

# **The Growth of the Muslim Population in the UK: A Demographic Analysis and Future Outlook**

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the growth of the Muslim population in the United Kingdom from 1995 to the present day. It examines the demographic trends of all major religions in the UK, with a particular focus on the Muslim community. The report includes projections for religious demographics up to the year 2035, an exploration of the factors contributing to the observed growth, and a discussion of the social, cultural, and economic impacts of these changes. Additionally, it analyzes trends in baby names as a cultural indicator of religious identity.

## **1. Introduction**

The religious landscape of the United Kingdom has undergone a profound transformation over the last three decades. Once a predominantly Christian nation, the UK is now a far more diverse and multicultural society. One of the most significant demographic shifts during this period has been the rapid growth of the Muslim population. This report aims to provide a detailed and data-driven account of this change, placing it within the broader context of the UK's evolving religious identity.

## **2. The UK's Changing Religious Demographics: 1995-Present**

While official census data on religion was not collected before 2001, it is possible to create a comprehensive picture of the UK's religious demographics from the mid-1990s to the present using a combination of census data and other statistical sources.

### **2.1. A Snapshot of the Nineties**

In the mid-1990s, the UK was still overwhelmingly Christian, at least in terms of

self-identification. However, the seeds of the demographic shifts that would define the next few decades had already been sown. Immigration from Commonwealth countries, which had begun in the post-war period, had established significant Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities in the UK.

## 2.2. The Census Era: 2001, 2011, and 2021

The inclusion of a question on religion in the 2001 census provided the first detailed, official data on the religious composition of the UK. The results, and those of the subsequent censuses in 2011 and 2021, have charted a clear and consistent trend: the decline of Christianity and the growth of other religions, particularly Islam, as well as a significant increase in the number of people with no religion.

### Key Trends:

- **Christianity:** The proportion of the population identifying as Christian has seen a steady and significant decline, from 71.7% in 2001 to 46.2% in 2021.
- **Islam:** The Muslim population has experienced rapid growth, more than doubling from 3.0% in 2001 to 6.5% in 2021.
- **Judaism:** The Jewish population has remained relatively stable at around 0.5%.
- **Other Religions:** Other religions, including Hinduism and Sikhism, have seen modest growth.
- **No Religion:** The proportion of the population with no religious affiliation has grown substantially, from 14.8% in 2001 to 37.2% in 2021.

## 3. Projecting the Future: Religious Demographics in 2035

Demographic projections are based on current trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. While these are subject to change, they provide a valuable insight into the likely future religious landscape of the UK.

### 3.1. Continued Growth of the Muslim Population

Based on current trends, the Muslim population of the UK is projected to continue its growth, potentially reaching between 8% and 10% of the total population by 2035. This is due to a combination of factors, including a younger age profile, higher birth rates, and continued immigration.

### 3.2. Further Decline of Christianity

The proportion of the population identifying as Christian is projected to continue its decline, potentially falling below 40% by 2035. This is largely due to an aging population and lower birth rates, as well as a growing number of people leaving the faith.

### **3.3. The Rise of the "Nones"**

The most significant growth is projected to be among those with no religious affiliation, who could make up close to half of the UK population by 2035.

## **4. The Drivers of Muslim Population Growth**

The rapid growth of the Muslim population in the UK is a complex phenomenon with multiple contributing factors.

### **4.1. Immigration**

Immigration has been a key driver of Muslim population growth in the UK. Initially, this was primarily from South Asian countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. In more recent years, there has been significant immigration from the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

### **4.2. Higher Birth Rates**

The Muslim community in the UK has a younger age profile and a higher average birth rate than the general population. This contributes significantly to the natural growth of the Muslim population.

### **4.3. Conversion**

While data on conversion is limited, it is a contributing factor to the growth of the Muslim population.

## **5. Naming Trends: A Cultural Indicator**

The popularity of baby names can be a powerful indicator of cultural and religious identity. In the UK, the name Muhammad, in its various spellings, has become one of the most popular names for newborn boys. This reflects the growing size of the Muslim community and a strong sense of religious and cultural identity among British Muslims.

## **6. Challenges and Complexities: Social Cohesion and Crime**

The integration of growing minority communities into a host nation is a complex process that can present significant social challenges. Alongside the positive contributions, the discussion surrounding the UK's Muslim population has also involved difficult issues related to crime and social cohesion.

### **6.1. Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation ("Grooming Gangs")**

One of the most serious and damaging issues to emerge has been group-based Child Sexual

Exploitation (CSE), often referred to in the media as "grooming gangs." A series of high-profile cases in towns and cities such as Rotherham, Oxford, Rochdale, and Newcastle revealed organised networks of men sexually abusing and exploiting hundreds of vulnerable, predominantly white, young girls over many years.

Official inquiries, most notably the 2014 Jay Report into the Rotherham scandal, found that the majority of perpetrators in these specific local cases were of British-Pakistani heritage. The reports were damning, not only of the perpetrators but also of the authorities.

## **6.2. Institutional Failures and "Political Correctness"**

A central finding of the inquiries was the catastrophic failure of police and social services to tackle the abuse. The Jay Report concluded that senior officials were aware of the problem for over a decade but failed to act. Subsequent reports, including the 2025 Casey Report, found that this inaction was, in part, due to a "culture of ignorance" and a fear among officials of being labelled racist if they highlighted the specific ethnic background of the perpetrators. This reluctance to address the issue directly allowed the abuse to continue unchecked for years, failing the victims and ultimately damaging community relations.

## **6.3. The Debate Over National Data and Ethnicity**

While local inquiries identified an over-representation of men from Pakistani backgrounds in specific cases, the national picture remains contested due to poor data collection. A 2020 Home Office report concluded that, based on available data, group-based offenders were most commonly white. However, the Casey Report later criticised this finding, stating that ethnicity was not recorded in two-thirds of cases, making it impossible to draw accurate conclusions at a national level. This lack of robust data has allowed the issue to be exploited by various groups to push political agendas, often obscuring the facts and harming community cohesion.

## **6.4. Community Response and the Fight Against Extremism**

It is crucial to note that these criminal acts are condemned by the overwhelming majority of British Muslims and are contrary to the teachings of Islam. However, it has to be remembered that Muhammad married a six year old (Aisha) but didn't have sex with her until she was nine years old.

# **7. Conclusion**

The United Kingdom is in the midst of a significant demographic transformation. The decline of Christianity and the growth of the Muslim population are two of the most important trends shaping the country's future. Understanding these trends, and the factors that drive them, is essential for navigating the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly diverse and multicultural society.

## **7.1. The people don't like the changes**

The noticeable changes caused by the growth of Islam has resulted in a rapid expansion of right wing patriots who are willing to stand up and be counted. More recently a symbolic gesture of putting up the British flags has been noted in national news. Strangely some are against this, viewing the British flags as being racist.