



Profiling and Pride:

Arab American Attitudes and Behavior Since September 11

Contents:

Executive Summary

Methodology

Demographics and Characteristics of Sample

**Disparate Impact: Arab Americans
and Personal Discrimination**

- ◆ Discrimination Before and After 9/11
- ◆ Where Discrimination is Experienced

Discrimination and Public Policy

- ◆ Perceptions of Profiling Since Terrorist Attacks
- ◆ Long-Term Effects of Discrimination
- ◆ Attitudes Toward President Bush's Handling of the Response to 9/11

**In the Public Square: Display of Ethnicity
and Political Discussion Since 9/11**

- ◆ Changes in Habits Since 9/11
- ◆ Disclosing Ancestry on US Census

Impact of 9/11 on Ethnic Identity and Pride

- ◆ Pride in Ethnic Heritage
- ◆ Pre- and Post-9/11 Comparisons of Strong Ethnic Identity
- ◆ Importance of Ethnic Heritage
- ◆ Emotional Ties to Country of Origin

Solidarity with the Victims of 9/11

Conclusion

In May 2002, the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) commissioned a survey of Arab American attitudes and behavior since September 11. The May survey is compared to a similar poll commissioned by AAIF in October 2001, in the immediate aftermath of the terror attacks. On some variables a three-way comparison is made, including findings of a survey of Arab American attitudes taken in 2000.

Executive Summary

The findings of the May 2002 survey reveal that Arab Americans have increased their concern about how the aftermath of September 11 has affected their community, but continue to maintain strong attachments to their ethnic identity and pride.

Among the findings:

- ◆ Nearly one in three Arab Americans (30%) say they have personally experienced discrimination in the past because of their ethnicity, nearly identical to the October 2001 survey.
- ◆ Forty percent of those surveyed know someone who was discriminated against since 9/11. Roughly one-fifth of respondents reported discrimination against themselves. Those who are young, Muslim and/or foreign born are more likely to have experienced discrimination.
- ◆ Compared to October 2001, Arab Americans feel discrimination since 9/11 is more prevalent at work

(31%), less at school (21%), about the same among neighbors and friends (25%); discrimination, they say, is more likely to happen in other places (20%) than it did last year.

- ◆ Seventy-eight percent of Arab Americans feel there has been more profiling of Arab Americans since September 11. About two-thirds of those surveyed expressed concern about the long term affects of discrimination.

- ◆ Two in five respondents feel the events of 9/11 have impacted the public display of their heritage, while nearly three-quarters (73%) say their pride in being Arab American has not changed, similar to results reported in 2001.

- ◆ Since September 11, about two-fifths of respondents say they are more likely to speak to their friends and acquaintances about events in the Middle East, while another 43% were doing so to the same degree as before. Only 14% indicated they were less likely to engage in public discussion now. Roughly one in five who speak Arabic say they feel less comfortable speaking Arabic in public.

Eight out of ten Arab Americans surveyed responded to 9/11 by contributing to a victims' fund, hanging a flag, or donating blood.

- ◆ When asked if they were reassured by President Bush's comments and conducts since the September 11 attacks, 54% of Arab Americans say they are reassured, while 35% say they are not reassured. This ratio is down sharply from the results of the October 2001 poll, when 90% of Arab Americans surveyed said they were reassured by the president's response.

- ◆ Eight out of ten Arab Americans surveyed said they responded to September 11 by either contributing to a victims' fund, hanging out a flag, or donating blood.

- ◆ Overall 89% of Arab Americans professed to be either extremely or very proud of their ethnicity. This is virtually the same as the percentage (90%) who claimed strong attachment in a January 2000 survey and up slightly from the 87% recorded in the October 2001 poll.

Methodology

Zogby International conducted interviews of 505 Arab Americans nationwide who have a Middle Eastern or Arabic-speaking background, chosen at random. All calls were made from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, N.Y., from Wednesday, May 1 to Saturday, May 4, 2002. The margin of error is +/- 4.5%. Slight weights were added to country of origin, born/not born in U.S., religion, and gender to more accurately reflect the Arab American population. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.

