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Lebanon and Syria

EXPATRIATES VOTING

ANALYSIS

**2022 Lebanese Parliamentary
Elections**

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The expatriates' (expats) vote in the 2022 Lebanese parliamentary elections has been a frequently-discussed topic, with respect to its impact on the results and the role it played helping the Change Movement and independent groups secure additional seats.

As part of a series of in-depth research papers on the 2022 parliamentary elections, the Electoral Lab at IFI drew an analysis of the voting trends of the Lebanese Expats or the Out of Country Vote (OCV) and developed important findings and conclusions, detailed in this paper.

Insights of numbers and data presented in this paper have been produced by the Data Liberation Project (DLP), in collaboration with FNF to convert, reorganize and cross-link the 2022, 2018, 2009, 2005, 2000 and 1996 Lebanese elections' results, into a machine-friendly and open excel format, thus making the data easily, freely and publicly available.[1]

This paper starts with an overview of the registration and turnout numbers, followed by an analysis of the general population numbers, with particular focus on the expatriates using two different frameworks: the OCV per country of origin and OCV per local districts.

The third section tackles the percentages of white and voided ballots. It includes an analysis of the general numbers of expats and explains why they changed along the different regions.

The fourth part discusses how the OCV was divided among the different forces and political parties, the impact of these votes, and whether they changed the result favoring a specific group or not.

The fifth part focuses on answering the topical question of which method of expat voting is more advantageous for the new emerging parties. Would it have been the one limiting the expats' votes to only 6 MPs representing expats or the one that was used (in 2018 and 2022) based on voting for all 128 MPs, each according to their district of origin? The paper ends with lessons learned and recommendations that could be adopted in future elections.



[1]The DLP data is freely available online on www.128Lebanon.com and a conference will be held in November show casing the data and what could be done with it.

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction P. 4
- 2. Turnout and Registration P. 5
 - A. General Registration and Turnout
 - B. Expatriates' Registration and Turnout
 - I. OCV Analysis by Country of Voting* P. 9
 - Registration
 - Turnout
 - II. OCV Turnout by Districts* P. 14
 - General Turnout per District
 - Expatriates' Turnout by Districts
- 3. White and Null Ballots Analysis P. 16
 - A. General Voters
 - B. Expatriates' Voters
- 4. Expatriates Voting per Political Parties P. 19
- 5. Voting for Six Expatriates' Seats or for all 128 P. 23
- 6. Conclusion P. 24



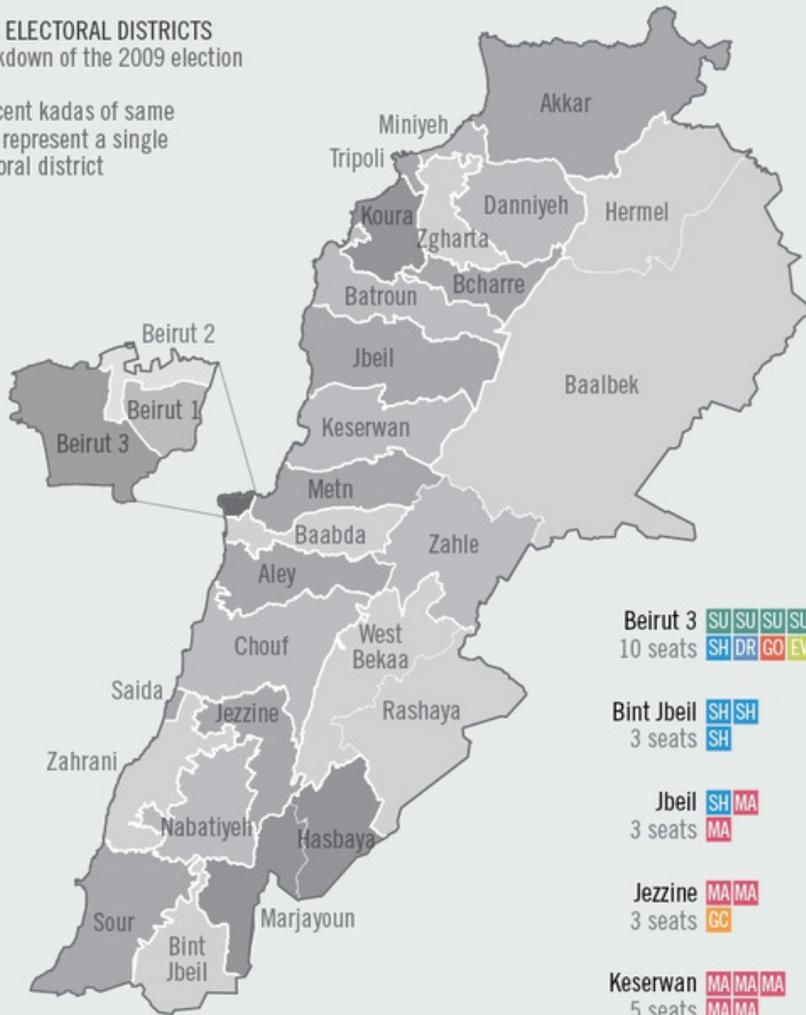
INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese 2022 parliamentary elections took place on May 15, 2022, shortly after the OCV held in 58 countries[2] on May 6 and 8. Countries with weekends that start on Friday (10 Arab Muslim countries[3]) held the elections on Friday, May 6, while elections in the remaining 48 countries were held on Sunday, May 8. The elections were based on a proportional law with a single preferential vote in 15 local districts, which were further divided into qazas in a non-uniform manner.[4]

2017 LEBANESE ELECTION LAW

2009 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS
Breakdown of the 2009 election

Adjacent kadas of same color represent a single electoral district



Seats by confession

- SU Sunni
- SH Shia
- DR Druze
- AL Alawite
- MA Maronite
- GO Greek Orthodox
- GC Greek Catholic
- AO Armenian Orthodox
- AC Armenian Catholic
- EV Evangelical
- MC Minority Christian

Akkar SU SU SU SU AL
7 seats MA GO GO

Batroun MA
2 seats MA

Koura GO GO
3 seats GO

**West Bekaa-
Rashaya** SU SU SH
DR MA GO
6 seats

Aley DR DR MA
MA GO
5 seats

Bcharre MA
2 seats MA

**Marjayoun-
Hasbaya** SU SH SH
DR GO
5 seats

Zahle SU SH MA GO
GC GC AO
7 seats

Baabda SH SH DR
MA MA MA
6 seats

Beirut 1 MA GO GC
AO AC
5 seats

**Miniyeh-
Danniyeh** SU SU
SU
3 seats

Zahrani SH SH
GC
3 seats

**Baalbek-
Hermel** SU SU SH SH SH
SH SH SH MA GC
10 seats

Beirut 2 SU SH
AO AO
4 seats

Metn MA MA MA MA
GO GO GC AO
8 seats

Zgharta MA MA
MA
3 seats

Beirut 3 SU SU SU SU SU
SH DR GO EV MC
10 seats

Nabatiyeh SH SH
SH
3 seats

Bint Jbeil SH SH
SH
3 seats

Chouf SU SU DR DR
MA MA MA GC
8 seats

Jbeil SH MA
MA
3 seats

Saida SU
SU
2 seats

Jezzine MA MA
GC
3 seats

Sour SH SH
SH SH
4 seats

Keserwan MA MA MA
MA MA
5 seats

Tripoli SU SU SU SU
SU AL MA GO
8 seats

Source: 2008 Election Law; Ministry of Interior and Municipalities.

© 2017 Executive.com.lb

[2] There were originally 59 countries, but elections in Ukraine were canceled in light of the war.

[3] The elections on Friday took place in the following countries: KSA, Qatar, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, Oman, Bahrain and Iraq.

[4] Some districts did not have any sub-districts, such as Beirut 1 and 2, while others had four, such as North 3.

In a relatively uneventful Election Day with few major incidents, the local elections took place without significant logistical problems. It is worth mentioning that a few polling centers experienced electricity cuts[5], while others simply faced long queues. Some incidents of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation and alleged vote-buying were reported.[6]

Likewise, the OCV occurred smoothly, with long queues reported in several locations, especially in Dubai, UAE and France. There were 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. [7] The process was generally smooth, and the votes were cast and sent to Lebanon for safekeeping in the central bank until May 15, to be counted with the local ballots.

Despite widespread incidents of vote buying and clientelism, which “distorted the playing field and seriously affected the voters’ choice[8],” the elections’ overall legitimacy has not been seriously questioned. Chief Observer of the EU Observation Mission noted that “The conclusion in the mission’s final report is that although preparations were affected by limited financial and human resources, the election authorities delivered the 15th of May parliamentary elections in the scheduled time.”[9]

TURNOUT AND REGISTRATION

الرقود المبروك		عدد الناخبين والمقترعين					نسبة الاقتراع	
الرقود المبروك	عدد الناخبين	عدد الناخبين	عدد المقترعين	عدد الناخبين	عدد المقترعين	نسبة الاقتراع 2018	نسبة الاقتراع 2022	
1	16	143	1	0	140	87%	49.67%	
2	42	281	0	0	281	88%	49.47%	
3	37	289	4	7	278	82%	49.14%	
4	22	184	3	12	169	61%	49.44%	
5	42	282	4	5	267	64%	49.67%	
6	37	283	0	1	264	58%	49.47%	
7	27	137	1	3	140	67%	49.67%	

On May 18, 2022, three days after the elections, and despite earlier reports of a much lower turnout,[10] the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) republished the official results with corrected numbers. The turnout was set at 49.19%, with a minimal drop of 0.47% from 49.67% in 2018.

