# Islamic Religiosity in the West:

## Belonging and Political Engagement in Multicultural Cities

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**Discovery Project
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Islamic Religiosity and Challenge of
Political Engagement and National
Belonging in Multicultural Western Cities

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## Project Summary

This project investigates how participation
in Islamic religious practices strengthens
attachments to the western cities where Muslims
have chosen to live. It will contribute to global,
national and local policy outcomes that focus
on the challenges of accommodating minority
religions in diverse western cities.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# EXECUTIVE
# SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project. The project uses a comparative approach to explore the everyday experiences of a broad cross-section of practising Muslims in the West.

The study provides insights into the role of Islamic beliefs, rituals, and faith-based community practices in shaping experiences of active citizenship, belonging, and political engagement in three countries: Australia, France, and the USA. Fieldwork was conducted in selected Western cities in three countries: 1) Australia (Melbourne); 2) France (Lyon and Grenoble with complementary interview data from Paris); and 3) USA (Detroit).

Research Data for the project were collected using a mixed methods approach across the three sites: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and online and face-to-face survey questionnaires. Research participants across the three sites included 384 persons (sampled, for example, by gender, age, ethnicity, and sect). All participants were aged 18 and over. The full list of mosques and community organisations who assisted the study in all research sites can be found in the Acknowledgments.

In Melbourne, Australia, 49 individual interviews, including with Imams and Sheikhs (N=3), were conducted to elicit rich qualitative data. Four focus groups were held with 26 representatives from Muslim organisations in Melbourne, including: Islamic Society of Deakin University (ISDU), Hazara Women's Network, Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS), and Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (MWCHR).

In Detroit, USA, 33 participants were interviewed. Participants included

Figure 1

**Research data sources and number of participants**

| Empirical Site/ Data Sources | Questionnaires | Focus Groups | In-Depth Interviews/ Photo-Elicitation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Melbourne | 96 participants | 26 participants (4 sessions) | 49 participants |
| Lyon/Grenoble/Paris | 93 participants | 6 participants (1 session) Grenoble | 33 participants |
| Detroit | 48 participants | 0 | 33 participants |
| **Total per Task** | **237 participants** | **32 participants (5 sessions)** | **115 participants** |
| **TOTAL PARTICIPANTS** | **384** | | |

Imams (N=4), Muslim community leaders (such as coordinators of various community projects within the Detroit's Muslim community), mosque attendees and participants at the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Annual conference, held in Downtown Detroit in 2014.

In France, individual interviews were conducted with 33 participants. 1 focus group was conducted with 6 participants from Grenoble. Participants were recruited from a diverse range of Islamic community organisations including: Tawhid Islamic Centre, Union of Young Muslims, Islamic Association *Al Islah*, Organisation against Islamophobia, and several mosques throughout France. Interviews were also conducted with sheikhs and Imams from a broad cross-section of the French population (N=5). For a full participant list see Figure 1.

Overall, 237 respondents completed questionnaires in the three sites, of these: 96 respondents in Australia, 93 in France, and 48 in the USA (see Figure 2).

Three key themes emerged from the research: **1) Self, Identity, and Islamic Ritual; 2) Religious Practices, Public Space, and Social Connectedness; and 3) Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Engagement in a Changing Geopolitical Context.**

A detailed discussion of each follows.

Figure 2

**Survey sample at a glance**

| Country | Gender | | Age | | Country of Birth | | Self-Identity | | | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | M | 18 - 24 | 25+ | Local | Other | Practising Muslim | Non Practising Muslim | Cultural Muslim | Arabic | African | South East Asians | Other | |
| US | 36 | 9 | 28 | 20 | 30 | 15 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 15 | **48** |
| France | 31 | 55 | 24 | 69 | 63 | 21 | 71 | 8 | 2 | 62 | 2 | 3 | 15 | **93** |
| Australia | 47 | 49 | 43 | 53 | 47 | 49 | 80 | 8 | 1 | 30 | 10 | 9 | 38 | **96** |
| **TOTAL** | **114** | **113** | **95** | **142** | **140** | **85** | **190** | **17** | **5** | **105** | **17** | **17** | **68** | **237** |

NB: Some participants chose not to disclose information for all demographic questions and therefore, some responses are missing. Data in the table reflect only disclosed information.

## SELF, IDENTITY, AND ISLAMIC RITUALS

In establishing the role played by Islam in shaping the *subjective* dimensions of religiosity across the research sample, the overarching theme of self, identity, and Islamic rituals emerged. Data comprising this theme suggest that the relationship between God and the individual is developed and nurtured through daily rituals and practices. This relationship emerged as a significant, if not central, aspect of the participants' self-identity, worldviews, ways of dealing with hardship, and ethical orientation towards others. As Riaz Hassan (2013, p. 49) explains, the ritual practices of Islam, while introducing a social dimension, also entail a 'complex interaction between individual meaning and experience and social values and expectations'. Thus Hassan (2013, p. 49) concludes, 'rituals are interrelated at both the individual and collective levels', meaning that embodied practices act upon understandings of self-identity and subjective experience, as well as underpinning the agentic capacities of participants in the study.

Prayer is considered the most important religious practice, and the foundation of obligatory practices – known as the five pillars of Islam. Except for pilgrimage *(hajj),* the obligatory practices are widely and regularly observed. For example, prayers and fasting during Ramadan are important observations in the Islamic calendar. Participants spoke of the personal significance and value of prayer, describing it as 'spiritual food' that contributes to discipline and good moral character. The personal and emotional benefits include a feeling of peace that inspires humility, patience, self-confidence, and increased self-esteem. These outcomes are practices of respect, care, and responsibility towards others.

The individual benefits of prayer and other ritual practices contribute to subjective feelings: of inner peace, spiritual centred-ness, connection with God, and self-knowledge. While this understanding of faith – as a source of subjective nourishment, inner strength, and resilience – is present in the samples from all research sites, participants' experiences are also shaped by the contrasting political structures and social policies for accommodating religious differences in each location.

In Australia (Melbourne), for example, multiculturalism is shaped by the liberal and secular political landscape in such a way that participants experienced a sense of freedom to practise their faith as a core aspect of their identity. For young people, their Muslim identity – even if evolving in Western contexts – is a significant influence on the way they live their lives and encounter other communities. Nonetheless, the ways in which religion is expressed, or mixed with other cultural identifiers and practices, is complex and dependent on several variables, including: place of residence, gender, class, race, country of birth, and what religious sect or school they belong to.

In USA (Detroit), *religious identity and spirituality* are more pronounced among African American Muslim groups, whose historical conversion to Islam dates to the Black civil rights movement there. Conversion to Islam commonly took place through the Nation of Islam (NOI), a branch of Islam associated with the African American civil rights movements and militant Black activism of the 1960s. The conversion to NOI is credited with awakening subjective experiences and feelings of dignity among the Black community, for whom histories of racial inequality and slavery had degraded experiences of self-worth and self-knowledge. Among Detroit-based participants, African American converts to Islam – many of whom have parents and grandparents raised in NOI – strongly convey the importance of discipline and structure. NOI is often discounted as an unfaithful practice of Islam, and most adherents, including almost all participants in this study, have since reverted to mainstream Sunni Islam; though NOI mosques still exist and continue to be attended in Detroit. While African American participants in this study were largely comprised of converts to Islam, it is important to note that among the original African slave population in the USA, 16 per cent were already Muslims – suggestive of a much earlier an important linkage between Islam and African American identities. All African American participants in this study understood Islam to be a key source of resistance, historically and contemporarily, challenging systematic histories of racial injustice and helping to rebuild experiences of self-worth, confidence, and agency.

In France (Grenoble/Lyon/Paris), the secular politics and laws of the French Republic shape the subjective experiences of religiosity. Some participants experienced these secular laws as a barrier, not only to public expressions of religiosity, but also to subjective feelings of freedom, agency, and hope. In the French context, especially among the 18–24-year-old cohort, non-obligatory practices, such as wearing the *hijab*, a beard, or specific types of clothing, took on extra significance as visible signs of resistance to secular state policies and the Islamophobic gaze.

## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, PUBLIC SPACE, AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

When speaking about the communal meanings and importance of many religious practices (such as *hajj*, fasting, and prayer during Ramadan), participants expressed that these instil special feelings and produce particular moralities, many of which relate to issues of social justice. For example, *hajj* is described as an embodiment of the moral teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, communicating the equality of all races, and of rich and poor. The giving of alms (*zakat*) and other charitable work during Ramadan also reflect feelings of communal support and social connectedness.

Generally, religious practices in Islam are oriented towards nourishing a connection to God and the self. Among participants the practices of Ramadan, for example, generated an inclination to reach out to others, including through actions driven by social justice. Participants attached more significance to private religious rituals such as prayer, than they did to significant religious sites, or the community. Fasting during Ramadan was found to be conducive to this same (private) experience, if a little more connected to a sense of belonging to a community.

In Melbourne, Australia, neighbourliness is an important civic virtue that points to the importance of social connections; this value is also integral to Muslim beliefs, and faith-based practices. The civic value of neighbourliness – described as taking care of one's neighbours – suggests that Muslim religious beliefs and practices are tied with conceptions of virtuous citizenship in Melbourne.

In Detroit, USA, the experiences of Muslim communities reflect historical upheavals associated with migration, industrialisation, de-industrialisation, and racial tensions. These historical circumstances have increased the importance of place and community as spaces of *resistance* and *resilience* for Muslims. The Muslim communities of Detroit are, for instance, spatially and spiritually centred on the mosque, which acts as a space of community, hope, and renewal.

Muslim communities in this city have a long history, given that Islam has been associated with the Black Power Movement since the Great Depression. Significantly, Detroit is home to the NOI Temple Number One established in 1930, and NOI continues to have an important presence there.

In Lyon/Grenoble/Paris, France, some participants reported that observing the five daily prayers at work or place of study was challenging because of the secular laws that limit the observance of religious practice in public institutions. Nonetheless, participants value this ritual practice as conducive to increased sense of peace, comfort, and self-esteem. The feelings of inner strength arising from participation in religious ritual practices led Muslim participants to adopt attitudes of openness and tolerance towards non-Muslims.

# CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING, AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN A CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Significantly, this research project has found that the core beliefs and practices of Islam correspond with both *liberal* and *republican* traditions of citizenship in Western liberal democracies. There is a strong focus on values of equality, diversity, and rights, corresponding to the liberal tradition. At the same time, many of the core practices of the faith encourage practices of active citizenship through interventions committed to social justice and a 'common good'; these align closely with the republican tradition and were particularly noted in the Detroit and French samples. There was some ambiguity, however, among the participant responses to questions regarding the connections between citizenship and religiosity: some viewed citizenship as a legal set of norms and status separate from forms of community engagement and civic participation.

Interview participants' forms of political participation varied, from normative to less conventional forms of engagement. Normative forms of engagement included joining political campaigns, voting in elections, and running in state and local council elections. While less conventional forms of engagement included participating in political discussions on social media, and everyday protest actions.

In Melbourne, Australia, with the increase of Muslim migration in the 1970s and 1980s came the need to establish organisations capable of negotiating a space for Muslim representation within the Australian political structure. This was particularly the case with the introduction of multiculturalism as policy at the federal and state levels during this period, which formally served to integrate and regulate migrant communities by establishing representative bodies to mediate between government and communities in ways that preserved cultural traditions while promoting allegiance to a national political will. Over time these organisations have also become important advocacy bodies, particularly since September 11.

**A range of organisations have engaged more actively with media and training, becoming interested in promoting and publicising the more activist types of citizenship, and thus enhancing the public voice of Muslim Australians.**

In Detroit, USA, given the significance of the city's economic and social disadvantage, and the deeper historical connections between Islam and the city, Muslim communities were identified as key actors in Detroit's renewal. Connections between acts of religiosity and citizenship were therefore most often conveyed through active community practices.

These practices included grassroots volunteering and forming civic associations to clean up neighbourhoods, address poverty and racism within and between communities, and bring greater 'lived' justice to Detroit's citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim. This was done through a range of 'citizenship interventions' including: cultivating community gardens in vacant lots; buying and rehabilitating abandoned homes, neighbourhoods, and schools; forming 'block clubs' to keep areas safe and clean; working through mosque outreach activities; voting

and becoming politically engaged in forms of public activism and protest. Some community members and entrepreneurs also set up their own crowdfunding social media platforms to raise funds for community projects.

Yet, there were several participants who claimed that, because of contested and often fractious sectarian community politics, many Muslims preferred to 'keep to the shadows' and perform their citizenship in less visible ways. This may be related to intra-community tensions as well as the effects of being a community under the microscope, given the common association in the West of Muslim communities with terrorism. Representatives of Mosque organisations spoke of the importance for Muslim religious leaders to become deeply engaged in rebuilding Detroit. Particularly important was the role of these leaders in conducting interfaith dialogue through bridging activities with other faith organisations. Participants also praised Muslim leaders for becoming involved in intra-faith initiatives addressing shared community problems.

In France, participants linked the expression of their faith to positive public action. Faith was conveyed through religious practices and rituals leading to good behaviours and social and ethical actions. They encompassed positive deeds directed at the Muslim community, as well as those targeted at non-Muslim society. Participants strongly expressed Muslims' responsibility to contribute to the advancement of the whole society economically and socially, irrespective of religious, ethnic, or cultural belonging. While under constant scrutiny by their politicians and non-Muslim French society, participants felt

**Figure 3**
Keysborough
Turkish Islamic Centre,
Melbourne, Australia.
Source: Authors,

that Muslims should be role models. In their view, citizenship is anchored in, and facilitated by, religious teachings found in the *Qur'an*, which in many ways – through the values of tolerance, respect, humanity, and responsibility for public welfare – are not dissimilar to the French constitutional values of fraternity and equality.

These international comparative findings reveal that the construction of Islam as 'problematic', prominent in public discourse is in the West, is at odds with the everyday subjective understandings of faith among participants. The political climate and negative framing of Islam and Muslim civic and political engagement have worsened over the last decade for a range of reasons: such as the conflicts of the War on Terror after September 11, and the emergence of the so-called Islamic State, which is particularly understood as a symbol of disconnect between Islamic faith

traditions and Western concepts of democracy, liberty, and individual rights. Despite this acrimonious political climate, our empirical findings suggest that Islamic religious and spiritual traditions are often employed as a source of *resilience* towards deeply embedded problems of social inequality and systemic injustice. Islamic practices also act as a conduit for *civic engagement in local communities.* Faith-based beliefs in everyday practice serve to embody and reinforce democratic citizenship ideals (liberal and republican), and to strengthen individual's commitments to pluralism.

The findings also show that the distorted frame through which Muslim communities are viewed in the West when combined with failings of religious leadership, tend to limit individual experiences of justice that are often enabled through mechanisms of citizenship.

Negative portrayal of Muslim communities in the media and public discourse tend to enhance experiences of racism and social exclusion, fostering psychological dispositions that may lead to youth disengagement and radicalisation.

These findings have significant policy implications related to the need to *reshape the public discourse* on Islamic religiosity and *redesign* policy attitudes in relation to Islam and its practice. These findings call for a *re-balancing of public debates and policy approaches,* which currently tend to securitise and problematise Islamic religiosity. By examining the diverse articulations of Islamic religiosity in Western public spaces, we discern meaning, hope, and a source of renewal for democratic and liberal conceptions of justice. These notions serve to promote intercultural understanding and belonging, and must be more prominent in public discourse.

# INTRODUCTION

There is increasing debate and contestation regarding the role of religiosity in the public sphere, particularly related to Muslims living in the West.

Lobo & Mansouri 2012; Mansouri & Marotta 2012; Ramadan 2004; Roy 2007; Turner, 2008

Central to this debate is the question of whether Western Muslims have the individual capacity and the societal support to be fully active citizens while upholding their religious values and practices. Addressing this important but empirically under-investigated question, this report provides insight into the role of Islamic beliefs, rituals, and faith-based community practices in shaping experiences of active citizenship, belonging, and political engagement in three culturally diverse urban sites: Melbourne, Australia; Lyon/Grenoble/Paris, France; and Detroit, USA. This report is the outcome of a three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery grant, comparing the experiences of a broad cross-section of Muslims living in three Western multicultural cities.

**The Project aimed to:**

1. Identify, describe, and analyse forms of participation in Islamic rituals and faithbased cultural activities among Muslims in selected Western cities.

2. Investigate the extent to which Islamic beliefs, values, and faith-based participation contribute to local and national belonging.

3. Analyse how spiritual and cultural religiosity among practising Muslims impedes or provides possibilities for political engagement.

**Islam in the West**

Western cities have long been regarded as sites where secular visions of modernity are enacted, and where religious activity is relegated to the private sphere. The changing narratives of modernity however, have seen the vibrancy of migrant communities and cultural and religious diversity in Western cities emerge as significant factors enriching urban culture. In line with this, Richard Florida (2002, 2005a, 2005b) links the flourishing of global cities of the West with 'talent migration' and the settling of the creative class. Nevertheless, some aspects of religious ritual and innovation in urban contexts have become the increased focus of social and cultural inquiry and problematisation (Becci, Burchardt & Casanova 2013).

Melbourne, Detroit, and Lyon/Grenoble (augmented with data from Paris) were purposively selected as optimal urban locations in which to conduct this multi-sited analysis for several reasons. First, each city has a Muslim population that is ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse. As cities with growing Muslim demographic profiles, these populations have been the subjects of media reports and empirical research conveying tensions surrounding the visibility of Muslim religious identity and practice in public spaces. Second, cities in Australia, France and USA were selected because of their divergent policy approaches to religiosity, with different levels of recognition and accommodation afforded to ethno-religious minorities in the public sphere at the level of policy and discourse (Haddad 2002; Turner 2008; Mansouri, Lobo & Johns 2015).

In Australia for example, Section 116 of the Constitution explicitly provides that the Commonwealth shall not legislate to establish any religion, impose any religious observance, or prohibit the free exercise of any religion. Despite extensive funding for religious schools and the increasing visibility of mosques, Islamic rituals and cultural practices in Australian cities, the Muslim presence continues to incite a range of negative feelings (Dunn, Klocker & Salabay 2007); these have intensified with the revival of right-wing nationalist parties demonising Islam and racialising Muslims.

In the USA the First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees religious and civilian freedoms of all citizens, yet in everyday life Muslims are viewed with suspicion, particularly since the events of September 11 (Bhargava 2009). Furthermore, since the completion of data collection for this project, President-elect Donald Trump has attempted to legislate a ban on Muslim immigration to USA – though not without significant legal challenges from States' rights excising constitutionally sanctioned freedom of religion. Nonetheless these recent attempts by the White House point to increasing levels of acceptance for religious discrimination and exclusion in the public discourse.

In France, there are policies prohibiting religious symbols, including the 'Ban on face covering' law (2011). As Cigainero (2016) explains, this ban applies to 'the complete covering of one's face in public', it relates 'to scarves, masks and motorcycle

helmets, but it particularly affects Muslim women who wear the full Islamic veil, or *niqab'*. The law follows an earlier ban of religious symbols in French schools and government offices that applied to the *hijab*. These interventions are thought to uphold values of freedom and equality. In practice, however, the French model of secularism with its emphasis on excluding visible religiosity from the public sphere can have the effect of alienating the five million Muslim citizens (8.5 per cent of the total population), many of whom are concentrated in *banlieues,* known as the 'problem suburbs' of French cities (Benhabib 2006; Open Society Institute 2007).

The researchers hypothesised that *different approaches to the governance* of religious and ethnic diversity at national, state and local government levels, coupled with *different ethnic, social, and economic demographics,* and variations in *subjective, intersubjective, performative, and affective experiences* of living in the city may shape different experiences of political and social participation and belonging. Furthermore, since the completion of data collection for this project, Paris has been the site of two terrorist-related attacks, resulting in significant loss of life. These events have had and

will continue to have ramifications for formulating migration and asylum seeker policies, as well as policies addressing cultural diversity in France, EU region, and internationally.

## Significance

This project aims to advance our understanding of belonging and political engagement through a comparative study of Islamic religiosity in Western cities. Islamic religiosity is defined as having two key dimensions:

1 **Faith** is the belief in the basic tenets of Islam and the performance of religious rituals

2 **Practice** is an observance of overall religious norms as they pertain to social behaviour

While existing research has focussed specifically on exploring and privileging *normative values* in understanding minority ethnic integration, this project focuses on the positive implications of various manifestations of religiosity among Muslim minorities. In light of Western anxieties over the increased presence and visibility of Muslims in the West, and the potential promulgation of anti-Western sentiment, this is a critical area of study at both national and

international levels. At an empirical level, the project provides informed and comparative data on Islamic religiosity that contribute to *innovative policy recommendations* and *programs* to understand and accommodate difference in Australia.

In the current international environment, where political agendas at all levels (national, state, and community) are increasingly polarised along ethnic and cultural lines, this project represents a unique and timely response by reassessing Islamic religiosity in Western societies.

By investigating religious practices among Muslims, this project directly addresses issues of cultural citizenship, intercultural relations, and human rights. Indeed, the significant contribution that this project provides to the knowledge base on citizenship and integration is complementary to several national initiatives and programs that promote social cohesion/inclusion and counteract discriminatory views and intolerance towards Muslims living in Western societies. It enables a better understanding between the West and Islam that could alleviate tensions and prevent outbreaks of violence by Muslim youth who feel disenfranchised by a dominant majority culture.

# BACKGROUND

The visibility of Islamic religiosity in Western secular societies remains a highly contentious and divisive issue. The everyday lives of Muslim minorities in the West are affected by how their expressions of Islam are perceived and portrayed in public discourses.

The visibility of Islamic religiosity in Western secular societies remains a highly contentious and divisive issue. The everyday lives of Muslim minorities in the West are affected by how their expressions of Islam are perceived and portrayed in public discourses. If the perceptions are negative, this can have significant effects on individuals and communities. Recent discursive practices in the public sphere that vilify Muslims, construct them as potential threats to national security, and place them 'outside the circle of trustworthy citizenship', are particularly damaging to the social fabric (Jakubowicz 2007, p. 270; Smith 2002).

Muslims in the West are living in countries with non-Islamic majority cultures. Current debates on the French, US and Australian models of religious accommodation have drawn attention to how majority 'culturally established religions' (Bader 2009, p. 568; Bhargava 2009) are privileged even when religion is relegated to the private sphere. This privileging 'masks majority religious bias' (Bhargava 2009, p. 556) and can lead to expressions of public hostility and anxiety towards Islamic religiosity. In this way, existing privileges of the majority cultures and religions entrenched in the social have implications for understanding the belonging and political engagement of Muslims in the West.

In this context, the recent popular and academic backlash against state-sponsored multiculturalism in liberal nation-states means that issues of ethno-religious diversity, and the ability to foster intercultural engagement, have become significant challenges for cities in the twenty-first century (Allen 2007; Amin 2002a; Hage 2003; Keith 2005; Mitchell 2007; Poynting & Mason 2008; Turner 2003; Vertovec & Peach 1997).

In Australia, the demise of multicultural policy, beginning in the late 1990s, temporarily created an 'enormous vacuum' (Turner 2003, p. 416) in public debates on inclusive citizenship and belonging. With recently renewed political support for multicultural policy and scholarship, however, Australia can perhaps assume leadership in demonstrating that political resistance to cultural assimilation allows for the transnational dimensions of Islam to be viewed in a positive light in Western societies. The treachery, criminality, insecurity, and irreverence to human rights often tied to visible Islamic religiosity will then slowly fade (Benhabib 2006; Dunn et al. 2007; Hage 2008; Turner 2003).

Conceptually this project combines theories of active citizenship and social inclusion with the more affective notion of performativity (Butler 2001).

This combination allows for a holistic assessment of the integration of Muslims into Western societies.

Moreover, it enables us to assess whether Islamic religiosity can be viewed as a source of empowerment, belonging, and engagement, rather than a source of a deep political and ideological rift in multicultural Western societies (Nesbitt-Larking 2008). Given contemporary discussions on cosmopolitan ethics that emphasise respect for difference, this project assesses whether theoretical insights into affective intercultural encounters can shed further light on understanding, solidarity, and care among citizens.

In particular, this project contributes to scholarship on active citizenship and social inclusion by investigating how Islamic spiritual and cultural practices can affect our understandings of national loyalty and political engagement.

# THEORETICAL
# FRAMEWORK

This report is organised around three research areas that align with the aims of the project, and that are discussed in the theoretical framework as well as in the empirical findings. They are:

**1)** Self, Identity, and Islamic Rituals;

**2)** Religious Practices, Public Space, and Social Connectedness; and

**3)** Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Engagement in a Changing Geopolitical Context.

The First section, *Self, Identity, and Islamic Rituals*, responds to the first aim of identifying, describing, and analysing forms of participation in Islamic rituals and faith-based cultural activities among Muslims in selected Western cities.

The Second section, *Religious Practices, Public Space, and Social Connectedness*, relates to the aim of investigating the extent to which Islamic beliefs, values, and faith-based participation contribute to local and national belonging.

The Third section, *Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Engagement in a Changing Geopolitical Context*, analyses how spiritual and cultural religiosity among practising Muslims impedes or provides possibilities for political engagement.

Figure 5
Bookstore in France.
Source: Authors
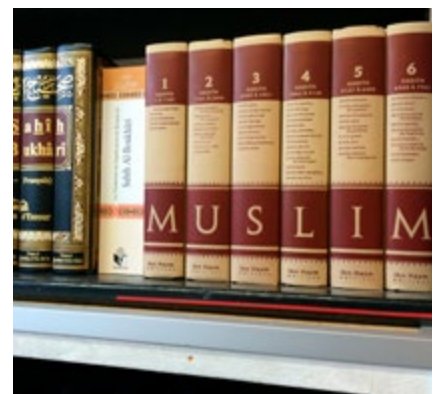
# SELF, IDENTITY, AND ISLAMIC RITUALS

This project, with its focus on embodied agency among Muslim migrants, has produced two important empirical findings. First, it generates benchmark empirical evidence of expressions of Islamic religiosity – currently contested practices that some scholars have argued should be relegated to the private sphere (Poynting & Mason 2008). Second, it allows us to examine the extent to which sustained participation in such religious practices can affect subjective notions of belonging and political engagement.

In exploring these interconnected objectives, the study draws on theories of performativity and recent literature on social encounters to provide new insights into understanding Islamic religiosity in multicultural cities. The focus is less on the racialisation of Muslim bodies, and more on how Islamic beliefs and practices can strengthen an openness to difference, an emerging trend in scholarship on Western Muslims and Islam (Mansouri, Kenny & Strong 2007; Mansouri, Lobo & Latrache 2011; Ramadan 2004; Saeed 2006).

The project's focus on religiosity from a performative perspective, rather than the more conventional normative approach, therefore, makes a significant contribution to studies of religious minorities in Western multicultural cities.

**Figure 6**
Eid prayers in Flagstaff Gardens, Melbourne. Source: Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

# RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, PUBLIC SPACE, AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

This research project draws on the theoretical concept of performativity to examine the role of religious practices of Muslims in the public space, and their potential for engendering social connectedness. Judith Butler (2001) uses the concept of performativity to explore how the dominance and power of heteronormativity regulates the ways that gendered subjects become recognisable in the public sphere. She argues that statements ('speech acts') and religious practices that make subjects recognisable, often reproduce dominant cultural norms. This can be oppressive for those who deviate from the normative prescriptions about acceptable social behaviour in the public sphere. While Butler does not often apply these concepts to religious bodily acts and performances, these ideas relate well to the study Muslims in the Western public sphere. Butler (2001) also underlines that norms formative of vulnerability and anxiety are never fixed, but rather are socially and temporally contingent. This theoretical insight enables us

to analyse forms of participation in Islamic rituals and practices as conduits to political engagement.

The focus on performativity is supplemented by new and emerging theories of affect and emotion that offer insights into embodied aspects of living with difference in white Western societies (Ahmed 2004; Dwyer 2010). The affective dimensions of belonging and political engagement recognises the importance of micro-scale practices and everyday spaces in the city (Amin 2002; Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008; Thrift 2004; Wise 2010; Lobo 2010a). There is little research, however, that focuses on whether Islamic spiritual practices and cultural acts increase or decrease the affective capacity for intercultural or interfaith encounters.

Therefore, rather than concede to the populist views that see Islamic religiosity and political engagement as an expression of fundamentalism or disloyalty, this project investigates

whether Islamic beliefs and values embodied in rituals and faith-based community participation can enable Muslims to negotiate the experiences of marginalisation in ways that demonstrate at once an attachment to authentic religious identity and an openness to others. This openness and embracing of difference has been documented in research among community leaders by Mansouri et al. (2011) in suburban Melbourne and Paris, but further study is required to understand whether these open attitudes exist among the broader Islamic community in these cities.

Recent sociological research on religion and citizenship argues that embodied practice is crucial for understanding agency and the negotiation of ethno-religious difference in Western societies (Turner 2017; Kong 2001, 2010), at the same time answering the call for greater focus on the affective nature of agency (Davies & Dwyer 2007).

## CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING, AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN A CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Many studies about diversity in liberal Western societies assume an existing or potential conflict in multifaith public spheres. These studies, therefore, focus on the role of the state and its institutions in guiding consensus for understanding or alleviating conflict (Benhabib 1996; Brouard & Tiberj 2007, 2011; Bukhari et al. 2004; Cesari 2010; Deltombe 2005; Geisser 2003; Habermas 1998; Modood et. al. 2006; Mouffe 1999; Roy 2007).

This focus on existing or potential conflict and its resolution, while valuable in the case of acute conflict situations, prevents us from fully appreciating the role of routinized performances of religiosity in city spaces. Our project of embodied engagements with places in the city, provides fresh insights into the negotiation of ethno-religious difference in everyday intercultural encounters. This is a necessary focus at a time when the commitment to the accommodation of religious diversity, and in particular Islamic religiosity, by Western nation-states is at the centre of policy debates on national identity, political stability, and global security.

This research provides both theoretical and empirical insights into belonging and political engagement that are necessary for the democratic governance of diversity at various interdependent geographical scales, including the local neighbourhood, the city, the nation, and the global community. The theoretical significance of this project stems from its focus on performativity for understanding the embodied agency of Muslims who engage in spiritual and cultural rituals. While the value of applying performativity to the study of agency and political engagement is on the rise in social sciences research, its application to the policy arena remains limited (Kong 2010; Lobo 2010b, 2010c; Popke 2009).



Figure 7
Woman holding child, Eid prayers in Flagstaff Garden. Source: Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

## THE CITY AS AN IMPORTANT UNIT OF ANALYSIS

**Processes of globalisation have changed the dynamic of urban culture to the extent that urbanisation needs to be considered as a process; attending to the more dynamic transnational social and cultural flows than hitherto imagined.**

A range of new and complex spatial scales have displaced the nation as the primary site of social analysis, with the city becoming the primary site in which people are increasingly governed, and come to perform their citizenship (Amin & Thrift 1997; Brenner 2004; Peake & Rieker 2013; Smith 2002).

While the nation remains important 'in framing mobilities and desires of [...] subjects' it is at the local and city scales, and the everyday practices and intersubjective encounters therein, where 'humanness is delineated and engaged' and where experiences of citizenship and belonging are shaped (Peake & Rieker 2013, p. 36). A city is not just a place to live in, it is closely implicated in daily decisions and actions that inform one's ethics and worldview: this relates to how one develops a sense of justice, how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, or how a human being becomes human (Sennett 1993, p. 83). Therefore, theories of the lived experiences in the city, and of encounters in the public spaces of the city, are also central to the theoretical framework for this study.

# METHODOLOGY

## Approach

Recent studies of ethno-religious diversity in countries such as Canada, Britain, and Australia (Mansouri et al. 2011) recognise that the future of multiculturalism as an ideology and everyday practice is deeply intertwined with global geopolitics. Contemporary research highlights the impact of geopolitics on public attitudes to Islam, and on the experiences of Muslim migrants in the West (Abbas 2005; Jakubowicz 2007; Meer & Modood 2008; Nesbitt-Larking 2008; Ramadan 2004; Turner 2006). This link to geopolitics is the reason traditional comparative studies, that focus on patterns, similarities, and differences in expressions of Islamic religiosity, may not be adequate to understanding Muslim conceptions of selfhood, belonging, and political engagement.

To supplement existing comparative scholarship, this project adopts a relational comparative approach to identify, describe, and analyse religious rituals and faith-based community participation among individual Western Muslims. The strength of this approach is that, first, it values contingency rather than causal mechanisms for understanding social life in the city. Second, it conceptualises the past, present, and future of Western cities as interconnected, enabling the findings from one city to pose questions in another (Ward 2010). In this project, such an approach has proved crucial for gaining nuanced in-depth understandings of agency, belonging, and political engagement that can inform policy recommendations on the accommodation of Islamic religiosity in Western cities.

## Survey Questions

The survey was designed to gain an understanding into how Muslims experience their religiosity in the context of Western secular societies, where their allegiances and commitment to national political institutions are frequently in question. The questions sought to understand how Muslim beliefs and practices shape experiences of belonging, civic participation, and political engagement at multiple social scales of the city. By focusing on local spaces, the survey and interview questions went beyond the discursive and representational aspects of Muslim religiosity in the national public sphere, offering more nuanced understandings of religion as a 'lived' 'everyday' experiences moulded through subjective negotiations and daily interactions with others in public space.

Survey questions were divided into three sections, each corresponding to the main research themes. The first section asked questions about levels of religious practice and adherence, and the feelings that this produces towards Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The second section focussed on national and local spatial scales of belonging, comfort, and civic engagement. This section also asked whether Muslim religiosity shapes or informs the types of citizens that people are, or aspire to. The surveys were completed using either an online or a hardcopy survey instrument. This method allowed respondents to either complete the survey in the presence of the researchers at a certain time and location, or in their own private time.

## Interviews and Focus Groups

The interviews and focus groups were designed to gain in-depth insights into the experiences mapped in the survey, therefore questions reflected the survey sections. The interviews and focus groups were conducted by one or more members of the research team and were undertaken mainly in the local areas where participants lived, for example in cafes, universities, and people's homes. All interview and focus group participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity (see Appendices for a full list of interview and focus groups participants).

## Mixed Methods and Multi-Sited Ethnography

This project draws on the diversity of Muslim voices from three sites to explore the possibilities for viewing Islamic rituals and faith-based community participation, as more than just fixed 'habitual acts of reverence and obedience' (Turner 2008, p. 124), but also as affective religious performance that make belonging and political engagement possible. Although there is an emerging theoretical literature on the significance of the affective dimension of living with diversity, it is difficult to find a vocabulary that taps into these embodied and emotional experiences.

Because the project aimed to elicit data capable of capturing the nuances of participants' lived experiences, we employed mixed methods (survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups) and ethnographic techniques (participant observation, visual methodologies). First, random, (face-to-face and online), structured surveys were conducted with Muslims (aged 18 and above) in the three sites. The aim of this approach was to visualise, describe and analyse the extent to which Islamic beliefs, values and faith-based participation contribute to conceptions of self, local/national belonging, and to explore how spiritual/cultural religiosity among practising Muslims impedes or provides possibilities for political engagement in each site of study. The survey instrument was designed to elicit socio-demographic information; to measure political participation, local/national belonging; self-identified levels of religiosity, depth and feelings associated with religious practice; and whether these subjective, experiential dimensions contributed to civic engagement and conceptualisations of the moral obligations of citizenship. Survey participants were recruited with the assistance of partner organisations in each of the three cities. The survey received 96 responses in Melbourne, 93 responses in France and a much lesser number of 48 responses in Detroit.

These findings were supplemented with a qualitative research phase, utilising insights from participant observation, photo-elicitation techniques, focus groups, and semi-structured in-depth interviews to triangulate survey responses and engage more deeply with hypothesised connections between deep religious practice, community engagement, and active citizenship.

Secondary data were collected to provide a contextual understanding of community attitudes to ethno-religious diversity in the selected locations. The inclusion of Lyon/Grenoble/Paris and Detroit, in addition to Melbourne, is predicated on the diverse approaches to social integration of religious minorities in France and USA in comparison to Australia.

Therefore insights from secondary data into state policies and societal attitudes to the accommodation of Islamic practices, particularly since the events of September 11, are necessary for understanding the urban contexts. Examples of secondary data collected include: demographic data (for example, census data), media reports, published documents (including policy documents and papers), organisational/administrative documentation, pamphlets, and other promotional material.
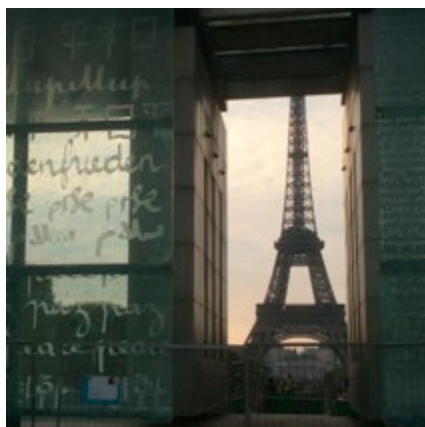


Figure 8
Paris, France.
Source Above: Participant
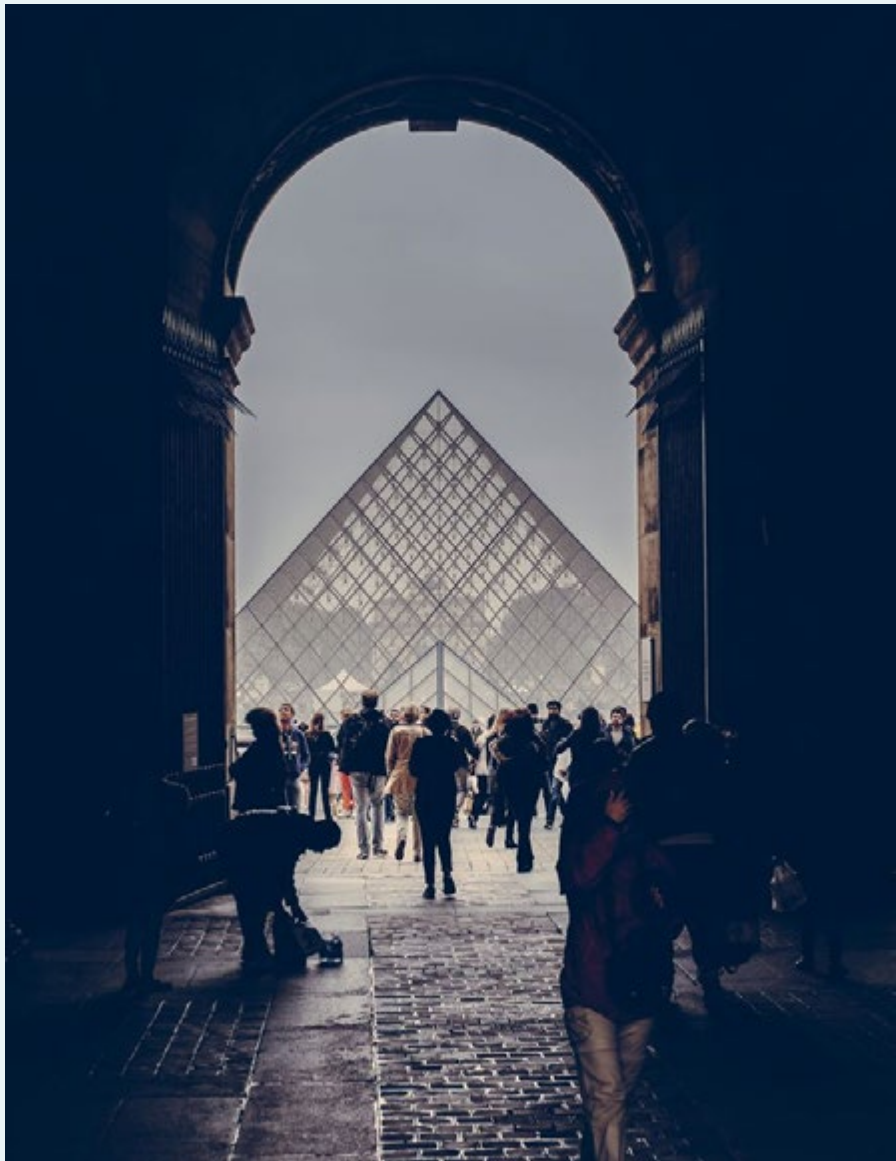
# RESEARCH SAMPLE

Research Data for this project were collected using mixed methods approach. Several data collection techniques were employed across the three sites: individual interviews, focus groups, participant observation, photo-elicitation techniques, and a survey questionnaire. A grand total of 378 people participated in all types of data collection activities.

In Melbourne, Australia, 49 individual interviews were conducted to elicit rich qualitative data. Additionally, four focus groups were held with 26 representatives of the Muslim organisations. These included the Islamic Society of Deakin University (ISDU), the Hazara Women's Network, the Muslim Women's Center for Human Rights (MWCHR), and Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS).

In Detroit, USA, qualitative data were gathered via thirty-three individual face-to-face interviews. Interview participants included Imams, Muslim community leaders (including the coordinators of diverse community projects within Detroit), academics, mosque attendees and participants at the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Annual conference, held in Downtown Detroit in 2014.

In France, individual interviews were conducted in three cities – Lyon, Grenoble, and Paris – with thirty-three representatives of diverse Islamic community organisations and their leaders. Community organisations included the Union of Young Muslims, the Islamic Association Al Islah, and the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (Collectif Contre L'Islamophobie en France CCIF).

Prior to the qualitative research phase, individuals in each of the three sites were approached to complete survey questionnaires. Overall, 237 respondents completed the survey in three sites: 96 respondents in Australia, 93 in France and 48 in the USA. While close to one-hundred participants were surveyed in Australia and France, only half this number participated in the survey in the USA. This discrepancy presented some challenges for quantitative data analysis in terms of comparability and advanced regression analysis.

Therefore, only descriptive statistics are presented in this report for illustrative purposes. In many cases, especially when describing the separate sites, actual numbers (i.e. frequencies) of participants are presented instead of percentages. This is because the low number of participants would render the percentages incomplete and misleading (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

**Survey participants in three sites**

| Country | Gender | | Age | | Country of Birth | | Self-Identity | | | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | M | 18 - 24 | 25+ | Local | Other | Practising Muslim | Non Practising Muslim | Cultural Muslim | Arabic | African | South East Asians | Other | |
| US | 36 | 9 | 28 | 20 | 30 | 15 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 15 | **48** |
| France | 31 | 55 | 24 | 69 | 63 | 21 | 71 | 8 | 2 | 62 | 2 | 3 | 15 | **93** |
| Australia | 47 | 49 | 43 | 53 | 47 | 49 | 80 | 8 | 1 | 30 | 10 | 9 | 38 | **96** |
| **TOTAL** | **114** | **113** | **95** | **142** | **140** | **85** | **190** | **17** | **5** | **105** | **17** | **17** | **68** | **237** |

In relation to the completed survey questionnaires, gender representation is equal for the overall sample of 114 females and 113 males.

There were, however, differences in how gender was represented among the three sites. While in Australia, a gender balance was achieved with 47 females and 49 males, in France the number of males was higher (F=31, M=55), and in the USA, females significantly outnumbered males (F=36, M=9) (see Figure 10).

### Gender Distribution by Site (frequencies)
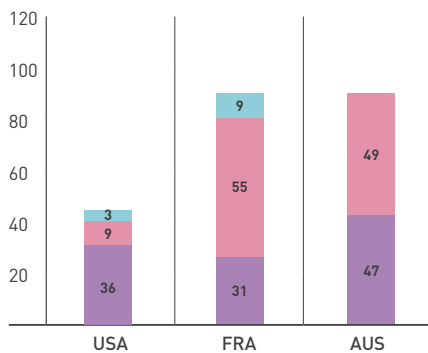


Women  Men  No answer

The survey attracted mainly young people and of those who participated in this survey, 95 (40.1 per cent) were 18–24 years old and 142 (59.9 per cent) were aged 25 years and above.

