

What the 2020 Census Tells Us About Middle Eastern North African (MENA) Children

By

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One of the most important features of the recent U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposal to change the way people are classified by race and ethnicity in the federal statistical system (including the census) is the addition of a category for the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) population (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 2023). The proposed changes by OMB follow widespread increased interest in how race and ethnicity are measured in the U.S. (Prewitt 2013; Frey, 2015; Alba 2022; Beveridge and Anderson 2023).

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released a file with the first data on the MENA population from the 2020 Census. This paper uses data from that file to examine the demographics of MENA children (population under age 18) in the 2020 Census. More information about the MENA population is available from the U.S. Census Bureau (2023a; 2023b;2023c). The goal of this paper is to provide a demographic description of the MENA child population based on data currently available from the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Decennial Census only collected data on a couple of demographic characteristics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, relationship to householder) as well as tenure and location. The only 2020 Census data available at this time for the MENA population is sex by age and location. More demographic data on the MENA population from the

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2020 Census will become available in Census Bureau files that are scheduled to be released in September 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023e).

Furthermore, the amount of age detail provided for a group, or a location, depends on the size of MENA populations in each group and in each location (like states and counties). So, detailed data may be available for some MENA groups and some locations, but not for other MENA groups and/or other locations. Relatively little child data is available for the MENA population below the state level.

Data for the MENA population in this paper are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A, released in September 2023. The data shown here were taken from the Census Bureau website at data.census.gov.

The Census Bureau changed the way they collected, coded, and reported data on race and ethnicity in the 2020 Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2021a). These changes made a big difference in the race and ethnic data reported in 2020 compared to the data prior to 2020 (O'Hare 2023). But the changes also provided a way to get a lot more detail about how Americans identify themselves.

Data on the Total MENA Population

Before looking at data for MENA children, we provide a little background on the total MENA population (all ages), since Census Bureau data have seldom been available for this population before.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2023a, page 1), "The Census Bureau's classification for the MENA population is geographically based and includes Arabic-

speaking groups such as Egyptian and Jordanian and non-Arabic speaking groups such as Iranian and Israeli.” Currently individuals who identify as MENA are classified as “white” in the Census. Consequently, in Census Bureau terms, the MENA population is currently seen as a subcategory of the “white” population based on standards adopted by OMB in 1997 (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1997). If the current OMB proposal is adopted, MENA would be a separate category from white.

Census data on race and ethnicity are reported in two different ways. Data for the category labeled “MENA Alone” means the respondent only selected the MENA category. Data for the category labeled, “MENA Alone or in Combination” means the respondent selected MENA but they may also have selected one or more other race or ethnicity in addition. MENA Alone or in Combination is the most inclusive definition of the MENA population. Unless stated otherwise when the term MENA is used in this paper it means MENA Alone or in Combination .

Collectively, the 2020 Census shows the MENA (Alone or in Combination) population is 3,522,478 million, which means the MENA population makes up about 1.1 percent of the total U.S population. The MENA alone population was 2,544,154.

Keep in mind that these figures are derived from “write-in” responses to the 2020 Census. There was not a check box for the MENA population in the 2020 Census like there was for other groups such as Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. It is possible the number of people identifying themselves as part of the MENA population would be higher if there was a check box for the MENA population.

Also, note that the MENA designation is not a group that has historically been collected in federal statistics, so some people are probably not familiar with the

category. Moving forward, education and community outreach may increase awareness of this choice within the MENA community and results in higher numbers of people identifying as MENA.

The data provided in this report are based on the Census Bureau definition of the MENA population. The groups the Census Bureau includes in the MENA population are listed in Appendix A. Another list of the people who belong in the MENA population is provided by the Arab American Institute and shown in Appendix B. Some of the groups in Appendix B are not included in Appendix A, and some of the groups listed in Appendix A are not included in Appendix B.²

However, the 2020 Census figure is very similar to the figure from the Census Bureau's National Content Test conducted in 2015 (which had a MENA check box), where the MENA population was about one percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2017).

As stated earlier, the only demographic characteristics available for the MENA population at this time are sex, age, and location. The percentage of males in the MENA population and examined first.

Data show that 51.7 percent of the MENA population were males compared to 49.1 percent of the overall U.S. population. This could be related to differences in age structure because females are a larger share of older cohorts, and a smaller share of

² The Census Bureau definition of MENA groups included the phrase, "Other Middle Eastern or North African Responses, Not Elsewhere Classified," I have been unable to find out what groups are included in this category. It is possible some or all of the groups listed in the Arab American Institute definition are also included in the Census definition.

the MENA population is in the older age groups. Also, the sex ratio is similar to other populations with a lot of recently arrived immigrants.

