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Lebanon's Parliamentary Election of 2018: Seats, Coalitions, and Candidate Profiles

Sami Atallah and Sami Zoughaib

Policy Paper

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Sami Atallah and Sami Zoughaib¹

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The authors would like to thank Mohammed Diab, John McCabe, Ned Whalley, Josee Bilezikjian, and Ayman Tibi for their contribution to this paper.

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List of voting districts and corresponding qadas

Beirut 1	Ashrafieh - Rmeil - Mdawwar - Saifi
Beirut 2	Ras Beirut - Dar al-Mreiseh - Mina Al-Hosn - Zoukak Al-Balat - Mazraa - Moseitbeh - Marfa - Bashura
Bekaa 1	Zahle
Bekaa 2	West Bekaa - Rachaya
Bekaa 3	Baalbek - Hermel
Mount Lebanon 1	Jbeil - Keserwan
Mount Lebanon 2	Metn
Mount Lebanon 3	Baabda
Mount Lebanon 4	Aley - Chouf
North 1	Akkar
North 2	Tripoli - Minnieh-Dannieh
North 3	Bcharre - Zgharta - Batroun - Koura
South 1	Saida - Jezzine
South 2	Zahrani - Sour
South 3	Marjaayoun - Nabatieh - Hasbaya - Bint Jbeil

Introduction

On 6 May 2018, Lebanese voters cast ballots for the first time in nine years to elect 128 members of parliament (MPs). Though its mandate ended in 2013, the parliament extended its term three times in contravention of the constitution—in 2013, 2014, and 2017—under the pretext of avoiding a political vacuum or deadlock and due to so-called 'security concerns'.

The election was governed by a new proportional representation law adopted in June 2017. The law divided Lebanon's 26 qadas into 15 electoral districts and gave Lebanese expatriates the right to cast their ballots in their respective countries of residence. A key feature of the new law is that voters are required to vote for a list of candidates and cast a 'preferential vote' for one candidate from that list.

This report aims to empirically assess the election's fairness and competitiveness, as well as identify the characteristics of its coalitions. It also explores the participation of women candidates, whose overall numbers were higher than in past elections. We argue that the new electoral system does not offer an equitable distribution of seats on a geographical and confessional level, and that most political coalitions formed during the election were hybrid in nature, meaning parties which allied with one another in one district may have faced off with one another in another district. Additionally, we demonstrate that women candidates were younger and more educated than their male counterparts.

The report is divided into four primary sections. In the first, an overview of the electoral system under the new law is presented. The distribution of candidates over districts, confessions, and parties is reviewed in section two. Section three maps out coalitions and focuses on seven major political parties, in addition to describing how they fielded their candidates. The final section focuses on women's participation; their representation at the confessional, partisan, and geographical level; and how women candidates compared in age and education to their male peers.

I Electoral System: Unequitable Distribution

The 2018 election was the first in Lebanon's history to be held under a proportional representation system.² As was the case under the previous system, all 128 seats were distributed on a geo-confessional basis detailed in tables 1 and 2. Mount Lebanon 4, which represents Aley and Chouf, has the highest number of seats with thirteen, whereas Saida-Jezzine has the lowest with five.

The size of the Lebanese electorate increased by 13.34% from 2009 to 2018 and now totals 3,746,327 according to the voter rolls. South 3—comprising Marjayoun, Nabatiyeh, Hasbaya, and Bint Jbeil— has the largest voting population among the fifteen districts with 451,831 voters, while Beirut 1—encompassing the Beirut districts of Medawar, Rmeil, Ashrafieh, and Saifi— has the smallest, with 131,344.

A key feature of any electoral law is equitable representation—meaning votes have an equal value. In Lebanon, there is a significant discrepancy in the distribution of seats among districts. While one seat in Beirut 1 is representative of 16,418 voters, one seat in South 2—comprising Zahrani and Sour—is representative of more than double this number, with one MP for each 42,316 voters.

Table 1 Number of seats, voters, and voters by seat per district

Electoral District	Qada(s)	Number of Seats	Registered Voters	Voters/ Seats
Mount Lebanon 4	Aley and Chouf	13	321,525	24,733
South 3	Marjayoun, Nabatiyeh, Hasbaya, Bint Jbeil	11	451,831	41,076
Beirut 2	Beirut 2 (Ras Beirut, Dar al-Mreiseh, Mina Al-Hosn, Zoukak Al-Balat, Mazraa, Moseitbeh, Marfa, and Bashura)	11	346,407	31,492
North 2	Tripoli and Minnieh - Dannieh	11	345,277	31,389
Bekaa 3	Baalbek and Hermel	10	312,770	31,277
North 3	Bcharre, Zgharta, Batroun, and Koura	10	237,083	23,708
Mount Lebanon 2	Metn	8	175,225	21,903
Mount Lebanon 1	Jbeil and Keserwan	8	172,596	21,575
Beirut 1	Beirut 1 (Ashrafieh, Rmeil, Mdawwar, and Saifi)	8	131,344	16,418
South 2	Zahrani and Sour	7	296,211	42,316
North 1	Akkar	7	280,096	40,014
Bekaa 1	Zahle	7	171,689	24,527

2

Despite the proportional nature of the law, Atallah and Helou argue that it retained majoritarian elements. See Atallah, S., and Helou 2017. "Our' New Electoral Law: Proportional in Form, Majoritarian at Heart.' Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Available at: <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=117>

Electoral District	Qada(s)	Number of Seats	Registered Voters	Voters/Seats
Mount Lebanon 3	Baabda	6	161,790	26,965
Bekaa 2	West Bekaa and Rachaya	6	139,465	23,244
South 1	Saida and Jezzine	5	120,052	24,010
Expats	From all 15 districts		82,966	
		128	3,746,327	29,268

According to the 1989 Taef Agreement, the parliament is divided evenly between Muslim and Christian MPs, and subdivided further based on confession. One Muslim seat currently represents almost twice the number of votes as a Christian seat. While seats representing the two major Muslim confessions (Sunni and Shia) are representative of about 40,000 voters each on average; Maronite and Orthodox seats are representative of half that number.

Table 2 Number of voters per seats by confession

Confession	Seats	Registered Voters	Voters/Seat
Sunni	27	1,081,411	40,052
Shia	27	1,073,504	39,759
Druze	8	210,607	26,326
Alawite	2	35,696	17,848
Muslim	64	2,401,218	37,519
Maronite	34	746,525	21,957
Greek Orthodox	14	257,788	18,413
Catholic	8	167,226	20,903
Armenian Orthodox	5	86,138	17,228
Armenian Catholic	1	20,313	20,313
Minorities	1	49,428	49,428
Evangelical	1	17,691	17,691
Christian	64	1,345,109	21,017
	128	3,746,327	29,268

