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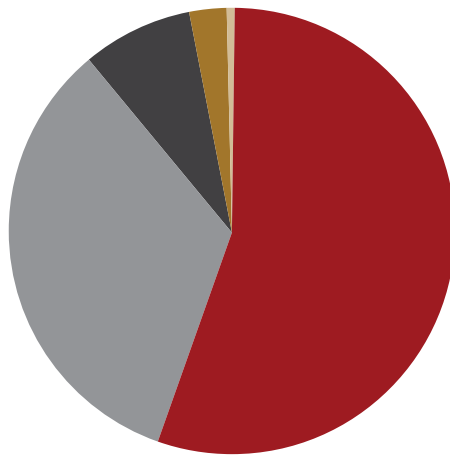
JULY 2014 - UPDATED JANUARY 2015
RELIGION AND MARITAL
STATUS IN THE CANADIAN
ARAB COMMUNITY

The second in a four-part series analyzing the 2011 census data by Statistics Canada. This report shows the distribution of Canadian Arabs by religion and marital status

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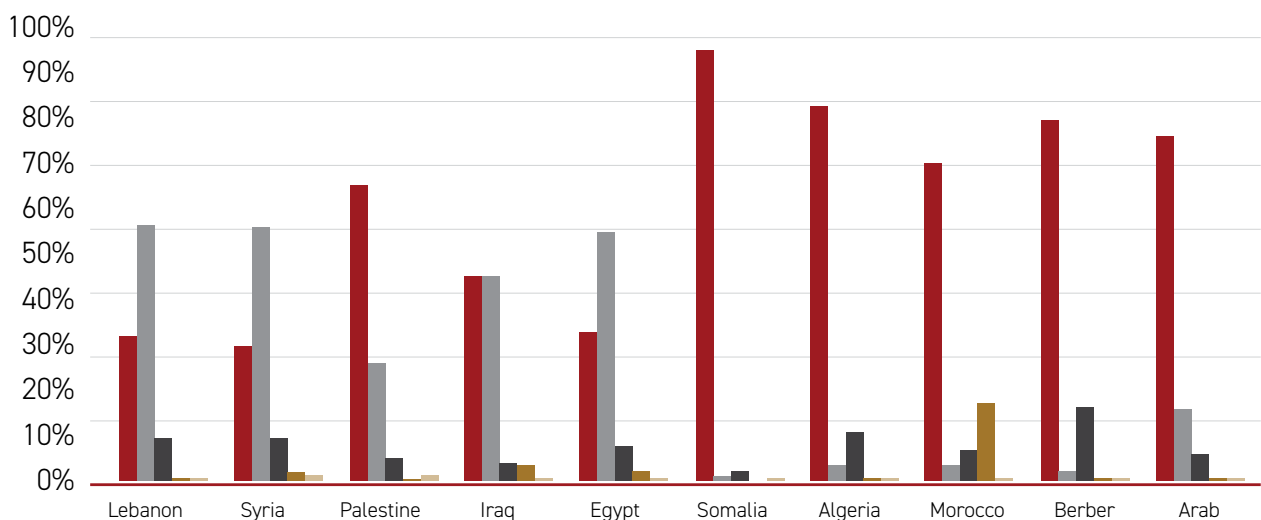
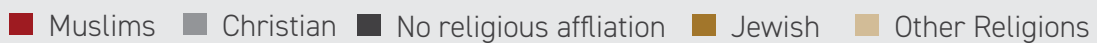
Faith and Religion in the Canadian Arab Community

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Selected Religions



The 2011 census shows that 55% of the Canadian Arab community reported belonging to a Muslim faith and 34% reported belonging to a Christian faith. These numbers differ measurably from the numbers reported in the 2001 census, which showed an even split in the Canadian Arab community between those who practiced the Muslim faith (44%) and those who practiced the Christian faith (44%).

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Ethnic Origin and Selected Religions



That said, the percentage of Canadian Arabs not affiliated with any religious groups only marginally increased from 2001 to 2011, from 6% to 8% of the population – the majority of which come from the Berber, Algerian, and Syrian communities.

