

The background features a stylized map of Australia in a light blue-grey color, centered on a dark blue night sky. A large, light blue crescent moon is positioned in the upper left quadrant. Several white, four-pointed stars are scattered across the sky. At the bottom, there are dark blue, rounded shapes representing clouds or hills. The entire scene is framed by a solid blue border.

IMPORTANCE OF MOONSIGHTING & THE PRACTICE OF AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS

Presented by:

Sheikh Ikramullah Ahmed

Qur'anic Verses about the Crescent

- The Quran mentions the word “moon” (*al-qamar*) 27 times. However, the use of the word is generally broad in most instances and their interpretations are unanimously agreed upon by all scholars.
- There are only three verses explicitly related to the topic of moonsighting, and it is in these references that scholars differ in their interpretations, thereby leading to differed opinions when it comes to determining the beginning and conclusion of Ramadan.

١- يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحُجِّ-

- Allama Hafiz Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) interprets this verse in the following manner:

عن أبي العالية: بلغنا أنهم قالوا: يا رسول الله، لم خلقت الأهلة؟ فأنزل الله (يسألونك عن الأهلة قل هي مواقيت للناس) يقول: جعلها الله مواقيت لصوم المسلمين وإفطارهم، وعدة نسائهم، ومحل دينهم .

- Hafiz Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) has also narrated a hadith under the interpretation of this verse from Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

عن نافع ، عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: " جعل الله الأهلة مواقيت "

٢- شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ^ط

- Al-Qurtubi: Emphasises that the command to fast applies to those who are resident during the month, highlighting the importance of being present at the beginning and end of the month.
- Ibn Kathir: States that the verse requires healthy individuals who witness the start of the month while residing in their land to fast.
- Mufti Muhammad Shafi: Explains that the word shahida in the verse derives from shuhud, meaning presence.
- However, Ibn Abd al-Barr writes under the tafseer of this verse:

قال الله تعالى: "فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ" [البقرة: ١٨٥]

يريد والله أعلم: من علم منكم بدخول الشهر علم يقين فليصمه، والعلم اليقين: الرؤية الصحيحة الثابتة الظاهرة أو إكمال العدد.

Prophetic Ahadith about sighting the moon

- Now, it seems appropriate to mention some Ahadith that emphasise the importance of sighting the moon.

There are many Ahadith on this topic. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave the command to sight the moon in various ways. A quick search brings up more than forty Ahadith, and many more can be found with further research.

- The companions (may Allah be pleased with them) who narrated these hadiths are numerous, but I will only mention a few: (1) Umar bin Al-Khattab, (2) Abdullah bin Umar, (3) Abu Hurairah, (4) Abdullah bin Abbas, (5) Aisha Siddiqa, (6) Hudhayfah, (7) Talq bin Ali, (8) Jabir bin Abdullah, (9) Al-Bara' bin Azib, (10) Abu Bakrah Nafi' bin Al-Harith, (11) Rafi' bin Khadij, (12) Adi bin Hatim (may Allah be pleased with them all).

١- عن عبد الله بن عمر رضى الله عنهما أن رسول الله ذكر رمضان فقال: لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال، ولا تفطروا حتى تروه فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له.

٢- عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله : إذا رأيتم الهلال فصوموا، وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن غم عليكم فصوموا ثلاثين يوماً-

٣- عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما أن رسول الله ذكر رمضان فقال: لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروه فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدد ثلاثين-

٤- عن ربعي بن حراش عن حذيفة بن اليمان قال: قال رسول الله : لا تقدموا الشهر حتى تروا الهلال أو تكملوا العدة ثم صوموا حتى تروا الهلال أو تكملوا العدة-

٥- عن عائشة رضى الله عنها قالت: كان رسول الله يتحفظ من هلال شعبان ما لا يتحفظ من غيره ثم يصوم لرؤية رمضان فإن غم عليه عد ثلاثين يوماً ثم صام-

History of Moonsighting in Australia

- As the Muslim population began to grow in Australia, particularly in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, there was a need for the Muslim leaders to consolidate all Islamic associations and communities under a unified -faith community.
- In 1964, Muslim leaders collectively decided on an organisational structure that would represent the needs and aspirations of the newly arrived Muslims in Australia. The leaders of the time brought some of these associations together to form a two-tier Australian Federation of Islamic Societies (AFIS).

- By 1976, the community had grown considerably, and thus the leaders decided to establish a three-tier structure: local Islamic societies at the grassroots level, State Islamic Councils serving as state umbrella bodies and a federal body to be named the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC).
- This structure was designed to be inclusive, aiming to represent the diverse Muslim communities of both the present and the future. This was one of the first registered organisations that lead Muslims in Australia.
- Although AFIC primarily deals with larger issues pertaining to the Muslim society at a federal level and is heavily involved in Halal certification, they have had a strong stance on the method of calculations when it comes to the issue of moon sighting.

- The first national conference of Imams took place in Melbourne on the 21st of November 1998, which was attended by over 50 Imams and leaders throughout Australia, with a primary focus on the moonsighting issue.
- During this gathering, they resorted to regional sighting as their methodology, aided with imkan al-ru'yah (the possibility of sighting the moon).
- All the Imams agreed unanimously that there was no contradiction between Shari'ah and astronomical science. As such, they endorsed astronomical data as an aid in determining the beginning and end of Ramadan.
- They also agreed that the sighting in countries within a '5-hour zone' including Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India would be accepted by Imams and Muslims in Australia.

- This only lasted ONE YEAR!
- On 14th November 1999, a major discussion took place during the second national conference of Imams in Sydney regarding the draft constitution and rules of the AFIC state board of Imams.
- A crucial decision was made to introduce a clause stating that the two Eids and Ramadan, would be determined in consultation with the national shura council.
- The national shura council strongly advocated for using calculations to determine the beginning and end of Ramadan.
- Despite opposition from some scholars, AFIC proceeded with the addition of the clause and has since followed the method of calculations to determine the start and end of Ramadan.

- AFIC was initially a leading authority for Muslims in Australia, but the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) became the leading religious authority after its establishment in 2006.
- ANIC serves as an umbrella organization, consisting of a council of Imams representing each state and territory in Australia.
- Many Muslims in Australia follow ANIC for determining the beginning and end of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Adhaa.
- In recent years, ANIC has opted to use astronomical calculations to establish the first and last day of Ramadan.
- The stance of ANIC on moonsighting has changed multiple times in recent years in efforts to unify Muslims in Australia to start and end Ramadan on the same day.