However, our research led us to conclude that lack of clarity remains on the number of registered voters, as detailed results from each polling station are missing. This can be seen in the screenshots of the official results in PDF format published by the MoIM on its elections website[11] shown below, comparing results from 2018 and 2022 in the Beirut 1 district.

2018 elections result with registered citizens column

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

[6] 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

[7] LADE, <https://bit.ly/3bUZMch>

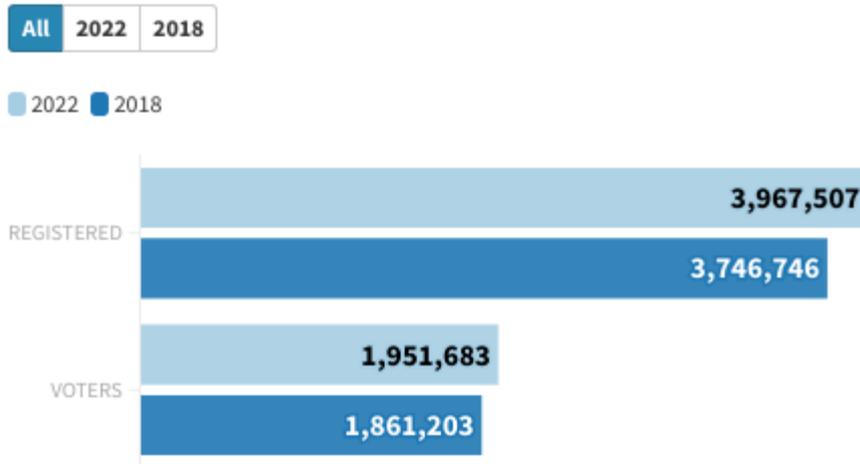
[8] EU Observation Mission final report.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Initially, the MoIM announced that the 2022 turnout was 41%, suffering from an 8% drop from 2018. It then explained that there was an error in tabulating registered numbers, which inflated them and lowered total turnout.

[11] MoIM elections website, <https://elections.gov.lb/Home.asp>

Turnout by absolute numbers



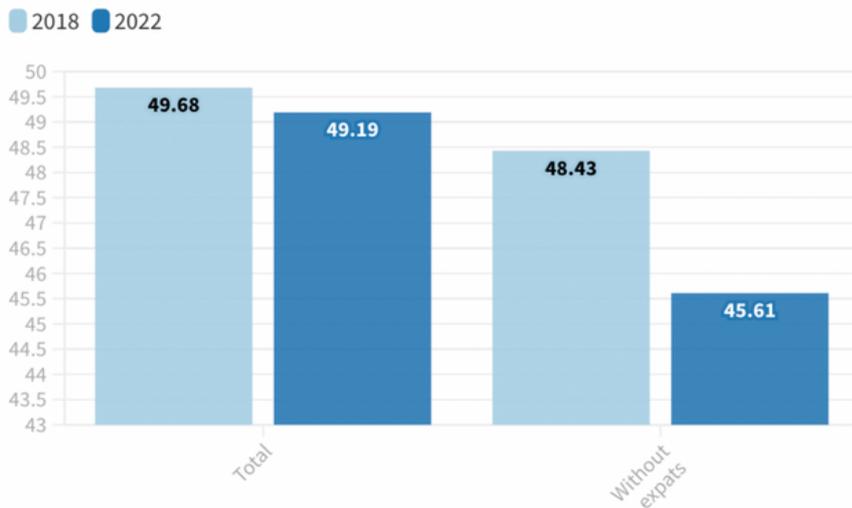
While the turnout for 2022 is significantly lower than the 54% reached in 2009, it is still considered much higher than the turnout percentages of previous elections (44,43% in 2005, 43% in 2000, 46.32% in 1996 and 30.4% in 1992).[12]

Although 49.19% might seem on the low end of turnouts in democratic countries, where the percentage usually ranges between 55% to 80%,[13] it is essential to note that the voter registration process in Lebanon is considered passive.

All Lebanese above 21 years of age are automatically registered

on the permanent voter roll updated once a year regardless of whether elections are occurring or not. Voter lists are issued by the MoIM's Directorate General of Civil Status (DGCS) based on civil status records.[14] Unfortunately, the registration system remains slow to correct the main lists, which usually includes deceased individuals and citizens who have left the country several years ago and other different scenarios.

Turnout



It is estimated 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.[15] In absolute numbers, 1,951,683 residents and Lebanese expats voted out of 3,967,507, which amounts to a participation rate of 49.19% compared to 1,861,203 voters out of 3,746,746 in 2018, or what amounts to a 49.68% turnout.

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

[13] 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/>

[14] EU Observation Mission final report, page 17.

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

B. EXPATRIATES REGISTRATION AND TURNOUT

The 2022 elections highlighted the importance of the expat vote, as both enthusiasm and energy were more visible on the expats' side, compared to in-country voters.

As a matter of fact, without the OCV, the turnout would have been limited to 45.61%, which is considerably lower than the final turnout of 49.19% and far short of the turnout in 2018. The enthusiasm of expats was clear, with their willingness to travel long distances within their country of residence and queue for hours, sometimes in the scorching summer heat, as was the case in Dubai.[16] The OCV rose from 46,799 in 2018 to 142,041 votes in 2022, or 7.27% of the total electorate. This comes down to a 2.57%, almost a threefold, increase compared to 2018.

This outstanding result was partly due to the extraordinary feat of preparation and outreach organized by the Lebanon's 'emerging parties.' They mobilized their supporters and set up several marathon campaigns to register expats who recently left Lebanon following the economic crisis and the Beirut port explosion. Expats were encouraged to register for an out-of-country vote through Lebanese embassies worldwide.[17]

The impact of these large mobilizations was reflected in the final number of registered expats, which reached 224,775 compared to 82,965 in 2018. The regional distribution, and the comparison to the 2018 numbers, are very interesting as they highlight the areas that either had the most significant demonstrations and anti-establishment movements or are witnesses to intense political rivalries.

Before delving into a deeper analysis of the numbers, their significance and the discussion of possible trends, it is essential to note that Lebanese expatriates are not a monolithic, tight-knit group sharing similar political affiliations. On the contrary, the expats' political aspirations and allegiances are as diverse as those who live inside the country.[18]

Although the socio-political makeup of the Lebanese expats is an interesting topic, it remains outside the scope of this study and would require a much deeper analysis. Nevertheless, it is still possible to outline the most common framework used to categorize the socio-political affiliation of Lebanese expats.

Lebanese expats can be divided into three groups,[19] the first includes Lebanese who left Lebanon before or during the civil war.[20] Those have kept their political and sectarian affiliation to traditional political parties and can sometimes be more aggressive and belligerent in their political stances, rhetoric and voting patterns than in-country political supporters of the same party.

The second group comprises those who left during the large wave during last years of the civil war, up to the early nineties.

[16] "Seeking change, more than 100,000 Lebanese cast ballots for May 15 election," <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/i-want-change-lebanese-abroad-vote-may-15-election-2022-05-08/>

[17] "244,442," <https://nowlebanon.com/244442-2/>

[18] "Lebanese Communities Abroad: Feeding and Fuelling Conflicts," <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/lebanese-communities-abroad-feeding-and-fuelling-conflicts/>

[19] This analysis is based on a closed session held at IFI tackling the issue of the expatriates and their voting trends, in addition to several articles, studies and books referenced in this section.

[20] There is an additional older group that left during the 19th and early 20th century, especially to South America, but have mostly assimilated into their host countries and have limited impact in these elections <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/6571>

These expats are more moderate, some have even returned permanently or temporarily.

They are less attached to traditional political parties, and some rarely vote, as they have become jaded by the current political elites and their actions during the civil war. The third group is made of those who left in recent years, since the start of the economic collapse.

The latter are the most energetic group. They are ready to vote and support alternative parties and emerging groups, as they have been exasperated by the latest developments. They blame the elites for the catastrophic situation that has befallen the Lebanese people. Thus, they will be the most likely to vote, against the traditional parties[21], braving travelling distances and long queues.

To better understand the effect of the OCV, this paper starts by using two different frameworks: an analysis by countries of voting, followed by an analysis of the OCV in each of the 15 local Lebanese electoral districts.

The expats' turnout is discussed in detail in sub-section ii, but it is worth shedding light on the 63.05% average expat turnout, which stands much higher than the local turnout at 45.61% or the general turnout (both expats and residents) at 49.19%.

I. OCV Analysis by Country of Voting

Understanding from which countries expats voted is a crucial aspect that highlights their socio-economic background and political allegiances. To start, the main requirement for a country to be eligible for OCV was to have 200 or more Lebanese registered to vote.[22] Fifty-nine countries were registered, including Ukraine, which was later removed due to the security situation, thus leaving 58 countries eligible for OCV.

It is interesting to note that four countries with Lebanese expats who previously participated in the 2018 OCV were struck out of the list because less than 200 expats registered to vote in 2022. These countries were Paraguay, Armenia, Guadeloupe and Argentina.

In 2018, 757 expats out of 924 voted in Paraguay, while 311 out of 331 voted in Armenia. This is a relatively significant number, and it is worth asking why the number of registered expats dropped considerably to below 200 in these two countries, especially in Paraguay, falling from 924 to less than 200 in 2020. One possible explanation is that no political party or group believed that these voters would vote for them. Thus, no party deployed the necessary logistics effort to register the expats and encourage them to participate. Another possible explanation is that countries such as Paraguay, Argentina and Guadeloupe are home to the historically first-wave of Lebanese immigrants. These expats usually still follow old traditional parties and have not experienced the latest crisis first hand, something that could have pushed them to vote for alternative parties.

