

Islam in Norway: The Norwegian approach to multiculturalism and to religion

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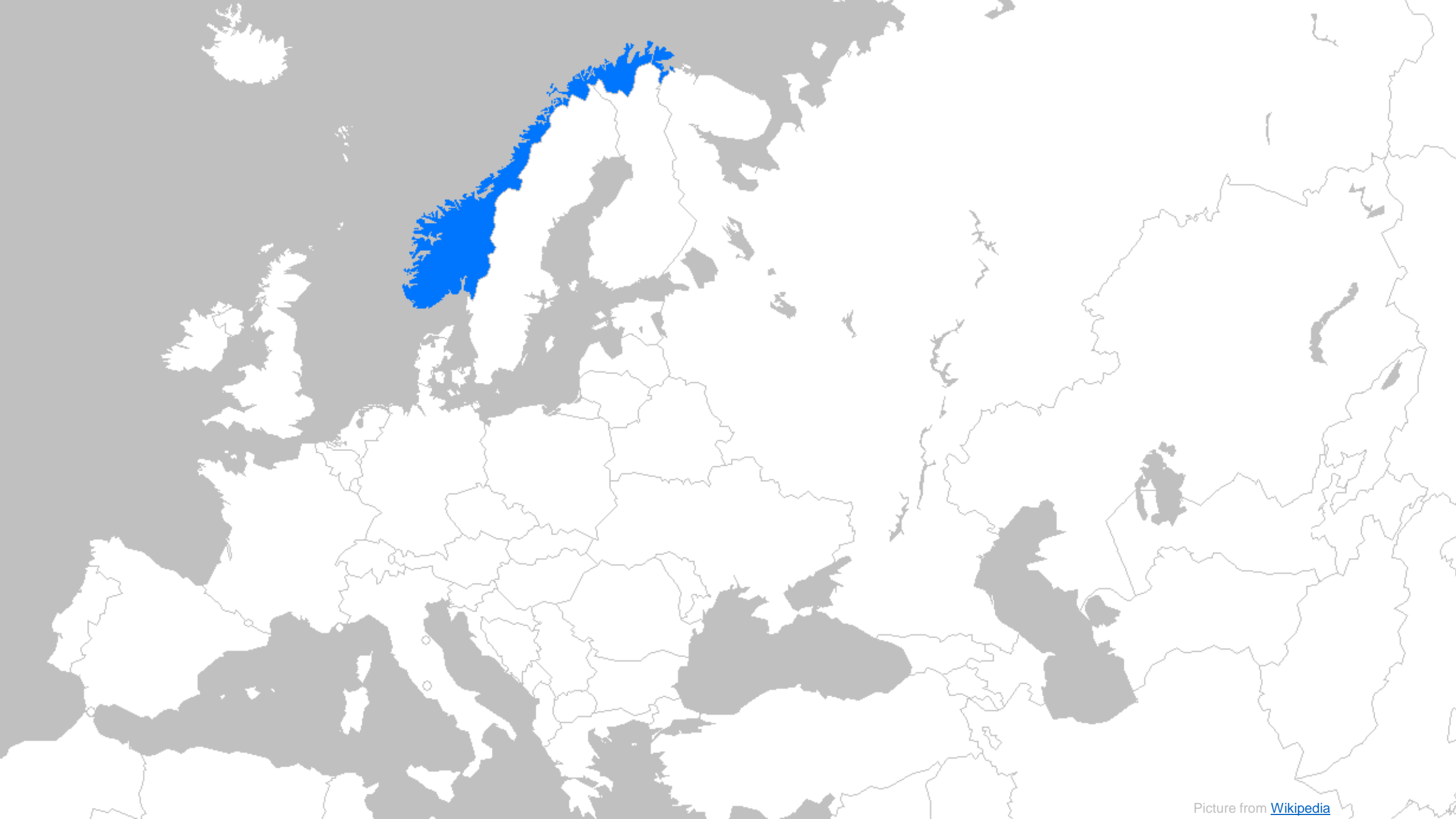
Islam in Norway

Two topics requested

1. The Norwegian approach to multiculturalism and to religion
2. Arabs/Muslims in Norway (immigration, integration), and their visibility (the reasons behind a positive or a negative visibility).

Structure

- Some background on Norwegian history
- Ethnic and racial categories
 - Immigrants and their descendants
 - Religion
- Approaches to religion
 - Public funding of religion
 - Marriage
- Approaches to Islam in Norway
 - Diversity
 - Consolidation
 - Responses



Norway emerging as a nation

Norway was under Denmark and then Sweden from 1380-1905.

Norway adapted its constitution in 1814 and became fully independent in 1905.

