

**AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE**  
**SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**#MYIDENTITYCAMPAIGN**

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### **Objective and Purpose**

In 2014, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (“ADC”) actively launched our My Identity Campaign to explore the complexities of identity within the Arab community and to reveal how Arab Americans identify themselves. This research initiative provides the foundation for further research on identity within our community and the need for a nationwide survey.

### **Logistics**

ADC conducted the identity survey from June 13, 2014 to June 15, 2015 to ADC membership, with part of the surveys administered at ADC 2014 Convention in Alexandria, Virginia and part of the surveys administered online. Out of all the surveys administered, sixty-four (64) surveys were completed by ADC members attendees at the ADC 2014 Annual Convention and sixty-eight (68) surveys were completed by ADC members online.

The in-person survey was in a tent card format with five (5) direct questions, biographical information, and comments section. The online-person survey was in utilized survey monkey format with five (5) direct questions and biographic information. The five (5) direct questions were:

- 1) How do you identify yourself to strangers?
- 2) How do you identify yourself at work?
- 3) How do you identify yourself with family or friends?
- 4) Do you consider yourself a minority in the United States?
- 5) Do others consider you a minority in the United States?

The biographical information asked surveyors for their age, gender, religion, country of national origin, financial class, and field of work.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the biographical information was to provide a base for comparing differences and disparities in how surveyors identified themselves depending upon biographical and socio-economic factors.

### **Summary of Survey Findings**

- surveyors were less likely to identify by religion or national origin in comparison to identifying as Arab American, American, and Arab;
- survey demonstrated that persons of Arab heritage are more likely to identify as Arab American to strangers and at work whereas surveyors of Arab heritage were more likely to identify by national origin with family and friends;

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<sup>1</sup> Field of work was only asked of surveyors whom attended the ADC 2014 National Convention, and consequently analysis on how field of work relates to identity is not included in this report.



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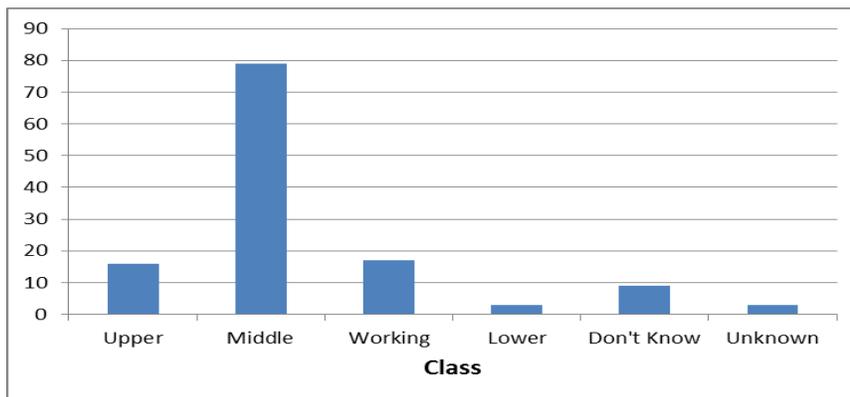
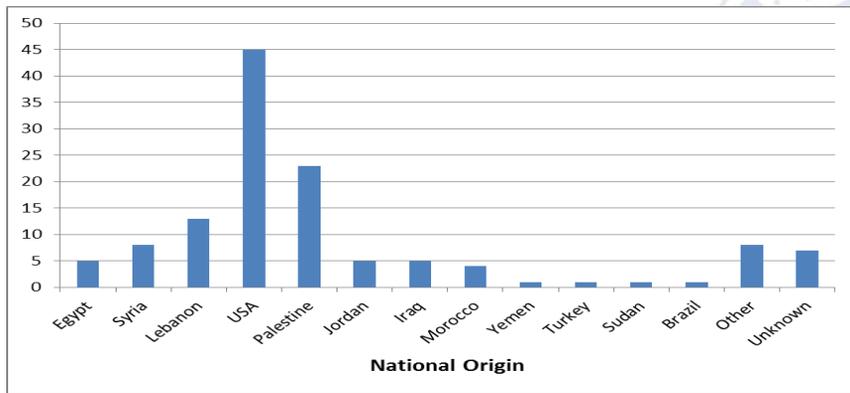
- surveyors considered “first generation Americans” tended to identify as Arab in comparison to surveyors considered “second and third generation Americans” whom tended to identify as Arab American or American reveals differences in generational perspectives on identity;
- socio-economic class was not a large determinative factor in surveyors identifying themselves as a minority; and
- Surveyors whom identified as Muslim largely identified as minority irrespective of financial class.

