# Methodology

This Pew Research Center analysis looks at different ways to count the Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) population in the United States. It's based on recent and historical data from the U.S. Census Bureau, including the decennial census and the American Community Survey. We accessed some data through published Census Bureau tables and reports, and we used microdata from IPUMS at the University of Minnesota.

All population figures reported are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

## U.S. Census Bureau reports and tables

Information about the Census Bureau's policy on and analysis of the MENA population primarily comes from the following sources:

- 2015 National Content Test Race and Ethnicity Analysis Report
- 2020 census population counts of MENA overall and detailed MENA race groups
- 2024 American Community Survey of detailed White alone or in any combination races (table S0201)
- 2024 Federal Register notice on revisions to Statistical Policy Directive No. 15

## Data from IPUMS

Pew Research Center estimates of the MENA population are based on tabulations of the 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses, and the 2006, 2010, 2015, 2019 and 2024 American Community Surveys (ACS).

**Variables used to estimate the U.S. MENA population**

| Variable | 2024 ACS questionnaire text |
|---|---|
| Ancestry (ANCESTR1D/2D) | *"What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?"* |
| Race (RACED) | *"What is this person's race? Mark one or more boxes AND print origins."* |
| Birthplace (BPLD) | *"Where was this person born?"* |
| Language (LANGUAGED) | *"Does this person speak a language other than English at home? What is this language?"* |
| Family relationship | *Linkages of parents with children* |

Source: 2024 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Our estimates use the Census Bureau's definition of MENA groups. In some estimates, we also include groups that are not part of the bureau's MENA definition, but that some people think should be. We call these "near-MENA" groups.

We matched these groups to census and ACS data on the detailed variables for ancestry, race, birthplace and language. We counted people as MENA if they gave a MENA response on either their first or second reported ancestry. We also used the variables for individuals' parents and children based on reported family relationships to classify people as MENA.

The tables below list all of the groups available in the data and how we categorized them, as MENA or "near-MENA" for ancestry, birthplace, language and race.

## Classifying MENA or near-MENA ancestry

| MENA ancestry | | | Near-MENA ancestry |
|---|---|---|---|
| Algerian | Jordanian | Kuria Muria Islander | Turkish Cypriote |
| Egyptian | Transjordan | Palestinian | Azerbaijani |
| Libyan | Kuwaiti | Gazan | Armenian |
| Moroccan (1990-2000, ACS, PRCS) | Lebanese | West Bank | Turkish |
| Moroccan (1980) | Saudi Arabian | South Yemeni | Djibouti |
| Moor (1980) | Syrian (1990-2000, ACS, PRCS) | Aden | Somalian |
| Ifni | Syrian (1980) | United Arab Emirates | Sudanese |
| Tunisian | Latakian (1980) | Assyrian/Chaldean/ Syriac (1990-2000) | Afghan |
| North African | Jebel Druse (1980) | Assyrian | |
| Alhucemas | Yemeni | Syriac (1980, 2000) | |
| Berber | Omani | Chaldean (2000, ACS, PRCS) | |
| Rio de Oro | Muscat | Middle Eastern | |
| Bahraini | Trucial Oman | Arab | |
| Iranian | Qatar | Arabic (1990-2000, ACS, PRCS) | |
| Iraqi | Bedouin | Other Arab | |
| Israeli | Kurdish | | |

Note: Codes are as reported by IPUMS.
Source: IPUMS-USA codebook, ANCESTR1 and ANCESTR2 detailed codes.

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## Classifying MENA or near-MENA birthplace

| MENA birthplace | | | Near-MENA birthplace |
|---|---|---|---|
| Iran | Kuwait | Southwest Asia, n.e.c./n.s. | Armenia |
| Bahrain | Lebanon | Northern Africa | Azerbaijan |
| Iraq | Oman | Algeria | Afghanistan |
| Mesopotamia | Qatar | Egypt/United Arab Rep. | Turkey |
| Iraq/Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone | Saudi Arabia | Libya | Asian Turkey |
| Israel/Palestine | Syria | Morocco | Asia Minor, n.s. |
| Gaza Strip | United Arab Emirates | Tunisia | Sudan |
| Palestine | Yemen Arab Republic (North) | Western Sahara | Djibouti |
| West Bank | Yemen, PDR (South) | North Africa, n.s. | Somalia |
| Israel | Persian Gulf States, n.s. | | South Sudan |
| Jordan | Middle East, n.s. | | |

Note: Codes are as reported by IPUMS. Abbreviations are used for "not specified" (n.s.) and "not elsewhere classified" (n.e.c.).
Source: IPUMS-USA codebook, BPL detailed codes.

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## Classifying MENA or near-MENA language

| MENA language | | Near-MENA language |
|---|---|---|
| Persian, Iranian, Farsi | Libyan | Armenian |
| Persian | Levantine Arabic | Dari |
| Other Persian dialects | Near East Arabic dialect | Pashto, Afghan |
| Kurdish | Syriac, Aramaic, Chaldean | Turkish |
| Arabic | Syrian | Azerbaijani |
| Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian | Hebrew, Israeli | Nubian |
| Egyptian | Berber | Saharan |
| Iraqi | | Sudanic |

Note: Codes are as reported by IPUMS.
Source: IPUMS-USA codebook, LANGUAGE detailed codes.

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## Classifying MENA or near-MENA race

| MENA race | | | Near-MENA race |
|---|---|---|---|
| Algerian alone | Iraqi alone | Palestinian alone | Armenian alone |
| Arab alone | Israeli alone | Saudi alone | Turkish alone |
| Assyrian alone | Jordanian alone | Syrian alone | Somali alone |
| Chaldean alone | Kurdish alone | Tunisian alone | South Sudanese alone |
| Egyptian alone | Lebanese alone | Yemeni alone | Sudanese alone |
| Iranian alone | Moroccan alone | | Afghan alone |

Note: Codes are as reported by IPUMS.
Source: IPUMS-USA codebook, RACE detailed codes.

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We also estimated the number of people who are not MENA by ancestry, birthplace, language or race but who live with a parent or grandparent with one or more MENA characteristics. We identified family relationships through the IPUMS-generated variables linking parents and children.