Norwegian national identity largely formed in the nineteenth century:

Members of the city bourgeoisie travelled to remote valleys in search of ‘authentic Norwegian culture’, brought elements from it back to the city and presented them as the authentic expression of Norwegianness. Folk costumes, painted floral patterns (*rosemaling*), traditional music and peasant food became national symbols even to people who had not grown up with such customs (Eriksen, 2010, p. 122).

The word “Norwegian” (*norsk*) referred to both citizenship and ethnicity/culture – and still does.

Norway emerging as a nation

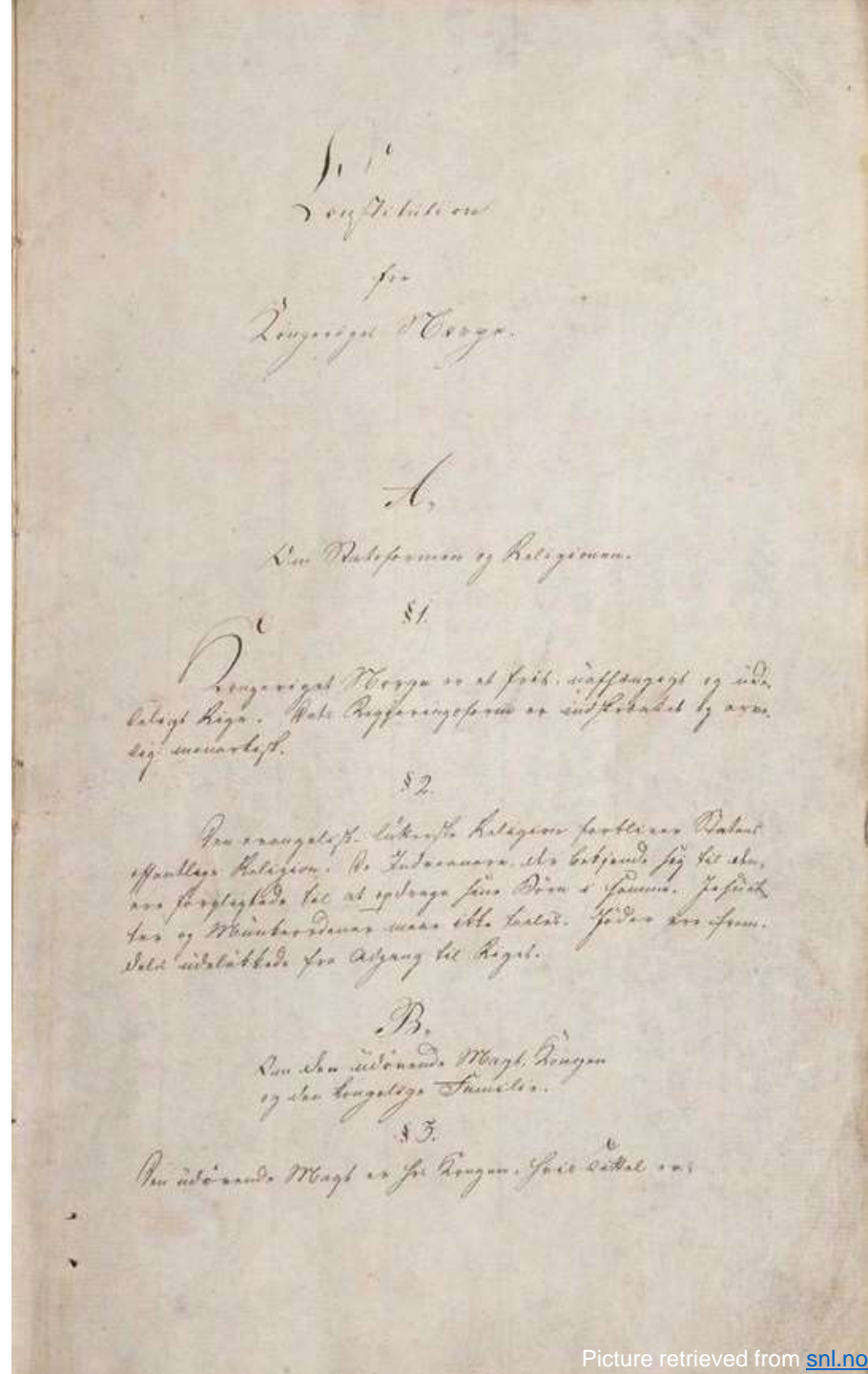
Article 2 of the Constituion of the Kingdom of Norway (1814)

The Evangelical Lutheran Religion remains the official religion of the State. Inhabitants who profess the same shall be required to educate their children therein. Jesuits and Monastic orders shall have no place in the country. Jews are still banned from accessing the Country.

