



GLOBAL MUSLIM DIASPORA

Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States



JAPAN

Country Report Series



ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION
STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES



GLOBAL MUSLIM DIASPORA:

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND MINORITIES IN NON-OIC MEMBER STATES



COUNTRY REPORT SERIES

JAPAN



Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training
Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)



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Please cite the work as follows: SESRIC (2019). *Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States: Japan*. Global Muslim Diaspora Project. Human and Social Development Studies. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. Ankara

ISBN: 978-975-6427-81-1

Cover design by Savas Pehlivan, Publication Department of the SESRIC.

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Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
G7	Group of Seven
G8	Group of Eight
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Global Muslim Diaspora
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PEW	PEW Research Centre
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SSUA	Social Sciences University of Ankara
UN	United Nations
US	United States

Foreword

The SESRIC has launched the Global Muslim Diaspora (GMD) Project - a comprehensive research effort trying to analyse challenges, attitudes, experiences and perceptions on a range of issues related to Muslim communities and minorities living in the non-OIC Member States. The main objective of the project is to provide a range of useful comparative statistics and insights, which can help identify issues, initiate cooperation forums and shape future policy.

Islam is not only present in all continents as a religion but also as a cultural and civilizational value. Starting with the *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslim migrants have laid the foundations for the spread of Islamic values, ideas and habits in the regions where they are settled, thus contributed to the cultural richness and economic development of these places.

Today, whenever we raise the point concerning Muslims communities and minorities living in non-OIC Member States, we have in mind a context in which Islam is present through more recent migrations. However, we should keep in mind that many of these countries have also been the homeland of its Muslims for centuries.

Despite the recent growth of literature on Muslims living in non-OIC Member States, our knowledge regarding this subject remains limited and fragmented. The GMD project intends to fill this gap through engaging more closely with the representatives of Muslim communities and minorities in different countries.

In context of GMD project, it is with great pleasure that I present to you the report on Japan, which affords the political elites, policy makers, analysts and general public the opportunity to understand how the Muslims in Japan view the most pressing issues they face today. The report on Japan is based on two basic pillars: desk research and fieldwork – conducted by travelling to Japan. Survey and workshop with representatives of Muslim communities and minorities and in-depth interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim public opinion leaders are the main components of this fieldwork study, whose results are integrated within the report.

I would like to encourage the readers of this report to have a look on the GMD general report titled “Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-OIC Member States: Diagnostics, Concepts, Scope and Methodology”, which inter alia provides description of methodology and research activities applied when preparing the report on Japan.

The development of this report has involved the dedication, skills and efforts of many individuals, to whom I would like to thank.

Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya
Director General
SESRIC

Acknowledgements

The research project on Muslim Communities and Minorities in non-OIC Member States has been commissioned to the Social Sciences University of Ankara (SSUA) by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). The SSUA core research team comprised of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erdal Akdeve, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gürol Baba, Dr. Onur Unutulmaz and Dr. Servet Erdem.

The Japan case report has been prepared by Onur Unutulmaz, with contributions of Erdal Akdeve, Servet Erdem and Gürol Baba. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Barca, Rector of SSUA, also contributed and supervised the preparation of this report. Clive Campbell proofread the document.

Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General of the SESRIC, provided pivotal leadership during the preparation of the report. Several SESRIC members also contributed to the finalization of the report, including Dr. Kenan Bağcı, Acting Director of Economic and Social Research Department, and Dr. Erhan Türbedar, Researcher, who coordinated and edited the report on behalf of SESRIC. Fatma Nur Zengin, Events and Communications Specialist, facilitated the fieldworks.

The SESRIC gratefully acknowledges local field workers and the institutions representing Muslim community in Japan for their cooperation and extraordinary support, without which this report would not have been possible.

Executive Summary

This report aims to contribute in the literature and public debate on Muslim communities and minorities living in the non-OIC Member States, by providing a comprehensive outlook on the principle aspects of Japan's Muslim community. The data presented and analysed in this report were collected using several primary data collection methods and a review of the existing sources. A survey was carried out in Tokyo on a sample of 400 Muslim individuals (in November-December 2018) to complement 16 in-depth interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim key persons - conducted during the Tokyo fieldwork on 10-15 September 2018. Lastly, a workshop was organized on 14 September 2018 in Tokyo and attended by representatives of Muslim and non-Muslim NGOs, municipalities and media organizations.

Japan is one of the most connected and internationally competitive economies, but also in a way secluded from the rest of the world. It is one of the largest industrial giants of the globe while being the only developed democracy with an ethnically homogenous population. It explicitly and consistently makes sure that Japan is not known as an immigration country, yet it has one of the fastest ageing and declining demographic structures, increasingly forcing it to consider more immigration as a partial solution. Japan has a refined perspective on religion and philosophy of belief, which has been articulated for centuries in its rich culture.

Where does Islam and Muslims fit into this picture? While the size of the Muslim community in Japan is tiny at the moment, it is an important one to investigate. As predominantly economic immigrants, the Muslims in Japan are exceptionally well educated and qualified, compared to most of their counterparts in other developed countries. However, Japanese immigration policies, or the lack thereof, make the integration and adaptation processes of Muslims complicated by providing so limited prospects for permanent settlement.

Moreover, size and significance of Muslim community will certainly grow due to Japan's inevitable transformation, which will likely involve a higher number of immigrants, including Muslim immigrants. International actors need to be sympathetic partners of Japan in this transformation. The widespread societal and cultural concerns need to be acknowledged, and the process should be coordinated in such a way that the strong Japanese economy could provide employment to people, who can then contribute in not only the Japanese economy, but also society.

There is a widespread lack of knowledge about the Muslim community in Japan. The mainstream society, on the whole, does not know much about Islam or Muslims. This "invisibility" of the Muslims brings about some challenges for the small Muslim community.

There are, however, also potential advantages of the invisibility of the Muslim community in Japan. The lack of Islamophobia and discrimination, as well as the ease with which the Muslim communities could act in, for instance, opening new mosques or organizing Islamic education programmes are some such advantages.

The largest potential advantage of the lack of knowledge and awareness about Muslims in public opinion of Japan is the opportunity for Muslim community to introduce itself. In other words, Muslims could be given the opportunity to construct and promote their own image and representation in Japan without dealing with strong prejudices, a challenge that exists for most Muslim communities and minorities elsewhere around the globe.

The representations of Islam and Muslims in the Japanese media, although rare, tend to be on the negative side. This is largely because the news feeds usually derive from the Western media outlets. Therefore, more effort needs to be paid to counter-act the negative representation of Islam and many misconceptions and stereotypes about Muslims in media. Programmes reflecting a more balanced representation of the Islam would be helpful. Arguably, the Japanese would be more receptive and sympathetic if such programmes focus on the cultural richness and depth of Islamic civilization, rather than theology and dogmatism.

There is much potential in the small Muslim community in Japan. Partly due to the religious freedom and relaxed political context, the Muslim communities in Japan have been able to organise very effectively into various civil society organisations. Their level of coordination and cooperation, however, is limited at the moment.

The native Japanese Muslims are significant and growing part of the Muslim community in Japan. They are ideally situated to best advance and defend the interests and well-being of the Muslims in Japan. They are also international in their outlook and open to cooperation. Therefore, their significance needs to be acknowledged and the international Muslim community needs to engage with them more closely and extensively.

1 Introduction: Context and Background

Japan is a peculiar country: it is, on the one hand, one of the most advanced, most connected, and largest economies in the world; on the other, it has a long and complex political history that includes an imperial past and active fighting in both world wars along with long periods of isolationism. Moreover, unlike most other developed and well-connected economies, Japan does not have a significant immigrant population. In fact, 98.5% of Japanese society is reported to be ethnic Japanese with only about 1.5% is made up of foreigners or those with immigrant origins, the largest number being Koreans (0.5%) and Chinese (0.4%). When considered that in other developed countries such as France, the UK and Germany, the proportion of immigrants and those with immigrant origins usually amounts to around 20% of the population, this fact is all the more remarkable. In order to understand the current context of Muslims living in Japan, it is necessary to understand the peculiarities of the context in the country.

The geographical position of Japan as an island country made it possible for the country to experience long periods of self-imposed isolation followed by periods of aggressive expansionism. As a result, Japan has complex relations in the region, particularly with China and Korea, two countries with the highest number of emigrants currently residing in Japan. Its isolation is also one of the main reasons why Japan has been able to maintain its ethnic homogeneity while many other equally developed countries have faced large-scale periods of immigration and undergone significant demographic transformations.

Japan is also known for the richness of its culture. This cultural richness is a result of both the history of this island empire and the religious and philosophical ideas that flourished here. The largest religion in Japan is Shintoism (79.2%), which is closely followed by Buddhism (66.8%). Christianity is much smaller at 1.5%, while all other faith groups make up 7.1% of population according to 2015 estimates. Unlike most other countries, the sum of the respective shares of various religious groups well exceeds 100% in the Japan, because many people practice both Shintoism and Buddhism. This practice in Japan of following more than one faith does not appear perversely counter-intuitive and, arguably, this says a lot about the Japanese perspective regarding religion.

Overall, Japan has a unique understanding of secularism, in which religion is considered to be an extremely personal matter. As will be demonstrated in the following discussions, in conjunction with its secular democratic structure, this perspective has provided a hospitable environment for the country's Muslim minorities. While this is not to say that Muslim communities do not have issues or challenges to face when living in Japan, the level of religious freedom and the lack of overt discrimination does appear to satisfy the majority of Muslims living in the country today, and provide them with a sense of hope for the future.

1.1 Japan: A Brief Historical Context

A long and detailed history of Japan is outside of the scope and limits of this report. It would be useful, however, to look at some basic historical cornerstones for the country in modern times inasmuch as they have been crucial in shaping the Japan of today.

Following a long feudal era, marked by self-imposed isolationism from the outside world and during which different *shoguns* ruled in the name of the Emperor, Japan was forced to open up to the world in 1854 under pressure from the US Navy. This led to the country going through an active process of Westernisation known as *the Meiji Restoration*, which was triggered by the establishment of a centralised state under the Emperor. During this period, the country adopted many of the Western political, judicial and military institutions. Via this process, Japan emerged as an industrialised world power, which was trying to expand its sphere of influence. It was during this expansionist period that Japan gained control of Taiwan, Korea and parts of Russia by the turn of the 20th century. Closely following these military successes, Japan invested significantly into its economic and demographic growth and the country's population grew from 35 million in 1873 to 70 million in 1935.

During World War I, Japan sided the Allies Powers, continued with expansionist policies and made advances into China. The country's location in the Far East and the priorities of the other combatants fighting in Europe and the Middle East meant that, unlike the European powers and the Ottoman Empire, Japan experienced significantly fewer material or manpower losses during the war. In 1931, Japan invaded and occupied the Chinese region of Manchuria. The Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, particularly following the Japanese attack on the US naval base of Pearl Harbour, became part of the larger global Second World War. The war ended for Japan, after immense loss of manpower and with the country's economy in ruins, with the dropping of the atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In 1947, Japan adopted a newly revised constitution that established a democracy in form of a constitutional monarchy with an Emperor and an elected parliament called the National Diet.

After the Second World War, Japan has repaired its economy and emerged as one of the biggest economic success stories in the world, driven by a technologically advanced industrial production base. It is also one of the most well connected countries being a member of the ASEAN Plus mechanism, UN, OECD, G7, G8, and G20. Economic growth appears to have slowdown in Japan in 2018 and it is projected to further moderate in the next year. As the world's fourth-largest economy in terms of GDP based on PPP, today Japan is experiencing its worst labour shortage due to an aging population, which is negatively affecting earnings of some industries such as transportation and construction.

1.2 Islam in Japan

Japan's relationship with Islam is relatively recent phenomena. Intellectually, Islam became better known in Japan in the last quarter of the 19th century as a part of Western religious thought. In around 1880, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was for the first time translated into the Japanese language.

Japan experienced important contact with Islam in 1890 when an Ottoman naval ship sailed to Japan coast with intention to develop diplomatic relations between the two states and spread the Islamic faith in the country (unfortunately, the ship, *Ertuğrul*, capsized and sank with 609 people on-board, on the return journey home). Significant interaction between Muslims and the Japanese population and government, however, did not emerge until the arrival of several hundred Turkmen, Uzbek, Tadjik, Kirghiz, Kazakh and other Turko-Tatar Muslim refugees from central Asia and Russia in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the Russian Civil War (1917-1922). These refugees were granted asylum in Japan and settled in a number of cities around Japan and formed small Muslim communities. Some Japanese converted to Islam following the settlement of these Muslim communities. Several mosques were built, the most important of these being the Kobe Mosque (est. 1935) and the Tokyo Mosque (est. 1938).

Image 1: Brochures and Maps for Muslim Visitors and Residents of Japan



Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

During the Second World War, Japanese are given the opportunity to better know the Islam, through establishment of different associations and research centres focusing on Islam and the Islamic World. In that period, as stated, over 100 books and journals on Islam were published in Japan. These

associations and research centres, however, were in no way controlled or run by the Muslims, nor was their purpose the propagation of Islam as such. The aim was to equip the military with a sufficient knowledge of Islam, as there were large Muslim communities in areas under the Japanese occupation in China and Southeast Asia. With the end of the Second World War in 1945, these associations and research centres rapidly disappeared, because Japan did not need them anymore.

Another increase in interest towards Islam in Japan took place after the “oil shock” in 1973. The Japanese mass media had given significant coverage to the wider Muslim World and to the Arab World in particular, having recognized the importance of some Muslim countries in sustaining the economic growth and maintaining of living standards in Japan.

The economic boom in the country in the 1980s saw an influx of immigrants to Japan, a large number from countries with a significant Muslim majority population. These immigrants and their descendants form the majority of Muslims in Japan society today.

1.3 A Brief Note on Legal and Political Context in Japan

Japan is a constitutional monarchy. While the Emperor retains symbolic power and significance, sovereignty lies with the Japanese people and the democratically elected government rules on their behalf. The legislative body is called the National Diet and is composed of two chambers: the lower House of Representatives with 465 seats and the upper House of Councillors with 242 seats.

