



MUSLIMS IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

Background Paper for COMPAS, University of Oxford

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I. Profile of Newham

Newham is home to 250,600 inhabitants. It is an East End borough located between the inner-city housing estates of Tower Hamlets and the prosperous commuter suburbs of Essex, geographically bounded by the rivers Thames, Lea and Roding, and by the common lands of Wanstead Flats to the north (see Fig 1). Newham was created out of the older London county council boroughs of West Ham and East Ham in a reorganization of local government in 1965 (LBN, 2002a).

Fig 1: The Borough of Newham within London



The borough is proud of having the largest proportion of non-White population in the country. More than 60% of its population is from a non-White ethnic group and this proportion is even higher amongst the young (LBN, 2005a). Newham is a good example what Vertovec (2005) terms a 'super-diverse' community. The cluster of wards on the boundary between Newham and Redbridge - Little Ilford, Manor Park, Loxford and Forest Gate - are the most diverse in the country, and the borough as a whole is also the second most diverse local authority (Piggott, 2004). There are more than 30 different ethnic communities in the borough, where more than 300 languages are spoken (Newham Language Shop, 2005). Alongside its breathtaking plurality of ethnicities, religions and languages, however, Newham is also known for its poverty. It is the eleventh most deprived

local authority in England and Wales, and the fourth most deprived in London (LBN, 2005a). It was partly the prospect of bringing regeneration to Newham's diverse but blighted population that secured London its bid for the 2012 Olympics (Gillan, 2005).

2. Introduction to Newham's Muslim population

According to the 2001 census a quarter of the borough's population is Muslim. Officially there are 60,000 Muslims living in Newham, though unofficially there may be many more (LBN, 2005a). A slim majority of Newham's Muslims are first generation migrants; 53% were born overseas compared to 47% born in the UK. Eighty percent are of South Asian origin. Newham has 19,000 ethnic Pakistanis, the majority originating from Mirpur district in Kashmir and the surrounding districts of Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Gujrat in Punjab, as well as Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar. There are 20,000 Bangladeshis, overwhelmingly originating from Sylhet district and Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna. The 7000 Indian Muslims are Gujaratis in the main, with smaller numbers of East Punjabis, Urdu-speakers from North India, and South Indians. Besides the South Asians, the 6000 African Muslims are mostly Somalis, Nigerians and Tanzanians. Newham also has a prominent White Muslim population, comprising more than 1000 White British Muslims and 2000 other White Muslims, mostly from Eastern Europe (2001 Census, author's own calculations).

Besides its ethnic diversity, the Muslim population in Newham practises within many different Islamic denominations. Nowadays of some 30 mosques the majority are Sunni, following the Hanafi school of thought, and would describe themselves as broadly Bareilvi or Deobandi. There are a few more Wahabi-influenced mosques, a Shia mosque and an Ahmedi organization. Nonetheless, Shias and Wahabis will pray in the Bareilvi and Deobandi mosques as well. Many Muslim men in Newham pray in different mosques within a normal week, according to the proximity to work, home or wherever they happen to be at the time. The theological differences are not inevitably observed dogmatically.

The biggest Muslim populations in Newham live around Upton Park, Forest Gate, East Ham, Manor Park and Little Ilford in the central and north-eastern regions of the borough. However, to capture new Muslim migration and the diversity of Muslim experience in Newham this report concentrates on Canning Town and Stratford in the west. As well as both having significant Muslim populations, each of approximately 2000, the Muslims of Canning Town and Stratford are less predominantly South Asian than in the rest of the borough. They also have a higher proportion of Muslims who are first-generation migrants. Canning Town and Stratford are somewhat physically distinct from the rest of the borough. The streets of terraced houses are interspersed with housing estates and tower blocks, and

lie face-to-face with no-mans-lands of current regeneration - business centres, dilapidated factories, depots and ubiquitous skips.

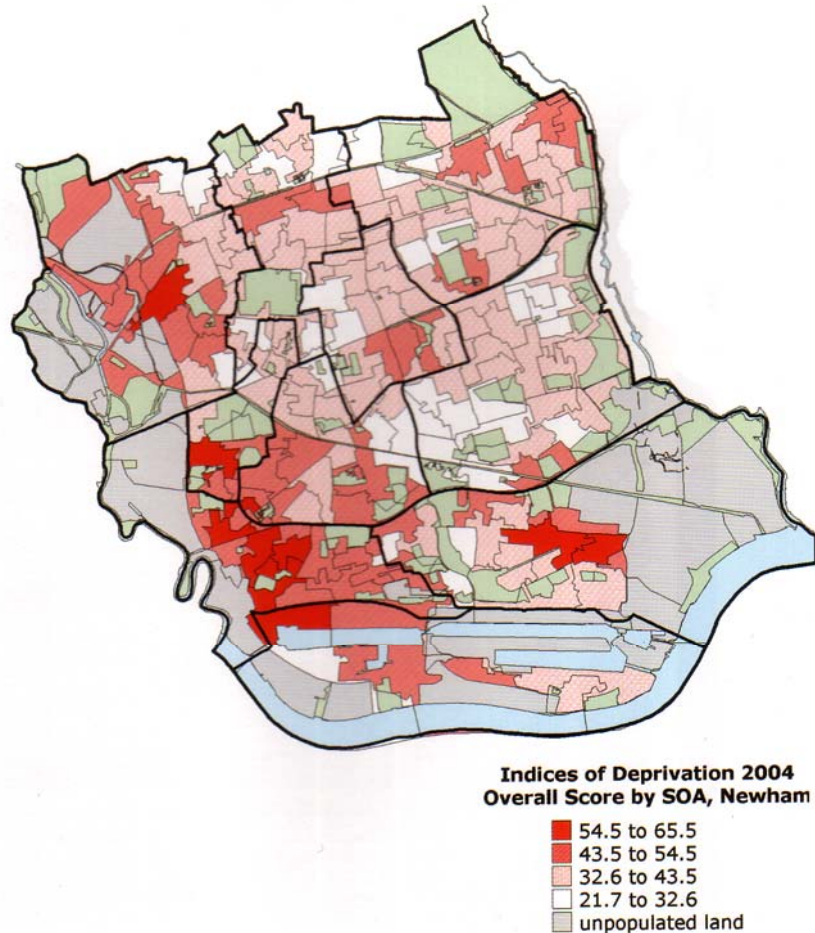
3. Historical perspectives on Newham's Muslim population

The present social geography of Newham's Muslims is the legacy of the contrasting economic histories of West Ham and East Ham (LBN, 1972, LBN, 2002a). West Ham was the industrial centre of the south-east. From its agrarian beginnings, the area built up rapidly following the opening of the railway in Stratford in 1839. Being close to the city, with rail and river links and space for growth, chemical factories, ironworks, ship-building, railway and rail engineering industries established in the area and thrived. The opening of the Royal Docks in 1855 encouraged more industries to set up, including the famous Tate and Lyle sugar refineries. Hastily-built townships like Canning Town and Silvertown mushroomed in the area to accommodate the industrial workers.

However, the industries of West Ham have been declining since 1900. Progressive mechanization produced a crisis of unemployment, leading West Ham to be the first borough to introduce the Unemployed Workers Act in 1905. By 1925, 70,000 people in West Ham were being supported by poor relief. The bombing of the docks during the Second World War further decimated the area. The borough lost a quarter of its housing. The housing stock was rebuilt by the Greater London Council after the war, and by the 1980s Newham had one of the greatest concentrations of tower blocks in the UK. During this era the docks and much of the associated industry and commerce moved further down the Thames to Tilbury. Through progressive deindustrialization the borough lost some 40,000 jobs between 1951 and 1975, when the docks were finally closed.

