

At Home in Europe Project

Muslims in Europe—A Report on 11 EU Cities

Findings and Recommendations

THIS REPORT CONSTITUTES the comparative analysis of data gathered from 11 cities in seven European countries. It points out common trends and offers recommendations at the local, national, and international levels, including to the European Union (EU) and to international organisations. While not representative of the situation of all Muslims in these cities, this report does capture a snapshot of the experiences of Muslim communities in select neighbourhoods in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Antwerp, Berlin and Hamburg, Copenhagen, Leicester and Waltham Forest–London, Marseille and Paris, and Stockholm.

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.

MYTHS VERSUS REALITIES

MYTH: Muslims do not want to integrate; they want to live separately from the rest of the population.

REALITY:

- The OSI research challenges the myth of segregation and alienation and reveals a much more positive picture of integration at the local level. The majority of Muslims and non-Muslims identify strongly with the city and the country where they live. Sixty-one per cent of Muslims have a strong sense of belonging to the country and 72 per cent have a strong sense of belonging to the city. In Antwerp, for example, over 90 per cent of respondents expressed a “very strong” or “fairly strong” sense of local belonging.
- However, 50 per cent of all Muslim respondents who identify themselves with the country where they live believe that they are not seen as belonging to that country by the wider society.

MYTH: The needs and concerns of Muslims are very different from non-Muslims.

REALITY:

- The needs and experiences of Muslims and non-Muslims are largely the same. Across all 11 cities surveyed, daily concerns centre around the need for better quality of education, improved housing, cleaner streets, and tackling antisocial behaviour and crime.
- Muslims want to live in mixed, not segregated, neighbourhoods across the cities studied. Muslim parents are concerned about the impact of segregation on their children and discrimination in accessing housing which limits their choice of residential location. They are concerned that urban renewal programmes in some cities, aimed at creating more mixed neighbourhoods, are displacing the most disadvantaged people.
- Both Muslims and non-Muslims enjoy living in and are proud of their mixed neighbourhoods. The major-



ity of people feel that their neighbourhood is a place where people are willing to help and trust each other and where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

MYTH: Muslims are not involved in political and civic life.

REALITY:

- Muslims who are eligible to vote are active in local civic and political life. The majority of Muslims who are eligible to vote did vote in local and national elections. Younger Muslims are more likely to feel they can influence decisions at local levels than older Muslims: 56 per cent of those under 20 believe they can affect decisions at the local level.
- Over 70 per cent of all eligible Muslims surveyed voted in local and national elections.
- Just under half of the Muslims surveyed (47 per cent) have been involved in some form of civic participation in the last year.
- Political parties based on ethnic and religious identities have not gained the support of Muslim voters—increasing numbers of Muslims are standing for political office in mainstream parties but they face additional scrutiny and questions due to their background.

KEY FINDINGS BY MAJOR ISSUE AREA

IDENTITY

“I really feel at home in Leicester. We are a big family here. I feel the whole of Leicester is my home”. [British Asian woman, aged 20–29, questionnaire respondent, Leicester]

- Muslims feel a stronger connection to their neighbourhood and city than country. Over 55 per cent of total respondents across the 11 cities agreed with the question: “Do people from different backgrounds get on well here?”
- Of those who identified themselves with the country where they live, 50 per cent believe they are not perceived as belonging to the country by the wider society.
- Overall, 50 per cent of Muslim respondents compared to 9 per cent of non-Muslims reported experiencing religious discrimination at some point over the last 12 months. Over one fifth of Muslims frequently experienced religious discrimination over the last 12 months.

EDUCATION

“Where does the responsibility lie? Does it lie with the parents, the children’s upbringing? Does the responsibility lie with the school? Or with the city council? It lies with everyone. Everyone has to do their share. We do our share at home, the school has to do its share at school. We have a joint responsibility”. [Muslim Moroccan woman, aged 40–49, focus group participant, Amsterdam]

- Muslims want more ethnically mixed schools—parents are concerned that segregation has an adverse effect on a child’s prospects.
- Some Muslim pupils continue to suffer from prejudice and low expectations from teachers.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Amsterdam, the education and social services have developed an innovative outreach programme for young pupils, including a significant number of Muslims, considered to be at risk of falling out of the education system. Under the “8 to 8” programme coaches provide advice, support, and direction to pupils from 8 am to 8 pm.

EMPLOYMENT

“In Germany, things are getting worse for veiled women. They can find jobs only in the service sectors (and that’s if they are lucky). They can’t work in sectors that require intellectual abilities. It’s very hard for them to find good jobs”. [Focus group respondent, Berlin]

- Many Muslims work in marginal and low-paid jobs which lead to segregated or parallel working lives.
- Muslims are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than non-Muslims; 19.8 per cent of Muslims involved in the OSI survey are unemployed, compared with 6.8 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Women are discriminated against in the labour market if they wear the veil.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Leicester, the employment advice agency Job Centre Plus took employers to local community centres, temples, and mosques, so that they could get a better understanding of the barriers faced in recruiting minorities. When a new shopping centre was being developed, the agency put on a “roadshow” to showcase the new employers to the community.

