

*Political Outreach to Americans of Middle Eastern and North African Descent During the
2020 Election*

Mona Amirseyedian
University of California, Irvine
Department of Political Science

Abstract

Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent hold a unique political position in the United States. Despite being designated as “White” on the Census, they are commonly racialized, particularly since 9/11, which has increased hate incidents and policies of surveillance directed towards the community. Furthermore, reliable data regarding demographic information, political attitudes, and markers of socioeconomic progress are scarce, posing a challenge for political mobilization. As a result, MENA Americans are frequently alienated from political discourse. Existing research about the political power of MENA Americans focuses on subgroups, whereas this research focuses on the whole group. This paper examines whether candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives viewed MENA Americans as a viable part of the electorate and actively sought to appeal to these voters in the 2020 election cycle. Twelve general election races in districts with prominent MENA populations across the country were analyzed using candidates’ social media posts, public statements, policy orientations, and interactions with constituents. Overall, findings demonstrate that campaign strategies varied from either appealing to or targeting MENA voters. While more Democrats made conscious appeals to MENA Americans than Republicans, some Republicans were successful in reaching out to MENA conservatives. Furthermore, racially or religiously intolerant rhetoric was highly prevalent, with Antisemitism displayed by candidates from both parties. This study’s unique and comprehensive design sheds light on MENA Americans’ role in politics and politicians’ attitudes towards them; these results can be utilized to promote government accountability and inspire further academic studies.

Introduction

Two years after calling for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,” newly inaugurated President Trump issued Executive Order 13769 in January

2017, which initiated a travel ban from a host of Muslim-majority countries. Although the executive order subsequently faced judicial challenges that limited its enforcement, a message was made clear: the general attitude towards those of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent, especially Muslims, continues to be one of suspicion. This trend has long resulted in the exclusion of these groups in the formal sphere of decision-making and politics.

This means that, in addition to being underrepresented in positions of power, MENA Americans have rarely been seen as a viable component of the electorate. Amidst growing attention raised to the MENA community and a highly polarized presidential election, it is worth studying whether candidates made conscious appeals to these voters or made discriminatory, antagonizing comments in 2020. To contextualize how political candidates interact with MENA constituents, it is critical to understand the historical context of MENA individuals' experiences in the U.S. and the diversity of the demographic.

Americans of Middle Eastern and North African descent can be identified as those with ancestral ties to the countries and territories in Southwest Asia and North Africa that encompass the geopolitical Middle Eastern region. MENA Americans can be found across the United States, but are most densely populated in California, New York, and Michigan. Initial migrations of peoples from this region go back to the nineteenth century, and their legal status in terms of racial identification fluctuated according to the Courts based on performative metrics that reinforced the role of white supremacy in our legal systems.

In re Halladjian (1909), for instance, decided that the Armenian petitioners would be classified as White and granted citizenship based on Armenia's connection to Christianity and the perceived potential for Armenians to assimilate, as evinced by a history of intermarriage with non-Armenian Whites.¹ Thus, what distinguished Armenians as White was not so much the color of their skin (although colorism of course played a role as well), but the extent to which they

could conform to traits and actions deemed acceptable (White) at the time.

What cases like this meant for Americans of MENA descent is that those arguing for citizenship had to demonstrate that they were capable of distancing themselves from non-Christian religions and cultural practices that would be frowned upon in court. These decisions were often inconsistent, however, due to the arbitrary nature of these classifications. While *In re Hassan* (1942) ruled that a Yemeni man was ineligible for citizenship due to his darker complexion and a differentiation between the Muslim and Christian worlds, *Ex Parte Mohriez* (1944), granted an Arab man citizenship on the basis of the contributions of the Arab world and potential for the petitioner to assimilate, which implies that success and achievement are somehow linked to Whiteness.² As these and other cases demonstrate, the place that MENA Americans hold in American conceptions of the racial paradigm has not only been inconsistent, but in line with the conviction that these individuals should assimilate and let go of connections to their homelands' cultures.

Although the federal government officially recognized MENA individuals as White in newly standardized racial categories in 1978, MENA Americans have continued to be racialized in practice as immigration from the region to the U.S. increased and world events negatively affected the Middle East's image. These events solidified stereotypes painting Middle Eastern peoples as inherently violent or incapable of assimilating to "Western" culture. From the Iranian Hostage Crisis to 9/11, global events have coupled with Nazita Lajevardi's observation of "old-fashioned racism"* to contribute to a conflation between Muslim and MENA identity.³ Pervasive stereotypes continue to dominate representations of MENA individuals in pop culture and

* Lajevardi defines "old-fashioned racism" as "the outright expression of the inherent, permanent, and biological differences between the races... and support for policies intended to further marginalize... non-whites" (116).

politics and present them as one monolithic group distinct from the rest of White America.

Indeed, MENA Americans face “selective racialization” in the sense that their ethnic identities are commonly whitewashed when conforming to social norms, but racialized when perceived negatively.⁴ As such, MENA Americans inhabit a unique position in the United States whereby they are officially regarded as White but frequently racialized as the contrary and vulnerable to discrimination.

Furthermore, this is complicated by the diversity within the region. MENA Americans encompass diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, in contrast to the common stereotype of all Middle Eastern people as being Arab and Muslim. Arab, Persian, Azeri, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Chaldean are just some examples of ethnic identifications, for instance, and commonly followed religions in the community include Islam as well as Christianity, Judaism, Baha’i, Zoroastrianism, and others. MENA individuals’ racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic identities all play a role in their levels of civic engagement, experiences of discrimination, and political attitudes.⁵ The tension between being seen as a monolithic group versus the divisions that actually exist greatly affects the potential for political mobilization.

All of these factors contribute to a complicated position for MENA Americans in the political realm. Due to their classification as White on the Census, accurate metrics regarding the number of MENA Americans in different cities, their political ideologies, and other demographic information that would typically be helpful to campaign managers’ messaging strategies are unavailable. This has the potential to result in less targeted outreach efforts to the population and/or insensitivity to MENA Americans’ political preferences in campaign platforms.

As for MENA Americans themselves, there is a long history of political, professional, and interest groups that do important advocacy work and promote civil society among MENA Americans. Some notable examples include the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans

(PAAIA), the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), all of which are widely respected and promote the interests of the respective communities they serve. Such advocacy groups are limited by the scant data known about MENA Americans because reliable numbers on issues such as rates of workplace discrimination and discrepancies in socioeconomic status are hard to come by; thus, it is difficult for such advocacy groups to determine their communities' needs in the first place.

At a much broader level, progress in the political sphere is dependent upon whether political candidates (MENA and non-MENA alike) take MENA voters seriously as a viable electorate, which can be measured by the extent to which a conscious effort is made to reach out to them and tailor campaign platforms to acknowledge MENA Americans' diverse political ideologies and concerns.

Progress for representation in government over the past few years include Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib's election wins in 2018 as the first two Muslim women to be elected to the House, Stephanie Bice's 2020 win as the first person of Iranian descent to be elected to Congress, and a multitude of other "firsts" for MENA representation at federal, state, and local levels of government. With this increased political visibility comes the hope that the values and interests of the MENA community will be taken seriously by politicians and the public. In order to ascertain whether this was the case throughout the course of the historic and polarizing 2020 election, congressional candidates in areas with significant numbers of MENA populations will be evaluated for political rhetoric and campaign strategies towards MENA voters.

Methodology

This research focuses on the extent to which congressional candidates in districts with a significant MENA population made efforts to appeal to MENA voters. A total of twelve races were selected. As previously mentioned, reliable data on MENA populations is scarce.

Therefore, this collection of districts is not meant to represent a definitive list of districts with the highest MENA populations, nor is the MENA population share in each district meant to be perfectly equivalent. Rather, there were several factors taken into consideration. First, all districts are known for having a prominent MENA community, and a variety of MENA ethnic groups are represented. Second, to ensure geographic diversity, districts from a total of eight different states were selected from across the country. Additional factors included racial/religious diversity of candidates, varying degrees of competitiveness, and the inclusion of races with high-profile candidates (e.g. Rep. Ilhan Omar, Rep. Rashida Tlaib, and Rep. Dan Crenshaw).

These races were evaluated using publicly accessible data including Federal Election Commission campaign finance contributions, press reports, campaign websites, online candidate forums, and public statements made at recorded events. Additionally, candidates' social media posts on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube were analyzed. Copies of candidates' Twitter feeds were saved just before the election; in cases where candidates deleted their Twitter accounts in 2021, posts were preserved for analysis. In order to sift through the social media content, I searched for posts containing pertinent keywords (e.g. Muslim, Arab, Iran, Israel), but also incorporated relevant content outside of these results. The following categories of political rhetoric/actions were analyzed: Middle Eastern foreign policy, immigration stances, racially charged rhetoric, cultural appeals towards MENA and non-MENA people of color, accusations/instances of Islamophobia or Antisemitism, contact with the MENA community, outreach/events with the MENA community, miscellaneous MENA policy appeals, endorsements from MENA organizations or people, and campaign contributions from MENA organizations.

