**Movements among Muslims**

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Knowing the current status of movements amongst Muslims is a common question, and one that is difficult to answer.

First of all is the security issue. Having been in the field of missions research particularly focused on the niche of who’s-working-where (often referred to as “work-among” information) for nearly 35 years, I can personally attest to the impact security needs - perceived and real - have on either learning or sharing information. Those most deeply involved on the field often feel the security tensions most acutely.

Ironically, the security issue is often felt not just in totalitarian countries but also when the work is in “more open” places. What danger is there?” to Western Europe work is nonsensical to these field workers. Honor killings still happen in Europe. And then there are the families back home. Plenty of governments and fundamentalist groups can identify people of interest in foreign countries and threaten their loved ones.

Security issues can impact a couple of ways. There are those who will not share what they are doing with anyone - the risks far outweigh any rewards. And there are those who will share with a limited set of individuals (some share with me) so that their story is contained within the regional and global statistics, but forbid any further sharing. These sorts of limitations obviously cause some issues of trust between people and organizations, but we also obviously need to honor the risks these people face.

Beyond the trust issue, there’s a somewhat more complicated issue in terms of data. Organizations work in places and among languages that have mixes of Islam and other religions. How much of this work, then, is “among Muslims”?

For example, consider the well-known Bhojpuri movement in northern India. The vast majority of this work is obviously amongst Hindus. However, to say it has no impact at all among Muslims would be in error. Other movements work among various languages, some of which are more “Muslim” or more “Hindu” - but many of which have mixes of Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and more. When we are counting “work among Muslims,” should we only count work in those languages that are majority Muslim? Or by some other mechanism?

For the moment, a [Fermi estimate](https://justinlong.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c2bfc514437348a83f37050dd&id=0caedcc8e2&e=a3b440c23a) (back-of-the-envelope generalization) is probably the best we’re going to get. Globally, nearly 2,000 movements comprise over 100 million believers in nearly 10 million house churches (note the rounded estimates here, for ease of use). The vast majority of these are found in parts of Africa and Asia, and a small (<1%) sliver in ‘Western’ countries. Of these, over 90% come out of non-Christian (of any sort) religious traditions, largely Muslim and Hindu with small slivers of Sikh and Buddhist.

What is the distribution of movements and believers amongst Muslims and Hindus? This is where it gets challenging. For a moment, let us jump into the weeds of how people report.

First, there is a bit of a disconnect between numbers of movements and numbers of believers. Those working amongst Muslims often report larger numbers of movements (often reported as a movement in a language in a place), with smaller numbers of believers per movement. Those working amongst Hindus tend to report smaller numbers of languages engaged (the languages themselves being quite large), with larger numbers of believers per language. One movement working amongst Hindus, for example, identifies a half dozen major languages they are working in. Are they working in other languages? Yes, probably, but they get lumped into these large ‘trade’ languages. That particular movement is more about sending teams to places on a very granular level.

The result is that the number of movements amongst Muslims can be a high percentage of the total number of movements, while the believers in movements amongst Hindus can be a higher percentage of believers.

One way to get “close” to a distribution might be to assume that “most” of certain regions are focused on Muslims. In Africa, at least 700 known movements are directly focused on or largely working amongst Muslims. Asia is more difficult, but we could likely count at least another 250 movements there. Out of the West, another 50 or so very small, under-the-radar efforts could be counted. So, out of nearly 2,000 movements in all, at least a thousand could be said to be among Muslims—and that, I remind readers, is “floor not ceiling.”

The number of adherents is a very different question. Movement families that focus specifically on reaching Muslims comprise well over 50 million believers in all. Not all of these believers are former Muslims (some ministries working amongst Muslims also attract believers from other religions, like Orthodox). Some ministries focused on other groups (like Hindus) also reach former Muslims.

If 90% of the people in these movements were former Muslims that would be at least 45 million. (Of course, that would leave out Muslims being reached by movements such as the Bhojpuri.) Or since, 50% of movements are among Muslims, perhaps 50 million as 50% of 100 million would be in the ballpark. Both of these methods are imprecise.  
  
My personal estimate would be to say: on the order of half of all movements (1,000 out of 2,000) and some “tens of millions” of former Muslims are now followers of Jesus in movements. If you use these numbers, please annotate them as “very rough estimates” from me. These numbers are more probably low than high based on the data I see (I acknowledge others will disagree with me), but they are likely not significantly low—in the right ballpark, but too far to one side of it.

For a long time, we’ve heard that “more Muslims are coming to faith in this century than the previous 2,000 centuries combined” - and this certainly remains true in the 21st century. Nevertheless, it also remains true that 50 million former Muslims as compared to 2,000 million (2 billion) Muslims globally is still just 2% of the total.

Interestingly, Vision 5:9 and partners is in the midst a 10 year prayer campaign asking God for 10% of the Muslim world by 2028 (which would be over 200 million believers). These numbers give us encouragement that God is at work to answer those prayers.

Many Muslims remain out of reach of the Gospel. During this upcoming Ramadan, I urge each reader to join in the 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World campaigns, and pray especially for Muslims you know of, by name, that they would have a redeeming encounter with Isa al Masih, Jesus the Messiah, who loves them and longs for them to come home.