2023
NATIONAL SURVEY:

ASSESSING THE STATE OF THE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

SURVEY RESULTS

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MANA · Conveners of Imams · MUSLIM JOURNAL · AL UMMAH · MUSLIM WELLNESS FOUNDATION

National Survey Results:

Assessing the State of the African American Muslim Community

Contents

Introduction

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.

Here is the breakdown of the age groups of respondents.

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

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 　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	115	12.2%
2	Absence of National Network 　Cohesive alliances of different Islamic communities and 　　organizations 　Lack of visible national leadership 　Lack of national agenda 　There is no recognized national structure for the African	107	11.3%

	American Muslim community Invisibility: Representation in National Dialogue on Islam Lack of common Islamic platform National Shurah National Spokesperson Connection between African Americans and Muslims from other backgrounds National events that speak to our unique Muslim experiences Networking		

3	Finances—Institutional
	    Lack of Funds
	    Lack of funding for proper programs
	    Lack of financial support from the greater Islamic community
	    Lack of financial infrastructure or business acumen to support
	        imams & masjid programs
	    No businesses to generate funds for the community.
		102	10.8%

4	Youth and Young Adults
	    Attracting & keeping young people
	    Lack of youth engagement
	    No activities for boys
	    Raising children in a non-Muslim community
	    Preparing the next generation
	    Youth trying to fit in with non-Muslim youth, adopting bad
	        habits
	    Generation Gap
	    Empowering the next generation
	    Religion is often not relatable for young people
	    Generational continuity between elders and young adults
	    Halal social/cultural outlet especially for the youth
	    A lack of relevance not just to the youth but the surrounding
	        non-Muslim communities
		80	8.5%

5	Islamic Knowledge and Islamic Education
	    Lack of Islamic education
	    Islamic literacy
	    Islamic classes
	    Lack of Arabic literacy
	    Learning the true deen
	    Lack of access to Islamic institutes to educate on the deen
	    Aqeedah
	    No sustainable program to increase the knowledge base
	    Lack of access to Islamic knowledge that is beneficial to
	        African-American community life
		79	8.4%

6	Lack of Commitment
	    Apathy
	    Maintaining regular attendance.
	    Motivating men to attend congregational prayers
	    Not willing to participate consistently in Masjid activities
		70	7.4%

	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 Leadership is aging and not selecting replacements "Old" Leadership not embracing younger leaders Leadership is a dictatorship Imams being apathetic towards the members No new leaders have been trained 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	63	6.6%
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 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	62	6.6%
9	Finances—Individual Poverty Economic empowerment Opportunities for cooperative economics Poverty and job insecurity Financial literacy Educational and career development Individual financial resources Housing Lack of entrepreneurial opportunity	46	4.9%
10	Issues of Identity and Culture Self-identify and pride Internalized inferiority complex (thinking black culture is haram, Arab culture is Islam, etc.) Erasure of our history and contributions	33	3.5%

	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	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 Incarceration Interaction with broader community/issues Social and political influence Lack of presence in the community Relatability to our struggle in America	31	3.3%
12	More Activities Lack of community events Resuming community life post Covid Lack of programs that encourage interaction outside of Jumu'ah Socialization needed There's no genuine community life	30	3.2%
13	Dawah Convert/Revert Care Propagating the religion to the U.S.A. Attracting new members Difficulty attracting new converts Developing systematic dawah programs for African American and other people of color	29	3.1%
14	Declining African American Population Shrinking community There are not enough of us to come together Aging Declining African American population 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	27	2.9%
15	Education Well-funded and financially supported learning opportunities Education outside of religion Educational opportunities Education to provide expertise in organizational development	22	2.3%

16	Professionalism
	    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
	    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
		21	2.2%

17	Racism and Islamophobia
	    Anti Black Racism
	    White supremacist capitalist patriarchy
		20	2.1%

18	Relations with Immigrant Muslims
	    Racism in the Muslim community and lack of awareness
	    Marginalization by the immigrant-controlled masjids
	    Black Muslims don't regard immigrant Muslims
	    Assimilation into an immigrant apolitical identity
	    Having our cultural perspective & deen invalidated by
	      Muslims from diasporic communities
	    Support from immigrant Muslims
		19	2.0%

