



**Facts about Lebanese Emigration (1991-2000)  
by Information International  
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**First Part**

**I. Accuracy of Figures**

Lebanese emigration is a phenomenon that goes way back in history, taking its roots from the Phoenician times and growing through the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Its causes are familial, social, political and economical.

However, estimates about the figures, the age, the religious and regional characteristics of the emigrants differ. Are these emigrants more or less than a million? If they were added to those born abroad of Lebanese origin, would they exceed 10 million? Or could they be hundreds of thousands? What is their religious, regional and social backgrounds?

The emigration of the Lebanese can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, after the events of 1860 took place. Egypt was among the first destinations of the emigrants, followed by France, the United States, Australia and Brazil.

The two world wars, and most importantly, the 1975 civil war, have contributed to a rise in the number of emigrants.

Some sources have estimated the number of emigrants since 1975 up until 1990 to be about 900,000 persons (press estimates). Many of those travelers have returned but the undergone research did not determine their number.

The return of peace and stability in 1992 and the launch of the reconstruction process were not sufficient to put a hold on or minimize emigration, which had expanded to include new social and religious categories. In the absence of exact figures, the estimates varied and were used to serve political and/or confessional ends.

Nevertheless, there have been some concrete attempts at estimating the number of emigrants and determining their socio-economic characteristics.

Here are some of the most recent of those studies:

- Dr. Riyad Tabbara “Opinion About Population Matters in Lebanon أفكار عن القضايا السكانية في لبنان” which estimated that “100,000 emigrants have left the country on a yearly basis during the past years”.
- Dr. Boutros Labaky’s study which shed the light on the economic and social repercussions of the emigration of Lebanon’s university graduates and skilled force.

- Dr. Anis Abi Farah' study which estimated the number of Lebanese emigrants and people of Lebanese origin born abroad between 1990-2000 to be about 2,325,131. As for his estimation of the number of Lebanese emigrants for the year 1999 in particular, he gave out several numbers: 272,000 people, then 2,267 and then 13,071 to conclude that "we cannot rely on any estimate if we do not know how the calculus was done, because there are hidden elements in the statistics for departures and arrivals".

Information International was concerned with the fact that the inaccuracy of figures as well as the lack of official statistics may be misleading and detrimental. It therefore focused its study on emigration between 1991 and 2000 in order to bring out the true figures.

The firm has contacted embassies and governmental institutions concerned with emigration and reviewed their statistics; it has also conducted a survey on November 1 and 7, 2001 using a sample of 1087 Lebanese families composed of 5890 individuals.

## **II. Method 1: Number of Emigrants by Registered and Residing Citizens**

The estimated numbers of registered citizens at the end of the year 2000 is about 4,672,746 according to the following equation:

$$\text{Number of electors} \times 1.7 = \text{number of citizens} \quad (2,748,674 \times 1.7 = 4,672,746)$$

The number of resident citizens is estimated to be about 3,451,000 and, consequently, the total number of Lebanese living abroad to be 1,221,746. This number includes every holder of the Lebanese identity card, including those who left the country many years ago and those who work in the Arab and African countries. Therefore, the real figures for the period 1991 and 2000 are less than that and even less than the widely circulating figures (some estimates have concluded that one million Lebanese had left during the past 10 years).

## **III. Method 2: Number of Emigrants by the Number of Travelers**

Estimates about the number of emigrants vary according to the sources. The figures released by the General Directorate of General Security and published by the Central Administration for Statistics during the past eight years, show the following:

Table 1: Lebanese Travelers by Air, Sea and Land

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Balance</b>
1993	644032	692082	- 48050
1994	733394	790148	- 56754
1995	1011832	1118644	- 106812
1996	1284211	1471201	- 186990
1997	1352116	1504190	- 152074
1998	1477189	1650379	- 173190
1999	2238857	2515533	- 276676
2000	1941352	2141117	- 199765
<b>Total</b>	10,682983	11,883294	- 1200311

These figures do not appear to be realistic particularly due to the fact that there is a lack of precision in the registration of the departures and arrivals from and to Syria, which leads to an overestimation of the number of Syrians residing in Lebanon and of Lebanese residing in Syria. Therefore, it is more accurate to rely on the activity of Beirut International Airport.

