WOMEN in politics

Delving into Women Empowerment, Perceptions & Attitudes

FOR EQUALITY
madanyat
للمساواة

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Table of Content

I. Partners 4
II. Rationale 5
III. Methodology 6
1. The Qualitative Method 6
2. The Quantitative Method 7
3. Data Collection Process 8
4. Challenges and Limitations 10
IV. Chapters 11
1. Women in politics 11
1.1 Involvement in Politics and Political News 11
1.2 Perception of Men Vs Women in the Workplace 15
1.3 Gender Disparity and Preferences in the Political Field 19
1.4 Ideal Men and Women Politicians 28
2. Women in media 33
2.1 Involvement and Gender Disparity in the Lebanese Political Shows 34
3. Female Key Challenges and Areas of Improvement in the Political Field 37
3.1 Challenges Facing Women in Politics 40
3.2 Ways to Empower Women Politically 41
V. Conclusion 42
VI. Table of Figures 46

I. Partners

Madanyat
Madanyat's aim is to bring together women, youth and men from around the country willing to work for political, economic, cultural and social justice for all. The NGO objectives are to actively contribute to reaching gender equality in all designated and elected bodies, advocate a new vision where politics is accessible to women and youth, raise awareness about the impact of women's under-representation and spread art and culture as a vector of social cohesion, diversity and human rights.

UNDP
UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and the planet.
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European Union
EU member states decided to pool their expertise, resources, and destiny, and have built a region characterized by stability, democracy and sustainable development while preserving their cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. Respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law are the fundamental values of the European Union.

The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and values with other countries and peoples that are outside its borders. The European Union is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in Lebanon. It supports Lebanon's stability, independence and sovereignty, its prosperity and democratic order.

USAID
USAID is committed to helping Lebanon modernize and achieve long-term prosperity through programs that strengthen service delivery and create new jobs. USAID activities bolster the efforts of Lebanese institutions to provide high quality education, as well as improve the provision of water, sanitation, and other public services, particularly in poor and underserved areas of the country. USAID support enhances economic opportunity, promotes environmental protection, improves local governance, and helps mitigate the impacts of the Syria crisis in Lebanon. Since 2006, USAID has provided more than $1.3 billion in assistance for the Lebanese people.

IPSOS
Ipsos is the leading market research company in the Middle East and North Africa and the third largest in the world. It is present in 90 markets and employs more than 18,000 people. Ipsos' passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers and even employees. It serves more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.
Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris and has been since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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II. Rationale

This national study was developed during the period of January – March 2021 by Madanyat in partnership with UNDP, and conducted by IPSOS. It aims to explore the prevailing perceptions and attitudes toward the role of Lebanese women and their participation in politics. Understanding these perceptions will empower women to make informed decisions and improve their strategies in their fight for their rights and positions in the political arena.

The findings of the study will allow a better identification of the challenges that should be addressed, in order to decrease the gender inequality gap, especially in politics.
Therefore, this study will serve as a backbone for the work of political parties, NGOs and the media who are designing new programs or planning for the elections, as it provides them with insight into the standpoints of the Lebanese people, women and men alike, towards women's participation in the political life.

According to the World Economic Forum Gender Gap report 2020, Lebanon has one of the highest overall gender gaps in the world, ranking 145th among 153 countries. In fact, Lebanese men still have the upper hand in numerous fields, and patriarchal norms remain flagrantly discriminatory. The number of women who are defying this status quo is very low compared to that of men who are exerting influence and control. Even though Lebanese women secured the right to vote only 5 years after men, their political participation is still far from the desired outcome, at both local and national levels. The most recent municipal elections in 2016 witnessed a very modest rise in women participation: almost 6.9% of candidates were women compared to 5.6% in 2010, according to UNDP's Publication "Women in the 2016 Municipal Elections". In the 2018 parliamentary elections, 113 women ran for office and 86 of them made it to candidate lists, which is an unprecedented number, as indicated in the UNDP's 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections Gender Key Results. However, despite the efforts exerted by several NGOs to support female candidates, only six women were elected.

Although their results were disappointing, these elections demonstrated that women are willing to run for elections and get involved in politics, and that political parties should be encouraged to nominate women candidates in municipal and parliamentary elections. When women were given the same opportunities as men candidates, they obtained an equal number of votes (Kulluna Watani, 2018). The ballot papers clearly attest that when voters knew the women candidates, they voted for them. Moreover, according to the UNDP Gender Key Results of the 2018 parliamentary elections, 9 women candidates obtained 56.4% of their preferential votes from women voters, which belies the myth that women are not in solidarity with each other.

While a strong case can be made for why there should be more women in politics and how women promote advancement and prosperity in Lebanon, it is important to listen to what women themselves have to say about the matter: What do they think of women politicians in Lebanon? Why is there only a handful of women members in the Lebanese parliament? Why are women not in the frontline? What is hindering their election? Why is their presence on political talk shows so occasional? Why do they not address political issues, rather than only talk about women empowerment and social issues?

In light of the above, it becomes clear that the deep-rooted attitudes toward women's political participation are shifting and that the need to adopt new strategies should be considered. While understanding the reason behind women's under-representation in parliament is key, it would be of great interest as well to re-evaluate the attitude of Lebanese people toward women and their role in politics, especially after the 2019 uprising and the Beirut blast in 2020. The overall objective of this study is to feed into the gender strategy adopted by NGOs, international organizations and local commissions, in addition to traditional and emerging political parties and activists, in preparation for the upcoming 2022 municipal and parliamentary elections.

III. Methodology

In view of the scope and objectives of the study, a twofold approach was applied combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. While the qualitative method used a set of projective techniques to identify and understand the respondents' feelings, motivations, and influencing factors, the quantitative method sought to quantify the respondents' answers based on a well-structured questionnaire.

1. The Qualitative Method

Multiple focus group discussions were initiated, as part of the qualitative method, in order to capture sensitive data, which would not have been otherwise captured through the questionnaire. The insights collected during this phase were also used to direct the next quantitative phase.

The qualitative study consisted of the following:
- Preparing a screener that includes the eligibility criteria;
- Starting the recruitment process from Madanyat's database to reach the desired sample size;
- Editing the discussion guide;
- Conducting the fieldwork.

Survey Sampling Strategy
The participants were recruited from all over Lebanon. Women activists were contacted and asked to recommend other women and younger men and women to participate in the focus group discussions.

Six focus group discussions were conducted within a week. The sessions were divided as follows:
- Two sessions with women from the age group above 45, highly active on the social and political fronts, often members of a political party, or active in the municipal elections, already ran or consider running for municipal office. They were active in the October 17th protests, defend and advocate for different humanitarian causes, primarily related to women's rights, human rights, as well as educating the youth on patriotism and citizenship rights.
- Two sessions with younger women who are between 20 and 40 years of age, who are still pursuing their university education in majors related to law, political science, journalism,

architecture, biology, public relations, human rights, international relations etc. or, have younger children and juggle the responsibilities of family life, professional life, and the humanitarian causes that they advocate for throughout their career and daily life.

- Two sessions: one with women from the general public, and one with men from the general public. The participants were between 20 and 45 years of age, completing their education or already employed. They are mostly active on the social front and have built their political opinion and views throughout the years either from their family inclinations or from their own research and curiosity. They are active in helping the needy, especially those affected by the current economic situation and the August 4th blast.

The duration of every session was two hours. It was essential to keep the discussions as detailed and informative as possible while ensuring that no tension or biases were to interfere and jeopardize the results. The discussions shed light on key concepts which were covered in the survey questions, such as the impact of the media and the reasons preventing women from being interested in political matters.

The discussions with older women respondents who are active in politics paved the way for a closer understanding of their perceptions on their roles in politics and the barriers they are encountering. The answers were pivotal in developing the questionnaire discussion guide. On the other hand, the session conducted with younger women respondents contributed significantly to the comparison of the views of Lebanese women who share the same background but come from different generations.

The last two sessions reflected the general public's perception of the state of Lebanese women in politics. The session with men participants was essential in shaping the overall effective debate on women empowerment. The segregation of groups by gender ensured that no participant was intimidated or biased when answering the questions.

2. The Quantitative Method

The quantitative phase was launched upon finalization of the focus group discussions. This approach comprised administering a questionnaire to participants from all over Lebanon, followed by data collection and analysis. This method was used to quantify the perceptions and attitudes of the Lebanese people. The quantitative study consisted of the following:

- Developing and translating the questionnaire;
- Collecting the data;
- Analysing the data;
- Preparing a final report.

The quantitative guidelines and questions were designed based on the study goals, the focus group discussion results, and the issues raised by the participants. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic as it was the language used for data collection through phone calls. Each call had a duration of 10 minutes.

Survey Sampling Strategy

The study successfully targeted 1,200 Lebanese citizens from all over Lebanon, aged 21 years and older.

The stratified random sampling method was applied to secure a better geographical

distribution of the participants. The latest available official figures from the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) were used, as advised:

- The participants were 52% women compared to 48% men.
- The governorates targeted were Mount Lebanon (41%), North Lebanon (20%), Bekaa (11%), South/ Nabatieh (20%) and Beirut (8%).
- The age distribution was 26% youth aged between 21 and 30, 29% aged between 31 and 45, and 45% of the participants were older than 45 years.

3. Data Collection Process

The interviews were conducted through the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system which has proved to be of great assistance to interviewers in terms of applying filters and questionnaire routing and improving data accuracy and reliability.

To enhance the response rate, as well as the efforts and time invested in such response, it is best to minimize the number of phone numbers used, and in return, maximize call backs. Appointment was set with the respondent whenever possible, and a proper automated follow up was made through the same system.

IPSOS used its internal database list. The numbers were selected randomly by the system and then put on the screens for the interviewers to make the calls. The same system controls the quotas achieved and signals if a person is out of quotas.

The numbers were contacted up to 6 attempts before being dropped and the system requesting new contacts. The interviewer redialled the number every 3 hours, up to 3 times a day for 2 days and then dropped it. This was applied on the standard database (5 times the required sample size).

- Attempts covered different times of the day.
- All unreachable contacts (NA, busy, line switched off, call later) were re-contacted. Time of re-contact was set in the system.
- Appointments were also set in the system.
- Completed, refused, wrong numbers and stopped interviews were dropped out from the list.

The call outcome was entered in the system informing the status and the attempts done for each contact. Selected samples were managed, and a number of attempts exhausted to maximize the response rate.

Dialling rules

Selecting Landline / Mobile phones: Dial the number generated by the system.

Sample management was done as follows:

Status	Action per Item
No answer/line switched off	Displayed again on screen by the system. Number was redialled twice per day (different timing) and had the same dialling frequency for 3 days before the number was dropped.
Out of service/disconnected	Out of number list
Respondent refused the interview	Out of number list
Interview was completed	Number can be dialled for recall
Line was busy	Number was redialled up to 3 times per day for 3 days and then the number was dropped
Person was busy, or not currently available (take appointment if the respondent agreed)	If the respondent agreed, an appointment was taken. If not, then the interview was rejected from the list.

Recording attempt results:
Register the response to the call: all calls were documented so that the response rate/number of attempts was clearly measured, and then analysed for future improvements of the lists provided.

The system kept a log for all attempts and a call status for each attempt.

If call was answered: The interviewer read the introduction script as shown on the screen, in a clear way, to inform the respondent about the content and objectives of the call.

The following options may occur:

- Interview accepted: interview continued.
- Interview refused: interview stopped, and the phone number dropped from the database.

Person busy or not present: Call later: the interviewer set an appointment and registered the number in the system. The number automatically popped up upon appointment.

Number busy or call not answered: attempt result recorded.

Number inactive or not a household: number dropped from the database and never called again.

4. Challenges and Limitations

With the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic and its direct and indirect repercussions on the country as a whole, the implementation of this national study while complying with the safety regulations imposed by the government in Lebanon was the major challenge encountered. Due to the pandemic-triggered lockdown, all the study stages from recruitment to implementation, including both the qualitative and quantitative phases, were completed either online or over the phone.

The focus group discussions were conducted online with various groups from all over Lebanon via Microsoft Teams meetings. This provided the unprecedented opportunity to gather people from different regions to meet, in just one click. This might not have been possible, had the meetings been held live. Moreover, the survey administration and collection of quantitative data over the phone boosted the response rate as a result of the multiple attempts made to contact unresponsive participants.

These major changes in the implementation of the study were however carefully planned to ensure that the proposed timeline and the research findings were not compromised.

IV. Chapters

1. *WOMEN* in politics

The presence of gender discrimination in the Lebanese society, the prevailing patriarchal mindset, as well as governmental laws are the main issues that impede a woman's path towards success, specially in politics. Women are commonly raised differently than men, and this discrimination prevails in remote areas away from the main cities. It is common in certain regions and societies to limit the female responsibility to household and children, and to look at her as weak and dependent; accordingly, she is treated as less capable and at times finds herself in abusive situations. This chapter will delve into the perception of women in politics.

1.1 Involvement in Politics and Political News

Level of interest in politics

N=1200

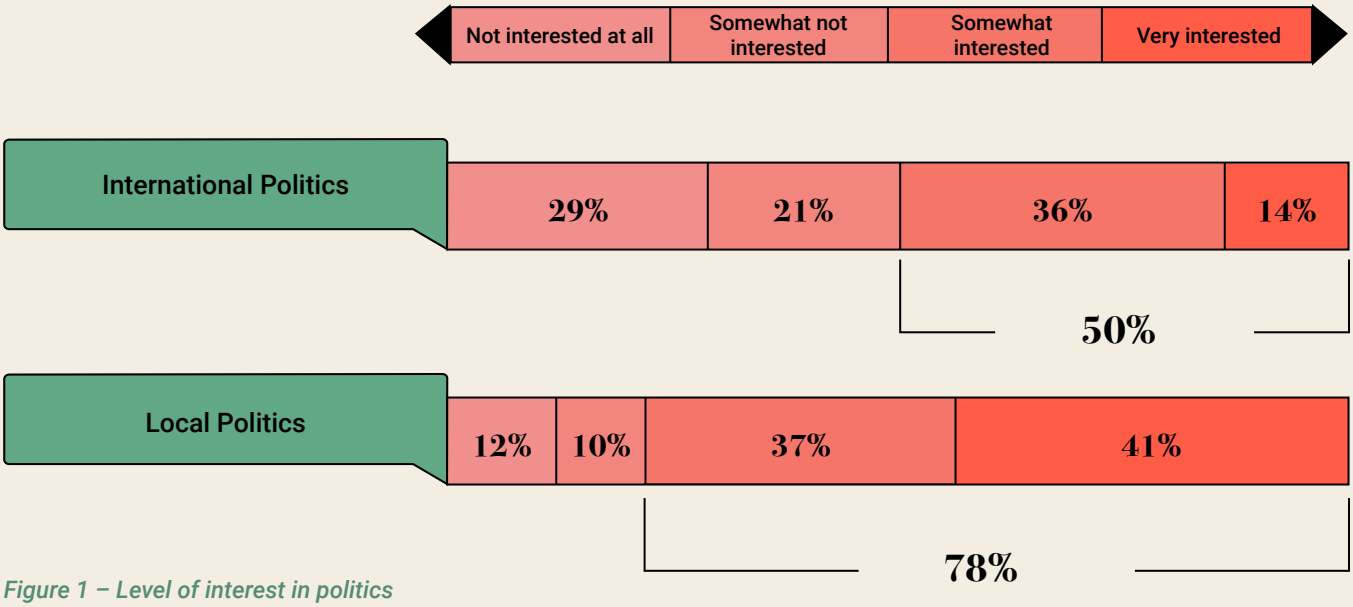


Figure 1 – Level of interest in politics

When asked about their level of interest in international politics, 50% of the participants answered that they are somewhat to very interested in international politics. Overall, men and the oldest age group (above 45) are more likely to be interested in Lebanese and international politics. Local politics was shown to be an area of interest for most of the Lebanese with almost half expressing strong interest in this domain. This level of interest is shared across all ages with more than 60% of participants from all age categories stating that they are somewhat to very interested in local politics. Specifically, 78% of the

participants are somewhat to very interested in Lebanese politics. Overall, 48% of men from the oldest age group (45 and above) are more likely to be interested in Lebanese politics. However, 41% of women stated that they are somewhat interested and 34% very interested in local politics.