Demographics and Characteristics of Sample

Three-fourths of those surveyed were born in the United States and 89% hold American citizenship. Eighty-one percent speak English at home. Sixty-three percent reported a Christian affiliation, 24% Muslim, and 13% of other or no religious affiliation (Figure 1).

Occupation breakouts are similar to census-based characteristics, with 36% reporting some form of professional or managerial job. Able to ask even more detail than available in the census, the survey revealed that 10% of the respondents are teachers and 7% are homemakers. Twenty-two percent of those surveyed reported membership in a union, and thirty-four percent own or operate a business. Close to two out of three respondents reported household income in excess of \$50,000, compared with 16% with annual incomes under \$25,000 (Figure 2).

The ZI/AAIF survey probed the issue of primary self-identification by asking, How are you most likely to describe yourself?

By nearly a two-to-one margin, more respondents describe themselves as Arab American (39%) than by their country of origin (21%). Approximately one in eight (12%) describe themselves as both Arab American and by country of origin. One in four uses neither choice to describe themselves.

Those who were born in the U.S. (36%) are less likely than those born elsewhere (49%) to describe themselves as Arab Americans. Half of American citizens not born in the U.S. (51%) describe themselves as Arab American, while more than two in five permanent residents (44%) refer to themselves by their country of origin (Figure 3).

Disparate Impact: Arab Americans and Personal Discrimination

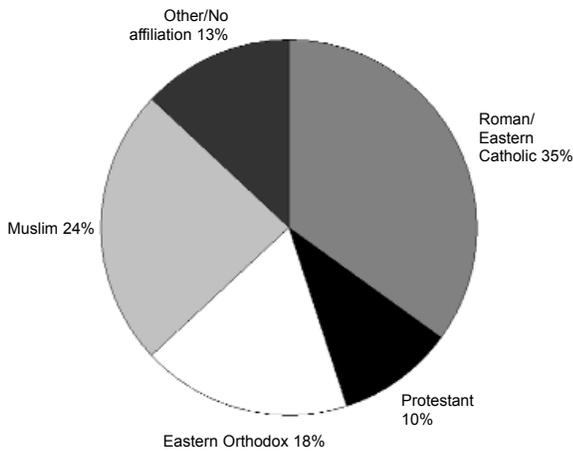


Figure 1: Religious Affiliation

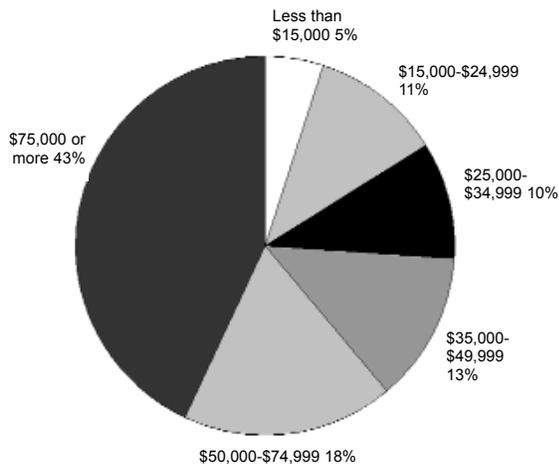


Figure 2: Income

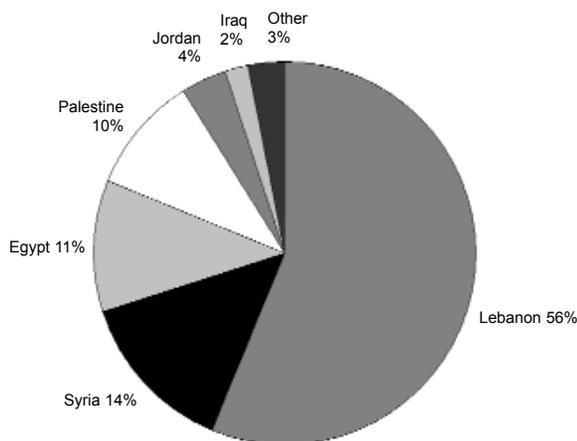


Figure 3: Country of Origin

Discrimination Before and After Sept. 11

Overall, nearly one in three Arab Americans (30%) say they have personally experienced discrimination in the past because of their ethnicity. The overall percentages are nearly identical to a previous survey conducted in October 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks (Figure 4).

