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**MEDIA COVERAGE**

**OF**

**MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2016**

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The analyses and recommendations regarding policies mentioned in this study do not necessarily reflect the opinion and the position of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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# Introducing the study

## 1. Why this Study:

Since the beginning of 2016, Lebanese public opinion and the political sphere have been occupied with the issue of the municipal elections. Contradictory information circulated about whether these elections were to take place on time or whether there will be an extension of the terms of the current municipal and mayoral councils, similar to the extension of the term of the parliament without elections.

This contradictory information coincided with severe political conflicts related to the persistent presidential vacuum and the non-election of a new president more than two years after the deadline, as well as to the failure in enacting a modern electoral law and the uncertainty of the security situation prevailing in the North and the Bekaa.

With the first weeks of the year 2016 a media and political movement started, especially from what is known as the “Christian Duet” (Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement), demanding that municipal elections take place on time. All this occurred amid journalistic reports stating that this “duet” represents 86% of the Christian vote while other reports spoke about splits within the Future Movement and the unwillingness of Deputy Walid Joumblatt to conduct municipal elections at this time, beside the fact that the “Shiite Duet” (Amal and Hezbollah) was preoccupied with the Syrian conflict.

With this background, it was necessary to keep up with the positions that support holding the elections and those calling for their postponement or the extension of the terms of the current municipal councils. It was also imperative to assess the approach of Lebanese media to this issue and the extent of their contribution in promoting and supporting the democratic process, as well as the role they played during this period.

This study aims to analyze the media coverage of the municipal elections in light of the “Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon” that was officially launched on June 25, 2013 by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project and signed by national participating media.

The article 12 of this Pact mentions the commitment of national media to present news and programs relating to legislative, municipal, syndical and student elections in a fair and impartial manner, and to provide the highest level of balance in order to ensure equal opportunities to the competing parties. It also states the commitment of Lebanese media to contribute to the democratic and electoral education of the public through disseminating information material on the elections, the importance of elections in democratic regimes and how they are conducted, as well as the role of the voter, his rights and duties.

## 2. Problems Studied

**The study brings up central questions about the role of the media during the electoral period, especially with regard to their mission in democratic regimes and particularly in shaping the public opinion through providing accurate information and the necessary facts allowing the public opinion to understand its environment and to take the appropriate positions accordingly.**

**Therefore, based on the municipal elections of 2016, this study will try to underline the following facts:**

- The contribution of the media in the democratic and electoral voter education? and raising awareness at the level of the voters and the politicians.
- The contribution of the media in urging politicians to accept holding the municipal elections on time.
- The volume of the media coverage of democratic civil forces striving to implement electoral reform.
- The contribution of the media in putting pressure on the political power to hold the elections and whether the media played a pressuring role one way or the other?
- Keeping up with electoral campaigns and the mechanisms of media coverage.
- Shedding light on the civil society initiatives related to elections.
- The extent of the commitment of the Lebanese media in presenting news and reports about municipal and mayoral elections according to the principles of the Journalists' Pact.

## 3. Corpus of the Study

Monitoring of the media for this study covered three periods:

First period: It started before calling for the electoral colleges on the first of February through the end of March, when electoral colleges were called in the Mohafazats.

Second period: During the month of April, after electoral colleges were called and before the start of elections in May.

Third period: During the month of May, when voting was taking place and campaigns were heating up.

The studied sample is composed of:

- Evening television newscasts;
- Journalistic reports related to the elections and op-eds, articles and analyses;
- Parts of political talk shows related to the municipal elections.

The monitored television stations are: Tele-Liban, Al-Jadeed, Al-Manar, OTV, MTV, LBCI and Future TV.

The monitored newspapers are: Annahar, Assafir, Al-Akhbar, Al-Moustaqbal, Al-Dyar, Al-Balad, Al-Liwa, Al-Joumhouriyah, l'Orient-le-Jour and The Daily Star.

## 4. Methodology

The methodology of the study is based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the evening news and television reports as well as press reports related to the municipal elections. It also analyzes the type of coverage, its position, the source of the speech and its role as well as different parts of the talk shows related to these elections.

Through this methodology, we will display the results of the quantitative monitoring in figures and tables. Analysis of the contents allows us to interpret these figures showing the roles and functions of the media in this period.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

### - Role of the Media

It is evident that media play an important role in the democratic process.

Usually, Media is seen as playing the role of a monitor through allowing criticism and shedding light on the whole democratic operation. It can inform voters of all the details, and it plays a facilitating role for the participation of citizens in democratic life through:

- Educating the voters on how to practice their democratic rights.
- Covering electoral campaigns.
- Allowing political parties and competing forces to transmit their messages to the voters.
- Giving competitors a debating forum.
- Monitoring the counting operations and the announcement of results.
- Following closely the electoral process in order to ensure its efficiency, fairness and integrity.

It is also to be noted that media are the principal source of information for voters in a world where media determines political choices through publishing these choices, introducing and promoting them.

Additionally, election oversight now relies a lot on media coverage as a principal criterion in evaluating its legitimacy. In parallel, statistical analyses are conducted as well as the analysis of the contents of media message in order to measure the balance and fairness in coverage.

### - Coverage and Editorials

This is about all aspects of media coverage: news, reports, opinions and debates, which belong to what is known as editorial monitoring of the media, as well as some other aspects such as announcement of results or publishing polls results before the electoral operations.

## - Electoral Education

In modern democracies, the media constitutes a vital instrument that not only informs voters on programs and candidates, but also provides principal information on voting mechanisms, the purpose of the elections and urging voters to partake in their civic duty.

This matter is part of the responsibilities of the electoral administration and the legislative framework that regulates the activities during the electoral process.

## - Right to Appear in the Media

The freedom to conduct political debates has been approved as a principal right by international courts and institutions.

The European Court of Human Rights declared in 1978 that the “freedom of political debate is at the core of the democratic society.”<sup>1</sup>

These political debates and their broadcast are important in that they provide the voter with the information that allows him or her to make the informed choice.

“Freedom of expression is at the basis of a democratic society; without free debate, especially in political matters, any educational endeavor or public information cannot be complete and correct.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, for the electoral process to be democratic, it is imperative to accord all candidates the right to appear in the media in a balanced way. An unjust and unfair democratic competition is characterized by imbalance in reaching the media and the information as well as in electoral infractions and various pressures.

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1- Political Campaigning Planning Manual: A Step by Step Guide to Winning Elections (Washington, DC: National Democratic Institute of International affairs (NDI), 2009)

2- Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 21 (January 2010), p. 57

## PART II:

# QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISTIC AND TELEVISION COVERAGE

## 1. Coverage before Calling Electoral Colleges

### a. Volume of Coverage by Categories:

Media coverage took place according to the following categories:

- Electoral Education: a topic about the rights and duties of the voters and the candidates and about legal and regulatory texts that rule the electoral process.
- News about the electoral process and its organization: decisions of the Ministry of the Interior, instructions and directions related to the electoral process.
- Local news about candidates and voters: coverage of the positions and activities of the candidates and the political forces.

- Tendencies toward holding the elections or postponing them: positions that clearly supported holding the elections or postponing them.
- News related to the awareness and control campaigns: two-pronged promotional activities, such as activating the electoral process and control of implementing the laws.

Based on the above-mentioned definitions, 440 reports in Lebanese daily newspapers and 78 television news reports were monitored between the first of February and 26 March, the date of calling the electoral colleges. Journalistic news supporting holding the elections was 63.32% while television news supporting the elections was 41% (Figures 1 and 2).

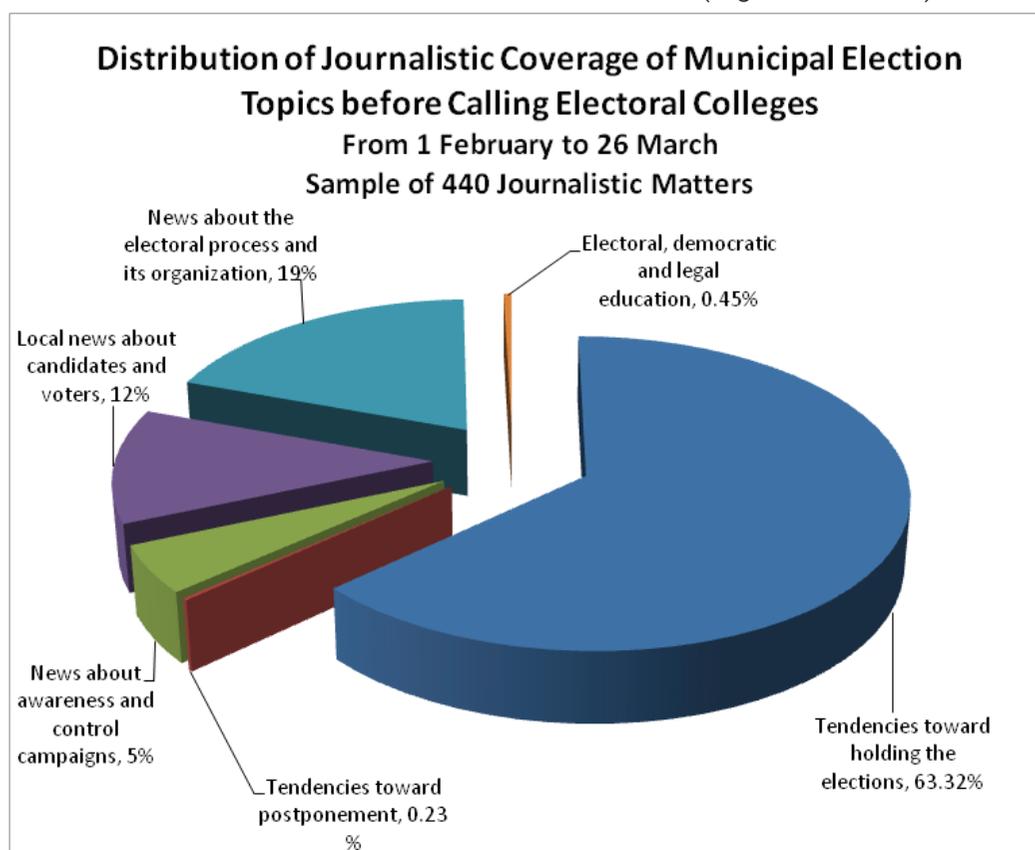
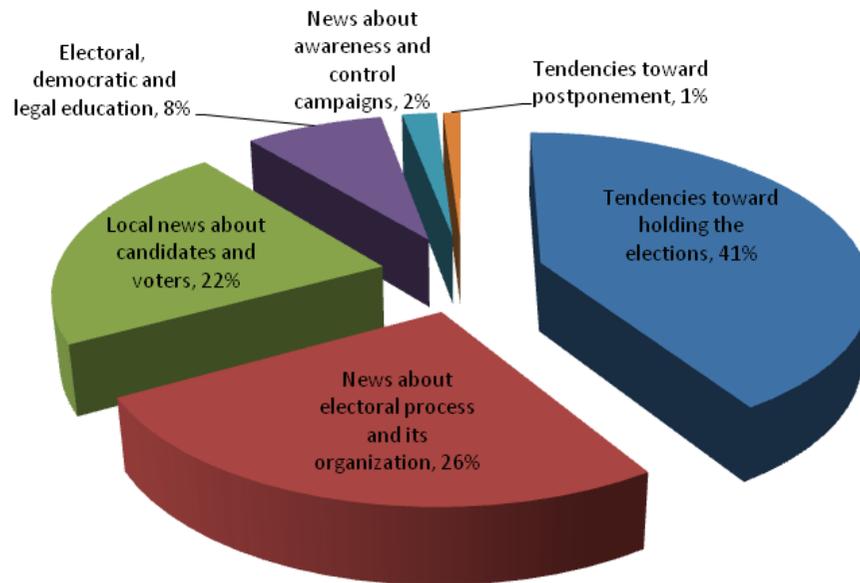


Figure 1

## Distribution of Television News Coverage for Municipal Election Topics before Calling the Electoral Colleges

From 1 February to 26 March  
Sample of 78 Television Reports



**Figure 2**

Due to the fact that media coverage took place from a traditional political approach (populist statements and positions), the proportion of the positions supporting the postponement of the elections did not reach more than 1% on television while it reached only a marginal proportion of 0.23% in daily newspapers.

News related to the electoral process and its organization was only 19% of the time in the press and 26% of the time in television. The same low proportion is seen with regard to the candidates and voters reaching only 12% in the press and 22% in television.

The reasons for these results are the following:

- Uncertainty about the fact that the elections will take place amid reports of possible security incidents that could derail the whole electoral process.

- Lack of clarity in the electoral alliances after the two components of the “Christian Duet” (Free Patriotic Movement and Lebanese Forces) agreed to join forces in municipal and mayoral campaigns, which caused some uncertainty in how the allies of this duet will deal with the municipal elections.

- A near absence of the election administration (concerned departments of the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities) from the media scene before calling the electoral colleges. The only exception was the media campaign to register voters during the period 10 February – 10 March.

- Non-implementation of the law with regard to the creation of an independent body to monitor elections and electoral information and advertising, such as in the last parliamentary elections.

Despite these doubts and uncertainties, the proportion of electoral educating was 8% in television and 0.45% in the press. At the same time, awareness and control campaigns in the printed press reached 5% while it was only 2% in television.

## b. Definition of the Type of Coverage

The news report is the most prominent type of press and television coverage surpassing interviews and investigations. The last two types were completely absent from television and constituted only 1.13% of the printed press (Figures 3 and 4).

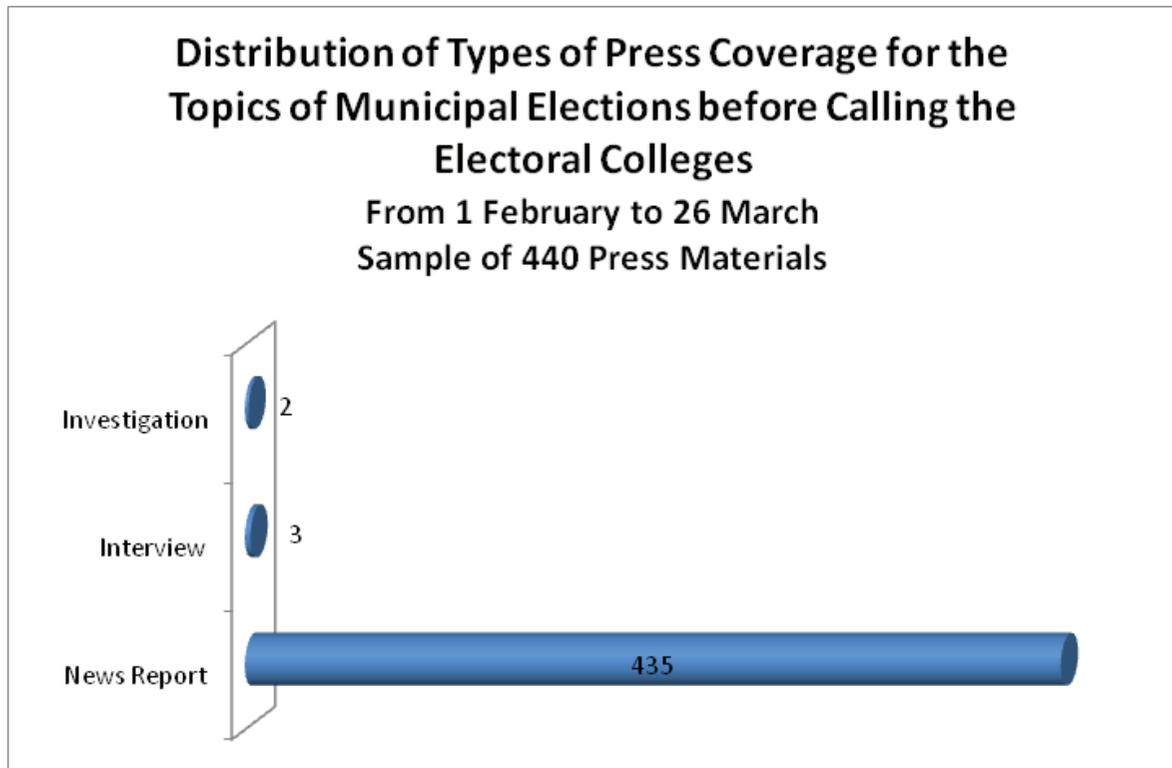


Figure 3

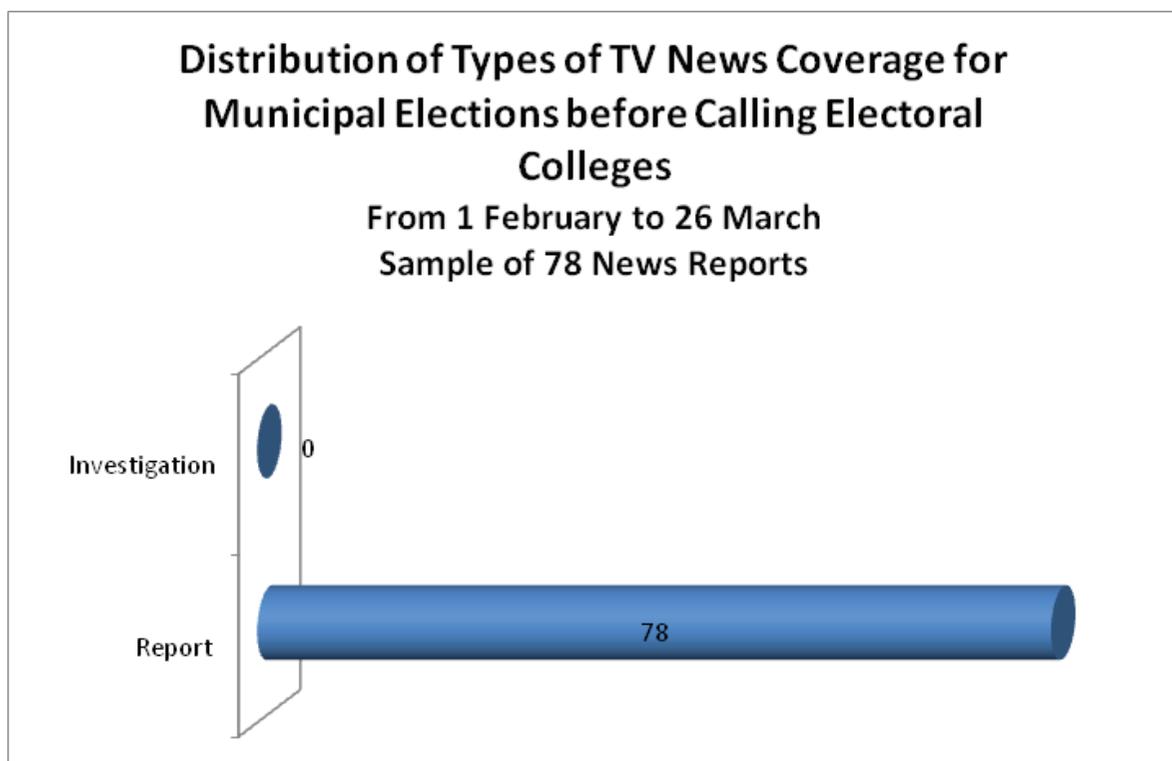


Figure 4

These results can be explained as follows:

-Unwillingness of the political forces to expand on the topic of conducting the elections and to announce clear positions in this regard due to uncertainties of future alliances.

-Inexistence of electoral slate candidates and competitors.

-The fact that media in general followed political forces in not pushing and pressuring toward holding the elections. Coverage related to municipal elections appeared as a regular news item in television in a proportion of 91% while in the printed press it was 66.13%. The election appeared as a principal news item at a rate of 31.13% and as a prime news item at 2.7% (Figures 5 and 6).

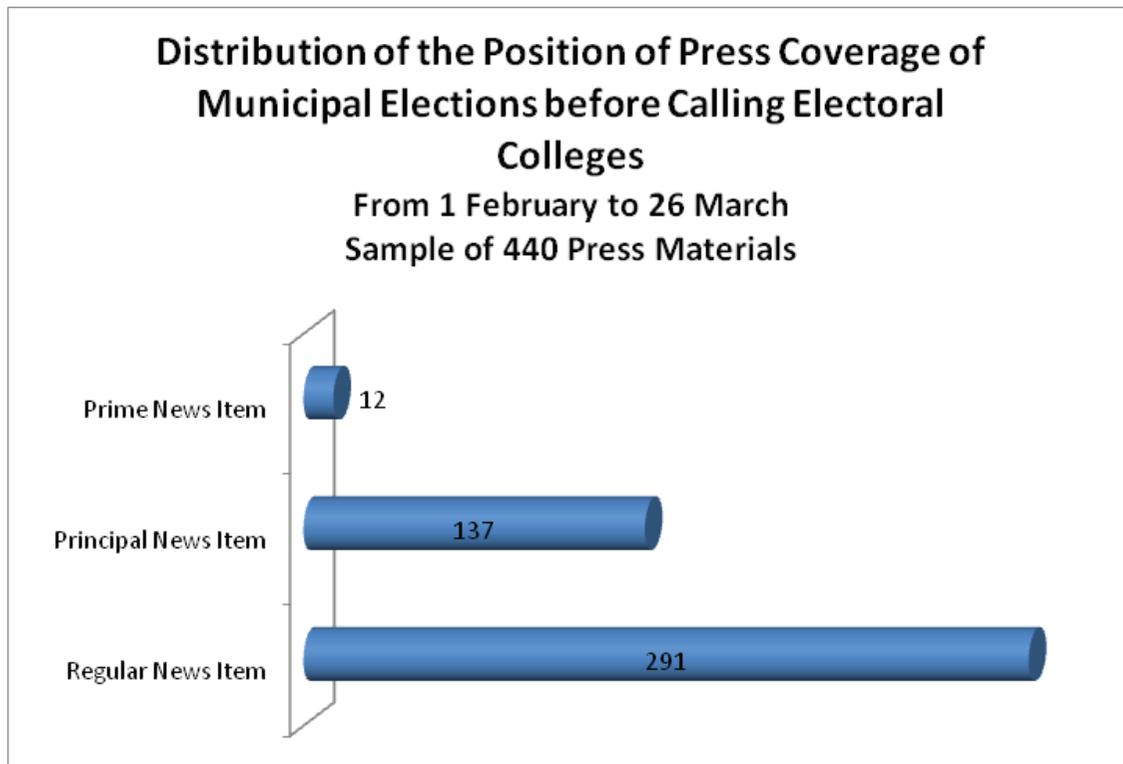


Figure 5

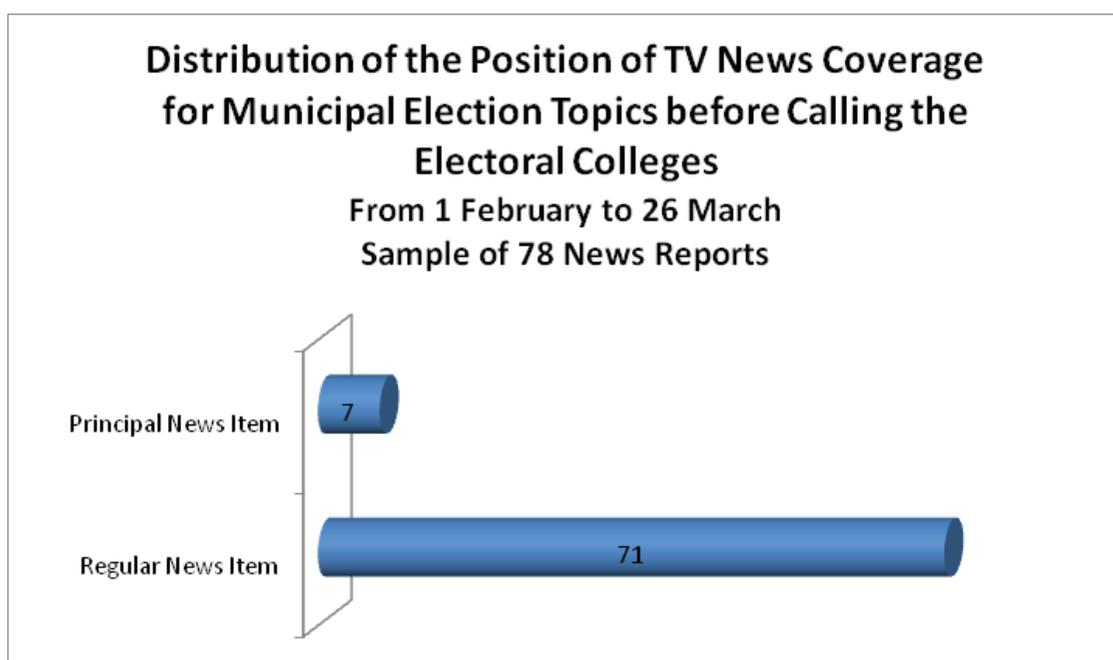


Figure 6

This difference between television and the press is due to the fact that our monitoring covered only the television newscasts while, with regard to the press, it covered all the pages and sections of the newspapers.