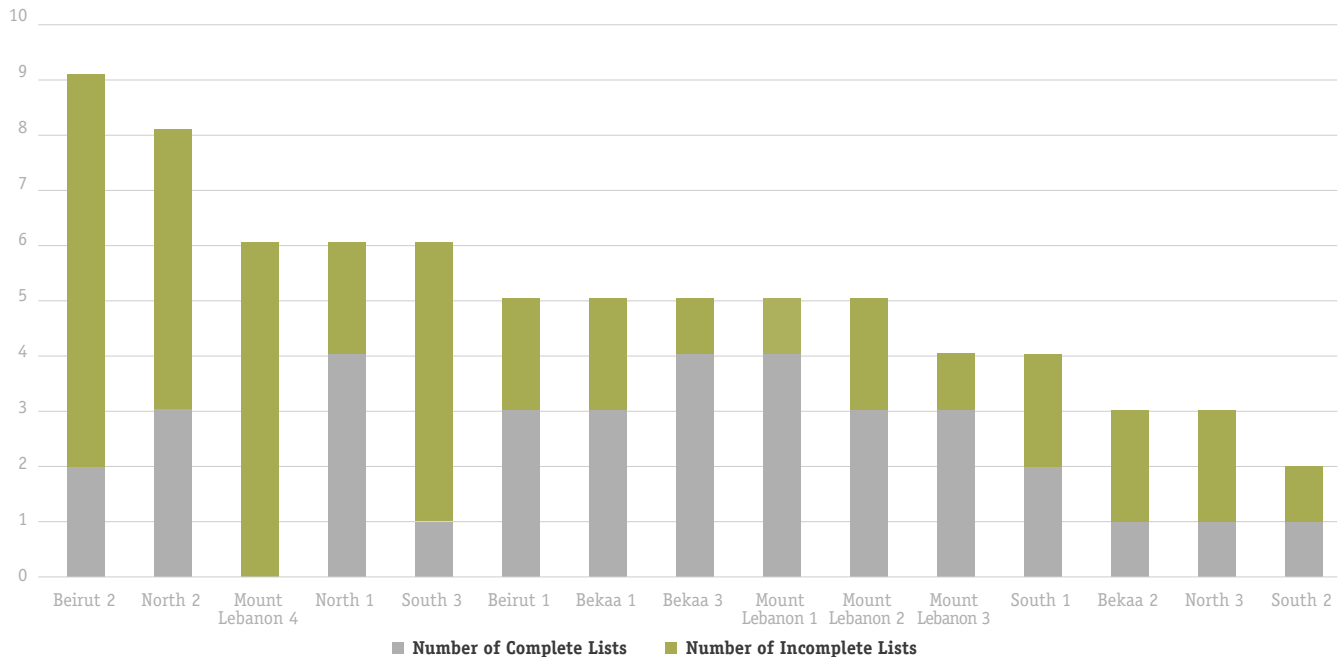
II Distribution of candidates

a Seemingly Competitive Lists

Although 976 candidates initially registered to run for parliament, only 597 candidates managed to form or join lists, as required by law. The 597 candidates were grouped into 77 lists in 15 electoral districts. Beirut 2—comprising Dar al-Mreiseh, Mina Al-Hosn, Zoukak Al-Balat, Mazraa, Moseitbeh, Marfa, and Bashura—had nine lists, making it the most competitive district in the country, while South 2, with only two lists competing, was the least competitive

(figure 1). On average, each district had five lists—comprising 40 candidates—competing for nine seats.

Figure 1 Number of complete and incomplete lists by districts



In none of the districts were all lists complete—meaning that not all lists put forward a candidate for each of the district’s seats. None of the six competing lists in Mount Lebanon 4—encompassing Aley and Chouf—were complete, and Beirut 2, North 2 (Tripoli and Minnieh-Dannieh), South 3, Bekaa 2 (West Bekaa and Rachaya), and North 3 (Bcharre, Zgharta, Batoun, and Koura) had more incomplete lists than complete ones (figure 1).

b Most Parties Ran Candidates in Districts Across Lebanon

Of the seven largest political parties, the Free Patriotic Movement, leading the Strong Lebanon Bloc, fielded the highest number of candidates (63), followed by the Future Movement with 35, and Lebanese Forces with 25. However, it should be taken into account that many political parties formed lists with non-party candidates.

Most parties attempted to compete nationally by fielding candidates in multiple districts, with each party running an average of nine candidates across nine districts. The Strong Lebanon bloc fielded candidates in all 15 districts, while the Progressive Socialist Party only chose to run in four. For their part, the civil society coalition, Koullouna Watani, managed to field 66 candidates on nine different lists.

Table 3 Number of candidates and lists by bloc

Party	Number of Candidates	Number of Lists
Strong Lebanon Bloc	63	15
Future Movement	35	9
Lebanese Forces	26	11
Amal Movement	18	7
Kataeb	15	9
Hezbollah	14	7
Progressive Socialist Party	7	4
Other Parties	72	29
Nonpartisan	281	
Koullouna Watani	66	9

An examination of the confessional distribution of candidates shows that 160 were Sunni, 152 Maronite, and 103 Shia. Of the four confessions with 10 or more seats, Shia seats are the least competitive with 103 candidates competing for 27 seats, while Sunni seats are the most competitive with 160 candidates competing for the same number of seats. Maronite and Greek Orthodox seats fall in between (table 4).

Table 4 Number of candidates and seats by confession and competitiveness ratio

Confession	Number of Candidates	Number of Lists	Ratio
Sunni	160	27	0.17
Maronite	152	34	0.22
Shia	103	27	0.26
Greek Orthodox	67	14	0.21
Druze	36	8	0.22
Catholic	33	8	0.24
Armenian Orthodox	22	5	0.23
Alawite	12	2	0.17
Evangelical	7	1	0.14
Minorities	5	1	0.20
Armenian Catholic	5	1	0.20

A closer examination of the competitiveness of individual seats shows that the Greek Orthodox and Sunni seats in Beirut 2 and the Greek Orthodox and Alawite seats in North 2, are the most competitive (table 5). In fact, the eight most competitive seats are either in Beirut 2 or North 2. Five out of ten of the least competitive seats are in Bekaa 2, two in South 2, and three each in South 1 (Saida-Jezzine), Beirut 1, and Mount Lebanon 2 (Metn). Annex 1 provides a detailed list of the competitiveness of the seats.

Table 5 Least and most competitive seats by confession and district

Confession	District	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats	Ratio
Greek Orthodox	Beirut 2	8	1	0.13
Alawite	North 2	8	1	0.13
Greek Orthodox	North 2	8	1	0.13
Sunni	Beirut 2	47	6	0.13
Druze	Beirut 2	7	1	0.14
Evangelical	Beirut 2	7	1	0.14
Shia	Beirut 2	14	2	0.14
Sunni	North 2	53	8	0.15
Armenian Orthodox	Beirut 1	10	3	0.30
Catholic	Beirut 1	3	1	0.33
Maronite	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Greek Orthodox	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Shia	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Armenian Orthodox	Mount Lebanon 2	3	1	0.33
Maronite	South 1	6	2	0.33
Sunni	Bekaa 2	5	2	0.40
Druze	Bekaa 2	2	1	0.50
Catholic	South 2	2	1	0.50
Shia	South 2	11	6	0.55

II March 8 vs March 14 vs CSO Coalitions

Plotting political party coalitions graphically reveals their hybrid nature. Most political parties that ran with another particular party in one district also ran against that same party in another district.

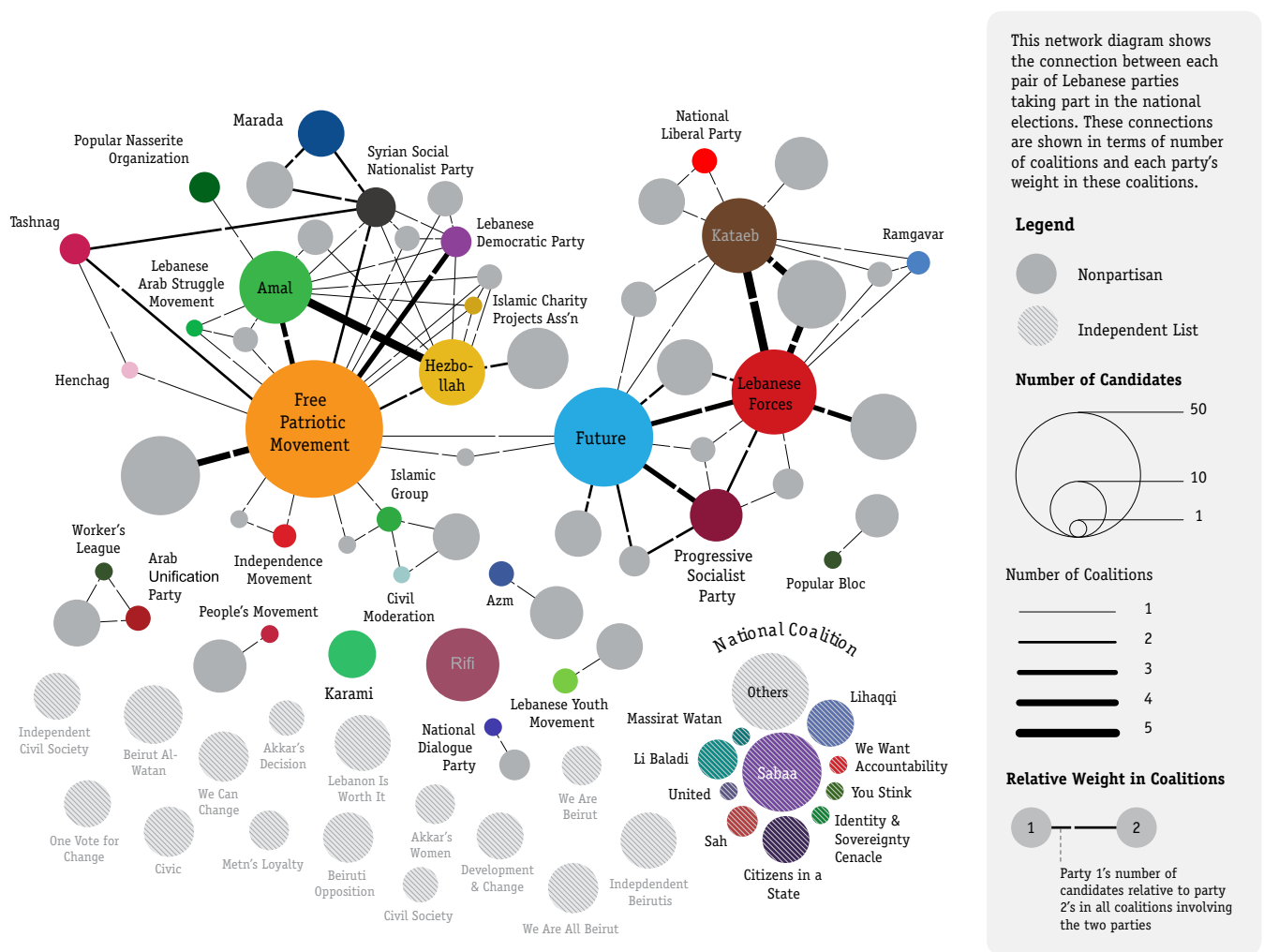
An examination of the affiliations of the 77 running lists reveals there are five main list-types:

- 1 One-party lists: Only one party is represented
- 2 Multi-party lists: An alliance between two or more parties
- 3 Party and non-party member lists: Includes both party and non-party member candidates
- 4 Independent lists: Only includes candidates with no partisan affiliation
- 5 National Coalition lists: Representatives of civil society groups

Figure 2 displays the connection between each Lebanese party and its partisan and nonpartisan partners, and identifies independent lists and civil society groups.

At first glance, four clusters can be identified: Two represent pro-March 8 and pro-March 14 groups, with only a single strand of connection between the Free Patriotic Movement and Future Movement. Additionally, there is a cluster for independent lists and one for the national coalition of civil society groups. The large number of nonpartisan candidates and their distribution among parties are also emphasized in the diagram, suggesting that parties heavily relied on these actors in their campaigns.

Figure 2 Electoral Coalitions



By examining which coalitions were formed by major parties, it is determined that the Free Patriotic Movement ran with 12 different groups across 15 districts, while the Progressive Socialist Party ran with just three (table 6). Examining the affiliation of lists in each district reveals that the Future Movement ran against 24 different groups while Hezbollah and the Amal Movement ran against 11. All parties ran with and against at least one party or group, indicating a high number of hybrid alliances—the FPM is notable in that it ran candidates against five groups that it had struck alliances with in other districts.

Table 6 Number of candidates and seats by confession and competitiveness ratio

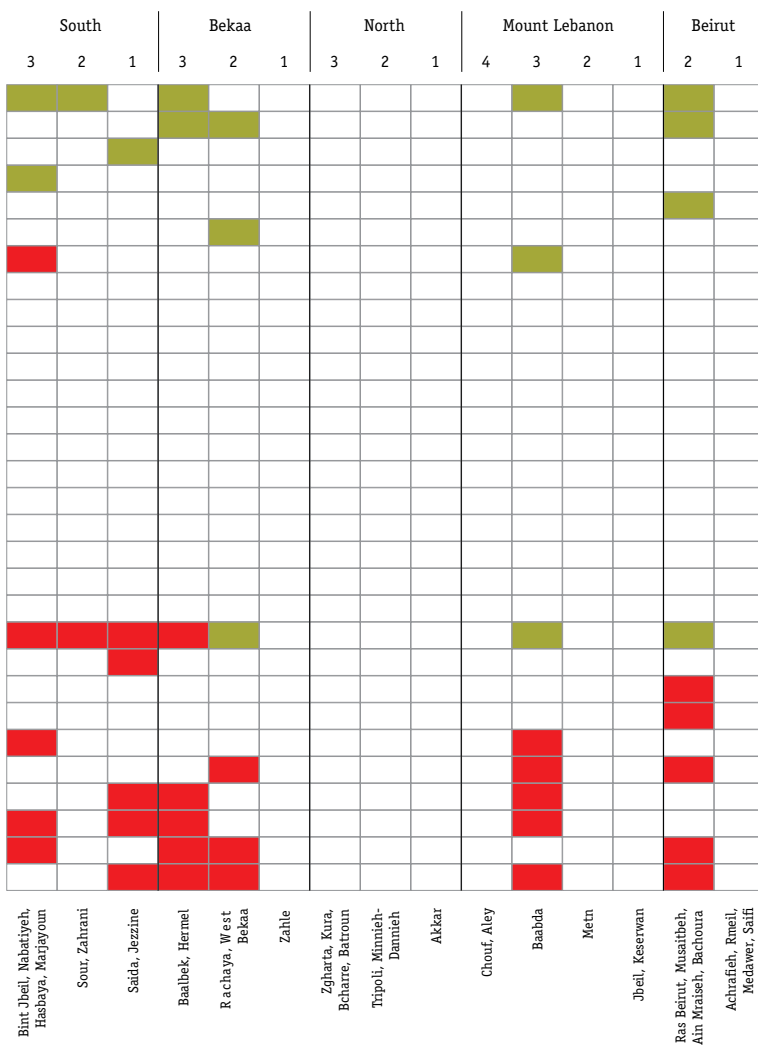
Party	Ran With	Ran Against	Ran With/Against
Amal Movement	8	11	2
Free Patriotic Movement	12	23	5
Future Movement	5	24	4
Hezbollah	6	11	2
Kataeb	5	20	2
Lebanese Forces	5	21	2
Progressive Socialist Party	3	16	1

The next section provides a detailed analysis of the activities of the seven major parties during the elections.

a Amal Movement

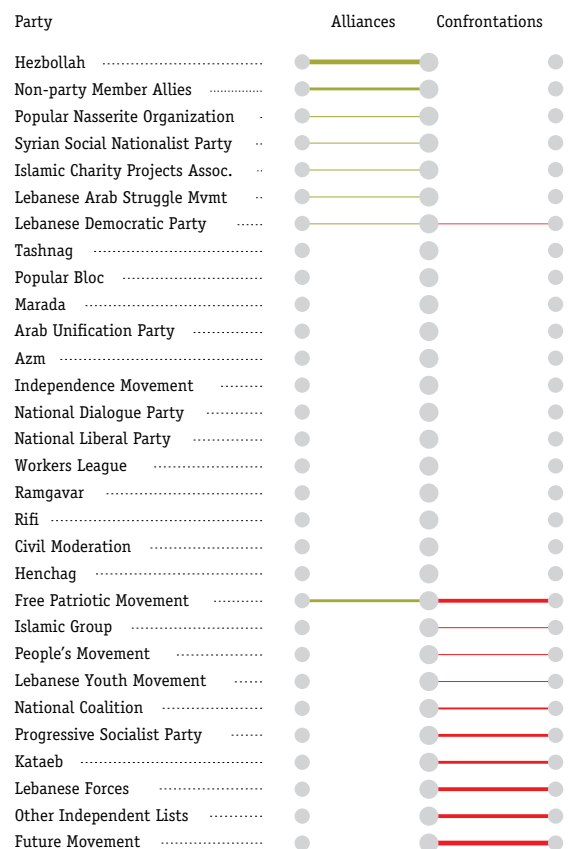
- The Amal Movement fielded 18 candidates across Beirut 2, Baabda, West Bekaa-Rachaya, Baalbek-Hermel, and all three districts in the South
- The Amal Movement struck alliances with the following six parties and groups: Hezbollah (five), non-party members (three), Popular Nasserist Organization (one), Syrian Social Nationalist Party (one), Al Mashari' (one), and the Arab Lebanese Struggle Movement (one)
- The movement ran against nine groups across seven districts, most often against the Future movement (five districts)
- The Amal Movement ran with and against two groups: The Lebanese Democratic Party (one with; one against) and Free Patriotic Movement (three with; four against)

