

Muslim Attitudes Survey: Results Analysis

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Introduction

A Muslim Attitudes Survey was conducted primarily in Cape Town throughout the month of April 2008. The survey took place both manually and electronically. Four sectors of respondents were surveyed:

- (1) Respondents to the survey on the Voice of the Cape website (168 respondents)
- (2) IPSA students (75 respondents)
- (3) Delft residents (44 respondents)
- (4) Lansdowne residents (33 respondents)

Altogether 320 respondents were surveyed.

Aims of the survey

The survey had three aims:

- (1) To gather empirical data as to how the general public felt about aspects of the South African Muslim situation.

- (2) To assist the *'ulamā* in strategizing for their communities in a manner that takes into account their views and feelings
- (3) To locate such views and feelings within broader theoretical discussions pertaining to Muslim minorities in general.

Format of the survey

The survey format can be gleaned from the “Key to questions” detailed below. In addition, the format of the survey contained options for the respondent to expand upon his or her responses.

Selection of respondents and collection of surveys

There was no specific selection of individual respondents. In the case of the radio it was anyone who responded to the survey on the VOC website. Completed surveys were immediately e-mailed from the VOC website to the researcher for data capturing. In the case of Lansdowne (a middle income neighbourhood) and Delft (a lower income neighbourhood), two student volunteers offered to survey an approximate sample of fifty people from each of these areas. The Lansdowne volunteer indicated that he collected surveys from the following groups: a madrasah that services male and female adults; the neighbours in his street; and a group of females who attended his mother’s “Shi’zen” [a range of beauty products] meeting. As to the Delft volunteer, she collected responses from customers who came to their house shop. She also went out to friends and customers scattered in Delft South to collect responses. As for the IPSA students, surveys were handed to all students who could be found on a particular day and they were instructed to complete the form.

The selection of respondents was then fairly random. However, the fact that a considerable portion of the responses emerged from “religiously oriented” sectors, namely, a Muslim radio station and an Islamic tertiary institution, compels us to qualify the survey as to an extent representing attitudes of *committed* Muslims.

Notes

320 respondents in the context of the study represents a statistically significant proportion. The general analysis undertaken in this study may therefore be said to be a fair reflection of the overall Muslim population’s views, especially the committed population. As for the student/youth sector, projections in this regard were mostly made based on responses received at IPSA. As a result, some views expressed, such as those on the importance of Islamic educational institutions, could be less representative than that of the student/youth population as a whole.

Results Analysis

The analysis was predicated upon two categories, general and sector. The sectors were divided along the four categories mentioned as well as in terms of age, gender and economic level. The general comprised the totality of respondents (320).

Results

The results are presented in tabulated form. The keys to the categories of respondents and to the questions asked follow the table.

(Results: in %)

Question	Category A: General	B: Radio	C: Students	D: Delft	E: L/downe	F: UES	G: MES	H: 17-30	I: 31-55	J: 56+	K: Female	L: Male
1	45	49	33	45	45	59	38	0	0	0	0	100
2	55	51	67	55	55	41	62	0	0	0	100	0
3	43	27	84	34	45	19	41	100	0	0	49	36
4	46	58	12	66	36	69	47	0	100	0	43	51
5	9	12	3	0	18	11	11	0	0	100	5	14
6	44	54	57	2	15	100	0	45	57	45	38	49
7	53	44	37	98	79	0	100	51	44	55	60	48
8	18	15	7	48	18	14	9	9	12	27	18	15
9	41	43	40	30	45	46	41	42	50	23	38	45
10	20	20	33	7	9	16	28	33	17	18	25	14
11	17	18	15	16	21	21	16	14	23	27	14	20
12	1	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
13	16	19	8	25	6	26	14	12	19	9	16	17
14	17	14	9	41	12	11	18	11	13	9	17	16
15	41	42	52	14	42	41	45	48	44	41	45	36
16	17	14	20	18	24	13	16	19	15	45	17	16
17	8	10	8	0	9	9	12	10	10	9	3	14
18	63	64	60	55	76	64	70	66	68	59	63	64
19	32	29	35	45	24	29	31	33	35	41	32	31
20	3	5	3	0	0	7	3	4	8	0	3	3
21	21	23	9	39	12	21	27	18	21	14	20	23
22	32	23	45	43	33	21	30	43	21	18	32	33
23	32	37	27	16	36	39	30	25	39	64	32	31
24	15	18	17	0	15	20	16	17	24	5	15	15
25	48	48	48	59	36	34	61	49	52	68	53	40
26	49	51	49	34	55	66	39	51	54	36	44	56
27	70	70	71	73	64	67	73	69	75	82	75	64
28	27	28	27	23	27	33	27	31	24	18	22	34
29	93	95	95	77	94	94	99	95	94	100	94	90
30	6	4	5	20	3	6	1	5	4	0	5	7
31	50	49	49	66	33	49	55	48	47	77	47	51
32	47	49	47	30	61	51	45	50	50	23	50	50
33	65	66	72	55	58	63	72	76	62	64	69	59
34	31	33	24	36	30	37	28	22	36	36	27	37
35	31	33	28	27	27	30	34	28	34	41	29	31
36	65	65	65	70	61	69	68	71	63	55	68	64
37	40	48	29	27	39	57	42	43	41	36	32	49
38	56	51	64	66	52	43	58	54	70	64	64	47

