



SHAPOORJI PALLONJI INSTITUTE
OF ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES



GEN Z AND BEYOND: A SURVEY FOR EVERY GENERATION

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GEN Z AND BEYOND: A SURVEY FOR EVERY GENERATION

REPORT

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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT SUMMARY

Gen Z and Beyond: A Survey for Every Generation, 'the Project' for the purposes of this report, was launched on 1 July 2021 and ended on 19 April 2023. It was a SOAS research project, privately sponsored, which included survey data collected over a period of 18 months followed by a 3-month period dedicated to the writing of the Report. SOAS has a long history of engagement with the subject of Zoroastrianism and links to the global Zoroastrian community. It offered a neutral platform from which to undertake such a study.

This chapter provides a summary of our key findings, which are given in greater depth, together with tables, in the following five chapters. We have created links so that readers can go more easily to the areas of the Report that may be of greatest interest to them. It would not have been possible to include all the tables in the main body of the Report, so we have put them into Appendices (available at www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation) for anyone wishing to access additional data. All the data (both raw and cleaned) collected from the Survey will be stored in perpetuity in the UK Data Archive. It can be accessed by anyone with a genuine interest, providing they give their contact details.

Included in this chapter is a description of the design of the Survey; the survey tools we used; the questionnaire, and some of the challenges we faced and how they were resolved.

The Gen Z and Beyond Project was approved by the SOAS Research Ethics Panel (REP) in October 2019.

Aims of the project

The Project entailed conducting an online survey that would enable respondents to engage from anywhere in the world. There have been in-depth surveys conducted, at various times, on Zoroastrian communities in certain regions and incorporating different themes (see Survey Design on p. 10). But a survey of this kind has never been undertaken before. It is now possible to compare and contrast Zoroastrian populations demographically and thematically on a global scale.

Through the Gen Z and Beyond Survey, we aimed to collect data that would help us understand how people in different regions think of themselves as Zoroastrians, their sources of belief and how they practice the religion in terms of devotional life. We also wanted to gain information about social habits and how people engage with each other in community spaces, as well as how they disseminate knowledge and information through familial and communal channels. Zoroastrians are a small community, estimated to number

around 100,000 individuals worldwide, so we thought it would be useful to gauge the extent to which they interact with non-Zoroastrian communities socially and in the workplace. Given the size of the global population, our purpose was to gather information about what people thought were the main challenges facing the community and how these could be met.

Overall, our aim was twofold. First, to provide a significant amount of data that would inform Zoroastrian communities about each other: the demographic trends, the ways in which the religion is practised, and the attitudes people have towards the various global challenges as well as the internal debates about social and religious issues. Second, to provide a valuable archive of data for research that could be used by scholars and students of the Zoroastrian religion, its history and its people.

Our data, and analysis thereof, contribute to existing understandings of patterns and trajectories in religious and social behaviour. Previous surveys, albeit not global, provide useful benchmarks to which we have added. This, we hope, may assist community leaders as to potential changes they might choose to make in the way they engage with their respective constituencies. In other words, to contribute to a roadmap for the future.

Scope of the Project by location

When the Project was first mooted, we expected to gather material from Zoroastrian communities wherever they existed in the world. For various reasons, outlined below, we realised early on that this was not going to be possible. We decided, therefore, to focus on South Asia and North America as the two regions with the largest Zoroastrian populations. If we think of these as respectively representing the old and the new diasporas, we can see them as rich repositories of comparative material, with their different histories and different cultures and jurisdictions of the host communities to which they belong.

Inevitably, the way in which Zoroastrianism is lived and practised has evolved differently in each region. A general observation would be that the more traditional communities belong in South Asia where, for example, the first fire temples outside Iran were founded, the *dakhmeh* is still in use and the only *madressas* for priestly training still exist. Parsis and Irani Zoroastrians in the new diaspora have had to adapt to their new surroundings, establishing places of worship, seeking alternatives to the *dakhmeh* system and making arrangements for priestly training. It follows that people may have changed or modified religious rituals and practices to make them more compatible with their new environment. The table below shows the number of respondents who completed the survey and where they reside:

Figure 1 – ‘What is your current country of residence?’ (grouped into Regions)ⁱ

Region	Respondents	
Australasia	5.6%	(N=256)
Europe	1.4%	(N=64)
Iran	0.6%	(N=26)
Middle East	1.6%	(N=71)
North America	31.7%	(N=1449)
South Asia	52.0%	(N=2379)
South East Asia	1.1%	(N=49)
United Kingdom	5.8%	(N=265)
Rest of the world	0.4%	(N=17)
Total	100.0%	(N=4576)

Smaller communities in other parts of the world were included in the Gen Z and Beyond Survey and responded with varying levels of enthusiasm. Community leaders in Pakistan, for example, were immensely proactive in creating initiatives to encourage people to complete the Survey. By contrast, we had a less enthusiastic response from communities in the Middle East and South East Asia. Unfortunately, we were unable to send a team member to Iran although we had some active support there and were able to collect some responses from what is still considered to be the motherland of Zoroastrianism.

Providing people meet the eligibility criteria (for which see below), we have accepted whichever way they self-identify as Zoroastrians. This may be ethnically, or ethno-culturally, or religiously, or a combination of one or more of these criteria. With respect to ethnicity, we include Iranian, Parsi, and Irani). Those who identify as ethno-culturally Zoroastrian think of themselves as relating culturally to a particular ethnic group through their religious beliefs and culture, while others identify simply by virtue of their religion. It should be noted that the majority of our respondents (91.6%) had two Zoroastrian parents and identified as practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians.

To address the uneven geographic spread of our respondents, we analysed by individual region where necessary to ensure that the largest region, South Asia, was not overly influencing the results when looking at the whole dataset. Where regional variations exist, they have been highlighted in our analysis.

ⁱ The total number of respondents were 5003, however, some chose not to answer the question on country of residence, and a few were not eligible to take the Survey.

We decided not to weight our data, as there is no reliable source of existing data that we could use to do so. Weighting can be used before data analysis takes place to correct for over- or under-represented groups within the sample. For example, if a survey sample had a higher percentage of young people than are present in the population being studied, the researchers could apply weighting to the older respondents so that they are not under-represented during analysis. However, this relies on having reliable existing data on the demographics of the population. As no such source exists for the Zoroastrian community across all of the regions covered by the Survey, it was not appropriate to apply weighting to our dataset.ⁱⁱ

We estimate our achieved sample of 5000 respondents to be 6% of the global Zoroastrian population of those over 18 years of age.ⁱⁱⁱ This is much larger proportionally than those collected in other comparable studies.^{iv} However, as participation in our Project was designed to allow participants voluntarily to opt-in or out of undertaking the survey, the achieved sample cannot be seen statistically to represent the whole of the global Zoroastrian population. As a result, we do not extrapolate from our sample to the wider population.^v Rather, we provide descriptive statistics based on the sizable proportion of the Zoroastrian population who were generous enough to spend time filling in the Survey and sharing their views.

WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

In this Report, we analyse and discuss the data gathered from the Survey in five chapters: 1) Family, 2) Respondents with one Zoroastrian parent, grandparent, or spouse 3) Identity and Interaction 4) Religious Beliefs and Practices, 5) Aspirations. In each chapter we look at the data by age, gender and region as well as other criteria such as migration, where applicable. The outcomes are presented at the end of each chapter under the heading 'what does the data tell us?'

We will draw here on some of the findings we found most interesting.

Chapter 1 focuses on **marriage and intermarriage** as well as the **raising of children** and domestic life. These are critical factors when considering the diminishing number of Zoroastrians worldwide, something that has become a much-debated issue within the community. There have also been several demographic studies undertaken, which point to

ⁱⁱ For more information, see Solon, Haider & Wooldridge (2015).

ⁱⁱⁱ We estimated the Zoroastrian global population of over 18 years old to be approximately 80,000. See further fn. i, Ch. 1, p. 17

^{iv} For example, the report 'The Jewish identities of European Jews' (which did use weighting) conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research used a sample of 16,359 individuals from a total estimated population of around one million, meaning the sample was approximately 2% of the population. DellaPergola and Staetsky (2021, p. 2); DellaPergola and Staetsky (2020, pp. 30-39).

^v For more information on this system, see Smith (1983).

a variety of causes for the decline in population numbers. These include low fertility levels and a high level of people marrying late or never marrying (see Ch. 1, pp. 17-18).

There are various factors that have changed the pattern of traditional family life, such as the **migration and the decline of the extended family**. This often results in families becoming separated, particularly when young people move abroad in search of educational and job opportunities. Unless they return to wherever their parents live, or their parents join to live with them, young people who migrate no longer have the benefit of family members to assist with the upbringing of their children and, it could be argued, the passing on of religious knowledge. From the parents' point of view, they no longer have their children there to help them in old age. The breakdown of the extended family is another element of traditional family life that is likely to have curtailed the transmission of religious knowledge (see Secs. 5.4 and 6.3 in Ch.1).

In terms of **marriage and relationships**, we found that the preferred option for young people (18-25-year-olds) who had never married was to find a Zoroastrian partner. But those in this age group who were already in a relationship were more likely than older age groups to have a non-Zoroastrian partner. Of respondents who were in a relationship, nearly half (49.5%) of this age group were in a relationship with or married to a non-Zoroastrian (see Ch.1, p. 20). For those who see ethnicity as an integral part of Zoroastrian identity, this means that the 18-25-year-old age group stands to increase the decline of the two-parent Zoroastrian population. With respect to religious upbringing, however, the picture is not so clear. In marriages with one non-Zoroastrian partner, it was younger respondents who were much more likely than older respondents to **raise their children as Zoroastrian** (Ch. 1 p. 37). Moreover, 6.8% of respondents said that their non-Zoroastrian spouse took on the important role of raising their children as Zoroastrian.

Our Survey includes a category of respondents (less than 6%) who were born of one Zoroastrian parent, which is examined in Chapter 2. Here, an interesting finding concerned the role of the non-Zoroastrian parent. Respondents with a Zoroastrian mother were most likely to say that their non-Zoroastrian parent played a minimal role in their religious and cultural upbringing (57.9% vs 20.5%) compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian father, who said their non-Zoroastrian mother played an important role (52.8% vs 21.1%) (see Ch. 2, p. 59).

The difference in attitudes towards gender when it comes to **acceptance of intermarriage** and the children of intermarriage is another cause for debate within the community. It manifests in our Survey with respect to questions about the acceptance of intermarried Zoroastrian men versus women into the religion. For example, we found that women were more likely than men to accept both intermarried Zoroastrian men and women (81.1% vs 73.7%) and their children (79.7% vs 70.6%). Men were more likely than women to accept intermarried men only (3.9% vs 1.8%). Men were also more likely to accept the children of

intermarried men only (7.2% vs 3.8%). Since the gender bias favours men, it is unsurprising, perhaps, that it is women who are driving the force for change.

Despite overall high levels of acceptance, in the more traditional communities we found there was greater resistance to accepting the spouses and offspring of women who had married, as compared to the spouses and offspring of men who had married out. For example, 4.3% of respondents in South Asia accepted only intermarried men and not intermarried women, compared to 1.6% in North America and 0.9% in the UK. In South Asia, 7.8% accepted the children of intermarried men but not those of intermarried women, compared to 2.6% in North America and 2.8% in the UK. Only 65.0% of respondents in South Asia accepted both intermarried men and women, compared to 91.6% in North America and 92.1% in the UK. The late John Hinnells' survey of the diaspora does not include India but shows Pakistan to be conservative about intermarriage, with 60% of his respondents saying they disapprove. Our data suggests that while this has changed, there remains a more traditional view towards intermarriage in South Asia than in the rest of the world.

Attitudes towards gender are relevant to the debate about intermarriage and population decline. In Parsi legal history, there have been various injunctions that prevented the admission of non-Zoroastrian spouses into the community, the Parsi Panchayat case of 1908 being the best known.^{vi} This perspective became the cultural norm for Parsis, though it is being challenged increasingly today, including in the Indian courts.^{vii} There are other factors that should be considered with respect to perceptions of gender such as the fact that the Zoroastrian priesthood, both in Iran and India has, until recently, been exclusively male. Zoroastrian religious texts were compiled traditionally by scholar-priests.

We discuss the **priesthood** in Chapter 4, noting that in both India and Iran this is a hereditary calling, modified by the training of lay priests, *mobedyars*, mainly to conduct rituals and ceremonies for the community such as *jashans* as well as rituals to do with birth, marriage, death and *navjotes*. They are not permitted to perform any of the 'inner rituals' that take place in the ritual precinct of the fire temple. In India, the training in the priestly *madressa* is rigorous and conservative. Traditionally, women from priestly families felt obliged to seek husbands from the same category, although this is no longer the case. Our data indicate that men from priestly families don't necessarily train to be priests (only 24.5% in North America and 24.7% in South Asia), with those in South Asia likely to train further to become a fully-fledged *navar martab*. But we thought it interesting that respondents who were born into a priestly family were less likely to identify as

^{vi} For a discussion of this topic see Patel (2010, p. 20).

^{vii} There are currently two cases in the Supreme Court of India. The first is Goolrukh M Gupta v Burjor Pardiwala & Ors (2012) and the second is Master Rian R. Kishani & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors. (2021). The third case, in the Kolkata High Court, is Prochy N. Mehta & Anr. vs Noshir Tankariwala & Ors. (2017).

conservative (11.3%) than those who married into a priestly family (17.4%) or those who were born into a *behdin* / lay family (16.7%) (see Ch. 4, p. 139).

People's views on intermarriage and gender, discussed in Chapter 1, are important factors in shaping their sense of identity as Zoroastrians and have a bearing on community discourse. Other themes to do with the notion of identity are covered in Chapter 3. Here, we look at how people perceive their cultural heritage by way of their attachment to, and knowledge about, their literary heritage. We asked questions about two significant texts to find out, among other things, whether these are taught to children and are thought to engender a sense of Zoroastrian identity. The first is the epic *Shahnameh*, or Book of Kings, which goes back to pre-Islamic times and draws on the ancient Zoroastrian *Yashts* (hymns). This text is much loved by Iranian Zoroastrians and Iranians generally and also by many Parsis in India and the diaspora. The Parsis have their own epic, the *Qisseh-ye Sanjan*, Story of Sanjan, which tells of the legendary journey from Iran to India by sea of those fleeing the country following the Islamic conquest sometime in the 10th century. We found that the youngest respondents (18-25-year-olds) were more likely never to have heard of the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* (22.1%) or the *Shahnameh* (44.2%) compared to older respondents in our study. Also, contrary to research suggesting that migrants would place greater importance on these stories so as to remain attached to their cultural traditions, we found that respondents who had migrated were more likely than those who had not migrated to say the *Shahnameh* was not important to them (44.7% vs 33.3%).

Migration was another theme covered in Chapter 3, since where people settle and how they feel about the place they have left, whether that be their birthplace or not, has consequences for their sense of identity and belonging. As a marginalised and often persecuted minority in Iran following the Arab invasion of 756 CE, Zoroastrians have been used to leaving their homes and resettling elsewhere. This migration happened within Iran, for example in the Safavid period, when large numbers of the Zoroastrian population were forced to leave Esfahan and relocate to the harsh desert environs of Yazd, before the migrations to India. Following the Mughal invasion of India, Zoroastrians were obliged to move once more, taking their sacred fire with them, and eventually to resettle in the town of Navsari. The modern diaspora began to take shape following migrations, mainly from India to the United States and Britain, as well as other countries in Europe and Africa.

Today, it is not uncommon to find people who have migrated several times in their lives, often to take up educational or professional opportunities. The significant factor in responses to our questions on this theme was that Zoroastrians adapt very well to new circumstances and different host communities. We found it interesting that 76.3% of respondents who had migrated considered their current place of residence 'home', i.e. where they felt they belonged; 36.9% chose their place of birth, 26.3% chose their place of nationality, and 5.0% of our respondents chose 'other'. As respondents were able to select multiple responses, there were many respondents who felt they belonged to a

number of places. Of the 1198 respondents who chose current place of residence, 30.8% also chose place of birth and 22.0% also chose place of nationality. This supports the idea that people seemed not to be torn between their birthplace or place of nationality and current place of residence but embraced both (see Ch. 3, p. 75). In keeping with the general sense of adaptability was the fact that most of our respondents (66.2%) said they did not face discrimination in any particular area of their lives. For a more detailed look at the environments in which discrimination was encountered see Ch. 3, pp. 82-83.

The final chapter in the Report, 'Aspirations', brings together the themes from chapters 1-4 and forecasts the future insofar as it asks people what they would like to gain from their **education**, their jobs, their **employment** and what they would like for their children. It also asked for people's views about aspects of the religion, what they thought were the most pressing challenges for the community, and how these could best be resolved.

Our data showed a socially mobile population who were becoming ever more highly educated. For example, the majority of our youngest respondents were in full-time education and those who were not highly educated themselves, although small in number, were primarily motivated to migrate for the benefit of their children's education and future. The majority of respondents were practising, or partially practising the religion regardless of education levels.

We were interested by those responses that were unique to the Zoroastrian community insofar as they referred to instances where religion and history intersected with daily life. For example, we devoted a number of questions to the topic of **entrepreneurship**, which is something that has been championed by Zoroastrians in the past and which, combined with **philanthropy**, is a characteristic for which the community is well known. First in India and then in Iran, Zoroastrian entrepreneurship grew rapidly in the 19th and 20th centuries. What is referred to by Parsis as the 'golden era' of Parsi entrepreneurship is often held as a standard by which to measure the entrepreneurial spirit amongst Parsi youth today. Our questions on this subject produced responses that demonstrated various factors that have inhibited this aspiration. One of the main obstacles across all age groups was funding and finances, with over 70% of those aged 18-45 seeing this as the foremost issue when attempting to start a business. The lack of knowledge and resources was the second most popular answer, with over 55% in this age group viewing this as a deterrent (see Table 12, Ch. 5, p.170).

