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Arab Americans and Americans of Middle Eastern heritage have a long history in the United States. They are U.S. military heroes, entertainers, politicians and scientists. They are Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi and more. Yet the representation of Arab Americans in the mainstream media tends to be quite limited. Arabs are typically featured on the news when Islam, hate crimes or terrorism are the topics at hand. Arab American Heritage Month, observed in April, marks a time to reflect on the contributions Arab Americans have made to the U.S. and the diverse group of people who make up the nation's Middle Eastern population. While Arab Americans are often stereotyped as perpetual foreigners in the United States, people of Middle Eastern descent first began to enter the country in significant numbers in the 1800s, a fact that's often revisited during Arab American Heritage Month. The first wave of Middle Eastern immigrants arrived in the U.S. circa 1875, according to America.gov. The second wave of such immigrants arrived after 1940. The Arab American Institute reports that by the 1960s, about 15,000 Middle Eastern immigrants from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq were settling in the U.S. on average each year. By the following decade, the annual number of Arab immigrants increased by several thousand due to the Lebanese civil war. Today an estimated 4 million Arab Americans live in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated in 2000 that Lebanese Americans constitute the largest group of Arabs in the U.S. About one in four of all Arab Americans is Lebanese. The Lebanese are followed by Egyptians, Syrians, Palestinians, Jordanians, Moroccans, and Iraqis in numbers. Nearly half (46 percent) of the Arab Americans profiled by the Census Bureau in 2000 were born in the U.S. The Census Bureau also found that more men make up the Arab population in the U.S. than women and that most Arab Americans lived in households occupied by married couples. While the first Arab-American immigrants arrived in the 1800s, the Census Bureau found that nearly half of Arab Americans arrived in the U.S. in the 1990s. Regardless of these new arrivals, 75 percent of Arab Americans said that they spoke English very well or exclusively while at home. Arab Americans also tend to be more educated than the general population, with 41 percent having graduated from college compared to 24 percent of the general U.S. population in 2000. The higher levels of education obtained by Arab Americans explains why members of this population were more likely to work in professional jobs and earn more money than Americans generally. On the other hand, more Arab-American men than women were involved in the labor force and a higher number of Arab Americans (17 percent) than Americans generally (12 percent) were likely to live in poverty. It's difficult to get a complete picture of the Arab-American population for Arab American Heritage Month because the U.S. government has classified people of Middle Eastern descent as "white" since 1970. This has made it challenging to get an accurate count of Arab Americans in the U.S. and to determine how members of this population are faring economically, academically and so forth. The Arab American Institute has reportedly told its members to identify as "some other race" and then fill in their ethnicity. There's also a movement to have the Census Bureau give the Middle Eastern population a unique category by the 2020 census. Aref Assal supported this move in a column for the New Jersey Star-Ledger. "As Arab-Americans, we have long argued for the need to implement these changes," he said. "We have long argued that current racial options available on the Census form produce a severe undercount of Arab Americans. The current Census form is only a ten question form, but the implications for our community are far-reaching..." The Arab world is considered an area of the world that encompasses the region from the Atlantic Ocean near northern Africa east to the Arabian Sea. Its northern boundary is at the Mediterranean Sea, while the southern portion extends to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean (map). In general, this area is tied together as a region because all of the countries within it are Arabic-speaking. Some of the countries list Arabic as their only official language, while others speak it, in addition to other languages. UNESCO identifies 23 Arab countries, while the Arab League—a regional multi-national organization of Arabic-speaking countries that was formed in 1945—has 22 members. The one state listed by UNESCO that is not part of the Arab League is Malta and is marked for easier recognition by an asterisk (*). The following is a list of all these nations arranged in alphabetical order, including each country's population and language information. All population and language data were obtained from the CIA World Factbook and are from July 2018. 