

# The Lebanese polled 76.6% do not trust Politicians

Political divisions between the Opposition and Pro-government Forces reached their peak, leading to a vacuum in the Presidency, a “constitutionally-challenged” government, foreign interference that widens the gap between the Lebanese and violent rhetoric of politicians and clerics.

Meanwhile, the people’s main concerns are addressed neither by the media nor by politicians, in spite of rising unemployment and low spending power as a result of significant rise in prices of basic goods and needs, with the absence of real growth.

*Information International* surveyed the Lebanese on the political situation, their position on the Pro-government and Opposition Forces, presidential elections and their daily concerns.

## Position on Foreign Mediations to resolve the Current Crisis

The majority of respondents (34.7%) are “absolutely against” foreign mediations<sup>(1)</sup> to resolve the current crisis, while 31% are “absolutely with” them. 9.8% of respondents are with mediations which back the Pro-government Forces, compared to 6.5% who are for mediations in support of the Opposition Forces. 13.6% did not specify and 4.4% “don’t know.”

When it comes to answers by confession, a high percentage of Druze, Sunni and Maronite respondents are with foreign mediations compared to a low percentage of Shia’a respondents. Respondents’ answers on foreign mediations by confession are shown in Table no.1.

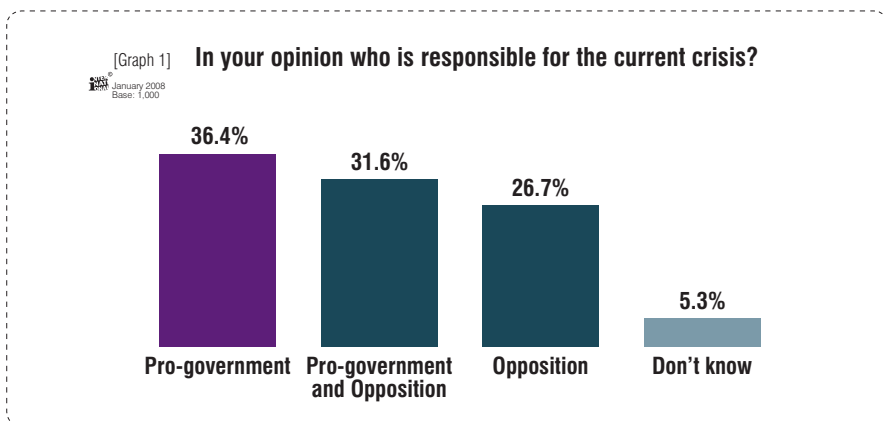
## On the Pro-government and Opposition Forces Party Responsible for the Current Crisis

36.4% of respondents hold the Pro-government Forces responsible for the current crisis; 31.6% accuse both the Pro-government and Opposition, while 26.7% hold the Opposition Forces responsible. 5.3% say they do not know (Graph no.1). While the percentages of those who accuse the Pro-government or both parties are almost the same among Christian confessions, a strong division in views is shown among Islamic confessions, as a high percentage of Shia’a respondents (73%) accuse the Pro-government Forces of the current crisis and only 2.3% accuse the Opposition. On the

**Respondents’ answers on foreign mediations by confession Table 1**

Position on foreign mediations	Confession					
	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia’a	Druze
Absolutely with	36.8%	24.7%	25.5%	37.8%	21.7%	56.4%
Absolutely against	35.4%	46.2%	41.2%	24%	43.1%	7.3%
No position	14.8%	11.8%	13.7%	14.1%	10.9%	12.7%
With mediations in support of the Pro-government	6.3%	7.5%	13.7%	18.7%	3%	20%
With mediations in support of the Opposition	2.2%	5.4%	2%	1.1%	17.2%	0%
Don’t know	4.5%	4.4%	3.9%	4.3%	4.1%	3.6%