Japan is a secular country, which grants complete freedom of religion and belief through its constitution. While Article 19 of the constitution recognizes freedom of thought and conscience, Article 20 guarantees the freedom of religion for citizens and residents of the country. Constitutional guarantees and legal mechanisms are of paramount importance, however, there are some examples where such formal guarantees largely remain on paper and do not protect individuals from discrimination in practice.

The Muslim respondents interviewed during the fieldwork in Japan, expressed praise for the degree of religious freedom they enjoy in this country. No respondents reported having an experience of discrimination and most described the Japanese legal and political context in very positive terms. There were some respondents, however, who suggested that while Japan offers freedom, the degree of comfort and conduciveness found in and provided by the legal and political framework remains subjective and relative. It depends heavily on what job an individual has, their language abilities, and overall socio-economic status. Therefore, they suggest, the responses of different Muslims to this question might be remarkably different.

One of the biggest deficiencies of the legal and political context appears to be the lack of integration programmes. In many Western countries, for example, newly arrived immigrants are provided with free language courses as well as orientation and counselling services. However, since Japan has a firm and resolute stance against permanent migration, it does not offer such programmes. For a foreign individual who has little or no knowledge of the system or the Japanese language, the legal and political context would hardly be perceived as accommodating and promoting.

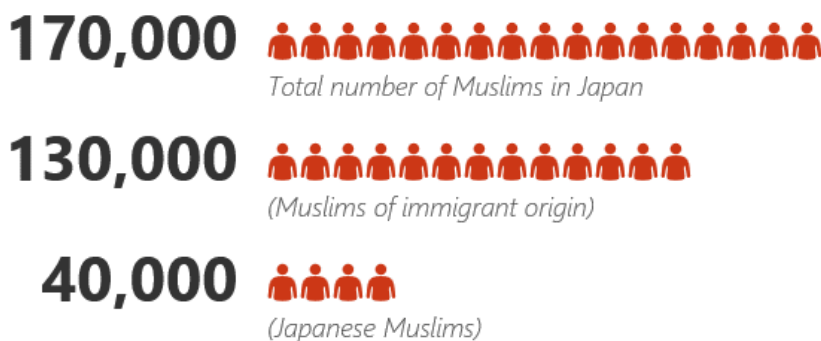
2 Demographic Profile

Muslims constitute a small religious minority in Japan. There are varying estimates concerning the numbers of Muslims in the country. Most estimates place the figure between 150,000 and 200,000 although in the interviews conducted during the fieldwork and in some secondary sources figures as low as a few tens of thousands and as high as 400,000 have been suggested.

2.1 Size and Composition of the Muslim Community

Professor Hirofumi Tanada from the Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University, one of the most well-known Japanese academics working on the Japanese Muslim communities and Islam, suggested that the total number of Muslims living in Japan was 170,000 in 2016 (Figure-1). On the other hand, according to the PEW Research Centre, the total number of Muslims in Japan in 2010 is estimated to be around 185,000, showing an increase from 118,000 in 1990. Interestingly, despite all indications that the number of Muslims in Japan will continue to grow in the future, the Pew Research Centre's projected figure for the year 2030 is 171,000 (PEW, 2011).

Figure 1: Size of the Muslim Community in Japan (2016)



Source: Hirofumi Tanada, Waseda University, Tokyo

Majority of Muslim in Japan are of Asian origin, although it is difficult to obtain precise figures on the constituent groups of such a small minority. The largest ethnic groups appear to be Indonesians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Malaysians, followed by smaller communities of Chinese Muslims (Uighurs or Uighur Turks), Iranians, Turks and so forth. While no official statistics about the ethnic breakdown of the Muslim immigrant communities in Japan is available, there is an estimation based

on Tanada's work (Table-1). It is possible that ratios presented in Table-1 have been changed today. However, all the interviews and contacts in the field indicate that not only is the Indonesian community still the largest, but the number of Asian Muslims has also grown in recent years due to an increasing share of Indonesian and Malaysian Muslims, among others, in the Japanese Technical Intern Training Program – designed to transfer Japanese skills to developing countries.

2.2 Native Japanese Muslims

In the demographic composition of the Muslim community, there is a clear majority of Muslims of immigrant origin in Japan. However, in contrast to other countries, the converts appear to have a far greater significance in the Japanese context. First of all, their share in the overall Muslim community is much greater when compared to contexts such as Western Europe, North America or Australia. According to Tanada,

while around 130,000 Muslims in Japan are of immigrant origin, about 40,000 are native. An earlier estimate by the same researcher puts the total number of Muslims to 105,565 in 2010, in which 94,376 were immigrant Muslims (including 2,632 irregular migrants) and 11,189 were Japanese Muslims (see Table-1). This indicates to a significant increase in the number of native Japanese Muslims. According to an interviewee, a popular Japanese TV channel Fuji TV, went even further in a recent report and claimed that there were around 100,000 immigrant Muslims and 50,000 Japanese Muslims, which means that one in every three Muslim is a Japanese convert (Interview with Usman).

Opposite to Japan, in other developed countries the number of ethnically native people converting to Islam is usually very small. In addition, their influence and visibility is very limited. In countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia, for instance, the proportion of converted Muslims to Muslims with immigrant origin is almost negligible.

Japanese Muslims live very much integrated with the general Muslim community. This is because they attend mosques with immigrant Muslims. In addition, a significant number of Japanese Muslims chose Islam after marrying a Muslim. As a result, there are a significant number of mixed families where one spouse is a Muslim of immigrant origin and the other is ethnic Japanese. This increases the interactions

Table 1: Muslims in Japan by Country of Origin (2010)

	Population	Percentage
Indonesia	19,169	21
Philippines	10,719	12
China	10,307	11
Pakistan	9,897	11
Bangladesh	8,985	10
Malaysia	5,052	6
Iran	4,754	5
Thailand	3,715	4
India	2,758	3
Turkey	2,483	3
Nigeria	1,378	1
Egypt	1,344	1
Russia	1,250	1
Afghanistan	1,137	1
Others	8,796	10
Total	91,744	

Source: Hirofumi Tanada, "Muslim Population in the World and Japan, 2011", *Journal of Human Sciences*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2013.

Image 2: Inside the Tokyo Mosque

Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

between Japanese Muslims and immigrants. One Pakistani respondent proudly that their mosque is very international and particularly on Saturdays “more than half of it is filled with Japanese sisters”.

The importance of Japanese Muslims also derives from their socio-economic status. They are usually highly educated individuals who choose to become Muslims after going through an extensive period of reading, research and arbitration. Significantly, they are Japanese citizens who were born and raised in the country and know Japanese culture very well. In interviews and workshop, which provided the opportunity of talking to many Japanese Muslims, authors witnessed how elegantly they were able to build their Muslim identity without any tension with their Japanese identity. As such, they appear to be in an ideal position from which to advance the cultural exchange between Muslims and Japanese society. The largest Japanese Muslim organisation - Japan Islam Association - suggested that they aimed to do just that.

It needs to be underlined here that in the interviews one consistent point raised by Muslim and non-Muslim respondents alike was that Japanese people have a peculiar perspective on religion. It was repeatedly mentioned that “if you start talking to them about your religion, if you try to convince them or convert them, you will lose them” (Interviews with Ahmed, Adnan, Usman, Hirohito). The Japanese do not feel comfortable speaking about religion in a very direct manner partly because religion is understood to be an extremely personal matter. Some respondents suggested that their own families did not know their conversion into Islam and “they had to tell it when they got married” (Interview with Heyet). They underlined that it was not out of fear or a willingness to hide it, but just because your own religion and faith is a very personal matter in Japan that is not usually openly discussed. This is important to note for anyone engaging the Japanese. Furthermore, it needs to be understood that it does not stem from Islamophobia or derive from any hostile feeling, but it is a part of the manner in which Japanese culture has evolved concerning the issue of faith and religion. For those involved in

dawah activities, *i.e.*, activities informing people about Islam and inviting them to convert to Islam, this issue is essential. Here, the importance of Japanese Muslims appears once more. They have all the necessary cultural and religious instruments: as Japanese individuals, they know the culture and its subtle nuances; and as Muslims, they know the Quran and Islam. Moreover, they can attest to the compatibility of Islam with the Japanese culture, with the shared ethical and moral values. Therefore, for informing the Japanese people about Islam and inviting them to the religion, it is essential to work with Japanese Muslims.

Japanese Muslims are crucial for the future of Islam and Muslim community of Japan. The majority of Muslims living in Japan do not hold Japanese citizenship and the community is not politically engaged. While the political context might be accommodating and relaxed at the moment, the Muslim community may require a higher degree of political visibility and representation in the future. In a traditional and immigration-wary country like Japan, Japanese Muslims' involvement in politics would potentially be much more effective and fruitful compared to the involvement of Muslim politicians of immigrant origin. In this manner, the Japanese Muslim community could constitute a very strong and efficient bridge between the whole Muslim community and the Japanese state and society.

Image 3: Japan Islam Association (Chairman and Members of the Executive Committee)



Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

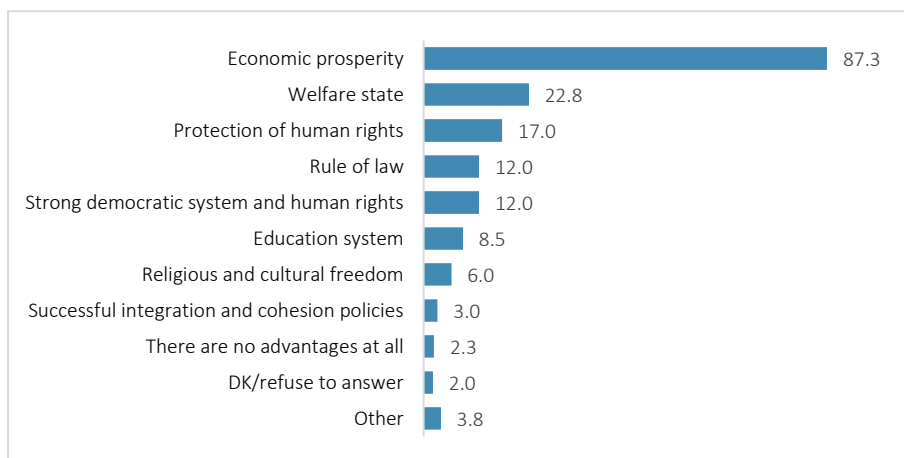
3 Views on Migration and Integration

Japan is not an immigration country. It is an island state with long periods of self-imposed isolation in its history. It remains one of the most homogenous societies among the developed countries. As such, the general attitude toward immigration in Japan is largely unfavourable. Both the government and the wider society oppose the idea of permanent immigration despite increasing need of the Japanese economy for foreign workers.

3.1 Advantages for Muslims

Interviewed Muslim of Japan tend to evaluate this country as positive for immigrants. “Not as a Muslim, but as a human being, a believe Japan is the best country to live in. The high standards of hygiene, the people, the system and the amount of comfort and safety, and many other things, when compared to other developed countries that I have visited, are better in Japan” suggested one interviewee (Interview with Ahmed). Respondents also praised the country for its religious freedom and lack of discrimination. Opening a mosque or an Islamic religious school is extremely easy in Japan. As long as the community is able to raise the funds, obtaining the permits is a very straightforward and trouble-free process. Some respondents even suggested that it was easier to perform these activities in Japan than in many Muslim countries such as Pakistan or Turkey. However, the top advantage of the life in Japan for Muslims appears to be economic prosperity (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Main Advantages of Living in Japan as a Muslim
(All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total respondents, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

In fact, 87.3% of the respondents mentioned the ability of Muslims to live in economic prosperity as the first and foremost strength of Japan. As a second advantage, the respondents suggested the Japanese welfare state (%22.8) and protection of human rights was mentioned as the third most frequent answer (%17). Successful integration and cohesion policies, religious and cultural freedom as well as educational system are seen as significantly less important advantages of Japan for the Muslim community.

In many developed countries, Muslim community is more settled, with a vast majority being comprised of permanent residents, naturalised citizens or 2nd/3rd generation Muslims. In case of Japan, however, due to the immigration policy and its historical background, almost half of Muslims are 1st generation immigrants, without permanent residency or citizenship prospects (Table-2). Therefore, it appears natural for Muslims temporarily living and working in Japan to consider economic prosperity as the most important factor.

Table 2: Status of Surveyed Muslims in Japan

	N	Share (%)
Temporary living and working in Japan	190	47.5
Autochthonous citizen (originating from same country for centuries)	83	20.8
Emigrant	41	10.3
Second-generation emigrant	23	5.8
Third or further generation emigrant	4	1.0
Other	49	12.3
DK/refuse to answer	10	2.5

Source: Survey of SESRIC with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

3.2 Challenges for Muslims in Japan

One significant issue of concern is whether Muslims in Japan face discrimination. In this respect, findings from in-depth interviews and the workshop discussion are in contrast with the survey results. While the interviewees unequivocally rejected the existence of discrimination against Muslims in Japan, the survey results show that a great majority of Muslim individuals felt that they have experienced discrimination because of their religion. In fact, over 75% of survey respondents mentioned that they faced discrimination in Japan due to their religious identity at least once in the past 12 months. While discrimination due to their ethnic origin and race is largely absent (only 6.3%), given sample of respondents indicate that discrimination based on language or accent is highest (at 82%) in Japanese society (Figure 3).

