Scottish Community Safety Network

Title: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities
Author: Change Institute
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SCS topic headings: Safety of Vulnerable Groups; Partnership Working; Community Engagement; Equalities & Diversity

This document is a REPORT of research regarding Muslim ethnic communities in England.

Summary of the intervention's aim
The aim of the research was to identify key characteristics of 13 priority Muslim communities in England, originating from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Turkey.

The research was important to guide Communities and Local Government's project delivery and inform its international engagement programme. Communities and Local Government commissioned The Change Institute (CI) to deliver the project.

Outcomes
The research undertaken assisted in developing an overview of national and local contexts to understand the make-up of diaspora communities, key issues concerning violent extremism including perceptions, experiences and activities, current initiatives in place to counter this and existing civil society structures and development needs.

Data was sought to address the following questions:

1.   Where are the key ethnic groups of the Muslim population located?
2.   What are the latest estimated sizes and demographic make-up of the key ethnic communities?
3.   Which denominations and/or other internal groupings do these ethnic groups belong to?
4.   How can Communities and Local Government best engage with them?
5.   What are the strength of links between the ethnic communities and country of origin?
6.   How developed is each group's level of social infrastructure?

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The authors were conscious of the dynamism and the (positive and negative) changes taking place in some communities and so consequently this research should be viewed as a 'snapshot' in time, rather than reflective of the full complexity or range of issues, challenges and changes taking place in these communities (e.g. intergenerational relationships, gender roles, perceptions of ethnic and religious identity, changing attitudes among the young (both in liberal and more radical directions) and the levels of integration or tensions within and across communities. (p.15).

The **literature review** highlighted other research sources and outcomes, and conclusions on subject topics. This encompassed a range of reports, publications, and articles, noting that some communities were better researched than others. For example, the Somali community has been the subject of numerous reports, while Egyptians, Saudi Arabians and Moroccans have limited visibility in research literature.

The **data gathered from interviewing the research sample** can be summarized thus:

- While many groups and individuals welcomed a voice to government, there were concerns about what tangible outcomes or strategies would emerge from the process.

- Particularly among established communities there is scepticism about consultation and research exercises conducted by government. It appears that there is often a lack of follow through either specific to projects or as a result of consultation. This reticence and scepticism contrasts with the enthusiasm of newer communities and communities that do not attract policy attention.

- For many individuals this process was the beginning of a slow process of bringing marginalised groups into a wider conversation about engagement, religion, identity and community challenges. This was sometimes greeted with enthusiasm but for many there were large degrees of scepticism relating to government agendas and past engagement with local and central government and authorities. This has often required a sensitive approach to communities which understands some of the history, culture and nuances of each community.

Some responses and challenges specific to each researched community are presented on pages 20-21.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The research questions represented a broad area of inquiry and analysis. While quantitative data about the size, location and other demographic features of the priority communities was a key research need, the study primarily focused on enabling the Communities and Local Government to 'know' these communities in depth. It was recognised that the project's time and budget would not enable a comprehensive mapping or analysis of these communities but would provide a

'snapshot' which is a solid starting point for policy makers, community practitioners, local authorities and academics with an interest in engaging, developing, supporting and working with England's diverse Muslim ethnic communities.

To fulfill these research requirements, the methodology combined documentary research with processes of consultation and dialogue. **This was a mixed-methods approach, collating and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data.** Data collection consisted of two phases which were consistent across each community.

Phase 1- Population mapping (quantitative data)
The first phase consisted of collecting mainly secondary quantitative data but also some primary qualitative data about locations of Muslim ethnic populations and known civil society organisations. The following sources were reviewed to cover the 13 communities in this study:

- Existing literature
- National data sources
- Local data sources and consultations with Local Authority, other public bodies and community representatives.

A literature review assisted to develop a detailed picture of data currently available in the public domain, and in identifying key gaps in the existing knowledge base. It also helped in identifying key locations for each diaspora to be targeted in the community research which followed, as well as identifying key stakeholders and community respondents. The literature review involved using key search terms for each community to locate both academic and non-academic material.

