

2011 SURVEY OF
PRODUCTIVITY IN
RAMADAN

Strategies For The Modern Muslim Work Environment

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PRODUCTIVE
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In the Name of God the Most Merciful the Most Beneficent

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Executive Summary

For the estimated 700 million Muslim global workforce, the sacred month of Ramadan has tremendous impact on work-life balance and spiritual life. Businesses and governments face many challenges balancing and adapting to their workers' Ramadan needs, while striving for consistent productive output.

This groundbreaking study presents a fact-based assessment of the state of productivity during Ramadan across the world and offers recommendations for improving productivity of individuals, businesses and government institutions. The study includes 1), a survey that benchmarks actual Ramadan practices and Muslims' expectations, and 2) an assessment of governmental policy implications on work-hour differences in various Muslim majority countries and their resulting economic impact.

The survey was conducted online between June 28, 2011 and July 10, 2011, prior to Ramadan 2011, and marketed to Muslims in five key Muslim-majority countries (Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) as well as five countries with sizeable Muslim minorities (USA, UK, India, Canada, and Australia). A total of 1524 responses were received, representing a 99% confidence level with a +/- 4% margin of error.

Select insights & recommendations for Individuals

- Key areas of spiritual activities that most Muslims struggle with were highlighted (reading Qur'an regularly 66%, focusing during worship 53%, Taraweeh attendance 47%, others), suggesting a need for Muslims to better prepare for Ramadan.
- 77% of fasting Muslims would like to keep their work productivity the same. However, the reality is that they undertake added spiritual activities during Ramadan (attend Taraweeh prayers 52%, others) and physical energy levels are low. This again supports the need to prepare for Ramadan as well as to reprioritize regular activities in order to accommodate one's Ramadan needs.

Insights & recommendations for Employers

- 77% of survey respondents said they try to maintain the same level of work productivity during Ramadan and feel that work should continue uninterrupted. However, increased spiritual activity is to be expected and should be accommodated, especially for work that requires a severe physical demand.
- For OIC¹ (Muslim majority countries) based employers, the survey highlights areas in which they can improve efforts to support employees during Ramadan and productivity (e.g. arranging Iftar gatherings, Eid gatherings, and Eid gift-giving and arranging for special Ramadan working hours, prayer times and facilities.)
- Although commendable, non-OIC² based employees were less happy with their employers' flexibility during Ramadan compared to OIC based employees (48% vs. 74%). Area in which Non-OIC based employers can improve their efforts included setting special Ramadan working hours.

Insights & recommendations for OIC member governments

- Although a detailed analysis of economic impact should be undertaken by each government, the economic impact assessment in this study shows that the economies suffer roughly 4% in monthly GDP per hour of work reduction per day.
- Some key questions for governments to evaluate:
 - Is a two hour reduction necessary?
 - Is a mix of one hour reduction and one hour adjustment optimal, as generally practiced in Indonesia and Malaysia?
 - Do hour reductions generate the desired increase in spiritual connectivity, or do they have an adverse effect (e.g. laziness, apathy, etc.)?
 - Does a segmented approach need to be considered, i.e., work flexibility, for certain type of physical labor?

¹ OIC = Organization of Islamic Conference 57 mostly Muslim majority countries

² Countries with minority Muslim populations



Introduction

For the estimated 700 million Muslim global workforce, the sacred month of Ramadan has a tremendous impact on work-life balance and spiritual life. The modern Muslim worker faces a variety of productivity challenges during Ramadan, and as a result, businesses and governments face many challenges in adapting to the modern Muslim workers' demands and ensuring consistent production throughout the month.

The purpose of this report is to develop a fact-based assessment of the state of Ramadan productivity across the world and offer recommendations for improving the productivity of individuals, businesses and government institutions during Ramadan.

The report is based on primary and secondary research that includes:

- A survey of Muslims working in Muslim majority OIC-member countries (Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and others) and in countries where Muslims are minorities (USA, UK, India, Canada, and Australia) to benchmark their productivity during Ramadan,
- A basic analysis of the economic impact of changes in work environment during Ramadan among key OIC members,
- An assessment based on Islamic religious injunctions on Ramadan productivity, and
- Recommended strategies to increase productivity of the Muslim worker based on survey results, contextual analysis, and the researchers' point of view.

Glossary of Terms

Allah	The Arabic term for God and the appellation of God for Muslims, regardless of race, ethnicity, or native language.
Eid	The Islamic festivity that marks the end of the Ramadan fast.
Hadith	Sayings, actions, approvals, and physical and character descriptions attributed to Prophet Muhammad.
Hanafi	One of the four Muslim religious leaders (Imams) who founded one of the four (Hanafi) Schools of Thought.
Ihsan	An Arabic term meaning "perfection" or "excellence." Ihsan is the act of demonstrating one's faith into both deeds and actions as a sign of religious conviction.
Iftar	The sunset meal that marks the end of the daily fast.
Prophet Muhammad	The 25 th Prophet mentioned in the Qur'an, who is also known as Allah's final Messenger to the whole of mankind. It was through Prophet Muhammad that the Qur'an was revealed and the message of Islam was disseminated.
Qur'an	Islam's holy scripture as revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad.
Ramadan	The 9 th month of the Islamic calendar representing the holy month of the fast.
Shari'ah	Islamic law.
Taraweeh	A night prayer that Muslims observe during Ramadan.
Tirmidhi	One of the six major Hadith collections.
Umar bin Al Khattab	A companion of Prophet Muhammad and the second rightfully-guided Caliph of Islam.
Ummah	A united nation of people. In the context of Islam, the word ummah is used to mean the entire Muslim world.
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference – 57 member mostly Muslim majority countries.
Non-OIC	Referenced in this report as countries where Muslims are minorities.

Acknowledgements

ABOUT DinarStandard™

www.dinarstandard.com; advisory.dinarstandard.com

DinarStandard™ specializes in the emerging Muslim markets -- helping companies with their growth strategies. For more than 5 years, DinarStandard™ has been a pioneer in researching and highlighting the emergence of the Muslim Lifestyle Market globally. It has been delivering Muslim market analysis, feasibility studies and growth strategies for its clients. Its anchor report, the DS100--Top 100 Businesses of the Muslim World, and other original reports are regularly covered by global media such as The Economist, Forbes, Zaman (Turkey,) Malaysian Star and many others.

ABOUT ProductiveMuslim Ltd

www.productivemuslim.com; www.productiveramadan.com

ProductiveMuslim Ltd is a private UK company dedicated to promoting productivity amongst Muslims worldwide. Since its launch in June 2008, *ProductiveMuslim Ltd* launched three websites dedicated to its message of productivity for the Muslim market, these are: *ProductiveMuslim.com*, *ProductiveRamadan.com*, and *LeadingProductiveLives.com*. It delivers its message through daily articles, weekly videos, weekly e-mail newsletter, as well as seminars and workshops in various cities. It specializes in developing productivity resources for its audience including worksheets, animation videos, and interactive online courses for members.

Acknowledgements:

This report was authored by DinarStandard team: *Rafi-uddin Shikoh, Maria Zain* (Analysis), *Deborah McNichol* (Editor,) with input and suggestions from the ProductiveMuslim team: *Mohammed Faris, Lotifa Begum, Ahlam Yassin, Saliha Celenlizade*, as well as expert advice and input from the following advisors: *Husain Quadri*, and *Farah Ghias*. ProductiveMuslim team was also instrumental in distribution of the survey.



Muslim pilgrims gather on the slopes of Mount Uhud to pray for the people who lost their lives during the Battle of Uhud.

DISCLAIMER: We present here select Quranic and prophetic statements in regards to Ramadan and productivity with sources referenced. We are not Sharia scholars or that this section has not been reviewed by any scholarly body for comprehensiveness.

From a spiritual perspective, the purpose of the Muslim fast has been articulated in the following verse of the Qur'an:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.”³

Moreover, the Qur'an mentions that fasting is not meant to be a burden or difficulty for the person, Allah says:

“Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.”⁴

³ Holy Qur'an, Al-Baqara, Chapter #2, Verse #183, Yusuf Ali Translation.

⁴ Holy Qur'an, Al-Baqara, Chapter #2, Verse #185, Yusuf Ali Translation.