The younger age group (18–24) was well represented at all three sites: 28 18–24-year-olds (58.3 per cent) in the USA, 24 (25.8 per cent) in France and 43 (44.8 per cent) in Australia (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

### Age distribution by site (frequencies)
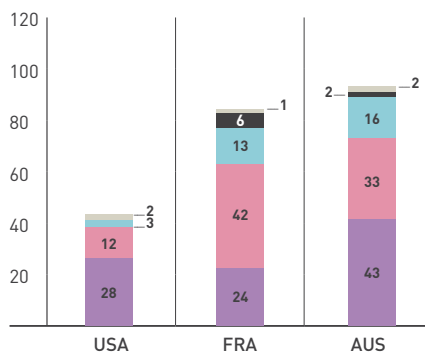


18 to 24   25 to 34   35 to 49
50 to 59   60+

Regarding to countries of birth, 140 respondents (62.2 per cent) overall were born in their countries of residence – Australia, USA, and France – and 85 (37.8 per cent) were born abroad. Locally-born participants dominated in USA (30 versus 15 people) and France (63 versus 21). In Australia, an equal number of local- and foreign-born respondents were represented (47 versus 49 people) (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

### Country of birth by site (frequencies)
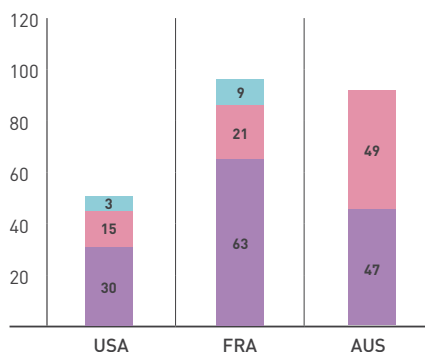


Series 4   Series 5   Series 6
Country   Other   No answer

Close to a half of all respondents – 113 people (47.7 per cent) – were university educated, while 25 respondents (10.5 per cent) had professional education, such as diplomas or certificates, and 43 respondents (18.3 per cent) had high school education. Thirty-six respondents (15.2 per cent) had less than high school education. University graduates were overrepresented in Melbourne (59 people or 61.4 per cent) compared to France (35 people or 37.6 per cent) and the USA (19 people or 39.6 per cent) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

### Education by site (frequencies)
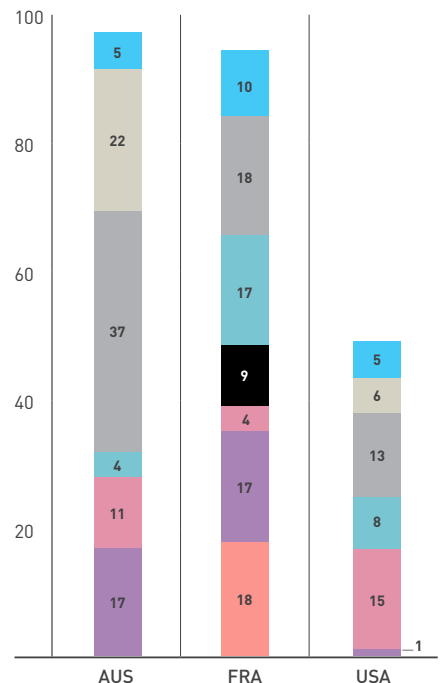


Did not attend school
Less than high school diploma
High School Diploma
Trade certificate
Assoc Diploma, Diploma, Certificate
Bachelors Degree
Masters Professional or Doctoral Degree
No answer

Over half of respondents reported being in full-time or part-time employment in all three sites. While a considerable number of students (36) responded to the survey in Australia, fewer students were involved in the samples in France (13) and the USA (8) (see Figure 14).

### Figure 14

**Employment by Site (frequencies)**



Legend: ○ Employed ○ Not employed ○ Student ○ No answer
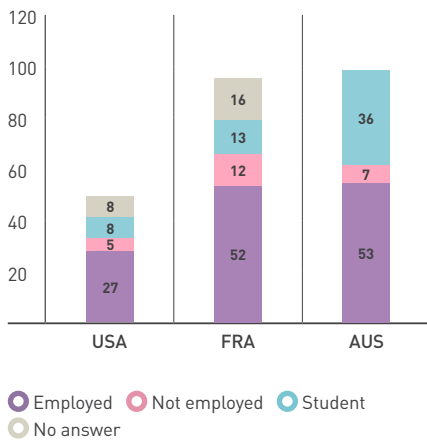
A survey question on religious identity included the following four options:

1  'Practising Muslim' (I regularly engage in prayer, attend mosque etc.)

2  'Non-practising Muslim' (I believe in God but do not regularly engage in religious rituals and practices)

3.  'Cultural Muslim' (I am a Muslim by cultural heritage only)

4.  Other

An overwhelming majority of respondents (190 people or 87 per cent) identified themselves as

'Practising Muslims', only 17 people (8.0 per cent) as 'Non-practising Muslims', and five people (2.4 per cent) as 'Cultural Muslims'.

Similarly, a large number of respondents in each country self-identified as 'Practising Muslims': 39 people (92.9 per cent) in the USA, 71 people (87.7 per cent) in France, and 80 respondents (89.9 per cent) in Australia (see Figure 15).

### Figure 15

**Religious Identity by site (frequencies)**



Legend: ○ Practising Muslim ○ Non-Practising Muslim ○ Cultural Muslim ○ No answer ○ Other
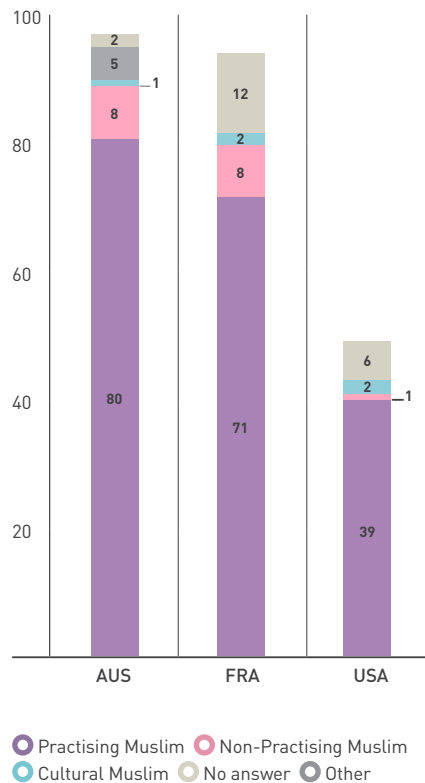
Survey questions on ethnicity were open-ended and generated a wide range of responses. Nonetheless, most respondents identified themselves as Arabic-speaking (105 people or 44.3 per cent). The next most represented ethno-cultural background was equally split between African or African American and South-East Asian (17 people or 7.1 per cent each) (see Figure 16).

### Figure 16

**Ethnicity by site (frequencies)**



Legend: ○ Arabic ○ African/African American ○ Persian ○ European ○ Turkey ○ Afghani ○ Indian ○ Pakistan ○ Sri Lankan ○ South East Asian ○ White/Caucasian ○ Other ○ No answer
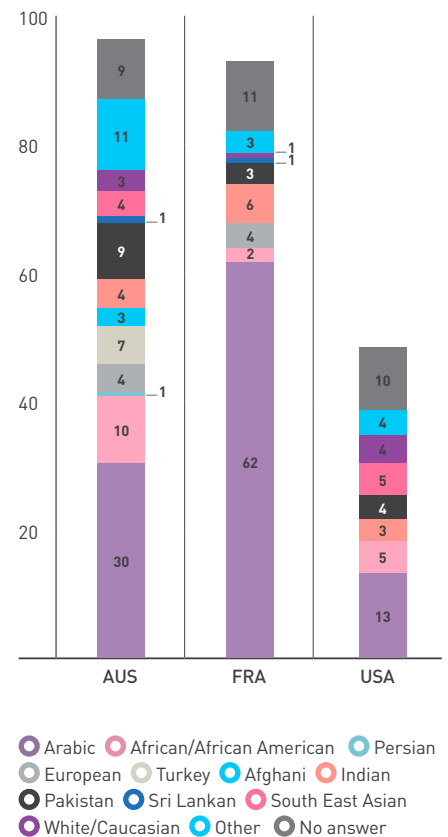
In all three sites, Arabic was the predominant language spoken at home by respondents.

A clear majority of the French respondents (56 people), a considerable number of the Australian respondents (34 people), and a large number of respondents from the USA (14 people) reported that they spoke Arabic at home. In contrast, only 14 people in Australia, 11 people in France, and 6 in the USA spoke only the language of their country of residence (see Figure 17).

The surveys, triangulated with in-depth interviews, focus groups, and experimental visual (and aural) research data, provide empirical insights that highlight connections and tensions between everyday Islamic faith traditions, normative understandings of citizenship, and political engagement in specific urban settings. Yet the discrepancy in survey sample sizes across the three sites presents methodological limitations; with collected data not always comparable or generalisable. For this reason, in this report qualitative analysis will be presented with supporting quantitative analysis from survey data.

Figure 17

**Language spoken at home by site**



Legend:
- No answer
- Country language only
- Arabic
- Urdu
- Turkish
- Afghan
- Dari
- Other
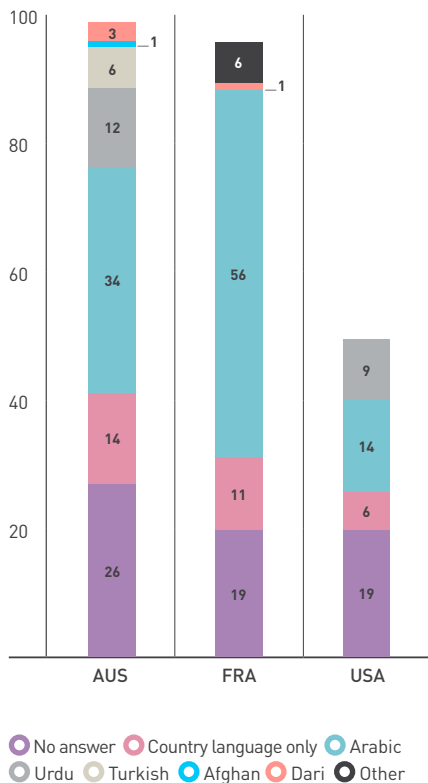
Figure 18
Emir Sultan mosque,
Cleeland Street,
Dandenong (Melbourne).
Source: Authors

# RESEARCH
# SITES

The first stage of data collection was conducted in Australia. According to the 2011 Census, over 476,300 Muslims live in Australia, making up 2.2 per cent of the total population (ABS 2012).

A range of new and complex spatial Islam is the third largest religion in Australia after Christianity (61.1 per cent) and Buddhism (2.5 per cent). Although Christianity is still the major religion, it has experienced a steady decline in numbers since the 1970s (ABS 2012). Commensurate with this decline is the increase in Australia's religious diversity, with the number of Australians identifying with non-Christian religions continuing to grow (Bouma 2006).

Most Muslims living in Australia are concentrated in urban centres, predominantly Melbourne and Sydney. A report published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2014) shows that the majority of migrants from Middle Eastern nations reside in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. These are predominantly Iraqi-born migrants, who are concentrated in Campbellfield (14 per cent), Roxburgh Park (13 per cent) and Coolaroo (11 per cent). A large proportion of Lebanese migrants also reside in Campbellfield (8 per cent), while Dallas and Meadow Heights are home to a large proportion of Turkish-born migrants. The area of Greater Dandenong in the city's south has a large number of Afghan-born residents (12 per cent), many of whom arrived as humanitarian migrants.

Though country of birth is not always an accurate predictor of religious affiliation, the ABS data also reflect the geographic distribution of Melbourne's Muslim population, with Dallas in Melbourne's north-western suburbs having the highest number of Muslim residents (45.3 per cent of total population), followed by Meadow Heights (42.1 per cent of total population), Broadmeadows

(25.7 per cent), Fawkner (24.4 per cent), and Dandenong (24.1 per cent). Socioeconomic indicators for these suburbs show that the vast proportion of Muslims living in Melbourne are socially and economically disadvantaged in comparison to the national average (ABS 2013). Yet, despite experiencing social marginalisation and disadvantage, rates of Australian citizenship among Muslim Australians remain higher than the national average (HREOC 2003). In the 2011 Census, when asked to nominate their national identity, 74.1 per cent of Australian Muslims chose 'Australian' compared with 84.9 per cent of all Australians.

It should be noted that some of these Muslims would have arrived in Australia only recently. It is likely that, after completing the residency and related requirements for becoming Australian citizens, more of these migrants would identify as Australian (Hassan & Lester 2015).

In this project, the City of Greater Dandenong was selected as the primary Australian site for the empirical data collection. This Melbourne municipality is of interest because it is the most culturally diverse municipality in greater Melbourne, and the second most culturally diverse municipality in Australia overall. This high level of diversity is also found among the Muslim community residing there. It was anticipated that the data collected at this site would generate a benchmark understanding of Islamic faith-based and community practices. Data were also collected in the City of Hume, Darebin, Frankston, inner Melbourne (primarily via university Islamic societies), and online.

Figure 19
Delivery of interfaith class to schoolchildren. Emir Sultan mosque, Cleeland St., Dandenong (Melbourne), interior. Source: Authors

# DETROIT, USA

**The city of Detroit, in Michigan, USA, was selected for the second stage of ethnographic research because Detroit is home to one of the largest metropolitan Muslim populations in the USA according to the census (2014).**

In addition, Dearborn, Michigan – a city located in the Detroit metropolitan area – is estimated to have the largest number of residents of Arab background/Muslim faith in any city outside of the Middle East. These figures however are difficult to confirm, as there is no category for Arab ethnicity in the census data, rather Arab background residents are classified as 'white'. Despite this, there is significant civil society representation of the Arab community, particularly in Dearborn, with many research participants speaking of their involvement in the local Arab community and welfare organisations such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS).

Detroit is a city that has gone through several historical upheavals associated with industrialisation, de-industrialisation, fluctuating waves of migration, and racial tensions; in particular the race riots of the 1940s and 1960s. In recent times, Detroit has been heavily associated with the urban decline of the USA's manufacturing cities, which has seen its population shrink to an estimated 700,000 people in 2014 (when data for this project was collected). Industrial decline has contributed to what has become known as 'white flight', as an increasing number of affluent, predominantly white residents move to neighbouring cities. This means that 82 per cent of the city's residents are now African American. The Detroit economy reached its lowest point in 2013 when the city declared bankruptcy. These historical circumstances however led participants there to nominate *place* and *community* as significant sources of resistance and resilience.

Muslim communities in Detroit are largely based around mosques that serve particular ethnic and denominational communities. The *Building Islam in Detroit* project (2016) reports that there are more than 50 mosques in Detroit. These mosques have long histories, and participants spoke of them as spaces of hope and renewal. Islam has special significance for the African American community in Detroit, given its deep historical association with Black empowerment movements born from the Great Depression; Detroit is home to Nation of Islam Temple Number One, established in 1930 (Baker et al. 2004; Bagby 2004; PFFRPL 2007). In addition, Islam in Detroit has been sustained by waves of migration from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen dating back to the industrialisation of the northern cities of the USA when the car manufacturing industry was dependent on both Black and migrant labour from Middle Eastern countries and elsewhere.

In recent years, new arrivals from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Bosnia have settled in Detroit following displacements caused by war and conflict. Further, recent migrations from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Latin American countries have contributed to a multiethnic, multifaith renewal in some areas of Detroit. For example, while Dearborn's communities are long established, migration in Detroit and Hamtramck has resulted in the repurposing of abandoned buildings, with newly arrived communities setting up their own places of worship. In this sense, the mosques of Detroit represent the mobility and regeneration of communities in the city. Participants in this study reported this as generating a strong level of social acceptance of Detroit's Muslim communities as well as fostering a sense of belonging, which participants felt would not be found in other US cities.

Detroit's history as a city, marked by continual waves of migration and settlement, shows evidence of ethnic and racial separation: it's diverse Muslim communities are often geographically concentrated according to ethnicity and race. Separation is also visible in religious congregations, mosques tend to be more ethnically homogenous than they are mixed. This is also reflected in the language used for delivering sermons; Imams provide sermons in the language of the community, rather than in Arabic (the language of the *Qur'an*) or English. For example, Aisha (25–30-year-old female, Latina revert) spoke about a large Latino Muslim community in Detroit and their ability to hear sermons and receive written religious materials in the Spanish language.

More recently, tensions in Detroit have developed along sectarian lines, these have arisen from international conflicts, and particularly those taking place in Iraq and Syria. This sometimes results in hostile relations between the predominantly Shia populations of Detroit, and the predominantly Sunni populations of Hamtramck, Detroit, and the outer suburbs. One research participant identified these tensions as 'faultlines', which, together with race and class, form a barrier to intercultural/interfaith harmony and the strengthening of community ties in Detroit.

Figure 20
The Muslim Center
in Detroit, USA.
Source: Authors

**France was selected for the second stage of ethnographic research due to its long history of immigration from the former French colonies in North Africa.**

One of the main characteristics of French Muslims is their relative sectarian homogeneity; the large majority are Sunni Muslims, despite their diverse ethnic and national backgrounds. The majority of French Muslims migrated from the Maghreb following national independence in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia during the 1950s and 1960s, and in response to a proactive French policy of labour recruitment from these three countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Algerian migration to France began in 1968, followed by waves of migrants from Morocco and Tunisia that intensified in the early 1970s. Sub-Saharan Africans, mostly from the former French colonies of Mali and Senegal, also became a major source of immigration from 1979 onwards. These initial and large migration flows were predominantly made up of single adult males under 30 years of age, brought to France (and other parts of Europe) to bolster its unskilled labour force. The late 1970s and 1980s saw an increase in female migration following the institution of family reunion migration policies (see Figure 21).

It is estimated that the largest practicing Muslim communities in France are French citizens of North African heritage. Many of them live in the cities of Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Grenoble, and Lille (Andre, Mansouri & Lobo 2015). Most migrants to France settled in places where accommodation was cheap – such as the Northern suburbs (*banlieues*) of Paris comprising the département of Seine-Saint-Denis together with the 18*ème*, 19*ème* and 20*ème arrondissements*. The word *banlieue* has increasingly become synonymous with concentrated areas of migrants and associated with poverty and disadvantage

Figure 21

**French muslim population by country of origin**

Website of INSEE (French National Institue for Economic Studies and Statistics), last 2012 census confirmed data unless otherise stated.www.insee.fr.
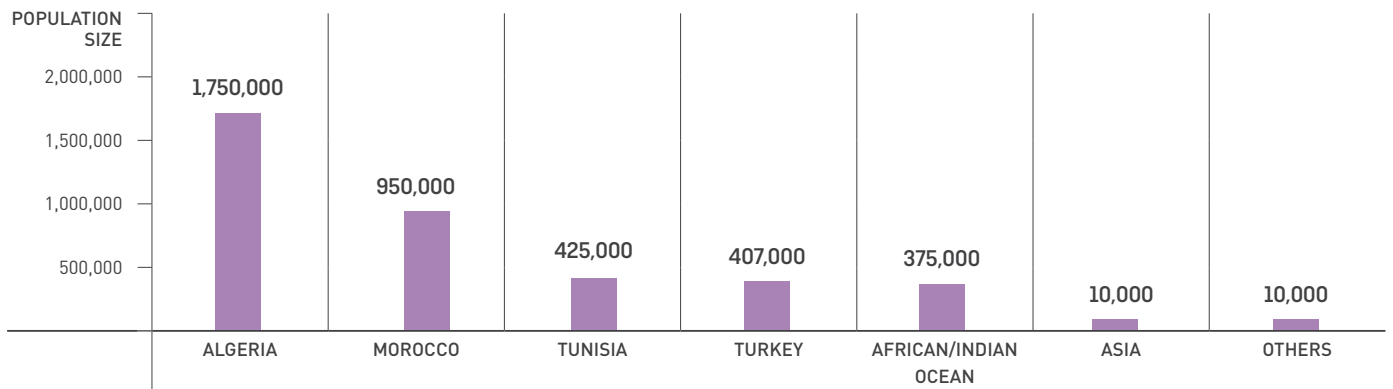
In terms of employment outcomes and social mobility, one-third of Muslim citizens in France are in full-time employment mainly in low-skilled factory work (32.9 per cent) and other blue-collar jobs. Compared to the overall French population, Muslims are also on average younger, with over 60 per cent aged 18–34.

In France places of worship have been built gradually over time. In recent years, an increased number of mosques and places of worship have been constructed, often changing the centre of gravity for the whole communities. The earlier mosques were smaller and not always considered by their communities to be centres for practising faith. Until recently, the official authorisations needed to build places of worship have been difficult to obtain, and financial obstacles to their construction remain. It was only after a long struggle for recognition, that a mosque was built in the Muslim-majority area of Saint Denis, a subprefecture of Seine-Saint-Denis, in Paris.

The recent demands imposed on French Muslims to publicly express their solidarity with the French Republic and dissociate themselves from radicalised groups and organisations in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks on 7 January 2015, reflect the lingering tensions between the state, Muslims and Islam in secular France (Andre, Mansouri & Lobo 2015). France has been struggling to come to terms with a changing religious landscape in which Islam, now the second religion there and a salient feature of the social and cultural milieu, is nonetheless, due to secular politics, never acknowledged as such. Tied to this is an increasing rate of ethnically-motivated crime,

and more specifically a sharp spike in Islamophobic incidents, evident, for example, in the weeks following the Charlie Hebdo attacks.

In the context of secular France, it is important to note that while most Muslims identify as being of 'Muslim culture' or of 'Muslim origin' they do not necessarily self-identify as 'practising Muslims'. In fact, an important empirical distinction must be made between those who maintain Islamic belief at a cultural level and those who routinely practise religious rituals such as prayers, observance of Ramadan, and adherence to strict dietary requirements, such as the consumption of halal food and non-alcoholic drinks.

According to a French study conducted in 2011, 75 per cent of the respondents who identified as of 'Muslim origin' also identified as believers, but only 41 per cent indicated that they perform religious rituals; of these, 25 per cent reported attending mosque, and 34 per cent declared that they did not follow religious rituals at all (Andre, Mansouri & Lobo 2015). The remaining individuals of 'Muslim origin' in the 2011 French study declared that they had no religious affiliation and were simply of 'Muslim culture'. In many ways then, Islamic religiosity in France has become an individualistic rather than communitarian pursuit. While children of migrants have not themselves experienced migration, they have a direct relation with the migratory experience of their parents. This experience finds some of its expression in the transmission of their parents' cultural and religious heritage in relation to Islamic religiosity.



**Figure 22**
Mosque in France.
Source: Authors

COMPARATIVE
INSIGHTS

## SELF, IDENTITY, AND ISLAMIC RITUALS

Contemporary debates about Muslim Diasporas frequently focus on the question of whether Muslims living in the West have the capacity to be fully active citizens while maintaining their religious obligations.

These representations characterise Islamic religiosity as having a transcendent orientation that presents obstacles to more secular approaches to citizenship; questioning Muslims' capacity to extend forms of solidarity, social connectedness, and belonging beyond their ethno-religious community and to the public spaces where they live and work in the West.

These characterisations of Muslim Diasporas in the West are challenged in this study, with its focus on the embodied and subjective dimensions of Islam. In fact, this study has found that Islamic practices contribute to strong intra-community bonds, and to an ethical orientation of care and respect for non-Muslim neighbours and others who share the social space.

Participants in all three research sites shared the perception that Islam and Islamic practices nourish a grounded sense of social justice, responsibility, and respect for the rights of others including non-Muslim neighbours, co-citizens, and the environment.

This is the universal dimension of Islamic belief and values that Tariq Ramadan (2004) has spoken of, which, through embodied and communal ritual practices, connect worshipper to the places and communities where they live.

While neighbourliness is integral to the Muslim faith, some participants felt that it was not a value specific to Islam, but rather was found in most faith cultures as well as the values of people without faith:

"My faith is no different to those human values that society kind of enforces. It's all a part of my faith anyway. So I don't feel as though my faith, deters me or excludes me, in any sense. Islam also encourages [... to] love thy neighbour and respect your elderly and to love animals and trees. And all that is encouraged. So it is part of my faith anyway, so I don't feel as though I'm disadvantaged, excluded, or [...] yeah, apart from anything else. Different yes, but that's ok, I like differences. And that's what multiculturalism is all about, it's those differences."

Jemimah, 33, Turkish background female, born in Australia, Melbourne

A wide range of participants reported justice is a central precept, grounded not only in examples from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, but also in everyday encounters. Islamic scholars and reformers such as Ramadan (2005) speak about the importance of equality and social justice. They believe that as a universal principle it creates connections and solidarity between Muslims and non-Muslims alike. As Ramadan (2005, p.149) explains, Islam is not a religion that encourages solitary prayer or devotion to God without also fulfilling responsibilities to the broader society: 'at the heart of the message of Islam, there is no part of Muslim ritual, from prayer to the pilgrimage to Mecca, that does not emphasise—even prioritise— the collective dimension'. Thus, the development of social ethics and the protection of social rights is a significant endeavour for practising Muslims.

Figure 23
Muslim Cultural Centre
in Grenoble, France.
Source: Participant



On the other hand, participants identified negative media images of Islam and Muslim communities as important barriers to feelings of social connection and belonging in the places where they live. They regarded the negative images that circulate in the media as fuelling misconceptions about their faith, and in more extreme cases as leading to racist encounters reflective of intolerance and social exclusion:

"There is a Muslim identity and then an American identity rests on a false social construction of identity labels. ... You have probably heard of the book 'Clash of Civilisations' ... a lot of that represents the old Orientalist ideas about viewing 'Others' that aren't white. [...] In the book 'Clash of Civilisations' Samuel Huntington does a very sloppy job of methodologically breaking down these groups. And a lot of that language still sticks with us today."

Sadiq, Detroit

As anticipated, variations across the three sites in terms of the accommodation of religious ritual and practice, as well as the levels of cultural diversity in the places in which people lived, led to different experiences and outcomes. For example, in France, secular laws prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols in some government buildings that seek to render religious expression private and maintain the geographic separation of many Muslim communities in the *banlieues* from the mainstream population,

contributed to a sense of precarious life and belonging. Meanwhile in Detroit, despite the well-established status of Islam there, tied as it is to the social fabric and history of Detroit, the separation of the main ethnic Muslim populations into discrete geographic communities – except for some culturally diverse pockets – likewise contributed to anxieties around intercultural encounters in certain spaces and contexts.

Conversely, in Melbourne, and in some geographic areas of Detroit and France, ethnically and religiously diverse suburbs and neighbourhoods were found to increase the sense of social connection, comfort, and civic belonging for participants, and to nourish expressions of Islamic faith.

Engagement in specific obligatory and non-obligatory communal religious practices (for example, attending Friday prayers at the mosque) that heightened the visibility of Muslim community members in the public space are particularly important to experiences of social connection and belonging.

Therefore, the analysis here will begin by examining communal, spatial, and relational dimensions of Islamic rituals and practices. This will be followed by a more geographically sensitive analysis of the places and neighbourhoods in which participants live, engaging with participants' perceived connection to or disengagement from their neighbourhoods.

### The Mosque as a Spatial Form of Belonging and Connection

In the Melbourne research site, data collection commenced during Ramadan and consequently a large

focus of the discussions about Islamic communal ritual practices centred on Ramadan.

Yet, Ramadan was also discussed as a significant period by members in the Detroit research sample, who reported that it fostered social connections to the mosque, neighbours, and place.

Ramadan as a practice is associated with the attainment of individual spiritual states of humility and compassion for the needy; indeed, the practice of fasting is thought to activate feelings of social responsibility and care, as well as compassion and shared vulnerability with those living in poverty and disadvantage.

The stimulation of these spiritual states through embodied acts is complemented by an increased obligation to serve the community through volunteering, giving charity, and looking after the needs of neighbours. The following quotes from participants across the research sites emphasise an active civic, spatial, and relational dimension to the core, obligatory, Islamic practices and values:

"Loving one's neighbour [...] all this is linked to our religiosity and that we can achieve in our everyday life. As is the possibility to provide food, which would often be the case in Lyon. There are many organisations who provide food for homeless people .... We, as Muslims, we do it because we are guided by our religious values."

Dunia, Lyon

"Living individually selfish life is in fact not human life. As a human being we have to be active socially—we have to know each other and we have to work together. So we have to educate people [...] We live for others."

Imam Abdul Latif, 50+ year old male, Bengali background, Detroit

**Interpersonal neighbourliness and community organisations:** Participants described several social spaces where rituals and practices such as daily prayers, ritual cleansing or *wudu*, attending Friday sermon, or wearing the *hijab* are performed, marking participants as visibly Muslim to non-Muslim citizens and eliciting either positive or negative responses.

Significant among these spaces, where public responses were experienced most acutely, were the workplace, school, and everyday public spaces (parks, public transport, and libraries). Variations between the three sites – each of which responded to unique civic and national cultures shaped by differences in social and political accommodation of rights and freedom to religious practice – resulted in very different outcomes for participants.

**Work:** The first social space in which engaging in private or communal religious practices provoked feelings of either inclusion or exclusion was the workplace. In the first instance, and common across all three sites, the workplace was a crucial public venue for the practice of prayer.

Accommodation by management and staff in the workplace, either by providing the use of a room or space for prayer or by allowing Muslim employees the time to engage in worship, encouraged strong feelings of social inclusion, acceptance, and belonging.

Participants in the Melbourne sample especially noted that policies around the provision of spaces and time were often implemented in public institutions and private workplaces in Australia, where respect and accommodation of the right to practice faith is institutionalised.

Participants, reflecting on their experiences as Muslim employees there, reported that these affordances made them feel included and accepted, and enhanced their feelings of equal belonging and respect.

"There is a room for me and I might add – I'm the only one –and there is room for me. That's the wellbeing room. And I'm the one that uses it mostly for my prayers. And they know when I pray and they don't schedule meetings when it's my prayer time, stuff like that, so it's very accommodating."

Bashar, 50, central African background male, born in Ghana, Melbourne

One participant however spoke of a situation where he was responsible for making recommendations for a multifaith prayer space in a public institution. Even though this was the reason for his employment, he was not able to take the time to engage in obligatory prayer himself, because it clashed with the busy work schedule:

"In my workplace it can be quite busy and it depends on who you work with, your colleagues and some of the workload, you know... there's always meetings and meetings and it's difficult."

Ali, 33, African background male, born in Ghana, Melbourne

Ali's need to pray in the workplace was not respected and this affects his confidence and self-esteem in ways that result in feelings of marginalisation. This feeling registers particularly in the French sample. Participants in France who wished to pray five times a day often had to find the venue and time to do so without the support of the state, employers, or trade unions.

"France has relegated religious practice strictly to the private sphere. As one participant noted: 'I'm fasting in Ramadan of course; I'm praying five times a day but when I work, I usually wait to go to home to pray because I don't have time to do that at work."

Awf, Moroccan background, born in France, Paris. French public servants, who are obliged to adopt a neutral position regarding religion, cannot claim adjustments to their work conditions.

Nonetheless in the private sector, labour laws demand that companies respect freedom of religion, except in cases involving proselytism, health or safety concerns, or the correct planning and execution of a work project.

Any refusal must be justified with factual motives. In this study, several participants indicated that in reality they face some measure of misunderstanding from their co-workers and managers who do not see the importance of these rituals for their expression of faith.

Since Trade Unions are not vocal on matters of faith, Muslims employees in France hide when they pray or wait to go home to do so:

**Mosque:** Participants cited the mosque as a central place for connection, reflection, and belonging; particularly during Ramadan and Eid:

"Eid is something special. ... You meet with people, you engage with people you have not seen in the community. It brings people together to engage with the Muslim community as well, other sheiks and other Imams, other cultural organisations. In Dandenong it's open to neighbours and open to locals."

Masjid, 28, Albanian/Greek background male, born in Australia, Melbourne

The *iftar* dinners (an evening meal when Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset) that are held by mosques during Ramadan – as well as on mosque open days and interfaith events – also demonstrate the civic function of the mosque in communicating the central values of Islam and encouraging civic activity, broader intercultural engagement, and harmony. For the Imams, this is more than good community relations, it is one of the foundations of the faith to be a good neighbour:

"There are different activities. They always strive to follow the triangulation of Islam, that is to say, rectify human relationships ... First of all, towards God. ... Faith translates outward by real acts, such as religious practices, rituals and applications and also by good behaviour. Therefore, the second component which we work on is to rectify human relationships towards other people, towards the creatures of God, towards others who have a different culture."

Amam, Lyon

"At the Muslim centre I mean it – their door is always open. ... The Imam does a lot of outreach—he does a lot of dealing with the other communities. Everybody knows him and so that is helping to break down a few of those barriers I think."

Atif, Detroit

In France over the last decade, the construction of mosques and other places of worship has emerged as a contentious issue. With the 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and State, France was formally established as a secular state, and as such, it does not fund the construction of religious buildings

France's religious buildings predating the Separation, mostly Catholic Churches, have heritage listings and are thus maintained on public funds.

There are other such occasions when the construction of religious buildings is authorised and paid for with government funds, but authorities have generally been unwilling to direct these funds to the building of mosques. Religious venues are very dependent on a city's mayoral support and good will.

"Twenty years ago, there were not many mosques, especially in Lyon, there were not many prayer rooms but thanks to God, it has progressed."

Laurent, Lyon

Participants who lived in areas with limited places of worship – ranging from cellars in an apartment block, a simple room in a building, or a dedicated room opened in a Muslim shop – indicated a preference for praying at home. In Paris, however, the Muslim community confronted with inadequate facilities often have no options but to pray in the streets especially during the Friday sermons.

"Here in France, we do not have enough places of worship ... For example, last Friday, I was in Paris and I went to pray in one of the places dedicated to prayer but it was full. It was not sufficient for the number of people who came to pray, so people had no choice but to pray in the street and afterwards, they [the politicians] say that Muslims are not disciplined."

Akif, born in Mali, Lyon



Figure 24
This is the new mosque of Saint-Denis in Paris. The building is under construction but the mayor let Muslims pray there for Eid prayers and tarawih. It will be the first time Saint-Denis will have a proper mosque and not only a basement or something like that for Muslims to pray' (interviewee, St Denis, Paris). Source: Participant

## Interfaith Dialogue

As noted by Bilici (2012) prior to September 11, Muslim religious leaders and community members in the USA were not great participants in the interfaith scene. Since September 11, there has been an awakened recognition that interfaith dialogue and outreach provides a key avenue for increasing the capacity of Muslims to become actively engaged citizens. It enables Muslims to build political and social capital with other religious and civil society organisations, to gain the attention of political parties as subjects with rights, and to increase harmony within the broader political community. In particular, Interfaith activism is used as a platform for grounding Islam in the religious landscape, addressing misconceptions about Islam found the West, and increasing the legitimacy of Islam as a Western religion. Bilici (2012) regards interfaith dialogue and action as powerful means of addressing Islamophobia in the USA, while providing a vocabulary for strengthening inclusion and equal citizenship, all of which responds to the emphasis placed on religion in US civil society and formal politics.

In Melbourne, interfaith networks have also become a popular means for increasing public and civic engagement and addressing misconceptions that lead to Islamophobia. For example, the participants in Melbourne viewed interfaith dialogue as an important vehicle for community engagement, outreach and *dawah* (preaching of Islam) as well as to build leadership skills and enhanced confidence in one's faith.

Participants understood individual involvement in interfaith activities to provide many benefits, primarily enhancing respect for people from different faiths and cultures, while also deepening recognition of the values that faith communities share, and providing a language through which Islamophobia might be addressed and challenged.

The Imams and community leaders interviewed in Melbourne also expressed a significant commitment to interfaith dialogue. They regarded interfaith dialogue as more than simply an activity that sends a good message, it is, also, a requirement of living in a multifaith/multicultural society:

"The first thing ... we teach is family, respect parents, respect who come to mosque, also friends, and non-Muslim friends cause they study in the schools... We are teaching respect. Our slogan is respect. We do the interfaith mosque tour... Also non-Muslim students come here when they are studying religion in year nine and ten so they go to some Greek Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, also coming here. So we try our best to explain what we are doing here and we accept all their questions, sometimes funny, but youth you know?"

Imam Salih Dogan, Melbourne

This link between interfaith dialogue and the development of leadership skills was also emphasised by several other interviewees, for whom interfaith activities acted as a stepping-stone to more active forms of political participation and community leadership. Basheema, an Arabic-speaking background female participant from Melbourne, became involved in interfaith groups after September 11. Before this event she was not involved in any community organisations, either Muslim or non-Muslim.

Her exposure to racism and hatred immediately following September 11, along with a letter of support that she received at this time, encouraged her to become involved in groups working towards harmony between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. She ultimately joined and became a board member of the Islamic Council of Victoria:

> **Basheema:** I wrote a letter to the newspaper basically condemning what had happened at September 11th but also stating that I was absolutely devastated that I was no longer treated as a fellow Australian. I love this country, I was born here, I have always tried my utmost to be an upright citizen and it's unfair and tragic I was being punished for the acts of a few evil individuals. So, writing that letter was extremely therapeutic, but what was life changing was a letter that I received from a couple who live in Eden Hills in South Australia. ... And they basically wrote to show their support for the Muslim community. They completely changed my whole mindset [...] And then I went to the Muslim Women's Association, I'd never been there, and I said: 'What can I do? I want to help'. And the lady there gave me a pile of beautiful letters just like the one I had received. And when I had finished responding to those letters, I had to respond to a whole bunch of emails, and it was, it was so, so good, because every time I'd go out and encounter some kind

of nastiness, I'd come home and immerse myself in those beautiful letters and it would just make all the hurt go away. [...] So that really reaffirmed to me the need to get involved in the community and to do something at the grassroots levels.

Interfaith dialogue is for many a form of civic participation that gained currency in the post-September 11 landscape. It provided an avenue for the Muslim community to become more connected and actively involved as citizens, as well as the platforms through which coalitions of support might be built. Whilst this was initially in response to a negative and wounding event, Alia, a 30-year-old woman in Melbourne with a Turkish background, described it as an opportunity for the Muslim community to 'open it's doors' and allow people to see the values shared across faith communities:

"Interfaith is something that we forgot to do as Muslims and unfortunately it took a tragic event like 9-11 to realise people are afraid of us and that's because they don't know us and that's because we probably haven't really opened our doors to each other. So I was involved with just maybe one or two programs before that but after September 11th I just kind of exploded in really trying to do as many programs as possible. And you know this goes for all different faith communities... the core of Interfaith, and I guess maybe the core of so many religions is – it sounds very rosy but it really is just love. And Interfaith is I guess

the whole 'love thy neighbour' concept."

Alia, 30, Turkish background female, born in Turkey, Melbourne

Participants spoke of the meanings and significance common to many religious practices, such as fasting, prayer and pilgrimage.

These expressions of faith are, in different ways, tied to issues of social justice. In Islam, for example, the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) is described as an embodiment of the moral teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, the giving of alms (*zakat*) and other charitable work during Ramadan is central to creating equality and cultural justice.

The significant role that Islam plays in shaping the subjective and agentic dimensions of self-identity emerged as an overarching theme across the research sample. Participants indicated that daily rituals and practices contributed to developing and nurturing the relationship between God and the individual. This relationship was reported as being a substantial, if not central, aspect of the participants' self-identity, worldview, way of dealing with hardship, and what Johns, Mansouri & Lobo (2015) term the 'ethical orientation towards others'. The centrality of this relationship between God and the individual is frequently 'a whole way of life' (Ali, 33, African background male, born in Ghana, Melbourne). In describing the subjective dimension of Islamic religiosity, participants in all three sites referred to Islam as a 'way of life', and a 'part of myself' that affects all relationships and activities, both worldly and spiritual:

"Well for me Islam is everything. Being a Muslim is a way of life, it permeates all aspects of our life, family, work, friendships, everything is determined by our religion, as well as the rituals part of it."

Bashar, 50, central African background male, born in Ghana, Melbourne

"It offers a feeling a connection [...], a belonging, a meaning, a focus in my life that is connected to God. It influences I guess how I behave and interact with everything else after that [...] it's like a gravitational pull towards something."

Abbas, 35–49, Arabic-speaking background male, Melbourne

"I pray five times a day; I fast in Ramadan, I try to go as much as I can to the mosque, especially on Friday for the Friday prayer.... I'm also living Islam in my everyday life because Islam is a part of myself."

Awf, Moroccan background, born in France, Paris

In France, youth, especially long-term resident youth, are very involved in the life of their local mosque, reporting that mosque attendance quells any anger and outrage they experience; providing solace and contributing to inner peace. In contrast, new arrivals

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In France, youth, especially long-term resident youth, are very involved in the life of their local mosque, reporting that mosque attendance quells any anger and outrage they experience; providing solace and contributing to inner peace. In contrast, new arrivals

to the research sites from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Somalia, and Mali are less likely to pray regularly in the mosque for reasons related to work and livelihoods.

They visit the mosque during Ramadan or festivals. Meanwhile in Detroit, the mosque was reported as being more welcoming of mature-aged men and women. Nonetheless most new mosques in Detroit are multifunctional social spaces with basketball courts, gyms, and meeting rooms for interfaith gatherings as well as weddings. These newer spaces are more likely to be frequented by youth. In Melbourne, mosques are particularly busy during Ramadan and Eid.

Although it is not possible to generalise about the atmosphere across the selected sites, in Detroit, Muslims overall came across as resilient and hopeful, even though many of them struggle to survive. In Lyon, Grenoble, and Paris, Muslims felt racialised, even though Islam is rendered invisible by the state. In France anger and outrage found their expression through different forms of resistance that express dissent and calls for recognition. Meanwhile in Melbourne, expressions of migrant gratitude are more common than expressions of dissent. Yet dissent was also seen as central to collective action and creative citizenship in public spaces and on social media forums,

where Muslims 'take on hate' and use a 'mipsterz' (Muslim hipsters) subculture to challenge racialised stereotypes. Indeed, young Muslims in all research sites asserted their right to belong through creative interventions. In Detroit, Islamic poetry is an intervention that rails against the demonetisation of Islam and the racialisation of Muslims – 'boom it wasn't me!'. In France, rap music enables Muslims to cry out 'don't panic I'm Muslim'. Stand-up comedy is another way for Muslims to speak out, with humour creating connections, understanding, and dialogue across faiths.

Figure 25
Grande Mosquee de Lyon, France.
Source: Authors
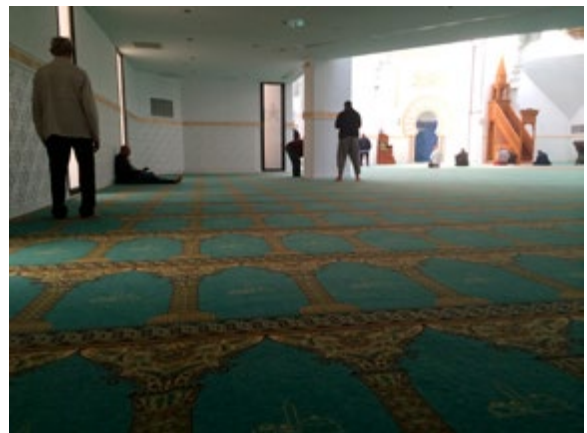
## Prayer

As noted by Bilici (2012) prior to Participants reported the benefits of prayer and other ritual practices for nourishing feelings of inner peace, spiritual centred-ness, connection with God, and self-knowledge. Prayers were also seen to increase health and wellbeing. The place set aside for religious practice was experienced as an emotional space, with one participant reporting that it helped in 'recharging the spiritual batteries'. These practices shape the foundation of Muslim identity, values, and worldview from which other relationships and social ties follow:

**"It's (prayers) very important – it refreshes you. All of this mad, mad world out here and you – you stop and do your prayers and it's – like a new beginning."**

Atif, 69, African American revert, Detroit

**"I think that the praying is a form of timeout and it is just the chance to recharge. ... If I'm praying ... the physical action means I've got to imagine I'm talking to my Lord now and it sort of pushes everything else out of your mind – so for me it's a timeout and it's a way to sort of really be disciplined and really focussed on myself."**

Wasila, Indonesian background female, born in Australia, Melbourne

Participants reported that the ritual practices of Islam combined with the *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions) to shape the self and discipline the soul. It promotes individual self-development, spiritual development, the development of inner strength, moral character, and the capacity to overcome hardships in life. When speaking of the personal significance and value of prayer, participants agreed that it is 'spiritual food' that develops discipline and good moral character. The personal and emotional benefits were experienced as a feeling of peace, inspiring humility, patience, self-confidence, and increased self-esteem. Participants found that these feelings encouraged respect, care, and responsibility towards others.