For those categories pertaining to racial or religious prejudice, a variety of interpretations exist. For example, some candidates were accused of Antisemitism for their comments on the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some within the Jewish community may believe that these remarks employ Antisemitic tropes, while others would argue that some of these comments are not Antisemitic in nature and simply critique the state of Israel. Any categorizations of a statement as racially or religiously intolerant are not aimed to definitively classify a remark as prejudiced. Rather, it is more about whether a comment could be perceived as such, especially if a candidate received widespread criticism for a specific remark or employed commonly-used tropes.

Based on performance on all recorded political rhetoric/actions, candidates were given one of three designations: conscious appeal to MENA voters, no conscious appeal, or a segmented appeal in which a candidate simultaneously reaches out to and attacks the MENA community. An important feature of this research is that the categorization of “conscious appeal” is not exclusive to one political ideology; in fact, there are several cases where candidates with opposing views on a topic still managed to consciously appeal to MENA voters. Thus, an emphasis is placed on the candidate’s intentions and campaign strategies towards the MENA community.

Results and Analysis

Overview of results

Based on the data collected, there was significant variation in the degree to which the observed candidates appealed to MENA voters. As seen in Figure 1, all twelve Democratic candidates made conscious appeals, compared to only three Republicans. Seven Republicans made no conscious appeal, while two made segmented appeals.

Within these classifications, however, there were differences in approaches. Some in the conscious appeals category were more comprehensive in their outreach efforts while others focused on specific religious/ethnic MENA sub-groups or spoke on limited policy areas affecting the MENA population (namely, foreign policy). There were even a few cases where candidates

in this category made comments or actions that could be interpreted as Islamophobic or Antisemitic, but these were generally limited in scope and supplemented by other comments that were meant to appeal to the Muslim and Jewish communities.

Among candidates who made no conscious appeals, there were some candidates who simply chose not to mention the MENA community at all, while others employed Antisemitic, xenophobic, or Islamophobic rhetoric targeting the MENA community in a way that would appeal to nativist, far-right demographics. The two candidates who made segmented appeals, in contrast, simultaneously employed rhetoric attacking the MENA community (especially through Antisemitic and/or Islamophobic remarks) while also attempting to gain support from MENA conservatives. While there were also some candidates in the conscious appeal or no conscious appeal categories who had mixed records of alienating or appealing to voters, candidates in the segmented category were distinct in that they put nearly equal effort into appealing to the MENA community as they did attacking it.

The following is a list of topics that this research provides valuable insight on: Antisemitism and Islamophobia, the role of electoral competitiveness, types of appeals, foreign policy, the connection between MENA rhetoric and attitudes towards other minorities, and the role of candidates' identities in campaign strategies.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia

The widespread Antisemitism and Islamophobia displayed by candidates is a disturbing trend and there are significant contextual variations in which this kind of rhetoric was displayed by Democratic and Republican candidates. A total of three Democratic candidates exhibited some form of Antisemitism, compared to five Republicans (Figure 2). Meanwhile, all four candidates displaying Islamophobic rhetoric were Republicans (two of which were among the Republicans with Antisemitic rhetoric).

The Democratic candidates facing accusations of Antisemitism were Representatives Ted Lieu (CA-33), Rashida Tlaib (MI-13), and Ilhan Omar (MN-5). All of these cases were directly tied to commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rep. Lieu, for instance, posted a Tweet in 2019 directed to the U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman in which he wrote “Your allegiance should be America, not to a foreign power” and criticized him for not defending Omar and Tlaib’s right to visit Israel shortly after the two were banned by the Israeli government. This comment was interpreted by many as using a dual-loyalty trope, which accuses Jewish Americans of conflicting loyalties to Israel and the United States. Lieu later deleted the Tweet and acknowledged the painful history of the trope.

In contrast to Lieu’s isolated incident, Omar and Tlaib have long faced accusations of Antisemitism. Both representatives support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and have consistently criticized the Israeli government for its treatment of Palestinians. While criticism of Israel is by no means inherently Antisemitic, some of these comments employ Antisemitic tropes. For example, Omar and Tlaib have repeatedly targeted lobbying groups such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and implied that Republican support for Israel is driven by money: in 2019, Omar’s Tweet “It’s all about the Benjamins baby” faced widespread condemnation. In 2020, Omar again faced criticism for distributing campaign mailers targeting her primary opponent’s campaign finance sources while only citing Jewish donors (none of whom were well-known figures) by name.

Both representatives have apologized for some of these comments and have even made efforts to reach out to Jewish Americans, but they remain controversial. Even within the Jewish community (Democrat and Republican alike), there are different opinions on the extent to which some of these cases are Antisemitic. Conversely, their comments supporting Palestinians (especially considering Tlaib’s Palestinian identity) certainly appeal towards many pro-

Palestinian organizations/activists, but even in these spaces, the use of Antisemitic tropes has been divisive. The spread of misinformation and conspiracies rooted in Islamophobia/racism against Omar and Tlaib, in addition to political attacks targeting their progressive politics, have further polarized discourse regarding the two Representatives. Regardless, the presence of Antisemitic tropes among these Democratic candidates is cause for concern and complicates national conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Whereas the Antisemitic rhetoric from the Democratic candidates drew widespread controversy, the Republican candidates' Antisemitic remarks faced less national attention because none were incumbents. There were three types of Antisemitic instances among the five Republicans. Tlaib and Lieu's respective opponents, David Dudenhofer and James Bradley, as well as Manga Anantatmula (VA-11), all posted Tweets spreading misinformation about famous Democratic philanthropist George Soros in a way that drew upon Antisemitic tropes. For example, Anantatmula called Soros "the puppeteer of Dems in US & progressives around the world to plot against US & India." The other two used similar rhetoric and defended Newt Gringrich's baseless accusations that Soros funded violence at 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. This type of conspiratorial, Antisemitic rhetoric has long been used against Soros by far-right groups/individuals.

The second kind of Antisemitism displayed by a Republican came from Jeff Jones (MI-12), who shared adrenochrome and Rothschild family conspiracy theories on Facebook. While it is not clear whether Jones or his audience understood the roots of these theories, it reveals how mainstream Antisemitism on social media can be for a Republican candidate for Congress to be exposed to that kind of content and then choose to reshare it. It is also worth noting that Jones made an overall segmented appeal to MENA voters. Despite sharing these Antisemitic Tweets, he also met with Arab conservatives in his district and even distributed campaign signs in Arabic.

The disconnect between these conflicting efforts suggests that Jones perhaps did not consider all MENA community members in his district equally when crafting campaign messaging.

Lastly, Billy Prempeh (NJ-9) was accused of Antisemitism after posting a picture of himself with someone holding a “Q” flag, which is the symbol for the QAnon conspiracy. Prempeh repeatedly denied believing in QAnon after the incident and even denounced Antisemitism in several interviews. However, his reluctance to talk about QAnon’s Antisemitic roots and the way he downplayed the incident may indicate Prempeh made an effort not to alienate QAnon followers.

Among the four Republicans with Islamophobic messaging, this type of rhetoric came in two forms. Rep. Robert Wittman (VA-1) and Lacy Johnson (MN-5) both employed language framing their respective opponents (Qasim Rashid and Rep. Omar, both of whom are Muslim) as sympathetic to radical Islamist violence in campaign messaging against them. In Wittman’s case, this came in the form of a campaign ad claiming Rashid mocked the deaths of terror victims and was “too radical for Congress.” Johnson similarly called Omar a “radical Islamic sympathizer” in a Tweet. Meanwhile, James Bradley and Manga Anantmula made comments on Islam directly, with Bradley calling Islam “intolerant” and attacking MENA organizations with anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Anantmula similarly attacked Islam and made Islamophobic comments about Muslims in India. The fact that these four candidates (including a sitting member of Congress) so unequivocally made blatant Islamophobic remarks demonstrates how there was clearly no consideration given to potential Muslim voters, and it may have even been a tactic to appeal to voters sharing those anti-Muslim sentiments.

Role of Electoral Competitiveness

The competitiveness of congressional races may have played a role in the extent to which

candidates made outreach efforts to the MENA community. In competitive races where either candidate has a viable chance of winning, there is typically more national attention given to the race, and each candidate is forced to appeal to all demographics. In this case, “competitive” refers to races where the election result margins were 10 percent or less.

There were three competitive races included in this study: California’s 45th district, New York’s 11th district, and Texas’s 7th district. The Democrats in these races (Representatives Katie Porter, Max Rose, and Lizzie Fletcher, respectively) all made conscious, comprehensive appeals to MENA voters without any accusations of Antisemitism or Islamophobia.

These appeals came in the form of visits to mosques and synagogues, condemnations of religious intolerance, as well as other statements clearly tailored to their district’s demographics. Porter and Fletcher, whose districts have large Iranian-American populations, acknowledged the Nowruz holiday, for instance, and all three recognized various Muslim and Jewish holidays. Porter also addressed reports in January 2020 that some Iranian-Americans were detained by border officials. She tweeted “I’m deeply disturbed by reports that people of Iranian descent—including U.S. citizens—are being detained by CBP [U.S. Customs and Border Protection]. In Orange County, we embrace our diversity, including our Iranian neighbors. If #CA45 residents need help with CBP or another agency, our OC office is ready to help.” This statement includes a cultural appeal in the form of acknowledging the Iranian-American community’s welcomed presence in Orange County, while also addressing a serious policy issue in the form of the CBP’s conduct.