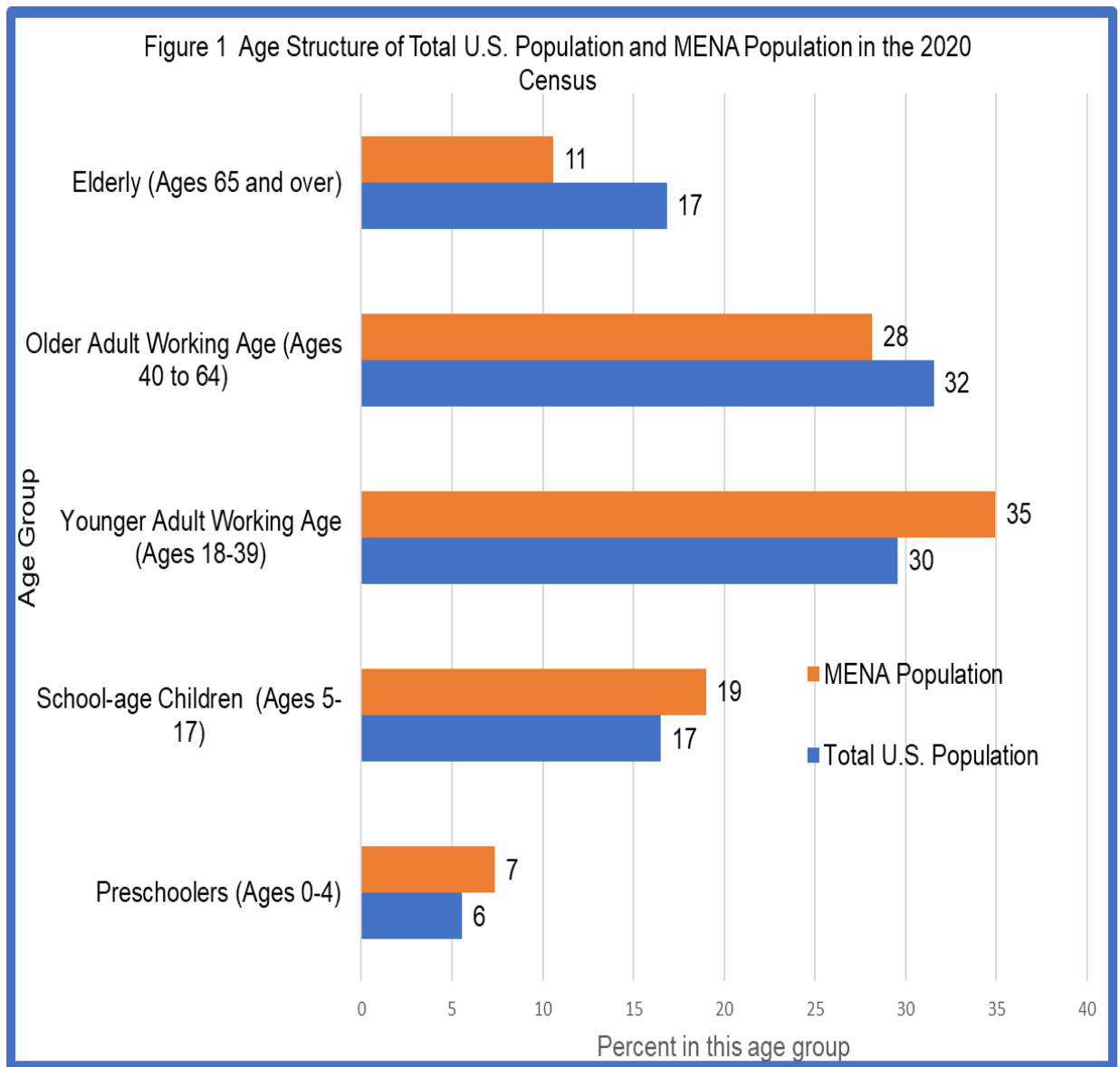
Figure 1 shows the age structure of the MENA population compared to the total U.S. population. The MENA population is slightly over-represented in the younger ages but under-represented in the older ages. Figure 1 shows 26 percent of the MENA population are children (under age 18) compared to 23 percent of the total U.S. population. The MENA population is particularly under-represented in the population age 65 and over. Only 11 percent of the MENA population is in this age category compared to 17 percent of the Total U.S population. This is consistent with a population that has a relatively high concentration of recent immigrants.

It is noteworthy that compared to the total U.S. population, a disproportionately large share of the MENA population are children. The relatively high number of children in the MENA population could be related to a higher birth rate, or it could be related to a relatively high share of MENA women in the child-bearing age groups, or both.

