

GLOBAL MUSLIM DIASPORA

Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Country Report Series



ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES



GLOBAL MUSLIM DIASPORA:

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND MINORITIES IN NON-OIC MEMBER STATES



COUNTRY REPORT SERIES

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Organization of Islamic Cooperation
Statistical, Economic and Social Research and
Training Centre for Islamic Countries



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Acronyms

ASBU	Social Sciences University of Ankara
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Global Muslim Diaspora
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEW	PEW Research Centre
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
UN	United Nations
US	United States
NY	(The State of) New York
NYC	New York City
NYU	New York University

Foreword

The SESRIC has launched the Global Muslim Diaspora (GMD) Project - a comprehensive research effort trying to analyze challenges, attitudes, experiences and perceptions on a range of issues related to Muslim communities and minorities living in the non-OIC Member States. The main objective of the project is to provide a range of useful comparative statistics and insights, which can help identify issues, initiate cooperation forums and shape future policy.

Islam is not only present in all continents as a religion but also as a cultural and civilizational value. Starting with the *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslim migrants have laid the foundations for the spread of Islamic values, ideas and habits in the regions where they are settled, thus contributing to the cultural richness and economic development of these places.

Today, whenever we raise the point concerning Muslims communities and minorities living in non-OIC Member States, we have in mind a context in which Islam is present through more recent migrations. However, we should keep in mind that many of these countries have also been the homeland of its Muslims for centuries.

Despite the recent growth of literature on Muslims living in non-OIC Member States, our knowledge regarding this subject remains limited and fragmented. The GMD project intends to fill this gap through engaging more closely with the representatives of Muslim communities and minorities in different countries.

In context of the GMD project, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the report on the US, which affords the political elites, policy makers, analysts and general public the opportunity to understand how the Muslims in US view the most pressing issues they face today. The report on US is based on two basic pillars: desk research and fieldwork – conducted by travelling to the US. The main components of this field study involved survey questionnaires and workshops with representatives of Muslim communities and minorities and in-depth interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim public opinion leaders., The results are integrated and utilized throughout the report. I would like to encourage the readers of this report to have a look at the GMD general report titled “Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States: Diagnostics, Concepts, Scope and Methodology”, which inter alia provides description of methodology and research activities applied when preparing the report on the US.

The development of this report has involved the dedication, skills and efforts of many individuals, to whom I would like to thank.

Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya
Director General
SESRIC

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Onur Unutulmaz has prepared the USA case report with the contributions of Erdal Akdeve, Servet Erdem, Gürol Baba and Prof. Dr. Mehmet Barca, Rector of SSUA, who contributed and supervised the preparation of this report. Clive Campbell proofread the document.

Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General of the SESRIC, provided pivotal leadership during the preparation of the report. Several SESRIC members also contributed to the finalization of the report, including Dr. Kenan Bağcı, Acting Director of Economic and Social Research Department, and Dr. Erhan Türbedar, Researcher, who coordinated the report on behalf of SESRIC. Kaan Namli, Researcher, edited the report and Fatma Nur Zengin, Events and Communications Specialist, facilitated the fieldworks. The SESRIC gratefully acknowledges local field workers and the institutions representing Muslim community in US for their cooperation and extraordinary support, without which this report would not have been possible.

Executive Summary

This report aims to contribute to the literature and public debate on Muslim communities and minorities living in the non-OIC Member States, by providing a comprehensive outlook on the principle aspects of the Muslim community in the US. The data presented and analyzed in this report was collected using several primary data collection methods and a review of the existing sources. A survey was carried out in New York City with a sample of 400 Muslim individuals in January-February 2019 to complement 12 in-depth interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim influencers - conducted during the New York City fieldwork between 14-20 January 2019. Lastly, a workshop was organized on 17 January 2019 in New York City with the representatives of Muslim NGOs.

The US is a very important country for the Muslim diaspora. How it portrays Muslims in its political discourse as well as outlets of popular culture such as Hollywood movies or music, influences how Islam and Muslims are perceived all across the globe.

The Muslim community in the US is very dynamic, vibrant, and diverse, so much that Muslims are the only faith group in which no single ethnic or racial community has a clear demographic dominance. In addition, vast majority of the Muslims in America have US citizenship and it is estimated that more than half are native-born members of the American society. Still, just like most other individuals living in the US, all Muslims in the country trace their ancestry to immigrants who either migrated to the US or were brought over as slaves.

As a country of immigration, issues of integration have a long history in the US. Some people for asking immigrants to assimilate into the dominant American culture and identity simultaneously criticize what is known as the ‘melting pot’ model of integration. Others praise this model for offering the immigrants the opportunity to become full-fledged citizens of the country and equal members of society no matter where they are from and who they are. The Muslim community in the US also displays both the negative and positive tendencies regarding the melting pot model. Some Muslims praise this model for being very effective and inclusive in making everyone whom wishes to become American do so. At the same time, particularly older generation Muslims express concerns about their children and grandchildren being assimilated into American pop culture while losing their ethnic and religious identity. The latter group suggests that parents should be very careful in helping their kids construct secure identities that are both Muslim and American.

Another point to highlight from the American case is the discourse of the ‘American dream’. Again, mixed accounts of the benefits of the individualist American system based on qualifications and hard work, instead of identities were provided. On the one hand, many Muslims spoke very positively about the opportunities that are available for anyone who is

willing to work hard and desires of social mobility. On the other hand, the perils of individualism, materialism and consumerism that are part of this capitalistic spirit were condemned for negatively influencing the Muslim community.

As a federation, states retain a considerable degree of autonomy in the US. Therefore, the legal and political context in which Muslims live can be quite different depending on the state they live. There is however a strong federal government with a binding constitution and overarching institutions that have authority across the country. The Muslims in New York, from whom this research collected primary data, appear to value:

- the education system and the opportunities of social mobility that good education affords;
- economic prosperity with equal-opportunities in the market place; and perhaps most significantly,
- the rights and liberties as well as the perceived protection of these rights and liberties provided by the state.

At the same time, Muslims are concerned about some challenges in the US including:

- growing racism and Islamophobia;
- lack of solidarity and unity among Muslims, which prevent them from being a stronger, more prosperous and more influential community in the country; and,
- discrimination that they face, particularly because of their religion and ethnicity.

One significant theme that kept emerging in the New York field research was the concept of growing Islamophobia in the US. Many participants suggested that this was a fact particularly in some political discourses and in the media; however, it does not have a strong counterpart in society- at least not in New York.

Although Islamophobia is harmful for Muslims, the growth of it also had several unintentional positive consequences for the Muslim community:

- it brought solidarity and unity for the diverse Muslim community,
- it brought Muslim community and several other communities that defend the rights and liberties of minorities closer together,
- it made society more aware of Islam and Muslims,
- it prompted many politicians to seek for Muslim advisors and staff.

Despite the suggested lack of solidarity and the divided nature of a very diverse community, the Muslims in the US have gradually made it into every significant aspect of the American politics, society, culture, and economy. One can only expect the significance of Muslims to grow in the US and the Muslims themselves are very optimistic about such prospects.

1 Introduction: Context and Background

The United States of America, hereafter the US or the USA, is a massively significant country for Muslims, including but not limited to those who live in this country. There are several reasons for this. First, the US is a classical immigration country. In other words, immigrants established it and immigration has always been a central element in the country's national identity. It has been the home of the famous phrase 'melting pot', which has been advertised to bring together people with different linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds; and melt them into a single American identity. This resulting identity, the argument usually goes, is all of its ingredients and at the same times none of them. Similarly, the famous 'American dream' means to represent the sentiment that 'no matter what your background is, if you work hard enough, you can make it in America'. Therefore, the American model of integration, which some people argue should be called assimilation, has a distinct and significant place in the discussions of immigrant integration, cultural diversity and multicultural cohabitation.

Secondly, as a global economic and military superpower, the US has is a global political actor. This means that it is involved in many issues that are important in the Islamic world. Thus, it has been an active player in many crucial processes for Muslims including the Palestinian struggle; various wars in the Middle East including the two Gulf Wars, Afghanistan, and Syria; and the so-called Arab Spring, to name a few. The US being a major producer of economic, cultural, artistic, and intellectual products on the global markets, it affects distant geographies indirectly as well. The so-called neo-liberal globalization has at times alternatively been called 'Americanization', 'McDonald'sization', or American cultural imperialism.

Thirdly and closely related to the second reason mentioned above, the US has been occupying the central stage in the intensifying discussions of 'clash of civilizations' and rising Islamophobic global discourse in the last one and a half decade or so. A very significant symbolic milestone in this regard was the unfortunate language chosen by the ex-President George W. Bush, who used the term 'Crusades' to describe the American military operations in the Middle East in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The implied association between Islam and terror was exploited and used by many far-right political currents around the globe. This has led to a skyrocketing in Islamophobia throughout the Western world. It has particularly had negative effects on the diasporic Muslim communities living in Western countries, forcing them repeatedly to 'prove' that they are not terrorists. The Muslim communities were amongst the top minorities that suffered from the ensuing rise in racist and xenophobic movements and attacks. While the intensity of these discussions has changed through time in the US, they have remained as an important issue.

Another historical peak of such debates and discussions about Islam and the place of Muslims in the US came with the last presidential elections in the country, which resulted in the election of Donald

Trump into office. Both the discourses he endorsed throughout his election campaign and his initial actions as President of the United States (POTUS) particularly including the infamous ‘Muslim ban’, which included imposing additional restrictions on travelers from selected Muslim countries. These actions re-heated the debates on Islam and helped legitimize Islamophobic discourses.

Has the Muslim community gone through the ‘melting pot’ to emerge on the other side as indistinguishably American, presumably, as all the other communities? Where do American Muslims stand in relation to the ‘American dream’? Do they believe that they have made it or that they can make it? How have all the reasons discussed above affected the Muslim minority in the US? Are they concerned about the perceived increase in Islamophobia in the country? This report attempts to answer these and some other pertinent questions on the diverse Muslim community today. However, before engaging with these questions, it is necessary to provide a historical background for Muslims and Islam in America.

1.1 USA: A Brief Historical Context

It is obviously outside of the limits of this report to provide a comprehensive historical review of the US. It is however necessary to provide a selective historical background to be able to make sense of the country today. Such a brief historical background must mention seven main periods.

(i) ***The pre-Columbian period and the indigenous peoples of America.*** Although for the purpose of brevity this report will not discuss this stage at length, it is important to point out that this period had lasted much longer than all the other periods combined. In fact, the first settlers in North America are assumed to have migrated from Siberia through the Bering land bridge some 12 to 13 thousand years ago (Erlandson et. al 2008, p.19). Other studies claim that the history of various groups living in North America goes as far back as 15,550 years (Gelo 2018).

The various indigenous cultures of North America established many different civilizations before their first contact with Europeans in the 15th century. When Christopher Columbus landed in Puerto Rico in 1493, there were many tribes in North America living side by side. When the Europeans started to settle in various places in North America, they developed a complex relationship with the natives. This included war and conflict between the European colonizers and the North American natives, while at the same time, tribes fought against each other sometimes forming alliances with the settlers. There was a high degree of cultural exchange as well. However, as European colonization advanced and the power balances shifted sufficiently in favor of the European settlers, the exchange rather turned into a transfer of the European culture into North America partially as part of the European missionaries’ attempts to ‘civilize the natives’. In the end, this encounter ended up with a massive scale of killing, displacement, and eventually, assimilation of the native populations.

(ii) ***European Settlements.*** Following the late 15th century arrival of European ships to North America, settlements started to emerge in various places throughout the 16th century. The first successful English settlement on the eastern coast of North America is noted to begin with the Virginia colony in early 1600s. Predominantly populated by religious dissidents who escaped religious

prosecution and pressure in Europe, known as pilgrims, these settlements quickly produced various elective bodies to govern and organize themselves.

While most early settlers were small farmers in all colonies, other industries started developing and trade became increasingly widespread over time. The beginning of African slave trade is also in this period. While the practice of slavery became widespread quickly in colonies, different colonies started developing distinct attitudes on slavery, either in favor of it or in favor of restricting it, quite early on.

The 13 colonies that would later become the United States of America were established with the British colonization of Georgia in 1732. With extremely high birth rates, low death rates by the standards of the time and prospering economies, the colonial population grew rapidly, making the small Native American communities a minority. While the new arrivals continued through time, the pace of natural population growth was so great that by 1770s the proportion of those who were born outside of America was already a small minority in a population of around 2.1 million (Walton 2009, p.35).

The fact that the colonies were so geographically distant from Britain had meant that a high degree of autonomy and self-government could emerge. The success of the colonies had meant that monarchs would feel the need to assert their authority every so often. This situation, together with the existing tensions and competition amongst various colonizing European powers, paved the way for a War of Independence between the colonies and the British.

(iii) Independence and Expansion. The aforementioned tension between the American colonies' taste for local self-governance and the imperial desire of the British to keep their colonial rule tight had inevitably caused a clash. The emerging republican ideology came up with increasing demands for political rights, which were epitomized by the slogan 'no taxation without representation' (Humphrey 2003, p.8-9).

As the colonists refused to pay the taxes, the tensions escalated in the late 1760s and early 1770s. The belief that the British were violating their rights on purpose led to demands for greater "local autonomy, fair dealing, and government by consent". This started the American Revolutionary War when the Thirteen Colonies rebelled against British rule in 1775 and proclaimed their independence in 1776 as the United States of America, becoming a member of the international community to make treaties and alliances and to be a partner in foreign trade on a more equal basis (Ferling 2011; Billias 2011, p.17).

The new nation was founded on the republican principles and the Enlightenment ideals of liberalism in what Thomas Jefferson called the unalienable rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Wood 2003). In the 1780s, the national government settled the issue of the western territories and with the migration of settlers to the Northwest; they became states (Greene and Pole 2004). The Congress was given the authority to ban the international slave trade. During the first two decades after the Revolutionary War, the status of slavery among the states changed dramatically. The revolutionary ideals of the equality of men and the lesser economic reliance on slavery helped to abolish slavery in Northern States (Kolchin 1993, p.79-81).

In 1823, the Monroe Doctrine proclaimed the United States' opinion that European powers should no longer colonize or interfere in the Americas, which was a defining moment in the foreign policy of the United States. It was adopted as a response to the American and British fears over Russian and French expansion into the Western Hemisphere (Gilderhus 2006, p.5-16). In 1830, with the Indian Removal Act, the exchange of Native American tribal lands in the Eastern States was authorized to remove Native Americans from the American Southeast as they occupied the land that settlers wanted (Heidler and Heidler 2006). Thousands of deaths resulted from the relocations (Remini 2002).

The American colonies and the new nation grew rapidly in population and settlements until around 1890–1912 as the last major farmlands and ranch lands were settled. Although the Native American tribes in some places resisted militarily, they were overwhelmed by settlers and the army and after 1830 were relocated to reservations in the west (Hine and Faragher 2000, p.10). The first settlers in the west were the Spanish in New Mexico; they became U.S. citizens in 1848. The number of Hispanics in California increased significantly. San Francisco by 1880 had become the economic hub of the entire Pacific Coast with over a-quarter-million diverse population (Unruh 1993, p. 120).

(iv) Civil War. The central issue after 1848 was the expansion of slavery. A small number of active Northerners were abolitionists who demanded its immediate abolition. Much larger numbers in the North were against the expansion of slavery defending that America would be committed to free land, free labour, and free speech (Forret 2012).

Defenders of slavery tried to justify it by economics, history, religion, legality, social good, and even humanitarianism. They argued, “The sudden end to the slave economy would have had a profound and killing economic impact in the South where reliance on slave labor was the foundation of their economy.” They also claimed that “if all the slaves were freed, there would be widespread unemployment and chaos” (ushistory.org 2017).

While the Southern slavery-based societies had become wealthy benefiting from the internal slave trade, northern cities were tied economically to slavery by banking, shipping, and manufacturing. “By 1860, there were four million slaves in the South, nearly eight times as many as there were nationwide in 1790” (PBS News Hour 2007). This dramatic increase led to slave rebellions that caused fear in the white South, imposed stricter oversight of slaves, and reduced the rights of free blacks. After Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 election, seven Southern states seceded from the union and set up a new nation, the Confederate States of America (Confederacy) in 1861, igniting the war (Stamp 2008).

The Civil War began in 1861. The industrial expansion in the North expanded dramatically. Foreign trade increased, with the United States providing both food and cotton to Britain, and Britain sending in manufactured products and thousands of volunteers for the Union Army. The British operated blockade-runners brought in food, luxury items and munitions to the Confederacy, bringing out tobacco and cotton. The War ended in 1865, leaving 750,000 soldiers dead and an undetermined number of civilian casualties, making it the deadliest war in American history.

“The American Civil War was the world's earliest industrial war. Railroads, the telegraph, steamships, and mass-produced weapons were employed extensively. The mobilization of civilian factories, mines, shipyards, banks, transportation and food supplies all foreshadowed the impact of industrialization

in World War I” (Hecker 2011). The war had a major long-term impact on the United States, helping the country to develop its leadership potential (Nevins 1965).

Late nineteenth century was marked by the rapid development and settlement of the far West, with large numbers of European immigrants taking up low-cost or free farms. The United States Army fought frequent small-scale wars with Native Americans as settlers moved to their traditional lands. By 1890, American industrial production and per capita income exceeded those of all other world nations (Mintz 2008). “An unprecedented wave of immigration from Europe served to both provide the labor for American industry and create diverse communities in previously undeveloped areas. From 1880 to 1914, peak years of immigration, more than 22 million people migrated to the United States” (TheUSAonline.com). The United States emerged as a world economic and military power after 1890. By the 1900s, the U.S. had the strongest economy on the globe. Apart from two short recessions in 1907 and 1920, the overall economy grew until 1929 (Morgan 1966, p.417-432).

(v) World Wars. As World War I started in Europe in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson took full control of foreign policy, “declaring neutrality but warning Germany that resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare against American ships supplying goods to Allied nations would mean war.” Germany decided to try to win by cutting off supplies to Britain through the sinking of ships leading the U.S. to declare war in 1917 (McNabb 2005, p. 482-3).

Following the Allied victory in 1918, Germany was treated harshly by the Allies in the Treaty of Versailles (Kohn 1994, p.216). In the 1920s, the Roaring Twenties, the U.S. grew dramatically as an economic and military world power. The United States Senate did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles imposed by its Allies on the defeated Central Powers; and instead chose to pursue unilateralism (Carlisle 2009). “Immigration laws were passed strictly to limit the number of new entries” (Kennedy 2001).

Although the nation enjoyed widespread prosperity, it remained weak in agriculture. The inflated stock market led to the Stock Market Crash on 29 October 1929, triggering a worldwide depression known as the Great Depression (Kennedy 2009, p. 251-68). The United States remained isolated with its domestic concerns during the recession years while democracy declined across the world leaving some countries under the control of dictators. “Imperial Japan asserted dominance in East Asia and in the Pacific. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy militarized and threatened conquests, while Britain and France tried appeasement to prevent another war in Europe.

U.S. legislation sought to avoid foreign conflicts through neutrality acts; but the increasing anti-Nazi feelings following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 started World War II. Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 to neutralize America’s power in the Pacific catalyzed American support to enter the war (Black 2003, p 648–82). The United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, China, as well as Poland, Canada and other countries, the Allies, fought the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The U.S. dominated the war against Japan and stopped Japanese expansion in the Pacific in 1942 (Kennedy 2001, pp 615–68). The US wartime production and the export of vast quantities of supplies to the Allies resulted in a dramatic increase in GDP, putting an end to unemployment (Vatter 1988, p 27-31).

(vi) *The Cold War and Bipolar World.* The predominant American isolationism ended with its participation in postwar foreign affairs. The threat of nuclear weapons inspired both optimism and fear, helping the emergence of a "long peace" characterizing the Cold War years, starting with the Truman Doctrine in 1947, despite the long regional wars in Korea and Vietnam (Gaddis 1989). Following World War II, the US participated in the United Nations, moving away from its traditional isolationism toward increased international involvement. It emerged as one of the two dominant superpowers, the USSR being the other.

The U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War centered on supporting Western Europe and containing Japan and the spread of communism. The US joined the wars in Korea and Vietnam to topple left-wing governments in the third world with the aim to stop its spread (Blakeley 2009).

In 1949, the United States formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, rejecting the long-standing policy of no military alliances in peacetime. In response, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact of communist states, leading to the formation of 'iron curtain'. "In 1949, the Soviets tested their first nuclear weapon, thereby escalating the risk of warfare. The threat of mutually assured destruction prevented both powers from nuclear war, and resulted in proxy wars, especially in Korea and Vietnam, in which the two sides did not directly confront each other" (Gaddis 2005). The Space Race between the US and the Soviets led to the landing of astronauts on the Moon in 1969, favoring the US (Patterson, 1988).

The United States became a global influencer of economic, political, military, cultural, and technological affairs during the decades following World War II. The Civil Rights Movement challenged the institutionalized racism across the United States in the late 1950s (Dierenfield 2004). The Vietnam War fed already existing social movements in the US, including those among women, minorities, and young people. Gorbachev tried to save Communism in the Soviet Union first by ending the expensive arms race with the US, however the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ending the U.S-Soviet Cold War. During the 1990s, the United States emerged as the remaining superpower and continued to intervene in international affairs, including the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

(vii) *USA Today: Contemporary History.* September 11, 2001 ('9/11') marked the beginning of a new era for the United States and the world. The US was hit by a terrorist attack when al-Qaeda hijackers commandeered airliners to be used in suicide attacks. Two planes were intentionally crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and another one into the Pentagon. The attacks left around 3,000 victims. In response, President George W. Bush announced a 'War on Terror'. On 7 October 2001, the United States and NATO invaded Afghanistan to topple the Taliban regime, which had provided a safe haven to al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden (Sanger 2012).

To prevent future attacks, the federal government established new domestic efforts such as the controversial USA Patriot Act, which increased the government's power to monitor communications and removed legal restrictions on information sharing between federal law enforcement and intelligence services (Zelizer 2010, pp. 59–87). "Some of these anti-terrorism efforts, particularly the

US government's handling of detainees at the prison at Guantanamo Bay, led to allegations against the U.S. government of human rights violations" (PBS News Hour 2008).

Putting forward reasons of spreading democracy and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the United States launched the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which led to the collapse of the Iraq government (Zelizer 2010, pp. 88–113). Despite some initial successes early in the invasion, later investigations found parts of the intelligence reports to be inaccurate (Associated Press 2005). "The continued Iraq War fueled international protests and gradually saw domestic support decline as many people began to question whether or not the invasion was worth the cost" (Clifton 2011; Milbank and Deane 2005) as the political stability of Iraq remained in doubt (Wilentz 2008, p. 453).

In 2011, the founder and leader of Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, was eventually killed in Pakistan. Although Al Qaeda almost collapsed in Afghanistan, the affiliated organizations continued to operate in Yemen and other remote areas (Baker, Cooper and Mazzetti 2011; Bergen 2012, pp 250–61). The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – formerly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq – emerged in 2014, taking control of Western Iraq and Eastern Syria. ISIS also beheaded three journalists, two American and one British, which all led to a major military offensive by the United States and its allies in the region.

