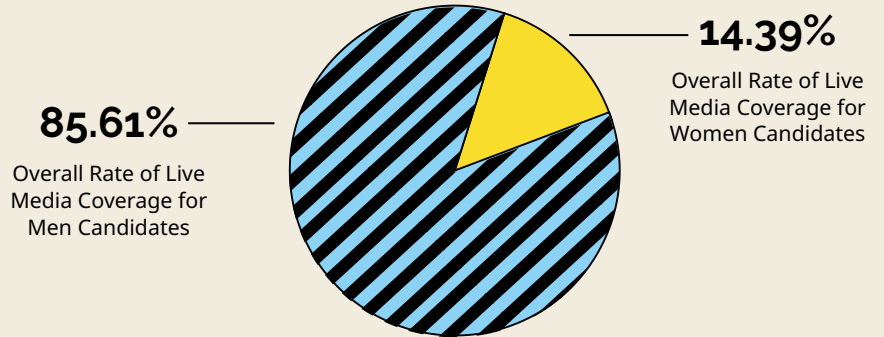
## Challenges for Women

Women face significant challenges, including the lack of official support from government institutions and the lack of a national plan for women support. They are also not involved in or targeted by public plans. Political parties have been reluctant to support women, with few women in decision-making positions or political offices. Women candidates are not properly supported by political parties, except in rare cases. Women suffer from the domination of a patriarchal mentality that refutes women's representation. At the human rights level, Lebanese laws continue to be unfair to women (non-application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women "CEDAW", and international conventions on political rights, the granting of citizenship, etc.) and to hinder their representation. Women are still deprived of the right to pass citizenship to children, and of the inability to open bank accounts for children and other discriminatory laws. Moreover, the sectarian political system does not contribute to establishing a safety net that supports women.

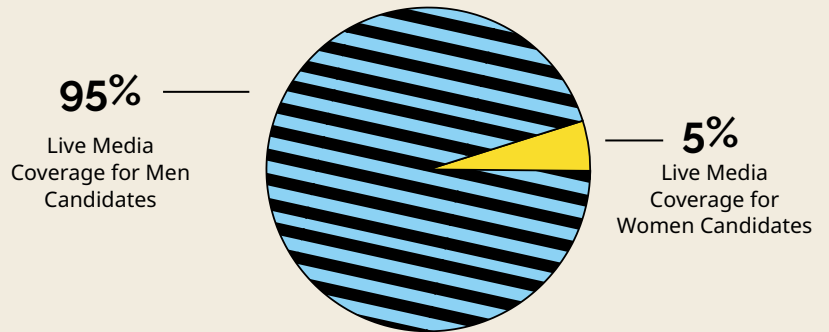
# Media and Voter Education

Women also suffered from the absence of gender voter education to motivate voters to vote for women, and to sensitize voters about the importance of women in politics and decision-making.

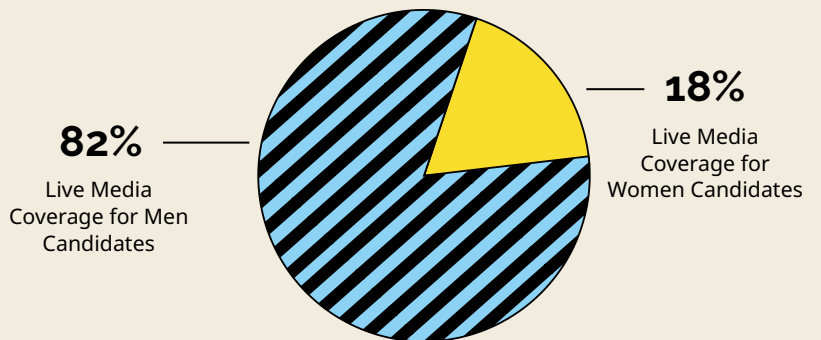
Between February 1st and May 15th, "Maharat foundation" conducted media monitoring for seven local TV channels (MTV, LBC, NBN, OTV, Al Jadeed, Al-Manar and Télé Liban) and the findings showed that total media coverage dedicated for women candidates accounted for around 14.39%, compared to 85.61% for men candidates.



