

# The Lebanese Follow Their Leaders

## Prefer Peace but Are Ready to Fight for Their Families, Country and Religion

**Information International**, in collaboration with Dr. Charles Harb from the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the American University of Beirut, conducted a survey to investigate some key aspects of the socio-political landscape in a representative sample of the Lebanese population.

The questionnaire consisted of several scales tapping into social identities, confessionality, leadership affiliation, religiosity, perceived group threat, life satisfaction, and readiness for violence. The questionnaire was anonymous and confidential.

The field work took place during 18–27 November 2006. The sample consisted of 1,500 participants, distributed proportionally over the Lebanese Mohafazas, based on the number of registered voters in each.

55.1% of participants were males and 44.9% females. The distribution of participants by mohafaza and confession is detailed in Table no. 1.

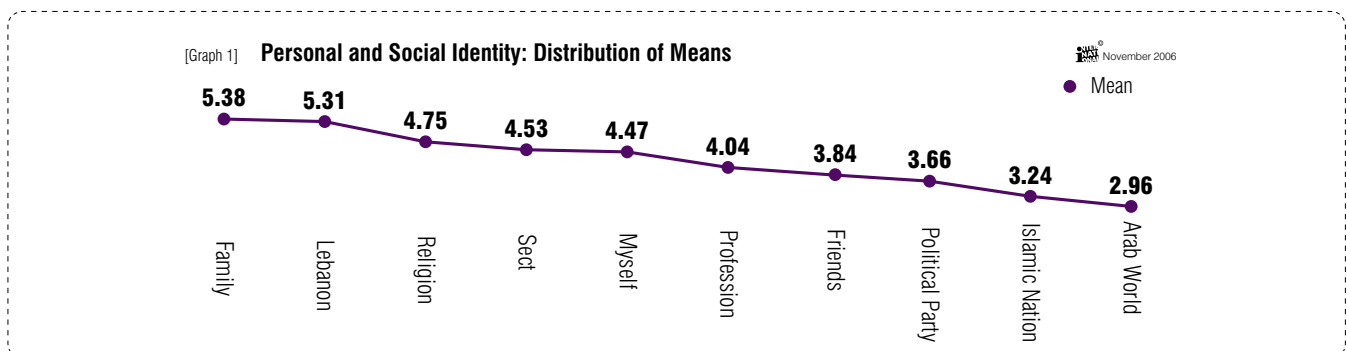
Confession	Mohafaza	Beirut	Beqa'a	Mount Lebanon	South	North	Total	Percent
Sunni		95	61	34	39	170	399	26.6%
Shia'a		42	106	32	235	0	415	27.7%
Druze		3	9	66	6	0	84	5.6%
Maronite		12	28	179	36	97	352	23.5%
Orthodox		21	16	26	8	41	112	7.5%
Other*		33	26	38	15	26	138	9.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>206</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* The Category "Other" includes Catholics (63 respondents), Armenian Orthodox/Catholic (47), Alaoui (16) and Christian Minorities (12).

## Personal and Social Identity

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of a series of questions that revolve around the participants' personal and social identity. Participants were asked to rate their endorsement of these identities using a 7 point scale that ranged from 0 (No, Not at All) to 6 (to a Very Large Extent).

Analyses of the data indicate that the most highly endorsed identities among the Lebanese participants are Family and Lebanon, followed by Religion and Confession. The least endorsed identities are the Arab and Islamic identities (Graph no. 1).



The statistical analysis of identity by confession showed the following:

- ⊙ There were significant differences between confessions on all identity dimensions except one: participants across confessions endorsed the Confessional Identity equally.
- ⊙ Maronite participants identified with their Family to a higher degree than both Sunni and Druze participants.
- ⊙ When it came to the Arab and Islamic Identity, both Sunni and Shia'a participants endorsed the Islamic Identity to a larger degree than the Arab Identity. However, an interesting Sunni by Shia'a interaction was found: Sunni participants scored significantly higher than Shia'a participants on the Arab Identity dimension, but scored lower than Shia'a participants on the Islamic Identity dimension (Graph no. 2).

### Confessionalism, Leadership, Religiosity, Group Threat and Life Satisfaction

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of five different scales measuring confessionalism (degree to which one favors his/her own confession and thinks in confessional terms), religiosity (the role played by religion in one's life), perceived group threat (degree to which participants perceive their group to be threatened by others), leadership affiliation (degree to which participants are loyal to and follow their leader/or reference (Za'im/marja'a), and life satisfaction (cognitive evaluation of one's well being, and satisfaction with life).