Industrialization in East Ham was confined to the Royal Albert docks and the Beckton Gasworks in the south. The large country estates dating from Tudor and Stuart times were sold for housing development in what is now Manor Park, Forest Gate, Upton Park and Plashet. By contrast, the area became more residential, with open spaces and grander housing, occupied by clerks and professionals commuting to London. Though East Ham was also badly affected by deindustrialization and unemployment, according to the 2004 indices of multiple deprivation the most deprived wards in the borough are still concentrated in its western regions (see Fig 2) (LBN, 2005a).

Fig 2: Indices of Deprivation 2004 Scores for Newham



Source: LBN, 2005a: 31

Industrial growth and decline in the East End shaped the processes of international migration and settlement in Newham. Migrant workers from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia and Lithuania have been settling in the dockland localities of West Ham and East Ham since the beginnings of industrialisation. After 1900 Jews originating in Germany and Eastern Europe began to settle in Canning Town, moving east from Whitechapel and Stepney. By 1911, about 1.5% of West Ham's and 1.9% of East Ham's populations were of European origin (Widdowson and Block, no date).

Migrants from more distant parts of the world have been a presence in the docks since the mid 19th century. Initially they were sailors and ship-hands, paid off and waiting for homeward-bound employment, staying in hostels whilst their ship was in dock. Some were tempted to stay and try their fortunes in London. In 1896 the Lascar Mission, a branch of St Luke's church in Canning Town, began its work with Indian seamen. As the seamen began to settle, communities of Black and South Asian people grew up in the south of the borough.

After the First World War more Blacks and South Asians settled in Canning Town; troops who were demobbed in the docklands and sailors, particularly from India and the Caribbean, who met and married local white women. In the 1911 census there were 143 Asians recorded in East Ham and 17 in West Ham (Widdowson and Block, no date). By the 1921 census this had grown to 1000 Indians in Canning Town alone, and by the 1930s the black community in the area was the largest in London (Bell, no date).

The post-war period saw a dramatic increase in settlers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean, as government ministries ran campaigns inviting people from the Commonwealth to come and work. In the 1960s and 70s Newham began to develop a significant Muslim population, initially comprising single working men, who subsequently brought over their wives and children in the 1970s and 80s. Mirpuris and Sylhetis, with their local economies of ship-building and employment on British ships, had been coming to the docks as seamen since the early 19th century. Kashmiris were amongst the first to take up the offer of employment in Britain, and settled in the docklands, joining their pioneer relatives in West Ham and East Ham. Kashmiris and Sylhetis began working in Canning Town as dockers, construction labourers and manual workers in the sugar refineries, flour mills and leather factories, and in the nearby Ford motor factory in Dagenham. In 1971 several hundred East African Asians also settled in Newham after fleeing from the Idi Amin regime in Uganda.

Patterns of Caribbean and South Asian settlement in Newham reflected the demands of the housing market. After it's bombing in the Second World War and subsequent reconstruction, Canning Town had a lot of council housing. Black and South Asian people settling in Newham rarely qualified for council accommodation, and had to rent homes from private landlords (Widdowson and Block, no date). Racial discrimination in the rented sector and the improved social status associated with owner occupation led South Asians in particular to start purchasing houses. As a result, by 1971 the census shows that the South Asians in Newham were concentrated in the north-east of the borough, around Forest Gate, Manor Park, Little Ilford, Upton Park and East Ham. The Caribbeans and Africans had settled further west into Stratford and Newtown (LBN, 1982). White flight from these residential areas out to Essex began in earnest. They became desirable locales for socially mobile Bangladeshis from Tower Hamlets on their way out to the suburbs. Since 1991 the proportion of Whites in the borough has declined by 18%, whilst that of Bangladeshi origin has increased by 5% and that of Black African origin by 7% (North et al, 2004).

Muslim migrants have continued to settle in Newham long after the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of the 1960s restricted widespread migration to Britain. Amongst the South

Asians this has taken the form of family reunion and marriage migration, and more recently also through small numbers of asylum seekers and refugees. The settlement of new migrant South Asian Muslims in Newham largely consolidated the existing social geography of religion and ethnicity in the borough, remaining concentrated in the north-east regions (LBN, 1993, LBN, 2005a). Over the 1990s the stream of migrants diversified. People came on student visas and work permits from all over the world, and asylum seekers and refugees settled from Somalia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Kurdish areas, Algeria and Kosovo. After Haringey, Newham has the second largest number of asylum seekers in London. Newham now has approximately 240 asylum-seeking families in dispersal accommodation and another 2,600 households are in some way supported by the National Asylum Support Service (LBN, 2005a). New Muslim migrants are scattered across the borough. Some are eligible for dispersal accommodation or council housing, whilst others are renting privately. They have become a significant presence in the housing estates and rented properties of Canning Town and Stratford, which used to be more White areas.

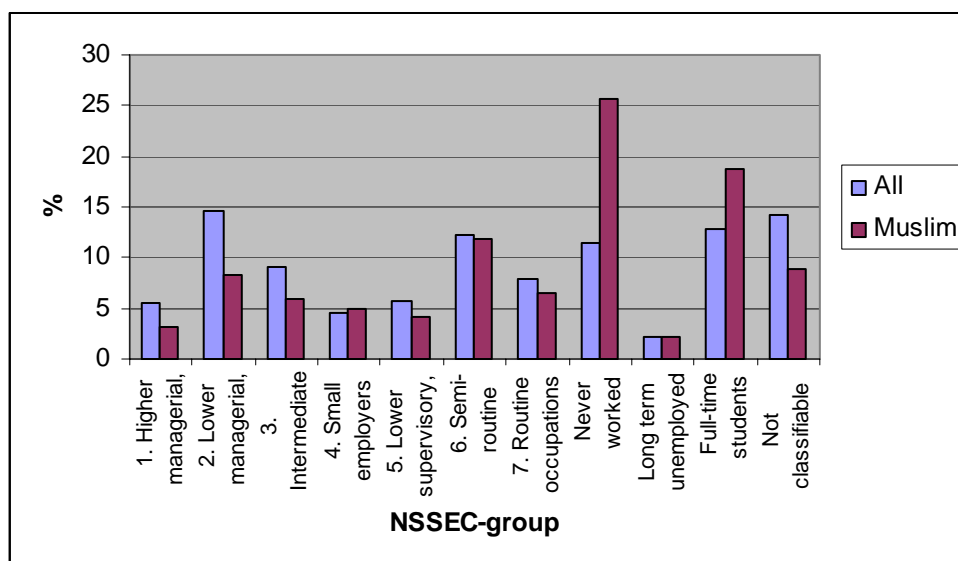
4. Socio-economic indicators of Newham's Muslim population

Muslims, especially Muslim women, are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged in the UK (Carvel, 2004). This is borne out in the local economy of Newham. Within this mainly working-class area, where levels of economic activity are amongst the lowest in the country (Seager, 2005), earnings are low and benefit dependency is high (LBN, 2005a), Muslims appear to have a particularly loose attachment to the labour market, high levels of worklessness, a marked degree of occupational segregation, lower levels of qualifications and poorer health.

Socio-economic class

Muslims in Newham are largely working-class. Analysis of the 2001 census indicates that Muslims in Newham are less likely to be managers or professionals than is average for the borough (see Fig 3).

