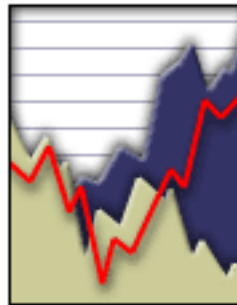


The Arab American Vote in the November 2000 Election

*A Zogby International Poll
Commissioned by Abu Dhabi Television*



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A recent poll of Arab American voters shows that Arab Americans supported the candidacy of Republican George W. Bush over the candidacy of Democrat Al Gore by a margin of 45.5% to 38%. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader won 13.5% of the community's vote.

Commissioned by Abu Dhabi Television and conducted by Zogby International, the poll sampled 505 randomly selected Arab American voters who were called from November 27 to November 29, 2000. The poll results have a margin of error of + 4.5%.

The Abu Dhabi/ZI poll showed that the Bush victory occurred despite a 40%-38% Democratic edge among Arab American voters. The Bush margin of 7.5% over Gore when compared with Clinton's 20% margin over Republican Bob Dole in 1996 represents a dramatic shift of almost 28%—with approximately 390,000 Arab American votes moving between the Democratic and the Republican and third party candidates from 1996 to 2000.

A closer examination of the results of the poll reveals a number of insights into Arab American voting patterns and the community's performance in the 2000 elections.

I. The 2000 Vote and Party Loyalities

For the most part, Arab Americans display strong party loyalties in their voting behavior. While Arab Americans are divided 40% Democrats to 38% Republicans (22% consider themselves independent), a majority of those are consistent in supporting their party's candidates. Only about 25% of Arab Americans are swing voters, i.e., shifting their votes based on candidate preference and issues.

The sub-groups that display the most consistent party affiliation are those born in the US, with immigrant Arab Americans being more likely to change party affiliation from election to election. A comparison of Charts III and I, for example, shows that immigrant Arab Americans supported Clinton by a margin of 54.5% to 26% in 1996 and then swung to a 34% to 41% Bush vote in 2000. Even with this swing, however, it is important to note that 75% of those voters, both Republican and Democratic, continued to support their parties' candidates in the two elections being considered.

A comparison of these results with those of earlier elections also makes clear that other sub-groups of Arab Americans, e.g. Muslims, men, Egyptians and Palestinians are more likely to swing vote than other sub-groups of Arab Americans.

II. The Lieberman and Nader Factors

While Bush captured the support of 86.5% of all Arab Americans who called themselves Republican, Gore was only able to attract the vote of 75% of Arab American Democrats. Bush also won 40% of the independent vote, with Nader receiving the support of 30.5% of the independents and Gore only attracting 24.5% of this group.

Almost half of those Democrats who abandoned Gore said that their decision to do so was influenced by the presence of Senator Joseph Lieberman on the Democratic ticket (Chart VI). Many of those swing Democrats voted for Nader. It is important, as well, to note that for 69% of

those Arab Americans the concern with Joe Lieberman was his stance on issues (Chart VII). At the same time, only 33% of Arab Americans who voted for Nader indicated that they were motivated by his Arab American background (Chart VIII).

III. The Importance of Middle East Issues

Because this election took place against the backdrop of escalating Israeli violence against Palestinians, the trauma produced by that conflict apparently influenced the votes of a number of Arab Americans.

When asked to rank a number of issues (like Palestinian rights, sovereignty of Lebanon and Jerusalem—see Chart V) from most important to not important, Arab Americans graded them almost exactly as they have done in earlier polls. While recent immigrant Arab Americans, in fact, show greater intensity of concern, the depth of concern of the first, second and third generation Arab Americans is still impressive.

An indication of the change in Arab American attitudes brought about by the current unrest in Palestine is the significant decline in support shown for the Clinton Administration's peace efforts. In the January 2000 poll, for example, 47% said the United States' Middle East policy was evenhanded, while only 36.5% said it was not. In the November Abu Dhabi/ZI poll, on the other hand, only 35.5% said US policy was evenhanded, while a substantially larger 60.5% said it was not.

There was a similar drop in the confidence Arab Americans show toward the Clinton Administration's handling of the Middle East conflict. In January 2000, for example, the Administration's policy received a 68.5% to 24% favorable rating. In the November Abu Dhabi/ZI poll, however, confidence in Clinton's handling of the Middle East had dropped to 45.5%, with 42.5% expressing dissatisfaction.

