

# Oromo Minnesota

*Oromo people are the largest nation in the Horn of Africa by language; there is no Oromo nation-state. Minnesota holds one of the largest Oromo communities outside Africa, concentrated in the Twin Cities. Counts disagree widely by method; date the number you cite.*

**Maintained by:** Equity and Inclusion Operations Consultant

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## Community told through its own stories

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The Oromo Story in Minnesota brings heritage, early community experiences, and regional differences into view through film. Community storytelling offers a richer starting point than a single label: people can describe the traditions and experiences that matter to them.

- **Discover the Oromo Story in Minnesota** — <https://www.legacy.mn.gov/projects/oromo-story-minnesota-0>

### A different starting point

Whose voices would help you understand the range of experiences behind a community name before planning outreach?

## Community overview

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Islam, Christianity, and Waaqeffanna all live here; do not assume a Somali religious pattern. U.S.-born children may have never lived in Oromia.

### Names and terms

Oromo; Oromo Minnesotan

Also used: Ethiopian (umbrella; not a substitute)

Book Afaan Oromoo on the interpreter line. Ask how names appear on documents.

Community counts range widely between community estimates and census-based figures; state the source and date.

## History and place

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### Origins and the Founding of a People

Oromo peoplehood — Oromummaa — is older than the Ethiopian empire's file on it and older than the refugee camp. Oromo people are a Cushitic-speaking nation of the Horn, the largest nation in the region by language. There is no Oromo nation-state. Gadaa (generational / governance tradition) is literacy for the desk, not a speech you give the family, and not every household still lives it.

## History for the meeting

Afaan Oromoo is not Amharic. Amharic is a Semitic language and was the imperial state language. Latin Qubee script, adopted in the early 1990s after the fall of the Derg, is political and educational history: a people writing itself after suppression. That sentence is literacy. It is not a lecture in the lobby.

## What people brought

What people brought: language and dialect, Islam and Christianity and Waaqeffanna, kinship, oral art, a memory of imperial and 20th-century state violence. What they met in Minnesota: an English form, one “Ethiopian” checkbox, one “East African” interpreter, and often Somali because the building already has that page.

Do not assume Addis Ababa as identity. Many Oromo people name Oromia, a region, a village, a lineage — not the capital of the state that ruled them.

## The Geography of the Oromo World

Homeland is Oromia and Oromo-inhabited country across the Horn — a map that does not match the Ethiopian state’s ethnic-federal drawing in every family’s mouth. Oromo communities also live in Kenya. A global diaspora: Middle East, Europe, North America. After Kenya, Minnesota has been named among the largest Oromo communities outside the homeland (MNHS / MNopedia). Twin Cities as Little Oromia is community naming, not a census.

## Homeland

Compass Ethiopian (ACS 2019–2023): 89.4 percent Twin Cities, 10.6 percent Greater Minnesota — umbrella, not an Oromo map. Do not assume Cedar-Riverside. That sentence is Somali geography unless this family lives there. Do not assume Addis.

## Minnesota

Do not assume the person in front of you has been to Oromia. Secondary migration built parts of this map. Greater Minnesota is still this people when they live there.

## Imperial Violence, Struggle, and Secondary Migration — Foundational Event

There is no single 1975 or 1991 on this page. The foundational political literacy is longer: Ethiopian imperial incorporation of Oromo country, 20th-century state violence, the Oromo Liberation struggle as literacy for the desk not a speech, the 1974 revolution and the Derg, flight through Sudan and Kenya and the Gulf, U.S. resettlement, secondary migration to Minnesota, and unrest in the 2010s–2020s that sent another wave.

## Foundational events

Do not referee Ethiopian politics in a waiver meeting. Do not pick a side as DHS. Intra-Ethiopian tension in Minnesota rooms is real. Listen if they name it. Do not file it as a risk score.

## Who you meet

The desk in 2026 meets first-wave elders and U.S.-born children — English-dominant with peers, still

translating for parents, still unable to get Afaan Oromoo in a lobby that offered Somali or Amharic.

