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News

Arab Americans better educated than most in U.S.

U.S. Arabs also earn more and hold more management jobs than the average American

March 09, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) — People of Arab descent living in the United States tend to be better educated and wealthier than other Americans, the Census Bureau says.

There are about 1.2 million U.S. residents whose ancestry is solely or partly Arab, less than a half-percent of all Americans. The details in yesterday's report covered the 850,000 people who identified themselves in the 2000 census as having only Arab ancestries.

Arabs are nearly twice as likely as the typical U.S. resident to possess a college degree — 41 percent to 24 percent. Better education typically translates into higher income, and that was highlighted in the report: The median income for an Arab family was \$52,300, about \$2,300 more than the median income for all U.S. families.

The proportion of U.S. Arabs working in management jobs was higher than the U.S. average, 42 percent to 34 percent.

Since the data stops at 2000, it was not possible to measure the impact of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

Helen Samhan, executive director of the Arab American Institute Foundation, lauded the bureau for a report that shows "how integrated Arabs are in American life. It is a community that is well-rooted and well-invested in the United States."

"That is something that many Americans don't pay attention to when usually the Arab community is only covered in a negative sense," she said.

The findings cover those who responded to the 2000 census "long form" questionnaire as having an ancestry from a predominantly Arabic-speaking country or area of the world.

Arab-American groups say the 1.2 million tallied in the census is probably an undercount since many people with Arab ancestry may be reluctant to fill out government forms because they came from countries with oppressive regimes.

Lebanon was the country of origin for the most U.S. Arabs (440,000), followed by Egypt and Syria (about 143,000 each).

The population numbers, first released in 2003, showed the states with the largest Arab populations were California (191,000), New York (120,000) and Michigan (115,000).

The nation's Arab population is 57 percent male and has a median age of 33, two years younger than the U.S. population overall. Among specific groups, Palestinians were the youngest at 29, while Lebanese and Syrians were the oldest at nearly 39.

About 64 percent of residents with Egyptian ancestry had a college degree, the highest among Arab groups, followed by Lebanese (39 percent) and Palestinian (38 percent).

Lebanese residents in the United States made the most money — the median family income was nearly \$61,000, about \$3,000 more than for U.S. Syrians and \$4,000 more than for Egyptian residents.

Arab Americans better educated than most in U.S.

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