

Nasrallah and Aoun at the Top but with Fewer Supporters

Geagea Moving Ahead among the Maronites 30.9% are willing to emigrate while 8.9% have applied for emigration

In the previous issue, *Information International* surveyed the opinion of the Lebanese on various issues, namely their political belonging, their position toward Hizbullah's arms and rearmament of political parties, their most preferred candidates for presidency and premiership, as well as the party behind assassinations and explosions.

In this article, *Ii Monthly* presents the opinions of the Lebanese about foreign ambassadors' role in internal affairs, their most favorite za'im, emigration and many other issues.

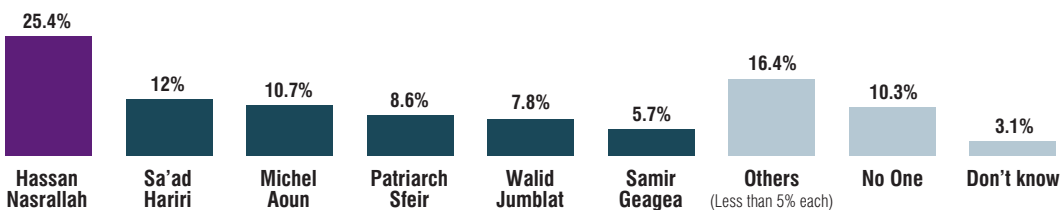
I- Political Figures

Most Supported Figure for its Positions and Statements

Politicians and religious men issue daily statements, some of which are positively welcome by the Lebanese while others meet rejection. 25.4% of respondents said they supported the statements made by Hassan Nasrallah, compared with 12% who reported to support Sa'ad Hariri's statements, 10.7% for Michel Aoun's statements, 8.6% for Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, 7.8% for Walid Jumblat, 5.7% for Samir Geagea, 4.7% for Nabih Berri, 2.2% for Suleiman Franjeh, 2% for Fouad Sanioura and 10.3% said they did not like statements made by any of these figures. Others (7.5%) named other personalities, while 3.1% did not answer (Graph no.1).

[Graph 1] The leader most supported for his political stands and statements (%)

February 2007
Base: 957



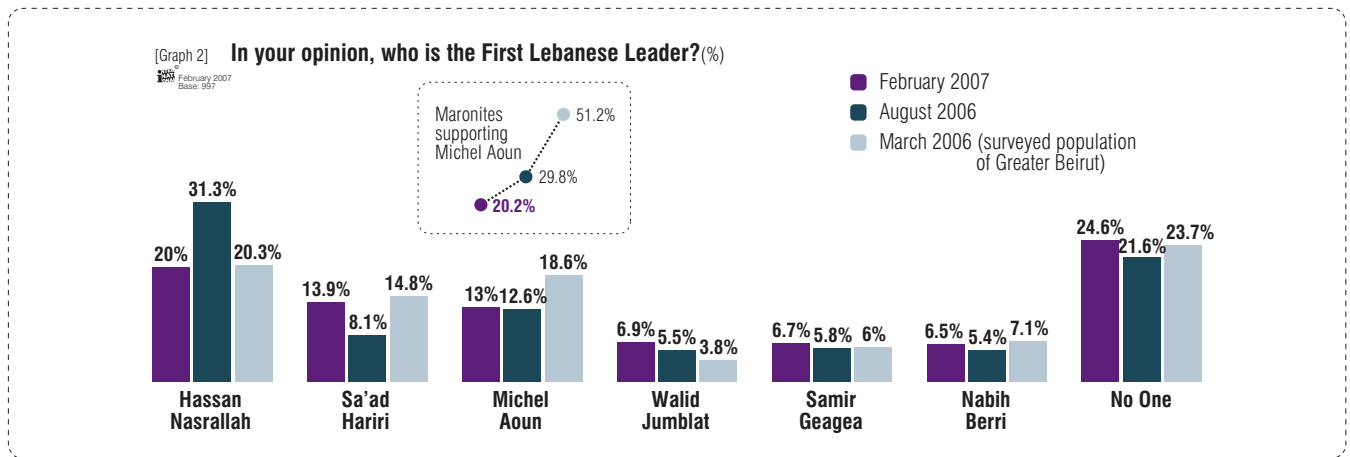
First Lebanese Za'im (leader)

"No one" remains at the top of the list with 24.6% of supporters while 20% of respondents said that Hassan Nasrallah was the first Lebanese za'im (leader), followed by Sa'ad Hariri (13.9%), Michel Aoun (13%), Walid Jumblat (6.9%), Samir Geagea (6.7%), Nabih Berri (6.5%) and Patriarch Sfeir (2%). 6.4% named other figures with less than 2% for each.

In comparison with results of previous opinion polls, Hassan Nasrallah remained the most supported za'im, but

with fewer supporters (Graph no.2). However, the support for Walid Jumblat and Sa'ad Hariri increased, while Michel Aoun maintained the same position. Moreover, a quarter of the Lebanese did not believe in the existence of any first za'im. 34% of university students between 18 and 34 years old said that "no one" was the first or main za'im in Lebanon.

