

**Institute** for  
the **Impact** of  
**Faith** in **Life**

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# **The social contribution of British Muslims**

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# Acknowledgements

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Most of all, the authors of this report would like to express their thanks to their closest and dearest for the love, support, and encouragement they provide.

## About the Authors

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# Executive summary

The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL) commissioned TechneUK, a member of the British Polling Council (BPC), to conduct two surveys – one nationally-representative survey of the general population (1,012 respondents) and a British Muslim survey consisting of 1,001 respondents.

The surveys explored forms of social belonging, attitudes towards family and community, and views on the degree to which Britain offers opportunities for people to fulfil their potential. Respondents in both the general population and British Muslim surveys were asked whether they engaged in the following civic behaviours over the past twelve months: given a charitable donation; unpaid volunteering work in the local community; provided care to an elderly relative; gifted money to a friend (with no desire for and expectation of repayment); and shared homemade food with someone who is not a family member.

In addition to this, the British Muslim respondents were specifically asked about their views on domestic interfaith relations and whether they felt Muslims in Britain were better able to respect their faith whilst participating in wider public life when compared to their co-religionists living in other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

## The key survey findings:

### Family and marriage

- In the survey of the wider general population, 86% of respondents reported a strong sense of belonging in their family life. This rose to 91% for respondents in the British Muslim survey.
- Nearly seven in ten (68%) British Muslim respondents believe that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society. This drops to 43% - 25 percentage points – for the wider general population sample.
- Over nine in ten (92%) British Muslim respondents believed that it is important for younger people to take as much care as possible of their older relatives. This dropped to 81% - 11 percentage points – for the wider general population sample.

- More than two in five British Muslims respondents (44%) reported that they had provided care to an elderly relative at some point during the twelve months leading up to being surveyed. This dropped to 31% - 13 percentage points - for respondents in the wider general population sample.
- More than three in five British Muslim respondents (63%) were of the view that overall, most people in Britain put their individual interests above the needs of their family members (and the wider community). This figure rose to 72% for British Muslim respondents aged between 18-34 years.

## **Community**

- Over half of British Muslim respondents (51%) reported having a strong sense of belonging in their local community and neighbourhood. This dropped to 35% - 16 percentage points - for respondents in the wider general population survey.
- Around one in five British Muslim respondents (19%) reported that they participated in unpaid volunteering work in the local community at some point during the twelve months leading up to being surveyed. This is near-identical to the wider general population (which was at the marginally higher figure of 20%).
- Most British Muslim respondents believed that more should be done to improve relations between Britain's different faith communities (71%). A total of 22% believed that the right amount is already being done, with only 1% saying that less should be done on this front.

## **Charitable activities and civic behaviours**

- Three in four British Muslim respondents reported giving a charitable donation at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey (75%). This figure dropped to 68% for the wider general population sample.
- More than half of British Muslim respondents reported gifting money to a friend (with no desire for or expectation of repayment) at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey (51%). This dropped by 21 percentage points to 30% for the wider general population sample.
- Nearly two in three British Muslim respondents reported sharing homemade food with someone who is not a family member at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey (64%). This figure dropped by 25 percentage points for respondents in the wider general population survey (39%).

## Opportunities in modern Britain

- In the British Muslim survey, 86% of respondents believed that Britain is a good place to live when it comes to people having the opportunities to progress and thrive in life (with 3% saying that it is a bad place to live on this front). In the wider general population survey, 70% of respondents believed that Britain is a good place to live (with 12% saying that it is a bad place to live in this context).
- More than four in five British Muslim respondents (83%) agreed with the view that, when compared to other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the UK is a better place for Muslims to be able to practise their faith whilst being involved in wider public life. This rises further to 87% for Muslims living in the Greater London area.

Building on the polling data derived from the surveys conducted by TechneUK, a total of 28 semi-structured interviews were held with a set of British Muslim participants. This group was chosen to be diverse in terms of ethnicity, denomination, occupational background, and place of residence. Whitestone Insight assisted the IIFL with the recruitment of British Muslim participants for this element of the study.

This report also contains a total of ten case studies of British Muslim organisations:

- The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship
- Al-Manaar (The Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre)
- Project Rise
- Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OXCIS)
- Hamara Healthy Living Centre
- Islamic Relief
- Muslim Hands
- Aishah Help
- Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks)
- Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS)



# 1. Introduction

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While many politicians, policymakers, and practitioners speak confidently on the behaviours and attitudes of the so-called 'British Muslim community', this section of the UK's population remains largely misunderstood, misrepresented, under-researched, and undervalued.<sup>1</sup>

As this report will demonstrate, British Muslims – while finding much common ground on certain issues – are anything but a monolithic, homogeneous religious bloc. The British Muslim population is diverse in terms of racial identity, ethnic background, Islamic religious denomination, country of birth, socio-economic status, and UK region of residence. Despite being a notable presence in the UK for decades, this diversity – both its richness but also the challenges it may pose – is all too often overlooked in the spheres of politics, academia, and media. There are also questions over how British Muslims are generally characterised and represented in mainstream British life – accounts which do not accurately reflect the realities on the ground.<sup>2</sup>

This report – unapologetically – emphasises the admirable and varied positive contributions made by traditional-minded, resilient, generous-spirited British Muslims: to their own families, local communities, and wider society. It also strives to get to the root of how British Muslims – men and women, Sunni and Shia, affluent and deprived, young and old, UK-born and foreign-born – feel about British society and the degree to which it provides people with the opportunities to advance in life and flourish. Compared to the wider public, what is the level of family-oriented duty, civic activity, and community spirit in the British Muslim population? To what extent do British Muslims believe that individualistic desires have eroded family values and a sense of community in the UK? Compared to other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, to what extent do British Muslims believe that the United Kingdom is a better place for Muslims to live in terms of being able to practise their faith whilst participating in mainstream public life? These are just some of the questions that the IIFL wishes to shed light on.

This report is structured as follows. After this introduction, a summary of the demography of British Muslims – primarily based on England & Wales census data – will be provided. This is followed by a deep-dive into the British Muslim and general population surveys, which were carried out by TechneUK and specifically commissioned for this piece of IIFL research. The surveys explored aspects of social belonging, attitudes towards family and community, and views on the degree to which Britain offers opportunities for people to fulfil their potential.

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1 Jones, S. (2022), 'University of Birmingham survey reveals Islamophobia is the posh person's prejudice,' 24 January. Available at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2022/university-of-birmingham-survey-reveals-islamophobia-is-the-posh-persons-prejudice>, last accessed 20 February 2024

2 Abdi, S. (2023), 'Islamophobia In The British Media: It's Time To Tell New Stories', 20 March. Available at: <https://www.journoresources.org.uk/islamophobia-british-media-muslim-journalists/#:~:text=Islamophobia%20in%20the%20UK%20press,per%20cent%20of%20TV%20packages>, last accessed 22nd February 2024

Respondents in both surveys were asked about their level of civic activity over the past twelve months leading up to being polled for this report.

After the presentation of the polling results, the findings of semi-structured interviews held with British Muslim participants recruited by Whitestone Insight will be provided. After the quantitative analysis and qualitative findings, ten case studies – focusing on the civic contribution of British Muslim organisations drawn from a range of sectors such as healthcare, education, interfaith relations, and natural preservation – are provided. The report concludes with a comprehensive evaluation of the research findings and an in-depth discussion on how the UK can move forward in terms of community cohesion and social integration by drawing on the knowledge and values of patriotic, family-oriented, and civic-minded British Muslim communities.



## 2. The census data on Muslims in Great Britain & Northern Ireland

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There is little doubt that the UK – especially its larger metropolitan centres but also medium-to-large towns with an industrial background – has undergone significant forms of ethnic and religious change in recent decades. Over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, England and Wales census findings have revealed a fast-paced secularisation of the social mainstream – an accelerated process of what could be termed ‘de-Christianisation’. In the 2001 census covering the two home nations, more than seven in ten residents identified with the Christian faith – 71.7% to be exact.<sup>3</sup> This fell by more than 12 percentage points in the 2011 edition – with under six in ten people in England and Wales being described as Christian (59.3%). In the most recent England and Wales census of 2021 – for the first time in its history – under half of residents across the two home nations identified as Christian (46.2%). The 2021 census also revealed that more than one in three people in England and Wales had ‘no religion’ (37.2%). This represented an 11 percentage-point rise from the 2011 edition. The UK is not alone in having a European society with an established Church or state religion, but has certainly experienced an ongoing shift toward secularisation and a marked decline in Christian self-identification.

The UK, like other places in Europe, has witnessed a curious mix of accelerated secularisation and heightened religious diversification.<sup>4</sup> The 2021 England and Wales census marked the first time in its history that one million people identified as Hindu (now 1.7% of the population), from the 2011 figure of 818,000 (1.5% of the population). There were smaller increases in the number who identify as Sikh, Buddhist and Jewish too – rises of 101,000, 24,000 and 6,000 individuals respectively. However, the most significant increase was the number of people who described themselves as Muslim – 3.9 million (6.5% in 2021), up from 2.7 million (4.9% in 2011). To put into perspective the increase of 1.2 million Muslims from 2011-2021, over the same period, the number of people who identify as Christian has reduced by 5.8 million.

Muslims in England and Wales, when compared with the wider general population, have a much younger age profile. While 62% of the wider general population was aged under 50 years in the 2021 census, this increased to 84.5% for Muslims.<sup>5</sup> The local authority with the highest concentration of Muslims is Tower Hamlets in east London (39.9%), followed by Blackburn with Darwen in Lancashire (35%). While the former predominantly comprises Muslims of Bangladeshi origin, the latter largely consists of their co-religionists of Pakistani heritage. One of the other higher-ranking local authorities in terms of concentrations of Muslims is Luton in Bedfordshire (32.9%) – with this population being relatively diverse in terms of ethnic

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3 Office for National Statistics (2022), ‘Religion, England and Wales: census 2021’, 29 November. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

4 Ibid.

5 Office for National Statistics (2023), ‘Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: census 2021’, 30 January. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

background when compared to the Muslim populations of Tower Hamlets and Blackburn with Darwen.

The data on religion has yet to be released for the separate 2022 Scotland census. In the 2011 Scotland census, 76,737 people identified themselves as Muslim (1.4% of Scotland's population, an increase from the 2001 figure of 0.6%).<sup>6</sup> Glasgow has the highest Muslim population of any city in Scotland, with 5% of the city's residents identifying as Muslim in the 2011 Scotland census. The Glaswegian wards of Pollokshields and Southside Central had the highest concentration of Muslims by ward – 27.8% and 15.7% respectively. Southside Central is home to Glasgow Central Mosque – Scotland's first and largest purpose-built mosque. In Northern Ireland, census data on Muslims started at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – with numbers rising on a consistently upward trajectory: 1,943 people in 2001 (0.11% of the population), 3,832 people in 2011 (0.21% of the population), and 10,870 people in 2021 (0.57% of the population).<sup>7</sup> More established and integrated Muslims tend to be in the affluent areas of south Belfast, while the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers from countries such as Iran, Libya, and Somalia has contributed towards the recent growth of the Muslim population in Northern Ireland.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Scotland's census (2021), 'Religion', 2 August. Available at: <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/religion/>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

7 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2022), 'census 2021 main statistics religion tables', 22 September. Available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-main-statistics-religion-tables>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

8 Meredith, R. (2022), 'Some asylum seekers in NI in 'prison-like' hotel condition', *BBC News*, 23 November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63722681>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

### 3. Survey data analysis

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The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL) commissioned TechneUK, a member of the British Polling Council (BPC), to conduct two surveys – one survey of the wider general population (comprising 1,012 respondents) and a British Muslim survey (consisting of 1,001 respondents). The general population data for this report is weighted by region, sex, age group, income, and employment status, with the British Muslim data being weighted by region, sex, age group, ethnicity, and employment status. The period of fieldwork for both the general population and British Muslim surveys was 22 January – 2 February 2024. In regards to survey methodology, a random sampling method was implemented, with a mixed CATI-CAWI approach to survey data collection (a combination of Computer-Assisted Telephone and Web Interviews).

The surveys explored forms of social belonging, attitudes towards family and community, and views on the degree to which Britain offers opportunities for people to fulfil their potential. Respondents in both the general population and British Muslim surveys were asked whether they engaged in the following civic behaviours over the past twelve months: given a charitable donation; unpaid volunteering work in the local community; provided care to an elderly relative; gifted money to a friend (with no desire for and expectation of repayment); and shared homemade food with someone who is not a family member. The British Muslim respondents were specifically asked whether they identified with a particular Islamic denomination/sect, as well as their country of birth. British Muslim respondents were also asked if they felt, when compared to major European nations such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, that the UK was a better place for Muslims in terms of being able to practise their faith whilst being involved in wider public life.

# 3.1: British Muslims – Islamic denomination, ethnic background, place of birth

Figure 1: British Muslims - Islamic denomination

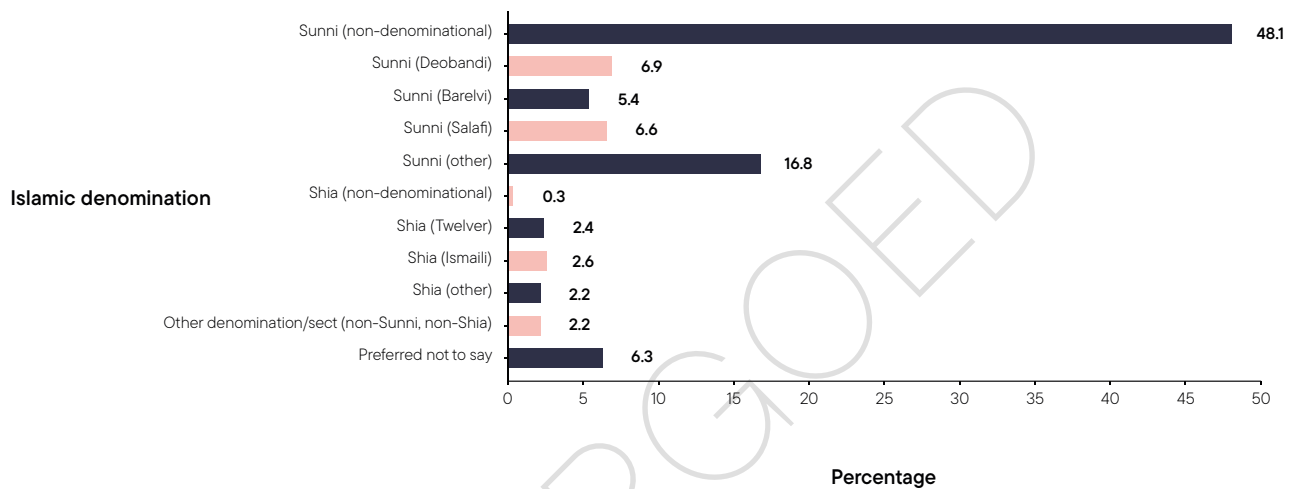
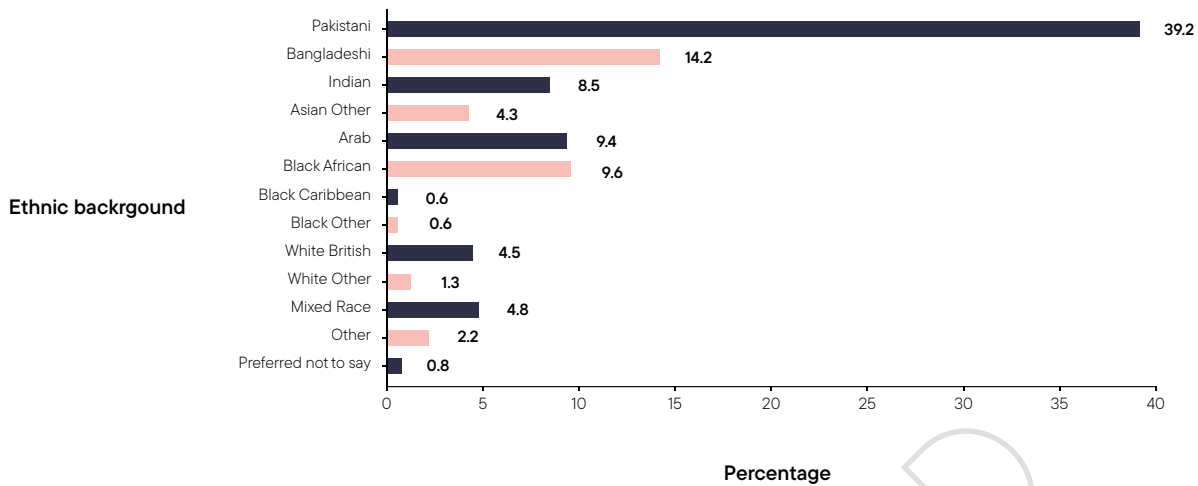


Figure 1 presents a breakdown of the British Muslim respondents in the TechneUK survey by Islamic denomination.