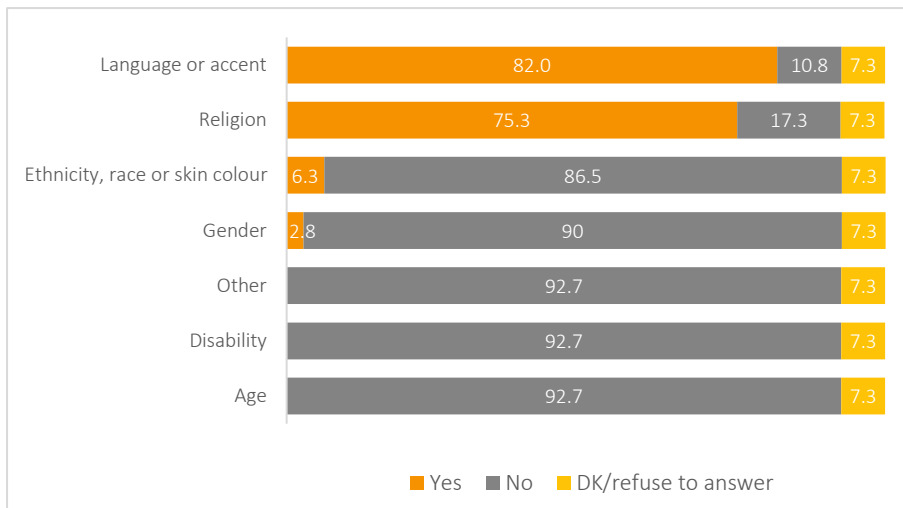
A significant number of the survey respondents seem to feel that they “were looked down” by some people, because of their religion. When asked to what extent they would agree with the statement

“some people look down on you because of your religious identity”, 6.5% of the respondents said that they totally agree and more than 44% of them that they tend to agree (Figure-4).

Why is there such a discrepancy between the in-depth interview and workshop inputs and the survey findings? According to one of our interviewees, Roberta, who is an anthropologist working extensively on immigrants in Japan, the reason for this discrepancy is the dominant attitude and perspective towards religion in Japan. Accordingly, Japan is so “indifferent” to religion and religious identity as a country, this can create some problems for Muslim community, which in turn could be construed as ‘discrimination’ by some Muslims. For instance, it can be especially difficult to accommodate religious requirements at the workplace because the idea of giving some workers differential treatment so that they can pray during working hours may well appear incomprehensible to Japanese minds. As was mentioned repeatedly by many respondents, Japan is very much a work-oriented society and the working conditions in most companies can be very demanding. Moreover, one of respondents, who works on immigration in Japan, claimed that Japanese men have little time to spend with their families due to the amount of time spent on or at work. This situation is even causing a growing trend in which Japanese women are marrying Muslim men, simply because they consider them more family-oriented (Interview with Roberta). This is also mentioned to be one of the trends that drive the number of conversion to Islam in recent years.

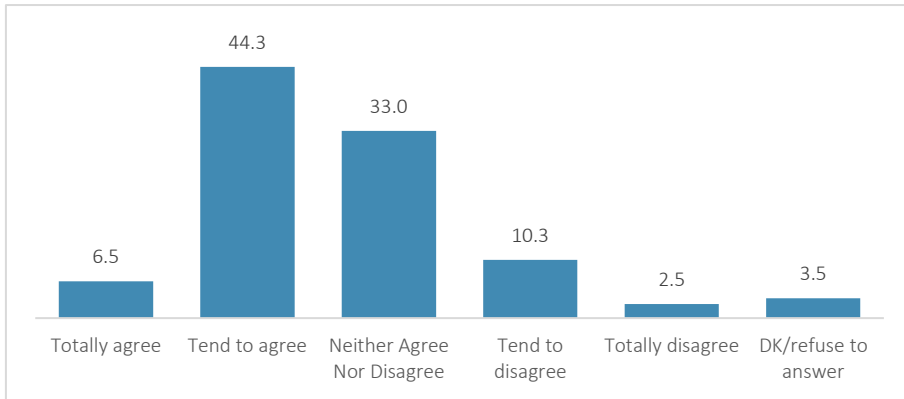
Figure 3: Experience of Discrimination in the Past Twelve Months

(All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

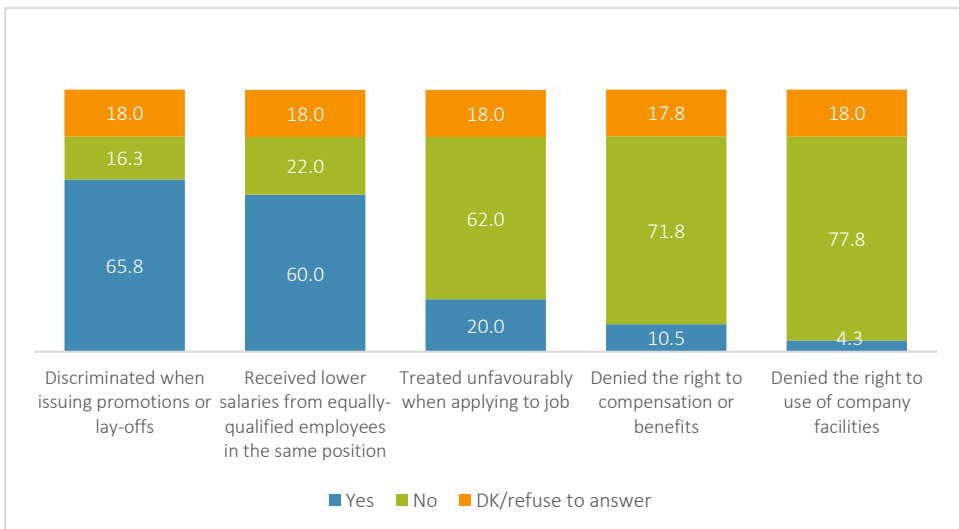
Figure 4: Agreement with the Statement: Some People Look Down on You Because of Your Religious Identity? (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Some respondents mentioned that although religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution and that discrimination on the basis of religion is largely absent in Japan, when religious duties and work duties conflict with one another, Japanese society usually expect a person to fulfil its work duties. Some examples given by the respondents included arguments that people would not be given the time to pray or Muslim women would be asked to remove their veils at the workplace. When asked whether a Muslim individual could take such actions to court against their employer, many respondents suggested that the court would likely favour the employer.

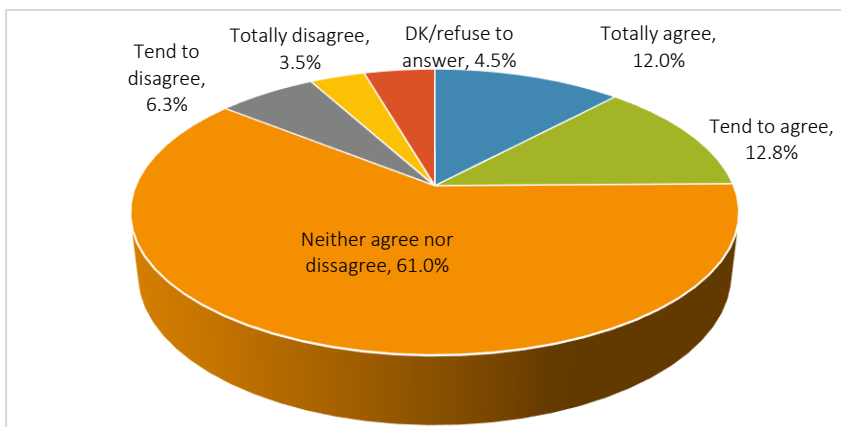
Figure 5: Experience of Workplace Discrimination (All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The survey respondents were further asked whether they have ever faced discrimination at their workplace because they were Muslim. Almost 66% of respondent reported that there is a discrimination when issuing promotions or lay-offs, while 60% of respondent believe that they are receiving lower salaries from equally qualified employees in the same position. Those who said they were treated unfavourably when applying to job was 20% (Figure-5). Combined with other responses, this perceived workplace discrimination seems to tell us more about the immigration regime and the role of immigrants in the Japanese economy as a more affordable and flexible labour force, rather than indicating a systematic discrimination against Muslims.

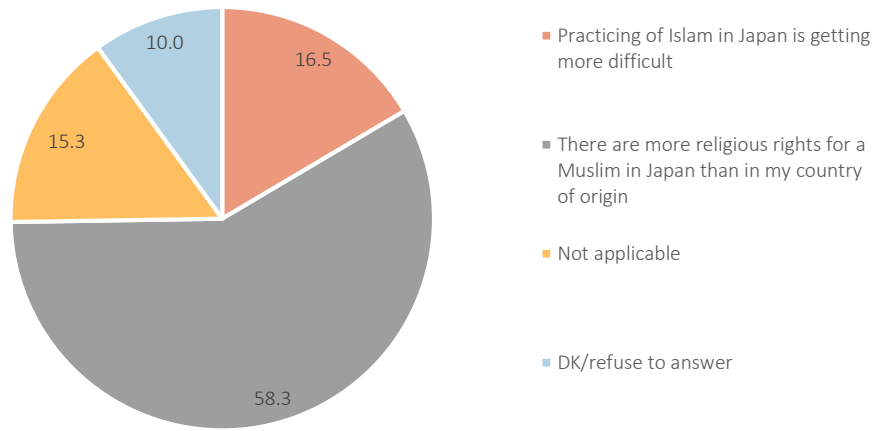
Figure 6: Agreement with the Statement: Members of Muslim Community are Accepted and Treated as Fully-Fledged Citizens in Japan
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

When asked whether Muslims are accepted and treated as fully-fledged members of the society with their own values and norms in Japan, a large majority of the survey respondents displayed an indecisive stance. As shown in the Figure-6, slightly over 60% of the respondents said they would neither agree nor disagree with that statement, and almost 25% of them either totally agree or tend to agree with the statement. Arguably, this finding shows that, although individual Muslim migrants occasionally feel discriminated against on some issues, they still do not feel a systematic and largescale discrimination against or exclusion of Muslims in Japan. In addition, when asked whether they thought that there were more religious rights for Muslims in Japan compared to their respective countries of origin, more than 58% of the respondents agreed. On the opposite side, 16.5% of respondent thinks that practicing of Islam in Japan is getting more difficult (Figure-7). Still, these results further supports the finding that there is not a perception of large-scale discrimination against Muslims in Japan.

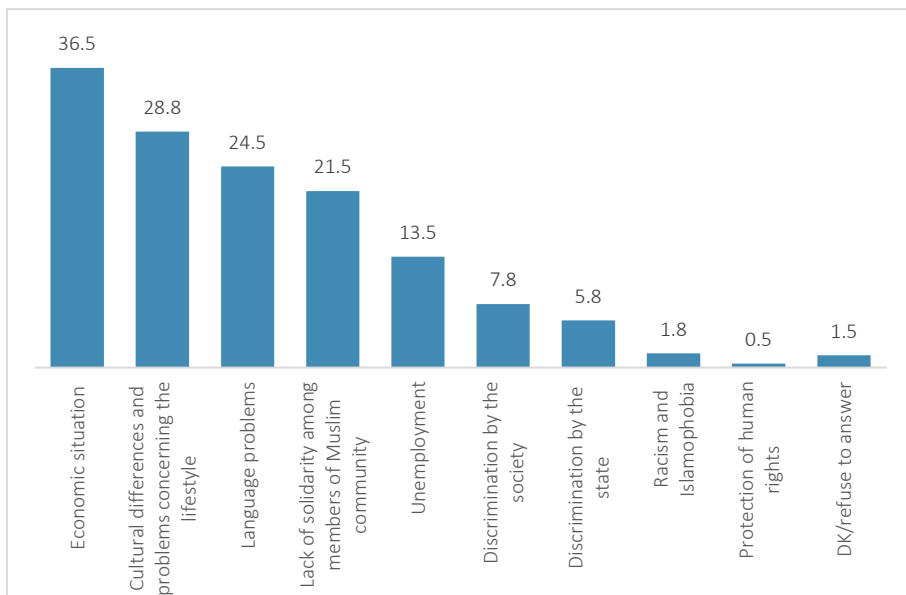
Figure 7: Agreement with the Statement: Practicing of Islam
 (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The survey respondents were also asked to provide a more general evaluation concerning their view on the ‘problems of Muslims’ in Japan. The main concerns of the Muslims in Japan appears to be economic situation (36.5%), and cultural difference and problems concerning the lifestyle (28.8%). Language problems are third in importance for the Japan Muslim community (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Problems of Muslims in Japan
 (All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

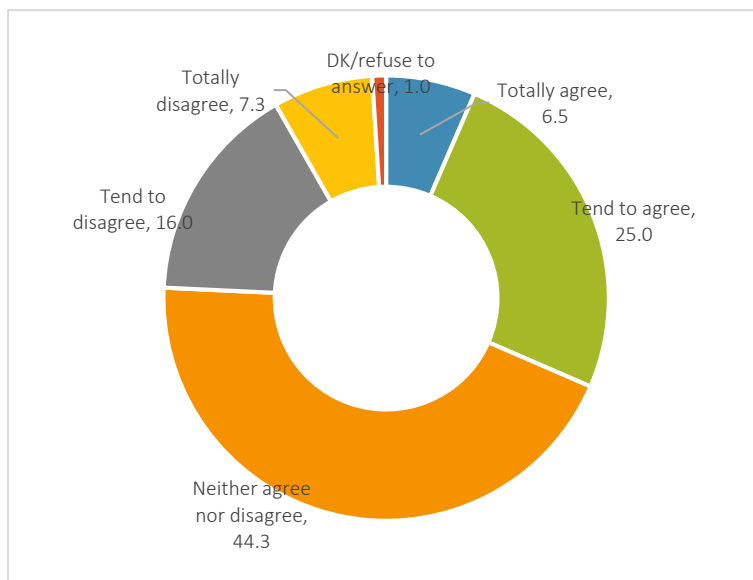
As may be expected, in the context where a large proportion of the Muslims are economic immigrants, economic concerns tend to dominate. Combining the answers on ‘economic situation’ (36.5%) and ‘unemployment’ (13.5%), shows that almost for the half of the Muslim community in Japan economic situation is of the most importance.

3.3 Integration of Muslims in Japan

As previously mentioned, Japan does not see itself as a permanent immigration country and does not look favourably towards the idea of permanent immigration. Japan tends to function based on short-term labour migration programmes under different names and therefore does not put much emphasis on integration policies or programmes. When looking at the perspectives of Muslims living in Japan, it is clear that different groups are performing better in terms of integration. While some groups are quite interactive with the larger society, learning the Japanese language and being well informed about cultural norms, other groups remain isolated and inward looking. Some respondents argued that the polarity in the attitudes and interactional behaviours has more to do with the human capital of the individual immigrant, including factors like education, skill-level, language proficiency and financial wealth, than with ethnic or national background.