If you only know “Ethiopian refugee,” you will miss this household.

## Minnesota and Oromo History

This department will meet this community on waivers, child welfare, health care, cash, food, aging, and employment. Twin Cities as Little Oromia is community memory (MNHS / MNopedia), not a Compass line. Greater Minnesota exists.

## Places

Partners: Oromo Community of Minnesota (OCIM / OCM) historically, from the 1980s. Churches and mosques families name — including Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church (from a 1980s Bible study, organized 1993 per MNHS) and Tawfiq Islamic Center in Minneapolis (MNHS: first Oromo mosque in North America, opened 2004 as Masjid Tawfiq). Pay. Report back. CECLC is a door, not the whole.

## Partners

Oromo staff are not unpaid interpreters and not the community. Identity is not a staffing plan. A festival or Irreecha visit is optional professional development. You are a guest. It does not make you the expert.

## Culture and everyday life

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### People, place, and perspective

This brief is about Oromo people — Oromoo; the language Afaan Oromoo — as a Cushitic-speaking nation of the Horn and as a Minnesota community. Oromo is not Somali. Not Amharic. Not “Ethiopian” as a synonym. If you open Somali Minnesota or book an Amharic interpreter because the building heard East Africa, you have already closed the door.

### Who this is

Minnesota Compass (ACS 2019–2023) puts Ethiopian Minnesota near 40,324: 89.4 percent Twin Cities, 10.6 percent Greater Minnesota; 43.5 percent age 17 or younger; 61.7 percent foreign-born; language other than English (age 5+) 74.9 percent; LEP 30.4 percent. Compass note historically: respondents born in Ethiopia who list Somali ancestry are counted Somali, not Ethiopian. Ethiopian Compass is an umbrella — Amhara, Oromo, Tigrayan and others are not one file. Use Ethiopian numbers as dated context, not as an Oromo census.

### Who this is not

Oromo-specific counts disagree. MinnPost (19 May 2016): the Oromo Community of Minnesota estimated up to 40,000 Oromo in the state; the state demographer’s office nearer 8,500 using census plus school language. Star Tribune (31 July 2025): about 8,000 Minnesotans speak Oromo at home; Minnesota Department of Education: Oromo was the 8th most-common home language in K–12. Date the disagreement. Do not invent a midpoint. A rate is not the person.

## How to read this

Islam and Christianity (Orthodox, Protestant) and Waaqeffanna traditional practice all live here. Do not assume Muslim like Somali. Always defer to the person in front of you. This page is a hypothesis you still test on this family.

## Family

Extended households and elder authority sit in many rooms. Compass Ethiopian average household size 3.09 (ACS 2019–2023) is umbrella context, not an Oromo census. Who cares for the child may not match the waiver checkbox. Ask who should be in the room.

## Who is in the household

Patronymic patterns exist: given name and father's name, sometimes more. Do not invent a last name because the screen requires one. Do not assume three Somali names. Oromo names are not Amharic names.

## Who speaks

Women's labor, men's labor, and church or mosque obligation all live here. Both a nuclear English form and a cousin-line can be true in the same week.

Do not collect status you do not need. Mixed-status fear is structure in some rooms.

## Oromummaa — the heart of a people

To be Oromo in Minnesota is to be a Cushitic nation without a state, filed under Ethiopian, East African, Black, and sometimes Somali by a building that has not studied. Oromummaa is peoplehood. It is not a poster. Islam, Orthodox and Protestant Christianity, and Waaqeffanna all live here. Do not assume the mosque.

## In this state

Many Oromo Minnesotans are Black in a U.S. racial order that also holds Somali and historic African American histories they do not share. Shared race is not shared culture. Shared Horn geography is not shared language.

This guide is a working orientation. Individual variation always supersedes group generalization. Ask this household.

## Core Concepts

Afaan Oromoo and dialect. Borana, Guji, Wollo, and others — confirm. An “Ethiopian interpreter” is often Amharic. That is a closed door for many Oromo households.

## Qubee

Latin script, 1990s. Political and educational history. Elders may not read it. Children may. The English form is still a gate.