Fasting is not meant to be a physical exercise of self-restraint, but a spiritual exercise of self-restraint from bad deeds and all that goes against the teachings of Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever does not give up false statements (i.e. telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink." ⁵

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized and encouraged extra worship during the month. He said:

"Ramadan has come to you. (It is) a month of blessing, in which Allah covers you with blessing, for He sends down Mercy, decreases sins and answers prayers. In it, Allah looks at your competition (in good deeds), and boasts about you to His angels. So show Allah goodness from yourselves, for the unfortunate one is he who is deprived in (this month) of the mercy of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted." ⁶

These encouraging injunctions to increase worship need also to be balanced by other similar injunctions from the Qur'an and Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that enjoin the Muslim worker to take care of his or her responsibilities and perform duties with utmost care:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "God loves that when any one of you does a job, he does it perfectly." ⁷

He (peace be upon him) also said: "He whom we have appointed for a job and have provided with livelihood, then whatever he appropriates beyond this is ill-gotten." ⁸

Historically, Ramadan was a productive time for the advancement of the Ummah, "It is in this noble month that many great events occurred in the history of Islam like the victory of faith over disbelief in the Battle of Badr, the conquest of Makkah, Battle of 'Ayn Jaaloot and other decisive battles." ⁹

Given the added demands of fasting and extra worship during Ramadan, it is clear why observant Muslim workers may find it difficult to balance Ramadan's spiritual demands with work and family responsibilities.

As for employers, how far should they go to accommodate their Muslim workers' spiritual demands? Saif Bin Rashid Al Gabiri, Director of Ifta and Research Administration in the Dubai Department of Islamic Affairs and Awqaf, summarizes the issue succinctly: "The month of Ramadan is a month of performing rituals, praying and fasting. However, working is part of worshipping. The Sharia does not force the employer to reduce working hours. There is no clause that says working hours must be reduced. On the other hand, Muslims must get time to fulfill their religious duties." ¹⁰

⁵ Sahih Bukhari, Book #73, Hadith #83.

⁶ Narrated by Tabarani.

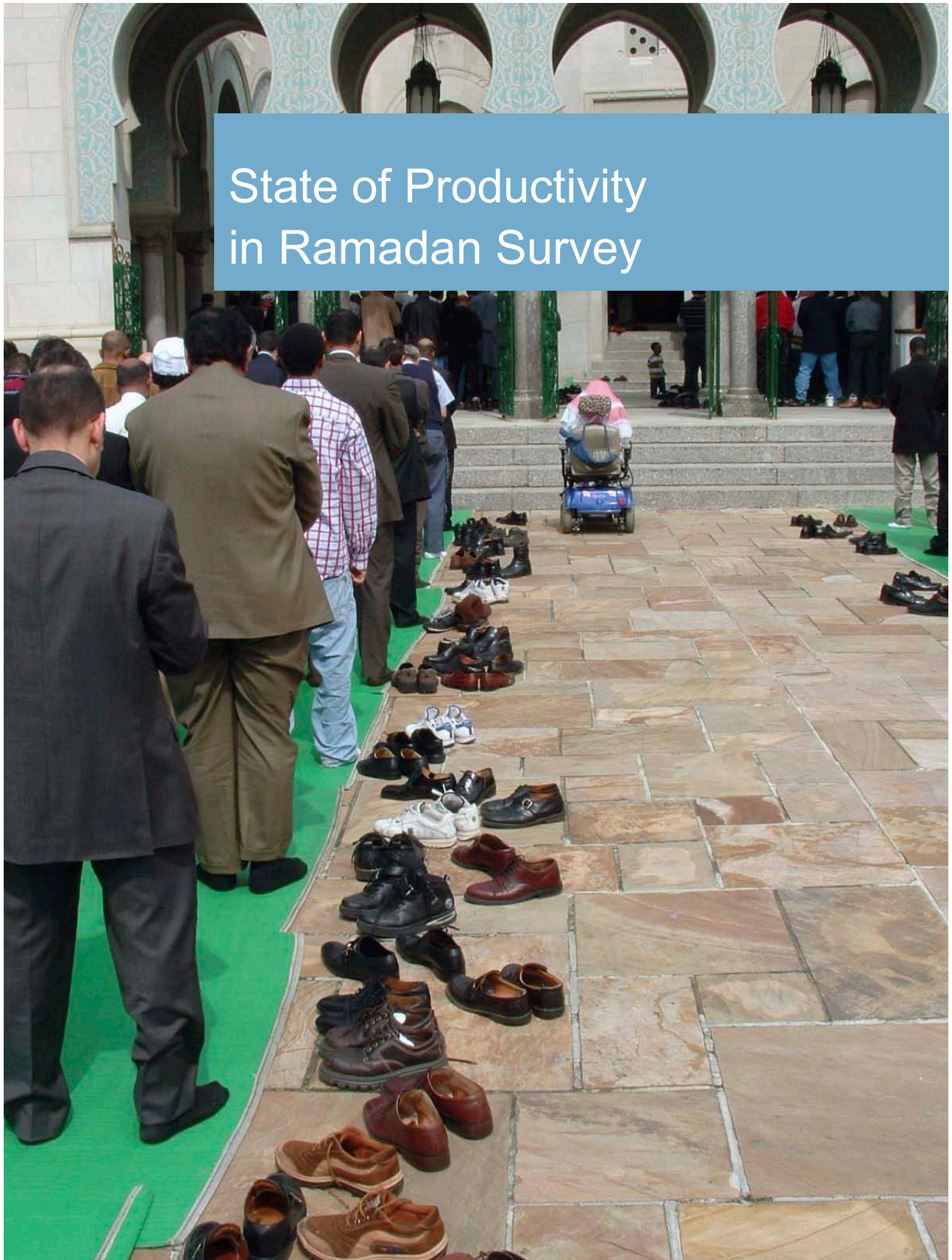
⁷ Bayhaqi's Shu'ab al-iman by Suyuti, v.1, p. 75

⁸ Abu Dawud, v. 2, p.121

⁹ Ramadan and Eeman (Faith) by 'Alî Abd-ur-Rahmân al-Hudhaifi, Islamic Network:

<http://www.islaam.net/main/display.php?id=369&category=130>

¹⁰ "Is work during Ramadan worship?" Spero News, accessed August 22, 2011, <http://www.speroforum.com/a/2064/Is-work-during-Ramadan-worship>



State of Productivity in Ramadan Survey

Survey Methodology

Data Collection: The 2011 Productivity in Ramadan survey was conducted between June 28, 2011 and July 10, 2011, ending before the start of Ramadan 2011. The survey was conducted online in the English language only and marketed to Muslims in five key Muslim-majority countries (Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) and five countries with sizeable Muslim minorities (USA, UK, India, Canada, and Australia) through ProductiveMuslim Ltd and DinarStandard.com's network of readers and followers (estimated reach of over 90,000).

Fifteen questions were asked, which fell under the following categories:

Survey question categories

1	Upcoming Ramadan expectations (spiritually)
2	Previous Ramadan experience (spiritually)
3	Work productivity during Ramadan
4	Satisfaction with Employer during Ramadan
5	Expectations of Employers during Ramadan

Scoring: The survey was designed to ensure that respondents could answer all questions as easily as possible. This was done by asking a limited set of questions with most questions being 'multiple select' options. In all such questions, and any binary (YES/NO) questions, participants were given the option to select OTHER as an option and provide their open-ended answers.

Survey Limitations: This survey has a few limitations which may affect the accuracy of the results:

There is a response bias element to the participant profile of this survey. First, an assumption can be made that those who participate and respond to the survey are predisposed to Islam. Second, the survey is reflective of English-speaking Muslims across the world. Finally, the survey presents an employee assessment of work productivity impact and does not take the employer view into account. These factors limit the survey's ability to truly represent the wide diversity of Muslim views even from the targeted markets.

In addition, the survey questions did not offer a scale for potential responses (e.g. 1,2,3,4,5), which would have provided the respondent with some degree of latitude to answer the question in a case where he or she might not be sure of the answer. As a result, the respondent may have, if in doubt, ticked off a selection, though the activity may not be fully carried out by the respondent or the employer.

Respondent Profile

The survey received a total of 1524 valid responses. Valid responses were those with complete demographic information submitted. This response rate represents 99% confidence level with a +/- 4% margin of error.

