

Nearly a quarter on Earth are Muslim, study says: About two-thirds in Asia

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Amid widely different estimates of the size of the world's Muslim population, a new demographic study has determined that followers of Islam represent nearly a quarter of the world's current population, with nearly two-thirds of them living in Asia.

The study, released October 7 and conducted by the Washington-based Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, found that 1.57 billion people are Muslims out of an estimated total world population of 6.8 billion.

Estimates of the global Muslim population have ranged from 1 billion to 1.8 billion people, according to Pew, a nonpartisan organization. Islam is the second largest religious tradition after Christianity, which is believed to have some 2 billion adherents.

The study, researchers said, is based on what it called "the best available data" for 232 countries and territories, including analyses of 1,500 sources, census reports, demographic studies and general population surveys.

Among the findings:

- A substantial number of Muslims—one-fifth, or more than 300 million—live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion.
- Indonesia, with an estimated Muslim population of 202,867,000—88 percent of its total population—has nearly 13 percent of the world's Muslim population. Pakistan, with 174,082,000 Muslims—96.3 percent of its population—ranked second, with 11.1 percent of the world's Muslim population. India was third, followed by Bangladesh and Egypt. —*Ecumenical News International*