2023 NATIONAL SURVEY:

ASSESSING THE STATE OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

SURVEY RESULTS

COMPILED BY DR. IHSAN BAGBY

A project of the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), Conveners of Imams of Imam W. Deen Mohammed Community, Muslim Journal, Al-Ummah and Muslim Wellness Foundation.







National Survey Results:

Assessing the State of the African American Muslim Community

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Assessing the State of the African American Muslim Community is a collaborative project of five organizations: Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), Conveners of Imams of Imam W. Deen Mohammed Community, Muslim Journal, Al-Umma and Muslim Wellness Foundation. The motivation for the project is the almost universal sense that the African American Muslim community is struggling.

This sense of alarm was confirmed by the 2020 US Mosque Survey which showed significant declines in the number of African American mosques (25% decrease), converts (15% decrease) and a decline or no change in Jum'ah attendance in 50% of all African American mosques.

The five organizations came together in an attempt to better understand the challenges facing African American mosques and to identify priority areas which should be the focus of efforts to strengthen and grow African American mosques. The ultimate hope is that African American Muslims and organizations will join forces and network to address these priority areas.

There are three phases of Assessing the State of the African American Muslim Community project:

- A national survey of African American Muslims to solicit their views of the African American Muslim community.
- A convening of African American Muslim leaders to get their own analysis of the challenges and priorities of the African American Muslim Community.
- A virtual national town hall meeting to get input from the African American Muslim community and to see if there is a consensus on the target areas which should be the focus of joint action.

Organizing Committee (in alphabetical order)

Bashir Ali, Conveners of Imams of Imam W. Deen Mohammed Community Nadim Ali, Al-Umma and MANA Ihsan Bagby, MANA Akil Fahd, Al-Umma Abdul Karim Muhammad, Muslim Journal Salahuddin Muhammad, MANA Ayesha Mustafaa, Muslim Journal Kameelah Rashad, Muslim Wellness Foundation Mikail Stewart-Saadiq, MANA

Demographics of Respondents

African American Muslims were invited to go to a website and complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was open from November 1 2022 to April 22 2023. There were 317 respondents to the questionnaire. The group of respondents were representative of the African American Muslim community.

- Half of the respondents were female and half were male.
- The average age of respondents was 51.
- Approximately 60% of respondents were converts and 40% were raised Muslim.
- About 50% of respondents were attendees in a mosque; 30% were active in a mosque; and 20% did not attend a mosque.

	Categories of Age Groups					
Age Group	Actual Number	Percentage				
18-34	35	11%				
35-64	197	64%				
65+	74	24%				

Here is the breakdown of the age groups of respondents.

Respondents were located in 27 states plus Washington DC.

- 1. Michigan 57
- 2. Georgia 47
- 3. California 32
- 4. New York 22
- 5. Maryland 17
- 6. New Jersey 17
- 7. Pennsylvania 17
- 8. North Carolina 14
- 9. Ohio 11
- 10. Texas 11

Challenges

Facing the African American Muslim Community

Respondents were asked an open-ended question: "What do you think are the three greatest challenges facing the African American Muslim Community."

Here are the top ten challenges identified by respondents.

- 1. Divisions within the community and lack of sense of community/belonging in masjids
- 2. Absence of cohesive alliances and networking and lack of national agenda
- 3. Deficient masjid funding and lack of financial infrastructure or business acumen in masjids
- 4. Absence of youth and young adults in masjids
- 5. Insufficient Islamic knowledge and Islamic education
- 6. Lack of commitment of attendees; diminishing community involvement in masjid
- 7. Lack of qualified leadership; leadership is aging
- 8. Marriage and family problems
- 9. Financial difficulties of masjid attendees; lack of financial literacy
- 10. Lack of integration of African American and Muslim identity; erasure of our history and contributions

Here are all the challenges that were mentioned by respondents. Below each listed challenge are actual phrases used by respondents.