Fig 3: National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NSSEC) distribution for Newham and for Newham's Muslim population, aged 16-74 yrs

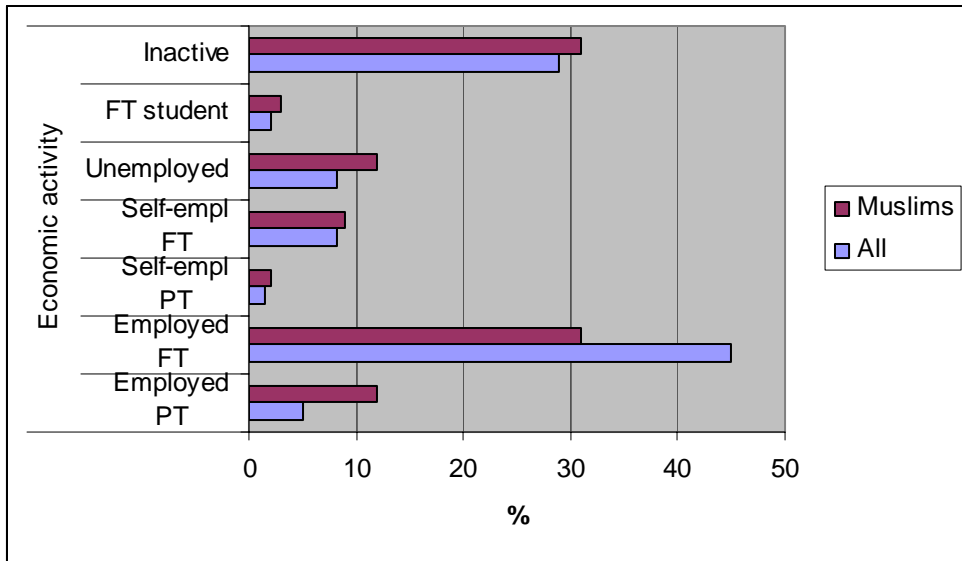


Source: 2001 census, author's own calculations

Economic activity and self-employment

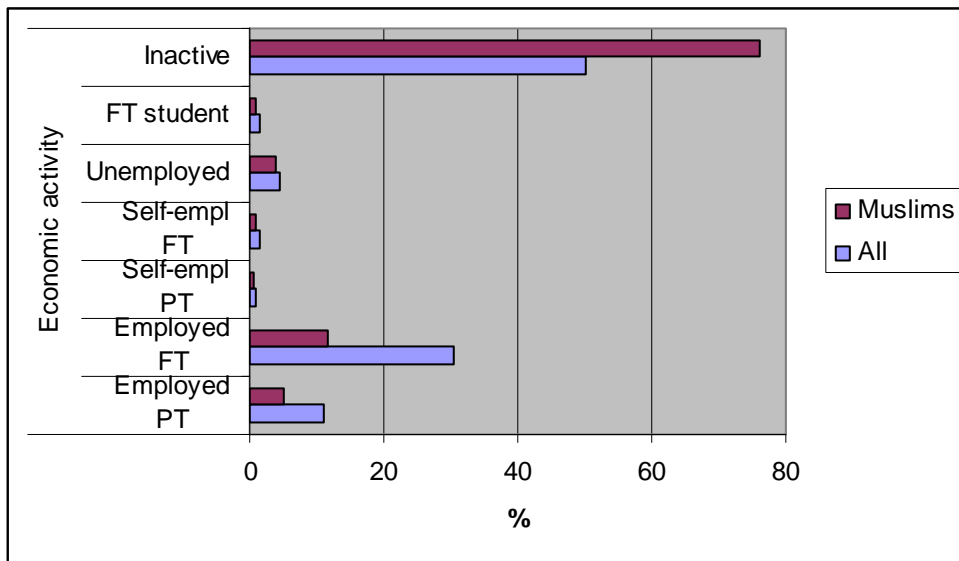
In Newham, 11% of Muslim men have never worked compared to 8% of the men in the general population, whilst 45% of Muslim women have never worked compared to 17%. Muslims in Newham appear to be particularly loosely attached to the labour market. They are more likely to work part-time and less likely to work full-time than the general population. The unemployment rate amongst Muslim men is nearly 12% compared to 8% in the overall population (see Fig 4). Seventy six percent of Muslim women in Newham are economically inactive compared to 50% in the borough as a whole (see Fig 5), which is driven by the 46% of Muslim women who state their primary activity as looking after home or family. Immigrant groups in Britain, particularly South Asians, have generally been successful in setting up businesses, but the Muslims in Newham have only slightly higher than average rates of self-employment (see Figs 4 and 5).

**Fig 4: Economic activity for Newham and for Newham's Muslim population:
MEN aged 25 yrs +**



Source: 2001 census, author's own calculations

**Fig 5: Economic activity for Newham and for Newham's Muslim population:
WOMEN aged 25 yrs +**



Source: 2001 census, author's own calculations

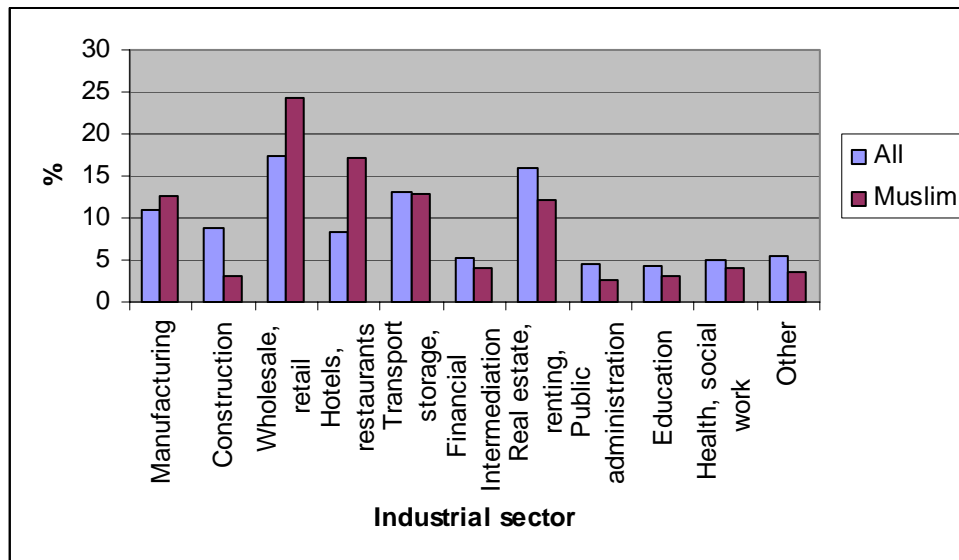
Poverty and deprivation

Levels of poverty and deprivation in Newham are highest in certain Muslim ethnic groups (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis) (Platt, 2003). Furthermore, those Muslim ethnic groups also seem to have a more precarious socio-economic position, and are particularly vulnerable to movement into poverty. Ethnic Pakistanis and Black Africans in Newham show lower levels of persistent employment than other ethnic groups (Taylor, 2005). Ethnic Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Africans are most likely to experience persistent poverty (Jackle and Buck, 2005).

Occupational segregation

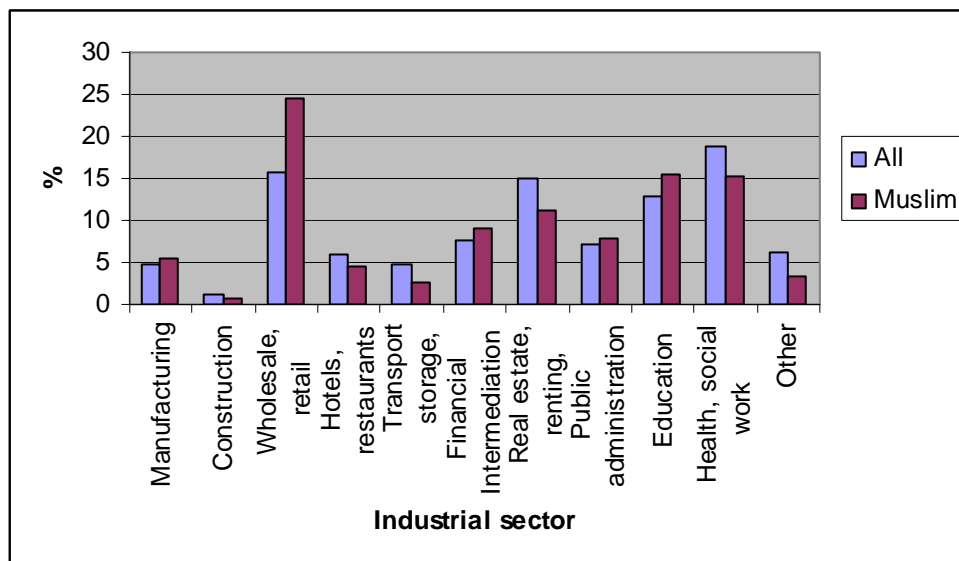
There is evidence of occupational segregation amongst Muslims in Newham. By looking at the industrial sector of those in employment (see Figs 6 and 7), it is clear that Muslims are particularly concentrated in wholesale and retail, and Muslim men are additionally concentrated in the hotels and restaurant sector. In Newham there are degrees of local ethnic and religious segregation beyond what can be described quantitatively using census data. As elsewhere in the UK, Pakistani men are particularly involved in mini-cabbing, Bangladeshis are concentrated in restaurants, and the Kosovan Albanians in construction. The slightly higher percentage of Muslim women working in education may reflect the popularity of working as teaching assistants, a job with hours that are compatible with looking after school-age children. In Newham many young Muslim women with degrees are also choosing to enter primary school teaching.