- Despite these efforts, uniting Muslims on a single methodology has been challenging, with some people opposing each methodology adopted by ANIC.
- ANIC's methodologies have included local sighting within Australia, regional sighting, and the method of calculations.
- In more recent times, ANIC has consistently opted for the method of calculations and has remained steadfast with this approach.
- In 2011, the Council of Imams NSW, a branch of ANIC, held a meeting with local Imams to discuss the methodology for determining the beginning and end of Ramadan.
- The meeting, led by Dr. Ibrahim Abu Muhammad and prominent scholars, resulted in the following decisions:

1. Australia would be considered as one region for determining lunar months.
 2. Physical sighting of the moon with the aid of telescopes would be the chosen methodology.
 3. All institutes were to conduct their own sighting in collaboration with the Council of Imams NSW.
- Despite the agreement on physical moonsighting within Australia, this methodology did not last long.
 - A few years later, ANIC began sending out statements a few days in advance to determine the first day of Ramadan, and from 2016 to 2019, they did not clarify the methodology being used.
 - In recent years, ANIC has consistently released statements prior to Ramadan, announcing the start date in advance.



11 April 2023

Eid Al-Fitr Statement for the Year 1444AH – 2023

All praise is due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad.

We thank Allah (SWT) for giving us the ability to fast in the Month of Ramadan, the ability to worship him, and the ability to fulfil our religious and worldly obligations.

The Australian Fatwa Council is pleased to announce to the Australian Muslim community the following:

It has been confirmed to the Australian Fatwa Council after further inquiries to the local and global observatories, in Sydney, the new moon of the month will be born on Thursday, 20th April 2023 at 2.12pm AEST, the sun sets on the same day at 5.27pm while the new moon will set on the same day and time at 5.27pm from the horizon. In Perth, Western Australia, the new moon of the month will be born on 20th April 2023 at 12.12pm AWST, the sun sets on the same day at 5.50pm while the moon will set at 5.54pm, this is not a sufficient time to sight the new moon of the month of Shawwal on that night, Therefore:

Friday, 21st of April 2023, will be the last day of the Month of Ramadan 1444AH

**The Day of Eid Al-Fitr will be on Saturday, 22nd of April 2023,
and the first day of the Month of Shawwal 1444AH**

The method in which the Grand Mufti of Australia and the Australian Fatwa Council had determined the end of the month of Ramadan, the first day of Shawwal and day of Eid Al-Fitr is based on the calculated birth of the moon before sunset, the duration of the moonset after sunset and the possibility of sighting the moon. This is a method that many prominent and reputable global scholars councils have adopted.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Community announcement

17 April 2023

All gratitude to Allah for blessing us with the month of Ramadan and for Gracing us with the Great Qur'an and for guiding us to fasting and night prayers and for keeping us in this world to witness the Night of Qadr which is better than a thousand months.

With the blessing of Allah, Ta'ala, the AFIC National Sharia Board (ANSB), after careful study and analysis of astronomical data and the sightability of the 1444 AH Shawwal Crescent in the region (including Indonesia and Malaysia), ANSB with AFIC's National Grand Mufti of Australia, the Most Eminent Sheikh Abdul Qudoos Al Azhari and representatives of Lebanon's Dar Al Fatwa in Australia have determined that the first day of Eid Al-Fitr for 1444\2023 will be Friday 21 April 2023.

**Friday 21 April 2023 is the first day
of Eid Al-Fitr – 1 Shawwal 1444**



MOONSIGHTING AUSTRALIA

Web: www.moonsightingaustralia.info Tel: (02) 9625 4716
Facebook/Twitter: @moonsightingau

STATEMENT

SHAWWAL 1444 / 2023

شوال / ١٤٤٤

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Today (Friday) 21st of April 2023, the Hilāl of **Shawwal 1444** has been sighted in Mareeba (Queensland). Therefore, the month of **Shawwal 1444** will begin from Saturday, 22nd of April 2023.

SATURDAY 22ND OF APRIL 2023 WILL BE EID UL-FITR

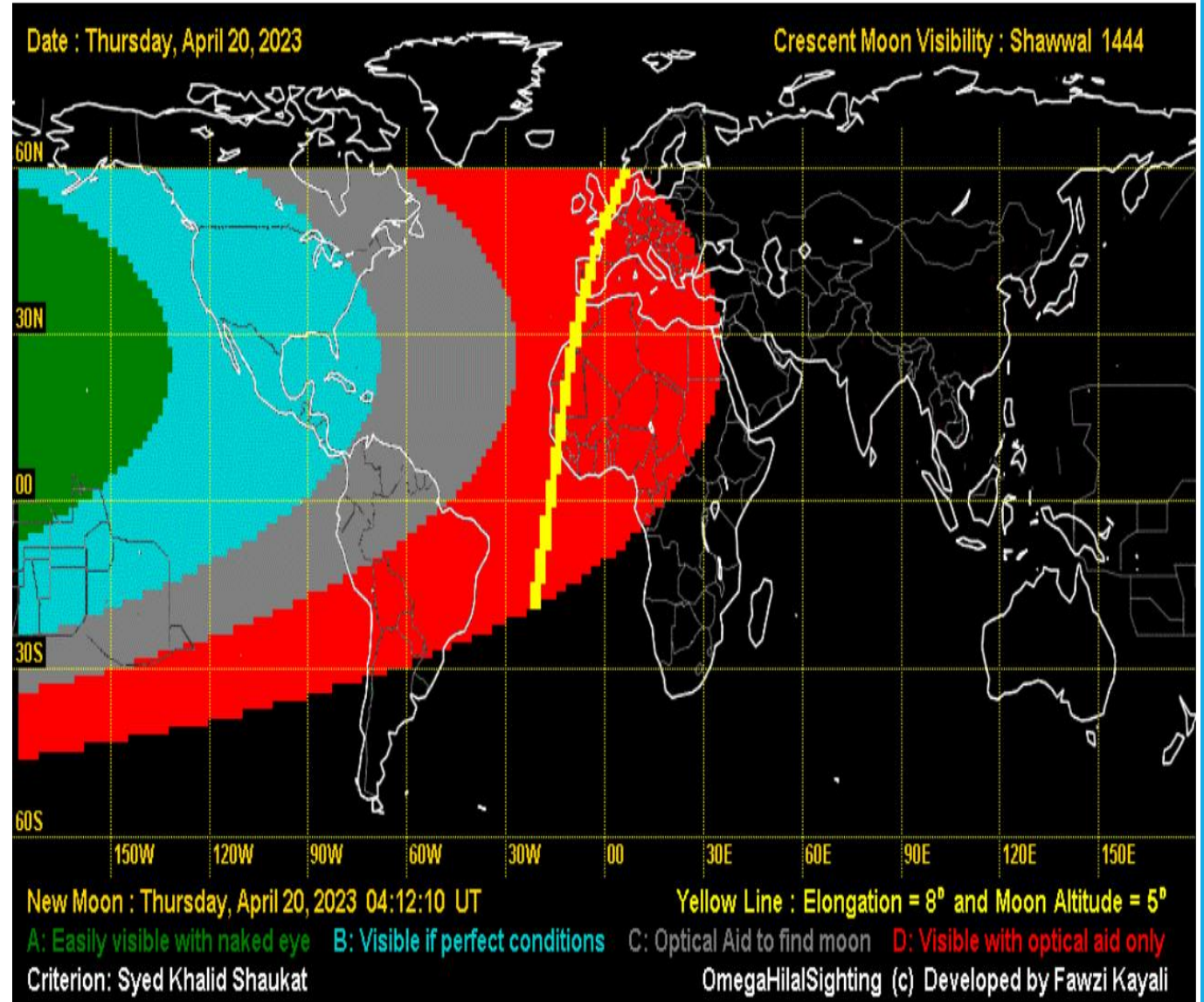
For further updates and moon-sighting information regarding the month of **Shawwal 1444**, including the beginning of all **Hijri months**, please visit our website:

www.moonsightingaustralia.info

SAC

Dr. Shabbir Ahmed
(Coordinator, Moonsighting Australia)

Dated: 21st April 2023



Online Survey

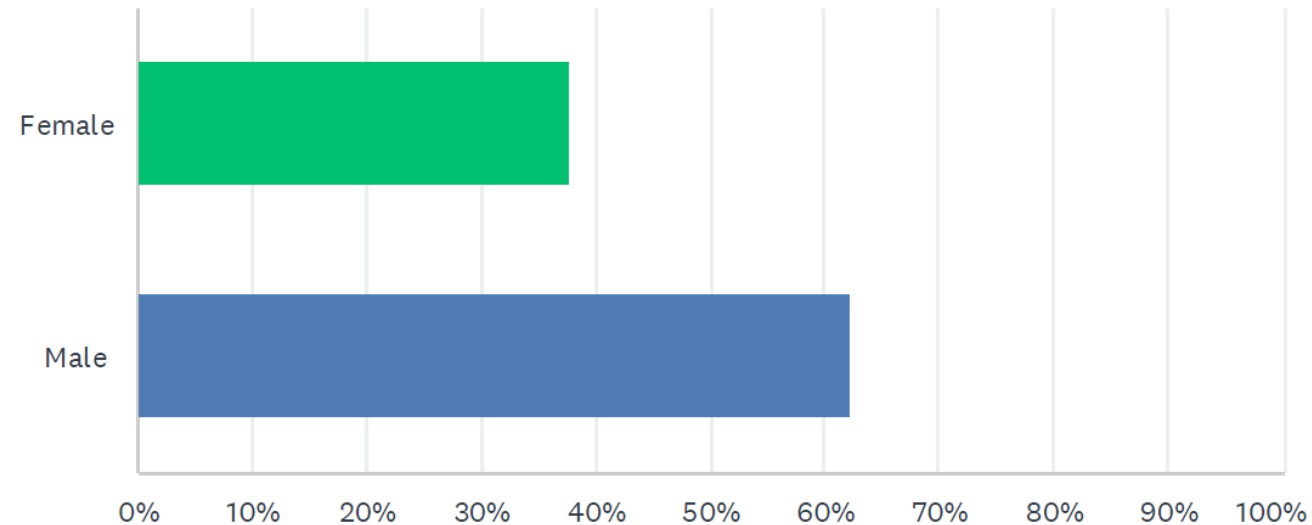
- Demographic Information: Collected data on gender, age, state, ethnic heritage, and religious affiliation.
- Methodologies: Gathered information on methods used to determine the beginning of Ramadan and the source for Eid determination.
- Confidence and Factors: Assessed participants' confidence in their sources and factors considered for determining Ramadan and Eid.
- Family Impact: Investigated the effects of differing Ramadan and Eid dates on family relations using a 0-10 scale.
- Open-ended question: Participants provided suggestions for improving the process of determining Ramadan and Eid dates in Australia, with 2787 open-ended responses analyzed for emerging themes.

Survey Overview

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Survey Questions

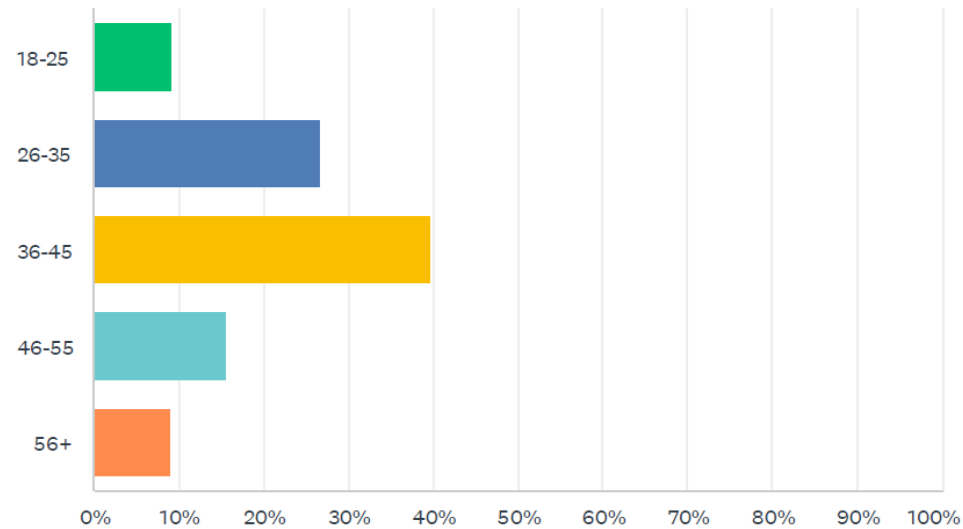
1) What is your gender?



- 62.36% of participants were male, while 37.64% were female.
- This distribution highlights that the issues around moonsighting significantly impact both male and female members of the Australian Muslim community.