Alliances and confrontations of Amal Movement in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



Amal Movement

Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:

- Green square: Party Alliance
- Red square: Party Confrontation

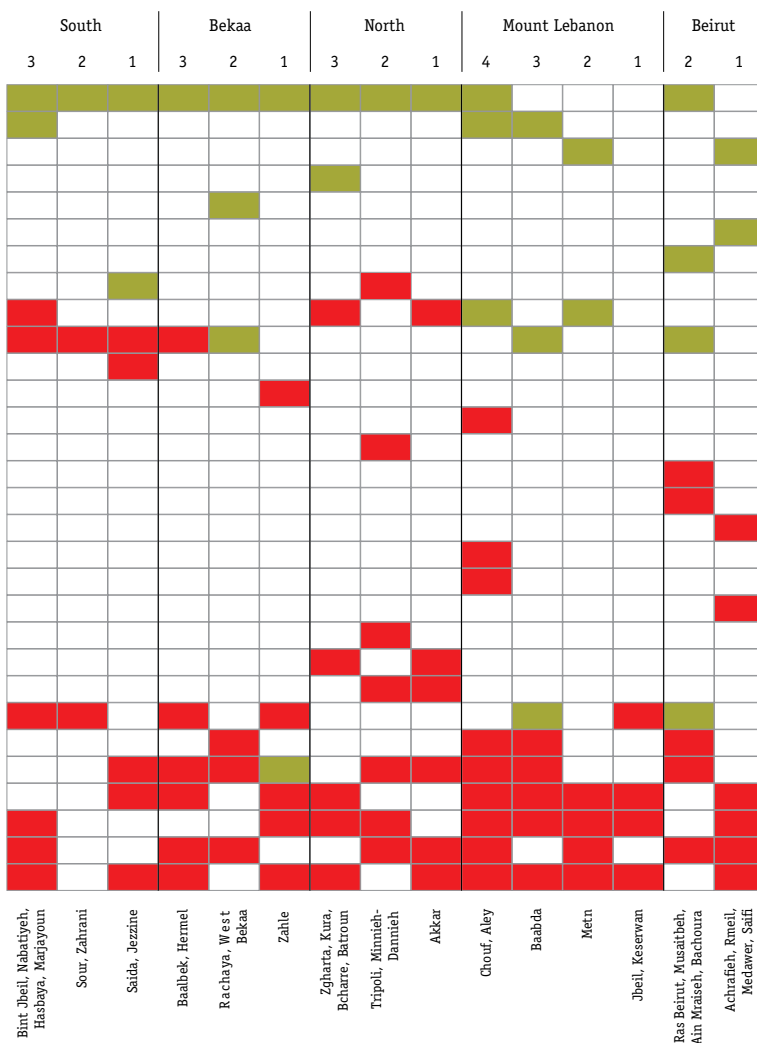
Number of districts:

- Thin line: 1
- Medium line: 4
- Thick line: 8

b Free Patriotic Movement

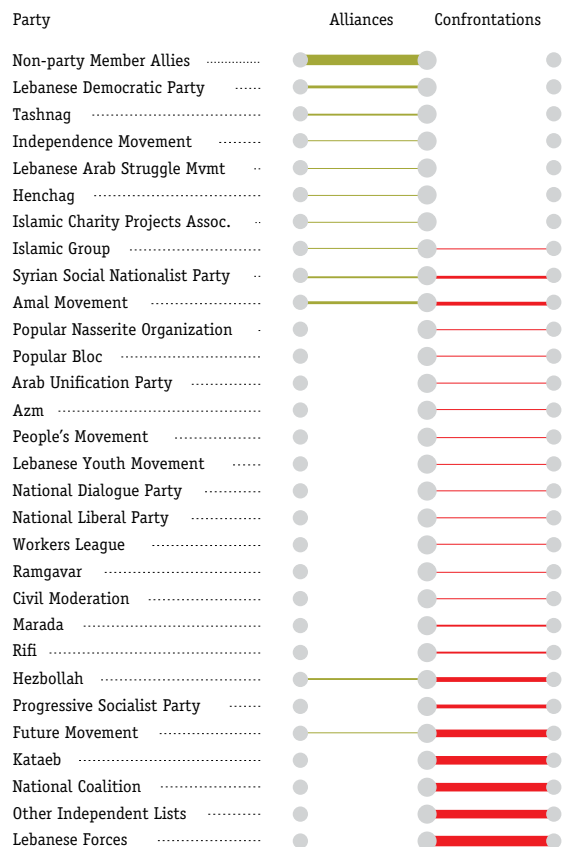
- The Free Patriotic Movement fielded 63 candidates across all 15 districts
- The Free Patriotic Movement struck alliances with the following seven parties: Non-party members (11), the Lebanese Democratic Party (three), Tashnag (two), the Independence Movement (one), the Arab Lebanese Struggle Movement (one), Hinshak (one), and Al Mashari' (one)
- The party ran against 21 groups across 15 districts, most often against the Lebanese Forces (11 districts)
- The Free Patriotic Movement ran with and against five groups: Jama'a Islamiya (one with; one against), Amal (three with; four against), Hezbollah (two with; five against), Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (two with; two against), and Future Movement (one with; eight against)

Alliances and confrontations of the Free Patriotic Movement in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



FPM

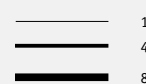
Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:



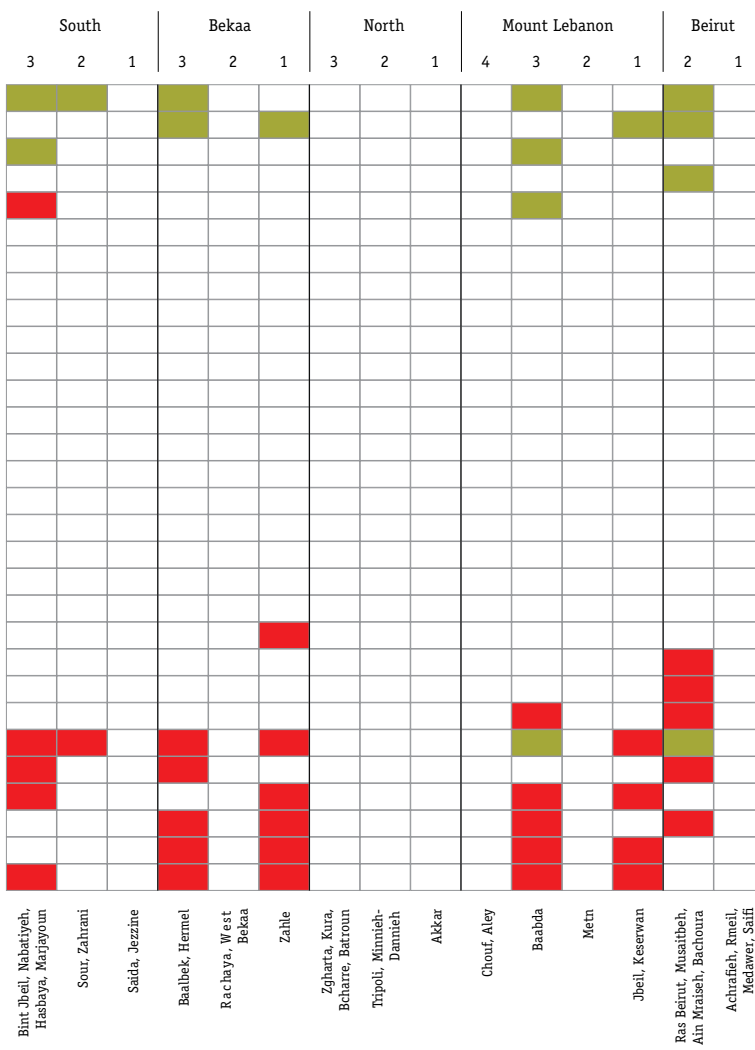
Number of districts:



c Hezbollah

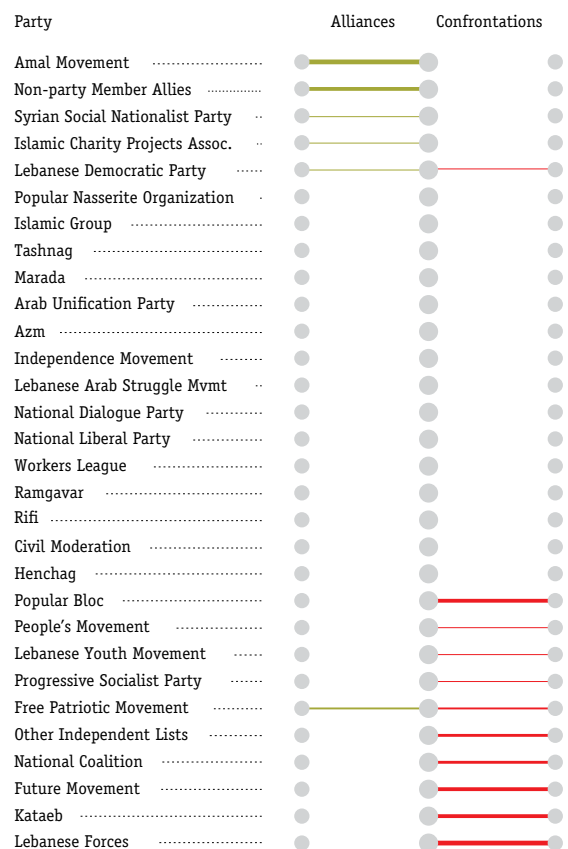
- Hezbollah fielded 14 candidates across seven districts
- Hezbollah struck alliances with the following three parties and groups: Amal (seven), Non-party members (four), Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (two), and Al Mashari' (one)
- The party ran against nine groups across seven districts, most often against the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces (five districts each)
- Hezbollah ran with and against two groups: The Lebanese Democratic Party (one with; one against) and the Free Patriotic Movement (two with; five against)

Alliances and confrontations of Hezbollah in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



Hezbollah

Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:

- Green square: Party Alliance
- Red square: Party Confrontation

Number of districts:

- Thin line: 1
- Medium line: 4
- Thick line: 8

d Lebanese Forces

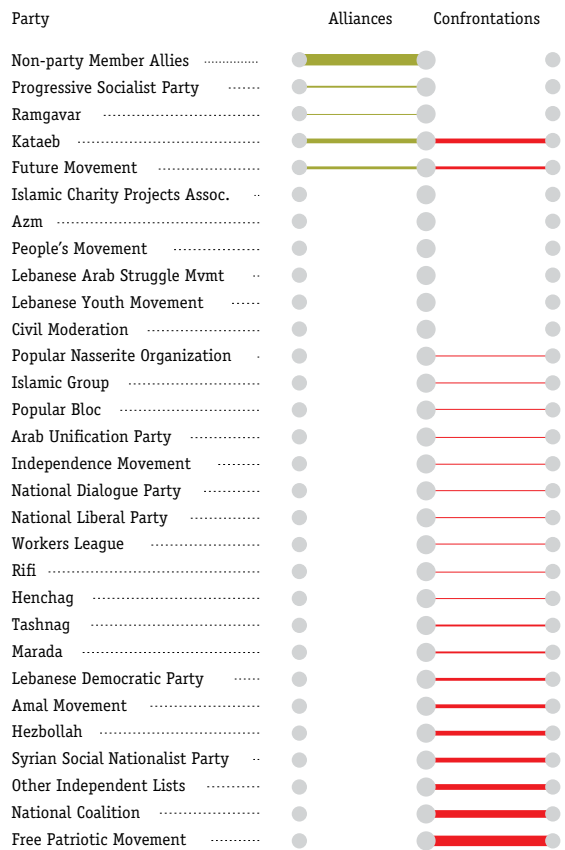
- The Lebanese Forces fielded 26 candidates across 11 districts
- The Lebanese Forces struck alliances with the following four parties and groups: Non-party members (11), Future Movement (three), Progressive Socialist Party (two), and Ramgavar (one)
- The party ran against 20 groups across 11 districts, most often against the Free Patriotic Movement (11 districts)
- The Lebanese Forces ran with and against one group: Kataeb (five with; four against)

Alliances and confrontations of the Lebanese Forces in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



Lebanese Forces

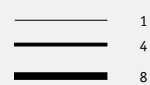
Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:



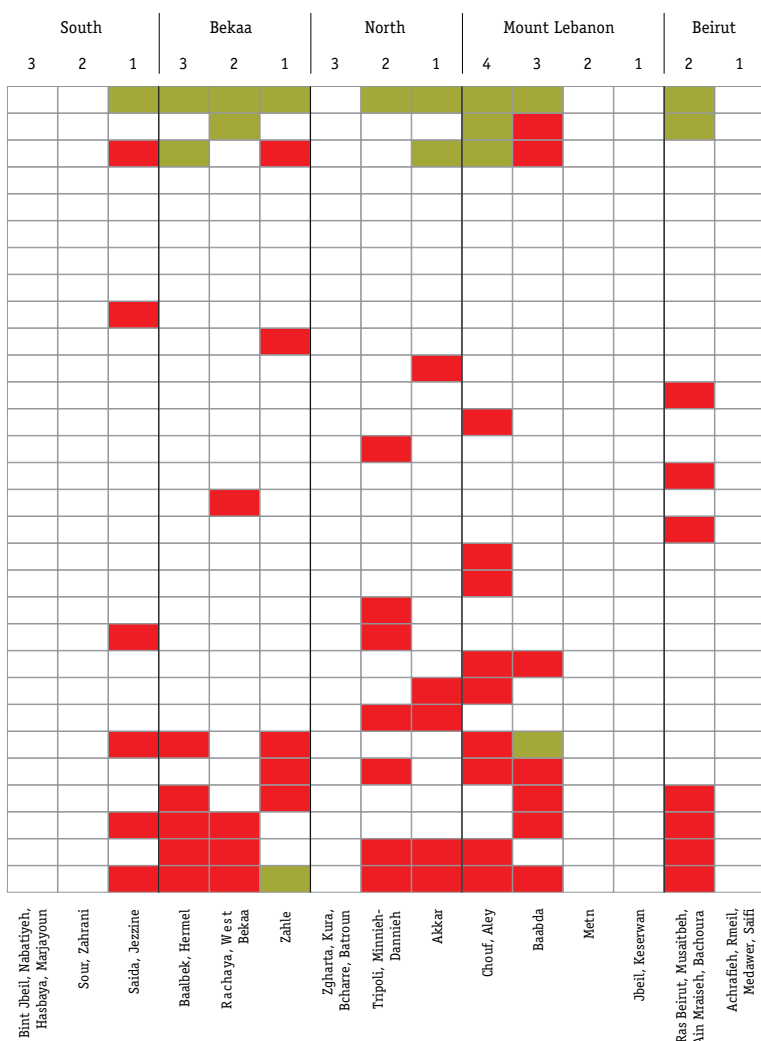
Number of districts:



e Future Movement

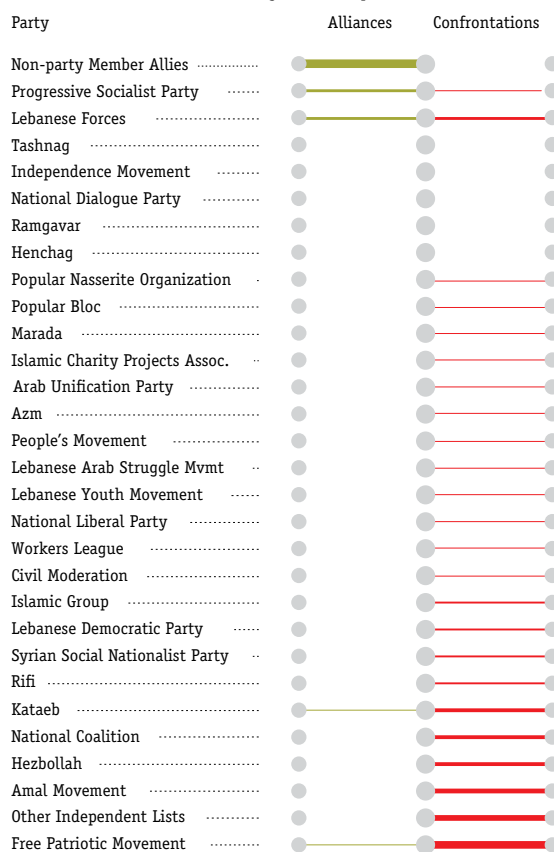
- The Future Movement fielded 35 candidates across nine districts
- The Future Movement exclusively struck alliances with Non-party members (nine)
- The movement ran against 20 groups across nine districts, most often against the Free Patriotic Movement (eight districts)
- The Future Movement ran with and against three groups: The Progressive Socialist Party (three with, one against), Lebanese Forces (three with, three against), Kataeb (one with, four against), and Free Patriotic Movement (one with, eight against)