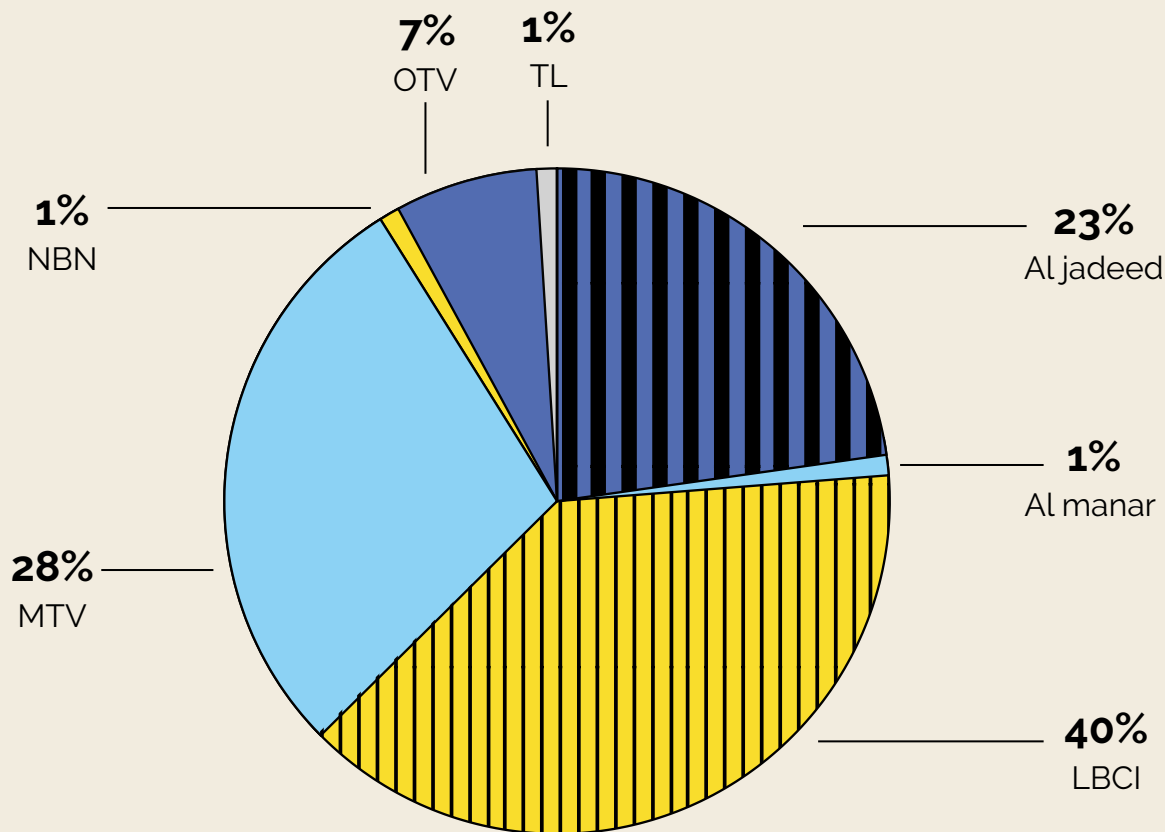
The percentage of women candidates' appearances in news bulletins was limited to 5% compared to 95% for men candidates (the length of news broadcasts in that period in seconds amounted to 181625 seconds). This reflects the weak presence of women in decision-making positions because the news focuses on political activity. MP Inaya Ezzeddine was the only one to appear on the



On talk shows, women's appearance has risen to 18%, which is low compared to women's activism, which has increased significantly in recent years.



It seems that it was the talk show dedicated by “FiftyFifty” to support women candidates that raised the percentage. “LBCI” topped the rest of the channels with nearly 40% of Women’s media appearances. As for the percentage of women’s appearance on “Télé Liban”, it registered 1%, and the same applies to “Al-Manar”, while “NBN” registered zero percent.



Economic factors as well as financial means of women candidates have influenced the size of their media appearances. According to the “Maharat foundation” report, in the last two weeks, five women who have financial capacities managed to appear in the media during peak periods, led by Paula Yacoubian, Halime El Kaakour, Asma Andraos, and Nada Boustani.

## Free and Paid Media

The Supervisory Commission for Elections did not issue clear statements and decisions related to electoral media and advertising to distinguish the media from paid advertising, as was the case in 2018. SCE’s presence was weaker than in 2018, both in terms of decisions and clarifications. There are media spaces that the law gives as free spaces for candidates. Spaces were paid, even if this wasn’t publicized, which reduced women’s appearances in the media. Therefore, this reality imposes more stringency on the implementation of the law in terms of free space in the media and the imposition of fines as stipulated by the law. The law should also clarify the nature of establishing free and fair spaces in all private and public media outlets independently from profitability, which contributes to supporting the presence of women in the media.

## Political Violence and Bullying

Women suffered political violence and bullying on social media, and while being hosted on talk shows. The Media monitoring of “Maharat” found that there were two editorial approaches in the media. In paid programs, the level of violence against women was lower, while in programs produced by the stations the level of violence rises. In other words, the interviewer is more tactful with women candidates in paid programs, and vice versa.

## Discrimination against Women

Although the Lebanese Constitution provides for the equality of all Lebanese before the law, especially since Lebanon has signed all international covenants such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention prohibiting discrimination against women and political, civil, economic and social rights, equality between men and women is not respected. Discrimination begins with a foreign wife being entitled not only to vote but also to run for Parliament, while a Lebanese woman married to a foreigner does not have the right to pass nationality to her children, and if she runs for elections, her children cannot vote for her.

