

13th August 2024

A Portrait of Muslim Britain

What is the state of the British Muslim community today?

In modern Britain it is clear that many hold fears surrounding the integration of Muslims into predominantly non-Muslim society. Perspectives vary greatly on the extent to which Muslims as a minority in Britain represent a departure from the general societal norm, and the degree to which any such departures are undesirable. This paper therefore endeavours to present a balanced portrait of British Muslims' contribution to and participation in the civic life of the United Kingdom, while acknowledging the divergences within and without the Muslim population. In the wake of August 2024's series of nationwide race riots, and in particular the targeting of Muslim communities and places of worship, greater clarity on these issues is all the more important.

Ultimately, the evidence generally indicates that Muslims are highly invested in British public life, although their way of approaching it remains distinct and unique. Despite being outliers from the general population in a number of ways, for example in their views on social issues, Muslims still manage to relate to and find belonging and purpose in Britain and in their British identity. This paper draws upon the work of previous researchers to highlight a range of insights into this cohesive narrative. In terms of gauging the views of British Muslims, one of the primary sources consulted is Policy Exchange's report titled 'Unsettled Belonging', which on its release in 2016 claimed to have carried out "the most comprehensive polling to-date of British Muslim opinion".

Media engagement with the report tended to highlight what were thought to be more concerning findings. However, as Policy Exchange itself - a think tank not noted for its sympathy with the British Muslim community - was forced to conclude, "The results... for the most part offer comfort" to those concerned about the results of Britain's growing Muslim population. The report in fact also indicates how much Muslims have, on the whole, settled into public life in Britain. This can be seen in how the survey's respondents speak about Britain and their lived experience here, and as well as in the various forms of civic engagement in which the community was found to participate.



In addition, this paper also reviews the more recent data from the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), which seeks to indicate British Muslim attitudes in the wake of the Israel-Gaza War, and was also the subject of similarly alarmist reporting. It also claims on the basis of its data that Muslims differ wildly from the rest of the population in terms of their vision of public life and social attitudes. However, Pickthall House has a number of concerns about the methodology and reliability of the Society's findings for making claims about the Muslim population in the UK.

This discussion will be grounded in a general understanding of the demographics of Britain's Muslim population drawn from the 2021 census data for England and Wales.¹ This information will provide further context on other areas of life concerning Muslims in the UK, including crime, work, and health, with points of concern highlighted where necessary.

Pickthall House's key findings and conclusions are that:

- As has been widely noted, Muslims in the UK have been overwhelmingly shown to feel a sense of belonging to Britain. Policy Exchange reported that 92% of those they surveyed felt either 'very strongly' or 'fairly strongly' a sense of belonging to Britain.
- The concerns and political priorities of British Muslims generally align with the rest of the British public. For instance, the Henry Jackson Society's poll found this year that the leading issue for both Muslim and non-Muslim surveyants was the cost of living crisis.
- Freedom of religion in Britain has played an important role in aiding British Muslim integration and sense of national pride, rather than engendering conflicting Muslim and national identities.
- Many of the issues faced by the British Muslim community which have played a role in creating communal strife have primarily been a result of and taken place in the areas of high deprivation where half of Britain's Muslims live.

Demographics

Those identifying themselves as 'Muslim' in the 2021 census numbered around 3.9 million people, or 6.5% of those surveyed in England and Wales. This is an increase numerically of around 1.2 million people from the 2.7 million people identifying as Muslim in the 2011 census. Along with almost 120,000 Muslims living in Scotland and almost 11,00 in Northern Ireland, this put the United Kingdom's Muslim population in 2021-22 at just under 4 million people, almost 6%. After 'no religion' and 'Christian', 'Muslim' was the most common way of identifying on the most recent census.

Muslims in the UK are a remarkably young demographic. According to the ONS, about 84.5% of those identified as Muslim on the census in England and Wales were under the age of 50, as

¹ Hereafter referred to as the 2021 census.



compared with just 62% of the general population.² This is not a recent development, as a report by Ipsos MORI carried out in 2018 for the Aziz Foundation and several other organisations indicates. Ipsos MORI reported the median age of the general UK population to be 40, as compared with a median Muslim age of just 25.³ Opinion polls often reveal the many divergences in social attitudes between older and younger surveyants over time, and so the shifting of the Muslim population to a younger demographic is significant in a community noted for its strong traditional values.

In many cases, these divergences demonstrate how young Muslims' thinking predominantly reflects that of their generation, rather than forming a homogenous bloc with their older co-religionists. The Ethnic Minority British Election Study in 2010 found that younger Muslims were more likely to think that the situation for Muslims in Britain had worsened in recent years, and Ipsos MORI noted that this reflects the general attitude of the millennial generation and their declining optimism.⁴

The 2021 census has also helped to remind us of how diverse the Muslim population in the UK is. Ethnically, 'Asian or Asian British' individuals constituted the largest background for self-identified Muslims, which as a category here includes Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Chinese and other Asians. These groups all together constitute 66.4% of the British Muslim population, with British Pakistanis being the plurality at 38%, followed by British Bangladeshis at 15.3%, and British Indian Muslims at 6.4%. Over 416,000 Black, African, Caribbean or Black British people listed themselves as Muslim, making them about 10.8% of the broader Muslim-identifying population. Meanwhile, over 226,000 'White' people identified as Muslim (5.9%), including 91,300 White British respondents (2.35% of Muslims living in England and Wales).

Table 1. British Muslim population by ethnic group, 2021 Census

Ethnic group	Percentage of Muslims	Percentage of Muslims aged 15 and under	Percentage of general population
British Pakistani	38.02%	37.21% ↓	2.66%
British Bangladeshi	15.33%	14.91% ↓	1.08%
British Black African	9.78%	10.43% ↑	2.5%
Any other group	6.61%	5.75% ↓	1.55%
Arab	7.18%	7.06% ↓	0.56%

² ONS, 'Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales: Census 2021', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religionbyhousinghealthemploymentandeducationenglandandwales/census2021>

³ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 'A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain', 2018, p. 11

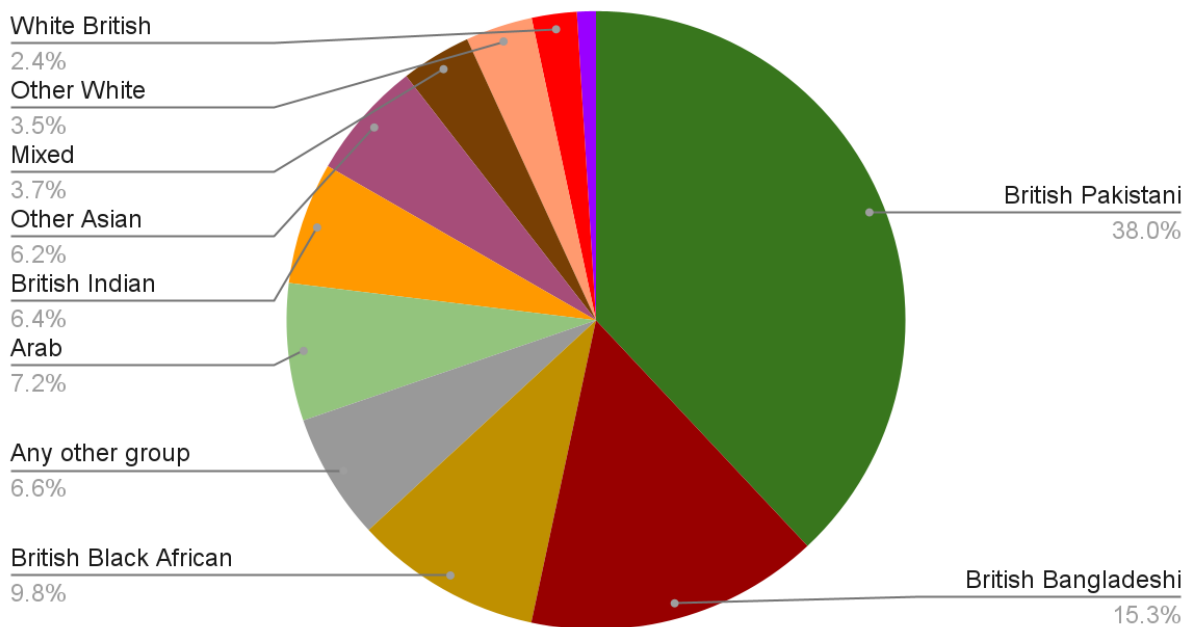
⁴ Ibid, p. 26

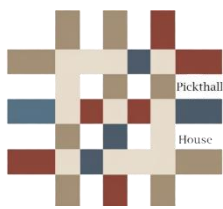


British Indian	6.38%	5.04% ↓	3.13%
Other Asian	6.18%	6.4% ↑	2.38%
Mixed	3.67%	6.47% ↑	2.88%
Other White	3.5%	2.38% ↓	7.28%
White British	2.35%	2.75% ↑	74.42%
Other Black	0.99%	1.59% ↑	1.55%

Among British Muslims under the age of 15, this British Asian majority is beginning to decline slightly, to 63.6%, particularly among the smaller and more-educated British Indian minority, who make up only 5% of British Muslim under-15s. Meanwhile, the Black British share of the Muslim population grows to 12% among under-15s. The largest growth is among Mixed race Muslims, from 3.57% of the general British Muslim population, to 6.47% of under-15s, demonstrating the increasing integration of British Muslim communities among marriage lines as well. Overall, British Muslims make up 10.9% of people in England and Wales aged 15 and under, notably higher than the general population.

Ethnic Groups of British Muslims, 2021





This diversity makes the Muslim community in Britain distinct, in that no single ethnic group comprises a conventional majority of its members, unlike France for example where almost three quarters of Muslims come from a North African background.⁵ The diversity of the community, however, manifests along many different lines, of which ethnicity is just one. As the authors of the Policy Exchange report put it, “this population does not comprise a single, monolithic community. Instead, it is a lattice of sub-communities, within which quite different attitudes prevail.”⁶

Politics

Crucially, Policy Exchange also demonstrated that the concerns and priorities of British Muslims are fairly similar to what would be expected of any other members of the general public. When asked what they consider to be the key issues facing Britain today, the leading answers were the **NHS and healthcare (36%)**, **unemployment (32%)**, **immigration (30%)**, and the economy (23%).⁷ There was also some regional variation on this, with respondents in Wales citing immigration as the leading issue at 42%, and respondents in London being much more likely to highlight housing as a leading issue, at a rate of 44%. Only 9% cited ‘defence/foreign affairs/terrorism’ as a leading issue, though in the North East this rose up to 26%. Despite this, Policy Exchange rightly noted that the leading concerns of Muslims in their survey were domestic ones.

An online poll conducted by Hyphen in May and June 2024 found that, “Muslims and the wider population were largely aligned on the policy issues most important to them in the run-up to July 4”, with the NHS, inflation, and the cost of living overall being the leading issues.⁸ In this survey 44% of Muslims listed the Israel-Gaza war as one of their top five concerns, with 21% ranking it as their first priority. This compared with just 3% of the general population listing it as their number-one issue.

This brings us to the much more recent data collected by the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), whose polls on 1,000 Muslim-identified respondents were conducted from 14 February to 12 March 2024, and 2,013 people the broader public from 4 to 6 March.⁹ The findings of this report were not altogether dissimilar from those of Policy Exchange and the Hyphen poll. **When asked about the leading issues of the upcoming election, the issue that came out as the most important for Muslims was the cost of living crisis. 40% rated it as the main issue of the**

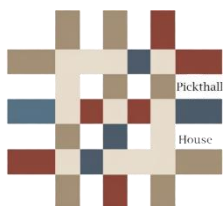
⁵ Laurence, J., Vaïsse, J., *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France*, Brookings, Washington D.C., 2006, p. 17

⁶ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., ‘Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain’s Muslim communities’, *Policy Exchange*, 2016, p. 15

⁷ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 19

⁸ S. Javed, *Hyphen*, June 2024, <https://hyphenonline.com/2024/06/11/poll-most-voters-concerned-about-the-crisis-in-gaza-would-consider-voting-independent-muslim-vote-uk-election/>

⁹ Henry Jackson Society, ‘British Muslim and general public attitudes polling’, March 2024, p. 3



upcoming election.¹⁰ By comparison, 26% considered Israel and Palestine to be the most important issue, with again just 3% of the general public listing it as their most important issue.