As far I know, there is no birth rate data for the MENA population in the U.S. However, one can construct a child/women ratio from the Census data and that measure is sometimes used as a proxy for birth rates. The child/women ratio is defined as “the ratio of the number of children aged 0 to 4 to the number of women aged 15 to 49 reported in the Census”. (Siegel and Swanson 2004, page 409).

The child/women ratio for the MENA population is 0.33 compared to 0.28 for the total U.S. population, indicating a higher birth rate for the MENA population.

The proportion of MENA women in their childbearing ages (15 to 49) is 46 percent compared to 39 percent for the total U.S. population. Again, this is typical of U.S. populations with high immigration rates.



Since the MENA population is currently coded as white by the Census Bureau, MENA children are typically not included in statistics on minorities. Young children are already the most racially and ethnically diverse age group without the inclusion of MENA children as a race/ethnicity (O'Hare and Mayol-Garcia 2023). Since young children make up a disproportionately large share of the MENA population, including the MENA population as a separate category will add to the diversity of young children population.

Table 1 shows the total MENA population for each state (the District of Columbia -DC- is included as a state). The MENA population is not spread evenly across the country. Among the states, the total numbers range from a high of 740,219 in California to a low of 1,336 in Wyoming.

While the MENA population is found in every state, the MENA population is highly clustered in a few states. Table 1 shows that more than half (52 percent) are located in just five states (California, Michigan, New York, Texas, and Florida). More than one out of every five MENA individuals (21 percent) are located in California.

Rank		Total MENA Population	Cumulative Number	Cumulative Percent of Total U.S. MENA Population
1	California	740,219	740,219	21
2	Michigan	310,087	1,050,306	30
3	New York	304,739	1,355,045	38
4	Texas	249,362	1,604,407	46
5	Florida	204,069	1,808,476	51
6	Illinois	163,426	1,971,902	56
7	New Jersey	162,988	2,134,890	61
8	Virginia	128,643	2,263,533	64
9	Ohio	114,024	2,377,557	67
10	Massachusetts	113,892	2,491,449	71
11	Pennsylvania	110,941	2,602,390	74
12	Arizona	71,183	2,673,573	76
13	North Carolina	67,455	2,741,028	78
14	Maryland	63,712	2,804,740	80
15	Washington	63,548	2,868,288	81
16	Georgia	59,996	2,928,284	83
17	Tennessee	55,290	2,983,574	85
18	Colorado	42,612	3,026,186	86
19	Minnesota	35,786	3,061,972	87
20	Connecticut	35,560	3,097,532	88
21	Missouri	33,100	3,130,632	89
22	Oregon	31,785	3,162,417	90
23	Indiana	31,499	3,193,916	91
24	Louisiana	28,442	3,222,358	91
25	Nevada	27,549	3,249,907	92
26	Wisconsin	24,955	3,274,862	93
27	Kentucky	22,023	3,296,885	94
28	South Carolina	20,502	3,317,387	94
29	Oklahoma	19,406	3,336,793	95
30	Alabama	18,878	3,355,671	95
31	Kansas	16,015	3,371,686	96
32	Utah	15,710	3,387,396	96
33	Nebraska	12,986	3,400,382	97
34	District of Columbia	11,578	3,411,960	97
35	New Hampshire	11,452	3,423,412	97
36	Iowa	11,258	3,434,670	98
37	Rhode Island	11,014	3,445,684	98
38	New Mexico	10,232	3,455,916	98
39	Mississippi	9,911	3,465,827	98
40	Arkansas	8,088	3,473,915	99
41	West Virginia	8,053	3,481,968	99
42	Maine	7,509	3,489,477	99
43	Idaho	6,598	3,496,075	99
44	Delaware	6,087	3,502,162	99
45	Hawaii	4,798	3,506,960	100
46	Vermont	3,654	3,510,614	100
47	North Dakota	3,004	3,513,618	100
48	Montana	2,930	3,516,548	100
49	South Dakota	2,473	3,519,021	100
50	Alaska	1,993	3,521,014	100
51	Wyoming	1,336	3,522,350	100
	Total	3,522,350		

Table 2 shows the states ranked by the percent the MENA population makes up of each state's population. The state where the MENA population makes up the largest percentage of the state population is Michigan where the 2020 Census shows 3.08 percent of the state population are MENA.

There is a heavy concentration of the MENA population in the Detroit area. The 2020 Census indicates a MENA population of 123,972 in Wayne County, Michigan, where Detroit is located. The MENA enclave has existed in the Detroit area for several decades.

The state where the MENA population was the smallest percent of their population was Wyoming where only 0.23 percent of the state are MENA.

