

ISLAMIC LAW

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Sharia law decrees that men and women should dress modestly, although countries vary in how they interpret this

Sharia can inform every aspect of daily life for a Muslim.

For example, a Muslim wondering what to do if their colleagues invite them to the pub after work may turn to a Sharia scholar for advice to ensure they act within the legal framework of their religion.



How are rulings made?

Like any legal system, Sharia is complex and its practice is entirely reliant on the quality and training of experts.

Islamic jurists issue guidance and rulings.

Guidance that is considered a formal legal ruling is called a fatwa.



There are five different schools of Islamic law. There are four Sunni schools: Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanafi, and one Shia school, Jaafari.

The five schools differ in how literally they interpret the texts from which Sharia law is derived.



Interpretation of Islamic law is also nuanced according to local culture and customs, which means Sharia may look quite different in different places.



What are some of the tough punishments?

Islamic scholars say Sharia is mainly a code of ethical conduct and about worship and charity but a part of it deals with crime.

Sharia law divides offences into two general categories: "hadd" offences, which are serious crimes with set penalties, and "tazir" crimes, where the punishment is left to the discretion of the judge.



There are many safeguards and a high burden of proof in the application of hadd penalties. But experts say that often doesn't happen in practice. Some countries where Islamic law is applied adopt or enforce such punishments for hadd offences, and surveys have suggested attitudes of Muslims to harsh penalties for such offences vary widely.

