



# How Can We Help Those Experiencing Mental Health Issues

*in the Muslim Community*

RESEARCH REPORT 2013

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION -----     | 02 |
| METHODOLOGY -----      | 02 |
| Design                 |    |
| Participants           |    |
| RESULTS -----          | 03 |
| DISCUSSION -----       | 07 |
| Methodological Issues  |    |
| CONCLUSION -----       | 07 |
| ABOUT INSPIRITED MINDS |    |

# INTRODUCTION

The independent researchers of this study were fully aware that the levels of psychological disorders in the Muslim community is generally high, however the extent of its happening was unknown. Many are known to have suffered from depression and anxiety, but not many people feel comfortable speaking about their ordeal, or making others aware that they have an issue.

The topic concerned is one which is not spoken of openly in the Muslim community leaving many people to feel they cannot or should not speak about the ordeal which they have suffered. Sufferers often feel that developing a mental health issue such as depression is a stigma which should be kept hidden and not spoken of.

The study has revealed some shocking results, which will be highlighted in this report. The main aim of the report will be to utilise the findings to help those who suffered, those who are silently suffering and to create awareness for Muslims around the extent of mental health illnesses present in their community.

# METHODOLOGY

## Design

An independent group design was used to conduct this research, where a measurement of a number of variables were taken; including gender, ethnicity, age, nationality and religion.

## Participants

290 participants were obtained from the general population via two methods: opportunity and snowball sampling. The surveys were distributed online, which the participants also forwarded on to others. The ages of the participants in this study ranged from 13-55+. 21 of the participants did not state their age. Of the remaining 269 participants where age was disclosed, 80.67% were between the ages of 18-34.

Further details of the participants are show in the table below:

## Table A - Demographics of participants

| Categories | Options      | Number / Percentage of Participants (Total 290) |
|------------|--------------|---|
| Gender     | Male         | 59 (20.34)                                      |
|            | Female       | 231 (79.66)                                     |
| Religion   | Muslim       | 287 (98.97)                                     |
|            | Other        | 3 (1.03)  |
| Age        | < 18         | 28 (9.66)                                       |
|            | 18-34        | 217 (74.83)                                     |
|            | 35-54        | 22 (7.59)                                       |
|            | > 55         | 2 (0.69)  |
|            | Not stated   | 21 (7.24)                                       |
| Country    | UK           | 167 (57.59)                                     |
|            | US           | 49 (16.90)                                      |
|            | Canada       | 11 (3.79)                                       |
|            | India        | 11 (3.79)                                       |
|            | Pakistan     | 7 (2.41)  |
|            | Saudi Arabia | 6 (2.07)  |
|            | Other        | 39 (13.45)                                      |

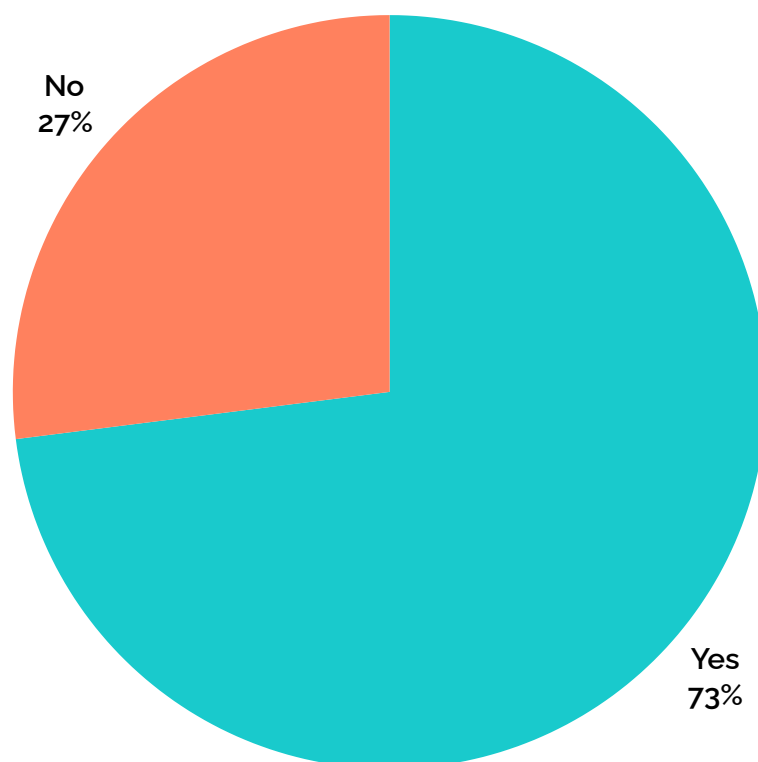
# RESULTS

It was vital for the research to show how community members felt towards what was being done about the prevalence of mental health issues. An overwhelming 73.45% of the participants knew of one or more Muslim persons who had suffered from a psychological illness.