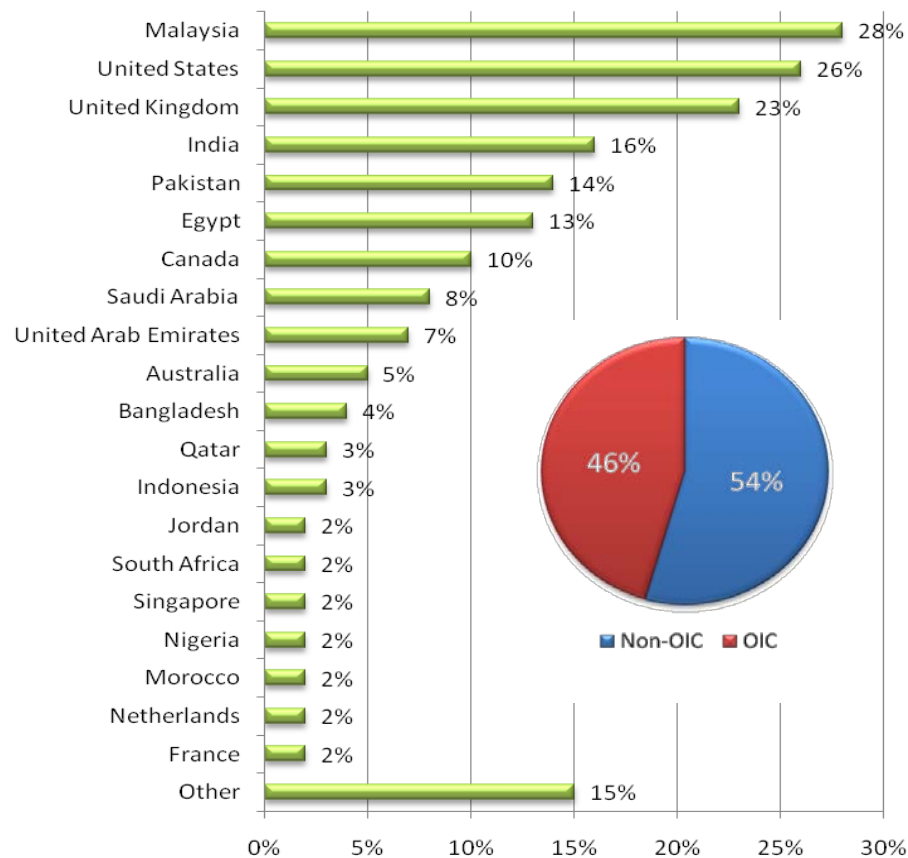
46% of the responses were from Muslim majority OIC member countries, while 54% of the responses were from non-OIC countries (See Chart). The number of respondents from both OIC and non-OIC countries is

fairly evenly distributed and allows us to show differences in spiritual and work experience, productivity, and expectation among these two environments.

The Chart below also shows percentage of responses from each country and shows a varied geographic distribution across non-OIC and OIC markets.

Within OIC member countries, the largest number of responses were from Malaysia (28%), Pakistan (14%), Egypt (13%), Saudi Arabia (8%), and United Arab Emirates (UAE) (7%). Among non-OIC countries, most responses were from United States (USA) (26%), United Kingdom (UK) (23%), India (16%), Canada (10%), and Australia (5%). Given the low number of per country responses, much of the analysis is done at the OIC and non-OIC aggregate country levels. For the purposes of the survey, the sample size and distribution are within acceptable limits and therefore enable us to make valid inferences about the Muslim population.

Respondent Countries & OIC/ Non-OIC Country breakdown



Gender distribution of the survey respondents is 59% female and 41% male. 53% of the responses are from working professionals (any employed person), 38% from students, and 9% are unemployed.

63% of the respondents have completed college (40% graduate, 23% post graduate). The income of 66% of respondents is less than \$45,000/year, and 17% earn above \$66,000/year.

Results

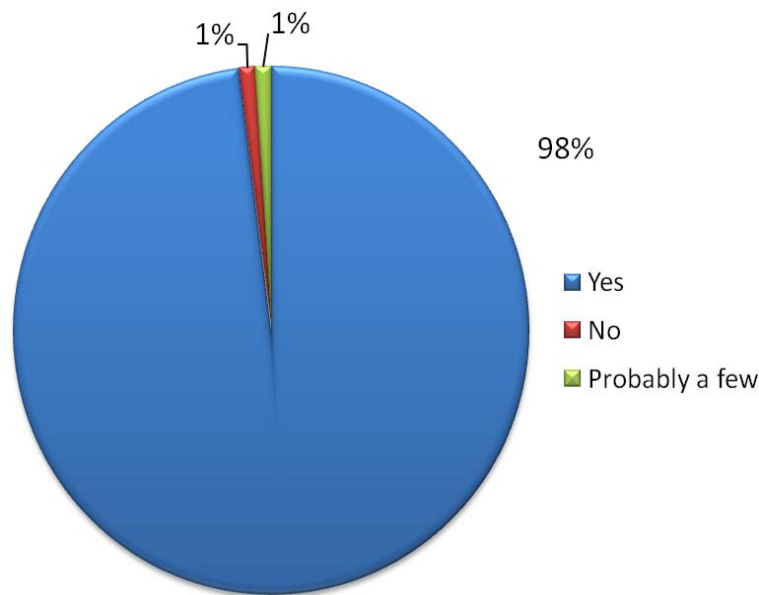
How many are fasting?

98% of the survey respondents said they planned to fast the entire month of Ramadan. This percentage was consistent across Muslim majority OIC countries and non-OIC countries.

This response shows a surprisingly high percentage of adherence to fasting, as it is commonly noted that other religious obligations throughout the year (e.g. five daily prayers) are not practiced consistently by all Muslims. On the one hand, the response reflects the importance Muslims give to the month of Ramadan and the ritual of fasting. Conversely, this may also be reflective of survey response bias as those who voluntarily participate in the survey may be those who are actively practicing Islam.

Given this response, it is safe to evaluate the rest of the responses as given by Muslims who fast during the month of Ramadan.

Question: Do you intend to fast during the upcoming Ramadan?



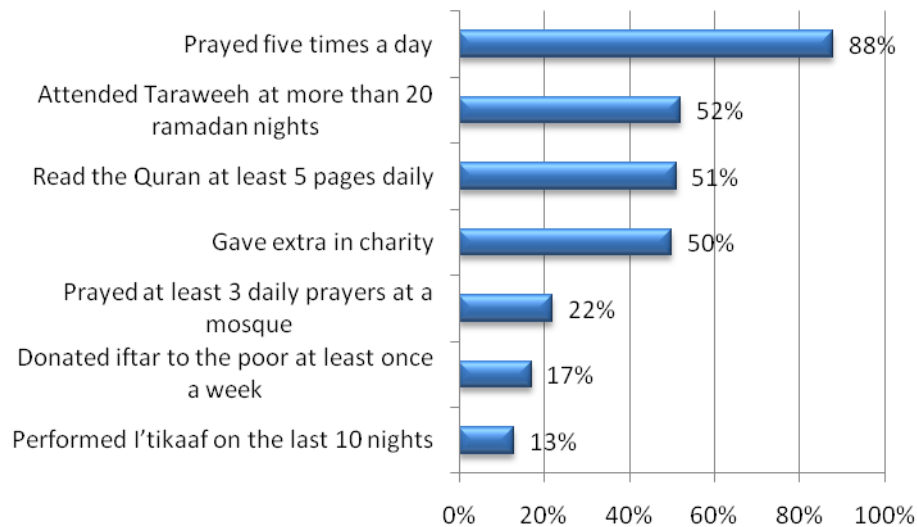
What were the most practiced activities during last Ramadan?

From among select mandatory or recommended religious practices during Ramadan, the most common activity was offering the five daily prayers. 88% of respondents said they prayed the obligatory five daily prayers during the prior Ramadan. Around half of the respondents said they gave extra charity during Ramadan. Half of the respondents also said they read the Qur'an daily and about the same said they attended the extra nightly congregational prayers (Taraweeh) regularly.

The activities that were least practiced were praying at least three daily prayers at a mosque (22%), donating Iftar to the poor once a week (17%), and performing I'tikaaf on the last ten nights of the month (13%).

These responses highlight a high level of spiritual activity taken on by Muslims during Ramadan that are both personal and social or communal, evident by the fact that half of the Muslims increase their charitable giving during Ramadan.

Question: Which of the following did you do during the last Ramadan?

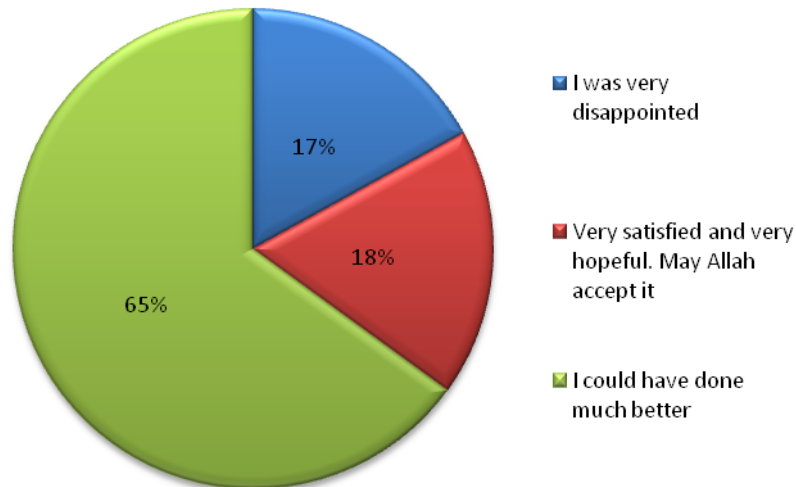


What was the level of satisfaction with Ramadan spirituality from last year?