### c. Source of the Speech

As mentioned above, the majority of the positions and events related to the municipal elections originated from Lebanese political forces, allied or competing with one another, within a traditional political framework. For this reason, political positions constituted a proportion of approximately 74% of the press coverage and 65.4% of television coverage (Figures 7 and 8).

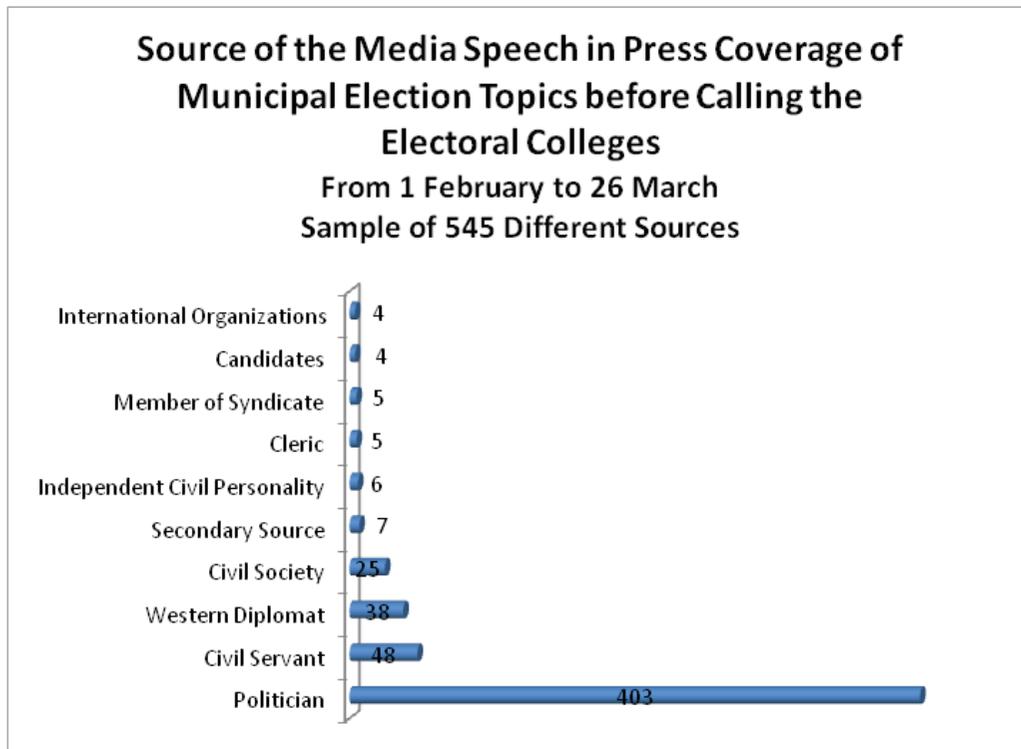


Figure 7

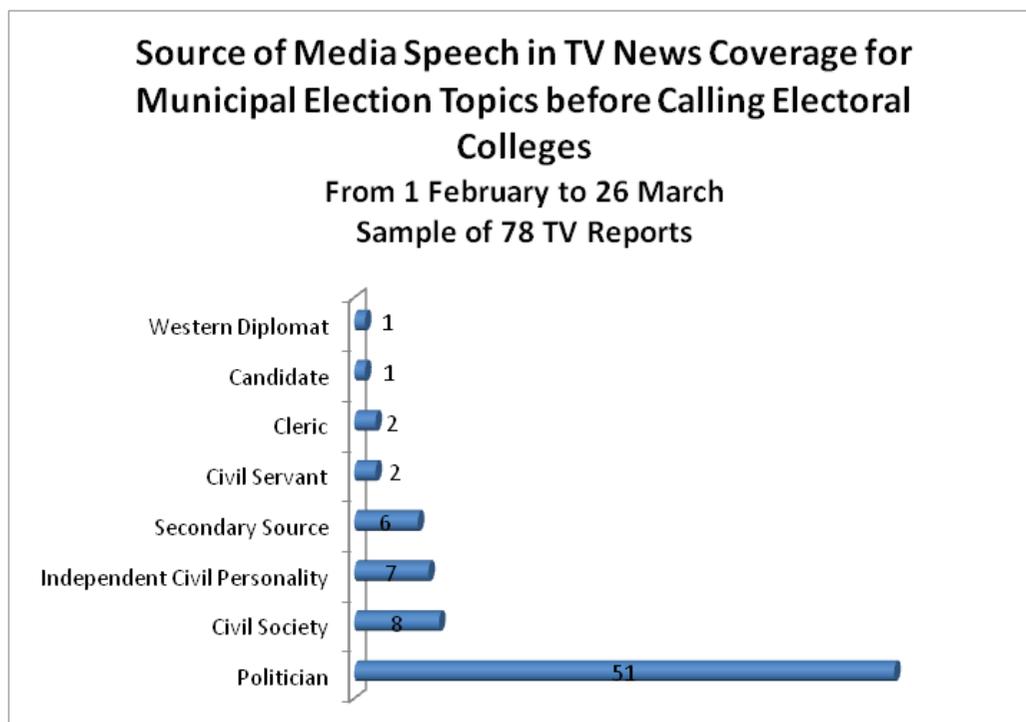


Figure 8

International interest in the municipal elections, which most of the times was calling for holding these elections on time, seems clearly apparent in the printed press (7%).

The civil society, which intensified its campaigns with the public opinion all over the Lebanese territory, occupied only a proportion of 4.58% of the news sources in the press and 10.25% in television.

In contrast, candidates, clerics and independents did not occupy an important proportion during this period.

## d. Gender Distribution

The first indications did not reflect women's interest in the municipal elections when these elections were mentioned. From the first of February until the 26th of March, coverage related to women did not reach more than 10% in television and 0.93% in the press.

## 2. Coverage after Calling the Electoral Colleges (April)

### a. Volume of Coverage

Following the call of the electoral colleges to the municipal elections, media coverage increased significantly. 310 television reports that included local news related to alliance scenarios, candidates and voters were monitored at a proportion of 66% (Figures 9 and 10).

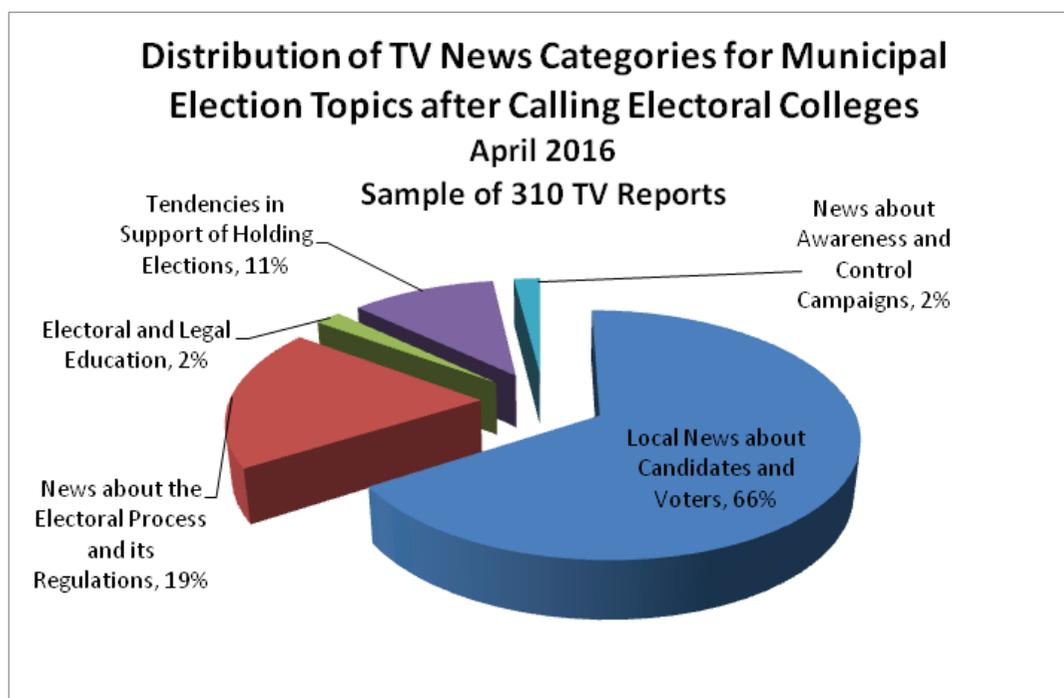
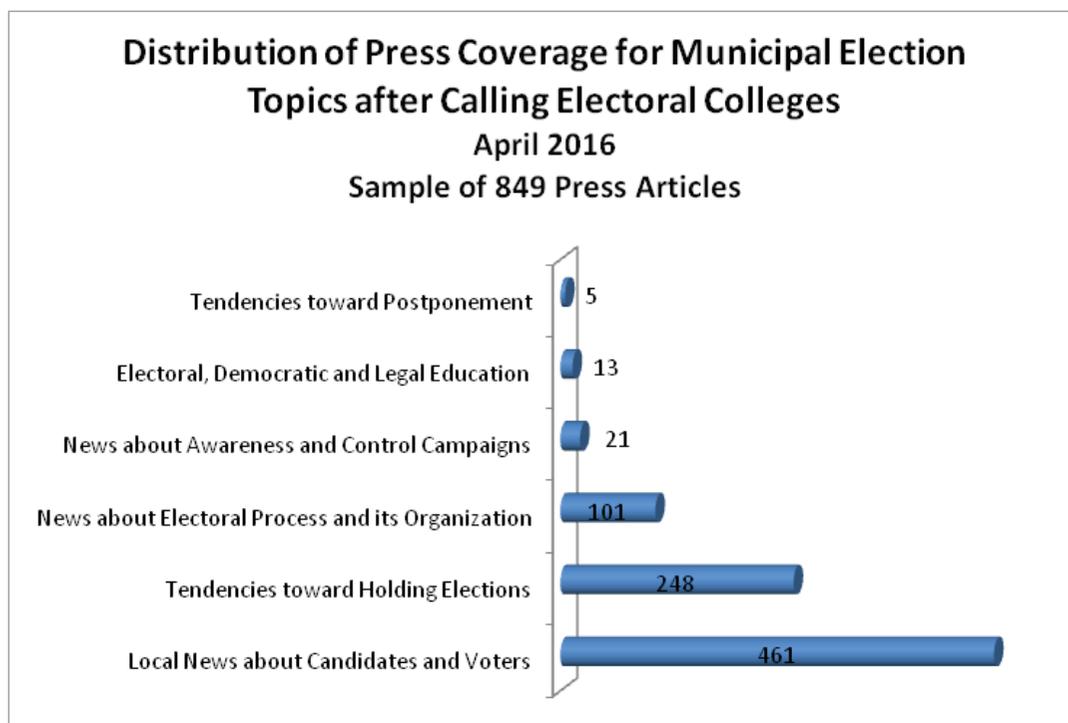


Figure 9



**Figure 10**

On the other hand, although April was full of political, media and social activities in the framework of the electoral process and its organization, the proportion of coverage did not reach more than 19% and the issues of political education and awareness and control campaigns remained limited and did not exceed 2%.

The volume of press coverage increased. A sample of 849 press materials were monitored, 54% of which were dedicated to news about candidates and voters.

However, the continued atmosphere of uncertainty and doubts in holding the elections resulted in moving the tendencies in support of holding the elections to the second most discussed topic at a proportion of 29.21%, and the interest in organizational matters increased and reached a proportion of 12%.

It is worth noting that news about campaigns for awareness and electoral, democratic and legal education varied between 2.5% and 1.5%. This is a negative indicator since April offered the opportunity to increase these activities and showcase them for the benefit of the democratic process and informed choice. The responsibility for this negative indicator falls on (in various proportions) the electoral administration, political parties and the civil society organizations as well as the media itself.

## b. Type of Coverage

It is true that the month of April witnessed activities and preparations to embark on the municipal elections. However, the uncertainty of the alliances until the last moment turned television news coverage of these activities into regular news items that were broadcast while describing the situation and the expectations (90.64%). In contrast, broadcasting these activities as principal news items reached 6.72% and as prime or live news reached 1.29% (Figures 11 and 12).

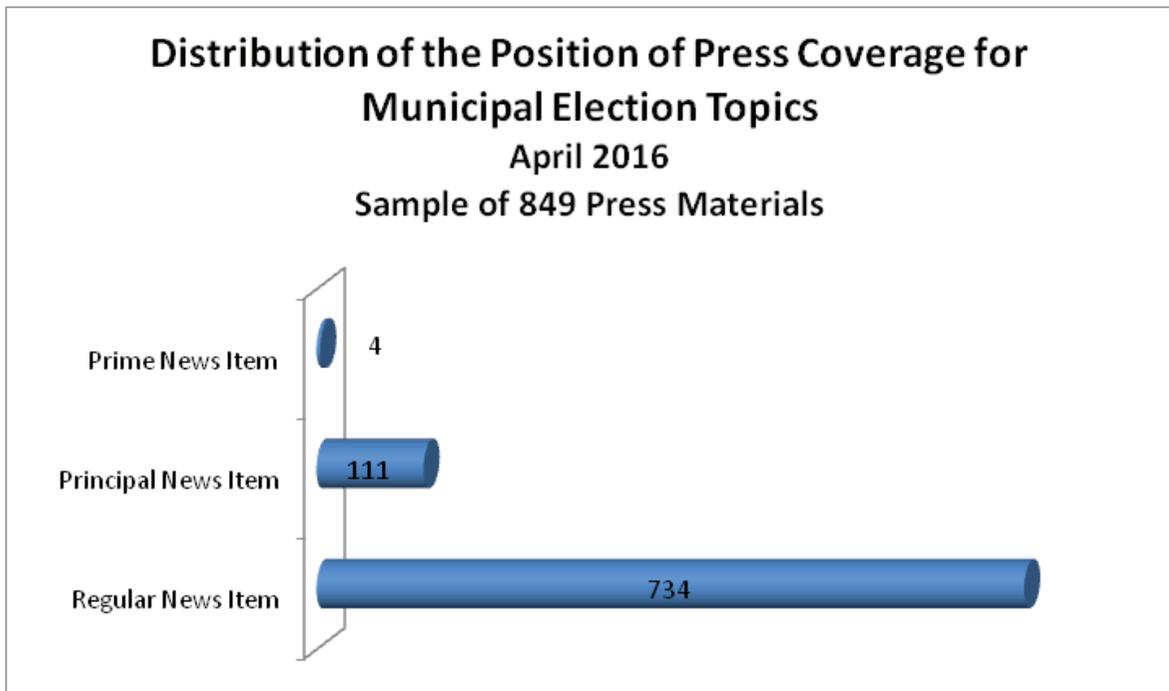


Figure 11

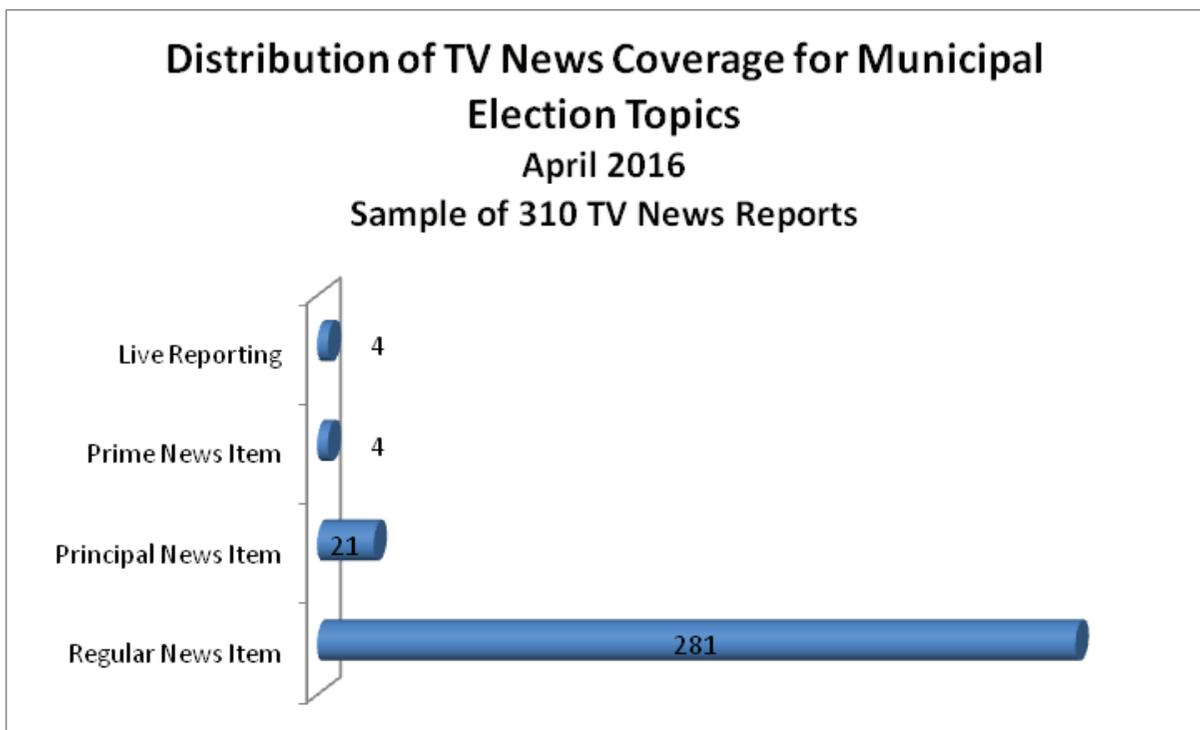


Figure 12

Press topics related to municipal elections were the most abundant as principal news items with a proportion of 13% while the rest were mentioned as regular news items for the reasons mentioned previously.

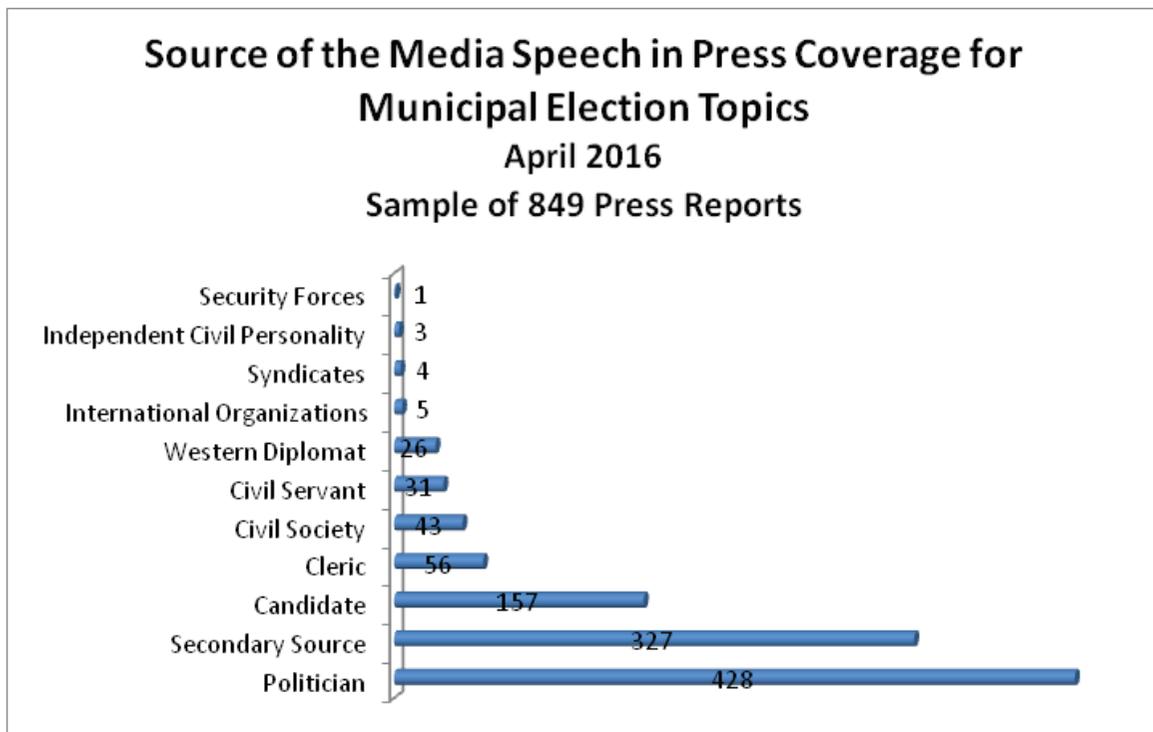
On the other hand, news reports dominated the coverage at a proportion of 98.7% at the expense of interviews and investigations.

### c. Source of the Speech

The main source of the media speech related to the municipal elections was the politicians and the candidates. The proportion was 42.43% for candidates and 38% for politicians. Very often, the declarations and statements of politicians were published together with those of the candidates, especially in the news about the formation of electoral slates (Figures 13 and 14).



Figure 13



**Figure 14**

While the voice of the civil society was rather quiet in the media (3.6%), we noticed an increase in the presence of clerics (3.4%), and experts and analysts (3%) who were often invited to newscast programs in order to offer their predictions for the outcome of the campaigns and the nature of the alliances. This occurred especially when television stations did not want to explicitly disclose their positions in some important districts such as Beirut, Zahleh and Jounieh among others.

Also, in press coverage, politicians appeared as a principal source of the speech at a proportion of 50.4%. However, the appearance of secondary sources equivalent to politicians and candidates was remarkable as they registered a proportion of 38.5% (press releases that were not issued directly by politicians for instance). This proportion becomes understandable when we take into consideration the uncertainties in the alliances and the unwillingness of the main sources to declare positions that are not yet final and certain.

The appearance of clerics among the sources of the speech at a proportion of 5.6% as well as the western diplomatic sources in support of holding the elections is also remarkable. Civil society registered a presence of 5%. This is considered a low proportion compared to the presence of political issues.

The presence of women as a source of speech in the media coverage is a reflection of their engagement in elections. The proportion here varies between 3% in the printed press and 13% in television.

## d. Position of the Source of the Speech

With the municipal elections going beyond their developmental dimension and becoming part of the political framework and renewed alliances, the representatives of political parties registered a remarkable presence in television newscasts with a preponderance of the Future Movement (34.7%) among news of fractures and bankruptcies within this movement.

The Free Patriotic Movement registered 19.2% of television appearances and Lebanese Forces registered 13.2% (the Christian Duet). In a smaller proportion were other forces such as the Kataeb, the Popular Block and the Progressive Socialist Party (Figures 15 and 16).