The U. S. Census Bureau (2023a, Table 1) shows the MENA population in 26 MENA subgroups. In terms of alone or in combination category, the subgroup with the largest number is Lebanese (685,672) followed by Iranian (568,564).

Rank*	State	Total Population from 2020 Census	Total MENA Population	MENA Population as a Percent of State Total Population
1	Michigan	10,077,331	310,087	3.08
2	California	39,538,223	740,219	1.87
3	New Jersey	9,288,994	162,988	1.75
4	District of Columbia	689,545	11,578	1.68
5	Massachusetts	7,029,917	113,892	1.62
6	New York	20,201,249	304,739	1.51
7	Virginia	8,631,393	128,643	1.49
8	Illinois	12,812,508	163,426	1.28
9	Maryland	6,177,224	63,712	1.03
10	Rhode Island	1,097,379	11,014	1.00
11	Arizona	7,151,502	71,183	1.00
12	Connecticut	3,605,944	35,560	0.99
13	Ohio	11,799,448	114,024	0.97
14	Florida	21,538,187	204,069	0.95
15	Nevada	3,104,614	27,549	0.89
16	Texas	29,145,505	249,362	0.86
17	Pennsylvania	13,002,700	110,941	0.85
18	New Hampshire	1,377,529	11,452	0.83
19	Washington	7,705,281	63,548	0.82
20	Tennessee	6,910,840	55,290	0.80
21	Oregon	4,237,256	31,785	0.75
22	Colorado	5,773,714	42,612	0.74
23	Nebraska	1,961,504	12,986	0.66
24	North Carolina	10,439,388	67,455	0.65
25	Minnesota	5,706,494	35,786	0.63
26	Delaware	989,948	6,087	0.61
27	Louisiana	4,657,757	28,442	0.61
28	Vermont	643,077	3,654	0.57
29	Georgia	10,711,908	59,996	0.56
30	Maine	1,362,359	7,509	0.55
31	Kansas	2,937,880	16,015	0.55
32	Missouri	6,154,913	33,100	0.54
33	Oklahoma	3,959,353	19,406	0.49
34	Kentucky	4,505,836	22,023	0.49
35	New Mexico	2,117,522	10,232	0.48
36	Utah	3,271,616	15,710	0.48
37	Indiana	6,785,528	31,499	0.46
38	West Virginia	1,793,716	8,053	0.45
39	Wisconsin	5,893,718	24,955	0.42
40	South Carolina	5,118,425	20,502	0.40
41	North Dakota	779,094	3,004	0.39
42	Alabama	5,024,279	18,878	0.38
43	Idaho	1,839,106	6,598	0.36
44	Iowa	3,190,369	11,258	0.35
45	Mississippi	2,961,279	9,911	0.33
46	Hawaii	1,455,271	4,798	0.33
47	South Dakota	886,667	2,473	0.28
48	Alaska	733,391	1,993	0.27
49	Montana	1,084,225	2,930	0.27
50	Arkansas	3,011,524	8,088	0.27
51	Wyoming	576,851	1,336	0.23
	Total U.S.	331,449,281	3,522,350	1.06

* Ranks based on unrounded figures

2020 Census Data on MENA Children

Children are defined here as the population under age 18. This is a commonly used threshold. To the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first look at the MENA child population based on the 2020 Census.

Overall, slightly more than one-quarter (26 percent) of the MENA population was under age 18 in the 2020 Census compared to 23 percent of the total U.S population.

There is very little difference in the sex ratio of MENA children compared to the total U.S. population. There are 475,668 MENA males under age 18 compared to 452,350 MENA females. In other words, 51.3 percent of MENA children are male compared to 51.1 percent for the total U.S population.

For young children (ages 0 to 4) there are 132,132 MENA males compared to 126,652 MENA females. In other words, 51.1 percent of MENA children are male compared to 51.0 percent for the total U.S population.

There are nearly one million (928,018) MENA children in the U.S. The national age breakdown for MENA children compared to the total U.S. population is shown in Table 3 for a few key age groups of children. Table 3 shows 28 percent of MENA children are in the youngest age category (ages 0 to 4) compared to 25 percent of all children in this age category. On the other hand, 16 percent of MENA children are in the oldest child age category (ages 15 to 17) compared to 18 percent of all children.

Table 3 Total U.S. Population and MENA Population of Children Broken Out by Detailed Age of Children in the 2020 Census						
	U.S. Total Population			U.S. MENA Population		
	Number of Children in Age Group	Percent of All Children in This Age Group		Number of Children in Age Group	Percent of MENA Children in This Age Group	Percent of Age Group That Are MENA Children
Under 5 years	18,400,235	25		258,784	28	1.4
5 to 9 years	20,130,423	28		260,361	28	1.3
10 to 14 years	21,627,830	30		258,527	28	1.2
15 to 17 years	12,947,512	18		150,346	16	1.2
Total Children	73,106,000	100		928,018	100	1.3

Table 3 also shows the MENA child population as a percent of the total US population for several age groups under age 18. The percentage is slightly higher for the youngest age group (1.4 percent for age 0 to 4, compared to 1.2 percent for the population ages 10 to 17).

