

# PewResearch Religion & Public Life Project

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JANUARY 27, 2011

THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL MUSLIM POPULATION

## Sunni and Shia Muslims

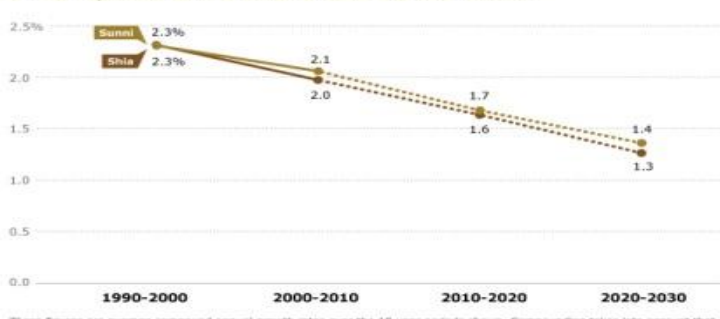
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Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims comprise the two main sects within Islam. Because data on the percentages of Sunni and Shia Muslims are rough estimates in many countries, this study presents them as ranges. <sup>57</sup>



Sunnis will continue to make up an overwhelming majority of Muslims in 2030. The number of Sunnis is projected to reach almost 2 billion by 2030 (between 1.91 billion and 1.97 billion), up from approximately 1.4 billion in 2010 (between 1.41 billion and 1.46 billion). Sunnis are expected to make up 87-90% of the world's Muslims in 20 years, roughly the same percentage as today. The number of Shia Muslims is projected to be between 219 million and 285 million in 2030, up from between 162 million and 211 million in 2010. Shia Muslims are expected to make up 10-13% of the world's Muslims, roughly the same percentage as today.

Annual Population Growth Rates for Sunni and Shia Muslims



These figures are average compound annual growth rates over the 10-year periods shown. Compounding takes into account that the population base for each year includes growth from the previous year. Data points are plotted based on unrounded numbers. Dotted lines denote projected figures.

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Within these ranges, however, there may be a very slight increase in the percentage of Sunni Muslims and a very slight decline in the percentage of Shia Muslims, largely because of low fertility in Iran, where more than a third of the world's Shia Muslims live. The annual rates of growth for the world's Sunni and Shia populations were identical from 1990 to 2000. But the rate of growth of the Shia population is expected to be slightly lower than the rate of growth for Sunnis over the next 20 years.

Four countries in the world have a Shia-majority population – Iran (where ~93% of Muslims are Shia), Azerbaijan (~70%), Bahrain (~70%) and Iraq (~67%). Of these, Iran has the largest number of Shia Muslims. Iraq's Shia Muslim population is substantially smaller, but it is expected to grow at a faster rate than the Shia population in neighboring Iran.

Shia Muslim Population Growth in the Four Largest Shia-Majority Countries

Country	ESTIMATED SHIA POPULATION 2010	PROJECTED SHIA POPULATION 2030	ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Iraq	20,998,000	32,636,000	2.2%
Bahrain	459,000	617,000	1.5
Iran	69,208,000	82,904,330	0.9
Azerbaijan	6,156,000	7,113,000	0.7

Population estimates are calculated as ranges; figures listed are the mid-points of the ranges.

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The Future of the Global Muslim Population, January 2011

Sunni Muslim Population Growth in the Four Largest Sunni-Majority Countries

Country	ESTIMATED SUNNI POPULATION 2010	PROJECTED SUNNI POPULATION 2030	ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Pakistan	155,834,000	224,103,000	1.8%
Egypt	79,624,000	104,539,000	1.4
Bangladesh	147,864,000	186,568,000	1.2
Indonesia	203,823,000	237,639,000	0.8

Population estimates are calculated as ranges; figures listed are the mid-points of the ranges.

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The four countries with the largest Sunni-majority populations are Egypt (where ~99% of Muslims are Sunni), Indonesia (~99%), Bangladesh (~99%) and Pakistan (~87%). Of these, Pakistan is expected to have the greatest annual growth in its number of Sunni Muslims. Indonesia's gains will be more modest.

### Footnotes

<sup>57</sup> For more information, see Methodology for Sunni-Shia estimates on page 38 of the Pew Forum's 2009 report *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*. (return to text)

### IN THIS PUBLICATION

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- Related Factors
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### FEATURES AND RESOURCES

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### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- OCT 10, 2013  
Event Transcript: Changing Identity of Jewish Americans – Implications for Social and Political Engagement
- OCT 1, 2013  
Video: 'A Portrait of Jewish Americans' Overview
- OCT 1, 2013  
A Portrait of Jewish Americans
- OCT 1, 2013  
Calculate the Size of the Jewish Population

Four countries in the world have a Shia-majority population – Iran (where ~93% of Muslims are Shia), Azerbaijan (~70%), Bahrain (~70%) and Iraq (~67%). Of these, Iran has the largest number of Shia Muslims. Iraq's Shia Muslim population is substantially smaller, but it is expected to grow at a faster rate than the Shia population in neighboring Iran.

چهار کشور ایران، آذربایجان، بحرین و عراق هر کدام به ترتیب به میزان تقریبی ۹۳، ۷۰، ۷۰، ۶۷ درصد از جمعیت شیعه را دارند. ایران بیشترین و عراق کمترین جمعیت شیعه را دارند اما انتظار می رود که نرخ رشد عراق سریعتر از ایران باشد.

But the rate of growth of the Shia population is expected to be slightly lower than the rate of growth for Sunnis over the next 20 years.  
نرخ رشد جمعیت شیعیان در جهان در ۲۰ سال آینده کمتر از اهل سنت خواهد بود دلیل اصلی آن کاهش باروری در ایران است.

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