Figure 9: Agreement with the Statement: Muslims Have Successfully Adapted to Customs and Way of Living in Japan

(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



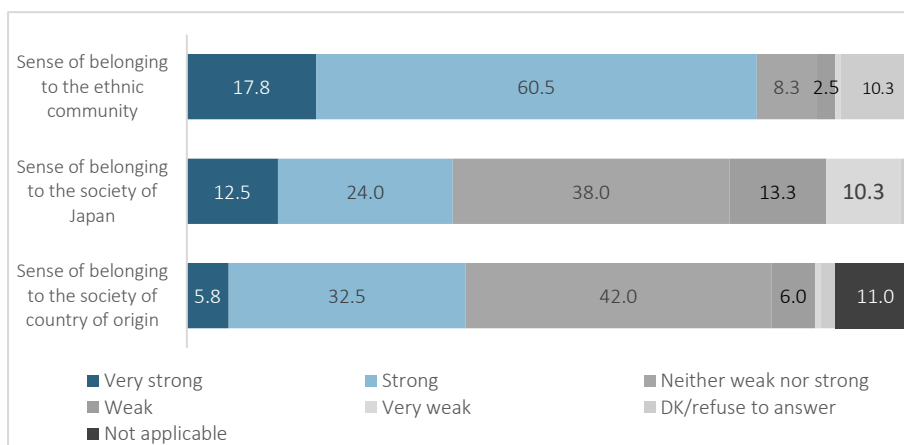
Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The survey included questions that attempted to uncover more information concerning the integration and adaptation levels of Muslims in Japan. A good place to begin here would be a selfassessment of Muslims concerning how well they think the Muslims in Japan have adapted to the life, norms, and culture in Japan. Here, it was found that almost one-third of survey respondents believe that Muslims have successfully adapted to the culture and way of life in Japan, while a smaller yet non-negligible number (23.3%) of individuals disagree (see Figure-9).

While formal integration into the job market or education system are very important indicators of integration of immigrants, in recent years more attention has been given to more subjective indicators such as sense of belonging of immigrants. In other words, an immigrant is seen to be well integrated if s/he has managed to muster a sense of belonging to the destination country, its society and culture. Therefore, the survey respondents were asked to indicate their sense of belonging to Japan and to their respective origin countries (i.e. if they have an origin country other than Japan). The results show a similar picture in both contexts, signalling that individuals feel belonging to both countries at almost similar levels, which could be seen as positive for integration (Figure-10). Of course, this finding in itself does not prove successful integration. However, it does show that there is no systematic obstacle in front of Muslim immigrants preventing them to develop a sense of belonging to Japan.

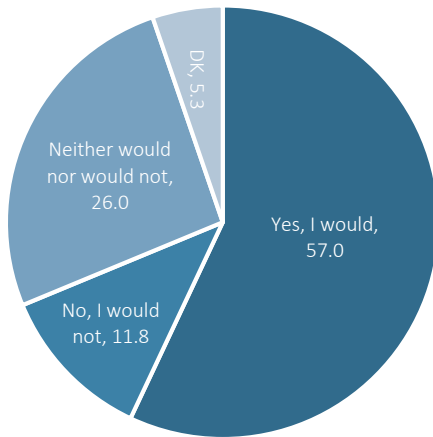
Figure-10 also indicate that for the Muslim community in Japan the strongest identity marker is the ethnic community. Above 78% of the respondents indicated either a ‘very strong’ or a ‘strong’ sense of belonging to their ethnic community, which points out to the importance of ethnic identity for the Muslims of Japan.

Figure 10: Sense of Belonging to the Origin Country, Ethnic Community and to the Japan (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



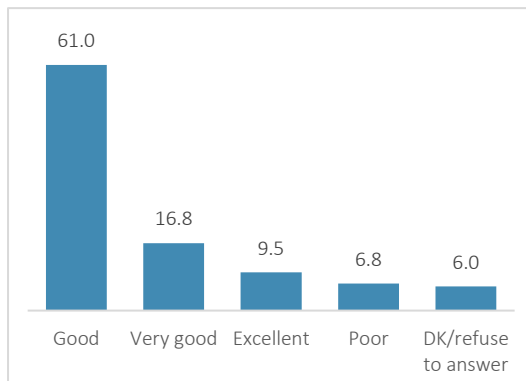
Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 11: Recommending Japan to Other Muslims as an Immigration Destination
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 12: Level of Engagement of Muslims in Public Life of Japan
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

In order to obtain an overall evaluation of Japan as a country to live for Muslims, the survey respondents were asked whether they would advise another Muslim to live in this country. Supporting finding of this report that overall Muslims are satisfied about living in Japan, a significant majority (57%) of respondents suggested that they would recommend other Muslims to come and live in this country. Only 12% of the respondents said that they would not recommend Japan to other Muslims, while slightly more than one quarter of the respondents suggested that they neither would, nor would not (Figure-11).

Another indication of integration of a diasporic community is their level of engagement with and participation in the public life of host country. The respondents were asked to provide an assessment on how much they believed the Muslim community is engaged in the public life in Japan. More specifically, the respondents were asked how much the

Muslims are participating in the public life in Japan as professionals, lawyers, local politicians, and university lecturers, to name a few examples. Overall, they appear to believe that the level of engagement of the Muslim community with the public life is positive. In total around 87% of the respondents suggested that the level of engagement and participation is good, very good or excellent, and only around 7% said that it was 'poor' (Figure 12). While this self-perception in itself does not prove that the level of

engagement and participation by the Muslims in public life in Japan is high, it does prove that Muslim individuals do not have a perception of exclusion. This perception is important because it shows Muslims do not harbour a sense of being marginalized or excluded from the various important public roles.

Image 4: The Otsuka Masjid



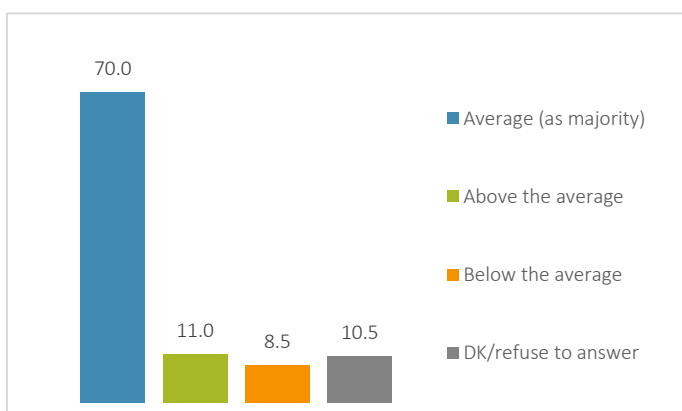
Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

4 Perceptions on Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic profile of the Muslim communities in Japan displays a great deal of diversity, even though it is a small minority community in terms of size. First, there is a significant portion of the Muslim community that is made up of well-educated professionals. Some respondents attributed this to healthy state of the Japanese economy, which requires a certain standard of education and skill levels from prospective migrants. Another reason is the growing number of foreign students, including those from Muslim countries that have been arriving in Japan as part of the country's efforts to open up and internationalise its higher education sector. Many of these students end up settling in Japan.

When asked about their own self-perception concerning their socio-economic standing, a majority of the survey respondents placed themselves on or above Japanese average. In fact, those who think that they are below the Japanese average in terms of socio-economic standing, are only 8.5% of the respondents. 11% of the Muslims believe that they are above the average socio-economic standard of Japan, and a vast 70% believes that they are doing well, placing themselves on average. Considering the fact that Japan is a well-off society in socio-economic terms, this could be interpreted as Muslims being contended about the socio-economic performance of the community (see Figure 13). Moreover, the Muslims overall appear to be optimistic about their socio-economic future. While almost 20% of the respondents expect to be better off socio-economically in the future, a large majority, around 60%, expect to remain on average. Those who predict that they would be worse than they are now make up only 4.3% of the respondents (Figure 14).

Figure 13: Self Perception of Socioeconomic Status in Japan
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)

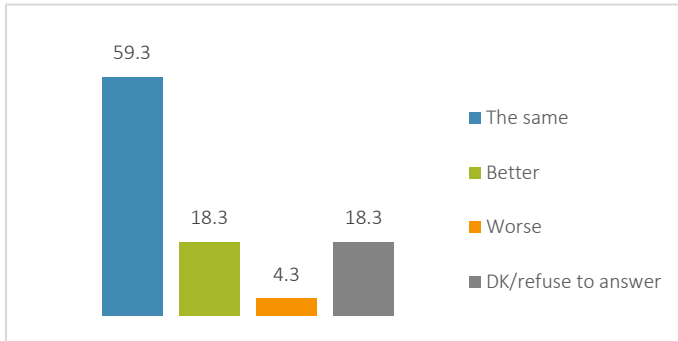


Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment are widespread among some Muslims of Japan. For instance, many Indonesian and Pakistani Muslims ended up establishing their own businesses in the automobile and automobile-parts export sector and maintain a very good standard of living. More recently, because of tensions between Japan and China, the number of Muslim workers employed through the Japanese Technical Intern Training Program has increased significantly.

As a result, the number of Muslim immigrants with lower education and skill levels is also increasing. This general portrait seems to be represented in the survey sample where almost half of the sample is composed of individuals who are either full-time employed or self-employed individuals. The other significant groups are those who work at casual jobs, students and housewives (Figure 15).

Figure 14: Expectation on Personal Financial Situation in the Next Twelve Months (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)

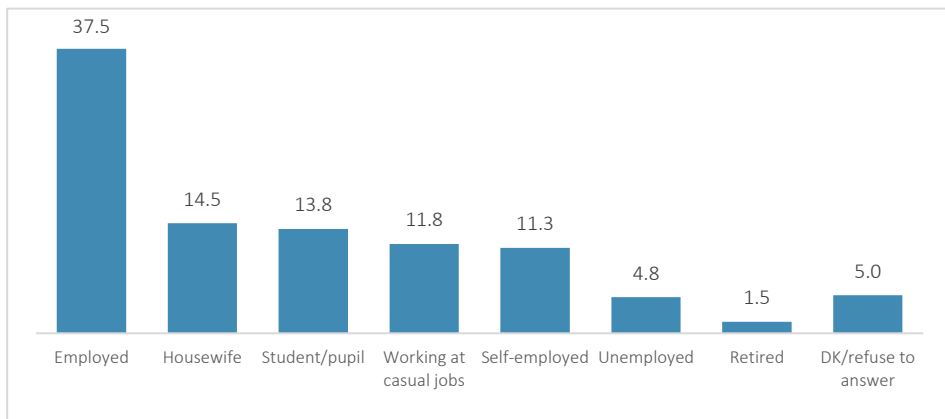


Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The educational attainment levels of Muslims in Japan appear to be quite high. This appears to be well reflected in the survey sample where more than half of all respondents are university graduates or higher. To be more specific, 49.5% of the respondents were university graduates with 3.5% holding masters or PhD. The second more populous group, with 38.5% of the respondents, is made

up of graduates of secondary schools. Those with primary school degrees or less account only for 4.8% of the sample (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Working Status of the Survey Respondents (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)

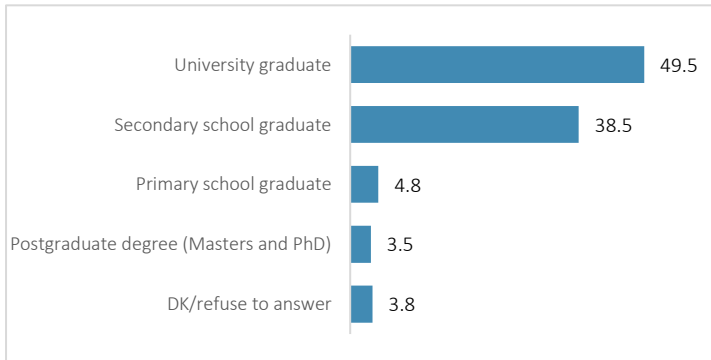


Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

It needs to be reiterated that this rather high degree of educational attainment of the Muslims is a direct result of Japan’s immigration policy and the fact that most Muslims are here as economic immigrants. Therefore, they need to have rather higher levels of educational and other qualifications. When asked about the Japanese education system and the educational opportunities in Japan for themselves and their children, a picture is more mixed. While the Muslims are overall satisfied with

the quality of Japanese schools and the education system, they are concerned about the education prospects of Muslim children. When asked about how satisfied they are with the quality of schools and the education system in Japan, more than half of the respondents suggest they are either completely or mostly satisfied, with only less than 9.3% of the respondents mentioning that they are mostly or completely unsatisfied (Figure 17).

