

IDENTITY MARKERS AND OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES OF THE LEBANESE DIASPORA ACROSS THE AMERICAS

MARCADORES DE IDENTIDAD Y PERFILES

OCUPACIONALES DE LA DIÁSPORA LIBANESA EN AMÉRICA

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Abstract

Understanding how cultural identity and inherited values shape career trajectories is a key issue in diaspora studies. This study focuses on the case of the Lebanese diaspora in the Americas, its identity markers, and its narratives of identity pride. For that purpose, an online survey was conducted in 2021 with 507 individuals of Lebanese descent living in the Americas, mainly in México, followed by Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, and other countries. Analysis of results shows predominant self-identification as Lebanese, as well as a very common dual pattern of pride combining their Lebanese heritage with the American country of birth or residence. Lebanese language proficiency is limited, and feelings of disconnection from their Lebanese local community is most common among those who do not understand the language. Regarding narratives of identity pride, the most frequent values highlighted are roots, culture, and family on one side, but also relational and prosocial values, which often could be associated with jobs chosen by the interviewees in professions related to business and commerce.

Keywords: Cultural heritage; Self-identification; Intergenerational transmission; Family ties; Transnational belonging; Occupational structure; Mexico; Argentina; Ecuador; USA.

Resumen

Comprender cómo la identidad cultural y los valores heredados configuran las trayectorias profesionales es una cuestión clave en los estudios sobre la diáspora. Este estudio se centra en el caso de la diáspora libanesa en América, sus marcadores de identidad y sus narrativas de orgullo identitario. Para ello, en 2021 se realizó una encuesta en línea a 507 personas de ascendencia libanesa que viven en América, principalmente en México, seguido de Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia y otros países. El análisis de los resultados muestra una autoidentificación predominante como libaneses, así como un patrón dual muy común de orgullo que combina su herencia libanesa con el país americano de nacimiento o residencia. El dominio del idioma libanés es limitado, y los sentimientos de desconexión con su comunidad local libanesa son más comunes entre aquellos que no entienden el idioma. En cuanto a las narrativas de orgullo identitario, los valores más frecuentes que se destacan son las raíces, la cultura y la familia, por un lado, pero también los valores relacionales y prosociales, que a menudo podrían asociarse con los trabajos elegidos por los entrevistados en profesiones relacionadas con los negocios y el comercio.

Palabras clave: Herencia cultural; Auto-identificación; Transmisión intergeneracional; Vínculos familiares; Pertenencia transnacional; Estructura ocupacional; México; Argentina; Ecuador; USA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is one of the most transformative social phenomena of the contemporary era, reshaping identities, labor markets, and cultural imaginaries. At the present time, marked by increasingly diverse host societies and fully intergenerational migratory trajectories, a central question for the social sciences is how belonging to one's place of origin is expressed in diasporic communities and what dimensions sustain its symbolic continuity, even when the link with the country of origin is indirect (for example, without language proficiency or experiences of return). Recent scholarship highlights the role of narratives and collective memory in sustaining diasporic belonging, particularly when direct ties to the country of origin weaken (Kianpour et al., 2025).

In this context, migration from Lebanon to the Americas stands out for its historical depth and the breadth of settlements in different countries, where belonging can be articulated through family practices, community networks, and identity repertoires. The specialized literature has emphasized the adaptability of these communities and their presence in economic and associative activities, especially around family and commercial networks (Klich & Lesser, 1996; Tabar, 2010).

Although there is relevant research on Arab diasporas, studies focusing on the Americas are scattered across countries, academic traditions, and languages, making it difficult to obtain comparable descriptive evidence on everyday markers of identity and cultural transmission. In a broader literature, situational dimensions of identification and their relationships with social contexts have been analyzed, while in the region, processes of integration and cultural accommodation have been documented (Bahajin, 2008), as well as historical-cultural readings on Syrian-Lebanese immigration in national contexts (Bérodot & Pozzo, 2012). In the case of Mexico, dynamics of identity persistence and social mobility in communities of Lebanese origin have been described (Ramírez Carrillo, 2018). Likewise, there are synthetic contributions that discuss historical particularities of Lebanese settlement in Latin America (Hamui-Halabe, 1994). Recent migration research also emphasizes the need for approaches that capture the contextual, relational, and non-essentialist nature of identity formation in migratory settings (Vlase, 2024). However, there is still a lack of comparable descriptive evidence that connects, in the same sample, everyday markers of belonging and cultural transmission with occupational profiles in diasporic communities of Lebanese origin in the Americas. In this sense, the problem addressed in this article is how these identity markers—including self-identification labels, religion, and language—are expressed and sustained, and how they are distributed in relation to occupation in a multinational sample. Recent evidence shows that cultural identity and language-related skills play a differentiated role across generations and professional contexts, without constituting a necessary condition for belonging (Popescu & Pudelko, 2024).

This study contributes to that debate through a descriptive approach focusing on people of Lebanese descent residing mainly in Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, and the United States. The work focuses on: (a) how belonging is declared and narrated, including the self-attribution of labels such as Arab, Lebanese, or Phoenician; (b) its distribution according to markers of self-identification and sociodemographic variables, such as religion, age, and occupation; and (c) the evaluative themes that emerge in an open-ended question about identity pride, analyzed through thematic coding. The article thus offers a concise and cautious characterization of patterns of

identification, family transmission, and occupational profiles in the sample analyzed, and provides an empirical basis for future comparative research.

Study objectives: (1) to describe identity markers and self-labeling; (2) to describe occupational profiles; and (3) to identify, through thematic coding, evaluative themes present in narratives of identity pride.

1.1 Cultural Memory and Symbolic Attachment to Lebanon

Migration from Lebanon to Latin America constitutes a particularly fruitful case for the study of transnationalism and diasporic identity due to its historical depth and the wide dispersion of settlements across host countries. From the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century, successive waves of migrants originating from the Levant—often recorded under broad labels such as “Syrians” or “Arabs”—settled in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and other countries in Central and South America (Klich & Lesser, 1996; Tabar, 2010).

These migrations were linked to contexts of political instability, economic hardship, and religious tensions during the Ottoman period and, later, under the French Mandate (Jozami, 1995; Khater, 2001). Over time, communities of Lebanese origin put down local roots and participated, to varying degrees, in the economic, political, and cultural life of their host societies, often supported by family and community networks.

Early literature has described frequent involvement in commercial and intermediary activities, which facilitated social integration processes without eliminating the continuity of family structures and community repertoires (Joseph, 2000). Later, the descendants of these migrants have been studied in relation to trajectories of social mobility, civic participation, and adaptation to diverse national contexts. In a broader literature on Arab diasporas, it has been shown that identification can be situational and activated in specific social contexts, allowing belonging to be understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed attribute (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007).

Although there are relevant contributions on Syrian-Lebanese immigration in Latin America, the available evidence remains heterogeneous and often difficult to compare across countries and research traditions. Processes of cultural accommodation and integration without the complete disappearance of identity references have been documented in the region (Bahajin, 2008), as well as historical transformations and community configurations in case studies such as Argentina (Bérodot & Pozzo, 2012) and Mexico (Ramírez Carrillo, 2018). Taken together, these studies suggest that diasporic belonging is not based solely on “classic” indicators—such as linguistic fluency, return migration, or formal affiliation with institutions in the country of origin—but also on less visible everyday mechanisms: intergenerational family narratives, religious practices, shared memories, and emotional ties. In this vein, symbolic attachment can persist even as linguistic or geographical ties weaken, reinforcing the need to attend to ordinary forms of transmission and recognition (Joseph, 2011; Nagel, 2009).