## Gender-Based Election Monitoring

The monitoring conducted by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) from a gender perspective and with the support of UNDP aimed at promoting the implementation of human rights and increasing the participation of women in decision-making in general.

### Main obstacles to political participation:

- 1.** The method of selecting candidates by the lists and not considering the inclusion of women as a priority.
- 2.** Lack of financial capacity for women to engage in electoral campaigns
- 3.** Cultural obstacles related to the dominant patriarchal mentality even among a number of women.
- 4.** Lack of confidence in women’s ability to lead.

The monitoring focused on specific aspects affecting the subject of participation, including interviews with women candidates and others who withdrew from the elections, evaluation of the work of media institutions, legal aspects, and interviews with political parties. The monitoring covered the number of women agents in polling stations, the percentage of women in security forces, and any discrimination against women agents from the polling officials or from any other party agents, as well as identifying possible cases of pressure and harassment, and determining the nature of voting if it is conducted on a family basis, and if women voters are forced to vote for certain lists.



# Dominant Male Hierarchy

The monitoring revealed that there was no interest nor importance given to the gender issue in training electoral machines of political parties. No internal regulations or by-laws were established to reduce violence, bullying or harassment. There were violent practices inside and outside polling stations. Women observers were subjected to physical violence and were not welcomed in some districts.

Political activists and parties acknowledged the existence of discrimination, they expressed understanding of gender-related issues, and acknowledged the need to adopt a gender quota even within parties, but this remains a mere statement. Political party structures remain male dominant, unqualified, and women are subjected to pressure from the leader or religious men. The political parties did not provide women with any financial or logistical support nor with their own agents, as revealed by the monitoring sample.

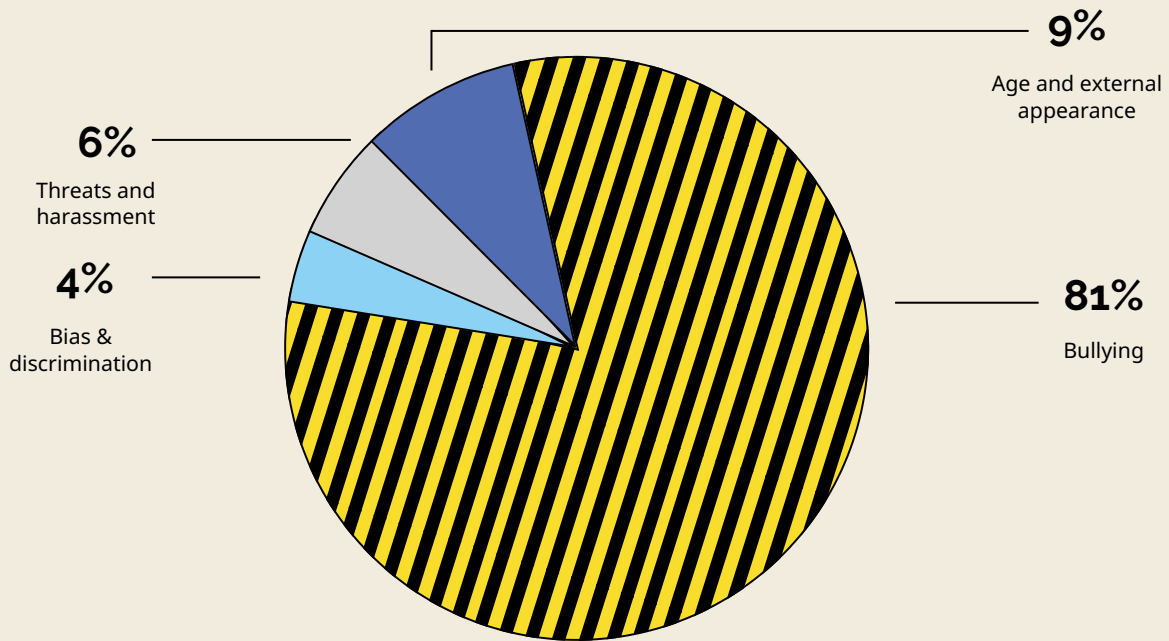
In addition, there is intersectional violence due to the patriarchal system: from family, to political parties, to religious men, to social media. All of this constitutes psychological violence against women candidates. There appears to be a fear that women will reach the forefront of decision-making in anticipation that this will threaten the religious, social or political system with regard to women's rights in general, namely laws on the granting of nationality, the custody age and personal status laws.

There were also pressures that led to the withdrawal of some women candidates. Families have disowned women candidates such as Dima Abou Daya and Sarah Zeaiter in Baalbek. Religious fatwas were issued to vote for electoral lists that do not include women. More than 250 women were supposed to run for election, but eventually 157 candidates ran. Overall, women have been subjected to partisan, family and societal pressures that have prevented many from continuing the elections.