Registration

The three countries with the most significant increase in registration were the UAE (+485%), KSA (+411%) and Qatar (401%). Meanwhile, France, USA, Canada, United Arab Emirates and Australia accounted for 129,075 or more than half of all registered voters.

The data analysis of the numbers clearly shows that the countries with the most registrations and turnout are the ones that received the latest wave of immigration, following the latest ongoing crisis.

[21] "Lebanon Is in Terminal Brain Drain," <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/09/lebanon-terminal-brain-drain-migration/>

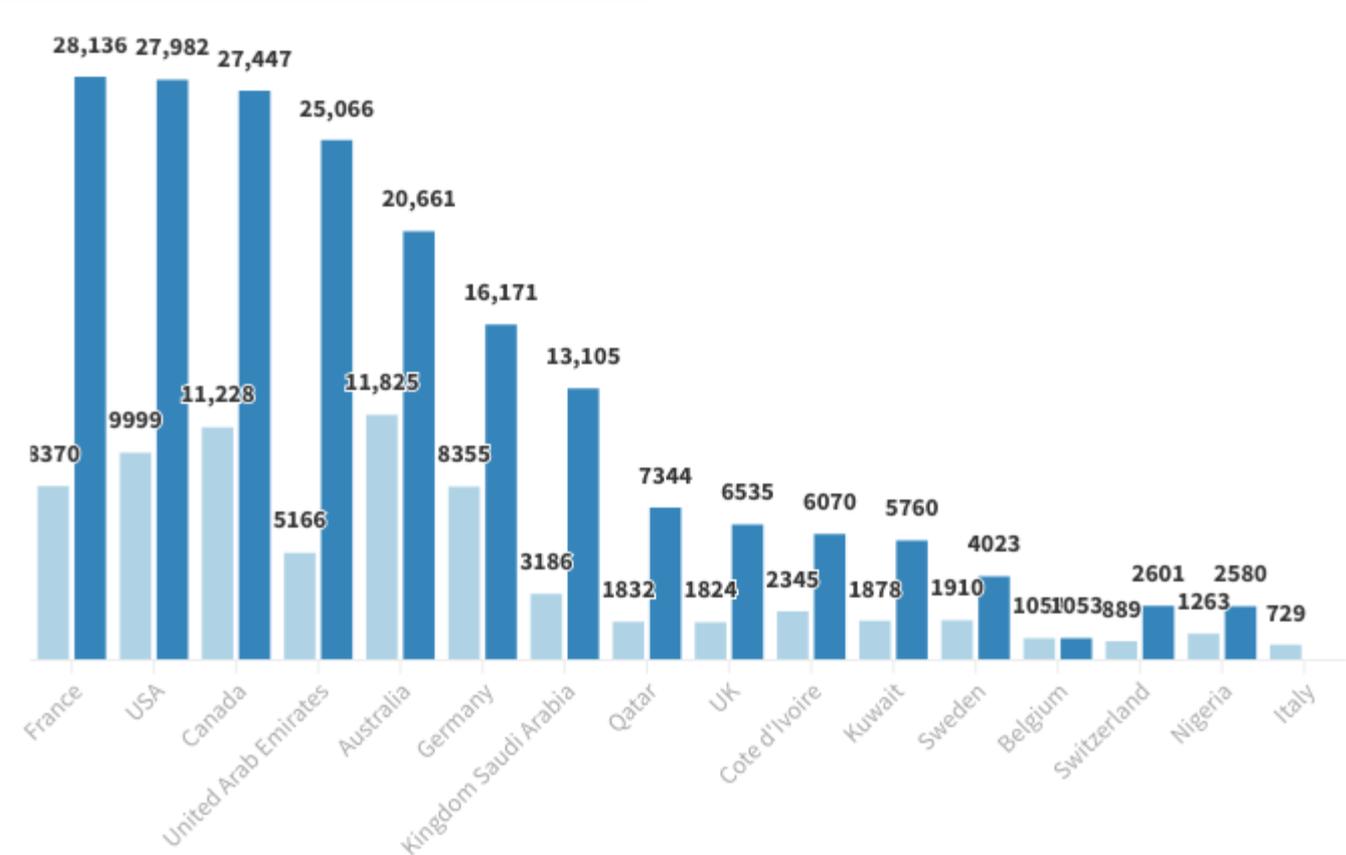
[22] Article 114 of Lebanon's 2017 Electoral Law,

<https://www.mfa.gov.lb/Library/Files/Uploaded%20Files/Lebanese%20electoral%20law%202017.pdf>

Number of registered expatriates

All 2018 2022

2018 2022



The collapse of the economy, banking sector, local currency, and especially the August 4th Beirut port explosion, affected an already disappointed young middle class. This latest wave of immigration was mostly witnessed among well-educated youth and young families leaving to the Gulf (especially the UAE, Qatar and KSA), as well as to France, the UK and Canada.

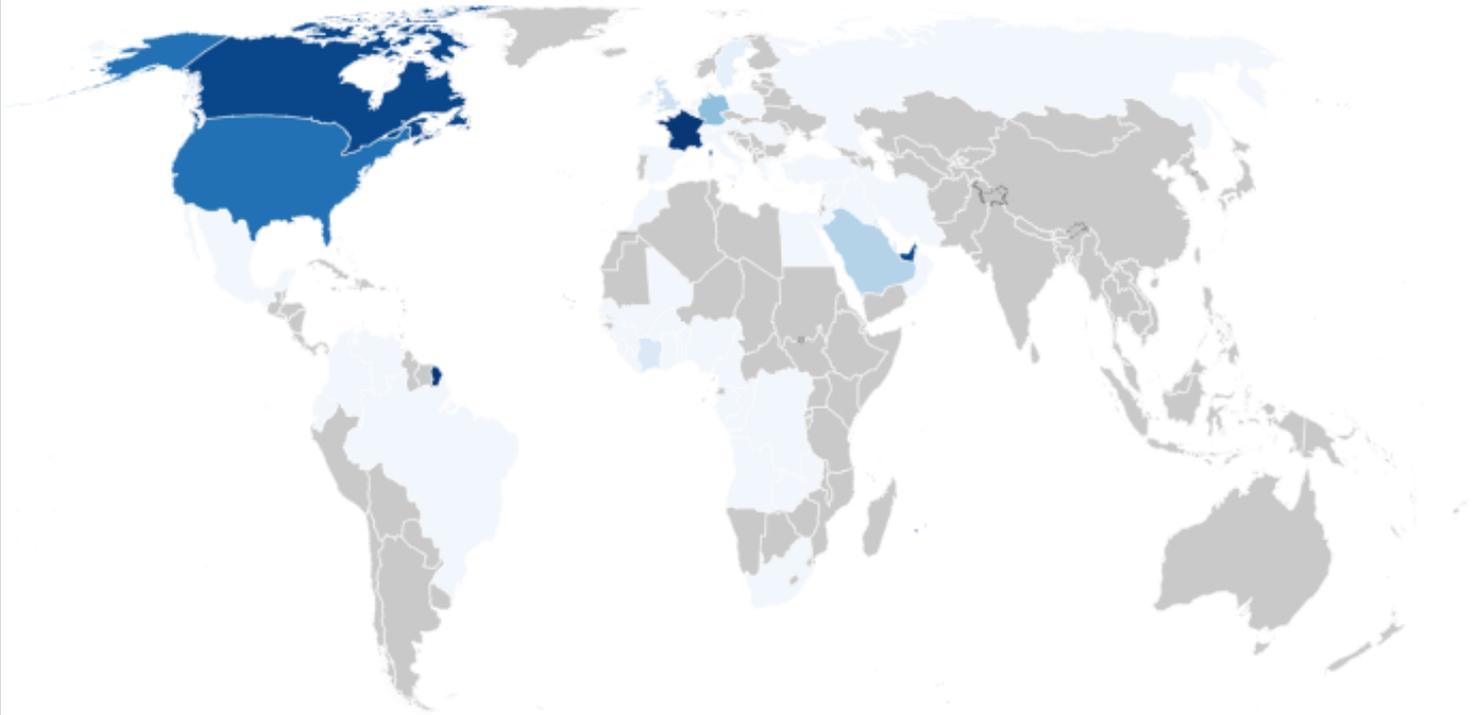
Our research shows that angry young Lebanese voted overwhelmingly for change and were the target of sustained and innovative online registration campaigns organized by alternative groups.[23]



[23] "Lebanon Is in Terminal Brain Drain."

Number of voters 2022

1000 7000 13,000 20,000



Note

countries at 1000 means less than 1000 vote

This is clear in the below map that highlights in darker shades of blue the countries with the largest number of expatriates voters. They are roughly grouped in three main regions: western Europe and north America, the GCC, and West Africa.

