

Islamophobia and the Muslim Experience

The Labour Party Report

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LABOUR
MUSLIM
NETWORK

Labour Muslim Network
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12 December

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INTRODUCTION

The Labour Party prides itself in being the party of anti-racism, inclusion and equality. Our party and movement has a proud tradition of fighting for social justice and inclusion - both in legislation and within the fabric of our society.

For this reason and many more, British Muslims have overwhelmingly supported the Labour Party for the last 20 years.

In the 2017 general election, an estimated 85% of Muslims supported the Labour Party compared to the support of 11% for the Conservatives. Similarly, in the 33 seats where Muslim voters had the potential to affect the overall outcome of the election - and where Conservatives finished either first or second - all but one of these seats saw a swing of 10% towards the Labour Party. This data is amongst many others that shows a trend across the years of consistent support within the Muslim community for Labour in consecutive elections.

While this support continues to be strong, the political world today is a very different place to that of recent history.

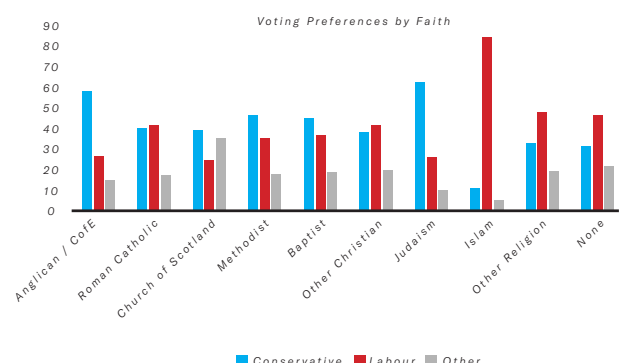
The growing threat of Islamophobia in mainstream politics has caused significant concern in across Muslim communities in Britain. Since the 2016 EU referendum, we have seen a sharp rise in hate crime and - in particular - a rise in violent and non-violent Islamophobic attacks. Home Office figures released in October 2020 showed that the highest number of recorded hate crime offences committed in the UK were against Muslims. Of the 6,822 religious hate crimes recorded by the police in 2019/20, over 50% were targeted towards Muslims.

With this and the increasing normalisation of Islamophobia in the Conservative party, and a growing concern over its perceived penetration into the Labour Party, Muslims across the country find themselves in a precarious position.

The research commissioned and conducted by the Labour Muslim Network aimed to take an honest look at the prevalence and nature of Islamophobia in one of Britain's largest political parties. Our goal has been to capture the experiences of Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party, explore institutional barriers and begin to develop solutions where the party falls short in tackling this racism. The research was conducted in the spirit that we make the Labour Party a safe and open space for Muslims and all peoples who wish to fight for a fairer, more just society.

Our report marks the largest consultation of Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party in history. We have brought together a wealth of experience from across the Labour and Trade Union movement to capture the full range of experiences by Muslims in this field. We firmly believe now is the right time for an honest introspection into the issue of racism experienced by Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party. If our party is to meet its promise of an open and fair society, and if it is to continue in its anti-racist traditions, it must tackle the issue of Islamophobia in our society head on and with serious commitment and action.

1 <https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data/>
2 <http://www.brin.ac.uk/religious-affiliation-and-party-choice-at-the-2017-general-election/>
3 <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/muslim-votes-appear-to-have-made-a-difference-at-this-general-election/>
4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925968/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920.pdf





FOREWORD

by Afzal Khan MP

The UK is home to 2.6 million Muslims, but Islamophobia is on the rise and can have distressing and real-life implications for our Muslim community. A primary example is the far-right peddling false narratives that British Muslims are ‘spreading corona’, which we’ve seen during this pandemic. As a result of this narrative, Muslim communities have suffered a shocking 40% increase in online Islamophobia during this period. The Government’s own figures also once again reveal Muslims have been victims to the highest proportion of all hate crimes committed this year.

Whilst our political representatives should be leading by example, harrowing figures have shown that the derogatory comments made by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who likened Muslim women to letterboxes and bank robbers, resulted in a 375% increase in hate crime across the UK, creating fear and anxiety among many British Muslims. This Islamophobia Awareness Month, it is our moral duty, as the Labour Party, to tackle this insidious hatred, and that starts first and foremost within our own Party.

This report was written against this backdrop of rising Islamophobia and concerns over the treatment of Muslim members within the Labour Party. It provides key findings, proposes recommendations and details the nature of Islamophobia within our Party, helping to shine a light on an issue which has gone unnoticed and deserves immediate attention. As the Parliamentary Chair of the Labour Muslim Network, I feel passionate about defending the rights of British Muslims, including our Muslim members.

It is at the core of our Labour Party values to promote equality, social justice and opportunity for all. Labour has a long history of championing the rights of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people across our country. But there’s still a long way to go — and we’ll only get there if all our voices are heard.

Shockingly, the key findings from this report highlight the disconnect between Labour and its Muslim members, with 56% holding the view that the shadow cabinet team does not represent the Muslim community effectively and 55% do

5 According to hate crime monitoring charity TellMAMA



not trust the leadership to tackle Islamophobia effectively. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our Muslim membership is being well represented and we must take swift action to tackle Islamophobia within our own ranks.

