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Labour Muslim Network

Labour Party Islamophobia Poll - January 2022

Introduction

In November 2020, the Labour Muslim Network published 'Islamophobia and the Muslim Experience'. This report was a deep dive into the experiences of thousands of Muslim members of the Labour Party. The publication of the report was the conclusion of the largest consultation of Muslim Labour members in the history of the party and unveiled some startling findings.

We found that over 1 in 4 Muslim members of the Labour Party had directly experienced Islamophobia. A further 1 in 3 had directly witnessed Islamophobia within the Labour Party and nearly half of Muslim members and supporters did not believe the Labour Party takes the issue of Islamophobia seriously.

The report, its findings, and its ultimate conclusions were accepted in full by the leader of the Labour Party Sir Keir Starmer MP, general secretary David Evans and deputy leader Angela Rayner MP.

This new research, conducted by the Labour Muslim Network, looks at the views and perceptions of Muslim Labour members and supporters over a year on from the groundbreaking 2020 report.

Methodology

The purpose of this poll was to capture the perception and 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. This poll took the form of an online survey of members, as well as telephone interviews with Muslim elected officials in the Party.

The survey and telephone interviews were conducted over a three week period (5th - 24th January 2022). 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.

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Our survey concluded with 428 respondents (well above the 1% sample) with an average completion time of 10:07. Of these responses, 83 were rejected for either having not passed our validation checks, or 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 345 valid responses (nearly 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.

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.”*¹

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 poll, 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 behaviors.

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.

¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

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- ❖ 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.

Results

The purpose of this poll was to capture the perception and 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. This poll took the form of an online survey of members, as well as telephone interviews with Muslim elected officials in the Party.

Since the publication of the 2020 LMN report titled "Islamophobia and the Muslim Experience", how do you believe the Labour Party has dealt with the issue of Islamophobia?

Very Well - 3%

Quite Well - 10%

Neither Well nor Badly - 24%

Quite Badly - 19%

Very Badly - 40%

other - 5%

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In November 2020, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer MP responded to the LMN 'Islamophobia and the Muslim Experience' report by saying "we take Islamophobia seriously and are utterly committed to eradicating it." In the year since the publication of the report, how well has Sir Keir Starmer handled Islamophobia as the Labour Party leader?

Very Well - 4%

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Quite Well - 7%

Neither Well nor Badly - 20%

Quite Badly - 18%

Very Badly - 46%

other - 5%

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Perceptions

In this section we explore the perceptions of Muslim members and supporters of the Labour Party. We asked participants to what degree they agreed with the following statements. Please note these are the same questions asked in the 2020 report and we have tracked the changes between 2020 and 2022 answers.

"I believe the Labour Party represents the Muslim community effectively"

Strongly Agree - 5% (-3)

Agree - 12% (-10)

Neither Agree nor Disagree - 19% (-5)

Disagree - 24% (-7)

Strongly Disagree - 39% (+23)

* brackets are changes with same question asked in Nov. 2020

** all percentage points are rounded to the nearest 1% and thus final total may be below 100%

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"I feel well represented by the leadership of the Labour Party"

Strongly Agree - 4% (-3)

Agree - 10% (-5)

Neither Agree nor Disagree - 14% (-6)

Disagree - 25% (-8)

Strongly Disagree - 47% (+21)

* brackets are changes with same question asked in Nov. 2020

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

Strongly Agree - 4% (-4)

Agree - 12% (-6)

Neither Agree nor Disagree - 17% (-2)

Disagree - 20% (-10)

Strongly Disagree - 48% (+23)

* brackets are changes with same question asked in Nov. 2020

** all percentage points are rounded to the nearest 1% and thus final total may be below 100%

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"I believe the shadow cabinet team represents the Muslim Community effectively"

Strongly Agree - 3% (-1)

Agree - 8% (-5)

Neither Agree nor Disagree - 18% (-10)

Disagree - 26% (-3)

Strongly Disagree - 45% (+19)

* brackets are changes with same question asked in Nov. 2020

** all percentage points are rounded to the nearest 1% and thus final total may be below 100%