Particular to Zoroastrianism is the idea that the accumulation of wealth is to be encouraged, providing it is accompanied by generous giving. The belief that everyone is accountable for the fate of their soul at death runs through Zoroastrian religious literature from the Avestan texts of the *Yashts*, the *Gathas* and the *Vendidad*, to the later Pahlavi texts, and finally to prescriptive texts like the Sasanian Book of a Thousand Judicial Decisions that dates from the reign of Khusrau II (591-628 CE). The Zoroastrian

eschatological doctrine of the two judgments: the individual judgment of the souls that occurs following death, and the universal judgement that will occur at the end of time, are described in the Pahlavi book of the *Bundahishn*, Creation. This provides a prototype for the balance that is maintained between man's duty towards himself and to society. Through the performance of good actions, people can address both their spiritual needs as well as the practical needs of society as a whole.

One of the principal ways of performing such actions has been through religious charity. Most places of worship, as well as some civil facilities, are the result of pious foundations, whether through endowed family memorials or religious institutions.^{viii} In Iran, religious philanthropy played a part in the organisation of civil society at least from Sasanian times. In India, the growth of Parsi entrepreneurship was matched by the growth of Parsi charity, both religious and social. It was the result of work not only of individuals but also of foundations and institutions such as the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsee Benevolent Institution, the Tata Charities, and of course the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) itself. Hinnells observes that in 1961, the BPP alone administered the funds of more than one thousand endowments.^{ix}

We were interested to find out whether people made the link between philanthropy, which can be said to represent the 'good thoughts, good words, good deeds' that all Zoroastrians recognize as a daily obligation in life, and religious teaching. To the question, 'what do you think happens to the soul at death?' the responses were a) the soul is judged on the 4th day after death and goes to heaven or hell before the final judgement at the end of time (49.4%), b) the soul is reincarnated in another physical form (10.3%), c) it is immortal (14.0%), d) there is no soul or anything after death (8.2%), e) don't know (25.3%), f) offered another belief (2.7%). Of interest here is the fact that majority of respondents chose the traditional belief. If we add the number of respondents who believe the soul is immortal to those that believed in the judgements at death and at the end of time the figure is 63.4%, demonstrating that a large proportion of people hold traditional religious views concerning death and the afterlife.

To our question, 'Do you support philanthropic causes?' we found that 20.2% volunteer their time regularly, 54.8% volunteer occasionally and 25.0% never volunteer at all. 29.6% donate money regularly, 60.2% donate money occasionally and 10.2% never donate money. 27.5% donate in kind (food / clothes / medicines / other items) regularly, 61.0% donate in kind occasionally and 11.4% never donate in kind. One of the most interesting findings here was that 72.5% of people gave to both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian causes, 12.5% gave to non-Zoroastrian causes alone and only 9.1% gave to Zoroastrian causes alone (see Sec. 2.5 in Ch. 5, p. 176). Since the population of our survey is largely

^{viii} For more information, see Stewart (2012).

^{ix} Hinnells (2005, p. 70).

divided between the old diaspora (India) and the new diaspora (mainly North America), this reinforces the idea that Zoroastrians are known for their generosity to the host community and the locality where they have settled.

An important question in Chapter 5 concerned the **community** and what people thought were the greatest threats to the Zoroastrian religion and Iranian/Parsi/Irani ethno-cultural identity. Respondents could choose up to three responses from the options given, of which the three most popular were: a small, ageing population (59.5%), unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and fully accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women (45.1%), and a lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals (35.6%).

This question was followed by asking people what single factor they thought would be the most significant in strengthening the community. The three most popular answers were as follows: teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture (49.1%), education: youth, vocational, scientific, higher education, retraining (13.2%), and entrepreneurship: adding economic, social and intellectual value to the community (11.3%) (see Table 21, Ch. 5, p. 184). It can be seen here that there is a sharp drop in opinions between the first and second responses, underpinning the perception that to maintain a sense of Zoroastrian identity, people need to learn more about their religion and culture rather than being successful in any particular walk of life.

SURVEY DESIGN

From the 1900s onwards, there have been several demographic studies focussing on the Zoroastrian community. These have mainly concentrated upon the Parsi community in India and were reliant on limited government census figures, the last of which took place in 2012. Also in 2012, a demographic survey of the population worldwide was compiled by Roshan Rivetna and published in FEZANA magazine. However, there has been no global survey that combines demographic data with information on the Zoroastrian religion and society until now.

Wherever possible, we have compared our data with two important studies that focused on the Zoroastrian diaspora and the Parsi community in India respectively. In this way, we can trace patterns of behaviour that have developed between the previous studies and ours. *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration*, by John Hinnells, looked at several places outside Iran and India.^x The research for this extensive study was undertaken between 1983-7, however, the results were not published until 2005. Hinnells received a

^x These included cities in the UK, Pakistan, Australia, Canada, USA, Kenya, France and Germany. Hong Kong and Zanzibar were also included.

total of 1,840 handwritten responses (the response rate varied in each location) to a questionnaire. The results were then manually uploaded for data analysis. The value of this study for our purposes was that many of the questions overlapped with our questionnaire, providing us with a benchmark by which to measure the changes that have taken place within the diaspora since the mid 1980s.

The Parsis of India: Continuing at the Crossroads is a pan-India study in four volumes of the Parsi Zoroastrian community undertaken by scholars and their research teams at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai. Edited by former Director of TISS, Armaity Desai, and the current Director of TISS, Shalini Bharat, the fieldwork for this study took place between 2004 and 2009 and was published in 2017. A total of 2,779 people were surveyed using qualitative and quantitative methodologies across the three studies on family (1132), youth (761) and senior citizens (886). The sample included respondents of two Parsi Zoroastrian parents, a Parsi Zoroastrian father, and (in the youth study) a Parsi Zoroastrian mother.

Questionnaire

The Gen Z and Beyond questionnaire was compiled with a view to obtaining three main categories of information:

- 1) demographic, to include education, employment, language and domestic life,
- 2) behavioural, to include religious and cultural beliefs and practices,
- 3) attitudinal, to include socio-religious and ethnic identities.

The Questionnaire consisted of mainly multiple-choice questions, to which respondents selected their answers from a given set of responses. Some questions had an 'Other (please specify)' option, in which respondents could write an alternative response from the given set of responses. We had one question at the end of the questionnaire that required a written answer, providing us with some qualitative data whereby respondents could express their views.

The Survey was completely anonymous, and we could not link the filled questionnaires to the details used to sign up for it. Each email address or mobile number could only be used to sign up for the Survey once. If someone requested a new survey invitation, their previous invitation and any responses to it were automatically deleted. Once the Survey was closed, all the contact details used to distribute it were permanently deleted. All data that was collected is subject to the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Eligibility criteria

In the questionnaire, Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrians live either in Iran or in the diaspora. Iranis are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 18th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora. Parsi Zoroastrians are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 10th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora. Mixed-heritage people are described as those with one parent who is Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian or Irani or Parsi and one parent who is not.

To be eligible to take the Gen Z and Beyond Survey, respondents had to be aged 18 or over and have two Zoroastrian parents, one Zoroastrian parent, or one Zoroastrian grandparent. Non-Zoroastrian spouses were also invited to take the Survey, since (and this was manifestly true in our findings) these people were often jointly or even solely responsible for the upbringing of children as Zoroastrian. Anyone in the world who met these criteria was eligible to fill out the survey. There was no pre-defined sample drawn from within this general population. Responding to the survey was voluntary. Each survey was completed in English, Gujarati and Farsi and hosted online and all responses were collected online.

The data between each of these categories was never conflated. From the total of 5003 respondents, we had 4893 respondents who had successfully completed the eligibility questions about their relationship to a Zoroastrian and their age. We then divided this group into respondents with two Zoroastrian parents (4481 respondents, covered in Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5), with one Zoroastrian parent (289 respondents), with a Zoroastrian grandparent (19 respondents), and with a Zoroastrian spouse (104 respondents). All but the first group are covered in Chapter 2. In Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the report, all analysis has been conducted on the group with two Zoroastrian parents, which represents the majority of our respondents (91.6%).

Challenges we encountered in undertaking the Project

The number one challenge that we encountered in completing the project within the timeframe was to get people to sign up and complete the online questionnaire. Despite being in touch with most Zoroastrian Associations in North America and creating a network of ambassadors to promote the project, uptake was slow and there was undoubtedly a syndrome of 'survey fatigue' that prevented what we had expected to be a more enthusiastic response. In India, the challenge was of a different sort, insofar as we were not allowed to enter the Zoroastrian *baugs* to distribute leaflets – something we had counted on being able to do. Our eligibility criteria were not accepted by some leaders in the community in India and elsewhere, which meant that publicity was curtailed and there was some adverse publicity in the Parsi press in India. In addition, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic made face-to-face communication difficult, and it was felt by some that to be

conducting a project of this nature at such a time (and seeking funds for it) was inappropriate. Finally, political unrest in Iran meant that we were unable to visit and promote the Survey there.

Addressing the challenges

The Survey was initiated by leaders in the Zoroastrian business world, based in North America, who set up a working group to network and publicise the Survey. We had planned a two-month stay in India for our Project Manager to build a team there, to travel to the major cities and carry out a boots-on-the-ground strategy to encourage people to take the Survey. Despite the setbacks described above, this proved to be very effective. Parsi media outlets published our material both to promote the project and counter negative articles when they appeared in Parsi newspapers. In North America, we had support from the leading Zoroastrian Institution, FEZANA, and were encouraged to publish several articles in its magazine. We were very active on social media, with two to three posts per week. We made a short promotional film for which we had a great deal of help and support, with community leaders, priests and young people taking part.

Methodology and software

The questionnaire was hosted by Sogolytics (previously SoGoSurvey), an online survey distribution platform. Respondents were given access to the survey via an invitation delivered by email, mobile or a unique password. The quantitative data from the survey was analysed using SPSS, with some use of NVivo for analysing the smaller amount of qualitative data. All of our data is stored with the UK Data Service and is available in both SPSS dataset and Excel workbook formats.

In the questionnaire, we asked respondents to give their current country of residence. We have grouped these countries into regions throughout this report to allow for more meaningful analysis and legible tables. Tables with analysis by individual countries are available in the appendices. We also grouped the responses to the questions 'Which field do you currently work in?' and 'If you could choose, what would be your ideal occupation / career?' into a smaller set of options for the same reason.

In the survey question about age, there were answer options for both 76-85 and 85+. Due to the small number of respondents in the 85+ category (69 respondents across all eligible groups), for the purposes of our analysis we have combined these groups into 76+. We have also omitted respondents who chose an option other than 'Male' or 'Female' when analysing by gender due to their statistically insignificant number, but these have been included in the appendices.

Responses given under the 'Other (please specify)' answer option have in some cases been recoded to one of the pre-written answer options. We have only done this in instances where we believe the answer respondents have given clearly fits within one of our set answer options. The data with and without this recoding is available from the UK Data Service.

Excluding the eligibility questions, we chose not to make questions compulsory so that respondents were able to skip questions that they did not choose to answer. As a result, the total number of respondents in each table may vary from question to question. Additionally, many questions were only asked of those for whom they were relevant. For example, the question 'What is your country of birth?' (Question 24) was only pertinent to those who had answered 'No' to the question 'Were you born in the country that you currently live in?' (Question 23). This means that the total number of respondents for Question 24 is less than the total number of respondents.

Project team

The Project was run by a small team: the Principle Investigator, Dr Sarah Stewart (0.2 fte), Project Manager, Dr Nazneen Engineer (full-time) and Administrator and data analyst, Joe Turtle (0.5 fte). In India, we had the paid support of a part-time researcher, Sheherazad Pavri. Otherwise, all the considerable help extended to us from members of the Zoroastrian community worldwide, but especially in North America, Pakistan and India, was voluntary.

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7. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

CHAPTER 1 - FAMILY

In this chapter we focus our attention on the family by asking what role the family plays in shaping individual identity, relationships with the wider community, and religious beliefs and practices. To understand this, we first need to understand the demographic trends.

We asked our respondents what they thought posed the greatest threat to the Zoroastrian religion and the ethnocultural identity of its members. As we will see in the community sub-theme in Chapter 5, a small, ageing population - estimated to be less than 100,000 globallyⁱ – was the most popular answer chosen. Demographer Chandra Shekar (1948, p. 88) studied the Parsi Zoroastrian population in India (where the majority of demographic studies have been undertaken) and estimated that the reproductive rate would have to rise by 20 percent simply to maintain the population figures and that ‘the future of the community can be read in its demographic trends.’ Today, the Parzor Foundationⁱⁱ estimates that 31% of Parsis in India are over the age of 60 and more than 30% have never married (Bagcchi, 2014).

Zoroastrian family numbers continue to change due to the following demographic trends:

1. **Low birth rate:** Late or non-marriage leading to a low number of children being born is acknowledged as the primary reason for the fall in population numbers since the turn of the nineteenth century.ⁱⁱⁱ The reasons for this are a combination of factors including social and biological.^{iv} In India, the replacement fertility rate (TFR) for the Parsi Zoroastrian community is now below 1 (0.8) (Bagcchi, 2014).^v In the diaspora,

ⁱ See Rivetna (2012, pp. 3-4) for an estimate of the global Zoroastrian population. Here, it was estimated to be 111,201 in 2012, a reduction of 11% from the 2004 population estimate. To arrive at an estimate of less than 100,000 people globally, we have reduced the 2012 population estimate by a further 11%. There has been no census taken in India since 2011. NB The Rivetna Survey was conducted by requesting a knowledgeable source in each region, country or province/state (for Canada and USA) to send them a ‘recorded count’ and an ‘estimated maximum count’. See Rivetna (2012, pp. 1-2) for the process and guidelines followed.

ⁱⁱ The UNESCO Parzor Foundation was established in 1999 for the preservation of Parsi Zoroastrian culture and heritage. In September 2013, under the auspices of the Ministry of Minority Affairs of the Government of India, the Parzor Foundation launched The Central Sector Scheme for Containing Population Decline of Parsis (also known as the Jiyo Parsi Scheme) in India. According to the Jiyo Parsi website (jiyoparsi.org), over 400 babies have been born to the scheme in the past decade (in a letter dated 14 March 2023, the Ministry of Minority Affairs announced it was discontinuing the services of the Parzor Foundation in the running of the scheme. The Jiyo Parsi scheme will now be implemented through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) model).

ⁱⁱⁱ See Desai (1948, pp. 48-50), who noted that from 1881 to 1931, the general marriage rate for the Parsi population aged 15-44 decreased significantly leading to fertility decline.

^{iv} See Axelrod (1990) for more information on changes in social behaviour such as women studying and working and moving away from arranged marriages leading to a limiting effect on the size of the family. Others such as Gould (1982, p. 1066) found that ‘match problems, parents’ needs, dislike of marriage, low income’ all contributed to the low marriage rate. See Patell et al (2021, pp. 11-12) for information on the Avestagenome Project, a genetic study which found asthenozoospermia, a condition that reduces sperm motility resulting in low birth rates, in the Parsi population.

^v This means that throughout her total childbearing age, a Parsi women has, on average, less than one child.

the population figures are increasing but not by a significant enough number to offset the decline in global figures (Rivetna, 2012, p. 5).

2. **Increased intermarriage:** The rate of intermarriage has increased over the past 50 years in India as well as in the diaspora.^{vi} Accurate figures are hard to obtain, but *Parsiana* collates and annually publishes inter- and intra-marriage rates for Mumbai where marriage data is more accessible.^{vii} From those figures, we can see that the rate of intermarriage has been growing steadily from 19% in 1991 to 38% in 2010 (Shroff and Castro, 2011, p. 548) to 47.5% in 2022 (Parsiana 2023). In North America, the rate of intermarriage rose from 23.7% in 1991 to 59.4% in 2011 (Rivetna, 2021, p. 6). In the UK, intermarriage was estimated to be 16.9%^{viii} in 2004 but estimated to increase to 60% with the second generation (Parsiana 2006, p. 21). It is also thought that few children of intermarriage follow the Zoroastrian religion and 'should be cause for grave concern, especially in future generations' (Rivetna 2021, pp. 6-7). We had some slightly more encouraging results on this topic (see Sec. 1.1.1 in Ch. 2, p. 52).
3. **Breakdown of extended family:** Shapur Desai (1948, p. 60) noted that 'Parsis are today more than 90% urbanised.' Urbanisation of the Parsi Zoroastrian community has led to the breakdown of joint family systems where multiple generations lived under the same roof, allowing a greater number of children to be born and taken care of. A study on marriage in the Parsi community found that 90% of people believed that couples should have their own house (as cited in Shroff and Castro 2011, p. 552). In cities such as Bombay, Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) or private housing Trusts provide many Parsis with subsidised flats or apartments, but they are often small in size and always in shortage. Finally, the Parzor Foundation (n.d.) also recognised migration and separation and divorce as contributing to the decline in the Parsi population.

In the following section, we analyse questions on marriage, raising children, and domestic life to see whether our data matches previous studies on the Parsi family. Hinnells (2005, p. 388) had already noted a general pattern when he published the results of his 2005 survey: 'young people tend to be religious after the manner, and to the level, of their parents until they leave home, generally for university, when they drift from the tradition, until they get married; when this is to a Zoroastrian, and then when they have children, they become active in the religion'. This is a phenomenon we recognised in our study.

^{vi} For the purposes of this study, intermarriage is defined as a marriage between a (Iranian / Irani / Parsi) Zoroastrian and a non-Zoroastrian.

^{vii} *Parsiana* is a bi-monthly community magazine published in India.

^{viii} This estimate was based on 45 non-Zoroastrian spouses in 267 families (barring single households) who were listed in the first 40 pages of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) directory. (Rivetna, 2004, p. 25).

