

Valuing Family, Valuing Work:
British Muslim Women and the
Labour market



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Executive Summary

This study explores the employment levels, attitudes, perceptions and barriers to labour market entry and progression of second generation British Muslim women.

Muslims currently make up three percent of the UK population and are the largest of the 'emergent' religions in the UK. They have the youngest age structure of all the religious groups: 46 percent of Muslims are less than 25 years old. Within the next ten years, Muslims will account for one quarter of the growth in the working age population in the UK. Yet British Muslim women are the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labour market, with 68 percent defined as inactive in the labour market and only 29 percent in employment.

It is widely assumed that British Muslim women have low levels of educational attainment, which is then assumed to explain their low levels of employment. In fact only 22 percent of British Muslims have no qualifications compared to 29 percent of the general population. Fifty percent of British Muslims now enter higher education compared to 38 percent of their White counterparts. 36 percent of British Muslim women respondents in the small-scale survey undertaken for this study have graduate or post-graduate qualifications.

However, graduate qualifications do not directly translate into employment for all British Muslims, particularly women. Only 76 percent of British Muslim graduates are in work compared to 87 percent for all graduates. There are more male British Muslim graduates (61 percent) than female (39 percent) in work.

The causal factors that explain a large proportion of first generation British Muslim women's low employment and high inactivity, such as limited English language fluency, low levels of education or transferable education and skills, and limited understanding of the UK labour market, do not apply, or apply to the same degree, for second generation British Muslim women.¹ Many of the first generation are now also in their late forties and fifties and soon will no longer be within the working-age population (though significantly more could be done now to improve their prospects).²

Previous reports have looked at the employment levels of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. This study focuses on the employment levels and barriers to employment affecting second generation British Muslim women who are a young, generally well-educated and, at present a strikingly under-used resource in the UK labour market. It analyses the current position and sets out recommendations for enabling more women to choose the right balance between work and family.

This study combines analysis of secondary data along with a new survey of the attitudes and aspirations of British Muslim women. Its key findings are:

Many British Muslim women value work and careers

- Many British Muslim women want to succeed in education and at work. Most have positive attitudes to work and many have high career aspirations. The majority also want to return to work after having children and combine family life with a career.

¹ Second generation is defined as those British Muslim women who are UK born or arrived in the UK before age 16.

² Working-age population is defined as women aged 16-59 and men aged 16-64.

- Some of the barriers which affect British Muslim women affect all women, such as gender discrimination, inflexibility, and lack of childcare. But British Muslim women also face additional challenges, including discrimination based on clothing and faith. Also, existing labour market programmes are neither shaped to their needs, nor seen to be shaped to their needs.

Unemployment and inactivity remain very high – despite high levels of educational attainment

- Despite their high levels of education, positive attitudes and overwhelming family support to work, British Muslim women continue to do less well in the labour market. Our analysis shows that 51 percent of second generation British Muslim women are inactive in the labour market, compared to only 17 percent of second generation Hindu women. Thirteen percent of second generation British Muslim women are unemployed, compared to four percent of second generation Hindu and Sikh women, and three percent of White women. This confirms other findings that in eight of the nine regions of the UK, the British Muslim women's inactivity level is higher than their employment level. Indeed in some regions the British Muslim women's economic inactivity levels are a mirror image of the White employment level. For example, in the West Midlands the employment rate for British Muslim women is 21 percent and the inactivity rate is 70 percent, whereas the White employment rate in the same region is 75 percent and the inactivity rate is 21 percent.

British Muslim women face distinct barriers to finding work – and receive little support from public agencies

- British Muslim women face clear barriers to finding jobs. Only 50 percent of the women we interviewed who are not currently in work, but wanting to work, had succeeded in gaining job interviews.³ The same proportion felt there was not enough accessible advice and support on how to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews or present themselves as employable candidates in order to successfully gain employment. Many have no experience of using existing support services: half of the women respondents not in work had never been to a Jobcentre to ask for employment advice or support. Of those that did go to a Jobcentre, 78 percent said they did not get the help they needed in order to improve their skills levels or find work. This is in stark contrast to the general population, 60-70 percent of whom were 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with the service they had received from Jobcentre Plus.⁴
- None of the women in work who we interviewed had received help from a Jobcentre. Forty five percent found their first job through the help of family and friends. Support in work is equally limited. Forty six percent of women respondents in work said they did not have any support from their employers and managers to develop their skills further and progress at work, and 41 percent of those interviewed were not happy with the way their careers were progressing and felt they should have progressed further.

³ 'Women respondents' are the second generation British Muslim women we surveyed specifically for this study (for more information see Chapter 2).

⁴ Research report No 252, Jobcentre Plus evaluation: Summary of evidence, J Corkett et al, Corporate Document Services, DWP, 2005.

Common perceptions about attitudes and barriers are misleading – most women are supported by their families in their decisions to work, and only a small minority want to work in all-women or all-Muslim workplaces

- There are widespread perceptions that ‘Muslim men and families do not let Muslim women work’ or that ‘they hold Muslim women back’. However, our analysis challenges this view. All the women we interviewed who are in work said that they have the support from their families or husbands to do so, and 93 percent of the women who are not in work want to work and feel supported by families in doing so. It is also assumed that many women want to work only in ‘women-only’ or ‘Muslim-only’ work environments. Among our interviewees, only 15 percent of women not in work wanted this while 85 percent said that they want to work in mainstream jobs. Nor is there evidence that women are not prepared to travel: 93 percent of women not in work said they were prepared to travel for up to an hour to get to work.

Many experience direct or indirect religious discrimination

- Department of Work and Pensions analysis has estimated that between a quarter and half of the current ethnic minority employment gap is caused by employer discrimination.⁵ Our analysis confirmed that there is continuing discrimination: 23 percent of women respondents who are in work said they felt they were treated differently or encountered discrimination in interviews because they were Muslim. Forty three percent of women respondents not currently in work said they felt they were treated differently or encountered discrimination at interviews because they were Muslim.
- Fifty percent of women respondents in work wear the hijab (and can therefore be visibly identified as being Muslim) and several of them highlighted that, while they could not be certain, they felt that they had missed out on progression opportunities because of religious discrimination and that the wearing of the hijab could have been a factor. Fifty seven percent of women respondents not in work wear the hijab. Therefore, over half of all British Muslim women surveyed wear Islamic dress.
- Eighteen percent of women respondents in work stated that they previously wore the hijab, and in one case the niqab and that when they did so they could not find work. Once they stopped wearing the hijab and niqab they all found employment. This finding reinforces recent evidence⁶ which suggests there is a strong possibility of an additional ‘Muslim penalty’ and that the combination of faith and ethnicity could be a greater determinant of labour market outcomes than ethnicity on its own. However, employers have made moves to address faith in the workplace. Fifty nine percent of the women who are in work stated they had access to a prayer room.

Many British Muslim women choose to take time out to care for their children – but there is very little use of formal childcare

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers (who make up 75 percent of British Muslim women) are far less likely to be in employment either prior to having a baby or during the early years of their child’s life than Indian,

⁵ DWP internal analysis, AICD, 2008.

⁶ Is ethnicity or religion more important in explaining inequalities in the labour market? Heath and Martin, 2008, unpublished (for more information see Context 3.2).

White or Black mothers. However 38 percent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers who were employed during pregnancy returned to paid work quickly, within three months.⁷

- Seventy two percent of the second generation British Muslim women interviewed, who were in work, have children. Ninety percent of those in work who don't yet have children, but plan to, stated their preference to take a career break, raise their children at home and return to work after the children entered nursery.
- None of the women surveyed had ever accessed formal childcare. Only 28 percent of the women in work stated they would access formal childcare in the future.
- Sixty percent of women currently not in work have worked previously and 47 percent of these women left work to have children. This strong preference for 'taking time out' of work to have children. Limited use and access of formal childcare provision explains much about the low levels of labour market activity amongst second generation British Muslim women.

Summary diagnosis

Our diagnosis is that British Muslim women are more educated than the general population but suffer higher unemployment and inactivity levels. Part of the reason for this is that many want to look after their children until they start full-time schooling. But for those who do want to work there is evidence of multiple discrimination barriers on top of those that affect all women. Additional specific support is therefore needed to mitigate these barriers, in particular through providing more active and holistic employment outreach support designed to meet the needs of the many inactive women who want to work but cannot find work, in order to make the most of this significant and growing untapped potential.

⁷ Ethnicity and patterns of employment and care, EOC, September 2007

Recommendations

Our recommendations are designed to directly address the issues raised in the research.

Tackle misconceptions head-on

We have identified many misconceptions amongst employers and the general public regarding the educational levels and career aspirations of British Muslim women. RDAs should conduct an information and awareness campaign for employers and employment service providers. This should promote the abilities, willingness to work and high aspirations of British Muslim women, and ensure that employment service advice can be targeted at this group.

Work with employers to reduce religious discrimination

Many employers want to address religious discrimination but 27 percent of employers are confused about the difference between positive action, which is lawful, and positive discrimination which is unlawful. RDAs should work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Government Equality Office and employer organisations to:

- Produce guidance to help employers openly address faith in the workplace, understand the difference between positive action and positive discrimination and ensure they have in place effective measures to support reported cases of religious discrimination.
- Produce information and communication tools to ensure employers can effectively communicate to their employees that they will not tolerate direct or indirect forms of religious discrimination, and that religious dress and religious practice of British Muslims in the workplace is protected by legislation.

Provide targeted outreach to connect women to job opportunities

British Muslim women are not currently using employment services such as Jobcentre Plus because they do not, or are perceived not to cater to their particular needs. Therefore a much more targeted and holistic approach is required, one that reaches out to the community and tackles the multiple barriers these women face.

We recommend that RDAs build on the example of the Manchester Enterprise and work with local authorities and Jobcentre Plus to create a targeted outreach service, staffed by skilled teams (including British Muslim women) to engage British Muslim women, provide one-to-one job preparation, job-search and career advice, and tackle the multiple barriers to employment to help them find suitable employment. There are some understandable concerns about programmes directly targeted towards specific groups: however non-targeted programmes simply have not worked in meeting the needs of this group.

Help graduates and other skilled women progress in their careers – and build their soft skills and networks early on

Some highly skilled British Muslim women are finding it difficult to enter or progress in work due to a lack of social capital networks and awareness of the market. RDAs should:

- Provide a programme of outreach mentoring, internship, careers and soft skills support to help increase the number of British Muslim women graduates entering employment.
- Build on examples such as the HotProspects graduate employment programme to provide effective support in jobsearch, preparation and progression, and monitoring outcomes by religion and ethnicity.
- Partner with employer organisations to support initiatives to actively and openly address faith in the workplace, remove barriers and discrimination, dispel myths through open dialogue sessions and Muslim or inter-faith networks between Muslims and non-Muslims.
- Partner with employers and employer organisations to provide more volunteer work experience placements to help increase the employability of inactive British Muslim women to help them build soft skills and secure paid employment.

Improve awareness and accessibility of formal childcare

Our research showed very little engagement with formal childcare. RDAs now need to:

- Increase awareness among British Muslim women of the benefits of formal childcare for their children and the eligibility of tax credits through outreach programmes in schools, women's organisations and Mosques.
- As the Childcare Affordability Programme is extended ensure this childcare provision is more accessible for British Muslims, for example through improving representation levels of British Muslim women in the childcare workforce and providing halal food to British Muslim children.

Use the public sector's levers to influence employer behaviour

RDAs should use their purchasing power through public procurement to encourage contractors to promote equality between different religious groups, conduct monitoring by faith and promote greater diversity in employment, including for British Muslim women. This will also require more effective monitoring of RDA agencies and RDA programme beneficiaries to help identify progress.

The overall goal of this package of policies is to improve British Muslim women's ability to choose the right mix of work and family, increase their employment and progression levels and help address the low employment knock-on effects of child poverty and social exclusion.

Chapter Summary

- Chapter 1** describes the objectives of the study.
- Chapter 2** is concerned with methodology. It describes how a survey of 50 second generation British Muslim women respondents from Manchester, Leicester and London was carried out and how an analysis of a snapshot of RDA programmes, other voluntary sector good practice employment programmes and employer recruitment practices was carried out.
- Chapter 3** gives a summary of key research and evidence to date highlighting low ethnic minority employment levels and the existence of an 'ethnic penalty'. It also provides new evidence to show the correlation between ethnicity and faith and the possibility of a 'Muslim penalty' resulting in high levels of inactivity for British Muslim women.
- Chapter 4** provides employment data for all British Muslim women and for second generation British Muslim women broken down by all nine RDA regions and compares these levels with other minority faith groups and their White counterparts. It provides a snapshot of the three RDA areas selected for this study (Northwest, East Midlands and London), RDA policies and programmes, and voluntary sector and employer initiatives to increasing employment levels of diverse groups, including British Muslim women, in the three selected cities of Manchester, Leicester and London.
- Chapter 5** assesses the causal factors and barriers to labour market entry and progression, attitudes to education and employment, perceptions of discrimination and the levels of employment support for second generation British Muslim women, using data from survey respondents.
- Chapter 6** summarises the research and puts forward recommendations of how to increase the employment and progression levels of second generation British Muslim women in the labour market.

1. Introduction

The objective of this study was to explore the outcomes, attitudes, perceptions and barriers to labour market entry and progression for second generation British Muslim women, and to put forward policy recommendations for all Regional Development Agencies designed to increase the employment and progression levels of British Muslim women.

The London Development Agency (LDA) is responsible for developing and delivering an Economic Development Strategy for London. The Economic Development Strategy (EDS), along with the LDA's Corporate Plan, outlines specific objectives, targets and actions for addressing equality. All Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are responsible for delivering sustainable growth and promoting equality for all. This includes raising the participation rates of minority and disadvantaged groups, as outlined in their Regional Economic Strategies. Increasing the employment levels of British Muslim women will help each RDA deliver the employment goals set out in their Regional Economic Strategies.⁸

Legislation and the strategic objectives of each RDA set the parameters within which the RDAs strive to deliver equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery for all, irrespective of their age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or possible disability: the six equality strands. Specifically, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires public sector bodies to prepare Race Equality Schemes and the Human Rights Act 2000 has significant implications for RDAs in terms of their role as an influencer, partner and employer. The Disability Discrimination Act, Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act also apply to all RDAs.⁹

The LDA is committed to developing programmes to address the needs of all of London's diverse communities. These include providing employment training to prepare people for work, and enable them to progress within work; as well as working with business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to help businesses develop and grow. The LDA is the lead RDA on Equality.

This study focuses on the employment experience of second generation British Muslim women with qualitative analysis conducted in Manchester, Leicester and London.¹⁰ All three cities have high and ethnically diverse populations of British Muslims.

⁸ This study has been written in accordance with RDA policy to ensure it is reader-friendly for persons with reading difficulties. Therefore, the study does not contain any italics or underlines.

⁹ The LDA has a statutory duty under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 and all RDAs have a duty under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. Equality Framework 2004-2007, London Development Agency, 2004.

¹⁰ These three cities fall within the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA), East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and London Development Agency (LDA) regions.

The reason for this focus on the second generation is that, while we accept all British Muslim women suffer from an overall low employment rate, high unemployment and high inactivity rate, many of the explanatory and causal factors affecting the first generation of British Muslim women in employment are markedly different from those affecting the second generation. Research has shown that for many British Muslim women in the first migrant generation low English language fluency, low educational attainment or limited transferability of foreign qualifications, low skills and employment experience, low overall understanding of the UK labour market and integration were all factors that explained to a large extent their low employment levels. The majority of the first migrant generation of British Muslim women have now reached, or are nearing, retirement and will no longer make up part of the female working-age population (age 16-59).

Many of the causal factors above do not apply, or do not apply to the same degree, to UK born, UK-educated second generation British Muslim women. Second generation British Muslim women have benefitted from full-time education in the UK, have greater English language fluency and educational attainment, and have a stronger sense of integration and better understanding of the UK labour market through the careers services available to them. It is therefore of greater relevance and greater overall benefit to focus now on second generation British Muslim women in order to improve our understanding, dispel myths and address the barriers to employment affecting this age group.