When it comes to international and local politics, it was concluded that overall, Lebanese are more interested in local than international politics. Men aged 45 and above are significantly more interested in international politics; however, more than 50% of women are interested in local politics.

Conclusion: *The above results indicate that the Lebanese are highly interested in politics in general and in their local political affairs in specific. Adding to this, the geographic filtering of respondents and their answers revealed that Lebanese across all regions are more interested in local politics than in international politics.*

Staying Updated with local political news

N=1200

Do you actively keep themselves updated with local political news?

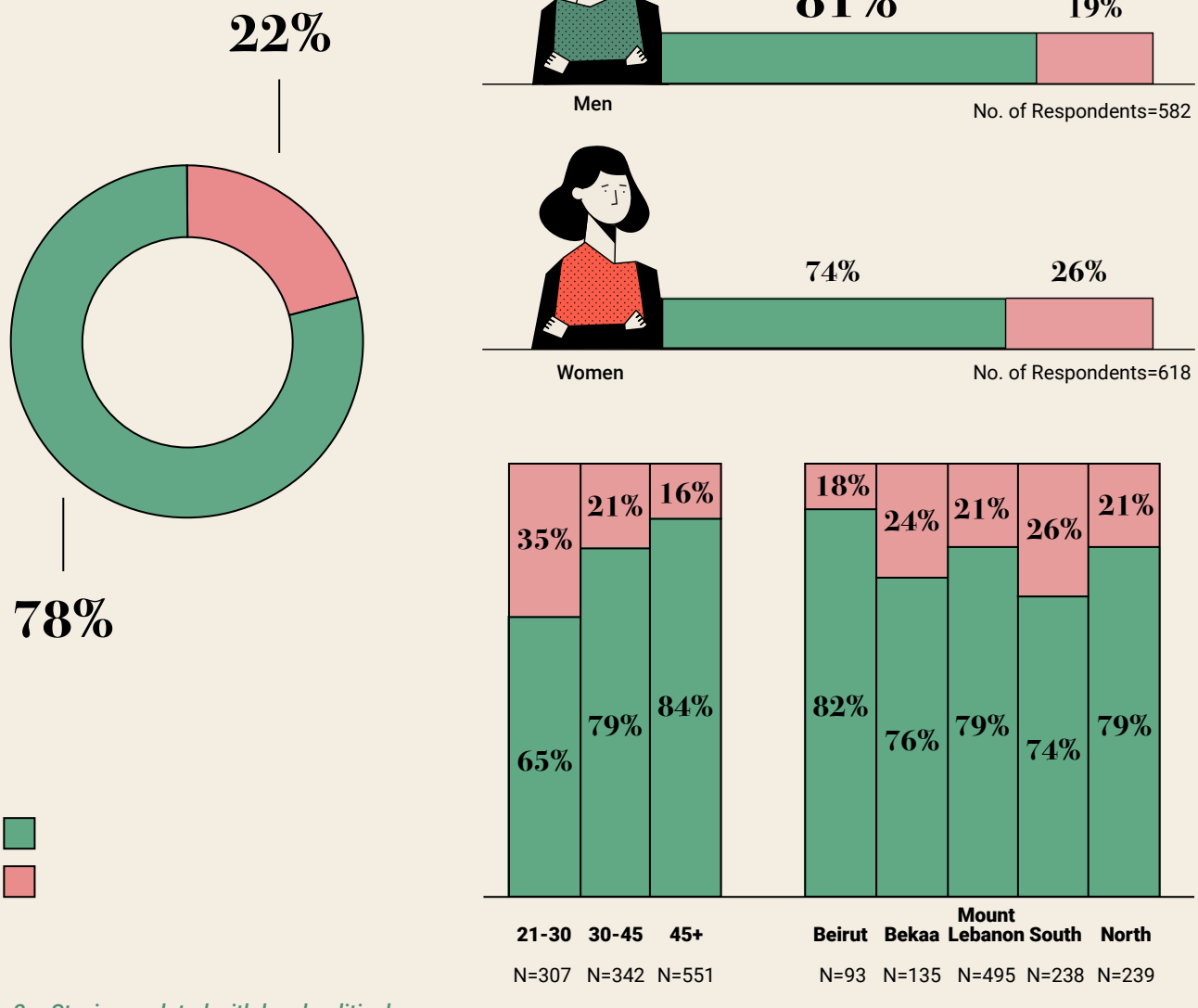


Figure 2 – Staying updated with local political news

When participants were asked if they actively stay updated on the latest local political news, 78% answered affirmatively, of which 81% were men, aged 45 and above.

Even though the results indicate that men are more updated than women, 74% of women are staying up-to-date. Similarly, all age groups were found to be actively following up on political news. This shows that Lebanese citizens are continuously researching their local politics and trying to stay well informed of the developments that are unfolding in their country and region.

Conclusion: *The above numbers insightfully prove that women (74%) and youth (65%) are actively keeping themselves updated.*

Support/belonging to political parties

N=933

Which of the below statement applies to you?

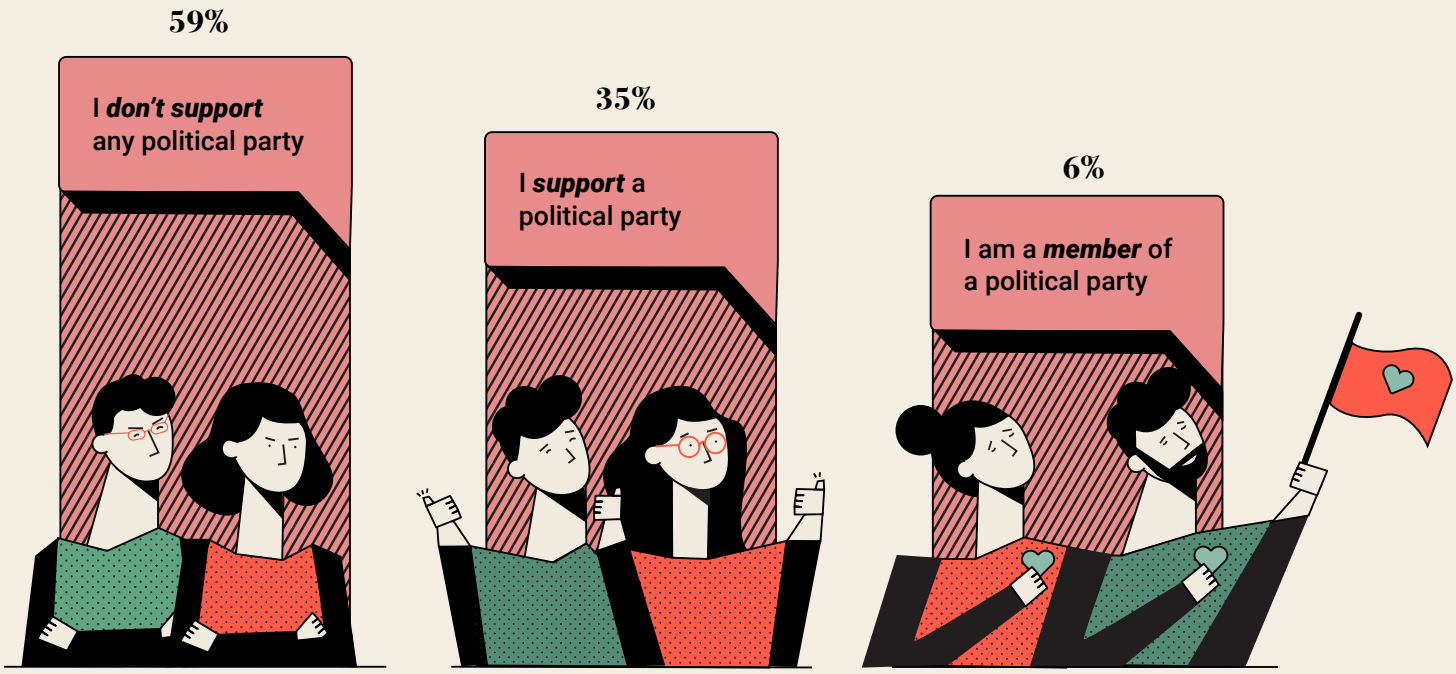


Figure 3 – Support/belonging to political parties

More than half of the respondents stated that they do not support any political party, compared to only one third who do support and advocate for one. This is true for all genders, ages, and regions. Precisely, 62% of women compared to 55% of men revealed that they do not endorse any political party. As for political party affiliation, less than 10% of the participants reported being members of a party.

Conclusion: *The above findings indicate that respondents either no longer have trust in the current political components and leaders or are refraining from expressing their endorsement publicly.*

October 17th Revolution

N=1200

Have you participated in the revolution which started on October 17th, 2019?

	Gender		Age Group			Region				
	Men N=582	Women N=618	21-30 N=307	31-45 N=342	45+ N=551	Beirut N=93	Bekaa N=135	Mount Lebanon N=495	South N=238	North N=239
I did not participate because I'm not convinced of it	29%	24%	20%	25%	31%	38%	24%	28%	28%	16%
I did not participate and there is no reason for that	23%	23%	20%	21%	27%	12%	36%	22%	21%	25%
I intended to participate but I couldn't	14%	20%	13%	17%	19%	17%	17%	18%	14%	18%
Yes, several times	17%	16%	25%	16%	12%	19%	13%	16%	16%	20%
Yes, most of the times	11%	7%	13%	10%	6%	9%	3%	12%	8%	9%
Yes, for one time only	6%	10%	9%	11%	5%	5%	7%	4%	13%	12%

Figure 4 – October 17th Revoliution

Furthermore, one third of the respondents stated that they did not participate in the October 17th protests because they were not convinced of its objectives and demands, and one third reported not having found any reason to participate at all. The younger generation (18-24 years) has a higher participation rate than the older generation with 20% of the youth having taken part in several protests. From the gender perspective, a larger share of men than women stated that they had not participated in the protests because they were not convinced. From the regional perspective, a higher percentage of Bekaa residents, compared to residents of other Lebanese regions, did not find a reason to participate in the protests.

Conclusion:

During the focus group discussions, respondents who reported having taken part in the protests said that they were motivated by the demands of the protests including fighting corruption, reclaiming a decent living, and salvaging the homeland. The respondents were confident that the coexistence of different social classes, religions, and regions was still possible in Lebanon despite everything. The discussions also revealed that the protests empowered women and showcased their strengths, capabilities, and high level of patriotism, and that youth (aged 18 to 24) were the most active in supporting the protests.

1.2 Perception of Men Vs Women in the Workplace

1200 respondents were asked on the gender (men, women, or both) that they believe is more likely to succeed in different sectors. The answers to this question will reflect the perceptions of the Lebanese population on the role of men compared to that of women in the workplace: assuming that one gender is more likely to succeed in one sector means that the latter is better fit for that gender compared to the other.

Perception- Likelihood of success per sector (men vs.women)

N=1200

In your opinion, which gender (men, women or both) is more likely to succeed for each of the following sectors?

Figure 5 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector (men vs. women)

More than 50% of respondents stated that both genders are equally likely to succeed in healthcare, education, hospitality and events, marketing, advertising, PR, and media.

However, some sectors are believed to be more promising to one gender compared to the other, such as art and design, education, and sales for women, compared to agriculture, economics, politics, and architecture for men.The above numbers shed light on certain stereotypes that exist among the Lebanese on the role of women compared to that of men. For example, only 3% of the respondents stated that men are more likely to succeed in education compared to 44% of respondents who stated that women are more likely to succeed. Additionally, only 11% of respondents believe that women are more likely to succeed in economics and finance compared to men (47%).

Conclusion: *A deeper analysis of the figures revealed new trends in industries which have been long believed to be dominated by men like politics, public institutions, economy and finance, with 43% of participants believing that men and women are equally likely to succeed in these two industries.*

Perception - Likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs.women)

No. of Men Respondents=582
No. of Women Respondents=618

In your opinion, which gender (men, women or both) is more likely to succeed for each of the following sectors?

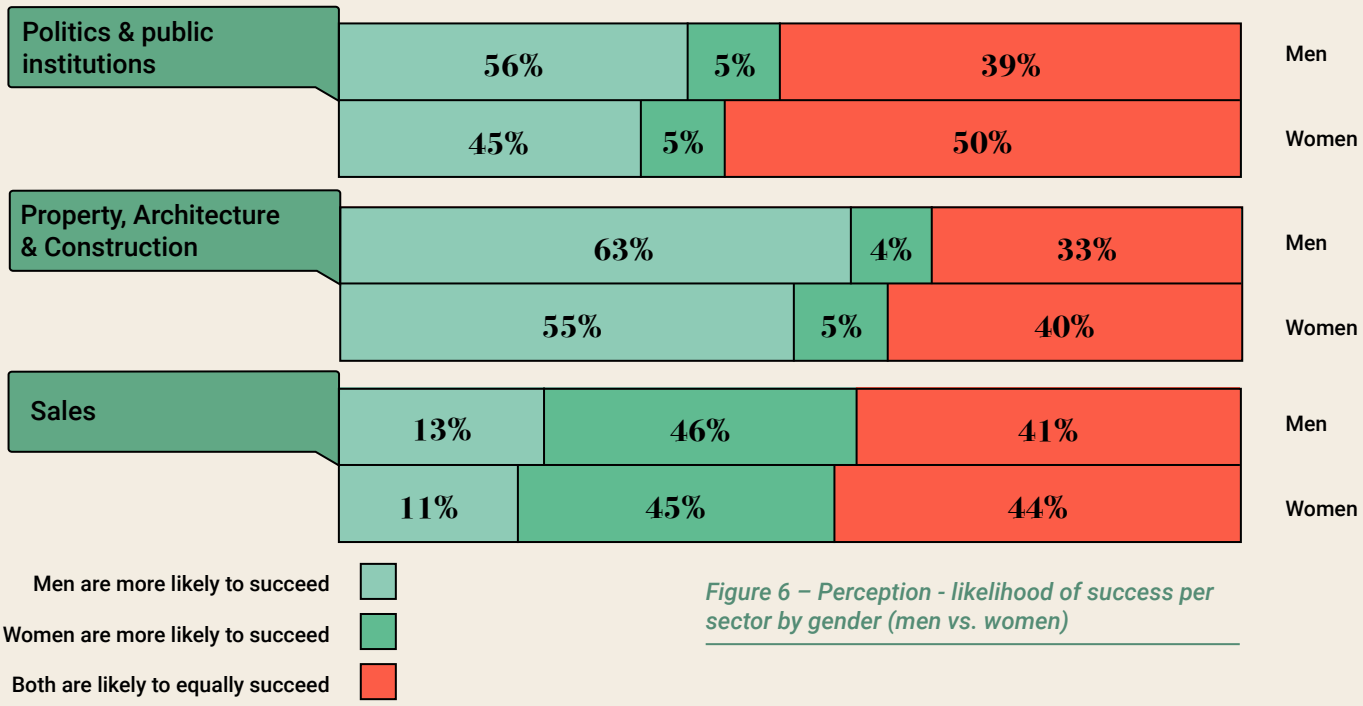


Figure 6 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women)

It was thus necessary to get a deeper insight into the main points of difference in the answers of men and women respondents. By looking at the answers provided on the subject of politics and the public sector, one can notice that 50% of women respondents believe that men and women are equally likely to succeed in this sector; however, only 39% of men respondents share this belief. On the other hand, 45% of women respondents and 56% of men respondents agreed that men are more likely to succeed in politics and the public sector.

Conclusion: *The above shows that both genders still consider politics as more fit for men, but women are starting to challenge this norm.*

Perception - Likelihood of success per sector by gender. (men vs. women)

No. of Men Respondents=582
No. of Women Respondents=618

In your opinion, which gender (men, women or both) is more likely to succeed for each of the following sectors?