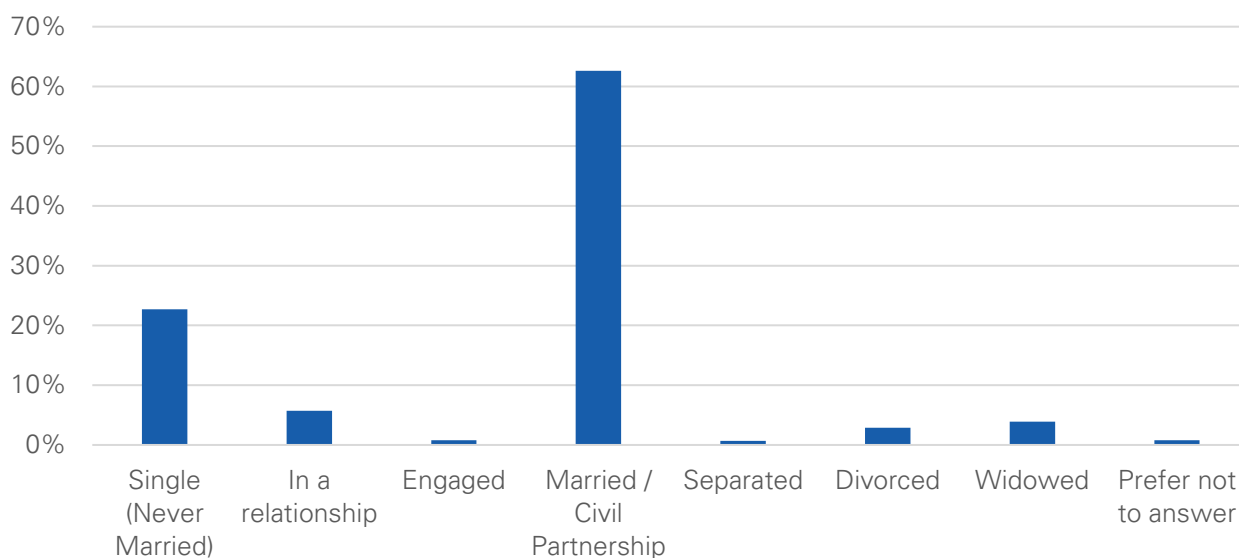
1. MARRIAGE

Marriage is an important social and religious duty for many Zoroastrians. As we have seen above, it is also a very controversial subject within the community due to the community's demographic decline and the rise in intermarriage. We give the basic information about marital status in the chart below. Thereafter, we have conducted analysis focusing on respondents with a non-Zoroastrian partner, as this is an issue with particular importance for the community. Questions on this topic do not appear in the other chapters.

1.1 Marital status

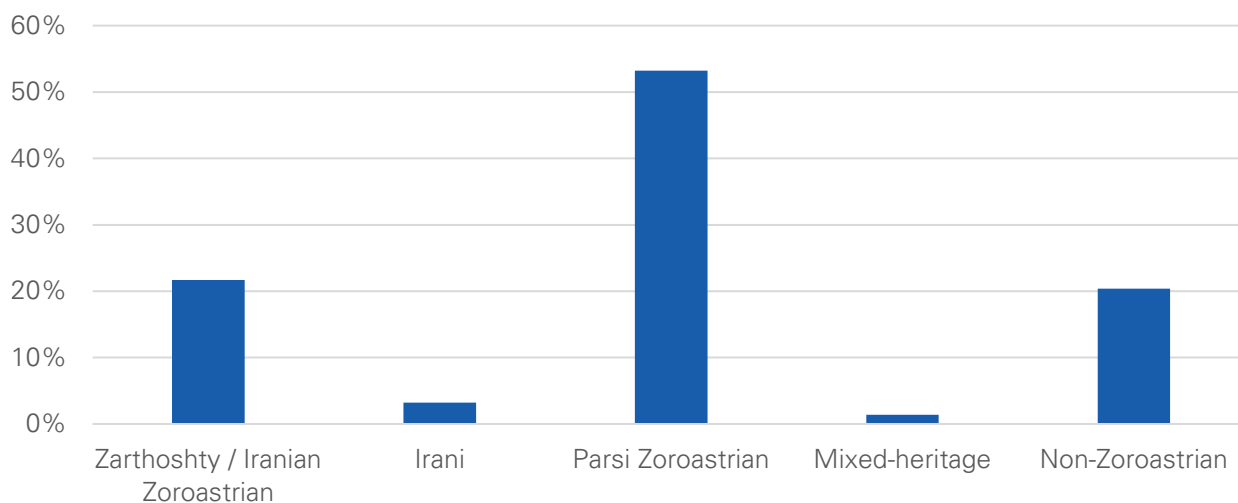
22.7% of respondents were single (never married), 5.7% were in a relationship, 0.8% were engaged, 62.76% were married or in a civil partnership, 0.7% were separated, 2.9% were divorced, 3.9% were widowed, and 0.8% preferred not to answer (Figure 1).¹

Figure 1 – 'What is your marital status?'



1.2 Ethnicity of partner

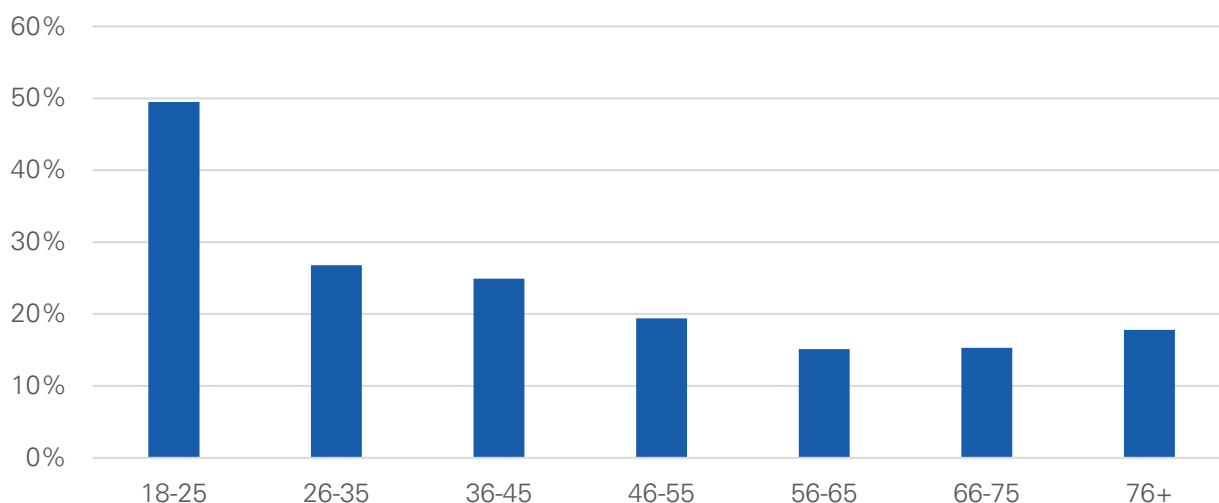
Of those respondents who were in a relationship, engaged, married or in a civil partnership, separated, divorced, or widowed, the majority (78.1%) of respondents had Zoroastrian partners. 20.4% had non-Zoroastrian partners and 1.4% had a partner with one Zoroastrian and one non-Zoroastrian parent (Figure 2).²

Figure 2 – ‘Which of these options best describes your current or previous partner?’^{ix}

1.2.1 Age

Of respondents in a relationship, nearly half (49.5%) of 18-25-year-old respondents were in a relationship with or married to non-Zoroastrians. This percentage reduces as the age group increases (Figure 3).³ Therefore, for those for whom ethnicity is a vital part of a Zoroastrian identity, this age group poses a double threat in relation to a declining two-parent Zoroastrian population, with high levels of single status and many in relationships with non-Zoroastrians.

Figure 3 – Respondents with a non-Zoroastrian partner, by Age



^{ix} In the questionnaire, Zarhoshty / Iranian Zoroastrians live either in Iran or in the diaspora. Iranis are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 18th century onwards living in India or the wider diaspora. Parsi Zoroastrians are defined as descendants of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 10th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora. Mixed-heritage people are described as those with one parent who is Zarhoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian or Irani or Parsi and one parent who is not.

1.2.2 Gender

Similar percentages of men and women respondents had non-Zoroastrian partners (19.9% and 20.9%).⁴

1.2.3 Region

Respondents in North America were more likely to have non-Zoroastrian partners than respondents in South Asia (31.3% vs 10.6%). This was true of all diaspora regions, as seen in Table 1.⁵

Table 1 – ‘Which of these options best describes your current or previous partner?’ by Region^x

	Australasia (N=200)	Europe (N=31)	Iran (N=10)	Middle East (N=58)	North America (N=1034)	South Asia (N=1636)	South East Asia (N=40)	United Kingdom (N=175)	Rest of the world (N=7)
Zoroastrian	82.5%	35.5%	100.0%	87.9%	68.1%	87.5%	55.0%	60.0%	57.1%
Non-Zoroastrian	16.0%	64.5%	0.0%	12.1%	31.3%	10.6%	45.0%	38.9%	42.9%
Mixed-heritage	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.2.4 Migration

Respondents who had migrated were more likely to have non-Zoroastrian partners than those who had not migrated (25.0% vs 17.2%).⁶ Respondents whose parents (35.9% vs 15.7%) or grandparents (33.5% vs 18.7%) had migrated were more likely to have non-Zoroastrian partners than those whose parents and grandparents had not migrated.⁷

1.2.5 Religious practices and beliefs

In his study, Hinnells (2005, p. 680) noted that ‘it is the contention of some in the community that marriage to a non-Zoroastrian is associated with a weakened commitment to the religion’. He found that those who were intermarried were less likely to be religious or hold traditional views. However, he did not believe the above to be true simply because they were intermarried, or that less religious people were more likely to intermarry, but that they could be turned away from the religion because of an unwelcoming environment at community events (Hinnells, 2005, p. 681).

^x The answer options Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian, Irani, and Parsi Zoroastrian have been grouped together as ‘Zoroastrian’.

Greater challenges to inclusion were certainly faced in India, as Bharat (2017) noted in her study. However, she also found that despite facing exclusion and denied entry into the fire-temples, 90% of intermarried women said they practised the faith (Bharat, 2017, p. 282).^{xi}

Our study, unlike Hinnells' 2005 study, looked at India and Iran as well as the diaspora, and found that respondents with a non-Zoroastrian partner were less connected to religious and cultural identity and less engaged with religious practices. When compared to those partnered with a Zoroastrian, they were less likely to:

- 1) identify as practising or partially practising Zoroastrians (80.3% vs 95.3%)⁸
- 2) view Zoroastrian religious and cultural rituals as very important (13.3% vs 34.9%)⁹
- 3) view their ethnic identity as central to who they are (40.0% vs 59.6%)¹⁰
- 4) believe that the priesthood was the most important voice in a religious dispute (14.2% vs 39.4%)¹¹
- 5) perform the *kusti* prayers daily (35.3% vs 76.0%)¹²
- 6) observe purity laws (25.6% vs 53.0%)¹³
- 7) believe in the traditional Zoroastrian eschatological doctrine for what happens to the soul at death (20.8% vs 45.6%)¹⁴
- 8) choose *dokhemenishni* as their preferred funeral practice (29.2% vs 53.1%)¹⁵

Respondents with a non-Zoroastrian partner were more likely to observe the customs or religious practices of other religions (18.5% vs 11.1%) and to consider themselves to be atheist (23.5% vs 17.8%).¹⁶

1.2.6 Participation in community life

When asked what activities, events, and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community respondents participate in, those with a non-Zoroastrian partner were less likely attend always (5.0% vs 18.3%) or often (21.7% vs 42.2%) than respondents with a Zoroastrian partner.¹⁷ Of those who do attend events, those with a non-Zoroastrian partner were less likely to participate in all but interfaith, LGBTQ+, and online activities than respondents with a Zoroastrian partner.¹⁸

When asked about what they liked about attending events and activities organised by the Zoroastrian community, compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian partner, intermarried men and women were more likely to say they liked the food (61.0% vs 57.7%) and the sense of familiarity / identifying with their cultural homeland (46.8% vs 43.8%). They were less likely to say they liked attending for any of the other reasons given, particularly passing down their heritage to their children (37.5% vs 50.7%).¹⁹

^{xi} No comparison was made between respondents who were married to non-Zoroastrians and respondents who were married to Zoroastrians. So, we cannot say if respondents married to non-Zoroastrians in India were less religious.

When asked about what they disliked about attending community events, respondents partnered with non-Zoroastrians were more likely to say that their spouse, partner or children didn't have fun when they went (16.1% vs 6.5%) or were not allowed to or discouraged from attending (11.6% vs 0.9%).²⁰ Furthermore, intermarried women were more likely than intermarried men to say they felt left out (16.5% vs 9.2%) and they didn't feel that they belonged at these community events (13.3% vs 10.9%).²¹

There were few respondents who said they never participated in activities, events and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community. Respondents with non-Zoroastrian partners who never participated said this was for a variety of reasons, including that the distance to the events was too far to travel, they didn't know anyone and felt left out, and that they participated with family and friends and not with the wider community. Very few indicated that they did not participate because their non-Zoroastrian family members were excluded.²²

2. ACCEPTANCE OF INTERMARRIAGE

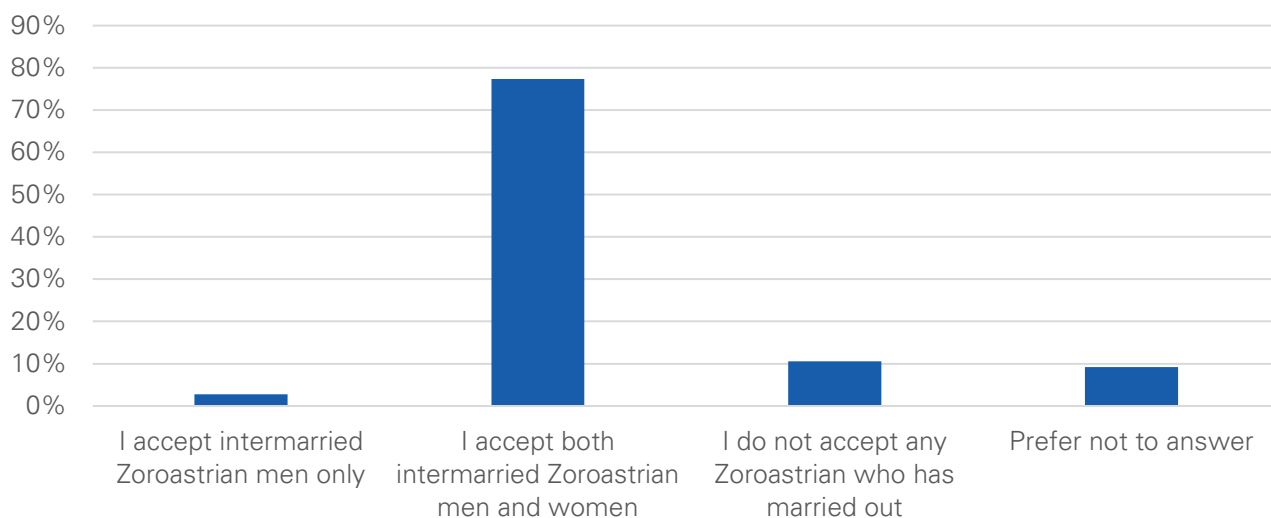
2.1 Acceptance of a Zoroastrian who has married out

We found that 77.4% of respondents accepted (as Zoroastrian) intermarried Zoroastrian men and women. 10.6% did not accept any intermarried Zoroastrians, 9.2% preferred not to answer this question and 2.8% accepted intermarried Zoroastrian men only (Figure 4).²³ It is interesting to note here that these figures have changed substantially since the time that Hinnells (2005) published his survey over 18 years ago and found that 70.4% of his diaspora survey participants 'approved' intermarriage.^{xii} Taking India and Iran out of our figures, we compared our global 'diaspora' to the diaspora studies by Hinnells in his 2005 study (although it included fewer countries^{xiii}) and found that acceptance of intermarriage in the diaspora had risen to 90.5%.²⁴

^{xii} See Table 1(22) in Hinnells (2005, p. 750).

^{xiii} Hinnells (2005, p. 9) studied 'older settlements of Karachi, Hong Kong, Zanzibar and London, and the newer ones in Canada, USA, Australia, France and Germany.

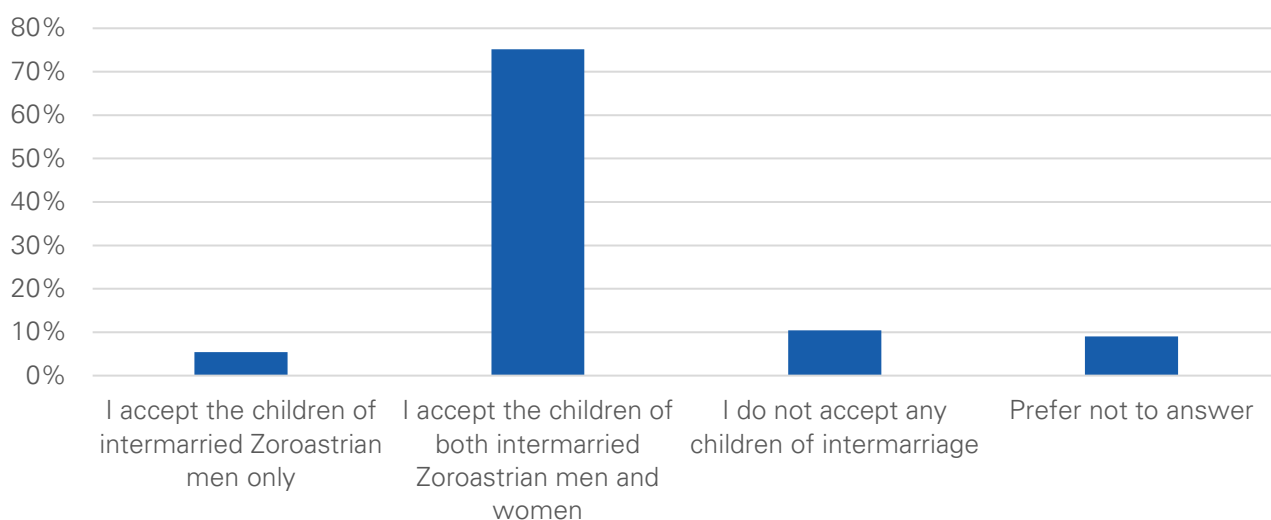
Figure 4 – ‘Do you accept a Zoroastrian who has married out?’