As seen in Figure 3, Republican candidates Greg Rath (CA-45) and current Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (NY-11) made conscious appeals to MENA voters. Wesley Hunt (TX-7), on the other hand, neither consciously appealed or alienated MENA voters. Despite engaging with Jewish voters/organizations, he did not make efforts to appeal to any other MENA subgroups.

Thus, two of the three total Republicans who made conscious appeals were from districts in competitive races. The other Republican was Rep. Dan Crenshaw of Texas's 2nd district, which was close to becoming a competitive race with Crenshaw winning by a 12.8 percent margin. None of these Republicans employed Islamophobic or Antisemitic rhetoric. In order to explore how competitiveness may have affected these Republicans' campaign strategies, it is worth considering how Raths and Malliotakis approached the MENA community. The 45th congressional district of California's main MENA constituency is made up of Iranian-Americans, and Raths took a special interest in engaging with these community members. While his opponent received the endorsements of several MENA organizations such as the National Iranian American Council and J Street, Raths received endorsements from prominent Iranian community members such as a local mayor.

Additionally, Raths held events with local Iranian-Americans, recognized the Nowruz holiday, and oriented statements on Iranian foreign policy in a way that would appeal to conservative, anti-Iranian regime voters without dehumanizing the Iranian people. There were other issues, such as immigration from Middle Eastern countries that were not directly (at least publicly) addressed, but overall, his campaign made an active effort to appeal to Iranian voters in the community and develop grassroots relationships with them. He also voiced support for Israel as an ally, which would appeal to a segment of MENA voters.

Malliotakis, who ended up winning her election, similarly developed relationships with MENA communities in her ethnically and religiously diverse district. In this race, Israeli foreign policy was a high-profile issue and she voiced support for Israel in a way that would have appealed to many voters in her district but also may have alienated pro-Palestinian voters (of which, there are many in New York). Overall, however, Malliotakis demonstrated more nuance than most Republican counterparts and directly acknowledged the MENA community in the

district.

While other Republicans did not address the Trump Travel Ban that targeted Middle Eastern countries, Malliotakis called it discriminatory and recognized the adverse effect it had on Muslim constituents; hence, she challenged the mainstream party position on an issue in order to adapt to her district's demographics, which was a potentially risky decision that ultimately paid off. She also frequently made efforts to appeal to Jewish voters by visiting synagogues, making statements denouncing Antisemitism, and gaining endorsements from several Jewish organizations.

Thus, both Raths and Malliotakis acknowledged the important role MENA constituencies played in their respective elections and adapted accordingly. They also demonstrate how political appeals to the MENA community are not exclusive to one political ideology/party or the other.

Districts with a prominent Democratic advantage had far different conditions than the competitive races. These races, in which the Democratic candidate won over 60 percent of the vote, were the following: CA-33, MI-12, MI-13, VA-11, MN-5, and NJ-11. While many of the high-profile Democratic incumbents received significant press attention, their Republican opponents did not receive as much national spotlight because they were not treated as viable candidates.

Since the outcome was so predictable in these cases, candidates of both parties had more freedom to approach their campaign strategies however they preferred without the same pressure to appeal to all voters like those in competitive districts faced. Democrats knew they would win regardless, and Republicans knew they would probably lose regardless. As a result, there was a high concentration of Antisemitic and Islamophobic rhetoric in these races.

As depicted in Figure 4, all three of the total Democrats who employed Antisemitic rhetoric came from these races; despite receiving widespread criticism for these comments, they

were still able to win re-election. Meanwhile, all six Republicans in these races used Antisemitic and/or Islamophobic rhetoric (Figure 5). Four of these Republicans made no comprehensive appeal to MENA voters, while the other two made segmented appeals. These trends demonstrate how, under lessened external political pressure, candidates may feel less inclined to filter their campaign rhetoric for offensive comments or appeal to all segments of the MENA electorate equally. When the attainment of MENA votes is not essential to a candidates' political goals, MENA Americans are not treated as seriously as cases where narrow margins of victory necessitate comprehensive voter outreach.

Types of Appeals

The level of attention given to MENA voters varied significantly among candidates, and so did the types of appeals employed. This variation included a stark contrast between Democrats and Republicans. The following are the types of appeals that were measured: MENA endorsements, foreign policy, cultural appeals, contact with MENA voters outside of endorsements, MENA immigration, and miscellaneous policy appeals. It is important to note that different candidates who employed one of these appeals were not necessarily on equal footing, however. Many candidates employed a certain appeal towards only some MENA communities while leaving out others. For example, some candidates made cultural appeals by recognizing Jewish holidays but neglected to mention Muslim holidays despite a high Muslim population in the district. Similar types of variations pertaining to foreign policy and immigration will be further explored after an overview of partisan differences in the types of appeals used.

Democratic candidates were generally more cohesive in the methods they employed. As shown in Figure 6, the only type of appeal that all twelve Democratic candidates did not use was in the miscellaneous category, which demonstrates that MENA candidates were comprehensive in their strategies towards MENA candidates. In contrast, Figure 7 demonstrates how Republican

appeals concentrated on foreign policy, cultural appeals, and contact with the MENA community. Democratic rhetoric was also more inclusive of MENA sub-groups within these three categories, whereas some Republicans only acknowledged one or two sub-groups—mainly pro-Israeli or Jewish constituents.

Immigration was a prominent area of focus in 2020 campaigns across the nation. As such, it was addressed to some extent by all Democratic and Republican candidates researched. However, only one Republican candidate clearly addressed MENA immigration policy in a way that was oriented towards a MENA audience: Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (NY-11). Other Republican candidates either did not address MENA immigration at all, implied support for the Trump Travel Ban, or had an ambiguous stance. Rep. Dan Crenshaw (TX-2), for instance, previously condemned then-candidate Trump's proposal of a Muslim ban before the 2016 election and made appeals towards Iranian-American conservatives in this election cycle, but did not explicitly define his stance towards the travel ban. Rep. Robert Wittman (VA-1) similarly made conflicting comments that criticized, but then defended, the travel ban. All Republican candidates had clear policy stances on immigration in general, however, which mostly came in the form of opposition to illegal immigration.

The exclusion of clear MENA immigration policies, which stands in contrast to Democrats' direct condemnations of the travel ban, is the reflection of three possible factors. First, political pressures led Republicans to avoid an issue that would portray their party negatively, particularly during a presidential election year. Second, some of these Republican candidates may not have been concerned with gaining MENA support at all, or even prioritized votes from constituents who opposed MENA immigration outright. A third possibility could be a lack of consensus among conservative MENA voters in the candidates' districts.

Further research regarding MENA Trump supporters is necessary to better understand

their attitudes towards the travel ban. It could be that some of these MENA conservatives did not perceive the Trump Travel Ban as a dealbreaker, which translated into Republican candidates who otherwise appealed to MENA constituents choosing to avoid a clear stance on MENA immigration.

Foreign Policy: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Iran

Foreign policy was a focus of campaign rhetoric among all candidates except for one Republican, and there were also partisan differences in this area. The main MENA foreign policy issues brought up by candidates were the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and relations with Iran. As mentioned previously, conversations over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict incited some Antisemitic tropes of dual loyalty, but most politicians generally voiced support for Israel. Very few mentioned the Palestinian cause, however, and these statements came from Democratic candidates.

The Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement, which calls for divestment of investments from Israel in protest for human rights abuses and the state's occupation of Palestinian territories, was brought up frequently. Republican candidates, all of whom expressed pro-Israeli statements, overall opposed the BDS movement, labeling it Antisemitic. And most Democrats also distanced themselves from the movement or did not mention it. The prominent exceptions to this trend were Representatives Tlaib and Omar, who advocate for the movement. Both candidates were subsequently attacked by their opponents for their stances.

Additionally, Republican Rep. Malliotakis (NY-11) used a picture of Omar in an attack ad against her opponent. The graphic read "Max Rose stands with AOC and Omar." While it is conceivable that Omar's inclusion was to criticize her economically progressive comments, as many Republicans have done, it is also possible that Omar's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had to do with her inclusion. Malliotakis's district is religiously and ethnically diverse,

with a prominent number of Muslim and Jewish constituents. As a result, Israel was brought up frequently over the course of the campaign. Although both candidates in her race made comments supporting Israel, there was debate over which candidate's support was stronger.

Regarding whether statements on the conflict were oriented towards MENA voters, it is important to note that there will always be a segment of MENA voters who would agree or disagree, or even feel offended, by politicians' comments regardless of their stance. MENA voters' religious and ethnic identities, as well as their own individual experiences, greatly influence how they interpret the conflict, and these perceptions don't necessarily fall neatly by party lines. Due to the lack of representation of Arabs and Muslims in U.S. politics, as well as the United States' unique relationship with Israel, advocates for Palestinians very rarely see their opinions represented within the formal political sphere.

This is a topic that Emily Regan Wills discusses in depth through her ethnographic field study. She notes that the topic of Palestine unites Arab American communities more than any other issue, but Arab Americans are often discouraged from publicly speaking about it due to its highly divisive nature, as well as the common stereotypes and Islamophobic/racist statements advocates are commonly subjected to. Wills coins the term "discursive misrecognition" to describe this phenomenon, which she defines as "the uniting of the identity of speakers... to the content of their speech... such that certain actors are not free to take part in a practical discourse without excessive restriction."⁶ This aspect of discussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are important to keep in mind as we examine how congressional candidates speak about the issue. Arab Americans, particularly Palestinian Americans, very rarely see their perspectives legitimized in mainstream political discussions in the United States in general.

