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**IMMIGRANTS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES TO THE OECD:  
FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE**

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## **Introduction**

For a number of reasons, migration from Arab countries is particularly significant to the OECD and will probably remain so in the future. One of these reasons is the importance of Arab countries in past and current immigration to several OECD countries, especially in Europe. Another argument can be found in the diverging demographic prospects of the European and North African labour forces (Fargues, 2005). The magnitude of trade relationships with OECD countries is also meaningful to understand these movements (OECD, 1998, 2000), as well as the nature and the intensity of past and current bilateral relationships.

Over the last decades, the internationalisation of the highly skilled labour market (OECD, 2002), the diversification of international migration flows following the opening up of Eastern Europe and the economic development of Asian countries (*e.g.* China and India), the measures taken to step up border controls as a result of the international fight against terrorism, and the will of OECD countries to fight illegal migration and the recent adaptation of OECD labour migration policies, have tended to reshape the traditional international migration links.

For all these reasons, it is important to better understand the scope, the characteristics and the recent changes in migration from Arab countries to the OECD area. How many people born in Arab countries are currently living in which OECD countries? What are their main demographic characteristics? To what extent does highly skilled migration represent a significant share of these movements and of the origin countries' human capital? Do the recent immigrant trends differ from the stock picture? These questions structure the different parts of this paper which ends by discussing briefly some of the prospects for migration from Arab countries to the OECD.

To respond to these questions, we use the OECD database on immigrants and expatriates which was compiled by putting together census data on the stock of the foreign-born population in OECD countries (Dumont and Lemaitre, 2005a). This database includes detailed information on the foreign-born population for almost all member countries of the OECD as well as "emigration rates"<sup>si</sup> to OECD countries by level of qualification and country of origin for approximately 100 countries (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. Development of a database on immigrants and expatriates in OECD countries**

Most censuses in OECD member countries were conducted around the year 2000 and the results are currently available for all of them. Due to their comprehensive coverage, censuses are particularly well-adapted to identifying and studying small population groups. In several countries, however, there is no population census and it has been necessary to turn to population registers or large-sample surveys to obtain data on the foreign-born population. Census data were in fact used for 23 of the 29 participating countries and other sources for the remainder (see the Annex for more detailed information). The database currently includes data on the foreign-born in OECD countries by detailed place of birth, nationality and educational attainment (three levels).

The database covers 227 countries of origin and 29 receiving countries within the OECD area. Only 0.46% of the total population of all OECD countries did not report place of birth and 0.24% did not report a specific country for the place of birth (either a region was specified or no answer was given). The level of education was reported for more than 98% of the population of 15 years of age or older. Finally, complete information (*i.e.* detailed education and detailed place of birth) is available for 97.8% of the OECD population aged 15+. "Emigration rates" by level of qualification have been calculated for more than 100 countries.

Data adjustments have been necessary for only two situations. First, data for Japan and Korea were not available by country of birth. For these two countries, it has been assumed that the country of nationality is the country of birth. This seems a reasonable assumption for the foreign-born, given the very low rate and number of naturalisations in these two countries. However, it will tend to overestimate the number of foreign-born relative to other countries, because persons born in Japan or Korea to foreigners will tend also to be recorded as foreign and thus be classified as foreign-born.

The second situation concerns Germany, where the available source was the Microcensus, a large-scale household sample survey. This source identifies whether or not a person was born abroad, but not the country of birth. Equating country of birth and country of nationality for Germany would have attributed “Germany” as the country of birth to naturalised foreign-born persons, whose numbers are not negligible, and to the numerous “ethnic” German immigrants who obtained German nationality upon entry into Germany. Another data source (the German Socio-Economic Panel) was used to adjust the data for Germany where this was possible (see the Annex for more details).

## **Main findings**

- Migration from Arab countries is important for OECD countries. It is dominated by few countries of origin and destination. These movements are still largely influenced by historical and cultural bilateral ties.
- France plays a predominant role in receiving most of the immigrants from Arab countries, especially from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). A diversification of migration channels is, however, occurring progressively. For instance, southern European countries, namely Spain and Italy, are now the most important receiving countries for Moroccans emigrants.
- Some nationalities are highly concentrated in a limited number of receiving countries (*e.g.* Algerian, Libyan or Jordanian) while some others are widely dispersed (*e.g.* Lebanese).
- The characteristics of the emigrants vary significantly between countries of origin and destination. Migrants from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) tend, for instance, to be less skilled than Egyptians; emigrants from the Arabian Peninsula are younger and the naturalisation rate of Lebanese and Egyptians are higher. As a whole, migration from Arab countries is still mainly male-oriented.
- Compared to other developing or emerging countries, the highly skilled emigration from the Arab region to the OECD is not especially large, but . This however hides important differences by origin country.
- In France and Canada recent immigrants tend to be more skilled than older cohorts. This is not the case in the United-States, which still has one of the highest number of highly skilled immigrants from Arab countries.
- The labour market integration of immigrants from Arab countries shows a diverse picture, with highly skilled emigrants performing quite well (which may jeopardise their return) and the low skilled having much more difficulty, especially in the case of humanitarian migration. Specific impediments exist in some of the older receiving countries in Europe.
- Recent migration flows from Arab countries to the OECD confirm the increasing role of Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), and particularly Morocco. Canada tends to receive more and more immigrants from Arab countries as the United States increases its control on migration movements from the region.

## **A. Immigrants from Arab countries in the OECD countries: a census-based description**

### **A.1. How many people living in OECD countries are originating from Arab countries ?**

In total, 4.9 million person born in Arab countries<sup>ii</sup> were living in OECD countries in 2000 (see Table 1). This represents 11.8% of all foreign-born originating from non-OECD countries, a share that is more than double that of the Arab countries' population in the non-OECD world population (4.9% in 2000). The emigration rate for the whole region is not large (2%), and important differences are recorded between origin countries, with Lebanon and Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) having between 4.2% and 7.5% of their populations abroad. These figures should be compared to the percentages calculated, for instance, for Sub-Saharan African countries (0.54% on average), or for Asian non-Arab non-OECD countries (0.39% on average). Clearly, the Arab region remains an important source of migrants for OECD countries.

