

Journal of Development Policy, Research, & Practice

ISSN (P): [2522-3410](#)

ISSN (E): [2663-3698](#)



Volume 7, 2023

Article History

Submitted:

April 26, 2023

Last Revised:

Nov 02, 2023

Accepted:

Dec 18, 2023

Funding

No

Copyright

The Authors

Muslims in Britain: History, Diversity and Socioeconomic Status

Shaista Malik

Infochange (Pvt) Ltd., Islamabad, Pakistan

Correspondence:

Shaista Malik: malik.shaista@gmail.com

Article Link: <https://journals.sdpipk.org/index.php/JoDPRP/article/view/63>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59926/jodprp.vol07/08>

Citation:

Malik, S. 2023, 'Muslims in Britain: History, Diversity and Socioeconomic Status?'. *Journal of Development Policy, Research & Practice*, vol. 7, pp. 165-180.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declared no Conflict of Interest

Acknowledgment: No administrative and technical support was taken for this research

Licensing:



licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



Scan here to read



An official Publication of
Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan



Muslims in Britain: History, Diversity and Socioeconomic Status

*Shaista Malik**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing presence of Muslims in the United Kingdom (UK), a community that, despite being a minority, is expanding rapidly according to data from the Oxford-based Migration Observatory. This research examines the diverse origins, cultures, languages, and religious beliefs of British Muslims, setting the stage to explore the multifaceted emergence of Islam and Muslims in the UK. The study investigates the various phases of Muslim migration, pinpointing the principal reasons for their arrival and the routes chosen by individuals from countries such as Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Syria, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Yemen to settle in cities like London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff, Bradford, Liverpool, Hull, and Sheffield. It identifies key factors driving the formation of Muslim communities in the UK, including political instability, ethno-religious conflicts, natural disasters, civil unrest, decolonisation, and labour shortages. Additionally, the paper assesses the socioeconomic status of Muslims in England and concludes with strategic recommendations for policymakers.

Keywords: Mapping, Migration, Imperial, Beliefs, Population, Expatriates.

JEL Classification: A14, Z1.

* **Ms Shaista Malik** is a researcher with extensive experience in multidisciplinary studies, proficient in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Over her 24-year career, she has contributed to national and regional initiatives in Asia, including work with Imagine New South Asia, Asia Media Forum, and the South Asia Centre for Economic Journalists (SACEJ), among others.

1. INTRODUCTION

The latest census of the United Kingdom (UK) held in 2018 found that 3,801,186 Muslims live in Britain (6.7% of the population). The UK Statista Research Department forecasts that by 2050, Muslims will constitute 17.2% of the total UK population (Statista 2023). This rapid growth in the UK's Muslim population is partially due to its notably young demographic (Ibid.). Census data indicates that while the Muslim community has expanded, 39% of this population resides in the most deprived areas of England and Wales (Mohdin 2022, p. 1). Furthermore, Muslims are often perceived as a 'suspect community,' subject to intense scrutiny regarding their actions and behaviour (Balazard and Peace 2022, p. 89).

Muslims arrived in England in various stages. The first significant number of Muslims arrived 'around 300 years ago, in the form of sailors recruited in India to work for the East India Company' (Iqbal 2016, p. 1). In this stage, Muslims came from the coastal area of Africa and Indian subcontinent adjacent to the British Empire (Nielsen 2008, p.55). To meet the growing demand of labourers at ports and in ships, the second stage of Muslim immigration began with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Most of them arrived from Yemen. The third stage commenced in 1947 following the independence of the Indian subcontinent. Since the 1960s, a significant number of Moroccan Muslims have also established themselves in the UK. Predominantly, these Muslim immigrants were men, many of whom had connections to the British colonial administration through military service or personal experiences.

2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the arrival of Muslims in Britain, focusing on the timing, reasons, and challenges encountered. This study employs a comprehensive narrative literature review, drawing on a wide range of academic materials, including articles, media reports, and books that detail the various phases of Muslim migration to the UK. Literature searches were conducted on scholar.google.com using keywords such as 'Muslims in Britain or England,' 'arrival of Muslims in UK,' and 'British communities.' Similar searches on google.com facilitated access to media reports and additional documents pertinent to the subject. Only material deemed authentic and relevant to the research question was selected for analysis. This review process revealed that the migration of Muslims to Britain has not been sporadic rather is a systematic process, often becoming more pronounced during global crises.

