

# Muslims in London

## Findings and Recommendations

THIS CITY REPORT IS PART OF A SERIES OF MONITORING REPORTS titled Muslims in EU Cities that examine 11 cities in the European Union (EU) with significant Muslim populations.

Each report focuses on the following neighbourhoods or boroughs within each city for more in-depth study: Slotervaart, Amsterdam; Borgerhout, Antwerp; Kreuzberg, Berlin; Nørrebro, Copenhagen; Hamburg-Mitte, Hamburg; Evington, Spinney Hills, Stoneygate, Leicester; 3rd Arrondissement, Marseille; 18th Arrondissement, Paris; Feijenoord, Rotterdam; Järvafältet, Stockholm; and Waltham Forest, London.

These reports are a response to major trends regarding the situation of Muslims living in Europe. Whether citizens or migrants, native born or newly-arrived, Muslims are a growing and varied population that presents Europe with the major public policy challenge of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all in a climate of rapidly expanding diversity.

### Background

- In 2001, there were 1.6 million Muslims in the UK. More recent estimates suggest that the Muslim population had increased to over 2.5 million by 2010 and that by 2030 the Muslim population will have reached 5.5 million.
- Almost 40 per cent of Muslims in England and Wales lives in London where Muslims are the second largest faith group after Christians, that is 8.5 per cent of the city's population. The Muslim population in London is more ethnically diverse than the rest of the UK. Nationwide, 69 percent are south Asian in heritage and 31 per cent are from other ethnic groups. 39 per cent of London Muslims were born in the UK compared with 46 per cent in England and Wales. The diversity of London's Muslim population is reflected in the 300 languages identified by the 2008 annual school census in London. The top ten languages spoken include Urdu, Bengali, Somali, Arabic and Turkish.
- The area with the highest proportion of Muslim residents in the UK is the borough of Tower Hamlets (71,000/36.4 percent), followed by Newham (59,000/24.3 per cent). In the boroughs of Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hackney, Redbridge, Haringey and Waltham Forest, Muslims constitute over 10 per cent of the population. The Muslim population in the London borough of Waltham Forest is the third largest in London and constitutes 15.1 per cent of the population.
- Of all the religious groups in London and the UK as a whole, Muslims have the youngest age profile. Almost one third is below 15 years of age and 17 per cent are aged 16-24 years.
- The London borough of Waltham Forest lies on the outer edge of north-east London and has been part of London since 1965. It is one of the five boroughs hosting the 2012 Olympics. Its neighbouring boroughs are Hackney and Newham to the south, Haringey and Enfield to the west and Redbridge to the east.
- Waltham Forest has been home to immigrants in the UK since the mid 19th century including Jewish communities from central and Eastern Europe. The largest influx into the area took place, as elsewhere in the UK, in the postwar years with the arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean and South Asia. This was subsequently followed by individuals from Africa, China, Greece, Turkey and most recently from Somalia. Since 2003, similar to other boroughs across the UK, there has been an increase in the population from Eastern Europe.
- In 2001, the population of the London borough of Waltham Forest stood at 218,277. Recent estimates suggest a figure between 227,000 and 243,200. Its white British ethnic group was constituted at 64.5 per cent and ethnic minority groups stood at 35.5 per cent of the population in 2001. The largest ethnic group was black Caribbean (8.2 per cent), followed by Pakistani (7.9 percent), and black African (5.7 percent).

The age profile is younger than that of London as a whole and is ranked seventh highest among London boroughs for residents aged 15 years or younger. This data does not take into account significant migration to the borough since 2001.

- This qualitative report is based on a number of methodological tools and was conducted in the London borough of Waltham Forest. It includes a survey of 200 respondents people (100 Muslims and a comparison group of 100 non-Muslims) and nine focus groups with people with a Muslim background. It also includes in-depth discussion with over 30 individuals from Muslim communities in the London borough of Waltham Forest, as well as local government officials, civil society members, and relevant experts engaged with inclusion and integration issues. The definition of Muslim in this report relies on respondents' self-identification.

## Key Findings By Major Issue Area

### Identity, Belonging and Discrimination

"It's like a hybrid mix: we're Muslims, we're also British; we're Asian, we're also British."