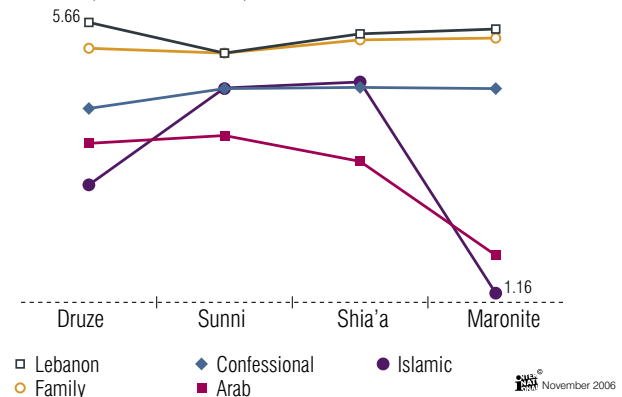
Overall, 12.5% (1/8) of participants said they have/follow no leader/reference whatsoever.

Analyses of the data related to this section reveal that Leadership ranks first, with a mean of 5.56, followed by Confessionalism (5.50), Religiosity (5.07), and Group Threat (5.02). These scores are above the scale midpoint, thus indicating that the Lebanese participants have strong leadership affiliation, are highly confessional, highly religious and perceive their group to be threatened by other groups. Furthermore, Life Satisfaction (3.99) was below the midpoint, indicating that the Lebanese participants expressed dissatisfaction with their lives. Graph no. 3 shows the mean distribution of these variables by confession.

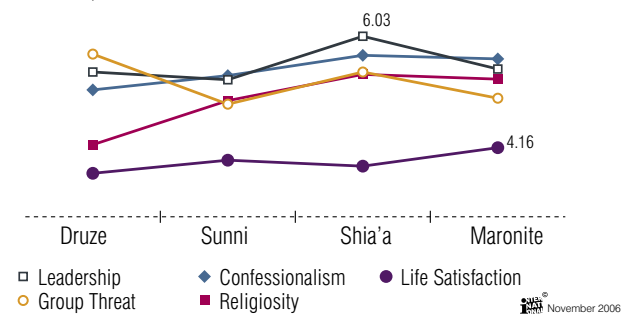
### Willingness for Peaceful Defense vs. Willingness to Fight

The third section of the questionnaire tackled the issue of readiness to defend peacefully (through negotiations, demonstrations, etc.) a variety of causes, on a scale from

[Graph 2] **Personal and Social Identity: By Confession**  
(Selected Confessions) Distribution of Means



[Graph 3] **Confessionalism, Leadership, Religiosity, Group Threat and Life Satisfaction by Confession**  
(Selected Confessions) Distribution of Means



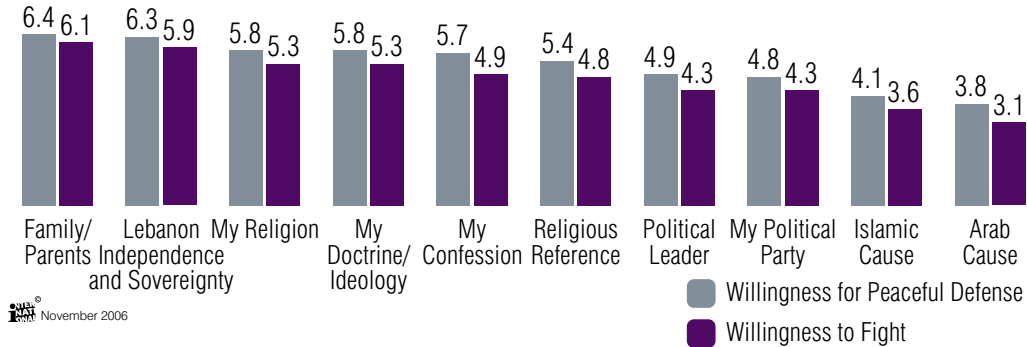
1 to 7, where 1 = (No, Not at All) to 7 (to a Very Large Extent).

The analysis of means reveals that participants are willing to peacefully defend their Families (6.42), followed by Lebanon's Independence and Sovereignty (6.27), Religion (5.80) and Doctrine/Ideology (5.79).