3. RESULTS: STAGES OF ARRIVAL OF MUSLIMS IN THE UK

3.1 First Stage: Before Sixteenth Century - Arrival of Islam and Muslims in Britain

The presence of Islam in Britain can be traced back to before the Sixteenth Century, with the earliest recorded conversion of an Englishman, John Nelson, to Islam occurring in 1583 while he was a captive in Tripoli. This early conversion suggests that there was some level of access to and awareness of Islamic knowledge in Britain at the time. The adoption of Islam by Nelson marked the beginning of a new religious identity for Muslims in the UK. This period also coincided with increased exposure of the British to the Muslim world, particularly through interactions with the Barbary states of Morocco, Algiers, Tunisia, and Tripoli, as well as with the Ottoman Empire and North Africa, facilitated by trade and naval engagements (Ibid.). These initial Muslims who were captured from Spanish Armada were freed from ships. Throughout the period 1558 till the death of Charles II in 1685, British people met with Muslims 'from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean and Arabian Seas' (Matar 1998, p. 1). A significant distance can be noticed between London and Istanbul, but people from England were in contact with Muslims as 'Muslims were present throughout the Mediterranean basin at the time of turmoil in Europe' (Ibid., p. 2). However, these Muslims participated in the early modern period of Britons (Ibid.). In this first stage, Muslims from Africa and the Indian subcontinent who arrived in the UK were from the elite class, e.g. chieftaincy families of West Africa and sons of Indian princes. They came to Britain from Imperial Sea routes to explore the UK. Often, they were found in commercial partnerships. The sea routes were extensively used for both goods and people between 'Arabia and Somalia' (Nielsen 2008, p. 55). However, only a small number of Muslims settled in Britain prior to the Eighteenth Century (Visram 1986; Robinson 1996; Abbas 2004; Peach 2006). British history highlights three significant periods during which Muslims from around the world arrived in Great Britain. These phases illustrate the development of a social network between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain, marking the emergence of interconnected communities within the country.

3.2 Second Stage: Opening of Suez Canal in 1869 - A Significant Opportunity

The second stage of Muslim arrival began at the time of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 that provided a significant opportunity for Muslim seamen and traders to migrate to the UK. The Canal connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and is famous for being the 'shortest maritime between Europe and the lands lying around the Indian and western Pacific oceans' (Mohit 2022, p. 3). As a shortest route, the 120-mile-wide Canal offered shipment of trade goods between Europe and South Asia. Therefore, Muslim seamen and traders hailing from the Middle East and Yemen also migrated to the UK as

this Canal facilitated the trade between Britain and its colonies. With the opening of Suez Canal, Muslims from Yemen, Somalia and Indo-Pak inhabitants particularly with Bengali background set up several significant communities in British ports, Cardiff and South Shields (Halliday 1992; Abbas 2013, p. 19). Muslims from West Africa established communities in Liverpool, while South Asian immigrants predominantly settled in London. Baxter (2006, p. 165) highlights that Muslims of Bengali origin have been present in Britain since the late 1880s. Between 1890 and 1903, approximately 40,000 seamen arrived in the UK, with about 30,000 of them spending portions of their lives in Britain (Peach 2006; Siddiqui 1995, p. 2). During this era, the Muslim population in Britain observed a pattern where some Muslims chose to permanently stay in the UK, while others left their ships at British ports, often without following any formal procedure (Ibid.).

Yemeni workers encountered challenges related to language barriers during their stays in Britain, often prolonged due to transit durations. Many Yemeni Muslims contributed to the British Merchant Navy, leaving their sea jobs for temporary periods. Additionally, some found employment in steel factories and foundries. A portion of these Yemeni workers chose to establish permanent roots by marrying British women, while others maintained semi-single lives, having families in Yemen but working in Britain (Hussain 2008, p. 37). Beyond the Yemeni community, traders from Syria and Lebanon relocated to Manchester, capitalising on their traditional skills (Ibid.). This migration pattern underscores that the early settlements in major ports like Cardiff, Liverpool, London, and Pollock Shields were significantly influenced by the influx of Muslim sailors and traders.

Initially, the number of Arabs in the UK was small but began to grow in 1945 with the arrival of Palestinians, Egyptians, and Sudanese (Ibid.). Turkish Cypriot communities also came in 1920 (Sirkeci et al., 2016, p. 167). By 1940, a significant number of Turkish Muslims were identified as young workers specialising in specific trades like tailoring, shoemaking, and catering. These early settlements, primarily composed of Arabs, highlight the immigrants' professional skills as a key motivation for their decision to reside in the UK.