1843: The Catholic Church returned to Norway

1851: Ban on Jews removed

1956: Ban on Jesuits removed



Norway c. 1970

“We have shared ancestry, shared history, a shared lifestyle [...] We are said to be part of a pluralist culture, but it is rather its monolithic character that is dominant. The one centrally governed school system, the one TV channel, the completely dominant church, the one labour organisation, the one employers’ organisation. We resemble one another *ad nauseam*” (Christie 1975, p. 63, my translation).

- Norway became net immigration country for the first time in 1968.
- In 1970:
 - 1,3 percent of the population were foreign citizens, of whom 46,7 percent were from other Nordic countries.
 - 94 percent of Norwegians were members of the Lutheran state church, and 3,5 percent were members of other faith communities (mostly Lutheran free churches).
 - 2,5 percent were religiously unaffiliated.

(Holte, 2018, p. 7)

Norway c. 1970

Around 1970, Islam would have been something faraway and exotic to most Norwegians.

Depictions of Muslims and Arabs included – but would not have been limited to – the Arab oil sheik Abdul Ben Bonanza in *The Pinchcliffe Grand Prix* (Caprino, 1975) – here seen losing a game of chess to his driver, Emanuel Desperados.



[See YouTube clip](#)

Norway c. 1970 onwards

Labour migration open until 1975:

- Very low number of migrants arriving until the late 1960s.
- Migrants arriving from Morocco, Pakistan and other countries to take up work in the early 1970s – not in very big numbers, but they attracted great attention.

More restrictive migration policies from 1975:

- No unqualified labour migrants allowed, but Norway still accepted refugees and family members of people who had already moved to Norway.
- Many of the labour migrants who came before 1975 have brought families (wives) from their home countries and have Norwegian-born children.

Labour migration to Norway remained low until 2004, when several Eastern European countries joined the EU.

(Holte, 2018, p. 6-7)

Norway c. 1970 – 2015

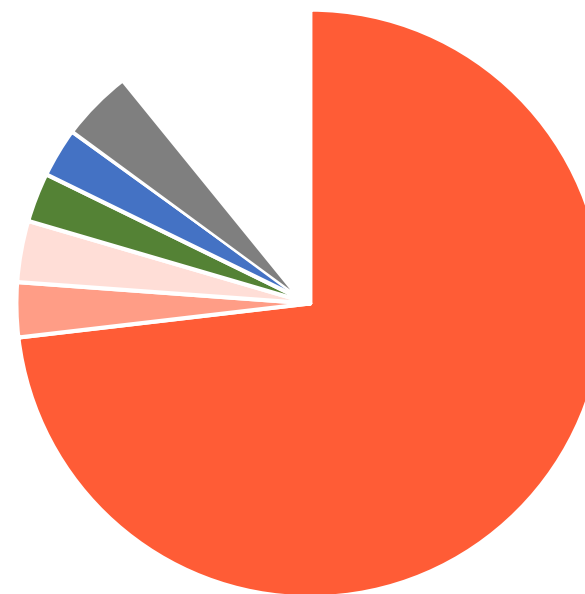
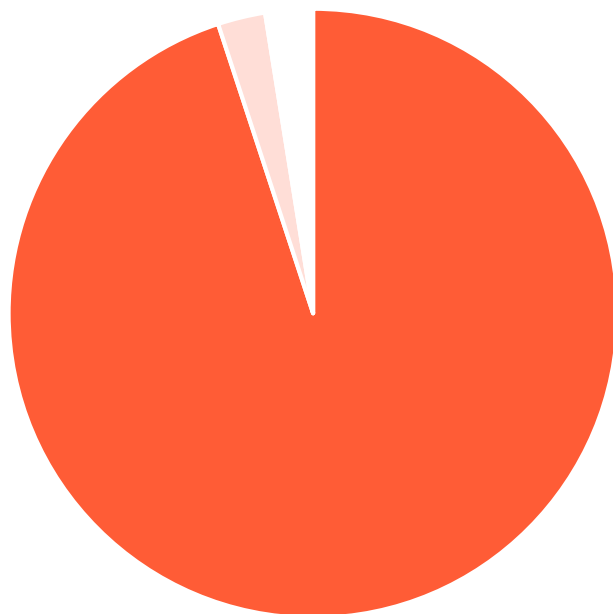
1970	2015
<p>1,3 percent of the population were foreign citizens of whom 46,7 percent were from other Nordic countries.</p>	<p>15,6 percent of population were immigrants or born to immigrant parents, more than half from “Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania except Australia and New Zealand, or Europe except the EU28/EEA”.</p>
<p>94 percent of Norwegians were members of the Lutheran state church.</p>	<p>72,9 percent of the population were members of the Lutheran Church of Norway.</p>
<p>3,5 percent were members of other faith communities (mostly Lutheran free churches).</p>	<p>11 percent of the population were members of one of 749 “religious and life-stance communities outside the Church of Norway.</p>
<p>2,5 percent were religiously unaffiliated.</p>	<p>15 percent were religiously unaffiliated.</p>