# The Role of Social Media

A sample for monitoring violence against women in politics (VAWP) on social media (developed by Maharat Foundation and Madanyat, in partnership with UNDP), which included 18 women candidates, showed that 93% of women candidates have experienced violence in politics, 81% violence in the form of bullying, 9% violence based on the age and external appearance of women, 6% experienced direct threats and harassment, and 4% violence in the form of bias and discrimination against women, as shown in the graph.



### Graph translation:

Distribution of comments on social media for 18 women candidates (February – March 2022)

Political Violence



Non-Political Violence



Only one hundred women candidates had social media accounts, and 43 of them were subjected to political violence and bullying, as they had clear political views on the various events taking place in the country. The women who were most subjected to violence were: Paula Yacoubian, Nada Boustani, Layal Bou Moussa, Rima Njeim, Bushra Khalil, and Karen Boustany. Some of the women candidates had no social media activity. Five of the women candidates did not even have social media accounts, and 12 were never active.

The role of the media has been growing in the current elections, and its role is expected to be much greater in 2026. Therefore, the challenge of the growing role of social media requires finding ways to approach it: the current law does not address its role, how to monitor it, and what penalties can be imposed on violators. The goal is to improve its role, preserve democracy in public debate, and mitigate harm, without compromising the freedom of expression.

# Strategy to meet the Challenges

The challenges that women have experienced in the media require the development of a media strategy to empower women, and allocate more space for them. It requires that the issue of women be placed among the priorities of the international community and international organizations, and that civil society invest more with the media to produce positive content that helps in the matters at stake and promotes social responsibility, to place women's participation, women's contribution, and their enhanced presence at the heart of the program plan that it sets. It is also necessary to work with the media to give a safe space for women, and set standards or a code of conduct to reduce violence against women in politics, and make it compulsory for guests in order to expand safe spaces for women to demonstrate their scientific and political expertise and capacities.



## Women and Electoral Spending

Due to their weak economic empowerment, women cannot afford to pay for their campaign. The rate of women's participation in the labor force is limited to 22% (ILO report in January 2022), in a clear tilt of balance in favor of men. Without economic empowerment, women will not be able to afford electoral spending, which is very high in Lebanon. Discussions at the workshop addressed the need to reduce the electoral spending ceiling from a gender perspective. There are loopholes in campaign financing that affect vote-rigging and vote-buying due to loopholes in the electoral law. The current law somewhat legitimizes bribery in the name of pre-election assistance. Electoral bribery affected women and their access to the Parliament as well because they did not have the same economic resources as men. Men also have more access to preferential votes than women due to provision of additional financial assistance. Therefore, the discussions at the two workshops organized by UNDP addressed the need to amend Article 62 of the law on electoral spending and to cancel the distribution of assistance in the run-up to the elections, that is, the period of electoral campaigns and consider it an electoral bribery. Laws on party funding should also be put in place to mitigate unfairness in electoral spending. This would improve the position of women in how to engage in such campaigns.

## Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Legal and structural barriers continue to deprive persons with disabilities from an independent, dignified and humane exercise of their electoral rights despite the fact that two decades have passed since the Law 220 on the rights of persons with disabilities was signed. Scenes of psychological and moral harm and the humiliation associated with the voting of persons with disabilities continue to be repeated, although in 2022 the situation improved compared to the 2018 elections, after the ground floors were accessible and equipped for PWDs voting in many polling centers.

## Long-lasting Demands

Since 1981, the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD) and disability associations have been working to achieve the political and civil rights of persons with disabilities. Several initiatives were launched up to 2022. Since 2005, the Union has tried to support various Interior Ministers and cooperated with MPs during election periods to achieve the principle of fair access to polling stations and voting in freedom and human dignity, but without any result. Barriers and obstacles continue to limit their ability to vote and exercise their political right, not because of their disability, but because officials do not take into account their physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

The “Haqqi” (My Right) campaign was launched in 2005 to promote the implementation of article 98 of Law 220/2000 in order to preserve the right of the persons with disabilities to run for election and to vote. It succeeded to entail a legal article on the draft of the electoral law of President Fouad Boutros committee. The content of this article was then confirmed by the Lebanese legislature in Law 25/2008 and the current Electoral Law 47/2017. With this campaign, cooperation was made with the MoIM to issue implementing decree 2214/2009 to facilitate the voting process for disabled voters.

At the level of publications, the LUPD monitored the polling centers and surveyed their readiness so that voters with disabilities could complete an inclusive voting process. Thereby a comprehensive field survey of polling stations in Lebanon was conducted between 2008 and 2009. A study was conducted on the cost of equipping all public and private schools in Lebanon, according to which it turned out to be equivalent to 0.8% of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for a period of six years. Detailed engineering studies and maps of schools were drawn up and submitted to the relevant ministries. Unfortunately, these reforms were not adopted by any of the successive governments.