Alliances and confrontations of Future Movement in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



Future Movement

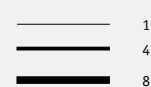
Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:



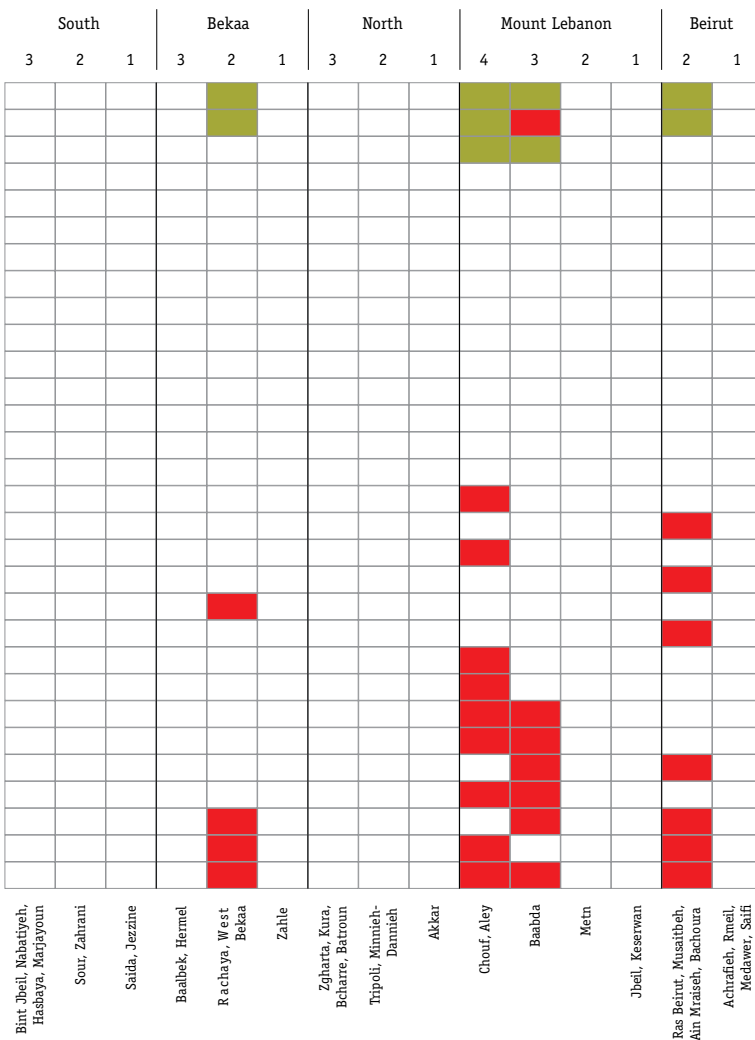
Number of districts:



f Progressive Socialist Party

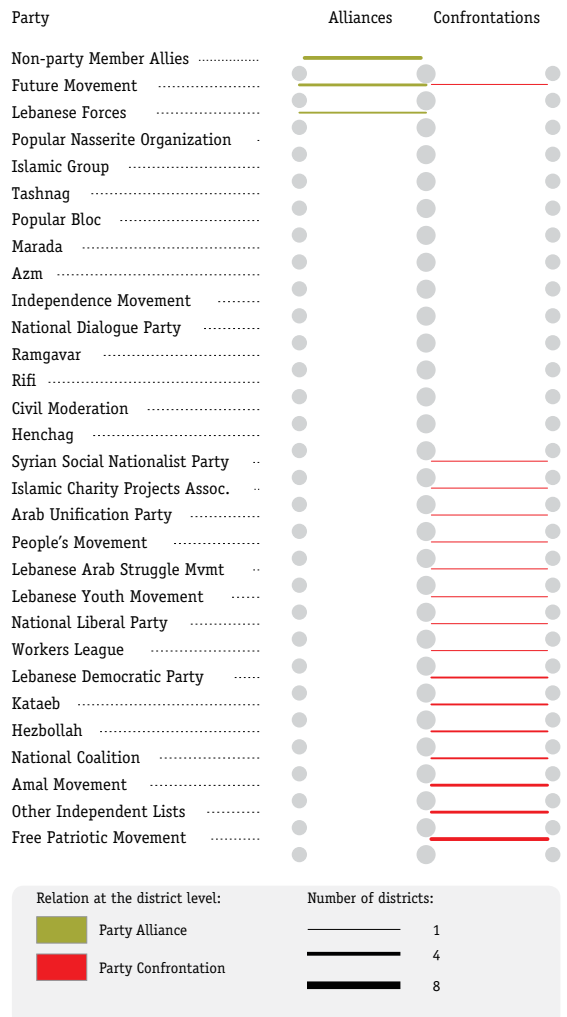
- The Progressive Socialist Party fielded seven candidates across four districts
- The Progressive Socialist Party struck alliances with the following two parties and groups: Non-party members (four), and the Lebanese Forces (two)
- The party ran against 16 groups across four districts, and were pitted against the Free Patriotic Movement in all of them
- The Progressive Socialist Party ran with and against one party—the Future Movement (three with, one against)

Alliances and confrontations of the Progressive Socialist Party in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



PSP

Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



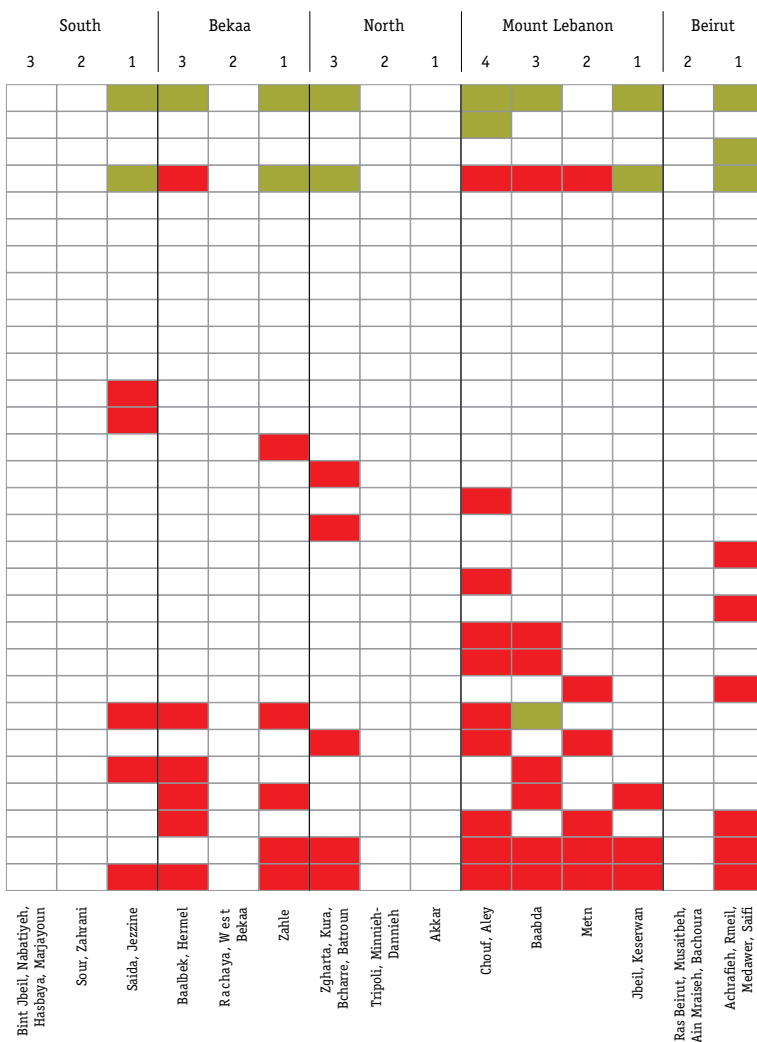
Relation at the district level:
 ■ Party Alliance
 ■ Party Confrontation