The respondents' answers by confession show that 46.5% of Shia'a regard Hassan Nasrallah as their first za'im, while 23% support Berri.



As to the Maronites, 20.2% voted for Michel Aoun and 19.7% for Samir Geagea, while 26.8% of Maronite respondents said there was not any first Lebanese za'im. A large majority of Druze respondents (78.9%) said Walid Jumblat was their first leader, while 44.6% of Sunni voted for Sa'ad Hariri and 33% of respondents from the same confession reported to not believe in the existence of a first za'im.

The distribution of answers by confession showed that Nabih Berri was gaining further Shia'a supporters. It also showed that Geagea was moving ahead against a drop in the number of Aoun's supporters (20.2% in February 2007 compared with 29.8% in August 2006 and 51.2% in a poll conducted in March 2006, which surveyed only the population of greater Beirut).

II- Foreign Roles

Ambassadors' Performance

The majority of respondents (35.4%) welcome the performance of the Saudi ambassador, compared with 15.5% who support the performance of the British ambassador, 19.2% support the US ambassador and 18.5% support the Iranian ambassador.

Table no.1 shows the positions toward the performance of main foreign ambassadors to Lebanon.

Positions towards the Performance of Main Ambassadors to Lebanon					Table 1
Ambassador	Performance	Blatant but welcome interference	Blatant but unwelcome interference	Neutral and Diplomatic performance	Don't know
United States		19.3%	57.4%	15.7%	7.6%
France		23.6%	51.8%	16.5%	8.1%
Britain		15.5%	50.5%	20.6%	13.4%
Saudi Arabia		35.4%	30.2%	25.4%	9%
Egypt		25.7%	33%	28.2%	13.1%
Iran		18.6%	52.2%	16.2%	13%

Source: Information International – February 2007

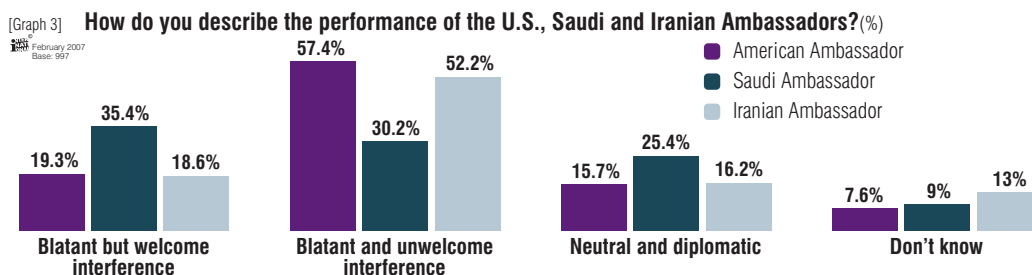
The distribution of answers by confession highlighted a strong Shia'a rejection of the US ambassador's performance (88.1%).

Meanwhile, 40.5% of Sunni respondents said the US ambassador's "interference was blatant and unwelcome," compared with 49.6% of Maronites who said the same.

42.5% of Maronites did not welcome the performance of the French ambassador.

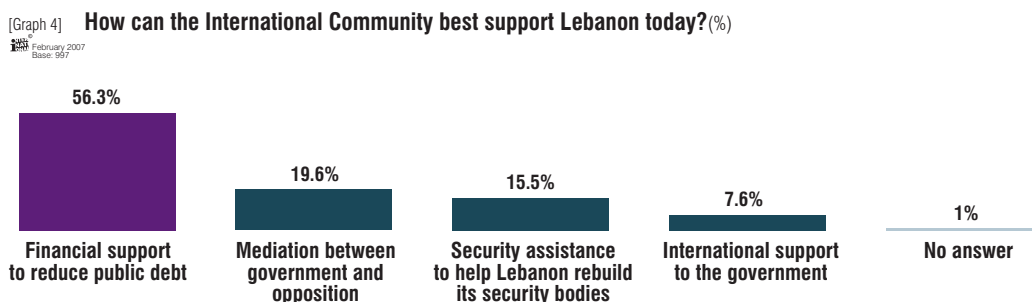
However, the majority of respondents positively regarded the "Saudi diplomacy", including the Shia'a respondents (32.7%).

Graph no.3 shows a comparison between the respondents' positions toward the performance of the Saudi, Iranian and US ambassadors.



International Support to Lebanon

Paris 3 international conference to support Lebanon was held in January 2007 in the French capital resulting in pledges, loans and grants to finance development projects and support the treasury. More than half of respondents (56.3%) said that Lebanon was in need of financial support to reduce the public debt, while 19.6% called for a diplomatic support to mediate between pro-government and opposition forces and 15.5% said the country needed support on the security level to help it rebuild its security bodies. 7.6% of respondents called for international support to the Lebanese government and 1% had no answer (Graph no.4).



