

Government & People: Diverging Priorities

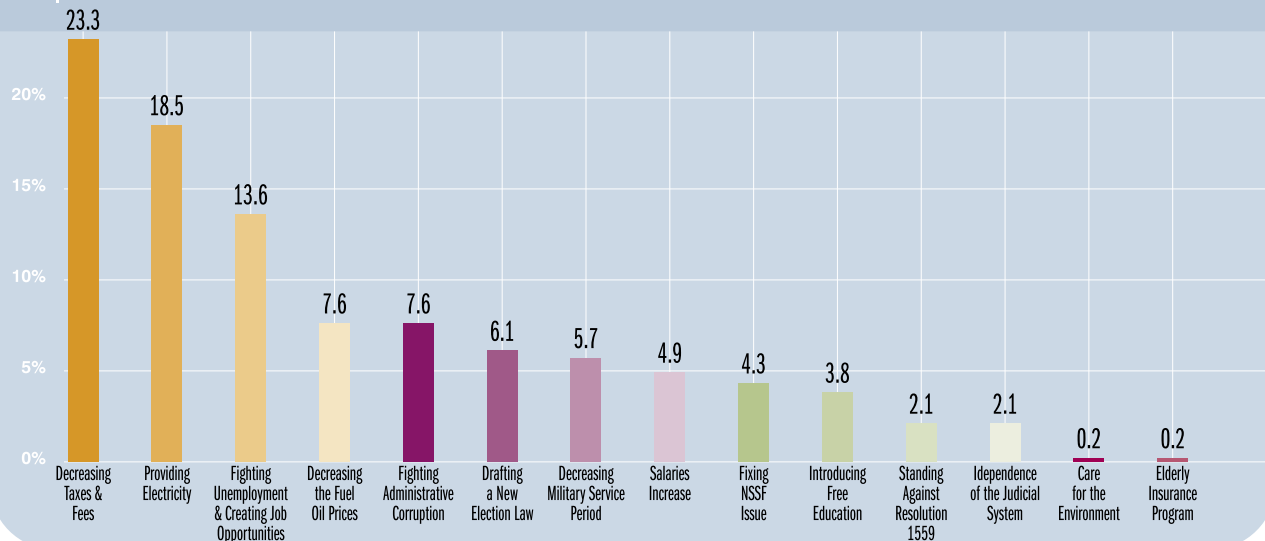
(Part 2 of 2)



The latest government's ministerial declaration included a pledge to work on several projects aimed at alleviating Lebanese living standards. Those projects include:

- Providing electricity & restructuring Electricité du Liban
- Reconsidering telephone charges in order to offer rates similar to those in the region
- Increasing agricultural production and decreasing its cost, while concurrently working to enforce monitoring and prevent smuggling
- Developing the health sector by supporting hospitals and regulating medical bills
- Establishing an education plan to cover Lebanon
- Working on the closure of all files regarding the displaced in the relevant villages
- Executing projects in the liberated areas to help communities return to their homes
- Reconsidering social services, ending waste in the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and issuing an insurance program for the elderly
- Drafting a new election law to strengthen social ties and unity
- Solving the issue of military service
- Dealing with UN Resolution 1559
- Reinforcing the judicial system and its independence
- Ending corruption and waste in all sectors
- Restructuring the tax system, including a uniform income tax
- Strengthening the economy and creating new jobs

G1 | Government's Work Priorities %



The Priority: A new election law or a new tax law?

As shown in Graph 1, respondents suggested the priorities of the government should be as follows: Lowering taxes and fees (23.3%), providing electricity (18.5%), fighting unemployment and creating jobs (13.6%), decreasing fuel oil prices (7.6%), fighting administrative corruption (7.6%), drafting a new election law (6.1%), reducing obligatory military service (5.7%), increasing wages (4.9%), solving the NSSF issue (4.3%), introducing free education (3.8%), opposing UN Resolution 1559 (2.1%), promoting an independent judiciary (2.1%), caring for the environment (0.2%) and creating an insurance program for the elderly (0.2%).

The figures show that the public's priorities are at odds with those of the government, since the latter considers a new election law, the issue of military service, electricity and issuing a public budget to be at the top of the list. In contrast, the public is more concerned with job creation, electricity and lowering taxes.

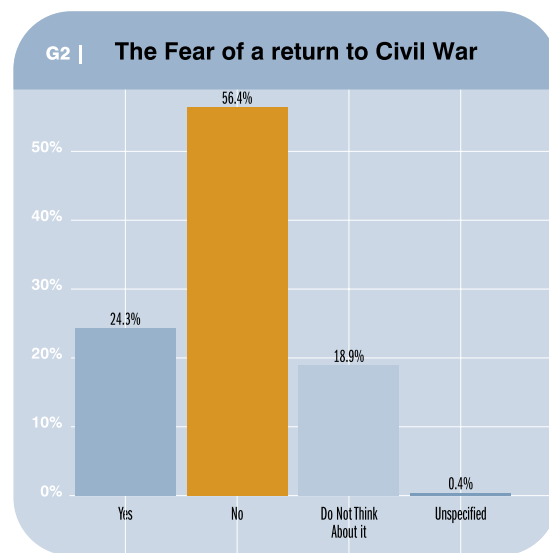
Priorities in Three Years

The priority list proposed by Lebanese citizens was reshuffled in the last three years owing to changing circumstances. A previous poll conducted by *Information International* in May 2001 (200 days

after the formation of the old government) indicated other priorities, shown in Table 1.

Fear of a return to civil war

The "ghost" of the civil war continues to haunt some Lebanese citizens, based on the most recent poll results. Out of those polled, 24.3% said the thought of another civil war still troubles them, compared with 56.4% of respondents who do not fear another war, 18.9% who do not think about the issue and 0.4% who did not specify. (see G2)



Sample & Methodology

The poll was conducted between 3 and 8 November 2004, taking a sample of 1,250 people distributed across Lebanon, in face-to-face interviews.

The gender distribution was 55.7% male and 44.3% female. However, 5.8% of females approached refused to participate, mainly indicating "no interest in politics".

The age distribution of respondents was as follows: 15.1% between 15-24 years, 26.7% between 25-34 years, 27.3% between 35-44 years, 19.5% between 45-54 years, 8.6% between 55-64 years, & 2.9% for those over 65.

The survey had a margin of error of $\pm 2\%$

Main Priorities	April 2000 Poll	Main Priorities	May 2001 Poll
Limiting price increases	19.6%	Decreasing the deficit & the public debt	18.4%
Providing job opportunities	15.9%	Economic growth	16.6%
Offering free medical services	12.1%	Building a state of law & institutions	19.1%
Offering free education	10.9%	Marketing Lebanon to investors	12.2%
Limiting taxes	5.8%	Re-organizing the finance & tax systems	10%
Main Priorities	February 2002 Poll	Main Priorities	November 2004 Poll
Improving economic conditions	24.5%	Decreasing taxes & fees	23.3%
Decreasing public debt	21.6%	Providing electricity	18.5%
Providing job opportunities	21.4%	Fighting unemployment	13.6%
Building a state of law & institutions	15.3%	Lowering fuel oil prices	7.6%
Designing a new tax system	7.3%	Fighting administrative corruption	7.6%