Survey Questions

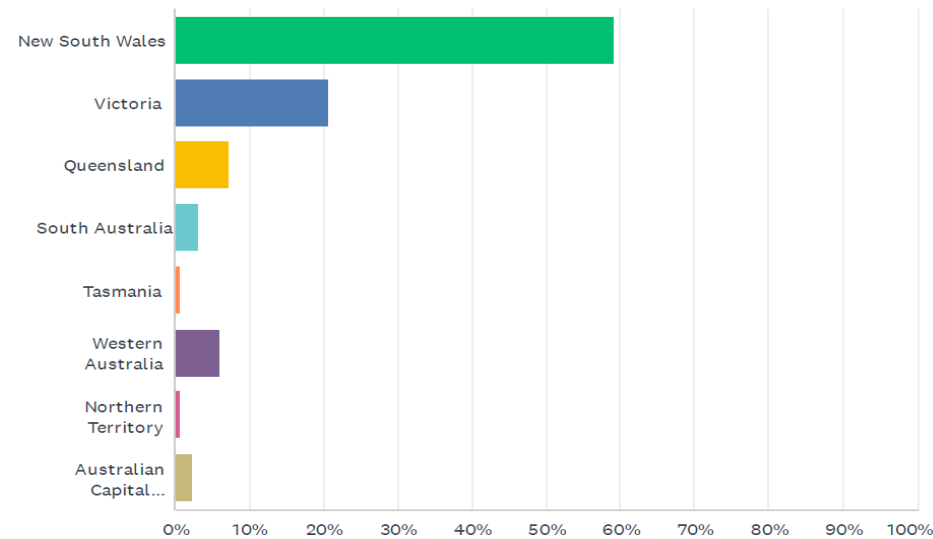
2) What is your age?



- Nearly 500 responses came from people aged 56 or above.
- The majority of participants were in the 36-45 age group, with 2,212 respondents, indicating high engagement with the topic of moonsighting.
- The 18-25 age group had 509 respondents, slightly higher than the 56+ group.

Survey Questions

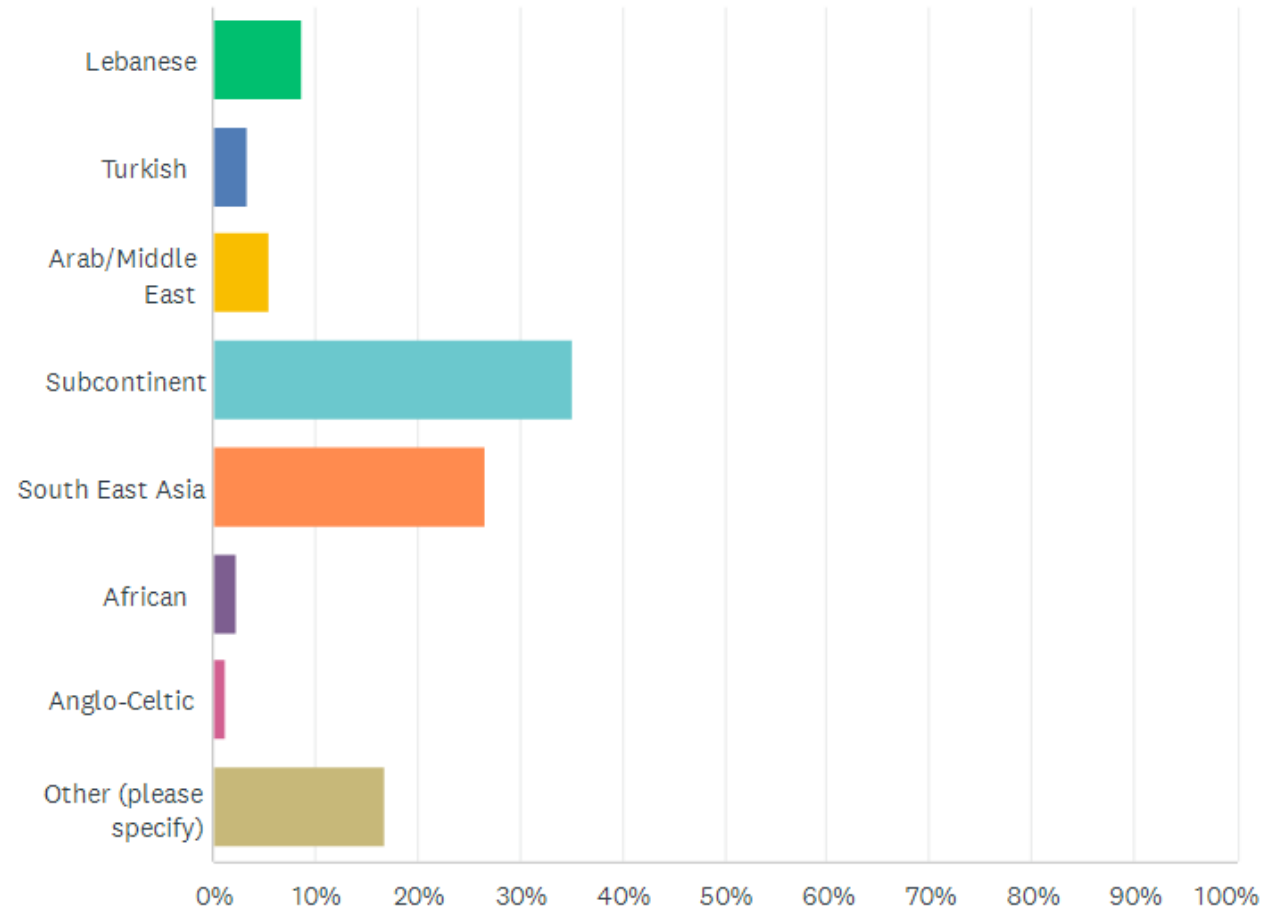
3) In which state do you live?



- Majority of respondents were from NSW, reflecting the influence of major Islamic organisations such as ANIC, AFIC, and Moonsighting Australia.
- Over 1150 responses were received from Victoria, indicating significant interest in Ramadan and Eid date issues within their community.
- Lower-than-expected responses from Queensland, despite the moonsighting issues faced by the Muslim community there.