MENA Children (under age 18) by State

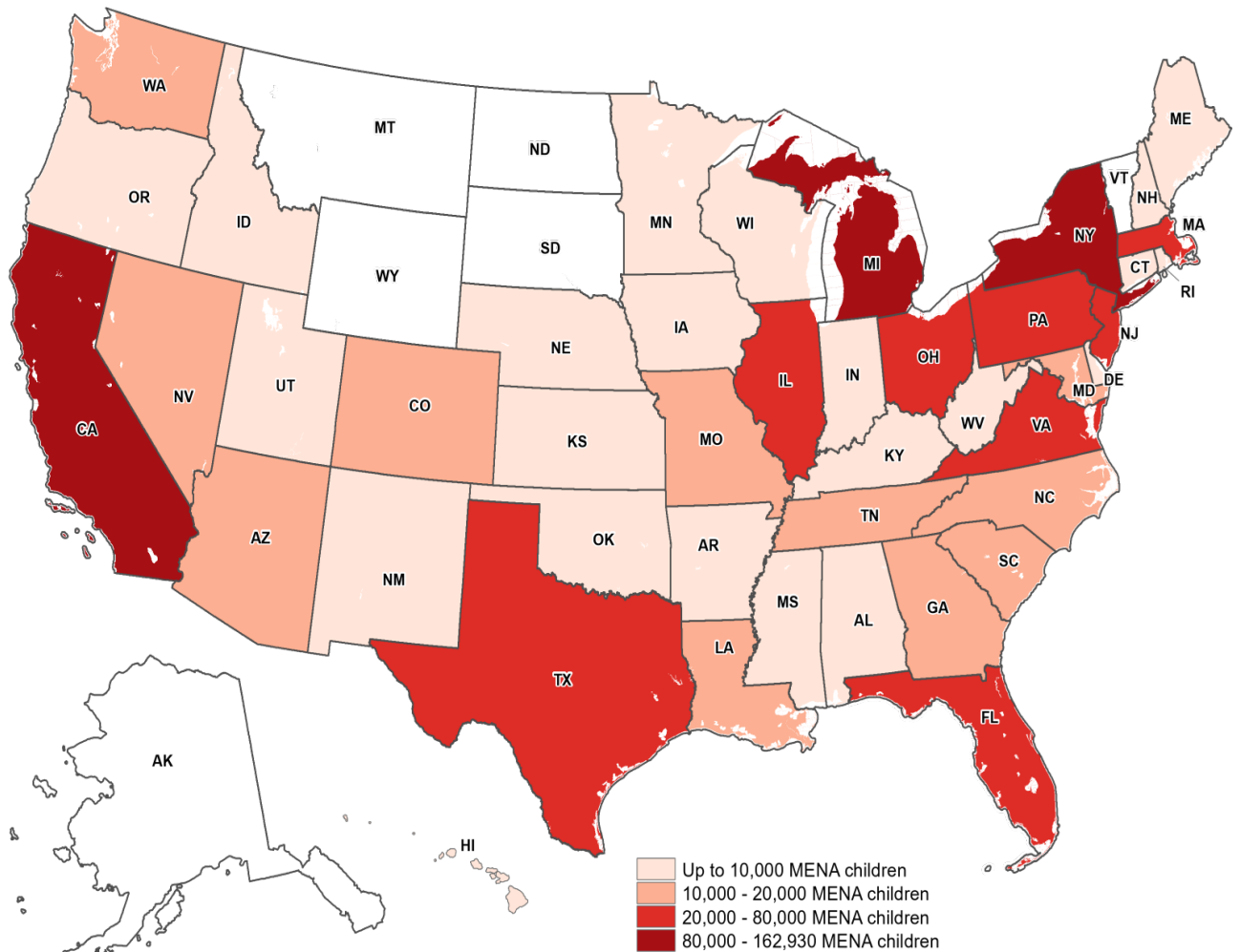
Table 4 shows the states ranked by the size of the MENA child population.³ The figures range from 163,930 in California to 1,267 in Hawaii. Like the total MENA population, most MENA children are clustered in a few states. Almost half (49.8 percent) of all MENA children are found in just five states (California, Michigan, New York, Texas, and Florida). Five states are not included in Table 4 because they did not have a large enough MENA population to allow the Census Bureau to provide data by

³ The Disclosure Avoidance System used by the Census Bureau in the 2020 Census relied heavily on a method called Differential Privacy which was applied to each state population independently of the national total, so the states do not total to the national number.

ages. Furthermore, the number of age categories shown for a group is based on the size of the group, so some states have more detailed age breakdowns than others (U.S. Census Bureau 2023d).