**Table 1. Total stocks and emigration rate of immigrants from Arab countries, by country of birth in OECD countries, circa 2000**

	Stock, Numbers	Emigration rate, %
Algeria	1 364 674	4.2
Bahrain	9 785	1.4
Egypt	337 405	0.5
Iraq	348 527	1.5
Jordan	72 296	1.4
Kuwait	46 264	2.0
Lebanon	353 657	7.5
Libya	69 190	1.3
Morocco	1 604 702	5.2
Oman	4 972	0.2
Palestinian territory	16 168	0.5
Qatar	4 850	0.8
Saudi Arabia	59 473	0.3
Syria	143 940	0.9
Tunisia	443 710	4.4
United Arab Emirates	24 030	0.8
Yemen	37 995	0.2
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>4 941 638</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Most immigrants from Arab countries originate from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), with these three countries counting for almost 70% (almost 3.5 million persons) of the total number of persons born in Arab countries and living in OECD countries. This percentage reaches 90% if we include Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon which also have relatively important communities of expatriates in OECD countries.

In terms of receiving countries, France ranks first, even if foreign-born with French nationality at birth are excluded (about 1 million persons including 670 000 repatriates from Algeria)<sup>iii</sup>. Almost 50% of immigrants from Arab countries living in the OECD are in France (see Table 2). The second largest receiving country is the United States, with four times fewer persons. Other OECD countries receiving a significant number of immigrants from Arab countries (more than 200 000) are, in decreasing order, Spain, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands and to a lesser extent (more than 100 000) the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden and Belgium.

As a share of their total foreign-born population, immigrants from Arab countries are important mostly for France (40%) and for Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium and Italy. For other OECD countries, including the United States, they represent a negligible share of the foreign-born population.

**Table 2. Stocks of immigrants from Arab countries by country of residence, OECD countries, circa 2000**

Numbers and as a percentage of total foreign-born population

	Numbers	% of total foreign-born	% of total of immigrants from Arab countries migrants
Australia	153 550	3.8	3.1
Austria	19 989	2.0	0.4
Belgium	149 526	13.6	3.0
Canada	245 150	4.3	5.0
Czech Republic	2 197	0.5	0.0
Denmark	41 820	11.6	0.8
Finland	6 442	4.9	0.1
France	2 376 455	40.5	48.1
Germany	43 250	0.5	0.9
Greece	51 877	4.6	1.0
Hungary	2 704	0.9	0.1
Ireland	4 874	1.2	0.1
Italy	310 942	13.9	6.3
Japan	1 645	0.1	0.0
Luxembourg	1 465	1.0	0.0
Mexico	2 077	0.4	0.0
Netherlands	220 150	13.6	4.5
New Zealand	8 901	1.3	0.2
Norway	23 983	7.2	0.5
Poland	3 036	0.4	0.1
Portugal	1 982	0.3	0.0
Slovak Republic	371	0.3	0.0
Spain	355 496	16.4	7.2
Sweden	122 339	11.4	2.5
Switzerland	37 212	2.4	0.8
Turkey	27 364	2.2	0.6
United Kingdom	152 246	3.1	3.1
United States	574 595	1.7	11.6

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1.00.html)

One of the most striking features of the migration from Arab countries to OECD countries is the predominance of a few origin and receiving countries, often linked by cultural and historical bilateral links. In this regard, the case of France is obvious. Algeria is the main country of origin for migration from Arab countries to France (see Table 3) and reciprocally more than 90% of Algerian expatriates are in France (see Table 4). But France is also the main receiving country for Tunisians and Moroccans. Migration from Morocco to Belgium or Switzerland; from Libya to Italy; from Egypt to Greece and the United Kingdom; from Oman to the United Kingdom; or from the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt to the United States are also the result of longstanding relationships.

The concentration of some nationalities in some OECD countries is more recent, and results either from the importance of humanitarian migration (*e.g.* Iraqis in Nordic countries) or of recent inflows, mainly driven by geographic proximity and economic opportunities (*e.g.* Moroccans in Italy or Spain).

One special case concerns migration from Lebanon, which is significant and widely dispersed. Lebanese communities are sizeable in virtually all OECD countries, including, for instance, Mexico, with a limited number, just above one thousand. The figures are particularly large in the main OECD settlement countries (Australia, Canada and the United States), which concentrate about 70% of Lebanese emigrants. About 35 000 people born in Lebanon are living in France, 20 000 in Sweden and more than 10 000 in the United Kingdom and Denmark. Migration from Morocco is also quite dispersed, this country of origin forming the biggest Arab community in a quarter of OECD countries. Moroccans are, however, still mainly located in Europe, despite increasing inflows to other OECD countries, notably Canada<sup>iv</sup>.

**Table 3. Main country of origin (among Arab countries) by country of residence, OECD countries, circa 2000**

Country of residence	Main country of origin (among Arab countries)	Numbers	% of the stocks of immigrants from Arab countries	% of total foreign-born
Australia	Lebanon	71 349	46.5	1.8
Austria	Egypt	9 168	45.9	0.9
Belgium	Morocco	116 854	78.1	10.6
Canada	Lebanon	68 875	28.1	1.2
Czech Republic	Syria	437	19.9	0.1
Denmark	Iraq	17 476	41.8	4.8
Finland	Iraq	3 209	49.8	2.4
France	Algeria	1 246 706	52.5	21.2
Greece	Egypt	32 687	63.0	2.9
Hungary	Syria	689	25.5	0.2
Ireland	Algeria	866	17.8	0.2
Italy	Morocco	155 807	50.1	7.0
Japan	Egypt	754	45.8	0.0
Luxembourg	Morocco	558	38.1	0.4
Mexico	Lebanon	1 143	55.0	0.2
Netherlands	Morocco	155 819	70.8	9.6
New Zealand	Iraq	4 848	54.5	0.7
Norway	Iraq	14 687	61.2	4.4
Poland	Syria	552	18.2	0.1
Portugal	Morocco	1 354	68.3	0.2
Slovak Republic	Syria	107	28.8	0.1
Spain	Morocco	313 739	88.3	14.4
Sweden	Iraq	67 645	55.3	6.3
Switzerland	Morocco	9 427	25.3	0.6
Turkey	Iraq	8 889	32.5	0.7
United Kingdom	Iraq	32 236	21.2	0.7
United States	Egypt	117 500	20.4	0.3