3.3 Third Stage: Arrival of Muslims after 1947 - Decolonisation of Indian Subcontinent and Expansion of British Economy

The third wave of Muslim immigration commenced as British economic growth accelerated between 1950 and 1960, coinciding with the decolonisation of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Post-Second World War, Britain found it increasingly challenging to maintain its colonial empire, leading to the end of the British Empire with the independence and partition of the sub-continent into Pakistan and India in 1947. This partition resulted in significant turmoil, displacing ten million people and causing up to a million deaths (Abbas 2013, p. 8). Concurrently, Britain experienced a labour shortage in

Muslims in Britain

specific industries, as employment conditions became unacceptable to the existing White British workforce. This shortage prompted an influx of West Indian immigration starting in 1948, followed by direct recruitment in London Transport, the British National Health Services, and British Rail (Robinson 1986, p. 26). Jones and Hedberg (2023, p. 369) also reported that during 1950-1960, new Commonwealth migrants particularly from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh arrived in the UK and received citizenship. During the 1950s and 1960s, the UK's economy experienced rapid growth, opening new opportunities for immigrants at a time when the demand for seamen had declined. This period saw a notable increase in Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Turkey, who moved to take advantage of job opportunities in industries located in London, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands (Peach 2006b, p. 136). However, in this era, Muslims were often perceived as outsiders and became the focus of societal fears and anxieties, largely attributed to their skin colour, accent, and general demeanour (Ahmad and Sardar 2012, p. 12).

In the early days of immigration, mostly male members from South Asia arrived in Britain with the 'myth' of returning home, but later wives and dependent children also joined them. South Asian Muslim women began arriving in Britain in significant numbers during the 1970s and 1980s (Gilliat-Ray 1998, p. 348). While opportunities to join the labour force were available, their participation was limited by challenges such as limited English language proficiency and qualifications (Dale et al., 2002, p. 5). This period also saw an increase in family reunification among South Asian immigrants, contributing to the growth of the Muslim population in England. The first generation of South Asian immigrants arrived towards the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, with a significant number still residing in the UK. According to the 2001 census data, there were 750,000 Pakistanis in Britain, representing over one-third of the South Asian population in England, while Indians numbered over one million, accounting for half of the South Asian population (Peach 2006b, p. 134). Despite ongoing struggles to improve their lifestyle, British Muslims are generally reluctant to return to their countries of origin, recognising that life in Britain offered better prospects.

In any case, migration from India and Pakistan was only from a few selective areas such as Punjab, Gujarat, and North-western parts of South Asia (Peach and Gale 2003; Barnes 2006) especially from rural parts of Azad Kashmir, such as Mirpur. Although Muslims migrating from the subcontinent were skilled professionals such as engineers, intellectuals and doctors, a sizable number of non-professional migrants also decided to stay in England. Numerous Pakistanis and Indians also had the chance to serve in the British Armed Forces (Glass 1960; Spencer 1997) leveraging their prior experience with Great Britain and established contacts within the country (Peach and Gale 2003, p. 473).

Turkish Cypriots were initially drawn to the UK during the first stage of Muslim

migration, coinciding with the inauguration of the Suez Canal. Subsequently, a significant influx of Turkish Cypriots migrated to England between 1945 and 1955, marking the third stage of Muslim arrivals. The estimated population of individuals of Turkish origin in England stands at 80,000 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2009, p. 24). In the 1960s, Turkish Cypriot Muslims who served as civil servants in the colonial administration were granted British passports and provided with paid passage to Britain as a reward for their loyalty to the British administration (Hussain 2008, p. 35).

Bangladeshi Muslims from South Asia also migrated to Britain. Originating predominantly from the northwest of Bangladesh, these immigrants, largely impoverished, have continued to represent a poor and less educated minority community within the UK (Peach and Gale 2003, p. 474; Abbas 2013, p. 10). The influx of Bangladeshi Muslim migrants increased in the 1980s, a period marked by declining labour demand in the UK (Peach and Gale 2003, p. 55). Data from the 2001 census reveals that South Asians, including Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, comprised 1.6 million of the Muslim population in Britain, with nearly half of them being of Pakistani origin (Peach 2006a, p. 632).

During the 1950s, the rate of Muslim immigration from the subcontinent to Britain reached 10,000 per annum (Baxter 2006, p. 166). Findings from previous studies regarding the Muslim population in the UK have shown notable inconsistencies and contradictions. Peach (2006a, p. 629) estimated the Muslim population to be 21,000, while Baxter (2006, p. 165) reported approximately 10,000 Muslims registered by the 1951 census. In contrast, Peach and Gale (2003, p. 473) indicated a presence of 50,000 Muslims in the UK for the same period. The variation in these estimates can be attributed to the lack of available ethnic data for minority communities prior to the 1991 census.