### Demographic of Surveyors

One-quarter (25.2%) of the surveyors were between the ages of twenty (20) and twenty-nine (29) years old. The next two largest age groups were tied with surveyors age forty (40) to forty-nine (40) and age sixty (60) to sixty-nine (69) each at 15.7% percent, and surveyors age thirty (30) to thirty-nine (39) and age seventy (70) to seventy-nine (79) each at 14.9%.

There was a difference between the surveyors’ gender, with 45.6% of the surveyors identifying as male, and 52.8% identifying as female. There was also a difference between the surveyors’ religious beliefs, with 46.5% identifying as Muslim, 39.4% identifying as Christian, 13.4% identifying as other, and 0.007% identifying as Jewish.

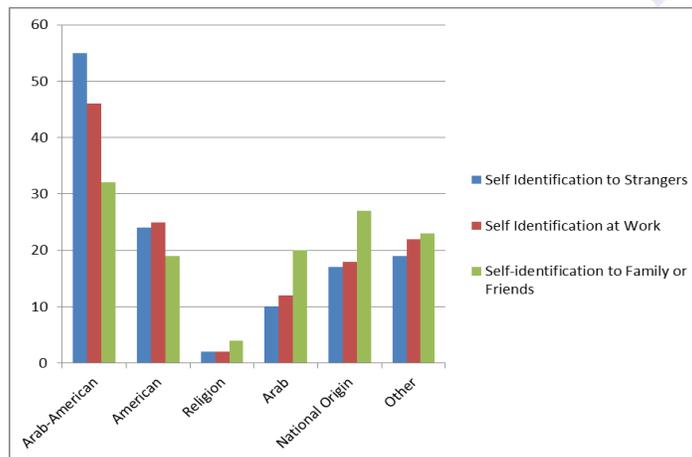
Surveyor’s national origin represented a diverse background of countries, but overwhelmingly the national origin of majority of surveyors was the United States. Seven (7) surveyors national origin were either unknown or unidentified. See Exhibits below:



### *Self-Identification Factor*

The graph below details how surveyors identified themselves to strangers, at work, and with family and/or friends. The graph denotes that surveyor’s identity changed depending upon the relationship with whom the surveyor interacts with. For example, 41.6% of surveyors identified as Arab American to strangers, but only 24.2% of those surveyors identified as Arab American to family and friends. Overall, the survey demonstrates that the surveyors were less likely to identify by religion or national origin in comparison to identification as Arab American, American, and Arab. This survey demonstrated that persons of Arab heritage are more likely to identify as Arab American to strangers and at work whereas surveyors of Arab heritage were more likely to identify by national origin with family and friends.

Based on this survey, national origin and religion has seems to be less of a determinative factor of identity within the community of persons with Arab descent. Additionally, it must be taken into consideration that national origin may become less determinative due to the increasing inclusion of Arab communities outside of the Levant and from North Africa, as well as due to the political climate of anti-Arab sentiment, xenophobia, and Islamophobia.



### *Identity In Relation to Age*

Generally, age is an important factor in how person identify themselves, because of the differences in the culture between the generations. Additionally, first generation Americans with Arab in comparison to second and third generation Americans, and Arab Americans not born and raised in the United States may have different perspectives of their identity. As discussed above, a large percentage of the surveyors were between the ages of twenty (20) to twenty-nine (29) years old, and the smallest percentage of surveyors were age group of eighty (80) years old and over.