Map 1 shows states color-coded by the size of the MENA child population.

Map 1. States Color-Coded by Number of MENA Children



SOURCE: Author's Analysis of Census Bureau Data

Blank states on the map have no data

Rank		Total MENA Population	Number of MENA Children Under Age 18	Cumulative Number fo MENA Children	Cumulative Percent of All U.S. MENA Children.
1	California	740,219	162,930	162,930	17.8
2	Michigan	310,087	94,656	257,586	28.2
3	New York	304,739	82,295	339,881	37.2
4	Texas	249,362	67,016	406,897	44.5
5	Florida	204,069	47,750	454,647	49.8
6	Illinois	163,426	46,229	500,876	54.8
7	New Jersey	162,988	45,718	546,594	59.8
8	Ohio	114,024	32,590	579,184	63.4
9	Pennsylvania	110,941	26,203	605,387	66.2
10	Virginia	128,643	24,747	630,134	69.0
11	Massachusetts	113,892	22,454	652,588	71.4
12	Tennessee	55,290	17,252	669,840	73.3
13	Louisiana	28,442	16,142	685,982	75.1
14	South Carolina	20,502	15,811	701,793	76.8
15	North Carolina	67,455	15,525	717,318	78.5
16	Nevada	27,549	15,507	732,825	80.2
17	Arizona	71,183	15,289	748,114	81.9
18	Maryland	63,712	14,048	762,162	83.4
19	Missouri	33,100	13,507	775,669	84.9
20	Colorado	42,612	12,755	788,424	86.3
21	Georgia	59,996	12,164	800,588	87.6
22	Washington	63,548	11,260	811,848	88.8
23	Connecticut	35,560	9,814	821,662	89.9
24	Kentucky	22,023	9,764	831,426	91.0
25	Minnesota	35,786	9,061	840,487	92.0
26	Indiana	31,499	8,948	849,435	93.0
27	Oregon	31,785	7,156	856,591	93.7
28	Alabama	18,878	5,285	861,876	94.3
29	Oklahoma	19,406	5,178	867,054	94.9
30	Wisconsin	24,955	4,753	871,807	95.4
31	Nebraska	12,986	4,614	876,421	95.9
32	Utah	15,710	4,588	881,009	96.4
33	Kansas	16,015	4,544	885,553	96.9
34	Mississippi	9,911	3,206	888,759	97.3
35	Iowa	11,258	3,204	891,963	97.6
36	New Hampshire	11,452	3,088	895,051	97.9
37	Rhode Island	11,014	2,758	897,809	98.2
38	New Mexico	10,232	2,740	900,549	98.5
39	Maine	7,509	2,306	902,855	98.8
40	Arkansas	8,088	2,291	905,146	99.1
41	Idaho	6,598	2,047	907,193	99.3
42	West Virginia	8,053	1,938	909,131	99.5
43	Delaware	6,087	1,811	910,942	99.7
44	District of Columbia	11,578	1,615	912,557	99.9
45	Hawaii	4,798	1,267	913,824	100.0
	Total in this table*		913,824		
No data were available for the MENA population under age 18 for six states that had less than 5,000 total MENA population in the 2020 Census.					
* This is the total used to calculate cumulative percent.					

Nationwide, the number of MENA children under age 18 made up 26 percent of the MENA population. But there is a lot of variation across the states. Table 5 shows the states ranked by the percent of the MENA population that was under age 18 in the 2020 Census.

Recall that Differential Privacy was applied to these figures, so small differences between states may reflect the injection of errors by the Census Bureau to protect privacy rather than real differences between states. In addition, some of the percentages are based on small numbers, and when small numbers are turned into percentages, it can exaggerate differences.

The states range from a high of 77 percent in South Carolina to a low of 14 percent in the District of Columbia. Again, Differential Privacy was applied to these data, and that may result in some unrealistic numbers for some states...especially those with a small MENA population (U.S. Census Bureau 2023d). In this context, note the states with a very high percentage of the MENA population under age 18 have relatively small MENA populations.