The survey showed that nearly half of the British Muslim respondents identified as Sunni but did not identify with a particular denomination (48.1%). Notable sections of the British Muslim sample identified with a specific denomination within Sunni Islam – Deobandi (6.9%), Salafi (6.6%) and Barelvi (6.6%). A further one in six British Muslim respondents identified with another Sunni denomination (16.8%).

Only 0.3% of British Muslims identified as Shia but not with a specific denomination. In the British Muslim sample, relatively slender sections identified with a particular denomination within Shi'ite Islam – Ismaili (2.6%) and Twelver (2.4%). A further 2.2% identified with another denomination within Shi'ite Islam. In the British Muslim survey, 2.2% of respondents identified with a denomination/sect which did not belong to either Sunni Islam nor Shi'ite Islam. The remaining 6.3% of British Muslim respondents preferred not to select any of the options available to them for this survey question.

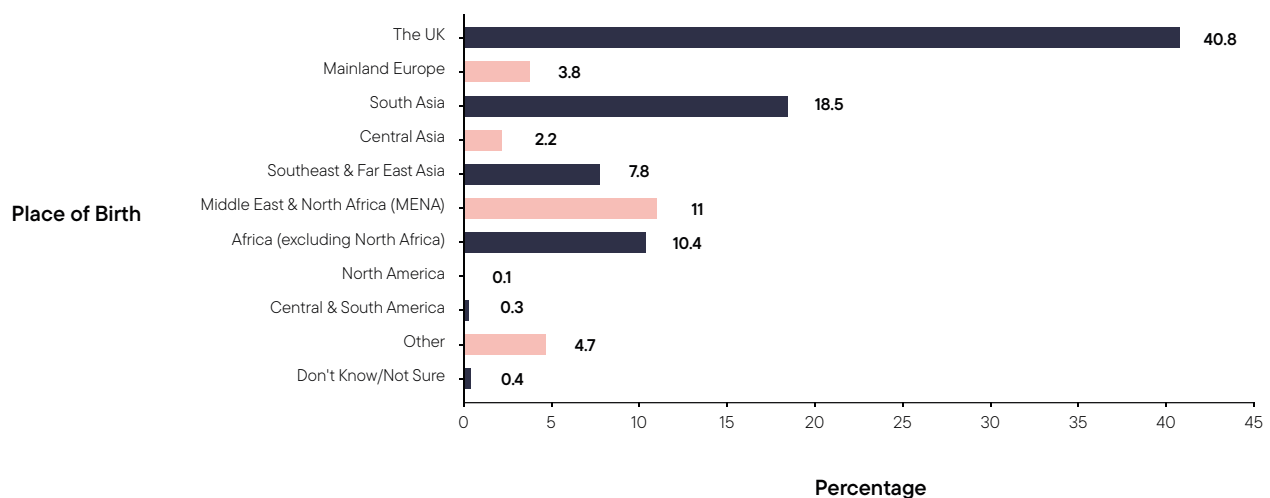
**Figure 2: British Muslims - Ethnic background**



**Figure 2** presents an overview of the ethnic breakdown of the British Muslim respondents polled. Around two in five respondents in the British Muslim survey reported being of Pakistani origin (39.2%), meaning a plurality belonged to this ethnic group. A further 14.2% reported being of Bangladeshi origin, with 8.5% of British Muslims stating that they were of Indian heritage – meaning that over three in five British Muslim respondents originate from one of the three most-populous countries in the South Asia region. An additional 4.3% of British Muslim respondents reported having another Asian ethnic background.

Just under one in ten British Muslim respondents fell into the broader black African and Arab ethnic categories (9.6% and 9.4% respectively), with 0.6% falling into each of the ‘Black Caribbean’ and ‘Black Other’ ethnic categories. Around one in twenty British Muslim respondents belong to the white-British ethnic group (4.5%), with a further 1.3% falling into the ‘White Other’ category. Nearly one in five British Muslim respondents felt that ‘mixed race’ best described their ethnic background, with a further 2.2% identifying with a non-stated ethnic group (denoted as ‘Other’ on Figure 2). In the British Muslim sample, 0.8% of respondents did not select any of the aforementioned options – selecting the ‘prefer not to say’ option.

**Figure 3: British Muslims - Place of birth**



**Figure 3** presents a breakdown of the British Muslim survey respondents based on their place of birth (in which respondents were asked which option best described where they were born).

In the survey, two in five British Muslim respondents reported that they were born in the UK (40.8%) – meaning that a comfortable majority of British Muslims polled were born abroad. Around one in twenty-five (3.8%) British Muslim respondents stated that they were born in mainland Europe – which is relevant considering the existence of notable French-Arab, Dutch-Somali, German-Afghan, and Italian-Bangladeshi communities in the UK.

Nearly one in five British Muslim respondents reported that they were born in South Asia (including countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) – 18.5%. A further 7.8% selected the 'Southeast & East Asia' option to report their place of birth (which would include countries ranging from Myanmar to China). In the British Muslim sample, 2.2% stated that they were born in the Central Asian region (which includes Afghanistan as well as former Soviet republics such as Uzbekistan).

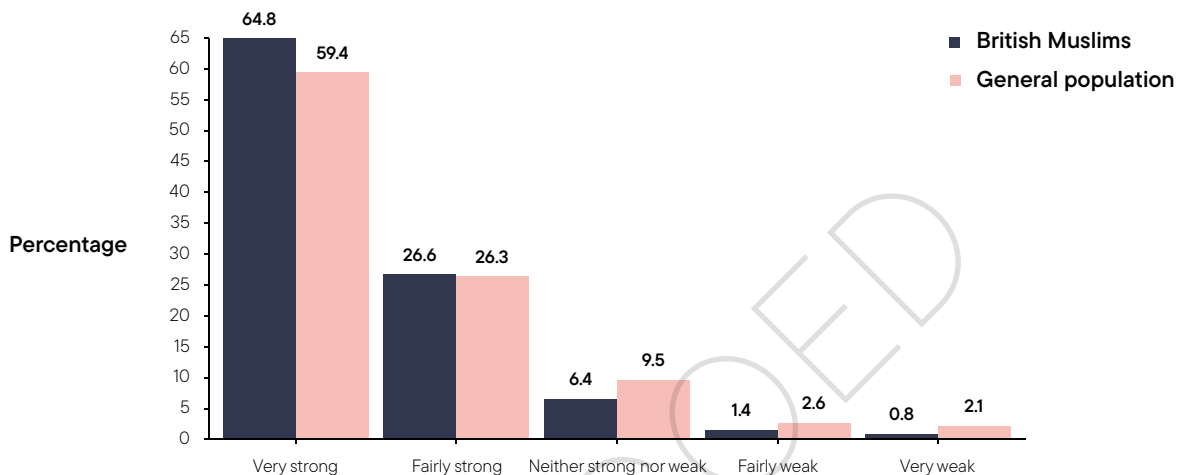
Over one in ten respondents were born in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which incorporates the likes of Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine (11%). A further one in ten British Muslim respondents reported that they were born in an African country which is not part of North Africa (10.4%). This includes west African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, as well as countries in the Horn of Africa such as Somalia.

Very small portions of British Muslims stated that they were born in North America (the United States of America and Canada) and Central and South America (including Guyana) – 0.1% and 0.3% respectively. Around one in twenty respondents (4.7%) reported that they were born in other parts of the world beyond the world regions offered in the survey. It is possible due to 'continental crossover' and not nestling into a specified region, a notable portion of these British Muslim respondents were born in countries such as Turkey and Azerbaijan. Another possible world region of birth that may be relevant for this 'other' category is the Caribbean (including Trinidad & Tobago).



## 3.2: Sense of belonging – family, friends, community, work

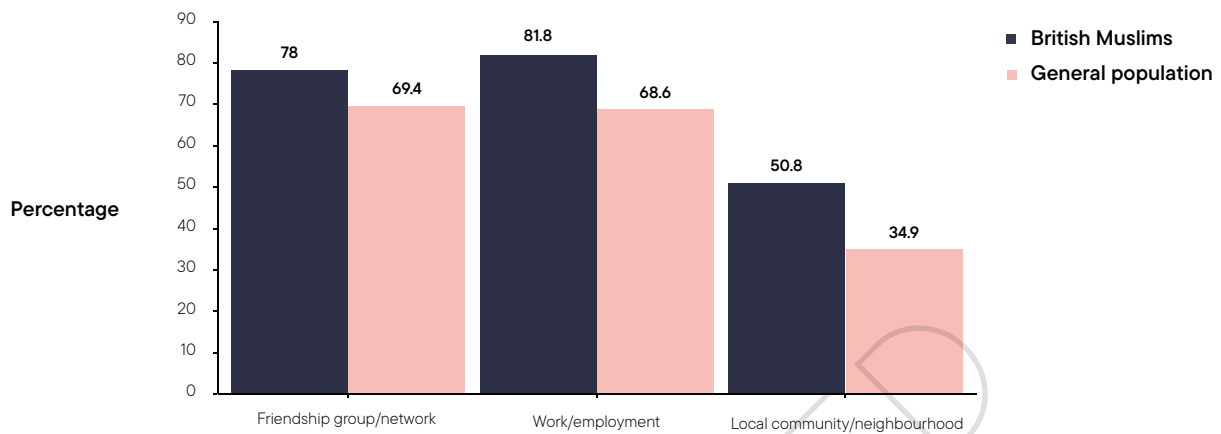
Figure 4: Sense of belonging in family life (British Muslims and general population)



**Figure 4** presents an overview of the self-reported strength of one's sense of belonging in their own family life. When compared to the wider general population survey, respondents in the British Muslim sample were more likely to say that they have a strong sense of belonging in the family life and less likely to say that their sense of belonging in this area of life is weak.

In the British Muslim survey, 64.8% of respondents reported that their sense of belonging in their family life was 'very strong', with a further 26.6% saying it was 'fairly strong' – over nine in ten British Muslim respondents in total (91.4%). The corresponding figures for the respondents in the general population survey were 59.4% and 26.3% respectively – providing a rounded total of 86%. In the British Muslim survey, 1.4% of respondents reported that their sense of belonging in their family life is 'fairly weak', with a further 0.8% saying it is 'very weak'. The corresponding figures for the general population survey are 2.6% and 2.1% respectively – meaning in the region of 5% of respondents considered their sense of belonging in their family life to be weak.

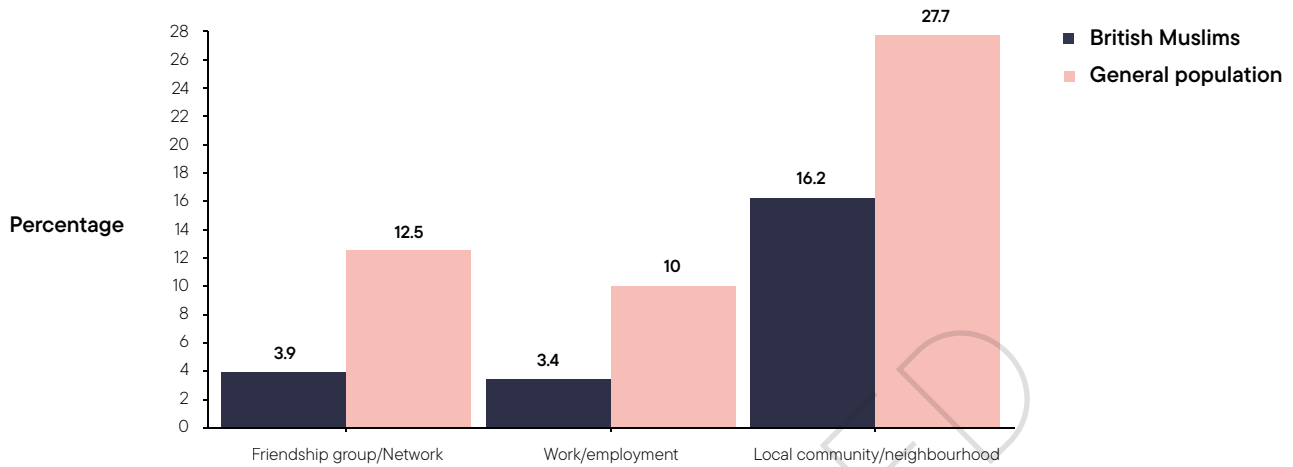
**Figure 5: Strong sense of belonging in friendship network, work-related life, and local neighbourhood (British Muslims and general population)**



**Figure 5** presents an overview of the data results from both the British Muslim and general population surveys. The data shown is the percentage of respondents within the two surveys who reported a **strong** sense of belonging in three 'life domains': friendship group/network, work/employment and local community/neighbourhood. The percentages have been calculated by combining the 'very strong' and 'fairly strong' responses. For the work/employment item, only employed and self-employed respondents were included.

Following the pattern regarding the self-reported strength of belonging in family life, British Muslims respondents were more likely to report a strong sense of belonging within their friendship group/network, work-related life, and local community/neighbourhood. More than three in four British Muslim respondents report that their sense of belonging is strong in their friendship group/network (78%). This falls to 69.4% for respondents in the wider general population survey. More than four in five British Muslim (employed and self-employed) respondents report a strong sense of belonging in their work-related life (81.8%). This drops by more than 13 percentage points for the wider general population sample (68.6%). Just over half of the British Muslim respondents reported a strong sense of belonging in their local community/neighbourhood (50.8%). This drops by 16 percentage points for the respondents in the general population survey (34.9%).

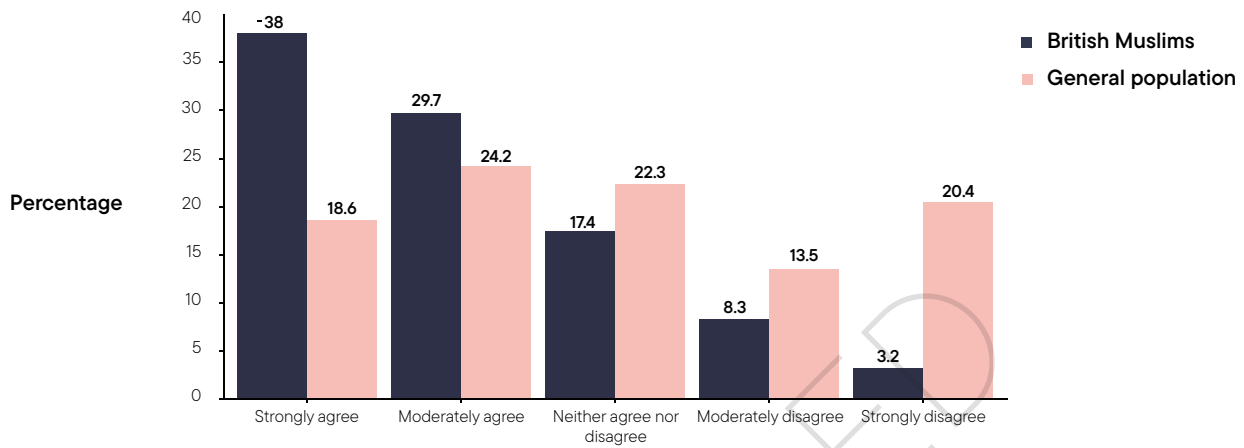
**Figure 6: Weak sense of belonging in friendship network, work-related life, and local neighbourhood (British Muslims and general population)**



**Figure 6** presents an overview of the data results from both the British Muslim and general population surveys. Following on from Figure 5, the data shown is the percentage of respondents within the two surveys who reported a **weak** sense of belonging in the three ‘life domains’: friendship group/network, work/employment and local community/neighbourhood. The percentages have been calculated by combining the ‘very weak’ and ‘fairly weak’ responses. Once again, for the work/employment item, only employed and self-employed respondents were included.