The majority of this group are still very young in relation to the rest of the working-age population. While we do not know the exact size or average age of the second generation British Muslim women group, we do know that 46 percent of British Muslims were born in the UK and are under 25 years old. Therefore, this young group is, and will continue to be, a valuable resource for the UK labour market.

Increasing the employment levels of all disadvantaged groups, including British Muslim women is a priority for all RDAs. This is not just because they are a valuable resource who can contribute to the labour market but also because employment brings greater benefit than just economic well-being, such as a reduction in child poverty. We know that for the general population, in households with no adult working, children are at a 58 percent risk of poverty. This risk reduces to 14 percent in households where one or both parents are working.¹¹

¹¹ Ending Child Poverty: everybody's business, HMT, DWP and DCSF, 2008.

Definition - British Muslim

Muslims in the UK come from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Over 40 percent are of Pakistani origin and nearly 20 percent of Bangladeshi origin. Of the remainder, about 15 percent are of Indian or other Asian origin, up to ten percent are from Turkish or Turkish Cypriot origin, and the rest are from the Middle East, East Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, with about four percent being of mixed ethnic origin. There is a small group (perhaps less than one percent) of White converts. Recent waves of Muslim immigrants and refugees have come from Morocco, Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

British Muslim - As second generation ethnic minority groups become more distant from their parental roots in, for example, Bangladesh, the religious identity rather than the cultural identity is easier to accommodate with being British. The Muslim religious identity has been a mechanism for integration providing a young educated second generation the way to a dual identity as British Muslims and multiple identities along race and faith lines.

Surveys by MORI (2007) and YouGov (2005) highlight that the majority of Muslims in the UK are very loyal to the UK. Being British enables them to adopt a hybrid identity and is reflected in the growing number of Muslims identifying themselves as British Muslim.

All second generation Muslim women interviewed for this study were asked if they identified themselves as 'British Muslim', British, 'Muslim' or along individual ethnic lines – 98 percent chose to be identified as 'British Muslim or British'. Therefore, all Muslim women in this study are referred to as being 'British Muslim'.

Source:

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/madeleine_bunting/2006/12/a_challenge_to_amartya_sen.html

2. Methodology

The aim of this study is to document and understand national and regional quantitative and qualitative findings of the outcomes, attitudes, perceptions and barriers to labour market entry and progression for British Muslim women and put forward policy recommendations to increase the employment and progression levels of British Muslim women.¹²

This study consolidates the large body of research detailing the existence of a national ethnic minority employment gap and an 'ethnic penalty'. This study highlights the fact that the majority of the ethnic minority employment gap is in fact a Muslim women's employment gap.

New evidence, using statistical regression analysis, highlights the possible existence of an additional 'Muslim penalty' in the labour market. Quantitative data analysis shows high levels of unemployment and inactivity and low levels of employment for second generation British Muslim women in all the nine RDA regions of the UK and compares these employment levels with other second generation minority faith groups and their White counterparts.

We also undertook a small-scale qualitative study and used national and regional quantitative statistics in order to get a varied geographic and ethnically diverse snapshot of British Muslim women in the UK. Three cities, Manchester, Leicester and London, were chosen to carry out our qualitative interviews giving a north, midlands and south snapshot covering three different RDA areas, the Northwest, East Midlands and London respectively. All three cities have high populations of Muslims from a variety of ethnic groups.

We decided to focus on employment issues exclusively affecting second generation British Muslim women living in three selected cities. Therefore, we interviewed:

- Second generation British Muslim women
- RDA employment programme providers and good practice programme providers
- Employers and employer organisations

2.1. Second generation British Muslim women¹³

¹² Using Pakistani and Bangladeshi as proxy indicators for British Muslims is no longer considered adequate as it ignores the high levels of employment disadvantage and discrimination encountered by Indian, African and White British Muslims. However as national research on the effect of faith is still, relatively, in its infancy and Pakistani and Bangladeshi women make up 75 percent of British Muslim women it has been used where appropriate.

¹³ A wide variety of ethnicities were represented among the respondents. While Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian are highlighted in the profile categories, the 'Other' category includes respondents from Albanian, Algerian, Egyptian, Iranian, Libyan, Somali and Turkish origin.

As employment barriers affect those who are in work as well as those who are not in work, interviews were held with British Muslim women who are in work and not in work, including students. Interviews were held with 50 second generation British Muslim women who volunteered to take part in this study. Twenty interviews were held in London and 15 interviews each were held in Manchester and Leicester.¹⁴

Interview respondents were selected at random giving a variety of ethnicity¹⁵ and age (between 16 and 39)¹⁶ in the three cities. Respondents were identified from the following sources:¹⁷

- RDA programme beneficiaries
- Learning and Skills Council programme beneficiaries
- Voluntary sector employment providers
- Voluntary sector community organisations
- Muslim organisations
- Jobcentre Plus customers

¹⁴ Quotations from British Muslim women respondents have been included in the quantitative analysis. To maintain their confidentiality while putting forward relevant employment information respondents have been identified in the following manner: if they are in work their professional title is given; if they are not in work and are registered unemployed, and claiming Job-seeker's Allowance they are identified as being 'unemployed'; if they are not in work but not claiming an unemployment benefit they are identified as 'out of work'; if they are not in work but are in full-time education they are identified as being a 'student'.

¹⁵ Every effort was made to try and interview an ethnically diverse random sample of second generation British Muslim women in the three cities. While a cross-section of women from different ethnic groups were interviewed in London, unfortunately no Bangladeshi women were identified in the Leicester and Manchester cities.

¹⁶ The upper age limit of 39 years was selected for the cohort due to Muslim migration patterns into the UK which largely occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is therefore assumed that the majority of second generation British Muslim women are under 40 years of age.

¹⁷ A full list of the organisations from which the respondents were identified and selected in the three cities can be found in Appendix 1.

Sample profiles of respondents:

Figure 1: Ethnic breakdown

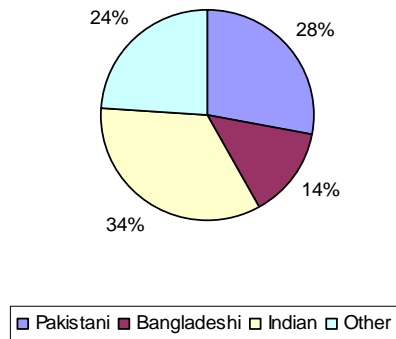


Figure 2: Education level

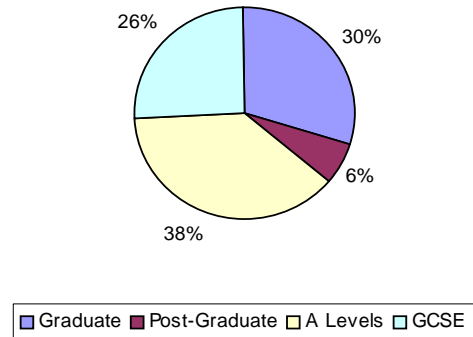


Figure 3: Employment profiles

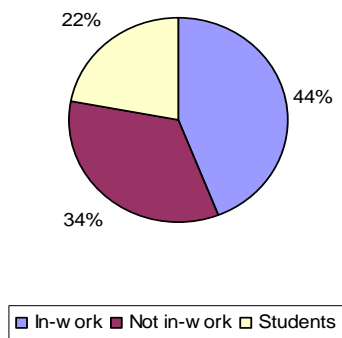
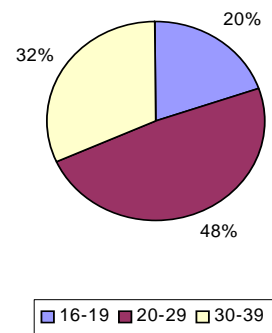


Figure 4: Age profiles



As respondents were being questioned about sensitive topics such as faith and discrimination, we used a detailed questionnaire but also conducted interviews in a semi-structured format.¹⁸ Respondents were allowed and encouraged to comment on a variety of concerns relevant to their labour market experience. Where respondents had participated in RDA programmes, they were asked additional questions regarding their experience of those programmes. This approach has generated a rich body of qualitative evidence of the attitudes and barriers to employment, and the labour market experience of British Muslim women. Interviews took place between February and May 2008.

¹⁸ Interviews took place in person and over the telephone. The full list of questions put to respondents can be found in Appendix 3.

In interpreting the quantitative data from the interviews we have not separated the information according to whether the data was collected in Manchester, Leicester or London, as the sample size in each city is too small to make comparisons between the cities and regions. Also, despite the small sample, little overall difference was found in the employment experiences of British Muslim women between the regions. Therefore the qualitative analysis from all three regions has been used to identify barriers and good practice in employment for second generation British Muslim women. The qualitative data from the interviews has only been separated by region to share the experience and views of second generation British Muslim women who have participated in a specific RDA or voluntary sector programme in that region.

2.2. RDA programme providers and good practice programme providers

Interviews and open discussions were conducted with RDA policy officials, RDA employment programme providers and voluntary sector employment and community providers in the three cities. These generated a snapshot of current RDA employment programme provision, delivering programmes to British Muslim women and helped identify other good practice examples from the voluntary sector. All three RDAs have a different strategic structure. For example, Manchester has a sub-regional structure and therefore discussions took place at different regional and sub-regional levels.

2.3. Employers and employer organisations

To help improve our understanding of employer recruitment practices, diversity processes, recruitment and progression barriers and challenges to increasing diverse, ethnic minority and faith minority employment levels, including British Muslims, open discussions were held with a variety of small, medium and large employers in the three cities. Employers were identified from a variety of sources including employer organisations, RDAs and voluntary sector programme providers. The majority of discussions were held with Heads of Human Resources as well as Chief Executive in some cases.

We also held open discussions with employer organisations in the three chosen cities to improve understanding of key recruitment and progression challenges for greater faith diversity, and identify good practice examples as identified by their members.¹⁹

Discussions aimed to cover a variety of important issues regarding recruitment practices and progression employer practices, and how these directly or indirectly affected employment and progression levels for British Muslim women. Employers and employer organisations were encouraged to discuss recruitment and progression issues relevant to their organisation and so discussions with employers covered the following issues:

- Do they have a diversity policy in place?
- Do they monitor by ethnicity?

¹⁹ A full list of employers and employer organisations who participated in this study can be found at Appendix 1.

- Do they believe their workforce is representative of their local population?
 - Do they have one mainstream recruitment process or do they undertake any additional proactive recruitment initiatives to diversify their employee recruitment?
 - Do they find they have any difficulties in attracting diverse applicants, including Muslim women?
- Do they monitor by faith?
 - If so, what are the reasons for doing so, as monitoring by faith is not currently required by legislation?
 - If not, do they plan to monitor by faith in the future?
- Are they aware of whether they currently have any Muslims, including Muslim women in their workforce? If so:
 - Do any Muslim women wear the headscarf?
 - Do they provide their staff with a prayer room?
 - Have any behavioural incidents or discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity or faith been brought to their attention?
 - Do they have any additional support, development or progression measures in place to help minority groups, including Muslim women, progress within their organisation?
 - Have they noticed any change or difference in employment behaviour among their Muslim women employees, as compared to their other female counterparts?

3. Context

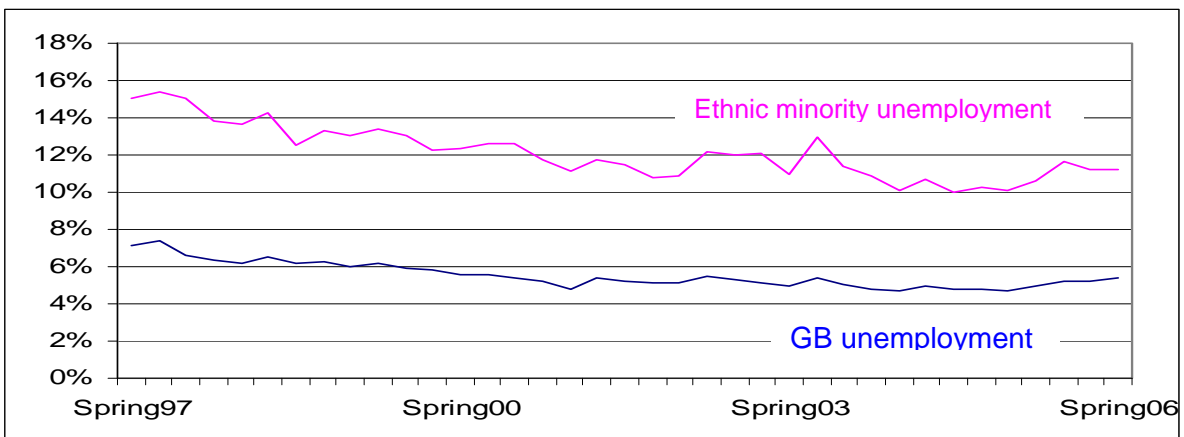
3.1. Despite the clear benefits of workforce diversity there is a recognised and persistent ethnic minority employment gap and 'ethnic penalty'

British society is becoming far more diverse with increasing concentrations of ethnic and faith minority groups settling within a handful of regional conurbation areas. There are widely recognised labour market benefits from greater workforce diversity including opportunities for economic growth and inclusion through improved understanding of diverse groups and cultures. Many leading organisations have documented the 'business benefits' of greater workforce diversity including the ability to move into new markets and attract more diverse customers.

Faith and ethnic diversity brings significant regional economic benefits too. For example, London's ethnic minority communities, approximately one third of whom are British Muslims, have enormous spending power, with an after-tax income of around £16 billion. Ethnic minority-owned businesses, again many of whom are British Muslims, generated a combined sales total of £90 billion in 2004 and made a significant contribution to the London economy through job creation and wealth creation.²⁰ The successful London bid for the 2012 Olympics highlighted the rich diversity and positive benefits of the faith and ethnic diversity of the city adding to its vibrancy and global competitiveness.

However, despite the clear benefits of greater diversity and a strong UK labour market, there remains a significant and persistent gap in the employment and unemployment rates of all ethnic minority groups compared to their White counterparts. Even though there have been several national policy interventions to try and address this gap, there has been little change in the employment and unemployment rates between ethnic minorities and White over the last ten years. The National Employment Panel report (2007) highlighted that while the national employment rate was 76 percent the ethnic minority employment rate was only 60 percent.²¹ Figure 5 shows the persistently high ethnic minority unemployment rate between 15-13 percent while the national unemployment rate is less than half at 7-5 percent, over the last ten years.

Figure 5: The ethnic minority unemployment gap



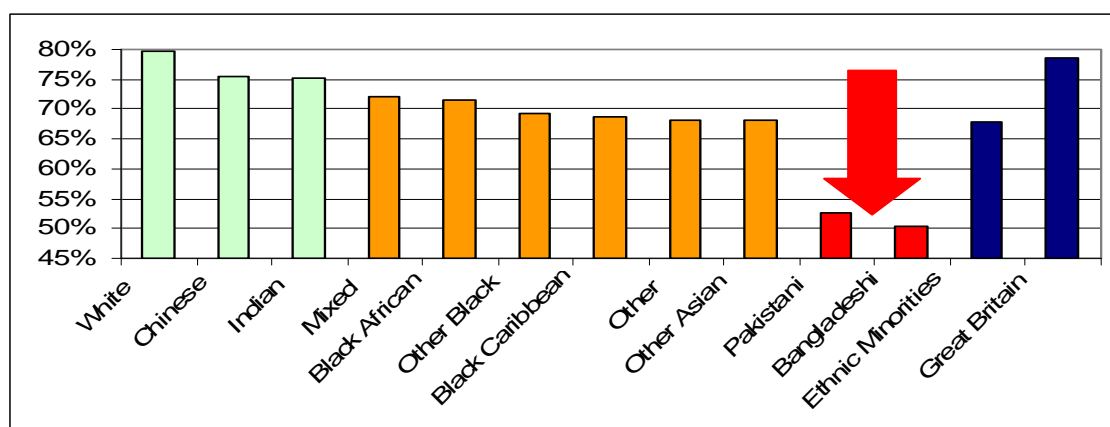
²⁰ www.lda.gov.uk

²¹ 60/76 The Business Commission on race equality in the workplace, Report by the National Employment Panel, October 2007.