The literature on diaspora and transnationalism has suggested that diasporic identities are constructed through both remembrance and reinvention, mediated by family, community, and the sociopolitical environment of host societies (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2001). From this perspective, identity transmission operates not only through explicit cultural institutions, but also through informal practices, emotional attachments, and everyday routines, which can be conceptualized as cultural remittances or transnational habitus (Hannerz, 2010; Levitt, 2009). In the contemporary scenario, moreover, interest in roots, cultural memory, and belonging

has been reactivated in dialogue with the dynamics of globalization and transnational media circulation, which tend to reorder symbolic repertoires and forms of self-identification (Appadurai, 1999; Hannerz, 2010).

Finally, the Latin American case invites us to overcome rigid dichotomies such as “integration” versus “separation” and to consider simultaneous belongings, transnational practices, and stratified subjectivities (Faist, 2010; Schiller et al., 1992). In contexts where national imaginaries have often been constructed on the basis of mestizaje and pluralism, the Lebanese diaspora offers fertile ground for observing how national integration and ancestral memory are articulated, as well as the emergence of specific narratives of self-identification (Balloffet, 2019; Karam, 2013, 2021). Some of these narratives include references to historical genealogies—for example, the label “Phoenician”—which will be addressed in greater detail in the theoretical framework below.

1.2. Hybrid identity and the “Third Space”

Several theoretical frameworks have contributed to our understanding of how diasporic identities are constructed. One of the most influential is the concept of hybridity associated with Homi Bhabha and his notion of the “third space” (Bhabha, 2012): a liminal realm in which cultures and symbolic repertoires interact, clash, and negotiate, giving rise to forms of identification that are neither a simple “original” continuity nor complete assimilation. From this perspective, diasporic identity is understood as a relational and situated production, dependent on historical contexts, social positions, and scenarios of interaction (Hall, 2011; Kraidy, 2006). In this article, these notions were used as a framework for interpreting self-identification labels and narratives collected in the survey.

Applied to the Lebanese case, the “third space” can be described as a terrain where Arab, Lebanese, and Western references coexist, and where some people also mobilize historical labels such as “Phoenician.” These labels do not function as “essential” markers, but rather as narrative and symbolic resources whose meanings vary across contexts and generations. The literature on diaspora has emphasized that belonging is continuously redefined through interaction with the country of origin and with host societies, shaping boundaries of inclusion and distinction that are dynamic and often situational (Humphrey, 2004; Nagel, 2002).

In this context, references to Phoenician heritage have been analyzed in the literature as a discursive resource that appears in certain debates on identity in Lebanon and its diaspora. Some studies have shown that, in certain contexts, this reference can be used to highlight historical continuities or to emphasize differential features within a broader identity repertoire (Kaufman, 2004). At the same time, various studies have pointed out that these symbolic affiliations are the subject of debate and that their meaning depends on the historical moment and the social framework in which they are mobilized. Research on memory, heritage, and identity in contemporary Lebanon has observed how heritage policies and memories of conflict can activate selective readings of the past, with possible effects of marking boundaries between identity narratives (Lefort, 2024; Volk, 2008). In analytical terms, this suggests interpreting the appeal to ancient genealogies as a practice of identity construction, rather than as direct historical evidence, through which belonging and senses of continuity are negotiated.

At the same time, other approaches highlight that, in diasporic contexts, these references may operate less as a closed ideological program and more as a way

of sustaining pride, continuity, and intergenerational recognition, especially when the language, territory, or institutions of the country of origin lose their centrality in everyday life (Joseph, 2011; Karam, 2013). Overall, Lebanese identity in the diaspora can hardly be reduced to a single ethnic or religious framework: it is more productive to understand it as a stratified and changing construct, situated at the intersection of memory, migration, and adaptation, and expressed through categories of self-identification that take on different meanings depending on trajectories and social environments.

1.3 Values and relational repertoires in diasporic narratives

In diasporic contexts, economic and community interactions often take place in multicultural environments where relational repertoires that articulate trust, reputation, reciprocity, and networks are central. From this perspective, what matters is not only individual ability, but also the way in which social capital and shared normative frameworks facilitate coordination, the resolution of frictions, and the construction of long-term relationships (Putnam, 2000; Vertovec, 2004). Recent research on social networks highlights how relational structures facilitate coordination, trust, and resource mobilization across diverse contexts, emphasizing the centrality of trust and network embeddedness in enabling economic and social interactions (Han et al., 2024). This approach is especially relevant in migrant communities where family and community ties have historically functioned as infrastructures for support, integration, and mobility (Joseph, 1999; Jozami, 1995). Empirical evidence shows that bonding and bridging social capital among migrants determine access to resources, integration opportunities, and support structures, with variation across educational and socioeconomic backgrounds (Tuominen, 2023).

Regarding the Lebanese diaspora, literature has emphasized the importance of transnational networks and cultural mediation in economic and professional activity, as well as the role of community ties in generating trust and cooperation (Vertovec, 2004). Recent research has also pointed out how identity and relational resources can be activated in cross-border interactions and intercultural contact scenarios (Eid & Sallabank, 2021). In Latin America, where national imaginaries have been constructed in a pluralistic manner, these dynamics offer a useful framework for interpreting why, in certain narratives of belonging, evaluative themes—such as perseverance, empathy, equity, or adaptability—appear as part of repertoires of legitimation, pride, and social recognition.

In this article, these evaluative themes are examined as emerging discursive components in an open question about identity pride, using thematic coding. When historical labels such as “Phoenician” appear, they are interpreted in their narrative dimension: symbolic resources mobilized to give meaning and continuity to belonging. Taken together, this framework allows us to situate the findings on identity markers and occupational profiles within a literature that emphasizes the role of networks, relational resources, and belongings situated in the everyday reproduction of diasporic identity (Joseph, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Vertovec, 2004).

1.4. Research question, objectives, and structure of the article

This article poses the following research question: How are self-identification and narratives of belonging articulated by people of Lebanese descent in the Americas, how are their occupational profiles described, and what evaluative themes emerge most frequently in accounts of identity pride?

Based on this question, the study pursues three objectives:

1. To describe how identity is constructed and expressed among people of Lebanese descent, including self-identification labels (e.g., Arab, Lebanese, or Phoenician) and markers such as religion and language.
2. To characterize the distribution of occupational profiles and their descriptive pattern according to variables of identification and belonging.
3. To identify, through thematic coding of open-ended responses, emerging evaluative themes are present in narratives about identity pride.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the study design, sample, and coding and analysis procedure. Section 3 presents the descriptive results and findings derived from thematic coding. Finally, Section 4 discusses the results considering the literature and points out implications and future lines of research.

2. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

This section describes the study design, recruitment and sample construction, instrument characteristics, and analytical strategy used to examine, from a descriptive approach, identity markers, cultural transmission, and occupational profiles in a sample of people of Lebanese descent.

2.1 Design, recruitment, and sample

The data was collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms. According to the timestamp recorded in the exported database, responses were received between September 12 and October 2, 2021 (EST). The survey link was disseminated through institutional and associative networks connected to the Lebanese diaspora across the Americas. Distribution channels included the Embassies of Lebanon in Mexico, Chile, and Argentina, as well as several Honorary Consulates of Lebanon, notably in Guadalajara, Mérida, and Monterrey (Mexico); Guayaquil and Quito (Ecuador); and Córdoba and Buenos Aires (Argentina). The dissemination was further supported by diaspora organizations such as CAIIL (Centro Argentino de Investigación e Inmigración Libanesa, Rosario, Argentina), the Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario (founded in 1928), the World Lebanese Cultural Union, and youth organizations including JOMALI (Jóvenes Mexicanos de Ascendencia Libanesa) and JUCAL (Juventud de la Unión Cultural Argentino Libanesa). Additional outreach was facilitated by community associations such as the Club Libanés de Veracruz, the Club Libanés de Mérida, and MEXPALI (Monterrey), as well as through the Honorary Consulate of Lebanon in Vancouver (Canada) via its contacts across Latin America. Additional support was provided by prominent community associations in Mexico, including the Centro Libanés A.C. (Mexico City), the Centro Mexicano Libanés de Puebla, and the Club Libanés Potosino (San Luis Potosí), which assisted in circulating the questionnaire among their member networks. Finally, the questionnaire also circulated through personal and community networks associated with these entities, extending its reach beyond formal membership lists.

