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Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World

Muslims and Hindus have larger households than Christians and religious ‘nones,’ in patterns influenced by regional norms

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Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World

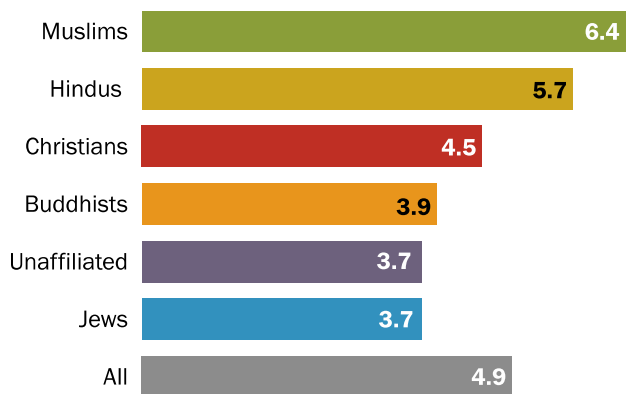
Muslims and Hindus have larger households than Christians and religious ‘nones,’ in patterns influenced by regional norms

Our households – who lives with us, how we are related to them and what role we play in that shared space – have a profound effect on our daily experience of the world. A new Pew Research Center analysis of data from 130 countries and territories reveals that the size and composition of households often vary by religious affiliation.

Worldwide, Muslims live in the biggest households, with the average Muslim individual residing in a home of 6.4 people, followed by Hindus at 5.7. Christians fall in the middle (4.5), forming relatively large families in sub-Saharan Africa and smaller ones in Europe. Buddhists (3.9), Jews (3.7) and the religiously unaffiliated (3.7) – defined as those who do not identify with an organized religion, also known as “nones” – live in smaller households, on average.

Muslims and Hindus live in biggest households

Average individual resides in a household of ___ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Why study households from an individual’s point of view?

This report looks at households from the perspective of an average person, rather than an average household. While it is possible to calculate statistics either way, researchers chose the individual perspective because it better captures the lived experience of most people. Consider two homes, one with a family of nine people, the other with a sole resident. The two households contain a total of 10 people, so the average *household* size is five. But most of the individuals in these two homes – nine out of 10 – live with more than five people. In fact, in this simple example, the average *individual* resides in a household of 8.2 people. (Here’s the math: Nine individuals, each living among nine people, plus one household of one person, is $9+9+9+9+9+9+9+9+9+1 = 82 / 10$ people total = an average person residing in a household of 8.2 people.) For more on this topic, see the sidebar on page 14.

Household size is one easy way to compare the lived experiences of people around the world. Bigger households are common in less-developed countries, where people tend to have more children and families share limited resources. Smaller households are prevalent in wealthier countries, which tend to have aging populations and lower birth rates.

But the number of people in any given household is only one dimension of living arrangements. Since households of the same size can be so qualitatively different from each other – a three-person household might consist of a couple and one child, a child with a parent and grandparent, a husband and two wives, or numerous other combinations – understanding the distribution of various *types* of households also is valuable.

Globally, the most common household type is the extended family, accounting for 38% of the world's population. But some religious groups are more likely to live in extended families than others. Hindus are the only major group in which a majority lives with extended family, such as grandparents, uncles and in-laws. Muslims, Christians and Jews are more likely to reside in two-parent households, composed of two partners with one or more minor children. Living alone is unusual among all religious groups, but it is more common among Jews than among the world's other major religions: About one-in-ten Jews worldwide are in solo households. From a global perspective, Jews also are much more likely than non-Jews to live in

Household types defined

Extended: A household that includes relatives other than children or partners. For example, adults who live with their siblings or parents in addition to their own children.

Two-parent: Married or cohabiting partners with at least one biological, step or foster child under age 18. Adult children may be present, but no other relatives or non-relatives.

Couple: Married or cohabiting partners with no one else. This includes couples whose children have grown up and moved out.

Adult child: At least one child over the age of 18 with one or two parents; no children under 18.

Solo: One person living alone.

Single-parent: One adult and at least one biological, step or foster child under 18. Adult children may be present, but no other relatives or non-relatives.

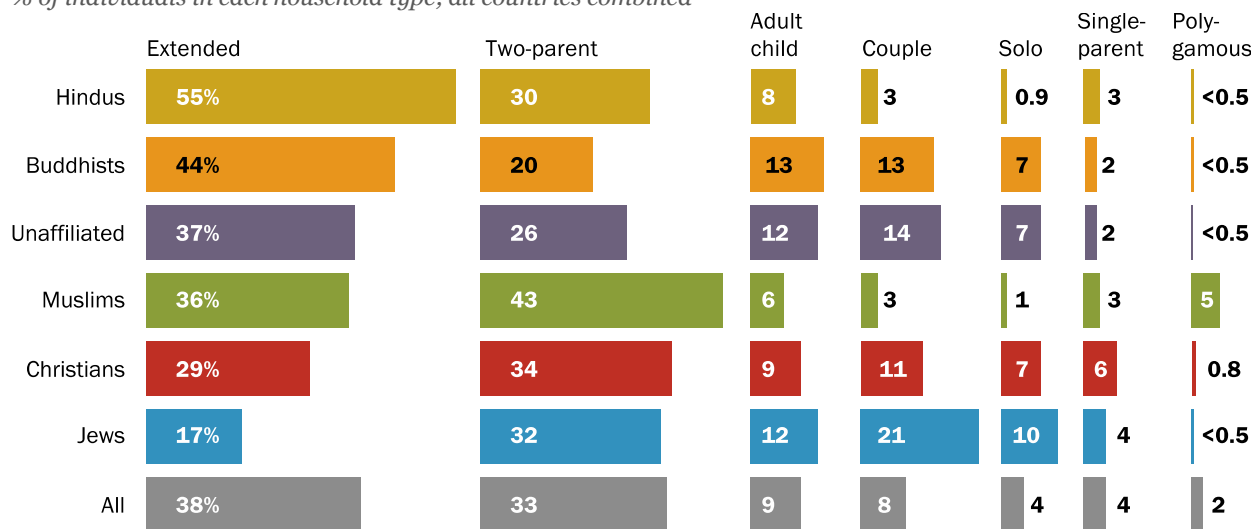
Polygamous: Households in which at least one member lives with more than one spouse or cohabiting partner. Other people also may reside in the household. This category does not include every household containing a person who is in a polygamous relationship. For example, two women married to the same man may maintain separate households.

Note: Married and cohabiting partners can include same-sex couples, though these relationships are more likely to be counted in the data sources for some countries than others. Also, individuals living in households with non-relatives, such as roommates, are included in the analysis but not reported as a separate category. People living in institutional settings, such as prisons, college dormitories and nursing homes, are not included. See Methodology for details.

households consisting of a couple without children or other relatives.¹

Buddhists and ‘nones’ are the least likely to live in two-parent families

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined



Note: Values not displayed for “other” households category, which includes households with non-relatives present.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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¹ Even though couple-only and solo households almost never include children, figures throughout most of this report are calculated as percentages of the total population, which includes children under 18. This approach makes it easier to compare shares across household types and does not substantially affect the overall figures. If children were excluded from the total population for purposes of computing percentages, the biggest shift in the share of individuals living in solo or couple households in any country would be +8 percentage points, found in Finland and Sweden’s share of people living as a couple (since adults in Scandinavian countries are more heavily concentrated in solo and couple households, this concentration produces a large boost when children are excluded from analysis). In most countries, the differences would be negligible.

How or why religion is linked with living arrangements has been the subject of much research and debate. Holy texts and spiritual leaders offer a range of guidance – from didactic anecdotes to outright prohibitions – on many aspects of family life, including marriage and care for elders. Previous social science research, particularly in the United States, suggests that the extent to which people value religion and participate in a religious community is tied to their patterns of marriage, divorce and childbearing. (For a discussion of how religious teachings and family life may be connected, see the sidebar on page 22. For more on academic research exploring the ties between living arrangements and religion, see sidebar on page 79.)

To be sure, religion is far from the only factor – or even the primary factor – affecting household sizes and types around the world. People’s living arrangements are shaped by many circumstances, including laws, cultural norms, personal situations and economic opportunities. Still, examining the connections between households and religion helps to illuminate the conditions under which members of various religious groups grow up, practice their faith and pass on traditions to the next generation.

Geography and other factors affect household formation

Some household patterns can be explained, at least in part, by the distribution of religious groups across the globe. Six-in-ten Christians live in the Americas and Europe, where households tend to be comparatively small, while eight-in-ten Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East-North Africa regions, where households generally contain more individuals. Most of the world's Jews live in the United States and Israel – two economically developed countries where advanced transportation and health care networks, educational opportunities, and other forms of infrastructure affect many life choices, including living arrangements.

At the same time, there are relatively few religiously unaffiliated people in the regions where families are largest – sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa. Moreover, because some religious groups are concentrated in a few countries, the economic conditions and government policies in those places can have a big influence on a group's global household patterns.

China, for example, is home to a majority of the world's "nones" and about half of all Buddhists. From 1979 to 2016, the Chinese government enforced a "one-child policy" that penalized couples who had more than one child.² As a result, the size of households among Chinese Buddhists and "nones" is small – and China's huge population has a big influence on the global figures for these groups. Meanwhile, more than nine-in-ten of the world's Hindus are found in India, where prevailing cultural norms shape many of the findings for that religious group.

Nigeria exemplifies the complexity and interconnectedness of factors that influence living arrangements. Africa's most populous country is nearly evenly split between two religious groups, with Muslims and Christians each accounting for about half of the population. These groups have different historical legacies, laws and geographic distributions. Largely due to the influence of Christian missionaries, who entered Nigeria via the Atlantic coastline to the south, most Nigerians in the southern states are Christian, while those living in the north tend to be Muslim. Sections of Africa that were reached by missionaries often have more advanced systems of formal schooling today, while aid and research agencies have found that in Nigeria, the northern states have lower rates of educational attainment and economic development.³

² Laws were relaxed in 2016 to allow two children per family, and the Chinese government is now reviewing the law in an effort to further boost childbirth. Demographers have observed that a substantial decline in China's fertility rate preceded the one-child policy, raising questions about its impact and the extent to which any policy change will affect fertility rates. During the period the policy was in place, some ethnic minority and rural groups were allowed to have more than one child without penalty. See Feng, Wang, Bochang Gu, and Yong Cai. 2016. "[The End of China's One-Child Policy](#)." *Studies in Family Planning*.

³ See, for example, Rustad, Siri Aas, and Gudrun Østby. 2017. "[Education and Systematic Group Inequalities in Nigeria](#)." Peace Research Institute Oslo.

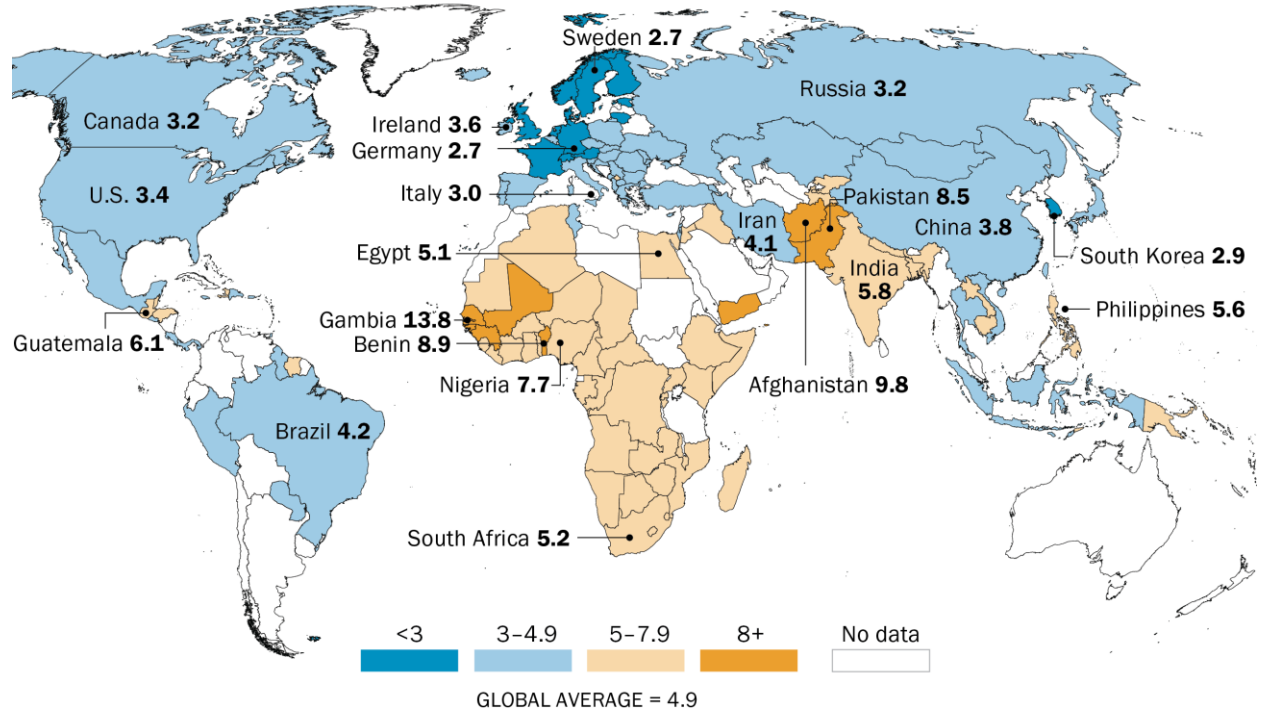
These differences extend to household formation. Typically, Muslims in Nigeria share their homes with almost three more people than their Christian compatriots, with an average household of 8.7 people among Nigerian Muslims, compared with 5.9 among Nigerian Christians. Also, although there is no national law providing for polygamy in Nigeria, polygamous marriages are recognized in 12 northern, Muslim-majority states – and Nigerian Muslims are much more likely than Christians to live in polygamous households (40% vs. 8%). (For a detailed discussion of polygamy in laws and religion, see page 36.)

In broad strokes, these examples show why it is difficult to isolate the causal impact of religion, which is inextricably linked to economic, geographic, legal and cultural factors not only in Nigeria but around the globe. Each country and part of the world has its own complex set of influences that affect household formation, resulting in a varied landscape of living arrangements.

Among the 130 countries with data available on households and religious affiliation, the household size experienced by the average person ranges from 2.7 people (in Germany) to 13.8 people (in Gambia). By region, people tend to form the smallest households in Europe (3.1) and North America (3.3). The biggest households are in sub-Saharan Africa (6.9) and the Middle East-North Africa (6.2). Latin America and the Caribbean (4.6) and the Asia-Pacific region (5.0) fall in the middle.

Gambians live with 11 more people than Germans, on average

Average individual resides in a household of ___ people



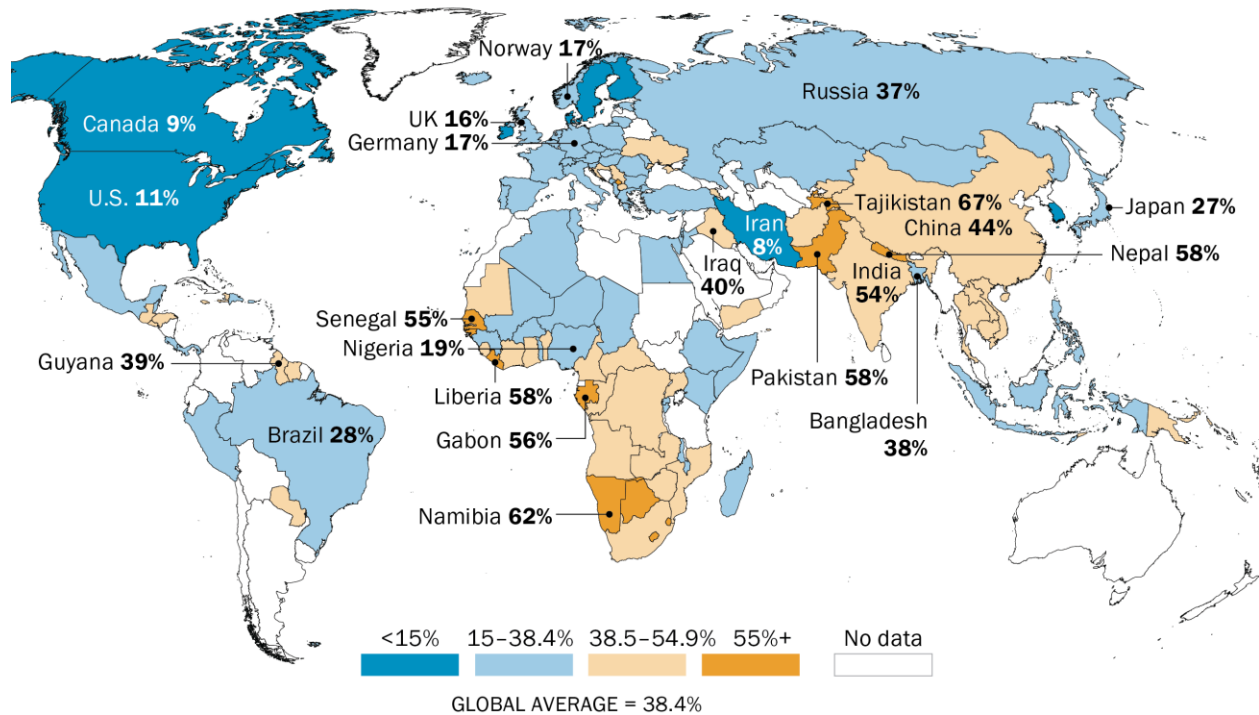
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Likewise, certain *types* of households are more prevalent in some parts of the world than in others. For example, almost half of all people in the Asia-Pacific region live with extended family, compared with just one-in-ten North Americans. Polygamous households are rare outside of West Africa, where the practice is quite common in some countries.⁴ And couples rarely live on their own – without children or extended family – outside of Europe and North America.

In some Asian and African countries, majorities live with extended family

% of individuals in extended-family households



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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⁴ Polygamy is also legal and practiced in some Persian Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia. However, these countries are not included in this analysis because adequate census or survey data is not available.

Regional patterns, in turn, influence the living arrangements among religious groups. Muslims in Europe, for example, generally live in larger households than non-Muslims in Europe (4.1 vs. 3.1, on average). Still, European Muslims follow the region's overall tendency toward relatively small households, and Muslims in Europe live with fewer people than Muslims in other parts of the world.

Sidebar: Measuring households from the individual’s perspective – why does it matter?

If you have ever been to a crowded beach in the summer, you may be surprised to hear that on average, even the most popular U.S. shores are quite empty. A beach on Martha’s Vineyard, for example, might have hundreds of visitors at noon on a sunny day in July, but just a handful of locals out for a midday walk on a chilly day in November. As a result, the daily average of visitors to that beach might be quite low. But that’s not the experience of most people who have been there. Most people are on beaches when they are crowded.

In the social sciences, this phenomenon is known as the “class size paradox.” It’s the disconnect between an *individual-level* perspective and a *group-level* perspective, and it applies to any group (or “class”) of people, including households: The average individual is more likely to experience a big household than a small one, simply because large households have more people in them.

Pew Research Center, for the purposes of this report, chose to present statistics from the individual perspective because the goal is to describe the commonly lived experiences of people – of an average Hindu or an average Buddhist, an average woman or an average child. The authors are inviting readers to imagine the daily lives of ordinary people.

The class size paradox is particularly relevant for researchers seeking to understand living arrangements. Especially in places where big households – including certain expansive types, such as extended families and polygamous arrangements – are common, there can be dramatic differences between the average size or type of households in that country and the experience of the average individual living there.

Take Senegal, for example. Dividing the total number of household dwellers by the total number of households in that West African country (using Demographic and Health Survey data), Pew Research Center researchers found that the *average household* in Senegal consists of roughly 8.9 people. When researchers made additional calculations to determine household size on the individual level, however, they found that the *average person* in Senegal lives in a household of 13.5 people.

A similar dynamic unfolds in the United States, even though U.S. households are generally much smaller than Senegal’s. Pew Research Center’s household-level estimate (using General Social Survey data) is that the average household in the U.S. contains 2.5 people. Meanwhile, the individual-level calculation shows that the average individual in the U.S. lives in a household of about 3.4 people.

These differences also appear on the global level. Worldwide, the average household has 3.9 members, but the average person lives in a household of 4.9 members.

The distribution of household *types* also varies, depending on the level of perspective, for the same reasons. Household types that allow for more people, such as extended-family homes, contain a bigger share of individuals

Average person’s household is larger than average household

Household size, by level of analysis

	Average individual	Average households
Muslims	6.4	5.1
Hindus	5.7	4.6
Christians	4.5	3.4
Buddhists	3.9	3.1
Unaffiliated	3.7	2.9
Jews	3.7	2.7
All	4.9	3.9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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than they represent in the simple percentage of households in any given place. Conversely, solo households are more common at the household level than at the person level, since they can contain only one individual.

Going back to Senegal as an example: 13% of Senegalese households contain polygamous families, while 51% are extended-family homes, and 7% consist of one person living solo. But because polygamous and extended families tend to be large, they are experienced by more people. Indeed, 23% of all Senegalese people live in polygamous homes, and 55% live with extended family, while fewer than 1% live alone. In the U.S., while 19% of all households belong to a two-parent family and 28% belong to a person living alone, the individual-level analysis shows that 33% of Americans live in two-parent homes and 11% live alone.

Household types: Distributions change when perspective shifts

% in each household type by level of analysis, all countries combined

	Individuals						
	Christians	Muslims	Unaffiliated	Hindus	Buddhists	Jews	All
Extended	29%	36%	37%	55%	44%	17%	38%
Two-parent	34	43	26	30	20	32	33
Couple	11	3	14	3	13	21	8
Adult child	9	6	12	8	13	12	9
Solo	7	1	7	0.9	7	10	4
Single-parent	6	3	2	3	2	4	4
Polygamous	0.8	5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	2
Other	3	2	1	0.6	0.9	3	2
	Households						
Extended	19%	27%	25%	42%	29%	11%	26%
Two-parent	24	43	21	31	16	19	27
Couple	18	8	20	8	19	28	15
Adult child	9	8	11	11	13	10	10
Solo	21	6	20	4	20	27	15
Single-parent	6	4	3	4	2	3	4
Polygamous	<0.5	2	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	0.5
Other	2	1	1	0.5	0.8	2	1

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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To gain a better understanding of how the individual-level figures in this report might differ from the more conventional household-level analysis, our researchers also generated results for all the variables on the household level, whenever possible. The tables in this sidebar summarize the differences.⁵

⁵ An analysis that includes the age and sex of respondents as variables could be performed only at the individual level. See Methodology on page 94 for more information.

Wealth and education: Smaller homes in more-developed countries

Levels of prosperity – defined by a range of measures including financial stability, life expectancy and education – are strongly linked with the size and type of households around the world. Europe and North America, the two wealthiest regions as measured by per-capita gross domestic product, are also those with the smallest households. Conversely, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region, which have the biggest households, have the lowest per-capita GDP.⁶

Extended-family arrangements in particular are linked with economic development: Financial and other resources stretch farther when shared within one household. Childcare and domestic chores are more easily accomplished if split among several adults living in the same home. Supporting a family in developing countries is often labor-intensive, requiring farming and other activities that benefit from multiple workers. And in countries where governments provide fewer retirement benefits or other safety nets for older adults, families have a greater responsibility to care for aging relatives. (Cultural factors, such as esteem for elders, also play a role.)

On the other hand, people are more likely to live alone in countries with higher levels of schooling. Young adults often delay or forgo childbearing to pursue advanced education, contributing to the tendency of highly educated couples to live without other family members. And in places where people tend to live well beyond their childbearing years, they are more likely to live alone as seniors or as couples without children.

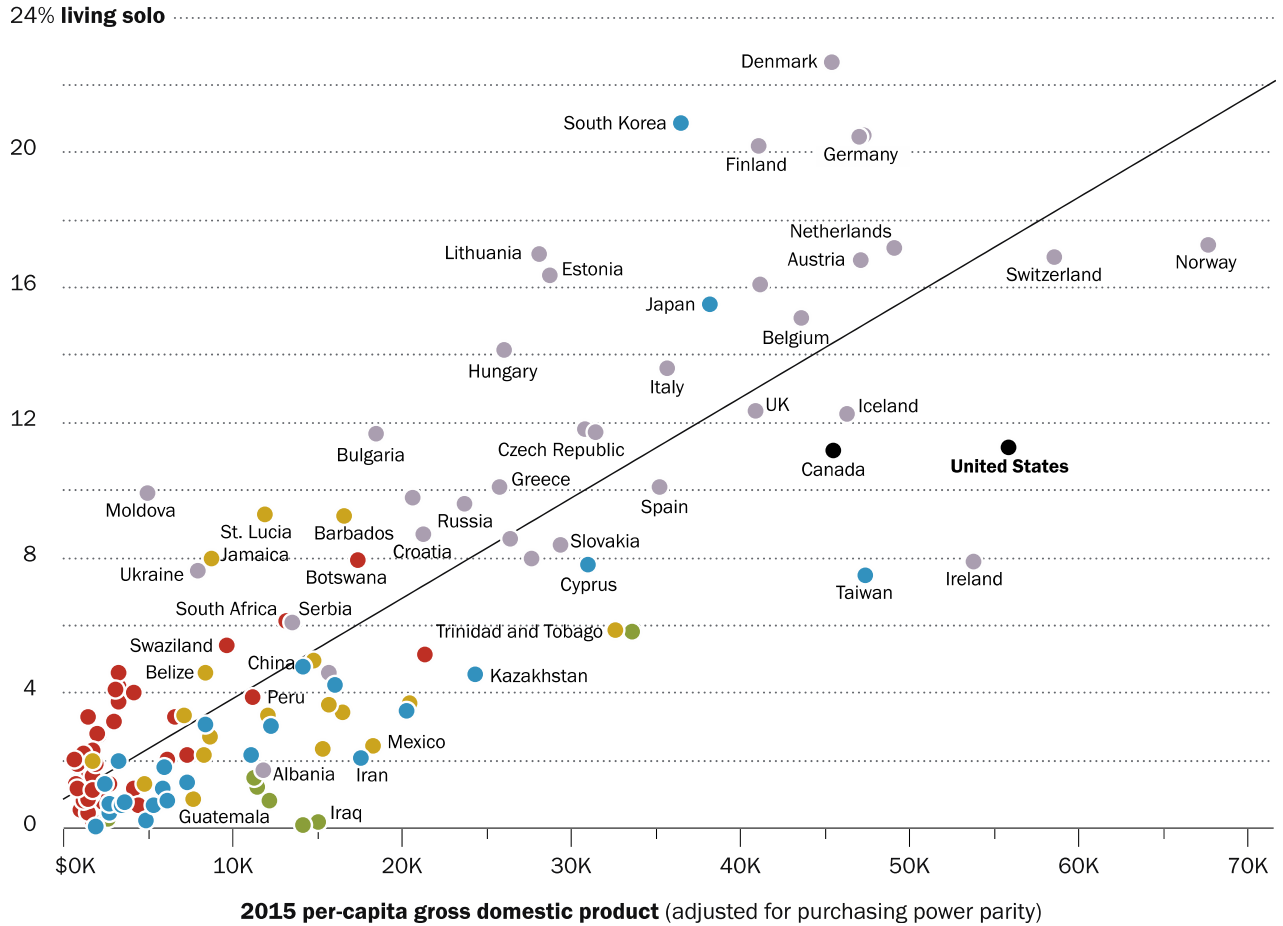
Economic development also affects patterns *within* regions. In Europe, relatively small households predominate in prosperous European Union countries (the average German or Swede lives in a home of 2.7 people, for example), while larger households are found in the less economically advanced countries of the Balkans (Kosovo 6.8, North Macedonia 4.6). In East Asian countries with advanced economies, people tend to live in smaller-than-average households (South Korea 2.9, Japan 3.1), while residents of less-developed countries in South Asia tend to have bigger households (Afghanistan 9.8, Pakistan 8.5).

⁶ Due to a lack of survey data on religion and households in some countries, this study does not represent the full economic diversity of the Middle East-North Africa region. Missing from the 130 nations in the study are such countries as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, all of which have relatively high per-capita GDP.

Living alone is more common in wealthier countries

% of individuals in solo households, by per-capita GDP

● Asia-Pacific ● Europe ● Latin America-Caribbean ● Middle East-North Africa ● North America ● Sub-Saharan Africa



Note: GDP data are not available for Kosovo, the Palestinian territories, Puerto Rico or Somalia.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. GDP data are in U.S. dollars and come from the International Monetary Fund.

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Although the regional distribution of religious groups often coincides with economic factors that affect the types and sizes of households people tend to live in, there are noticeable differences among religious groups *within* the six regions covered in this report, and even within single countries.⁷

Indeed, this report shows that the experiences of religious groups around the world differ in many ways:

- Islam is the largest religion in all but one of the 15 countries with the biggest households: Benin. These top 15 include nations in Africa, such as Gambia and Senegal; the Middle East, namely Yemen and Iraq; and the Asia-Pacific region, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. On the other hand, Christians and the religiously unaffiliated make up the largest groups in the 15 countries with the world's smallest households (all of which are located either in Europe or the Asia-Pacific region).
- Within regions, Muslim-majority countries tend to have larger households, affecting members of all religious groups, while nearby Christian-, Jewish- or Buddhist-majority countries tend to have smaller households. For example, in Kosovo, which has a Muslim majority, both Christians and Muslims tend to live in bigger households than adherents of these religions in nearby Romania, which has a Christian majority.
- Within countries, religious groups often differ in their living arrangements. In Senegal, for example, Muslims on average live in 14-person households, while Christians live in homes of about nine members. In Nigeria, a nine-member household is the average Muslim's experience, while the average Christian lives in a six-person home. And in India, Muslims live in the largest households, with an average size of more than six people, compared with slightly fewer than six people for Hindus, on average. Christians in India have even smaller households, with an average of about five members.
- Relatively few people in any group live alone (4% globally), though Jews (10%), Buddhists (7%), Christians (7%) and "nones" (7%) all live alone at higher rates. Muslims and Hindus rarely form solo households (1% each).