The recent National Audit Office report on ethnic minority employment highlighted that despite good intentions there has been limited impact by national employment policies to improve the labour market outcomes of ethnic minorities. The report stressed that the ethnic minority employment gap results in a loss to the UK economy of £8.6 billion every year.²²

Labour market outcomes vary considerably between individual ethnic minority groups. For example, the Indian and Black Caribbean groups have relatively high employment rates. Figure 6 shows that Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups on the other hand have the lowest employment rate among all ethnic minority groups with a 28-30 percentage point gap in employment, compared to their White counterparts.

Figure 6: Employment Rates (excluding students)



Source: AICD, DWP, 2006.

While there is no single cause for the level of labour market disadvantage human capital, social class, culture and family patterns, and access and utilisation of mainstream services all play a part. Discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity also plays a part. These factors that culminate into an overall employment gap between ethnic minorities and their White counterparts have been identified as an 'ethnic penalty'.²³

It is important to compare the labour market performance of different ethnic minority groups by gender to see where the greatest employment gap lies. There are currently two million ethnic minority women of working age in the UK population, making up eleven percent of all women. Just over half of all ethnic minority women are in employment but again there are significant differences in labour market outcomes between different ethnic minority groups. For example, 60 percent of Indian women are in employment but only 29 percent of Pakistani and 24 percent of Bangladeshi women are in employment.²⁴

²² Increasing employment rates for ethnic minorities, National Audit Office, 2008.

²³ Ethnic minorities and the labour market, Policy Report, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, 2003.

²⁴ LFS, DWP, 2007.

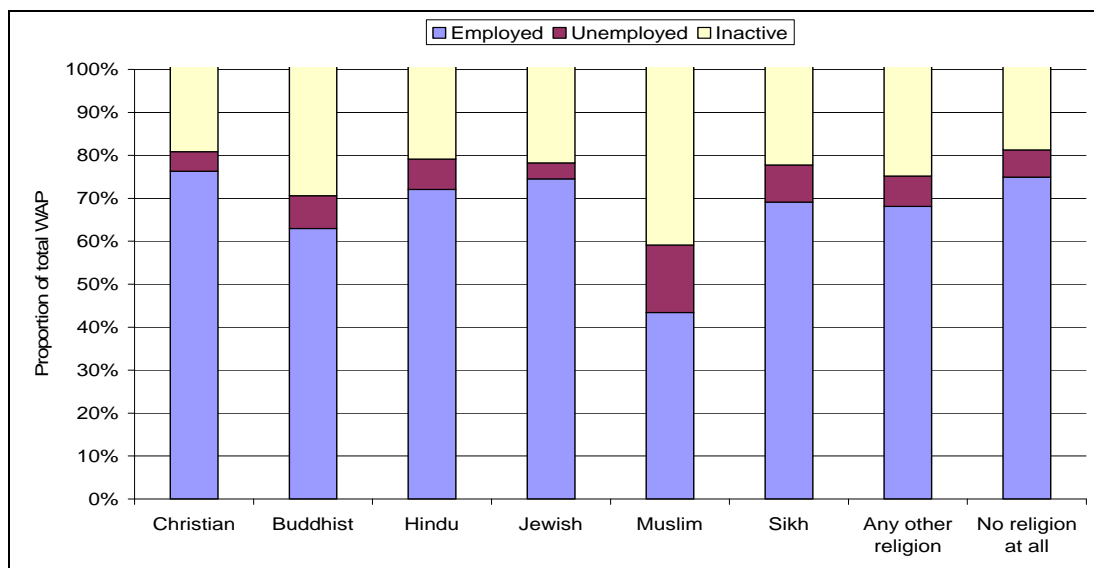
Research has shown that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (the majority of whom also happen to be Muslim) are almost four times more likely to be unemployed, compared to their White counterparts. Employment disadvantage does not only affect employment outcomes but also pay levels. While all women in the UK face a pay gap compared to men, with White women earning 17 percent less than their White male counterparts, Pakistani women (who work full-time), for example, earn 28 percent less than White males.²⁵

3.2. New evidence shows that there is a correlation between ethnicity and faith - a possible 'Muslim penalty'

In recent years there has been significant research into whether religious affiliation, is a more important determinant than ethnicity of how different groups fare in the labour market. The latest data shows British Muslims suffer the greatest labour market disadvantage compared to all other faith groups. Figure 7 shows national economic activity levels by faith. Employment data for all British Muslims shows:

- Employment rate for British Muslims is 43 percent
- Inactivity rate for British Muslims is 48 percent
- Unemployment rate British Muslims is 16 percent

Figure 7: National economic activity by faith



Source: ONS, 2007.

Among British Muslims (aged 16 to 24), 28 percent were unemployed, compared to only eleven percent of Christians of the same age. British Muslims aged 25-34 are more than three times more likely to be unemployed than Christians of the same age – 14 percent and four percent respectively.²⁶

²⁵ Moving on up? The way forward, Report of the investigation into Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean women and work, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007.

²⁶ LFS, DWP, 2007.

Disproportionately high unemployment and inactivity has wider implications than just economic well-being. Muslims are the largest of the 'emergent' religions in the UK. They have the youngest age structure of all the religious groups and within the next ten years will account for one quarter of the growth in the working age population in the UK.²⁷ Therefore high levels of unemployment and inactivity must now be addressed which in the long-term should have an impact on reducing child poverty and social exclusion.²⁸

High inactivity rates are paralleled by a very high incidence of child poverty. Two-thirds of Pakistani children and three-quarters of Bangladeshi children in the UK are living in poverty²⁹, which is additionally worrying as it provides young British Muslims with even fewer role models of working adults.³⁰

The Open Society Institute study (2004)³¹ suggested there was a possible 'Muslim penalty' that could explain the disproportionate employment gap faced by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and other British Muslims.

A recent (unpublished) study into labour market activity found religion may directly affect attitudes and could be a basis for discrimination by employers that is not the same as for ethnicity.³² This study, like other recent studies into ethnic minority employment disadvantage³³, suggests that the employment penalty is suffered the most by Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other British Muslim women and correlates to their faith, rather than to their ethnicity.

The Equal Opportunities Commission report identified that there are significant barriers which prevent many Muslim women who want to work from entering or progressing within the labour market. For example, the report highlighted that two-thirds of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women felt they were unable to apply for certain jobs because of their race, gender or faith.

²⁷ The 2001 Census found that Christians accounted for 71.7 percent, Muslims for 3.1 percent, Hindus for 1.1 percent and Sikhs for 0.7 percent of the population of England. In total, there were 1.5 million Muslims, 546,000 Hindus and 327,000 Sikhs. The Muslim population is the youngest and most rapidly increasing faith group in England.

²⁸ Ethnic minorities and the labour market, Policy Report, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, 2003.

²⁹ Ethnicity and Child Poverty, Paper for the Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force, L Platt, 2006.

³⁰ ONS, 2007.

³¹ Aspirations and reality: British Muslims and the labour market, Bunlawala, OSI, 2004.

³² The study assessed the two main measures of labour market activity: economic inactivity rates and unemployment rates, showing how they vary between different ethnic and religious groups once differences between the groups with respect to characteristics such as gender, age, qualifications and, for women, marital status and the presence of dependent children, have been taken into account. In addition, the study takes account of whether individuals were born in the UK and, if not, their age on arrival. The study suggests that in addition to religion culture may also be a greater determining factor than ethnicity. Is ethnicity or religion more important in explaining inequalities in the labour market? Heath and Martin, 2008, unpublished.

³³ Persistent employment disadvantage, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2007.

While British Muslim women are not a homogenous group, what affects them all is the fact that as a group they have the lowest employment levels and highest unemployment and inactivity levels in the UK compared to any other faith group. Only 29 percent of British Muslim women nationally are currently in work while 68 percent are inactive. This represents the highest inactivity level in the UK and a 46 percentage point employment gap with Christian women.

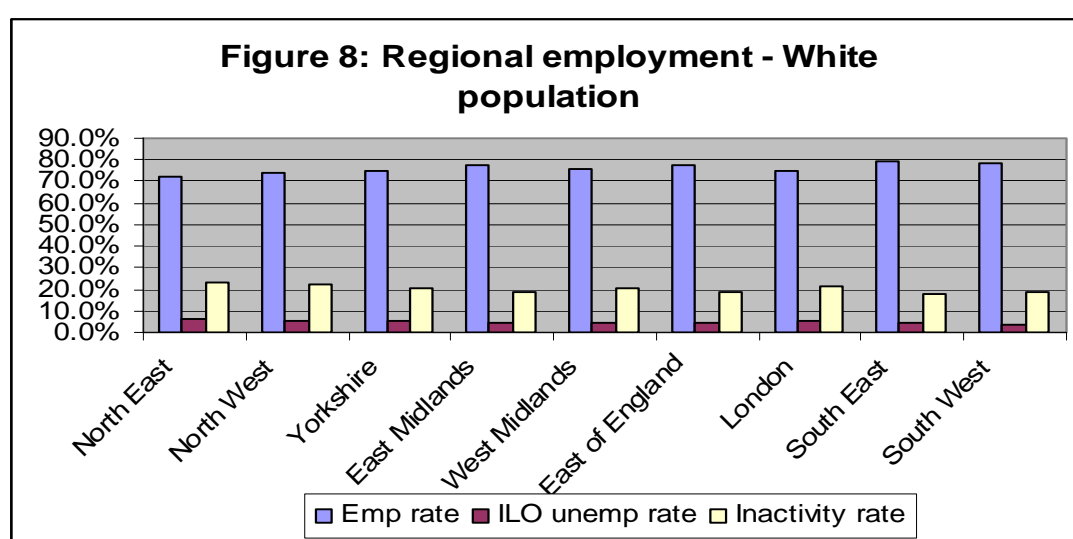
Therefore, the evidence increasingly suggests the existence of a 'Muslim penalty' that is experienced more by Muslim women than Muslim men in the labour market.³⁴ Current policy and programme provision does not address this disproportionate level of employment disadvantage faced by British Muslim women. It is important that we now address this employment gap and increase the number of British Muslim women in the labour market, not least because British Muslim women represent 30 percent of the ethnic minority female working-age population.³⁵

³⁵ AICD, DWP, 2007.

4. The Regional Labour Market and British Muslim women

4.1. Comparing overall regional employment levels with regional British Muslim women's employment levels we find British Muslim women have the lowest employment levels of all faith groups

All Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are obliged to promoting equality of opportunity for all, including tackling the multiple barriers faced by disadvantaged groups in the labour market. In this section we assess the regional employment levels of all British Muslim women, including second generation British Muslim women and compare them to the White population. We then provide a snapshot of RDA programmes and examples from the voluntary and community sector in the three selected regions and cities to identify good practice examples for increasing employment outcomes and removing the barriers to employment British Muslim women face.



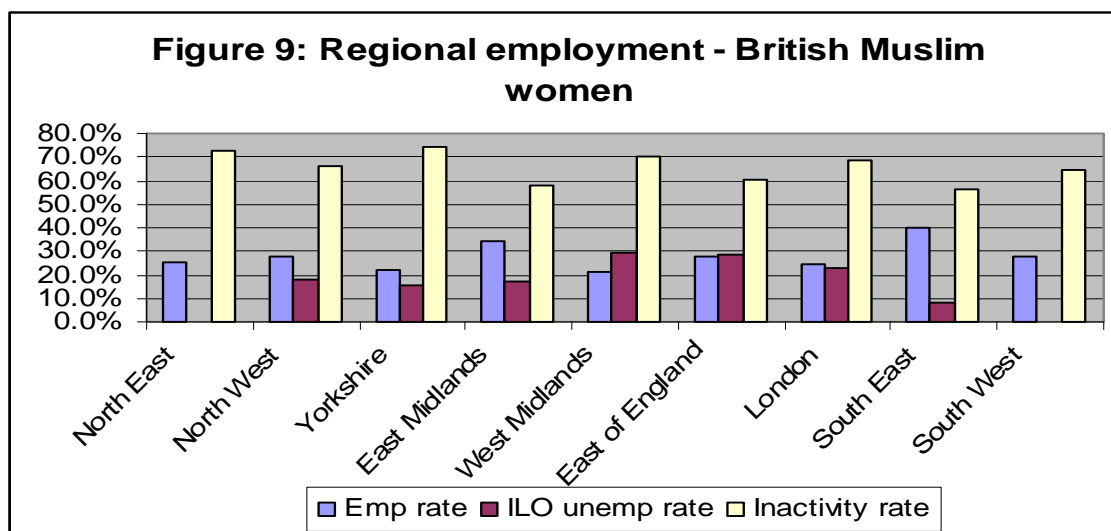
Source: AICD, DWP, 2008.

Muslims, at 1.6 million people, currently make up three percent of the UK population and are the largest of the 'emergent' religions in the UK, 48 percent of Muslims in the UK are women. British Muslim women are the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labour market, with 68 percent defined as inactive in the labour market and only 29 percent in employment.

In order to show the significant differences in employment, inactivity and unemployment between British Muslim women and the White³⁶ population, we have separated the regional employment statistics to show employment levels for the White population, in Figure 8, and employment levels for British Muslim women in Figure 9.

³⁶ We have used the category 'White' in addition to Christian as a reference to the general population when comparing employment levels between groups. This is because not all of the UK White population categorise themselves as being Christian but are nevertheless part of the majority group in the general population. For category definitions and employment terminology definitions see Appendix 4.

It is clear from Figure 8 and 9 that in almost every region of the UK the British Muslim women inactivity rate is almost the same as the White regional employment rate. For example, in the West Midlands the employment rate for British Muslim women is 21 percent and the inactivity rate 70 percent. Whereas the employment rate for the White population in the same region is 75 percent and the inactivity rate is 21 percent. The region with the highest employment level in the country is the South East, though the White employment rate there is 79 percent whereas the British Muslim women employment is just over half that at 40 percent.



Source: AICD, DWP, 2008.

The UK region with the highest White unemployment level is the North East with 6.5 percent unemployment. The UK region with the highest British Muslim women unemployment is the West Midlands with 30 percent unemployment.

4.2. Why we should now focus on increasing the employment levels of second generation British Muslim women

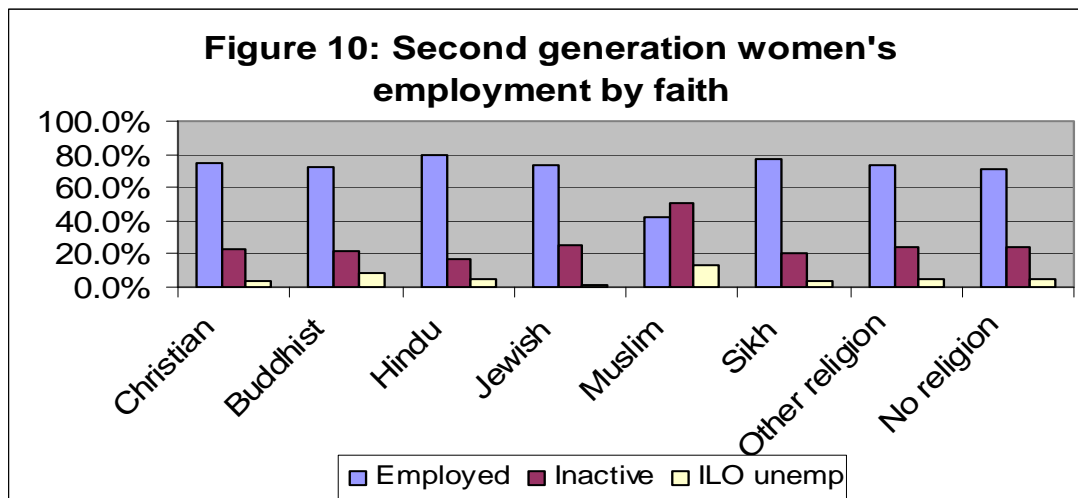
As we outlined in the introduction, this study focuses on increasing the employment levels of second generation British Muslim women. The reason for this focus is that many of the causal factors, such as low English language fluency, low education and skills levels and limited understanding of the UK labour market, which have resulted in high levels of inactivity and low levels of employment for the first generation, do not necessarily apply to second generation British Muslim women.³⁷

Second generation British Muslim women are unlikely to experience these barriers to the same degree as they have benefited from full-time education in the UK, have greater English language fluency and, through the careers advice available to them, have a stronger understanding of the UK labour market. It is therefore important to focus now on second generation British Muslim women, to address the specific employment barriers they face in order to increase their employment outcomes.