The main method for data collection on population characteristics was through a comprehensive review of a broad range of secondary data sources, including the Census, Annual Population Survey, output of migration and population 'think tanks', and academic research centres.
 Robust and up-to-date population data is difficult to obtain outside of the 2001 Census but the researchers obtained some anecdotal information from Local Authorities and community groups about migration since 2001. However, the 2001 Census data still informs the baseline of the population figures quoted in this study. This data has been supplemented where possible by a limited amount of additional Local Authority information or other sources where reliable estimates have been made. Further details on the main sources of quantitative data are provided in Section 4 of the report.

Demographic data
The researchers examined the religious affiliations of the 13 communities as well as relevant statistics on employment, housing, health and education. The main census tables used for the study were S104, CO352, CO644 and C1013. The reports also use secondary analyses of Annual Population Survey (APS) and Labour Force Survey (LFS) data (used to provide information on education, employment, gender and age structures where applicable).

Looking forward, the 2011 census will be invaluable to tracking demographic and socio economic shifts of the Muslim population in England using the 2001 baseline. The addition of the 'Arab' ethnicity category is also a worthy addition and will assist greatly in our understanding of Muslim ethnic communities.

Data caveats
While this data has been utilised as effectively as possible, it is widely recognised that detailed data to local authority level on ethnicity and religion in England is limited outside of the 2001 census. For the first time the 2001 Census provided data on the basis of religion, although, in England and Wales, religious affiliation was an optional question.

There is limited data giving a detailed breakdown of how many people in the UK have English as a second language or the ranking of community languages spoken in the UK (English language as a barrier to employment, education and training, DfES, March 2001 and The National Centre for Languages, www.cilt.org.uk/faqs/langspoken.htm).

Phase 2- Qualitative data collection
To provide additional context, the researchers obtained qualitative data on other facets of the community such as socio economic position and intra-community dynamics.
 Data collection was primarily through **one-to-one interviews** and some **telephone interviews** with members of the community (205 total) and interviews with local government and voluntary services stakeholders (15 total). Respondents were chosen on the basis that they offered a range of different types of knowledge and perspectives on community issues and dynamics. Additional names were added on the basis of subsequent recommendations made.

Thirty **focus groups** with representatives of different communities and Muslim youth (two with each community and four with youth from ethnic groups covered in the study) were also undertaken.
 Focus groups were designed to include a mix of participants from different community networks and different occupational backgrounds that might be expected to hold a wide range of views. Recruitment was led by the researchers and facilitated by local consultants and community organisations. Participants were identified through contacts made through the community consultations as well as on- the-ground sourcing of individuals who were not affiliated with community organisations.

One male and one female focus group were conducted with each community due to sensitivities around gender mixing and to ensure the views of women were adequately represented. Participants in these focus groups were aged 35+. In addition, we conducted four mixed ethnicity/gender focus groups with Muslims aged 14 - 35 years.

The ethnic background of researchers was deemed to be important for focus groups and community consultations and research for all but two of the communities was

predominantly carried out by someone from that ethnic community. The researchers who were not of the same ethnicity as the research community had either previous extensive research experience with that community or the internal dynamics of the community necessitated a neutral observer.

Table 1 on page 12 provides an excellent illustration of the researcher's process.

Appendix 6.1 (pp. 23-24) provides the topic guide used for one-to-one interviews, and a guide for the discussion/focus groups.

Research ethics
The research teams observed a strict data protection protocol which was also supplied to all participants to outline the process of data collection and analysis. The anonymity of all respondents was guaranteed, and assurances to this effect given to all who responded to or participated in the study. All those involved in the delivery of this programme of work, including members of the research and project teams, were bound by non-disclosure agreements to ensure the confidentiality and ethical handling of the research and to ensure that the findings from the consultations are not used to inform other studies or research outside of the study.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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