



# Needs of Muslim women at QUT

Youngnam Baek

QUT International Student Services



Country	Number of students
China	1,234
India	567
USA	345
UK	234
Other	1,000

Muslim International Students International Students in Australia in 2010

Country	Male	Female
China	1,200	1,500
India	500	600
USA	300	400
UK	200	300
Other	800	1,000

Female Muslim International Students  
46.3 per cent of total international students were females in 2010.  
74.7 of all higher education (HE) countries were female.





# *Needs of Muslim women at QUT*

Youngnam Baek

QUT International Student Services



# Needs of Muslim women at QUT

Youngnam Baek

QUT International Student Services



Country	Number of students
China	1,234
India	567
USA	345
UK	234
Other	1,000

Muslim International Students International Students in Australia in 2010

Country	Male	Female	Total
China	1,200	300	1,500
India	500	100	600
USA	300	50	350
UK	200	30	230
Other	800	100	900
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>2,580</b>

Female Muslim International Students  
46.3 per cent of total international students were females in 2010.  
100% of all higher education (HE) countries are now female.

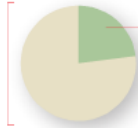


# Muslim Population in the world

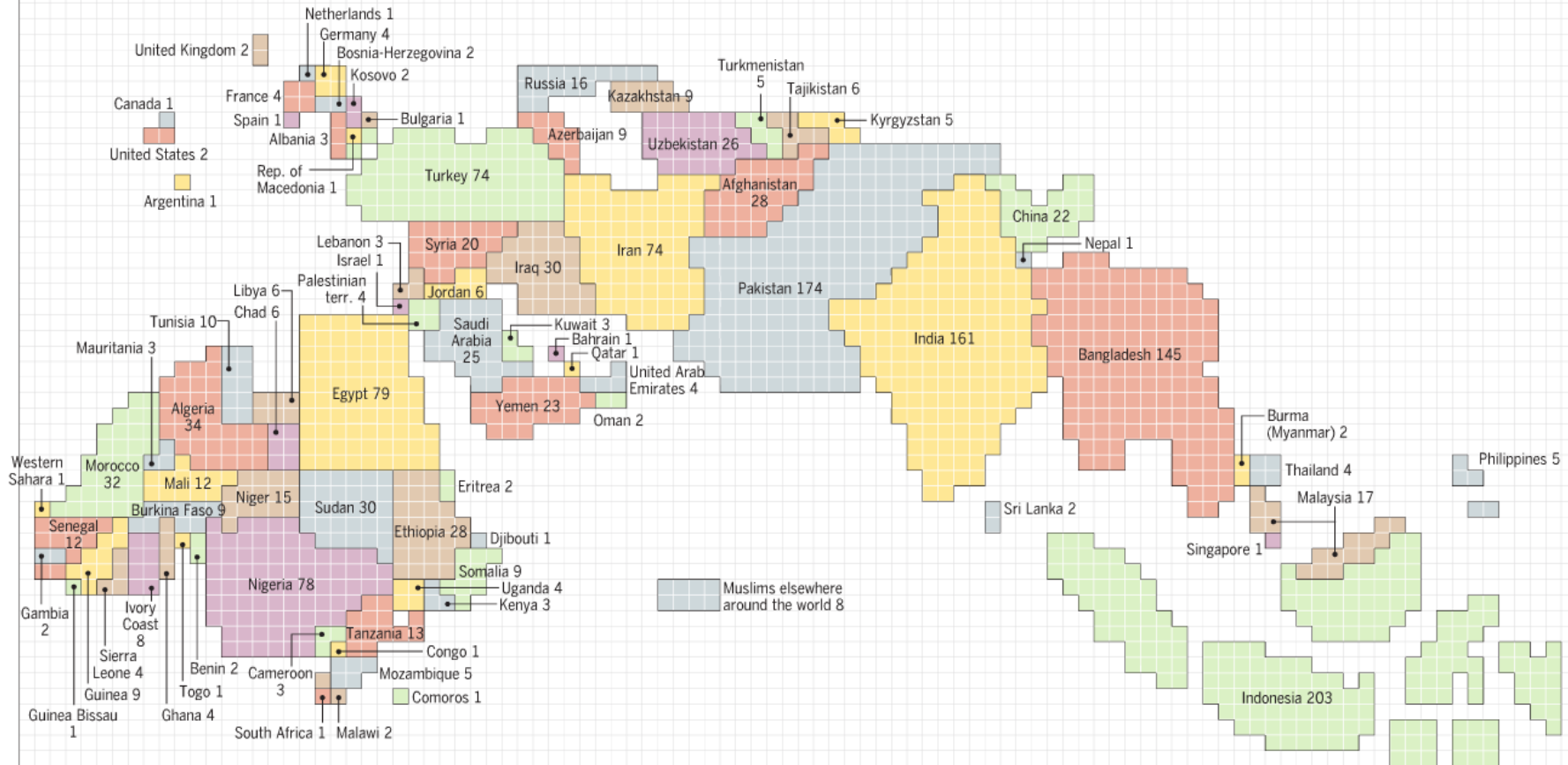
## World Distribution of Muslim Population

