

THE FRENCH CONNECTION



French is a common language in Lebanon. A law determines the cases in which the French language is to be used within government and is often used as a prestige language for business, diplomacy and education.

France and Lebanon share deep historical, cultural and political ties that date back centuries, anchored by religious protection, a post-war mandate, and ongoing Francophone influences

The use of the French language is a legacy of the time of the French Crusades and later France's mandate in the region from 1920-1943, including its League of Nations mandate over Lebanon following World War I; as of 2004, some 20% of the population used French on a daily basis.

French stopped being an official language in 1943 when it gained independence and American oil companies based themselves in Lebanon, leading to the rise of English as an influential language.

The independent Republic of Lebanon designates Arabic as the sole official language, while a special law regulates cases when French can be publicly used; 70% of Lebanese schools use French as a language of instruction whereas English is used as a secondary language in 30% of Lebanon's secondary schools; as well French appears alongside Arabic on road signs, banknotes, vehicle registration plates, and on public buildings,

The majority of Lebanese people speak Lebanese Arabic; almost 40% of Lebanese are considered francophone, and another 15% "partial francophone".

Today English is the language of business and communication, with French being an element of social distinction and chosen for its historical emotional value to many Christians.

However, the economic opportunities and size of the French-speaking world makes French a must-have in business, sciences and international relations.

