



# CENSUS SHOWS 3.5 MILLION MIDDLE EASTERN RESIDENTS IN US, VENEZUELAN FASTEST GROWING HISPANIC GROUP - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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*Photo: Confetti flies as Dearborn mayor candidate Abdullah Hammoud prepares to speak to supporters at the election night gathering at the Mohammed Turfe Community Center in Dearborn, Mich., on Nov. 2, 2021*

The United States had 3.5 million residents who identify as Middle Eastern or North African, Venezuelans were the fastest-growing Hispanic group last decade and Chinese and Asian Indians were the two largest Asian groups, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The most detailed race and ethnicity data to date from the 2020 census was released Thursday more than three years after the once-a-decade head count, which determines political power, the distribution of \$2.8 trillion in annual federal funding and holds up a mirror to how the U.S. has changed in a decade. The delay was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of a new method to protect the confidentiality of participants.

The Census Bureau says the 2020 census provided more details on the nation's racial and ethnic groups than ever before, offering counts for about 1,550 racial, ethnic and tribal groups, although some tables aren't available at smaller geographies for some groups because of the new confidentiality methods.

## MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN POPULATION

The 2020 census was the first to allow respondents to identify themselves as coming from a Middle Eastern or North African country, otherwise known as MENA. While there was no separate MENA category in the 2020 census, respondents were encouraged to write-in their backgrounds, and if they wrote Jordanian or Moroccan, for instance, they could be classified as MENA. The data showed that more than 3.5 million people did so or in combination with another group.

The results come as the Biden administration contemplates updating the nation's racial and ethnic categories for the first time since 1997. Right now, MENA residents are classified as white, but they would have their own category under the proposed changes. The

process also would combine the race and ethnic origin questions into a single query, because some advocates say the current method of asking about race and separately about ethnic origin often confuses Hispanic respondents.

The bureau's American Community Survey previously has asked a question about ancestry, from which MENA figures could be inferred, but the survey collects data only from 3.5 million households while census forms go to every U.S. household.

"This is a monumental change," said Maya Berry, executive director of the Arab American Institute, a Washington-based advocacy group. "For us, it's a wonderful indication of what is to come when we secure a MENA category."

However, Berry believes the MENA population may have been undercounted because of the extra steps needed to write down respondents' detailed backgrounds on the 2020 census form, instead of being able to just check a category box.

According to the 2020 census, the two largest groups of people who identified as MENA, either alone or in combination with another group, were Lebanese, with more than 685,000 people, and Iranian with more than 568,000 people. The states with the largest MENA populations were California, Michigan and New York.

#### HISPANIC POPULATION

Venezuelans were the fastest-growing Hispanic group. They nearly tripled their numbers, from more than 215,000 people to more than 605,000 people from 2010 to 2020, as they fled a political, economic and humanitarian crisis that has lasted the entirety of President Nicolás Maduro's government.

"This shows, really, what is going on in Venezuela," said Ernesto Ackerman, president of Independent Venezuelan American Citizens, an advocacy group in Miami. "There is nothing there and it's getting worse."

The Biden administration on Wednesday said it was granting temporary legal status to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are already in the U.S. — quickly making them eligible to work.

Mexicans were, far and away, the largest Hispanic group in the U.S. with a population of 35.9 million people, followed by Puerto Ricans with 5.6 million people and Salvadorans at 2.3 million people.

#### WHITE POPULATION

Among the census respondents who identified as white, English was the most common detailed group written down on the form where people were asked to elaborate on their backgrounds, with 46.6 million people saying they were English alone or in any combination. They were followed by those identifying as German, with 45 million people, and Irish, with 38.6 million people.

#### BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION

Among the 46.9 million black respondents, African American was the most common answer, either alone or combined with another group, at 24.5 million people, when asked about their backgrounds. That answer was followed in more or less a tie between Jamaican and Haitian at more than 1 million people each. Nigerians had the next highest responses, with more than 604,000 people, followed by Ethiopians at more than 325,000 people.

#### ASIAN POPULATION

More than 5.2 million people identified as Chinese, the largest group among respondents who were Asian alone or in combination with another group. They were followed by Asian Indians with 4.7 million people, Filipinos with 4.4 million people and the Vietnamese population at 2.2 million people. The Nepalese population was the fastest growing Asian group, growing from almost 52,000 people in

2010 to almost 206,000 people in 2020. California was home to the largest share of the six most common Asian groups in the U.S. New York had the second-largest share of Chinese residents, while Texas had the second-largest share of Asian Indian residents.

The Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities are very diverse "and we know that lumping our groups together can have harmful impacts by hiding the disparities that certain racial or ethnic groups face, including gaps in wages earned, health outcomes, or educational attainment," said Rep. Judy Chu, a Democrat from California, who chairs the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

#### AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE POPULATION

For the American Indian and Alaska Native population in the U.S., Cherokee was the largest group alone or in combination with another group, with 1.5 million people. The next highest was Aztec with almost 584,000 respondents and Navajo Nation with more than 423,000. Tlingit was the largest Alaska Native alone or in any combination group, with more than 22,600 people.

#### SOME OTHER RACE

Almost 94% of the almost 28 million respondents who answered "some other race" for the race question were Hispanic, supporting previous research that showed Hispanics often are unsure how to answer the question with the current race categories. Some 1.9 million respondents who picked "some other race" identified as multiracial or multi-ethnic, and more than a half million said they were Brazilian, either alone or in combination with another group.

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