

Muslims in Paris

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 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; Norrebro, Copenhagen; Hamburg-Mitte, Hamburg; Evington, Spinney Hills, Stonegate, Leicester; 3rd Arrondissement, Marseille; 18th Arrondissement, Paris; Feijenoord, Rotterdam; Jarvafaltet, 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

- France has a population of over 65 million people (Insee data, 2012), of which almost 19 per cent are foreign born or descendants of immigrants (born in France with at least one immigrant parent). Collection of data on the grounds of ethnic or religious affiliation is forbidden but extrapolations of existing data point to an estimated 4 to 5 million residents and citizens who have a Muslim background. Around 4 million originate from North Africa, with an estimated one million from sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey and other parts of the world. Four out of 10 immigrants live in the Ile-de-France region (composed of 8 departments including Paris) which has a population of over 11 million.
- Paris is home to a myriad of nationalities and individuals. One in six foreigners in France lives in Paris. The city has a population of 2 million and hosts more than 300,000 foreigners, 14 per cent of the population, and three quarters of whom were born outside the EU. It is the most popular in regards to the settlement patterns of foreigners and those of immigrant backgrounds, followed by Seine-Saint-Denis. North Africans can be found in the northern parts of Paris and suburbs whereas the north-eastern districts of Paris are home to people of sub-Saharan origin.
- Paris has a long tradition of welcoming migrants, especially throughout the 20th century. Colonial demand for labour was a key feature of the last century which saw Muslims from North Africa move to Paris before the First World War and settling in districts of the city.
- This report focuses on the 18th arrondissement in Paris, in particular the neighbourhood of La Goutte d'Or. With a population of an estimated 192,000, it is an area known for its vibrancy and multicultural environment as well as its social and economic challenges.
- This qualitative report is based on a number of methodological tools: a survey of 200 people (100 Muslims and a comparison group of 100 non-Muslims) and six focus groups with people with a Muslim background. It also includes in-depth discussion with 25 individuals from various communities in Paris, local government, civil society, 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

"I cannot feel I belong to [a] country that discriminates against me. I love this neighbourhood and this city, but I don't have any feelings for this country."

– Research participant

- Muslims (82 respondents) and non-Muslims (96 respondents) overwhelmingly said they liked living in their neighbourhood. A large majority of all respondents agreed that people in their area were willing to help each other (68 Muslims and 71 non-Muslims) and its ethnic diversity was an attractive characteristic.
- There was a keen sense of belonging from both groups at the local, city and, to a lesser extent, the national level. More than half of Muslims and non-Muslims expressed a strong attachment and affection towards their neighbourhood. 54 Muslims and 62 non-Muslims had a strong sense of belonging to Paris, whilst 65 non-Muslims and 40 Muslims felt a strong sense of attachment to France.
- Family was described as the most important aspect of individual identity for Muslims and non-Muslims. Although small in number, religion featured as the second highest aspect for Muslims whilst interests, age and life stage were chosen by non-Muslims. For Muslims born in France, religion rated lower than for those born abroad. Reasons cited for low sense of belonging include the perception and experiences of discrimination, unequal treatment, and a lack of engagement with the environment outside of their immediate neighbourhood and area.
- Although seen as a diverse neighbourhood, concern was expressed by residents of the 18th arrondissement at the perceived lack of interaction between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and the scarcity of public places and opportunities to meet.

Education

"We have to work actively on mixing, even if there are doubts that we will reach it someday. We have classes in La Goutte d'Or where 80 per cent have migrant parents. So, at the end, it is 95 per cent blacks and Arabs. But there will be a need for a lot of neighbourhood development to reach real diversity."

– Interview with a council member in charge of school affairs in the 18th arrondissement

- Given the restriction on collection of ethnic- and religious-based data, there is a paucity of accurate information on educational issues facing minority pupils, including monitoring of ethnic discrimination and challenges relating to particular groups.
- In March 2004, the French state banned visible manifestations of religion in state schools. This affects female Muslim pupils who wish to wear the headscarf (hijab) to school. The subject of the headscarf in the education system was almost absent in the Open Society Foundations survey. Muslim respondents' primary concern was the poor quality of state schools and the lack of diversity in schools attended by children of ethnic minority origin in the 18th arrondissement. Where religion was mentioned it was articulated mainly in terms of dietary restrictions at schools.
- Concerns raised by Muslims focused heavily on the connection between social inequalities in living conditions and a subsequent negative impact on children's educational achievements and opportunities to interact and mix with pupils from diverse, including non-minority, backgrounds.
- The percentage of pupils receiving their high school diplomas in the 18th arrondissement (65 per cent) is below the regional average (83.5 per cent). One factor for this is the large number of parents who prefer to send their children to private or other public schools outside the arrondissement. Focus group participants stated that this is a growing issue in the 18th arrondissement.
- The *carte scolaire*, which assigns children to the school nearest to their parents' residence, has had a significant impact on the demographics and diversity of schools in France. This policy has been considered a key factor in creating schools which are viewed as segregated, especially in the 18th arrondissement. Whilst the *carte scolaire* has undergone some changes, so that more parents are able to choose where to send their children, it remains a major concern for many ethnic minority and Muslim parents.