Given the lack of a comprehensive sampling framework for the Lebanese diaspora in the Americas and the practical limitations of implementing a probabilistic design on a regional scale, the study resorted to non-probabilistic convenience sampling, supplemented by dissemination through networks. This type of strategy is common in studies on migration and transnationalism when the objective is to explore identity, symbolic, or affective dimensions, and a high level of participant involvement is

required (Pisarevskaya et al., 2022; Renzaho et al., 2023). Consequently, the sample represents a subset closely related to the study's subject, making it easier to describe patterns within the analyzed group, although it limits the ability to statistically generalize to the diaspora as a whole.

In practical terms, this recruitment strategy may influence the composition of the participating group and, therefore, the interpretation of the descriptive results. Dissemination through institutional and community networks tends to attract people with a greater connection to the subject matter (e.g., greater interest in ancestry and participation in associative environments), which could overrepresent certain repertoires of identification and pride. Likewise, the relative weight of some countries in the sample may be conditioned by the intensity of dissemination in each national context, so that comparisons across countries should be interpreted as configurations within the sample rather than as population portraits. For this reason, the manuscript prioritizes visual patterns, transparent recoding, and a cautious interpretation, consistent with the exploratory scope of the design.

There were 508 responses. For analysis requiring the coded country of residence variable, the analytical sample was reduced to 507 observations due to one case that could not be unequivocally assigned to the recoded country categories and was treated as a missing value in the country cross-tabulations. Due to the nature of the recruitment, the results are interpreted as descriptive patterns within the sample and not as estimates representative of the entire diaspora population. Consequently, any interpretive emphasis on differences between countries remains descriptive and dependent on the composition observed in the sample.

In operational terms, this sample size allows for a reasonably stable description of the overall distributions of key variables in the sample. The main constraint arises when disaggregating by country and low-frequency categories; therefore, the manuscript uses transparent recoding, prioritizes comparative visualizations, and reports measures of association for descriptive purposes only.

For bivariate analyses requiring certain recoded variables (e.g., country of residence), the subsample with valid information on those variables was used; cases that could not be classified in any recoding were treated as missing values in the corresponding analyses.

2.2 Instrument and variables

The data collection tool consisted of an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms, aimed at people of Lebanese descent residing mainly in Latin American countries (and, to a lesser extent, in other countries). The questionnaire combined closed-ended questions—mostly categorical—with an open-ended question designed to capture the reasons and meanings associated with identity belonging.

In terms of content, the instrument was structured into five sections. First, it included basic sociodemographic variables (gender, age, current country of residence, and profession). Second, it incorporated items on ancestry and family ties (e.g., lineage and figures with whom respondents reported having the closest relationship, admiration, or empathy). Third, it collected indicators of identity and belonging, including pride in Lebanese ancestry and a comparison of pride in Lebanese heritage with that of the country of birth. Fourth, it included questions on culture, religion, and language (declared religion; relative importance of religion versus Lebanese culture; language use; and feelings of disconnection in community contexts when the language is not understood). Finally, an open-ended question—"Why are you proud of your Lebanese ancestry?"—was included to elicit symbolic and emotional responses.

For the analysis, we worked with the original variables from the questionnaire as well as with a set of recoded variables aimed at (i) standardizing response categories, (ii) facilitating comparative reading in tables and figures, and (iii) preserving the substantive content of the instrument. When necessary to improve readability and avoid excessive fragmentation, categories with very low frequencies were grouped under the label “Other.” Some variables collected in the questionnaire are not reported or exploited at the analytical stage due to a high proportion of missing values (NA), which limited their statistical reliability and interpretability. The recoding of the occupational variable into seven aggregate groups is documented in Appendix A, and the recoding of religious affiliation into seven collapsed categories is documented in Appendix B. The relationship between variables, the original wording of the items, their response options, and their use in the manuscript are summarized in Appendix C (Table C1).

2.3 Analytical strategy and coding of the open-ended question

The analysis was approached from a predominantly descriptive perspective, consistent with the exploratory nature of the study and the largely categorical nature of the variables. First, absolute and relative frequencies were calculated, and bar charts were created to characterize the distribution of the main sociodemographic, identity, and occupational variables. Second, contingency tables were constructed to describe relevant bivariate patterns (e.g., country of residence with religion, age, or occupation; and identity markers with religion or language). For reasons of space and clarity, only the most informative cross-tabulations and summaries of the most representative categories are presented in the body of the article. The complete tables corresponding to the cross-tabulations by country with collapsed religion and with collapsed occupational group are included for consultation in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively. This strategy is consistent with a descriptive use of the available sample size: it allows for the summarization of overall distributions but recommends grouping categories when cross-tabulating by country to avoid excessive fragmentation and low-frequency cells. As a reading supplement—and without any inferential pretensions given the sample design—measures of association strength for categorical variables (in particular, Pearson’s chi-square statistic and Cramer’s V) are reported, interpreted as descriptive magnitudes. To incorporate the symbolic and affective dimension of belonging, the open-ended question was analyzed using a content analysis procedure with thematic coding.

Following methodological guidelines for integrating qualitative evidence into systematic data processing and articulating it with descriptive analyses (Nichols & Edlund, 2023), the responses were read and classified into a set of analytical categories that capture recurring themes (e.g., family, roots, resilience, empathy, adaptation, prosocial values, or cultural references). These categories were operationalized as dichotomous variables (0/1), allowing us to describe the presence of each motif in the sample and, where appropriate, examine its descriptive distribution in relation to identification markers and occupational profiles, while maintaining a focus on identifying regularities within the study group. The coding was performed by one team member and reviewed by the co-authors to ensure consistency in the criteria.

Missing values may be due to three main sources: (i) response logic in conditional items, (ii) non-response, and (iii) specific cases that cannot be classified in certain recodings intended to standardize categories. The analysis was based on the recoded variables used in tables and figures, prioritizing substantive categories of

the instrument and minimizing information loss. Data processing and analysis were performed in SPSS using a database exported from Google Forms.

2.4 Ethical considerations and data availability

Participation in the survey was voluntary. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and did not include an explicit informed consent box; completion of the form was interpreted as acceptance to participate in a study for academic purposes. The form did not request direct identifiers (e.g., name, email, or postal address), and the working base consisted of sociodemographic and identity variables (e.g., gender, age, country of residence, religion, language, and markers of belonging), along with technical fields from the registry (e.g., identifier and timestamp generated by the platform) used solely for the purposes of controlling and managing the set of responses.

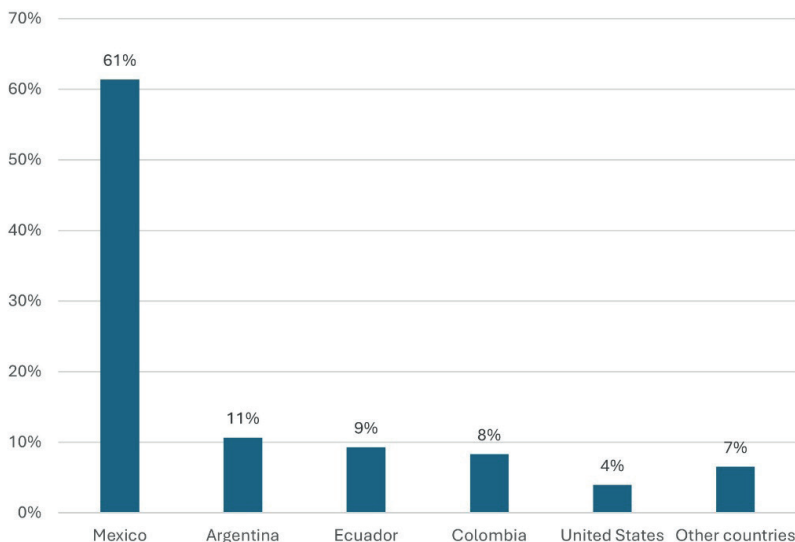
To minimize risks to participants, results are presented exclusively in aggregate form (tables and percentages), and information that could allow individual identification is avoided.

