

The varying socio-economic experience of Pakistani migrants in the UK

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THE PROJECT

The exact question I was dealing with was the "varying experience of Islamophobia within Pakistani communities across socio-economic indicators."

The question is important because it is often the case that "Pakistani" or migrant communities are portrayed as monolithic communities in the Media, and governmental policy has often been choreographed in a non-nuanced way that has prevented it from being effective.

So from the offset, my Laidlaw Project was designed to get a more accurate insight into the Pakistani communities of Great Britain.

LAIDLAW

The Laidlaw Project has been extremely enriching on two fronts for myself. Firstly, from an academic point of view, the opportunity that the Scheme presents to you is really unrivalled. Conducting such an immersive academic pursuit during an undergraduate degree is not really heard of. Moreover, being given the opportunity to explore questions of such personal importance was a great privilege.

Secondly, the leadership aspect of the scheme was something I thoroughly enjoyed. Prior to conducting the course, we undertook a leadership training programme which helped me understand a great deal about my leadership style and how to apply it to academic contexts.

METHODOLOGY

My methodology relied on three main avenues; interviews with migrants, secondary academic material and primary source material from migrants who travelled back to Pakistan. I first had to delimit the subgroups of "middle class" and "working class," which are terms fraught with complexity. I eventually decided to have quite specific educational and income based indicators to divide these two groups.

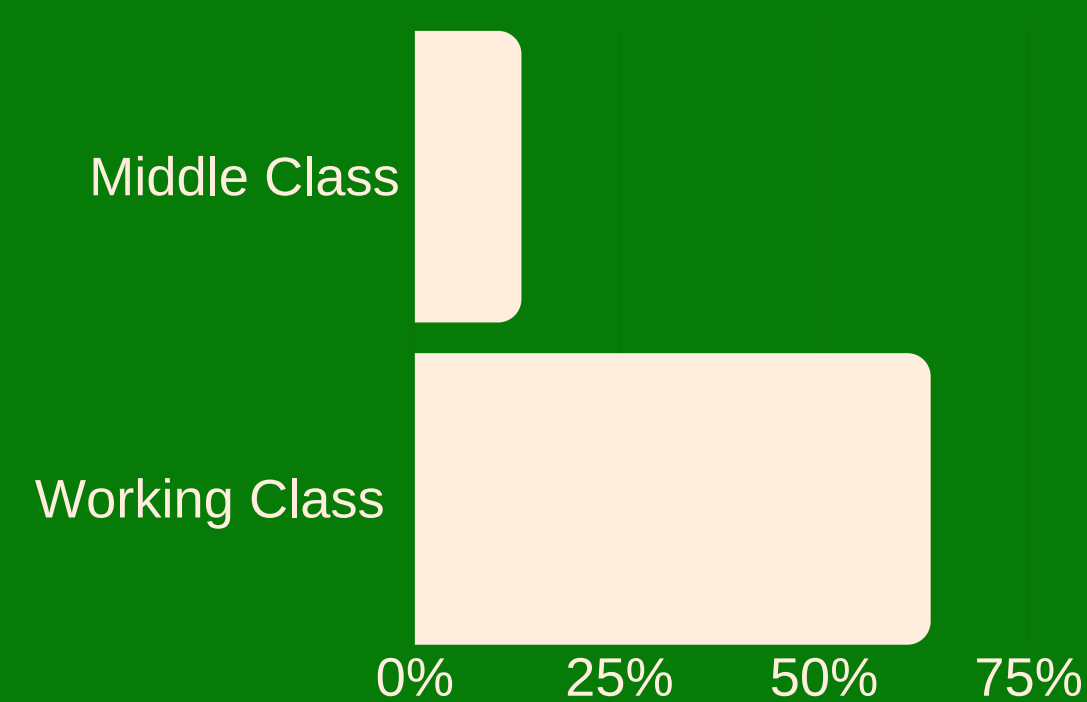
1) The interviews I conducted were quite emotional experiences, it was really touching to see the spectrum of emotions that came out during my questions. Accounts of the migrant experience included elements of nostalgia, gratefulness and confusion as motifs that came up during the questioning.