It is worth noting that 80% of those who were dissatisfied in the Administration's handling of the Middle East voted for either Bush or Nader.

It is also important to observe that the Arab American voters who supported Ralph Nader were those who had the most intense view on the Middle East. In fact, as Chart V establishes, on average 90% of Nader voters were strong supporters of Palestinian rights, sovereignty of Lebanon and Jerusalem. And 76% of Nader voters said that the Middle East was the most important issue in determining their vote. Far from being environmentalist "Greens", it appears that the Arab Americans who supported Nader did so as a protest. These voters traditionally vote Democratic or Republican but felt strongly dissatisfied with the ability of either Gore or Bush to reflect their views on the Middle East. This obviously hurt Gore the most since more than 10% of all Arab American Democrats voted for Nader, and a substantial portion of the 31% of progressive independents who supported Nader might otherwise have supported the Democrats as they did in 1996.

IV. Arab American Participation

This poll did not measure Arab American voter turnout, but anecdotal evidence and press coverage establish that this was a great year for Arab American participation. Both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates made a significant outreach effort toward the community—all of which generated prominent press coverage throughout the 2000 Campaign. From the November 7, 1989, Associated Press' "Presidential Hopefuls Court Arab Americans" to the October 2000 Newsweek magazine's "A New Fight for Arab Votes" and the October Economist's "The Birth Of the Arab American Lobby"—the community was the focus of press attention this year.

What the poll did measure, however, were two forms of Arab American participation, specifically contributing to candidates (31.5%) and volunteering in a political campaign (23%)—both of which are significantly higher than in 1996.

V. Conclusion

The poll results present a fascinating picture of a complex yet cohesive community. The Abu Dhabi/ZI poll demonstrates that while Arab Americans, on the whole, are strongly immersed in the American political process, they are also deeply influenced by issues of concern. The fact that some are connected to their party of choice is a strength that will provide opportunities for the community to develop ties that will serve them well in the future. The fact that sub-groups within the community can be swung from candidate to candidate is also an asset since it will serve to create competition for Arab American support in future elections.

Both component groups, loyalists and swing voters, are needed for the continuing success of the community—as long as they retain a common sense of purpose. If this remains, Arab Americans will continue to grow in political influence in the US.

Charts I – XI

Analysis of Abu Dhabi Television Poll of Arab American Vote in November 2000 Election

I. 2000 Presidential Vote

	Total	Lebanese	Syr./Egypt./Pales.	US	Immigrant
Gore	38	41.5	35	43	28.5
Bush	45.5	43	51	43.5	50
Nader	13.5	13	14	11	18

	Catholic	Orthodox	Muslim	Male	Female
Gore	42	39.5	22.5	33	43
Bush	41	47	58.5	48.5	43
Nader	13	10	16.5	15	11.5

II. General 2000 Election Results

	Party ID	Congressional	Presidential
Democrat	40	43.5	38
Republican	38	44	45.5
Independent	22	6.5	13.5

III. 1996 Presidential Vote

	Total	Catholic	Muslim	US	Immigrant
Democrat	51.5	51	57	50	54.5
Republican	31.5	35	22	34.5	26
Independent	8.5	7	6.5	7.5	10.5

IV. General 1996 Vote

	Party ID	Congressional	Presidential
Democrat	38	43	51.5
Republican	35.5	44	31.5
Independent	23	6	8.5

V. Percentage of Arab Americans Who Identified Issues as Important

	Total	US	Immigrant	Nader
Palestinian Rights	74	68.5	84.5	93
Sovereignty. of Leb.	80.5	76	88.5	93
Jerusalem	73	66.5	85	84
Middle East as issue	54.5	49	65	76

VI. Impact of Lieberman on Their Vote

	Total	US	Immigrant	Muslim	Democrats
Yes	36.5	28.5	48.5	53.5	48
No	62	71	47.5	45	49

VII. Was Lieberman's Positions on Issues a Factor?

Yes	69
No	26

VIII. Was Nader's Arab American Background a Factor?

Yes	33
No	66

IX. Did You Contribute to a Campaign this Election?

Yes	31.5
No	68.5

X. Did you Volunteer in a Campaign this Election?

Yes	23
No	77

XI. Demographics of Participants in November 2000 Poll

Country of Origin

Lebanese	56
Syrians	14
Egyptians	12
Palestinians	8.5

US-born	66
Immigrant	34

Religion

Catholic	34.5
Orthodox	24.5
Protestant	11
Muslim	22

2000 Presidential Vote