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html)

**Table 4. Main country of residence by Arab country of birth, circa 2000**

	Main country of residence	Numbers	% of total stock of each Arab migrant group
Algeria	France	1 246 706	91.4
Bahrain	United Kingdom	4 185	42.8
Egypt	United States	117 500	34.8
Iraq	United States	91 595	26.3
Jordan	United States	49 025	67.8
Kuwait	United States	21 535	46.5
Lebanon	United States	110 775	31.3
Libya	Italy	37 608	54.4
Morocco	France	709 521	44.2
Oman	United Kingdom	2 024	40.7
Palestinian territory	Canada	5 635	34.9
Qatar	United States	1 810	37.3
Saudi Arabia	United States	27 410	46.1
Syria	United States	55 910	38.8
Tunisia	France	340 752	76.8
United Arab Emirates	United States	7 440	31.0
Yemen	United States	20 460	53.8

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html)

## **A.2. What are the main demographic characteristics of immigrants from Arab countries?**

It would not be correct to consider migration from Arab countries to the OECD as homogenous. Indeed, because of very different history and dynamics, migrant populations significantly differ by countries of origin and to a lesser extent by countries of destination. This section looks at the demographic characteristics by origin country for migrants originating from 8 out of the 10 most important receiving countries (Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States). Altogether, these 8 countries account for about 85% of total stock of immigrants from Arab countries.

In terms of age structure, the emigrants from the Arabian Peninsula appear to be very young, three-quarters of them are less than 35 years old and 50% less than 25 years old (see Table 5). This is a result of the relative importance of the student category and of the predominance of short-term movements. On the contrary, immigration from Algeria and Egypt, but also from Libya and Tunisia, is much older, about 20% of these people are more than 65 years old, and between 30% and 40% of them are more than 55 years old. This results from the cumulated flows recorded over the past 50 years or so and from the fact that, as a consequence of the halt to labour migration in European countries after the



first oil crisis, most immigrants who arrived in the 1960s or 1970s decided not to return to their origin country. A settlement type of migration has resulted which can be identified in the age structure of stocks of migrant. This phenomenon is also clearly illustrated in Table 6, which represents the distribution of immigrants by duration of stay and country of origin.

The case of Morocco is slightly different, because emigration from this country has recently increased. Spain and Italy are now key destinations in Europe. Due to the age pyramid of the Moroccan population and to the specificity of the labour demand in these countries (mainly low-skilled jobs in construction, agriculture and services), the new Moroccans immigrants tend to be young. As a result, their general age structure is more balanced. The same may be true for Lebanese migration, which keeps maintaining itself at relatively high levels.

**Table 5. Distribution of migrants (15+) to selected OECD countries by age group, Arab countries of birth, circa 2000 (Percentages)**

	<b>15-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
Algeria	4.2	10.0	21.1	22.2	19.8	22.7
Bahrain	37.1	23.2	26.4	9.9	1.8	1.6
Egypt	6.6	15.7	23.1	23.0	14.0	17.6
Iraq	16.6	25.3	26.0	16.0	8.7	7.4
Jordan	12.6	27.7	31.8	16.4	6.4	5.0
Kuwait	35.5	38.6	22.1	2.7	0.8	0.4
Lebanon	11.0	24.4	27.7	17.2	10.2	9.5
Libya	4.3	11.1	23.4	20.5	23.1	17.6
Morocco	13.9	22.0	24.5	20.9	11.0	7.7
Oman	58.8	28.3	8.7	2.6	0.9	0.6
Palestinian territory	5.0	10.6	13.4	18.7	32.2	20.0
Qatar	46.1	28.6	21.6	1.9	0.5	1.3
Saudi Arabia	47.2	30.8	15.4	4.6	1.0	0.9
Syria	9.8	20.4	27.5	17.2	12.5	12.5
Tunisia	4.5	11.9	22.3	25.4	16.9	19.2
United Arab Emirates	80.5	15.1	2.5	1.0	0.4	0.4
Yemen	18.3	21.1	27.5	16.9	8.2	8.0
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>14.5</b>

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

**Table 6. Distribution of migrants (15+) to selected OECD countries by duration of stay, Arab country of birth, circa 2000 (Percentages)**

	≤1 year	>1 & ≤3 years	>3 & ≤5 years	>5 & ≤10 years	>10 & ≤20 years	>20 years	no answer
Algeria	1.1	1.8	1.8	4.9	7.1	61.5	21.8
Bahrain	11.9	16.6	11.9	14.9	20.1	19.0	5.6
Egypt	3.9	6.5	6.7	13.0	22.2	39.6	8.1
Iraq	5.7	14.7	12.9	25.6	20.8	18.8	1.5
Jordan	4.7	7.5	7.3	16.9	29.3	32.3	2.0
Kuwait	7.6	13.6	12.2	25.9	29.2	8.7	2.8
Lebanon	2.7	4.1	3.7	14.4	33.9	37.1	4.1
Libya	0.9	1.7	1.4	3.1	4.5	17.8	70.6
Morocco	3.4	7.2	5.8	11.4	19.9	39.4	12.8
Oman	20.0	13.8	13.8	24.3	18.1	4.7	5.3
Palestinian territory	4.8	7.6	5.4	15.0	25.2	37.2	4.8
Qatar	9.6	19.0	13.6	22.2	24.1	7.1	4.3
Saudi Arabia	16.1	15.5	11.5	15.8	22.7	11.5	6.9
Syria	3.2	6.4	5.7	16.6	34.5	29.6	4.0
Tunisia	1.4	2.3	1.9	5.0	12.8	53.4	23.3
United Arab Emirates	11.9	22.1	14.0	19.7	24.7	2.3	5.2
Yemen	6.1	11.0	10.8	21.3	20.2	28.1	2.6
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>15.5</b>

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy (poor response rate), France, Spain, Sweden, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

The feminisation of international migration flows, as well as of the discourse on migration, is gaining importance (Oso Casas and Garson, 2005). However, with the relative exceptions of Algeria and Libya, migration from Arab countries did not change enough in the last decades, to challenge the predominant role of male immigrant stocks (see Table 7). As a whole, only 45% of immigrants from Arab countries to the OECD are women, compared to almost 49% for worldwide migrants (United Nations, 2002). For a majority of countries, the share of women is even below 40%. This certainly reflects the persistence of a traditional migration pattern, despite the progress in the educational attainment of women, the increasing importance of family reunification, as well as the growing demand for foreign labour in domestic services and healthcare, which tends to be focused on women.