Rank	Challenge	Number	Percentage
1	Divisions and Lack of Sense of Community		
	Divisions between the populous		
	Sectarianism		
	Feuds due to different Madhhabs		
	Fostering a strong sense of community connection		
	Lack of sense of belonging		
	Trust in each other	115	12.2%
	Hislam instead of Islam		
	Sense of cohesion and community		
	Lack of collaboration		
	Lack of integration with other Muslim ethnic groups		
	Lack of unity between masaajid		
	Need for more unifying experiences		
2	Absence of National Network		
	Cohesive alliances of different Islamic communities and		
	organizations	107	11.3%
	Lack of visible national leadership	107	11.5%
	Lack of national agenda		
	There is no recognized national structure for the African		

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	b Lack of Commitment	Maintaining regular attendance.707.4%	6	•		
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a regular attendance 70 7 40/					70	7.4%
		Motivating men to attend congregational pravers				
	Motivating men to attend congregational pravers			Not willing to participate consistently in Masjid activities		
nt		Apathy70Maintaining regular attendance.70		No sustainable program to increase the knowledge base Lack of access to Islamic knowledge that is beneficial to		
a require attendance	Apathy		6	Lack of Commitment Apathy		70
		Motivating men to attend congregational pravers			_	
	Motivating men to attend congregational pravers					
men to attend congregational prayers	Motivating men to attend congregational prayers			Not winning to participate consistently in Masju activities		

	Not enough consistent volunteers		[]
	Diminishing community involvement		
	Too many folk thinking someone else is supposed to provide a		
	service instead of stepping up		
7			
	Lack of Qualified Leadership Knowledgeable leaders		
	Knowledgeable leaders		
	Leadership is aging and not selecting replacements		
	"Old" Leadership not embracing younger leaders		
	Leadership is a dictatorship		
	Imams being apathetic towards the members	62	C C (
	No new leaders have been trained	63	6.6%
	Honest leadership through fair elections		
	The "Arabization" of black imams who were educated		
	overseas		
	Culturally relevant imams and leadership		
	Lack of Black leadership and Black Muslim Imams that are		
	educated at a high level		
8	Marriage and Family		
	Difficulty in getting married, staying married. Attaining and		
	maintaining strong family life.		
	Dysfunctional families		
	Family Stability		
	Large unmarried population		
	Misogyny		
	Serial Marriages	62	6.6%
	Domestic violence against Women		
	Lack of resources for single parent families		
	Lack of familial support		
	Finding Muslim mates for our children.		
	Preparing people for marriage		
	Marital counseling and support		
	Finding suitable partners for our sisters		
9	Finances—Individual		
	Poverty		
	Economic empowerment		
	Opportunities for cooperative economics		
	Poverty and job insecurity	10	4.00/
	Financial literacy	46	4.9%
	Educational and career development		
	Individual financial resources		
	Housing		
	Lack of entrepreneurial opportunity		
10	Issues of Identity and Culture		
_	Self-identify and pride		
	Internalized inferiority complex (thinking black culture is	33	3.5%
	haram, Arab culture is Islam, etc.)		0.070
	Erasure of our history and contributions		
	Liasure of our history and continuations	1	

Lack of identity Lack of self esteem Writing our narrative Preserving our legacy Lack of knowledge of African Muslim History Alignment of cultural identity and Islam Cultural confusion 11
Writing our narrative Preserving our legacy Lack of knowledge of African Muslim History Alignment of cultural identity and Islam Cultural confusion
Preserving our legacy Lack of knowledge of African Muslim History Alignment of cultural identity and Islam Cultural confusion
Lack of knowledge of African Muslim History Alignment of cultural identity and Islam Cultural confusion
Alignment of cultural identity and Islam Cultural confusion
Cultural confusion
11 Activism—Involvement in Black Community
Implementing Islam as the answer to the social ills of our
people
Not enough exposure in greater African American Community
Inviting the public to resources that we can provide
Lack of engagement with the larger African American
community 31 3.3%
Incarceration
Interaction with broader community/issues
Social and political influence
Lack of presence in the community
Relatability to our struggle in America
12 More Activities
Lack of community events
Resuming community life post Covid
Lack of programs that encourage interaction outside of303.2%
Jumu'ah
Socialization needed
There's no genuine community life
13 Dawah
Convert/Revert Care
Propagating the religion to the U.S.A.
Attracting new members 29 3.1%
Difficulty attracting new converts
Developing systematic dawah programs for African American
and other people of color
14 Declining African American Population
Shrinking community
There are not enough of us to come together
Aging
Declining African American population 27 2.9%
Lack of growth in new membership
Retention of Muslims born into the deen
The closing of majority Black masjids
Atrophy of inner-city masjid congregations
15 Education
Well-funded and financially supported learning opportunities
Education outside of religion 22 2.3%
Educational opportunities
Education to provide expertise in organizational development