## **Oromummaa**

Peoplehood. Not a clan icebreaker taken from the Somali page.

## **Faith is plural**

Islam, Orthodox, Protestant, Waaqeffanna. Follow this room.

## **Names**

Oromo, not Amharic, not three Somali names. Do not invent a last name.

Do not assume Addis. Do not referee the Oromo Liberation struggle in a waiver meeting.

## **Religion and Healing**

Islam and Christianity both live in Oromo Minnesota in large streams. Orthodox and Protestant (including Oromo evangelical churches) are ordinary. Waaqeffanna — traditional Oromo religious practice — lives in some rooms and as public revival in others. Do not assume Muslim like Somali. Do not assume Orthodox like a mash of “Ethiopian.”

## **Streams**

Arabic may be religion, not the interview. Qur+æ æ—2 &V6—F F—öâ —2 æ÷B `aan Oromoo. Book the interview language.

## **Practice**

Do not import As-sal ðu +ö Æ ykum as default. In a Christian Oromo room it is already a closed door. In a Muslim Oromo room it may be ordinary. Follow this room.

Do not make an imam or a pastor the case plan unless this family asked. Halal and fasting matter in some rooms and not in others. Illness meaning may not be the DSM sentence. Ask.

## **Greetings**

Elders first. Follow this room. Many Christian Oromo. Many Muslim Oromo. As-sal ðu +ö Æ ykum is not default. English hello is ordinary in the second generation. Afaan Oromoo greetings exist — ask, do not perform one you learned from a video.

## **Titles**

A hard handshake you assume is universal is already a closed door for some women and some elders. Many second-generation people will shake hands in English-language rooms. If a hand is not offered, nod. Do not force it.

## **This room**

Do not import the Black nod onto this page. Do not import Somali greeting rules as if Oromo were Somali.

Physical contact: ask the room. Cross-gender touch is not a default in some families.

## **Naming Conventions**

Oromo names are not Amharic names. Patronymic patterns exist: given name, father's name, sometimes grandfather's. That can look like a Somali three-part name and is not. Do not assume three Somali names. Do not invent a last name because the screen requires one. That invented name becomes a gate.

## **How to file**

Ask how to say it and how to file it. Pronounce it.

Women may or may not take a husband's name in U.S. records. Ask how to file. Do not "correct" a mother and child who do not share a last name as a fraud signal until you have a reason.

Do not joke about names. Do not collect a clan list as an icebreaker. Clan as Oromo social fact is not the Somali qabiil icebreaker and not a risk score.

## **Dates of Significance**

Irreecha — thanksgiving / new-year gathering, autumn in homeland practice, marked in diaspora including Minnesota. Guest, not researcher. A calendar click is not community engagement.

## **Calendar**

Orthodox Christmas and Easter, Protestant calendars, Ramadan and Eid in Muslim rooms. Ask this family. Do not put Somali dates on this page by default. Do not put "Ethiopian holiday" on a case note without asking.

Political commemorations some families name and some refuse. Do not collect them as a risk score. Do not referee.

1974, 1991, 2010s protests — literacy for the desk, not holidays.

## **Etiquette**

Elders first. Hospitality is a virtue in many rooms. Accept a little tea if offered. You still keep medical and legal time.

## **In the home**

Shoes off in some homes. Faith practice varies — mosque, Orthodox liturgy, Protestant church, Waaqeffanna, none. Follow this room. Do not rank covering. Do not assume covering.

## **Time**

Do not photograph a family and call it rapport. Do not enter a prayer space as a tour.

On-time for appointments. Multi-household logistics are real. So is a courtesy-yes then no-show when the plan was never agreed. Ask whether they agree. Confirm in Afaan Oromoo if that is the language they use.

## **Language and Communication**

Afaan Oromoo. Varieties include Borana, Guji, Wollo, and others — confirm. An interpreter labeled Ethiopian who speaks Amharic is often a closed door. A Somali interpreter is the wrong door. Arabic may

be religion, not the interview.

