

# Gender Diversity on Boards of Public Institutions in Lebanon: A Comprehensive Analysis of Patterns, Challenges, and Opportunities for Reform



# **GENDER DIVERSITY ON BOARDS OF Public Institutions in Lebanon**

**A Comprehensive Analysis of Patterns,  
Challenges & Opportunities for Reform**

# DISCLAIMER

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# Our Mission and Vision



The Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) is a non-profit organization established in 2006. As a socio-economic association, LLWB is committed to empowering women in business and the workforce.

Our mission is to support women to take the lead and succeed in their professional growth. To ensure inclusion, diversity and equity, we also encourage the active participation of men mainly youth in our initiatives, recognizing that gender equity and women's empowerment require collective action and collaboration.

With over 812 members, LLWB includes business owners, employees, entrepreneurs, independent professionals, academics and students from diverse backgrounds. Our initiatives extend across Beirut, North Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, the South, and the Beqaa Valley, with a broader reach on both regional and international levels.

LLWB fosters economic development by connecting aspiring entrepreneurs, women start-ups, social enterprises and MSMEs and SMEs with:

- Mentorship & Coaching
- Capacity Building
- Funding Opportunities
- Professional Networks

In addition, LLWB collaborates with large businesses, within the private and the the public sector: decision-makers, academia, local, regional and international organizations to promote gender equity and women's economic advancement and inclusion on all levels.

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

## UNPRECEDENTED COMPREHENSIVE SCOPE

- First systematic analysis of women's representation on Lebanese public institution boards spanning 1950s-2024
- Creation of first-ever database on board composition and gender diversity in Lebanese institutions.
- Analysis of 792 documented board appointments

## CHALLENGES IN DATA ACCESS

- Formal requests denied by multiple government entities
- Alternative data collection through official gazettes and legal repositories
- Research conducted during extraordinary circumstances (armed conflict since September 2024)

## MIXED METHODS APPROACH

- Documentary analysis, interviews, database construction

# Research Scope

## Lebanon's Public Institutional Landscape

- **Total Public Institutions:** 76
- **Under Central Inspection Board's Mandate:** 62
- **Focus of Analysis:** 55 active public institutions

## Governmental Hospitals

- **Total:** 31

## Other Public Institutions

- **Total:** 24
- Serve various public functions

## Selection Criteria

- Comparable governance structures and regulatory frameworks
- Excluded institutions with:
  - Distinct governance structures
  - Inactive status

# Legal and Institutional Framework

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Public institutions regulated by Decree 4517/72
- Types: Administrative public institutions, Investment public institutions (industrial/commercial), Educational and training institutions, healthcare institutions (regulated by Law No. 544/1996)
- Boards typically consist of 3-7 members (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and members)
- Board members appointed by decree of Council of Ministers
- Standard 3-year terms (often extended in practice)

## APPOINTMENT PROCESS

- Supervising ministry initiates candidate selection
- Consultation with Civil Service Board
- Recommendations to Council of Ministers
- Final approval by decree
- No specific legislation mandating gender quotas or targets
- Political-sectarian considerations often supersede merit-based criteria

# KEY FINDINGS

- Alarming underrepresentation: Women occupy **only 5.3%** of board positions in Lebanese public institutions
- Significant below international benchmarks and regional leaders: European countries (40%), Tunisia (23.1%) and Morocco (19.8%)
- **Only 2 women** in history have achieved chair/vic chair positions in public institutions
  1. **Haifa Al Amin** - Vice Chair of the Sidon Port Authority (1994-2000).
  2. **Hoda Salloum** - Chairwoman of the Traffic, Trucks & Vehicles Management Authority (2014-2023).



**5.3%**

**WOMEN  
BOARD DIRECTORS**



**94.7%**

**MEN  
BOARD DIRECTORS**

# Projected Distribution of New Leadership Positions Under Proposed Quota

## a. Introduce a law to enact phased mandatory gender quota:

- At least 1 woman board member in year one → 20% female representation by year 3 → 30% female representation by year 5

### Projected Impact of a 30% Quota in Lebanon

- 15 additional board seats for women
- Not enough---- need to introduce other measures