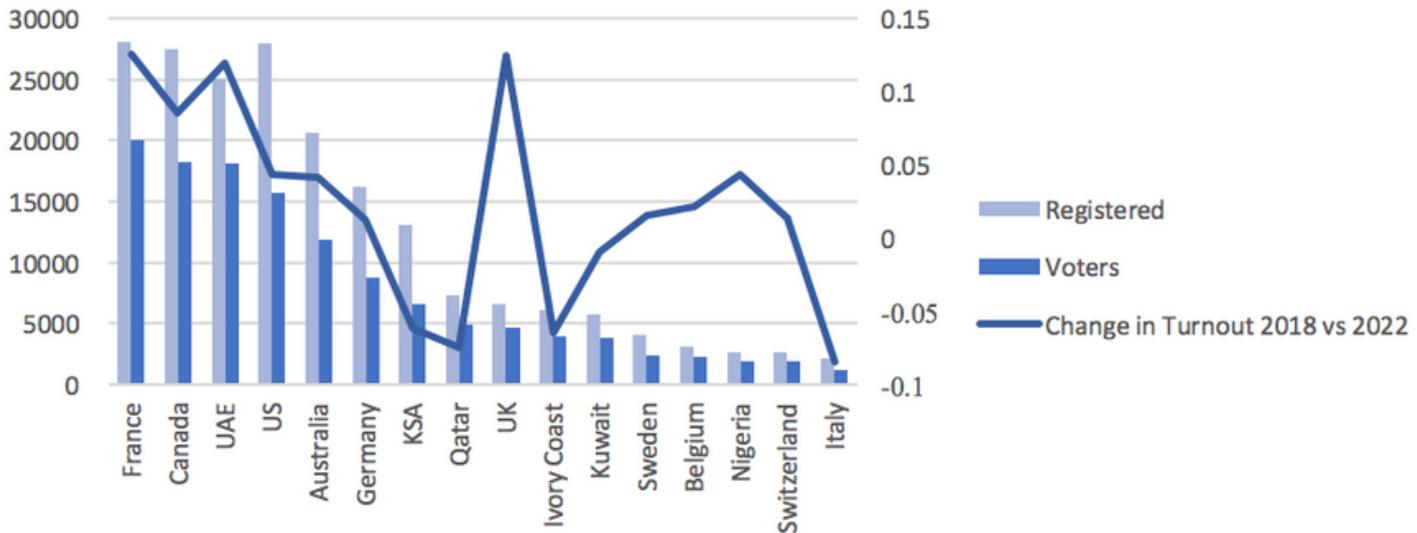
Turnout

An analysis on voter turnout shows that numbers paralleled the registration numbers, and the top five countries in registration numbers (France, USA, Canada, United Arab Emirates and Australia) have witnessed a significant increase in turnout in both absolute numbers and percentages.



Countries	Registered Voters	2018 Turnout	2022 Turnout	Change in Turnout
France	28,136	58.53 %	71.08 %	+12.55
Canada	27,447	57.71 %	66.29 %	+8.57
UAE	25,066	60.30 %	72.30 %	+12.00
US	27,982	51.72 %	56.05 %	+4.34
Australia	20,661	53.34 %	57.48 %	+4.14
Germany	16,171	52.87 %	54.15 %	+1.28
KSA	13,105	56.25 %	50.10 %	-6.15
Qatar	7,344	73.85 %	66.38 %	-7.47
UK	6,535	59.05 %	71.51 %	+12.46
Ivory Coast	6,070	72.32 %	65.86 %	-6.46
Kuwait	5,760	66.56 %	65.61 %	-0.95
Sweden	4,023	59.27 %	60.80 %	+1.53
Belgium	3,092	70.75 %	72.90 %	+2.15
Nigeria	2,580	68.96 %	73.33 %	+4.37
Switzerland	2,601	70.19 %	71.55 %	+1.36
Italy	2,128	63.65 %	55.17 %	-8.48

Expatriates 2018 vs 2022



France's turnout rose from 58.53% in 2018 to 71% in 2022, similarly to the UAE, where turnout increased from 60.30% to 72.30%, and Canada from 57.71% to 66.29%. Australia and the US rose slightly less, by around 4% each.

The only countries that bucked the trend were the Ivory Coast, Italy, KSA and Qatar, where turnout fell by an average of 7%. This is compelling, given that Qatar and KSA registration numbers rose the most in comparison with other countries (more than a 400% increase in registration numbers, following the UAE with a 485% increase). Along these lines, the drop in participation seems intriguing.

There are three possible explanations for the lower participation in these countries. First, that majority of expatriates in these countries are Sunni, and might have heeded the call for boycotting the elections by the Future Movement, Lebanon's main Sunni political party. The boycott may explain this drop, although there are other countries that have similar expatriates that did not have a drop in participation like Kuwait and the UAE that witnessed a strong showing

The second possible explanation is that 'Eid,' the main Muslim holiday, included the Friday of the OCV elections. There is circumstantial evidence suggesting that many expats spent their holidays in Lebanon and were unable to go back to their registered out-of-country polling stations to vote.

The third explanation is based on the different waves of immigration framework and expats' composition. The UAE witnessed a large influx of young and enthusiastic Lebanese expats, forced to leave in 2020 and 2021. It is very possible that they were the reason behind the increase in registration numbers and turnout.[24] Meanwhile, in KSA and other countries, expats from older waves of immigration were still beholden to traditional political parties[25] and simply didn't vote on Election Day.

[23] "Lebanon Is in Terminal Brain Drain."

[24] "Lebanese expats in Dubai brave 1km queues and 40 degrees heat to vote in crunch election," <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/lebanese-expats-dubai-brave-heat-and-1km-queue-vote>

[25] Lebanese Communities Abroad: Feeding and Fuelling Conflicts."

A country like Italy presented a different scenario. Our research indicates that few political parties were actively engaged[26] there, whether in the registration process or for the turnout. Number of registered voters reached 2,128, a very small figure compared to 20,000+ in the top five countries.

The case of the Ivory Coast there was a substantial increase in registration, rising almost threefold. However, when it came to voting, turnout fell significantly to -6.46%, although more Lebanese voted in that country in 2022 with 3,998 compared to just 1,696 in 2018.

In general, turnout in Africa dropped by around 5.36%. Expat communities in these countries are predominantly Shiite and their vote in past elections went overwhelming in favor of traditional parties, mainly Amal and Hezbollah. The drop in turnout might indicate that Amal and Hezbollah expats' support is declining.

It is clear that the primary factor impacting expat turnout and registration in different countries is the composition of the expats' communities and the timing of their immigration. The data shows that countries with the highest registration and turnout numbers were those that welcomed the latest wave of immigration following the outbreak of the crisis in 2019.

II. OCV Turnout by Districts

To analyze the OCV vote from the local district perspective, we must first start with an overview of the general population's turnout per district.

General Turnout per District

The 2022 turnout was very close to what was seen in 2018, in spite of an average drop of 0.49%. This was evident across the board in most districts, while some of the most salient cases include:

Beirut 1 and Mount Lebanon 3 districts showed the most significant increase, with 2.65% and 2.54% respectively. As shown below, South 1, North 2 and Bekaa 3 had the most significant turnout drop, with -5.93%, -3.16% and -3.10% respectively. This may be also explained by the calls for a boycott by the Future Movement.

It is worth bearing in mind that although Beirut 2 is one of the most prominent Sunni areas in Lebanon, the turnout in that district did not dropped significantly. Meanwhile, lower turnout in the South 2 district (which includes Saida and Jezzine) can be directly linked to the boycott and the absence of former MP Bahia Hariri's presence in the race, given her political weight and stature.

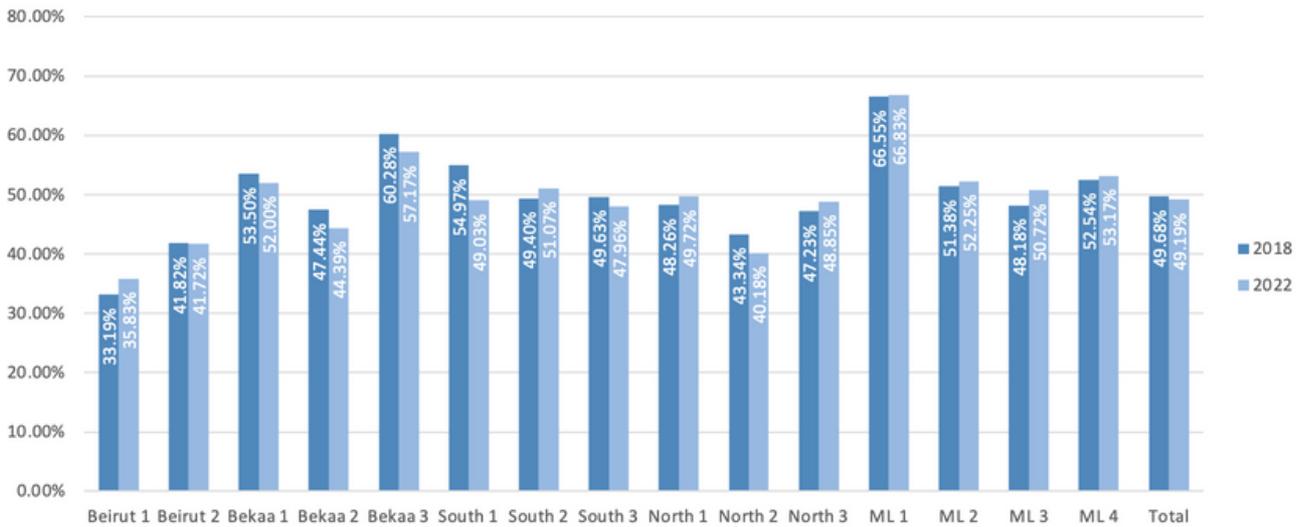
In Tripoli, the low turnout cannot be justified by the boycott. Considered as one of the poorest cities in Lebanon, soaring fuel prices caused by the current economic and financial crisis,[27] it has become harder for citizens in Tripoli's impoverished areas to vote.