With the expected pattern emerging from the survey data, British Muslims respondents were less likely to report a weak sense of belonging within their friendship group/network, work-related life, and local community/neighbourhood. One in twenty-five British Muslim respondents reported having a weak sense of belonging within their friendship group/network (3.9%). This rises to one in eight respondents in the wider general population survey (12.5%). In the British Muslim survey, 3.4% of respondents reported a weak sense of belonging in their work-related life. This increases to one in ten respondents for the wider general population sample – exactly 10%. In the region of one in six British Muslim respondents reported that their sense of belonging in their own local community/neighbourhood was weak (16.2%). This rises to more than one in four respondents for the general population survey (27.7%).

**Figure 7: “To what extent do you agree or disagree that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society?” (British Muslims and general population)**

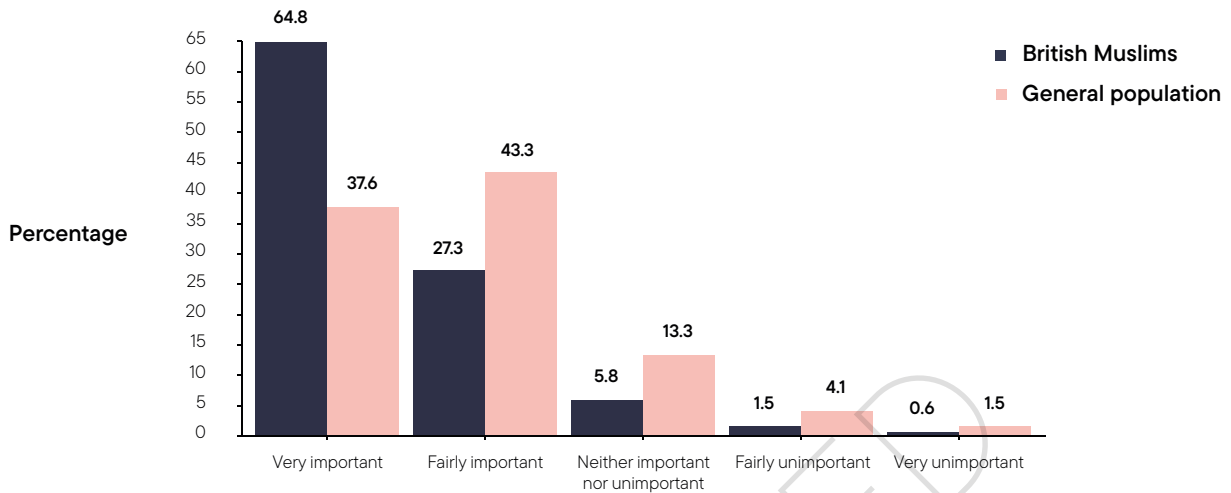


**Figure 7** presents an overview of the data results after respondents – in both the British Muslim and wider general population surveys – were asked to what extent they agreed/ disagreed with the view that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society.

There are notable differences to report, with British Muslim respondents being much more likely than those in the wider general population survey to agree with this view. In the British Muslim sample, 38% of respondents strongly agreed that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society, with a further 29.7% moderately agreeing with this statement. This means more than two in three British Muslim respondents agreed with this view (67.7%). Under one in five general population respondents strongly agreed, with a further 24.2% moderately agreeing with it – providing a notably lower combined total of 42.7% (a difference of 25 percentage points).

More than one in three respondents in the general population survey (34%) disagreed with the view that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society (20.4% strongly disagreeing, 13.5% moderately disagreeing). In the British Muslim survey, 11.5% disagreed with this statement (3.2% strongly disagreeing, 8.3% moderately disagreeing).

**Figure 8: “How important or unimportant is it for younger people to take as much care as possible of their older relatives?” (British Muslims and general population)**

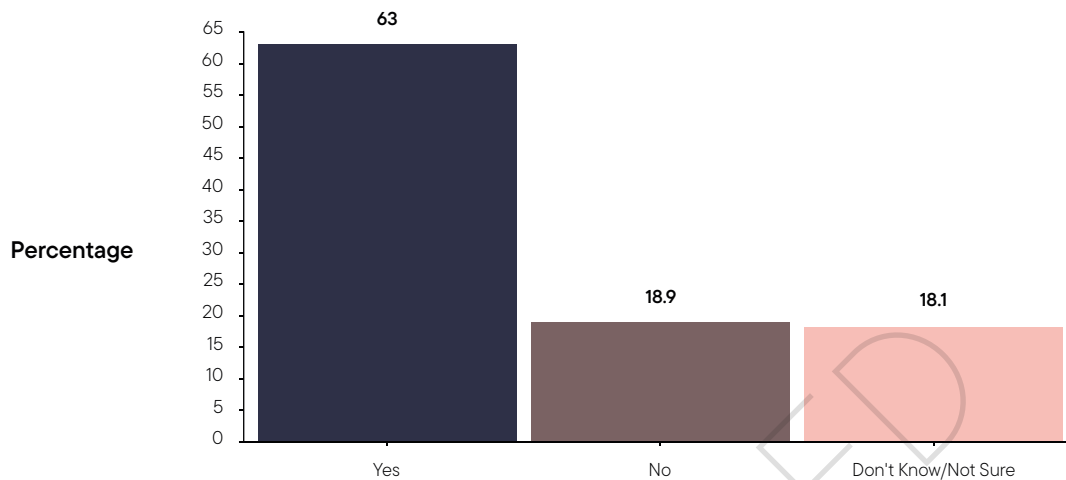


**Figure 8** presents an overview of the data results after respondents – in both the British Muslim and wider general population surveys – were asked to what extent they felt it is important/unimportant for younger people to take as much care as possible of their older relatives.

In the British Muslim survey, nearly two in three respondents (64.8%) believed that it is ‘very important’ for younger people to take as much care as possible of their older relatives. For the wider general population survey, this drops by more than 27 percentage points to 37.6%. Around nine in ten British Muslim respondents felt it was either ‘very important’ or ‘fairly important’ for younger people to take as much care as possible of their older relatives (91%). Around eight in ten respondents in the general population survey followed suit (81%).

In the region of 2% of British Muslim respondents felt that it was either ‘fairly unimportant’ or ‘very unimportant’ for younger people to take as much care as possible for their older relatives. This rises to around 5.5% for respondents in the general population sample (4.1% ‘fairly unimportant’, 1.5% ‘very unimportant’).

**Figure 9: “Overall, do you think most people in Britain put their own individual interests above the needs of their family members and the wider community?” (British Muslim respondents)**



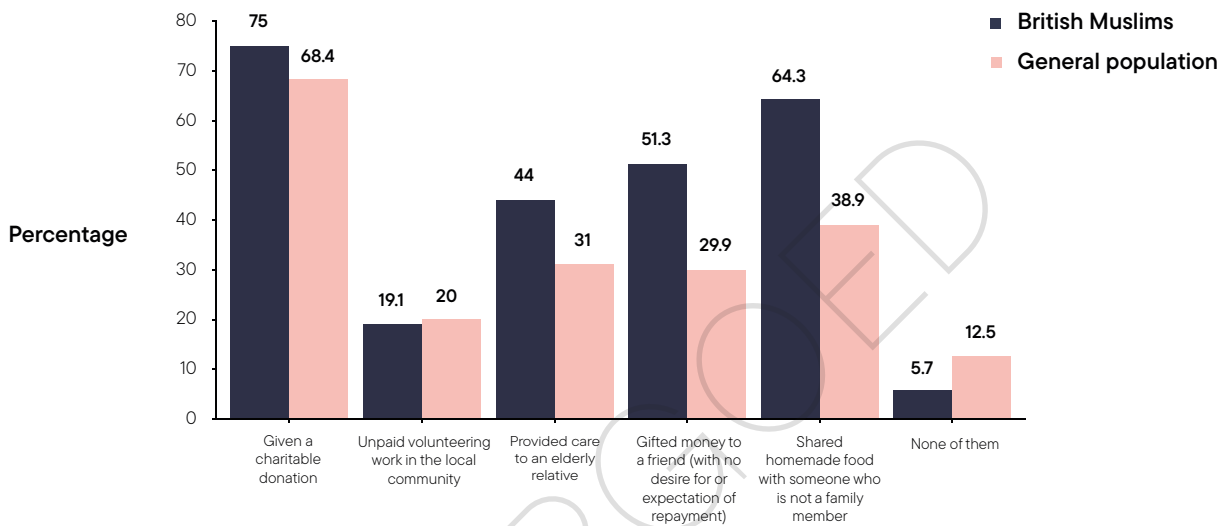
**Figure 9** presents an overview of the data results when British Muslim respondents were asked the following question: “Overall, do you think that most people put their own individual interests above the needs of their family members and the wider community?”.

More than three in five British Muslim respondents responded ‘yes’ to this question (63%), with under one in five respondents (18.9%) responding ‘no’. The remaining 18.1% said they did not know or were not sure.



### 3.3: Family duty, community spirit, civic activity

**Figure 10: Forms of family duty, community spirit and civic activity over the past 12 months (British Muslims and general population)**



**Figure 10** presents an overview of data results after respondents in both the British Muslim and general population surveys were asked whether they had done any of the following civic activities or acts of community spirit over the twelve months leading up to being surveyed: given a charitable donation, unpaid volunteering work in the local community, provided care to an elderly relative, gifted money to a friend (with no desire for or expectation of repayment), and shared homemade food with someone who is not a family member.

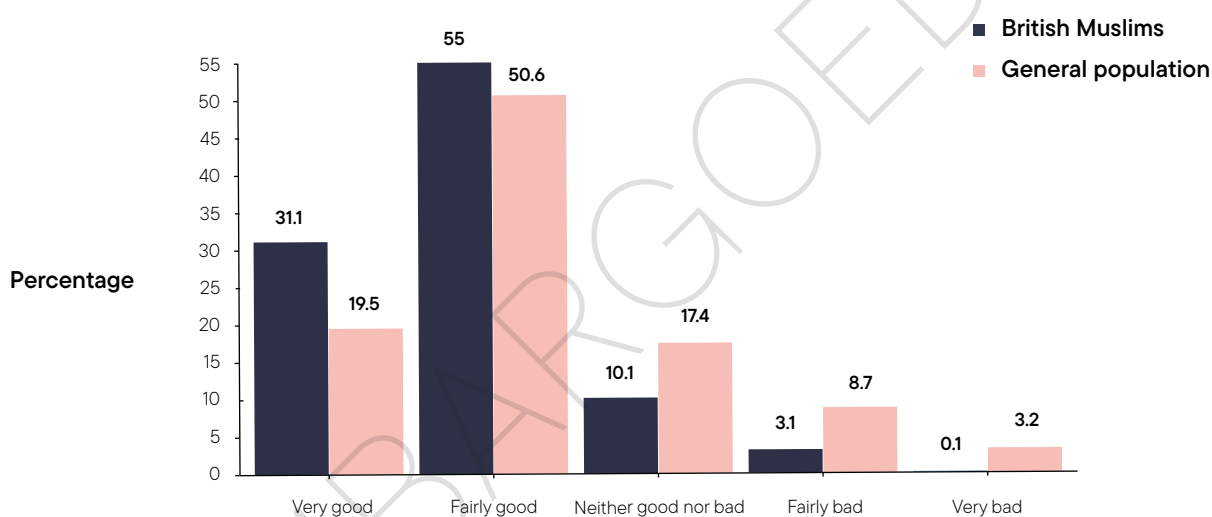
In the British Muslim survey, three in four respondents – exactly 75% – reported that they had given a charitable donation at some point during the last twelve months. This drops to 68.4% for respondents in the wider general population sample. Nearly two in three British Muslim respondents reported that they had shared homemade food with someone who is not a family member (64.3%). This falls by more than 25 percentage points to 38.9% for respondents in the wider general population survey.

More than half of the respondents in the British Muslim survey reported that at some point during the last twelve months, they had gifted money to a friend (with no desire for or expectation of repayment) – 51.3%. This drops by more than 21 percentage points for respondents in the wider general population survey (29.9%). While 44% of British Muslim respondents reported that they had provided care to an elderly relative at some point in the past year, this drops by exactly 13 percentage points for respondents in the wider general population sample (31%). The only instance where the rate of activity is (marginally) higher for the general population sample than the British Muslim sample is for unpaid volunteering work in the local community (20% and 19.1% respectively).

In the British Muslim survey, 5.7% of the respondents reported that they had not done any of the acts of family duty, community spirit and civic activity listed, over the past twelve months. This rises to one in eight respondents (12.5%) in the wider general population survey.

### 3.4: British society – opportunities and religious accommodation

**Figure 11: “Overall, do you think Britain is a good or bad place to live when it comes to people having the opportunities to make progress and excel in life?” (British Muslims and general population)**



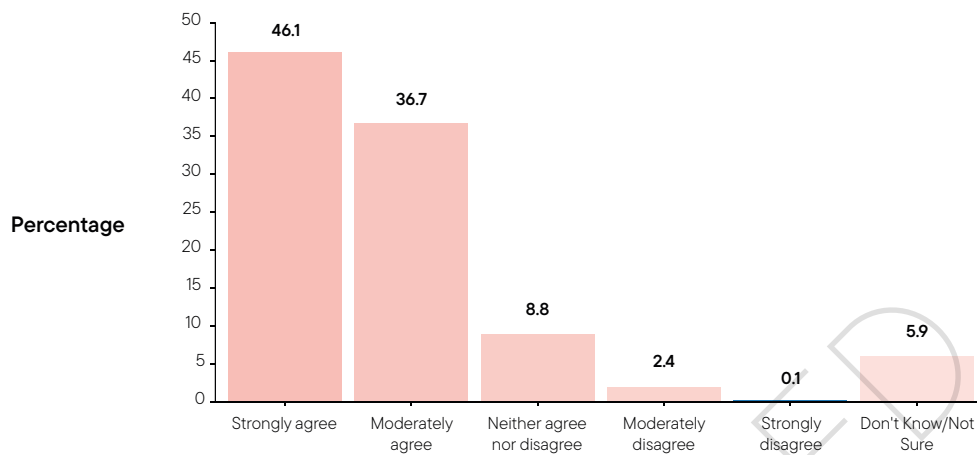
**Figure 11** presents an overview of the data results - for both the British Muslim and wider general population surveys – for the following survey question: “Overall, do you think Britain is a good or bad place to live when it comes to people having the opportunities to make progress and excel in life?”.

When compared to the wider general population sample, British Muslims are notably more likely to say that Britain is a good place to live when it comes to people having the opportunities to make progress and excel in life (as well as being notably less likely to say it is a bad place to live on this front).

A total of 86.1% of British Muslim respondents said Britain was either a ‘very good’ or ‘fairly good’ place to live when it comes to people having the opportunities to make progress and excel in life (31.1% ‘very good’, 55% ‘fairly good’). This figure drops by 16 percentage points for respondents in the wider general population survey – 70.1% (19.5% ‘very good’, 50.6% ‘fairly good’). Just over 3% of respondents in the British Muslim survey stated that Britain is a bad place to live on this front (3.1% ‘fairly bad’, 0.1% ‘very bad’). This increases to the region of 12% for respondents in the wider general population survey (8.7% ‘fairly bad’, 3.2% ‘very bad’).