# Improvements during Elections time

Prior to the recent elections, there was serious cooperation between the MoIM and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The MoIM minister issued a circular concerning the opening of the ground-floor rooms where elections are to be held. The slogan launched by LUPD was “From the ground my vote shall come out” because normally ministries would lock down the ground floors. The LUPD conducted a survey to determine the number of polling centers with a ground floor that could be used and to study the improvements to be implemented. The LUPD proposed this matter to the Minister of the Interior who was cooperative. The statistic revealed that there are 143 centers with ground floors out of 1734 in Lebanon, including 955 public schools.

## Distribution of Persons with Disabilities and Centers

The 2020 data of the Ministry of Social Affairs, as shown in the table below, indicates that there are around 114,000 people with disabilities in Lebanon, including around 80,000 voters distributed according to governorates by 17% in the Bekaa (29 polling centers were equipped), 13% in the South (15 polling centers were equipped), 8% in Nabatieh (11 polling stations were equipped), 18% in the North (33 polling stations were equipped), 7% in Beirut (6 polling centers were equipped) and 37% in Mount Lebanon (29 polling centers were equipped).

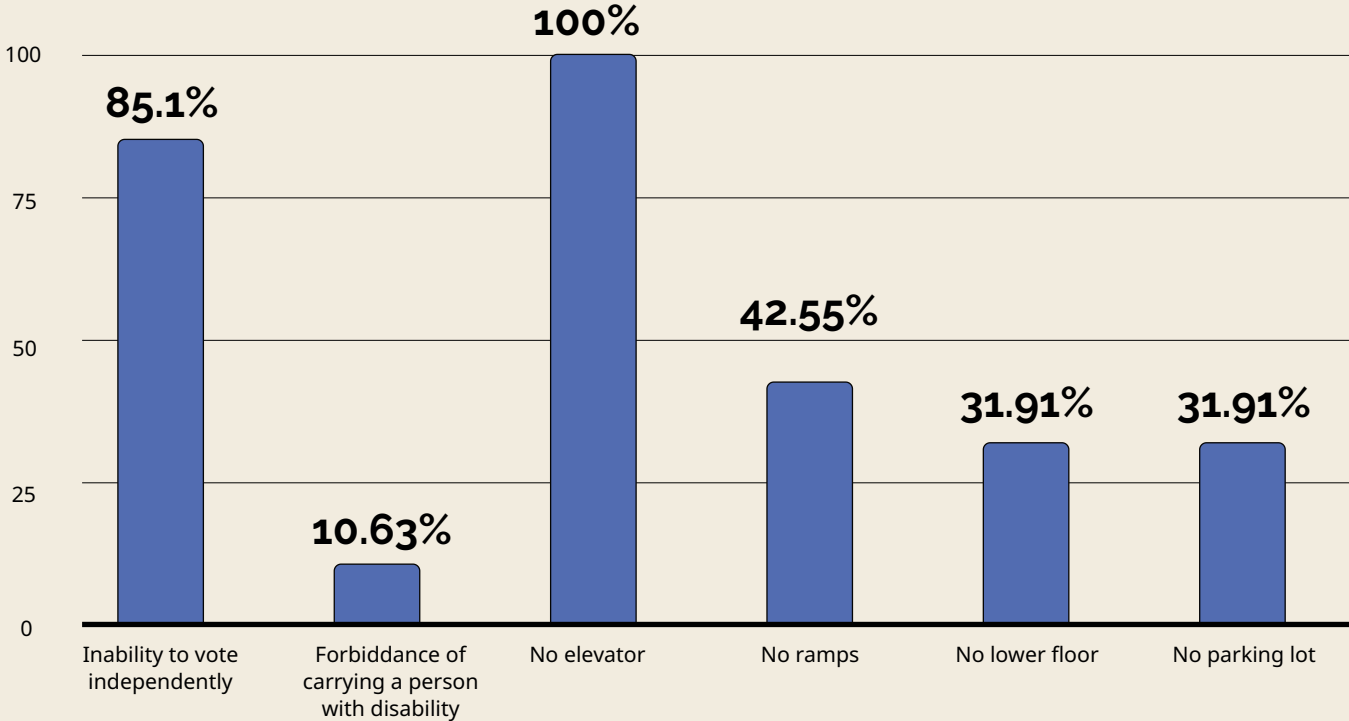
Percentage of PWDs among the population according to the Ministry of Social Affairs	Electoral Districts (14 out of 15 districts)	Number of polling Centers inspected by LUPD
29	Bekaa	17
15	South I and II	13
11	South III	8
33	North	18
6	Beirut II	7
29	Mount Lebanon	37
		Total 100% (out of 114,000 people 80,000 persons with disabilities)

# Field Observation on E- Day

In 2022, LUPD conducted a sample survey of 423 PWDs to determine the accessibility of polling centers with the criteria set out in the 2009 MoIM decision, and to assess the extent of their respect of voting rights independently and with dignity and evaluate their experience after voting.

