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Who is No. 1 in religious diversity? Hint: It's not the U.S.

Take our quiz to test your knowledge about the multiplicity of faiths in America.

by [David Briggs](#)

August 31, 2010

Editor's note: Scroll down to take quiz.

Many non-Christian religions are growing in the United States. And immigration and fertility patterns suggest the Muslim population, for example, will continue to expand.

But several large-scale studies providing detailed demographics of religious affiliation in the United States show that some three-quarters of Americans are Christian, and in fact religious diversity is not rapidly increasing.

But religion research shows that we are far from being No. 1 in religious diversity, and there is even little evidence the United States is moving quickly in that direction.

[The American Religious Identification Survey](#) found only a six-tenths of a percent increase in the percentage of non-Christian religious affiliation in the United States from 1990 to 2008. An aggregate of [Gallup Polls](#) on religion estimated that the percentage of people who identified with religions other than Christianity and Judaism stayed the same from 1989 to 2009.

The 2007 [U.S. Religious Landscape Survey](#) is among several studies showing that slightly more than three in four Americans identify themselves as Christian.

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And the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey of more than 54,000 U.S. adults found a combined 3.9 percent said they were Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or followers of another non-Christian world religion.

In contrast, consider instead the case for religious diversity that can be made by a nation such as South Korea, where Christians are 41 percent of the populace, Confucianists 11 percent, Buddhists 15 percent, and 31 percent identify with ethnic or new religious movements. In India, the majority of people are Hindu, yet 14 percent of the populace is Muslim, 4.6 percent Christian and 2 percent Sikh.

Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, also is 12 percent Christian and 2 percent Hindu, with some 7 percent following other beliefs.

More information:

- [The Association of Religion Data Archives \(ARDA\), National Profiles](#)
- [ARDA, America's Megatrends](#)
- [North America Jewish Data Bank](#)
- [Pew Forum, Mapping the Global Muslim Population](#)

Those looking for nations where significant numbers of the world's two largest faiths live within the same borders can find them in Nigeria, with almost equal numbers of Muslims and Christians, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon.

Many of those promoting the idea of U.S. superiority in religious diversity are well-intentioned. The recent conflicts opposing the building of mosques, just one current sign of overt prejudice toward Islam, shows the need for interfaith understanding in a nation that also has a history of anti-Semitism.

But as President Obama found out last year when he told a French television station that "if you actually took the number of Muslim Americans, we'd be one of the largest Muslim countries in the world," credibility can be one of the first casualties of claims not based on research.