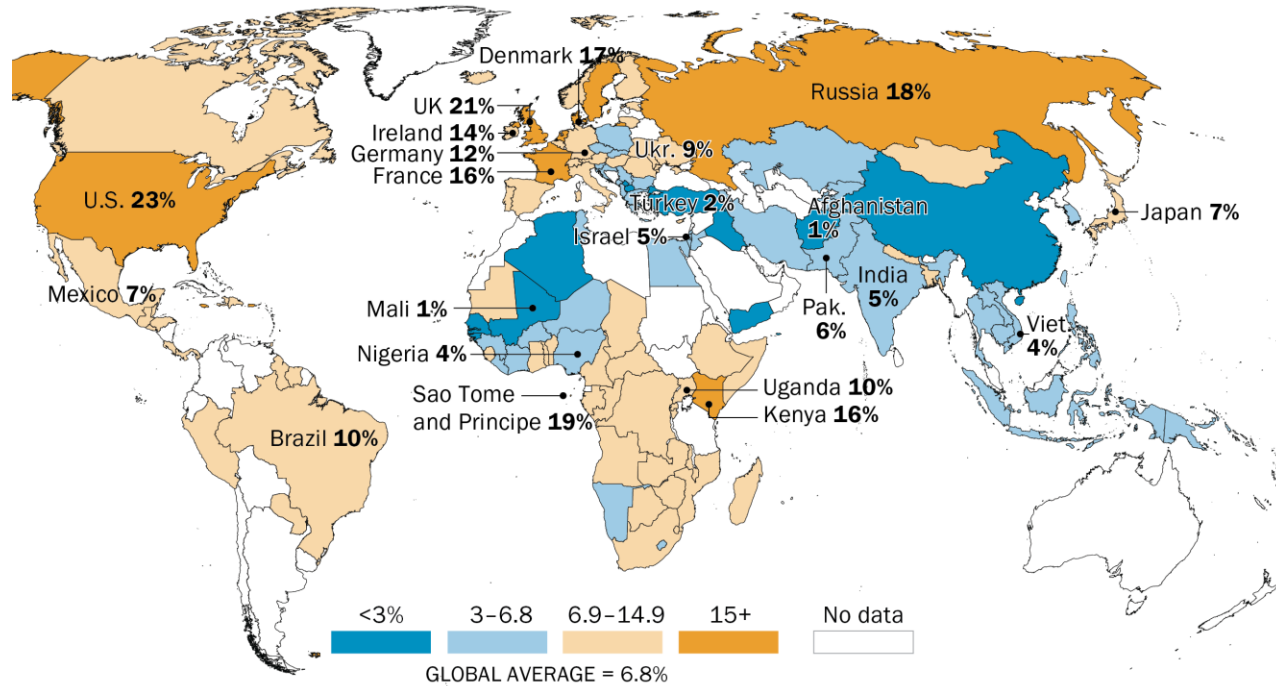
⁷ Although some faiths other than those analyzed in this report have millions of adherents around the world (such as Sikhs), censuses and surveys in many countries do not measure them specifically. Because of this scarcity of reliable data, this report does not analyze groups other than Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and people with no religious affiliation; the report is also unable to show data for subgroups within these major religions, such as Protestants and Catholics or Sunnis and Shiites. The six major religious groups are always included in the total global count, but the groups are not represented on the regional level (or on the country level) if there are too few adherents in the population or in surveys. See Methodology on page 94 for details.

- Similarly, Muslims and Hindus are the least likely to live as couples (without children or other relatives), with just 3% in each group living in such an arrangement. By contrast, at least one-in-ten Christians, Buddhists and “nones” live this way, as do one-in-five Jews.
- Polygamy is very rare, except in some sub-Saharan African countries where this type of marriage is largely legal. While African Muslims are more likely than Christians to live in polygamous households (25% vs. 3%), the practice is also widespread among adherents of folk religions (who are not analyzed separately in this report) and “nones” in certain countries.
- In the U.S., Christians (3.4), “nones” (3.2) and Jews (3.0) live in similarly sized households, on average. However, U.S. Jews are much more likely than non-Jews to live as couples without children or other relatives, and they are less likely to reside in extended families and single-parent households.⁸
- Men in every country are older, on average, than their wives or female cohabiting partners. This age gap is widest among Muslims and Hindus, and smallest among Jews and the religiously unaffiliated.
- Women ages 60 and older are more likely than men in this age group to live alone. Three-in-ten Christian and Jewish women over 60 live alone, while only 6% of Hindus do.
- More Christians than members of any other religious group live in single-parent homes (6%). And women, particularly Christian women, are more likely than men to live as single parents. In the U.S. – the country with the world’s largest Christian population – about a quarter of children live in single-parent homes, making them more likely than children in any other country to do so. American children in Christian homes are just as likely as those in unaffiliated homes (23% each) to live in single-parent situations.

⁸ The sample sizes of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus in the available U.S. data are not large enough to allow for separate analysis. Also, previous Pew Research Center studies have found large differences within the Jewish population, with Orthodox (particularly Haredi) Jews [living in larger households](#) than non-Orthodox Jews, on average.

U.S. children are more likely than children elsewhere to live in single-parent homes

% of children under age 18 in single-parent households



Note: Single-parent households include one adult and at least one biological, step or foster child under 18. Adult children may be present, but no other relatives or non-relatives.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center analysis of census and survey data collected by governments and survey organizations in 130 countries since 2010. This report was produced by Pew Research Center as part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world. Funding for the Global Religious Futures project comes from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation. Previous reports from the Global Religious Futures project explored links between religion and [gender](#), [education](#), [age](#) and [personal well-being](#), and produced [population growth projections](#) for major religious groups.

Statistics come from Pew Research Center analysis of sources, which include Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, census data archived by IPUMS International, General Social Surveys and European Social Surveys, as well as country-specific studies. The study

covers countries where 91% of the global population lives.⁹ Unless otherwise specified, results describe the average living arrangements experienced by people of all ages (that is, children and adults). For more details, see Methodology.

In addition to analyzing household *sizes* using census and household survey data and transforming it to present the average individual’s perspective (as opposed to the average household), researchers also analyzed eight household *types* among the major religious groups, broken down by age and gender. The report focuses on descriptions of seven household types that are made up of individuals living alone or with family members, though about 2% of all people living in households fall into the residual eighth (“other”) category, including those who share housing with unrelated roommates or a mix of relatives and non-relatives. All statistics in this report exclude institutionalized populations, such as people in prisons, college dormitories and nursing homes.

The next section of this report explores how holy texts and spiritual leaders have addressed the question of household formation. Subsequent chapters outline patterns in household sizes and types by region and religious group, including a discussion of previous social science research on the connections between living arrangements and religion. The final chapter focuses on how living arrangements vary by age and between women and men.

⁹ Some countries, for example, Argentina, Australia, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, are not covered in this report either because surveys in those countries do not ask about people’s religious affiliations *and* their household arrangements in the same questionnaire, or because data was not readily available in a downloadable format. For more details on inclusion criteria, see the Methodology on page 94.

Sidebar: Religious teachings on families and homes

Holy texts and spiritual leaders have much to say about domestic life. All the major world religions – including but not limited to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism – promote specific types of family formations and offer guidance on the roles that people play within the home. These teachings take many forms, from explicit rules to popular sayings and stories.¹⁰

But teachings are not static or universal. Interpretations of religious texts vary by place and shift across time, and religious leaders in the same context often disagree. For nearly two centuries, scripture was used by some U.S. Christian clergy to justify opposition to interracial spousal relationships. But [societal views](#) and laws shifted in the 20th century, and Bible passages once viewed as censuring ties between races have largely been pushed aside.

Procreation

Bearing, raising and protecting children is a central theme in many religions. Christianity and Judaism encourage adherents to have children, and in Genesis – the first book of the Jewish Torah and the Christian Old Testament – God commanded humans to “[be fruitful and multiply](#).” The Quran, which emphasizes the importance of motherhood and childbearing, has a handful of references to pregnancy and birth.¹¹

Outside of the Abrahamic religions, the Hindu Vedic texts also contain passages about having children. The Marriage Hymn of the Rig Veda, which is sometimes recited at Hindu weddings, states “Let Prajapati create progeny for us,” and “Generous Indra, give this woman fine sons. ... Place ten sons in her and make her husband the eleventh.”¹²

Buddhism is not considered to be particularly pro-natalist, which some scholars have tied to relatively low fertility rates in that religious group.¹³

A religion can promote having children even if it does not have specific doctrines endorsing procreation. Some scholars say that teachings of conservative Islam and Christianity indirectly lead people to have more children due to the gender roles they endorse.¹⁴ Religion also can indirectly encourage procreation through other means, such as [opposition to birth control](#). In Judaism, a couple’s inability to have children [can be grounds for divorce](#).

Marriage

Closely tied to childbearing, religions often set rules for marriage and sexual relations. According to [Genesis 2:18](#), woman was created because “it is not good that the man should be alone.” In the Christian New Testament, Paul

¹⁰ This sidebar draws heavily on research published in Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

¹¹ Isgandarova, Nazila. 2013. “[Pregnancy and Childbirth](#).” In DeLong-Bas, Natana J., ed. “The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Women.”

¹² Sarma, Deepak, ed. 2008. “Hinduism: A Reader.” Also see Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

¹³ Skirbekk, Vegard, Marcin Stonawski, Setsuya Fukuda, Thomas Spoorenberg, Conrad Hackett, and Raya Muttarak. 2015. “[Is Buddhism the low fertility religion of Asia?](#)” Demographic Research.

¹⁴ Muslim women’s embrace of such traditional gender roles varies considerably across Muslim nations. See Blaydes, Lisa, and Drew A. Linzer. 2008. “[The Political Economy of Women’s Support for Fundamentalist Islam](#).” World Politics. Also see Sherkat, Darren E. 2000. “[‘That They Be Keepers of the Home’: The Effect of Conservative Religion on Early and Late Transitions into Housewifery](#).” Review of Religious Research.

the Apostle wrote, “Because of cases of sexual immorality, [each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband](#).” In Islam, the Quran states that God created “[love and mercy](#)” between spouses.

In Hinduism, the *ashrama* system specifies [four stages of the life course](#), including the second stage of life, *grihastha*, in which one becomes a householder and focuses on marriage, raising children and fulfilling obligations toward elders and other relatives.

The [Laws of Manu](#), a traditionally authoritative book of Hindu code, states: “Reprehensible is the father who gives not (his daughter in marriage) at the proper time; reprehensible is the husband who approaches not (his wife in due season), and reprehensible is the son who does not protect his mother after her husband has died.”

In Buddhism, the Sigālaka Sutta offers instructions on how spouses should treat one another: “There are five ways in which a husband should minister to his wife as the western direction: by honoring her, by not disparaging her, by not being unfaithful to her, by giving authority to her, by providing her with adornments.”¹⁵

Scriptures provide a mix of guidance on interfaith marriage. In the Torah, Moses tells the Jews that they must not intermarry with those from the seven nations of Canaan, which some interpret as a prohibition on all religious intermarriage. And, according to the Talmud, a rabbinic commentary on Jewish scripture, both participants must see the marriage ceremony as sacred in order for it to be religiously valid.¹⁶ The Christian New Testament, however, is less clear on the topic of intermarriage. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “[Do not be mismatched with unbelievers](#),” which is often thought to prohibit marriage to non-Christians. However, Paul also instructed believers [not to divorce their unbelieving spouses](#).

In Islam, critics of interfaith marriage typically cite [Surah 2:221](#): “Do not marry idolatresses until they believe: a believing slave woman is certainly better than an idolatress, even though she may please you. And do not give your women in marriage to idolaters until they believe: a believing slave is certainly better than an idolater, even though he may please you.”

Polygamy

Polygamy was practiced by central figures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and, more recently, by early leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the 19th century. Many prominent biblical figures were polygamous, including Jacob, David and Solomon. Generally speaking, polygamy is no longer encouraged by the leaders of major religions, though it is practiced by some Muslims, fundamentalist Mormon sects and Christians in Africa. Muslim supporters of polygamy often cite Quran verse 4:3, which permits a man to marry up to four women, but encourages him to be monogamous if he cannot be fair to all of them.¹⁷ Scholars [have interpreted](#) this text as a way to regulate and [limit polygamy](#) in seventh-century Arabia, where it was widely practiced. (For more on polygamy laws and teachings, see the sidebar on page 36.)

¹⁵ Sigālaka Sutta, as cited in Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

¹⁶ Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

¹⁷ Jaafar-Mohammad, Imani, and Charlie Lehmann. 2011. “[Women’s Rights in Islam Regarding Marriage and Divorce](#).” Journal of Law and Practice.

Divorce

Religions often discourage divorce. The Christian New Testament specifies, “[Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.](#)” Still, many religions recognize the reality that some marriages will not last. In the Old Testament, [Deuteronomy](#) states that the process of divorce is enacted when a man writes his wife a certificate.

The Quran specifies the requirements for divorce and outlines a man’s responsibilities toward his former wife. Islam allows a woman to retain any assets she earns or receives during a marriage and gives her the right to receive support from her former husband.¹⁸

According to a Confucian text, The Record of Ritual of the Elder Dai, there are seven valid reasons a husband may divorce his wife – including “if she has no children” or “if she steals” – and three situations in which a wife may not be divorced, including “there is no longer a home to which she can return.”¹⁹

Extended family

Teachings that address the status of elders and other relatives outside of the nuclear family may also encourage certain types of living arrangements, including extended families. Hinduism, which emphasizes a respect for elders, also has guidelines for responsibilities toward other relatives in the second stage of life, the *grihastha ashram*.²⁰

Judaism and Christianity instruct followers to respect their elders in the [Ten Commandments](#): “Honor your father and your mother.” And the Book of Leviticus, which is part of both Christian and Jewish scripture, [states](#): “You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old.” Similarly, the New Testament [says](#): “And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Confucian texts also encourage support for aging parents and emphasize filial piety.²¹

In these and many other ways, religious leaders, texts and traditions can affect the choices that people around the world make about procreation, marriage, divorce and family life. It would be unwise to view religion as rigidly determining these choices, because so many other factors also come into play. Still, no picture of family sizes and structures would be complete without a closer look at the role of religion.

¹⁸ Jaafar-Mohammad, Imani, and Charlie Lehmann. 2011. “[Women’s Rights in Islam Regarding Marriage and Divorce.](#)” *Journal of Law and Practice*.

¹⁹ Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

²⁰ Subramuniaswami, Satguru Sivaya. 2000. “[How to Become a Hindu: A Guide for Seekers and Born Hindus.](#)”

²¹ Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

1. Household patterns by region

Pew Research Center analyzed data on living arrangements in 130 countries, including 26 in the Asia-Pacific region, 40 in sub-Saharan Africa, 35 in Europe, 19 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and eight in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the U.S. and Canada, which in this report make up North America.

Globally, the average individual lives in a household of 4.9 people. But there is wide variation around the world: The average person in sub-Saharan Africa resides in a home of 6.9 people, while the average European lives in a home that is less than half that size, at 3.1 members.

Regional differences also are apparent when it comes to household types: For example, more than half of people in the Middle East-North Africa region live in two-parent homes with minor children (56%), compared with about a quarter of Europeans (26%). And more than four-in-ten people in the Asia-Pacific region live in extended families (45%), compared with just one-in-ten North Americans (11%).

Households smallest in Europe, biggest in Africa

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

	Household Size
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.9
Middle East-North Africa	6.2
Asia-Pacific	5.0
Latin America-Caribbean	4.6
North America	3.3
Europe	3.1
World	4.9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Almost half of Asians live in extended families, one-in-ten Europeans live alone

% of individuals in each household type

	Asia-Pacific	Europe	Latin America-Caribbean	Middle East-North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
Extended	45%	26%	32%	27%	11%	35%	38%
Two-parent	31	26	39	56	33	37	33
Adult child	10	9	10	9	14	2	9
Couple	7	19	6	3	20	2	8
Solo	3	13	3	1	11	2	4
Single-parent	2	4	5	2	9	6	4
Polygamous	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	0.9	<0.5	11	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Every region has its own set of historical, economic, religious and cultural backdrops that influence living arrangements.

Wealthier parts of the world tend to have smaller households. Europeans in general, and particularly Western Europeans, are the most likely of all the regional groups to live alone: For example, Norway has the highest GDP per capita of any country in this study, and 17% of Norwegians live by themselves. Conversely, sub-Saharan African countries have both small GDPs and relatively few people who live alone.

Education is another important factor: The share of people within countries who live in couple-only households generally increases as average years of formal schooling rise and young adults delay or forgo having children. (People also live longer in these countries, which leads to more couples living together after adult children have moved out.)

On the other hand, natural disasters, epidemics and wars also leave their mark on household distributions. In Kenya and Malawi, where tens of thousands of people die each year from HIV/AIDS, single-parent households are relatively common. The HIV epidemic in Africa has affected middle-aged adults more than other age groups, leaving many children and grandparents without this middle generation. In Nepal, a massive earthquake in 2015 killed thousands of people and left millions homeless, forcing many Nepalis to shift their living arrangements and likely affecting household patterns for that country in subsequent surveys.

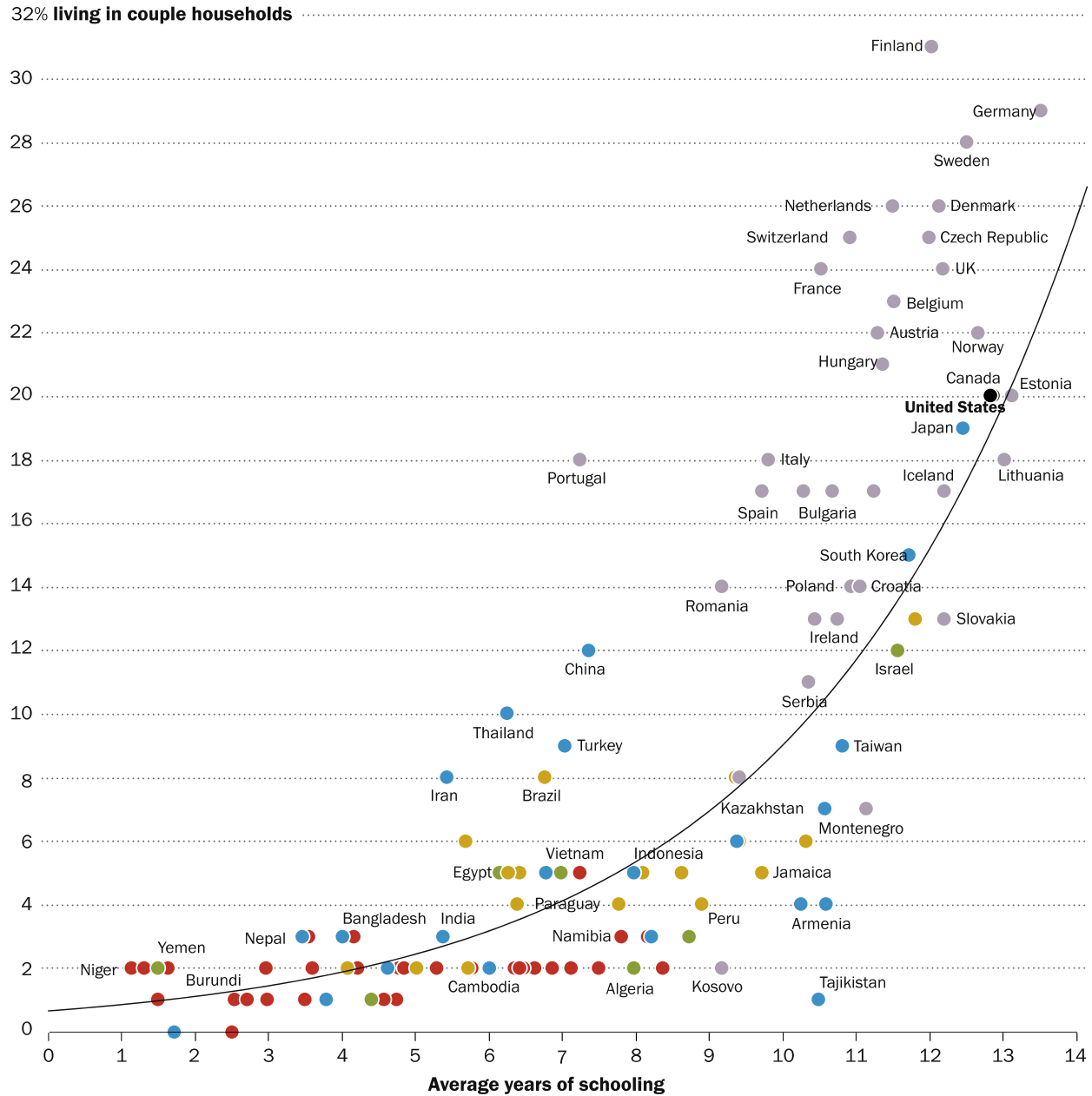
This chapter looks at the living arrangements in each region and within the major religious groups when they are sufficiently represented. The data in this report covers 91% of the global population, representing at least 85% of people in each major religious group. But groups are unevenly distributed around the world, and the number of religious groups compared within each region varies, reflecting the global distribution of religions and variation in the sample sizes of source surveys. For details on data sources and coverage, see Methodology on page 94.

The analysis starts with the average household sizes experienced by adherents of each religion, followed by a discussion of the most common household types. The regions are ordered by population size, starting with Asia and the Pacific.

Living as a couple is more common where education levels are high

% of individuals in couple-only households, by national average years of schooling

● Asia-Pacific ● Europe ● Latin America-Caribbean ● Middle East-North Africa ● North America ● Sub-Saharan Africa



Note: Education data is for those ages 25 and older and was not available for 14 of 130 countries and territories studied. Source: Living arrangements data from Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. Education attainment data gathered for Pew Research Center's 2016 report "Religion and Education Around the World." "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Asia and the Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region is a good example of the way household sizes can vary within a single part of the world. The most religiously varied of all the regions – in part because it is the largest, home to more than half of the world’s population – Asia-Pacific has [hundreds of millions of Muslims, Hindus, “nones,” Christians and Buddhists](#). In addition, the economies of the region’s 26 countries with available data range from Japan – one of the world’s wealthiest countries – to Nepal, one of the poorest.

On average, people in the Asia-Pacific region live in five-member households. Asian Muslims (6.0) and Hindus (5.7), on average, reside in households that are slightly bigger than those of Asians overall, while Asian Buddhists (3.9) and “nones” (3.7) have relatively small households.

Asia-Pacific stands out globally because it has the biggest share of people living in extended families (45%); it is the only region where that type of arrangement is more common than the two-parent family. This region, along with the Middle East-North Africa region, also has the smallest share of people in single-parent homes (2% in each).

In Asia-Pacific region, Muslims and Hindus have larger households than Buddhists and ‘nones’

Average individual in the Asia-Pacific region resides in a household of ____ people

	Household size
Muslims	6.0
Hindus	5.7
Christians	4.8
Buddhists	3.9
Unaffiliated	3.7
All Asia-Pacific	5.0

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. “Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

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Living in single-parent families is rare in Asia-Pacific region

% of individuals in each household type

	Hindus	Muslims	Unaffiliated	Buddhists	Christians	All Asia-Pacific
Extended	55%	41%	41%	44%	37%	45%
Two-parent	30	42	25	20	35	31
Adult child	8	7	14	13	10	10
Couple	3	4	13	13	8	7
Solo	0.9	1	6	7	5	3
Single-parent	3	3	1	2	2	2
Polygamous	<0.5	0.6	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. “Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

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These overall patterns are driven by India and China, which together account for more than 60% of the region's population, encompassing the majority of Asian Hindus, Buddhists and "nones." (Muslims in Asia and the Pacific are most numerous in Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while Christians, who make up a relatively small percentage of the regional population, are concentrated in the Philippines and China.)

Extended families are the most common household type in both India (54%) and China (44%). The concentration of Hindus in extended families on a global level reflects typical living arrangements in India, where 94% of the world's Hindus reside. Extended families also are common in most other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, encompassing more than half of Muslims in Tajikistan (67%), Buddhists in Vietnam (56%) and "nones" in Taiwan (51%).

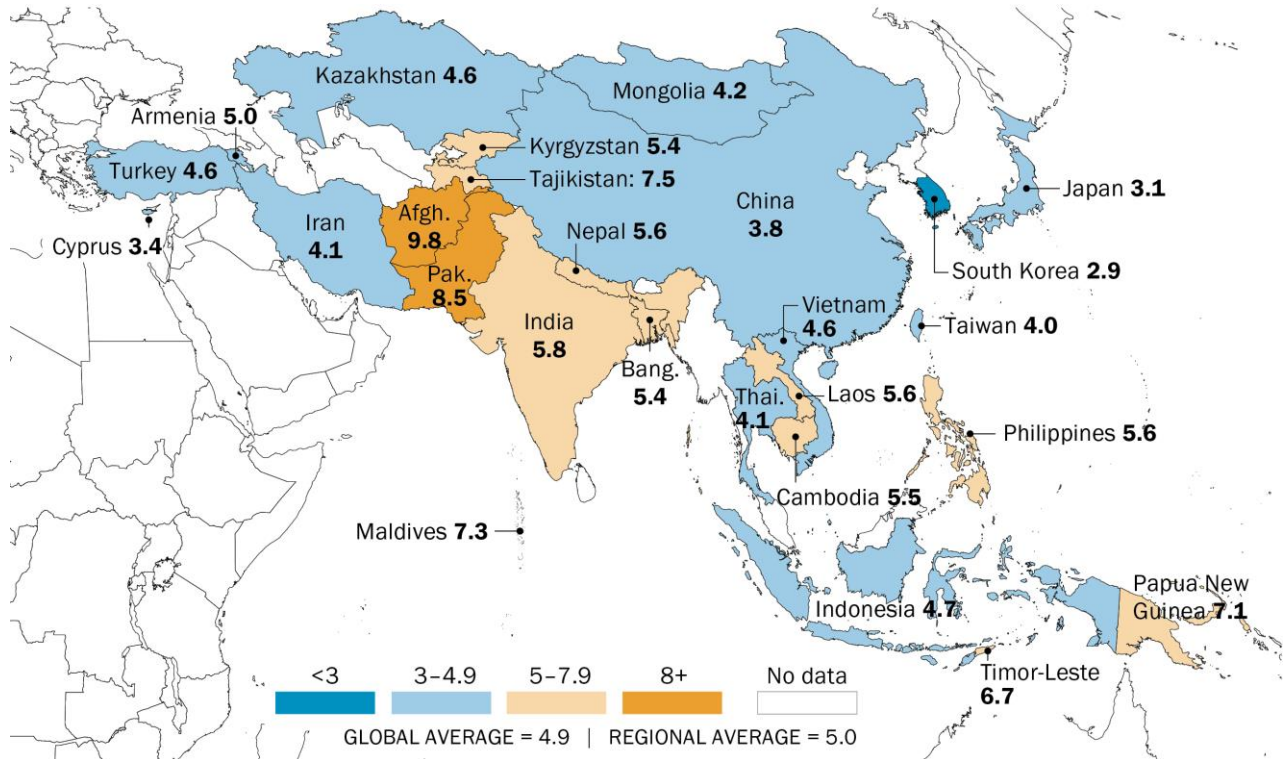
However, when it comes to household size, India and China are at opposite ends of the regional scale: The average Indian lives in a fairly big household (5.8), while the average person in China resides in a smaller household (3.8). Across the region, the countries with the smallest households tend to have large shares of Buddhists or unaffiliated people (or both). That includes China, but also Japan, South Korea, Mongolia and Thailand – where the average household size is about four people or fewer.

Northeast Asia stands out for its high frequency of solo households. South Korea's general population has among the world's highest rates of people living alone (21% – second only to Denmark), with South Korean "nones" (24%) and Christians (21%) more likely than Buddhists (14%) to live alone. Japan (15%) also has a relatively large share of people living alone, with Buddhists and "nones" about equally likely to do so.

As in other parts of the world, Muslims in the Asia-Pacific region tend to share their homes with more people. Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are overwhelmingly Muslim, also are the two countries where Asians live in the biggest households (9.8 and 8.5 people, respectively). Moreover, Muslims have larger households than their countrymen in a range of other countries – including some without Muslim majorities, such as India and the Philippines. However, Muslims' tendency to live in fairly big households is not universal: The Muslim-majority countries of Indonesia (4.7) and Iran (4.1) have relatively small households by regional standards.

The average Afghan lives with seven more people than the typical South Korean

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Sub-Saharan Africa

Household patterns vary widely across sub-Saharan Africa, with clear differences that can be measured in different parts of the region, across country borders and between religious groups in single countries. The region's population is [mostly Christian, with a substantial Muslim minority](#). In some countries, large Muslim and Christian populations live side by side.

Overall, sub-Saharan Africans live in the world's biggest households, at an average of 6.9 people per household, with Muslims (8.5) in more expansive arrangements than Christians (6.0). The religiously unaffiliated and Hindus, who make up less than 4% of the regional population, have smaller homes – 5.7 and 3.9 people, respectively.

Within sub-Saharan Africa, the nations with the largest households tend to be in West Africa and have majority Muslim populations. In Gambia, Senegal and Mali – three neighboring countries with the largest overall household sizes – at least 90% of people are Muslim and the average person lives in a household of 12.6 people or more. Christians in those places also have the biggest households of Christians in any country, with as many as 10.3 people, though they live in smaller homes than their Muslim compatriots.

The region's smallest households, meanwhile, are found in countries where Christians form a majority: In Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Madagascar and Rwanda, where Christians make up 80% or more of the population, the average person lives in a household of about five people. In an exception to the overall global and regional pattern, Muslims in Madagascar live in smaller households than Christians. (In South Africa and Rwanda, there is not much of a difference, and in Sao Tome no data is available for Muslims.)

Muslims live in larger households than Christians in sub-Saharan Africa

Average individual in sub-Saharan Africa resides in a household of _____ people

	Household size
Muslims	8.5
Christians	6.0
Unaffiliated	5.7
Hindus	3.9
All sub-Saharan Africa	6.9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

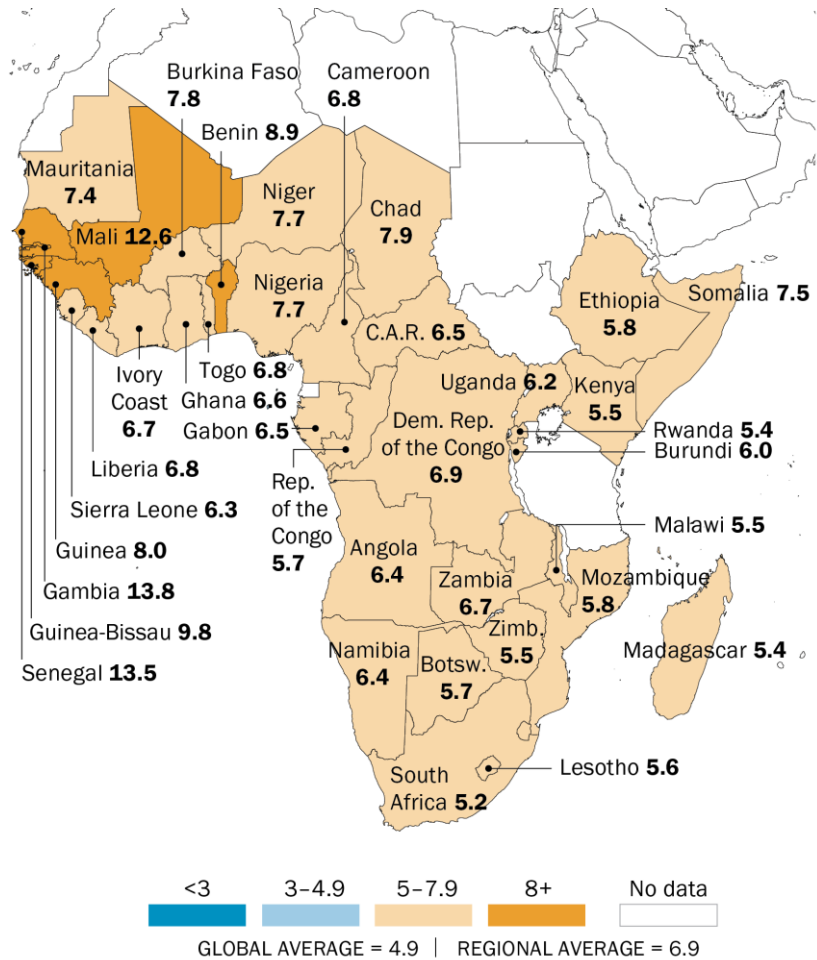
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Overall, sub-Saharan Africans are about as likely to live in two-parent households (37%) as in extended families (35%). The region is unique in its high rate of people living in polygamous homes, with 11% in this arrangement, much higher than the 2% global average. (This practice is particularly common in West and Central Africa. For a more detailed discussion of polygamous households, see page 34.) Sub-Saharan Africa also has the smallest percentage of people in adult child households (2%).