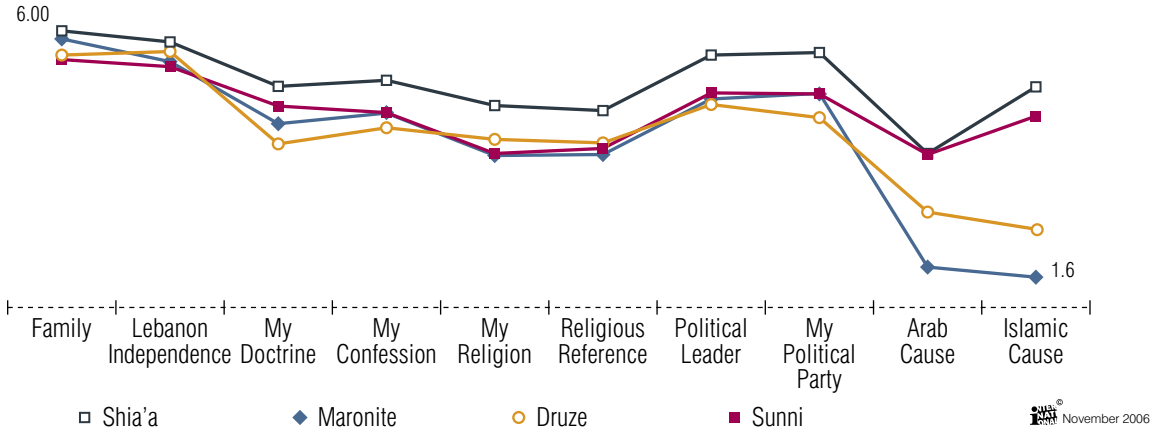
When asked whether they are willing to fight for the same causes, the same ranking was preserved with Family in the first place, followed by Lebanon's Independence and Sovereignty, Religion and Doctrine/Ideology, but at lower means.

This indicates that the willingness to defend peacefully any of the listed causes is higher than the willingness to fight for any of them (Graph no. 4).

[Graph 4] **Willingness for Peaceful Defense vs. Willingness to Fight**  
Distribution of Means



[Graph 5] **Willingness to Fight by Confession (Selected Confessions)**  
Distribution of Means



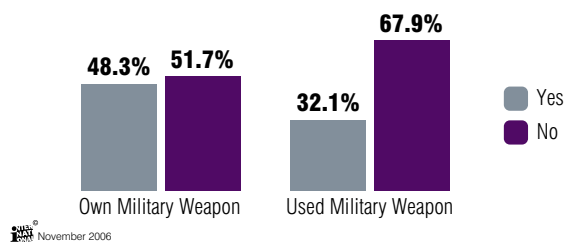
Furthermore, Lebanese participants were more willing to fight for religious/confessional causes than for their political leaders or parties.

Analysis of the Willingness to Fight by confession reveals that any Arab Cause and any Islamic Cause are highly endorsed by Sunni and Shia'a participants and not by Druze and Maronite. In addition, Islamic Cause seems to have greater appeal to both Sunni and Shia'a participants than the Arab Cause (Graph no. 5).

### Ownership and Use of a Military Weapon

When asked whether they own a military weapon, 48.3% of participants reported to have access, personally or through relatives, to military weapons. On the other hand, 32.1% of participants reported to have used a military weapon before (Graph no. 6).

[Graph 6] **Ownership vs. Use of Military Weapons**



“48.3% of participants reported to have access to military weapons.”

Limiting the selection to male participants only, 80% of Druze male participants reported to have access to a military weapon, compared to 58.7% of Shia'a, 20.9% of Sunni and 50.8% of Maronite male participants.

Participants were also asked whether they are “willing to use military weapons if the situation gets worse in Lebanon”. On this issue, 40.6% of participants said yes, compared to 30.8% who said no, and 28.6% who said “Maybe”.

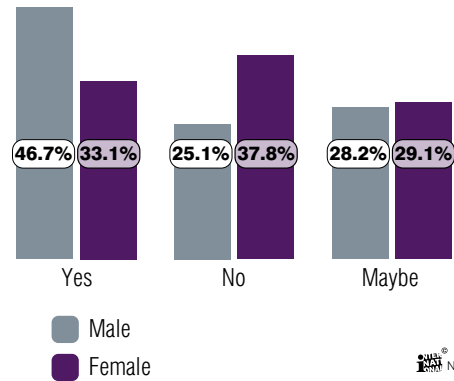
As to the readiness to use weapons by gender, 33.1% of female respondents said they are ready to use weapons in case the situation gets worse in Lebanon, while 46.7% of men said the same. (Graph no. 7)

The distribution of results by Mohafaza shows that 53.7% of participants in South Lebanon report to be ready to use a military weapon if things get worse in the country, compared to 42.7% in Beqa'a, 42.5% in North Lebanon, 38.4% in Beirut and 26.9% in Mount Lebanon (Graph no. 8).