There were several instances in this data set where candidates were clearly mindful of their district's demographics, however. Representatives Dingell, Omar, and Tlaib have a history

of speaking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that would appeal to their respective district's pro-Palestinian populations. Qasim Rashid (VA-1-D) also has a long history of condemning Israeli human rights violations while defending Israel's right to exist, but Israel/Palestine was not emphasized as much by him in this election cycle.

Additionally, Rep. Marie Newman (IL-3-D) stood out for her approach to discussing the conflict. Her campaign website listed a three-page document outlining her stance in greater detail than any other candidate. In that document, she states "I am a strong supporter of the Jewish and Palestinian communities in our metropolitan area," which demonstrates a notable degree of attention and concern for the MENA community. In her statement, she outlines her support for a two-state solution, denounces Antisemitism/Islamophobia, and states that, while she does not personally support BDS, she recognizes the right of people to advocate for it. Newman recognized how voters in her district cared deeply about the conflict; the level of detail and nuance she provided to explain her stance is unique among politicians in general. She also recognized how MENA voters are not monolithic in their stance on the conflict and did not resort to Antisemitic tropes in her rhetoric.

Another foreign policy issue that revealed a divide among MENA voters was Iran. Amidst withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal, and the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, the United States's policy towards Iran was a particularly salient issue during this election cycle. It was also an issue that fell more neatly along partisan lines than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In general, Democratic candidates oriented their rhetoric on Iran in a way that was mindful of Iranian-Americans' opinions, particularly considering how many of these Iranian-Americans have family in Iran who are directly impacted by sanctions and the threat of war. In their criticisms of the Trump Administration's actions, Democrats emphasized the human toll of Iranian foreign policy while

prioritizing de-escalation and re-joining the JCPOA.

Among Republicans, those who spoke about Iran defended President Trump's actions and advocated for more aggressive policies with the goal of instituting regime change. Some Republicans showed signs of genuine engagement with the Iranian-American community on this issue. For example, Greg Rath (CA-45) posted Tweets that were critical of the Iranian regime and voiced support for Iranian citizens; his track record of meeting with Iranian voters demonstrates that he consciously intended to appeal to conservative Iranians.

Similarly, Rep. Dan Crenshaw (TX-2) framed the Trump administration's policies as supporting the Iranian people, while also clarifying his opposition to all-out war. Crenshaw's position was notable considering his opponent, Sima Ladjevardian, is of Iranian descent. Both Crenshaw and Ladjevardian received endorsements from the Iranian American Political Action Committee.

In contrast to Rath and Crenshaw, however, James Bradley (CA-33) employed inflammatory rhetoric that would only appeal to a very small segment of Iranian-Americans, which is why he was considered as one of the two "segmented appeals" candidates in the data set. Bradley attended a small 2020 event in Los Angeles with conservative Iranian Trump-supporters in what he called a "Protest against Ted Lieu calling him on his support of the CCP, NIAC, CAIR and Terrorists." Surrounded by signs with phrases such as "NIAC lobbies for mullahs," Bradley engaged in messages that were blatantly racist and Islamophobic.*

Not only was his assertion that Lieu supports the Chinese Communist Party rooted in

* Increased attention towards the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) was the result of a January 2020 letter from Senators Tom Cotton, Ted Cruz and Mike Braun calling for the Department of Justice to investigate NIAC for lobbying on behalf of the Iranian regime. These accusations were made with little substantial evidence, and the letter was written shortly after NIAC criticized the Trump Administration's assassination of Qasem Soleimani.

racism because of Lieu's Taiwanese heritage, but he also engaged in other dual-loyalty tropes against MENA Americans by suggesting NIAC supported the Iranian regime. What makes this event so interesting, however, is that Bradley was surrounded by Iranian-Americans spreading those same messages and engaged in conversations with them. Thus, he simultaneously appealed to and alienated MENA voters by exclusively reaching out to a small segment of the Iranian community (non-Muslim, ultra-conservative) in a way that would be offensive and harmful to the rest of the MENA community.

Bradley's case is significant for multiple reasons. First, it sheds light on hard-line conservative Iranian-Americans who are committed to a regime change policy in Iran without compromise. Their willingness to vilify NIAC and CAIR is consistent with Neda Maghbouleh's observations regarding a generational divide in Iranian-Americans' conceptions of their MENA identity, with middle-aged and older generations often perceiving themselves as separate from other Middle-Eastern groups due to differences in ethnicity and religion, as well as historical tensions between the communities.⁷

The second important takeaway from Bradley's political activities is that there is an evident divide within the Republican Party. On the one hand, there are Republicans such as Rep. Crenshaw or Greg Raths who justify their stances by supporting the Iranian people and engaging with conservative Iranian-Americans without resorting to Islamophobic or hateful rhetoric. Alternatively, there are individuals like Bradley who, despite sharing the same policy views, resort to xenophobic rhetoric and hateful messaging to justify their stances. Going forward, research on Iranian-Americans' stances towards foreign policy with Iran would help further guide these discussions and reveal possible reasons for varying opinions.

The Connection between MENA Rhetoric and Attitudes Towards Other Minorities

Comparing candidates' rhetoric towards non-MENA and MENA ethnic/racial groups is

valuable because it helps us better contextualize the presence of MENA-oriented appeals. The data set is not sufficient to definitively determine whether there exists a correlation between positive/negative racially charged rhetoric towards MENA Americans versus non-MENA people of color. However, these cases can provide some insight into different partisan approaches on race, as well as demonstrate how much variation there is within this category.

Overall, there were two different kinds of rhetoric that were considered. The first consisted of racially charged rhetoric towards non-MENA people of color. Statements from this category were mostly related to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, general condemnations of racism, celebrations of different holidays (e.g. Hispanic Heritage Month, Lunar New Year), and discussions regarding racial disparities in areas such as healthcare or wealth.

The second kind of rhetoric examined was exclusive to immigration. Policy stances towards immigration were studied, as well as whether candidates used xenophobic rhetoric. Considering how conditions at the Southern border were a prominent issue in this election cycle, many statements within this category directly or indirectly focused on Hispanic immigrants. As stated earlier, the categorization of racial rhetoric is highly subjective and ideological/partisan identities would naturally influence how people see these statements. Classifications were based on whether an action or statement could be interpreted as racially charged and/or xenophobic. Democratic candidates were fairly uniform in their rhetoric. They stated strong support for the Black Lives Matter Movement, were vocal on issues affecting racial minorities, condemned anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognized different cultural holidays. There were no recorded instances of negative racially charged rhetoric for candidates in this election cycle. On immigration, Democrats criticized the Trump Administration's border policies (while framing them as racist/xenophobic) and stated their support for undocumented Americans. The

uniformity of Democratic messaging suggests strong partisan unity in this area and is notable considering that all Democrats also made conscious appeals to MENA voters.

Republicans varied more significantly in their racial rhetoric. All made some sort of appeal to non-MENA minorities. This mostly came in the form of condemning George Floyd's murder, affirming conservative support among racial/ethnic minorities, and/or discussing personal experiences if the candidate was a minority. In contrast to Democratic candidates, seven out of twelve Republicans made negative racially charged statements; all three Republicans who made conscious appeals to MENA voters were among the seven (Figure 8). A majority of these instances consisted of statements linking Black Lives Matter to Antifa, with Rep. Crenshaw tweeting "Antifa and BLM have done exactly zero good for America."

There were also some even more disturbing instances of racist rhetoric. For example, Manga Anantatmula (VA-11), who also made Antisemitic and Islamophobic comments during this election cycle, tweeted in September 2020, "All the ruckus about Goerge Floyd death only coz hes a black man is bogus!" Meanwhile, James Bradley (CA-33) made anti-Asian statements against his opponent Rep. Lieu in addition to anti-Black statements. In response to a Tweet made by Rep. Lieu regarding discrimination against Asians since the COVID-19 pandemic, Bradley tweeted "Which is ironic since it was an Asian country that sent the virus here in the first place. I'd call that a backfire, wouldn't you Ted?" Cases of negative racially charged rhetoric from Republicans were unfortunately not unique to the candidates in this data set; these sorts of sentiments were echoed by Republican political figures across the country.

Republican rhetoric regarding immigration was also consistent with partisan talking points. Most Republican candidates stated their support for legal immigration and two spoke about their own experiences as first-generation Americans. There were even a few Republicans who exhibited more nuance than typical partisan rhetoric. For example, David Dudenhoefer (MI-

13) spoke about how U.S. intervention in Latin America has contributed to the border crisis and Billy Prempeh (NJ-9), whose parents immigrated from Ghana, supported granting a path to legal status for people brought illegally to the U.S. as children.

All Republican candidates, however, also made statements that could be interpreted as xenophobic (e.g. the portrayal of undocumented immigrants as a threat or minimizing the inhumane treatment of migrants at the border). There were also a few candidates whose statements had explicitly racial undertones. For example, Greg Rath (CA-45) described a hospital he visited in a city with a high Hispanic population as “just full of Hispanics that appeared to be illegal” when discussing healthcare access for undocumented immigrants. This is particularly noteworthy considering how Rath stood out for his efforts to engage with the Iranian-American community in his district.