³⁷ Despite these barriers we know that many first generation British Muslim women did work and continue to do so either from home or supporting their husbands who are self-employed or mostly work in sectors that do not require high levels of English language fluency.

We have used regression analysis to highlight the employment, inactivity and unemployment levels of second generation British Muslim women, and compared it to Christians and other second generation minority faith groups.³⁸ Figure 10 shows that at 51 percent, the inactivity level for second generation British Muslim women actually exceeds the employment level of 43 percent. Fifty one percent inactivity is three times higher than the inactivity level for second generation Hindu women, at 17 percent and more than double the inactivity for second generation Sikh women at 20 percent.

Unemployment for second generation British Muslim women is 13 percent. For both second generation Hindu and Sikh women unemployment is four percent, close to their Christian counterparts who have three percent unemployment.



Recognising disadvantage across all ethnicities

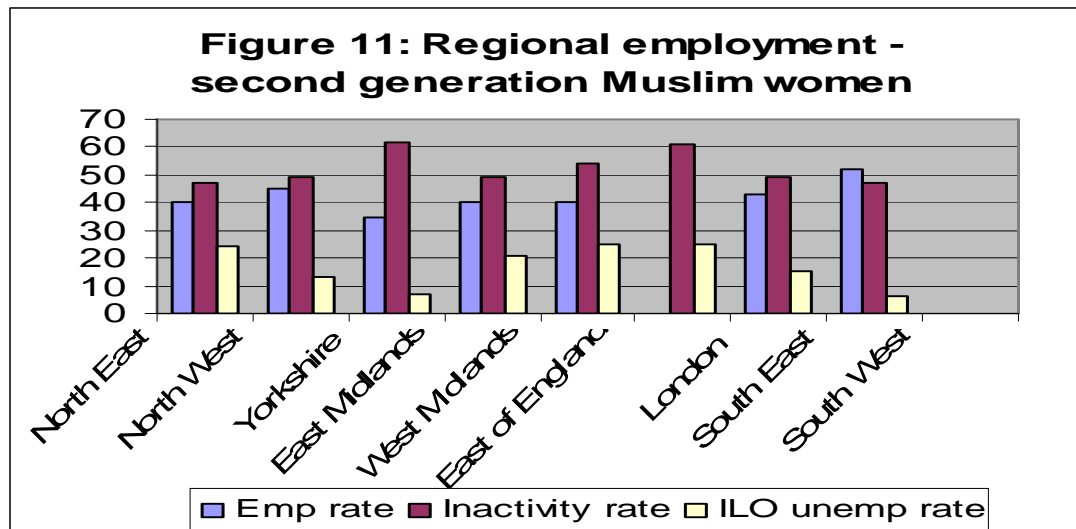
It is important that we no longer use 'Pakistani and Bangladeshi' as the proxy indicator for the entire British Muslim population, as it ignores the disadvantage faced by Indian, White and African British Muslims. Inactivity levels for second generation British Muslim women from different ethnic groups are as follows:

- Pakistani Muslims - 55 percent inactivity
- Bangladeshi Muslims - 52 percent inactivity
- Indian Muslims - 44 percent inactivity
- Black African Muslims - 43 percent inactivity
- White Muslims - 41 percent inactivity

Source: Annual Population Survey 2005.

³⁸ All regression statistics in this study on the employment levels of second generation British Muslim women have been compiled from the Annual Population Survey 2005 and provided by the Economic and Social Data Service on licence to our statistician Jean Martin.

From Figure 11 we can see that the inactivity rate for second generation British Muslim women exceeds their employment rate in every region, except for the South East.³⁹ This shows that almost half of the entire second generation of British Muslim women population, across all nine UK regions, are not in work. It is clear therefore that disproportionately high levels of unemployment and inactivity continue to affect second generation British Muslim women in all regions of the UK.



4.3. Analysis of RDA employment programmes and policies in the three selected regions of the North West, East Midland and London

Here we provide a snapshot of policy and programme approaches to increasing employment levels and tackling employment disadvantage in the North West Development Agency (NWDA), East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and the LDA RDA's, highlighting programmes in the three selected cities for this study of Manchester, Leicester and London. Several RDAs undertake similar types of labour market intervention or initiative and some are unique to individual RDAs, therefore we have highlighted key select initiatives to provide an illustrative snapshot of programmes in the three regions.

³⁹ There are no statistics available for the South West as the sample size in the regression analysis for this region was too small to be classified as statistically robust.

4.3.1 The Northwest Development Agency recognise that the delivery of their Regional Economic Strategy now requires a new approach to tackling the regional 22 percent employment gap between ethnic minorities, including faith minorities, and their White counterparts

The employment rate in the NWDA region is 73 percent, one percent lower than the national average. The NWDA recognise that they need 80,000 more people in work to bridge the current employment gap. To ensure effective local solutions to local problems, the NWDA have supported the innovative establishment of five Sub-Regional Partnerships (SRPs) including Manchester⁴⁰. The SRPs bring together business, the public sector and voluntary and community groups who are responsible for leading economic development and identifying economic priorities which will help to deliver the NWDA Regional Economic Strategy.

The Northwest has significant areas of employment inactivity. Specifically, 90 percent of the employment gap in the NWDA region is in six districts, including Manchester. Some ethnic minorities have a significantly lower employment rate at 40 percent, compared to the 48 percent national average. The Greater Manchester White employment rate is 74 percent compared to 53 percent for ethnic minorities. To close this 21 percent employment gap it is estimated that some 36,000 ethnic minority residents would need to be supported into employment. It is also estimated that ethnic minority women, including British Muslim women, constitute two-thirds of this employment gap.⁴¹

From DWP analysis we know the British Muslim women employment rate in Manchester is 27 percent and the inactivity rate is 67 percent. From our own regression analysis we know second generation British Muslim women in Manchester have a 45 percent employment rate, a 49 percent inactivity rate and a 13 percent unemployment rate compared to only five percent unemployment and 21 percent inactivity for the White population in Manchester. (The Manchester Muslim population is five percent while the Greater Manchester Muslim population is nine percent.)

From Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) data, the NWDA are aware that ethnic minority adults (data on British Muslims is not available) are over represented in LSC funded further education provision and that they have high educational attainment levels within the regional education system (NWDA internal analysis). However, high ethnic minority participation and attainment rates in learning and education are not resulting in high employment rates for this group. The National Audit Office (NAO) report highlighted that city-level approaches would be more effective in tackling labour market disadvantage for ethnic minority groups than national level policies. The City Strategy gives greater flexibility to local agencies to target resources effectively to develop local solutions to address high levels of inactivity and improve employment rates for ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups.⁴² However, it is not within the specified remit of the City Strategy to improve employment rates for minority faith groups.

⁴⁰The five sub-regional partnerships are Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance, Cumbria Vision, Greater Manchester Forum, Lancashire Economic Partnership and The Mersey Partnership.

⁴¹ Northwest Regional Economic Development Strategy, NWDA, 2006.

⁴²There are 15 City Pathfinders areas in England. They are: Birmingham, Blackburn, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heads of the Valleys, Leicester, Liverpool, London East, London West, Manchester, Nottingham, Rhyl, Sheffield, Tyne and Wear.

NWDA funded programmes

Supporting ethnic minority businesses, the Ethnic Minority Business Forum has strong links to the ethnic minority business community and provides strategic leadership and policy advice to the NWDA and regional stakeholders to encourage and empower ethnic minorities to start-up or expand their business. Enhanced marketing initiatives have resulted in a marked increase in the number of ethnic minority women, including British Muslim women, using the Business Link service. The EMBF Business Awards in 2008 recognised several regional businesses, including several British Muslim entrepreneurs.

Engaging faith communities in policy-making the Northwest Faith Forum is part of the NWDA's programme to develop the faith agenda and maximise the contribution that diverse groups make to the economic and social development of the Northwest and to promote:

- Good practice in relations between faith communities
- Engagement of faith communities in public policy
- A vision of healthy spiritual values and integrated communities
- The role of faith communities in caring for the most vulnerable in society

Source: Northwest Faith Forum and EMBF.

In response to the high levels of inactivity and the demographic forecasts of rapid and significant growth in the young British Muslim and ethnic minority population in Manchester, Manchester Enterprises (the economic development and inward investment agency for the Greater Manchester sub-region) will now be developing an innovative city level approach to tackle faith and ethnic minority inactivity, raise employment levels, skills and enterprise needs of ethnic minorities and faith groups.⁴³

The NWDA supports this strategic sub-regional approach to tackle high levels of inactivity as the strategy will help to deliver key regional economic priorities for ethnic minorities as set out in the NWDA's Regional Economic Strategy as well as in the Northwest Equality and Diversity Strategy. In addition, targeting inactivity by faith is an innovative and effective step forward. Due to the geographic settlement patterns of British Muslims in a handful of large UK cities, this city strategy to tackling unemployment and inactivity and monitoring its impact could have a significant and direct positive impact in increasing employment levels for British Muslim women in the Greater Manchester area.

4.3.2 The East Midlands employment rate in the region is 76 percent compared to the UK average of 74 percent. However, disparities in cities with high British Muslim populations, such as Leicester, persist

⁴³Manchester Enterprises is the economic development agency for the Greater Manchester (GM) sub-region and is currently responsible for co-ordinating the GM City Strategy Pathfinder, which will form a major part of the employment component of the GM strategy. While the strategy is currently in the early stages of development, the GM team will be targeting resource on some, but not all ethnic minority and faith communities, based on economic need and the priorities of the sub-regional economy.

emda policies, programmes and projects are developed to ensure that equality and diversity is mainstreamed into all emda activity. The emda Regional Economic Strategy details three key themes:

- Raising Productivity - Enabling people and businesses in the region to become more competitive and innovative.
- Ensuring Sustainability – The region is committed to investing in and protecting natural resources, the environment and infrastructure.
- Achieving Equality – Supporting businesses across the region by helping them to access people with the right skills, commitment and motivation to help them realize their full potential, enrich lives and strengthen communities.

emda has set itself the target of helping 86,000 people off benefits and into employment. One significant challenge to increasing employment levels in the East Midlands region has been identified as the need to effectively match the skills of local people with the needs of local employers. However, in 2007, there were 11,800 vacancies reported as 'hard to fill' in the region, of which 8,200 were due to a shortage of applicants with the appropriate education, training or experience. This means that there remain significant opportunities to help inactive people into work.⁴⁴

While we do not know, precisely, where all the vacancies in the region are, we do know that the most deprived districts in the region with high levels of inactivity include the major cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby (and districts in the coalfields area).

Unlike the NWDA Regional Economic Strategy, the emda Regional Economic Strategy does not provide information on the employment levels of different ethnic minority groups and their White counterparts, despite there being sizeable pockets of high ethnic minority concentration in the region (employment information is provided using 'whites' and 'non-whites' categories). The regional employment rate for White women in the region is 71 percent, (nine percentage points lower than the male employment rate). The employment rate for non-White is 60 percent, therefore significantly below the average rate for their White counterparts.

From DWP analysis we know that the Leicester British Muslim women employment rate is 30 percent with 62 percent inactivity. From our regression analysis we know that second generation British Muslim women in the East Midlands region have a 40 percent employment rate, 49 percent inactivity and 21 percent unemployment rate. (Leicester has an 11 percent British Muslim population). Therefore, the British Muslim women's employment rate is 31 percent lower than their White counterparts in the region.

HotProspects

emda have recognised that even graduates need targeted support to help them prepare for and find suitable employment. To help graduates secure jobs in the region and help regional businesses attract graduate recruits, emda have successfully implemented the HotProspects graduates programme. The programme objective is to help place 3,000 graduates into employment in the East Midlands over the next three years.

⁴⁴ Working Paper, Worklessness and economic exclusion task and finish group, emda, 2007.

The programme recognises that many graduates may not access Jobcentre Plus services when it comes to finding a job and therefore may need alternative help to translate their education into employment. But also more crucially, it recognises that even graduates need personalised support to help them apply for jobs, from CV writing to presentation and interview techniques, and job preparation. The programme provides an on-line job site and face-to-face recruitment support, delivering a high quality service for graduates and local employers.

To date the programme has seen tremendous success:

- 6,500 graduates registered
- Over 850 regional SMEs registered
- 70 large businesses registered
- 630 graduates have been recruited into careers with East Midlands businesses

One programme beneficiary commented:

“I’d never been to the Jobcentre but I did try the careers service at university...they were a little helpful...but the HotProspects team helped me apply for positions and prepare for interviews – I went to five in all and it took seven months but I got a good job in the end.” Programme beneficiary, Leicester.

emda require the HotProspects programme to collect data to monitor outputs, and job outcomes. However, no data on faith or ethnicity is required to be collected or recorded. Therefore, the degree to which this programme has been accessed and has been successful for ethnic and faith minority groups can not be ascertained.⁴⁵

Many British Muslim women, like many other women, want support to help fulfil their entrepreneurial aspirations and also enable them to work flexible hours. To realise these aspirations they require business start-up advice and support.

Mind Your Own Business’

The emda ‘Mind Your Own Business’ programme delivered by LeicestHERday has successfully reached out to majority and minority faith communities supporting them to start their own businesses. The aim of the programme is to encourage, empower and support women into self employment. The programme provides practical business assistance and advice. To ensure women from faith and ethnic minority groups access and benefit from the programme, the project team have held seminars in Mosques, Gurdwara’s and churches in Leicester.

⁴⁵ Information on the HotProspects programme was provided by the HotProspects team.

This programme has been successful in reaching out to British Muslim women and supporting them into self-employment and recognises the important role Mosques can play in helping to provide employment and business information and support either directly to British Muslim women who attend the Mosque or through male family members who attend the Mosque. So far, 26 percent of programme participants have been British Muslim women and 65 percent of the attendees at one particular open day in the Highfields area were British Muslim women. (Highfields has one of the highest British Muslim populations in Leicester).⁴⁶

emda funded programmes

Improving skills and employment levels. emda-funded **VOICE EM** act as the regional champion for the ethnic minority community, aiming to influence stakeholders and represent the ethnic minority sector across the East Midlands. Working with the Learning and Skills Council, VOICE EM have successfully developed a regional ethnic minority skills consortium, to improve skills levels and deliver employment initiatives for ethnic minority groups, particularly within inner-city areas.

Providing employment experience through the 'Employability Through Work Experience' programme, which will be implemented this year and will target employers and providers of employability services to create a regional work experience matching service. This project will engage with hard-to-reach groups to address barriers to work and work experience. Through its Equality Impact Assessment, emda will ensure beneficiary data is collected to evaluate the effectiveness of this programme and where the greatest need remains.

Source: emda

4.3.3 The London Development Agency has a key challenge to improve the 69 percent London employment rate

The London Development Agency (LDA) work to deliver the Mayor's vision for London: to be a sustainable world city with strong, long term economic growth, social inclusion and active environmental improvement. Investing in people, knowledge and skills, addressing discrimination and promoting diversity is vital to delivering the Economic Development Strategy for London.