On the economy front, in September 2008, the United States, and most of Europe, entered the longest post-World War II recession, the 'Great Recession' (Payne 2012; Rosenber 2012). The housing market crisis, a mortgage crisis, soaring oil prices, an automotive industry crisis, rising unemployment, and the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression characterized this new recession. The stability of the entire economy was under threat (Kolb 2011). "The recession officially ended in June 2009, and the economy slowly began to expand once again" (Kaiser 2010). The recession left the overall economic growth weaker in the 2010s compared to the previous expansions (CNBC 2014).

The ongoing political debate issues included "tax reform, immigration reform, income inequality, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly with regards to global terrorism, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and an accompanying climate of Islamophobia" (Tottoli 2014, p. 230).

In 2016, Republican Party presidential nominee Donald Trump defeated Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and became the President-elect of the United States. Trump's election brought controversy after U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that the Russian government interfered in the election "to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process", leading to the launch of investigations by the FBI, the Senate and the House Intelligence Committees (Miller 2017). All these development in the US have had an important influence on the American Muslim community and for the wider Muslim community around the world. The next section specifically examines Islam in the US to provide a historical and up-to-date exploration of the role of Muslims in American society, economy, culture and politics.

1.2 Islam in the US

Islam has a long history in the United States. There are several early records of Muslim travelers, sailors and slaves dating back to the 16th century. According to an article published in the New York Times, a Moroccan slave named Estevanico was recorded to have been shipwrecked in Texas in 1528 (Manseau 2015a). Another article by the same historian published in The Huffington Post points at official documents that mention the presence of Muslims, mostly from North Africa. Accordingly, the Virginia statute of 1682 refers to ‘negroes, moores, molatoes and others’ (Manseau 2015b).

Muslims also constitute a significant portion of the Africans who were brought to America as slaves. It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of the slaves brought to America during the colonial times were Muslims, mostly from the predominantly Muslim Western and North Africa (Tweed 2009). An estimated 20 percent of enslaved Africans were Muslims, and many sought to recreate the communities they had known. The historians estimate that between 15 and 30 percent of the enslaved African men and less than 15% of the enslaved African women of around 500,000 Africans brought to America between 1701 and 1800 were Muslims. Some researchers suggest that Muslim African slaves “stood out from their compatriots because of their resistance, determination and education” (Meigs-Jaques and Jaques 2005). It is however not easy to reach more definite and healthy figures due to a lack of systematic registration of the slaves. In addition, studies show that the slave owners have fiercely oppressed Islam in the plantations (Curtis 2009).

Muslims continued their presence through the American Revolutionary War, as documented by the records of some Muslim soldiers who fought on the American side. One significant name is ‘Yusuf ben Ali’, who is a member of the ‘Turks of South Carolina’ community, along with ‘Bampett Muhammed’ whose name is also to be found in the Revolutionary War records (Curtis 2010).

The link between Muslims and the newly established United States were also evident in the early history of the country. The very first country to recognize the US as an independent nation was Morocco, whose Sultan Mohammed ben Abdallah had several correspondences with President George Washington (Hufbauer and Brunel 2009). Later, President Thomas Jefferson hosted an Iftar dinner at the White House for the Sidi Soliman Mellimelli, who was an envoy from Tunis. Muslims also took their place in the American Civil War. While reliable figures are hard to reach, it is estimated that from a few dozens to a couple hundred Muslim soldiers were enlisted by the Union Army fighting for the North. The highest ranking of Muslim soldiers in the Union Army was recorded to be the Captain Moses Osman (Curtis 2010, p.561).

Among the early prominent American Muslims, the name of Alexander Russell Webb is often considered the earliest prominent Anglo-American convert to Islam in 1888. In 1893, he represented Islam as the only representative in the first Parliament of the World’s Religions (M’Bow and Kettani 2001, p.109). Another prominent name is the scholar and writer Ahmed Abdullah, who was born in Russia before moving to America (Curtis 2010, p.198).

Even though it was a minority religion, Islam and Muslims affected the debates over religious freedom in the US. When the state constitution of Pennsylvania was being drafted in 1776, the constitutionalists

avored religious toleration while anti-constitutionalists insisted on drafting a constitution based on Protestant values. A prominent name in the former group, John Adams, mentioned the prophet Muhammad as a “sober inquirer after truth” in his publication ‘Thoughts on Government’ in 1776. Because of extensive discussions, a clause on religious liberty was inserted in the constitution, which was later adopted to be the constitution of the United States.

Muslim immigration into the US continued throughout 19th and 20th centuries. The largest bulk of Muslim immigrants to the US were constituted by the Yemenis and Turks from the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1840 until World War I. Most of these Arab and Ottoman immigrants came to work and trade in the US with an intention to go back, however, most of them ended up as permanent settlers (Koszegi and Melton 1992, p.26-27). While the two World Wars and several other major events presented significant interruptions, Muslim immigration to the US continued and diversified. Due to this long historical background, the current Muslim community in the US is one of the most diverse, dynamic and significant Muslim diasporic communities around the world.

1.3 A Brief Note on the Legal and Political Context in the US

The United States is a federal democracy. Therefore, while there is a federal Constitution that is binding and authoritative throughout the country, the constituting States retain considerable autonomy. This is a very significant fact to remember since the legal and political context concerning different Muslim communities living in different States can be quite diverse. State governments have the power to make laws that are not granted to the federal government. While the federal government only has those powers granted to it in the Constitution, “a state government has inherent powers allowing it to act unless limited by a provision of the state or national constitution.”

The main differences between the political system of the United States and that of most other developed democracies include “greater power in the upper house of the legislature, a wider scope of power held by the Supreme Court, the separation of powers between the legislature and the executive and the dominance of only two main parties.”

“The executive branch is headed by the president and is formally independent of both the legislature and the judiciary. The cabinet serves as a set of advisers to the president. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of Congress, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The judicial branch (or judiciary), composed of the Supreme Court and lower federal courts exercise judicial power. The judiciary's function is to interpret the United States Constitution and federal laws and regulations. This includes resolving disputes between the executive and legislative branches. The federal government's structure is codified in the Constitution.”

The modern political party system in the United States is a two-party system dominated by the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. While the Democratic Party is known as the center-left liberal party within the United States, the Republican Party is known as a center-right conservative party.

The President is the head of the executive branch of the federal government of the United States, both the head of state and the head of government, as well as the military commander-in-chief and chief diplomat. The President presides over the executive branch of the government, where he/she has “broad constitutional powers to manage national affairs and the workings of the federal government.” George Washington was the first United States President and served from 1789-1797. The current President Donald Trump is the 44th one holding the office. All US presidents to date have been male. All presidents have been Protestant, with the exception of John Kennedy who was a Catholic. All but one president has been White, and the exception is Barack Obama.

The US constitution spreads power between the executive, the legislature and judiciary arms to ensure that each arm limits the exercise of power by the other. This principle of “separation of powers”, a concept by the French political enlightenment thinker Montesquieu, is at the heart of the US Constitution. The three institutions of the state -the executive (President and Cabinet), the legislature (House of Representatives and Senate) and the judiciary (Supreme Court and federal circuits) shares the power. This principle is also known as “checks and balances”.

Some may argue that the US political structure has the characteristics of an oligarchy, where small economic elite overwhelmingly determines policy and law. Such an approach points to “the influence of corporations, wealthy, and other special interest groups, leaving individual citizens with less impact than economic elites and organized interest groups in the political process” (Gilens and Page 2014; Piketty 2014, p. 514). Unlike the 18th century, we live in a world of fast political and economic developments, where the US system sometimes remains weak and disadvantaged with complicated and slow government processes.

2 Demographic Profile

Since the American government does not collect data on religious identification in its censuses, reaching certain authoritative figures is not possible. There are however an increasing number of studies on the Muslim community in the country, conducted by several research centers as well as data released by NGOs and official institutions. In the following, a selective review of these sources is presented to shed light on the demographic composition of the Muslim community in the US. In turn, the socio-economic status of the Muslim community will be evaluated in another section below making use of the available data sources and the subjective perceptions of the Muslim individuals covered by this study, through the Survey as well as the in-depth interviews and the workshop.

2.1 Size of the Muslim Community

In the absence of accurate official statistics, the available data concerning the size of the Muslim community in the US is very diverse. It ranges from around 2 million to more than 7 million. In 2001, Dr. Smith from University of Chicago published a paper entitled '*Estimating the Muslim Population in the United States*' in which he reviewed 20 suggestions concerning the size of the Muslim population in the country between 1996 and 2001 and concluded that all the figures presented in these documents should be considered as estimates. The reviewed estimates in this publication averaged at 5.65 million, with 15 of the 20 figures provided by the Muslim NGOs, research centers, and news articles putting the number between five and 7 million (Smith 2001, p. 1).

A more recent Pew Forum estimate in 2017 suggests that there are 3.45 million Muslims in the US, corresponding to around 1.1% of the total US population. According to this piece, the Muslim population in the US recorded an increase of more than 1 million in a decade, as the estimates provided by PEW studies put the number at 2.35 million in 2007 and 2.75 million in 2011 (PEW Forum 2017). This figure appears to be in line with the subjective perception of the Muslim individuals asked by the GMD New York Survey. While 171 respondents were reluctant to provide any estimate, the estimates produced by the remaining 229 respondents ranged from 1 million to a few estimations between 11 million and 30 million. The bulk of the respondents, 148 individuals out of the 229, suggested the number to be between 3 million and 4 million.

However, it needs to be noted that some of the interviewed Muslim individuals suggested much higher figures. A prominent Imam, who is also giving lectures at Columbia University, suggested that the number of Muslims is close to 30 million in the US. Accordingly, this figure is not openly declared because of the political climate to prevent any public backlash. Similarly, a Muslim NGO member who also works as a Chaplain for the State of New York reported that they were working with the number of 22 million in their official proceedings at her NGO.

Given the higher than average fertility rate amongst the Muslims, the PEW Research Centre projects a consistent increase in the Muslim population in the US. Accordingly, the Muslim community is

expected to replace the Jewish community as the second largest faith group in the country by 2040. Moreover, the projections suggest that the number of Muslims in the US will exceed 7 million by 2050, doubling its current size.

2.2 Ethnic/Racial Composition of the Muslim Community

In terms of the composition of the Muslim population, a few important characteristics of the Muslim community in the US immediately stand out. First, Muslims, currently the third largest faith group in the country after Christians and Jews, are also the most ethnically and racially diverse. In fact, Muslims are the only faith group for which there is no clear majority race. According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in 2017, 25% of the Muslims are black, 24% white, 18% Asian, 18% Arab, 7% mixed race and 5% Hispanic (ISPU 2017, p.2). The Religious Landscape Study of the PEW Research Centre presents a somewhat different, yet still very diverse picture concerning the ethnic and racial composition of the Muslims. Accordingly, 38% of the Muslims covered by the study identify as white, 28% as black, 28% Asian, and 4% as Latino while the other 3% are made up of other and mixed races (PEW Forum 2017). Another data source from an earlier date, provided by the US Department of State in 2009, suggests that the largest ethnic community within the Muslim community is that of South Asians who constitute 34% of the community, followed by Arabs (26%), African Americans (25%) and others (15%) (US Department of State 2009) (Table 1).

Table 1: Ethnic/Racial Composition of the Muslim Community in the US

ISPU, 2017*		PEW Research Centre, 2017**		US Department of State, 2009***	
Black	25%	White	38%	South Asian	34%
White	24%	Black	28%	Arab	26%
Asian	18%	Asian	28%	African American	25%
Arab	18%	Other	6%	Other	15%
Other	15%				

* <https://www.ispu.org/american-muslim-poll-2017-key-findings/>

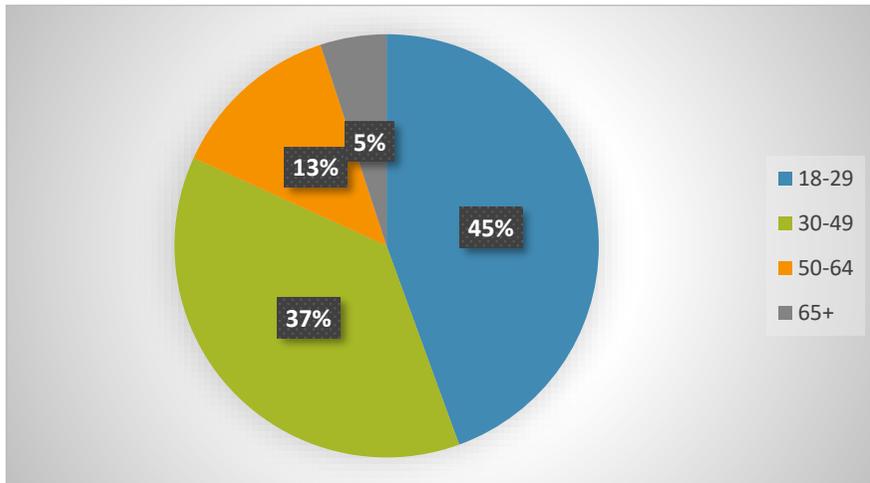
** <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/>

*** https://photos.state.gov/libraries/korea/49271/dwoa_122709/being-muslim-in-america.pdf

2.3 Age Structure of the Muslim Community

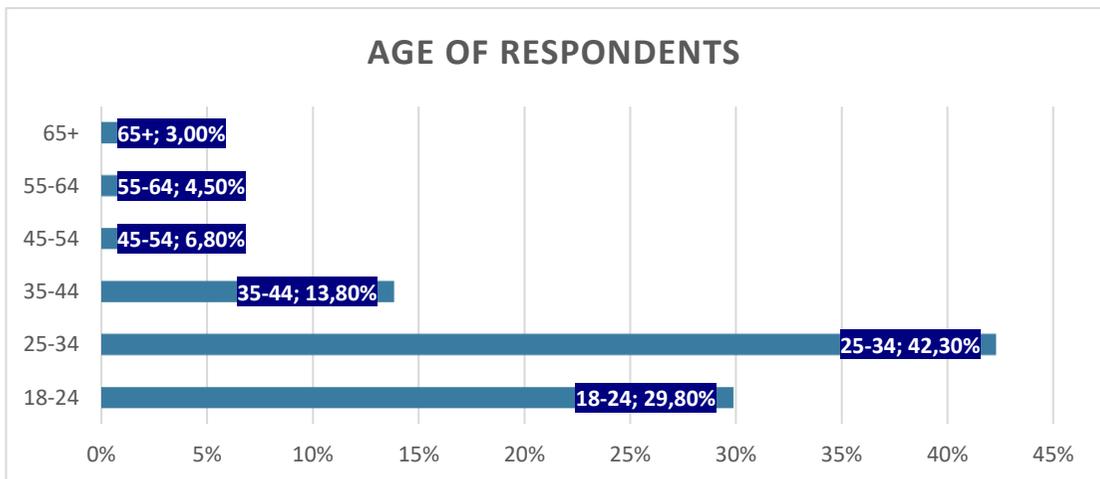
Second outstanding characteristic of the Muslim community is that it is also the youngest religious minority in the country. Both the ISPU and the PEW studies suggest that Muslims constitute the youngest faith group in the US (ISPU 2017, p. 2; PEW 2014). According to the Religious Landscape Study of the PEW Research Centre, which collected information from individuals of 18 years of age or older of various faith groups, the Muslim sample's age distribution was remarkably young. Accordingly, those individuals between the ages 18 and 29 make up 44% of the sample, another 37% were 30 to 49 years of age. The 50-64 age group contained 13% of the Muslims and those older than 65 made up only 5% (PEW 2014) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age Groups of the Muslim Community at the Religious Landscape Study



Source: PEW, 2017

Figure 2: USA Survey Sample by Age of Respondents



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The GMD New York Survey was conducted on a sample of 400 individuals for this study. The age structure of the sample was similar to the general age structure of the Muslim community in the States, being composed of mostly younger individuals. Almost 30% of the respondents were in the 18-24 age group. The largest group of respondents fell within the 25-34 (42%), age group while there were fewer and fewer individuals in the older age groups (Figure 2).

2.4 Native Muslims in the US

The third outstanding characteristic of the Muslim community in the US is that they predominantly American citizens. According to available estimates, a vast 89% of the Muslims living in the country are US citizens (PEW 2017). Moreover, half of all Muslims living in the US are native-born citizens of the country according to existing figures (ISPU 2017, p.2-3).

The descendants of the long-standing African American Muslim community constitute a large part of this native population. There are an increasing number of native-born Muslims who are second or third generation children of the Muslim immigrants who came to the States more recently.

Lastly, it is predicted that a significant convert Muslim population is also included in the native-born Muslim community. In the absence of official census statistics, it is hard to pinpoint exact numbers; however, the upcoming 2020 national census is expected to include some questions concerning the religious identification of the population and shed some more light on these figures.

Table 2: USA Survey Sample by the Status of Respondents

Status in USA	N	%
Autochthonous citizen	43	10.8
Immigrant	111	27.8
Second-generation Immigrant	113	28.3
Third or further generation immigrant	31	7.8
Temporarily living and working in USA	88	22.1
Other	10	2.5
Don't know / Refuse to answer	3	0.8
Total	399	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The GMD New York Survey Sample was again demographically similar to the general Muslim community in the country concerning the number of US born respondents. Half of the 400 respondents that participated in the Survey reported that they were either autochthonous citizens or second or further generation immigrants suggesting that they were born in the US while the other half reported that they were permanent or temporary immigrants in the country (Table 2).

3 Views on Migration and Integration

The US is a traditional immigration country. While the issue of immigration has become one of the most heated political debates in the country, because of the rising anti-immigrant and xenophobic discourses, the fact is that the entire population of the country can trace their ancestry back to immigrants who arrived in the US in the last few centuries, with the significant yet numerically small exception of ‘native Americans’. The above brief historical account is a testament to this historical fact.

As it was described in the previous section, Muslims are no exception to this. The entire Muslim population in the country can trace their ancestry to immigrants, even though than half of the Muslim community is native born and almost 90% of them have US citizenship. Therefore, this intricate relationship between being immigrants, or being descendants of immigrants, and being native citizens of the country should not be overlooked. In fact, this is quite different from most other contexts reviewed in the context of GMD research where being native and being immigrants are conceptualized remarkably differently.

The fieldwork has found that most native-born Muslims from whom primary data were collected appear to consider themselves as American as well as immigrants. Also, different from most other Western contexts where significant Muslim minorities live, most Muslim individuals, either immigrants or natives, do not consider the American identity and their Muslim identity to be mutually exclusive, or one as a threat to the other. The historical background of the US as a ‘country of immigrants’ appear to be an important factor in this finding.

3.1 Immigration of Muslims into US

The US, as it keeps coming up, is known to be a country of immigrants. However, what kind of a country is the US *for* immigrants. More particularly, what kind of a country is it for Muslim immigrants. This section addresses two issues: first, why Muslim migrants move to this country, i.e. the reasons for migration, of both the contemporary Muslim migrants and their immigrant ancestors; and secondly, what type of challenges and problems they have been facing in the US as migrants.

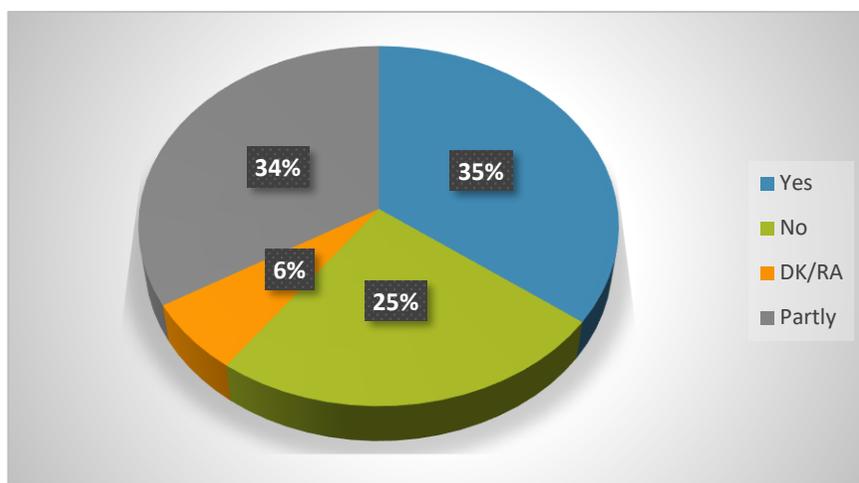
The respondents were first asked about the primary reasons for why moved to the US. They were given the freedom to produce more than one answer and all the answers were combined in the table below. As it can be seen here, the most frequently stated reasons for Muslims to immigrate into the US are reasons related to education, which constitute 1/3 of all answers. More than 25% of the answers included ‘Economic reasons’; which were followed by ‘Reasons concerning family’ (17.6%), ‘Political reasons’ (14.4%), ‘Religious reasons’ (4.8%) and other reasons (4.2%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons for Migration of Survey Respondents in USA (multiple answers)

	N	%
Educational Reasons	63	33.5
Economic Reasons	48	25.5
Reasons Concerning the Family	33	17.6
Political Reasons	27	14.4
Religious Reasons	9	4.8
Other Reasons	8	4.2
Total	188	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The respondents who reported their status in the US to be immigrants were then asked whether they experienced any problems in America as immigrants. Here the responses were divided into three main categories. Slightly more than one in every three respondents suggested that they have experienced problems as immigrants in the US, while a smaller yet significant group of 25% of the respondents reported that they have not experienced any problems. Another one-third of the responses suggested that they partly felt some problems as immigrants (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Have you had problems as immigrants in USA?

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Next, those individuals who reported having experienced problems as migrants were asked about the types of problems they had. The respondents were able to give multiple answers and all provided answers were combined in a single table below (Table 4). As it can be seen in the table, the most frequently cited problems as a migrant were financial complications. This response constituted nearly 30% of all the responses. The subsequent problems reported by the Muslim immigrants were 'Language problems' (21.3%), 'Cultural problems' (14.2%), 'Problems concerning lifestyle' (12.7%), 'Religious problems' (7.1%), 'Psychological problems' (6.2%), and 'Political problems' (4.3%) (Table 4).

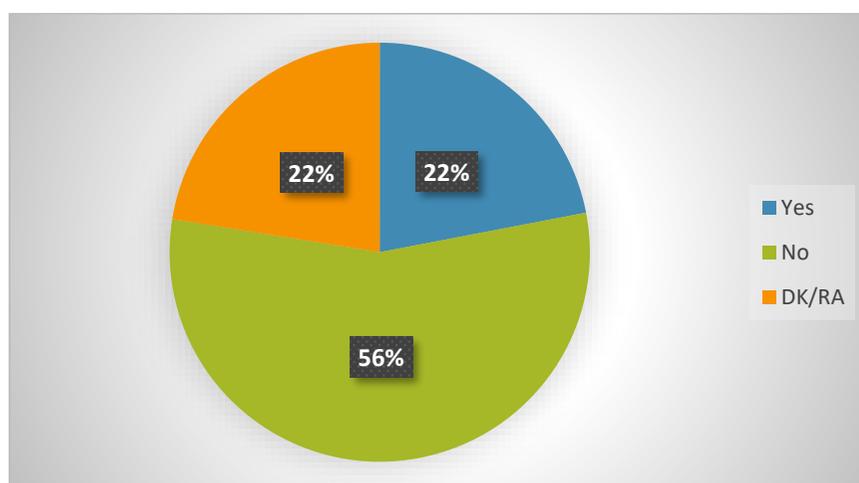
Next, those individuals who reported having experienced problems as migrants were asked about the types of problems they had. The respondents were able to give multiple answers and all provided answers were combined in a single table below (Table 4). As it can be seen in the table, the most frequently cited problems as a migrant were financial complications. This response constituted nearly 30% of all the responses. The subsequent problems reported by the Muslim immigrants were 'Language problems' (21.3%), 'Cultural problems' (14.2%), 'Problems concerning lifestyle' (12.7%), 'Religious problems' (7.1%), 'Psychological problems' (6.2%), and 'Political problems' (4.3%) (Table 4).