The third wave of migration extended beyond the influx of South Asian Muslims following the decolonisation of the Indian Subcontinent and Britain's economic expansion. Immigrants from diverse regions, including Morocco, the Caribbean, and Somalia, were drawn to Britain due to political instability, conflict, famines, and natural disasters in their home countries. A significant push factor during this phase was the political unrest in Arab nations, prompting Muslims from Morocco to migrate to British shores in the 1960s (Hussain 2008, p. 37). Concurrently, there was a noticeable eagerness among students from Muslim countries to pursue higher education in the UK starting in the early 1960s. A gradual increase in Muslim students from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Gulf countries was observed in Britain. These students, alongside young British-born Muslims, played pivotal roles in establishing Islamic organisations, including the U.K. Islamic Mission (1962), Muslim Student's Society (1962), Union of Muslim Organizations (1970), Islamic Council of Europe (1973), Young Muslims (1984), Islamic Party (1989), Islamic Society of Britain (1990), and, the Muslim

Muslims in Britain

Parliament, the U.K Action Committee of Islamic Affairs, World Islamic Mission, Jamiat'Ulama-i- Islam, among others (Siddiqui 1995, p. 4).

Following the 'Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962', a significant influx of Muslim families migrated to the UK, marking a pivotal moment in the transmission of cultural values to subsequent generations of Muslims in the country (Buryova 2005, p. 1). The political turmoil, conflicts with neighboring countries, and civil unrest in Somalia during the 1960s compelled many Somalis to seek refuge in the UK, searching for a place to survive (Hussain 2008, p. 29). Additionally, the decolonisation process and the Africanisation programmes of the late 1960s and early 1970s spurred increased immigration from India and East Africa (Peach and Gale 2003, p. 474).

The Somali immigrant population in Britain saw significant growth due to ethno-religious conflicts, famines, and natural disasters. The year 1990 marked the peak of asylum seekers from Somalia, contributing to a rising culture of hostility towards asylum seekers in the UK (Sharma 2016, p. 166). While the majority of immigrant men found employment in London, regional centres, and factories, or in unskilled professions, their families predominantly settled in Sheffield, Liverpool, and Manchester (Hussain 2008, p. 30). Unlike other Muslim immigrants, the Somali community primarily sought refuge due to the political instability back home, with an estimated 90 to 95% arriving in Britain since the 1990s (Khan and Jones 2003, p. 6). A national survey highlighted that Somalis, identified as 'Black Africans,' share little in terms of culture, language, diet, dress, and religious practices with their neighbours (Hussain 2008, p. 30).

By the end of the Nineteenth Century, Moroccan merchants had established a robust community in the UK. Additionally, Caribbean and Somali groups emerged as significant sources of labour force, further diversifying the UK's Muslim immigrant population (Peach and Gale 2003, p. 473).

3.4 Immigration Laws

Earlier, migration from colonies was not a major concern in Britain (Smith and Marmo 2014, p. 23). Therefore, the Labour Government introduced the 'British Nationality Act, 1948' as a process of migration from the colonies to Britain and justified the free entry of Commonwealth citizens into Britain, declaring that '[e]very person who ... is a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies... is a citizen of [Britain]' (Smith and Marmo 2014, p. 24). This Act allowed people to settle in Britain 'without a special permit or residence permit, resulting in the arrival of masses of immigrants from all the Commonwealth countries' (Deakin 1969, pp. 77-83; Jan 2023, p. 3). At the same time, between late 1940 to 1960, a topic of 'social, economic and political impacts of colonial migration upon Britain' was part of the discussion at different forums, such as the Parliament, media, and within British society, with a strong emphasis on limiting 'non-white migration' (Ibid.).

This, despite the fact that migration from the former colonies was acceptable to the British government as well to its industries due to labour shortage in the country (Ibid.). Thus, from 1939, British society transformed from a monolithic ‘white society to a multi-racial country’ with mainly a non-white colonial population from Asian and Black communities (Abrahámová 2007, p. 8). As the labour shortage began to stabilise, both the Conservative and Labour parties increasingly advocated for stricter border control measures (Smith and Marmo 2014, p. 28). Kelly (2003, p. 36) observed that the rising number of refugees in the UK led to emerging settlement issues and policy discussions. While the influx of Muslim immigrants reached its peak at the start of the 1960s, it experienced a downturn by the decade’s end. Restrictions introduced by the Immigration Acts of 1968, 1969, 1971, and 1981 significantly altered the trajectory of Muslim immigration to the UK, marking a departure from the previous growth trend.