When analysing the details of the types of illnesses suffered, depression was mentioned 150 times, anxiety 63 times and schizophrenia 23 times. These key terms, of course, do not give a conclusive analysis of the exact types of illnesses which are prevalent in the Muslim community, but it gives a reasonable insight into what our participants understand from those who have suffered. Many other disorders were mentioned also such as, suicide, bipolar, dementia, paranoia, OCD and more.

These results highlight that 49.30% of the 213 participants assessed knew of more than three people who suffered a mental illness. This indicates that psychological disorders are a prevalent issue in the Muslim community, though people are not openly speaking out about these. The research also found that 71.72% of the respondents felt that sufferers are made to keep quiet about the ordeal they have suffered.

**Figure 1**



*The pie chart shows the percentage of participants who knew of one or more persons who had a mental illness. 55.93% of males and 77.92% of females answered 'yes'. 77.25% of UK residents knew of people who have suffered from a psychological disorder. 50.70% of the 213 respondents who said 'yes' knew of 1-2 people who had a mental illness, 26.29% claimed to know 3-4 people and 23.00% stated they knew 5 or more people.*

84.83% of the participants felt that sufferers of psychological illnesses would benefit from receiving help from a professional who is also Muslim. These professionals include advisors of mental health, doctors, Islamic professionals for example. Having a professional from a similar religious background would likely provide those suffering mental health issues with comfort to talk about their culture and religion openly, as their advisors have a deeper understanding of these factors. This perhaps, will enable people to speak more about these issues in greater depth.

93.10% of the respondents (and 92.22% of UK citizens) stated that they were not aware of any established organisations who aided Muslims experiencing mental health issues. Of the 13 people who stated they were aware of an established organisation to help Muslims suffering from psychological disorders, none were able to mention a specific organisation. This highlights the importance of why an organisation such as Inspired Minds is required. 93.79% of the participants felt that mental health is not spoken of enough in the communities to help these victims.

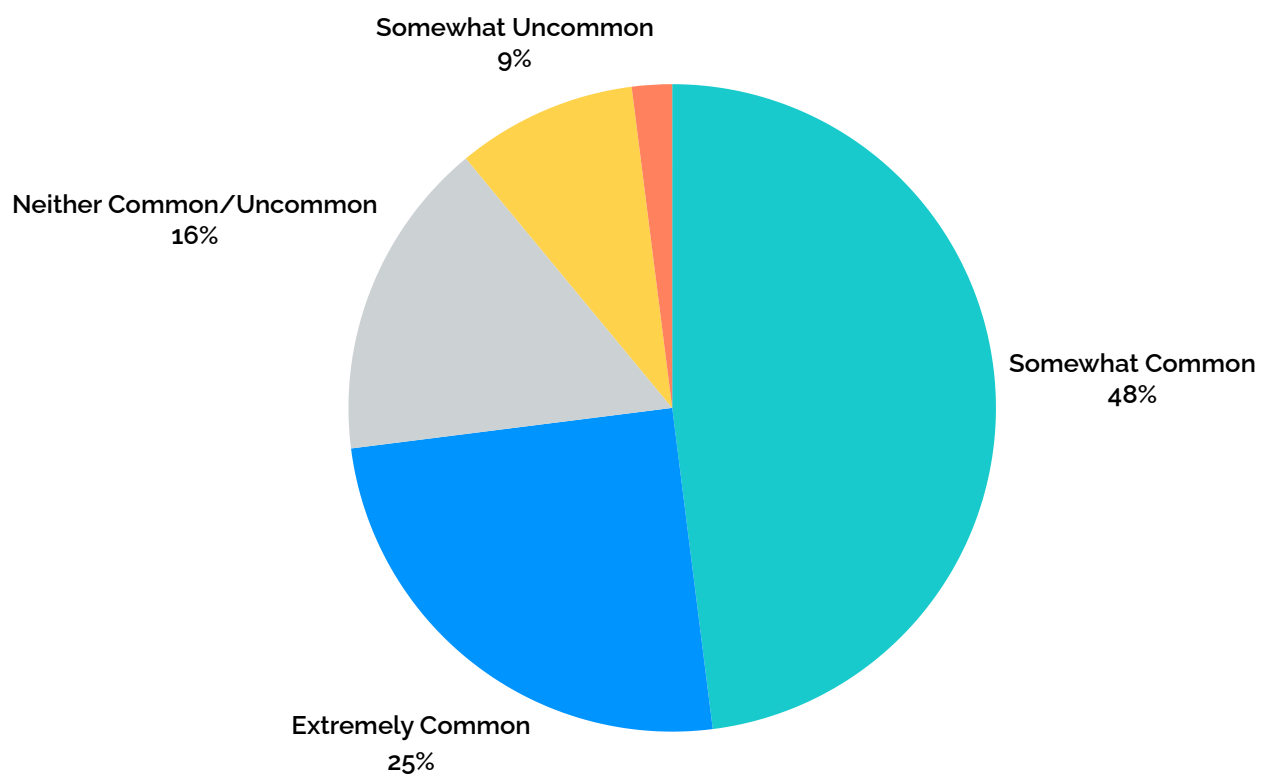
When the participants were asked about their opinions on the prevalence of mental health issues, every group had a large proportion of participants stating they felt it was somewhat common (which had a rating of 4 on a Likert scale of 1-5 (one being extremely uncommon and five being extremely common). The results are shown in Figure 2.