## b. Engage Capital Markets Authority (CMA) as key actor

### implement corporate governance guidelines:

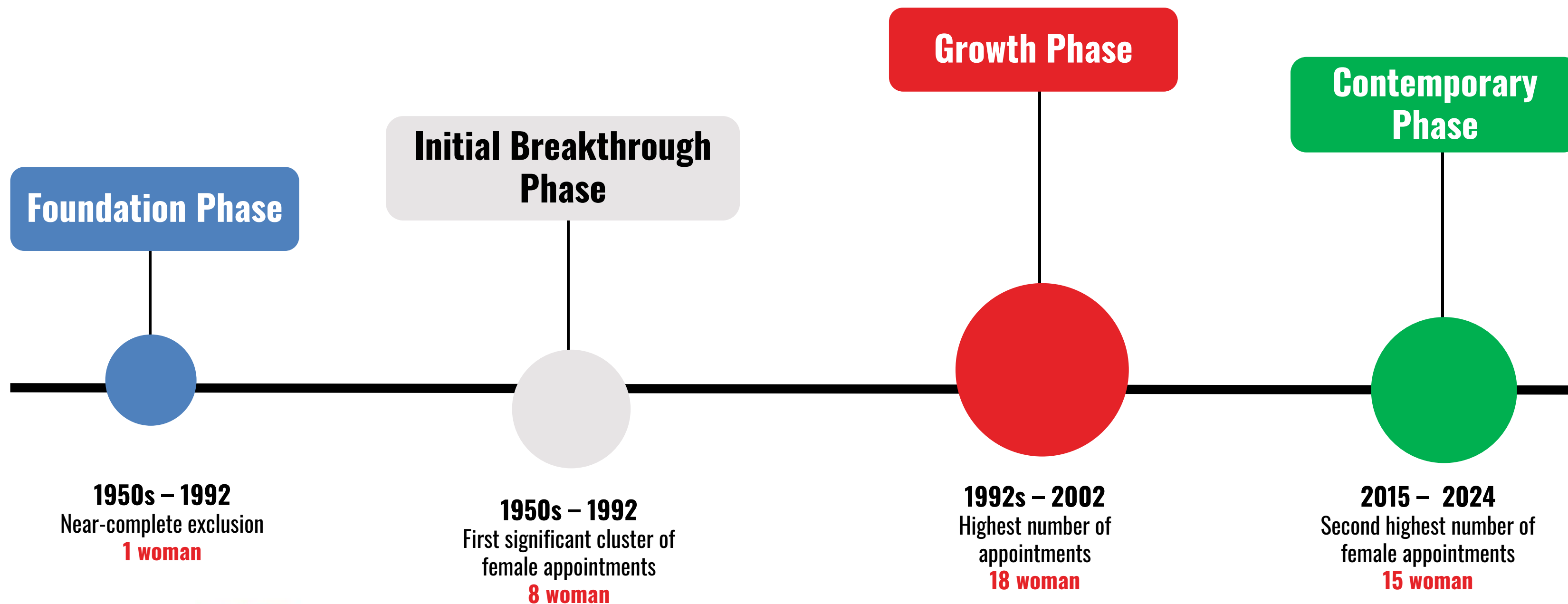
- Establish gender diversity requirements (quota)
- Require annual reporting on gender diversity metrics
- Establish clear sanctions for non-compliance



