



Middle East

Best practice guidelines

Definitions

The term 'Middle Eastern' is derived from the term '**Middle East**', and is used to describe both people and things from the Middle Eastern area, which is located in the Afro-Eurasian Region.

The term **Arab** is widely used to refer to someone who is from the Middle East, as Arabic is the official language of the majority of the Middle East. This is usually an umbrella term for Arab speaking countries. Not everybody from the Middle East is comfortable with the term Arab, as it may imply a generalised monoculture for the entire region.

The word **Persian** is used to describe the cultural identity of people who are from Iran. 'Iranian' is typically used when referring to the people themselves. It's a common misconception that Iranian people speak Arabic, when in fact Farsi is the official language of Iran.

Other Middle Eastern titles for people from the Middle-Eastern region are:

- **Turkish**, used to describe people of Turkey.
- **Israelis**, used to describe people of Israel.

Ex-pats of the Middle East living in Western Countries or any other part of the world outside of the Middle East, are sometimes referred to as 'Middle Eastern' or 'Arab' outside of the Middle East because of their history with the region.

Regions and countries

The Middle East consists of 17 countries, making up a population of almost 411 million people. With countries such as Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and Oman on the Arabian Sea, the Middle East has many bodies of water on their coasts, and sits in between Africa and Eurasia.



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<https://cdn.britannica.com/37/109437-050-64B319CA/Middle-East.jpg>

In the diagram below, you can see the names of all countries in the Middle East:

Arms	Flag	State	Area (km ²)	Population (2012)	Density (per km ²)	Capital	Nominal GDP, bn (2018) ^[22]	Per capita (2018) ^[23]	Currency	Government	Official languages
		Akrotiri and Dhekelia	254	15,700	N/A	Episkopi	N/A	N/A	Euro	De facto stratocratic dependency under a constitutional monarchy	English
		Bahrain	780	1,234,596	1,582.8	Manama	\$30.355	\$25,851	Bahraini dinar	Absolute monarchy	Arabic
		Cyprus	9,250	1,088,503	117	Nicosia	\$24.492	\$28,340	Euro	Presidential republic	Greek, Turkish
		Egypt	1,010,407	82,798,000	90	Cairo	\$249.559	\$2,573	Egyptian pound	Presidential republic	Arabic
		Iran	1,648,195	78,868,711	45	Tehran	\$452.275	\$5,491	Iranian rial	Islamic republic	Persian
		Iraq	438,317	33,635,000	73.5	Baghdad	\$226.07	\$5,930	Iraqi dinar	Parliamentary republic	Arabic, Kurdish
		Israel	20,770	7,653,600	365.3	Jerusalem ^a	\$369.843	\$41,644	Israeli shekel	Parliamentary republic	Hebrew
		Jordan	92,300	6,318,677	68.4	Amman	\$42.371	\$4,278	Jordanian dinar	Constitutional monarchy	Arabic
		Kuwait	17,820	3,566,437	167.5	Kuwait City	\$141.05	\$30,839	Kuwaiti dinar	Constitutional monarchy	Arabic
		Lebanon	10,452	4,228,000	404	Beirut	\$56.409	\$9,257	Lebanese pound	Parliamentary republic	Arabic
		Oman	212,460	2,694,094	9.2	Muscat	\$82.243	\$19,302	Omani rial	Absolute monarchy	Arabic
		Palestine	6,220	4,260,636	667	Ramallah ^a	n/a	n/a	Israeli shekel, Jordanian dinar	Semi-presidential republic	Arabic
		Qatar	11,437	1,696,563	123.2	Doha	\$192.45	\$70,780	Qatari riyal	Absolute monarchy	Arabic
		Saudi Arabia	2,149,690	27,136,977	12	Riyadh	\$782.483	\$23,566	Saudi riyal	Absolute monarchy	Arabic
		Syria	185,180	23,695,000	118.3	Damascus	n/a	n/a	Syrian pound	Presidential republic	Arabic
		Turkey	783,562	73,722,988	94.1	Ankara	\$766.428	\$9,346	Turkish lira	Presidential republic	Turkish
		United Arab Emirates	82,880	8,264,070	97	Abu Dhabi	\$424.635	\$40,711	UAE dirham	Federal Absolute monarchy	Arabic
		Yemen	527,970	23,580,000	44.7	Sana'a ^a Aden (provisional)	\$26.914	\$872	Yemeni rial	Provisional presidential republic	Arabic

Wikipedia 2021

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Language and dialects

While Arabic is the official language for a majority of the Middle East, almost every Arabic-Speaking country has their own unique dialect all in the Arabic language. This is important to thoroughly research if you are depicting an Arabic-speaking character, as the accent or dialect plays an important role in defining their character's background.