(Holte, 2018, p. 7-8)

Norway c. 1970 – 2015

1970

2015



- Church of Norway
- Catholic Church
- Other Christian faith communities
- Islamic faith communities
- Other faith communities
- Unaffiliated
- One out of four among the religiously unaffiliated believe in "God or a higher power"

Norway c. 1970 – 2015 and onwards

The idea of a homogeneous population is challenged

- By continuously increasing numbers of immigrants and children of immigrants somehow marked as “different” from the majority population.
- By recognition of the historic heterogeneity of the Norwegian population – especially with regards to the Sámi indigenous people (Henriksen, 2016).
- By “individualisation” – more diverse lifestyles and choices among the majority population.

Norway c. 1970 – 2015 and onwards

An “ethnification of national identity”

Underpinned by:

- ideas about “equality as sameness”
- metaphors of home and family life
- territory and generalized kinship
- Lutheran Christianity

(Gullestad, 2002)

Ethnic and racial categories in Norway

There is no official registration of ethnicity, race or religious faith in Norway.

However, some categories that often serve as proxies include:

- Immigrants and their descendants
- Religious affiliation
- Language/ mother tongue (registered and used in schools)

Ethnic and racial categories: Immigrants and their descendants

- *Immigrants* are people who were born abroad, and who have two parents and four grandparents who were born abroad, and who have moved to Norway.
- *Norwegian-born to immigrant parents* are people who were born in Norway, and who have two parents and four grandparents who were born abroad.
- “The third generation” – ie. the grandchildren of immigrants – is not used as a category.

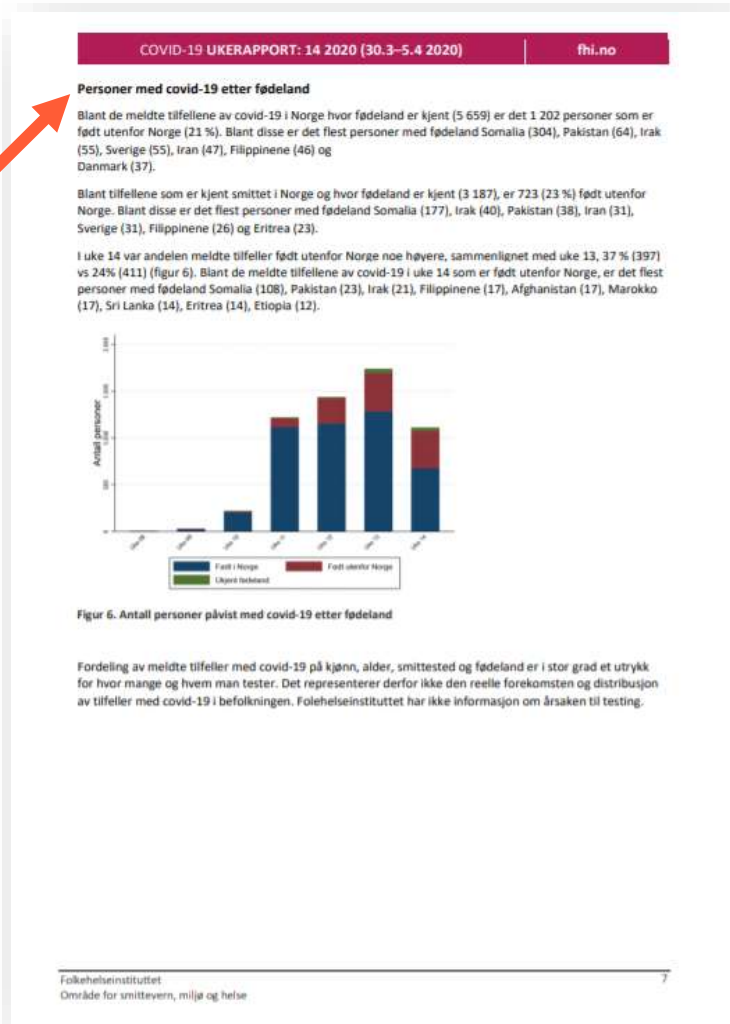
(Dzamarija, 2019)

Based on these definitions, there were:

- 790 497 immigrants, and
 - 188 757 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents
- ... in Norway on 1 January 2020, corresponding to 18,2 percent of the population.