The result of the sample of 423 disabled voters, as shown in the graph, revealed that 85% of the centers do not allow independent voting, and only about 10% of the polling stations officers forbade carrying a person with disability and accompanying him/her behind the voting booth. It turned out that 100% of the centers were not equipped with elevators, and around 31% did not have a ground floor that could be converted into a polling station. It was also found that 31% of the centers were not equipped with a public parking lot, and 42% were not equipped with ramps to facilitate access of the person with disability.

## Difficulties faced by voters with disabilities



# Importance of the Ground Floor

The LUPD survey results showed that the 143 polling centers in which the MoIM equipped the ground floor were effectively used for inclusive elections. Also, the security forces assigned to guard the polling centers cooperated in a highly positive manner to assist the accessibility of PWDs and their escorts.

## Encouraging Political Participation

The second workshop presented the main milestones where the participation of youth in the public field emerged, starting with the student and union elections that preceded the parliamentary elections. These milestones revealed an increase in youth participation in political life, leading up to the parliamentary elections. Civil society organizations, such as the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), have worked to encourage this generation's participation by organizing meetings in the regions to explain the electoral law. Panel discussions were held, many through the use of zoom techniques, in addition to educational seminars in schools to explain the importance of political participation, and the political and social rights of youth. It included training on human rights, democracy and accountability, and encouraging meetings with local authorities to present problems. In addition, campaigns were organized to raise awareness amongst youth on the need to vote for women, and marginalized groups in order to achieve gender equality.

## Youth Participation

The participation of the younger generation was noticeable in the current elections at all levels. The elections came after several milestones in which the younger generation emerged as a key driver of the civil movement, represented by the demonstrations that took place in 2015, known as the waste crisis, followed by the civil movement in the municipal elections in 2016, the parliamentary elections in 2018, leading to what is known as the Uprising of October 17, 2019 and the subsequent student elections at universities and in many unions.

## Generation Resisting Clientelism

The workshop discussions revealed that the voting age in Lebanon is linked to the sectarian structure of the country and its demographic change. Since some communities fear of the involvement of a large segment of youth in the electoral process because of the demographic disparity between one community and another. LADE revealed that there are political concerns regarding this generation voting, given that it is not subject to clientelism and employment in Lebanon. It considers that controlling youth between 18 and 21 is more difficult than the university graduates, those above 21 years old, who may need political connections and networking in order to enter the labor market.

# Participation and Diversity

The levels of political participation of youth are multiple:

**1.**

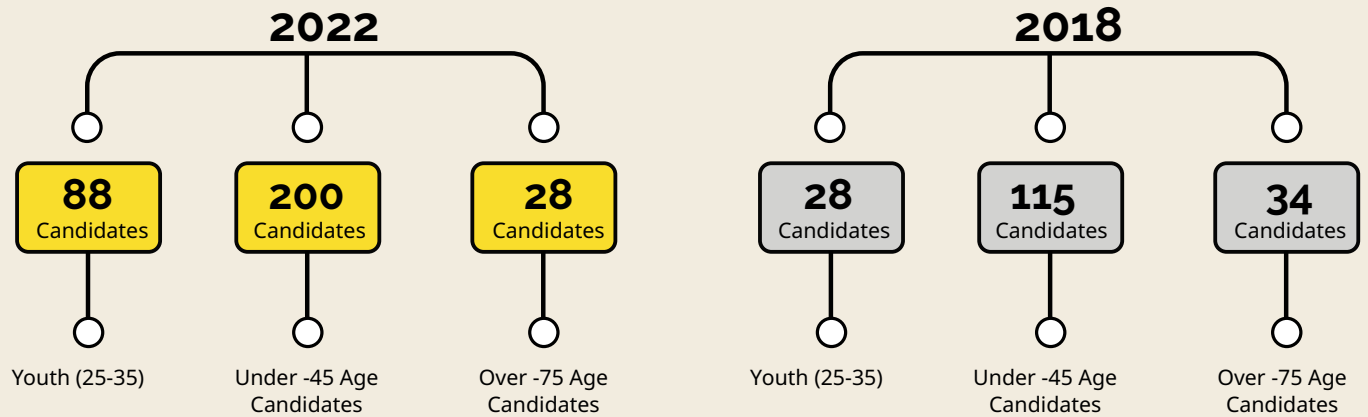
At the level of young people under the age of 21, who are not entitled to vote under the Lebanese Constitution, youth participation was remarkable in all political and non-political machines, in observation missions (LADE observers' reached more than 1100 young men and women, most of them under the age of 21), and in the fields of media and advertising. The youth support to opposition lists was noticeable, as evidenced by the experiences of the "Change" electoral lists such as "Shamaluna", "Beirut Al Taghyir" and "United For Change" in particular. Perhaps it is due to the massive youth participation that took place in the October 17 demonstrations. Despite this, Lebanon still adopts two ages for adulthood: one is civil/legal, which a young person acquires at the age of 18, and another can be called the age of political adulthood at the age of 21, which is the voting age.