2.2 Acceptance of the children of intermarriage

There was also significant acceptance (as Zoroastrians) of the children of intermarriage. This showed that 75.2% accepted children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women. 10.4% did not accept children of either intermarried Zoroastrian, 9.0% preferred not to answer this question and 5.4% accepted the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men only (Figure 5).²⁵ Hinnells’ 2005 study showed that 69.8% of his survey participants accepted the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women.^{xiv} Taking India and Iran out of our figures, we found that acceptance has risen to 89.0%. This wasn’t the only substantial change. We noticed that acceptance of the children of only intermarried Zoroastrian men decreased from 14.4% in Hinnells’ (2005) study to 2.8% in our study.²⁶

Figure 5 – ‘Do you accept the children of intermarriage?’



^{xiv} See Table 1(24) in Hinnells (2005, p. 751).

2.3 Age

Acceptance of intermarriage or the children of intermarriage did not vary greatly by age. Those aged 36-45 were the least likely to accept both intermarried men and women (72.6%) or the children of intermarried men and women (70.6%) (Tables 2 and 3). This may support Hinnells' suggestion that people become more active in the religion once they marry and have children (Hinnells, 2005, p. 388).

Table 2 – 'Do you accept a Zoroastrian who has married out?' by Age

	18-25 (N=398)	26-35 (N=736)	36-45 (N=693)	46-55 (N=717)	56-65 (N=691)	66-75 (N=620)	76+ (N=329)
I accept intermarried Zoroastrian men only	1.5%	2.2%	2.9%	3.1%	2.7%	3.5%	4.3%
I accept both intermarried Zoroastrian men and women	79.6%	78.7%	72.6%	75.9%	77.6%	78.9%	82.4%
I do not accept any Zoroastrian who has married out	9.3%	10.1%	12.7%	10.2%	10.6%	11.6%	7.6%
Prefer not to answer	9.5%	9.1%	11.8%	10.9%	9.1%	6.0%	5.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3 – 'Do you accept the children of intermarriage?' by Age

	18-25 (N=398)	26-35 (N=732)	36-45 (N=693)	46-55 (N=716)	56-65 (N=691)	66-75 (N=623)	76+ (N=328)
I accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men only	4.3%	4.8%	4.9%	5.9%	6.5%	5.5%	6.1%
I accept the children of both intermarried Zoroastrian men and women	76.9%	75.3%	70.6%	73.9%	75.5%	77.0%	81.4%
I do not accept any children of intermarriage	10.1%	10.5%	12.7%	9.1%	9.4%	12.0%	7.0%
Prefer not to answer	8.8%	9.4%	11.8%	11.2%	8.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.4 Gender

Men were more likely than women to accept intermarried men only (3.9% vs 1.8%) and their children (7.2% vs 3.8%). They were also more likely not to accept any intermarried Zoroastrian (13.0% vs 8.4%) or their children (12.8% vs 8.1%). Women were more likely than men to accept both intermarried Zoroastrian men and women (81.1% vs 73.7%) and their children (79.7% vs 70.6%).²⁷

2.5 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to accept intermarried men only (4.3% vs 1.6%) and their children (7.8% vs 2.6%). They were also more likely not to accept any intermarried Zoroastrian (16.7% vs 3.3%) or their children (16.4% vs 3.5%). Respondents in North America were much more likely to accept both intermarried Zoroastrian men and women (91.6% vs 65.3%) and their children (90.9% vs 62.2%). Acceptance was high across all other regions (Tables 4 and 5).²⁸

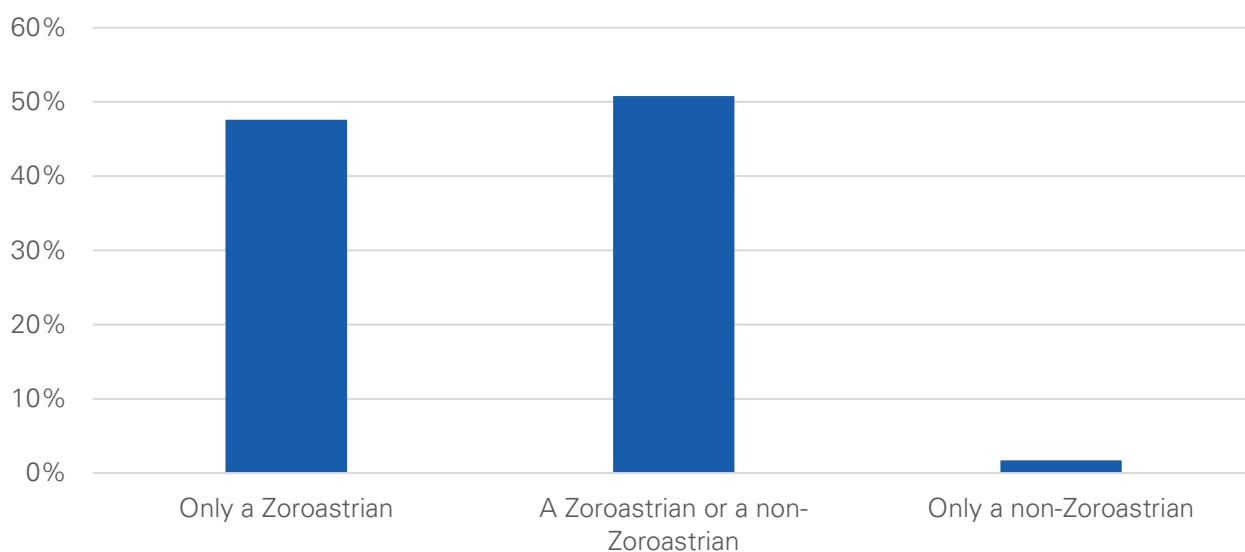
3. LOOKING FOR A RELATIONSHIP

We asked respondents who said they were not in a relationship if they were currently looking for one. 46.6% said they were looking for a relationship, with 26-35-year-olds the most likely to say this (72.8%).²⁹

3.1 Who were they looking for as a partner?

We then asked who they were looking for as a partner. 47.6% said that they were looking for a Zoroastrian only, 50.8% were looking for a Zoroastrian or a non-Zoroastrian and 1.7% were looking for a non-Zoroastrian only (Figure 6).³⁰ Although Hinnells (2005) never asked his respondents about who they wanted as a partner if they were single, we have this information from research conducted on the Parsi Zoroastrian youth (20-35-year-olds) community in India by Lata Narayan (2017).^{xv}

Figure 6 – ‘Who are you looking for as a partner?’



In her study, Narayan (2017, p. 114) asked about respondents' willingness to marry outside the community and found that 33.6% said that they were willing.^{xvi} Noteworthy is the fact that she included young people aged between 20-35 years, who were born of either a Parsi man and a Parsi woman, a Parsi man and a non-Parsi woman, and a Parsi woman and a non-Parsi man. Our study has maintained separate categories for these three groups. In this instance, as a point of comparison, we matched the sample from Narayan's (2017) study by expanding our data set to include respondents with both Zoroastrian parents, a

^{xv} The fieldwork on the youth study was conducted between February 2005 and March 2007 (Narayan, 2017, pp. 113-114).

^{xvi} A further 48.2% said no, 9.4% said maybe, 1.7% were already married to non-Zoroastrians, and 7.1% did not respond (Narayan, 2017, p. 114).

Zoroastrian father only, and a Zoroastrian mother only and filtered our sample by age to keep only 18-35-year-olds from India.^{xvii} Although the two samples weren't perfectly aligned – our study asked this question to single respondents only whereas Narayan's 2017 study sample included married respondents^{xviii} – we found that our study results were similar to hers, with 34.9% our respondents saying they were open to a relationship with either a Zoroastrian or a non-Zoroastrian.³¹

3.1.1 Age

The younger age groups were more likely to want a Zoroastrian partner only. 26-35-year-olds, who were in their prime marriage age, were most likely to want a Zoroastrian partner only (52.8%). This changed noticeably as the age groups increased, and if respondents were still single at this point, they were more likely to be open to a relationship with either a Zoroastrian or a non-Zoroastrian partner.³² Narayan (2017, p. 114) points to this as well when she says that the preference for youth is for a Zoroastrian partner, but if one is not found, they would consider marriage to someone outside the community and were unlikely to choose to remain single.

3.1.2 Gender

Male respondents were more likely to want only a Zoroastrian partner (51.6% vs 41.4%). Female respondents were more likely to be open to a Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian partner (56.1% vs 47.3%).³³

3.1.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were much more likely than respondents in North America to want only a Zoroastrian partner (62.4% vs 23.9%). This was also true of younger respondents, with 66.1% of 18-35-year-olds in South Asia looking for only a Zoroastrian partner compared to 28.7% of 18-35-year-olds in North America.³⁴ Respondents in North America were much more likely to be open to either a Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian partner compared to respondents in South Asia (73.0% vs 36.7%) (Table 6).³⁵

^{xvii} See Narayan (2017, p. 4) for more details on the survey sample.

^{xviii} It must be noted that Narayan's sample of 761 respondents included 204 married (191 to Zoroastrians and 13 to non-Zoroastrians). This is different from our study which posed this question to single respondents only. Therefore, our sample does not include anyone who wasn't single at the time of the survey.

Table 6 – ‘Who are you looking for as a partner?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=33)	Europe (N=6)	Iran (N=7)	Middle East (N=8)	North America (N=163)	South Asia (N=327)	South East Asia (N=4)	United Kingdom (N=25)
Only a Zoroastrian	33.3%	16.7%	57.1%	50.0%	23.9%	62.4%	25.0%	32.0%
A Zoroastrian or a non-Zoroastrian	66.7%	83.3%	42.9%	50.0%	73.0%	36.7%	50.0%	68.0%
Only a non-Zoroastrian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	0.9%	25.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.1.4 Who you live with

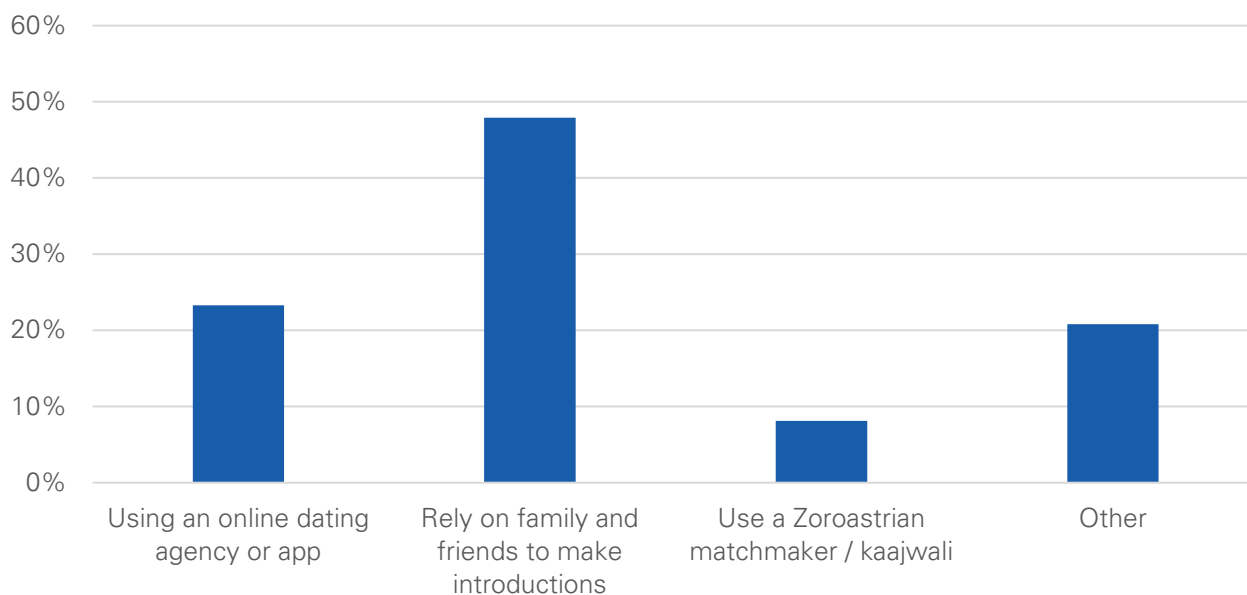
Most single respondents lived with their parents and/or siblings (66.7%), or alone (21.9%).³⁶ Those who lived with their parents and/or siblings were more likely to want a Zoroastrian partner only (57.9%).³⁷ This is in keeping with Hinnells’ finding (see above p. 18) that young people tend to remain influenced by their parents in religious matters while living at home.

3.2 How people look for a partner

It is widely acknowledged that most young Zoroastrians choose their own partners, and whilst parental approval was sought, parents were no longer ‘arranging’ their children’s partnerships. Shroff and Castro (2011, p. 553) spoke of this as part of the ‘Westernisation of the community’ which contributed to demographic decline as its small size and fewer intracommunity interactions led to delays in finding partners, pushing upward the age of marriage. We found that respondents predominantly relied on family and friends to introduce them to a partner (47.9%) (Figure 7).

3.2.1 Age

Online dating was low even amongst the youth (20.3% for 18-25-year-olds and 24.7% for 26-35-year-olds) and peaked at 32.6% for 36-45-year-olds. Only 8.1% of respondents said they used a *kaajwali* or traditional matchmaker. This method was most popular among 26-35-year-olds (15.0%), which may explain the slightly higher number within this age group who were looking for a Zoroastrian partner only (as most *kaajwalis* offer their matchmaking services to Zoroastrians only).³⁸

Figure 7 – ‘How do you look for a partner?’³⁹

When we looked at the qualitative data, we found that there were three main types of responses from those who chose ‘other’ in the table above:

- 1) Some respondents said they used a mix of techniques and did not rely on only one method to find a partner. For example, one respondent said they used “a mix of family/friends and a Zoroastrian matchmaker”.
- 2) Others stated they preferred to meet someone organically or naturally. There were also a few people who said they used prayers or believed in destiny or fate. For example, one respondent stated they would meet someone “when DESTINY makes it happen”.
- 3) Other respondents relied on their social circles or social activities such as “Zoroastrian networking/youth events or groups/associations (Eg: Congress)” to meet people and find a partner.

There was also a sense of resignation in some of the responses that they might never find someone, despite their best efforts. Some responses were humorous, like for example, “I don't lol. Eventually I'll find someone, or I'll just end up with a lot of cats. But I won't knit”. Some others were more despondent, like for example, “Well, there's not any dating apps/websites for Parsis so I can't use those. I'm almost just living in hope that I organically meet someone but doubt that will ever happen”.

3.2.2 Gender

Online dating and relying on family and friends were at similar levels for both men and women. Men were more likely to use a *kaajwali* than women (10.1% vs 5.1%), who were more likely to use ‘other’ means (23.4% vs 19.0%).⁴⁰

3.2.3 Region

Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to use an online dating agency or app (32.9% vs 17.5%). Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to use a *kaajwali* (11.6% vs 3.7%). Respondents in both major regions rely on family and friends to introduce them to potential partners (53.4% in South Asia and 42.2% North America).⁴¹

3.2.4 Participate in activities

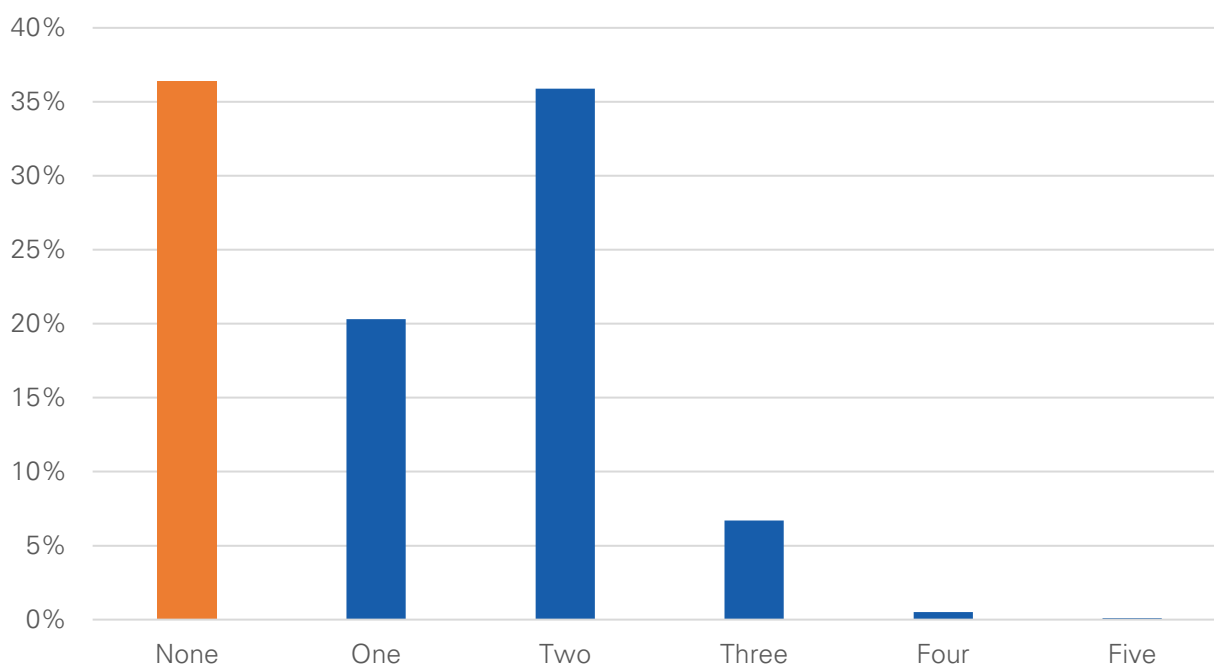
Respondents who 'always' and 'often' participated in activities, events and functions organised by the local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre were most likely to rely on family and friends to make introductions (60.0% and 56.8% respectively).⁴²

4. RAISING CHILDREN

4.1 Children

As we saw in the Introduction to this chapter, a lot of community time, effort and resources has been spent in assessing the demographic decline of the community and encouraging members to have more children. In our study, 63.6% of respondents had children. Of those who had children, 31.9% had one child, 56.4% had two children, 10.9% had three children and only 1.1% had more than three children (Figure 8).⁴³

Figure 8 – 'How many children do you have?'