Government's 'Reform Plan' to the Paris 3 Conference

The Lebanese government submitted to the Paris 3 Conference a 'reform plan' that included a series of measures the Cabinet is willing to implement, such as increasing working hours from 32 to 36 hours per week, imposing new taxes and raising the Value Added Tax from 10% to 12% in 2008 and 15% in 2010. The majority of respondents (67.1%) were against these measures, against 21.6% of respondents who supported the 'reform plan' and 11.3% who said they did not know. The respondents' answers are distributed by confession according to table no.2, which shows that the majority of Maronites, Orthodox, Catholics and Shia'a are against these measures.

Position towards the Increase of Taxes and Working hours by Confession							Table 2
Confession \ Position	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	
With	23.2%	21.2%	20.4%	36.8%	1.9%	50.9%	
Against	62.8%	70%	61.2%	53.2%	91.4%	29.8%	
Don't know	14%	8.8%	18.4%	10%	6.7%	19.3%	

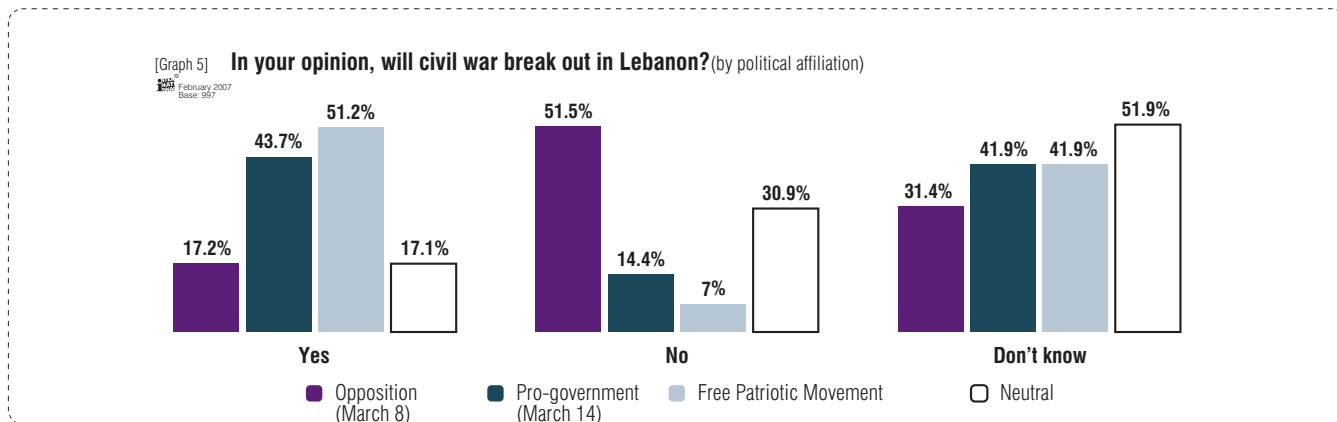
Source: Information International – February 2007

III- The Lebanese and the Future

Return of Civil War

44.2% of respondents said they did not believe that a civil war would break out against 14.8% who said they were sure there would be a war. However, 41% of respondents said they “did not know”.

Graph no.5 shows the respondents’ answers by political affiliation.

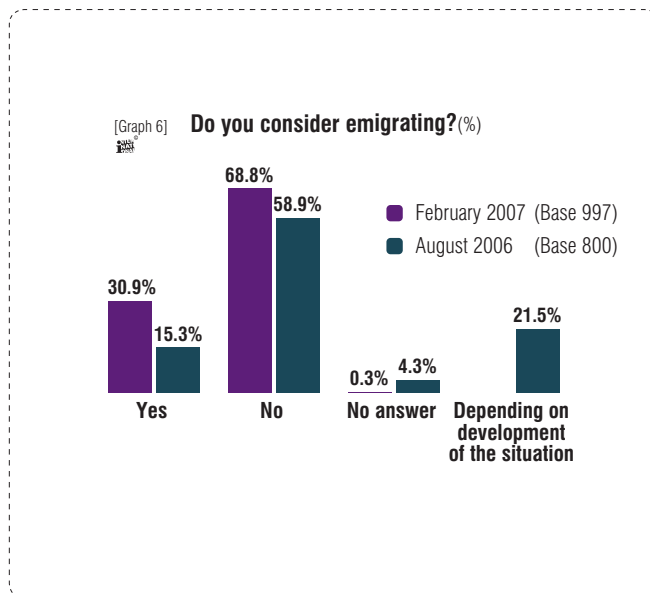


Lebanese and Emigration

In light of security, political and economic developments in the country, 30.9% of Lebanese reported to be considering emigrating, while 68.8% were opposed to such idea and 0.3% did not answer.

Of the 30.9% of Lebanese who are considering emigrating, 28.9% said to have submitted emigration applications over the past six months, thus constituting 8.9% of the total number of respondents (Graph no. 7). In an opinion poll conducted by *Information International* in August 2006, 58.9% of respondents expressed their determination to remain in Lebanon and 21.5% said they were waiting to see how the situation would develop, while 15.3% said they were determined to emigrate and 4.3% of respondents did not answer (Graph no.6). A comparison between the two polls shows that 71% of the people who were waiting to see how things would develop, are now considering emigration as an option.

