# 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections

**Analysis of Change Movement Voting Trends**
**By IBRAHIM JOUHARI**

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## Introduction

This research paper aims to explore the sectarian, gender, and geographic characteristics of the Lebanese that voted for Change Groups and highlights the populations that are more open and enthusiastic about Change Groups and have a high probability of voting for them in the upcoming municipal election.

The numbers and data used in this research paper have been produced by the Data Liberation Project (DLP) in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation Beirut (FNF) to convert, reorganize and cross-link 2022, 2018, and previous Lebanese elections' results into a machine-friendly and open excel format, thus making the data easily, freely, and publicly available.[1]

### Methodology

For this study, the "**Change Groups**" will be considered the top one or two emergent party lists, in addition to the minor change groups and MMFD[2]
lists that ran in each district. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the change groups and the sect, gender, and geographic locations of those who voted for them, including votes for both winning and losing candidates.

The emergent parties are the new parties or coalitions that fielded lists and received the most votes in their districts while being recognized as the 'real' change groups. The minor groups do not fit the above criteria but are still considered change groups, lacking the necessary backing from the diaspora and the main stakeholders. Finally, MMFD is a new Lebanese party, called Citizens in a State, launched in 2016 by Charbel Nahas, with a strong opposition inclination, calling for the secularization of the state.



Change votes disribution

- MMFD 7%
- Minor parties 5%
- Emerging parties 88%

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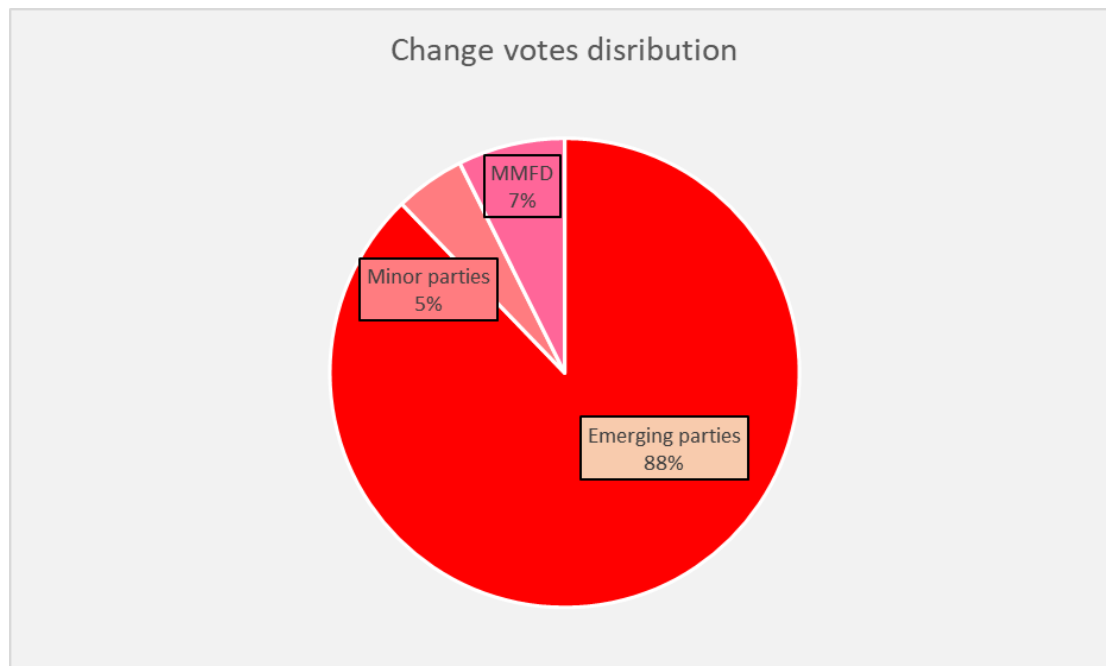
[1] The DLP data is freely available online on www.128Lebanon.com and a conference will be held in May 2023 to showcase the data and its multiple applications.
[2] Missing

MMFD fielded lists in most districts but failed to gain any seats. Nevertheless, in terms of popular support, Emerging Parties got the largest share of votes totaling 88%, with the rest going to minor groups and MMFD. The names of the lists, organized as emerging parties, minor groups, and MMFD, are detailed in Annex 1 of this Paper.

Additionally, it is essential to note that in Lebanon, some polling stations are mixed, without a gender denomination. They represent 14% of total votes. The same applies to a sectarian denomination with 5% of all votes without sectarian qualifications. Additionally, Expatriate votes do not have any gender or sectarian qualifications. Therefore, any percentages and analyses are based on the votes that are not 'mixed' by subtracting the mixed votes from the totals. This Paper concludes that such a method does not affect the general trends as these mixed polling stations are distributed among all districts and sects.

Moreover, all the expatriate votes are also labeled as mixed for gender and sect. However, in this case, this Paper has considered expatriates as a separate group to differentiate their voting trends from the local votes. For more on the expatriate voting trends, please review the [Paper](#) published by Issam Fares Institute at AUB in cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation by the same author of this Paper.

Finally, the classifications used in this Paper (emerging, minor, and MMFD) are not definitive. Other analysts might have different criteria. Nevertheless, this Paper tried to use a classification that is the most widely used. However, there is some argument for including Kateab and other independent MPs and parties (such as Nemaat Frem, Oussama Saad, Abed Rahman Bizri, and others) under the change criteria. However, these politicians and parties are still considered by many (especially among other emerging parties) as part of the old political establishment. The current infighting among change MPs and groups for the next president's elections is the best illustration of this issue. Therefore, this Paper has decided against including them.

## 2022 Parliamentary Elections

### Electoral Law

The Lebanese 2022 parliamentary elections took place locally on May 15, 2022. Meanwhile, the Out of Country Vote (OCV) was held in 58[3] countries on May 6 and 8. Countries with weekends that start on Friday (10 Arab Muslim countries[4]) held the elections on Friday, May 6, while elections in the remaining 48 countries were held on Sunday, May 8. The election was based on the 2017 proportional law[5] with a single preferential vote in 15 local districts, which were further divided into cazas in a non-uniform manner.[6]

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[3] There were originally 59 countries, but elections in Ukraine were canceled in light of the war.
[4] The elections on Friday took place in the following countries: KSA, Qatar, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, Oman, Bahrain and Iraq.
[5] Lebanon 2017 electoral law http://www.mfa.gov.lb/Library/Files/Uploaded%20Files/Lebanese%20electoral%20law%202017.pdf
[6] Some districts did not have any sub-districts, such as Beirut 1 and 2, while others had four, such as North 3.

BEIRUT I: 8
3 Armenian Orthodox
1 Armenian Catholic
1 Maronite
1 Catholic
1 Orthodox
1 Minority Christian

BEIRUT II: 11
6 Sunni
2 Shiite
1 Druze
1 Orthodox
1 Protestant

BAALBECK HERMEL: 10
6 Shiite
2 Sunni
1 Maronite
1 Catholic

AKKAR: 7
3 Sunni
2 Orthodox
1 Maronite
1 Alawite

TRIPOLI MINYEH DINNIEH: 11
8 Sunni
1 Maronite
1 Orthodox
1 Alawite

BSHARRI ZGHARTA BATROUN KOURA: 10
7 Maronite
3 Orthodox

JBEIL KESEROUAN: 8
7 Maronite
1 Shiite

NABATIEH MARJAYOUN BINT JBEIL HASBAYA: 11
8 Shiite
1 Sunni
1 Orthodox
1 Druze

WEST BEKAA RASHAYA: 6
2 Sunni
1 Maronite
1 Orthodox
1 Shiite
1 Druze

ZAHLE: 7
2 Catholic
1 Armenian Orthodox
1 Maronite
1 Orthodox
1 Shiite
1 Sunni

ALEY CHOUF: 13
5 Maronite
4 Druze
2 Sunni
1 Orthodox
1 Catholic

Metn: 8
4 Maronite
2 Orthodox
1 Catholic
1 Armenian Orthodox

SIDON JEZZINE: 5
2 Maronite
2 Sunni
1 Catholic

ZAHRANI TYRE: 7
6 Shiite
1 Catholic

BAABDA: 6
3 Maronite
2 Shiite
1 Druze

THE DAILY STAR

The local elections witnessed few incidents and no significant logistical problems. However, it is worth mentioning that a few polling centers experienced electricity cuts[7], while others faced long queues. Meanwhile, a number of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, and alleged vote-buying incidents were reported.[8]

Likewise, the OCV process was smooth. A few long queues were reported in several locations, especially in Dubai and France. There were also some reports of voters being turned away from the polls as they were not included on the ballot lists, despite having registered online and receiving official confirmation emails.[9] The votes were cast and sent to Lebanon for safe keeping in the central bank until May 15 and were counted alongside the local ballots[10].