39	66	74	56	52	70	71	82	69	77	73	71	60
40	30	25	37	41	24	30	19	27	27	27	26	36
41	50	42	52	70	58	43	45	48	46	73	54	45
42	47	57	43	27	33	57	55	50	51	27	42	53

Key to categories

- (A) General results (320 respondents)
- (B) Sector results: Radio (168 respondents)
- (C) Sector results: Students (75 respondents)
- (D) Sector results: Delft/ lower to Sub-Economic spectrum (44 respondents)
- (E) Sector: Lansdowne (33 respondents)
- (F) Sector results: Upper economic spectrum (70 respondents)
- (G) Sector results: Middle Economic Spectrum (74 respondents)
- (H) Sector results: Age 17-30 (103 respondents)
- (I) Sector results: Age 31-55 (104 respondents)
- (J) Sector results: Age 56 up (22 respondents)
- (K) Sector results: Female views (173 respondents)
- (L) Sector results: Male Views (134 respondents)

Key to questions

- 1. Male
- 2. Female
- 3. 17-30
- 4. 31-55
- 5. 56 up
- 6. Category one
- 7. Category two

What is your general view of the South African Muslim community:

- 8. The SA Muslim community is a well functioning one
- 9. The SA Muslim community has its ups and downs, with more ups than downs
- 10. The SA Muslim community has its ups and downs with more downs than ups.
- 11. The South African Muslim community is in deep trouble.
- 12. None of the above (state other)

The biggest challenge facing Muslims in South Africa is:

- 13. Racist attitudes by Muslims themselves
- 14. The increasing gap between the rich and poor Muslims
- 15. The increasing immorality we find in society
- 16. The global onslaught against Islam generally
- 17. None of the above

Respecting other religions and cultures means that Muslims should:

- 18. interact with them to find out what they believe and practice
- 19. respect from a distance and be more concerned about one's own beliefs
- 20. None of the above

The first priority for well to do Muslims is to put their money into :

21. building and maintaining mosques and Islamic associations
22. building and maintaining Islamic educational institutions
23. projects that will result in job creation for the unemployed
24. None of the above

Agree or disagree:

25. Agree-Differences of opinion weaken the community
26. Disagree- Differences of opinion weaken the community

27. Agree-Culture is an important part of religion
28. Disagree- Culture is an important part of religion

29. Agree- Madrasah education is still a vital part of a child's education
30. Disagree- Madrasah education is still a vital part of a child's education

31. Agree- Islamic schools are better for Muslims than secular ones
32. Disagree- Islamic schools are better for Muslims than secular ones

33. Agree- Islamic financial institutions benefit the Muslim community
34. Disagree-Islamic financial institutions benefit the Muslim community

35. Agree-Learning Islamic law is more important than being able to read Quran
36. Disagree- Learning Islamic law is more important than being able to read Quran

37. Agree- The South African government protects Muslim's interests
38. Disagree- The South African government protects Muslim's interests

39. Agree-Muslims should focus more on local rather than international issues
40. Disagree--Muslims should focus more on local rather than international issues