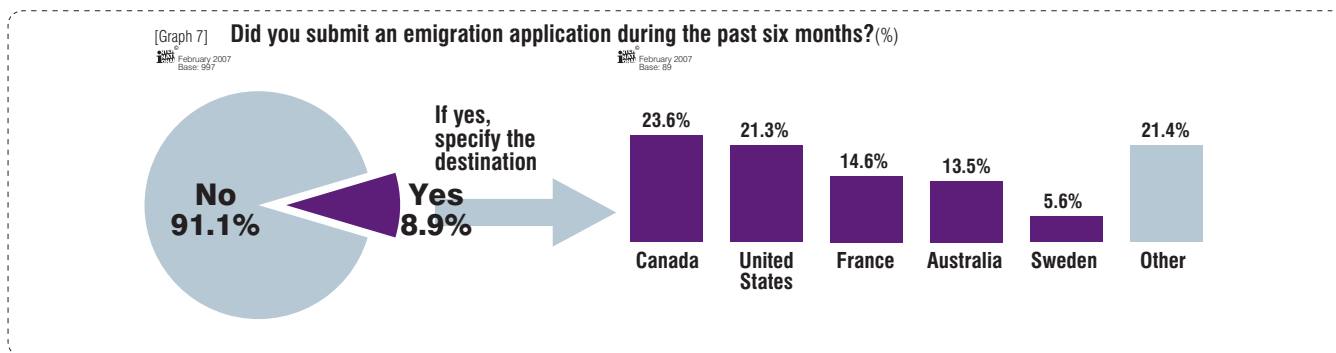
The respondents’ answers are distributed by confession as illustrated in table no.3, which shows that the Maronites and Druze are more favorable to the emigration choice than respondents from other confessions.



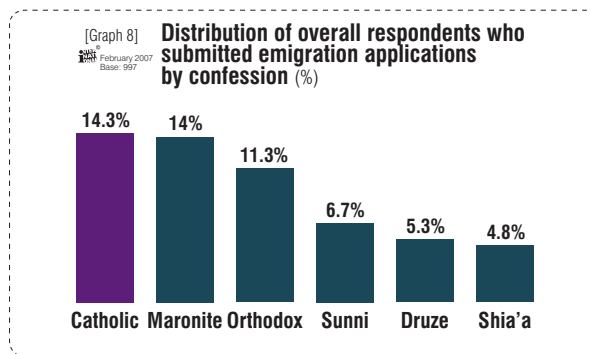
Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Are you considering emigrating?						
Yes	43%	28.8%	38.8%	26.4%	22.3%	45.6%
No	57%	71.2%	61.2%	72.5%	77.7%	54.4%
No answer	-	-	-	1.1%	-	-

Source: Information International – February 2007

As to the emigration destination, Canada ranked first (23.6%), followed by the United States (21.3%), France (14.6%), Australia (13.5%), Sweden (5.6%) and other destinations (21.4%). (Graph no.7)



“Of the 30.9% of Lebanese who are considering emigrating, 28.9% said to have submitted emigration applications over the past six months, thus constituting 8.9% of the total number of respondents.”



Graph no.8 shows the distribution of respondents (total number surveyed) who submitted emigration applications over the past six months by confession.

Respondents who submitted emigration applications are distributed by age category as illustrated in table no.4, which shows that 11.3% of respondents between 18-24 years-old have submitted applications. The percentage increases to reach 12.5% for respondents between 25-34 years-old.

Respondents who submitted emigration applications by age category Table 4

Age category	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and above
Have you applied for emigration?						
Yes	11.3%	12.5%	6.3%	6.5%	4%	7.7%
No	88.7%	87.5%	93.7%	93.5%	96%	92.3%

Source: Information International – February 2007

The respondents' answers by educational level are equally distributed, as shown in table no.5

Respondents who submitted emigration applications by educational level Table 5

Educational level	Elementary and below	Intermediate	Secondary	Vocational Education	University	Higher studies
Have you applied for emigration?						
Yes	6.8%	8.5%	6.9%	15.5%	11.7%	8%
No	93.2%	91.5%	93.1%	84.5%	88.3%	92%

Source: Information International – February 2007

Lebanese Carrying Foreign Nationalities Official records do not reflect Exact Numbers

Emigration from Lebanon reached its peak during and after the civil war. Recent statistics showed a surge in the number of Lebanese emigrants.

Not all the Lebanese officially declare acquiring foreign nationalities.

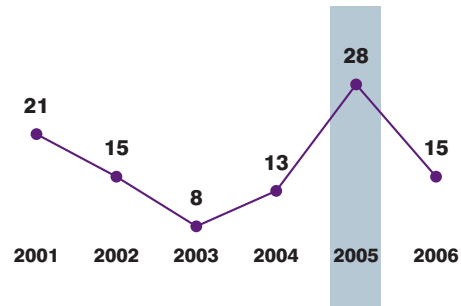
Acquiring Foreign Nationalities

A law issued in January 31, 1946, pertaining to the Lebanese nationality, stated that Lebanese nationals must drop their nationality in four cases, one of the most important being “if he has acquired a foreign nationality upon the issuance of a decree by the head of state”. However, the majority of the Lebanese, who acquire foreign nationalities, do so without getting an official permit from the head of state. 100 people declared to have acquired foreign nationalities between 2001 and 2006 as illustrated in graph no. 9.