Since September 11, one in five has personally been discriminated against because of their ethnicity, and over the same time, a nearly equal 20% say their children or a member of their household has experienced discrimination.

A plurality of respondents (40%), however, says they know someone of Arabic ethnicity or an Arabic-speaking background who has experienced more discrimination since the terrorist attacks.

U.S.-born Arab Americans and those born elsewhere have been discriminated against equally in the past (30% each). Since September 11, however, Arab Americans born outside the U.S. (27%) say they have experienced more personal discrimination than those born in the U.S. (17%).

The number of 18- to 29-year-olds who have experienced discrimination since the terrorist attacks (54%) is equivalent to those in this age group who were discriminated against previously (55%). However, a substantial majority of adults age 30 and older (including 94% of those 65+) are likely to say they have not experienced personal discrimination since September 11, nor did they face ethnic discrimination in the past (77% of those 65+).

From a religious standpoint, Arab American Protestants and Muslims (43% average) are much more likely than Eastern Orthodox or Catholics (24% average) to have experienced personal discrimination in the past. Their opinions have dramatically changed since the events of September 11, with Arab American Muslims (46%) likely to say they have experienced personal discrimination more often than Arab Americans of any other religion (including 14% of Protestants and 10% of Catholics).

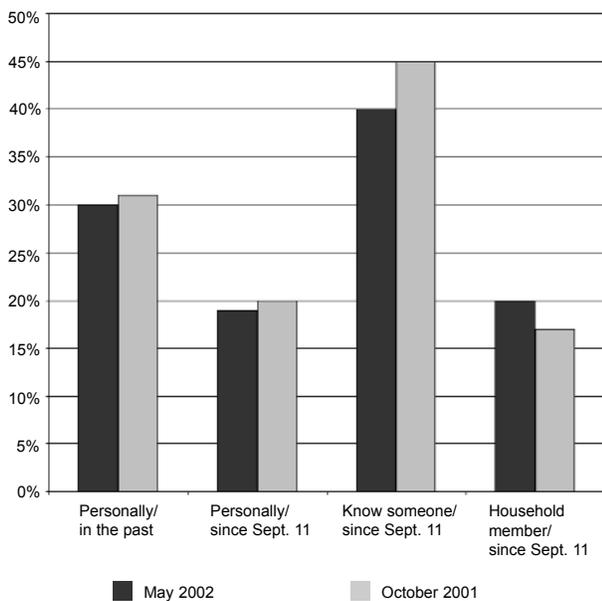


Figure 4: Ethnic Discrimination Before and After September 11

Questions on Discrimination:

- ◆ Have you personally experienced discrimination in the past because of your ethnicity?
- ◆ Since the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on Sept. 11, have you personally experienced discrimination because of your ethnicity?
- ◆ Do you know anyone of Arabic ethnicity or with an Arabic-speaking background who has experienced discrimination since the terrorist attacks on September 11?
- ◆ Have any of your children or any member of your household experienced discrimination since the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11?