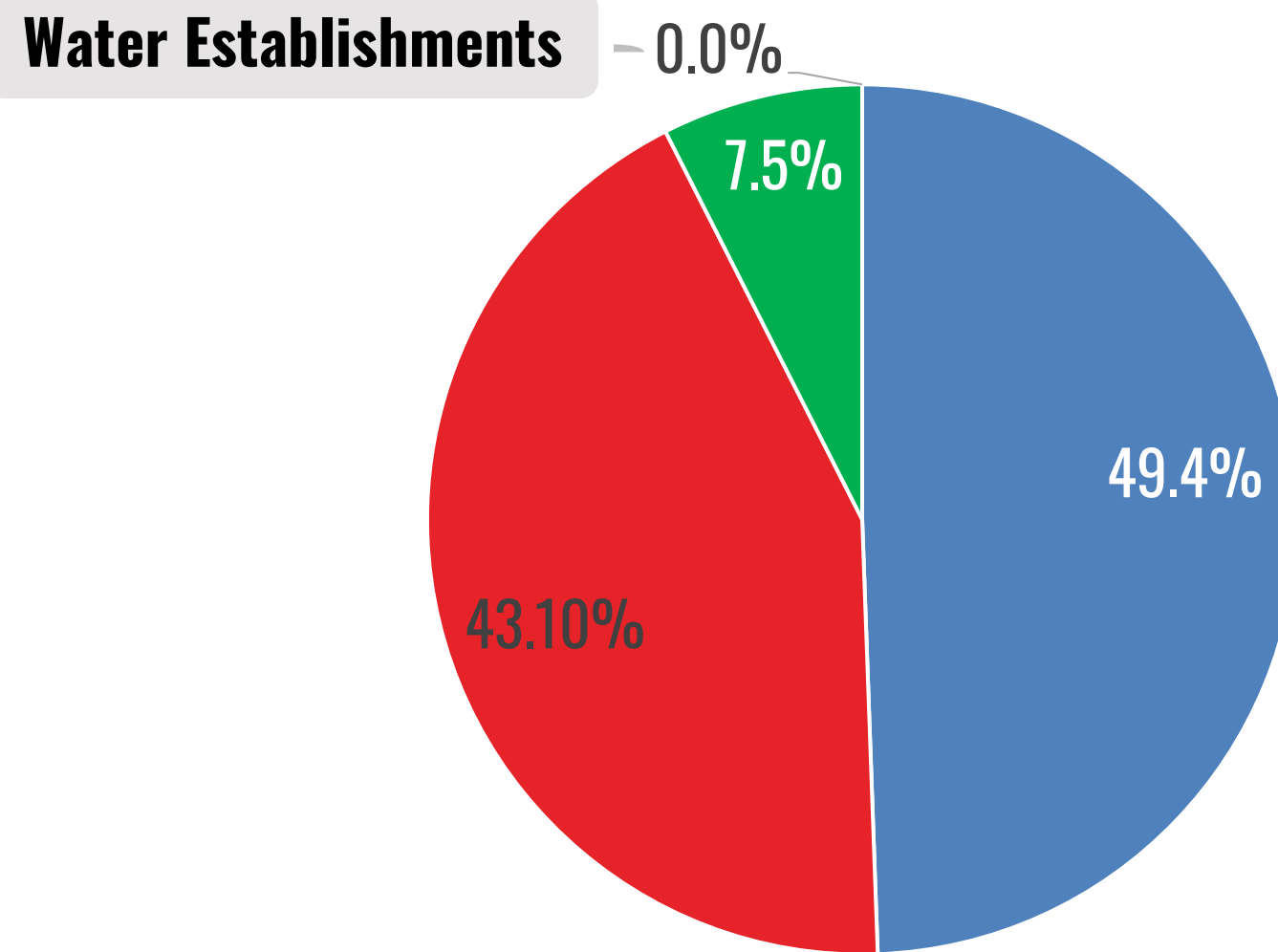
30%

**WOMEN  
BOARD DIRECTORS**

# Historical Progression (1950–2024)

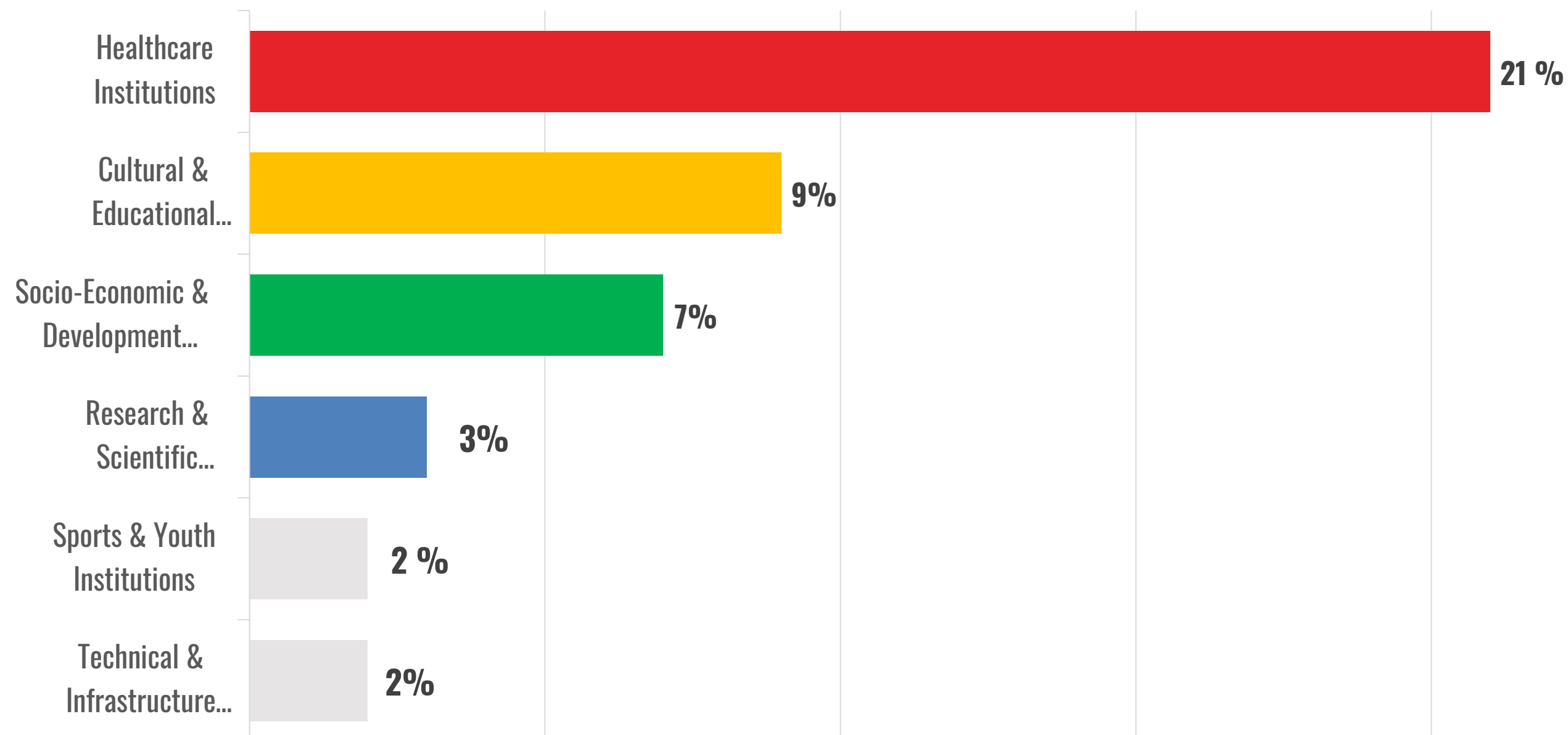


# Sectoral Analysis



■ Cultural & Educational ■ Healthcare ■ Technical & Infrastructure ■ Water Establishments

# Research Scope



**Women Board Members in Lebanese Public Institutions  
(1950s-2024)**

# Geographic Disparities

- **Urban institutions** achieve **higher female representation** than rural ones
  - **65%** of all female board appointments in **Beirut** and **Mount Lebanon**

# Networks of Power & Patronage

**FAMILY-POLITICAL NETWORKS:** Primary pathways for women's access to board positions

- Immediate political family ties
- Extended political networks
- Marriage-based political connections

**POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATIONS:** Crucial pathway to appointments

**ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS:** Crucial pathway to appointments

# Appointment & Leadership Patterns

## TEMPORAL PATTERNS SHOW GENDER-BASED DISPARITIES:

- **Female renewal rate: 38%** vs. male rate **67%**
- **Women hold: 18%** of acting/interim positions  
(glass cliff: appointed during periods of crisis or downturn)

# Structural Barriers

## **TOKENISTIC REPRESENTATION**

- Majority of institutions maintain only a single female board member

## **DUAL BURDEN FOR WOMEN**

- Need for both exceptional professional qualifications AND strong political connections

## **GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK GAPS**

- Absence of formal diversity requirements
- Lack of transparent selection processes
- Limited accountability mechanisms

## **ABSENCE OF NETWORKING MECHANISMS**

- Isolation among female board members

# Reform Agenda

## **LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNANCE**

- Minimum 30% female representation requirement
- Transparent appointment processes with clear criteria
- Term limits to create regular opportunities

## **SELECTION PROCESS REFORMS**

- Standardized evaluation criteria
- Diverse candidate pools requirement