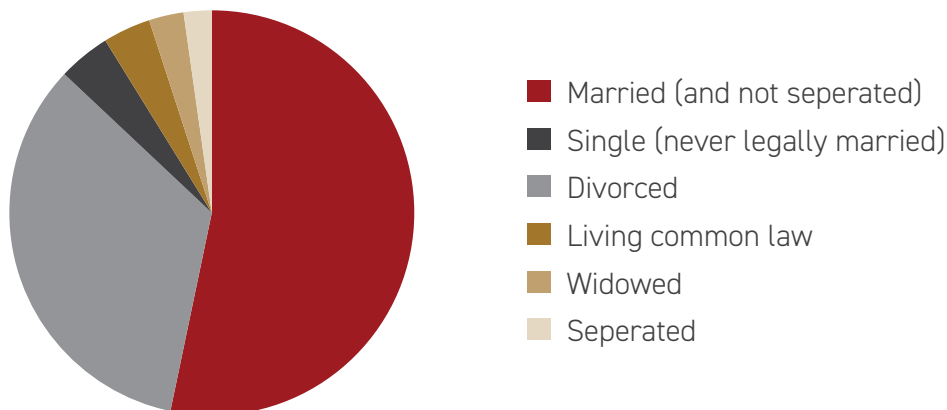
	Muslim	Christian	No religious affiliation	Jewish	Other Religions
Lebanon	32%	57%	9%	1%	0%
Syria	30%	57%	10%	2%	1%
Palestine	67%	26%	5%	0%	1%
Iraq	46%	46%	4%	4%	0%
Egypt	33%	56%	8%	2%	1%
Somalia	96%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Algeria	84%	4%	11%	1%	0%
Morocco	71%	4%	7%	17%	0%
Berber	81%	2%	17%	0%	0%
Arab	77%	16%	6%	0%	0%
Grand Total	55%	34%	8%	3%	0%

The greatest percentages of Christian Canadian Arabs come from the Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian and Iraqi communities, whereas the highest rates of Muslim Canadian Arabs come from the Somali, Algerian, Moroccan and Berber communities.

Marital Status in the Canadian Arab Community [iii]

In 2001, census data showed that Canadian Arabs were generally more likely than other Canadians to be married, with 53% of Canadian Arabs aged 15 and over in married relationships compared to the 50% of all Canadian adults. The 2001 data also showed that Canadian Arabs were also less likely than other Canadians to live in common-law relationships, with only 4% of Canadian Arabs aged 15 and over living in common-law compared to the 10% of all Canadian Adults.[iii]

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Marital Status



In 2011, 47% of Canadians 15 years or over reported "married (and not separated)" in the census data. Comparatively, 53.28% of Canadian Arabs 15 years and over reported "married (and not separated)" in the census data – maintaining the same percentage of married Canadian Arab adults as that of 2001.

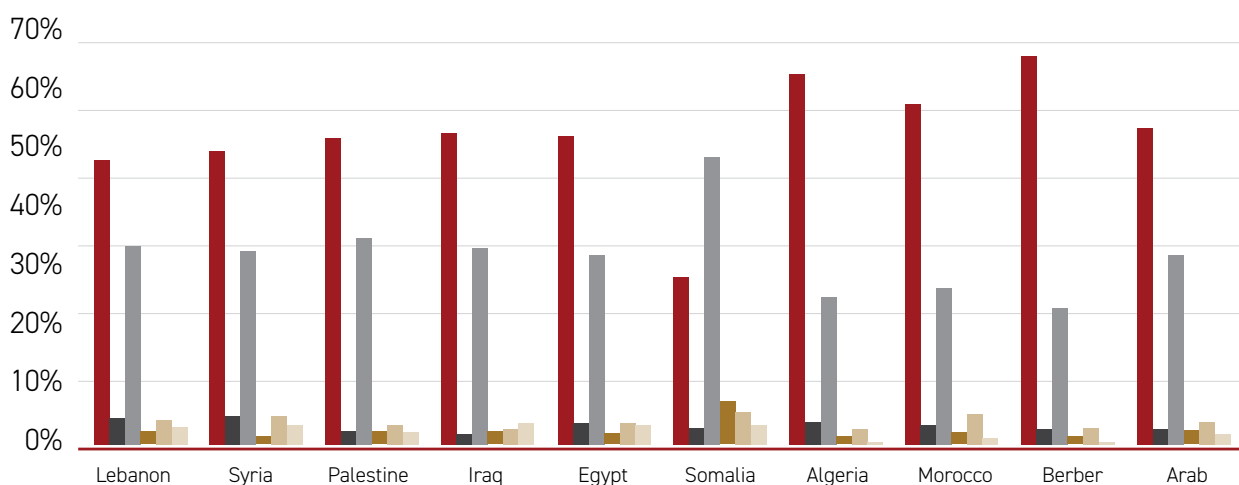
The 2011 data also showed 11.47% of Canadians 15 years and over as "living common law" versus 3.69% of Canadian Arabs in the same category. This indicates that Canadian Arab adults are far more likely to be

married than to live in common law partnerships, and are a lot less likely than their Canadian counterparts to enter into such relationships – again reflecting similar data as that of 2001. This indicates that Canadian Arab culture continues to value married relationships over common law partnerships.

These patterns are also reflected amongst the various Canadian Arab communities themselves, with rates of marriage surpassing common law partnerships at 16 to 1 except in the Lebanese community where the ratio is at 11 to 1. This difference could be attributed to both the size of the Lebanese community as well as the length of their historical presence in Canada which surpasses that of other Canadian Arab communities by decades, making it more likely for Canadians of Lebanese heritage to align more closely with the statistics of the general Canadian community.