4.1.1 Age

The likelihood of having children at a young age was very low. Only one respondent under the age of 26 and 19.6% of 26-35-year-old respondents had children. This increased to 69.1% for respondents between 36-45 and to over 80% for respondents over 45.⁴⁴

4.1.2 Region

Respondents who lived in North America were slightly more likely than respondents who lived in South Asia to have children (67.3% vs 61.4%).⁴⁵ Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to have one child (24.0% vs 15.6%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to have two (41.1% vs 32.6%) or more (10.6% vs 4.6%) children (Table 7).^{xix} The trend of respondents in South Asia having only one child remained across all age groups. For example, of respondents aged 66-75, 24.6% had one child, which rises to 33.2% for 46-55-year-olds and 35.3% for 36-45 year-olds.⁴⁶

Table 7 – ‘How many children do you have?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=239)	Europe (N=44)	Iran (N=21)	Middle East (N=65)	North America (N=1260)	South Asia (N=2127)	South East Asia (N=41)	United Kingdom (N=220)	Rest of the world (N=10)
None	32.6%	52.3%	71.4%	27.7%	32.7%	38.6%	19.5%	47.3%	40.0%
One	14.6%	25.0%	9.5%	29.2%	15.6%	24.0%	19.5%	15.0%	10.0%
Two	41.8%	22.7%	19.0%	40.0%	41.1%	32.6%	46.3%	29.5%	30.0%
Three	8.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	9.6%	4.4%	12.2%	6.4%	20.0%
Four	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.2%	2.4%	1.8%	0.0%
Five	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.1.3 Where people live^{xx}

Respondents who lived in subsidised housing through a Zoroastrian trust and who owned their own home were most likely to have children (59.3% and 79.7% respectively). However, possibly due to the size of house or the difficulty in obtaining a larger one to

^{xix} See Hinnells (2005, p. 140) as a point of comparison. He noted that 44% of his respondents had two children and 2% had four or more children in his study, but that ‘globally the diaspora was not at reproduction level’.

^{xx} We are not taking into consideration care homes and government subsidised housing as they had too few responses.

accommodate a growing family,^{xxi} respondents who lived in subsidised housing through a Zoroastrian trust were more likely to have only one child (25.3%) compared to respondents who owned their own home (21.6%), who were most likely to have two or more children (58.1% vs 34.0%).⁴⁷

4.1.4 Who people live with

Respondents with children were more likely to live as a nuclear family with their partner and children (37.5%).⁴⁸ 16.0% of respondents with children lived in a joint family,^{xxii} 34.2% lived with their spouse or partner only, 5.7% lived alone, and 4.2% lived with their children and/or grandchildren.^{xxiii}

4.1.5 Currently living in a city/town/village^{xxiv}

Respondents who lived in a city were the least likely to have children (62.2%) compared to respondents who lived in a town (72.9%) or village (76.8%). They were also most likely to have one child (20.9%), compared to those who lived in a town, who were the most likely to have two children (44.7%).⁴⁹ This could be related to the size of housing in cities, which tend to be denser with smaller houses.

4.2 Raising children as Zoroastrian^{xxv}

It is important for the community not only to have children but to raise them as Zoroastrian. Of respondents whose partner is Zoroastrian, most said they would or did raise their children as Zoroastrian (95.3%). 4.7% said they would or did not raise their children as Zoroastrian.⁵⁰

^{xxi} Castro and Shroff (2011) noted that 'while the BPP and a large number of private Trusts do provide subsidized housing to large sections of the community, the demand for these almost always exceeds the supply. This is evident from the extent that housing issues dominate BPP elections' (pp. 552-553).

^{xxii} A couple living with parent(s) and child(ren).

^{xxiii} This preference for a nuclear over a joint or extended family was expressed in studies in India as well as the diaspora. Bharat (2017, p. 292) found that only 19% of their study respondents lived in a joint family and that the majority of respondents with children preferred a nuclear family arrangement for themselves as well as their own children. Only 37% wanted their son and 14% wanted their daughter to live with them after marriage. Hinnells (2005) noted that this aversion to living in a joint family has travelled to the diaspora as 'unlike many South Asian groups in the 'West', only a quarter (24%) were part of an extended family network; 63% belonged to a nuclear family and 14% were single' (p. 140).

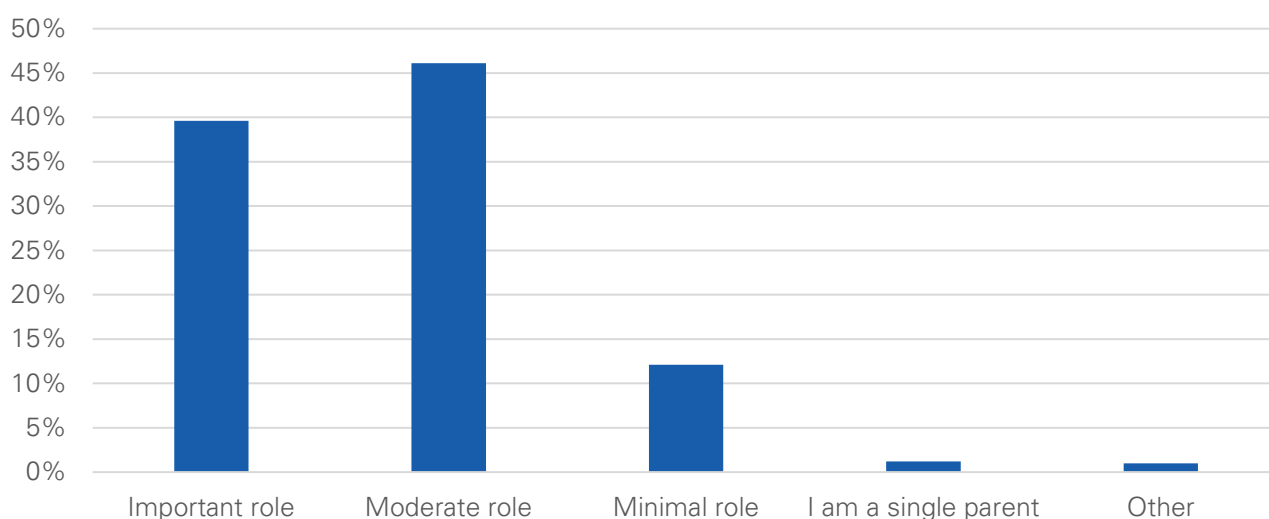
^{xxiv} As the global Zoroastrian is urbanised, 3796 respondents said they lived in a city, 475 lived in a town, and 84 lived in villages.

^{xxv} Respondents who chose the option 'Not applicable' have been excluded from our analysis. Figures including this group are given in the appendix.

4.3 Role spouse played in raising children^{xxvi}

In his talk at the North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston on 30 December 2010, historian Dinyar Patel (2010, p. 20) outlined the demographic decline faced by the community and called on all Zoroastrian parents to pass on 'their religion, tradition and culture to a new generation'. We wanted to assess the role (responsibility and involvement) the spouses of people taking the Survey played in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of their children. In our study, 46.1% of respondents with Zoroastrian partners said their partner played a moderate role, meaning that responsibility for religious and cultural upbringing was shared. 39.6% of respondents said their spouse played an important role, meaning that their spouse / partner managed the majority of their religious and cultural upbringing. Finally, 12.1% of respondents said their spouse played a minimal role, meaning that they undertook the majority of religious and cultural upbringing themselves. 1.2% of respondents were single parents (Figure 9).⁵¹

Figure 9 – What role did / does / will your spouse / partner play in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of your child(ren)? (Respondents with a Zoroastrian partner only)



4.3.1 Gender

Men with a Zoroastrian partner were more likely to say their spouse would or did play an important role compared to women (51.7% vs 28.2%). Women with a Zoroastrian partner were much more likely to say their spouse would or did play a minimal role (17.2% vs 6.7%) meaning they took or expected to take on the responsibility themselves.⁵² This is in keeping with findings in other studies that the 'mother is the main influencer in the child's upbringing'.^{xxvii}

^{xxvi} Respondents who chose the option 'not applicable' have been excluded from our analysis. Figures including this group are given in the appendix.

^{xxvii} Bharat and Desai (Eds.) (2017, p. xxxiv). The research for this study took place between 2004 and 2009.

4.3.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia who had a Zoroastrian partner were more likely to say their spouse would or did play an important role than respondents from North America (45.7% vs 30.6%) (Table 8).⁵³

Table 8 – ‘What role did / does / will your spouse / partner play in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of your child(ren)?’ by Region (Respondents with Zoroastrian partner only)

	Australasia (N=140)	Europe (N=7)	Iran (N=8)	Middle East (N=41)	North America (N=563)	South Asia (N=1142)	South East Asia (N=19)	United Kingdom (N=68)	Rest of the world (N=3)
Important role	37.9%	28.6%	37.5%	34.1%	30.6%	45.7%	26.3%	22.1%	33.3%
Moderate role	49.3%	57.1%	62.5%	53.7%	52.8%	41.3%	52.6%	61.8%	33.3%
Minimal role	11.4%	14.3%	0.0%	9.8%	15.1%	10.5%	21.1%	11.8%	33.3%
I am a single parent	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	1.2%	1.3%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%
Other	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	1.1%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.4 Raising children if intermarried^{xxviii}

Two thirds of respondents in our study whose partner was not Zoroastrian were raising their children as Zoroastrian (66.2%).⁵⁴ In her study, Bharat (2017, p. 283) found that men and women compared well as 55.2% of intermarried men and 42.6% of intermarried women raised their children in ‘the Parsi way’. We should note that whereas respondents being analysed here had two Zoroastrian parents, respondents in Bharat’s (2017, p. 26) study included people who were ‘born of Parsi parents or born of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother’.

33.8% of intermarried respondents were not raising, or did not intend to raise, their children as Zoroastrian.^{xxix} This percentage is high when compared to those married within the community (4.7%, see p. 34) who did not intend to raise their children as Zoroastrian.

^{xxviii} Respondents who chose the option ‘Not applicable’ have been excluded from our analysis. Figures including this group are given in the appendix.

^{xxix} As a point of comparison, Bharat (2017, p. 283) found that 12% of intermarried men and 20% intermarried women did not or had no intention of performing the *navjote* ceremony for their children.

This can be linked to the concerns that people have about intermarriage in the community. It should be noted, though, that there could be a number of reasons, apart from intermarriage, that cause people not to bring up their children as Zoroastrians.

4.4.1 Age

Younger respondents who were intermarried were much more likely than older respondents to raise their children as Zoroastrian. For example, only 21.7% of intermarried 26-35-year-olds were not raising their children as Zoroastrian, compared to 63.6% of intermarried 76+ year-olds who had not raised them as Zoroastrian.⁵⁵

4.4.2 Gender

Intermarried women were only slightly less likely to raise their children as Zoroastrian than men (63.3% vs 68.8%).⁵⁶

4.4.3 Region

Intermarried respondents in North America and South Asia were equally likely to raise their children as Zoroastrian (69.6% vs 68.9%) (Table 9).⁵⁷

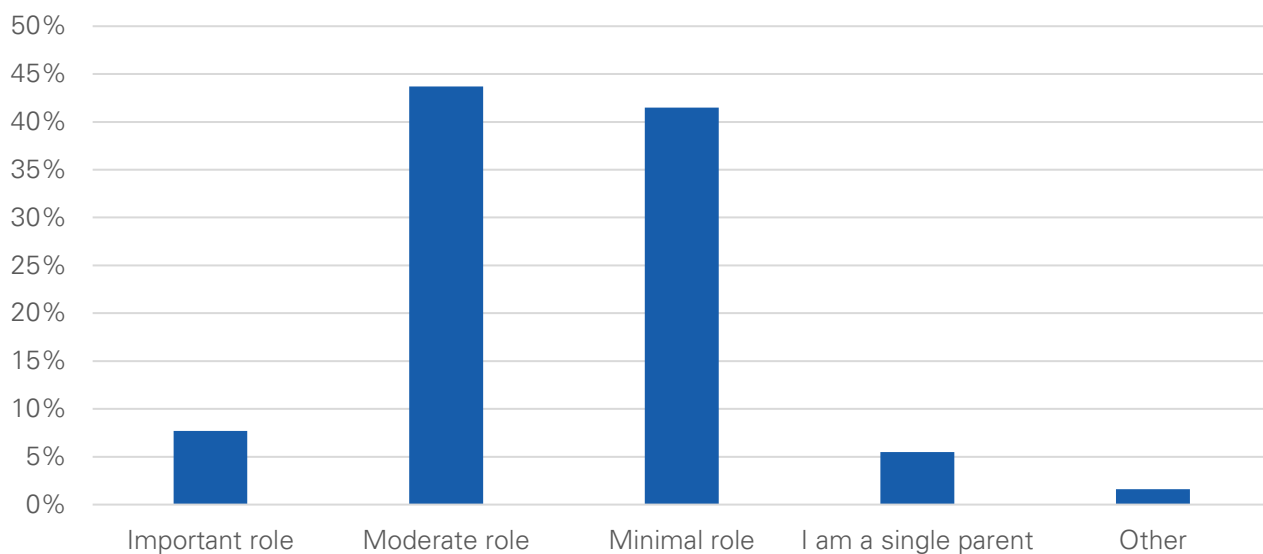
Table 9 - 'Did you raise, or are you currently raising, your children as Zoroastrian, or plan to raise any future children as Zoroastrian?' by Region (Respondents with non-Zoroastrian partner only)

	Australasia (N=26)	Europe (N=16)	Middle East (N=7)	North America (N=260)	South Asia (N=119)	South East Asia (N=15)	United Kingdom (N=54)	Rest of the world (N=2)
Yes	65.4%	75.0%	42.9%	69.6%	68.9%	80.0%	44.4%	100.0%
No	34.6%	25.0%	57.1%	30.4%	31.1%	20.0%	55.6%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.5 Role of non-Zoroastrian spouse in raising children as Zoroastrian

Most respondents either shared the workload with their non-Zoroastrian partners (43.7%) or did most of the work in raising children as Zoroastrian themselves (41.5%). Only 7.7% said that their non-Zoroastrian partner took this responsibility on their own (Figure 10).⁵⁸

Figure 10 – ‘What role did / does / will your spouse / partner play in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of your child(ren)?’ (Respondents with non-Zoroastrian partner only)



4.5.1 Age

Younger age groups were more likely to share the workload than older age groups, who were most likely to give the responsibility to their non-Zoroastrian spouse or do most of the work themselves in raising their children as Zoroastrian.⁵⁹

4.5.2 Gender

Intermarried Zoroastrian men were more likely than intermarried women to say that their non-Zoroastrian partner managed the majority of children’s religious and cultural upbringing (14.7% vs 1.3%) or to say that they shared the responsibility equally (50.7% vs 36.9%). Intermarried Zoroastrian women were more likely than men to take on the responsibility of raising their children as Zoroastrian (54.1% vs 28.0%).⁶⁰

4.5.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely to say they their non-Zoroastrian spouse played an important (12.2% vs 7.5%) or moderate (47.3% vs 42.2%) role in bringing up their children as Zoroastrian than those in North America. Respondents in North America were more likely to say their non-Zoroastrian spouse played a minimal role (44.7% vs 35.1%) meaning that the respondents did the work themselves (Table 10).⁶¹

Table 10 - 'What role did / does / will your spouse / partner play in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of your child(ren)?' by Region (Respondents with non-Zoroastrian partner only)^{xxx}

	Australasia (N=15)	Europe (N=9)	Middle East (N=2)	North America (N=161)	South Asia (N=74)	South East Asia (N=11)	United Kingdom (N=19)	Rest of the world (N=2)
Important role	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	7.5%	12.2%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%
Moderate role	46.7%	22.2%	100.0%	42.2%	47.3%	54.5%	21.1%	100.0%
Minimal role	46.7%	44.4%	0.0%	44.7%	35.1%	45.5%	57.9%	0.0%
I am a single parent	6.7%	22.2%	0.0%	3.1%	4.1%	0.0%	15.8%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5. DOMESTIC LIFE

5.1 Home life

People's identities and social interactions are shaped by where they live. The Zoroastrian *baug* plays a crucial role in the formation of the behaviours, interests and sense of humour of its inhabitants.^{xxxi} It is a key feature of Parsi life in the sub-continent, especially in larger cities such as Mumbai, Pune, and Karachi. Owned and managed by various community Trusts, traditionally, they provided subsidised housing for impoverished Parsi Zoroastrians, but as the community became wealthier, their role changed from providing affordable but basic shelter to fostering a 'social, cultural and religious identity' (Bharucha, 2019). As can be seen in Table 11, whilst subsidised housing is still the most common type of housing (56.9%), people can and do own their own homes in Zoroastrian *baugs*.

^{xxx} There were no responses from Iran for this question.

^{xxxi} A *baug* is a gated community housing estate, also referred to as a colony.