London is the most prosperous city in the UK. Over the past few years the LDA have helped to create over 100,000 jobs and developed the skills of over 130,000 individuals. However, only 69 percent of the working age population in London are in employment, compared to the national average of 74 percent and some groups continue to experience disproportionate disadvantage in the London labour market.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Information on the Mind Your Own Business programme was provided by the LeicestHERday team.

⁴⁷ Sustaining success: Developing London's economy, Economic development strategy, London Development Agency, 2005

Tackling the low employment rate and reducing poverty and disadvantage are key challenges to achieving long-term economic growth and social inclusion. The LDA are investing in the potential of London's workforce to ensure all Londoners regardless of faith, age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation have equal opportunities. The LDA are currently developing a Single Equality Scheme to detail the LDA's equality priorities and actions on faith, sexual orientation, age and refugee issues and to incorporate the existing equality schemes on race, gender and disability.⁴⁸

At the heart of LDA work is the core focus to address discrimination and promote diversity, both in the workplace and within London's economy in general through:

- tackling barriers to employment
- reducing disparities between groups in the labour market
- improving the skills of the workforce
- addressing the barriers that affect various disadvantaged groups
- addressing discrimination and promoting diversity in the workplace and within London's economy in general

There are significant employment barriers in London that affect all women, not just British Muslims. For example, despite being almost half the London labour force, there are too few part-time employment opportunities available. London's economic output would be £1.5 billion higher if part time employment rates for women with children in London were raised to equal those in the rest of the country.⁴⁹ This is of great significance to second generation British Muslim women as 28 percent of respondents not in work stated they would only enter or return to work on a part-time basis (mostly due to childcare responsibilities).

London is home to the largest and most diverse population of British Muslims (38 percent). DWP analysis shows 24 percent of British Muslim women are in employment, 68 percent are inactive and there is 23 percent unemployment. Our regression analysis shows for second generation British Muslim women 43 percent are in employment, 49 percent are inactive and 15 percent unemployed. Only 15 percent of British Muslim women aged 25 and over work full-time, compared to 37 percent of the general population. The White employment rate for London is 75 percent, unemployment five percent and inactivity is 21 percent.

It is estimated that more than 600,000 new jobs will be created in London over the next 11 years. People from London's faith and ethnic minority communities will make an important contribution to filling these jobs and to boosting London's economy as a result.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ All RDA's carry out equality impact assessments of their work to assess and maximise the opportunities to tackle discrimination, promote equality and positive community relations.

⁴⁹ www.lda.gov.uk.

⁵⁰ Sustaining success: Developing London's economy, Economic development strategy, London Development Agency, 2005.

Childcare Affordability Programme

The LDA are delivering targeted programmes to help address some of the key barriers to employment in London. For example, the lack of affordable childcare in London has been identified as a key barrier to labour market entry which can also lead to high levels of child poverty. The high cost of childcare in London constitutes a significant barrier particularly for low-income families (and lone parents) where the childcare is estimated to be 25 percent more expensive than elsewhere in the UK.⁵¹

The LDA and Surestart pilot, the Childcare Affordability Programme, has helped 7,400 families into work providing 10,000 places of subsidised childcare for parents who are either in training, searching for employment, or undertaking the transition to employment. The pilot has been delivered in key London boroughs which also happen to have high British Muslim populations.⁵² The 2008 Budget announced this programme will now be extended to other parts of the UK.⁵³ The extended programme will assess how further childcare support for additional earners can be provided, and consider the barriers faced by families with three or more children.⁵⁴ This measure may disproportionately benefit British Muslims, many of whom have three or more children, if they choose to access formal childcare.⁵⁵

In one study, British Muslim mothers and those who wanted children in the future highlighted that the faith background of childcare staff influenced their choice of childcare services. The level of faith awareness and attitudes of childcare staff was also an important deciding factor of whether ethnic and faith minority groups accessed mainstream formal childcare services.⁵⁶

The Daycare Trust have identified a need to deliver more culturally and religiously appropriate childcare services for Asian and British Muslim mothers to help encourage them to access formal childcare services and enter or return to work. They suggest the need to employ more staff from various ethnic and faith minority communities, and encourage minority groups to provide child minding services.

⁵¹ Childcare nation? Progress on the childcare strategy and priorities for the future, Daycare Trust, 2007.

⁵² Information on the Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP) was provided by the CAP team.

⁵³ An independent evaluation of this pilot is currently ongoing. Therefore analysis of the impact of this pilot on faith or ethnic minority groups in London can not yet be undertaken.

⁵⁴ Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business, HMT, 2008.

⁵⁵ Data on birth rates by religion is not collected. Data on birth rates by ethnicity is also not collected. What is collected is data by ethnicity on the country of birth of the mother. Therefore, the fertility rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women born in Pakistan and Bangladesh are recorded. The data shows the fertility rate for Pakistani women is 4.7 children, for Bangladeshi women 3.9 children and for the national UK population 1.6 children. (Source: Birth statistics: birth and patterns of family building, ONS, 2006.) Preliminary analysis comparing fertility rates for, women born in Pakistan with women of Pakistani ethnic origin (which will include second and subsequent generation migrants) suggests that the fertility of second and subsequent generation migrants is lower than that of first generation migrants, and may be converging towards the fertility levels observed for UK born women. (Source: The changing demographic picture of the UK, National Statistics annual article on population, K Dunnell, ONS, 2007).

⁵⁶ The study found that Sikh/Hindu/Punjabi Asian respondents whilst remaining closely attached to their cultural heritage and religious values were more likely to be less traditional, than Muslim mothers. Diversity and difference: Minority ethnic mothers and childcare, DTI, 2004.

As we identified in Leicester, employers face a significant barrier in finding employees with the relevant skills and experience to meet their recruitment needs. In London, the London Employer Accord and the employer-led London Skills Employment Board are working together to ensure the current and future skills and recruitment needs of London's employers are met in a flexible way while also increasing the employment levels of some of London's most disadvantaged groups.

The Performance Framework for this programme will be published later this year and will include targets and indicators to help monitor progress to close the employment and skills gap for the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market. For this new measure to be effective for British Muslim women, the Performance Framework would need to include faith monitoring.

Ensuring British Muslim women access mainstream and targeted programmes is also a key challenge to increasing their employment levels and requires effective outreach. It is vital that employment and skills information is effectively disseminated and is accessible to British Muslim women to help them make informed choices of how to access programmes and services on offer and where they are located.

Way to Work

The LDA 'Way to Work' programme increases the skills levels for women and young people, and fosters greater communication between faith groups. The programme provides advice and guidance sessions on education, employment and skills to British Muslim women in East London. The programme office is uniquely located within the East London Mosque (London Muslim Centre). The Mosque is the main prayer facility for the large British Muslim (mostly Bangladeshi) population that live in Tower Hamlets and has facilities for women. A third of the programme beneficiaries who received employment advice and 11 percent of candidates who entered employment in 2007/08 were British Muslim women.

While there is no data on how many British Muslim women attend Mosques, it is recognised that many British Muslim women do not regularly visit the Mosque and indeed many Mosques in the UK do not yet have a 'women's section'. Therefore while useful for information sharing, Mosques should not be deemed to be the only access point for British Muslim women.

One programme beneficiary shared how she heard about the programme:

"I heard about the programme because they held a 'job-shop' near my house...it was convenient...I didn't know they were in the Mosque...they helped me fill in job applications...I'd never filled in an application before, I knew the basics but I didn't know how to meet the job requirements. I got the job I applied for". Programme beneficiary, London.

The programme team will now be implementing outreach services and employability workshops to help increase the number of British Muslim women accessing the programme and entering employment. With the exception of the 'Way to Work' programme no other LDA programmes are currently monitored by faith.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Information on the Way to Work programme was provided by the Way to Work team.

LDA funded programmes

The London Skills Employment Board's key delivery principles are:

Customer focus: All London employment and skills services must be easy to access and navigate, providing personalised support and helping people to help themselves.

Equality of opportunity: focusing on removing the barriers – attitudinal, financial, information, accessibility, discrimination, social difficulties – to skills and employment.

Maximising impact: Where possible, delivery agencies should pool public funding to collectively deliver programmes to make the greatest impact. All activities should provide clear evidence of success and value for money through robust monitoring.

Better Integration: Sustained employment and progression pursued at all levels: from planning to procurement through integrated objectives, targets and processes.

Partnering with business to increase workforce diversity - Diversity Works for London promotes the business case for workplace and supplier diversity. The objective being to engage and work in partnership with business and other key stakeholders to enable London's businesses to reflect diversity in their workforces not only for reasons of fairness and a level playing field but because diversity is good for business.

The LDA are also engaging with the planning processes for the London Olympics to ensure local people benefit from the employment opportunities that the games will generate. The LDA Gender Equality Strategy has highlighted the need to improve employment levels for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women.

Source: LSEB and Diversity Works for London.

All RDAs currently use public sector purchasing power to promote diversity in recruitment. Through using public sector funding processes (under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000), RDA suppliers and their contractors can proactively promote positive change in employer recruitment patterns.⁵⁸ Similar policies in the USA have dramatically increased workforce diversity and improved the quality of jobs available to ethnic minority applicants. This measure has the potential to increase the employment levels of British Muslim women significantly. However, while this measure addresses monitoring by ethnicity it does not currently allow for diversity based upon religion.

4.4. There are several examples of good practice in the voluntary sector and in the Muslim community for increasing British Muslim women's aspirations, education and employment levels from the three regions

There is significant evidence from the three regions in this study that where voluntary and community organisations have been given funding to provide employment support to inactive British Muslim and ethnic minority women, they have been very successful. Such organisations effectively raise awareness of the benefits of further education, provide employment and careers support, and job search and preparation services to ethnic minority and British Muslim women, which has resulted in raising their confidence, aspirations, skills, education and employment levels.

⁵⁸ 60/76 The business commission on race equality in the workplace, National Employment Panel, 2007.

Enlighten Project

For example, the Enlighten Project was implemented after research from Bolton University (in Greater Manchester) found that the local Asian and British Muslim population were not readily accessing higher education and employment opportunities. The project aims to increase the numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially from families where university education is not typical. In the first five years they have helped 450 Asian women access education including university and employment opportunities.

The key to the project's success has been the employment of three women workers who are from and live in the local British Muslim and Asian community. They are aware of the religious, cultural and family backgrounds of the women they seek to help and are able to effectively engage, empower and provide tailored support to promote the benefits of education and employment to British Muslim and Asian young women.

The team promotes raising aspirations and the benefits of education and employment by reaching out to British Muslim women and girls through local schools, including local Muslim girl's schools and community organisations in deprived areas with high concentrations of inactive British Muslim women. Project activities include building confidence levels of young women, many of whom may have left school with few qualifications but who now want to study further. They also hold 'taster sessions' and a summer programme at Bolton University for young girls considering university education; and providing linkages to employment opportunities.⁵⁹

The team highlight that now, more than ever before, young British Muslim women want to increase their education levels and enter the labour market. Even on the rare occasion when parental support is not forthcoming, the team highlighted that British Muslim women are still determined to meet their aspirations. One programme beneficiary commented:

"My parents never wanted me to go to university and definitely didn't want me to work. So, after I got married I told my husband that I wanted to do a business admin degree...which I will finish soon...after that I want to get a job." Enlighten programme beneficiary, Student, Manchester.

Increasing access to careers advice and support is also crucial to helping British Muslim women translate their education into employment opportunities. As we have seen (from the HotProspects programme), raising awareness and providing support with job search, interview techniques and preparation can have positive outcomes for graduates seeking to enter the labour market. It is equally important to ensure British Muslim women have access to, and benefit from, such programmes.

Adab Trust

The Adab Trust in London focuses on increasing the employment opportunities for inner-city graduates, especially those from South Asian and British Muslim backgrounds. The Trust recognises that these minority groups are under-represented in employment in London, regardless of their educational attainment, experience and ability to work.

⁵⁹ Information on the Enlighten programme was provided by the Enlighten team.

The Trust works with leading employers in London, to identify job opportunities and then encourage under-represented ethnic minority and British Muslim graduates to apply for those vacancies. They have found that despite high levels of education many minority groups, including Muslims, need direct help to increase their soft skills and confidence levels through training and face-to-face interviews, to help them successfully apply for the graduate recruitment programmes of many city employers. The Trust support London's employers to recruit and progress a workforce that genuinely reflects London's demographic profile.⁶⁰

Mosaic

In recognition of the fact that while there are many British Muslim women not in the labour market; there is a growing number of highly successful British Muslims, including women, in the UK labour market. To help support and increase the aspirations of British Muslims and help raise their awareness of a variety of career opportunities the Mosaic programme was established in 2007.

The Mosaic objective is to develop a network of British Muslim-led initiatives to break down the barriers faced by young British Muslims and to inspire, raise and meet their education and employment aspirations through:

- Encouraging successful and professional British Muslims to reach directly into schools and local communities, acting as ambassadors and role models
- Mentoring pupils through one-to-ones, group mentoring and e-mentoring
- Offering valuable work experience placements for young British Muslims who may not have the social networks needed to gain relevant work placements
- Advocate the positive contribution of British Muslims to British society⁶¹

4.5. Good practice examples from employers and employer organisations to help increase the number of British Muslim women in employment

Many employers in the UK, large, medium or small, have in place robust monitoring practices to measure the ethnicity of their workforce as they recognise the value of diversity. Some employers are also now looking to increase the faith diversity levels within their organisations.

Several employers interviewed stated that they would like to employ more British Muslims into their workforce, but many were unsure of how to attract British Muslims to their organisation, despite an increase in funds allocated for diversity advertising.

Some employer comments included:

“There's a lack of knowledge within the organisation of how to attract Muslim women, the big misconception is that they have a lack of appropriate skills.”
Small employer, London.

⁶⁰ Information on the Adab Trust was provided by the Adab Trust team.

⁶¹ Information on the Mosaic programme was provided by the Mosaic team.

“We have vacancies and recognise it will take time for ethnic and faith minority groups to apply for those...they tend to apply for the more professional roles.” Medium-size employer, Leicester.

“It’s so hard to get certain groups to apply for our jobs...but we know those minorities that do work for us are among our highest performers.” Large employer, Manchester.

The CBI Employment Trends Survey (2007) shows that employers are committed to diversity, with 89 percent either having a formal diversity policy or equality practices in place. However, creating a more diverse workforce remains a challenge, with 67 percent of employers stating they believe a lack of applicants from disadvantaged groups is the main obstacle to achieving greater workforce diversity. The survey also found 27 percent of employers are confused about the difference between positive action, which is lawful, and positive discrimination which is unlawful.

Many employers are now looking to the recently established Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to be an approachable source of information and advice on equality issues. The EHRC have taken on the powers of the previous commissions on equality dealing with race, gender and disability, and in addition also cover the new diversity strands of age, religious belief and sexual orientation.⁶²

However, several employers have now begun to take proactive steps to increase their workforce diversity, including targeting Muslims to apply for jobs. Some employer comments below illustrate this:

“In terms of Muslim women, we haven’t cracked it yet...so we’re now going to engage with a range of Muslim women’s groups and we’re now using a range of images including women wearing the hijab in our advertising, to attract more possible employees.” Small employer, London.⁶³

“We advertise locally and network with the local community to raise awareness of our organisation...in the past 18 months we’ve also started visiting local Mosques, Temples and Gurdwaras, and Asian supermarkets to attract faith minorities...we are receiving more applications from diverse groups, including Muslims, but there’s no way of knowing if the two are linked.” Medium-size employer, Leicester.

Other employers have now implemented significant measures to help increase faith diversity in their organisations and support employees from minority faith groups.

⁶² Fit for business, Employment Trends Survey, CBI, 2007

⁶³ The hijab is a headscarf worn by Muslim women.