I find it deeply saddening to learn that 48% of Muslim members do not have confidence in the Labour Party complaints procedure to deal with Islamophobia effectively. Whilst the Labour Party has enjoyed the overwhelming support of the Muslim community for decades, we cannot take their support for granted. The Labour Party must commit to a zero tolerance of Islamophobia and rebuild confidence with its Muslim members.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims working definition of Islamophobia, has the confidence of over 800 organisations and has been adopted by the all major parties, apart from the Conservatives. As the Vice Chair of the APPG on British Muslims, I welcome the Labour Party as one of the first to adopt the definition, but we must do more and fully embrace the recommendations set out by the APPG report and ensure that we, the Labour Party, lead by example.

Let us remind ourselves that the reason the APPG created this definition was the Government's sheer reluctance to adopt a formal definition of Islamophobia in the first place. Whether we look at the evidence from the Ruby McGregor-Smith review or the Lammy review, we are confronted with the fact that Islamophobia has damaging consequences for the life chances and equalities enjoyed by our British Muslim communities. The APPG's inquiry was set up to do something about the nature and scale of Islamophobia and its impact on British Muslim communities—and doing something is what we, as the Labour party, are committed to.

I would like to thank the Labour Muslim Network for their hard work and commitment on this issue. This report is the biggest consultation of Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party, and as such I encourage the Leadership of the Labour Party to engage with the findings and together, we can make our Party a safe and anti-discriminatory place.



ABOUT LABOUR MUSLIM NETWORK

The Labour Muslim Network (LMN) is an inclusive organisation which seeks to promote the voice of Muslim members and supporters in the UK Labour Party.

The network works with members, activists, community organisations, Councillors and Parliamentarians to ensure that British Muslim voices are heard at all levels of the Labour Party. We strive to encourage British Muslim engagement with the Labour Party and in the political process based on our shared values of social justice and equality.

Through encouraging increased participation in politics, and building a strong relationship with the Labour Party, the Labour Muslim Network empowers its supporters to campaign for a fairer, more equal and democratic society. Our members are made up of local activists, ordinary members, Councillors and Members of Parliament representing all parts of the United Kingdom.

The Labour Muslim Network also offers unique opportunities to engage with the Labour Party, community development opportunities including training and capacity building, and innovative campaign approaches to members, supporters, CLPs and the Labour Party as we work together to increase community organisation and deliver a country for the many, not the few.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research project was to take a deep-dive into the experiences of Muslim Labour members and supporters relating to the issue of Islamophobia. As such, our methodology reflected a strategy to capture data (both qualitative and quantitative) from this specific constituent group alone.

Throughout this report, we take a look closely at the experiences of Muslims in the Labour Party by conducting the largest consultation of Muslims in the history of the Party. This consultation took the form of an online survey of members, as well as telephone interviews with Muslim elected officials in the Party.

The LMN Islamophobia survey was conducted over a two-month period (July and August 2020). Members were posed with a list of 12 questions ranging from personal experiences within the Labour Party to perceptions of the party priorities overall. All responses were anonymised and validated through email verifications, IP address checks and balanced based on the speed of completion.

Respondents were asked about their relationship with the Labour Party and if they identify as Muslim. Only those who self-identified as both Muslim and members/supporters of the party were permitted to complete the survey - and therefore only their responses were taken into account in this report. Our team also balanced responses

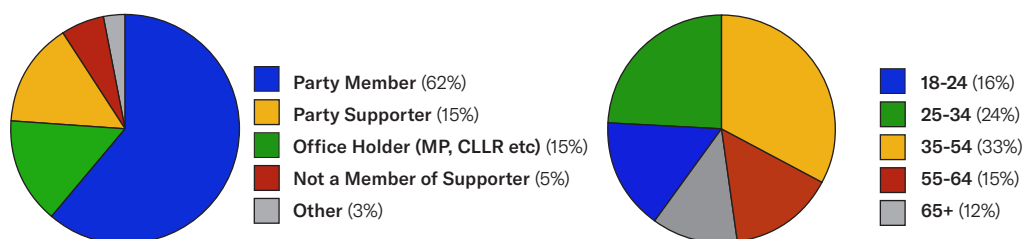
based on age to ensure we get a reflective sample from across the Muslim community.

Appertaining to work done between the Labour Party and the Labour Muslim Network in 2019, we estimate that there are between 10,000 to 20,000 Muslim Labour members in the UK. Based on this figure, we aimed to capture the experiences and views of a 1% representative sample of this constituent base.

Our survey concluded with 676 respondents (well above the 1% sample) with an average completion time of 04:38. Of these responses, 102 were rejected having not passed our validation checks. A further 152 were not permitted to complete the survey on the basis of either not identifying as a Muslim and/or not being a member or supporter of the Labour Party. This resulted in 422 valid responses (double our 1% sample) for which the data throughout this report is predicated on.

We recognise and stress that Muslims are not a homogenous group; there exists a wide breadth of opinions, views and experiences amongst Muslim within the Labour Party, and indeed, across Britain. That is why LMN has made every effort throughout each stage of this project to capture the broad range of views that exists within the Labour Party and to ensure that this diversity is accurately reflected in this report.