Table 11 – Type of housing by Location of home

	In a Zoroastrian <i>baug</i> or a predominantly Zoroastrian enclave (N=1252)	In a mixed neighbourhood with a few Zoroastrians living close by (N=835)	In a predominantly non-Zoroastrian neighbourhood (N=2297)	Total (N=4372)
Private housing - I own my own home	17.7%	47.5%	67.6%	49.5%
Private housing - I live in the family home	13.7%	28.4%	13.5%	16.4%
Private housing - I am renting	10.5%	17.7%	16.8%	15.2%
Subsidised housing through a Zoroastrian housing trust	56.9%	4.4%	0.4%	17.3%
Subsidised housing through local government	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
Care, old-age, or nursing home	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Other	1.1%	1.8%	1.4%	1.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.2 Place of Residence

52.4% of respondents lived in non-Zoroastrian neighbourhoods, 28.6% lived in Zoroastrian *baugs* and 19.0% lived in mixed neighbourhoods.⁶² 50.1% of respondents from South Asia lived in Zoroastrian *baugs*, 27.2% in mixed neighbourhood and 22.7% in non-Zoroastrian neighbourhoods. 89.1% of respondents in North America lived in non-Zoroastrian neighbourhoods. Interestingly, 1.7% of respondents in North America and 4.6% of respondents in Australasia said they lived in a Zoroastrian *baug* or predominantly Zoroastrian neighbourhood.⁶³

5.3 Type of home

49.5% of respondents were homeowners, and 17.2% lived in subsidised Zoroastrian trust housing.⁶⁴ These were the two most popular forms of accommodation. Private home ownership was much higher in North America than South Asia, with 71.6% of respondents owning their own home compared to 32.6% of respondents in South Asia. 31.3% of South Asian respondents lived in housing subsidised by a Zoroastrian Trust.⁶⁵

5.4 Sharing home life

We were not surprised to see that 77.8% of 18–25-year-olds and 41.7% of 26-35-year-olds lived at home with their parents and/or siblings. This highlights the low rates of marriage among the younger generations, with only 9.5% of 26-35-year-olds live in a nuclear family with their spouse or partner and children. This figure rose to 40.2% for 36-45-year-olds, indicating that the age of marriage and children within the community is high, as we have already seen.⁶⁶ 20.5% of 46-55-year-olds lived in a joint family with their parent(s), spouse/partner, and child(ren). This is less than half in the same age group who live in a nuclear family (44.1%).

6. OLDER GENERATION

A study commissioned by the Parzor Foundation in 2013 estimated that 31% of Parsi Zoroastrians in India are over the age of 60 (Bagcchi 2014). In this study, 22.5% of respondents were over 65 years old.⁶⁷ The data in the rest of this section only includes these respondents.

6.1 Health of the older generation

13.1% of respondents said they suffered from long-term ill health, with men more likely to suffer with long-term ill health than women (14.7% vs 11.1%).⁶⁸ Out of all the regions, respondents in North America were least likely suffer with long-term ill health (8.6%).⁶⁹

6.2 Where the older generation live

70.2% of respondents lived in their own home, 12.2% lived in subsidised Zoroastrian trust housing, 9.3% were renting, 5.6% lived in the family home, 0.3% lived in subsidised housing through a local government and 0.4% in care, old-age or nursing homes (Figure 11).⁷⁰

6.3 Who the older generation lives with

59.6% of older respondents lived with a spouse or partner, 18.0% lived alone, 9.0% lived in a nuclear family,^{xxxii} 4.5% lived in their children and/or grandchildren, 4.4% lived in a joint family,^{xxxiii} 3.5% lived with parents and siblings, and 0.4% lived with flatmates and 0.3% with an employed carer / caregiver (Figure 12).⁷¹ This raises questions about how elderly people are being taken care of in the community.

^{xxxii} A couple living with their child(ren).

^{xxxiii} A couple living with parent(s) and child(ren).

Figure 11 – 'Where do you live?' (66+ only)

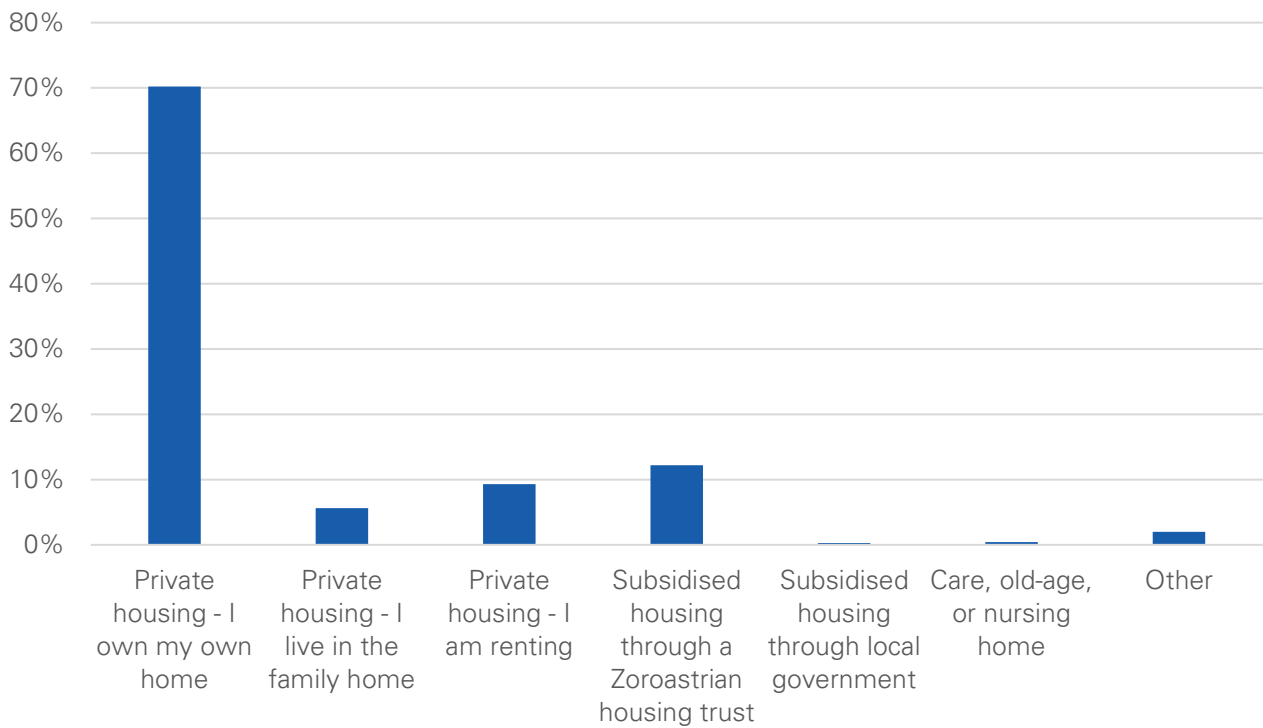
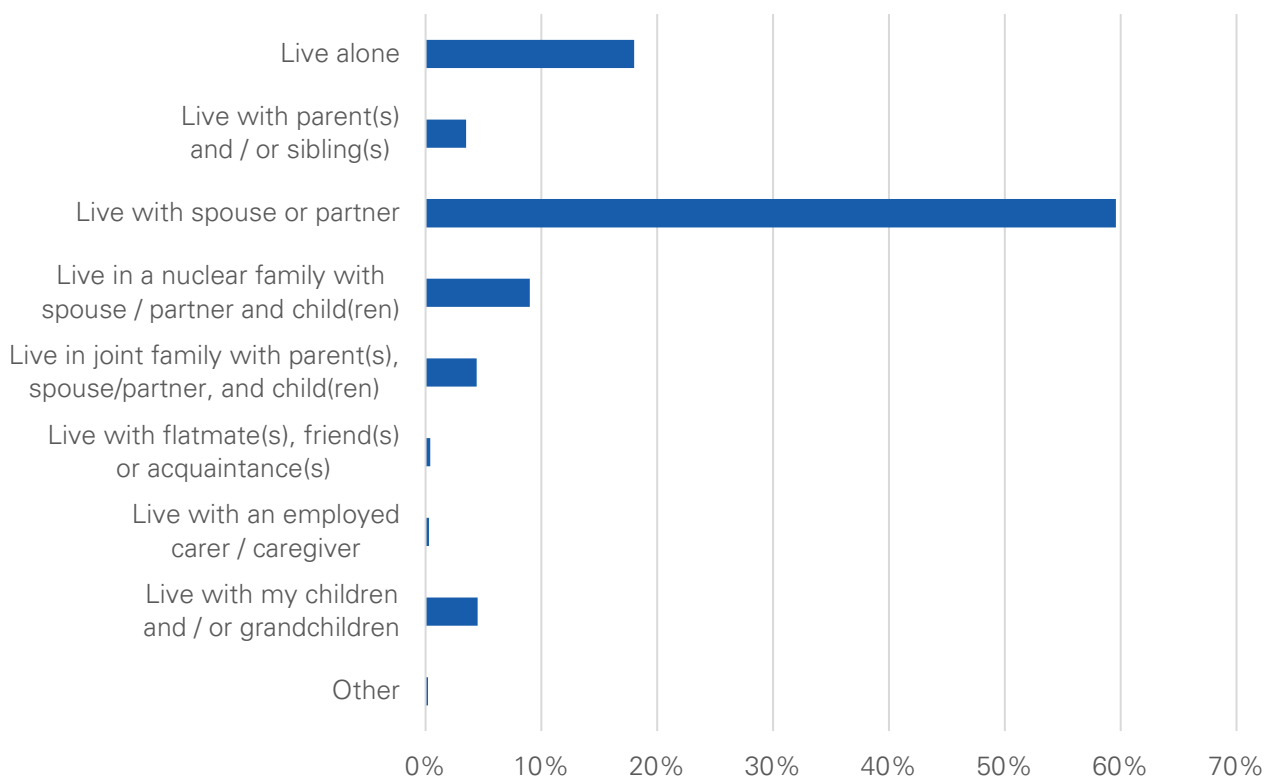


Figure 12 – 'Who do you live with?' (66+ only)



6.3.1 Gender

Older women were more likely than older men to live alone (25.9% vs 11.3%) and with children and/or grandchildren (6.7% vs 2.8%). In this older group, men were more likely than women to live with a spouse or partner (66.4% vs 51.6%) and in a nuclear family (11.0% vs 6.7%) (Table 12). This may be because women are generally more likely to outlive their partners, and our data suggests this is borne out in our sample as well.

Table 12 – ‘Who do you live with?’ by Gender (66+ only)

	Male (N=538)	Female (N=448)
Live alone	11.3%	25.9%
Live with parent(s) and / or sibling(s)	3.3%	3.8%
Live with spouse or partner	66.4%	51.6%
Live in a nuclear family with spouse / partner and child(ren)	11.0%	6.7%
Live in joint family with parent(s), spouse/partner, and child(ren)	4.8%	4.0%
Live with flatmate(s), friend(s) or acquaintance(s)	0.2%	0.4%
Live with an employed carer / caregiver	0.2%	0.4%
Live with my children and / or grandchildren	2.8%	6.7%
Other	0.0%	0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

6.3.2 Region

Older respondents in South Asia were more likely than those in North America to live alone (20.9% vs 15.2%), with their parents and/or siblings (6.1% vs 0.8%), in a nuclear family (12.7% vs 6.2%), in a joint family (8.9% vs 0.5%), or with children and/or grandchildren (6.1% vs 3.5%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to live with their spouse or partner (73.4% vs 44.0%) (Table 13).⁷² It is possible this was because young adults in North America were more likely to move out of the family home for university and work.

Table 13 – ‘Who do you live with?’ by Region (66+ in North America and South Asia only)

	North America (N=369)	South Asia (N=425)
Live alone	15.2%	20.9%
Live with parent(s) and / or sibling(s)	0.8%	6.1%
Live with spouse or partner	73.4%	44.0%
Live in a nuclear family with spouse / partner and child(ren)	6.2%	12.7%
Live in joint family with parent(s), spouse/partner, and child(ren)	0.5%	8.9%
Live with flatmate(s), friend(s) or acquaintance(s)	0.3%	0.2%
Live with an employed carer / caregiver	0.0%	0.7%
Live with my children and / or grandchildren	3.5%	6.1%
Other	0.0%	0.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

7. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

The data tells us that acceptance of intermarriage and the children of intermarriage was high. Acceptance has become less conditional on the gender of the intermarried parent, driven in part by women and respondents in the diaspora. We did find that respondents with non-Zoroastrian partners showed less religiosity and were less likely than those with Zoroastrian partners to participate in community events. Many respondents with non-Zoroastrian partners said they did not feel like they belonged, or their families did not enjoy themselves or were discouraged or disallowed from participating in events. This was surprising as most intermarried respondents were in diaspora communities where there was a greater level of acceptance of non-Zoroastrian partners. However, greater participation in our Survey by respondents with non-Zoroastrian partners in the diaspora could be a sign of greater inclusion within their local Zoroastrian communities in the diaspora. The low number of intermarried respondents from South Asia in our study did not demonstrate that there were fewer intermarried Zoroastrians in the region, but that they were much more likely to be separate from and less involved with their local Zoroastrian communities. This was also observed by Narayan (2017, pp. 7-8) when her research team was looking for young people who were intermarried or whose parents were intermarried in India.

For young, single (never married) respondents, the preferred option was to find a Zoroastrian partner. While this was the ideal, the reality was different, with young people being the most likely to be in a relationship with a non-Zoroastrian. Our study also showed

that in older age groups the preference changed, and single (never married) respondents were more open to marrying outside the community. Most single (never married) respondents also relied on family and friends (or a combination of techniques) to help them look for a partner, and some respondents also believed in destiny and wanted to find someone naturally through the course of their daily lives.

The data regarding children tells us that most respondents were raising or would raise their children as Zoroastrians. It is of interest here that young people, whether intermarried or not, were more likely than older people to share the responsibility of raising their children as Zoroastrian. This indicates that the younger generation are indeed committed to the preservation of the religion.

Young, intermarried respondents were likely to raise their children as Zoroastrian and pass on their religious and cultural heritage, something that those who intermarried years ago did not seem to be as likely or able to do. It was also interesting to note that intermarried Zoroastrian women were as likely as intermarried Zoroastrian men to raise their children as Zoroastrian. This is despite the fact that intermarried Zoroastrian women were more likely to encounter opposition than men when it came to inclusion in the community. However, it is possible that intermarried women who raised their children as Zoroastrian were more likely to participate in the Survey as they felt more connected or invested in community matters.

It has been the cultural norm in India for the children of Zoroastrian men who have married non-Zoroastrians to be accepted as Zoroastrian.^{xxxiv} Bharat makes the point here that women are likely to be the dominant 'socialising agents' insofar as they play a major role in bringing up their children as Zoroastrian. This is to do with more than just their physical well-being but also their knowledge of the religion and the learning of prayers, rituals, and customs. This point was demonstrated in our data which found that non-Zoroastrian spouses, especially non-Zoroastrian mothers, were playing an important role in raising their children as Zoroastrian.

In terms of domestic life, we can see that the Zoroastrian community has a high level of home ownership across the world. This is a priority in the diaspora. Young people were also most likely to be living alone or with their parents with a small percent living with a spouse or partner and/or children. This highlights, once again, the low levels of marriage amongst the youth. The data also tells us that there is a preference, both in South Asia and the diaspora, for living in a nuclear family (couple with children) rather than a joint family (couple with child(ren) and parent(s)). This is borne out by Bharat (2017, p. 297) in her study where she found that young people, especially, were disinclined towards joint family living,

^{xxxiv} It should be noted that by no means all Zoroastrians accept this cultural norm and the issue remains a subject for debate. See Patel (2010, pp. 20-21) for a brief explanation.

seeing it as 'an encroachment on their mental space and personal style'. Our study showed that most 66+ year-olds were living with their spouse or partner or by themselves.

With the decline of the extended family due to migration and the preference for nuclear family living, we wonder about the loss, if any, of transmission of culture and language. Schuler, Schuler, and Dias (2022, p. 203) noted that 'grandparents are custodians of an invaluable knowledge that needs to be passed on to the younger generations.' This is true especially in 'transnational relationships', where grandparents are in the country of origin and parents and children have migrated. However, this is also true of intermarriage where grandparents or the older generation, in general, can play a crucial role.