Figure 16: Level of Educational Attainment
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The picture is quite different when Muslims are asked about whether they believed that Muslim children have equal opportunities for a quality education in Japan. Here, a significant majority of the respondents suggested that they do not believe that Muslim children have equal educational opportunities. More specifically, when asked whether they would agree that Muslim children have the same chances for a quality

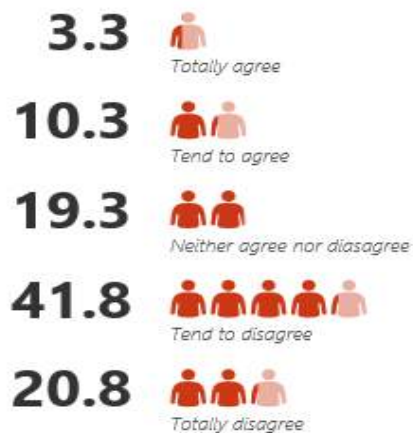
education as other children in Japan, 41.8% said they tend to disagree while another 20.8% said they would completely disagree with this statement (Figure 18). When those who disagreed with this statement were further asked why they believed that Muslim children have a disadvantage when it

Figure 17: Level of Satisfaction with the Quality of Schools and Education System in Japan (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

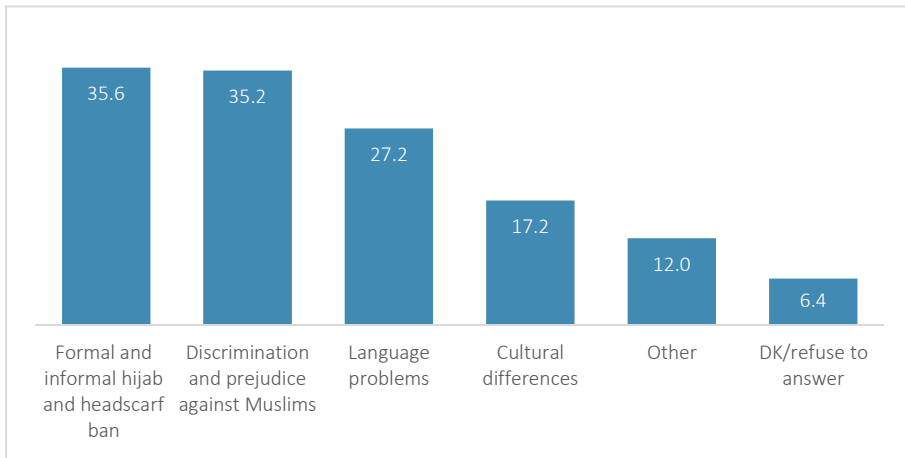
Figure 18: Agreement with the Statement: Muslim Children Have the Same Chances for a Quality Education as Other Children in Japan (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

comes to having equal access to a quality education in Japan, 35.6% pointed out to formal and informal hijab and headscarf ban. 35.2% of respondent raised the issue of discrimination and prejudice against Muslims, language problems remained at third place (27.2%), while 17.2% of the respondents suggested that Muslim children are at a disadvantage due to cultural differences (Figure 19). The

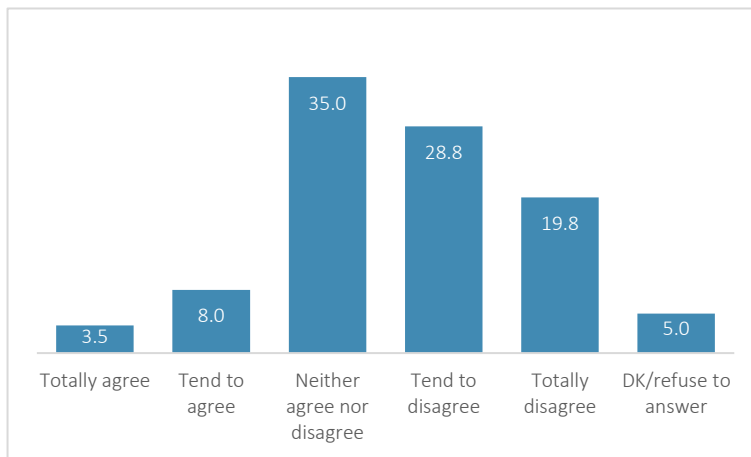
Figure 19: Why Muslim Children are not offered with Equal Chance for a Quality Education in Japan? (Those who disagreed in Figure 18 - N=250, multiple answers, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 20: Agreement with the Statement: Muslims Have Equal Access to Employment in Public Sector

(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Japanese economy is known to be one of the most internationally competitive and innovation-led economies in the world. It also has some national peculiarities and the strong presence of the state is

Image 5: Islamic Culture Exchange Centre in Japan



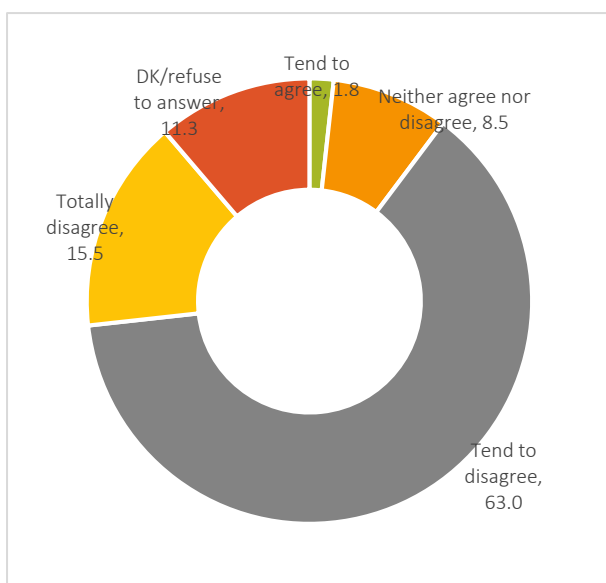
Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

one such characteristic. In fact, the public-private partnership model in the Japanese economy has been shown as one of the important reasons why the country has been able to score tremendous levels of economic development following the destruction of World War II and managed to become the one of the largest economies in the world. The so-called 'Tiger Economies' of Asia, which followed similar state-managed models of economic development, later replicated this model to a certain extent. As such, the respondents of this study were asked to evaluate the openness of public administration offices and of publicly owned/controlled enterprises for Muslims in Japan. The respondents, on the whole, appear to perceive Muslims' prospects of being employed by the state or publicly owned/controlled enterprises to be bleak. More specifically, almost half of the respondents suggested that they do not believe Muslim individuals have equal opportunities and access in seeking or achieving employment in the public sector. Only 11.5% of the respondents indicated that they believed such opportunities existed for Muslims (Figure 20).

5 Attitudes on Visibility and Representation of Muslims

The Muslim community is not among the large religious minorities in Japan. As such, they do not register as an issue in the eyes of most ordinary Japanese people. In other words, there is a widespread lack of awareness about the Muslim community in mainstream Japanese society. The survey respondents were asked whether they believe Muslims were ‘well-represented’ in the Japanese media, and according to their answers, they are not. In fact, almost 78.5% of the respondents suggested that Muslims were not well represented in the media, while only 1.8% said that Muslims were in fact well represented (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Agreement with the Statement: Muslim Community is Well-Represented in Japanese Media
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

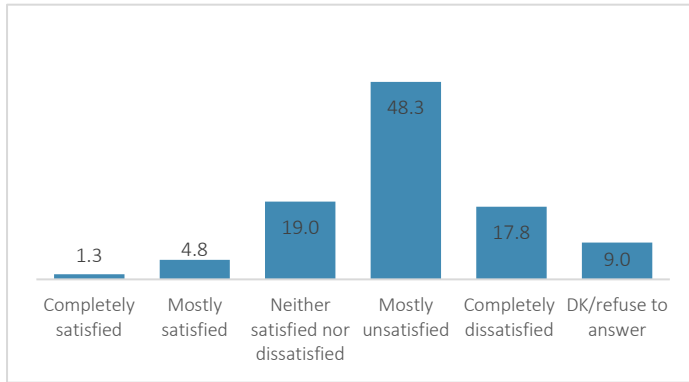
Lack of awareness about the Muslim community in Japanese society can be seen as a disadvantage since it leaves issues of Muslims unaddressed. On the other hand, lack of awareness about the Muslim minority may serve as an advantage, as well. For one thing, it protects them from any significant degree of discrimination or Islamophobia and shields them from unwanted public attention or scrutiny. In fact, majority of the Muslim respondents in the Tokyo fieldwork praised Japan for the degree of religious freedom it provides and the lack of any particular discrimination against Muslims.

Although the Japanese national media does not cover issues related to Islam or Muslims in an extensive manner, it appears that Muslims in Japan are concerned that the Japanese media usually use news

stories about Islam from Western news sources, which have been affected by the rising tide of Islamophobia. When asked about their evaluation of the contents of the media reporting on Muslims, a large majority of the respondents suggested that the news were not objective. To be more specific, while 17.8% of the respondents reported they were completely dissatisfied with the objectivity of reporting in the national media on Muslims, another 48.3% suggested that they were mostly

dissatisfied. Those who were satisfied with media content objectivity, on the other hand, constituted a mere 6% of the respondents (Figure 22).

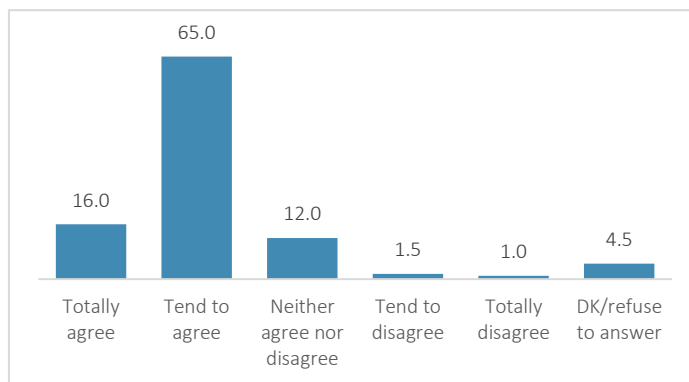
Figure 22: Satisfaction with Objectivity of Media Reporting on Muslims (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

It needs to be highlighted that despite some developed countries protect the rights and religious freedom of Muslims through the country's constitution and laws, their Muslim community is often confronted with an unwelcoming, if not hostile, public gaze. In Japan, most Muslims do not have to deal with unwanted looks from the public. However, according to respondents, there is an increasing influx of Western-originated news and discussions that tends to introduce Islam and Muslims in association with issues related to fundamentalism and terrorism. When asked whether they would agree that the public image of Muslims needs improvement, a vast 81% of the respondents agreed (Figure 23). This rising concern is voiced in several in-depth-interviews too, in which interlocutors mentioned the Salman Rushdie affair - where a Japanese translator of Rushdie was killed, or the effect of the extensive coverage of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Figure 23: Agreement with the Statement: There is a Need to Improve Public Image of Muslims in Japan (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

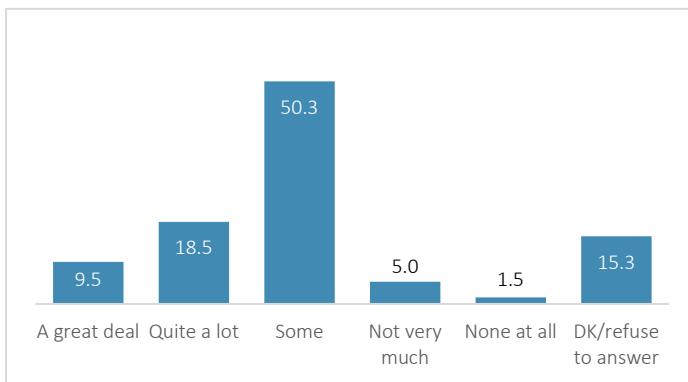
The interviewees suggested that the best way in which the Japanese people are told about the true face of Islam is by showing them the cultural depth and richness of Islamic civilization. Therefore, it has been repeatedly suggested that the most effective way in which negative representation of Islam can be counteracted against is by promoting the Islam's culture rather than its theological aspects. It has been reported that this is due to the Japanese perspective of religion. Directly informing the Japanese about the theological and dogmatic points of Islam is likely to put the majority of them in a sense of great unease. However, introducing them to Islamic architecture, *halal* cuisine,

art and the general way of life may lead to greater interest and enthusiasm. It was possible to observe this at first hand at the Tokyo mosque where groups of dozens of Japanese people have tours to listen to the Islamic culture and history. The interviewees from Japanese media also suggested that documentaries about the Islamic culture would be the most attractive and effective way of drawing the attention of Japanese people toward Islam.

In terms of political visibility and representation, the size of the Muslim community means that they are largely invisible in the political arena. In addition, a majority of Muslims do not have Japanese citizenship and most of them are not politically active. The survey findings provide quite interesting insights on the self-image of Muslims concerning their political visibility, representation, and participation.

Figure 24: Interest in Japanese Politics

(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

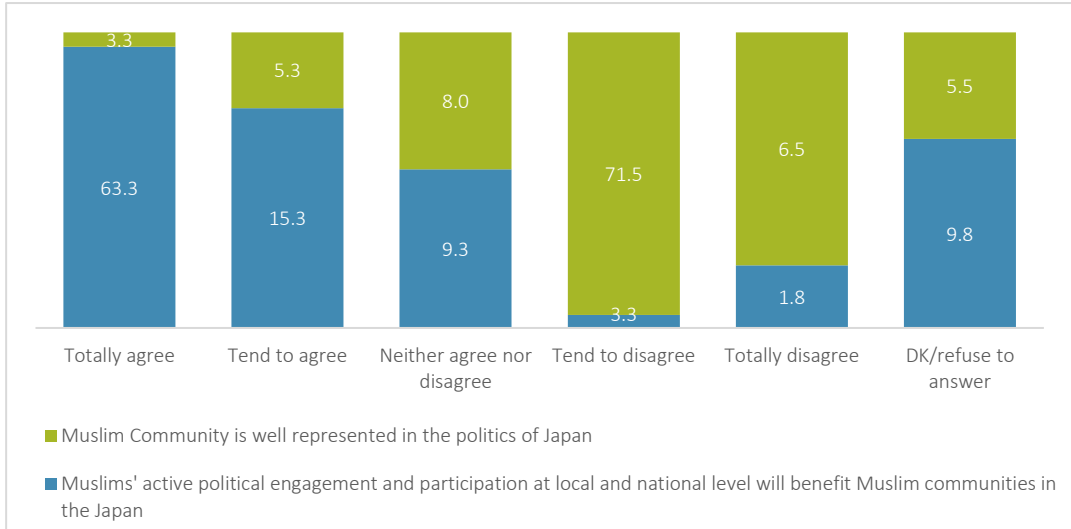
First of all, confirming the argument that Muslim community doesn't have so much interest in politics, the majority of survey respondents suggest that they only have some interest in politics in Japan. More specifically, while around 10% of the respondents displaying 'a great deal' and another 18.5% displaying 'quite a lot' of interest in politics, more than half suggest they only have 'some' interest (Figure 24).