Based on these two polls by Hyphen and HJS, it would appear likely that while national belonging is strong among British Muslims, international affairs are also a priority, particularly those affecting predominantly Muslim populations abroad, such as Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in Gaza and the Occupied West Bank. Nevertheless, Pickthall House would first point out that these interests are not mutually exclusive and need not come at the expense of a sense of British identity.

With that said, the recent election period has seen elements in the press and political class express concerns on so-called 'sectarian voting', and suggesting that British Muslims are single-issue voters, primarily motivated by their faith convictions and identity. It has been argued that many Muslim voters were driven primarily by the war in Gaza, and took no account of the interests of Britain as a whole in their voting, and perhaps not even their own domestic interests. Kenan Malik, writing for the Guardian, has argued that the Gaza issue was rather the catalyst for the expression of longer-term discontent in Britain's Muslim community.¹¹ Indeed, Malik cites that it has been found that support for Labour in the most deprived areas generally declined in the 2024 election, **regardless of religious affiliation.**

The Henry Jackson poll notably omits any direct mention of regional variation, which as has been seen can make a difference to views within the British Muslim community. Quotas were, however, added to try to ensure a representative sample covering age, gender, ethnicity as well as region. It is also not entirely clear how the HJS obtained their sample, except that it was through an "online panel". Policy Exchange meanwhile was careful, for instance, **to ensure that participants would be drawn from at least three different parts of a given city or region, that no participant should be a religious studies student or a religious leader. They also did not recruit participants from directly outside mosques.**¹²

The idea behind these measures was that failing to include them might detract from the representative quality of the sample. Nevertheless, this does not address Pickthall House's above criticism that Policy Exchange's decision to conduct its survey only in areas of 20% Muslim population or higher excluded the 45% of British Muslims who live outside those areas.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 15

¹¹ K. Malik, *The Guardian*, July 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/14/muslims-arent-single-issue-voters-gaza-was-a-lightning-rod-for-their-disaffection>

¹² Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 12



A more detailed account of Hyphen's data shows that they weigh the sample to account for age, gender, ethnicity and region, though the effect only of age is mentioned.¹³ Findings from this include that Muslim voters over the age of 55 were more than twice as likely as those aged 18-34 to vote for the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats respectively.

Returning to the poll by HJS, one particularly controversial finding was that around 29% of their Muslim sample claimed to have a positive view of Hamas, with 15% claiming to have a 'very positive' view of the group.¹⁴ This compared with just 8% of the British public who held positive views. Another question found that 32% of Muslims would be favourable to the idea of declaring Islam as national religion; Pickthall House would point out that the meanings and implications of such a declaration are quite unclear.¹⁵ Indeed, 12% of HJS's non-Muslim surveyants expressed support for this notion of declaring Islam as national religion, which by its wording could imply anything from simple government recognition to the adoption of a new state religion.

This kind of imprecision is not unusual for the HJS, which has more than once been found guilty of putting out poorly grounded claims. The HJS paid damages to Huda Television Ltd in 2020, after one of their researchers had claimed the station had a radical agenda. The link to a formal apology remains on their Twitter account, but it does not seem to lead anywhere.¹⁶ One of the cofounders of the society, Matthew Jamison, now no longer a member, has condemned the organisation as **“far-right” and “deeply anti-Muslim”**, and for being “run in the most dictatorial, corrupt and undemocratic fashion”.¹⁷

To illustrate this he pointed out that in 2017, while Jamison was writing, the Associate Director of HJS was Douglas Murray, who is notoriously outspoken against the presence of Islam and Muslims in Europe. In a speech to the Dutch Parliament in 2006, Murray stated, “Conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board: Europe must look like a less attractive proposition.”¹⁸ Jamison also noted that the HJS had refused to disclose their donors after the Commissioner for Parliamentary Standards had ruled that they were obliged to, as a result of their connection with two All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).

This behaviour naturally raises concerns, ancillary to the ones already mentioned, about the efficacy of the data provided by the HJS. The HJS must clarify further their methodology used to

¹³ Hyphen staff, *Hyphen*, June 2024, <https://hyphenonline.com/2024/06/17/general-election-savanta-british-muslims-voting-intention-cultural-issues-poll-data-uk-election/>

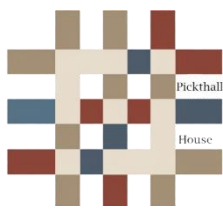
¹⁴ Henry Jackson Society, p. 24

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 30

¹⁶ https://x.com/HJS_Org/status/1303746489638940674?s=20

¹⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/brendan-simms-racist-corrupt-henry-jackson-society-matthew/>

¹⁸ Bridge Initiative Team, 'Factsheet: Douglas Murray', <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-douglas-murray/#:~:text=In%202006%2C%20Murray%20gave%20a,and%20also%20suggested%20that%20Euro%20pean>



find their surveyants for the recent poll before the implications of their data can be fully apprehended and alleviate the current suspicion that hangs around them as it stands.

The data shows that Muslims in Britain largely share the concerns of their fellow Britons when it comes to matters of policy and everyday fears and worries about the future. This is corroborated by a sense of belonging and attachment both to Britain as a whole and their local communities; these attachments are correlated, and perhaps mutually reinforcing.

Nevertheless, despite the questions above regarding the surveys' methodologies, it is difficult to deny that Muslims often have pronounced concerns about international events, as the results indicate, and may in some cases feel a greater sense of attachment to them than the general population. Pickthall House would reiterate its argument that there is no reason to see this as incompatible with wanting the best for one's own country of residence, and indeed may be an extension of that impulse in many cases. A report in 2010 by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research surveyed over 4,000 British Jews, and found that 82% of respondents considered Israel as a state to play either a "central" or "important but not central role" in their Jewish identity, with 77% saying that Jews have "a special responsibility to support Israel".¹⁹ Few would choose to question on these grounds the loyalty of Britain's Jews to the country, despite this comparable level of investment in places beyond Britain's shores.

Patriotism and Identity

Given this diversity, it is notable that a community of such diverse backgrounds could all come to find a sense of belonging to the same place. While not all Muslims in Britain feel a strong sense of belonging to the country, the data available indicates that the vast majority do. According to the 2021 census, **71.7% of British Muslims identify as only British**, rising to 74.9% if you include those identifying as only English, Scottish, Welsh or any combination of UK identities.²⁰

It is notable that across England and Wales, only 54.8% identify as only British, while 14.9% identify as only English, and 13.6% as only English and British, suggesting that while there are greater barriers to identifying as English, British identity is felt to be more inclusive of minorities.

Meanwhile, 3.76% of British identified with both at least one UK identity and any other identity. The largest minority to identify only as a non-UK identity were Pakistanis, with 4.32% of British Muslims identifying as only Pakistani, followed by 1.64% as only Bangladeshi and 1.47% as only North African. As the table shows, British Muslims are actually the religious group most

¹⁹ Graham, D., Boyd, J., 'Committed, concerned and conciliatory: The attitudes of Jews in Britain towards Israel', *Institute for Jewish Policy Research*, July 2010, p. 9

²⁰ ONS custom dataset, National Identity (detailed) by Religion.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/19ef5a82-aede-4726-a814-44cfaa37e452#get-data>



likely to identify as British only, behind only British Sikhs, while both groups are more likely to identify as British and less likely to identify with another nationality than British Hindus.

The polling data provided by Policy Exchange surveyed over 3,000 respondents, with surveyants being taken only from areas with an excess of 20% of the population having been registered as Muslim.²¹ The sampling units were Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which comprise between 400 and 1,200 households.²² These in turn were classed under regions, and subsequently under local authorities.

National identity	All	Christian	No religion	Muslims	Hindus	Jews	Sikhs
British only	54.83 %	50.95%	56.05%	71.72%	61.49%	66.81%	74.73%
English only	14.93 %	18.44%	14.28%	0.98%	0.76%	8.2%	0.99%
English and British only	13.61 %	13.69%	16.63%	1.7%	1.57%	12.15%	1.79%
UK identity and other	1.9%	1.57%	1.55%	3.76%	7.03%	3.07%	2.93%
Other non-UK identity	9.77%	10.46%	5.25%	21.35%	28.89%	8.72%	19.23%
Largest non-UK identity	Polish (1%)	Polish (1.66%)	'Other European' (0.93%)	Pakistani (4.32%)	Indian (17.78%)	'Other Middle Eastern' (1.78%)*	Indian (13.43%)

Table 2. National identity by religion, 2021 Census

*presumably Israeli.

It is slightly difficult to gauge the impact of the report only taking samples from areas where above a fifth of residents are Muslim. On the one hand, this may grant residents a certain degree of comfort and flexibility which allows them to engage more confidently and openly with the wider culture. At the same time, the opposite effect could be imagined, and individuals could in some cases choose to become quite disengaged from the wider culture.

²¹ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 11

²² Ibid, p. 12



This high level of concentration, sometimes termed communal segregation, is often considered one of the key obstacles to integration. Although it makes surveys such as Policy Exchange's easier, this does mean the views of almost half of British Muslims, who live in areas with 20% Muslim population or less, and who could be expected to hold closer views to their neighbours are excluded. For England and Wales, that includes 2,895 of 35,762 LSOAs (8.1%), which together account for 55.3% of the Muslim population.²³ Coincidentally, a very similar proportion of those surveyed by Policy Exchange in these areas felt 'very strongly' attached to their local community (56%), while slightly fewer felt 'fairly strongly' attached to it (37%).²⁴ These areas of 20% or higher Muslim population, mapped according to Medium Super Output Areas, can be seen in Appendix III.

Nevertheless, as cited in the key points above, 92% of those surveyed felt either a very strong or a fairly strong sense of belonging to the UK.²⁵ Muslims are also more likely than the general population to consider their national identity important to their sense of self, at 55% compared to 44% of all adults.²⁶ The sense of belonging was slightly weaker in the South West, where only 77% of respondents reported a 'strong' sense of belonging to the country. The South West is the least Muslim area of England and Wales (1.4%) and is inhabited by only 2.1% of Muslims who live in England and Wales, which may somewhat account for this feeling of alienation.²⁷ This is where a broader survey of the Muslim population would be of greater insight.