– Questionnaire respondent

- Residents surveyed in the London borough of Waltham Forest were generally positive about living in their area with over 70 per cent of Muslims and non-Muslims surveyed believing that people were willing to help each other.
- Among Muslim respondents there was an almost even split between those who agreed or strongly agreed (44 per cent) with the statement that people in the neighbourhood shared the same values and those who disagreed (42 per cent). Only 30 per cent of non-Muslims respondents agreed with this statement and 48 per cent disagreed.
- Responses to whether people worked together to improve the neighbourhood demonstrated a less positive feeling with 53 per cent of Muslims and 54 per cent of non-Muslims stating that people did not work together to improve the neighbourhood.
- Whilst overall there was a strong sense of belonging at the local, city and national level for Muslim and non-Muslim respondents, a greater proportion of Muslim respondents (79 per cent) than non-Muslims (66 per cent) reported a very or fairly strong sense of belonging to the local level. For non-Muslim respondents, this was reversed with belonging greatest for the country, then the city and then the local area.
- National belonging appeared more intense for non-Muslims at 76 per cent and 69 per cent for Muslims.
- A majority of both groups (70 per cent) saw themselves as British with 82 per cent of Muslim and 78 per cent of non-Muslim respondents identifying

themselves as British nationals. Alongside seeing themselves as British a similar percentage wanted to be seen as British (74 per cent).

- When asked if they were seen as British by others, only 41 per cent of Muslim respondents felt this to be true whilst 67 per cent of non-Muslims felt they were regarded as British by others.
- 74 per cent of Muslims wished to be seen as British by others. Barriers identified included not speaking English, being a member of an ethnic minority, and being born abroad.
- Experiences and perception of racial discrimination were felt to be high in the UK with over 70 per cent of both groups believing there was a lot or fair amount of racial discrimination in the country. This stands out in contrast to the perceptions of religious discrimination which was felt by 86 per cent of Muslims respondents to be a lot or a fair amount compared with only 21 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Of those who felt religious discrimination was a lot 45 per cent reported having experienced this at least some of the time.
- The data indicates that Muslims and non-Muslims have experienced discrimination based on race and colour at some time: just over 30 per cent of Muslims and 27 per cent of non-Muslims.

### CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

**The London borough of Waltham Forest provides funding and support for an annual Islam Awareness Week. This forum provides an opportunity for people from all backgrounds to come together and crucially addresses issues relating to increasing an understanding of Islam and contributing to cohesion. The project composed of representatives includes members from the Council of Mosques, a women's advisory group, the faith and community police liaison officer and led by staff from the local authority. Events include open days at mosques, crafts, cookery, talks and exhibitions.**

### Education

"It's about awareness of different cultures, different religions, different ethnic groups. This is about awareness of what pupils' families actually go through, what refugees and asylum seekers will go through in terms of coming into the country."

– Questionnaire respondent

- There are no data on the number of Muslim pupils in schools but data gathered on the ethnic diversity of pupils shows that the main ethnic groups in schools in Waltham Forest are white British, followed by Pakistani, any other white background, any other Asian background, and white and Black Caribbean. Similar data points to over half of the primary school

pupil population speaking a first language other than English and that free schools meals, commonly used as indicators of poverty and deprivation, are on par with London which is considerably higher than for England.

- Chinese and Asian groups perform better than other ethnic categories in England, London and Waltham Forest but all ethnic categories perform less well in Waltham Forest compared to England and London. Concern was expressed by some in the research towards the educational underachievement of pupils from Gypsy and Traveller background.
- The majority of respondents (63 per cent Muslims and 54 per cent non-Muslims) were satisfied with their local primary and secondary schools but less happy with youth service provision (45 per cent Muslims and 36 per cent non-Muslims).
- Those working in schools felt that community cohesion and diversity are considered on a regular basis in schools and the majority of parents in focus groups welcomed teaching about different faiths. The majority of Muslims and non-Muslims felt that schools respected the needs of different religious groups: 68 per cent of Muslims and 59 per cent of non-Muslims. A main concern was the need for more resources for all pupils.

## CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Community Learning and Skills Service (CLaSS) is the borough of Waltham Forest's direct provider of adult education and work based learning. It provides a range of learning opportunities for adults and young people and has played an important role in encouraging the inclusion of parents in the education of their children as well as participation from marginalised communities. Local nursery and primary schools work closely with CLaSS to run free courses in their schools for parents to help children with their homework and support their learning. The success of CLaSS is considered to be the close support of community centres, teachers and home school liaison officers.

Great emphasis has been placed by the borough on eradicating all forms of harassment including religious and homophobic. The Council collects data from schools on all reported incidents and in response to this, a number of initiatives have been developed such as school drama performances and active monitoring of anti-racist, anti-Muslim and homophobic behavior.

Addressing issues around gang related violence, including religious and the far right, continues to be a concern for teachers and education professionals. Interviews with practitioners indicate that gang and knife violence have been the focus of initiatives and youth led projects, key to promoting safety and cohesion.

## Employment

"Going back 20-25 years or even 30 years when I was working in the civil service, if I explained to them who I am, where I am from and that I need to go to prayer on Friday, they did not accept it. Nowadays, employers do not have any problem or issue with Muslims."

– Focus group participant

- Compared to other faith groups, Muslims have the highest unemployment and economic inactivity rates and the lowest employment levels. However, it is difficult to make a direct link between ethnicity and religion for some groups.
- A 2009 Waltham Forest report estimates that 7 per cent of the borough's adult population is foreign workers which are higher than the London average of five per cent. Of this population almost half is from Eastern Europe. Other than Haringey, no other London borough has such a high proportion of National Insurance registered foreign workers from eastern European countries.
- In 2011, the employment rate in the borough was 69.3 per cent, just above the London average of 68.1 per cent and just below the national average of 70.2 per cent. A key concern of employment policy is the low skill level in the local population. In 2010, the employment rates for ethnic minorities accounted for more than one third of all Waltham Forest residents at 56.3 per cent compared with 69.2 per cent for white groups.
- A proportion of respondents to the survey reported experiencing discrimination when applying for a job (22.3 per cent of Muslims and 26 per cent of non-Muslims). Differing grounds were identified: for non-Muslims the most frequent ground was age, ethnicity and gender and for Muslims it was their place of residence and religion.
- Muslims and non-Muslims reported positive feelings when asked about the respect employers have for religious customs—42 per cent of Muslims and 49 per cent of non-Muslims felt employers have it 'about right'.

## Housing and Social Protection

"There is a problem with space and there is a huge demand for housing [...] Also the poor quality of housing has resulted in overcrowding. The housing around the Olympics site is causing a lot of tensions as people are being crowded into housing so that work can commence on the Olympic site."

– interview with a local authority official

- Religion and faith have become growing features of England's housing policy discourse because religious and cultural needs have an influence on individuals housing choices. For some Muslims, decisions are affected by access to facilities and services relating to

their faith. After the number of rooms, other research has shown that access to mosques and other religious aspects influence housing choice and many focus group participants reiterated this feeling.

- Respondents in Waltham Forest appreciated what they perceived as the positive ethnic and cultural diversity of the borough and their access to goods and services that cater to their cultural and religious needs.
- There are estimated to be 98,100 residential dwellings in the borough of Waltham Forest and four fifths (78 per cent) are in the private sector and one fifth (22 per cent) constitute social housing.
- Non-Muslim respondents in the study were more likely to live in private rented accommodation or social housing. Only 10 per cent of Muslims were in social housing compared with 21.9 per cent of non-Muslims, figures which are lower than the London average of 40 per cent for Muslims. 44 per cent of Muslim respondents lived with parents or siblings compared with 26 per cent of non-Muslims surveyed.
- On average, Muslims were more satisfied than non-Muslims with social housing (33 per cent compared to 19 per cent). Dissatisfaction was more pronounced amongst non-Muslims at 32 per cent (22 per cent of Muslims) with social housing which according to focus group data could be due to the quality of housing, disrepair, and overcrowding. It is estimated that 14,408 households (16.1 per cent) in Waltham Forest are overcrowded similar to the London average of 17.3 per cent.

### Health and Social Services

“There is equal opportunity. I feel that they don’t judge you for your ethnic background. They seem to respect all people and all religious customs.”

