



POLL OF ARAB, IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI AMERICANS ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S IRAQ POLICY AND DISCRIMINATION POST-9/11

Conducted by Bendixen & Associates

Executive Summary

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**Amnesty International USA cosponsored the portion of this poll that deals with racial discrimination and the Patriot Act. It did not sponsor and is not responsible for any other questions contained in this poll.*

INTRODUCTION

The 2000 U.S. Census counted 1.2 million Arabs in the United States. The same census also reported that the Arab American population grew by 40 percent in the 1990s and counted 250,000 Pakistanis and 340,000 Iranians in the country. Taken together, these populations account for some 1.8 million people.

The numbers were determined by counting the individuals who voluntarily identified themselves as "Arab," "Pakistani," or "Iranian," on census forms that asked for ancestry or ethnic origin. So the real numbers could be higher.

All three populations have intimate knowledge of the Middle East and South Asian countries where U.S. military and diplomatic involvement is intensely focused. They are also the groups that have been affected by well-publicized episodes of discrimination and violence in the wake of new "security measures" put in place after the Sept. 11 attacks, yet the broader public seldom hears their views.

Now with media attention zeroing in daily on unrest in Iraq and pre-election terror warnings, this poll taps into the opinions of this overlooked community.

This survey of 600 Arab, Iranian and Pakistani Americans was conducted in Arabic, Urdu, Farsi and English between August 2nd and August 18th, 2004. Simultaneously, armed conflict continued in Iraq, U.S. terror warnings were issued and President George W. Bush and Democratic candidate Sen. John F. Kerry debated Iraq policy and anti terror strategy.

Respondents were assured the poll was confidential and were asked for basic demographic information, including country of origin, age and religion.

This summary will first present major findings thematically, detailing the views of the largest group, Arab Americans, but will also highlight Iranian and Pakistani American views when they offer important insights. In one category, that of discrimination, the answers of Muslim respondents are compared to those of non-Muslims to highlight significant differences.

The margin of error for the poll is +/- 4%. For the sample of 400 Arab Americans the margin of error is +/- 5%, for the samples of 100 Pakistanis and Iranians, the margin of error is +/- 9%.

MAJOR FINDINGS: ARAB AMERICANS OPPOSE PRESIDENT BUSH ON IRAQ

Arab Americans have starkly negative views of President George W. Bush's handling of Iraq.

An overwhelming majority of Arab Americans (73%) gives President Bush negative marks on his Iraq policy. Most (60%) rated his job handling Iraq as "poor" while another one-tenth (13%) rated his job as "mediocre." Majorities of Arab Americans believe that the president made the wrong decision in attacking Iraq (55%) and deliberately misled the U.S. public about his reason for going to war (54%).

A clear majority (69%) also believes that the United States is no safer from terrorism after waging the war than it was before the campaign to depose Saddam Hussein.

Arab Americans reject U.S. intervention in Iraq and the region. When asked whether the U.S. military should keep troops in Iraq for six months to one year, one to three years, more than three years, or withdraw them immediately, by far the greatest number of Arab Americans (45%) say the United States should remove all troops immediately. When asked if the United States should take a more active role in the Middle East, a less active role, or should stay out altogether, the greatest number of respondents (40%) said it should stay out.

But many Arab Americans believe the United States is more likely to deepen its military involvement in the region. A majority of Arab Americans (58%) believes that it is "very likely" or "somewhat likely" that the U.S. war against terrorism will expand beyond Afghanistan or Iraq into Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or other countries.

Arab Americans don't believe the violence in Iraq is the most serious problem in the Middle East. When asked what the most important threat is, a majority of respondents rated the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (61%) as a far more important threat to the region than the continued violence in Iraq (19%), the terror attacks in Saudi Arabia (3%) or instability in Afghanistan (1%).

Arab Americans are divided on whether they see opportunities for stability in Iraq and the Middle East in the near future.

A majority of Arab Americans (52%) believe the Iraqi government is a "puppet of the U.S." and not fully sovereign. Some believe that Iraqis are ready to govern their country and maintain stability (43%), while others believe the Iraqis are not ready to govern and civil war will erupt (41%).

There is optimism in other areas. Nearly half of Arab Americans (48%) believe the confrontations between supporters of al-Qaeda and the Saudi government will stabilize and that the country will stay under the royal family's authority. Only a small minority (10%) believes Saudi Arabia could fall into the hands of militants. Almost half of the respondents (47%) believe there is a realistic chance that a peace treaty can be signed between Israel and Palestine in the next four years; a lower number (42%) disagrees.

A clear majority of Arab Americans (67%) believes "irreparable damage" or "serious damage" was done to the reputation of the United States in the Middle East as a result of the torture in Abu Ghraib prison.

Pakistanis and Iranians have similarly negative views of President Bush's handling of Iraq.

Iranians, however, showed greater levels of optimism about the overall U.S. position in the Middle East.

While two-fifths (*see above*) of Arab Americans wanted the United States out of the region altogether only one-fifth (20%) of Iranians expressed this view.

Iranians were less suspicious of U.S. intentions in the Middle East than Arab or Pakistani Americans.

Respondents were asked whether they believe U.S. military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq are part of the U.S. war against terrorism or whether they

are a U.S. campaign against Islam and the Arab world. A wide majority (77%) of Iranian Americans said the actions are part of a war against terror; a small minority of Iranian Americans (8%) said they represent a campaign against Islam.

By contrast less than half of Arab Americans (44%) and only one fourth (27%) of Pakistani Americans believe that the U.S. actions are a war against terrorism. One fifth of Pakistani Americans (21%) and a substantial portion of Arab Americans (29%) believe the U.S. interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan are part of a war against Islam and the Arab world.