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Ethnic Origin and Selected Religions

■ Married (and not separated)
 ■ Single (never legally married)
 ■ Divorced
 ■ Living common law
■ Widowed
 ■ Separated



While Lebanese community shows the highest numbers of divorce and separation among the Arab communities, the Somali community ranks highest in rates of divorce and separation with 6% divorced and 8% separated Somali Canadians.

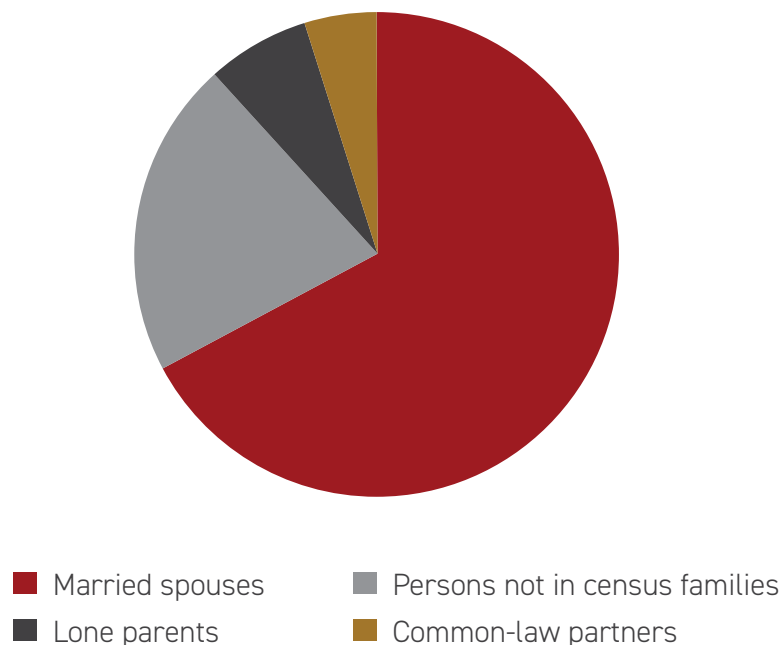
	Separated	Divorced	Total Population aged 15 and over	Rate of Divorce	Rate of Separation
Lebanon	3,600	6,380	141,370	5%	3%
Syria	470	1,505	30,910	5%	2%
Palestine	490	730	22,735	3%	2%
Iraq	935	1,010	36,160	3%	3%
Egypt	980	2,195	55,475	4%	2%
Somalia	2,185	1,700	28,470	6%	8%
Algeria	470	895	31,685	3%	1%
Morocco	1,045	2,675	49,380	5%	2%
Berber	265	520	17,420	3%	2%
Arab	1,630	2,720	66,560	4%	2%
Grand Total	12,070	20,330	480,165	4%	3%

A Portrait of the Canadian Arab Family

In the 2011 National Household Survey, a “census family” consisted of (a) a married couple, with or without children, or (b) two persons living in common law, with or without children, or (c) of a lone aren’t living with at least one child in the same dwelling. It also defined “persons not in census families” as those who (a) may live with relatives (without forming a census family with them), (b) may live with non-relatives only, or (c) may live alone.

With these classifications in mind, the 2011 data shows that the Canadian Arab family generally consisted of married spouses, with a small number of persons not in census families, and even fewer lone parents and families living in common-law partnerships.