While sub-Saharan African Christians are about as likely to live in two-parent families (38%) as in extended families (39%), Muslims are more frequently found in two-parent families (37%) than in extended families (27%). The smaller share of Muslims in extended families may be related to a higher prevalence of polygamous households among Muslims.

In sub-Saharan Africa, many live in homes of six people or more

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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In Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, two-thirds or more of Christians live in extended families (66% and 74%), making these the sub-Saharan African communities most likely to do so. Extended families are least often found among Muslims in Nigeria, only 13% of whom reside in that type of home.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Christians are less likely than Muslims to live in polygamous families

% of individuals in each household type, by religion

	Christians	Muslims	Unaffiliated	Hindus	All sub-Saharan Africa
Two-parent	38%	37%	32%	31%	37%
Extended	39	27	39	32	35
Polygamous	3	25	5	<0.5	11
Single-parent	8	4	7	0.8	6
Solo	3	1	7	3	2
Couple	2	2	4	10	2
Adult child	2	0.9	3	22	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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Polygamy is very common in some African countries

Around the world, polygamy is very rare. About 2% of people globally live in households in which at least one member has more than one spouse or partner. The practice is illegal in most countries, and laws that allow it are primarily found in the Middle East and Africa.²² (For more on polygamy laws and religious teachings, see the sidebar on page 36.)

In sub-Saharan Africa, however, polygamy is practiced in a group of [West and Central African countries](#) that sometimes are referred to as the “[polygamy belt](#)” – and they include Muslim-majority countries such as Senegal, Gambia and Mali, *as well as* Christian-majority nations such as Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Benin.²³

Still, most of the countries that allow polygamy are majority-Muslim – and an analysis of sub-Saharan Africa specifically shows that Muslims there are more likely than Christians, Hindus or the unaffiliated to live in polygamous households. There also is a high rate of polygamy among adherents of African folk religions – and, in a few countries, among “nones.” (Christian churches with historic ties to Western missionaries tend to reject this type of marriage, although many churches that have their roots in African communities allow it. Polygamy is an accepted practice in some tribal and ethnic cultures.²⁴)

Among Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa, a quarter live in polygamous households, compared with 3% of African Christians and 5% of the unaffiliated. Among people who do not belong to any of these groups and instead identify with traditions that can be described as folk religions, 19% live in polygamous households.²⁵

Overall, the share of all sub-Saharan Africans living in polygamous households is 11%. In six countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Guinea – at least a quarter of the population lives in polygamous homes.²⁶ Polygamy is legal in all of these countries, at least to

²² Importantly, several Persian Gulf countries where polygamy is legal and assumed to be relatively common could not be included in this analysis due to a lack of available data. In Iraq, a Gulf country analyzed in this report where polygamy is legal under certain circumstances, the percentage of people living in polygamous households is 2.3%.

²³ Jacoby, Hanan G. 1995. “[The Economics of Polygyny in Sub-Saharan Africa: Female Productivity and the Demand for Wives in Côte D'Ivoire.](#)” *The Journal of Political Economy*. Also see Allen, John L. Jr. 2014. “[Surprise! One of the Church's family issues is polygamy.](#)” *Crux*.

²⁴ Falen, Douglas J. 2008. “[Polygyny and Christian Marriage in Africa: The Case of Benin.](#)” *African Studies Review*.

²⁵ Other sections of this report do not broadly analyze data about followers of folk religions and a range of other, smaller religious groups because the individual groups that make up these categories are numerous, diverse and often have little in common. For example, African Spiritualism, Voodoo and Confucianism are all classified as folk religions; on the whole, folk and other religions are not cohesive or widely represented enough for the purposes of analysis in this report.

²⁶ Because polygamous households tend to have a higher number of members than other types of households, this analysis may seem high compared with estimates that compute results on the household level. Similarly, because polygamous families tend to be larger and have more children, there are always larger shares of children living in these types of households than adults. More information on the living arrangements of children can be found on page 82.

some extent. In Nigeria, polygamy is banned under civil law, but 12 northern states governed by Shariah law allow it.²⁷

Burkina Faso has sub-Saharan Africa's largest share of people living in polygamous households (36%), including nearly half of those who practice folk religions (45%), making them the likeliest of all religious groups to live in this arrangement. Four-in-ten Muslims in Burkina Faso live in polygamous households, followed by roughly a quarter of Christians (24%). (Burkina Faso is largely Muslim, with a sizable Christian minority.) In Cameroon, which is majority Christian but has a sizable Muslim minority, the percentages of people living in polygamous households are 32% for adherents of folk religions, 26% for Muslims, 19% for "nones" and 7% for Christians. A similar pattern exists in Togo.

In Nigeria – Africa's most populous country, where roughly half the population is Muslim and half is Christian – 28% of all people live in polygamous households. This arrangement is widespread among Muslims (40%) and adherents of folk religions (29%) but is less common among Christians (8%).

In Chad, the unaffiliated have the highest rates of polygamy, with about four-in-ten "nones" in this arrangement. Chad is also the only country where Christians (21%) are much more likely than Muslims (10%) to live in polygamous households.

²⁷ For details on laws that govern polygamy, see the sidebar on page 36.

Sidebar: Polygamy in laws and religion

Laws

Although polygamy is illegal in most places, over 50 countries – largely in the Middle East and Africa, but also in Asia – allow it to at least some degree. Polygamous marriages are almost always polygynist, with one man taking multiple wives; rules often specify that a man may marry up to four women if certain conditions are met. There are a few countries in which polygamy is illegal but relatively common, and many where the opposite is true.²⁸

Among the countries covered in this report, polygamy is most widely practiced in West Africa, where that type of arrangement is often permitted by customary law or religious tradition, if not by civil law, according to the [OECD](#). In six countries – Benin, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria – polygamy is formally prohibited but tolerated. Some countries, including Burkina Faso and Togo, allow couples to choose between a monogamous or polygamous arrangement at the outset of their marriage. In others, including Mauritania, a man must obtain permission from his spouse or spouses before marrying again. In Nigeria, polygamy is banned at the national level, but recognized by the 12 northern states regulated by Shariah law.

In the Middle East-North Africa region, polygamy is legal in Iraq, Yemen, Algeria and Egypt, but fewer than 3% of individuals in those countries live in polygamous households. (Polygamy is also legal in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and most other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, but data is not available on household composition and religion outside of the eight countries covered in this report.) In Asia, this arrangement is both allowed and rare in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran and Afghanistan. In India, polygamy is legal only for Muslims, but a fraction of 1% of Indian Muslims – no more than any other religious group – live in polygamous homes.

Even though polygamy laws are usually skewed in favor of allowing men (but not women) to take multiple spouses, women are sometimes granted rights as well. For example, in Burkina Faso and Chad, two countries where polygamy is common, first wives must state whether they eventually want to be polygamous before they marry, and several other countries require the first wife's permission before the husband can marry other wives. Other countries set guidelines on what men owe to their spouses; this is the case in Mali, where men are allowed as many as four wives but are obligated to treat them equally and to ensure the welfare, education and moral development of all of their children. Not all countries where polygamy is common take these issues into account: In Guinea-Bissau, early and forced marriage, levirate marriage (the practice of requiring a widow to marry her late husband's brother), and polygamy are widespread, and no legal guidelines apply.

Theology

The history and theology surrounding polygamy are complex. Taking multiple spouses – particularly wives – has been approved of at one point or another, and practiced to some degree, in various religions.

²⁸ This sidebar draws heavily on research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, published in the 2019 [Social Institutions & Gender Index](#), the 2010 [Atlas of Gender in Development: How Social Norms Affect Gender Equality in Non-OECD Countries](#) and 2019 [West Africa Brief](#). Data was also obtained from a variety of reports by the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

In Judaism and Christianity, the Bible refers to several instances of accepted plural marriages, including by Abraham, Jacob and David. However, plural marriages were disavowed by these groups in the Middle Ages, and polygamy generally has not been condoned by Jews or Christians in recent centuries.²⁹ Still, polygamy sometimes was practiced by certain Christian sects, including by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (sometimes called Mormons) in the U.S. [until the late 1800s](#). Some Mormon splinter groups [still practice](#) polygamy.

In Africa, Christian missionaries who arrived in the 18th century targeted the indigenous practice of polygamy as a priority for reform, and marriage became a point of conflict.³⁰ Studies have found that these efforts were often successful, and polygamy in Africa has diminished over the past century, particularly in countries that have been influenced by Christian missionaries, according to James Fenske, an economist at the University of Warwick. However, many Christian churches without Western origins allow polygamy, which may help explain its continued prevalence in some Christian communities.³¹

Among Muslims, supporters of polygamy often cite Quran verse 4:3, which instructs men to take as many wives as they can take care of, up to four. They also note that the Prophet Muhammad had multiple wives. However, scholars point out that early Muslim populations lived in communities where polygamy was widespread, and that Islam limited the practice by providing guidelines and specifying obligations of husbands to each of their wives. These conditions of fairness are so demanding that they essentially make polygamy “impossible for a righteous man,” according to Azizah Al-Hibri and Raja El Habti in a chapter of “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”³²

Historians also have noted that Islamic guidance on polygamy was issued amid wars in Arabia, when there were many widows and orphans requiring financial support, and that polygamy created a system for them to be cared for. To this day, polygamy is most common in places where people, and particularly men, tend to die young.

²⁹ Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

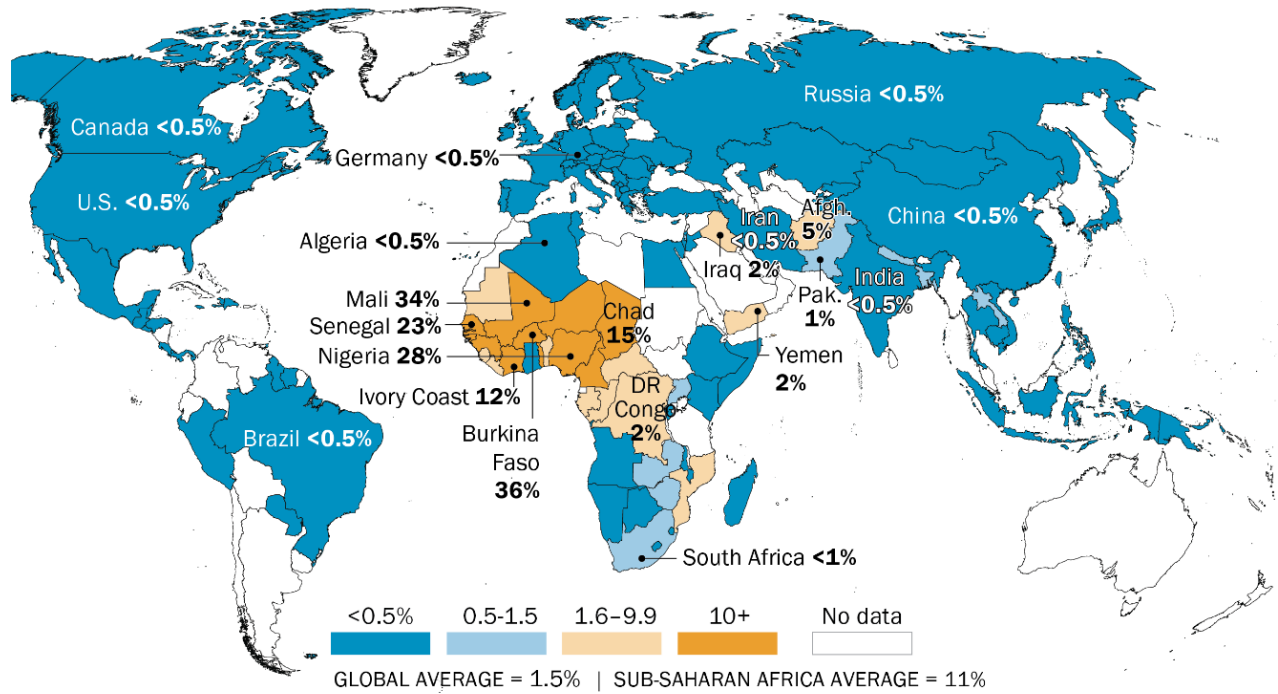
³⁰ Falen, Douglas J. 2008. “[Polygyny and Christian Marriage in Africa: The Case of Benin](#).” African Studies Review.

³¹ Fenske, James. 2015. “[African polygamy: Past and present](#).” Journal of Development Economics.

³² Al-Hibri, Azizah, and El Habti, Raja. 2006. “Islam.” In Browning, Don S., M. Christian Green, and John Witte Jr., eds. 2006. “Sex, Marriage, and Family in World Religions.”

Living in polygamous households is very uncommon in most places

% of individuals in polygamous households



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Europe

Almost [three-quarters of Europeans are Christian](#), but there also are substantial minorities of “nones” and Muslims in Europe.³³

In the 35 countries studied, the average European lives in a household of 3.1 people, with the two largest groups – Christians and the unaffiliated – at 3.1 and 3.0, respectively. European Muslims, on average, live in households of 4.1 people. Europe is the region where all three of these groups have the smallest households worldwide. Most of the countries in the region are economically advanced.

Overall, Europe’s smallest households belong to Germans, Danes and Swedes (all at 2.7 members, on average). As in other parts of the world, countries with larger shares of Muslims tend to have bigger households.

In Kosovo, where 94% of the population is Muslim, the average person belongs to a household of 6.8 people, making this the European country with the most expansive living arrangements. In nearby majority-Muslim Albania, people also reside in fairly large households by European standards (4.6).

Other countries on the high end of the European scale are North Macedonia (4.6) and Montenegro (4.3), where majorities of the population are Christian, but Muslims make up sizable minorities. Wealth may explain some of these numbers: These Balkan countries are among the poorest in the region and are not European Union members. Nevertheless, within three of these four countries, Muslims have larger households than Christians.

Christians, Muslims and ‘nones’ have their smallest households in Europe

Average individual in Europe resides in a household of ___ people

	Household size
Muslims	4.1
Christians	3.1
Unaffiliated	3.0
All Europe	3.1

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
“Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

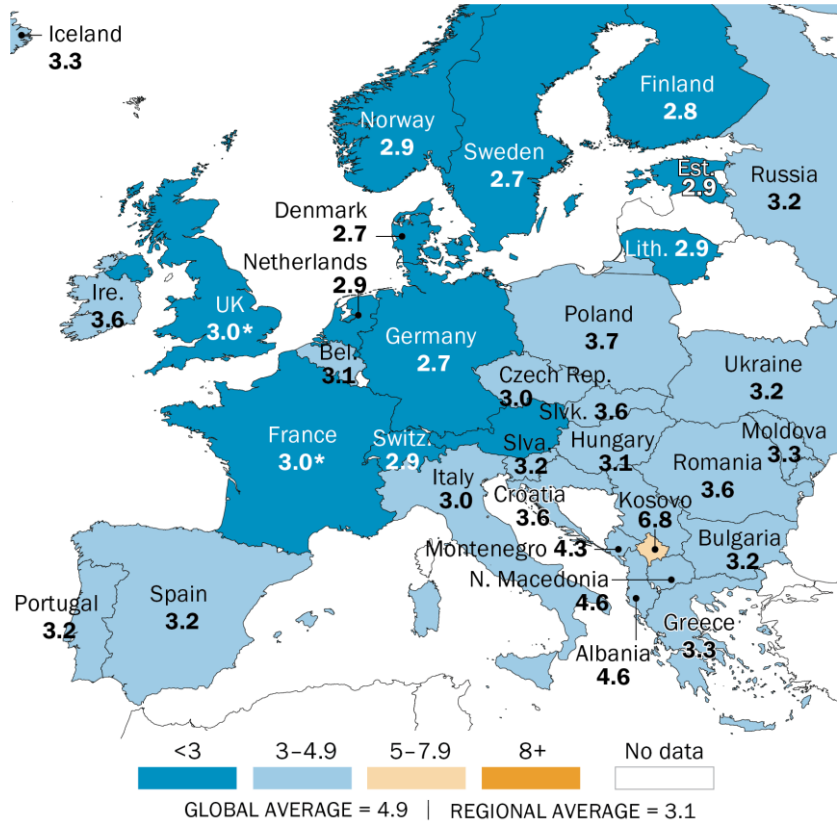
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³³ The European data covers 35 countries and includes Christians, Muslims and the religiously unaffiliated. Jews, Buddhists and Hindus do not have enough respondents in European surveys to allow for reliable analysis.

When it comes to household *types*, Europe stands out for having the biggest share of people living alone: 13% of Europeans live in solo households, even more than the share of North Americans who do so (11%) and more than three times the global average (4%). European “nones” and Christians live alone at similar rates (14% and 13%, respectively). Though European Muslims are less likely to live alone (7%), they are more likely to live alone than Muslims anywhere else in the world.

In Europe, small households are the norm

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people



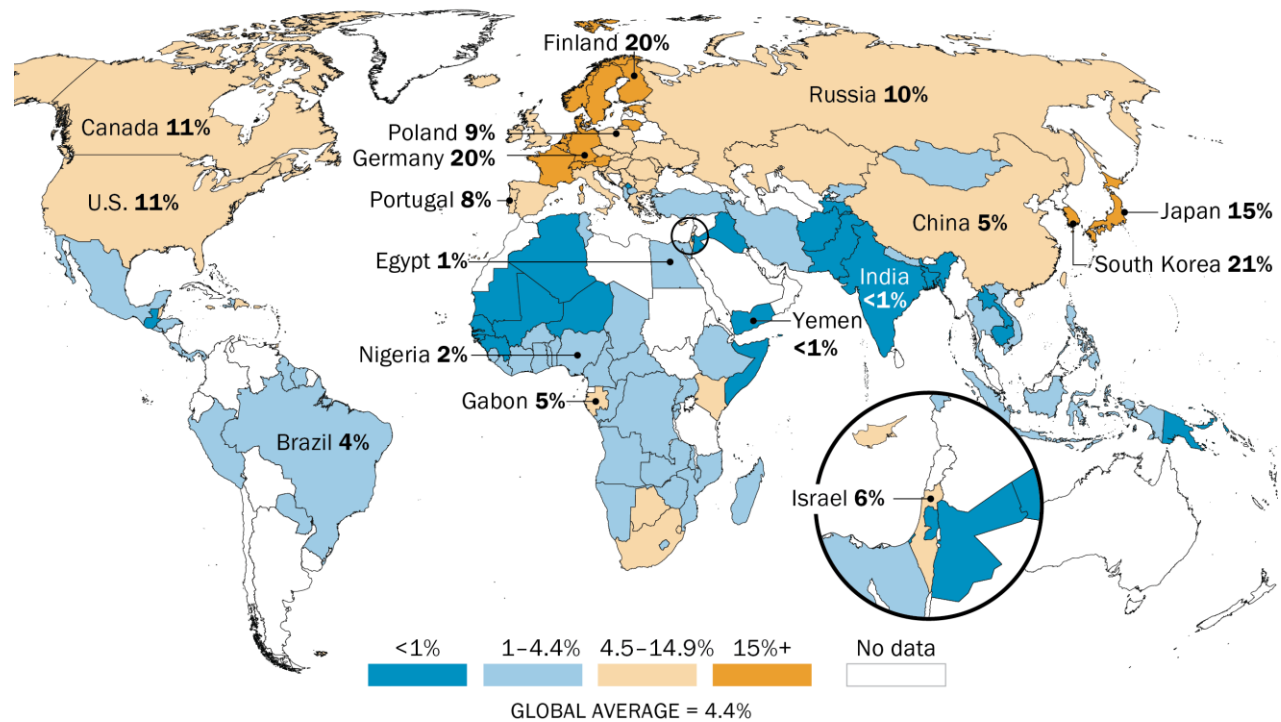
Note: Asterisks indicate discrepancies based on rounding. Color categories are based on unrounded numbers, but household sizes are only shown to one decimal place. The average person experience a household size of 2.99 in the UK and 2.97 in France. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. “Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

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Europe also stands out for having a large share of people living as couples without children or any other relatives (19%, similar to North America's 20%). Living in a couple-only household is the most common arrangement for Christians in several Western European countries, including in Sweden, Germany, France, Finland and the Netherlands, where more than a quarter of Christians live this way. Couples also are the most common arrangement for "nones" in Finland and Germany. Ireland is an exception to this pattern: Irish Christians are three times as likely to live as a couple *with* children (40%) than as a couple *without* children (13%).

Europe is the region with the largest share of people in solo households

% of individuals who live alone



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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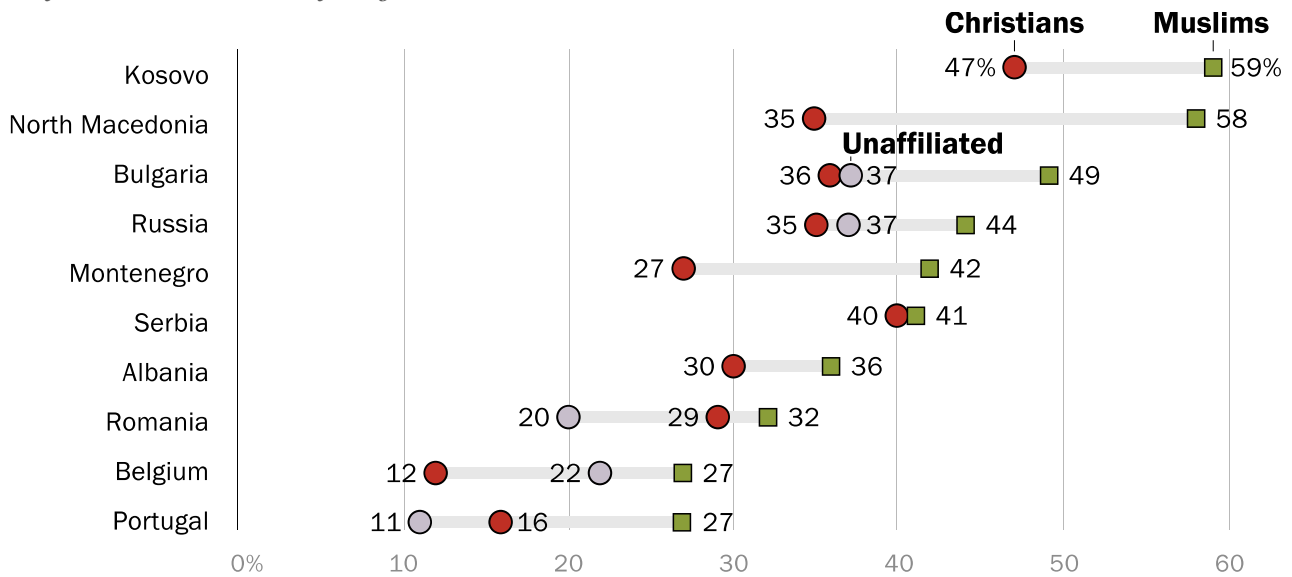
Muslims across Europe are the least likely group to live in couple-only households, both in Muslim-majority countries such as Kosovo (2%) and in predominantly Christian countries such as Romania (9%).

By the same token, while only about a quarter of all Europeans live with extended family, shares are much higher in Eastern Europe, especially among Balkan Muslims. In fact, Muslims are more

likely than Christians or the unaffiliated to live with extended family in every country with sufficient numbers of Muslims to compare (Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania and Russia) except Serbia, where Muslims live in this arrangement about as often as Christians do. In all of these countries (with the exception of Albania), Muslims are less likely than Christians to live alone.

In Europe, Muslims more likely than Christians to live with extended families

% of individuals in extended-family homes



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the [least religiously diverse](#) regions analyzed in this report, with a large Christian majority (90%), a modest share of religiously unaffiliated people (8%), and small shares of other groups, like Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Jews.³⁴

Overall, the average Latin American lives in a household of 4.6 people, which is also the average for Christians and similar to Hindus and the unaffiliated (4.4).

The largest households belong to Guatemalans (6.1 people) and the smallest to Puerto Ricans (3.5). The region's most populous countries are clustered in between, with Mexicans and Peruvians (both 4.9) residing in households that are somewhat bigger than Brazilians' (4.2).³⁵

Two-parent households (39%) are the most common arrangement in Latin America, followed by extended families (32%). Unlike other regions, Latin America does not stand out for having stark outliers in its distribution across household types: Overall, people in this region are not substantially more or less likely than others around the world to live in, say, solo or polygamous households.

In Latin America-Caribbean region, narrow gaps in household size by religion

Average individual in Latin America-Caribbean region resides in a household of ____ people

	Household size
Christians	4.6
Hindus	4.4
Unaffiliated	4.4
All Latin America	4.6

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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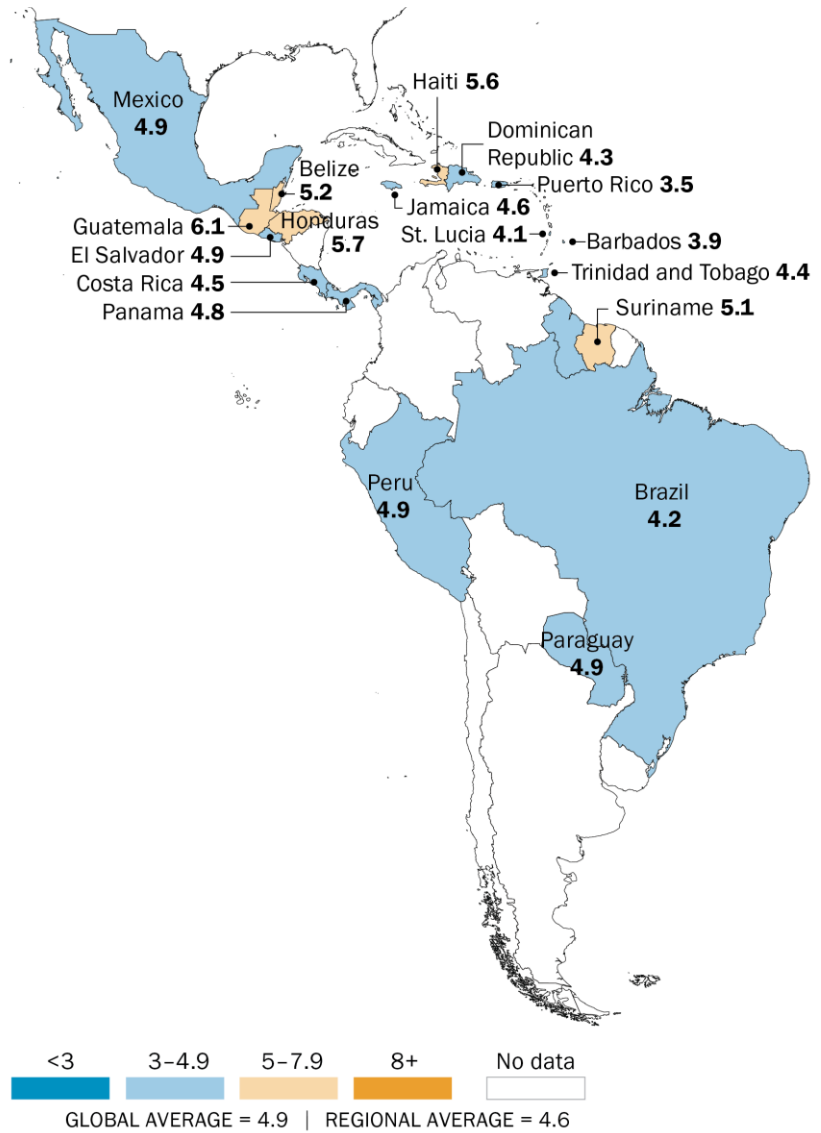
³⁴ In Latin America, sufficient data is available for analysis of Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and the religiously unaffiliated, but numbers for Buddhists and Jews are not presented because only small populations of each group residing in Latin America. See Methodology on page 94 for further details.

³⁵ The analysis covers 19 countries and territories. Some large countries, including Argentina and Venezuela, were not included due to a lack of suitable data.

There also tend not to be striking differences between Christians and religiously unaffiliated people or minority religious groups, but exceptions certainly exist.

Guatemalans live in the biggest households in Latin America

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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In Jamaica, the unaffiliated live alone more than twice as commonly as Christians, with 16% of “nones” living solo in a country where only 6% of Christians do. And Hindus living in Guyana, where they make up almost a quarter of the population, have one fewer person per household (4.3 vs. 5.3) and are half as likely to live in single-parent households as Christians in the same small country (4% vs. 8%).

In Latin America, similar shares of Christians and ‘nones’ live in each household type

% of individuals in each household type, by religion

	Christians	Unaffiliated	Hindus	All Latin America
Two-parent	39%	38%	33%	39%
Extended	32	29	35	32
Adult child	10	9	17	10
Couple	6	6	7	6
Single-parent	5	7	3	5
Solo	3	5	4	3
Polygamous	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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The Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East illustrates the way household patterns can vary in countries that are close neighbors but have very different economic, religious and cultural contexts.

The [region's population](#) is 93% Muslim, 4% Christian and less than 2% Jewish; this report covers seven Muslim-majority nations and Israel, where virtually all Middle Eastern Jews reside. Reliable data on Christians is available only in Egypt and Iraq.

Overall, the average person in the Middle East-North Africa region lives in a fairly expansive household, with 6.2 members. People in Yemen (8.6) and Iraq (7.7) reside in the biggest households, while Tunisians (4.9) and Israelis (4.5) belong to the smallest households.

As is the case in other regions, Muslims live in the largest households (6.3 members), followed by Christians (4.6) and Jews (4.3). There are notable differences even within countries: In Israel, Jews on average live with one fewer person than Muslims do (4.3 vs. 5.2).

