

Pew study charts growth in Muslim population

by [Omar Sacirbey](#) in the [February 22, 2011](#) issue

The U.S. Muslim population is expected to double over the next 20 years, fueled by immigration and higher than average fertility rates, according to a new Pew report.

The study comes as some critics accuse Muslim Americans of seeking to impose Shari'a, or Islamic law, in the U.S., and some Europeans raise the specter of a Muslim-dominated "Eurabia" if countries don't tighten immigration. The fears are overblown, the report said.

"The numbers are very far away from the Eurabia scenario of runaway growth," said Alan Cooperman, one of the coauthors of the report, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," released in Washington on January 27 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

The number of Muslims in the United States is projected to rise from 2.6 million, or 0.8 percent of the U.S. population, to 6.2 million, or 1.7 percent in 2030. That rate of growth would make Muslims about as numerous as Jews or Episcopalians in the U.S. today.

Although Muslim populations in some Western countries are expected to double in the next 20 years, they would still not be high enough to fundamentally shift the religious or ethnic balance of European societies, the authors said.

Even some conservatives expressed skepticism at the idea of homegrown Islamic fundamentalism threatening to overtake the U.S. "We welcome all Muslims here who

pledge allegiance to the Constitution and believe in the separation of religion and state," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Liberty Commission. "I don't worry about Shari'a creep because Americans won't let it happen."

Researchers

also found that nearly two-thirds (64.5 percent) of Muslim Americans are immigrants, while 35.5 percent were born in the U.S.—a figure that is projected to rise to almost 45 percent by 2030.

On the

assumption that many of these young immigrants start families, the number of U.S. Muslims younger than 15 will more than triple by 2030, to 1.8 million in 2030.

According to the report, the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35 percent in the next 20 years—rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030—compared to a general population growth rate of about 16 percent.

If current

trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4 percent of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030, up from 23.4 percent of the estimated 2010 world population of 6.9 billion. —RNS