Table 4: Problems Experienced by Muslims as Immigrants in USA (multiple answers)

	N	%
Financial Problems	63	29.9
Language Problems	45	21.3
Cultural Problems	30	14.2
Problems Concerning the Lifestyle	27	12.7
Religious Problems	15	7.1
Psychological Problems	13	6.2
Political Problems	9	4.3
Other Problems	9	4.3
Total	211	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The respondents, i.e. those who stated their status to be immigrants, were also asked whether they would consider 'going back to their country of origin to live there'. A large majority (56%) of the respondents said they would not, while almost one in four respondents suggested that this could remain an option for them (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Would you consider going back to your origin country to live there?

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

3.2 US as a Legal and Political Context for the Muslim Community

As it was briefly described in the background section, the USA is a federal democracy where different states retain considerable local autonomy. Therefore, the legal and political context for the Muslim community living in the state of New York will be different from the legal and political context for the Muslim community living in Texas. Having mentioned this, the existence of a federal constitution and strong federal agencies as well as the national media affect the context for Muslims no matter where they live in America.

Many of the Muslim individuals that were interviewed within the framework of the GMD research portrayed a quite positive picture concerning the general context in the US, and particularly in the state of New York:

“New York is very liberal. People in NY are used to seeing many Muslims and interacting with many Muslims. Therefore, they are above the curve when it comes to interaction with Muslims. A lot of Muslims feel comfortable in New York.” (Mahmut)

Another interviewee, a prominent Albanian Muslim at Staten Island, went even further in his praise of the US as a country very well suited for Muslims:

“I believe, the United States, and I say this very bluntly and in a very straight forward way, is the best country for Muslims to live in. We enjoy the best of rights, the best of support. We are treated very fairly like any other communities.” (Alban)

The overwhelming view expressed by the interviewees was one of contentedness but with a significant caution:

“Because of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of worship in America, that creates a potentially very good environment for Islam and for Muslims. Islam is the fastest growing religion in America. Um, similarly, there are challenges, like bigotry and so on. There is islamophobia. Um, anti-Muslim bias is also a part of the reality of the American way of life.” (Hakeem)

Some people suggested that there was a turn for the worse in the last two decades facilitated by two significant historical events. Accordingly, the September 11 terrorist attacks, a part of which targeted the Twin Towers in NYC, had a remarkable impact on how Muslims were perceived in America. The second important turning point, according to the interviewed individuals, was the election of Donald Trump to presidency and his anti-immigrant political discourse:

“I think that, particularly after 9/11, it's been a challenging period both for the American nation and for the Muslim community. It does not mean that there was no discrimination before, but I think it has become heightened post 9/11 and like more politically acceptable. You know, it has become acceptable to express your anti-Muslim sentiments publicly. Therefore, I think it is very challenging. It has been a challenging time. And particularly after the president Trump was elected, people have said that it's actually worse than in the aftermath of 9/11.” (Jenny)

One interviewee suggested that there was a significant wave of Muslim migration from the Southern states where Islamophobia and anti-immigrant discourses were stronger compared to the more liberal Northern states like NY, where Muslim people feel “more comfortable” (Mahmut).

Not every single Muslim feels negatively about the impact of 9/11 attacks or the post-Trump era. In fact, few respondents stated that, indirectly and unintentionally, the rising Islamophobic discourses also pushed the issue of Islam and Muslims to the national agenda, raised awareness about Islam, brought the Muslim community closer together, and helped build resilience:

“Let me give you an example from right here New York. So about a year after 9/11, I happened to be downtown in Manhattan and I went into a Barnes and Nobles and, and which is one of the biggest bookstore chains in America. They had these lectures. So, the president of Barnes and Nobles was giving a talk that day. He said that, since 9/11, the bestselling book in Barnes and Noble was the English translation of the Quran”. (Hakeem)

The New York Survey also included some questions that aimed to learn how Muslims evaluate the US as a general context for themselves. The survey respondents were asked about their level of confidence in the courts and other judicial institutions as well as to the police and security forces. A high degree of confidence in these crucial institutions signals a positive assessment of the context by the ordinary Muslim individuals. The highest degree of confidence was declared to the courts and other judicial institutions. To be exact, 47.3% of the respondents suggested that they had full confidence in the courts in America. While another 26.5% reporting that they ‘mostly had confidence’, those with a lack of confidence in courts and judicial institutions constitute around 17% of the respondents (Table 5).

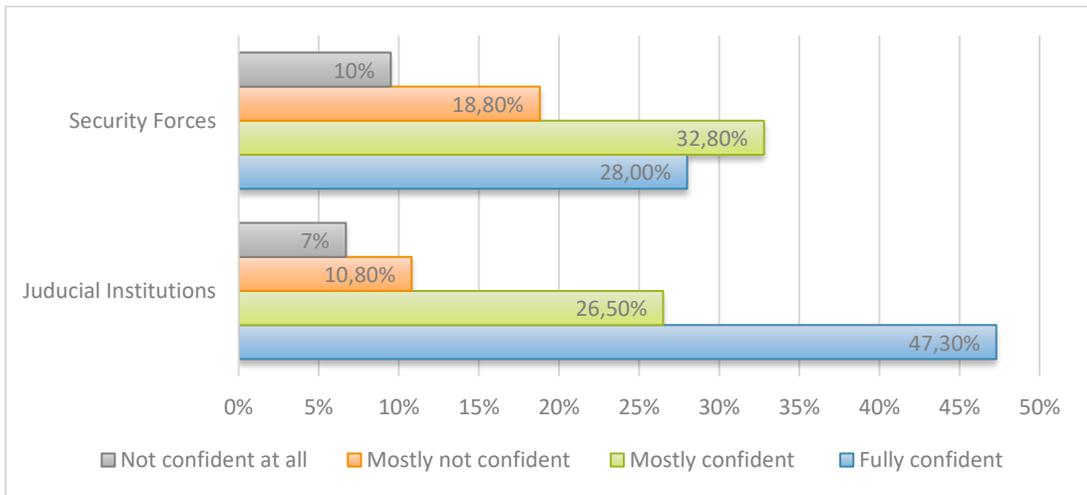
Table 5: Level of Confidence in Judicial Institutions and Security Forces

Level of Confidence	In Courts and Judicial Institutions		In Security Forces	
	N	%	N	%
I have full confidence	189	47.3	112	28
Mostly I have confidence	106	26.5	131	32.8
Mostly I don't have confidence	43	10.8	75	18.8
I don't have any confidence at all	27	6.7	38	9.5
DK/RA	35	8.7	44	11
Total	400	100	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Although the level of confidence in the security forces was somewhat lower than that displayed for the courts, it is still quite high. In fact, a combined more than 60% of the respondents suggested either ‘full confidence’ (28%) or that they ‘mostly have confidence’ (32.8%) in the American security forces. This should not overshadow the fact that almost 30% of the respondents said they either ‘mostly don’t have confidence’ (18.8%) or ‘don’t have any confidence at all’ (9.5%) in the security forces. The level of ‘lack of confidence’ in the security forces is twice as high when compared to confidence levels in courts (Figure 5).

Figure 5: To what extent do you have confidence in judicial institutions and security forces in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Another survey question that is relevant for this section is a more general one. The respondents were asked to evaluate the treatment of Muslims in the US on a scale ranging from ‘very poor’ to ‘excellent’. The answers pointed at a more positive than average assessment, where 17.3% of the respondents believed that Muslims were treated excellently in the US. Another one quarter of the respondents suggested that the treatment was ‘good’, while almost one in every three respondents reported that it was only an average ‘OK’. Those who appear to be dissatisfied with the way that Muslims are treated in the US constitute a minority with 20% of the respondents (Table 6).

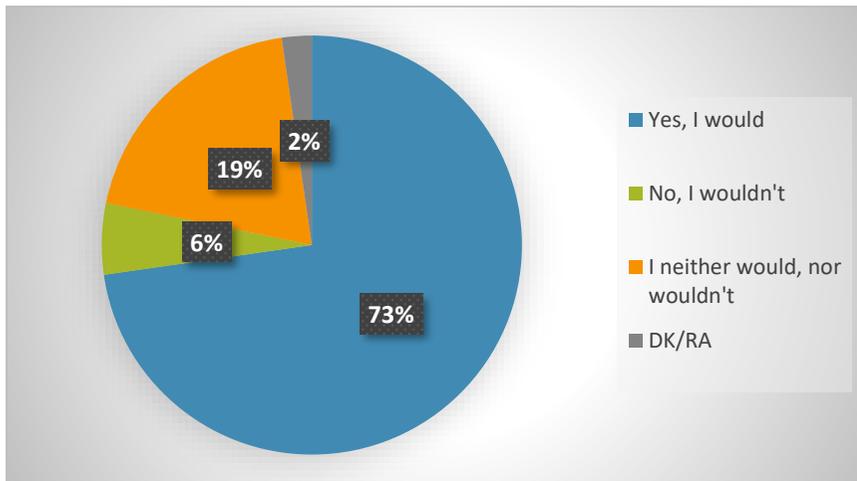
Table 6: How would you evaluate the treatment of Muslims in the US?

	N	%
Excellent	69	17.3
Good	101	25.2
OK	128	32
Poor	63	15.8
Very Poor	17	4.3
DK/RA	22	5.4
Total	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Lastly, another question of general evaluation, the survey respondents were asked whether they would recommend other Muslims to come and live in the US. Here, a vast majority with 73% of the respondents answered positively suggesting that they were overall content with their lives in the country. Those who suggested that they would not recommend a life in the US to another Muslim accounted only for 6% of the respondents (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Would you recommend another Muslim to immigrate and live in USA?

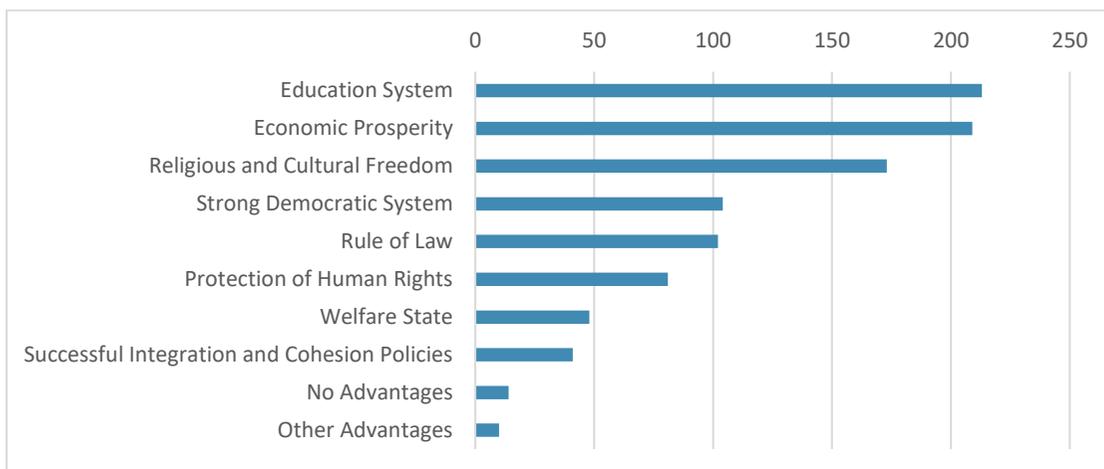


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

3.3 Advantages for Muslims of Living in the US

What are the perceived advantages of living in the US for a Muslim? This question was explicitly asked both in the New York Survey and in the in-depth interviews and workshop. Overall, it appears that advantages of a national context differ from individual to individual depending on a variety of factors such as social class, legal status in the country, education level and so on. Still, a general assessment appears to be possible. To this end, it seems logical to start with the findings of the survey.

To be able to make a comprehensive evaluation, the respondents were given the chance to produce multiple answers, which were all compiled in the following table. At the top of this table, the two items appear to have been mentioned almost equally frequently. While 213 people mentioned education system as an advantage of living in the US for Muslims, 209 suggested economic prosperity. Following these two most frequently given responses, the next four answers were related to rights and freedoms enjoyed by Muslims in a strong democratic system (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Advantages of Living in USA for Muslims

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Total Sample Size: 995

The same question was asked at the interviews and the responses were generally in line with the findings of the survey. The suggested advantages of living in the US as a Muslim can be grouped under two main headings. First, respondents mention rights, freedoms, and protections they enjoyed in America:

“So I like the United States because it gives us the rights and freedom to actually practice Islam. Yeah, there are setbacks; there are the negative aspect of like being discriminated against and the outcast. But like there's just, there's a lot of advantages and especially at this time and, and I'm with the American system and politics right now like you can use that as American Muslim woman as, because political identities are very important right now. So, that's a good thing for me as an American Muslim. (Workshop contribution)

Secondly, people talked about ‘opportunities’. Accordingly, in America if you really want something and you sufficiently work for it, you know that you will get it. In other words, there is no perceived structural obstacle between the individual and what he/she deserves. Just like the respondents in the survey, the respondents in the interviews gave a special place to education as the motor of social mobility:

“I think for me personally, it's just been the educational opportunities that I've had at, you know, I've had access to the best, elite universities for my education. So, I am, I'm very, very grateful for that. And when you go to these places you have access to better job opportunities etc. So, I think that.” (Sarah)

“I feel like, you can be anything. Like I came to America, we provide the 80 bucks and I was a teenager, I didn't have family here so if I can be here and work my way up until now I'm going to the school, I feel like my story can only be possible in this country and I'll forever be grateful for that opportunity” (Khadija)

“So during that time, I applied to work at the JFK Airport and I find out that, you know, in America if you have qualification and you have a good background, then no one can stop you from doing any job, you know, so, so technically I didn't find discrimination in America and I feel more comfortable living here than living in Pakistan. Why? Because Americans are like, whatever they say, that is what they are. There is no hypocrisy. You know, they do not just say something and do something else. Maybe in the government. All governments are same, but in general as the public, you know, the public here is nice” (Badar)

3.4 Challenges for Muslims in US

What are the perceived disadvantages or challenges of living in the US as a Muslim? Similar to the previous section, this question was also included both in the survey and in the interviews and workshop discussions. Starting with the findings of the survey, there were three relevant questions to report under this heading. First, the respondents were asked to list the main problems they believed the Muslims had in the US, again producing multiple answers if they wished. Secondly, they were asked whether they have ever felt discriminated against regarding certain specific areas in their lives. Thirdly, they were asked more generally to evaluate whether they thought Muslims were being looked down on in the US.

The answers given for the first question, i.e. ‘what are the most important problems of Muslims in the US?’ are compiled and presented in the below table. Here, it can be seen that ‘racism and Islamophobia’ was at the top of the list. Half of all respondents mentioned these as one of the most important problems for Muslims and in total; they constituted 21.4% of all the responses produced for this question. Closely following racism and Islamophobia, the survey participants mentioned, ‘cultural differences and problems concerning the lifestyle’ second most frequently (Table 7).

Apart from ‘language problems’, which could be considered as a logistical issue not specifically related to being a Muslim, the only other major problem to be reported by the survey respondents was the ‘lack of solidarity among members of the Muslim community’. Echoing similar findings in other Western contexts, the Muslim community appears to fail at mobilizing effectively and producing a unified voice that would give them the influence that their number and significance in society would deserve (Table 7).

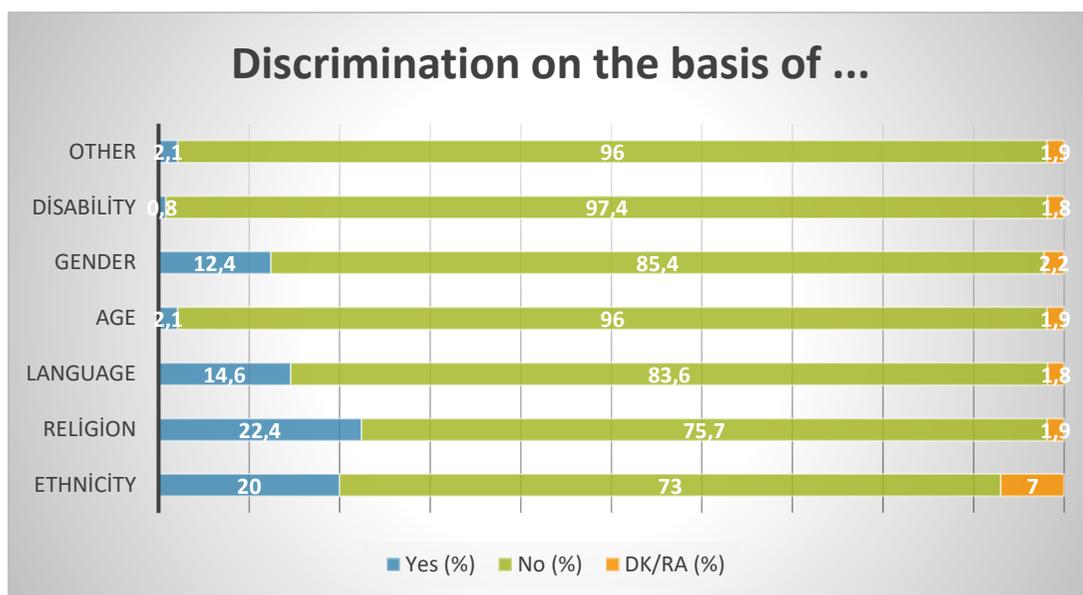
Table 7: What are the most important problems of Muslims in the US? (Multiple answers)

	N	%
Racism and Islamophobia	199	21.4
Cultural differences and problems concerning the lifestyle	186	20
Lack of solidarity among members of Muslim community	155	16.7
Language problems	146	15.7
Discrimination by the society	73	7.9
Economic situation	52	5.6
Discrimination by the state	33	3.6
Unemployment	22	2.4
Lack of protection of human rights	19	2
Crime and lack of security	10	1.1
Inability to practice religion freely	7	0.8
Other	26	2.8
Total	928	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Whether or not the Muslims feel discriminated against is an important question with strong implications. The survey participants were asked this question based on several identities including their religious identity, ethnicity, gender, and age. The results show that, while in all categories large majorities of respondents report not having been discriminated, the number of individuals who suggest that they were discriminated against because of their religious and ethnic identities is far from being negligible. In fact, 22.4%, or nearly one in every 4 Muslims in the survey suggest that they have been discriminated against because of being a Muslim at least once in their life in the US. The only other category that brought a similar finding was ethnicity. Here, 20% of the Muslim individuals, or one in every 5 people, suggested that they have felt discrimination based on their ethnic identity at one time or another in the US (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Have you ever been discriminated against based on one of the following?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Do the Muslims feel like they are being looked down on by the American society? Again, the picture produced by the survey was a positive one but with a significant sign for warning. In combination more than 61% of the respondents said they do not believe that Muslims were being looked down in the US just because they are Muslim. 26.8% of the respondents who suggested agreed that Muslims were being looked down on simply because of being Muslim (Table 8).

Table 8: To what extent do you agree that you were being looked down because of being Muslims in the US?

	N	%
Totally agree	51	12.8
Tend to agree	56	14
Neither agree nor disagree	36	9
Tend to disagree	67	16.8
Totally disagree	179	44.7
DK/RA	11	2.7
Total	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The challenges suggested by the interviewed individuals were also similar. As it was already mentioned in the previous sections, many people are concerned about the rising of Islamophobia and discrimination against migrants. Apart from this, three important challenges were mentioned in the interviews need to be included here. First, there is the significant issue of the fear of assimilation. The American melting-pot model expects all immigrants to assimilate, culturally at the very least, into the

American identity. Moreover, the supreme value attached to individualism makes it quite difficult for many young Muslims to establish secure identities:

I mean, you know, you have to be very aware to raise your kids, your children, not to leave them alone. I mean our culture; most of it is not working. I find that most of the youth are fighting over their identity; they do not know what they are. Arab, Muslim, American... (Hind)

A second related, challenge was reported to concern the education of Muslim children. Accordingly, if a Muslim parent wants his/her children to get a quality education at an Islamic school, it can be extremely expensive. On the other hand, sending your children to free public school might fuel the above-mentioned anxieties over their identities:

I have three children. Okay. And I want my children to become American, good Muslim, you know, not just American Muslim. American and good Muslim. But I don't find any way to support my children to go in that way. Because when I see about the public schools, I never have to spend a single penny on them until they go in college. But when I think about Islamic school, it going to cost me about \$2,000 a month for three children. You know, which is somewhat impossible for one parent to take care of. So for that side, if you see the Jewish people, they have their own system, their own funding, they are getting it done from wherever, but they are successful in it. That's why their community has all these lawyers, judges you know, you name the department and their representatives are sitting in that department and they are actually helping their community (Ahmed)

Lastly, some Muslims feel that Islam does not receive the respect and value that it deserves from the American state. They suggest that sometimes they feel like their religion was regarded as a 'second class' faith:

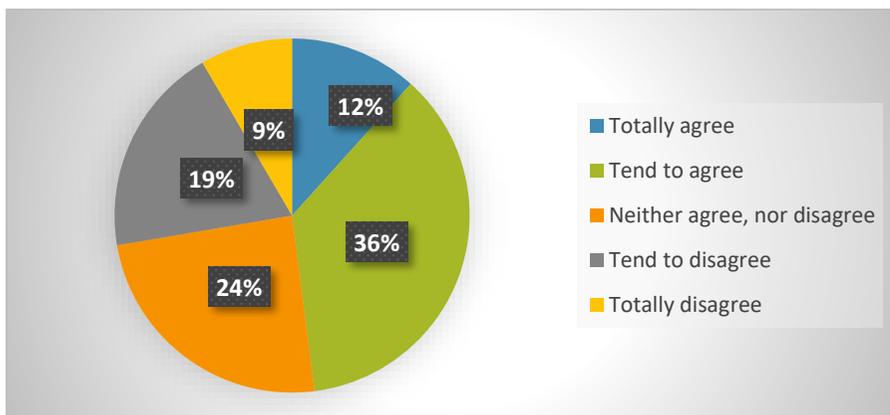
Muhsin: So, in terms of disadvantages, I would definitely say it is still somewhat hauling that we are the second largest religion in the world, the fastest growing in the world. Yet we are still in this country considered practically second class in terms of holiday celebrations, you know, benefits etc. I mean, we are gradually getting there. You buy a calendar in any store. You have the Christian holidays. The schools have holidays for these dates. (Muhsin)

3.5 Integration of Muslims in the US

Integration is a very important topic in the American context. The so-called 'American dream' promises everyone two things: social mobility, i.e. 'you can achieve your dreams- of becoming rich, famous or powerful', and full integration, i.e. 'you can become an American- if you are ready to become one'. The interviewed representatives from the Muslim community for this research confirm this line of argument. They speak very highly of the opportunities provided by the American dream and tend to keep a positive view of the possibility of becoming full-fledged Americans. Yet, there is also a concern on the part of the Muslim parents towards the identity formation processes of their youth. Integration is desired, yet assimilation is fiercely rejected.