3. RESULTS

The results are interpreted descriptively, referring to the sample studied (see Section 2). In analyses that incorporate the recoded country of residence, the analytical N is 507, due to one case not classified in that recoding. The sample size may vary occasionally between analyses due to response/non-response logic and specific missing values for each variable; therefore, the corresponding valid N is indicated in each figure or table.

3.1 Sample profile and baseline variables

Figure 1. Respondents' country of residence (%)

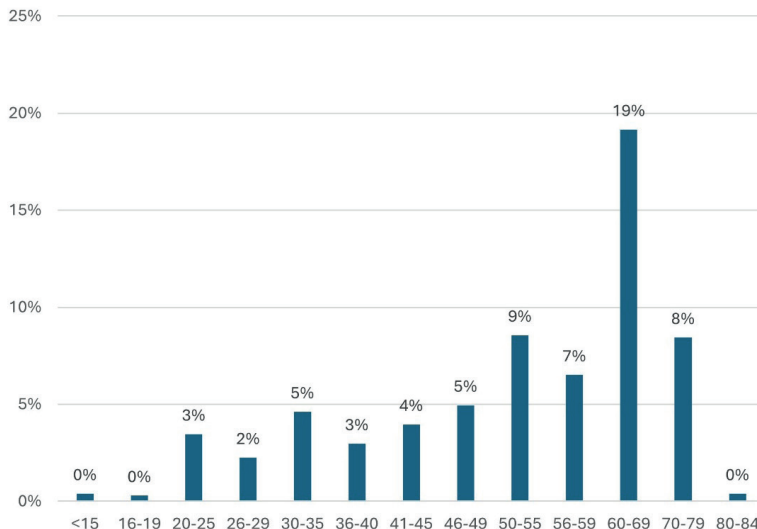


Source: Own elaboration

The analytical sample in Figure 1 consists mainly of people residing in Mexico (61.3%), followed by Argentina (10.7%), Ecuador (9.3%), and Colombia (8.3%). The United

States accounts for 3.9% of cases. The remaining percentage is distributed among other countries with a minority presence, which are grouped for ease of reading.

Figure 2. Age distribution (%)

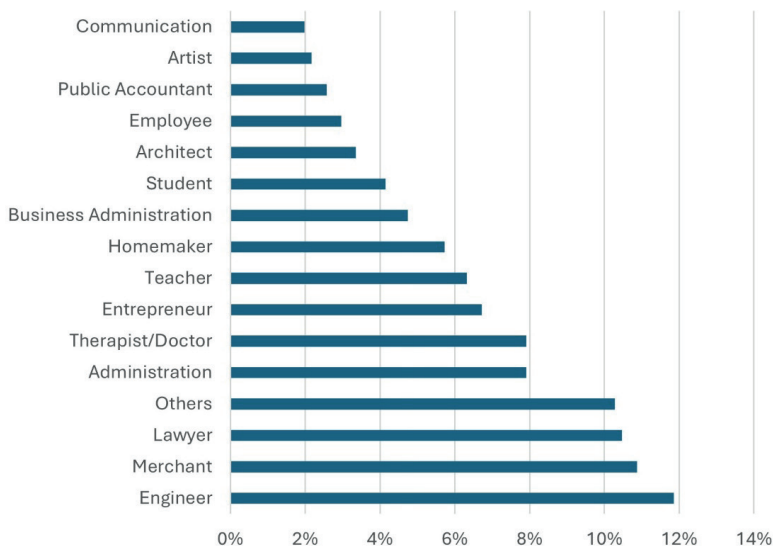


Source: Own elaboration

In terms of age, Figure 2 shows a distribution concentrated in the adult and older age groups. The average age is 51.24 years, and the modal range corresponds to 60–69 years ($n = 132$), suggesting a relatively high participation of older people in the survey. Some variables may have missing values due to filtering logic or non-response, so the N may vary slightly between analyses.

3.2. Occupational profiles

Figure 3. Occupational profiles sorted by frequency (%)



Source: Own elaboration

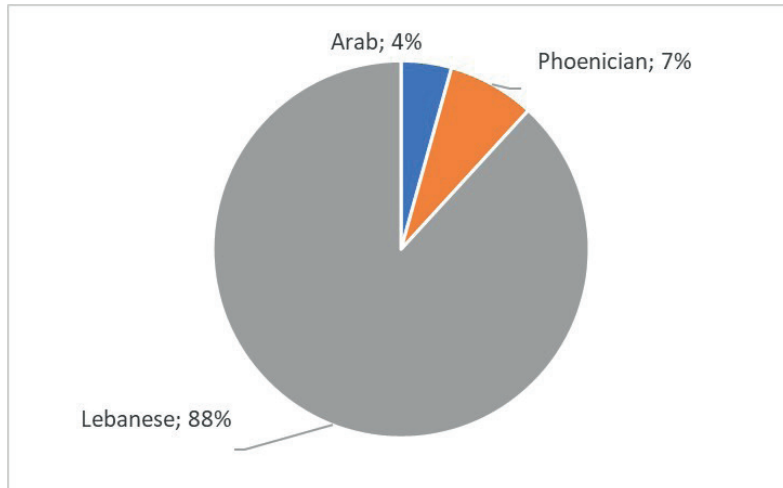
Figure 3 shows the distribution of participants' occupations. To improve readability, responses were recoded beforehand, standardizing names and grouping categories with individual frequencies of less than 2% under "Others." This threshold allowed the most represented occupations to remain visible and avoided excessive fragmentation of the graph by residual categories.

In descriptive terms, the figure reflects a greater presence of technical and commercial profiles, with Engineer, Merchant, and Lawyer as the most frequent categories. Next are occupations linked to organizational and institutional functions (e.g., Administration and Business Administration) and to the health and care fields (e.g., Therapist/Doctor). Entrepreneur, Teacher, Homemaker, and Student are in the middle range, while the rest of the less frequent occupations are included in "Others."

Taken together, this distribution provides an overview of the sample's occupational profile. It establishes a context for subsequent descriptive analyses, preserving the diversity of profiles without overloading the presentation with very minor categories.

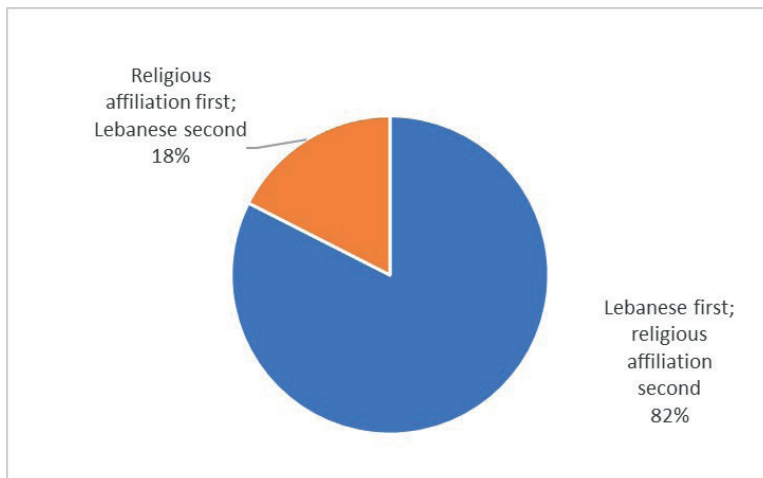
3.3 Self-identification and markers of belonging

Figure 4. Primary self-identification label (Arab, Phoenician, Lebanese).



