

Trends in the Canadian Muslim Civil Society Ecosystem: An Analysis of 50 Muslim Charities

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Abstract

As the Muslim presence in Canada grows and matures, so too does local Muslim philanthropy and the number of Muslim-serving, Muslim-led, and Muslim-focused charitable organizations. Limited scholarship currently considers how resources are allocated within this ecosystem. This paper analyzes trends in the Canadian Muslim charitable ecosystem. Building on Qasqas and Chowdhury's (2017) methodology, which looks at annual CRA data on Islamic religious groups, we conduct an analysis of publicly available data on the 50 largest Muslim-serving, Muslim-led, and Muslim-focused charities. We use an analytical framework adapted from Nimer's (2014) typology of Muslim organizations to help categorize organizations and philanthropic investments within this ecosystem. Through this categorization, we show there is disproportionate focus among Canadian Muslims on directing philanthropic investments internationally and toward international organizations and limited publicly available information on the value of Canadian Muslim philanthropic investment in Muslim public affairs and research organizations. These philanthropic patterns may result in Muslim organizations in key areas of interest experiencing underinvestment relative to local Muslim communities' needs. We argue that Canadian Muslim philanthropists should consider donating locally and based on areas of strategic need, and this requires a more systematic assessment of local communities and their needs.

Keywords: *Muslim philanthropy, Muslim charitable ecosystem, strategic philanthropy, Canadian Muslims*

Introduction

The purification of wealth through its redistribution is a central tenet of the Islamic faith. Zakat and sadaqah are common forms this redistribution can take

(Malik, 2016; GhaneaBassiri, 2017). As Mattson (2010), observes, not only is zakat a mandatory annual “wealth tax” on those who have surplus wealth, and one of the five major pillars of Islam, in the North American context, it also acts as an indicator of community cohesion. For many Muslims, this tax amounts to 2.5% of their excess wealth (although it is a greater percentage in certain denominations). There is some diversity of opinion on who zakat is redistributed *to*. The common understanding is that zakat is for individuals living in absolute poverty and are unable to meet their basic needs. However, contemporary scholars have allowed zakat to be used for institutions such as mosques, schools, and even civil rights organizations in Muslim minority contexts, although this is not the preferred target (Mattson, 2010). Further, the traditional understanding of zakat is that it is meant to be allocated locally, because those in closest proximity are most likely to be aware of the needs of their own communities (Mattson, 2010).

While zakat is the bare minimum required, and is mandatory, sadaqah, on the other hand, is a voluntary “meritorious act” (GhaneaBassiri, 2017; Siddiqui, 2010). It can take the form of additional charitable giving in ways that meaningfully address a need (Siddiqui, 2010). For example, it may take the form of a waqf or endowment, in which an institution and/or resources are allocated in perpetuity toward a worthy and beneficial cause, such as a soup kitchen, garden, or religious school (Mattson, 2010, Siddiqui, 2010). It is this form of giving that appears more like the North American tradition of “philanthropy,” which is also voluntary and directed toward a cause of the philanthropists’ choice yet aimed at promoting the “public good” (GhaneaBassiri, 2017). For ease of analysis, we consider all charitable giving to Muslim-led, Muslim-serving, and Muslim-focused charitable organizations, whether it arises from zakat or sadaqa, to be evidence of “Muslim philanthropy.”

In Canada, as the Muslim presence continues to grow and mature, we see Muslim charitable organizations and philanthropy growing and maturing as well (Waugh, 2018). Between 2001 and 2011, the population growth rate of 82% was greater than that of any other religious group (CBC, 2015). And according to certain Statistics Canada projections, the population will rise to 2,775,000 persons by 2036, making Muslims the second largest non-Christian group in the country (Morency et al., 2017).

The Canadian Muslim population is also diverse linguistically, racially, ethnically, and by sectarian affiliation (Shah, 2019). Consequently, the number of Muslim-led, Muslim-focused, and Muslim-serving charitable and nonprofit organizations that have emerged to meet the needs of this rising population are also diverse. They include social service organizations, religious institutions, Islamic schools, research institutes, human rights organizations, and special interest groups (Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2019).

This multiplicity of organizations and needs may create a dilemma for Muslims making decisions about where to allocate their philanthropic giving. For instance, a search of the MuslimLink website, an online hub for Muslims in Canada, for the term “fundraising” reveals over 138 results and illustrates just how much effort Muslim charitable and nonprofit organizations expend to secure

Muslim philanthropic dollars in Canada. It also reveals the number of causes that are competing for those dollars (MuslimLink, 2021).

Given this great number of causes competing for finite resources within Muslim communities, it may be valuable for Muslim philanthropists and the Muslim ecosystem as a whole to consider a localized and needs-based approach to resource distribution. In an ideal world, organizations and causes would be prioritized based on information about the current distribution of resources in the ecosystem and the most pressing needs (Breeze, 2013). However, donors generally have imperfect information about the state of the charitable ecosystem, according to several studies on donor behaviors. Donors typically also make philanthropic decisions subconsciously, based on their own personal tastes, rather than the needs of communities (Breeze & Mohan, 2016; Breeze, 2013). This study aims to counteract this dearth of information about the Muslim charitable ecosystem by exploring the scale of Muslim philanthropy in Canada and how Muslim philanthropic resources in Canada are allocated. This may contribute to more informed patterns of Muslim philanthropic giving.