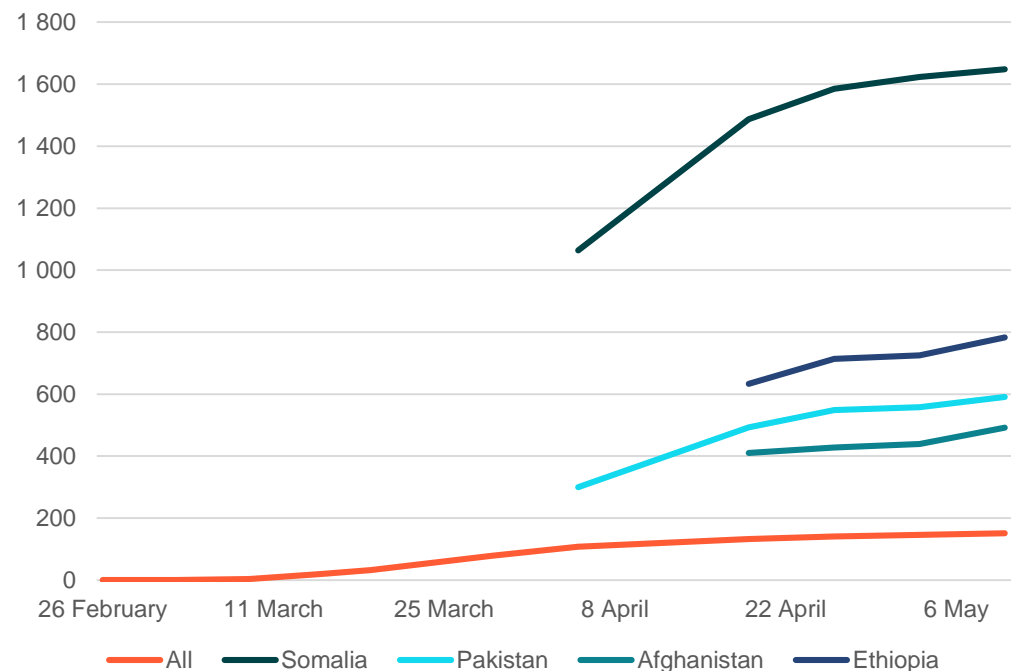
(Statistics Norway, 2020a)

Ethnic and racial categories: Immigrants and their descendants



Persons
[diagnosed]
with Covid-19
by country of
birth

Confirmed corona cases in Norway pr. 100 000 by country of birth



Ethnic and racial categories: Religion

The religious faith of people who were not members of the state church registered in Norwegian censuses 1866 – 1960:

1866:

- 5 105 persons not members of the state church in 1866
- 25 Jews (constitutionally banned from Norway until 1851)

1876: 56 people were not members of a Christian faith community:

- 25 Jews
- 31 non-religious

1910:

- 90 faith communities, in addition to the state church

(Søbye, 2014, p. 248-250)

Ethnic and racial categories: Religion

Today, statistics on religion in Norway focus on membership.

The Church of Norway, the former state church, had 3 686 715 *members* at some undefined date in 2019.

(Statistics Norway 2020b)

Including
only
members for
whom
government
subsidy is
received.

Members of religious and life stance communities outside the Church of Norway, by religion/life stance. Per 1 January ¹				
	2020		Percentage change	
	Members	Per cent	2019 - 2020	2016 - 2020
¹ Including only members for whom government subsidy is received.				
Total	697 257	100.0	2.8	12.1
Baha'ism	1 091	0.2	-2.4	-5.0
Buddism	21 555	3.1	2.4	14.6
Hinduism	12 153	1.7	6.6	36.8
Islam	182 826	26.2	4.2	23.4
Judaism	794	0.1	-1.9	3.1
Christianity	372 651	53.4	1.9	6.8
Sikhism	4 080	0.6	2.4	15.1
Philosophy	99 468	14.3	3.3	10.8
Other religious and philosophical communities	2 639	0.4	8.2	42.7

(Statistics Norway, 2020c)

Approaches to religion in Norway

Article 16 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway (since 2012)

All inhabitants of the realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Church of Norway, an Evangelical-Lutheran church, will remain the Established Church of Norway and will as such be supported by the State. Detailed provisions as to its system will be laid down by law. All religious and belief communities should be supported on equal terms.

- In practice, the Church of Norway is funded by the state and the municipalities, and other faith communities are eligible for economic support of corresponding amount per member.

Approaches to religion in Norway

Membership in faith communities

Mosques with members?

“In most Muslim countries, mosques do not normally have ‘members’, as churches in Europe do ... But in Norway, mosques receive funding from the state conditional on their formal membership size” (Elgvin, 2020, p. 99).

Norge Den katolske kirke

Oslo katolske bispedømme må betale tilbake millionstøtte

Bispedømmet tapte søksmålet om tilbakebetaling av 40 millioner kroner etter medlemsjukssaken.



Approaches to religion in Norway

Public funding of religion – consequences

- A certain standardisation of organisational form – cf. “de facto congregationalism” (e.g. Warner, 2000)
- Public lists of the [Number of members eligible for subsidy in faith communities](#)
- Substantial differences in power between the Church of Norway and other faith communities remain due to more members (which means more funding), but also accumulated resources (e.g. buildings), established networks, perceived legitimacy and other factors.