**Table 7. Distribution of immigrants (15+) to selected OECD countries by gender, Arab country of birth, circa 2000 (Percentages)**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Algeria	52.2	47.8
Bahrain	52.8	47.2
Egypt	57.7	42.3
Iraq	57.0	43.0
Jordan	61.3	38.7
Kuwait	58.9	41.1
Lebanon	55.0	45.0
Libya	52.2	47.8
Morocco	56.3	43.7
Oman	67.3	32.7
Palestinian territory	61.2	38.8
Qatar	60.4	39.6
Saudi Arabia	60.2	39.8
Syria	54.9	45.1
Tunisia	55.1	44.9
United Arab Emirates	61.8	38.2
Yemen	63.7	36.3
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>45.0</b>

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates and United Nation (2002)

Another demographic characteristic that might be worth considering relates to migrants' citizenship status (see Table 8). This is partly an indicator of the willingness (and of the opportunity) to settle in the receiving country, and of the seniority of migration movements. In the case of Libyans and Algerians, a significant share of nationals born in these countries did not become naturalised, but were "rapatriated". In these cases, the figure should not be interpreted as a naturalisation rate, which is actually significantly lower<sup>v</sup>. This being said, an important share of people originating from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and to a lesser extent Jordan, do obtain the citizenship of the receiving country. On the contrary,

Moroccan immigrants, partly because a lot of them are recent immigrants to southern European countries, or are living in European countries which make it relatively difficult to change nationality (*e.g.* France, Germany and Switzerland). On the other hand, about half of Kuwaitis and Bahrainis are nationals of their country of current residence (mainly the United States).

**Table 8. Distribution of immigrants (15+) to selected OECD countries by citizenship status, Arab country of birth, circa 2000**  
(Percentages)

	National	Foreigner
Algeria	65.0	35.0
Bahrain	47.9	52.1
Egypt	66.9	33.1
Iraq	55.3	44.7
Jordan	63.3	36.7
Kuwait	49.3	50.7
Lebanon	79.5	20.5
Libya	88.0	12.0
Morocco	37.9	62.1
Oman	30.4	69.6
Palestinian territory	77.2	22.8
Qatar	41.0	59.0
Saudi Arabia	42.8	57.2
Syria	67.8	32.2
Tunisia	61.0	39.0
United Arab Emirates	40.2	59.8
Yemen	55.8	44.2
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>57.2</b>	<b>42.8</b>

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

### A.3. Highly skilled migration from Arab countries to the OECD

In terms of skills, the most striking result is the relative importance of low-skilled immigrants from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) (see Table 9). For instance, about 63% of migrants from Morocco have less than secondary level of schooling and 23% no more than upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary level. The case of Algerians and Tunisians is broadly similar. This contrasts sharply with the migration from Egypt, where respectively 50% and 47% of migrants hold a tertiary degree. Migration from Lebanon and Syria is much more balanced and flows from the Arabian Peninsula tend to be focused on intermediate levels (which is consistent with a student migration pattern). In absolute value, the largest highly skilled groups are Moroccan and Algerian, with about 200 000 expatriates each.

For all origin countries, the share of the low-skilled is higher for migrant women. In 6 countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Syria), the percentage of women holding a tertiary degree is at least 10 percentage points lower than for men. By contrast, migrant women originating from Qatar and United Arab Emirates tend to be more skilled than men and there is no significant gender difference in the case of Morocco.

**Table 9. Distribution of migrants (15+) to OECD countries by Educational attainment, Arab country of birth, circa 2000**  
(Percentages)

	Less than upper secondary (ISCED 0/1/2)	Upper secondary and post- secondary non- tertiary (ISCED 3/4)	Tertiary (ISCED 5/6)	Emigration rate of the tertiary educated (%)	Total number of tertiary educated expatriates
Algeria	55.6	27.9	16.5	15.0	215 350
Bahrain	17.6	40.3	42.1	5.5	3 022
Egypt	19.5	30.8	49.7	3.6	147 835
Iraq	39.7	29.8	30.5	7.6	83 472
Jordan	20.8	37.5	41.6	4.6	26 639
Kuwait	18.4	36.8	44.8	6.4	16 636
Lebanon	34.9	30.9	34.2		110 690
Libya	44.9	30.8	24.3		15 541
Morocco	62.6	23.3	14.1	19.5	207 243
Oman	15.7	45.9	38.4		1 017
Palestinian territory	24.5	28.6	46.9		6 581
Qatar	17.9	37.5	44.6		1 468
Saudi Arabia	25.4	38.6	36.0		12 345
Syria	33.8	31.2	35.1	3.7	43 896
Tunisia	56.0	28.0	16.1	14.0	68 192
United Arab Emirates	23.6	51.4	25.0		3 496
Yemen	49.2	30.8	20.0		6 303
<b>Total (above countries)</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>21.6</b>		<b>969 726</b>

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html)

In total, about 0.97 million highly skilled people living in the OECD area were born in Arab countries. This represents 5.2% of the highly skilled foreign-born in OECD countries and 9.2% of those originating from non-OECD countries. As a result, migration from Arab countries to the OECD, as a whole, does not appear to be more or less selective in terms of skills than overall migration. The distribution by receiving countries is, however, not uniform. The United States receives 23% of highly skilled immigrants from Arab countries and France 40.2%. Canada has a selective migration policy and as a consequence receives 10.2% of the highly skilled emigrants from Arab countries (but 5.7% of total immigrants). Australia also has a selective migration policy but receives in proportion much less highly skilled from Arab countries (4% of the highly skilled, but 3.1% of total immigrants). As previously mentioned, migration to Spain and Italy is mainly low-skilled (respectively 3.6% and 2.6% of the highly skilled emigrants from the region).