The majority of survey respondents (65%) felt they could have done much better spiritually during Ramadan 2010. Meanwhile, 17% were very disappointed with the quality of their spirituality. However, 18% were very satisfied with their efforts and are hopeful that Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta'ala) would accept their deeds.

Even having performed a high level of spiritual activity (see previous question), a high percentage of respondents wished they had done more during Ramadan. This can be inferred as not just a disappointment, but a desire to improve Ramadan spirituality in the future (i.e., striving for personal improvement, excellence in prayers, etc.).

Question: How satisfied were you with your Ramadan spirituality from last year?

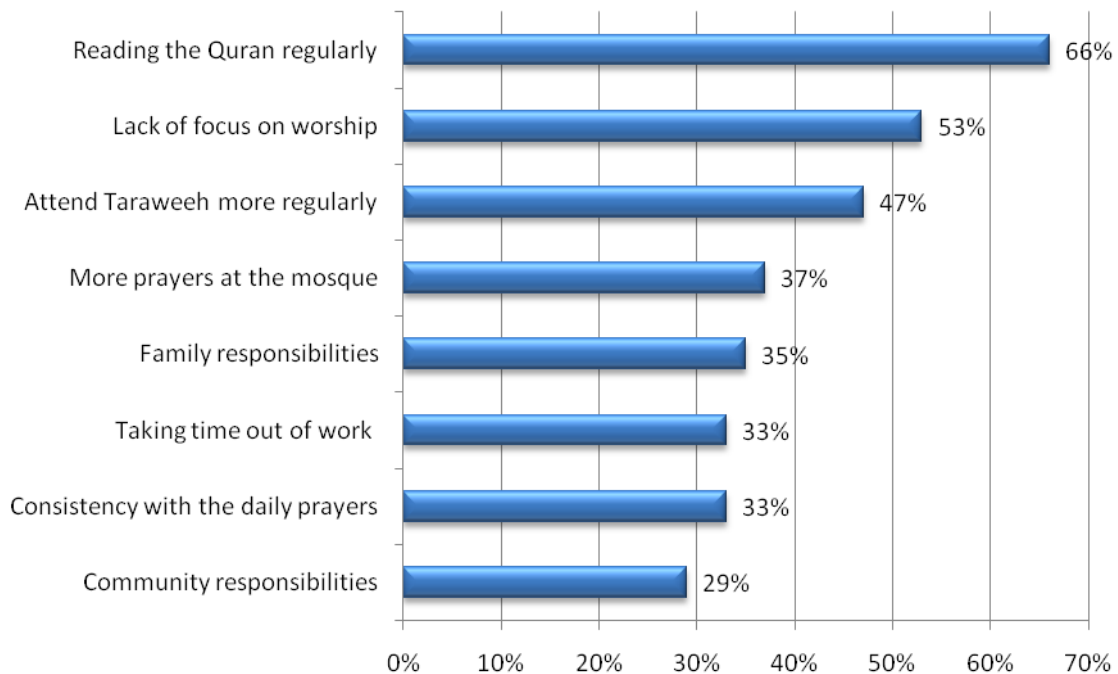


What are the biggest challenges faced in strengthening spirituality during Ramadan?

The biggest challenge Muslims faced in observing Ramadan spiritual activities was their struggle to read the Qur'an regularly (66%). The second biggest challenge was "lack of focus during worship" (53%), closely followed by "not being able to attend Taraweeh prayers regularly" (47%). Other areas included praying regularly at a mosque, maintaining family responsibilities, being consistent in prayer, work inflexibility, and maintaining community responsibilities.

The variety of challenges Muslims struggle with to improve their Ramadan spirituality, as shown in this response, reflects added pressure Muslims have during Ramadan.

Question: What are your biggest challenges to develop spiritually during Ramadan?



The remainder of the results in this report reflect the answers of the surveys employed respondents.

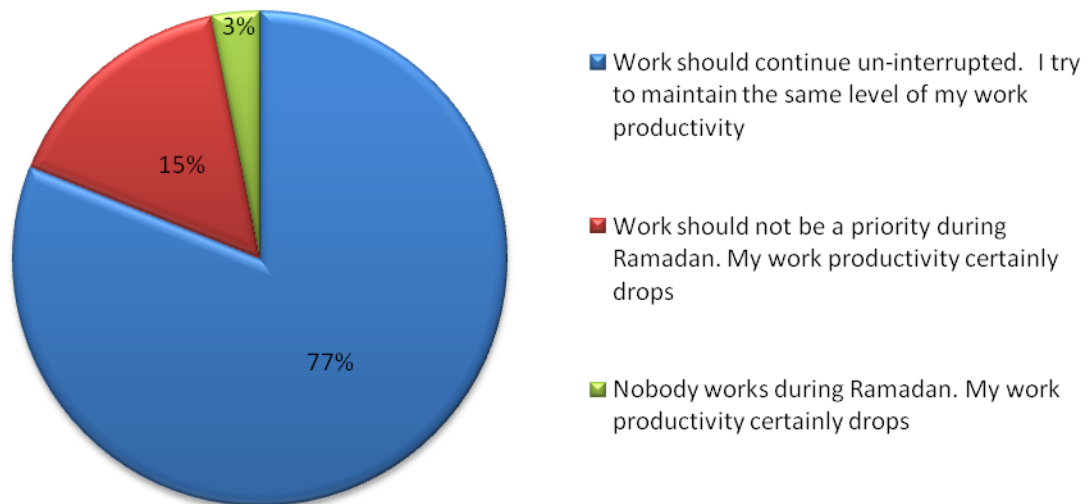
How do Muslims feel about their work productivity during Ramadan?

A majority (77%) of the working professional respondents said they try to maintain the same level of work productivity during Ramadan as they do outside of Ramadan, and feel that work should continue uninterrupted.

One key implication of this finding is that people do not expect adjustments to their work hours. This is also highlighted by the earlier response that showed the greatest challenges to having a spiritual Ramadan do not include work flexibility.

However, 15% thought work should not be a priority, while a small percentage (3%) answered that nobody works during Ramadan. Meanwhile, 18% of the respondents felt their productivity does drop during Ramadan. This result was consistent in the responses of Muslim majority OIC countries as well as non-OIC markets (US, India, and UK being the largest such respondent countries).

Question: How is your work productivity during Ramadan? (multiple select)



Comments:

“Productive Work is a part of a Productive Ramadan.”

“In a Muslim country I would expect a shift in working hours to allow for a bit of sleep after qiyaam [voluntary night] prayers.”

“Last time I had to work on a very important deliverable so wasted whole of my Ramadan.”

“Ramadan fasting is for our spiritual growth - work should continue as it was before and after Ramadan.”

“Why [do] many governments encourage Muslims to be less productive in Ramadan by restricting working hours?”

“I feel very hungry. After 2am it's very difficult to work.”

“I work shifts, and management doesn't care if I am fasting. So, I just show up and slug through the day like a zombie. Then I come home and collapse. Sometimes I am too tired to read Qur'an, pray Taraweeh, or to socialize.”

“I guess that work should not be a top priority in Ramadan, though I intend to work most in the early hours of the day.”

“I am actually more productive during Ramadan. Can focus better because I don't have to think about food, lunch breaks etc.”

“My work productivity doesn't drop. But yes, I make it secondary (and can afford to) to my worship in Ramadan. But whatever project I take up, I'm able to maintain my productivity levels. Ramadan helps me be efficient. I am never more disciplined with my time as I'm in Ramadan, and it helps with non-ibadah stuff [secular activities], too.”

“I feel [fasting does not] create any hurdle in my work, and Allah ordered [Muslims to] work hard around the year.”

“Though I intend to keep the same level of productivity, being in Saudi Arabia, the surroundings [do] not let me due to others' behavior, who tend to be unproductive.”

“I live in the USA. I have no choice but to continue working hard. The work doesn't slow down for Ramadan.”

What special adjustments do employers make during Ramadan?