Respondent Demographics



ISLAMOPHOBIA: A DEFINITION

In November 2018, the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims published a report titled: *"Islamophobia Defined: the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia."*⁶

Following two years of consultation across the political sphere, the Muslim community and relevant organisations and charities, the APPG settled on a working definition of Islamophobia. This definition has since been adopted by the Labour Party and multiple local authorities from across the United Kingdom.

For the purposes of this report, we will be using this working definition as the backdrop of our understanding of Islamophobia. It will help inform our analysis and recommendations, and will provide the context behind our understanding of members' experiences and institutional behaviours.

The report contained the following definition:

"Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness."

Contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/ fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as,

especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism, and claims of a demographic 'threat' posed by Muslims or of a 'Muslim takeover'.

- Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.
- Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.
- Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the 'Ummah' (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying Muslim populations the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, e.g. loyalty tests.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia (e.g. Muhammed being a paedophile, claims of Muslims spreading Islam by the sword or subjugating minority groups under their rule) to characterize Muslims as being 'sex groomers', inherently violent or incapable of living harmoniously in plural societies.
- Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.

KEY INSIGHTS

Experiences of Islamophobia

- Over 1 in 4 (29%) Muslim members and supporters have directly experienced Islamophobia in the Labour Party.

Witnessed Islamophobia

- Over 1 in 3 (37%) have directly witnessed Islamophobia within the Labour Party.

Party Attitudes

- Nearly half of Muslim members (44%) and supporters do not believe the Labour Party takes the issue of Islamophobia seriously.

Confidence in the Party

- Nearly half (48%) of Muslim members and supporters do not have confidence in the Labour Party complaints procedure to deal with Islamophobia effectively.

Feelings of Representation from the Party

- 46% of Muslim members and supporters disagreed with the statement “I believe the Labour Party represents the Muslim community effectively”. Compared to 29% that agreed.

Feelings of Representation from the Leadership

- 59% of Muslim members and supporters do not feel “well represented by the leadership of the Labour Party.”

Trust in the Leadership to Tackle Islamophobia

- More than half (55%) of Muslim members and supporters do not “trust the leadership of the Labour Party to tackle Islamophobia effectively.”

Belief in the Shadow Cabinet to Represent Muslims Effectively

- More than half (56%) of Muslim members and supporters do not feel “the shadow cabinet team represents the Muslim community effectively.”

DIRECT EXPERIENCES WITH ISLAMOPHOBIA WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Key to our research into the prevalence of Islamophobia in the Labour Party was capturing the direct experiences of members and supporters on the ground. Our work here aimed to encapsulate the stories and voices of those who engage with the party across the different avenues and to analyse trends and patterns.

In this section we look at the direct experiences of these members as it pertains to Islamophobia.

When asked about their personal experiences of Islamophobia within the Labour Party, we found that over one in four members and supporters (29%) reported having *directly* experienced Islamophobia at some point within the structures of the Labour Party. This compared to 50% who claimed not to have directly experienced Islamophobia within the Labour Party and 18% who did not know.

Common trends amongst those who reported their direct experiences with Islamophobia include accusations of “planned takeovers” when Muslims participate at a local level, stereotypes of “grooming gangs”, a disproportionate expectation on Muslim members to condemn violence and insults using terms such as “terrorist” and “foreigners”.

It is also important to note the intersectional nature of experiences of racism in this field. Many of the people who answered “do not know” or “other” in this section, specifically commented on their broader experiences of racism. One member, as an example, explained that while she did not know if it amounted to defined Islamophobia, she had certainly “experienced discrimination in the party”. This response and others like it point to a lack of awareness and education within the Labour Party on Islamophobia as a form of racism.

“There are definitely undercurrents of Islamophobia within the Labour Party, stemming from ignorance and systemic racism which may not be overt but does exist.”

Muslim Woman, Age 55 to 64:

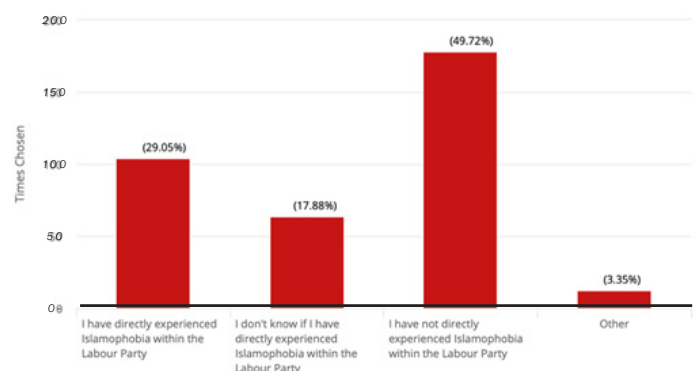


Figure 1: Have you ever experienced Islamophobia within the Labour Party?

Beyond individuals directly experiencing Islamophobia themselves, we asked members if they had directly witnessed Islamophobia within the Labour Party. This could range from witnessing instances of Islamophobia in a local meeting, on social media or in a national Labour Party setting. Our research found that when asked, over one in three (37%) members reported that they had directly witnessed Islamophobia in the Labour Party at some point in time. This is compared to 41% who reported that they had not directly witnessed Islamophobia and 19% who did not know.

When discussing their experience of witnessing of Islamophobia in the Labour Party, members often pointed towards social media and comments made at local constituency meetings targeting Muslim members and communities. There was also a particular trend in references to the ‘war on terror’ and the impact that this has had on the rhetoric of and climate within the party at all levels.