ENDNOTES

The table numbers below refer to the document 'Gen Z and Beyond - Ch.1 Family Appendix', which can be accessed at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation>

¹ See Table 1

² See Table 2

³ See Table 3

⁴ See Table 4

⁵ See Table 5 for breakdown by country

⁶ See Table 6

⁷ See Tables 7 and 8

⁸ See Table 9

⁹ See Table 10

¹⁰ See Table 11

¹¹ See Table 12

¹² See Table 13

¹³ See Table 14

¹⁴ See Table 15

¹⁵ See Table 16

¹⁶ See Tables 17 and 18

¹⁷ See Table 19

¹⁸ See Table 20

¹⁹ See Table 21

²⁰ See Table 22

²¹ See Table 23

²² See Table 24

²³ See Table 25

²⁴ See Table 26

²⁵ See Table 27

²⁶ See Table 28

²⁷ See Tables 29 and 30

²⁸ See Tables 31 and 32 for breakdown by country

²⁹ See Tables 33 and 34

³⁰ See Table 35

³¹ See Table 36

³² See Table 37

³³ See Table 38

³⁴ See Tables 39 and 40

³⁵ See Table 41 for breakdown by country

³⁶ See Table 42

³⁷ See Table 43

³⁸ See Table 45

³⁹ See Table 44

⁴⁰ See Table 46

⁴¹ See Table 47

⁴² See Table 48

⁴³ See Table 49

⁴⁴ See Table 50

⁴⁵ See Table 51 for breakdown by country

⁴⁶ See Table 52

⁴⁷ See Table 53

⁴⁸ See Table 54

⁴⁹ See Table 55

⁵⁰ See Table 56

⁵¹ See Table 57

⁵² See Table 58

- ⁵³ See Table 59 for breakdown by country
- ⁵⁴ See Table 60
- ⁵⁵ See Table 61
- ⁵⁶ See Table 62
- ⁵⁷ See Table 63 for breakdown by country
- ⁵⁸ See Table 64
- ⁵⁹ See Table 65
- ⁶⁰ See Table 66
- ⁶¹ See Table 67 for breakdown by country
- ⁶² See Table 68
- ⁶³ See Table 69
- ⁶⁴ See Table 70
- ⁶⁵ See Table 71
- ⁶⁶ See Table 72
- ⁶⁷ See Table 73
- ⁶⁸ See Tables 74 and 75
- ⁶⁹ See Table 76
- ⁷⁰ See Table 77
- ⁷¹ See Table 78
- ⁷² See Table 79 for breakdown by country

CHAPTER 2 – ONE ZOROASTRIAN PARENT, GRANDPARENT, OR SPOUSE

1. ONE ZOROASTRIAN PARENT

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- 1.1.2 Ethnic identity
- 1.1.3 Socio-religious identity
- 1.1.4 Practising Zoroastrianism
- 1.1.5 *Navjote* ceremony

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- 1.4.2 Religious disputes
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- 1.4.5 How sole parent respondents learned about the religion as adults
- 1.4.6 *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan*
- 1.4.7 *Shahnameh*

1.5 Integration into the community

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- 1.5.2 Role of the non-Zoroastrian parent
- 1.5.3 Participation in activities organised by the Zoroastrian community
- 1.5.4 Like about participating in activities organised by the Zoroastrian community
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1.6 Views on the future

- 1.6.1 Greatest threats to the future of the community
- 1.6.2 Significant factors in strengthening the community

2. ZOROASTRIAN GRANDPARENT

3. ZOROASTRIAN SPOUSE

4. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

CHAPTER 2 – ONE ZOROASTRIAN PARENT, GRANDPARENT, OR SPOUSE

One of the unique features of this survey was that it was open to people with a Zoroastrian mother or father, a Zoroastrian grandparent, and/or a Zoroastrian spouse. As we did not want to conflate these categories with that of Zoroastrians with two Zoroastrian parents, we have outlined the responses from the following groups of respondents below: one Zoroastrian parent, a Zoroastrian grandparent, and/or a Zoroastrian spouse.

1. ONE ZOROASTRIAN PARENT

At the start of the Family chapter, we discussed the issue of intermarriage, observing that it was a contentious subject within community discourse.ⁱ Those who argue against intermarriage suggest that the Zoroastrian population will increase as a result of the offspring of those who have intermarried, thereby causing a dilution to the Zoroastrian population both ethnically and religiously (insofar as religious knowledge and practice will be diminished).ⁱⁱ The large increase in intermarriage makes it a more visible target for the community's concerns.

Here we analyse the offspring of intermarriage - respondents with a Zoroastrian mother or a Zoroastrian father. We understand that offspring of intermarried Zoroastrian parents are often raised as Zoroastrians, but children of intermarriage are not counted as full Zoroastrians by everyone within the community. Traditionally, children of Zoroastrian fathers are accepted as Zoroastrians by the community more readily than those of Zoroastrian mothers (see Introduction p. 6). For this reason, we have kept these categories separate from the rest of our respondents who are the offspring of two Zoroastrian parents.

In total, there were 101 respondents with a Zoroastrian mother and 188 respondents with a Zoroastrian father. It is possible that the large difference in numbers was because, on the one hand, children of Zoroastrian mothers are often excluded from community life and may not have received news of the Survey. The children of Zoroastrian fathers, on the other hand, are likely to be better integrated into the community. Another reason for the difference in numbers could be the emotional separation from the community that children of Zoroastrian mothers sometimes feel, which may have discouraged them from participating in the Survey. As we mentioned in the Family chapter (p. 44), Narayan and her

ⁱ Hinnells (2005, 54) referred to a demographic studyⁱ conducted in 1999 in which 80% of the respondents blame intermarriage for the decline in the population [meaning the population of two-parent Zoroastrians].

ⁱⁱ A counterargument is suggested by Shroff and Castro in 2011 who calculated that the inclusion of the children of intermarriage into the faith won't necessarily lead to a substantial increase in numbers overall. In terms of numbers, they argue that birth vs death rates are the real cause of diminishing numbers. See results of the demographic projections done by Shroff and Castro (2011, pp. 555-558).

research team also found it hard to find and interview respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent.

Below we give some basic demographic information including age (Table 1), gender distribution (Table 2), and location of Zoroastrians with only one Zoroastrian parent (Table 3). Thereafter, we analyse their perceptions of identity, family life and interaction and involvement with the community.

Table 1 – ‘How old are you?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=101)	Father (N=188)	Total (N=289)
18-25	23.8%	27.1%	26.0%
26-35	27.7%	27.1%	27.3%
36-45	16.8%	19.7%	18.7%
46-55	14.9%	10.1%	11.8%
56-65	11.9%	11.7%	11.8%
66-75	5.0%	3.7%	4.2%
76+	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2 – ‘What is your gender?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=99)	Father (N=184)	Total (N=283)
Male	43.4%	45.1%	44.5%
Female	56.6%	54.9%	55.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Respondents in both South Asia and in North America were more likely to be the children of a Zoroastrian father than a Zoroastrian mother. The percentages are similar, and this tells us that it is possible that the children of Zoroastrian mothers faced similar levels of communal as well as emotional separation in both these regions.

Table 3 – ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=10)	Europe (N=12)	Iran (N=2)	Middle East (N=1)	North America (N=107)	South Asia (N=88)	South East Asia (N=3)	United Kingdom (N=30)	Rest of the world (N=4)
Mother	60.0%	58.3%	50.0%	0.0%	33.6%	22.7%	33.3%	40.0%	50.0%
Father	40.0%	41.7%	50.0%	100.0%	66.4%	77.3%	66.7%	60.0%	50.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In the following section, we analyse how these two groups were raised, how they identified, what they believed and practised and how involved they were with community life.

1.1 Identity

1.1.1 Raised as a Zoroastrian

Respondents with a Zoroastrian father were more likely to be raised as a Zoroastrian than those with a Zoroastrian mother (76.0% vs 63.7%) (Table 4). There were regional differences, with respondents in North America being equally likely to have been raised as a Zoroastrian whether they had a Zoroastrian mother (75.0%) or father (75.0%) (Table 5). In South Asia, respondents were more likely to have been raised as a Zoroastrian if they had a Zoroastrian father (81.7%) than if they had a Zoroastrian mother (55.6%) (Table 6). This may be due to patrilineal social norms being more faithfully practised in South Asia than in North America where the children of Zoroastrian mothers are more readily accepted.

Our data shows that, despite these social norms, 18.3% of respondents with a Zoroastrian father were not raised as a Zoroastrian in South Asia. Bharat (2017, p. 283) noted a similar trend when she found that 12% of intermarried men did not or had no intention of performing the *navjote* ceremony for their children.

Table 4 – ‘Were you raised as a Zoroastrian by one Zoroastrian and one non-Zoroastrian parents?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=91)	Father (N=167)	Total (N=258)
Yes	63.7%	76.0%	71.7%
No	36.3%	24.0%	28.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5 – ‘Were you raised as a Zoroastrian by one Zoroastrian and one non-Zoroastrian parents?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’ (North America only)

	Mother (N=32)	Father (N=68)	Total (N=100)
Yes	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
No	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6 – ‘Were you raised as a Zoroastrian by one Zoroastrian and one non-Zoroastrian parents?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’ (South Asia only)

	Mother (N=18)	Father (N=60)	Total (N=78)
Yes	55.6%	81.7%	75.6%
No	44.4%	18.3%	24.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.1.2 Ethnic identity

Most respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent said they were of mixed-heritage (58.0%), but those with Zoroastrian fathers were slightly more likely to have an ethnocultural (Iranian/Irani/Parsi) Zoroastrian identity (43.7%) than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers (35.6%).¹ There were also regional differences as respondents in North America were more likely to identify as mixed-heritage (59.6% vs 50.6%) compared to respondents in South Asia who were more likely to have an ethnocultural identity (48.1% vs 39.4%).² This was expected as the ethnocultural identity is passed down more rigorously in South Asia than in the diaspora.

In terms of the importance of ethnic identity, respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother and a sole Zoroastrian father were similarly likely to perceive their ethnic identity as very important (40.0% vs 43.5%), a small but important part (53.3% vs 49.4%) and not important (6.7% vs 7.1%).³

1.1.3 Socio-religious identity

When asked about their socio-religious identity, respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to have chosen the options 'conservative' (10.9% vs 5.6%) or 'moderate' (25.5% vs 19.1%) compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian mother, who were more likely to be 'liberal' (73.0% vs 62.4%).⁴

1.1.4 Practising Zoroastrianism

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to consider themselves to be practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians (74.7% vs 58.2%).⁵

1.1.5 *Navjote* ceremony

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were much more likely to have undergone a *navjote* ceremony than those with Zoroastrian mothers (82.6% vs 46.7%).⁶ Respondents in North America or South Asia who had a Zoroastrian mother were similarly likely to have undergone a *navjote* ceremony (57.6% vs 57.9%). However, respondents in South Asia with a Zoroastrian father were far more likely to have undergone a *navjote* ceremony than those in North America (96.9% vs 70.4%).⁷ Overall, 29.6% of respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent had not undergone their *navjote* ceremony.

In terms of the identity conferred by a *navjote* ceremony, respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to believe the *navjote* was necessary for both a Zoroastrian religious as well as an ethnocultural identity (37.6% vs 20.7%). Respondents with a Zoroastrian mother were more likely to believe the *navjote* was necessary for a religious identity (but not an ethnocultural identity) (37.0% vs 31.5%), for neither religious nor ethnocultural identity (18.5% vs 7.9%), but also an ethnocultural identity (but not a religious identity) (14.1% vs 9.0%).⁸ This indicates that those with a Zoroastrian mother are more likely than those with a Zoroastrian father to feel that Zoroastrian ethnocultural and religious identity are only *partially* contingent, or not at all contingent, on the *navjote*.

1.2 Family life

1.2.1 Marriage

There were no variations in marital status for respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent.⁹ They were also equally likely to have children, but respondents with a Zoroastrian father were more likely to have only one child (21.8% vs 11.8%) than respondents with a Zoroastrian mother, who were slightly more likely to have two children (22.6% vs 16.1%).¹⁰

1.2.2 Ethnicity of partner

Respondents with a single Zoroastrian parent were much more likely to have a non-Zoroastrian partner. 64.2% of respondents were with non-Zoroastrian partners, 5.5% were with people of mixed-heritage (with one Zoroastrian parent and one non-Zoroastrian parent) and 30.3% were with Zoroastrians of two Zoroastrian parents (Table 7).

We also found that respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to have Zoroastrian partners than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers (39.2% vs 13.7%). This is probably because, as we have seen above, children of Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to be raised as, practise and consider themselves Zoroastrian. They were more likely to be accepted into and integrated within the Zoroastrian community and find a partner within it. Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to have non-Zoroastrian partners (79.3% vs 56.1%) (Table 7).

Table 7 – ‘Which of these options best describes your current or previous partner?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=58)	Father (N=107)	Total (N=165)
Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian	3.4%	8.4%	6.7%
Irani (descendant of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 18th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora)	0.0%	2.8%	1.8%
Parsi Zoroastrian (descendant of Zoroastrian settlers who migrated to India from approximately the 10th century onwards, living in India or the wider diaspora)	10.3%	28.0%	21.8%
Mixed-heritage (person with one parent who is Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian or Irani or Parsi and one parent who is not)	6.9%	4.7%	5.5%
Non-Zoroastrian	79.3%	56.1%	64.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.3 Religious Observance

1.3.1 Basic *kusti* prayer

Respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent (mother or father) were similarly likely never to perform the *kusti* ritual. However, respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to do it every day (38.1% vs 27.9%) than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers, who were more likely to do it only on special occasions (27.9% vs 21.8%).¹¹

1.3.2 Understanding the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers

Respondents with sole Zoroastrian parents (mother or father) were similarly likely to have an understanding of Zoroastrian prayers at all levels (Yes, Mostly, Some, Basic, and None).¹²

1.3.3 Worship in a fire-temple

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to visit the fire temple at most of the intervals mentioned in the questionnaire.ⁱⁱⁱ They were also more likely to never visit (23.9% vs 19.6%). Respondents with a Zoroastrian mother or a Zoroastrian father were equally likely to visit whenever they had access to a fire-temple, but respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were much more likely to say they were not permitted into the temple (27.2% vs 5.1%).¹³ A table showing the results only for respondents in India and Iran is available in the appendix, but the number of respondents was too low to draw conclusions.¹⁴

1.3.4 Worship in a community place of worship

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to visit a place of worship at most of the intervals mentioned in the questionnaire.^{iv} Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say they visited a place a of worship whenever they had access to a one (21.7% vs 18.3%) or never (38% vs 29.7%). Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely than respondents with Zoroastrian fathers to say they were not permitted entry into a place of worship (9.8% vs 1.7%).¹⁵ A table showing the results only for respondents in the diaspora is available in the appendix, but the number of respondents was too low to draw conclusions.¹⁶

1.3.5 Importance of Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers to say Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices were very important (20.6% vs 12.0%) or quite important (27.4% vs 16.3%) to them. Respondents with

ⁱⁱⁱ Daily, Weekly, Monthly, A few times a year, Yearly, Only on special days / occasions, and I am not permitted into a Fire Temple.

^{iv} Daily, Weekly, Monthly, A few times a year, Yearly, Only on special days / occasions.

Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say that Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices were slightly (32.6% vs 17.1%) or not at all (13.0% vs 9.1%) important to them. Both groups were similarly likely to say that Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices were moderately important to them (26.1% vs 25.7%).¹⁷

1.4 Socialisation and knowledge

1.4.1 Who sole parent Zoroastrians socialise with

There were no major variations between respondents with Zoroastrian mothers and fathers as to who they socialise with. We noted that respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent were more likely than those with two Zoroastrian parents to socialise mainly with non-Zoroastrians (54.2% vs 19.0%) and less likely to socialise with a mixture of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians (43.0% vs 70.4%) or mainly with Zoroastrians (2.5% vs 10.6%).¹⁸

1.4.2 Religious disputes

Respondents with a Zoroastrian father were much more likely to say they valued the opinions of priests in religious disputes (26.8% vs 9.1%). Respondents with a Zoroastrian parent (mother or father) were similarly likely to choose local Association leaders. However, 50.4% said 'not applicable', possibly because they did not feel they had the right to an input in religious debates. 19.0% said 'other'.¹⁹

1.4.3 Language

Overall, respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent were much more likely to speak English in the home than a traditional language. Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were twice as likely to speak Gujarati in the home than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers (20.0% vs 9.4%).²⁰

1.4.4 How sole parent respondents were taught the religion as children

Respondents learnt about the religion as children mainly through their Zoroastrian parents. For example, respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were most likely to learn about the religion through their Zoroastrian mother. However, it was interesting to note that 19.7% of respondents with a Zoroastrian father said that they learnt about the religion from their non-Zoroastrian mother.

Respondents were equally likely to be taught the religion by their grandparents, but respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to be taught the religion by teachers (22.5% vs 10.8%) and by priests (21.9% vs 5.4%) than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers, who were more likely to have learnt by themselves (20.4% vs 12.4%) or have never been taught the religion (15.1% vs 9.0%) (Table 8).

Table 8 – ‘Who taught you about the Zoroastrian religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) as a child?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’^v

	Mother (N=93)	Father (N=178)	Total (N=271)
Mother	72.0%	19.7%	37.6%
Father	7.5%	63.5%	44.3%
A grandparent or other family member	48.4%	43.8%	45.4%
Zoroastrian friend	8.6%	12.4%	11.1%
Teacher at group / community religion classes	10.8%	22.5%	18.5%
A Mobed / Priest or Mobedyar / Behdin Pasbaan / Assistant Priest	5.4%	21.9%	16.2%
Self-taught	20.4%	12.4%	15.1%
I was never taught or learnt the prayers	15.1%	9.0%	11.1%
Not applicable	2.2%	0.6%	1.1%
Other	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%

1.4.5 How sole parent respondents learnt about the religion as adults

Respondents with sole Zoroastrian parents were similarly likely to be taught by family, by a teacher, or to never have been taught or learnt about the religion in adulthood.

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to have learned about the religion through priests (22.9% vs 6.6%) and friends (21.7% vs 15.4%) than respondents with Zoroastrian mothers, who were more likely to have taught themselves (44.0% vs 37.7%).²¹

1.4.6 *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan*

Respondents with a sole Zoroastrian father were more likely to view the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* as historically accurate (25.0% vs 17.8%) and say it was most important to their cultural and religious identity compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian mother (14.4% vs 11.1%). 28.7% of respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent had never heard of it and 35.9% said it was not important to their cultural and religious identity.²²

1.4.7 *Shahnameh*

Respondents with a sole Zoroastrian father were more likely never to have heard of the *Shahnameh* compared to respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother (42.2% vs 36.7%), who were more likely to view it as semi-mythological (45.6% vs 35.5%). 40.2% of respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent had never heard of the *Shahnameh* and 51.0% said it was not important to their cultural and religious identity.²³

^v Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

1.5 Integration into the community

1.5.1 Raising children as Zoroastrian

63.2% of respondents said yes, they did raise, were raising, or would raise their children as Zoroastrian. Respondents with a Zoroastrian mother were less likely to raise their children as Zoroastrian than those with a Zoroastrian father (68.6% vs 54.2%) (Table 9).^{vi}

Table 9 – ‘Did you raise, or are you currently raising, your children as Zoroastrian, or plan to raise any future children as Zoroastrian?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’²⁴

	Mother (N=90)	Father (N=165)	Total (N=255)
Yes	54.2%	68.6%	63.2%
No	45.8%	31.4%	36.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.5.2 Role of the non-Zoroastrian parent

When asked about the role non-Zoroastrian parents played in respondents’ religious upbringing, the differences were significant. Respondents with a Zoroastrian mother were most likely to say that their non-Zoroastrian parent played a minimal role in their upbringing (57.9% vs 20.5%) compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian father, who said their non-Zoroastrian mother played an important role (52.8% vs 21.1%) (Table 10).