While this understanding of faith as a source of subjective nourishment, inner strength, and resilience was found in all sample sites, participants' experiences were unevenly shaped by the contrasting political structures and social policies for accommodating religious difference at each location. For example, policies of multiculturalism shape the liberal and secular political landscape in Australia in such a way that – notwithstanding intersubjective and structural experiences of racism and Islamophobia that are associated with a changing geopolitical climate since September 11 – participants experienced the freedom to practise their faith as a core aspect of their identity:

**"I am proud to live in ... a host society that is accommodating, just and fair to my needs to practise my faith. Secularism in certain countries around the world is very prevalent; I think in Australia it is just taken for granted, it is not imposed by the state."**

Dawud, 35–49, Turkish background male, Melbourne

These subjective experiences of religiosity contrast with the French context, where the secular politics and laws of the French Republic produce less positive experiences of everyday religiosity. Some participants in France perceived these secular laws as a barrier, not only to public expressions of religiosity, but also to their feelings of freedom, agency, and hope. Nonetheless, even under circumstances where participants' freedom to practise was pressured, Islam was experienced as a source of inner strength, as were practices of resistance to structures that impact on the dignity and liberty of the individual:

**"Islam brings values on my daily life that's for sure, but it's more like in my behaviour every day, in my work ethics, in the way I behave with other people [...] also it plays a role in my resistance because we have a very hard work, I work a lot and sometimes it's exhausting and sometimes you feel hopeless. So it is very important to have Islam to give you strength to continue your work and to behave correctly, to be respectful, to be a better person every day."**

Madiha, 27, Paris

Among participants in Detroit, differences in the subjective dimensions of Islam (religious identity and spirituality) were found between the different social groups that participated in the research.

Among the three major ethnic groups that make up Detroit's Muslim communities (Arabic-speaking, South Asian, and African American) the subjective and spiritual dimensions of faith were most clearly articulated by African American Muslim reverts.

Many participants in the study had parents or grandparents who reverted to Islam through their involvement with the Nation of Islam (NOI) at the height of the Black civil rights movement in the USA. Notwithstanding the shift by many African American Muslim reverts from NOI to orthodox Sunni Islam, for others, including young participants in the study, NOI was still regarded as a pillar within the Detroit community. Participants associated Islam with the awakening of subjective experiences and feelings of dignity.

This is significant for a community in which histories of racial inequality and slavery have degraded experiences of self-worth and self-knowledge:

"Accepting Islam [...] it helped dignify me; it showed me the importance of myself and my community."

Michael X, 30, African American revert, NOI, Detroit

Figure 26
Friday prayers at the Keysborough Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre (Melbourne).
Source: Authors

"The Nation of Islam... pulled together those individuals who thought they were nothing, from jails, prostitution, cleaned them up. When I say cleaned up, took them off the drugs, alcohol, told them they needed to be upright in everything [...]. My people needed structure, now which means that when you have structure you get a uniformed mind, but we also understand coming to ... Islam, you have a right to be autonomous, to think, and so that transition needed to happen for me."

Zafeerah, 50–59, African American revert, Detroit

Unlike secular, liberal understandings of religious subjectivity and agency, that reduce notions of spirituality and faith to an interiorised and individualised set of beliefs, these expressions of self-worth and dignity by way of faith highlight the outward expression and embodied dimension of Islamic belief and practice. It is a point highlighted by sociologists such as Riaz Hassan and Bryan S. Turner (drawing on Pierre Bourdieu), and anthropologists such as Saba Mahmood (drawing on Michel Foucault and Judith Butler).

Muslim self-identity does not separate outward religious acts (including rituals, liturgies, and worship) and inward belief (state of the soul). Rather, for Muslim subjects, belief is the product of outward practices, rituals, and acts of worship (Mahmood 2012, p. xv), that cultivate and nourish the subjective self (one's ethical orientations and conceptions of self

and personhood) and the social body. Several participants identified this triangulation between practice, belief, and selfhood as the foundation of Muslim faith, identity, and agency.

A dominant belief reported in all three sites was that faith-based rituals provide a disciplinary structure and method that enables the believer to overcome difficulties and develop ethical attitudes toward others; specifically, through embodied discipline, self-knowledge, and spiritual development.

Participants reported that ritual practices (prayers, fasting during Ramadan, *zakat*, and *hajj*) influenced their behaviour, their sense of who they are, and shaped their understanding of their life's purpose beyond short-term goals, desires, and emotions:

"The constant struggle [of fasting] is something that will help us overcome the struggles that we may face in the coming year. So when I look at Ramadan it's like a little intensive university ... for one month the intensive university allows me to discipline myself so that later on next month and the month after that I can overcome these challenges that are in front of me and that's one of the many, many benefits."

Tariq, 25–34, Lebanese background male, born in Australia, Melbourne

"I am not disappointed by failure or so on, it teaches you discipline and patience, and

have a sense of sacrifice for the good, the public good, and a sense of having conviction."

Azad, Tunisian background, Paris

While embodied rituals and practices are integral to the development of Muslim self-identity, faith and ethics, Ramadan (2004) also stresses that critical thinking, reason, and self-reflection are core features of Muslim faith identity; making piety and religiosity rational and agentic. As Ramadan (2004) claims, a central tenet of Islamic faith is *ijtihad*, or the critical and reasoning faculty of the mind that allows followers to become aware of both themselves and their responsibilities as humans.

This concept of responsibility rests on a form of agency in which the believer is 'responsible' for interpreting the Islamic texts (*Sunnah* and *hadith*) according to the context in which they live. According to Ramadan (2004, p. 15): 'It is the human ability to control, to combine and to guide that determines the ethical quality of individuals, their *nafs*, their hearts, their bodies, feelings, each of their emotions, as well as each of their actions'.

While there are universal dimensions to Islamic religious beliefs, rituals, and practices, as this study evidences the social context or environment is also important. Ramadan (2004) emphasizes that critical thinking is required to develop a grounded and relevant understanding of Islam.

Indeed, this has been the role of *Ulama* (religious scholars) throughout centuries. For Ramadan (2005, p. 80): 'it follows that Muslim identity is

not closed and confined within rigid, inflexible principles. On the contrary it is based on a constant dialectical and dynamic movement between the sources and the environment, whose aim is to find a way of living harmoniously'.

Participants who understood Islam as a lifelong commitment to education and learning, also highlighted these critical dimensions.

In so doing, some participants referred to examples provided in the Qu'ran where those of faith are required to educate themselves about many different faiths and cultural forms of knowledge, rather than engage in blind worship:

**"In our religion, education is very much emphasised on and you know, no matter what age you are and no matter what country you live in, education is very, very important for you. There is also a verse in the Qur'an that says 'educate yourself from the time you are just born to the time you are about to die', so education is very much emphasised."**

Saba, 22, Hazara background female, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

**"When you look at Islam, as I understand it, disagreement is encouraged in order for you to understand what you believe in and not just believe it for just a fact."**

Saffiya, 22, Iraqi background female, born in Iraq, Melbourne

Many participants argued that self-education of other religions, cultures, and forms of knowledge fostered a better understanding of their own faith. They learned how to follow their faith but within a multifaith, multicultural context. Participants underlined that the opposite of this critical, reflective tradition is the *Salafi* framework, where critical thinking and interpretation is discouraged. *Salafi*sm is an ultra-conservative movement within Islam that advocates a return to the traditions of the 'devout ancestors' (the *salaf*) and rejects religious innovations. In all three sites, participants regarded Salafi influences as a barrier to compassion, productive of intolerant and uncritical attitudes:

**"When I first became Muslim, I was sort of hanging around the mosque, I didn't feel comfortable. I felt like they were indoctrinating me, and there was no critical thinking. We cannot close the doors to others. The literal understanding is taken by a few people, who are called the Salafists. They have an appearance-based understanding."**

Akmal, born in Morocco, Grenoble

**Figure 27**
Praying at the Beach in Melbourne.
Source: Participant
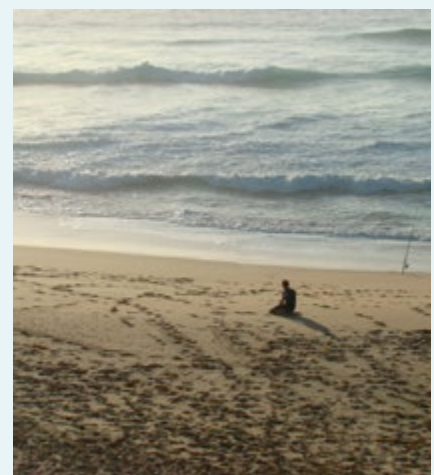
## Hijab

Despite emphasising the importance and connection of Muslim identity and personhood to embodied rituals and practices, some participants drew attention to contested dimensions of faith-based rituals and spirituality. Many young female participants expressed their fatigue with religious leaders who placed too much focus on ritualistic practices of the faith, closing space for spiritual reflection. One finding that emerged from the interview and the focus group discussions was that spiritual reflection is a truer and more inclusive expression of Islam than ritualistic practices.

For women, the *hijab* and the perceived social pressures around wearing the *hijab* or dressing modestly provides an insight into this tension. Despite this, participants who chose to wear the *hijab* also expressed the connection between discipline and piety.

Across all research sites, participants identified the practice of covering as being more than symbolic.

Most participants who discussed the practice of covering regarded it as a disciplinary practice orienting the wearer against vanity and excess, and instead towards moderation and humility in all forms of expression:

"We try not to engage in materialism and … getting blinded by society, all the glam and glitz and all the things that you can buy […] you want to be like your friends and have expensive things and nice things but we always try to moderate that."

Alhena, 18–24, Arab Sunni, Detroit

"It's covering, modesty. With this I find respect. With this I find that I can do a lot more things that I won't be able to do if I didn't have this on. And that's because I care for myself and I know who I am and I know where I'm going."

Zaynab, 50–60, Bengali speaking, Detroit

Yet most female participants in this study also felt that embodied acts of piety and modesty such as wearing the *hijab* had been hijacked and re-signified in Western media landscapes as a symbol of patriarchal control and oppression of Muslim women. Some participants argued that this had led to a situation where Muslim women's bodies had become subject to both Western media stereotypes as well as Muslim patriarchal concepts of appropriate behaviour. In these discourses, the tendency to treat the body as a contested site of religiosity robs Muslim women of their agency:

"You are embodiment of what your faith is, and people have perceptions of what that means […] women are an object that everyone talks about. So everyone has an opinion about Muslim women, except, apparently, Muslim women themselves. So you do have that […] from the government and the media to the general people in the public, and I guess even Muslim men. So everyone almost treats the Muslim woman as an entity, which can also be very problematic."

Amira, 32, Pakistani background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Practising Muslims participants in this study who did not wear the *hijab* emphasised evolving ideas of what constitutes modesty in a Western cultural context:

"I don't wear the hijab. I guess I try to dress modestly but I guess everyone has their own definition of what modesty is. So perhaps it'll come one day but to me, when I think of my religion, it's much more about how I behave and my relationship with God more so than what I look like."

Saffiya, 22, Iraqi background female, born in Iraq, Melbourne

Despite participants generally accepting that it is a woman's right to choose whether she wears a *hijab* or niqab, one participant regarded the niqab to be an inappropriate form of religious expression in a Western political and social context, particularly on the basis that it closes off the potential for dialogue and understanding:

"An example of that I guess is my views on niqab, or the full face cover, many Muslims would see that my personal view of it is that it's unnecessary and is not theologically based. But it also stems from the fact that if you're living in a country where so much communication is focussed on face then you should make allowances for that."

Wasila, Indonesian background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Participants however offered many reasons for choosing to wear the *hijab*. It was variously described as a way of expressing individual piety, religious values, cultural identity, together with secular values, such as feminism:

"My reason is that I would want people to like me for who I am, for my personality and intellect, rather than how my hair looks, or [...] how much skin I am showing. So for me it is sort of like a feminism within, whereas for other sisters it might be for different reasons."

Samira, 18–24,
Pakistan born, Paris

The *hijab* was also described by participants as a signifier of identity and resistance to Islamophobic attitudes that circulate in the Western public sphere.

This description was particularly apparent among young women who had experienced the post-September 11 backlash against Islam while still at school. Among French participants, the *hijab* was described as a strong signifier of resistance to laws banning its use in public institutions, such as schools and government buildings:

"I do not think guys have as much problems, because anyone can have a beard. I think a lot of people speak about women's rights in Islam and I say women are the flag-bearer of Islam. I mean, you look at my dad and you are not sure if he's a Muslim or not, but you look at me and I am definitely a Muslim. So [...] it's all about identity, and how we appear."

Samira, 18–24,
Pakistan born, Paris

"I would say it is very specific to each woman. First of all, wearing the hijab is an obligation as a Muslim person, of course you always have the choice to wear it or not, but it is one of the obligation as a believer. It is also a way to show your identity as a Muslim and to be proud of it."

Madiha, 27, Paris

As these responses demonstrate, wearing the *hijab* is invested with a wide range of personal, social, political, and religious meanings, irreducible to one homogenous expression of faith or identity.

Figure 28
Muslim clothing store
in Lyon, France.
Source: Authors
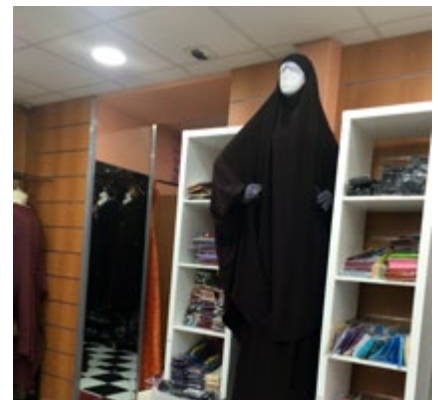
## Despite varying levels of practice among interview and focus group participants, Ramadan was the most frequently adhered to practice among all respondents.

### Fasting during Ramadan

Significantly, while prayer and modesty were reported to be negotiable according to individual lifestyle needs and levels of faith – despite conceding that they are required practices – Ramadan was spoken of as an event that centred on the community and family. Indeed, participants considered Ramadan so integral that one commented that it would 'shameful' for a Muslim to not fast during Ramadan.

Several participants described an average day during Ramadan as comprising of getting up before dawn to eat breakfast before offering the *Fajr* prayer (dawn prayer), which also marks the commencement of the time of fasting *(sawm)*. Following this, Muslims perform the other obligatory prayers throughout the day. After the final prayer of the day (*maghrib*), they are encouraged to break their fast with family.

"Ramadan for us as a family [...] is the only time of the year where we actually all sit down on the table and have a meal together. So, I guess it's more about bringing everyone together, especially for families, it's more of a family sort of time."

Raima, 21, Lebanese background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Participants described the importance of Ramadan as a ritual that increases feelings of individual spirituality and social bonding among families and communities. For some participants, these ritual activities were more focussed on the immediate family and the home:

For others, the mosque played an important role in the social and communal aspects of Ramadan, by providing a communal place for the evening meal and Taraweeh prayers.



Figure 29
Muslim educational books for children in France.
Source: Authors

"During Ramadan a lot of people come together in the mosque and they're all there fasting and I guess it's a belonging. That's what I love about it, it's the belonging, it's the camaraderie that comes along with it. Because sometimes there's so much negative in humanity right now, death and war and all that stuff and when it comes to that 30 days it's completely different it's like blissful, I guess in some ways."

Sharif, 21, Iraqi background, born in Iraq, Melbourne

Though some prayers are non-obligatory, when performed collectively they increase the benefits and blessings of Ramadan. Women describe an increase in mosque attendance during Ramadan:

"Ramadan somehow attracts you a lot, it somehow pulls you closer to the mosque. It pulls you closer to the mosque because, once again, of that humble and peaceful state that you're in."

Maryam, 40, Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

This study found that Ramadan contributes to embodied feelings, emotions and meanings considered vital to the development of Muslim spirituality and ethics. Fasting enables community members to focus on what is important in life and helps them to develop self-discipline, patience, and humility.

Participants described the feelings of social responsibility, care, compassion, and shared vulnerability with others as being the dominant feelings that fasting activated. These in turn were described as deepening experiences of spiritual connection and gratitude towards God:

"It is that sense of vulnerability, it is that sense that makes you a lot more caring towards others, and a lot more compassionate. [...] You become a lot more appreciative that you do have food, and other people do not. And then you think of those people that are in other

countries that are breaking their fast and haven't got food to break their fast with."

Maryam, 40, Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"The whole aspect of Ramadan is not so much the not eating; the not eating is a small part of the whole experience. It's about beginning to feel how others would feel when they don't eat, starving people in other countries, and how people just take life and food for granted."

Bashar, 50, central African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

There is clear relationship between these descriptions of embodied compassion and the development of social responsibility directed toward others; be they in the immediate community or further afield. In terms of broadening these teachings beyond the Muslim community, the *iftar* dinners that mosques and other community and business organisations run highlight how the social and communal aspects of Islam during Ramadan are integral. Some participants (for example Wasila listed below) underscore this in relation to the cross-cultural forms of exchange that are increasingly a part of Ramadan festivities for Australian Muslims.

### Hajj (Pilgrimage)
Beyond the ritualistic dimensions of Muslim religiosity, which encompasses belief in one God (*shahadah*), ritual prayers (*salat),* fasting during Ramadan (*sawm),* and payment of *zakat*, this section considers the last pillar – pilgrimage to Mecca, or *hajj*. As most of the participants were aged 34 years and younger, few had completed the *haji*; it is expected that one perform it only once in a lifetime.

For participants who had performed *hajj* however, or were in the process of planning their trip, they reported feelings and understandings of the practice to be like those of fasting; that is, that it contributes to self-discipline and is a test, and a necessary struggle, to please God. Basheema conveys this understanding of *hajj* as a test that brings you closer to your creator and allows you to live the values of your faith in an intensive period of time:

"It was just really humbling. Because, you know, God knows what every challenge is for. You know, some people don't like crowds [...] I get really frustrated when things aren't clean. ... But you sort of get tested on whatever your weakness is. And so I found it to be incredibly, uh, incredibly humbling. And it was really a spiritually uplifting situation for me."

Basheema, 35–49, Arabic-speaking background, Melbourne

Basheema makes sense of her experience through a gendered lens, claiming that it challenged her own views on the perceived limits of the liberation for women in Muslim societies; a view that she acknowledges is enculturated by Western media and political discourses that stereotype Muslim women as oppressed. Basheema's experience opened her mind to seeing the equal desire and potential of women across all societies and cultures, to demand their rights as Muslims:

"I think Islam is a very liberating religion, but sadly the lived reality, you know, Muslims do not always implement the proper teachings of Islam. So sometimes culture and patriarchal perverse misinterpretation compromises the situation. So that Muslims are not given the rights that have been afforded to them through Islam [...]. But to go to Hajj and to see Muslim women from every corner of the globe and to see how incredibly feisty and strong these women are, I thought: Yes!"

Basheema, 35–49, Arabic-speaking background, Melbourne

Basheema's experience points to one of the central meanings of *hajj*: to come together and experience unity with Muslims from all racial and cultural backgrounds, and from all walks of life – rich and poor. This aspect of the *hajj* pilgrimage reinforces a central value of Islam, that is, to see all Muslims as equal before God. Amira elaborates:

"I also think it [hajj] brings a really positive light for people, because they see the world in one place, they see the diversity of Muslims. And they see people side by side. [...] You're there and going through this whole cleansing experience and reminding yourself what you believe in and why you believe in it and, again that idea of connection. But you see the world as equals in this one place."

Amira, 32, Pakistani background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Shia Muslims engage in several pilgrimages and forms of remembrance in which the experience of being with people from all walks of life is as an important spiritual lesson, encouraging humility:

"In Iraq when I went last year [...] it was during that time of mourning called Muharram and what people do, because the shrine of the prophet's grandson is in Iraq, and what people do is they all congregate to that shrine so it's like Hajj in Mecca but it's on a whole new level. Last year there was 60 million people from Pakistan, India, all over the world. [...] So some would walk 40 kilometres or 3 days just to go to the shrine and for the remembrance, it is a huge spectacle in Iraq and so I always participate in that because I find that it is very important, close to me."

Sharif, 21, Iraqi background, born in Iraq, Melbourne
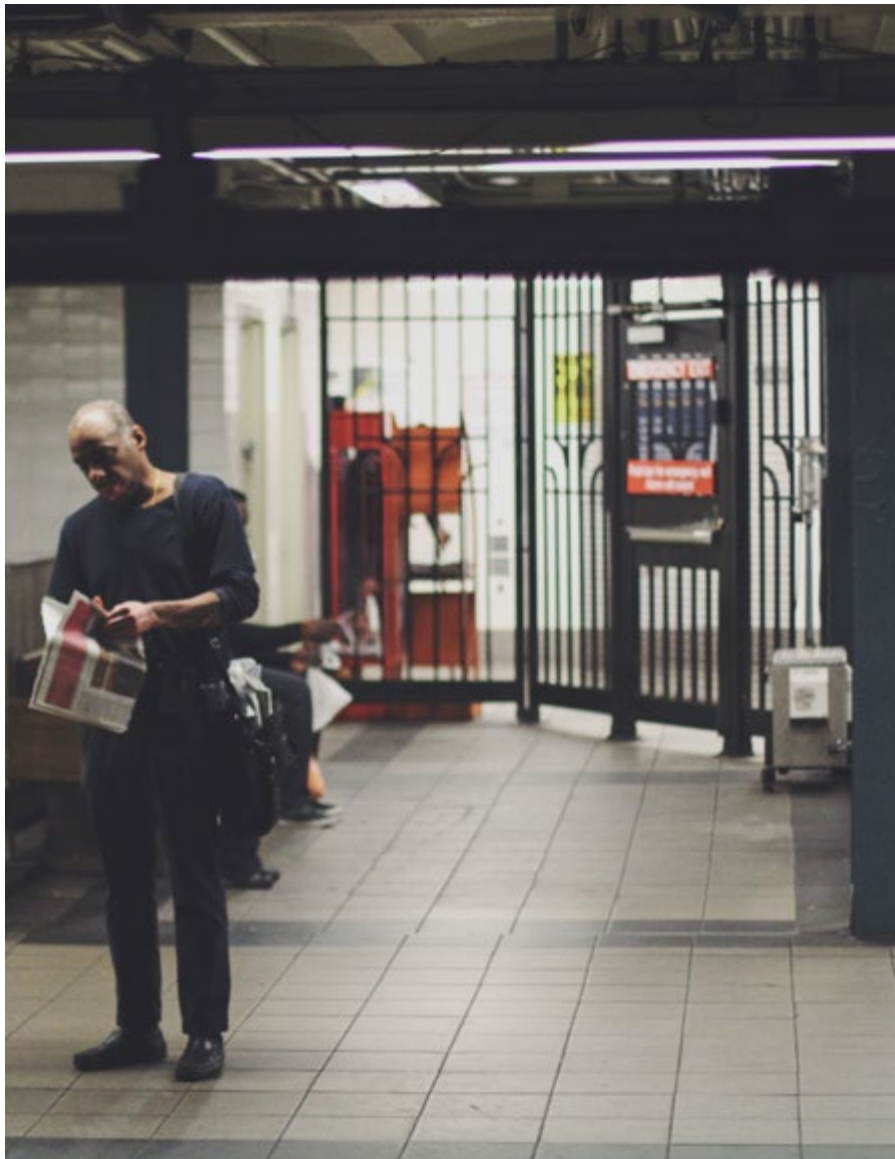
# FINDINGS SITE-BY-SITE: PLACE-BASED INSIGHTS ON ISLAMIC RELIGIOSITY
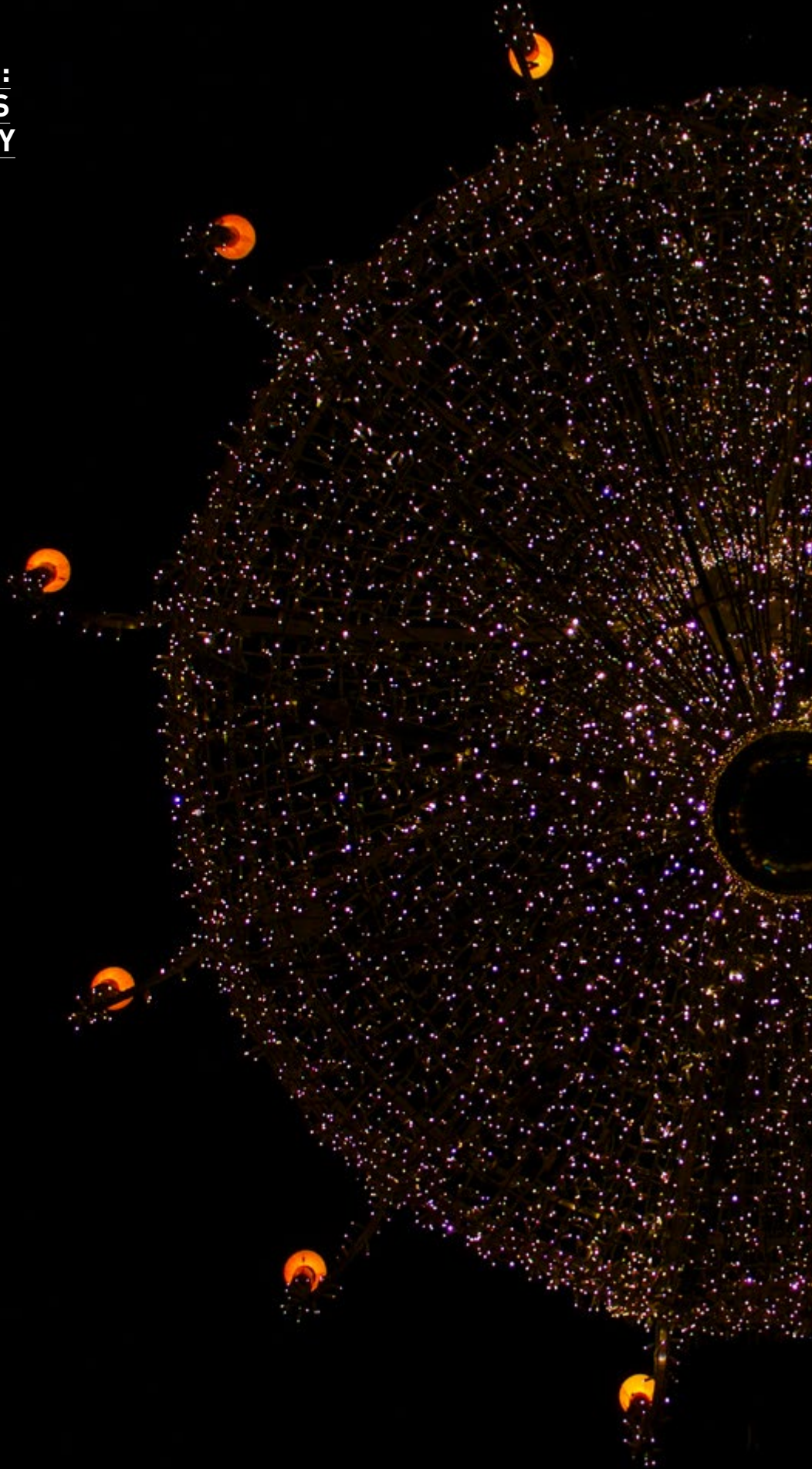
# SELF, IDENTITY, AND ISLAMIC RITUALS

## MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The participants' ages ranged from 22–60 years. Of this group, 20 took part in in-depth interviews, with six taking photos of places in Dandenong and around Melbourne that they considered significant to religious/cultural practice and community life. The researchers also conducted a focus group with 13 members of the Hazara Women's Network. The Network is a community-run initiative, including family-sponsored migrants and refugee claimants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Members meet weekly at the Migrant Resource Centre on Thomas Street in Dandenong. Overall, and in keeping with the diversity of the Muslim community in Dandenong, both survey, interview, and focus group participants represented a range of ethnic backgrounds, a diverse range of migration and settlement experiences, and belonged to several Islamic sects and schools. Consistent with recent settlement patterns, most survey, interview, and focus group participants living in Dandenong were born in Afghanistan (roughly 57 per cent). They had arrived in Australia either as refugee claimants or through the sponsorship of family members already living in Dandenong.

A smaller number of participants from other ethno-cultural backgrounds were also interviewed: Turkish (12 per cent), Albanian (9 per cent), Burmese (6 per cent), Ghanaian (6 per cent), Lebanese (3 per cent), Pakistani (3 per cent) and Uzbek (3 per cent). Of the Turkish, Albanian and Lebanese participants, many had arrived in Dandenong in the 1970s and 1980s as part of a labour migration program. Among this group, Imams in Dandenong from the Emir Sultan mosque and the Albanian Saki mosque were interviewed. Of the other participants, most had lived and worked in Dandenong for eight years or more, and were running successful local businesses. The majority were members of long-established mosque communities.

It is important to note that even among the Afghan Muslim Australians there was significant diversity: most Afghan participants interviewed were from the Hazara minority ethnic community (73 per cent) and belonged to the Shia sect. A much smaller number of Afghan residents who belonged to the Sunni sect (26 per cent) were also interviewed, two of which identified as Pashtun. A range of factors complicated the settlement experiences of both groups, such as interreligious and tribal conflict between Hazara and Pashtun groups in Afghanistan, and between Hazara and Sunni-majority Muslims in the local Dandenong area. Socioeconomic circumstances compounded these tensions, since a large portion of Afghan background participants had arrived in Dandenong on bridging visas, limiting their rights to employment and welfare support. This was a source of frustration and anxiety for many participants, some had waited months or years for their settlement claims to be completed.

The Melbourne survey attracted 96 respondents. Gender distribution was almost equal with 49 males (51 per cent) and 47 females (49 per cent) participating in the survey (see Figure 30).

Figure 20

**Gender. Melbourne (frequencies)**



● **49%** Male  ● **47%** Female
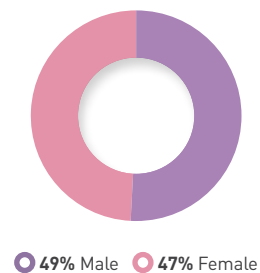
Among Melbourne-based participants in the study, 33 (or roughly 30 per cent of survey respondents and interview/focus group participants) lived or worked in the City of Greater Dandenong and its surrounding areas.

Many of the respondents to the Melbourne survey represented a relatively young demographic. The age of most respondents was between 18–34 years old (76 per cent). Close to a half of the sample (43 per cent) belonged to an even younger cohort, between 18–24 years old (see Figure 31).

Figure 31

Age. Melbourne



● 43% 18-24  ● 33% 25-34  ● 16% 35-49
● 2% 50-59  ● 2% 60+  ● 4% No answer
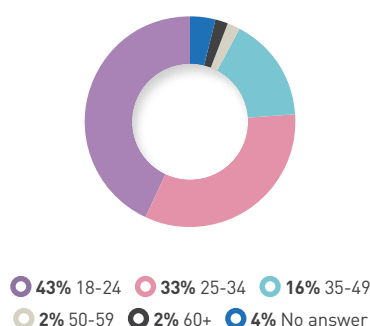
The responses of young people (aged 18–24) to questions on their faith, the integration of religion in Western contexts, and to the barriers and opportunities for engaging and belonging to the city, highlighted the diverse experiences and religiosities of young Muslims, at the same time as it suggested clear intergenerational differences with older respondents. As sociologists of religion have claimed, young people living in Western societies who identify with a traditional religious affiliation are turning away from traditional sermons in favour of more informal or 'new age' and individualised forms of spirituality and religiosity (Turner 2010).

For the young people interviewed in Melbourne, their Muslim identity – even if evolving in Western contexts

– is formative of the way they live their lives and encounter other communities. Nonetheless, the ways in which they expressed their religion, along with other cultural identifiers and practices, was complex and dependent on several variables not limited to place of residence, gender, race, country of birth, religious sect, or school education. Indeed, rather than positioning religion as a core identity from which all other relationships flowed, this cohort expressed different experiences of social connection and place, as well as different trajectories of the nexus self-religion-community: shaped by different expressions, intensities, and understandings of the role of faith and religious practice, all of which impacted on their self-identity.

Of particular interest to this study was the ways in which differential experiences of social connection and belonging between Australian-born Muslims (second- and third-generation) and migrant Muslim youth (first-generation) might shape different typologies of faith identity and practice. Some young Muslims developed forms of religiosity that are more open, individualised, spiritual, and easily integrated within secular and multicultural frameworks than the religiosity of their parents. Others meanwhile developed more conservative, traditional modes of religiosity, shaped by having experienced belonging more fully within Islamic conceptions of self and Ummah (community), especially after September 11.

This research found that the experiences of coming to Australia as a migrant from a Muslim majority country often produced one of three responses: assimilation, incorporation

(hybridity, mix), or extremism. Significantly then, the experiences of settlement processes for young Muslim migrants to Australia is of great importance; particularly in relation to their ease of ability and opportunity to negotiate a space for their faith in the new environment:

"I don't think there is a set sort of being [a Muslim] in Australia or overseas. I think that you notice when people, migrants or refugees settle in a new country, some of them would integrate by assimilating to the new culture. Other ones might try to incorporate the culture they were brought up in, the culture where they lived in another country, and perhaps the new place and coming together with sort of a mix of their own. Then there's the others who bring their own sort of village to the place that they are in, and they sort of become more extreme of what they actually are, or what might have been an idea becomes more extreme here."

Balquees, 24, Iraqi background, born in Iraq, lives in Melbourne

In the literature, the religiosity of migrant Muslim youth is often contrasted with Western-born Muslims, for whom attitudes toward faith and expressions of religiosity are thought to be more flexible and open to the West – a product of their immersion in Western culture and society as a place of 'dwelling'. Bilici (2012, pp. 117–118) regards this as an evolution from having what he terms

an 'Eastern Muslim' habitus which encounters the Western habitus, to having a Western Muslim habitus which experiences the Western country a 'homeland'. Certainly, this distinction was evidenced, to certain extent, in the responses of Australian-born Muslims in this study:

"In our society, because we live in Australia, breaking our fast is generally when people come home from work. So it's really about balancing time and understanding your place in society and that remembering [...] how much your faith impacts on or how it can integrate with a lot of the other things we usually normally do, like everybody else."

Raima, 21, Lebanese background female, born in Australia, Melbourne

Yet there were also several instances that challenged this rule. More clearly, individual experiences of migration and settlement in Australia produced a complex array of feelings of belonging, which shaped expressions of faith and religious practice. In Sharif's case, reflecting on his experiences of migration, settlement, and his cultural and religious heritage enabled him to move from a position of denying his heritage/assimilation to the dominant culture, to one in which central aspects of his ethnic identity are incorporated into an Australian or Western lifestyle and culture:

"It just depends on the context but there is Australian in me, there's no doubt ... I mean some people think I'm bipolar

you know with the mixing of identities depending on the issue or the place or the context. But when it comes to opinion, I take into consideration my religious views, my cultural views and my westernised views. I take that all into consideration and that's when I place my view. But when it comes to patriotism and all that stuff I'm Iraqi and Australian, either so it's good."

Sharif, 21, born in Iraq, lived in Saudi Arabia and Melbourne

Another participant, Mustafa, lived in many countries during his early childhood. After migrating to Melbourne, he had to adjust to a society where religion was not a prominent feature, and where he was a minority. He felt an in-betweenness that enabled him to, in his words, mix and match the best of both cultures.

His connection to Melbourne arose from his experiences of the multicultural population there, and from the cultural hybridity and mix encountered. His religion, as a universal set of ethical principles, was the one constant, an anchor for his identity that transcended place, and gave him a sense of confidence and belonging to the world:

"I think always, in terms of being Muslim, it has been the one thing that I have consistently. [...] I suppose, at the end, you take the best of both worlds, so you take the religious upbringing from there

and you bring it here. More so you take the understanding that you've built here [of cultural diversity and multiculturalism [...] I'm living here, and by doing that I'm accepting to live by the laws which is what my religion tells me to do."

Mustafa, 18–24, born in Palestine, Melbourne

In relation to country of birth, just over half of the respondents were born in Australia (49 people or 51 per cent) with the remaining respondents born overseas (47 people or 49 per cent). Among those born overseas, the majority (35.5 per cent) had arrived more than 15 years ago. Of these, significantly, most had become Australian citizens (93.7 per cent), confirming the importance of citizenship to Muslims living in Melbourne (see Figure 32).

Figure 32

Country of Birth.
Melbourne (frequencies)



⬤ **49%** Australia ⬤ **22%** Other ⬤ **6%** Pakistan
⬤ **6%** Iraq ⬤ **3%** Afghanistan ⬤ **3%** Bangladesh
⬤ **3%** Somalia ⬤ **2%** Sri Lanka ⬤ **2%** Egypt
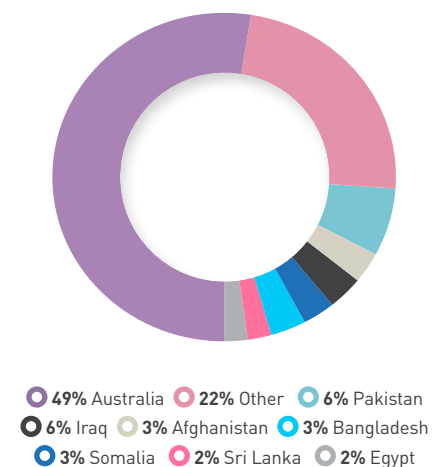
Education levels show that most participants were university educated (61.4 per cent). Among them, 38.5 per cent of the sample have achieved a bachelor degree, and 22.9 per cent had a postgraduate qualification.

**Education. Melbourne**
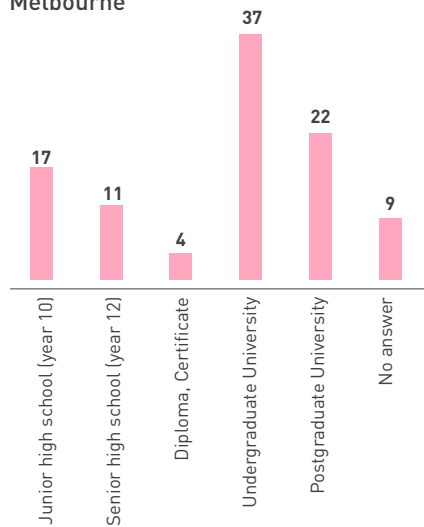


In regards to employment, most respondents were either studying full-time (25%) or in full-time employment (26%). There was a wide range of household incomes, ranging from less than $10,000 per annum to $150,000 or more.

Melbourne respondents came from a range of ethno-cultural backgrounds, but overall most self-identified as from an Arabic-speaking background (30 people or 31.3 per cent), followed by ten people of African backgrounds (10.4 per cent) and nine from Pakistani backgrounds (9.4 per cent).

The remaining participants were from European, South Asian, Iranian and Afghan backgrounds (see Figure 33).

Reflecting the ethno-cultural backgrounds of participants, the most frequently reported language spoken at home was Arabic (34 respondents or 35.4 per cent), followed by English (14 respondents or 14.6 per cent) and Urdu (12 people or 12.5 per cent) (see Figure 34).

Figure 33

**Ethnicity. Melbourne (frequencies)**
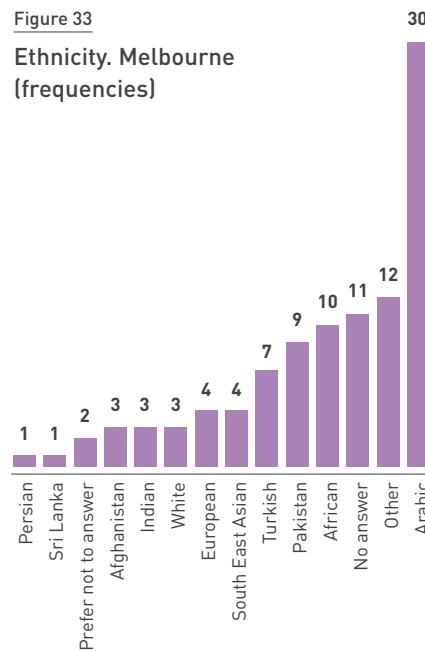


Figure 34

**Languages spoken at home. Melbourne (frequencies)**
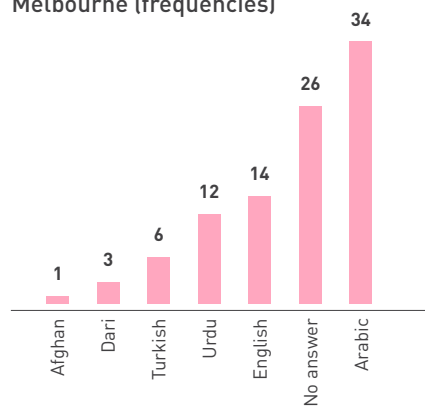


When discussing religious identification, the use of a scale enabled participants to identify as 'practising' (they regularly engage in prayer, attend mosque, and so on), 'non-practising' (believe in God but do not regularly engage in religious rituals or practices), or 'cultural' (Muslim by cultural heritage only).

A clear majority of participants identified as 'practising Muslims' (89.77 per cent), indicating the significance that performing their faith has on their sense of identity (see Figure 35).

Figure 35

**Self-identity. Melbourne (frequencies)**



- **80%** Practising Muslim
- **1%** Cultural Muslim
- **8%** Non-practising Muslim
- **2%** No answer
- **5%** Other
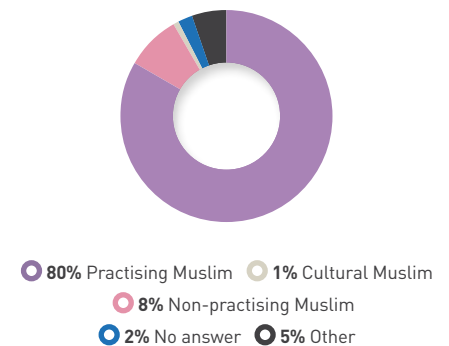
People who responded 'other' provided the following comments: 'Although I do not engage in prayer, I engage in other religious rituals such as fasting during Ramadan, celebrating Eid, etc.'; 'I regularly pray but don't attend mosque'; 'I am Muslim and spirituality is important to me'.

Participants were also asked whether they adhered only to domestic law, to a mix of domestic and Sharia laws, or to Sharia law only. A clear majority of participants obeyed a mix of domestic law and Sharia law (59 respondents or 61.5 per cent), whereas only ten people

or 10.4 per cent followed Sharia law exclusively and 11 people (11.5 per cent) reported that they strictly followed domestic law. These findings suggest that Sharia law and domestic law are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories, but in fact together shape the lived experience of many practising Muslims (see Figure 36).