Despite the reported incidents of vote buying and clientelism, which "distorted the playing field and seriously affected the voters' choice[11]," the elections' overall legitimacy has not been seriously questioned. Chief Observer of the EU Observation Mission noted, "The conclusion in the mission's final report is that although preparations were affected by limited financial and human resources, the election authorities delivered May 15 parliamentary elections in the scheduled time."[12]

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[7] LADE, http://www.lade.org.lb/getattachment/39274855-fca9-4a51-915a-6cf772d72953/2022-Parliamentary-Elections-Monitoring-Report.aspx

[8] EU Observation Mission final report, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-lebanon-2022/european-union-election-observation-mission-presented-today-its-final-report-23_en?s=4575

[9] LADE report on the expatriate voting, in Arabic https://bit.ly/3bUZMcH

[10] Ibrahim Jouhari, Expatriates voting analysis - 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections, https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/expatriates-voting-analysis-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections

[11] EU Observation Mission final report. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-lebanon-2022/european-union-election-observation-mission-presented-today-its-final-report-23_en?s=4575

[12] Ibid.

## General Demography

It is important to explore the general demography of Lebanon to understand better the Change groups voting trends and the sectarian, gender, and geographic characteristics of their voters. In most countries, the official census would be the most comprehensive and easily accessible data set for such a study. Unfortunately, Lebanon's political system is based on a power-sharing agreement linked to demographic balances, a census is a politically charged endeavor, and the last official census was organized in 1932[13]. Therefore, this research paper analyzed the official voter rolls to understand the main demographic trends of the country.

All Lebanese above 21 years of age are automatically registered on the permanent voter rolls, updated once a year, based on civil status records.[14] Unfortunately, the registration system is slow to delete the lists, which usually include deceased individuals and long-term expatriates[15].

The main demographic findings of that analysis show that in terms of absolute numbers, the Christian's overall share of registered voters has been dropping steadily, while the Muslims have been increasing due to the difference in population growth rate. Indeed, the Christians grew with an average of 0.56% per year, growing from 1,272,745 in 2009 to 1,345,384 in 2018 and 1,372,541 in 2022. Meanwhile, Muslims grew by 1.80% annually, from 1,987,214 in 2009 to 2,401,362 in 2018 and 2,594,967 in 2022. Thus, **the share of registered Christians in the total population declined from 39.07% in 2009 to 34.59% in 2022. The Muslim share rose from 61.01% in 2009 to 65.41% in 2022[16].**



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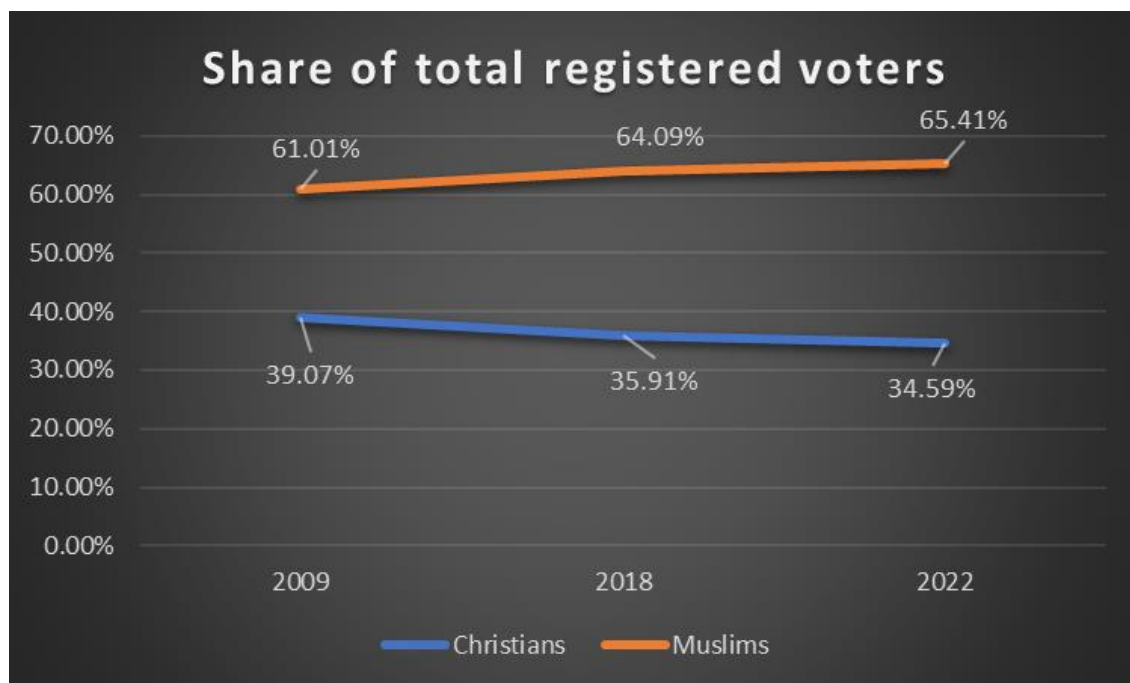
[13] https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/lebanon-census/
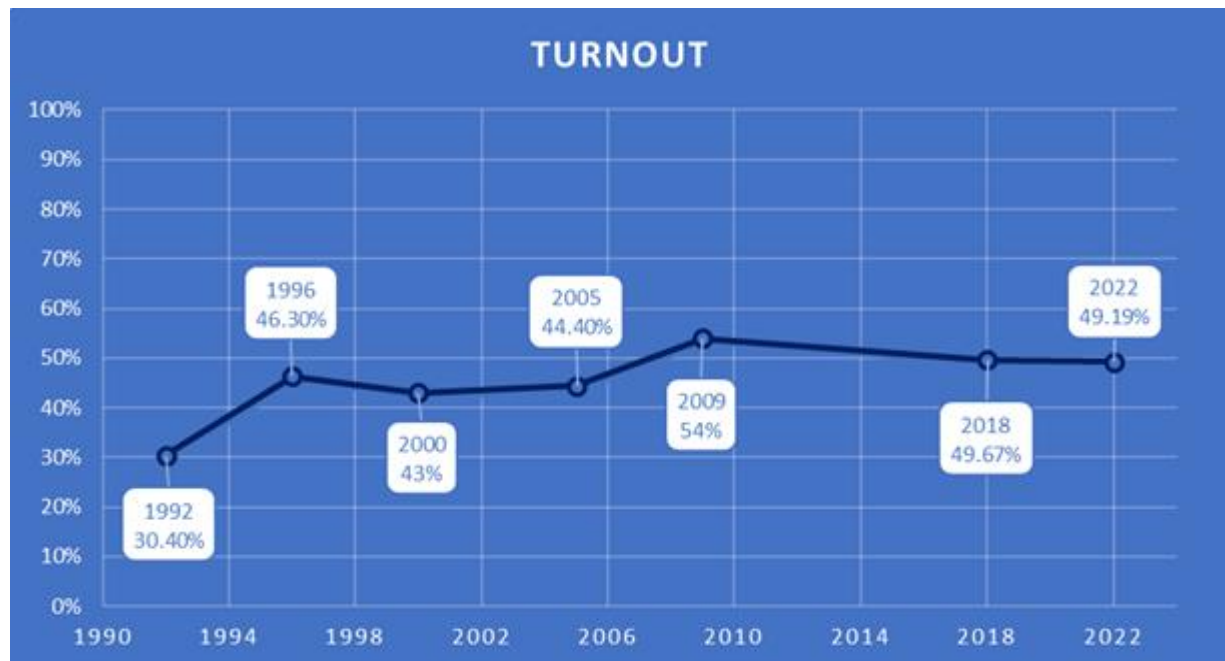[14] EU Observation Mission final report, page 17.
[15] Ibrahim Jouhari, Expatriates voting analysis - 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections, https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/expatriates-voting-analysis-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections
[16] It important to point out that the specific sectarian turnout is limited to the local vote, excluding the expatriates vote, that does not have a sectarian or gender segregation. Meanwhile, registration number includes both expatriates and residents.

Interestingly, the only sectarian group with a shrinking population has been the Armenian orthodox, dropping from 92,132 in 2009 to 86,163 in 2018 and 84,028 in 2022[17].

## General Turnout

The 2022 turnout reached 49.19%, with a minimal drop of 0.47% from a 49.67% turnout in 2018. The relatively stable turnout shows that despite a horrendous economic, financial, and health crisis along with rising fuel costs, the Lebanese people cast their ballots in large numbers, on par with 2018.[18]

## TURNOUT

| Year | Turnout |
|------|---------|
| 1992 | 30.40% |
| 1996 | 46.30% |
| 2000 | 43% |
| 2005 | 44.40% |
| 2009 | 54% |
| 2018 | 49.67% |
| 2022 | 49.19% |

Although 49.19% might seem on the low end of turnouts in democratic countries, where the percentage usually ranges between 55% to 80%,[19] it is essential to note that the voter registration process in Lebanon is automatic[20] and, as previously mentioned, is not entirely accurate. Therefore, this Paper estimates that the 'real' number of living, currently residing voters is around 80% of the complete ballot list. Thus, a 49.19% showing indicates a possibly higher actual turnout.[21] Nevertheless, in absolute numbers, 1,951,683 residents and Lebanese expats voted out of

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[17] Ibrahim Jouhari, Sunni voting trends analysis, IFI Electoral Lab.

[18] Figures from the Data Liberation Project, NDI, and International IDEA.