The three (3) graphs provided in this section reveal a number of key factors of the surveyors. First, religion does not seem to be a determinative factor in identity or surveyors steer away from identifying by religion for personal or bias reasons. No surveyors identified by religion with strangers, while in environments where surveyors may have some comfort level, with friends or family and at work, a few surveyors did identify by religion.

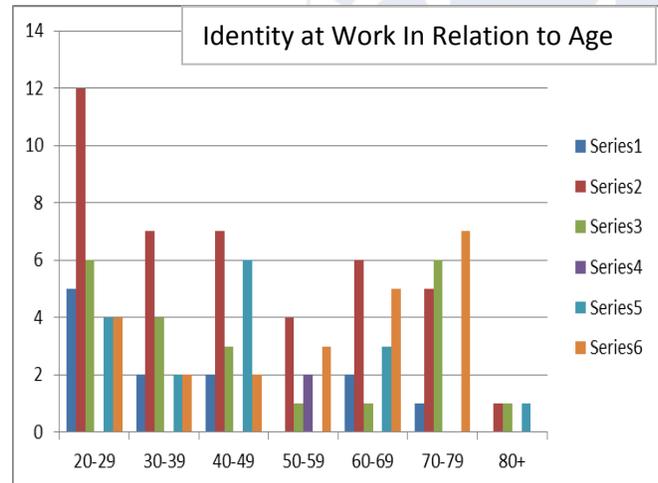
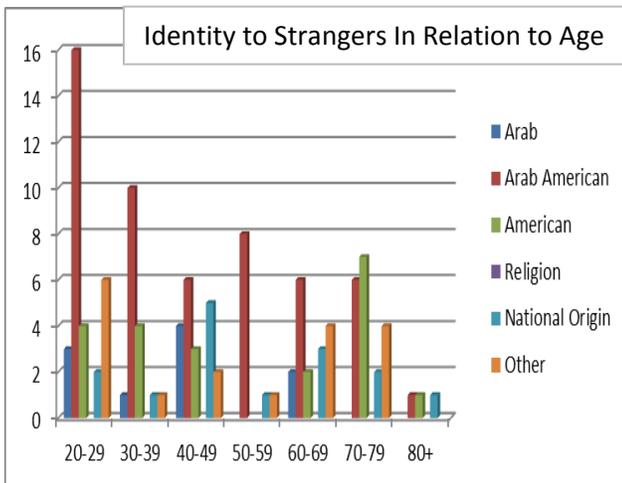


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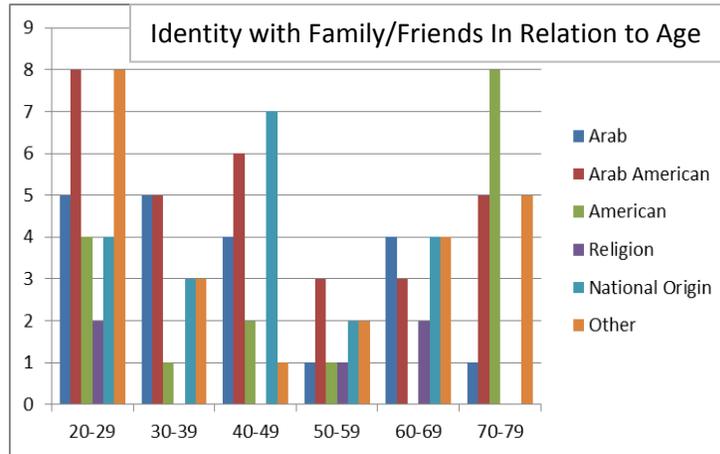
Second, Arab American identity seems to be an increasing acceptance among Arab Americans. 43% of all surveyors identified as Arab American to strangers, 36% of all surveyors identifying as Arab American at work, and 25% of surveyors identifying as Arab American with family or friends. The next common identification was generally identification by national origin heritage or American.<sup>2</sup> This reflects journals and articles denoting that young persons of Arab descent are leaning toward a homogenous identity.