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Family Status

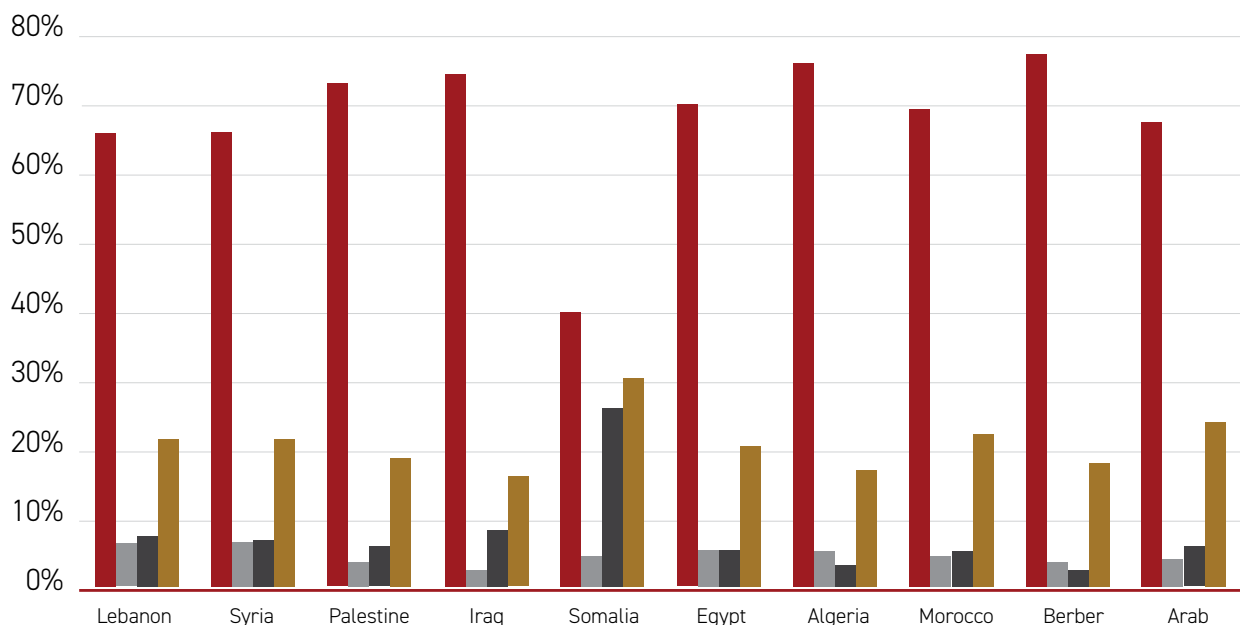


In 2001, census data showed that Canadian Arabs were less likely than other Canadian adults to live alone or independently, with 9% of Canadian Arabs aged 15 and over living alone in comparison to 13% of all Canadian adults.

However, in 2011, the rate of Canadian Arabs 15 years and over who reported living independently rose to 11% in comparison to the national rate of 17%. This indicates that Canadian Arabs are catching up to their Canadian counterparts in choosing to live on their own rather than within families. While this change may be partly due to further assimilation of Canadian Arab communities into Canadian society, it is also likely to be a result of the [incredibly fast-paced growth of the Canadian Arab community](#) and the [high rate of immigration coming in from Arab and Middle Eastern countries](#).

Percentage of Canadian Arabs by Ethnic Origin and Selected Religions

■ Married spouses
 ■ Common-law partners
 ■ Lone parents
■ Persons not in census families



The majority of independent-living Canadian Arabs come from the Lebanese community – with a record high of 22,255 Canadian Arabs of Lebanese origin living independently – whereas the rates of living independently more or less appear similar within all Arab-origin communities.

	Persons not in census families	Total of Census Families	Percentage of Persons not in census families
Lebanon	22,255	190,270	12%
Syria	5,040	40,840	12%
Palestine	2,975	31,245	10%
Iraq	4,000	49,680	8%
Somalia	5,595	45,000	12%
Egypt	8,505	73,345	12%
Algeria	4,505	49,110	9%
Morocco	9,080	71,910	13%
Berber	2,640	25,885	10%
Arab	12,525	94,640	13%
Grand Total	77,120	671,825	11%

The 2001 census also showed that Canadian Arab adults were less likely than their Canadian counterparts to be lone parents, with 4% of Canadian Arab adults who reports being lone parents in comparison with 6% of the overall Canadian population.

	Lone Parents	Total of Census Families	Percentage of Lone Parents
Lebanon	7,515	190,270	4%
Syria	1,580	40,840	4%
Palestine	935	31,245	3%
Iraq	2,045	49,680	4%
Somalia	4,755	45,000	11%
Egypt	2,160	73,345	3%
Algeria	775	49,110	2%
Morocco	2,045	71,910	3%
Berber	345	25,885	1%
Arab	2,970	94,640	3%
Grand Total	25,125	671,825	4%

Interestingly, the combined rate of lone parent families in the Canadian Arab community remained the same in 2011 as the 2001 census, at 4%. This statistic could be connected to the relatively low rate of divorce in the Canadian Arab community which stands at 4% in comparison to the national rate of 6%. These numbers together with the high percentage of married spouses in the Canadian Arab community – at 53% versus the national percentage of 47% – indicate that the Canadian Arab community values the “nuclear family” ideal of married spouses with children over other types of families that include single parents or common-law partnerships.

Significantly, however, the Somali community offers the highest rate of single parent families at 11% whereas the remainder of the Arab community hovers around 3-4%. This significant discrepancy in the Somali community in comparison with the remainder of the Canadian Arab community not only reflects the higher rates of divorce and separation present in the Somali community, but could be related to the [high rate of Somali refugees who have arrived in Canada in recent years](#) and have, therefore, been separated from their spouses and partners due to conflict.

[i] A previous version of this report published in May 2014 used incorrect data for religious affiliation.

[ii] All data tables extracted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Census, and 2011 National Household Survey and are based on self-identification.

[iii] Adults aged 15 years and over

[iv] All data relating to the 2001 census has been retrieved from the Statistics Canada 2007 report “The Arab Community in Canada”.