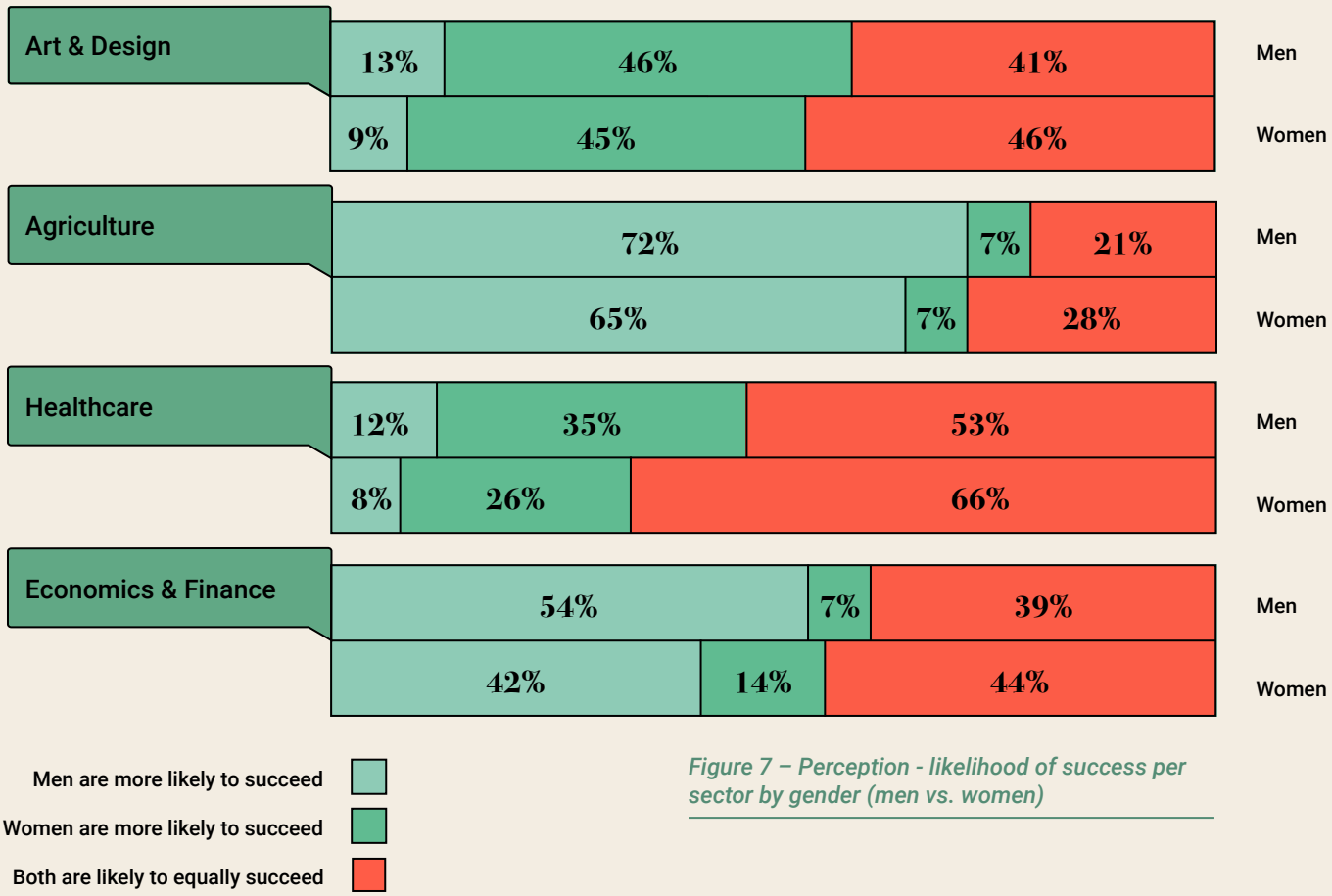


Figure 7 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women)

The majority of respondents, specifically 72% of men respondents and 65% of women respondents believe that men are more likely to succeed in the agriculture sector. However 45% of women respondents and 46% of men respondents stated that women are more likely to succeed in the art and design industry.

Conclusion: *the results indicated above showcased that stereotypical industries such as agriculture, economics and finance are still male dominated while art and design sectors are best fit for women.*

Perception - Likelihood of success per sector by gender. (men vs. women)

No. of Men Respondents=582
No. of Women Respondents=618

In your opinion, which gender (men, women or both) is more likely to succeed for each of the following sectors?

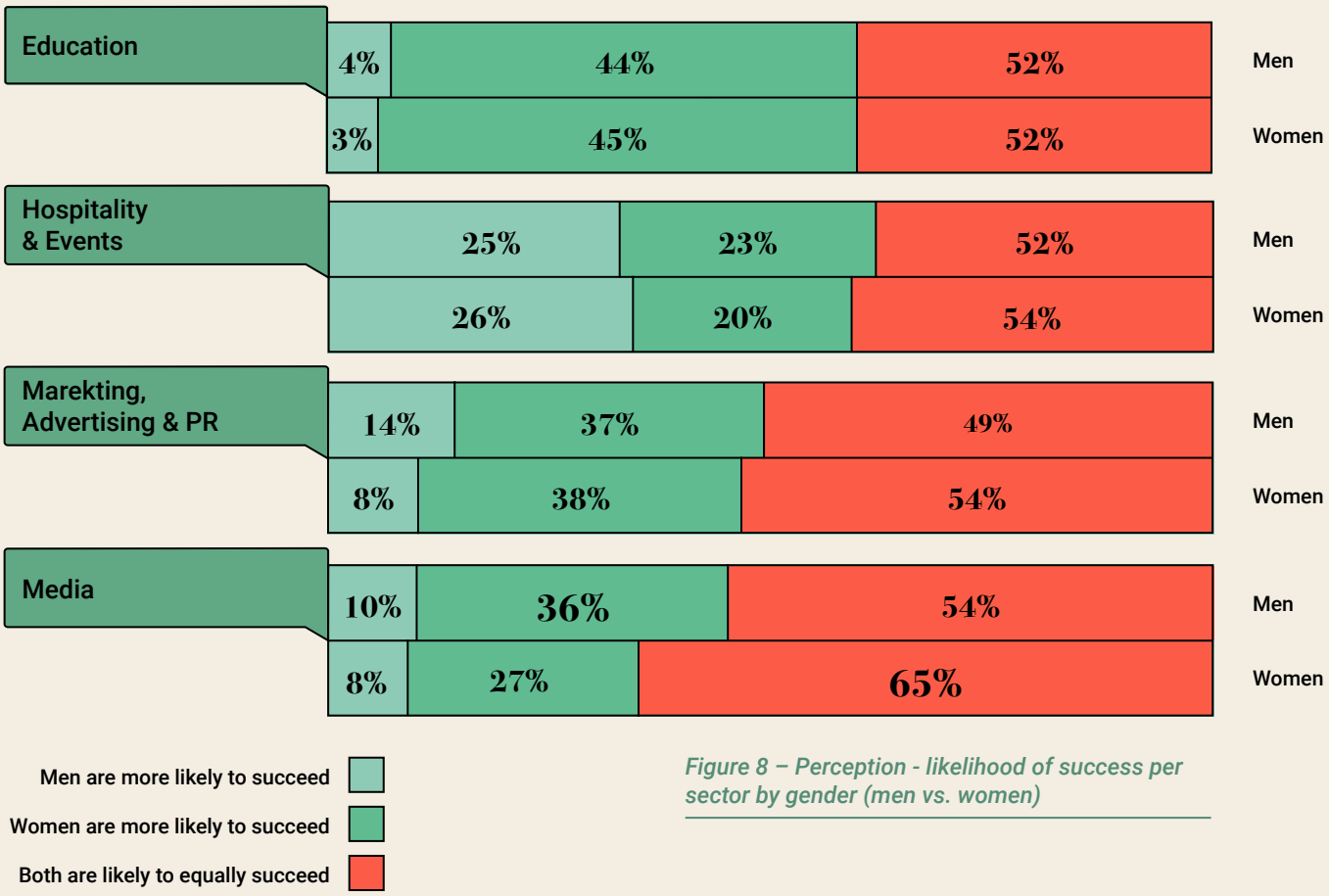


Figure 8 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women)

The results demonstrated that very few respondents, specifically 4% of men respondents and 3% of women respondents believe that men are likely to succeed in the education sector.

However, the majority of respondents specifically 54% of men respondents and 65% of women respondents stated that both genders are best fit to succeed in media.

Conclusion: *In summary, out of the 11 sectors studied, 4 sectors were found to be exclusive for men: agriculture, economy and finance, politics and the public sector, property, architecture, and construction, compared to 3 sectors exclusive for women: art and design, education, and sales*

1.3 Gender Disparity and Preferences in the Political Field

Perception - Why men are more likely to succeed in the political and public institution sector?

N=606

Can you please tell me why men are more likely to succeed in politics?

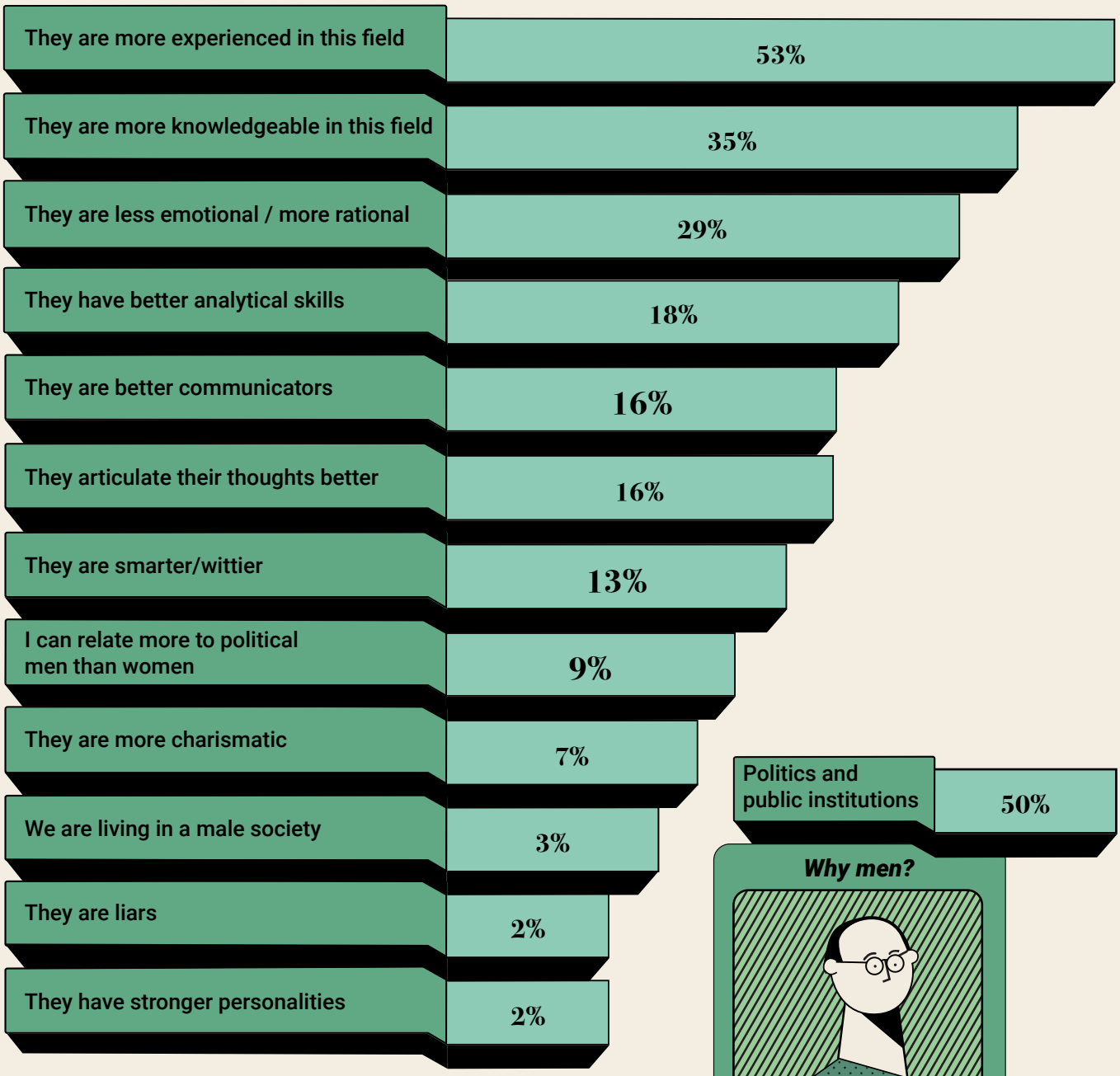


Figure 9 – Perception-Why men are more likely to succeed in the political and public institution sector?

When asked about why men are more likely to succeed in politics, 53% of the respondents stated that men are more experienced in this field, compared to 16% of respondents who linked men's success in politics to them being better communicators.

According to the results, 19% of men respondents and 13% of women respondents stated that men are more likely to succeed in the political and public life because they are better communicators in the political field.

In addition, 11% of men respondents stated that, in politics, they relate better to men, which contributes to men's success in this field.

Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field

N=1200

In your opinion, why do we currently see more men in the political field ?

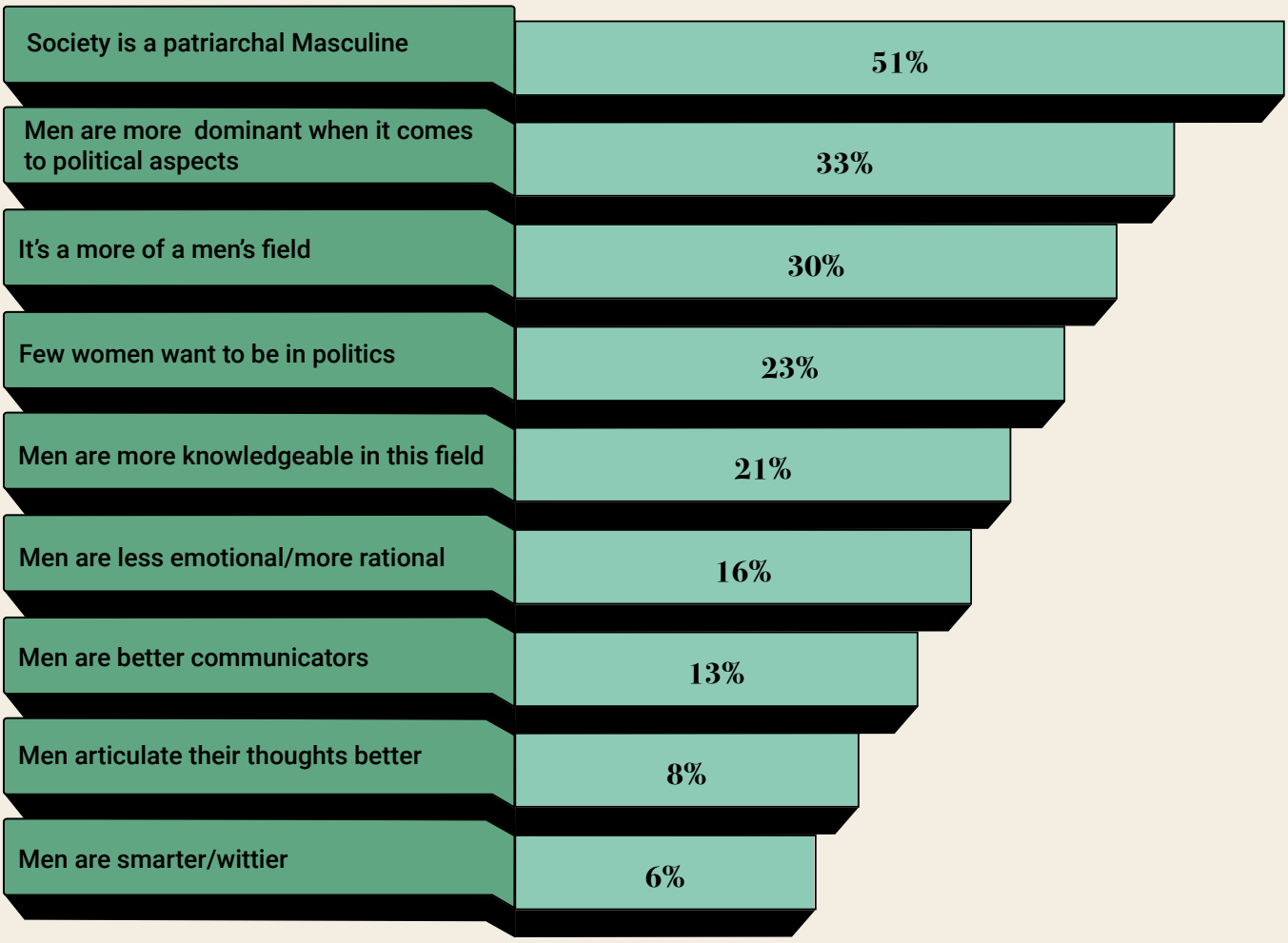


Figure 10 – Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field.

