

2020 CENSUS: ARAB AMERICAN RESEARCH AND MESSAGING



January 23rd, 2019

Maya Berry, Executive Director

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (established 1980)



and

the Arab American Institute (established in 1985)



represent the interests of 3.7 million Arab Americans.

GOALS OF MESSAGING RESEARCH

- **Main Objectives**

- Assess the attitudes of & discover **potential motivations** for participation.
- Identify at least 3 behavioral opportunities to **help overcome barriers to participation**
- Expose audience to **messages** to assess which will **resonate better** and **ultimately motivate** Arab Americans

- **Further Understanding Of...**

- Main Reasons for Non-Participation
- Undercount of Children in Community
- Concerns Around the Census
- Best ways to reach Arab Americans
- Identify trusted messengers

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

FOCUS GROUPS

July 22nd : Utica, NY

July 24th: St. Louis, MO

July 27th : Miami, FL

August 9th: Jersey City, NJ

Focus Group Round 1:

- 39 women, 30 men
- Ethnicities: Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese Moroccan, Palestinian, Sudanese, and Syrian.

Focus Group Round 2:

- 20 women, 23 men
- Ethnicities: Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Palestinian, Sudanese, and Syrian.

POLLING

Nationwide poll conducted
August 20-24, 2018

Randomly sampled & stratified to be
representative by region.

Ethnicities: Lebanese, Syrian,
Egyptian, Palestinian, Moroccan,
Jordanian, Iraqi, Yemeni, and other
MENA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

ARAB AMERICANS AND THE 2020 CENSUS

- **32%** of Arab Americans **either do not plan or are unsure** if they will **participate in the Census**.
- **64%** of Arab Americans **would be inclined to choose a MENA category** (Middle East and North Africa) if presented with the option.
- **28%** of Arab Americans were **not sure or not likely to respond** if they had to report **citizenship** status.

CHALLENGES TO AN ACCURATE COUNT OF ARAB AMERICANS



HISTORICAL ARAB AMERICAN CONCERNS



ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITY CONCERNS REGARDING GOVERNMENT TARGETING

- U.S. government national security approach that treats Arabs as suspect or security threats.
- Aggressive national security surveillance programs post-9/11.
- Arab Americans are targeted for their ethnicity or national origin, religion, political views and activism.

ARAB AMERICANS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CENSUS

DATA BREACH + DISTRUST OF CENSUS BUREAU SPECIFICALLY

The Census Bureau came under criticism in 2004 when it was revealed the agency shared data that listed where Arab Americans lived by city and ZIP code with the Department of Homeland Security.

Census Bureau gives DHS statistics on Arab Americans

BY SALLY CHAPMAN · PUBLISHED AUGUST 5, 2004 · UPDATED APRIL 1, 2016

The Census Bureau has given the Department of Homeland Security statistical information on people who identified themselves on the 2000 census as being of Arab ancestry. These statistics were prepared specifically for law enforcement, and include information about U.S. citizens, as well as individuals of Arab descent whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations. These heavily edited documents have come under much questioning in regard to their usage, given the sensitivity of the data. The Electronic Privacy Information Center has a Web page containing links to related FOIA documents including e-mail correspondence and sample tabulations. The Web page is available at <http://www.epic.org/privacy/census/foia/>

Article formerly posted at https://www.hsdl.org/blog/newpost/view/s_646

LACK OF A CATEGORY AS A BARRIER: MENA



MENA Category

What is your race or ethnicity? Mark all boxes that apply AND print your specific ethnicities in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

☐ **White** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.

☐ **Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Salvadoran, Colombian, etc.

☐ **Black or African Am.** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, etc.

☐ **Asian** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.

☐ **American Indian or Alaska Native** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Mayan, Dayan, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, etc.

☐ **Middle Eastern or North African** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.

☐ **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshalese, etc.

☐ **Some other race or ethnicity** – Print specific race(s) and/or ethnicities:

United States
Census
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

☐ **Middle Eastern or North African** – Print specific ethnicities, for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.