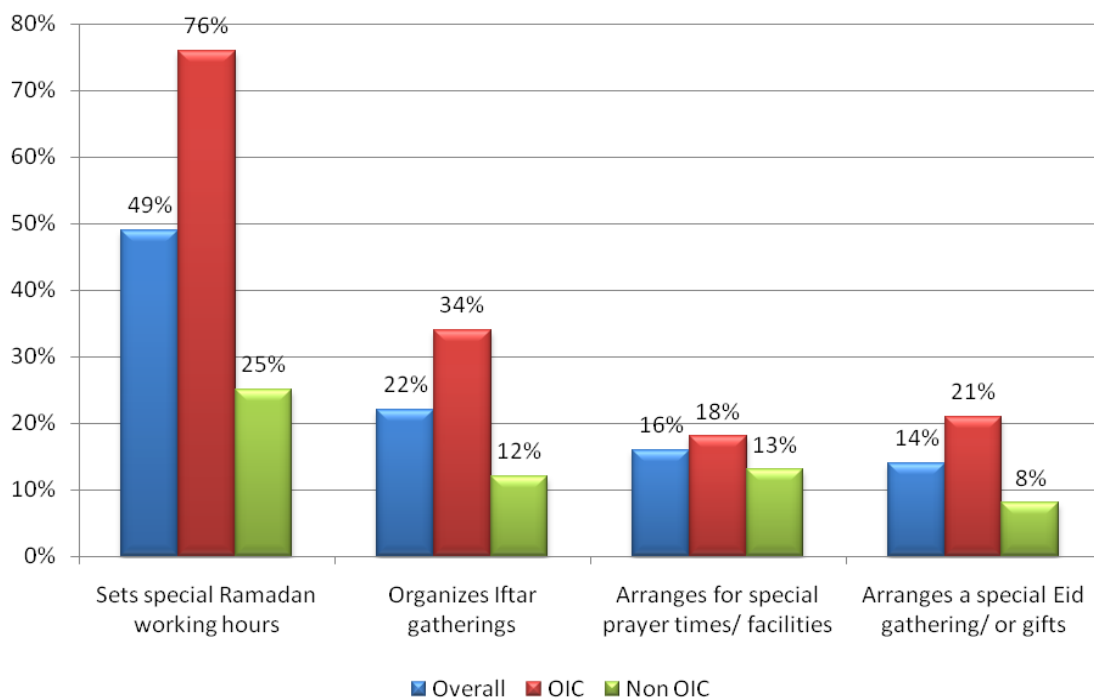
49% of the Muslim working professional respondents said their employers set special adjusted Ramadan hours. Other activities included: Iftar gatherings (22%), arrangements for special prayer time facilities (16%), and special Eid gatherings or gift-giving (14%).

There is, however, a stark difference between the responses from Muslim majority country respondents (OIC countries – Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudia Arabia, and UAE being the largest respondent countries in this case) and non-OIC based respondents (US, India, and UK being the largest such respondent countries).

Whereas 76% of the OIC working professionals said employers set special Ramadan hours, only 25% of the respondents from non-OIC countries said the same. Similarly for all other adjustments, the non-OIC responses claimed much less adjustment than those from OIC countries.

This is perhaps to be expected. However, this response indicates that non-OIC based HR teams should consider further facilities to accommodate their Muslims employees, using OIC Ramadan practices as benchmark. There was an overwhelming majority of open comments from non-OIC based respondents to this question (164 out of 217 comments). A selection of these comments is summarized below.

Question: During Ramadan, your employer/organization: (multiple select)



Comments:**Non-OIC based responses:**

“I work/live in a non-Muslim industry /country but my employer is understanding and allows me to leave early enough to get home on time.”

“They do accommodate my timings as I skip the lunch hour and work between 7am and 3pm.”

“My employer respects that I am fasting and moved the refrigerator out of our shared office space to another office.”

“I'm in France, my job permits me to arrange a bit my working hours (not much though).”

“Our employer provides standard flexible schedules and two diversity days. However, they otherwise do not provide any religious focus.”

“They allow me to rest at midday if needed and switch my hours to early morning if needed.”

“Hah! Management doesn't do anything to accommodate my needs. I'm lucky I can pray at work without being harassed.”

OIC based responses:

“I work in a Muslim majority country so timings are arranged for everyone!”

“These guys are Muslims, but from their behavior I don't have any idea whether they will give some exemptions in Ramadan.”

“They set up a bulletin board and organize tazkirah [remembrance] sessions.”

“[They allow] me to arrange my own working hours/prayers as required.”

How satisfied are respondents with their employers support during Ramadan?

60% of the respondents said they were satisfied with their employers support during Ramadan, agreeing that their employers go out of their way to provide flexibility during Ramadan. Meanwhile 27% said no, and the remaining respondents had other open-ended comments (summarized below).

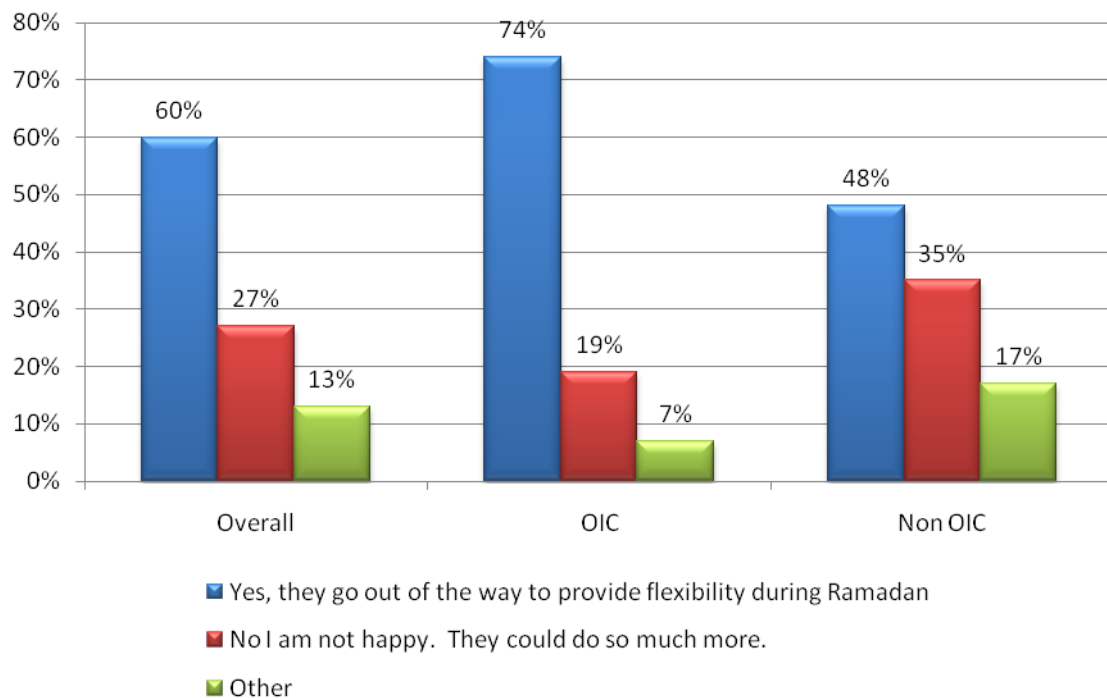
Similar to the above question, there is a stark difference between the responses from Muslim majority countries (Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE being the largest respondent countries in this case) and non-OIC respondents (US, India, and UK being the largest such respondent countries).

19% of OIC based respondents were unhappy with their employers' support, whereas this number jumps to 35% for non-OIC based respondents. 74% of the OIC based respondents were happy with their employers' support during Ramadan. The number dropped to 48% for respondents from non-OIC countries.

The fact that 48% of the non-OIC respondents were happy is encouraging. This is a strong indication that non-OIC countries tend to be accommodating to Muslims, although there is much room for improvement.

At the same time, OIC based HR groups have opportunities to evaluate employee satisfaction of their own Ramadan support programs.

Questions asked: Are you happy with your employer/organizations support and flexibility during Ramadan?



Comments:**NON-OIC based responses:**

“Yes happy, but I don't impose myself and nor do I expect different treatment.”

“I can't say I am not happy. They let me pray anytime in a special room how nice is that ;)”

“They do not support but I can cope with it, insha Allah.”

OIC based responses:

“They say they are flexible, but the amount of targets assigned becomes unachievable if you don't put extra hours either at home or office.”