(Holte, 2020; see also Nordin, 2017)



Faith communities in Søndre Nordstrand



Approaches to religion in Norway

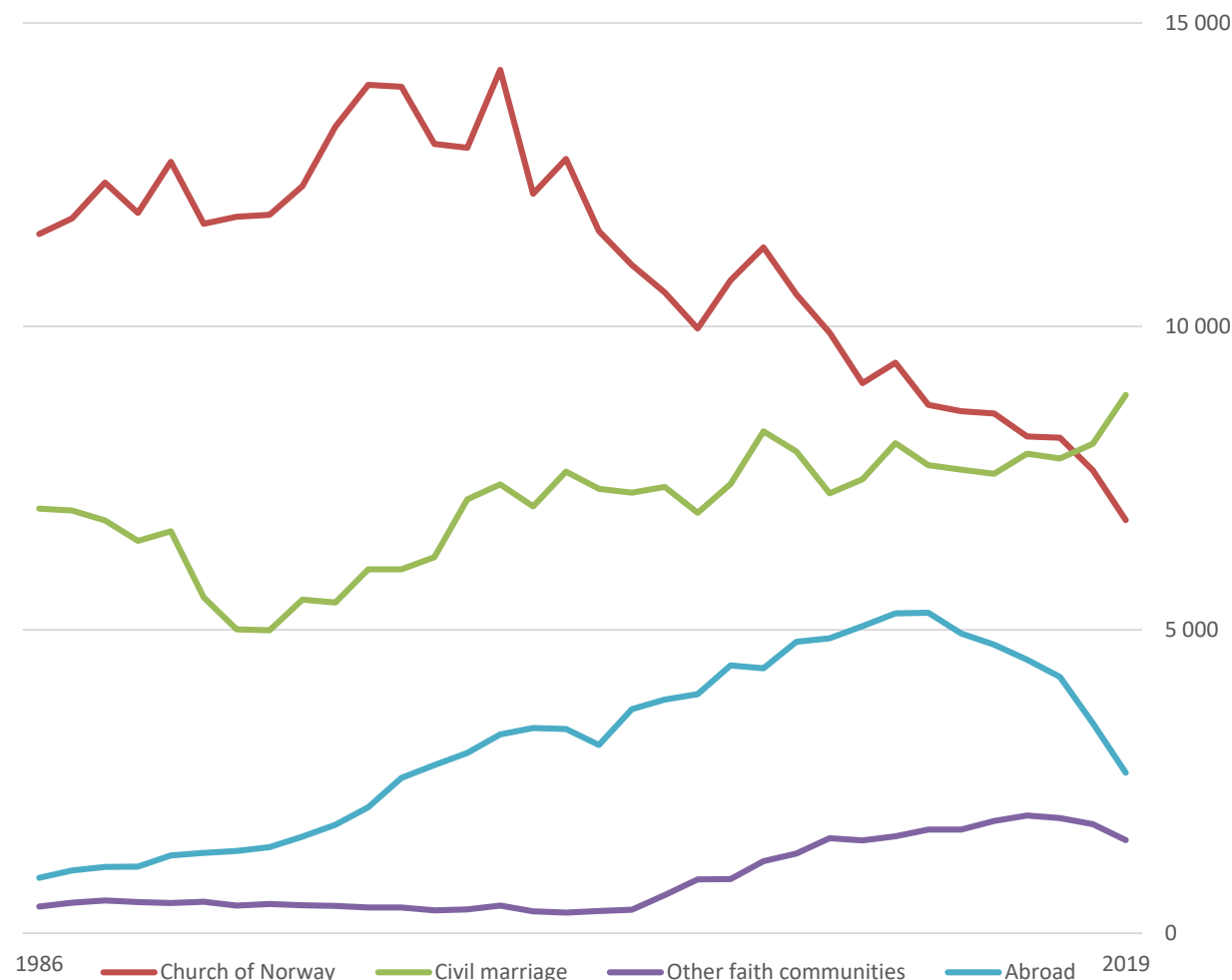


Marriage

Faith communities that are registered with the authorities and eligible for subsidies can be licensed to conduct weddings.

(I.e. there is no need for a civil service to become legally married if a couple is married in a licensed faith community.)