**2.**

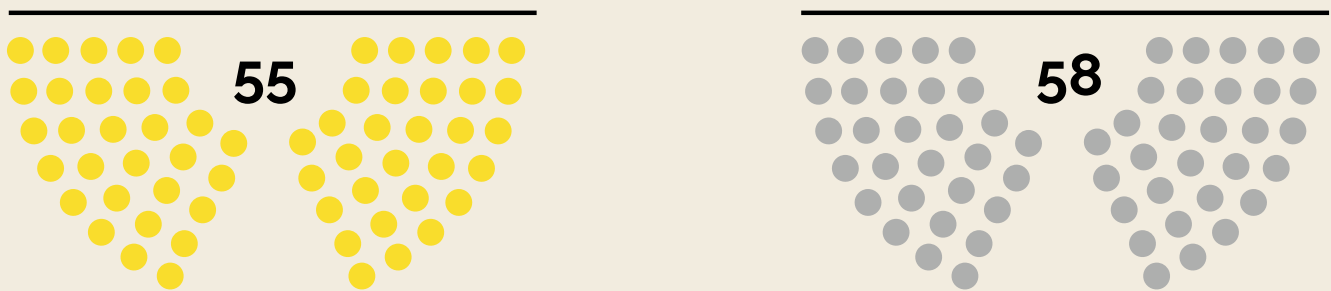
At the level of the youth candidates in the elections, there was a good change in the age scale between the 2018 and 2022 elections. In the 2018 elections, the number of candidates between the ages of 25 and 35 was 28, while in 2022 the number increased to 88 candidates among this age group. The same is applicable for the candidates under-45 age group: in 2018, they numbered 115 candidates and in 2022, they increased to 222 candidates. As for the over-75 age group, the number of candidates decreased from 34 in 2018 to 28 in 2022. This was reflected in the Parliament, where the average age of deputies dropped from 58 years (2018) to 55 years (2022), as shown in the graph below.



## Youth Participation in Elections



## Average Age at Parliament



## Youth Challenges

Despite this improvement in the participation of the younger generation through their candidacy in the elections, nevertheless the denial of the right to vote for young people under the age of 21 years, and denial of the right to run for elections for young people under the age of 25 years, affects the broad political participation of youth in political life. It is a sort of injustice to the youth, in addition to the economic inequity that the Lebanese have suffered since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2019, which prompts the younger generation to seek other sources of livelihood: immigration or high school/university dropouts. This affects the participation of youth as candidates in the elections, given their need for huge financial resources in light of the high electoral spending ceiling in Lebanon.

# Workshops Recommendations

## Electoral Administration and Supervisory Commission for Elections

### Electoral Law

- Inclusion of an article in the electoral law prohibiting any amendment a year before the elections date, which permits the MoIM to prepare well logistically for any elections.
- Lifting bank secrecy on the accounts of candidates and descendants to control and monitor electoral spending.
- Reconsideration of the number of agents that each candidate and electoral list are entitled to appoint and setting a specific proportion for each list appropriate with the size of the district, the number of seats and the number of lists.
- If the six dedicated expat seats are adopted, a specific mechanism should be established for the counting of votes abroad or in Lebanon, with an explanation of how these seats will be distributed.
- Adoption of the Megacenter to ease the pressure on voters, combat electoral bribery and facilitate accessibility of persons with disabilities.
- Adoption of the magnetic card.
- Adoption of clear methods of canceling or counting ballot papers.
- Enforcement of the Access to Information Law.
- Reduction of the financial ceiling on electoral spending and the candidacy fee
- Amendment of Article 62 of the Law regarding electoral spending and cancelling the distribution of financial assistance during the period of electoral campaigns and considering it an electoral bribe.
- Refrain from registering non-profit organizations six-month preceding the elections and regulating the timeline during which registration must cease without violating the freedom of assembly and establishment of associations.

### Electoral Administration

- Formation of a permanent independent electoral body to manage elections.
- If the current Supervisory Commission is retained:
  - 1.Approval of its budget separate from that of the MoIM.
  - 2.Making the Commission independent with a legal personality for litigation and prosecution.
  - 3.Implementation of its decisions in a timely manner.
  - 4.Establishment of a timetable for the appointment and number of its members.
  - 5.Extension of the deadline related to studying candidates' accounting data.
- Setting a standard criteria ballot boxes counting and provide relevant training to judges.
- Adoption of a gender quota at the electoral administration (SCE).
- In-person training for polling officials and judges of the registration committees.