Historically, political parties in Lebanon have always worked on ensuring transportation to voters. Yet, in Tripoli, few major political parties were active in this regard, except for the Lebanese Forces and Ashraf Rifi. Other parties were doing the bare minimum to rally people to vote, and spending very little to do so.

[26] There was no mention of any political party (traditional or emergent) sending representatives to Italy before the elections.

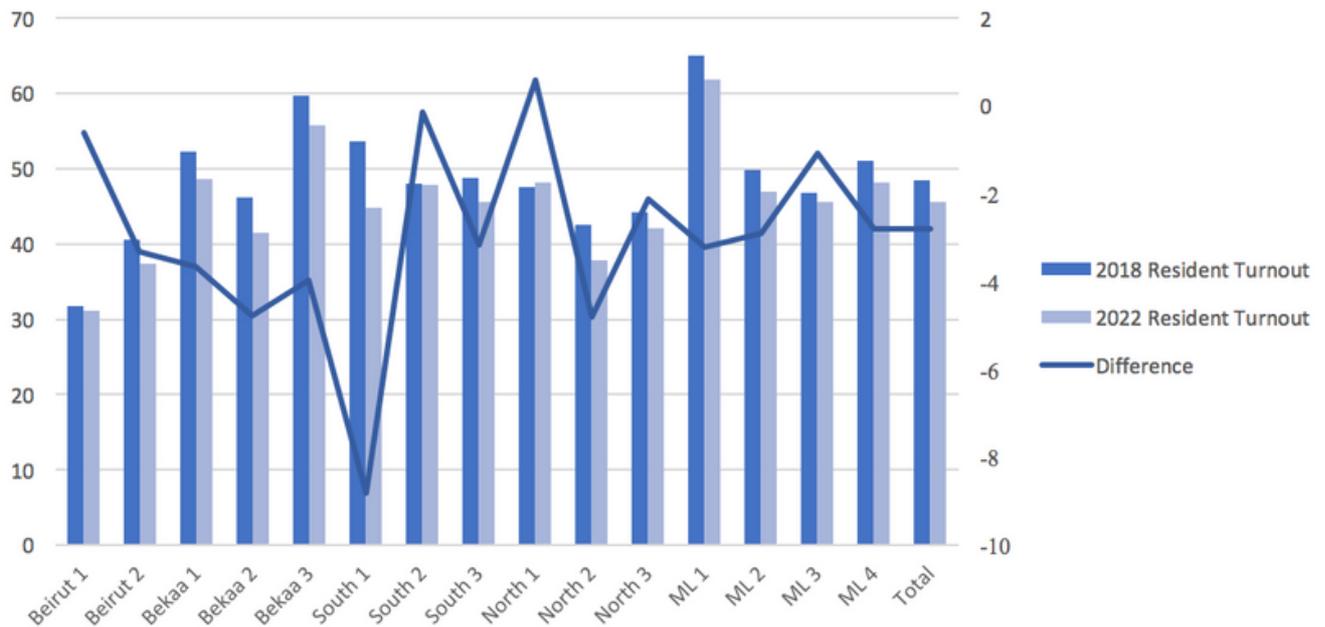
[27] "Soaring Lebanese fuel prices deepen misery," <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/soaring-lebanese-fuel-prices-deepen-misery-2021-10-21/>

Turnout by District



It is also worthwhile to study the resident-only turnout by subtracting the number of expatriates voters from the total voters’ number.

Resident only turnout 2018 vs 2022



When it comes to resident-only turnout, numbers dropped by a significant 2.82 points in 2022 compared to 2018. This held out in most districts, with slight deviations except for a few outliers. On another hand South 2 and Beirut 1 had the lowest drop in resident turnout by only -0.15 and -0.6, while South 1 had the highest drop by -8.61%.

Surprisingly, North 1 was the only district with an increase in resident turnout, up by 0.60%. This positive turnout is viewed as an exception, which doesn’t follow the common trend of a lower resident turnout, and lower Sunni participation rates across the country (-8.61% in Saida, -3.31% in Beirut 2 and -4.80% in North 2).

The reasons are hard to pinpoint, but there was an influx of votes in certain areas in Akkar that bucked the trend. On the other hand, there were rumors and reports from various media outlets of large-scale vote buying and “buses bringing in votes by the hundreds from across the Syrian border.”[28]

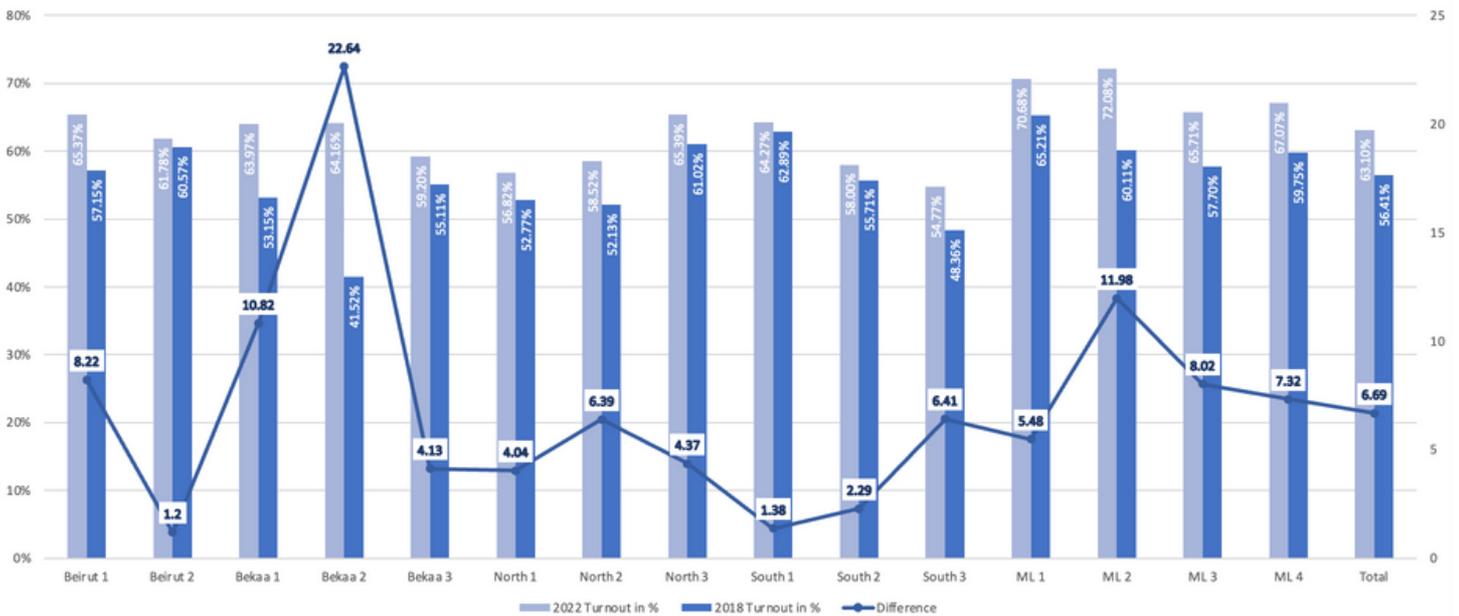
[28] Al Modon, <https://bit.ly/3QTpwoi>

Expatriates' Turnout by Districts

An analysis of OCV per district has uncovered some interesting trends worth highlighting. Despite early reports of a lower turnout of expats voting in districts with Sunni majorities as in Beirut 2, Tripoli and Saida, actual numbers proved otherwise. The turnout in Sunni districts was slightly below the total turnout average of around 62%. This is interesting, as it is close to the 2022 expats average turnout and higher than the 2018 general average turnout. Additionally, it is also above the overall turnout percentage of the Sunni vote across Lebanon in 2018, which stood at 46%.

As previously mentioned, the average expatriate turnout percentage was 63.05%, with the highest turnout in districts with Christian majorities, most notably 72.25% in Metn, followed by 69% in Keserwan, Jbeil and Batroun. This shows that districts with Christian majorities had the highest turnout.

Expats Turnout 2018 vs 2022



Compared to 2018, the expats turnout increased across the board, as opposed to the general turnout, which generally remained the same with slight changes across districts. This is yet another indication that Lebanese expats were much more enthusiastic about exercising their right to vote on Election Day.

WHITE AND NULL BALLOTS ANALYSIS

Another important aspect of the 2022 elections was the increase in white ballots, from 0.81% of total ballots cast in 2018 to 0.99% in 2022. At the same time, the null ballots increased by 0.85% or a total of 18,791 this year.

It is unfortunate that 57,700 votes were cancelled. Although the new electoral law was already implemented in the 2018 elections and its new rules and regulations were known to the public, such a high number of cancelled ballots reflects a lack of voters' education and the need for greater public awareness campaigns for voters. This is also a reminder that voter education should be at the forefront of the priorities of the Supervisory Election Committee (SEC) and the MoIM.