In the Middle East and North Africa, Muslims live in larger households than Jews

Average individual in the Middle East-North Africa region resides in a household of ___ people

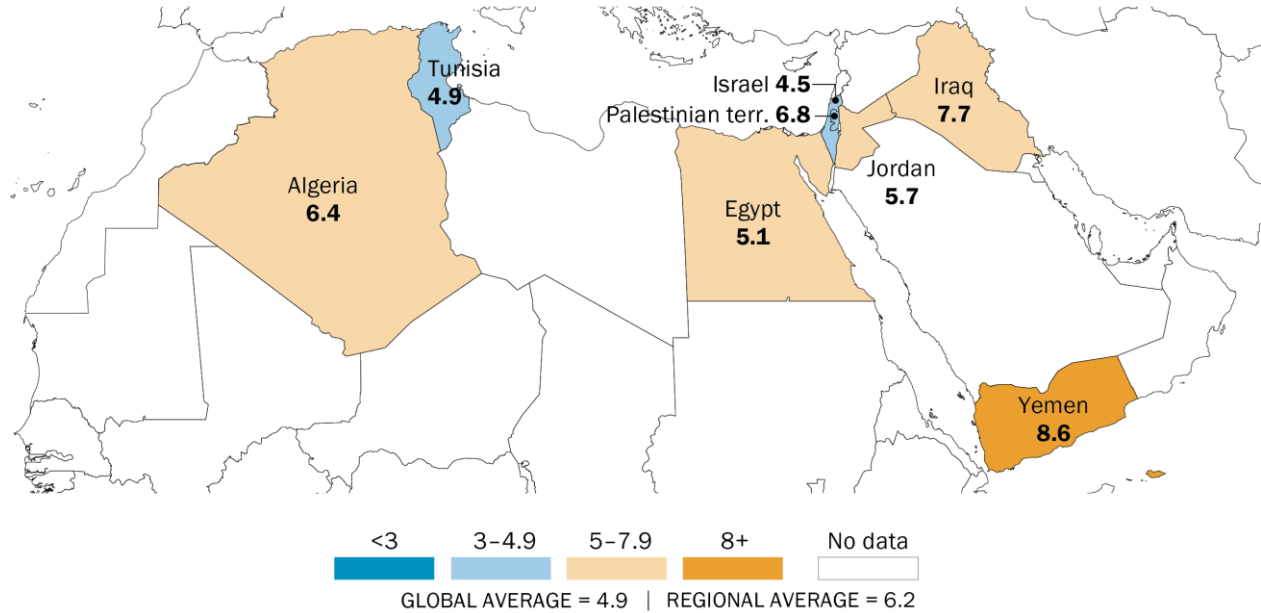
	Household size
Muslims	6.3
Christians	4.6
Jews	4.3
All Middle East-North Africa	6.2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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The average Yemeni lives with nearly twice as many people as the average Israeli

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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The Middle East and North Africa stands out as the region where people are more likely than anywhere else to live in two-parent households. More than half of Middle Eastern Muslims *and* Christians live in this arrangement (57% and 58%, respectively).

Muslims in the Palestinian territories are the most likely group in the world to live in two-parent families (71%). Israeli Jews do so at about half that rate (35%), making them the least likely group in the region to live in a two-parent household. Even within Israel, Muslims live in two-parent families much more often than Jews, with half of Israeli Muslims in this arrangement.

Israel is different from other countries studied in that it is the only Jewish-majority nation – most Israelis are Jewish, and over 98% of Jews in the region live in Israel. The country also has a longer life expectancy than any of its neighbors, the highest overall levels of education, and a per-person GDP that is more than twice as big as the second-richest Middle Eastern country in this study, Iraq.

Of all the Middle East and North African countries in this study, Israel has the highest share of people who live alone (6%). Israelis also are much more likely than others in the region to live in couple-only households.

Polygamous relationships are legally recognized in at least some circumstances in parts of the Middle East-North Africa region, including several countries analyzed in this report – Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Yemen. In these countries, however, polygamy is rare: Iraqis and Yemenis are the most likely to live in this type of household (2% each). Data is not available from many of the countries where polygamy is legal and presumed to be more common, such as Saudi Arabia.

Christians have Middle East-North Africa region's lowest share of extended-family households

% of individuals in each household type, by religion

	Muslims	Christians	Jews	All Middle East-North Africa
Two-parent	57%	58%	35%	56%
Extended	27	16	29	27
Adult child	9	13	13	9
Couple	3	6	13	3
Solo	0.8	3	6	1
Polygamous	1	<0.5	<0.5	0.9

Note: Data on Jews and Christians is all from Israel and Egypt, respectively.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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North America

In North America, Christians account for a majority of the population, while a rapidly growing share identifies with no religion, and fewer than one-in-ten affiliate with Islam, Judaism or other non-Christian religions. The United States and Canada are the only countries included in the North America region in this report; Mexico is included in the Latin America-Caribbean region.

Because the U.S. population is much larger than Canada's, U.S. household patterns have a much bigger influence on the overall numbers for the region, though the two countries have similar religious makeups and comparable levels of education, life expectancy and economic development.

On average, North Americans live in the world's second-smallest households, after Europeans, with an average of 3.3 members. Regional figures, available for Christians, "nones" and Jews, show a narrow range of household sizes across religious groups: North American Christians live in slightly bigger households (3.4 people) than their unaffiliated (3.2) or Jewish (3.0) counterparts.

A sufficient number of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims were surveyed to represent the characteristics of their households in Canada, but not in the U.S., and therefore not regionally. In Canada, these religious minority groups have larger households than Christians (3.2) or the unaffiliated (3.1). Muslims and Hindus live in the biggest households, with an average of 4.4 and 4.3 members, respectively, followed by Buddhists (3.9).

North American Christians, 'nones' and Jews have similar sized households

The average individual in North America resides in a household of ___ people

	Household size
Christians	3.4
Unaffiliated	3.2
Jews	3.0
All North America	3.3

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Small shares of North Americans overall live with extended family (11%). However, Canadian Hindus (28%), Buddhists (23%) and Muslims (16%) are more likely than other Canadians to live with extended family. Among the groups with available data in both Canada and the U.S., the religiously unaffiliated are the most likely to reside in extended-family arrangements (14%), followed by Christians (9%) and Jews (6%).

Three-in-ten North American Jews live in couple-only households

% of individuals in each household type

	Christians	Unaffiliated	Jews	All North America
Two-parent	34%	30%	30%	33%
Couple	21	18	30	20
Adult child	14	15	11	14
Solo	11	12	13	11
Extended	9	14	6	11
Single-parent	9	9	5	9
Polygamous	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

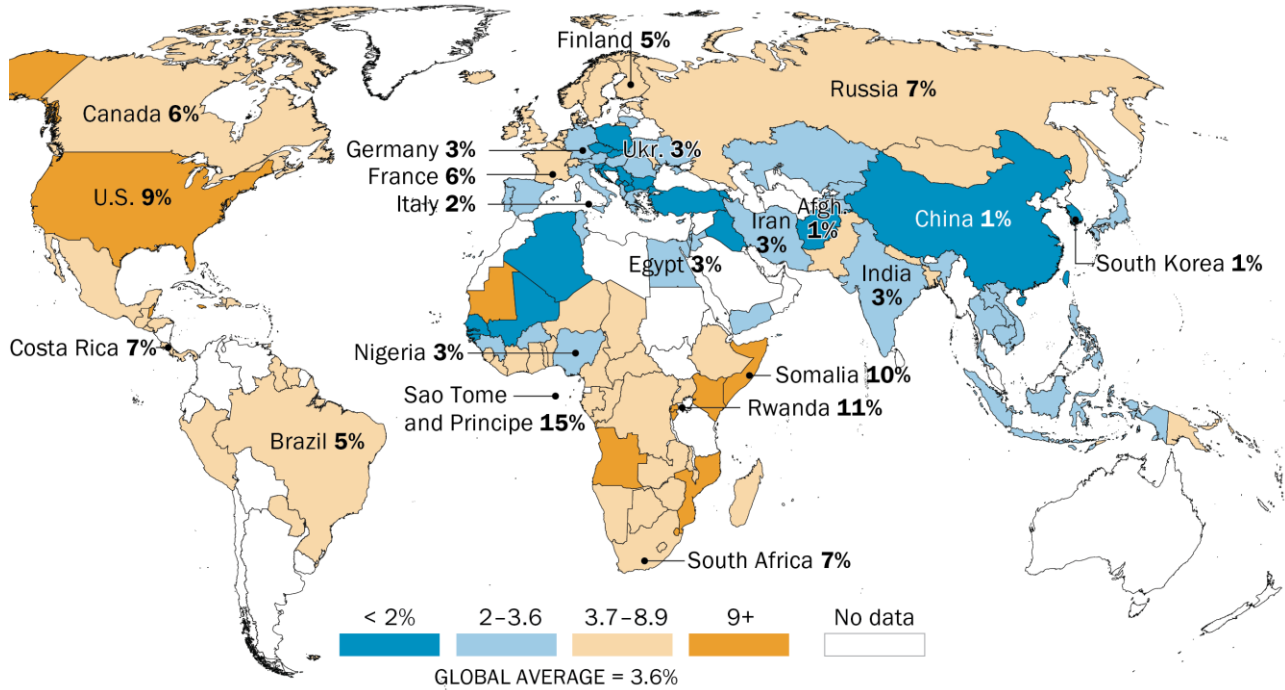
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The U.S. share of people living in single-parent families across all religious groups (9%) is among the highest in the world, behind only a handful of countries where the rate is higher: Sao Tome and Principe (15%), Kenya (12%), Jamaica and Rwanda (11% each).³⁶ Fewer North American Jews live in this arrangement than Christians or "nones," with only 5% in single-parent households. Jews also stand out with a relatively high share of people living in couple-only households – three-in-ten, compared with about one-in-five Christians and "nones."

³⁶ These relatively high rates of single-parent households in sub-Saharan African countries may be explained in part by the fact that people in that region are more commonly widowed at younger ages. Compared with the other countries mentioned here, the U.S. has a higher life expectancy at birth (more than a decade longer) than any of these other countries except Jamaica, where people can expect to live about 75 years, on average, just four years less than the 79 years in the U.S.

More people in U.S. than in other developed countries live in single-parent homes

% of individuals in single-parent households



Note: Single-parent households include one adult and at least one biological, step or foster child under 18. Adult children may be present, but no other relatives or non-relatives.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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2. Household patterns by religion

Pew Research Center analyzed data on six religious groups – Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and people with no religious affiliation.³⁷

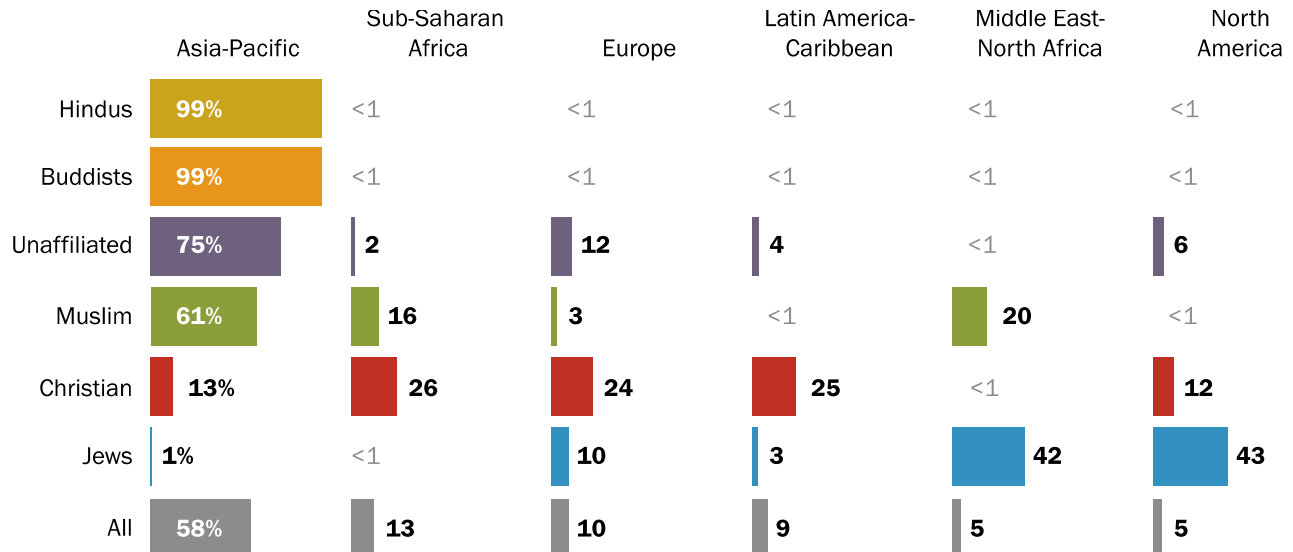
Globally, the average Muslim lives in the biggest household (6.4 people), followed by the average Hindu (5.7), Christian (4.5), Buddhist (3.9), “none” (3.7) and Jew (3.7). Religious groups also vary in the types of households they are most likely to occupy: Hindus, Buddhists and the religiously unaffiliated most often reside in extended families, while Muslims, Christians and Jews have larger shares in two-parent homes.

But religious groups are not monolithic, and followers of the same religion living in different parts of the world often vary substantially from each other. The experiences of religious groups are sometimes closely tied to the patterns found in the regions where they reside.

³⁷ Although some faiths other than those analyzed in this report (such as Sikhs) have millions of adherents around the world, censuses and surveys in many countries do not measure them specifically. Because of this scarcity of census and survey data, this report does not attempt to analyze groups other than Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and people with no religious affiliation; the report is also unable to show data for subgroups within these major religions, such as Protestants and Catholics or Sunnis and Shiites, although members of many other, smaller religious groups are included in general population results at the country, regional and global levels.

Hindus and Buddhists are concentrated in Asia, while Christians are most evenly scattered globally

% of individuals in each region, by religion



Source: Data from Pew Research Center's 2017 report "The Changing Global Religious Landscape." "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Religious groups also are distributed unevenly around the world. Christians are the most evenly scattered, with no more than a quarter living in any one region. The majority of Muslims, meanwhile, live in the Asia-Pacific region, but there are also large Muslim populations in the Middle East-North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa regions. Most of the world's religiously unaffiliated people and even larger shares of all Buddhists and Hindus live in Asia, while Jews are concentrated in Israel and the United States.

This report does not attempt to determine exactly how religion shapes household patterns. It is difficult to quantify the extent to which religion, on its own, affects people's living arrangements – or conversely, how a person's home life influences their religious affiliation. Still, comparing a single religious group in a country or region to the rest of the population may help illuminate possible connections between living arrangements and religion.

This chapter examines each religious group separately and explores not only how the experiences of each group's adherents vary from region to region, but also how their experiences compare with those of people who are *not* of that religion.

Information is provided on religious groups within regions when there are sufficient survey data to represent at least one-third of that group's regional population *and* when that group has at least 500,000 adherents in that region. For example, enough Buddhists were surveyed in the Latin America-Caribbean region to represent 61% of the regional population – surpassing the one-third cutoff. However, only about 430,000 of the world's 499 million Buddhists (about one-tenth of 1%) live in the region, so figures for Latin American Buddhists were not presented. See the Methodology on page 94 for more details.

The analysis of religious groups is presented in descending order of the groups' size, starting with Christians, who make up the world's largest religion.

Christians

Christians account for [nearly a third of the global population](#), making them the largest of the major religious groups. They also are the most broadly distributed, with roughly equal percentages living in Europe (24%), Latin America and the Caribbean (25%) and sub-Saharan Africa (26%). The Asia-Pacific region and North America together account for most of the remaining quarter; the share of Christians who reside in the Middle East-North Africa region is less than 1%.

In terms of their shares of the regional populations, Christians represent majorities in Latin America and the Caribbean (90%), North America (76%), Europe (73%) and sub-Saharan Africa (62%), and small minorities in the Asia-Pacific region (7%) and the Middle East and North Africa (4%).

Christians: Household size

Globally, Christians are the largest group in 12 of the 15 countries with the smallest households. Christians around the world live in somewhat smaller households, on average, than non-Christians (4.5 vs. 5.1 members). Christians have their smallest households in North America (3.4) and Europe (3.1), and – by a wide margin – their largest households in sub-Saharan Africa (6.0). Christians live with the largest number of people in Gambia, where their households contain 10.3 people, on average. And Christians’ smallest households are in Denmark and Sweden, both with an average of 2.6 people.

The tendency of Christians to live in smaller households than others is particularly pronounced in areas where they live alongside Muslims: In sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region, Christians have households with roughly two fewer people than non-Christians, on average. In other parts of the world, the gaps between Christians and others are much smaller.

Globally, Christians live in slightly smaller households than others

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

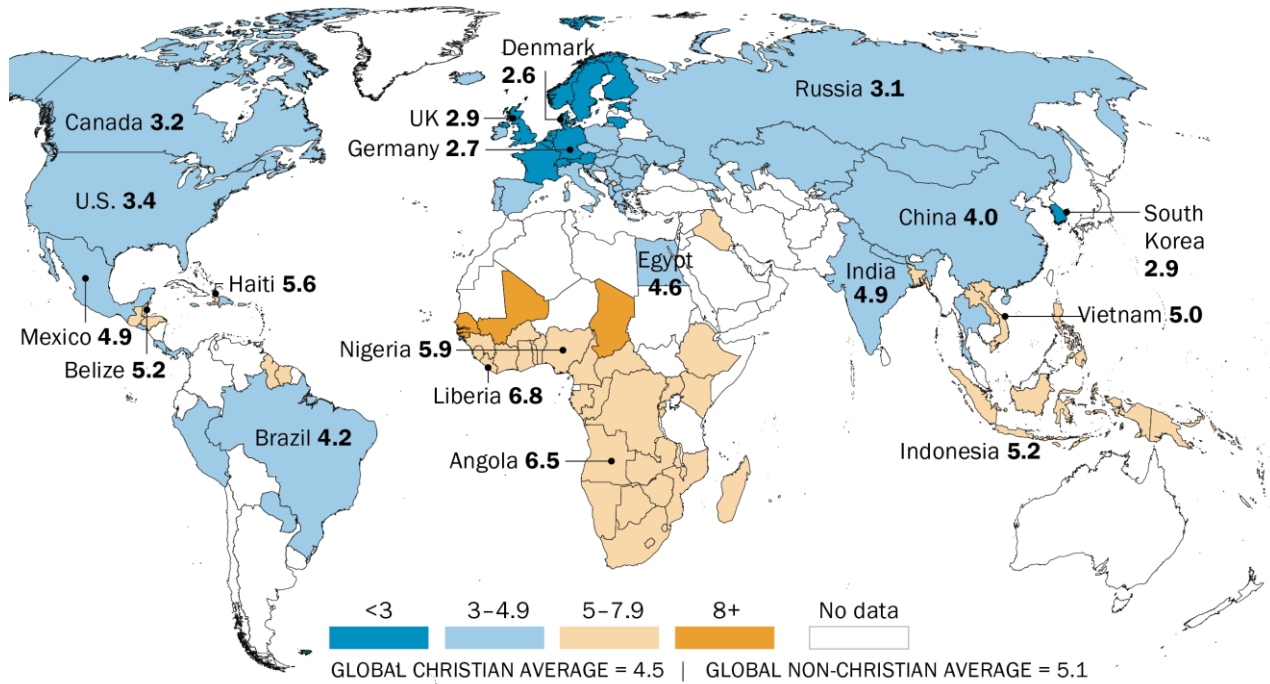
	Christian	Non-Christian
World	4.5	5.1
Asia-Pacific	4.8	5
Europe	3.1	3.1
Latin America-Caribbean	4.6	4.3
Middle East-North Africa	4.6	6.3
North America	3.4	3.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.0	8.1

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Average Christian in sub-Saharan Africa lives with three more people than a Christian in Europe

Average Christian resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Christians: Household types

Christians around the world are most likely to live in two-parent families with minor children, and they do so at about the same rate as everyone else (34% vs. 32%). But Christians are markedly less likely than others to live in extended families (29% vs. 42%). In fact, Christians are the least likely group – aside from Jews (17%) – to live with a wider circle of relatives.

Christians live with extended family less often than others

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined

	Two-parent	Extended	Couple	Adult child	Solo parent	Poly-gamous	
Christians	34%	29	11	9	7	6	0.8
Non-Christians	32%	42	7	9	3	3	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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On the other hand, Christians are more likely than non-Christians to live in household types that have few members: Larger shares of Christians live alone (7% vs. 3%) or as couples without other family members (11% vs. 7%). In some countries, such as Sweden (35%) and Germany (32%), living in a couple-only household is the most common arrangement for Christians.

Globally, Christians also are more likely than non-Christians to live in single-parent households (6% vs. 3%), a type of arrangement that is generally more common in North America, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America – all Christian-majority regions. Within these regions, Christians live in single-parent families at close to the same rates as non-Christians.

In the Asia-Pacific, Latin America-Caribbean, Middle East-North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa regions, Christians overwhelmingly live in extended or two-parent families, with combined shares of more than 70%. Far fewer European Christians (49%) and North American Christians (43%) reside in those types of households, and they are more likely than Christians elsewhere to live alone (13% and 11%, respectively) or as a couple (21% in both regions).

Globally, Christians are more likely than others to live in solo, single-parent or couple-only households

% of individuals in each household type

	Two-parent	Extended	Couple	Adult child	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous
Asia-Pacific							
Christians	35%	37%	8%	10%	5%	2%	<0.5%
Non-Christians	30	46	7	10	3	2	<0.5
Europe							
Christians	25	24	21	11	13	4	<0.5
Non-Christians	28	27	18	7	13	5	<0.5
Latin America-Caribbean							
Christians	39	32	6	10	3	5	<0.5
Non-Christians	36	29	7	10	5	7	<0.5
Middle East-North Africa							
Christians	58	16	6	13	3	3	<0.5
Non-Christians	56	27	3	9	0.9	2	0.9
North America							
Christians	34	9	21	14	11	9	<0.5
Non-Christians	31	15	18	14	12	8	<0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa							
Christians	38	39	2	2	3	8	3
Non-Christians	37	29	2	1	2	5	22
World							
Christians	34	29	11	9	7	6	0.8
Non-Christians	32	42	7	9	3	3	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Muslims

About a quarter of all people are Muslims, making them the [world's second-largest religious group](#) (and the [fastest-growing](#) major group). Over six-in-ten Muslims – about a billion – live in the Asia-Pacific region, and most other Muslims live in the Middle East-North Africa (20%) or sub-Saharan Africa (16%) regions.

Muslims represent more than nine-in-ten people in the Middle East and North Africa, about three-in-ten sub-Saharan Africans and a quarter of the population in the Asia-Pacific region. Elsewhere, Muslims are small minorities, accounting for 6% of the population in Europe, 1% in North America and a statistically negligible fraction in Latin America.³⁸

Muslims: Household size

Globally, in the 15 countries with the biggest households, Islam is the largest religion in all but one – Benin. Muslims around the world live in households with an average of approximately two more people than non-Muslims (6.4 vs. 4.5), and they reside in larger families than non-Muslims in every region analyzed.

One reason Muslims live in larger households is that they tend to have [more children](#) compared with other religious groups.

Muslims around the world also are relatively young; in a handful of Muslim-majority countries, half or more of the population is under 18, and children are unlikely to live alone or in a couple-only arrangement.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Muslims have their biggest households (8.5 people, on average) and also the widest gap in size compared with non-Muslims (6.1). The biggest households identified in this study belong to Muslims in Gambia (13.9), Senegal (13.6) and Mali (12.8) – all countries that have high rates of polygamy (see Chapter 1).

Like other religious groups, Muslims have their smallest households in Europe. Still, in European countries with enough representation to compare Muslims with others, the average Muslim lives with more people than the average non-Muslim.

Muslims in every region have larger households

Average individual resides in a household of ___ people

	Muslims	Non-Muslims
Asia-Pacific	6.0	4.6
Europe	4.1	3.1
Middle East-North Africa	6.3	4.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	8.5	6.1
World	6.4	4.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

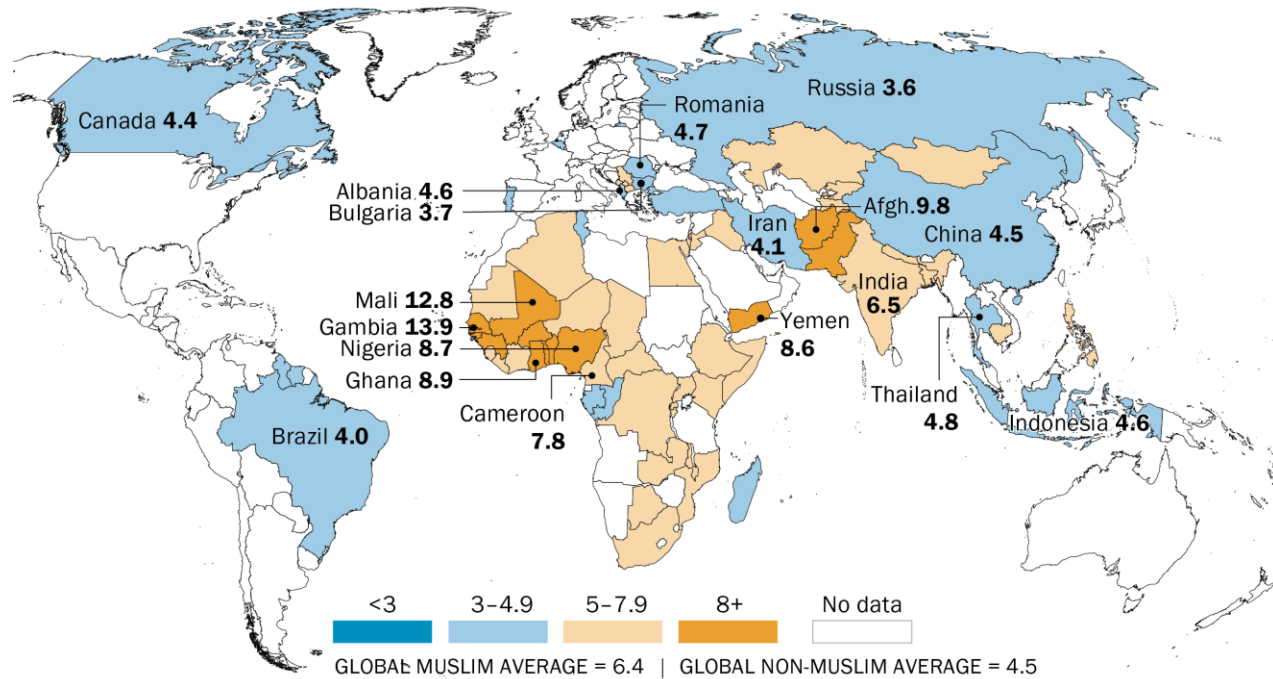
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³⁸ Too few Muslims in North America and the Latin America-Caribbean region were surveyed for analysis in this report.

The opposite is true in the country with the world's largest Muslim population: In Indonesia, Muslims live in households with an average of 4.6 members, while non-Muslims (who are mostly Christian) live in households of 5.1 people, on average.

Muslims in Gambia live with an average of 10 more people than Muslims in Russia

Average Muslim resides in a household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

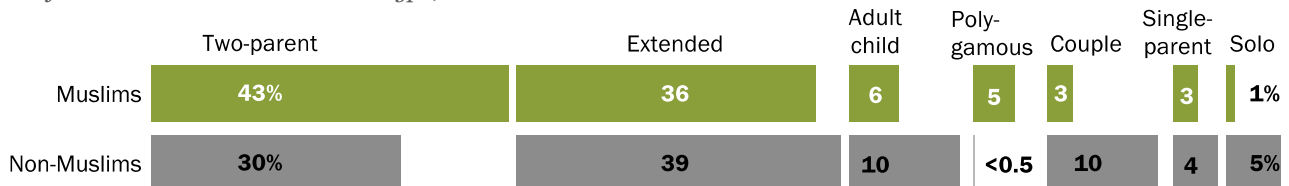
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Muslims: Household types

Muslims are less likely than others to live in households that contain no children or extended family. Only about 5% of Muslims live either alone or as a couple without children, compared with about 15% of non-Muslims. And Muslims are much more likely than others to live in two-parent homes with minor children (43% vs. 30%).

Muslims live in two-parent families more than other groups

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Within regions, Muslims often differ from non-Muslims. In Asia and the Pacific, for example, four-in-ten Muslims live in two-parent homes, compared with three-in-ten non-Muslims. In Europe, Muslims are notably more likely than others to live in two-parent or extended-family households, and they are much less likely than non-Muslims to live in couple-only households (7% vs. 20%).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Muslims live in extended-family households less frequently than others (27% vs. 39%). Conversely, Muslims are much more likely than others in this region to reside in polygamous homes (25% vs. 3%). (For more about polygamy in sub-Saharan Africa, see page 34.)

Muslims are unique in their relatively large share of adherents living in polygamous households. Worldwide, in the countries studied, about 5% of Muslims live in this type of arrangement, which means that more Muslims live in polygamous households than live in solo, single-parent or couple-only households. This estimate may even be conservative because suitable data was not available from some Muslim-majority Persian Gulf countries where polygamy is legal and assumed to be common.³⁹

³⁹ Further, estimates of the share of people in polygamous households may be lower than the true share of people who belong to polygamous families; some polygamous families maintain multiple households.

Muslims rarely live alone or as a couple with no other relatives

% of individuals in each household type

	Two-parent	Extended	Adult child	Polygamous	Couple	Single-parent	Solo
Asia-Pacific							
Muslims	42%	41%	7%	0.6%	4%	3%	1%
Non-Muslims	27	46	11	<0.5	9	2	4
Europe							
Muslims	37	37	6	<0.5	7	5	7
Non-Muslims	26	26	10	<0.5	20	4	13
Middle East-North Africa							
Muslims	57	27	9	1	3	2	0.8
Non-Muslims	44	24	13	<0.5	10	3	5
Sub-Saharan Africa							
Muslims	37	27	0.9	25	2	4	1
Non-Muslims	38	39	2	3	2	8	3
World							
Muslims	43	36	6	5	3	3	1
Non-Muslims	30	39	10	<0.5	10	4	5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Religiously unaffiliated

Like Christians, Muslims and other groups, the religiously unaffiliated have an array of identities and beliefs. Atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any religious group are all classified as unaffiliated.

While the term “nones” has become [widely accepted](#) as shorthand for the religiously unaffiliated, this category also includes people who consider themselves religious and hold a mix of religious beliefs. Some people may choose “no religion” in response to a religious identity question on a survey because no other response option captures their identity. “Nones” may believe in deities, astrology or traditional religions – or they may believe in no supernatural beings whatsoever.

Together, these people represent [16% of the global population](#) and make up the third-largest group. A majority of all religious “nones” live in Asia, with six-in-ten found in China alone. About 12% of the unaffiliated reside in Europe, and 6% are in North America. Fewer than 5% live in each of the remaining regions.

In terms of their share of regional populations, just over one-fifth of people in the Asia-Pacific region are religious “nones,” as are similar shares of Europeans and North Americans. About 8% of the total population in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3% of sub-Saharan Africans and less than 1% of all people in the Middle East-North Africa region have no religious affiliation.

Economic development and its influence on households is particularly relevant for the living arrangements of the religiously unaffiliated. [Many “nones” live in richer countries](#) with relatively high education levels and greater workforce participation, particularly among women. People in such countries typically have easy access to birth control, and, as they spend more years in school and working outside the home, they tend to have children later in life and therefore have less time for childbearing. They also have high life expectancies, which may increase their chances of living without young children in their care. Individuals, couples and small families can afford to live alone, rather than with other relatives.

Unaffiliated: Household size

Since three-quarters of “nones” live in the Asia-Pacific region, norms in this region set the tone for this group worldwide, and China is particularly numerically influential. Indeed, relatively small households in China are one reason that religiously unaffiliated people globally live in substantially smaller households than affiliated people (3.7 vs. 5.2 people, on average). Similar gaps exist in the Asia-Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa, but not in North America, Europe and the Latin America-Caribbean region; affiliated and unaffiliated people do not differ much in their household sizes in those regions.