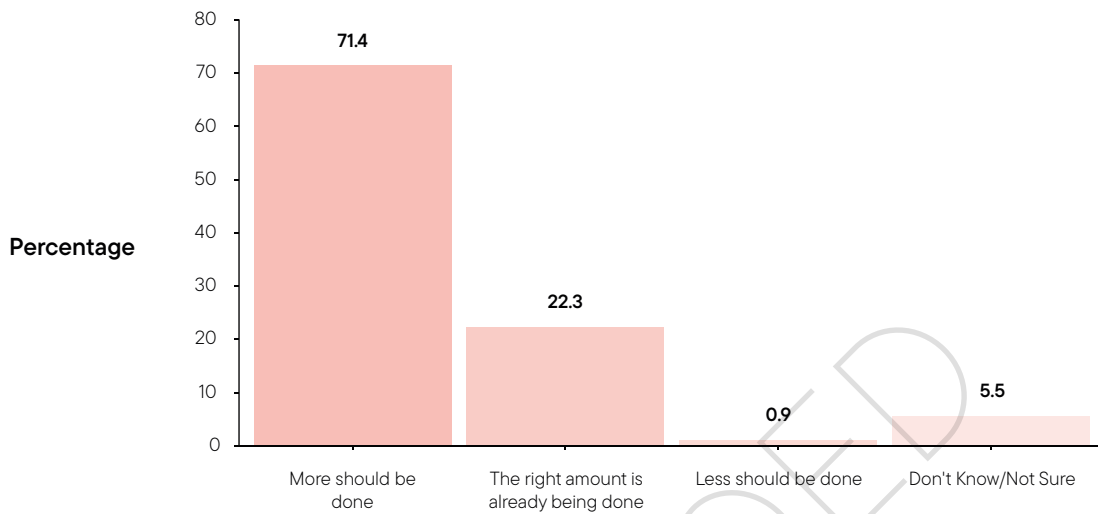
**Figure 12: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: Compared to other European countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, the UK is a better place for Muslims to be respectful of their faith whilst being involved in wider public life.” (British Muslim respondents)**



**Figure 12** presents an overview of the data results of a survey item from the British Muslim polling, which asked respondents to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the following statement: “*Compared to other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the UK is a better place for Muslims to be respectful of their faith whilst being involved in wider public life.*”

While 46.1% of British Muslim respondents strongly agreed with this statement, a further 36.7% moderately agreed. This means that more than four in five respondents in the British Muslim survey agreed with the view that the UK – when compared with major European nations such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands – is a better place for Muslims to be able to practise their own faith whilst participating in wider public life (82.8%). Only 2.5% of British Muslims disagreed with this statement (2.4% moderately disagreeing and 0.1% strongly disagreeing with this view). Around 6% of the British Muslim respondents opted for the ‘don’t know/not sure’ option for this survey item.

**Figure 13: “Do you think there should be more or less done to improve relations between Britain’s different faith communities, or is the right amount already being done?” (British Muslim respondents)**



**Figure 13** presents an overview of the data results of a survey item from the British Muslim polling, which asked respondents the following question: “Do you think there should be more or less done to improve relations between Britain’s different faith communities, or is the right amount already being done?”

Over seven in ten British Muslim respondents (71.4%) said that more should be done to improve relations between different faith communities in Britain. In the British Muslim survey, 22.3% felt that the right amount is already being done on this front. Under 1% of British Muslim respondents thought that less should be done to improve relations between Britain’s different faith communities, with 5.5% opting for the ‘don’t know/not sure’ option for this survey item.

### **3.5: Advanced quantitative analysis of British Muslim polling (logistic regression)**

This part of the British Muslim data analysis section of the report includes two binary logistic regression models (predicting for giving a charitable donation and sharing homemade food with someone who is not a family member) and an ordinal logistic regression model (with the dependent variable being the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with the view that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society). The models include the following variables: sex, age group, education, gross household income, ethno-racial group, and Islamic denomination/sect.

**Table 1: Binary logistic regression models (Giving a charitable donation and sharing homemade food with a non-family member)**

	Model 1: Giving a charitable donation <sup>9</sup>		Model 2: Sharing homemade food with someone who is not a family member <sup>10</sup>	
	Log Odds (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Log Odds (B)	Standard Error (SE)
<b>Sex: Male (REF)</b>				
Female	.269	.209	-.069	.187
<b>Age Group: 18-24 years (REF)</b>				
25-34	-.326	.391	1.208**	.381
35-44	-.015	.387	1.141**	.364
45-54	-.082	.376	.848*	.377
55-64	-.122	.388	.361	.381
65 and over	.185	.582	.250	.468
<b>Education: Doctoral (REF)</b>				
Master's	-.432	.412	.465	.316
Undergraduate	-.422	.407	-.149	.318
College/A-Level	-.609	.419	-.448	.346
GCSE	-.570	.460	-.023	.353
No formal qualifications	-.396	.568	-.079	.444
Don't Know/Prefer not to say	-.791	1.839	-	-
<b>Annual gross household income: £100,000 and over a year (REF)</b>				
£70,000-£99,999.99	-.939	.726	-.609	.567

9 Notes for Model 1: N = 973. Degrees of Freedom: 25. Chi-Square: 101.13. Pseudo R Squared: 0.143. -2LL: 454.719. p-value <0.01 = \*\*, <0.05 = \*

10 Notes for Model 1: N = 970. Degrees of Freedom: 24. Chi-Square: 103.94. Pseudo R Squared: 0.152. -2LL: 527.971. p-value <0.01 = \*\*, <0.05 = \*

£40,000–£69,999.99	-2.126**	.605	-1.233*	.477
£10,000–£39,999.99	-2.247**	.610	-1.045*	.482
Less than £10,000	-3.162**	.689	-2.408**	.586
Don't Know/Not Sure	-3.380**	.719	.569	.847
<b>Ethno-racial group:</b>				
<b>Asian (REF)</b>				
Arab	2.292**	.440	-.174	.319
Black	.660	.393	-.186	.333
White	.515	.331	-.548*	.236
Mixed race	-1.246**	.436	2.307**	.649
Other/Prefer not to say	1.461	.964	1.935*	.818
<b>Denomination: Sunni</b>				
<b>(REF)</b>				
Shia	-.079	.345	-.272	.342
Other	.043	.717	.407	.469
Prefer not to say	-.653	.413	-.884*	.428
Constant	3.748	.739	.944	.602

**Table 1** presents the results of binary logistic regression analysis where the two dependent variables are giving a charitable donation at some point over the last twelve months (Model 1: no = 0, yes = 1) and sharing homemade food with someone who is not a family member at some point over the last twelve months (Model 2: no = 0, yes = 1). Both models include identical independent variables: sex, age group, education, annual gross household income, ethno-racial group, and Islamic denomination. The models are reliant on the data derived from the British Muslim survey.

In **Model 1**, predicting for a British Muslim respondent giving a charitable donation at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey, there are no significant effects to report based on sex, age, level of educational attainment, and Islamic denomination. There are significant effects to report based on annual gross household income and ethno-racial group.

Controlling for all other variables, British Muslims respondents living in a household with an annual gross income of £40,000–£69,999.99 ( $b = -2.126$ ), £10,000–£39,999.99 ( $b = -2.247$ ), and less than £10,000 ( $b = -3.162$ ), are significantly less likely to report giving a charitable donation at some point during the last twelve months, than co-religious respondents who live in a household with an annual gross income of at least £100,000. All three findings reported are statistically significant at the 1% confidence level.

There are also significant ethno-racial effects to report from Model 1. Controlling for sex, age group, education, annual gross household income and Islamic denomination, Arab Muslim respondents are significantly more likely to report giving a charitable donation at some point during the last twelve months than their co-religious counterparts of Asian origin ( $b = 2.292$ ), while mixed-race respondents are significantly less likely to report giving a charitable donation at some point during the last twelve months than their co-religious counterparts of Asian origin ( $b = -1.246$ ). Both findings are statistically significant at the 1% confidence level.

**In Model 2**, predicting for a British Muslim respondent sharing homemade food with a non-family member at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey, there are no significant effects to report based on sex, level of educational attainment and Islamic denomination/sect.

There are significant effects to report based on age group. Controlling for all other independent variables, British Muslim respondents aged 25-34 years ( $b = 1.208$ ), 35-44 years ( $b = 1.141$ ), and 45-54 years ( $b = .841$ ) are significantly more likely to report sharing homemade food with a non-family member at some point during the twelve months than their co-religious counterparts aged 18-24 years. The first two findings are statistically significant at the 1% confidence level, with the third being so at the 5% confidence level.

There are also significant effects to report from Model 2 based on annual gross household income. Controlling for sex, age group, education, ethno-racial group and Islamic denomination/sect, British Muslims living in a household with an annual gross income of £40,000-£69,999.99 ( $b = -1.233$ ), £10,000-£39,999.99 ( $b = -1.045$ ) and less than £10,000 ( $b = -2.408$ ) are significantly less likely to report sharing food with a non-family member at some point during the last twelve months than co-religious respondents who live in a household with an annual gross income of £100,000 or more. The first two findings are statistically significant at the 5% confidence level, with the third being so at the 1% confidence level.

For Model 2, there are significant ethno-racial effects to report. Controlling for all other independent variables, white Muslim respondents are significantly less likely to report sharing homemade food with a non-family member during the last twelve months than their co-religious counterparts of Asian origin ( $b = -.548$ ), while mixed-race respondents are significantly more likely to report sharing homemade food with a non-family member during the last twelve months than co-religious respondents of Asian heritage ( $b = 2.307$ ). While the former finding is statistically significant at the 5% confidence level, the latter is statistically significant at the 1% confidence level.

**Table 2: Ordinal logistic regression model (Agree/disagree that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society)**

<b>Model 3: Agree/disagree that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society <sup>11</sup></b>		
	Log Odds (B)	Standard Error (SE)
<b>Sex: Male (REF)</b>		
Female	.081	.158
<b>Age Group: 18-24 years (REF)</b>		
25-34	1.010**	.283
35-44	1.090**	.285
45-54	1.500**	.325
55-64	.476	.294
65 and over	1.289**	.313
<b>Education: Doctoral (REF)</b>		
Master's	.417	.280
Undergraduate	.181	.276
College/A-Level	-.406	.298
GCSE	-.310	.319
No formal qualifications	.030	.400
Don't Know/Prefer not to say	4.055*	1.882
<b>Annual gross household income: £100,000 and over a year (REF)</b>		
£70,000-£99,999.99	-1.666**	.520
£40,000-£69,999.99	-.985**	.357
£10,000-£39,999.99	-.981**	.352
Less than £10,000	-1.587**	.405
Don't Know/Not Sure	-2.272	.429

11 Notes for Model 3: N = 973. Degrees of Freedom: 25. Chi-Square: 149.52. Pseudo R Squared: 0.089. -2LL: 1191.997. p-value <0.01 = \*\*, <0.05 = \*

<b>Ethno-racial group: Asian (REF)</b>		
Arab	.138	.213
Black	.874*	.403
White	.840**	.230
Mixed race	.214	.323
Other/Prefer not to say	.986	.703
<b>Denomination: Sunni (REF)</b>		
Shia	.808**	.308
Other	1.405*	.635
Prefer not to say	.291	.235
Cut/1	-3.630	.494
Cut/2	-2.158	.454
Cut/3	-.822	.465
Cut/4	.713	.471

**Table 2** presents the results of ordinal logistic regression analysis where the dependent variable includes the British Muslim survey responses to the item where they were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the following statement: “People have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society”. The dependent variable is coded as the following: strongly disagree = 1, moderately disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, moderately agree = 4, strongly agree = 5. Table 1, which includes Model 3, has the same independent variables as Models 1 and 2: sex, age group, education, annual gross household income, ethno-racial group, and Islamic denomination.

In **Model 3**, there are no significant effects to report based on sex and level of educational attainment. There are significant effects to report based on age group. Controlling for all other variables, British Muslim respondents aged 25-34 years ( $b = 1.010$ ), 35-44 years ( $b = 1.090$ ), 45-54 years ( $b = 1.500$ ), and 65 years and over ( $b = 1.289$ ) are significantly more likely to agree that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society, than co-religious respondents who are aged 18-24 years. All four of these findings are statistically significant at the 1% confidence level.

There are a series of statistically significant effects to report from Model 3 based on annual gross household income. Controlling for all other variables, British Muslim respondents who are part of a household with an annual gross income of £70,000-£99,999.99 ( $b = -1.666$ ), £40,000-£69,999.99 ( $b = -.985$ ), £10,000-£39,999.99 ( $b = -.981$ ) and less than £10,000 ( $b = -1.587$ ) are significantly less likely to agree with the view that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society, than

co-religious respondents who live in a household with an annual gross income of £100,000 and above. All four of these findings are statistically significant at the 1% confidence level.

There are statistically significant effects to report on the grounds of ethno-racial background. Controlling for sex, age group, level of educational attainment, annual gross household income and Islamic denomination, black Muslim respondents ( $b = .874$ ) and white Muslim respondents ( $b = .840$ ) are significantly more likely to agree that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society, than co-religious respondents of Asian origin. The former finding is statistically significant at the 5% confidence level, with the latter being so at the 1% confidence level.

There are also significant effects to report based on Islamic denomination. Controlling for all other variables, Shia Muslim respondents ( $b = .808$ ) and non-Sunni and non-Shia respondents classified as 'Other denomination/sect' ( $b = 1.405$ ) are significantly more likely to agree with the view that people have a duty to get married and raise children to be citizens who make positive contributions to British society, than Sunni Muslim respondents. The former finding is statistically significant at the 1% confidence level, with the latter being so at the 5% confidence level.





## 4. Semi-structured interviews with British Muslims

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To complement the quantitative analysis based on TechneUK polling and provide the survey data with a more 'human' dimension, the IIFL held a total of 28 semi-structured interviews with British Muslim participants from different walks of life. The set of British Muslim interviewees, which were recruited with the assistance of Whitestone Insight, is diverse in terms of sex, age, ethno-racial identity, Islamic denomination, place of residence, and occupation.

Analysis reveals key trends that substantiate the findings of the survey poll, with variations between respondents' answers reinforcing much of what emerged from the survey data – overall, British Muslims feel optimistic about and comfortable living in Britain, with a significant majority feeling that it is their duty to contribute to society through hard work and charitable endeavours, bringing children up in a family-centred ethic that encourages generational cohesion, social contribution, and care for the natural world. However, while British Muslims share much common ground, there is a level of 'viewpoint diversity' which ought to be recognised and risks being overlooked under homogenising narratives which suggest they collectively represent a singular 'community'.

### 4.1 Methodology for British Muslim interviews

The 28 British Muslim respondents were asked six 'core' questions about their attitudes to the following topics relevant to social life in Britain, with each question prefaced by asking that the respondent consider *their own understanding* of Islam:

1. Based on your own understanding of Islam, is it the duty of British Muslims to raise children that will make positive contributions to British society?
2. Looking at your own interpretation of Islam, how important is it for able-bodied younger people to care for older relatives and family members living with disabilities?
3. In your understanding of Islam, how much importance is given to making charitable donations, doing voluntary work, or other similar philanthropic activities?
4. Based on your understanding of the teachings of Islam, to what extent is adopting a dedicated work ethic promoted and encouraged?

5. Do you believe that there are teachings in Islam which promote protection of the environment and the preservation of natural beauty?
6. Overall, would you say that Britain is a good place to live as a Muslim? If so, what are your main reasons for believing / not believing this?

Structuring the interviews in this way allowed for respondents to reflect on their own interpretation of the relationship between their faith and how it shapes their attitudes towards social life, rather than focusing on explicit teachings and scripture. As a result, the interviews present the respondents as active practitioners of their faith, with the chance to examine the interaction between Islam as a way of life and salient components of British life. The interviews were analysed in a primarily thematic content style, considering the key and shared themes across each respondents' answers to the different questions. Doing so allows for a coordination of data according to shared language without prescribing set terms that risk ignoring similarities between responses, whilst focusing on synonymic patterns across answers.

## 4.2: Raising children to make positive contributions to British society

Across the 28 respondents, the overwhelming majority (26 of the 28 interviewees) showed a positive correlation between their faith and the belief that it is their duty to raise children to make positive contributions to British society. Exactly half of the interviewees' answers exhibited a clear level of association between Islam and their belief that they should raise children to make positive contributions to British society, with a further ten respondents exhibiting some association between their faith and this approach to parenting. Only four respondents did not *explicitly* attach any importance to their faith when raising children, but only two of those respondents explicitly rejected a connection between Islam as a specific faith and the duty to raise children well.

*"My faith tells me that I have to actively contribute to my society... but my duty as a parent on top of that is to raise my children in a way that they are abiding loyal citizens to the country." (Interviewee no. 12, Raza Ahmed)*

There is a greater prevalence on this topic of community spirit than patriotism, though only marginally; half of the 28 respondents expressed a high level of community spirit and involvement with only three expressing none, while ten respondents expressed a high level of patriotism and six expressed no patriotic sentiment. It is important to note, however, that seven respondents expressed medium levels of patriotism and only five expressed low levels of patriotism.