[19] For example, 54% in Japan, 55% in the US, 62% in the UK, 69% in Germany, 68% in France and 88% in Belgium, according to Pew Research https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/03/in-past-elections-u-s-trailed-most-developed-countries-in-voter-turnout/

[20] Ibrahim Jouhari, Expatriates voting analysis - 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections, https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/expatriates-voting-analysis-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections

[21] "Will the dead vote in May's legislative elections?" https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1289855/will-the-dead-vote-in-mays-legislative-elections.html

3,967,507. This amounts to a participation rate of 49.19% compared to 1,861,203 voters out of 3,746,746 in 2018, or a 49.68% turnout[22].
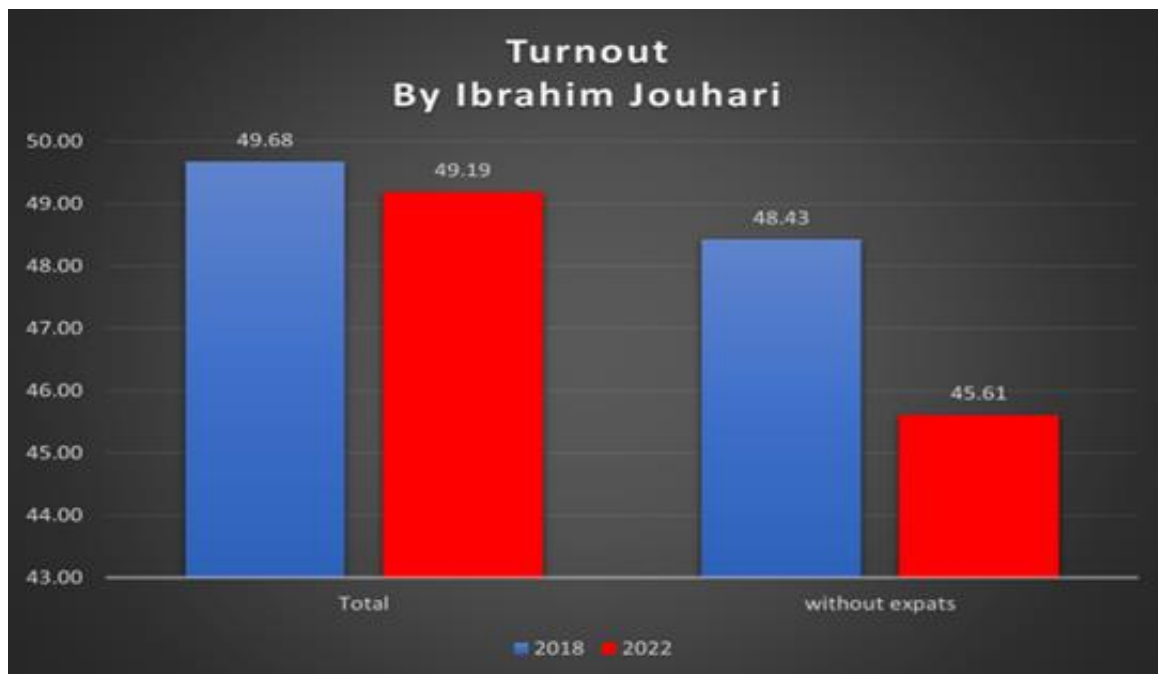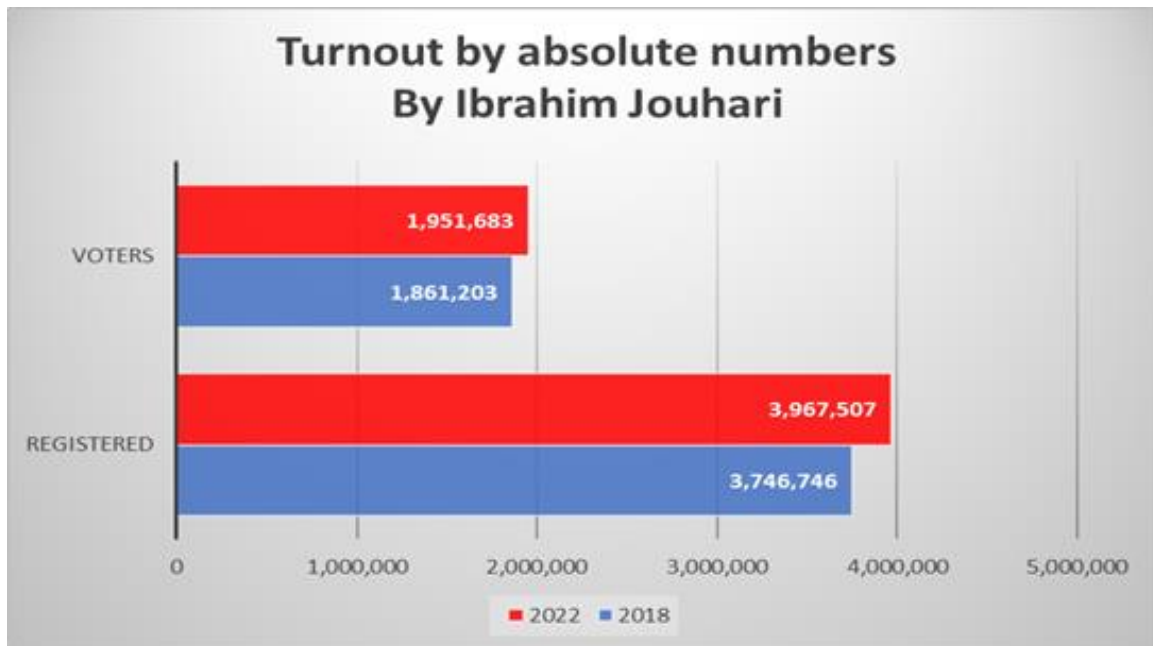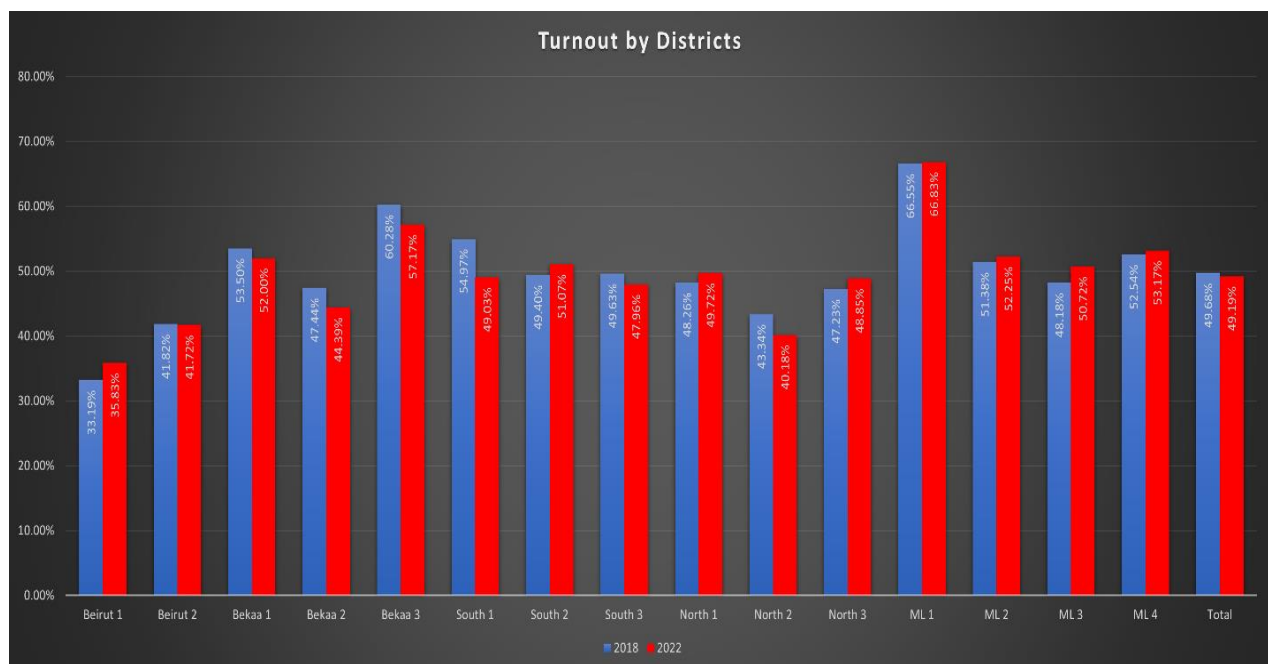
[22] Ibrahim Jouhari, Expatriates voting analysis - 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary
Elections, https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/expatriates-voting-analysis-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections

## Turnout by Districts

As previously mentioned, the 2022 turnout rate was very close to 2018's. This was also evident across the board in most districts. Nevertheless, there were some salient differences. For example, Beirut 1 and Mount Lebanon 3 districts showed the most significant increase, with 2.65% and 2.54%, respectively. On the other side of the graph, South 1, North 2, and Bekaa 3 had the most significant turnout drop, with -5.93%, -3.16%, and -3.10%. This might be traceable to the calls for a boycott by Future Movement[23].
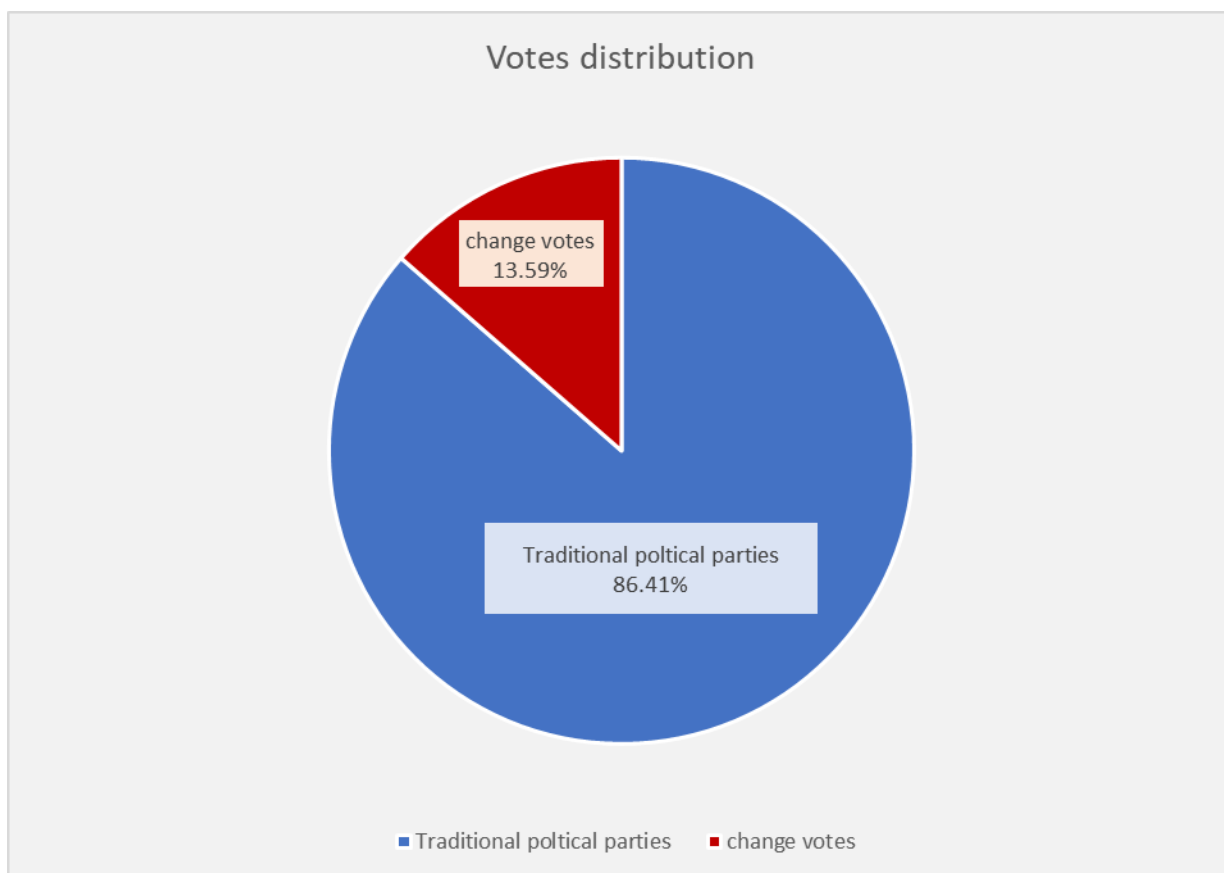
However, it is worth bearing in mind that although Beirut 2 is one of Lebanon's most prominent Sunni areas, the turnout in that district has not dropped significantly. For more on the causes of the discrepancies in the turnout among the different districts, the Sunni voting trend research paper further analyzed this issue. The Paper can be accessed here.



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[23] Ibrahim Jouhari, Expatriates voting analysis - 2022 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections, https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/expatriates-voting-analysis-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections
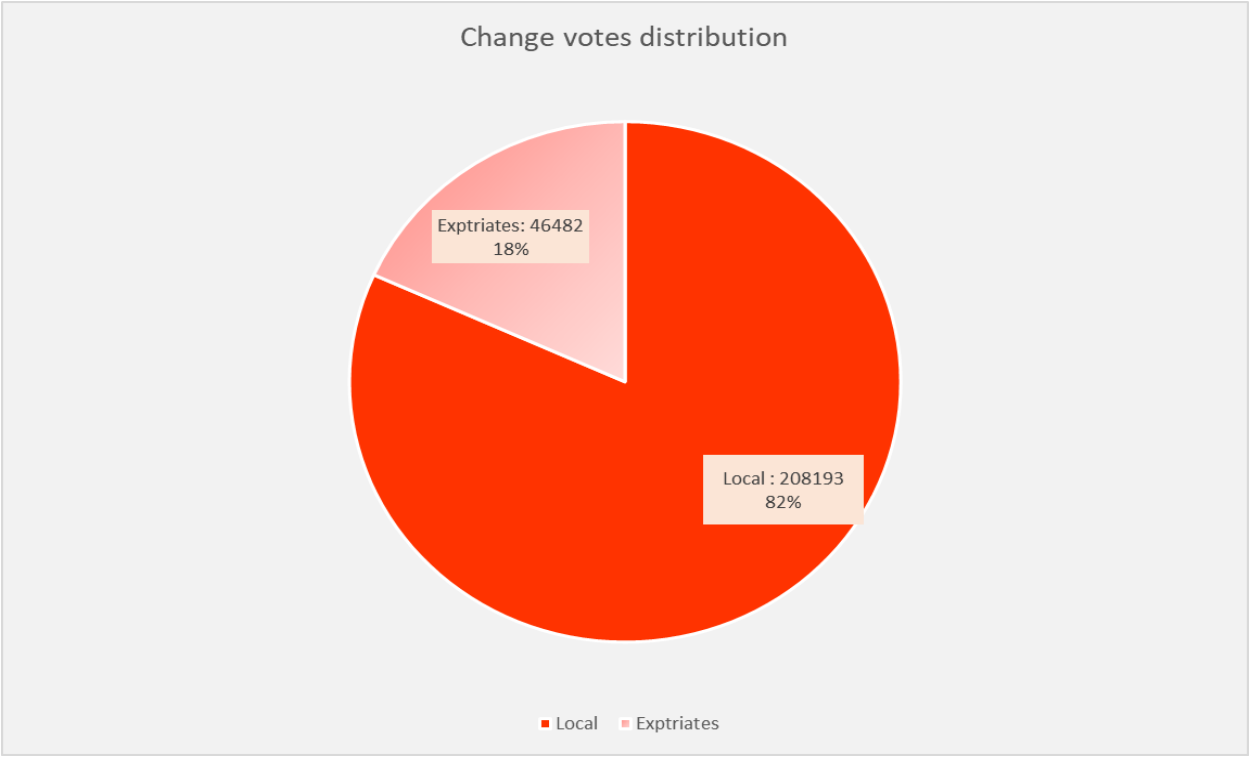
## The Change Vote

The Lebanese vote for Change includes the main emerging parties (listed in Annex 1) in addition to minor change groups, and MMFD received 254,698 of 1,874,675[24] or 13.59% of the votes. Although the percentage seems low, in 2018, the change groups received only 42,448 votes. **Thus, from the 2018 to 2022 parliamentary elections, the change vote witnessed a 600% increase.**

### Votes distribution

change votes
13.59%

Traditional poltical parties
86.41%

■ Traditional poltical parties    ■ change votes

Additionally, 18% of the vote for Change was cast by Lebanese expatriates. This is an important distinction, considering that in the upcoming 2023 municipal elections, the expatriates will not be able to vote in their place of residence in foreign countries.

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[24] As previously explained this number is the effective total votes in 2022 (that does NOT include the invalidates or white ballots)

## Change votes distribution



Exptriates: 46482
18%

Local : 208193
82%

■ Local ■ Exptriates

Although the Change vote seems low, this Paper has identified several factors that explain why it was at that level and not more. The significant regional discrepancies clearly illustrate these factors. In several districts, almost a quarter of all votes went to change groups. Indeed, **Change Groups received 26.4% in Mount Lebanon 4, 23.9% in Beirut 2, and 23.5% in Beirut 1** of all votes in those districts. At the other end of the spectrum, Change Groups received only 3.1% in Mount Lebanon 1 and 5.5% in Bekaa 3 of each district's votes.