In Canada, the share of the highly skilled among recent immigrants is somewhat higher than for older cohorts (about 53.8% for those who arrived in the last 5 years, as compared to 45.5% for those settled for 10 years or more), indicating a shift in recent immigration. The same is also observed for France (about 24.2% as compared to 17.6%). For Spain, this trend is reversed, illustrating the predominance of low-skilled migrants in recent flows, as well as a selective settlement. The same may be true for the United States, with about 40.8% of recent immigrants holding a tertiary degree, as compared to about 48.3% for those settled for more than 10 years.

As a percentage of tertiary degrees holders from the country of origin, highly skilled emigrants represent a much more important share for Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) than for other Arab countries listed here. About 19% of the highly skilled born in Morocco were living in one of the OECD countries circa 2000 (respectively, 15% and 14% for Algeria and Tunisia). Even if there is a certain degree of uncertainty in these figures (based on the revised version of the Barro and Lee database for the stock of human capital in the origin countries), they are significantly higher than for Egypt, which also has an important number of highly skilled expatriates. However, these emigration rates do not reach the levels recorded for the African or the Caribbean countries most exposed to the risk of brain drain (see Table 9) (Dumont and Lemaitre, 2005b). According to these estimates, the situation of most Arab countries would be comparable to that of the Philippines. Under these conditions, the gains associated with highly skilled migration, through remittances, technology transfers, return migration or trade, may offset in part the potential impact of human capital losses.

**Table 10. Emigration rates of the highly qualified to OECD countries, circa 2000  
(Highly qualified expatriates as a percentage of all native-born tertiary graduates)**

	Top 20		Bottom 20
Guyana	76.9	United States	0.4
Jamaica	72.6	Japan	1.2
Guinea-Bissau	70.3	Brazil	1.5
Haiti	68.0	Thailand	1.5
Trinidad and Tobago	66.1	Indonesia	1.5
Mozambique	52.3	Paraguay	1.8
Mauritius	50.1	Argentina	1.8
Barbados	47.1	Australia	2.4
Fiji	42.9	Spain	2.4
Gambia	42.3	Myanmar	2.5
Sierra Leone	32.4	China	2.6
Ghana	31.4	Peru	2.9
Kenya	27.8	Turkey	3.0
Cyprus	26.0	Canada	3.0
Hong Kong SAR	25.3	Bangladesh	3.0
Uganda	24.9	Nepal	3.2
Congo	24.6	Bolivia	3.2
Liberia	24.4	India	3.4
Ireland	22.6	Egypt	3.4
Sri Lanka	20.2	Venezuela	3.5

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33931\\_33865936\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,2340,en_2649_33931_33865936_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Student migration is an increasing phenomenon within the OECD area. Member countries compete to attract the best and the brightest, and most of them have adapted their legislation to facilitate status change and allow students to obtain a work permit after the completion of their studies. This is seen as a relevant means for selecting highly skilled workers, taking into account that foreign students have a national degree, have better language proficiency and already have networks and access to information in the receiving country. In total, 135 000 students in the OECD area originate from Arab countries<sup>vi</sup>. This represents about 7% of the total number of foreign students.

Moroccans account for 40% of all students from Arab countries in the OECD area, far ahead of the following largest groups, made up of Algerians and Tunisians. France is again the most important receiving country with about 50% of all foreign students from Arab countries. They account for 32% of all foreign students in France. Germany also receives many students from the Arab region (15 000), mainly from Morocco. This is slightly less than the United States (20 000). The latter country is the main receiving country for people originating from the Arabian Peninsula and probably is the country with the most diversified sources. Saudi Arabia makes up the biggest group, with about 4 200 students in the United States.

The distribution of foreign students in the OECD, should be considered taking into account the importance of French in several countries of the Arab region, notably in Maghreb countries (Algeria,



Morocco and Tunisia), the availability of grants for the international mobility of students, as well as the role of diasporas and family networks.

Table 11. Number of foreign students enrolled in tertiary education by country of origin and country of destination, 2003 (Head counts)

Countries of origin	AUS	AUT	BEL	CZE	DEN	FIN	FRA	DEU	GRC	HUN	IRL	ITA	JPN	KOR	NLD	NZL	NOR	POL	PRT	SVK	ESP	SWE	CHE	TUR	GBR	USA	Total
DZA	10	22	303	2	10	10	18432	342	2	3	5	73	14	..	18	..	5	10	6	5	107	25	255	4	383	177	20218
BHR	93	..	..	61	..	..	22	5	..	2	35	18	6	..	..	2	..	..	..	15	1	1	..	2	716	451	1422
EGY	129	133	49	7	21	15	837	1264	39	16	12	108	235	5	18	3	10	1	2	19	53	43	73	33	654	2155	5875
IRQ	59	22	30	6	164	38	209	421	16	2	14	24	2	1	211	2	116	4	3	3	41	294	48	182	79	127	2077
JOR	319	46	11	26	10	17	231	1002	65	20	21	156	25	..	6	5	7	38	..	11	55	30	17	172	850	2173	5261
KWT	140	..	..	58	..	1	71	8	2	3	218	4	12	..	2	..	..	2	..	118	25	..	2	7	171	2212	3031
LBN	280	14	145	50	11	6	4420	795	53	7	10	503	13	..	11	..	9	23	..	10	45	32	92	54	441	2364	9318
LBY	44	17	15	45	1	15	227	224	11	66	80	123	9	2	3	..	..	26	1	28	7	21	13	3	1052	33	2060
MAR	14	32	2658	10	45	61	34826	7616	14	..	3	518	52	1	1664	1	35	12	6	..	3468	17	403	7	139	2034	53631
OMN	302	..	..	1	..	..	13	10	..	2	19	..	9	..	2	4	..	..	..	4	..	1	2	6	1653	540	2567
PSE	..	41	23	24	..	..	127	..	72	12	3	47	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	3	..	9	277	..	287	929
QAT	30	..	..	2	..	..	11	8	..	..	24	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	2	..	..	293	441	817
SAU	189	10	2	28	1	1	93	39	4	4	17	9	64	12	..	41	..	..	..	26	8	10	2	15	1538	4175	6265
SYR	34	46	54	34	9	3	1936	1064	92	44	7	81	38	1	32	4	11	54	..	22	85	89	16	251	276	642	4908
TUN	7	35	161	4	7	9	9409	1662	4	1	2	157	35	..	13	..	5	11	..	..	32	7	259	7	53	381	12259
ARE	616	..	1	8	..	..	53	35	..	2	113	4	12	..	..	5	..	1	..	24	2	3	3	1	1250	1792	3906
YEM	8	3	..	21	..	..	52	168	4	3	2	20	7	1	1	..	2	11	..	10	..	..	1	5	160	375	854
<b>Total (000)</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>1976</b>
<b>Total Arab countries</b>	<b>2274</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>3452</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>70969</b>	<b>14663</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>1846</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>3937</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>1026</b>	<b>9708</b>	<b>20359</b>	<b>135398</b>
<b>Arab % of Total</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.9</b>

To benefit from these migration flows the challenges for the origin countries should not be underestimated. It requires, among others, maintaining the links with students and highly skilled communities abroad, to offer them attractive conditions and incentives to return. It also means preparing the national economies, through sound macroeconomic policies and good governance, to take advantage of the human or financial capital that the migrants will be willing to invest back home (OECD, 2005).