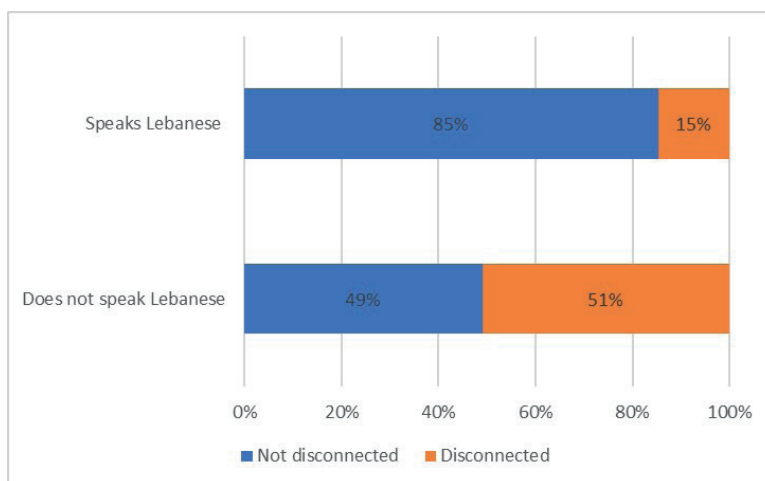
Source: Own elaboration

In the sample, Figure 4, the predominant self-identification was "Lebanese" (88%), followed by 'Phoenician' (7%) and "Arab" (4%) (Figure 4). This distribution summarizes the relative weight of the leading self-identification labels collected in the questionnaire. It serves as a starting point for describing how other dimensions of belonging (religion, language, and relative pride in origin) are ranked.

Figure 5. Identity ordering: Lebanese identity vs religious affiliation (which comes first?)

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the relationship between national identity and religious affiliation, Figure 5, the majority indicated that, if they lived in Lebanon, they would identify first as Lebanese and then by their religious affiliation (82%), compared to 18% who placed religious affiliation first (Figure 5). The result describes the order declared between the two dimensions in the sample analyzed, without implying any “objective” hierarchies outside this response context.

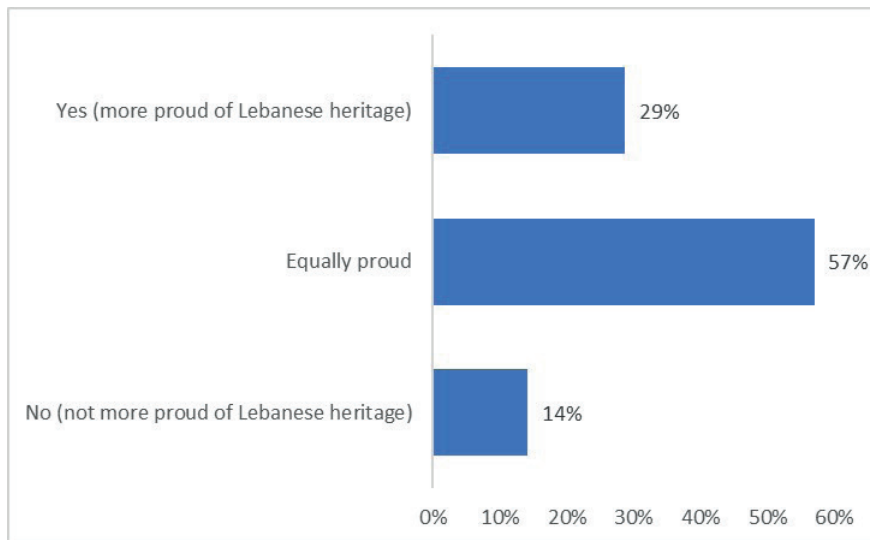
Figure 6. Speaks Lebanese and feels disconnected when not understanding the language (100% stacked).

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding language, Figure 6 shows that a minority (17%) spoke Lebanese Arabic, while the rest (83%) indicated they did not speak it. When this information is cross-referenced with the feeling of disconnection when others speak the language, and it is not understood, the disconnection is mainly concentrated among those who do

not speak the language. In contrast, among those who do speak it, the absence of disconnection predominates (Figure 6). This joint representation allows us to describe the pattern of co-occurrence between both indicators without resorting to causal interpretations.

Figure 7. Relative pride: Lebanese heritage vs country of birth (less, equal, more)

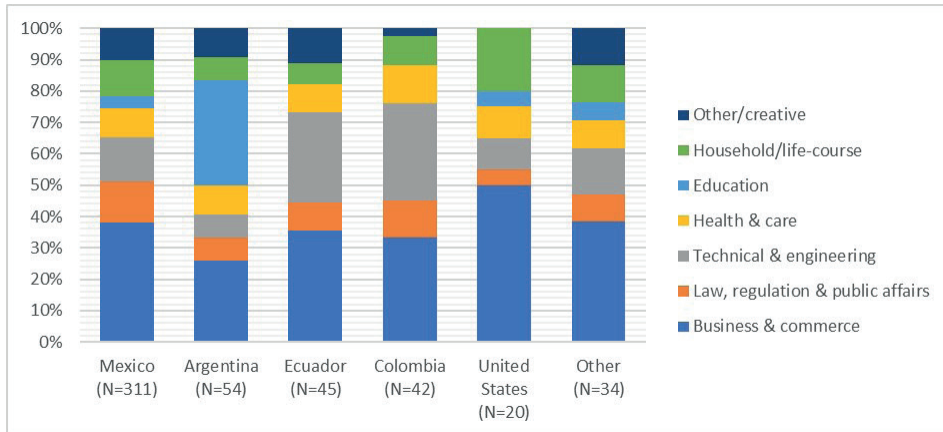


Source: Own elaboration

Finally, Figure 7 shows that when comparing pride in Lebanese ancestry with pride in country of birth, the most frequent category was “Equally proud” (57%), followed by “Yes (more proud of Lebanese heritage)” (29%) and “No (not more proud of Lebanese heritage)” (14%). This distribution describes the predominance of an identification compatible with dual pride, along with a segment that declares relatively greater pride in Lebanese heritage.

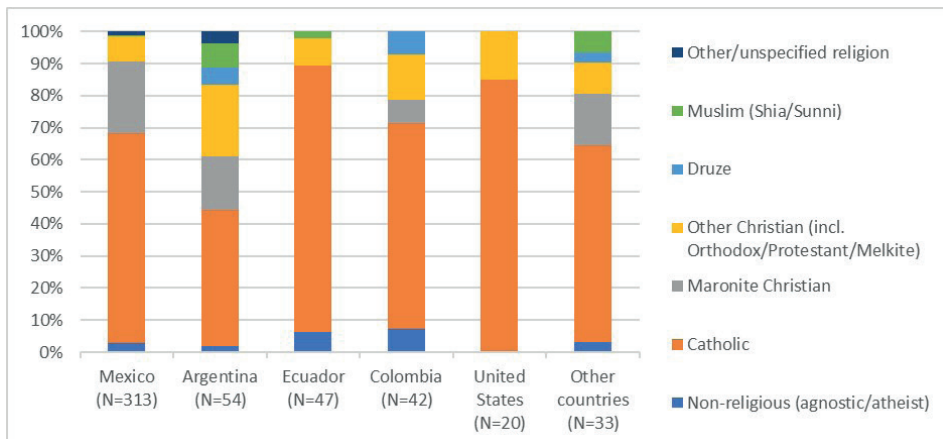
3.4 Key bivariate patterns

To answer the research question directly without overloading the reader with extensive tables, two bivariate cross-tabulations were selected between country of residence (recoded into six categories: Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, United States, and “Other countries”) and (i) grouped occupational profiles and (ii) collapsed religion. In the body of the article, these results are presented using two 100% stacked bar charts (Figures 8–9) and are accompanied by a summary table with descriptive measures of association (Table 1). The complete contingency tables (absolute frequencies by country) are included in Appendix D (country × collapsed religion) and Appendix E (country × collapsed occupational group). Documentation of the recoding used is presented in Appendix A (occupation) and Appendix B (religion). The valid N may vary between crosses due to specific missing values for each variable.

