

# **Belonging in Rochdale**

## **Ambition for Ageing “Ageing Equally?”**

### **Research Project**

**by Halal Incorp**

Simpler summary report

This is an easier to read summary of the “Ageing Equally?” research report by Halal Incorp.

It contains some background to the research, the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The Equalities Board team have written it to help people understand the research more easily, and to make it easier to use the findings to make places better for older people.



## Glossary

**Ambition for Ageing (AfA)** = a Greater Manchester programme that aims to make communities more age-friendly and improve older people's quality of life

**Communities of identity or experience** = a group of people who share a common identity or experience (e.g. Bangladeshi people, LGBT people, or people living with dementia)

**Data** = information

**Ethnography** = a way of researching that focuses on human culture and society, by gathering observations, interviews and stories to create detailed pictures of people's lives

**GMCVO** = Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations, the organisation that is responsible for managing the Ambition for Ageing programme

**Identity** = your sense of your self

**Indian subcontinent** = the part of the world that contains the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal.

**Interviewee** = someone who is interviewed for a research project

**Kashmiri** = a person from Kashmir, an area in the Himalaya mountains in the northern Indian subcontinent

**Mainstream** = catering for the majority, not specialised

**Marginalised** = the result of being pushed to the margins of society: excluded or ignored

**Minority** = a group of people who are different in some way from the majority of the population

**Pahari** = a language that is spoken in Kashmir and the Pakistan / India border area

**Participant** = someone who takes part in a project

**Qualitative data** = information about how people think and feel

**Quantitative data** = information in the form of numbers and amounts

# 1. Introduction and background

## Halal Incorp

Halal Incorp provides communications and research services. It specialises in working with digital businesses, people setting up businesses, and youth and community development.

## The Muslim community in Central Rochdale

Many South Asian men came to Rochdale from the 1950s to the 1980s to work in textile mills. They settled in the terraced streets near the centre of the town. After the textile mills closed down, many of them found jobs in food or taxi businesses. The majority of men who took part in the research project were from the Kashmiri community and speak Pahari as their first language. The rest of the men were from the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian communities.

## Aims of the research

The researchers wanted to find out more about the experience of ageing for Muslim men aged over 50 living in central Rochdale.

## Summary of findings

The participants felt that good health care, family relationships and practicing their Muslim faith are most important for ageing well.

Many men had complex histories of migration and their relationship to their place of birth continued to be important. However they felt they belonged to the local community in Rochdale.

The men did not have much involvement with the wider community in central Rochdale. They felt that they need to improve their digital skills and English language skills to reduce the barriers in daily life.

## 2. Method: How Halal Incorp did their research

The researchers employed a mixture of methods. They did a survey of 100 older men to gather quantitative data. They carried out surveys in people's homes and a variety of community spaces including mosques, on the street and outside supermarkets.

They gathered qualitative data through two focus groups with 11 participants in each, and eight one-to-one walking interviews. Interview participants chose where and when to meet, and where to walk. These interviews were then recorded and typed up.

The researchers used ethnography to explore the details of the men's lives. Walking interviews are good for ethnographic research as they gave the men a chance to talk about the area they lived in while doing a familiar activity.

The researchers presented their findings at a community celebration event with a photography exhibition for local older people and guests, including the local MP.

## 3. Findings: What Halal Incorp found out

### a) What's important to Muslim men as they age

The men who took part in the research felt the most important aspects of ageing well are: access to good health care, family relationships and practicing their Muslim faith. Access to good health care is vital to them, and they were concerned about cuts to services including a local hospital closing. 31% of participants defined themselves as disabled, and many had more than one long term health condition.

The mosque played a central role in the men's lives and many said they visit several times a day. They see prayer as essential for wellbeing, and feel ceremonies are important for bringing people together. However, they do not socialise much inside the mosque out of respect.

Very few participants visited local places outside their homes apart from the mosque and friends and family. They thought that poor digital and English language skills were the main barriers to getting more involved in their community.

## b) Place and belonging

Themes of belonging and migration came through very clearly in the walking interviews. Many of the men expressed a strong sense of belonging to their local community in Rochdale, although 38% had experienced hate crime. Many of the men had complex histories of migration – they had travelled back and forth to the Indian subcontinent over many years. This helped to keep them attached to the country they were born in, and shaped their view of the world and their beliefs.

Housing was another theme of the walking interviews. When the men first arrived in the UK, the Victorian terraced houses they moved into were very basic and some did not have bathrooms. The houses have been improved, but are still often overcrowded and damp and this can affect the men's health.

## c) Barriers to wider participation in the community

Although many men had a strong sense of community to the local South Asian community, it was clear that many of them found it hard to connect to the wider community. Less than half those surveyed used a local community centre, although more than one in 10 of the men were volunteering locally. 40% of men said they were “not a confident person”. The main barriers they identified in daily life identified were digital exclusion and language barriers.

## **Halal Incorp's recommendations**

The report recommends that language barriers should be addressed by providing opportunities to improve English language and digital skills. It also suggests translation services to reduce health inequalities and provide more volunteering opportunities. Finally the report suggests that as Muslim men enjoyed the walking interviews, a “walk and talk” group should be set up to improve older men's connectedness and health. Local councillors should have more power to resolve local issues.

## 4. What can we learn from this research about what makes a good place to grow older for people in minority communities?

- A person's history of migration shapes their relationship to their current local community and their place of birth, as well as their world view. Memories of their birthplace, as well as continuing connections to this place, remain very important as migrants age.
- Places of worship, such as mosques, can play an important role in a believer's life and wellbeing. However, it may not be possible for people to socialise informally in these places and they may need access to other places to meet deeper social needs.
- Older migrants may view digital exclusion as equally important as English language barriers.

### About the “Ageing Equally?” Research Programme

Depending on their backgrounds, culture and life circumstances, different people need different things to feel socially connected and supported in their daily lives. Ambition for Ageing funded the ‘Ageing Equally?’ research programme to find out more about this by asking: “What makes a good place to grow older for people who belong to minority communities?”

### More information

This is a simpler summary of the full report, which contains a lot more information about the background of the research, and details of Halal Incorp's findings. You can read and download this summary, the full report, and all the ‘Ageing Equally?’ project reports and summaries from the Ambition for Ageing website here: <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/ageing-equally>

Photo: Courtesy of Halal Incorp