Employment

"This (employment) discrimination should not be islamised."

– Roundtable participant

- The unemployment rate of foreigners from non-EU countries is three times higher than that of native French people. National and ethnic origins seem to play a role in acquiring employment: the lowest

employment rate for men in France is for those whose parents migrated from sub-Saharan Africa (53 per cent), South East Asia (60 per cent), North Africa (61 per cent), Turkey (67 per cent) and Algeria (69 per cent).

- Studies over the last five years have shown that employment remains one of the most significant areas of complaints received by equality and anti-discrimination monitoring bodies. In cases brought to the attention of the former equality watch dog HALDE—the French Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Commission—ethnic origin was cited as a key criterion for discrimination. Participants in the research indicated that experiences and perceptions of racial and religious discrimination remain barriers to accessing employment opportunities.
- Over half of male Muslim survey respondents (55 per cent) were employed in manual and service occupations. Female Muslim respondents were employed across the clerical, manual and service industries. A greater proportion of Muslim women were either economically inactive or working part time. The research also revealed the importance of social contacts and networks as a main gateway in seeking employment.
- Whilst respondents to the survey expressed satisfaction at the way employers respected religious difference, twice as many Muslims (43 per cent) in comparison to non-Muslims (20 per cent) felt that employers did too little to respect the religious customs of people with different religions. The focus groups further revealed nuanced and detailed experiences and anecdotes of discrimination in the workplace.
- The workplace was deemed to be particularly challenging for women who wear the headscarf. Among those who took part in the focus groups, many women reiterated their worries about the growing public and social intolerance towards the headscarf and the apparent unwillingness of non-Muslim employers to hire women who wear such outward manifestations of their religion.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Acting for Competence (Agir pour la compétence, APC) is an association which was established in the 18th arrondissement in 2005. It now works in poor and discriminated arrondissements of the Ile-de-France region, and has offices in Lyon and Montpellier. It is the first recruitment agency specialising in the promotion of ethnic minorities. Its objective is to give advice and

support to members of ethnic minorities and inhabitants of poor suburbs who are job seeking, through a variety of activities including workshops for creating video CVs, interview coaching, building self-esteem and confidence. The agency also offers advice to employers, assisting them in finding applicants among ethnic minorities who meet their expectations. The agency aims to help candidates turn what are often seen as their weaknesses (i.e. name, origin or postcode) into assets, encouraging them to stand up to discrimination, and to improve their professional profiles and methods of job hunting.

Housing and Social Protection

“There are 12,000 yearly demands for social housing, and there will be more next year. We don’t have them. How do we solve that equation?”

– Local political representative in roundtable discussion

- In France almost one residence in five can be termed social housing. Its stock includes 4.3 million housing units across the country, 43 per cent of the rental market and 19 per cent of the total housing numbers. The 18th arrondissement has a large social housing stock in comparison to other Parisian arrondissements. Despite this, the 18th contains the highest number of people waiting to be allocated social housing in Paris.
- Although ethnic minorities, in particular North Africans, feature heavily in the social housing sector, over 50 per cent of non-EU nationals live in privately rented accommodation. This is due to the lack of availability of social housing. Home ownership amongst non-EU foreign nationals in Paris stands at 12.2 per cent whilst ownership by foreign nationals acquiring French citizenship is at 30 per cent. For those who are French by birth, the percentage of ownership is at 32.1 per cent.
- Only 19 per cent of survey respondents declared themselves fairly satisfied whilst 34 per cent of both groups expressed dissatisfaction with the housing situation in their local area. A surprising 28 per cent had no opinion on the subject. 36 per cent of Muslims and 31 per cent of non-Muslims were dissatisfied.
- A general feeling of discrimination and pessimism was expressed by Muslim participants owing to the length of time it takes to acquire housing, the perception of unequal distribution, and the alleged lack of transparency in housing allocations. Respondents reported little trust in the housing system.
- Alongside feelings of discrimination, the state and squalor of available housing, location of housing in

insecure and deprived areas and poor quality of local services and housing associations characterised the feelings of Muslim respondents.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The local municipality of the 18th arrondissement has implemented *Louez Solidaire (Rent Solidarity)*, a project which helps families living in furnished hostels, most of whom are from migrant backgrounds, to find a more stable location to live in. The municipality mediates between tenants and landlords to agree on favourable conditions, such as a low price guarantee and rent payments as well as some related expenses.