Figure 8. Country of residence × Professional group (100% stacked bar chart). (N valid = 506)

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 8 shows the distribution by occupational groups (valid N = 506), differences in composition by country are observed within the sample. Argentina has a high proportion in Education (18/54; 33.3%), compared to zero proportions in Colombia (0/42) and Ecuador (0/45). Colombia and Ecuador show a higher proportion in Technical & engineering (13/42; 31.0% and 13/45; 28.9%, respectively). In the United States, the proportion is higher in Business & commerce (10/20; 50.0%), together with Household / life-course (4/20; 20.0%). In Mexico—the country with the largest sample size—Business & commerce predominates (118/311; 37.9%), with additional proportions in Technical & engineering (44/311; 14.1%) and Law, regulation & public affairs (41/311; 13.2%), as well as smaller percentages in the other groups.

Figure 9. Country of residence × Religion (collapsed) (100% stacked bar chart). (N valid = 507)

Source: Own elaboration

In figure 9 the intersection between country and collapsed religion (valid N = 507; country recoded), Catholic is the majority category in the main countries in the sample, with high proportions in Ecuador (39/47; 83.0%) and the United States (17/20; 85.0%).

In Mexico, Catholic predominance (205/311; 65.9%) coexists with Maronite Christian (70/311; 22.5%). In Argentina, the distribution is more diversified (Catholic: 23/54; 42.6%), with a significant proportion of Other Christian (incl. Orthodox/Protestant/Melkite) (12/54; 22.2%) and Maronite Christian (9/54; 16.7%). The non-religious (agnostic/atheist) category has higher proportions in Colombia (3/42; 7.1%) and Ecuador (3/47; 6.4%). The Druze and Muslim (Shia/Sunni) categories appear with low counts, so their interpretation remains strictly descriptive.

Table 1. Summary of key bivariate associations (descriptive)

Bivariate association	N (valid)	χ^2 (df)	p-value	Cramer's V
Country of residence × Professional group	506	96.688 (30)	< .001	0.195
Country of residence × Religion (collapsed)	507	91.386 (30)	< .001	0.190
Note: Statistics are reported as descriptive association measures within the sample; in both cross-tabulations, some expected counts are < 5, so χ^2 results should be read with caution.				

Source: Own elaboration

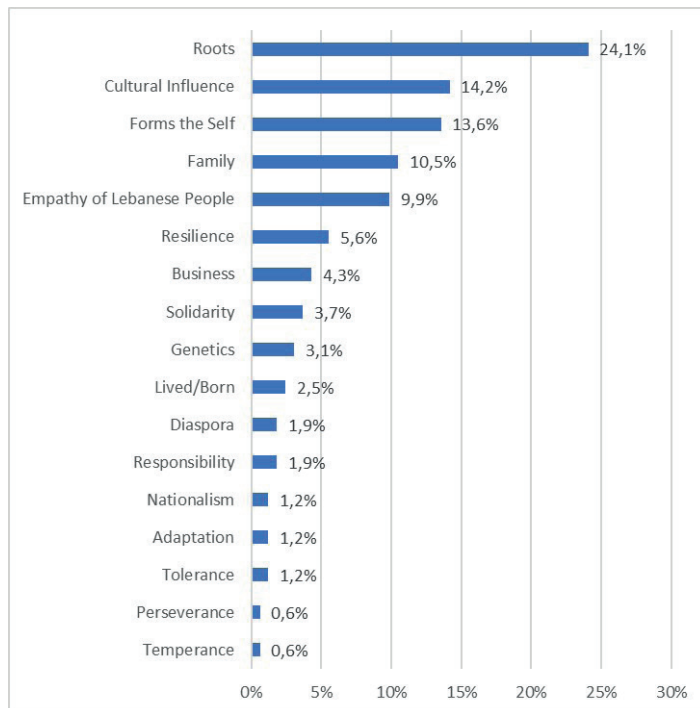
To complement the visual reading of Figures 8–9, the χ^2 independence contrast and Cramer's V are reported as measures of association for descriptive purposes within the sample, without any claim to population inference given the non-probabilistic nature of the recruitment. In both crosses, cells with low expected frequencies are also observed; therefore, the χ^2 contrast is presented as informative support, and the focus of the section remains on the distribution patterns shown in the figures.

In both crosses, the χ^2 test indicates a non-homogeneous distribution of categories across countries in the sample ($p < .001$). In descriptive terms, this reflects that (i) the composition by occupational groups and (ii) the composition by collapsed religion vary according to the recoded country of residence.

Cramer's V summarizes the overall strength of the association in each cross-tabulation (0.195 for country×occupation; 0.190 for country×collapsed religion). Values of $V \approx 0.19$ suggest a small to moderate overall association; the main interest is descriptive, focusing on the relative composition shown in the figures. Given the aggregation of categories and the presence of low expectations, these values are interpreted as consistent with systematic but not extreme differences, which align with the variations seen in Figures 8–9. Consequently, priority is given to a substantive reading of which categories have the greatest relative weight by country, complementing the numerical information (Agresti, 2013).

3.5 Open-ended question: thematic coding and evaluative themes in narratives of pride

To incorporate the symbolic and affective dimensions of belonging, the open-ended question "Why are you proud of your Lebanese ancestry?" ($N = 162$) was analyzed using thematic coding. The responses were classified into non-exclusive analytical categories and operationalized as dichotomous variables (0/1), allowing a single response to include more than one reason. The resulting coding scheme is summarized in Appendix F (Table F1). Figure 10 summarizes the relative frequencies of the identified themes among the total valid responses.

Figure 10. Open-ended question: thematic categories of pride (relative frequency).

Source: Own elaboration

Overall, the most common reasons are linked to roots and identity continuity. The category Roots is the most frequently mentioned (24.1%), followed by Cultural Influence (14.2%) and Forms the Self (13.6%), pointing to a narrative focused on family-cultural heritage and its role in shaping a sense of belonging. At a second level, Family (10.5%) appears, reinforcing the role of intergenerational transmission in supporting identity pride.

Alongside these motifs, references emerge that can be interpreted as evaluative themes mentioned by the participants—without attributing a causal structure to them—and which dialogue with normative frameworks associated with social interaction, cooperation, and coexistence, including relational repertoires relevant to coordination and the resolution of frictions in community and multicultural contexts. Empathy of Lebanese People (9.9%) and Resilience (5.6%) stand out as value-based attributes of the group, and, less frequently, Solidarity (3.7%), Tolerance (1.2%), Adaptation (1.2%), and Responsibility (1.9%) appear. These mentions suggest that part of the pride is articulated around prosocial dispositions (empathy/solidarity), coping skills (resilience/adaptation), and normative references (responsibility/tolerance), which in the context of the article are treated as value components expressed by the sample.

Finally, there are minority motifs that add heterogeneity to the discursive profile, such as Business (4.3%) and biographical references (Lived/Born, 2.5%) or identity references (Diaspora, 1.9%; Nationalism, 1.2%), as well as specific mentions such as Temperance and Perseverance (0.6% each). Given the exploratory nature of the study and the sample design, these frequencies are presented as a descriptive synthesis of patterns within the analyzed group.