This indicates that Muslims tend to feel a connection both to their locality and to the nation more broadly. Policy Exchange also noted that those who felt they belonged to Britain were more likely to express an attachment to their local area, at a rate of 95%, as compared with 66% of those who felt no sense of belonging.²⁸

It is not easy to gauge how Muslims in Britain experience this sense of belonging; for instance whether it is through the medium of culture, or if it is a more abstract civic commitment. Daniel Nillson DeHanas, following Lord Anthony Giddens, argues that in the case of British identity in particular a solid cultural identity, or set of identifiers, is elusive, and that it makes more sense to consider it a civic identity.²⁹ DeHanas pointed out that 'British' identity tends to act as a subsidiary identity, often subordinated to more immediate or substantial ones like 'Scottish' or

²³ ONS custom dataset, Religion by Lower layer Super Output Areas.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/e367f054-1cc3-4389-8a00-1792e0243178#get-data>

²⁴ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 41

²⁵ Ibid. p. 41

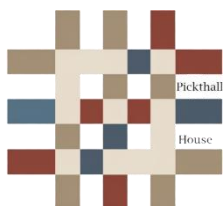
²⁶ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 7

²⁷ ONS custom dataset, Religion by Regions.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/ac87d9d5-9a92-4c10-bbc6-3043246c3418#get-data>

²⁸ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 41

²⁹ DeHanas, D.N., *Believing citizens: Religion and civic engagement among London's second generation youth*, Ph. D. diss, University of North Carolina, 2010, p. 193



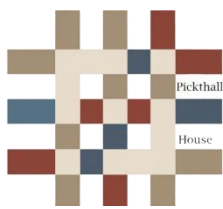
indeed 'Muslim', and that rather than entail adoption of one culture, it instead entails a certain set of "rights, opportunities, and responsibilities".³⁰

Table 3. Place of birth by religious or Muslim ethno-religious identity, 2021 Census

Religious group	Born in the UK	Born overseas	Principal overseas birthplace(s)
All people	83.19%	16.81%	India (1.54%)
No religion	91.98%	8.02%	China (0.59%)
All Christians	83.63%	16.37%	Poland (2.03%)
All Jews	80.12%	19.88%	Israel (5.62%)
All Sikhs	57.07%	42.93%	India (34.13%)
All Muslims	51.04%	48.96%	Pakistan (14.98%)
All Hindus	34.93%	65.07%	India (39.33%)
Muslim Ethnic Group	Born in the UK	Born overseas	Most common overseas birthplace
Mixed British Muslims	74.67%	25.33%	Africa (10.67%), Europe (7.61%), Middle East and Asia (6.27%)*
White British Muslims	73.49%	26.51%	Europe (19%)
British Pakistani Muslims	58.85%	41.15%	Middle East and Asia (38.77%)
British Indian Muslims	56.22%	43.78%	Middle East and Asia (33.43%), Africa (9.37%)
British Bangladeshi Muslims	54.64%	45.36%	Middle East and Asia (42.38%)
Black British Muslims	42.1%	57.9%	Africa (49.1%), Europe (6.91%)
Muslim Arabs	29.29%	70.71%	Middle East and Asia (40.77%), Africa (24.26%)
Other White Muslims	21.91%	78.09%	Europe (64.13%), Middle East and Asia (6.43%), Africa (6.42%)

*When selecting by ethnic group and religion, the ONS does not provide precise country of birth information for privacy reasons.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 194



A more recent poll carried out by Hyphen and Savantana surveying 1,503 people identifying as Muslims found that 59% of them believed life as a Muslim in the UK is generally better than in other European countries, including Italy, France and Germany.³¹ This very likely accentuates the sense of loyalty that many Muslims feel to Britain, as it is felt not only to be hospitable to Muslims and their practice of Islam, but exceptionally so.

It is notable also that according to Policy Exchange **91% of surveyants said they felt entirely free to practise their religion in Britain**, with only 7% saying they only 'partly' could, and just 2% saying they could not at all.³² Given that the responses quite closely parallel those pertaining to belonging, this may well be a key factor behind Muslims' comfort in cultivating a sense of belonging to Britain. At the very least it is a prerequisite to the formation of an attachment at the communal level.

Strikingly, Policy Exchange's report also shows that 53% of those surveyed were born outside of the UK, in line with the data provided by the 2011 census, and not too dissimilar from the 49% of British Muslims born overseas in the 2021 census.³³³⁴ This suggests that Muslim immigrants develop a strong sense of attachment to their British identity.

Furthermore, 83% of Muslims agree that "it is possible to fully belong to Britain and maintain a separate cultural or religious identity", compared to only 66% of Britons overall, regardless of religion. This suggests that Muslims more eagerly buy into and support multiculturalism than the general public.³⁵ Nevertheless, there is some division, as although 49% of Muslims, predominantly younger Muslims born in the UK, say they would like full integration with non-Muslims, and 42% of British Muslim graduates feel they share a lot in common with other Britons, only 30% of Muslims non-graduates and 19% of Muslims who studied overseas feel the same.³⁶ This suggests that despite feeling fully British, many Muslims still recognise and value their difference from other British communities.

³¹ B. Wazir, *Hyphen*, June 2022 <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/17/majority-of-british-muslims-believe-that-life-in-the-uk-is-better-than-it-was-five-years-ago/>

³² Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 25

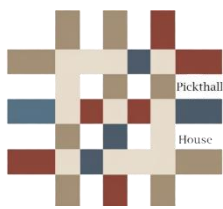
³³ *Ibid.*, p. 16

³⁴ ONS custom dataset, Religion by Country of Birth.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/d1e6ce8b-f978-4d25-963c-a53202ad54fc#get-data>

³⁵ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 'A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain', 2018, p. 9

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6



Media and conspiracy theories

The responses from the media to the Policy Exchange report were varied. The Guardian's Alan Travis alleged that the report asserted Muslims to have "separatist" tendencies.³⁷ Travis noted the criticism directed at the report by the Muslim Council of Britain, who not incorrectly pointed out that the report had "provided ample fodder to countless headlines demonising Muslims." This is particularly true of the section on conspiracy theories, which made its way into more than one headline. In particular, it was found that Muslim surveyants had controversial views about the 9/11 attacks. When asked who they believed to be responsible for the attacks, 52%, the majority, said that they did not know.³⁸

However, Policy Exchange also found that 31% of Muslim-identified respondents believed the American government to be behind the attack, while 7% believed 'Jews' responsible for it, with only 4% apparently accepting the established fact that al-Qaeda had planned and carried out the attack independently. Only 10% of the wider public, by comparison, believed the American government responsible for the attack, and only 1% 'the Jews'.³⁹ In responding to this, Policy Exchange noted that many consider conspiracy theories to flow from a decline in trust in the media and political elites.⁴⁰

Indeed, trust in the media among Muslims appears to be below average based on the data from Policy Exchange. They asked respondents to assess nineteen media outlets based on how much of a balanced view of Muslims they gave, and the most trusted outlet to provide coverage was the Islam Channel, which still stood at a fairly humble 52%.⁴¹ Even the BBC did not fare very well, with just 34% trusting it to give fair coverage, while 31% trusted Channel 4 and only 23% trusting Sky. This can be loosely compared to YouGov's findings last year that 44% of Britons considered the BBC trustworthy or very trustworthy, with 38% for Channel 4 and 28% for Sky.⁴²

This generally lower level of trust in the media is probably not unrelated to the portrayal of Muslims in the British media. A 2016 Populus study found that 38% of surveyands believed the media was too negative towards Muslims, rising to 69% among young people.⁴³ The same survey found 47% support more positive media coverage of Islam and Muslim communities, and

³⁷ Travis, A., 'UK Muslims show worrying belief in conspiracy theories, claims thinktank', *The Guardian*, December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/02/uk-muslims-show-worrying-belief-in-conspiracy-theories-claims-thinktank>

³⁸ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 75

³⁹ Ibid, p. 75

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 80

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 81

⁴² Smith, M., 'Which media outlets do Britons trust in 2023?', *YouGov*, May 2023 <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/45744-which-media-outlets-do-britons-trust-2023>

⁴³ Populus, 'HOPE not hate: Public attitudes poll', February 2016



48% support a campaign against Islamophobia. A 2013 Cambridge study also found that the number of media articles written about Muslims clearly peaks after terrorism-related disasters.⁴⁴

Although 70% of Muslims feel they are treated fairly by the government, prejudice against Muslims has been felt to be on the increase, particularly among young and graduate Muslims, with 63% of Muslims from minority ethnic backgrounds believing there is greater prejudice against Muslims than other religious groups.⁴⁵ This animus can be seen in YouGov's poll on the public reaction to the 2024 riots, which saw one in four respondents blame Muslims for the unrest.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, six in ten said Muslims could not be blamed, and much larger proportions blamed the current Labour and particularly the former Conservative government and its immigration policy for stoking unrest.

Civil society

The authors of the Policy Exchange report, however, did seem hopeful that support for integration would increase over time, and noted that 53% of respondents said they wished to “fully integrate with non-Muslims in all aspects of life”, as Travis also acknowledges. Meanwhile 37% wanted to be integrated “on most things”, while leaving some areas, for instance schooling, separate.⁴⁷

The report also noted an appetite for civic engagement, with British Muslims more likely than the wider public to have used local leisure and fitness activities, to have voted in an election in the last twelve months, to have raised money for a local charity, and to have volunteered at a local school or care-based institution.⁴⁸ All of these indicate that many Muslims' involvement in and commitment to their local community, and actively contribute and take part.

Ipsos MORI noted that most Muslims in Britain live in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, particularly younger Muslims and graduates, who are also more likely to have diverse friendship groups.⁴⁹ Over two fifths of Muslims aged up to 34 say at least half their friends have a different ethnic background, although this falls among older age groups. Meanwhile, three in five British Muslim graduates say that a majority of their friends are from a different ethnic background, and 63% of Muslims believe different religious and ethnic groups in their local area should interact more than they do currently, demonstrating a lively and growing commitment to multiculturalism.

⁴⁴ Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., McEnery, T., *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The representation of Islam in the British press 1998-2009*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2013

⁴⁵ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 8

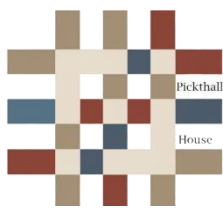
⁴⁶ Difford, D., 'The public reaction to the 2024 riots', *YouGov*, August 2024

<https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/50257-the-public-reaction-to-the-2024-riots>

⁴⁷ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 42

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 30

⁴⁹ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 6-7



Society

Muslims in Britain, as across Europe, have a reputation for social conservatism. This reputation is certainly not unearned. A poll carried out by ICM for Channel 4 polled over 1,000 people who identified as Muslim, and found that 52% of them disagreed with the idea that homosexuality should be legal in the UK, while only 18% of this sample agreed with the idea.⁵⁰ However, agreement grew to 28% among Muslims aged 18-24. Though these attitudes would not have been unusual in Britain just a few decades ago, the survey found only 5% of Britons generally disagreeing that homosexuality should be legal. The same poll found 86% of those identifying as Muslim felt a strong sense of belonging to the country, higher than the rest of surveyants who felt this 83% of the time.

These two stats suggest that Muslims in Britain generally do not value their British identity any less for their social conservatism, and that indeed British identity can be shared by people with a wide range of social attitudes. Policy Exchange also commented on the conservative attitudes found in the Muslim community, finding that 40% of Muslim-identifying surveyants supported gender segregation in schools, while 41% did not.⁵¹ There was something of a divide here between those born outside of Britain, who supported it at a rate of 50%, and those born in Britain who did so at a rate of 28%. Meanwhile just under a majority of Muslim men, and one in three Muslim women, agree that “Wives should always obey their husbands”.⁵²

This indicates how on many if not all issues, British Muslim communities increasingly integrate and agree with the general population over time, although it was found that those who lacked a sense of belonging to Britain were slightly more likely to support gender-segregated schools, at a rate of 54% compared to the general 40%.⁵³ Moreover, those who considered themselves to be more religious were also more likely to support gender segregated schools.⁵⁴ Pickthall House would point out that many of the country’s leading public schools advertise themselves as single sex, the likes of Eton and Harrow. It can hardly then be called wholly incongruous with British values to support gender-segregated education.

Those arguing fervently for assimilation and the adoption of ‘British values’ should consider the extent to which those values have changed since the first major waves of migration to the United Kingdom. British Muslims as they are today are arguably more congruous with the Britain of that time than are the majority of Britons in modern society as Britain’s values have shifted to

⁵⁰ J. Zorthan, *Time Magazine*, April 2016, <https://time.com/4288592/british-muslims-survey-homosexuality/>

⁵¹ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 50

⁵² Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 8

⁵³ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 50

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 51



be more socially liberal. Therefore, it would appear inappropriate to associate holding socially conservative values outright as being in some way ‘un-British’. Moreover, providing a surveyant providing an opinion simply on what they would prefer to be law should not be equated with a desire actively to change the law in that direction.

Education

The review by Ipsos MORI noted that around 55% of Muslims in one survey considered education to be a part of their sense of self, as compared with just 35% of Christians.⁵⁵ As a percentage of the population, students were a larger portion among Muslims than among any other religious group, with 13.8% of those identifying as Muslims aged 16-64 being students according to the ONS, as compared with 7.3% of the population of England and Wales as a whole.⁵⁶ This fell as low as 5.4% among Christians aged 16-64, with the next highest proportion of students being among Jewish people aged 16-64, at 10.7%.