This paper analyzes trends in the Canadian Muslim charitable ecosystem. Building on Qasqas and Chowdhury's (2017) methodology, which looks at annual CRA data on Islamic religious groups, we conduct an analysis of publicly available data on the 50 largest Muslim-serving, Muslim-led, and Muslim-focused charities. We use an analytical framework adapted from Nimer's (2014) typology of Muslim organizations to help categorize organizations and philanthropic investments within this ecosystem. Through this categorization, we show there is disproportionate focus among Canadian Muslims on directing philanthropic investments internationally and toward international organizations and limited publicly available information on the value of Canadian Muslim philanthropic investment in Muslim public affairs and research organizations. These philanthropic patterns may result in Muslim organizations in key areas of interest experiencing underinvestment relative to local Muslim communities' needs. We argue that Canadian Muslim philanthropists should consider donating locally and based on areas of strategic need, and this requires a more systematic assessment of local communities and their needs.

Before explaining our method in more detail and noting our findings, since our argument is based on a global overview of Muslim charities in Canada, we begin with a brief demographic profile of Muslim communities in Canada, as this information provides the jumping off point for Muslim philanthropy. We then summarize what is already known in the academic literature about Muslim philanthropy in Canada. Next, we present our analytical framework, method, and findings. We draw these findings together in the concluding section and end the paper with some suggestions for further research.

A Demographic Profile of Muslim Communities in Canada

The total Muslim population in Canada today numbers over a million persons, with the highest concentration of Muslims in the provinces of Ontario (581,950), Quebec (243,430) and Alberta (113,445), followed by British Columbia (79,310) (Statistics Canada, 2013). Populations in remaining provinces comprise less than

2% of the total Canadian Muslim population (Shah, 2019). Given Qasqas and Chodhury's (2017) results, it is projected that there will be more numerous Muslim charities and civil society organizations in regions where Muslim populations are concentrated.

Muslims have a relatively young presence in Canada, with 73% of Muslims born outside of Canada, while 27% are born in Canada (Shah, 2019). The Canadian Muslim population is also younger than the general Canadian population. Only one third of all Canadian Muslims are aged 40 or older, compared with over half of the general Canadian population (Shah, 2019). This may have a bearing on the philanthropic contributions of Muslim communities, but also informs the types of Muslim charitable institutions that have been established thus far (Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2016).

While Muslims in Canada are more likely to have post-secondary education on average than other Canadians, and about a quarter of Muslim households report annual incomes above \$100,000.00, they do so at a lower rate than other Canadians across generational status (Shah, 2019). In addition to this, Muslim Canadians are less likely than other Canadians to report being employed (57% vs. 63%). More Muslim Canadians report being unemployed and looking for work compared to non-Muslim Canadians (8% vs. 4%), and more Muslim Canadians report never having worked compared to non-Muslim Canadians (15% vs. 5%) (Shah, 2019). Further, a higher proportion of Canadian Muslims have low incomes than other Canadians, and fewer Canadian Muslims report high incomes in comparison to non-Muslim Canadians (Shah, 2019). This data on income levels and employment may have bearing on the value of Muslim philanthropic giving in Canada.

There is no data on income distribution among Canadian Muslims by sectarian affiliation or race, however, we know that Sunni Muslims comprise 64% of the Muslim population in Canada, Ithna Asheri Shia Muslims about 8%, while other denominations, including Ismaili, Ahmadi, and nondenominational, comprise about 10%. Nearly 18% of all Canadian Muslims did not identify with any sectarian affiliation (Shah, 2019).

What Do We Know About Muslim Philanthropy and Civil Society in Canada?

There are over 170,000 nonprofits and charities in Canada (Ahmad, 2020), over 86,000 of which are registered charities (Canada Helps, 2020). Among these are hundreds of Muslim-led and Muslim-serving civil society organizations, including both nonprofits and charities, which collectively engage thousands of volunteers (Ahmad, 2020; Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017).

With respect to philanthropic giving, one study notes that 32% of Ottawa Muslims polled in a 2011 study donated to religious institutions, however, as this is not a representative sample of the general Canadian Muslim population, no conclusions can be drawn about the value of Muslim Canadian charitable giving, or the frequency of Muslim Canadian giving (McCauley et al., 2011). It is challenging to find research other than Qasqas and Chowdhury's (2017) study,

which describes the volume of receipted and non-receipted donations to Islamic religious groups.

In the US context, studies find that American Muslims, despite having high incomes at rates comparable to the national average, give relatively less to religious institutions when compared to their American non-Muslim peers (Bagby, 2017). It remains unknown whether this holds true in the Canadian context as well. Khader and Siddiqui (2018), for instance, find that there are several possible explanations for low rates of giving to Muslim religious institutions. Explanations include the fact that Muslim Americans define philanthropy in ways that are not captured by researchers' definitions, Muslim Americans may choose to donate to non-religious causes due to the political environment, and also that American Muslims are an overall younger population (Ruff, 2005; Khader, 2018). Further research finds that many Muslim Americans also utilize informal philanthropy, not necessarily donating to registered charities (Khader, 2018).

According to several studies, Muslim nonprofits and charities fulfill various functions in the charitable ecosystem, which can allow us to classify them (Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017, 2019; Nimer, 2014). According to Nimer's (2014) typology, they can be characterized as fulfilling one of eight structural functions necessary for the success of Muslim communities in North America. These are mosques and Islamic centers; Islamic primary and secondary schools; community development groups; social service organizations; ethno-religious organizations, which are formed when ethnicity and religious identity converge; ethnic and community media; public affairs groups; and research organizations. Each of these categories have considerable overlap (Nimer, 2014). We return to this in more detail in section IV where we adapt Nimer's classifications for our work.

