

4 Reasons Why Islam Is Growing Faster Than Christianity

A new report from the Pew Research Center paints a sobering picture of the shifting religious landscape worldwide: Islam is growing faster than any other religion, while Christianity—still the largest faith globally—is shrinking in its share of the population.

“It’s just striking that there was such dramatic change in a 10-year period,” said Conrad Hackett, lead author of the Pew study. “During this time, the Muslim and Christian populations grew closer in size. Muslims grew faster than any other major religion.”

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According to the study, Christianity now comprises 28.8% of the global population, a drop of 1.8 percentage points from a decade ago. Islam, by contrast, has grown to 25.6%—an increase of the same amount. While both religions saw numeric growth, the rate of increase for Islam outpaced Christianity due to several key factors.

Why Islam Is Growing Faster Than Christianity:

- A younger average age among Muslims: 24 years compared to 33 for non-Muslims globally.
- Higher fertility rates, especially in regions with large Muslim populations.
- Lower rates of disaffiliation, meaning fewer Muslims are leaving their faith.

- Demographic momentum, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia.

Hackett pointed to disaffiliation as a primary cause of Christianity's decline: "Among young adults, for every person around the world who becomes Christian, there are three people who are raised Christian who leave," he told Premier Christian News.

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This trend is most visible in the West. Europe, once the stronghold of global Christianity, has now been surpassed by sub-Saharan Africa, which holds the largest share of Christians at 31 percent. The shift is driven by "high fertility, youthfulness and rapid growth in general of sub-Saharan Africa," said Hackett in The Washington Post, "as well as the aging, lower fertility and disaffiliation going on in Europe."

Meanwhile, the unaffiliated—those who identify as atheist, agnostic or with no religion—have surged to 24.2% of the global population, up from 16% a decade ago. This rise, too, is largely attributed to people leaving Christianity. In countries like China, the U.S. and Japan, the unaffiliated make up vast portions of the population.

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Hackett acknowledged that while some expect a religious revival, "the broad trend is that in many places people are moving away from religion."

The Pew study is based on over 2,700 surveys and censuses across 201 countries and territories. While the numbers reflect shifting affiliations, they may not fully capture

nuanced personal beliefs. Still, the data points to a future in which Islam may overtake Christianity as the world's largest religion—unless global trends drastically change.

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“The next step of our ongoing work in this project,” Hackett said, “will be to do some demographic population projections to provide new estimates of sort of exactly when they might converge.”

If current patterns continue, that convergence may happen sooner than many expect.

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