Arab American Political Attitudes Survey

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As liaisons for their ethnic identity, immigrant communities in the United States are considerably important. In having both a vested interest in the wellbeing of the United States and their native country and ethnic identities, these individuals hold particular importance in signaling policy preferences amicable to both American politicians and foreign countries. The perspective these immigrants provide is inextricably valuable. Thus, in a time where the Middle East has become the center of discussion surrounding foreign policy, it is critical to have individuals coming from a Middle Eastern background to have a voice in American governance and foreign policy relations. Yet, Arab Americans largely have very little voice.

Remarkably, there are Arab Americans in the US Congress—nine, in fact—yet they are overwhelmingly white, male, Republican, Lebanese-Christians. On the face, this is not an issue, yet according to demographic profiles provided by the Arab American Institute it becomes clear this is a small subpopulation of a very large community. (U.S Census Bureau, 2013) Additionally, Muslims are severely underrepresented. There have only been two Muslims elected to Congress and they were elected in 2008. Neither of them, however, are Arab Americans. And even though there are nine Arab Americans in Congress, none of these individuals actively represent Arab American interests and identity (Suleiman, 2006) often as a function of political detriment to emphasizing such an identity (Stockton, 2006; Jabara, 2006). As becomes clear, Arab American political representation is lacking and skewed.

As a voting block, Arab Americans have low impact on elections and are largely invisible (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007). The community is comparatively small, estimated to be at approximately 1.9 million by the US Census nationally (U.S Census Bureau, 2013).² To make matters worse, the Arab American population has no identifier on official documentation and often have to resort to self-selecting into one of the following categories: Asian, Black, White, and Other.³ The lack of a consistent identifier contributes significantly to decentralizing the identity and organization of Arab Americans. Contributing further to this invisible identity, Arab Americans are considerably politically uninvolved compared to other larger American populations (Suleiman, 2006; Stockton, 2006).

There is an important distinction to be made between Arab Americans and other minority groups in the United States with respect to political identity. Most minority groups are given importance in their ability to be a demographic group with similar voting preferences able to be targeted by the two parties—namely African American and Latino voters. Arab Americans make up less than 2% of the population, making winning their vote irrelevant in most elections. While this makes them less desirable targets for American political parties, this does not make their voice irrelevant nor their contributions useless. Their importance lies not in their ability to be an important demographic group swayed by either party in American elections, but in their ability to be liaisons and ambassadors to the American public of the Middle East. It is arguably even more important to adequately understand the nuances and differences within the Arab American

¹ See Appendix A for a breakdown of Arab American Congressional history.

² The Arab American Institute estimates that the Arab American population hovers around 3.7 million nationally.

³ The Arab American Institute has cited that because of these limited racial categories and other methodological problems, the population is severely undercounted (AAI, 2011).

community so as to provide information about which groups to target to encourage increased self-identification as an Arab American and voting behavior in line with Arab American self-interest.

To understand Arab Americans as a complex demagogue and an invisible minority, I plan on conducting a survey which, above all, intends to contribute to the working knowledge of Arab American political attitudes, largely formed by existing work from the Arab American Institute and other notable scholars. This survey, which will be expanded on in the pages to come, aims to adequately capture voting behavior and party identification of Arab Americans in an effort to understand some of complexities present within the demographic group. I hypothesize much of the divisions in political attitudes and identity of Arab Americans boil down to different pathways of assimilation and integration into the United States. Speaking in empirical terms, individuals ascribing to more of a white identity will vote for more conservative candidates and identify as more Republican.

On the Arab American Identity

I have been using the term "Arab American" thus far. However, concerning identity, it is important to clarify the rationale behind using such language given that the community is incredibly diverse and often disagree in their self-identification. Arab Americans, as defined by the Arab American Institute, are:

...immigrants from the Arabic-speaking countries of southwestern Asia and North Africa that have been settling in the United States since the 1880s. Their Arab heritage reflects a culture that is thousands of years old and includes 22 Arab countries as diverse as Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia and Palestine. (AAI, 2011)

This sentiment is echoed by Suleiman (2006), citing Arab Americans share language, culture, pride in their heritage, subjection to political exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization—all of which has suggest the existence of a consistent shared identity. The existence of the label was largely non-existent until the Arab-Israel war in 1967—until then the individuals either assimilated to American culture or retreated to their ethnic enclaves (Shain, 1996). In spite of this, the Arab American Institute has discovered that there is non-homogenous self-identification with the term Arab American—63% in 2014 and 61% in 2012. Most of those who abstain do so in preference of a white identity or stating the country of their ethnic origin. Yet, the Arab American Institute and most Arab American scholars refer to the group as "Arab Americans". Knowing this, Americans hailing from North Africa and the Middle East will be referred to as Arab Americans throughout this paper.

