

Muslims in Berlin

Findings and Recommendations

THIS CITY REPORT WAS PREPARED as part of a series of monitoring reports titled *Muslims in EU Cities*. The series focuses on eleven cities in the European Union with significant Muslim populations.

Within the reports, select neighbourhoods in the cities were chosen for more in-depth study which are: Slotervaart, Amsterdam; Borgerhout, Antwerp; Kreuzberg, Berlin; Nørrebro, Copenhagen; Hamburg-Mitte, Hamburg; Evington, Spinney Hills, Stonegate, Leicester; 3rd Arrondissement, Marseille; 18th Arrondissement, Paris; Feijenoord, Rotterdam; Järvafältet, Stockholm; and the Borough of Waltham Forest, London.

This body of work comes in response to major trends with regards to Muslims living in Europe: whether citizens or migrants, native born or newly-arrived, Muslims are a growing and varied population that presents Europe with one of its greatest challenges, namely how to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all in a climate of rapidly expanding diversity.

This report offers the rarely heard voices of Muslims living in Berlin and a snapshot of their experiences and perceptions.

Background:

- Berlin has one of the most diverse populations in Germany with 24 per cent of the residents coming from a minority background. According to the city's statistics agency, in 2005 there were 220, 000 Muslims in Berlin.
- The district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg has an overall population of over 147,000, with an estimated 35,000 residents from a Muslim background. Turks form the largest minority group within this district which also contains other non-Western minority residents.
- In Berlin, the greatest interaction between policymakers, Muslims, and Muslim organisations takes place at the district and neighbourhood level.
- Over 300 residents of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg and Berlin took part in the research for this report, which

includes 200 detailed interviews with residents (100 Muslims and 100 non-Muslims), six focus groups, and over 15 in-depth discussions with leaders from the community and government.

“I feel German because I speak the language and have adopted the culture. Yet I also feel I am Russian and Kazakh and Ukrainian and Muslim. I feel good about all of these identities.”

—Focus group participant

Key Findings By Major Issue Area

Identity And Belonging

- Muslims feel a strong sense of belonging to their district. Eighty-four per cent of Muslims and 76 per cent of non-Muslims said they belonged to the district of

Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg with 80 per cent of Muslims believing that people in their neighbourhood were willing to help each other.

- Berlin's positive and open atmosphere towards diversity was seen as an asset with 72 per cent of Muslim and non-Muslim respondents identifying a strong sense of belonging to Berlin.
- Eighty-nine per cent of Muslims and 20 per cent of non-Muslims feel they are not perceived as German by others.
- Experiences of racial discrimination were felt among 79 per cent of Muslims and 45 per cent of non-Muslims claiming to have experienced discrimination in the last year at least once.
- The vast majority of all respondents (almost 90 per cent) felt there was considerable racial and religious prejudice within society.
- Seventy-four per cent of Muslim respondents experienced religious discrimination at least once, in comparison to 25 per cent of non-Muslims.

Education

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

By 2011, the Berlin Senate and Kreuzberg district administration will establish free kindergarten classes for all children as part of Berlin's Integration Policy (Integrationskonzept).

- Improving the quality of education and pupil achievement in schools is the main priority for Kreuzberg residents. Concerns were expressed by Muslim respondents about the high proportion of Kreuzberg students attending the Hauptschule, the lowest educational streams which inhibit career choices later in life.

“There should be a better mix between immigrants and Germans in the classes, in order to avoid parallel societies.”

—Focus group participant

- Many Muslim respondents favoured a greater ethnic mix within their district and believed it would lead to an improved quality of education.
- Over half of the Muslim respondents felt that different religious practices were not sufficiently respected by schools while only a quarter of non-Muslims shared this opinion. Some of the Muslim and non-Muslim respondents pointed to the ban on headscarves as the reason for their position.

- Discrimination in the school system is a major concern for Muslim parents, particularly instances of the exclusion of mothers wearing the headscarf at school events and pupils confronted by negative stereotypes and low expectations from teachers.

Employment

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Senate of Berlin has initiated Berlin Needs You (Berlin braucht Dich), a campaign to raise the percentage of young people with an immigrant background in public sector jobs.

- Young Muslim women say they feel impeded by the headscarf ban when attempting to secure meaningful employment.
- According to the 2003 Atlas of Social Structures (Sozialstrukturatlas), Kreuzberg is one of the poorest areas of Berlin with a district wide unemployment rate of 41 per cent.

“In Germany, things are getting worse for women wearing headscarves. They can find jobs only in service sectors (if they are lucky, that is). They can't (find) work in sectors that require intellectual abilities. It's very hard for them to find good jobs.”

