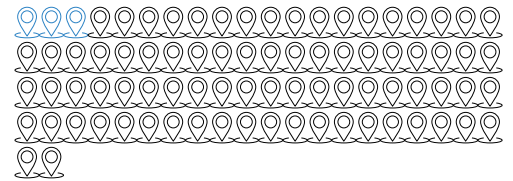


Keserwan

DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

SECTION 1: TENSIONS SUMMARY

Keserwan, a district of the governorate of Mount Lebanon, hosts a predominant Maronite Christian population along a smaller Shiite community. The district is characterized by a delicate interplay of sectarian and political influences, primarily between its diverse population. While historical disputes over land ownership have largely diminished, urban centers such as Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh are hotspots for tensions. Main tensions drivers are economic disparities and competition for resources, further compounded by the large presence of displaced Syrian population. Despite these challenges, Keserwan remains one of the districts with the lowest overall tensions levels in Lebanon, with most incidents being localized and not escalating into widespread conflict.



3 cadastres out of 82 are characterized as **high** or **moderate** tensions levels as of Q4 2024

The main tensions drivers in the district are:

- **Sectarian and Political drivers**, triggered by the presence of diverse political actors including political parties and political families.
- **Inter-Communal Conflicts** manifesting in incidents of violence and campaigns against the large presence of Syrians in urban areas in the district.
- **Socio-Economic Challenges** occasionally surface, despite being a relatively affluent district, particularly in the form of protests or demonstrations related to labor issues and deteriorating living conditions. These tensions are generally contained but reflect the district's complex social landscape.

SECTION 2: TENSIONS OVERVIEW

Keserwan is a predominantly Maronite Christian district, with significant influence from major Christian political parties as well as high influence of few political families. Other Christian denominations contribute an additional small faction of the population, while the remaining smallest faction consists primarily of Shiites, who are concentrated in towns like Maaysrah, Zeytoun, and Hssein. While overall tensions are relatively low compared to other districts, localized conflicts occasionally arise, particularly in urban centres like Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh, often driven by socio-economic and inter-communal factors.

The district is also home to the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerki, a significant religious and cultural hub for the Maronite community. Although there used to be some friction between the Christian and Shiite communities - especially regarding land ownership - this is less the case today and these tensions are generally muted and do not escalate into widespread conflict. As a result, the overall level of tensions in Keserwan remains low.


Urban centers like Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh tend to experience more pronounced tensions, but even in these areas, such issues are not daily occurrences. Localized conflicts are dispersed across the district, with occasional flare-ups in coastal regions. There, personal disputes often originate from tensions between traders and stallholders. Coastal areas often face tensions over public services, as the needs of the tourism industry—critical to these regions—are sometimes prioritized over those of the local population.

Despite being one of the districts with the lowest overall tension levels, Keserwan has experienced certain notable incidents that reflect underlying inter-sectarian and inter-communal dynamics.

Inter-sectarian tensions in Keserwan are primarily characterized by the coexistence of a predominantly Maronite Christian population alongside a smaller Shiite community. While the district has largely avoided violent sectarian clashes, there are underlying frictions driven by differences in political affiliations, particularly between some prominent political parties and actors active in the area. These tensions tend to manifest in subtle ways, such as during local elections or political events, but are generally kept in check by the strong influence of Christian political leaders and a shared interest in maintaining peace within the district.

Inter-communal tensions, particularly involving Syrians, have seen a noticeable increase. These incidents have sparked localized conflicts and prompted calls for stricter security measures, although they remain relatively contained compared to other districts. The district's urban centers, Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh, are hotspots for such tensions.

Socio-economic issues, although present, are relatively well managed within Keserwan. The district's population, which benefits from a relative degree of affluence and access to resources, experiences fewer economic pressures than other parts of Lebanon. As a result, socio-economic tensions, while occasionally surfacing in the form of protests or demonstrations, have not significantly disrupted the overall peace. This is especially the case since the national currency stabilized in 2023. Prior to that, and similarly the rest of the country, Keserwan witnessed many protests movements related to the degraded socio-economic situation.

Key Tensions Drivers	Analysis
 <p>Socio-economic Pressures</p>	<p>Although currently contained, the potential for socio-economic tensions to resurface remains, especially if the economic situation in Lebanon deteriorates further. Keserwan district has some poverty pockets mainly in Jounieh and Zouk Mikael with significant pressure on resources, mainly education, water, electricity, and limited job opportunities exacerbating communal tensions. Drug dealing, theft, robberies, and prostitution are also prevalent in certain neighborhoods such as Maameltein.</p>



A diversified political landscape leads to tensions

The presence of diverse political actors (political parties and families) lead to tensions among people sometimes materializing into personal disputes, especially during times of elections or politically charged events. During 2018 Parliamentary elections high tensions and accusation of fraud were reported between supporters of rival political parties in Keserwan sometimes leading to confrontations.