The absence of patriotic sentiment amongst those respondents who did not *explicitly* express a patriotic comment does not imply its absence altogether; rather, they simply did not make an overt mention of “Britain” or any reference to the country they lived in. Indeed, no respondents made a negative reference to Britain when answering this question; the key indicator of patriotic sentiment in the interviews ought to be looked for in the section below on question six, concerning respondents’ overt attitudes towards whether Britain is a good place to live as a Muslim.

Nonetheless, the conclusion to be drawn from the responses to this question is that British Muslims overwhelmingly believe in raising children to be citizens who positively contribute to their own society – with their faith as a major source of inspiration on why and guidance on how to do so. This is accompanied by most of the British Muslim interviewees attaching a high level of importance to community, with a plurality of the interviewees explicitly exhibiting patriotic sentiment in raising children in this way.

*“I believe that, as Muslims, we have to honour and respect the country in which we live. We have to raise citizens that are honourable, that are respectful and law abiding, especially within our community.” (Interviewee no. 1, Khadija Mansoorali)*

## **4.3: Younger relatives caring for older and disabled relatives**

As with the previous question, the 28 interviewees exhibited an overwhelmingly high correlation between the importance of caring for one’s family and the personal perception of the importance of doing so in Islam. A consistently recurring attitude amongst the respondents included the centrality of caring for elderly family members as well as vulnerable or less fortunate family members to the faith itself, with interviewees commonly specifying that Islam is a “family-centric religion” and that Muslims typically “frown on” putting elderly family members in care homes as “there’s a very high regard and a high status for parents within Islam” (Interviewee no. 1, Khadija Mansoorali).

Moreover, two further themes presented themselves across respondents’ answer:

1. First, the significance of caring for the less fortunate;
2. Second, from where that obligation arises aside from the faith itself.

Concerning the first, respondents typically answered that caring for the less fortunate is a “duty” and an “obligation”, and not merely something that is encouraged. More than a third of respondents – ten in total – specifically used the word “duty” when describing the importance of caring for their older and less able family members, whilst a further thirteen respondents used such phrases as “the right thing to do” when describing this specific type of care.

Concerning the second, as many as twelve respondents used language indicating that caring for elderly family members is an expected *reciprocal* relationship between the generations, with some respondents saying that “we should constantly pray for our elderly because our parents, for example, took care of us” (Interviewee no. 2, Safeer Zartasht) and “we grow up with a mindset that we are going to be taking care of our parents because they have taken care of us” (Interviewee no. 14, Shapla Begum).

*“In Islam it is the responsibility of the children to look after their parents once they're older, as mentioned in the Quran in chapter 17 verse 24: 'my Lord have mercy on them as they reached me when I was a child'.” (Interviewee no. 15, Anon.)*

*“I would like to think that I would raise my daughter in a way where she feels that it's not only a duty but it's also something that she aspires to be able to make a positive contribution to the kind of society she wants to live in.” (Interviewee no. 17, Tasneem Bhindarwala)*

There was also a clear and consistent trend among the British Muslim interviewees that the obligation to care for the vulnerable extends beyond the family, with many specifying that Islam inspires protection of the needy and vulnerable. Only three respondents (nos. 13, 16, and 23 (Anon., Sofia Qureshi, and Fatma Jeilani)) did not follow this trend, answering that the duty to care for family members is not unconditional but dependent upon the quality of the relationship, or that it is expected but not a compulsion.

## **4.4: The importance of charity, voluntary work, and philanthropy**

The most important finding in relation to this question is that every respondent gave a positive response, with 23 out of the 28 British Muslim interviewees attaching a high level of importance to Islam in terms of being a motivating factor in their attitudes. Only one respondent explicitly stated that there was no relationship between faith and charity, instead attributing charitable sentiment to “personal traits and if they're a good person” (Interviewee no. 16, Sofia Qureshi).

Significantly, 23 of the 28 respondents (82%) exhibited a medium or high level of correlation between, on the one hand, their faith and charity, and on the other hand a belief that charity is a direct means to improving the community. Respondents' answers typically emphasised the role that their faith and community played in shaping their attitude towards charity: respondent 24 (Tyrese Walters), a Sunni Muslim, commented that charity is “a part of doing something different for the community”, whilst respondent 28 (Anon.) - also Sunni - explicitly included “[creating] a better society” as a cause and consequence of charity.

Moreover, interviewees belonging to smaller faith communities emphasised the interconnectedness of their global communities with their local communities. Interviewee no. 12 (Raza Ahmed), a member of the Ahmadiyya community, noted that “I belong to a community that is worldwide, in over 200 countries” and has donated to help and care “for orphans in Pakistan, India and Africa”. Similarly, Interviewee no. 17 (Tasneem Bhindarwala), commented that “we’re constantly reminded about how we’re not just members of the Dawoodi Bohra community, but a larger and wider community that’s interfaith.”

Two important trends emerge across respondents’ answers when considering the motivating factors behind the importance of charity in their personal lives. The first similarity to note among the answers provided by the British Muslim interviewees is the clear reference to one of the core tenets of the Islamic faith, that of *zakat* (“alms”, or more commonly referred to as charity). In this case, 18 respondents mentioned it directly through a variety of responses: “it’s a pillar of Islam” (Interviewee no. 1, Khadija Mansoorali); “the concept of charity, known as ‘Sadaqah’ or ‘Zakat’, is... considered one of the fundamental principles of the faith” (Interviewee no. 5, Salma Khanam); “that is enshrined in the five pillars” (Interviewee no. 19, Anon.).

The second similarity between answers was a reference to charity as a means of “purification” or “completion”, either of wealth itself or the faith of the Muslim in question. Interviewee no. 1 (Khadija Mansoorali) stated that charity “completes your faith”, no. 22 (Trayvone Copeland) stated that Muslims are “defined” by charity, with no. 14 stating that charity is “essential to being a Muslim”.

## **4.5: The promotion and encouragement of a strong work ethic**

The responses for this question were almost as consistently strong as the responses to the previous question, with 27 of the 28 British Muslim interviewees answering positively. Only one respondent answered that faith (theirs or otherwise) did *not* have a direct impact on their attitude towards work or their adoption of a dedicated work ethic. Many respondents gave strongly-worded answers to this effect, such as work ethic being “probably the single greatest driver in Islam” (Interviewee no. 9, Anon.), that Islam places “value on honest labour, diligence, and responsibility” and viewing work “as a noble and dignified endeavour” (no. 5, Salma Khanam), with another interviewee advancing the view that “one of the values of a good Muslim man or woman is to be hard-working” (no. 6, Salman Ghaffar).

Most British Muslim interviewees gave answers indicating that their Islamic faith had a high level of importance for their attitude to work and the formation of a strong work ethic (22 out of 28 respondents), with a small segment of respondents indicating a medium level of importance of Islam in their attitude to work (four interviewees). Two respondents gave answers which suggested that Islam was not necessarily required for the fostering of a dedicated work ethic (nos. 3 and 16 (Ibrahim Ali and Sofia Qureshi). Interviewee no. 3 commented that whilst Islam emphasises a good work ethic in their understanding, a strong

work ethic can be developed “regardless of Islam”, whilst no. 16 explicitly stated that “I don’t think there’s any connection between my religion and work”.

Consistent trends between answers are evident in two key interrelated areas: honesty and discipline. Coding in the responses to this question had to account for a greater degree of complexity, as eleven of the 28 respondents used the word “honesty” outright, whilst six respondents used phrases that closely approximated honesty. For example, Interviewee no. 17 (Tasneem Bhindarwala) stated that “integrity fuels a positive work ethic”; no. 14 (Shapla Begum) commented that Muslims “are not allowed to lie or abuse, and have to work to our hardest”; no. 21 (Salma Akhtar) said that “if you are to work, you are supposed to work in an honourable, respectable job”. With that in mind, a total of eighteen respondents (64% of the interviewees) made comments that directly highlighted honesty at work as a significant concept in Islam.

Similarly, when it came to “discipline”, while only five respondents explicitly used the word “discipline” when describing Islam’s attitude to work, a further ten interviewees used phrases synonymous with discipline, most notably “hard work” (and variations thereupon). Respondents also used phrases that suggest a centrality of discipline and obligation in the relationship between Islam and work, such as Islam placing a “great emphasis... on justice” when referring to work-based obligations (no. 2 (Saefer Zartasht)).

## 4.6: Caring for the natural world

Twenty of the 28 British Muslim interviewees provided responses that revealed a high level of personal importance of the faith in shaping their attitudes towards environmental obligations. The remaining respondents exhibited attaching at least a medium level of importance to the faith in their attitude to environmentalism.

“High” importance was registered if the respondent directly referenced Islam, the Quran, the hadiths, Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), or other similar Islam-related phrases, such as “in the Quran itself... there’s a lot of emphasis on natural beauty” (Interviewee no. 1, Khadija Mansoorali), “stories of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH emphasise how he took care of the environment” (no. 21, Salma Akhtar), and “several Quranic verses and the Hadiths... highlight the importance of environmental conservation” (no. 5, Salma Khanam).

It is important to note that “medium” importance in this context is judged on an awareness of the faith’s teachings, without a direct reference to the faith or a specific element of it. For example, respondent no. 19 (Anon.) indicated that they were aware of there being an importance attached to this in the Quran and in the hadiths, but was not specific about where or how, whilst still exhibiting a faith-based conviction that caring for the environment is essential. Similarly, no. 16 believed that caring for the environment is “characteristic of being Muslim” but ultimately attributed an environmentally-friendly attitude to “people’s personal traits”. Nevertheless, these responses still show a belief that the Islamic faith plays an important role in shaping adherents’ attitudes to environmental preservation and sustainability.

Two notable trends emerged across respondents when discussing the influence of the Islamic faith on attitudes towards the environment: stewardship and avoiding wastefulness.

Stewardship, as Interviewee no. 5 (Salma Khanam) commented, is a central component of Islam, as the Quran “describes humans as stewards or trustees (*Khalifah*) on Earth,” implying a duty to the environment that all Muslims must respect. It is unsurprising that 21 of the 28 British Muslim interviewees placed a high importance on stewardship as part of their attitude to the natural environment, of which twelve provided answers exhibiting a ‘high’ level of importance (overt use of the word “stewardship” or variations thereupon such as “custodianship”).

Similarly, high importance was judged on whether respondents gave answers referring to the role of God in creating the world – inspiring environmental duties. For instance, Interviewee no. 9 (Anon.) commented that Islam has specific teachings about the environment and “preservation” and “balance” are key parts.

A notable type of response among the British Muslim interviewees was specifically referring to avoiding wastefulness/avoiding excess waste. Interviewee no. 2 (Safeer Zartasht) traced this attitude back to the origins of Islam, attributing it to the “minimalism” of the “Islamic peoples in Arabia,” while no. 17 (Tasneem Bhindarwala) shared an anecdote of when their mosque issued travel mugs during Ramadhan as a small-scale means to reduce waste when it came to breaking fast (iftar). Six respondents used phrases directly connected to “avoiding waste”, with a further eight interviewees mentioning phrases approximating such an attitude – for example, reservations over “consumerism” (no. 23, Anon.), with another saying that “certain things you can use for your own benefit, but certain things are just there to be observed” (no. 12, Raza Ahmed).

## **4.7: Is Britain a good place to live as a Muslim?**

In response to this question, most British Muslim interviewees indicated that, overall, they consider Britain a good place to live as a Muslim, with only one respondent answering that it is not “at the moment” (Interviewee no. 20, Nousheen Mehrban). Among the 28 respondents, 21 answered that Britain is a generally good place to live, with respondents saying “absolutely, 100%” (Interviewee no. 10, Nadeem Afzal), “yes, definitely” (no. 12, Raza Ahmed) or even that Britain “is perhaps one of the best places in the world for Muslims to reside” (no. 9, Anon.). Out of the 28 respondents, six respondents gave mixed answers, though it is important to note that nobody answered that they “did not know”; instead, these respondents typically emphasised that, while they overall agreed with the question, “it depends” on where in the country you lived (no. 23, Anon.), “certain parts” are more comfortable than others (no. 27, Tahir Din) and “things were getting better” but they are “not really going in the right direction anymore” (no. 28, Anon.).

*"When I compare [Britain] with other countries I see, France being an example where you've got the ban on niqab, I think generally we have come quite a long way in comparison." (Interviewee no. 19, Anon.)*

When British Muslim interviewees discussed why Britain is a good place to live as a Muslim, three reasons stood out from their responses: tolerance, religious freedom, and flexibility over cultural maintenance. Respondents would typically use the phrase "tolerant" (12 interviewees - 42% of the pool) or similar phrases such as "welcoming" (no. 7, Humaiyah Ahmed), "not judgmental" (no. 11, Nadia Imran), or "here is safer" than where they or their community might originally be from (no. 15, Anon.), indicating that there is a clear view of Britain being a tolerant place when it comes to having the freedom of Islamic religious observance.

*"We moved to Germany in 1989... They still haven't managed to get used to the idea that Muslims exist. What I mean by that is... when I go shopping with my mum or with my sisters or with my wife now [in Germany], I still see people looking, I can sense them staring." (Interviewee no. 12, Raza Ahmed)*

Nine of the British Muslim interviewees explicitly mentioned a sense of religious freedom and being able to practise their religion without hindrance, with a further 13 responding that they felt they were able to live and practise as a Muslim in Britain. Many respondents pointed to "increased facilities" for Muslims in Britain as a sign of religious freedom, highlighting the ability to purchase halal products (no. 7, Humaiyah Ahmed), the increased number of mosques and Islamic centres (no. 6, Salman Ghaffar), and the ability to wear religious garbs (no. 12, Raza Ahmed).

*"[Britain is] a very tolerant place... in day-to-day life. I think for the most part people are understanding... no one really forces anything upon you which is nice and there's that freedom to practise religion as you see it." (Interviewee no. 6, Salman Ghaffar)*

This is not to say there are no areas for improvement. Of those interviewees who gave mixed reviews, along with the single respondent who answered that Britain is not a good place to live as a Muslim, emphasis was put on the media's negative portrayal of Muslims (nos. 7, 14 and 26 (Humaiyah Ahmed, Shapla Begum and Tyrese Walters), a perceived increase in anti-Muslim prejudice (nos. 20 and 28) and smaller towns being less welcoming or overtly hostile when compared with larger metropolitan centres (nos. 23 and 27 (Anon. and Tahir Din)). Non-religious reasons were cited as well, including pessimism over the UK economy (no. 20, Nousheen Mehrban), but the main reason for the minority of British Muslim interviewees feeling that Britain is not a good place to live as a Muslim were focused on unflattering caricatures of Muslims in the media, which may play a part in feeding existing forms of anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice.

*"There's no better place than England or Britain, especially if you look at the situation for Muslims, let's say in Europe, France." (Interviewee no. 10, Nadeem Afzal)*



**Table of interview participants**

	Name		Sex	Denomination/ sect	Ethnicity	Occupation	Region of the UK
1	Khadija Mansoorali	27	Female	Shia	Indian	Paediatric pharmacist	North West
2	Safeer Zartasht	32	Male	Ahmadiyya	Pakistani	Imam	South East
3	Ibrahim Ali	26	Male	Sunni	Pakistani	Software test engineer	East Anglia
4	Anon.	38	Female	Sunni	Pakistani	Self-employed	East Midlands
5	Salma Khanam	41	Female	Sunni	Bangladeshi	Charity director	London
6	Salman Ghaffar	22	Male	Sunni	Pakistani	Self-employed	London
7	Humaiyah Ahmed	21	Female	Sunni	Bangladeshi		London
8	Anon.	39	Female	Shia	Indian	Self-employed	London
9	Anon.	43	Male	Shia	Indian	Engineering lead in national security	South East
10	Nadeem Afzal	40	Male	Sunni	Pakistani		West Midlands
11	Nadia Imran	47	Female	Sunni	Pakistani	Teacher	London
12	Raza Ahmed	39	Male	Ahmadiyya	Pakistani	Imam	London
13	Anon.	37	Female	Sunni	Asian	Digital manager	North East
14	Shapla Begum	28	Female	Sunni	Bangladeshi	Legal admin for the Shariah council	London
15	Anon.	27	Female	Ahmadiyya	Pakistani	Housewife	London
16	Sofia Qureshi	37	Female	Sunni	Algerian-Pakistani	Unemployed	London

17	Tasneem Bhindarwala	28	Female	Shia	Indian	Solicitor	London
18	Anon.	34	Male	Sunni	Asian	Legal professional	North West
19	Anon.	35	Male	Sunni	Bangladeshi	Civil servant	London
20	Nousheen Mehrban	45	Female	Sunni	Pakistani	NHS administrator	South East
21	Salma Akhtar	28	Female	Sunni	Pakistani	Manager with Birmingham Adult Education Service	West Midlands
22	Trayvone Copeland	27	Male	Sunni	Afro-Caribbean	Quantity surveyor	London
23	Anon.	43	Male	Sunni	Mixed Race	Solicitor	London
24	Fatma Jeilani	27	Female	Sunni	Kenyan	Business manager support for council	London
25	Arshad Mahmood	53	Male	Sunni	Asian	Consultant	West Midlands
26	Tyrese Walters	19	Male	Sunni	Mixed Race	Student	London
27	Tahir Din	39	Male	Sunni	Pakistani	Business support	London
28	Anon.	54	Male	Sunni	Indian	Customer service assistant	London

# 5. Social contribution of British Muslim organisations

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With the report having presented survey data and interview findings which demonstrate the patriotic, family-oriented and community-spirited nature of many British Muslims who consider their faith to be important in how they view their society and approach life in general, this section highlights the social contributions made by British Muslim organisations from a variety of sectors – ranging from healthcare access to environmental protection, interfaith relations to skills development. With the qualitative findings of this report supporting those in previous relevant studies which suggest that there is much British Muslim discontent over the national media discourse surrounding their religious communities and Islam’s place in Britain, this section of the report is designed to demonstrate the positive contributions made by Muslim organisations in various spheres of British life.