Figure 36

**Daily life with Sharia law. Melbourne (frequencies)**
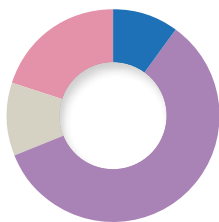
- 59% Mixture of Sharia law and domestic law
- 20% No answer
- 11% Strictly domestic law
- 10% Strictly Sharia

Much of the debate and contestation around Muslim religious beliefs and practices in the West has focussed on Sharia law, which, in its broadest definition, could be regarded as laws that govern the conduct of Muslims in relation to domestic, social, political, financial, and legal matters. The precepts for these laws are primarily derived from the *Qur'an* (the Revelation) and the *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions) and are applied through the interpretation and consensus of *Ulama* (religious scholars).

While 'lived' Muslim religiosity in the West is often performed in accordance with many of these laws, particularly in relation to personal and financial matters, participants reported that the desire to establish Sharia at the level of the state is a misconception, fuelling Islamophobia and ignorance:
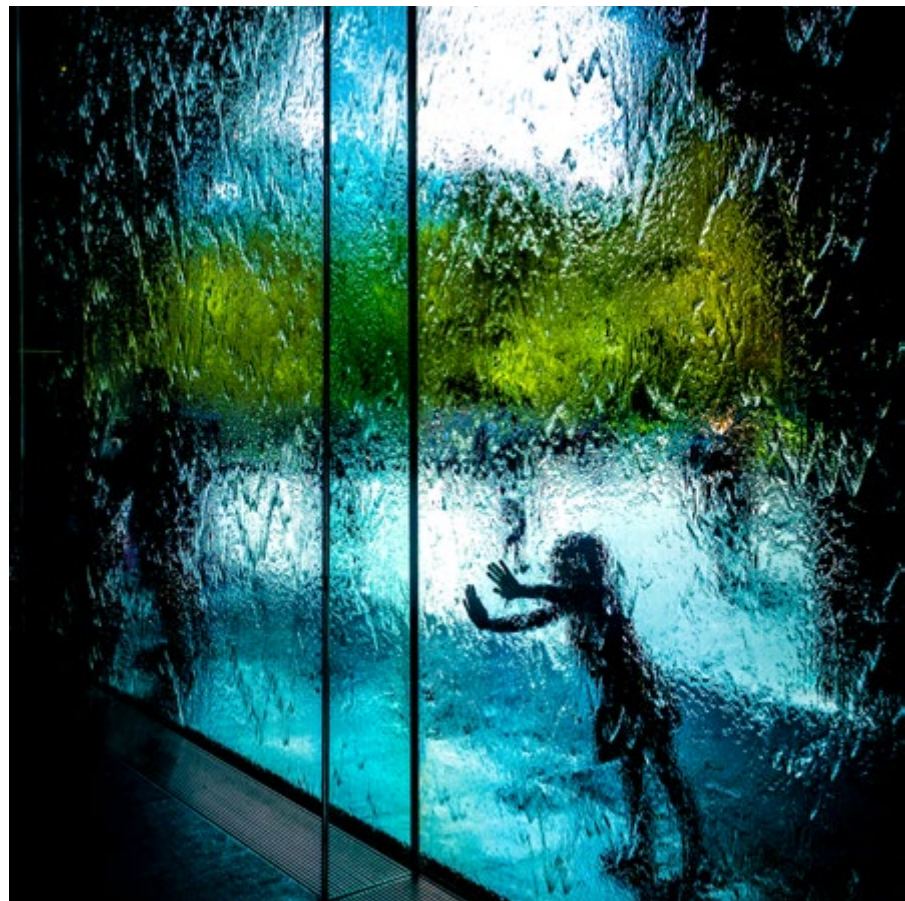
"I think there's misconception amongst many non-Muslims in Australia in that the country is becoming Islamic because the population of Muslims is growing. It is actually nonsense to me. It doesn't really make sense because there is very limited participation [of Muslims] in parliament. So if we're looking at that level if someone sits there and is educated and knows exactly what's going on there's no chance of anything happening on Sharia or anything like that, absolutely no chance of that happening."

Tariq, 25–34, Lebanese background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"I guess and there is a kind of a collection of different kinds of intolerance or I am not sure how you describe them, people with vested interest in keeping or having Muslims as being a focus of fear or reaction. I think to some extent these people are driven also by the [anti-Muslim] industry. It has become a bit of an industry for them, they actually build a whole organisation around having that hostility towards Muslims, frightening others and raising hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions, by frightening people about Muslims and immigration and takeovers and creeping Sharia and all those things."

Abbas, 35–49, Arabic-speaking background, Melbourne

Because of popularist misrepresentations of Sharia, many participants were reluctant to speak about its role in their own lives.

Some participants, however, confirmed that they practiced their religion according to some precepts of Sharia law, and while these precepts are often thought to be incompatible with domestic laws, they spoke of their essential role in promoting ethical behaviour as well as virtuous and participatory citizenship:

"For practising Muslims... there is an ultimate divine rule that has come through for the benefit of humanity [...] If people choose to follow it."

Saeed, 27, Afghan background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"Islam is an incredibly capitalist religion actually. It really focuses on business but it doesn't permit unfair allocation of labour and resources, it's very much against that. It's against interest because interest is frowned upon because it creates an un-equal relationship between the borrower and the lender. [...] So the subprime mortgage crisis I don't think would have happened under a Muslim – under a Sharia compliant financial system if it was practised properly. So I guess notions of equity and injustice and fairness and how you treat people are all sort of encompassed by that."

Wasila, Indonesian background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"[Sharia law] has been balanced since the beginning of time without it being an issue. [...] But it can go and it has been going hand-in-hand [with non-religious laws] for quite some time. [...] If it was not seen in such a negative light [...] the laws come together."

Amira, 32, Pakistani background, born in Australia, Melbourne

## DETROIT, USA

The participants' ages ranged from In Detroit, 48 participants responded to the survey. In terms of gender distribution, the majority were females (36 people or 75 per cent), with only nine males (19 per cent) completing the survey (see Figure 37).

### Gender. Detroit (frequencies)



- **36%** Female
- **9%** Male
- **3%** No answer
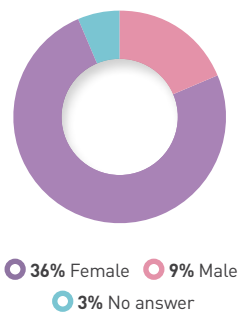
Most respondents to the Detroit survey represented a young demographic. Forty (83 per cent) of a total of 48 were 18–34 years old. Twenty-eight respondents (58.3 per cent) belonged to the youngest age group of 18–24 years old (see Figure 38).

Figure 38

### Age. Detroit (frequencies)



| 18 to 24 | 25 to 34 | 35 to 49 | 60+ | No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
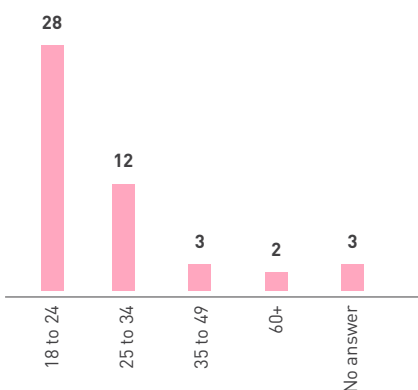
In Detroit, 48 participants participated in the survey, 36 females and nine males, with three responses missing (75 per cent female, 19 per cent male).

### Gender. Detroit



- **75%** Female
- **19%** Male
- **6%** No answer
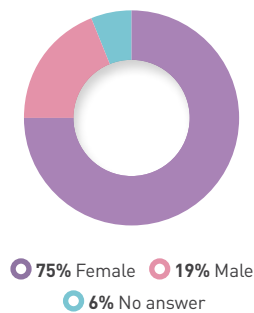
A majority of Detroit participants (83%) are aged 34 or under; among them 58% belong to the youngest age group (18-24 years old), and 25% are 25-34 years old.

Thirty participants (62.4 per cent) were born in the USA, 71.4 per cent came to the USA more than 15 years ago, and 71.4 per cent were US citizens (in accordance with the requirements for acquiring citizenship at birth in the USA) (see Figure 39).

Figure 39

### Country of birth. Detroit (frequencies)



| Australia | England | Jordan | Malaysia | Senegal | Syria | Bangladesh | No answer | Pakistan | USA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 30 |
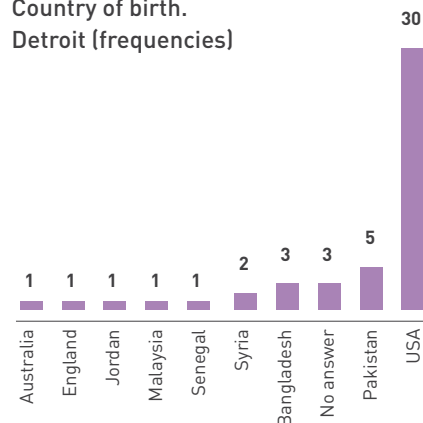
When asked about their highest educational attainment, one participant (2.1 per cent) reported having less than a High School education, while 15 people (31.3 per cent) held a High School Diploma only. The remaining respondents were tertiary educated: eight people (16.7 per cent) held a Diploma or Certificate, 13 participants (27.1 per cent) had attained Bachelor degrees, and six participants (12.5 per cent) held Master's or PhD degrees (see Figure 40).

Figure 40

### Education. Detroit



| Less than high school diploma | High school diploma | Assoc Diploma, Diploma, Certificate | Bachelors Degree | Master's, Professional or Doctoral Degree | No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 15 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 5 |
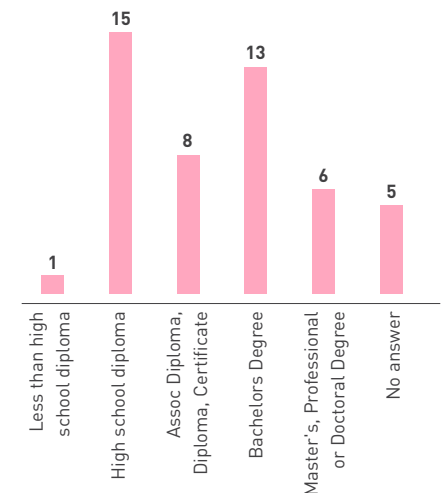
Regarding their employment status: 27 people (56.3 per cent) reported being in employment, five people (10.4 per cent) reported being unemployed, and eight (16.7 per cent) were students. Twelve people were employed full-time, nine part-time, six students studied full-time, and three students studied part-time.

The total household income of participants was variable, from less than US$10,000 to more than US$150,000 (see Figure 41).

Figure 41

**Current employment.
Detroit**



- **27** Yes   **5** No
- **8** Student   **8** No answer
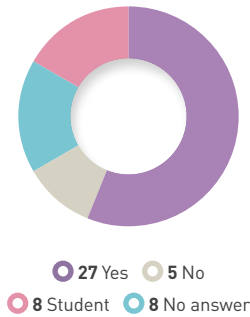
When asked about their ethno-cultural background, 13 of 48 participants in Detroit (27.1 per cent) self-identified as 'Arabic-speaking'. The categories 'African American', 'Pakistani', or 'South East Asian' each attracted five respondents (10.4 per cent).

Three people (6.3 per cent) identified as 'Indian' and three (6.3 per cent) as 'White-Caucasian' (see Figure 42).

**Figure 42**

**Ethnicity. Detroit**
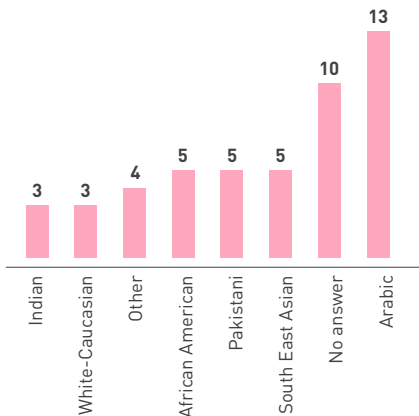


Six people (12.5 per cent) spoke only English at home, 14 respondents (29.2 per cent) also spoke Arabic, and nine (18.8 per cent) spoke Urdu (see Figure 43).

**Figure 43**

**Do you speak languages other than English at home? Detroit. (frequencies)**



- **19** No answer   **14** Arabic
- **9** Urdu   **6** English only
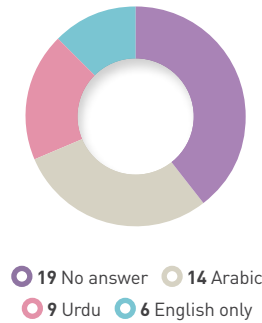
On religious identification, 39 of the 48 respondents to the Detroit survey (81.3 per cent) identified as 'practising' Muslims (regularly engage in prayer, attend mosque).

One person (2.1 per cent) claimed that they were a 'non-practising' Muslim (believed in God but did not regularly engage in religious rituals and practices), and two (4.2 per cent) identified as 'cultural' Muslims (Muslims by cultural heritage only) (see Figure 44).

Thirty-five of 48 respondents (72.9 per cent) reported strictly observing religious dietary requirements, only three people (6.3 per cent) claimed not to. Additionally, 33 participants (68.8 per cent) reported observing strict dress and physical rule (wearing Islamic clothing such as *hijab*, or wearing a beard), and five (10.4 per cent) replied 'no'. An equally high number (30 or 62.5 per cent)

**Figure 44**

**Self-identity.
Detroit**



- **81%** Practising Muslim
- **4%** Cultural Muslim   **13%** No answer
- **2%** Non-practising Muslim
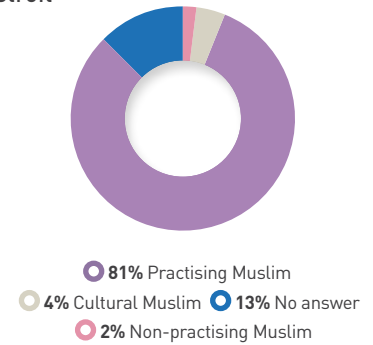
maintained community ties with local Muslim groups, while eight people (16.7 per cent) replied that they did not. Over half of all respondents (27 people or 56.3 per cent) maintained community ties with Muslim relatives or friends abroad, while 11 people (22.9 per cent) confirmed that they did not.

Most respondents (31 people or 65 per cent) conducted daily life (in terms of financial, personal, behavioural, customs and so on) in accordance with 'a mixture of Sharia law and domestic law', five people (10 per cent) observed 'strictly Sharia law' and two people (4 per cent) by 'strictly domestic law' (see Figure 45).

**Figure 45**

**Daily life with Sharia law.
Detroit**



- **10%** Strictly Sharia   **21%** No answer
- **4%** Strictly domestic law
- **65%** A mixture of Sharia law and domestic law
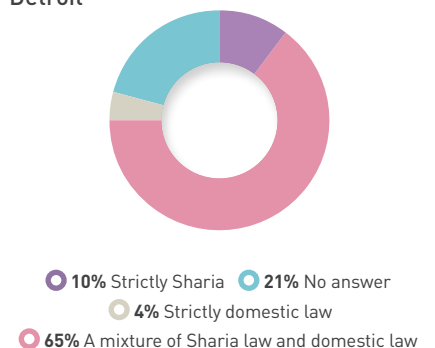
## LYON/GRENOBLE/PARIS, FRANCE

In France (across the greater Lyon, Grenoble, and Paris regions), 93 participants took part in the survey. Most of these were male (55 people or 59 per cent), and 31 participants (33 per cent) were female (see Figure 46).

Figure 46

### Gender. France



**33%** Female  **59%** Male
**8%** No answer
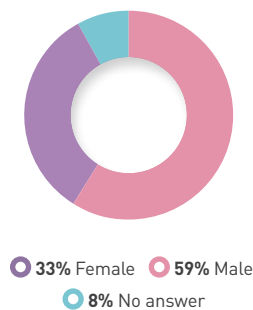
Over two-thirds of respondents (71 per cent) were under 34 years old, among them 26 per cent belonged to a younger group of 18–24-year-olds and 45 per cent 25–34 year-olds. The remaining 14 per cent were aged between 35-49, 7 per cent aged between 50–59, and 1 per cent 60 years or over (see Figure 47).

Figure 47

### Age. France



**26%** 18 to 24   **45%** 25 to 34
**14%** 35 to 49   **7%** 50 to 59
**1%** 60+   **7%** No answer
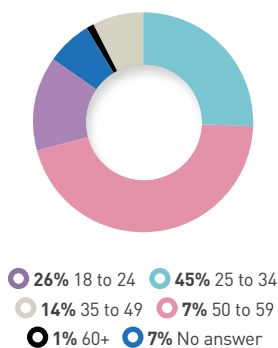
Sixty-three respondents (68 per cent) were born in France, and 21 (23 per cent) were born overseas in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Mali, Algeria, and others (see Figure 48).

Figure 48

### Country of birth. France (frequencies)



| France | Tunisia | Morocco | Mali | Algeria | Chile | Gabon | Ivory Coast | Switzerlad | No answer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 63 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
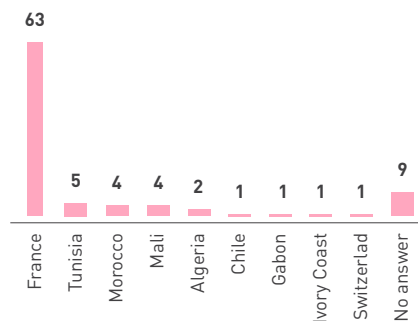
Over a half of the respondents in France had completed tertiary education. Among them 21.7 per cent had attained Master's or Doctoral degrees, 20.5 per cent held Bachelor's degrees and 15.6 per cent held specialist Diplomas or Certificates (see Figure 49).

Figure 49

### Education (% Percent). France



| Junior High School | Senior High School | Diploma, certificate | Bachelor's degree | Master's and Doctoral degree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 21.7 | 20.5 | 15.6 | 20.5 | 21.7 |
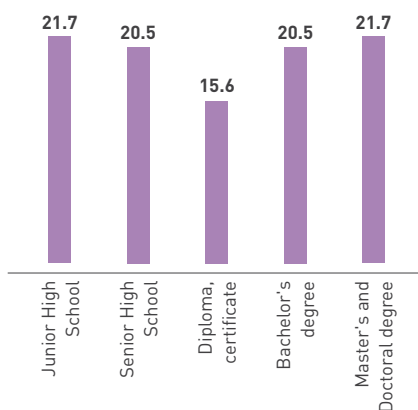
Regarding the respondents' employment status, 51 (55 per cent) reported being in employment. Of these, 42 (45 per cent) were employed full-time. Seven respondents (8 per cent) were students, and four (4 per cent) were unemployed (see Figure 50).

Figure 50

### Employment. France



| Student part time | Retired | Part time | Casual | Self employed | Looking for work | Student full time | No answer | Full time |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 30 | 42 |
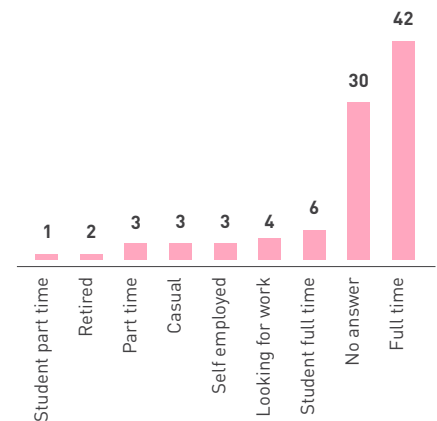
The annual household income for close to half of all participants (49.3 per cent) was less than Đ20,000 (the average annual salary in France is approximately Đ26,000), while 85 per cent of participants earned less than Đ40,000 per year.

Among the 93 respondents in France, the majority (62 or 66.7 per cent) self-identified as 'Arabic-speaking'. Six people identified as 'Indian', four as 'European', three as 'Pakistani', three as 'Afghan', two as 'African', one as 'Sri Lankan', and one as 'Caucasian' (see Figure 51).

**Ethnicity (% Percent). France**



Regarding religious self-identification, 71 respondents (79 per cent) said they were 'practising' Muslims, eight people (9 per cent) identified as 'non-practising' Muslims, and two people (2 per cent) identified as 'cultural' Muslims (see Figure 52).

Seventy-two of the 93 respondents (77.4 per cent) reported observing strict dietary requirements, while one person (1.1 per cent) reported that they did not. Thirty respondents (32.3 per cent) confirmed observing strict dress and physical rules, while 41 people (44.1 per cent) said they did not.

In response to the question: 'To what extent do you conduct your daily life in accordance with Sharia law? (in terms of financial, personal, behavioural, customs and so on)', most participants (57 people or 68 per cent) reported that they conducted their lives according to 'a mixture of Sharia law and domestic law', seven people (8 per cent) followed 'strictly Sharia law', and six people (7 per cent) followed 'strictly domestic law' (see Figure 53).

Figure 53

**Daily life with Sharia law. France**



- **8%** Strictly Sharia
- **7%** Strictly domestic law
- **17%** No answer
- **68%** A mixture of Sharia law and domestic law

Figure 52

**Self-Identification. France**



- **79%** Practising Muslim
- **2%** Cultural Muslim
- **10%** No answer
- **9%** Non-practising Muslim
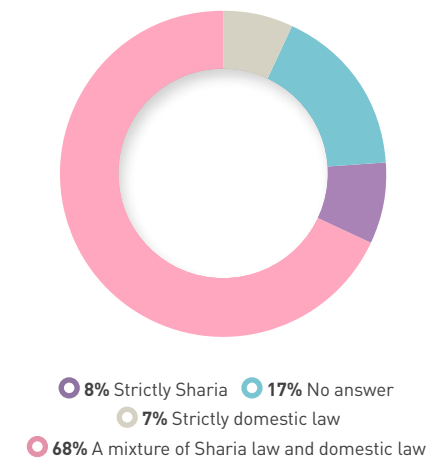
# RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, PUBLIC SPACE, AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Survey participants considered prayer to be the most important religious practice and the foundation of the five pillars of Islam. The five pillars are:

1. Shahada: Declaration of Faith

2. Salat: Prayers (five times a day)

3. Zakāt: Charity

4. Sawm: Fasting Ramadan

5. Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca (for those physically and financially able to do so)

Across all three sites, 167 participants (70.5 per cent) reported engaging in everyday prayers, and 144 (60.8 per cent) participating in Friday prayers. One participant describes his experience of prayer as:

"The five times prayer reminds me all the time of my direction, just everything that I do, when I sit down to pray I look back on the day... and how it's been and how I'm going to finish the day and how I start my day... each day."

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne.

An overwhelming majority of participants from all three sites reported that they were most comfortable performing religious practices at home, at mosque, or in other public spaces: 53 respondents in Melbourne, 27 in Detroit and 37 from the French sites conducted their religious practices at these conventional places (see Figure 54)

Figure 54

## Places to practice religious activities by site (frequencies)
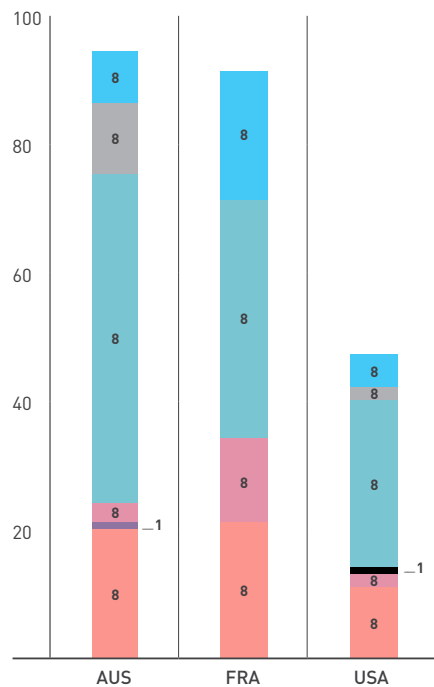


Legend:
- No answer
- Only Mosque
- Only Home
- Mosque and public places
- Home. Mosque and public places
- Home and public places
- Home and Mosque

Close to half of Melbourne respondents (41 people or 42.7 per cent), over one-third of the Detroit respondents (19 people or 39.6 per cent) and 18 people (19.4 per cent) at the French sites (see Figure 55) reported conducting religious practices at community centres.

Figure 55

## Religious practices at community centers by site (frequencies)
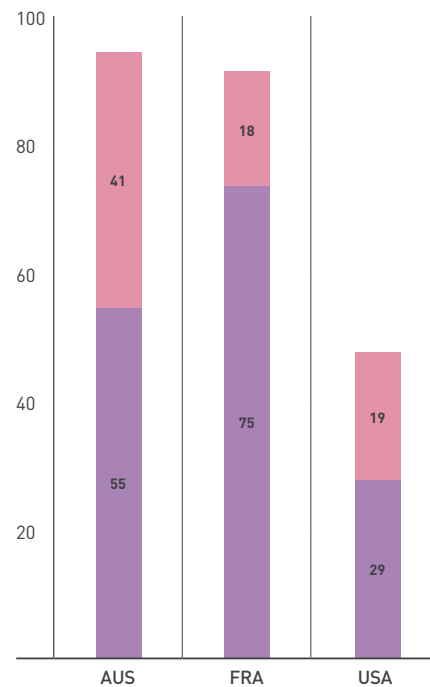


Legend:
- Yes
- No

The university, as a site for conducting religious practices, was popular mostly among the Detroit respondents (21 people or 43.8 per cent), and Melbourne respondents (37 people or 38.5 per cent). While only nine respondents (9.7 per cent) in France, reported performing religious practices at a university (see Figure 56).

Less than half of all participants conducted religious practices at work. More people reported practicing their religion at work in Melbourne (41 people or 42.7 per cent) and Detroit (20 people or 41.7 per cent); this finding relates to the greater political, public, and institutional acceptance of embodied religious practices in these field sites. Only 19 respondents (20.4 per cent) reported conducting religious practices at work in France (see Figure 57).

During religious practices, respondents mostly reported feeling positive towards Non-Muslims: in France (51 participants or 54.8 per cent); in Australia (41 or 42.7 per cent) and in the USA (20 or 41.7 per cent) (see Figure 58).

Figure 56

**Religious practices at university by site (frequencies)**
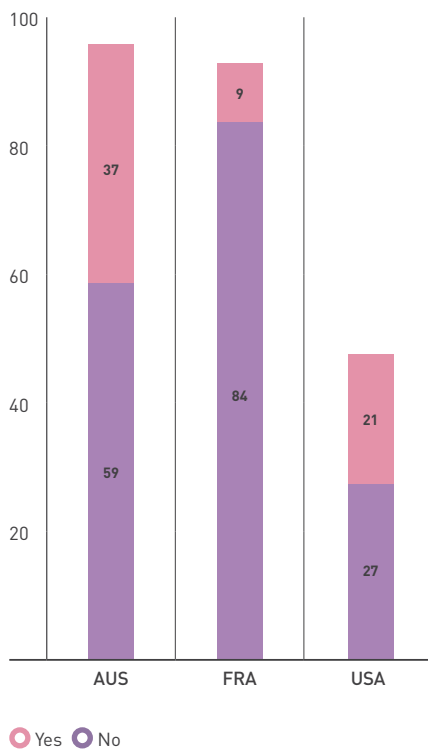


Figure 57

**Religious practices at work by site (frequencies)**
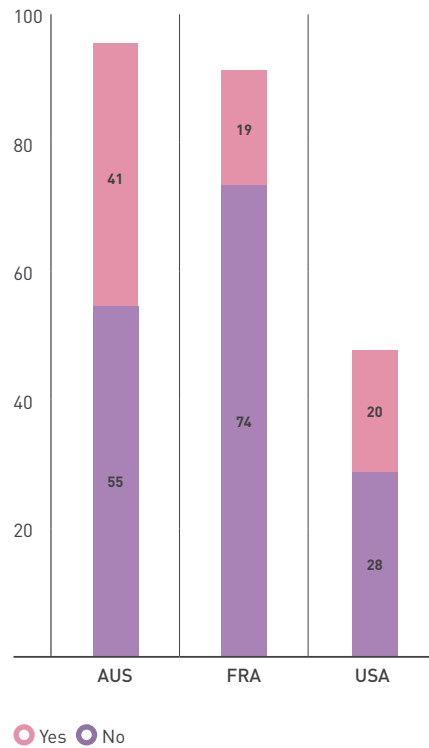


Figure 58

**Feelings while performing religious practices by site (frequencies)**
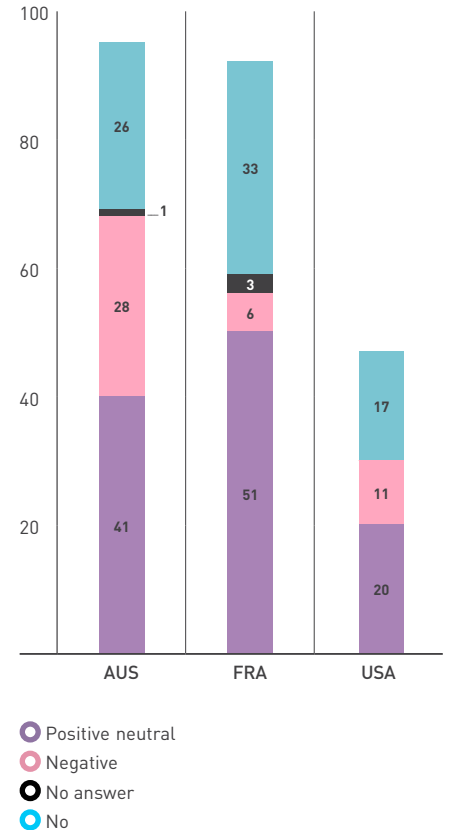
## MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

For Muslims in the West, the most visible religious practice is the observance of strict dress and rules governing physical appearance. For women, this can include wearing modest clothing or the *hijab*, while men might wear a beard. In Melbourne, 54 people (56.3 per cent) reported observing a strict dress code, while only 26 (27 per cent) responding that they did not follow these requirements. Sixteen people (16.7 per cent) did not answer this question at all (see Figure 59).

Figure 59

**Observe Dress Requirements. Melbourne (frequencies)**



- ○ **54** Yes   ○ **26** No
- ○ **16** No answer
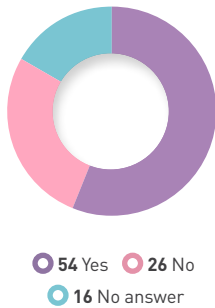
Dietary requirements were even more strongly observed by participants in Melbourne: 75 people (83 per cent) responded 'yes' and only five people (5 per cent) said 'no'.

**Dietary requirements. Melbourne (frequencies)**



- ○ **75** Yes   ○ **16** No
- ○ **5** No answer
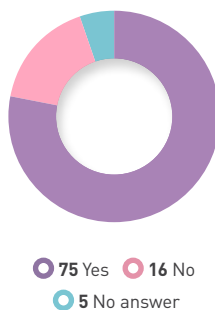
Among the Melbourne cohort, on the question of what rituals, practices, and faith-based activities or community events they regularly engaged in, participants most frequently cited fasting during Ramadan (76 people or 79.2 per cent), cleaning hands prior to prayers (75 people or 78.1 per cent), and celebrating Eid festival (74 people or 77.1 per cent). Other frequently mentioned rituals included, daily prayers (71 respondents or 74 per cent), reading *Qur'an* (67 respondents or 70 per cent) and the payment of alms (63 people or 65.7 per cent). Additionally, 62 (64.6 per cent) of respondents attended mosque, and 57 (59.4 per cent) attended community festivals other than Eid (see Figure 60).

Figure 60

**Rituals, practices and faith based community events regularly engaged in. Melbourne**
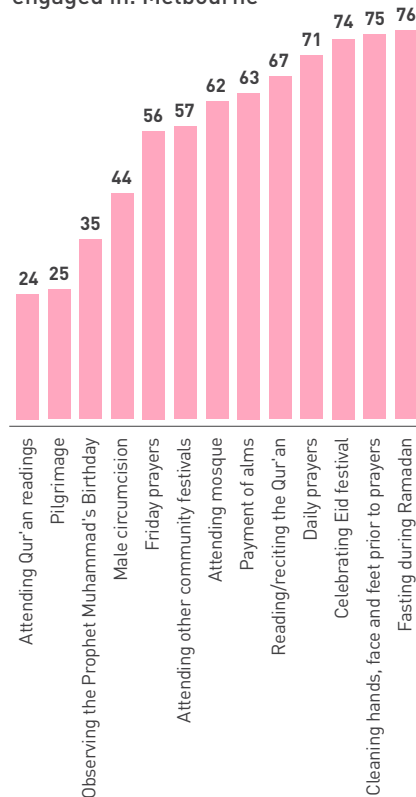


Reflecting on the sites where these rituals and practices, such as daily prayers, are enacted, the majority among the Melbourne cohort reported feeling most comfortable practicing at home (75 people or 78.1 per cent), or in a designated religious space such as the mosque (62 people or 64.6 per cent). Workplaces and community centres were also popular (41 respondents or 42.7 per cent for each), as was the university (37 respondents or 38.5 per cent). Open public spaces, for example in parks, on public transport, or on the street were less popular (see Figure 61).

Figure 61

**In what places do you perform these religious practices? (frequencies) Melbourne**
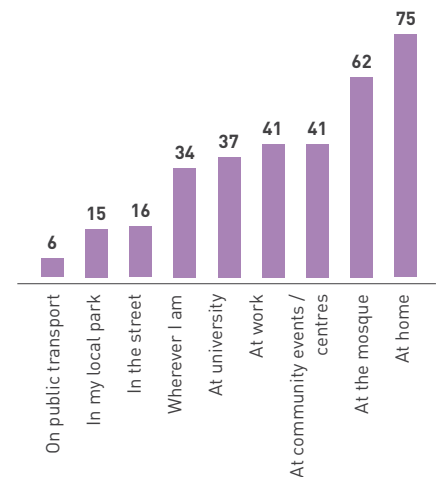


Faith communities mirror the society in which they are embedded, in relation to the social norms that inform obligations and values; all of which are incorporated into conceptions of formal citizenship vis-à-vis the nation-state. These depend on the family unit as a primary agent of socialisation; through which specific ideas and values related to being a 'good Muslim' are reproduced.

On this subject, a group of participants from Melbourne, particularly the religious leaders, provided specific insights into the importance of the family, as well as the social connections fostered through the mosque:

"In Islam family is very important. Yes, you can live independent, but the style of Islamic life is to live with your parents, or next to your parents, where you see your parents all the time, they see you…. So, that culture is still here alive, staying with parents, taking care of parents, and getting married, and building family."

Imam Ismael, Melbourne

By being a good family member, especially taking good care of one's parents, individuals fulfil the wishes of God as well as their obligations to their community and society more broadly. Imam Ismael drew on passages from the *Qur'an* to underline that family is the most important site for fulfilling moral values and obligations to others.

Neighbourliness as a civic virtue extends the focus on social connections beyond the family and is an important and integral value to Muslim beliefs and faith-based practices. Participants communicated this by way of verses in the *Qur'an*, Prophetic traditions (particularly the example of Medina), and the requirements of Muslim faith:

"There's a verse in the Quran and it's very clear… It states that if someone does good

to you it's only better to give something better in return. So the Australian people, the Australian government have given me the freedom to work here, to practise my religion so it's only fair to return back to that community… So we always encourage [this] by helping our people especially our neighbours."

Imam Ismael, Melbourne

"Basically it says in the Qur'an that we've sent to be at mercy to humankind. And that's what I see my role on this Earth is to serve God and to serve others, and just to be the best person I could be."

Basheema, 35–49, Arab background, Melbourne

"Islam also encourages […to] love thy neighbour and respect your elderly and to love animals and trees. And all that is encouraged. So it is part of my faith anyway, so I do not feel as though I am disadvantaged, excluded, or […] yeah, apart from anything else. Different yes, but that is ok, I like differences. And that's what multiculturalism is all about, it's those differences."

Jemimah, 33, Turkish background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Jemimah's suggestion that the universal principle of respect and care for one's neighbour is a defining principle of multicultural citizenship is extended by Dawud in the quote that follows. He describes how the values attained through his faith, rather than separating him from others, actually brings him closer to a society of neighbours. These values also inform his concept of Australian multiculturalism as a model for living with difference, which requires the 'host' society to demonstrate the same values:

"Australian values are not necessarily unique or Islamic values in itself are not necessarily black and white. To say Christian values or other religious or universal values – you would that 90% are pretty much the same so it's a matter of having values and high ethics and morality. Your faith teaches you to be a good world citizen; be a good neighbour; be a good son; be a good colleague etc. [...] Most people say 'you've been a great neighbour, you've been our great friend, you've been a great colleague, I've benefited immensely from you, I cherish our friendship'."

Dawud, 35–49, Turkish background, Melbourne

Emerging research from urban studies suggests that the spatial dimensions of religiosity are increasingly important for understanding the role that religion plays in processes of social inclusion or exclusion, integration, citizenship, and belonging.

While policy-oriented research tends to focus on the question of whether Muslim religiosity leads to self-segregation and failed integration, a growing body of literature is, perhaps more productively, concerned with how the everyday religious rituals, practices, and beliefs of Muslims, inform community engagement and active citizenship. Hatziprokopiou & Evergeti 2014.

Central to this study is the question of what happens when Muslim religious actors occupy space, and encounter others, in multicultural urban settings. In this sense, quotidian experiences and encounters in the multicultural city are analytics used to explore complex processes of social inclusion, integration, assimilation, hybridity, resistance, and segregation.

European research on Muslim integration and segregation at the scale of the city focusses on the mosque as a visible signal of the presence of Islam in the public sphere. Cesari 2005; Gole 2011; Salvatore 2004). As Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti 2014) claim, the visibility of mosques in public space is central to political contests over cultural and religious recognition, tolerance, public claims to Muslim identity and 'rights to the city', as well as to European discourses that tie together issues of religiosity, difference, and multiculturalism.

More positive accounts highlight the role of the mosque for preserving cultural and religious traditions among Muslim migrants and sojourners, and as an important place of social connection and belonging. Few studies have examined the evolving role of the mosque. Yet the mosque can often play important civic roles in the community that extends beyond Muslim religious concerns: for example, as a facilitator of cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue, community engagement, volunteerism, and social welfare provision. The religious leaders and community members from Dandenong, Melbourne, frequently spoke of these roles during their interviews. As this conversation between Imam Salih Dogan and a youth leader at the Emir Sultan mosque illustrates,

**Tahwid: "Everything starts from the mosque that's why as you said it's the start..."**

Imam Salih Dogan:
Centre of life

Expanding on the community function of the mosque, the Imam spoke about programs that he runs in prisons and hospitals, with Muslim and non-Muslim inmates and patients:

**"Sometimes I go to hospital... mental ward. The management are saying the mental sicknesses [is] increasing so I try to support those in hospital, and those also being treated at home, if there's a problem we look after them... They are all brothers and sisters... Also few elders are visiting the troublemakers in the prison... so we like to visit them also and support them when they finish their prison time."**

Imam Salih Dogan, Melbourne

In the Dandenong area, mosques were originally paid for and established by migrant communities. These places provide religious and social services not supplied by government. The mosques tend to be tailored to different ethnic groups, with sermons delivered in the native language of the community, alongside or instead of Arabic. Today there are six mosques in Dandenong, representing the Bosnian, Albanian, Turkish and Afghan communities.

From various discussions with Muslims living in the local area, it emerged that the Emir Sultan mosque was very multicultural. Despite originally providing services for Turkish migrants it now caters for a multicultural congregation. The Albanian Saki mosque, on the other hand, has been slower to evolve as a multiethnic space, because it is supported by annual membership fees, and sermons are delivered in Albanian and English. Yet the Imam of the Albanian Saki mosque stressed that he saw it as his responsibility to teach all Muslims, and that the mosque was open to other communities:

**"As a Muslim leader, I am not only for the Albanians... [but] for all the Muslims that live here around. In our Mosque we have all nationalities who come and pray with us.... Membership and the expenses – everything has been run only from Albanian families. The rest they do not have to pay anything but they come and they use our mosque – that is not a problem."**

Imam Ismael, Melbourne

He also spoke of wanting to hold a regular open day, opening the mosque to neighbours and other faith communities. This process was slowly underway, with young people promoting a multicultural version of the faith, and embedding it in broader community engagement:

Certainly, the younger participants emphasised that Islam is a religion for all cultures and races, and they prefer to attend mosques that promote the values of inclusion and acceptance:

"There ...[are] many mosques in Melbourne, but I think Hallam is one of the most special mosques for everyone, people travel from everywhere to go to... because it's all based on community... A lot of the mosques, different nationalities go, but it's for specific people, like Afghan mosque, Turkish mosque. But this mosque, it's more open. Well, it's kind of an Indian mosque... but no-one feels like it's their mosque because everyone has a say, there's Afghan, Turkey, we all belong to that Mosque."

Amina, 18–24, Pashtun background, born in Iran, Melbourne

"In Hallam, it is the Fijian community but the Imam's Afghan... But it's beyond that. The mosque is beyond any idea of any nationalism or sectarian or whatever. [...] In fact, the majority of the Muslim world is also like that."

Saeed, 27, Afghan background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Intergenerational differences then, also shape mosque attendance, this is frequently documented in the literature on gender. For example, few older women attended the mosque regularly. Though they cited work and family duties as obstacles to their attendance, another significant reason is that female Muslims are not obligated to attend mosque and, in some cultures, are actively discouraged from doing so – albeit these exclusions are often thought to be cultural rather than religiously prescribed.

Aida, female participants who did not regularly attend mosque, provided these reasons:

"In Afghanistan, they not let woman's go in the mosque, all the men, but here it's different."

Aida, 35-49, Pashtun background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Muska goes on to explain that despite mosques being open to men and women in Australia, she does not feel comfortable attending because of the gender-segregated nature of the space. She comments that in Indonesia both genders pray side-by-side. She concludes that tradition imposes too many restrictions on women attending mosque in Australia:

"If you go to Indonesia, they have the same door, they sit together, they even don't have a block or a curtain blocking them from the men.... Even they do their ablution or their washing up in the same place, which is kind of a bit weird sometimes, but

it is that open, comparing with what we are doing here. We are very separate, go to the backroom, a dark dingy dirty place [Laughs]."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

These sentiments were not shared by younger participants for whom Islamic teachings, rather than culture, informed their regular attendance at the mosque. They were more inclined to contest cultural traditions that limit women's inclusion and involvement in the rituals and activities associated with the mosque. Amina stressed that women have the freedom to choose in this country, and that some younger women are choosing to follow faith traditions more closely:

"We have freedom for women... Muslim women in Australia have a huge role in the community. It was not like that in Iran... but here it is really different. I always say to my mum, if I was in Iran – I wouldn't have been who I am today."

Amina, 18–24, Pashtun background, born in Iran, Melbourne

Amina spoke of her mother's frustration at always having to pick her up from mosque or another religious youth centre that she frequently attended in Coolaroo. Amina enthusiastically describes this centre, particularly the friendships and social connections that she makes there, as well as the lifestyle it provides:

"It's a lifestyle, you could live there. There's programs every week, sleepovers, parties for girls only, so providing what women can't have, there's dancing and stuff like that. [...] That's what we're trying to build soon in Dandenong, because we need that as well [...]They've got counsellors for youth [...] where their parents can't support them and they support them financially [...] Like if I ever had problem and nowhere to go, I'd definitely go to the mosque, they'll always help me."

Amina, 18-24, Pashtun background, born in Iran, Melbourne

Despite the evolution of the mosque from a relatively closed, ethno-cultural and gender specific space to a more open space of worship, religious leaders noted that young people do not necessarily perform their religiosity exclusively at the mosque. Significantly, the young Muslims living in Dandenong spoke of the incorporation of non-religiously defined public and private spaces into their religiosity; encouraging civic engagement, integration, recognition and claims for equal representation in the public sphere.