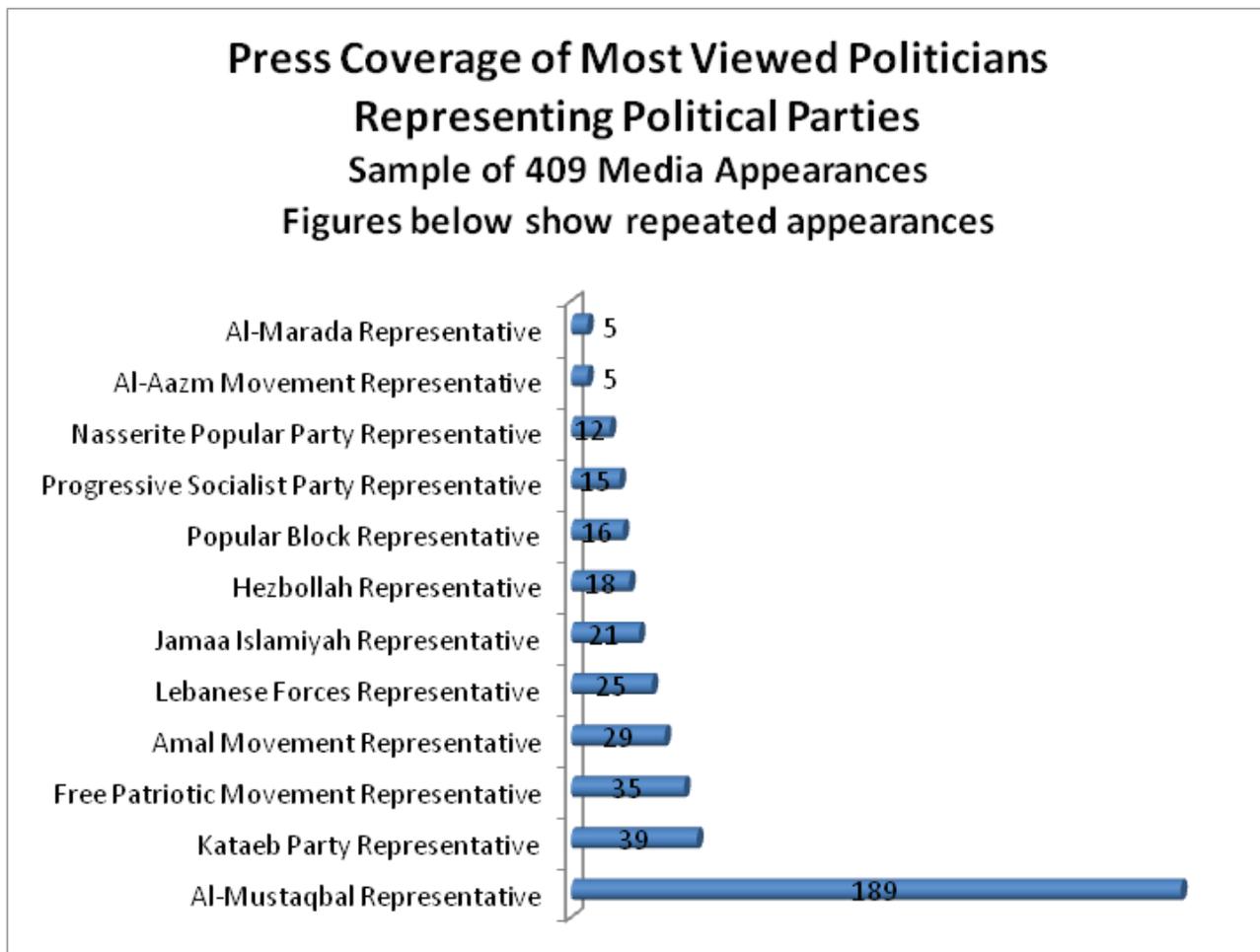


Figure 15

## Television Coverage of Most Viewed Politicians Representing Political Parties

Sample of 144 TV Appearances

Figures below Indicate Repeated Appearances

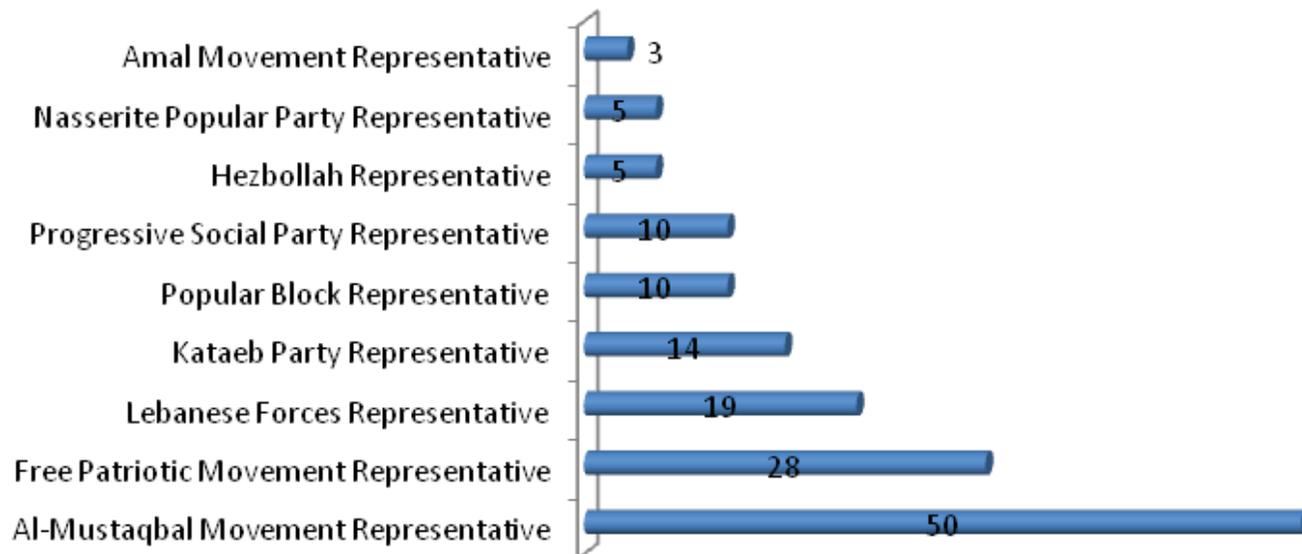


Figure 16

It is worth noting here that some political forces have their own television stations such as Al-Mustaqbal, the Free Patriotic Movement, Hezbollah and Amal Movement. This fact avails them the ability to appear on screen according to their political motives and priorities, in the absence of any laws and regulations ensuring equal time for other political forces.

As with television coverage, the Al-Mustaqbal Movement also received the most attention in press coverage with a proportion of 46.2%, followed by the Kataeb Party and the Free Patriotic Movement, both with 9%.

And such as with television stations, some political forces have their own newspaper or may have sway on some papers with regard to political positions.

On the other hand, some non-partisan forces were supported by some television stations wanting to display the opposition to the hegemony of the Shiite and Christian Duets in the areas of their presence. This kind of coverage registered a proportion of 73.25% for the representatives of electoral slates with clear support for the campaign of the slate “Beirut Madinaty” which registered a proportion of 13.33% of the total of non-partisan forces appearances (Figures 17 and 18).

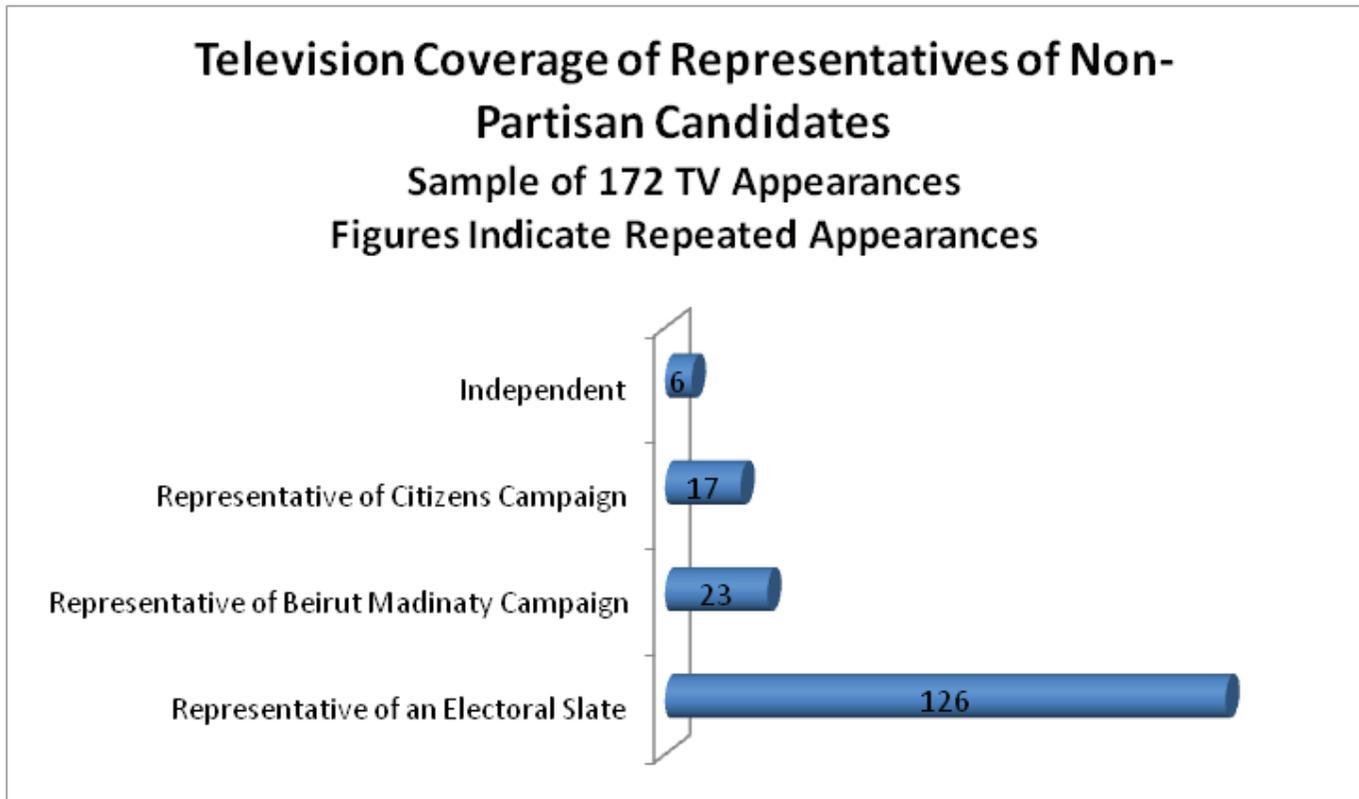


Figure 17

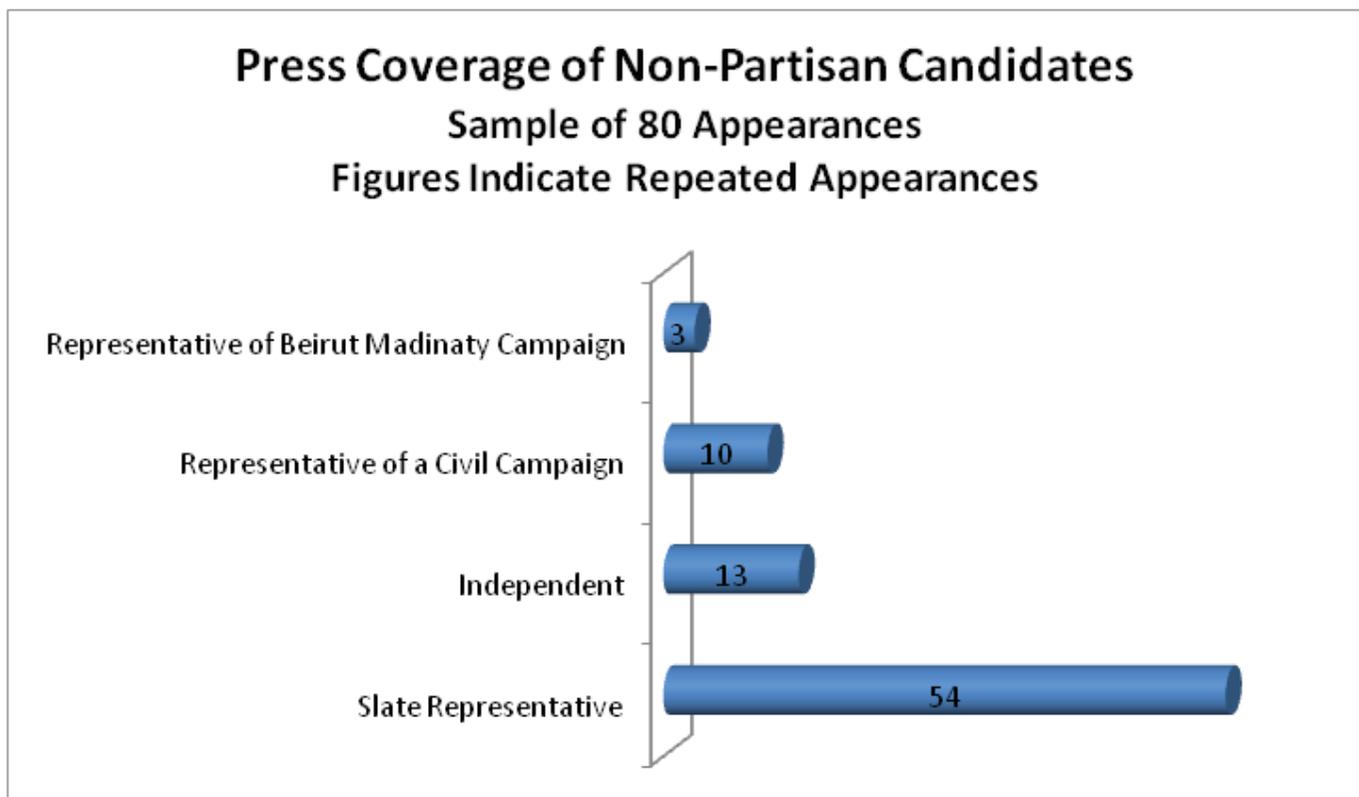


Figure 18

The appearance of civil forces of non-partisan candidates was rather less than others (12.5%) during the month of April. The most prominent was the appearance of representatives of electoral slates with 67.5%. "Beirut Madinaty" registered only 3.75% of all press coverage.

### e. Geographic Scope

Beirut, the capital, received a majority of the television and press coverage due to the fact that the outcome of its elections has an effect on all other regions of the country. Coverage of Beirut registered a proportion of 40.17% of all coverage, followed by Mount Lebanon which was considered an experimental field for the Christian Duet with a proportion of 22.7%, then came the Bekaa, the South, Baalbek and Hermel... (Figures 19 and 20).

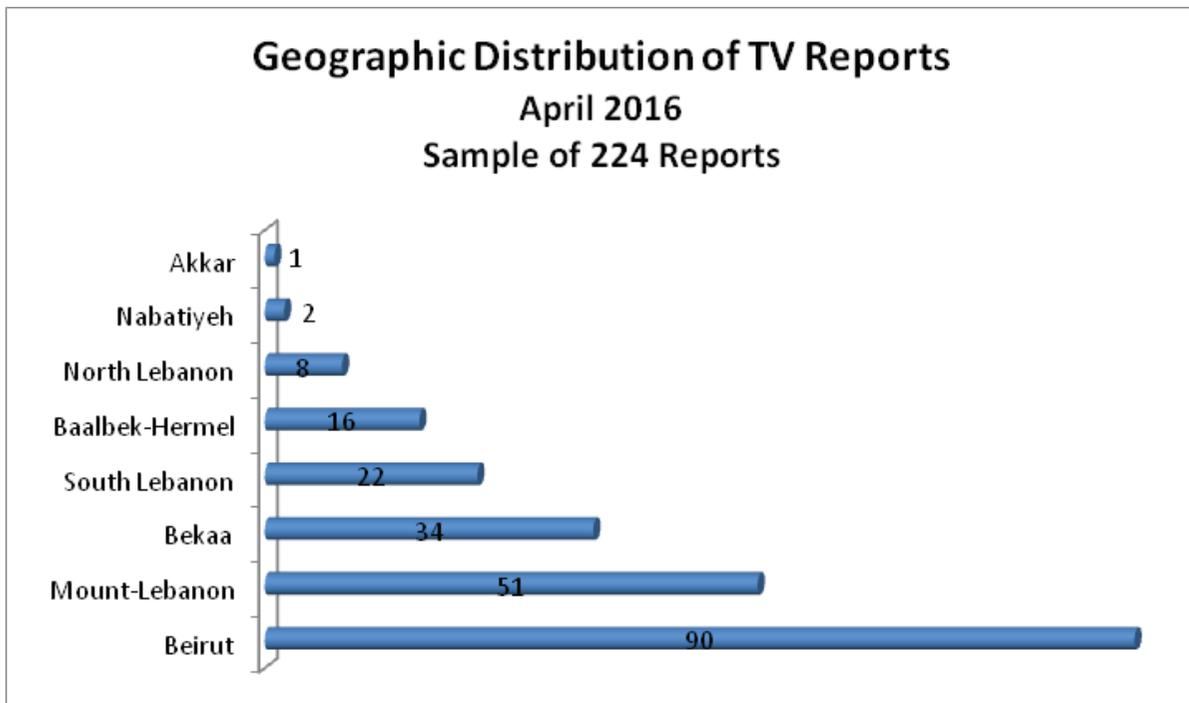


Figure 19

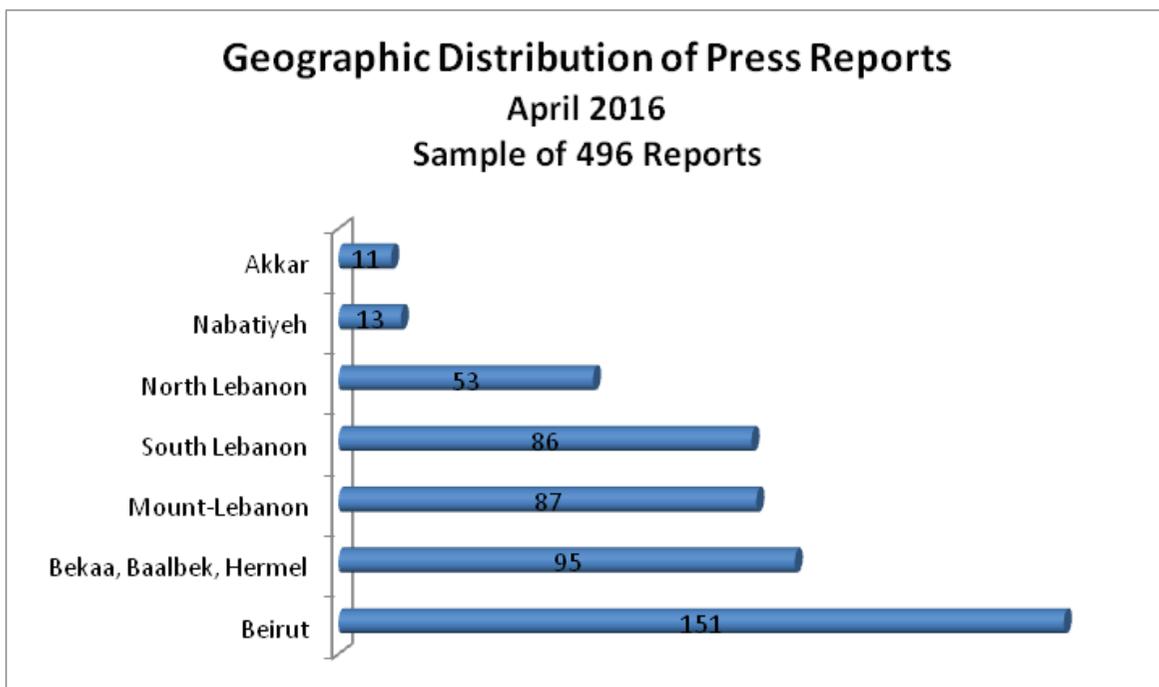


Figure 20

### 3. Coverage during Elections

#### a. Volume of Coverage

The month of May saw an intensive media coverage with the beginning of the electoral process in Beirut, the Bekaa and then the other regions of Lebanon. While some rare voices still expressed doubts about the possibility of holding the elections and were calling for a postponement (0.13%), most of the times attributed to the adversaries, the news about alliances, candidates and voters represented 69.7% of the press coverage compared to 74.02% for television coverage (Figures 21 and 22)

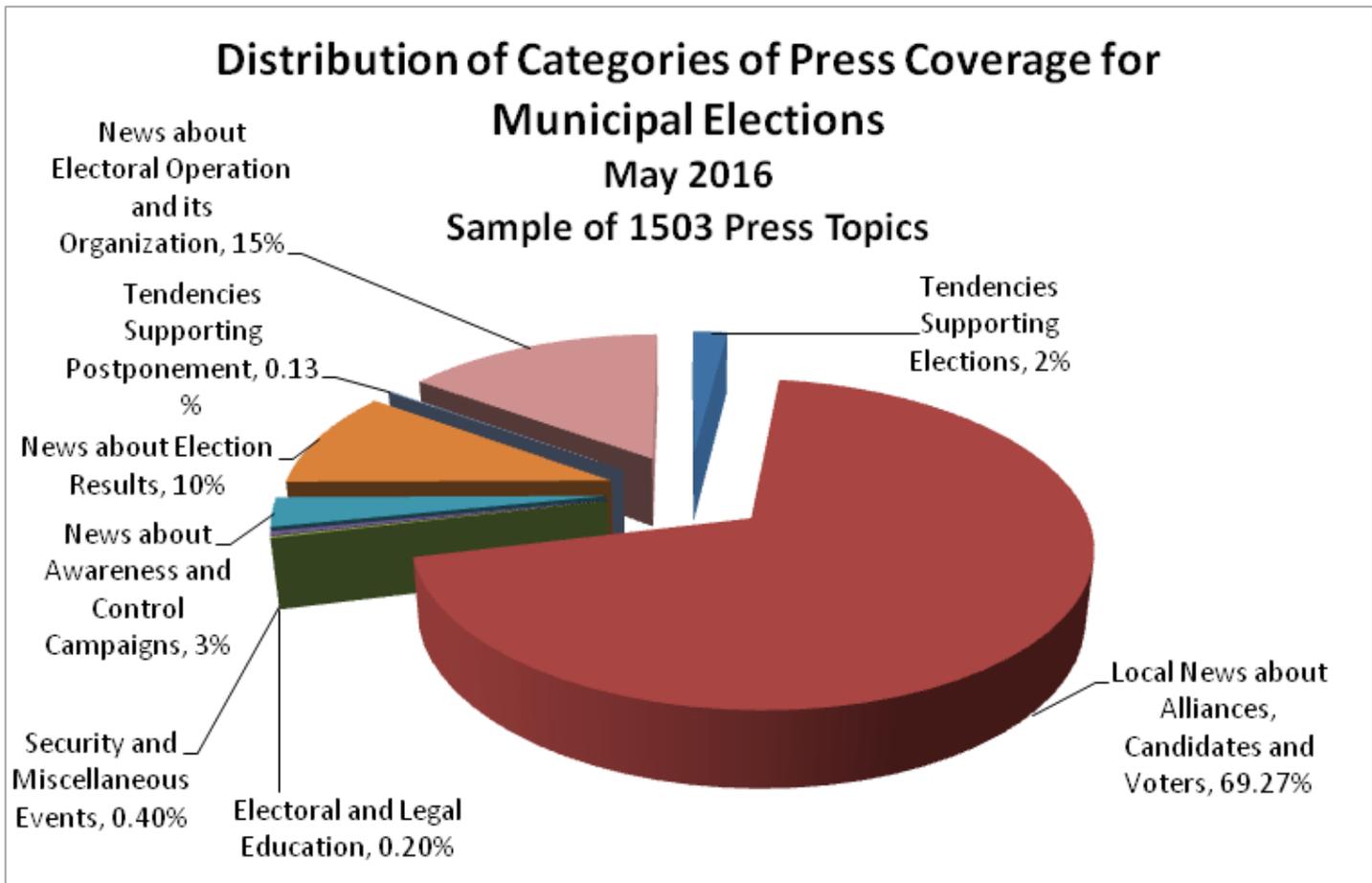


Figure 21

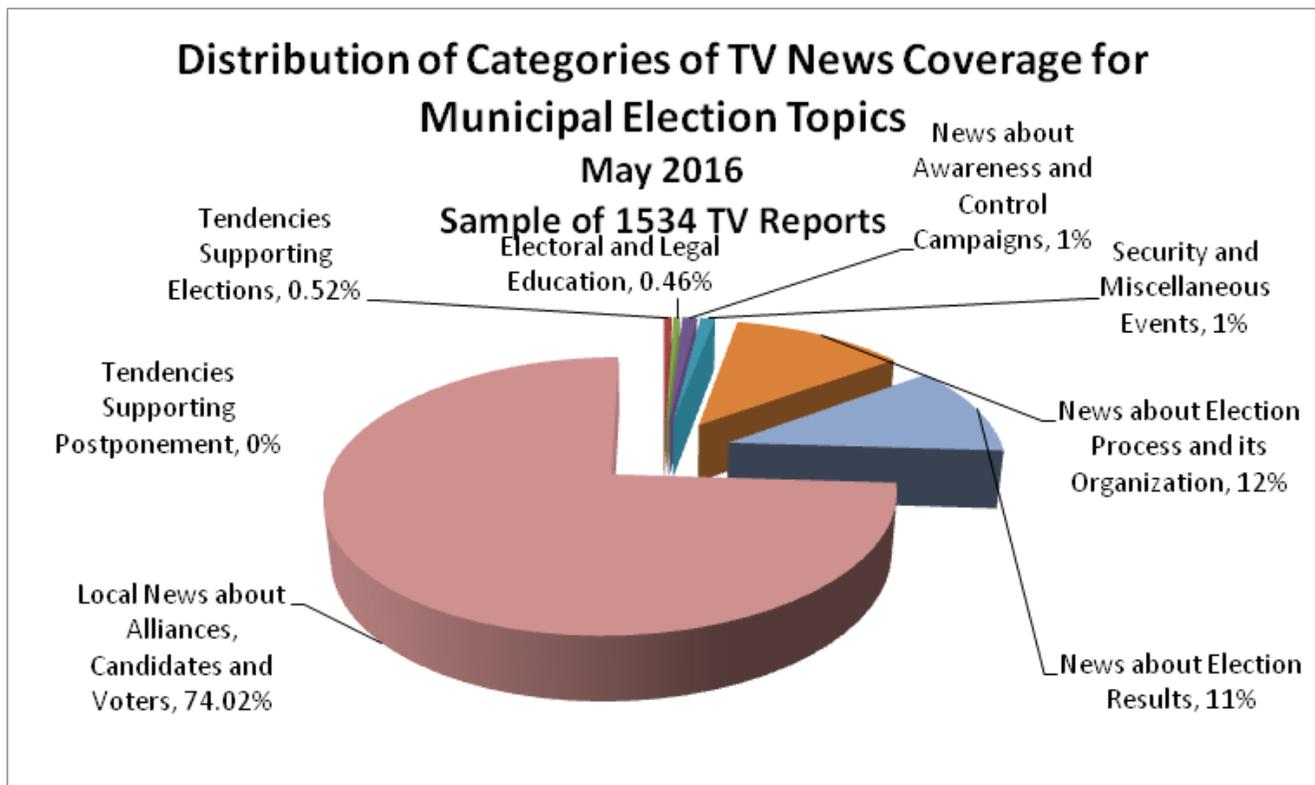


Figure 22

We notice here the beginning of the appearance of analyses and positions regarding the results with 10% in the printed press and 11% in television. Electoral and legal education about the democratic process was limited to less than half per cent.