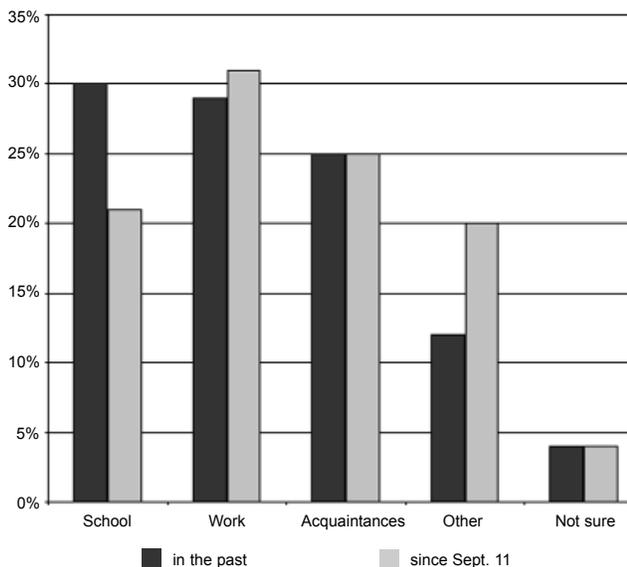


Figure 5: Where Discrimination is Experienced

- ◆ Have you experienced such discrimination (in the past) in any of the following? (At school; at work; from friends, acquaintances, neighbors; other; not sure).
- ◆ Have you experienced such discrimination (since the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on Sept. 11) in any of the following? (At school; at work; from friends, acquaintances, neighbors; other; not sure).

Where Discrimination Is Experienced

Arab Americans feel that in the past, discrimination occurred nearly equally at work (29%) and at school (30%), while fewer instances occurred among friends, acquaintances, and neighbors (25%) (Figure 5). Since September 11, the respondents have a sense that discrimination is less prevalent at school (21%), and it has remained virtually the same at work and among friends, acquaintances, and neighbors. They feel discrimination is more likely to happen in “other” places since 9/11 (20%) than it did in the past (12%). The occurrence of disparate treatment or discomfort post-9/11 in public places, like airports or shopping malls, may account for this shift.

Those who say they have experienced more discrimination since September 11 in school are 36% of respondents aged 18-24. Meanwhile, Arab Americans who are business owners and those not born in the U.S. (37% average) feel they have been discriminated against at work.

Discrimination and Public Policy

Concern for discrimination experienced at home, work, or school is extended to the broader arena of public policy, where Arab Americans continue to struggle with the practice of “profiling” used by law enforcement and other government agencies.

More than three-quarters of respondents believe there has been more profiling of Arab Americans since the terrorist attacks, and this belief has increased 9% since last year (Figure 6). One in eight feels that profiling has remained about the same (12%). Three percent feel there has been less profiling of Arab Americans, and 7% are not sure.

Two-thirds or more in almost every sub-group in 2002 feel there has been more profiling of Arab Americans since September 11. Among the most likely to agree are nine in ten 18- to 29-year-olds, and more than eight in ten U.S.-born respondents.

Long-Term Effects of Discrimination

Close to two-thirds of respondents (63%) are very or somewhat worried about the long-term effects of discrimination against Arab Americans, again little change since last year. More than one-third are not worried about the long-term effects (37%) (Figure 7).

The 2002 respondents who are very or somewhat worried about the long-term effects include four in five Muslims and a 73% average of 18- to 49-year-olds

and Arab Americans not born in the United States.

Attitudes Towards President Bush's Handling of the Response to 9/11

In the month after September 11, Arab Americans were reassured that President George W. Bush was defending and protecting their civil rights. This confidence has diminished significantly in the past six months (Figure 8).

When asked in May 2002 if they were reassured by President Bush's comments and conduct towards Arab Americans since the Sept. 11 attacks, fifty-four percent of Arab Americans said they have been reassured, while 35% said they were not reassured. This ratio is down sharply from the results of the October 2001 poll, when 90% of the Arab Americans surveyed said they had been reassured by the president's response.

While the plurality of Arab Americans regardless of place of birth is still reassured by the president's conduct towards the community, the rising percentage of those not reassured is evident among both those born in the U.S. (33%) and the foreign-born (39%). Among the groups most likely to find the president's response to Arab Americans not reassuring in 2002 are the young (an average of 45% of those 18-34) and Muslims (58%).