## **Language**

Star Tribune (31 July 2025): about 8,000 Minnesotans speak Oromo at home. MDE: 8th most-common K–12 home language. Date it. Compass Ethiopian LEP 30.4 percent is umbrella context.

A long answer may be story. Oral prestige is real. A short English yes may be exhaustion or courtesy. Do not take a smile as consent. Ask whether they agree with the plan.

Do not make an Oromo coworker the interpreter. The child is not the interpreter.

## **LGBTQ**

Queer and trans Oromo Minnesotans exist. Conservative family, church, and mosque climates can mean silence or exile. Some people live a public English life and a private Oromo life. You use the name they use. You do not out them to an elder as cultural humility.

## **This person**

Minnesota's Human Rights Act still applies. So does the duty not to treat a whole people as a family-values exhibit.

Do not use this chapter to raid a household. Do not pretend the tension is not there.

## **Hair, Dress, and Body**

Hijab and modest dress for some Muslim Oromo women; not all. Christian Oromo dress is Minnesota dress plus, for some, church clothes. Do not assume covering. Do not rank covering as piety or oppression.

## **Dress**

This is not the CROWN Act chapter — and anti-Blackness still sits on Black Oromo bodies in U.S. clinics and schools. Ask this person. Do not mash historic African American hair politics as a script, and do not ignore them.

Do not touch. Do not police covering. Do not assume a covered woman cannot speak for herself — ask her, with a gender-matched interpreter if she wants one.

## **Music**

Geerarsa and related oral forms are prestige speech — praise, history, sometimes resistance. Qeerroo-generation music is public in the 2010s–2020s diaspora. Church music. Islamic nasheed in some rooms. Religious caution about some music in some families.

## **Variation**

A playlist is not engagement. A long answer may be oral art, not evasion.

Do not request a political song as icebreaker in a waiver meeting.

## **Sports**

Soccer is a common public sport. Basketball shows up in the second generation. Distance running as a Horn stereotype is not a file and not a compliment you give a child in clinic.

### **Not the whole person**

Do not assume the kid plays. Do not make sport the only excellence you can see.

Sport clubs are social infrastructure. They are not language access and not a case plan.

### **Literature**

Oral literature first. Qubee in the 1990s made a mass written public possible — that is political history, not a trivia fact. Minnesota Oromo journalists, poets, and media exist.

### **Literacy in the lobby**

You do not need to quote a novel in the lobby. You need to know this is not a people without letters, and that an elder who does not read Qubee or English is not a person without language.

Do not test an elder in Amharic and call it language access.

### **Art**

Not Ethiopian Orthodox church art as a synonym for Oromo. Dress, oral art, contemporary visual work, diaspora stages. Guest, not researcher.

### **Guest**

A visit is optional professional development. It is not consultation.

Do not put a Somali poster or an Ethiopian flag mash on a Heritage Month table and call it this people.

### **Conflict, War, and the State**

Ethiopian imperial incorporation, 20th-century state violence, the Oromo Liberation struggle as literacy for the desk not a speech, the Derg, 2010s–2020s unrest — that is the political event. Do not referee it in a waiver meeting. Do not pick a side as DHS. Intra-Ethiopian tension in Minnesota rooms is real.

### **The badge**

A DHS badge is not automatically help. Do not use a struggle as a personality. Do not ask a person to narrate prison or killing for your professional development.

Enforcement climate in the United States is a different state and still a closed door for some. Do not collect status you do not need. Do not collect political speech as a risk score.

### **Adjacent Peoples — Do Not Mash**

Not Somali. Not Amharic. Not “Ethiopian” as a synonym. Not Tigrayan as mash. Not Arabic as the interview default. Compass counts people born in Ethiopia who list Somali ancestry as Somali, not Ethiopian — date that method.

## Adjacent doors

Never one East African interpreter. Never one Ethiopian module. Never one Black module. Open Somali Minnesota for a Somali household. Open historic African American for a Great Migration household. Open this for Oromo.

Some households are mixed. Ask this household. Shared Islam is not shared culture. Shared Horn geography is not shared language.

