

Islamic Cultures in the West
Notes for Discussion
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Sociological Data

Muslim Population: World= 1.8 billion; USA= 3.45 million – about 1%; Europe about 10
 Largest populations in countries (millions, rounded): Indonesia 170, Pakistan 136, Bangladesh
 106, India 103

Note: Most Arabs are Muslims, most Muslims are not Arabs
 Those leaving Islam are about balanced by those converting to Islam

Passages of Life

Birth and Infancy

Welcomed with *Call to Prayer* (adhaan)

Sweet taste on baby's lips

On the seventh day

Breastfeeding

Genital cutting

Circumcision as must for males

Excision an honor for females

Circumcision as purification (tahara)- usually on day 7;

Childhood

Parenting with prayers and the teaching of faith

No contact rules affect children in non-Muslim schools

Puberty and the age of transition from childhood to adulthood.

Young Adulthood

Clothing-women: hijab, niqab, burka, al-amira, Shayla, khimar, chador

Clothing -men: thobe, ghutra and egal, bisht, serwal, shalwar and kameez, izar, turban

Beards and mustaches

“Halal dating”

Celibacy

Virginity

Females, religious practices, menstruation

No contact rules e.g., handshakes

No official same-sex relationships

Weddings and Marriages

Marriages as a social contract and an ideal

Eligible Marriage partners

Mahr (a man's payment to women he intends to marry)

Nikah (wedding)- a ceremony; A feast (walimah)

Nikah mut'ah is a temporary marriage practiced by Shia Muslims but not Sunnis.

Interfaith marriage prohibited traditionally but a common event

Family Life

Holy Days

Eid al Adha (End of pilgrimage to Mecca)

Eid al Fitr (End of Ramadan, ninth month of lunar calendar)

Ashura: Sunni day remembering day Nuh (Noah) left the Ark and Musa (Moses) was saved from Egyptians

Lailat al Qadr (27 Ramadan) First revelation to Prophet Muhammad.

Milad un Nabi (12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) Birthday of the Prophet

Al-Hijra (1 Muharram) New Year; When Prophet Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina; set up first Islamic State

Lailat al Miraj (27 Rajab) The night journey to Jerusalem

Lailat ul Bra'h (15 Shabaan) Night of forgiveness, 2 weeks before Ramadan; prayers for forgiveness and time of charitable giving

Contraception: Children are a gift from God

Eight of nine schools of Islam permit birth control

Sterilization is wrong

Some refer to Qur'an (17:31; 6:151)

Abortion- General belief in the sanctity of life (BBC)

Forbidden but most make exceptions.

Groups vary on when abortion is acceptable: 7 weeks; 16 weeks;

Unanimous opinion no abortion after 120 days

Saving the mother's life is the *lesser of two evils*, a Sharia principle

Some permit abortion for the sake of the baby

Groups vary on permitting abortion following rape

Ensoulement opinion varies e.g., 40d, 120d

Food

Halal: Arabic for permissible;
 Sharia law on killing animals for meat; Sanctify and minimal pain
Hunting: No hunting for sport

Elder care- families are expected to provide care for their parents

Family Structures

Divorce is permitted- but can be tricky; US divorce rate about 1/3

Polygyny is permitted

Large families are valued

Elderly are valued

Extended family members living together is traditional

A man is the head of the family and has economic responsibility

Notes and References

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/05/the-kingdom-in-the-closet/305774/>

BBC. A useful summary of the Islamic religion. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/>

BBC 2018 One example of the no handshake rule affecting life- a couple were denied citizenship over no handshakes. Other similar stories make news. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45232147>

BBC 2018 pictures of Muslim women in different versions of modest clothing

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/24118241>

Dhami & Sheikh, (2000). An article covering several aspects of Islamic family life

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1071164/>

HuffPost 2017 An article about interfaith marriage that offers ways to interpret the Koran that

permits women to marry non-Muslims https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/can-a-muslim-woman-marry-a-non-muslim-man_us_589aae92e4b061551b3e05a8

Human Rights Campaign- a link to an article on LGBTQ issues and Islam.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-islam>

Npr (2017) A story on acceptable dating practices among Islamic couples.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/20/502461218/how-young-muslims-define-halal-dating-for-themselves>

PBS: A useful source of general information but lacking in nuance.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/terror/background/6.html>

Pew (Jan 2 2018) Recent data on the Muslim population in the USA.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/>

Pew (Aug 9, 2017) A helpful set of data on attitudes toward Muslims and views of Muslims as well as beliefs and practices.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>

RNS A recent article on Islam and FGM.

<https://religionnews.com/2017/04/27/the-splainer-what-is-female-genital-mutilation-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-islam/>

Thoughtco. 2018 An article describes and illustrates variations in modest clothes for Muslim men

<https://www.thoughtco.com/mens-islamic-clothing-2004254>

WP 2012 Muslim divorces in the United States

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/shariah-or-not-muslim-divorces-can-get-tricky/2012/10/01/13d014da-0c15-11e2-97a7-45c05ef136b2_story.html?utm_term=.6776cc6f3b0f