“Like in most institutions within the U.K. as a Muslim it often feels as though we are towards the bottom of the list when it comes to human rights, being respected and having our best interest heard/ advocated. It feels as though within all institutions within the U.K. it has become increasingly acceptable to condemn and even abuse Muslims.”

Muslim Woman, Age 25 to 34:

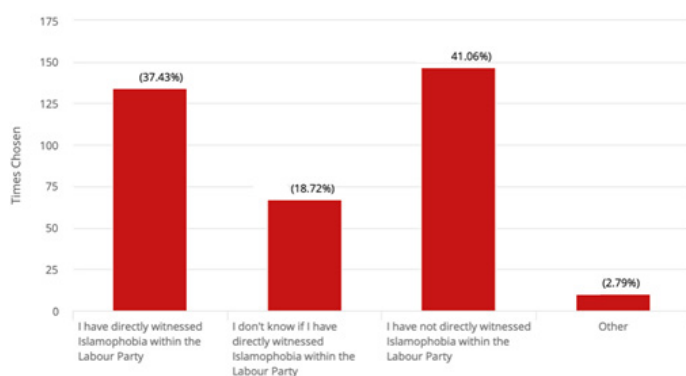


Figure 2: Have you ever witnessed Islamophobia within the Labour Party?

It is important, as we attempt to understand members' experiences of Islamophobia that we know where incidents of Islamophobia are taking place. We asked members who reported experiencing or witnessing Islamophobia within the Labour Party, to expand on where this took place. These responses included online and in physical meetings and spanned across different avenues and engagement points.

The figures suggest an even distribution relating to Islamophobic experiences amongst CLPs, the national party and from elected officials of the Labour Party (this includes MPs, Councillors, CLP Executive Officers and all other Labour office holders). A smaller group of respondents (5%) reported experiencing and/or witnessing Islamophobia in 'other' settings; which included in unofficial Labour group meetings, student societies, canvassing sessions and by Labour staff members.

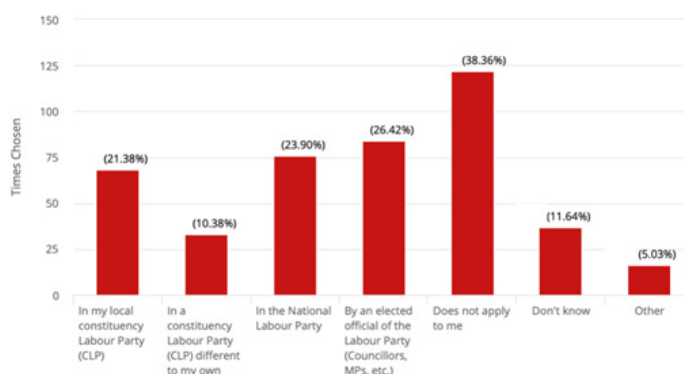


Figure 3: If you have experienced or witnessed Islamophobia within the Labour Party, where did this take place?

Our findings in these three figures provide an important and valuable insight into the experiences of Muslim Labour members and supporters. Approximately one in four Muslim members and supporters have reported direct experiences with Islamophobia - with a further one in three reporting having witnessed Islamophobic racism in the party. These experiences have been reported as prevalent across all parts of our party and all engagement points - be it local or national.

As such, these findings present a stark call for action and the need to work with key partners and stakeholders across the Muslim community to tackle the serious issue of Islamophobia within our party. Our early recommendations - provided in the conclusion of this report - should act as the starting point of a conversation to create a more open and accessible Labour Party for Muslim members.

DOES THE LABOUR PARTY TAKE ISLAMOPHOBIA SERIOUSLY?

The perception of importance placed on the issue of Islamophobia by the Labour Party plays a hugely important role in the eyes of Muslim members. The disposition to report instances of racism, willingness to participate in local or national activities and enthusiasm to engage are all informed by this perception amongst Muslim members. Here we explore the degree to which Muslim members and supporters believe the Labour Party takes the issue of Islamophobia seriously.

In figure 4 we asked Muslim members and supporters if they “believe the Labour Party takes the issue of Islamophobia seriously.” Our response found that 44% of members did not believe the issue of Islamophobia is taken seriously, 32% believe the party took the issue ‘somewhat’ seriously and 18% believed Labour does take the issue of Islamophobia seriously. A further 6% did not know.

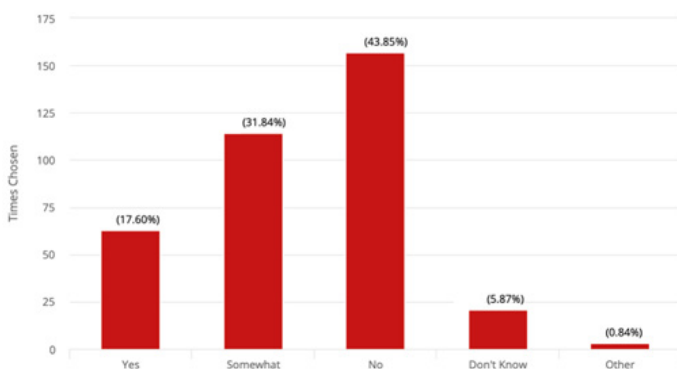


Figure 4: Do you believe the Labour Party takes the issue of Islamophobia seriously?