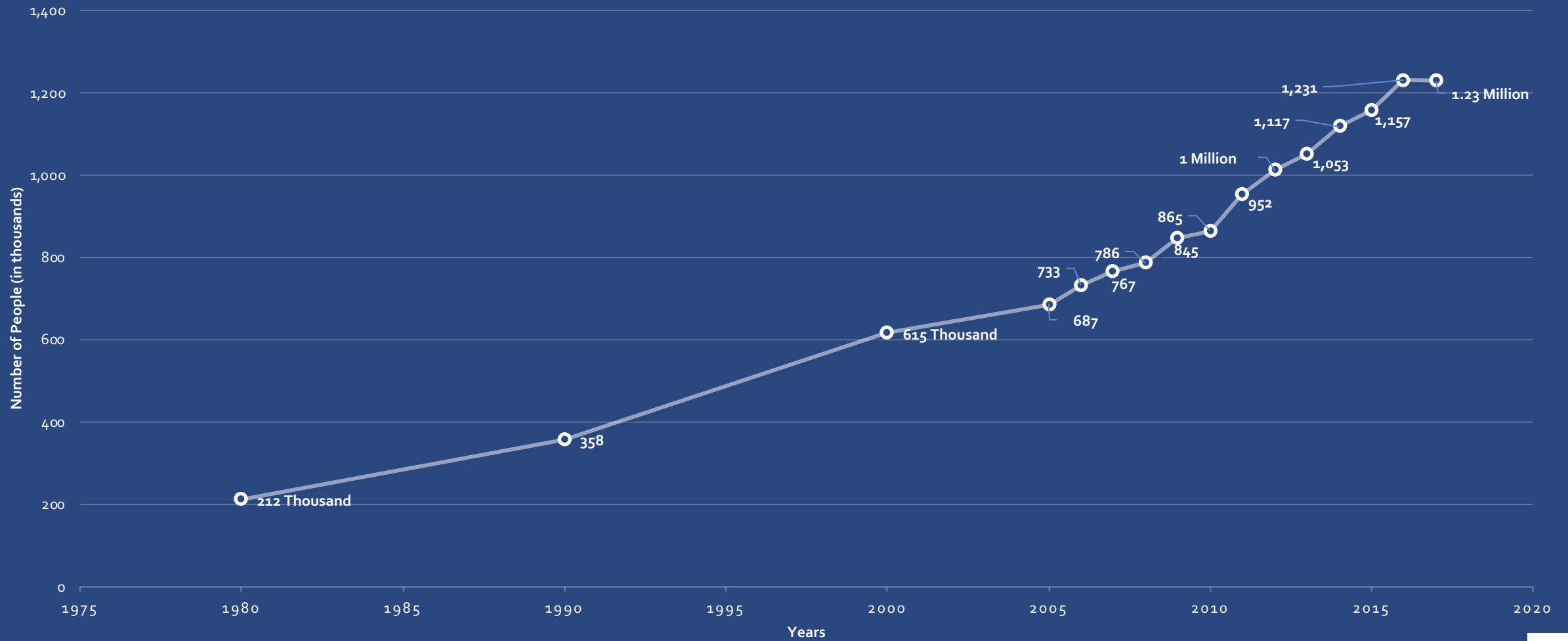
➤ 64% of Arab Americans polled would be inclined to choose MENA (Middle East and North Africa) if presented with the option.