** Figures below 1% are disregarded from this chart*

Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field

N=1200

In your opinion, why do we currently see more men in the political field ?

	Gender		Age Group			Region				
	Men N=582	Women N=618	21-30 N=307	31-45 N=342	45+ N=551	Beirut N=93	Bekaa N=135	Mount Lebanon N=495	South N=238	North N=239
Society is patriarchal/ masculine	49%	54%	51%	55%	50%	53%	47%	50%	62%	46%
Men are more dominant when it comes to the political aspects	33%	34%	33%	29%	36%	42%	21%	42%	31%	20%
It's more of a men's field	34%	26%	27%	27%	33%	43%	21%	30%	40%	19%
Few women want to be in politics	22%	24%	25%	25%	20%	7%	20%	25%	30%	18%
Men are more knowlegeable in this field	23%	20%	20%	21%	23%	31%	22%	18%	18%	27%
Men are less emotional/ more rational	17%	15%	15%	15%	18%	10%	18%	14%	27%	12%
Men are better communicators	14%	12%	13%	12%	13%	13%	5%	11%	20%	13%
Men articulate their thoughts better	10%	7%	7%	9%	8%	12%	4%	8%	10%	7%
Men are smarter/wittier	8%	4%	7%	5%	6%	8%	5%	7%	8%	2%

Figure 11– Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field.

** Figures below 1% are disregarded from this chart*

When asked about the reasons why men outnumber women in the political field, both men and women respondents, from all age groups and regions, cited patriarchy and men being naturally more dominant, less emotional, and better communicators. It is worth noting that answers maintaining that men articulate their thoughts better, are smarter or wittier, or that politics is a men's field, were given by 34% of men respondents of whom 33% are aged 45 and above.

When asked about their perceptions of women in politics, some of the respondents stated that they negatively associate women in politics with "inherited political office". This type of political involvement is not approved by the majority, and it is considered as a type of corruption. However, on a positive note, some men notice the hard work and the capability of some independent women's work in politics.

Conclusion: *During the focus group discussions, most respondents focused on women's modest presence in politics. According to older activists, women lack encouragement to venture into politics and public affairs. Many young activists consider that political parties do not encourage women to take part in politics. They also believe that the Lebanese culture and traditions go against all forms of women empowerment.*

Gender preference when voting

N=1200

If you have a woman and a man running for the elections in a list you support, both having the same qualifications, same cultural background, same years of experience and the same characteristics in terms of social and demographic background, skills and abilities. Who would you elect?

Figure 12 - Gender preference when voting

The participants were asked to imagine that they must vote for either a man or a woman running for elections in a candidate list that they support, knowing that both have the same qualifications, cultural background, and years of experience.

Only 21% of respondents mentioned that they would vote for a man compared to 45% who stated that they would vote for a woman and 34% who would vote for both genders equally.

Gender preference when voting

N=1200

**If you have a woman and a man running for the elections in a list you support, both having the same qualifications, same cultural background, same years of experience and the same characteristics in terms of social and demographic background, skills and abilities.
Who would you elect?**

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Region				
		Men N=582	Women N=618	21-30 N=307	31-45 N=342	45+ N=551	Beirut N=93	Bekaa N=135	Mount Lebanon N=495	South N=238	North N=239
Woman	46%	30%	60%	55%	47%	39%	43%	44%	49%	53%	33%
Both equally	34%	41%	27%	28%	33%	38%	32%	36%	37%	24%	36%
Man	21%	30%	13%	18%	20%	23%	25%	21%	15%	22%	31%

Figure 13- Gender preference when voting

The same scenario was proposed in the discussion groups and most respondents prioritized the qualifications of the candidate over their gender. However, when both a man and a woman run for the same position, respondents tend to vote for the woman candidate to support and encourage her.

Additionally, many respondents highlighted the drawbacks of voting for a woman candidate on the basis of her gender instead of her qualifications; her performance would undermine the opportunities of other qualified women and reinforce the stereotype that women are not qualified for politics to the disadvantage of qualified women. Some older activists, especially older women, would still give their vote for a woman candidate because of her gender. This was proven in the survey findings, where 60% of women respondents stated that they would vote for women compared to 13% who would vote for men and only 27% of women respondents who said they will vote equally for both genders. It is important to note that 41% of men respondents would vote equally to both genders compared to 30% who would vote either to a man or a woman.

***In conclusion**, almost half of the respondents stated that if two equally qualified candidates, one being a man and the other a woman, are running for office, they would vote for the woman candidate.The numbers indicate a new trend: while a higher percentage of women (60%) are supporting other women, men are equally supporting women and men. This could be promising in terms of voting on the basis of qualifications instead of gender.*

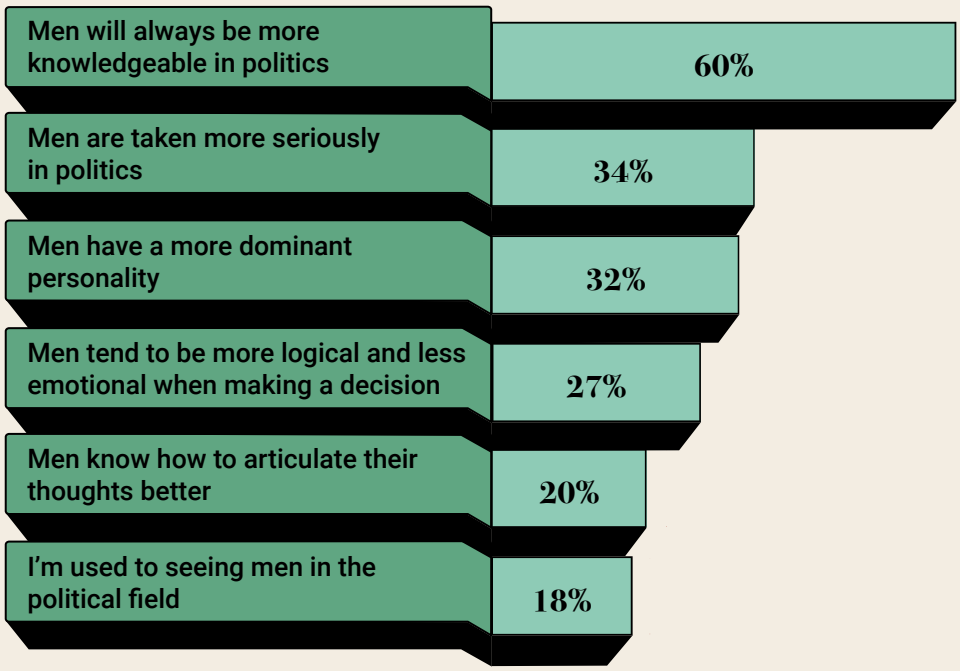
Gender preference when voting

N=1200

a. Why would you elect a woman?
b. Why would you elect a man?

21%

N=250



46%

N=546

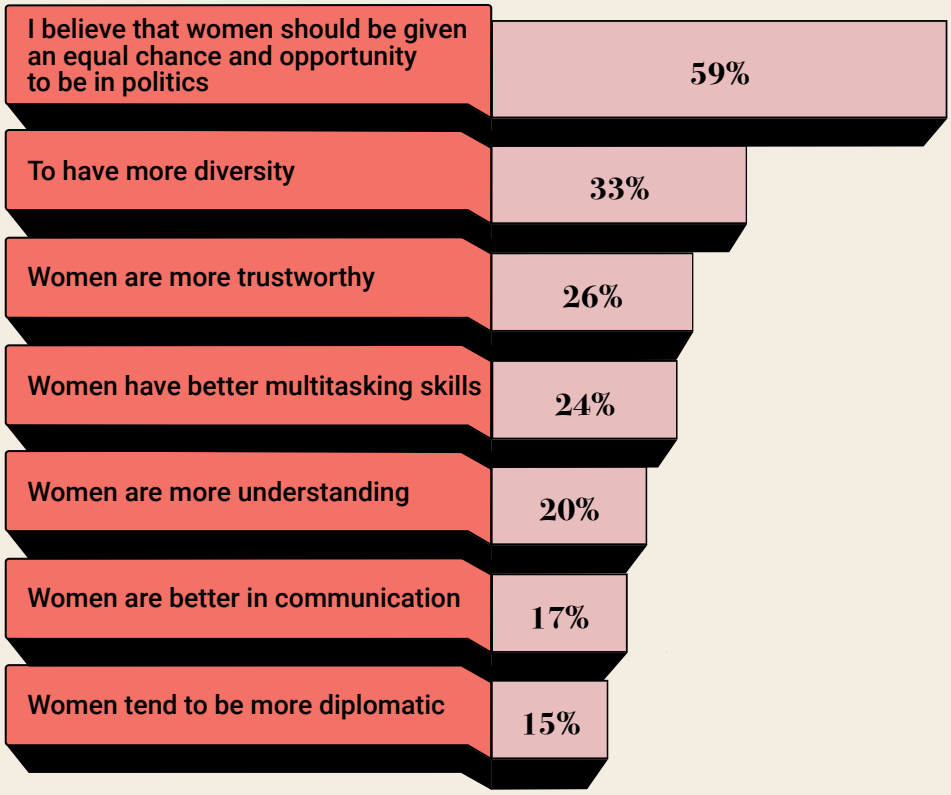


Figure 14 - Gender preference when voting

More elaborate questions were asked in order to reveal the underlying causes behind these preferences, and the findings were as follows: While 60% of people will vote for the men candidate, mainly because of his knowledge and skills in politics, the majority of those who would vote for a woman instead of a man do so for reasons not related to the woman's capacities or knowledge, but rather to give her a chance to prove herself (59%) and to have a more diverse political scene (33%).

When asked about their voting criteria, the participants in focus group discussions made a clear distinction between municipal and parliamentary elections and indicated that voting criteria may differ slightly in each of these two elections. The majority claim to give their vote to candidates based on credentials, qualifications, competencies, and trust. Many respondents, especially men respondents from the general public group, focus on the political agenda and electoral platform of the candidates. These same respondents would also vote for a women candidate who is independent from any political party, provided that she has the minimal qualifications required.
Certain respondents, especially those who are active in political parties, would give their vote to a women candidate who is affiliated to a political party that they trust since she will be better supported in the parliament and in a stronger position to make achievements.

The majority of respondents are active in the municipal and parliamentary elections; in point of fact, many of them believe that their participation in elections is a duty and not a choice. They have a responsibility towards their country and the choice to advance it by electing the right people.

Some young activists and general public respondents did not have the chance to vote because of age restrictions. Most of these respondents almost confirm their participation in the coming elections when they will be eligible. They believe they can make a change by voting.

Very few older activists are not interested in voting in municipal elections because their vote, which will be counted in their place of birth, will not make a difference in their area of residence. They are not convinced of the municipal elections system and consider it as non-representative; they prefer to vote in the area of residence. However, they would make the effort of voting outside their area of residence if a woman were running for office, in order to support her.

Moreover, more than half of the respondents, especially young activists and men from the general public, believe that women have better chances at winning in municipal elections, assuming that the voting community concerned accepts women in positions of authority. Otherwise, women's chances of being elected will dwindle.

Several reasons support women's success in municipal elections:

- Municipal elections are smaller in scale than parliamentary elections. They take place at a local level and involve a community of people who share almost the same mentality, motives, and background. In this context, a woman candidate will be working with familiar people, mainly from her entourage.
- The small scale makes it easier for the woman candidate to identify the needs of her electorate and incorporate them in her development plan.
- Also, working with like-minded people makes it easier for the woman candidate to share her development plans and visions with the public, hence her better chances at proving her capabilities and convincing others to give her their votes.

Gender equality in Parliament

N=1200

In your opinion, in how many years do you think that the number of women in the parliament will be equal to the number of men?

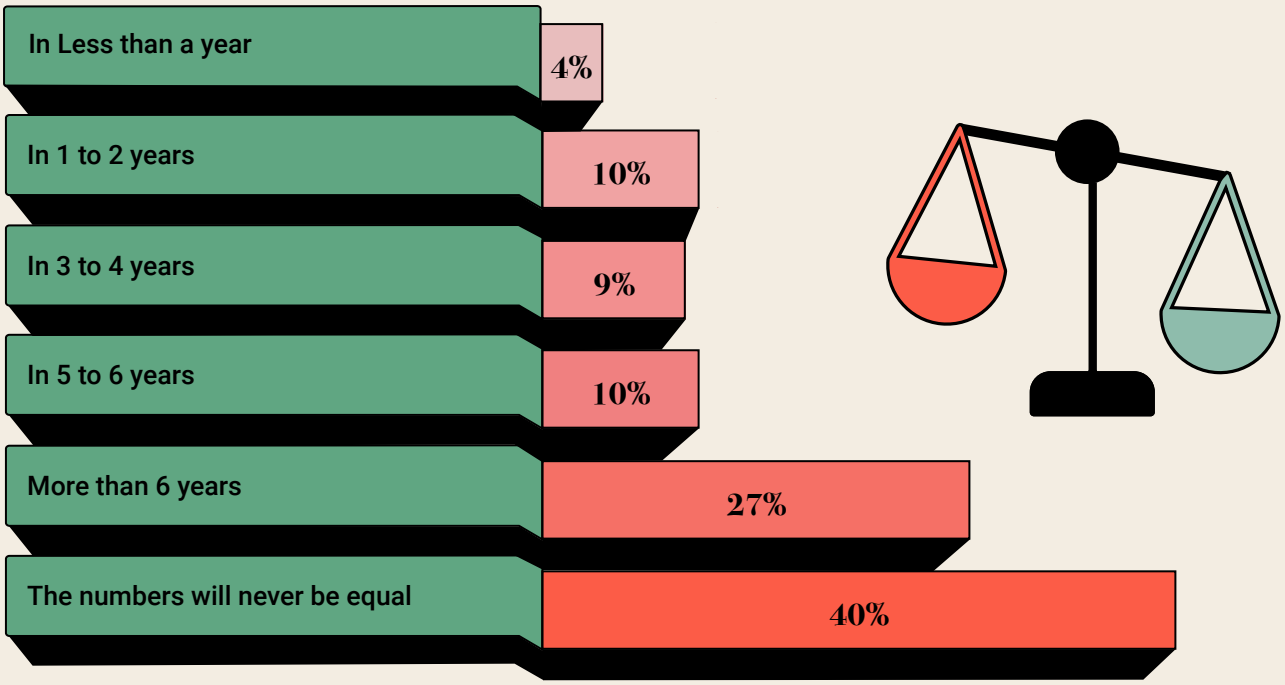


Figure 15 - Gender equality in Parliament

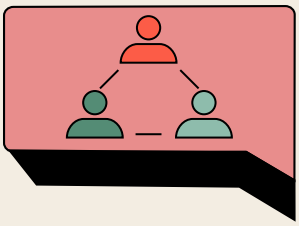
Almost half of the respondents believe that gender equality will never be achieved in the parliament, however all of them agree that the women presence in the parliament will have a significant impact, primarily because women are almost half the social fabric and should be adequately represented in the parliament.

Women's representation in the parliament is needed for several reasons:

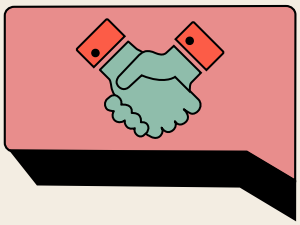
- Women represent almost half of the Lebanese population and should have a voice in the parliament. A woman is in a better position to understand and address the needs of other women with compassion and empathy.
- Many respondents believe that the presence of women in the parliament is likely to contribute to faster and more serious implementation of laws in favor of women's rights, achievement of progress on gender equality, and improvement of policy issues at the workplace.
- Older activists convey that women are peaceful by nature, diplomatic, multitaskers, and more approachable for discussion; all of which are very important traits in politics. They are smart and know how to approach problems with wise solutions.