Overall, there does not appear to be a clear-cut connection between candidates’ attitudes towards MENA voters compared to non-MENA minority voters, at least within this data set. The Republican candidates who made conscious appeals or segmented appeals to MENA voters all used negative racial rhetoric towards non-MENA people of color, demonstrating that the nature of racially charged statements from candidates are determined by a complex set of factors that cannot be neatly captured. The backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement, increase in hate crimes against Asians, and contentious presidential election in 2020 put racial issues at the forefront of debate in this election cycle and the politicization of “identity politics” could not be more apparent.

The Role of Candidates’ Identities in Campaign Strategies

As demonstrated in Figures 9 and 10, the candidates included in this data set were racially/ethnically and religiously diverse— more so than the actual Congress. For example, three out of twelve Republican candidates within this data set were Black. In contrast, there are

only two Black Republicans in the entire U.S. House of Representatives. Furthermore, there were three MENA-American candidates included in the data set (one Iranian, one Palestinian, and one Somali), all of whom were Democrats.

This diversity can be attributed to the demographic characteristics of candidates' communities. As districts with prominent MENA populations, they also have high populations of other minorities. It is well-established that people's unique identities impact their political ideologies and voting patterns, and this was certainly the case among candidates in this data set. Candidates of color, regardless of party, frequently drew upon their personal experiences when discussing stances on racial issues.

For MENA candidates, their cultural and religious identities, as well as their experiences as immigrants or children of immigrants, translated into policy platforms. Representatives Tlaib and Omar's impassioned rhetoric in support of Palestinians, as well as their and Ladjevardian's focus on immigration policy, are all representative of how they have been personally impacted by these issues. With the exception of rhetoric concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, their messages seemed to be consistent with prevailing rhetoric from the Democratic Party, particularly when it came to opposition to the Trump Travel Ban and policy with Iran.

MENA candidates differed from their Democratic counterparts by enjoying more formal and informal relationships with MENA organizations and community members, which would translate into ever-important campaign donations, in addition to increased opportunities to gain votes. This is not to say that non-MENA Republicans or Democrats did not have similar relationships, but MENA candidates would be in a position to better connect with constituents of the same cultural heritage.

MENA and non-MENA Muslim candidates, all of whom were Democrats, also faced unique challenges because of their identities. All were more vulnerable to racist and/or

Islamophobic attacks because of their cultural heritage. Representatives Tlaib and Omar have been particularly vocal about the death threats they have faced since running for Congress in 2018. Their opponents, as well as Republicans across the country, have used their likeness as a symbol for the Democratic Party as a whole in an attempt to frame them as radical, extremist, or even sympathetic to terrorism, which has clear racial/Islamophobic undertones. Qasim Rashid, a Muslim candidate of Pakistani descent, was also the subject of an attack ad by opponent Rep. Wittman that presented Rashid as sympathetic to terrorism (Wittman denied any racist/Islamophobic intent). Given the historical conflation and racialization of Muslim and MENA identities among the American public, these candidates shared similar experiences on the campaign trail.

Another area of interest concerning candidates' identities is whether the racial/ethnic identities of Republican candidates would affect their approach to MENA voters. Although this data set is not sufficient to extend to the broader Republican Party, particularly since these races are unique in their demographics and levels of competitiveness, there seems to be no indication that Republican candidates of color would be more likely to reach out to MENA voters.

Among the three Republicans who made overall conscious appeals to MENA voters, one was Hispanic (Rep. Malliotakis of New York) and the other two were White. Rhetoric regarding issues important to the MENA community, including foreign policy and immigration, were mostly in accordance with policy platforms from the Republican Party. Furthermore, there were incidents of Islamophobic and Antisemitic rhetoric from White and non-White candidates alike.

For example, the only non-Christian Republican in this data set, Manga Anantatmula from Virginia (who is Hindu and of Indian descent) employed both Islamophobic and Antisemitic rhetoric. While the identities/experiences of Republican candidates of color certainly impacted the way they spoke about other political issues in the campaign, as well their

relationships with the community, it did not appear to impact attitudes towards the MENA community specifically.

Conclusion

In closing, MENA Americans have a long history of being overlooked in political circles and being subject to racialization and discrimination in the United States. The intention behind this project was not only to shed light on an underrepresented community, but also to provide some insight into how they are perceived by politicians themselves. By examining how candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives interacted with MENA voters in their community during the momentous and polarizing 2020 election, we are better able to evaluate variations in campaign strategies towards the MENA community.

In all, the results demonstrated a clear partisan divide, with all Democratic candidates making overall conscious appeals to MENA voters, compared to only three Republicans. Another key finding was how prevalent Antisemitism and Islamophobia are in the political sphere, particularly among Republican candidates. One possible reason for variations on MENA records among candidates of the same political party was the competitiveness of races; close election results generally translated to increased outreach to the MENA community because of how valuable these votes were.

Furthermore, candidates employed different techniques to appeal to MENA voters, with some political issues— namely, foreign policy— playing more of a salient role within candidates' messaging than others. The potential connection between attitudes towards the MENA community and other racial/ethnic minorities was also studied, but there did not appear to be a definitive correlation between the two. Lastly, the racial, ethnic, and religious identities of non-MENA candidates did not make them less or more likely to reach out to MENA voters. However, MENA and Muslim politicians that were studied shared common experiences that

translated into their campaign approaches.

These findings are incredibly valuable considering the dearth of academic research and demographic statistics on the MENA-American community. However, there are also various limitations with this data that should be addressed for future studies. First, since this was not a field study, there could have been interactions between candidates and MENA voters that occurred during this election cycle that were not posted online and therefore not included in the data.

The classification of specific remarks or interactions as appealing or not appealing to MENA voters is also highly subjective. Although my personal Iranian-American identity has granted me some insight into the MENA community, my experiences do not necessarily make me equipped to represent all MENA-American perspectives, nor are these perspectives homogenous within or among different sub-classifications.

Furthermore, while social media was examined fairly closely in this study, there may have been deleted posts concerning the MENA community that were not observed. There were also some Republican candidates who used the social media platform Parler. Due to the app's ties to far-right extremism and removal from Amazon and Google app stores in 2021, discourse on Parler was not included in this data set either; there is a strong possibility that anti-MENA sentiments could have been shared on such a platform by the observed candidates.

Another important factor to consider is how unique this election cycle was due to social distancing restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Campaigns nationwide were not able to conduct mobilization or canvassing efforts the way they normally would, which naturally decreased the number of opportunities available for candidates to meet with MENA voters. Thus, specific data regarding partisan variations on outreach to MENA voters may differ in future election cycles. Lastly, only twelve races were analyzed, which is far too small a data set to make

broader generalizations about political parties.

There are several areas of research that can be pursued in the future. The arguably most important of these is securing reliable demographic information displaying how many MENA Americans are in the United States, as well as what disparities exist. This will be difficult to achieve considering how contentious adding a separate “MENA” classification on the Census is; many are understandably afraid that reporting their ethnicity would make them vulnerable to discrimination. However, it will be immensely difficult for substantive progress to be made in the absence of reliable data.

Additionally, future studies can compare attitudes towards the MENA community from candidates in districts with prominent MENA populations compared to districts with far fewer MENA residents. Studying public opinion variations among various sub-groups of the MENA community (on racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, geographic, and generational divides) is also valuable for better understanding the reasoning behind policy preferences. A comparison between MENA Republican voters and minority Republican voters from other racial/ethnic backgrounds could also be helpful. Considering how the Republican party performed better among Hispanic voters in 2020 than 2016, a comparison between Hispanic and MENA voters could be particularly valuable.

With the contributions this project and future research provides, my hope is that the MENA community in the U.S. will be taken seriously as voters, and, more importantly, as Americans. As MENA representation in politics grows, I anticipate political issues affecting the community to be the subject of mainstream conversations and solutions, and I expect MENA Americans to become more politically visible over time. There are various reasons for concern and optimism for the community. While racism, Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and xenophobia continue to affect MENA Americans, there has also been significant progress in representation

over the years that are cause for celebration. It will take serious research in the academic realm, as well as political mobilization efforts, to continue this progress in the future.

Endnotes

1. John Tehranian, *Whitewashed: America's Invisible Middle Eastern Minority* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010), 51.
2. Tehranian, *Whitewashed*, 59.
3. Nazita Lajevardi and Kassra A. Oskooii, "Old-Fashioned Racism, Contemporary Islamophobia, and the Isolation of Muslim Americans in the Age of Trump," *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018): pp. 112-152, <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2017.37>.
4. Tehranian, *Whitewashed*, 73.
5. Wayne Baker, Mark Tessler, Ronald R Stockton, Andrew Shryock, Ann Chih Lin, Amaney Jamal, and Sally Howell, *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 135-162.
6. Emily Regan Wills, *Arab New York Politics and Community in the Everyday Lives of Arab Americans* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019), 12.
7. Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 54-58.