## Share of change votes to total votes



■ Total voters ■ Change voters ━■━ Percentage
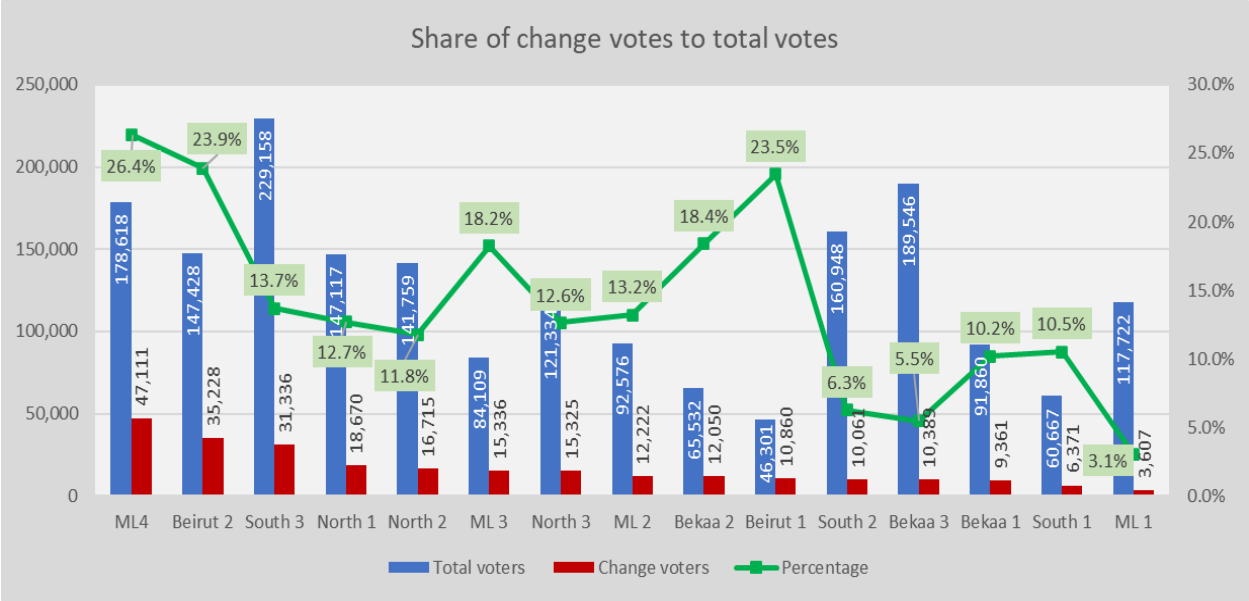
Thus, the factors identified by this Paper to explain the reasons behind the relatively low percentage of voters for Change among the general population are the following:

**First**, several districts have a very large population, like South 3 with 229,158 voters, Bekaa 3 with 198,546, and South 2 with 160,546. Thus, the percentage of change votes seemed relatively low, with 13.3% in South 3, but a massive 31,336 voted for Change in that district. The third largest amount in absolute numbers among the other 15 districts.

**Second**, Bekaa 3 and South 2 had only 10,000 change voters amounting to an average of 6% for Change. One possible cause of that is the sizeable Shiite majority in these districts. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between the Shiite majority and a lower vote for Change, as this Paper will demonstrate in the sectarian analysis section. The only exception is the South 3 district, where change groups managed a good 13.6% share, winning two seats in a district considered a stronghold of the main Shiite political parties. This was caused by significant Sunni and Druze minorities that voted at a much higher percentage for Change, making up for the low change votes in the Shiite community. Moreover, South 3 Change Groups were supported by strong expatriate voting, which was crucial to the victory of change groups in the district.

**Third**, another reason the change groups performed poorly in South 2 and Bekaa 3  was the disunited change front splintered among many different lists. This caused many Change voters to refrain from voting and staying home. That phenomenon also has affected the expatriate vote and support for the change lists in these districts. This phenomenon is better illustrated by the impressive victories of change groups in South 3, a district that shares many characteristics as South 2, but Change Groups won two seats. Indeed, as opposed to most other districts, the different change forces in South 3 were able to unite in one list, and voters responded positively and vigorously to that unity and voted in large numbers for Change.

**Fourth**, Mount Lebanon 1 (ML1) had the lowest share of change voters, with 3.1%. This was due to the district's absence of an organized change list. The traditional parties waged a fierce battle against each other. Indeed, Lebanese Forces and Former President Aoun Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) were pouring all their resources to grab the largest share of voters and prove they are the number 1 Christian party. This battle left no room for independent political candidates or groups to mount their campaigns. Indeed, the most popular independent or Change candidates allied themselves with one or the other traditional political party.

## Change Vote Gender Distribution

Looking at the change vote from a gender perspective led to some very interesting findings. First, as in most countries, demographic factors[25] results in women voting at a higher rate than men. Indeed, out of the total votes, 52.08% were cast by women, while men cast 47.92%[26].

However, when the votes of Change Groups are analyzed, the gender gap significantly increases. **Out of the total vote for Change, 56.15% was cast by women, with only 43.87% by men!**

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[25] "In the older age groups of many populations, the number of females is much greater than the number of males." https://www.britannica.com/topic/population-pyramid

[26] In lebanon some polling stations are mixed, without a gender denomination. They represent 14% of total votes. Additionally, Expatriate votes do not have any gender or sectarian qualifications.

Gender view of Emerging parties voters
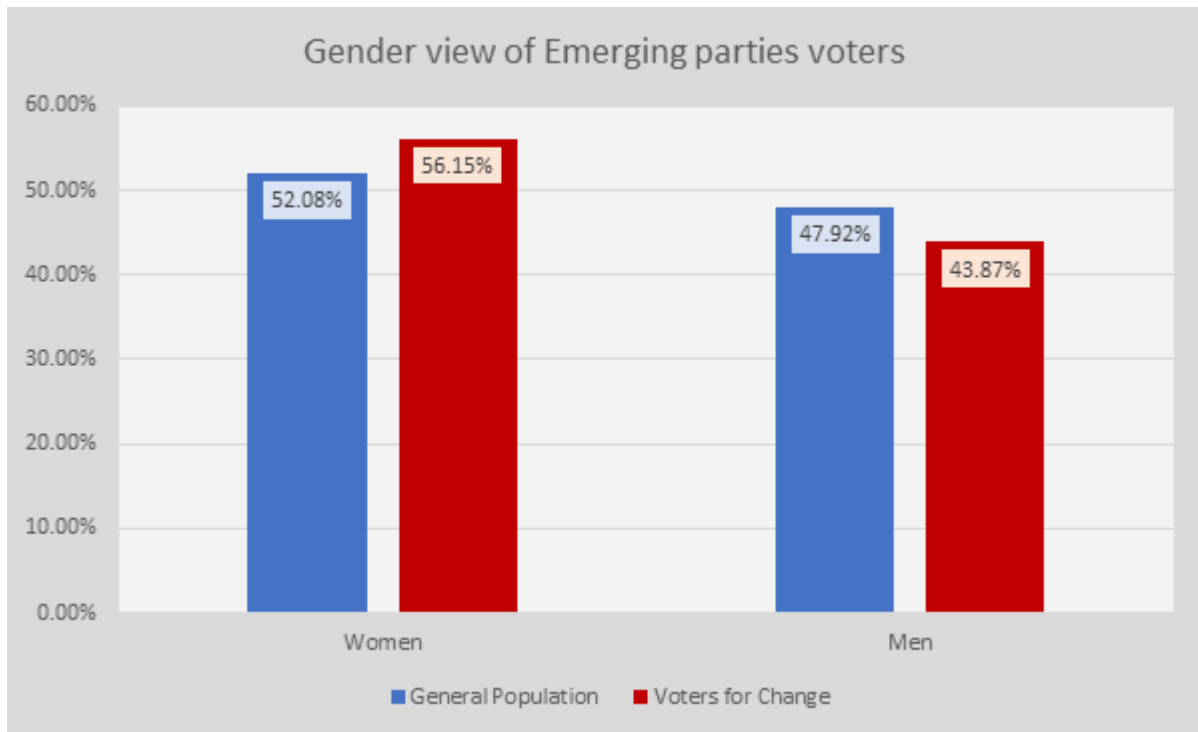
This indicates that women were agents of Change. There are 22,000 more women than men that voted for Change. Those extra 4% women votes were crucial in winning the 12 change MPs.

However, analyzing the district distribution of women's share of Change voting highlights some significant differences.



Women voting behavior
Change vs general population
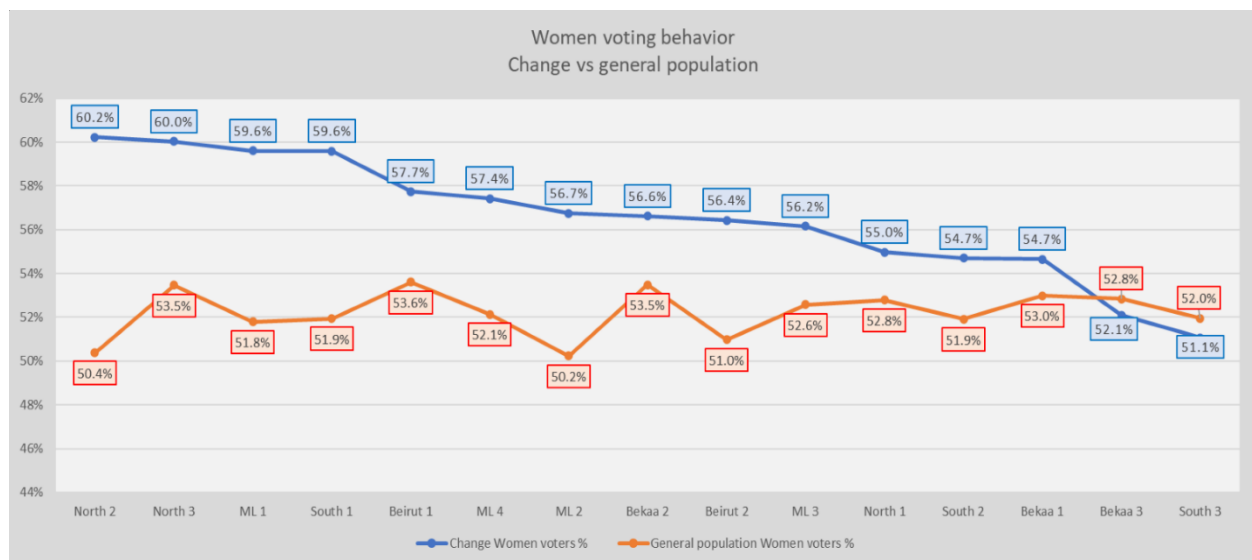
In several districts, like North 2, North 3, Mount Lebanon, and South 1, around 60% of votes for Change were cast by women, compared to the national average of 52% of the total votes of women. On the other side of the graph,

the percentage drops rapidly to 54.7% in Bekaa1 and South 2, 52.1% in Bekaa 3, and 51.1% in South 3. In the last two districts, women voted for Change in percentage less than their general voting.