Health

“When my brother died [in hospital], we were asked if we wanted to pray. We then could perform the rites as said in the Qur’an.”

– Research participant

- The health sector is positively perceived among respondents in the 18th arrondissement. Over half of Muslims (53 per cent) and non-Muslims (55 per cent) felt that hospitals and clinics showed the right level of respect for the customs of different religious groups. For most, access to treatment, and not religious sensitivities, was the priority in healthcare.
- The undocumented and elderly were identified as the groups facing the most difficulties. The lack of proper official documentation raises concerns about access to adequate levels of healthcare for the undocumented whilst the needs and specificities of aging first generation migrants require nuanced policies and services.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The *Goutte d’Or health centre (Pôle Santé Goutte d’Or)* was created as a district initiative in 1985 to respond to the scarcity of medical services in the neighbourhood. Since then, it has developed several specialist services in response to the needs of the local community. These services include units for young children with emotional problems or learning difficulties at school, information and advice clinics for sexual health and family planning, a medical and social prevention unit for families requiring medical, dermatological or psychological consultations, and information provision on social and legal issues. The consultations and services are available free, and people who do not have healthcare documentation, social insurance or legal status can use them. Due to its central location in La Goutte d’Or, many migrants and people of foreign origin use this health centre. While some come across the centre themselves, many are referred to it by local NGOs since the

centre works in collaboration with organisations working with people of migrant origin, particularly young adults under 18 who arrive in France as asylum seekers without parents or guardians. The centre also organises health information sessions with illiterate women learning French. The centre has adapted its methods to provide ethnically and culturally sensitive health services to its diverse clientele, providing translators where necessary and relying on the ethnic and cultural diversity of its own staff.

Policing and Security

“Police officers? You never meet them, except when you shouldn’t. They do too much repression and not enough prevention!”

– Focus group participant

- Police visibility in the Goutte d’Or is prominent with reactions from respondents ranging from outright hostility to a passive acceptance of their presence. The research indicates that actual experiences of engagement and interaction between residents and the police are low.
- Respondents expressed a high degree of mistrust towards the police. 59 per cent of Muslims stated that they did not trust the police very much or at all compared to 53 per cent of the non-Muslim respondents.
- Over 70 per cent of both groups had no had direct contact with the police over the last 12 months (81 per cent of Muslims and 74 per cent of non-Muslims).
- In contrast, trust in the judiciary was higher amongst Muslims (55 per cent) and non-Muslims (51 per cent).
- There was consensus in the focus group that ethnic profiling by the police was a source of tension and concern. Aggressive verbal abuse, allegations of racism, inefficiency in tackling crimes including drug dealing, and disproportionate interventions were some of the reasons given for the mistrust in the police.

Participation and Citizenship

- The right to vote in French national elections is limited to those who are citizens of the state. Citizens of the EU have the right to vote in municipal elections and non-EU citizens are not permitted to vote in local elections. Electoral disenfranchisement is a particular challenge in the 18th arrondissement with its large non-EU population.

- The survey results reveal that only 41 per cent of Muslim respondents had the right to vote in comparison with 70 per cent of non-Muslims. The majority of Muslims (59 per cent) were ineligible to vote as they were born outside France.
- Where they could vote, a majority of both groups exercised their right in national elections. Turnout in local elections was lower for Muslims (21 per cent) and slightly lower for non-Muslims (59 per cent). 60 per cent of Muslim respondents were ineligible to vote in contrast with 25 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Low confidence in the belief that they can influence decisions affecting the city may be a factor in the low local elections turnout for Muslims. 51 per cent of this group felt they could affect city policies in comparison to 58 per cent of non-Muslims.
- Respondents felt less ability to influence the country compared with the city. A similar majority of both Muslims (59 per cent) and non-Muslims (58 per cent) said they could not influence decisions affecting France.
- Distrust in national institutions and in particular the government was reflected by 73 per cent of Muslims and 70 per cent of non-Muslims. Regardless of religion, respondents born in France held a higher degree of mistrust in political institutions than respondents born abroad.
- There is a historical precedence of civil society groups in the 18th arrondissement and a plethora of associations, activists and organisations work in the area. Involvement of survey respondents in civic organisations was low however, and participation in political movements was equally low for both groups. With respect to civic engagement with faith based organisations there was no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims (10 per cent).
- There was a strong feeling among participants that some mainstream human rights organisations and public authorities were unwilling to acknowledge and recognise that discrimination against ethnic and religious groups was a serious concern. Certain civil society organisations and officials were perceived to be reinforcing the negative stereotype of Islam and Muslims, especially women who wear the headscarf and full-face veil, through a lack of engagement and support of issues facing Muslims in France.

CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Institute of Islamic Cultures (Institut des Cultures d'Islam [ICI]) was created by the City Hall in cooperation with two Muslim leaders to address the realities of local life for Muslims living in the 18th arrondissement, in particular in response to the lack of available space for religious and cultural activities. The institute is part of the Office for Cultural Affairs (Direction des affaires culturelles) of the City Hall and is administered by a religious association called the Association of Muslims of Openness (Association des musulmans de l'ouverture). Both a cultural centre and a place of worship, the ICI runs a number of activities centred on promoting knowledge of the diversity of Islamic cultures to the wider Parisian population through exhibitions, concerts, public meetings and conferences.

Media

“On the one hand the media insist on [talking to] the Muslims who succeed despite them being Muslims. On the other hand, they focus on the ‘threat’ Muslims represent and the fact that this threat is largely towards women.”

– Focus group participant

- The research revealed that the media discourse on Islam and Muslims has had a powerful impact on the public perception of Muslims. Focus group participants held the media, in its various forms, directly responsible for the hostile representation of Muslims and the creation of Islam as a threat. An example given of this treatment was the intense and often negative media attention surrounding the issue of Muslim worshippers praying in the streets in the 18th arrondissement.
- Respondents relied on local newspapers, neighbours, and municipal offices for information about their local area. Television, radio, national newspapers and the internet were the primary sources from which news on a city and national level were obtained.
- Despite the paucity of ethnic media in the 18th arrondissement, there is an emerging and growing minority media in France. Largely web based, multimedia websites, such as oumma.com and saphirnews.com, have been instrumental in offering a wide range of news on domestic and international current affairs as well as Islam and Muslims in France.

Key Recommendations

- Local and national authorities are urged to develop strategies that build upon this report's findings that Muslim respondents have a very strong and positive sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and Paris. The challenges and everyday concerns of Muslims do not differ from other groups, namely employment, clean and safe streets and equal access to public services. Promoting an inclusive identity and society should ensure that everyone is an integral part of the city.
- The French government and city and local authorities should respond to the study's findings that religion is not an obstacle to identity and belonging to Paris and France and the persistence of discrimination and prejudice contributes to corroding a sense of acceptance and belonging among Muslims and other minority groups.
- Local and national authorities should place an emphasis on the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation at the local level in Paris and other French cities. The City Hall, arrondissement councils, equality and anti-discrimination bodies should set in motion campaigns and actions which recognise that discrimination exists in many forms and demonstrate the kinds of efforts needed to combat it.
- Robust data are needed for the development of evidence based public policies. Institutions at the local level are considering different ways to collect data but there is little or no official data on religious groups and identity. The absence of data on religion poses obstacles when attempting to devise policies that consider the religious needs and experiences of Muslims and therefore the National Statistical Agency and the government of France are urged to consider the inclusion of a booster sample of minority groups which includes, at least, a question on religion, perceptions, experiences and attitudes towards Muslims and other groups.
- In order to improve integration between children of diverse backgrounds, the Ministry of Education and various educational authorities should propose the development of stronger links between private and public schools and schools where students are predominantly from one ethnic group. The (*carte scolaire*) system should be reviewed to ensure that such a policy does not lead to segregation.
- Housing associations, municipality and district housing offices should consider mechanisms which engage migrant and minority organisations from different groups in an effort to raise awareness of the process and procedures for obtaining social housing as well as offering advice, support and action if and when discrimination occurs.
- Strategies to improve relations between the police and the community should ensure that policing on the streets is not seen as a symptom of crime-ridden areas and instead should seek to increase the confidence of all residents to feel protected and included. The various tiers of the police authority are encouraged to review mechanisms for handling complaints made against police ill-treatment as well as recruit individuals into the police force from the diverse population of France.
- Local and national authorities can address unofficial political disenfranchisement by extending the right to vote in local elections to all those who are long term settled residents in a city.

For more information

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