“Nones” follow typical regional patterns in relative household size, with the largest families in sub-Saharan Africa (5.7) and the smallest in Europe (3.0). At the country level, the unaffiliated have their smallest households in Germany (2.5 people, on average) and their biggest households in Chad (9.2).

Chad is one of only four countries in which the unaffiliated live in bigger households than their affiliated counterparts, and the gap is at least 0.5 people (Chadians with a religious affiliation live in households of 7.8 people, on average).⁴⁰ In other countries, the unaffiliated live in households that are smaller than, or similar in size to, religiously affiliated households.

‘Nones’ live with fewer people than others

Average individual resides in a household of ___ people

	Unaffiliated	Affiliated
Asia-Pacific	3.7	5.3
<i>China</i>	3.8	4.0
Europe	3.0	3.2
Latin America-Caribbean	4.4	4.6
North America	3.2	3.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.7	6.9
World	3.7	5.2

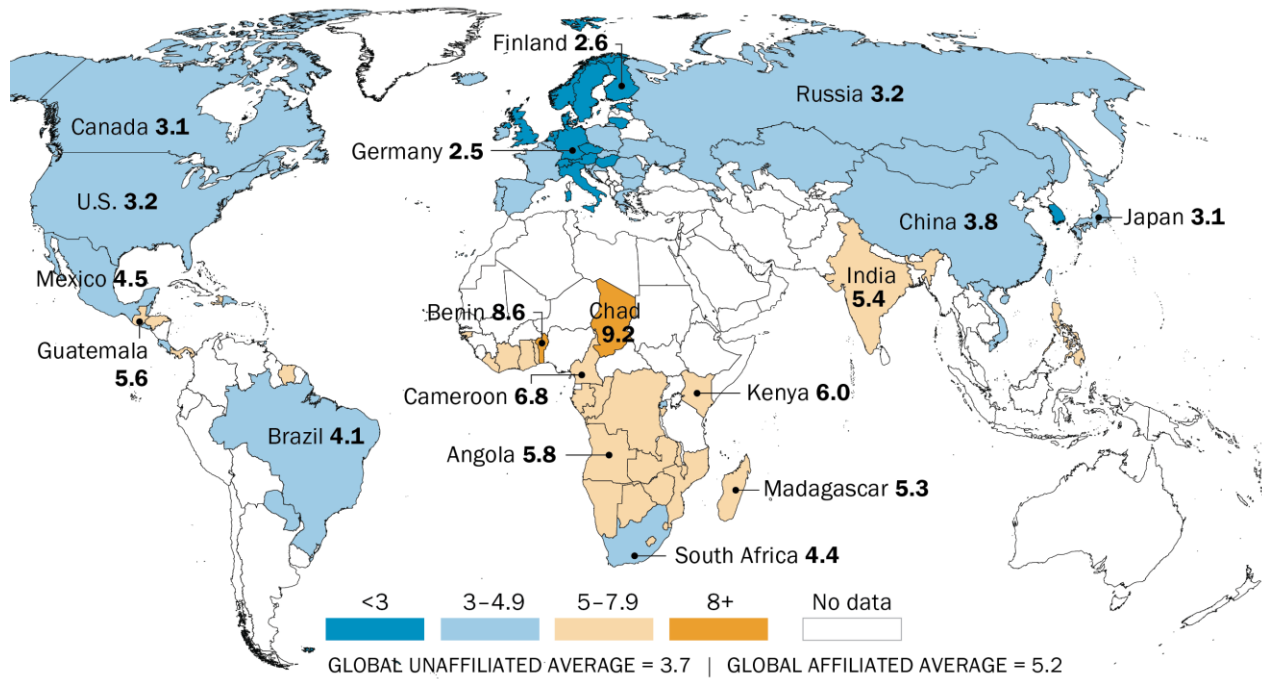
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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⁴⁰ The other countries are Panama, where the average unaffiliated person lives in a household of 6.3 people, compared with 4.7 among the affiliated, Suriname (5.6 vs. 5.1), and Kenya (6.0 vs. 5.5).

The average 'none' in Chad lives with about seven more people than the average 'none' in Germany

Average unaffiliated individual resides in household of ____ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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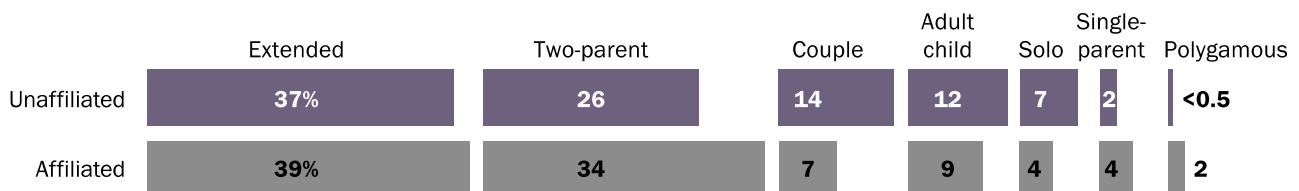
Differences in both household sizes and types are underpinned by the relatively high median age of the unaffiliated population (36 years, compared with 29 years for affiliated people) and their lower-than-average fertility rates. Globally, the average unaffiliated woman is expected to have about 1.6 children in her lifetime, compared with 2.5 for affiliated women.

Unaffiliated: Household types

Living alone is more common among the religiously unaffiliated than among others (7% vs. 4%), as is living in a couple-only arrangement (14% vs. 7%) or in adult child households (12% vs. 9%). Conversely, fewer of the unaffiliated live in two-parent households with minor children (26% vs. 34%) or in single-parent homes (2% vs. 4%). Just over a third of “nones” live in extended-family homes, similar to the share of the affiliated who do so.

‘Nones’ are more likely than others to live alone or in a couple

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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The small share of single-parent families among the unaffiliated worldwide is tied to the concentration of the unaffiliated in the Asia-Pacific region, where living in this type of household is uncommon across religious groups. This is especially true in China and South Korea, where many unaffiliated people live and single-parent families are particularly rare.

In sub-Saharan Africa, “nones” stand out for living alone at the highest rate of any group in the region (7%) – more than three times the share of affiliated people (2%). “Nones” in the Asia-Pacific region also are more likely than others to live alone (6% vs. 3%), as well as in a couple-only households (13% vs. 6%).

Differences between “nones” and others are not as pronounced in Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Europe.

In Europe and North America, household types among ‘nones’ are similar to others

% of individuals in each household type

	Extended	Two-parent	Couple	Adult child	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous
Asia-Pacific							
Unaffiliated	41%	25%	13%	14%	6%	1%	<0.5%
Affiliated	46	32	6	9	3	3	<0.5
<i>China</i>							
Unaffiliated	44	23	13	14	5	1	<0.5
Affiliated	45	21	12	15	5	1	<0.5
Europe							
Unaffiliated	25	26	20	7	14	5	<0.5
Affiliated	25	26	20	11	12	4	<0.5
Latin America-Caribbean							
Unaffiliated	29	38	6	9	5	7	<0.5
Affiliated	32	39	6	10	3	5	<0.5
North America							
Unaffiliated	14	30	18	15	12	9	<0.5
Affiliated	10	34	21	13	11	9	<0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa							
Unaffiliated	39	32	4	3	7	7	5
Affiliated	35	38	2	2	2	6	11
World							
Unaffiliated	37	26	14	12	7	2	<0.5
Affiliated	39	34	7	9	4	4	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Hindus

More than a billion people – almost one-sixth of the world’s population – are Hindu. Hindus are heavily concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region, and more than nine-in-ten of the world’s Hindus live in just one country: India. As a result, the global characteristics of Hindu households are heavily influenced by patterns in that country.

Even though most Hindus live in the Asia-Pacific region, they make up only about a quarter of all people in the world’s most populous region. Hindus represent less than 1% of the population in all other regions.⁴¹

Hindus: Household size

Globally, the average Hindu lives in a fairly large household (5.7 people), with nearly one person more than the average non-Hindu (4.8). In India, however, the reverse is true: Hindus live in slightly *smaller* households than non-Hindus (5.7 vs. 6.2) – even though Hindus’ biggest households are in India.

Hindus in the Latin America-Caribbean region – mostly found in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname – live in slightly smaller households than other Latin Americans (4.4 vs. 4.6). Meanwhile, the small population of Hindus in sub-Saharan Africa – many of whom live in South Africa – have much smaller households than others in the region (3.9 vs. 6.9).

Hindus have larger households than others in Asia-Pacific region – but not in India

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

	Hindu	Non-Hindu
Asia-Pacific	5.7	4.7
India	5.7	6.2
Latin America-Caribbean	4.4	4.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.9	6.9
World	5.7	4.8

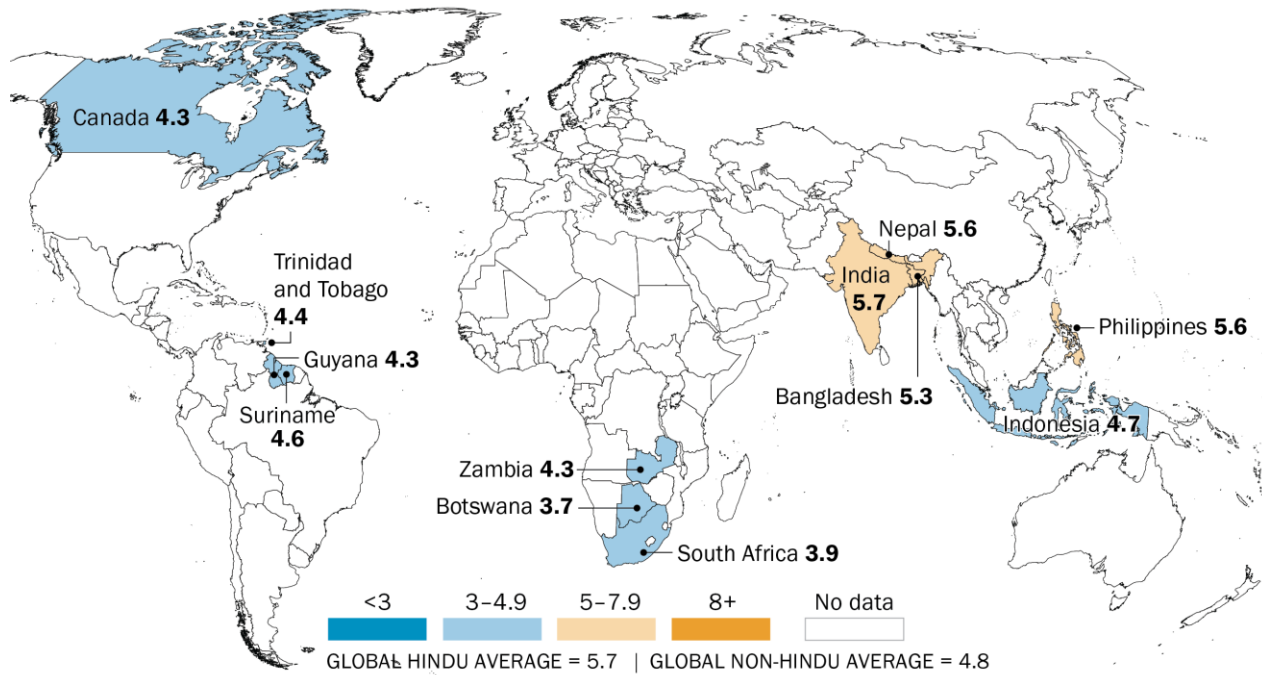
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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⁴¹ Even though Hindus represent very small minorities in sub-Saharan Africa and the Latin America-Caribbean region, they are concentrated in a handful of countries for which large surveys are often available, including South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. As a result, general statements can be made about Hindus in these two regions. At the country level, there were only enough Hindu households surveyed to confidently represent them in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, Botswana, South Africa and Zambia. Due to population weighting, Hindus outside of Asia have very little influence on global patterns.

Hindus have larger households in India than in other countries

Average Hindu resides in a household of ___ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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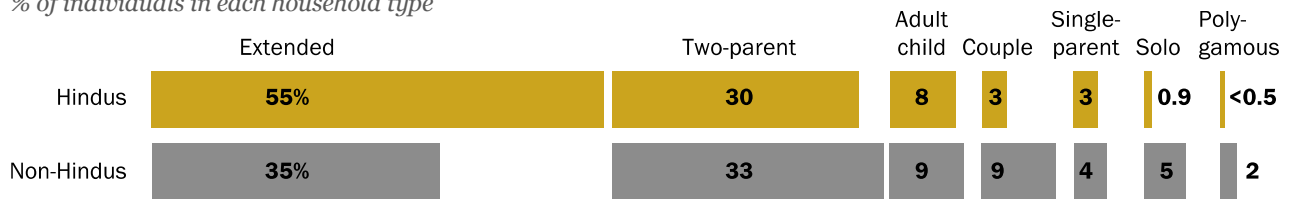
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Hindus: Household types

Globally, Hindus are the only religious group with a majority of people living in extended-family homes, with 55% residing in this type of arrangement. Relatedly, Hindus are less likely than non-Hindus to live in a couple-only arrangement (3% vs. 9%). Hindus, along with Muslims, have the smallest share of adherents who live alone (1% in each group).

Hindus are the only group with a majority living in extended families

% of individuals in each household type



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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In the Asia-Pacific region, Hindus are far more likely than non-Hindus to live in extended families (55% vs. 42%). But this pattern is less pronounced in India, where religious minorities live in arrangements similar to Hindus. Indian Hindus are only a little more likely to live with extended family (55%, compared with 51% for non-Hindus).

Outside Asia, Hindus stand out for high shares in adult child families

% of individuals in each household type

	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Single-parent	Solo	Polygamous
Asia-Pacific							
Hindus	55%	30%	8%	3%	3%	0.9%	<0.5%
Non-Hindus	42	31	11	9	2	4	<0.5
<i>India</i>							
<i>Hindus</i>	55	30	8	3	3	0.9	<0.5
<i>Non-Hindus</i>	51	35	7	2	3	0.6	<0.5
Latin America-Caribbean							
Hindus	35	33	17	7	3	4	<0.5
Non-Hindus	32	39	10	6	5	3	<0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa							
Hindus	32	31	22	10	0.8	3	<0.5
Non-Hindus	35	37	2	2	6	2	11
World							
Hindus	55	30	8	3	3	0.9	<0.5
Non-Hindus	35	33	9	9	4	5	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Buddhists

With about 500 million adherents worldwide, Buddhists represent roughly 7% of the global population. Nearly 99% of Buddhists live in Asia and the Pacific. Buddhists make up just over 10% of all people in the Asia-Pacific region, 1% of North Americans and less than one-half of 1% of people in any other region.⁴²

Buddhists: Household size

Around the world, Buddhists live with at least one fewer person, on average, than non-Buddhists do. This reflects the gap in Asia, where the average Buddhist lives in a household of 3.9 people, compared with 5.1 for non-Buddhists.

About half of the world's Buddhists live in China, where they make up almost one-fifth of the population. In China, Buddhists live in households of 3.8 people, on average, as do non-Buddhists. The second-biggest population of Buddhists by country is in Thailand, where they make up over 90% of the population. In Thailand, Buddhists have an average household size of 4.1, whereas others live in larger households, with an average size of 4.7. (Most non-Buddhists in China are unaffiliated, while most non-Buddhists in Thailand are Muslim.)

Buddhists have their smallest families in Japan (3.0), where their average household sizes are about the same as those of non-Buddhists. In Canada, though, Buddhists live in bigger households than others (3.9 vs. 3.2), which is partly because Canadian Buddhists are more likely than other Canadians to live with extended family.

Buddhists live with fewer people than others

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

	Buddhist	Non-Buddhist
Asia-Pacific	3.9	5.1
<i>China</i>	3.8	3.8
World	3.9	5.0

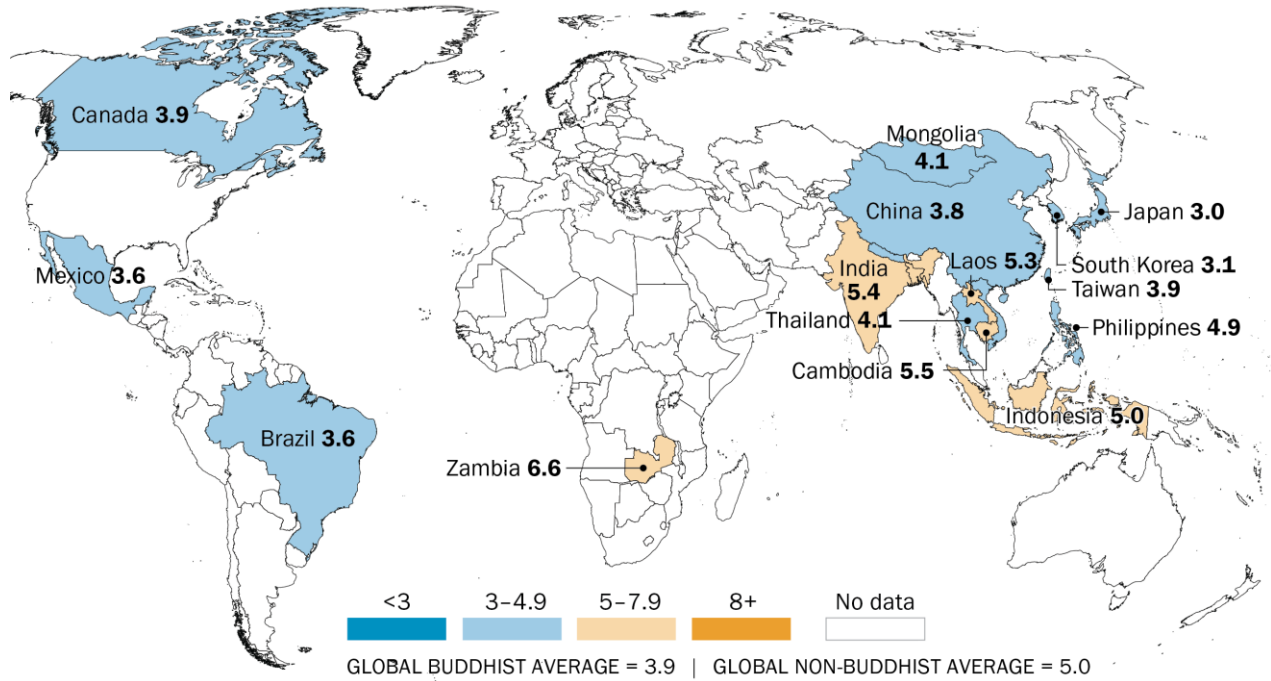
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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⁴² Sufficient data to represent Buddhists outside of Asia was only available for the Latin America-Caribbean region. However, because fewer than 500,000 Buddhists live in that part of the world, *region level* results for Latin America are not presented separately. At the *country level*, results for Buddhists are included in this chapter and in Appendix C for any country where an adequate number of Buddhists were surveyed (18 total).

Buddhists have their smallest households in Japan

Average Buddhist resides in a household of ___ people



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Buddhists: Household types

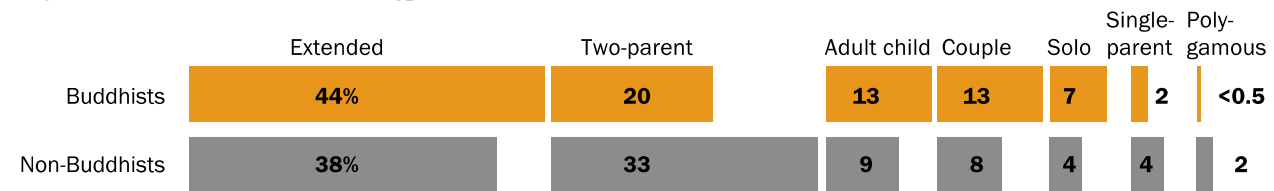
When it comes to household type, the biggest difference between Buddhists and non-Buddhists is in the relatively small percentage of Buddhists who live in two-parent households with minor children. One-fifth of Buddhists globally live in this arrangement, compared with one-third of non-Buddhists. In fact, of all major religious groups, Buddhists have the smallest share of adherents in this household type.

As a group, Buddhists are older than non-Buddhists, with a [median age of 36](#), compared with 29 for non-Buddhists. And the average Buddhist woman is expected to have [1.6 children in her lifetime](#), well below the global figure for non-Buddhists (2.4). These demographic factors, which are themselves influenced by the legacy of the one-child policy in China, help to explain why Buddhists tend to have smaller households and are less likely to live in household types that by definition include minor children.

Buddhists also are unlikely to live in single-parent families (2%), which reflects the rarity of this type of household for all religious groups in the Asia-Pacific countries where most Buddhists are found, and the fact that there are relatively few Buddhists in countries or regions where single parenthood is common. At the country level, about the same share of Buddhists and non-Buddhists live in single-parent households in China, Thailand, Japan and Canada. Within the Asia-Pacific region, Nepal has the biggest share of Buddhists living in single-parent families (9%).

Fewer than a quarter of Buddhists live in two-parent households

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Globally, Buddhists are slightly more likely than others to live in extended-family households (44% vs. 38%), in couple-only households (13% vs. 8%), in adult child homes (13% vs. 9%) and alone (7% vs. 4%). Within the Asia-Pacific region, however, Buddhists and non-Buddhists live with extended family at about the same rate.

Buddhists are more likely than others to live alone or in couples

% of individuals in each household type

	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous
Asia-Pacific							
Buddhists	44%	20%	13%	13%	7%	2%	<0.5%
Non-Buddhists	45	32	10	7	3	2	<0.5
<i>China</i>							
<i>Buddhists</i>	45	19	14	14	6	2	<0.5
<i>Non-Buddhists</i>	44	23	14	12	5	1	<0.5
World							
Buddhists	44	20	13	13	7	2	<0.5
Non-Buddhists	38	33	9	8	4	4	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Jews

Globally and in every region, Jews are a minority religious group; they make up less than one-quarter of 1% of the global population. About 40% of Jews live in Israel, where they represent a large majority of the population, and a similar number live in the United States, where they form roughly 2% of the population.

Jews: Household size

Jews in the Middle East-North Africa region live in bigger households than those in North America.⁴³ In Israel, Jews live in households of 4.3 people, on average (compared with 5.2 for non-Jewish Israelis); in the U.S., those figures are 3.0 and 3.4, respectively.⁴⁴

Of all religious groups analyzed for this report, Jews are the oldest, with a [median age of 37](#), compared with 30 among non-Jews. The comparatively high percentage of Jews who live alone or with only a spouse or partner can be partially attributed to their older age.

Jews: Household types

Globally, Jews have the biggest share of adherents in couple-only households and are more than twice as likely as non-Jews to live in this arrangement (21% vs. 8%). Jews are more likely to live as couples in the U.S. than in Israel (30% vs. 13%), and in both places, they are more likely than non-Jews to live with only a spouse or partner. Jews also are unique in that the couple-only household type is their second-most common (behind the two-parent family with minor children); in all other groups, two-parent and extended-family are the most common household types.

Israeli Jews have much smaller households than others in the Middle East

Average individual resides in a household of ____ people

	Jews	Non-Jews
Middle East-North Africa	4.3	6.3
<i>Israel</i>	4.3	5.2
North America	3.0	3.4
<i>United States</i>	3.0	3.4
World	3.7	4.9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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⁴³ Sufficient data to represent Jews was also available in the Latin America-Caribbean region. However, because fewer than 500,000 Jews live in that part of the world, region level results for Latin America are not presented separately. At the country level, results for Jews are included in Appendix C for all six countries where an adequate number of Jews were surveyed. These include Brazil, Canada, Israel, Mexico, Romania and the U.S.

⁴⁴ This analysis only includes people who identify religiously as Jewish. A previous [Pew Research Center study](#) found that about one-in-five U.S. Jews (more broadly defined) describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," but nonetheless say they consider themselves Jewish in other ways, such as culturally, ethnically or by family background. They would not be included as Jews in this analysis, but rather as religious "nones."

Jews stand out for living in extended families much less often than others

% of individuals in each household type, all countries combined

	Two-parent	Couple	Extended	Adult child	Solo	Single-parent	Poly-gamous
Jews	32%	21	17	12	10	4	<0.5
Non-Jews	33%	8	38	9	4	4	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Jews have a much smaller share than others living in extended families (17% vs. 38%). Again, there are big differences in the experiences of U.S. Jews and Israeli Jews: While 29% of Israeli Jews live with extended family, only 6% of U.S. Jews do. Conversely, U.S. Jews live alone at about twice the rate of Israeli Jews (13% vs. 6%).

Israeli Jews much more likely than U.S. Jews to live with extended family

% of individuals in each household type

	Two-parent	Couple	Extended	Adult child	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous
Middle East-North Africa							
Jews	35%	13%	29%	13%	6%	3%	<0.5%
Non-Jews	57	3	27	9	0.8	2	1
<i>Israel</i>							
Jews	35	13	29	13	6	3	<0.5
Non-Jews	48	6	34	6	4	2	1
North America							
Jews	30	30	6	11	13	5	<0.5
Non-Jews	33	20	11	14	11	9	<0.5
<i>United States</i>							
Jews	30	30	6	11	13	5	<0.5
Non-Jews	33	20	11	14	11	9	<0.5
World							
Jews	32	21	17	12	10	4	<0.5
Non-Jews	33	8	38	9	4	4	2

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Sidebar: Studies often show links between religion and family life

Researchers who explore the connections between religion and household patterns often focus on major life events: marriage, divorce and childbearing. Their findings suggest that several measures of religion – a person’s affiliation, how important religion is to them and how often they participate in their congregation – have some influence on living arrangements. While many of the studies have been conducted in the U.S., using largely Christian samples, there is a growing body of research focused on other parts of the world.⁴⁵ Some of these findings are presented here.

Marriage and divorce

Marriage, divorce and childbearing patterns are tied to religious identity and participation. In the U.S., evangelical Protestants are more likely than members of some other religious groups, including Catholics and mainline Protestants, to marry as young adults. Young evangelical Protestants also are less likely than others to live with a romantic partner outside of marriage.⁴⁶ In the UK, the religiously affiliated, especially those who regularly attend religious services, also are less likely than “nones” to cohabit.⁴⁷

Muslims are especially likely to marry: Studies have found that Muslims in many countries around the world are more likely than Christians to be married, and that in nations with larger shares of Muslims, women tie the knot at a younger age.⁴⁸ Premarital sex is rarer among Muslims, and both Muslims and Buddhists are relatively unlikely to engage in extramarital sex.⁴⁹

The connection between divorce and religion also has interested researchers. Married “nones” are more likely than their religiously affiliated peers to go through a divorce at some point in their lives, according to a meta-analysis of 10 peer-reviewed research projects.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, U.S. states with bigger shares of religious conservatives experience relatively high divorce rates, even though evangelical Protestants tend to emphasize the sanctity of marriage. This seeming contradiction may be explained by the tendency among conservative Protestants to marry at a younger age.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Mahony, Annette. 2010. [“Religion in Families 1999 to 2009: A Relational Spirituality Framework.”](#) Journal of Marriage and Family.

⁴⁶ Eggebeen, David, and Jeffrey Dew. 2009. [“The Role of Religion in Adolescence for Family Formation in Young Adulthood.”](#) Journal of Marriage and Family. Also see Keister, Lisa A., 2011. “Faith and Money: How Religious Belief Contributes to Wealth and Poverty.” Also see Uecker, Jeremy E., and Charles E. Stokes. 2008. [“Early Marriage in the United States.”](#) Journal of Marriage and Family.

⁴⁷ Village, Andrew, Emyr Williams, and Leslie Francis. 2010. [“Living in Sin? Religion and Cohabitation in Britain 1985-2005.”](#) Marriage & Family Review.

⁴⁸ Fieder, Martin, Susanne Huber, Elmar Pichl, Bernard Wallner, and Horst Seidler. 2018. [“Marriage gap in Christians and Muslims.”](#) Journal of Biosocial Science. Also see Carmichael, Sarah. 2011. [“Marriage and power: Age at first marriage and spousal age gap in lesser developed countries.”](#) History of the Family. The authors adjust for regional differences in these outcomes with the use of clustered standard errors and controls for standard family types and other relevant nation-level attributes.

⁴⁹ Adamczyk, Amy, and Brittany E. Hayes. 2012. [“Religion and Sexual Behaviors: Understanding the Influence of Islamic Cultures and Religious Affiliation for Explaining Sex Outside of Marriage.”](#) American Sociological Review.

⁵⁰ Mahoney, Annette, Kenneth I. Pargament, Nalini Tarakeshwar, and Aaron B. Swank. 2001. [“Religion in the Home in the 1980s and 1990s: A Meta-Analytic Review and Conceptual Analysis of Links Between Religion, Marriage, and Parenting.”](#) Journal of Family Psychology.

⁵¹ Glass, Jennifer, and Philip Levchak. 2014. [“Red States, Blue States, and Divorce: Understanding the Impact of conservative Protestantism on Regional Divorce Rates.”](#) American Journal of Sociology.

Childbearing

In the baby boom years after World War II, U.S. Catholics tended to have more children than non-Catholics. But by 1979, Princeton demographers noted that this gap had nearly disappeared and declared “The end of Catholic fertility.”⁵²

Around the globe, Muslims have higher fertility rates than Christians on average.⁵³ Muslim women’s low educational attainment is a likely factor; demographers find that higher educational attainment among women is tied to lower fertility rates.⁵⁴ Even though fertility rates generally are declining in Muslim-majority nations, the above-average number of children born to Muslim women contributes to Muslims’ larger household sizes, as described elsewhere in this report.⁵⁵

Buddhism appears to have a unique association with procreation compared with the other major world religions: An analysis of fertility data in six Asian nations found that Buddhist affiliation was either unrelated to the number of children born or associated with having *fewer* children. This may be because Buddhism, unlike Abrahamic religions, does not have a specifically pro-natalist doctrine.⁵⁶ (For more on religious teachings about family life, see the sidebar on page 22.)

In Western Europe, women who belong to religious groups and attend services more often tend to have more children.⁵⁷

⁵² Westoff, Charles F., and Elise F. Jones. 1979. “[The End of ‘Catholic’ Fertility.](#)” *Demography*. Also see Westoff, Charles F., and Raymond H. Potvin. 1967. “College Women and Fertility Values.”

⁵³ See Chapter 1 of Pew Research Center’s 2015 report “[The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.](#)”

⁵⁴ See Pew Research Center’s 2016 report “[Religion and Education Around the World.](#)” Some research finds that variation in the educational attainment of Muslim women is largely explained by the wealth of countries in which Muslim women live. See McClendon, David, Conrad Hackett, Michaela Potancokova, Marcin Stonawski, and Vegard Skirbekk. 2018. “[Women’s Education in the Muslim World.](#)” *Population and Development Review*.

⁵⁵ Eberstadt, Nicholas, and Apoorva Shah. 2012. “[Fertility Decline in the Muslim World.](#)” *Policy Review*.

⁵⁶ Skirbekk, Vegard, Marcin Stonawski, Setsuya Fukuda, Thomas Spoorenberg, Conrad Hackett, and Raya Muttarak. 2015. “[Is Buddhism the low fertility religion of Asia?](#)” *Demographic Research*.