Another way of classifying Muslim nonprofits and charities is explored by Sider and Unruh (2004), who argue it is possible to categorize organizations by the degree to which faith-based content is integrated into various areas of the organization. These include organizational mission statements, founding history, external partnerships, governance, hiring, fundraising, and service delivery (Sider & Unruh, 2004). While studying the degree to which faith is integrated into Muslim nonprofits and charities is potentially an interesting area to explore, this is not the current focus of this paper. We are focused on examining where philanthropic dollars are spent in order better to understand their impact on supporting Canadian Muslim communities' needs.

Since 9/11, responding to systemic Islamophobia through advocacy, legal assistance, intra-community development, and media and public relations work has been an important function for Muslim public affairs organizations. These include the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), previously known as CAIR-CAN, the Ihya Foundation, and AMPAC, now known as NCCM Alberta, among others (Ahmad, 2020; Munawar et al., 2005; Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2019). Other Muslim nonprofits and charities, however, including the Muslim Canadian Congress, have played a role in fanning the flames of Islamophobia, most notably during the faith-based family arbitration debates (Razack, 2007; Bakht, 2006, 2007; Sharify Funke, 2009). A significant body of

research on Muslim nonprofit and charitable organizations in Canada is dedicated to public affairs organizations. This includes the now defunct Canadian Islamic Congress, CAIR-CAN (now NCCM), and the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW). Organizations like CCMW are described as having relationships with government agencies like Status of Women Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage (Atasoy, 2003), while CAIR-CAN/NCCM is also described as having relationships with state actors (Ross, 2013).

Additional research focuses on Muslim charitable and nonprofit institutions that address the need for culturally safe and spiritually responsive primary and secondary education for Muslim children, also known as Islamic schools (Zine, 2007; Memon, 2010; Ali & Bagley, 2015). Studies have been conducted within both Sunni and Ithna Ashari Shia Islamic schools (Zine, 2007).

Still other nonprofits and charities fulfill religious needs for Muslim communities, while also providing social and recreational activities, which we refer to as mosques as Islamic centers. These include the Al Rashid Mosque in Edmonton, the Islamic Centre of Sudbury, and the Islamic Centre of Kingston (Waugh, 2018; Kurd, 2018; Gaber, 2014; Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017). A recent analysis of 299 Muslim charities by the Tessellate Institute (2017) finds that, as of 2015, over 89% provided religious services and hence may fall in the “mosques, Islamic centers and associations” category (Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017).

More recently, social service organizations catering specifically to the needs of Muslim communities have emerged. These include groups like NISA Helpline, Naseeha Youth Helpline, DEEN Support Services, and others (Latif et al., 2020; Jisrawi, 2018). Similarly, arts organizations celebrating Islamic art and history have also recently emerged (Al-Khamis, 2019), as have research-oriented think tanks like The Tessellate Institute (Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017).

International relief and aid organizations, focused on delivering programs and services abroad, have also become a feature of Canadian Muslim communities, given connections between diasporic Muslim communities and their countries of origin, as well as the idea of a global Muslim ummah (Nimer, 2014). These include groups such as Human Concern International, based in Ottawa, and Islamic Relief Canada (Qasqas & Chowdhury, 2017; Nimer, 2014).

An important theme in the research is that many national umbrella Muslim public affairs organizations are not necessarily viewed as the most representative of grassroots Muslim communities and in fact may be unknown within grassroots Muslim communities (Ross, 2013; Kazemipur, 2014). Kazemipur (2014) notes this disconnect between Muslim civil society organizations and Muslim communities is likely as a result of the heterogeneity of Muslim communities in Canada. In addition to challenges of being disconnected from grassroots Muslim communities, Ross (2013) notes that umbrella Muslim public affairs organizations in the Canadian context also don't collaborate with one another as often as those in the American context. However, in recent years, this appears to be changing, with public affairs organizations like NCCM and the Black Muslim Initiative, Muslim Council of Peel, and others collaborating on responses in times of crisis (Black Muslim Initiative Press release, February 5, 2021; NCCM Press release,

June 22, 2020). This “trust” may have bearing on philanthropic patterns among Muslim communities in Canada.

There is limited research on the sources of funding and the level of access to government funding among Muslim nonprofits and charities. Qasqas and Chowdhury’s (2017) research, for instance, shows that for the 299 IRPs surveyed, only 4% of their total annual revenue in 2015 was from government funding, while 76% was from receipted and non-receipted donations, likely from within Canadian Muslim communities. While it is understandable that religious activities, the major function provided by Islamic religious groups, are not publicly funded, it will be important to determine whether this is the case for Muslim-led and Muslim-focused charities that do not provide religious services directly.

The literature on Muslim nonprofits and charities provides additional nuance to the Qasqas and Chowdhury (2017) quantitative data. For example, certain public affairs organizations, such as CCMW, receive federal government grants (Atasoy, 2003), while others, such as CAIR-CAN, have access to limited funding, which plays a role in the ability to lobby on foreign and domestic policy matters effectively (Ross, 2013).

Most Islamic schools are also excluded from access to public funding, with the exception of Islamic schools in Alberta (Zine, 2007), while mosques and Islamic centers like the Al Rashid Mosque have relied heavily on local Muslim philanthropy (Waugh, 2018; Kurd, 2018). However, others, like the Islamic Society of North America and Muslim Students Associations, have historically had access to philanthropic dollars from abroad also (Atasoy, 2003).