Iranian Americans, unlike Pakistani and Arab Americans, say the United States made the right decision in using military force to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Over half of Iranian Americans (51%) believe that.

MAJOR FINDINGS: DISCRIMINATION POST 9/11 and the USA PATRIOT Act

Arab Americans have experienced more discrimination and are over three times more likely than the non-Latino white population to have experienced racial profiling since the attacks. For Pakistani Americans and for the Muslims polled, those numbers were even higher. It is important to note that Arab Americans typically check "white" on U.S. Census forms. This poll is significant because it is the first time data showing Arab American opinions on discrimination has been disaggregated from the overall white population.

One-fifth of Arab Americans (21%) say they have experienced discrimination in their schools, workplace or neighborhoods in the last three years. But among this percentage of Arab Americans that *has* experienced discrimination, a clear majority (74%) says they have experienced it more often since Sept. 11, 2001.

One tenth (11%) of Arab Americans polled said they had been victims of mistreatment or targeting by government officials because of race, ethnicity, or religion or national origin in the three years since Sept. 11, 2001. A much higher number (87%) said they had not.

This rate of racial profiling, however, is more than three times higher than the rates reported by whites for their entire lifetimes in recent racial profiling surveys and similar to the rates reported by Asians. A 2002 study by researchers at George Washington University (which only looked at the experiences of whites, Blacks and Hispanics) found that only 3% of whites in the United States say they have been racially profiled during their lifetime¹.

A similar survey by The Washington Post, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University found that 11% of Asians said they had been racially profiled, a number that matches the rate for Arab Americans post-9/11 found in this poll².

¹ "Racially Biased Policing: Determinants of Citizen Perceptions," by Ronald Weitzer and Steven Tuch, George Washington University, Washington DC, 2004 (survey conducted December 2002).

² "Race and Ethnicity in 2001: Attitudes, Perceptions, and Experiences," by *The Washington Post*, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University, 2001 (survey conducted March 2001).

A surprisingly high number of Arab Americans (15%) have been the victims of unfair incarceration, deportation or detention since Sept. 11 or know someone who has.

A substantial portion of Arab Americans (45%) agree that racial profiling based on race, ethnicity or religion has been used by the U.S. departments of Justice of Homeland Security since Sept. 11, 2001.

A surprisingly high number of Arab Americans (54%) were not aware of the PATRIOT Act legislation, while a minority (41%) said they were aware of the act. Interviewers then read a brief description of the act and arguments both for and against its provisions for those that were not aware.

After hearing this information, half of Arab Americans (50%) said it is a bad law while a minority (25%) said it is a good law.

Iranian Americans, while experiencing similar levels of discrimination to Arab Americans, tended to be more supportive of the USA PATRIOT Act. A majority of Iranian Americans (63%) were not aware of the legislation; when the law was described to them, along with arguments for and against, over half of Iranian Americans (52%) thought it was a good law.

Pakistani Americans, taken separately, have experienced significantly higher levels of discrimination and racial profiling after Sept. 11 than Arab or Iranian Americans.

Nearly one third of Pakistani Americans (31%) said they had experienced discrimination in the last three years.

Well over one tenth of Pakistani Americans reported being mistreated or targeted by government officials because of ethnicity, race, religion or national origin since Sept. 11, 2001 (16%). And over one-fourth of Pakistani Americans reported that they or someone they knew had been a victim of unfair detention, incarceration or deportation since 9/11 (28%).

Nearly half (48%) of Pakistani Americans reported that they were very worried or somewhat worried that they or someone in their families will become the victim of detention, incarceration or deportation; in contrast less than one sixth (14%) of Iranian-Americans and one-fourth (25%) of Arab Americans reported being worried about this.

Muslim respondents were more likely than non-Muslims to have experienced racial profiling in the last three years. Nearly one sixth (15%) of Muslims said they had, while only a few (6%) of non-Muslims said they had. Over one sixth of Muslims (18%) reported experiencing or knowing someone who had experienced unfair deportation, incarceration or detention; among non-Muslims that number was 5 percent less.

The USA PATRIOT Act was less popular among Muslims than non-Muslims. After the legislation was described, Muslims disapproved of the law (48% said it was bad; 32% said it was good) while non-Muslims were divided (38% to 38%, with the rest saying they didn't know or giving no answer).

MAJOR FINDINGS: 2004 ELECTIONS

Arab American registered voters prefer Democrat John F. Kerry over Republican President Bush in the 2004 elections. Almost half (49%) of the 273

registered Arab American voters said they would vote for Kerry while almost equal numbers (16% and 14% respectively) said they would cast ballots for Bush or Nader, who is of Arab descent.

MAJOR FINDINGS: MEDIA USAGE

By a wide margin (63% to 33%), Arab Americans say they prefer Arabic or Arab American media for home country and community news to U.S. mainstream media.

For Iranian Americans, Persian or Iranian American media edged out mainstream media (52% to 45%). For Pakistani Americans, Urdu or Pakistani American media split its audience with mainstream media (46% to 47%).

About New California Media

New California Media is a nationwide association of over 700 print, broadcast, and online ethnic media organizations founded in 1996 by the non-profit Pacific News Service. NCM's goal is to build a more inclusive public forum by raising the visibility of ethnic media and their audiences. NCM is supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Community Technology Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and the American Association of Advertising Agencies among others. Multilingual polling partners include the USC Annenberg's Institute for Justice and Journalism, the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State, and the Chinese American Voter Education Committee. For more information, visit www.ncmonline.com.

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