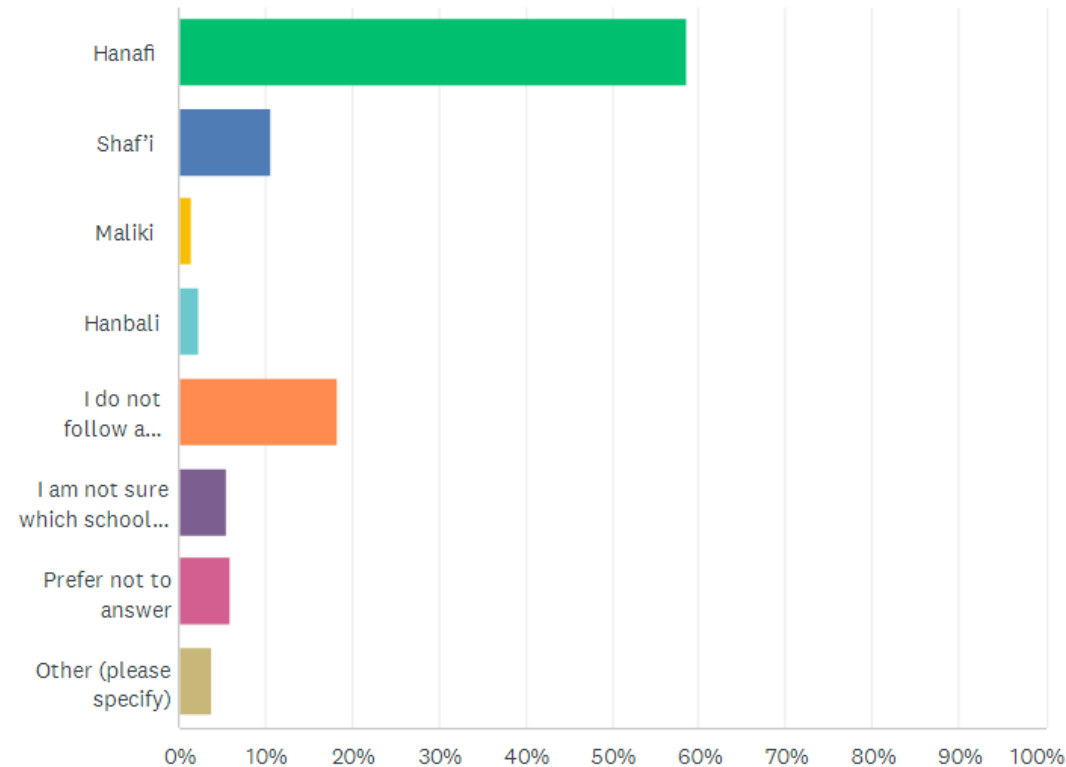
Survey Questions

4) What is your majority ethnic heritage?



Survey Questions

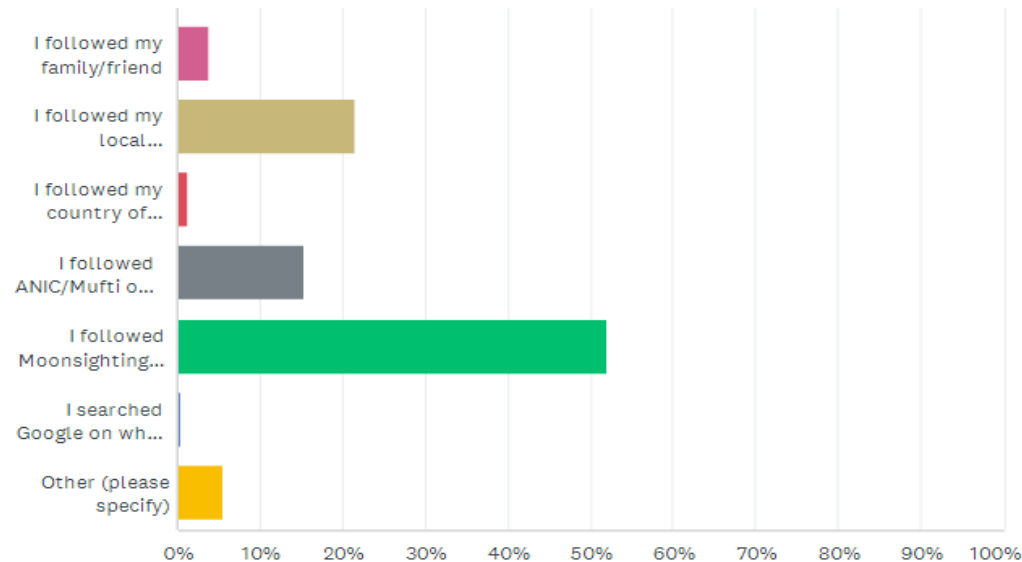
5) What Islamic legal school do you follow?



- Out of 210 respondents who selected "Other (please specify)," over 70 identified as Shia/Ja'fari.

Survey Questions

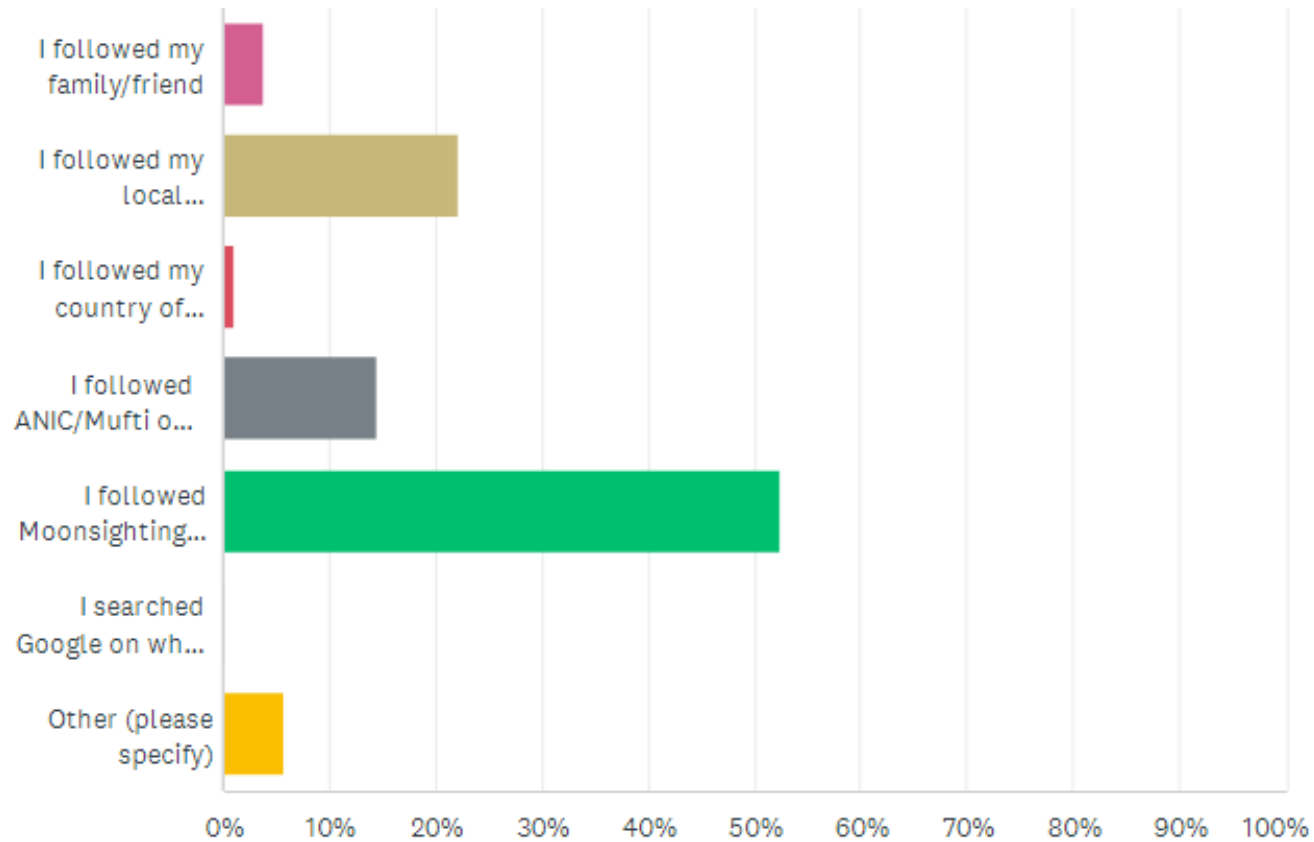
6) How did you know or establish the beginning of Ramadan?