Literature Review

In preparing questions for the survey, its first important to establish an understanding of Arab Americans and their development of a political identity in the United States. The literature, however, is small and concise. There have been varied writings on the specific Arab American experience. The most important of which is a report compiled in 2006 entitled *American Arabs and Political Participation* composed of ten articles from renowned scholars on the subject.

The Arab American Institute has been the predominant polling organization on Arab American political attitudes, having conducted many polls on Arab American political attitudes within the last two decades. For the purposes of this survey, I will be focusing on the last few surveys much more heavily, as these surveys will likely provide the most recent snapshot of the Arab American community.

As an immigrant population, the integration and assimilation of Arab Americans and their different preexisting identities into the United States has resulted in the differences in voting behavior and political attitudes. Ajrouch and Jamal form a typology on the different pathways to assimilation based on assimilation to a white identity. They stratify their survey on four factors identified as being influential on ethnic traits and white identity: immigrant status, national origin, religious affiliation, and Arab-Americanness. The following sections detail their importance as well as other relevant findings from the literature.

Immigrant Status

Particularly within the Arab American community, the identification as white is influenced by the immigration status of the individual. First generation immigrants are more likely to reject an Arab American label because of the ascribed benefits in identifying and passing themselves as white (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007). Children of Middle Eastern immigrants, however, are more inclined to define themselves as differentiated from whites (Ajrouch, 2004; Ajrouch and Jamal 2007). This distinction was important to the Arab American Institute in their 2012 survey, where they identified a distinction between foreign-born and native-born individuals. Unfortunately, the survey tables shown restricted the division between foreign-born and native-born individuals to identity and personal concerns. Among identity and personal concern questions, there were not many substantial differences between the two groups regard their identity as Arab Americans (59% native-born to 68% foreign-born), pride in their ethnic heritage (78% native-born to 88% foreign-born), and fear of ethnic discrimination (38% native-born to 55% foreign-born).

National Origin

Ajrouch and Jamal cite using national origin as a variable because, "each national origin group...has a unique history of immigration, and moreover physically differs in appearance." These differences in appearance ultimately shape the direction of assimilation. As they found, Syrian/Lebanese individuals identified as white more than Yemeni/Iraqi individuals (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007). As Ajrouch and Jamal explain, "having achieved a white identity that coincides with their economics interests and does not conflict with their phenotype nor political identities in the region, it may be that Lebanese/Syrians are less likely to perceives themselves as a minority compared to Iraqi and Yemeni participants" (2007).

Religious Affiliation

An atypical dividing factor in most immigrant literature, religious affiliation amongst Arab Americans has a heavy impact on cultural and social identity (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007; Ajrouch and Kusow, 2007). Especially in the case of Arab Americans, religious identity along with racial identity has played a divisive role in the assimilation of the Arab American into American country. The intensification of attitudes towards Muslim Americans and Muslims has intensified

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in reaction to 9/11, the Islamic State, the collapse of Syria, and the subsequent migration to Europe as Islam increasingly becomes more salient amongst the American citizenry. As found in the AAI surveys on the Arab American population, there were strong differences in voting behavior between Christian and Muslim Arab Americans—75% of Muslims would vote for Obama in the upcoming reelection compared to 34% of Protestant/Orthodox and 50% of Catholics. Religious affiliation also seems to influence other demographic factors. Muslims have a higher identification with the Arab American identity (77% compared to 56% Christian), are more proud of their ethnic heritage (93% compared to 75% Orthodox/Protestant and 79% Catholic), are more inclined to report having faced ethnic discrimination (55% compared to 42% Orthodox/Protestant and 30% Catholic), and are substantially more concerned about facing discrimination (71% compared to 37% Orthodox/Protestant and 29% Catholic) (AAI, 2012). All of this suggests that there are some very distinct identities cultivated by different religious affiliation that will provide meaningful distinctions on the dependent variables.