Research also shows that state-led “securitization” has impacted many Muslim nonprofits and charities in Canada post-9/11. In this environment, Muslim civil society actors can be subject to undue scrutiny by government officials and agencies, which has resulted in mistrust of state actors. This may lead Muslim organizations to forgo public funding to preserve their personal and institutional independence in this environment (Ahmad, 2020). An examination of quantitative data on sources of revenue for Muslim charities that across the ecosystem is required to determine the degree to which Muslim charitable organizations access public funding understand why this may be the case and how it may be improved.

Analytical Framework

We use an adaptation of Nimer’s (2014) typology to classify philanthropic investments among Muslim charitable organizations in Canada. As described earlier, Nimer argues Muslim nonprofits and charities can be characterized as fulfilling one of eight structural functions necessary for the success of Muslim communities in North America. These functions include:

1. Mosques and Islamic centers, which are places of worship but also act as community centers where a multiplicity of services may be provided, including religious education and funeral and burial services, among others.

2. Islamic primary and secondary schools, which have emerged in response to the challenges Muslim children face in public education, including challenges of discrimination and maintaining Muslim identity and practice.
3. Community development groups, which act as an umbrella body and support and coordinate mosques and Islamic centers as well as Islamic schools. These operate nationally or regionally and may include Muslim Students' Associations (MSAs) or other groups like the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).
4. Ethnic associations in the United States are described as being primarily organized around African American, South Asian, and Arab identities, although Shia Muslim groups are noted for organizing less around ethnic identity. These associations allow for the fostering of common linguistic and cultural identity and may offer cultural events, language classes, dance classes, and other activities.
5. Social service and charity organizations are described by Nimer (2014) as being important recipients of North American Muslims' zakat and sadaqa, which these organizations distribute locally or internationally to address poverty and other socioeconomic community needs.
6. Muslim community media is considered an important alternative source of information about the lived realities of Muslim communities in North America, especially in a climate where mainstream media stigmatizes and stereotypes Muslim communities. It therefore has the power to shape the discourse within North American communities about identity and social and political events, among others.
7. Public affairs organizations conduct advocacy and represent the interests of Muslim communities to help ensure their well-being and social and legal equality in North American societies.
8. Research organizations are those organizations established to serve the religious and political concerns of Muslim communities through research. They may be focused on spiritual questions of jurisprudence, or more political realities.

The current research, aimed at tracing how Muslim philanthropic funding is allocated and the degree to which it is allocated to address local needs, makes a distinction between social service organizations that primarily provide services locally, which we refer to as social service organizations, and those that primarily provide programs abroad, which we refer to as international development and aid organizations. Further, in the Canadian context, we find that community development organizations (for example, ISNA), ethno-religious organizations, and mosques and Islamic centers fulfill very similar functions, and so we refer to them collectively as mosques, Islamic centers, and associations. Our research also

finds that, in addition, important Muslim arts and cultural organizations are emerging in the ecosystem, and this must be recognized.

In accordance with these modifications to Nimer's (2014) typology, organizations were coded as being "Mosques and Islamic centers and associations" and "Islamic schools" if they provided full time primary and secondary education and weekend programs for children and youth; "social services" if they provided some form of income support, shelter support, foodbank, mental health and wellness, or settlement services; "public affairs" if their primary purpose was public policy dialogue and development on behalf of Muslim communities; "arts and cultural organizations" if their primary goals were artistic and cultural; or "international relief and aid" if their primary goal was to conduct development programs and services abroad. Certain organizations had multiple areas of focus and were coded as such. Organizations were also coded as conducting "international" or "local" activities, although certain organizations conducted both types of activities and were coded as such. Organizations' sectarian diversity was coded as Sunni, Ithna Asheri Shia, Ismaili, Ahmadiyya, non-denominational, not stated, or other.

Methods

While anecdotally, we know that Canadian Muslims donate to nonprofits and charities in Canada, financial data for Canadian Muslim nonprofits is generally not publicly available. As a result, we focus on Muslim charities, for which publicly available data does exist. Qasqas and Chowdhury's (2017) study includes a content analysis of programming as well as a financial analysis of registered charities that can be categorized as Islamic religious groups in Canada. It offers a useful method that can be adopted for our analysis. Using publicly available data on program descriptions, the authors categorize Islamic religious groups by area of focus for their content analysis. Using publicly available CRA data on Islamic religious groups, Qasqas and Chowdhury (2017) profile these Islamic religious groups by their geographical location, revenues, expenses, and staffing. They dissect revenue information further by source, including government funding, receipted donations, non-receipted donations, gifts from other charities, and all other revenues.

Our quantitative analysis of Muslim charities relies on publicly available data from Muslim charities' T3010 Annual Returns to make assessments about Muslim charitable giving for the year 2018. In contrast, the annual Canada Helps Annual Giving Report relies on tax filer data to understand charitable giving among Canadians, data that is not available to us disaggregated by religious groups at this time (Canada Helps, 2020). Because, unlike Qasqas and Chowdhury's 2017 study, we did not restrict ourselves to Islamic religious groups, in searching for Muslim-led and Muslim-focused charities, we searched the Canada Revenue Agency's *List of Charities* using the terms "Muslim" and "Islam." Based on our knowledge of Muslim charitable institutions, we also used additional search terms ("Amal," "Aga Khan," "International Development and Relief Foundation," "Penny Appeal," "Human Concern International," "Zakat," "Olive Tree," "Noor," "Jamaat," "Naseeha," "DEEN," and "Tessellate"), which

revealed a total of 359 charitable organizations. We do not believe this is a comprehensive estimate of the total number of Muslim charities in Canada. Although this is not a comprehensive list, we believe this will allow us to gain some insight and understand some trends in the Muslim organization ecosystem. We elected not to search the List of Charities by majority Muslim ethnic or national group, such as “Pakistani,” “Afghan,” “Somali,” or “Albanian,” given that not all members of these ethnic or national origin groups will identify as Muslim.