Number of districts:
 — 1
 — 4
 — 8

g Kataeb

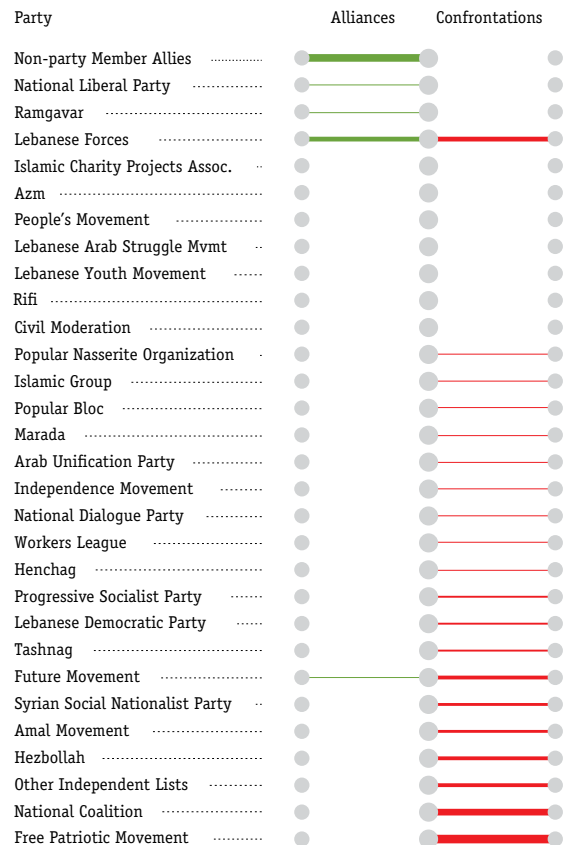
- Kataeb fielded 15 candidates across nine districts
- Kataeb struck alliances with the following three parties and groups: Non-party members (eight), Ramgavar (one), and the National Liberal Party (one)
- The party ran against 18 groups, most often against the Free Patriotic Movement (nine districts)
- Kataeb ran with and against two groups: The Lebanese Forces (five with, four against) and the Future Movement (one with, four against)

Alliances and confrontations of Kataeb in the 2018 national Lebanese elections



Kataeb

Alliances with and confrontations against other parties



Relation at the district level:

- Party Alliance
- Party Confrontation

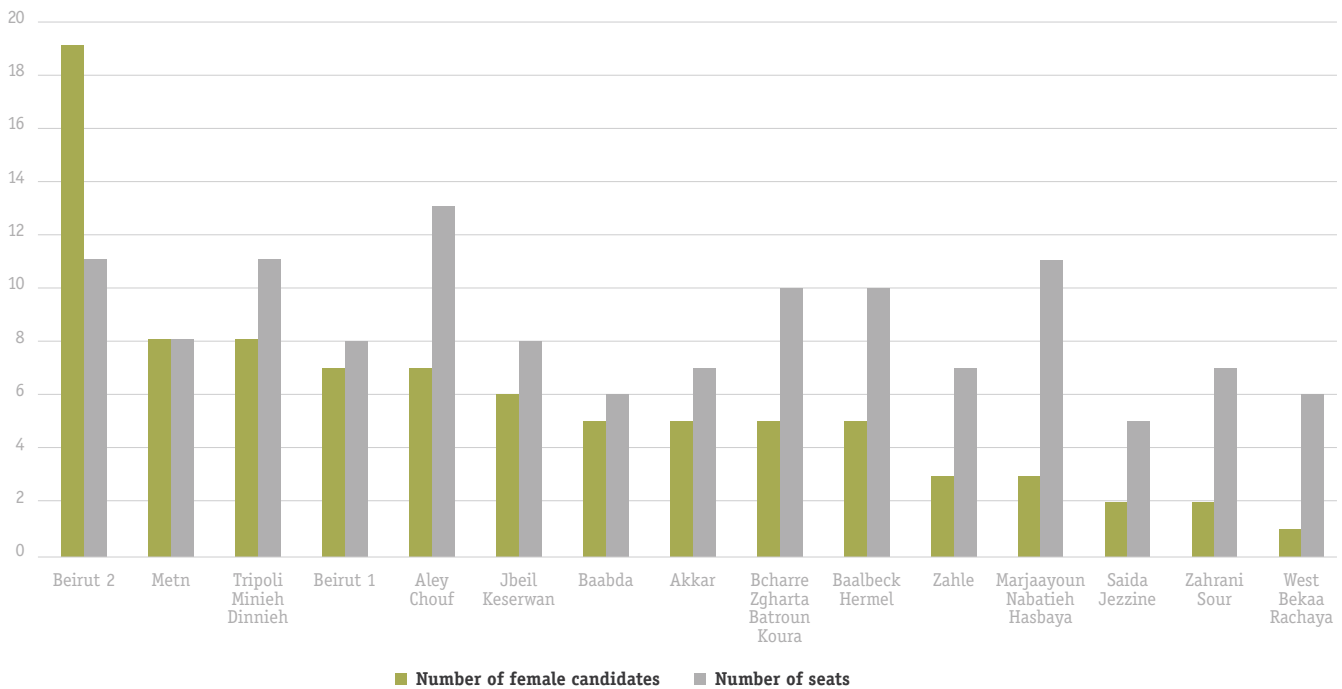
Number of districts:

- 1
- 4
- 8

III Women Candidates: Younger and More Educated

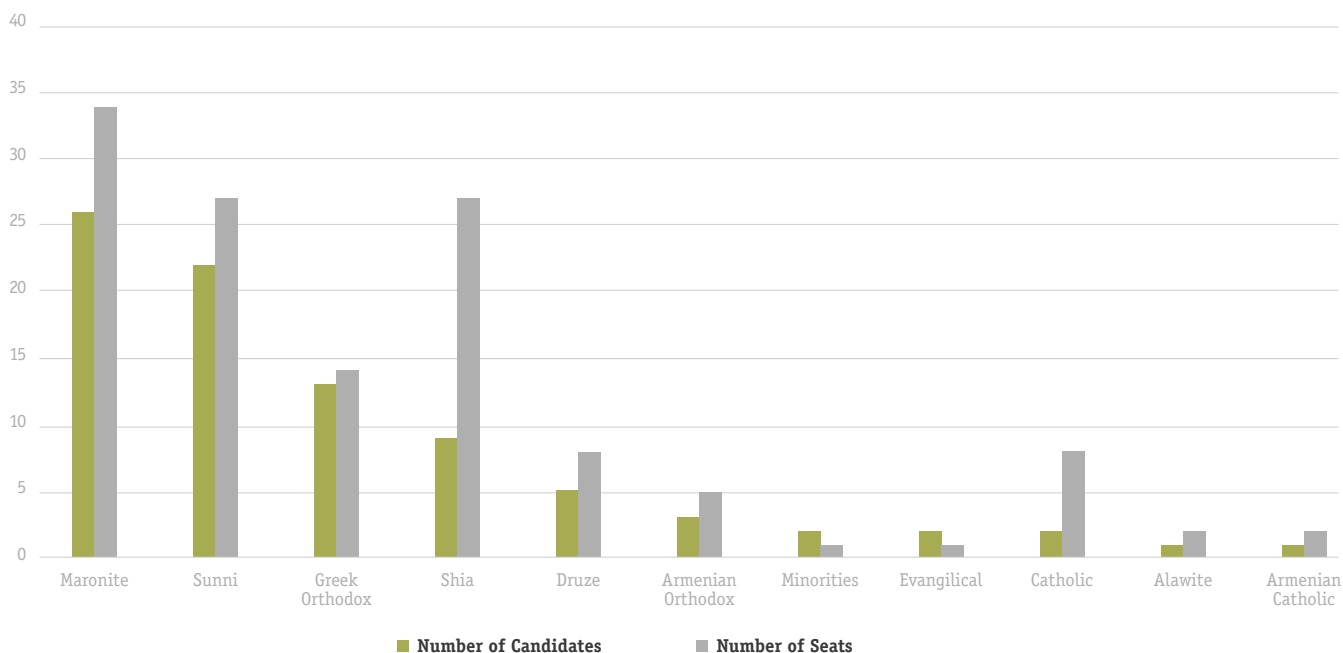
The election saw a record number of female candidates register—86 in total—a significant increase from the last election, which saw only 12 women run. Beirut 2 saw the highest level of female candidacy while West Bekaa-Rachaya had only a single woman on the ballot.