—Focus group participant

- Data from the Turkish-German Entrepreneur's Union (Türkisch-Deutscher Unternehmerverband) indicates that self employed Turks increased from 22,000 to 61,000 between 1985 and 2005. One in ten Turkish-owned businesses is located in Berlin.
- Lack of understanding and information about apprenticeships and employment opportunities remains a significant barrier to improve labour market participation of Muslim respondents.

Policing And Security

- Around half of Muslims and non-Muslims surveyed did not trust the police. Both groups expressed low levels of satisfaction with police services. Levels of trust were higher for older Muslims whereas more Muslim women than men distrusted the police.
- Instances of discriminatory behaviour from the police towards Muslims were reported. Very few respondents officially reported these incidents.

- The general impression among Muslims is that young men of ethnic background were more likely to be targeted by the police.
- Muslims support the recruitment of ethnic minorities into the police force.

Participation And Citizenship

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In 2005, Berlin established the Islamforum, which allows representatives from Muslim organisations to meet with city officials, including high level senate officials, four times a year.

- Some Muslims who are not EU citizens can not vote in local elections despite being long-term residents of Germany.
- Muslims are applying for German citizenship in decreasing numbers. Many cite certain aspects of citizenship laws which they believe discriminate against particular groups, especially Turks.

“I want to give a signal to German society, by saying “Yes I am Muslim, I wear the headscarf, I speak German, I am educated, and I have achieved much.”. That has always been my aim, even when I was a child, and people stared at me on the street. It raises your ambition.”

—Focus group participant

- Muslim respondents who are eligible to vote had high levels of voter participation in national and local elections.
- Muslims exert the most amount of influence on decision making at the local level as opposed to the city or national level.
- Muslims have high rates of civic participation in education and youth activities. Religiously observant young Muslim women are particularly active in civic and political spheres.

Housing

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In 2005, mothers in Kreuzberg formed Mothers without Borders (Mutter ohne Grenzen) to confront local crime and drugs through activities such as night time neighbourhood patrols by diverse groups of women.

Many Muslim respondents, compared to non-Muslims, live in social housing.

- Muslims want to live in ethnically mixed areas and value Kreuzberg for its diversity. There was regret that many ethnic Germans had moved out of Kreuzberg.
- Everyday concerns of Muslim and non-Muslim respondents centered on cleanliness of the streets, traffic congestion, noise, and antisocial and criminal behaviour by youth.
- Experiences of discrimination were indicated ranging from direct verbal comments to the lack of explanation for a refusal to provide accommodation. Dissatisfaction was also expressed with the state and conditions of available social housing.

Health

Both Muslims and non-Muslims expressed a great degree of satisfaction with health services. Respondents felt their cultural and religious needs were addressed and respected.

However, health services were not completely free from stereotyping attitudes, as Muslims mentioned prejudice on the basis of religion in doctor’s surgeries 13 times and in hospitals 14 times.

Media

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The public TV channel ZDF has created the Internet programme Forum on Friday (Forum am Freitag) offering Muslim scholars and experts a platform to debate and express opinions on issues of public interest.

- Muslim respondents largely derive their information about the local and city levels from German newspapers and magazines. Non-German media such as Turkish television stations and newspapers are popular mediums for national and international information.
- The negative portrayal of Muslims in the media is generally seen as indicative of how Muslims are viewed by the wider population. It may also be a reason why some Muslim respondents prefer non-German media.
- Many Muslims recognize that more balanced coverage of Muslims issues and communities also requires that Muslims increase their participation and engagement with the media. There is an absence of Muslim voices on key public issues such as headscarves that keeps Muslim perspectives on these issues out the media and public discussions.

Key Recommendations

- The Federal, Senate, and local authorities in Berlin should develop targeted and effective campaigns that celebrate diversity and difference as part of being German.
- The Federal, Senate, and local authorities in Berlin should increase awareness and combat discrimination on the grounds of religion including documentation of such cases.
- The Federal, Senate, and local authorities in Berlin, together with civil society, should generate awareness and discussions about the impact of government efforts to increase security and combat terrorism on Muslim communities and organisations.
- Education authorities should build mutual trust and better understanding between parents, teachers, and other educational staff to overcome cultural stereotypes and improve opportunities for higher educational attainment.
- The Berlin Senate should consider increasing investment in schools with high numbers of immigrant pupils in

an effort to improve the standard and quality of education.

- Local district administrations must consider a stronger focus on developing a common local identity and policies that encourage collective investment and upkeep for local neighbourhoods.
- The research in this report indicates that discrimination on the grounds of visible manifestations of religion is a particular concern for women wearing the headscarf. The Berlin Senate is urged to further evaluate the effects of the headscarf ban on the economic, political, and social participation of women wearing head-coverings.

For more information

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