### b. Type of Coverage

Coverage of the elections continued to appear as a regular news item in the press at a rate of 79.37% compared to 72.8% in television. However, this coverage started to become a principal news item in proportions varying between 10% in television and 20% in the printed press. Then television coverage began presenting the elections as a prime news item in the start of the newscast and especially when announcing results and reporting live at a proportion of 12% (Figures 23 and 24).

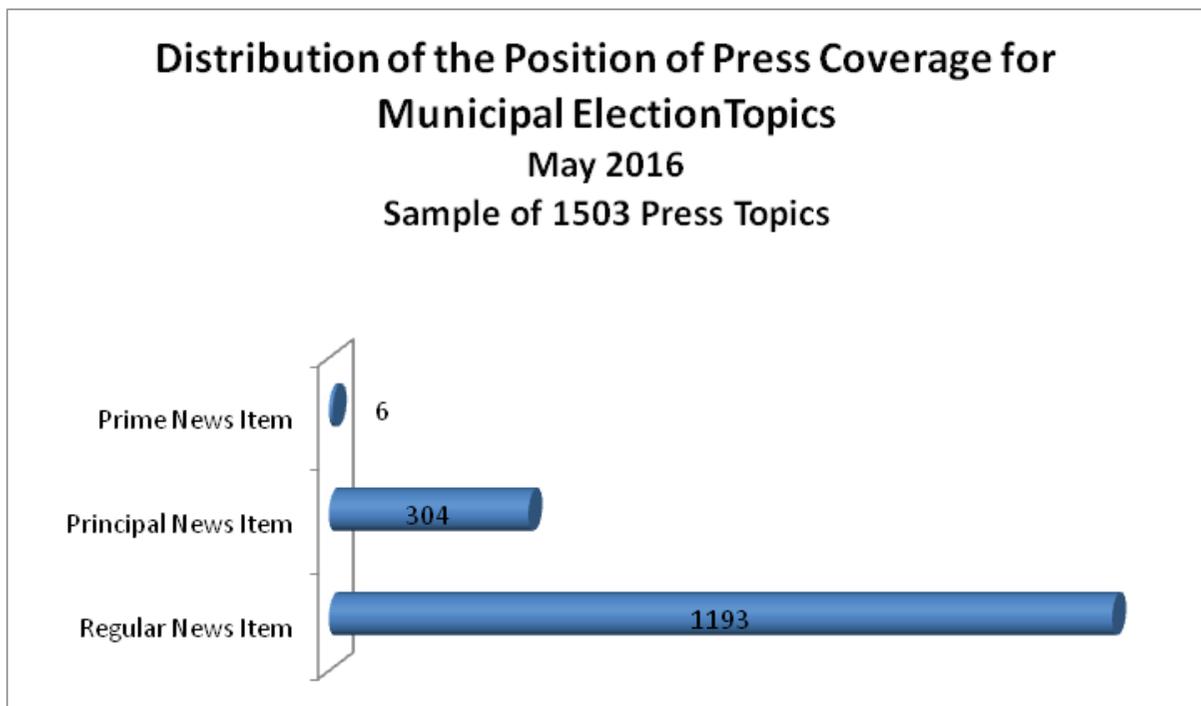
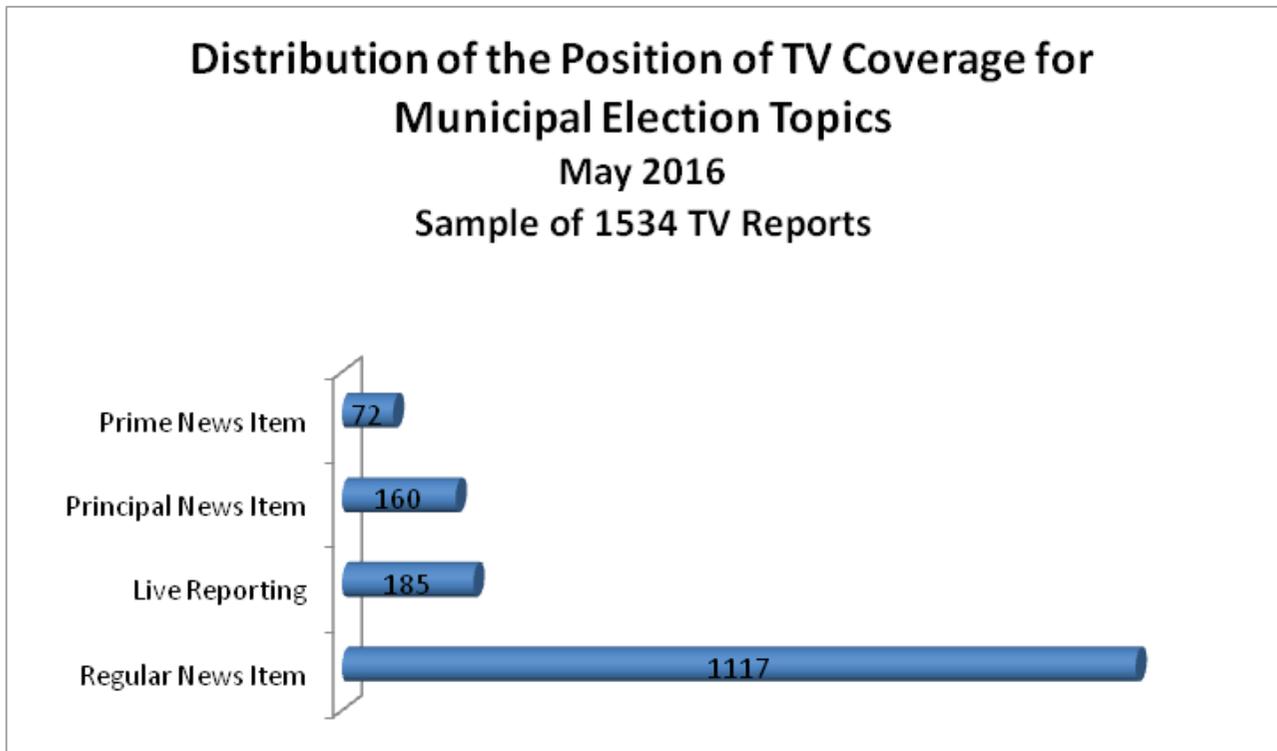


Figure 23



**Figure 24**

Geographically, South Lebanon registered the majority of principal news items, followed by North Lebanon, then Mount-Lebanon where the campaigns were aimed at crushing the opponent. With regard to gender, males appeared in 90% of radio and television coverage. This is due to the fact that women in general tend to not run for municipal positions. In Beirut for instance, there were 74 male candidates compared with 19 females. This ratio is even lower in the Mohafazat of Akkar where we saw 2598 male candidates and only 210 females. In the Bekaa, there were 3537 males and 137 females

### c. Source of the Coverage

Politicians kept their advanced position in the printed press at a proportion of 62.16% while the sources of press coverage of the electoral topics related to candidates regressed to 22.74%. This fact exacerbates the political conflict between the larger forces and suggests that the municipal campaign will determine the political size in the parliamentary elections of 2017 (Figures 25 and 26).

## Source of the Media Speech in Press Coverage of Municipal Election Topics

May 2016

Sample of 1398 Media Appearances

Figures show number of persons in coverage

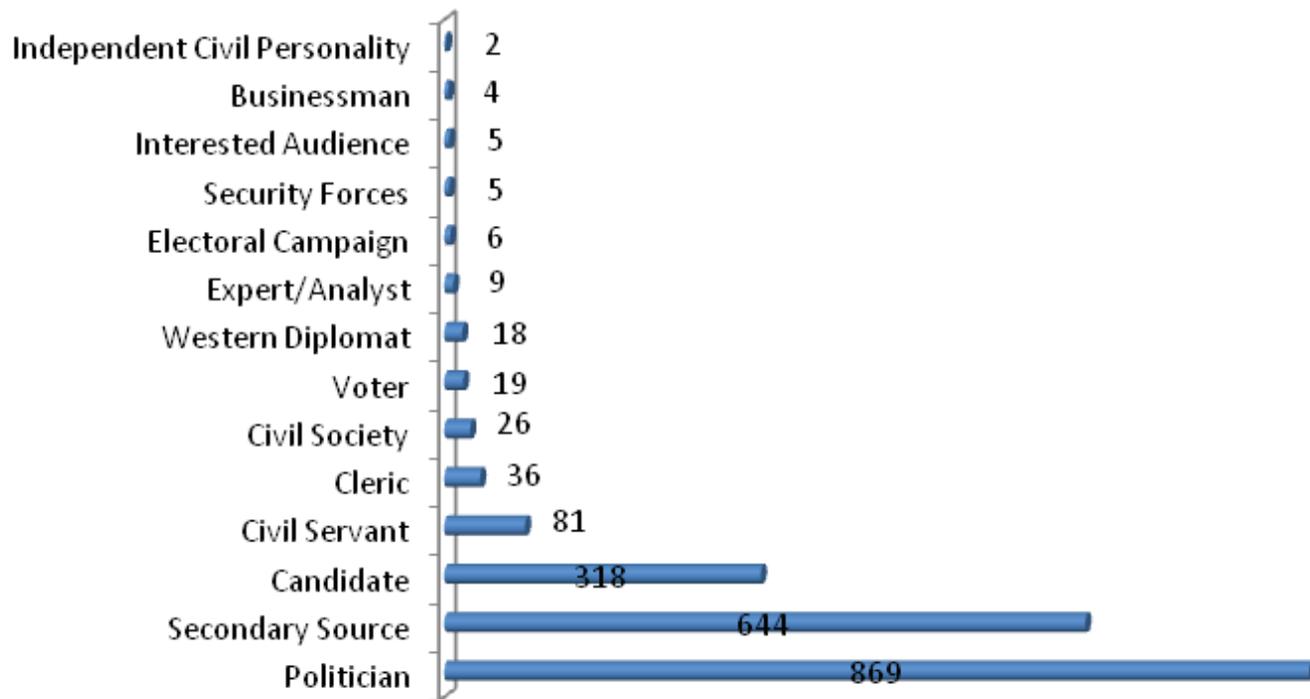


Figure 25

## Source of Speech in TV News Coverage of Municipal Elections

May 2016

Sample of 2419 Appearances

Figures show number of persons in coverage

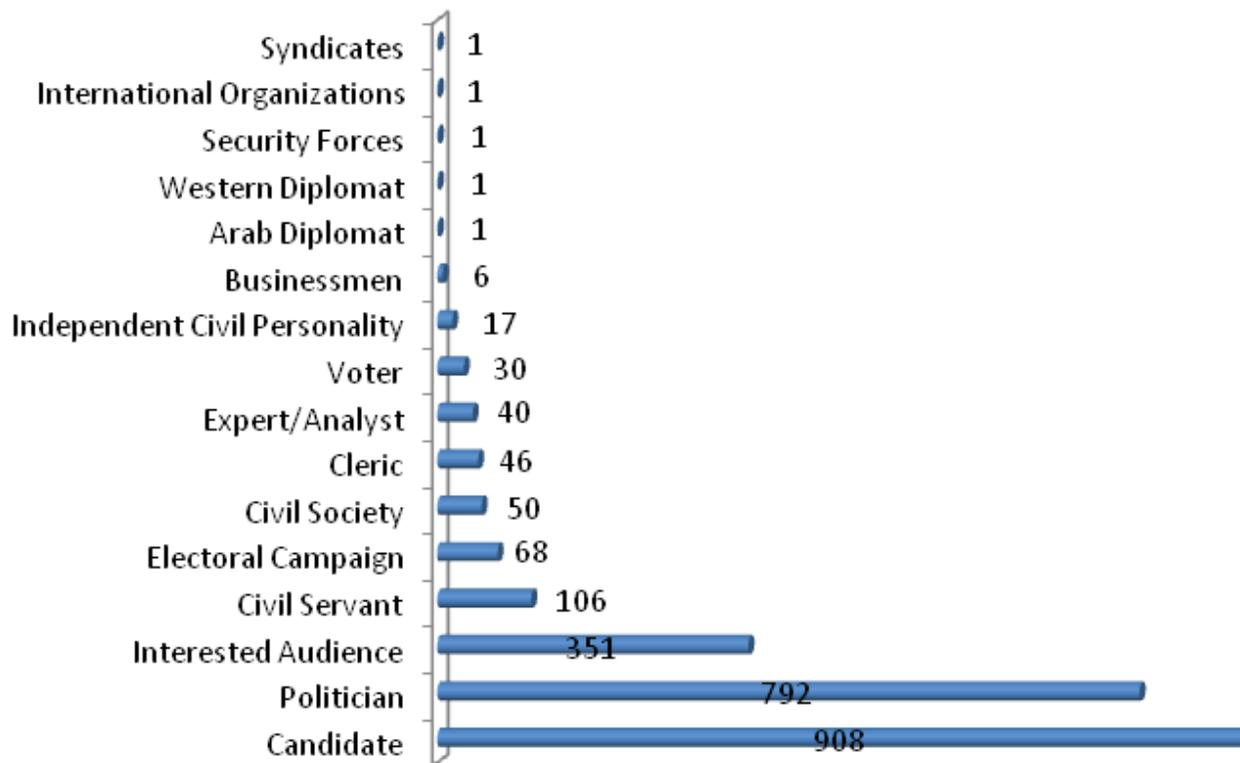


Figure 26

The presence of candidates (37.53%) overtook that of politicians (32.74%) in television news coverage. There was more television coverage of the interested audience, reaching a proportion of 14.5% compared to a marginal presence in the press coverage at only 0.35%. This is due to the nature of live coverage on television.

Clerics had more presence than the civil society in both television and press coverage. The presence of political analysts was more apparent in television since its direct influence is stronger than printed press.

The negative indicator in all this coverage was represented by the voters since they are the most concerned element in these elections but their presence did not exceed 1.3% in neither television or printed press.

The Al-Mustaqbal Movement maintained its advance in media presence with 41% in newspapers and 25.53% in television.

The "Christian Duet" was in second place with 18% in television and 12% in printed press (Figures 27 and 28).

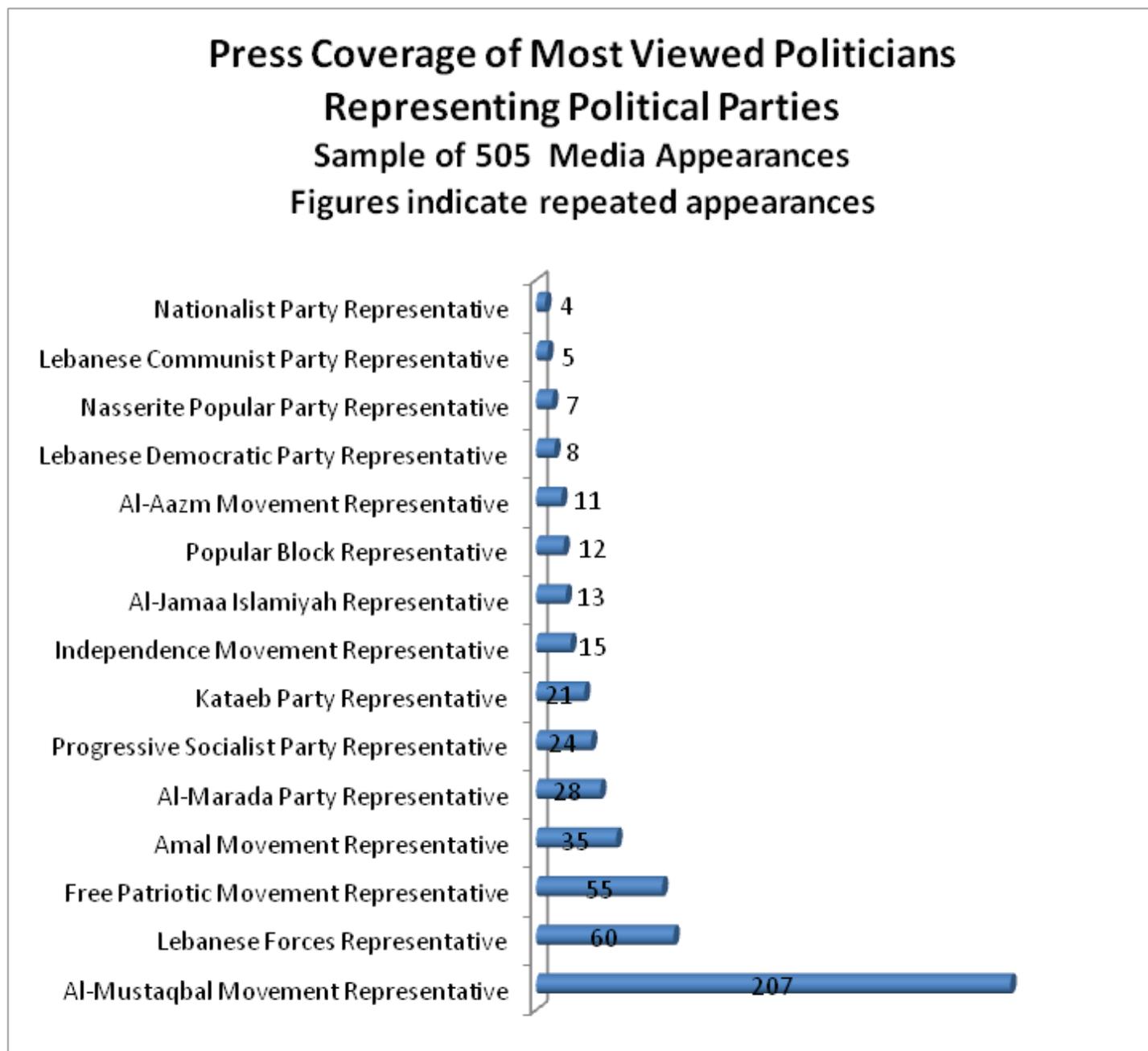


Figure 27

## Television Coverage of Most Viewed Politicians Representing Political Parties

Sample of 658 TV Appearances in May 2016

Figures indicate repeated appearances

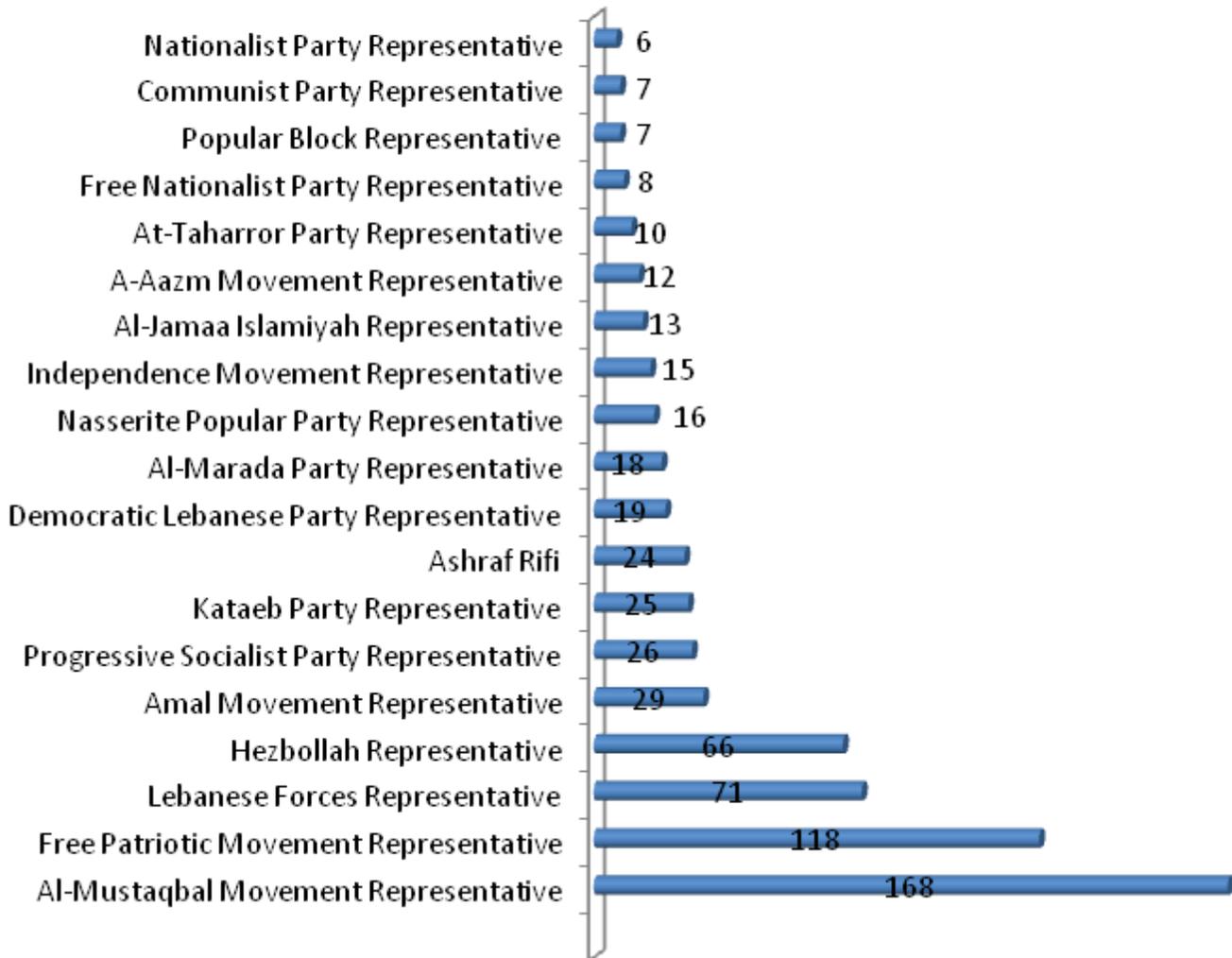


Figure 28

In television coverage, the “Shia Duet” (Amal and Hezbollah) were the third most covered topic, followed by the other parties.

67% of television coverage was about politics, followed by regular programming.

With regard to non-partisan candidates, they registered a remarkable presence of 86.9% in television appearances in contrast with 26.2% in press coverage. Representatives of electoral slates had the highest proportion of coverage with 91.7% on television and 92.3% in the press. Independents, too, had a remarkable presence.

With regard to the “Beirut Madinaty” electoral slate, it registered only 2.3% of television coverage and 2.67% in the press (Figures 29 and 30).