In this section, some relevant information concerning the integration of Muslims in the US will be described and analyzed. First, the survey findings will be presented. Here, the first question to investigate is a general one. The survey respondents were asked whether they believed that Muslims have successfully adapted to the customs and way of life here in the US. The respondents appear to respond largely affirmatively to this question. In fact, almost half of the respondents either ‘totally agreed’ (12%) or ‘tended to agree’ (36%) with this statement. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the combined share of those who ‘totally disagreed’ (9%) and ‘tended to disagree’ (19%) were slightly more than one quarter of the respondents (Figure 9).

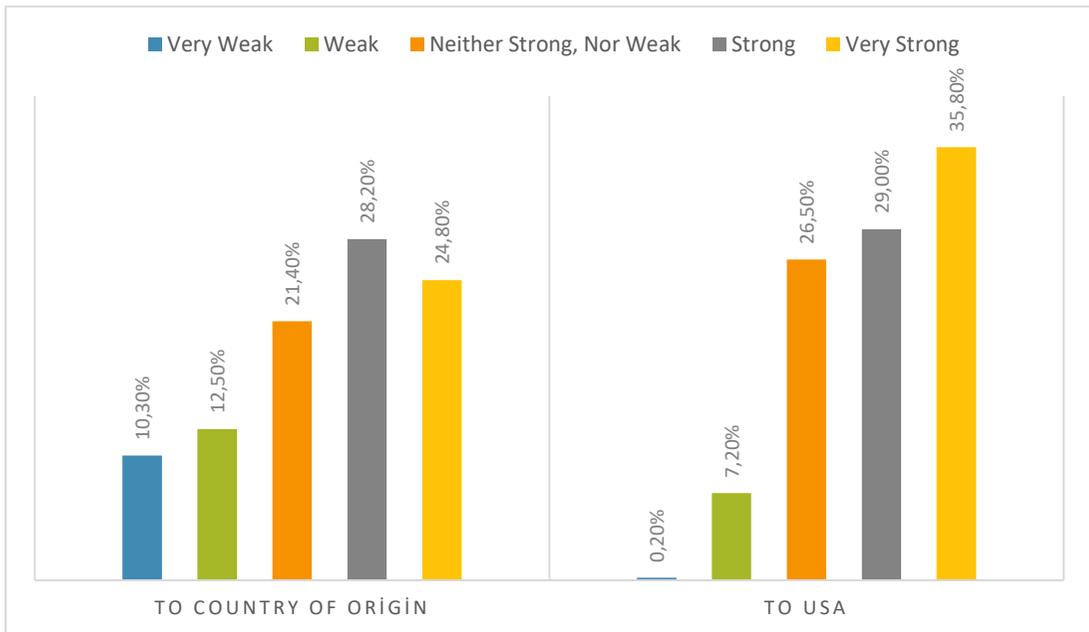
Figure 9: To what extent do you agree that most Muslims in USA have successfully adapted to the customs and way of life here?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

One concept that became increasingly important in diaspora studies and integration debates is the ‘sense of belonging’. There are growing and often-controversial debates concerning where the sense of belonging of diasporic communities should lie and what this means for the integration policies of the immigration countries. Therefore, the respondents subsequently asked about their sense of belonging both to the US and to their respective countries of origin. Overall, in the US sample, the respondents reported a stronger sense of belonging to the US than their countries of origin. Those who said that they have a ‘very strong’ sense of belonging to the US constituted more than 35% of the sample, while the same response was only given by slightly less than 25% of the respondents concerning their respective countries of origin. This is a significant difference. The significant difference is replicated on the other end of the spectrum as well. Those who reported a ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’ sense of belonging to the US constituted just over 7% of the respondents; while those displaying ‘weak’ or ‘very weak’ sense of belonging to their respective countries of origin constituted almost 23% of the respondents (Figure 10).

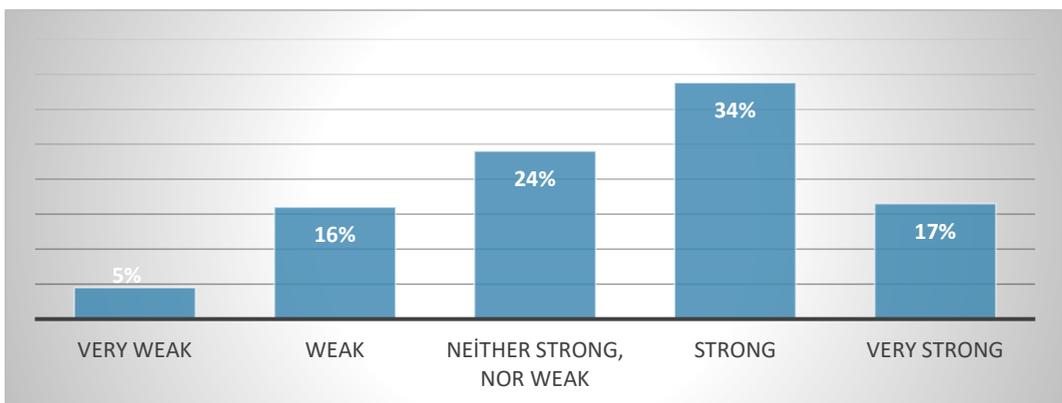
Figure 10: Sense of Belonging to USA and the Country of Origin



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size: 995

Next, the respondents were asked to evaluate the strength of relations between the Muslim community and the American society. It appears that half of the respondents believe that the relations between the American society and the Muslim community in the US are either ‘very strong’ (17%) or ‘strong’ (33.8%) while those who believe that relations are either ‘weak’ (16%) or ‘very weak’ (4.5%) constitute around 20% of the respondents (Figure 11).

Figure 11: How strong are the relations between the Muslims in USA and the American society?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The issue of integration was also one of the subjects of most heated discussions at the Workshop as well as the interviews. Many individuals suggested that the fact that Muslims can be seen at every

position and institution in society demonstrates integration. Accordingly, “Muslims are now everywhere. ... We have Muslim police officers, politicians, doctors, workers.” (Abdullah).

We have a presence as Muslim Americans at every office you can go where they are elected officials, the mayors. Sarah Sayeed. She is senior advisor for the mayor and has so many other Muslims. She is an amazing human being to me. Okay. You go to a congressional representative’s office, you will find key persons in office or Muslims you go to, uh, and NYPD the police forces is the best police in the country. You have so many Muslim officers even in charge, many missions. (Alban)

One particular example was about Muslim professional sportsmen suggesting that they were very influential in making the larger society see and normalize Muslims’ presence in the society:

I do not know if anybody went to the Yankees game, we had a whole Muslim Yankee game. So, uh, the Yankees is the biggest baseball team. I hate baseball. I just went for it. But at the field, it was the Muslim day, they called the Azan then we prayed together and this was us being integrated. I have a friend, Jay Abushy who played for the Jets [another baseball team]. So again, Muslims are in every field of life, we are everywhere. And we are integrated with this community. And the more we get integrated, we get more people coming up front. (Osman)

There were some contentious issues regarding the discussions of integration of Muslims in America. One issue was segregation, even perhaps racism that was inside the Muslim community. Some African Muslim participants in the Workshop described how they felt that the non-Black Muslim community in New York did not welcome them. One participant particularly suggested that she considered this the remnants of racism that is brought over to America by older generation Muslim migrants and they were teaching this to the younger generations of Muslims. One example she gave was how intermarriages was extremely uncommon between Black Muslims and other Muslim groups in America. While the issue of internal segregation within the Muslim community will be discussed in detail at a later section, this issue of inter-marriages needs to be addressed briefly here as well.

For one thing, some participants suggested that the reason for the tendency of Muslims not to intermarry was cultural, and it did not mean they are racists. One Turkish male participant said he would not dream of marrying a Black Muslim, not because he believes he deserves better or he looks down on them, but because of his cultural upbringing. Some others argued this was indeed a sign of segregation and racial tension. This very issue of intermarriages came up in some of the interviews as well. One prominent African-American Imam suggested that while intermarriage was so rare amongst the earlier generation Muslims, it was becoming more and more common nowadays. He suggested that he considered this trend as an indicator of integration and calls these marriages between Muslims of different ethnic background as ‘bridge and blend weddings’:

I said I would do what we call bridge and blend weddings, Muslim, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and then the goals of the bridge. Groom is Turkish and the bride is from Bangladesh. Culturally, you might as well be from another planet. Right? Well I do those weddings because I believe in their merit. Everyone, when people say things are changing, I tell them no and they are not changing. They have

changed. It happened so quickly. It is almost shocking. My mother's from Bangladesh and my father's Japanese and I am American and I am American. OK?
(Abdullah)

Another issue that kept coming up was also related to this sense of quick change. On the one hand, Muslims praise the opportunity for their children to 'become Americans', not fearing discrimination and fostering a secure sense of belonging to the land, society, and the state:

America is a melting pot and whether your father is Turkish, your mom is a Bengali or a uncle is this and that all of us here, our kids will be the same uh, person... um not person the same identity as a Muslim. They will be American Muslim. They will not be Turkish Muslim. They will not be Bengali Muslim. They will not be Gambian Muslim. They will be American Muslim. We will look differently from each other. We will look Brown, White, green, yellow. But we will be American Muslims because we are melting in the same pot. (Osman)

On the other hand, they voice concern that this 'melting pot' works so quickly sometimes that parents run the risk of losing control of their kids. This is why a number of interviewees suggested that parents need to be aware and alert so that their kids do not get completely assimilated, and that they should be taught about their Muslim identity just as much as their American identity. One participant at the workshop made a very similar point suggesting that the education system was a very effective mechanism assimilating the kids into the American pop culture. He suggested that kids did not enjoy tea and traditional foods of their parents anymore, but wanted hamburgers and fries. "... Which is fine. However, the schools are also the places many Muslim kids try alcohol and premarital sex. This is not fine and the parent should be very careful". Another young African-American participant, who was born and raised in New York, suggested that every day he meets young Muslims who tell him that they do not care about religion. He warned, "While we are talking about *dawa* and people converting into Islam, there is the very real danger of many young Muslim kids leaving the religion in the guise of integration into life in America"

4 Perceptions on Socio-Economic Status

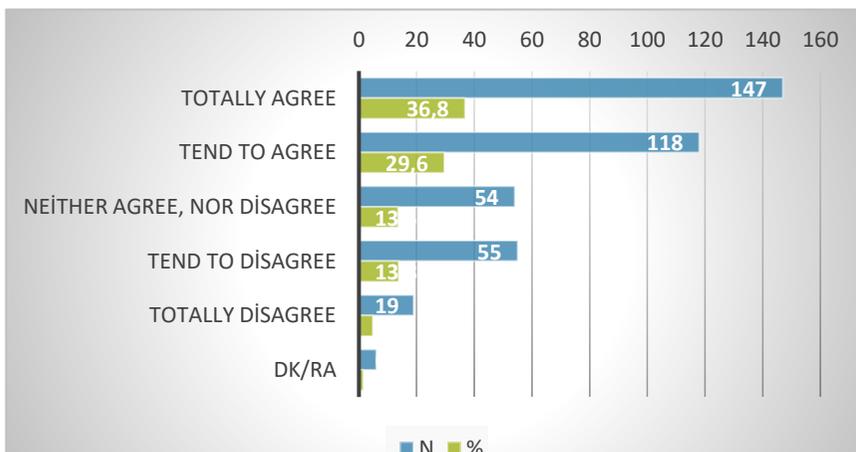
The socio-economic profile of the Muslim communities in US displays a great deal of diversity. Most available data sources suggest that overall the socio-economic profile of the Muslim community is not very different from the socio-economic profile of the other faith groups (ISPU 2017, Pew 2017). How is the self-perception of Muslims concerning their own socio-economic status in the US? Before asking questions about how the respondents perceive the socio-economic status of the wider Muslim community in the US, it is necessary to take note of some socio-economic indicators of the respondents themselves. Education is a good place start. It appears that the Muslim individuals in the survey sample were mostly well-educated people. As the below table shows, more than 71% of the respondents were at least university graduates (Table 9).

Table 9: Educational Attainment Levels of the Survey Sample in USA

	N	%
Illiterate	4	1
Literate but not graduate of any school	16	4
Primary school graduate	11	2.8
Secondary school graduate	79	19.8
University graduate	177	44.2
Graduate degree (Masters, PhD, etc.)	109	27.2
DK/RA	4	1.0
Total	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree that Muslim children have the same chances for a quality education as other children in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

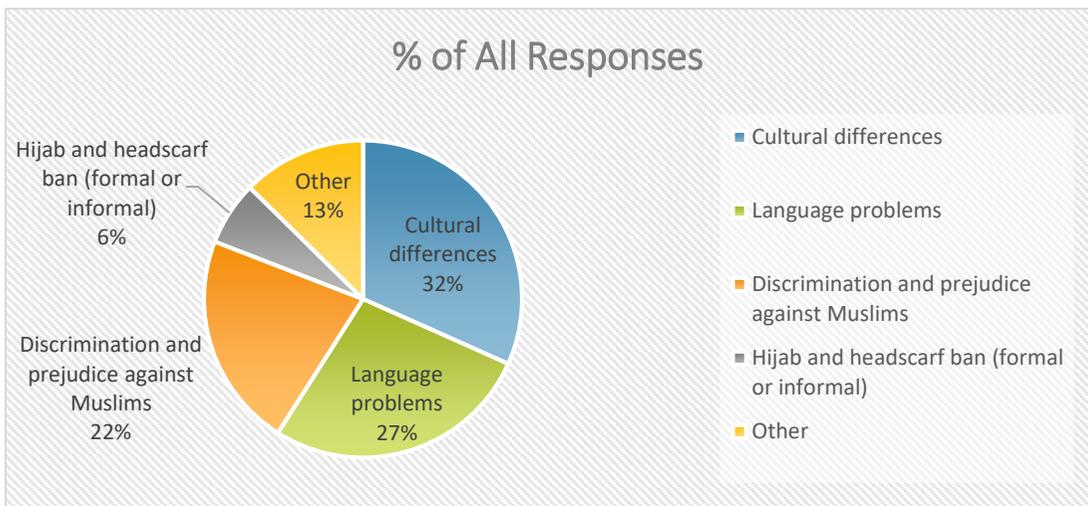
As it is a very important concern for immigrant and diasporic communities everywhere, the respondents were first asked whether they believed their children had the same chances for a quality education as American children.

It appears from the Survey data that Muslims believe that their children have the same chances for a quality education as other children in the US. In fact, more than 66% of the respondents either totally agreed (36.8%) or tended to agree (29.6%) with this statement (Figure 12).

At the other end of the spectrum, a minority 18% of the respondents did not agree that Muslim children have the same chances for a quality education as everybody else. Those respondents were asked about the reasons for the inequality that they perceived. In other words, they were asked to list the main reasons that prevent Muslim children from having the same chances in education.

At the top of the suggested reasons, the respondents reported that the cultural differences that Muslim children have from other children prevent them from having equal educational opportunities. The other two significant reasons suggested were the language problems that Muslim children face and discrimination and prejudice against Muslims (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Why do you think that Muslim children are not offered with equal chance for a quality education in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size: 183

Continuing on the issue of education, the respondents were asked whether they believed that the American government should adopt certain measures to provide equal access and opportunities for Muslim individuals, particularly when applying for a secondary school or university. It appears that the respondents of the New York Survey were almost equally divided on this matter. While slightly more than 45% of the respondents suggested that they believed the government should adopt such extra-measures, almost 40% of the respondents thought there was no need for such measures (Table 10).

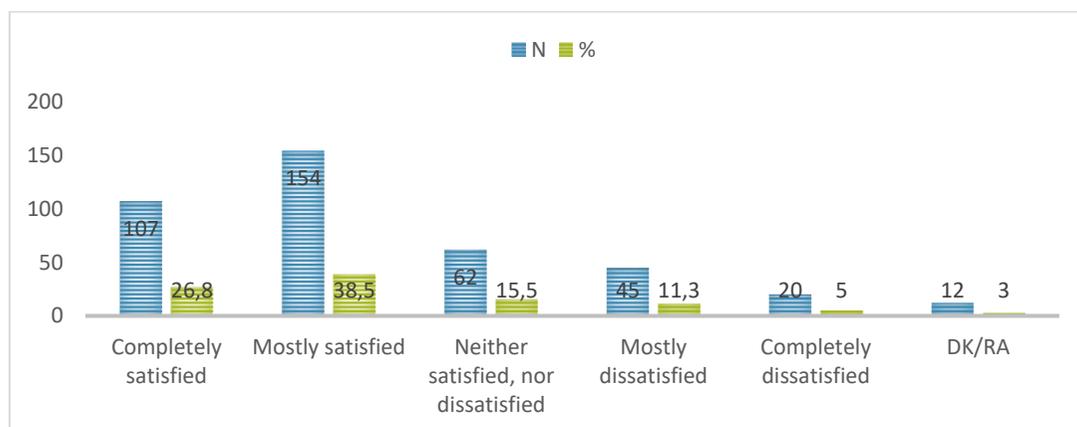
Table 10: To what extent would you agree that American government should adopt extra-measures to provide equal access for Muslim individuals, when applying for a secondary school or University?

	N	%
Totally agree	119	29.8
Tend to agree	66	16.5
Neither agree, nor disagree	40	10
Tend to disagree	96	24.1
Totally disagree	62	15.5
DK/RA	16	4
Total	399	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

When the respondents were asked to evaluate the overall quality of schools and education system in the US, a strong majority expressed a high level of satisfaction. In combination, over 65% of the respondents said they were either 'completely' (26.8%) or 'mostly' satisfied with the quality of schools and the education system in the US, only 16% expressed dissatisfaction of varying degrees (Figure 14).

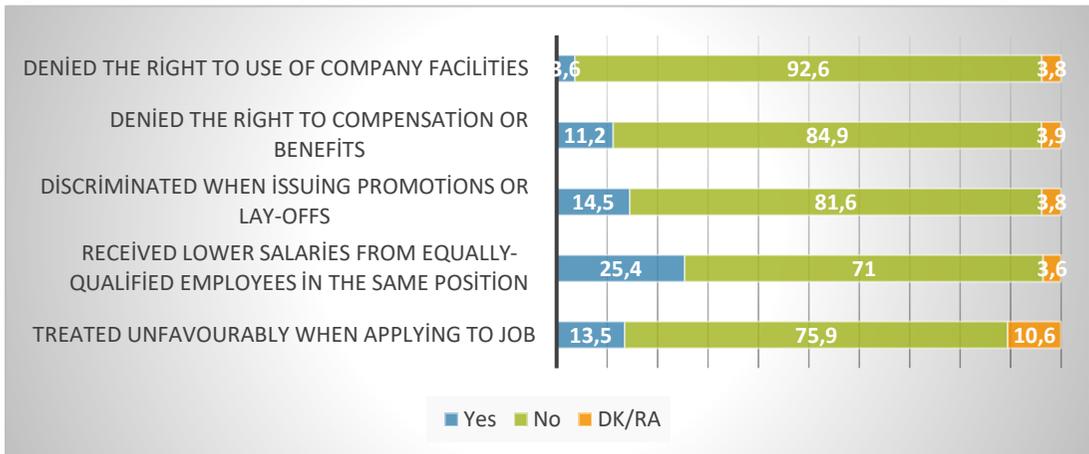
Figure 14: How satisfied are you with quality of schools and education system in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Following education, the survey respondents were asked questions about their work places and jobs. First, they were asked about their experiences of discrimination in their respective workplaces. Further, they were asked to report specific discrimination experiences such as if they were ever denied the right to use of company facilities, denied compensation or benefits, discriminated when promotions or lay-offs were distributed, discriminated regarding their salaries or treated unfavorably when applying to a job.

Figure 15: Have you every experiences discrimination in the Workplace in the following ways?

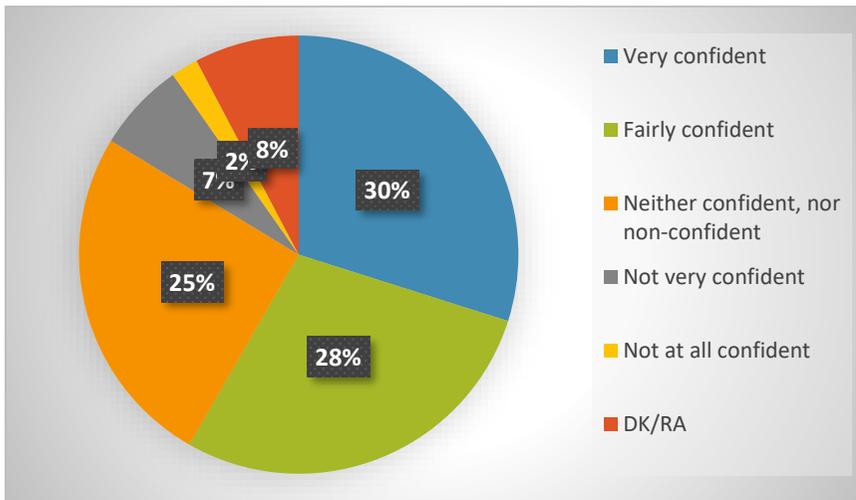


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Overall, the Muslims in New York City do not feel discriminated against in the workplace. Apart from one significant exception, the share of respondents that report discrimination is never more than 15%, while 75% to 93% of the respondents reported never experiencing discrimination in the workplace. However, those who did believe that they faced discrimination in the workplace should not be ignored. 11.2% of the respondents reported that they were denied their right to compensations or benefits; 13.5% suggested they were treated unfavorably when applying to a job; and 14.5% of the respondents said they were discriminated against when promotions or lay-offs were being distributed. However, the most significant finding was that more than 25% of the respondents, or one in every 4 Muslims, suggested that they received lower salaries compared to equally qualified employees occupying the same position. While it is not possible to objectively confirm or reject this inequality, a very significant number of Muslims are feel that it is important (Figure 15).

On average, Muslim individuals do not appear to be worried about their job security. When asked how confident they are about keeping their current jobs in a year, more than 58% suggested that they were either very confident (29.9%) or fairly confident (28.4%). At the other end, only over 6.6% of the respondents voiced concern about their future job security stating that they were ‘not very confident’ that they will keep this job; while an even smaller 2% of the respondents reported being ‘not at all confident’ about it.