4 MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS FROM BOSNIA, KOSOVO AND AFGHANISTAN

Despite the British government’s restrictive policies, the UK continued to welcome Muslim immigrants from various countries, driven by the socioeconomic and political transformations in their homelands. The 1990s saw a significant influx of refugees from Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, fleeing war and social unrest. In April 1990, Britain facilitated the Kosovo humanitarian evacuation programme, airlifting over four thousand Kosovars from camps on the Macedonian border. This move, as Smart (2004) notes, enabled the arrival of asylum seekers from Kosovo, leading to a swift increase in the Kosovar Muslim population in the UK (cited in Hussain 2008, p. 34). Remarkably, following the conflict’s resolution, Kosovar refugees returned to their homeland at a higher rate than any other group of asylum seekers in the UK. Nonetheless, a portion of the Kosovar community chose to remain, settling in various parts of England, including around 2,000 in Leeds and between 200 to 300 in London (Ibid.).

In 1992, under the Governmental 1000 programme, the UK also welcomed refugees from Bosnia. These individuals arrived not only with physical injuries but also faced significant mental health challenges due to the trauma they experienced (Fink 2010, p. 557). The adversity of war and conflict compelled the Muslim community to seek refuge in Britain, making it a primary destination for those displaced. This period of global crisis contributed to the rich diversity within the Islamic community in Britain, reflecting a wide range of countries of origin.

Overall, Muslim immigrants hold diverse backgrounds and reasons for entering Britain, even though they are generally considered a homogeneous community based on their common religion - Islam.

Since many Muslims arrived in Britain during periods of labour shortages, while others sought to escape poor socioeconomic conditions or conflicts in their home countries. Given this context, it becomes crucial to assess whether British Muslims have been successful in improving their socioeconomic circumstances.

5 SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF BRITISH MUSLIMS

Based on the available data between 2001 and 2011 from various studies, this section evaluates the socioeconomic conditions of Muslims in England. As a whole, Muslims in Britain have a depressed socioeconomic position compared to the rest of the British population. There is a growing number of Muslim labourers in the market (Abbas 2013, p. 34), but they have a low participation rate in the labour force. Almost one-third of Muslims of working age have no qualification, except for a slight improvement during the last decade (Iqbal 2016, p. 3). In fact, Muslims still experience a significant level of socioeconomic disadvantage. The Annual Population survey found that British Muslims experienced the highest male unemployment rate (13%) in 2004 (Kabir 2010, p. 49). Similarly, a significant proportion of Muslim women (18%) were unemployed. However, with the current generation from Muslim families joining the labour market, such occupational trends are gradually changing (Ibid.).

Statistical evidence from the 2001 census highlights the challenging living conditions faced by Muslims in Britain. The data reveals that Muslim families tend to be larger, with a significant number of dependent children, and experience high rates of unemployment. Additionally, Muslims have some of the lowest health and education indicators, with women disproportionately affected (Carvel, 2004, p. 5). A considerable portion of the Muslim community, particularly South Asians, resides in substandard housing conditions (Abbas 2013, p. 10). These adverse circumstances contribute to the perception that Muslims have struggled to integrate into Western developed society.

On the other hand, the 2011 census revealed that a segment of the British Muslim community had made notable progress, moving into the elite class, with the number of millionaires doubling from 5,000 in 2002 to 10,000 in 2013 (Ansari 2018). There was an increased focus on education, with more Muslims sending their children to school, starting their own businesses, and becoming self-employed. Despite these advancements, the Muslim community continued to face a higher degree of unemployment and economic inactivity compared to the overall UK population. Only a small proportion of Muslims (19.8%) held full-time jobs, compared to 34.9% of the overall population. Additionally, a significant number of Muslims never entered the labour force, a contrast to only 4.3% of the entire UK population. Factors such as racial discrimination and Islamophobia at the workplace might contribute to the higher levels of joblessness among Muslims. According to the latest 2021 census data, only 51.4% of Muslims aged 16 to 64 years were in employment, compared to 79.9% of the overall population (Office for National

Statistics 2023). The Muslim Census (2021, p. 2) found that 50% of Muslims are considered to be living in poverty, with a significant number of Muslim women staying at home to care for their families. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that approximately 190,000 British Muslim females are unable to speak English. Ansari (2018) also noted that 10% of the council wards identified as the most deprived areas in the UK are home to 1.33 million Muslims, whereas only 1.7% of Muslims live in the 10% least deprived areas, highlighting the socioeconomic challenges faced by the community.