- **Local Mosques/Organizations:** Over 20% of respondents used their local mosque or organization, highlighting the influence of Islamic organizations across Australia.
- **ANIC/Mufti of Australia:** Only 850 respondents (approximately 15%) followed the announcement of ANIC or the Mufti of Australia, indicating this source is less widely followed compared to Moonsighting Australia or local entities.

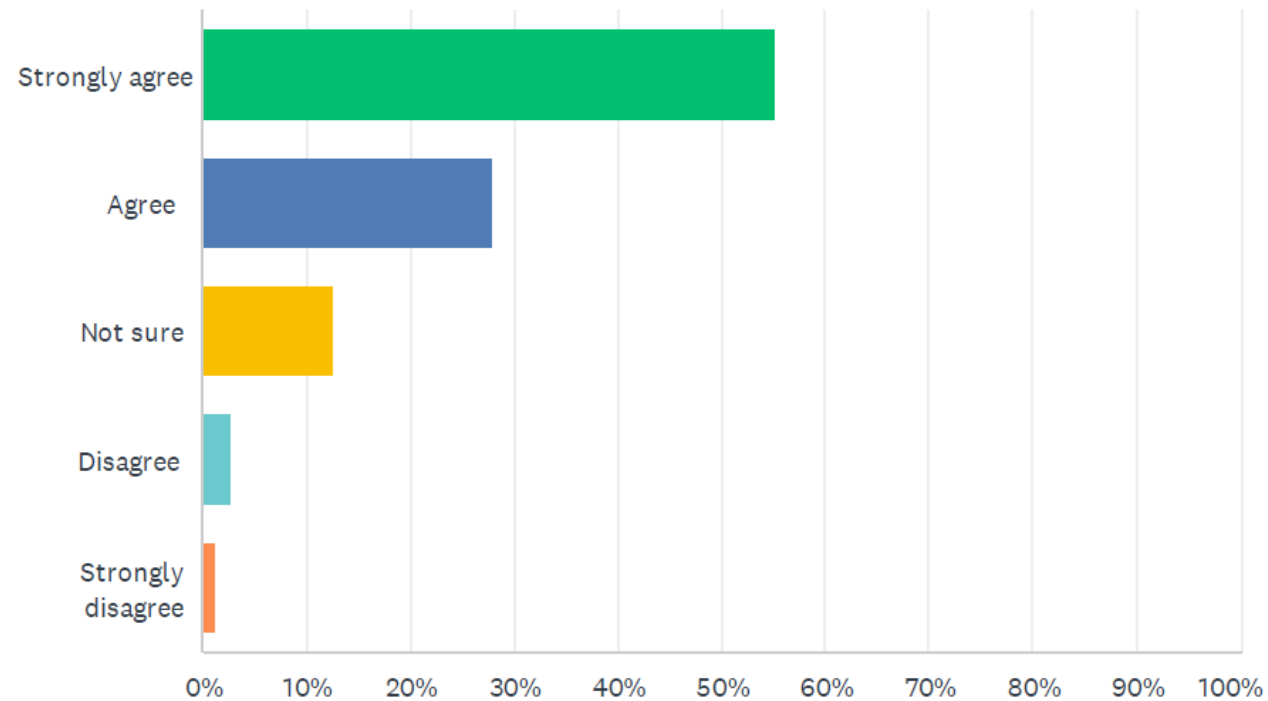
Survey Questions

7) Who did you follow in establishing the day of Eid?