These findings show us that there is considerable concern amongst Muslim members and supporters of the party surrounding the seriousness in which the party is perceived to handle Islamophobia.

The most consistent trend informing this position was the belief that there exists a hierarchy of racism in the Labour Party. Muslim members and supporters who did not believe the party takes Islamophobia seriously also informed our researchers that they believed other forms of racism took precedent over the experiences of Muslims. There was considerable concern from many respondents that the Muslim experience with racism sat at the very bottom of Labour’s priorities. This perception of a hierarchy of racism was a significant trend and was a factor in their response in figure 4.

A further trend our research found was the impact of the recently leaked internal Labour Party report on antisemitism. The report is alleged to have shown Islamophobic comments and views shared by Labour Party staff and inaction in tackling complaints. As reported by the Muslim Engagement and Development organisation (MEND), there was allegedly a ‘reluctance to take action following a complaint demonstrating forty Islamophobic, antisemitic, and far-right Facebook posts by a local member; and a lack of progress in a case involving a member using the hashtag “Jezbollah” against a Muslim member.’

While the leaked report is not within the purview of this report’s investigation, the impacts of it on Muslim members and supporters was prevalent and

7 <https://cryptome.org/2020/04/Labour-Antisemitism-Report.pdf>



influential in responses to figure 4. It was clear that the content of and analysis surrounding this leaked report played a role in the perception of Muslims in relation to Islamophobia within the Labour Party

Similarly, we looked at the trust levels amongst Muslim members and supporters in relation to the Labour Party leadership in dealing with Islamophobia effectively. We found, demonstrated in figure 5, that 26% of Muslim members and supporters agreed with the statement, 'I trust the leadership of the Labour Party to tackle Islamophobia effectively'; compared to 55% who disagreed and 19% who did not know.

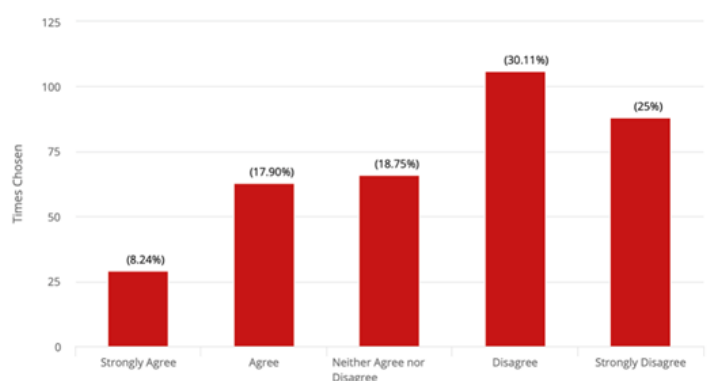


Figure 5: "I trust the leadership of the Labour Party to tackle Islamophobia effectively"

"Islamaphobia is is growing day day and if not tacked head on this will not only damage Labour Party but will cause huge uproar and devisions [sic] too."

Muslim Woman, Age 35 to 54

8 <https://www.mend.org.uk/leaked-labour-party-report-reveals-islamophobia-and-inaction-within-the-party/>

THE COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

The Labour Party complaints and disciplinary process has been a widely discussed topic for many years. It is therefore unsurprising that this area was significant in our consultation relating to Islamophobia with Muslim members and supporters.

When asked if they have 'confidence in the Labour Party complaints procedures to deal with Islamophobia effectively', 48% of Muslim members and supporters responded 'no'. This is compared to 28% who responded 'somewhat' and 13% who responded 'yes'. Our research found that this deficit in confidence came largely from a combination of Party culture and experience. Many members did not feel complaints of Islamophobia were dealt with seriously, or in a timely manner, and those who had engaged in the disciplinary process were often dissatisfied with their handling and treatment.

Examples of comments from respondents:

"My complaint has not been dealt with to this day despite being submitted a year ago."

"I have complained to the Labour Party complaints but have not heard back."

"I didn't bother to submit a complaint, at the time I was the BAME Officer in the CLP and the other office holders were un-supportive to say the least."

"The complaints are still being investigated almost one year later."

"At times, the complaints procedure was very bureaucratic and monotonous. It took a long time before a response was given to the reports I had made, and eventually no action was taken when I felt that action was justified."

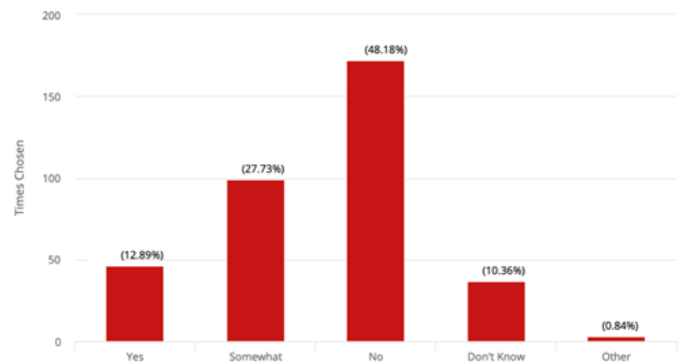


Figure 6: Do you have confidence in the Labour Party complaints procedures to deal with Islamophobia effectively?