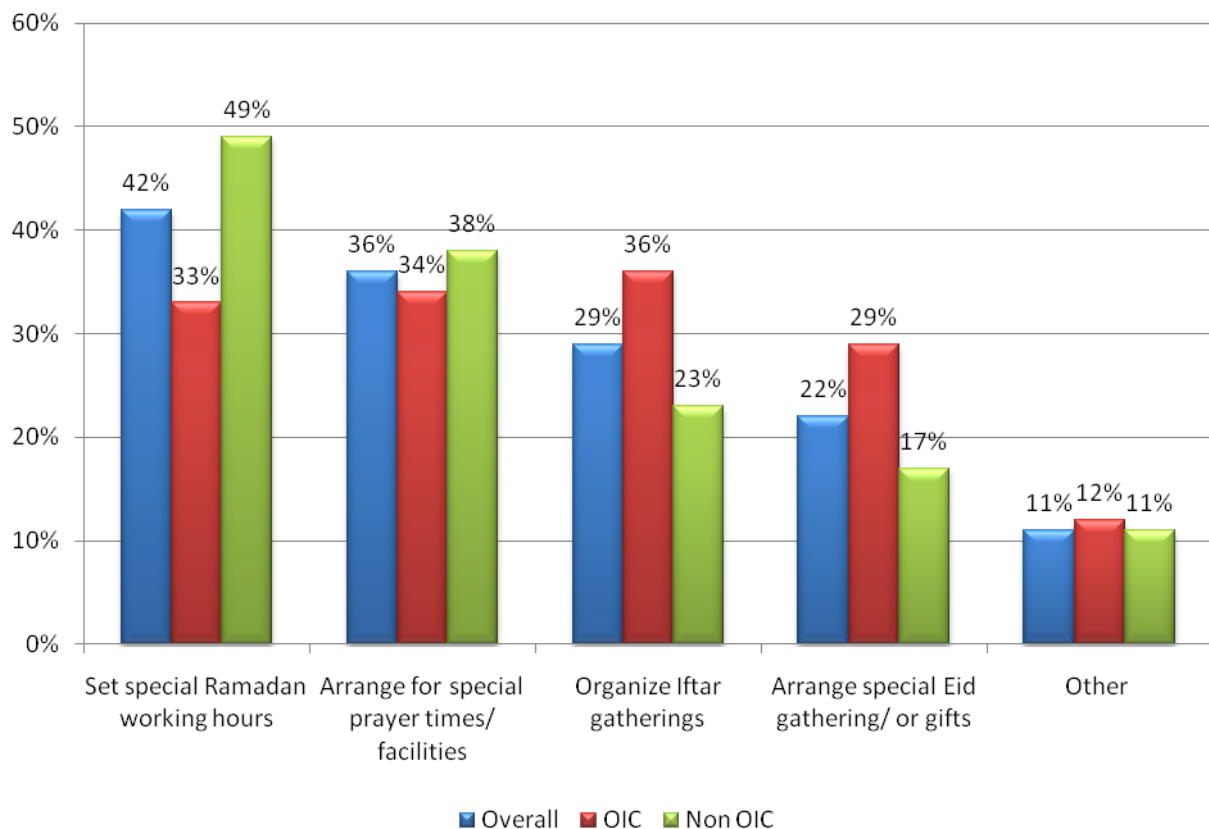
“They didn't go out of the way to do anything special, but they are always flexible not only during Ramadan. So, I am happy.”

What are some of the areas employers can improve upon in their support during Ramadan?

42% of the respondents would like employers to set special Ramadan hours. This request was much stronger among non-OIC based respondents (49% as opposed to 33% from those in OIC countries). Another strong area of request from non-OIC based respondents was for employers to arrange special prayer times or facilities (38%). Given that 77% of respondents earlier said that work should continue uninterrupted, this request of Ramadan work-hour flexibility (not necessarily reduction but adjustment) and prayer facilities signifies a need to help fasting employees deliver consistent work product while satisfying their Ramadan needs.

A sizeable number of OIC based respondents (34% and 36%) suggested that employers arrange Iftar gatherings, Eid gatherings and gift-giving as additional employee activities during Ramadan. This expectation was much lower from non-OIC based respondents.

Question: What are some of the things your employer/organization can do to improve its support of Ramadan? (multiple select)



Comments:**NON-OIC based response:**

“Encourage managers to work with employees on being home in time for Iftaar.”

“My employer already allows me to set my own hours at Ramadan.”

“My employer gives one week paid holiday to all staff at Christmas- I think they could substitute this with a week during Ramadan/ Eid for Muslims.”

“I don't expect my employer to do anything special although I admit it would be very nice!”

OIC based responses:

“Maybe organize a team building twice in Ramadan in order to exchange ideas about Imaan in Ramadan, helping [the poor], visiting associations...etc”

“Office hours should be from 6am to 12 pm. No sleep after sehri [the morning meal before sunrise].”

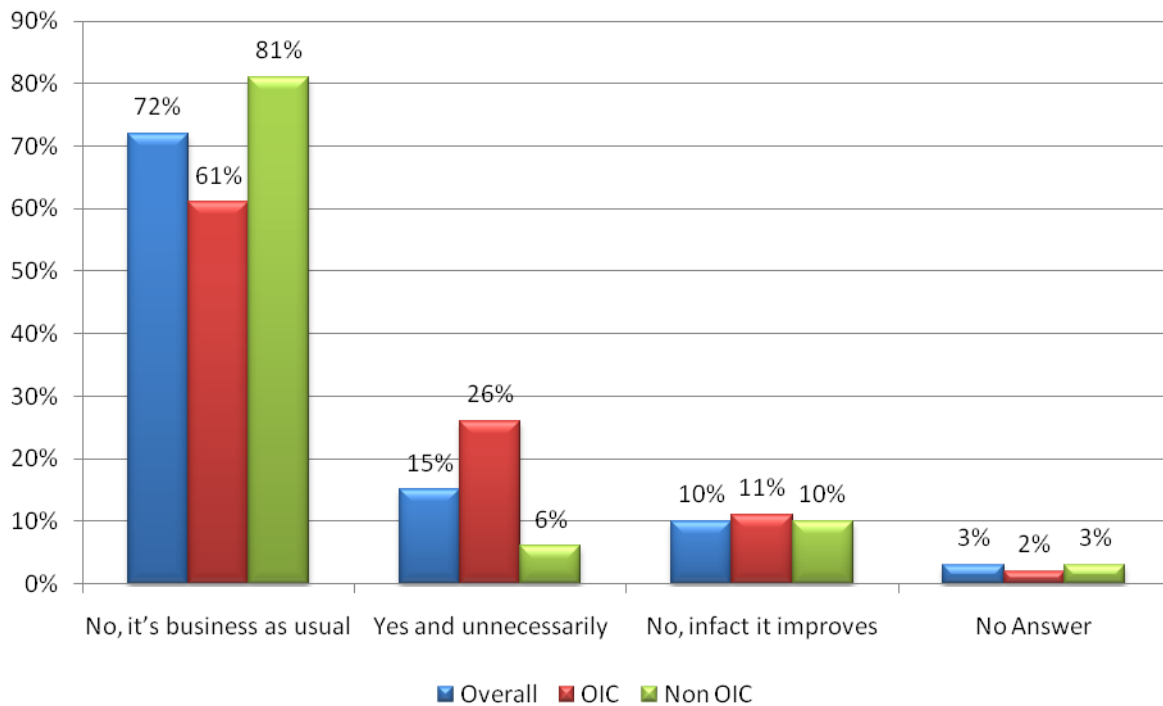
“Promote the fasting and Ramadan spirit by not just fasting, but also [by promoting] the virtues of it.”

“Pre ramadan workshop of productivity enhancement during and post Ramadan.”

Does a company's productivity suffer during Ramadan?

The majority of respondents (72%) agreed that their company's productivity does not suffer during Ramadan, and that it is business as usual. As can be expected, this response was stronger from non-OIC based respondents (81% versus 61% from OIC based respondents.) Noteworthy is that 26% of OIC based respondents did think their company's productivity does unnecessarily suffer during Ramadan.

Questions asked: Do you believe your company's productivity suffer during Ramadan?





Work Hour Changes & Economic Impact

In the Muslim-majority OIC countries, the month of Ramadan sees a reduction or an adjustment of work hours. There are varying instances on work hours during Ramadan. In some cases, work reduction or adjustment is government mandated. Some countries leave scheduling at the discretion of the employers, and others mandate government office hours, while permitting the private sector to use its own discretion.

The purpose of this working-hours brief analysis is to provide a broader perspective to this report by evaluating the varying work-hour change practices across OIC countries, and their economic impact. The evaluation highlights the different approaches in creating a balanced and flexible Ramadan work schedule.

Definition—Adjustment vs. Reduction: An adjustment in work hours means the working day starts early (e.g. in Indonesia) and finishes early. A reduction means that the number of scheduled work hours is reduced.