These more open styles of religiosity were particularly evident in four sites: the establishment of non-formal educational and community spaces such as Baytul Hikmah), the Dandenong Eid festival, Dandenong market, and the Afghan Bazaar on Thomas Street. As many of these spaces are hybrid spaces in which both Muslims and non-Muslims mix and interact, they

are interesting sites for examining the extent to which Muslim public performances of religiosity intersect with, shape, and are integrated into the urban social environment and everyday culture of Dandenong.

In keeping with recent scholarship on youthful expressions of Muslim religiosity, the young people in this study made their own claims to public space and the multicultural life of the city, rather than having the mosque and religious leaders determine their levels of public and community engagement. Young people have established several youth-led spaces – both open to mass public participation and more private spaces – where they can feel free to enact new place-making activities that incorporate expressions of Islamic lifestyle and identity.

The first of these places is a youth-led religious education centre that operates from a large hall-like space above a shop in central Dandenong. Saeed and Masjid established the centre, Masjid also has a role in the annual Dandenong Eid Festival. The rationale for the Centre was to provide an inclusive space, alternative to the mosque, where women and new arrivals can participate freely and learn about Islam as well as social aspects of Australian life and culture:

**Saeed:** Because, in terms of a mosque, we don't really have one so [...] The aim of this is combining a social as well as an educational space, for mothers, or people who have only just come to Australia [...]

**Masjid:** How people can adapt to the lifestyle, how to treat society and respect society.

**Saeed:** And it is open to all communities.

The Dandenong Eid festival is also presented as a community festival open to everyone, yet Shia Muslims in the community have objected to the timing of the event, suggesting that it precludes important rituals and observances important to Shia Muslims. Nonetheless, the creation of DIY religious centres, such as the one operated by Masjid and Saeed

together with the Dandenong Eid Festival) is the product of young Australian Muslims' expression and efforts.

This is a demographic that the mosque does not always accommodate; the religious hierarchy in the mosque can close-down forms of youth agency and autonomy:

"There are particular hierarchies in the mosque, so this is just an environment where you can come and learn about the Qur'an, learn Arabic. It is basically a religious institution for the Southeast of Dandenong."

Semir, Melbourne

In addition to dedicated DIY religious places of education and worship, participants also noted the importance of both council-built prayer and work facilities. This is what Petra Kuppinger 2014, p. 4) describes as the small 'semi-visible corners in public or in work spaces to which individuals retreat for their prayers', serving to accommodate Muslim acts of religiosity in the city, enhancing comfort, inclusion, and belonging.

Participants especially noted the significance of a multifaith prayer room at the Dandenong Plaza, which enables Muslim rituals and practices to be better integrated into the daily necessities of life such as shopping. Many also spoke of the provision of dedicated and informal prayer spaces at work, although in some instances the use of these spaces had to be negotiated:

"Um, there is. Not [...] a prayer room by itself, but a place I can pray in, which is usually the bedrooms. Or we have an overnight bedroom or a sacred quiet space for someone to relax in. I use that at least twice a day, it depends on what shift I am working. They accommodate for that. When I started, I was the only one at the time. So it was, at the beginning, they did not understand why and that. Now they know and it is easy."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

Participants mentioned two more interesting sites: a prayer room created for Hazara women in Thomas Street, and a prayer room custom built by an Afghan restaurateur, wanting to make her customers more comfortable:

"There's a small room special made for Muslim people. There's a special seating place on the floor. Like, you can feel at home, because Muslim people, we all like to sit on the floor and there

are special cushions and couches... the prayer mats as well.... Because we have lots of Muslim customers... they say they feel like at home."

Thana, 25–34, Afghan background, born in Uzbekistan, Melbourne

Thana went on to explain that by accommodating ritual prayers in the restaurant, more people could eat out during Ramadan:

"Especially Ramadan, this year we've been really, really busy. We worked seven days a week. Because most of the people there was, try to come every day for breaking their fasting. So they celebrate their fasting, special occasion.... People are coming with groups."

Thana, 25–34, Afghan background, born in Uzbekistan, Melbourne

Some of the more complex and ambivalent intercultural encounters – productive of integration, inclusion, and recognition, but also exclusion and marginalisation – occurred in relation to several publicly staged events.

The Eid festival held in Dandenong, for example, was one such event, it was promoted through local/Melbourne-wide religious and cultural networks and organisations, including ICV, Greater Dandenong City Council, Dandenong Plaza, local businesses and SBS Radio.

In 2013 two major Eid festivals took place in Dandenong. The first, the

Chand Raat Eid Festival, was held at Sandown Park and was a ticketed event celebrating Eid ul-Fitr.

This was the first year that Chand Raat had been staged in Melbourne, it had been held successfully in Sydney, nonetheless, introducing the event into a new community was a risky venture. Habeeb promoted Chand Raat Eid festival as a multicultural event, 'open for everyone without religious or cultural boundaries':

"When we are saying this event is open for everyone, it means that everyone will come. And they will enjoy it because we are not focusing on Muslims, or we are not focusing on Pakistani only or Indian only, we are focusing on everyone... What I feel is in Australia, we have to create bonding between different communities when we promote multicultural events."

Habeeb, 35–49, Pakistan background, born in Pakistan, Melbourne

Yet Habeeb received several complaints from Muslim leaders and community members for promoting multiculturalism at the cost of religious specificity. These complaints centred on the inclusion of activities considered haram:

"We have a lot of email... negative feedback... 'you have music there, you have a tarot reader there'. And we say 'yes, it is. Because it's a multicultural program'.... At the end of the day, we are

celebrating Eid, but we are celebrating the entertainment part, the festivity part of the Eid. Uh, and inviting other people, so this Chand Raat Eid Festival is multicultural. Muslims are happy because this is the way we celebrate our festival... They might not be expecting Indian music and Bollywood and dancing and all those things, but, when they come, they understand that we are focusing on cultural religion. But even doing so, we still have some rules, some format, some limitations so that it would not highly, or you know, at any level, offend Muslims."

Habeeb, 35–49, Pakistan background, born in Pakistan, Melbourne

Perhaps because of these issues, the numbers at the festival did not meet initial projections.

Nonetheless Habeeb remained resolute that this was the type of Eid festival that the Muslim community needed; one that is open to the diverse range and experiences of religiosity – including cultural religiosity – that typify the Australian Muslim experience:

As this case demonstrates, public Eid festivals are contested events in the Muslim community, encouraging experiences of inclusion but also producing discomfort and community tension. Habeeb's reference to a hierarchical ordering of Muslim ethnic communities, whereby Muslims of Arabic background are considered

the authentic embodiment of Islam, is particularly interesting in this case, since the Muslim community of Dandenong hail largely from non-Arabic–speaking backgrounds. In this sense then, there is a political message folded into the Chand Raat Eid festival: that because of the diversity of the Muslim community in Dandenong, the festival should be a cultural, rather than Islamic event; which also opens it up to the non-Muslim community.

The other major festival, Eid Al-Adha, contrasts with Chand Raat precisely because of its specific Islamic focus. Nonetheless, Masjid also promoted the festival as a youth-friendly, multicultural event:

"Eid is something special. There's something on – 'hey, let's go to this Eid festival'. You meet with people, you engage with people you have not seen in the community. It brings the people together to engage with the Muslim community as well, other sheiks and other Imams, other cultural organisations. And also in society itself, in Dandenong it's open to neighbours and open to locals... I am very proud to live in Dandenong to be honest. I like living in Dandenong, the cultural diversity of it and the mix of people living here."

Semir, Melbourne

This distinction between the two festivals, and specifically the understandings of multiculturalism that their organisers operationalise, is significant because it is also reflected

in different policy and theoretical responses to cultural and religious diversity in Western societies and to how religion ought to be accommodated.

The aim of the Dandenong Eid festival is to support Muslims in celebrating one of the pillars of the Islamic faith, as well as provide the wider Australian community with an opportunity to appreciate Islam as a legitimate expression of religious identity and cultural diversity. The support of the Muslim faith within the explicitly multicultural model is, moreover, expressed in the upcoming description of non-Muslim festival attendees observing a Muslim prayer-time. Of those praying, one described the encounter as very positive, helping to alleviate community fear by showing what Muslims do behind closed doors:

"While we were all praying, and I noticed a few people taking photos – non-Muslims – who were intrigued to sort of see, because they have probably never seen the act inside a mosque. There were a few people actually taking photos. Which was quite funny. It was funny because the fact, like, you know, bowing down and things like that, is very different to other, other religious ways of prayer. But, yeah, it was, sort of, a good thing, good to have that interaction. ... I guess it is a good way for them to see and reflect on how, you know, at the end of the day, Muslims are enjoying themselves but at the same time, still not forgetting our prayers."

Semir, Melbourne

This sentiment was reflected in the words of the Imam of the Albanian Saki mosque: he said, 'It's very important so at least other people will see your faith, your traditions, your cultures or they know also and they have the education about it'. These examples illustrate the significance of openness and inclusion for social harmony. Because of its central and open location, the Dandenong Eid festival encourages the participation of all community members without 'hiding' religious activity. In so doing, it makes a claim for equal representation in the community and, by presenting aspects of Islamic faith to non-Muslim community members, proposes that integration is a two-way process of mutual understanding, tolerance, and accommodation.

In Dandenong, the subdued nature of the Dandenong market and surrounding shops during the Eid festival, and particularly on the day of Eid ul-Fitr, reflected the significance of the Muslim community to the area. On this day there were multiple messages in shop windows saying 'closed for Eid', and 'Eid Mubarak'. The market was also abnormally quiet for a Saturday, usually one of its busier days. On other days, however, Thomas Street's bi-weekly market and Afghan Bazaar were particularly busy, a non-Muslim local commented that she had gone shopping on Friday to avoid the Saturday rush, only to find that the market was packed.

She reasoned that this must have been because of Eid, and to the Muslim community getting their shopping done early before the weekend. This activity demonstrates the importance of the Muslim community to the life of Dandenong. It also shows why the Greater Dandenong City

Council views the 'Afghan bazaar', 'Little India' and other ethnically-labelled shopping areas as major selling points for Dandenong.

Participants from the Dandenong area suggested that the market's character with its visible and sensory signs of Muslim culture – dress, food, and other goods – enhanced their sense of belonging to the Dandenong community, as well as providing goods tailored to them:

"Fifteen years ago, we never had food, halal butchers here. We had to drive to Sydney Rd to get halal. We had to drive to Sydney Rd to get the Lebanese pizzas that we were used to. The sweets, the same thing. But food is the most important thing. Because it makes you feel good. Simple as that."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

As Muska claimed this had not always been the case, but the longer the settlement of Muslims in the area, the more they had made themselves at home and catered for specific community and religious needs. One illustration of this was Aida's fashion store, which sold *hijabs* and other modesty garments.

When Aida first arrived in Australia and opened the store, she felt a sense of shame at her English language and tried to hide from customers. Soon her confidence grew as local Muslims and non-Muslims started to appreciate her 'colourful' shop, making her feel a part of the diverse market community:

"I get help from inside the market management as well... I was saying – no I can't do it, like I wanted to stop the business last year or year before, he [the manager] came in and said ... your shop looks like the best for me, ... small shop and colourful I want you to stay here and don't go. I said okay maybe it's nice, I can't see it, maybe it is nice. ... Before I was thinking, if I'm going outside ... people understand I'm Muslim, their reactions not the same like now, they maybe don't like Muslim people, but slowly I found now they love me."

Aida, 35–49, Pashtun background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

This acceptance and warmth over time made Aida feel that she belonged more to the Dandenong community than Afghanistan.

Another contested site of local Muslim and ethnic identity politics emerging from interviews and focus group discussions was the Afghan bazaar on Thomas Street in central Dandenong. The Afghan bazaar is a part of an urban redevelopment of an area of Dandenong where Afghan restaurants, grocery stores, and carpet sellers are clustered. In 2013, after a lengthy public consultation, the Council invested AUD1.17 million in the project to attract visitors to Dandenong as a food and cultural precinct.

In a pitch last year, Greater Dandenong's former mayor, Angela

Long, said the project 'would elevate the Afghan Bazaar cultural precinct from being a "hidden gem" to a "must see" destination where residents could seek out individual specialty shops.... It will deliver culturally-themed treatments, improved lighting and amenity, new seating, and enhanced landscaping, paving and urban design elements that build on the Afghan flavour of the precinct' Dandenong Journal, 25 July 2013).

The redeveloped area was launched in 2014, leading the Victorian Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, Matthew Guy, to describe it as a 'fitting tribute to the success of Victoria's multiculturalism and to the Afghan migrants who have shaped and will continue to shape Dandenong, our state, and our nation'

Press release, Premier of Victoria, 28 April 2014). According to Saba, however, not all Afghan residents of Dandenong were happy with the naming of the precinct. Considering what she described as the daily massacre of Hazara minorities in Afghanistan, naming the precinct 'Afghan' had been divisive, many Hazaras felt that it should be named the Hazara Bazaar:

## "There's a discussion going on what to name the bazaar. Yeah because people don't identify themselves as Afghans, we're not accepted as Afghans."

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

While this dispute was not resolved in favour of the Hazara community, Saba still identified the Bazaar as a formal recognition of the presence of Afghan Muslims living in Dandenong,

enhancing her sense of connection and belonging to the area:

## "There's 78 shops in Dandenong, Hazara shops all in one street... So it's like 'Oh I am home'. It feels like home because when you walk down the street you see so many Hazaras, you hardly see anyone else. If you see someone from another community background then you feel pride, like oh it's such a good place that people from other communities feel safe and feel good to be in this area and to shop around in Dandenong."

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Survey respondents identified daily prayers as the most frequently performed of the religious practices and rituals. Thirty-six respondents reported performing daily prayers five times or more, with 33 people praying one–to–five times a day.

The second most popular religious activity was 'making daily decisions based on *Qur'an*'. Thirty-nine respondents reported making decisions based on *Qur'an* one–to–five times a day and 18 people mentioned making these decisions five times or more. Reading *Qur'an* was also frequently mentioned. Twenty-four people read it one–to–five times a day, 12 people read *Qur'an* five times or more daily, nine people read it only on Fridays and 21 respondents reported reading *Qur'an* only on special occasions (see Figure 62).

A set of questions in the survey sought to examine what people feel when they engage in certain practices, and specifically how this makes them feel towards others, including non-Muslims. Apart from feeling closer to God when participating in rituals such as prayer (75.1 per cent), other respondents described feelings of peace (61.97 per cent), comfort (59.42 per cent), and feeling comfortable with themselves (58.21 per cent). During Ramadan, feelings of love were also associated with ritual practices (68.18 per cent).

Figure 62

**How frequently do you perform the following practices and rituals? Melbourne (frequencies)**
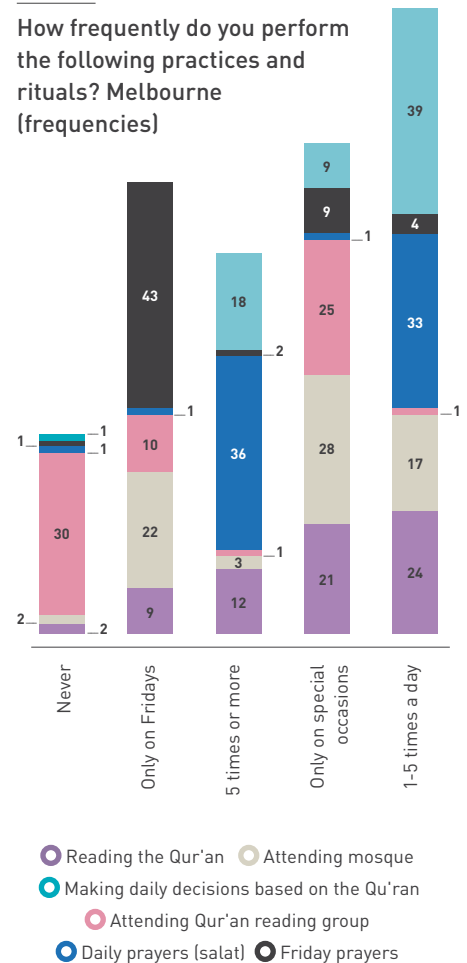
When asked about whether or how these practices produced certain feelings toward non-Muslims in the community, 47 people (49 per cent) claimed that it made them feel more open to non-Muslims, while 36 people (37.5 per cent) said that it increased their feelings of tolerance towards non-Muslims, 28 people (29.2 per cent) felt ambivalent and 27 (28.1 per cent) experienced love. Only one person said that he/she felt resistance or rejection towards non-Muslims in the community while performing the rituals (see Figure 63).

**Feelings toward the Non-Muslim community while performing the rituals. Melbourne (frequencies)**

How does performing these rituals make you feel toward the non-Muslim community?
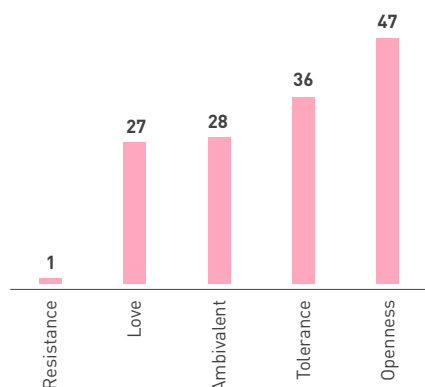


Respondents reported that these feelings extended beyond the time, place, and location of the ritual enacted. Engagement in fasting, for example, also encouraged feelings of openness (63.89 per cent) and tolerance (50 per cent) towards non-Muslim communities; implying

a social dimension. This suggests that engagement in religious rituals and practices give rise to spiritual feelings and emotions that generate acts of care and responsibility towards all members of the community. This was also evident in the interview responses:

"Islam is love that you give to people. It does not matter whether you get it in return but it is the love and the share, like what you have to share with people, people who do not have. Making people feel that they are being cared of, they are recognised regardless of their status, you always give them some value in life, it does not matter who the person is or where the person's coming from. And that's one thing most people don't realise about Islam, you know and … It's not the religion but how you feel afterwards when you are able to do all these things the right way."

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

There are clear connections between these descriptions of embodied feelings of love, and the development of a sense of social responsibility for the wellbeing of others in the community.

The religious leaders in Dandenong also communicated a deep sense of moral and emotional responsibility to those who have come to them in need, Muslims and non-Muslims. One story, related by the Imam of the Emir Sultan mosque, emphasised

the responsibility that leaders feel to help their Muslim 'brothers' who have endured hardship to seek asylum in Australia:

"Now is people from Burma, many, many hundreds of families are now in Australia, many of them living here … a brother came here, he is very stressed, because in front of his eyes… I'm not blaming Buddhist… but they kill his wife, his father but not the children.

They catch them they cut their legs… when you listen to this you'll cry so what's happened we try to help them okay, we find a house for him, also some government help… but emotional they come here and we say brother we have a mosque here and what do you need, any clothes, food, and friends?"

Imam Salih Dogan, Melbourne

The environment of the mosque is understood here to provide not only material support to those in need, but also emotional support and friendship.

When asked about the feelings that come from participating in a prayer, participants strongly associated prayer with 'feeling closer to God' (4.58), 'peace' (4.36), 'comfort' (4.29), 'relaxation' (4.23), 'feeling spiritually connected' (4.21), and 'feeling comfortable with who I am' (4.14) (see Figure 64).

Figure 64

**Feelings arising while participating in prayer. Melbourne**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in prayer?



Figure 64 bar chart — values: Love 3.86, Peace 4.36, Feeling spiritually connected 4.21, Feeling attached to a place 3.19, Comfort 4.29, Relaxation 4.23, Feeling closer to God 4.58, Feeling comfortable with who I am 4.14, Feeling connected to my community 3.27

Figure 65

**Feelings arising while participating in Ramadan. Melbourne**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in Ramadan?



Figure 65 bar chart — values: Love 4.39, Peace 4.25, Feeling spiritually connected 4.47, Feeling attached to a place 3.47, Comfort 4.17, Relaxation 4.11, Feeling closer to God 4.64, Feeling comfortable with who I am 4.26, Feeling connected to my community 4.11

Participants reported that stronger feelings were elicited in the acts and rituals of Ramadan.

Among the feelings reported to arise from participating in Ramadan, the strongest were 'feeling closer to God' (4.64), 'feeling spiritually connected' (4.47), 'love' (4.39), 'feeling comfortable with who I am' (4.26), 'peace' (4.25), 'comfort' (4.17), 'relaxation' (4.11), and 'feeling connected to my community' (4.11) (see Figure 65).

In line with the findings from the survey data, most of the interview and focus group participants identified as practising Muslims. If they were Sunni Muslims, they generally engaged in the five pillars of Islam (belief in one God, daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, paying *zakat*, and committing to go to *hajj*) but as the survey findings made evident, this also extended to aspects of Islamic jurisprudence. And while Shia Muslims also integrated several other beliefs and practices into their faith,

the five pillars were a constant across sectarian lines of difference.

For Ali, Ramadan was a particularly significant religious observance. Especially the practice of fasting, which is designed to incite an embodied feeling of the poor, develop empathy, and a sense of social responsibility, productive of action:

**"The whole aspect of Ramadan is not so much the not eating; the not eating is a small part of the whole experience.**

**It is about beginning to feel how others would feel when they do not eat, starving people in other countries, and how people just take life and food for granted."**

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

For many of the participants, religious identity was shaped by an understanding that being a Muslim was 'a whole way of life', affecting worldly and spiritual perceptions, relationships, and activities:

**"My religion is everything. My way of life has been shaped by the way my religion teaches me, the way I interact with people, engage with people, my day to day life is all within the context of my religion, everything I do."**

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

"I think being Muslim and being a Shia Muslim... is part of my identity. I would describe it as... part of my everyday approach towards life... You grow up with those values, you grow up with all the understandings of life and how to appreciate things in your life, and appreciate people in your life and how to approach people from a different culture, from a different background, from a different religion."

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Saba saw the religious values she grew up with as having had a strong influence on her ethical outlook, fostering an appreciation for all human life.

As expressed here, Islam was an orienting set of morals and practices that are both transcendent and immanent and embodied; covering all spheres of life and activity. In this sense, Islam is a religion that governs all relationships (bodily, social, and spiritual).

For Ali, this begins the moment he kneels in the morning to pray and is very much grounded in the spiritual connection to God and consciousness that sets his direction for the day:

"The five times prayer reminds me all the time of my direction, just everything that I do, when I sit down to pray I look back on the day... and how it's been and how I'm going to finish the day and how I start my day... each day."

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

One key difference between Islam and Christian faith traditions (although with similarities to Judaism) is the addition of Islamic law (Sharia law) as a mode of governing Muslim life; public and private, bodily, and spiritual. This is clear in the description Masjid – a teacher at a local Islamic school, and co-founder of an educational centre in Dandenong – provides:

"There is a whole system that governs everything... How you speak to someone, how you speak to your parents, how you speak to your brothers and sisters, how you treat Muslims and non-Muslims. ... How you should eat, what you should eat, and it just goes on ... It's every single aspect of your life [...] How you dress, how you talk, how you walk ... especially what you put in your body. Looking after your neighbours."

Masjid, 28, Albanian/Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Importantly, this description recounts that Islamic law not only prescribes a set of rights and obligations within the domestic sphere of family life, but also outwards into other public and social spheres. This is also evidenced in the survey responses: particularly in response to the question of 'whether being a Muslim makes you a better citizen', to which many referring to a close correspondence between Islamic laws and civic and human rights:

"Growing up with that set of rules does influence the way you act publicly and privately. Also there are lots of things about this faith and many faiths that are based on values that humanity agree on. They go hand in hand, the religion is not removed from human rights and values."

Survey respondent, female, Melbourne

Across the entire study the importance of religious practices and rituals (such as praying five times a day, or wearing *hijab*) as a core aspects of Muslim religiosity was contested. Young participants in particular seemed to reject the view that engaging in material rituals and practices made you a better Muslim than those who did not.

Even those who wore Islamic dress and regularly engaged in embodied and ritual performances of faith did not necessarily view their practice as a requirement for all Muslims. Many of the Dandenong participants however, claimed that these practices disciplined the body and mind, strengthening their connection to God and to what was important in life.

The description of this experience as 'ground[ing] back into reality' suggests that the repeated

performance of embodied rituals re-centres the self in a more spiritually and emotionally grounded present. Certainly, in relation to repeated rituals and practices, more than one participant mentioned the idea of grounding oneself and creating space for the spiritual practice in daily life:

"By doing it 5 times a day, it constantly reminds you, and keeps the flow of your daily routine … You disconnect yourself from that daily work, social, money, figures, everything, and say 'Hey, I need a break'. Your body needs a break. It's like a car going all day and running, and running and running. It needs to have a break eventually or it's going to go [makes a breaking down noise]."

Masjid, 28, Albanian/Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

For women interviewed, the decision to wear the *hijab* or to dress modestly was often made for a mix of cultural and religious reasons. Yet it was primarily seen as a practice that demonstrated piety and commitment to faith.

More than an individual expression of piety, however, wearing the *hijab* was also associated with social commitments that others may not have. This is because the *hijab* signals to the public that one is Muslim, meaning that the wearer represents the faith community through their actions, which in turn implies a sense of social responsibility:

"Wearing the hijab for me is … practising more than someone who is not wearing it … I try not to swear … I try not to do anything that might attract attention negatively. I try to do the other way around, the positive working of things, like OK, 'she's doing the right thing, she's trying her best'. I try to represent Islam as much as I can. Wearing the hijab, whether I like it or not, I'm representing Islam."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

While some could experience this social responsibility as a burden, for Muska and others interviewed it provided an opportunity to address public misconceptions, embodying a kind of Islam that is different to media stereotypes. The kind of Islam they associated with peace, kindness, fairness, patience, tolerance, humility, and other good qualities. By taking on this responsibility, the *hijab* wearers who participated in this study aspired to a level of piety that corresponded with notions of virtuous citizenship.

Another of the value central to the Dandenong participants, that tied in with notions of virtuous citizenship, is the quality of being a 'good neighbour' – notwithstanding some internal conflicts. As stated by the Imams of the Albanian Saki mosque and the Emir Sultan mosque:

"Our religion is Islam, so we had a book, we had a prophet … and we learned this from

our prophet. In our religion you cannot force non-Muslims to become our religion; you can't do this if people have no interest… but we never ever lock the door… so we have neighbours, neighbour from Vietnam, also neighbour from Fiji, we all know we could have good relation with each other. We look after also some of them also mental sicknesses in housing commission house we give them present, we invite them here for eat together."

Imam Salih Dogan, Emir Sultan mosque, Melbourne

Interestingly, Imam Salih Dogan also mentioned that forced conversions are prohibited in Islam. This point was volunteered by other participants in the study too, who claimed that forced conversions are popularly associated with Islam but conflict with what is stated in the Qur'an; commanding Muslims to respect neighbours' rights above their own, and to live peaceably with people from different faiths and cultures:

"The religion or faith is all about how to live with the other people. … To give you an example, in the time of the Prophet Muhammad there was the people from other faiths, they come and said: Look we don't have our community centre, can we use your place for our pray? And He asked: Well, what time do you pray?

They said: We pray on Sunday morning. And He said: That's absolutely fine, because we don't pray at that time."

Habeeb, 35–49, Pakistan background, born in Pakistan, Melbourne

"My religion says that you are born to serve everybody in the community that you can, and approach them in a way that's not harmful to them and you."

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

While the precept of being 'good neighbour' is not unique to Muslim beliefs, it is a principle that is embedded in the core practices of the faith. For example, during *Eid al-Adha* – the more important of the two Eid festivals on the Islamic calendar – Aida and Amina spoke of the importance of giving a portion of the lamb that had been slaughtered during this time to your neighbours:

Amina: The meat we divide into seven. And then one goes to the family…

Aida: First for the person who did cut [the sheep], one is for neighbour, one is for family… there's four more for the poor people, like in a poor country, when they know you cut the sheep, they come in front of your door and say 'give it to me'.

Interviewer: So do you just give it to local neighbours?

Aida: Yes, local neighbour, because in Islam, first is your neighbour,

is very important your neighbour to not get hurt from you, they have to be happy from you, you not make trouble for them. If you cook some food, like the smell goes in your neighbour house, you have to give it to them as well, otherwise you can't eat.

Amina: So it's like their dignity is your dignity.

As this ritual demonstrates, being a Muslim means more than aspiring to be a 'good neighbour'. Rather the precept of good neighbour is embodied in ritual practices. These acts of faith have a strong connection to active citizenship, meaning that these actions and performances enact the idea of working for the common good of the whole community.

Caring for neighbours, as Amina and Aida describe, and in particular caring for the most vulnerable members of the community, was echoed by many participants, referring not only to core ethical principles associated with the faith, but also to embodied affects described as central to the act of feeling responsible to another human being. In this sense, the description of responsibility is grounded not only in religious beliefs and ethical practices, but also in a sense of humanity and particularly a knowledge of our shared vulnerability, and the responsibility to act in the face of this knowledge.

In terms of the significance of religion to the development of this embodied and emotional response, Alia felt that the awareness of God or a 'higher power' led worshippers to feel this responsibility more deeply than citizens who may be conditioned to care more for the immediate political community:

"You get up and say 'look at these other people who are suffering'. I guess that's what we – I just feel like that is the core of so many religions is that remembering your weaknesses as a human and acknowledging that before a higher power or before nature or whatever it is that you hold as holy."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

Alia's response is an example of 'embodied responsibility', whereby the ethical practices and teachings of all religions, including Islam, are understood to centre on a recognition of and an embodied response to the suffering of others. This is thought of as a common human bond extending beyond ethnic or religious groups, or national borders. Alia reiterates this claim later in the interview, adding that the core emotion informing this embodied responsibility is a feeling of transcendent or universal love:

"I think this is the core of religion, which is having love for your fellow human being, being able to transcend those, I guess those fears and doubts and suspicions and say you know what? I care for you because I know what that weakness is like."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

In physical terms, participants spoke about many of the embodied practices and rituals that encourage feelings tied to openness and care towards others.

## DETROIT, USA

In Detroit, 39 respondents (92.9 per cent) (self)identified as a 'practising Muslims', one person (2.4 per cent) as 'non-practising Muslim', and two people (4.8 per cent) as 'cultural Muslims'.

Of 48 participants, 35 (72.9 per cent) said that they observed strict dietary requirements, while 33 people (68.8 per cent) observed strict dress requirements (see Figures 66 and 67).

The most commonly observed faith-based practices included fasting during Ramadan, reading the *Qur'an*, celebrating Eid, and wudu. Thirty-six people (75 per cent) reported that they had participated in each of these activities. Additionally, 33 participants (68.8 per cent) performed daily prayers and 32 people (66.7 per cent) reported attending mosque. Thirty-one people (64.6 per cent) engaged in payment of alms.

Twenty-nine participants (60.4 per cent) reported attending other community festivals. More than half of the respondents – 26 people (54.2 per cent) – also observed Friday prayers. In addition, 16 people (33.3 per cent) attended *Qur'an* reading groups and 13 people (27.1 per cent) reported observing the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (see Figure 68).

Among the communal religious practices, *hajj* was most frequently mentioned. Whereas many embodied practices involve individual spiritual reflection and moral regulation, other practices convey the significance of communal ties, producing different feelings and moral precepts, many of which relate to issues of social justice. For example,

several participants spoke about *hajj* as an experience of communal pilgrimage and prayer that imparted moral teachings associated with race, class, and social equality.

Participants reported that the experience of *hajj* increased embodied feelings of love, and equality of humankind, elevating the sense of oneness among the religious community, surrender to God, and empathy towards others:

### Figure 66
### Dietary requirements (frequencies)



**35** Yes **3** No
**10** No answer

### Figure 67
### Dress requirements (frequencies)



**33** Yes **5** No
**10** No answer

### Figure 68
### Engagement in rituals, practices and faith based community events. Detroit

Which of the following rituals, practices and faith based community events do you regularly engage in? (percentage)



- Male circumcision — 20.8
- Pilgrimage — 25
- Observing the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday — 27.1
- Attending Qur'an readings — 30
- Friday prayers — 54.2
- Attending other community festivals — 60.4
- Payment of alms — 64.6
- Attending mosque — 66.7
- Daily prayers — 68.8
- Reading/reciting the Qur'an — 75
- Fasting during Ramadan — 75
- Celebrating Eid festival — 75
- Cleaning hands, face and feet prior to prayers — 75

"When you got to Hajj you know it does not matter if you are rich, old, black, pink whatever... we all meet in the same place. ... Just to see doctors, professors and regular people ... in the same dirt, in the same area asking God for forgiveness ... and that's what the purpose is."

Radwan, 25–30, Yemeni background

"When we do Hajj – doesn't matter who you are, the king or the servant – we are all one. We come the same way and we will leave the same way."

Aisha, 25–30, Latina revert

Some of these social values were also conveyed discursively by participants through recitation of the *Qur'an* in prayer, through laws or fiqh, or through examples from the life of the Prophet *(Sunnah)*. *Sunnah* was especially reported to provide a set of precepts aligned with values of social justice and equity.

These values were more commonly associated with universal human rights and civic values, for example, the importance of truth, charity, mercy, and doing good to neighbours.

"There is a saying from Prophet Muhammad: 'No man will enter paradise who feeds himself but whose neighbour goes hungry'. ... My job here on this planet is to make the world a better place."

Badda, 25–34, Pakistani background

"There's a word in the Quran called 'Taqwa' which means God consciousness. ... There's a command in the Quran where God says 'Be Just, and this is what's most close to Taqwa'. So being just, but making sure there's a system in place, that there is an even playing field."

Imam Younis, 30–49, African American revert

"Every Muslim is compelled by Islam to fulfil everyone's rights. This includes the environment that you're living in, being kind to animals and also humans, everyone that you interact with. ... When you're conscious of this idea that this person has rights over me, and that I will be held accountable for them one day, I think that is very effective in compelling you to fulfil their rights as citizens."

Sameera, 22, Pakistani background

Participants reported that faith-based rituals tended to be generally performed in more private locations. The two most frequently cited places included 'home' (75 per cent) and the 'mosque' (68.8 per cent). Slightly less frequently cited places were the 'university' (43.8 per cent), 'work' (41.7 per cent), and 'community centres' (39.6 per cent). The least popular places to perform religious practices included 'in my local park' (18.8 per cent), 'in the street' (12.5 per cent) and 'on public transport' (10.4 per cent) (see Figure 69).

In some cases, individuals started their own faith-based programs and organisations, working very closely with mosques and local community councils. Many of these were presented at the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Annual conference, held in Downtown Detroit in 2014; with a bazaar where community and fundraising organisations could raise their profile. Muslims Building Bridges was one of those programs:

Figure 69

In what places do you perform these religious practices? (frequencies) (% Percent). Detroit
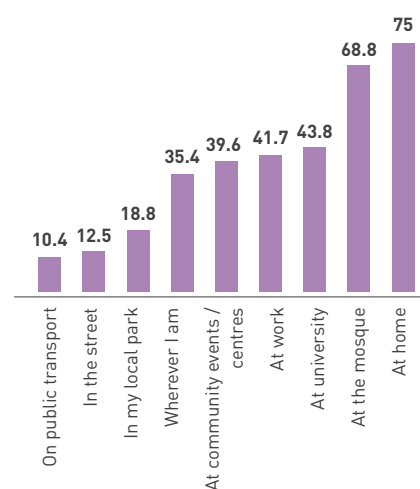


"I take all these kids and every Tuesday and Thursday we broke our fast in a different mosque here in Detroit area ... because I wanted these kids from the suburbs to connect with these kids in the neighbourhood so that they can network, they can coordinate and they can provide these kids with opportunities. So that was basically the purpose of Muslims Building Bridges, just to get these kids to talk to each other. To bridge that financial that social economic gap. To bridge it, we're all the same underneath, we all pray to the same God, we all bleed the same colour."

Badda, Detroit

Another organisation, Reaching ALL HIV+ Muslims in America (RAHMA), provided outreach and awareness among those who were living with HIV/AIDS:

"Our Prophet – he was an example to mankind so I'm trying to be – I'm trying to follow the example of being kind to others and not judging others, and being respectful and just being open, you know, and with HIV a lot of people are judged. ... I want to just follow his example and show mercy for others, to show compassion, you know, and try to support ... So RAHMA is mercy, for me to have mercy, and we believe that our God— he's full of mercy and that's he's forgiving. If we commit sins or we do things that we shouldn't be doing, we pray for forgiveness and [God] forgives us."

Anoud, Detroit

A Muslim-led Urban renewal project called Dream of Detroit was focussed on rehabilitating abandoned houses in the service of community. Part of the project was a re-entry programme for people who had come out of the prison system. The project was tasked with providing employment for those newly released from prison, as well as transitional living arrangements for ex-prisoners and other community members at risk of homelessness:

"The group that originally started this project was called 'Neighbourly Needs'. The group of brothers and sisters that started it grew out of the Muslim centre. And they started this work maybe five years ago, I got involved in 2011 when IMAN [Inner City Muslim Action Network, Chicago] came up as part of our visit and we spoke at the Muslim Centre. You know one of the things that we shared was ... our dream re-entry project, taking brothers who had just come out of the prison system, having them rehabilitating abandoned homes and then living in those homes as transitional places."

Nassurallah, 25–30,
African American revert, Detroit

In addition to this program, The HUDA Clinic started in 2004 as a small project on the second floor of the Muslim Centre:

"The mission of the clinic is to provide free healthcare to the ... uninsured, and that's really it. Since 2004, they've had a lot more opportunities to expand their scope of work and everything. So right now along with the primary care clinic... they have mental health care, a full pharmacy, dental care, ophthalmology, dermatology, endocrinologist – and these are all a couple of times a month, so it's not regular care, but they're all available to the people."

Kalsoom, Detroit

Participants reported that block clubs provided a more informal way of organising within the local community. Block clubs are a group of community members centred around a specific neighbourhood block, who work together to effect change in their area. In Detroit, these clubs have historical precedent: they were established by the original wave of African American migrants to the area who came from the Southern states to work in Detroit's car industry. The area where many of these migrant labourers were settled was the Historical 'Black Bottom', also the site of the 1943 race riots. The community itself was the result of the segregationist housing policies of the time that separated White and Black residents, and led to the racial tensions that erupted in the 1943 race riots. In the 1950s, urban renewal projects aimed to remove many of the urban slums in Detroit, including the Black Bottom housing estates. The whole of the Black Bottom was razed in 1954 and replaced with Lafayette Park. Black Bottom was also the site of the first Nation of Islam (NOI) temple. It is therefore, a place with deep ties to African American and Muslim self-determination and resilience. As Zafeerah recalls, the Black Bottom community was typified by neighbours helping one another through block clubs, addressing the disadvantage of many residents:

"We had block clubs. Kept you safe, that's community work, we don't have block clubs much today in Detroit. I believe we need to go back to some of the basics that kept us healthy. As a child it was safe and wonderful. ... Neighbours taking care of the child and if you got in trouble

a neighbour whooped you and you got home. ... everybody knew who was on your block, invited you to a meeting, have a little cook out. So that's the type of neighbourhood we need, we need to advocate for ourselves, government can't always do it. .... So that's what I mean by the block club."

Zafeerah, 50–59, African American revert, Detroit

According to participants, Mayor Mike Duggan of Detroit has publicly encouraged these types of community initiatives to cover the shortfall in funding for police services and other services vital to maintaining safety in neighbourhoods. Ali, who was introducing something similar in Hamtramck, also discussed this initiative:

"We have formed teams, a block patrol, which is led by Police Chief Max ... and he does very good job with volunteers actually with his department. He train[s] volunteers to help on the weekends or holidays and because in the past we have increased crime in Hamtramck. So they're really doing great job."

Ali, 50+, Bosnian background, Detroit

"There is no believers just sit down and pray. It doesn't matter how hard you pray and how long, the city have to be clean. By prayer this garbage which will not be picked up, we have to pick up the garbage, we have to take care of overgrown branches, we have to take care of overgrown grass. Like I said, if city pay contractors to do all of those things, that is big money. And I think, which other partners of mine agree with that, as more we work voluntarily, the city save more money and spend that money is some priority things. We don't have enough man power in police department for example. That is expensive also for police department to pay over time or hire more police officer; there is no money for that. So that's why we have volunteers."

Ali, 50+, Bosnian background, Detroit

Figure 70
Islamic Centre of America
mosque, Dearborn, USA.
Source: Authors
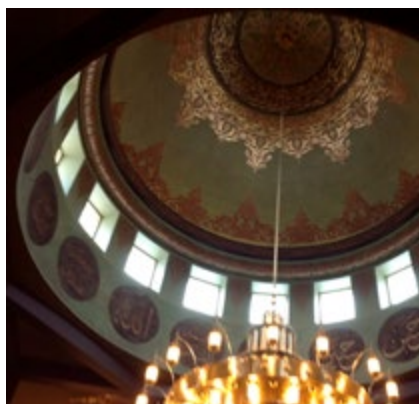
Detroit is a place of multiple historical upheavals associated with industrialisation, deindustrialisation, migration, and racial tensions. But this history has meant that place and community are important spaces of resistance and resilience. Muslim communities of Detroit, centred around the mosque, are spaces of hope and renewal with long histories, embedded in Islam's special connection there to the Black empowerment movement, NOI:

**"Nation of Islam has its origin here in the City of Detroit, it started July, well it was initially if you will, July 4th, 1930 in Black bottom Detroit ... So Islam is really deeply embedded in the City of Detroit in particular, because at the time in 1930 the African American community was only 65 years up from slavery. So we were facing the Great Depression and we needed something that will help give us salvation or give us a new identity that will raise us up to be more productive citizens in the community and here comes Islam."**

Michael X, 30, African American revert, NOI, Detroit

Because of the city's previously mentioned histories of racial segregation, migration, and settlement, Detroit's diverse Muslim communities are often separated by ethnicity and race. This is reflected in the make-up of religious

congregations, with mosques tending to be more ethnically homogenous than mixed. Several participants explained this homogeneity with reference to the migration and settlement of their ethnic community, together with more personal stories of conversion.

Relating the most frequently performed rituals and practices, close to a half (23 of 48 participants or 47.9 per cent) performed daily prayers five times or more every day. In addition, 16 people (33.3 per cent) reported reading/reciting the *Qur'an* one-to-five times daily, and the same number (16 people or 33.3 per cent) reported making daily decisions based on the *Qur'an* five times or more daily (see Figure 71).

When performing these rituals, the strongest feelings that were reported towards non-Muslims included 'openness' (28 respondents or 58.3 per cent), followed by 'love' and 'tolerance' (18 people or 37.5 per cent each), while 11 people (22.9 per cent) said that they felt 'ambivalent' toward non-Muslims. No respondents reported feeling 'resistance' towards non-Muslim communities when performing the rituals (see Figure 72).

Participants rated the feelings arising during prayer on a scale of one (lowest) to five (highest). From these data, the mean values were determined. The strongest feelings arising while participating in prayer in descending order were: 'peace' (4.7), 'closeness to God' (4.65), 'feeling spiritually connected' (4.58), 'comfort' (4.58), 'relaxation' (4.58), 'love' (4.42), 'feeling comfortable with who I am' (4.28), 'feeling connected to my community' (3.6) and 'feeling attached to a place' (3.58) (see Figure 73).