This 'weighted' map of the world shows each country's relative size based on its Muslim population. Figures are rounded to the nearest million.

World Population  
6.8 billion



Muslim Population  
1.57 billion



Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Mapping the Global Muslim Population, October 2009

## Muslim population in Australia

It is estimated that there were 340,393 Muslims in Australia.

Birthplace	%	Birthplace	%
Australia	37.9	Bangladesh	3.9
Lebanon	8.9	Iraq	2.9
Turkey	6.8	Indonesia	2.5
Afghanistan	4.7	Bosnia & Herzegovina	2.2
Pakistan	4.1	Iran	2.1

State/territory of residence	Muslim population	% of total Muslim population
New South Wales	168 788	49.6
Victoria	109 369	32.1
Western Australia	24 187	7.1
Queensland	20 318	6.0
South Australia	10 521	3.1
Australian Capital Territory	4 373	1.3
Northern Territory	1 083	0.3
Tasmania	1 049	0.3

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing  
(Australian Bureau of Statistics)

# Muslim International Students

## International Students in Australia in 2010

469,619

Resource: Australian Government  
Australian Education International

Top 10 Nationalities in Australia	International students % of total population	Muslim % of total population
China	27.1%	1.8%
India	16.2%	14.6%
South Korea	5.5%	0.2%
Vietnam	4.2%	0.2%
Thailand	4.0%	5.8%
Malaysia	3.8%	61.4%
Nepal	3.6%	4.2%
Indonesia	3.0%	88.1%
Brazil	2.6%	0.1%
Saudi Arabia	2.0%	97.1%
Other nationalities	27.6%	

resources: Australian Education International 2011/  
Pew Research Center 2011

## Female Muslim International Students

46.5 per cent of total international students were females in 2010.

Half of all higher education (HE) commencements were females.

# *Background of study*

## **Previous studies**

Islamphobia      Stereotyped in the Media  
Prejudices      Veiled women

**QUT International Student Services**

## **International Women's Group**

Muslim international Students are required to fulfill their religious practice every day

Study focused on female international Muslim students and female spouses of students at QUT

QUT International Student Services

# International Women's Group

Muslim international Students are required to fulfill their religious practice every day

Study focused on female international Muslim students and female spouses of students at QUT

# Study methods

## Interviews with key stake holders

Student advisers, president of QUT Muslim student association, professional staff and QUT female postgraduate and undergraduate students

### The questionnaire

- what issues and concerns Muslim women face during their time at QUT
- whether Muslim women's perceived needs are met at QUT
- what resources and support could be delivered to meet their needs

### Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group	Number	Country of Origin	Status
Group 1	3	Malaysia, Indonesia	International Student
Group 2	9	Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran	International Student
Group 3	5	Iran, Bangladesh	Spouse

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data : Descriptive statistical analysis  
Qualitative data : Sarantakos' theory

# The questionnaire

- what issues and concerns Muslim women face during their time at QUT
- whether Muslim women's perceived needs are met at QUT
- what resources and support could be delivered to meet their needs

# Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group	Number	Country of Origin	Status
Group 1	3	Malaysia, Indonesia	International Student
Group 2	9	Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran	International Student
Group 3	5	Iran, Bangladesh	Spouse