The socioeconomic status of Muslims in the UK is also mirrored in their geographic distribution, highlighting the importance of statistical data for analysing their concentration patterns. Contrary to being dispersed across urban areas, Muslims are significantly concentrated in specific cities (Hopkins and Gale 2009). London emerges as a primary hub for the Muslim community, with notable populations also found in cities like Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Birmingham, Bradford, and Edinburgh. It is evident that a substantial portion of the Muslim population, over half (51.7%), resides in just three cities: London, Bradford, and Birmingham, indicating a distinct pattern of settlement within the UK (Ibid.).

The significant concentration of Muslims in cities like London, Bradford, and Birmingham not only reflects the historical patterns of Muslim settlement at various English ports but also raises concerns about potential segregation from the wider population (Ansari 2018). Ansari suggests that this segregation can be attributed to a combination of factors including socio-economic constraints, individual and collective choices, 'white flight', and discriminatory policies and practices from various institutions ranging from local authorities to estate agents. These elements have collectively played a significant role in the development of segregated Muslim communities within these urban areas.

A report by Policy Exchange in 2016 suggests that 'British Muslims as a whole continue to live somewhat more separately than other large ethno-cultural minorities' (Pugh, 2019, p. 273). As noted, the Muslims have constituted a large size cluster in certain cities, but it needs to be further examined whether it was an intentional segregation of Muslims in Britain, due to their own religious limitations and social backgrounds that may make them isolated sometimes.

In fact, former Prime Minister David Cameron addressed the issues of 'segregation, radicalisation, and parallel living' in a February 2011 speech, criticising the British approach of encouraging 'different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and from the mainstream.' He highlighted the failure to offer 'a vision of society to which [Muslim young men] feel they want to belong' (Gale 2013). Albeit, the 'Index of Dissimilarity,' a metric used to gauge integration, showed a slight improvement, decreasing from 56% in 2001 to 54% in 2011. This minor shift suggests a gradual

movement towards greater integration (Ibid.).

The educational attainment of the Muslim community in the UK offers further insight into their socioeconomic status. The first Muslim educational institution in the country, established in the late 1800s by the Liverpool Muslim Institution under Abdullah Quilliam, a middle-class convert to Islam, marked the beginning of formal Islamic education in Britain (Miah et al., 2020, p. 213). According to the 2011 census, there was an improvement in the educational status of Muslims compared to 2001: the percentage of Muslims without any qualifications decreased from 39% to 26%, although this figure remains higher than the overall population's ratio. While the proportion of British Muslims holding educational degrees rose from 20.6% to 24%, a notable 26% still lacked degrees. Several factors contribute to this educational gap, including the aftermath of the War on Terror, low parental engagement with schools, limited living spaces, language barriers, and discrimination in educational settings (Ansari 2018). While it is generally observed that females are more likely to pursue higher education than males, this trend is reversed among British Muslims, with three Muslim boys attending higher education for every two girls. This discrepancy may stem from the sociocultural norms within the British Muslim community, which traditionally prioritise male education over female, who are often expected to assume household responsibilities.

Racism has also played a pivotal role in shaping the economic status and living conditions of Muslim workers in the UK, influencing both their employment opportunities and residential choices (Kundnani 2007). Commonwealth immigrants from the African-Caribbean and Asia were often funnelled into specific sectors of employment, reflecting an ethnic division of labour. As a result, Muslims faced a range of adversities including inequality, cultural abuses, discrimination, and segregation. Their living standards were notably below average, underscoring the systemic barriers they encountered. It is a misconception to suggest that Muslims have chosen to isolate themselves from British society. Instead, their segregation is closely tied to their economic circumstances. Kundnani (2007) argues that Muslims, marginalised due to their class, race, and religion, and relegated to societal ghettos, are unjustly criticised for their perceived reluctance to integrate, highlighting the complex interplay of socioeconomic factors and systemic discrimination in their experience within the UK.