41. Agree- The West is the major cause of our problems
42. Disagree- The West is the major cause of our problems

Findings

General component

- Most of the respondents (41% from a selection of 5 responses) had a generally positive view of the SA Muslim community.
- Most viewed increasing immorality as the biggest challenge (41% from a selection of 5 responses)
- A high proportion (63%) felt that one had to interact with other beliefs and cultures
- Respondents featured the creation of Islamic educational institutions and job opportunities (32% and 31% respectively) as chief priorities.
- There is an even split among respondents as to whether differences of opinion weaken the community (48 vs 49%)
- A high proportion of respondents (70%) felt that culture is an important part of religion.

- The continuing importance of Madrasah education was overwhelmingly endorsed (93%).
- There is a fairly even split as to whether Islamic schools are better than secular ones (50 vs 47%).
- A high proportion of respondents (65%) thought that Islamic financial institutions benefited the community.
- A significant proportion of respondents (65%) thought that being able to read the Quran is more important than learning Islamic law.
- A significant number of respondents (67%) disagreed that the government protects the Muslim community's interests.
- A significant proportion of respondents (66%) thought that the focus should be on local rather than international issues.
- There is a fairly even split regarding whether the West was the main cause of our problems or not (50 vs 47%).

The sector analyses in the light of the general trend

- The Radio sector corresponded closely with the general sector- the bulk of the respondents were from this sector (168 of the 320).

The student sector significantly diverged from the general one in these areas:

- In 7% seeing the SA Muslim community as a well functioning one as compared to 18% generally.
- In 9% seeing the chief priority as the building of mosques and associations compared to 22% generally.

The Delft sector differed significantly from the general in the following areas:

- 48% seeing the SA Muslim community as a well-functioning one as compared to 18% generally
- 41% seeing the income gap as the biggest challenge as compared to 17% generally.
- 39% seeing the building of mosques and Islamic associations as the most urgent priority compared to 22% generally.
- 30% disagreeing that madrasah is still a vital part of a child's education compared to 7% generally.
- 70% agree that the West is the cause of our problems compared to 50% generally.

The Lansdowne sector diverged significantly in the following areas:

- 6% viewed Muslim racism as the biggest challenge compared to 17% overall.
- 61% disagreed that Islamic schools were better than secular ones compared to 46% overall.
- **There is then evidence of a divide among sectors, particularly along economic lines.**

The Delft, upper-economic spectrum (UES) and middle economic spectrum (MES) comparison

- A large proportion of Delft respondents (48%) saw the SA Muslim community as a well-functioning one compared to 14% of the UES and 9% of the MES.

- Significantly, in contrast to the general findings, most Delft respondents (41%) saw the increasing gap between rich and poor as the biggest challenge. [Cf. to 11% of the UES and 18% of the MES]
- A larger proportion (66%) endorsed Islamic schools [Cf. to 49% of the UES and 55% of the MES]
- A larger proportion (66%) disagreed that the SA government protected Muslim interests [Cf. to 43% of the UES and 58% of the MES]
- A larger proportion (70%) also felt that the West was responsible for our problems [Cf. to 43% of the UES and 55% of the MES]
- **Divides along economic lines seems to emerge in terms of views expressed.**

Generation analysis

- 45% of the 56 plus age group see the global onslaught on Islam as the biggest challenge facing Muslims as compared to 19% of the 17-30's and 15% of the 31-55's.
- 43% of the 17-30's see the main priority as building Islamic educational institutions as compared to 18% of the 56 plus and 21% of the 31-55's.
- 64% of the 56 plus age group see unemployment as the main priority as compared to 39% of the 31-55 and 25% of the 17-30 age group.
- 31% of the 17-30 age group disagreed that culture was important compared to 24% of the 31-55's and 18% of the 56 up's.
- 77% of the 56 up's agreed that Islamic schools were the better option as compared to 48% of the 17-30's and 47% of the 31-55's.
- 73% of the 56 up's saw the West as the major cause of our problems as opposed to 48% of the 17-30's and 47% of the 31-55's.
- **There is evidence then of a generational gap in terms of views expressed.**

Gender Analysis

- 53% of females believe that differences of opinion weaken the community as compared to 40% of males.
- 69% of females hold that Islamic financial institutions are of benefit to the community compared to 59% of the males.
- Only 32% of the females agreed that the government protected Muslim interests compared to 49% of the males.
- **There does appear to be then a marginal gender divide.**

Ethnographic data

Options were also given to respondents to expand upon their particular responses. The following represents the data collected in this respect.