Arab Americanness

Ajrouch and Jamal identify Arab Americanness as the degree to which individuals identify with the "Arab American" pan-ethnic label. The influence the label can have on individuals often depends on the institutions that support it—it could place "other" individuals as subordinate to white individuals or serve as a way of finding solace in. As Ajrouch and Jamal found, the Arab American identity "incurs minority status elements, yet strong ethnic behaviors associated with a pan-ethnic identity label constitute potential resources." The stronger the intensity that an individual identifies with a pan-ethnic label, the stronger the intensity that an individual values their whiteness. Of particular note in this section was Ajrouch and Jamal's finding that Arab Americans can hardly unify under the umbrella term of Arab American, the most convincing of which was, "Immigrant and ethnic groups may find themselves in the awkward situation of having to denounce a pan-ethnic label if its seen as denying them "white" privilege."

Party Identification

As a consequence of low political activity in the early part of the century, Arab Americans did not have a consistent party identity (Shain, 1996). Additionally, many Arab American identified as Republicans—Syrian-Americans in particular (Suleiman, 2006). More recently, Arab Americans have begun to identify as Democrats. Appendix B includes an image displaying party identification over time as established by the Arab American Institute. Most recently in 2014. Arab Americans identified as Democrat nearly 2:1, or 44% Republican to 23% Democrat. Stratified amongst gender and religion we make some remarkable findings. Muslims are a near Democratic monolith, identifying support for Obama at 75% compared to 8% for Romney in 2012 and having said they voted for Obama at 76% compared to 1% for Romney in 2014. By contrast, Catholics were less Democratic, identifying support Obama over Romney 50% to 36% in 2012 and having said they voted for Obama over Romney 51% to 35% in 2014. Protestants and Orthodox Christians were by far the most conservative, identifying support for Romney over Obama 40% to 34% in 2012. Remarkably, when asked in 2014 about who they voted for they voted for Obama over Romney 48% to 33%. All of this paints a picture with Muslims as strong Democrats, Catholics as weak Democrats, and Protestants/Orthodox Christians as swing votes. We finally similarly dramatic results in gender as well. Women supported Obama in 2012 63% to 15% and 65% to 14% in 2014. Men, by contrast, supported Obama 44% to 37% in 2012 and

53% to 33% in 2014. This finding is also considerably significant, showing that women strongly support Democrats, whereas men weakly support Democrats.

Research Design

As hypothesized, much of the divisions within the Arab American community in political behavior and attitudes boil down to different pathways for Arab Americans to assimilation into the United States. These pathways vary as a result of differing ethnic traits and white identity. As Ajrouch and Jamal identified, there are categories by which these ethnic traits and white identity vary significantly: immigrant status, national origin, religious affiliation, and Arab-Americanness (2007). The following sections intend to articulate the specific nature in which these and other variables are measured as well as generally how the survey and specifics of the survey will be conducted.

Survey Methodology

The survey intends to use the voter file compiled and used by the Arab American Institute to engage the households of Arab American individuals in an interactive voice response (IVR). This voter file is a composition of registered Arab American voters in the United States including the following information: name, physical address, mailing address, phone number, party membership or affiliation, voting history (including federal, sub-national, primary, municipal, or special election voting history), absentee or military voter designations, source of voter registration, ethnicity, gender, birth date or age range. After aggregating data from the fifty different states, the Arab American voter file identifies individuals by name, ethnicity, and religion (if the information is available) and marks them as having an Arab American identity. Once we have marked the Arab American voters, we will pull a random sample of the voter file. It is important to clarify that we will not be using a quota sample, but instead will weight the responses with respect to Census demographics. With the sample established, this survey will conduct approximately 30,000 calls at a little under \$0.02 per call. However, as a result of call complications like machine hang-ups, unanswered calls, call failures, busy lines, and bad calls as well as response falloff during the survey, we can expect to receive a sample size of approximately 400-500 responses.