Although protest vote could be a reason for the significant number of invalid ballots, reports from observation missions and other sources limit protest voting to a small percentage of the voided ballots, emphasizing errors and lack of knowledge as the cause for the high percentages instead.[29]

Elections	Number of White ballots	Percentage of total voters	Number of voided ballots	Percentage of total voters
2018	15,029	0.81%	38,909	2.09%
2022	19,308	0.99%	57,700	2.96%

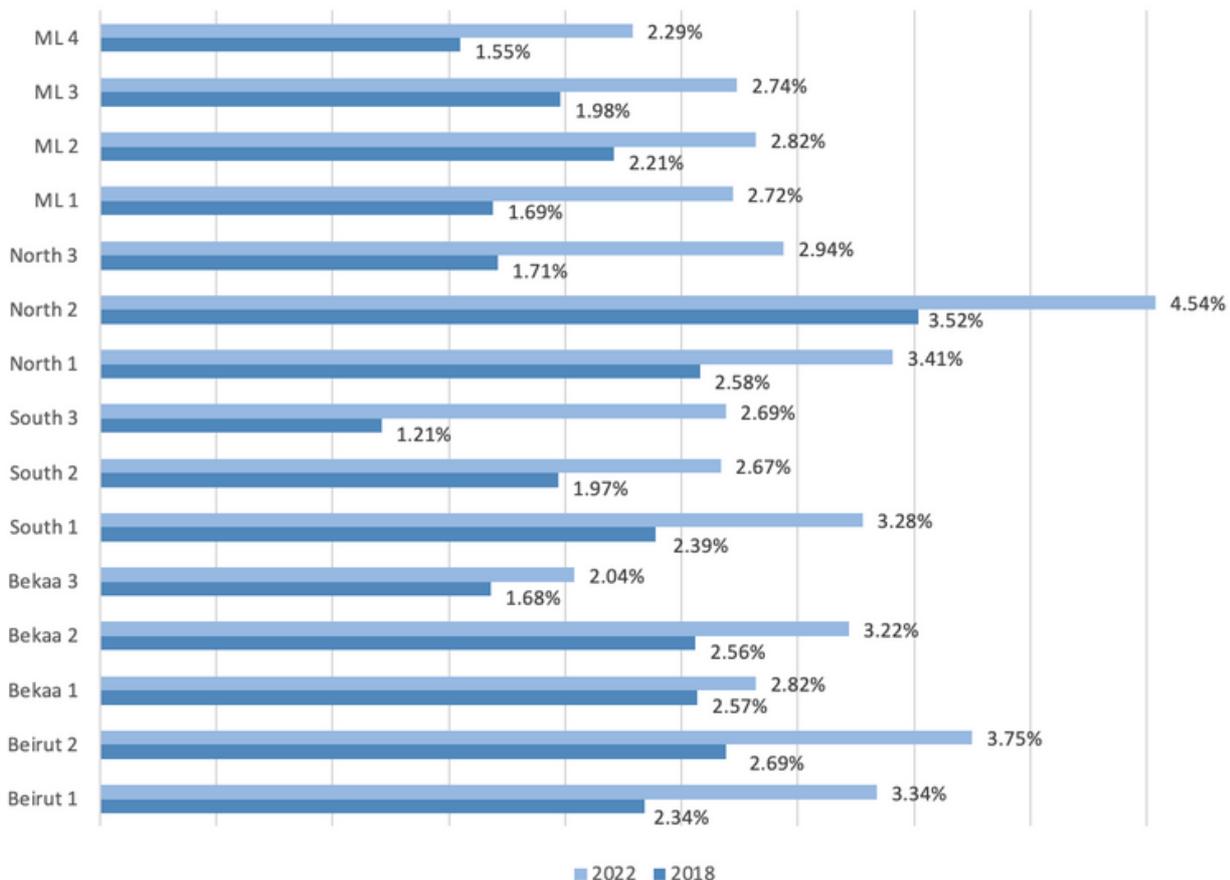
A. GENERAL VOTERS

There was a lot of regional disparities in the distribution of invalid ballots. The North 2 district - Tripoli, Minnieh and Dinnieh - topped the charts with 4.54% of voided ballots, followed by Beirut 2 with 3.75% and North 1 with 3.41%. Whether the result in these Sunni majority districts is related to lack of education or done in protest, it is something that will require further investigation and research.

Finally, there was a significant increase in voided ballots in South 3, more than doubling from 1.21% in 2018 to 2.69% in 2022. The increase cannot be justified by a lack of education alone, but appears to be a significant statistical anomaly.

The analysis conducted for this paper points at clear efforts made by the traditional parties that hold sway over poll officers to push them to void votes in favor of the opposition. The next section will show a similar increase in voided ballots among expatriate votes.

Null Ballot Percentages (%)



B. EXPATRIATES' VOTERS

The percentage of expat void and white ballots were lower than those of the general population. For the expats, the percentage of white ballots fell from 0.99 to 0.55%. This drop is reasonable given that the expat voter generally made a conscious effort to head to the polls, was more enthusiastic about the process and would rather not waste time and energy over a white vote. All this was also evident in the 63.1% turnout rate, compared to 45.61% of the resident turnout.

Although the percentage of invalid ballots among expats was also lower than the general population, down from 2.96% to 2.69%, the drop was not very significant and even considered surprising. The lack of proper training and an inadequate explanation of the process of voting also played a role in losing a considerable number of ballots. Still, one would expect that expatriates would have had a better understanding of the voting process to avoid that their ballot be considered void, due to their socio economic and educational background.

It is important to mention that the overseas voters had to register online unlike the general population, and a large number of them had to travel long distances to accomplish this. This number stands more problematic because it is significantly higher than the null percentage of the total population in 2018, reaching only 2.09%.

The initial analysis of this paper highlighted the substantial lack of training and clear instructions given to the poll officials (the responsibility of the MoIM). In addition, it revealed inadequate knowledge and awareness raising on how to vote among the general population (the responsibility of the SEC). Reports by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) and the EU Observation Mission noted that heads of polling stations and official staff were not always familiar with the electoral process. This is of much concern given that these people have a responsibility to help voters cast their ballots and also play a crucial role in counting votes and reporting the results to the judges[30]

In the district analysis of expats voided ballots, there were three glaring outliers when comparing the expats' voided ballots percentages to the total population: there was a surprising 6.50% of voided ballots in Mount Lebanon (ML) 1, compared to 2.72% in the general population, and 3.64% in South 3 compared to 2.69% Beirut 2 in 2018 and 3.52% in North 2 2018 compared to 2.94% in North 3 2022.

For ML1, the lab delved deeper into the number using access to the detailed and enriched data provided by the Data Liberation Project to find the reasons behind this anomaly.

The second preliminary registration committee in Jbeil[31] had a glaring 24.28% (365 out of 1,503) voided ballots compared to 4.18% (105 out of 2509) for the other three committees in Jbeil. Moreover, the anomaly was limited to the expats' votes, as the local votes had an average of void ballots close to the national average.

Despite having reasonable averages in most other districts, the countries with the most voided ballots were the UAE, France, UK, Canada and the US. Incidentally, they are the countries with the most anti-establishment voting, the biggest increase in registration and highest participation.

It should be noted that these 365 voided ballots would not have changed the seat distribution, while the emerging party lists that received the majority of these votes would not have gained any additional seats. Nevertheless, the issue should be further investigated, as the composition of the preliminary committee is publicly available information.

[30] LADE report on the head of polling stations, <https://bit.ly/3Qogi3z>

[31] One out of four preliminary committees and one higher that are headed by judges and tasked with entering the final tally of locally cast ballots into the system and counting the expatriate votes and entering it into the system.

The North 3 and South 3 districts were also targets of efforts, most probably by pro-establishment parties, to weaken the expats vote by voiding as many ballots as possible. As a matter of fact, South 3 had an additional +1% and North 3 an additional +0.8% invalid ballots above the average, which amounted to 120 and 140 more lost votes. Most of these voided ballots originated from countries that witnessed the most significant anti-establishment expats voting, such as the UAE, Australia, US, France and Kuwait.

Finally, this explains that both districts were the only two with unified (or quasi-unified) emerging party lists. This shows that the establishment parties were threatened by this unity and tried to counter it by nullifying their votes.

As an example, in South 3 the emerging party list received 4,619 expats' votes, out of which around 22% originated from the UAE, 17% from France, 12% from Canada, 10% from Kuwait and 7% from the US. On the other hand, the establishment list received 6,340 votes, and most of these votes originated from Germany with 35% of the votes, West Africa (Ivory Coast, Congo, Senegal, Gabon and Nigeria) with 30%, Canada with 10%, and only 1.3% from the US.[32]

Coincidentally, North 3 and South 3 were the only districts with unified (or quasi-unified) emerging party lists. This shows that establishment parties were threatened by this unity and tried to counter it by nullifying their votes.

EXPATRIATES' VOTING PER POLITICAL PARTIES

One of the most fascinating and rich data sets presented in this paper relates to the expats' vote distributed among political parties, in itself a complicated exercise. To start, official MoIM data is published in PDF format, which cannot be used for the purposes of analysis. Second, the data format is also hard to parse and analyze and needs data manipulation to be ready for analysis. Third, the data is segregated and reorganized to highlight the trend line and the sub-group in focus; in this case, the expats' vote.

It is important to keep in mind that political affiliation is a subjective label and is open to interpretation (how to classify each MP and the party he/she belongs to).

For example, in this paper, we considered the 13 elected MPs under the Change Movement or emerging parties[33] category to belong to one group, separate from other independents. This classification is not set in stone, while some analysts might also categorize parties like the Kataeb and National Block as independents as well.

Moreover, some lists were multi-party, and there were list-only votes for each candidate on top of the preferential votes for each candidate. These votes were tabulated with the head of a list or the party that held the majority of the list's votes.

