

Egypt

Ethnicity in Egypt

Group selection

We identify the following ethnic groups as politically relevant: **Arab Muslims**, **Coptic Christians**, and **Jews**, with the latter losing relevance after 1967.

Population sizes were compared among four sources: the 1994 projection on ANM, the 2003 Fearon list, the 1993 MIR list (using UN population estimates for 1995) and the CIA World Factbook list of ethnic groups for 2000 and 2005. Only groups above 1% of the population and persecuted groups were included in the listing. Size estimates were then compared and if discrepancies occurred, additional literature was consulted to facilitate selecting an appropriate figure. In the case of Egypt, population estimates for the Copts vary between 6% (CIA World Factbook) and 14% (based on the estimate of 11 million members for the Coptic church). Lying in the middle, Fearon's estimate of 9% seems the most reasonable to use here.

Power relations

Arab Muslims

Egypt unilaterally declared independence from Great Britain in 1922. In the following decades, British influence remained strong until their army withdrew in 1952 and Egypt became fully independent. Following the British withdrawal and the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, the Kingdom of Egypt was abolished and the country became governed by authoritarian governments in the following decades. Arab socialism was the ruling ideology under Gamal Abdel Nasser with the subsequent Presidents Sadat, el-Shafei, and Hosni Mubarak shifting towards the model of a free-market economy. Under Sadat, Islam became the official state religion, Sharia the official source of law, and Arabic the official language of Egypt.

Under Mubarak, who came to power in 1981, moves were made towards more fair, democratic governance, but executive power remained in the hands of the ruling party and a small number of advisors, all of which were Arab Muslims. The ethnic majority of Arab Muslims had monopolized political power, while its subgroups never became politically relevant. The classification as Monopoly power holder is based on various assessments of Egypt's legal landscape by human and minority rights groups, such as HRW's background report "Monopolizing Power: Egypt's Political Parties Law" (¹⁷²⁴).

¹⁷²⁴ [Human Rights Watch, 2007]

No significant political changes occurred until the turmoil of the “Arab Spring” in 2011, which eventually ousted Mubarak. The people took to the streets and protested over the lack of free elections, freedom of speech, and social justice, as well as corruption and economic issues. Although the political landscape and relevant actors changed as a consequence, there is little evidence that this affects the ethnic power balance in the country. Political demands revolved around nationalism and social consciousness rather than political inclusion based on religious affiliation, with Muslims and Christians uniting across religious divisions against the Mubarak government ⁽¹⁷²⁵⁾. Although new opportunities were created for inter-faith dialogue, freedom, and secularism, these were not necessarily reinforced by the new government, and well organized Islamist organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood played their part to increase the power and influence of Islamist parties after the revolution, while hampering the greater integration of different ethnic groups and ideologies. President Mohamed Morsi was elected into office in 2012, supported by the Muslim Brotherhood, but removed from office one year later amid renewed demonstrations in 2013.

¹⁷²⁵ [Ibish, 2011]

Adly Mansour succeeded him as interim president, remaining in office until June 2014. Then, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took over power in official presidential elections. He is steering the country continuously towards an authoritarian military regime as seen before the Arab Spring under Mubarak ⁽¹⁷²⁶⁾. Hence, Arab Muslims still hold a monopoly on political power.

¹⁷²⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

Coptic Christians:

Coptic Christians are the largest religious minority group in Egypt. They have a long history of being subject to sporadic violence, which intensified over time, without any official convictions of Muslims for related crimes ⁽¹⁷²⁷⁾. Documentation for this can be found in the country section for Egypt of the HRW World Report 1999 ⁽¹⁷²⁸⁾.

¹⁷²⁷ [Zaki, 2010]

¹⁷²⁸ [Human Rights Watch, 1999]

Multiple sources including the WSJ speak of the state’s lack of recognition and protection of the Copts, doing little to prevent rising hostility against this group. Moreover, no churches can be built or repaired without a presidential decree, and Copts are “excluded from the intelligence and security services because they are deemed a security risk” ⁽¹⁷²⁹⁾.

¹⁷²⁹ [Zaki, 2010]

The WSJ states that violence against the Copts intensified into “more like a purge, as waves of mob assaults have forced hundreds, sometimes thousands of Christian citizens to flee their homes” ⁽¹⁷³⁰⁾. Tensions were high between Copts and Islamists, with multiple church attacks in 2011 killing dozens of mostly Copt Egyptian Christians. Human Rights Watch notes that the Egyptian government has failed to properly investigate and prosecute individuals involved in rising incidents of sectarian violence ⁽¹⁷³¹⁾. The Egyptian government reportedly officially denies the existence of any sectarian problems, but does not appear to officially enforce ethnic exclusion

¹⁷³⁰ [Zaki, 2010]

¹⁷³¹ [Human Rights Watch, 2010]

either (coded: powerless).