Figure 71

**How often do you perform the following? Detroit (valid percent)**



Reading the Qur'an ◯ Attending mosque ◯ Making daily decisions based on the Qur'an ◯ Attending Qur'an reading group ◯ Daily prayers (salat) ◯ Friday prayers
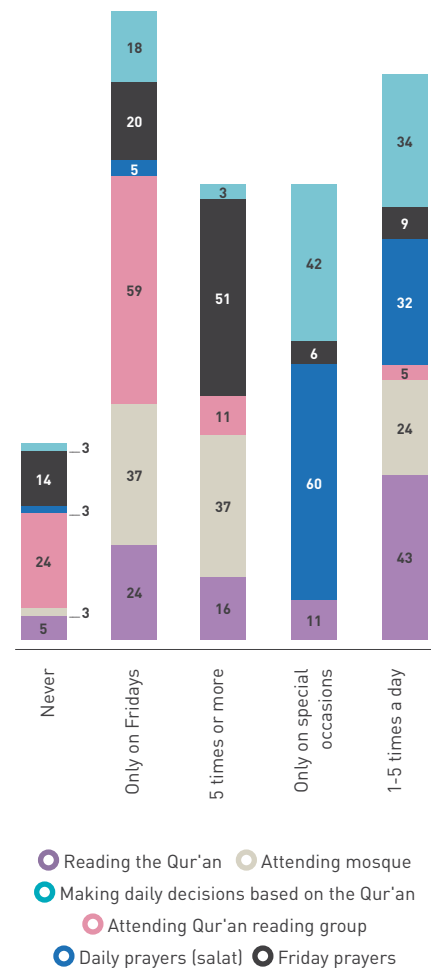
**Feelings toward the Non-Muslim community while performing the rituals (% Percent). Detroit (frequencies)**

How does performing these rituals make you feel toward the non-Muslim community?

**Feelings arising while participating in prayer (% Percent). Detroit**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in prayer?

**Feelings arising while participating in Ramadan (% Percent). Detroit**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in Ramadan?
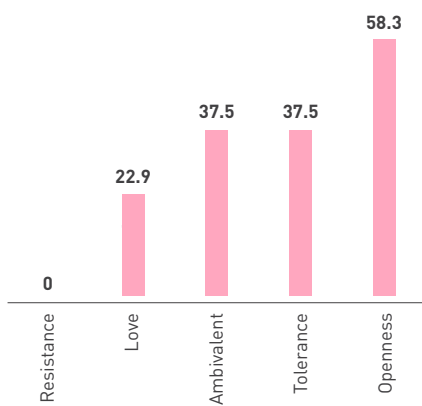


While participating in Ramadan, the strongest feelings that participants experienced were 'feeling closer to God' (mean value 4.81 on a scale of 1 to 5) and 'feeling spiritually connected' (4.71). Equally strong were the feelings of 'love', 'peace', and 'comfortable with who they were' and 'connection to their community (4.63 each) (see Figure 74).

Additionally, individual interviews revealed the importance of discipline and structure. African American reverts to Islam in Detroit – many of whom had parents and grandparents who had grown up in the Nation

of Islam (NOI) – strongly conveyed a controversial branch of Islam associated with the African American civil rights movements and militant Black activism in the 1960s. NOI is often discounted as an unfaithful practice of Islam, and most adherents, including almost all participants in this study, had since reverted to mainstream Sunni Islam – though NOI temples still exist and continue to be attended in Detroit. All African American reverts in this study perceived Islam as a key source of resistance to systemic racism, from the civil rights era to the present,

challenging histories and practices of racial injustice and helping to rebuild experiences of self-worth, confidence, and active political participation.

More broadly, since September 11, Arabic-speaking South Asian and other Muslim communities in Detroit have also been wounded by experiences of racism and Islamophobia. Some participants identified this shared experience as increasing intra-community bonds, such as between the African American 'indigenous' Muslims (who have a longer history of racial injustice and prejudice) and other

Muslim communities. This common ground has strengthened participation in social justice movements bridging racial and ethnic boundaries. The Ferguson protests and 'Black Lives Matter' are examples of this. But tension between African American communities and 'immigrant' Muslims also occurs: largely because of the stereotype circulating among migrant Muslim communities that African Americans adhere to NOI, which in turn marks their practice of Islam as unfaithful to core beliefs.

Whereas African American Muslims experienced racism as an ongoing, historical, and structurally determined process, Arab Americans and South-East Asian Muslims found that they had become a suspect community after September 11, and consequently that their experiences of racism and prejudice were more acute.

Issues of class and race were also emerged as important intersections for understanding how racism operates within and among Detroit's Muslim communities. For example, African American communities are marked by disadvantage, whereas Arab communities and South Asian communities are socioeconomically better. In terms of the geographic distribution of class, participants spoke of the 'suburbs' to the north as home to most of the middle-class residents of Detroit (predominantly white, Arab, and South Asian) while inner-city areas, apart from Hamtramck and newly-gentrified Midtown and downtown areas, housed the urban poor, predominantly African American populations.

Despite evidence of a connection between Islamic beliefs, rituals and practices, and forms of community

engagement among Detroit's Muslim communities, disengagement was also registered, and signalled lines of community fracture and contest. One participant articulated this in relation to what he considered 'tectonic plates' of community tension that needed to be addressed via 'interfaith' dialogue.

The 'tectonic plates' he spoke of were, i) sectarian differences and tensions (between Sunni and Shia Muslims); ii) tensions between 'immigrant' and African American 'indigenous' (i.e. local) Muslims and; iii) intergenerational tensions. Many of these issues were raised during the 2014 Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) conference, which was held for the first time in Detroit and consequently brought to light the racial, sectarian, and intergenerational politics affecting Muslim communities there.

Another point of intra-community tension in the Detroit-Dearborn community that emerged with more intensity with the rise of the 'Islamic State' (ISIS) and the conflicts in Syria and Iraq has been sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Historically, despite Dearborn's large population of Shia Muslims, unlike the rest of Detroit's predominantly Sunni Muslims, community relations had been respectful and harmonious.

The conflict in Syria especially stirred animosities and divisions, and participants noted that the community had to be vigilant. These conflicts were mapped onto the geographical spaces of Detroit and emerged as significant sources of community unrest during the fieldwork encounters.

Another line of difference among Muslim communities across the

USA, not just in Detroit, is a growing generational divide, particularly on cultural and theological issues. For example, for many young Muslims, or 'Millennial Muslims', issues of culture and religion often became entangled. This produced tension, such as, on the maintenance of cultural and religious tradition vis-à-vis more individualised and autonomous interpretations of scripture and other aspects of religiosity.

Diverse attitudes and ideas related to gender normativity, sexuality, and other taboo topics, were particularly reported. Some of these taboo subjects even became catalysts for young Muslims' more individualised citizenship and political practices; young people in these communities have been encouraged to face and challenge the social injustices maintained by community and cultural traditions. Conceptualisations of space were reported as central to these contests, as young Muslims sought out and created 'safe spaces' for engaging in forms of dialogue and critical discussion.

**LYON/GRENOBLE/PARIS, FRANCE**

As detailed earlier, France is a secular state. Historically, the separation of the state from the Church was highly disputed. The first long-term Republic was voted in in 1870, and only 35 years later was the separation of State and Church inscribed as a principle of the Republic. The secularisation of France has had several consequences, such as the non-involvement of the state in the financing of new religious buildings. It also demands that the public sector, and its employees, remain neutral vis-à-vis religion. According to this law, public servants cannot wear visible religious signs or clothing; effecting teachers, administrative staff, and staff from state-owned companies.

The participants in this study observed a shift from 'passive secularism' (the state as independent from any religious activity or belief) to 'active secularism' (state intervention into citizen's display of religious affiliation).

Active secularism focuses on the visibility of religion as a public force and resulted in the 2004 adoption of a law banning the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools. France further forbids the wearing of the burqa in all public spaces, which it justifies through a securitised discourse:

"It's basically because they want to exclude Muslim people because for the Jewish people for example it's not a problem. For the Kippah and stuff like that we don't have a problem, but for the hijab it's a problem. So we see that they actually change the concept of secularism now to exclude

Muslim citizens from the public field and the social field."

Madiha, 27, Paris

"French secularism ... became something exclusive, not inclusive like it was. You can't wear the veil here in school [...] In the university, it's okay to wear the veil and in your life you do what you want. Actually, in France you still do what you want in public space, except for the burqa and the niqab."

Awf, Moroccan background, born in France, Paris

"Unfortunately, today we feel that in the opinion of some politicians and even some public figures that secularism has become anti-religion."

Akif, born in Mali, Lyon

From a more practical perspective, when discussing the religious symbols of public servants, some are more easily singled out than others. The hijab is one of these. The law effectively enables private companies to restrict the wearing of the hijab in certain circumstances; not limited to health and safety issues. In French kindergartens, for example, when the organisation's rules state that the religious neutrality of the staff should be maintained in relation to the children, employees cannot wear the hijab.

The education sector is very clearly a space in which the hijab is not welcome. It is not just teachers in the sector, but also students attending primary schools

and high schools who are prohibited by law to wear the hijab. This law does not however apply to universities. The participants in this study experienced these state practices very strongly as injustices and state discrimination. The treatment of the hijab has crystallised a growing feeling of division between the Muslim community and the state:

"We work with local Muslim organisations; we work with a collective dedicated to the fight for veiled mother because mothers who wear the hijab usually are excluded from the school activities. And this is illegal, this is a discrimination and there is a collective fighting against this specific problem so we work with them."

Madiha, 27, Paris

"Here in France, we are discussing whether a woman wearing the hijab has the right to take her child to school. What does this aggressive secularism mean? They accuse us of intolerance but they are the ones who are intolerant! My wife wants to take her daughter to the swimming pool, they told her 'no, no, you cannot go in, you wear the headscarf' so the intolerance issue is theirs not ours."

Aariz, Lyon

"One year ago, deputies proposed a new law to forbid veiled women to be nannies, because they thought that

a women taking care of a child should be neutral. We organised a huge awareness protest. We asked people to send an email to their deputy or their senator to protest against this law and in like a week over two thousand emails have been sent after we launched the campaign."

Madiha, 27, Paris

Nearly all participants at the French sites placed equal emphasis on all practices, whether obligatory or not. The obligatory practices are the five pillars of Islam outlined in previous sections of this report. Non-obligatory practices may include wearing the *hijab*, having a beard, eating halal food and abstaining from the consumption of alcohol.

"There are different activities. They always strive to follow the triangulation of Islam, that is to say, rectify human relationships in three dimensions, with three tools, following three axes, if I may say. First of all, towards God, which is what we call the axes of adoration and this is the responsibility of this Mosque: practices, rituals, worship. This is vertical to God, this is what we call the axes of devotion based on faith and belief. Faith translates outward by real acts, such as religious practices, rituals and applications and also by good behaviour. Therefore, the second component which

we work on is to rectify human relationships towards the other, towards other people, towards the creatures of God, towards others who have a different culture."

Amam, Lyon

Interview participants suggested that religion brings an additional stratum of values to existing civic values. The testimony of faith thus layers a different orientation on top of the expression of the national identity, with people from different religions sharing a sense of belonging to a common citizenship. It reflects the diversity of the nation, in which Islam is followed on an individual basis:

"To me, being a Muslim in France, means to demonstrate my faith, that is to say in my daily life: to respect the principles of Islam, while being a French citizen at the same level as other citizens. ... I am a French citizen with a Muslim religion, a Muslim life philosophy."

Ali, Lyon

In France, public actions based on the values of Islam are primarily directed at interfaith and intercultural understanding. Negative portrayals, particularly following September 11 and other attacks, combined with an ongoing political and media discourse around 'integration issues', have encouraged the community to share the positive teachings of Islam in the public sphere.

Participants reported that religious practices conveyed understanding and peace, prompted dialogue and respect towards one another:

"Islam helps me to concentrate ... and always continue in my way. And if people want to stop me I just have to be kind with these people to show them the good behaviour and to show them that Islam is not terrorism. Islam is not a religion of hatred or oppression. It is just a religion of peace, it's just – there are people who are terrorists."

Mouna, Moroccan background, born in Paris

Figure 75
Muslim educational books for children in France.
Source: Authors

"Sometimes when [we] are insulted, when people disrespect us, we do not respond with hate and insults and stuff like that, we stay polite and respectful and we try to communicate and have a dialogue with this person. I think that maybe if I did not have the religion I would be more aggressive."

Madiha, 27, Paris

In France, 72 people (77.4 per cent) reported that they observed strict dietary requirements, only one person responded 'no'. In sharp contrast, observing dress code was not as prevalent. Only 30 people (32.3 per cent) responded that they observed dress requirements, and a larger number (41 people or 44.1 per cent) replied that they did not follow Islamic dress code. Their position signals the influence of the official ban on religious clothing legislated by the Government (see Figures 76 and 77).

Figure 76

Dietary requirements
(frequencies)



◉ **72** Yes    ◉ **1** No
◉ **20** No answer
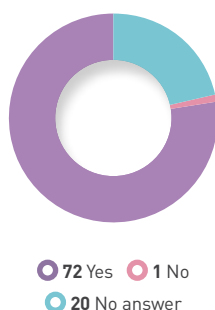
Figure 77

Dress requirements
(frequencies)



◉ **30** Yes    ◉ **41** No
◉ **22** No answer
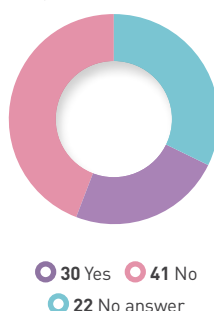
While wearing the *hijab* is not an obligatory practice, participants widely wore it. Without diminishing the value of modesty attached to it, women in France and especially young women have increasingly taken on this practice to display their belonging to the Muslim community. As Madiha describes, the wearing of the *hijab* acts as a sign of resistance in the face of prohibiting its use in certain spaces, alongside other reasons for wearing it:

"I would say it's very specific to each woman. Well first of all wearing the hijab is an obligation as a Muslim person, of course you always have the choice to wear it or not, but it's one of the obligation as a believer. It's also a way to show your other identity as a Muslim and to be proud of it and also to be humble."

Madiha, 27, Paris

Many participants in the study stressed that the experience of Muslim women in the exercise of their citizenship, social, and economic daily life is much

more difficult than for men. They are more readily discriminated against. Participants noted that while wearing a beard might not necessarily exclude men from working in the public service or the private sector, the *hijab* attracts public attention towards Muslim women. By restricting the right to display religious signs, the state has put its seal on the popular (mis)interpretation of *hijab* as a custom restricting women's freedom. Participants noted that women were the target of public discrimination. These discriminations are serious: acts against Muslim women range from verbal abuse to physical assaults. Some participants linked Islamophobia to a specific expression of sexism with distressing consequences:

"I feel at ease in the religious as well as public place. I feel at ease because I am not particularly visible as a Muslim, except for having a small beard and sometimes wearing traditional attire. Even with that, nobody has said to me 'why are you dressed like that?' But I know there are other Muslims who have encountered this problem, especially Muslim veiled women. As men, we are less affected by this type of problems."

Ali, Lyon

"When it is a really bad person, we will say that racism is stretched to its limits and that this person is ready to commit a verbal or physical aggression. If this person wants to annoy someone, hit someone or be

mean, they will do it more easily to a woman wearing the hijab. Because she obviously is Muslim and the hijab in France is the symbol object of Islam. It is strongly correlated with Islam. It refers to oppressed women, closed-in women. To them, it is a very derogatory synonym. Actually, we live it totally differently."

Dunia, Lyon

Women wearing the hijab described that they did not feel that they had equal opportunities in the workplace. The religious neutrality law for the public sector means that Muslim women are excluded from a wide range of government jobs. Their access to work in the private sphere and in the educational sector is also hindered by various laws.

Participants noted that women were faced with the choice of reducing their visible expression of religion and adopting a sartorial expression of secularism, or of wearing *hijab* and limiting their prospects of education and work. Contrary to its constitutional premise, the French Republic fails to apply the value of equality into this particular field of gender equality.

"Muslim women are not immune to Islamophobic statements. So when we keep telling them that they are a problem, that they don't belong here, that they are not capable, that they are a backward people, this speech to some extent has an impact on the way they perceive themselves, and on the way they perceive what is possible or not for them. So we have a large number of young

Muslim women who do not pursue their studies because they say basically, "What's the point of doing a PhD if I know in advance that I am going to be discriminated against when looking for a job? There's no point for that.

What's the point for me being involved in the environmental project in my local city if I know that before even talking, I am going to have to justify myself for wearing a headscarf. What's the point?"

Athar, Paris



**Figure 78**
Muslim clothing store in France. Source: Authors

"My wife wears the headscarf; she works in a private Muslim school. Today, she does not have problems any more, but before, she took part in some work placements and she was told to take her headscarf off. It is not easy. It is difficult."

Ali, Lyon

Because the *hijab* is a visible sign, it has enabled Islamophobic, discriminatory practices to focus particularly on women as they go about their daily lives. Participants reported that Muslim women are subject to discrimination because of their visibility; yet another example of the social difficulties that Muslim women may face in their daily life in France.

There is an inherent contradiction between the reasons behind this discrimination. The veil, on the one hand, is popularly considered as symbol of the lack of freedom supposedly suffered by Muslim women; while on the other hand, its prohibition challenges Muslim women's rights to equality and social justice.

"I guess the stare on us can be different. I felt it especially when I had to look for an apartment three years ago. When I spoke with the landlords on the phone, they were saying that the apartment was available and that I could go and visit. As soon as I had arrived to visit, the person would step back a meter away because he saw that I was wearing the hijab. I felt it right away. The person said that they

were waiting for a reply from another potential tenant, who had not yet said that he/she did not want the apartment. In this last case, they would have called me back. They never called back. But already with back step, I understood. I still remember the day when I found my current apartment, because the owner welcomed me normally, as if there was nothing wrong. It made me happy because I had just experienced ten people looking at me strangely when visiting the apartments."

Dunia, Lyon

Despite the highly politicised secular environment in France, survey participants reported a high observance of many faith-based rituals and practices.

The most commonly observed practices included 'washing before prayer' (69 people or 74.2 per cent), 'celebrating Eid' (69 people or 74.2 per cent), 'fasting during Ramadan' (68 people or 73.1 per cent), 'daily prayers' (63 people or 67.7 per cent) and 'Friday prayers' 62 participants or 66.7 per cent). Other rituals also frequently practiced were: 'reading *Qur'an*' (56 people or 60.2 per cent), 'attending mosque' (56 participants or 60.2 per cent), 'payment of alms' (55 participants or 59.1 per cent), 'male circumcision' (44 people or 47.3 per cent), 'attending *Qur'an* readings' (31 people or 33.3 per cent), 'pilgrimage' (21 people or 23.7 per cent), 'attending festivals' (20 people or 21.5 per cent), and 'observing Mohammed's Birthday' (19 people or 20.4 per cent) (see Figure 79).

Rituals, practices and faith based community events regularly engaged in (% Percent). France
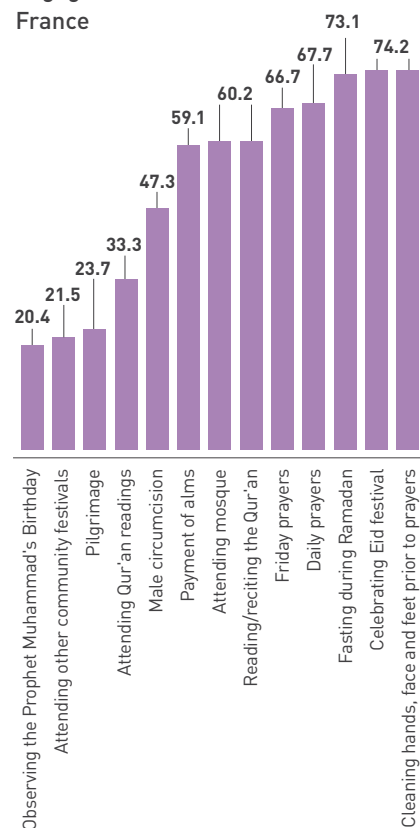
Most religious practices were performed in the privacy of the home (71 people or 76.3 per cent) or Mosque (57 people or 61.3 per cent). Relatively few participants observed these practices in more public spaces: at work (19 people or 20.4 per cent), in community centres (18 people or 19.4 per cent), 'wherever I find myself' (15 participants or 16.1 per cent), on the street (12 people or 12.9 per cent), at university (nine people or 9.7 per cent), in the park (nine participants or 9.7 per cent), or on public transport (six participants or 6.5 per cent) (see Figure 80).

Included in the most frequently reported religious practices were 'performing daily prayers five times a day or more' (45 people or 48.1 per cent) and 'reading Qur'an one-to-five times a day' (31 people or 33.3 per cent).

Additionally, 28 people or 30.1 per cent reported going to the mosque one-to-five times a day, 32 people or 34.4 per cent performed Friday prayers, and 25 people or 26.9 per cent based their daily decisions on Qur'an one-to-five times a day (see Figure 81).

The performance of these rituals brought out the following feelings towards non-Muslim communities: 'openness' (47 participants or 50.5 per cent), 'tolerance' (44 people or 47.3 per cent), 'love' (28 participants or 30.1 per cent), 'ambivalence' (ten people or 10.8 per cent) and 'resistance' (four people or 4.3 per cent) (see Figure 82).

Figure 80

**In what places do you perform these religious practices? (frequencies % Percent). France**



Figure 81

**How often do you perform the following? France (valid percent)**



Legend: Reading the Qur'an · Attending mosque · Making daily decisions based on the Qur'an · Attending Qur'an reading group · Daily prayers (salat) · Friday prayers

Figure 82

**Feelings toward the Non-Muslim community while performing the rituals. (frequencies % Percent). France**

How does performing these rituals make you feel toward the non-Muslim community?
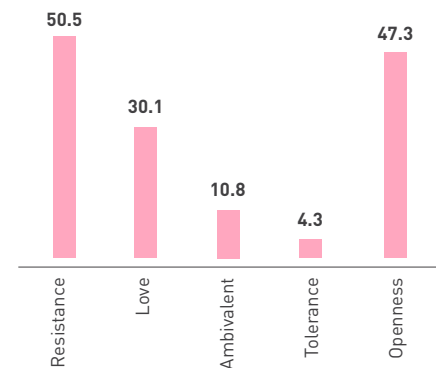
Like the surveys at other sites, respondents' feelings arising from participating in prayer were measured using a scale from one (lowest) to five (highest) and mean values were calculated.

Performance of the daily prayers brought out the following feelings in a descending order: 'staying closer to God' (mean 4.31), 'peace' (4.29), 'relaxation' (4.22), 'comfort' (4.2), 'comfortable with who I am' (4.12), 'love' (4.03), 'feeling connected to my community' (3.76), and 'feeling attached to a place' (3.39) (see Figure 83).

Among the feelings arising from participating in Ramadan, the strongest reported feelings included 'peace' (mean 4.5), 'feeling closer to God' (4.3), 'feeling comfortable with who they were' (4.2), 'feeling spiritually connected' (4.2), 'feeling connected to their community' (4.1) and 'comfort' (4) (see Figure 84).

Figure 83

**Feelings arising while participating in prayer. France**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in prayer?
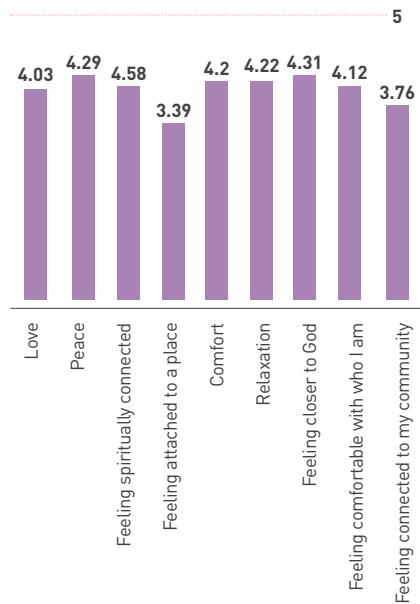


Figure 84

**Feelings arising while participating in Ramadan. France**

On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) please rate which of the following feelings arise for you while participating in Ramadan?

# CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING, AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

For many participants in this research, a religious commitment to social rights and justice had led directly to political participation in social justice related issues; demonstrating a commitment to shaping societal attitudes on these issues. Their civic commitment was manifested through several activities including community and volunteer work, media work, choice of career, and engagement in public protest:

"I've learned a lot from working in a multicultural kind of environment, it's made me a better person, it's made me more reflective, and just, yeah I've really benefited from it. ... It's beautiful to have friendships with people from different cultural backgrounds, but for me it's more about the sense of justice. How people can have access to different services, how people feel that they can express themselves, so I like to work towards that kind of area as well."

Mariam, 25–34, European background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"I've always had that drive for justice. When I see any sort of injustice, whether it's, you know, a bomb's been dropped on a certain community or ... someone gets assaulted in the street, they've done nothing, they got robbed, stuff like that."

Hamzah, 28, Lebanese background, born in Australia, works for Victoria Police, Melbourne

"I've spoken to a lot of people about their religion and spaces and how they feel, well how they can contribute, how they think their country's fairly contributed to them, and their response is all the time, it's not the same. Some people do not. For me personally, I have always been able to ... Some people will have to stand up for them. ...Even though they are Australian citizens, because of their religion they don't feel like they belong ... They have to go to someone who is more confident and who is more, can express himself well if any questions arise with them."

Bashar, 50, central African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne, works at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

"One of the others would be Students for Palestine [a Facebook group that organizes public protests], so basically showing our solidarity with Palestine. And ... yeh, there was a protest last year when Gaza was bombed by Israel, in 2012."

Samira, 18–24, Pakistan born, Paris

In relation to Muslim political struggles and participation, 'Voice', as a central aspect of membership, is relevant (Bilici 2012).

For minority Muslims in Western societies, voicing their concerns has been important to the various struggles for equal treatment as citizens, even though these forms of participation are often read as signs of civic disloyalty.

Indeed, many participants spoke of their commitment to social justice as a way of bridging differences between Muslim and non-Muslims, and of forming social and political alliances based on a shared commitment to rights and justice in domestic and international arenas.

Ahmad, for example, spoke of this commitment and emphasised the spiritual underpinnings to these forms of protest against social injustice.

As the organiser of a 'Free Egypt' protest in the Melbourne CBD following the massacre of pro-Morsi supporters in Egypt's Rabaa al-Adawiya square, Ahmad spoke of the ways in which the protest incorporated spiritual dimensions as well as democratic claims to justice:

"We wanted to emphasise the fact that we're Australians, and so that's why you saw a lot of Australian flags ... because we wanted to show that this is not just an Egyptian issue, this not just a Turkish or Syrian issue ... We believe that our concerns should be concerns of broader society as well because we're members of this society."

Ahmad, 35–49, Egyptian background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Ahmad's sentiments were echoed by Tahwid, also in Melbourne, who described the importance of raising a voice against such injustices:

"I'm seeing injustice. I'm seeing people dying. I'm seeing people getting killed in a massacre just for protesting. ... I mean I wish every citizen, in every city in the world where they have some civil rights and freedom of speech, to get up there and speak against tyrants – I am here for the Islamist or the Muslim as well, or generally a wide range of people."

Tahwid, 18–24, Egyptian background, Melbourne

Citizenship is generally understood as the legal means through which membership to the nation is determined. The state offers legal protections and rights in exchange for certain obligations and responsibilities undertaken by the citizen. In a post 9-11 environment, the governmental focus on Muslims living in the West has been particularly centred on this civic reciprocity –protections in exchange for obligations. For example, to maintain a relationship whereby the state 'protects' Muslim citizens and their right to religious freedom, the state has placed the focus squarely on the obligations and responsibilities of Muslim citizens and expanded the 'duties' that they must perform to prove that they are worthy of rights and protections. Andrew Shryock and Ann Chih Lin (2009) describe this as a form of 'disciplinary inclusion', while Bilici (2012) regards it as 'negative incorporation'.

While state(s) have appealed to security discourses to justify this level of state interference, they have had the effect of pushing their Muslim citizens to the point of insecurity;

compromising their freedoms including their ability to practise faith 'privately'. Some participants identified this hypocrisy, and the resultant division of the Muslim community into 'good' and 'bad' citizens, as confusing and discriminatory, and exacerbating their sense of exclusion. This led, on the one hand, to ambivalence among some, who described a desire to be as politically engaged or non-engaged as every other citizen; to be as active in their community or not as every other citizen:

"We [Muslims] are not really out there to please anyone anyway. We just want to go out and do the right thing by our religion and by doing that people will actually see what we are all about."

Tariq, 25–34, Lebanese background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"I want to be the model Muslim citizen. So I have that extra responsibility and I have put it on myself, because ... we do get judged as Muslims. If you do anything and they know you are a Muslim that is what comes out first, they will not say I am Aussie ... therefore there is more onus on us, which is unfair."

Bashar, 50, central African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

"Being a citizen is being yourself, and abiding by the laws, that everyone else abides from it. So you are not, you should not be any different to

anyone else, just because you have a certain belief or you come from a certain culture."

Maryam, 40, Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Many Australian participants, especially, did not agree with the publicly-held view that Islam could be a law unto itself, encouraging forms of disassociation or indifference toward Australian laws and politics. In contrast, many regarded their religion as one of cooperation, encouraging obedience towards the law of the land:

"[As Muslims] You're meant to respect the rule of the land or the law of the land. You're supposed to, for example, respect the law of the land unless the law of the land says it's forbidden to pray because then you would still—you would have to pray because that's what your creator tells you to do but other things are just like common sense."

Amal, 27, Turkish background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Some of the core beliefs and practices of Islam correlate with both liberal and republican traditions of citizenship in Western liberal democracies. As evidenced in this study, there is a strong focus on social justice and the values of equality, diversity, and rights (liberal tradition). While many of the core principles of the faith directly encourage practices of active citizenship through interventions committed to a 'common good'.

Yet among participants there was some ambiguity in response to questions that asked about this connection between citizenship and religiosity. Some participants understood citizenship as a legal set of norms and status divorced from the practice of community engagement and civic participation.

Some survey participants placed a high value on the practice of voting in elections: 31 people in Australia (n=96), 35 in France (n=93) and 14 (n=48) in the USA indicated that voting was significant to them (see Figure 85).

Participants at all three sites placed higher significance still on volunteering: 55 in Australia (n=96), 48 in France (n=93) and 33 in the USA (n=43) agreed with the statement that it was important to perform volunteering activities (see Figure 86).

**Significance on voting in elections by site (frequencies)**



| | USA | FRA | AUS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 14 | 35 | 31 |
| No | 34 | 58 | 65 |

● No   ● Yes

**Significance on volunteering by site (frequencies)**



| | USA | FRA | AUS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 33 | 48 | 55 |
| No | 15 | 45 | 41 |

● No   ● Yes
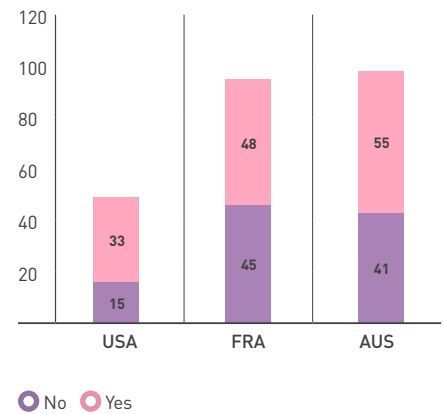
## MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

In Melbourne, only 47 people responded to the question on their citizenship and residency status, 53 did not. Close to one-third of all participants (31 people or 32 per cent) reported that they were citizens, nine reported that they were temporary residents, and seven that they were permanent residents (see Figure 87).

### Figure 87

**Residency and citizenship status. Melbourne (frequencies)**
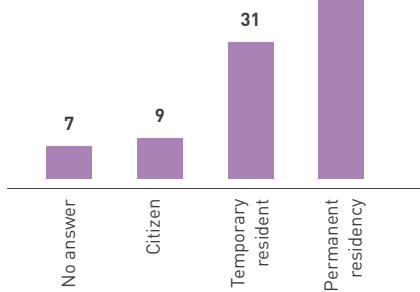


Of significance to our analysis, with its focus on citizenship status and practice, was the finding that most participants born overseas who had migrated to Australia more than fifteen years ago had become Australian citizens (93.75 per cent). This once again confirms the importance of citizenship to Muslims living in Melbourne.

In response to questions about feelings of belonging to the local Dandenong community, a range of themes emerged. Participants discussed migration and settlement experiences, experiences of racism and social exclusion, as well as feelings of belonging, connection, and integration. Feelings of integration were discussed primerily in relation to the recognition and support of faith by local council,

in terms of providing permits/licenses for the building of mosques and other community centres, and for the staging of public religious festivals such as Eid celebrations. Many participants also highlighted that the multicultural and multifaith feel of the Dandenong area encouraged their sense of belonging. Exceptions included some African born participants, together with most of the Hazara residents, who were less positive: expressing a view of Dandenong as 'multicultural' but also a 'weird and disconnected place. People are together but they are in sections' (African background survey respondent, 60 years old).

Participants reported maintaining strong social connections with Muslim relatives, friends, and organisations locally and overseas. Sixty-seven people (70 per cent) maintained close ties with relatives and friends abroad, while slightly fewer (63 people or 65 per cent) maintained ties with local Muslim groups and organisations (see Figures 88 and 89).

### Figure 88

**Community ties with local muslim groups. Melbourne (frequencies)**



**65%** Yes  **18%** No
**17%** No answer
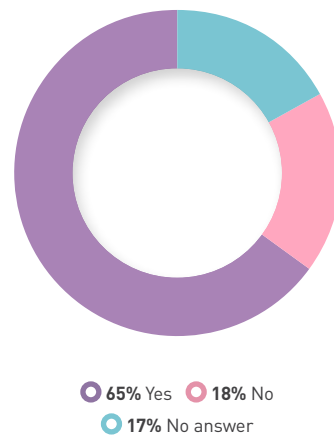
### Figure 89

**Community ties with muslim relatives/friends overseas. Melbourne (frequencies)**



**70%** Yes  **13%** No
**17%** No answer
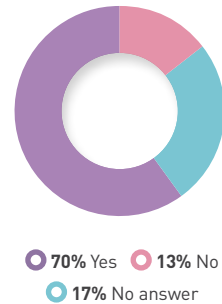
In relation to civic and political engagement, participants placed less significance on school fundraising (30 people or 31.3 per cent) and voting in political elections (31 people or 32.3 per cent), than they did on volunteering in their local community (55 people or 57.3 per cent) (see Figure 90). On voting in federal elections, 55 people (57.3 per cent) said they did vote, two respondents (2.1 per cent) voted 'sometimes', while 21 people (21.9 per cent) said they did not vote at all (see Figure 91).

### Figure 90

**Significance on participating in... Melbourne (frequencies)**
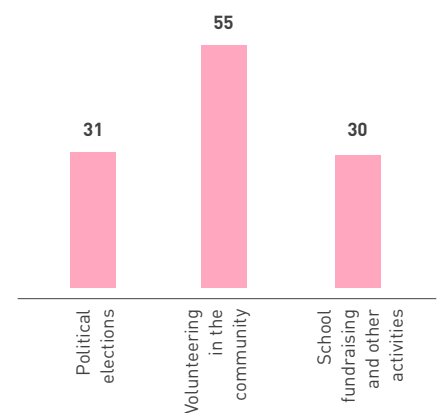
Figure 91

**Do you vote in federal elections? Melbourne (frequencies)**



Most comments from survey respondents revealed that they felt a civic duty and responsibility to vote in federal, state, and local elections:

"Being politically aware, I do feel that in order to pursue the type of society that you desire it is vital to take a chance and play your part in elections."

"Voting is very important to me because not many people voted in Afghanistan."

"Everyone has the right to vote in Australia. I have lived in this country my whole life and I feel it is important for my values/ opinions to be regarded/ counted."

"I think it is important to vote in federal elections because one voice makes a difference."

On this subject, some survey respondents from Melbourne offered comments indicative of alienation:

"I do not like to vote in Federal elections because I believe democracy is not the proper way."

"I do not feel any party is worth my vote."

"I did not in the last one. Uninspiring candidates. Preferred to pay a fine."

"I pay for my right not to vote. No decision is the right decision. I do not know enough."

Some comments explicitly referred to the system of compulsory voting in Australia:

"Because I get forced to do it. Otherwise, I get fined."

The increase of Muslim migrants in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s, produced a need to establish organisations capable of negotiating a space for Muslim representation in the Australian political structure (Hage 2011).

This was particularly important with the introduction of multiculturalism as policy, which would formally integrate and regulate migrant communities by establishing representative bodies to mediate between government and communities; ideologically aimed at preserving distinct cultural traditions of these communities and promoting allegiance to a national political will.

While Ghassan Hage (2011) has written about this in terms of 'managing' or 'caging' ethnic communities, these organisations have also become important advocacy bodies, particularly since September 11.

Since September 11, Muslim loyalties to the nation have been questioned on a wider and more intense scale. It has made religious and ethnic community organisations more important in terms of their ability to 'engage with the media, government agencies and policymakers to voice community concerns and dispel doubts about Muslims' loyalty as law-abiding citizens' (Peucker, Roose & Akbarzadeh 2014, p. 283), while also seeking to 'bridge' with mainstream political and cultural organisations to facilitate social inclusion.

In addition to this, many organisations have begun working at a more grassroots level to 'enhance capacity by providing training, guidance and advice' (Peucker, Roose & Akbarzadeh 2014, p. 283); facilitating active citizenship. A range of organisations have more actively engaged with the media and training, and have become more interested in promoting more activist types of citizenship. The point is to strengthen the public voice of Muslims, so that they might feel themselves to be more actively included members of society.

Essentially, in trying to enhance the political and civic agency of Muslim citizens, many of the organisations themselves, or individuals acting within them, have attempted to turn passive citizens into active citizens. In some instances, this has led to the increased recognition and participation of Muslim community spokespeople or 'elites' in the public sphere.

Muslim leaders often act as representatives of large community organisations, such as the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV), the Affinity Foundation or various Muslim women's organisations (Peucker, Roose & Akbarzadeh 2014).

When asked whether they felt that their religious community had adequate representation in formal political groups and organisations, most respondents in this study did not agree. In fact, 46 people responded negatively: with 23 (n=96) people reporting that their religious community was 'very poorly' represented, and the same number (23) feeling that it was 'poorly' represented.
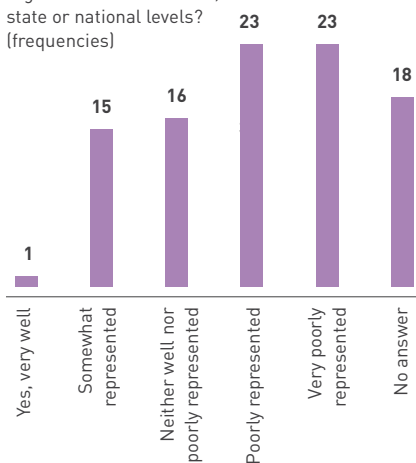
Some of these views were found among the responses of participants who were active in either grassroots Muslim or ethnic community organisations (such as the Hazara Women's Network, and the Victorian Arabic Social Services) or peak Muslim representative bodies at a local, state (Islamic Council of Victoria) or federal level (Australian Federation of Ethnic Councils, Multicultural Council of Australia). On the question of why they became actively involved in these organisations, participants emphasised the opportunities that these organisations afforded by providing a space for Muslim/ethnic communities to shape their own narratives. These opportunities included: training leaders, 'bridging' with the non-Muslim community, demonstrating a willingness to work with mainstream

political organisations, and the opportunity to influence government policy on issues that impact Muslims (such as asylum seeker policies):

"I'm trying my best to take it from the grass root level, educate the people who are really important to us at this stage. The community is very important, they need to understand the sufferings of their people, they need to understand the golden chance they have, they need to appreciate the safety they have and they need to give back."

Saba, 22, Hazara Women's Network, Young Australian of the Year recipient, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

"With the community and the school that I'm working with our job is to build bridges as much as possible. You build those bridges – you build a common ground."

Alia, 30, volunteer with Dandenong Interfaith network, Australian Intercultural Society and Sirius College, Turkish background female, born in Turkey, Melbourne

"I think there are tremendous opportunities. I think it's fair to say that Australian Muslims haven't been heavily involved in the mainstream, in terms of a public profile perspective. ... I was involved with an organisation that actually was a community development organisation, but

**it was a Muslim community development organisation, and we had initiatives like a young leaders program for university age people – it was actually called Mercy Mission."**

Ahmad, 35–49, Former President, Islamic society of Melbourne University, Egyptian background male, born in Australia, Melbourne

**"You've got ancestry, you've got roots and you shouldn't feel that okay you've come into a host country which has a different ethnic or national identity and therefore you must strip your original identity and just assimilate into the host. ... By being provided that opportunity you should actually cherish; you should value your ethnic heritage and run parallel with your new assumed national identity. ... I believe whatever you can enrich in your own personality, your character, your identity, you can actually further enrich Australian society with it and Australian society by and large encourages that."**

Dawud, 35–49, ICV secretary, Turkish background male, Melbourne

For some participants, their involvement with Muslim representative bodies was driven by a desire to break down barriers between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, that, they felt, had been created by media stereotypes. Some also spoke of

barriers within the Muslim communities that needed to be addressed. These relate to limited active female membership and representation, or to the limited extension of human rights, equality, and social justice to other community members. These responses point to the way that Muslim community politics can be just as exclusive and selective as national politics in the distribution of rights and justice:

**"Muslims ... want equality for their own community and are very committed to that. But ... you can't believe in equality and in being treated equally and that all human rights should be made available to you unless you believe in principle that they should be then be made available to all people. Because ... why should gays get married? It is completely forbidden. ... Either you believe in justice or you do not ... And what that means is they're not really actors for change."**

Yasmin, 45, Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, Lebanese background, Melbourne

Yet, despite volunteering in community and religious organisations, many participants demonstrated a lack of interest in becoming involved in politics at a more formal level; particularly because of the religious compromises that may need to be negotiated. In this sense, grassroots civic and political engagement was preferred as it allowed participants to give back to the community without compromising their core religious values.

Although for Alia, this type of grassroots engagement was the foundation for ensuring that formal organisations were strongly representative and capable of making real change attentive to everyone's needs:

**"I'm not engaged in politics and ... especially given the time that we're in. ... A lot of Muslims are turning to just grass-roots ... Let's first reach out to our neighbours, take care of our youth, take care of our elders, our family members. ... Then they start building actual foundations or organisations so when you get more professionals, lawyers or doctors. ... We just try to stay small in our own communities and try to help people in our own ways as much as possible. But again, you do reach out for those ... different leaders in your society because you say we are a growing part of society, we want to work together with you and help each other out."**

Alia, 30, Dandenong Interfaith Network, Australian Intercultural Society, Sirius College, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

TAnother interesting finding was the encounters that many young participants in the study had experienced with interfaith dialogue through school programs, particularly in Islamic schools. Two educators discussed their participation in interfaith activities at school, describing how their interest in

interfaith work had carried over into their professional lives. They spoke of the importance of interfaith work for developing intercultural learning and understanding, which in turn increases community harmony and openness to difference, while minimising racism and violence:

"Previously at school I did a lot of interfaith; I did a lot of United Nations Treaty Conventions. I was involved in the Black Saturday Appeal, in the actual ceremony. Now the community still does do a fair bit of interfaith and open days and I do try and take part in those .... It was basically year 10s just talking about their life experiences as teenagers and what it meant for them being Jewish or being a Christian, being Catholic or being a Protestant or an Anglican in Australia. We all had that understanding and it wasn't just about tolerance it was about acceptance and what made them special."

Sajida, 20, Lebanese background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Many regarded interfaith dialogue as a positive vehicle for deepening civic participation and forms of engagement for Muslim community members and leaders, thereby increasing community harmony. Despite these affirmations, some participants criticised interfaith dialogue as a form of citizenship that was passive and did not actively challenge real world problems, such as racism, gender inequality and other social inequalities, including those perpetuated by faith communities.

"Islamic community leaders always come on the screen when there is an issue … and promote peace and friendship by doing some interfaith conference or interfaith religion talk. … They are not attracting the common people to talk about how they can build up their relationship. What they're doing in interfaith conferences, they're talking about, um, the … differences or maybe trying to prove that all religions are, you know, promoting peace and all. But practically, what they're doing?"