I will do three things to maximize response rate from Arab Americans. First, I will use a female voice with an Arabic accent for the survey. The Arabic accent will be used to increase familiarity and trust with the speaker. The specific dialect for the accent is undetermined, but will likely be Egyptian. Second, the survey will begin with a colloquial introduction catered toward Arab Americans, so as to dispel suspicion of authority (Stockton, 2006) and encourage responses. Third, the survey will ask the individuals whether they would prefer to take the survey in English or Arabic, so as to encourage individuals from older generations who only speak Arabic to participate in the survey.

Unfortunately, there will not be any call-backs made, due to budgetary constraints. Additionally, in order to ensure that response order is not biasing responses, we will perform rotations on the candidate name order. In doing this we hope to remove any potential bias in ordering a

⁴ See Appendix D for the specific wording of the introduction.

candidate's name in a particular order. This will be done by assigning questions to preset individuals. These presets will also be used to change the wording of the question asking whether the individual individual voted and how they voted in their states primary election. Finally concerning question order, dependent variables will be asked before independent variables. Independent variables will be sorted in the order from most significant (racial identity, age) to the least significant (immigration status, Arab American identity). After responses have been collected, the survey results will be weighted based on census information to create an accurate representation of the Arab American universe.

Important Variables

There are many questions that a survey can and should ask in order to get an accurate window into the population they are surveying. Surveys—interactive voice responses in particular—however, cannot be long, otherwise they risk high drop-off from participants. As a consequence, every question asked on the survey taken needs to be asked with purpose and reason behind them. In order to keep the survey brief, yet deep enough to provide enough information, I will ask questions that measure 6 independent variables and 2 dependent variables. A total of 9 variables sounds like a lot, but surveys measure many variables and the relationships between these variables. The following sections detail the independent and dependent variables used in the survey.

Independent Variables

There are six independent variables. The first four are the four mentioned by Ajrouch and Jamal and in the literature review section: immigrant status, national origin, religious affiliation, and Arab Americanness. The last two are generic demographic variables—age and gender. This section explicitly discusses how the issues identified as important in the literature review section will be asked.

The first variable is immigrant status. In order to measure this variable, I will include a question on whether the individual is foreign-born or native-born, as this will match the Arab American Institute's voter survey format for asking the questions. It is hard to make any judgments about perceived party identification as relating to immigrant status as the existing data offers very little information. According to the distinction made by Ajrouch, native-born Arab Americans are more inclined to distinguish themselves from whites, which could have the implications of encouraging more liberal voting behaviors and more Democratic partisan identity than foreign-born Arab Americans. It will be important to control on age to make a strong comparison as foreign-born—native-born divide has a strong correlation with age. Though this assumption remains to be tested. The findings of this survey on immigrant status will be extremely valuable for the Arab American literature

The second variable is national origin. Ajrouch and Jamal's categories are lacking for a more modern survey, only encompassing Lebanese/Syrian, Palestinian, Yemeni, and Iraqi nationalities. And since AAI did not construct a question for asking national origin, I thought it would be best to create my own. This question asks individuals which country region they fall in—Northern Africa, Levant, or the Arabian Peninsula as those divisions are roughly the three

⁵ See Appendix C for a graphical representation of the variables used.

major divisions within the Middle East and North Africa region. The ideal level of data would be by country, but that is difficult to achieve through an IVR call, as that would require 22 individual options to be coded. At least by region, similar countries can be grouped to create three somewhat-consistent Middle Eastern cultures. It is expected that individuals from the Levant, as a function of whiteness and past results, will have more conservative voting behavior and more will identify as Republicans compared to the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. It is hard to predict between the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, which will have more conservative voting behavior and identify more as a Republican.