Some in-depth interview respondents suggested that the main reason for political disengagement has been the lack of discrimination and a strong sense of religious freedom enjoyed by the Muslims. In other words, Muslims do not appear to feel the need to mobilize politically. However, there are also those who mention that as the size of the Muslim community grows, the social reaction towards and the political context regarding the Muslims could change, and therefore Muslims may need an effective political representation in the future.

As it can be expected from the described context above, the level of political representation of the Muslim community is not very high in Japan. The view of the Muslim community reflects this fact, as well. Coupled with a relatively low-level interest in politics, it was interesting to know whether the Muslims in Japan believed that improved participation in politics would be useful for the Muslim community. Therefore, both these questions, i.e. whether they believed Muslims are well represented in politics, and whether they believed it would be beneficial for the Muslim community if more Muslims participated in politics, were asked to the survey respondents. The results for the former question are not surprising, that a vast majority of the respondents thought that Muslims were not well represented in politics in Japan. In fact, 78% of the respondents thought in this way. The results for the latter question, on the other hand, could be seen to be more interesting, where a clear majority of the respondents believed that more involvement and greater participation by Muslims in politics would

indeed be beneficial for Muslims. Here, almost an equally great majority, around 79%, suggested this view (Figure-25).

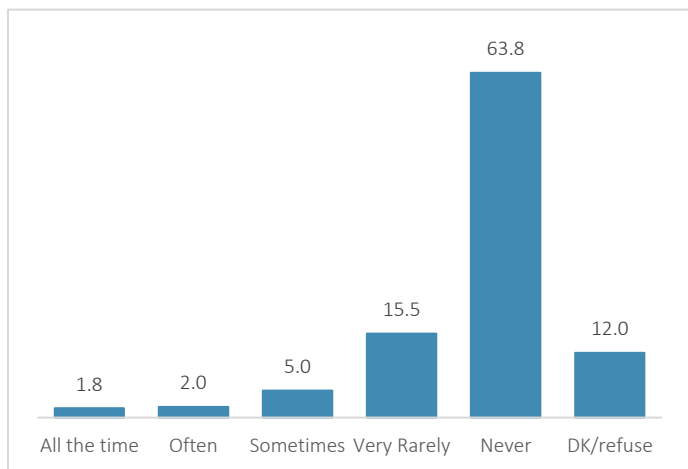
Figure 25: Representation and Engagement of Muslims in Politics
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

After looking at attitudes and views on political participation and representation, one might also be curious about the individual behaviour of Muslims related to political events. More specifically, how frequently do Muslims participate in political events or activities with a political outlook in Japan? Bearing in mind a great majority of Muslims are immigrants who do not have citizenship, the frequency of participation in political events by Muslims in Japan is quite limited, too. In fact, less than 9% of the respondents of the survey reported to have participated in political events ‘all the time’, ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’. The great majority of the respondents, 63.8%, said they never participate in any kind of political event, while the second largest group, with 15.5%, suggested they participate ‘very rarely’ (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Frequency of Attending to Political Events with Members of Muslim Community
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)

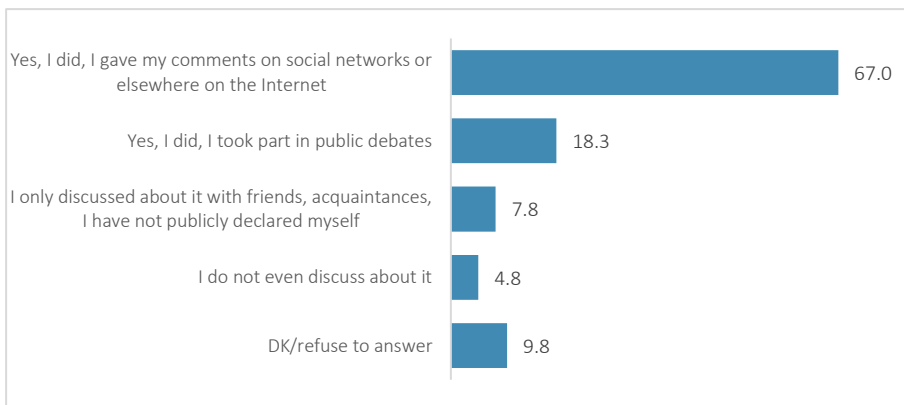


Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Attending to political events is only one form of individual political engagement. Apparently, the

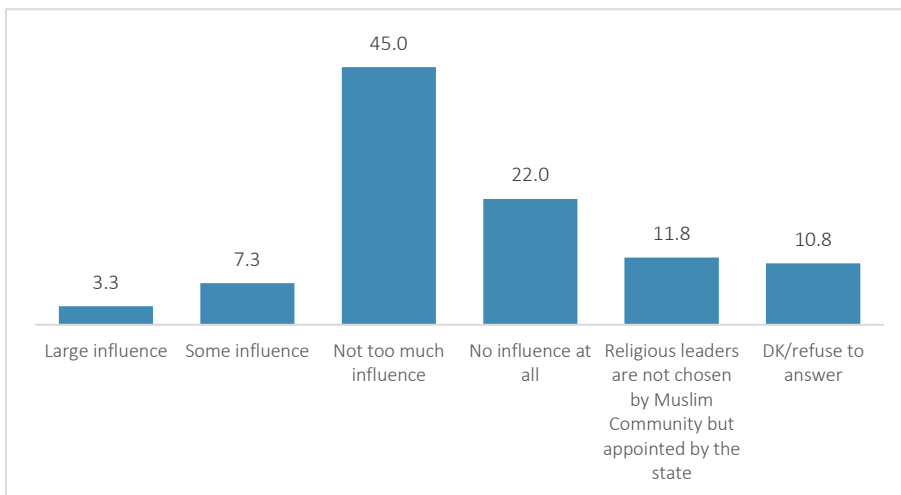
Muslim community in Japan is not very active on this account. However, that does not mean that they do not show any participation in political debates related to the needs of Muslim community. In fact, when asked about whether they were ever involved in any public political debate that concerned the Muslim community in Japan, most of the respondents suggested that they have. It appears that the most popular and convenient channel of contributing in public debates is the social media. 67% of the respondents reported to have left comments on social networks or other internet-based platforms on political matters and public debates that concerned Muslims. Another 18.3% suggest that they participated in public debates, not merely online, but in various platforms in person (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Have you ever done something that could affect any of the Government Decisions Related to the Needs of Muslim Community?
(All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 28: Influence of Muslim Religious Leaders in Political Matters
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)

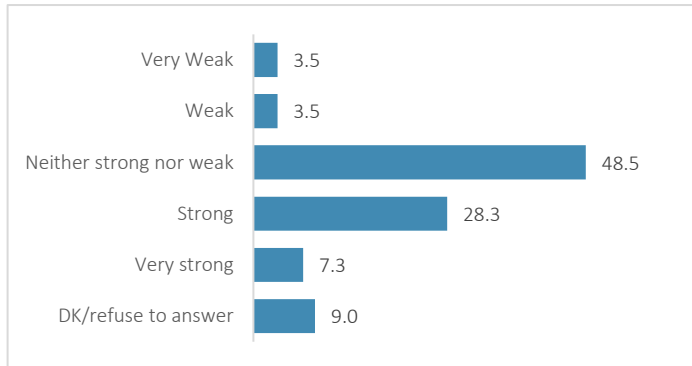


Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

One persistent issue with regards to the political visibility and representation of diasporic Muslim communities in various contexts is the issue of leadership. In many countries, for example in United Kingdom and Germany, the Muslim communities and minorities voice their concern about the efficiency of their leaders, both at local and the national levels. In Japan, the survey respondents were asked to evaluate the efficiency of the local Muslim religious leaders. Here, the perception of religious leaders is rather weak. Accordingly, around 45% of the respondents suggest that religious leaders do not have much influence on the political matters, while another 22% say they believed religious leaders have no influence at all. Only slightly more than 10% of the respondent think that Muslim religious leaders are influential (Figure 28). Some 12% of the respondents think that Muslim religious leaders even do not represent them, with the argument that they were not chosen by Muslim community of Japan, but appointed by state.

The Muslim community does appear on the whole to trust their political leaders in Japan, although not very strongly. To be more specific, when asked to indicate their level of trust to Muslim political leaders, more than 35% of the respondents described their level of trust to be either 'strong' or 'very strong'. On the other side of the spectrum, those who indicated 'weak' or 'very weak' levels of trust to Muslim political leaders are in a much smaller minority, making up of only 7% of the respondents (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Level of Trust to Muslim Political Leaders in Japan
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Image 6: Tokyo Mosque



Source: Photo from the personal collection of author.

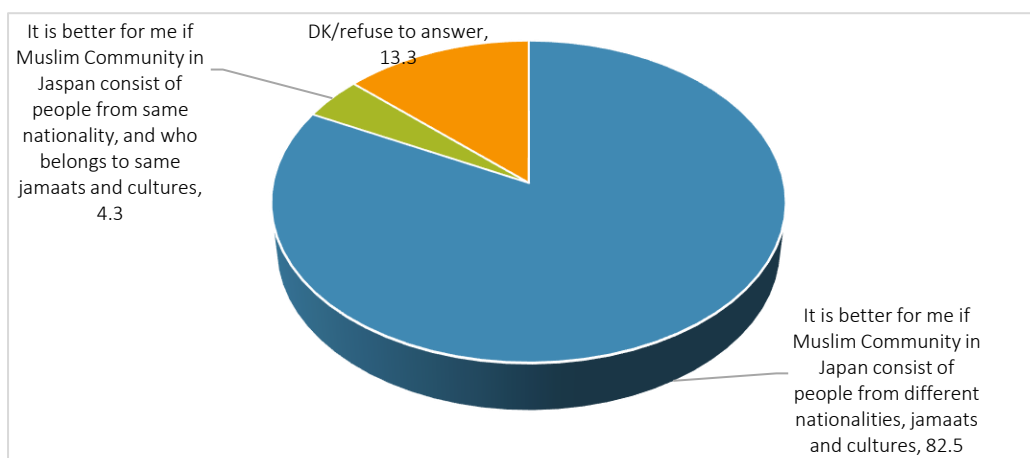
6 Confidence in Relations among Muslim Communities

Although there is no obvious friction or hostility among different Muslim ethnic groups, there does not appear to be much interaction and cooperation either. Overall, they appear to get along with each other and the rest of the society well but they do not appear to have much of an incentive to come together and display solidarity as a single community.

The attendance in most mosques in Tokyo depends on the neighbourhood of the mosque, more than the ethnic community who established or are currently managing it. It is, however, also the case that different groups have strong preferences for living with members of their own ethnic group in same neighbourhoods. Consequently, there is usually a dominant ethnic group in most mosques. Still, Muslims from different ethnic groups attend almost all mosques. In many mosques, in addition to Arabic, the *khutbahs* are given in Japanese and English, as well as in the languages such as Urdu and Turkish. Same attitude was evident in the survey findings, where a vast majority of the respondents (82.5%) declared that it would be better if Muslim community in Japan consisted of people from different nationalities, jamaats and cultures (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Stance on Diversity of Muslim Community

(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

There have been occasions where the Muslim community of Japan attempted to act together. It would suffice here to give two examples. The first is an instance of, what may be called, ‘positive interaction’ in which various Muslim organisations responded together in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. Reportedly, they were among the first groups that rushed to the disaster struck regions and offered humanitarian help and relief. It was suggested that the incident and the positive response of the Muslim communities positively contributed in changing many people’s perception of Islam and Muslims in Japan. An anecdote about how the tsunami changed the Muslim image in Japan by one of the respondents is worth quoting here at length:

One year before the tsunami, we asked a Japanese newspaper to publish a small advertisement for our conference introduction. They asked for 8,000 USD for a small size, which is expensive. Therefore, we tried to find funding and we found it. The next day, the newspaper refused to publish this ad saying it is related to religion.

After the tsunami, what happened is a few Japanese professors went to the area to do their own research on the tsunami. Local people told them that the first group that came were Muslims. It was not only us; many different Masjids also went there. Then, one professor said that what Muslims have done was very important, it should not stop by saying “thank you very much.” It deserves more than that. He wrote a textbook for social sciences for Junior high school grade 2, in which he mentioned our activities for two pages.

Before the tsunami, they asked us to pay 8000 USD for a small advert and they even did not publish that. After the tsunami, without paying any money they published two pages. Now it is in an official school textbook. It continued in the next textbooks as well. Now we have maybe 10-15 pages mentioning us, the Muslim contributions in this country. Therefore, the tsunami changed many things. (Interview with Usman)

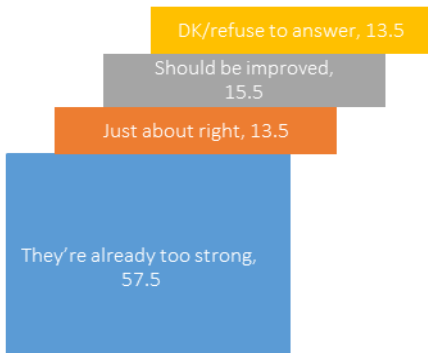
The second example is from the Danish cartoon affair when a humiliating cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was drawn and published. At the time, some Muslim organizations called upon the Japanese Muslim community to come together and condemn the act by protesting at the Danish Embassy. Japanese Muslims organizations, however, argued that a demonstration outside the Danish Embassy would be a counter-productive for Japanese Muslims. One respondent from such an organisation explains their reasoning in the following way:

About 15 years ago, there was the publication of a cartoon that reflected anti-Islam sentiments in Denmark. Then, we were invited to a demonstration at the Danish Embassy. However, we thought that this would not be beneficial for the Muslims in this country. We are Muslim but we are also Japanese. We know the Japanese way of thinking; we can understand it very well. Instead, we thought it would be much more useful to organise symposiums where we can inform people about Islam (Interview with the *Heyet*).

This example illustrates the existence of diversity within the Muslim community. Despite there being agreement on certain issues, such as the unacceptable nature of the Danish cartoon, there can be disagreements on how to respond and act. While some respondents mentioned this occasion as lack

of communication and solidarity, it could also be seen as the strength and richness of the community that different organisations have chosen to respond differently. In this regard, the survey respondents were asked about their evaluation of the level of cooperation between different Muslim communities. 57.5% said that the level of cooperation among different Muslim communities is already too strong. 13.5% of the respondents, on the other hand, were contended that the level of cooperation was just about right; and only 15.5% of the respondents suggested that the level of cooperation should be improved (Figure 31).