LANGUAGE AS A BARRIER

ARABIC SPEAKING POPULATIONS

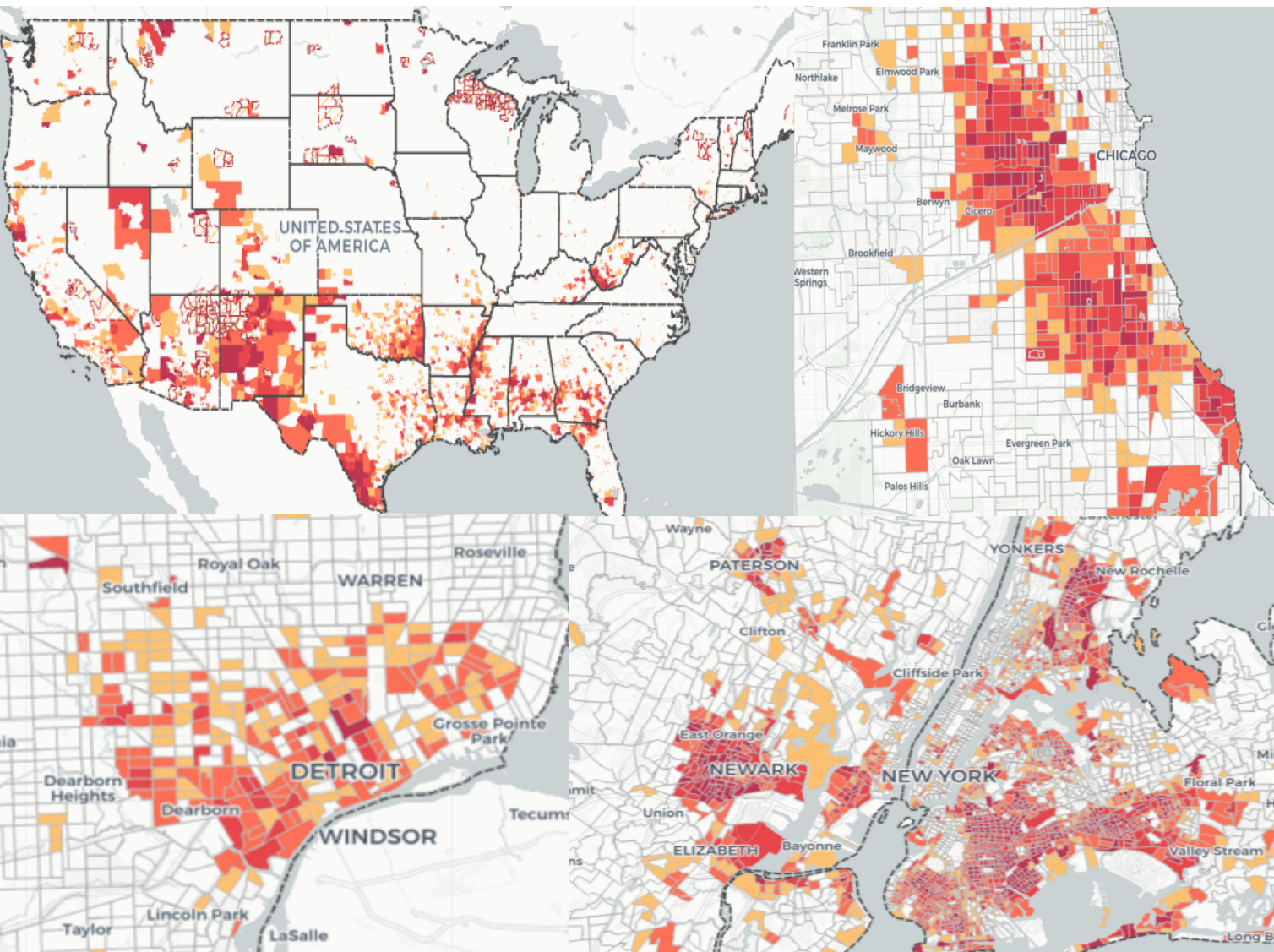
- The Bureau has done research on whether to produce the Census questionnaire in Arabic.
- Arabic is one of the fastest growing language in the US, number of speakers grew 42% from 2010 to 2017. That is a bit over 1.2 million people making it the 6th most spoken language in the US.
- This growth in language is due to the increased immigration of Arabic speakers and Arab American's strong sense of cultural identity.
- Among those who speak Arabic at home, 37% are not proficient in English meaning they speak English less than "very well." This is comparable to the 40% English proficiency rate among the 41 million Spanish speakers.
- The growth of the Arab American community is in part the reason for the push for creating a MENA category to capture more accurately data on Arab Americans.

NUMBER OF ARABIC SPEAKERS FROM 1980-2017 (AGES 5 AND OLDER)



American Community Survey Data 1980-2017

ARAB AMERICANS + HARD TO COUNT CENSUS TRACTS



HARD TO COUNT CENSUS TRACTS WITH LARGEST ARAB AMERICAN POPULATIONS

- Texas
- California
- Florida
- New York
- New Jersey
- Michigan (Detroit, Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids)
- Illinois (Chicago)
- Ohio (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus)
- Virginia (Richmond, Fairfax)
- Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh)
- Massachusetts (Boston)
- Maryland (DMV and all areas right outside of DC)

TOP STATES BY ARAB AMERICAN POPULATION

1. California
2. Michigan
3. New York
4. Texas
5. Florida
6. Illinois
7. New Jersey
8. Ohio
9. Virginia
10. Pennsylvania
11. Massachusetts
12. Maryland

ARAB AMERICANS & UNDERCOUNT OF CHILDREN



17% of respondents overall said they **were unsure or would not count children** in their household.

- **10%** were **unsure**
- **7%** stated they **would not count** children.
- The **non-response rate increased from 7% to 9%** for those respondents who were **foreign born**.

OUR FINDINGS



GENERAL VIEWS ON CENSUS



Participants **generally had positive view of the Census** but...of the **32%** of Arab Americans that either **do not plan or are unsure** if they will participate in the census, their:

Reasons for Non-Participation

- **57%** of those polled worried about **"giving personal information about me and my family."**
- For **U.S.-born** respondents, that number increased to **65%** of participants.
- **66%** were **"concerned about online security."**
- **28%** of Arab Americans were **"not sure"** or **"not likely"** to respond if they had to **report citizenship**.