Following the 2011 Revolution, an Egyptian Constitutional Review Committee was formed and includes one Christian member, which is a sign of tokenistic inclusion of the Copts. Al-Sisi's authoritarian rule does not appear to target ethnic minorities particularly (¹⁷³²). Christian Copts are represented in parliament and serve in important posts such as judges or military officials (¹⁷³³; ¹⁷³⁴). Yet, the Copts do not hold any executive power in al-Sisi's regime. Thus, Coptic Christians are listed as powerless.

¹⁷³² [Minority Rights Group International, 2017a]

¹⁷³³ [U.S. Department of State, 2016]

¹⁷³⁴ [U.S. Department of State, 2019]

Jews:

The Jewish community of Egypt has a history expanding over 3,000 years. However, xenophobic nationalism arising after the founding of the Republic and after the birth of Israel in 1948, as well as the 1956 Suez Crisis and 1967 Six-Day War, intensified the persecution of the Jewish community in Egypt (¹⁷³⁵). After the Suez crisis of 1956, the Egyptian government declared all Jews and Zionists as enemies of the state, expelled the Jewish population and sequestered Jewish-owned property (coded: discriminated). The collective persecution of Jews in Egypt worsened after the 1967 Six-Day war, with hundreds detained and physically abused. This encouraged most of the remaining Jewish population to emigrate while others converted. Specific numbers of their subsequent population size in Egypt cannot be found. Minority Rights Group states that "by some estimates there were fewer than 200 self-identifying Jews remaining in the country after 1967" (¹⁷³⁶). Thus, a new time period in 1968 accounts for the significant drop in the size of the Jewish population. Jews are considered politically irrelevant thereafter and not listed any longer due to their negligible population size.

¹⁷³⁵ [The Economist, 2013]

¹⁷³⁶ [Minority Rights Group International, 2017b]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Egypt

From 1946 until 1967

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Arab Muslims	0.9099	MONOPOLY
Coptic Christians	0.09	POWERLESS
Jews	1.0×10^{-4}	DISCRIMINATED

From 1968 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Arab Muslims	0.91	MONOPOLY
Coptic Christians	0.09	POWERLESS

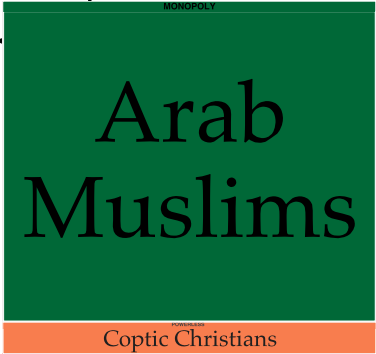


Figure 323: Political status of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1946-1967.

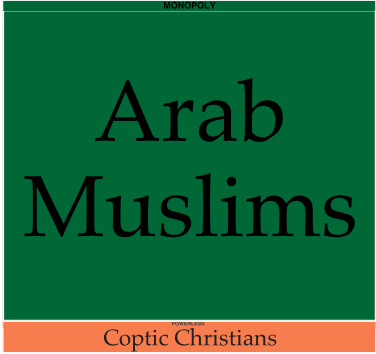


Figure 324: Political status of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1968-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Egypt

From 1946 until 1966

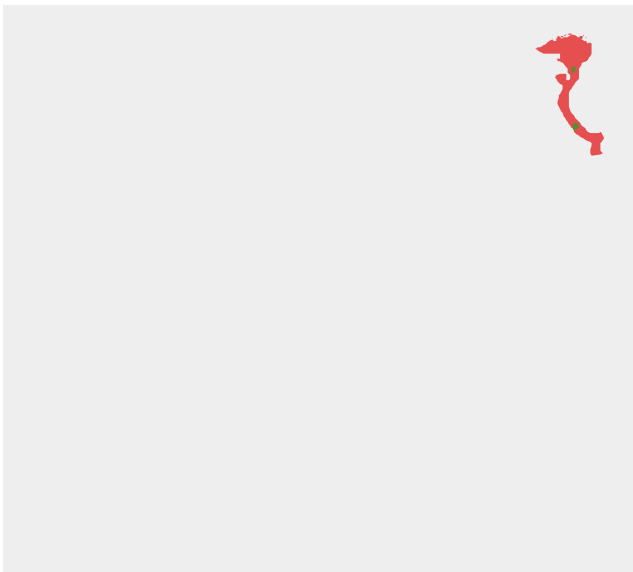


Figure 325: Map of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1946-1966.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Arab Muslims	77 792	Regionally based
■	Coptic Christians	2178	Regionally based
■	Jews	0	Urban

Table 111: List of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1946-1966.