This lack of confidence in the complaints and disciplinary process has seemingly had consequential effects on member behaviours. When asked if those who had experienced and/or witnessed Islamophobia had reported the incidents to the party complaints procedure, the majority responded 'no'. Figure 7 shows that of those for whom the question was relevant, the majority claimed not to have reported their experience/witnessing of Islamophobia (36%), 9% responded they had submitted a complaint and 4% did not remember.

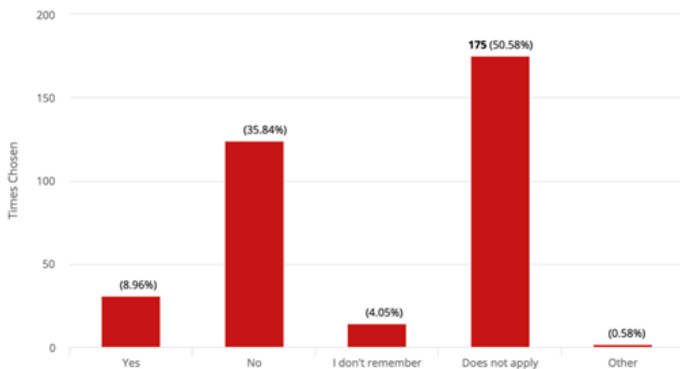


Figure 7: If you have experienced and/or witnessed Islamophobia in the Labour Party, did you report this through the party complaints procedure?

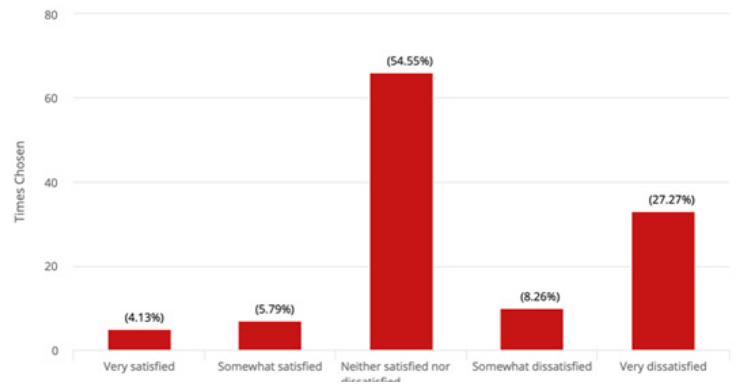


Figure 8: If you have reported Islamophobia through the Labour Party complaints procedure, were you satisfied with the handling of your complaint?

Furthermore, our work explored the experiences of those who had indeed reported cases to the complaints and disciplinary procedure in terms of how they perceived their experiences.

Figure 8 shows our research found that 35% of Muslim members and supporters who had reported Islamophobia through the party complaints procedure were dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint, compared to 10% who were satisfied. A larger 55% of members were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - though many of these were due to being active cases still pending investigation and/or action.

It is clear that there is a significant gap - both in confidence and efficiency - when it comes to the Labour Party's complaints and disciplinary procedure. As it pertains to Islamophobia, our findings show that Muslim members and supporters generally do not believe the processes are fair or efficient, and are not satisfied with their experiences therein.

“The complaints system remains unfit for purpose. The sophistication of racism and Islamophobia today is not recognised or accommodated by procedures.”

Muslim Woman, Age 35 to 54



REPRESENTING MUSLIMS

While the Labour Party maintains high levels of support from the Muslim community, it is important to investigate how effectively Muslims believe they are being represented. In this section our research looks at how effectively Muslim members and supporters believe they are being represented by the Party and some of the reasons underpinning their perceptions.

When asked to state the degree to which they agree with the statement “I believe the Labour Party represents the Muslim community effectively”, 47% of Muslim members and supporters disagreed, while 29% agreed. A further 24% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Figure 9 should be of particular concern as it shows us that a significant proportion of the Muslim members and supporters who responded did not believe the Labour Party was representing the Muslim community effectively. It should, however, be noted that there is a smaller but sizable portion of respondents in figure 9 who did believe the party was representing the interests of and issues facing Muslims.

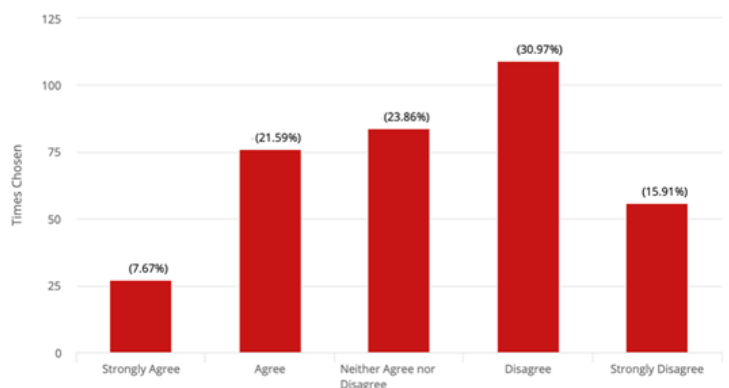


Figure 9: “I believe the Labour Party represents the Muslim community effectively”

Similarly, these feelings surrounding representation were reflected when asked about the leadership of the Labour Party.