These results indicate that the members of the Muslim community are aware of how common mental illnesses are, however there does not seem to be enough knowledge of how to directly tackle these issues in order to aid those who have suffered or are currently suffering.

The participants were then asked what they feel would be most beneficial to those experiencing mental health issues. Some of their responses are as follows:

***"Speaking about such problems more openly and making people feel that having such problems is not uncommon and it is human to have such issues. Everyone cannot be perfect."***

**Figure 2**



The pie chart shows the percentage of the views held by the participants when asked to rate how common they thought psychological issues were in the Muslim community. In the gender category, a majority of participants in both genders rated the issue to be somewhat common. This was also found in participants in the UK and US (other countries had too few participants to make a fair judgement). Further, a majority of the participants under the age of 35 also felt the issue was somewhat common as well as those between the ages of 35-54.

*“Help and understanding of their condition”*

*“Professional help and therapies”*

*“More awareness and support from the community and professional services.”*

*“Islamic counselling/advice centres Talks Social activities for youth and elderly as often loneliness leads to depression.”*

*“This is another issue that is not talked about by the Muslim community. And even the UK struggles to see it as an actual health issue. Not enough is done by the government to support mental health awareness. It would be good to have people listen to you.”*

*“Professional or find out the main and actual cause and defuse it somewhat straight away.”*

*“Muslim counsellors should speak to people suffering from depression and mental health problems. [Use] the Qur’an and sunnah to deal with the problem; not just be given pills.”*

*“I don’t know...seems too uncommon as it’s hardly talked about....EVER!”*

*“Education, widely available support, early intervention”*

*“Support network Muslim leaders addressing the issue”*

*“Help line”*

*“More Muslim counsellors, mainly Maulanas [imams]. We do not see much Maulanas [imams] counselling which would be more beneficial because they are experts. People in small towns like St. Andrews suffer from not having local maulanas [imams] to share problems with. It’s not fair.”*

From the suggestions, a large majority of people stated more support, help, counselling and family support is required (such words were repeated up to 177 times). A greater awareness and education in the community was also mentioned (words such as awareness, education, speak and talk were reported 51 times).

The insightful comments from research participants would be taken into account in the establishment of the organisation, ultimately aiding sufferers of psychological disorders in the best way possible.



# DISCUSSION

A range of results were found from this study, which were more than what was anticipated. Mental health issues were known to be prevalent by the researchers, but the extent of its prevalence was not thought to be as extensive as initially thought. The 290 participants had highlighted that this problem is far greater than originally anticipated and a dire need of aid is required.

The research will enable the potential mental health organisation to be designed in a way that is bespoke to aiding mental health sufferers and their families. The wider opinions of the research participants will also be taken on board to maximise the benefits for the target population as much as possible. The research does consist of a few methodological issues which will be discussed below.

## Methodological Issues

The current research had 98.97% of participants who were of the Muslim faith. This suggests that the results obtained are perhaps not applicable to people of other faith backgrounds. However, the aim of the organisation is to break the silence on the topic of mental health within the Muslim community, in order to remove the stigmas and barriers to seeking appropriate mental health support thereafter. The downfall of using a snowball and random technique to obtain research participants is that there is no formalised control on who can complete the surveys. To demonstrate a known pitfall, the current study does not reflect the opinions of males proportionally, as 79.66% of the participants were reported as female.

Lastly, the surveys were also available to those residing outside the UK. Though the majority of the participants were residing in the UK (57.79%), this was not an issue as the main aim of the study was to obtain the viewpoints of Muslims, although we note this is centred around mental health organisations that will be UK based.

# CONCLUSION

The study had uncovered much eye-opening data, which intensified the need of such an organisation. The results have shown that the Muslim community are not completely unaware of mental health issues and that more action needs to be taken within this area specifically. They also feel the subject needs to be tackled by trained Muslim professionals to help those suffering. The initial purpose of this study has been solidified by the results obtained, allowing a stronger focus to be developed on tackling this taboo subject.



# About Inspired Minds

Inspired Minds (IM) is an Islamic grassroots charity that raises awareness and provides support, from a faith-based and culturally-sensitive perspective, to those affected by mental health challenges.

Anchored to our organisation is our vision of a society where people experiencing mental health challenges are validated and empowered to live fulfilling lives.

To bridge the gap in the understanding of mental health within and between our communities, we:

- Provide vital support and counselling services for both Muslim and non-Muslim clientele alike; recognising cultural, spiritual and Islamic needs
- Actively raise awareness on a variety of issues experienced within our communities, which is informed by the field-based research that we conduct to further our understanding

You can find out more about us via our website and social media links.

**We hope that together we can  
Prioritise Mental Health and Wellbeing.**