Rank*		Total MENA Population	Number of MENA Children Under Age 18	Percent Under age 18
1	South Carolina	20,502	15,811	77
2	Louisiana	28,442	16,142	57
3	Nevada	27,549	15,507	56
4	Kentucky	22,023	9,764	44
5	Missouri	33,100	13,507	41
6	Nebraska	12,986	4,614	36
7	Mississippi	9,911	3,206	32
8	Tennessee	55,290	17,252	31
9	Idaho	6,598	2,047	31
10	Maine	7,509	2,306	31
11	Michigan	310,087	94,656	31
12	Colorado	42,612	12,755	30
13	Delaware	6,087	1,811	30
14	Utah	15,710	4,588	29
15	Ohio	114,024	32,590	29
16	Iowa	11,258	3,204	28
17	Indiana	31,499	8,948	28
18	Kansas	16,015	4,544	28
19	Arkansas	8,088	2,291	28
20	Illinois	163,426	46,229	28
21	New Jersey	162,988	45,718	28
22	Alabama	18,878	5,285	28
23	Connecticut	35,560	9,814	28
24	New York	304,739	82,295	27
25	New Hampshire	11,452	3,088	27
26	Texas	249,362	67,016	27
27	New Mexico	10,232	2,740	27
28	Oklahoma	19,406	5,178	27
29	Hawaii	4,798	1,267	26
30	Minnesota	35,786	9,061	25
31	Rhode Island	11,014	2,758	25
32	West Virginia	8,053	1,938	24
33	Pennsylvania	110,941	26,203	24
34	Florida	204,069	47,750	23
35	North Carolina	67,455	15,525	23
36	Oregon	31,785	7,156	23
37	Maryland	63,712	14,048	22
38	California	740,219	162,930	22
39	Arizona	71,183	15,289	21
40	Georgia	59,996	12,164	20
41	Massachusetts	113,892	22,454	20
42	Virginia	128,643	24,747	19
43	Wisconsin	24,955	4,753	19
44	Washington	63,548	11,260	18
45	District of Columbia	11,578	1,615	14

* Ranks based on unrounded data

No data were available for the MENA population under age 18 for six states that had less than 5,000 total MENA population in the 2020 Census.

MENA Children Under Age 5

Based on nationwide data, there were 258,784 MENA preschoolers counted in the 2020 Census, however, the number of young (ages 0 to 4) MENA children are unavailable for many states. The Census Bureau did not provide the number of MENA children under ages 5 for many states with relatively small MENA populations.

Table 6 shows states ranked by the size of the MENA population under age 5. The state with the largest number of MENA children under age five is California (44,691) and among the states with data, South Carolina had the fewest (1,613).

Table 6. States Ranked by the Number of MENA Children Under Age 5 in the 2020 Census		
Rank	State	Total MENA Children Under Age 5
1	California	44,691
2	Michigan	25,663
3	New York	23,236
4	Texas	18,830
5	Illinois	12,965
6	Florida	12,917
7	New Jersey	12,394
8	Ohio	9,675
9	Virginia	9,411
10	Pennsylvania	8,785
11	Massachusetts	8,170
12	North Carolina	5,388
13	Washington	5,038
14	Arizona	4,793
15	Tennessee	4,750
16	Maryland	4,399
17	Georgia	4,246
18	Colorado	3,182
19	Minnesota	3,143
20	Missouri	2,974
21	Louisiana	2,887
22	Connecticut	2,835
23	Indiana	2,591
24	Oregon	2,258
25	Wisconsin	2,024
26	Kentucky	1,814
27	Nevada	1,649
28	South Carolina	1,613

The number of MENA children under age 5 was not available for many states.

MENA Children by Subgroup

Within the MENA population the Census Bureau identifies 26 subgroups and provides detailed age data for most groups. For some of the smaller MENA groups the Census Bureau provided data for the population under age 18 but not for the population under age 5.

Table 7 shows the MENA subgroups, for which there are data, ranked by the size of the MENA child population. The subgroup with the most children under age 18 is Lebanese (175,227) followed by Egyptians (112,933).

Rank	Group *	Total Population in Group	Total under age 18 in subgroup	Percent of Subgroup under age 18
1	Lebanese	685,672	175,227	26
2	Egyptian	396,854	112,933	28
3	Iranian	568,564	98,510	17
4	Arab	238,921	79,991	33
5	Iraqi	212,875	60,637	28
6	Syrian	222,196	59,325	27
7	Palestinian	174,887	54,597	31
8	Israeli	190,660	47,407	25
9	Moroccan	147,528	42,465	29
10	Yemeni	91,288	38,569	42
11	Jordanian	121,917	34,297	28
12	Chaldean	59,045	16,576	28
13	Assyrian	57,944	12,216	21
14	Algerian	38,186	10,587	28
15	Kurdish	25,466	8,309	33
16	Saudi	30,563	7,678	25
17	Libyan	13,681	5,109	37
18	Tunisian	15,270	4,470	29
19	Kuwaiti	6,923	1,396	20
20	Berber	3,871	1,116	29
21	Emirati	2,480	762	31
22	Syriac	2,413	603	25
23	Yazidi	630	270	43
24	Bahraini	973	263	27
25	Omani	1,336	240	18
26	Qatari	650	165	25

* All groups are alone or in any combination

Table 8 shows MENA subgroups ranked by size of MENA population under age 5. The largest group are Lebanese (49,098), and the second largest group is Iranian (30,345). Data for the MENA population under age 5 were not available for several of the MENA subgroups.