Number of marriages by type (1986-2019)



Approaches to Islam in Norway

Background

- Hardly any presence of Islam in Norway before the 1970s.
- No official registration of ethnicity, race or religious faith in Norway.
- Statistics on religion based on membership.
- An alternative approach is to focus on immigrants from Muslim-majority countries (cf. Østby and Dalgard, 2017)

Figure 4-2 Immigrants and children of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, 1980-2015

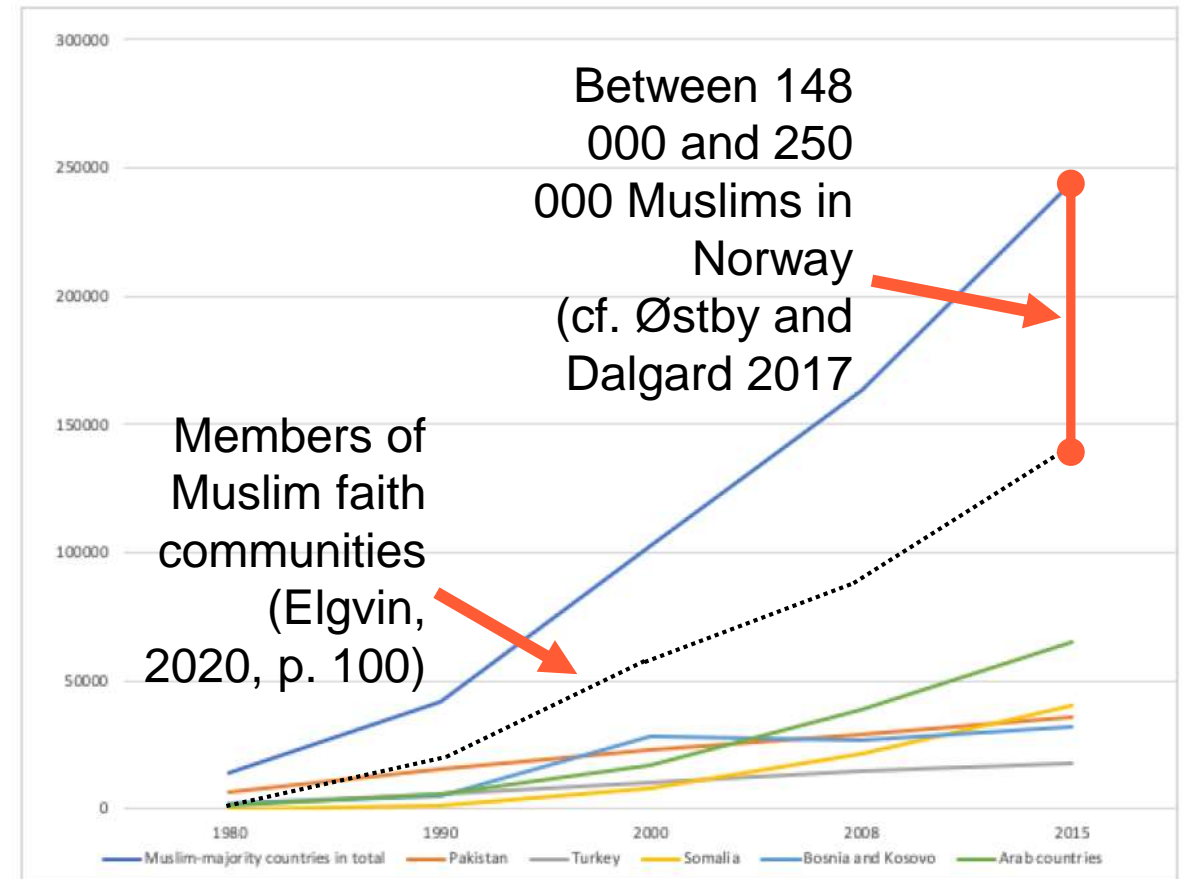


Chart from: Elgvin, 2020, p. 98

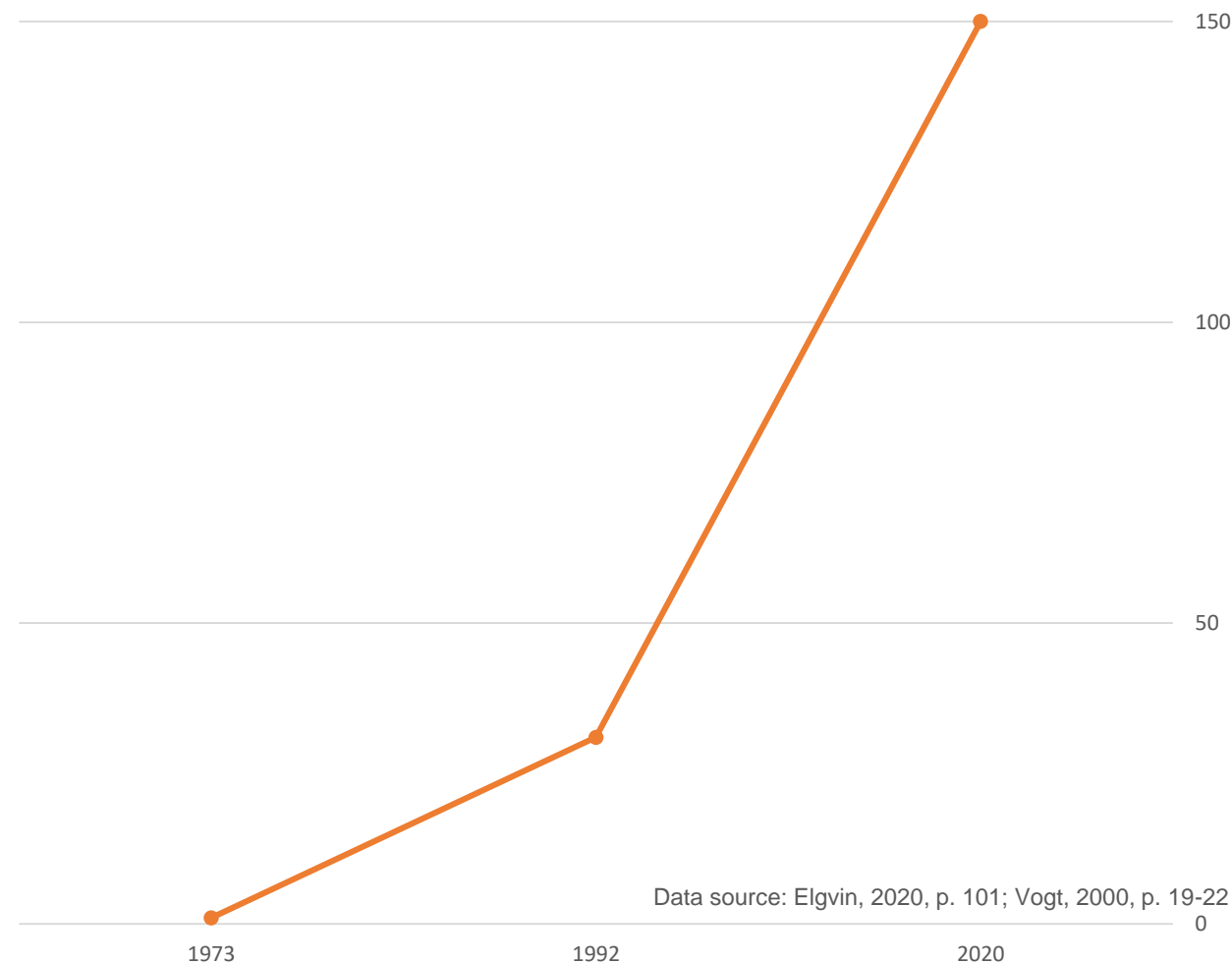
Approaches to Islam in Norway



Estimated number of Mosques, Islamic congregations, and Islamic associations in Norway (1992-2020)

Diversity of Muslims in Norway

- Members and not members of faith communities
- Sunni, Shia, Ahmadiyya ...
- Background from different countries
- First, second and third generation in Norway, as well as people with no migration background
- People from Muslim families and converts



Approaches to Islam in Norway

Consolidation among Muslims in Norway

The Islamic Council of Norway (ICN) emerged in the early 1990s, in part as a response to the Church of Norway's request for Muslim dialogue partners.

- Earlier consolidation of Muslim public engagement in the wake of the Rushdie Affair