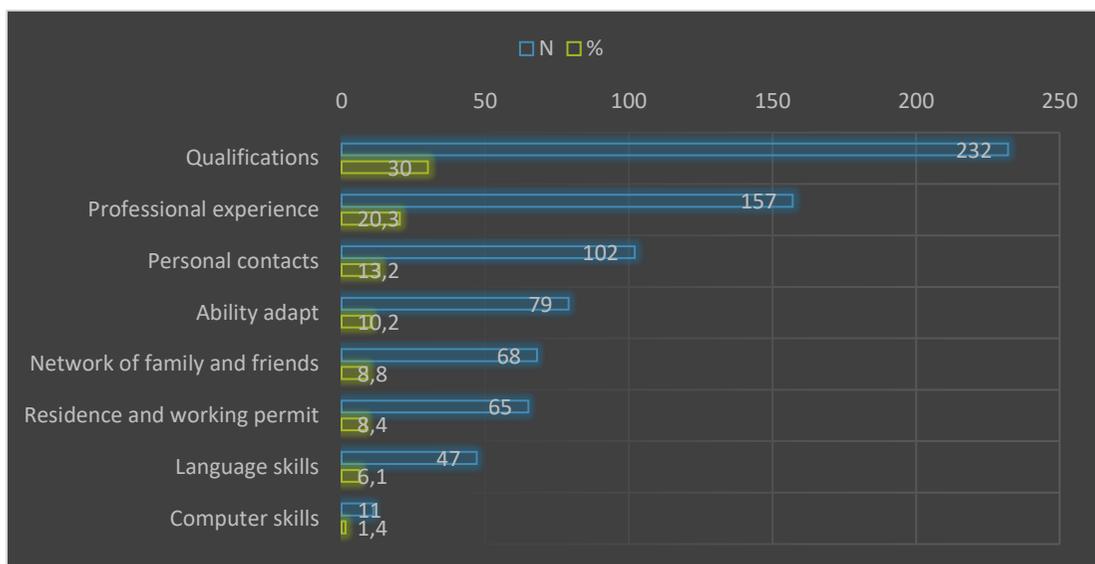
Figure 16: How confident are you that you will keep your job in the coming 12 months?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size: 197.

What are the most important assets for a Muslim to find a job in the US? This question was asked to respondents and they were given the chance to list multiple answers. All the responses are combined and presented in Figure 17.

The Muslims in America appear to believe that the most important asset for someone to get a job is relevant qualifications. This response was mentioned by 232 of the respondents accounting for the 58% of the whole sample and 30% of all the answers given for this question. This was followed by 'professional experience', which constituted 20.3% of the answers provided. The two answers related to 'social capital' were also frequently suggested, which were 'personal contacts' and 'network of family and friends in high places' that were mentioned by 102 and 68 respondents, respectively (Figure 17).

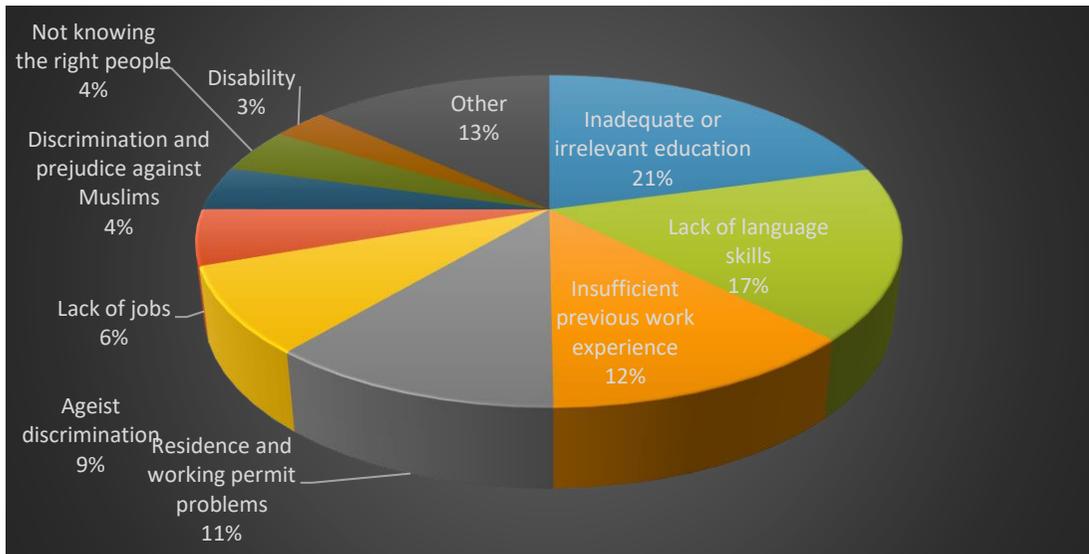
Figure 17: Most important assets for a Muslim to find a job in USA

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

If these were the main assets that could significantly, increase the likelihood of a Muslim to find a job, what were the main obstacles that prevent them from finding employment? In the same manner as the main assets, the respondents were asked to provide a list of main obstacles.

As it can be seen in the above table, the answers appear to be consistent with those of the previous question. The respondents suggested that the biggest obstacle was the lack of relevant education. In addition, they mentioned 'lack of language skills' and 'insufficient work experience', both of which could also be considered among necessary qualifications for work, and are important obstacles preventing Muslims from finding jobs. Although discrimination and Islamophobia were mentioned to be important factors for Muslims in America and that they are on the rise, the survey respondents do not seem to consider 'discrimination and prejudice against Muslims' to be an important obstacle in front of Muslims (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Main obstacles before those who are unable to find a job in USA



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size: 203

The interviewed individuals and the workshop participants also provided insights concerning the perceptions of the Muslim community on its socio-economic status. One critical theme was about how settled the Muslim community in New York and in the US. There were two simultaneous arguments: on the one hand, a large number of participants argued that the Muslim community was a relatively new community in the US, and as such was not as well settled as some of the older communities like the Jewish community. Accordingly, even though in numerical terms the Muslim community was not that much smaller than the Jewish community in America, in terms of the influence and significance in society, economy, culture, and politics, the Jewish community was so much more advanced. The participants believed that this was natural because of the much earlier arrival of the Jews in this country.

The other argument concerning this was that the Muslim community was consistently and continuously improving itself and getting better settled in every part of the American society. This was already mentioned in the above section on integration; a large number of Muslim interviewees kept suggesting that Muslims are now everywhere in America. They are not a small, isolated and segregated community but one that occupies a central part in the everyday functioning of the American society:

As I said, they are very well settled. There are a lot of them. They have so many workers; they contribute very graciously to the city and to the country. And as I said, you can look into the police. You will find over a thousand NYPD police officers. They are Muslims. And these are the ones who openly declared that they are Muslims. There are also so many who, for one reason or another, refrain from openly identifying themselves as Muslims (Hakeem)

Another important theme concerning the socio-economic standing of the Muslim community in the US is that they are more likely to be well educated than without an education. One workshop participant who works in finance, suggested, “The American Muslims are one of the wealthiest communities in the whole nation”. Their medium income is higher than the other minorities.” Another participant agreed and added, “And they are more educated than the rest of the minorities, too.”

Most Muslims participants in this study seemed to confirm this perception. However, some confirmed it with significant caveats. One interviewee suggested that the first and second-generation immigrant Muslims were much more likely to have an above average education compared to third or further generation Muslims:

I think our own grown children are not as well educated, as highly educated as our fellow Muslims who come from abroad. They are not; it is not the same level. We do not have that same push for education here among Muslims that are, especially if they are second, third, fourth generation. Why? Mostly because they might not need it. They do not do PhDs. There is no need for a PhD. You get your bachelors; you get a CPA or a MBA or something and start working. You do not need to go get a PhD. In fact, that might even be a detriment. We are overqualified. So now people want to go, they want to go to work. Whereas in some of our [Muslim] countries, without the PhD, you are not going anywhere. (Mahmut)

Therefore, the suggestion is that those Muslims who come to America as immigrants needed education and they had the extra motivation of believing that without education “they were not going anywhere”. They felt the need to invest in their qualifications to an extent that the newer generations of Muslim youth just do not. As native-born citizens, these Muslims do not feel that they need to invest more time, money, and energy into their education.

A different yet similar argument was made concerning the differential levels of motivation to invest in education by another interviewee. She suggested that the Muslim girls tend to be more educated than the Muslim boys are. This might appear odd for someone who thinks that in many Muslim contexts, parents are more reluctant to send their daughters to school for cultural reasons. When asked to explain, this interviewee suggested, “Girls have to have good education if they want to make something out of themselves in America. Boys have it much easier. They have so many options. For many girls, education is the only way out; it is the only way up” (Salma).

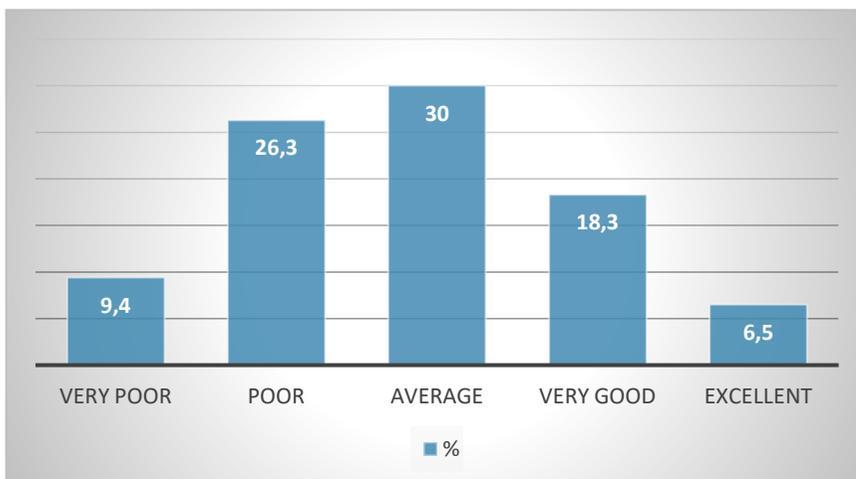
5 Attitudes on Visibility and Representation of Muslims

The visibility and representation of Muslims have become exceedingly important and contentious in recent years. The US is no exception to this. While these are complex issues with many different dynamics to consider, this part will make use of the primary data collected in New York to discuss some of their most important aspects. This section has two main subsections. First, the level and forms of public engagement by the Muslim community will be discussed. Muslims' level of interest in American politics, their involvement in various political activities, and their views on Muslim leaders and political representation of the Muslim community will be the main topics. In the second subsection, Muslims' representation and visibility in American media will be addressed.

5.1 Muslims' Public Engagement and Representation in Politics in the US

How engaged are the Muslims in the US with the public life? The respondents were asked about their own assessments on this point and it appears that they are not very happy about the level of engagement of the community with public life, although the views seemed to be distributed in a balanced way (Figure 20). Those who thought that the level of public engagement of Muslims is 'excellent' constitute only 6.5%, while a more significant group of 18.3% of the respondents claimed that the level of public engagement is 'good'. On the opposite end, 36% of the respondents believed that the level of engagement was either 'poor' or 'very poor'. Nearly one in three respondents expressed a seemingly neutral stance, suggesting that the level was 'average' (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Level of Muslim engagement in public life in USA (%)



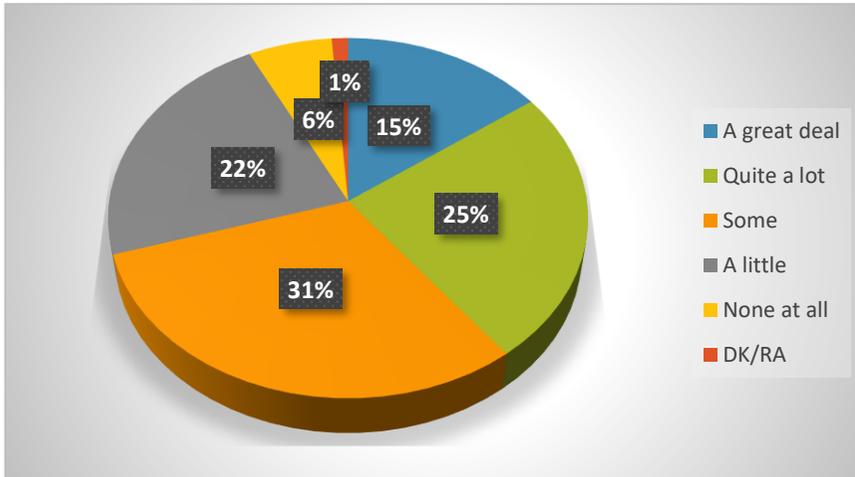
Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

degree of interest in the American politics (Figure 21). 15% of the respondents suggested that they have 'a great deal' of interest in the politics of the US, while almost one quarter of the participants said

What about American politics and Muslims? How much of an interest do the Muslims in the US have in the politics of the country? Again, the survey participants display a balanced distribution, this time with a tilt towards a greater

that they have ‘quite a lot’ of interest. Approximately one third of the participants said they do not have much but ‘some’ interest in politics, while a bit less than that, around 28%, reported having less than average interest in American politics, either ‘a little’ (22.3%) or ‘none at all’ (6.2%) (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Level of interest in politics in USA



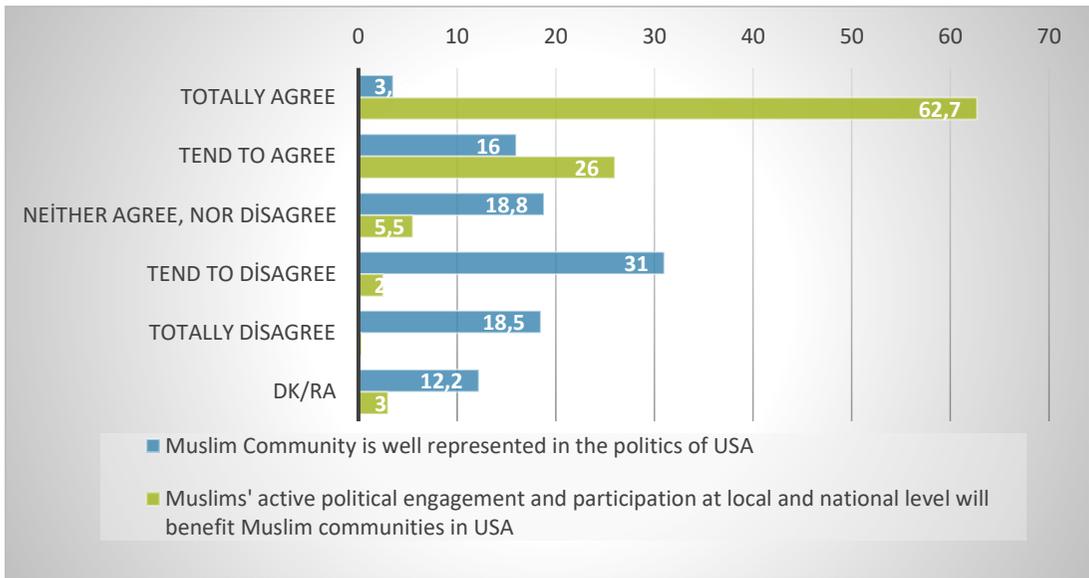
A very significant question is the political representation of the Muslim community in the US. Here, Muslims view starts significantly to move towards the negative side. When asked to what extent they agree that ‘Muslim

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size: 403

community is well represented in the politics of the US’, less than 20% of the participants reported agreement. However, those who disagreed were more than twice as much accounting for almost half of all participants at 49.5% (Figure 21).

It appears from these two pieces of data that Muslims in the US are interested in American politics, yet they believe that the Muslim community is under-represented. Does this mean that they want more engagement that is political and participation? In other words, do Muslim individuals believe that more Muslim political involvement is a good thing for the Muslims? As one might expect, the survey participants decisively agreed. Almost 90% of the respondents reported that Muslims’ active political engagement and participation at local and national level would benefit the Muslim community in the US. Those who disagreed constituted less than 3% of the respondents (Figure 21).

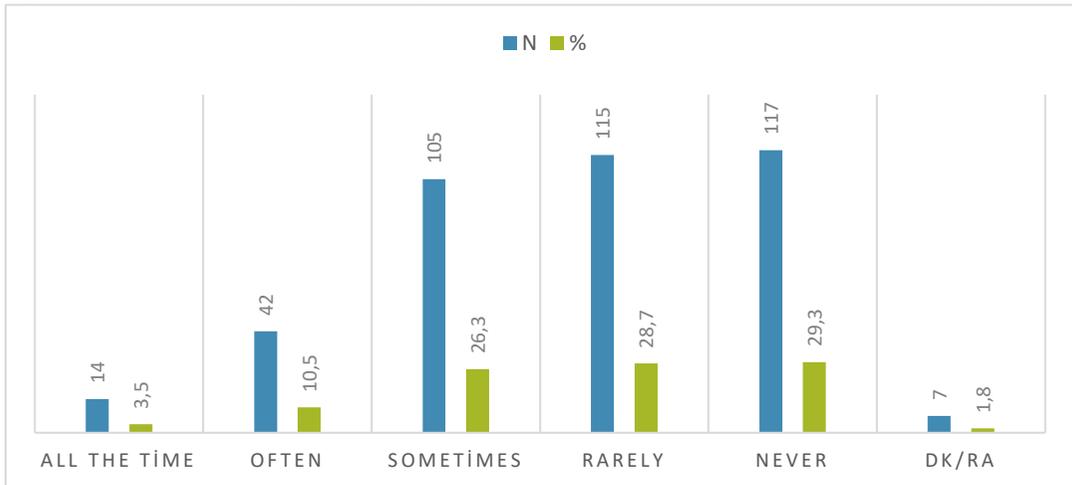
Figure 21: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%)



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

After measuring these questions regarding the views and perceptions of Muslims in the US and politics; the respondents were asked questions about their political behavior. First, they were asked about how often they attended political events. Although a significant 26.3% of the participants suggested that they ‘sometimes’ attended political events, a large majority of the survey participants, almost 60% said they either ‘rarely’ (28.7%) or ‘never’ (29.3%) attended political events with other Muslims in the US (Figure 22).

Figure 22: How often do you attend political events with members of Muslim Community in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Obviously, attending political events such as meetings or demonstrations is merely one way of participating in politics. Therefore, the respondents were also asked about other political behavior. For instance, they were asked if they have ever done something that could affect any of the government decisions related to the Muslim community. Particularly, the question aimed to understand whether Muslim individuals were trying to become a part of the public debates and discussions, or at least, trying to make their voices and concerns heard in one way or another. In order to get a comprehensive view and considering the fact those responses were not mutually exclusive, the respondents were once again permitted to provide multiple answers, which are all gathered and presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Have you ever done something that could affect any of the government decisions related to the needs of Muslim Community? (Multiple answers)

	N	%
Yes, I took part in public debates	72	15.9
Yes, I gave my comments on social networks / elsewhere on the internet	125	27.6
I only discuss about it with friends, acquaintances, I have not publicly declared myself	134	29.5
I do not even discuss about it	68	15
Other	22	4.9
DK/RA	32	7.1
Total	453	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The most frequently provided two answers suggested that Muslims mostly discuss such political matters amongst friends without publicly declaring their views, or when they do declare them, they do it on social networks or similar channels through the internet. It can be seen as a healthy distribution that the number of those who are the most active, ‘yes, I took part in public debates’, and those who seem to stay completely away from political debates are almost the same, both accounting for around 15% of the responses.

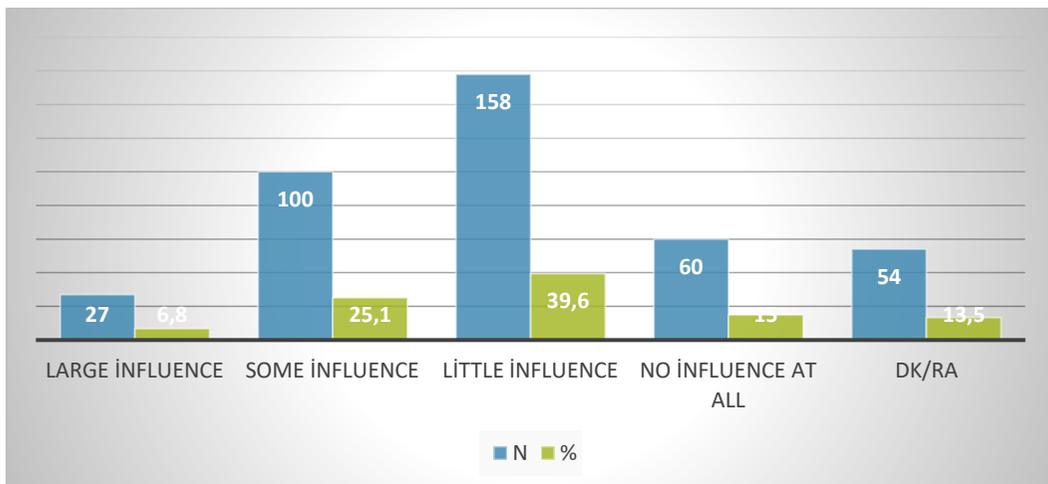
When those individuals who said they were not involved in public debates were further probed as to why, the main reason appears to do with a lack of interest (23.3%). In other words, those who stay away from political debates do so mostly because of apathy. The second largest group (18.2%) appears to be held back by a reluctance to expose themselves publicly; possible because they are afraid of repercussions. The third main reason for not attending public political debates appears to be related to a lack of confidence in personal efficacy. In other words, 15.7% of the participants remain out of such debates because they believe that these debates will not change or affect anything.

Table 12: What is the main reason why you are not actively involved in these processes?

	N	%
I as an individual cannot influence government decisions	37	15.7
I don't want to be publicly exposed	43	18.2
I don't care about it at all	55	23.3
Other	52	22
DK/RA	49	20.8
Total	236	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Another point of interest was the level of influence that the official religious leaders of the Muslim community enjoy in political matters in the US. Only a small minority of 6.8% of the participants suggested that Muslim religious leaders enjoyed a 'large' degree of influence. One quarter of all participants believed that religious leaders had 'some' influence, while the largest group of almost 40% of the participants suggested that Muslim religious leaders only have a 'little' degree of influence. A non-negligible 15% said that they have 'no influence at all' (Figure 23).

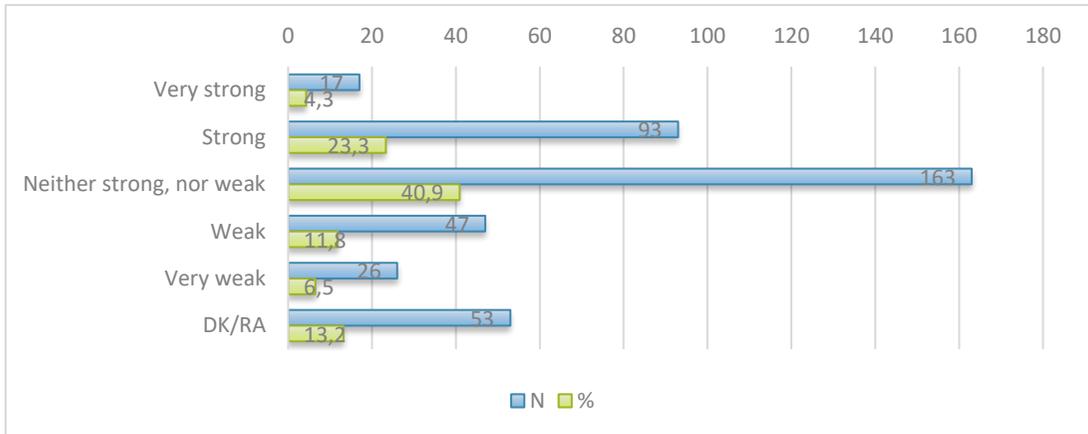
Figure 23: In your opinion, how much influence do official religious leaders of Muslim Community have in political matters in USA?

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Another essential issue in terms of the political engagement of Muslims in the US is the level of their trust to Muslim political leaders. When asked to describe their level of trust, Muslim respondents in the survey appear to display a medium level of trust to Muslim political leaders (Figure 25). Only 4.3% of the respondents reported a 'very strong' level of trust, while a significant 23.3% suggested that their level of trust to Muslim political leaders was 'strong'. The largest number of respondents, nearly 41%, said that their trust was 'neither strong, nor weak'. Those without much confidence in the Muslim

political leaders in the country were in a minority, accounting for less than 19% of the respondents (Figure 24).