– Questionnaire respondent

- Health care policies in Waltham Forest must take into account the growing and ageing population. By 2031 the population is estimated to rise from 224,800 to 274,770 and those aged 65 years and over will increase from 25,000 to 35,000. Social and health care services for people from minority groups are also key considerations. By 2031, it is predicted that 42 per cent of all Waltham Forest residents aged over 50 will be of ethnic minority background.
- Data from the Foundations survey revealed half of all respondents were satisfied with the health service in the borough: 49.5 per cent of Muslims and 59 per cent of non-Muslims. A significant percent of Muslims (30 per cent) were dissatisfied. Weaknesses include ineffective service delivery and waiting time to see doctors, and were viewed as generally shortcomings within the National Health Service rather than discrimination aimed at particular groups. The

diversity of health staff and accommodation of cultural and religious requirements, such as diet and prayer facilities, were acknowledged.

### CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The use of community based organisations has been utilised by the borough in a bid to raise awareness about certain health issues where outreach or community is problematic. The community organisation Social Action for Health (SafH) was contracted by the NHS for Waltham Forest as part of their outreach campaign against cancer. Using local based workers and targeting communities at the grass roots level they ensured that the relevant language skills were available in order to communicate with individuals on a face to face level. Targeted individuals and communities were reached through community centres, mosques and other locations where particular members of communities may be found.

### Policing and Security

“Young people don’t report [hate crimes], they retaliate or move on. Older Asian males tend to report. Anecdotal evidence is that the largest group of victims is Asian women.”

– Interview with a local authority official working on reporting of hate crimes

- The police were rated second after the courts as the public institutions in which respondents had the highest level of confidence (63 per cent of Muslims and 67 per cent of non-Muslims).
- The majority of both respondents said they had a lot or fair amount of confidence in the police (63 per cent Muslims and 67 per cent non-Muslims).
- Satisfaction with the police was muted in comparison to levels of confidence in the police at over 40 per cent for Muslims and non-Muslims. A higher number of Muslims were dissatisfied (29 per cent) in comparison with non-Muslims (21 per cent).
- Of those who had been a victim of crime in the last 12 months (16 Muslims and 18 non-Muslims) none of the Muslims had reported the crimes to the police. All the non-Muslims had. Caution is needed in drawing conclusions but it nonetheless suggests the need for a deeper understanding of whether there are particular barriers to Muslims contacting the police when they are victims of crime.
- Dissatisfaction with the police was a feature of the focus groups where the causes were listed as poor response by the police to reported crimes, a perception that the police were ineffective and a lack of effort by local police to actively investigate crimes committed. They reflect a general dissatisfaction with the police rather than a concern about unfair treatment.



- A very different picture is painted by young men in the study's focus group who were concerned with their experiences and perceptions of what they believe to be discriminatory use of police stop and search powers. A widely held belief by Muslim focus group respondents was that stop and search powers were being used disproportionately against some groups, in their view, Muslims. The latter may be a consequence of the focus of counter terrorism policing on Muslim communities.
- Under reporting of hate crimes was an emerging and disturbing concern. Muslim women in the research focus groups stated that verbal and physical abuse against them was frequent and that they had normalized this as part of their everyday experience.

### CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs) are one mechanism designed to build greater community consultation and participation in shaping policing and security policies. The SNPs, whose members include local residents, provide advice on policing and security. Members activities include walks around neighbourhoods, noting areas or issues that need to be dealt with such as removal of graffiti, lack of street lighting, anti-social hotspots and issues which generally require more policing. Committed volunteers are crucial to its success as are faith and ethnic based organisations from the local areas.

### Participation and Citizenship

"You know people always say Muslim communities don't engage? Well, I want to ask this: how often does someone from a disadvantaged background white working class area or a white middle class suburb like Hertfordshire make the effort to engage with their own kind in their own community? Never mind engaging with black and ethnic minorities, how often do they engage with their white colleagues, from a different community?"

– Focus group participant

- One measure of political participation is voting. There are no official data on voting by different faith groups and attempts have been made to measure voting by different ethnic groups. This research survey shows a similar proportion of Muslim respondents (58.5 per cent) and non-Muslim respondents voted during the last local council elections. A slightly higher proportion of non-Muslims (64.3 per cent) than Muslims (57.3 per cent) voted at the last national elections (2005 elections at the time of the fieldwork).
- Political participation was found to be at a similar level for both groups. 42 per cent of Muslim and non-Muslims had signed a petition in the last 12 months and around 10 per cent of all respondents had taken part in a public demonstration.