# Data Analysis

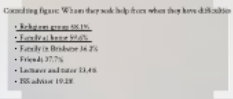
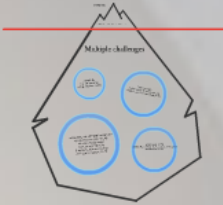
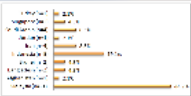
Quantitative data : Descriptive statistical analysis

Qualitative data : Sarantakos' theory

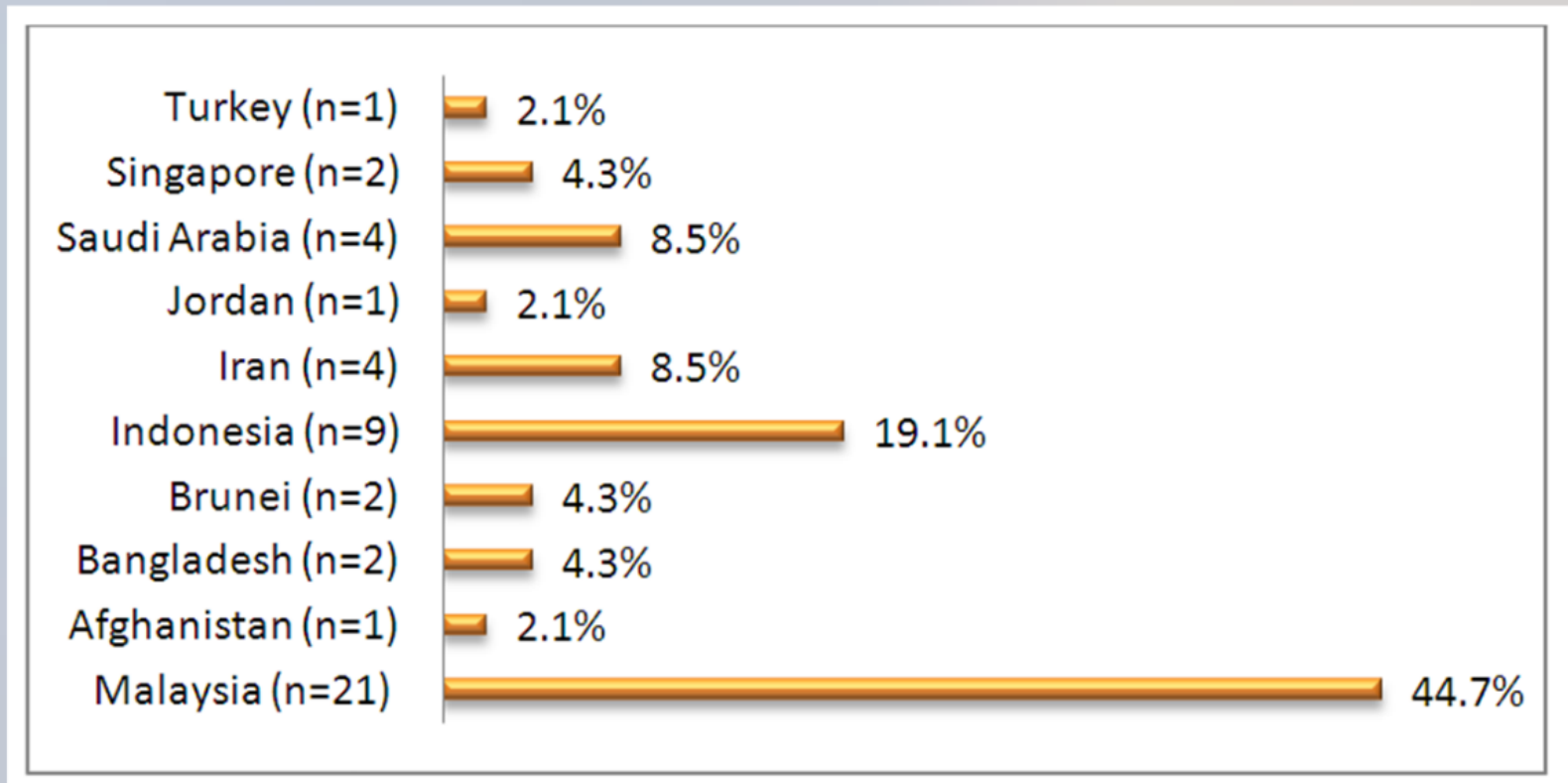
# Findings

## Questionnaire findings

- 47 Muslim women
- 16 have children
- 66% were in their 30's
- 56% living alone
- 44% living with family/64% with their husband