Surveyors between the age of twenty (20) and twenty-nine (29) years old identity relatively remains the same whether they are at work and with strangers. Identification of twenty (20) and twenty-nine (29) years old surveyors changes when it comes to identification around family. This reflects the idea that there is less need for identification among persons whom you believe will not judge you, and/or you feel you do not have to defend your identity. For example, 20 -29 year olds, identified as Arab American with strangers (16 surveyors), Arab American at work (12 surveyors), then identified as Arab American with family or friends (8 surveyors). This is also demonstrated with 30-39 year olds, identified as Arab American with strangers (10 surveyors), Arab American at work (7 surveyors), and Arab American with family or friends (5 surveyors).

Third, persons over fifty (50) years old of Arab descent are straying away from being placed in a particular “box.” Surveyors between the ages of fifty (50) years old and fifty-nine (59) years old identity as Arab, Arab American, American, and by religion or national origin changes depending on if they are at work, with strangers, or with family and friends. This age group of surveyors do not identify by national origin at work. This age group of surveyors do not identify by religion to strangers.



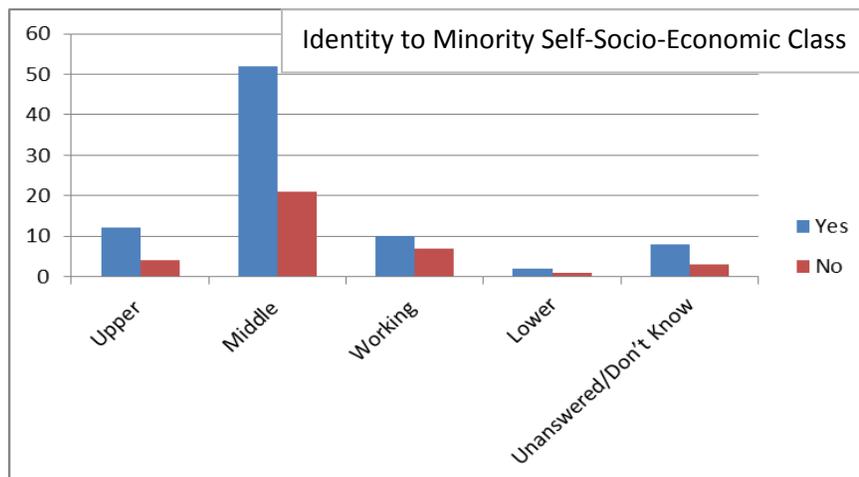
<sup>2</sup> Surveyors identified as American with strangers (18.9%), work (19.7%), family or friends (14.9%). Surveyors identified by national origin with strangers (13.4%), work (14.2%), family or friends (21%). It is important to note that there were significant surveyors whom identified as mixed, and/or subgroup of Arab ethnicity and/or country of national origin. For example, surveyors identified under the following: Arab Mexican, Afro Arab, Chaldean.