Name of each Dialect spoken in each Arabic-speaking country:

- Algeria: Algerian Dialect
- Bahrain: Bahraini Dialect
- Egypt: Egyptian Dialect
- Iraq: Iraqi Dialect
- Jordan: Jordanian Dialect
- Kuwait: Kuwaiti Dialect
- Lebanon: Lebanese Dialect
- Libya: Libyan Dialect
- Morocco: Moroccan Dialect
- Oman: Omani Dialect
- Palestine: Palestinian Dialect
- Qatar: Qatari Dialect
- Saudi Arabia: Saudi/or Saudi Arabian Dialect
- Sudan: Sudanese Dialect
- Syria: Syrian Dialect
- Tunisia: Tunisian Dialect
- United Arab Emirates: Emirati Dialect
- Yemen: Yemeni Dialect

Other widely spoken languages in the Middle East are: Farsi (Iran), Hebrew (Israel), Kurdish (Mesopotamian region), and Turkish (Turkey).

While it is not considered an "official" language, French is widely spoken in the following countries:

- Tunisia



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- Morocco
- Algeria
- Egypt
- Syria
- Lebanon

This is due to these countries' history with French Colonialism.

Diverse appearance

Depending on the country and region, Middle Easterners have a range of diversity in their genetics and appearances. While Arabs are stereotypically represented in the media as dark brown with dark facial features, it's important to note that Middle Easterners can range from pale to black skin, and blonde to black hair, dark brown eyes to blue, etc. Facial structure and hair texture can also vary widely.

Traditional clothing common in the media

Common clothing used to represent Middle Eastern People are **Thobes** (Traditional Men's Dress) and **Shemagh** (Fabric headwear worn by Middle Eastern men). In the diagram below, you can see how each of these pieces of clothing are worn by men from each Middle Eastern country.

Although traditional clothing is widely used in the region, 'western' clothing is just as popularly worn.

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smyh 2014

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For Women, the **Hijab** is a traditional Islamic piece of clothing that Muslim women wear. It's important to note that not all Middle Eastern or Arab women are by default Muslim or wear the Hijab. If you are representing the Hijab in the media, women from different regions in the Middle East and the world may wear it differently depending on their lifestyle, faith and cultural situation. Some may choose not to wear the Hijab at all—this choice does not make them a lesser or fake Muslim.



IstiZada 2019

Religion in the Middle East

The three major world religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, have a deep history with the Middle Eastern region. The world's largest population of Muslims can be found in the Middle East. Other practiced religions in the region include Bahá'í Faith, Druze, Nusairism, Manichaeism, Sabianism, Bábism, Yazidism, Mandaism, Gnosticism, Yarsanism, Samaritanism, Shabakism, Ishikism, Ali-Allahism, Alevism, Yazdânism, and Zoroastrianism.

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Size and Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Middle East and North Africa, 2010-2050

	2010 ESTIMATED POPULATION	% IN 2010	2050 PROJECTED POPULATION	% IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050	% INCREASE 2010-2050	COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (%)
Muslims	317,070,000	93.0%	551,900,000	93.7%	234,830,000	74.1%	1.4%
Christians	12,710,000	3.7	18,180,000	3.1	5,470,000	43.0	0.9
Jews	5,630,000	1.6	8,200,000	1.4	2,570,000	45.7	0.9
Unaffiliated	2,100,000	0.6	3,280,000	0.6	1,180,000	56.2	1.1
Hindus	1,720,000	0.5	3,700,000	0.6	1,980,000	114.6	1.9
Folk Religions	1,060,000	0.3	2,270,000	0.4	1,210,000	114.2	1.9
Buddhists	500,000	0.1	1,190,000	0.2	690,000	137.4	2.2
Other Religions	230,000	< 0.1	260,000	< 0.1	30,000	11.5	0.3
Regional total	341,020,000	100.0	588,960,000	100.0	247,950,000	72.7	1.4

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Population estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Pew Research Centre 2015

Common misconceptions

Below are common misconceptions that are perpetuated by inaccurate representations in the media. Please avoid including these incorrect assumptions in your work:

- All Arabs are Muslim
- All Middle Easterners are of the same level of Muslim faith if they are Muslim
- Middle Easterners are Arab
- Middle Eastern Women are oppressed by Islam or their culture
- Middle Eastern Women must wear the Hijab
- Middle Eastern Women need a Western figure to free them from the Hijab (a common stereotype in Western Media)
- Middle Eastern countries are war torn deserts
- Middle Easterners are terrorists, villains or barbaric
- All Middle Eastern cultures are the same

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- Arabs living in non-Middle Eastern countries (i.e. NZ or Australia) are mostly Muslim

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