What is your general view of the South African Muslim community:

8. The SA Muslim community is a well functioning one : As compared to other places; we have laid a solid foundation in SA; we have a major influence on national policy; a vibrant financial, educational and religious infrastructure

9. The SA Muslim community has its ups and downs, with more ups than downs: Compared to countries abroad; we have good basic knowledge of Islam; we tend to be a close-knit family

10. The SA Muslim community has its ups and downs with more downs than ups: Too many unresolved issues; too ritualised; its a fragmented community with many ulama bodies

11. The South African Muslim community is in deep trouble: Gay marriages and apostasy; materialism; hypocrisy; large scale immorality; disillusioned youth

12. None of the above (state other) ...Certain sectors display a range of above four; problems in coping with the demands of the modern world; need to assert Muslim identity

The biggest challenge facing Muslims in South Africa is:

13. Racist attitudes by Muslims themselves: Holier than thou attitude; racism towards black and foreign Muslims; we only stick with and help our own

14. The increasing gap between the rich and poor Muslims: Affluent Muslims do not give; gap leads to immorality; rich Muslims look down on the poor ones; conspicuous consumption leads to class envy

15. The increasing immorality we find in society: dress code; gay couples; disrespect of mosques; a society without taqwa is a dangerous and scary one; superficiality; children are not taught how to implement their rights

16. The global onslaught against Islam generally: West sees us as a threat because of our religious beliefs and values; they make trouble in Muslim countries; we are constantly put on the defensive; negative media portrayal

17. None of the above: Combination of above four; no commitment to the deen; we need to find balance between local and global commitment; youth are the biggest challenge as they out of control; growing prevalence of shirk; must see ourselves as part of the global ummah; lack of direction; drug abuse and gangsterism

Respecting other religions and cultures means that Muslims should:

18. interact with them to find out what they believe and practice: needed in order to engage and live with neighbours; interaction develops true respect; it makes one appreciate one's own religion more; one exposes them to Islam through interaction; it is an opportunity for da'wah; it demystifies the boogie man

19. respect from a distance and be more concerned about one's own beliefs: To you your religion and to me mine; cleanse our own morals first; we tend to become like them; temptation to practise easier religions; we first need to respect ourselves; many Muslims too weak to engage with others

20. None of the above: Compromise between the two approaches; draw them in through one's akhlaq

The first priority for well to do Muslims is to put their money into :

21. building and maintaining mosques and Islamic associations: so that other religions and cultures can look up to Muslims and associations can spend money where it is needed in the Muslim community; build infrastructure for Shariah compliant youth activities; masjids struggle financially and need help; mosques is where people pray

22. building and maintaining Islamic educational institutions: Knowledge is the key

23. projects that will result in job creation for the unemployed: hungry stomach leads to crime; self-sustenance leads to education and social upliftment; society reinforces inequality; will bring people to Islam; leads to increased self-worth; this is a practical benefit

24. None of the above : educational, health and social projects that benefit all; self-sufficiency; create Islamically focussed conventional education systems of a very high standard; provide basic human needs such as food and shelter; we need to uplift people with both employment and guidance; to educate one's own children; support da'wah and relief organisations; should be helping township people

Agree or disagree:

25. Agree-Differences of opinion weaken the community: Breaks family ties; art of debate has been forgotten; disagreements have proved divisive at leadership level and have led to dishonesty and arrogance; we nitpick over secondary issues; renders community vulnerable to attacks; results in confusion

26. Disagree- Differences of opinion weaken the community: Method rather than content of differences that is the problem; differences healthy and leads to educational enhancement and critical thinking; we should not be like sheep; leads to awareness, respect and sharing; mindless agreement leads to stagnation and monopolies; it can be positive and constructive; leads to a more democratic and hence stronger community; everyone has the right to their opinion

