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# Imaginary fears

A close look at recently released statistics dispels the myth of runaway growth in the country's Muslim population and debunks the fear that Hindus are in danger of becoming a minority.

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The bogeyman of runaway growth in India's Muslim population has been a staple of divisive politics, used time and again to polarise the electorate and make significant political gains. But recent Census of India statistics dispel the myths and debunk the oft-repeated claims made by right-wing elements that Hindus are in grave danger of becoming a minority in their own country.

Data on the religious composition of the country's population as of 2011, released recently by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner under the Ministry of Home Affairs, show that the population of Muslims nationwide stood at 17,22,45,158, or 14.23 per cent of the total Indian population of 121,08,54,977, compared with 13,81,88,240 in 2001, when it was 13.44 per cent of a total of 102,86,10,328. Thus, while the Muslim population recorded a decadal growth of 24.65% in absolute numbers, it grew only 0.79 percentage points as a share of the

total population. To get a clearer picture of the reality, one must take a closer look at the statistics on the Statewise distribution of population in terms of absolute numbers, change in percentage of population, and the decadal growth in the population of Muslims in the States where they are in significant numbers (of at least 10 lakh).

SHARE IN STATE POPULATION

The overwhelming majority of India's Muslims (97 per cent) live in 17 key States, all of which have at least 10 lakh members of the country's biggest minority. India's most populous State, Uttar Pradesh, is also home to the highest number of Muslims (nearly 3.85 crore), followed by West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Assam, each of which has at least one crore. Together, these five States account for 60.58 per cent of the country's total Muslim population.

Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir and (undivided) Andhra Pradesh are each home to at least

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY RELIGION  
ALL COMMUNITIES  
121,08,54,977  
100%

HINDUS  
96,62,57,353  
79.80%

MUSLIMS  
17,22,45,158  
14.23%

CHRISTIANS  
2,78,19,588  
2.30%

SIKHS  
2,08,33,116  
1.72%

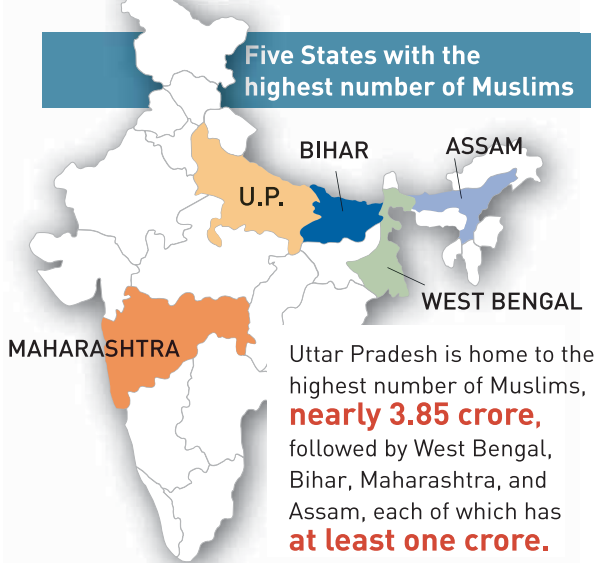
BUDDHISTS  
84,42,972  
0.70%

JAINS  
44,51,753  
0.37%

OTHERS  
79,37,734  
0.65%

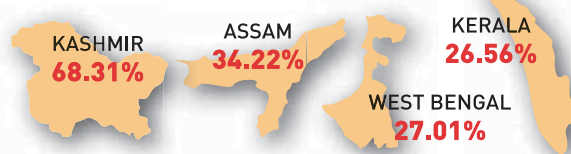
RELIGION NOT STATED  
28,67,303  
0.23%

Source: Census of India 2011



Together, these five States account for 60.58 per cent of the country's total Muslim population.