In the Public Square: Display of Ethnicity and Political Discussion Since 9/11

A majority (59%) of Arab Americans say their public display of their heritage has been neither positively nor negatively affected by the aftermath of Sept. 11, but nearly two in five (37%) say their habits have changed (Figure 10). Factors impacting the degree of effect on subgroups include age, occupation, and religious affiliation.

Those who have been most affected include 63% of Muslims, 70% of 18- to 24-year-olds, as well as 48% of people not born in the U.S. Seventy-nine percent of students report an effect on their public display of ethnicity, and 61% of those who work in sales. Among the subgroups who feel their heritage has not been affected are a 69% average of those 50-64 and 65+, and 64% of those born in the U.S.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) say their pride in being Arab American has not changed. This includes majorities of people in all subgroups. Fifteen percent of respondents are prouder of their Arab American her-

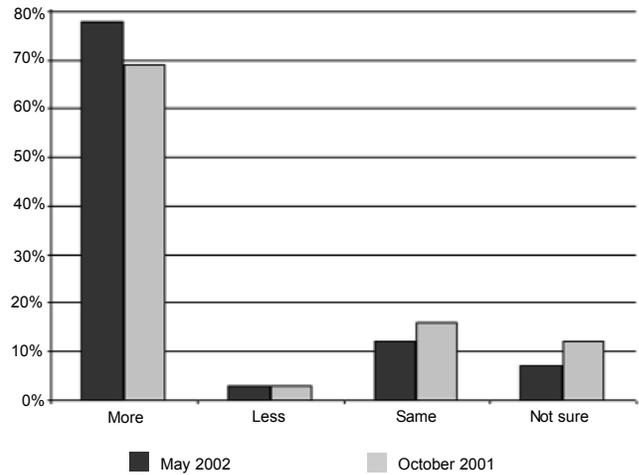


Figure 6: Perceptions of Profiling Since Sept. 11

Do you think that there has been more profiling, less profiling, or about the same amount of profiling of Arab Americans since the terrorist attacks?

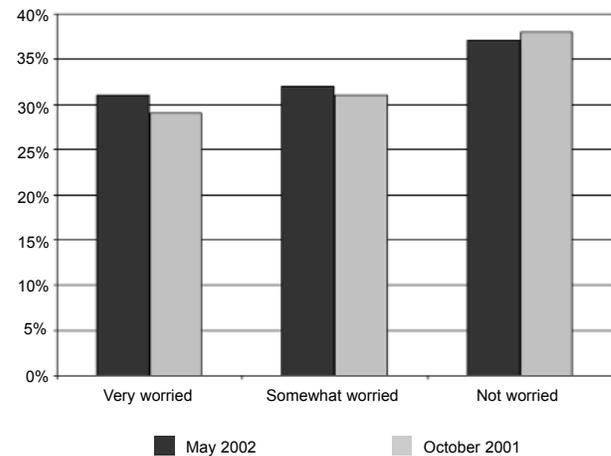


Figure 7: Long-Term Effects of Discrimination

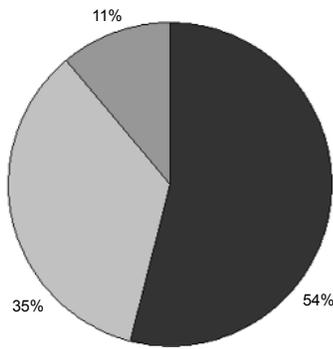
How worried are you about the long-term effects of discrimination against Arab Americans: very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

itage since the events of September 11. For 8%, their pride is diminished.

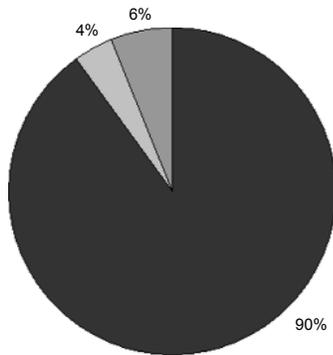
The most likely to say their pride has increased are Muslims (32%) and Arab Americans not born in the U.S (25%). The respondents who are likely to say they have the same amount of pride are an average 78% of seniors 65+ and those born in the U.S.