In figure 10 we asked Muslim members and supporters to let us know to what extent they agreed with the statement: “I feel well represented by the leadership of the Labour Party”. Our response showed us that 59% of members and supporters disagreed with the statement, compared to 21% who agreed, and a further 20% who neither agreed nor disagreed. In addition to figure 9, this should be a cause for concern to the Party as it shows the majority of Muslim members and supporters do not believe they are being represented well enough.

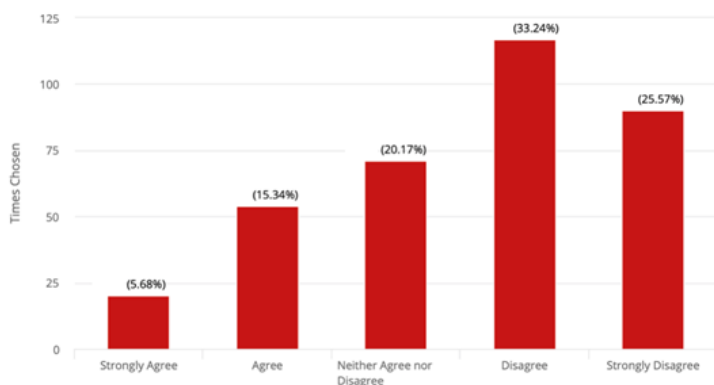


Figure 10: "I feel well represented by the leadership of the Labour Party"

The adoption of particular policy positions affecting Muslims, decisions on foreign policy stances and a history going back to the 'war on terror' were all trends our study found that may help explain the feelings expressed in figure 9 and 10.

The perceived change in policy relating to Kashmir early in 2020 is a particular example which caused considerable hurt and distress amongst Muslim members and supporters. We found many members citing it directly in our consultations as a cause for concern in relation to the effective representation of the Muslim community. Similarly, many members and supporters raised the ongoing political crisis in Palestine as an area of great hurt and anxiety. One member stated: "to me, it is Islamophobic if the rights of the Palestinians are not heard."

Additionally, on matters of domestic policy, positions on counter-terrorism strategy - and particularly the Prevent program - were raised by members as causes of concern. Prevent is one strand of the government counter-terrorism strategy (originally developed under a Labour government) which has come under intense criticism from within Muslim communities. Our research found that Labour's connection to the Prevent program was influential in some respondents feeling not represented by the party.

All of these issues seem to have fed into the data we see in figure 11. Here we asked members to what degree they feel the shadow cabinet team (as of July/August 2020) represents the Muslim community effectively. 17% of Muslim members and supporters agreed with the statement, 55% disagreed and a further 28% neither agreed nor disagreed.

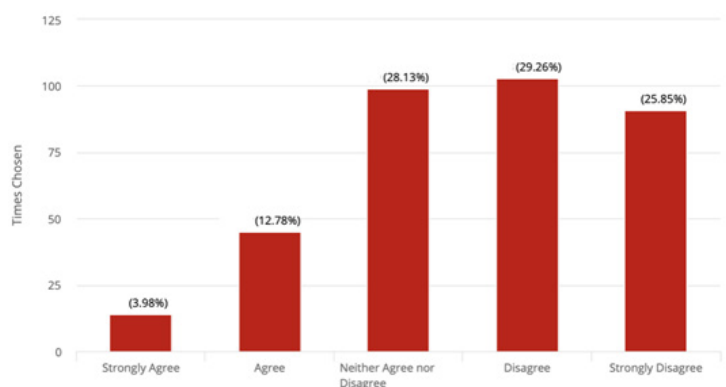


Figure 11: "I feel the Shadow Cabinet team represents the Muslim community effectively"

CONCLUSION

This research and report was commissioned and conducted by the Labour Muslim Network to begin a journey of understanding the views of Muslim Labour members, their perceptions of the Party's representation of British Muslim communities and their experiences of how Islamophobia is tackled within the Party.

There is little doubt that British Muslims continue to support the Labour Party consistently and in big numbers. There is also little doubt that Islamophobia is rife in the ruling Conservative Party and is a cause of serious concern for British Muslims across the country. However, the rise in Islamophobia not just as an overt kind of racism but as structural discrimination that disadvantages Muslim communities, its prevalence and penetration in the Labour Party, and the importance placed on the issue is having significant impact on the future of the relationship between Muslims and Labour.

This report has uncovered a multitude of worry and angst from Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party. Our research has raised serious concerns surrounding the direct experiences with Islamophobia, perceptions on the importance placed on Islamophobia, representation of Muslim communities and dissatisfaction surrounding the complaints procedures. Our findings - much like the Muslim community - are not monolithic. There continues to be a wide range of experiences, opinions and views among Muslim members and supporters of Labour.

Nevertheless, the findings and outcomes of this research should be a source of concern for the Party. The goal of this report is to highlight the issues that exist, to uncover the stories and experiences of a range of Muslim members and supporters, and importantly, to begin a journey of rooting out Islamophobia in our movement, in our party and in society as a whole. As such, we have provided a range of initial recommendations to be adopted by the Labour Party. These recommendations have been developed through work with broad Muslim stakeholders and should form the start - not the end - of a process of change. Our expectation is that from publication of this report we will begin immediate work with the Labour Party and appropriate stakeholders to develop more comprehensive and long term recommendations and action points.

