HOW DO ARAB AMERICANS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES?

Primary ethnic identification is derived from responses to the ancestry question on the American Community Survey (ACS). ACS data on “Arabs” include the responses: Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, Arab or Arabic. The following countries are collapsed as “Other Arab”: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Adopting an accurate and inclusive definition of Arab Americans, AAI includes the Arabic-speaking countries of Comoros, Mauritania, Somalia, and Sudan, and the transnational communities of Assyrians/Chaldeans who are not currently aggregated as Arab in ACS data.

According to the Census Bureau, the largest components of Illinois’ Arab American community have Lebanese or Assyrian/Chaldean roots. Since 2010, significant increases appear in the number of Illinois residents who are of Jordanian or Syrian descent.

WHERE DO ILLINOIS’ ARAB AMERICANS LIVE?

Arab Americans in Illinois reside in all 17 congressional districts in the state. District 6, which includes parts of Cook and DuPage counties just outside of Chicago, houses the highest number of Arab Americans at an estimated 27,321.

ILLINOIS ANCESTRY BREAKDOWN

- Palestinian
- “Other Arab”
- Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriac
- Lebanese
- Syrian
- Iraqi
- Egyptian
- Jordanian
- Moroccan
- Somali
- Sudanese
The population in Illinois who identified as Arab American on the U.S. Census more than doubled between 2000 and 2017. The number of Illinoisans who claim an Arab ancestry has more than tripled since the Census first measured ethnic origins in 1980 and is among the fastest growing Arab populations in the country. The Census Bureau estimates the statewide Arab American population is 136,194.

**Because of changes made by the Census Bureau for the 2020 Census, the collection and tabulation of data about racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including Arab Americans, was made available for the first time. Previously, detailed data on these communities were only available from the ancestry question on the decennial census long-form and, after 2000, the American Community Survey (ACS). To maintain integrity of the data over time, AAI continues to track growth percentages using responses to the ancestry question, while using the 2020 decennial data for our flat population count.**

**Immigration data pulled from the Department of Homeland Security does not include data for Palestinian immigration. This is an issue AAI is attempting to remedy.**