

Major Early Caliphate Capital Moves

Period	Ruling State/Dynasty	Capital	Move
622–656	Early Muslim Community / Rashidun	Medina	Initial political center
656–661	Rashidun under Ali	Kufa	Medina → Kufa
661–750	Umayyad Caliphate	Damascus	Medina → Damascus
750s	Early Abbasid Caliphate	Kufa	Damascus → Kufa
762–836	Abbasid Caliphate	Baghdad	Kufa → Baghdad
836–892	Abbasid Caliphate	Samarra	Baghdad → Samarra
892 onward	Abbasid Caliphate	Baghdad	Samarra → Baghdad

The Umayyads moved their capital from Medina to Damascus after Mu‘awiya established the dynasty in 661.

The Abbasids then shifted the center of power eastward. They initially used Kufa and, in 762, established **Baghdad** as their principal capital.

There was then a particularly significant move **within the Abbasid Empire**: Caliph al-Mu‘tasim founded **Samarra** in 836 and moved the court there, largely because of tensions between the military and Baghdad's population. The Abbasid court returned to Baghdad in 892.

Other Major Islamic Capitals

As the Muslim world became politically divided, different caliphates and dynasties established their own centers:

- **Córdoba, Spain** — Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba
- **Cairo, Egypt** — Fatimid Caliphate
- **Marrakesh and Seville** — important Almoravid and Almohad centers
- **Fez** — important Moroccan Islamic dynastic capital
- **Istanbul/Constantinople** — Ottoman imperial capital after the Ottoman conquest
- **Isfahan, Tabriz, and other Iranian cities** — capitals of various Persianate Muslim dynasties

By around **1000 CE**, there were simultaneously three major rival caliphates: the Abbasids in **Baghdad**, the Fatimids in **Cairo**, and the Umayyads in **Córdoba**.

Modern Islamic Population Centers in the United States and Europe

Today, many Islamic communities and organizations are concentrated in major metropolitan areas throughout the United States and Europe.

United States

Major centers include:

- **New York City / New York metropolitan area**
- **Detroit–Dearborn, Michigan**
- **Chicago**
- **Los Angeles**
- **Washington, D.C.–Maryland–Virginia**
- **Houston**
- **Dallas–Fort Worth**
- **Northern Virginia**
- **Boston**
- **Minneapolis–St. Paul**
- **Upon research we found Concord, New Hampshire and potentially other state capitals.**

The U.S. Muslim population is estimated at approximately **5.5 million in 2026**, compared with approximately 2.4 million in 2007. Pew also estimates that the number of U.S. mosques increased from approximately 1,200 in 2000 to 2,800 in 2020.

Dearborn is a particularly distinctive case because of its large Arab-American population and long-established Muslim community. Current reporting describes Dearborn as having a majority Arab-American population.

Europe

Major concentrations are particularly visible in:

Country	Major Urban Centers
United Kingdom	London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester
France	Paris region, Marseille, Lyon
Germany	Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, Ruhr

Country	Major Urban Centers
	region
Belgium	Brussels, Antwerp
Netherlands	Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague
Sweden	Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg
Italy	Rome, Milan, Turin
Austria	Vienna
Denmark	Copenhagen

Pew's demographic research identifies **France and Germany** as having the largest Muslim populations among European countries in its 2016 estimates, while the UK had received the largest number of regular Muslim migrants during the period studied.

There are also older, historically established Muslim populations in southeastern Europe—particularly **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo**—which are historically different from more recent immigration to Western Europe.

Washington, D.C., London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, and other national capitals are not “Islamic capitals.” They are national or European political capitals in which Muslim communities, mosques, advocacy organizations, businesses, and elected officials have become established.

For example, **Brussels** is particularly significant because it is both Belgium's capital and the institutional center of the European Union. **London, Paris, and Berlin** are major national political capitals with substantial Muslim populations.

Questions Concerning Modern Population Movement and Territorial Change

However, when examining the movement and concentration of these populations, new claims and political questions have emerged. For example, **Dearborn, Michigan, has sometimes been described in public discussion as a “Muslim capital” of the United States.** This terminology should be understood as a description used by particular commentators rather than an official designation.

Many Americans are concerned about rapid demographic and cultural changes in particular communities and view some of these changes as a form of territorial or political conflict. Where residents express the entire cultural fabric of a community to be changing—including changes in population, political representation, police and court representation, local institutions, public symbols, flags, heritage, history, and culture—they may feel that the character of their established community is being displaced.

The **63% figure concerning foreign-born Muslims** refers to an *earlier* Pew estimate of the share of Muslim American adults who were foreign-born. **7-10%** of the Muslim population in the United States may be undocumented.

The Union of Saints' concern is that **Islamic political movements and American civic institutions may have competing expectations concerning political participation, religious identity, cultural integration, and assimilation**. The organization argues that American citizens should retain meaningful representation within their established communities.

The organization further argues that these questions deserve examination through evidence concerning immigration, citizenship, population change, political representation, local government, religious institutions, and community demographics.

Many of these changes transpired post-pandemic and resulted from open-border policy during the Biden era, and now Americans are paying the price of modern territorial war in their home communities. For many, all that they know is changing rapidly because of “foreign politics,” and “foreign religion.”