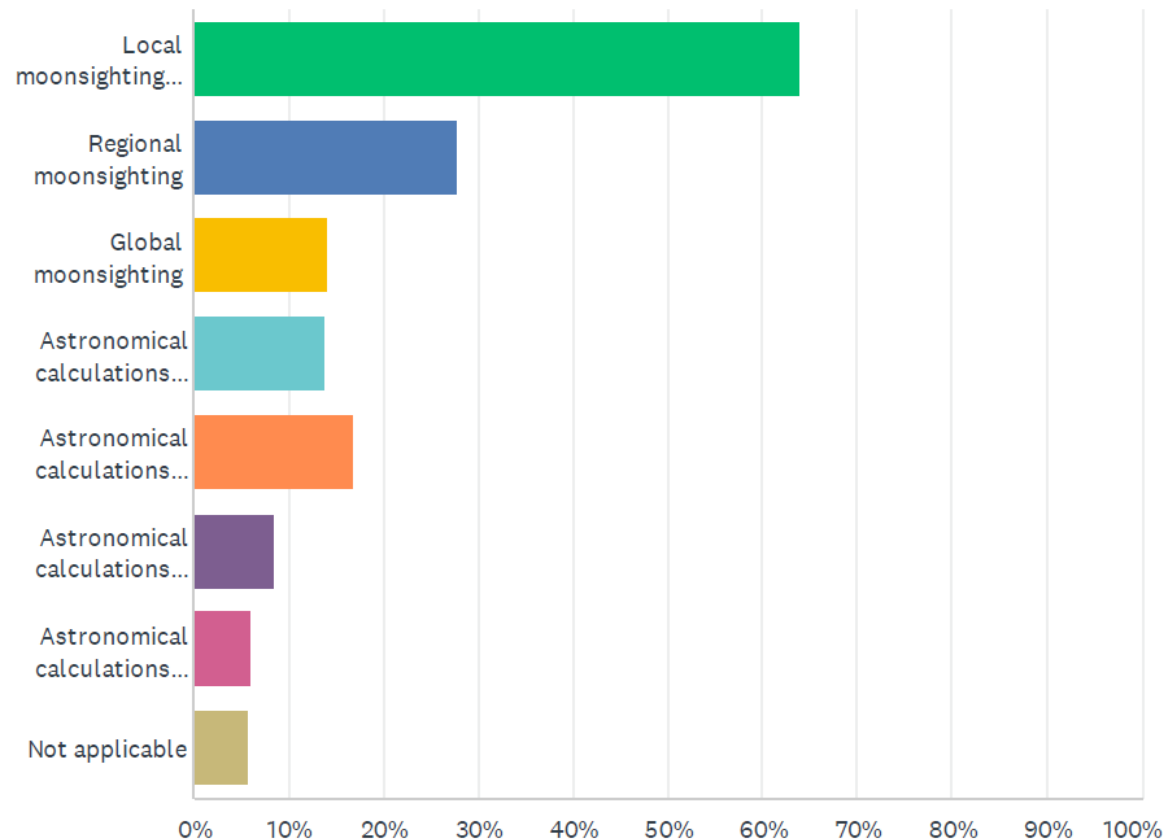
Survey Questions

8) I am confident in the accuracy of the source I follow to begin Ramadan and Eid



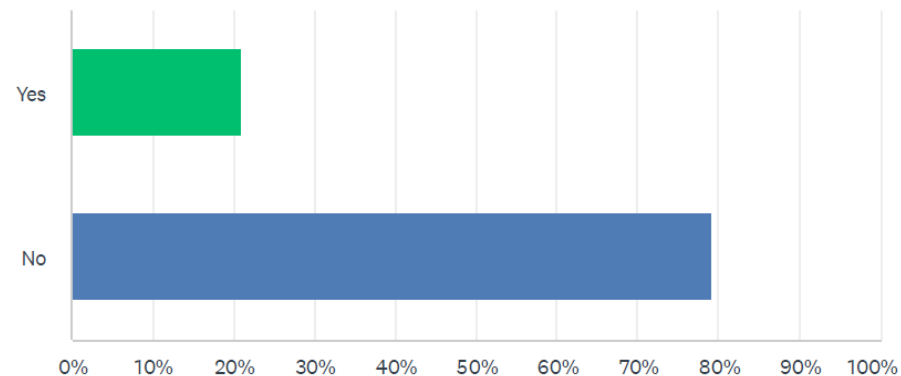
Survey Questions

9) In deciding who to follow, did you consider any of the following methods of establishing the beginning of Ramadan and Eid?



Survey Questions

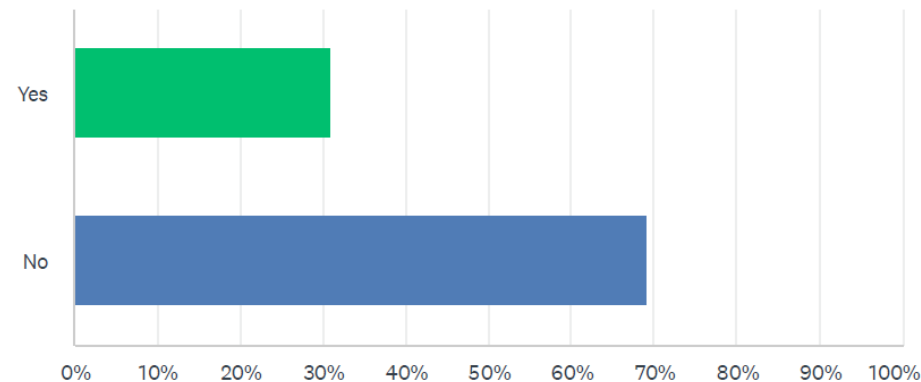
10) Within the last 5 years have you ever followed a different method of determining the beginning of Ramadan and Eid than your current method?



- **Consistency:** Majority of participants have remained consistent in their chosen method for determining the start of Ramadan and Eid.
- **Change in Methods:** 20% (over 1,100 respondents) switched their method within the last 5 years, representing a significant subset.
- **Reasons for Switching:** Family-related reasons, learning about a more accurate method, and a desire to be with the majority were common reasons.

Survey Questions

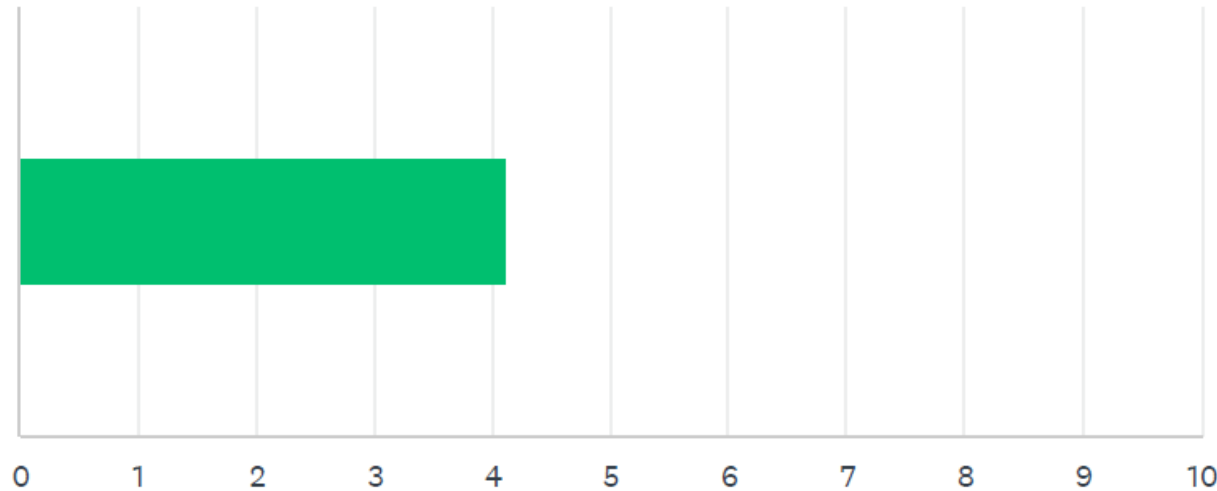
11) In the last three years have the members of your family started Ramadan or Eid on different days?