That is a striking difference in percentage from district to district. Thus, to understand the reason, this Paper ran several regression analyses, testing different variables against women's share of change voters. The variable that had the most impact was Shiite majorities, as shown below. **Therefore, this Paper can conclude that the more significant a Shiite population majority was in a district, the fewer women voted for Change. Vice versa, the more Christians, Sunni, or Druze a district had, the more women voted for Change.** If Shiite majority districts were removed from the national average, the total share of women who voted for Change would rise to 57.2%
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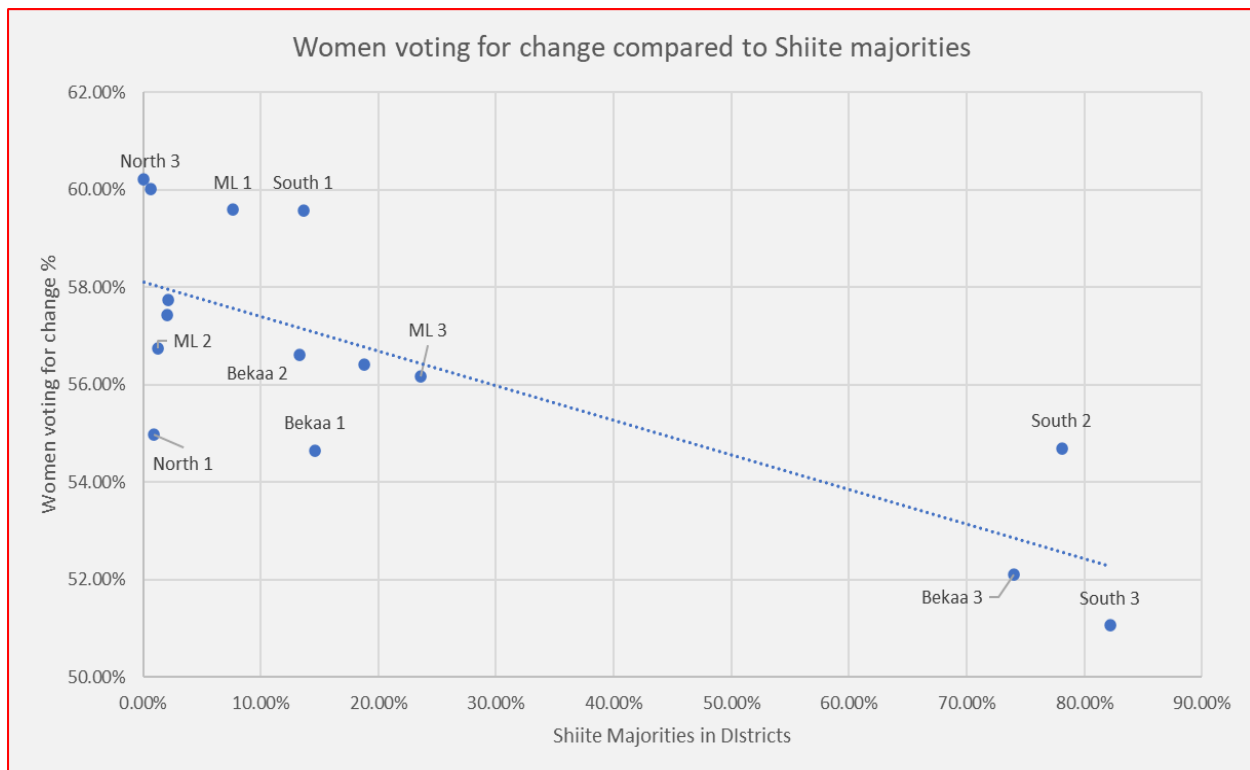


This correlation is fascinating as it is unique amongst all other sects. Even in diverse sectarian districts where change groups did not perform well, like in ML1, ML2, and South 1, women's share of the change vote was much higher than men's.

Moreover, in terms of absolute numbers, this Paper found that in the general population, 255,421 Shiite women voted to 233,904 men. This is on par with the national average of women/men voting percentage of 52% to 48%. **However, out of the 25,641 Shiite votes for Change, the share of women votes was only 49.7%, 6% below the national average of 56%!** This further reinforces the above hypothesis.
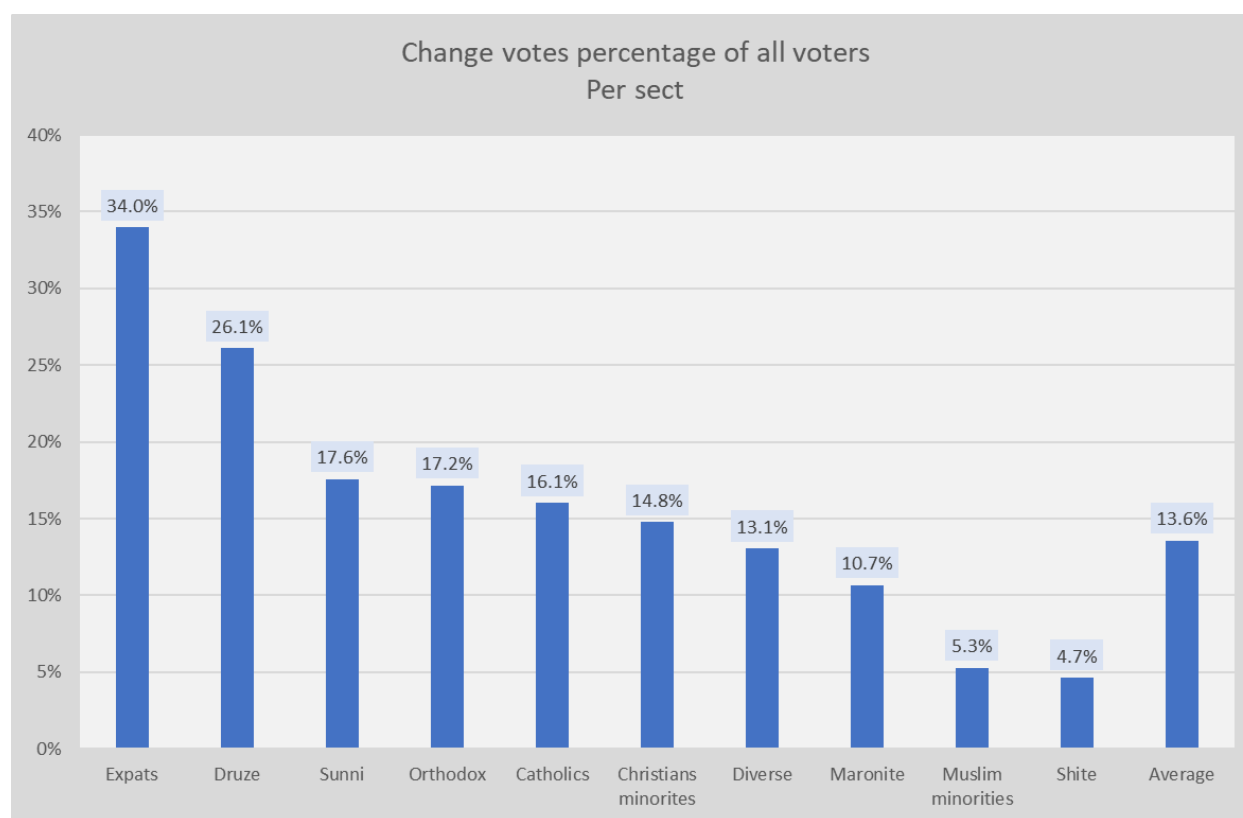
Therefore, it is essential to research further the negative attitude of Shiite women toward change groups and understand its causes, especially with the upcoming municipal elections. To illustrate the importance of closing this gap and raising Shiite women's vote for Change to the national average, this Paper ran a scenario where Shiite women voted on par with the national average of 56%.

Indeed, if Shiite women voted on par with the national average, change groups would have won an additional 15,000 votes nationally, completely changing the parliament's balance of power and leading to the possible victory of

additional change MPs. Moreover, if we run the same scenario in south 3, only 11,290 women voted for Change, reaching 51.1%as opposed to the share of the general population vote where women voted at the national average of 52%. Thus, if women in south 3 voted for Change at 56%, the Change list would have won an additional 1,100 votes. Although these additional votes in this particular district would not have changed the number of seats won by change groups, they would have resulted in the probable victory of one of the Shiite change MPs, breaking Hezbollah's and Amal's monopoly on Shiite MPs.