From the list of 359 charities yielded by this search, we selected the 50 largest organizations by annual revenue for further examination. Where data about annual revenue for an organization was unavailable for the year 2018 because an organization was registered as a charity after the year 2018 or an organization had not filed its tax returns for that year, it was coded as “0.” Similar to Qasqas and Chowdhury’s (2017) methodology, in our examination, we used content analysis of CRA descriptions as well as organizations’ websites to determine organizational focus. Given our interest in understanding where funding was going, we also considered whether organizations’ activities were directed internationally or within Canada and organizations’ sectarian affiliation as self-identified in their mission statements or on their websites. In accordance with Qasqas and Chowdhury’s methodology, we also examined organizations’ sources of funding, be they receipted or non-receipted donations, government funding, and donations from other charities.

Findings

The Muslim charitable organizations considered in this study are financially robust. An analysis of T3010 filings for the year 2018 reveals that these Muslim charities continue to collect sizable annual revenues, with Ontario and Alberta receiving the largest investments due to the size and historical longevity of the Muslim communities established there. Annual revenues are generated primarily from receipted and non-receipted donations, likely from within Muslim communities rather than any external (government or nongovernmental) sources of funding.

With over half of all Muslim charitable organizations investing in activities outside of Canada, foreign affairs remains a high priority for Muslim investment. It is unclear how much Muslim philanthropic funding is allocated toward Muslim public affairs organizations and activities, given that none of the charitable organizations considered had a public affairs mandate. The majority of Muslim philanthropic funding allocated toward local activities was invested in religious institutions and Islamic schools. Much smaller contributions were made to social service and arts and cultural charitable organizations.

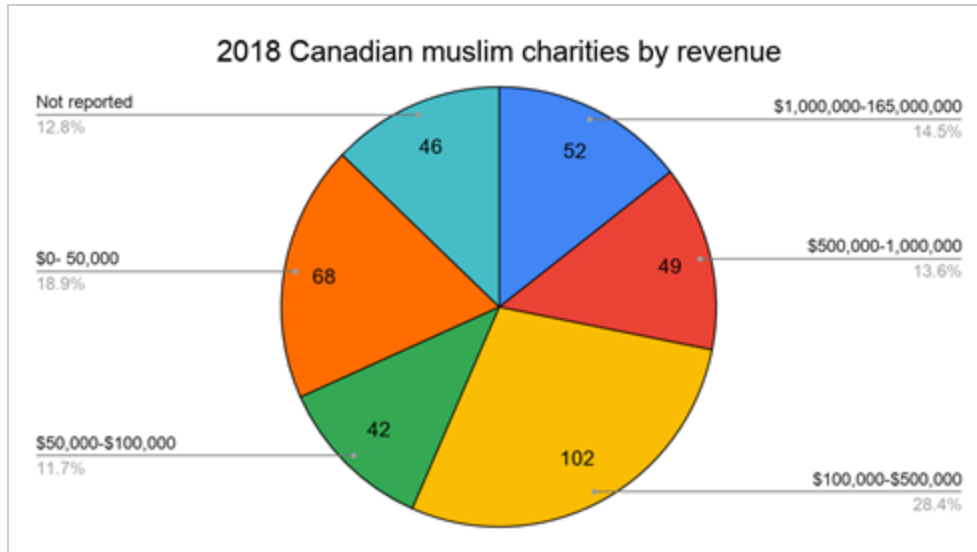


Figure 1: Muslim Charities in 2018 by Annual Revenue

The Scale of Investments in Muslim Charities

Based on publicly available data about the 359 Muslim charities yielded by our search of the *List of Charities* database, annual revenues in the Muslim organization ecosystem totaled at least \$520,380,478.00 in the year 2018. These charities varied considerably in their annual revenue. Table 1 and Figure 2 show the distribution of Muslim organizations by annual revenue, 72% having revenues under \$1,000,000.00.

Annual Revenue (2018)	# of Muslim Charities
\$1,000,000–165,000,000	52
\$500,000–\$1,000,000	49
\$100,000–\$500,000	102
\$50,000–\$100,000	42
\$0–\$50,000	68
Not reported	46

The 50 Largest Muslim Charities by Annual Revenue

The 50 largest Muslim charities each had annual revenues between \$1.1 million and \$164 million, totaling \$454,694,396.00, or 87.38% of investments in the Muslim charitable organization ecosystem.