- ICN consolidated somewhat successfully to overcome the “multipolarity of the Islamic field on Norway”.
- ICN received public funding in 2007, after playing an active role during the cartoon crisis.
- Public funding was stopped in 2017, when ten organisations resigned to establish *Muslimsk dialognettverk* (Muslim Dialogue Network).

(Elgvin, 2020)

Approaches to Islam in Norway



Consolidation among Muslims in Norway

Islamic Council of Norway:

- 33 mosques and organisations
- over 65 000 members

(ICN, n.d.)

Muslimsk dialognettverk (Muslim Dialogue Network):

- 31 mosques
- 31 613 members

(Muslimsk dialongnettverk, n.d.)

Approaches to Islam in Norway

Islamophobia

Two violent terrorist attacks by right-wing extremists in Norway in the last decade:

- Utøya 22 July 2011
- Bærum 10 August 2019

Norwegian public features many of the same Islamophobic tropes (Bangstad, 2014).

- E.g., *snikislamisering* (stealth jihad)

Conservative and Radical Islam

There has been no terrorist attacks in Norway by people professing Islam.

Some Norwegian youth joined the ISIS.

Conservative and radical Islamic voices also feature in the Norwegian public.

- E.g. [IslamNet](#)

In lieu of a conclusion ...

... can we have a discussion?

- How does Islam in Norway compare with Islam in France?
- How does Islam in Norway compare with Islam in the USA?

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