## Change Voters' Sectarian Distribution

The same Shiite reluctance to vote for Change was discovered in the sectarian distribution of the change vote. **Indeed, the Shiite community had the lowest percentage of Change vote, coming at 4.7%, while 34% of expatriates, 26.1% of Druze, and 17.6% of Sunnis voted for Change**. If we do the same exercise as the gender analysis and remove the Shiite from the calculation of the share of total voters for Change, the national average jumps up from 13.58% to 17.2%.



Change votes percentage of all voters
Per sect

| | Expats | Druze | Sunni | Orthodox | Catholics | Christians minorites | Diverse | Maronite | Muslim minorities | Shite | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 34.0% | 26.1% | 17.6% | 17.2% | 16.1% | 14.8% | 13.1% | 10.7% | 5.3% | 4.7% | 13.6% |

### *Expatriates*

The strongest support for change groups came from the expatriates[27]. This vote was fully explored in a previous paper, which can be reviewed [here](). In brief, most of the expatriates that voted for Change were the young enthusiastic Lebanese who led and took part in the massive protests in 2019. Many had to leave the country in the following years, looking for jobs and a better life. There is no doubt that a sizeable pro-change voter base exists in

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[27] In this particular analysis this paper has considered the expats as a sect to highlight their impact on the results, considering that their vote is not segregated by gender or sect as local votes.

the expatriate communities that would be critical in any future election. However, expatriates can't vote in municipal elections. Thus, their impact on the 2023 municipal elections will be limited to those able to travel back to Lebanon and vote in person.

## Druze

The Druze community came second, with 26.1% voting for Change! Most of the Druze vote in Mount Lebanon 4 district, with a smaller minority in Bekaa 2 and South 3. In all three districts, Change groups received strong backing. Historically the Druze community has always followed their traditional leaders, mainly the Jumblatt and Arslan feudal families. In 2022 the trend changed. Although Jumblatt won a majority of Druze votes and all 8 of the Druze seats, Arslan failed to win any seats, and so did Wiam Wahhab, who can be considered the third Druze political power. This paper analysis shows a substantial shift among the Druze community towards Change, steering away from Arslan and Wahhab while maintaining strong support for Jumblatt, which is usually considered the main Zaim of the community. Nevertheless, the 2022 election has shown that Change groups can make many roads in the Druze community and win additional district seats. Unfortunately, the Druze are a small minority, and their demographic impact in the elections outside the three districts is limited.

## Sunnis

17.6% of the Sunni community voted for Change. Indeed, three months before the election, Future Movement and their leader Saad Hariri withdrew from political life[28], leaving a growing void in the community. This was clear in their voting trends[29]. Change groups, especially in Beirut 2, ML4, and Bekaa 2, and to a lesser degree in North 1 and 2, have been able to fill some of that void and receive significant support from the Sunni community. This Paper can confidentially say that this trend can be built upon and strengthened in the upcoming municipal election, leading to even more Sunni votes for Change. Especially in the largest three cities with Sunni majorities (Beirut, Tripoli, and Saida). Indeed, in 2016 an opposition list supported by Ashraf Rifi was able to win Tripoli's municipalities, and Beirut Madinati, a change group list headed by the current Change MP Ibrahim Mniemneh, came very close to winning Beirut Madinati[30].

## Christians

The Christian vote for Change was surprisingly low. Although 17% of orthodox and 16% of Catholics voted for Change, only 10% of Maronites, the largest Christian community, voted for Change. The Maronite community has been the subject of a fierce battle for control by the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement. The two parties poured all their resources and used all their clientelistic and power levers to grab the largest share of voters and prove they were the number 1 Christian party. This battle left no room for independent political candidates or groups to mount their campaigns. Indeed, many of the most popular independent or Change candidates allied themselves with one or another traditional political party lists. This was most evident in one of the largest Christian districts, ML1, that practically had no 'pure' change group list.

Additionally, this Paper has not added the Kateab Party or several independent Christian politicians to the Change Group category. This could be explained why the Change vote was lower. However, the fact remains that the Maronites still voted at a lesser percentage than all other sects except the Shiites.

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[28] https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/86243

[29] For more on the Sunni Community Voting trends, kindly check this full report on the subject. https://www.freiheit.org/lebanon/sunni-voting-trends-2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections

[30] The Monthly Magazine, issue number 164 | July 2016, https://monthlymagazine.com/cms/upload/magazine/285_file.pdf

## Shiites

Finally, the Shiite community came last in support of Change, with only 4.7%. This was expected. It has proven very hard to run impactful and widespread electoral campaigns in districts with Shiite majorities, like South 2 and 3 and Bekaa 3. Many intimidations, threats, and outright assaults against change candidates have been reported in these districts, culminating with several E-day incidents[31]. Moreover, the two Shiite traditional parties have been deploying much economic, financial, and social aid for their population since before the 2019 crisis[32]. A complete social, economic, and political ostracization in the Shiite Community could meet any vote for Change. Even more worrisome, some of the most vocal opponents of the traditional Shiite parties were assassinated in the last few years[33].

But it is not hopeless. The Breakthrough in South 3, one of the most populous districts with an overwhelming Shiite majority, proves that a united change list, running on a solid platform with a comprehensive program and a slate of respected candidates, can win big, even in these 'difficult' districts. Indeed, the Change group list success in south 3 hints at what could be done, especially by using the district's sectarian mixed areas as a launchpad[34]. Moreover, local and familial politics are much more prominent in the upcoming municipal elections than national and sectarian issues. Thus, change groups have a good chance of winning in the next municipal elections in many Shiite-majority cities and villages.

## Three Districts In Focus



Sectarian votes comparison of Top 3 distrocts in change voter share
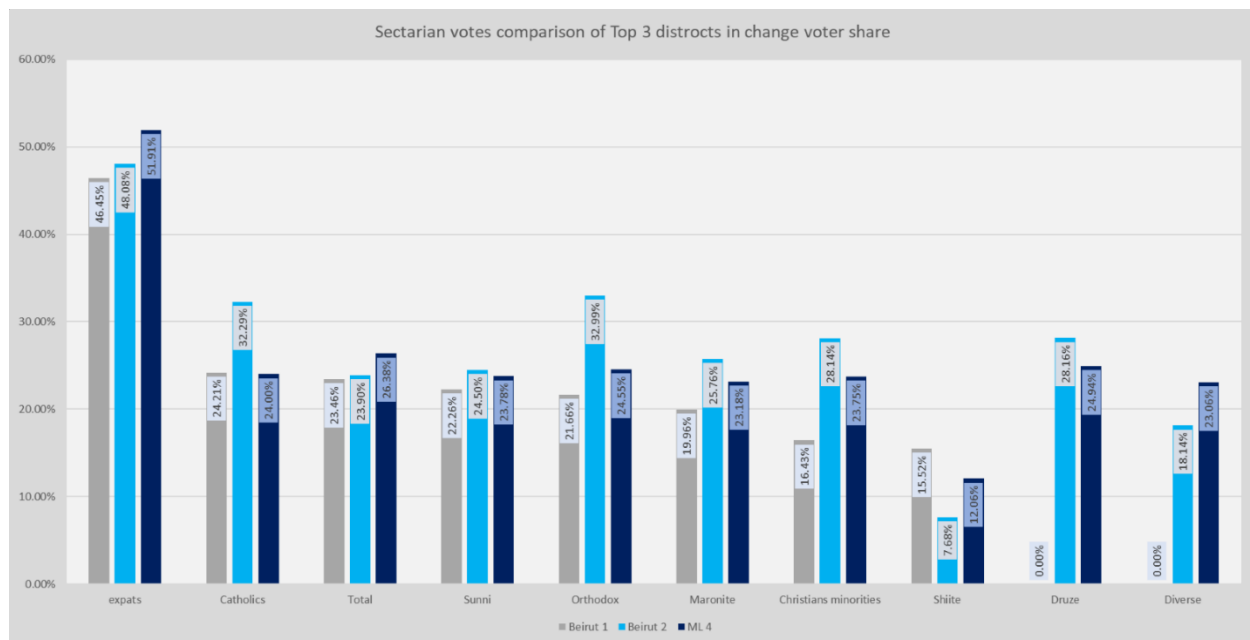
When the top three districts in change votes are analyzed, this Paper discovered that the expatriate share of the change vote shot up to above 50%. Incidentally, these three districts were responsible for electing 8 out of the 12 Change MPs!

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[31] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/23/lebanon-opposition-election-candidates-threats-attacks
[32] https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollah-has-created-parallel-financial-and-welfare-systems-manage-current-crisis
[33] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/3/assassination-of-activist-lokman-slim-in-lebanon-one-year-on
[34] The change group running in South 3 that won 2 seats, relied on a very strong showing in Sunni and druze areas in that districts, supported by growing in roads in pure shiite villages.

Additionally, the Shiite and Maronite share of votes was higher than the national average (nationally, Shiite votes for Change were only 4.7% of their total votes, while the Maronites were 10.7%). In these three districts, the Shiite vote rose at a minimum to 7.7% in Beirut 2 and 15% and 12% in Beirut 1 and ML4. Similarly, Maronite voting in these districts rose to 20% in Beirut 1, 25% in Beirut 2, and 23% in ML4.