HOUSING

“I like this area because of its residents: There is a good atmosphere among people and they generally get on well with each other. People respect and help one another in any way they can”. [Malian woman, aged 30–39, questionnaire respondent, Paris]

- Muslims want to live in mixed communities, challenging claims that the geographical concentration of Muslims reflects their desire to live among their own kind.
- Discrimination in housing restricts choices of where many Muslims across Europe can live.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Copenhagen, the city’s integration policy states that its aim is to combat the problem of vulnerable housing areas by tackling unemployment and social problems and making public housing more attractive: “The positive side-effect will be a great demand for public housing, including from high resource families”.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

“Health services are excellent in Germany. May Allah bless them. We couldn’t find these kinds of services in Turkey. I’m very satisfied about it”. [Focus group respondent, Berlin]

- Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction in the healthcare that they receive. Reports of discrimination and unfair treatment are low, and most respondents felt that doctors and health clinics respect the needs of people of different faiths.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum partnered with the Local Strategic Partnership to implement a system of “health preachers”. The central concept of this programme was to identify and train local religious representatives from the borough’s Muslim, Christian and Sikh communities, and to draw on their positions as faith leaders to communicate important messages on health to their congregations.

POLICING AND SECURITY

“When you are African, you are always exposed to certain looks and some policemen act differently around you. The only time I was checked by the police, the officer literally threw my identity papers back at me! In spite of this, I feel well integrated and am happy to have obtained French nationality”. [French man of Senegalese origin, aged 30–39, questionnaire respondent, Paris]

- Despite overall high levels of trust in law enforcement (58 per cent), there are also low levels of trust among young European-born Muslim men, who experience the greatest amount of discrimination and unfair treatment at the hands of the police.
- Muslims and non-Muslims differ greatly when it comes to reporting hate crimes—that is a crime motivated by discrimination. Overall, 36 per cent of Muslims reported the crime to the police compared with 59 per cent of non-Muslims.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Berlin, contacts between the police and mosque associations have taken place through the development of “cooperation agreements”. In 2003, the local police in the district of Neukölln, together with the local mosque association, started a programme called “TiK” (Transfer of Intercultural Competencies). The programme aimed to put mosque staff and police officers from different districts in contact with each other and to develop national guidelines for the police about how to act in their contacts with mosques and Muslims.

PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

“I would like to be perceived as German but not in the national sense—the blood principle—but as a citizen and member of this country, with my various identities and self-perceptions and my multiple perspectives”. [German Turkish man, aged 40–49, questionnaire respondent, Berlin]

- Many Muslims who are not EU citizens remain disenfranchised, particularly in Germany and France, where they do not have the right to vote in local elections even though many are long-term residents.
- Political parties based on ethnic and religious identities have not gained the support of Muslim voters.
- Increasing numbers of Muslims are standing for political office in mainstream parties but they face additional scrutiny and questions due to their background.
- Muslims and non-Muslims have similar levels of trust in local government and institutions, but Muslims have significantly lower levels of trust in Parliament.
- Respondents involved in same ethnic/religious civic organisations are significantly more likely to trust their city councils than those involved in mixed organisations indicating the importance of how recognition of such groups by local policymakers leads to greater confidence and integration.

MEDIA

“We should get our people involved in journalism and enter into the field and change the mindset. I think the opportunities are there and I think we should grab them so our communities can become more engaged”. [Focus group respondent, Leicester]

- On average, Muslim respondents viewed reporting by local media as more balanced, fair, and representative of Muslim communities than reporting by the national media.
- Muslim respondents believe that the enormous media scrutiny of Muslims in different European countries has contributed to the negative reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudices.
- The generally negative media coverage has also provided the impetus for individuals, civil society, and public entities to respond with greater engagement in media discussions and to focus on the need for encouraging and supporting more Muslims working in the media.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In Belgium, the public television network, VRT, has signed a diversity charter which states that as a public mass medium it should reflect the diversity of the population. Efforts to increase the visibility on television of young people from ethnic minorities in Flanders include the programme *Rwina*, broadcast on VRT. In the focus groups there was, however, criticism that the programme reproduced stereotypes.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

At the City Level:

- Cities should pursue urban regeneration policies that ensure access to housing for all neighbourhoods with a good mix of ethnicities.
- City officials must find ways to maintain areas that are ethnically and religiously mixed and to ensure that Muslims are not limited by discrimination and prejudice when choosing where to live.
- Local policymakers should develop municipal campaigns

that emphasise a common and inclusive city identity as an effective way to increase cohesion and belonging. Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Copenhagen are three cities which have initiated such campaigns with success.

- Local policymakers must examine schools, businesses, and workplaces for opportunities to increase interactions between various ethnic and religious groups within the community.

At the National Level:

- National officials, taking into account the results of the OSI research showing a general preference for mixed neighbourhoods, should ensure that discrimination does not present a barrier to the free choice of where to live. Officials should pursue urban regeneration policies that ensure access to housing for all and neighbourhoods with a good mix of ethnicities.
- National officials should consider reforming nationality laws for long-term settled third country nationals where necessary, so that naturalisation is the desired goal of settlement (as it is in the United States, Canada, and Australia), and that dual citizenship should be possible.
- National officials should consider extending the right to vote in local elections to all those who are long-term settled residents in order to address concerns about democratic legitimacy amongst policymakers in areas with large disenfranchised populations.

At the EU Level:

- The EU should encourage the adoption of principles of equal treatment to cover discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief in education, housing, transport, and the provision of goods and services. It is important that measures to tackle prejudice and stereotypes ensure and engage public support.
- EU statistical agencies and projects should collect accurate data on minorities to support evidence-based policies to facilitate integration and fight discrimination.
- The EU should develop a forum among cities for exchanging information and best practices about collecting educational data on minority students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain more information about the report's findings and the At Home in Europe Project, contact:

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