16	Professionalism		
10	Accountability		
	Organizational skills		
	Infrastructure		
	Working with a board and community that is myopic		
	Shurah Board is not effective. The division amongst them is		
	felt with the lack of participation		
	Transparency	21	2.2%
	Better management of the community resources.		
	Using technology to our advantage		
	Disorganization of community- not coming together to		
	progress		
	Lack of structure so more members can have meaningful roles		
	No professional governance to make our institutions grow		
	Disorganization		
17	Racism and Islamophobia		
<i>- '</i>	Anti Black Racism	20	2.1%
	White supremacist capitalist patriarchy		2.1/0
18	Relations with Immigrant Muslims		
10	Racism in the Muslim community and lack of awareness		
	Marginalization by the immigrant-controlled masjids		
	Black Muslims don't regard immigrant Muslims	19	2.0%
	Assimilation into an immigrant apolitical identity		
	Having our cultural perspective & deen invalidated by		
	Muslims from diasporic communities		
10	Support from immigrant Muslims		
18	Social Ills		
	Drugs/sex		
	Gun violence		
	Crime	19	2.0%
	Western culture		
	Safety		
	Social Media influencing people and taking people out of the		
	Masjid		
20	Masjid Buildings		
	Structure upkeep		
	Expansion of facilities		
	Subpar space for worship/masjid		
	Getting a masjid built from the ground up that our children	15	1.6%
	can look at with dignity and respect		
	Architectural representative masjids in our community		
	Masjid locations/subpar buildings		
	Upkeep of masjids		
21	Islamic Schools		
	Muslim schools and Quranic Education		
	Classical Islamic Education as a Pedagogy k-12	13	1.4%
	Keeping Muslim schools open		
L		1	

Need of a school pre-K thru 12th grade	
Establish Islamic school curriculum for our accredited schools.	
22 Spiritual and Character Growth	
Genuine spiritual growth. Not superstitious religious thinking	1.2%
and behavior	1.270
Trusting in Allah	
23 Social Services	
Gaining resources for mosque-based social service initiatives	
Establishing social services 9	1.0%
Care for our aging (senior) Community members	
Health education	
24 Mental Health	
Unaddressed Mental Health Issues 8	0.8%
Lack of therapy/ outlets	
25 Vision and Direction	
Lack of vision	
Strategic planning 7	0.7
Lack of compelling messaging	
No direction	
25 Issue of Women	
The rights of women	
Need greater emphasis on women's involvement in masjid 7	0.7%
Promoting women's leadership in mosque boards	
Accommodating women in the best way	
27 Communication	
Suggestions and opinions being heard 6	0.6%
The needs of the Community are not clearly communicated	0.070
Effective communication	

Priorities

An open-ended question was asked on priorities: "To meet these challenges and to strengthen the African American Muslim community, what do you think should be the top three priorities."

Here are the top ten priority areas:

- 1. Islamic knowledge and Islamic education.
- 2. Finances of the individual
- 3. Marriage and family
- 4. Youth and young adults
- 5. Establish a national network
- 6. More Activities to attract Muslims to the masjid
- 7. Finances for masjids and institutions
- 8. Spiritual growth and wellness
- 9. Leadership
- 10. Education

Here is a full list of all priorities that were identified. Phrases below the listed priority are the actual words of respondents.

Rank	Priority	Number	Percentage
1	Islamic Knowledge and Islamic Education More opportunities to learn Robust libraries in every mosque Organize virtual halaqas for Muslim women Knowledge and development of self Comprehensive classes to provide strong Islamic foundation Getting grounded in the true beauty of the deen beyond the basics Daily/weekly classes on tawheed & articles of faith Qualified teachers Learning Arabic	100	11.7%
2	Finances—Individual Financial literacy classes and ongoing programs for teaching how to budget, manage money and create wealth Do for self Educating on how we help ourselves Economic education/support/development Pathways to collective economic growth and action Economic empowerment - business development Trade skills with emphasis on self-employment Micro-finance for small businesses Pool financial Resources	99	11.6%