Changes in Habits Since September 11

Since September 11, approximately two-fifths of respondents have engaged more in discussions about events in the Middle East (42%) and have expressed their opinions about the Middle East more freely to



May 2002



October 2001

Figure 8:
Reassured by
President Bush's
Conduct Towards
Arab Americans

■ Reassured
■ Not reassured
■ Not sure

their friends and acquaintances (40%) (Figure 10). The influence of intense media coverage of the Israeli siege of Palestinian towns in the months prior to the poll may partially account for this spike.

Ten percent of all respondents say they feel less comfortable speaking Arabic in public around non-Arabs, which is closer to 20% of those who speak Arabic. Still, pluralities of respondents find themselves doing the same of each activity since September 11.

Respondents who engage in more discussions about events in the Middle East since the terrorist attacks include a majority of 18- to 29-year-olds (58%); forty-three percent of those born in the U.S. report discussing Middle East events more, similar to 40% of their foreign-born counterparts.

A majority of Muslims (53%) also say they express their opinions more freely since September 11, as do about half of 18- to 29-year-olds and 30- to 49-year-olds, and those not born in the U.S.

Muslims (51%) and 30- to 49-year-olds (42%) are among those most likely to say they speak Arabic in public around non-Arabs the same amount of time as previously. Yet these same subgroups, 30- to 49-year-olds (19% average) and Muslims (15%), are also among the most likely to feel less comfortable speaking Arabic in public.

Disclosing Ancestry on U.S. Census

Nearly half of respondents are more likely to disclose their Arab ancestry on a census form today, while 10% are less likely to do so. Two in five (42%) say their likelihood to disclose their Arab ancestry is no different today than it was before.

Respondents not born in the U.S. (59%) are more likely than those born here (45%) to disclose their Arab ancestry. Furthermore, U.S. citizens (60%) are more likely than permanent residents (48%) to disclose their ancestry.

Impact of 9/11 on Ethnic Identity and Pride

The results of the May 2002 survey show that despite the Arab American community's anger at the terrorists who attacked the U.S. and the resultant discrimination experienced in the aftermath of September 11, Arab Americans as a whole continue to maintain strong pride in their ethnicity and heritage.

Overall, eighty-nine percent of Arab Americans professed to be either extremely or very proud of their ethnicity (those answering 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, Figure 11). This is virtually the same as the percentage (90%) who claimed strong attachment in a

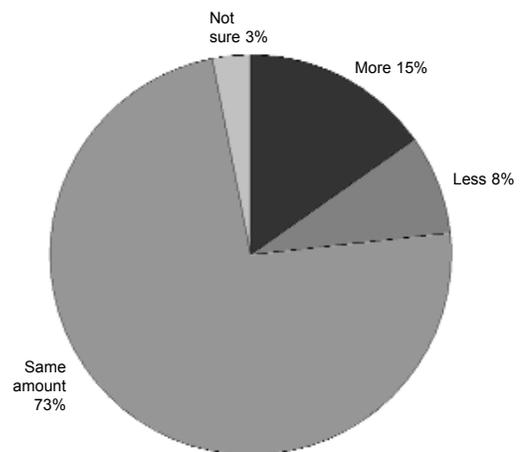


Figure 9: Difference in Pride Since 9/11

Would you say you are more proud, less proud, or have the same amount of pride in being an Arab American since Sept. 11?

January 2000 poll and is up slightly from the lower 87% recorded in the October 2001 survey. This includes more than three in four overall who are “extremely” proud of their heritage (78%). Note there is no change in their views since October 2001.

Only 4% have little or no pride in their heritage (combined 1 and 2).

Importance of Ethnic Heritage

Nearly half of respondents (49%) in May 2002 say their ethnic heritage is very important in defining themselves, a decline of 10% since October 2001. The May responses approach the levels measured (52%) in January 2000. There has been little change in those who say their ethnic heritage is somewhat important (33% in May 2002 versus 25% in October 2001) or not important (17% in May, 16% in October).