Source: Information International- January 2008

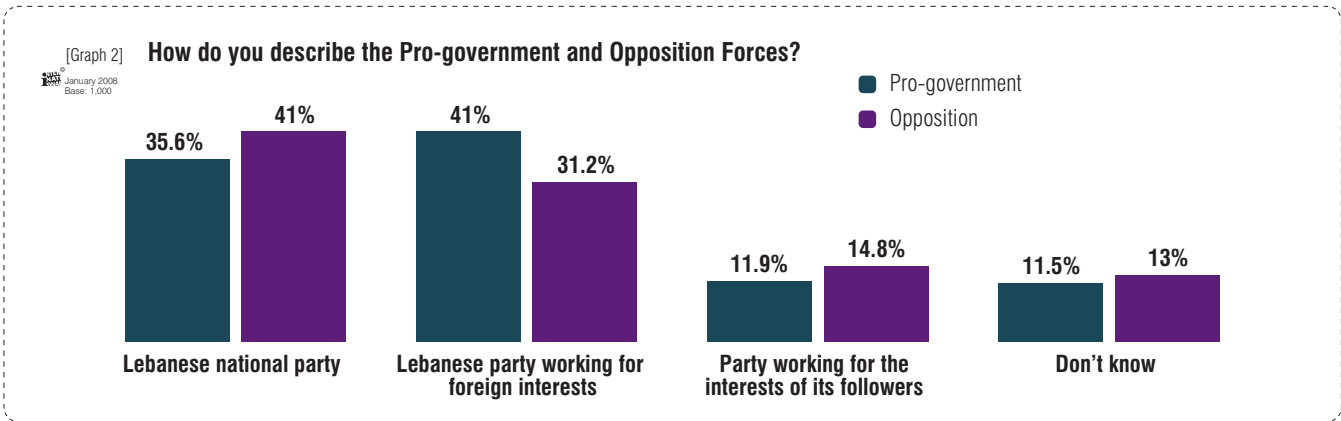


other hand, the majority of Druze and Sunni hold the Opposition Forces responsible. Table no.2 shows respondents’ position on the party responsible for the current crisis by confession.

**Respondents’ position on the party responsible for the current crisis by confession Table 2**

Party responsible for current crisis	Confession					
	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia’a	Druze
Pro-government Forces	34.5%	33.3%	31.4%	6.9%	73%	14.5%
Opposition Forces	26.9%	22.6%	25.5%	50.8%	2.3%	60%
Pro-government and Opposition Forces	33.2%	38.7%	33.3%	36.6%	21.7%	16.4%
Don’t know	5.4%	5.4%	9.8%	5.7%	3%	9.1%

Source: Information International- January 2008



**Description of the Pro-government and Opposition Forces**

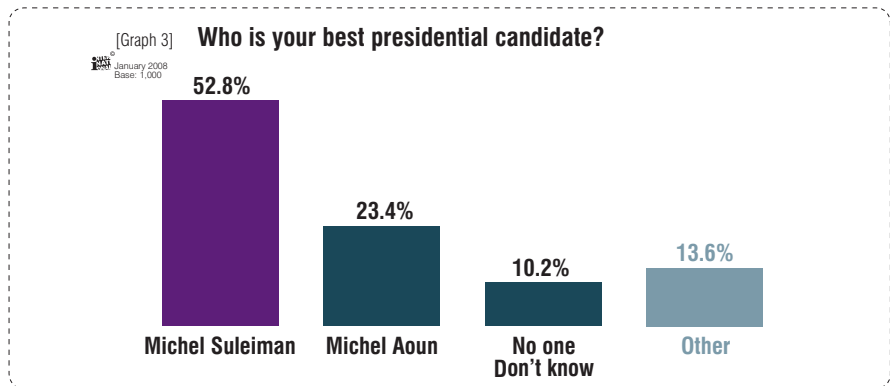
The Lebanese are strongly divided in their description of the Pro-government and Opposition Forces. Nonetheless, the support rate of the Opposition is higher than that of the Pro-government. In fact, 41% of respondents describe the Opposition Forces as a “Lebanese national party” compared to 35.6% who describe the Pro-government the same. 31.2% of respondents say the Opposition is a “Lebanese party working for foreign interests” compared to 41% who describe the Pro-government as such. 14.8% of respondents say the Opposition is a “party working for the interests of its followers” while 11.9% describe the Pro-government the same. 13% say “don’t know” for the Opposition and 11.5% for the Pro-government. (Graph no. 2)

Meanwhile, the majority of respondents (39.5%) say that the Pro-government Forces “do not commit to pledges and agreements” compared to 27.8% who accuse the Opposition Forces of the same. 26.7% say both parties do not commit to pledges and agreements, and 6% “don’t know”.

**Presidential Elections**

Presidential elections are currently one of the hottest issues in the Lebanese political arena. Army Commander General Michel Suleiman is candidate number one, supported by 52.8% of respondents, followed by Michel Aoun (23.4%).

10.2% say “no one” or “don’t know” and the remaining percentage (13.6%) is distributed among several politicians, including Boutros Harb (2.8%), Riad Salameh (2.4%) and Nassib Lahoud (2.4%) (Graph no.3).



Respondents’ answers by confession, as shown in Table no.3, show that a high percentage of Druze and Sunni respondents support Michel Suleiman, while the percentage of Maronite, Orthodox and Shia’a respondents who support Suleiman is almost the same; on the other hand, a higher support to Aoun is among the Shia’a, Catholic and Maronites and the lowest is among Druze and Sunni respondents.