From 1967 until 1967

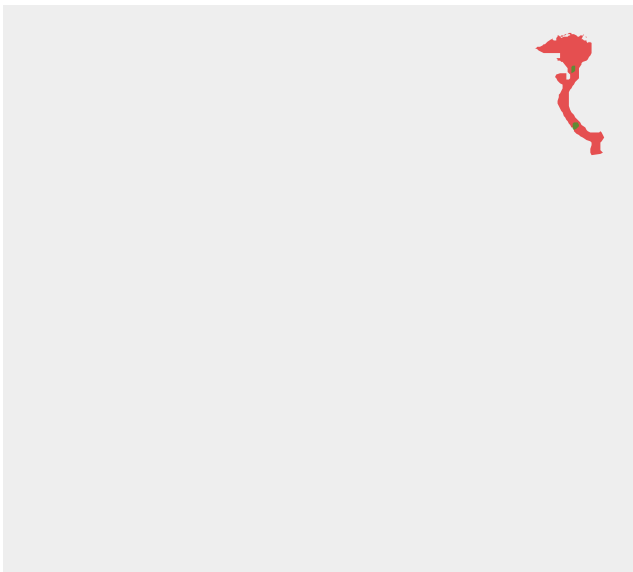


Figure 326: Map of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1967-1967.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Arab Muslims	77 792	Regionally based
Coptic Christians	2178	Regionally based
Jews	0	Urban

Table 112: List of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1967-1967.

From 1968 until 1978

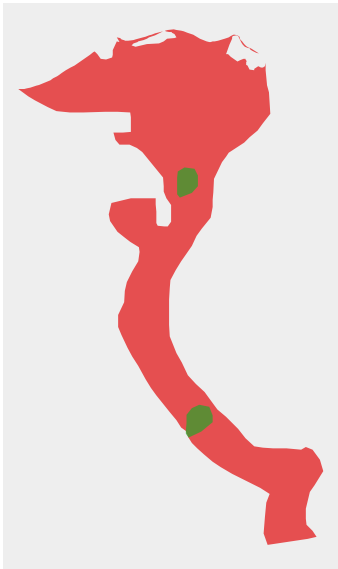


Figure 327: Map of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1968-1978.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Arab Muslims	77 789	Regionally based
Coptic Christians	2178	Regionally based

Table 113: List of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1968-1978.

From 1979 until 1979

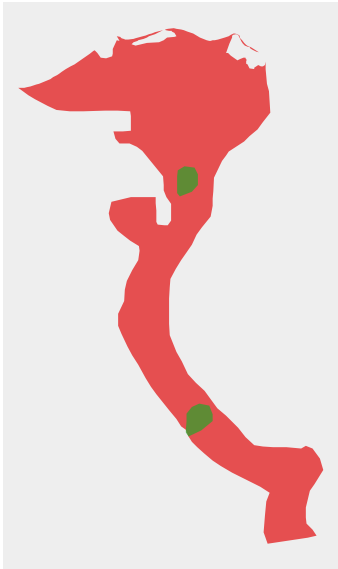


Figure 328: Map of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1979-1979.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Arab Muslims	77 789	Regionally based
■	Coptic Christians	2178	Regionally based

Table 114: List of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1979-1979.

From 1980 until 2021

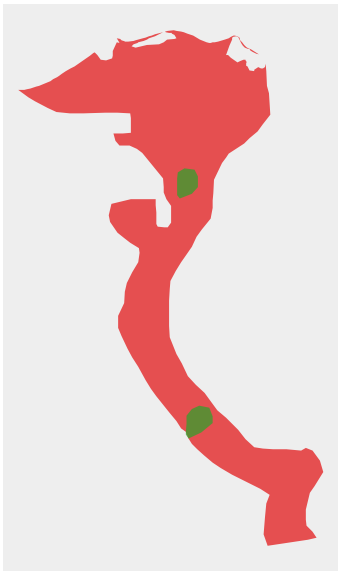


Figure 329: Map of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1980-2021.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Arab Muslims	77 792	Regionally based
■	Coptic Christians	2178	Regionally based

Table 115: List of ethnic groups in Egypt during 1980-2021.

Conflicts in Egypt

Starting on 1948-04-14

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	Government of Israel		1948-04-14			
Government of Iraq	Government of Israel		1948-04-14			
Government of Jordan	Government of Israel		1948-04-14			
Government of Lebanon	Government of Israel		1948-04-14			
Government of Syria	Government of Israel		1948-04-14			

Starting on 1951-10-17

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	Government of United Kingdom		1951-10-17			

Starting on 1956-10-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	Government of France		1956-10-30			
Government of Egypt	Government of Israel		1956-10-30			
Government of Egypt	Government of United Kingdom		1956-10-30			

Starting on 1967-06-04

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	Government of Israel		1967-06-04			

Starting on 1981-10-07

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya	Arab Muslims	1981-10-07	No	Yes, from EGIP	No
Government of Egypt	Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis		2014-03-10			
Government of Egypt	Harakit Sawa'id Misr		2016-10-07			
Government of Egypt	Jama'at Ansar al-Islam		2017-10-19			

Starting on 2014-11-15

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Egypt	IS		2014-11-15			