Bibliography

- Baker, Wayne, Mark Tessler, Ronald R Stockton, Andrew Shryock, Ann Chih Lin, Amaney Jamal, and Sally Howell. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.
- Lajevardi, Nazita, and Kassra A. Oskooii. “Old-Fashioned Racism, Contemporary Islamophobia, and the Isolation of Muslim Americans in the Age of Trump.” *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018): 112–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2017.37>.
- Maghbouleh, Neda. *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017.
- Tehrani, John. *Whitewashed: America's Invisible Middle Eastern Minority*. New York, New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- Wills, Emily Regan. *Arab New York Politics and Community in the Everyday Lives of Arab Americans*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019.

Figure 1

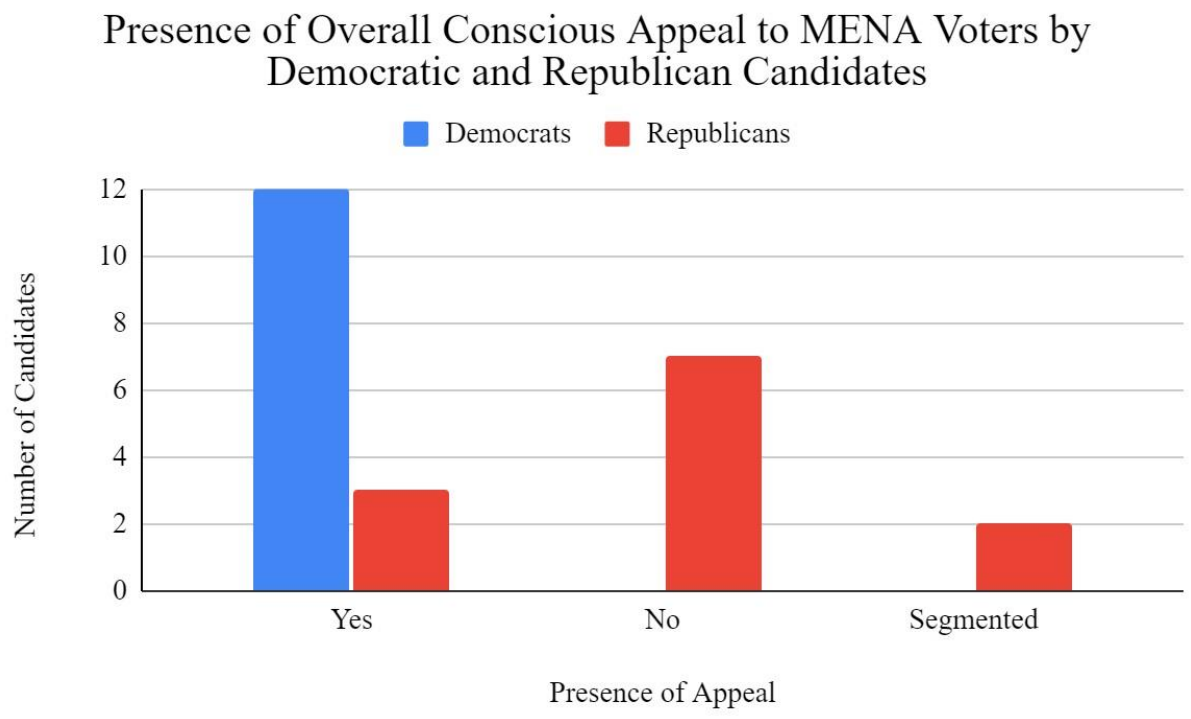


Figure 2

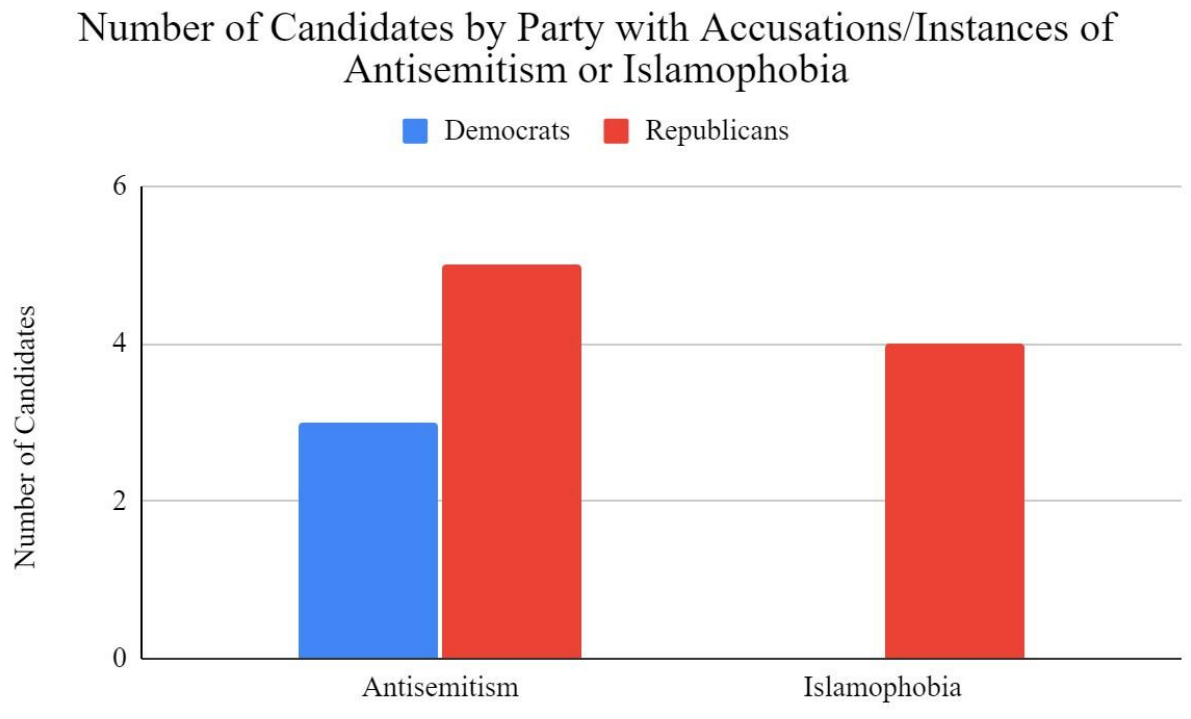


Figure 3

Presence of Appeal to MENA Voters by Republicans in Competitive Districts

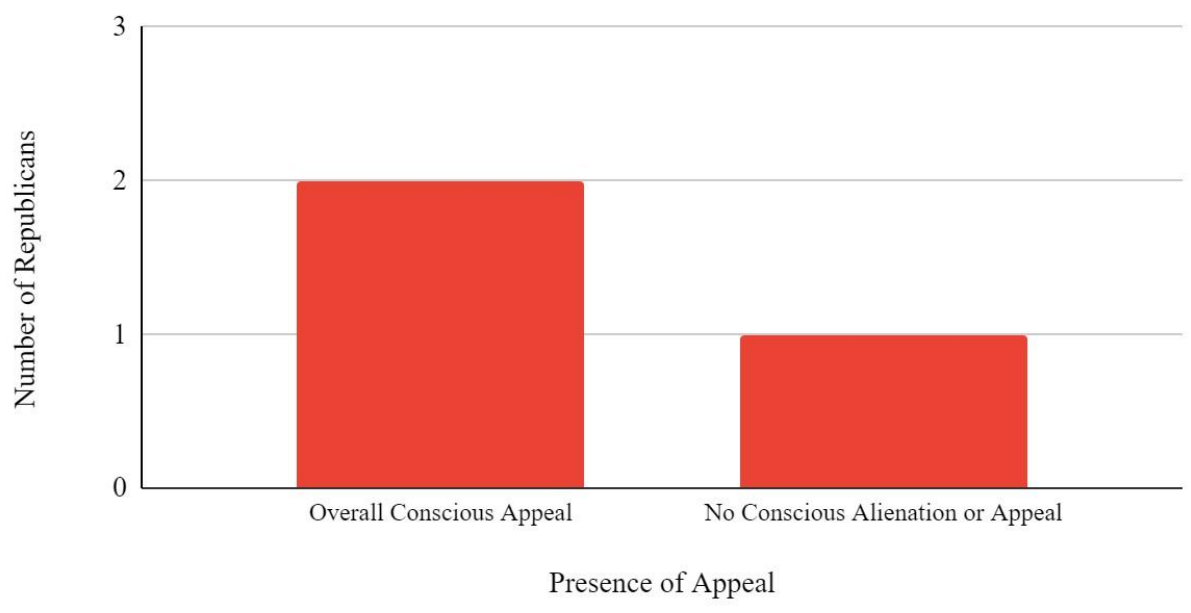


Figure 4

Democrats in Predominantly Democratic Districts Who Used Antisemitic Rhetoric

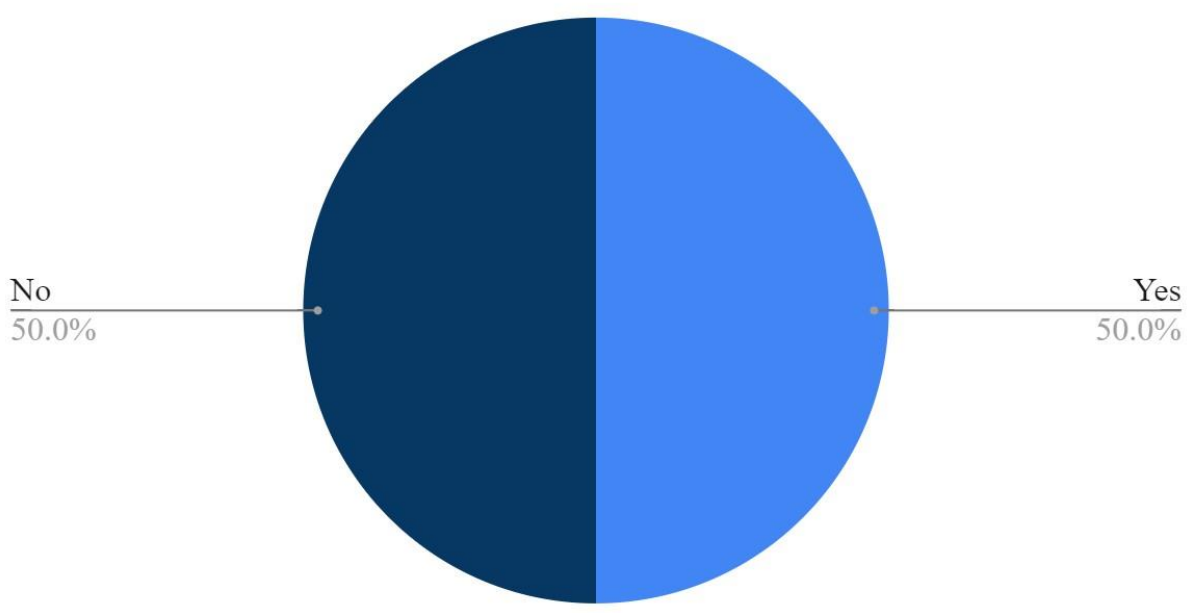


Figure 5

Republicans in Predominantly Democratic Districts Who Used Antisemitic and/or Islamophobic Rhetoric