This section of the reports includes ten case studies which cover the following British Muslim organisations:

- The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship
- Al-Manaar (The Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre)
- Project Rise
- Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OXCIS)
- Hamara Healthy Living Centre
- Islamic Relief
- Muslim Hands
- Aishah Help
- Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks)
- Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS)

## 5.1: The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship

The Muslim Scout Fellowship (MSF) is the UK’s official body for all Muslim adults who are involved in Scouting and is part of The Scout Association (Scouts UK) which was formed in 1910 and incorporated in 1912 by a royal charter under its previous name of The Boys Scout Association.<sup>12</sup> The organisational structure of the MSF (aligned with the Scouts UK umbrella association) is as follows: ‘Beavers’ (6–8 years old), ‘Cubs’ (8–10.5 years old), ‘Scouts’ (10.5–14 years old), ‘Explorers’ (14–18 years old), and Network (18–25 years old).<sup>13</sup> Alongside this, there is a modular training scheme for adults which has been recognised with a National Training Award.

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<sup>12</sup> The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship website (front page): <https://www.ukmsf.org/>

<sup>13</sup> The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship webpage on organisational age-related structure: <https://www.ukmsf.org/all-about-scouting/scouting-sections/>

According to its website, the MSF is the largest Muslim youth organisation providing access to 'non-formal' education to young people – with its central mission being to ensure that “all young Muslims living in the UK are given opportunities to grow, develop, become confident and empowered young Muslims who are skilled to be the future change makers in society”.

Promoting the inclusive nature of Scouts UK, the MSF directly challenges established misconceptions that it is ultimately a Christian-focused organisation of middle-class males – arguing that it is an open system which embraces both sexes, a variety of ethnic backgrounds and all religious affiliations (and none). The MSF credits its volunteers for the rapid expansion in Muslim Scouting membership by “demonstrating how the values of Scouts are so very closely interconnected to the principles of Islam”. It has described the Scouts as “an amazing platform which has allowed active Muslim members to participate in day-to-day activities without any compromise on their faith and beliefs”.<sup>14</sup>

Championing civic integration and confronting claims that Islamic teachings are incompatible with British traditions, the MSF stresses the compatibility between Scouting values (integrity, respect, care, and belief) and conventional Islamic principles – advancing the view that “the scouting values, promise and law are all harmonious to Islamic principles and are key characteristics we wish to develop and see in Muslims today”.<sup>15</sup>

The MSF has made remarkable progress in terms of organisational development since the creation of the first predominantly Muslim Scout group in 1999 in London.<sup>16</sup> Since officially registering with Scouts UK in 2004, it held its first national camp the following year (with 400 attendees). By 2007, 1,000 Muslims had joined the UK's scouting activities. In 2012, 50 predominantly Muslim groups had been established. Two years on from this, the number of adult volunteers which had been trained through the MSF's training scheme had reached 1,000. With the inaugural MSF International Jamboree taking place in 2017 (1,500 attendees), 2020 saw its overall membership (adults and youths) reach 6,000.

There is a sound geographical spread across England when it comes to the MSF's activities. Outside of its many organisations in major cities such as London and Birmingham, there are established Muslim scouting groups in places such as Bournemouth, Dorset (3rd Bournemouth), Norwich, Norfolk (5th Norwich Ansaar), Derby, Derbyshire (176th Derby Scout Group), Blackburn, Lancashire (AHF Scout Group), and Halifax, West Yorkshire (51st Pellon Scout Group). There is also a Muslim scouting group in Cardiff, Wales (1st Cathays Al-Huda).<sup>17</sup>

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14 The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship webpage on Scout Values: <https://www.ukmsf.org/all-about-scouting/scouting-values/>

15 Ibid.

16 The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship webpage including the timeline of its development (including milestones for membership growth): <https://www.ukmsf.org/about-us/>

17 The UK Muslim Scout Fellowship webpage on the location of its branches: <https://www.ukmsf.org/join-scouting/find-your-nearest-group/>

## 5.2: Al-Manaar (The Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre)

Al-Manaar, The Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre Trust, is based in London and is a charity that was officially inaugurated by King Charles III, then-Prince of Wales, on 17th May 2001. Al-Manaar MCHC is in a purpose-built centre, designed by Gibberd Architects,<sup>18</sup> built on a disused railway goods yard in Kensington and Chelsea. Whilst the centre is not explicitly designed to be or act as a mosque, it provides a worship space for all faiths.

The Trust was established by the local Muslim community in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and North Kensington City Challenge, which is funded by the government. The centre was founded originally to “provide a variety of services to tackle a range of social, economic and cultural needs of the local Muslim community.”

Whilst the Trust was initially founded to meet these needs, it has since expanded its remit to serve the wider local community, of all faiths and none. On its website, the Trust states that it works in six key areas: Social/leisure; Cultural; Spiritual; Economic; Educational; and Training, describing itself as a “a focal point for a range of spiritual, social, cultural, economic, educational and training activities”.<sup>19</sup>

One service that Al-Manaar MCHC maintains is its 5-star rated Community Kitchen, which is open and available to different groups to “provide support to the community, enhance their cooking skills through vocational and accredited training courses, facilitate support to the Homeless, and cater for events.”<sup>20</sup>

Of note was Al-Manaar MCHC’s role in providing support for the victims of, and those affected by, the Grenfell Tower fire.<sup>21</sup> The centre acted as an initial refuge for those seeking shelter and, later, donations for the survivors.<sup>22</sup> In late-May and early-June of 2021, the Trust hosted “Silent Art for Grenfell” in which local residents were invited to create small clay sculptures for inclusion in a collective community mural.<sup>23</sup>

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18 Gibberd Architects’ page on Al-Manaar: <https://www.gibberd.com/projects/al-manaar-the-muslim-cultural-heritage-centre>

19 Al-Manaar’s “About Us” webpage: <https://almanaar.org.uk/about-us/>

20 Al-Manaar’s webpage on its community kitchen service: <https://almanaar.org.uk/community-kitchen-service/>

21 Al-Manaar’s webpage on its counselling services: <https://almanaar.org.uk/al-manaar-counselling-service/>

22 Kellaway, K. (2018), ‘Grenfell one year on: the mosque manager who took in survivors’, *The Guardian*, 10 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/10/mosque-manager-grenfell-survivors-interview-abdurahman-sayed-al-manaar>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

23 Al-Manaar’s webpage on the Grenfell tragedy: <https://almanaar.org.uk/al-manaar-and-grenfell-forever/>

In November 2023, the Al-Manaar MCHC won the British Beacon Mosque awards for Best Youth Service, with the awards team noting that Al-Manaar MCHC “has made significant contributions to the youth in its community through a diverse range of activities and services” and that their “commitment to spiritual growth, confidence-building, and emotional well-being has made a significant impact, nurturing a generation of confident, responsible, and engaged individuals.”<sup>24</sup>

## 5.3: Project Rise

Project Rise is a global and international campaign initiated by the Dawoodi Bohra Muslim community that operates across multiple nations, and in the UK is specifically active in the areas of environmentalism, poverty relief and fundraising for local services.

Principally described as an “umbrella initiative” across the world,<sup>25</sup> Project Rise covers “global development challenges, ranging from hunger and poverty to climate crisis and education” that “cannot be addressed in isolation.” Launched in 2018, in the United Kingdom the initiative is active mostly in the Bradford area, and has partnered with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to undertake small-scale projects that are intended to have a lasting, positive impact on their communities.

The main focal point of action in the UK community has been environmentalism, including tree planting, beach and river clean ups, litter picks and other small-scale, localised activities. The philosophy at the heart of the initiative focuses on the smaller scale intentionally, as “Project Rise volunteers are hopeful that, with the support of their collaborators and partners, their efforts stand as small yet meaningful steps on the road to addressing pressing global challenges and making the world a better place for all its inhabitants.”

For instance, in July 2023 the initiative partnered with the Marine Conservation Society in Hornsea to complete a beach clean-up in East Yorkshire, collecting 10 kilograms of litter off of one stretch of beach front.<sup>26</sup> As part of the environmental focus of the UK community, the initiative has also partnered with the Aire Rivers Trust in Leeds to help clean the River Aire,<sup>27</sup> and also participated in the Bradford local government’s “Tree for Every Child” drive (a project to plant one tree for every primary school child in Bradford).<sup>28</sup>

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24 Al-Manaar’s webpage on its youth activities: <https://beaconmosque.com/finalist/al-manaar-mchc/>

25 The Dawoodi Bohra’s webpage on Project Rise: <https://www.thedawoodibohras.com/category/project-rise/>

26 The Dawoodi Bohra’s webpage on partnering with the Marine Conservation Society: <https://uk.thedawoodibohras.com/bradford/bradford-bohras-partner-with-marine-conservation-society-on-hornsea-beach-clean-up/>

27 The Dawoodi Bohra’s webpage on cleaning up Aires River: <https://uk.thedawoodibohras.com/bradford/bradford-bohras-volunteer-for-ourcleanriver-campaign/>

28 The City of Bradford’s webpage on the ‘Tree for Every Child’ campaign: <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/environment/climate-change/take-climate-action-planting-a-tree-for-every-child/>

Similarly, the initiative has raised money for the Bradford neonatal appeal following a 1,000km fundraising walk in which over 150 community members participated.<sup>29</sup> Emphasising the community's belief in "the importance of contributing to society and helping those in need," the initiative welcomed the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bradford, with the latter commenting that "the Dawoodi Bohras' efforts will help Bradford's families requiring these exceptional services."<sup>30</sup>

Whilst Project Rise in the UK has mostly focused on environmentalism, in London, the other major focal point of the initiative in the United Kingdom, the community consistently raises money for charities and important causes. In April 2023, as part of Ramadhan, the "Ladies of London" group hosted a fundraiser for the National Literacy Trust<sup>31</sup> while the younger members of the community raised money for Macmillan Cancer Research.<sup>32</sup>

When considering the small-scale focus of the initiative, Project Rise is a commendable example of a community, inspired by faith, coordinating to address immediate needs that go beyond the bounds of faith to make positive changes to the local community.

## 5.4: Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OXCIS)

The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OXCIS) was founded in 1985.<sup>33</sup> It is an independent institution which focuses on the advanced scholarly study of Islam and the broader 'Muslim world'. According to its own website, OXCIS is "dedicated to the study, from a multi-disciplinary perspective, of all aspects of Islamic culture and civilisation and of contemporary Muslim societies".

In 1993, HRH Charles, Prince of Wales – now His Majesty the King – became its patron. A registered educational charity, in 2012, it was granted a Royal Charter by the late HM Queen Elizabeth II. The governance of OXCIS is managed by a Board of Trustees, and the current Chairman of the Board of Trustees is HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal – the former head of Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Agency and director of the Riyadh-based King Faisal Centre for

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29 Bradford City Hospital's JustGiving fundraising webpage: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/bradfordsbigneonatalappeal>

30 The Dawoodi Bohra's webpage on fundraising for Bradford City Hospital's neonatal appeal: <https://uk.thedawoodibohras.com/bradford/dawoodi-bohras-raise-money-for-bradford-neonatal-appeal/>

31 The Dawoodi Bohra's webpage on the 'Ladies of London' fundraising: <https://uk.thedawoodibohras.com/project-rise/ladies-of-london-host-brownie-sundae-fundraiser-for-literacy/>

32 The Dawoodi Bohra's webpage on younger members fundraising for Cancer Research: <https://uk.thedawoodibohras.com/charity/london-youngsters-sell-doughnuts-in-aid-of-macmillan-cancer-research/>

33 The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies's webpage (front page): <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/>

Research and Islamic Studies.<sup>34</sup>

The Centre has several research areas, which include understanding the opportunities and challenges faced by Muslims living in Britain.<sup>35</sup> Seminars, workshops, and roundtables are regularly organised by the OXCIS on a range of subjects which relate to the social well-being, economic integration, and political incorporation of British Muslims. This includes exploring matters of identity and democratic participation, investigating housing needs, and representation in institutions such as the British Army. A recent roundtable, held by OXCIS in partnership with Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), looked at issues surrounding religious education curricula and British Muslim experiences in the English state school system.<sup>36</sup>

The OXCIS provides scholarships which are specifically designed to aid the academic development of British Muslim students.<sup>37</sup> Launched in 2009, the OCIS – Oxford Scholarships support British Muslim students (as well as those from developing Asian and African nations) to read for degrees at the University of Oxford. Under the scholarship scheme, up to five scholarships a year are available for British Muslim undergraduate students. Alongside this, up to five postgraduate scholarships are available for those from British Muslim communities and students from a specific set of countries in Asia and Africa. The scholarships are available to students undertaking study in a range of fields, but must be considered relevant to the “needs of Muslim societies”.

The Centre also runs The Young Muslim Leadership Programme (YMLP), which has the central mission of encouraging greater Muslim participation in wider British public life.<sup>38</sup> It is advertised on the OXCIS website as an “intensive residential summer school open to Muslim men and women between the ages of 21 and 30”. British Muslims must demonstrate a degree of ‘leadership potential’ in their chosen career-paths to be accepted on the course. Course participants are drawn from a variety of backgrounds and interests. This includes both national and local government, academia, the legal profession, media, and the voluntary sector. In evaluating their experience on the course, participants have welcomed the opportunities the YMLP provided to discuss the challenges facing British Muslims in various spheres, such as education, employment, housing, and foreign policy.

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34 The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies’s “About Us” webpage (Governance): # <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/governance>

35 The Oxford Centre on Islamic Studies’s webpage on its “Muslims in Britain” research stream: <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/muslims-britain>

36 Ibid.

37 The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies’s webpage on the OCIS-Oxford Scholarships: <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/muslims-britain>

38 The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies’s webpage on The Young Muslim Leadership Programme (YMLP): <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/young-muslim-leadership-programme>



## 5.5: Hamara Healthy Living Centre

Hamara Healthy Living Centre is a Leeds-based organisation which operates in the voluntary and community sector.<sup>39</sup> The phrase “Hamara” means “Our” in Urdu – underlining the collective-minded and community-spirited mission of the centre.

According to its own website, Hamara started with two part-time staff operating from a small office working on one project. It has now evolved into an established organisation which employs over 20 staff and is based in a purpose-developed £1.2 million centre in the suburban area of Beeston (a few miles south of Leeds city centre). Indeed, it has grown to be the largest ethnic-minority organisation in Leeds’ voluntary and community sector.

Hamara currently delivers support across different strands such as health promotion, older people’s services, and learning disabilities. One of its health programmes, “Patient Ambassadors”, is designed to assist patients – especially those who belong to ‘hard-to-reach’ and ‘vulnerable’ sections of the local community – in accessing appropriate forms of healthcare.<sup>40</sup> This involves signposting patients to relevant services to meet their needs (including those that may be more social and non-medical in nature). Under the Patient Ambassadors scheme, Hamara strives to proactively deliver events and workshops in the local community which aim to engage with harder-to-reach groups.