Fig 6: Industrial sector of occupation for Newham and for Newham’s Muslim population: MEN aged 16-74 in employment the week before the census



Source: 2001 census, author’s own calculations

Fig 7: Industrial sector of occupation for Newham and for Newham’s Muslim population: WOMEN aged 16-74 in employment the week before the census



Source: 2001 census, author’s own calculations

Housing

South Asians characteristically have higher than average rates of owner-occupation, as a result both of choice and constraint (Modood and Berthoud, 1997). In Newham only the Indians show these typically high levels of owner-occupation. Ethnic Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are not especially likely to be owner-occupiers, and Bangladeshi households are

more likely than the White British to be living in local authority housing (Buck et al, 2003). Whilst only 40% of the borough's overall population is White, 60% of council tenants are White (Newham Tenants Involvement Unit, *pers. comm.*).

Table 1: Ethnic group households by housing tenure

	Owner-occupied	Local authority rented	Housing Assoc rented	Rented private furnished	Other rented
White British	46	32	9	5	8
Other White	36	16	7	32	8
Indian	67	10	5	13	5
Pakistani	44	27	7	15	7
Bangladeshi	40	38	8	12	2
Other Asian	56	19	5	12	7
Black Caribbean	36	39	18	4	2
Black African	22	32	18	15	14
Other, inc mixed	43	18	21	11	7
Mixed household	66	12	5	12	5
Total	44	27	10	11	7

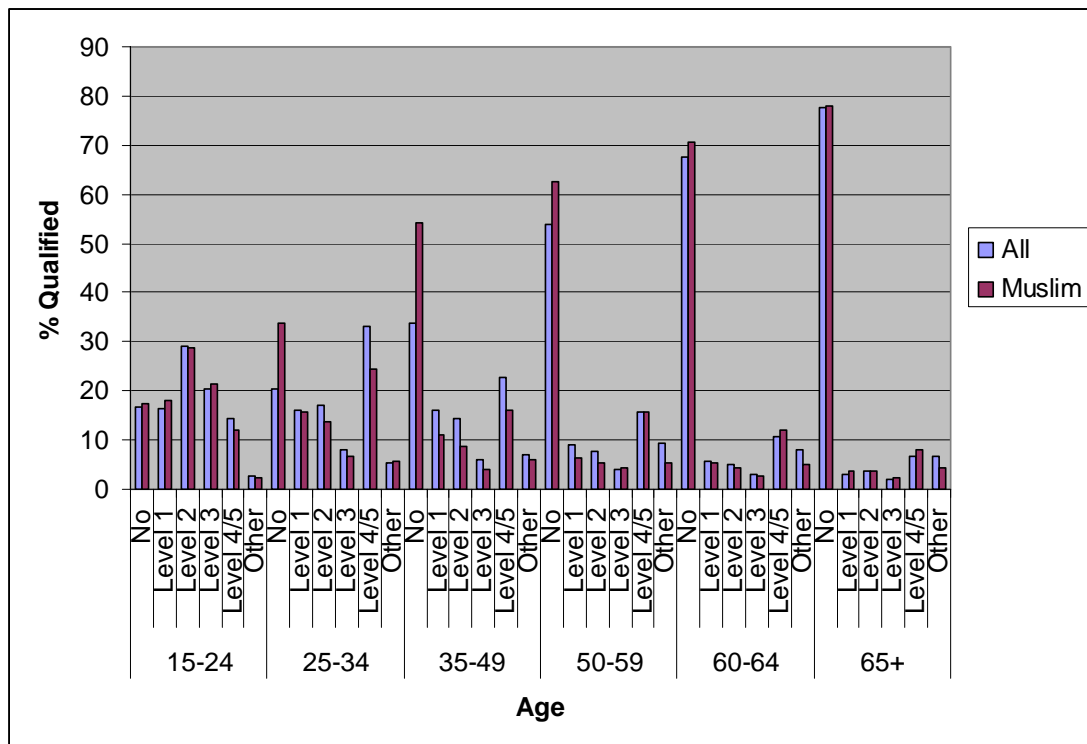
Source: Newham Household Panel Survey, 2002 (Buck et al, 2003)

Educational status

The educational status of Muslims in Newham is below the average for the borough, but this is driven by the markedly high proportions of Muslims aged 35-59 who have no qualifications at all. In looking at ethnicity Bangladeshis have particularly poor educational achievement, with half of Bangladeshi men having no qualifications at all (Taylor, 2005). The differences in educational achievement between Muslims and the general population aged 15-24 are much slimmer (see Fig 8). At age 16-19, as at older ages, it is the White British population who is under-represented in education; at age 20-24 the ethnic Bangladeshis are also under-represented (Taylor, 2005). However, the relationship between education and poverty appears to be differentiated by ethnicity, and amongst those with a degree or higher qualification poverty rates were higher than average amongst Indian, Pakistani and Black African groups (Jackle and Buck, 2005).

Fig 8: Highest level of qualification by age for Newham and Newham's

Muslims

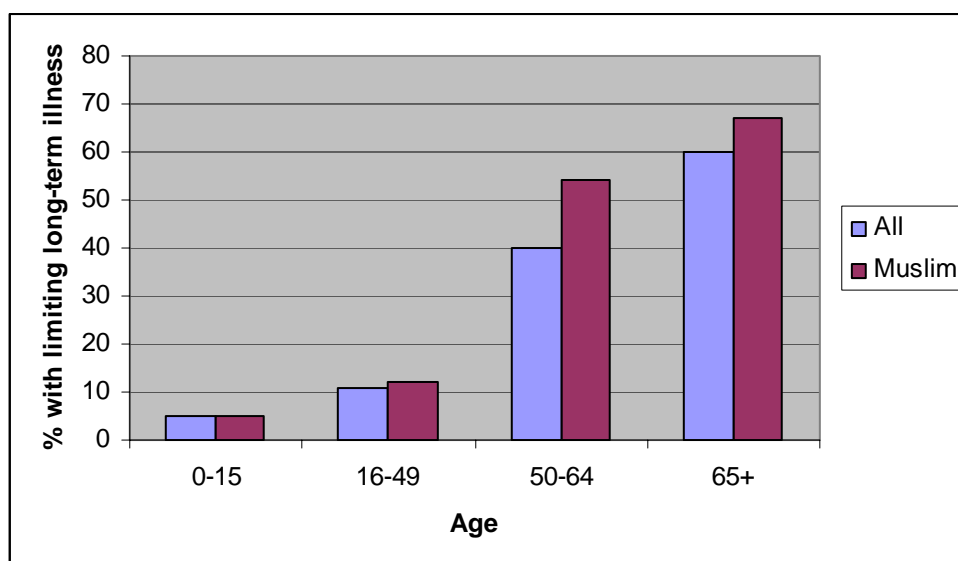


Source: 2001 census, author's own calculations

Health status

The health status of Muslims in Newham is also poorer than average, although only at older ages. Above the age of 50 Muslims report noticeably higher levels of limiting long-term illness than the population as a whole (see Fig 9). The patterns of ethnic inequalities in health in Newham are somewhat different from the national picture. After controlling for age and sex, it is White British and Bangladeshis who are most likely to report health problems, whilst the Pakistanis – who typically have a disadvantaged health profile like the Bangladeshis – are relatively healthy (Pevalin, 2003). However, in relation to the use of health services it appears that certain ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) are particularly unlikely to use any health or welfare services, and are less likely to have preventative health check-ups or tests (Burton and Laurie, 2005).

