

Sarah Yee

Professor Smith

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Issue Brief: Arab Americans and Socio-Economic Class in the US

Key Words (4-6): Arab-Americans, Socio-Economic Class, Culture, Location, Education, Income

Thesis (1-2 Sentences): Given the large increase of Arab-Americans in the United States and their comparably higher socio-economic class, it brings us to the question, what factors affected this mobility? A combination of strong ethnic enclaves, and a cultural focus on education leads to higher socio-economic class among Arab-Americans.

Key Points (4-6):

- High number of Arab-Americans (3.6 million) in the US including a recent 72% population growth
- Cultural values and location (ethnic enclaves) contribute to a high focus on education
- Arab Americans in Michigan reside in 82 out of the 83 counties in the state, with more than 80 % of the state's Arab American population residing in three metro counties
- Education is very influential with 89% of Arab-Americans obtaining at least a high school diploma

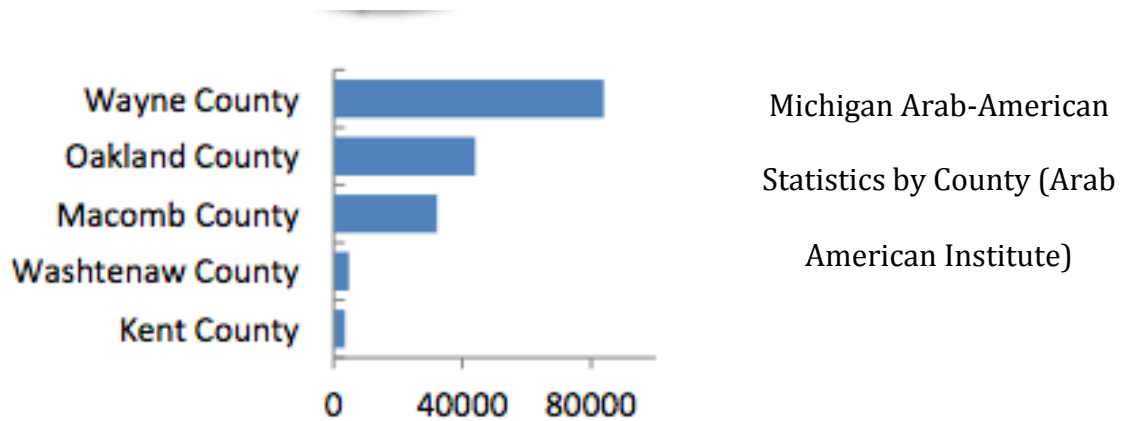
- Medium income for Arab-Americans \$56,000 versus \$51,000 for the average American

#### Issue Brief (500-700):

Arab-Americans in the United States have emerged as an influential and important part of our society. Today, there are a total of 3.6 million Arab-Americans in the US alone, reflecting a notable 72% growth between 2000 and 2010. This number has more than doubled since their population was first measured in 1980, and is among the fastest growing Arab diaspora population in the world. Given the large increase of Arab-Americans in the United States, it is also interesting to note their comparably higher socio-economic class; how has a cultural focus on education lead to a higher overall socio-economic class? To begin, we'll analyze the factors that effect socio-economic class: education and income.

Culturally, education is very important to Arab-Americans. Over 89% of Arab-Americans over 25 have obtained at least a high school diploma. More than 45% have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the American average of 28%. In terms of higher education, 18% of Arab-Americans have a post-graduate degree, which is nearly twice the American average of 10%. A focus on education can be attributed to ethnic enclaves where Arab-Americans are highly concentrated. For example, by far the most concentrated areas of Arab American settlement is in southeastern Michigan, especially the distinctly Arabic neighborhoods in the city of Dearborn. The chart below, show the distribution of Arab-Americans in the top counties of Michigan – even in this chart, the majority of Arab-Americans remain in a singular county. The high concentration is reflected not only the same state, but

the same city, and the same county, creating a tight knit ethnic enclave where community values, such as education, can flourish.

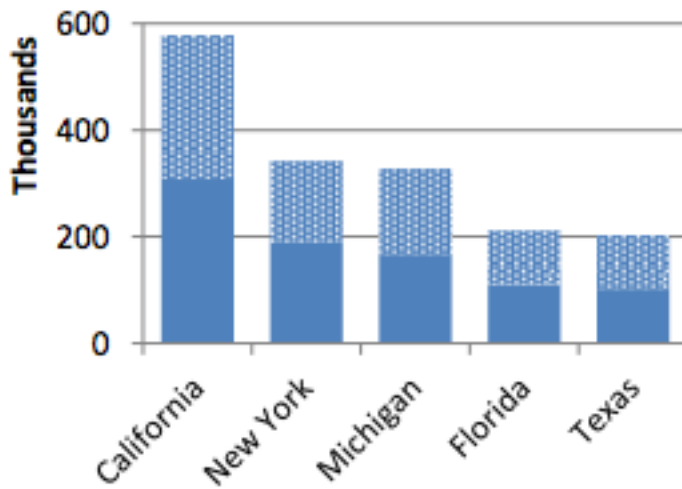


Michigan's vibrant expanse of ethnic, civic, and religious institutions have made it the new cultural and political magnet for the community nationwide. In fact, the first and only Arab-American Museum is located in Michigan. Unlike anywhere else in the country, Arab - Americans make up 20% of Dearborn's population and more than 40% of the students enrolled in public schools. The strong focus on education is reiterated through these ethnic enclaves, from immigrant parents to their children in the second generation of Arab-Americans. Higher education leads to easier mobility in terms of income, and thus, easier mobility for socio-economic class.

The medium income for Arab American households in 2008 was \$56,331 compared with \$51,369 for all households in the United States. Individually, the mean income was 27% higher than the national average of \$61,921. This is impressive, but understandable, given the focus on education, leading to an improvement of their socio-economic class. The same source does note that 13.7% of Arab-Americans also live below the poverty line, and increases to over 28% for

single mothers. However, this is close to the national average of 14.3%, and way below the American Indian and Alaska Natives (27%), African Americans (25.8%), and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (17.6%). Therefore, the medium income reflects the average Arab-American's similarity to other ethno-racial groups in terms of low socio-economic class, but is higher than the national average for high socio-economic class.

**Top Arab American States by Population, 2010**



Arab-American  
Population by Location  
(Arab American  
Institute Foundation)  
*Blue represents the  
Census Estimate, while  
the Dotted Blue is the  
adjusted total.*

A higher medium income by Arab-Americans brings to question what industries Arab-Americans choose to enter, which is also aided by their concentration in urban cities. Of the 94% of Arab-Americans who live in metropolitan areas, such as Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Washington D.C., 73% of working Arab-Americans are employed in managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative fields. 14% of Americans of Arab descent are employed in service jobs compared to 17% for Americans overall.

Overwhelming percentages, 88%, of Arab Americans work in the private sector, though 12% are government employees. Occupations are largely tied to the highly urbanized locations Arab-Americans choose to live.

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