The Halo project carried out by Hamara is specifically tailored to empower people living with learning disabilities and difficulties, along with those who are on the autistic spectrum.<sup>41</sup> “Halo” stands for “Health, Achievement & Learning Opportunities”. The project aims to promote the social inclusion of such individuals – supporting them to build healthy ties with others in the wider community, as well as providing relevant health-related advice and opportunities to build their self-confidence. At the heart of the Halo project promoting ‘independence’ – supporting its members with decision-making as well as providing them with the chance to learn and develop new and existing skills. The wide array of activities is offered for members to participate in. This includes employability development, digital learning, cookery sessions, sporting activities and outdoor pursuits.

Hamara also provides English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) lessons for those at different levels of English language proficiency.<sup>42</sup> The lessons, which serve the central purpose of enabling social, cultural, and economic integration into mainstream British life, are designed to improve the way one verbally communicates in English across a variety of situations – both formal and informal. As well as aiming to strengthen the English reading ability of those who

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39 Hamara Healthy Living Centre’s webpage (front page): <https://www.hamara.org.uk/>

40 Hamara Healthy Living Centre’s webpage on its “Patient Ambassadors” scheme: <https://www.hamara.org.uk/our-services/projects/health/>

41 Hamara Healthy Living Centre’s webpage on the HALO project: <https://www.hamara.org.uk/our-services/projects/halo/>

42 Hamara Healthy Living Centre’s webpage on its provision of ESOL classes: <https://www.hamara.org.uk/our-services/projects/esol-classes/>

participate on the course, the ESOL courses run by Hamara also focus on the improvement of writing skills (including the correct use of punctuation).

It is worth noting that in recent times, there have been significant reductions in funding for ESOL lessons nationally. The funding for providers of ESOL classes across England has dropped from £212.3m in 2008 to £105m in 2018 – a real-terms cut of almost 60%.<sup>43</sup> Against a relatively unfavourable backdrop in terms of overall national funding for English-language lessons, civic organisations based in multi-ethnic localities – such as Hamara in Leeds – are playing an active part in bolstering integration outcomes in their local communities.

## 5.6: Islamic Relief

Islamic Relief, founded in 1984, is one of the most impactful and recognised Islam-based charities in the world. Established by a group of Muslim medical doctors and activists in the United Kingdom, Islamic Relief has grown to operate across the world, inspired by the Islamic faith and committed to furthering the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

First founded in Birmingham by medical student Hany El-Banna in response to the famine in East Africa, the charity initially raised £135,000 to provide three projects across East Africa, before setting up an office in a Birmingham community centre a year later. As of 2024, after 40 years, Islamic Relief has grown to operate in 40 countries, and is one of only five UK-based charities to be certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.<sup>44</sup>

Highlighting that one in five people in the UK are struggling with poverty, over 300,000 people are homeless and 50% of children from minority-ethnic groups are living in poverty, Islamic Relief has shifted its work from an overseas focus to the UK.

Despite being an international charity and initially established to relieve suffering in the developing world, Islamic Relief provides support for vulnerable communities in the United Kingdom as part of its 'Helping at Home' programme in four key areas: building resilience to poverty; empowering women; supporting refugees and asylum seekers; and youth and family development.<sup>45</sup>

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43 Refugee Action (2019), 'NEW RESEARCH SHOWS REFUGEES SUFFERING FROM LACK OF ENGLISH CLASSES, DESPITE STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ACTION BY GOVERNMENT', 12 June. Available at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/new-research-shows-refugees-suffering-from-lack-of-english-classes-despite-strong-public-support-for-action-by-government/#:~:text=The%20amount%20of%20money%20spent,57%25%20between%20these%20time%20periods.>, last accessed: 24 February 2024.

44 Islamic Relief's webpage on receiving CHS certification: <https://islamic-relief.org/news/chs-rigorous-certification-reaffirms-islamic-reliefs-programmes-prioritise-quality-and-accountability/>

45 Islamic Relief's webpage on UK-based activities: <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/giving/areas-of-work/united-kingdom/>

As part of this re-orientation in focus, Islamic Relief partnered with Green Lane Mosque and Community Centre in Birmingham in January 2023 to provide and distribute over 1,000 people with winter food packs over a single weekend. At the time, Tufail Hussain, Islamic Relief UK Director, commented that “these mosques are lifelines for the community in Birmingham as they help some of the most vulnerable. They show the true spirit of Islam which is charity, one of the most important pillars of faith.”<sup>46</sup>

This work continued throughout the year, with Islamic Relief providing over 400 people with “food and essential items” on 6th July 2023. Importantly, this was only one instance of a national campaign led by Islamic Relief in 2023, in which 26 partners across the country coordinated to deliver “food packs, Qurbani meat and Eid gifts to coincide with the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha.” This campaign was described as “Islamic Relief UK’s largest ever nationwide Eid al-Adha food distribution.”<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, as part of its attempts to support refugees and asylum seekers across the world, and partnering with Refugee Action, Islamic Relief has been working in the United Kingdom to provide access to critical support for children seeking asylum, a critical service for many refugees for whom English is not their first language and have been separated from their families.

Islamic Relief has been the recipient of many prestigious awards, including the Lord Mayor of Birmingham Community Care award in 1993, winning the first British Muslim Awards’ ‘Charity of the Year’ award in 2013, receiving the Third Sector Charity of the Year Award in 2022<sup>48</sup> and 2023<sup>49</sup>, and many more.

## 5.7: Muslim Hands

Founded in 1993, Muslim Hands was originally inspired by the devastation of the Bosnian War, and has grown from a grassroots response in Nottingham to raise money for those suffering from the war, into an international aid agency and NGO working across 30 countries that aims to tackle the root causes of poverty. It seeks to achieve this through immediate relief efforts, principally humanitarian, as well as long-term projects “such as schools, healthcare clinics and

46 Green Lane Masjid (2023), ‘PRESS RELEASE: Islamic Relief UK, Masjid Al Falaah and Green Lane Masjid team up to help some of the most vulnerable in Birmingham as mosques sees stark increase in calls for help,’ 21 January. Available at: <https://greenlanemasjid.org/press-release-islamic-relief-uk-masjid-al-falaah-and-green-lane-masjid-team-up-to-help-some-of-the-most-vulnerable-in-birmingham-as-mosques-sees-stark-increase-in-calls-for-help/>, last accessed 20 February 2024

47 Islamic Relief’s webpage on receiving CHS certification: <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/islamic-relief-uk-and-green-lane-masjid-will-help-some-of-the-most-vulnerable-in-small-heath-and-surrounding-areas-during-islamic-festival-of-eid-al-adha/>

48 Islamic Relief’s webpage on winning Charity of the Year 2022: <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/charity-of-the-year-2022/>

49 Islamic Relief’s webpage on winning Charity of the Year 2023: <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/charity-of-the-year/>

livelihood programmes worldwide”.<sup>50</sup>

Since 1995, Muslim Hands’ work has expanded beyond immediate relief for those suffering from war to include orphan sponsorship programmes for those living in Africa, Asia, and the Balkans, providing vocational training for Kashmiri women and widows affected by violence, and the reconstruction of schools and the provision of medical services in Iraq following the commencement of hostilities in 2003. Most recently, in 2023 Muslim Hands worked tirelessly through what it calls a “year of emergencies”, assisting those affected by earthquakes in Turkey, Syria, Morocco and Afghanistan, and by floods in Libya and Somalia. Over the year, Muslim Hands raised £5m in emergency relief.<sup>51</sup>

One of the longest-running services that Muslim Hands maintains is their orphan sponsorship programme, in which sponsors can choose to send a monthly (£29.50) or annual (£354) donation to sponsor a specific child.<sup>52</sup> Alternatively, donations can be made to sponsor a Hifz student (someone learning and memorising the Quran) for £27 a month,<sup>53</sup> or sponsor a child with disabilities for £30 a month.<sup>54</sup>

Muslim Hands has also undertaken work in the United Kingdom.<sup>55</sup> Since 2008, Muslim Hands has worked to “enable deprived and under-achieving communities to move forward and to provide them with opportunities to live a life free from poverty, exploitation and exclusion,” pointing out that nearly half of British Muslims (46%) live in “the most deprived areas of England”.

There are a number of projects operating in the UK run by Muslim Hands, including The Open Kitchen, which has run continuously since December 2018 in Hounslow, providing two free hot meals every day of the week; Mighty Meals, a partnership scheme with FareShare that has distributed over one million meals; and a scheme to support marginalised women, empowering them to be more economically active and provide support to tackle domestic abuse.<sup>56</sup>

In 2013, at the first British Muslim Awards, Muslim Hands was a finalist for the Charity of the Year Award, and in 2019 Muslim Hands was awarded the Queen’s Award for voluntary service.

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50 Muslim Hands’ webpage (about us): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/about-us>

51 Muslim Hands’ webpage (our history): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/about-us/our-history>

52 Muslim Hands’ webpage (sponsor orphans): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/our-work/orphans>

53 Muslim Hands’ webpage (Hifz student sponsorships): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/donate/sponsor-a-child/hifz-student-sponsorship>

54 Muslim Hands’ webpage (sponsor a child with disabilities): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/donate/sponsor-a-child/sponsor-a-child-with-disabilities>

55 Muslim Hands’ webpage (UK projects ): <https://muslimhands.org.uk/our-work/uk-projects>

56 ibid.

## 5.8: Aishah Help

Aishah Help is a London-based, women-led organisation which operates in the voluntary and community sector. Named after the wife of Prophet Mohammed, Aishah Bint Abi Bakr, Aisha Help is inspired by the work of Aishah who, as stated on its website, “not only possessed great knowledge but took an active part in education and social reform.”

According to the charity’s own website, Aishah Help was founded in 2019 in the home of Salma Khanam, who previously worked as a social worker and public health adviser and witnessed how individuals remained trapped in a cycle of poverty. Since then, as stated on the Charity Commission’s website<sup>57</sup> Aishah Help’s team has grown to three trustees and over 50 volunteers, with Salma Khanam joined by Rita Wahid on the Senior Management Team.

Aishah Help has received a number of awards for their work. In 2021, the Canary Wharf Group PLC recognised Aishah Help as one of their 2021 “Covid Community Champions”, an award given to organisations who made “a difference helping the community during the pandemic.”<sup>58</sup> In the same year, at the London Faith and Belief Forum, Aishah Help was chosen as a recognised project in response to the pandemic.

Aishah Help operates a number of projects across multiple areas of social impact, which can be grouped into the following categories: financial support and cost of living; career education and advancement; community and social support; and confronting the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) global crisis.

One such project, “The Community Organisations and Cost of Living Fund,”<sup>59</sup> provides a single £50 supermarket voucher to households experiencing severe pressure due to the rise in the cost of living, in the East London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. Alongside this, Aishah Help provides information and signposting to government services such as the Household Support Fund in the borough of Newham<sup>60</sup>, as well as the different sources of support available for those experiencing financial insecurity due to the cost of living increases.<sup>61</sup>

The Worktop to Desktop (W2D) programme<sup>62</sup> carried out by Aishah Help also helps to address ethnic and community inequality in London. As part of the Pathways to Economic Opportunities programme - a £2m fund managed by the London Community Foundation

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57 The Charity Commission, ‘Aishah Help’: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5139042/charity-overview>, last accessed 20 February 2024

58 Aishah Help’s webpage celebrating being made a Canary Wharf Group “Covid Community Champion”: <https://aishahhelp.com/canary-wharf-group-awards/>

59 Aishah Help’s webpage (cost of living fund): <https://aishahhelp.com/the-community-organisations-cost-of-living-fund/>

60 Aishah Help’s webpage (household support fund): <https://aishahhelp.com/household-support-fund/>

61 Aishah Help’s webpage (cost of living): <https://aishahhelp.com/cost-of-living/>

62 Aishah Help’s webpage (worktop to desktop): <https://aishahhelp.com/worktop-to-desktop/>

and supported by JP Morgan Chase - W2D “offers a holistic employment and enterprise programme focusing on supporting and empowering those from ethnic minority communities to build their skills and confidence to reach their potential.” This is enacted through free, online employment workshops that educate individuals from minority communities looking to start their own business and apply their own talents to achieve employment.

In addition, Aishah Help’s two community-relations projects (Mentoring Service<sup>63</sup> and Befriending Service<sup>64</sup>) provide guidance and social skills to young people. The first, Mentoring Service, asks that volunteers over the age of 18, subject to DBS and reference checks, “work with a young person between the ages of 16 and 24 for a minimum of 12 weeks” in weekly, hour-long sessions. The second, “Mind the Gap” Befriending Service, is a service focused on bringing together older and younger people who are experiencing loneliness. Whilst this service is also subject to DBS checks and an interview, the Befriending Service is part of “a national mission to reduce social isolation and loneliness amongst our communities and guide the younger generation.”<sup>65</sup>

Aishah Help’s work is obviously of great importance in a time of rising cost of living and social isolation, and the charity’s recognition from the London Faith and Belief Forum as well as the Canary Wharf Group PLC means it is clearly an important part of London’s voluntary and charitable sector.

## 5.9: Tell MAMA

Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), launched in February 2012, is an independent and confidential support service for those who face and experience anti-Muslim hatred across the UK.<sup>66</sup> Former MP, Baron (Eric) Pickles, who at the time was Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, was involved in the launch of Tell MAMA (which is coordinated by the interfaith organisation Faith Matters).

The central purpose of Tell MAMA is to provide a nationally co-ordinated framework which ensures that anti-Muslim incidents and attacks in the UK are mapped, measured, and recorded, as well as providing support for victims of such discrimination. The organisation works with police forces across the home nations of England, Wales, and Scotland to facilitate justice for victims of anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice through the prosecution of the perpetrators responsible. Tell MAMA is modelled on the Community Security Trust (CST), which was registered as a charity in 1994 and has the core mission of providing safety, security, and advice for Jewish communities living in the UK.

The organisation Tell MAMA places a specific emphasis on ‘mosque security’ – advancing

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63 Aishah Help’s webpage (mentoring service): <https://aishahhelp.com/mentoring-service/>

64 Aishah Help’s webpage (befriending): <https://aishahhelp.com/befriending/>

65 Aishah Help, ‘Mind the Gap’, available at: <https://aishahhelp.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Mind-the-Gap-web.pdf>, last accessed 20 February 2024

66 Tell MAMA’s webpage (landing page): <https://tellmamauk.org/>

the view that “the safety and security of mosques and Islamic institutions across the UK are paramount.”<sup>67</sup> Following the March 2019 white-supremacist terrorist attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand (in which 51 Muslim worshippers were murdered), Tell MAMA launched the National Mosques Security Panel to bring together expert advisers to help deliver dedicated training programmes and advice sessions for mosques. The stated aims of the National Mosques Security Panel include the provision of training around “active monitoring, physical building checks, perimeter walks, and safety drills alongside written products for mosques that cover religious holidays, changing seasons and political climates” – with the delivery of tailored specialist advice during Ramadhan. The Panel also seeks to assist Islamic institutions who wish to apply for protective security schemes, especially in terms of writing applications.

Tell MAMA also has a rich history of publishing academic reports which explores matters of anti-Muslim violence, intimidation, and harassment. This includes the report, *A Decade of Anti-Muslim Hate*, which was published in July 2023.<sup>68</sup> According to Tell MAMA, the report represented “one of the most detailed studies in the UK, with actual case numbers and classifications of anti-Muslim hate cases covering a decade from 2012-2022”. It revealed that in the region of 20,000 British Muslims had used Tell MAMA’s services in the 2012-2022 period, with the organisation working on over 16,000 cases of anti-Muslim hate during that time. In November 2022, the organisation published a briefing titled *The Tangled Web of Far Right Anti-Muslim Hate*, which focused on the social media activities of Andrew Leak – an extreme right-wing terrorist who took his own life after carrying out the firebombing of an immigration processing centre in Dover, Kent in October 2022.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Tell MAMA’s webpage on mosque security: <https://tellmamauk.org/national-mosques-security-panel/>

68 Tell MAMA (2023), ‘A Decade of Anti-Muslim Hate’, 20 January. Available at: <https://tellmamauk.org/a-decade-of-anti-muslim-hate/>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

69 Tell MAMA (2022), ‘The Tangled Web of Far-Right Anti-Muslim Hate’, 3 November. Available at: <https://tellmamauk.org/the-tangled-web-of-far-right-anti-muslim-hate/>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

## 5.10: Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS)

Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS) is a not-for-profit organisation made of British Muslims – holding the central belief that it is the duty of everyone to challenge antisemitism of all shapes and forms.<sup>70</sup> Among its trustees are Jerusalem-born Middle East political and economic analyst Ghanem Nuseibeh and British interfaith stalwart Fiyaz Mughal OBE (who founded Tell MAMA).