Naturally those figures do not reflect the reality of the situation.

[Graph 9] **Distribution of Lebanese who officially declared acquiring foreign nationalities 2001-2006**

Source: Information International - Lebanese Official Gazette



138,047 Lebanese have permanently emigrated from Lebanon between 1991 and 2000. They are distributed as follows:

United States: 43,441

Canada: 36,823

Australia: 12,984

Europe: 44,799

Source: *Facts about Lebanese Emigration (1991-2000)* by Information International.

Lebanese and the United States

3,288 Lebanese were naturalized in the United States in 2005, compared to 3,314 in 2004 and 2,499 in 2003.

As for the Lebanese immigrants in the States, 3,811 were reported to have been admitted in 2004, compared to 2,964 in 2003 and 3,966 in 2002.

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration and Statistics Homeland Security*.

Lebanese and Canada

The number of Lebanese-Canadians reached 250,000 in 2006, including 143,000 who currently live in Canada.

Source: *Citizenship and Emigration Canada*

Lebanese and Australia

The total number of Lebanese-Australians according to 2001 Census is 162,239. Of these, 71,310 were born in Australia.

Source: *Australia Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship – Media Center*

Two Explorers... from Lebanon

The first "Arab man" to go to the United States of America was a Lebanese from the town of Sleima (Matn). His name was Antoun Youssef Daher al-Basha'alani. He was born in 1827 and traveled to the United States in 1845 on board a sailboat: (How much time did he spend on the way?) He resided in the States and wore Lebanese traditional clothes (*Sherwal*, *Mintian* [underwear] and Moroccan *tarboush*). He passed away in New York in 1856.

The first "Arab man" to go to Brazil was a Lebanese from the town of Meziara (near Ehden). His name was Youssef Moussa Meziara. He traveled on board a sailboat to Portugal. We do not know how long he resided in the country. What is confirmed is that he traveled to Rio de Janeiro, where he resided in 1880 and died in Sao Paulo in 1930.

Translated from: "Awraq Loubnaniah" (Lebanese Papers) Volume 2 - Part 3 p.141, by Youssef Ibrahim Yazbek, 1983

Sounding the Alarm

Emigration is not a new trend of the Lebanese people. However, it is necessary to sound the alarm, especially when emigration rates today remind us of the exodus of Lebanese people during civil war. Determining the exact numbers of people who left the country during the July-August 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon could not be achieved, as Rafik Hariri International Airport was closed for 36 days and many Lebanese fled the country through land and maritime borders.

In an attempt to highlight the rising emigration rate, *li Monthly* referred to the number of people who left the country via the airport in the month of January in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The numbers showed that the Lebanese who left the country exceeded those who entered Lebanon by 19,575 people in 2004, 18,029 people, 15,321 people and 21,140 people respectively; thus, the number of Lebanese departing from Rafik Hariri International Airport in January 2007 increased by 38% compared with January 2006 and by 8% compared to January 2004.

Note: These numbers are an estimate and they will be further examined in the coming issues.

Media reports said that General Security records over the last five months of 2006 highlighted a significant rise in issuing and renewing passports compared to the beginning of the same year.

Information International February 2007 opinion poll shows that around the third of Lebanese between 18 and 34 years-old have submitted emigration applications to foreign embassies and 11.7% of university students and 15.5% of professionals are also seeking to emigrate. These percentages indicate that:

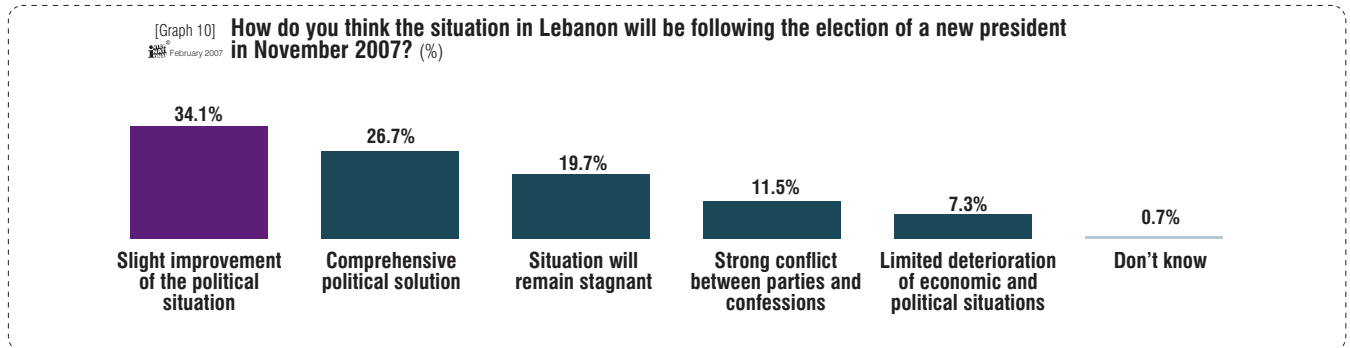
- ⦿ The Lebanese society is facing a decrease in population growth, which today reaches 1.2%
- ⦿ The Lebanese population is aging and this fact is apparent in several Lebanese villages
- ⦿ Production costs are rising which leads to an increase in importation costs
- ⦿ The rate of celibacy will further increase and will yield negatively on the social situation.

