

DIVERSITY OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today. The Pew Research Center says that in the United States, they are on track to become the second largest religious group by 2040, following Christianity. Much of the Muslim community is very diverse, especially in the United States. In fact, the majority of Muslims in the United States are not Middle Eastern, as some might think. About 25% of the 5 million Muslims that live in the United States are black. According to NPR, it is thought that African slaves were the first people to bring Islam to the United States. At least 10-15% of African slaves in the United States were practicing Muslims who taught their faith to their children; that was how Islam began and grew. The next influx of Muslim immigrants came after the construction of the Suez Canal in 1859. The black community have had a multitude of important practicing Muslims throughout history, two of the most prominent being civil rights activist Malcolm X and professional boxer Muhammad Ali.

Latino Muslims are another very important part of Islam in the United States, as well as one of the fastest growing segments of the Muslim community. About 6-8% of all Muslims living in the United States are Latinx. Nationwide, they make up one fifth of the total converts to Islam. Historically, it makes sense that the Latinx community is converting to Islam. For roughly 800 years during the Middle Ages, Arab Muslims ruled Spain. Some call the transition a rediscovery of their roots; others convert because they find it to be a more direct worship than Catholicism and more structured overall. In fact, more Latina women convert to Islam than Latino men do because Islam offers more freedom for women than the Catholic church, which forbids female priests, birth control, and divorce.

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