This is partly a function of the Muslim population on average being younger, no doubt, but it must also be influenced by the high premium placed on education in the Muslim community. Significantly, 32.3% of Muslims over the age of 16 according to the census have a degree-level qualification or higher, only slightly less than the national average of 33.8%, and actually higher than the percentage White Britons of all religions who hold degrees at 30.76%. This again is likely to be in part due to the generally younger age of profile of British Muslims.

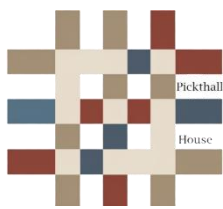
The use of averages, however, obscures the internal diversity of the British Muslim community regarding education. For example, 43.61% of British Arab Muslims and 38.8% of British Indian Muslims, who are minorities among British Muslims, hold a degree-level qualification or higher, compared to only 27.92% of British Bangladeshi Muslims, suggesting that educational attainment is an issue for certain larger ethnic communities among British Muslims, rather than the Muslim community as a whole.

Table 4. Percentage of degree-holders by Muslim ethno-religious group, 2021 Census

Ethno-religious group	Degree-level qualified or higher (%)	Percentage of Muslim population
All Britons	33.8%	N/A
White Britons	30.76%	N/A
British Muslims	32.34%	100%

⁵⁵ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 6

⁵⁶ ONS, ‘Religion by housing, health, employment, and education, England and Wales, Census 2021’



British Arab Muslims	43.61%	7.18%
British Indian Muslims	38.8%	6.38%
Mixed British Muslims	35.37%	3.67%
Other White Muslims	33.75%	3.4%
British Pakistani Muslims	31.7%	37.60%
Black African British Muslims	31.08%	9.67%
White British Muslims	30.94%	2.35%
British Bangladeshi Muslims	27.92%	15.16%

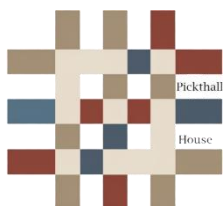
The value placed on education by various Muslim communities can also be seen by the performance, for example, of Bangladeshi and Pakistani students at GCSE level, with both groups being predominantly Muslim. Bangladeshi students have an average attainment 8 score of 54.4 out of 90, while Pakistanis have an average of 49.1 - the average White British student's attainment is 47.8, for comparison.⁵⁷ While British Bangladeshi students higher GCSE level attainment does not correlate with their lower rate of degree-level qualifications, it must be noted that 30.7% of all British Muslims, including 30.2% of British Bangladeshi Muslims were 15-years-old or younger at the time of the 2021 census, and this higher rate of academic achievement may yet filter up over time.

Policy Exchange's report also had several interesting findings when it came to the matter of education. Muslims surveyants were more likely to support the introduction of a common national curriculum that would enhance community cohesion, at a rate of 69%, as compared with 58% of the general population.⁵⁸ As well as this, they were more likely to want to send their children to schools with strong "Muslim values", although the strict parameters of this appears to have been left open to the interpretation of individual surveyants. Together these two facts paint a picture where the contrasts are strong but nonetheless seem to work well together. Muslims are generally supportive of a curriculum that would increase harmony and civic integration, while many are simultaneously willing to favour schools that represent their religious values. This seems to contradict elements of the public discourse which consider these two principles to be contradictory.

Ipsos MORI also pointed out that Muslims are much more likely to base their self identity on their education than other British people, with 55% saying education is important to their sense

⁵⁷ Department for Education, 'GCSE results (Attainment 8)', October 2023

⁵⁸ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 48



of self, compared to only 35% of Christians.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Muslim parents had higher educational ambitions for their children, with 67% considering it 'very likely' that their child would go to university, compared to 39% for non-Muslim parents. Rather than integration, education and social mobility conflicting with religious identity and practice, Ipsos MORI actually found that Muslim graduates with a UK degree are "especially likely to feel their religion is extremely important to them".

Certain responses pertaining to education also give us an insight into how the Muslim community views the government, that is to say apparently with a high degree of trust. There was surprisingly little resistance among surveyants to the suggestion of government involvement in regulating after-school madrasas. **Only 7% of respondents opposed the idea of government regulations preventing 'anyone unsuitable from being able to tutor in madrassas'**.⁶⁰

A full 78%, meanwhile, supported such measures. **This should go some way to dispelling any notion that Muslims see themselves and their institutions as entirely divorced from those of wider society and the government.** It is notable that older respondents were more favourable towards this, with over-65s backing it at a rate of 81%, while those aged 18 - 24 backed it at a rate of 69%. This is suggestive of the declining trust in government intervention among the younger generations.

A majority of 63% supported the notion that all tutors, or madrasa teachers, should be trained by a government body, which may indicate a desire for higher quality training in madrassas, but also shows that government bodies are trusted enough to administer this training. It is notable that nearly a fifth of respondents opposed this though, which is unsurprising given that it would entail a much greater degree of government influence in curriculums. In this we can find at least some evidence for the 'embattled worldview' ascribed to the Muslim community by Policy Exchange. By this they meant that there is a pervasive sense among Muslims of being persecuted by the major institutions. Evidently in the realm of education there is less fear around this.

There was also a general sense from the polling that most surveyants felt that faith was best taught either at home (24%) or at the mosque (48%), rather than inside a school classroom (26%).⁶¹ 57% of over-65s preferred the mosque, while just 14% of them thought teaching of faith in the classroom to be best. This indicates the importance of mosques in promoting and maintaining religious literacy among the Muslim community, as well as that religious knowledge is largely considered a private or intra-communal affair. Overall, the Muslim community's

⁵⁹ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 6

⁶⁰ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 55

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 52



respect for the value of educational institutions is a positive indication of their investment in the civic infrastructure of Britain.

Language

Related to education, one issue among the British Muslim community, however, was language, particularly the proportion of Muslims who cannot speak English well or at all. as it is among other religious communities with large immigrant cohorts.⁶² In 2021, 67.4% of Muslims living in England and Wales reported English as their main language, compared to 59.4% of Hindus and 62.1% of Sikhs, and 91.1% of the general population. Among the 32.6% with a different main language, 23.2% could speak English well or very well, 7.8% could not speak English well, and 1.54% reported not being able to speak English at all, the highest proportion for any religious group after Sikhs (1.7%).

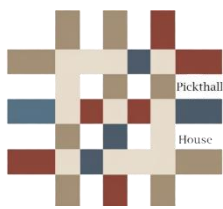
This rate of inability to speak English was unsurprisingly higher among first-generation immigrants generally (1.4% compared to 0.04% of the UK-born population), but particularly those born in some Muslim-majority countries, including immigrants from: Syria (5.8% unable to speak English), Kuwait (4.6%), Afghanistan (4.3%), Bangladesh (3.97%), Yemen (3.4%), Pakistan (3.1%), Somalia (2.3%), Iran and Iraq (2.2% each), and Morocco (2%).⁶³ Nevertheless, this seems to be improving from 2011, when 4.2% of Pakistan-born residents could not speak English at all, and 5.5% of those born in Bangladesh.

As for the linguistic diversity of the Muslim community in England and Wales, we can see that among the 32.6% of British Muslims without English as a main language, the most common main languages are: Urdu (7.02%), Bengali (including Sylheti; 4.95%), Arabic (4.89%), West or Central Asian languages (including Farsi, Pashto and Kurdish; 4.14%), African languages (primarily Somali and Swahili; 2.4%), Punjabi (2.1%) and Turkish (1.91%).⁶⁴ 13.3% of British Indian Muslims reported Gujarati as their main language. In addition to the ethnic diversity of British Muslims, and how this has been seen above in regards to education, this linguistic diversity should serve as a reminder of the internal diversity of British Muslims and the wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and issues held and faced by a community that is often spoken of in monolithic terms. British Muslims' ethnic, linguistic and geographic diversity is further set out in Appendix I.

⁶² ONS custom datasets, Proficiency in English language by Religion
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/cf94d3bd-cab9-4dcc-b34f-0dbf374034d2#get-data>

⁶³ ONS custom datasets, Proficiency in English language by Country of birth (extended)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/1445a494-4388-4ee4-b405-bb30789e0109#get-data>

⁶⁴ ONS custom datasets, Main Language by Ethnic Group and Religion
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/1bc779c5-7c53-4056-b978-4c9f6efd9cfb#get-data>



Crime

The poll carried out by Hyphen in the lead-up to the election found that Muslim voters were more concerned with crime as an issue than were non-Muslim voters.⁶⁵ The ONS reported that in 2019, 79% of Muslim adults believed crime to have gone up 'a little' or 'a lot' on a national scale.⁶⁶ Sadly, these concerns are not unfounded, and are likely connected in part to issues internal to the community. A report released just in July 2024 for the House of Commons Library found that around 18% of the prison population in England and Wales identified as Muslim as of March 2024, a very significant change from only 8% in 2002.⁶⁷ The situation in Scotland was similar.

Although this is rather an uncomfortable fact to confront it should be borne in mind that the reasons for this are still up for discussion. The precise reasons are not quite clear - the Muslim Council of Britain, for instance, suggested that this may have something to do with the younger age profile of Muslims on average, and the number of Muslims living in deprived areas.⁶⁸ The issue still requires deep consideration and substantive action on the part of the Muslim community to understand and combat this issue.

A positive sign on the other hand is that Muslim engagement with and approval of the police is more positive than might be expected. **The aforementioned ONS report from 2019 found that 59% of Muslim surveyants believed police to be doing a good or excellent job, with there being little disparity between religious groups on this question.** The group most likely to say the police are doing a good job was Hindus at 65%, while those following any other religion said so at 52%, and Sikhs at 55%.

Policy Exchange **asked their Muslim sample what they considered the best solution to the problem of crime, and the most popular answer was to have 'extra police on the beat', with 55% giving this answer, followed distantly by 30% wanting the installation of more security cameras.**⁶⁹ As the report noted, this is indicative of a degree of trust in the police. The survey of 1,000 self-identified British Muslims by the Crest Advisory **found that British Muslims trust the police on ordinary crimes at a rate of 59%, higher than the general public at 47%**, though they trusted them less than the general public on countering extremism.⁷⁰ Despite this, 35% of Muslim surveyants felt that the police treated Muslims unfairly, either 'very' or 'somewhat' so.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Hyphen staff, June 2024

⁶⁶ ONS, 'Religion and crime in England and Wales: February 2020'

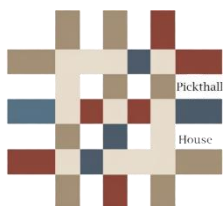
⁶⁷ Sturge, G., 'UK Prison Population Statistics', *House of Commons Library*, July 2024

⁶⁸ Muslim Council of Britain, 'British Muslims in Numbers Briefing', December 2016

⁶⁹ Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 30

⁷⁰ Clements, J., Roberts, M., & Forman, D., p. 73

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 67



A contemporary survey on this might be warranted, given the generalised decline in trust of government bodies in recent years, but that this affirming attitude to the police was borne out in multiple surveys is striking. Equally striking is the apparent tension between many Muslims perceiving the police to treat them unfairly, while simultaneously many want to see more police on the beat.

That a group with a large prison population is also quite supportive of the police suggests divisions and frustration within the Muslim community. The favourable attitude towards police involvement suggests that large parts of the Muslim community may be uncomfortable with this fact, offering hope for resolution of this problem in the long-term, even if greater police action is not a direct solution. The response to crime is another indication of the trust that many Muslims have come to place in Britain's public institutions, which is promising for civic engagement.

Extremism

The issue of extremism and terrorism is of course one of the most difficult and persistent issues to have followed Muslim communities in the Western world for decades now. Despite this, we find relative unanimity among British Muslims in the condemnation of extremist violence. Policy Exchange found their Muslim surveyants more willing to condemn the use of violence in political protest than the general population. **A total of 89% of Muslim surveyants condemned violence as a form of protest, and 90% condemned terrorism; 2% were sympathetic to both of these respectively, a proportion somewhat lower than the wider public.**⁷²

Indeed, Policy Exchange noted that self-identified Muslims who considered themselves less religious were more likely to express sympathy with violent and terroristic acts, saying, "Perhaps the most important of our findings in this context is that greater religiosity does not equate to political radicalism".⁷³ Policy Exchange also noted that **social conservatism does not correlate with political radicalism.**⁷⁴

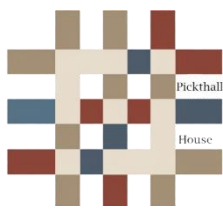
The report from the Crest Advisory found that 63% of Muslim surveyants said they were "very worried" or "fairly worried" about Islamist extremism, as compared with 67% of the general British public.⁷⁵ This compared with 71% who were in some way worried about far-right extremism, as compared with 66% of the wider public. Evidently British Muslims share many of the concerns surrounding extremism with wider society.

