



Arab-American Family
Support Center

ADULT READINESS EVALUATION RESULTS

Examining the impact of culturally-
responsive adult education initiatives



Published by the AAFSC Research Institute

ADULT READINESS PROGRAM

The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC) provides a range of culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed social services to support immigrants and refugees throughout New York City. AAFSC's mission is to empower immigrants and refugees with the tools to successfully acclimate to the world around them and be active participants in their communities. While our doors are open to all, we have gained expertise serving Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities. Across the organization, we speak 36 different languages and are representative of our client base. AAFSC's initiatives operate across four priority areas – Promote, Prevent, Get Ready, and Communicate – to achieve our goal of strengthening families. We promote mental and physical well-being, prevent child abuse and gender-based violence, get families ready to lead productive lives, and communicate the needs of marginalized populations to partners and policymakers. We approach each interaction with safety, trust, collaboration, and mutual respect.

AAFSC's Adult Readiness program is core to our mission. AAFSC has offered comprehensive, intensive adult education services for 23 years. Our free classes support immigrant and refugee populations as they learn English speaking and literacy skills. The program provides a supportive learning environment for empowerment, social interaction, and self-discovery. Our classes are practically focused, preparing students to engage with their communities and the institutions that impact their lives, including employers, doctors, and their children's schools.

The Adult Readiness program offers courses in three areas: Basic Literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Civics. The Basic Literacy Course is focused on familiarizing individuals with basic English reading, writing, and listening skills. Students are expected to learn the alphabet, typical greetings, and personal identification information. We also create a safe space to hold sensitive discussions about domestic violence, marriage, gender issues, and more, and provide internal referrals for counseling and additional support across the family unit. Meanwhile, our ESOL classes unleash our students' potential by creating an environment to discuss feelings and thoughts in English. Students learn the basic mechanics of writing, interpret ideas and feelings, and comprehend simple sentences. Finally, our Civics classes foster clients' social and political integration in their newly adopted home by discussing their role in the larger system of American government and within their local communities. We also assist students in studying and preparing for their United States Citizenship exams, covering topics such as American history, institutions and values.

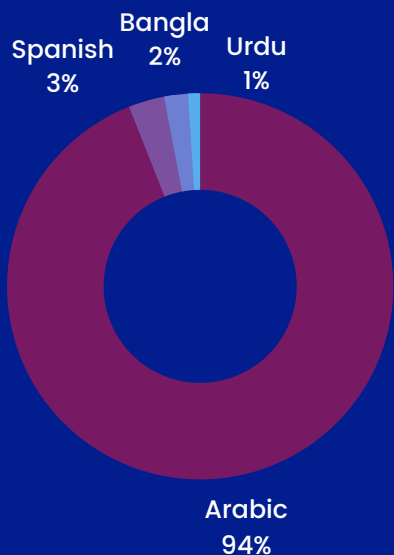
AAFSC's Adult Readiness program empowers NYC's immigrant and refugee adults and families with literacy and language skills, career preparedness, and the tools to acquire citizenship, equipping them to acclimate to and actively participate in their communities.

As a multi-service wrap-around organization, we ensure our clients have access to a full range of services that support holistic well-being. Grounded in our two-generational approach to service provision, AAFSC facilitates a network of internal referral channels. Those who participate in this project may also benefit from AAFSC's health insurance and SNAP enrollment, legal services, emergency financial assistance, domestic violence case management, mental health counseling, parenting support groups, and COVID-19 testing and vaccination enrollment.