Role of women in the Parliament

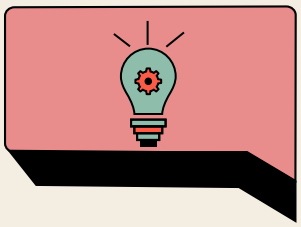
Representative of the population
She represents almost half of the Lebanese population who should have a reflective voice in the parliament. A woman is in a better position to understand and address women's needs. She is compassionate and has empathy; she can put herself in others' shoes.



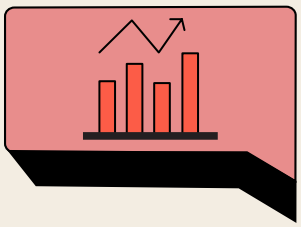
Social inclusion
Many respondents believe that the presence of women in the parliament is likely to contribute to faster and more serious implementation of laws in favor of women's rights, achievement of progress on gender equality, and improvement of policy issues at the workplace.



Diplomatic
Older activists convey that the woman is peaceful by nature, diplomatic, multitasking and more approachable for discussion; all of which are very important traits in politics. She is smart and knows how to approach problems with wise solutions.



Other point of view
The woman is likely to shed light on issues that may not occur to man; such as matters related to food, children, the environment, cleanliness and garbage, education, and medications which are closer to the heart of women than men. For instance, in the approved subsidized food basket, women hygiene pads were absent; this is an example on how women's needs may go unnoticed in a parliament occupied by men.



Increase in revenue
Some GP men evoke and are convinced with study findings that highlight the positive correlation between women presence and revenue increase. The woman has proved successful in economy-related issues, the country should benefit of her skills and qualifications to improve the local economy.

Figure 16 - Role of women in the Paliament

Women are likely to shed light on issues that may not occur to men; such as matters related to food, children, environment, cleanliness and garbage, education, and medication. For instance, women hygiene pads were absent in the approved subsidized food basket; this is an example on how women's needs may go unnoticed in a male-dominated parliament.

Some general public men respondents evoke and are convinced with study findings that highlight the positive correlation between women presence and revenue increase. Women have proved successful in economy-related issues, the country should benefit of their skills and qualifications to improve the local economy.

1.4 Ideal Men and Women Politicians

Most participants do not draw major distinctions between the ideal woman politician and the ideal man politician. Both are ideal as long as 'the right person is in the right place', regardless of gender or any other discrimination. Otherwise, the characteristics applicable to the ideal woman politician are similarly applicable to the ideal man politician in terms of age, knowledge, skills, qualifications, presentable appearance, personality, and respect to the other gender. Very few draw a distinction between a male and a female politician with respect to character; females, by nature, are prone to be more patient, understanding, good listeners, and emotional; all of which, if combined with the appropriate thinking skills and logic, can result in an ideal female candidate who is slightly different from and favored over the ideal male candidate.

Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 1/2

N=1200

Can you please tell me, in your opinion, what are the top 5 traits that a man should have to be considered a good politician?

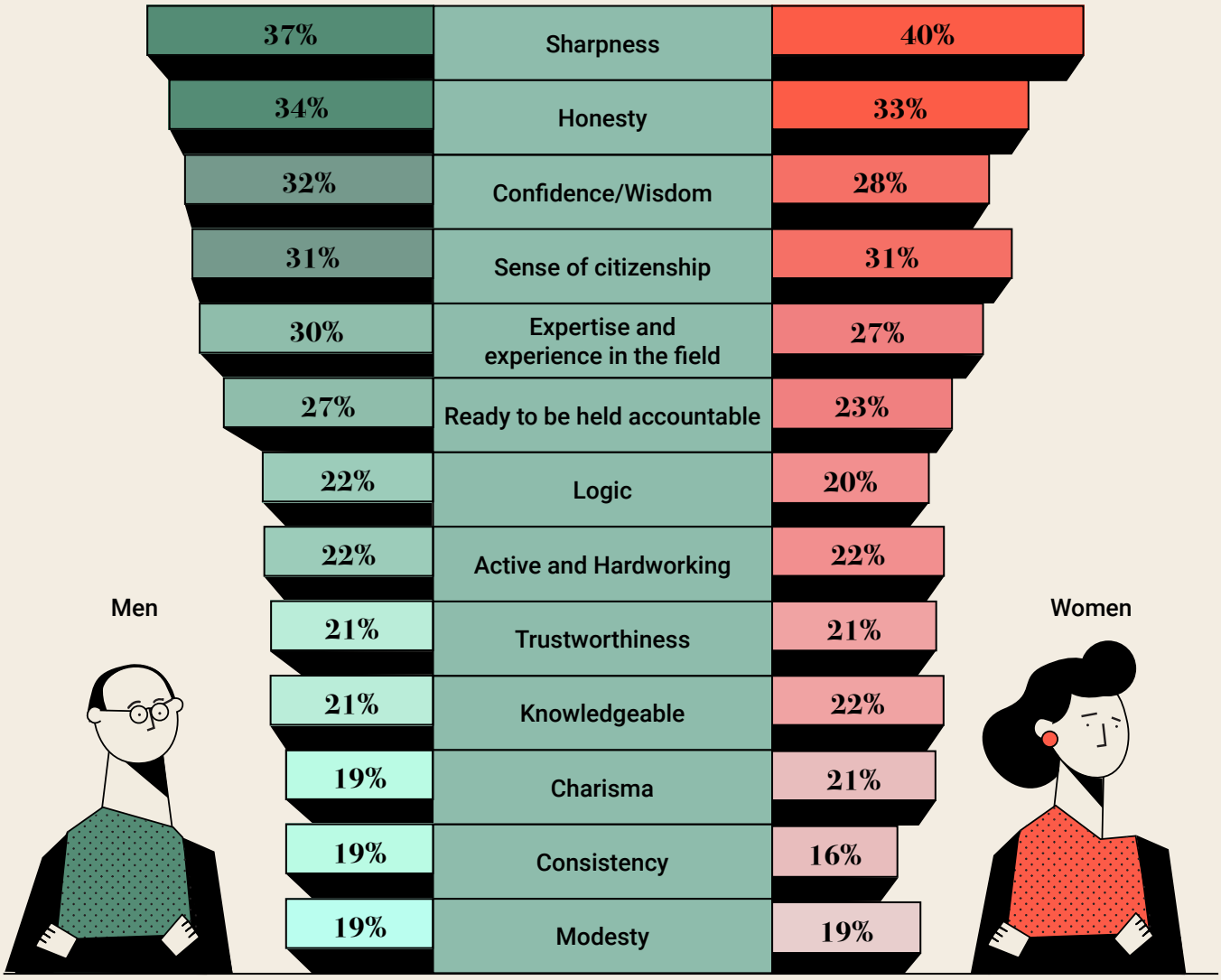


Figure 17 - Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 1/2

When asked to choose one of five traits that make a woman a good politician; the respondents said that being sharp, honest, confident, and wise are the top traits required for both genders to be considered as good politicians. However, male and female respondents scored differently on the following traits:

A man politician is more likely to be seen as good politician if he has the following traits: confident (32%), wise (32%), ready to be held accountable (27%) and consistent (19%). On the other hand, a good woman politician needs to be sharper (40%) compared to men (37%).

Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 2/2

N=1200

Can you please tell me, in your opinion, what are the top 5 traits that a man should have to be considered a good politician?

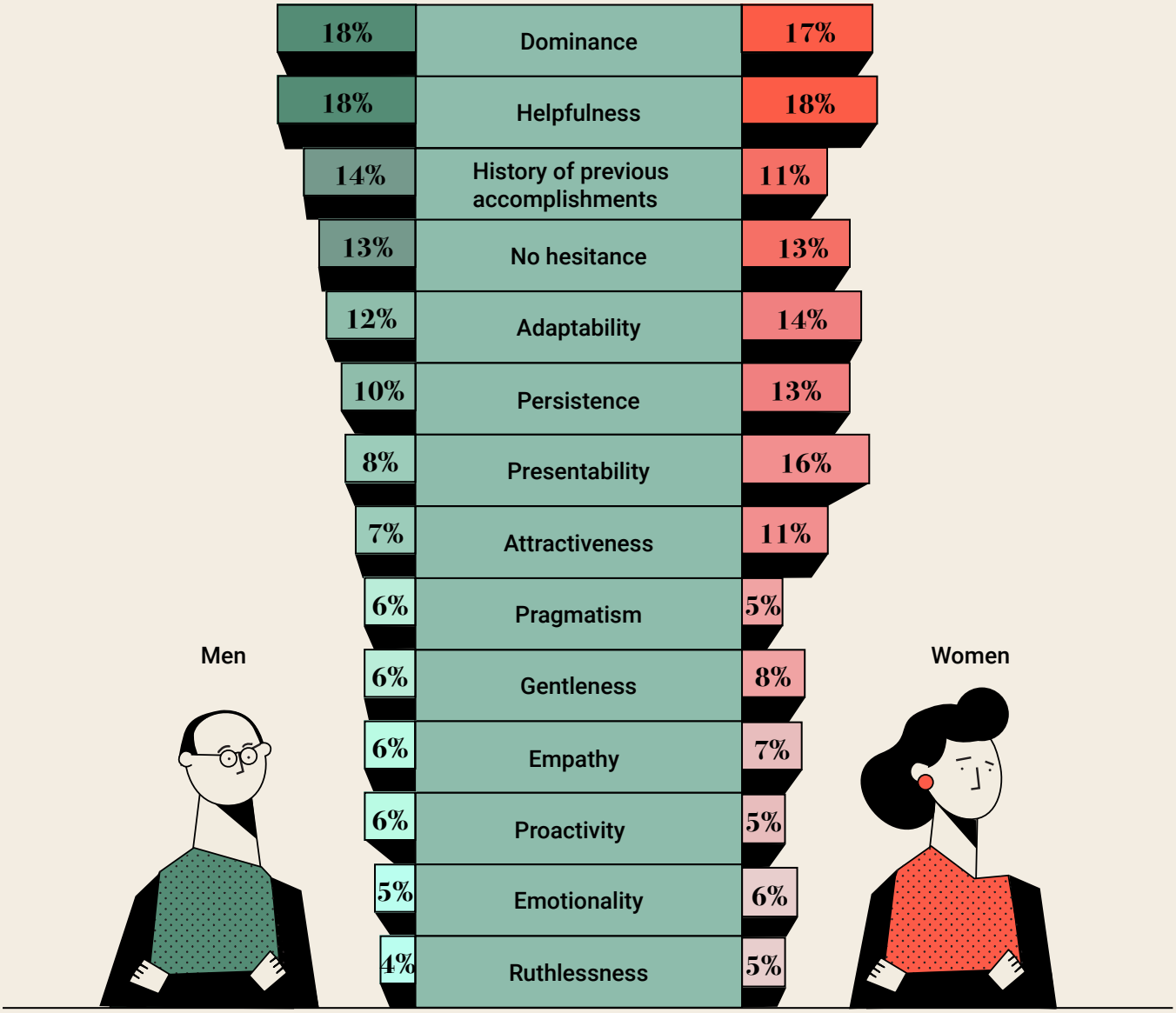
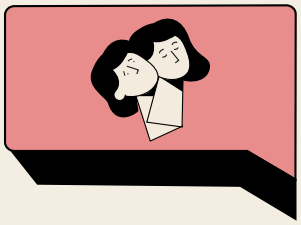


Figure 18 - Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 2/2

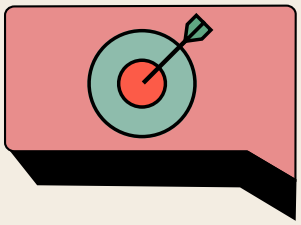
Male politicians are more required than female politicians to have a score of previous accomplishments; the percentages are 14% and 11%, respectively. The traits that were more requested of female politicians are mostly related to physical appearance including being presentable (16%) and attractive (11%). This shows that even though both genders are expected to have the same traits in order to be considered good politicians, the percentages differ, with traits related to appearance being more required of woman politicians and traits related to character being more required of men politicians.

The ideal Women politician

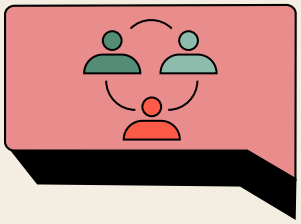
Can you please tell me, in your opinion, what are the top 5 traits that a woman should have to be considered a good politician?



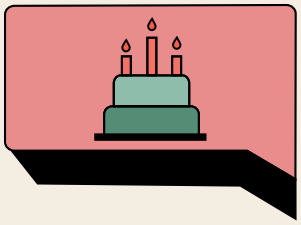
Personality traits
An ideal woman politician should be mature, wise, ambitious, independent, determined, capable of making her own decisions without being affected by others. Young activists and general public focus more on traits related to humbleness, charisma, strong personality, courage, honesty, young in spirit (to gain more youth trust), a solid knowledge background, experienced, has wisdom, integrity, principles and values, and has time.



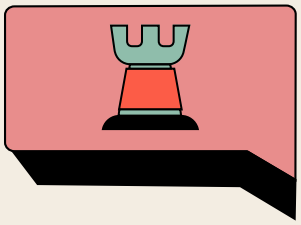
Qualifications
The ideal politician should have a vision, a strategic plan – she believes in individual freedom and freedom of speech. She needs to be well immersed in human rights, citizenship, democracy, well aware of the problems in the country, close to people to be able to become their voice and know their needs. Young activists focus on the ideal politician to be a person who have reached her position through political knowledge, electoral programs and not by inheritance. They also focus on having skills and qualifications of international caliber.



Social Perception
A person who can see and feel the public's pain and problems with matters related to daily life issues, economy, and financials. She is from the people and knows what aches them everyday. She understand their fears and is ready to address their worries.



Age
Though age is just a number, the ideal candidate should be young-spirited and active in order to represent all generations.



Appearance and environment
She should be presentable, formal, professional, simple, decent, and respectful. Her attire has to reflect her integrity and be a mirror of her knowledge and professionalism. The region and environment she was raised in are secondary as long as she represents everyone through her thoughts and actions.

Figure 19 - The Ideal Women Politician

When the same question was asked during the focus group discussions, the participants stated that both, male and female politicians, are ideal as long as 'the right person is in the right place'. Only few distinctions were drawn between a male and a female politician with respect to character. Females, by nature, are prone to be more patient, understanding, good listeners, and emotional; all of which, if combined with the appropriate thinking skills and logic, will give them priority over the ideal male candidate. When further prompted, different answers were given as to whether the ideal male or female candidate will have higher chances at winning

the elections. Some respondents, especially young activists and men and women from the general public groups, see that there is an almost equal chance for a male and a female politician with the same qualifications to reach the contested position. However, few females from the general public group mentioned that the ideal woman candidate is likely to win because voting for female candidates has somewhat become a trend.

'If it's really an ideal woman, I think she'd win because the idea is new, and people will be encouraged to vote for her. If she's ideal, she will convince them.'

GP Female

Many respondents, especially old and young activists, have the perception that in Lebanon, the ideal man is more likely to win over the ideal woman competing for the same position for several reasons, namely:

- The patriarchal mentality prevailing in numerous Lebanese communities and obscuring the capabilities of women.
- Men having more power and more financial support than women.
- Men not being treated as second class citizens and enjoying full legal capacity and rights, compared to women who do not enjoy full legal protection, face cultural limitations, and have to deal with more challenges than men.

'Males are usually ahead because they have the power and the money that females don't receive.'

Older Activist

'In the Lebanese society, if they have the same level, they will always choose the man because the mentality still doesn't trust the capacity of women to occupy some positions.'

Young Activist

Areas of development (men vs. women)

N=1200

In your opinion, what are the top 3 skills that women should work on to be more present in the political scene?

In your opinion, what are the top 3 skills that men should work on to be more present in the political scene?