Fig 9: Limiting long-term illness for Newham and Newham's Muslim population



Source: 2001 census, author's own calculations

5. Governance

Who's who and responsibilities relevant to locality

Members of Parliament

Jim Fitzpatrick (Labour party), Poplar and Canning Town

Stephen Timms (Labour party), East Ham

Lyn Brown (Labour party), West Ham

Sir Robin Wales, mayor

Since a referendum in 2002 Newham became one of just 3 London boroughs to have a mayor. Sir Robin Wales (Labour party) became mayor. He makes decisions, advised by the cabinet, mayoral advisors and officers. He heads the civic partnership, namely the structures for community participation in local government via the community forums. He also becomes accessible to the community through bimonthly 'walkarounds' and 'question-times', and twice-yearly 'here to help' days. The position of mayor will be decided again in the local elections in May 2006.

Councillors

Newham has 60 councillors, who advise the mayor, scrutinise the work of the executive, participate in the community forums and represent their wards and local communities. After

the last local elections, 59 councillors were from the Labour party and one (Alan Craig) was from the Christian Peoples Alliance.

Currently 9 councillors are Muslims: Ayesha Chowdhury (Bengali), Shama Ahmad (Pakistani), Mahmood Ahmad (Pakistani), Abdul Shakoor (Kashmiri), Akbar Chaudhary (Bengali), Rustam Talati (Indian), Abdul Karim Sheikh (Pakistani), Khalil Kazi (Bengali) and Riaz Ahmed Mirza (Pakistani). Until his death in January 2006 there was also Sardar Ali (Kashmiri).

Neither Canning Town North or Stratford Newtown have Muslim councillors.

Canning Town North councillors: Marie Collier, Clive Furness, Paul Schafer.

Stratford and Newtown councillors: Judith Garfield, David Griffin, Anthony McAlmont.

Policy forums

Each cabinet member serves as mayoral adviser responsible for a particular policy forum.

The policy forums are information-sharing meetings at which the mayoral advisers feed back to the other councillors and officers.

Of particular relevance to the topic of community cohesion are:

Councillor Neil Wilson – Equalities and social inclusion forum

Councillor Ian Corbett - Anti-social behaviour forum

Councillor Jo Corbett – Culture forum

Council officers

Of particular relevance to the topic of community cohesion are:

Norma Spark – head of strategy and policy

Tom Conner – manager of community and culture – refugees and asylum seekers

Christina Schichtling – responsible for community forums

Newham Muslim Alliance

Represents the 30 affiliated mosques in Newham in consultations with the council.

Newham Muslim Citizen's Association

Non-political and non-religious association of Muslims.

Policies surrounding inclusion

After the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) public authorities were required to fulfil steps to identify and address racial discrimination and promote racial equality. Councils were obliged to publish yearly Racial Equality Schemes (RES) to set this in place. Newham council

RES was published in 2002 and broadly sets out the aims of eliminating racial discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good racial relations between people of different racial groups. It binds the council to ethnic monitoring and carrying out research to evaluate the impact of council policies on race equality and diversity. It details action plans for each service department in the council (LBN, 2002b). Newham has committed to achieving level 5 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government by 2006, the highest level of a standard that has been developed by the CRE (LBN, 2003).

Newham Community Strategy (2003) is an aspirational document produced by the Local Strategic Partnership. It is a renewal of the council's 1997 vision. It sets the priorities for spending the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) money awarded from central government. Projects funded by the NRF are grouped under the themes of: health and wellbeing, crime and anti-social behaviour, environment and housing, employment, community and social regeneration and young people. The second target is to 'build an active and inclusive community', such that 'everyone in the borough should have the same chances in life, whatever their background and Newham should be a place where people live harmoniously and respect each other'. It outlines 3 main areas of action to achieve these goals: (1) promoting equalities; (2) the Supporting People Programme to help 'vulnerable people' in care to live independently; and (3) community involvement through the community forums and other consultative mechanisms and partnerships.

Forums

Community Forums (CFs)

Newham's ten CFs were established 5 years ago. They were set up as part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which was a requirement of the £70m that Newham received from the central NRF. The LSP consists of (1) the civic partnership chaired by the mayor, to which each CF sends one representative; (2) the LSP executive group; (3) six Local Action Partnership boards on Health, Crime, Environment, Active and inclusive communities, Education, employment and training, and Youth, who each send delegates to the executive group; (4) the Community board, which is a seventh body consisting of the chairs of the CFs and representatives from various other bodies. These structures allow communication between the CFs and the LSP (LBN, 2003).

Newham's CFs were first established as local management bodies and given £400,000 a year to decide how to spend. After 3 years the CFs were redesigned on a consultation or advisory base. A Community Involvement Unit (CIU) was set up within the council to support the work of the CFs. The CFs now serve to advise the civic partnership

and the LSP executive board on financial questions and diverse aspects of planning. The council must consult with the CFs before making any decisions relating to statutory services.

Participation in the CFs is itself hoped to generate community cohesion (LBN, 2003), and the forums also organize specific outreach activities such as fun days, fitness activities and walkabouts. The forums are open meetings to which anyone in the locality is entitled to attend. The CIU monitor attendance and provide guidance to the CFs to involve demographic groups that are not well represented. Sixty percent of participants in forum meetings have been non-White. Muslim participation has been prominent, though such participants tend to be South Asian, with a small number of Somalis. It has proved difficult to encourage new migrants to participate (CIU, *pers.comm.*).

Patient Involvement forums

There are two patient forums within the overview and scrutiny committee in the local authority, one for the Acute Trust and one for the PCT. The forums have been established for about 18 months and meet every 2 months to scrutinize NHS policy and suggest improvements. Membership to the forums is closed at 6 members. Muslim involvement in these forums has been good; for example, there are currently two Muslims on the PCT forum. The Patient and Public Involvement unit in the PCT was named by the Commission for Racial Equality as one of seven examples of best practice nation-wide.

Police consultative groups

The Newham Community and Police Forum is the most direct way for local people to become involved in policing matters. This group meets every 2 months to discuss community safety and policing. The forum meetings are open for anybody to participate in. Each CF sends a representative to the forum. Muslim councillors and associations have been well represented at the forum meetings, largely raising issues of anti-social behaviour. Rarely, issues of racial or religious discrimination are also raised. The police also have a diverse independent advisory group consisting of 18 members (of whom four are Muslim), who attend planning meetings to do with policing at community events and oversee operations.

School governors

Muslims are under-represented as school governors in Newham even though some schools might have pupil bodies who are as much as 70-85% Muslim. This has been recognised, however, and some of Newham's active Muslim governors have set up the Association of Muslim Governors to promote involvement in the community and governance and

engagement with education in general. The AOMG is currently based in Newham but plans to expand to cover all of London. The governing bodies support section in the council education department report that most of the Muslims who serve as school governors are 2nd generation South Asians, parents who have been through the British education system themselves, often in Newham. There is little involvement from newer groups such as Somalis or Nigerians, and even less involvement from new migrants.

Tenants Associations (TAs) and Tenant Management Organizations (TMOs)

There are 60 associations for council tenants in Newham. Muslim participation in the TAs is low. White people make up 60% of Newham's council tenants, and TAs still typically consist of older, established White council tenants. Canning Town TAs tend to be attended predominantly by White people, though Stratford TAs and TMOs less so. Although BME people are becoming increasingly involved in the grassroots running of the TAs, as yet few BME people have become sufficiently involved to join Area Tenant Liaison Committees or borough-wide Tenant Liaison Committees. The Newham Tenants and Residents Federation, established since 1987, is funded directly by council tenants to campaign to the council on their behalf. Four years ago the council also set up a Tenant Involvement Unit or Residents Empowerment Unit. Both agencies aim to encourage wider involvement in TAs and TMOs. Although neither have any explicit policies to encourage greater BME involvement they both conduct outreach work to these ends.