Among the most likely 2002 respondents to say that ethnic heritage is very important are Palestinians (80%) and a 76% average of Muslims. People not born in the United States (70%) and a 73% average of 18- to 34-year-olds tend to agree. An average one-fifth of Arab Americans born in the United States say that ethnic heritage is not important in defining themselves.

Emotional Ties to Country of Origin

More than two-fifths of Arab Americans (42%) have strong emotional ties to their families' countries of origin (Figure 12), a slight increase since October 2001, but a decline since the January 2000 survey in which 56% reported strong emotional ties. An additional three in ten in May 2002 say they have somewhat strong emotional ties (31%), and a nearly equal amount says the emotional ties to their families' countries of origin are not strong (27%).

Respondents who say their ties are very strong include majorities of people not born in the United States (66%); the age cohort of 18- to 34-year-olds (62% average) also demonstrates very close emotional ties, levels that have grown from 49% in October 2001. Among the subgroups, the respondents of Palestinian origin had the highest majority (72%) reporting very strong ties, followed by Egyptian Americans (61%).

A 38% average of adults 50 and older are among Arab Americans whose emotional ties are somewhat strong. The most likely to say their emotional ties are not strong include seniors 65 and older and Arab Americans born in the United States.

Figure 10: Changes in Habits Since Sept. 11

Since Sept. 11, would you say you do more, less, or about the same of the following?

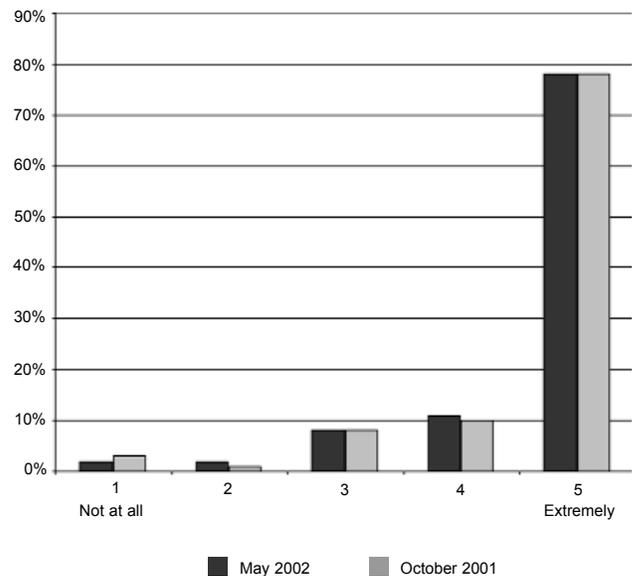
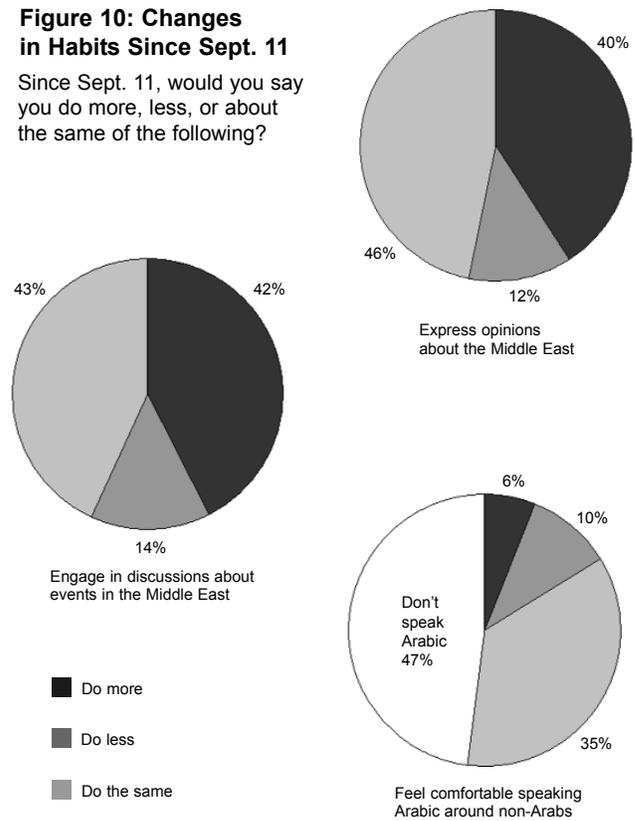


Figure 11: Pride in Ethnic Heritage

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely, how proud are you of your ethnic heritage?