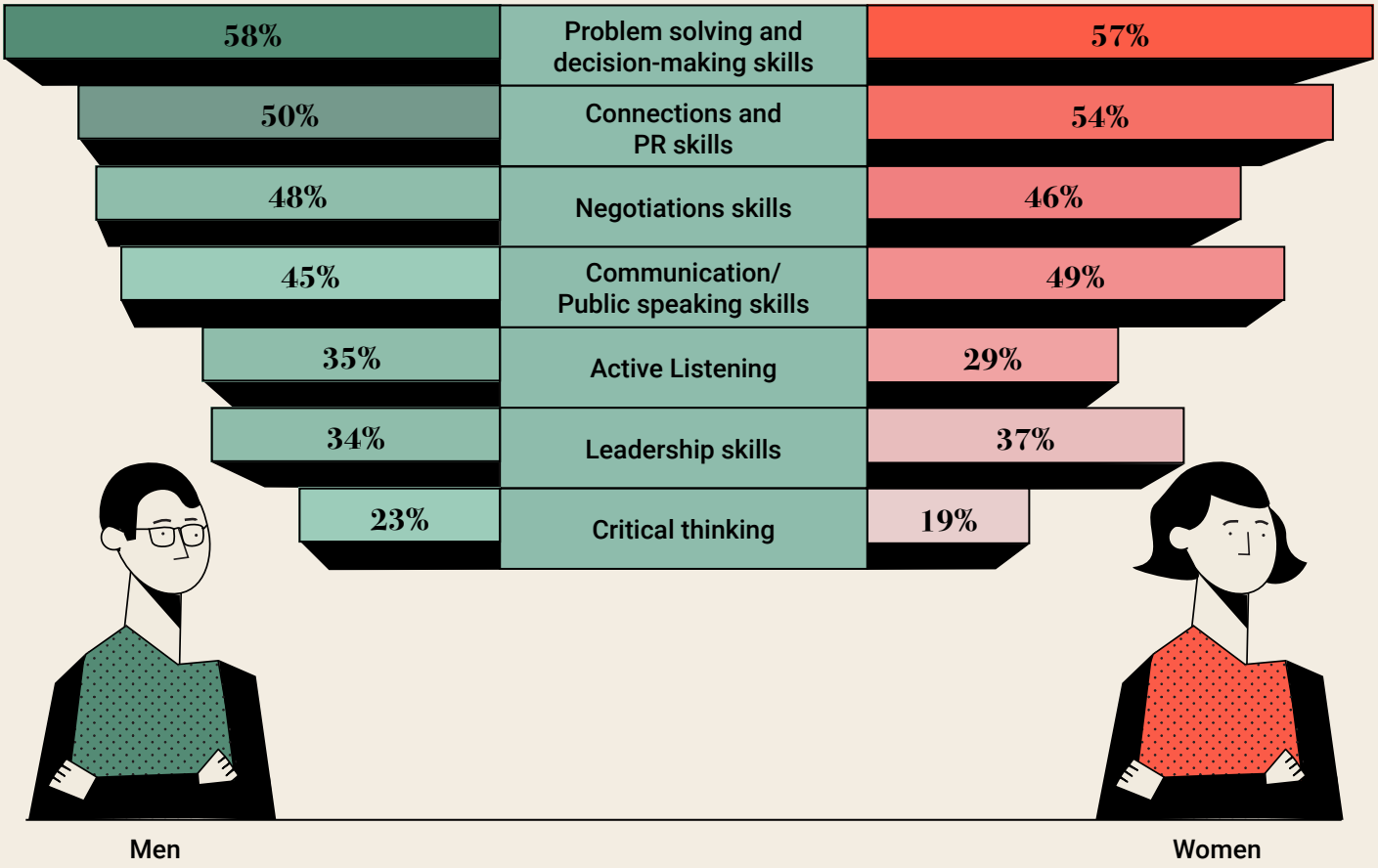


Figure 20 - Areas of development (men vs. women)

The survey participants were asked to name 3 top skills that women and men should work on to secure better representation in the political scene. Both men and women were found to be required to work on the same set of skills, specifically: problem solving, PR, connections, negotiation, and communication. However, 35% of the men respondents stated that men politicians must work more on their active listening skills, compared to 29% who demanded the same of women politicians. In addition, 34% of respondents stated that men politicians compared to 37% to women politicians. And finally, 23% of respondents stated that men politicians should work on their critical thinking skills compared to only 19% stating this for women.

***In conclusion**, similar traits and areas of development are required from both ideal female and male politicians but at varying percentages. Women are expected to work more on their physical appearance compared to men who are required to work more on their character and soft skill.*

2. *WOMEN* in media

During the focus group discussions, the majority of respondents agreed that while women's media visibility in economic and political matters has certainly increased, it is still far from ideal or even satisfactory.

> *'If you watched the talk shows during and after the revolution, before the setback of Corona, you would have seen how much women have awareness and freedom of speech and common sense. I'm not talking about women politicized in parties. I am talking about women of all ages who are activists and independent that were in the revolution.'*
>
> ***Older Activists***

Few older activists associate the shy presence of women in the media with their financial abilities. Media is usually paid, and women tend to have fewer financial resources than men.

Also, older activists and general public males associate women's shy presence to the fact that the media does not perceive women as capable or as a symbol of power. Media tends to give visibility and airtime to those who have more power in society, especially at peak hours. Unfortunately, since men have more power, they enjoy greater media exposure.

> ***'We were seeing a lot of women engaging in the revolution and it was called a female revolution. This all came from a big action taken by Lebanese women in the streets. They faced all the difficulties and hatred, and they were even beaten up. Women broke all the obstacles of fear to show everyone that Lebanese women are here, and we want our rights.'***
>
> ***GP Males***

Young activists and general public males consider that the limited representation of women in the media is directly related to her limited representation in the political scene. Moreover, participants raised the issue of women's presence in the media and how it might affect the public's perception of women in politics.

The majority of respondents conveyed satisfaction with regard to the performance of women who appear on political talk shows as they are perceived to be knowledgeable, capable, and credible. According to the young activists and the general public groups, the performance of female guests depends greatly on the program host.

The participants highlighted the need to spread awareness and educate the public on the capabilities of women in order to increase women's exposure in the media. In addition, the groups suggested that the media should as well focus on success stories of women in high positions so as to normalize the general public's perception of women's capacity to reach high ranks at the political, professional, and social levels.

As for women's visibility in the media after the pivotal events of October 17, 2019, the focus group discussion participants stated that women's active participation in the protests showcased their resilience and reinforced their perception by the general public as capable of making decisions and achieving goals. According to the general public male respondents, the protests allowed women to break their silence and free themselves from assigned limitations; as a result, their presence in the media has improved noticeably. After October 17, women have been increasingly present in conferences and talk shows; especially independent female activists of all ages.

2.1 Involvement and Gender Disparity in the Lebanese Political Shows

Lebanese Political Shows

N=1200

Do you watch Lebanese talk shows?

- Why do you watch lebanese talk shows?
- Why don't you watch lebanese talk shows?

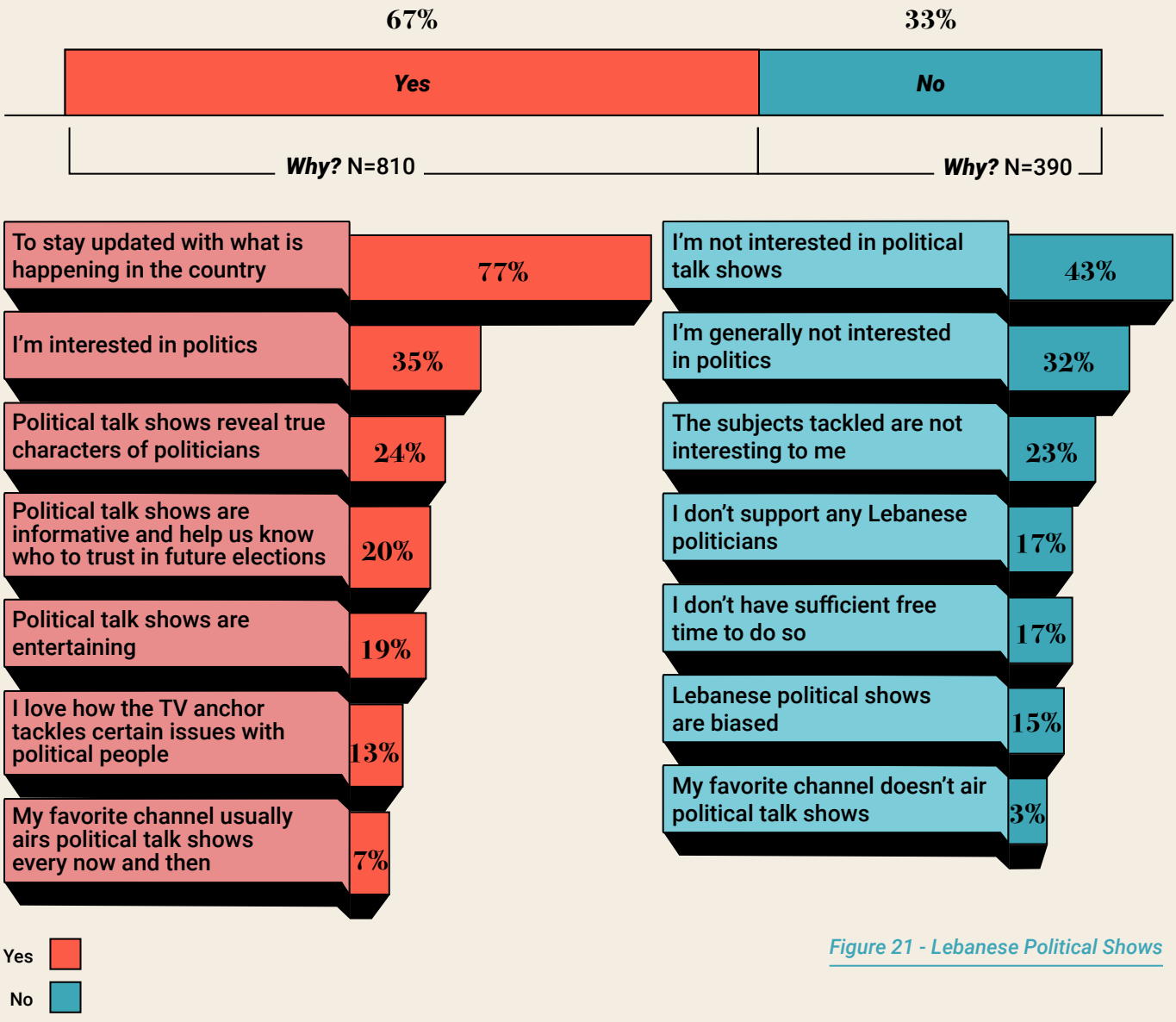


Figure 21 - Lebanese Political Shows

As part of the survey data collection, 1200 participants were asked whether they watch Lebanese political shows: 67% stated that they watch political shows compared to 33% only who do not watch such shows. When looking at the reasons behind watching political shows, 77% noted that they do so to stay updated with the latest developments in the country. It is also worth noting that 24% of the respondents stated that the political shows reveal the true character of politicians and help them know who to trust in future elections. This shows that 44% of the people who watch political shows are looking for the best politician to support or vote for, which reinforces the importance of promoting women's visibility in political talk

shows in order to gain public support and be elected. Additionally, participation in said shows will raise awareness on women's capabilities, character, and political skills, as was highlighted earlier by the focus groups.

On the other hand, 43% of the participants who do not watch political shows stated that they are not interested in these shows compared to 32% who are not interested in politics, and 17% who said that they do not support any Lebanese politician. Another finding that is worthy of note is that 15% of respondents believe that Lebanese political shows are biased.

Gender preference for TV show guests

N=1200

In your opinion, when it comes to TV show guests which gender (men, women or both) is more suitable to partake each of the below types of shows?

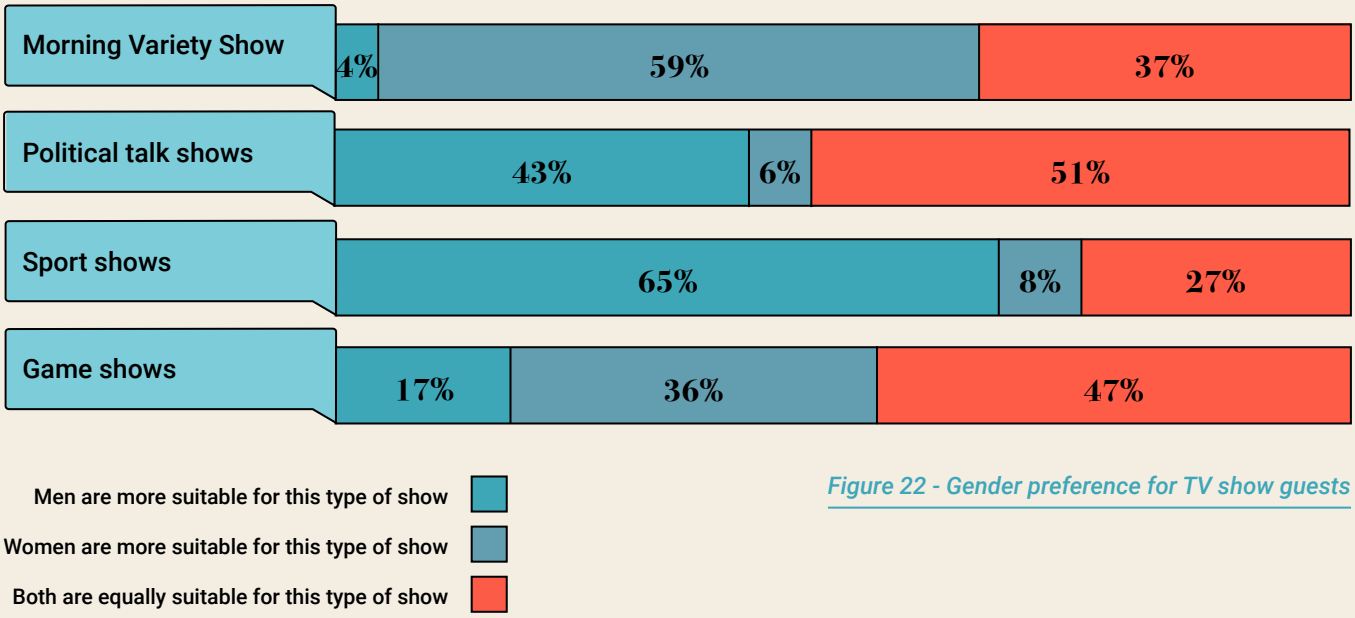


Figure 22 - Gender preference for TV show guests

As part of the survey, a question measured the respondents' opinion regarding which gender (men, women, or both) is more suitable to be a guest on different types of shows. While almost half of the respondents (43%) believe that men are more suitable for political talk shows, more than half of the participants (51%) stated that both genders are equally suitable for this type of show.

However, when it comes to morning variety shows and sports shows, the perceptions still reflect the long-believed stereotypes of men being more suitable for sports (65%) and women for morning shows (59%).

Reasons behind not having more female guests on political talk show

N=1200

In your opinion, why don't we see more women guests on political talk shows?