The third variable is religious affiliation. The AAI survey and the Ajrouch and Jamal study ask about religion in two different ways. AAI asks whether the individual is Catholic, Protestant/Orthodox or Muslim, whereas the Ajrouch and Jamal study include categories for Other, Atheist, and Jewish and collapse Catholic and Protestant/Orthodox into one Christian category. This is problematic because it localizes religious choices to the individual when individuals in Arab American households identify religion based on familial ties. Knowing this, the survey will use the AAI definition of religious affiliation, as it accurately quantifies religion as related to Arab Americans. It is expected that the findings in previous studies be replicated in this study, with Muslims being the strongly Democratic and liberal in voting behavior, Catholics being weakly Democratic and liberal in voting behavior and Protestants/Orthodox Christians being

The fourth variable is Arab Americanness. Ajrouch and Jamal create an index to measure the degree of Arab Americanness and ask whether individuals self-identify as Arab American, where AAI asks how individuals self-identify. While the index posed by Ajrouch and Jamal could be valuable, ultimately it would be far too long for the survey and provide relatively little information. Instead, I will construct two ways for measuring Arab Americanness. The first way will look at race and self-identification. Individuals will be presented typical Census race options—whether they identify as White, Black, Asian, or Other. Theoretically, Arab Americans can fall into any of these categories, which makes asking such a measure so immensely valuable. Ideally, respondents will choose "Other" and will be prompted with a question that asks them if they identify as Middle Eastern. In doing this, I hope to construct an accurate composite measure for how individuals truly self-identify on the U.S. Census. This measure would likely be very conservative. The second measure will ask more directly about identification as an Arab American. This measure hopes to look into whether individuals actively identify themselves by their Arab American identity or some other factor. I will borrow the question constructed by AAI as it asks individuals how they identify, prompting them with five options: by religion, by country of origin, Arab American, all of the above, none of the above.

The fifth variable is age. Age is a fundamentally important variable used in virtually all surveys and studies. In particularly more traditional and family-oriented cultures like those of Arab Americans, age is particularly influential within the social dynamics and makes a strong stratifying variable. Additionally, age is helpful to have in order to control on certain conditions, such as immigrant status, as was mentioned earlier.

The sixth variable is gender. As seen in the literature review through the AAI surveys, gender is a very influential variable with women identifying as much more Democratic than men. It is expected that this finding will be carried out unilaterally across all demographics. Of particular

interest is whether or not women support Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders with a much higher rate of support.

Dependent Variables

There are two dependent variables: voting behavior and party identification.

The first variable is voting behavior. Voting behavior intends to measure how individuals plan on voting in the upcoming election. As 2016 is a voting year, I have the luxury of asking questions about voting preferences. This year, I am hoping to ask three questions. The first question I plan on asking will ask individuals favorability of Sanders, Clinton, Trump, and Cruz. After this, I plan to ask a question that measures who, of the candidates running, respondents would prefer to win the election. The third and final question will ask who the individuals voted for in the 2012 election—hopefully this information will provide a metric of "what kind of supporter" they are.

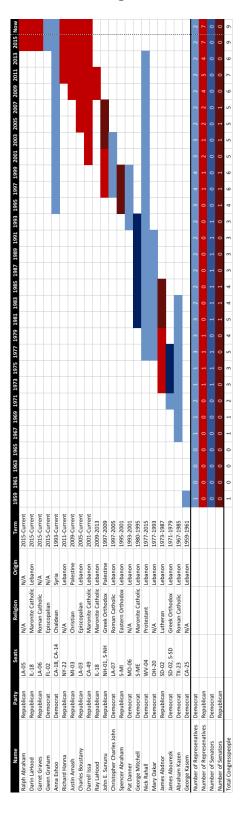
The second variable is party identification. This variable is very straightforward and simply measures individuals party allegiance. The answer options will be "Republican", "Democrat", and "Independent". After this variable, I will include a question that will measure individuals who chose "Independent" to see if they hold any partisan lean. In doing this, I hope to construct a stable measure of party identification.

Limitations

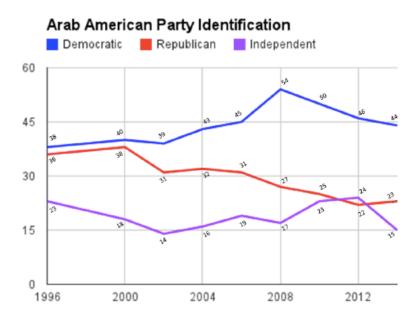
In conducting an IVR survey, there are several pretty significant limitations. The first and most prominent is that IVRs have a lower response rate, which often biases the perception of the results. Additionally, as a result of budgeting issues, all calls will be IVR calls, which often overrepresent older, coupled individuals and underrepresents younger individuals. Both of these two problems, however, are often solved by weighting with respect to a reference universe. Another problem is the reduction of detail in certain variables, namely the ethnic background variable—we will have no way of knowing if Palestinians are more conservative than Jordanians and viceversa. One large and significant limitation is the inability and sheet difficulty in randomizing question and answer responses.