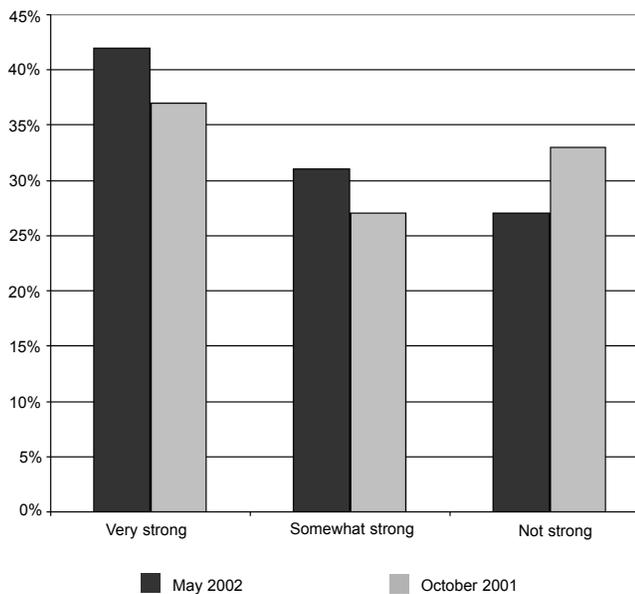


Figure 12: Emotional Ties to Country of Origin

Solidarity with the Victims of 9/11

In an effort to measure the response of Arab Americans as Americans in the immediate aftermath of the terror attacks, the respondents were asked if September 11 led them to (1) hang out or purchase an American flag; (2) contribute to a victims' relief fund, or (3) donate blood. Nearly eight out of ten Arab Americans surveyed said they took part in one or more of these activities. More than half said they hung out a flag (54%) and contributed to a relief fund (53%), while 24% reported that they gave blood.

Conclusion

The May 2002 poll shows that Arab Americans, across the spectrum, retained strong pride in their ethnicity after Sept. 11 but have become increasingly concerned about the policies of the Bush administration.

The most significant shift in Arab American opinion between the October and May polls was a 36% decline, from 90% in October to 54% in May, in those who say they feel reassured by the Bush administration's conduct toward Arab Americans. While the poll did not examine in detail the reasons behind the

drop in confidence, the numbers indicate that Arab Americans would like to see a return to what was perceived last October as positive leadership from the administration toward the Arab American community, and that Arab Americans have concerns with the Bush administration's foreign and domestic policies.

The May 2002 poll shows other indications, too, that Arab Americans are less confident in the U.S. government's response toward the community than they were in October. While the numbers of Arab Americans who say they have experienced ethnic discrimination, or know someone who has, remained virtually unchanged between October 2001 and May 2002, the number of those who believe Arab Americans have been victims of ethnic profiling rose by 9%. A majority of those surveyed remain concerned about the long-term effects of discrimination.

Arab Americans are demonstrating heightened concern over the U.S. government's response toward the community

The poll demonstrates, too, that while some Arab Americans were concerned about public display of their ethnicity since Sept. 11, the vast majority reacted to the terrorist attacks in the same ways that their fellow Americans did: by hanging flags, contributing to funds, and donating blood.

The aftermath of Sept. 11, though, did not affect Arab Americans' sense of pride in their ethnicity. While the numbers of those indicating ethnicity as a major factor in defining themselves dropped 10% in May - perhaps reflecting heightened awareness of ethnicity in October, immediately following the attacks - the numbers of those saying they are very proud of their heritage remains high. ♦



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