

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

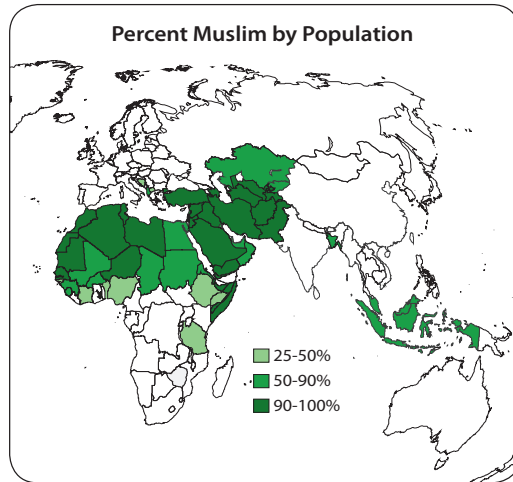
Islam

Most of the world's 1.9 billion Muslims live in an arc stretching across the world from West Africa to Indonesia. High birthrates make Islam the fastest growing religious community and it is currently expected to overtake Christianity in population in the second half of this century.

Radical Islam dominates the headlines, and is the source of much persecution of Christians - and also of other Muslims. While only a minority of Muslims practice their religion in this way, extremism is shaking the Islamic world. In fact, most of the victims of extremism are Muslim. The world's deadliest conflicts are centred on majority-Muslim lands. As a result disillusionment with Islam is rising in many places. So is a fresh hunger to meet the living God.

The former Communist world, and the West, are home to the least-practicing Muslims, but Muslims worldwide show a high level of agreement with the basics of Islam, and most affirm Islam's importance to their daily lives.

On a much smaller scale, increasing numbers of Muslims are turning to Christ. Defining 'a movement' as 1000 baptisms or 100 new churches in a twenty-year period, researchers have counted at least 70 verifiable movements to Christ among Muslims in 29 nations by the first decade of the 21st century. Some of these movements embrace tens of thousands of people. Networks of people are turning to Christ, rather than single individuals. God is doing a new thing: nothing on



this scale has happened since the first days of Islam.

Praise God for a groundswell of intercession (such as through the '30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World' resource). The growth of prayer for Muslims and response by Muslims to the Good News is no coincidence!

Pray that the world's Christians will bring good news of peace to the whole Muslim world. Praise God for a multiplication of effort in recent years.

Pray for people of Muslim background who are now followers of Christ (estimated to be 10 million or more). Pray their good lives and words will win over many of their friends, families and neighbours.



IRAN

Iran (population 82 million) has been stuck in violent revolution since the Islamist takeover 40 years ago. Iran is officially a democracy, and prone to power struggles and civil unrest, but most power resides with Islamic clerics and their 'Revolutionary Guard'. Together they force clerical rule on a young population many of whom who long ago lost their Islamist zeal.



Around 150,000 Iranians leave the country every year and many more emigrate emotionally: behind closed doors, Iran is a different country. Local reports suggest 2.8 million drug users, highlighting a widespread problem.

Rebellion against the 'beards' has ignited a large turning to Christ. This is occurring in thousands of house churches across Iran, with local word-of-mouth growth further fuelled by satellite TV and the internet. Iranians overseas are turning to Jesus in even greater numbers. In 1979, just a few hundred Iranians of Islamic background were followers of Jesus. Now there are hundreds of thousands – a thousand-fold increase in a single generation!

Persecution is cruel and rising. According to a human rights report, Iranian authorities arrested 114 Christians in one seven-day period in 2018. Iran is one of the most dangerous places to be a Christian according to the ministry Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List. And yet the Church in Iran is one of the fastest-growing in the world.

Pray for strength, grace, and perseverance for persecuted Christians in Iran. Pray especially for those jailed, wounded, and tortured.

Christianity is seen as a Western religion and a threat to the established order - pray for Christians to be able to live 'peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Tim. 2:2).

Pray for wise leadership for the churches and that the Christian movement will continue to spread.

A thousand years ago the region was home to the world's greatest thinkers, poets and architects. Pray that this generation will enjoy rest from revolution and rebuild their nation in peace.

Praying for the World is a free weekly prayer guide to inspire and inform the whole church to pray for the whole world. Visit www.lausanne.org/pray to start any week. Created through the partnership of Operation World and the Lausanne Movement.