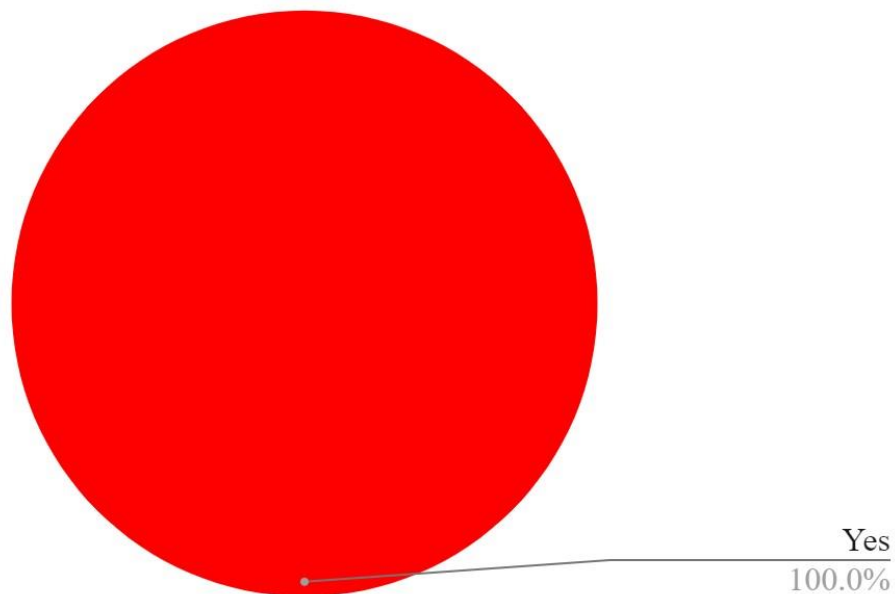


Figure 6

Types of Appeals from Democrats

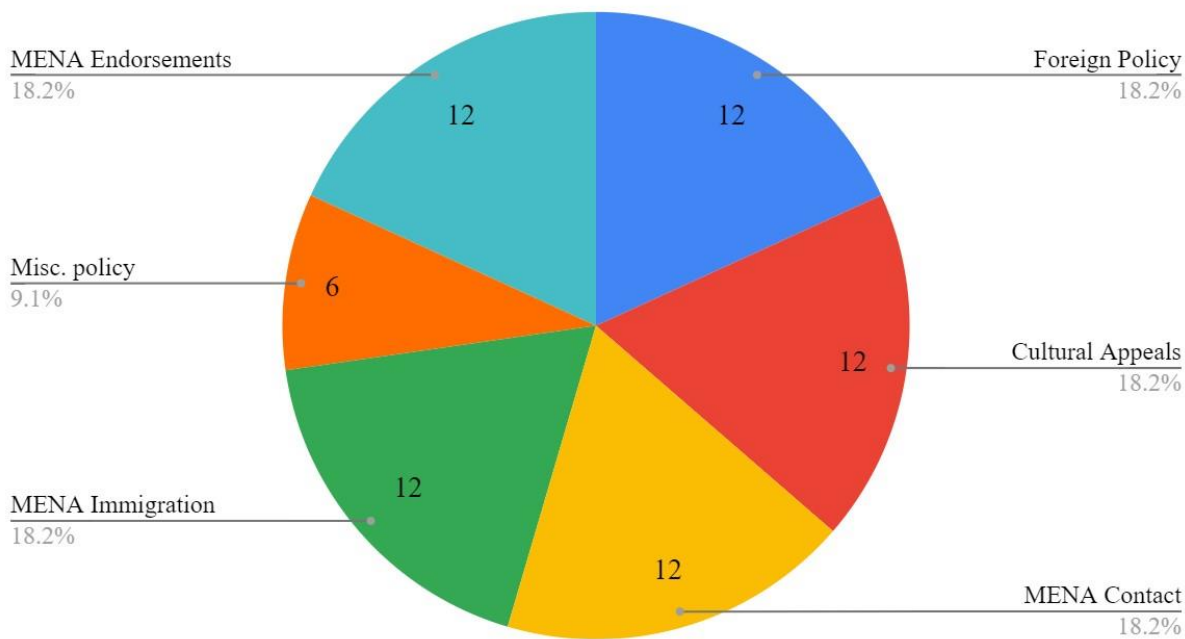


Figure 7

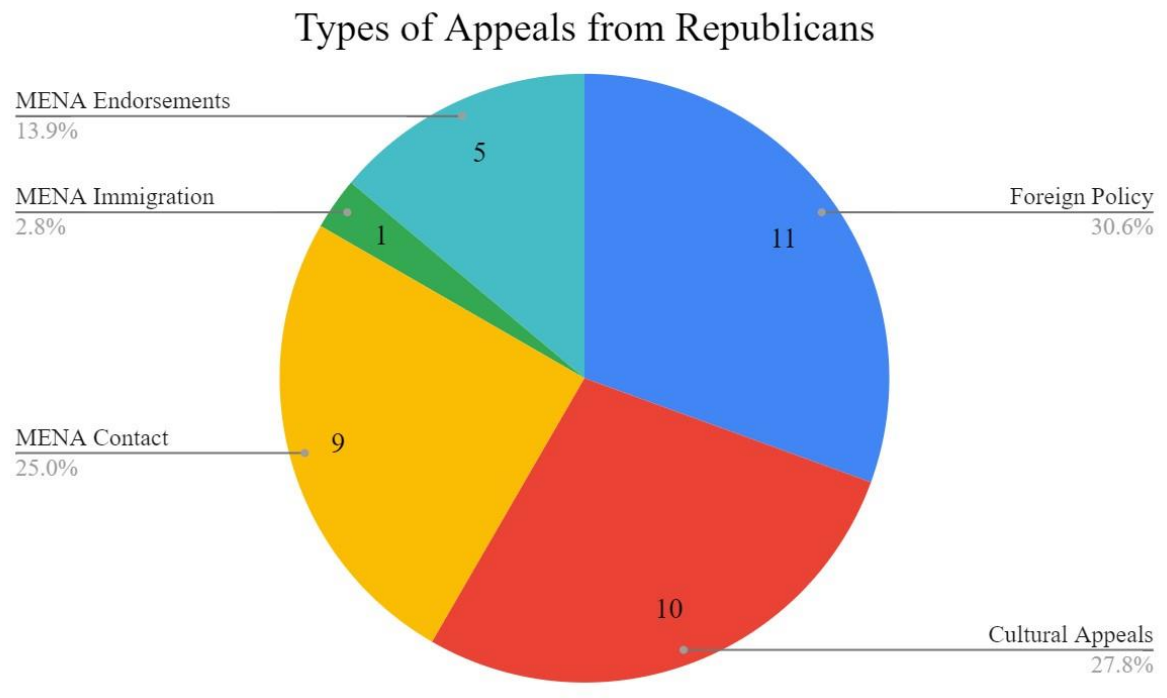


Figure 8

Type of Negative Racially Charged Rhetoric from Republican Candidates

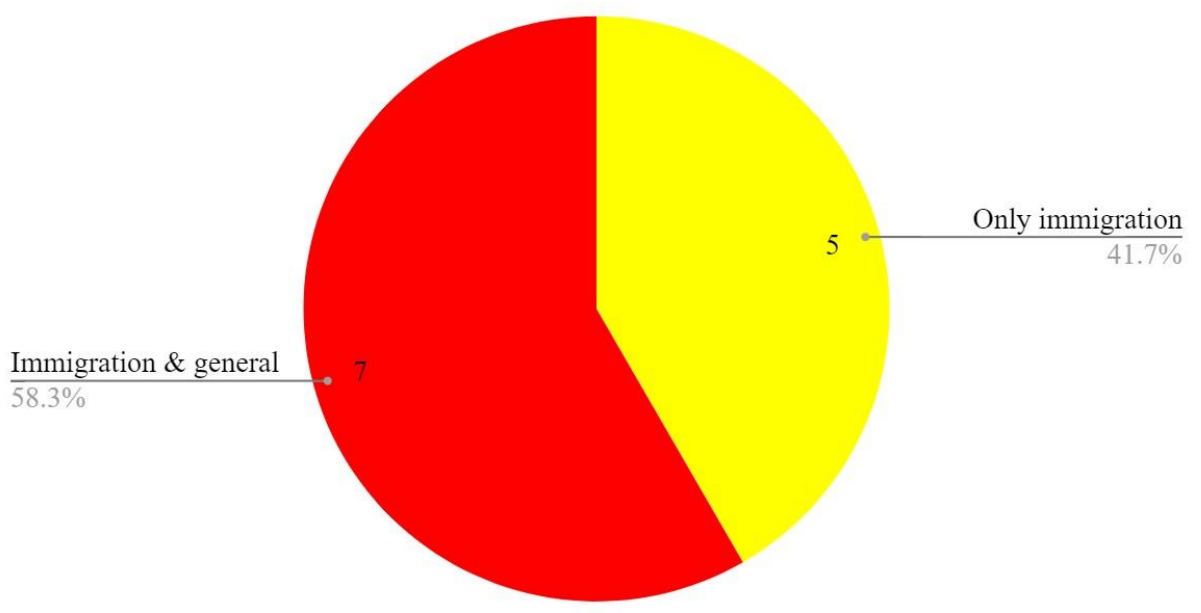


Figure 9

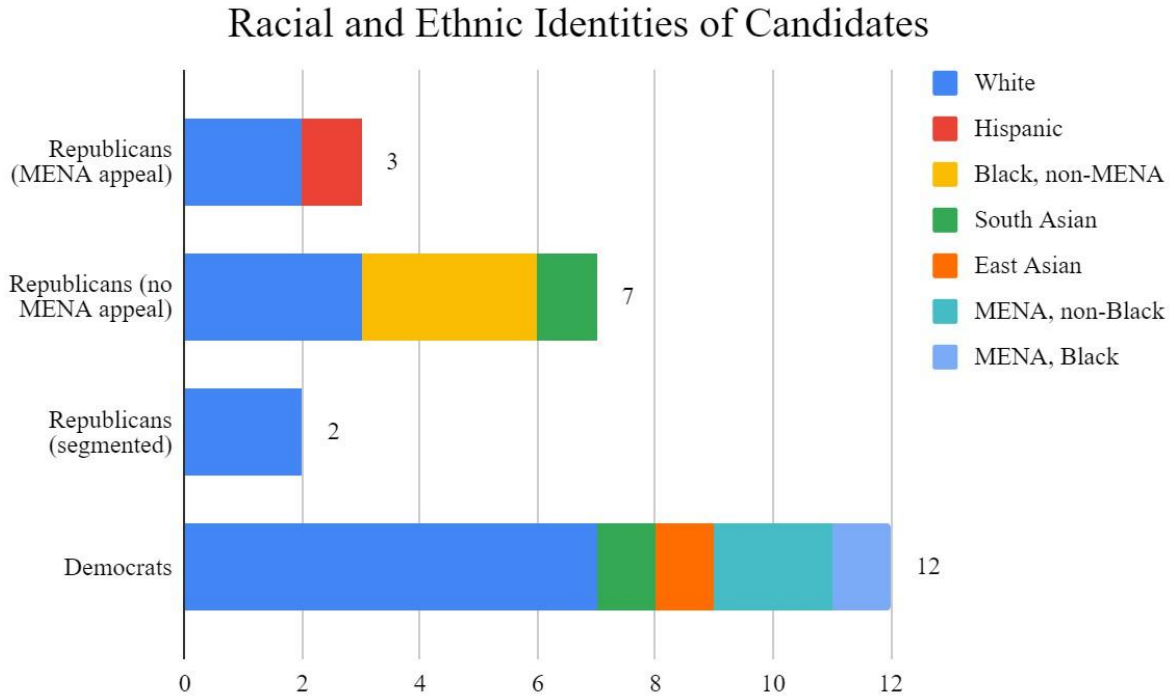
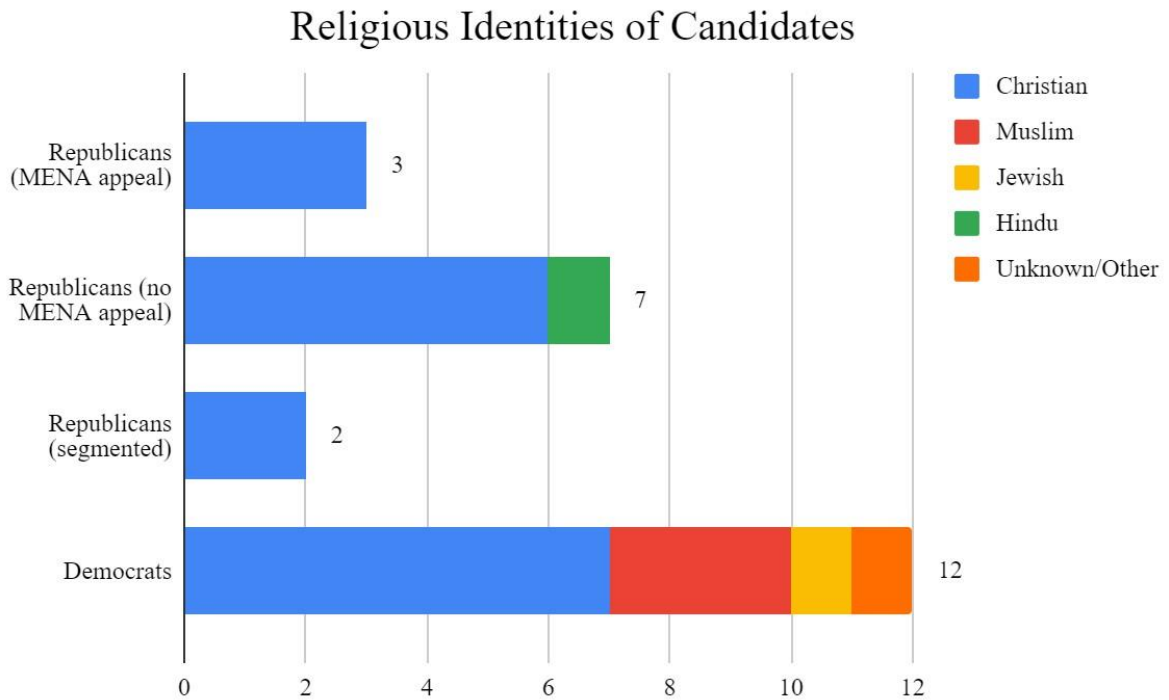


Figure 10



Overview of Districts in Study

State-district	2020 general election candidates	Incumbent's first won election	Winning party, 2014	Winning party, 2016	Winning party, 2018	2020 election result (competitive races highlighted yellow; races w/ prominent Dem advantage highlighted orange)	2020 pres election winner of district	Main MENA groups in district
CA-45	Katie Porter (D), Greg Rath (R)	Porter: 2018	R	R	D	D: 53.5% R: 46.5%	Biden	Arab, Iranian
CA-33	Ted Lieu (D), James Bradley (R)	Lieu: 2014	D	D	D	D: 67.6% R: 32.4%	Biden	Iranian
