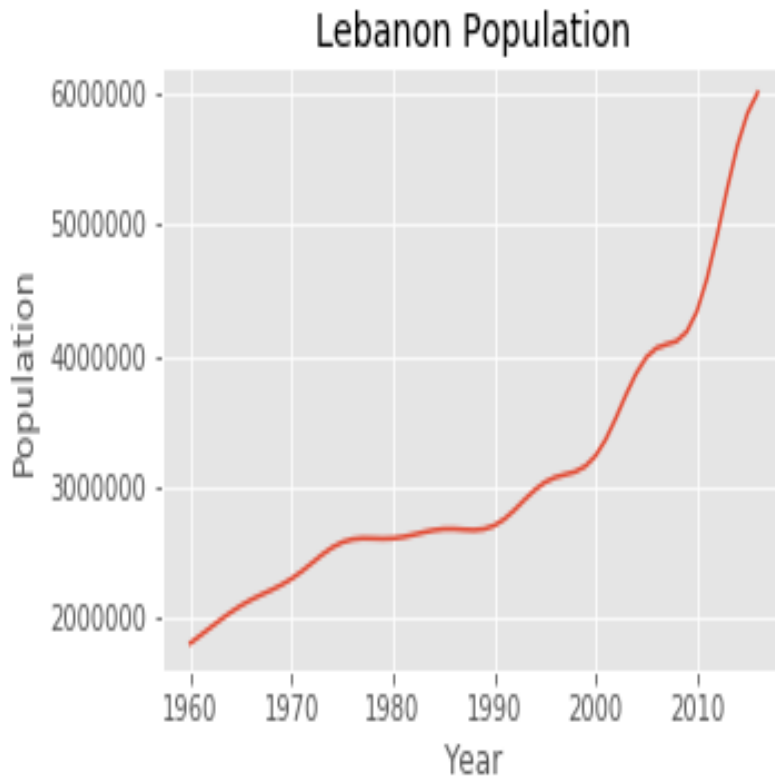


Lebanon



Coordinates: 33°50′N 35°50′E﻿ / ﻿33.833°N 35.833°E﻿ / 33.833; 35.833Lebanon

(listen); Arabic: لُبْنَان Lubnān; Lebanese pronunciation: [lʊbˤnæˤn]; French: Liban), officially known as the Lebanese Republic^[nb 2] (Arabic: جُمْهُورِيَّةُ لُبْنَان al-Jumhūrīyah al-Lubnānīyah; Lebanese pronunciation: [elʤumhuˤrɪjje l.ʊbˤnæˤnɪjje]; French: République libanaise), is a sovereign state in Western Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, while Cyprus is west across the Mediterranean Sea. Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland facilitated its rich history and shaped a cultural identity of religious and ethnic diversity. At just 10,452 km² (4,036 sq. mi.), it is the smallest recognized country on the entire mainland Asian continent.^[nb 3]The earliest evidence of civilization in Lebanon dates back more than seven thousand years, predating recorded history. Lebanon was the home of the Canaanites/Phoenicians and their kingdoms, a maritime culture that flourished for over a thousand years (c. 1550–539 BC). In 64 BC, the region came under the rule of the Roman Empire, and eventually became one of the Empire's leading centers of Christianity. In the Mount Lebanon range a monastic tradition known as the Maronite Church was established. As the Arab Muslims conquered the region, the Maronites held onto their religion and identity. However, a new religious group, the Druze, established themselves in Mount Lebanon as well, generating a religious divide that has lasted for centuries. During the Crusades, the Maronites re-established contact with the Roman Catholic Church and asserted their communion with Rome. The ties they established with the Latins have influenced the region into the modern era.