## Counts, Dated

Minnesota Compass, ACS 2019–2023, Ethiopian cultural community — umbrella, not an Oromo census: about 40,324; Twin Cities 89.4%; Greater Minnesota 10.6%; age 17 or younger 43.5%; 65+ 3.6%; foreign-born 61.7%; language other than English (age 5+) 74.9%; English less than “very well” 30.4%; high school or higher (25+) 81.5%; bachelor’s or higher 24.6%; median household income about \$57,106 (2022 dollars, averaged); poverty 13.0%; owner-occupied 34.7%; renter-occupied 65.3%; average household size 3.09. Compass: respondents born in Ethiopia who list Somali ancestry are counted Somali, not Ethiopian.

## Counts

Oromo-specific counts disagree. MinnPost, 19 May 2016: OCIM estimated up to 40,000 Oromo in Minnesota; state demographer nearer 8,500 using census plus school language. Star Tribune, 31 July 2025: about 8,000 Minnesotans speak Oromo at home; MDE: Oromo 8th most-common home language in K–12.

## What the count is not

Date the disagreement. Do not invent a midpoint. A rate is not the person.

## Doors and Sources

Minnesota Compass Ethiopian profile (ACS 2019–2023) — umbrella. MinnPost, 19 May 2016, Kristoffer Tigue, on counting Oromo Minnesota. Star Tribune, 31 July 2025, languages at home. MNHS / MNopedia, “Oromos in Minnesota: The Making of Little Oromia.” Oromo Community of Minnesota (OCIM) historically. Churches and mosques this family names.

## Public doors

CECLC is a door, not the whole community. An eList is not engagement. Pay partners. Report back.

## Learn on your own time

Learn on your own time. Do not make an Oromo colleague your unpaid tutor. Book a qualified Afaan Oromoo interpreter. Confirm variety. The child is not the interpreter.

## Services, opportunity, and participation

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### Education

Qubee in the 1990s is why a mass written Afaan Oromoo public exists. That is political history and school history. Many elders still do not read it. Many children in Minnesota schools do. The English IEP still has to reach the parent.

## **School and language**

Compass Ethiopian (ACS 2019–2023), among those 25 and older: about 81.5 percent high school or higher; about 24.6 percent bachelor's or higher — umbrella, not an Oromo census. Star Tribune (31 July 2025): MDE listed Oromo as the 8th most-common home language in K–12. Date it.

A parent who speaks fluent Afaan Oromoo and limited English is not illiterate. The child is not the interpreter. Book Oromo, not Amharic. An English-only form is the gate.

## **Other Considerations**

Unvarnished, because Minnesota Nice is how a room that treats everyone the same deletes facts.

## **Named harms**

Intra-Ethiopian tension in Minnesota rooms is real — Oromo, Amhara, Tigrayan, and the state's name itself. Do not pick a side as DHS. Do not referee in a waiver meeting. Do not file politics as a risk score.

FGC exists in some Horn communities. Minnesota law stands. This is not the Somali page. Do not invent an Oromo rate. Do not mash Somali prevalence onto this household. Follow mandated reporting. Still see a family.

Queer and trans Oromo exist. You use the name. You do not out someone to kin and call it culture.

Enforcement climate is structure for some. Do not collect status you do not need. Do not treat fear as noncompliance.

Staff who share this community may add facts. They do not get to delete a fact because it is hard to say.

## **Health**

No dated Oromo-specific Minnesota autism, diabetes, or FGC rate belongs on this page. Do not invent one. Do not mash MDH 2014 Somali findings onto this people. Do not skip screening because you have no module.

## **Access**

Compass Ethiopian (ACS 2019–2023): poverty 13.0 percent; renter 65.3 percent; 43.5 percent age 17 or younger — umbrella context. A young age structure is not a personality. A rate is not the person.

Gender match may be requested in maternal and intimate care. Offer it. Believe reported pain. Peers who share language. FGC: Minnesota law stands; this is not the Somali page; do not invent a rate; do not skip care.