18	Social Ills
	    Drugs/sex
	    Gun violence
	    Crime
	    Western culture
	    Safety
	    Social Media influencing people and taking people out of the
	      Masjid
		19	2.0%

20	Masjid Buildings
	    Structure upkeep
	    Expansion of facilities
	    Subpar space for worship/masjid
	    Getting a masjid built from the ground up that our children
	      can look at with dignity and respect
	    Architectural representative masjids in our community
	    Masjid locations/subpar buildings
	    Upkeep of masjids
		15	1.6%

21	Islamic Schools
	    Muslim schools and Quranic Education
	    Classical Islamic Education as a Pedagogy k-12
	    Keeping Muslim schools open
		13	1.4%

	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
	      and behavior
	    Trusting in Allah
		11	1.2%

23	Social Services
	    Gaining resources for mosque-based social service initiatives
	    Establishing social services
	    Care for our aging (senior) Community members
	    Health education
		9	1.0%

24	Mental Health
	    Unaddressed Mental Health Issues
	    Lack of therapy/ outlets
		8	0.8%

25	Vision and Direction
	    Lack of vision
	    Strategic planning
	    Lack of compelling messaging
	    No direction
		7	0.7

25	Issue of Women
	    The rights of women
	    Need greater emphasis on women's involvement in masjid
	    Promoting women's leadership in mosque boards
	    Accommodating women in the best way
		7	0.7%

27	Communication
	    Suggestions and opinions being heard
	    The needs of the Community are not clearly communicated
	    Effective communication
		6	0.6%

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
	    More family-oriented programs
	    Family counseling
	    Establish a consistent and trusted method/process specifically
	       for finding African American Muslim spouses
		67	7.9%

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
	    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
		60	7.0%

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
	    Bring the communities together thru zoom Platform
	    National / regional spokes person
	    Communicating with multiple black communities
	    Unifying to form strong organizations
	    Increased visibility
		57	6.7%

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
	       collective humanitarian goals
	    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
		50	5.9%

7	Financial--Institutional
	    Develop capacity to support paid leadership
	    Economic and community development
	    Financial clout
	    Effective use of funds
	    Developing a fund
	    United financial goals and planning
	    Economic collaborations
	    Establish economic options (trust funds, banks, credit
	       unions)
		49	5.8%

8	Spiritual Growth and Wellness
	    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
	    Trusting Allah
	    Instilling true fear of God in Muslims
	    Connecting to a spiritual tradition
	    Encourage individual Quran reading
	    Humbleness
	    Utmost sincerity, care & dedication
		39	4.6%

9	Leadership
	    Train leadership
	    Clear definition of imam's job description
	    Putting strong, well-educated leaders in place
	    Involve African Americans in leadership opportunities
	    Finding a spiritual leader/teacher
	    Put those in positions that has leadership abilities
		38	4.5%

10	Education
	    Secular education
	    Education General
	    Invest in educational opportunities
		37	4.3%

10	Professionalism and Better Organization
	    Organizational development. Holding each other accountable
	    More transparency
	    Technology ownership
	    Tap into community strengths and knowledge
		37	4.3%

12	Activism and Involvement in Black Community
	    Developing programs that address the social and economic
	       need of local the African American community
	    Local community activism
	    Neighborhood Development
	    Building communities around the masjid
	    Involve ourselves with broader community
	    Open discussion on the topics with Muslims and non-Muslims
		36	4.2%

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

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 (ages 5-17) programs	4.60	63%
2. Healthy marriage programs	4.59	65%
3. Young adult (ages 18-34) programs	4.56	57%
4. Premarital education	4.46	57%
5. Increasing faith and commitment among attendees	4.40	55%
6. Leadership training	4.40	54%
7. More cooperation and unity among masjids	4.38	55%
8. Personal wellness and healing	4.29	47%
9. Imam Training	4.26	47%
10. Adult education to better understand Islam	4.26	43%
11. Social services 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. Community activism—involvement in local community issues	4.03	34%
16. New leadership in masjids	3.97	35%
17. Helping attendees find jobs	3.87	29%
18. Political involvement both local and national	3.63	24%
19. Dawah to non-Muslims	3.57	22%
20. Involvement 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.

Conclusions

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.