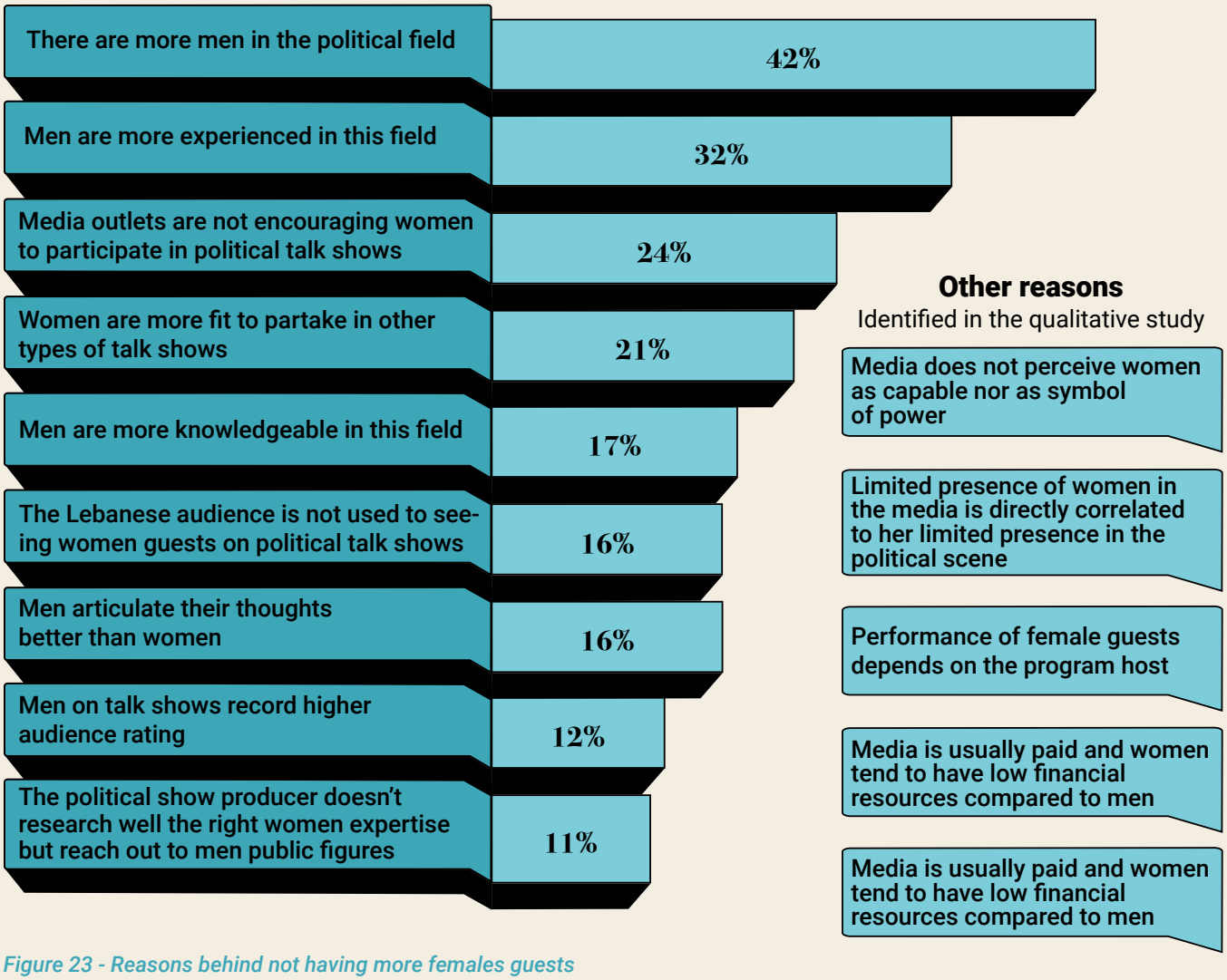


Figure 23 - Reasons behind not having more females guests on political talk shows

When asked about their perception of why men have more visibility than women in political shows, 42% of focus groups respondents stated that it is a male-dominated industry while 32% believe that man are experienced in this field than women.

This section revealed and measured the Lebanese perception of women in the media. A better inclusion of women as guests in the media, especially in political talk shows, is needed in order to make the public aware of women's political capabilities and give women the opportunity to be elected. In this context, the results showed that 24% of media outlets are not encouraging women to participate in political talk shows and 11% of respondents blamed show producers for reaching out to male public figures instead of making the effort to find suitable women guests.

3. *Female Key Challenges* and Areas of Improvement in the Political Field

Female respondents identified various challenges that impede their aspirations in one way or another. While older female activists focus more on political and social challenges, younger activists and general public females tend to emphasize social and economic challenges.

On the political front, the primary challenge lies in the dysfunctional political system and the absence of an effective state; this includes:

- The absence of political accountability.
- The prevailing corruption.
- The lack of proper implementation and application of the Lebanese Constitution, and the absence of a proper judicial system that applies accountability standards.
- The politicisation of all matters under sectarian influence.

On the social front, it is the social mind-set that affects women strongly by weakening her self-confidence and reinforcing her fears; this includes:

- A prevalent patriarchal mind-set.
- A gender-biased education for children.
- A prevalent stereotype of women as weak and vulnerable.
- The widespread mind-set that a woman's role is to take care of the household and the children and a man's role is to be the breadwinner.

On the economic front, the current situation and high unemployment rates in Lebanon are driving young females to pursue their aspirations and goals out of the country.

Abilities rating per gender 1/3

N=1200

On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you rate men's and women's below abilities?

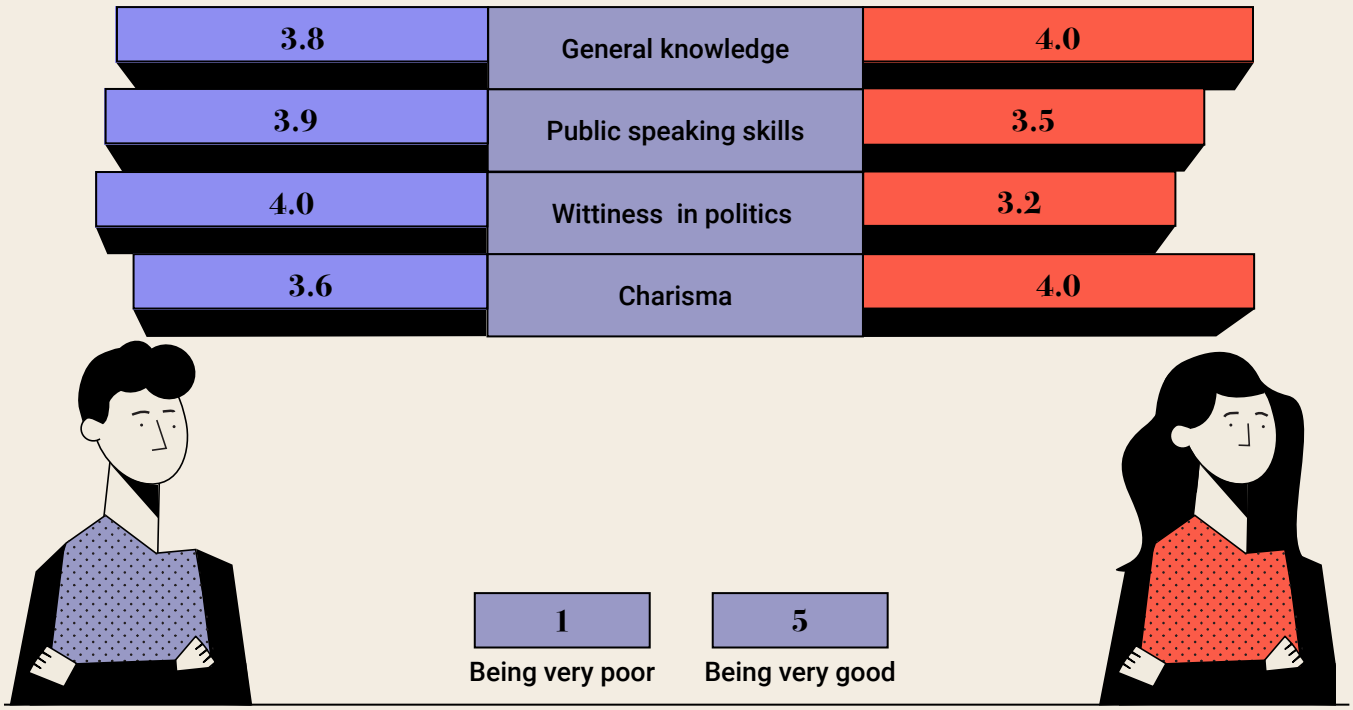


Figure 24 - Abilities rating per gender 1/3

As part of the survey, the participants were asked to rate the abilities of men and women on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is very poor and 5 very good. The answers showed that men scored higher when it comes to public speaking skills (3.9) and wittiness in politics (4.0) while women scored 4 for having more general knowledge and charisma.

Abilities rating per gender 2/3

N=1200

On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you rate men's and women's below abilities?

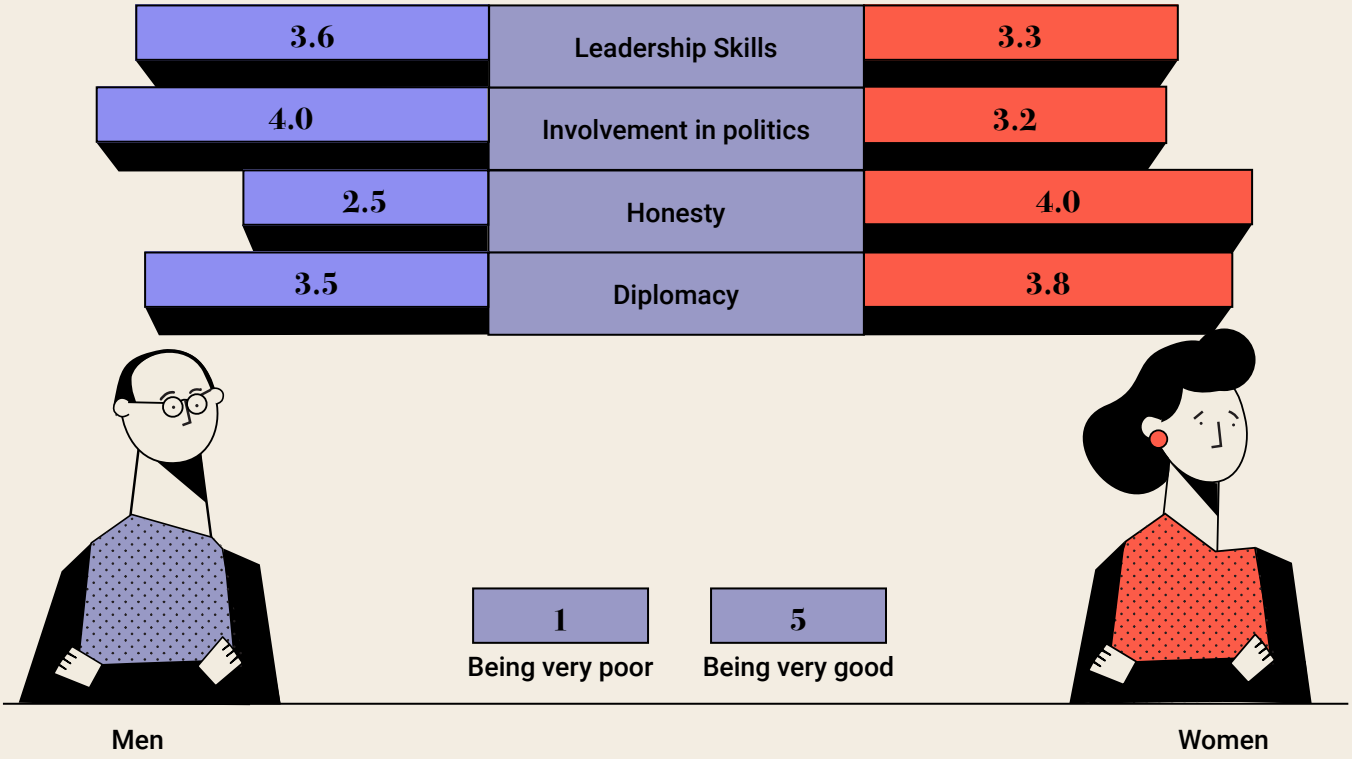


Figure 25- Abilities rating per gender 2/3

In addition, men are seen to be more involved in politics (4.0) and aware of developments in the political life. However, women are more likely to be more honest (4.0) and slightly more diplomatic, with a score of (3.8) versus (3.5) for men.

Abilities rating per gender 3/3

N=1200

On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you rate men's and women's below abilities?

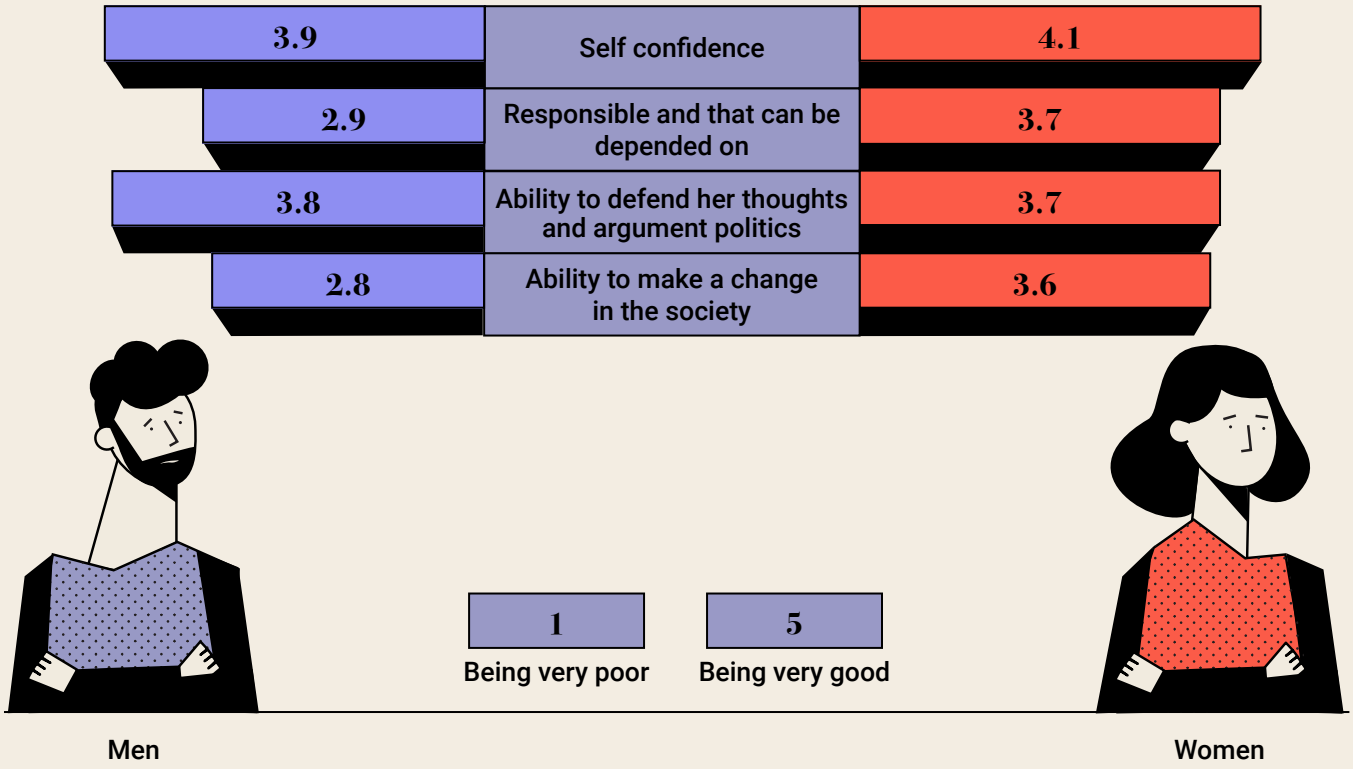


Figure 26 - Abilities rating per gender 3/3

As for self-confidence, women scored higher than men and the result was: 4.1 compared to 3.9 respectively. Women are also seen as more responsible and reliable (3.7). Some believe that women make a change in society (3.6) more than men could (2.8). However, men are still seen as more dominant in politics and better at defending their thoughts and arguments.

Conclusion: *Out of 12 skills, women scored higher on 7 skills compared to men who scored higher on 5 skills only. Men scored higher on skills related to wittiness, leadership, and involvement in politics; however, women scored higher on skills related to knowledge, character, and ability to make a difference.*

Factors preventing women from following a political career

N=1200

In your opinion, what are the factors that might prevent women from having a political career?