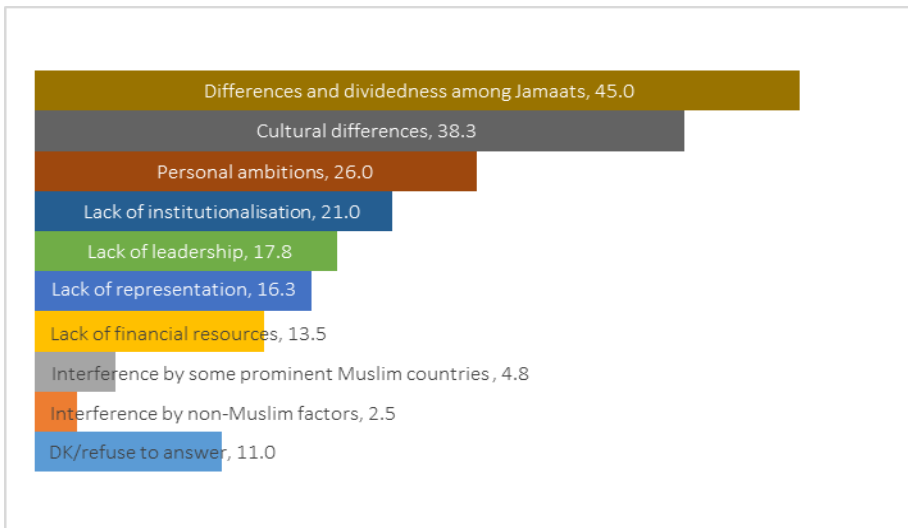
Figure 31: Level of Cooperation between Different Jamaats of Muslim Community
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The survey respondents were asked further about the obstacles that stand in the way of solidarity among different Muslim communities. More specifically, they were asked to list the main factors that work against greater cooperation and solidarity of the Muslims in Japan. The number one factor that was suggested by 45% of the respondents was the differences and dividedness among Jamaats. The second most frequently listed factor was related to the cultural differences (38.3%), which was followed by the personal ambitions that was stated by 26% of the respondents (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Factors that Work Against the Greater Cooperation and Solidarity of the Muslims in Japan
(All respondents - N=400, multiple answers, share of total, %)



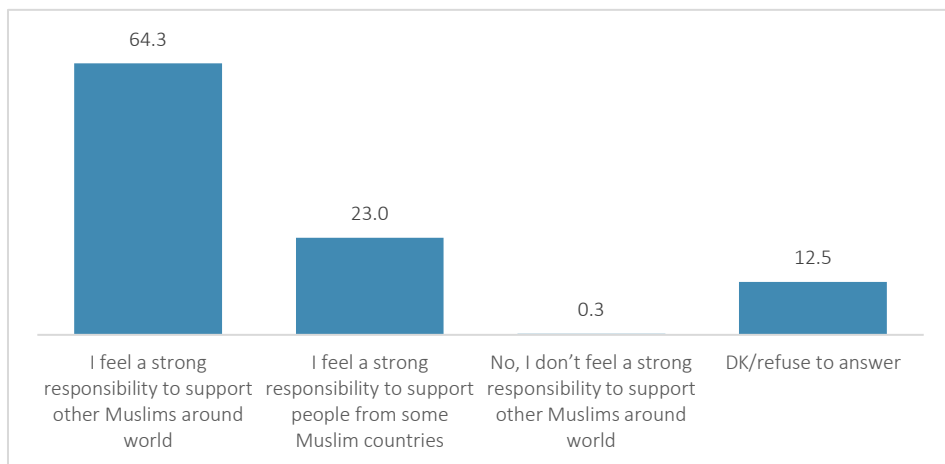
Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

How about relations of Muslim community in Japan with other Muslim communities living elsewhere in the world? With its somewhat far away geographical location, Muslims in Japan don't have very strong and frequent contacts with other Muslim communities and minorities around the globe. Most Muslim individuals keep relations with their respective countries of origin strong, but other than that relations do not seem to extend any wider. The respondents of the survey were asked whether they felt a sense of responsibility to support Muslims around the globe. A large majority of the respondents suggested that they do feel a strong responsibility to support Muslims who are in need. While more than 64% suggested that this sense of responsibility towards supporting Muslims was not restricted with any consideration of geographical borders or political sentiments, a sizable 23% of the respondents suggested that their sense of responsibility to support Muslims is selective towards people from certain countries. What is striking is the fact that only one respondent said that he does not feel a strong responsibility to support Muslims around the world (Figure 33). This is a quite positive picture showing the potential of the small yet significant Muslim community in Japan to be engaged.

Another interesting finding of the survey was that Muslims in Japan do not appear to have much confidence in the leaders of Muslim countries. In fact, more than 65% of the respondents reported that they 'mostly don't have confidence' or 'have no confidence at all' in the leaders of Muslim countries around the world. At the other end, 13.5% of the respondents either indicated 'full confidence' or stated that they 'mostly have confidence' in Muslim country leaders (Figure 34).

One last note is due about the level of recognition of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation amongst the Muslims in Japan. When asked whether they have heard about the OIC, a majority of the survey respondents replied negatively. To be more specific, almost 55% of the respondents said they have never heard of the OIC, while the proportion of those who suggested that they know about the organization was slightly more than 35%. When those 35% of the respondents were further asked whether they thought the OIC needed to become more active and to play a greater role in representing

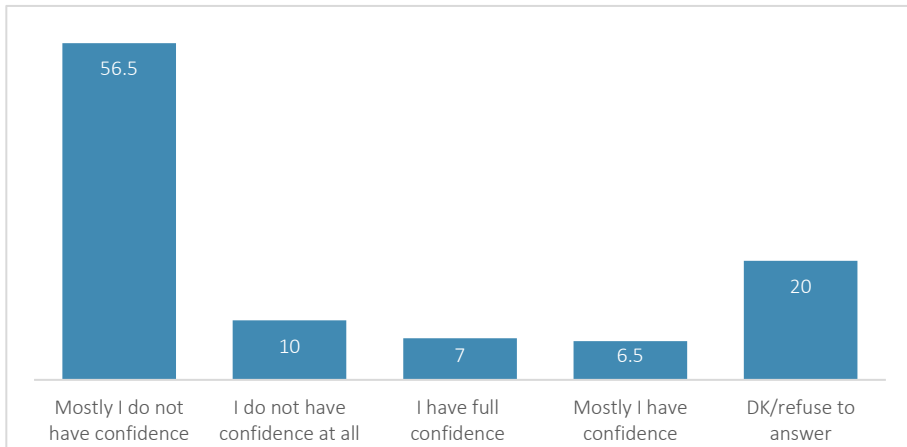
Figure 33: Sense of Responsibility to Support Muslim Worldwide
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

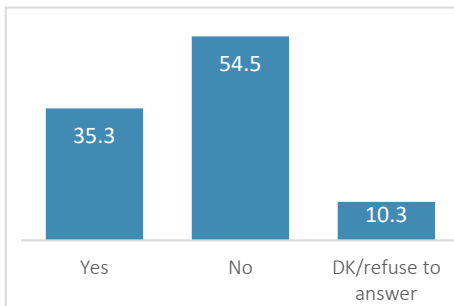
globally the rights of Muslims and promote cooperation and security among them, almost 60% responded positively (Figure 35).

Figure 34: Confidence in Leaders of Muslim Countries
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



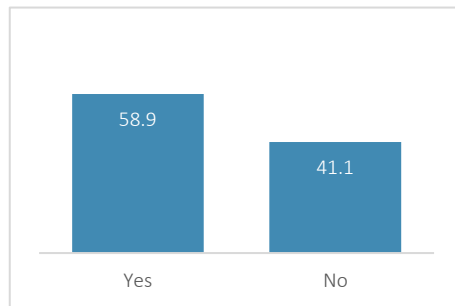
Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 35: Did you hear about the Organization of Islamic Cooperation?
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Figure 36: OIC Need to Play a Greater Role in Representing Globally the Rights of Muslims and Promote Cooperation and Security among Them
(Those who heard about OIC - N=141, share of total, %)



7 Future Projections for the Muslims in JAPAN

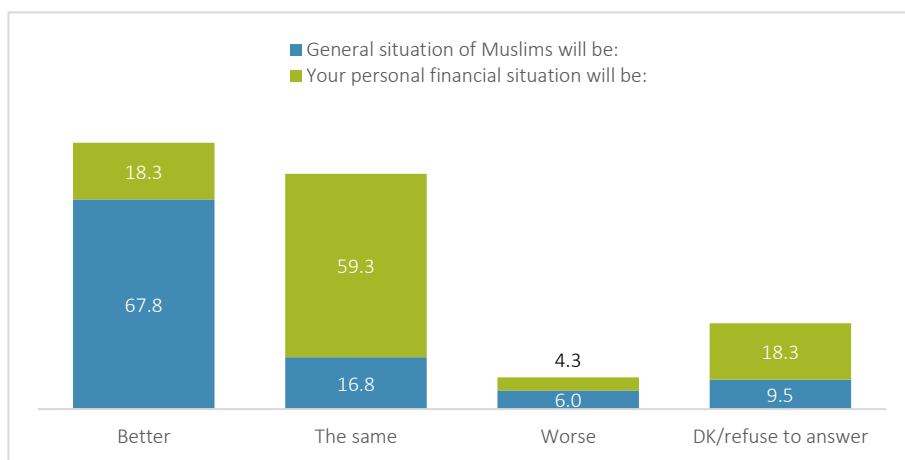
Muslim communities in Japan tend to be positive and optimistic about the future in this country. Many respondents believe that Japan is already a good context for Islam and Muslims because Japanese culture and ethics are conducive for Muslims. As the number of Muslims in the country grows, they expect, so will the opportunities for and awareness about Muslims. For instance, many cite the growing awareness among the Japanese concerning the *halal* food issue and the efforts of the Japanese government as well as many municipalities and private sector actors in creating a more “Muslim-friendly” Japan. The respondents also expect religious freedom to continue in the country and issues such as Islamic education to continue to improve.

7.1 Socioeconomic Prospects

The respondents of the survey in Japan expect their lives to be better in the next twelve months. When asked about their projections for the future of themselves and that of the Muslim community in Japan, a large majority of 67.8% of the respondents reported to expect a brighter future. While another 16.8% of the respondents expect a stable future, where their lives would be the same as they are now, those with a pessimistic outlook constitute only 6% of the respondents (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Expectations for the Next Twelve Months

(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

The survey also asked the respondents about their expectations from future concerning their financial situation. Here, although the general outlook tends to be optimistic, a majority of the respondents expect a stable future, with around 60% predicting their financial situation to remain the same in the coming twelve months. Those who expect to have better financial situation make up of more than 18% of the respondents, while 4.3% are worried that their financial situation will become worse in the upcoming year (Figure 37).

Some Muslim respondents suggested that the Muslim community in Japan would be highly influential in shaping the future for both Japanese Muslims and Islam in the country. They suggest that if the Muslim community could seize the opportunity concerning the lack of existing knowledge and prejudices about Islam, and turn this into an advantage by informing the public about Islam and Muslims in positive way, then the future will be a much better one.

Non-Muslim interviewees drew a more cautious picture. They emphasized the Japanese attitudes towards immigration and foreigners and suggested that the lack of any unfavourable reaction towards the Muslims so far is largely the result of their symbolic number. They voiced concern that if the number of Muslims grew significantly, hostile responses from wider Japanese society could be expected. The emphasis, again, was on the fact that this would be an anti-immigrant reaction and not an anti-Muslim one. It would certainly be undesirable for the Muslim community in Japan either way. Roberta, for instance, draws attention to the enduring Japanese stance towards immigration and integration in the following way:

“The Japanese people like people to behave in a way that is predictable. They can predict each other in school, on the bus. That is why they act in the way they do, they learn the rules and they abide by them. However, the foreign people are not predictable. They do all sorts of things on the street and that make Japanese people nervous I think. On the other hand, it could make people annoyed if, say, you do not know how to deal with your garbage. You have to be very careful about how to separate your garbage. But it is really hard for the foreigners if they don’t have the instructions in their own language. Those people would be not welcome because they cause other people problem. Causing other people problems is like the cardinal sin in this country.

Some people say before WWII, Japan has its own colonial history where they took over Taiwan, Manchuria etc. At that time, those people and the citizens of those countries were considered kind of Japanese citizens and they had rights. In that period, Japan had a very expansionist policy. Japanese may not have been necessarily kind to these people yet they did include them in the society somehow. That had ended after the WWII when they lost the war. Some people say, “Well, we learned a lesson. That taught us a lesson. No more trying to include others”. It was kind of “let’s deal with our problems ourselves, including our population programmes”.

There is the need for more active efforts on the part of the Muslim community, towards better integration into Japanese society. Some respondents suggested that for the future to be a positive one for Muslims there is a need for them to be more open and interactive with wider Japanese society.

7.2 Demographic Prospects

Japan is facing a rapidly ageing and declining population. With the current low fertility rate (1.4 births per woman) and high life expectancy (84 years), there is no possibility for Japan to keep its workingage population at the same size. In recent years, the Japanese government has tried to increase the share of women in the workforce to counteract problem. The previously inactive female population has been increasingly encouraged to take part in paid employment to support the retired population. However, this policy has created large gaps in care for children and the elderly. As one interviewee describes:

Japan is faced with rapidly and severely declining population. They will not have enough young people to sustain the system and take care of the elderly population. They will have to bring in people to help them. Even now, there are shortages of labour in agriculture, nursing care etc. Japan is trying to get more and more women into the labour market because of this dwindling labour force of Japan. However, you cannot send women out to work if you do not have anyone to take care of stuff in the house. For that reason, Japan is increasingly realising that they have to bring in migrant labour not only for skilled jobs, but also for less qualified jobs. However, they are reluctant to name it as immigration. Until now, Japan brought unskilled people under the category of *KenShuSe* - calling them as technical interns and trainees (Interview with Roberta).