Regeneration policies

Newham has been an area of regeneration since the London Dockland Development Corporation took over planning, housing and industrial development in the docklands in the early 1980s. Since 1996 Newham has received £300m in regeneration funding from the NRF, New Deal for Communities, Single Regeneration Budget, European Regional Development Fund and other agencies. For the period 2004-2006 Newham received a further £40m from the NRF (LBN, 2003). Through regeneration, Newham has begun to develop culture, leisure and transport services to replace the heavy industries it relied on in the past (LBN, 2002a).

The council Unitary Development Plan from 2001 sets out the framework for regeneration in Newham, identifying over 400 hectares of prime development land in the borough. Most of this land is concentrated in the western parts of the borough around the lower Lea Valley, Stratford rail lands, Canning Town, the Royal Docks and Forest Gate

(LBN, 2005a). Council tenants who are moved from their properties for the purposes of regeneration are put forward to the front of the housing list.

Lea Valley Olympics

Newham is to host 61% of the Olympic park and stands to gain 7,500 housing units and a net 2,900 jobs from the post-games transformation of the area (LBN, 2005a). In so doing, 300 existing businesses in the Marshgate Lane trading park will be lost (Gillan, 2005). In November 2005 a conflict arose between London Development Agency, responsible for the Olympic park, who wanted to issue a compulsory purchase order for land earmarked for housing in the Stratford City development project (Newham Recorder, November 9th 2005).

Stratford City

North-west of Stratford town centre is a collection of sites due to become Stratford international passenger station once the Channel Tunnel rail link is connected to Kings Cross, due to open in 2007. In April 2003, 73 hectares of this site was proposed to be developed into 4,500 new homes (30% of which would be affordable), 465,000 sq.m. of office space and 150,000 sq.m. of retail, 121,308 sq.m. of hotel and 35,943 sq.m. of leisure space. If the planning application is accepted work will start in 2006 and take an expected 15 years to complete, providing an estimated 4000 construction jobs and generating 29,000 new jobs through office and retail floorspace (LBN, 2005a).

Canning Town housing and town centre redevelopment

A 60 hectare area has been identified for redevelopment to redesign Canning Town centre so that it can support a higher housing density, with 62,000 new houses and apartments replacing 1,900 existing houses. The improvements are expected to attract 5000 new jobs to the area through commercial redevelopment (LBN, 2005a). 11,000 properties in the Newtown estate will be demolished over 5-7 years.

Voting patterns

General elections

	<i>East Ham</i>		<i>West Ham</i>		<i>Poplar and Canning Town</i>	
	2005	2001	2005	2001	2005	2001
1	Stephen Timms, Labour – 21,326	Stephen Timms, Labour – 21,032	Lyn Brown, Labour – 15,840	Tony Banks, Labour – 20,449	Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour – 15,628	Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour – 20,866
2	Abdul Khaliq		Lindsey		Timothy	

3	Mian, Respect – 8,171 Sarah Macken, Conservative – 5,195	German, Respect – 6,039 Christopher Whitbread, Conservative – 3,618	Archer, Conservative – 8,499 Oliur Rahman, Respect – 6573
4	Ann Haigh – Lib Dem – 4,296	Alexandra Sugden, Lib Dem – 3,364	Janet Ludlow, Lib Dem – 5,420
5	David Bamber, Christian People's Alliance – 580	Henry Mayhew, UKIP – 409	Terence McGreenera, Green – 955
6		Generoso Alcantara, Veritas – 365	Tony Smith, Veritas – 650
7			Simeon Ademolake, Christian People's Alliance - 470

Source: London Borough of Newham Electoral Services

In both local and national politics Newham is a Labour Party stronghold, a tradition dating back to Kier Hardie, the first Labour MP in Britain who was elected to West Ham South in 1892. Conservative support is concentrated around Beckton and the north-east. In the last 2 years the Respect coalition have made gains across the borough, especially amongst Newham's Muslim population.

Local elections

2002

	Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem	Green	Others			
Canning Town North	-	37.8%	-	18.3%	BNP 6.7%	CPA 13.9%	IND 8.0%	SLAB 5.3%
Straford and Newtown	16.5%	53.1%	-	19.9%	CPA 10.5%			

Source: Minors and Grenham, 2003

1998

	Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem	Others
Canning Town and Grange	13.7%	57.6%	13.6%	BNP 15.1%
Stratford	12.7%	65.5%	-	NIND 15.1% MRL 6.8%

Source: Minors and Grenham, 1998

6. Institutional landscape

This section contains general observations about Muslim participation in the institutional landscape of Newham, arising from more than 35 meetings with key individuals working in the council, police, health services, voluntary sector groups and local businesses. Some direct quotes from these meetings are presented to substantiate claims where relevant. The comments should be understood as representing informed perspectives and perceptions, rather than statements of fact. Appendix I contains an annotated list of institutions and descriptions compiled from these meetings.

Ethnic monitoring statistics suggest that Muslims are somewhat under-represented in working in statutory agencies such as the council, police and health services in Newham. The numbers are lower than would be expected on the basis of population, and the overall numbers conceal the extent to which Muslims are concentrated in lower-grade work within these institutions, with relatively few rising to higher positions. The Muslims working in the statutory agencies are mostly South Asian, with little representation from newer Muslim groups. There are no Somali council officers, for example. Efforts are being made to promote employment in these areas amongst ethnic minority communities.

Muslims have taken a prominent role in setting up businesses in Newham. Most of the Muslim businesses are run by South Asians but there are also many locally significant Turkish- and African-run shops and restaurants. One new Muslim migrant expressed the sentiment that the South Asians were dominant in the local economy: *“You can’t compete with the Asians – they’re wealthier, more educated. They know the nitty and gritty part of the country. So you can’t compete with them”* (Somali male, 50s).

Newham is characterised by strong community involvement, boasting more than 1000 voluntary groups, of which some 750 work with black and ethnic minority communities. Muslim participation in the voluntary sector is extensive, but again mostly amongst the established South Asian communities. In relation to newer Muslim migration, amongst the 37 organizations that make up the Newham Refugee Forum there is only one

predominantly Muslim group (Somali). One community worker commented that *“They just haven’t got to that stage yet. They’re still at the stage where they need help in getting people benefits, housing - whether they’re participating in the voluntary sector or in local issues – that comes further on down the line”* (White female, 40s). Over the last few years some eight Somali groups and one Albanian group have also been formed in Newham. It is possible that some newer Muslim migrant groups may not have had sufficient interest to form associations in Newham because there are active ethnic associations elsewhere nearby in London, as for Turks (Hackney) and North Africans (Whitechapel).

The Islamic institutional landscape in Newham is also mainly run by the established South Asians. Of the 30 odd mosques in Newham most are run by Pakistanis. Apart from that there are 3-4 predominantly Bangladeshi-run mosques, 3-4 Gujarati mosques and one Tamil mosque. New Muslim migrants attend the mosques for prayers, but do not seem to be becoming involved in running them or socialising around them. As one Pakistani male put it, *“They do go to the mosques but don’t keep communication”* (Pakistani male, 60s). Established Muslims seem to feel this is natural given the recentness of the migration: *“The new migrants are not bothered if someone else is running the show, they just come in and use the facilities, they don’t have time to get organized. Running a mosque is a responsible job”* (Pakistani male, 60s).