Table 2: Departures and arrivals at Beirut International Airport

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Balance</b>
1992	527118 (only Lebanese)	565563 (only Lebanese)	- 38445
1993	644032 (only Lebanese)	692082 (only Lebanese)	- 48050
1994	765925	779365	- 13440
1995	802352	809988	- 7636
1996	818416	827063	- 8647
1997	963657	976617	- 12960
1998	1002117	993794	+ 8323
1999	1050001	1060655	- 10654
2000	1114058	1125442	- 11384
<b>Total</b>	7,687,676	7,830,569	- 142,893

*Source: General Directorate of Civil Aviation*

However, the activity of the airport does not limit itself to Lebanese travelers only, but also involves expatriates as well as Lebanese working abroad. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Labor, the number of registered foreign workers is 75,000 whereas the sources used by the Ministry estimate that their number is double i.e. 150,000. Therefore, we can conclude that the net balance of Lebanese who traveled abroad between 1991 and 2000 is about 292,893.

Furthermore, the activity of the airport does not include the direct emigration of Lebanese from countries other than Lebanon to their new homeland. Some Lebanese leave by air via Syria and Jordan for example... Thus, other sources and means must be taken into consideration to estimate the actual number of emigrants.

#### **IV. Method 3: Number of Emigrants According to Figures Released by Main Countries of Immigration**

The United States of America, Canada and Australia are the main destinations of Lebanese emigrants, followed by Europe (France, Germany, Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain). The percentage of the Lebanese that emigrates to Latin America and Asian nowadays is comparatively smaller and negligible.

##### **1. Lebanese Immigrants to the United States of America**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Total</b>
Permanent Immigrants	6009	5838	5465	4319	3884	4382	3568	3290	3300*	3386*	43441
Students	1175	892	800	990	778	855	855	1298	1443	1198*	10284
Visitors (Tourists and businessmen)	24766	24900	22913	20775	17350	18320	18320	21571	24534	21475*	214924
<b>Total</b>	<b>31950</b>	<b>31630</b>	<b>29178</b>	<b>26084</b>	<b>22012</b>	<b>23557</b>	<b>22743</b>	<b>26159</b>	<b>29277</b>	<b>26059*</b>	<b>268649</b>

*Source: U.S Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service*

*\* Estimated figures relating to the last three years.*

##### **2. Lebanese Immigrants to Canada**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Total</b>
Permanent Immigrants	12172	6619	4796	2717	2157	1892	1808	1457	1588	1617*	36823
Students	2600*	1417	1015	564	391	307	290	233	254	259*	7330
Visitors (Tourists and businessmen)	22888	22807	22909	21752	23621	25373	24915	28671	32811	28799*	254546
<b>Total</b>	<b>37660</b>	<b>30843</b>	<b>28720</b>	<b>25033</b>	<b>26169</b>	<b>27572</b>	<b>27013</b>	<b>30361</b>	<b>34653</b>	<b>30675*</b>	<b>298699</b>

*Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Statistics Canada*

*\* Estimated figures relating to the last three years.*

##### **3. Lebanese Immigrants to Australia**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Total</b>
Permanent Immigrants	2891	1617	1042	1064	1265	774	865	916	1210	1340	12984
Students	117*	117*	117*	117*	10	6	11	51	104	303	953
Visitors (Tourists and businessmen)	3679*	3679*	3679*	3679*	3553	3364	2888	3060	4017	4752	36350
<b>Total</b>	<b>6687</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>4838</b>	<b>4860</b>	<b>4828</b>	<b>4144</b>	<b>3764</b>	<b>4027</b>	<b>5331</b>	<b>6395</b>	<b>50287</b>

*Source: Department of Australian Immigration and Multicultural Affairs for the year 91-95 and the Australian Embassy for the years 95-2000.*

It is worthy of note that the figures concerning Australia do not include the Lebanese who may enter it as visitors or students from countries other than Lebanon.