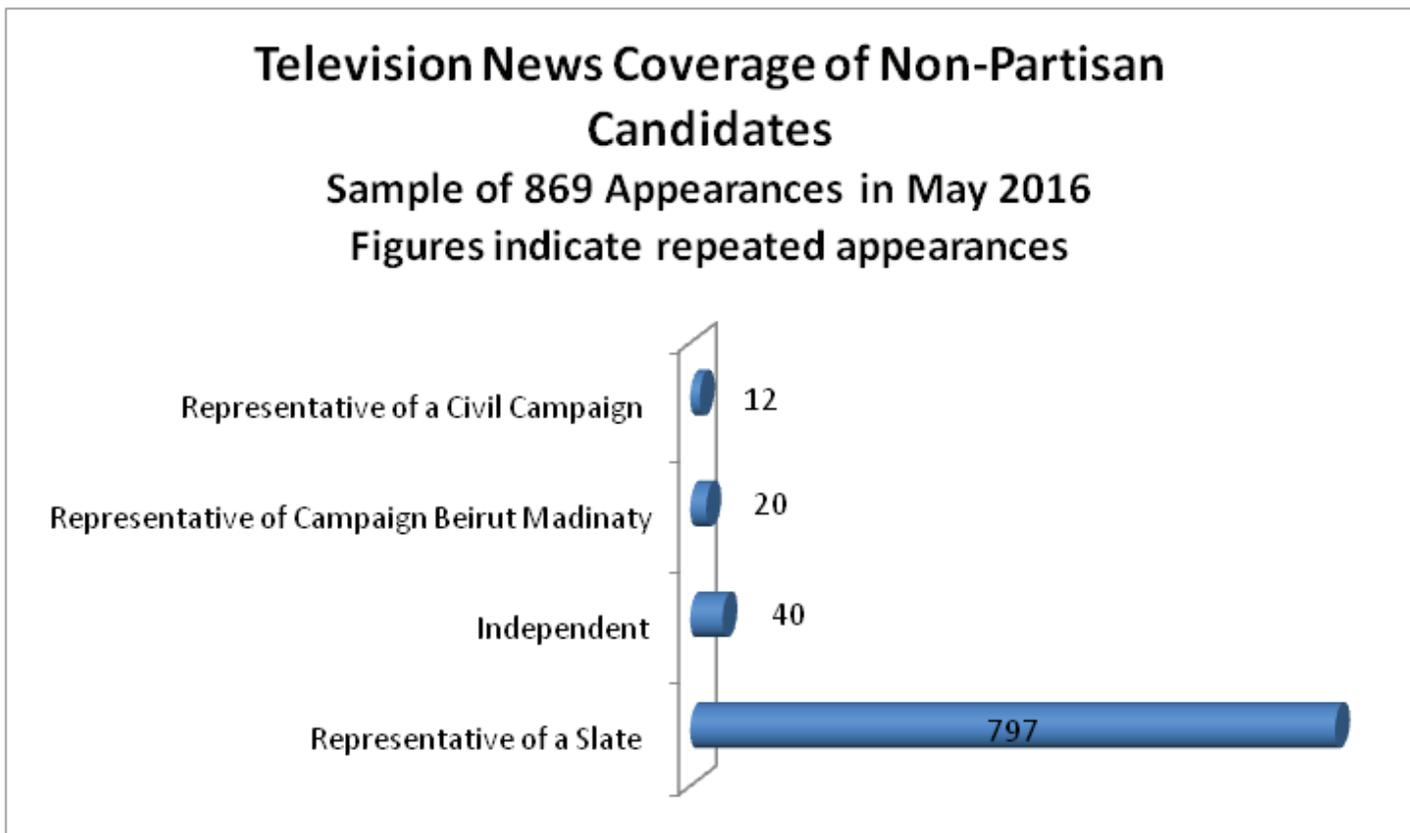


Figure 29

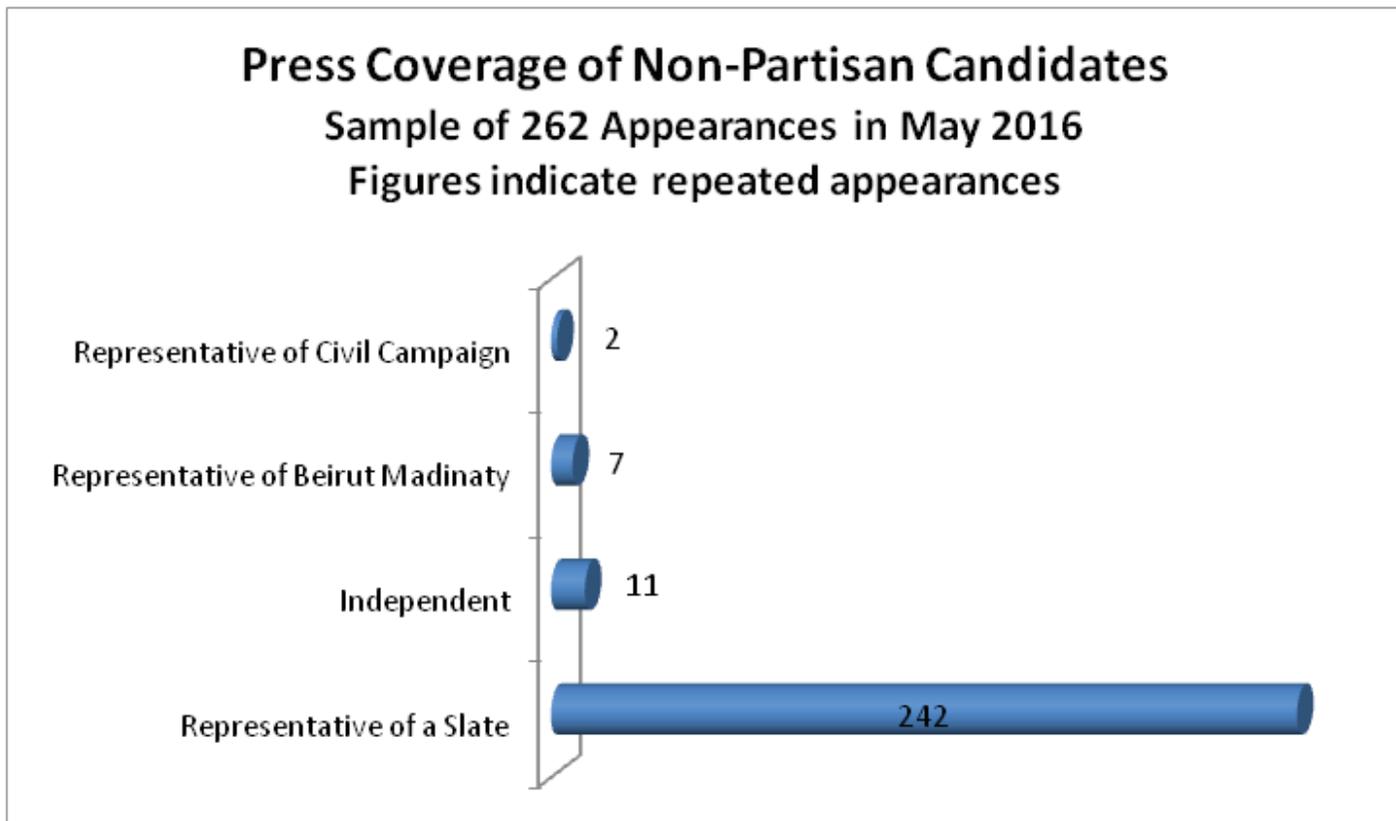


Figure 30

## PART III:

# TALK SHOW PROGRAMS

## IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Television talk shows constitute a major forum for those involved in public service. They reflect the main aspects of political life, especially during the elections period when the political heat rises and the candidates compete to be heard and to convince voters of the correctness of their views and the quality of their programs. Television stations also compete in trying to satisfy the expectations of the viewers who are eager to keep up with the developments taking place during such period, all within the framework of the general policy of the station and its political and funding tendencies.

For this reason, these programs were part of this study about the media during the municipal elections period, with the purpose of uncovering their content within the framework of the general purposes of the study.

The first assumptions of the study anticipated that the electoral debate would deal with the candidates' programs, specific invitations to the voters, recommendations for reforming the electoral law and the administrative decentralization, the role of women in public life and in the political field, as well as the definition of the priorities of the candidates, the speech of the political parties and the political class and the political practice in general...

Therefore, in the analysis of the talk show programs, we monitored the contents of these programs by looking at the choice of guests in each station, then we thoroughly studied the contents of the shows in order to extract the messages they carried.

## Methodology in Monitoring Talk Shows

Six television stations, considered the most popular and the most representative, were monitored. They are: Al-Jadeed, MTV, Future TV, Al-Manar, Tele Liban, LBC and OTV.

Each of these stations has its own weekly talk show. In addition, these stations had a supplementary talk show every Sunday evening during the month of May to follow the elections that took place that Sunday. During the election period, these talk shows were given names that were very indicative such as: Municipal Talk (LBC), Lebanon Votes (MTV), The Municipality Votes (OTV), Municipalities 2016 (Al-Mustaqbal), A Program to be Covered (Al-Manar). However, the Al-Jadeed station's program name remained unchanged: The week in one Hour.

The monitoring covered two periods of the talk shows: in the first one, we followed the regular weekly talk show of each station during the month of May: Kalam el-Nas (LBC), Bi-Mawdouiyah (MTV), Bila Hasanah (OTV), Inter-Views (Al-Mustaqbal), Hadeeth Al-Saah (Al-Manar), and Al-Ousbouh Fi Saah (Al-Jadeed). This period is the period of campaigning when political parties and candidates are active on the ground in advertising and promotional campaigns in order to gain the trust of the voters. The second period is dedicated to the Sunday evening talk shows of the month of May, where the elections are followed and their results are analyzed.

Four talk shows were monitored in each period and on each station, totaling 24 episodes.

The profession of the guests and their affiliations were defined (politician, candidate, civil society, analyst, expert, electoral campaign) and the contents of their discourse was analyzed.

The analysis of the talk shows is one of the main purposes of this study, which is trying to find answers to the following questions:

- To what extent do the Lebanese media contribute to the promotion of democratic and electoral culture?
- Who occupied the media forums in this period?
- What is the woman's position as a source of political speech and as a topic in gender equality?
- Which electoral programs were promoted?
- Monitoring the talkers' speech in general and the candidates' speech in particular.
- To what extent was the Journalists' Pact respected?

## 1. Analysis of the Weekly Episodes of the Month of May

The topic of the elections dominated the contents of the talk shows during the month of May. This, in fact, is natural considering the focus on this exceptional event. Figure 31 shows that 78% of the contents of talk shows were about this topic, as well as 21% about political topics in general.

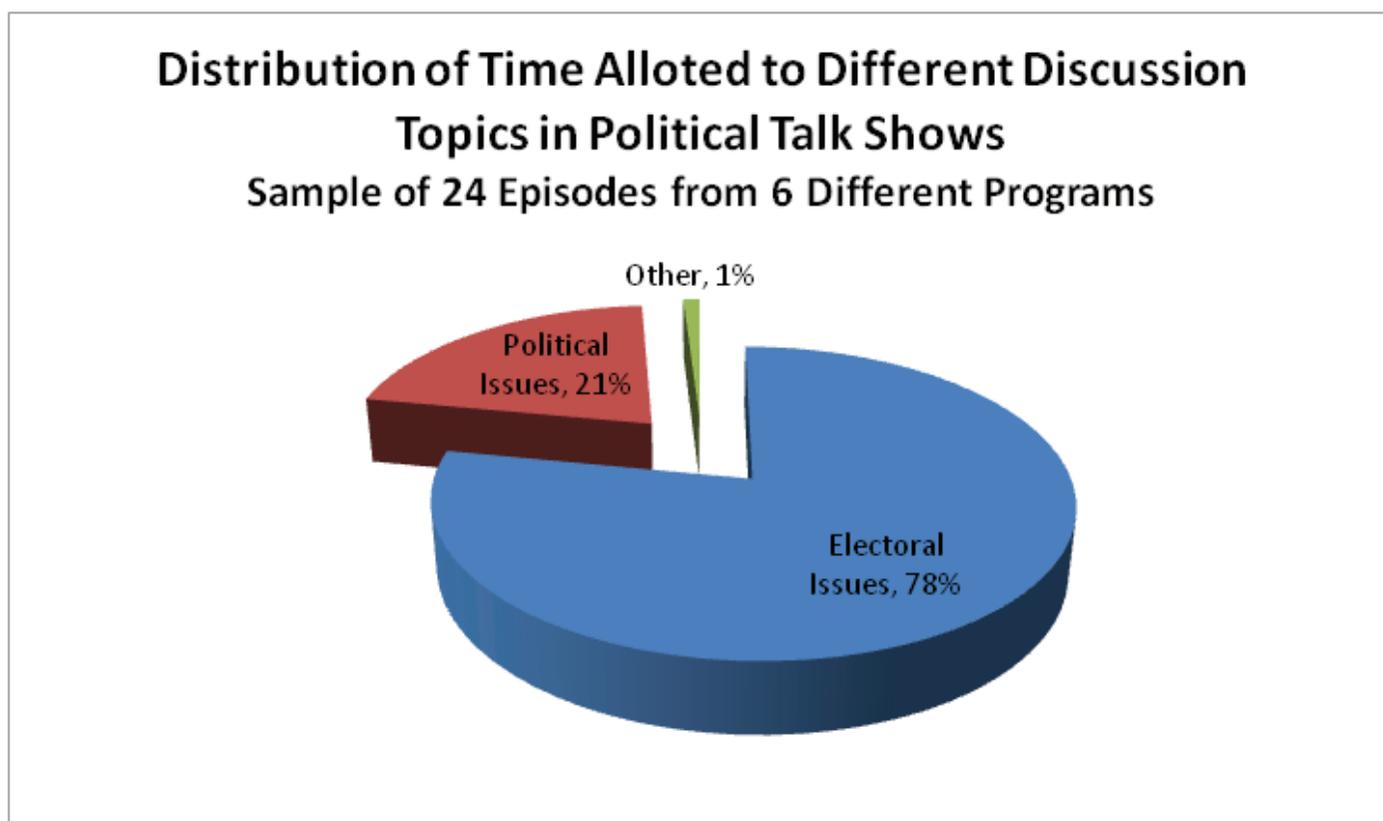


Figure 31

However, it is worth noting that there was a certain disparity between the stations in the importance they gave to the electoral and political issues. For instance, on MTV, elections occupied almost 100% of the talk show programs and on Al-Mustaqbal almost 90%. At the same time, other stations retained a high proportion of their programs for general political issues, such as OTV where the proportion of elections coverage was 60% while keeping with its general political issues with a proportion of 40%. The same occurred on Al-Manar, LBC and to a lesser degree Al-Jadeed (Figure 32).

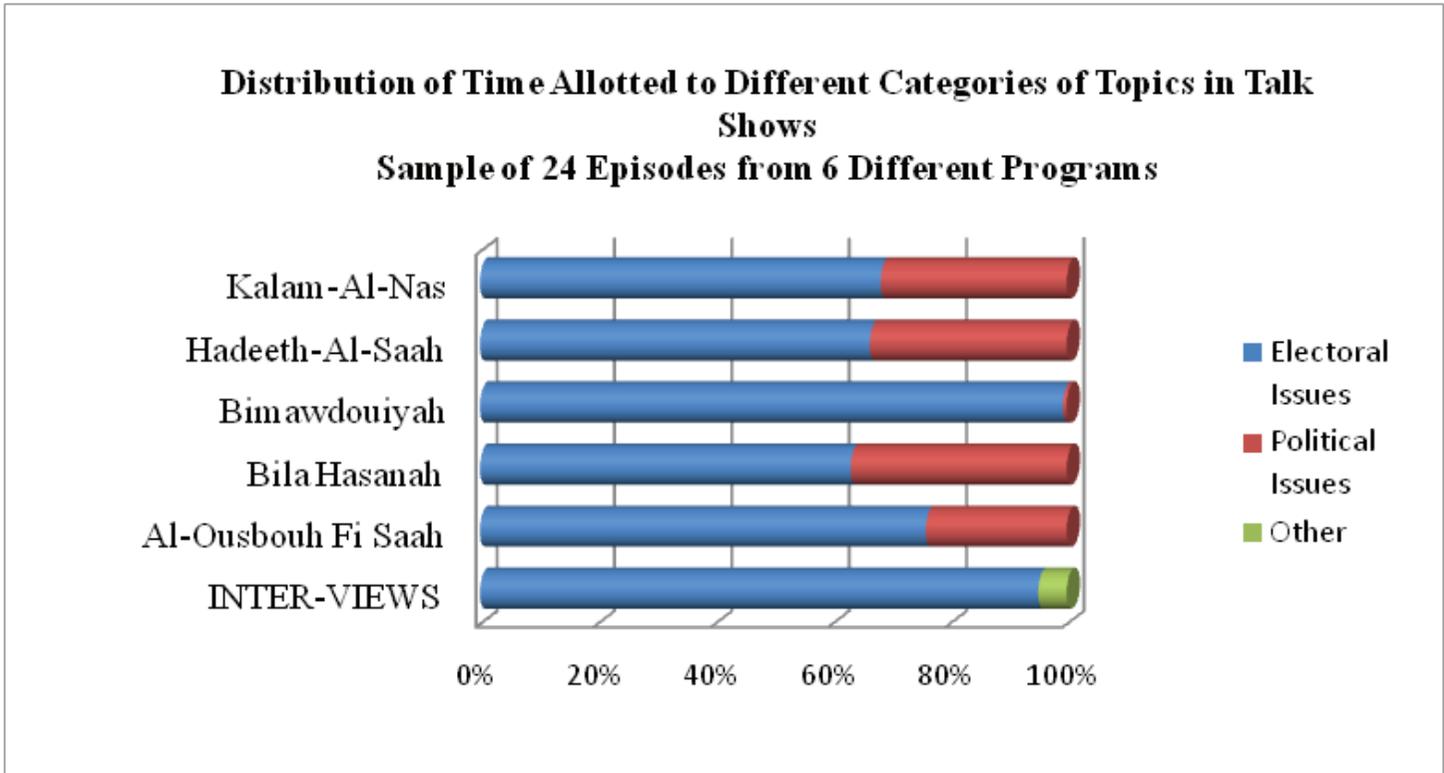


Figure 32

## a. Guests of the Talk Shows

There were a total of 164 guests on talk shows of the six stations during the month of May. However, some were invited repeatedly. Therefore, counting the number of the guests while discarding the repetition, we come to 107 individual guests (Figure 33).

What is noteworthy here is the difference in the number of guests from one program to another during the month of May. This number varied between 8 guests on OTV and 35 on MTV. Different stations had different numbers of guests (Figure 33). This is due, of course, to the general policy of each station. It is preferable, as a rule, to invite the greatest number of political tendencies and candidates in order to give them the chance to express their views and to present their programs to the public. This would ascertain a general debate on the elections, the candidates and the electoral programs.

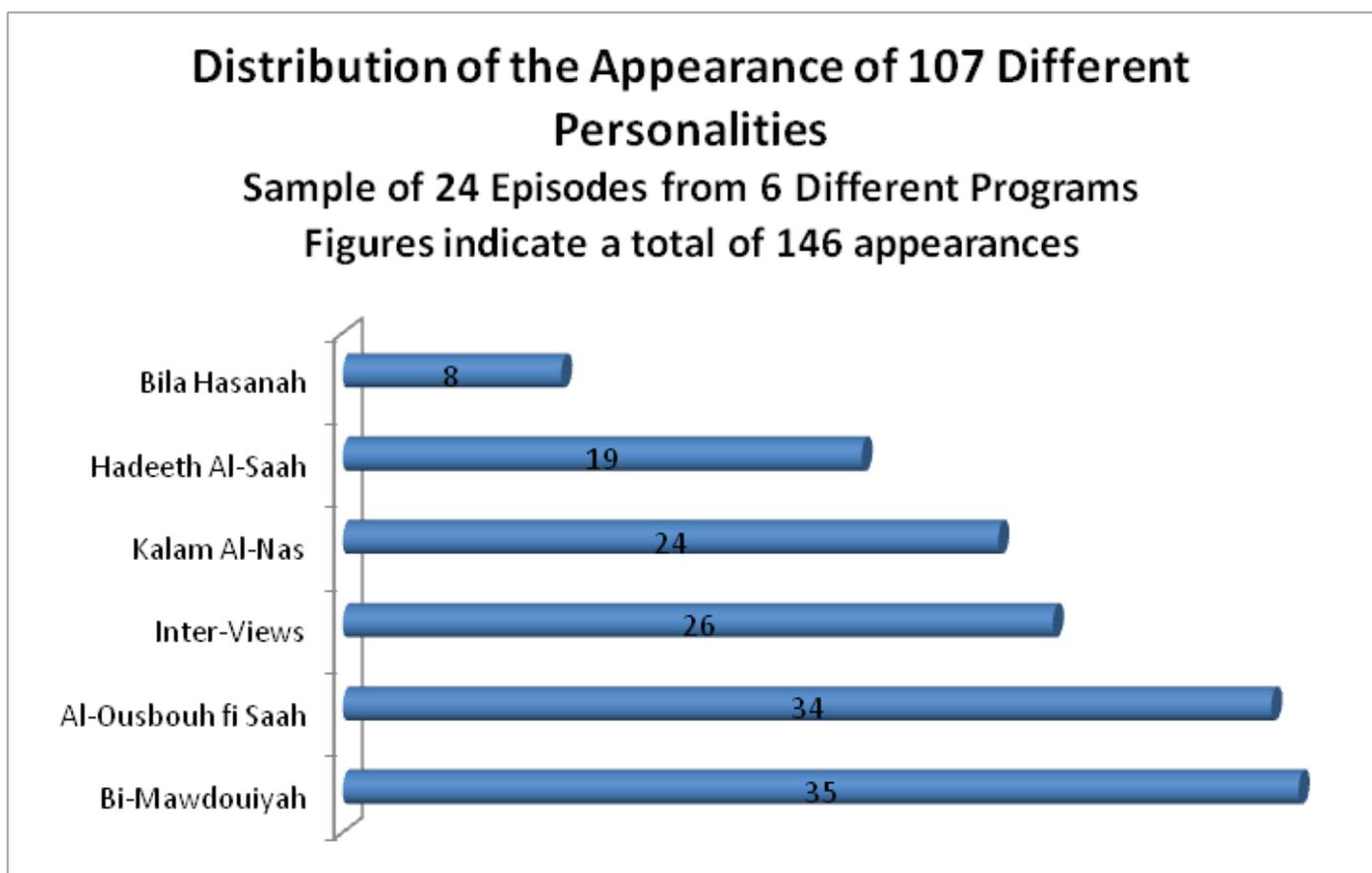
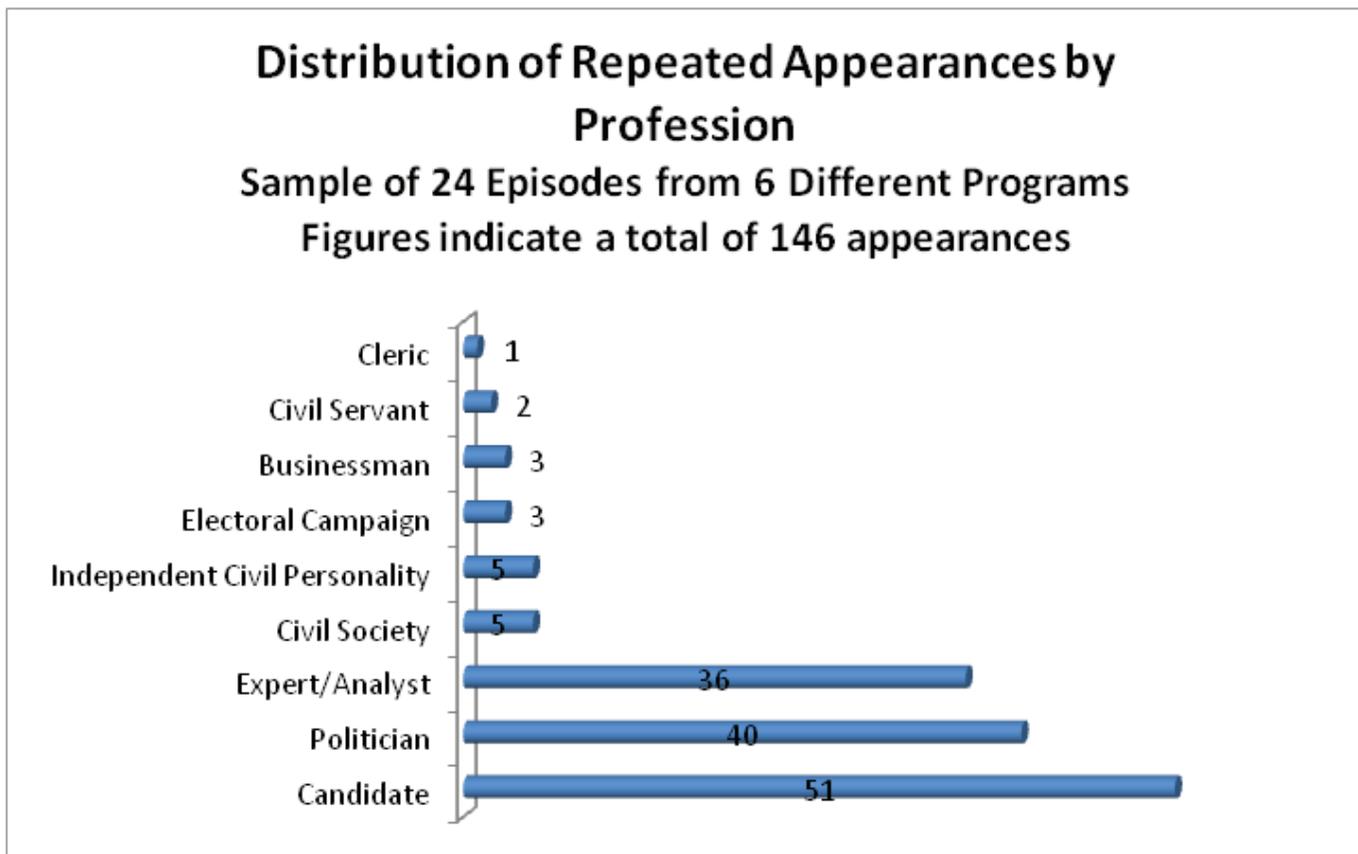


Figure 33

The largest number of guests was of candidates, 51, compared to 40 politicians and 36 analysts and experts. The number of guests from the civil society did not exceed 5, the same number as for independent personalities (Figure 34).