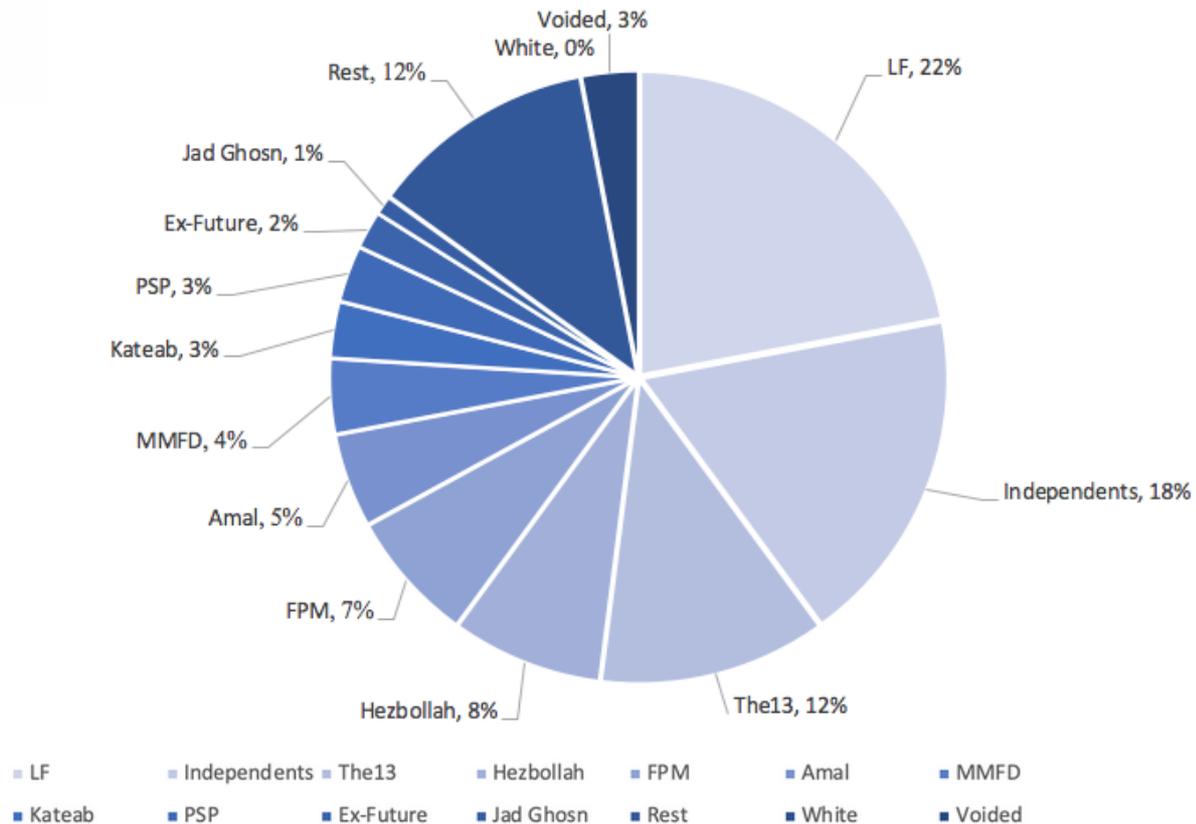
[32] Data extracted via DLP, analyzed by the Electoral Lab.

[33] 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 and Rami Finge.

The number of expats votes by political party, group and/or individual were as follows[34]:

Districts	Total Party Votes
Lebanese Forces (LF)	30,592
Independents	25,710
Emerging Parties[35]	16,632
Hezbollah	11,323
Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)	9,486
Amal Movement	6,881
Citizens in a State (MMFD)	5,327
Kataeb	4,910
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)	4,221
Ex-Future Movement	2,220
Jad Ghosn	2,133
Neemat Frem	1,986
National Bloc	1,715
Fouad Sinioura	1,443
Marada Movement	1,241
Michel Mouawad	1,153
Fouad Makhzoumi	1,051

Expats votes per Political Affiliation



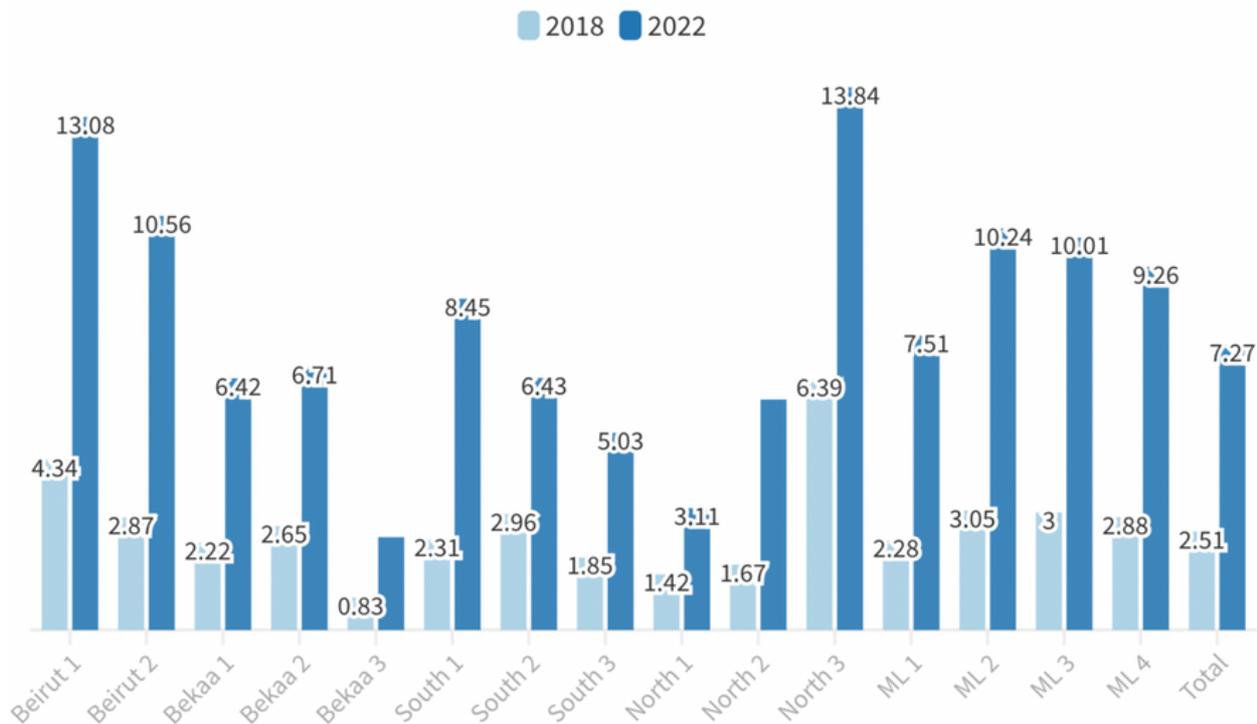
[34] Data extracted via DLP, analyzed by the Electoral Lab.

[35] Represented by the 13 MPs listed above.

The data is unequivocal, with a solid 30% of the expatriate vote opting for change, whether for independents or emerging parties, amounting to more than 40,000 votes. These expatriates' votes were mainly from the UAE, France, UK, Canada and the US.

In several districts, the expat vote was crucial and had a significant impact on the results. For example, in Beirut 1 and 2, the expatriates' vote weighted more than the threshold^[1], reaching 1.08 and 1.21, respectively. This translated into the victory of two emerging parties, MPs in Beirut 1 and 3 in Beirut 2. Similarly, in North 3, the number of expats who voted compared to the threshold reached 1.43, and emerging parties won one seat in a very competitive district. This effect was compounded when emerging parties were united and weakened when they ran on different lists. For example, in South 3 where emerging parties were united and the expats' threshold was only 0.57, emerging parties won two seats in a politically challenging district. In contrast, in Mount Lebanon 2, the weight was 0.84 but the emerging parties did not win any seats, as they were divided.

Share of Expat Voters to Total Voters per District



The LF did a remarkable job in galvanizing and organizing their expatriate voter base, which allowed them to receive 22% of expats' vote. The LF received the most significant part of expats' votes in most Christian districts, especially North 3, Bekaa 1, Beirut 1, Mount Lebanon 1 and North 1. Incidentally, these were the areas where the LF got the largest share of seats.^[37] Meanwhile, the LF also received the second most votes after the Change Movement and independents in Mount Lebanon 2, 3, and 4.

[36] A threshold is the number of voters -excluding null ballots- divided by the number of seats in the districts. Reaching the threshold in votes means the list automatically wins at least one seat. Falling under the threshold disqualify the list from winning any seats no matter the number of votes it won.

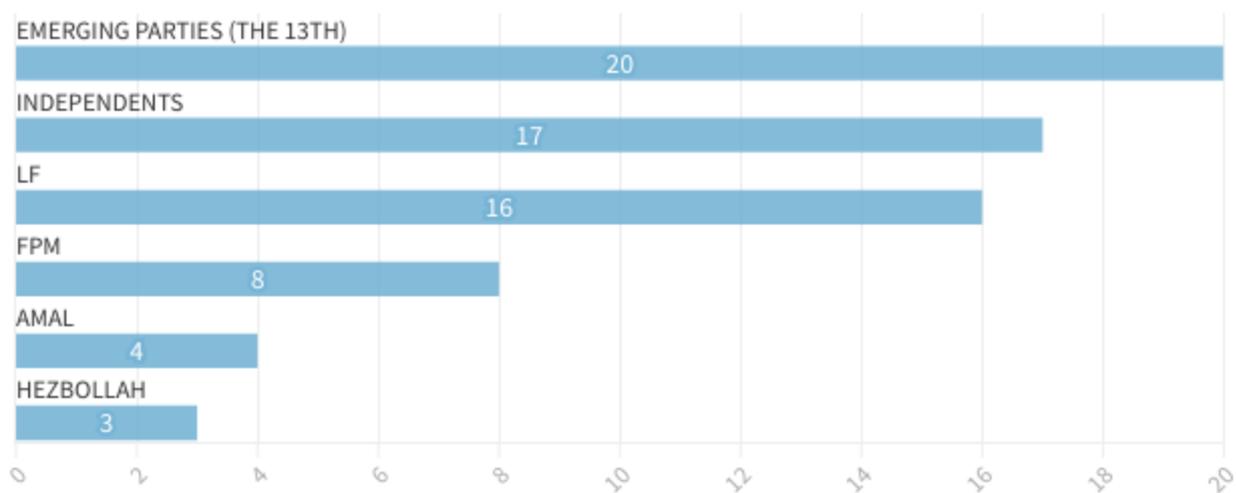
[37] LF got 3 seats in North 3, 2 in Beirut 2, 2 in Mount Lebanon 1 and Mount Lebanon 4.