Figure 24: How would you describe your level of trust to political leaders of Muslim Community in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The workshop participants and interviewees also talked extensively about engagement, visibility, and representation of Muslims in American political landscape. One recurrent argument is that the Muslims are a relatively new immigrant community and therefore they are not as well organized as they can or should be. Many respondents compared the engagement level of the Muslim community with another religious minority, the Jewish community, and concluded that the Jews are much better organized because they have been in the US for much longer. The simple argument was that it takes time to learn the rules of the game and accumulate human capital (i.e. qualifications and competences), social capital (i.e. contacts and networks), and financial capital (i.e. funds and wealth) for a community to become more influential and organized. Some participants put it very bluntly suggesting that a relatively poor migrant, who does not know anyone and who needs to work all the time to provide for his/her family cannot engage in politics:

... Because nobody have the time. Politics is a game for the rich; it is not a game for a normal person. It takes a lot of time. You have to spend many time visiting people, you know, seeing them. Because first you need maybe, 5-6,000 signatures just to be on a paper and be nominated. You had better have time to visit all these places. And in Brooklyn, New York, you know, sometimes, uh, like today I go to the store by walking. Plus, I'm not getting paid while I am spending all this time. So, that's even worse. (Badar)

Immediately following this observation of insufficient degree of organization and engagement on the part of the Muslim community came optimistic additions that Muslims today are doing much better than they did yesterday, and everyone seemed certain that they will do even better tomorrow as a community:

... Last election, 2018, we were really pressing and working very hard in the local level because in United States it is very important. We have not really paid that much attention to the federal level, because the local is more important. The local level contains the first responders. So alhamdulillah locally, we have been doing much better than before. We get a council member, we have assembly member or we have state senators. And judges are there, which is very good. These are mostly the second generation and third generation. (Salma)

For many respondents this confirms the argument that the Muslim community requires time and with it, it will get better and better:

I think this is the process of assimilation into American culture. As the generations go on it will continue. You will see that the more assimilated Muslim communities are more vocal and I think the longer that these immigrant communities have been here, the more we're going to start seeing both unity within the community and presenting the face to the outside world. And I think like the way that Jewish Americans assimilated into this country with a very instructive example because at first it was all immigrant associations and Russian Jewish associations or Polish or whatever. Now it's, there is kind of a Jewish community that is unified and that advocates for Jewish issues and price to put on it. (John)

We have the third generation, fourth generation American Muslims who are in top places everywhere. We're starting to get to the top places that we have chaplains in Yale and Harvard who can answer these questions and who could provide a strategy of how to come together, how to give a true picture of Islam to America, so that's what we're trying to do. The new generations are learning to vote. That is just coming into play recently. So, what happened in Michigan, in Detroit, that's what happens now and you're getting mayors, the mayor of London I think was a Muslim. (Mahmut)

For some other participants, the insufficient level of communal organization and public engagement was not exclusively about the passage of time in America. Instead, they argued, communal mobilization comes because of certain external pushes and pressures. "It is ironic, I know, but I think our problem was that we were too many. We never considered ourselves threatened" one workshop participant argued. Another interviewee seems to confirm:

I think there is the lack of coordinating within the community to prioritize a set of issues that matter. I mean, everyone in the community clearly cares about Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bias, right? So like that is something that people do rally around. Um, and post Trump, um, there's been a lot of rallying to push back on the Muslim travel ban and other policies that are anti-immigrant. But other than that, there isn't like an organized push for anything yet. I have heard some talk about people organizing around Halal meals, um, and just the Halaal sector generally. Again, that is in a very beginning phase and I am not sure where it will go. (Jenny)

Overall, the dominant view is that while it is only recently being established as an influential community, the Muslim community is progressively and consistently doing better. Their performance

to work as a unified community increases when there are external pressures or issues over which the community can rally around quickly.

5.2 Muslim Community in the US: Media and Representation

A very important topic for all Muslim diasporic communities is media representation of Islam and Muslims. In most contexts, Muslims reportedly suffer from a lack of representation. Moreover, the limited amount of media coverage they get is increasingly becoming biased. The question on this subject was also asked to the survey participants in the US. Not surprisingly, the Muslims in the US are not happy about the representation of Muslims in the US media. While those respondents who believed that the Muslim community is well represented in media accounted for a mere 15% of the sample, those who disagreed with this notion accounted for almost 65% of the respondents.

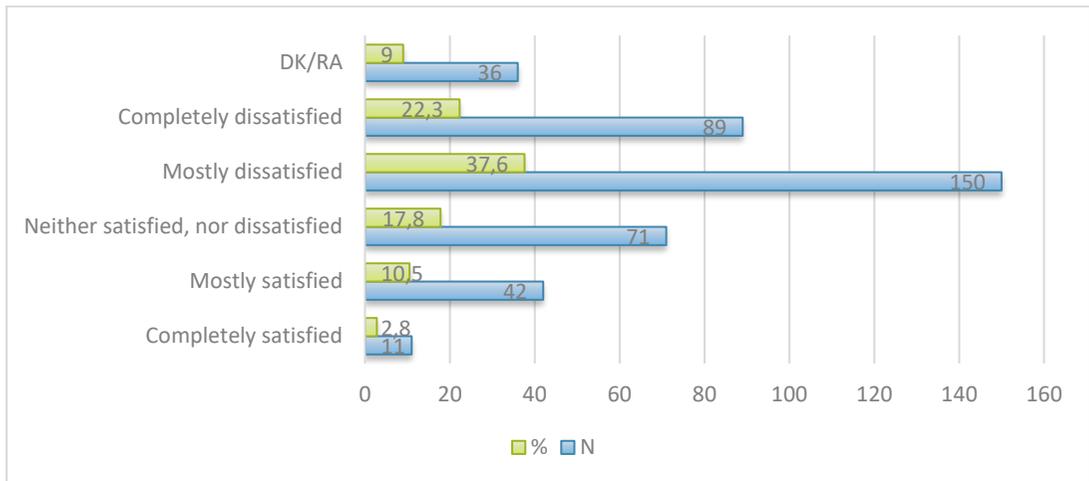
Table 13: To what extent do you agree that Muslim Community is well-represented in media in US?

	N	%
Totally agree	13	3.2
Tend to agree	47	11.8
Neither agree, nor disagree	54	13.5
Tend to disagree	131	32.8
Totally disagree	128	32.1
DK/RA	26	6.5
Total	399	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

As mentioned above, apart from the issue of coverage and representation, there is the issue of objectivity of reporting on Muslims. The respondents were also asked whether they were satisfied with the objectivity of the media content on Muslims. Again, as it might be expected considering the findings in many other contexts, Muslims are overall not satisfied with the neutrality of the media concerning Islam and Muslims, and the objectivity of reporting on Muslims. In combination, 60% of the respondents said that they were either 'mostly dissatisfied' (37.6%) or 'completely dissatisfied' (22.3%) with the objectivity of the media reporting on Muslims. Those who are satisfied with it were a minority of 13% or so of the respondents (Figure 26).

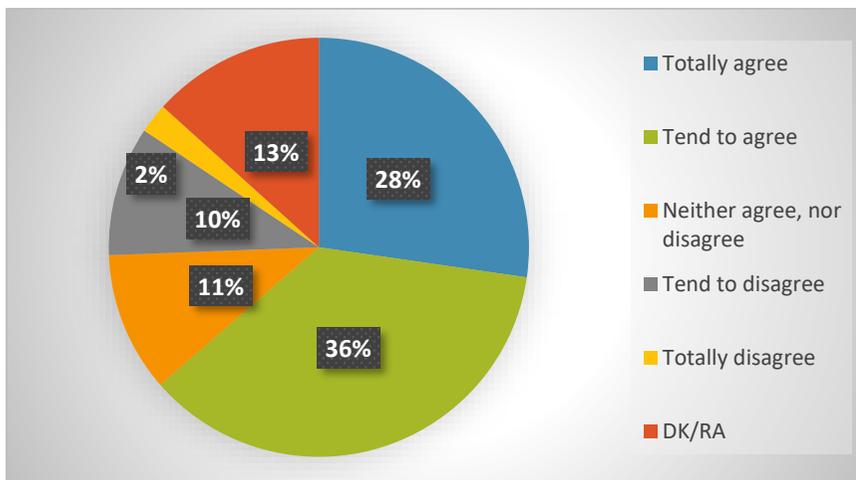
Figure 25: Are you satisfied with the objectivity of reporting on Muslims in general?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Moreover, in parallel with the global developments in world media, there seems to be a concern among the Muslims in the US that things are deteriorating everyday through an increase in the exclusionary discourses and practices against Muslims in the media. 64% of the respondents agreed that such exclusionary discourses were in fact on the rise in the US; while only 12% refused this notion (Figure 26).

Figure 26: To what extent would you agree that there is a rise of exclusionary discourses and practices directed at Muslims in American media?

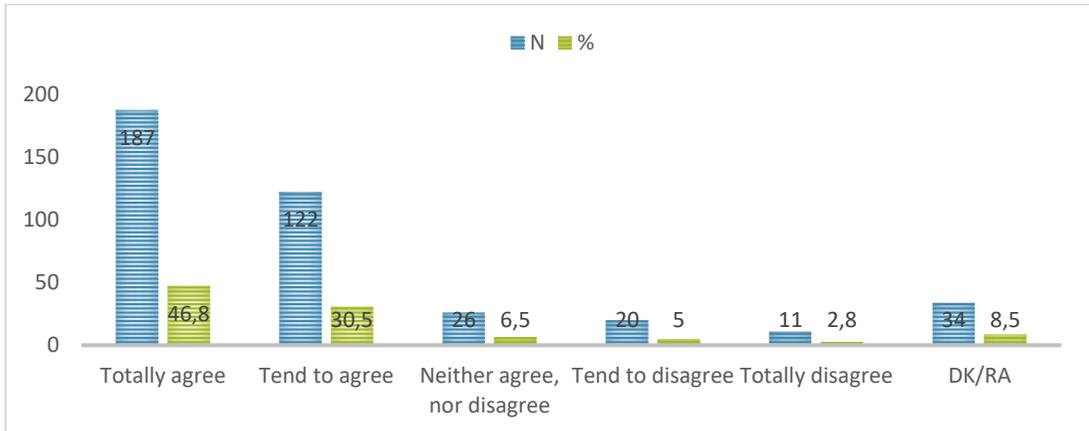


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

As a result, one might expect the Muslims in the US to be worried about the public image of Islam and Muslims. This is exactly what the survey has found. When asked to what extent they would agree that there is a need to improve the public image of Muslims in the US, 77.3% of the respondents agreed.

Those who did not see such a need accounted only for 7.8%, almost exactly one tenth of those who agreed (Figure 27).

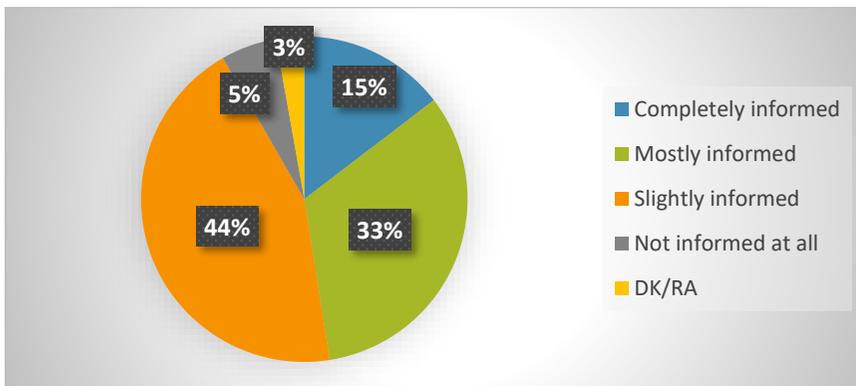
Figure 27: To what extent would you agree that there is a need to improve public image of Muslims living in USA?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

If the representation of Muslims in the US media is in such a problematic situation, where do the Muslim individuals obtain information about the Muslim community in the country? Before inquiring about the channels of information for Muslims, the respondents were first asked to provide a subjective evaluation of how informed they are about the Muslim community in the US. While almost half of the respondents considered themselves to be either ‘completely’ (15%) or ‘mostly’ (33%) informed about the Muslim community in the country; the other half said they were either only ‘slightly’ informed (44%) or ‘not informed at all’ (5%) (Figure 28).

Figure 28: To what extent do you think that you are informed about the Muslim Community living in USA?



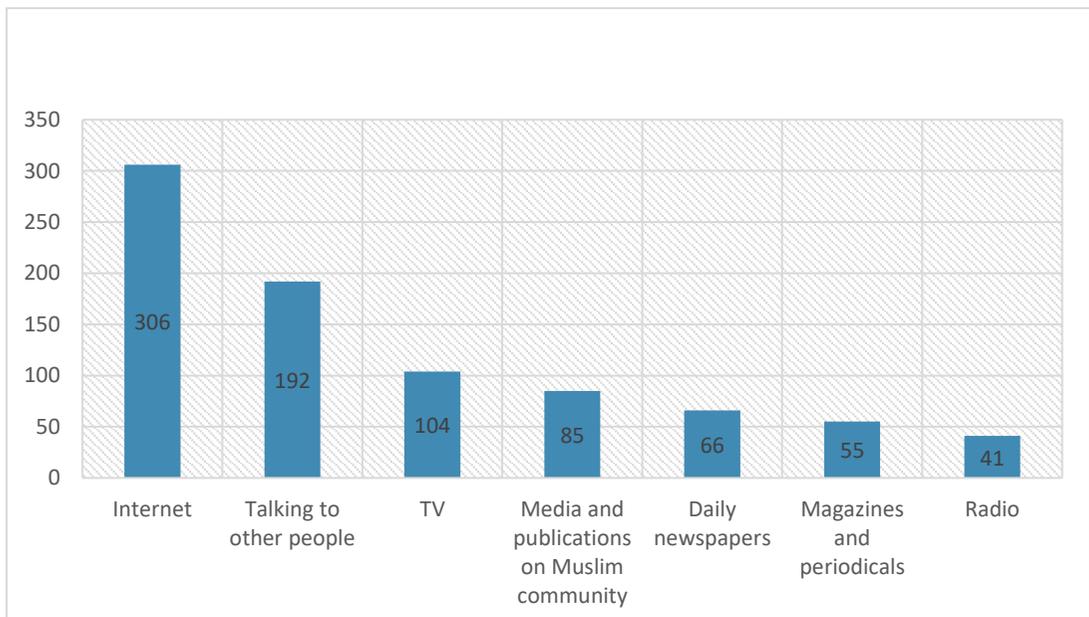
Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The next question was about the channels of information for Muslim individuals about other members of the community. Since it is perfectly possible for the individuals to have more than one information

source, the respondents were given the chance to provide multiple answers to this question (Table 23).

It appears from the responses that the number one channel of information for the Muslim community is the Internet. Almost 77% of the respondents mentioned the internet in their list of information channels, and overall, the number of times it was mentioned accounted for more than 35% of all answers. The second channel of information was much more social and interactive. 22.2% of the responses involved ‘talking to other people’ as a channel of information about Muslims. ‘TV’, once considered the ultimate media outlet, was only ranked third for the Muslim community (Table 22 & Figure 29).

Figure 29: What are the main information sources that feed you about the Muslim communities in the country?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019. Sample Size 865.

The representation of Muslims in the media certainly effects how the mainstream society directly and indirectly perceives Muslims. For instance, a workshop participant gives an interesting perspective:

So, when 9/11 happened, actually, there were a lot of people who were prone to Islamophobia and who were unaware that there were already Muslims in the United States serving in the United States armed forces. And those Muslims serving in the United States armed forces actually, were very concerned with, “wait a minute, if we’re going to go overseas to fight, you know, Al-Qaida, Taliban, whatever, is this permissible? Are these the Munafiqs or are we going to be the Munafiqs if we do this?” So, they actually ended up consulting some of the world’s leading renowned Islamic scholars and sheikhs from different madhabs from all parts of the world. And the majority of them came to the conclusion that yes, it is

permissible to fight against these groups. Who are “tarnishing the name of Islam”? Someone went to a friend of his at I think the New York Times or Post and he said, get your bosses to publish this on the front page. “Muslims in the United States army had been given clearance by the top Islamic leaders to wage war against these groups”. Now you can imagine the kind of influence that is going to have on the public view that is unaware of Muslims. Like wait a minute. I thought the Muslims were the ones who attacked us. That is going to have a huge effect that is going to turn heads. But as it turns out, the heads of the New York Times or whatever a newspaper's friend worked with, they only put it on like page 26 or something in a very small article, forget the front page.

6 Confidence in Relations among Muslim Communities

This section discusses the relations amongst Muslim communities in the US. This includes intra-communal relations within the Muslim community as well as inter-communal relationships between the Muslim community and other communities. There is also a special emphasis on the relations of the Muslim community in the US with other diasporic Muslim communities around the globe with a transnational perspective. More precisely, how the Muslim community views the concept of a Global Muslim Diaspora will be evaluated. Finally, there will be a discussion on how the Muslim community in this country views several foreign national and international actors.

6.1 Relations amongst Muslim communities in USA

The survey respondents were first asked questions about their relations and interactions with other members of the Muslim community. It appears that there is a quite high level of interaction among the Muslim individuals in the US. 17.3% of the respondents interact with other members of the Muslim community, excluding their family members and co-workers on a daily basis. Another 18.8%, had similar interactions a few times a week, and more than one quarter of all respondents have such social interactions with fellow Muslims once a week. It needs also to be pointed out that 20% of survey respondents who suggested that either they interacted with other Muslims less than once a month (14.2%) or they never (5.3%) interact with other Muslims (Table 14).

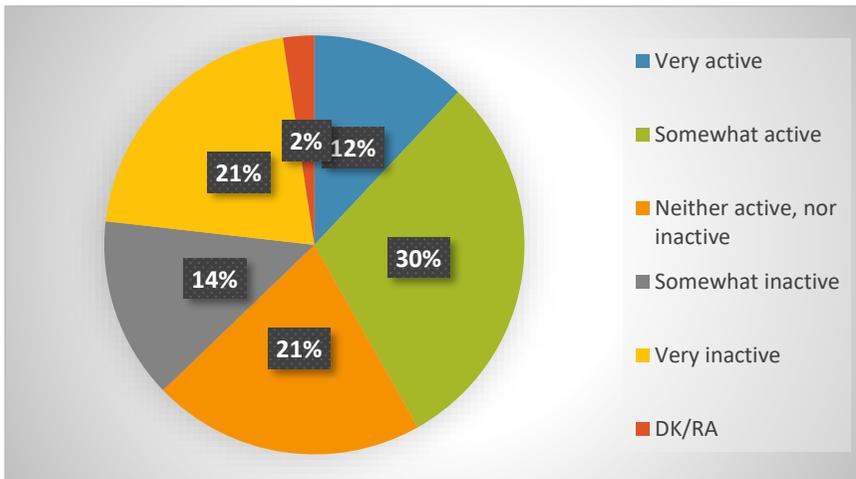
Table 14: How frequently do you interact with members of the Muslim community in USA (excluding your family/relatives and co-workers)?

	N	%
Everyday	69	17.3
Few times a week	75	18.8
Once a week	107	26.8
Once or twice a month	63	15.8
Less than once a month	57	14.2
Never	21	5.3
DK/RA	8	2
Total	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Apart from the daily social contacts, the respondents were asked whether they were involved in Muslim civil society organizations. Here, the picture appears to be somewhat less lively. 21% of the respondents said that they were 'very inactive' in this regard. However, a combined 42% of the respondents placed themselves on the active side, suggesting that they were either 'somewhat active' (30%) or 'very active' (12%) (Figure 30).

Figure 30: How engaged and active would you say you are in voluntary organizations of Muslim Community registered in USA such as associations and charities?

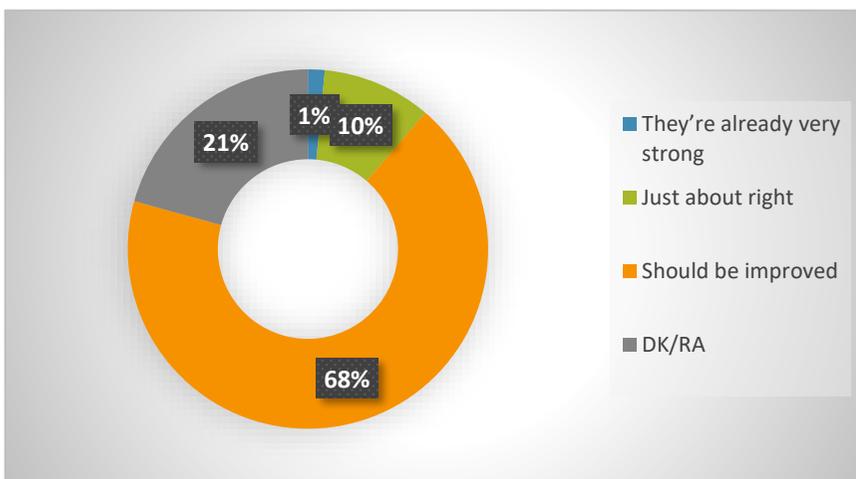


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

An issue of major concern for Muslim diasporic communities everywhere is the level of cooperation between different groups and Jamaats. The survey respondents were asked how they would describe the

level of cooperation between different Jamaats in the US. Again, confirming the findings in many other contexts, a huge majority of the respondents believe that the current level of cooperation should be improved. To be precise, 68% of the respondents suggested this; while only a tiny 1% of the respondents said the cooperation is already very strong. 10% of the respondents believe that the level of cooperation was neither very strong nor in need of improvement, but ‘just right’ (Figure 31).

Figure 31: How would you describe the level of cooperation between different Jamaats of Muslim Community in USA?