- There was a significant difference between Muslims and non-Muslims as to whether they felt they could influence decision making at the local level. Among Muslims, 62 per cent felt they could influence decisions affecting the city in comparison to 45 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Across both groups, respondents felt more confident in their ability to influence the city over the national level. Just 37 per cent of non-Muslims and 39 per cent of Muslims felt they could influence national decision making.
- The findings overall suggested that Muslim respondents have greater levels of trust in political institutions compared to non-Muslims. Almost half of Muslims (49 per cent) reported trust in the national parliament compared with just over one third (35 per cent) of non-Muslims.
- A significant number of both Muslims and non-Muslims said they did not trust the national government: 35 per cent of Muslims and 47 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Among both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents, trust in the local city council was higher than trust in national political institutions. Over half of Muslim respondents (64 per cent) trusted their city council and 46 per cent of non-Muslims.

### CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) is made up of young people who provide advice on community safety. Some of these are former young offenders and are trained to deliver conflict management workshops to young people in youth offending teams and pupil referral units. They also provide advice on interventions with gangs and have been involved in training police officers following young people's experiences of stop and search.

### Media

"Why do the media deliberately ignore Muslims, when Muslims are doing something positive? We contribute to the economy, we contribute to the National Health Service, we contribute to everything here, but the media always portrays small minor pockets of issues that they blame on the Muslims; why is that? Why can't they show Muslims more positively?"

– Focus group participant

- Muslims noted that the national and local media had vastly different ways of reporting and representing Muslims. Some felt that the local media were willing and engaged with them on stories as residents whereas the national media were constant in their portrayal of Muslims as terrorists and generally more negative and hostile.

- Focus group participants suggested that both the stereotypical picture of Muslims as religious extremists and those focusing exclusively on the positive aspects of Islam created an unrealistic view of British Muslims as a single category.
  - Many Muslims agreed that a more proactive relationship with the media was required and a number of initiatives addressing media representation have been created in the borough. One was the “iMuslims” 2010 project which was developed out of concerns being voiced about the representation of young Muslims in mainstream, television dramas. “Press Gang” is another initiative which developed the skills of young people aged 12-19 years who want to become journalists. Training was offered in writing for news media and as well as opportunities to publish their work in local newspapers as well as the national newspaper The Guardian and on the BBC.
- CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**
- Streetlife FM, a local community radio, was started with support from the London Borough of Waltham Forest. It brings young people, from the locality, together through their shared passion for music and provides a platform for local people to air their concerns and opinions. It aims to strengthen community bonds, and encourage social cohesion. The station has provided local youth with skills and built their confidence, sense of responsibility and motivated them.**

### Key Recommendations

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) should work with the Greater London Authority in developing guidelines for collecting data on ethnic and religious diversity found in London across different areas such as health and education. Best practice should also be noted so that the data can be used to improve policies and programmes.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should work with the ONS, universities and research institutions to ensure a full analysis of the 2011 Census data, to identify trends and significant changes in the profile of the UK Muslim population since the 2001 census.

- The London borough of Waltham Forest should work to raise awareness about equality monitoring and the significance of newer grounds such as religion and belief in this monitoring process. Such efforts would likely improve the level of responses on equality surveys and score cards.
- The NHS Waltham Forest should consider how to work with mosques and other community organisations, including minority media, to best reach out to the diverse communities in the area and improve healthcare access and adaptation to local needs.
- The Metropolitan Police should work with Muslim and minority women’s organisations in developing initiatives that increase reporting of hate crime.
- The police should seek out ways to improve the transparency of the use of stop and search powers, and address concerns that these practices continued to be used disproportionately against Muslims.
- Working on integration should look at ways to create space for dialogue between local residents in Waltham Forest on their values, since in this study perception of whether people in the neighbourhood shared the same values appeared to be one of the weaker cohesive links.
- Muslim community organisations should reach out to media sources to offer voices and stories about Muslims that provide a nuanced and non-collective perceptive.

### For more information

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