- **Consistency:** 69% of participants reported that their family members did not start Ramadan or Eid on different days in the last three years.
- **Variation:** 31% of participants (over 1,700 individuals) acknowledged that their family members did start Ramadan or Eid on different days, highlighting internal family variations or disagreements.

Survey Questions

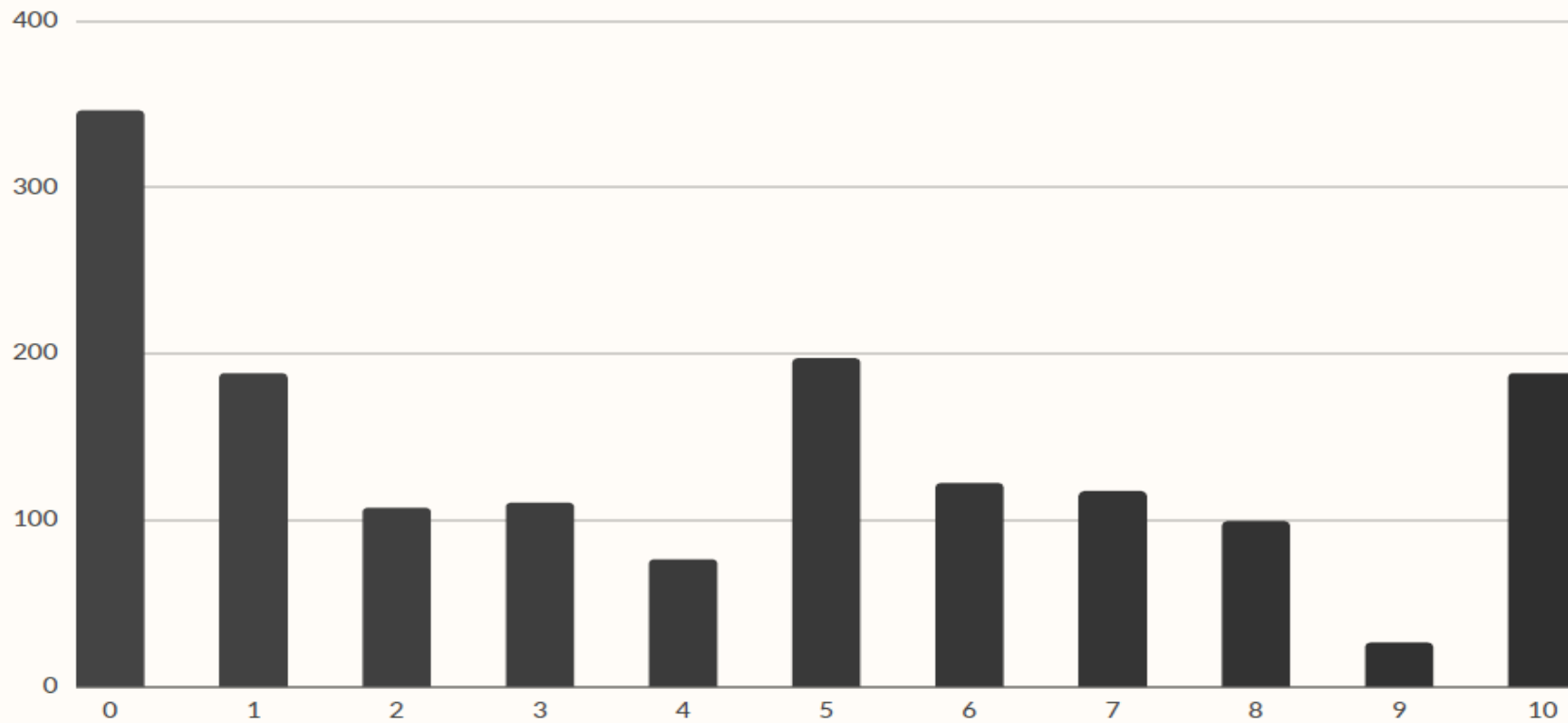
12) How did this affect your family relationships?



- The average rating of 4 from 1,576 respondents indicates a moderate overall effect on family dynamics due to starting Ramadan or Eid on different days.
- However, this average masks individual variations, with some participants experiencing severe impacts and others minimal or no effect.

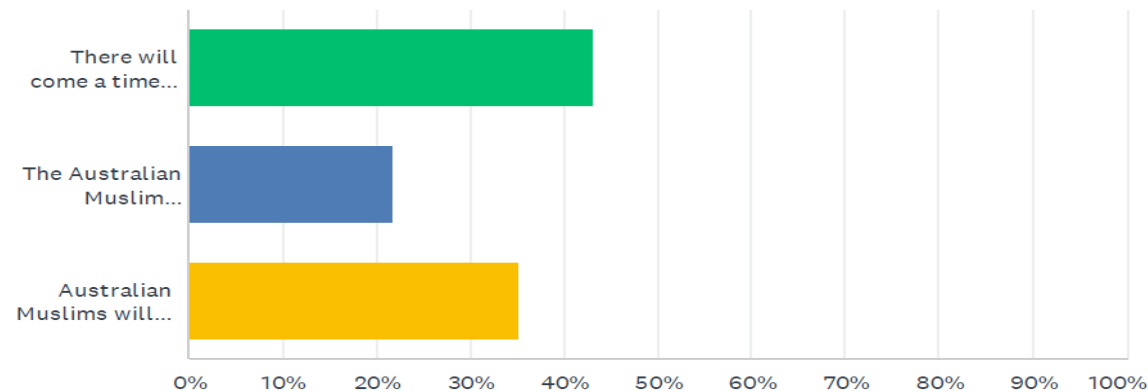
Survey Questions

INDIVIDUAL RATINGS



Survey Questions

13) What do you feel should be the ultimate outcome to the issue of Muslims starting Ramadan and Eid on different days?



- a) There will come a time when all Australian Muslims will start Ramadan and Eid on the same day
- b) The Australian Muslim community will not be able to unite, and the issue will remain unresolved for the foreseeable future
- c) Australian Muslims will eventually accept that different interpretations will always be there on this issue

Survey Questions

14) What improvements or changes would you like to see in the process of the start and end of RAMADAN and EID in Australia

- A total of 2529 comments were coded using Nvivo.
- 6 Major themes emerged from these comments.

Theme	Comments	Percentage
Embracing diversity	85	3.05%
Promoting education and awareness	170	6.10%
Unity of Imams and Islamic organisations	378	13.56%
Moonsighting in a broader context	385	13.80%
Advocating a specific methodology	673	24.16%
Call for unity	838	30.03%