MI-12	Debbie Dingell (D), Jeff Jones (R)	Dingell: 2014	D	D	D	D: 66.45 R: 30.7%	Biden	Arab
MI-13	Rashida Tlaib (D), David Dudenhoefer (R)	Tlaib: 2018	D	D	D	D: 78.1% R: 18.6%	Biden	Arab
NY-11	Max Rose (D), Nicole Malliotakis (R)	Rose: 2018	R	R	D	R: 53.1% D: 46.9%	Trump	Arab, Iranian
VA-11	Gerald Connolly (D), Manga Anantatmula (R)	Connolly: 2008	D	D	D	D: 71.6% R: 28.4%	Biden	Arab, Iranian
VA-1	Qasim Rashid (D), Robert Wittman (R)	Wittman: 2007	R	R	R	R: 58.1% D: 41.8%	Trump	Arab, Iranian
MN-5	Ilhan Omar (D), Lacy Johnson (R)	Omar: 2018	D	D	D	D: 64.5% R: 25.9%	Biden	Arab
NJ-9	Bill Pascrell (D), Billy Prempch (R)	Pascrell: 2012	D	D	D	D: 65.8% R: 31.9%	Biden	Arab
TX-2	Sima Ladjevardian (D), Dan Crenshaw (R)	Crenshaw: 2018	R	R	R	R: 55.6% D: 42.8%	Trump	Arab, Iranian
TX-7	Lizzie Fletcher (D), Wesley Hunt (R)	Fletcher: 2018	R	R	D	D: 50.8% R: 47.5%	Biden	Arab, Iranian
IL-3	Marie Newman (D), Mike Fricilone (R)	N/A	D	D	D	D: 56.4% R: 43.6%	Biden	Arab