#### **A.4. Labour market outcomes of immigrants from Arab countries in OECD countries**

Because labour market integration of immigrants is generally considered as a determinant of long-term integration into the society as well as of the attractiveness of the receiving country, it is important to consider it briefly.

Labour market outcomes for highly skilled migrants originating from Arab countries in the OECD seem to be quite positive, notably in terms of access to employment. Indeed, employment rates of tertiary educated Lebanese and Egyptians are close to 78% and the corresponding figure for most other origin countries is close to 70%, except for the Arabian Peninsula. These figures are certainly higher than those observed in most of the origin countries but may be still lower than for the native-born of the receiving countries<sup>vii</sup>. Some determinants in relation to migration strategies and/or to the socio-economic background of the migrants may also contribute to explain part of these outcomes.

Integration is, however, more problematic for low-skilled immigrants, especially when humanitarian migration is important, as it is the case for Iraqis, and Palestinians. For low-skilled immigrants from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), the aggregated labour market outcomes may appear rather favourable, but this hides important discrepancies between receiving countries. In recent immigration countries such as Spain or Italy, labour market outcomes are positive and even higher than for similar groups of native-born (the participation rates for Moroccans in Spain reaches 74% for instance). In older receiving countries, notably in France and Belgium, the situation is not so favourable, especially if we control for the duration of stay. For instance, the participation rate of Moroccans in Belgium does not exceed 35% and is as low as 14% for women. But still this does not mean that these people have strong incentives for returning, because the labour market prospects in their origin country may not be significantly better, or may even be worse. Furthermore, even if these migrants have usually kept strong links with their origin country, their livelihood is now shared between two spaces and return as such is generally not in their plans, except maybe at retirement age, but very few seem to do so.

Table 12. Employment status (15-64) by education level of Arab countries of birth in selected OECD countries, circa 2000

Country of birth	Education level	Employment rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Participation rate (%)	Country of birth	Education	Employment rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Participation rate (%)
Algeria	Low	41.4	29.0	58.3	Oman	Low	23.9	8.8	26.1
	Medium	60.6	20.2	76.0		Medium	26.0	8.8	28.6
	High	74.6	11.5	84.3		High	45.2	6.1	48.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>68.8</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>36.3</b>
Bahrain	Low	56.4	6.3	60.2	Palestinian territory	Low	59.1	13.7	68.5
	Medium	56.1	10.1	62.4		Medium	69.7	11.8	79.0
	High	68.8	6.9	73.9		High	78.8	10.0	87.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>67.1</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>81.7</b>
Egypt	Low	55.3	12.6	63.2	Qatar	Low	39.5	14.1	45.9
	Medium	67.7	9.6	74.9		Medium	35.7	15.8	42.5
	High	77.8	6.3	83.0		High	59.7	6.7	63.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71.6</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>77.8</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>53.1</b>
Iraq	Low	35.5	20.5	44.6	Saudi Arabia	Low	29.2	19.4	36.2
	Medium	55.3	13.3	63.8		Medium	41.6	13.0	47.8
	High	62.9	12.2	71.6		High	51.7	8.0	56.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>59.9</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>49.1</b>
Jordan	Low	45.9	11.0	51.6	Syria	Low	47.4	13.9	55.0
	Medium	60.5	8.0	65.8		Medium	59.5	10.2	66.2
	High	71.9	6.0	76.5		High	72.6	8.0	78.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>67.9</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>68.1</b>
Kuwait	Low	35.8	17.7	43.5	Tunisia	Low	46.6	26.4	63.4
	Medium	46.7	11.7	52.9		Medium	60.5	18.9	74.5
	High	68.7	6.1	73.2		High	74.1	10.1	82.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>61.3</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>55.6</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>70.1</b>
Lebanon	Low	44.8	14.9	52.6	United Arab Emirates	Low	31.4	17.5	38.1
	Medium	63.0	10.8	70.6		Medium	35.3	17.2	42.7
	High	78.7	6.8	84.4		High	58.3	11.2	65.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>70.2</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>48.0</b>
Libya	Low	46.4	6.8	49.8	Yemen	Low	44.1	8.7	48.3
	Medium	67.2	5.5	71.1		Medium	62.5	10.5	69.9
	High	70.8	6.1	75.4		High	72.1	6.0	76.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>63.3</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>61.0</b>
Morocco	Low	49.2	23.8	64.6	Grand Total	Low	45.6	24.5	39.6
	Medium	59.4	20.2	74.4		Medium	60.1	17.3	27.4
	High	73.0	12.0	83.0		High	73.5	9.6	18.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55.2</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>69.7</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>31.1</b>

Note: OECD countries included are the following : Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.

Source: OECD database on foreign-born and expatriates.