States with large Muslim populations

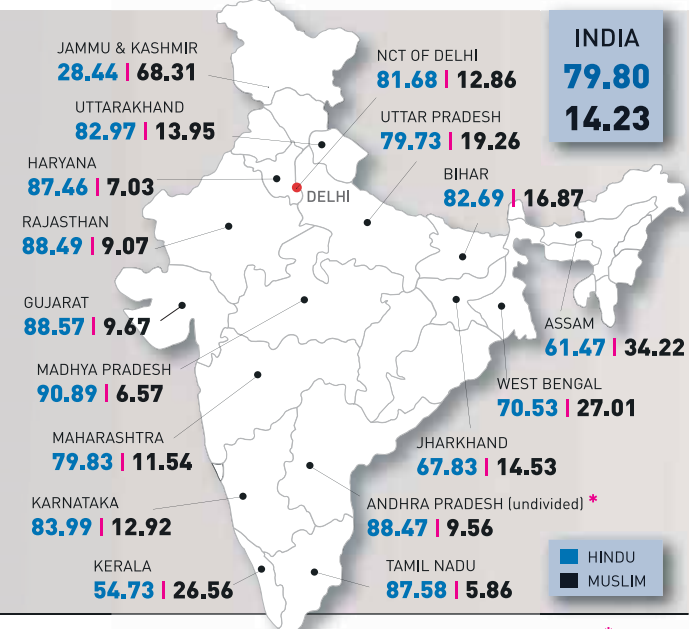


Growth in Muslim population as a percentage of total population in key States

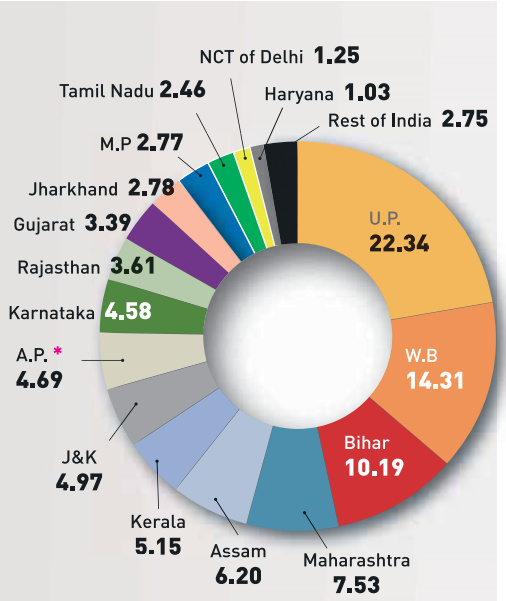
State	2001	2011	Change%
Jammu & Kashmir	66.97	68.31	1.34
Assam	30.91	34.22	3.31
West Bengal	25.24	27.01	1.77
Kerala	24.70	26.56	1.86
Uttar Pradesh	18.49	19.26	0.77
Bihar	16.53	16.87	0.34
Jharkhand	13.85	14.53	0.68
Uttarakhand	11.92	13.95	2.03
Karnataka	12.22	12.92	0.70
NCT of Delhi	11.72	12.86	1.14
Maharashtra	10.60	11.54	0.94
Gujarat	9.06	9.67	0.61
Andhra Pradesh *	9.17	9.56	0.39
Rajasthan	8.47	9.07	0.60
Haryana	5.78	7.03	1.25
Madhya Pradesh	6.37	6.57	0.20
Tamil Nadu	5.56	5.86	0.30

\* Figures available only for undivided Andhra Pradesh. Source: Census of India 2011

Share in population according to religion in key States in 2011 (in per cent)



Distribution of Muslims as a percentage of the total Muslim population in India



\* Figures available only for undivided Andhra Pradesh. Source: Census of India 2011

Growth in Muslim population in key States

State	2001	2011	Change%
Haryana	12,22,916	17,81,342	45.66
Uttarakhand	10,12,141	14,06,825	38.99
NCT of Delhi	16,23,520	21,58,684	32.96
Rajasthan	47,88,227	62,15,377	29.81
Assam	82,40,611	1,06,79,345	29.59
Jharkhand	37,31,308	47,93,994	28.48
Bihar	1,37,22,048	1,75,57,809	27.95
Gujarat	45,92,854	58,46,761	27.30
Maharashtra	1,02,70,485	1,29,71,152	26.30
Jammu & Kashmir	67,93,240	85,67,485	26.12
Uttar Pradesh	3,07,40,158	3,84,83,967	25.19
Madhya Pradesh	38,41,449	47,74,695	24.29
Karnataka	64,63,127	78,93,065	22.13
Tamil Nadu	34,70,647	42,29,479	21.86
West Bengal	2,02,40,543	2,46,54,825	21.81
Andhra Pradesh *	69,86,856	80,82,412	15.68
Kerala	78,63,842	88,73,472	12.84

\* Figures available only for undivided Andhra Pradesh. Source: Census of India 2011

80 lakh Muslims, while their population is between 50 lakh and 80 lakh in Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu each have above 40 lakh Muslims. The National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, Haryana and Uttarakhand complete the list.

Muslims are in a majority only in Jammu and Kashmir, where they account for 68.31 per cent of the population. A high percentage of Muslims is seen in Assam (34.22), West Bengal (27.01) and Kerala (26.56). The percentage is between 10 and 20 in eight States and below 10 in six States.

Data on the change in the Muslim share of population, in percentage points, from 2001 to 2011, show that Assam recorded the highest change, at 3.31, while Uttarakhand stood second with 2.03. Five other States posted a change of at least one percentage point, while the growth was below one percentage point in 10 States.

GROWTH IN NUMBERS

Decadal growth statistics show that Haryana recorded the highest growth percentage (45.66), while Uttarakhand and the NCT of Delhi saw their respective Muslim populations grow more than 30 per cent.

All the other key States posted a growth of at least 20 per cent, with Andhra Pradesh and Kerala alone recording below-20 per cent growth. In absolute terms, Uttar Pradesh topped the decadal growth list, recording a growth of 77.43 lakh in its Muslim population, followed by West Bengal (44.14 lakh) and Bihar (38.35 lakh).

Maharashtra with 27 lakh and Assam with 24.38 lakh were the only other States where the growth was above 20 lakh. Seven among the other key States posted a growth above 10 lakh, while the growth was below 10 lakh in five States.