*\* Estimated figures relating to the last three years.*

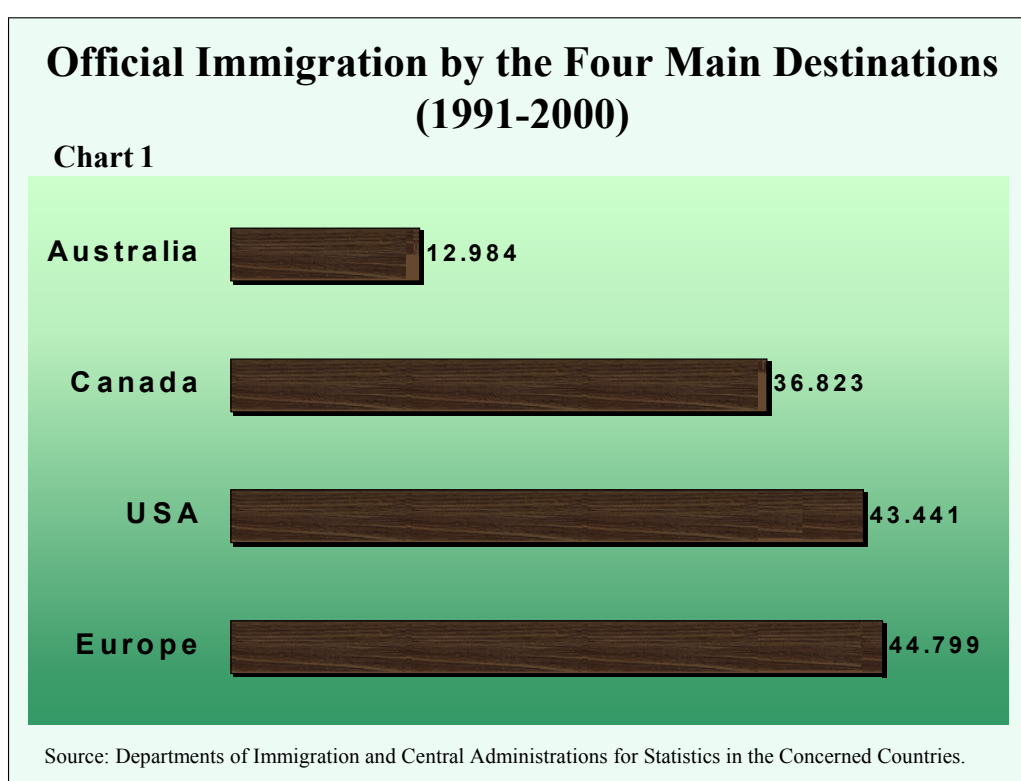
#### 4. Lebanese Immigrants to Europe

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Permanent Immigrants	12157	7161	5593	4047	3135	2009	2867	2435	2721	2674*	44799
Students	1750	1250	950	941	887	1178	1466	1634	1661	1587*	13304
Visitors (Tourists and businessmen)	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000*	300000
Total	43907	38411	36543	34988	34022	33187	34333	34069	34382	34261*	358103

Source: Departments of Immigration in the main countries (France, Germany, and Great Britain)

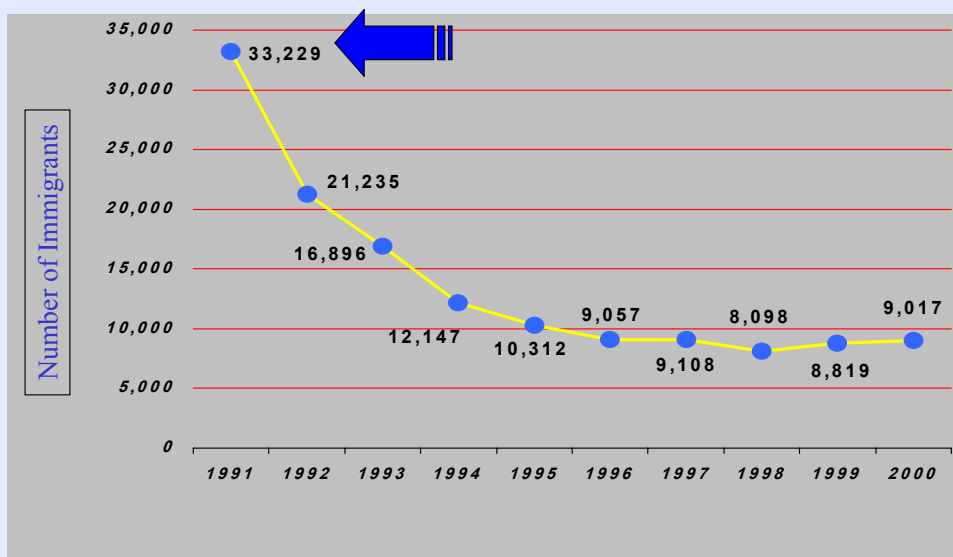
\* Estimated figures relating to the last three years.