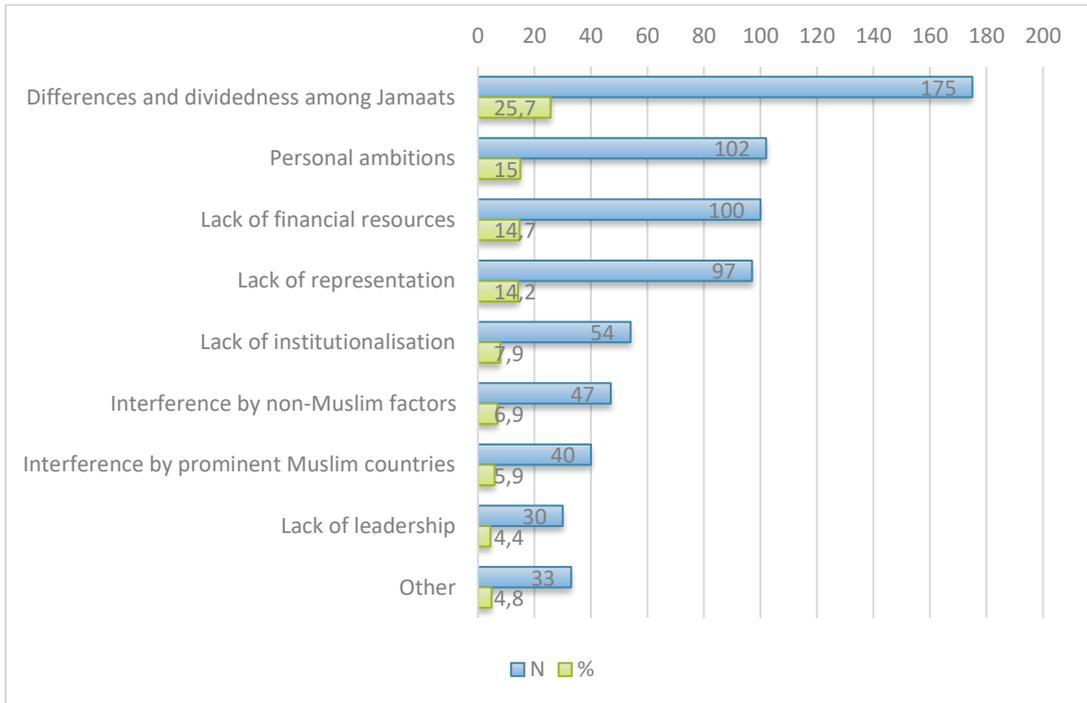
Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

What are the main factors in the US that work against a greater degree of cooperation and solidarity amongst the Muslims in this country? The respondents were given the opportunity to provide multiple answers to create a comprehensive

list. It is noteworthy to mention that this question drew the largest number of responses in the US survey. At the top of the list came the ‘differences and dividedness among different Muslim Jamaats’. This answer constituted 25.7% of all the answers provided to account for the unsatisfactory level of

cooperation. The next three most frequently given responses were ‘personal ambitions’ (15%), ‘lack of financial resources’ (14.7%) and ‘lack of representation’ (14.2%) (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Main factors that work against the greater cooperation and solidarity of the Muslims in USA



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Some significant themes could be identified from the workshop discussions and the interviews concerning the relations amongst different Muslim communities in the US. For example, when discussing the relations within the Muslim community, one participant suggested the first main dividing line within the community was the generational one:

“I would say there are two main divisions. One is the generation, the ones who migrated here, as an adult not kids have a different view of Islam, whether they are Turkish or Bengali or Chinese or anything. Then, there are the kids who are born and raised here or came here at a young age, whose understanding and experience of Islam is very different. So, we have to separate them. (Osman)”

This point was also discussed in the section on integration. It is suggested that the younger generation Muslims are getting integrated into the American culture and their view of Islam, as well as their religious practices, are decidedly different from their parents yet more similar with their fellow young Muslims from other ethnicities. There seems to be other, perhaps more important and controversial, dividing lines. For instance, a number of workshop participants as well as interviewees argued that ethnic and racial differences are also important determinants of the relations amongst Muslims:

Unless there is a common goal or projects that make us try to work together, I would say that there would not be a lot of mixing between the different Muslims. Arabs do not necessarily mix with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. They do not necessarily mix with the Albanians and, and New York City, you know, is a great cosmopolitan city, but New York City is also a city of neighborhoods that are really almost separate from each other. So the Albanians, they live way in the North Bronx and in Staten Island, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, they live in Brooklyn. Queens segregated. And if it were not for the projects and the work, we really might not even be mixing together, praying together or anything of that nature. Honestly, it is very segregated in a sense. You have, let us say this area in Brooklyn is predominantly Arabs, and then you have another area in Queens that is like predominantly Bengalis. Tragedy brings us together, but other than that, we are pretty much separated.

The quote above is from the workshop, upon hearing these comments another participant intervened saying that this is a reality here in New York, which does not apply to many other places in America:

Yes, you are right. New York is different in this respect from the rest of the country. If you go to other parts of the country, it is different. This is because we have too many of individuals from each of the groups here in New York. The Turks live somewhere then Bengalis somewhere. These are immigrant communities; these are the first immigrants who came here. So, they stick to their own communities. But when they become American, their kids become American it changes. And in other parts of the country, where there aren't many individuals from each group, they stick together with the individuals from other Muslim communities

This explanation was not convincing enough for some participants, who suggested that the issue was not merely about the numbers. What she suggests was that there was an ethnic and racial segregation, and even racism:

Yeah. I disagree. I wish what you were saying was true, which I respect because everybody has their truth. But being someone that moves all over the city, especially in Ramadan I can tell you that there's a lot of segregation in the Muslim community. Like for me as a Muslim, if I walked down in Harlem where I live, I would have many African American Muslims saying Assalamu Alaykum to me, but in these other places, I will look at my fellow Muslims and say Assalamu Alaykum, they will not even acknowledge me. They do not just walk past, it happened to me for so many times, it is still happening, and this is something that happens to many people. So, the Muslim community is very racist. Very segregated.

At this point, the discussion became very heated in the workshop as some of the participants fiercely rejected this argument of racism within the Muslim community. However, even the most fervent critiques of the term racism conceded, "There is a divide between the African American Muslim community and the other Muslim community". They offered their own explanations for this divide, which were all based on cultural differences. Given the existence of cultural differences amongst all

subgroups in the Muslim community, these explanations did not seem to be convincing enough. Another dividing line within the Muslim community in the US was religious orientation it was reported:

Well, another dimension to add I think to the discussion is differences in Muslim communities by religious orientation. Meaning you might have some people who are Salafi oriented, for example, as it has Salafi teachers who maybe they prize their scholars coming from let us say Medina University. You have other people who value other people who have studied that Azhar or have studied at the madrasas from India. So, there's also different orientations in terms of what kind of interpretation of Islam they have.

Many Muslim individuals suggested that New York was such a large metropolitan center, it hosted a micro cosmos of all Muslims in the world: every single Muslim community around the globe has some members living in New York. Some participants suggested that it was healthier to look at intra-community relations on an individual basis, rather than a collective basis:

Uh, I will say it is just individual. There is no such collective relationship. It is just individuals and different people so, I have Iranian friends, I have American friends and I have friends from you name it. I mean, I have different Muslim and non-Muslim friends, you know, and if they have anything, I will go. (Aarifa)

6.2 Relations with non-Muslim communities

The issue of relations with non-Muslim communities created heated debates in the workshop as well as remarkable perspectives at the interviews. Particularly concerning the various so-called 'inter-faith' events, some opposing views were voiced.

On the one side, there were the positive accounts praising the strength and dynamism of the relations between the Muslim community and the non-Muslim communities. One argument to explain why the relations are positive and strong was strategic necessity. Accordingly, the Muslim community, as a religious minority, feels the need to cooperate with other minorities. The same applies for the other minorities as well. At the end of the day, they are still a minority and in the end, their prosperity and even survival will depend on how hospitable the general context remains for minorities:

In many places throughout America, the Muslim community is very well aligned with the Jewish and the Christian leaders. They have to because; the bottom line is that that is what we have to do. If something happens to us, we need some support. I mean today we are aligned even with the LGBTI, A-B-C communities as well. We have to, because look, the Muslim communities have to work with the other minority communities because at the end here, we are the targets and we need allies. When you are the target, you need allies. When you need allies, you need to protect the other ones as well. (Osman)

This cooperation gets even stronger when the communities pool together their strengths for a common cause or against a perceived common enemy. One example was given in one of the interviews:

I think actually, especially when it comes to religious freedom issues; you do see a lot of cooperation between Muslims and Jews. As I think in Kansas or somewhere there was some law that they were trying to adopt. It was targeted at Muslims, but they tried to make it so you cannot use a foreign “religious family law” in US courts. And one of the communities that came out against it that the Jewish community, because they say we have our own religious family laws, they’re also “foreign”. And uh, this is a violation of our rights too. So I think especially as the American right becomes more hostile to Muslims and tries to target Muslims, I think the relationship between the Muslim, the Jewish community will get a little bit better because it’s because of the way the American legal framework is set up in terms of religion. It is impossible to hurt Muslims without collateral damage against the other minorities. (John)

Another issue of heated discussion concerned the issue of ‘inter-faith’ activities. There was a group that believed in the merits of ‘inter-faith’ events in bringing communities together, building bridges through meaningful communication, and countering the misinformation and prejudices that might exist in people’s minds through raising awareness:

Yeah, it has certainly grown a lot. Um, after 9/11, there has been a lot of interfaith work that has happened with the Muslim community and I think it has just been essential for survival really to build those kinds of bridges. And I think from the communities themselves, there’s a lot more interest in understanding who Muslims are, you know. I mean the average community leader that I work with, it is probably not engaged in interfaith work here in New York City. Overall like I think at the national landscape there’s a lot happening. (Jenny) So, usually they organize it every Wednesday at 6 where they will have a different faith groups. I never even knew about many religions. So, they will have people come from those communities and they all speak and after they speak, you have a chance to ask them questions. I have learned so much about all the religions that way and I have not even the last time I was there, I think the ambassador, the Israeli ambassadors, Dora was there. We are all talking together. So, they asked me a lot of questions about Islam. I feel like they were very curious and I asked them questions. (Workshop contribution)

Some workshop participants considered this growth in the inter-faith events also in strategic necessity terms:

Well, in a country, if you are a minority, you have to create certain events, you know, to show the big brothers that you are one of them. So, you have to prove that you were not a terrorist or people will be suspicious. We want to have good relationship with you even with Zionists because you are a minority.

Nevertheless, not everyone feels that the inter-faith events are either beneficial or necessary. In fact, some participants argued that the Muslim community should not engage in inter-faith activities with certain groups, because when it does, it justifies their policies and normalizes problematic practices:

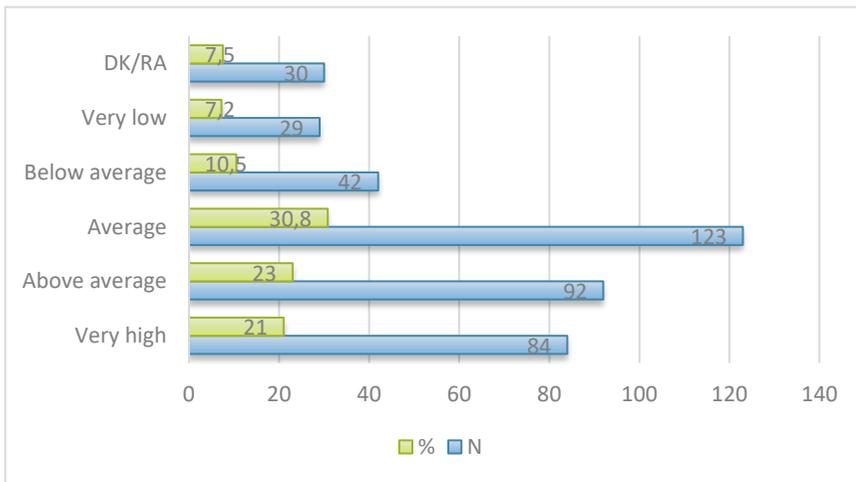
I honestly think that, in my experience, of interfaith events, just our excuse for Muslims to normalize the other relationships with Zionists. Honestly, I do not

think that we should trade our convictions just to fit in or to be accepted. These interfaith events are liberal in nature and their aim is to normalize relations with Zionism. It is as if there is merit and like really building relationships with the Jewish community and Christian community of course. Why not? But you have to do that background check between the Zionist community and that Jewish community.

6.3 Religiosity and Halal

Religiosity is quite a subjective and potentially contentious concept. Without offering a definition of religiosity, the survey respondents were asked to provide their own self-evaluations of how religious they believe they are. They were asked to describe to what extent they believe they fulfil the religious requirements of being a Muslim. Overall, the participants consider themselves to be on the more religious side (Figure 34). More than one in five respondents believed they fulfil the religious requirements of being a Muslim to a ‘very high’ extent. Slightly more than 23% of the respondents reported fulfilling Islamic religious requirements to an ‘above average’ extent while the largest group of respondents, 30.8% suggested that they were on ‘average’. On the other side of the spectrum, only a small 7.5% of the respondents believed that their religious requirement fulfilment level was ‘very low’, with another 7.2% saying that they were fulfilling the requirements of being a Muslim, but only on a ‘below average’ extent (Figure 33)

Figure 33: In general, to what extent do you believe you fulfil religious requirements of being a Muslim?



One increasingly popular issue is the halal food subject. As a result, both of the growing Muslim population living all across the globe and the increasing number of touristic or commercial links with the Muslim world, many non-Muslim countries

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

is trying to increase the halal food options on the market. Still, finding good, fresh, and affordable halal food is a challenge for many Muslim minorities around the world. Therefore, this issue was also asked to the survey respondents. It appears that finding halal food is quite important for the Muslims in the US. 54.8% of the respondents suggested that they ‘always’ look at the labels of food products to check whether they are halal. Another 10% of the participants reported doing the same thing on a frequent

basis; while those respondents who said they do that ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ accounted for 5.4% and 9% of the sample, respectively (Table 15).

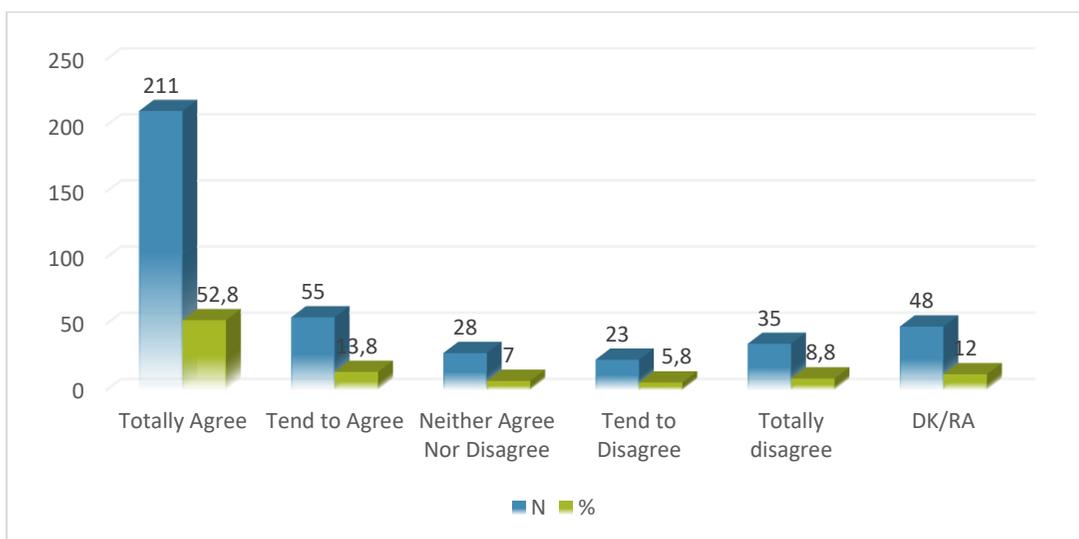
Table 15: When you purchase food in the supermarket, how often do you look at the labels to see whether it is a halal food?

	N	%
Always	219	54.8
Frequently	41	10.3
Sometimes	33	8.3
Rarely	22	5.4
Never	36	9
DK/RA	49	12.2
Total	400	100

Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

When further asked whether they would be willing to pay more for halal food, a similar percentage of the respondents said that they would. Again, more than half of the respondents suggested that they were ready to pay extra for halal food, while smaller minorities mentioned that it was not such an important concern for them (Figure 34).

Figure 34: To what extent would you agree with the following statement: I am ready to buy halal food products even if they are more costly?



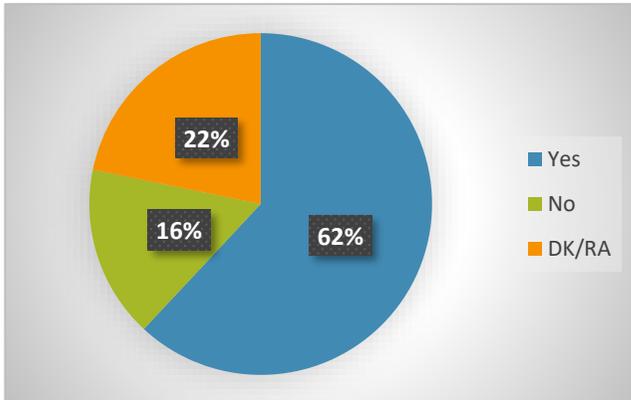
Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

6.4 Muslim Diaspora

One of the central concepts, giving the project its name, is that of ‘Muslim diaspora’. Without providing any explanation, the survey respondents were asked whether they believed that there is a Muslim

diaspora. 62% of the respondents, a quite high figure compared to the findings of many other country cases covered by the GMD research, said yes. Those who do not believe that there is a Muslim diaspora accounted only for 16% of the survey sample, while there was a quite significant number of respondents, 22%, who said 'I don't know or I refuse to answer'. The high percentage of this answer is something in line with the findings from other countries, suggesting that a significant number of Muslims are not familiar with the concept and/or they have not thought about it quite a lot.

Figure 35: Do you believe that there is a Muslim Diaspora?

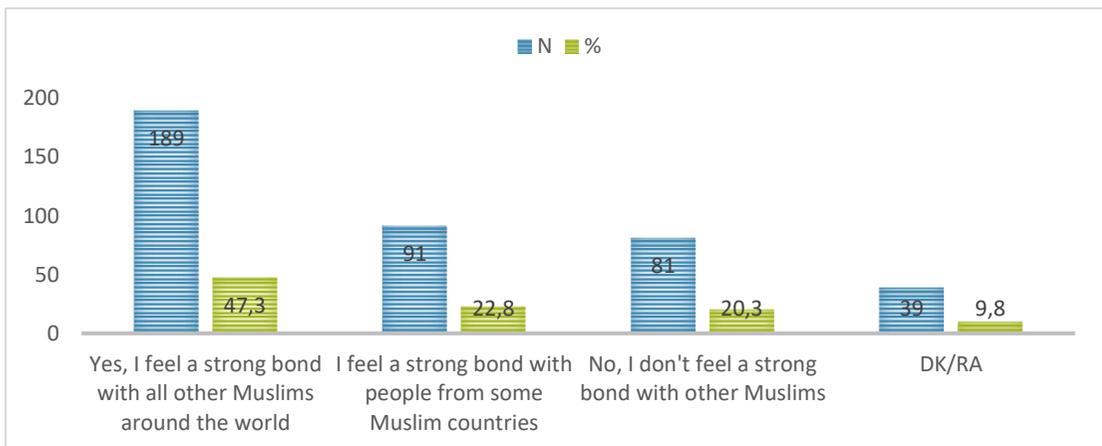


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Leaving the concept of diaspora aside, the respondents were then asked whether or not they feel a strong bond with other Muslims around the world, trying to see whether the Muslim identity creates such a transnational bond amongst all the Muslims across the globe or at least, whether the Muslim community in America feels that bond. Almost half of the respondents, 47.3% to be precise, said that they feel a strong bond with all the Muslims around the

world, no matter which country they live in. In the other half of the survey, the two answers were closely distributed with 22.8% of the respondents expressing feelings of strong bonds only with Muslims from 'some Muslim countries', and 20.3% of the respondents suggesting that they do not feel a strong bond with other Muslims (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Do you feel a strong bond with other Muslims around world?

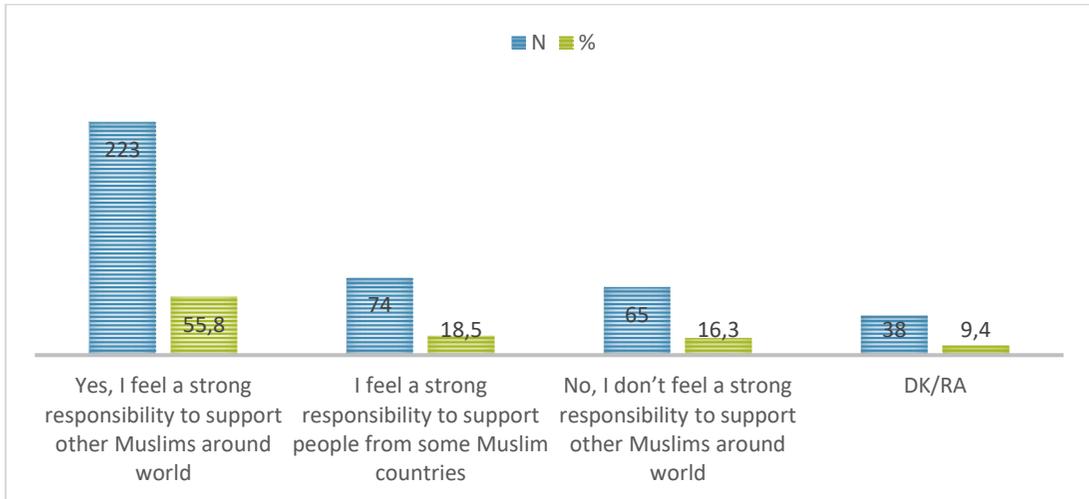


Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Does this feeling of a strong bond translate into a sense of responsibility to support other Muslims? The next question asked exactly this, and consistent with the figures of the previous question, even a

larger majority of 55.8% of the respondents suggested that they do feel a special responsibility to support other Muslims around the world. The two other responses drew similar number of respondents (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Do you feel a special responsibility to support other Muslims around world?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The concept of Muslim diaspora was also discussed at the workshop and in the interviews. While some people took no issue with the concept suggesting that they understand exactly what is meant with the word, others disagreed. They offered a number of reasons why they thought the concept was inappropriate or that it does not work in the Muslim case. One argument was that diaspora was about the idea of home. In other words, a diaspora is a community that was dispersed beyond their homeland and lives in different places on earth with the memory of home.

I have one issue comes to my mind when you think, when I think about the word diaspora of this idea of there being a home and being away from that home versus this being rooted here, being from here as not having an idea of going back to somewhere else. (Workshop contribution)

Accordingly, this was not the case for the Muslims in America since for a large majority of the American Muslims the home was not anywhere else but the US. In addition, even if for some Muslims the primary idea of home does refer to somewhere other than America, it would be a country of origin, not the 'land of Islam'. Therefore, it would be a national referent, not a religious one, which discounts the concept of Muslim Diaspora.

Similar to this argument, some people suggested that for most Muslims primary referent for a diasporic identity would their ethnic/national identity, rather than their religious identity. Therefore, it would be more proper, the argument goes, to talk about 'ethnic/national' diaspora such as an 'Arab diaspora', an 'Iranian diaspora' or a 'Moroccan diaspora' rather than a Muslim one.