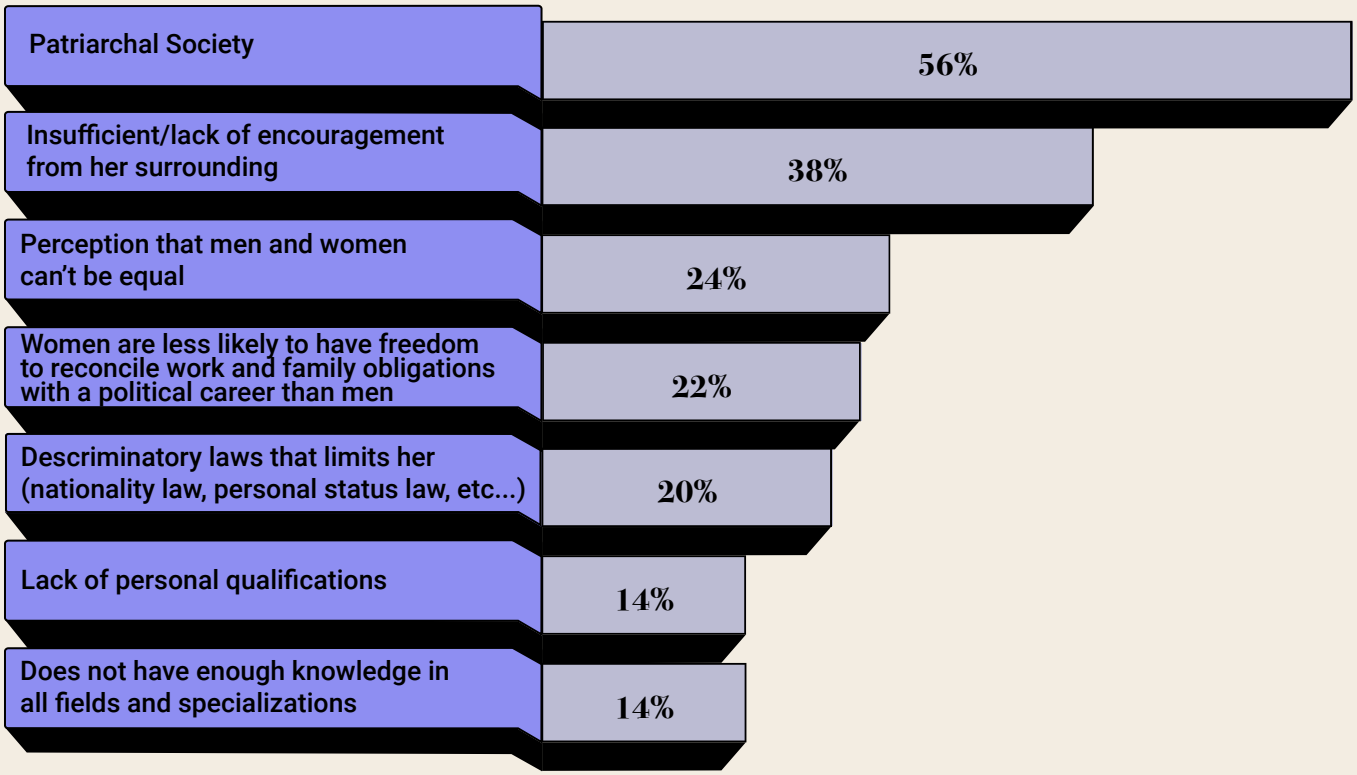


Figure 27- Factors preventing women from following political career

When asked about the factors preventing women from having a political career, 56% of the participants answered that living in a patriarchal society is the first barrier, followed by insufficient or nonexistent encouragement from the entourage (38%). It is also worth noting that 20% of respondents stated that discriminatory laws such as the nationality law, personal status law and others limit women's political participation.

3.1 Challenges Facing Women in Politics

1- Social perceptions and culturally pre-set assignments

The local culture has assigned responsibilities to women and drew their limitations. A woman is assigned to take over family, household, and children's responsibilities with all that this entails of tasks and chores that confine her in a domestic bubble.

Having designed the borders of this bubble, the culture around women does not often accept her trespassing these borders to the non-domestic world and breaking the traditional image assigned to her; as a result, many of the public responses towards her are harsh. These responses judge her for being a vulnerable and dependent, therefore less capable individual in society. Even worse, some responses touch on her reputation and honor, only to discourage her and bring her back to the bubble. These types of public responses strongly affect women's confidence and willingness to step out to the public life, whether consciously or not, and make her journey to success harder.

2- Inadequate support

Some old and young activists as well as general public female respondents bring forth the problem of inadequate support that impedes a woman's path in politics. Women need encouragement and support from their entourage. On the family front, not all women get the support they need from their spouse or parents. Financially, securing resources becomes harder if the woman embarks on an independent political path without support from political parties. On the media front, it is only recently that the media has started showing support for women; otherwise, they tend to shed light on less capable women.

3- High social expectations

Women who step outside the pre-designed bubble are faced with high social expectations that are otherwise very rarely projected on men. As a result, women find themselves making more effort, often double the effort of men, in order to prove themselves worthy and capable.

4- Unjust and discriminatory laws

According to the answers of older activists, the fact that the electoral law does not provide for a women's quota impedes women's efforts to reach high ranks in politics.

5- The time factor

Very few general public males identified the time factor as a hindrance. The challenge lies in the mind-set that a woman should spend more time with her family, especially if her children are young.

6- Professional jealousy (a controversial idea between older activists and the general public females)

The idea that women are not supportive to other women in politics was raised by some respondents and generated controversial opinions. On one hand, older activists stated that in the last elections, women's support to other women in politics was remarkable, and that any suggestion of jealousy is pure propaganda. It is rather men who exhibit jealousy towards women in political practice.

3.2 Ways to Empower Women Politically

When asked about the ways that would help empower women politically, participants mentioned the following:

- Women should have a supportive entourage who provides them with technical and professional support.
- Women should have strong confidence and communication skills.
- Awareness should be raised on women's capabilities and achievements.
- A gender quota should be applied (a controversial idea)

According to the focus group participants, especially older women activists, a political decision should include women in politics, based on merit; and a gender quota should be adopted to secure women's representation.

The quota system is not well-accepted by many for the reason that it may possibly result in incompetent women reaching decision-making positions. This would have an adverse effect on women's performance and credibility in politics .(Especially among general public male and female respondents and young activists.)

'Women's fear and reluctance are the result of the oppression that society is inflicting onto them. We need to let go of this ignorance, social backwardness and the attachment to old habits and traditions.'

V. Conclusion

Perceptions towards Lebanese Women and the Obstacles to their Success

- The respondents' perception of women is associated positively with women's strength, potential, and capabilities. The general public male respondents also positively associate women with the role of a caretaker and an individual who does not give up. At the same time, many respondents draw negative perceptions pertaining to the social injustice exercised towards women.
- A Lebanese woman is perceived to be tolerant, dedicated, a fighter, and a survivor. She is often restrained by a prevailing patriarchal attitude and legislations that do not do her justice. The general public male respondents appreciate that women carry a burden of responsibilities that is often heavier than that of men. Older activists, younger activists, and general public female respondents categorize Lebanese women into two groups: the fearless and adventurous and the invisible and timid.
- Gender discrimination, patriarchy, and unjust legislations are the main obstacles that impede a woman's course towards success in Lebanon. Women are already raised differently, they do not enjoy the same personal civil status and employment rights as men, and they get easily bullied and judged by their entourage if they ever take the initiative of stepping outside their "culturally assigned responsibilities'.

Role of Women and Gender Equality

- The majority of respondents believe that women's key role in society, family, and at work has a constructive impact; they are leaders and pillars of strength in society. Yet, they still struggle to acquire civil, constitutional, and basic human rights that allow them to be equal to man.
- Achieving gender equality starts by reviewing and amending legislations that are not fair to women. Women should lead the reform of all discriminatory laws.
- Many respondents suggested the adoption of a quota system at the professional and social levels including companies and NGOs; however, controversies were raised around the women quota system being less encouraged on the political front given the risk of prioritizing quota numbers over meritocracy.
- Education also plays a key role in spreading public awareness on the importance of women's role and rectify the stereotypical perception and portrayal of women.

Political and Social Participation

- The majority of respondents are somehow politically active. Their involvement is driven by an opposition to the prevailing injustice, a determination to change the status quo, and an urge to contribute to reform in their country. Some respondents feel motivated when they find a political party that shares their values and vision. Having said that, some general public men and women respondents said that they prefer to remain politically neutral, without this preventing them from having their personal political opinion.
- The majority of respondents are active on the social front; their motivation is fueled by social injustice, patriotism, the economic crisis, or the August 4th blast; all of which stream towards rejecting the current situation and the urge to change the country into a better place by helping the less privileged, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Many older activists and some younger activists are involved in areas related to women's rights, human rights, child protection, fighting corruption, as well as animal rights.

- Many respondents reported that they were motivated to take part in the October 17th protests because they support its demands including fighting corruption, reclaiming a decent living, and salvaging the country. They were further encouraged by the remarkable expressions of coexistence that were felt in the protests. The fact that protests brought together people of different social, religious, and regional backgrounds restored the respondents' hope and faith in the country.
- Many respondents considered political involvement in university as crucial as it mirrors the country's democratic elections and gives the youth the opportunity to experience democratic processes. However, some younger activists were not satisfied with many university students voting for the independent candidates just because they were against political parties or voting for females just for the sake of encouragement.

The Ideal Female Politician and Perceptions Towards Women in Politics

- While discussing the ideal woman politician and the ideal men politician; respondents did not differentiate between genders. Only few distinctions were highlighted with respect to the nature of the women character. Respondents considered that the essential characteristics that make a politician ideal are the same for both genders as long as 'the right person is in the right place'.
- Most general public men and women respondents see that men and women who have similar qualifications are equally likely to win the contested position. However, most older and young activists disagree and believe that in Lebanon, the ideal man is likely to win over the ideal woman who is running for the same office mainly because of the prevailing patriarchal attitudes.
- The perceptions of respondents towards women in politics are often negatively associated with women's shy presence which is caused by a lack of encouragement from the direct entourage, a bleak attitude by political parties, and the constraining cultural factors and traditions. Nevertheless, some men do notice and appreciate the hard work and competence of some independent women in politics.
- The inheritance of political office is yet another negative association with women in politics. This type of political involvement is not approved by most of the respondents; in fact, it is considered as a type of corruption that affects performance negatively.

Women's presence and performance in Parliament

- All respondents agree that women's presence in the parliament has an additional value primarily because women constitute more than half of the social fabric in Lebanon, hence, the need for them to be adequately represented in parliament. Moreover, women are likely to shed light on issues that may not occur to men and are likely to push towards the enactment and implementation of laws that are in favor of women's rights, achieve progress on gender equality, and improve policy issues at the workplace.
- Respondents categorized women's performance in parliament into two groups: women who are active and let the public hear about their work and achievements; and those who are not heard of, sometimes to the extent that the public forgets they exist.
- Political parties influence the performance of women in parliament. Even though parties are showing a minimal progress towards empowering women in politics; they also tend to pretentiously integrate women to facelift the political party's image. Respondents suggest that political parties initiate appropriate plans towards empowering women members and raising limitations to allow such members to speak freely.
- Participants believe that women should make their presence felt or decline the position if they feel they are not up to its standards. Filling in a vacancy without proper qualifications has an adverse effect

on the performance and general perception of women in decision making positions.
- Also, few general public male respondents consider that politics is all about teamwork instead of it being an individual achievement. Therefore, if the woman is part of a political party that is working properly, then she is likely to perform well.

Empowering Women in Politics and Challenges in the Political Journey

- In order to feel empowered in politics, women need proper support from their family and professional entourage. Respondents discussed several other ideas that help empower women in politics. For instance, the opportunity to attend capacity building workshops on communication skills and follow mentoring programs in politics, as well as the adoption and implementation of a gender quota (mostly approved by older activists but disapproved by many other categories of respondents), the promotion of social awareness with regard to women's abilities and capabilities, and the use of success stories to help the public see that women possess qualifications and credentials.
- The challenges and obstacles that a woman encounters as she proceeds towards a political career that make her journey to success harder. While the primary challenge lies in the perception and attitudes of society towards women, other challenges are related to social expectations, inadequate support, discriminatory laws, and the time factor.
- A change in the overall public mindset towards women as well as the promotion of social awareness and education campaigns on women's rights are key to alleviate or overcome the challenges that women face during their political journey.

Women's presence and performance in the media

- Women's presence in political programs in the media has somewhat increased compared to previous years; however, it is still far from ideal, and women still need more encouragement. The reasons behind such demure presence include the limited financial abilities, the fact that the media does not perceive women as capable or as a symbol of power. General Public men respondents also associated women's limited presence with political parties who tend to delegate media presence to men because they are more resilient to criticism and impervious to the viciousness of politics.
- According to most respondents, women's presence in political talk shows is satisfactory. Overall, women on these platforms are perceived to be knowledgeable, capable, and credible. Their performance also depends on the program host: while a cynical host tends to make women feel uncomfortable, a non-sexist host makes them feel confident and comfortable.
- Women's presence in the media improved after the October 17th protests. Her resilient presence at various fronts reinforced the general public's perception of woman and her ability to make decisions and to achieve. General public men respondents believe that the protests allowed women to break their silence and free themselves from 'assigned limitations', thus attracting the spotlight and making a difference in their presence in the media.

Participation in Elections

- The majority of respondents are active in the municipal and parliamentary elections; in fact, many respondents believe that their participation in elections is a duty and not a choice. Most respondents stated that they vote for candidates based on their credentials, qualifications, competence, and trust. Other respondents, especially general public men, focus on the political agenda and the electoral platform; they tend to vote for a 'plan' rather than an 'individual'.
- The majority of respondents prioritize the qualifications of the candidate over their gender. It is only when two equally qualified candidates, a man and a woman, run for the

same office that respondents tend to vote for the woman candidate with the intention of supporting and encouraging women. Few general public men respondents would vote for an independent woman candidate, provided that she has the minimal qualifications required, because elected political party candidates have always been associated with poor performance.

- Some respondents, especially those active in political parties, stated that they would give their vote to a woman candidate who is affiliated with a political party that they trust. If she wins, she will have better support in the parliament and would be in a stronger position to achieve.
- More than half of the respondents, especially young activists and general public men, believe that women have better chances at winning in the municipal elections, assuming that the voting community accepts women in decision-making positions. The small scale and familiar environment of municipal elections make it easier for a female candidate to communicate her plan and prove her capabilities.
- On the other hand, other respondents consider that women have better chances at winning in the parliamentary elections. They assume that if the woman candidate is part of a political party, she will get the votes of party members and allies, and thus improve her chances at being elected.
- Also, in parliamentary elections, regions such as South of Lebanon, Tripoli, and Akkar have low acceptance towards women in decision-making positions; therefore, a woman candidate is more likely to win in parliamentary elections where she can secure votes from a wider public rather than from a limited one.
- The majority of women respondents reported not being interested in running for any kind of office. The main barriers that prevent them from doing so are associated to a lack of financial resources, the current political and economic situation in the country, personal time restrictions, and the confessional system that makes some religious sects not eligible for candidacy in particular regions. Other reasons included respondents not being ready for an aggressive competition with men.
- Few young activists said they would consider running for municipal elections. They are motivated by their interest in politics which they perceive as a tool to achieve change in the country.

VI. Table of Figures

Figure 1 – Level of interest in politics 10
Figure 2 – Staying updated with local political news 11
Figure 3 – Support/belonging to political parties 12
Figure 4 – October 17th Revoliution 13
Figure 5 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector (men vs. women) 14
Figure 6 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women) 15
Figure 7 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women) 16
Figure 8 – Perception - likelihood of success per sector by gender (men vs. women) 17
Figure 9 – Perception - Why men are more likely to succeed in the political and public institution sector? 18
Figure 10 – Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field. 19
Figure 11– Reasons why men outnumber women in the political field. 20
Figure 12 - Gender preference when voting 21
Figure 13 - Gender preference when voting 22
Figure 14 - Gender preference when voting 23
Figure 15 - Gender equality in Parliament 25
Figure 16 - Role of women in the Paliament 26
Figure 17 - Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 1/2 27
Figure 18 - Top 5 traits defining a good politician (men vs. women) 2/2 28
Figure 19 - The ideal Female politician 29
Figure 20 - Areas of development (men vs. women) 31
Figure 21 - Lebanese Political Shows 33
Figure 22 - Gender preference for TV show guests 34
Figure 23 - Reasons behind not having more females guests on political talk shows 35
Figure 24 - Abilities rating per gender 1/3 36
Figure 25 - Abilities rating per gender 2/3 37
Figure 26 - Abilities rating per gender 3/3 38
Figure 27 - Factors preventing women from following political career 39

Political Participation Voting Preference **Political Participation** *Media Presence*