Overall, the results described (i) the sociodemographic and occupational profile of the sample, (ii) the main markers of self-identification and belonging, and (iii) two key bivariate patterns between country of residence and occupational profiles/collapsed religion. Likewise, analyzing the open-ended question allowed us to synthesize the most frequent reasons for pride in Lebanese ancestry and the values mentioned in the responses (e.g., family, roots, empathy, resilience, and adaptation). These findings are presented as descriptive regularities within the group studied and serve as a basis for further discussion.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results presented are interpreted descriptively and refer exclusively to the sample analyzed (see Section 2), without any claim to population inference. In relation to the objectives of the study, the findings allow us to discuss (i) how different markers of identity and belonging are expressed—self-labeling, identity-religion order, language, and relative pride—(Figures 4–7), (ii) how occupational profiles are described and their variation by country of residence and collapsed religion (Figures 3 and 8–9; Table 1), and (iii) which evaluative themes appear most frequently in narratives associated with pride in Lebanese ancestry (Figure 10). In general terms, the pattern observed is consistent with approaches that conceive of diasporic identity as a situated, plural, and dynamic construct, rather than as a fixed or univocal essence (Joseph, 2011; Vertovec, 2004).

First, the high proportion of participants who state that they identify first as Lebanese and then by their religious affiliation (Figure 5) suggests, within the sample, a declarative organization of belonging in which national identity ranks ahead of religious affiliation in the order of self-identification. This pattern is consistent with work on identities in migratory contexts that emphasizes the contextual and relational nature of identification (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007). Convergently, the coexistence of pride in heritage of origin and pride in country of birth or residence—reflected in the distribution of relative pride (Figure 7)—is consistent with the idea of simultaneous belongings in transnational social fields (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Schiller et al., 1992). Given the non-probabilistic recruitment, these regularities should be read as patterns internal to the sample, without extrapolation to the entire Lebanese diaspora in the Americas.

Secondly, the results on language and feelings of disconnection when the language is not understood (Figure 6) show that, in the sample, self-identification and declared indicators of belonging are not always linked to linguistic skills: a small number declare they speak Lebanese Arabic, and disconnection is mainly concentrated among those who do not speak it. This pattern is consistent with contributions that emphasize the symbolic and affective dimension of cultural memory in identity construction, especially when language and territory lose their centrality in everyday life (Nagel, 2009). Along these lines, belonging can be sustained through ordinary practices (family, rituals, community networks) and intergenerational narratives, without assuming deterministic or universal mechanisms.

The place of the self-label “Phoenician” requires particularly careful reading. The literature has pointed out that references to ancient genealogies can operate as discursive resources of memory, heritage, and identity in certain contexts, with meanings that are debated and dependent on the social and historical framework in which they are mobilized (Kaufman, 2004; Lefort, 2024; Volk, 2008). In light of the

results—where this label appears less frequently than “Lebanese” as the predominant self-identification (Figure 4)—it is methodologically more consistent to discuss it on a narrative level: as a category that some people mobilize to give meaning to continuity and pride, without treating it as direct historical evidence or as an unambiguous ideological marker.

Third, the bivariate crosses between country of residence and (i) collapsed occupational group and (ii) collapsed religion (Figures 8–9) show associations within the sample, with overall intensities summarized by Cramer’s V of small–moderate magnitude (Table 1). Considering the presence of cells with low expected counts, the interpretive emphasis is based more solidly on the composition patterns shown in the figures than on the χ^2 contrast as inferential evidence. Consequently, these results are interpreted as descriptive indications of heterogeneity and differentiated national configurations in the distribution of occupational and religious categories within the sample, in line with the historical diversity of settlements and forms of insertion documented for Lebanese communities in different countries in the region (Klich & Lesser, 1996; Ramírez Carrillo, 2018; Tabar, 2010).

Fourth, analysis of the open-ended question reveals which sources of pride are most frequently mentioned in the narratives (Figure 10). In the sample, roots, continuity, and family stand out—with repeated references to intergenerational transmission—along with mentions of valuable attributes such as empathy/solidarity and resilience/adaptability. Interpretatively, these elements can be understood as value-laden themes and normative repertoires expressed in the narratives, and can be placed in dialogue with approaches that situate social capital (trust, reputation, reciprocity, and networks) as infrastructure for support and coordination in migrant communities (Putnam, 2000). It should be noted, however, that the frequency of mentions does not allow us to conclude that these themes “explain” specific occupational positions or constitute measurable competencies; rather, they describe symbolic resources through which participants give meaning to belonging and present it as a value-laden component of their identity.

From a methodological point of view, combining descriptive statistics with thematic coding of an open-ended question is useful for capturing affective and symbolic dimensions that are not derived from closed items. At the same time, the limitations of the study must remain explicit: non-probabilistic sampling and potential self-selection (especially due to recruitment through institutional and community networks), possible overrepresentation of profiles particularly interested in cultural heritage, and restrictions on interpreting contingency tables with infrequent categories. In interpretive terms, some regularities—such as the centrality of certain identity markers (Figures 4–7) or the frequency of certain motifs in the open-ended question (Figure 10)—may reflect, in part, a greater propensity to participate among people connected to networks and narratives of belonging. Similarly, comparisons by country should be read with the differential intensity of dissemination and the relative sizes of the subgroups in mind. These conditions justify the manuscript’s position as a descriptive and exploratory contribution, aimed at synthesizing patterns within the sample and delimiting questions for further research, rather than testing explanatory hypotheses.

Looking ahead, the material suggests lines of inquiry that could be addressed through cross-country comparative designs, more structured sampling strategies, and in-depth qualitative approaches to explore mechanisms of family transmission and generational variation. Likewise, multivariate analyses or explanatory models would only be relevant with additional data and a design consistent with such inferences.

In short, the study provides an orderly empirical basis for how markers of belonging are declared, how occupational profiles are distributed, and how reasons for identity pride are articulated in a sample of the Lebanese diaspora in Latin America, providing a starting point for more specific further research.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study described, with a strictly descriptive approach and referring to the sample analyzed, how identity markers were expressed in people of Lebanese descent residing mainly in the Americas, how occupational profiles were distributed in relation to country of residence and recoded religious affiliation, and what evaluative themes emerged most frequently in narratives of identity pride. The study contributes by synthesizing previously dispersed descriptive information through a comparable mapping of identity markers and occupational profiles, complemented by transparent thematic coding of pride narratives. Based on an online survey conducted in 2021, the results offered a synthetic portrait of everyday markers of belonging and meanings associated with cultural heritage, useful as an empirical basis for future comparisons between national contexts.

In relation to identity, the results showed a self-identification broadly aligned with Lebanese heritage and a declared organization of belonging that combined national and religious dimensions without presenting them as mutually exclusive. Identity pride was described in a manner consistent with simultaneous belonging to both family-cultural origins and the national environment of reference.

In terms of language, the results indicated that declared belonging was not based exclusively on linguistic competence, and that disconnection from the community use of the language was concentrated mainly among those who did not understand it. This pattern reinforced the idea that everyday identity markers integrated symbolic, affective, and community components beyond language proficiency.

Regarding occupational and religious profiles, the sample was diverse and heterogeneous. Descriptive cross-tabulations showed variation in occupational and religious distribution according to country of residence, interpreted as internal configurations within the sample rather than representative patterns.

Finally, analysis of the open-ended question identified recurring motifs of pride linked to roots, continuity, and family, along with mentions of relational and prosocial values, as well as coping and adaptation skills. Within the framework of the study, these elements were interpreted as value repertoires mobilized in the identity narrative, without attributing to them a direct explanatory role in occupational positions.

Overall, the article provided orderly descriptive evidence on markers of belonging, occupational profiles, and reasons for identity pride in a sample of the Lebanese diaspora in Latin America. This empirical map provided a basis for further research aimed at comparing national contexts and delving deeper into generational dynamics and family transmission mechanisms with more structured designs.

Author's Contributions

Habib Chamoun-Nicolas designed the survey, supported data collection through institutions and diaspora associations, and contributed to the research questions, literature review, and the discussion and conclusions. María Victoria Ramirez-Muñoz organized the literature review, contributed to the discussion and conclusions,

supervised the manuscript, and revised the final version; she is the corresponding author. Francisco Rabadán Pérez conducted the data analysis and software-related tasks, and contributed to the literature review, discussion, conclusions, and final manuscript preparation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

Data Availability Statement

For reasons of confidentiality and data protection, the individual database is not made publicly available. However, additional methodological information and, where relevant, aggregated tables, reproducible outputs, or anonymized extracts may be provided upon reasonable request to the authors.