Some individuals believe that the Muslim community could be a part of a diaspora, but it requires mobilization and organization. They do not see the Muslim community in the US to be organized enough:

When I compare different communities and ourselves, I find out that they are more organized. They are more serious about fixing the issues and we are not. We always leave the job on one person's head or two person's head, because other two, three, four people and they are unable to sit together and you know, because they do not have that much education. So, so it's our education problem. Right now, I see that we have to get more people who actually like to work under one umbrella. (Badar)

Others suggested that the Muslim community in the US was just too diverse and divided to be called a single diaspora:

I don't think so, because uh, within every single community we are much divided. I mean I will just say like Sudan cases, I have been here for 22 years. There is not a single Sudanese community, which that can come, together and work for common interests. There are many groups, divisions, and people all wanting different things. And at the end of the day, this diminishes what the community can do because you are dividing and dividing all the resources that the community has. It is similar for most Muslim groups. We are too much divided within ourselves (Aarifa)

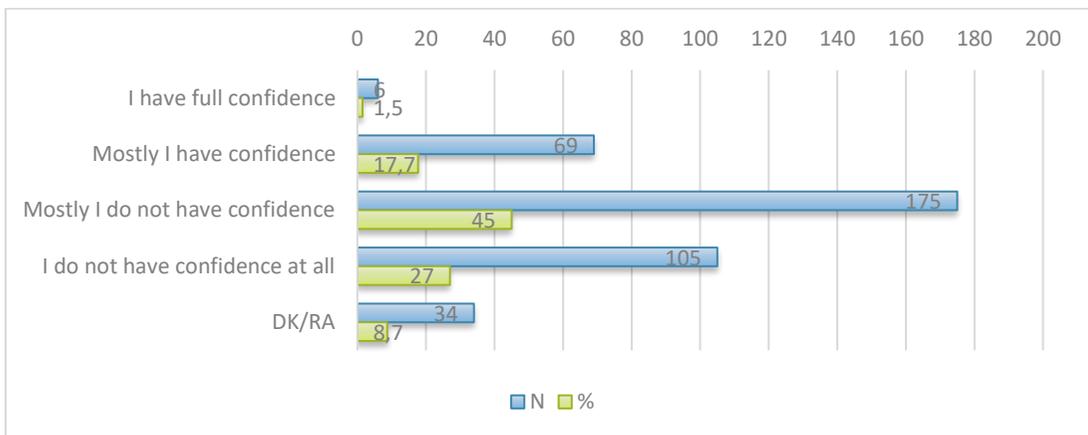
Therefore, for a majority of the individuals, the potential idea of a Muslim diaspora makes sense and it has a very solid background of Muslim Ummah on which to stand, but now, the way the community organizes itself in the American context, it cannot be called a diaspora. Two different interviewees voiced a similar sentiment:

There is a disconnect and a quiet tension, you know, between the Muslims. So, um, that's why I say theoretically, yes, practically no [to the question of global Muslim diaspora]. Um, it seems to me that globally the Muslims have a sense of, you know, Ittihad [unity], with one another, particularly, the Muslim majority countries, you know, they recognize each other. They have the OIC, okay. Etc. OIC does not have an American representative, you know, the most we have ever had is an American envoy to the OIC who was appointed during the Obama administration. His name was Rashad. In practice, Ittihad does not exist among Muslims anywhere. That is a big problem. (Hakeem) I think that American Muslims are going to move towards a Pan-Muslim identity, but I don't know if I would call it diaspora because I don't know if it will be based on the idea of like we were dispersed or there's somewhere else that were from. I think that people are going to think of themselves as Muslims who are rooted in this land. And just like the way I think about it personally is like Islam as a universal religion. Yeah, that can take root anywhere and in history, there have been Muslims all over the world. (John)

6.5 Confidence in Muslim Country Leaders and Awareness of OIC

The survey participants were asked how much confidence they had in the leaders of Muslim countries. Here, the picture was a negative one. Only less than 20% of the respondents said that they have confidence in these leaders. A vast majority of the respondents, 72% to be specific, suggested that they did not have confidence in Muslim country leaders. While the biggest group was the 45% of the sample who said ‘mostly I don’t have confidence’, a very significant 27% was even fiercer, reporting that they ‘don’t have confidence at all’ (Figure 38).

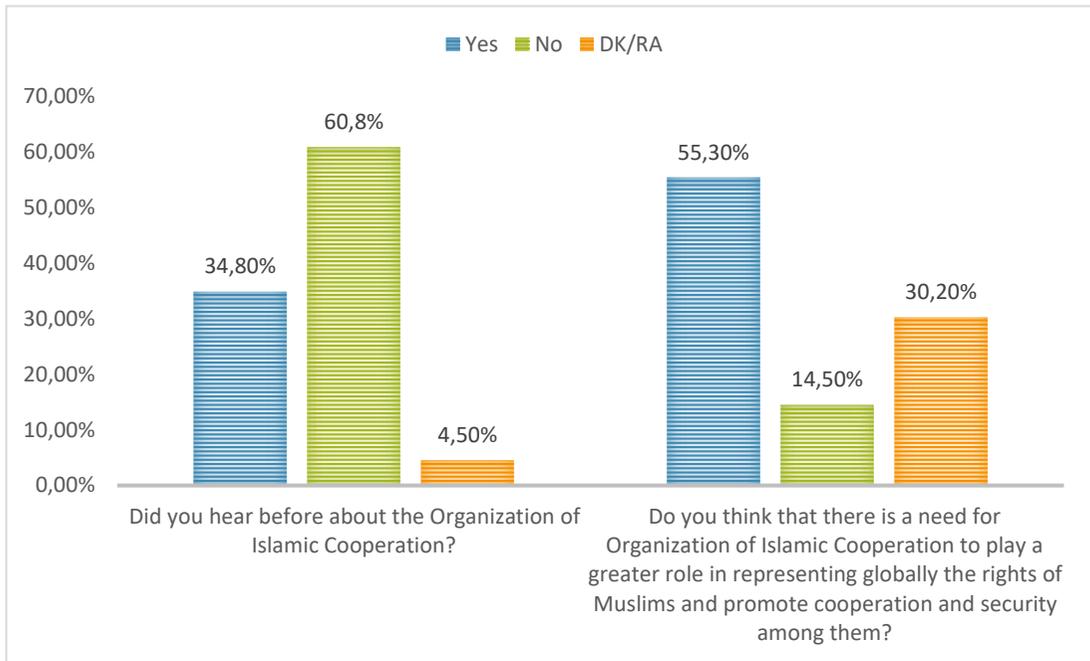
Figure 38: How much confidence do you have in leaders of Muslim countries?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

It appears from this data that Muslim individuals in the US do not trust leaders from individual Muslim countries. However, do they trust Muslim international organizations? Before asking this question, the respondents were first asked whether they knew about the OIC. Then, they were asked, whether they believed that the OIC should play a greater global role for Muslims worldwide. The findings show that a majority of the Muslims in the US did not know about the OIC. 60.8% suggested that they did not hear about the OIC before, while 34.8% said they did. Even though a majority did not know about OIC, the general attitude demonstrates that the American Muslims believe that there is a need for strong Muslim international organizations to exist and play a more active role in supporting Muslim communities around the world. That is why 55.3% of the respondents said that they agreed with that notion, while only 14.5% found this to be unnecessary (Figure 39).

Figure 39: Awareness about the OIC and views on its activity



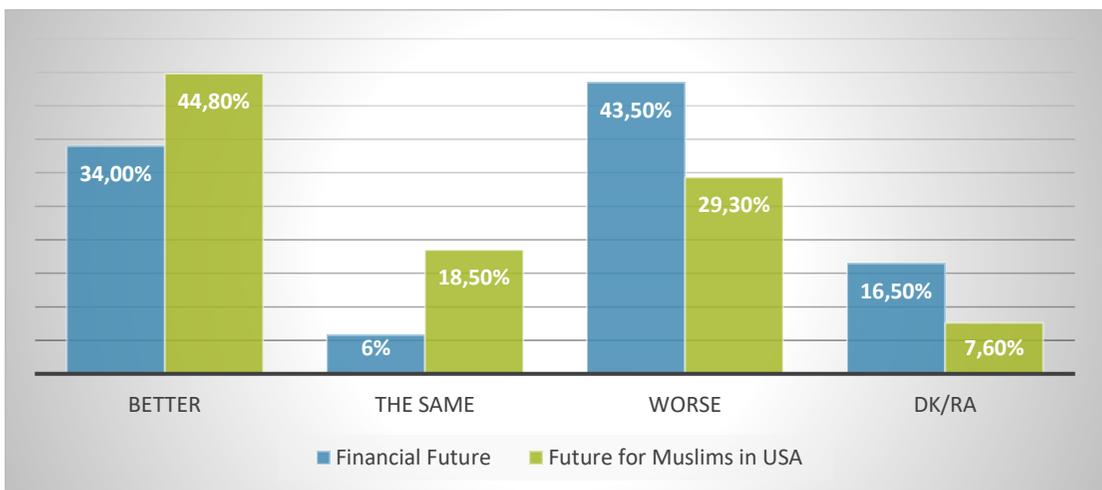
Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

Looking at the responses of the Muslims in the US, it is visible that a lack of confidence for Muslim leader around the world exists. In line with this, is a large number of Muslims who did not hear about the OIC? However, when inquired about the role an Islamic organization should play more than half of the respondents answered positively. These two findings reiterate that Muslims would like to see greater Islamic role to represent Muslims but at the same time, they request for Muslim leaders that they can have confidence in.

7 Future Projections for the Muslims in US

How does the Muslim community in the US see their future? As it was discussed in various sections previously, there is a heightened sense of concern about whether the current political climate and the effects of growing Islamophobia will extend to the future. Overall, the Muslim community in New York stays closer to the optimistic side concerning the future. In the survey, the respondents were asked how the situation of Muslims in the US would be in the future. To make the question more specific, the respondents were asked whether they expected the situation of the Muslims in the country to be better, worse, or the same in 12 months. As suggested, the largest group of respondents was optimistic. 44.8% said that Muslims would be in a better situation in a year, while 18.5% did not think it would be any different. 29.3% of the respondents thought otherwise, suggesting that they expect the situation to deteriorate for Muslims in the US (Figure 40).

Figure 40: How will the situation of Muslims in USA be in the future?



Source: GMD USA Sur., 2019

The workshop participants and the interviewees provided a more in-depth and varied view of the future for Muslims. The general tone was optimistic. However, some respondents voiced their concerns about the future and said they were worried about the current political climate in the country, while others said the future could be very bright, yet it will ultimately depend on the Muslim community itself. For instance, one workshop participant suggested that events involving Muslims were increasing in number and influence, and that it was increasing the crucial 'sense of community':

I feel like there are many events. Small by small these events help the community, you know. Not just in NYU. People know each other more, you know, their sense of community is increasing. As I will go to the Bronx, I know many people and I

feel like people knowing each other more and becoming closer and more accepting. So, I feel like that is great. And Muslims now, especially Muslim women with Ilhan Omar and the older lady going into who is in a high position in the government, they will pull the speed. So, I feel like that is exciting.

As it was discussed in the section on integration, some respondents voiced their concerns about what they perceive to be a danger facing the Muslim community. Accordingly, as part of the integration process growing number of Muslims are losing their religious identity. One participant gave a personal example:

I mean, when I was studying during finals week I would meet a Muslim brother and I asked him, what is your name? And he said, uh, it was a Turkish name. Sorry. And I asked him are you Muslim? And he says, 'my parents are Muslim, but I'm not'. So, I've been seeing a lot of 'my parents are Muslim but I am not cases'. So, I see there are a lot of people who were diverging, you know. They all start like 'let me stop practicing first'. Okay, then 'let me start eating not halal chicken, beef', whatever. Stuff like that. Then it goes even more and more. Like if we keep digressing from certain practices and then afterwards we started eventually lose our faith.

Someone confirmed this observation: "I saw it at least three, four times. Like, I asked this brown person, like, you look Muslim. Are you Muslim? He said, not really, I am an ex Muslim. That is what one person told me. I am an ex-Muslim or Agnostic." Others also joined in the discussion suggesting that this is really a potential problem for Muslim youth:

When someone said earlier that Muslims are the biggest growing population in America; we need to realize that we are losing Muslims, too. Many Muslims are getting out of faith. I was just opening up a statistics that I said, even among Muslim students premarital sex, among women is 48%, among men 57%. First experience of alcohol is very high. This, studies have been done.

Q. What needs to be done about this?

The only way we can spread Islam. That should be every one of our goals. I am here for Dawa. And the only way we can make ourselves heard is becoming a part of this society. This is what the Jewish did and that is the way they became successful. Now, this organization Zakat Foundation of America is an organization who started only getting money funding from Muslims and only helping Muslims. Most recently, they have been helping, uh, American victims. When I say American victims, they go help people in hurricanes. What happens is then you get funding from others. When you get funding from others, meaning you are becoming part of the community. The community has to embrace the American culture, not all the American values, good American values.

In one of the interviews, a prominent African-American Imam said that this problem was not peculiar to the Muslim youth. Indeed, it was a general problem of the society and the youth from all religious groups were suffering from the same. Therefore, when he was asked whether he believed that Muslim youth were losing their religious identity, he responded saying that this was what he talked about in his khutbah the very same day:

Wow, Uh, boy, you sure you did not come to my khutbah today? Because I mentioned these things in the khutbah today. Um, one of the things that are going on now in America is that religious groups are losing a sense of religious identity. This is across the country. Christian groups, Jewish groups, definitely. Uh, uh, here in New York City they have churches closing. One of the big dilemmas that Christian leaders and Jewish leaders, they speak about it is the loss of a religious identity amongst the young generation. The Jews more so than anybody else. You know, they are losing. But if you ask them, are you Jews? They tell you yes. Are you proud to be Jewish? Yes. Do you practice it? No. All right. Same thing with Islam and, and so there is a legitimate fear that this might happen to the Muslims. Uh, I do not believe and Allah knows best that it would be to the same degree, but we are already experiencing amongst the Muslim millennials a diminishing of what I would call a religious base identity as Muslim. Same thing. You ask, are you Muslim, yes, I am Muslim. They have a, a cultural rootedness. (Hakeem)

Therefore, it appears that one of the main issues that the Muslims will have to deal with is how they will respond to this widespread trend among young people. Another major issue concerning the future of Muslims in the US was how the current political climate will affect them. Many people mentioned President Donald Trump and his discourses, as well as actions, concerning Muslims. When asked to evaluate how they expect this period to affect the Muslims, there were varied views. Some people were pessimistic, yet again; some people believed that there was so much to remain hopeful. One workshop participant said: "He is terrible for Muslims in the United States. It is bad. He does not care. You know, what happened in Syria and what happened in Pakistan, but he just banned the Muslims to come to the US. Muhammed Ali".

There was a different view as well. One workshop participant suggested, a bit sarcastically, that the presidency of Donald Trump was "the greatest thing that happened for the Muslims!" When some other participants objected and asked whether he was joking, he went on to explain himself:

No, I am not. Look! In Obama, we had two Muslim scholars, brothers and sisters of ours to be the advisors of Obama as Muslims, Dahlia and Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, I believe. Right? They were the advisors of the Obama administration for Muslim communities. Now, what happened with those that we took that as granted, you know, we took ourselves as being Muslims, uh, in this country is granted, we did not work. We did not do anything. We did not work in any political activity. Thank God, Allah gave us Trump, this helped us understand what we are against and we are working harder than ever that we know that one day we can all be killed or put into concentration camps. You can hear these things in some parts of America. I believe you have not gone to West Virginia. I traveled the country and I can tell you. Look, I have not, uh, my wife's grandmother, she is telling me that the best Muslim is the person with the tag on it. She is a countrywoman. She is 98 years old. She is a Trump supporter. She says that Muslims should be registered. They should be known. I am his son-in-law, one of them. I live in their household and she thinks I should be registered too, so the, at the end of the day that the reality is this, the people are brainwashed and these people have guns. But long story short is that that when that day comes, if Trump didn't come through, we wouldn't have Ilhan Omar today who wouldn't have a Rashida Talib today.

Because of Trump, we have our voices heard well. Because of Trump, the Yemeni community is now involved. Engaging our community is politically with the system, becoming more part of the system. We are becoming legitimately part of the society. The Muslim ban brought the Jewish and the gay and homosexuals out to the airports to defend us. So, CNN for the first time talked about Muslims being demonized in this country. We uh, with Trump we became legal. That is why we should all thank Trump.

In the interviews, this issue was a major point as well. Some interviewees agreed that the current political climate and the Trump presidency had an unintended contribution by bringing the Muslims into the political discussions in the country:

[On rising discourse of Islamophobia] I think that is going to make a difference. It's going to make it grow faster. It is going to backfire. I think it is just going to grow faster when you, when you tell people they are wrong or they cannot do it, it should not do it or watch out for this or watch out for that. It will backfire. If you were here and you saw how many Americans came to those airports after Trump made his little terrain, you would realize that how many people actually would work with us (Mahmut).

[The Islamophobic discourse] does, it does have an effect, but not to the point of changing people's mind. But the only way you can kind of put immunity and protection to your community, it's through your own work. You work hard. You convince people that I am your neighbor. You can count on me. Regardless what he says, what whoever says on TV, he knows you firsthand? He does not have to listen to the person who speaks on TV. Yes, there are some people mediatic people that they listened to the news, but if you are on the ground and working hard and you're always support them, that trash is just going to go whatever it goes but he's not going to affect people's view will be the reference from you, you are the ones through your actions. American people are not stupid. American people, they are very smart and they know what they are doing and we as American Muslims, we have learned the lesson that you want to be successful, then you have to work. (Alban)

Some other interviewees suggested that the issue was exaggerated outside of the US. It was not that bad in the country. One non-Muslim interviewee said that the real issue is larger than Donald Trump is:

I think that Trump's America is a temporary problem that is going to pass because of the intense reaction that his policies, not just as anti-Muslim, but anti-immigrant policies in general have gotten from people. I think what is new about Trump's America is the polarization. So I think what's going to happen in more liberal parts of America, which are more open parts of America, people are going to become far more sympathetic to Muslims because they see them as targets of the right-wing, kind of Trump nativism. Um, and so I think these places like New York are going to become far more accommodating to Muslims. And I think as we, as older generations of immigrants settled down, their children who are assimilating with both of America as a whole and each other or going to any, our generation is going to create these robust Muslim institutions that later

immigrants are going to be able to assimilate into like kind of right now we are building the model for assimilation of Muslims. And like I said, in the same way that Jewish people did 100 years ago. (John)

Not everyone was so optimistic. Quite a few individuals suggested that they were worried about the future for Muslims in America and that was more because of the Muslim community itself than the external factors. Accordingly, the current climate has made particularly uneducated and poor Muslims more vulnerable:

I feel the future is in danger, because now we are talking about uneducated Muslims, you know, without education a Muslim does not know what he is doing and anybody can come in his life and change his views because. Honestly. You know, we try to do fundraising for our masjid and anytime we tried to do fundraising, you know, nobody wants to give money, people have no trust on Muslim institutions, you know, and, and, and all of these institutions who are already rich, you know, uh, they don't want to share their wealth. (Badar)

The bottom line was that the Muslims in the US believe that it will be the Muslim community itself who will be the main authors of their future story:

I think the future is very bright if we do not shoot ourselves in the foot and we do not fall into this tribal track. If we actually choose the best and the brightest for every position, not the ones from our ethnic group or something like that. (Abdullah) The future is bright if we continue with the way we are working and with the passion. (Alban) I mean, I think that if the community continues to develop and exercise a political voice, I think there is a potential for a positive future but it is going to take a lot of organizing on the ground. And I'm not entirely sure that I'm going to see it in my lifetime. Maybe I will, you know, I do not know. Inshallah. It is hard. It is hard, because it has taken so long even to get to this point, you know. Um, but I mean it has, it is great that Muslims are being elected into political office when we have not even elected a female president of this country, you know? So, I think that shows a positive thing for the future. (Jenny)

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

The US is a very important country for the Muslim diaspora. How it portrays Muslims in its political discourse as well as outlets of popular culture such as Hollywood movies or music influences how Islam and Muslims are perceived all across the globe.

The US has a very dynamic, vibrant, and diverse Muslim community, so much so that it is the only faith group in which no single ethnic or racial community has a clear demographic dominance. In addition, a vast majority of the Muslims in America has US citizenship and it is estimated that more than half are native-born members of the American society. Still, just like most other individuals living in the US, many Muslims in the country could trace their ancestry to immigrants, who moved or were brought as slaves, to this country in the last couple of centuries.

As a country of immigration, issues of integration have a long history in the US. What is known as the ‘melting pot’ model of integration is simultaneously criticized by some people for asking immigrants to assimilate into the dominant American culture and identity, and praised by others for offering the immigrants opportunity to become full-fledged citizens of the country and equal members no matter where they are from and who they are. The Muslim community in the US also displays both tendencies: the melting pot model is praised for being very effective and inclusive in making everyone whom wishes to become Americans feel so. At the same time, particularly older generation Muslims express concern about their children and grandchildren being assimilated into American pop culture while losing their ethnic and religious identity. The latter group suggests that the parents should be very careful in helping their kids construct secure identities that are both Muslim and American.

Another point to highlight from the American case is the discourse of the ‘American dream’. Again, mixed accounts of the benefits of the individualist American system based on qualifications and hard work, instead of identities, were provided. On the one hand, many Muslims spoke very positively about the opportunities that are available for anyone who is willing to work hard and the easiness of social mobility. The perils of individualism, materialism, and consumerism that are part of this capitalistic spirit were condemned for negatively influencing the Muslim community.

As a federal country, states retain a considerable degree of autonomy in the US. Therefore, the legal and political contexts in which Muslims live can be quite different depending on which states they live. There is a strong federal government with a binding constitution and overarching institutions that have authority across the country. The Muslims in New York, from whom this research collected primary data, appear to value

- the education system and chances of social mobility that good education affords;
- economic prosperity in an equal-opportunities market place; and perhaps most significantly,
- the rights and liberties as well as the perceived protection of these rights and liberties provided by the state.

The Muslims, at the same time are concerned about some of the challenges that they perceive in the US including:

- growing racism and Islamophobia;
- lack of solidarity and unity among Muslims, which prevent them from being a stronger, more prosperous, and more influential community in the country; and,
- discrimination that they face, particularly because of their religion and ethnicity

One significant theme that kept emerging in the New York field research was the concept of growing Islamophobia in the US. Many participants suggested that this was a fact particularly in some political discourses and in the media; however, it does not have a strong counterpart in the society- at least not in New York. Although it is something that is harmful for Muslims, the growth of Islamophobia also had several unintentional positive consequences for the Muslim community

- it brought solidarity and unity for the diverse Muslim community,
- it brought Muslim community and several other communities that defend the rights and liberties of minorities closer together,
- it made the society more aware of Islam and Muslims,
- it prompted many politicians to seek for Muslim advisors and staff.

Despite the suggested lack of solidarity and the divided nature of a very diverse community, the Muslims in the US have gradually made it into every significant aspect of the American politics, society, culture, and economy. One can only expect the significance of Muslims to grow in this country and the Muslims themselves are very optimistic about such prospects.

The Muslims have strong civil society organizations that are extremely open for collaboration and cooperation with other American NGOs as well as international actors from abroad. The American community is not by the least an inward-looking, closed community and they do not want to be isolated. International organizations particularly need to reach out to the American Muslim community and engage with them further.

The American Muslims appreciate the international attention drawn to the US to defend them from the rising discourse of Islamophobia. However, they are not happy with some of the language directed towards the US, which they believe does not help the Muslims in America. They are in the opinion that the criticisms towards Islamophobia needs to endorse a constructive language that should not put American Muslims and the American society in opposing terms.

Annexes

I. List of Interviewees in New York City

Pseudonym	Who	Gender
Badar	Pakistani, Imam	Male
Mahmut	Turkish-American, retired from NYC Municipality	Male
Yusuf	Chinese-American, Converted Muslim	Male
Aarifa	Sudani, Works for UN	Female
Hakeem	African-American Imam	Male
Abdullah	African-American, Academic and Imam	Male
Alban	Albanian, Imam and School Principal	Male
Osman	Turkish, Works at Finance and Banking	Male
John	Italian-Iranian-American, Christian Student	Male
Hasan	African-American, Student	Male
Jenny	Indian, Muslim, Political Advisor	Female
Salma	Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Social Worker and Activist	Female

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