Again, limiting the selection to males only, results are highest for Shia'a male participants, 64.6% of whom reported to be ready to use military weapons if things get worse in the country, with Sunni participants ranking second (51.3%) - (Graph no. 9).

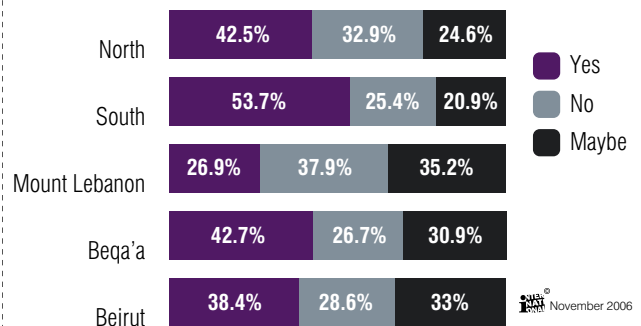
On the other hand, when asked whether they think that Others are willing to use military weapons if the situation gets worse in Lebanon, the percent of participants who agreed on this issue increased to 60.6%, compared to only 9.1% who said No, and 30.3% who replied Maybe.

[Graph 7] Willingness to Use Military Weapons by Gender



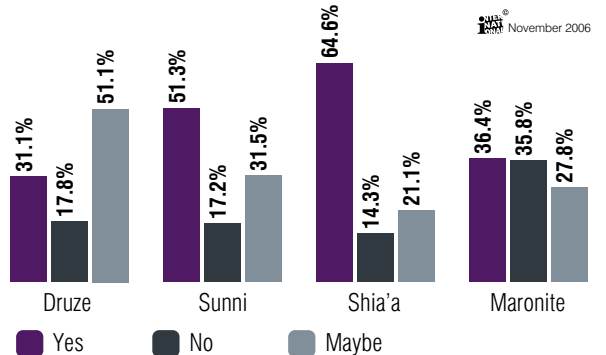
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[Graph 8] Willingness to Use Military Weapons by Mohafaza



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[Graph 9] Willingness to Use Military Weapons Among Males by Confession (Selected Confessions) %



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## Conclusion

Based on the previous findings, it is worthy to highlight the following results:

1. Family remains the most highly endorsed identity. Family Identity (5.38) was quickly followed by Lebanon (5.31), Religion (4.75) and Confession (4.53).
2. The Lebanese are strongly affiliated with their Leader Za'im/Marja'a; they are highly confessional, highly religious and also have a strong sense that the group they belong to is threatened. Furthermore, their life satisfaction levels are below the midpoint, a worrying trend when combined with the previous findings.
3. Lebanese are ready to fight for their Family in the first place, followed by Lebanon's Independence and Sovereignty, and their Religion and Doctrine. Interestingly, while the Lebanese express high Leadership Affiliation, they are also less likely to fight for them. Religion, Ideologies and Confessionalism are more prominently positioned on the list.
4. 48.3% of participants reported to have access, personally or through relatives, to military weapons. 32.1% of participants reported to have used a military weapon before.
5. Only 25.2% (1/4) of Lebanese males said they would not use a military weapon if things get worse in Lebanon.
6. Arab Identity and Fighting for Arab Causes have significantly less appeal than Islamic Identity and Fighting for Islamic Causes among both Sunni and Shia'a participants.
7. When the picture is viewed comprehensively, (i.e. identity profile, confessionalism, perceived threat, willingness to use weapons etc.), the situation in Lebanon seems to be dangerously polarized, and potentially explosive.

## The Lebanese and Books

In a survey conducted by **Information International** in 2003 on a sample of 600 people in Greater Beirut:

- ◉ 36.7% of respondents read nothing and the core of regular readers was composed of university graduates and those between 15 and 24 years of age.
- ◉ 30.7% of readers said they read books, but estimates sizing up the number of serious readers of books reached a mere 14% of the population.
- ◉ 75.9% of the respondents use the internet for chatting while 41% use it for research. 

“32.1% of participants reported to have used a military weapon before.”

### Description of the sample

The poll was conducted between November 18-27, 2006 on 1500 women and men in the different Lebanese areas respectively and according to the voters in each area, also respectively and the number of voters of each confession in these areas. Respondents were of different ages and different social levels and incomes.