Habeeb, 35–49, Pakistan background, born in Pakistan, Melbourne

For one participant, the focus on Abrahamic faith traditions as a common ground also excluded many other non-monotheistic traditions and humanists who do not necessarily believe in God, but who religious leaders and faith community members should nonetheless seek dialogue with:

"So traditionally this idea of 'People of the Book'… I would say the majority of people I know in this world and love probably don't believe in god… but live with the same consciousness. And that is what I seek in human beings … and actually I feel a lot more comfortable about the fact that nobody knows what this is all about rather than having this delusional sense of I've got the answer'. … But I mean that's what I take comfort in sharing with other people as opposed to 'we all believe in god'.

Nadine, Melbourne

To better understand participants' sense of belonging, they were asked if being a Muslim was a challenge in their local neighbourhood.

Almost half of the respondents (43 people or 44.8 per cent) answered 'rarely', indicating a good level of integration in Melbourne. Additionally, 26 people (27.17 per cent) said 'sometimes' and nine respondents (9.4 per cent) answered 'often' (see Figure 93).

Figure 93

Do you feel being Muslim in your local neighbourhood is a challenge? Melbourne (frequencies)
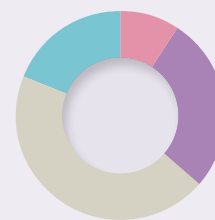


● **26** Sometimes ● **9** Often
● **43** Rarely ● **18** No answer

While respondents provided a range of descriptions of the local neighbourhoods in which they lived, a relatively low number felt that they belonged to their local neighbourhood community more than to the national community. When asked whether they thought religion attached them more strongly to the places in which they lived, 37 people (38.5 per cent) replied 'often', 18 people (18.8 per cent) said 'sometimes', while 23 people (24 per cent) replied 'rarely' (see Figure 94).

Figure 94

**As a Muslim, do you feel that your religious and cultural beliefs and practices help to attach you more strongly to your local neighbourhood and community? Melbourne (frequencies)**



- **18** Sometimes
- **37** Often
- **23** Rarely
- **18** No answer
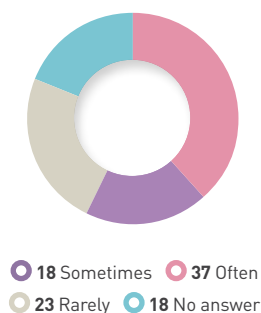
In response to the open-ended question: 'how would you describe your local neighbourhood?', most respondents provided positive and favourable characterisations of their neighbourhoods. General positive and friendly comments included the following descriptors: 'peaceful', 'calm', 'quiet', 'loving', 'understanding', 'respectful', 'diverse', 'accepting', 'welcoming', 'safe', 'comfortable', and 'lovely'. More specific descriptions included:

"I love everybody here at the market. In my neighbourhood, there is nice clean air."

"They are generally good people of middle-income households."

Some respondents made specific reference to the multicultural nature of their neighbourhoods and its benefits:

"My local community is a very vibrant, lively and multicultural one. There is a lot of tolerance and acceptance in the neighbourhood."

"It is a very multicultural community, therefore people are usually accepting of differences. There are many centres for people to meet and engage in activities, sport and leisure."

"Welcoming, happy to bring people closer and allowing non-Muslims to listen and join."

"Active, wanting to make a difference, passionate about making a difference."

Meanwhile, others referred to the religious representation in their local community:

"Moderately religious due to the presence of the local mosque, which the council strongly supports during special occasions/functions such as Eid celebrations (where traffic blocks the road etc.)."

"It is a large Muslim community with mosques around, non-Muslims and Muslims living together in peace. I love this part of Melbourne because of this. Mosques, churches and other worship centres side by side within Hume."

While others spoke of the inadequate interpersonal connections in their neighbourhoods:

"Quiet, detached, people moving in and out all the time."

"I would describe them as isolated-everyone keeps to themselves."

"My neighbourhood is multicultural but it is also a weird and disconnected place. There are lots of cultures but they are not connected. People are together but in sections."

Also included were somewhat negative comments expressing feelings and experiences of rejection or non-acceptance:

"Some are open to my religion while others give me looks of disgust. Most whom I smile to tend to smile back but others look away."

"When I am out with my family, we do occasionally get a few weird looks but most of the time people are tolerant."

"Loving, caring, respectful. Sometimes there are those people that 'look' at me funny, because I wear a scarf."

When asked whether Muslim religious and cultural beliefs helped to make them better citizens, most participants replied 'often' (63 people or 65.6 per cent) citing a range of reasons related to spiritual, ethical and material aspects of the faith. Activities that participants identified as promoting good and ethical citizenship included the values of being a good neighbour, of obeying the 'laws of the land', of making a commitment to social justice and equality, and through regular engagement in volunteer and charity work at the grassroots level (see Figure 95):

**As a Muslim, do you feel that your religious and cultural beliefs and practices help to make you a better citizen? Melbourne (frequencies)**



- **10** Sometimes
- **63** Often
- **5** Rarely
- **18** No answer
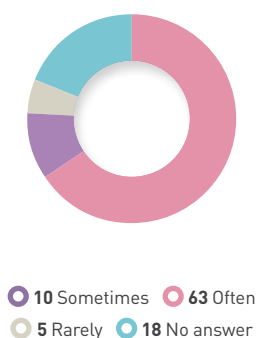
Participants were asked to respond to the question: 'what is it about being a Muslim that makes you a better citizen?' Their responses revealed a range of personal values that they associated with being a Muslim, such as honesty and sincerity, tolerance and peace, love and compassion, and forgiveness and kindness. Many comments emphasised that a good Muslim is distinguished through their service to a community:

"Islam teaches human brotherhood and sisterhood so there is always a sense of fellowship, which makes you respect your fellow Australians and assist them if they ask."

"My religion teaches me the importance of community and giving back."

While some participants referred specifically to civic participation, volunteering, obeying the laws, and being a good fellow citizen, others emphasised the universal values of good citizenship. In response to the question: 'are there particular religious beliefs or practices that encourage good citizenship?' participants identified specific values and beliefs that help them to be good citizens. Many cited 'helping other people:

"Islam has always stood for communities living in harmony and for Muslims to exemplify the highest standards of care and concern toward others. One of the most emphasised of all the Prophet's teachings was being good to people. A Muslim's duty is bound to work for the common good not only with fellow Muslims, but all those in society."

"Volunteering and helping out the community, being kind to neighbours, abiding by the laws of the state are encouraged in Islam."

"Taking care of the environment and land, paying respects to the traditional owners of the land, looking after neighbours, being responsible for my decisions as a citizen (during voting, etc.), being conscious of my behaviour and manners, striving for success."

Many mentioned the virtues of respect, patience, fairness, mercy, and justice in relation to others. Participants specifically mentioned that the following personal qualities are tied to being a good citizen: 'being more accepting', 'to love your brother what you love for yourself', 'self-reflectiveness, kind, calm, positive, well mannered', 'honesty in actions to self and others', 'compassion for one another', 'smiling, being patient'. The value of charity was frequently mentioned as embedded in Islamic civic traditions:

"The main pillars of Islam like zakat ... promote a sense of community which can encourage good citizenship too."

Some participants stressed that obeying rules was considered the trait of a good citizen in Islam:

"One of the orders of Allah via our Prophet Muhammad Mustafa is that: you obey the rules of the country you are in as long as it is the rules of Allah. Don't break them as you break Allah's. Be faithful and watch others' rights, keep away from any kind of fraud, never become a witness that you will hurt the decent residents at courts or other judgement places."

Other comments made reference to universalist values shared among religions:

**"I don't believe any religion, Muslim, Catholic, Christian, Buddhist etc. encourage bad citizenship. That is the choice each individual makes based on their own morals and personal experiences. If you are a good Muslim/Jew/Christian etc. you will endeavour to be a good person and citizen."**

Unsurprisingly, diverse migratory and socioeconomic experiences were implicated in the way participants felt and experienced community participation, engagement, and belonging. Many centred on places and spatial interactions as having facilitated strong feelings of either inclusion and participation, or alienation and exclusion.

Saba – a 22-year-old Hazara refugee who arrived in Australia from Afghanistan eight years ago – still felt a sense of not being settled or belonging in her local community, despite winning a civic award for her volunteer work in the Dandenong community. She attributed her feelings of exclusion to the failure of federal and local governments to understand the plight of Hazara community members and to make the experience of living and settling into the local community less burdensome:

**"I started my life and my family started their life from scratch, from zero, we had nothing here. And just to get to the stage I am at, you know it took us eight years or maybe even more, we're still not settled. So imagine all those people coming in spending years in detention centres and then waiting for their ... visas to be over... You know by the time they set up everything they will be too old to live. ... The Hazara community was... the main group who come here by boat; they're the main refugees coming to Australia by boat... So Hazara community in Afghanistan have been persecuted for as long as I remember, for as long as we all remember. From the 1980s till today, you know they are killed on daily basis; they are killed because they're Hazaras. And that's the reason why the Hazara community partially moved to Pakistan, Iran and India, and that's, again, the same reason why Hazara community is taking refuge or asylum here in Australia."**

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Despite these experiences of unsettledness, Saba also expressed a love for Australia because of the safety and opportunity it provided her and her community.

Members of the Hazara Women's Network also expressed these two sides to settlement; love and gratitude, but also hardship and burden. Of the group, six members had arrived in Australia by boat as refugee claimants in the last two years and were living in the community on bridging visas. For these participants, settlement was precarious. They lived and participated in the community, but did not feel that they belonged: 'I come here by boat. Too hard' (Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne). Verdiq who had arrived in Australia less than one year ago also supported this view: 'In Afghanistan you know your neighbours, but here everyone is a stranger. In Afghanistan I was a respected community leader'.

These experiences were contrasted with those of the Turkish, Albanian, and Lebanese background participants who had migrated to Dandenong in the 1970s and 1980s as a part of skilled migration programme and other employment schemes. When they first arrived, they too experienced barriers to settling, primarily attributed to language and lack of places where they could practice and maintain religious and community traditions. Yet, they experienced less complications resulting from visa restrictions or racism than the recently arrived Muslim migrants and those entering on humanitarian or bridging visas. Imam Mehmet Salih Dogan from the Emir Sultan mosque observed:

"When our fathers come here, they were confused. It take[s] more than one or two years, because we pray five times a day, and they do not have even timetable ... they do not know when start month of Ramadan is okay. No mosque here for Eid Festival so after Ramadan, also

Friday, they go to for example Coburg because Arabs had a mosque....."

Highlighting the importance of positive settlement experiences, the longer the time elapsed since initial settlement, the more likely that negative feelings had been replaced with those of belonging and social connection. This was particularly so for community members who participated in community formation activities such as the building of mosques and the establishment of halal butchers, and other food and clothing stores that accommodated the needs of the Muslim community. According to Imam Ismael from the Albanian Saki mosque:

"So the Albanian's came here in Dandenong about 40 years ago – started from 1960s...then in 1985 some old Albanians got together and they came with an idea that we need to build a mosque... because it's very hard to go far afield to other mosques in those days. So then, they collect money from each family. They came up with some money that every family need to pay so that we can buy a house. So they bought about one house – two houses here and then they bought two more houses – all this land they got the permission from council from everything, and then they built the mosque."

Muska, a 39-year-old skilled migrant from Lebanon who had lived and worked in the community for more than 13 years, not only felt integrated

with the Dandenong community, but also saw herself as a local:

"I am a local Dandy [Dandenong] girl. I love Dandy. I will never move out of it. Love it. I have good interactions through work, and through non-work. I shop in the area. I talk to people in the area... You have halal products at Coles and Safeway. That never used to be the case.... There is a halal Hungry Jacks, yeah."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

Muska described Dandenong as a place in which everybody is free to practise their religion and cultural traditions without fear of interference. This is an experience that she claimed was not available to Muslims living in her homeland.

It is this feeling of acceptance and freedom to be who she is that allows Muska to feel a strong sense of connection to the local area, and which also compels her to object to policies that may force her to 'lose' her identity:

"I thank God for Australia accepting us the way we are. I don't have to force my rules and my religion on others. I want to practise them by myself. So I want to keep integrating, but I don't want to lose my identity."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

Migration and settlement also intersected with age, race, and gender, producing a complex array of experiences of inclusion and exclusion, participation and belonging. For example, while participants of all ages had experienced racism, those settled in Australia for some time particularly observed the increased incidence of these experiences. Specifically, several participants identified racist acts toward Muslims in the local area as having escalated since September 11.

Ali, a young man of African background who had lived in Dandenong for seven years but at the time of the interview was living in Pascoe Vale, detailed several experiences of racism from neighbours and work associates, which led him to move away from the Dandenong area:

**"I started off working in a nursing home. And most of them, most of those who were working were not well educated. Because sometimes I found that people were just voicing opinions without thinking that this guy might be a Muslim or this guy might not be a Muslim... people were talking about Islam and the terrorist and all this."**

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

Ali also mentioned that he felt the area was more racist because of its high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and low educational attainment. This was a point he raised again later in the interview, claiming that when socioeconomic disadvantage intersects with high levels of cultural and religious diversity in the area it produces a 'chaotic' environment that

made him feel uncomfortable. This contrasted with his experience of living in other areas of Melbourne that were either more culturally and ethnically homogeneous or middle-class:

**"You know when I lived in Coburg... It was different, there's a lot of Muslims ... it's just everywhere I go, like the shop in front of me was run by a Muslim, it's just free you know, you just feel like it's all good. I moved to Doncaster where there is not many Muslim but it was, people living there are cautious of the way they react, they just do not react to things without thinking or making you feel anything, a bit diplomatic. I moved to Dandenong for 7 years and it was just chaos... the kind of questions that I have to answer to people was so, sometimes I couldn't believe it, even when it came from Muslims."**

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

Ali's views were supported by Saba's, a resident of Dandenong. As many of women in the study who wore *hijab* reported, Muslim women are often the targets of more incidents of racism in the places where they work, study, and live because of their visibility. For Saba this wasn't as surprising as the identities of the perpetrators of the racist abuse, who she reported largely came from migrant background themselves:

**"You know sense of belonging... when I first came in I was bullied quite a few times at**

**school because of how I dress, and obviously, I could not speak proper English to say anything back to them. And it was not, you know Anglo-Saxon Australians that were bullying me, it was people who have migrated here before me, and that was interesting. I kept thinking shouldn't it be them, shouldn't it be the Australian Aussie's who would be bullying me, who should be bullying me because I look different, no it wasn't them, it was communities who were here before me, and some from Afghanistan as well."**

Saba, 22, Hazara background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Saba experienced this complexity of intercultural encounters and racism as confusing and disorientating, particularly because Dandenong is renowned for its cultural diversity. Although her experience did not register as so acutely harmful as Saba and Ali's accounts, Aida, a middle-aged store holder at the Dandenong market, had also experienced public acts of racism, this time from the Anglo community – her shop provided a visible Muslim presence at the market:

**"One lady passed the shop, and she said 'I hate all the market because of this shop' [laughs] and at that time exactly she's gone across to the Azan clock... I put it there for Muslim people, for**

**pray time, and the Azan clock started at exactly the same time [laughter] and she was like [makes an angry sound]."**

Aida, 35–49, Pashtun background, born in Afghanistan, Melbourne

Yet Aida's overall positive experience of the Dandenong community enabled her to brush off incidents like these.

Masjid, a 28-year-old revert of Albanian/Greek ethnic background, who wore a beard in accordance with his religion, also felt that there was a heightened awareness around visible Muslims after September 11. This had led to act of racism and intolerance towards him. Like Muska however, his friendships and connections to his local area enabled him to feel supported enough to laugh it off:

**"Even though it's an area where people are open-minded ... people do question a lot with the beard, even though the beard's in nowadays, you know, most footballers wear beards, but you do still get the little joke here or there, you know, like 'you look like Osama Bin Laden'. But we (workmates) have that kind of relationship where we just laugh."**

Masjid, 28, Albanian/Greek background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Participants also identified negative media reporting on Muslims and Islam to be a major trigger of public acts of racism and intolerance

towards Muslims. So that even those born, or having lived most their lives, in the Dandenong area were constantly called upon to defend themselves and their religion.

As Tahwid, a Muslim of Egyptian background who had been a volunteer for the Country Fire Association (CFA) for many years described, these experiences often made belonging and engagement with the local community difficult for Muslims:

**"Look there are times where they don't give them the opportunity to engage. They are looked at as something different. I know myself when I was with the CFA – being the only Muslim in the CFA at times it wasn't easy because I basically come here when I was a young kid – I am strong with what I do and what I say and what I believe in – they need to understand you better and I mean sometimes you're not given that opportunity to engage with the community. You are looked at as something – they look at you because they do not understand the religion –they only know what they have seen on the news."**

Tahwid, 18–24, Egyptian background, international student, Melbourne

Participants reported that a common argument made by those who question the capacity of Muslims to integrate into Western societies is the presumed inflexibility and rigidity of Muslim religious beliefs

and practices, and the barriers that these may present to active participation and integration into the multicultural fabric of the city. Yet, Dandenong participants contested this view, arguing that the core practices of Islam are flexible, easily integrated and compatible with a Western multicultural lifestyle:

**"You see Islam is very flexible because if you are in circumstances where you cannot practise your religion fully there is exemption for that .... So contrary to what some people believe it is not that hard."**

Ali, 33, African background, born in Ghana, Melbourne

Interestingly, even for one participant who expressed the least tolerant view of 'the West' and liberal democratic political institutions, Islam was understood to have has shown itself historically to be a religion that is adaptable to all societies in which people live:

**"If it is a universal religion then it has to be from God. And if it's from God then it would have to mean that this religion has to stand, or has to be effective, in every era and in every time and in every society. So, to be universally accepted in the whole world ... it has to be adaptable."**

Saeed, 27, Afghan background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Muska discussed this in relation to the flexibility that individuals must

also bring to their practice of faith in a Western society. For example, though drinking alcohol or even being in a place where alcohol is served is haram, she found no problem negotiating these issues at social catch-ups with non-Muslim friends who may be drinking. Instead of having to give up her faith, or ask that her friends give up their lifestyle, she regarded adjustments and accommodations as a necessary part of the process of living together in a culturally and religiously diverse society:

"Non-Muslim friends, yep, I've got heaps. And they respect my religion. And I respect their privacy and their happiness as well. So what I do, I always go for half an hour only and that half an hour, they know, no alcohol on the table, so they don't drink. I go there, have a small salad with them, yell and laugh and scream and the usual stuff. And then I say goodbye and they can have their alcohol. So that way they accommodate me for half an hour. I accommodate them. We see each other, we still have that, you know, interaction, but I don't let them lose their happiness."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

The example that Muska provides was just one of many negotiations that Muslim residents of Dandenong reported making daily in order to integrate their faith with the reality of living, working or studying in one of the most culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse suburbs of Melbourne.

Participants predominantly described Dandenong as a culturally diverse, multifaith suburb. Sometimes this diversity was seen to present barriers that were difficult to surpass. For example, one participant described Dandenong as a place where 'people are together but in sections', implying a community segregated by cultural or religious difference. For others, living in a vibrant, culturally diverse suburb increased feelings of belonging to both the city and the country. This was most clearly expressed by long-term residents of Dandenong who regarded the diversity of both the Muslim community and the broader Dandenong community, as a positive model for multicultural societies around the world:

"You don't need to go to different countries, just come here, stay one week and you can learn ... from some of them wearing clothes, eating, talking, behaviour. Also we have many Italian Muslims... we have ... more than 50 countries here... you know they can learn many things."

Imam Salih Dogan, Melbourne

Muska, in her public service role, reported dealing with new migrants from all over Melbourne, some of whom were struggling to fit in with the Australian culture and lifestyle. She recommended that they live in Dandenong on the basis that the vibrant, multicultural ambience would make them feel at home very quickly:

"I feel more comfortable wearing my hijab in Australia

than I was comfortable wearing my hijab in Lebanon. I nearly was kicked out of my job in Lebanon when I put my hijab on. So in here, they can't do that. They respect you more. Maybe they're scared how to deal with you, but ... I'm comfortable wearing my hijab, really more comfortable here than anywhere else in the world."

Muska, 39, Lebanese background, born in Lebanon, Melbourne

This suggests that accommodation of religious and cultural difference has an important role to play in fostering migrant belonging.

That is not to say, however, that cultural and religious diversity alone eradicates experiences of racism, Islamophobia, and intolerance. In fact, many Muslims living in Dandenong found that religious and cultural intolerance, racism, and fear of difference were found among all ethnic and religious groups in the area, including members of the Muslim community. Interfaith volunteer programs were identified by more than one participant as an important way of addressing fears within Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike:

"Well I think Interfaith is something that we forgot to do as Muslims and unfortunately it took a tragic event like 9-11 to realise people are afraid of us and that's because they don't know us and that's because we probably haven't really opened our doors to each other. So I was involved with just maybe one or

two programs before that but after September 11th I just kind of exploded in really trying to do as many programs as possible."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

Certainly, two religious leaders who participated in the research in Dandenong described interfaith activities as a powerful way of finding common ground between different faith and cultural communities, and of breaking down prejudices.

The Emir Sultan mosque and the Albanian Saki mosque belonged to the Interfaith Network of Dandenong, a volunteer organisation comprising members of all the faith groups of Dandenong. The group meets monthly at the Greater Dandenong City Council offices and runs tours of the local 'holy houses' for schools and other groups:

"Me myself and two other people (Imams) we encourage to respect all the other faiths. In Islam there are a lot of saying of our prophet … and that is respect your neighbour and respect your other faith people. So we also teach them on this way. We try to have good harmony, good understanding, dialogue with other faith, also with other people and we try to show by example – leading by example in a good way."

Imam Salih Dogan, Melbourne

As a volunteer with the Interfaith Network, Alia spoke in depth about how interfaith activities had shaped her values and made her more open to appreciating the similarities and differences between different cultural and religious groups in the community:

"Interfaith is a bit of both, both finding the common grounds and also learning about the differences because you can't just push those aside and say we're all one, let's hold hands and sing."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

The focus on dialogue and engagement was particularly important to Alia, who emphasised shared goals among different faith communities, all of which were, in her view, bound by a common concern for social justice and a desire to help the most vulnerable in the community. Her appreciation for, and ability to see, these interfaith commonalities stemmed from her family's experiences of living in New York when September 11 occurred:

"Now I remember after 9-11 happened we had a Unitarian Universalist Church not too close to where we were living. They had these very nice … Ministers or Pastors leading them… They called … my dad and some members of the Muslim community … and said: 'We know this and this has happened, and there may be attacks and people discriminating against you, so just know that we're here for you'. That was just so mind-blowing because it is

usually in this time everyone kind of retreats into their own shell. And here they are throwing away all the fears people automatically jump to and saying we're here for you."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

Alia regarded this experience as a formative; strengthening her commitment to her own faith. It also highlighted to her the importance of learning from other religions and cultures about our common humanity, which can only be achieved through community engagement and interaction with others.

For others, the necessity of more active public 'engagement' after September 11 was welcomed and seen as a means of increasing the inclusion of Muslims in Western societies.

Some participants felt that it provided an opportunity, at an individual level and a community level, to address misconceptions and highlight the universal principles and ethics of Islam common across all Abrahamic faiths. It also encouraged some participants to perform *dawah* (preaching of Islam); fulfilling an important component of faith:

"Being steadfast, overcoming this adversity that's the Muslim way. We're the first ones to hold hands when things happen like that (September 11, Boston bombings) as tragedies happen cause we know that obviously there's going to be an after effect on many

of the community. ...Within ourselves ... setting the right example by being a role model for others that way they don't go down a certain pathway. that's really what shapes us having that consciousness knowing that there must be action taken [...] go out there take initiative, make things happen and contribute in that positive way ... so I think it's the responsibility on just about everyone especially within our own community, the elders."

Tariq, 25–30, Lebanese background, born in Australia, Melbourne

"Straight after September 11th I got involved in some interfaith dialogue in Adelaide, so just some church groups. And what really fascinated me was how it really polarised the community. So, one sector of the community had reacted with hatred and felt the need to lash out at the Muslim community. And then there was a significant number of people who wanted to reach out to the Muslim community [...] So, that's why I came back to Melbourne and got involved in Living in Harmony project."

Basheema, 35–49, Arab background, Melbourne

In fact, active citizenship as a normative exercise has often 'problematised' Muslim religiosity by identifying religious practice and expression as a barrier to broader

forms of civic engagement. As a result, citizenship practices that reflect a desire for assimilation rather than recognition have been pushed onto Muslims in a manner that has furthered experiences of alienation and inequality. The central issue here, has been the presumed deficit of Islam in terms of its contribution towards 'good citizenship'. To test this presumption, some questions in the study were designed to elicit views regarding the nature of Muslim religious belief and practice and whether these forms of obligation and responsibility to God and *Ummah* ('community') had created a barrier to Western, secular modes of active citizenship.

As with many other studies on religiosity and citizenship (Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Lam 2006; Read 2015), participants identified strong links between the type of civic values and practices that Islam encourages and Western democratic forms of citizenship, civic engagement, and political participation.

Areas of overlap between Muslim religious beliefs and citizenship, included the promotion of actions that uphold a common good, such as acting on values of: equal rights and social justice, charity, obedience to the rule of law, community service and engagement and neighbourliness.

When participants were asked about certain ideas originating from Islamic sources and ritual practices that may shape forms and practices of citizenship, some unexpected points of overlap emerged. Some responses focussed on Muslim subjectivity and ethics, while others centred directly on social and political norms, relationships, and responsibilities:

"You can stand-up being part of a country and ... you can disagree for the benefit of the country and that makes you a better citizen. But sometimes I guess especially with young people, not just from Muslim background, they're intimidated into toeing the line and I think that is counter-productive. Islam teaches ... [to] speak the truth even if your voice shakes or speak the truth even in front of the tyrant and so that's something that I guess Muslims should do more often, but should do it with manners. ... I think we are lacking a good citizenship – active citizenship that is aware and makes their leaders accountable and we are lacking a leadership that makes itself accountable and deals with the issues and not the popularity."

Abbas, 35–49, Arabic-speaking background, Melbourne

"I actually do not find any contradiction between being an Australian citizen and being Muslim. You know like values ... well that is exactly what Islam teaches being a good team leader and family and doing community work. ... I feel like good citizenship requires being an all-rounder person. Not to just Muslims, to everybody in fact."

Lazanda, 27, Sri Lankan background, born in Australia, Melbourne

Another clear example of the overlap between religious responsibilities and obligations and conventional notions of active citizenship and engagement was the payment of *zakat* as a pillar of the faith, and the active promotion of volunteer and charity work:

"Zakat is very similar to taxation, so we pay tax. That means that when we have a certain amount of money that you earn, you pay tax, but you don't really pay it to the government, you pay it to the poor to help them."

Hazara Women's Network translator, Melbourne

*Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam, most survey respondents therefore regarded it as a requirement (80.3 per cent of those who identified as practising Muslims paid *zakat*).

There were numerous examples where study participants were involved in volunteer work in their local community or had set up or contributed to charities operating at a transnational level.

Whilst much of this activity raised funds primarily for the Muslim community, many of the individuals and religious leaders interviewed also felt a responsibility to the communities in which they lived, and became involved in civic associations or interfaith associations:

"For example, tomorrow we collect donation for the Philippines. We are not saying we have only Muslims in Philippines... majority of people are non-Muslims but tomorrow all mosques decide to collect fundraising for all lost homes, lives, we also doing this for natural disasters... Before we helped Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, bush fire a couple of years ago. ... and gave free food for people who had lost homes."

Imam, Emir Sultan mosque, Melbourne

In keeping with findings from numerous studies exploring the civic participation and engagement of young Muslims, participants here did not place a high value on formal types of political participation.

Yet, while only 50.85 per cent of participants viewed voting in political elections as important, the great majority of participants identified volunteering in the community as being a more grounded and practical way of fulfilling their civic duties, as Alia explained:

"I am not engaged in politics ... especially given the time that we are in... There was one time where I was thinking should I go into politics? Will that help change the world? That's – when you are young, you are that idealistic, you want to change the world. Then you learn... and you are thinking well if I am going to have to compromise my values then politics might not be the best way. That is why a lot of Muslims are turning to just grass-roots, is let's first reach out to our neighbours, take care of our youth, take care of our elders, our family members."

Alia, 30, Turkish background, born in Turkey, Melbourne

## DETROIT, USA

In Detroit, ten (20.8 per cent) respondents had citizenship status, three people (6.3 per cent) permanent residency, one person (2.1 per cent) reported temporary residency status, and 34 people provided no answer to this question.

Residency and citizenship status. Detroit (frequencies)



- ◉ **1** Temporary resident
- ◉ **3** Temporary residency    ◉ **10** Citizen
- ◉ **34** No answer
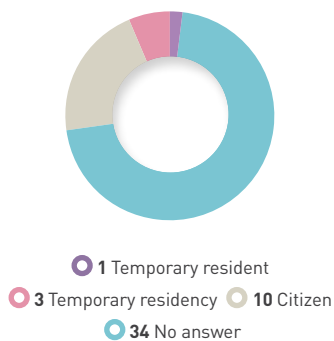
The Detroit survey and interviews revealed that the core beliefs and practices of Islam correspond with liberal and republican traditions of citizenship. There was, for example, a strong focus on social justice and the value of equality, diversity, and human rights (liberal tradition) among participants. While many of the core practices of the faith were reported to encourage active citizenship practices and values, such as mercy, charity and conveying rights to neighbours to produce a 'common good' (republican tradition).

Yet, there was some ambiguity in relating religious belief and practice to citizenship and citizenship practices. Some participants viewed citizenship as a legal practice and status divorced from forms of community engagement and civic participation. Others found a strong connection between core

Islamic principles and both liberal and republican ideals of citizenship.

Given the significance of Detroit's economic and social deprivation, connections between acts of religiosity and citizenship were most often expressed through active community practices, particularly volunteering, and forming civic associations to clean up neighbourhoods, remove blight, address poverty and racism within and between communities, and bring greater 'lived' justice to Detroiters. In light of this, interviewees offered some descriptions of the conditions affecting Detroit and the necessity of engaging to rebuild the city at a grassroots level:

"I believe that people are going to come and help because they want to see the City of Detroit rise. Detroit is the home of the industrial movement for the America in general. The big three started here with GM, Chrysler, Ford Motor Company which helped create what is known as the middle class … So this is very valuable to America as well that Detroit rise, very important, so people want to come help Detroit in general, regardless of religion."

Michael X, 30, African American revert, NOI, Detroit

Several interviewees spoke of the Muslim community's responsibility to become engaged in projects that will help rebuild Detroit. For many this was linked with aspects of Islamic faith that stressed the importance of social justice and service:

"There is a very famous prophetic tradition that says that if you see an injustice you should stop it with your hand. If you cannot stop it with your hand, you should stop it with your mouth, your tongue. If you cannot stop with that, you should at least try to stop it in your heart and that's the least – that's the lowest form of faith … That's how I feel about Detroit.

And I know a good many people do feel that this is a city that has its fair share of challenges and the only thing that I know is that disengagement is not an option."

Zahir, 40–50, Indian background, British born, Detroit

Zahir went on to list a typology of 'citizenship interventions' that he had witnessed in Detroit:

"There are those people who will come here and seek return on investment and a quick one, buying some property. … If Detroit in any way – has a net benefit as a result of that then who am I to complain. There are people who I think practise what I call ontological citizenship. They engage with Detroit simply because they recognise what it means to be a citizen of a place and for them it's not about necessarily running for election it's not necessarily for lobbying it's actually getting out there and

doing something themselves. ... The Islamic tradition says that if you see an injustice you should stop it by with your hand first ... and people are willing to do that. It is not just simply writing a cheque."

*Zahir, 40–50, Indian background, British born, Detroit*

Detroit respondents reported very high levels of involvement in their local community groups. While these were most commonly religious groups – exactly half of all respondents were involved in such groups (24 people) – participants' involvement in non-denominational groups was rather high too.

This is suggestive of participants need to belong to communities in ways that reflect a range of identities, and the complexity of their identities beyond a religious identity. Nineteen people (39.6 per cent) were involved in school associations and 18 participants (37.5 per cent) in charity organisations. Seventeen people (35.4 per cent) reported involvement in community support groups, and an equal number were involved in youth activity groups.

Five people (10.4 per cent) were active in political parties, four (8.3 per cent) in sports clubs, three (6.3 per cent) in environmental groups, two (4.2 per cent) in senior citizens clubs, two (4.2 per cent) in mother's groups, and one person (2.1 per cent) was involved in a kids playgroup (see Figure 96).

At a personal level, many participants spoke about the service they offered through their work. They saw their service to the community as inseparable from core Islamic beliefs:

Figure 96

Involvement in local community groups. Detroit.

What, if any, local community groups are you involved in? (percentage).
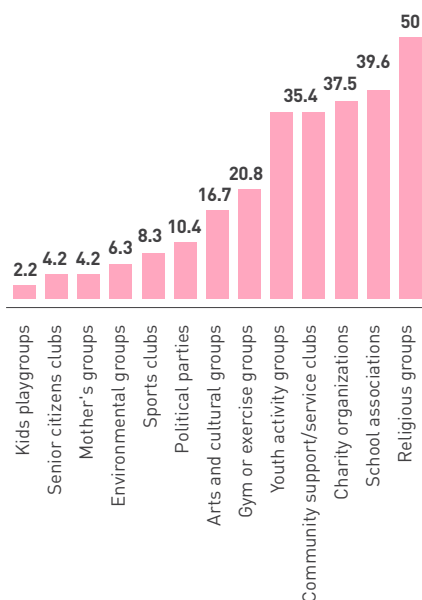


"I find that if there is a skill that I have it's the impartation of knowledge. I'll gladly go ahead and do that and so as a result of that if people can take some of that knowledge.

And first of all develop a better sense of self, acquire a greater sense of understanding across different divisions and lines and

then take that energy, harness it and move it forward towards something that's tangibly beneficial. I find those to be American values ... and I also find that to be an incredibly Islamic value."

*Zahir, 40–50, Indian background, British born, Detroit*

"In Islam we teach a lot about Entrepreneurship – it is ingrained in the language so most Muslims you see they own their own business. While everyone else is hopeless we're optimistic, we know that Allah will provide. So we have to have food, so we can supply our own food, our own vegetables and things like that, we use the, there are lots of great community gardens."

*Michael X, 30, African American revert, NOI, Detroit*

Social work is part of Islam ... it's part of your faith. To take care of others, that's what you do. So the first place I worked, Black Family Development is a place where I worked in the shelters, I worked for juvenile delinquents, CPS and Health.

"I had to go into the homes. Some of the juveniles belong to gangs; some of them even committed murder. ... There were times I did get frightened ... and this was a program with the children of substance

**abuse mothers. ... They too have hearts and souls, some of them are in a situation they can't get out of. You just do your job because Allah gave it to you to do, I mean I guess he protects you from that."**

Zafeerah, 50–59,
African American revert,
Detroit

Participants in Detroit reported maintaining strong social connections with Muslim relatives, friends, and organisations locally and abroad; in common with the Melbourne sample. Thirty participants (62.5 per cent) reported maintaining community ties with local Muslim groups (see Figure 97); while 27 people (56.3 per cent) maintained community ties with Muslim relatives/friends abroad (see Figure 98).

Participants placed a high significance on volunteering in the community (68.8 per cent), compared to school fundraising (31.3 per cent) and political elections (29.2 per cent) (see Figure 99). On voting, 27 participants (56.3 per cent) reported voting in federal elections, six participants (12.5 per cent) said that they did not vote, and seven people (14.6 per cent) claimed to have voted 'sometimes' (see Figure 100).

Voting attracted some positive comments among the participants: for example, one claimed 'I think it is important to practise our rights and voting is a right and blessing'. Another respondent reported that they had actively contributed to the electoral campaigns: 'I worked in canvassing, phone banking in the 2008 and 2012 Presidential elections'.

Figure 97

**Community ties with local muslim groups. Detroit**



● **30** Yes   ● **8** No
● **10** No answer
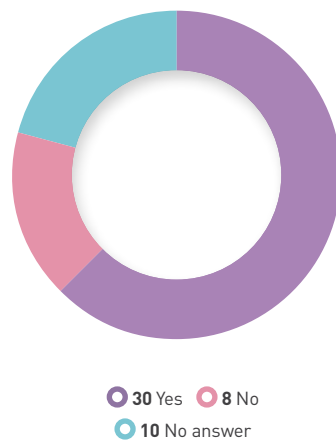
Figure 98

**Do you maintain community ties with Muslim relatives/friends overseas? (frequencies)**



● **27** Yes   ● **11** No
● **10** No answer
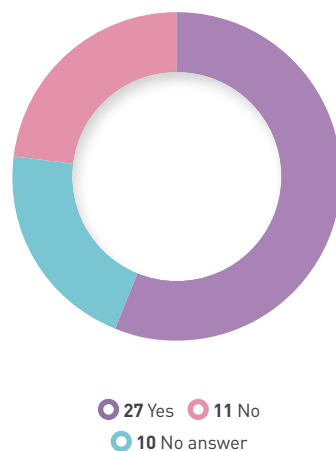
Figure 99

**Significance on participating in... Detroit (frequencies)**
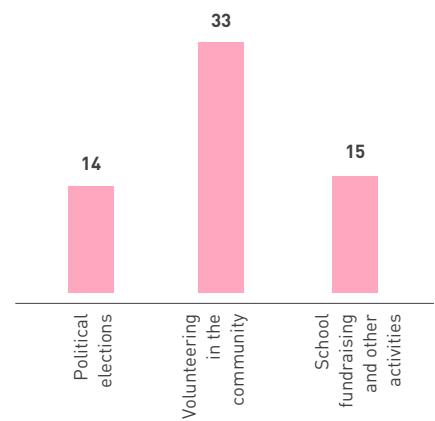


Figure 100

**Voting in Federal elections. Detroit**
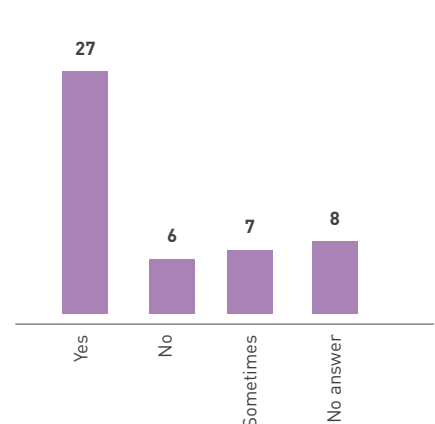
Meanwhile, there were respondents who regarded voting more negatively. One respondent commented: 'I choose not to support any parties that would have me dip my hand into their actions of oppression and tyranny'.

Participant engaged in varied forms of political participation. These ranged from normative forms of engagement – such as joining political campaigns, voting in elections, and running in state and local elections – to academic or policy level engagement – such as everyday protest actions and participating in political talk on social media. Some of Detroit's Muslims had worked on Obama's election/re-election campaigns, yet they expressed their disaffection with the political system, and particularly the promises of the first African American President of the USA.

Their dissatisfaction was palpable on issues such as the unwillingness of the President to address systemic racism and the abuse of civil liberties in relation to anti-terror laws, and in relation to the government's stance on foreign policy, especially Israel-Palestine. Participants variously reported that they felt such policies and inactions did not reflect the promises made during the campaign for office and had tarnished the President's reputation. For many participants, politics was viewed as power for others but not for them; it did not reflect the voices of the poor and underprivileged.

Most interviewees however, reserved their strongest criticism for local political representatives. Badda, Kalsoom, and Zafeerah were the most vocal of all interviewees on this issue. They felt that the city leadership through corruption and mismanagement, had led Detroit to bankruptcy, and to criminal charges being filed against the previous mayor,

Kwame Kilpatrick, who ran several criminal enterprises from the office of the mayor of Detroit, stealing millions of dollars from an already ailing city.

As Badda commented, corruption has been 'so rampant in the City of Detroit and that's what put us in the position we are in now, thank you Kwame Kilpatrick. He's the one that jacked us for 9 million dollars, we're stuck with the bill, that money doesn't come easy to the City of Detroit'.

This situation led to the election of Mike Duggan, the first white mayor in Detroit since the 1970s. The Michigan governor, Rick Snyder, who put Detroit into emergency financial administration in 2013, also received strong criticism from participants for backing harsh austerity measures and for directing investment dollars away from some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Detroit, while lining the pockets of his friends. Perhaps because of the social, economic, and political conditions blighting the city, political engagement was a characteristic of the Detroit sample. Yet, disaffection with the political system owing to endemic corruption and mismanagement had also led to disengagement from formal politics, redirecting political energies to grassroots engagement.

Interestingly, a think tank set up by one participant to address Islamophobia in the USA suggested not only interfaith networks as an important political force, but also the formation of alliances with social groups also targeted by forms of bigotry and injustice. These included other racial and ethnic minority groups and the LGBTIQ community.

This exhibits not only strong bonding political capital coming from experiences of social injustice and

racism, but also the development of bridging capital, extended to social groups not usually allied with Muslim political and community organisers.

Participants also spoke about social justice organisations, many of which were run at a grassroots level to raise awareness for those denied justice or subjected to systematic abuses of civic rights.

A lot of work was concerned with community service and community building, and was specifically focussed on rehabilitating abandoned homes and revitalising neighbourhoods; removing blight and forming block clubs to make neighbourhoods safer and more liveable.

This was viewed as vital to attracting reinvestment to Detroit while also addressing issues such as poverty and disadvantage. The mosques established many of these programs:

"Besides the student organisations through Wayne State, Unity Centre [mosque] itself is actually, they have kind of community service projects also and kind of like a youth program. ... I would literally just read an email about the community having kind of a project where we adopt a road and so we go that morning and kind of just clean up and pick up litter and everything. And a lot of people show up to those things and help out and it's kind of just like a community-wide thing."

Alhena, 18–24, Arab Sunni, Detroit

"We're trying to build love between one another because you really can't build a community if you don't build relationships. ... Project Unity is also involved in collaborative efforts, is teaming up with the Nation of Islam. We go out and feed the hungry, we go out to the homeless shelters we... but the main objective is to educate our youth, to teach them trades, etiquettes, discipline."

Omar, 41, African American revert, Sunni orthodox, Detroit

**Representation of religious community in formal political groups and organisations (% Percent). Detroit**

Do you feel that your religious community is represented in formal political groups and organisations at the local, state or national levels? (frequencies)



| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8.3 | 25 | 14.6 | 12.5 | 22.9 | 16.7 |
| Yes, very well | Somewhat represented | Neither well nor poorly represented | Poorly represented | Very poorly represented | No answer |



Figure 102
Detroit, a tour of Detroit and Dearborn mosques paid for by ISNA as a part of their national conference.
Source: Authors

Opinions among participants regarding the representation of religious communities in formal political groups and organisations were divided. Twelve people (25 per cent) felt 'somewhat represented' and four people (8.3 per cent) felt 'very well' represented. Meanwhile, six people (12.5 per cent) felt 'poorly represented', 11 people (22.9 per cent) felt 'very poorly represented' and seven people (14.6 per cent) felt neither well nor poorly represented (see Figure 101).

In Detroit, 25 people (52.1 per cent) 'rarely' felt that being Muslim was a challenge in their local neighbourhood; 14 people (29.2 per cent) said they 'sometimes' thought it was a challenge, and only one respondent (2.1 per cent) said that it was 'often' a challenge.