Subsequently, the official aforementioned charts indicate that the number of Lebanese immigrants to the four mentioned destinations is 138,047 persons (Chart n° 1 and Chart n°2).



## Official Immigration (1991-2000) by the Four Main Destinations

Chart 2



Source: Departments of Immigration and Central Administrations for Statistics in the Concerned Countries.

### 5. Visitors and Students

According to the aforementioned charts, the aggregate number of visitors and students is 839,024 and is divided as follows:

- 263,209 Lebanese in Canada
- 313,304 Lebanese in Europe
- 225,208 Lebanese in the United States of America
- 37,303 Lebanese in Australia

The proportion of emigrants among students and visitors is difficult to determine due to the lack of exact figures. However, the releases obtained from the U.S. Immigration Department list the countries that have between 4,000 and 25,000 illegal immigrants for the period between 1991-2000. Since Lebanon was not mentioned in that list, this clearly means that the number of illegal Lebanese immigrants remains below that level.

According to European and American estimates, the percentage of visitors and students who extend their stay to become unofficial and quasi-permanent immigrants does not exceed 7% i.e. about 58,731. This increases the aggregate number of real emigrants to nearly 197,000 (excluding Latin American and Asian destinations which registered low numbers of recent immigrants).

## V. Lebanese Leaving for Work Purposes or Temporary Residence

Due to the precariousness of the economic situation in Lebanon before and since the end of the war, many Lebanese have left the country to live and work abroad, often unaccompanied by their families (mainly Gulf Cooperation Council Countries-GCC- and Africa).

These cannot be considered as emigrants for several reasons:

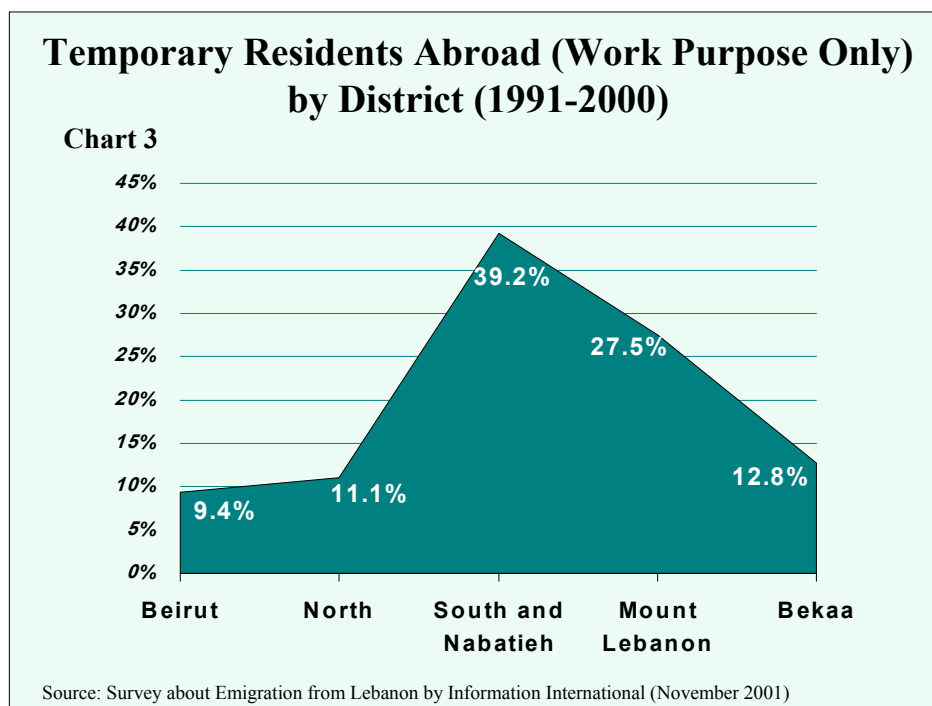
- The laws and regulations of the countries of destination, such as Arab and African countries, forbid naturalization of foreigners.
- These people keep close ties with their country of origin by constructing or purchasing houses to live in when they return.
- Some of them leave their families behind.

### 1. Number of Lebanese Who Leave for Work Purposes

The results of the sample survey have shown that the number of those who travel to work abroad had reached 100,000 during the past ten years. About 50,000 were married, and 33,3% of them were accompanied by their families (with an average of 4 persons per family). Their aggregate number averaged 150,000.