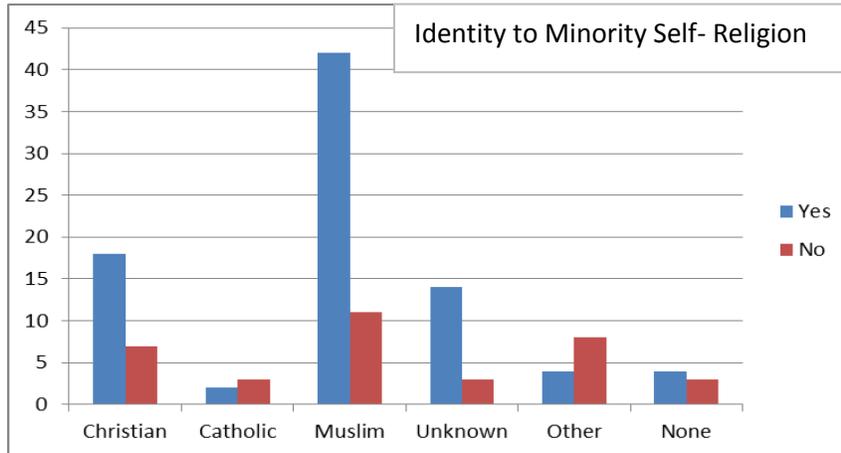


### Identity In Relation to Socio-Economic Class

Out of the 127 surveyors, sixteen (16) identified as upper class, seventy-nine (79) identified as middle class, seventeen (17) identified as working class, and three (3) identified as lower class. Nine (9) surveyors did not know which socio-economic class to identify as and three (3) surveyors socio-economic class is unknown.

The analysis between identify by socio-economic class and identity of self as a minority revealed that socio-economic class was not a large determinative factor in surveyors identifying themselves as a minority. This is based on the data showing that over 50% of surveyors in each socio-economic class identified themselves as a minority. Approximately 75% of surveyors whom identified as middle class also identified as a minority. There was a slight decrease in the number of middle class surveyors whom believed others identified them as minority. The survey also revealed that surveyors whom identified as Muslim largely identified as minority irrespective of financial class.





### Response to Comments on In-Person Survey

The comments section of the survey of the “Identity Questionnaire” revealed many concerns that largely impact identity not only within the Arab community but also how persons and/or entities outside the Arab community categorize or label persons of Arab descent. A common concern was that Arab Americans, particularly surveyors under the age of forty (40) identify as American first and that is influenced by personal inhibitions of other’s prejudice.

A common theme, not exclusive to the community of persons with Arab descent, that how surveyors identified themselves changed depending upon the identity of the persons whom they interacted with. Meaning, surveyors generally identified as American to actual and/or perceived Caucasian persons, and identified as Arab to others of similar descent.

The survey comments also revealed that surveyors identified as American, but the vocalization of their identity would change to Arab when it came to matters of United States Foreign Policy, and interactions with the Middle East and Arab nations.

### In-Person Survey Disparities

The results of ADC’s “Identity Questionnaire” Survey must be weighed in accordance with the following disparities for the in-person survey:

- Six (6) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, more than one box was checked for each of the five (5) direct questions on the survey
  - ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes American and Arab were checked for the direct questions one (1) and two (2);
  - ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes Arab American and Arab were checked for direct question one (1);
  - ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes Arab and National Origin were checked for the direct questions one (1), two (2), and three (3);
  - ❖



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- ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes Arab American and National Origin were checked for direct questions one (1), two (2) and three (3);
  - ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes Arab American and National Origin were checked for direct questions one (1) and two (2), and boxes Arab and National Origin were checked for direct question three (3); and
  - ❖ One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, boxes Arab American and Religion are checked for direct questions, one (1), two (2), and three (3).
- Four (4) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, national origin was not provided
  - Five (5) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, religion was not provided
  - One (1) out of the sixty-four (64) surveys, biographical information was not provided

### Online Survey Disparities

The results of ADC's "Identity Questionnaire" Survey must be weighed in accordance with the following disparities for the online survey where one (1) out of the sixty-eight (68) surveys on different separate surveys, a box was left unchecked:

- Identification to family or friends
- Identification as minority to self
- Identification as minority to others
- Identification at work
- Religious identification
- Financial class identification

If you have any questions regarding this survey,<sup>3</sup> and/or interested in supporting future initiatives like the #MyIdentityCampaign, please contact the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee at 202-244-2990 or ADC Legal and Policy Department at [legal@adc.org](mailto:legal@adc.org).

If you are interested in supporting more intensive research on issues and concerns that directly impact the Arab American community, please contact the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Research Institute (ADC-RI). More information can be found on our website at <http://www.adc.org/adcri/>.

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<sup>3</sup> \*ADC Staff Attorney Yolanda Rondon prepared this report in April 2016, and prepared the survey factors and questions.