**Figure 34**

As previously noted, the number of guests of different professions differs from one station to the other. OTV invited only one expert whereas 9 were invited by Al-Manar. The same applies to politicians; Al-Jadeed hosted 12 politicians compared to half this number hosted by other stations (Figure 36). OTV had 6 guests that were politicians out of a total of 8 guests during the entire month. This means that it consecrated the vast majority for politicians and did not host any candidates.

On the other hand, MTV opened its air waves in a remarkable way to candidates, hosting 21 of them while Al-Manar hosted 3; Al-Jadeed hosted 5; LBC hosted 10; and 12 were hosted by Al-Mustaqbal (Figure 37).

The number of analysts/experts guests also varied according to the stations. While OTV hosted only one analyst, Al-Manar hosted a maximum of 9. LBC hosted 4, and 7 or 8 were hosted at other stations.

## Distribution of Appearances of Experts/Analysts

Sample of 24 Episodes from 6 Programs

Figures indicate a total of 36 repeated appearances

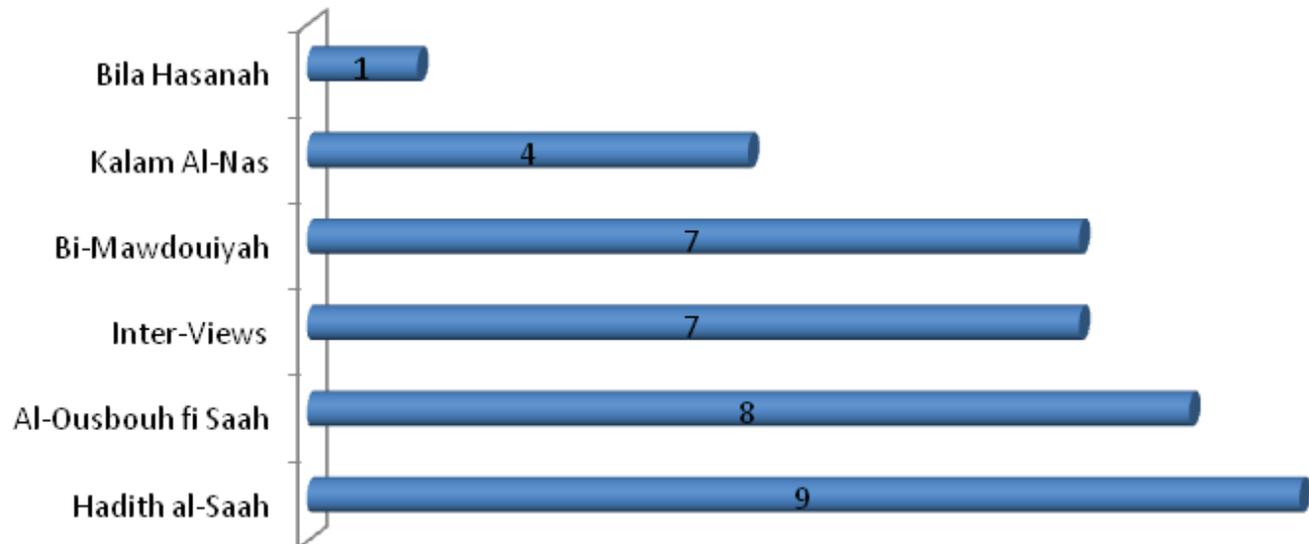


Figure 35

## Distribution of Appearances of Politicians

Sample of 24 Episodes from 6 Different Programs

Figures indicate a total of 40 repeated appearances

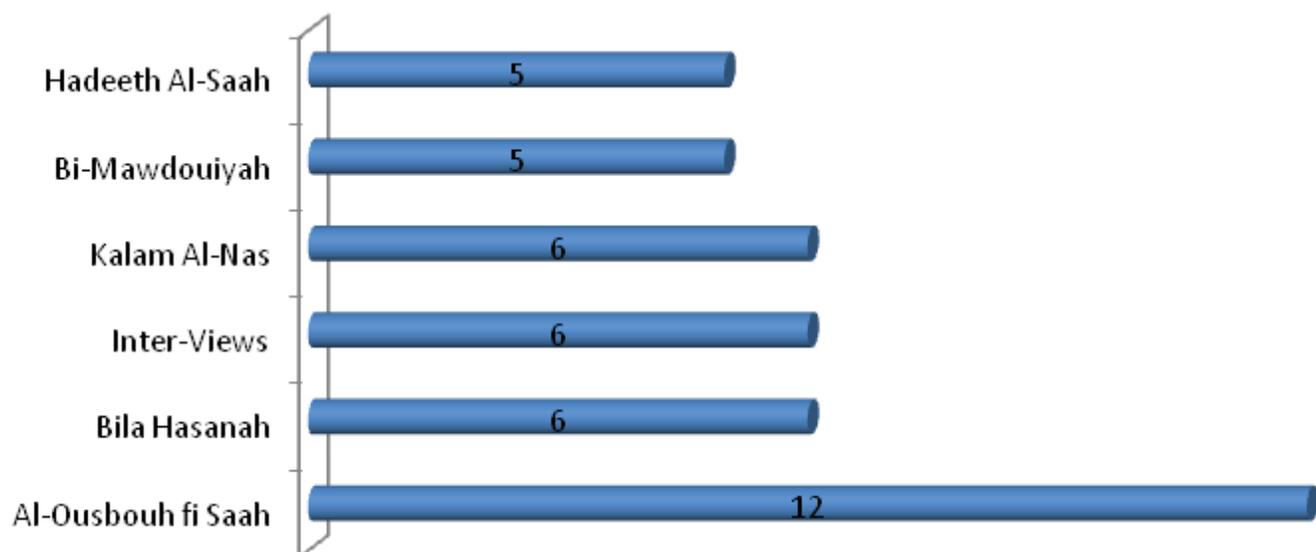


Figure 36

**Distribution of Candidates' Appearances**  
**Sample of 24 Episodes from 6 Different Programs**  
**Figures indicate a total of 51 repeated appearances**

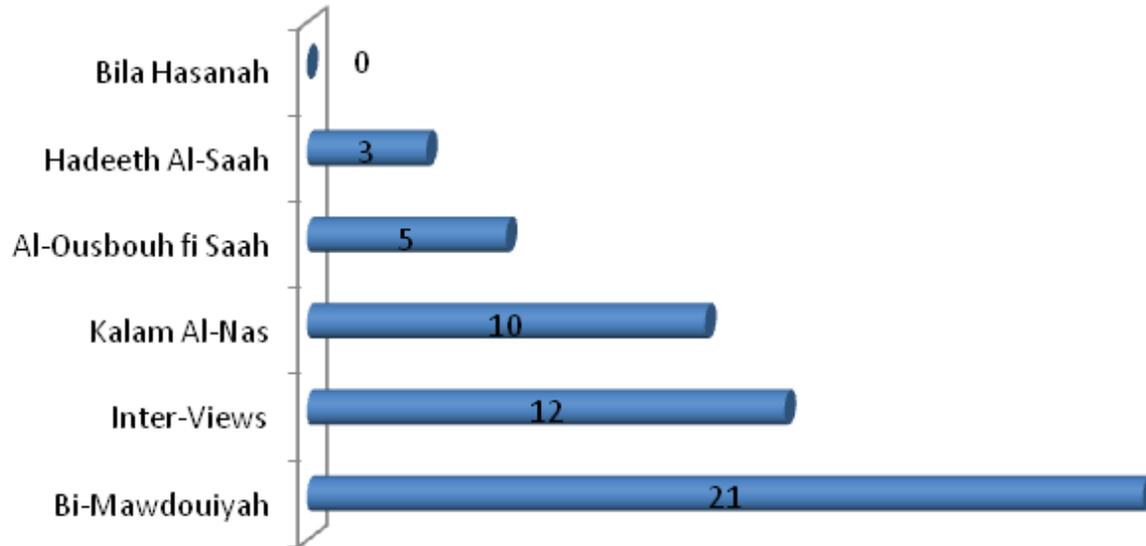


Figure 37

Figure 38 shows that politicians had the most air time on talk shows (39%), followed by experts and analysts (26%) and then the candidates (23%). Civil Society did not register more than 2% and independent guests had 8% of air time. This is a clear indication that the political dimension of the campaign was more important than the developmental dimension. It is however known that in municipal elections, the developmental dimension should take precedence in a way that would allow candidates to present their electoral programs and projects.

**Air Time Given to Guests According to Their Profession**  
**Sample of 24 Episodes from 6 Different Programs**  
**Total of live appearance was 110,640 seconds (about 31 hours)**

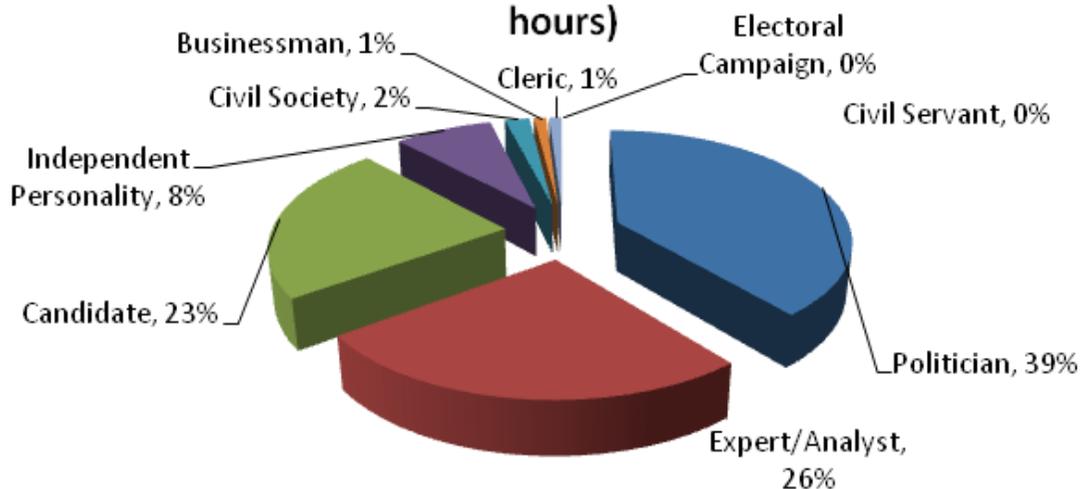
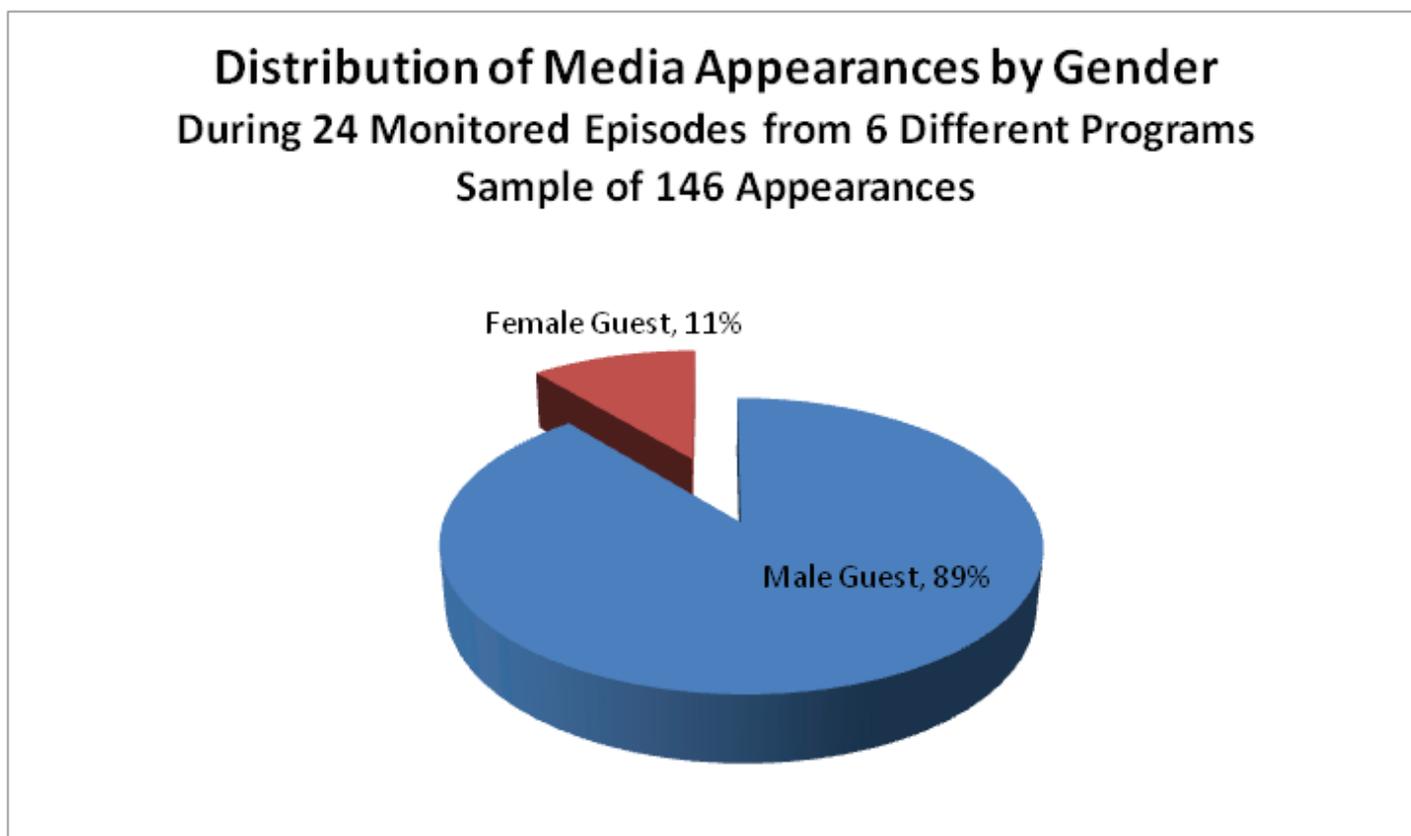


Figure 38

What was also remarkable was the limited air time given to women who had no more than 11% air time compared to 89% for males (Figure 39).



**Figure 39**

## b. Content of the Guests' Speech during the Month of May

In accordance with the problems addressed by this study, the guests' speech was analyzed on each and every station. The topics fall under ten main titles:

- Electoral awareness and calls for participation
- Speech about women and their role
- Speech meant to promote and convince
- Positions of criticism
- Electoral demands
- Electoral programs
- Analysis of the electoral campaign and its process
- Electoral law
- Results forecast
- Violation of the Journalists' Pact

These topics were carefully monitored as the guests (sources) were making their interventions. The guests were therefore distributed according to the following categories: electoral campaign, candidates, experts and analysts, politicians, civil society, businessmen and others. Figure 40 shows the contents of the topics in all the talk shows and the distribution of the titles according to the source of the speech.

Figure 40: Detailed quantitative table of the source of speech and its contents in weekly talk shows during May 2016.

| Source of Speech/<br>Topics                  | Electoral Campaign | Candidates' Speech | Experts / Analysts | Politicians | Civil Society | Businessmen | Other | Total |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Electoral Awareness & Call for Participation |                    | 4                  | 2                  | 4           | 1             |             |       | 11    |
| Speech on Women & Their Role                 |                    | 4                  |                    |             |               |             |       | 4     |
| Convincing & Promoting Speech                |                    | 15                 | 1                  | 9           |               |             | 1     | 26    |
| Critical Positions                           |                    | 9                  | 3                  | 3           |               | 1           |       | 16    |
| Electoral Demands                            |                    |                    |                    |             |               |             |       |       |
| Electoral Programs                           |                    | 9                  | 1                  | 1           | 1             |             |       | 12    |
| Analysis of Electoral Campaign               | 2                  | 6                  | 25                 | 17          | 2             |             | 1     | 53    |
| Electoral Law                                |                    |                    | 3                  | 1           |               |             |       | 4     |
| Results Forecast                             | 1                  | 2                  | 6                  | 2           |               |             | 1     | 12    |
| Violation of Journalists'                    |                    |                    | 1                  | 1           |               |             |       | 2     |

Figure 40

## **The analysis of the contents of the speech in each television station shows the following results:**

### **- LBC Station**

Interventions on this station dealt with 24 topics, the main among them being the analysis of the electoral campaign in general and how it proceeded (8 interventions), followed by 6 positions of criticism, most of them originating from candidates. There were also 3 interventions about electoral programs also coming from candidates and 2 other interventions about women. Any speech about the culture of elections, democracy and the call for participation was completely absent from the guests' interventions.

### **- OTV Station**

In this station, all interventions were about one single topic: analysis of the electoral campaign and its procedure (7 interventions out of a total of 8). We also registered one violation of the Journalists' Pact. The lack of diversity of topics on this station is due to the fact that the vast majority of this station's guests were politicians and there were only a total number of 8 guests during the month of May.

### **- Al-Manar Station**

The subject of the analysis of the electoral campaign and its process took precedence over others with 6 interventions out of a total of 17, and it emanated mostly from experts and analysts. This subject was followed by the speech aimed at convincing and promoting (4) expressed by politicians, one expert and one candidate. We also registered one intervention calling for the participation in the elections beside 2 interventions about the results' forecasts. One intervention regarding women was also registered. Electoral programs were the subject of just one intervention.

### **- Al-Mustaqbal Station**

In this station, the high number of critical positions was remarkable, totaling 7 out of 26 interventions. The interventions about the analysis of the electoral campaign also reached that same number. Most of the critical positions emanated from candidates while the majority of interventions about the analysis of the electoral campaign were made by experts and analysts. The speech aiming to promote and convince registered 5 interventions and 3 others were about electoral awareness and the call to participate in the elections. There were also 2 interventions about electoral programs and one about women and their role. Al-Mustaqbal distinguished itself with regard to the diversity of the interventions and their quality.

### **- MTV Station**

The interventions on this station were remarkable in the discourse aimed at convincing and promoting (12 out of a total of 34). The reason for that is the large number of candidates hosted by this station. For the same reason, the proportion of electoral programs was high on this station (6). The analysis of the electoral campaign also took a prominent place with 7 interventions. One topic was about participation in the elections and another was about women and their role.

### **- Al-Jadeed Station**

This station took precedence over other stations in the proportion of interventions about democratic education reaching 8 interventions out of a total of 33. This is a high proportion and it is beneficial to the society. These interventions were made by guests from the civil society (4) and politicians (2) as well as experts (2).

The highest proportion of interventions (12) on this station was for the analysis of the electoral campaign and its process, in addition to a high proportion for the results' forecasts (7). Promotional speech was also present in the interventions on this station (3) while we noticed an absence of the topics about women and electoral programs. We registered one intervention as a violation of the Journalists' Pact.

## 2. Analysis of the Electoral Evening Shows

Television stations followed the municipal elections in each Mohafazat and consecrated an evening talk show to every day of the elections and their results.

### a. Distribution of Time Allotted to Talk Shows

The six monitored television stations had a rather comparable time allotted to talk shows. Figure 41 shows this quasi similarity: 19% (Al-Mustaqbal: Municipalities 2016), 12% (Al-Manar: A Program to be Covered), 18% (Al-Jadeed: Al-Ousbouh Fi Saah), 18% (OTV: Municipalities Vote), 18% (MTV: Lebanon Votes) and 15% (LBC: Municipal Talk).

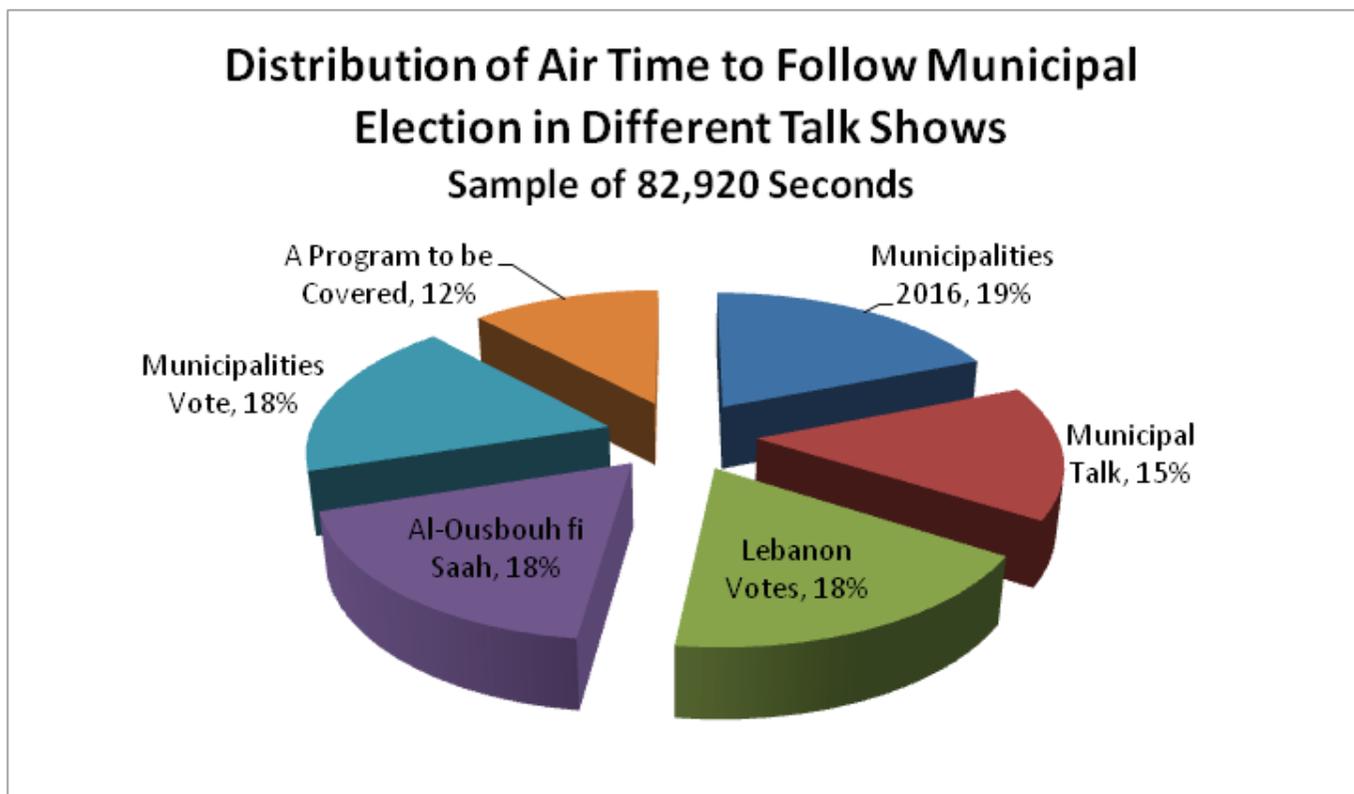


Figure 41

It was clearly noted that the debate on evening talk shows after polls closed was mostly about two topics: one was about how electoral operations proceeded in general in the Mohafazat, and the second about the city where the campaign was of utmost importance or the cities witnessing heated electoral campaigns.

Figure 42 shows that the majority of the discussions on the evening of the elections in the Mohafazat of North Lebanon were about this Mohafazat in general (64%) and that the most important campaign in this Mohafazat was in Tripoli with 20% of the debate. Kobeyat, which experienced a heated campaign, registered 5% of the debate that evening, followed by Tannourine with 4%.