Through its activities, MAAS strives to tackle divisive narratives which frame Muslims and Jews as enemies – promoting points of commonality such as a shared belief in one God (monotheism), a traditional emphasis on family bonds, and jointly facing the threat of far-right extremism. MAAS – a UK-registered charity – has a history of holding public events on Jewish-Muslim relations, such as the “Shalom, Salaam” conversation in November 2019 between Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and Imam Mamadou Bocoum (which was held at Kingston Liberal Synagogue in southwest London).<sup>71</sup>

MAAS officially supports the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.<sup>72</sup> The organisation states on its website that it is “committed to ensuring a national debate on challenging hate and in particular, against the oldest hatred in the world”. A MAAS advertisement published in *The Times* in May 2018 with the title “We Muslims have one word for Jews – Shalom” received much praise – especially from members of the British Jewish population.<sup>73</sup> The advertisement advanced the belief that as a British Muslim interfaith charity, MAAS believed that “our future peace, security and prosperity in this great country cannot be ensured while Jewish communities feel under threat”. MAAS’s advertisement made headway in the Jewish-specific press – being reported on by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and Jewish News.<sup>74</sup>

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70 Muslims Against Antisemitism’s webpage (landing page): <https://muslimsagainstantisemitism.org/>

71 Muslims Against Antisemitism’s webpage on the “Shalom, Salaam” event on 5 November 2019: <https://muslimsagainstantisemitism.org/2019/11/shalom-salaam-an-imam-and-a-rabbi-discuss-jewish-muslim-relations/>

72 IHRA definition of antisemitism (as adopted at the May 2016 Plenary in Bucharest, Romania): “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

73 Relevant Muslims Against Antisemitism tweet on X (formerly Twitter) – 18 May 2018: [https://x.com/MAAS\\_UK/status/997404704480071680?s=20](https://x.com/MAAS_UK/status/997404704480071680?s=20)

74 Muslims Against Antisemitism’s webpage documenting its press coverage: <https://muslimsagainstantisemitism.org/press/>



MAAS has also worked with Jewish organisations such as the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) to condemn both anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism. A joint MAAS-JLC campaign – carried by much of the British national press in May 2021 – condemned all forms of religiously-motivated discrimination (including forms associated with conflict and hostilities in the Middle East region). The heart of the joint advertisement read: “We abhor Antisemitism. Equally, we condemn anti-Muslim hatred”.<sup>75</sup>

MAAS has started plans to create an “Understanding Antisemitism” guide for pupils in UK schools and colleges. This will include addressing pseudo-intellectual theories of ‘Jewish privilege’ which have the potential to trivialise the impact of the ‘longest hatred’, as well as tackling the anti-Semitic injustice of holding British Jews collectively responsible for Israeli government policies. The booklet will also emphasise the value of Muslim-Jewish allyship in the UK – rooted in a shared monotheistic belief, family-oriented values, and jointly facing the threat of far-right extremism as religious minorities. As a dynamic interfaith organisation with a strong focus on practical action in religiously-diverse communities, MAAS seeks to assist public-sector partners in their efforts to meet their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).<sup>76</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

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The findings of this report provide much food for thought – not only when it comes to the portrayal of British Muslims but also the UK’s national conversation on ‘integration’ and how wider civil society can foster a common moral-cultural standard to integrate diverse communities into a cohesive whole. There are fundamental principles at the heart of British liberal democracy, such as equality of opportunity, respect for the rule of law, and appreciation of political choice. This can be extended to freedom of association and assembly (within the confines of the law).

This report is also instrumental in identifying, elaborating on, and enhancing understandings of British Muslims’ perceptions of their place in modern Britain. Alongside significant statistical evidence, which in itself paints a positive picture of British Muslims’ feelings of belonging, which is key to encouraging social contributions and a sense of identity, the interviews allow us to understand why this perception is as positive as it is.

The suggestion that has been advanced in some corners of the media and in politics that Muslims are not proud of this country and don’t feel a sense of Britishness, and therefore are met with a degree of scepticism by certain elements of the mainstream, is incorrect. British Muslims are overwhelmingly community-spirited, have a keen sense of family duty, and perceive great opportunities for themselves and their families in modern Britain.

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75 Relevant Jewish Leadership Council on X (formerly Twitter) – 26 May 2021: [https://x.com/JLC\\_uk/status/1397454764443639813?s=20](https://x.com/JLC_uk/status/1397454764443639813?s=20)

76 GOV.UK (2012), ‘Public sector equality duty’, 6 July. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

## 6.1: Family and community – learning from British Muslims

The TechneUK British Muslim and general population surveys specifically commissioned for this report produced data which is highly revealing, calling for a more nuanced understanding of Muslims living in the UK, regarding who they are, the contributions they make to their local communities, and how they feel about wider British society. At the same time, the interviews reveal British Muslims' perception of how their faith informs their attitudes to society, as well as the contributions they make and why.

When compared with the wider public, British Muslims are more likely to believe that people have a duty to get married and raise their children to positively contribute to our society. The British Muslim respondents in the survey were also likely to report a stronger sense of belonging in their family life and believe that young people should take as much care as possible of their elderly relatives. When it comes to acts of family duty and community spirit over the past year, when compared to the broader public, British Muslims are more likely to have provided care to an elderly member of the family, given a charitable donation, shared homemade food with a non-family member, and gifted a sum of money to a friend (with no desire for or expectation of repayment). Not only this, but faith clearly plays a significant factor in shaping these beliefs, with many respondents in the interviews exhibiting an understanding of Islam that places emphasis on following the law and a sense of citizenship, and an overwhelmingly high correlation between tenets of the faith and caring for family members.

The findings of this report remind us of what former PM David Cameron remarked back in 2007 after spending time with a Muslim family in Birmingham as Leader of the Opposition:

*“Asian families and communities are incredibly strong and cohesive, and have a sense of civic responsibility which puts the rest of us to shame. Not for the first time, I found myself thinking that it is mainstream Britain which needs to integrate more with the British Asian way of life, not the other way around.”<sup>77</sup>*

There is family-connected data which highlights the rapid social change modern Britain has experienced in recent times. To demonstrate the growing disconnection in wider Britain between the institution of marriage and having children, the majority of babies born in England and Wales in 2021 were out of wedlock – for the first time since records began back in 1845.<sup>78</sup> This is especially concerning when one considers the fact that the children

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77 Cameron, D. (2007), 'What I learnt from my stay with a Muslim family', *The Guardian*, 13 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/may/13/comment.communities>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

78 Sky News (2022), 'Majority of babies born in England and Wales in 2021 were out of wedlock, new statistics reveal', 10 August. Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/majority-of-babies-born-in-england-and-wales-in-2021-were-out-of-wedlock-new-statistics-reveal-12669585>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

of cohabitants are significantly more likely to witness the separation of their parents in their formative years – which can be an extremely challenging outcome for a young child – than their peers who are the offspring of married parents.<sup>79</sup>

Data published in 2019 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that in England and Wales, nearly one in five white-British children up to the age of 16 years lived in a lone-parent household – 19%.<sup>80</sup> This drops to 12% and 14% for their peers in the (near-universally Muslim) Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups respectively (and rises all the way to 63% for children of Black Caribbean origin). This is not to stigmatise single parents who try their utmost under testing circumstances – but a wealth of studies has shown that the family model of the two-parent household (with a married couple at the helm) is more strongly associated with positive youth outcomes relating to cognitive development, mental well-being, level of school attainment, labour market integration, and general life satisfaction.<sup>81</sup>

In this sense, it is not necessarily a surprise that when compared to their white-British peers as well as their counterparts in the secularised Black Caribbean-heritage population, England's pupils in the sizeable, Muslim-dominant Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups now boast higher levels of school attainment (and lower levels of school exclusions).<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the fruits of this educational advancement are beginning to show in the way of improved labour market integration outcomes (which could be further aided by the roll-out of more 'name-blind' application processes which would provide a fairer playing field for those with 'Muslim-sounding' names).<sup>83</sup>

## 6.2: Views on opportunities and cohesion in modern Britain

While there are improvements to be made in ensuring a merit-based allocation of opportunities and rewards in the UK, contrary to the inaccurate depictions which have been circulated by the UK's media ecosystem regarding British Muslims at large, the findings of

79 The Centre for Social Justice (2020), 'Family Structure Still Matters', August. Available at: <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/family-structure-still-matters>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

80 Office for National Statistics (2021), 'Proportion of children in lone parent families by ethnic group, England and Wales, 2019', 28 June. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/adhocs/12947proportionofchildreninloneparentfamiliesbyethnicgroupenglandandwales2019>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

81 The Centre for Social Justice (2020), 'Family Structure Still Matters', August. Available at: <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/family-structure-still-matters>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

82 GOV.UK (2023), 'GCSE results (Attainment 8)', 17 October. Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest/#by-ethnicity>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

83 Croxford, R. (2019), 'Why your name matters in the search for a job', *BBC News*, 18 January. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46927417>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

this report are deeply encouraging when it comes to their general views on modern Britain.<sup>84</sup> According to the TechneUK survey, 86% of British Muslim respondents believe that the UK is a good place to live when it comes to people having the opportunity to make progress and excel in life – this is notably higher than the corresponding figure for the wider general population (70%). This should not come as a surprise, considering faith can be a vital source of optimism and resilience.<sup>85</sup> This is especially important when faced with the fact that the UK officially entered an economic recession in the latter stages of 2023.<sup>86</sup> It is also worth noting that the majority of British Muslims are not born in the UK – often born and raised in social, political, economic settings which are relatively unfavourable to those in modern Britain. This can contribute towards especially positive orientations towards British democracy. There is little evidence that British Muslims represent a downtrodden collective which is deeply sceptical of modern Britain’s ability to provide opportunities for its citizens to make headway in life.

Moreover, when considering responses provided during the interviews, the reasons for Britain being considered a good place for Muslims to live are particularly revealing: a religious freedom that is surprisingly anomalous in the developed world, and a level of tolerance that has allowed for that religious freedom to be practised and experienced within the bounds of the law. The fact that British Muslims feel as though Britain is a particularly good place to live due to allowing for facilities, practices and services in line with the Islamic faith – such as mosques, halal catering and wearing hijab – is especially encouraging, and no doubt a contributing factor to the patriotism and sense of belonging that British Muslims exhibit.

Another positive finding which demonstrates the significant strides we have made as an advanced multi-faith democracy is that the vast majority of British Muslims believe that when compared to other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the UK is a better place for Muslims in terms of being able to be able to practise their faith whilst being involved in wider public life. According to the TechneUK survey, more than four in five British Muslims are of this view (83%). Post-Brexit UK comfortably outperforms these major EU member-states when it comes to the provision of anti-discrimination protections on the grounds of race, ethnicity, and religion – with religious belief being enshrined as a protected characteristic in the 2010 Equality Act.

While the UK is a land of considerable religious freedoms, France’s secular constitutional principle of *laïcité* has proved to be extremely difficult to reconcile with the presence of Muslim communities in the Republic – with many languishing in the multi-deprived *banlieues*

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84 Abdi, S. (2023), ‘Islamophobia In The British Media: It’s Time To Tell New Stories’, 20 March. Available at: <https://www.journoresources.org.uk/islamophobia-british-media-muslim-journalists/#:~:text=Islamophobia%20in%20the%20UK%20press.per%20cent%20of%20TV%20packages>, last accessed 22nd February 2024

85 Ehsan, R. (2023), ‘Keep the Faith: Mental Health in the UK’, *The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL)*, 17 November. Available at: <https://iifl.org.uk/reports/keep-the-faith-mental-health-in-the-uk/>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

86 Jordan, D. and Islam, F. (2024), ‘UK economy fell into recession after people cut spending’, *BBC News*, 16 February. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-68285833>, last accessed: 20 February 2024.

of cities such as Paris, Marseille, and Lyon. While the UK has passed race relations legislation designed to enable the social and economic integration of its minorities, France's so-called 'colour-blind egalitarianism' has given rise to a mainstream political culture which is generally reluctant to acknowledge very real forms of discrimination towards its racial and religious minorities (especially Muslim communities originating from countries such as Algeria in North Africa and Senegal in West Africa).

When it comes to social cohesion, it is worth noting the fact that seven in ten British Muslims in the TechneUK survey believe that more should be done to improve relations between Britain's faith communities. This runs counter to perceptions that there is widespread British Muslim opposition to engaging with non-Muslim communities and a 'community reluctance' to cultivate bonds with those who follow a different faith. With foreign geopolitical conflicts and unfounded group-based generalisations increasingly having an impact on community relations in the UK, it is important for politicians, policymakers, and practitioners to recognise that preferences of extreme insularity, social self-segregation and non-engagement with different faiths are remarkably fringe views within the wider British Muslim population. As well as being appreciative of the freedoms, rights, and protections afforded under their democracy, the majority of British Muslims believe that more should be done to strengthen community relations within its religiously heterogeneous society. In this context, the work of interfaith charities such as Muslims Against Antisemitism (MAAS) – included as a case study in this report – should be recognised.

## **6.3: The future of Modern Britain**

Moving forwards as a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-faith society will need constant effort – by a variety of social groups - to build and sustain national cohesion.

We find the best of Britain in our Muslim communities – a deep love for family, a strong sense of civic responsibility and community spirit, ingenuity and industriousness, and a prevailing appreciation of the opportunities and freedoms that come with the fortune of living in the UK. Their patriotism, family-orientedness, and generous-spirited nature should be admired by all in a society that, over time, has become more atomised and individualistic. Any muscular model of patriotic civic nationalism which is adopted in the UK should incorporate an emphasis on family stability and a shared appreciation of faith – one that transcends group-based rivalry and tribal identity politics. Patriotic and traditional-minded British Muslims – especially those with an outstanding record of fruitful interfaith activity - should be at the heart of such a project.

Listening to and learning from British Muslims is key to such efforts. Rather than attempting to sanitise the public realm of religion, under the belief that religion "has more negative than

positive consequences for society,”<sup>87</sup> British society needs to be more prepared to accept that religiosity *encourages* positive contributions to society and roots believers in a sense of civic responsibility and patriotic duty, rather than disconnecting them. British Muslims, as this report has shown, feel that they belong in Britain and want to make contributions to its social fabric *because* of their Islamic faith, not *in spite* of it. This patriotism and community spirit ought to be recognised and rewarded, and more work needs to be done especially by Britain’s media to not make British Muslims feel alienated, especially when they so clearly feel that they belong here.

Finally, the national conversation on Islam in Britain must evolve to reflect the diversity of the British Muslim population. Not only is this incredibly diverse group of British citizens often caricatured as religiously monolithic, but so too is it depicted as ethnically and culturally homogenous, which could not be further from the truth.

British Muslims exhibit a plurality of religious denominations beyond even the commonly-known Sunni-Shia distinction, with denominations such as Deobandi, Barelvi, Twelver, Ismaili and even lesser known communities making up notable proportions of the population. Even within the Sunni majority, the diversity between sects and denominations is often unknown to the wider population and ignored by commentators who otherwise speak authoritatively on Islam. Likewise, the British Muslim population is more diverse in terms of ethnicity, national origins and economic status than the mainstream discussion typically depicts.

If the conversation is to develop positively, the idea of “the Muslim community” must be replaced with a more nuanced and more accurate idea of “Muslim communities”. This report hopes to inform that discussion.

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87 Riley, J. Elsdon-Baker, F. et al. (2023), ‘Exploring the Spectrum: A MultiCountry Study on Public Perceptions of Evolution, Religion and Science’, 8 December 2023. Available at: <https://scienceandbeliefinsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/UoB-YouGov.-Science-and-Religion-Survey-Report.-8-Dec-2023-.pdf>, last accessed 20 February 2024





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