⁵⁷ Peri-Rotem, Nitzan. 2016. “[Religion and Fertility in Western Europe: Trends Across Cohorts in Britain, France and the Netherlands.](#)” *European Journal of Population*.

3. Household patterns by age and gender

People move between different types of households throughout their lives. Someone born into a two-parent home might become a member of an extended-family household when a grandmother moves in, live as a couple with their spouse in middle adulthood and end up in a solo household after that partner dies.

Differences in living arrangements are particularly striking for children under 18 and adults who are 60 and older. While someone in their 30s can easily be found in any household type, it is unusual for anyone under 18 to live solo, or for someone in their 60s to raise a child alone.

Moreover, examining age groups separately is important because a society's age composition affects living arrangements for the overall population. Countries with longer life expectancy, for example, are more likely to have people living as couples without children, in part because parents may live for decades after their children move out. Places with higher fertility are more likely to have two-parent and extended-family homes simply because there are more children overall per household.

Sex is another variable associated with living arrangements, both within religious groups and across them. Women are more likely than men to be single parents, for example, and also more likely to live alone in later years.

Earlier in this report, all age and gender groups were included when analyzing shares of people in different types of households. This chapter examines the differences, by religion and region, between people within the same phase of life, and of the same gender.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Surveys available in most countries do not record the religious affiliation of children, so children are typically categorized using the head of household's religion as a proxy. In countries where children's religious identity is collected (such as India), it rarely differs from that of their parents. For more details, see the Methodology on page 94.

Living arrangements of children

Children under 18 make up about a third of the world’s population – and in the fast-growing regions of sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa, they account for 48% and 37%, respectively.

For children around the world, sharing a home with two parents – whether biological, step, adoptive or foster, married or unmarried – is the most common arrangement (51%). But many children also live in extended-family homes (38%), whether with aunts and uncles, grandparents, or other family members aside from parents and siblings.

A little more than half of Christians, Muslims and

“nones” under 18 live with two parents, while fewer than four-in-ten among these groups reside in extended-family homes. The pattern is reversed for Hindu and Buddhist children, who, like their adult counterparts, are more likely to live with extended family. Roughly half of Hindu children live with extended families (52%), while about four-in-ten live in two-parent homes (43%). As has been noted before, 94% of Hindus live in India, where extended-family households are common overall. Still, Hindu children in India are even more likely than their Christian, Muslim or unaffiliated peers to live with extended family.

Single-parent homes are not common in general, with fewer than one-in-ten children around the world living with one parent and no other adults.⁵⁹ But children from Christian families are about twice as likely as non-Christian children to reside in single-parent households. And the U.S. has

Most children in Christian, Muslim and unaffiliated homes live with two parents

% of children under 18 in each household type, all countries combined

	Two-parent	Extended	Single-parent	Polygamous
Christians	52%	32%	11%	1%
Muslims	53	33	5	7
Unaffiliated	54	39	7	<0.5
Hindus	43	52	5	<0.5
Buddhists	45	50	5	<0.5
All	51	38	7	3

Note: Due to sample size limitations in the United States, Jewish children are only adequately represented in Israel and therefore not analyzed at the global level.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details

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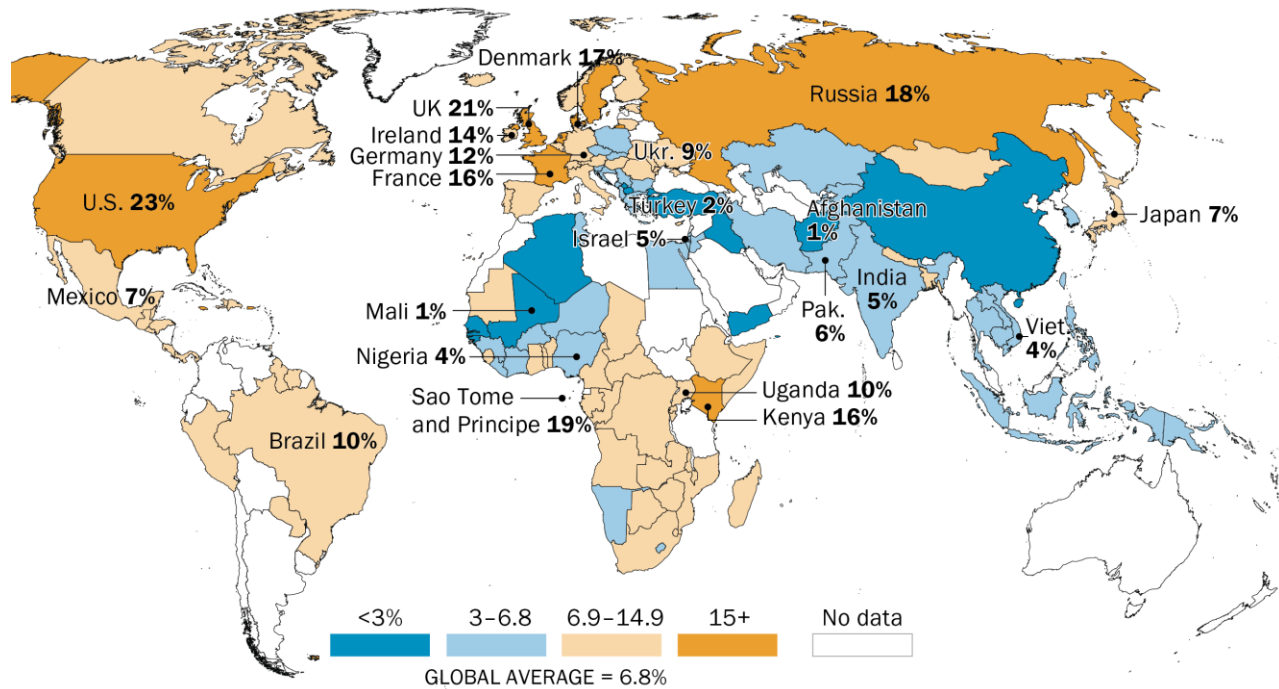
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⁵⁹ Incidence rates for single-parent households may be lower in this report than in other analyses that use a broader definition. Here, single-parent households include one adult and at least one biological, step or foster child under 18. Adult children may be present, but this classification does not include households that contain other relatives or non-relatives. Research using a more expansive definition may classify homes that also have other adults present (such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or non-relatives) as single-parent households.

the highest rates of children living in single-parent households, with almost a quarter of Christian (as well as unaffiliated) children living this way.⁶⁰

U.S. children are more likely than children elsewhere to live in single-parent homes

% of children under 18 in single-parent households



Note: Single-parent households include one adult and at least one biological, step or foster child under 18. Adult children may be present, but no other relatives or non-relatives.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

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⁶⁰ Throughout this report, the U.S. usually refers to the 50 states and District of Columbia; results for the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico are presented separately. However, Puerto Rico has a similar share of children living in single-parent households (25%) to the rest of the U.S. (23%).

Globally, the share of Muslim children living in single-parent homes is smaller than the percentage residing in polygamous families (5% vs. 7%). Among other religious groups, very small shares of children – 1% or less – live in polygamous households.⁶¹ Growing up in polygamous households is relatively common in sub-Saharan Africa, where 12% of children live in such arrangements – including an even higher share of children in Muslim families (27%).

Relatively few North American children live in extended families

% of children under 18 in each household type

	Two-parent	Extended	Single-parent	Polygamous
Asia-Pacific	50%	45%	4%	<0.5%
Europe	58	27	13	<0.5
Latin America-Caribbean	55	32	9	<0.5
Middle East-North Africa	71	24	3	1
North America	67	8	23	<0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	42	34	8	12
World	51	38	7	3

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
“Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

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Living alone or as a couple is very rare for children, though not unheard of. In South Korea, about 5% of Christian and unaffiliated children under 18 live in solo households.

⁶¹ The 7% figure for Muslim children in polygamous households is likely conservative because data is not available from most Muslim-majority Gulf countries where polygamy is legal and assumed to be somewhat common, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Living arrangements of people 60 and older

People in later adulthood have many things in common, no matter what religious group they belong to or where in the world they live. Most of them have finished bearing and raising children, and many have experienced the loss of a spouse, a need for caretaking, the birth of a new generation of family members or some other shift that causes a change in their living arrangements.

Yet adults over age 60 of different religions and in different parts of the world vary widely in their living arrangements. In addition to some of the other factors discussed in this report that are related to household patterns (such as religion, geography and economics) living arrangements for older people are particularly tied to another measure of prosperity – life expectancy. (See chart on page 88.)

Among seniors, Hindus are the least likely to live alone

% of individuals ages 60 and older in each household type

	Christians	Muslims	Unaffiliated	Hindus	Buddhists	All
Extended	23%	53%	35%	72%	36%	38%
Couple	38	15	38	13	34	31
Solo	23	7	17	4	18	16
Adult child	12	14	9	8	12	11
Two-parent	2	7	<0.5	2	<0.5	2
Polygamous	<0.5	3	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	0.5
Single-parent	0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5

Note: Due to sample size limitation in the United States, Jewish adults ages 60 and older are only adequately represented in Israel and therefore not analyzed at the global level.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

“Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World”

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Around the world, living with extended family is the most common arrangement for people ages 60 and older, even though fewer than half of all older adults globally (38%) live in this household type. Living as a couple is the second most common experience (31%), followed by living alone (16%).

Hindu and Muslim seniors are particularly likely to live with extended family. Almost three-quarters of Hindus (72%) live in this type of arrangement, including in multigenerational households. Hindus are concentrated in India and other Asia-Pacific countries where extended-family households are relatively common.

By contrast, fewer than a quarter of Christians ages 60 and older globally (23%) live with extended family, while an identical share of Christian seniors around the world live alone – the highest of

any religious group analyzed. Among older Christian and unaffiliated adults, living as a couple is the most common arrangement (38% each).

Muslims have a higher-than-average share of adults over 60 who are still raising minor children without extended family, with 7% of older Muslims living in two-parent or single-parent households combined – equal to the share who live alone.

Europe and North America have the largest shares of older adults who live alone, with a quarter or more found in solo households; these regions also have the highest percentages of older adults living as couples, with just under half in both regions found in that type of arrangement, while relatively few older Europeans and North Americans live with extended family.

Half of older adults in sub-Saharan Africa, but few in North America, live with extended family

% of people ages 60 and older in each household type

	Asia-Pacific	Europe	Latin America- Caribbean	Middle East- North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
Extended	50%	16%	41%	39%	7%	51%	38%
Couple	27	46	20	18	47	9	31
Solo	11	28	12	9	26	9	16
Adult child	10	8	20	25	14	6	11
Two-parent	2	<0.5	3	8	3	11	2
Polygamous	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	0.7	<0.5	8	0.5
Single-parent	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	2	1	<0.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
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Some of these differences are tied to levels of economic development, particularly as measured by life expectancy. Older adults are more likely to live alone or as couples in countries where an average person can expect to live more than 70 years. In countries where lives are shorter, seniors tend to live with other family members instead. Life expectancy is often linked to other markers of prosperity within a country, so older adults who can expect to live into their 80s also tend to live in countries where living alone is more affordable and sources other than family may provide help in meeting basic needs.

Cultural norms also may play a role; in Western countries it is often expected that seniors will live alone.⁶² In India and other parts of the world it may be seen as a normal arrangement (or even a responsibility) for adult children to take their aging parents into their home. One example of this can be seen among immigrant communities in the West: In Canada, almost half of Hindus ages 60 and older (who are often immigrants or the children of immigrants from South Asia) live with extended families (47%), more than four times the share of Canadian seniors overall (10%).

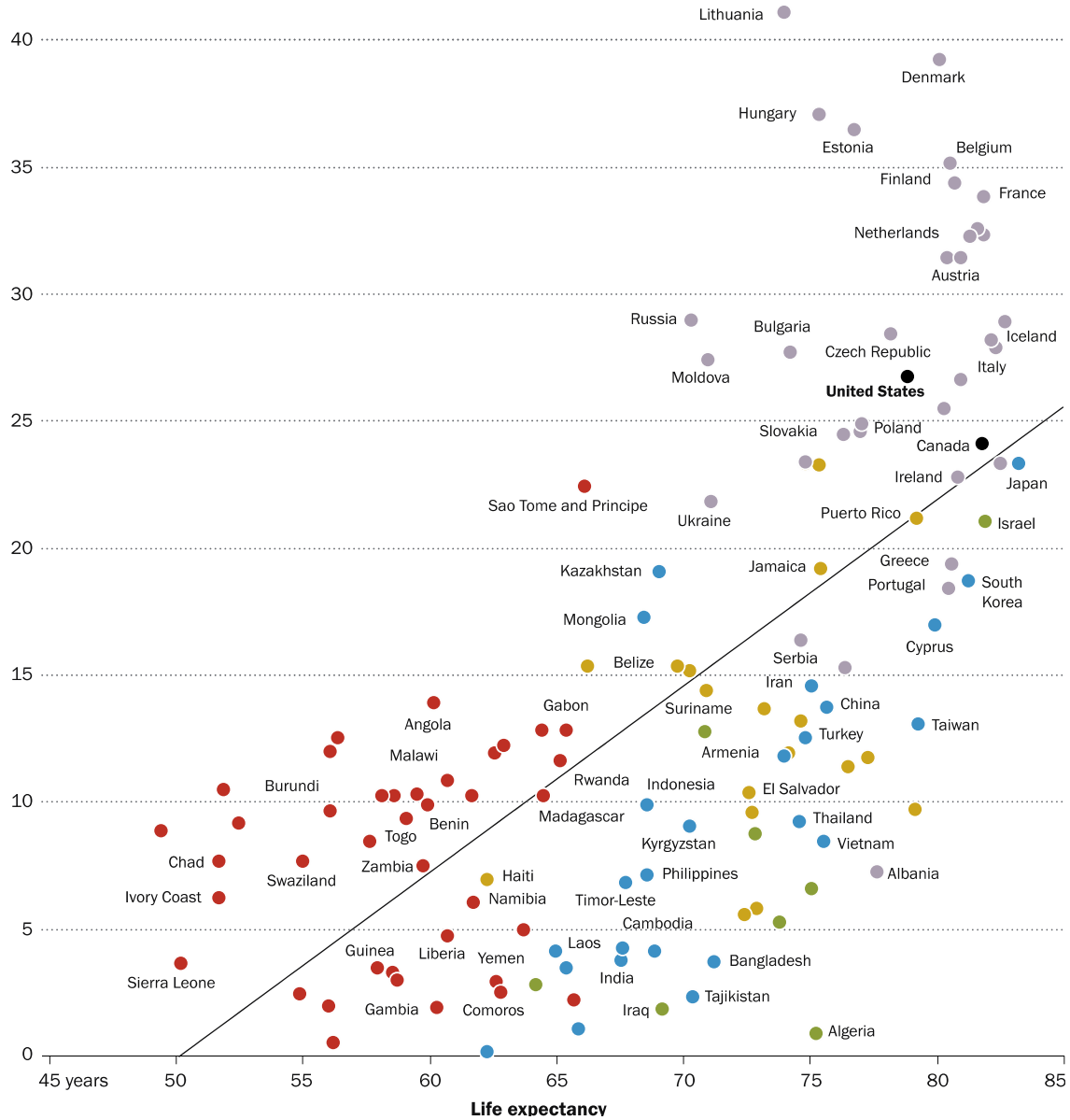
⁶² Institutional populations, including people living in nursing homes, are outside the scope of this report, which analyzes the distribution of people in the world's household population. It may be more common for seniors to [live in nursing homes](#) in Western countries than is the case elsewhere.

Older adults live alone more often in places with longer life expectancy

% of individuals ages 60 and older in solo households

● Asia-Pacific ● Europe ● Latin America-Caribbean ● Middle East-North Africa ● North America ● Sub-Saharan Africa

45% living solo



Note: Life expectancy data is not available for Kosovo.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. Life expectancy data come from the United Nations.

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Experiences of men and women

Men and women around the world experience households differently, and these gender gaps sometimes vary by religious affiliation. Gender and religion play a role when it comes to three measures in particular: The age gap between cohabiting partners, the prevalence of single-parent households, and the rate of living alone in old age.

Spousal age gap

Men tend to be older than their wives or female cohabiting partners by a global average of about four years.⁶³ Around the world, Jewish couples tend to have the smallest age gaps (2.1 years, on average) while Muslims have the biggest (6.6 years). Across all groups, the gaps are smallest in Europe and North America (less than three years), and biggest in sub-Saharan Africa (8.6 years). Of the 130 countries analyzed, there is no place where male partners are younger than their female partners, on average, or even the same age.

The countries with the world's widest age gaps are all in sub-Saharan Africa and have high rates of polygamy; they include Gambia and Guinea, both with average gaps of around 14 years. The countries with the narrowest age gaps are largely in Europe (including the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Estonia), in addition to the U.S., China and Mongolia, all with gaps of around two years.

Age gaps between partners are widest in Africa, particularly among Muslims

Women are younger than their husbands or male cohabiting partners by an average of ____ years

	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East-North Africa	Asia-Pacific	Latin America-Caribbean	Europe	North America	World
Christians	7.1	6.6	3.0	3.6	2.6	2.2	3.8
Muslims	11.6	6.2	5.7	*	5.0	*	6.6
Unaffiliated	6.4	*	2.2	3.8	2.4	2.2	2.3
Hindus	3.5	*	5.6	4.0	*	*	5.6
Buddhists	*	*	2.9	3.5	*	*	2.9
Jews	*	3.1	*	*	*	1.2	2.1
All	8.6	6.1	4.0	3.6	2.7	2.2	4.2

* Religion-region combinations in which small populations and/or survey samples prohibit reliable analysis. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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⁶³ Same-sex partners are not included in this analysis.

Single parents

All over the world, women in middle adulthood (ages 35 to 59) are more likely than their male counterparts to live in single-parent homes.

The gender gap in single-parenthood in this age group is widest among Christians. Worldwide, about 2% of middle-aged Christian men live in single-parent homes, while about 7% of women do. On the other end of the spectrum, Buddhist men and women in this age group do not differ much on this measure.

These patterns partly reflect the large share of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa, where single-parent households are relatively common, and the big shares of Buddhists in Asia, where such households are rare. Middle-aged men tend to live in single-parent homes at about the same rate all over the world and regardless of religion – any differences in rates of single parenthood affect women almost exclusively. Middle-aged women in sub-Saharan Africa have the largest share in single-parent households, with about 9% in this arrangement – although North American (8%) and Latin American (7%) women are not far behind.

Women live as single parents more often than men

% of individuals ages 35 to 59 in single-parent households



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
 "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

Aging alone

Around the world, women ages 60 and older are only slightly more likely to live in a couple (27%) than to live alone (20%). Older men, however, are *three times* as likely to live in a couple (36%) than they are to reside alone (11%).

This pattern, which applies across religious groups and country borders, is tied to life expectancy: Because women tend to live at least a few years longer than men, larger shares of older women – in every religious group and in every region – live alone. The tendency of women to live alone in advanced age is a result of both women’s greater longevity and their tendency to form relationships with men who are older.⁶⁴

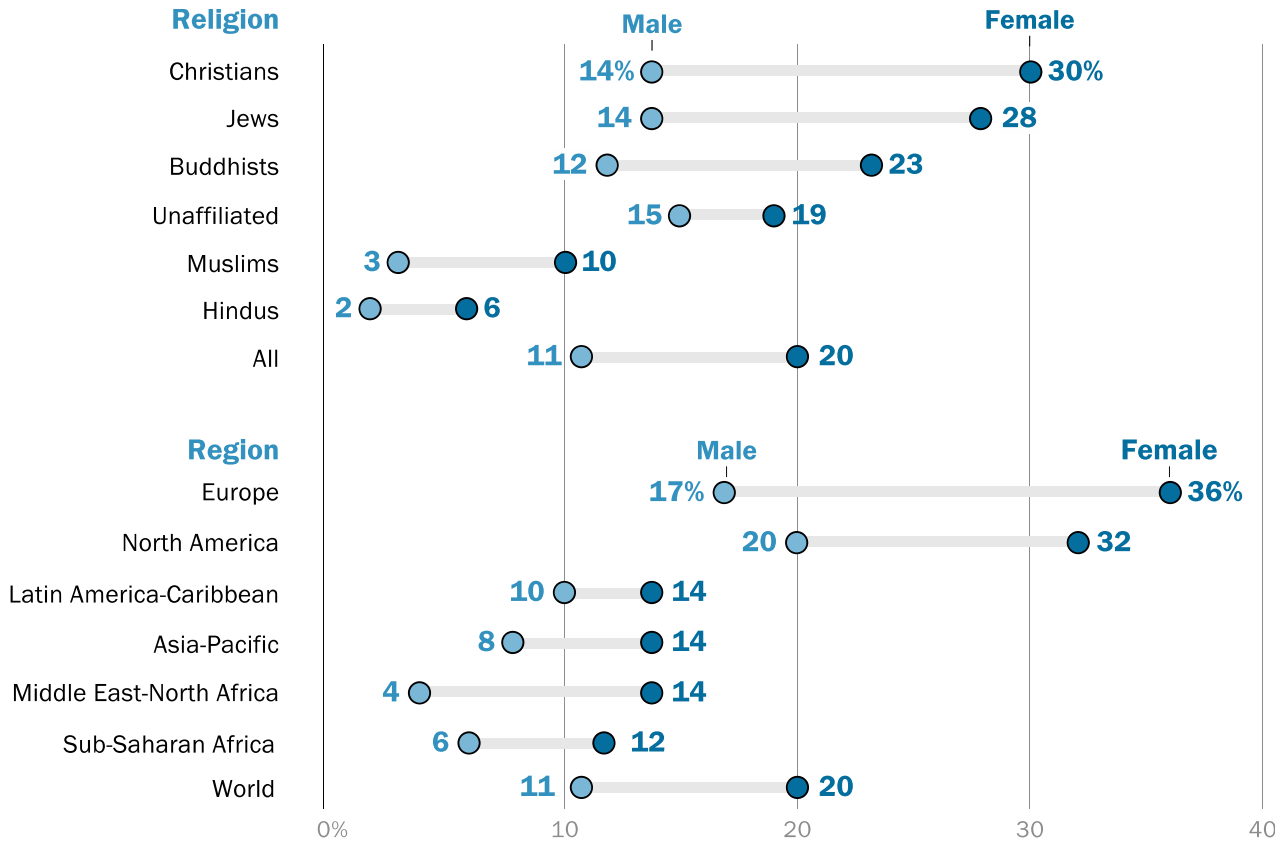
Christians have the widest gap in rates of living alone, with older women found in solo households twice as often as older men (30% vs. 14%). Among Hindus ages 60 and older, on the other hand, few live alone regardless of gender (6% of women and 2% of men). Thus, while greater female life expectancy is universal, the living arrangements of widows are not.

In sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle-East North Africa region, women and men also differ in their frequency of living in two-parent households with minor children. Owing to the relatively large age gaps between partners in these regions, it is not uncommon for men in their 60s or beyond to live with a partner and children under 18. In the Middle East and North Africa, 14% of men ages 60 and older and 1% of women in this category live in two-parent households, and in sub-Saharan Africa, 19% of older men and 2% of older women live in such an arrangement.

⁶⁴ For example, if a couple begins living together when the woman is 25 and the man is 30, the woman lives to age 87 and the man to age 80, the woman will live 12 years (ages 75 to 87) without her partner.

Older women live alone more often than older men

% of individuals ages 60 and older in solo households



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. See Methodology for details.
 "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Appendix A: Methodology

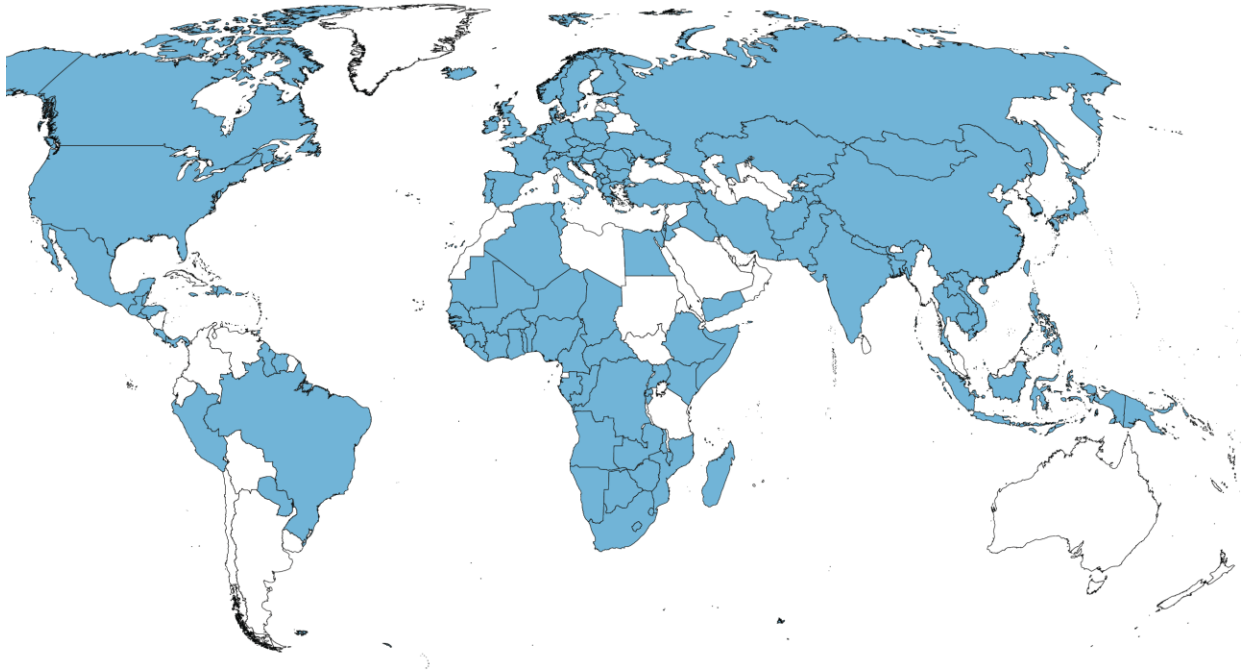
Data sources and analytical approaches used in the report are described in this section.

First, this appendix provides shares of the populations that are represented in the study and details on the underlying source data. It goes on to explain how household types were categorized based on relationships in household rosters and how household sizes were derived. Finally, it describes adjustments made to the data, weighting procedures and data aggregation.

Coverage

130 countries included in study

Countries with available household roster and religion data



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
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Source data for this study comes from 130 countries, which are home to 91% of the global population. By region, the study covers countries representing 95% of the total population of the Asia-Pacific region, 97% of Europe, 69% of the Latin America-Caribbean region, 59% of the Middle East-North Africa region, more than 99% of North America and 92% of sub-Saharan Africa.

Data underlying the analyses in this report comes from a variety of censuses and surveys, all gathered since 2010. The analyses required data on religious affiliation and household rosters – lists of every member of a household along with their age, sex and relationship to the survey respondent. Rosters were used to code household type (see more on household relationships and type below).

In countries where data sources that included religion were not available but more than 95% of the population belongs to the same group, the religious affiliation of the overwhelming majority of the country's population was assigned to the sample for analysis.

When possible, census data is used as the source of country data. However, when census data on both religion and household composition was unavailable – many countries including the United States do not measure religion on their census – the analysis relies on well-established nationally representative sources, such the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and European Social Survey (ESS). The best available data source with information on both religion and household composition was used for each country. Household rosters and religion variables were standardized and aggregated across surveys; more detail on those processes can be found below. The aggregated dataset for the 130 countries of this study includes 82.6 million individuals from 20.8 million households. For a full list of sources used by country, see Appendix B.

Although Australia and New Zealand do measure religion and household composition in their censuses, individual-level census microdata from these countries are not readily available (microdata from many country censuses are available via the IPUMS International archive). Due to this lack of readily available data, results for Australia and New Zealand were not obtained.

Results are reported only for groups that reach certain coverage thresholds. For the sake of reliability, only religious groups represented by at least 125 households have statistics reported separately at the country level. Within those households, researchers required a minimum of 125 people who met the relevant demographic criteria for analyses of household characteristics by age or sex. For example, more than 125 Jewish respondents in the United States provided information on their living arrangements, so their household patterns are presented. However, these same households contained fewer than 125 Jewish children, so living arrangements of Jewish children in the U.S. are not reported in the discussion of age patterns in Chapter 3. To obtain an adequate sample to represent Jews in the U.S., Pew Research Center aggregated 2010 to 2016 waves of the General Social Survey (GSS). Data for every other country came from a single wave.

There are two thresholds for inclusion of religious groups at the regional level: There must be a minimum of 500,000 people of that religion living in the region and the countries in which a sufficient number of households were surveyed (125 or more) must represent a minimum of one-third of that religious group's regional population. There were two cases in which the latter condition was met but not the former: Buddhists in the Latin America-Caribbean region, where appropriate data with large samples was available but only about 430,000 of the world's Buddhists reside (out of about 500 million Buddhists worldwide), and Jews in the same region, where only about 480,000 Jews reside out of over 14 million worldwide.

Estimates of the size of religious group populations come from calculations made for Pew Research Center's 2015 report "[The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050](#)." In the example of U.S. Jews, more than 125 Jewish households were surveyed in both the U.S. and Canada, the countries where more than 99% of the North American Jewish population resides, so coverage is sufficient and results are broken out for individuals living in Jewish households in North America.⁶⁵ However, results for Hindus living in North America are not reported separately because most (80%) of the region's Hindus live in the U.S., which lacks sufficient data (fewer than 125 households) on the composition of Hindu households. Even when respondents from particular groups are not reported separately, they are still included in analyses of the overall population – the "all" category – both at the country level and the regional level. At the global level, at least 85% of the population of each major religious group is represented in the study.

⁶⁵ The North America region also includes Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre and Miquelon. Less than 1% of the regional population resides in these territories, where appropriate data on households and religion was not available. Mexico is included in the Latin America-Caribbean region.

Descriptions of household patterns at regional level are based on data representing at least one-third of a population

% of populations represented in available surveys

	Christians	Muslims	Unaffiliated	Hindus	Buddhists	Jews	All
Asia-Pacific	87%	93%	96%	>99%	87%	*	95%
Europe	97	48	97	*	*	*	97
Latin America-Caribbean	70	*	58	89	61	38	69
Middle East-North Africa	34	60	*	*	*	>99	59
North America	>99	*	>99	*	*	>99	>99
Sub-Saharan Africa	92	92	91	36	*	*	92
World	88	85	95	98	86	86	91

* Too few households were surveyed within the region to adequately represent their religious group.

Note: Results for underrepresented groups are not reported, but members are included in analyses of overall populations. In rare cases, sample sizes are sufficient to represent a group overall, but not a subset of that group (e.g. Jewish children in North America). Those cases are noted in discussions of subsets by age.

Source: Data on the total population size of religious groups in each region from Pew Research Center's 2015 report "The Future of World Religions."