The Co-operative

For example, The Co-operative, a large employer, now monitors all applicants and new starters within their organisation by faith. No employer is currently required by law to monitor their workforce by faith. However, it is recognised from ethnic minority monitoring and other types of diversity monitoring that information on representation levels of diverse groups and at what levels they are represented within an organisation can help to measure effective recruitment practices and progression measures. The Head of Diversity at The Co-operative commented:

"We monitor by faith and ethnicity for our applicants and new starters because we recognise the diversity in the community and in our customer base. We also recognise there are some disadvantaged groups such as faith minorities, lone parents and ethnic groups. Monitoring is a self-selecting process but we encourage our staff to complete the data by explaining why data on faith and ethnicity monitoring is important to assess if we have any challenges that we need to address."

Positive action and monitoring measures to increase the number of Muslim women in employment are being adopted by employers of all sizes.

Greenwich Leisure Limited

Greenwich Leisure, a medium-sized employer in London also recognised they needed to take proactive measures to increase the number of Muslim women in their workforce. The Recruitment Manager commented:

"We've been monitoring our workforce by faith now for just over a year. We're doing this because we want to be reflective our local community...we've now got some Muslim women working for us...and some of them wear the hijab."

The Employers Forum on Age and the Employers Forum on Belief have developed 'e-equality', an on-line questionnaire designed to cover all legally protected equality strands, including faith. The questionnaire enables employers to assess their workplace policies and practices in diversity. Employers who want advice on how to improve their diversity policies or representation levels of minority groups can gain direct feedback from the Forum on how to do so.⁶⁴

It is also important to provide employment and careers support for British Muslims once they are in the workforce. Some employers have recognised that while they may have well-intentioned policies in place, direct and indirect discrimination may still occur. One employer commented:

"We have a large workforce which will reflect a variety of opinions and prejudices...we need to be alert to the possibility of Islamaphobia." Large employer, Manchester.

There are measures that employers can take in order to help safeguard against religious discrimination in the workplace and help increase the awareness levels among non-Muslim employees of Islamic practices. For example, BT has supported the establishment of a Muslim network within its organisation.

⁶⁴ Information on the Employers Forum on Age and Belief was provided by the age and belief teams.

The Muslim network is operated by Muslim BT employees and is funded by BT. The network has held internal workshops and open-dialogue sessions for Muslims and non-Muslims to help increase awareness and understanding of 'Muslims in the workplace'. The network has also helped to remove misconceptions and improve understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims of Islamic practices. The network has found that because BT is a customer facing organisation, such measures can directly improve their understanding of their customer base.⁶⁵

“The network has over 400 members within the organisation and has really helped to raise internal awareness of Muslims and helped to remove negative perceptions. Through our newsletter we’ve covered topics like fasting in Ramadan, prayer times and why we don’t drink alcohol. We have support from the top of the organisation who have also now supported us in providing mentoring and careers support for Muslim employees.” Muslim BT employee, London.

⁶⁵ Information on the Muslim Network in BT was provided by BT.

5. Drivers and barriers to British Muslims women's labour market entry and progression

This section details the labour market misconceptions, causal drivers and barriers and helps us understand why the employment levels for second generation British Muslim women are so low. We use quantitative and qualitative data from our interviews with second generation British Muslim women, employers, and employer organisations to help understand the specific demand and supply factors in the UK labour market.

5.1. Supply

Supply refers to the pool of British Muslim women who are in the working-age population and assesses their employability. Employability not only takes into account their education and skills levels but also their willingness and attitudes to work, therefore their 'availability' in the labour market.

5.1.1. Education, soft skills and experience

There is a large body of evidence that links higher educational attainment with successful entry and progression in the labour market. The overall educational performance of British Muslim pupils in schools has improved significantly in recent years. There are approximately 500,000 British Muslim children currently receiving full-time education in British schools. This is 5-6 percent of the total school population.

Education data is not currently available as disaggregated by faith. As a result, we have used ethnicity data for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis as a proxy indicator for faith.

In 2000, only 30 percent of children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in England and Wales gained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared to 50 percent in the population as a whole (QED study). However, this figure has improved considerably in recent years. In 2006/07, 58 percent of Bangladeshi pupils achieved 5+ A*-C at GCSE or equivalent, compared to 59 percent of all pupils nationally. Pakistani pupils' attainment level of 5+ A* - C at GCSE and equivalent was 53 percent, therefore six percentage points below the national figure.⁶⁶

Education data is now available comparing attainment levels in schools/colleges located in different types of areas such as Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and Deprived Areas. In the most deprived areas, the level 3 average points score per candidate for 2006/07 was over 20 percent lower (at 637.7), compared to the least deprived areas (at 756.4. Level 3 qualifications are equivalent to two A levels or NVQ level 3). Similarly, in the most deprived urban areas, the level 3 average points score

⁶⁶ National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2006/07, ONS First Release, Nov 2007. Issued by DCSF.

per candidate for 2006/07 was also 20 percent lower (at 637.7), compared to the least deprived urban areas (at 755.3).⁶⁷

GCSE results from many of the UK's Muslim schools surpass the national average. An assessment of 65 Muslim schools found they have a combined average of 65 percent achieving 5 or more grade A* to C GCSEs (or equivalent). There is some regional variation in education outcomes. For example, Muslim schools in London had a 72 percent combined average of a 5 or more A*-C pass rate while in Manchester Muslim schools had an average of 84 percent of 5 or more A*-C passes, over twenty percentage points higher than the national average.⁶⁸

When it comes to higher education, British Muslims have higher attainment levels than the general population. Only 22 percent of British Muslims have no qualifications, compared to 29 percent of the population as a whole. Fifty percent of British Muslims now enter higher education compared to 38 percent of their White counterparts and 21 percent of British Muslims have NVQ level 4/5 (1st degree or higher) while Christians are the least likely to have an NVQ level 4/5 at only 18 percent. Bangladeshi women who are in employment are more likely to have a degree than any other ethnic group.⁶⁹

However, in a labour market that demands higher skills graduate qualifications do not necessarily translate into employment for British Muslim graduates. Only 76 percent of British Muslim graduates are in jobs compared to 87 percent for all graduates.

The total number of British Muslim graduates is approximately 150,000, about two percent of all British graduates. There are more male British Muslim graduates (61 percent) than female (39 percent). British Muslims do not attain the same class of degree as their White counterparts. For example, 49 percent of Pakistanis and 39 percent of Bangladeshis gain first or upper second class degrees, compared to 59 percent of White graduates.⁷⁰

British Muslim graduates, with the same class of degree as their White counterparts, do not have the same chance of gaining employment. For example, among Pakistani graduates with first class and upper-second class degrees, the unemployment rate (14 percent) is far greater than that of their White counterparts (6 percent).⁷¹ Evidence suggests this low graduate employment level could be linked to the fact that a high proportion of British Muslims graduate come from post-1992 universities rather than the more competitive universities.⁷²

⁶⁷ GCE/VCE A/AS and Equivalent Examination Results in England, 2006/2007 (Revised), ONS, Jan 2008. Issued by DCSF.

⁶⁸ Muslim schools continue to excel in GCSE's, The Muslim News, 2008.

⁶⁹ Moving on up? Ethnic minority women at work, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007.

⁷⁰ Muslim graduates in the labour market – Seminar report, QED, 2005.

⁷¹ Muslim graduates in the labour market – Seminar report, QED, 2005.

⁷² Minority ethnic students in higher education: Interim report, Institute for Employment Studies, 2003.

The QED Graduate Study also found pre-university experiences significantly influenced the choices Muslim women students perceive as available to them in terms of subjects studied, universities attended, further post-graduate study options, future career and labour market prospects. Respondents in the study, many of whom came from socially deprived areas with high concentrations of Muslims and Asians where schools and further education institutions were poorly resourced, spoke of little encouragement and preparation for higher education from their teachers and found their transition from school to university difficult.

Our interview analysis shows that there is a high level of educational achievement among second generation British Muslim women⁷³ with 36 percent having graduate qualifications, eight percent having post-graduate qualifications and 38 percent being qualified to A level standard. If we separate the educational achievement levels between second generation British Muslim women who are in work from those not in work we find that there is comparatively a higher level of educational achievement among second generation British Muslim women who are in work. However, 29 percent of second generation British Muslim women who are not in work are educated to graduate level (see Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 12: British Muslim women in work

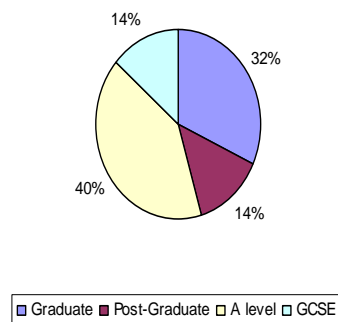
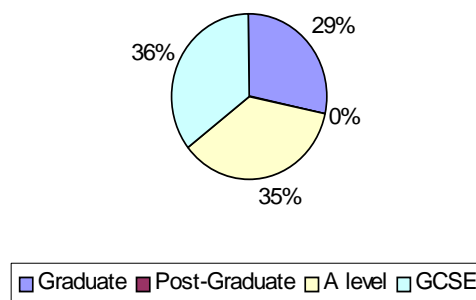


Figure 13: Education level - British Muslim women not in work



It is also important to assess attitudes and accessibility to higher education to help us understand second generation British Muslim women’s education and employment levels. Some comments from some respondents below suggest there are a variety of explanations:

“I always wanted to go to university but I needed to be pushed and motivated...no one in family had ever been...it’s very scary so you need someone to encourage you.” University student, Manchester.

“Even though we lived in a deprived area I had a lot of encouragement from my parents to study, you could even call it pressure...my older sister’s a doctor...I think being Indian is also a factor to studying further.” Professional, London.

⁷³ See chart in Chapter 2

To help understand the reasons behind some of the lower educational achievement levels we looked at the evidence that suggests that disadvantage in education and employment can persist across generations. The children of British Muslim migrants of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin many of whom have low education and disadvantaged occupational positions, may face similar disadvantage both educationally and occupationally, to that of their parents. A long-term study found that social class origins in the parents' generation can lead to poorer educational attainment and lower occupational attainment in the children's generation.⁷⁴

However, in order to assess whether British Muslim children's socio-economic background is a greater barrier than for their White working class counterparts we need to look at the concept of 'social capital'. Social capital is a multi-faceted concept that embodies networks and shared norms and value within or between groups. Social capital has been described as having three main types: bonding, bridging and linking.⁷⁵ A lack of social capital networks to help bridge between ethnic and social class groups has been identified as a barrier to accessing appropriate employment for ethnic minority groups.⁷⁶ One hypothesis is that as ethnic minority groups, especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, have high levels of bonding capital, but low levels of bridging capital, the children from families with poorer socio-economic backgrounds may find it more difficult to break free from these backgrounds than their White counterparts. Therefore social class origins of certain British Muslims may form a greater barrier to higher education, employment and progression.

5.1.2. Cultural norms, traditions and attitudes

A recent study highlights the importance of accessible careers support and careers services having staff with specific training in, and understanding of, the barriers facing British Muslim women in education and the labour market if educational and employment outcomes are to be improved. The study challenges the stereotypical assumptions about the lives of British Muslim women and the myths that they do not want to work or that their families do not support them entering education and employment. The study found British Muslim women students' attitudes towards wanting to work were extremely positive.⁷⁷

The comments made by one British Muslim female student reflect these findings (below). Her comments suggest that while confidence levels, educational aspirations and achievement are increasing, British Muslim women need access to effective careers support and help to enter the labour market:

⁷⁴Socio-economic position and political support of the BMEs in Britain (1971-2004), Heath and Li, ESRC, 2008.

⁷⁵Bonding social capital – describes more distant connections between people and is characterised by strong bonds, e.g. among family members or close friends. Bridging social capital – describes more distant connections between people and is characterised by more cross-cutting ties e.g. with business associates, friends of friends or those from a different ethnic group or social class, good for 'getting ahead' in life.

⁷⁶Discussion paper: Employment issues – Minority ethnic people in rural areas, Crockett and Lima, 2006.

⁷⁷ Muslim women and higher education: Identities, experiences and prospects, D Tyler and F Ahmad, Liverpool John Moores University, 2006.

“I have every intention of finding a job in dentistry after I finish my studies. While I have not yet had to apply for work my cousin, who also wears a hijab, has had several rejections...it has undermined her self-confidence.”
University student, Manchester.

While personal choice not to enter the labour market is present for all women and indeed all people, there are still strong misconceptions that Muslim parents or culture ‘hold Muslim women back’ or British Muslim women do not have high education or employment aspirations for themselves.

A recent MORI survey found many people thought unemployed Pakistani and Bangladeshi women face cultural and religious barriers that prevent them from working. Lack of awareness and misconceptions such as these among non-Muslims can feed negative opinions of British Muslim women and employer discrimination.⁷⁸

However, recent evidence shows the majority of second generation British Muslim women want to work and have family support to do so. The EOC study found that 92 percent of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women’s parents support their daughters’ choice to work. Another recent study found that 90 percent of unmarried British Muslim women graduates surveyed are in employment. The study found that many British Muslim women have high aspirations and want to combine their careers with having a family.⁷⁹

These findings are supported by another study which found that while many British Muslim women, like many non-Muslim women, see raising a family as an important role many also have high aspirations for education and employment.⁸⁰

Our interview analysis shows there is little evidence to suggest second generation British Muslim women do not have the support of their families or husbands to work. All (100 percent) of the women interviewed who work said they have the support from their families or husbands to do so. For women interviewed who do not currently work, 93 percent of them said they want to work and that their families or husbands support their decision to work. Therefore, only seven percent said that they never want to work or do not have family support to do so.

Many British Muslim women graduates, or those still in full-time education, interviewed for this study expressed strong views of the value of higher education and asserting their right to work and positive attitudes towards having a career, which fits comfortably within their practice of Islam. Islam does not prevent a woman from working. Some comments were:

“I’m studying because I want to, I enjoy it and my family are very supportive...they’re paying the fees.” University student, Manchester.

“Living in the UK you have to work, you need two earners in a family. Besides, if you work, you become a role model to others.” ‘A’ level student, Manchester.

⁷⁸ Closing the gaps, IpsosMORI Survey, 2007.

⁷⁹ Aged 19-34 with no partner or children. Ethnic differences in the labour market: A life-stage perspective, A Dale, Manchester University 2007.

⁸⁰ Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's attitudes to work and family, J Ashton et al, DWP, 2007.

It is also worth noting that some British Muslim women chose not to work because they are financially able to do so but nevertheless are still active members of civil society. One women respondent told us:

“I do a lot of voluntary work...because of our business we are financially secure so I don't need to work but I help out with the local women's group...it keeps me busy”. Out of work woman, Leicester.

There are also misconceptions about where or what types of employment British Muslim women would be willing to accept. Our interview analysis found that 85 percent of second generation British Muslim women who do not currently work want to work in mainstream jobs. Only 15 percent stated they wanted to work in 'women-only' or 'Muslim-only' work environments. The comments below from women who work and do not work illustrate the reasons some gave for their 'women only or Muslim environment' preference:

“I used to work in a place where I was the only Black Muslim woman there. I felt I wasn't being offered promotion or roles I wanted...I did talk to the manager about it but I was given promises that never materialised so I quit. I now work in a place where most of the people are Muslim...and things are fine.” Community development worker, London.

“It would be nice to work in a place where you weren't made to feel uncomfortable just because you're a woman who wears a hijab...so I want to work in a place that is mostly women.” Out of work woman, London.

Another popular misconception is that British Muslim women are not prepared to travel for work. While it may well be the case that some, like many women, would like to work close to home and children's schools, and there may be some cultural preferences not to travel too far for work our analysis found that the 93 percent of women not currently in work were prepared to travel for up to an hour to get to work.

5.1.3. Childcare and caring responsibilities

As we have shown, many British Muslim women want to combine having a family with having a career. In answer to the question 'What does success mean to you?' in a recent survey of 1,000 Muslim women, 32 percent said it meant successfully combining family life with work while 26 percent stated success meant being happily married and a good mother.⁸¹

Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers (who make up 75 percent of British Muslim women) are far less likely to be in employment either prior to having a baby or during the early years of their child's life than Indian, White or Black mothers. However 38 percent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers who were employed during pregnancy returned to paid work quickly, within three months.⁸²

⁸¹ What Muslim women want: Survey, Ummah Foods Ltd and Sister's Magazine, 2008.