- 47 Muslim women
- 16 have children
- 68% were in their 20's
- 56% living alone
- 44% living with family(68% with their husband)



## Perceived needs

68% answered their religious needs are met at QUT

Perceived needs

64% answered their religious needs are met at QUT

## Multiple challenges

Food(65.2%),  
Cost of living(56.5%),  
making new friends (47.8%)

English language :  
academic use (41.3%) social use (37.0%),  
Adapting to new studying methods (39.1%)

Relationship with QUT staff and student /  
Adjusting to a new place (28.3%),  
Meeting religious needs/  
Child care support(23.9%)  
Studying in a new environment/  
Having family support (21.7%)

Accommodation (17.4%)  
Health & Medical needs - finding a female doctor (10.9%)  
Feeling homesick(8.7%)

*Food(65.2%),  
Cost of living(56.5%),  
making new friends (47.8%)*

*English language :  
academic use (41.3%) social use (37.0%),  
Adapting to new studying methods (39.1%)*

*Relationship with QUT staff and student /  
Adjusting to a new place (28.3%),  
Meeting religious needs/  
Child care support(23.9%)  
Studying in a new environment/  
Having family support (21.7%)*

Perceived needs

64% answered their religious needs are met at QUT

## Multiple challenges

Food(65.2%),  
Cost of living(56.5%),  
making new friends (47.8%)

English language :  
academic use (41.3%) social use (37.0%),  
Adapting to new studying methods (39.1%)

Relationship with QUT staff and student /  
Adjusting to a new place (28.3%),  
Meeting religious needs/  
Child care support(23.9%)  
Studying in a new environment/  
Having family support (21.7%)

Accommodation (17.4%)  
Health & Medical needs - finding a female doctor (10.9%)  
Feeling homesick(8.7%)

## Consulting figure: Whom they seek help from when they have difficulties

- Religious group 68.1%
- Family at home 59.6%
- Family in Brisbane 36.2%
- Friends 27.7%
- Lecturer and tutor 23.4%
- ISS adviser 19.2%

# Findings from focus group discussions

## Seven key concerns

- Being misunderstood by non-Muslim groups and discrimination issues
- Limited halal food availability
- Feeling of social marginalisation
- Lack of facilities to fulfill religious obligation
- Difficulties in interacting with male counterpart
- Insufficient support for women raising children
- Language barrier and high living expenses

## Suggestions

- Establishing a Muslim women's support group
- Delivering education on how to handle mixed gender group work situations
- Arranging social activities
- Providing information on halal outlets, cheaper grocery shops and prayer places
- Publishing a booklet containing information on general Muslim beliefs and culture
- Conducting employment workshops

**Being misunderstood and by non-Muslim groups and discrimination issues**  
Respondent said that she does not understand herself or her husband in her husband's culture and religion, which is not the same as her own. She said, "I was working in my home and heard that some people saying things like 'Muslim'."

**Limited halal food availability**  
Respondent said that she has difficulty in finding halal food in the market. She said, "I was looking for halal food in the market but I couldn't find it."

**Feeling of social marginalisation**  
Respondent said that she feels marginalised in the society. She said, "I feel like I am not part of the society because of my religion."

**Lack of facilities to fulfill religious obligation**  
Respondent said that she has difficulty in finding a place to pray. She said, "I was looking for a place to pray but I couldn't find it."

**Difficulties in interacting with male counterpart**  
Respondent said that she has difficulty in interacting with her husband. She said, "I was talking to my husband but he didn't understand me."

**Insufficient support for women raising children**  
Respondent said that she has difficulty in raising her children. She said, "I was raising my children but I didn't have enough support."

**Language barrier and high living expenses**  
Respondent said that she has difficulty in understanding the language and high living expenses. She said, "I was looking for a place to live but I couldn't find it because of the high living expenses."