1) AlgeriaPopulation: 41,657,488Official Languages: Arabic and Berber or Tamazight (with French as lingua franca) 2) BahrainPopulation: 1,442,659Official Language: Arabic 3) ComorosPopulation: 821,164Official Languages: Arabic, French, Shikomoro (a blend of Swahili and Arabic; Comorian) 4) DjiboutiPopulation: 884,017Official Languages: French and Arabic 5) EgyptPopulation: 99,413,317Official Language: Arabic 6) IraqPopulation: 40,194,216Official Languages: Arabic and Kurdish. Turkmen (a Turkish dialect), Syriac (Neo-Aramaic), and Armenian are official in areas where speakers of these languages constitute a majority of the population 7) JordanPopulation: 10,458,413Official Language: Arabic 8) KuwaitPopulation: 2,916,467 (note: Kuwait's Public Authority for Civil Information estimates the country's total population to be 4,437,590 for 2017, with immigrants accounting for more than 69.5%.)Official Language: Arabic 9) LebanonPopulation: 6,100,075Official Language: Arabic 10) LibyaPopulation: 6,754,507Official Language: Arabic 11) Malta*Population: 449,043Official Languages: Maltese and English 12) MauritaniaPopulation: 3,840,429Official Language: Arabic 13) MoroccoPopulation: 34,314,130Official Languages: Arabic and Tamazight (a Berber language) 14) OmanPopulation: 4,613,241 (note: as of 2017, immigrants make up approximately 45% of the total population)Official Language: Arabic 15) Palestine (recognized as an independent country by UNESCO and Arab League but not recognized by CIA)Population: 4,981,420 (with 42.8% of refugees)Official Language: Arabic 16) QatarPopulation: 2,363,569Official Language: Arabic 17) Saudi ArabiaPopulation: 33,091,113Official Language: Arabic 18) SomaliaPopulation: 11,259,029 (note: this number is only an estimate, as population counting in Somalia is complicated due to nomads and refugees)Official Languages: Somali and Arabic 19) SudanPopulation: 43,120,843Official Languages: Arabic and English 20) SyriaPopulation: 19,454,263Official Language: Arabic 21) TunisiaPopulation: 11,516,189Official Language: Arabic. (French is not official but a language of commerce and spoken by the majority of the population) 22) United Arab EmiratesPopulation: 9,701,3115Official Language: Arabic 23) YemenPopulation: 28,667,230Official Language: Arabic Note: Wikipedia lists the Palestinian Authority—an administrative organization which governs parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—as an Arab state. Similarly, UNESCO lists Palestine as one of the Arab states and the State of Palestine is a member of the Arab League. However, the CIA World Factbook does not recognize it as an actual state and the population and language data are therefore from other sources. On the other hand, the CIA lists Western Sahara as an independent country, with a population of 619,551 and languages such as Hassaniya Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. Yet, UNESCO and the Arab League don't recognize it as a country of its own, considering it a part of Morocco. You're probably thinking "pretty easy" and you're probably right. Serve us food French-style. Of course, I must start with food. We're a nation recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records for making the largest food dishes on the planet. So, do not serve me bite-sized food. Unless you want my (not-so-positive) opinion before you even bring out the actual plate. "But are you Muslim?.. Aren't you all Muslim?" Contrary to popular belief, most Muslims aren't Arab and millions of Arabs aren't Muslims. There are more than 20 faiths in Arabia. In fact, religion is the reason behind many civil wars — current and past — in the Arab world. Trying to determine the religion of an Arab is a very irritating issue. Asking a person wearing a cross or a hijab annoys them because if she's a hijabi (covered woman), then obviously she's Muslim. If she has a big fat cross, then obviously she is Christian! If she's not sporting an obvious religious symbol, then don't ask because she'll think you're trying to judge her. "Do you ride camels?" "Do you have a tent back home?" Yeah, a camping tent that takes me two hours to set up because I lost the instruction manual. No, we ride Ferraris. We have more BMWs on the street than Germany. We have custom-made sports cars in funny colours. Not impressed? Fine, we're suffering from a large number of abandoned luxury and sport cars here in Dubai. You know why? 'Cause we don't live in deserts and sleep in tents. Diss another Arab in front of us Look darls, we're all cousins and you can't just insult my cousin and expect me to sit there and smile. Refuse to let us treat you Arabs will never take no for an answer, so let's not argue about it. Just allow me to pay the bill and next time you want to meet up tell me it's your treat beforehand. "Where the black-gold money at?" Ha-ha. No. Saying all Arabs have oil money is as true as saying all British people have had tea with Queen Liz the second. The sad reality is we are 22 countries (if you count one Sudan but not the other), and one of them is Somalia, which is rock-bottom poor and has oil. We have the Gulf countries that have varying amounts of oil and rich people. We have Le Grande Maghreb with not much oil and even those who have great oil supplies aren't rich. Yemen and Sudan are struggling with everything. You get the picture. We're not one huge bag of money called Arabians. Asking me, "What do you mean by you're broke? Where that oil money at?" will piss me off. Stop expecting me to be immune to going broke just because I'm Arab. Rip us off Don't try selling us something from the 2012 autumn collection in summer 2014 and call it "special edition." Forget offering us a "special discount" when we know you're actually charging us more. There is an Arabic proverb, "If your friend is made of honey don't suck him all up." Nobody likes to be taken advantage of, and out of every other race on planet we tend to take everything a bit too personally. "You're Arab? How come you don't have an accent?" Ok, I agree that some Arabs have thick accents, but that's because they learned the language late, or from a second-language speaker. That doesn't mean we all do. A massive amount of us speak perfect English and French, so give us a break will you? What did you think of this story?

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