2) The secondary literature on this topic falls into the trap that my Project is trying to answer. It often deals with Pakistanis as a single group in the UK. However, there were definitely useful books such as Considine's "Islam, Race and Pluralism in the Pakistani Diaspora."

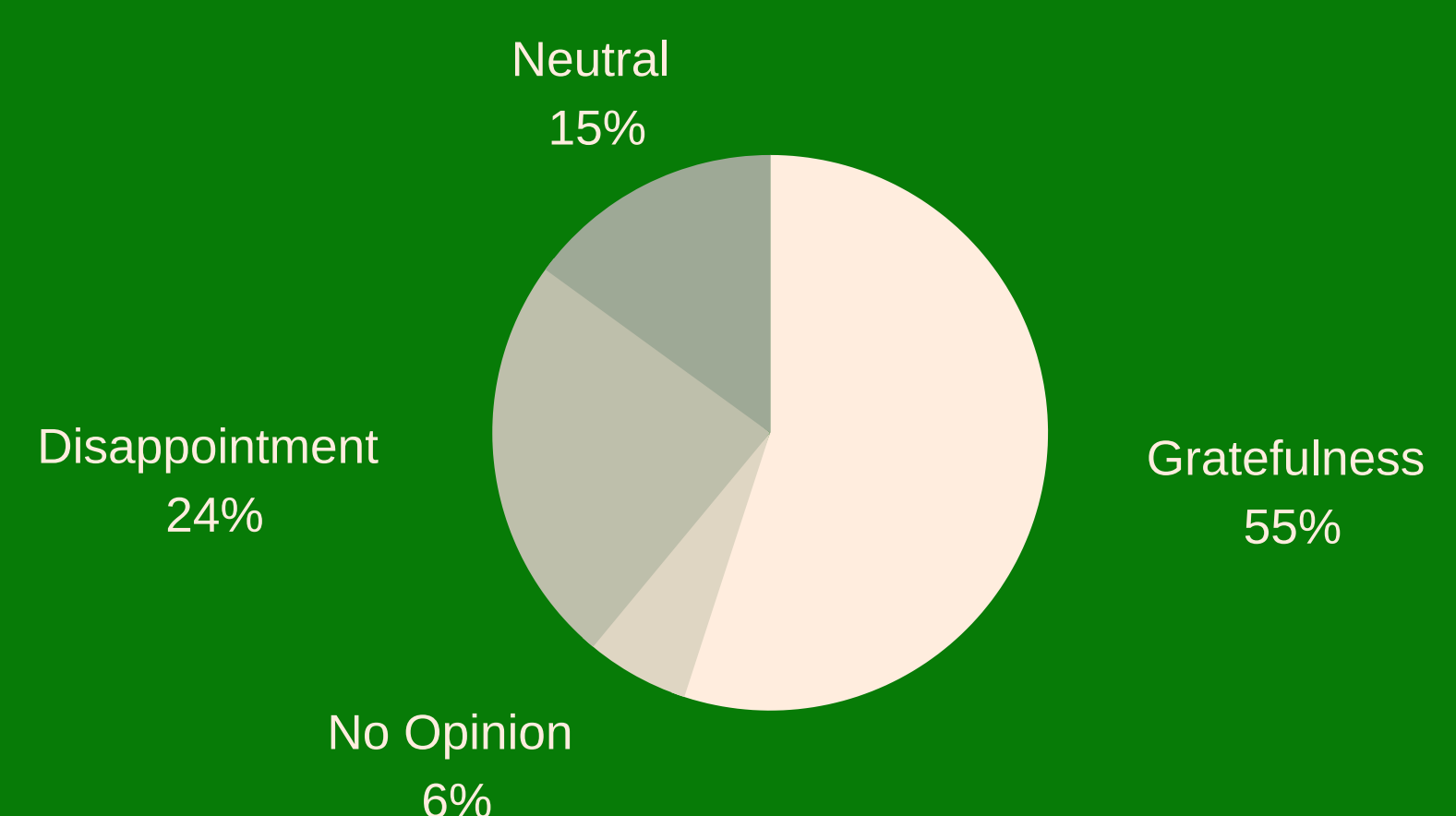
3) The sources that I was able to observe in universities and governmental archives in Pakistan were fascinating. Letters that migrants wrote back to their loved ones in the 1960s, like the interviews, revealed a range of emotions.