27. Agree-Culture is an important part of religion: Bonds communities; if you know where you come from you can make the right decisions; creates pride and sense of belonging; keeps religion alive; creates vibrancy in a community; culture is the gateway to religion

28. Disagree- Culture is an important part of religion : Religion first, culture second; culture not part of religion; there is no clear understanding of what is acceptable culture; can lead to bidah and racism

29. Agree- Madrasah education is still a vital part of a child's education: Teaches the basics; in today's rat race no time to educate children on our own; with strong fundamentals faith will not be compromised; kids need to interact with their own kind; children with no madrasah education are misled; a child can be easily moulded

30. Disagree- Madrasah education is still a vital part of a child's education: Parents should become more involved rather than leaving it up to a third party

31. Agree- Islamic schools are better for Muslims than secular ones: they can get both religious and secular education allowing free time in the afternoon; are better if done well

32. Disagree- Islamic schools are better for Muslims than secular ones: More important for Muslims to integrate rather than be isolated; some have become elitist and serve class interest; does not provide necessary quality and balance; misbehaviour of students; we are part and parcel of secular society as well; creates silos that leave them unprepared to deal with the real world; do not live up to their mission statement; can lead to exclusive mentality; too expensive; they focus more on secular rather than Islamic studies; we live in a multi-cultural society

33. Agree- Islamic financial institutions benefit the Muslim community: provides interest free facility; without them progress will be retarded; they do help the community

34. Disagree-Islamic financial institutions benefit the Muslim community: they concerned with their own profits; have not seen them build an orphanage

35. Agree-Learning Islamic law is more important than being able to read Quran: Beautiful recitation meritorious but does not lead to understanding and knowledge; Obligations have to be fulfilled first; both are important

36. Disagree- Learning Islamic law is more important than being able to read Quran: Everybody can read the Quran but not everybody can afford to study law; Quran is the same as the Law or leads to the Law; Quran and Islam must be imbibed in hearts first before details of law

37. Agree- The South African government protects Muslim's interests: Enjoys protection like other faiths; more freedom than in some Islamic countries; Government

enables efficient Hajj; we have financial institutions, halal food and are allowed to practise our deen in schools and universities

38. Disagree- The South African government protects Muslim's interests: No, protects interests of all its citizens; politicians only fill their own pockets; marriages not legal yet; many rights and provisions opposed to the Shariah; its becoming increasingly Islamophobic; too much poverty and struggling Muslims

39. Agree-Muslims should focus more on local rather than international issues: Charity begins at home; think global, act local; our own people are struggling; grassroots work more effective than marches; too much focus on what is happening elsewhere; this is the country of our birth and we owe it a duty

40. Disagree--Muslims should focus more on local rather than international issues: World affairs affect us; Muslims are an Ummah; Solidarity with Muslims first above other religious groups; there is greater suffering in other parts of the Muslim world;

41. Agree- The West is the major cause of our problems: Control everything including media and business; they are jealous of our practice of the Sunnah; the importation of their values erodes ours; they wish to dismiss importance of religion; due to the sheer ubiquitousness of West; their way of life misleads and they see us as terrorists

42. Disagree- The West is the major cause of our problems: It is due to our failure that they do not know Islam; they are able to impose themselves because of our weakness; we created our own problems; we have not armed ourselves with Islamic knowledge and behaviour; we lack unity; the earth is borderless; Muslim excess can rival Western excess; if we think like that then we just like them; we choose what can influence us

Summary

- Respondents are strongly divided along economic and to an extent along generational lines.
- There is also a small gender divide in some areas.
- In general immorality, Islamic educational institutions and joblessness feature high on the list of challenges and priorities as compared to racism, the income gap, the global onslaught against Islam and the building of mosques and Islamic associations. However, in Delft the priorities and challenges are substantially different.
- There are sharp divides in the following areas: on the value of differing opinions and whether Islamic schools are to be preferred to secular ones.
- There are sharp sector divides as to whether the government protects Muslim interests and whether the West is the major cause of our problems.
- However, there is broad agreement with regard to the importance of madrasahs, the role of culture, the need to interact with others, a positive attitude to Islamic

financial institutions, the primary need to know and recite the Quran and a feeling that one needs to focus on the local more than on the international