⁷² Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., p. 8

⁷³ Ibid, p. 85

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 11

⁷⁵ Clements, J., Roberts, M., & Forman, D., p. 79



A 2016 survey found markedly higher levels of condemnation from Muslim communities than the general population regarding any act of violence.⁷⁶ Indeed, Ipsos MORI has pointed out that sympathy for terrorist violence in the general population at 4% was twice that among Muslims at 2%, and in the context of August 2024's riots, YouGov's polling reveals 7% of Britons supported the violent anti-Islam and anti-immigration demonstrations.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, the Muslim Census has found that 92% of British Muslims now feel less safe living in the UK.⁷⁸

Although extremism and terrorist-sympathies are evidently peripheral to the Muslim community, few would deny that the problem exists, yet tensions remain around how it should be dealt with. Within this rubric the Prevent programme has attracted particular attention. Prevent was set up to deal with the threat of terrorism in particular, and to assess the risk of individuals becoming a tangible threat. The survey carried out by the Crest Advisory asked its respondents several questions surrounding the controversial programme.

Surprisingly, 56% of Muslim respondents were apparently unaware even of the programme's existence, while members of the public were still less likely to have heard of it. The report was released in 2020, and it is quite likely that awareness has increased since that time given media discussions around the subject. The small sample size may also be a limitation. **An apparently 'neutral explanation' was given about Prevent, which provoked the support, qualified or unqualified, of 80% of Muslim respondents, and 85% of the wider public.**⁷⁹ This ought not be confused with the respondents condoning all of the particular actions of Prevent, however. In addition, 66% of British Muslims said they would refer someone to Prevent if it became clear that that person was on track to being radicalised, slightly higher than the general public at 63%. Nevertheless, many British Muslims have voiced opposition to the programme. The Muslim Council of Britain said that Prevent's strategy had left Muslims feeling "demonised, targeted and spied upon."⁸⁰ Given that most Muslims have apparently not even heard of Prevent, it seems likely that this discourse is relegated to a relatively small, but more vocal and perhaps more informed corner of the Muslim community.

Extremism is widely condemned in the Muslim community, and the associated concepts of political violence and terrorism are as well. This has been given further force by a desire to rehabilitate the image of Muslims, perhaps for themselves as much as for society at large. As the Crest Advisory commented in their conclusion, "there is a 'quiet majority' of British Muslims

⁷⁶ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 9

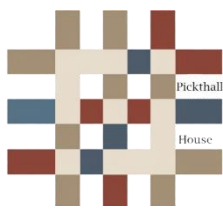
⁷⁷ YouGov, 'The public reaction to the 2024 riots'

⁷⁸ Muslim Census Team, *Muslim Census*, '92% of UK Muslims feel less safe since the start of far-right riots'

<https://muslimcensus.co.uk/muslims-feel-less-safe-since-far-right-riots/>

⁷⁹ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, p. 11

⁸⁰ Bowcott, O., *The Guardian*, December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/19/lord-carlile-prevent-review-legal-challenge>



willing to support what is routinely described as, and is widely considered to be, highly controversial counter-extremism policy”.⁸¹

Wealth

Muslims are in several ways disadvantaged in the UK when it comes to wealth and property. For instance, people identified as Muslim on the 2021 census were nearly four times as likely to be living in overcrowded homes than the population of England and Wales in general. This is likely influenced both by socioeconomic factors and by cultural practice, with many predominantly Muslim cultures favouring the maintenance of strong connections and regular contact between generations. **More conspicuous still is the fact that only 45.6% of Muslims live in a household where one of the occupants was the owner, which is noticeably less than the 62.8% of the overall population.**⁸²

A higher proportion of Muslims than any other group lived in ‘social rented’ homes, those homes in some way subsidised by local councils or housing associations. 26.6% of Muslims lived in such dwellings, compared to 16.6% of the overall English and Welsh population.⁸³

A significant portion of Muslims in England and Wales do live in the most deprived areas: as of 2021, 18.61% of Muslims lived in LSOAs in which over 1/3 households experienced at least two levels of deprivation, compared to 6.13% of the population.⁸⁴ In these LSOAs, numbering only 2,178 out of 35,672 (6.11%) across England and Wales, 19.71% of the population were Muslim, compared to 6.49% across England and Wales. This notable correlation of Muslim population centres and deprived neighbourhoods, with Kenan Malik’s finding above, suggests that the Muslim swing away from Labour may also be linked to general discontent at the political establishment by many communities experiencing prolonged deprivation.

Nevertheless, only 28.8% of these LSOAs have a Muslim population over 20%. Therefore, while the percentage of all LSOAs with a Muslim population over 20% (8.1%) and those with over 1 in 3 households experiencing multiple indices of deprivation (6.11%), on the whole only a small correlation cannot be drawn between high Muslim populations and high levels of deprivation. However,

⁸¹ Clements, J., Roberts, M., & Forman, D., p. 90

⁸² ONS, ‘Religion by housing, health, employment and education, England and Wales: Census 2021’

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ ONS custom datasets, Religion by LSOAs.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/a90aa4e8-9402-4931-92ab-4be09923f4e2#get-data>
Household Deprivation by LSOAs.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/27f30efc-790f-408e-90b3-7f96c569ca#get-data>



The Social Mobility Commission published a qualitative report in 2017 which surmised that British Muslims faced a ‘broken social mobility promise’, and that barriers to better socioeconomic opportunities were few.⁸⁵ The value of this report would be better understood if it were accompanied by quantitative research on the subject, but its findings should still be considered. The Muslim Council of Britain identifies a similar issue comparing the 2021 census data on religion and deprivation to 2011 and 2001. Despite the passage of 20 years, little social mobility is apparent, with the proportion of Muslims living in neighbourhoods of each quartile of deprivation remaining largely unchanged.⁸⁶

One might expect that a financially disenfranchised minority would have a harder time building loyalty to the society they operate in. It is thus worth reflecting on the fact that Muslims have on the whole managed to develop a sense of affinity and belonging to Britain despite being on average closer to the poverty line and more often living through deprivation.

Health

Data provided by the census regarding self-reported health shows that those identifying as Muslim were slightly less likely to report themselves as having bad or very bad health, with just 4.5% reporting this as opposed to 5.2% of the general population.⁸⁷ Given that this is based on self-reporting, it is not the most accurate way to gauge health among any population, partly because people are likely to measure themselves relative to those around them. This would require an assessment of health at a local or communal level to clarify. The UK Household Longitudinal Study, surveying people between 2016 and 2018 found that surveyants identifying as Muslim were satisfied with their health at a rate of 66%.⁸⁸ This compared with 77% for Jews, 68% for Christians, and 64% for those with no religion.

This is an improvement from 2011, when 5.5% of Muslims self-declared ‘bad or very bad health’, similar to 5.6% of the overall population at the time. Muslims on the whole being younger may suggest a greater likelihood to have a positive appraisal of their health. The MCB identified the cause of this in the greatly higher proportion of over-50-year-old Muslims reporting ‘bad or very bad health’, at 24.1% compared to 12.1% of the population as a whole.⁸⁹ This was worst among Muslim women over 65, of whom 38.2% reported ‘bad or very bad health’, compared to 16.1% of the general population. Regarding disability, 47.6% of this same group reported that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot by disability, compared to only 29.4%

⁸⁵ Stevenson, J., et al., *The Social Mobility Challenges Faced by Young Muslims*, September 2017, p. 1

⁸⁶ Muslim Council of Britain, ‘Census 2021: First Look’, November 2022, p. 12

⁸⁷ ONS, ‘Religion and health in England and Wales: February 2020’

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Muslim Council of Britain, ‘British Muslims in Numbers’, February 2015, p. 52-53



of over-65 women in the general population. For over-65 Muslim men, 26.7% reported 'bad or very bad health' and 35.1% that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

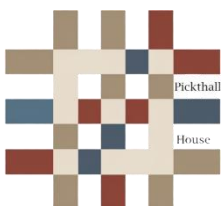
As mentioned, Hyphen's poll found the NHS to be the highest ranked issue among the respondents identified as Muslim in the lead up to the 2024 election. Concerns are thus shown to be similar to the general public when it comes to healthcare, no doubt influenced by the unique health issues facing the community.

Conclusions

Overall, Pickthall House's findings and the cited surveys point to the fact that Britain's Muslims have come to feel a marked sense of attachment to the country in which they reside and in which increasing numbers are born. As the surveys and opinion polls show, British Muslims hold a conscious and articulated identification with Britain, as well as a deep sense of involvement and investment in how many Muslims engage with Britain's institutions. This even includes those institutions, like Prevent and the police, which are often opposed by some voices as oppressive or obtrusive. Despite valid criticisms of these organisations, there is widespread support among Muslims for the principles of civic order that they represent. British Muslims generally approach Britain's political and public institutions with trust, despite experiences of difficulties and inequalities relating to crime and deprivation. This and British Muslims' strong sense of national identity is also in spite of their largely more conservative social mores and values compared to the rest of the population. Crime is another notable concern in the community, and the aforementioned attachment to Britain's institutions, including its police, so long as inequalities are appropriately redressed, should in the long-term allow for the problem's systematic, community-level resolution. The Muslim community's civic engagement should have the same effect in many other domains in which the community faces challenges.

Moreover it must be stressed that freedom of religion has played a crucial role in aiding British Muslims' integration and ability to feel they a sense of belonging and shared national identity in Britain, as suggested by 92% of Muslims feeling a sense of belonging to the United Kingdom while 91% feel able to practise their faith openly. This is in marked contrast to other Western European countries which have even introduced sartorial limitations targeting their Muslim minority communities in aggressive attempts at assimilation. As the evidence shows, continued protection of freedom of and state non-interference in religion - true secularism rather than Continental laicism - is the most successful pathway to integration for Britain.

Furthermore, it must be noted that half of England and Wales' Muslims live in the top quintile of most deprived areas and many issues faced by the community are shared by other groups experiencing deprivation, most notably the White British working class. This can be seen not only in education, with British Muslims of all backgrounds except for British Bangladeshi Muslims, having a higher percentage of degree-holders than White Britons, but also in the



recent race riots conducted largely by working class White Britons in areas of high deprivation.⁹⁰ The failure to account for this point extends also to pollsters and think tanks such as Policy Exchange, who in only surveying highly Muslim areas, inherently selected from among one half of the British Muslim population more likely to be suffering from deprivation and less likely to have had the natural impulses driving integration experienced by the other half of British Muslims living in the remaining 94% of England and Wales. With this and future policy white papers, Pickthall House intends to correct the record and provide a more balanced and evidence-based approach for Britain's relations with its Muslim minority and other communities.

⁹⁰ Gross, A., Fisher, L., Borrett, A., *Financial Times*, August 2024
<https://www.ft.com/content/c8317b53-ce27-42fc-bd67-59f9ac9267c9>



Appendix I: Ethno-religious profiles of British Muslims

*For Black Britons, the Census only provides the three high-level ethnic categories: Black African, Black Caribbean or Other Black, which can be paired with religion and other variables in datasets. A detailed list of 288 ethnic groups is available, broken down by geography, but this cannot be paired with other variables.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the largest predominantly-Muslim Black ethnicity living in the UK are British Somalis and Somalilanders, with 182,491 people identifying as either ethnicity.⁹² As 95.42% of Somali nationals in England and Wales identify as Muslim, it could be assumed that almost all ethnic Somalis or Somalilanders are also Muslim.⁹³ Therefore, Somalis appear to make up almost half of England and Wales' Black African Muslim population.