Declaration on the use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the design of the research, data analysis, interpretation of results, or the formulation of scientific content. AI assistance was employed solely as a language aid during the English writing process to improve clarity and coherence. All intellectual and analytical contributions are entirely those of the authors.

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Appendix A

Recoding scheme for occupational profiles

This appendix explains the recoding of the original occupational variable (TProfesion) into seven combined groups used in the comparative analyses. The goal of this grouping is to make figures easier to read and to reduce low expected counts in bivariate cross-tabulations, while maintaining a descriptive interpretation within the sample.

The recoding was implemented as follows:

- Occupational categories related to business and commerce were grouped under a single analytical dimension. These categories include Merchant (Comerciante), Entrepreneur–Business Owner (Empresario), Business Administration–Company Administration (Administración de empresa), Administration (Administración), Public Accountant (Contador público), Finance (Finanzas), Actuary (Actuario), Advisor–Consultant (Asesor-consultor), and Consultant (Consultor). The original Spanish labels were retained to preserve the semantic consistency of the survey instrument, while their English equivalents are provided for clarity.
- Occupations related to law, regulation, and public affairs were grouped under a single category, including Lawyer (Abogado), Diplomat (Diplomático), and Police (Policía).
- Technical and engineering-related occupations comprise Engineer (Ingeniero), Architect (Arquitecto), Biologist (Biólogo), and Research (Investigación).
- The health and care category includes Therapist/Physician (Terapeuta–Médico) and Psychology (Psicología).
- Educational occupations encompass Teacher (Docente) and Philologist (Filólogo).
- Household and life-course statuses include Homemaker (Hogar), Student (Estudiante), and Retired (Jubilado).
- The Other / creative category includes Communication (Comunicación), Designer (Diseñador), Artist (Artista), Chef (Chef), Anthropologist (Antropólogo), Sailor (Marino), and Wage employment – non-specified (Cuenta ajena). The category Wage employment (non-specified) was deliberately assigned to this group to capture salaried occupations lacking sectoral specification and to avoid their substantive interpretation as entrepreneurial, managerial, or administrative activities.

Appendix B

Recoding scheme for religious affiliation

The original religious affiliation variable (R. What is your religion?) was recoded into seven aggregated categories for comparative analyses by country of residence.

The recoding was implemented as follows:

- Non-religious (agnostic/atheist): Agnóstico; Ateo.
- Catholic: Católica.
- Maronite Christian: Cristiano Maronita.
- Other Christian (including Orthodox, Protestant, and Melkite): Cristiano; Cristiano Católico Melkita; Cristiano de otras denominaciones; Cristiano Ortodoxo de Antioquia; Cristiano Protestante; Cristiano no practicante.
- Druze: Drusa.
- Muslim (Shia/Sunni): Musulmán Chiita; Musulmán Sunnita.
- Other/unspecified religion: Otra religión.

Appendix C

Survey items, response options, and analytic use

Table C1 summarizes the key survey items used in this article, their response options, and how they were coded/recoded for analysis. Details of the thematic coding scheme derived from the open-ended item (category list and frequencies) are provided in Appendix F (Table F1).

Table C1. Survey items, response options, coding/recoding, and manuscript use

Variable (Manuscript label)	Response options	Coding/recoding used in analyses	Shown in (Figure/Table)
Country of residence (raw)	Open-ended	Recoded to 6 categories: Mexico; Argentina; Ecuador; Colombia; United States; Other countries	Figure 1; Figures 8-9; Table 1
Age group	Categorical ranges	Reported as distribution; descriptive summaries	Figure 2
Occupation (raw)	Open-ended	Label harmonization; rare categories grouped for visualization	Figure 3
Professional group (collapsed)	—	Recoded to 7 groups (see Appendix A)	Figure 8; Table 1; Appendix E
Primary self-identification label	Libanes; Fenicio; Arabe	3-category variable (Lebanese / Phoenician / Arab)	Figure 4
Identity ordering (Lebanese vs religion)	Si; No	Reported as Religion-first vs Lebanese-first	Figure 5
Speaks Lebanese Arabic	Si; No	Binary	Figure 6
Disconnected when not understanding	Si; No	Binary; cross-tabbed with speaks Lebanese Arabic	Figure 6
Relative pride	Si; No; Igual	Recoded to More / Less / Equal	Figure 7
Religion (detailed)	Closed list + Otra religion	Original categories retained for traceability	Appendix B; Figure 9 (collapsed)
Religion (collapsed)	—	Recoded to 7 categories (see Appendix B)	Figure 9; Table 1; Appendix D
Open-ended pride reason (text)	Open-ended	Thematic coding; non-exclusive categories operationalized as 0/1 indicators	Figure 10

Source: Authors' online survey (Google Forms), administered in 2021.

Appendix D

Country of residence × Religious affiliation (collapsed)

Table D1. Cross-tabulation of country of residence and collapsed religious affiliation (absolute frequencies)

Category	Mexico	Argentina	Ecuador	Colom- bia	USA	Other coun- tries
Non-religious (agnostic/ atheist)	9	1	3	3	0	1
Catholic	205	23	39	27	17	19
Maronite Christian	70	9	0	3	0	5
Other Christian (incl. Orthodox /Protestant/Melkite)	24	12	4	6	3	3
Druze	0	3	0	3	0	1
Muslim (Shia/Sunni)	1	4	1	0	0	2
Other / unspecified religion	4	2	0	0	0	0
Total	313	54	47	42	20	31
<i>Note: Frequencies are reported for descriptive purposes within the sample. Column totals sum to N = 507 (country of residence recoded); one case was unclassified in the country recoding.</i>						

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix E

Country of residence × Occupational group (collapsed)

Table E1. Cross-tabulation of country of residence and aggregated occupational groups (absolute frequencies)

Occupational group	Mexico	Argentina	Ecuador	Colombia	USA	Other countries
Business & commerce	118	14	16	14	10	13
Law, regulation & public affairs	41	4	4	5	1	3
Technical & engineering	44	4	13	13	2	5
Health & care	29	5	4	5	2	3
Education	12	18	0	0	1	2
Household / life-course	35	4	3	4	4	4
Other / creative	32	5	5	1	0	4
Total	311	54	45	42	20	34
Note: Frequencies are reported for descriptive purposes within the sample.						

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix F

Thematic coding procedure and binary category construction (open-ended item)

This appendix explains how thematic categories were created from the open-ended responses to the question “Why do you feel proud of your Lebanese ancestry?” Responses were usually short—just one sentence. Coding was done through an iterative process: each time a theme appeared in a respondent’s answer, a corresponding binary indicator (0/1) was assigned for that respondent; when a new theme was identified, a new indicator column was added and applied consistently to subsequent responses. As a result, a single response could be assigned to multiple themes (non-mutually exclusive coding). The final list of categories and their observed frequencies (and relative frequencies over valid open-ended responses, N = 162) are presented in Table F1.

Table F1. Open-ended item: thematic categories (frequency and relative frequency; N = 162)

Characteristic	Frequency	Relative frequency
Temperance	1	0,6%
Perseverance	1	0,6%
Tolerance	2	1,2%
Adaptation	2	1,2%
Nationalism	2	1,2%
Responsibility	3	1,9%
Diaspora	3	1,9%
Lived/Born	4	2,5%
Genetics	5	3,1%
Solidarity	6	3,7%
Business	7	4,3%
Resilience	9	5,6%
Empathy of Lebanese People	16	9,9%
Family	17	10,5%
Forms the Self	22	13,6%
Cultural Influence	23	14,2%
Roots	39	24,1%
<i>Note: Categories are non-mutually exclusive; therefore, percentages refer to the share of valid open-ended responses mentioning each theme.</i>		

Source: Own elaboration.