



The American Mosque 2011: Basic Characteristics of the American Mosque, Attitudes of Mosque Leaders

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(WASHINGTON, D.C. - February 29, 2012) -- A comprehensive study of mosques and the attitudes of mosque leaders in the United States released today indicates that the number of American mosques increased 74 percent since 2000 and that Islamic houses of worship are ethnically-diverse institutions led by officials who advocate positive civic engagement.

A coalition of major American Muslim and academic organizations, including Hartford Seminary, released the report, titled "The American Mosque 2011: Basic Characteristics of the American Mosque, Attitudes of Mosque Leaders," at a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

The report is the first part of the larger U.S. Mosque Survey 2011. To conduct the survey, researchers counted all mosques in America and then conducted telephone interviews with mosque leaders. More than 2,000 mosques were counted and more than 500 leaders were interviewed.

Among the speakers at the news conference were Ihsan Bagby, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Kentucky and researcher for the report, and David Roozen, Director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary, and Professor of Religion and Society.

"Against a backdrop of an overall decline in religious participation in the past decade, the Muslim growth of more than 30 percent is especially dramatic," Roozen said.

The report's major findings include:

- The number of mosques and mosque participants continue to show significant growth, from 1,209 mosques in 2000 to 2,106 in 2011. New York and California have the largest number of mosques, 257 and 246 mosques respectively. Connecticut has 36 mosques.
- The American mosque is a remarkably young institution; more than three-fourths (76%) of all existing mosques were established since 1980.
- The number of mosques in urban areas is decreasing, while the number of mosques in suburban areas is increasing. In 2011, 28 percent of mosques were located in suburbs, up from 16 percent in 2000.
- The number of mosques with large attendance has increased. In 2000 there were only 12% of mosques with attendance over 500 and in 2011 there were 18% with attendance over 500 people. More than 2% of American mosques can be classified as megachurches or megamosques which are defined as a congregation with attendance of 2000 or more people.
- Mosques remain an extremely diverse religious institution. Only a tiny minority of mosques (3 percent) have just one ethnic group that attends that mosque. South Asians, Arab-Americans and African-Americans remain the dominant ethnic groups, but significant numbers of Somalis, West Africans and Iraqis now worship at mosques nationwide.
- The conversion rate per mosque has remained steady over the past two decades. In 2011,

the average number of converts per mosque was 15.3. In 2000 the average was 16.3 converts per mosque.

- Shia mosques are also expanding in number. Some 44 percent of all Shia mosques were established in the 1990s.
- The majority of mosque leaders (56 percent) adopt a flexible approach to interpretation of Qur'an and Sunnah that takes into account the overall purposes of Islamic law and modern circumstances.
- Mosque leaders overwhelmingly endorse Muslim involvement in American society. More than 98 percent of mosque leaders agree that Muslims should be involved in American institutions and 91 percent agree that Muslims should be involved in politics.
- The vast majority of mosque leaders do not feel that American society is hostile to Islam.
- The vast majority (87 percent) of mosque leaders disagree that "radicalism" is increasing among Muslim youth. Many mosque leaders say the real challenge for them is not radicalism and extremism among the youth, but how to attract and keep them close to the mosque.

Sponsors of the U.S. Mosque Survey 2011 include: The Hartford Institute for Religion Research (Hartford Seminary), the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought.

The U.S. Mosque Survey 2011 is part of a larger study of American congregations called Faith Communities Today (FACT), which is a project of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership, a collaborative, multifaith coalition of American faith communities affiliated with Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

To view the full report, go to:

<http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/The-American-Mosque-2011-web.pdf>

Source: [Hartford Seminary](#)

About Hartford Seminar: The Seminary engages leaders in international inter-religious initiatives; prepares leaders, students, scholars and religious institutions to understand and live faithfully in today's multi-faith, world; engages a diverse array of people in dialogue; and affirms the particularities of faith and social context while openly exploring differences and commonalities. The Seminary provides educational opportunities that enable participants to understand themselves and their faith traditions better and to contribute more fully to a culture of dialogue and creative leadership in their civic and faith communities locally, nationally and abroad.