MAJOR CONCERNS OF ARAB AMERICANS

- 40% of Arab Americans were “concerned about immigration enforcement or other government officials using Census answers”
- 48% expressed concern that the **government would use their information against them** because they are Arab American
- Majority (54%) of respondents felt the “**data is being used to profile**” them as Arab Americans
 - 60% of Women & 70% of Muslim really resonated with this profiling concern

This concern **aligned with the Census Bureau’s own research**, where a MENA respondent stated that the information can be used against the community by **not “funding certain schools because its in certain ‘bad areas’.”**

ON THE HOMEFRONT - THE HSDL BLOG

Census Bureau gives DHS statistics on Arab Americans

BY SALLY CHAPMAN · PUBLISHED AUGUST 5, 2004 · UPDATED APRIL 1, 2016

ARCHIVES | 2004

Homeland Security Given Data on Arab-Americans

lend to an anti-immigration regime. The Census Bureau drew fire over a decade ago for providing data tables of Arab Americans in each zip code to the Department of Homeland Security. The Census Bureau does

FOCUS GROUP SENTIMENTS & SUBGROUP CONCERNS

- Concerns about **Census Workers coming to their homes & government using Census data against them** or their families seen in St. Louis, Jersey City & Miami.
- Fear about **Muslim Ban and worry about being targeted using Census data** but felt better once they were told that the Census doesn't ask about religion was noted with the St. Louis group.
- Not understanding questions enough to answer & need of **help filling out** Census was a concern for Arab Americans in Utica.
- Worries about **online security** (Jersey City respondents).
- These concerns were **also seen in the Census Bureau's focus groups** where a MENA individual stated **"every single scrap of information that the government gets goes to every intelligence agency..."**

PREFERRED MODES OF RESPONSE

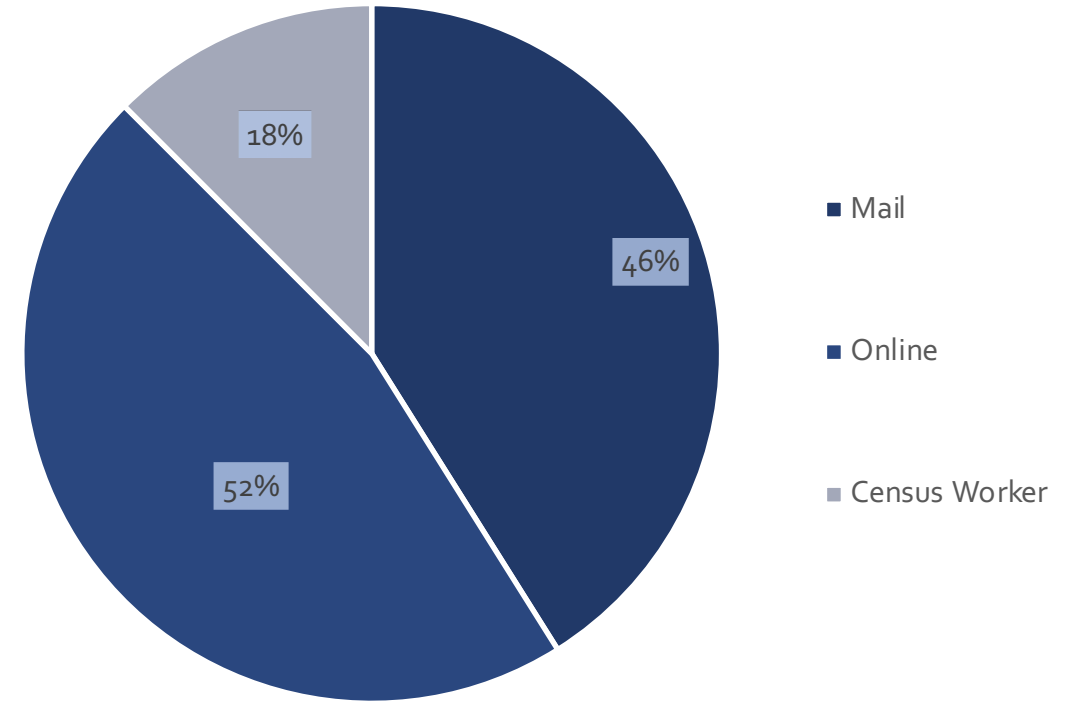
Of those who prefer mail

- Born in U.S.: 42%
- Foreign Born: 58%

Of those who prefer online submission

- Born in U.S.: 51%
- Foreign Born: 58%

Like NALEO, the vast majority agreed that sending a Census worker to their home was not convenient



MESSAGING RESEARCH FINDINGS

2020 CENSUS MESSAGING

Generally, positive messaging worked the best.