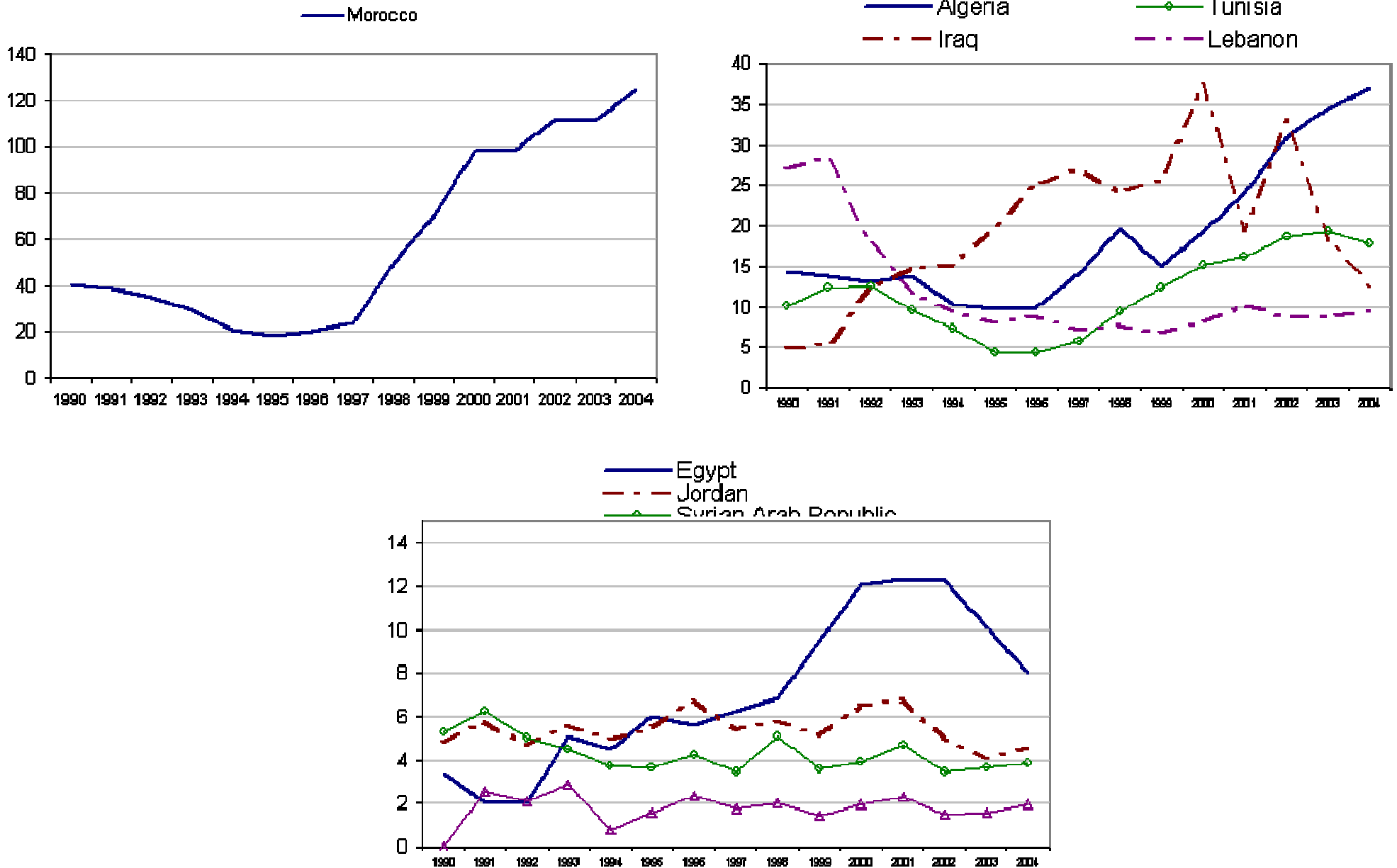
## ***B. Recent changes in migration from Arab countries to OECD countries: facts and prospects***

The picture which was drawn in the previous section was based on stock data. What can immigration flow data tell us about the recent changes with regard to migration from Arab countries? More specifically, what are the most notable changes over the last 10-15 years in terms of the migration channels towards the OECD, and what can we expect in the near future?

Graph 1 presents the inflow of migrants from Arab countries in major OECD countries since the early 1990s. These flows, which do not include asylum seekers, show a global increase in immigration from the region, mostly driven by Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). The Graphs depict notably:

- (i) The rapid and recent increase in migration from Morocco to the OECD countries. If these trends were to continue, Moroccans could make up one out of two immigrants from Arab countries in the OECD area in less than 5 years.
- (ii) The key role played by geopolitical determinants in migration movements from the region.
- (iii) The persistence of Lebanese emigration at a fairly high level (as a percentage of total population, in 2004 migration flows from Lebanon rank just after those originating from Morocco).
- (iv) The long-term stability, at relatively low levels, of migration from Jordan, Syria and Yemen over the last 15 years.
- (v) The fact that Egyptian emigration, although it has increased recently, is now rather limited and is less focused on the United States.

Graph 1. Inflows of immigrants from Arab countries in major OECD host countries, 1990-2004 (Thousands)



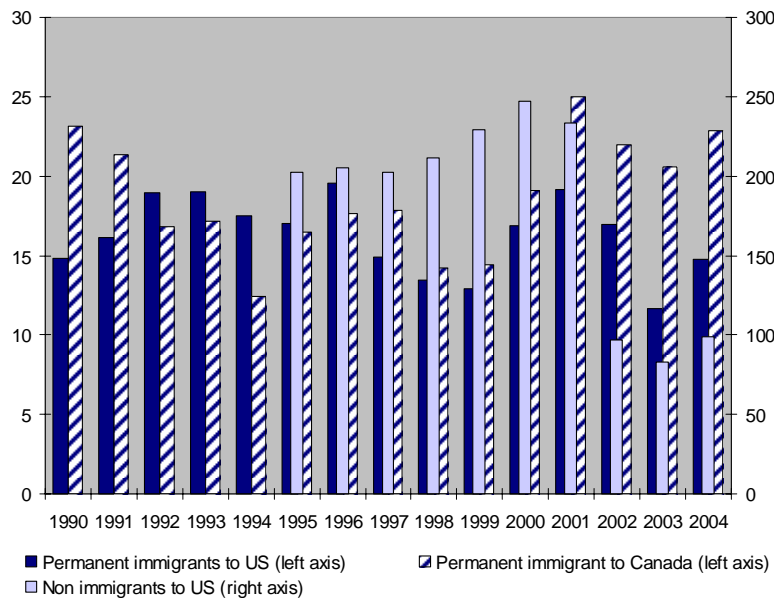
Source: OECD database on International Migration.