Figure 3 Number of female candidates by district



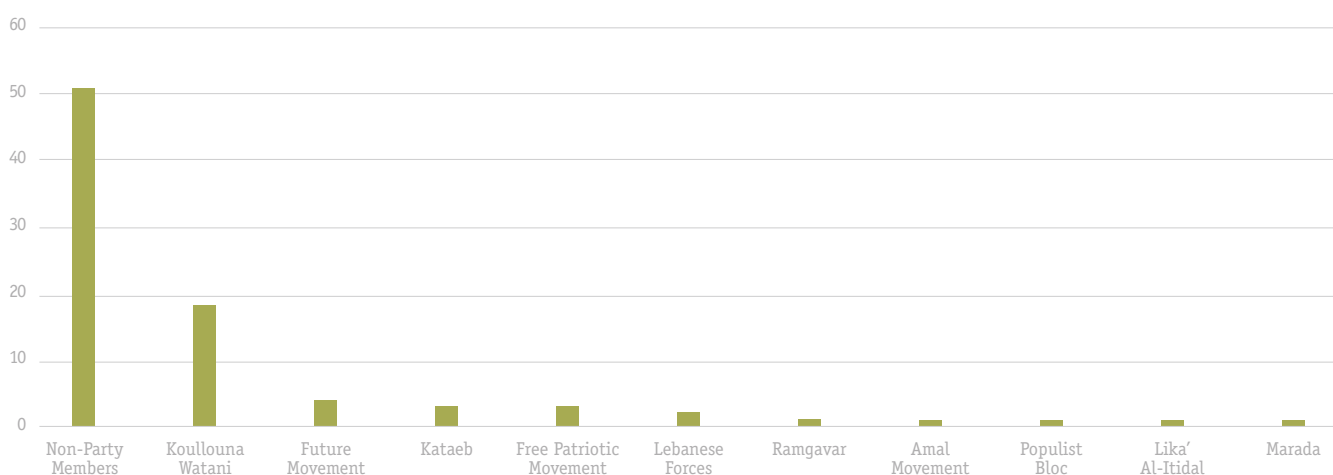
Most women candidates were Maronite (26), while Shia women were least represented among the four major confessions (nine) (figure 4).

Figure 4 Number of female candidates by confession



Most women candidates were non-party members or part of the civil society coalition Koullouna Watani (figure 5). The Future Movement, with four candidates, had the highest level of female representation among traditional parties.

Figure 5 Number of female candidates by bloc

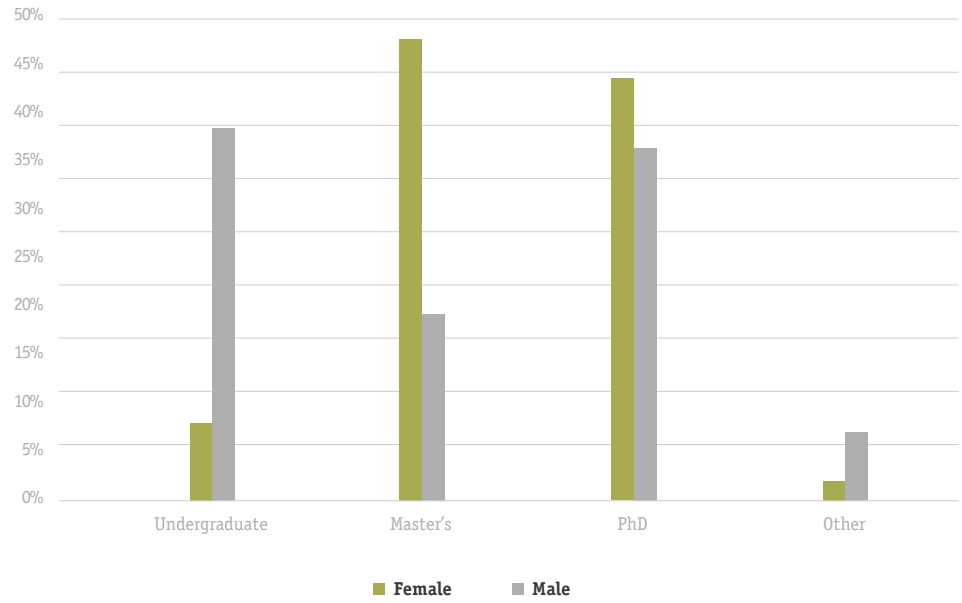


Women candidates tended to be younger and more educated than their male peers. The average age for male candidates was 57, while for female candidates it was 49.3. Moreover, as figure 6 shows, the share of female candidates who at the time held postgraduate degrees (master's degree and PhD) was larger than that of their male counterparts by a considerable margin.⁴

³ Based on the profiles of 80 female candidates and 261 male candidates.

⁴ Based on the profiles of 82 female candidates and 231 male candidates.

Figure 6 Share of female candidates' post graduate degrees



Annex 1: Competitiveness of seats by confession and district

Confession	District	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats	Ratio
Greek Orthodox	Beirut2	8	1	0.13
Sunni	Beirut2	47	6	0.13
Alawite	North 2	8	1	0.13
Greek Orthodox	North 2	8	1	0.13
Druze	Beirut2	7	1	0.14
Evangelical	Beirut2	7	1	0.14
Shia	Beirut2	14	2	0.14
Sunni	North 2	53	8	0.15
Catholic	Mount Lebanon 4	6	1	0.17
Maronite	North 1	6	1	0.17
Sunni	North 1	18	3	0.17
Maronite	North 2	6	1	0.17
Greek Orthodox	South 3	6	1	0.17
Sunni	Mount Lebanon 4	11	2	0.18
Armenian Catholic	Beirut 1	5	1	0.20
Maronite	Beirut 1	5	1	0.20
Minorities	Beirut 1	5	1	0.20
Greek Orthodox	Beirut 1	5	1	0.20
Maronite	Bekaa 1	5	1	0.20
Greek Orthodox	Bekaa 1	5	1	0.20
Shia	Bekaa 1	5	1	0.20
Sunni	Bekaa 1	5	1	0.20
Catholic	Bekaa 3	5	1	0.20
Maronite	Bekaa 3	5	1	0.20
Sunni	Bekaa 3	10	2	0.20
Shia	Mount Lebanon 1	5	1	0.20
Catholic	Mount Lebanon 2	5	1	0.20
Maronite	Mount Lebanon 4	25	5	0.20
Druze	South 3	5	1	0.20
Maronite	Mount Lebanon 1	33	7	0.21
Maronite	Mount Lebanon 2	19	4	0.21
Shia	Bekaa 3	27	6	0.22
Druze	Mount Lebanon 4	18	4	0.22
Greek Orthodox	North 1	9	2	0.22
Armenian Orthodox	Bekaa 1	4	1	0.25
Catholic	Bekaa 1	8	2	0.25
Greek Orthodox	Mount Lebanon 2	8	2	0.25
Druze	Mount Lebanon 3	4	1	0.25
Maronite	Mount Lebanon 3	12	3	0.25
Greek Orthodox	Mount Lebanon 4	4	1	0.25

Confession	District	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats	Ratio
Alawite	North 1	4	1	0.25
Catholic	South 1	4	1	0.25
Sunni	South 3	4	1	0.25
Maronite	North 3	27	7	0.26
Shia	South 3	31	8	0.26
Greek Orthodox	North 3	11	3	0.27
Shia	Mount Lebanon 3	7	2	0.29
Sunni	South 1	7	2	0.29
Armenian Orthodox	Beirut 1	10	3	0.30
Catholic	Beirut 1	3	1	0.33
Maronite	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Greek Orthodox	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Shia	Bekaa 2	3	1	0.33
Armenian Orthodox	Mount Lebanon 2	3	1	0.33
Maronite	South 1	6	2	0.33
Sunni	Bekaa 2	5	2	0.40
Druze	Bekaa 2	2	1	0.50
Catholic	South 2	2	1	0.50
Shia	South 2	11	6	0.55



LCPS policy papers are in-depth research papers that address relevant policy questions and shed fresh light on topics related to governance and development.