- Targeting areas with lowest representation (technical sectors and rural areas)

## **CULTURAL & SYSTEMIC CHANGES**

- Networks connecting qualified women with opportunities
- Partnerships with professional associations

## **MONITORING FRAMEWORK**

- Regular reporting mechanisms on board composition
- Public reporting on diversity achievements

# Recommendations for Upcoming Appointments

**This research provides a critical evidence base for immediate action with upcoming government appointment**

- **Implement gender targets:** Establish formal 30% quota through government decision or parliamentary legislation
- **Reform selection processes:** Institute transparent, merit-based appointment procedures with clear criteria and documentation
- **Diversify candidate pools:** Require gender-balanced shortlists and explicitly encourage women to apply in vacancy announcements
- **Expand outreach:** Launch targeted public awareness campaigns about board opportunities
- **Break sectoral barriers:** Prioritize female appointments in technical and infrastructure sectors to overcome stereotypical clustering
- **Advance women to leadership:** Set specific targets for chair and vice-chair positions, not just membership roles
- **Monitor and evaluate:** Establish tracking mechanisms to measure progress and ensure accountability

# Acknowledgements

The Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) is leading a project titled “Supporting Women on Board of Syndicates, Universities and Board of Organizations”, that aims to facilitate and increase female representation on the boards of organizations, syndicates, and universities, promoting gender equality and diversity in decision making positions. This research was carried out as part of the project.

The lead author is Me Lara Saade, Senior legal advisor and gender expert. Substantive and technical inputs were provided by Mrs. Corine Kiame, President of LLWB, Mrs. Abir Chebaro, Vice President of LLWB. Guidance and executive support were provided by Mrs. Rita Chemaly, executive director of LLWB.

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