# Seven key concerns

- **Being misunderstood by non-Muslim groups and discrimination issues**
- **Limited halal food availability**
- **Feeling of social marginalisation**
- **Lack of facilities to fulfill religious obligation**
- **Difficulties in interacting with male counterpart**
- **Insufficient support for women raising children**
- **Language barrier and high living expenses**

## **Being misunderstood by non-Muslim groups and discrimination issues**

Emphasised that non-Muslims are sometimes insensitive or discriminating as they do not understand Muslims' religious beliefs and culture. "some students (non-Muslim) make negative remarks in tutorial groups or classes that have been mentioned in the media. "

"I was walking to my home and heard that some people saying things like 'bomb'".

## **Limited halal food availability**

Stated that there should be more information on the "halal certification" at eating outlets,

walking to my home and heard that some people saying things like 'bomb'".

### **Limited halal food availability**

Stated that there should be more information on the "halal certification" at eating outlets, as many food outlets do not indicate whether they have halal or non-pork.

### **Feeling of social marginalisation**

Mentioned that they have lack of social networks and difficulties in socializing with non-Mus

There should be more information on the halal certification at eating outlets,  
food outlets do not indicate whether they have halal or non-pork.

### **Feeling of social marginalisation**

Mentioned that they have lack of social networks and difficulties in socializing with non-Muslims.

"It is hard to mingle with other students (non-Muslim background). There are barriers to social interaction including that we need to pray, only eat halal food and because we cannot join other students to go to pubs or clubs when Australians or non-Muslims invited us."

### **Lack of facilities to fulfill religious obligation**

Reported that while QUT has a prayer room that enables Muslim students to meet their religious needs, washing places for women need to be improved

### **Lack of facilities to fulfill religious obligation**

Reported that while QUT has a prayer room that enables Muslim students to meet their religious needs, washing places for women need to be improved.

"In KG prayer room, the wash room is shared space for males and females.

It is difficult at times for us to do Wudu' when men are already present."

## **Difficulties in interacting with male counterpart**

Stated that Muslim women experience difficulties in working together with male counterparts.

"When I meet with my supervisor (male) I did not know how to act or what to say and I did not know the boundaries/ expectations in relation to supervisor and student relationship, particularly if you are a female Muslim student."

## **Insufficient support for women raising children**

Stressed that many international Muslim students consider child care as the main concern for them. " Child care is very expensive in Brisbane. It is hard to find babysitters on campus for us because both of us are studying... We were rejected when we applied for the kindergarten because of not enough space."

kindergarten because of not enough space."

## **Language barrier and high living expenses**

Mentioned that language barriers and high living cost are issues when adjusting to a new life in Australia.

## Suggestions

- Establishing a Muslim women's support group
- Delivering education on how to handle mixed gender group work situations
- Arranging social activities
- Providing information on halal outlets, cheaper grocery shops and prayer places
- Publishing a booklet containing information on general Muslim beliefs and culture
- Conducting employment workshops

# What we do?

- Support Muslim Student Association :Iftar, Orientation booth
- 'The Muslim Students Guide to Brisbane'
- Promote IWG : events for women - cooking class, English class, information on child care, family picnic, etc.
- Arranging workshops : supervisory relationships for HDR students
- PD session for student advisers
- Refer to resources : 'The exchange' community centre - employment workshop, Knitting class, programs for children, cooking class, English class





## What we do?

- Support Muslim Student Association :Iftar, Orientation booth
- 'The Muslim Students Guide to Brisbane'
- Promote IWG : events for women - cooking class, English class, information on child care, family picnic, etc.
- Arranging workshops : supervisory relationships for HDR students
- PD session for student advisers
- Refer to resources : 'The exchange' community centre - employment workshop, Knitting class, programs for children, cooking class, English class

tations

icipants

# Limitations

- A limited number of participants
- Indicative
- Muslim women are not an homogeneous group.
- Religious beliefs may vary depending on their educational level, length of stay overseas and cultural practices.
- Further research is necessary to explore how these variables may impact their experiences and perceptions.



# Needs of Muslim women at QUT

Youngnam Baek

QUT International Student Services



Country	Number of students
China	1,234
India	567
USA	345
UK	234
Other	123

Muslim International Students International Students in Australia in 2010

Country	Male	Female	Total
China	1,234	567	1,801
India	567	234	801
USA	345	123	468
UK	234	123	357
Other	123	67	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,503</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>3,597</b>

Female Muslim International Students  
46.3 per cent of total international students were females in 2010.  
100% of all higher education (HE) countries are now more females.

