



The voter register in Lebanon is updated annually. Between 10 February and 10 March, the Election Law provides that all Lebanese citizens have the right to check whether they are correctly included on the voter register before it is published on 30 March. With elections scheduled for 7 June, this year's update will be especially important for ensuring that all eligible voters are registered to vote. This IFES Lebanon briefing paper outlines the voter registration process, especially the key elements of its updating phase.

Who should be registered as a voter?

Every Lebanese citizen aged 21 years or over is eligible to vote in elections.¹ A person cannot vote unless they are included in the voter register. Thus, all persons holding Lebanese citizenship should be registered as a voter. This right applies regardless of whether they are resident in Lebanon or not.

How is the Voter Register compiled?

Voter registration in Lebanon is a passive system administered by the Personal Status Directorate of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM). The register is automatically compiled from the civil status records held at 47 regional registration offices; these maintain a register of all births, marriages, deaths and other changes to a citizen's personal status. It is traditional practice in Lebanon that citizens are registered at the geographic location of origin of their family. Thus, many Lebanese are registered to vote in different electoral districts than in which they live.

How is the Voter Register maintained?

Lebanon has a centralised computerised voter registration database, drawn from the hand-written civil status record books held at the regional registration offices. The database is annually updated to include newly eligible voters and to remove those voters who have died or who have become ineligible to vote. This process, which also involves a cross-check to ensure that a citizen is registered in only one electoral district, was undertaken between 5 December and 5 January.

The 'Public Inspection and Challenge' Phase

From 10 February, all citizens have the right to inspect the preliminary update of the voter register (PVR). The Election Law requires that copies are made widely available for public inspection through government offices (municipalities, *mukhtars*, *muhafazats*, *qadas* and embassies) as well as in electronic format on the MoIM website² and also published in a database format on a purchasable CD.

The inspection phase is aimed at allowing citizens to check that they are included on the voter register and, if so, that all the relevant data contained in the voter register is accurate and complete. The public inspection also allows for citizens to check the data of other persons, (i.e. to check that no ineligible person is wrongly included on the voter register or that an eligible person has been wrongly omitted).

Electoral District		Seats	Voters		
North Lebanon	Akkar	7	5.5%	220,823	7.0%
	Minieh-Dennieh	3	2.3%	93,941	3.0%
	Tripoli	8	6.3%	186,377	5.9%
	Zgharta	3	2.3%	69,276	2.2%
	Koura	3	2.3%	57,254	1.8%
	Bcharre	2	1.6%	44,824	1.4%
	Batroun	2	1.6%	57,068	1.8%
	North Lebanon Totals	28	21.9%	729,563	23.2%
Mount Lebanon	Jbeil	3	2.3%	73,327	2.3%
	Keserwan	5	3.9%	88,278	2.8%
	Metn	8	6.3%	166,920	5.3%
	Baabda	6	4.7%	146,990	4.7%
	Aley	5	3.9%	113,901	3.6%
	Chouf	8	6.3%	172,889	5.5%
	Mount Lebanon Totals	35	27.3%	762,305	24.2%
Bekaa	Baalbek-Hermel	10	7.8%	249,143	7.9%
	Zahle	7	5.5%	146,377	4.6%
	West Bekaa-Rashaya	6	4.7%	119,044	3.8%
	Bekaa Totals	23	18.0%	514,564	16.3%
Beirut	Beirut 1	5	3.9%	91,325	2.9%
	Beirut 2	4	3.1%	98,727	3.1%
	Beirut 3	10	7.8%	244,612	7.8%
	Beirut Totals	19	14.8%	434,664	13.8%
South Lebanon	Saida	2	1.6%	51,395	1.6%
	Jezzine	3	2.3%	53,380	1.7%
	Zahrany	3	2.3%	89,468	2.8%
	Nabatieh	3	2.3%	115,023	3.7%
	Marjaayoun-Hasbaya	5	3.9%	131,959	4.2%
	Tyre (Sour)	4	3.1%	151,474	4.8%
	Bint Jbeil	3	2.3%	116,618	3.7%
	South Lebanon Totals	23	18.0%	709,317	22.5%
National Totals		128	100.0%	3,150,413	100.0%

*The total number of registered voters (as of 30 March 2008)
(by electoral district and number of seats per district)*

¹ Under the 2008 Election Law, some categories of citizens are not eligible to vote: these include convicted criminals, persons who have lost their legal capacity and fraudulent bankrupts. Naturalised citizens are not eligible to vote for ten years after citizenship is granted. Members of the security forces (whether military or civilian) are not allowed to vote.

² See www.moim.gov.lb and www.elections.gov.lb

What information needs to be checked?

The 2008 Election Law requires that the voter register contains the following personal data on every voter:

- the voter's full name (i.e. the voter's given name, their father's name and the family name)
- the voter's mother's name
- the voter's personal registration number
- whether the voter is male or female
- the voter's date of birth
- the registered confession of the voter.

It is important that the voter not only checks that their data on the voter register is accurate but also that it is the same as the data contained on their ID card or passport. This is because, on election day, the voter will need to show their ID card or passport as proof of identity; if there are inconsistencies in the voter's data between the voter register and the ID card/passport, the voter may be prevented from voting.

Special categories of voter registration

Persons aged over 100 years on 30 March 2009

The Election law requires that any voter aged over 100 years must be automatically removed from the voter register. This is done to ensure that deceased persons whose deaths have not been officially recorded are eventually taken off the voter register. Persons aged over 100 years must make a special request to have their name included as a voter.

Persons reaching 21 years between 31 March–7 June

This year's voter register will include all citizens who will be aged 21 years or above as of 30 March 2009. It will be important for newly eligible voters to check their inclusion on the voter register. Those persons who will become 21 years of age after 31 March will not be included even if they celebrate their birthday on or before election day on 7 June.

Women who have become married since 30 March 2008

Upon marriage, a woman's place of civil registration is automatically transferred to her husband's registered location of origin. Women who have married since 30 March 2008 will need to check that their transfer of civil registration has been recorded on the voter register also.

Changing the voter registration data

The 2008 Election Law (Article 35) allows "any interested individual" to submit a request to correct the voter register where there is "any mistake regarding him/her on the voter rolls, such as registration omission or distortion of his/her name due to negligence, material mistake or any other reason." This request is submitted to their nearest Registration Committee. Any request to correct the voter register must be accompanied by supporting evidence and documents. No fee is payable for submitting the request.

Registration Committees

There are at least two Registration Committees in every electoral district. They are composed of three members: one judge (as President); one mayor/councillor from a municipal council; and one employee of the MoIM's Personal Status Directorate. The Registration Committee must make its decision within five days. Its decision can be appealed within five days to a Higher Registration Committee.

Higher Registration Committees

Every one of the 26 electoral districts has a Higher Registration Committees. They are also composed of three members: one judge from the Court of Cassation or the Court of Appeal (as President); one mayor/councillor from a municipal council; and one senior employee of the MoIM's Central Inspection Bureau. Any decision of the Higher Registration Committee on the appeal is final.

The Finalisation of the Voter Register

All decisions of the Registration Committees and Higher Registration Committees that amend the voter register are forwarded to the MoIM for inclusion in the final version of the voter register. This must be completed by Monday 30 March when the voter register is finalised, closed and published. No further changes to it are permissible.

The Voter Register on Election Day

After 30 March, the voter register for each electoral district is used to determine the allocation of every voter to a polling station. Ahead of election day, the final voter register is again distributed widely for voters to be informed of the polling station in which they are registered to vote. On election day, every polling station is issued with two extracts from the voter register, one of which is signed by a voter after they have cast their ballots.