⁸² Ethnicity and patterns of employment and care, EOC, September 2007

Our interview analysis found 72 percent of British Muslim women in work who have children, and those planning to have children, stated their preference to take a career break and raise their children at home as a primary choice. Ninety percent of women in work who had children said they would return to work after the children entered nursery (the preference here ranged mostly between 2-4 years old) and would rely on their family (usually their mother or mother-in-law) to provide childcare while they were at work. All of the women who were interviewed said they had never accessed formal childcare. Only 28 percent of women in work stated they would access formal childcare in the future and remain in work full time. Similarly, all those interviewed who were not in work said they had never accessed formal childcare and only 16 percent said they would access formal childcare and remain in work.

Sixty percent of women respondents not in work had worked previously. Forty seven percent of these women left work to have children or because they got married and had children. These findings are highly significant to our understanding of the employment patterns of second generation British Muslim women. This strong preference for 'taking time out' of work to have children and limited use and access of formal childcare provision has a significant correlation to the high levels of employment inactivity we see in the labour market for this generation.

Many young women highlighted that while their preference was to stay at home before nursery and full-time schooling began for their children or to use informal childcare such as family and friends, they might choose to access formal childcare and remain in employment if the childcare was faith or culturally appropriate. Some comments on formal childcare illustrate these points:

"I and my siblings weren't put into formal childcare...my mother worked from home...I'd like to try and do the same when I have children but would definitely go back to work once they were in full-time school." Professional, London.

"While I'm studying my Mum takes care of my daughter...if I get a job not sure if I'll use a nursery." University student, Manchester.

"I'm a bit traditional, when I have children I want to stop working for good. My husband will have to take care of us then." Professional, London.

"If the nursery feed my children halal food and can understand the basic principles of Islam...they don't have to necessarily all be Muslim staff...then yes I would put my children into formal childcare." Professional, London.

"The first years are the most formative years...it is very important to me to make sure my children will be raised understanding Islam...if the staff are Muslim then I would feel comfortable leaving the children there." University student, Manchester.

5.1.4. Social networks, motivation and careers support

Separate from education, understanding how the labour market operates, how to learn about job vacancies, how to apply for jobs that are commensurate to education and skills levels, knowing how to present and perform in interviews are all a crucial part of translating education into employment, and progressing within the labour market. Limited understanding of the labour market and being able to access and connect to it can also be a significant barrier to employment.⁸³

Second generation British Muslim women, many of whom, as we have shown, have high levels of educational attainment and have a positive attitude to employment have highlighted significant difficulties in translating their education and skills into employment opportunities. Their parents or the majority of the people they know are likely to have either been self-employed, unemployed or worked in sectors that are low paid.⁸⁴ Therefore they do not have ready access to crucial social capital support to help them understand and enter the labour market. They need help connecting to the labour market, with job-search and interview techniques, mentoring support, awareness of training and employment opportunities and how to progress within employment.⁸⁵

Increasingly, British Muslim women now want to work before and during marriage and before and after having children but due to a lack of encouragement or confidence or employment and careers advice, many require proactive support to gain employment. Only 50 percent of women respondents who are not currently in work but wanting to work had succeeded in gaining job interviews. Fifty percent of women respondents also stated that they needed advice and support on how to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews or present themselves as employable candidates to successfully gain employment. Some comments from respondents illustrate these points:

“I know lots of Bangladeshi girls like me who if we got support would work...someone needs to give us a job...we don't know where to find it ourselves. I don't even know where to start and I've got 'A' levels.” Out of work woman, London.

“You need someone to motivate you after you've had kids to help you get back to work...you need help to increase your skills...my husband did support me and I got a lot of one-to-one support from a local women's group.” Duty Officer, Leicester.

“I went to one interview and they asked me to give a presentation. I didn't know what to do. I've worked before (took time out to have children) but we never had to show we could give presentations in an interview. I wish someone had shown me how.” Out of work woman, Leicester.

⁸³ The education and employment of disabled young people: Frustrated ambition, Burchardt. The Policy Press, 2005.

⁸⁴ 52 percent of male Bangladeshi workers in Britain are in the restaurant industry (compared with only 1 percent of White males), while 1 in 8 male Pakistani workers is a taxi driver or chauffeur (compared with a national average of one in 100). Ethnic minorities and the labour market, Policy Report, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, 2003.

⁸⁵ Socio-economic position and political support of the BMEs in Britain (1971 – 2004), Heath and Li, ESRC, 2007.

Due to the rapidly growing size of the British Muslim population, these findings bring into question the effectiveness of employment services provision and career development practices in meeting the needs of a diverse population. Religion and culture play a strong role in what types of services and advice including employment, are accessed, even for second generation British Muslim women.

First and second generation British Muslim women, like many other ethnic minority groups, do not readily access mainstream employment services and many are not claiming a benefit that would require them to interact with JobCentre Plus services.⁸⁶

Fifty percent of women who do not work have never been to a Jobcentre to ask for employment advice or support. Of the 50 percent that have been to the Jobcentre, 78 percent said they did not get the help they needed to help them increase their skills levels or find work. This is in stark contrast to the experience of the general population. A recent Jobcentre Plus evaluation found that 6 to 7 in 10 Jobcentre Plus customers reported being 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with the service they had received from their Personal Adviser.⁸⁷

The comments below help to illustrate some of the difficulties second generation British Muslim women have in accessing employment support or translating their education into employment:

"I've tried a few agencies but no luck yet...I haven't tried going to the Jobcentre yet but I did try on-line but didn't get anywhere...I've got a degree in languages but don't know what sort of job to look for and it's been almost nine months now." Unemployed woman, London.

"I finish college this summer and I'm really starting to worry about finding a job...I tried the careers service and the Jobcentre already, they were no help." Student, Manchester.

"I've got lots of education, what I don't have is experience and no one wants to hire you without experience...but the Jobcentre doesn't give me any experience, so I'm still looking." Out of work woman, London.

"I know the veil shouldn't be a barrier but I went to the Jobcentre once and while I didn't have a problem approaching them I think they had a problem trying to help me. I'm never going back." Unemployed woman, Manchester.

⁸⁶ DWP estimate about a third of non-employed ethnic minorities, excluding students, are not claiming a benefit. NAO report, 2008.

⁸⁷ A Personal Adviser is a member of Jobcentre Plus staff. Research report No 252, Jobcentre Plus evaluation: Summary of evidence, J Corkett et al, Corporate Document Services, DWP, 2005.

Access to information about job vacancies is also an important factor in whether British Muslim women enter the labour market. There is significant research which shows how important informal social networks are in helping to secure employment opportunities. Our interview analysis reflects the importance of social capital networks to securing employment as 45 percent of women in work interviewed said they learned about their first job through a family member or friend. Thirty two percent responded to an advertisement in the newspaper and 18 percent were successful through graduate recruitment programmes from university. None of the women in work interviewed secured their first job through help or support from the Jobcentre.

Once in work, many people need support and guidance on how to develop their careers further and progress in the labour market. Forty six percent of women respondents in work said they did not have any support from their employers and managers to develop their skills further and progress at work and 41 percent were not happy with the way their careers were progressing and felt they should have progressed further.

As we have shown, many second generation British Muslim women do actively access the support and advice of the local community women focused and faith based groups, where available. However, there is a lack of easily accessible funding for such organisations to deliver employment support programmes to increase British Muslim women's employment levels despite the fact that these organisations are able to reach out into Mosques, British Muslim girls' schools, schools with high concentrations of ethnic minorities and local Muslim and ethnic minority women's and community groups.

The Government recognises that there is a significant gap in effective employment and education service provision and delivery to British Muslim women and recently established the National Muslim women's Advisory Group to help provide key advice to policy-makers on how to increase the economic and civic participation of British Muslim women.⁸⁸

5.2. Demand

5.2.1. Local labour market – geographic deprivation, unemployment:

The current pattern of geographic settlement for British Muslims across the UK continues to largely reflect the migration settlement patterns of first generation British Muslims. British Muslims, like many ethnic minority groups are clustered in the UK's major cities and conurbations. Over 80 percent of British Muslims live in the 5 major UK conurbations, compared to 50 percent of the general population. The conurbations are Greater London, Greater Manchester, East Midlands, West Midlands and West Yorkshire.⁸⁹

Research shows that while ethnic minorities, including British Muslims, are more likely to live in cities, this is particularly true for those groups that have difficulty in finding employment. The concentration of such groups in particular deprived wards

⁸⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/554064>

⁸⁹ AICD, DWP, 2004.

and their high unemployment and inactivity there suggests a skills mismatch in their area of residence.⁹⁰

We have already shown how educational attainment is lower in deprived areas. Housing patterns can also have an impact on employment levels for people living in deprived areas. The pattern of housing deprivation by religion shows that 33 percent of the Muslim population live in the 10 percent most deprived neighbourhoods (measured by the 2001 Census). While 15 percent of all households in England experience housing deprivation (defined as fewer rooms than household members) 40 percent of the Muslim population, 25 percent of the Hindu and 22 percent of Sikh people live in conditions of housing deprivation. Muslims make up one-tenth of the population of the most deprived ten percent of neighbourhoods in England.⁹¹

More than half of the people in social housing are out of work. People with the greatest challenges to entering work are over represented in the social sector and face higher rates of inactivity than those who live in other sorts of housing.

As well as high rates of inactivity there are high rates of poverty in social housing. Around 49 percent of children in local authority housing and 40 percent of children in housing association accommodation are poor. This compares to 23 percent of children living in privately rented housing, and 22 percent of children nationally.⁹²

The Government have set a target to achieve an employment rate of 80 percent, up from the current figure of over 74 percent. This requires a new and radical approach to remove the barriers to employment that disadvantaged groups currently face, including British Muslims, to give them access to opportunities to help them prepare for and access employment. Sustainable employment will now be at the heart of neighbourhood renewal to help find local solutions to local challenges and will put employment at the heart of area-based regeneration. The Government will be modernising the New Deal so that it better meets the employment and skills needs of those who have been on benefit for a long time or who have struggled to find work.⁹³

As we have seen from the cities we have focused on for this study, all three have higher levels of unemployment and inactivity, and higher population levels of British Muslims than the national average. Therefore, any initiative to increase the employment level of British Muslims will need to take into account their geographic concentration in the five major UK conurbations and the higher than average unemployment and inactivity for all people living in those areas.

⁹⁰ Full employment in every region, HMT, 2003.

⁹¹ Review of the Evidence Base on Faith Communities, Mercia Group, 2006, ODPM.

⁹² During 2008, Jobcentre Plus will play a key role in enhancing links with housing organisations, including exploring ways of providing access to employment information in housing offices and improving referral processes between housing and Jobcentre Plus services. Ready for work: Full employment in our generation, DWP, 2007.

⁹³ Ready for work: Full employment in our generation, DWP, 2007.

5.2.2. Religious discrimination

While the size and impact of the 'Muslim penalty' can not yet be quantified DWP analysis has estimated that between a quarter and half of the current ethnic minority employment gap is caused by employer discrimination.⁹⁴

Several women interviewed felt that in addition to the glass ceiling and barriers to employment and progression faced by all women, and many ethnic minorities, being Muslim and choosing to wear the hijab resulted in an additional dimension of religious discrimination. Many described negative personal experiences and those of friends and family in work, once employers and colleagues saw them wearing the hijab or learned that they were Muslim.

Of women currently in work, 23 percent said they felt they were treated differently or encountered discrimination at interviews because they were Muslim. Thirty two percent said they felt they were treated differently or encountered discrimination while at work because they were Muslim. Forty three percent of women not currently in work said they felt they were treated differently or encountered discrimination at interviews because they were Muslim. These findings almost directly reflect the DWP analysis of between a quarter to half of the employment gap being caused by employer discrimination.

Perceived or actual discrimination in employment processes can manifest itself in the following ways:

- Candidates are rejected at the first stage of job application for having a Muslim name or coming from a non-White background
- Muslim or ethnic stereotypes and prejudices exist on the part of employers
- Perpetuation of inequalities by employment agencies by predicting the rejection of candidates and so avoiding putting them forward for jobs
- Muslim women themselves are aware of the potential for discrimination and this constrains their job-seeking
- Recruitment through internal vacancies, word-of-mouth or out-sourcing through agencies limits the awareness of available employment opportunities

Some respondents' comments on perceptions and experience of direct and indirect religious discrimination in the labour market:

“All women face discrimination in the labour market, just look at how few are in the boardroom. But, if you go to the interview with this hijab on your head, then you don't get the job. A lot of my cousins who have degrees don't have jobs. We face additional discrimination.” University student, Manchester.

⁹⁴ DWP internal analysis, AICD, 2008.

“I don’t know for sure if it’s because I’m black or because I’m Muslim...all I know is I am the only hijab wearer where I work and the staff are lot friendlier to other women than they are to me and some of them have been promoted and I still haven’t. I’ve told my manager about it but he says there’s nothing to it...so anyway I’m looking for another job.” Customer Service Adviser, London.

“Some people don’t approach you at work because they think you won’t talk to them. I always have to make the effort to talk to people first to let them know I’m not anti-social.” Psychologist, Manchester.

“I’m not a hijab wearer but I think they could tell by my name...I was made to feel very uncomfortable socially at work but I didn’t want to get anyone into trouble...but also because I couldn’t prove anything, so I resigned...but in the end my manager agreed to help me get a transfer.” Professional, Leicester.

“When one of the manager’s was leaving, I was in line to get the job but then my manager said “You can’t do this job”...and she differentiated between Muslims and ethnic minorities rising to senior positions and White people in senior positions...I didn’t report to anyone how I was treated...I didn’t think anyone would take me seriously.” Community worker, Manchester.

Religious discrimination, as is the case with most types of discrimination can be very subtle and perceived rather than direct and is therefore difficult to prove. For example 50 percent of British Muslim women in work interviews wear the hijab and several of our respondents highlighted that while they could not be certain that they had missed out on progression opportunities because of religious discrimination they felt it could have been a factor. The incidence of wearing the hijab is similar for British Muslim women not in work. Fifty seven percent of respondents not in work wear the hijab. Therefore, almost half of all British Muslim women surveyed for this study are identifiably Muslim.

The NAO report found that discrimination remains a serious barrier to employment for ethnic minorities (the report did not address faith), but relatively few examples are recorded by employment services providers such as Jobcentre Plus. The NAO report stated that such agencies could have a greater role in making ethnic minority customers aware of the procedures for reporting suspected cases of discrimination.⁹⁵

A recent study has found that negative media coverage of Muslims can provoke and increase suspicion and anxiety among non-Muslims while causing many Muslims to feel alienated.⁹⁶ The study found over 90 percent of media articles that refer to Islam and Muslims are overwhelmingly negative. The study also found such coverage is likely to provoke and increase feelings of suspicion and anxiety among non-Muslims.

⁹⁵ Increasing employment rates for ethnic minorities, NAO, January 2008

⁹⁶ Muslims and non-Muslims and the UK media, Search for Common Ground, 2007.

Four British Muslim women respondents (18 percent) in work stated that while they previously wore the hijab and in one case the niqab,⁹⁷ before they started their current jobs, they no longer do. They all said that when they began applying for jobs while wearing the hijab they were not successful in being employed. All four stated that once they stopped wearing their Islamic clothing, they found work. Two respondents commented:

“A lot of Muslim women have had to compromise their hijab...it’s just an item of clothing, it didn’t affect my ability to work...it’s the same as a Christian person wearing a cross. So yes I regret not being able to wear it but you have to be able to work.” IT Professional, Manchester.