## Talk Shows about Campaigns in Municipal Elections in the North

Percentage indicates time allotted  
Sample of 21,120 seconds

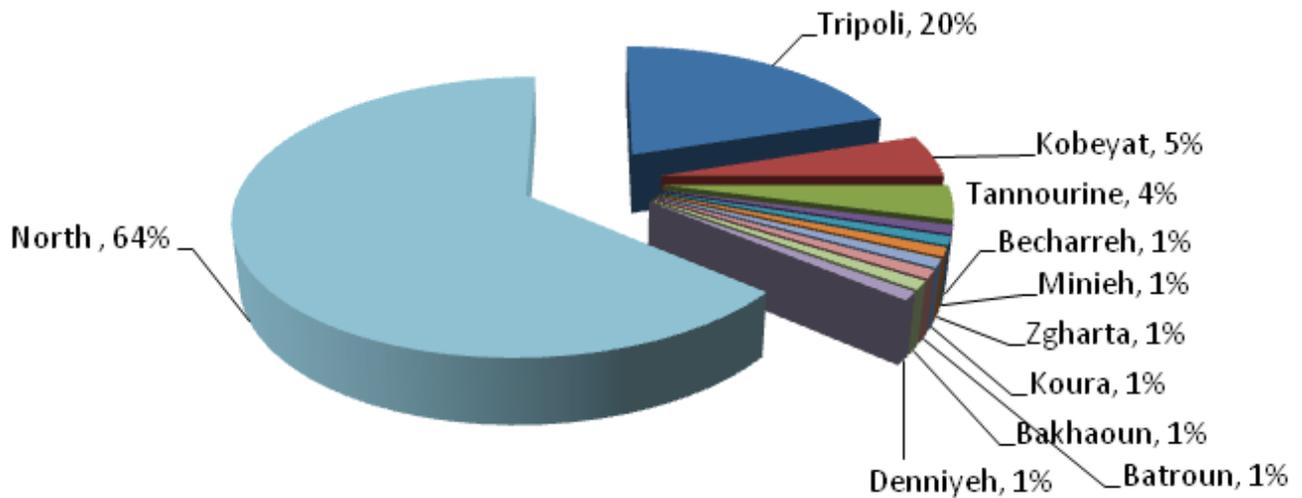


Figure 42

In the South, most of the debate was about Jezzine where municipal elections took place at the same time as parliamentary by-elections. The proportion of the debate in talk shows was 49%, surpassing the general situation in the South which registered 33%, as well as the campaign in Saida with its 17% (Figure 43).

## Talk Shows about Campaigns in Municipal Elections in the South

Percentage indicates time allotted  
Sample of 25,260 seconds

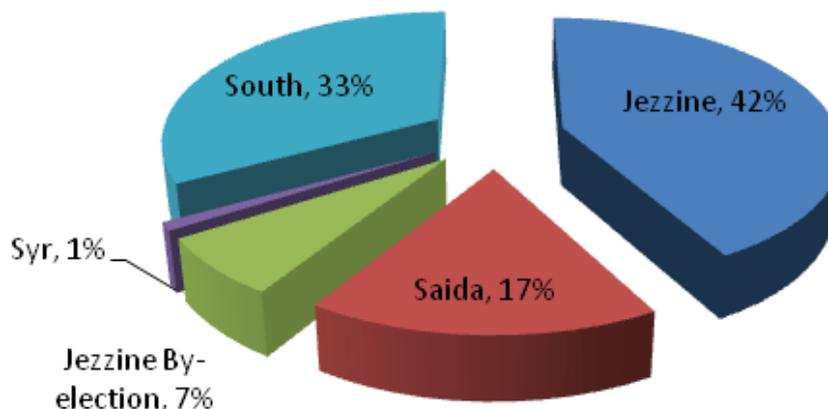


Figure 43

In the Mount-Lebanon Mohafazat, the debate focused on Jounieh where the campaign was heated (27%) while the general situation in Mount-Lebanon registered 24% of the debate. Al-Hadath registered 3% (Figure 44).

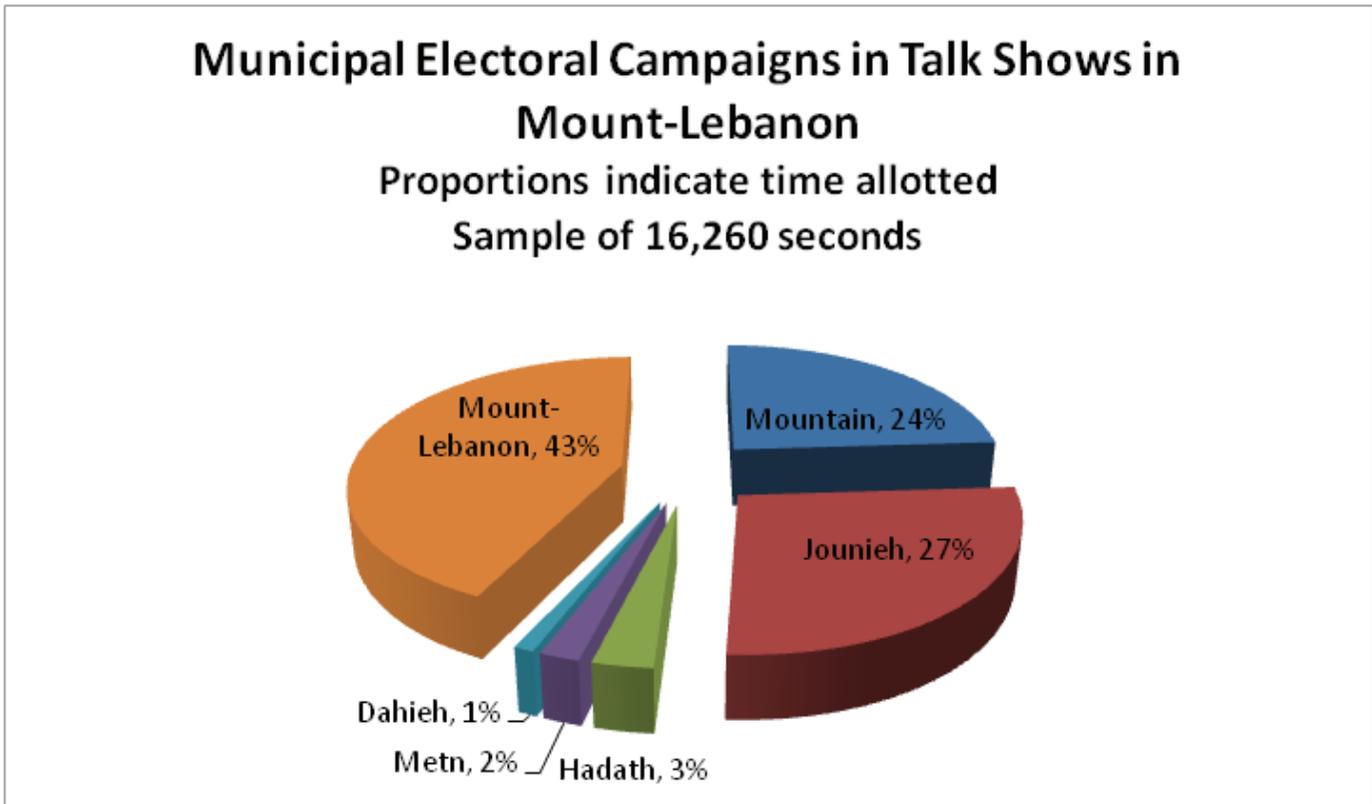


Figure 44

On the evening of the Beirut elections, talk shows were rather general (79%) with a special focus on Zahle (13%) where a heated campaign took place between three electoral slates, while the Beirut campaign did not register more than 7% of the allotted time (Figure 45).

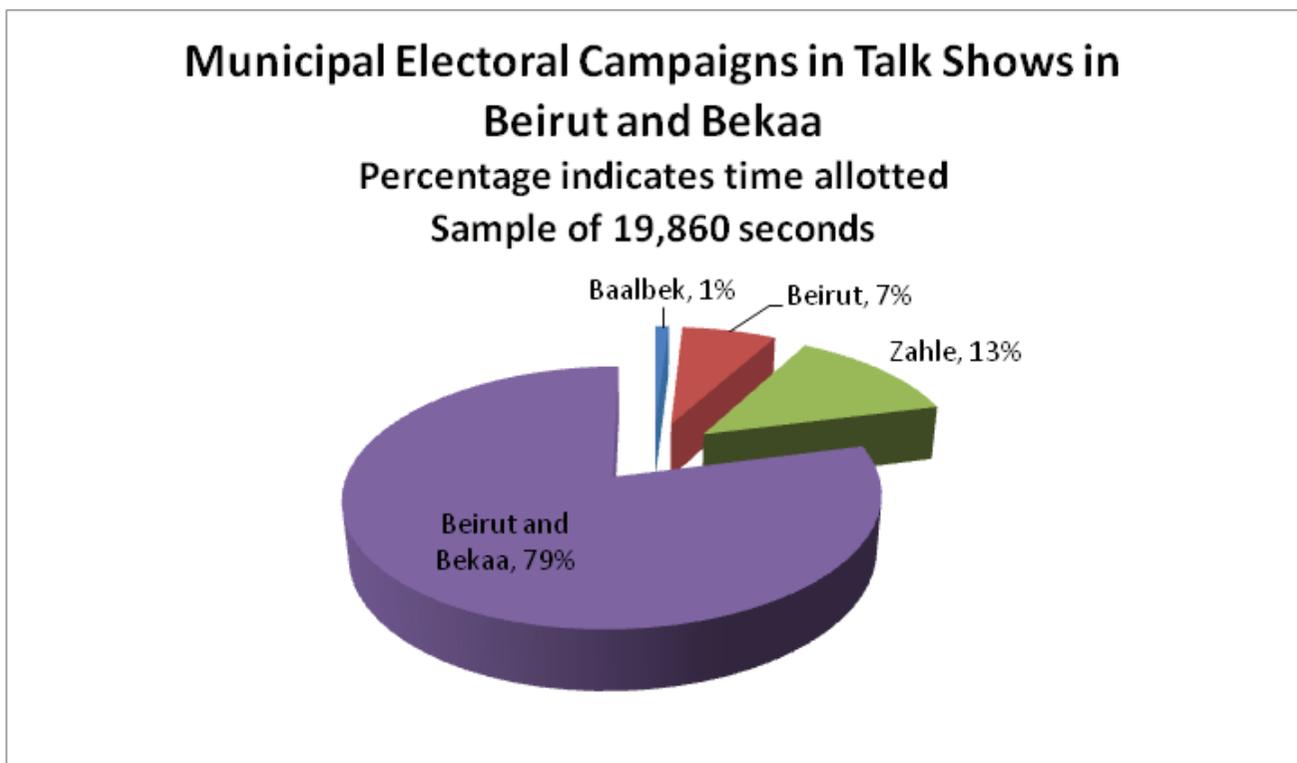


Figure 45

## b. Guests of Talk Shows

Studying the participation of guests in talk shows was conducted from two angles: the first was about the number of guests and the second was about the time allotted to each of them.

With regard to the number of guests, politicians took precedence over other categories of guests in the evening talk shows, registering a proportion of 46%. They were followed by experts and analysts with a proportion of 23.6% while candidates were represented in a proportion of only 15%. Civil society guests occupied 9.6% of air time. These figures show clearly the political dimension of the municipal elections (Figure 46).

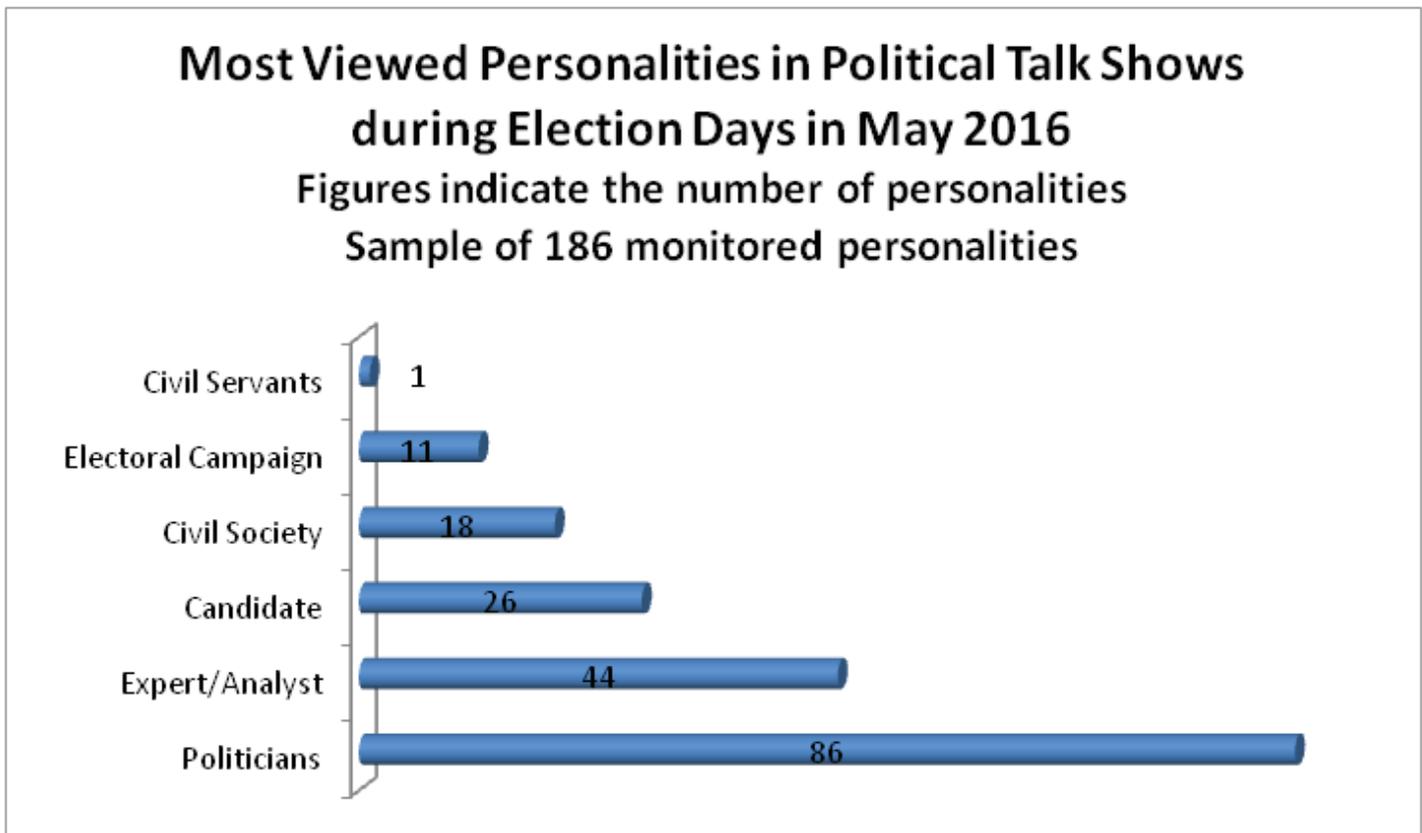


Figure 46

With regard to the time allotted for guests on the screen, here too, politicians took precedence with a percentage of 42% over other categories, followed by the experts and analysts with 38%. Candidates did not get more than 5% of the air time in these talk shows, but civil society received 13% of air time (Figure 47).

## Most Viewed Personalities in Political Talk Shows in May 2016

Proportions indicate air time  
Sample of 82,920 seconds

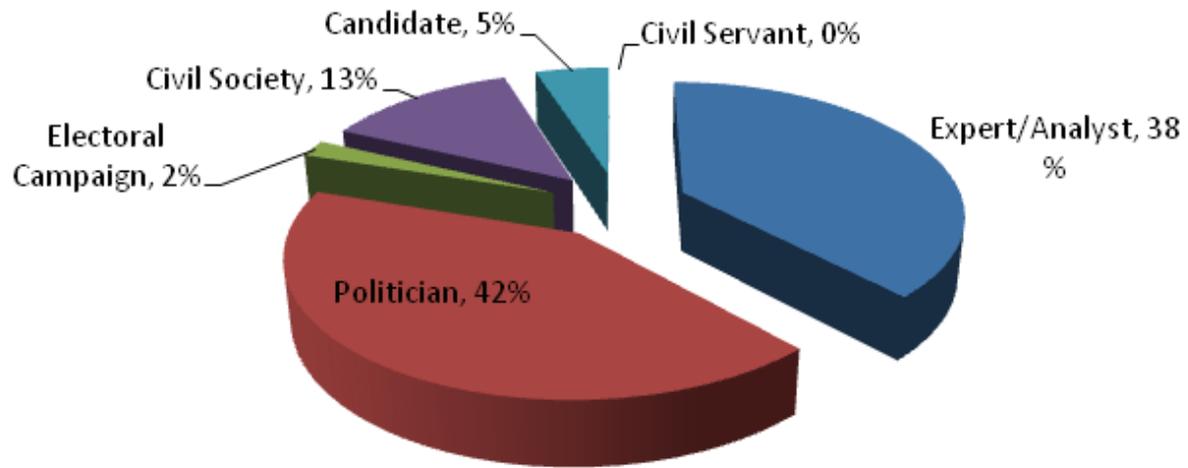


Figure 47

Women, as usual, remain an absent element since they were represented at a proportion of only 8% of the guests. The males' presence was overwhelming in the media and political speech at a proportion of 92% (Figure 48).

## Distribution of Media Appearances by Gender in Political Talk Shows in May 2016

Sample of 186 Monitored Personalities

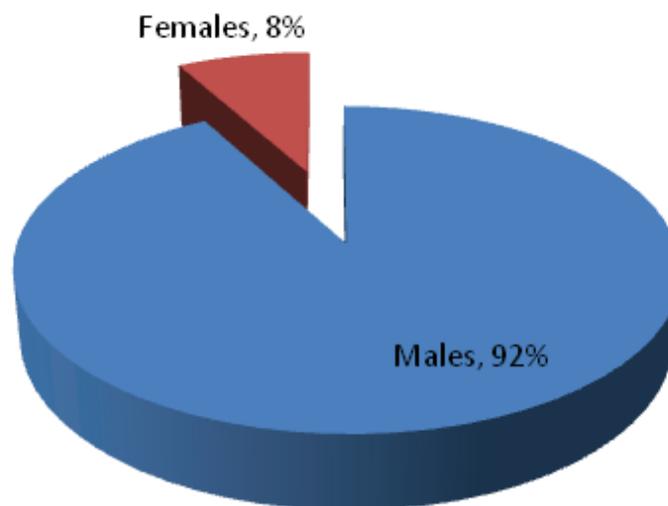


Figure 48

### c. Guests' Speech during Elections

The same way as we analyzed the contents of weekly talk shows during the month of May, we also analyzed the contents of these episodes on the evening of each electoral cycle. In doing so, a special focus was put on the main titles of the speeches used in the episodes of that month as they were uttered by the guests (the sources) and according to the same categories (Figure 49).

**Figure 49- Detailed quantitative table of the sources and contents of the speech in talk shows about electoral cycles and the results in the month of May**

| Source / Topics                 | Electoral Campaign | Candidates' Discourse | Experts/ Analysts | Politicians | Civil Society | Business Community | Other | Total |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Awareness Call to Participate   | 2                  |                       | 8                 | 9           | 4             |                    |       | 23    |
| Speech on Women & Their Role    |                    |                       |                   |             |               |                    |       |       |
| Convincing & Promotional Speech |                    | 8                     |                   | 13          |               |                    |       | 21    |
| Critical Positions              | 2                  | 2                     | 2                 | 6           | 14            |                    |       | 26    |
| Electoral Demands               |                    |                       |                   |             |               |                    |       |       |
| Electoral Programs              |                    | 1                     |                   | 5           |               |                    |       | 6     |
| Analysis of Election            |                    | 9                     | 21                | 22          |               |                    |       | 52    |
| Electoral Law                   |                    |                       | 4                 | 2           |               |                    |       | 6     |
| Results' Forecast               | 8                  | 5                     | 7                 | 29          |               |                    | 1     | 50    |
| Pact Violation                  |                    |                       | 1                 |             |               |                    |       | 1     |
| Total                           | 12                 | 25                    | 43                | 86          | 18            |                    | 1     | 185   |

Figure 49

### **- LBC Station**

The process of the electoral operations and the forecast of the results dominated this station, consecrating 23 interventions to this topic out of a total of 38. Although there was an absence of civil society in this instance, topics about electoral awareness and the necessity to participate in the elections were mentioned in 5 interventions. Critical positions also appeared in 4 interventions while any discourse on women was absent. Politicians and experts/analysts occupied most of the speech totaling 31 interventions out of 38, against 5 interventions made by candidates.

### **- OTV Station**

Analysis of the electoral campaign and its results were not prominent in this station as there were only 9 interventions out of 22 for these two topics. Electoral awareness and participation in the elections were the topic of 5 interventions as well as 4 critical positions. Politicians registered the highest number of interventions (11) while guests of civil society had 4 with a total absence of women as sources of speech or as civil topic.

### **- Al-Manar Station**

Forecasts of the electoral campaign and the analysis of its process were at the forefront of the interventions on this station (13 out of 18). The electoral law was also the topic of 3 interventions, while we noticed an absence of topics such as the call to participate in the elections or the role of women. The main source of speech here was from the politicians in 10 interventions and analysts in 5.

### **- Al-Mustaqbal Station**

Politicians were the main source of speech for interventions on this station (17 out of 32). There were 5 interventions of civil society which were all from the category of critical positions. The dominating topic, however, was the analysis of the electoral campaign and the results' forecast which took 17 interventions. Speech to promote and convince was also registered in 7 interventions whose main source was politicians and candidates. Here too, any speech on women was absent while one single intervention calling to participate in the elections was registered.

### **- MTV Station**

Politicians and analysts dominated the speech on this station with 22 out of 30 interventions. Candidates made only 3 interventions, equal to civil society whose 3 interventions had critical content. The majority of the interventions were about the analysis of the electoral campaign and the results' forecast (14 out of 30). Interventions from the category of promoting and convincing ensued (6), emanating from politicians and candidates. Another 3 interventions were from the topic of electoral awareness and the call to participate in the elections while, here too, there was a complete absence of any speech on women's issues.

### **- Al-Jadeed Station**

The contents of the speech on Al-Jadeed differed from others by the volume of interventions on the topics of electoral awareness and the call to participate in the elections with 9 interventions emanating from different sources. Also 5 critical positions were registered here, 3 of which were expressed by civil society. But, here too, the analysis of the electoral campaign and the analysis of its process and results dominated with 27 out of 46 interventions. In one intervention, the Journalists' Pact was violated and any speech about the role of women was completely absent.

## PART IV:

# QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

## OF THE MONITORED MEDIA TOPICS

### 1. Period prior to Calling the Electoral Colleges

#### a. Press Articles

This survey encompasses articles and analyses about the municipal elections in the first period, extending from the first of February to 26 March, the date when electoral colleges were called in Beirut, Bekaa and Mount-Lebanon. The second period in our survey extends from that date through the end of May 2016.

The sample included the following newspapers: Annahar, Al-Safir, Al-Akhbar, Al-Mustaqbal, Al-Balad, Al-Diyar, Al-Liwa, Al-Joumhouriyah, L'Orient-le-Jour and the Daily Star.

In the first paragraph (before calling the electoral colleges), we will try to find answers to the following questions:

- To what extent do Lebanese media contribute to the promotion of a democratic and electoral culture?
- Did the media coverage in all its forms accord enough space to the democratic forces to allow them to express themselves?
- To what extent did the media exert pressure on the political power to hold the elections?
- To what extent did the media keep up with the steps that led to the decision to hold the elections?
- How did the media deal with the different views and positions, whether supporting the elections or not?
- To what extent did the media shed light on the civil society initiatives related to the elections?

The pessimistic views expressed in the majority of press articles in the monitored newspapers are noteworthy, in contradiction with journalistic news that showed a percentage of 62% of support for holding the elections.

The pessimistic views expressed in the majority of press articles in the monitored newspapers are noteworthy, in contradiction with journalistic news that showed a percentage of 62% of support for holding the elections.

Most articles agreed that municipal elections will not take place, each newspaper offering reasons of political nature while blaming the opponents.

Al-Akhbar, for instance, accused the Al-Mustaqbal Movement of threatening to obstruct the work of the government in order to put pressure for the purpose of postponing these elections "because it needs Saudi financing which is not available at the moment."

Also Al-Diyar thought that "the elections will be postponed for six years."

Articles in Al-Akhbar focused on the "Christian Spring" and the will of the new Christian coalition composed of the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces to achieve what it called an "Aoun-Lebanese Forces Tsunami." It mentioned that this coalition was strongly for the elections because, according to the polls, it would reap 400 municipal councils out of a total of 460.

Articles in Al-Mustaqbal advised to put to test this Christian coalition, raising doubts about whether it really represents 86% of the Christians, especially when we take into consideration the game of "shuffling the cards between local leaderships, the estranged political parties and the families."