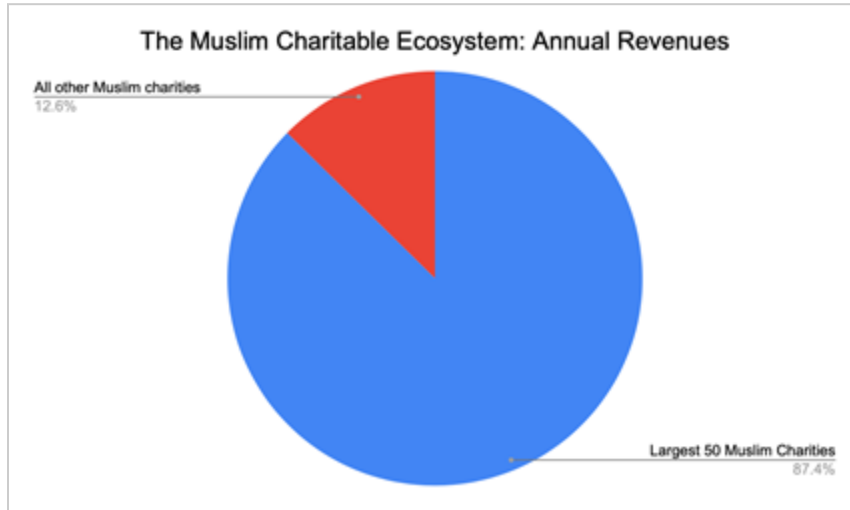


Figure 2: 50 largest Muslim charities’ share of total annual revenue in the Muslim ecosystem

Distribution across Canada

Of the annual revenues of the 50 largest charitable organizations, 89.49% (\$406,900,719) was invested in charitable organizations registered in Ontario; 6.99% (\$31,769,590) was invested in organizations registered in Alberta; 2.03% (\$9,244,875) was invested in organizations registered in BC; 0.89% (\$4,036,396) was invested in organizations registered in QC; and 0.6% (\$2,742,816) invested in organizations registered in MB.

The relatively small investments made in organizations registered in QC seem surprising, given that the second largest Muslim population in Canada is found in Quebec. These results may be explained by the fact that our search terms did not capture Muslim charitable organizations in Quebec, or that there are, in fact, fewer large, registered Muslim charities in Quebec due to the hostile political environment, or that there are lower socioeconomic resources among Quebec Muslim communities.

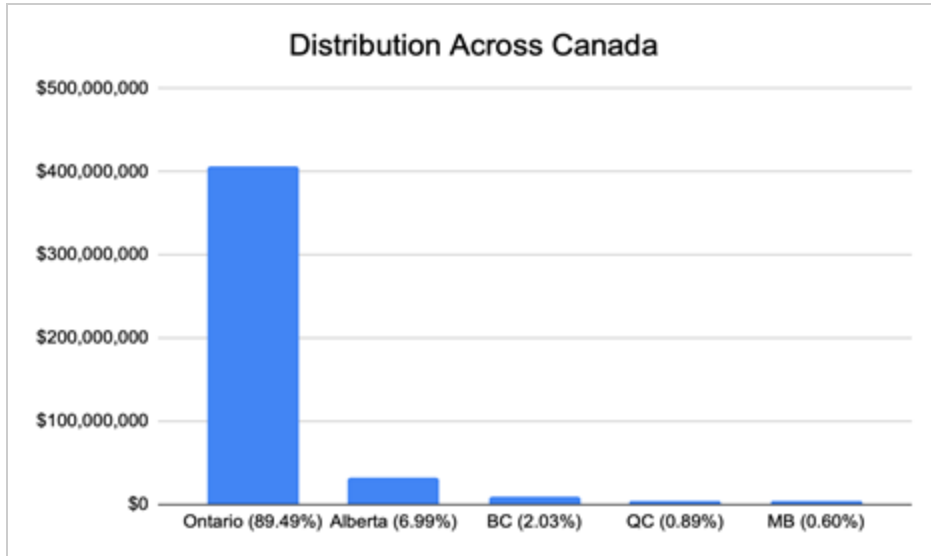


Figure 3: Provincial distribution of investment in Muslim charities

Investments in Organizations Focused Locally versus Internationally

Of the largest 50 organizations, over half of their donations (\$247,429,474; or 54.41%) were invested in nine charitable organizations conducting activities outside of Canada. Several of these organizations conducted activities both in Canada and internationally. Just 45.58% (\$207, 264,922) was allocated toward organizations’ activities in Canada.

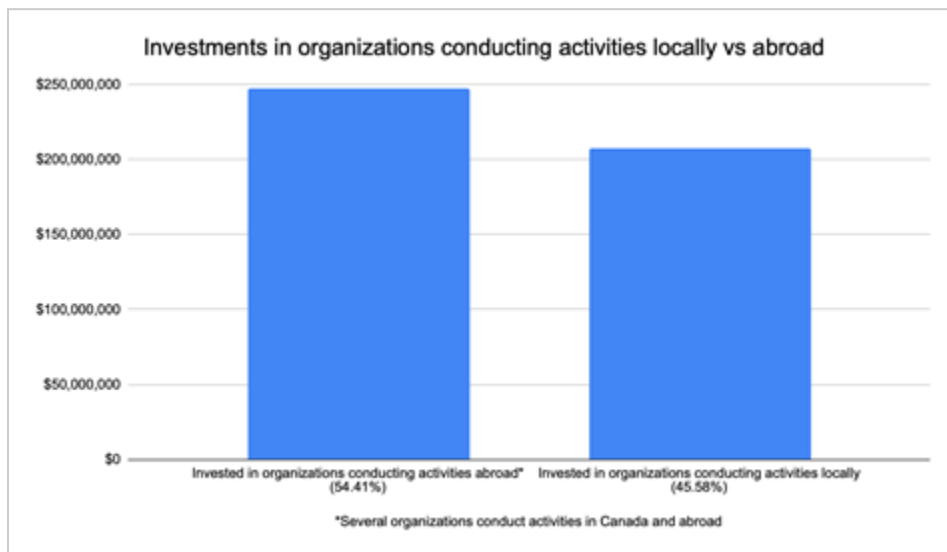


Figure 4: Investments in charities conducting activities locally vs internationally

Investments by Area of Focus

Of the annual revenue invested in local activities, 88.02% (\$182, 447,545.00) was invested in mosques, Islamic centers and associations, and Islamic schools, while the remaining 4.11% (\$8,518,517) was invested in social service organizations and 7.86% (\$16,298,860.00) in arts and cultural organizations.