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Included countries by region

There is sufficient data to report on:

- 26 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region: Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey and Vietnam
- 35 countries in Europe: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom
- 19 countries and territories in the Latin America-Caribbean region: Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago

- Eight countries and territories in the Middle East-North Africa region: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Tunisia and Yemen
- Two countries in North America: Canada and the United States
- 40 countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia⁶⁶, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁶⁶ Due to conflict in Somalia, source surveys were only conducted in two regions representing roughly 45% of Somalia's population. Somalia's population was reduced accordingly prior to aggregating to the regional and global levels.

Variables

Age and sex variables used in this study were readily available across all sources. Other variables, including household religion, size and type were constructed through the processes described below.

Household religion

In this study, results are reported for six major religious groups: Christians, Muslims, the religiously unaffiliated, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews. People affiliated with other religious groups are included in overall global, regional and country-level results, but they are not reported on separately.

Members of a household tend to share the same religion, but there is variation in the extent to which available data distinctly measures the religion of each household member. In most countries covered in this report, religion is measured for the respondent but not for other household members. As a result, in each of these countries, the religion of the respondent was assigned to everyone in the household.

However, in the 20 countries shown in the adjacent table, religions of all household members ages 15 and older were collected, allowing researchers to categorize all household members in these countries according to their *own* religious affiliation. (As this table shows, multi-religion households are generally rare. In India, for example, 98% of households are single-religion. But there are some exceptions: In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, nearly one-in-five households have members whose religious affiliation is different from the respondent's.)

All children under 15 covered in this report are categorized using the respondent's religion. Few sources gather information on children under 15 unless they are household heads (and therefore also respondents) themselves. That is an extremely rare occurrence; it affects less than 0.1% of children.

Single-religion households are in the overwhelming majority

% of single- and multi-religion households

Country	Single-religion	Multi-religion
Papua New Guinea	>99%	<0.5%
Philippines	99	1
Bangladesh	99	1
India	98	2
Indonesia	98	2
Albania	97	3
Armenia	96	4
Mexico	96	4
South Africa	95	5
Rwanda	93	7
Ireland	93	7
Brazil	92	8
Canada	91	9
Romania	91	9
Zambia	90	10
Ghana	87	13
Benin	87	13
Portugal	86	14
Botswana	85	15
Trinidad and Tobago	81	19

Note: Table includes all countries in which religious affiliation was gathered for all household members age 15 and older. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data. "Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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In addition to the 112 countries for which data is available on both household structure and religion, this report also includes 18 countries and territories in which at least 95% of the total population identifies with one religious group (based on Pew Research Center's 2015 report "[The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050](#)"). These 18 countries and territories are Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Jordan, Maldives, Mauritania, Moldova, Niger, Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Peru, Puerto Rico, Somalia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. In these cases, household data for the general population is used to describe household characteristics, with all individuals coded as identifying with the religious group of the overwhelming majority of the country's population.

Imputing religion for Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) samples with partial information on the religious identity of household members

Data for 35 countries in this study is from DHS. The surveys generally asked the religious affiliation question only of household members in the reproductive age range (15 to 49). The 2015 survey of India, which asked about the religious affiliations of all household members ages 15 and older, is an exception.

Among the other 34 DHS countries, household religion was not asked of anyone in seven of the countries, but all seven have at least 95% of the total population identifying with one religious group. In an eighth country, Timor-Leste, religion was asked of household members in the reproductive age range, however, because more than 99% of the country is Christian, researchers assumed that all households in the country were Christian. Christians also make up more than 95% of the population in Peru. Muslims make up more than 95% of the population in the other six countries (Afghanistan, Jordan, Niger, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Yemen). For these countries, the predominant religious identity is used for all households and individuals.

For each of the remaining 26 countries, more than two-thirds of people live in a household where someone provided religion information: Roughly one-third of people provided their own religion, while more than a third of people had religion assigned based on someone else in the household who provided their own religious affiliation. In the latter case, household members without religion were imputed by assigning religious values of reproductive-age women or men who live in the same household. In cases where multiple religions were measured among multiple adults of reproductive age, assignment was based on a hierarchy of relationship closeness (in order: spouse, parent, child, other relative). For instance, if a male head of household was not asked about his religion since he was too old to be included in the fertility survey, but he lived with his Muslim reproductive-aged wife and his religiously unaffiliated nephew, his religious affiliation was assigned as Muslim.

At the individual level and in a typical country relying on DHS data, 81% of the household population is represented by a sampled household with directly reported information on the religion of at least one member.

For the remaining households in which there were no members of reproductive age, and therefore no information about religious identity was gathered, multiple imputation was applied using the multivariate imputation by chained equations (MICE) algorithm in Stata. There was enough information about adults not of reproductive age in households *with* adults of reproductive age to identify age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, household size, region and urbanicity as predictors of religion and use them in the imputation. Five iterations were executed with these predictors (independent variables) for the missing data on religion.

Household size

For the purposes of this study, a household is a private dwelling unit that is not vacant and is not an institution (such as a college dormitory or nursing home). The household population is made up of all people who reside in households (not in institutions). Household size is the number of persons living in a household. Average size at the household level overall is derived by dividing the total household population (that is, the non-institutionalized population) by the total number of households. Average household size for a religious group was derived by dividing the total population affiliated with that religion by the total number of households headed by a person affiliated with that same religion (except for in the 20 countries where religious affiliation was captured for all household members over age 15). These household-level sizes were then transformed to represent the experiences of individuals. A simplified example of this process is described below, and more details can be found in the sidebar on page 14.

A small village is made up of only 50 homes. Thirty homes contain large households of 10 people each, and each of the remaining 20 homes contain two people. At the household level, the average size is 6.8.

$$\frac{(30 \times 10) + (20 \times 2)}{30 + 20} = 6.8$$

But if all 340 villagers gather to compare their living situations, there will be 300 people who report experiencing large, 10-person households, and 40 people who live in pairs. The average villager experiences a household size of 9.1.

$$\frac{(300 \times 10) + (40 \times 2)}{300 + 40} = 9.1$$

Unless specified otherwise, all results in this report reflect the average experience of individuals (such as a household size of 9.1 in the example above) rather than average values at the household level (6.8 in the example above).

Household type

For this study, households were categorized into types that describe qualitative differences in living arrangements that are not captured by household size alone. As with household size, the prevalence of household types is reported from the perspective of individuals. Household type categories are based on relationships between members and the ages of people identified as children of the respondent. Household rosters from every source dataset were coded to produce a standardized set of seven household types that are referred to throughout this report: Extended family, two-parent, adult child, couple, solo, single-parent and polygamous. About 98% of the global household (non-institutionalized) population lives in one of these seven household types. Regionally, the shares of people who live in a categorized household range from over 99% in the Middle East-North Africa region to 96% in sub-Saharan Africa. At the country level, the smallest share of people living in a categorized family household is 85%, in Rwanda. Members of other types of households – for example, homes of only unrelated roommates or homes with a mixture of both related and unrelated individuals – are not reported separately but remain in the denominators of analyses.⁶⁷ Because of this, the shares of individuals residing in the seven household types reported do not always sum to 100.

This classification process was largely based on harmonized household definitions constructed by IPUMS International at the Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. Pew Research Center analysts modified the IPUMS classification scheme to combine types not relevant to this report into the undifferentiated “other” category described above and to exclude institutions. They also added a new category – adult child – which uses the age of children (by relationship) to distinguish two-parent and single-parent households with and without minor children. When using census data from IPUMS International, Pew Research Center analysts did not reclassify household rosters that were unaffected by the new categories, and instead accepted IPUMS’ household type results (having already adopted their coding scheme), with one exception: Benin. Because of the way IPUMS classifies household members, Benin’s “other” category had an unusually large number of people. As a result, Pew Research Center recoded Benin’s census data on household types using the same process that was applied to data sources that did not come from the IPUMS archive.

⁶⁷ While not reported separately throughout the report, these figures are available in Appendix C.

Household relationships

Every data source includes a variable that describes how each individual in a household is related to the respondent who answered questions on behalf of the entire household.⁶⁸ Relationships were collapsed and standardized across surveys to include consistent categories for household type coding. Categories of relationships to household respondent include:

Respondent: The individual who supplied the household roster and answered other survey questions on behalf of the household. In some data sources, the individual may be called the household head, householder or the reference person.

Spouse/cohabiter: An individual either married to or cohabiting with the respondent. Some source surveys distinguish between formally married and cohabiting partners, but some do not, so these relationships were collapsed into a single category for comparability. Cohabiting partners do not include roommates.

Child: A child of the respondent. Some data sources distinguish a biological child from an adopted, foster or stepchild, while others do not, so these were consolidated. The child category was subdivided into minor children and adult children based on whether any children (by relationship) were under or over 18 years old at the time of the survey.

Parent: Any parent of the respondent, including those other than biological parents.

Other relative: Other than a spouse, child or parent, a person in this category is an individual who is related to the respondent either by blood (a grandparent, grandchild, sibling, cousin, niece, aunt, uncle, and so on) or by marriage (a parent-in-law, child-in-law, grandparent-in-law, grandchild-in-law, sibling-in-law, cousin-in-law, niece-in-law, aunt-in-law and so on).

Non-relative: An individual who is unrelated to the respondent by blood, marriage, adoption or fostering. This category does not include partners who are living together but not married.

Unknown: A household member whose relationship to the respondent is unknown.

⁶⁸ Sources used in this report typically enumerate each person in a household and then ask how members are related. However, in the case of the Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS), a household roster had to be constructed from a series of questions that ask about various kinds of relatives and whether such relatives live with the respondent. Sources usually record non-relatives who are members of a household, but the JGSS, the Chinese General Social Survey and the Taiwan Social Change Survey do not ask about the presence of non-relatives in the household.

Defining household type

Using household individuals' relationship to the respondent, the study classifies households into seven basic categories:

Solo: One-person household.

Couple: Married/cohabiting couple without children, other relatives or non-relatives.

Two-parent: Married/cohabiting couple with at least one minor child (under the age of 18), regardless of whether adult children also live in the home, and with no other relatives or non-relatives.

Single-parent: One parent with one or more minor children (under the age of 18), regardless of whether adult children also live in the home, and no other relatives or non-relatives.

Adult children: One or two parents with one or more of their adult children (over the age of 18) and no minor children or any other relatives or non-relatives.

Extended: A household with one or more "other relatives," as defined above.

Polygamous: A household in which an individual lives with two or more partners, with or without children, and regardless of the presence of other relatives or non-relatives.

Other: Households that contain any non-relatives or people whose relationship to the respondent is unknown. Shares of people in this undifferentiated "other" category are not detailed throughout the report but are available in Appendix C.

Differences between estimates in this report and other reports

There are various ways to classify living arrangements. The above categories are mutually exclusive, but living arrangements can also be analyzed with overlapping categories. Consider a household with a minor child, the child's parent and the child's grandparent. In the classification scheme used in this report, such a household is classified as an extended-family household. However, researchers sometimes classify such households as single-parent households. When this more-expansive approach is taken, the share of children living in single-parent households often is higher.

Same-sex couples

When identifiable in source data, same-sex partners are categorized as belonging to couple, two-parent, adult child or extended-family households regardless of marital status, exactly as heterosexual couples are. Four out of 19 countries with national census agency data that includes religion specifically list same-sex spouse or partner as a relationship option.⁶⁹ Other surveys used neutral language like “spouse” or “partner.” However, there are two reasons to suspect that same-sex couples are often missed in source surveys. First, some surveys do not give respondents the opportunity to identify a household member of the same sex as their spouse or significant other. For example, DHS surveys explicitly assume that partners are opposite-sex by asking women, “Are you currently married or living together with a man as if married?” and asking men only about female partners. In Portugal, the census categorized all households with same-sex partners as unclassifiable. Relatedly, same-sex partnerships are stigmatized or illegal in some countries. Same-sex partners are likely undercounted in such contexts, even when inclusive response options are available.

Part-time household members

Source surveys use a variety of language to introduce household roster questions. Commonly, questionnaires ask for details on everyone who “usually” lives in the household. For example, this is the wording used by MICS and the U.S. GSS.⁷⁰ The ESS asks about members who “live here regularly.” Even subtle differences in question wording might lead to minor discrepancies in the way part-time household members (such as migrant workers or children who live in more than one home) are counted. For example, in Europe, where the survey asks about people who live in the home “regularly,” parents with weekend-only custody might include their children, whereas U.S. parents in the same situation might not include the children, because the survey wording – “usually” – may imply that these children live in the home at least half of the time.

Other demographic characteristics of religious groups

Data on the regional distributions of religious groups, their age structures and fertility rates used to complement the analyses of households in the report comes from earlier Pew Research Center reports, [“The Future of World Religions”](#) and [“The Changing Global Religious Landscape.”](#)

⁶⁹ These countries are Brazil, Canada, Ireland and Portugal.

⁷⁰ DHS surveys gather information on household members who usually live in the household as well as those who slept in the household the previous night. DHS calculations in this report are based on all people enumerated in the household roster. Including those who slept in the household the prior night typically adds 1-2% to the “usual” household population. Usual household members include people who were away the prior night. In the Lesotho DHS sample, available measures permit the exclusion of household members who reside elsewhere in Lesotho, South Africa or another country. For consistency with other DHS samples, which do not typically contain such detail, all listed household members are included in Lesotho calculations even if they currently reside elsewhere (for example, because they are working away from home).

Minor errors in source data

Source data underwent rigorous quality control checks by census and survey organizations before being published. Despite the high quality of the source data and the care taken by survey and statistical agencies, minor discrepancies are inevitable in major data collection efforts, so conducting further quality checks while standardizing and aggregating data on nearly 83 million individuals is customary and important. Pew Research Center analysts identified and cleaned up minor data errors. For example, cases were dropped in which a household contained only one person but the relationship was coded as spouse, child or other relative instead of household head or respondent. One-person households in which the only person was younger than 12 were excluded from the analysis. Rarely, a person's relationship to the respondent was coded as parent, even though that person was substantially younger than the respondent; or as child, with a large age gap in the other direction. In such cases, Center analysts assumed that respondents had simply answered the relationship question from the wrong perspective and reversed the parent-child relationship so that the much younger person was recoded as the child rather than the parent.

Weighting

Country weights

Survey weights make minor adjustments to account for differences between the sample and the general population of individuals or households in an area. All data files have person weights that are used to derive individual-level results from person-level data files. Further, samples of census and household survey data usually provide household weights. The comparative analyses on household-level data in the sidebar on page 14 apply these weights to the analyses of household file data.

Adjustments to social surveys

Wherever possible, household characteristics were drawn from government censuses or large household surveys in which religious identification was measured for every member of the sampled households. For 33 countries and territories, the recent censuses and household surveys do not ask a question on religious affiliation, but data is available from nationally representative modest-sample social surveys that allow for the relevant household estimates – including the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), European Social Survey (ESS), U.S. General Social Survey (GSS), Japan General Social Survey (JGSS), Korea General Social Survey (KGSS) and Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS). However, these surveys' sample weights failed to address two related issues in derived results. First, the weighted results show the proportion of one-person households is substantially lower than estimates from official publications for every country except South Korea. Second, the resulting average household sizes are larger than those from official publications for every country except China. Center researchers recognized that the weights for these surveys are not designed to be used in measuring household characteristics, so they adjusted the sample weights in two steps to make the data files more consistent with official estimates.

The social surveys used in this analysis are designed and weighted to be representative of the adult population in their respective countries, and respondent weights reflect the probability that one adult in each household was selected to participate. To calculate estimates for the entire population (including adults and children), the weight for each respondent was divided by the number of adults living in that household. This first adjustment effectively converts the representative sample of adults into a representative sample of households. Dividing the sample weights by the number of adults largely improved the weighted results. However, for the majority of countries, they did not match up to benchmarks. Further, for a few countries, the first-step adjustment of weights seemed to exacerbate the problems. One plausible reason is that small households – one-person households in particular – may be less likely than others to be reached by phone.

Since inconsistencies with benchmarks persisted after the first-step adjustment, weights were raked to household size data from official government statistics, which separately enumerate one-person, two-person, three-person, four-person and five-and-more-person households. The table on page 109 – which compares derived results using original survey sample weights and adjusted weights with the official data – shows that using the adjusted weights improved the accuracy of the computation. Estimates for individuals were then produced by combining these household-level weights with information on the total number of adults and children living in each household.

Sources of benchmark data

Country	Source
Austria	Eurostat
Belgium	Eurostat
Bulgaria	Eurostat
China	United Nations Population Division
Croatia	Eurostat
Cyprus	Eurostat
Czech Republic	Eurostat
Denmark	Eurostat
Estonia	Eurostat
Finland	Eurostat
France	Eurostat
Germany	Eurostat
Greece	Eurostat
Hungary	Eurostat
Iceland	Statistics Iceland
Israel	The Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel
Italy	Eurostat
Japan	United Nations Population Division
Lithuania	Eurostat
Netherlands	Eurostat
Norway	Statistics Norway
Poland	Eurostat
Russia	Russian Federal State Statistics Service
Slovakia	Eurostat
Slovenia	Eurostat
South Korea	United Nations Populations Division
Spain	Eurostat
Sweden	Eurostat
Switzerland	Eurostat
Taiwan	Republic of China Census
Ukraine	State Statistics Service of Ukraine
United Kingdom	Eurostat
United States	United States Census Bureau

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
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Two-step adjustment process aligned survey results with official benchmarks

Country	Percent of solo households				Mean household size			
	Benchmark	With original survey weight	After 1st adjustment	After 2nd adjustment	Benchmark	With original survey weight	After 1st adjustment	After 2nd adjustment
Austria	37%	18%	33%	37%	2.2	2.7	2.3	2.2
Belgium	35	15	29	35	2.3	2.9	2.5	2.3
Bulgaria	29	10	22	29	2.5	3.1	2.6	2.5
China	15	13	28	15	3.1	3.1	2.5	3.1
Croatia	25	9	19	25	2.8	3.5	3.0	2.8
Cyprus	21	6	14	21	2.7	3.3	2.9	2.7
Czech Republic	28	15	28	28	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.4
Denmark	45	22	37	45	2.0	2.5	2.2	2.0
Estonia	36	23	39	36	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.2
Finland	41	27	43	41	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.0
France	36	18	31	36	2.2	2.7	2.3	2.2
Germany	41	19	33	41	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.0
Greece	26	11	22	26	2.6	3.1	2.6	2.5
Hungary	33	22	39	33	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.3
Iceland	31	14	25	31	2.5	3.1	2.7	2.5
Israel	19	5	12	19	3.3	4.1	3.6	3.3
Italy	32	20	36	32	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.4
Japan	35	12	24	35	2.3	3.2	2.7	2.3
Lithuania	38	13	24	38	2.3	2.7	2.4	2.2
Netherlands	37	15	27	37	2.2	2.8	2.5	2.2
Norway	38	18	31	38	2.2	2.7	2.3	2.2
Poland	24	13	26	24	2.8	3.1	2.6	2.8
Russia	25	17	31	25	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.6
Slovakia	23	10	21	23	2.8	3.3	2.8	2.8
Slovenia	29	10	22	29	2.5	3.2	2.7	2.5
South Korea	27	29	32	27	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5
Spain	25	9	19	25	2.5	3.0	2.7	2.5
Sweden	42	21	35	42	2.0	2.6	2.2	2.0
Switzerland	37	15	28	37	2.2	2.8	2.4	2.2
Taiwan	22	5	14	22	3.0	4.4	3.6	3.0
Ukraine	20	7	17	20	2.6	3.3	2.8	2.6
United Kingdom	29	20	34	29	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.3
United States	28	16	29	28	2.5	2.8	2.4	2.5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
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Weights in computing global and regional household characteristics

Pew Research Center used national-level results to calculate regional and global distributions. Household populations (overall and by religion) were applied as country-level weights in deriving data on personal living arrangements in each region and around the world. The estimates of the 2015 size of religious groups at the country level are from the [demographic projections by Pew Research Center](#), which include the household and non-household populations (for example, people living in institutions). To adjust for the fact that homeless individuals and residents of institutions are not included in this study, the population of each country was reduced by 3%. This figure is based on available information from the U.S., the UK and Canada. While it is possible that these relatively wealthy Western countries have higher-than-average shares of people living in non-households, corresponding figures on the precise size of non-household populations are not readily available for all countries in this study. This population adjustment was applied only at the country level, without further adjustments for any potential religious or other differences between household and non-household populations.

Aggregating individual-level data to represent regional and global populations, overall and by religious group based on the Center's own demographic projections, was relatively straightforward. In order to produce the comparisons between individual and household-level results shown in the sidebar on page 14, researchers also aggregated results from household files. Since data with estimates on the number of households in every studied country was not available, a new procedure was developed. To aggregate household sizes and living arrangements at the household level, researchers first divided the household population by mean household size to derive the total number of households, for all people and by religion, for each country. Next, total regional or global household populations and total number of households were summed, respectively. Then the mean regional household size was derived by dividing the aggregated total household population by the aggregated total number of households.

To explain how the household weights are computed and used in aggregating average household size by religion, consider the Christian population and number of households in Southern Africa as an example. In the table, column 1 shows the names of 10 Southern African countries. Column 2 shows the Christian population in each country in 2015. Column 3 shows the non-household Christian population (3% of the total). Column 4 shows the total Christian household population, which is derived by subtracting the non-household population (column 3) from the total population (column 2). Column 5 shows the average Christian household size for each country. Column 6 shows the total number of Christian household units that resulted from dividing the total Christian household population (column 4) by the average Christian household size (column 5). Next, the regional total for the Christian household population (125,367,624) and total number

of Christian households (29,574,715) were summed, respectively, which resulted in the average Christian household size for the Southern African sub-region:

$$\text{Christian household size for Southern Africa} = 121,606,595 / 29,574,715 = 4.1$$

Household size adjustment and aggregation example

Column 1 Country	Column 2 Christian population	Column 3 Non-household Christian population (3% of col. 2)	Column 4 Christian household population (col. 2 – col. 3)	Column 5 Mean size of households w/ Christian respondents	Column 6 Number of Christian households (col. 4/col. 5)
Angola	19,655,719	589,672	19,066,047	5.0	3,846,619
Botswana	1,577,024	47,311	1,529,713	3.6	429,031
Lesotho	2,208,765	66,263	2,142,502	4.2	507,322
Malawi	14,569,722	437,092	14,132,630	4.5	3,168,942
Mozambique	14,917,562	447,527	14,470,035	4.6	3,170,118
Namibia	2,418,498	72,555	2,345,943	4.4	538,514
South Africa	42,143,897	1,264,317	40,879,580	3.4	12,186,491
Swaziland	1,120,916	33,627	1,087,289	4.0	270,211
Zambia	14,934,091	448,023	14,486,068	5.3	2,755,229
Zimbabwe	11,821,430	354,643	11,466,787	4.2	2,702,238
Southern Africa	125,367,624	3,761,029	121,606,595	4.1	29,574,715

Aggregated household size: Christian household population (121,606,595) / Number of Christian households (29,574,715) = 4.1

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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To illustrate how the data was weighted to derive household type at the aggregate levels, the next table also shows the 10 countries in the Southern African sub-region as an example.

The upper part of the table above shows the distribution of Christian households by country. Using the weighted total number of Christian households (column 6), the numbers of each type of household were derived by multiplying the total number by the percentage of each type for each country. The resulting numbers of each type of household for each country are shown in the lower part of the table. Then the regional total number of households was summed as well as the numbers for each type of household, which allowed for the computation of the Christian household type distribution for the sub-region (the bottom line): Among the Christian households in the Southern African sub-region, 15% are single-person households, 7% are couple households, 25% are two-parent households, 10% are single-parent households and 36% are extended-family households.

Household type adjustment and aggregation example

Distribution of Christian households

Country	Extended	Two-parent	Solo	Single-parent	Couple	Adult child	Polygamous	Other	Total
Angola	35%	35%	10%	12%	5%	1%	<0.5%	2%	100%
Botswana	39	9	26	8	6	3	<0.5	8	100
Lesotho	45	19	13	6	4	5	<0.5	8	100
Malawi	31	42	8	10	5	2	<0.5	2	100
Mozambique	36	32	9	11	6	1	1	3	100
Namibia	48	10	17	7	6	2	<0.5	11	100
South Africa	34	15	23	9	10	6	<0.5	2	100
Swaziland	40	13	22	11	4	3	<0.5	7	100
Zambia	40	38	6	7	4	2	0.5	3	100
Zimbabwe	43	22	11	11	4	2	<0.5	6	100

Counts (in thousands) of Christian households

Country	Extended	Two-parent	Solo	Single-parent	Couple	Adult child	Polygamous	Other	Total
Angola	1,338	1,342	372	480	195	54	0	66	3,847
Botswana	168	41	113	34	26	14	0	33	429
Lesotho	227	96	64	30	22	25	0	42	507
Malawi	986	1,321	246	323	156	58	8	72	3,169
Mozambique	1,148	1,027	291	344	191	46	31	93	3,170
Namibia	257	56	89	36	31	11	0	58	539
South Africa	4,164	1,868	2,804	1,107	1,188	749	31	276	12,186
Swaziland	108	35	59	31	12	7	0	18	270
Zambia	1,091	1,038	171	205	113	47	14	76	2,755
Zimbabwe	1,160	581	306	305	113	63	13	162	2,702
Southern Africa counts	10,648	7,405	4,514	2,894	2,046	1,073	96	897	29,575
Southern Africa distribution	36%	25%	15%	10%	7%	4%	<0.5%	3%	100%

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World"

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Appendix B: Data sources by country

General sources and archives

Demographic and Health Surveys. Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Implemented by ICF. <http://www.dhsprogram.com/>.

European Social Survey. Led by the Centre for Comparative Social Surveys. City University, (London) in partnership with the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), GESIS (Germany), NSD (Norway), and SCP and the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands).

<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>.

Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International (IPUMS). Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. <https://international.ipums.org/international/>.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. Developed by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). <https://mics.unicef.org/>.

Other demographic data sources

Pew Research Center. 2016. “Religion and Education Around the World.” <https://www.pewforum.org/2016/12/13/religion-and-education-around-the-world/>.

Pew Research Center. 2017. “The Changing Global Religious Landscape.” <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/>.

Pew Research Center. 2015. “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.” <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>.

World Economic Outlook database. 2015. International Monetary Fund. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2015/02/weodata/download.aspx>.

World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision. United Nations Population Division. <https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/>.

Data sources by country

Afghanistan: Demographic and Health Survey 2015

Albania: Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012

Algeria: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012-2013

Angola: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Armenia: Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Armenia 2011, IPUMS subset

Austria: European Social Survey 2016

Bangladesh: Population and Housing Census 2011, IPUMS subset

Barbados: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012

Belgium: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Belize: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015-2016

Benin: Fourth Population and Habitation Census 2013, retrieved from IPUMS

Botswana: Census 2011

Brazil: XII Recenseamento Geral do Brasil. Censo Demográfico 2010, IPUMS subset

Bulgaria: European Social Survey 2012

Burkina Faso: Demographic and Health Survey 2010

Burundi: Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017

Cambodia: Demographic and Health Survey 2014

Cameroon: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Canada: National Household Survey 2011, retrieved from IPUMS

Central African Republic: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010

Chad: Demographic and Health Survey 2014-2015

China: Chinese General Social Survey 2013-2014

Comoros: Demographic and Health Survey 2012

Costa Rica: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011

Croatia: European Social Survey 2010

Cyprus: European Social Survey 2012

Czech Republic: European Social Survey 2016

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Demographic and Health Survey 2013-2014

Denmark: European Social Survey 2014

Dominican Republic: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Egypt: Demographic and Health Survey 2014

El Salvador: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Estonia: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Ethiopia: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Finland: European Social Survey 2016-2017

France: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Gabon: Demographic and Health Survey 2012

- Gambia:** Demographic and Health Survey 2013
- Germany:** European Social Survey 2016-2017
- Ghana:** Population and Housing Census 2010, IPUMS subset
- Greece:** European Social Survey 2010
- Guatemala:** Demographic and Health Survey 2015
- Guinea:** Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016
- Guinea-Bissau:** Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014
- Guyana:** Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014
- Haiti:** Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017
- Honduras:** Demographic and Health Survey 2012
- Hungary:** European Social Survey 2017
- Iceland:** European Social Survey 2016-2017
- India:** Demographic and Health Survey 2016
- Indonesia:** Population Census 2010, retrieved from IPUMS
- Iran:** National Population and Housing Census 2011, retrieved from IPUMS
- Iraq:** Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018
- Ireland:** Census of Population of Ireland 2011, IPUMS subset
- Israel:** European Social Survey 2016-2017
- Italy:** European Social Survey 2017

Ivory Coast: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016

Jamaica: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011

Japan: Japanese General Social Survey 2012

Jordan: Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018

Kazakhstan: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010-2011

Kenya: Demographic and Health Survey 2014

Kosovo: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-2014

Kyrgyzstan: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Laos: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017

Lesotho: Demographic and Health Survey 2014

Liberia: Demographic and Health Survey 2013

Lithuania: European Social Survey 2016

Madagascar: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Malawi: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-2014

Maldives: Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017

Mali: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015

Mauritania: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015

Mexico: Population and Housing Census 2011, IPUMS subset

Moldova: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012

Mongolia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-2014

Montenegro: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013

Mozambique: Demographic and Health Survey 2011

Namibia: Demographic and Health Survey 2013

Nepal: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Netherlands: European Social Survey 2016

Niger: Demographic and Health Survey 2012

Nigeria: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-2017

North Macedonia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011

Norway: European Social Survey 2016

Pakistan: Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018

Palestinian territories: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Panama: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013

Papua New Guinea: Census 2011

Paraguay: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016

Peru: Demographic and Health Survey 2010-2013

Philippines: Census of Population and Housing 2010, retrieved from IPUMS

Poland: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Portugal: Censos 2011: XV Recenseamento Geral da População; V Recenseamento Geral da Habitação, IPUMS subset

Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico Community Survey 2010, IPUMS subset

Republic of the Congo: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014-2015

Romania: Population and Housing Census 2011, retrieved from IPUMS

Russia: European Social Survey 2017

Rwanda: Fourth Population and Housing Census 2012, retrieved from IPUMS

Sao Tome and Principe: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Senegal: Demographic and Health Survey 2017

Serbia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Sierra Leone: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017

Slovakia: European Social Survey 2012

Slovenia: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Somalia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011

South Africa: General Household Survey 2015

South Korea: Korean General Social Survey 2014-2016

Spain: European Social Survey 2017

St. Lucia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012

Suriname: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010

Swaziland: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014

Sweden: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Switzerland: European Social Survey 2016-2017

Taiwan: Taiwan Social Change Survey 2016

Tajikistan: Demographic and Health Survey 2017

Thailand: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2015-2016

Timor-Leste: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Togo: Demographic and Health Survey 2013

Trinidad and Tobago: Population and Housing Census 2011, retrieved from IPUMS

Tunisia: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011-2012

Turkey: Family Structure Survey 2016

Uganda: Demographic and Health Survey 2016

Ukraine: European Social Survey 2012

United Kingdom: European Social Survey 2016-2017

United States: General Social Survey 2010-2016

Vietnam: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-2014

Yemen: Demographic and Health Survey 2013

Zambia: Census of Population and Housing 2010, IPUMS subset

Zimbabwe: Demographic and Health Survey 2015

Appendix C: Household structure by religious group

This table describes the family structures experienced by adherents of each of the major religious groups in every covered country, territory and region.

