

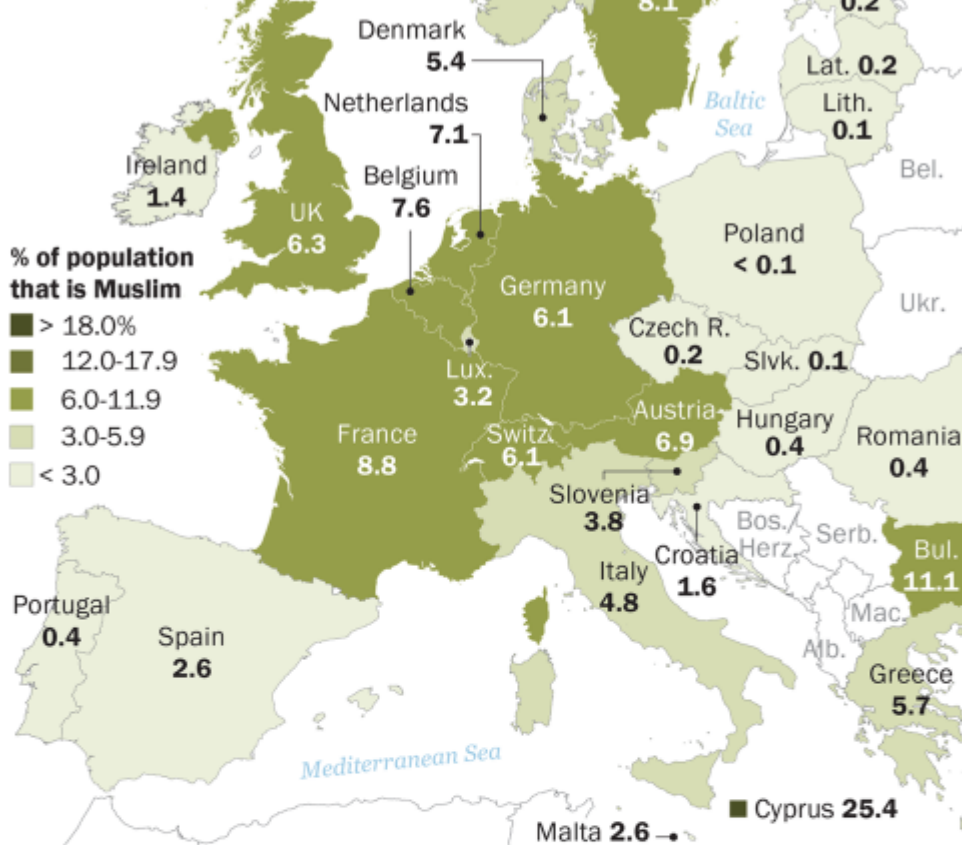
Research counters nativist claims about Europe's Muslim population

**A report from the Pew Research Center looks at projections depending on rates of welcoming refugees and immigrants.**

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#) in the [January 3, 2018](#) issue

# Muslims make up 4.9% of Europe's population in 2016

Estimated % of Muslims among total population in each country



Region	Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016	% of population that is Muslim
EU + Norway + Switzerland	25,770,000	4.9%
France	5,720,000	8.8
Germany	4,950,000	6.1
United Kingdom	4,130,000	6.3
Italy	2,870,000	4.8
Netherlands	1,210,000	7.1
Spain	1,180,000	2.6

Note: Europe is defined here as the 28 nations of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland. "Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016" column lists only countries with at least 1 million Muslims. Estimates do not include those asylum seekers who are not expected to gain legal status to remain in Europe, including roughly 320,000 Muslims in Germany and 140,000 Muslims in France. Source: Pew Research Center estimates. See Methodology for details. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population"

A graph of Europe's Muslim population. From [Pew Research Center](#).

Even if migration to Europe ceased—no immigrants, no refugees—the percentage of Muslims in the continent’s population would still rise over the next three decades.

Yet according to new projections by the Pew Research Center, even the scenario with the largest Muslim growth would leave the Muslim population considerably smaller than the populations of both Christians and people with no religion in Europe.

“There will be no country where Muslims make up more than a third of the population,” said Conrad Hackett, Pew’s associate director of research and senior demographer. “There have been sort of sensationalistic claims that due to different fertility or migration patterns, France or other countries might perhaps have a Muslim majority by midcentury. Even in our highest scenario, we just don’t find that to be an outcome that would materialize.”

Pew made its last projections on population growth of world religions based on 2010 numbers. Since then, a record number of asylum seekers from Syria and other predominantly Muslim countries has changed the picture considerably.

As of mid-2016, Muslims made up nearly 5 percent of the population in the 28 countries of the European Union, plus Norway and Switzerland, according to the new Pew report. That’s an estimated 25.8 million people.

By comparison, Muslims make up about 1 percent of the population in the United States and could reach 2 percent by 2050, according to Pew estimates released earlier this year.

The new European numbers are based on census and survey data from each country, as well as data on immigration from Eurostat and other sources.

With the recent wave of Muslim immigrants and refugees to Europe, anti-Muslim movements have sprung up in several countries, including Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West, known by the acronym PEGIDA, which has protested the arrival of Muslim migrants and claims that Germany will be “overrun” by Muslims.

How much Europe’s Muslim population actually will grow over the next three decades depends on future migration and birthrates. Pew created projections for

three possible scenarios:

- If all migration to Europe stopped, the Muslim population could grow to 7.4 percent by the year 2050. One reason for that growth is that European Muslims are younger than other Europeans by 13 years on average. They also have more children, an average one more child per woman.
- If no more refugees were admitted into European countries as of mid-2016, but immigration continued at its current pace, the Muslim population could more than double to 11.2 percent.
- If refugees and immigrants continued to come to Europe in similar and numbers with a similar religious makeup from now until 2050, the Muslim population could nearly triple to 14 percent.

Without any future migration, Europe's total population would drop from about 521 million to 482 million. Total population would remain roughly the same if only nonrefugee immigrants were admitted to the country, and it would grow modestly if all were admitted. —Religion News Service

*A version of this article, which was edited on December 19, appears in the January 3 print edition under the title "Research counters nativist claims about Europe's Muslim population."*