On the other hand, despite the sanctions and risks involved in voting for Hezbollah in certain countries that label it a terrorist group,[38] the party received the fourth largest number of expat votes (over 8%) securing more votes than the FPM. Most of these votes came from Germany and West Africa (inc. the Ivory Coast and Nigeria) and Canada. It is to be noted that in Beirut 2, more than 50% of Hezbollah votes came from Germany, 20% from African countries and another 10% from Canada. Similarly, in South 3, 35% of the votes came from Germany, 30% from African countries (mainly the Ivory Coast, Gabon and Nigeria) and around 10% from Canada.

This fits well in the broader analysis of Lebanese expats and their political affiliation. Indeed, there has been a historical trend of Lebanese from the Shia community immigrating to Africa[38] and Germany.[39] Even though many Lebanese Shias immigrated to the US[40], few voted for Hezbollah, presumably out of fear of being associated to a US-designated terrorist organization.

Moreover, a cross-analysis of the expats' votes received by each party compared to their total votes shows how critical these votes were. As a matter of fact, for the 13 emerging party MPs, the expats' votes represented a significant 20%. Similarly, the expats' votes to other independent candidates stood at 17%, and 16% to the LF.[41] The FPM only received 8% of their votes from the expats, and one reason behind their smaller parliamentary bloc. Meanwhile, Amal and Hezbollah received a significant part of their total votes from their local constituency, and the expats' votes paled in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of residents' votes.

% of Expatriates Vote to Total Votes per Party



[38] The US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand among others consider Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/more-countries-have-recently-declared-all-of-hezbollah-a-terrorist-organization-but-some-eu-countries-still-refrain-from-doing-so/>

[39] "Lebanese Communities Abroad: Feeding and Fuelling Conflicts."

[40] "Shiite "Communities of Practice" in Germany," https://brill.com/view/journals/jome/6/2/article-p216_216.xml?language=en

[41] "Metro Detroiters helping Lebanon with millions of dollars in equipment, supplies," <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/08/14/michigan-residents-helping-lebanon-aid-after-explosion/3349716001/>

VOTING FOR SIX EXPATRIATES' SEATS OR FOR ALL 128

Finally, a question has often been asked on how the results would have changed if the electoral law had limited the expats to vote for six additional MPs, as opposed to giving them the opportunity to vote for all their eligible candidates as in-country voters. The technicalities of how expats would vote for only six MPs were not explicitly stated in the law. However, some officials noted that they would have been considered as part of an additional district. This section will answer the question based on this assumption.

If we assume the existence of a new 16th district with six seats for which only expats vote for, its threshold would be the number of expats voters (142,041) divided by the seats (6) or a total of around 23,673 votes.[43] In terms of lists, we will suppose that three main lists would be competing against each other: the Change Movement, emerging parties and independents; LF, PSP and Kataeb; as well as FPM Hezbollah, Amal and other allies. Based on our assumptions and calculations, each list would have ended up with 2 seats. In this case, we would apply the largest remainder formula and end up with 2 seats for each list.

List	Votes	Seats	Final seats
Independent + emerging	44,057	1.86	2
LF, PSP, Kataeb, Ex-Future	41,943	1.77	2
FPM, Hezbollah, Amal	28,931	1.22	2

Meanwhile, the implementation of the current law allowed the emerging parties and independents to win at least 2 extra seats. A case in point is South 3, where independents would have lost a seat had it not been for the expatriate vote. Similarly in Beirut 2, the emerging parties would have lost at least one seat. In Beirut 1, the emerging parties would have also lost a seat without the expats' votes, gone to the LF instead. In Bekaa 2, the Emerging Party list "Sahlouna wa el Jabal " would have fallen under the threshold and eliminated without the influx of the expats' votes.

Therefore, it seems clear that had the expat vote been limited to voting for six MPs only, emerging and independent parties would have lost at least four seats nationally, while winning only two seats from the additional expat-only seats.

Finally, this paper can confidently say that if the law was applied[44] and the expatriates votes were limited to six new seats reserved for them, the emerging parties would have lost at least two seats, with a high probability of losing another two.

[42] Percentages are approximate as calculating the number of local votes per political party is complex and open to interpretation. The Electoral Lab will revisit this analysis using the full DLP numbers.

[43] Data extracted via the DLP, analyzed by the Electoral Lab.

[44] Data extracted via the DLP, analyzed by the Electoral Lab.

CONCLUSION

The expatriate vote played a crucial role in ensuring that 13 MPs from emerging parties and the Change Movement, as well as 15 other independent MPs won seats in parliament. This impact was not only limited to the voting and the number of ballots and seats won, but also extended to the general registration numbers and turnout.

The traditional parties were fully aware of this fact. It is not a coincidence that the highest percentage of voided OCV ballots happened to be in the districts where emerging parties had the strongest and most unified showing, specifically North 3 and South 3.

Yet this 'wave' of strong expats' turnout was limited to a few countries where young voter enthusiasm and thirst for change was the most prevalent, mainly in the UAE, France and Canada. However, had the registration drive and get-out-the-vote efforts extended to the US, Australia, and more European countries, we would have certainly seen higher registration and turnout, and new MPs with more progressive agendas being elected.

In a few countries such as KSA, Qatar, the US and to a lesser degree Australia, the increase in registration did not translate into an increase in turnout. Thus, the question to be asked is, "what happened between the deadline for OCV registration and E-day that depressed the turnout in several countries?"

This paper shows that the promise of unifying the various Change Movement groups didn't take place. The plan was to have a few large groupings, unifying lists from all districts with solid name recognition and strong candidates representing the Lebanese people's will for change. Lists were expected to include young, enthusiastic and brilliant figures who emerged following the 2019 uprising and for which many young newly-immigrated Lebanese registered and campaigned for in November 2021 (When the window of OCV registration closed).

The dream of having one or at most two national lists or parties in all districts did not materialize. The change side of the political spectrum was disjointed, fragmented and competed against each another. The Lebanese people, residents and expats, noticed this early on and were let down and outraged by their 'dirty politics.' This discouraged many from voting, thus lowering the turnout numbers. Still, in every district with a unified change list and well-run, professional, and genuine campaign focusing on real issues affecting people's lives, the expats and local turnout was much higher.

However, it is not enough to drive the voters to register and vote, in a playing field that is heavily slanted towards old established political parties with years of election experience and abundant resources. Emerging parties should focus their few resources on the expats' groups and the countries that are the most receptive. In the current political landscape, this study has shown that emerging parties and change actors should focus on Europe, the US, the UK, Canada, and the GCC for the highest return on their investment.

Finally, Lebanese expats will play a crucial role in the revival and reconstruction of Lebanon and helping the country get out of its economic, social and political crisis. However, this study has shown that Lebanese expats do not provide a "spontaneous vote." Despite leaning towards independents and emerging parties, they still need to be contacted, organized, convinced and shown that the candidates and lists they are voting for are united, organized, professional and hard-working. Similar to the general voting population, the expats cannot be duped by empty slogans, rehashed programs, or any kind of assistance. Expats must be convinced that candidates will work on fulfilling their needs and aspirations.

In less than a year, the municipal elections are scheduled to be held. This will provide an excellent test for emerging actors and the Change Movement to draw from the lessons of the 2022 parliamentary elections. Until then, the Electoral Lab will continue analyzing the 2022 elections from different angles, as well as work on studies in preparation for the upcoming municipal elections.

ABOUT THE REPORT

The Electoral Lab is a new research initiative launched by the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) Lebanon. The lab aims to raise awareness about political discourse around elections both in content and form in Lebanon and the region. It seeks to highlight important thematic subjects that are rarely discussed during the electoral cycle and increasing public awareness of the importance of public data, especially electoral results. This initiative focuses on three main themes: conversation and dialogue with different political stakeholders, deep thematic analysis, and spreading awareness and availability of open electoral data.

ABOUT FNF

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) is the German Foundation for Liberal Politics. Established in 1958 by Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany, FNF promotes liberal values; above all the freedom of the individual in their pursuit of happiness. FNF promotes liberal thinking and policies in cooperation with its local partners through civic education, international political dialogue, and political counselling. In Lebanon, our main objective is to support Lebanese start-ups, civil society organizations and liberal political parties while raising awareness about political education, female empowerment and durable development.

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The Institute aims at bridging the gap between academia and policymaking by conducting high quality research on the complex issues and challenges faced by Lebanese and Arab societies within shifting international and global contexts, by generating evidence-based policy recommendations and solutions for Lebanon and the Arab world, and by creating an intellectual space for an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, scholars, civil society actors, media, and policymakers.

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