

POPULATION IN THE WORLD:

~1.5 billion

POPULATION IN CANADA:

~1,000,000 or 3% of Canadians

HISTORY:

The faith of Islam originated in the Arabian city of Mecca, the site of the holy Kaaba. An orphaned merchant named Muhammad received the first Qur'anic revelation in the year 610 through a heavenly intermediary known as Angel Gabriel. Prophet Muhammad's mission sparked transformation in the socially stratified tribal society of Arabia. His new moral order deemed all humans equal under one true God. Muslims, believers in Islam, see the Prophet as a model for righteous living; his death marked the beginning of a longstanding debate on the question of rightful leadership and succession.

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is an Abrahamic faith. Islam is practised all around the world; currently, Indonesia holds the largest population of Muslims. Since the time of the Prophet, Muslims have responded to the word of God in their own context, culture and language. The diversity of the *Ummah* (global Muslim community) is vast, and there are many communities of interpretation. Sources often categorize Islam into three major communities: Sunnism, Shiism and Sufism.

FORMAL PLACE OF WORSHIP:

Mosque

SACRED SCRIPTURE(S):

Qur'an

- The Qur'an consists of 114 chapters and about 6,000 verses; it is understood to be the message of God as revealed to his final messenger.
- In Arabic, *Qur'an* means "recitation"—revelation is meant to be recited, as there is a distinct poetic nature and beauty to the text.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- Islam is a monotheistic faith: Muslims believe that there is only one God.
- God has sent many messengers and revelations to communities throughout history so that they may know how to live nobly—the Qur'an is the final and complete message.
- In Islam, faith and world are inextricably linked; Muslims pursue balance and noble conduct.
- Muslims honour their interconnected responsibilities as exemplified by the Prophet: the horizontal relationship (ethical action and care for creation) and the vertical relationship (God-consciousness).
- Muslims fulfill central obligations and ethical responsibilities through rituals of prayer, pilgrimage, giving and sacrifice.
- In the *shahada*, Muslims proclaim that there is only one God and that Muhammad is his messenger; this profession serves as a formal statement of intention to pursue a straight path laid out by God.

OTHER IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS:

- *Islam* is an Arabic word that refers to the act of submission. *Salaam* is often translated as "peace" in English, and *Muslim* as "one who submits."

REFERENCES:

- Harvard's Pluralism Project – Islam: pluralism.org/religion/islam
- Project Interfaith – Muslim: projectinterfaith.org/page/muslim
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- BBC Religions – Islam: bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam
- Aga Khan Development Network – About Imam: akdn.org/about_imamat.asp