Inter-communal Conflicts

Tensions involving Syrians recently increased across the district in Keserwan, particularly in urban centers like Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh. Those tensions manifested through closure of businesses, localized violence, or broader social unrest. For example, in Q2 2024, several shops opened by Syrians were closed by security forces in the district and posters with anti-Syrian statements were hung on the coastal highway in Jounieh by a political party. Letters by the local community to regulate Syrian presence were also shared in the area. Inter-communal tensions exacerbate also around schools welcoming Syrians such as Al Ghadir School where protests erupted against hosting Syrian students.



Unrest and road blockages impact transportation of people and goods

Keserwan district is prone to road blockages, particularly in urban centers such as Jounieh and Zouk Mosbeh. These blockages, often due to protests, accidents, or severe weather conditions, can significantly disrupt transportation routes. Given that Keserwan serves as a critical transit point between the northern regions and the capital, Beirut, extended road closures could severely affect the movement of goods and people across Lebanon.

SECTION 3: TENSIONS HOTSPOTS

Jounieh

Jounieh is a historically significant coastal city with deep Maronite Christian roots, with its political landscape being dominated by Christian parties. Tensions in Jounieh often arise from economic disparities between affluent and marginalized areas, as well as the influx of displaced Syrians, and community insecurity, which adds to inter-communal friction. The city's vibrant nightlife and tourism industry sometimes lead to clashes over public order, while political rivalries further heighten tensions during elections or national events.

In total, 73 incidents have been recorded in Jounieh between January 2023 and July 2024, with the majority related to Safety and Security, including thefts and state-led operations to combat crime. Actual clashes have been relatively rare, with only a few armed confrontations and minor incidents involving displays of arms. Additionally, there have been incidents related to Economic and Labor issues, as well as inter-communal tensions. However, these tensions do not point to a specific underlying dynamic but rather reflect the complexities of a densely populated area where different social groups, including wealthy and poor citizens and refugees, coexist.

Zouk Mosbeh

Zouk Mosbeh is considered a poor suburban area of Jounieh and where some people live in informal settlements. Tensions in the locality primarily stem from competition over strained services and infrastructure, such as electricity and water, exacerbated by the influx of refugees. The area's strategic location on the highway linking Jounieh to Baalbek and Beirut to Jounieh also makes it a focal point for transportation-related disputes and protests. As a result, Zouk Mosbeh witnessed the most road blockages at the height of the economic crisis, totaling 28 between December 2020 and July 2024, which is ten more than Jounieh.

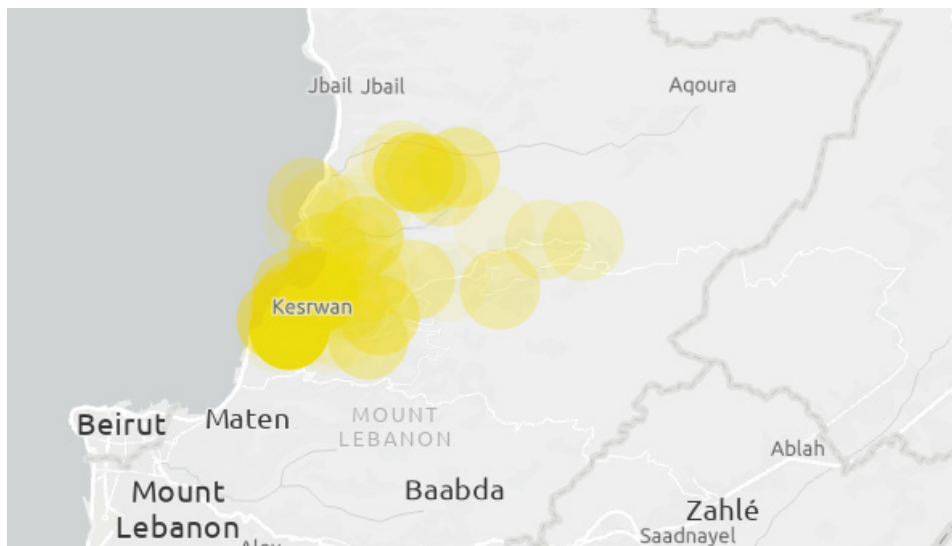


Figure 1: Heat map of reported safety and security incidents