6 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This research reveals that British Muslims constitute a diverse group, differentiated by their country of origin, religious beliefs, cultural values, and traditions. Originating from various global regions, they bring rich traditions, values, and beliefs to the UK, marked by distinct skin colours and physical features influenced by their birthplaces. Their reasons for migrating to Britain are equally varied. While some sought to immerse themselves in Western culture and lifestyle, a majority pursued the prospect of a more

prosperous life. Opting to settle in cities with readily available job opportunities, these immigrants not only aimed to enhance their own living conditions but also contributed significantly to the post-World War II reconstruction of British society and addressed labour shortages in the British industry. Therefore, the influx of Muslims into the UK has proved to be mutually beneficial, enriching both the Muslim community and the broader British society. Regardless of various differences, one element is common among all British Muslim is that they believe in Allah as the supreme authority and who created this world and rules everything. The heart of their faith is obedience to Allah's will who is Eternal, Omniscient, and Omnipotent. With this account, following recommendations are made for policymakers:

- The UK government should implement an 'Anti-Discrimination Strategy' aimed at fostering inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for all British citizens within society.
- UK leadership should systematically record and analyse instances of discrimination to gain insight into their nature and underlying causes.
- State policies should be tailored to address the specific needs and concerns of the Muslim community in Britain.
- The UK should establish an effective, impartial, and independent complaint mechanism that caters to the grievances of minority groups, particularly Muslims, providing a means to address cases of racism and Islamophobia.

7 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the arrival of Muslims in Britain can be categorised into distinct stages. The first stage saw the arrival of Muslims from coastal areas of Africa and the Indian subcontinent; the second stage can be associated with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 which brought Muslim seamen and traders to the UK; the third significant stage can be traced back to 1950 characterised by a substantial influx of Muslims from the Indian subcontinent, along with other ethnic groups arriving in the 1960s. Various pivotal factors, including political instability, labour force demands, ethno-religious conflicts, natural disasters, civil unrest, decolonisation, and labour shortages, contributed to the formation of the British Muslim community. While these groups of Muslims in the UK exhibit cultural and ethnic diversity, they share a common faith, predominantly following the Sunni and Shia schools of thought within Islam.

In different eras, the relationship between Muslims, Christians and other British communities has been multifaceted. However, it is worth noting that despite significant events such as 9/11 and 7/7, the space for Muslims in Britain has not diminished. This resilience and inclusivity are indicative of the strength of the British system.

The literature revealed that the majority of Muslim immigrants in the UK have faced

challenges in achieving socioeconomic parity with the rest of the British population. They have a larger family size and live in less favourable economic conditions. Even today, Muslim communities have to contend with inferior housing conditions, limited health and educational facilities. Considering these indicators, it becomes evident that the lives of British Muslims are not without difficulties. However, it is important to note that they do enjoy certain benefits associated with living in a developed country. Additionally, some individuals within these communities invest in property in their countries of origin, which contributes to their overall quality of life in the UK.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, T. 2013, *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, 1st Ed., United Kingdom: Zed Books Ltd.
- Abbas, T. 2004, 'After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 26-38, <<https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v21i3.506>>.
- Abrahámová, N. 2007, *Immigration Policy in Britain since 1962*, Master's Diploma Thesis, Masaryk University, Czechoslovakia, <https://is.muni.cz/th/64569/ff_m/FinalDraft.pdf>.
- Ahmad, W.I.U. and Sardar, Z. (eds.) 2012, *Muslims in Britain: Making Social and Political Space*, 1st Ed., London: Routledge, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203121467>>.
- Balazard, H. and Peace, T. 2022, 'Confronting Islamophobia and its Consequences in East London in a Context of Increased Surveillance and Stigmatization', *Ethnicities*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 88-109, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968221088016>>.
- Baxter, K. 2006, 'From Migrants to Citizens: Muslims in Britain 1950s-1990s', *Immigrants & Minorities*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 164-192, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619280600863663>>.
- Barnes, H. 2006, *Born in the UK: Young Muslims in Britain*, London, UK: The Foreign Policy Centre, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/26632/Born_UK.pdf>.
- Buryova, A. 2005, *Muslims in Britain*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Masaryk University, Czechoslovakia, <<https://is.muni.cz/th/lq4ei/text.pdf>>.
- Carvel, J. 2004, 'Census shows Muslims' plight', *The Guardian*, 12 October, <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/oct/12/religion.news>>.