**Presumably Albanian, which makes up 53.3% of non-EU European languages spoken in England and Wales.⁹⁴

⁹¹ ONS, Ethnic group (detailed) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS022/editions/2021/versions/1>

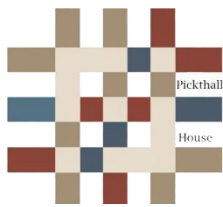
⁹² ONS, National identity (detailed) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS028/editions/2021/versions/1>

⁹³ ONS, National identity (detailed) by Religion <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/create/filter-outputs/7de88fa5-27e9-461b-aaff-f8e04bebcd0a#get-data>

⁹⁴ ONS, Main language (detailed) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS024/editions/2021/versions/3>



Ethnoreligious group	Population (% of total)	% of Muslims	Average age	English main language	Other languages	Main region(s) (% of population; % of group living there)	Main city (% of city population; % of group living there)
British Pakistani Muslims	1,470,775 (2.64%)	37.6%	29.4	70.19%	Urdu (16.05%), Punjabi (4.9%)	Yorkshire (5.41%; 18.85%), West Midlands (5.36%; 20.25%)	Birmingham (6.26%; 12.4%)
British Bangladeshi Muslims	593,136 (1.06%)	15.16%	28.5	64.02%	Bengali/Sylheti (29.78%)	London (3.66%; 49.9%)	Tower Hamlets, London (32.5%; 17%)
Black African British Muslims*	378,219 (0.68%)	9.67%	27.1	63.88%	African languages (19.9%), Arabic (6.88%)	London (2.23%; 51.99%)	Brent, London (4.8%; 4.3%)
British Arab Muslims	277,736 (0.5%)	7.1%	28.9	47.48%	Arabic (42.9%)	London (1.29%; 40.98%)	Westminster, London (6.19%, 4.55%)
British Indian Muslims	246,969 (0.44%)	6.31%	33.2	71.52%	Gujarati (13.31%), Urdu (4.07%)	East Midlands (0.96%; 18.89%)	Leicester (9.19%; 16.12%)
Mixed Muslims (White & Asian, W. & Black African, W. & Black Caribbean, Other)	142,045 (0.24%)	3.57%	16.4 (W&A) 23.1 (W&BA) 23.4 (W&BC) 18.1 (Other)	89.36% 66.88% 90.13% 87.63%	Arabic (6.12%), Turkish (1.71%)	London (0.54%; 33.46%)	Westminster, London (0.97%, 1.39%)
Other White Muslims	135,296 (0.24%)	3.5%	32.9	42.08%	Turkish (23.07%)	London (0.86%; 55.8%)	Enfield, London (3.55%, 8.66%)
White British Muslims	91,300 (0.16%)	2.33%	28.2	83.23%	European non-EU language* (5.18%), Turkish (5.1%)	London (0.43%; 41.1%)	Enfield, London (1.42%, 5.14%)



Appendix II: Select Bibliography and Further Reading

All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, 'Integration not Demonisation', 2017

Cabinet Office, 'Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website', October 2017, rev. March 2018

DeHanas, D.N., *Believing citizens: Religion and civic engagement among London's second generation youth*, Ph. D. diss, University of North Carolina, 2010

Frampton, M., Goodhart, D., Mahmood, K., 'Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities', *Policy Exchange*, 2016

Henry Jackson Society, 'British Muslim and general public attitudes polling', March 2024

iCoCo Foundation, SchoolDash, The Challenge, 'Understanding School Segregation in England: 2011 to 2016', 2017

Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 'A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain', 2018

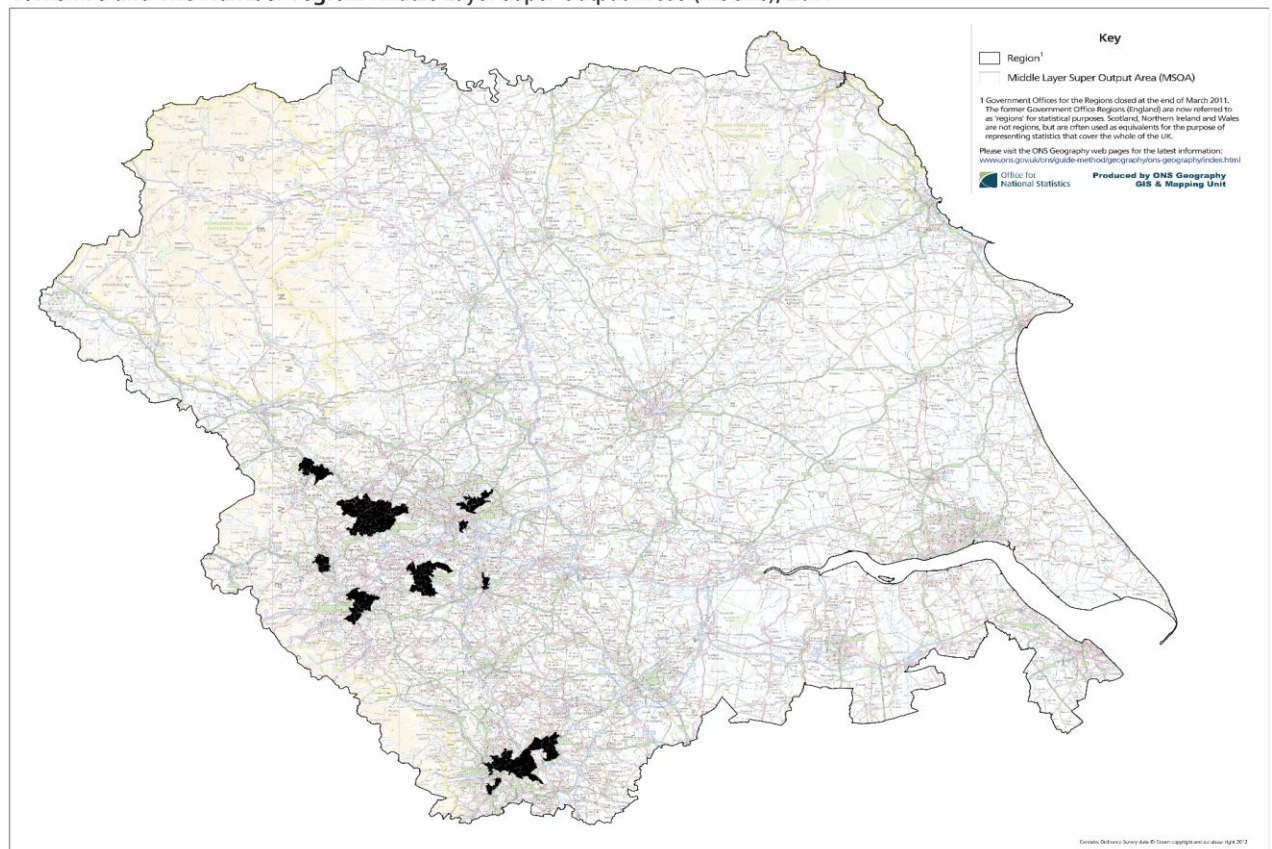
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 'The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (IoD2019)', 2019

Muslim Council of Britain, 'British Muslims in Numbers', February 2015

National Centre for Social Research, 'Immigration: Changing attitudes, policy preferences and partisanship', *British Social Attitudes*, 41, June 2024

Appendix III: Regional maps of Middle layer Super Output Areas with a Muslim population of 20% or higher

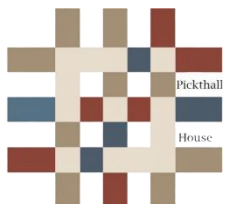
Yorkshire and The Humber region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011



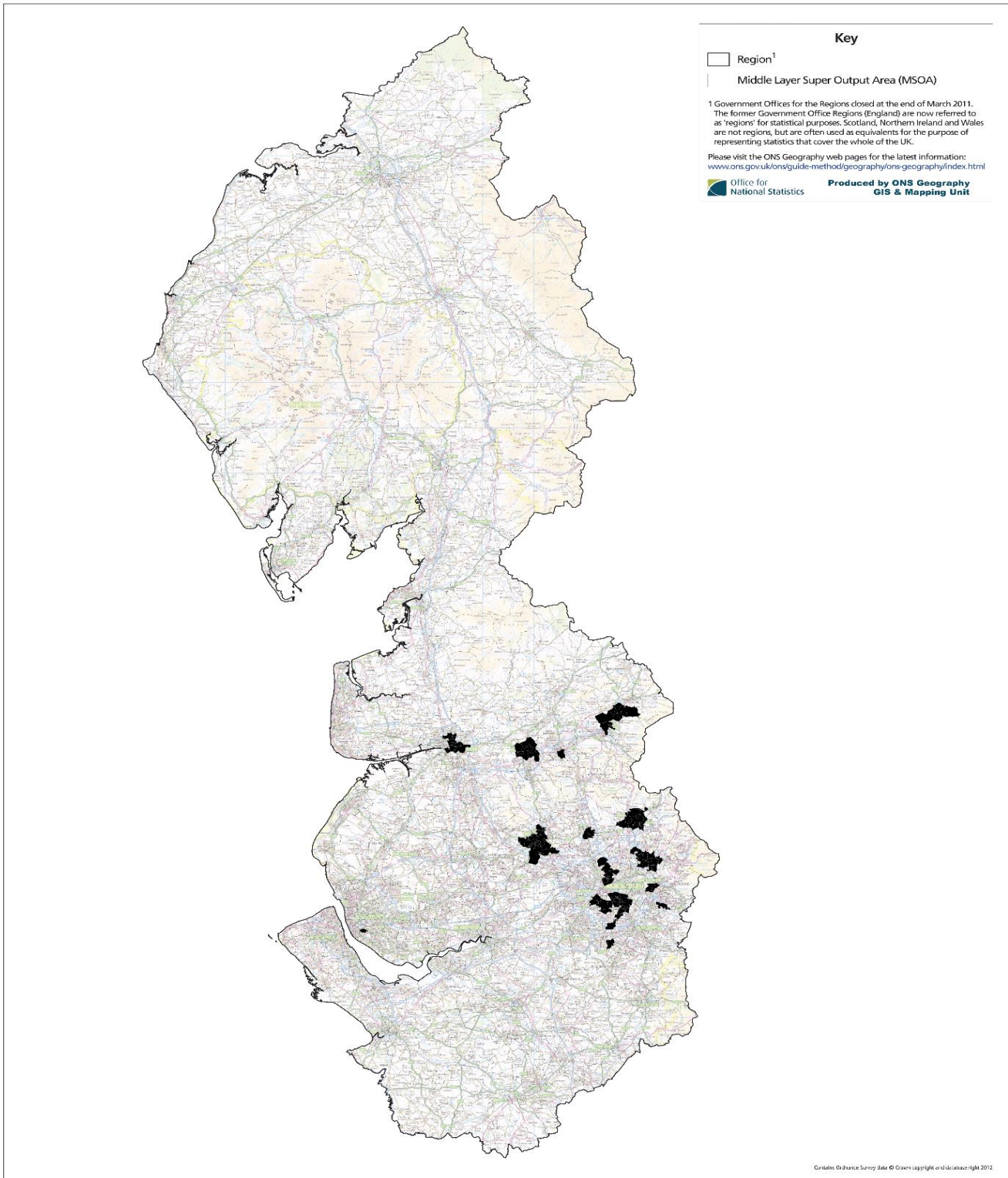
Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are made up of groups of LSOAs, usually four or five. They comprise between 2,000 and 6,000 households and have a usually resident population between 5,000 and 15,000 persons.⁹⁵ MSOAs with a 20% or larger Muslim population have been mapped, rather than LSOAs, for ease of visibility, but the areas marked in black correlate closely with the areas of the country polled by Policy Exchange.