Somalis and Nigerians have become actively involved in running and attending certain mosques in Newham. A Pakistani commented of the Somalis: *“They are a good community. They do come to the mosques, they use the spaces in the mosques for their children and for prayers. They have a strong religious bond. They wear their own traditional clothes, they wear the cap, they have the Muslim identity”* (Pakistani male, 70s). However, other new Muslim migrants may feel excluded from greater involvement in the life of the mosques because of language or ‘cultural’ barriers. One respondent commented *“All the mosques round here do the khutaba only 3 minutes in Arabic and then the rest is Bangladeshi or Pakistani or whatever! [laughs] But we like to go to one where it’s one in our language. We can’t understand this one, it’s not very nice to join in”* (North African male, 40s).

Some mosque representatives say that Eastern European Muslims, such as Kosovans, have not become particularly involved in mosque life. One respondent described this as: *“They might be Muslim, but they have a very different way of being Muslim. Some of them were just born Muslim – they don’t practise it, they don’t do fasting, they’re not really strong, not very informed. So many men have never been to a mosque. Most of them don’t even touch the Koran, or read it”* (Albanian female, 30s). However, a lack of representation in mosques does not imply that such groups are not actively practising Islam. An Albanian community worker remarked that she had noticed a number of Kosovan Albanian Muslim women becoming more overtly observant in their religion since coming to Newham. *“I’ve seen a number of families that have*

changed their dress code. They used to be Western like everyone in Kosovo but now they're wearing scarves and reading the Koran. I don't know why, perhaps because people approach them and then they read the Koran and decided, or maybe their husbands went to the mosques and found out that this was the sort of thing they should be doing. But we're now seeing some changes like that" (Albanian female, 30s).

7. Community cohesion

A recent media commentary on British multiculturalism was that *"The great neglected truth of British multiculturalism is that every day, millions of different people cross the country are actually getting along very nicely, while the bad news gets all the attention"* (Benedictus, 2006:2). Many community workers and spokespersons in Newham expressed similar sentiments.

Community relations in Newham are relatively smooth compared to some cities with substantial Muslim populations which have recently experienced race riots, such as Bradford, Burnley or Birmingham. Community workers attribute Newham's cohesion to its diversity and residential feel. As one commentator put it: *"In London people integrate lots more. They've got to rub shoulders with their neighbours and because of that, there's tolerance. In Tower Hamlets it's different again. Tower Hamlets has a big Muslim population as well, but they're mainly Bangladeshi. They're all from one country, they're mostly from the same part of Sunni Islam, politically they think the same. Then there's all the business in Tower Hamlets, it's the city. But Newham is majority residential – who is there to conflict with?"* (White male, 50s).

In the 1970s and 80s the National Front targetted Newham heavily and racist murders were commonplace. In the face of organized racism the Black and South Asian communities in Newham themselves became politically organized, setting up the Newham Defence Committee and the Newham Youth Movement, which eventually led to the foundation of the Newham Monitoring Project in 1980 (LBN, 2002a). In 1980 the murder of a young Muslim male prompted the founding of Newham Muslim Citizens Association, which evolved into Newham Muslim Alliance (Stratford Community History, 1996). Right wing groups continued to be active in Newham during the 1990s, but since 2000 their strength has waned considerably. There have not been any race-related uprisings in the borough since 2001 when a young Muslim was killed in disturbances (Racial Equality in Newham, *pers.comm.*).

Ongoing contemporary issues

Racial discrimination and harassment

Most community workers consulted felt that instances of overt racist discrimination were rare in the borough but that subtle forms of discrimination were persistent. One respondent said: “They might ask ‘hello, I’m X, where do you come from?’ – there’s still a way in which they’re not treated as residents, they’re treated as visitors. There are very subtle ways of doing inclusion and exclusion. It’s very hard to combat” (White female, 40s). Surveys show that a tenth of working age men and women in Newham have experienced discrimination in employment on the grounds of race or ethnicity, particularly Pakistanis and Black Africans (Taylor, 2005a).

Others expressed the sentiment that Newham is relatively protected from racial harassment due to its diversity. As one respondent commented: “Here within local borough it’s fine but sometimes it’s a bit awkward if you go to new borough, maybe they see something new and you might have problem. For example if you go from here to Dagenham and upper part, they don’t like you, they hate you, racism is still existing, although it’s not too bad but still. Two of my friends last week they bought house in the English people area, and they said everyday they say ‘Paki’, you know, all these things, ‘you bad Asians’, when you are out of your own society. This is our area and in here it’s not like that.” (Pakistani male, 40s).

Settled communities and new migrants

Some differences between the settled Muslims and the new migrants are apparent. New migrants are sometimes referred to by the established communities as ‘freshies’, which is taken to be a pejorative term. Resentment about asylum seekers and refugees can also be heard: “Asylums receive what I couldn’t receive in all my 40 years”; “To me they were richer than the older community” (Pakistani male, 60s). Nonetheless when The Childrens Society carried out research with young asylum seekers and refugees they found that many chose to come to Newham after living in other boroughs, because it’s diversity made them feel safer. Within Newham Canning Town was not an area that refugees enjoyed living in. The environment is perceived to be hostile, and it is only in recent years that refugees have settled there (The Childrens Society, *pers.comm.*).

Anti-social behaviour and gangs

Newham doesn’t have anti-social behaviour problems of the same order of magnitude as neighbouring inner-city boroughs. However, as anywhere some young males loiter around on the streets. One recurrent issue pertaining to Muslims is on Eid and Pakistan Independence Day, when young Muslim males come out onto Green Street in large

numbers, driving around in cars with loud music and waving Pakistani flags. Elders hold campaigns in the mosques before Eid to try and dissuade young people from doing this, arguing that this behaviour does not present a good image of the Muslim community.

Some of the gangs in Newham are organized along ethnic lines (particularly the Tamil gangs). Youth violence is often carried out between members of different ethnic groups, and people in Newham may assume that youth violence is ethnically motivated. Perceptions that Black and Asian boys fight together were often mentioned, as between Muslims and Sikhs. However according to police spokespeople, frequently it turns out that youth violence does not directly relate to ethnic or religious difference but to conflict between rival schools or families. There are concerns about fighting amongst Muslim youth. Mosque elders hold talks with young men to try to defuse tensions by appealing to the common brotherhood of Islam. As one community worker put it: "*A lot of the problems are black on black*" (Black Caribbean woman, 40s).

The last murder with a significant impact on community relations was that of Ashley Hedger in January 2004. A group of young men attempted to rob a group of Asian youths, who ran into a mosque for cover. They rounded up some friends and came back out to look for the culprits, and mistakenly ran after 16 year old Ashley Hedger, who was stabbed in the head and died. The National Front organized a vigil in protest at the murder, claiming that because the victim was White it didn't receive the media attention that attacks on BEM victims have had.

Gender relations

Some non-Muslim groups commented that gender relations in Muslim communities were a kind of division. One respondent commented "*The reason they don't want to integrate is because of the culture and customs of the religion which prevents integration, like for example what Muslim women can and can't do – what we in the West call suppressive*" (White woman, 40s). Several times honour killings were mentioned as a fault line between Muslims and non-Muslims. Rumours about honour killings are around in Newham. However, the last honour killing documented in the borough was many years ago. Ironically, the last incident concerning honour killings actually related to the Sikh community. Forest Gate police station was involved in an undercover operation to expose two Sikhs from Kent who were tipped to be trying to employ an assassin to murder a daughter who had an affair with a Jewish man.

Mixed marriages

Some community workers observed that it is unacceptable in many Muslim families for young people to marry from outside their ethnic group. As one respondent commented: *“There is community cohesion in the sense that people are living peacefully side by side. So that’s social cohesion, isn’t it. But there are still very strict rules about family cohesion, and the children will adhere to them. A Bangladeshi girl would still not be allowed to marry a Pakistani boy, even if he is Muslim. With the Muslims here it’s tribal”* (White female, 40s).