## Electoral Administration and Supervisory Commission for Elections

### Media & Electoral Campaigns

- Laying the groundwork for monitoring social media spending.
- Strict enforcement of the law in terms of free spaces in the media and the imposition of fines for violations thereof as stipulated by law.
- Clarification of the law on specifying free and fair spaces in all private media.

### Political Parties

- Establishing laws on party funding to mitigate unfair electoral spending.
- Development of the Law on the establishment of parties and associations.

### Voter Education

- Raising awareness on how to use pre-printed ballot papers and make them more visible to all illiterate and disabled persons.
- Presenting a dynamic and interactive content.
- Increased duration of the national campaign for electoral education on private and public media channels.
- Enforcing the media outlet to disseminate voter education as stipulated in the law.

### Social and Economic Barriers

- Securing the election budget for the MoIM three months before the start of the electoral campaign.
- Disbursement of the SCE's budget in sufficient time prior to the commencement of electoral campaigns.
- Assignment of a special administrative body to SCE that complies with its decisions in order to be implement.
- Development of a communication strategy between SCE, MoIM and the relevant ministries, and mechanisms to address public opinion on the course of the electoral process.

### Other Recommendations

- Establishment of legal mechanisms on obtaining electoral documents related to appeals for losing candidates, allowing the MoIM to hand them over with sufficient time limits in order to process them as quickly as possible.

## Women's Participation

### Electoral Law

- Positive discrimination through the adoption of a gender quota based on the reservation of seats in Parliament
- Adoption of a gender quota in municipal councils as a measure prior to the 2026 elections according to each municipal council

### Electoral Administration

- Adoption of a gender perspective in the electoral process
- Adoption of a gender quota in the Electoral Administration (SCE, MoIM, head officers of polling stations and judges)

### Media & Electoral Campaigns

- Collaboration with the public media outlets
- Ensuring equal access for men and women
- Cooperation with the media to give a safe space to women and setting standards or codes of conduct with women and making them mandatory for guests in order to expand safe spaces.
- Legislating and regulating the use of social media (without prejudice to the freedom of expression).
- Inclusive Media: participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities.
- Transparency and organization of opinion polls

### Political Parties

- Adoption of a gender quota in electoral lists and within political parties.
- Reservation of seats for women on electoral lists and in decision-making positions within parties (political bureau).
- Active support for women from political parties.

### Voter Education

- Use of various channels of communication to provide electoral information
- Promoting awareness on the concept of discrimination against women in politics
- Voter education from a gender perspective and targeting marginalized groups

### Social and Economic Barriers

- Securing financial independence, equal opportunities and access to the labor market
- Abolition of all discriminatory laws against women (nationality, personal status...)
- Changing the masculine mentality and the patriarchal system
- Raising awareness about the concept of violence against women in politics

	Persons with Disabilities	Youth
Electoral Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use of the ground floors for polling stations to facilitate access and voting</li> <li>-Establishment of the “Megacenter”</li> <li>-Modifying the ballot paper to become inclusive and PWD friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lowering the voting age to 18</li> <li>-Lowering the age of candidacy to 21</li> </ul>
Electoral Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Activation of the Coordination Committee for the follow-up of persons with disabilities between the MoIM, Public Works and Transport, Education, Social Affairs and others</li> <li>-Training of polling officials and security forces on how to communicate with persons with disabilities</li> <li>-Digital accessibility and inclusive and PWDs friendly voting processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Youth quota in the Electoral Administration (SCE, registration committees, polling officials...)</li> </ul>
Media & Electoral Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhancing the awareness of candidates and media experts on ways to communicate with PWDs and include them in their electoral programs</li> <li>-Use of sign language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Customized campaigns targeting youth and their aspirations</li> </ul>
Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Strengthening the role of PWDs in the parties</li> <li>-Integrating the issues of PWDs into the parties programs and platforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhancing the role of youth in parties by selecting and supporting them as candidates in electoral lists</li> </ul>
Voter Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Addressing PWDs in a friendly manner</li> <li>-Raise awareness on the importance of inclusion and support for candidates with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Intensifying voter awareness and education campaigns in schools and universities</li> <li>-Dedicating programs to educate young people on their political and civic rights and the importance of political participation</li> </ul>
Social and Economic Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implementing the International Convention concerning Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>-Adjusting the size of the voting booth to ensure the secrecy of PWDs voting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Creating employment opportunities to integrate and economically empower youth</li> <li>-Initiating the local community/municipal work for youth and encouraging them to participate in decision-making</li> <li>-Engaging youth in comprehensive policies through conducting vocational and technical training</li> </ul>



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## 2022 LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Milestones and Lessons Learned



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