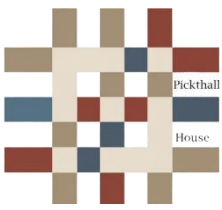
⁹⁵ ONS, Census 2021 geographies

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/censusgeographies/census2021geographies#middle-layer-super-output-areas-msoas->

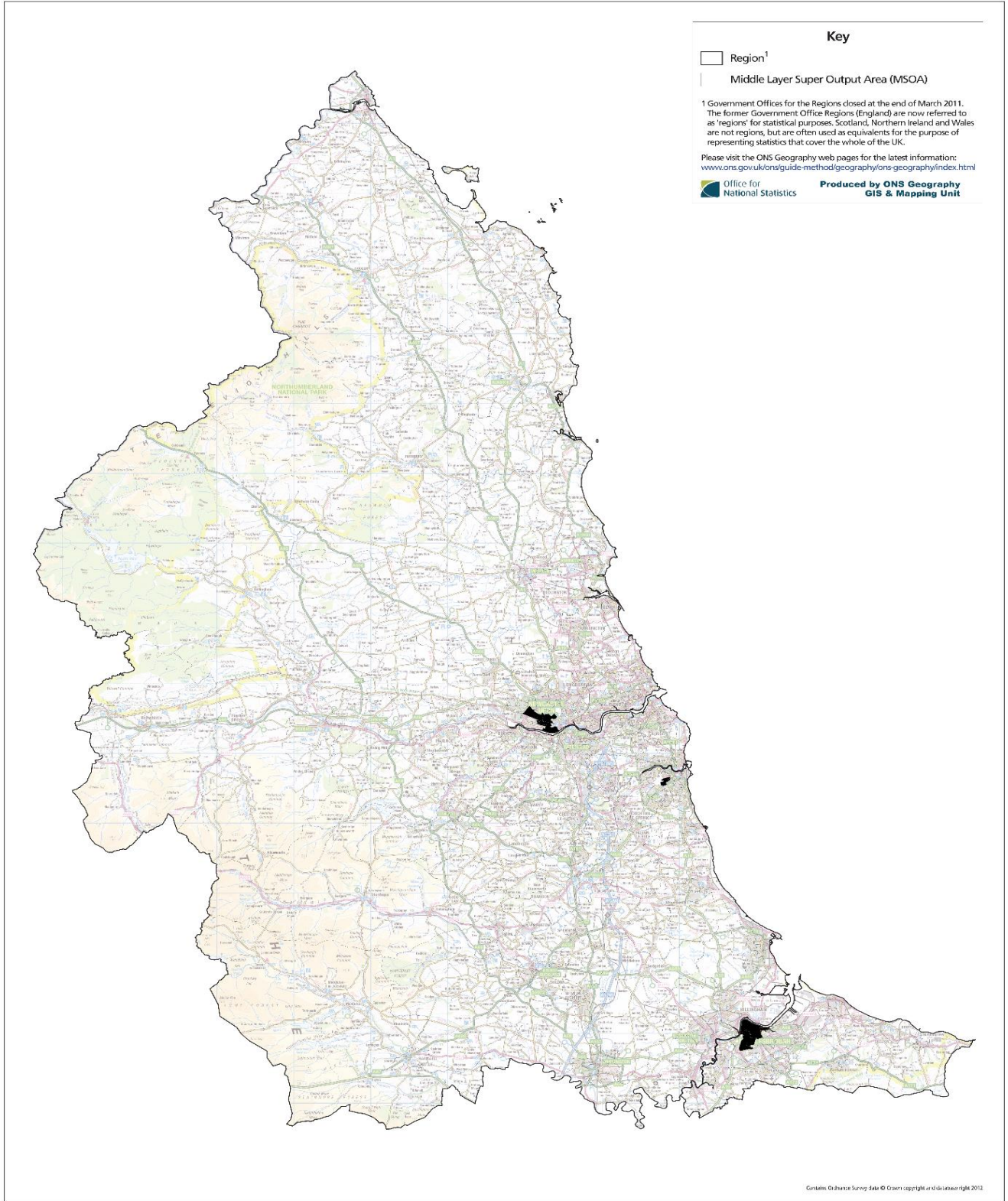


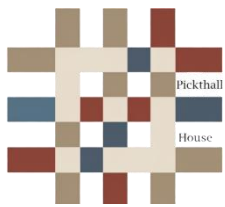
North West region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011



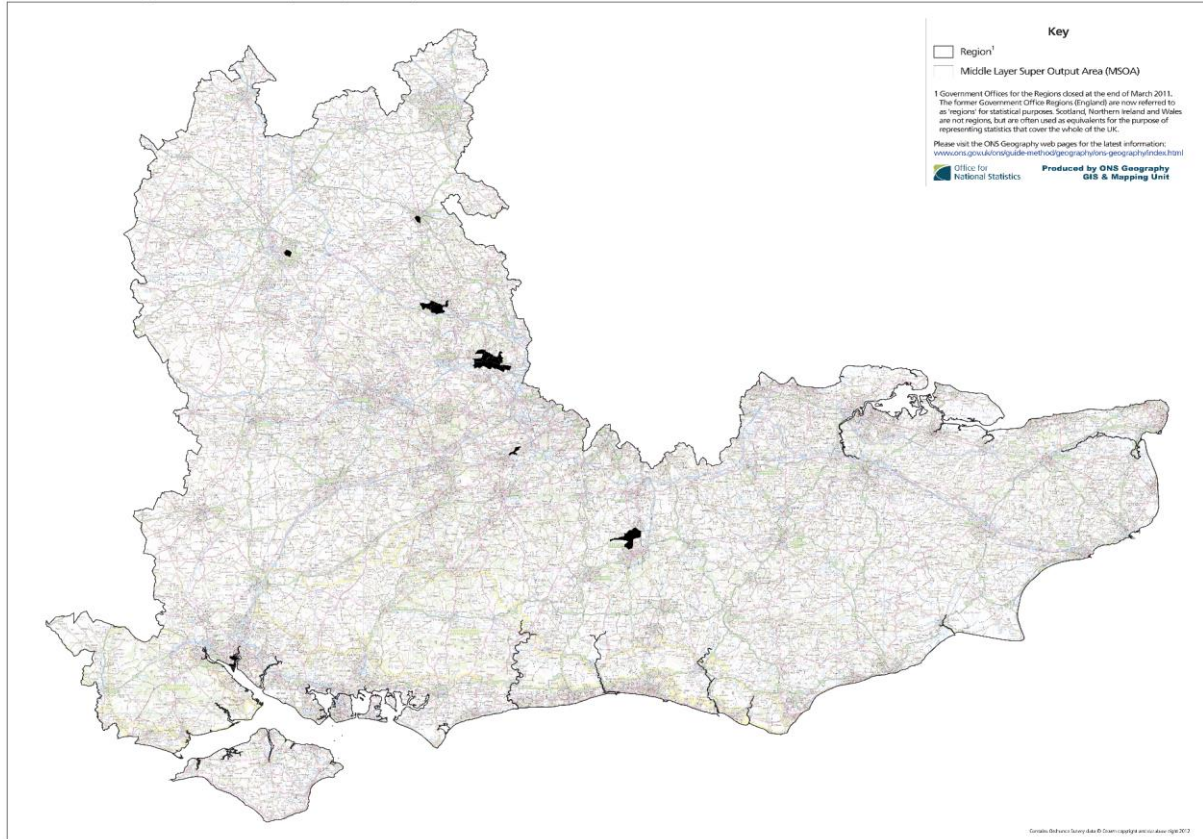


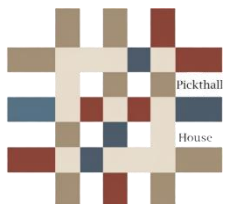
North East region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011



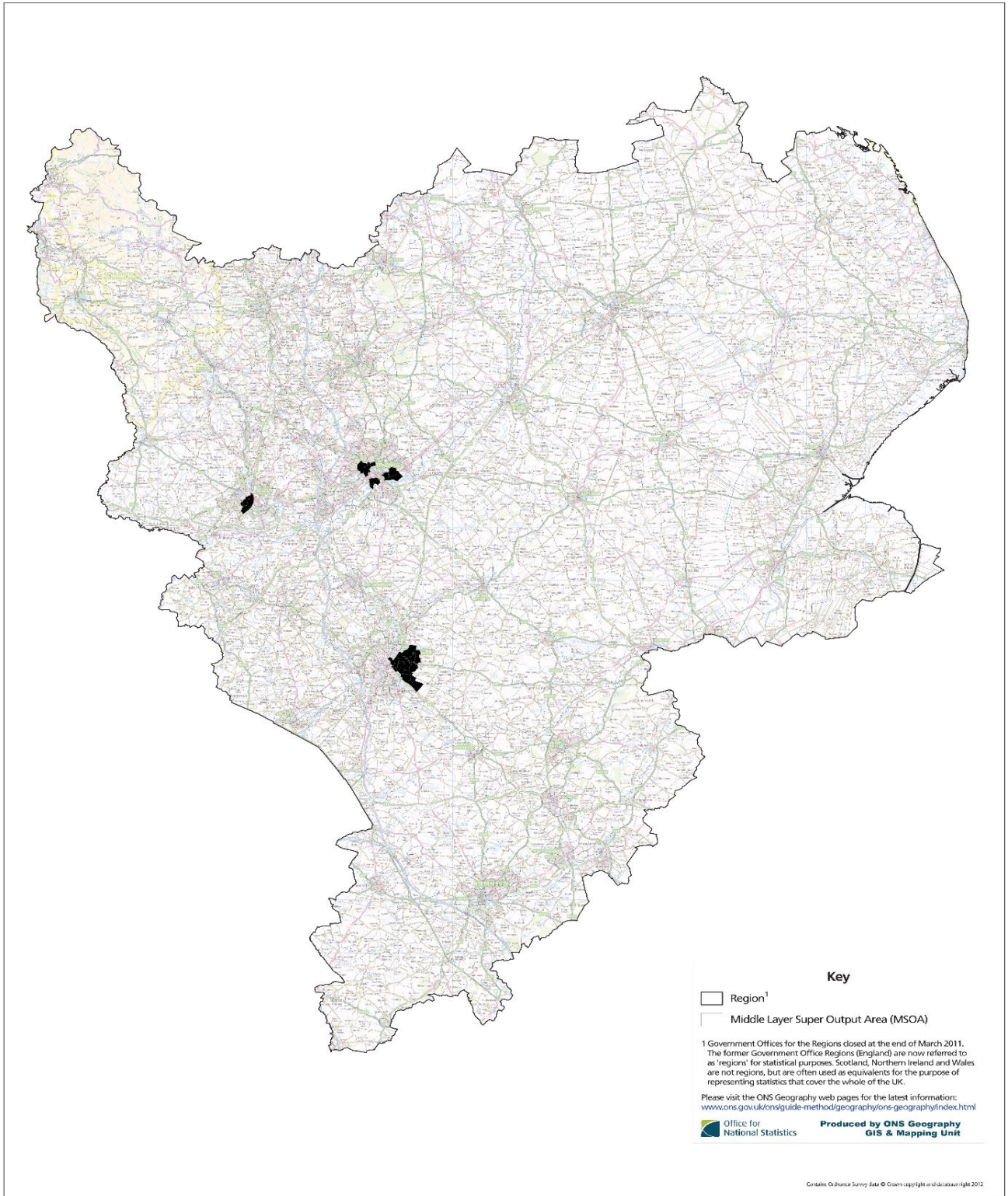


South East region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011





East Midlands region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011



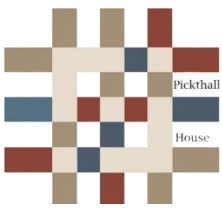
- Key**
- Region¹
 - Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA)

¹ Government Offices for the Regions closed at the end of March 2011. The former Government Office Regions (England) are now referred to as 'regions' for statistical purposes. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are not regions, but are often used as equivalents for the purpose of representing statistics that cover the whole of the UK.