- Dale, A., Fieldhouse, E., Shaheen, N. and Kalra, V. 2002, 'The Labour Market Prospects for Pakistani and Bangladeshi Women', *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 5-25, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170222119227>>.
- Deakin, N. 1969, 'The British Nationality Act of 1948: A Brief Study in the Political Mythology of Race Relations', *Race*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 77-83, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/030639686901100106>>.
- Department for Communities and Local Government 2009, *The Turkish and Turkish Cypriot Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities*, London: Change Institute, <<https://csdinternationalcommunityproject.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/turkish-muslim-communities4.pdf>>.
- Fink, G. 2010, *Stress of War, Conflict and Disaster*, Australia: Academic Press.
- Gale, R. 2013, 'Religious Residential Segregation and Internal Migration: The British Muslim Case', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 872-891, <<https://doi.org/10.1068/a4515>>.
- Gilliat-Ray, S. 1998, 'Multiculturalism and identity: their relationship for British Muslims', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 347-354, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13602009808716416>>.
- Glass, R. 1960, *New Comers: The West Indians in London*, London: Centre for Urban Studies, <<https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/mq/volume-39/issue-01/39-1-Newcomers-The-West-Indians-in-London-by-Ruth-Glass-and-Harold-Pollins.pdf>>.
- Hopkins, P. and Gale, R. 2009, *Muslims in Britain - Race, Place and Identities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hussain, S. 2008, *Muslims on the Map: A National Survey of Social Trends in Britain*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Iqbal, J. 2016, 'The Diverse Origins of Britain's Muslims', *BBC*, 18 January, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33715473>>.
- Jan, E. 2023, 'The Political Influence of an Interest Group: A Comparative Study on the Muslim Minority in the United States and Britain', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 10, pp. 1-11, <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01586-1>>.
- Jones, E. and Hedberg, M. 2023, *Europe Today: A Twenty-First Century Introduction*, 6th Ed., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Muslims in Britain

- Kabir, N.A. 2010, *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture, Politics and the Media*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kelly, L. 2003, 'Bosnian Refugees in Britain: Questioning Community', *Sociology*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 35-49, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038503037001386>>.
- Khan, S. and Jones, A. 2003, *Somalis in Camden: Challenges faced by an Emerging Community*, Camden: The Refugee Forum, <<https://www.karin-ha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/A9R9B9B.pdf>>.
- Kundnani, A. 2007, *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*, London: Pluto Press.
- Matar, N. I. 1998, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511582738>>.
- Miah, S., Sanderson, P. and Thomas, P. 2020, 'Educated to be Separate?' in *Race, Space and Multiculturalism in Northern England: The (M62) Corridor of Uncertainty*, Palgrave Politics of Identity and Citizenship Series, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42032-1_7>.
- Mohdin, A. 2022, 'Census says 39% of Muslims Live in most Deprived Areas of England and Wales', *The Guardian*, 30 November, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/30/census-says-39-of-muslims-live-in-most-deprived-areas-of-england-and-wales>>.
- Mohit 2022, 'The Suez Canal: A Man-Made Marvel Connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea', *Marine Insight*, 7 July, <<https://www.marineinsight.com/maritime-history/a-brief-history-of-the-suez-canal/>>.
- Muslim Census 2021, *A Year of Lockdown: The Impact on Muslims*, 6 April, <<https://muslimcensus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/year-of-lockdown-revised-v1.pdf>>.
- Nielsen, J.S. 2008, 'Religion, Muslims, and the State in Britain and France: From Westphalia to 9/11', in *Muslims in Western Politics*, Abdulkader H. Sinno (ed.), Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Office for National Statistics 2023, 'Religion by Housing, Health, Employment, and Education, England and Wales: Census 2021', 24 March, <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religionbyhousinghealthemploymentandeducationenglandandwales/census2021#religion-by-employment-status>>.

- Peach, C. 2006a, 'Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and Economic Disadvantage', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 629-655, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870600665284>>.
- Peach, C. 2006b, 'South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain, 1951-2001', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 133-146, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930600955234>>.
- Peach, C. and Gale, R. 2003, 'Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England', *Geographical Review*, vol. 93, no. 4, pp. 469-490, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2003.tb00043.x>>.
- Pugh, M. 2019, *Britain and Islam: A History from 622 to the Present Day*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Robinson, V. 1986, *Transients, Settlers, and Refugees: Asians in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sharma, S. 2016, *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization*, London: Routledge.
- Siddiqui, A. 1995, 'Muslims in Britain: Past and Present', *Muslim Population*, <<https://muslimpopulation.com/library/History/Muslims%20In%20Britain.pdf>>.
- Sirkeci, I., Tilbe, F., Bilecen, T., Dedeoglu, S., Seker, B.D., Unutulmaz, K.O., Costu, Y. and Kesici, M.R. 2016, *Little Turkey in Great Britain*, London: Transnational Press.
- Smith, E. and Marmo, M. 2014, *Race, Gender and the Body in British Immigration Control: Subject to Examination*, Berlin: Springer.
- Statista 2023, Islam in the UK - Statistics & Facts, Statista Research Department, 20 December, <<https://www.statista.com/topics/4765/islam-in-the-united-kingdomuk/#statisticChapter>>.
- Spencer, I. R. G. 1997, *British Immigration Policy since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain*. London: Routledge, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203437032>>.