It is unclear based on publicly available information how much is invested in Muslim public affairs organizations, given that there is no publicly available information for TCMV, which is a registered charity, or NCCM, which is not a registered charity. None of the 50 largest Muslim charities had an explicit public affairs focus, although both the Muslim Association of Canada and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada are currently registered federally as lobbyist organizations.

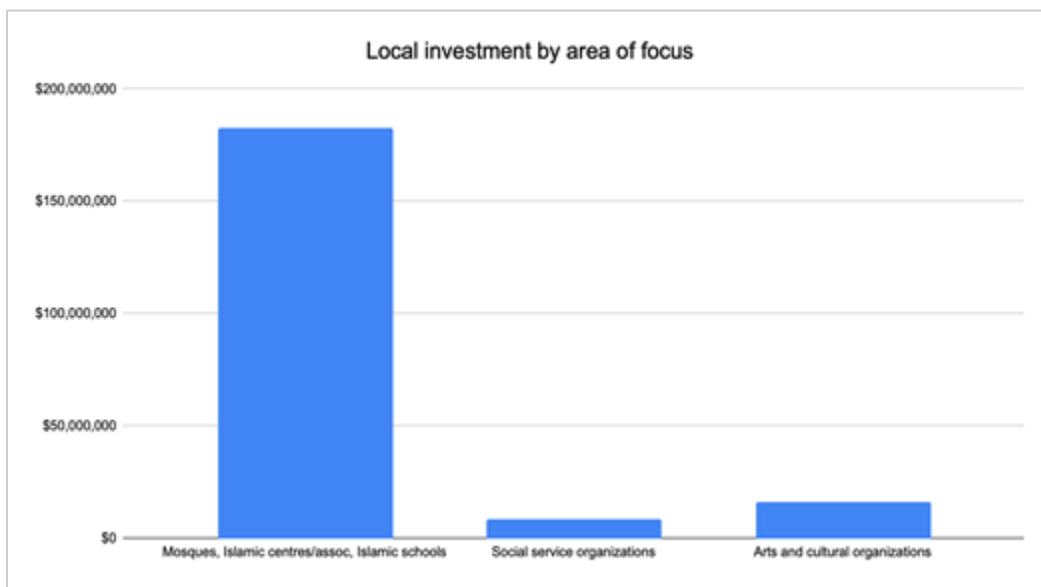


Figure 5: Local Investments by area of focus

Sectarian Diversity of Muslim Charities Considered

In our content analysis of Muslim charities, we also coded by sectarian affiliation, as self-identified in organizations’ missions and on organizations’ websites. We found that 20% of organizations self-identified as Sunni, 8% as Ithna Asheri Shia, 64% did not identify any denomination, 2% identified as non-denominational, 2% as Ahmadiyya, and 4% as Ismaili.

In terms of annual resources invested in organizations by sectarian affiliation, however, 13% of all revenue was invested in Muslim organizations self-identifying as Sunni, 4.7% in those identifying as Ithna Asheri Shia, 37.64% in those that did not identify any denominational affiliation, 0.3% in organizations that identified as non-denominational, 4.32% in organizations that identified as Ahmadiyya, and 39.68% in organizations identifying as Ismaili.

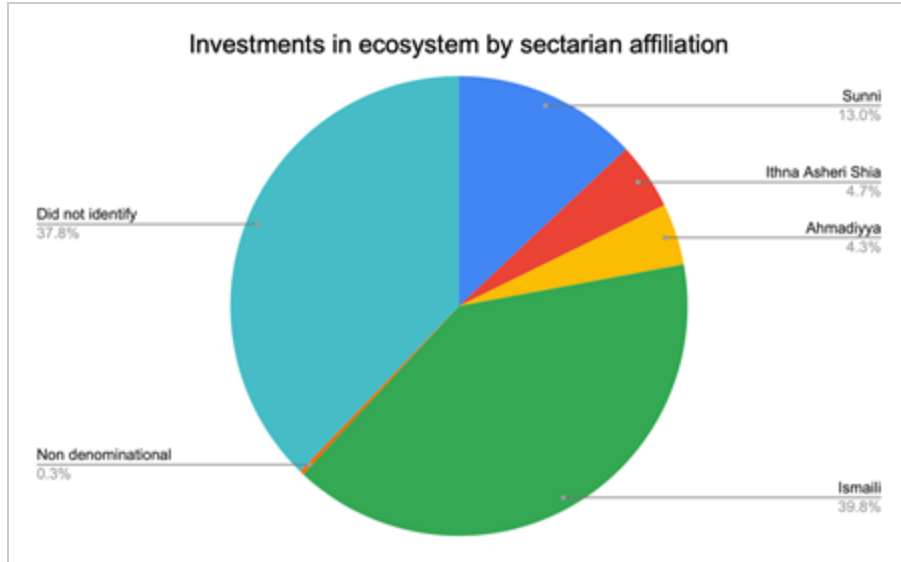


Figure 6: Investments by sectarian affiliation

Government Funding

Thirty-three of the 50 organizations surveyed received some kind of public funding, although this amounted to just 12.18% (\$55,378,275) of total Muslim annual organizational revenue. Twenty of the Muslim organizations surveyed received funding from other registered charities, but this was just 4.16% (\$18,904,832) of total annual revenue. We deduce that the remaining 63% (\$286,662,350.00) is comprised of Muslim philanthropic dollars.