Opinions about the Future

The majority of respondents (34.1%) said there would not be any major solutions to the current deadlock, but added that a minor progress would be achieved and key issues would remain unresolved. However, 26.7% of respondents said that a comprehensive agreement would be reached over the international tribunal, elections, government and political sharing arrangements.

19.7% of respondents have a negative perception of the future, as they said that the situation would remain stagnant, while 11.5% are strongly pessimistic about the future, saying that a clash would break out between the different confessions and parties, resulting in a deterioration of the political and economic situation.

Meanwhile, 7.3% of respondents believe that the political and economic situation would deteriorate to a certain extent and 0.7% said they did not know how the situation would be in the coming months (Graph no.10). These results highlight the presence of two divergent opinions; one optimistic about the future (60.8%) and another pessimistic (38.5%).



Civil Marriage: Fewer Supporters

Lebanon does not have unified laws that regulate people’s affairs, as each of the 18 confessions has its own law and specialized bodies. Several attempts were made since the 1950s to adopt an optional law for civil marriage. The last attempt was made in 1996 but was not adopted by the Cabinet. With an absence of such laws, the Lebanese go to Cyprus, Europe or Turkey to conclude a civil marriage and then notify the Lebanese public authorities to acknowledge it.

What do the Lebanese think about Civil Marriage?

In an opinion poll conducted by *Information International* in February 2007, 45.3% of respondents were against an optional law for civil marriage against 30.2% who reported to be with the adoption of such law. However, 24.5% of respondents said they were not concerned by this issue (graph no.11). The respondents’ answers are distributed by confession as shown in table no.6.

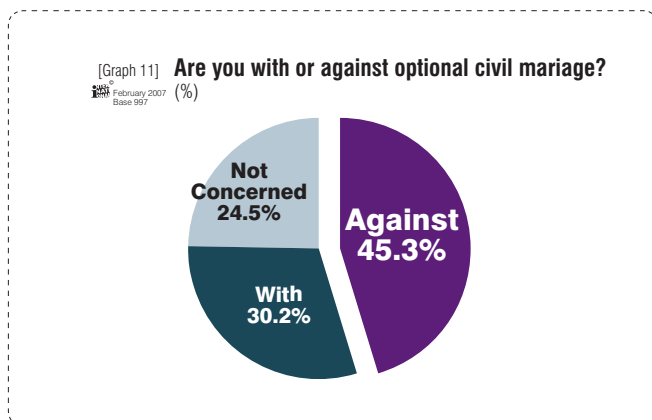


Table no.6 shows that the majority of Orthodox, Catholics and Druze support the optional civil marriage while the majority of Maronites, Sunni and Shia’a are against it.

Positions about optional civil marriage by confession							Table 6
Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze	Position
With	38.6%	58.8%	53.1%	10.8%	22.7%	47.4%	
Against	46.5%	22.5%	26.5%	63.2%	41.3%	31.6%	
Not concerned	14.9%	18.7%	20.4%	26%	36%	21%	

Source: Information International – February 2007

Respondents' answers by age category show that the youth are the most supportive of the optional civil marriage, as illustrated in table no.7.

Position \ Age category	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and above
With	33.5%	32.4%	32.9%	19.5%	21.3%	19.2%
Against	49.4%	43.4%	42.2%	52%	41.3%	42.3%
Not concerned	17.1%	24.3%	24.9%	28.5%	37.4%	38.5%

Source: Information International – February 2007

In an opinion poll conducted by *Information International* in early 2006 on 675 university students, 69.5% of respondents said they were with the optional civil marriage against 30.5% who were against it.

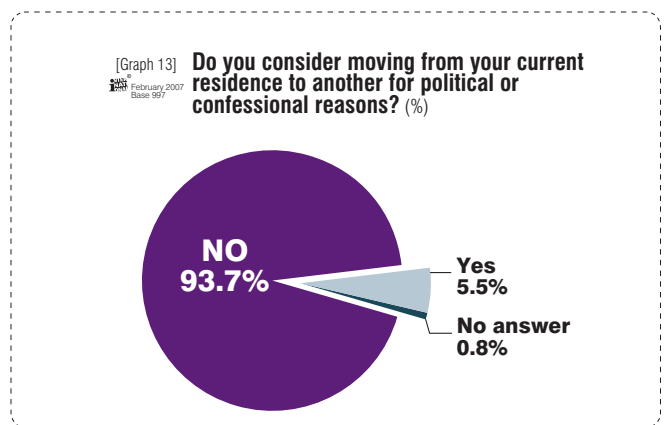
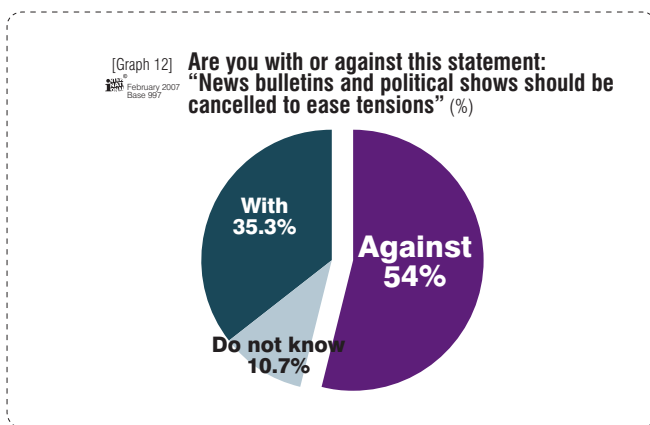
In another opinion poll conducted by *Information International* in 2002, 57.3% of respondents were against civil marriage and 36.8% were supporting it. Only 5.9% said they were not concerned by the issue.