War, prison, and protest trauma sit in some rooms. Mental-health stigma exists in some families. So does a fierce wish for services. You can hold both.

## **Work, Markets, and Government**

Work, small business, professional second generation, public employment. Oromo staff inside DHS and counties are not unpaid interpreters and not “the community.” Identity is not a staffing plan. Oromo staff are not unpaid interpreters and not the community. Identity is not a staffing plan.

## **Work**

Oromo Community of Minnesota historically — pay, report back, do not BCC a cultural organization and call it consultation.

## **Staff**

Relationship may precede a signature. That is not permission to skip a notice. It is a reason the first visit may not be the decision.

## **Health-care and Human-service Encounters**

Oromo versus Amharic versus Somali is the first closed door. Book Afaan Oromoo. Confirm the variety. Confirm whether Arabic is religion not interview. Offer gender match. Ask who should hear. Do not invent a last name.

## **Language**

Child-welfare fear after help-seeking is part of why people wait. Mandated reporting still exists. So does the duty not to treat a whole community as a risk score. FGC: Minnesota law stands; this is not the Somali page; do not invent a rate.

## **The meeting**

Believe reported pain. Do not mix Tuskegee into this history and do not mix Somali MDH autism findings onto this page. The child is not the interpreter. Do not make staff the interpreter.

## **Connections to human services**

Workplace culture and service delivery are both candidates.

Language: Oromo versus Amharic versus Somali mash is the first failure. An interpreter labeled Ethiopian who speaks Amharic is often a closed door. A Somali interpreter is the wrong door. Arabic may be religion, not the interview. Confirm the variety (Borana, Guji, Wollo, others). Gender match may be requested in maternal and intimate care.

Names: Oromo names are not Amharic names. The database that invents a last name, or that assumes three Somali names, is a gate that follows the person.

Hour caps, exception processes, and life-sharing matches without language are not culturally neutral.

Child welfare: help-seeking that becomes a report is part of why people wait. Mandated reporting still exists. So does the duty not to treat a whole community as a risk score. FGC: Minnesota law stands; this is not the Somali page; do not invent a rate.

Notices and comment: an eList and an English PDF is not how this community was reached. Empty follow-up cells are theater.

Workforce: Oromo staff are not the interpreter pool and not the community. Staff are colleagues, not the curriculum. Do not treat them.

Legislation, funding, rule: you cannot advocate for a channel you will not study. This cultural intelligence exists so the 40% has a household in it — not a paternalistic program designed in a building that filed Oromo under Somali or under Ethiopian as a synonym.

## Practice considerations

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Oromo is distinct from Somali and Amharic, and 'Ethiopian' is not a substitute for Oromo identity. An interpreter requested only as 'Ethiopian' may not meet the person's language needs. Oromo naming practices are also distinct from Amharic and Somali naming practices.

### What to ask

- Should we book Afaan Oromoo?
- Who should be in the room?
- How would you like to be addressed?

### Access considerations

- Afaan Oromoo, not Amharic or Somali, on the request.
- Translated notices reviewed by an Afaan Oromoo speaker.
- Greater Minnesota households exist; do not assume the metro.

### Who to involve

- Language access lead or interpreter services, with the dialect written on the request.
- Equity Director for the administration or the person responsible for the program.
- Community partner organizations identified in this brief, with a clear purpose, role, compensation, and plan to report back.
- Oromo community organizations and congregations the family names.

### Assumptions to examine

- Do not use a Somali or broad 'Ethiopian' brief in place of Oromo-specific context.
- Keep the service meeting focused on the person's needs rather than asking them to explain or resolve Ethiopian politics.
- Do not assume a religious pattern.

## Continue the connection

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- **Community engagement or co-design effort** — program page </paths/gp-3>
- **Equity Analysis Toolkit** — program page </learn/equity-toolkit>
- **Community engagement and connections** — program page </learn/community-connections>

- **Learning and resources** — program page /learn

## Sources

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- **Minnesota Compass (Ethiopian umbrella profile)** — Umbrella count; not an Oromo census. <https://www.mncompass.org/>