When we look at access to government funding by organizations' area of focus, we find that the most sizable investments are made by governments into Muslim-led and Muslim-focused social services and also, Islamic schools in Alberta. Nonetheless, for these types of organizations, the average contribution of government funding to annual revenue remained just under or over 20%.

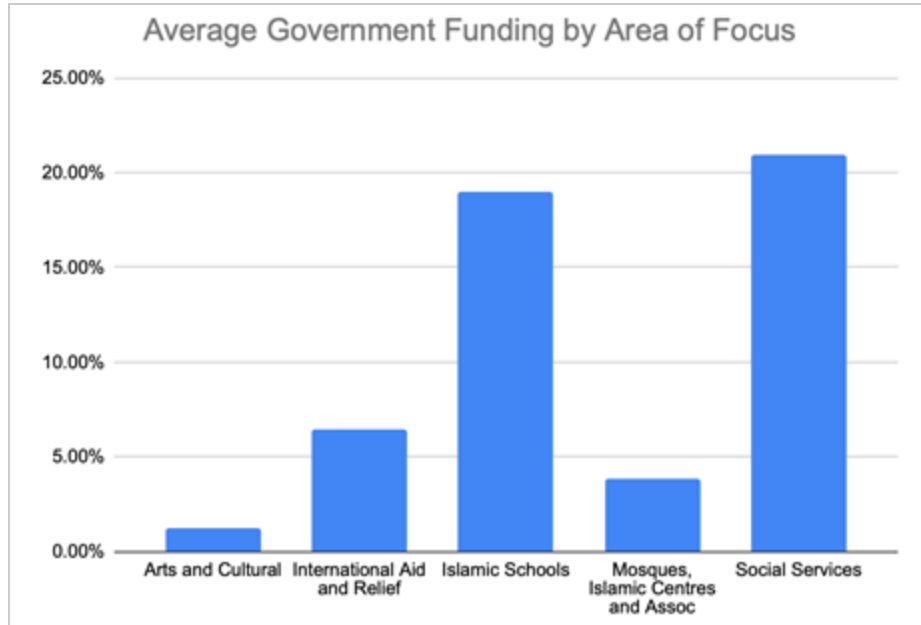


Figure 7: Average government funding by area of focus

Conclusions

It is clear from this analysis that millions of philanthropic dollars are contributed by Muslims in Canada to the Muslim civil society ecosystem. We know this occurs in spite of challenges that Muslim communities face, which demographic data shows include high unemployment and other barriers to full participation in Canadian society.

From this research, it is also clear that a considerable proportion of Muslim philanthropic efforts are invested by organizations in activities abroad. While we can make assumptions about why this occurs, e.g., preferences for allocating zakat to trusted organizations with a track record of providing poverty alleviation programs, or the idea of global Muslim solidarity and that diasporic communities maintain connections to their countries of origin, we do not have clear data on why so many different organizations exist to meet the international development and relief needs of Muslim communities.

This results in the duplication of efforts within the ecosystem. Our study revealed there are at least five organizations in the ecosystem with missions to promote international development and relief. We believe this duplication of efforts means resources are overinvested in internationally focused activities. This would also indicate limited coordination and division of labor among Muslim charitable organizations in Canada. As a result, there does not appear to be a clear strategy for how Muslim philanthropic dollars are allocated. Anecdotally there have been discussions within local Muslim communities about the need for greater oversight and strategy around the collection and allocation of Muslim philanthropic dollars that arise from zakat and sadaqa, however these efforts have yet to materialize.

The absence of a clear strategy may mean relatively fewer resources are spent by Muslim communities on addressing local needs, including social service needs. While we are not able to quantify the amount of spending on Muslim research and public affairs, given the persistent nature of Canadian Islamophobia, it also appears that Muslim philanthropic investments in research and advocacy addressing Islamophobia may be lower than is required. Further, the absence of any research and public affairs organizations from our list of the largest Muslim charities by revenue is telling.

While the study does not suggest that there is no cooperation and coordination between Muslim charitable organizations, it does show evidence the ecosystem is more competitive than it is collaborative in nature. If we fail to address these challenges, Muslim populations will continue to remain underserved by Muslim philanthropy well into the future. Further, demonstrated by the literature and our quantitative analysis of the 50 largest Muslim charities in the ecosystem, governments at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels continue to underfund Muslim charities, even when those charities conduct activities that are non-religious in nature. Muslim social service organizations, which receive the most funding of any other type of organization in the ecosystem, receive just over 20% of their annual revenue, on average, from public funding. This raises questions about the accessibility of public funding to Muslim-led and serving civil society organizations.

Areas of Further Research

Because this study is not a comprehensive scan of Muslim organizations, an environmental scan is required to help gain a complete picture of all the functions being carried out within the Muslim civil society ecosystem and the philanthropic dollars being allocated to different functions. Such an environmental scan will further enable resources to be allocated more effectively, in a way that avoids duplication of efforts and meets the growing needs of local Muslim communities. An environmental scan will also allow for more in-depth understanding of challenges inherent in accessing public funding for Muslim-led and serving organizations in Canada.

Such a scan will allow for a comparison of the extent and distribution of Muslim philanthropic investments with a systematic assessment of Muslim communities' needs to determine the causes experiencing overinvestment or underinvestment relative to local communities and their most pressing needs.

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