Responsibility of Media Institutions

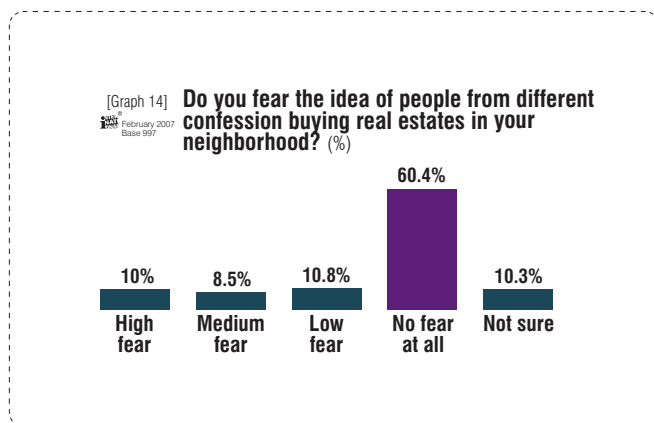
Media institutions, in particular television channels, play an important role in leading or misleading the public opinion. In fact, some television channels affiliated with political parties have raised campaigns in support of their parties and were criticized by observers for trying to “instigate street conflicts”. As a result, many called for the need to stop broadcasting news bulletins and political shows. 35.3% of respondents approved the proposal, while a majority of 54% opposed it. 10.7% said they did not know (graph no. 12).

Relocating, Real Estate Ownership and Confession

Despite the increase in political and confessional tensions accompanied by security developments, the overwhelming majority of respondents (93.7%) reported not to have considered changing residence to more secure places. Only 5.5% said they thought about this option, while 0.8% did not reply. (Graph no. 13)



The majority of respondents (60.4%) reported not to have concerns at all over the ownership of real estate in their areas by people belonging to different confessions than theirs. 29.3% reported to have some concerns (10% to a large extent, 8.5% to a certain extent and 10.8% have little concerns). 10.3% of respondents said they were not sure. (Graph no. 14)



The respondents' answers are distributed by confession as illustrated in table no.8, which shows that the Maronites and the Druze are the ones who have the highest level of concern.