Ramadan work-hour practices: A selection of eleven OIC countries was evaluated for general differences in approach toward Ramadan work hours. This included the six GCC countries (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain), Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The table below shows each country's Ramadan hour practices:

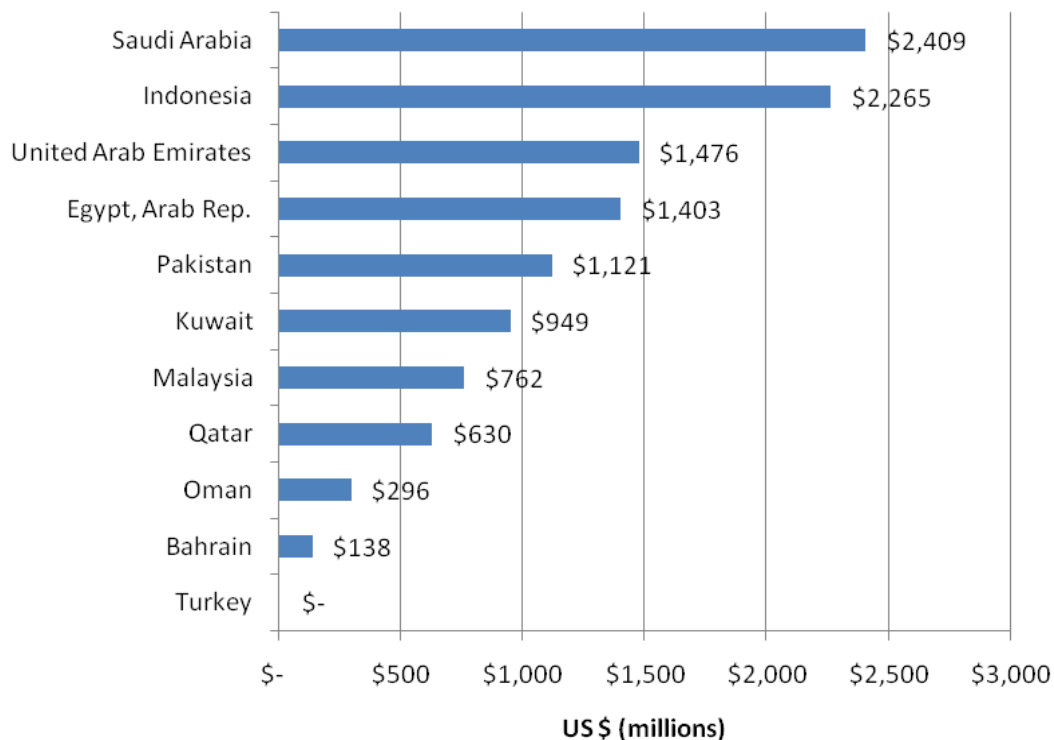
Country	Practice	Average, hour reduced/ day during Ramadan
Malaysia	<u>Private sector:</u> Changes are at discretion of employer. If working times are reduced, there is a one hour reduction. <u>Government:</u> Work ends at 4pm (one hour reduction).	one hour
Indonesia	<u>Private sector:</u> At employer discretion. Generally work starts earlier and ends by 4pm. <u>Government:</u> One hour reduction.	one hour
Turkey	<u>Private sector:</u> At employer discretion. <u>Government:</u> None.	Effectively none.
Egypt	<u>Private sector:</u> Work hours cut down to six hours - starting at 7am, 8am or 9am, depending on the organization. Banking hours 9am to 2pm.	Two hours
UAE	<u>Private sector:</u> Working hours trimmed to six hours, i.e., two hour reduction. Applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims. (This year, the Ministry of Labor Relations is aggressively enforcing these restrictions against governmental and private enterprises.)	Two hours
Saudi Arabia	<u>Private sector:</u> The Ministry of Labour mandates that working hours are reduced to six hours per day. <u>Government:</u> The Ministry of Civil Service restricts office hours to 10am-3pm.	Two hours
Oman	<u>Private sector:</u> Work hours reduced to six hours daily for Muslims. (Ministry of Manpower) <u>Government:</u> Public sector hours: 9am-2pm (five hours). (Oman Civil Service Council)	Two hours
Bahrain	<u>Private sector:</u> Work hours reduced to six hours daily. <u>Government:</u> Public sector hours: 8am-2pm (six hours). (PM's Office 2008)	Two hours
Kuwait	<u>Private sector:</u> Work hours reduced to six hours daily. Some private establishments also have evening shifts. <u>Government:</u> Public sector hours: 8.30 am - 1pm (4.5 hours).	Two hours
Pakistan	<u>Private sector:</u> Working hours start an hour earlier (8am) and end earlier (2-3pm). <u>Government:</u> Public sector hours: Friday—9am-1pm (four hours); daily 8:30am-1:45pm (5.25 hours).	Two hours

Economic impact: Conducting a thorough economic impact assessment of Ramadan work hour reduction is beyond the scope of this study. However, we have used a basic approach using national GDP-per-hour-per day to determine the financial impact of reduced hours on each of the eleven OIC economies.

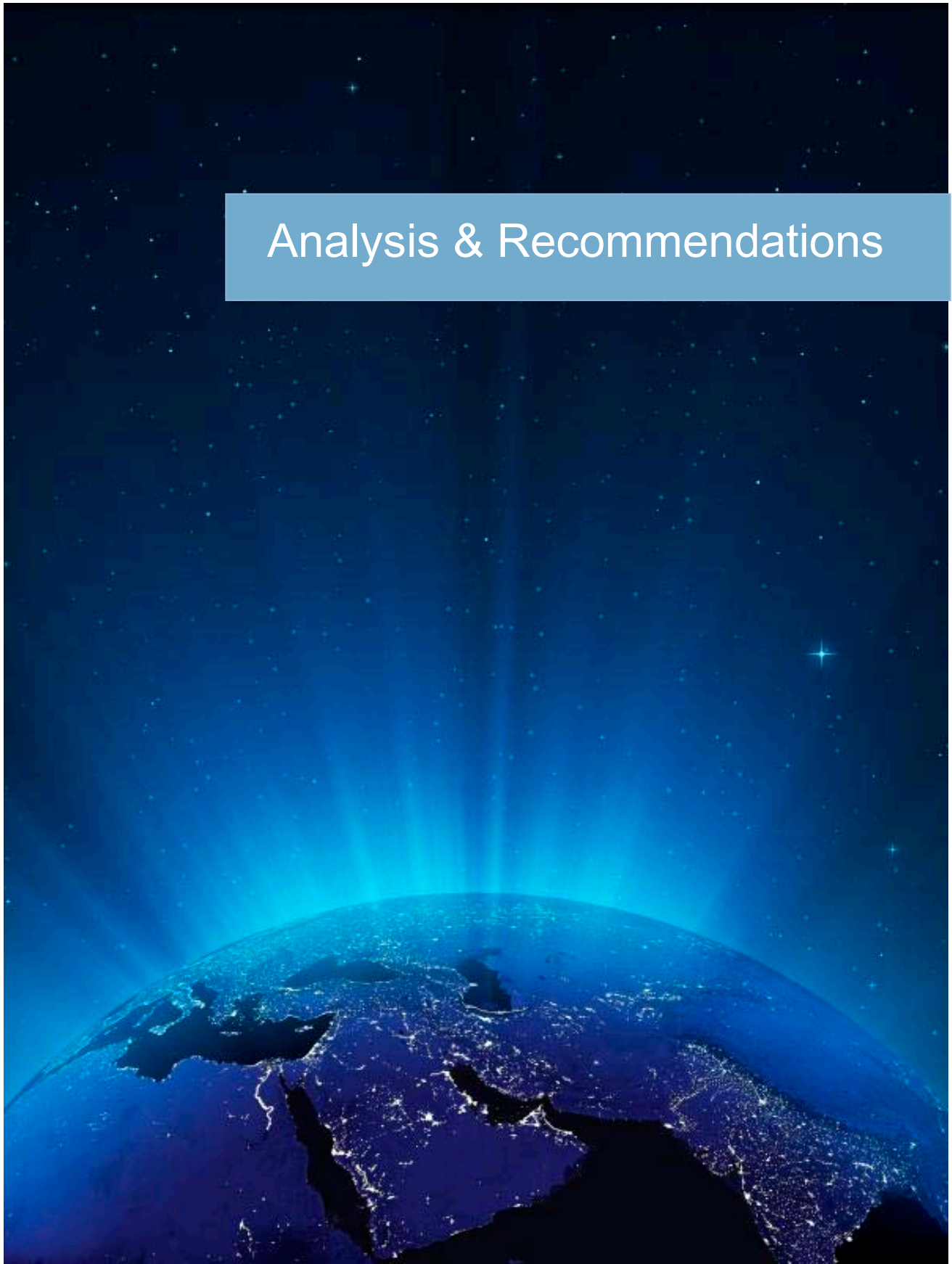
For those countries who average two hour workday reduction (GCC, Pakistan, Egypt), the total hours lost are approximately forty, which is essentially equivalent to one week of economic productivity. Percentage-wise, this averages to a 7.7% loss in such a country's monthly GDP value. For those who average a one hour workday reduction (Indonesia, Malaysia), the total lost hours are twenty, which averages to 3.8% loss in those economies' average monthly GDP value. This assessment does not consider end of Ramadan Eid holidays.

