Why the Census Matters for Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) Communities in the DMV Area

By Mahnoor Hussain

Every 10 years, the federal government is legally required to count every person living in the country, regardless of citizenship status, as part of the U.S. Census. The next census will take place April 1, 2020 and will be open for response online, by telephone, or with a paper questionnaire.

The U.S. Census is an opportunity for the government to accurately count Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities in the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area and appropriately allocate resources and services in this region.

The 2020 Census data will determine how the next 10 years of representation will look like for our communities and how much federal funding is distributed for critical programs that our families and communities use.

Census Process and Timeline

- **March 12 - 20:** Households will receive official Census Bureau mail (see sample on back) with information on how to respond to the 2020 Census online
- **March 16 - 24:** A reminder letter will be sent
- **March 26 - April 3:** Reminder postcard
- **April 1:** National Census Day
- **April 8 - 16th:** A reminder letter and paper questionnaire.
- **April 20 - 27:** Final postcard reminder before in-person visits begin.
- **May:** In person follow-up with households that have not responded to the 2020 Census

**How Do I Respond to the Census Online?**

**For the first time ever, you will be able to complete your census form online.**

- Most households will receive a letter inviting them to respond online, with a unique household ID and the web address of the official Census Bureau website.
- If you lose your household ID, you can still fill out the census online by providing your address.
- The internet self-response form is available in 12 non-English languages including Arabic.
**What Does the Census Ask Me?**

- The number of people in the household on April 1 (including children and non-citizen family members)
- Do you own or rent your home?
- Telephone number
- Name, sex, age, and date of birth of each person in the household (including children and non-citizen family members)
- Race - not all AMEMSA racial groups are listed as check box options
  - Step 1: Check off the “some other race” category (last box underneath the question)
  - Step 2: Write in your families origin (for example Somali, Lebanese, Egyptian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani)

**What’s at Stake for AMEMSA Communities in 2020?**

AMEMSA communities, people with limited English proficiency, people with low incomes, and young children are some of the groups that are undercounted in the census. Many areas in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia with dense AMEMSA populations are at risk of being undercounted.

The following are AMEMSA population estimates according to the 2014 and 2017 American Community Survey data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DC</th>
<th>Maryland</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi³</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>6,604</td>
<td>9,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutanese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>2,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9,401</td>
<td>108,671</td>
<td>161,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iranian²</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>12,935</td>
<td>14,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>8,564</td>
<td>9,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>26,023</td>
<td>39,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>4,459</td>
<td>2,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian, Somali, Sudanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, Algerian, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen</td>
<td>10,821³</td>
<td>76,446⁴</td>
<td>169,587⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total = (675,194)</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,429</strong></td>
<td><strong>244,394</strong></td>
<td><strong>408,371</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. Iranian Census Report. NIAC. bit.ly/3awqgus
An accurate count of our community is necessary for critical government services to be provided to our people.

- Census data helps determine where and how billions of dollars are spent on programs like SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, Head Start, Affordable Housing, and Transportation and Roads.
- Census data determines how many seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives and how many votes each state gets in the Electoral College.
- Businesses use census data to decide where to build new stores and offices impacting both the services they provide and job opportunities available to our communities.

**Getting a complete and accurate Census count of AMEMSA communities in the DMV is about $40 billion dollars in federal funding.**

Our Communities Receive Funding for Each Individual Counted in the Census:

- Virginia receives $2,000 per year for each counted resident. In 2016, Virginia received $17 billion dollars in federal spending for critical state programs based on 2010 Census data.⁶
- Maryland receives $1,800 per year for each counted resident. In 2016, Maryland received $16 billion dollars in critical state programs based on 2010 Census data.⁷
- In 2016, D.C. received $6 billion dollars in federal aid based on the 2010 Census.⁸

**Is my Information Safe?**

It is against the law for the Census Bureau to share any of your data. We encourage you to respond to the Census to the best of your abilities. If you have any issues with Census related security please reach out to the hotlines below.

**Questions About the Census?**

Email Justice for Muslims Collective with your questions at dcjusticeformuslims@gmail.com

Call the following census language hotlines for in-language information and assistance:

- Census Bureau Questionnaire Assistance Hotline
  - English - call 844-330-2020
  - Arabic - call 844-416-2020

- Count Us In Census Hotline
  - English, Urdu, Hindi, Bangla - call 844-2020-API

- YallaCountMeIn Census Hotline
  - Arabic - call 833-333-6864

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⁷ Ibid. bit.ly/3bZmuez
⁸ Ibid. bit.ly/3VWbUK