3	Marriage and Family		
	Pre-marriage and marriage education		
	Imams encourage healing between black men and women		
	Stop polygamy when brothers have no money		
	Conferences about marriage and divorce	67	7.9%
	C C	07	7.9%
	More family-oriented programs		
	Family counseling		
	Establish a consistent and trusted method/process specifically		
-	for finding African American Muslim spouses		
4	Youth and Young Adults		
	Youth groups that work together		
	Showing the youth what genuine community life is about		
	Youth leadership		
	Raising sons to be healthy, emotionally intelligent, fully		
	human and to value marriage		
	More events for young Muslims to meet in their teens and		
	early 20s and parents encouraging marriage	60	7.0%
	Have programs for the youth		
	Get the young people 20 and below involved in community		
	planning		
	Programs to attract and retain youth		
	Appoint younger co-imams		
	Making younger generations feel welcomed, heard, and safe		
	Educating our youth & instilling a strong Islamic identity		
5	Establish a National Network		
	Establish an umbrella organization to establish strategic plan		
	Nationwide organization that puts on local social activities for		
	different groups. Allows for singles to meet		
	National collective fundraisers		
	Having a national group or platform	57	6.7%
	Bring the communities together thru zoom Platform		
	National / regional spokes person		
	Communicating with multiple black communities		
	Unifying to form strong organizations		
	Increased visibility		
6	More Activities to Attract Muslims to Masjid		
	Host more events		
	Programs to draw participants		
	Community meetings		
	Making Islamic communities a solution		
	More opportunities to gather		
	Provide consistent opportunities for coming together for	50	5.9%
	collective humanitarian goals		2.270
	Hosting local community events and programs that encourage		
	(advertised to) both Muslim and non-Muslims to		
	participate (Cook outs, local events)		
	Community development programs		
	Community - building an active community		
	Community - bunding an active community		

7	FinancialInstitutional		
, í	Develop capacity to support paid leadership		
	Economic and community development		
	Financial clout		
	Effective use of funds		
	Developing a fund	49	5.8%
	United financial goals and planning		
	Economic collaborations		
	Establish economic options (trust funds, banks, credit		
8	unions) Spiritual Growth and Wellness		
0			
	Healing as a national community		
	Respect		
	Faith		
	Ongoing programming to teach folk how to develop and		
	maintain interpersonal relationships in Islam, with a specific		
	focus on addressing the issues peculiar to our community	39	4.6%
	Trusting Allah		
	Instilling true fear of God in Muslims		
	Connecting to a spiritual tradition		
	Encourage individual Quran reading		
	Humbleness		
	Utmost sincerity, care & dedication		
9	Leadership		
	Train leadership		
	Clear definition of imam's job description		
	Putting strong, well-educated leaders in place	38	4.5%
	Involve African Americans in leadership opportunities		
	Finding a spiritual leader/teacher		
	Put those in positions that has leadership abilities		
10	Education		
	Secular education		
	Education General	37	4.3%
	Invest in educational opportunities		
10	Professionalism and Better Organization		
	Organizational development. Holding each other accountable		
	More transparency	37	4.3%
	Technology ownership		
	Tap into community strengths and knowledge		
12	Activism and Involvement in Black Community	ļ	
12	Developing programs that address the social and economic		
	need of local the African American community		
	Local community activism	36	4.2%
	Neighborhood Development		
	Building communities around the masjid		
	Involve ourselves with broader community		
	Open discussion on the topics with Muslims and non-Muslims		

	Planning, building and investing in community housing Creating resources to help the poor and being more visible in the community. Networking with larger community		
12	Unity and Sense of Community Focus on the brother and sisterhood Create safe spaces for Muslims to be vulnerable with each other and work together through issues they might Getting to actually know the individuals in the community through events Teaching and connection and inclusion for us all Develop lesson plans that support black unity while emphasizing community development	30	3.5%
14	Identity and Culture Understand our history and experience in the West Knowledge of self Education on the history of Islam in America (our contribution) Publishing our narrative Pride in who they are as afro-indigenous or Afro-American Self-worth/love/appreciation Racial/cultural superiority removed Talks on cultural identity Organized cultural critique of trends within Blackamerica	27	3.2%
15	Islamic Schools The building and staffing of local schools More Islamic schools Black Muslim educational initiatives including developing a high quality network full time Islamic schools, that are potentially boarding schools Focus on building schools and businesses Development of Educational Institutions K-12 Building sustainable education systems	25	2.9%
16	Vision and Direction Develop a vision & mission A relevant, modern vision and mission Strategic planning/organizational leadership training African Americans must agree on the challenges Strategic planning and cushioning Think Tank to solve these specific issues on a national level An American school of thought instead of following various foreign ones	24	2.8%
17	Dawah Information to community Be more inviting to converts Increased, targeted dawah efforts Developing our unique message to Black people	13	1.5%

18	Communication		
	Streamlined communication	11	1.3%
	Building a reputable online information center for African	11	1.570
	America Muslims		
18	Political Involvement		
	Political engagement	11	1.3%
	Create a political agenda		
20	Social Services		
	Shelters for women and children	8	0.9%
	Build community by improving the service experience		

Ranking for Program Priorities

Finally, respondents were asked to rank 20 programs as to their priority. The possible rankings were: highest priority, important priority, medium priority, somewhat important priority and lowest priority. The question was: "In order to strengthen and grow African American masjids, what **programs** do you think should be prioritized?" Here are the results.