Using this evaluation, the chart below shows estimated GDP impact to the select economies of the OIC. Although a detailed analysis of economic impact would have to be undertaken in order to understand the full complexity of the Ramadan dynamic, the above assessment does show that the economies suffer roughly 4% in monthly GDP per hour of work reduction per day.

Estimated Loss in monthly GDP due to reduced Ramadan hours



Analysis & Recommendations



Context

- In this study we have looked to develop a fact-based assessment of the state of productivity during Ramadan and offer recommendations for improving productivity for individuals, businesses and government institutions.
- To provide productivity recommendations, we have,
 1. Conducted a survey to determine actual Ramadan practices and expectations of Muslim workers, and
 2. Looked at Ramadan work-hour differences in various Muslim majority countries and its resulting economic impact, and to suggest areas of Ramadan productivity improvements.

Insights & recommendations for Individuals

- The survey provides fasting Muslims with practical insights on how to improve their spiritual productivity. They are indeed in strong company, as most of the Muslims participating in the survey fast during Ramadan (98% respondents) and strive to improve their spirituality. (While 18% were very satisfied with their Ramadan spirituality from 2010, 65% had hoped to have done better, and 17% were disappointed.)
- The survey results highlight areas of spiritual activities that most Muslims struggle with (reading Qur'an regularly 66%, focusing during worship 53%, Taraweeh attendance 47%, others) and highlight the need for Muslims to better prepare for Ramadan. This preparation could include planning and pre-scheduling the personal and professional activities for the month of Ramadan, as well as physically preparing for fasting prior to the start of Ramadan. Websites such as ProductiveRamadan.com and other such resources provide valuable tips and guidelines in this regard.
- Most fasting Muslims would like to keep their work productivity the same (77%). However the reality is that there are added spiritual activities that Muslims undertake during Ramadan (attend Taraweeh prayers 52%, others) and physical energy levels are low. This again supports the need to prepare for Ramadan as well as to reprioritize regular activities to accommodate Ramadan needs.

Insights & recommendations for Employers

- The study provides beneficial insight on how employers can support Muslim employees in honoring their religious requirements. This attention is expected to result in employee goodwill as well as productivity improvements.
- It is clear from survey responses that most Muslims fast, and those who fast do see an increased level of spiritual activity for which the respondents value employer flexibility.
- An important insight from this survey is that most survey respondents (77%) say they try to maintain same level of work productivity during Ramadan and feel that work should continue uninterrupted. Also, although there are no specific religious injunctions on reducing work hours, increased spiritual activity is to be expected and accommodated. Reduced or flexible scheduling is especially important for work that requires severe physical labor.

- **For Muslim majority OIC based employers specifically:**
 - Most OIC based employees (74%) said they were happy with their employers' flexibility during Ramadan. At the same time, over 25% have higher expectations of their employers.
 - The survey highlights areas in which OIC based employers can improve their efforts to support Ramadan and productivity. These include:
 - Organizing Iftar and Eid gatherings and gift-giving, and
 - Arranging for special Ramadan working hours, prayer times and facilities. (Special hours may not necessarily mean a reduction of hours but an adjustment with consideration to key prayer times and Iftar.)
 - Be aware of the activities Muslims are striving for to achieve spiritual excellence (e.g. reading the Qur'an regularly, praying at a mosque, giving extra in charity etc.). Perhaps special programs can be created to facilitate these efforts.
 - While a majority (61%) of respondents from OIC countries said their company's productivity does not suffer during Ramadan, a sizeable 26% said their company's productivity unnecessarily suffers. This should be a cause for companies to evaluate their practices and policies.

- **For Muslim minority non-OIC based employers:**
 - Contrasted with OIC based employees, non-OIC based employees were less happy with their employers' flexibility during Ramadan (48% vs. 74%). Although commendable that a good percentage of Non-Muslim majority based companies do accommodate for Muslim needs, the gap does present HR departments within these companies' opportunities to engage with their Muslim employees to impact not just goodwill but productivity.
 - As mentioned earlier, most Muslims during Ramadan expect to be as productive as they would be at any other time. However, the survey results show that they engage in added spiritual activity which reduces physical energy. Any accommodation of this reality is expected to increase goodwill and productivity.
 - The survey highlights areas in which non-OIC based employers can improve their efforts to support Ramadan and productivity. These include:
 - A big percentage of non-OIC based respondents (49%) expressed desire for employees to set special Ramadan working hours. (Special hours may not necessarily mean reduction of hours but an adjustment—for example, providing an early start and an early end to the workday.) 25% of the respondents stated that their employers provide special working hours.
 - 38% also expressed an interest in special prayer time or facility.
 - Additional, but less prioritized requests include activities such as organizing Iftar and Eid gatherings.

Insights & recommendations for OIC member governments

- Governments in many OIC countries set the tone for productivity across all institutions within their countries.
- Our work-hour analysis shows a few different approaches of some OIC countries, which opens the question as to which models are most effective in delivering the right balance of work productivity and employee satisfaction.
- Although a much detailed analysis of economic impact would have to be undertaken to fully understand the complexities of Ramadan work reduction and adjustment, the economic impact assessment in this study shows that the economies suffer roughly 4% in monthly GDP per hour per day of work reduction.
- Undoubtedly, no dollar value can be placed on spiritual gains and divine blessings of increased worship during Ramadan, but the fact that there are different approaches to work-hour reduction and adjustment does suggest that governments should evaluate whether their Ramadan policies maintain the right balance of work responsibility and spiritual flexibility during Ramadan.
- Some key question for governments to evaluate:
 - Is a two hour reduction necessary?
 - Is a mix of one hour reduction and one hour adjustment optimal (as practiced generally in Indonesia and Malaysia)?
 - Do hour reductions generate the desired increase in spiritual connectivity, or do they have an adverse effect (e.g. laziness, apathy, etc.)?
 - Should a segmented or other flexible approach be considered, for example, for certain types of hard labor?

Recommendations for Human Resource Departments:

Expert Commentary by Farah Ghias, HR Consultant, GCC/USA

For HR departments in non-OIC countries, the challenge falls in balancing the needs of Muslim employees with organizational priorities. There are a number of reasons why an HR department in a non-OIC country would have an interest in becoming more accommodating to its Muslims employees' needs during Ramadan. Diversity, in particular, is an increasing concern for organizations trying to reap the full benefit of a diverse workforce. Diversity initiatives are driven by high profile firms, concerned not only with legal compliance, but also with the business case for diversity. Employers with reputations for encouraging inclusiveness, tolerance, and diversity are more likely to benefit from a widened talent pool. Attracting a heterogeneous workforce also requires that organizations be inclusive when designing policies and procedures in order to better accommodate and retain the diversity they attract.

Organizations that have not reached the level of valuing diversity for its business case may still be driven to pay attention to diversity in order to avoid litigation. For example, under US employment law, "employers must reasonably accommodate employees' sincerely held religious practices unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the employer."

Recommendations for Human Resource Departments:

Expert Commentary by Farah Ghias, HR Consultant, GCC/USA

(continued)

Poor HR practice towards diversity generally stems from a lack of awareness. Understanding Muslim practices and employment preferences during Ramadan would help ensure that reasonable measures were taken to accommodate them. A look at the most practiced activities during Ramadan can give employers insight into the kind of accommodation Muslim employees may require. Examples include providing a quiet space to perform the daily prayers, or avoiding the scheduling of night shifts to allow Muslim employees to attend Taraweeh prayers. Relatively minor adjustments that are unlikely to cause disruption to work can significantly increase satisfaction levels of Muslim employees.

In the balancing act between employee demands and organizational productivity, the bigger challenge OIC countries face is maintaining productivity. Employees in OIC countries are generally satisfied with the accommodations made by employers during Ramadan (74%). Although 77% of respondents believe that work should continue uninterrupted during Ramadan, 26% of OIC respondents believe that their company's productivity suffers unnecessarily. Organizations would benefit greatly to identify the causes for these unnecessary drops in productivity. Furthermore, whereas 76% of OIC organizations set special working hours, 77% of respondents feel that they try to maintain the same level of work productivity during Ramadan as they do outside of Ramadan. Thus, shortened work hours may actually hinder employee desire to maintain similar levels of output during Ramadan as they accomplish outside of Ramadan.

Having said this, high percentages of employees desire a higher level of spirituality during Ramadan. So although it may be unnecessary to significantly reduce working hours during Ramadan, organizations should not create undue work pressure that consumes employees' time outside of regular work hours, in order to allow time for spiritual activities.

In both OIC and non-OIC countries, HR departments should regularly consult staff and management to help find the optimal balance between employee needs and the needs of the organization.

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