Note: Data for Italy and Spain are included only since 1998 and data for the United Kingdom are not included since 2002

Data from the 4 main receiving countries in Europe and North America (the United States, Canada, France and Spain) complement this picture (see Graphs 2 and 3). It appears that permanent migration from Arab countries to the United States had started to decrease, even before the 1990s. In relative terms, it has followed more or less the global trends and even the marked decrease observed in 2003 is not specific to the Arab region. In 2004, however, the permanent immigration to the United States did not recover the levels observed in the previous years and temporary migration has dropped significantly. Permanent migration to Canada also declined in the early 90s, but show quite a different pattern during at the end of the period. In 2004, more Arab immigrants went to Canada than to the United States. It could be the case that part of the permanent migrations flows have been diverted from the United States to Canada.

For France and Spain, the current trends are undoubtedly on the increase. The inflows of people from Arab countries to France was three times greater in 2004 than in 1995-96<sup>viii</sup>. Algerians still count for approximately 50% of the total and most of them enter through family related migration (about 90%). In parallel, student migration from the Arab region to France remains important, and recent policy changes provide for the possibility of stay and work following the completion of studies and aim at increasing the share of highly skilled immigrants. In Spain the recent flows are characterised by sustained increasing flows from Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and growing competition with immigration from Latin America. With prolonged stay of immigration in this country, the likelihood of permanent stay increases and the issue of labour market integration may become more important, as structural changes make it difficult for low-skilled workers to maintain themselves.

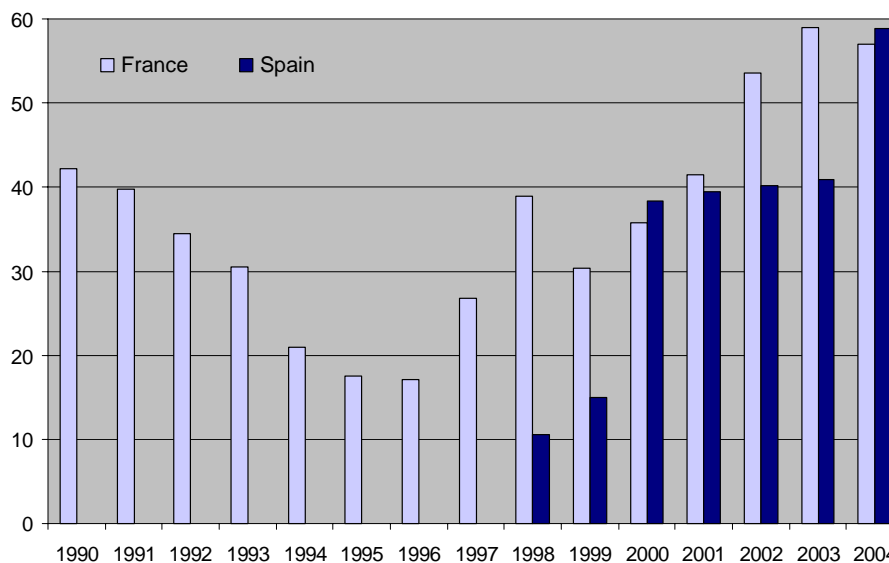
**Graph 2. US Permanent immigrant visa and non-immigrants visa and permanent immigration to Canada for people originating from Arab countries, 1990-2004 (Thousands)**



Note: US Nonimmigrant Visas Issued by Nationality (Including Border Crossing Cards)

Source: US Department of State, Report of the Visa Office 2004 and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and figures: immigration overview (various years)

**Graph 3. Immigration of Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians and Lebanese to France (1990-2004) and of Moroccans to Spain (1998-2004) (Thousands)**



Source: OECD database on International Migration.

But clearly when looking forward at the immigration trends from Arab countries to the OECD, it is important not only to consider the situation of the receiving countries but also that of the origin countries. In this context, what are the perspectives with regard to intra regional migration ? What role may on-going regional economic integration processes play ? What are the labour market prospects for the cohorts of youth currently entering the labour market in their countries of origin ? Is there is any “chance” that the anticipated labour demand in the OECD countries in the context of population ageing match with the expected labour surplus in the origin countries, in terms of both timing and skill composition ? How to better adapt human resources policies to local needs ? How to better share the benefits of the international mobility of the highly skilled between the origin and the receiving countries and the migrants ? As many questions which go far beyond the recent changes in migration flows and policies in the OECD.

## **Conclusion**

The previous description of the scope and the demographic characteristics of former migration from the Arab countries to the OECD demonstrates the importance of historical and cultural links in shaping the new migration trends. The future of migration from Arab countries should not be very different, despite recent changes in the main destination countries and a progressive bipolarization of migration movements towards the most highly skilled and the low-skilled.

Taking into account the importance of the stocks of immigrants from Arab countries, especially in the main European receiving countries, the issue of their labour market integration and of their insertion into the society, including for the second generations, remains crucial to facilitate the management of future migration flows as well as to reinforce the potential strength of the migration-development nexus.



In many developing countries, including in the Arab region, the labour force will continue to grow at a fast rate in the next decades and employment issues will probably remain a matter of concern. In this context, migration cannot be a substitute for sound macroeconomic policies, the development of social and economic infrastructures and good governance. Within the Mediterranean Basin, for instance, in-depth regional integration could reinforce economic convergence and thus contribute to more balanced migration links and the productive return migration of some migrants (OECD, 1998).

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i. "Emigration rates" are calculated by dividing the number of foreign-born persons residing in OECD countries and originating in a particular country by the total number of persons born in that country, including those no longer living in the country. It does not correspond to the usual definition of an emigration rate, which relates flows of migrants over a certain period of time to the initial stock of persons in the origin country.

ii In this document Arab countries, include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

iii The corresponding figure for the United States is about 33 thousands.

iv Even these remain rather modest, immigration flows of Moroccans to Canada have increased more than 5-fold over the last 10 years.

v After excluding people born with the French nationality in Algeria, it appears that no more than 27.2% of immigrants from Algeria have French nationality. The corresponding figures for people from Morocco and Tunisia are, respectively, 25.6% and 40.1%.

vi This figure excludes Canada as a receiving country, because data by country of origin were not available.

vii Employment of the highly skilled native-born is generally higher than 80%. In 2004 it ranks from 79% in France to 92% in Switzerland (83% in the United States, 84% in Canada)

viii The small increase in 1997 and 1998 was due to the results of a regularisation programme.