

Arab American

What does it mean to be “Arab”? Common misunderstandings and things to think about...

“The Arab world is often defined by membership in the Arab League, which consists of 22 countries...While many in the U.S. use the terms Middle East or Middle Eastern casually, it is not fully interchangeable with the more specific term Arab...The Middle East includes countries that are not considered Arab, including Iran, Turkey and Cyprus...In addition, African Arab countries are often not placed in the Middle East...”, such as Sudan and Mauritania (Arab Americans: History, Culture & Contributions, Arab American National Museum, p 11)

“...Arabs represent only one-fifth of the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims. Arabs are a minority of Muslim Americans as well. A 2011 Pew Research Center survey found that 26% of Muslim Americans and 41% of foreign-born Muslims were from the Middle East and North Africa. This highlights that Muslims are not always Arab, but in addition Arabs are not always Muslim. There are large Christian communities in many Arab countries...Historically, Arab countries have also had Jewish communities...” (Arab Americans: History, Culture & Contributions, Arab American National Museum, p 12). Additionally, many minority communities from Arab-majority countries have a complicated relationship with “Arab” identity and may or may not identify as Arab, including Coptic Christians, Kurds, Mizrahi Jews, Amazigh (Berber), etc.

[Demographics | Census Counts](#)

Today, it is estimated that nearly 3.7 million Americans trace their roots to an Arab country. Arab Americans are found in every state, but more than two thirds of them live in just ten states: California, Michigan, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Metropolitan Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York are home to one-third of the population. The majority of Arab Americans are native-born. Nearly 82% of Arabs in the U.S. are citizens, 63% are Christian, and 24% are Muslim. While the community traces its roots to every Arab country, the majority of Arab Americans have ancestral ties to Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq.

In 2017, there were an estimated 7,500 Arab Americans in Pima County and 60,000 in Arizona. [Arizona — Yalla Count Me In!](#)

Timeline

[Arab American History - History.com](#)

[Arab American Immigration Timeline](#)

Local History

Travel Route 66 with [“The Great Muslim American Road Trip”](#) - PBS

[Citizens of Two Worlds](#): A podcast to identity issues among first-generation Arab-Americans in Tucson

[Arabs in the Arizona Desert](#)

Current Issues

[Muslims \[in the U.S.\] prepare for a more somber Ramadan due to the Israel-Hamas war](#) (NPR)

[Palestinian Americans on the Israel-Hamas war: 'We're not even allowed to grieve'](#) (NPR)

[Arab Americans are a much more diverse group than many of their neighbors mistakenly assume](#), TheConversation

[Hijab: An empowering choice in US, a symbol of oppression in Iran | The Seattle Times](#)

[Why Arabs and Arab Americans feel being counted as White in the US doesn't reflect their reality](#) - CNN

[I love America](#)

Personal Stories

[Omar ibn Said](#): an Arabic manuscript memoir written by a West African enslaved person in the United States

[Arab American National Museum](#)

[Natours Grocery](#): Filmmaker Nadine Natour captures the story of her parents' emigration from Palestine to the United States

[Maysoon Zayid](#): TED Talk, I got 99 problems...palsy is just one

[Danny Thomas](#): Arab American entertainer and founder of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital

Churches' roles

UMC: [Our Muslim Neighbors](#)

[Tucson Refugee Ministry](#) supports refugees from all over the world with a number of refugees from Afghanistan

[United Methodist Bishops Call for Cease Fire in Gaza](#)

[UMC “A ministry of prayer and presence in the Middle East”](#)

Digging Deeper

Articles

[Arab America Foundation](#)

[Five important Christian churches in the Middle East](#)

[A brief history of Dearborn, Michigan - the first Arab-American majority city in the US](#), TheConversation

[Arab Youth Survey](#): What do youth around the Arab world think and feel about key issues?

Books

*denotes books available through the Pima County Public Library

Children: [Deep in the Sahara*](#); [The Arabic Quilt*](#); [Like the Moon Loves the Sky*](#); Sitti’s Secrets by Naomi Shihab Nye; The Three Lucy’s by Hayan Charara

Middle grade: [The Green Bicycle*](#); [The Turtle of Oman*](#); [Other Words for Home*](#)

Young adults: [Once Upon An Eid*](#); [Mirage*](#); [We Hunt the Flame*](#)

Adults: *A Country Called Amreeka: Arab Roots, American Stories*, by Alia Malek; *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California*, by Sarah Gualtieri; *We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled: Voices from Syria*, by Wendy Pearlman; *Salt Houses*, by Hala Alyan; *Out of Place: A Memoir*, by Edward Said; *The Return*, by Hisham Matar; *The Prophet*, by Khalil Gibran; *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization*, by

Jonathan Lyons; [*Against the Loveless World*: I Was Their American Dream*: Life Without a Recipe**](#)

Arab in America - Graphic novel by Toufic El Rassi

Videos / Films / Shows

[PBS Specials: Arab Americans \(54 min\)](#)

[“The Feeling of Being Watched”](#) (available for streaming on Amazon Prime), When journalist Assia Boundaoui investigates rumors of surveillance in her Arab-American neighborhood in Chicago, she uncovers one of the largest FBI terrorism probes conducted before 9/11 and reveals its enduring impact on the community.

[For Sama](#) (available to stream for free from PBS Frontline). In a time of conflict and darkness in her home in Aleppo, Syria, one young woman kept her camera rolling — while falling in love, getting married, having a baby and saying goodbye as her city crumbled. Directed by Waad al-Kateab and Edward Watts, the documentary For Sama unfolds as a love letter from al-Kateab to her daughter — Sama. Nominated for an academy award for best documentary. Not about Arab Americans, but important for understanding recent events in the Middle East and North Africa/Arab world, as well as some of the reasons people have emigrated to the United States and become Arab Americans.

[Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People](#) (available to stream via Kanopy with public library card)

[The Square](#) (documentary), directed by Jehane Noujaim, available to stream on Amazon Prime; documentary of the “Arab Spring” revolution in 2011; not about Arab Americans, but important for understanding recent events in the Middle East and North Africa/Arab world

[Casablanca Beats](#) (available to rent/stream on Amazon Prime); semi-autobiographical film about a Moroccan rapper who teaches teenagers hip-hop to confront social challenges in Morocco

[Amer Zahr - Ted Talk - on Being Arab American - TedxDetroit](#)

[Jeremiah Stinnett: Don't Erase Me: The Modern Arab American | TED Talk](#)

[My life after 9/11](#)

[How you see me](#)

Lamya’s Poem (movie and graphic novel) - [trailer](#)

Podcasts

[Citizens of Two Worlds](#) (The Daily Wildcat - University of Arizona)

[Race and the Arab American Experience](#) - Arab Center, Washington DC

Experiences

Dine at a Mediterranean Restaurant in Tucson: Zayna, Sindbad's

Shop at a Middle Eastern store: Babylon Market

Watch an Arab movie or show

Watch an Arabic-English Church service from an Arab country: St. George's Episcopal Cathedral (Anglican Church) in Jerusalem. Services recorded and streamed via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/anglicathedral/videos/1029219095296413>