Program and	Ranking	Avg Score	Ranked as Highest Priority
1. Youth (a	ges 5-17) programs	4.60	63%
2. Healthy	marriage programs	4.59	65%
3. Young ac	lult (ages 18-34) programs	4.56	57%
4. Premarit	al education	4.46	57%
5. Increasin	g faith and commitment among attendees	4.40	55%
6. Leadersh	ip training	4.40	54%
7. More co	operation and unity among masjids	4.38	55%
8. Personal	wellness and healing	4.29	47%
9. Imam Tra	aining	4.26	47%
10. Adult ed	ucation to better understand Islam	4.26	43%
11. Social se	rvices for Muslims and non-Muslims	4.22	46%
12. Financial	literacy programs	4.17	41%
13. Convert/	revert care programs	4.17	37%
14. Training	in entrepreneurship and econ empowerment	4.11	42%
15. Commur	ity activism—involvement in local community issues	4.03	34%
16. New lead	lership in masjids	3.97	35%
17. Helping a	attendees find jobs	3.87	29%
18. Political	involvement both local and national	3.63	24%
19. Dawah te	o non-Muslims	3.57	22%
20. Involver	ent in interfaith programs	2.98	10%

The rankings of program priorities were compared to the various age groups. The results show that there are virtually no differences in the top ten programs identified by the different age groups. The only differences are:

- Age group 18-34 was the only age group to identify "convert care" as a top ten priority.
- Age group 35-64 was the only group to identify "financial literacy" in their top ten.
- Age group 65+ was the only group to identify "increasing faith" in their top ten.

Program Priorities Compared by Age Groups				
Rank	Ages 18-34	Ages 35-64	Ages 65+	
1	Young Adults 4.60	Youth 4.61	Youth 4.61	
2	Marriage 4.57	Marriage 4.58	Marriage 4.61	
3	Youth 4.49	Young Adults 4.54	Young Adults 4.58	
4	Unity 4.40	Pre-Marital Education 4.47	Leadership Training 4.51	
5	Adult Education 4.37	Increasing Faith 4.45	Pre-Marital Education 4.51	
6	Pre-Marital Education 4.37	Leadership Training 4.39	Unity 4.45	
7	Convert Care 4.29	Unity 4.34	Increasing Faith 4.41	
8	Social Services 4.29	Personal Wellness 4.24	Adult Education 4.39	
9	Personal Wellness 4.24	Imam Training 4.22	Imam Training 4.39	
10	Leadership Training 4.12	Financial Literacy 4.18	Social Services 4.27	

The ranking of program priorities compared to gender again showed little differences in their top ten. The only differences were:

- Males listed in their top ten "leadership training" and "adult education" and females did not.
- Females listed in their top ten "social services" and "imam training" and males did not.

Priorities Compared to Gender			
Rank	Female	Male	
1	Marriage 4.59	Youth 4.65	
2	Young Adults 4.56	Marriage 4.59	

3	Youth 4.55	Young Adults 4.55
4	Unity 4.46	Pre-Marital Education 4.48
5	Pre-Marital Education 4.43	Increasing Faith 4.48
6	Leadership Training 4.43	Leadership Training 4.37
7	Adult Education 4.36	Unity 4.28
8	Increasing Faith 4.34	Personal Wellness 4.27
9	Imam Training 4.32	Social Services 4.21
10	Personal Wellness 4.30	Imam Training 4.19

There are virtually no differences in comparing program priorities to masjid attendance and whether the respondent was a convert or not.

Overall, there is

Overall, there is a rough consensus on areas that should be the focus of efforts to strengthen and grow African American masjids.

- A top concern are youth and young adults. Too many of them are not attending the masjid. Efforts are needed to attract youth and young adults to the masjid.
- Marriage and family are another area of top concern. Marriage and family problems are sapping the energy of masjids. Pre-marital and marriage education programs have been placed at the top of needed programs.
- Divisions within the masjid and the national African American Muslim are clear concerns. Greater efforts are needed to build unity locally and nationally.
- Islamic education and training are areas of concern. Greater knowledge and more professionalism are essential needs.
- The increase and improvement in wellness, faith, spiritual development and commitment were all common concerns.
- Financial problems and lack of financial literacy, both in terms of the individual and organizations, impede growth.

One reflection on the results:

• Puzzling is the low ranking and lack of concern for attracting converts to the mosque and being active in the local African American community. Both seem logical prerequisites for increasing the number of African American Muslims.