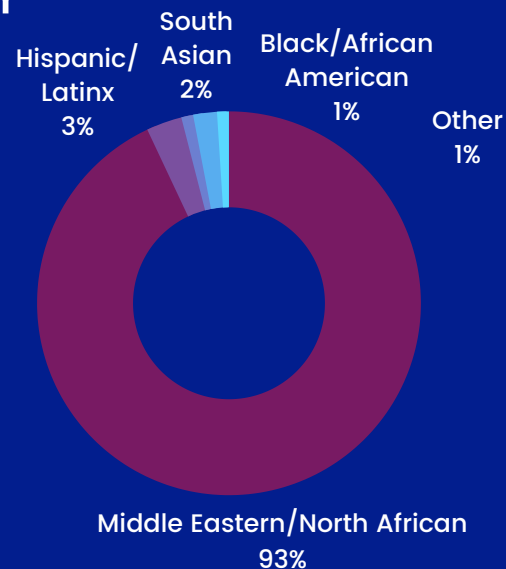


PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

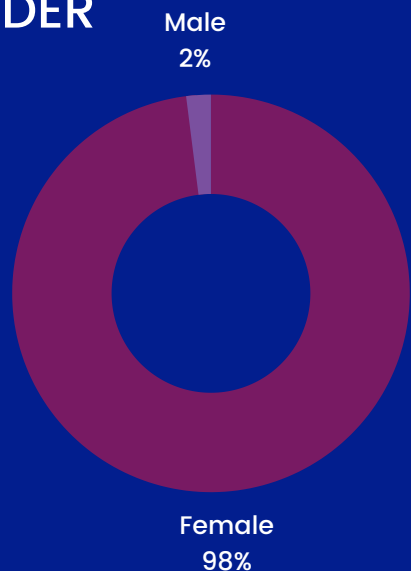
PRIMARY LANGUAGE



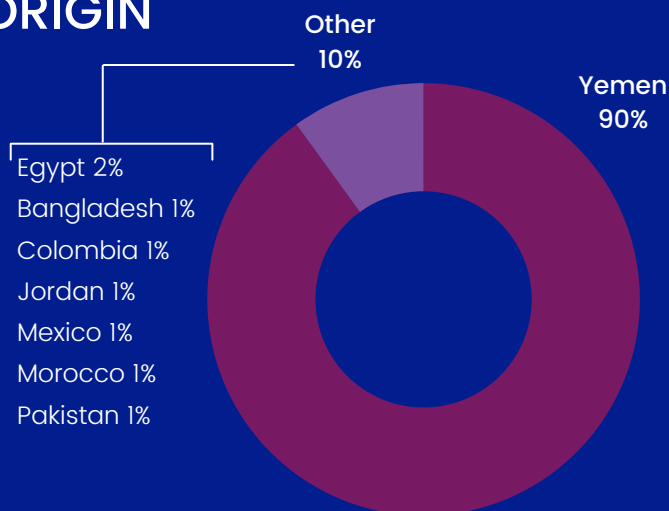
RACE/ETHNICITY



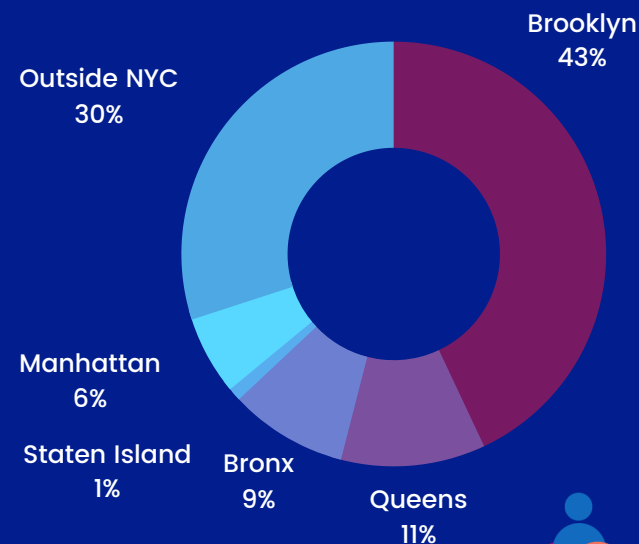
GENDER



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

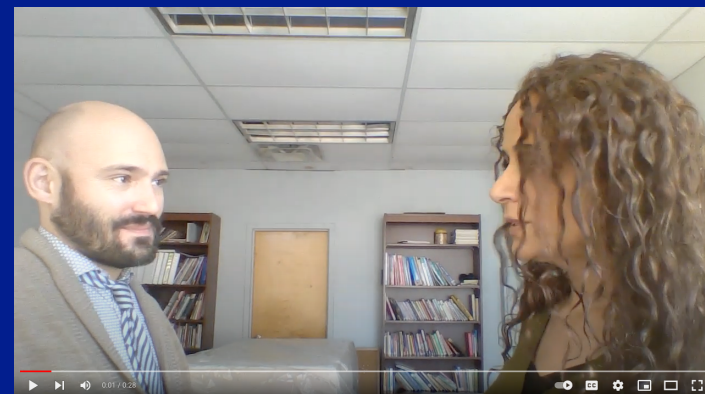


BOROUGH

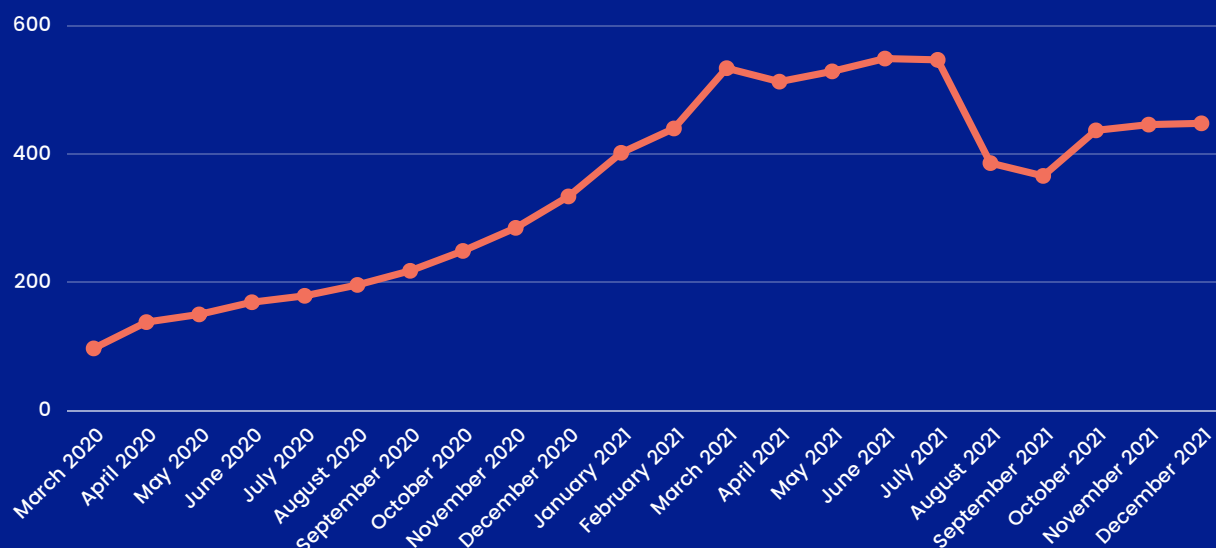


PROGRAM TRENDS

In spite of the unprecedented challenges brought on by COVID-19, the past two years have been transformational for AAFSC's Adult Readiness initiatives as opportunities for connection, learning, and growth were met with tremendous enthusiasm and demand from the community. Since the Spring of 2020, enrollment in Adult Readiness programming has increased by 464% as we offered uninterrupted services in an accessible and HIPAA-compliant remote environment. This approach has allowed participants to continue their learning while caring for their health, their family's well-being, their children's schooling, and their safety. Through innovative, multi-media tools, AAFSC's Adult Readiness staff support participants in overcoming the technological barriers that may prevent quality engagement in online programming. Participants receive one-on-one support to ensure they can access and comfortably navigate remote learning technology, often for the first time. Our programming also employs a variety of educational modalities to expand learning beyond the class period -- tools such as instructional YouTube videos, vocabulary cards, worksheets, and 1-1 conversational phone calls, that are adaptive to the schedules and demands that immigrant families and caregivers navigate. We also prioritize individualized in-person support by appointment.



ADULT READINESS ENROLLMENT OVER TIME



Throughout this period, Adult Readiness staff leveraged their position of trust and access to channel public health updates, safety guidelines, and information about resources and services to participants and their families, many of whom were residing in New York City's hardest-hit neighborhoods. Over the past two years, our programs have evolved to uplift and empower immigrants and refugees to make strides in their learning, enhance their tech-literacy skills, and participate actively in their community.



PROGRAM EVALUATION APPROACH