**Do you feel being Muslim in your local neighbourhood is a challenge?
Detroit (frequencies)**
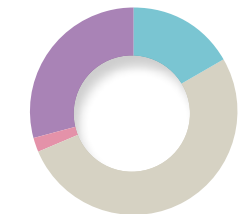


● **14** Sometimes ● **1** Often
○ **25** Rarely ○ **8** No answer

**LYON/GRENOBLE/PARIS, FRANCE**

When asked whether their religious and cultural beliefs helped them attach more strongly to their local neighbourhood and community, 16 people (33.3 per cent) responded 'often' and 'sometimes' each and eight people (16.7 per cent) said that they 'rarely' felt an attachment through cultural practises.

Religious and cultural beliefs and practices help to attach to their local neighbourhood and community. France



● **33%** Sometimes ● **33%** Often
○ **17%** Rarely ○ **17%** No answer
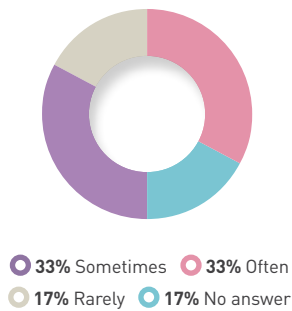
Some comments described a multifaith and multicultural diversity of neighbourhoods:

"I work at a halal grocery store, so I see more of it than most people do, and I love it because I get to see the amazing diversity of my community. It is not just Arabs or South Asians; it is Morocco, Senegal, Great Britain, and Trinidad and Tobago. Not just Muslims, but also Hindus and Christians as well. A very dear customer is a Jehovah's Witness, and she leaves pamphlets for us whenever she visits :)"

"I am able to reach out to my neighbours because my faith strongly encourages us to know and be there for neighbours."

"There is a lot of South Asian people in my community, so I find it is easier to connect with them on terms of culture. If they are also Muslim, it is easy to connect with them on that too."

Few respondents communicated somewhat negative comments, revealing feelings of not being accepted or not being connected to the neighbourhood, including:

"I have to travel outside of my neighbourhood to connect with African-American mosques."

"In other neighbourhoods it does. I feel judged and unwanted."

"Islam says to love your neighbours but being a minority makes it difficult."

"The traditional Muslim cultural practises do not align easily with the cultural practices in my neighbourhood."

"We do not try to rub our beliefs on anyone else."

"Our cultural and religious beliefs pertain only to me so they do not attach me to my neighbourhood. My beliefs have nothing to do with my neighbourhood."

In Detroit, 37 people (77.1%) said that they felt that their religious and cultural beliefs 'often' helped make them a better citizen, 2 people (4.2%)

said 'sometimes', and 1 person (2.1%) said 'rarely'.

When asked a question 'What is it about being a Muslim that makes you a better citizen?' participants offered a range of responses. Helping others was a prominent theme in the comments: 'Helping one another, love, and citizenship are all part of Islam. In Islam we believe in community service, feeding the poor regardless their religions or race, and that is making me a better citizen'.

Many comments emphasised personal qualities, such as honesty, compassion, respect, equality, which were linked to an Islamic framework: 'Islam teaches you tolerance, respect, order, patience, honesty, courtesy and thoughtfulness towards others.

If you follow these qualities in life of course that makes you not only a better person yourself but a better citizen'. Participating in the community was seen as important for many respondents:

"I like to implement Muslim ideals by being involved in bettering my community."

"The practicing of Islam with itself is always looking for the good that can be done. A Muslim such as myself is always looking to better the community which I live in."

Some comments revealed a paramount value of Islam in their lives: 'On an ethical level, my religion prohibits things such as lying, thievery, and cheating. On a community level, congregating once a week helps disseminate information about current events in the community. On

a personal level, I know that I live in a society where my religion seems to be a bad thing. I also know that, in order to do anything to change that perception, I have to prove to people in Washington that I am a voice for change, and that I (and others like me) have the power to vote for things I want to see'. In identifying particular religious beliefs or practices that encourage good citizenship, good neighbourly relations were seen as important for many respondents.

Personal qualities of respect towards others, honesty and justice were mentioned on several occasions. Charity work was mentioned in many comments:

**"Charity is compulsory, firstly to the immediate needs of the surrounding community, being good to your neighbour and following the laws of the land where one resides."**

**"Giving to the poor. Respecting your parents and elders."**

**"Practising or giving zakat as a Muslim and a citizen is like bringing everyone up and helping one another to get back on their feet and spread da'wa. Can save economic disasters and push away classism."**

Given the significance of Detroit's economic and social disadvantage, connections between acts of religiosity and citizenship were most often conveyed through active community practices, particularly grassroots volunteering and forming civic associations to clean up neighbourhoods, remove blight, address poverty and racism. This was

done through a range of 'citizenship interventions' including: growing community gardens in vacant lots; buying and rehabilitating abandoned homes, neighbourhoods and schools; forming 'block clubs' to keep areas safe and clean; working through mosque outreach activities; voting and becoming politically active in forms of public activism and protest. Some active community members and web entrepreneurs had set up their own crowdfunding social media platforms to raise funds for community projects.

Yet, several participants claimed that, because of contested and often fractious community politics, many Muslims preferred to 'keep to the shadows' and perform their citizenship in less visible ways. This is related to intra-community tensions as well as feelings of being a community under the microscope because of the common association of Muslim communities with terrorism.

Mosque organisations indicated the importance of Muslim religious leaders of becoming deeply engaged in rebuilding Detroit, particularly by bridging with other faith organisations (interfaith) and becoming involved in interfaith initiatives to address shared community problems. However, Intergenerational difference contributed to demands being expressed for more relevant leadership which was focused less on theology and more on engaging practically with real world pressures experienced by Muslim communities. Whereas many religious leaders in mosques came from overseas and imported ideas from Muslim majority societies, there was a strong sense that this did not necessarily serve the American Muslim community well, nor did it address specific issues that were relevant for Muslims living in Detroit:

**"We put interfaith interaction as one of our priorities. Like last night was the 9/11 anniversary and we had interfaith meeting for 9/11, it was in a Christian temple in Detroit... But it was a good gathering, usually not too many people spend that much time to, ... it just really is your belief that this is the right thing to do. I'm a founder of the Shia Sunni Council of Michigan too."**

Imam Al-Mahdi, 50+ year old male, Iranian background, Dearborn-Detroit

Some of the failings of the Muslim religious and community leadership at a national level were highlighted at the 2014 ISNA conference. They included the failure of Muslim community leaders to adequately address infringements of civil liberties that the United States government has been systematically pursuing and a failure to address young people's identity struggles (i.e. atheism, sexuality etc.) in any way except by reference to scriptures.

The forms of political participation that interview participants engaged in were varied, from normative forms of engagement (joining political campaigns, voting in elections and running in state/local elections) to everyday protest actions and participating in political talk on social media.

For Detroit's Muslims, some of whom had worked on President Obama's election/re-election campaign, disaffection with the political system, and particularly the 'failed' promise of African American political leadership at a national and local level, was palpable.

For many, politics was viewed as power for others, as it did not reflect the voices of the poor and underprivileged. The Michigan governor, Rick Snyder, who put Detroit into emergency financial administration in 2013, received strong criticism for his backing of harsh austerity measures, and for directing investment dollars away from some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Detroit whilst lining the pockets of wealthy investors.

Deep political engagement is a characteristic of the Detroit sample, precisely because of the social, economic and political conditions blighting the city. However, disaffection with the political system owing to endemic corruption and mismanagement also led to disengagement from formal politics and the redirection of political energies to grassroots engagement. Islam was widely viewed as a resource in the formation of voluntary and civic associations to rebuild Detroit.

When an open-ended question was asked: 'What is it about being a Muslim that makes you a better citizen?' a variety of very positive answers was collected. A majority of the answers referred to a service to the community and helping the others:

"Being conscious of my actions at all times and being attentive towards others needs and rights."

"Helping one another, love, and citizenship are all part of Islam. In Islam we believe in community service, feeding the poor regardless their religions or race, and that is making me a better citizen."

Some answers refereed to individual self-improvement and the following personal qualities were mentioned: discipline, honesty, tolerance, respect, order, patience, honesty, and courtesy. In many cases, perceptions of individual self-improvement could not be separated from the imperatives of rendering service to the community:

"I try to adhere to Quranic teachings and the practices of my Prophet (peace be upon him) as much as I can. My prophet was constantly giving back to his community and I try to emulate that as much as possible."

My faith in God and strong moral compass allows for me to remain steadfast in my convictions while keeping my heart open to understanding others and being respectful of their life choices, even if they do not fall in line with my own.

France (Lyon/Grenoble/Paris) Among 93 respondents in France, 40 people (43%) had citizenship status and six people (6.5%) reported permanent and temporary residency statuses each. Additionally, 41 people (44.1%) did not provide any response to this question.

In the French sample, the linkages between participants' faith and positive social actions were apparent. Faith was expressed through religious practices and rituals, leading to good behaviours and social and ethical actions. The words participants used to describe their expressions of faith, included 'responsibility', 'obligation', 'instructions', and 'importance'. These words convey clearly the type of conduct respondents believed that

Muslims must adopt. Participants' expressions of faith involved not only positive deeds towards the Muslim community, but also towards the wider non-Muslim society.

Participants clearly expressed that Muslims have a responsibility to contribute to the economic and social advancement of the whole society, irrespective of religious, ethnic, or cultural belonging. Participants in France, under the constant scrutiny of politicians and French society, suggested that Muslims had to be role models or model citizens. Participants did not however, understand this to be apologetic or reactionary. Rather they viewed the religious teachings found in the Qur'an to facilitate their ties to citizenship practices and social actions. Participants emphasised that the Islamic values of tolerance, respect, humanity, and responsibility for public welfare, are not unlike French constitutional values of fraternity and equality:

"This shows the degree of importance granted by our religion to tolerance, education, good behaviour and ethics. It is the basis on which our civilisation is founded on and also on which lies individual progress and progress of the society. Then Islam is expressed by brotherhood, kindness, benevolence. ... If I draw something which holds Islam, it is a tree. The trunk is faith, the branches of this tree are rituals and religious practices, the fruits are behaviours."

Amam, Lyon

"In our Islamic principles, the one who believes is also the one who does good. Doing good is not only directed towards Muslims and that's it, it is directed towards the whole society too. ... It is a notion of public interest, which means that a Muslim must do everything to improve things, in the nation where he lives. If there is anybody who needs anything, one must help. Being useful to society is an Islamic principle."

Ali, Lyon

"Loving one's neighbour, self-giving, being good, speaking respectfully, all this is linked to our religiosity and that we can achieve in our everyday life. ... We, as Muslims, we do it because we are guided by our religious values. ... Many things to do to be closer to God, that can be achieved in everyday life, in the public sphere, such as being good to people, helping people."

Dunia, Lyon

Participants in France described their neighbourhoods as diverse areas; not specifically Muslim or with an Arab concentration. Unlike in, for example, the Melbourne sample from Dandenong, the French respondents showed no sense of belonging to a specific neighbourhood, though they pointed to the quality of life in the neighbourhood as important. Many participants had a favourable impression of their neighbourhoods, feeling that they were generally welcoming places.

Yet, similar to findings elsewhere in this study, participants stressed that they were more at ease in diverse areas and felt a strong sense of belonging to these places. This contradiction is likely the result of different Muslims experiences in different cities, and whether they live in urban or rural settings, as one participant expressed:

"Where I live, there are many, many Muslims and people have their own habits there. So even the non-Muslims are confident with us but when we go and live far away from where I live, for example in the centre of Paris, it's different."

Mouna, Paris

"It is not the only place in Paris in which I am feeling at ease, but because it is multi-cultural and people see that Muslims are not what they see on TV, they are more like okay with us, they are more aware that we are not freaks."

Awf, Moroccan background, born in France, Paris

"I guess here in Paris there is another social reality, because Arabs or Africans or, I mean strangers anyway, are a bit isolated from the elite. This is not my state I guess, I came from a city where we all, we were all together. It is a little city; it was in the North of France."

Maira, Paris

Evident in the study was the pride that participants felt at their multi-faceted religious, ethnic, and cultural identities. Some participants had dual citizenship, but all mentioned their attachment to France, as well as their origins, as equal. While national belonging was not strongly expressed in the survey results, it is unambiguous in the interview responses.

The participants are French citizens with other identities layered upon this one. As reported earlier, participants'

religious practices underpinned their sense of national belonging.

At times of perceived incompatibility between their religious and national belongings, participants reported favouring an interpretation of the Qur'an that allowed an adaptation to the laws of the state. In return, participants advocated tolerance, openness, and respect, which they regarded as part of a multiethnic and multifaith society:

"In my life I have different type of belongings, I have obviously my country, but also my family, my community, my friends – it's different fields of belonging."

Madiha, 27, Paris

"I feel French as much as Muslim. To me, these are two independent issues. I feel as much one as the other. One does not prevent the other. … To be French does not make me less of a Muslim."

Dunia, Lyon

"I want to be visible and tell you that I'm Muslim; I'm not hiding anything because I don't want to hide anything. My vision of France and of the Republic and Democracy is that I don't have to hide what I am, to live properly in this state, in this country."

Awf, Moroccan background, born in France, Paris

"I don't feel uncomfortable about speaking about the fact that I'm Tunisian, I'm Muslim, I'm Arabic, I'm brown, I live in the suburb. I'm quite proud enough of my identity."

Azad, Tunisian background, Paris

Survey participants were involved in several community and local groups, yet involvement in religious groups (38 participants or 40.9 per cent) was the most prevalent. Participation in sports clubs was also high (34 people or 36.6 per cent) and community support groups (30 people 32.3 per cent). Other categories of highly-reported gro

up involvement included gym/fitness groups (19 people or 20.4 per cent), charity organisations (19 people or 20.4 per cent), youth groups (17 people or 18.3 per cent) and arts and culture groups (14 people or 15.1 per cent). Less common was participation in political parties (eight people or 8.6 per cent), children's groups (five people or 5.4 per cent), environmental groups (four people or 4.3 per cent) and only one person (1.1 per cent) in a seniors group (see Figure 104).

Nearly all interview participants in the study were involved in intercultural practices at a personal level, either with NGOs, or as part of religious activities.

At a personal level, participants reached out to their neighbours and colleagues and took time to explain their religious practices. They invited their neighbours and people from other communities to Eid celebrations to encourage an understanding of Islam. Dunia was particularly proud of the influence she had been able to make:

Figure 104

Involvement in local community groups. France

What, if any, local community groups are you involved in? (percentage).



| | |
|---|---|
| Senior citizens | 1.1 |
| Environmental | 4.3 |
| Kids | 5.4 |
| School associations | 7.5 |
| Political parties | 8.6 |
| Arts and cultural | 15.1 |
| Youth activity | 18.3 |
| Charity organizations | 20.4 |
| Gym or exercise | 20.4 |
| Community support | 32.3 |
| Sports | 36.6 |
| Religious | 40.9 |
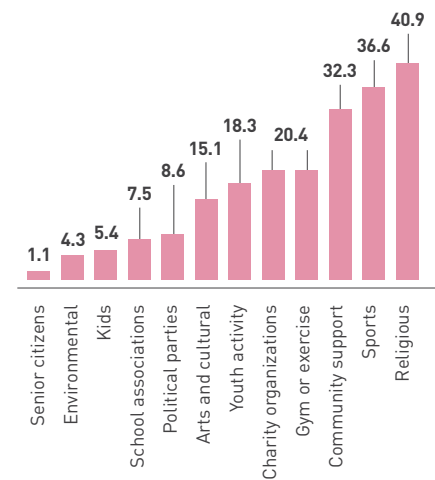
"There are people who we will meet who are slightly narrow in their thoughts, who have watched a lot of television [and with whom], unfortunately, we will experience ... the need to justify ourselves. There are also great encounters, because, precisely, at the beginning, these people were a bit reluctant towards Islam and to me ... this is what I owe God, to be able to meet people and change their mind on Islam. This is my greatest pride, my greatest joy, to meet people who did not necessarily know Islam, or who had a bad image of Islam and to manage to change them. Thanks to my personality, Islamic values, a soft attitude, self-giving, a good behaviour, being agreeable, help people, these kind of little things they can change everything."

Dunia, Lyon


Some participants also described building interfaith dialogues through the work of mosques and Muslim organisations; enacted at regular conferences, or joint religious actions on certain issues. Participants also reported playing active roles in organisations that were not specifically Muslim, but aligned along interfaith lines and with diverse memberships. In this sense, many participants did not act exclusively within the Muslim community, but instead were active in a wider scheme of intercultural organisations:

"We participate on a social level, for example, we invite non-Muslims in our homes and personally, I meet with other non-Muslims to explain to them what is the Muslim religion, so I try to fight prejudices and move forward."

Ali, Lyon


Mosques' authorities also took advantage of the opportunities offered by national cultural events, such as the Journées du Patrimoine (Heritage Days). These events allow the public to have wide access to cultural, scientific, or religious buildings and areas, which may otherwise be closed. Special visits to the mosques are organised on these occasions, and Imams open the doors of their mosques to the public and explain Islamic rituals. These events open the space to all members of French society, irrespective of their cultural, religious, or ethnic background; importantly, they function to anchor Islam within the national cultural landscape:

"There is a practical example ... an open-door day, the Journée du Patrimoine. Nearly three thousand Christians and other religions have participated in this meeting. We organised guided visits, we shared with them, we ate together, we distributed dates to everybody, this is our tradition. We took pictures together; it was a time of spirituality but also a time of comfort. [...] This Mosque is a Mosque which has a seat in Councils and in interfaith and inter-community organisations, such as the Association des Fils d'Abraham (Association of Abraham's Sons), Association des Mains Ouvertes (Open Hands Association) and we also organise open doors. We often organise meetings, seminars on sacred texts, about fasting in various religions, on common practices. We always invite a Rabbi, a Priest and an Imam, we make of these conferences a time to share between everybody."

Amam, Lyon


Other community groups also work to tie Islam to French society: such as the Union des Jeunes Musulmans (UJM - Young Muslims' Union). This community group seeks to make religious materials accessible by translating them from Arabic into French. The UJM now also organises conferences about Islam and has a library:

"We created the Union des Jeunes Musulmans in Lyon. ... At the start, when we created the Union, I said, we must not do a Mosque but a cultural centre, an open centre. We started to get interested in all aspects of Islam. We wanted an Islam that is independent of the countries of origins. ... In this centre, there was a cultural, linguistic and artistic approach, on top of

the religion. For example, we organised concerts, cultural activities, and neighbourhood festivals, Eid Festivals. [...] I was already in Islam and I said that we must reclaim our Islamicity."

Naseem, Lyon

As in Melbourne and Detroit, French participants maintained strong social connections with Muslim relatives, friends, and organisations locally and abroad. Of the 93 people surveyed, 51 (54.8 per cent) said they maintained community ties with local Muslim groups (see Figure 105), while 20 people (21.5 per cent) responded 'no'. On maintaining community ties with Muslim relatives/friends abroad, 54 people (58.1 per cent) responded 'yes' and 18 people (19.4 per cent) said 'no' (see Figure 106).

Figure 105

**Community ties with local Muslim groups. France**



○ **55%** Yes  ○ **24%** No
○ **21%** No answer
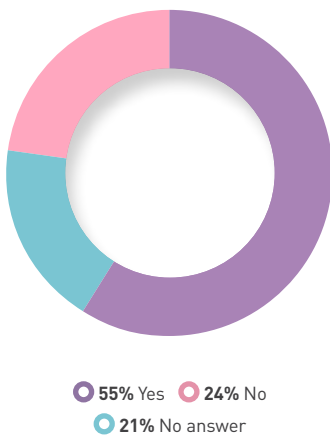
Figure 106

**Community ties with Muslim relatives/friends overseas. France**



○ **58%** Yes  ○ **23%** No
○ **19%** No answer
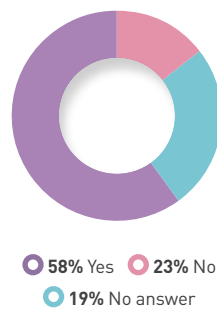
Participants reported a higher sense of attachment to the local community, compared to the greater national community.

On a scale of zero (weak) to ten (very strong), the mean score regarding a sense of belonging in the local neighbourhood was 5.2078, while the feeling of belonging in the greater French community was lower, at 4.409.

When asked whether they placed a high significance on participating in socially significant activities, most respondents (48 people or 51.6 per cent) reported that volunteering in the community was a significant activity for them.

Thirty-five people (37.6 per cent) said that they placed a high significance on participating in political elections, while 22 participants (23.7 per cent) placed a high significance on school fundraising and other activities (see Figure 107).

Figure 107

**Significance on participating (% Percent). France**
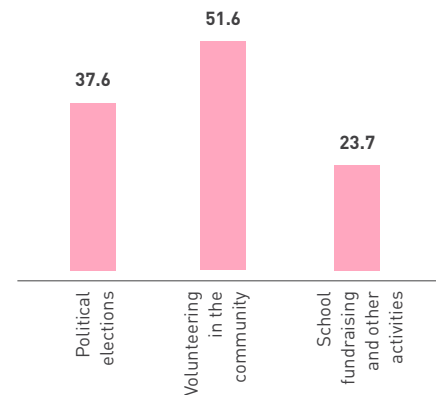


When asked whether they vote in the Federal elections, 27 respondents (29 per cent) said that they do not vote in, and 45 people (48.4 per cent) saying that they do, and five people (5.4 per cent) said they vote 'sometimes'.

**Voting in Federal Elections. France**



○ **48%** Yes  ○ **29%** No
○ **17%** No answer  ○ **6%** Sometimes
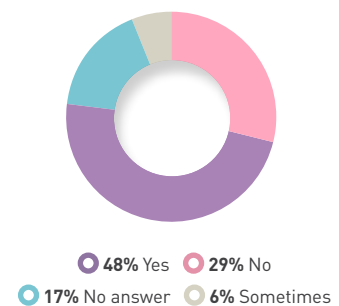
Participants offered a range of responses about voting in federal elections. Some participants linked their self-identification as French citizens to what they considered as a civic right, duty, and privilege to participate in the elections:

**"Being a French citizen, this is before everything a right and a duty."**

Others expressed feelings of disillusionment with politics and politicians, such as: 'I do not feel represented', 'It will not change anything', 'Politicians are liars', and 'I do not believe in politics'.

In response to the question: 'Do you feel that your religious community is represented in formal political groups and organisations at the local, state or national levels?' most (49 people or 52.1 per cent) felt that they were 'poorly' or 'very poorly' represented. Among them, 21 people (22.6 per cent) said that they felt 'poorly' represented by formal political groups and organisations, and 28 respondents

(30.1 per cent) feeling 'very poorly' represented. A further 15 people (16.1 per cent) said that they felt 'neither well nor poorly represented', and only seven people (7.5 per cent) claimed to have felt 'somewhat' represented, three people (3.2 per cent) feelt 'very well' represented, and 19 participants (20.4 per cent) chose not to respond (see Figure 108).

In response to the question: 'do you feel being Muslim in your local neighbourhood is a challenge?' 20 people (21.5 per cent) said 'often' and 40 people (43%) responded 'sometimes'. Fifteen people (17.2 per cent) felt that being Muslim in their local neighbourhood was 'rarely' a challenge (see Figure 109).
Some participants suggested that they lived in a harmonious neighbourhood:

'As I live in a neighbourhood with a big cultural diversity where my religion and community are well represented I am not seen as a stranger' and 'Our community is important'.

Other participants experienced related moderate challenges living in non-Muslim communities:

**"As I live in a neighbourhood where there are a few Muslims, sometimes people look at me insistently because I wear hijab. But it is not hurtful."**

**"In Paris, Muslims of foreign origin come from different parts of the world. Thus, habits and costumes are different. Then occasionally one is asked to justify behaviours that are foreign to us."**

Stronger comments were related to the feelings of exclusion and discrimination tied to Islamophobia in France:

**"Islamophobia in France is in constant increase after many years especially because of the Islamophobic discourses of certain politicians and media."**

**"Now people look at me. Lack of jobs [...] implicit discrimination."**

**"We are badly accepted and understood. They play with others' fears. This creates a feeling of insecurity and Islamophobia."**
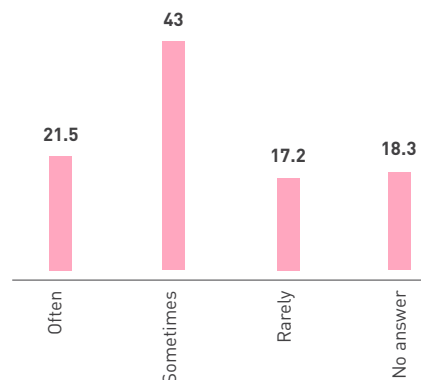
Figure 108

**Religious Community Representation in Formal Political Groups and Organisations at the Local, State or National Levels (% Percent). France.**



Figure 109

**A Challenge of Being Muslim in the Local Neighbourhood (% Percent). France.**

Do you feel being Muslim in your local neighbourhood is a challenge?

However, 35 people (37.6 per cent) also said that their cultural beliefs and practises 'often' attach them more strongly to their local neighbourhood and community, and 20 people (21.5 per cent) said 'sometimes' and 'rarely'.

Some of the positive comments relating to feeling a strong attachment to their local neighbourhood and community included:

"Absolutely, my religion and my beliefs invite me to commit with Humanity and to be responsible for my acts knowing that men are complex by nature."

"Islam teaches love for the others, the mutual-help, which brings the people of the neighbourhood closer."

Other respondents did not see how this question could be applied to their neighbourhoods:

"I live in the city and the notion of neighbourhood does not really exist'."

Most participants (59 people or 63.4 per cent) agreed that their religious and cultural practices 'often' make them a better citizen, with ten participants (10.8 per cent) reporting that they 'sometimes' feel so, and four people (4.3 per cent) 'rarely'.

Participants eagerly commented on the ways in which their religious and cultural practices make them a better citizen:

"Our religion asks us to be tolerant and open, the freedom of expression and make choices from all points of view."

"Islam gives me a moral frame, teaches me that one of the most important things is the good behaviour. I learn also that we have to be actors of our world, not simple spectators. It pushes me to look for the science, to have interest in the world that surrounds me, and to be good with my fellow human beings. These are for me the basis of a healthy citizenship."

"Islam teaches us to respect others, the neighbours (Muslims or not), and also to respect the environment. Therefore, those are the principles that make us good citizens, respectful."

"Respect of the law, citizenship, caring, and good behaviour."

"The values of Islam pushes every Muslim to be a person who must make good around either and improve the society in which one lives. And this cannot be done without active participation in this society."

Only two respondents expressed ambivalence regarding the linkages between their religious practices and civic engagement: 'I think that my quality as Muslim does not change nothing to my civic engagement nor to my relationships with the people' and 'not positive, not negative'.

Another open-ended question: 'Are there particular religious beliefs or practices that encourage good citizenship?' revealed a range of responses and examples.

Many responses tended to be all encompassing and universal, such as 'all the beliefs', 'faith in Allah, fear of Allah', 'the obedience to Allah', and 'exemplarity of the figure of the Prophet Muhammad'.

Some responses referred to religious traditions other than Islam: 'All religions [teach] love and respect of the human being', 'my religion and others. Each spirituality', 'the Christians and the Jewish', 'Christianity, Islam', 'Islam and other religions', and 'the faith encourages the good'.

Many responses cited specific beliefs and practices that encouraged good citizenship, such as: 'be good with others', 'respect others and display humanity and honesty', 'help the others, respect others, be charitable', 'charity and solidarity', 'generosity', 'tolerance, openness, sociability', and 'to help others as a fundamental principle of the community'.

"To be Muslim is to be just with oneself and therefore just with others."

Hadith: the best among you is the one who is useful for his community; the Muslim loves his brother as he loves himself.

"The incentive for good behaviour, the zakat, the fact of viewing the Prophet as a model, having to come together to seek the advice

of others before making a decision affecting the community and much more!"

"The status of the neighbour in Islam and the ecological dimension of Islam and the values of tolerance and goodness that are fundamental rules of Islam."

"In Islam we learn to live with others and accept them as they are. We do not want to impose our ideas but to make people love our ideas."

The French state does provide official recognition to minorities. Instead, there are national policies that focus on the 'unity' of the nation.

Mainstream French media and the dominant political discourse are constructed around that notion of unity, applying pressure to religious communities, as well as migrant minorities, to 'adapt' and 'integrate' according to this French unitary model of inclusion. This model was reflected in the participants responses, who favoured national belonging over religious belonging.

Respondents articulated a clear relationship between the law and citizenship on the one side, and Islam and its religious principles on the other. From Islam, participants drew on a principle that calls for adaptation to the countries in which the community live. Respondents repeatedly mentioned adaptation.

Understanding the teachings of Islam by way of its intentions (rather than adhering to strict readings of the text) provided flexibility to adapt to various national civic foundations. Participants reported that no compromise was needed between religious principles and citizenship, since national law prevailed over religious principles or practices in case of a conflicting scenario:

"Faith is something that must reinforce us in our belonging to the country where we live. Faith is something that, in principle, stresses patriotic feelings of the person where he/she lives. There is a verse stating 'stand by your commitments', so abiding by the laws of the country where we live is an Islamic principle."

Ali, Lyon

"I think that my action in a secular country, as you said, France is to adapt my discourse and my action to the country where I am. I chose to always be respectful of French law."

Aariz, Lyon

"Islam has come to secure individual rights so if we neglect those rights, we act against Islam. We can adapt, there is no objection or constraint at all towards our religious practices. We are free to practise here at the mosque or at home. Nobody can influence you and nobody can force you to do it. On the other hand, we live in a society that is not ours, so one must adapt adequately and respect it."

Amam, Lyon

# CONCLUSION

The overall findings from the three sites reveal that negative framings of Islam prominent in public discourse in the West are at odds with everyday subjective understandings of faith that contribute to ethical acts of generosity, belonging, political engagement, and active citizenship.

The ongoing War on Terror since September 11 and the emergence of the 'Islamic State' means that Muslims in Western societies like Australia, France, and the USA are under heightened surveillance, and their loyalty to the nation-state questioned. Specifically, official and popular discourses circulating suggest a disconnect between Islamic faith traditions and 'Western' norms of democracy, liberty, and individual rights. The empirical findings reported here relating to individual and collective religiosity, however, suggest that Islamic religious and spiritual traditions contribute to resilience and enable a diverse Muslim population to engage in local place-based practices and acts of citizenship. These acts are aimed at addressing social inequality and systemic injustice. Islamic faith-based practices represent a conduit for civic engagement in ways that strengthen a commitment to pluralism, and uphold ideals of democratic citizenship through individual and collective activities in multicultural neighbourhoods.

Many of these local neighbourhoods have historically provided employment and affordable housing for Muslim migrants. With the increasing Muslim population, ethnic restaurants, shops selling halal food, prayer spaces/mosques are important features of the suburban landscape. These are not places of ethnic segregation but multicultural places where Muslims of diverse backgrounds feel welcome. It is in these places where everyday life is underpinned by an Islamic ethics and where Muslims take an active part in the life of the city.

In these multicultural neighbourhoods and cities, Imams are powerful leaders and the mosque is a place of prayer that brings peace and contributes to resilience.

Yet, participation in mosque activities varies with age, gender, ethnicity, and place. In France, there is regular participation in mosque activities, among young and old, women and men. This contributes to a strong sense of belonging in a secular nation that fails to value the importance of religious identity.

The findings also show that when Muslim communities feel racialised, socially excluded, or disengaged, religious leaders are under severe pressure to address these everyday experiences. In addition, official discourses predominantly emphasise dominant images of radicalisation among youth that places all young Muslims under scrutiny. This has the effect of producing anger and outrage, which are expressed in different ways in the cities that were the focus of this project.

One of the major outcomes of secularisation in the history of the modern Western state is the removal of religion and faith from the public and political sphere. Religious virtues and ethics, unlike secular modalities of ethical or virtuous citizenship, are considered 'irrational'; thought to produce tribal differences that prevent social cohesion in societies characterised by diversity and difference. The proper place for religion then, in the minds of secular theorists, is the private space of the home. In most Western societies, therefore the public domain – dominated by the edict of 'the separation of church and state' – is seen as the healthiest and most appropriate for a thriving democracy, enabling the functioning of civil society as a pillar of society and politics.

This logic, however, is challenged in the case of Islam; particularly since September 11. With the perceived disloyalty, withdrawal and sometimes 'self-exclusion' of Muslims from public affairs and mainstream forms of civic engagement, Islam has emerged as a problem and challenge for the Western state. In the three countries that are the focus of this project, Islamic religious practice and expressions are subject to policing and public inquiry in ways that imbalance the presumed 'secular' position of the state and its civic institutions. This in turn has led

Muslims living in the West, in many instances, to enter the public realm to defend their rights as citizens and to seek a path to engagement that will define Islam as a legitimate form of religious expression in increasingly multifaith and multicultural Western cities. In contrast to many studies on Muslim religiosity and citizenship, this project clearly shows strong links between Islamic ethics/values/ practices and Western democratic forms of citizenship, civic engagement, and political participation. This connection between Muslim religious beliefs and citizenship suggests that everyday actions aim to uphold a common good that is about charity, responsibility, obedience to the rule of law, community service/engagement (described as neighbourliness), equal rights and social justice.

Different approaches to the governance of ethno-religious diversity at national, state, and local government levels and place-based affective experiences of living in the city appear to shape political and social participation and belonging across the three sites. In Australia, the dominant official discourse is multiculturalism/ social cohesion; in France it is laïcïté and secular republicanism; while in the USA the focus has been on social mobility and individual constitutional rights.

The site-specific findings have significant policy implications, highlighting the need to reshape the public discourse on Islamic religiosity and redesign policy attitudes in relation to Islam and its practice. It calls for a re-balancing of public debates and policy approaches that problematise Islamic religiosity. By examining the diverse articulations of Islamic religiosity in Western public spaces, the research findings discern meaning, hope, and a source of renewal for democratic and liberal conceptions of justice. These notions must become more prominent in the public discursive sphere, because they have the potential to promote intercultural understanding and belonging.

In conclusion and contrary to widespread misconceptions, notions of Islamic ethics have the potential to contribute meaningfully and productively to inclusive social agendas and to the emancipatory politics of recognition – rather than mere resilience – with a diverse Muslim population in Western cities learning how to thrive rather than just survive!
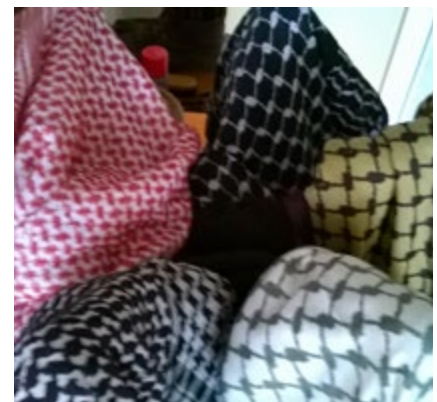


**Figure 110**
Muslim vestments.
Source: Authors

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Figure 111
Muslim Library in France.
Source: Fethi Mansouri

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1**: Interview Participants in Melbourne, Australia

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Maryam | 40 | F | Greek, born in Melbourne |
| 2. | Raima | 21 | F | Arab background, born in Melbourne |
| 3. | Dina | 20 | F | Indigenous, born in Melbourne |
| 4. | Eshal | 21 | F | Arab background, born in Melbourne |
| 5. | Mariam | 25–34 | F | Italian, born in Melbourne |
| 6. | Hamzah | 28 | M | Lebanese, born in Melbourne |
| 7. | Masjid | 28 | M | Greek/Albanian, born in Melbourne |
| 8. | Saeed | 27 | M | Afghan, born in Melbourne |
| 9. | Vada | 50–59 | F | Turkish. In 1973 came to Australia from Turkey with her husband. Has lived here for 40 years |
| 10. | Azmeena | 35–49 | F | Arab background |
| 11. | Jemimah | 33 | F | Turkish, born in Melbourne |
| 12. | Irfan | 24 | M | Sri Lankan, born in Sri Lanka |
| 13. | Habeeb | 35–49 | M | Pakistani, born in Pakistan, Hyderabad. |
| 14. | Sharif | 21 | M | Iraqi, born in Iraq but has lived in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and the US. Father came to Australia on a boat as an asylum seeker. His family followed and he attended high school in rural Australia before moving to Broadmeadows |
| 15. | Muska | 39 | F | Lebanese, born in Lebanon |
| 16. | Bashar | 50 | M | Ghana, born in Africa |
| 17. | Ali | 33 | M | Africa, born in Africa |
| 18. | Tahwid | 18–24 | M | Egyptian |
| 19. | Tabor | 50–59 | M | British. In 1985 moved to Australia from Britain, 30 years in Australia |
| 20. | Misha | 24 | F | Canadian Indian, born in Canada, in 2013 came to Australia |
| 21. | Saba | 22 | F | Hazara, in 2006 arrived in Australia as sponsored refugee from Pakistan (originally from Afghanistan) |
| 22. | Tariq | 25–34 | M | Lebanese, born in Melbourne |
| 23. | Sajida | 20 | F | Lebanese, born in Melbourne |

**Appendix 1**: Interview Participants in Melbourne, Australia. *Cont.*

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|-----|-----------|-----|--------|------------|
| 25. | Abbas | 35–49 | M | |
| 26. | Dawud | 35–49 | M | Turkish |
| 27. | Mustafa | 18–24 | M | Palestinian, born in Palestine, has lived in Jordan, USA and Australia. |
| 28. | Savas | 25–34 | M | Turkish, born in Dandenong |
| 29. | Lazanda | 27 | M | Sri Lankan, born in Noble Park |
| 30. | Basheema | 35–49 | F | Arab background |
| 31. | Seok | 18–24 | M | Pakistani, born in Pakistan |
| 32. | Ahmad | 35–49 | M | Egyptian, born in Australia |
| 33. | Zaynab | 33 | F | Pakistani, born in Australia |
| 34. | Thana | 25–34 | F | Afghan, born in Uzbekistan |
| 35. | Aida | 35–49 | F | Pashtun, born in Afghanistan |
| 36. | Amina | 18–24 | F | Pashtun, born in Iran |
| 37. | Amal | 27 | F | Turkish, born in Australia |
| 38. | Zaynab | | F | Pakistan, born in Pakistan |
| 39. | Amira | 32 | F | Pakistan, born in Australia |
| 40. | Thana | 25–34 | F | Uzbek, born in Uzbekistan |
| 41. | Adil | 50–59 | M | |
| 42. | Abu | 25–34 | M | |
| 43. | Jahin | 35–49 | M | |
| 44. | Verdiq | 35–49 | M | |
| 45. | Saffiya | 22 | F | Iraq, born in Iraq |
| 46. | Balquees | 24 | F | Iraq, born in Iraq |
| 47. | Wasila | | F | Indonesian heritage, born in Australia |
| 48. | Yasmin | 45 | F | Lebanese, Alawite |
| 49. | Shihaam | 28 | F | Bangladesh |

## Appendix 2: Focus Groups in Melbourne, Australia

| No. | Organisation or Community Group | Number of participants |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Islamic Society of Deakin University (ISDU) | 5 participants |
| 2. | Hazara Women's Network | 11 participants |
| 3. | Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) | 6 participants |
| 4. | Muslim Women's Center for Human Rights (MWCHR) | 4 participants |

**TOTAL NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS: 26**

## Appendix 3: Interview Participants in Detroit, USA

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Not assigned | 29 | F | African American Sunni Muslim (parents NOI reverts) |
| 2. | Anoud | 50–59 | M | Pakistani, non-denominational Muslim |
| 3. | Madi | 32 | M | Pakistani |
| 4. | Omar | 41 | M | African American revert, Sunni orthodox |
| 5. | Michael X | 25–35 | M | African American revert, Nation of Islam, Detroit MI |
| 6. | Alhena | 18–24 | F | Arab Sunni Muslim |
| 7. | Atif | 69 | M | African-American revert Sunni |
| 8. | Zahir | 35–49 | M | Pakistani non-denominational |
| 9. | Zaynab | 35–49 | F | Bangladeshi, Sunni |
| 10. | Radwan | 25–35 | M | Yemeni Sunni |
| 11. | Ali | 50–59 | M | Bosnian Sunni |
| 12. | Samara | 22 | F | Pakistani Sunni |
| 13. | Nassurallah | 25–35 | M | African American revert |
| 14. | Aisha | 25–35 | F | Latina revert |
| 15. | Younis | 35–49 | M | African American Muslim Sunni |
| 16. | Rana | 18–24 | F | Indian-Hindu revert |

**Appendix 3**: Interview Participants in Detroit, USA. *Cont.*

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. | Imam Sareeh | 35–49 | M | Yemeni |
| 18. | Not assigned | 50–59 | M | Al-Falah mosque Sunni |
| 19. | Kalsoom | 25–34 | F | Indian |
| 20. | Badda | 25–34 | M | Pakistani |
| 21. | Patrick | | M | white revert Sunni/Sufi influences |
| 22. | Imam Al-Mahdi | | M | Arabic speaking Shia |
| 23. | Rabia | 34 | F | Lebanese Shia |
| 24. | Siddiqua | | F | Palestinian |
| 25. | Zafeerah | 50–59 | F | African American revert |
| 26. | Sadiq | | | |
| 27. | Not assigned | 33 | F | Yemeni background |
| 28. | Not assigned | | F | Bangladeshi |
| 29. | Not assigned | | M | immigrant from India, Palestinian background |
| 30. | Not assigned | 25–34 | F | Arabic speaking, USA born |
| 31. | Not assigned | | | Indian |
| 32. | Not assigned | | | |
| 33 | Not assigned | 22 | F | Palestinian |

**Appendix 4:** Interview Participants in Lyon/Grenoble/Paris, France

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|-----|-----------|-----|--------|------------|
| 1 | Aariz | | M | |
| 2 | Mushira | | F | |
| 3 | Abaan | | M | French, born in France |
| 4 | Abdul | 22 | M | Algerian Berber background, born in France |
| 5 | Aarif | | M | |
| 6 | Akif | | M | Born in Mali, lived in Saudi Arabia |
| 7 | Akmal | | M | Came from Morocco in the late 1970s |
| 8 | Ali | | M | |
| 9 | Amam | | M | |
| 10 | Nadeem | | M | |
| 11 | Nubaid | | M | |
| 12 | Naseem | | M | |
| 13 | Sarim | | M | |
| 14 | Shafi | | M | |
| 15 | Sharaf | | M | |
| 16 | Siwar | | M | Palestinian |
| 17 | Dunia | | F | |
| 18 | Kashan | | M | |
| 19 | Marwa | | F | Tunisian |
| 20 | Mouna | | F | Born in Paris, parents came from Morocco |
| 21 | Azad | | M | Born in France, parents came from Tunis |
| 22 | Awf | | M | Born in France, parents came from Morocco |
| 23 | Malak | 54 | F | born in Algeria, came to France when she was 9 years old |
| 24 | Maira | | F | Born in Morocco, came to France 8 years ago with her parents |
| 25 | Athar | | M | |

**Appendix 4**: Interview Participants in Lyon/Grenoble/Paris, France. *Cont.*

| No. | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Background |
|-----|-----------|-----|--------|------------|
| 26 | Madiha | 27 | F | |
| 27 | Ateeb | | M | From Tunisia, foreign born, came to France as a student |
| 28 | Soumitra | | | |
| | | M | Bangladeshi | |
| 29 | Bishnu | | M | Bangladeshi |
| 30 | Raja | | M | Bangladeshi |
| 31 | Zahid | | F | Pakistani- |
| 32 | Riaz | mature aged | M | Pakistani, arrived from Pakistan 20 years ago |
| 33 | Roshni | young | F | Algerian |

**Islamic Religiosity
in the West**

PROJECT
INVESTIGATORS

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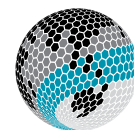
WITH RESEARCH
SUPPORT FROM

**LIUDMILA KIRPITCHENKO
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**Belonging and Political Engagement
in Multicultural Cities**

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