“I wanted to wear my niqab to the interview but I just knew that if I did, I wouldn’t get the job...I knew they wouldn’t give me an opportunity to explain why I wear it and that I wouldn’t wear it in front of the children. So, I just wear it outside of work. Childcare worker, Manchester.

Several British Muslim women interviewed stated they felt misunderstood, stereotyped and made to feel unintelligent at work because of their faith. Often when people did interact with them it was to ask about ‘Muslim issues’.

“Every time there’s something in the news about Muslims, I just know someone at work’s going to ask me ‘so what do you think about that?’ or ‘do you agree with what happened?’ I’m not the mouthpiece for the whole Muslim community.” Communications professional, London.

To help remove negative misconceptions, attitudes and discrimination towards British Muslims employers and policy must now actively and openly addressing faith in the workplace. As we have seen from examples such as the BT Muslim Network, many British Muslims are happy to have open and constructive dialogue in the workplace to raise awareness of barriers they face or to address misconceptions. This is not just about providing prayer rooms (59 percent of women in work stated they had access to a prayer room) but also about ensuring that British Muslim women are not barraged with questions regarding the Islamic faith or feeling the need to justify or explain events overseas.

Some workplace practices and elements of workplace culture can inadvertently exclude Muslims. For example, alcohol is not permitted within Islam and many British Muslims are uncomfortable in pubs. Several respondents expressed concern that this culture still dominates in the workplace and is crucial to networking and getting to know colleagues better, and therefore not only does it make them feel uncomfortable but not going may hinder their employment progression opportunities.

⁹⁷ The niqab is a face veil worn by Muslim women, covering the face often leaving the eyes uncovered.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) has produced guidance giving practical information on direct and indirect discrimination and religious observance for personnel officers in the public and private sectors. This includes details about the observance of religious holidays and religious practices, such as prayers during work hours. It also covers detailed issues related to social interaction at events during, and outside, working hours that may indirectly disadvantage or exclude British Muslims. For example, 'the after-work drinks in the pub', while a common social event for the majority of workers is an event with which British Muslims, including women, may find it uncomfortable to participate.⁹⁸

While we have shown examples of positive measures some employers have taken to help increase employment levels of diverse groups, including British Muslim women, there is still a very long way to go. Research has shown that while 73 percent of workplaces in the UK have equality and diversity policies - including 96 percent of large private sector businesses and 45 percent of SMEs - only 23 percent of large private sector businesses and 10 percent of SMEs apply these policies.⁹⁹ Moreover, the majority of these policies do not include faith diversity.

Employers need to address the issues of greater diversity and workplace discrimination as part of their mainstream recruitment and workplace culture, if they want more British Muslims to apply and progress within their workplaces, and if they want to be more representative of this growing demographic group within the UK workforce.

A report by the Institute for Employment Studies (2003) found that while employers were not short of ethnic minority applicants, the applicants failed to make progress through successive stages of the recruitment process, compared to White applicants. The study highlights practices that contribute to this lack of success including the preference for graduates from pre-1992 universities and the requirement for high class degrees.¹⁰⁰

This preference for or bias towards pre-1992 'red brick' universities was reinforced by a survey by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2004) which found that while less advantaged young people made more job applications than their advantaged peers (those from working class families applied for an average of 19.4 jobs compared to 7.7 jobs among other social classes), students from new universities (who were predominantly less advantaged) receive fewer job offers.¹⁰¹

Many of the second generation British Muslim women interviewed also felt their employment opportunities are confined to jobs dealing with race and faith, and other sectors did not see them as obvious candidates, despite their qualifications. While they are beginning to combat the negative views held about their potential in schools and in the workplace, they recognise the need for a wider cultural change to fully participate and progress within the wider labour market.

⁹⁸ Aspirations and reality: British Muslims and the labour market, Bunglawala, OSI, 2004.

⁹⁹ Workplace employment relations survey, DTI, 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Minority ethnic students in higher education: Interim report, Institute for Employment Studies, 2003.

¹⁰¹ Graduates from disadvantaged families: Early labour market experience' Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005.

6. Summary and Recommendations

Our recommendations are designed to directly address the issues raised in the research.

Tackle misconceptions head-on

We have identified many misconceptions amongst employers and the general public regarding the educational levels and career aspirations of British Muslim women. RDAs should conduct an information and awareness campaign for employers and employment service providers. This should promote the abilities, willingness to work and high aspirations of British Muslim women, and ensure that employment service advice can be targeted at this group.

Work with employers to reduce religious discrimination

Many employers want to address religious discrimination but 27 percent of employers are confused about the difference between positive action, which is lawful, and positive discrimination which is unlawful. RDAs should work with the EHRC, Government Equality Office and employer organisations to:

- Produce guidance to help employers openly address faith in the workplace, understand the difference between positive action and positive discrimination and ensure they have in place effective measures to support reported cases of religious discrimination
- Produce information and communication tools to ensure employers can effectively communicate to their employees that they will not tolerate direct or indirect forms of religious discrimination, that religious dress and religious practice of British Muslims in the workplace is protected by legislation

Provide targeted outreach to connect women to job opportunities

British Muslim women are not currently using employment services such as Jobcentre Plus because they do not, or are perceived not to cater to their particular needs. Therefore a much more targeted and holistic approach is required, one that reaches out to the community and tackles the multiple barriers these women face.

We recommend that RDAs build on the example of the Manchester Enterprise and work with local authorities and Jobcentre Plus to create a targeted outreach service, staffed by skilled teams (including British Muslim women) to engage British Muslim women, provide one-to-one job preparation, job-search and career advice, and tackle the multiple barriers to employment to help them find suitable employment. There are some understandable concerns about programmes directly targeted towards specific groups: however non-targeted programmes simply have not worked in meeting the needs of this group.

Help graduates and other skilled women progress in their careers – and support their soft skills and networks early on

Some highly skilled British Muslim women are finding it difficult to enter or progress in work due to a lack of social capital networks and awareness of the market. RDAs should:

- Provide a programme of outreach mentoring, internship, careers and soft skills support to help increase the number of British Muslim women graduates entering employment.
- Build on examples such as the HotProspects graduate employment programme to provide effective support in jobsearch, preparation and progression, and monitoring outcomes by religion and ethnicity.
- Partner with employer organisations to support initiatives to actively and openly address faith in the workplace, remove barriers and discrimination, dispel myths through open dialogue sessions and Muslim or inter-faith networks between Muslims and non-Muslims.
- Partner with employers and employer organisations to provide more volunteer work experience placements to help increase the employability of inactive British Muslim women to help them build soft skills and secure paid employment.

Improve awareness and accessibility of formal childcare

Our research showed very little engagement with formal childcare. RDAs now need to:

- Increase awareness among British Muslim women of the benefits of formal childcare for their children and the eligibility of tax credits through outreach programmes in schools, women's organisations and Mosques.
- As the Childcare Affordability Programme is extended ensure this childcare provision is more accessible for British Muslims, for example through improving representations levels of British Muslim women in the childcare workforce and providing halal food to British Muslim children.

Use public sectors levers to influence employer behaviour

RDAs should use their purchasing power through public procurement to encourage contractors to promote faith equality, faith monitoring and greater employment diversity, including for British Muslim women. This will also require more effective monitoring of RDA agencies and RDA programme beneficiaries to help identify progress.

The overall goal of this package of policies is to improve British Muslim women's ability to choose the right mix of work and family for them and increase the employment and progression levels for this group and to help address the low employment knock-on effects of child poverty and social exclusion.

Appendix 1 Stakeholders who identified respondents, RDA programmes, employers and employer organisations and individuals consulted

Manchester:

- Dosti Women's Group
- Enlighten Project
- Ethnic Minority Business Forum
- Ethnic Minority Business Service
- Equal to the Occasion
- Fazila Food Limited
- Manchester Employer Coalition
- Manchester Enterprise
- Manchester Learning and Skills Council
- Manchester University
- Northwest Faith Forum
- Professor Angela Dale
- Professor Yaojun Li
- Sameera Ahmed
- The Cooperative Group

Leicester:

- Aggregate Industries
- Business in the Community
- Derby Business in the Community
- Fatima Women's Network
- Highfields Mosque
- HotProspects
- LeicestHERDay
- Leicester Learning and Skills Council
- Office Depot

- The Islamic Foundation
- The Peepul Centre
- Sangam Women's Group

London

- Adab Trust
- Area Initiatives and Communities Division, DWP
- BT
- Childcare Affordability Programme
- Confederation of British Industry
- Chartered Institute for Personnel Development
- Child Poverty Unit, DCSF
- Department for Communities and Local Government – National Muslim Women's Advisory Group
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- East London Business Alliance
- Employer Forum on Belief
- Ernst and Young
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Faith Regen
- Fawcett Society
- Greenwich Leisure
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- London Employer Accord
- London First
- London Skills and Employability Forum
- Mosaic – The Muslim Mentoring Network
- Muslim Council of Britain
- Professor Lucinda Platt

- OSCA – Ocean Somali Community Centre
- REACH – University of London
- State Street Corporation
- Spirit 21
- Veena Meetoo
- Way to Work
- Work Directions
- Working Links

Appendix 2 Interview questions

Questions for women in work:

Questions were also used as 'openers' into broader discussion of the workplace.

- Q 1 Do you describe yourself as Muslim/British Muslim/or use your ethnic identity/Other?
- Q 2 Are you Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Other?
- Q 3 Do you wear a hijab? Yes/No.
- Q 4 What is your educational background? GCSE/A Level/Graduate/Post-graduate?
- Q 5 Do you have children? Yes/No.
- Q 6 How long have you been in employment? What is your current position?
- Q 7 How did you find your first job – advertisement, Jobcentre, family/friend?
- Q 8 Have you ever been to the Jobcentre/careers service? Yes/No. If yes, did you find them helpful?
- Q 9 Did you get/need any help with your job applications/interviews? Yes/No.
- Q 10 Did your family/husband support your decision to work? Yes/No.
- Q 11 In the interview, did you feel you were treated any differently because you are Muslim? Yes/No. If yes, have you mentioned this to anyone at work? Yes/No
- Q 12 Do you feel there are any instances in work where you were treated any differently because you are Muslim? Yes/No. If yes, have you mentioned this to anyone at work?
- Q 13 Do you have any prayer facilities at work? Yes/No. If no, have you asked for them?
- Q 14 Do you feel your career is progressing as you would like? Yes/No. Have you been promoted? Do you get the support you need to help you develop – mentoring for instance? Yes/No
- Q 15 According to whether they have or are planning to have children – have you ever accessed formal childcare? Yes/No. Would you? Yes/No – give reasons. If state they will raise children at home ask if they will return to work at a later date.

Questions for women out of work – unemployed

Questions were also used as 'openers' into broader discussion.

- Q 1 Do you describe yourself as Muslim/British Muslim/or use your ethnic identity/Other?

- Q 2 Are you Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Other?
- Q 3 Do you wear a hijab? Yes/No.
- Q 4 What is your educational background? GCSE/A Level/Graduate/Post-graduate?
- Q 5 Do you have children? Yes/No.
- Q 6 Have you worked previously? If yes, why did you leave and do you plan to return to work in the future? If not worked previously, do you plan to work in the future? If not, why not?
- Q 7 How did you find your first job – advertisement, Jobcentre, family/friend?
- Q 8 Do your family/husband support your decision to work? Yes/No.
- Q 9 What types of work will/are you looking for? Part-time?
- Q 10 Do you have any caring responsibilities? Yes/No.
- Q 11 Do you have any preferences to be in women-only environments? Yes/No.
- Q 12 Do you have any preferences of where the work is? Is the travel distance an issue? Yes/No.
- Q 13 Do you think you need any additional skills or experience to help you get a job? If so, do you know where to go for help/advice?
- Q 14 Have you ever been to the Jobcentre? If so, did they help you?
- Q 15 Have you had any interviews so far? If so, how did they go? Did you in the interview feel you were treated any differently because you are Muslim? If so, did you mention this to anyone?
- Q 16 If you have worked before – do you think your employer did all he could to help you feel comfortable in work?
- Q 17 According to whether they have or are planning to have children – have you ever accessed formal childcare? Would you? Yes/No – give reasons. If state they will raise children at home ask if they will return to work at a later date.

Questions for student women – these were largely the same as the questions for out-of-work women with the additional following questions:

- Q 1 What are you studying and where?
- Q 2 What do you plan to do after your studies?

Appendix 3 British Muslim population statistics from the 2001 Census

Breakdown of the British Muslim Population

Muslims largest religious group after Christians:

- 1.6 million Muslims in UK in 2001
- 3% of Population
- 52% of non-Christian religious population

Youngest age profile of all religious groups in UK:

- 34% under 16 in 2001

Muslims only religious group in which men outnumber women:

- 52% men
- 48% women

Ethnic breakdown:

- 74% Asian (1.2 million Asian Muslims in UK 2001):
 - 43% Pakistani
 - 16% Bangladeshi
 - 8% Indian
 - 6% other Asian
- 11% White:
 - 4% White British
 - 7% Other White (includes: Turkish, Cypriot, Arab & Eastern Europe)
- 6% Black African origin

46 percent Muslims living in UK born in the UK

- 39% born in Asia:
 - 18% Pakistan
 - 9% Bangladesh
 - 3% India
- 9% born in Africa:
 - 2% Somalia
 - 1% Kenya
- 4% from other European countries:
 - 3% Turkey
 - 1% former Yugoslavian countries

Unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than those for any other religion:

- 15% Muslim women unemployed
- 22% Muslims aged 16-24 unemployed compared with 11% Christian
- 14% Muslims aged 25-34 likely to be unemployed compared with 4% Christians.
- 68% of Muslim women of working age economically inactive.

Geographic Distribution:

- 38% live in London
- 14% West Midlands
- 13% North West
- 12% Yorkshire & Humber

Source: She who disputes: Muslim women shape the debate, Muslim Women's Network, Women's National Commission, 2006.

Appendix 4 Employment definitions

Ethnic minorities: the term 'ethnic minority' is widely used to denote people of South Asian, Black African and Black Caribbean origin. In this study, the use of the term "ethnic minority" as a broad "umbrella" label, is deliberate, to signify reference to a wide variety of ethnic minority groups.

White: as with the term 'ethnic minority', the generic label "White" should be used with some caution. The existence of distinctive ethnic groups within the 'white' category is gradually being acknowledged. Notably, in the 2001 UK Population Census, people of Irish descent are recognised as a separate ethnic group.

Religious categories in the 2001 Census: the 2001 Census asked an optional question on religious affiliation. The data is disaggregated into the following categories: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Any other religion, No religion and Religion not stated.

Ethnic Penalty: net differences in achievement between ethnic groups are often referred to as "ethnic penalties." Some scholars use the term to emphasise the importance of discrimination in explaining the persistence of net differences in labour market achievement and others to refer to "all the sources of disadvantage that might lead to an ethnic minority group to fare less well in the labour market than similarly qualified White." (Ethnic minorities and the labour market, Policy report, Cabinet Office, 2003).

Muslim Penalty: refers to an identifiable net difference in the labour market experience of Muslims, as compared to non-Muslims who are similarly qualified.

Employment: The Labour Force Survey¹⁰² determines the status of individuals, depending on their answer to a number of questions about their recent labour market activity:

Employed: individuals are counted as 'in work' if they have carried out one hour or more of paid work in the reference week for the survey; are temporarily away from their job; are on a government-supported training programme; or are an unpaid family worker.

ILO unemployed: individuals are counted as ILO (International Labour Organisation) unemployed if they are not in work and have actively sought work during the last four weeks and are available to start within the next two weeks; or have found a job and are waiting to start in the next two weeks.

Economic activity: individuals who are not in work and who do not meet the ILO definition of unemployment are counted as economically inactive.

¹⁰² The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a quarterly sample survey of households living at private addresses in Great Britain. Its purpose is to provide information on the UK labour market that can then be used to develop, manage, evaluate and report on labour market policies. The questionnaire design, sample selection and interviewing are carried out by the Social and Vital Statistics Division of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of the Statistical Outputs Group of the ONS.