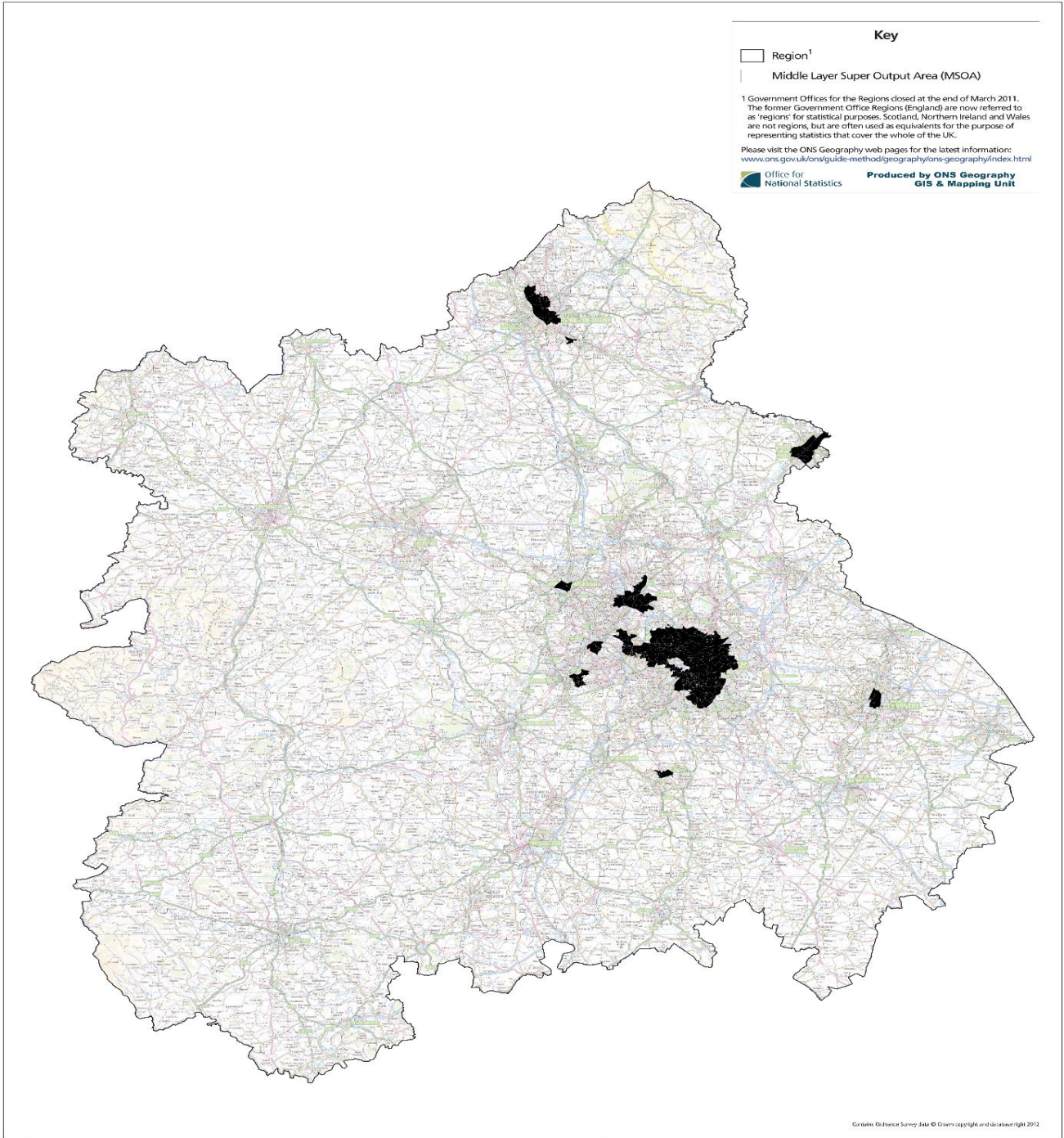
Please visit the ONS Geography web pages for the latest information:
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/ons-geography/index.html

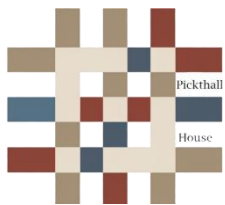
Office for
National Statistics

Produced by ONS Geography
GIS & Mapping Unit

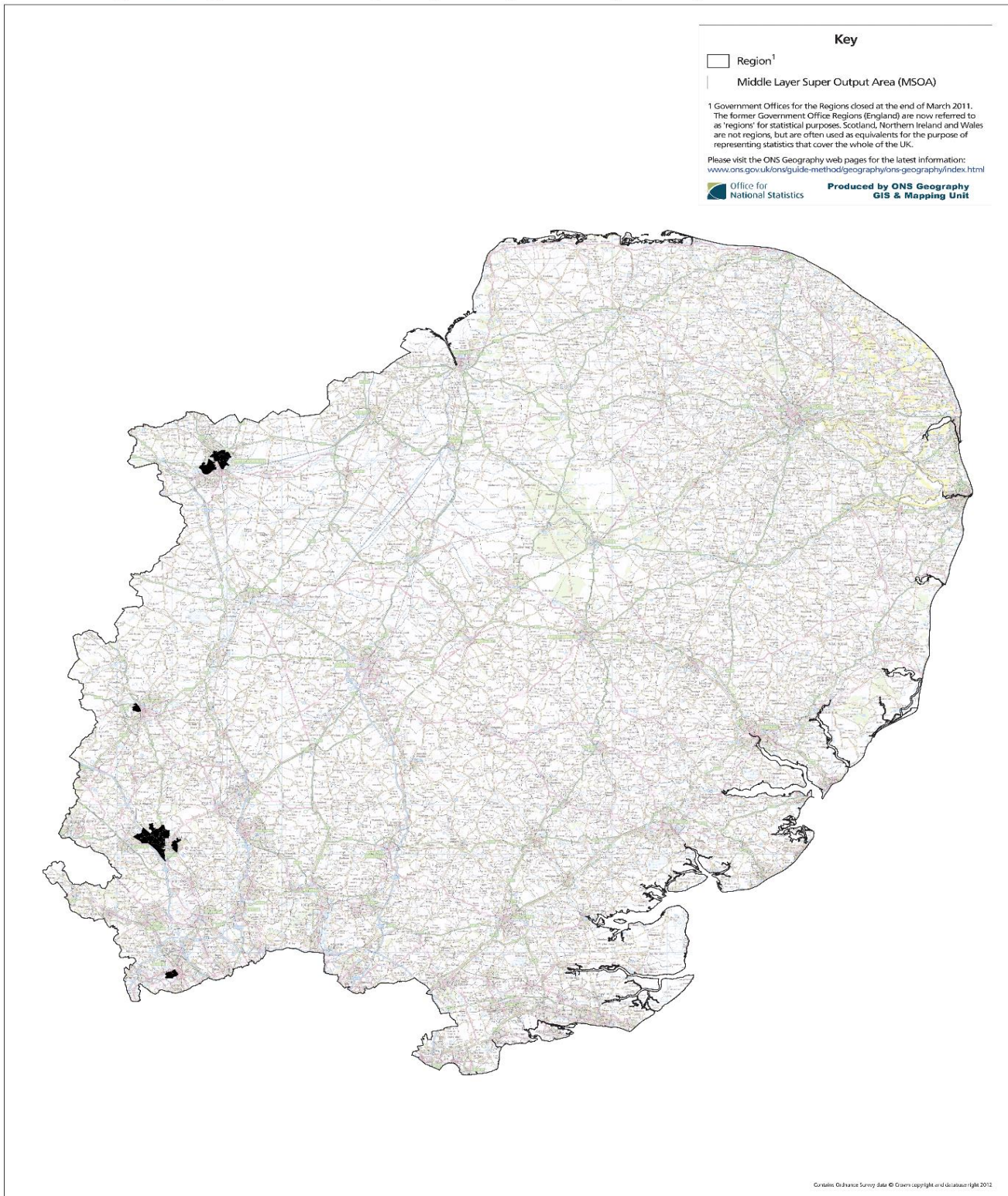


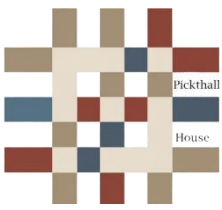
West Midlands region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011



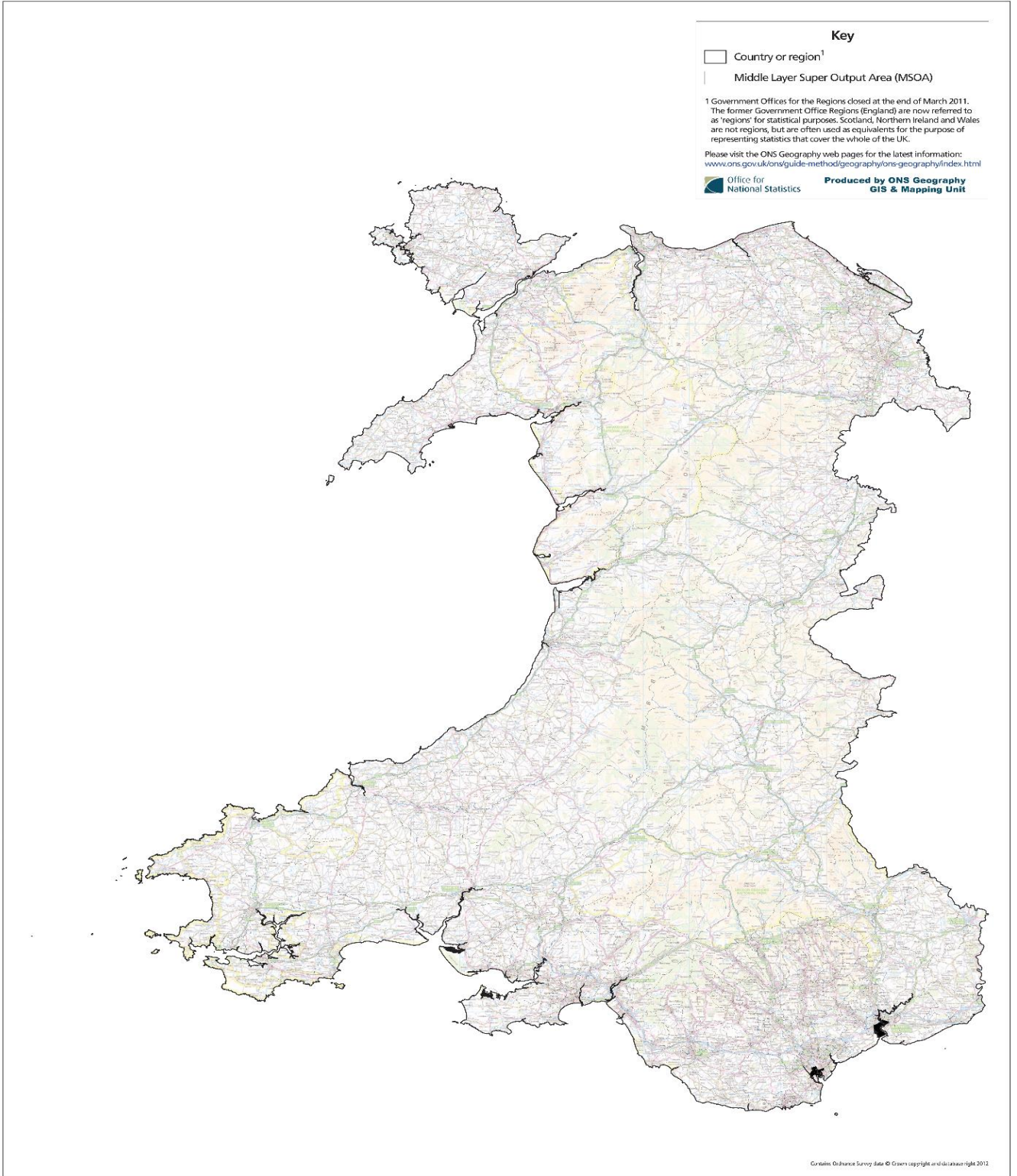


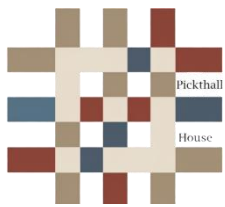
East of England region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011





Wales: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011





South West region: Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), 2011