Al-Liwa newspaper focused on the criticism expressed by the leader of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement, Saad Hariri, to Hezbollah “which obstructs the presidential elections and demands democracy in the municipal elections.” This newspaper mentioned the “crisis of the finalization of administrative paperwork which threatens the elections.” It also linked the municipal elections with the approval of the budget and the search for sources of financing for the elections as well as increasing the state revenue from the gasoline tax. It called on members of the parliament to adopt a law allowing the extension of the terms of the current municipal councils “due to the situation in the North and in Arsal, and due to the political division with regard to the presidential election.”

The same position also appeared in the Al-Balad newspaper with regard to security as the French expressed concerns in this respect. This newspaper also gave the gasoline tax as a reason for its pessimism, but it called on linking the municipal elections with the parliamentary ones.

Al-Joumhouriyah considered that the municipal elections are unlikely to take place in the background of the game of interests. It also mentioned some “whispers” about extending the term of the current municipalities for a period of 3 years, because “only the Christian coalition is for holding the elections, against the Al-Mustaqbal Movement and the deputy Walid Joumblatt who prefer postponement, and the Shiite Duet occupied in Syria.” The paper also added that one other reason for not holding the elections is that they coincide with the end of school year exams.

On the opposite side of these pessimistic articles, other articles appeared in the Annahar newspaper considering that “the municipal elections will take place and they will coincide with the reactivation of the work of the government in order to compensate the vacuum at the level of the Presidency of the Republic.” Other reasons mentioned by this newspaper for holding the elections were to distract people from demanding parliamentary elections and the will of the political forces to test their political strength through these municipal elections.

Positions in support of holding these elections were repeated in the Al-Safir newspaper which reported a statement made by the American Ambassador in favor of the elections. The newspaper also mentioned some indications showing that the Al-Mustaqbal Movement has started to “prepare itself for this possibility.” Articles in this newspaper focused on the role of the youth civil movement in favor of approving the execution of the elections and adopting the government budget, considering the municipal elections as a “national battle.”

Support for the elections and positions doubting the possibility of holding them coincided with demands for reforms to adopt an electoral law based on proportional representation which would allow political, religious and ethnic minorities to be represented (Al-Akhbar). They also coincided with demands for electing the head of the municipality and his deputy directly by the people and giving the municipality a financial and administrative autonomy and letting it become a central agency for the implementation of decentralization. There were also demands to let municipalities participate more actively in developmental projects (Al-Nahar).

In the end, and despite the fact that these articles and analyses reflected a certain mood, they contributed in uncovering the positions of the political players in the Lebanese arena. These forces, with their direct interest in the municipal elections, had to make indirect statements and declarations about these articles expressing doubts and accusations of obstructionism.

## b. Television Coverage

The survey encompassed declared positions and views on the following television stations: MTV, OTV, LBCI, Al-Mustaqbal, Al-Jadeed, Al-Manar, and Tele-Liban.

The views expressed on television contradicted the pessimistic mood reflected in press articles during the period from 1 February to 26 March.

Live and public television appearances had a direct impact on political forces who could not counter the public opinion tendencies that supported holding the municipal elections. Reciprocal accusations between the Al-Mustaqbal Movement and their opponents compelled all concerned parties to express a strong desire for holding the elections. This fact appeared clearly in assurances made by Al-Mustaqbal TV that election boxes will open next May.

Additionally, Al-Mustaqbal TV advised citizens to make sure that their registration was correct, reminding those concerned of the necessity to rectify potential errors in the registration lists. It also reported statements made by the Minister of the Interior about the full readiness of the Ministry to conduct the elections. In addition, it broadcast a report prepared by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) concerning a campaign to collect signatures in support of the elections and another campaign titled "Municipalities are Half the Country."

Television station OTV called for the correction and updating of the electoral registration lists. The station also reached out to the citizens and made available, via an animated program, the modalities to make the correction online.

Additionally, OTV broadcast interviews with persons supporting the elections, showing meetings organized by political parties, particularly preparations under way by the Aounists and the Lebanese Forces.

However, this station considered that "theoretically, everybody supports the elections, but practically there are some whispers about postponement." This position was shared by OTV and by Al-Manar stations, the latest confirming that "there is no reason to postpone the elections," and that Hezbollah is allied with Amal.

Tele-Liban reported the position of the Speaker of the Parliament confirming that the elections will take place. Like Al-Jadeed television station, it showed preparations in the North and reported the position of Faysal Karami who warned about the risks of using Tripoli as a message box to sabotage the elections. It also reported the position of the Al-Mustaqbal parliamentary block which focused on the "importance of holding the municipal elections on time."

LBC television reported the activities of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections and the positions of Lebanese citizens with regard to the municipal elections, considering that "the chances of holding these elections are increasing," after mentioning links between the elections and the security developments in Aarsal.

In general, television coverage during this phase was positive with regard to supporting the elections and highlighting positions in favor of holding them.

## 2. Period after Calling the Electoral Colleges

### a. Printed Press

#### - During the Month of April

Although the municipal elections became a fact of life in the aftermath of calling the electoral colleges, articles in some newspapers in April continued to mention “contacts taking place to postpone them” (Al-Diyar and Al-Balad). Also Annahar newspaper wondered whether the municipal elections were going to be the “victim of political escalation between Joumblatt and Al-Mustaqbal.”

Al-Liwa newspaper considered that Joumblatt was escalating his positions toward the Minister of the Interior with the purpose of postponing the elections. This was also suggested by Al-Joumhouriyah, focusing on political tensions between Speaker Berri and Michel Aoun and between Deputy Sleiman Franjeh and Michel Aoun, as well as tensions between PM Saad Hariri and Michel Aoun

In contrast, a majority of articles and analyses published during April talked about the nature of the campaigns and the probabilities of success for the new Christian coalition (Geagea-Aoun) which will consecrate Aoun as the leader (Al-Diyar).

However, some very rare articles performed electoral education in addition to advertising the “Elections are a Right for Every Citizen” campaign put forth by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections.

It is worth noting that the majority of newspapers, in April, were supporting the civil society organizations and calling on voters to participate actively in the democratic process in all Lebanese regions.

#### - During the Month of May

Throughout May, newspaper articles and analyses approached the topic of municipal elections according to the affiliations and tendencies of each newspaper. Below are the main topics raised:

##### • Christian Coalition

According to Annahar newspaper, it is the Christian coalition that pushed for holding the elections. The newspaper considered that the Christian Duet changed the electoral panorama with a “failure to count on the failure of holding the elections.”

Assafir considered that the Christian Duet got “a slap in the face in Jounieh” and that “Aoun’s failure in Jounieh and Jezzine is not permitted.”

Al-Mustaqbal mentioned what it called the “sins and mistakes of the Christian coalition” and considered that Christians rebelled against this coalition which wants to “assail and dominate all other Christians.” This newspaper also exposed the defeats of the Christian Duet (Aoun-Geagea) and indicated that the Kataeb party “reaped more seats in Mount-Lebanon than the Duet, while Michel El-Murr dominated the Metn.” It added that Aoun’s victory in Jounieh with only tens of votes is “worse than a defeat.”

On the other side, Al-Akhbar newspaper put forth what Christians said about Hariri’s threats, mistakes and adventures. It considered that Zahle and Beirut liberated the Christian Duet from Hariri and that the Free Patriotic Movement failed in Beirut’s elections.

Al-Joumhouriyah, for its part, highlighted the failure of the Hariri tsunami and reported that the families (as opposed to political parties, note of the translation) gathered 60% of the municipal seats.

Al-Diyar wondered whether “the victory of Christian parties” will lead to the election of a strong Christian President of the Republic and it believed that Christians “grabbed seats from Joumblatt and Hariri.”

### • The Shiite Duet

In its analyses, Annahar touched upon the impossibility of breaking through the electoral slates of the Shiite Duet despite some rebellion on the part of Amal in the South where there is a “competition in one third of the municipalities between the two sides of the coalition (Hezbollah and Amal).”

Al-Akhbar spoke about what it called a “revolution against the coalition in Joaya.”

Al-Mustaqbal judged that Hezbollah’s resorting to a religious ruling is due to its “popular bankruptcy,” that the “project of establishing an Islamic state failed” and that the Bekaa elections “gave them a lesson.”

It also considered that the Shiite Duet acknowledged that there has been a change in the mood of the Shiite electorate and that the Shiites have regained their nationalism, Arabism and the reins of the initiative.

Al-Akhbar also made allusion to the opposing votes in the South.

### • Al-Mustaqbal Movement

Annahar thought that Hariri is strong in Beirut because he ran his campaign alone. For its part, Al-Akhbar brought back the issue of the “International Tribunal” in Joun, where a battle was taking place between the “Men of Allah” against the son of Judge Afif Shamseddine, Head of the Appeals Court in the International Tribunal, reminding the readers of his friendship with Satterfield and Ashra Rifi. This newspaper also mentioned that Beirut “exposed Hariri” and that religious fanaticism is what saved him. Additionally, it spoke about a “slap in his face in the city of Aarsal in the Bekaa” in opposition to his policy, adding that Hariri is facing a “mini intifadah” from his supporters who are asking for their money.

Al-Diyar, in its analyses, deemed Hariri in crisis with his allies.

### • Civil Society

Electoral slates supported by the civil society found clear interest from journalists in Lebanese newspapers, with a special focus on the electoral slate of “Beirut Madinaty.” This slate was described as the one that “meets the concerns of the people and offers a clear program” while, on the opposite side, we see “persons named by political parties” as per Annahar. This newspaper said “Yes” to “Beirut Madinaty” because it is the “dream.” It also considered it an “independence movement” and it praised the “My country, My city, My municipality” campaign.

Promoting “Beirut Madinaty” was also echoed in the newspaper Al-Akhbar which considered that this electoral slate “reflects a new social rising of a class that claims its place in the political power.”

However, Al-Akhbar called on “Beirut Madinaty” to go beyond religious and confessional awareness because fighting corruption requires, according to Michel Foucault, “fighting the power that is diffuse rather than concentrated” and that it is “necessary to fight the power in its diverse and local manifestations, since power is not only the state, but an educational and a national system, administrations...”

Al-Diyar highlighted the failure of the civil society in becoming a united movement. Al-Joumhouriyah spoke of the “craze of separating development from politics” in alluding to the civil society suggestions.

## b. Consequences of the Results in Newspapers' Positions

### On the Political Level

The results of the municipal elections have led to numerous analyses and interpretations through the positions of newspapers and their commentators. Annahar called for the necessity to think seriously about distributing municipal seats to the different religious confessions and sects in order to avoid ruining the social fabric after the Tripoli events. It reached the conclusion that it is impossible to put an end to political confessionalism at a time of confessional awakening. The newspaper also considered that the era of the leader's political dictatorship is gone, citing the volume of the opposing votes and the weaknesses in the structure of the political parties who relied mostly on inciting confessional fanaticism in their electoral campaigns.

A series of analyses were published by Annahar about:

- The continuation of the "status quo" and the revamping of the parties' bases.
- A popular revolution against Christian leaderships in Beirut.
- A call to divide Beirut into 3 districts.
- A call to adopt an electoral law based on the results of the municipal elections and the alliances that led to the fall of the forces of 8 and 14 March
- The continuous role of local communities in influencing municipal elections.
- The emergence of a new "bourgeoisie" that is looking for a political role to play.
- The start of the influence of the developmental speech on the voters.
- The problem of the relationship between the place of residence and the place of voting.

Al-Akhbar called for the reform of the concept of municipality and presented the problem of residents of cities and villages who cannot vote. It also raised the following issues:

- Irregularities in the form and the substance.
- Absence of an oversight agency and absence of mechanisms for electoral information and advertising.
- Article 84 preventing any electoral or advertising activities in the electoral centers was not implemented.
- Electoral silence in accordance with Article 73 was not implemented.

Al-Akhbar newspaper stated that "the right of fair representation of all components of the society cannot be achieved without implementing the rule of proportionality."

On the other side, Al-Liwa considered that "the first victim of the results will be the law based on proportionality," since "the municipal elections were held because the political class needed to ensure its legality and the legality of the regime from which it originated."

Al-Jomhouriyah, for its part, saw that the results of these elections will be the "entrance toward a constitutional assembly and an introduction for constitutional reforms within favorable regional circumstances and internal vacuum."

In turn, Al-Diyar thought that the proportionality system is necessary to generate a governing power and it called for a "national and partisan dialogue with the elite in order to decide on the nature of the political regime."

## On the Level of Electoral Awareness

Electoral awareness, in newspapers analyses, was concentrated in a limited way, on the call to submit developmental programs. The importance of popular participation to engender change and calls to revolt against violations were highlighted. There were also calls on voters to ignore instructions, fanaticism and personal interests of the political class before voting, because municipal work is the opposite of political clientelism and it is a responsibility at the local level, according to Al-Safir.

There were also calls for the municipalities to confront the Lebanese Sykes-Picot (Al-Liwa) in an allusion to the distribution of municipalities between influential forces and alliances dominating certain areas. Additionally, municipalities should be a “revolt against corruption that would constitute the base for a change in politics and leadership.”

## On the Level of Women

With regard to encouraging women to run for elections, Al-Safir found out that political parties praise women, but they do not adopt their candidacies. It highlighted the news about the “Association for the Advancement of Women in Nabatiyeh” that presented the candidature of some of its members to explore the democratic experience.

The same was done by Al-Mustaqbal newspaper which praised the women of Akkar in becoming candidates and in voting.

Regardless, there were no major articles enticing women to present their candidacy.

In contrast, Al-Akhbar reported what it considered a “religious taboo” for women to be candidates in Hasbaya amid a division in the ranks of the religious leaders.

## c. Analysis of Television Coverage

The monitored positions in television stations do not differ much from those of the printed press since each station conducted its electoral campaign from a purely political angle.

MTV for instance often presented opposing electoral slates and displayed their programs and criticisms through their representatives, especially in Beirut, Jounieh, Tyre, Metn Coast, Tripoli, Deir-el-Kamar and Choueifat.

This station also tried to highlight the role of women wherever there was a female candidate or a female head of an electoral slate, underlining the fact that a woman gathered the most votes in the “Al-Bayaritah” slate.

Protests about the organization, violations and bribes were formulated by representatives of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections.

With regards to the consequences of the results, there were requests for the implementation of a law based on proportionality after “shaking the thrones of political parties” thanks to opposing votes that reached 40% in Beirut, 35% in Bazouriyeh (village of the Secretary General of Hezbollah), 30% in Becharreh (stronghold of the Lebanese Forces) and 42% in Baalbek (home of the Shiite Duet).

Facing this panorama presented by MTV, the strong presence of candidates from the Al-Mustaqbal Movement was clear at the expense of their opponents on the Al-Mustaqbal television station. There was a focus on the theme of “fifty-fifty and the acceptance of the others” with a continuous appearance of PM Saad Hariri and a polling of people “supporting the Al-Mustaqbal Movement.”

Al-Mustaqbal station highlighted the opposition slates in the Christian districts, especially in Kobeyat, Kleiyat, Deir-el-Kamar and the Metn Coast. It also gave special attention to the opposition slates in the Shiite districts, particularly in Baalbek where the opposition slate reaped 46% of the votes according to Al-Mustaqbal station, which reported additionally about the electoral slates opposing the Shiite coalition in Bazouriyeh (hometown of the Secretary General of Hezbollah), Bint-Jbeil and Nabatiyeh. All the reports of this station announced clearly the position of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement toward electoral slates, especially in districts of Sunni majority where this movement had strong political weight, such as in Beirut, Saida and Tripoli.

OTV station underlined the Christian accord, stressing that there will be “no votes other than Christian votes in Zahle” for instance. It also broadcast calls for Christian participation and a display of Christian strength in Zahle (83%) besides playing on the national and confessional feeling by showing Syrians voting in that city.

This station also broadcast cartoons of “Afif and Akif” to criticize the “Al-Bayaritah” slate and the Hariri policy in a sarcastic way. This criticism took place although the Free Patriotic Movement was participating in this slate. Additionally, the station called on the citizens to not vote for the whole slate “As It Is,” which is the slogan of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement.

On the other hand, OTV produced short videos enticing women to participate in the elections and it supported some female candidates in different districts. It also supported, in its reports, persons with special needs calling for their inclusion in the municipal electoral process and it gave clear support to the “Beirut Madinaty” slate. Tele-Liban limited its reporting on the elections to presenting the different electoral slates by name and by district without any commentary.

Al-Manar station, which suffered some embarrassment in many districts, especially in Zahle and Beirut, limited itself to presenting some electoral maps, districts, municipalities and votes. It invited experts and scholars to highlight some positions that Hezbollah wanted the viewers to see with regard to contradictions in some alliances. It also limited itself to “media surgeries” highlighting the positions of the Free Patriotic Movement and the Popular Block in Zahle for instance. It also resorted to special analysts to underline its support to the “Beirut Madinaty” slate because “the media did not give it enough support,” and it gave a clear support to the Shiite coalition.

LBC coverage distinguished itself from all other Lebanese stations in that it gave priority to the people in all its news reports about municipal competition. It presented the needs of the people in their own words; it then conducted interviews with candidates and competing slates based on the people’s demands trying to measure the relationship between the needs of the people and the electoral programs in most Lebanese regions, including Central Bekaa, Zahle, Jounieh, Mount-Lebanon, Beirut, Bourj-Barajneh, Tripoli, Kobeyat and Tyre... LBC ensured a balanced coverage in media appearances in a set-up similar to a debate between principal competing slates.

While considering that development is the prime victim of the elections due to the heated political competition, this station exposed a series of violations in the following fields:

- Absence of the agency in charge of supervising the elections
- Organization of electoral information and advertising
- Non respect of electoral silence
- Role of electoral finances
- Right of the organizations of civil society to supervise the elections in accordance with Article 20 of the municipal electoral law.

LBC also presented the report of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections which mentioned the fact that places of worship and public squares were used to announce electoral slates. It also raised the issue of the “lack of preparedness of the electoral administration up to 80%” and the presence of electoral advertising inside voting centers, as well as the rights of people with special needs. Additionally, the report spoke about bribes, the acceptance of candidates’ withdrawals after the end of the deadlines, the incompetence of some of the organizers of the elections and the delay in counting the votes. With regard to the repercussions of the results, LBC called for the adoption of a law based on proportionality because such a law “would have given ‘Beirut Madinaty’ 10 members and would give hope for a change.”

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Conclusions

### a. With regard to Media Coverage

- Electoral education as a subject about voters' and candidates' rights and duties and about laws and rules of the electoral process was almost absent. Although some positions raised awareness on the importance of the elections and encouraged voters to participate in the electoral process, what was prominent in the coverage was news about major alliances and the politicians' speeches.
- Media, which reported serious doubts based on "information," "analyses" and readings in the local and regional political and security fields, contributed in creating an atmosphere of frustration, fear and uncertainty within the forces seeking change. These forces were not given the chance to prepare themselves and therefore, the results came in favor of the traditional political forces and their allies.
- By relying on exaggerated or unreliable statistics in their coverage of numerous electoral campaigns, media participated in the prevailing atmosphere of intimidation, thus weakening the competitive power and the whole democratic process in many regions.
- This kind of coverage also contributed in intimidating some voters who decided either to stay home or "went along" with major currents at the expense of their convictions.
- Television coverage in support of holding the elections was in clear contradiction with press reports that were opposing this tendency.
- The popular movement contributed in encouraging viewpoints supporting municipal elections leading to the decision of the government to call the electoral colleges for this purpose.
- During the electoral period, media were not organized enough to commit themselves for equal coverage of all players according to unified criteria. This situation made each medium focus on its own electoral campaigns. Therefore, coverage reflected clearly the political positioning of numerous media which participated actively in the electoral operations by focusing on the activities of some slates and candidates and attacking their opponents, all this through publishing figures of potential results based on "experts and analysts."
- In professional preparation, the issue of elections is a circumstantial one. It often is part of the coverage of political and similar issues. However, most of the television and press coverage of the municipal elections was not able to separate the political from the municipal issues. For this reason, most of the coverage was performed from a purely political approach ignoring the issues of development and the related programs.
- The television and press coverage were performed from a perspective that focused mainly on presenting the balance of power between traditional political forces at the expense of the forces of change (the Popular Movement).
- In the majority of television coverage of the elections in Beirut, there was a clear contradiction between the commitment toward major alliances and the viewpoint about "Beirut Madinatny" which represented the civil society.

- Contrary to traditions and rules followed in modern democracies, there was no “moment of media silence” even at the voting booths.
- The initiatives of the civil society did not take their deserved share in the media debate and there was even clear criticism of these initiatives from the media for their lack of unification.
- Participation of youth and women was covered in a limited way, manifesting itself only by verbal demands of some politicians without any follow-up.

## b. With Regard to Talk Shows

From the analysis of talk shows, the following deductions can be made:

- **Absence of Electoral Programs:** What was really remarkable in talk shows during the municipal elections was the absence of candidates’ electoral programs and the absence of a general debate about the vision of the role of municipalities in managing the daily affairs of citizens. Talk shows, as a rule, are supposed to avail air time to candidates in order to explain their programs to the public. This will allow voters to make their informed choice and, in a following period, hold those they voted for accountable.
- **Politicians taking up the Majority of Air Time:** Most of the guests of talk shows during the month of May were politicians, although their speech is well-known and connected to major political choices that do not always take into account the municipal interests. Additionally, politicians are given air time almost continuously unlike candidates in municipal elections.

The second category of guests who took up a lot of air time was analysts and experts as well as journalists who explain electoral campaigns and offer forecasts. Candidates constituted the third category with very limited air time. Some television stations (particularly OTV) did not host candidates in their programs and kept their talk shows the way they were outside the electoral period.

- Some television coverage seemed more balanced starting in May.
- During electoral campaigns, coverage did not take into account the public interest; which means that journalists should not limit themselves to reporting news of candidates and their supporters, but it should also extend to that of the voters.

- **Limited Democratic Education:** Media are supposed to contribute in diffusing a culture of democracy. They should also encourage voters to accomplish their electoral duties and explain the mechanisms and the rules of the elections; they are also supposed to shed light on potential violations and irregularities that might take place, all this in order to prepare voters to understand the importance of this process which will allow them to play their role as a source of the governing power. On most television stations, raising awareness to the democratic process, highlighting the importance of the role of voters and encouraging their participation as well as the presence of civil society were very limited.

- **Absence of Women:** The absence of women, either as guests in talk shows or as a gender topic was really flagrant. Lebanese women still suffer from marginalization in political life as well as at the media and information level.

- **Absence of the Voters’ Voice and their Demands:** The voice of the voters and that of the public were completely absent in talk shows. Media are supposed to give them space to express their demands, evaluate the performance of municipalities and relay the expectations of the citizens.

## 2. Recommendations

### a. With Regard to Journalists' Performance

- In media coverage, the lack of professional training and experience was noticeable. Most journalists had their coverage experience and skills from their daily work and personal experiences. Therefore, it is imperative to make training on electoral coverage accessible to all.

Journalists should be capable of analyzing information and media strategies of the competing forces in order to be able to prepare their information messages without falling in the traps of serving a certain electoral campaign at the expense of others. The idea of training should be really generalized.

- In order to ensure transparency in elections, legal immunity for journalists should be implemented while performing their electoral coverage. Their presence in voting and counting centers should also be facilitated in order to avoid violations on the basis of "freedom of expression as a counterpart for the freedom of the media institution" without favoritism.

- Media is a sort of a preventive instrument and allows fact-finding with regards to claims of electoral violations. However, coverage was limited to verbally enumerating these violations by the civil society organizations without any follow-up or investigation. Media should play its role in criticizing and supervising.

### b. With Regard to Required Reforms

General performance of media indicated large violations of the implementation of the Journalists' Pact with regard to the lack of commitment in fairness, imbalance, lack of equal opportunities and non-commitment to broadcast educational material (Article 12); violations also included slander, clear favoritism in journalistic analyses and partisanship as well as absence of objectivity (Article 13). Additionally, both Articles 16 and 17 of the pact were violated with regard to lack of impartiality of some newscasters and taking advantage of their position to promote the sides they support. There was also a clear violation of Article 6 concerning the access to information, news and statistics, which are of importance to citizens, as well as the principle of practicing maximum objectivity when citing materials that are published (Article 9).

All this makes us strongly request legal frameworks that would regulate media work during election times, the creation of an independent agency to manage the elections, and make it possible for the citizens to vote in the area of their residence. Regulating electoral information and spending, adopting an electoral law based on proportionality and approving the principle of a quota for women in all elections to guarantee their participation in the political process and public life are also requested.



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