“Army Commander General Michel Suleiman is candidate number one, supported by 52.8% of respondents, followed by Michel Aoun (23.4%)”

Best presidential candidate by confession							Table 3
Candidate	Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia’a	Druze
Michel Suleiman		48.4%	46.2%	37.3%	63.4%	49.8%	80%
Michel Aoun		28.3%	23.7%	33.3%	6.5%	37.8%	3.6%
Don't know/ No one		6.7%	10.8%	11.8%	17.5%	2.6%	9.1%
Other candidates		16.6%	19.3%	17.6%	12.6%	9.8%	7.3%

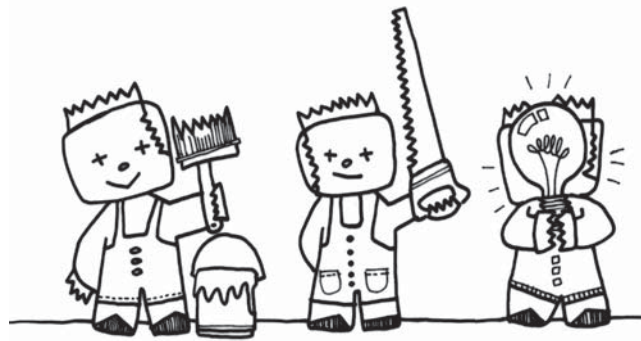
*Source: Information International- January 2008*

In a previous opinion poll conducted by **Information International** in February 2007, Michel Aoun was supported by 29.4% of respondents, followed by Boutros Harb (10.8%), Riad Salameh (9.3%) and Michel Suleiman (7.9%). This means that the increase in the support for Suleiman is due to the agreement of the different parties over his name. In case they agree on a different candidate, the rate would definitely change.

## Formation of the new Government

According to the Constitution, if presidential elections are held, the current Cabinet will be considered resigned and parliamentary consultations are held to appoint a Prime Minister, who would form a new government.

The majority of respondents (36.7%) support the formation of a “neutral government of technocrats”, while 28.8% support a “national unity government where political parties are represented according to their parliamentary size.” 18.2% of respondents are with a “government with a two-thirds majority for the Pro-government Forces”; 9.4% support a “government equally divided between the Pro-government and Opposition; 6.6% say “don’t know” while 0.3% are with a “secular government without confessional representation” (Graph no.4).



“The majority of respondents (36.7%) support the formation of a “neutral government of technocrats””

## Opinions on Politicians

When asked about their opinion on politicians, 42.7% of respondents say they “do not trust politicians at all”, 33.9% “do not trust them to a certain extent”, 17.1% “trust them to a certain extent” and 1.5% “trust them totally.” 4.8% say “don’t know.”

This means that 76.6% of respondents do not trust politicians.

Respondents’ answers by confession show that the Druze have the highest rate of trust (12.7%), while the Orthodox and the Shia’a have the lowest (0% and 0.4% respectively).

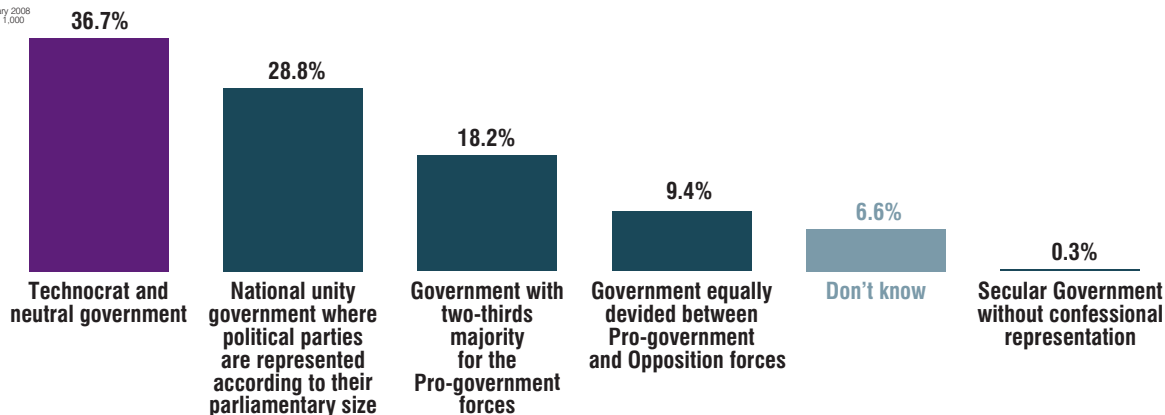
Table no.4 shows respondents’ opinion on politicians by confession.