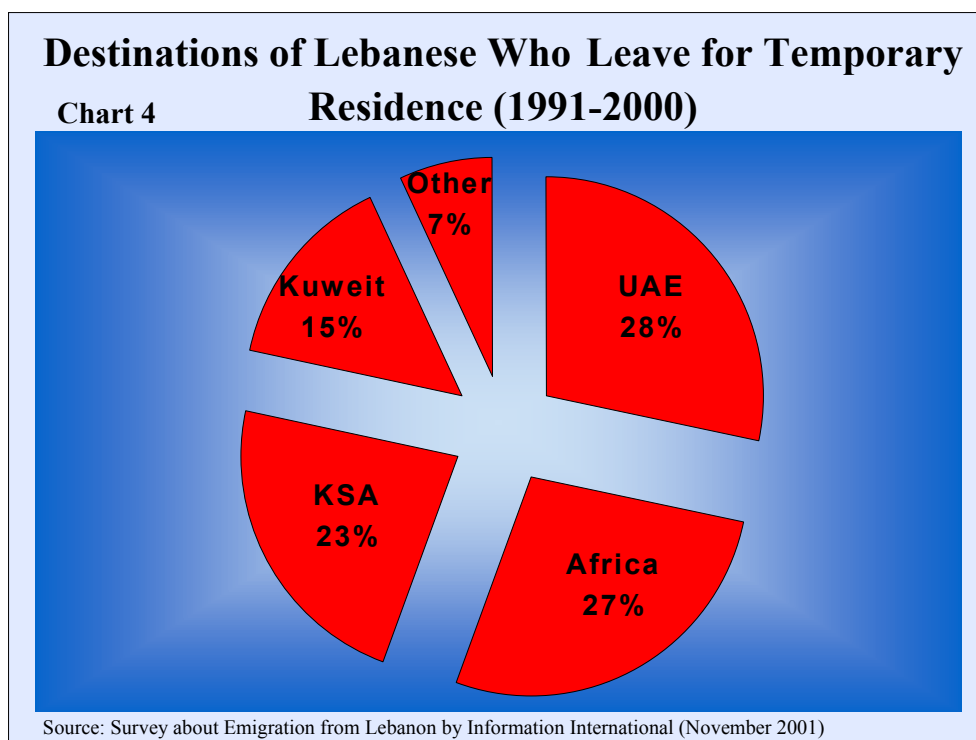
### 2. Number of Lebanese Who Leave for Work Purposes by District

South Lebanon (including Nabatieh) constitutes the largest source of those working abroad (39,2%), followed by Mount Lebanon (27,5%), the Bekaa Valley (12,8%), North Lebanon (11,1%) and Beirut (9,4%) (Chart n° 3).



### 3. Lebanese Who Leave for Work Purposes by Destination

The United Arab Emirates is the first destination chosen by 28% of the Lebanese who leave for temporary residence, followed by Africa (27%), Saudi Arabia (23%), Kuwait (15%), and other countries such as Europe, the Gulf and Latin America (7%) (Chart n° 4).



### **Conclusion**

In brief, it is obvious that the true figures for the Lebanese emigrants and expatriates are substantially lower than the widely circulated numbers.

Nevertheless, they still remain seriously high in proportion with the Lebanese population, and notably highlight the brain drain and the emigration of the youth (discussed in the second part).

It can therefore be concluded that:

- The aggregate number of official and “illegal emigrants” for the last ten years is about 200,000.
- The widely circulated number of 100,000 emigrants per year is inaccurate and highly exaggerated.

- In 1991, 1992 and 1993, the emigration rate was at its peak. It started decreasing progressively in 1994 and remained semi-constant between 1995 and 2000.
- The official emigration for the last ten years averaged 13,800 emigrants per year.
- The official and non-official emigration averaged about 20,000 emigrants per year.
- The above-mentioned number is not 100% accurate and may be misleading due to the lack of statistics from Latin America and Asia, and the approximate figures from Europe and the rough estimates of non-official emigrants, but it still remains closer to reality than the annual number of 100,000 emigrants.
- The emigration and the travel of nearly 350,000 Lebanese in 10 years must be seriously taken into consideration as far as the ageing factor as well as the brain drain issues are concerned. The importance of the remittances sent home by the Lebanese working abroad to sustain their families, as well as other advantages of emigration should however not be neglected.
- In order to provide more accurate figures, analysts should take into consideration the number of emigrants, no matter how low, who returned to Lebanon during the years covered by this survey.