Another significant limitation is the lack of information about the voter file. There is not any information available about what is contained on the Arab American voter file, nor how it was made—both aspects of which are critically important.

Appendix A: Arab Americans in the U.S Congress



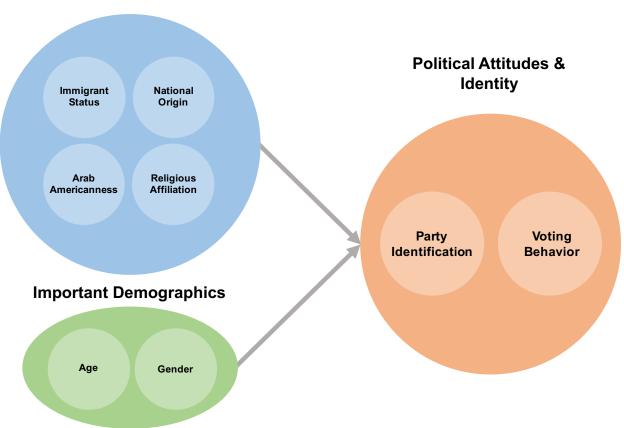
Appendix B: Arab American Party Identification (1996-2012)



Retrieved from Arab American Voters 2014: Their Identity and Political Concerns.

Appendix C: Independent and Dependent Variables

Influencers of Pathway to Integration



Appendix D: Proposed English Survey

Ahlan wa Sahlan! This is [ARABIC FEMALE NAME] from [INSTITUTION]. We are conducting a public opinion survey and would like to ask you a few quick questions.

1. To take the survey in English, press 1. 'aw lee-tatmeem al-ehsaeya fii Arabi, edghat raqam ethnayn. (To take the survey in Arabic, press 2.)

2, ARABIC SURVEY]
Now, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent? Press 1 for Republican, press 2 for Democrat, or press 3 for Independent. Republican
I know you identified yourself as an Independent, but do you think you learn more Republican, more Democrat, or are a True Independent? Press 1 for more Republican, press 2 for more Democrat, or press 3 for True Independent. Lean Republican
I am going to read you the name of some politicians. For each one, press 1 if you have a favorable opinion of that person, press 2 if you have an unfavorable opinion of that person, press 3 if you are neutral, or press 9 if you are unsure. (ROTATE) Hillary Clinton Bernie Sanders Ted Cruz Donald Trump
If the election were held today, for which candidate would you vote? Press 1 for Hillary Clinton, press 2 for Bernie Sanders, press 3 for Donald Trump, press 4 for Ted Cruz, or press 9 if you are unsure. Clinton
Just to make sure we have a representative sample, what is your race? Press one if you are white, press two if you are black, press 3 if you are Asian, or press 9 if you are of another race. White

	Other9	
7.	Also to make sure we have a representative sample, press 1 if you are from a Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish-speaking background, press 2 if you are from a Middle Eastern background, or press 9 if you are from neither. Latino	1,
	For statistical purposes only, please enter your age as a two-digit number. Press 1 if you are female or 2 if you are male.	
10	Now, if the following are your choices, how are you most likely describe yourself? Press 1 if by your country of origin. Press 2 if by your religion. Press 3 as an Arab American. Press 4 if all of the above. Or press 9 if none of the above options describ yourself. By Country of Origin	e
11	For statistical purposes only, what is your ethnic origin? Press 1 if you are from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, or Sudan. Press 2 if you are from Lebanor Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Israel or Palestine. Press 3 if you are from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen or Oman. Press 4 if you are from another region in the Middle East and North Africa. Press 9 if you are not from the Middle East and North Africa. Northern Africa	
12	Were you born in the United States or another country? Press 1 if you were born in the United States. Press 2 if you were born in another country. Native-Born	

You have now finished the survey! Thank you very much; we greatly appreciate your responses. This call was conducted by [INSTITUTION] and paid for by the [DONOR], [PHONE NUMBER].

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