Although the number of Shiites in Beirut 1 is minimal, similarly, the Maronite presence in Beirut 2 is very limited, yet this indicates a trend. In contrast, **Sects in diverse areas are less extreme and more progressive and accepting of Change in their voting than in sectarian homogeneous areas.**

# Conclusion

This research paper has shown that just 13.59% of the Lebanese voted for Change. But the change vote increased by 600% from 2018 to the 2022 parliamentary elections. Moreover, a majority of those change voters were women, and a plurality of their support came from expatriate voters. Moreover, from a sectarian perspective, change groups had a much higher chance of getting support from Druze voters, followed by Sunni, orthodox, and Catholics. Meanwhile, Maronite and Shiite populations had a much lower affinity for change groups. Additionally, 8 of the 12 change MPs that won seats ran in these districts: Beirut 1, Beirut 2, and ML4.

Moreover, the Lebanese voters were more likely to vote for Change in sectarian mixed areas rather than in areas with sectarian majorities. This was most evident in the Maronite and Shiite sects. Nevertheless, Change Groups face strong opposition amongst the Shia community, especially Shiite women. In future elections, this fact should be at the forefront of any effort to make inroads in the Shiite communities and break the hold of Hezbollah and Amal on Shia representation.

Finally, before overviewing this Paper's policy recommendations, it is essential to note that these recommendations will be catered for the upcoming municipal elections. Indeed, these elections' electoral laws and circumstances differ from the parliamentary elections. Thus, this Paper will briefly overview the municipal elections law and specificities before moving on to the recommendations.

## 2023 Municipal Elections

The 1977 Law of Municipalities and its amendments govern the current municipal electoral law. Each municipality has jurisdiction over all matters of public interest and works within its boundaries, and it has a council that serves as the decision-making body. Municipal councils range in size from nine to 21 members, determined by set proportions to each municipality's registered population. Beirut and Tripoli are exceptions, with 24 council members each. In all cases, members elect the council's executive, who holds the title of president[35]. Voters elect municipal councils for a six-year term in a bloc-vote list instead of a proportional parliamentary vote system.

In contrast to the parliament, there are no sectarian quotas. Each voter casts a single list with up to as many names as available spots. Candidates who win the highest number of votes are elected. The system allows voters to cast ballots from different lists and party affiliations. However, the system enables a winner-take-all outcome[36]. It is also important to note that as opposed to parliamentary elections, where national parties and hot macro issues[37] are at the heart of all electoral campaigns, municipal elections are based on familial relations, local politics, social and developmental issues, and the notoriety of the running candidates.

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[35] Ziad Abu-Rish "Municipal Politics in Lebanon," Middle East Report 280 (Fall 2016), https://merip.org/2016/10/municipal-politics-in-lebanon/
[36] Ministry of Interior website, Municipal elections guide https://bit.ly/3JqCmdr
[37] like Hezbollah's weapons, neutrality, and economic model

## Policy Recommendations

Based on the analysis and findings of this research, this Paper offers the following policy recommendations:

- Change groups should first and foremost target and encourage female voters, who tend to vote for them more than men (up to a 60/40 average). This is even more important in the Shiite population, where men voted for Change more than Shiite women, and change groups should urgently remedy this imbalance.
- The strongest support for change groups came from Expatriates. Unfortunately, for the upcoming municipal elections, expatriates don't vote. Change groups can make the most inroads in the Druze and Sunni nationally and with the Christian population in mixed districts.
- Change groups should focus on major cities with a diverse sectarian makeup, where they received the highest share of votes and won the largest number of seats.
- Change groups should also start making inroads in non-urban regions, considering that many votes originate from periphery districts.
- Despite the low votes for Change in Shiite regions, South 3 example proved that when Change Groups field united list, running on a solid platform with a comprehensive program and a slate of respected candidates can accomplish a lot.
- **Finally, the Change Groups supporters do not provide a "spontaneous vote." These supporters must be contacted, organized, convinced, and shown that the candidates and lists they are voting for are united, organized, professional, and will work on fulfilling their needs and aspirations.**

## Future Research Venues

This Paper has uncovered some fascinating correlations and voting trends. With the upcoming municipal elections, there is an urgent need to explore these trends and themes further to fine-tune the Change Groups strategies and campaigns for the 2023 municipal elections. Therefore, this Paper has identified and detailed several future research venues.

- Exploring Shiite women's aversion to Change groups. The answer to this research question could start a change in Shiite majority districts, possibly Impacting the whole sect and breaking Hezbollah and Amal movement stronghold.

- A comprehensive gender-focused voting trends analysis. Why did most Lebanese women vote for Change, and how can this be amplified? Are women more opposed to traditional political parties and corruption? Are they more progressive?

- Further exploring the Sunni community voting trends and their preoccupation and aspiration for new politicians and political parties. The Sunni community's future political support for Change will be a crucial pillar for any victory of the change groups in the municipal elections.

- Exploring why the Druze community voted for Change and how this trend can be further strengthened and exported to other communities.

- Lessons learned from the different electoral campaigns in 2022. Investigating and comparing the different political campaigns, both traditional and Change, to highlight the most successful strategies and tactics (media, organization, messaging, platform, and programs) and formulate a set of best strategies to use in the upcoming municipal elections.

- Qualitative and quantitative investigation into what were the main hurdles stopping change groups from winning more seats.

## The Author

Ibrahim Jouhari is a governance, electoral affairs, and open data expert with experience gathered working with various NGOs, universities, and think tanks, like NDI, FNF, IRI, UN Women, USJ, and UNDP.

Mr. Jouhari is the lead Advisor of the Electoral Lab, which published two research papers on the expatriates and the Sunni community voting trends in the 2022 elections in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the Issam Fares Institute. He also manages the Data Liberation Project to convert, cross-link, and publicly publish the previous Lebanese parliamentary elections results in a machine-readable format.

Mr. Jouhari is an international affairs, diplomacy, and US foreign policy instructor at USJ and AUST. Mr. Jouhari holds a MA in Political Studies from the American University of Beirut and a BA in Journalism from the Lebanese American University. In 2019, he completed a post-graduate US security and foreign policy program with the State Department of Study of US Institutions.

## Annex A

### Names of Change Lists via District

Below are the lists considered by this study as emerging parties, or minor change groups, and MMFD and used in the electoral analysis.

| District | Emerging parties | English transliteration |
|---|---|---|
| Beirut 1 | لوطني (4)      بيروت مدينتي (6) | Li Watani / Beirut Madinati |
| Beirut 2 | بيروت التغيير (6)    بيروت مدينتي (10) | Beirut lil Tagheer / Beirut Madinati |
| ML 1 | نحنا التغيير (7) | Nahnou lil tagheer |
| ML 2 | سياديون متنيون (2) | Nahoua el dawlat |
| ML 3 | بعبدا التغيير (4) | Baabda al Tagheer |
| ML 4 | توحدنا للتغيير (5) | Twahadna lil Tagheer |
| North 1 | عكار التغيير (6) | Akkar lil tagheer |
| North 2 | انتفض.. للسيادة للعدالة (7) | Intafed lil Syada w aadalah |
| North 3 | شمالنا (1) | Shamalouna |
| Bekaa 1 | زحلة تنتفض (3) | Zahleh Tantafed |
| Bekaa 2 | لائحة سهلنا و الجبل (3) | Sahlouna wal Jabal |
| Bekaa 3 | ائتلاف التغيير (6) | Iitilaf el tagheer |
| South 1 | نحن التغيير (٣) | Nahnoun el Tagheer |
| South 2 | معاً للتغيير (3) | Maan lil tagheer |
| South 3 | معأ نحو التغيير (2) | Maan na7wa tagheer |

| District | Minor Change groups |
|---|---|
| Beirut 1 | n/a |
| Beirut 2 | نعم لبيروت (9) |
| ML 1 | n/a |
| ML 2 | سياديون متنيون (2) |
| ML 3 | نحنا التغيير (5)   معأ نستطيع (1) |
| ML 4 | صوتك ثورة (2) |
| North 1 | عكار تنتفض (5) |
| North 2 | فجر التغيير (9) طموح الشباب(3) |
| North 3 | وعي صوتك ( 5) |
| Bekaa 1 | القول والفعل (4) |
| Bekaa 2 | n/a |
| Bekaa 3 | مستقلون ضد الفساد (1) |
| South 1 | صوت التغيير (٥) |
| South 2 | n/a |
| South 3 | صوت الجنوب (3) |

| District | MMFD |
|----------|------|
| Beirut 1 | (5) قادرين |
| Beirut 2 | (8) قادرين |
| ML 1 | (5) قادرين |
| ML 2 | n/a |
| ML 3 | (6) قادرين |
| ML 4 | (4) قادرين |
| North 1 | نحو المواطنة (4) |
| North 2 | قادرين (11) |
| North 3 | قادرين نغيّر (4) |
| Bekaa 1 | قادرين نواجه (7) |
| Bekaa 2 | (6) قادرين |
| Bekaa 3 | (4) قادرين |
| South 1 | (٦) قادرين |
| South 2 | n/a |
| South 3 | n/a |

## 12 Change MPs

Ibrahim Mneimneh
Melhem Khalaf
Waddah Sadek
Elias Jradi
Firas Hamdan
Michel Douaihy
Halime Kaakour
Najat Aoun Saliba
Mark Daou
Paula Yacoubian
Cynthia Zarazir
Yassin Yassin