Public morality

Some Muslims expressed the opinion that they were divided from the rest of the community because overwhelmingly they did not want to participate in ‘English’ customs such as ‘drinking and dancing’. One person commented that English people resented Muslims because their presence was the reason why many much-loved pubs in East London have been closing down. Speaking of the main concerns of Newham’s Muslim communities, a Pakistani man commented: *“You know, principally Muslims don’t want to be a community of drinking and dancing. This is big issue. People think they’re not socializing. Now to Muslim community, integration means having your own identity ... It doesn’t mean going to the pub and smoking”* (Pakistani male, 70s).

Recent local events

Elections

Muslim representatives in Newham say that it is not so much local events that have had an impact on community relations in the borough, but international events. There was widespread local opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2003 an anti-war march on Green Street attracted 7-10,000 protesters, including people from mosques, trade unions and political parties.

Responding to this popular sentiment, the Respect coalition have made major inroads in local politics in Newham, which has traditionally been a Labour stronghold. In the 2005 general elections East Ham showed the 7th largest swing from Labour in the country, and Abdul Khalik Mian was the 3rd most successful Respect candidate after George Galloway and Salma Yakub. Respect in Newham heavily targetted Muslims for recruits and the majority of its supporters in the East End are Muslims (Taylor, 2005b). This may have precipitated a greater appreciation of Muslims as a distinct political force in Newham amongst the other political parties.

Al-Mohajiroun and Hizb-ul-Tahir, generally unwelcome groups in Newham's mosques and banned from speaking, had a brief moment of prominence in the run-up to the 2005 general elections. On Saturday 23rd April a small contingent of young, mainly Pakistani males drove down Green Street in cars bearing posters against all the local election candidates ('Stephen Timms is shaitan') and shouting 'voting is haraam' in Urdu through loudhailers. Their cars blocked up the road and the incident was policed. Local people who were out doing their shopping watched in astonishment and Muslims amongst the crowd began arguing with the protesters.

Since the last local elections, two councillors in Newham have switched from the Labour party to Respect (Abdul Khalik Sheikh and Sarah Ruiz). In the upcoming local elections due in May 2006 Respect plans to put forward candidates for all 3 councillor positions within each electoral ward in Newham, as well as a candidate for mayor. The Respect coalition has more than 500 members in Newham, mostly from ethnic minorities, especially Muslims.

London bombings

Newham was profoundly affected by the London bombings. One of the victims who died in the bombings was 20 year old Shahara Islam from Plaistow, a British Bangladeshi woman. London Underground employee Imran Chaudhuri from Forest Gate was one of the first on the scene of the Kings Cross bombing and was involved in pulling victims out of the wreckage. There was widespread fear of reprisals against mosques and Muslims in Newham. The fears seem to have been largely unfounded. In the week following July 7th one faith crime was committed in Newham, and there was one incident of racist graffiti appearing on a wall in Stratford (Newham Recorder, July 20th 2005). Two arson incidents in mosques in East Ham in August were initially suspected to be Islamophobic attacks but now it seems unlikely, as both fires took place during namaz and would have had to have been planted by the type of person who would not attract attention inside a mosque.

Newham local authority and Muslim associations showed unity after the London bombings. A gathering was held at East Ham town hall to observe the two minute silence in memory of the victims. The council, police and Newham Muslim Alliance organized a public meeting in East Ham town hall to condemn the bombings and discuss community safety. It was decided that meetings and consultations should be public rather than only involving Muslims, as they reasoned that terrorism is an issue that affects the whole community. Newham Monitoring Project held a meeting at Minhaj-ul-Quran mosque in Forest Gate to discuss Newham's situation in relation to the threat of terrorism, which was also well attended. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair, Sir Robin Wales and MP Lyn

Brown spoke against the bombings and called for no one community to be blamed for the attacks.

The police organized information-sharing meetings between the borough commander, senior police officers, the council and concerned groups. The police held a series of consultations with mosque leaders about the police response to the bombings should be. The mosques overwhelmingly expressed the desire for life to resume normality, rejected the offer of posting police officers outside the mosques and discouraged journalists from hanging around as well.

Many of Newham's Muslims spoke out against the bombings. They talked about feeling scared to go into central London in the wake of the bombings, as they shared the general fear of becoming the victim of a terrorist attack, and those who wear distinctive Muslim attire feared discrimination from others. *"I myself was feeling threatened – I didn't like to take a big bag to the gym in case somebody stopped me"* (Pakistani male, 50s). Newham's Muslims were distraught at the idea of being associated with terrorism, and resented the burden they felt the bombings placed on them. Shamsun Noor's emotive letter entitled *"Barbaric acts oppose Islam"* was published in the Public Opinion section of the Newham Recorder.

6. Conclusions

Newham is characterised by diversity, deprivation and strong community involvement. The Muslims in Newham are themselves diverse, from different eras of migration, countries of origin, religious backgrounds, circumstances of immigration and trajectories after moving to the borough. As elsewhere in the country, Newham's Muslims show signs of socio-economic disadvantage compared to the general population. The political and community involvement of Muslims in Newham is sub-optimal in some arenas, and within the Muslim population new migrants seem overwhelmingly absent from public life. However, there is also a widespread desire to see new migrants participating more in community affairs, and statutory and voluntary agencies in the borough are both engaging in outreach work to those ends. Newham seems to have managed to escape the excesses of communal tensions that have recently wrought such damage in other cities with substantial Muslim populations. Newham's super-diversity creates a distinctive environment for community cohesion. In the words of one community worker: *"Newham is more diverse than Bradford – it's not as polarized. There are so many differences that it waters down each one a bit. It stops there being such a magnetic pull to each camp. But that doesn't mean there aren't many tensions"* (White female, 40s).

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Appendix I: Institutional landscape

Muslim Associations

Newham Muslim Alliance
Newham Muslim Citizens Association

Inter-faith associations

Newham Association of Faiths
Conflict and Change
Faith Sector Development Officer

Mosques and Islamic organizations

The community liaison team in Newham police estimates that there are some 58 mosques in the borough, though Newham Muslim Alliance puts this estimate at 30.

Mosques in and around Canning Town:

Barelvi mosque.
Muslim Welfare Association
Masjid Ilias

Mosques in and around Stratford:

Stratford Islamic Association
Masjid and Madrassah Al-Tawhid

Other significant local mosques and Islamic organizations

Minhaj-ul-Quran
Beckton Islamic Association
Quwwat-UI-Islam Society
Green Street Mosque
Markaz ud Dawat Wal Irshad Islamic Centre
Bilal mosque
Muslim Youth League
Islamic Dawah Centre
Tamil mosque
Imamia Islamic Mission
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

Ethnic associations

Katherine Road Community Centre
East London African and Caribbean Counselling Service
Together We Can, Newham United Reform Churches Group
Somali Family Welfare Association
Shpresa
Albanian Youth Action

Refugee and asylum seeker organizations

Refugee Community Forum
Backari Stevens, The Childrens Society

Hand in Hand Refugee and Homeless Support Group
Newham Community Renewal Programme
Newham Social Services Asylum Seekers project and drop-in
Renewal Refugee and Migrant Project

Racial Equality

Race Equality in Newham (REIN)

Islamic Faith Schools

Azhar Academy
Quwwat-ul-Islam girls school
Imam Zakaria Academy
Jamiah Madaniyah
Islamic Circles Supplementary School

Early Starts

Canning Town and West Ham

Libraries

Canning Town library
Stratford Library

Advice centres

Canning Town Advice Centre
Stratford Advice Arcade

Local service centres

Canning Town local service centre
Stratford local service centre

Housing associations

There are 50 housing associations working in Newham, managing 12,000 homes. The largest of these is East Thames Housing Group.

The council's preferred housing associations are listed here.

<http://www.newham.gov.uk/content/Housing/housing-associations/housing-associations.jsp?sectionNumber=5>

Job centres

Job agency, Hermit Lane, Canning Town
The Hub, Star Lane, Canning Town
Jobcentre Plus, Stratford

Business associations

Black and Ethnic Minority Community Business Forum

Parks

West Ham park
Memorial recreation ground
Canning Town recreation ground
Stratford park

Markets

Queens market