AAFSC's Adult Readiness program evaluates students' progress using the BEST Plus Test from the Center for Applied Linguistics. This industry-standard tool is designed to assess English language proficiency in Adult English Language Learners in both listening and speaking skills. Sampled students* receive a BEST Plus Pre-Test upon enrollment to establish their baseline literacy level, and receive a Post-Test at several points throughout their participation in classes as well as upon exit from the program, to assess and measure growth.

The BEST Plus test scores across three categories:

1. Listening Comprehension
2. Language Complexity
3. Communication

The test is practically-focused, evaluating interpersonal communication using everyday language in practical situations. Content areas include personal identification, health, family/parenting, housing, job searching and readiness, civics, transportation, and community services.

For students who participate in AAFSC's Citizenship Test prep classes, the ultimate goal is attainment of citizenship. AAFSC is proud to maintain a 100% pass rate for our adult students who take the citizenship exam even in the face of the pandemic. In 2021, 50 students have successfully taken and passed their citizenship exam, making a monumental achievement in their personal development, civic engagement, and job preparedness.

87%

OF STUDENTS IMPROVED THEIR
LITERACY SKILLS, AS MEASURED
BY THE BEST PLUS TEST**

100%

OF STUDENTS WHO TOOK
THE US CITIZENSHIP TEST
PASSED**



WHAT'S NEXT?

The Arab-American Family Support Center is proud to have scaled and adapted our Adult Readiness initiatives in response to rising need, while maintaining our high standards for program quality and impact. Looking ahead, AAFSC recognizes that immigrant and refugee communities will play a critical role in New York City's recovery from COVID-19, and we remain committed to supporting our community members as they take important steps to advance their career readiness, civic engagement, and personal development.



AAFSC's Research Institute is a hub for research & evaluation that measures community needs and analyzes the impact of culturally and linguistically-responsive programs and initiatives. For more reports and insights, visit our Impact page at aafscny.org/our-impact.



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To support the immigrant and refugee families that AAFSC serves, please donate today at aafscny.org/donate

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