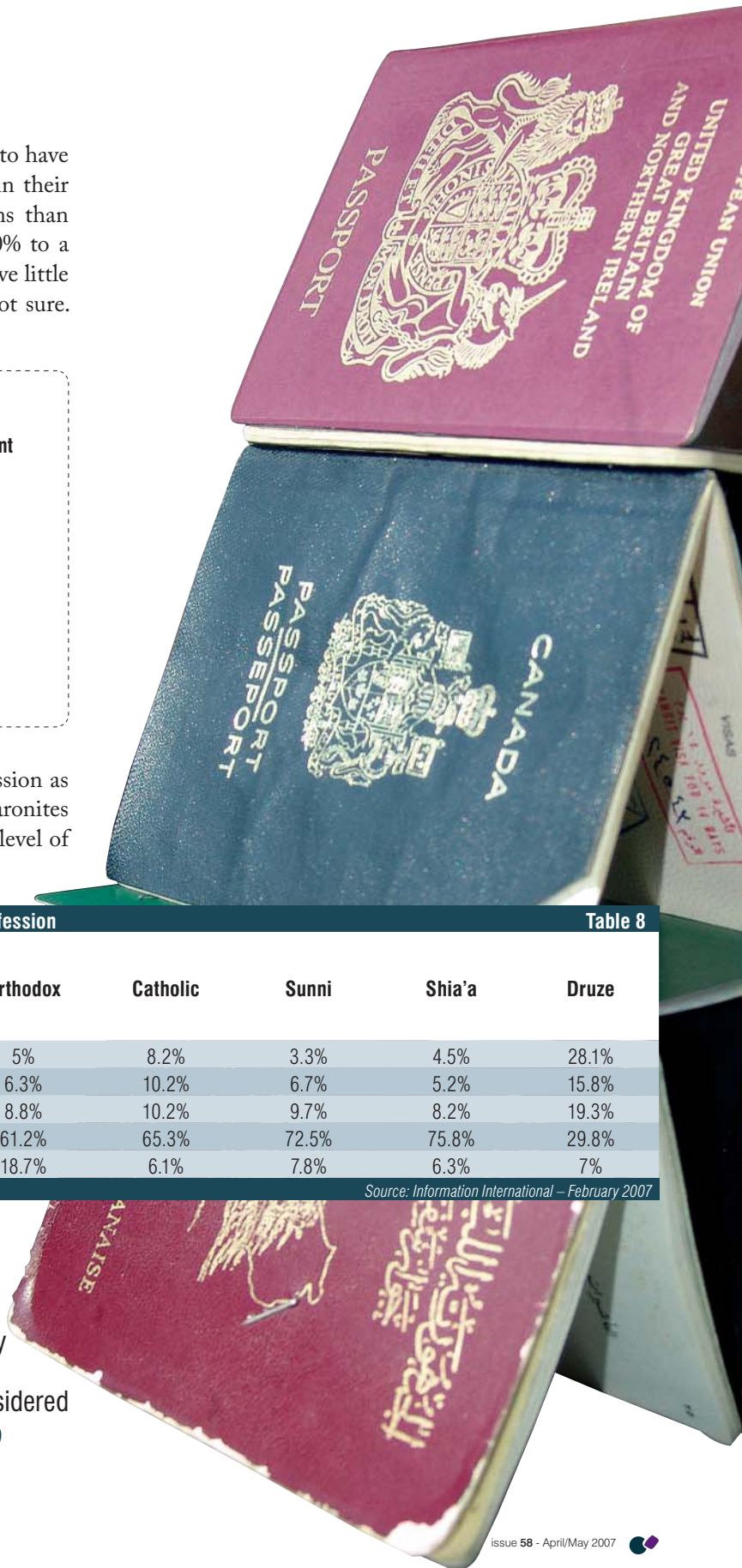
Lebanese Positions toward Real Estate Ownership by Confession

Table 8

Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia'a	Druze
Concern over real estate ownership by a different confession						
To a large extent	23.7%	5%	8.2%	3.3%	4.5%	28.1%
To a certain extent	13.2%	6.3%	10.2%	6.7%	5.2%	15.8%
Little concern	14%	8.8%	10.2%	9.7%	8.2%	19.3%
No concerns at all	35.5%	61.2%	65.3%	72.5%	75.8%	29.8%
Not sure	13.6%	18.7%	6.1%	7.8%	6.3%	7%

Source: Information International – February 2007

“Despite the increase in political and confessional tensions accompanied by security developments, the overwhelming majority of respondents (93.7%) reported not to have considered changing residence to more secure places.”



Conclusion

- ⊙ 20% of respondents said that Hassan Nasrallah was the first za'im (leader), compared with 31.3% who said the same in August 2006.
- ⊙ Hassan Nasrallah, Sa'ad Hariri, Walid Jumblat and Michel Aoun are the first leaders (za'im) in their confessions, but with a minor difference between the supporters of Aoun (20.2%) and that of Samir Geagea (19.7%).
- ⊙ Around the quarter of respondents (24.6%) did not acknowledge the existence of any first or main za'im.
- ⊙ Around a third of the Lebanese (30.9%) are considering emigrating, against 15.3% of respondents last August, which reflects a lack of trust in the situation in Lebanon.
- ⊙ Around 11.9% of Lebanese youth between 18 and 34 years-old have submitted emigration applications and intend to leave the country. Their number is estimated at 135,000 people. It is noteworthy that the number includes those who actually submitted a visa application and those who acquired passports and who are waiting for a work opportunity abroad.
- ⊙ The emigration of youth leads to brain drain, which yields negatively on economic growth and productivity. Observers believe that emigration is due to political and economic instability and lack of trust in the future of Lebanon.
- ⊙ 55.8% of respondents have concerns over the resumption of the civil war. However, the majority of Lebanese look positively at the future, as 60.8% of respondents believe that positive developments would occur by the end of November 2007.
- ⊙ It seems that around half the respondents rule out the resumption of the civil war and the other half have concerns in this matter. Divergence of positions within political groups highlights incoherence in the political group itself.
- ⊙ 35.4% of respondents are satisfied with the performance of the Saudi ambassador, while the percentage of respondents who are opposed to the interference of the US ambassador, reached 57.4%, the Iranian ambassador reached 52.2%, the French ambassador reached 51.8% and the British ambassador reached 50.5%.
- ⊙ 56.3% of respondents said that the country was in need of financial and economic aid to reduce the public debt. ●●

Description of the sample

The opinion poll was conducted between February 22-28, 2007 on a sample of 1,000 citizens in different Lebanese areas, with a proportional distribution according to the number of residents and the electoral size of each confession in each qada'a.

Males represented 58.3% of respondents and females 41.7% distributed by age categories as follows:

24% between 18-24 years old	27.3% between 25-34 years old
23.7% between 35-44 years old	12.3% between 45-54 years old
7.5% between 55-64 years old	5.2% over 65 years or did not specify

The margin of error was $\pm 1.8\%$