FINDINGS

What proportion of the respective sub groups had experienced Islamophobia at some point?

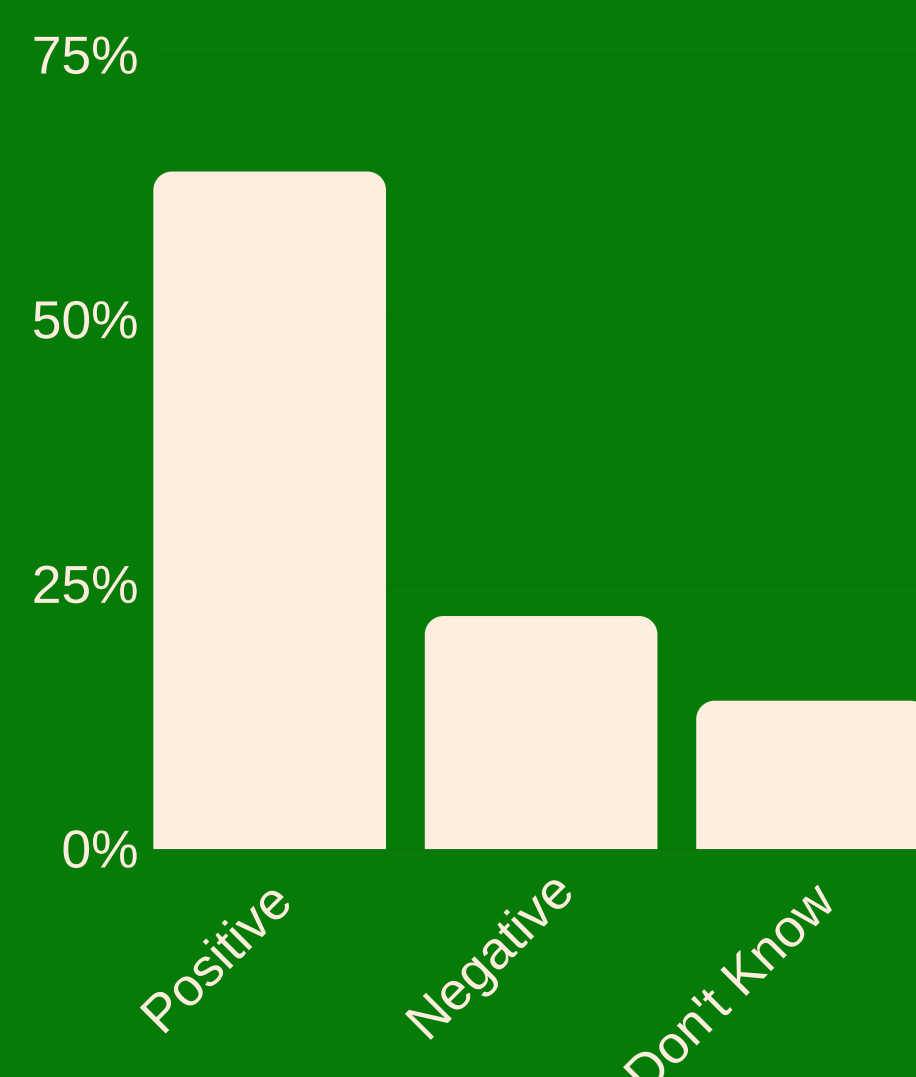


63% of British Pakistanis that fell into my category of "working class" had experienced Islamophobia at some point in their lives. This was five times more frequent than "middle class Muslims.



This pie chart illustrates a cumulative representation (across sub groups) of how immigrants viewed their migrant experiences. Of course, it is impossible to boil such a wide experience down to one word, but I used parameters to discern what category (word) that an interviewee's response would best fit into. The most interesting comparison point was that Middle Class respondents responded with a description of "gratefulness" 74% of the time, whereas "working class" respondents answered with "gratefulness" 33% of the time.

One of the most startling findings was that neither group had a particularly positive outlook for their futures inside the United Kingdom, with many of the respondents speaking openly about fears and insecurities about their current and future state of affairs. This was largely due to contemporary political rhetoric.



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