Opinion	Confession	Maronite	Orthodox	Catholic	Sunni	Shia’a	Druze
Totally trust		1.8%	0%	2%	0.8%	0.4%	12.7%
Trust to a certain extent		13.5%	12.9%	17.6%	17.2%	21.3%	25.5%
Do not trust to a certain extent		22.4%	34.4%	33.4%	37.4%	42.3%	23.6%
Do not trust at all		56.5%	45.2%	43.1%	42.4%	32.6%	18.2%
Don’t know		5.8%	7.5%	3.9%	2.2%	3.4%	20%

*Source: Information International- January 2008*

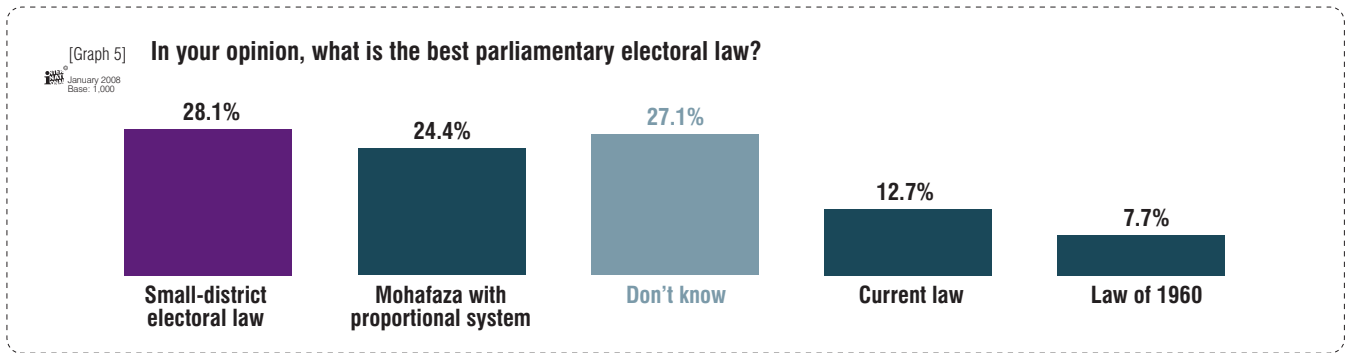
[Graph 4]  
January 2008  
Base: 1,000

### In your opinion, what is the best formula for the creation of a new government?



## Electoral Law

The coming parliamentary elections are supposed to be held between April 20th and June 20th 2009. Asked about the electoral law, 28.1% of respondents support the “small-district electoral law”, 24.4% support the “Mohafaza with the proportional system” and 27.1% “don’t know”; 12.7% are with the “current law” and only 7.7% of respondents support the “law of 1960”, known as the Qada’a law (Graph no.5).



### Summary

- Around third of the respondents are totally against foreign mediations to resolve the current crisis. The percentage of support to the mediations is high among Druze and Sunni respondents and low among Shia’a, Orthodox and Catholic respondents, while the Maronites are equally divided between supporters and objectors;
- Around third of the Lebanese hold the Pro-government and Opposition Forces responsible for the current crisis. Percentages are almost equal among Christian confessions, who hold both the Pro-government and Opposition responsible, or the Pro-government Forces alone, while strong divergence of opinions is highlighted among Islamic confessions;
- A slight majority of respondents show support to the Opposition Forces with 41% of respondents saying it is a “Lebanese national party”, and only 27.8% say it does not commit to pledges and agreements compared to 35.6% who describe the Pro-government as a “Lebanese national party” and 39.5% who say it does not commit to pledges and agreements.
- The best candidate for the Presidency, according to more than half of respondents, is General Michel Suleiman and to the quarter of respondents, Michel Aoun;
- The majority of respondents support a “technocrat and neutral government”, and more than the three-quarter of respondents (76.6%) do not trust politicians;
- 28.1% of respondents support the “small-district electoral law,” while 24.4% support the “Mohafaza with a proportional representation” and more than quarter of respondents “don’t know”.

“28.1% of respondents support the “small-district electoral law”, 24.4% support the “Mohafaza with the proportional system” and 27.1% “don’t know””

### Description of the Sample

The opinion poll was conducted between January 8-18 2008 on a sample of 1,000 respondents distributed in the different Lebanese areas based on the number of registered voters and their confessions. 52.2% of respondents were males and 47.8% females. The opinion poll covered the different age categories and social levels. The margin of error was +1.1%.

<sup>(1)</sup> The term “mediation” was put to see whether respondents view it as positive or not.