Table 8. Detailed MENA Subgroups Ranked by Size of the MENA Population Under Age 5 in the 2020 Census			
Rank	Subgroup*	Total MENA Subgroup Population	MENA Children Under Age 5 in
1	Lebanese	685,672	49,098
2	Iranian	568,564	30,345
3	Egyptian	396,854	29,768
4	Arab	238,921	21,720
5	Palestinian	174,887	15,543
6	Syrian	222,196	14,805
7	Iraqi	212,875	13,869
8	Israeli	190,660	13,713
9	Moroccan	147,528	12,582
10	Yemeni	91,288	10,989
11	Jordanian	121,917	9,707
12	Chaldean	59,045	4,755
13	Algerian	38,186	3,943
14	Assyrian	57,944	3,439
15	Saudi	30,563	3,194
16	Kurdish	25,466	2,397
17	Libyan	13,681	1,473
18	Tunisian	15,270	1,332
19	Kuwaiti	6,923	412
20	Berber	3,871	339
21	Emirati	2,480	176
22	Syriac	2,413	172
23	Bahraini	973	76
24	Omani	1,336	54
Subgroups are Alone or any Combination			

Summary

In September 2023, the Census Bureau released a data file with the first information on the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) population from the 2020 Census. This population is of particular importance among the many detailed race and ethnicity groups reported by the Census Bureau because it is likely to become a new category in the official federal statistical system. This is the first report on MENA children based on the 2020 Census data.

There were about 3.5 million people who identified as MENA in the 2020 Census and a little over 900,000 of those were children under age 18. There were a little over a quarter of million (258,784) MENA children under age 5. Examining the ratio of males to females indicates males are slightly over-represented compared to the U.S total population.

Examination of the age structure of the MENA population show it is over-represented among younger age groups and under-represented among the oldest age group. This is consistent with many other groups with a large share of recent immigrants.

The five states with the largest number of MENA children were California, Michigan, New York, Texas, and Florida. About half (49.8 percent) of all MENA children in the country live in one of those five states. MENA children under age 5 in the 2020 Census are highly clustered in the same five states as all children.

Like many immigrant groups before them, MENA immigrants often use family and friends' networks in selecting where to settle when they arrive in the U.S. Being close to

family, friends and familiar institutions like churches and cafes, can provide comfort to new immigrants.. So, it is not surprising that the MENA population is highly clustered in a few states. As noted earlier, the situation in the Detroit area is a prime example of this, and this probably explains why the MENA population in Michigan is a higher percentage of the state population than any other state.

The data on the MENA population provided by the Census Bureau helps us get a picture of this population regarding some key demographics. As more files are released by the Census Bureau the picture of the MENA population will become more complete. Given the likely addition of this ethnic group as a category in future federal statistics, this first glimpse will help us start to gain a better understanding of this population. This report may serve as a benchmark for tracking changes in the MENA population in the near future.

Appendix A. U.S. Census Bureau Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics
File A - Appendix H. Code List The 2020 Hispanic Origin and Race Code List

Middle Eastern or North African

Algerian

Arab

Assyrian

Bahraini

Berber

Chaldean

Egyptian

 Copt

Emirati

Iranian

Iraqi

Israeli

Jordanian

Kurdish

Kuwaiti

Lebanese

Libyan

Middle Eastern

Moroccan

North African

Omani

Palestinian

Qatari

Saudi

Syriac

Syrian

Tunisian

Yazidi

Yemeni

Other Middle Eastern or North African

Responses

 Middle Eastern or North African

Responses, Not Elsewhere Classified

Appendix B List of MENA Populations from the Arab American Institute's FAQ

Algeria,
Bahrain,
Comoros,
Djibouti,
Egypt,
Iraq,
Jordan,
Kuwait,
Lebanon,
Libya,
Mauritania,
Morocco,
Oman,
Palestine,
Qatar,
Saudi Arabia,
Somalia,
Sudan,
Syria,
Tunisia,
United Arab Emirates
Yemen
Iran
Israel
Turkey
Armenians,
Assyrians/Chaldeans,
Kurds,

Source:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63e1198e5c6094481668a891/t/6430558a9a535f53fee8d1d3/1680889226228/MENA+FAQs-4.pdf>

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