- **69%** of respondents **liked** the **“community will benefit if more from your community participates in the Census”** message
- **71%** are **more likely** to participate if they know that Census numbers **“determine funding for state and local services.”**
- **71%** said they were **more likely to participate** if they knew that filling out the Census is **“safe, easy, and just a few clicks online.”**
- **72%** are **more likely** to fill out the Census if assured that the **“Census protects personal data and your identity is anonymous.”**

Generally focus group attendees learned about the impact of accurate Census data on funding for schools, social services, health care and local and state government services.

- **Stress benefits** to the Arab American community, especially funding to services and infrastructure.
- Emphasize the **importance to the future & for children**
- Be **inclusive in messaging**, showing the common culture but also the diversity of the community (most expressed sentiment in focus groups)
- **Convenience is important** in encouraging people to fill out the Census (like online version)
- Focus on the **importance of the Census to the family**

BEST MESSAGES FOUND



SUBGROUP RESPONSES TO MESSAGING

"stand up for
your
community! "

"it has a
positive feeling
to it..."

- New immigrant communities responded well to the **"stand up for your community"** messaging
- Established community in Miami also sided with the new immigrants
"It has a very positive feeling to it."
- St. Louis responded best to the message about the Census being all about the people
"I like the focus of the family and about people."
- Jersey City liked the **"stand up for your community"** & **"it benefits our family and community"** messaging
General sentiment of liking the idea of helping others through the Census messaging

- Family Members
 - Healthcare Providers
 - Teachers /Local Educators
 - People from Religious Organizations (not leaders but peers)
 - Notices at Post Offices
 - Arab American Organizations
- Social Media polled last with **41% of Arab Americans** saying they **trust information** found online.
 - Religious Leaders polled at 9th place with **49% of Arab Americans** **trusting** them to deliver messaging.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS FOR ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITY



LEVELS OF TRUST FOR NEWS & SOCIAL MEDIA

- **32% of 18-29 year-olds; 37% of 40-49 year-olds, 50% of 50-59 year-olds** trust and rely on **social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.**
- **Television news reports for younger participants** were trusted or relied on **more than social media.**
- **Across all ages, television** seems to be the **most trusted**, specifically local television.
- **39% of male respondents** rely on **local television.**
- Though **most individuals** in the focus groups **agreed that the online form to fill out the Census is convenient** there was still worry from people stating that they would **“feel safer to fill out through mail”** because **“online there really is no privacy.”**

APPLYING RESEARCH FINDINGS

MESSAGING

MESSAGING STRATEGY

- **Social Media campaign** targeting younger Arab Americans (18-29) & Arab Americans who are 40 years old and older.
- **Hashtags and video materials** in both Arabic and English to reach wider range of Arab Americans.
- **PSA + Ad Campaigns** informed by findings from our messaging research to reach both new immigrant populations and Arab Americans who have been here for generations.
- **Outreach + Advertising Campaign** to educate Arab Americans about the Census and incentivize their participation in the 2020 Census.



OUTREACH + ADVERTISING



To reach Arab Americans we plan to meet them where they are....

- Through **blog, magazines, newspaper, community-based event publication** dissemination of PSA and Ad.
- **Postcard Mailing** to 50K Arab American Households using AAI's Arab American Voter List with Arabic and English messaging on the postcards.
- **Television Ads** in Arabic for **Arabic television and radio** broadcasting as well as **English for local television** broadcasting.
- **Local trainings** and **event outreach at community events** in target areas like California, Texas, New York, etc.
- All of these outreach methods will be started mid 2019 and carrying out until the Census ends.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

➤ Additional Research in:

California	Ohio
Michigan	DMV
Texas	Pennsylvania
Illinois	Massachusetts

➤ Fill Potential Research Gaps

- **Local specific research** done in key states & other **metro-areas** with high Arab American population count
- Greater understanding of the **undercount of children for Arab American** community
- Greater understanding of what can be done to mitigate the concern of **government targeting and surveillance**
- Greater understanding of the **diversity of Arab American community** & the impact it can have on outreach efforts to specific populations.
- **Testing GOTC strategies** to ensure that they reach intended populations.

THANK YOU



MAYA BERRY
Executive Director
mberry@aaiusa.org
[@iMayaBerry](#)
[@aaiusa](#)