It should be of no doubt that now is the right time for comprehensive action on the issue of racism experienced by Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party. Once again, if our party is to meet its promise of an open and fair society, and if it is to continue in its anti-racist traditions, it must tackle the issue of Islamophobia in our midst and in wider society head on and with serious commitment and action.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS



A commitment to equality for Muslims in the fight for anti-racism

This public commitment should come from the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party, the party chair and the general secretary of the Labour Party. There needs to be a public acknowledgment of the policies, decisions and behaviours within the Party that have let Muslim members down when it comes to Islamophobia.



The development of comprehensive Islamophobia training to be rolled out in conjunction with LMN, the Muslim Council of Britain and other Muslim organisations as appropriate

Along with adopting a definition and a Code of Conduct, members must have confidence that all elected officials, volunteers and staff members under the Labour banner have undergone comprehensive, mandatory training on Islamophobia.



All policies adopted by the Labour Party to be equality impact assessed

For many Muslim members, it does not sit well that the Labour Party is seen as the architect party of the War on Terror. Therefore, going forward, the Party must make a concerted effort to assess the impact of Shadow Cabinet policies and Party voting decisions on Bills going through Parliament. This can happen through stakeholder meetings with representative groups, research and data and most effectively by learning from past mistakes.



The adoption of the APPG definition on Islamophobia by all Labour-run councils, groups and constituency parties

This initiative should be led from the very top of the Party, and we ask the Leader's office to lead by example.



A code of conduct surrounding Islamophobia to be developed with LMN and the Muslim Council of Britain, and used by the Labour Party Governance and Legal Unit

Adopting a definition of Islamophobia on its own is not enough. There must be a concerted effort made by the Leader's Office, the Governance and Legal Unit and all groups under the Labour banner to sign up to a Code of Conduct which clearly lays out behaviours, policies and cultures that can be Islamophobic.



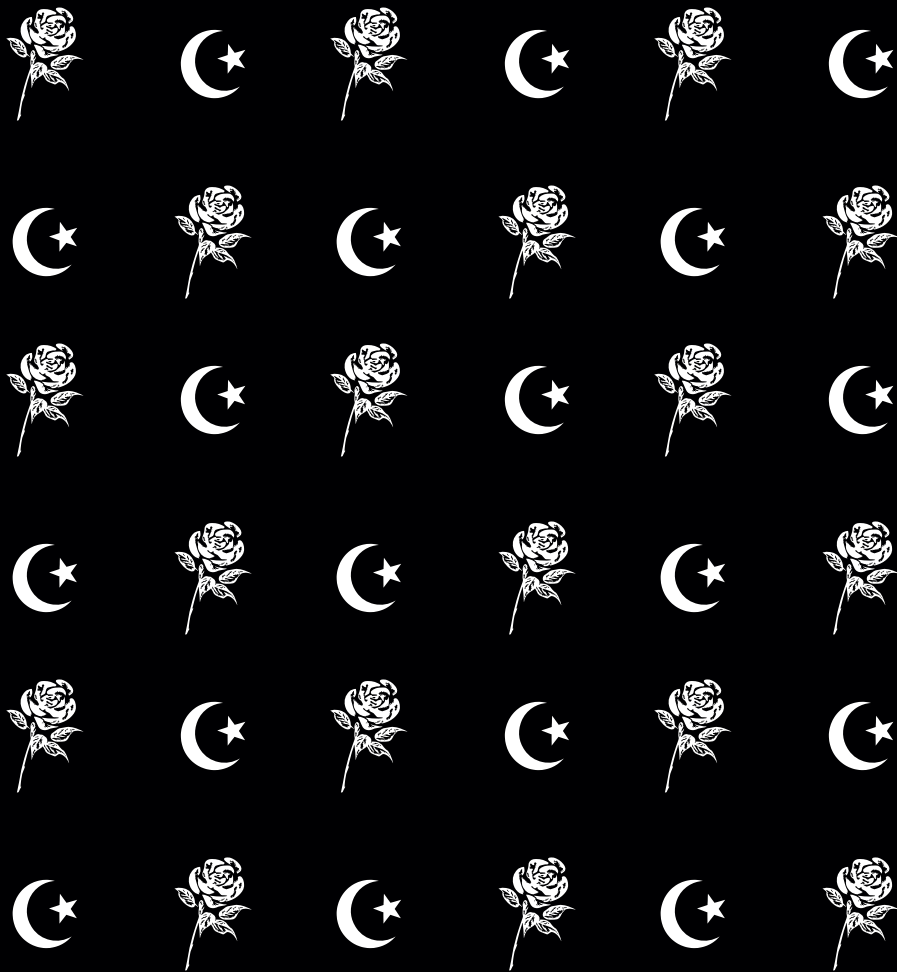
The publishing of a handbook educating members on Islamophobia - including a list of commonly used tropes

We do not expect education on Islamophobic tropes and actions to be a one-off exercise. Instead, we would ask the Labour Party to provide handbooks, for all groups under the Labour banner, on common Islamophobic tropes, examples of Islamophobia and general guidelines on anti-racist organising as a central tenet of Labour organising.



A new complaints procedure with transparency and confidence of impartiality

The current procedure does not work for Muslim members. The Party should develop a new, transparent and impartial procedure which inspires faith and confidence in members to report their experiences fully.



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