In many developed countries, immigration has provided at least a partial answer to similar demographic problem. However, Japan's strict stance on immigration has continued to this day. The current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has officially declared that his administration will never adopt an "immigration policy" to respond to the acute labour shortages.

While the stance against long-term immigration has been made clear, Japan has adopted several "technical traineeship" programmes that attracted hundreds of thousands of people to the country for periods of 2 or 3 years (Roberts, 2018). For that reason, Japan has often been criticised for using these schemes as covers for short-term labour. Moreover, since the status of the individuals in these programmes is not "workers" but "trainees," labour laws generally do not protect them (Roberts, 2018).

There have been several implications of the above-mentioned issues towards the Muslim community in Japan. First, South Asian Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia have been among the most popular source countries for Japanese traineeship programmes. While some Muslim individuals complete their programme and return to their respective countries, many found ways to remain in Japan by marrying Japanese citizens or acquiring various other legal statuses (Roberts, 2018).

Moreover, in conjunction with the labour shortages, an increasing number of care-workers, including nurses from Muslim countries have been coming to Japan via similar technical cooperation schemes. It has also been pointed out that in recent years the government has been revising these programmes by improving the working conditions and social security of those involved, covertly recognising that these programmes are functioning as short-term labour migration schemes.

Finally, regardless of the name given to these types of programmes, it seems increasingly evident that in the long term they will not be sufficiently sustainable if Japan wants to maintain its current economic

and social structure. It becomes more and more apparent that, sooner or later, the Japanese government will need to find more permanent ways of dealing with the demographic transition and the country's ageing and declining population. While technological advancements and automation systems might offer part of the solution, a more permanent and realistic solution will inevitably be linked to a more realistic immigration policy (Roberts, 2018). As a result, it can be argued with almost absolute certainty that the Muslim community in Japan will grow significantly in the future.

7.3 Prospects of Halal Food and “Muslim Friendly” Businesses in Japan

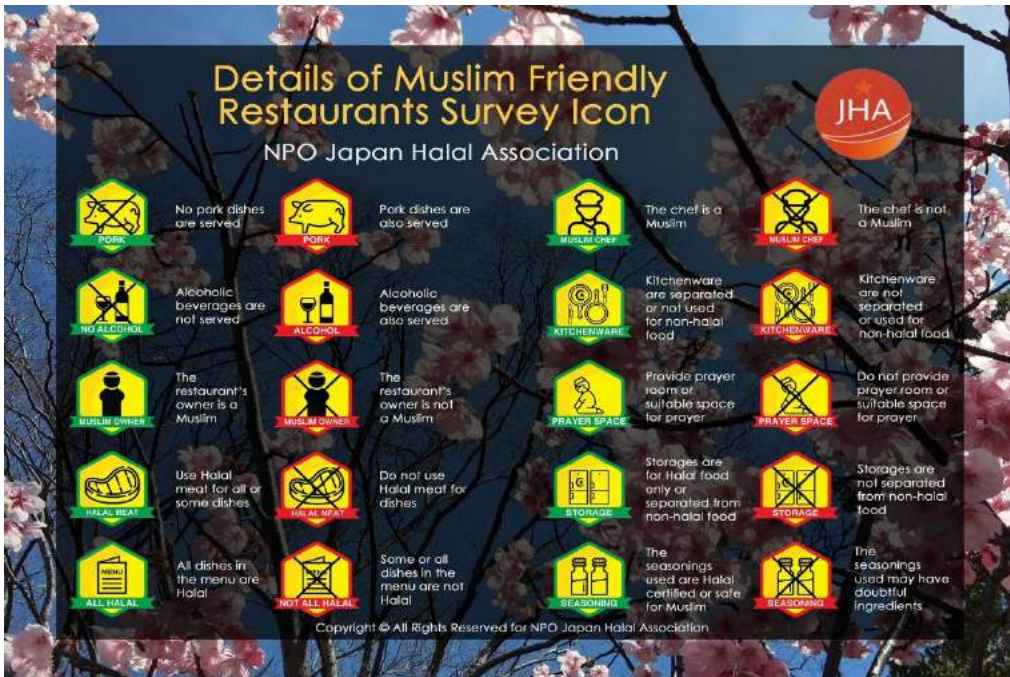
One of the most significant issues for the Muslim community in Japan has been the local diet and difficulty of finding *halal* food. Today, however, there seems to be a significant degree of improvement on this issue. Not only is there an increasing interest on the part of the private sectors to produce and sell *halal* products, the national and local governments have also been very cooperative. It must be noted, however, that the main driving force behind this process was not the Muslim community of Japan. Instead, it has been twofold: on the one hand, the desire of Japanese companies to diversify their exporting portfolio and enter the large Muslim markets in Asia was influential. To be able to sell products in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, many Japanese companies are trying to understand the concept of *halal* and attempting to obtain *halal* certification. In Japan, therefore, four organisations have the authority to issue *halal* certification to producers as well as restaurants. They not only provide advice on how to make the production process and the product itself *halal*, but also regularly inspect these businesses about the maintenance of *halal* requirements.

Developing Japan's touristic appeal to Muslim countries, has been the other main motivation behind increasing the *halal* sector. There are upcoming large international sporting events for which Muslim people are expected to come to Japan in large numbers. One of these events is the Rugby World Cup in 2019. Moreover, the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 is expected to attract large numbers of Muslim tourists. Therefore, the municipalities and the government are working together to make the country's cities more Muslim-friendly by increasing the *halal* eating options. Many organisations are producing maps that contain information about the whereabouts of *halal* restaurants in large Japanese cities. They also raise awareness among Japanese people and businesses about the benefits of *halal*.

One respondent suggested that some Japanese business owners used to think that *halal* food was only for Muslims and non-Muslims could not eat them. When he realised making his restaurant *halal* will not cost him any of his existing customers, he became more willing to diversify the options. The concept of “Muslim-friendly” was produced in this context to refer to restaurants and business that do not meet all the requirements of *halal*. For instance, a *halal* certificate will not be issued to restaurants that serve *halal* food but also serve alcohol. For such cases, Muslim-friendly certification is issued informing the customer that the food is *halal* but alcohol is also served on the premises. In fact, a very detailed set of information about each restaurant is usually provided (see Image 7).

While the Rugby World 2019 and 2020 Tokyo Olympics are concrete motivators for Japan to make the country a more hospitable and welcoming place for Muslim tourists, it should be noted that they are not the only reasons. In fact, because of the economic challenges of an ageing and declining population, Japan is also trying to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on traditional industries. Tourism offers a potentially profitable and cheap economic alternative for a country like Japan, which has a long history and rich culture. Therefore, efforts to increase the degree of Muslim-friendliness of the country and making *halal* food far more widespread should be seen as part of a wider effort towards attracting more Muslim tourists in the future.

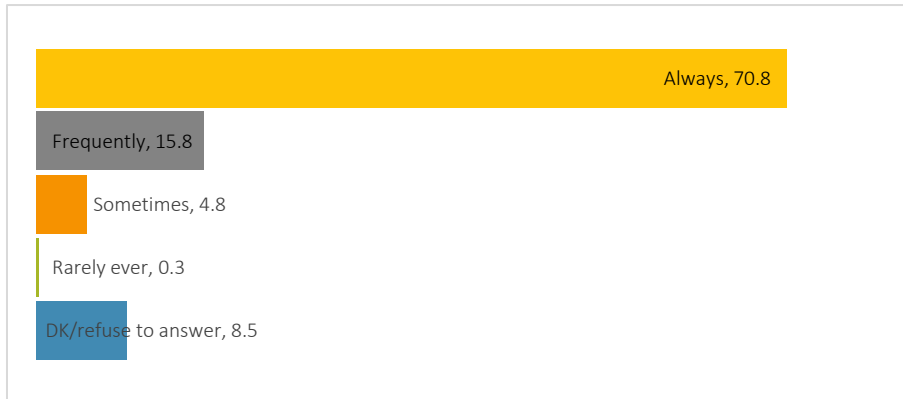
Image 7: Muslim Friendly Restaurants Icons



Source: Japan Halal Association

While the reasons for the current change might not be the Muslim community settled in Japan, they are certainly benefiting from it. Finding *halal* food has been the greatest challenge for many Muslims in Japan in the recent past, now it is becoming increasingly easier. The survey respondents, for example, were asked how often they were checking the information on food products before purchasing them to see if they were halal. Not surprisingly, a vast 71% of the respondents stated that they 'always' check to see if the products are marked as halal before buying them. Another 16% said that they frequently do the same (Figure 38).

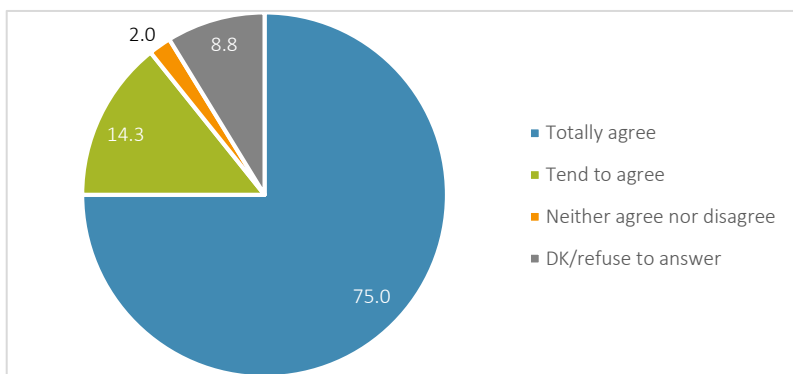
Figure 38: Checking the Product Info for Halal before Purchasing
(All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

Moreover, to the credit of government and school administrations, many respondents also suggest that while in the past menus of the school cafeterias were not offering any *halal* options, nowadays the number of schools that provide *halal* food for Muslim students is growing. Therefore, it would not be fair to say all the concern for *halal* is entirely for external reasons. There is certainly a concern for the Muslim communities and as their number grows, this concern is expected to grow as well. It needs also to be added that this endeavour should not be seen merely as a public service. When asked whether they would be willing to pay more money for a halal product, a striking 90% of the survey respondents replied positively (Figure 39). It is interesting to note that no respondent expressed disagreement to paying extra for halal products. In other words, growing halal business has the potential to benefit those who invest in them economically as well.

Figure 39: Agreement with the Statement: I am ready to buy halal food products even if they are more costly (All respondents - N=400, share of total, %)



Source: SESRIC survey with members of the Muslim community of Japan.

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Japan has long been viewed as closed to immigration. Although the number of Muslims in Japan has grown at a rapid pace in recent years, they still make up less than 0.2% of the total population. Japan's aging population, however, is creating a demand for foreign labour. Greater openness to foreign workers may increase the population of the Muslim community in Japan, both in the medium and long term.

International actors need to be sympathetic partners of Japan in supporting it with labour force. In this regard, the widespread societal and cultural concerns need to be acknowledged, and the process should be coordinated in such a way that the strong Japanese economy could provide employment to people, who can then contribute in not only the Japanese economy but also society.

There is a widespread lack of knowledge about the Muslim community in Japan. The mainstream society, overall, does not know much about Islam or Muslims. This "invisibility" of the Muslim community brings about some challenges for the small Muslim community to address together.

There are, however, also potential advantages of the invisibility of the Muslim community. The lack of Islamophobia and discrimination as well as the ease with which the Muslim communities could act in, for instance, opening new mosques or organizing Islamic education programmes, are some such advantages.

The largest potential advantage of the lack of knowledge and awareness about Muslims is the opportunity for Muslim communities to introduce themselves. In other words, Muslims could be given the opportunity to construct and promote their own image and representation in Japan without dealing with strong prejudices, a challenge that exists for most Muslim diasporic communities elsewhere around the globe.

The rare representations of Islam and Muslims in the Japanese media tend to be on the negative side. This is largely because the news feeds usually derive from the Western media outlets. Therefore, more effort needs to be paid to counter-act the negative representation of Islam and the religion's association with violence or radicalism. Instead, programmes reflecting a more balanced representation of the religion would be helpful. Arguably, the Japanese would be more receptive and sympathetic if such programmes focus on the cultural richness and depth of Islamic civilization, rather than theology and dogmatism.

There is much potential in the small Muslim community in Japan. Partly due to the mentioned religious freedom and relaxed political context, the Muslim communities in Japan have been able to organise very effectively into various civil society organisations. Their level of coordination and cooperation, however, is limited at the moment.

The native Japanese Muslim community is a significant and growing part of the Muslim community in Japan. They are ideally situated to best advance and defend the interests and well-being of the Muslim communities in Japan. They are also international in their outlook and open to cooperation. Therefore, their significance needs to be acknowledged and the international Muslim community needs to engage with them more closely and extensively.

Annexes

List of Interviewees in Tokyo

Pseudonym	Who	Gender
Ahmed	Muslim company owner of halal food certification	Male
Roberta	American anthropologist, an expert on migration	Female
Adnan	Egyptian Muslim, Director of a Muslim NGO	Male
Usman	Pakistani Muslim, Director of a Muslim NGO and Imam of a Mosque	Male
Heyet	Three Japanese-Muslims from a Japanese Muslim NGO	All Male
Noman	Japanese Muslim working in halal food sector	Male
Akifumi	Japanese worker of a think-tank, former diplomat	Male
Hirohito	Japanese academic, an expert on Muslims in Japan	Male
Jiro & Jun	Japanese local administrators from a Municipality	Male
Masahiro	Japanese researcher	Male
Naoko	Japanese researcher	Male
Saburo	Japanese Academic, an expert on Muslims in Japan	Male
Aasma	Turkish Muslim academic, an expert on inter-faith marriages	Female
Seiko	Japanese Media Worker	Female
Hasan	Turkish Muslim diplomat	Male
Farhan	Indonesian Muslim, Representative from a Muslim NGO	Male

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