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
World	All	4.9	38%	33%	9%	8%	4%	4%	2%	2%
	Buddhists	3.9	44	20	13	13	7	2	<0.5	0.9
	Christians	4.5	29	34	9	11	7	6	0.8	3
	Hindus	5.7	55	30	8	3	0.9	3	<0.5	0.6
	Jews	3.7	17	32	12	21	10	4	<0.5	3
	Muslims	6.4	36	43	6	3	1	3	5	2
	Unaffiliated	3.7	37	26	12	14	7	2	<0.5	1
Asia-Pacific	All	5.0	45	31	10	7	3	2	<0.5	1
	Buddhists	3.9	44	20	13	13	7	2	<0.5	0.9
	Christians	4.8	37	35	10	8	5	2	<0.5	3
	Hindus	5.7	55	30	8	3	0.9	3	<0.5	0.6
	Muslims	6.0	41	42	7	4	1	3	0.6	2
	Unaffiliated	3.7	41	25	14	13	6	1	<0.5	0.5
Europe	All	3.1	26	26	9	19	13	4	<0.5	2
	Christians	3.1	24	25	11	21	13	4	<0.5	2
	Muslims	4.1	37	37	6	7	7	5	<0.5	0.9
	Unaffiliated	3.0	25	26	7	20	14	5	<0.5	2
Latin America-Caribbean	All	4.6	32	39	10	6	3	5	<0.5	4
	Christians	4.6	32	39	10	6	3	5	<0.5	4
	Hindus	4.4	35	33	17	7	4	3	<0.5	2
	Unaffiliated	4.4	29	38	9	6	5	7	<0.5	5
Middle East-North Africa	All	6.2	27	56	9	3	1	2	0.9	<0.5
	Christians	4.6	16	58	13	6	3	3	<0.5	<0.5
	Jews	4.3	29	35	13	13	6	3	<0.5	1
	Muslims	6.3	27	57	9	3	0.8	2	1	<0.5
North America	All	3.3	11	33	14	20	11	9	<0.5	1
	Christians	3.4	9	34	14	21	11	9	<0.5	1
	Jews	3.0	6	30	11	30	13	5	<0.5	5
	Unaffiliated	3.2	14	30	15	18	12	9	<0.5	2
Sub-Saharan Africa	All	6.9	35	37	2	2	2	6	11	4
	Christians	6.0	39	38	2	2	3	8	3	5
	Hindus	3.9	32	31	22	10	3	0.8	<0.5	0.9
	Muslims	8.5	27	37	0.9	2	1	4	25	3
	Unaffiliated	5.7	39	32	3	4	7	7	5	4

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Afghanistan	All	9.8	54%	39%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	5%	<1%
	Muslims	9.8	54	39	<1	<1	<1	<1	5	<1
Albania	All	4.6	35	35	18	8	2	2	<1	<1
	Christians	4.5	30	35	20	9	2	3	<1	<1
	Muslims	4.6	36	35	17	8	2	2	<1	<1
Algeria	All	6.4	29	54	12	2	<1	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	6.4	29	54	12	2	<1	2	<1	<1
Angola	All	6.4	44	39	<1	2	2	10	<1	2
	Christians	6.5	45	38	<1	2	2	10	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	5.8	36	43	2	3	4	9	<1	2
Armenia	All	5.0	55	19	16	4	3	2	<1	2
	Christians	5.0	55	19	16	3	3	2	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	4.4	47	19	18	7	6	2	<1	2
Austria	All	3.0	16	32	7	22	17	3	<1	3
	Christians	2.9	13	32	8	26	16	3	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	2.6	14	28	6	21	24	4	<1	4
Bangladesh	All	5.4	38	44	3	3	<1	5	<1	6
	Buddhists	5.2	35	46	5	3	<1	3	1	6
	Christians	5.1	35	40	5	4	1	4	<1	9
	Hindus	5.3	44	38	5	3	<1	3	1	5
	Muslims	5.4	37	44	3	3	<1	5	<1	6
Barbados	All	3.9	35	17	15	7	9	8	<1	9
	Christians	4.0	34	17	16	8	8	7	<1	10
	Unaffiliated	3.9	36	16	11	5	13	11	<1	8
Belgium	All	3.1	19	30	9	23	15	4	<1	<1
	Christians	2.9	12	28	9	26	20	5	<1	<1
	Muslims	4.0	27	50	4	5	12	4	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.0	22	28	10	23	13	4	<1	1
Belize	All	5.2	32	41	6	5	5	9	<1	3
	Christians	5.2	33	39	6	5	4	9	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	4.8	26	42	4	7	7	9	<1	6
Benin	All	8.9	39	31	1	1	2	7	9	8
	Christians	7.6	36	36	2	1	2	8	6	8
	Muslims	11.8	48	24	<1	<1	<1	3	12	11
	Unaffiliated	8.6	40	30	1	1	3	7	9	9
Botswana	All	5.7	58	11	2	4	8	6	<1	11
	Christians	5.6	58	11	2	3	7	7	<1	10
	Hindus	3.7	27	40	6	9	7	<1	<1	11
	Muslims	5.0	39	30	1	4	7	5	<1	13
	Unaffiliated	5.9	59	10	2	4	9	4	<1	12

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Brazil	All	4.2	28%	39%	12%	8%	4%	5%	<1%	3%
	Buddhists	3.6	30	23	18	12	7	5	<1	5
	Christians	4.2	28	40	12	8	3	5	<1	3
	Jews	3.4	12	32	19	15	9	3	<1	10
	Muslims	4.0	23	42	14	8	5	3	<1	4
	Unaffiliated	4.1	28	37	10	8	5	7	<1	4
Bulgaria	All	3.2	38	22	9	17	12	2	<1	<1
	Christians	3.1	36	20	11	19	12	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	3.7	49	19	6	14	10	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.2	37	29	8	13	11	2	<1	<1
Burkina Faso	All	7.8	19	34	<1	2	1	3	36	5
	Christians	7.2	27	35	<1	1	1	3	24	7
	Muslims	8.0	16	33	<1	2	1	3	40	4
Burundi	All	6.0	22	53	2	1	1	10	<1	10
	Christians	6.0	22	54	2	1	1	10	<1	10
	Muslims	6.2	32	38	<1	1	2	8	1	17
	Unaffiliated	5.5	16	63	1	2	2	14	<1	3
Cambodia	All	5.5	49	39	5	2	<1	3	<1	2
	Buddhists	5.5	49	39	5	2	<1	3	<1	2
	Muslims	6.0	55	37	4	<1	<1	2	<1	<1
Cameroon	All	6.8	41	30	1	2	4	6	13	3
	Christians	6.4	47	28	1	2	5	6	7	4
	Muslims	7.8	29	33	<1	2	3	4	26	2
	Unaffiliated	6.8	33	34	1	<1	5	3	19	3
Canada	All	3.2	9	33	14	20	11	6	<1	7
	Buddhists	3.9	23	27	19	10	7	5	<1	9
	Christians	3.2	8	32	14	23	12	5	<1	6
	Hindus	4.3	28	38	15	8	3	2	<1	6
	Jews	3.4	4	36	16	20	13	3	<1	7
	Muslims	4.4	16	52	11	6	4	6	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	3.1	8	32	12	18	12	7	<1	11
Central African Republic	All	6.5	41	38	<1	3	2	6	8	1
	Christians	6.5	41	39	<1	2	2	6	7	1
	Muslims	6.5	37	33	<1	3	3	8	13	2
Chad	All	7.9	29	44	<1	1	1	7	15	1
	Christians	8.1	32	36	<1	1	2	6	21	2
	Muslims	7.6	28	50	<1	1	<1	8	10	1
	Unaffiliated	9.2	17	36	<1	<1	1	4	40	<1

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
China	All	3.8	44%	23%	14%	12%	5%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Buddhists	3.8	45	19	14	14	6	2	<1	<1
	Christians	4.0	46	15	13	16	8	<1	<1	1
	Muslims	4.5	42	36	9	10	2	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.8	44	23	14	13	5	<1	<1	<1
Comoros	All	6.9	43	36	2	2	<1	6	<1	10
	Muslims	6.9	43	36	2	2	<1	6	<1	10
Costa Rica	All	4.5	32	36	13	5	2	7	<1	4
	Christians	4.4	32	36	13	5	2	7	<1	4
	Unaffiliated	4.5	33	38	9	5	2	8	<1	5
Croatia	All	3.6	40	22	14	14	9	2	<1	<1
	Christians	3.7	39	23	15	13	8	1	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.3	42	17	14	15	10	2	<1	<1
Cyprus	All	3.4	30	28	12	20	8	3	<1	<1
	Christians	3.4	29	28	12	20	7	3	<1	<1
Czech Republic	All	3.0	27	25	9	25	12	1	<1	2
	Christians	3.1	19	27	11	26	13	<1	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	3.0	29	25	8	24	11	1	<1	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	All	6.9	46	37	<1	2	1	8	2	3
	Christians	6.9	47	37	<1	2	1	8	2	3
	Muslims	7.3	34	34	<1	2	2	5	12	9
	Unaffiliated	6.5	34	45	<1	2	1	9	2	5
Denmark	All	2.7	15	27	3	26	23	6	<1	<1
	Christians	2.6	10	28	3	29	25	5	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	2.7	19	27	3	24	21	6	<1	<1
Dominican Republic	All	4.3	34	35	9	6	5	9	<1	3
	Christians	4.3	36	33	9	6	5	8	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	4.4	27	44	5	5	6	10	<1	4
Egypt	All	5.1	18	63	9	5	1	3	<1	<1
	Christians	4.6	15	59	13	6	3	4	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.1	18	63	9	5	1	3	<1	<1
El Salvador	All	4.9	40	36	8	4	2	6	<1	5
	Christians	4.9	41	34	9	4	2	6	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	4.7	32	47	5	3	2	7	<1	5
Estonia	All	2.9	18	33	6	20	16	5	<1	1
	Christians	2.8	14	36	8	21	17	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.0	20	32	5	20	16	5	<1	2
Ethiopia	All	5.8	29	52	2	2	2	8	<1	5
	Christians	5.6	29	51	3	2	2	7	<1	6
	Muslims	6.3	29	53	2	2	<1	9	<1	4

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Finland	All	2.8	12%	29%	3%	31%	20%	5%	<1%	<1%
	Christians	2.8	11	29	4	31	20	6	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	2.6	11	29	3	31	21	5	<1	<1
France	All	3.0	17	30	6	24	16	6	<1	<1
	Christians	2.7	12	26	7	31	19	4	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.0	20	31	5	20	15	8	<1	<1
Gabon	All	6.5	56	20	1	3	5	5	2	6
	Christians	6.8	60	19	1	3	4	5	1	6
	Muslims	4.2	22	42	2	7	16	3	3	6
	Unaffiliated	6.8	56	17	<1	4	5	5	2	10
Gambia	All	13.8	45	14	<1	<1	<1	2	30	7
	Christians	10.3	55	14	3	2	4	3	12	7
	Muslims	13.9	45	14	<1	<1	<1	2	30	7
Germany	All	2.7	17	22	6	29	20	3	<1	3
	Christians	2.7	15	20	7	32	19	4	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	2.5	17	21	5	28	22	3	<1	3
Ghana	All	6.6	48	26	2	2	4	8	<1	10
	Christians	6.0	45	27	2	2	4	9	<1	10
	Muslims	8.9	55	24	1	1	2	5	<1	11
	Unaffiliated	5.8	43	26	2	3	8	8	<1	10
Greece	All	3.3	27	29	14	17	10	2	<1	<1
	Christians	3.3	27	27	15	18	10	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.1	27	33	11	13	13	3	<1	<1
Guatemala	All	6.1	40	39	5	2	<1	7	<1	6
	Christians	6.1	40	39	5	2	<1	7	<1	6
	Unaffiliated	5.6	38	39	5	2	2	8	<1	7
Guinea	All	8.0	37	28	<1	1	<1	3	26	3
	Christians	7.5	53	30	1	<1	<1	3	10	1
	Muslims	8.1	34	27	<1	1	<1	3	29	3
Guinea-Bissau	All	9.8	60	12	<1	<1	<1	2	23	2
	Christians	8.8	74	10	<1	<1	<1	2	10	3
	Muslims	10.8	52	14	<1	<1	<1	1	30	2
	Unaffiliated	8.0	56	17	<1	1	<1	2	22	<1
Guyana	All	5.0	39	36	8	5	3	7	<1	3
	Christians	5.3	40	34	7	4	3	8	<1	4
	Hindus	4.3	35	38	10	7	4	4	<1	2
	Muslims	4.6	37	42	9	6	2	3	<1	<1
Haiti	All	5.6	53	23	3	2	2	8	<1	9
	Christians	5.6	53	23	3	2	2	8	<1	9
	Unaffiliated	5.2	50	26	4	3	3	7	<1	8

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Honduras	All	5.7	41%	34%	4%	2%	1%	6%	<1%	12%
	Christians	5.8	41	34	4	2	1	6	<1	12
	Unaffiliated	5.3	37	36	4	3	2	7	<1	11
Hungary	All	3.1	27	28	8	21	14	3	<1	<1
	Christians	3.3	24	28	10	21	14	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.0	29	27	6	21	14	3	<1	<1
Iceland	All	3.3	17	38	6	17	12	5	<1	5
	Christians	3.3	11	39	9	23	12	4	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	3.3	21	36	4	14	13	5	<1	7
India	All	5.8	54	31	8	3	<1	3	<1	<1
	Buddhists	5.4	55	30	9	3	1	1	<1	<1
	Christians	4.9	44	33	13	5	1	3	<1	<1
	Hindus	5.7	55	30	8	3	<1	3	<1	<1
	Muslims	6.5	51	37	5	2	<1	4	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	5.4	50	33	5	4	2	3	<1	3
Indonesia	All	4.7	33	48	7	5	2	3	<1	3
	Buddhists	5.0	33	34	15	4	2	2	<1	10
	Christians	5.2	33	46	7	4	2	3	<1	5
	Hindus	4.7	41	40	7	5	2	1	<1	3
	Muslims	4.6	32	48	7	5	2	3	<1	3
Iran	All	4.1	8	59	18	8	2	3	<1	<1
	Muslims	4.1	8	59	18	8	2	3	<1	<1
Iraq	All	7.7	40	51	4	1	<1	2	2	<1
	Christians	5.4	32	50	12	4	<1	<1	<1	<1
	Muslims	7.8	40	51	4	1	<1	2	2	<1
Ireland	All	3.6	10	39	15	13	8	6	<1	8
	Christians	3.7	10	40	16	13	8	6	<1	7
	Unaffiliated	3.2	9	28	11	17	10	4	<1	21
Israel	All	4.5	30	37	11	12	6	3	<1	<1
	Jews	4.3	29	35	13	13	6	3	<1	1
	Muslims	5.2	34	50	5	5	4	2	1	<1
Italy	All	3.0	25	27	13	18	14	2	<1	<1
	Christians	3.0	22	28	14	19	13	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.0	34	23	8	17	15	3	<1	<1
Ivory Coast	All	6.7	40	28	<1	2	4	4	12	9
	Christians	6.3	49	23	1	2	4	5	3	12
	Muslims	6.9	32	32	<1	2	4	3	19	8
	Unaffiliated	6.5	37	34	<1	3	4	3	11	7
Jamaica	All	4.6	42	22	6	5	8	11	<1	6
	Christians	4.7	44	22	6	5	6	11	<1	6
	Unaffiliated	3.9	34	25	5	5	16	10	<1	5

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Japan	All	3.1	27%	25%	12%	19%	15%	2%	<1%	<1%
	Buddhists	3.0	29	15	13	24	17	1	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.1	27	29	11	17	15	2	<1	<1
Jordan	All	5.7	15	64	12	3	<1	3	<1	2
	Muslims	5.7	15	64	12	3	<1	3	<1	2
Kazakhstan	All	4.6	38	36	11	7	5	3	<1	<1
	Christians	3.3	28	27	17	14	10	4	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.1	42	39	9	4	2	3	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.6	27	33	16	14	7	3	<1	<1
Kenya	All	5.5	35	38	2	2	5	12	<1	6
	Christians	5.4	34	38	2	2	5	12	<1	7
	Muslims	6.6	37	42	1	2	3	11	<1	4
	Unaffiliated	6.0	36	33	1	2	8	14	<1	4
Kosovo	All	6.8	58	27	10	2	<1	1	<1	<1
	Christians	5.2	47	26	17	6	3	1	<1	<1
	Muslims	6.9	59	27	9	2	<1	2	<1	<1
Kyrgyzstan	All	5.4	51	34	5	4	2	3	<1	<1
	Christians	3.4	36	20	12	19	11	3	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.6	52	36	5	2	1	3	<1	<1
Laos	All	5.6	50	39	5	2	<1	2	<1	<1
	Buddhists	5.3	51	36	6	3	<1	2	<1	<1
	Christians	5.9	53	41	2	2	<1	2	<1	<1
Lesotho	All	5.6	55	20	3	2	3	5	<1	11
	Christians	5.6	56	20	3	2	3	5	<1	11
	Unaffiliated	5.2	45	31	2	2	7	6	<1	7
Liberia	All	6.8	58	24	<1	2	2	5	2	7
	Christians	6.8	59	23	<1	2	2	4	1	7
	Muslims	7.0	53	23	<1	2	2	5	7	8
	Unaffiliated	6.4	52	34	1	2	1	3	3	4
Lithuania	All	2.9	26	26	8	18	17	2	<1	2
	Christians	2.9	24	27	9	19	17	2	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	2.9	39	18	5	16	19	1	<1	1
Madagascar	All	5.4	32	49	2	3	2	8	<1	5
	Christians	5.5	32	48	2	3	2	7	<1	6
	Muslims	4.9	41	37	2	2	3	7	<1	8
	Unaffiliated	5.3	29	52	2	3	2	9	<1	3
Malawi	All	5.5	36	47	1	2	2	9	<1	3
	Christians	5.5	36	46	1	2	2	9	<1	3
	Muslims	5.9	40	45	<1	1	1	10	<1	1
	Unaffiliated	5.5	22	67	1	2	2	5	<1	2

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Maldives	All	7.3	64%	15%	3%	2%	<1%	4%	<1%	10%
	Muslims	7.3	64	15	3	2	<1	4	<1	10
Mali	All	12.6	37	23	<1	<1	<1	1	34	3
	Christians	8.9	43	34	<1	<1	<1	2	14	5
	Muslims	12.8	37	22	<1	<1	<1	1	35	3
Mauritania	All	7.4	43	37	2	1	<1	10	3	2
	Muslims	7.4	43	37	2	1	<1	10	3	2
Mexico	All	4.9	32	42	9	5	2	5	<1	5
	Buddhists	3.6	19	22	17	10	12	3	<1	16
	Christians	4.9	33	42	9	5	2	5	<1	5
	Jews	4.5	17	35	9	8	4	3	<1	25
	Unaffiliated	4.5	28	40	10	6	5	6	<1	5
Moldova	All	3.3	23	28	13	17	10	5	<1	4
	Christians	3.3	23	28	13	17	10	5	<1	4
Mongolia	All	4.2	28	50	8	6	3	5	<1	<1
	Buddhists	4.1	29	48	8	7	3	5	<1	<1
	Christians	4.4	28	46	8	3	4	10	<1	1
	Muslims	5.1	41	48	5	2	<1	2	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	4.1	26	52	8	6	3	4	<1	<1
Montenegro	All	4.3	30	35	21	7	5	2	<1	<1
	Christians	4.1	27	35	23	8	5	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.4	42	34	15	4	2	<1	<1	<1
Mozambique	All	5.8	41	38	<1	3	2	9	2	3
	Christians	5.9	43	37	<1	3	2	9	2	4
	Muslims	5.1	36	44	<1	5	3	9	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	5.8	37	40	<1	3	2	10	4	3
Namibia	All	6.4	62	10	1	3	4	5	<1	14
	Christians	6.4	63	10	1	3	4	5	<1	14
	Unaffiliated	5.9	47	22	4	4	5	5	<1	14
Nepal	All	5.6	58	23	3	3	1	9	<1	2
	Buddhists	5.0	53	25	4	4	3	9	<1	2
	Christians	4.5	44	33	4	5	2	9	<1	2
	Hindus	5.6	58	22	4	3	1	9	<1	2
	Muslims	7.7	64	21	1	1	<1	11	<1	1
Netherlands	All	2.9	16	28	6	26	17	5	<1	2
	Christians	2.9	12	27	6	29	21	4	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	2.9	17	29	6	25	16	6	<1	2
Niger	All	7.7	21	42	<1	2	<1	6	29	<1
	Muslims	7.7	21	42	<1	2	<1	6	29	<1

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Nigeria	All	7.7	19%	42%	2%	2%	2%	3%	28%	1%
	Christians	5.9	29	45	4	2	4	6	8	2
	Muslims	8.7	13	41	<1	2	<1	2	40	<1
North Macedonia	All	4.6	43	24	20	9	3	<1	<1	1
	Christians	4.0	35	24	24	12	4	<1	<1	<1
	Muslims	6.0	58	25	10	3	<1	<1	<1	1
Norway	All	2.9	17	32	4	22	17	5	<1	2
	Christians	3.0	13	34	5	26	17	4	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	2.8	19	30	4	20	19	7	<1	1
Pakistan	All	8.5	58	32	3	<1	<1	4	1	<1
	Muslims	8.5	58	32	3	<1	<1	4	1	<1
Palestinian territories	All	6.8	16	71	7	3	<1	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	6.8	16	71	7	3	<1	2	<1	<1
Panama	All	4.8	37	35	8	6	4	6	<1	4
	Christians	4.6	36	35	9	6	4	6	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	6.3	42	39	4	4	3	4	1	3
Papua New Guinea	All	7.1	44	35	3	3	<1	4	<1	11
	Christians	7.1	44	35	3	3	<1	4	<1	11
Paraguay	All	4.9	39	38	7	4	3	5	<1	4
	Christians	4.9	39	38	7	4	3	5	<1	4
	Unaffiliated	4.6	36	40	9	2	6	4	<1	4
Peru	All	4.9	37	38	8	4	3	5	<1	4
	Christians	4.9	37	38	8	4	3	5	<1	4
Philippines	All	5.6	31	50	6	3	1	3	<1	5
	Buddhists	4.9	25	28	11	5	5	3	<1	22
	Christians	5.6	32	49	7	3	1	3	<1	5
	Hindus	5.6	36	44	7	3	1	4	<1	5
	Muslims	6.4	26	63	4	2	<1	3	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	5.5	16	65	4	5	3	4	<1	3
Poland	All	3.7	34	29	9	14	9	2	<1	3
	Christians	3.7	33	30	9	14	8	2	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	3.3	44	21	6	14	10	3	<1	2
Portugal	All	3.2	16	33	19	18	8	4	<1	3
	Christians	3.3	16	32	19	19	8	3	<1	3
	Muslims	4.4	27	30	9	5	5	4	<1	19
	Unaffiliated	3.1	11	34	19	16	9	5	<1	4
Puerto Rico	All	3.5	21	27	17	13	8	10	<1	4
	Christians	3.5	21	27	17	13	8	10	<1	4

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Republic of the Congo	All	5.7	44%	40%	2%	3%	3%	6%	2%	2%
	Christians	5.6	45	38	2	3	3	6	1	1
	Muslims	5.0	38	37	2	3	9	2	3	6
	Unaffiliated	5.7	36	47	<1	2	4	3	4	2
Romania	All	3.6	28	24	16	14	10	3	<1	5
	Christians	3.6	29	24	17	15	8	2	<1	5
	Jews	2.4	9	9	16	28	27	2	<1	10
	Muslims	4.7	32	28	14	9	5	2	<1	11
	Unaffiliated	3.5	20	27	17	15	13	2	<1	6
Russia	All	3.2	37	23	9	13	10	7	<1	2
	Christians	3.1	35	19	12	14	11	7	<1	3
	Muslims	3.6	44	29	6	11	5	6	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.2	37	25	8	12	9	7	<1	1
Rwanda	All	5.4	18	49	3	2	2	11	<1	15
	Christians	5.4	18	50	3	2	2	11	<1	15
	Muslims	5.6	18	39	2	2	3	10	<1	26
	Unaffiliated	4.8	16	42	3	3	6	13	<1	16
Sao Tome and Principe	All	5.0	33	41	2	3	4	15	<1	2
	Christians	5.0	36	39	2	3	4	14	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	4.8	23	51	2	3	4	15	<1	<1
Senegal	All	13.5	55	10	<1	<1	<1	2	23	9
	Christians	9.4	66	11	4	1	2	3	7	6
	Muslims	13.6	55	10	<1	<1	<1	2	23	9
Serbia	All	4.0	40	22	19	11	6	1	<1	<1
	Christians	4.0	40	22	20	11	6	1	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.2	41	35	12	5	3	2	<1	2
Sierra Leone	All	6.3	53	25	<1	1	2	6	6	7
	Christians	6.2	54	24	1	2	2	7	3	8
	Muslims	6.4	52	25	<1	1	2	6	6	7
Slovakia	All	3.6	37	26	13	13	8	2	<1	<1
	Christians	3.6	37	26	14	13	8	1	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.4	38	27	11	13	8	4	<1	<1
Slovenia	All	3.2	28	27	14	17	12	2	<1	2
	Christians	3.3	29	25	14	15	11	2	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	3.1	25	28	13	19	13	<1	<1	2
Somalia ¹	All	7.5	37	45	2	<1	<1	10	<1	5
	Muslims	7.5	37	45	2	<1	<1	10	<1	5

¹ Due to conflict, source surveys were only conducted in two regions representing 45% of Somalia's population.

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
South Africa	All	5.2	53%	19%	5%	5%	6%	7%	<1%	3%
	Christians	5.2	54	19	5	6	6	7	<1	3
	Hindus	3.9	32	31	22	10	3	<1	<1	<1
	Muslims	5.1	40	37	8	5	4	1	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	4.4	47	16	6	7	14	6	<1	4
South Korea	All	2.9	11	34	18	15	21	1	<1	<1
	Buddhists	3.1	14	28	25	17	14	1	<1	<1
	Christians	2.9	9	35	18	16	21	1	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	2.8	10	37	14	13	24	1	<1	<1
Spain	All	3.2	26	29	12	17	10	3	<1	3
	Christians	3.1	24	27	15	18	11	3	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	3.1	31	31	6	16	10	3	<1	3
St. Lucia	All	4.1	33	25	11	8	9	9	<1	4
	Christians	4.1	35	25	12	8	9	9	<1	3
Suriname	All	5.1	40	33	9	5	3	7	<1	2
	Christians	5.4	44	29	7	5	4	9	<1	2
	Hindus	4.6	36	38	15	5	2	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	4.6	39	35	13	7	2	2	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	5.6	34	39	4	4	4	13	<1	3
Swaziland	All	6.1	58	15	2	2	5	9	<1	8
	Christians	6.1	58	15	2	2	5	10	<1	8
	Unaffiliated	6.5	56	23	<1	3	5	5	<1	7
Sweden	All	2.7	12	27	4	28	20	7	<1	1
	Christians	2.6	8	23	6	35	21	5	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	2.7	14	28	3	26	21	7	<1	<1
Switzerland	All	2.9	15	28	8	25	17	4	<1	2
	Christians	2.9	13	30	9	28	17	3	<1	2
	Unaffiliated	2.8	18	23	6	23	18	7	<1	4
Taiwan	All	4.0	49	17	15	9	7	2	<1	<1
	Buddhists	3.9	45	17	17	14	6	1	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.7	51	18	12	8	9	2	<1	<1
Tajikistan	All	7.5	67	26	3	<1	<1	2	<1	<1
	Muslims	7.5	67	26	3	<1	<1	2	<1	<1
Thailand	All	4.1	51	20	11	10	4	2	<1	2
	Buddhists	4.1	52	19	11	10	4	2	<1	2
	Christians	3.9	35	31	14	12	2	2	<1	3
	Muslims	4.8	43	36	9	4	2	3	<1	2
Timor-Leste	All	6.7	43	45	3	2	1	5	<1	1
	Christians	6.7	43	45	3	2	1	5	<1	1

Country/region	Religion	Average household size	Extended	Two-parent	Adult child	Couple	Solo	Single-parent	Polygamous	Other
Togo	All	6.8	36%	29%	1%	1%	3%	7%	17%	5%
	Christians	5.8	41	29	2	2	4	8	8	6
	Muslims	8.1	34	28	<1	1	2	4	26	5
	Unaffiliated	7.2	33	33	<1	1	2	9	18	3
Trinidad and Tobago	All	4.4	36	27	16	6	6	6	<1	4
	Christians	4.5	37	26	14	6	5	6	<1	4
	Hindus	4.4	35	28	21	7	4	3	<1	2
	Muslims	4.4	34	30	19	7	4	3	<1	3
	Unaffiliated	3.9	31	23	12	8	13	7	<1	6
Tunisia	All	4.9	16	52	22	5	1	2	<1	1
	Muslims	4.9	16	52	22	5	1	2	<1	1
Turkey	All	4.6	26	43	16	9	3	1	<1	<1
	Muslims	4.6	26	43	16	9	3	1	<1	<1
Uganda	All	6.2	40	36	<1	2	3	8	<1	9
	Christians	6.2	40	37	<1	2	3	9	<1	9
	Muslims	6.5	43	34	<1	2	3	7	1	9
Ukraine	All	3.2	39	22	13	16	8	3	<1	<1
	Christians	3.2	39	21	13	16	8	3	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	3.2	38	25	12	16	7	2	<1	<1
United Kingdom	All	3.0	16	28	7	24	12	7	<1	6
	Christians	2.9	10	26	8	28	15	7	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	3.0	18	27	6	22	11	8	<1	8
United States	All	3.4	11	33	14	20	11	9	<1	<1
	Christians	3.4	10	34	14	21	11	10	<1	<1
	Jews	3.0	6	30	11	30	13	5	<1	5
	Unaffiliated	3.2	15	30	15	18	12	9	<1	<1
Vietnam	All	4.6	45	34	10	5	2	2	<1	<1
	Buddhists	4.9	56	23	11	5	3	2	<1	<1
	Christians	5.0	40	39	12	4	2	3	<1	<1
	Unaffiliated	4.5	43	36	10	6	2	2	<1	1
Yemen	All	8.6	42	48	3	2	<1	2	2	<1
	Muslims	8.6	42	48	3	2	<1	2	2	<1
Zambia	All	6.7	47	39	1	2	1	6	<1	3
	Buddhists	6.6	36	50	2	1	2	4	<1	3
	Christians	6.7	48	39	1	2	1	6	<1	3
	Hindus	4.3	31	39	7	13	4	<1	<1	5
	Muslims	6.5	48	37	1	2	1	5	1	4
	Unaffiliated	5.9	38	42	2	3	4	6	<1	4
Zimbabwe	All	5.5	52	25	1	2	3	8	1	7
	Christians	5.5	53	23	2	2	3	9	<1	7
	Unaffiliated	5.4	48	36	1	2	3	5	1	4