Table 10 – ‘What role did your non-Zoroastrian parent play in your Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=57)	Father (N=127)	Total (N=184)
Important role	21.1%	52.8%	42.9%
Moderate role	21.1%	26.8%	25.0%
Minimal role	57.9%	20.5%	32.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

^{vi} Respondents who selected ‘Not applicable’ have been excluded from analysis. Figures including these respondents are available in the appendix (Table 28)

1.5.3 Participation in activities, events and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community

Respondents with sole Zoroastrian parents (mother and father) were equally likely not to attend events (25.3% vs 25.9%). Respondents with a Zoroastrian father were slightly more likely to attend often (21.7% vs 13.2%) compared to respondents with a Zoroastrian mother, who were more likely to seldom and rarely attend (23.1% vs 18.1%) activities, events and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community.²⁵

1.5.4 What respondents with sole Zoroastrian parents (mother and father) liked about participating in activities, events and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were more likely to say they liked participating in community activities to pass down heritage to their children and encourage them to be involved in the community (37.7% vs 25.8%) and meet new people (51.8% vs 41.9%). Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say they liked participating in community activities because they liked learning new things (61.3% vs 54.4%) and practising their culture by being able to speak their mother tongue or wear traditional clothes (22.6% vs 18.4%).²⁶

1.5.5 Disliked about participating in activities, events and functions organised by the Zoroastrian community

Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say they disliked participating in community activities as they didn't know anyone or have any friends / felt left out (30.2% vs 17.9%) or didn't feel like they belonged / felt different to others present (30.2% vs 26.8%). They were also slightly more likely to say their non-Zoroastrian parent was not allowed to or discouraged from attending (12.7% vs 8.9%).²⁷

1.5.6 Discrimination

When asked if and where respondents faced discrimination, respondents with Zoroastrian mothers and those with Zoroastrian fathers were equally likely to say they faced no discrimination at all (38.4% vs 38.2%). They were both also equally likely to face discrimination due to their religion, age, disability, colour and name. However, respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say they faced discrimination due to their gender (31.4% vs 23.6%), sexual orientation (14.0% vs 3.0%), and ethnic group (33.7% vs 21.2%).²⁸

1.6 Views of the future

1.6.1 Greatest threats to the community

Respondents with Zoroastrian fathers, as opposed to those with Zoroastrian mothers, were more like to say that the greatest threats to the future of the community were a lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals (29.4% vs 17.0%), lack of respect for the authority of the priesthood (7.4% vs 0.0%), and marrying later in life or not marrying at all (19.6% vs 10.2%). Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say that the greatest threats facing the community were unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and fully accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women (77.3% vs 58.3%), different rules in different Associations and Trusts (18.2% vs 7.4%), and infighting in the community (27.3% vs 23.3%) (Table 11).

Table 11 – ‘In your opinion, what are the greatest threats to the Zoroastrian religion and the Iranian / Parsi / Irani ethnocultural identity?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’^{vii}

	Mother (N=88)	Father (N=163)	Total (N=251)
Small, ageing population	63.6%	61.3%	62.2%
Lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals	17.0%	29.4%	25.1%
Lack of respect for the authority of priesthood	0.0%	7.4%	4.8%
Different rules in different associations and trusts	18.2%	7.4%	11.2%
Migration to the West and the influence of Western culture	6.8%	9.8%	8.8%
Loss of entrepreneurial spirit	2.3%	2.5%	2.4%
Unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and fully accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women	77.3%	58.3%	64.9%
Apathetic and lethargic population	8.0%	5.5%	6.4%
Marrying later in life or not marrying at all	10.2%	19.6%	16.3%
Marrying outside the community	8.0%	10.4%	9.6%
Parents not passing down religious traditions to children	15.9%	19.0%	17.9%
Increase in atheism / agnosticism / non-religion	5.7%	8.6%	7.6%
In-fighting in the community	27.3%	23.3%	24.7%
Other	3.4%	2.5%	2.8%

^{vii} Respondents were able to select up to three responses, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

1.6.2 Significant factors in strengthening the community

Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers and respondents with Zoroastrian fathers were similarly aligned on most options except for two. Respondents with a Zoroastrian father were more likely to say the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community was teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture (55.2% vs 49.4%). Respondents with Zoroastrian mothers were more likely to say the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community was being more outward looking and engaged with global issues such as climate change, migration, and infectious diseases (18.8% vs 10.4%) (Table 12).

Table 12 – ‘Which of the following factors do you consider the most significant in strengthening the future of the community?’ by ‘Which of your parents are Zoroastrian?’

	Mother (N=85)	Father (N=163)	Total (N=248)
Teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture	49.4%	55.2%	53.2%
Entrepreneurship – adding economic, social and intellectual value to the community	9.4%	9.8%	9.7%
Education – youth, vocational, scientific, higher education, retraining	9.4%	11.7%	10.9%
Care for the elderly - providing resources and programmes	1.2%	2.5%	2.0%
Giving back - helping social causes, education / scholarship, other	2.4%	4.9%	4.0%
Being more outward looking and engaged with global issues such as climate change, migration and infectious diseases	18.8%	10.4%	13.3%
Other	9.4%	5.5%	6.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

We asked respondents about how their ideas for strengthening the future of the community might be achieved. Many stated that the gender divide should be removed and the children of both intermarried men and women should be accepted as Zoroastrians. Teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture was the first and most popular option even amongst the respondents with a sole Zoroastrian parent. The following quotes are from the survey:

“Framing the culture and religion as valuable, useful, relevant and helpful in bringing meaning and purpose to modern existence.”

“Parents teaching children about their Zoroastrian identity and continuing with customs in the home.”

"I think that more group functions involving social causes and helping with upkeep of the *Darbe Mehr*."

"Being from the western world, there should be an online school per age group (where prayers & customs are taught weekly) so kids learn from a young age and the kids will meet others in their country, not just their small community."

The second option was 'Entrepreneurship – adding economic, social and intellectual value to the community':

"For entrepreneurship to be successful, it requires fostering good ideas via social connections, mentorship, and financial guidance. Having that offered up by the community builds good will and then desire to stay connected."

The third option was 'Education – youth, vocational, scientific, higher education, retraining':

"Support quality higher education for all Parsi students, not just a small set of "toppers". Parsis should be motivated to be educated and successful (Jews for example). Affluence will lead to larger average family size."

The fourth option was 'Care for the elderly - providing resources and programmes':

"Supporting the community and offering both the youth and elderly a way to progress together. Also, helping with any mental health issues like depression, etc. Teaching ethical values and basic manners."

The fifth option was 'Giving back - helping social causes, education / scholarship, other':

"By allowing the youth to take leadership roles and having faith in their vision."

The sixth option was 'Being more outward looking and engaged with global issues such as climate change, migration and infectious diseases':

"A more forward-facing and modern approach to bringing the teachings and rituals of Zoroastrianism into the 21st century would encourage younger generations to engage. Also, modernizing social policies and creating a more inclusive community."

2. ZOROASTRIAN GRANDPARENT

The survey was also open to respondents with a Zoroastrian grandparent. We hoped that we could map the identity, beliefs and practices of this group but we had limited responses, possibly due to communal and emotional separation. Due to the tiny sample size (19 respondents) we did not explore this category further. Table 13 below shows the number of respondents in each group.

Table 13 – ‘Which of your grandparents are Zoroastrian?’^{viii}

	Percentage of respondents (N=19)
Paternal grandfather	63.2% (N=12)
Paternal grandmother	42.1% (N=8)
Maternal grandfather	31.6% (N=6)
Maternal grandmother	42.1% (N=8)

3. ZOROASTRIAN SPOUSE

As we have already seen, non-Zoroastrian spouses played a significant role in raising their children, especially if they were raising their children as Zoroastrian.

A total of 104 non-Zoroastrian spouses took the survey, including one respondent who was previously married to a Zoroastrian. 59.2% of this group said they raised or were raising their children as Zoroastrian.^{29, ix}

It was not surprising to find that the majority of non-Zoroastrian spouses said that their Zoroastrian spouse played an important role (62.8%) in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of their children.^x However, a significant percentage (30.2%) shared the responsibility with their Zoroastrian spouses. Only one respondent (2.3%) said their Zoroastrian spouse played a minimal role.³⁰

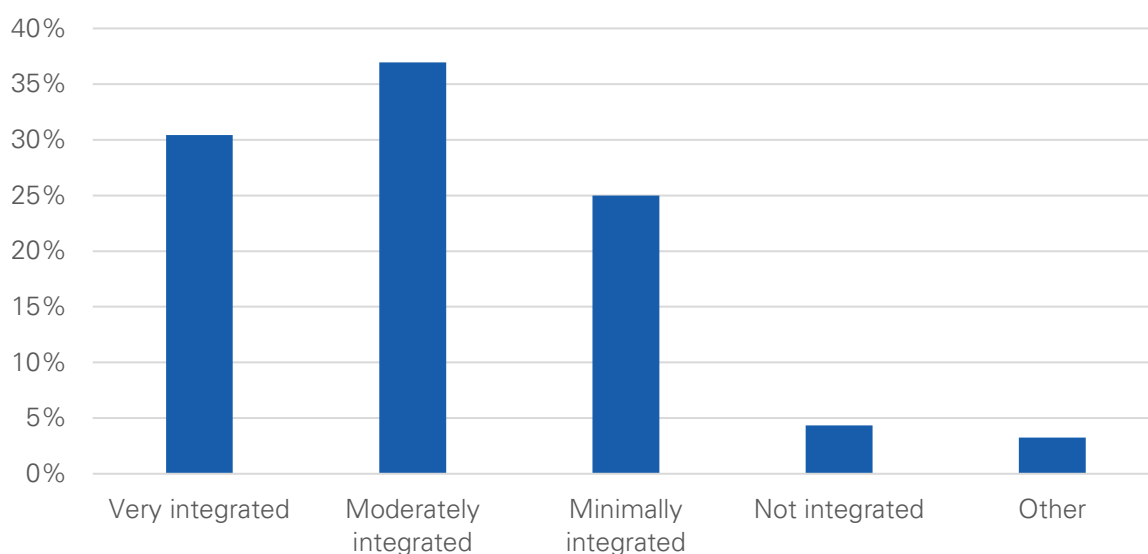
^{viii} Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

^{ix} Respondents who selected ‘Not applicable’ have been excluded from analysis. Figures including these respondents are included in the appendix (Table 33)

^x Respondents who selected ‘Not applicable’ have been excluded from analysis. Figures including these respondents are included in the appendix (Table 34)

Most non-Zoroastrian spouses were very (30.4%) or moderately (37.0%) integrated into the community and regularly or occasionally participated in religious and social events and festivals (Figure 1). 25.0% said they were minimally integrated and rarely participated in religious and social events and festivals. Only 4.3% (27 respondents) said they were not integrated at all and never participated.³¹ When asked the reason for why they minimally and never participated, most said they lived too far away (59.3%).³²

Figure 1 – ‘As a non-Zoroastrian spouse of a Zoroastrian, how integrated are you in the local Zoroastrian community?’



4. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

The data tells us that respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother and a sole Zoroastrian father were equally likely to be raised as a Zoroastrian in North America. In South Asia, respondents with a sole Zoroastrian father were more likely to be raised as a Zoroastrian than respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother. This is possibly due to prevalent social norms, but this is not guaranteed to continue in the future as nearly 20% of respondents in South Asia with a sole Zoroastrian father were not raised as a Zoroastrian.

Respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother were as likely as respondents with a sole Zoroastrian father to view their ethnic identity as important. However, they were more likely to have a non-Zoroastrian partner and less likely to raise their own children as Zoroastrian. They were slightly less likely to practise the religion, have traditional beliefs, and be involved with community life than respondents with Zoroastrian fathers.

One crucial difference between respondents with a sole Zoroastrian mother and a sole Zoroastrian father was the role their non-Zoroastrian parent played in their religious and cultural upbringing. Non-Zoroastrian mothers played an important role in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of their children compared to non-Zoroastrian fathers, who played a minimal role. This meant that it was the mother, whether Zoroastrian or not, who played an important role in the Zoroastrian religious and cultural upbringing of their children.

Nearly half of the non-Zoroastrian spouses who took the survey said they did raise, were raising or intended to raise their children as Zoroastrians. Most were integrated to a considerable extent into the community and a third said they shared the responsibility of raising their children as Zoroastrian with their Zoroastrian spouses.

ENDNOTES

The table numbers below refer to the document 'Gen Z and Beyond - Ch.2 One Zoroastrian Parent, Grandparent or Spouse Appendix', which can be accessed at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation>

¹ See Table 1

² See Table 2

³ See Table 3

⁴ See Table 4

⁵ See Table 5

⁶ See Table 6

⁷ See Tables 7 and 8

⁸ See Table 9

⁹ See Table 10

¹⁰ See Table 11

¹¹ See Table 12

¹² See Table 13

¹³ See Table 14

¹⁴ See Table 15

¹⁵ See Table 16

¹⁶ See Table 17

¹⁷ See Table 18

¹⁸ See Tables 19 and 20

¹⁹ See Table 21

²⁰ See Table 22

²¹ See Table 23

²² See Tables 24 and 25

²³ See Tables 26 and 27

²⁴ See Table 28

²⁵ See Table 29

²⁶ See Table 30

²⁷ See Table 31

²⁸ See Table 32

²⁹ See Table 33

³⁰ See Table 34

³¹ See Table 35

³² See Table 36

CHAPTER 3 - IDENTITY AND INTERACTION

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3. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

CHAPTER 3 - IDENTITY AND INTERACTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we focus on 'expressions of identity'. In the survey we explored the ways in which people identify with and connect to their culture and environment by asking them questions about:

- 1) their connection to a historic homeland through two epic poems,
- 2) the place they felt they belonged,
- 3) the relationships between Zoroastrian communities,
- 4) their level of openness about their sexual identity,
- 5) their perceptions of discrimination.

In the second section, we focus on 'interaction and involvement'. Interaction within a community and the ways its people get involved in community activities inform us about their attachment to that community. We asked the respondents in our study about:

- 1) who they socialised with,
- 2) what language they spoke inside their homes,
- 3) the activities they participated in with their local Zoroastrian communities,
- 4) what they liked about participating in the activities,
- 5) what they disliked about participating in the activities,
- 6) why they never participated,
- 7) their news sources, both Zoroastrian and of the locality in which they live.

1. EXPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY

1.1 Historical Homeland

The *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan*ⁱ and the *Shahnameh*ⁱⁱ are epic poems that have significance for the Zoroastrian community. We investigated whether there was a link between identity and the importance of *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* and the *Shahnameh*. Stories from these epics are taught to children, so do they foster a stronger Zoroastrian identity?

ⁱ The *Qisseh-ye Sanjan* or 'Story of Sanjan', a Persian epic poem written in 1599 by a Parsi Zoroastrian high priest, Bahman Kaikobad Sanjana. The quasi-historical text recounts the challenges faced by the Iranian Zoroastrians during their legendary journey from Iran to the shores of Sanjan in western India where they established a life in their adopted homeland. Initially passed down within the Navsari priestly family, the poem was not widely known within the Parsi Zoroastrian community until Gujarati and English translations were printed and disseminated in the nineteenth century (See Engineer, forthcoming).

ⁱⁱ The *Shahnameh*, 'Book of Kings,' is an epic poem written in 1010 by Iranian poet Abul-Qâsem Ferdowsi Tusi, which describes mythical and historical reigns of Persian Zoroastrian Kings during the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods.

45.8% of our respondents said the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* was historically accurate, 40.0% said it was semi-mythological, 1.4% believed it to be completely fictional and a sizeable 10.7% had never heard of it.¹ In terms of its importance for our respondents, 18.7% said it was most important to their cultural and religious identity, 53.1% said it was important, and 28.2% said it was not important (Table 1).²

Table 1 – ‘How important is the *Qisseh-ye Sanjan* to your cultural and religious identity?’ by ‘How do you view the epic Parsi tale of arrival and settlement in India, the *Qisseh-ye Sanjan*?’

	Historically accurate description of events of the past (N=1897)	Semi-mythological story based on some historical events of the past (N=1654)	Completely fictional / mythological story (N=56)	Other (N=76)	Total (N=3683)
Most important	31.9%	4.7%	1.8%	3.9%	18.7%
Important	55.0%	52.8%	26.8%	32.9%	53.2%
Not important	13.0%	42.4%	71.4%	63.2%	28.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

For the *Shahnameh*, 21.6% believed it to be historically accurate, 43.6% said it was semi-mythological, 4.3% said it was completely fictional, and 23.1% had never heard of it.³ In terms of its importance, 15.6% of respondents said it was most important to their cultural and religious identity, 46.6% said it was important, and 37.8% said it was not important (Table 2).⁴

Table 2 – ‘How important is the *Shahnameh* to your cultural and religious identity?’ by ‘How do you view the epic Persian Book of Kings, the *Shahnameh*?’

	Historically accurate description of events of the past (N=891)	Semi-mythological story based on some historical events of the past (N=1798)	Completely fictional / mythological story (N=177)	Other (N=282)	Total (N=3148)
Most important	43.9%	5.1%	2.8%	1.8%	15.6%
Important	49.8%	50.9%	19.8%	26.6%	46.7%
Not important	6.3%	44.0%	77.4%	71.6%	37.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.1.1 Age

The youngest respondents (18-25-year-olds) were more likely never to have heard of the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* (22.1%) or the *Shahnameh* (44.2%) compared to older respondents in our study. Respondents over the age of 45 were more likely to believe the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* was an historically accurate document.⁵ Respondents across all age groups were more likely to believe the *Shahnameh* was semi-mythological rather than historically accurate.⁶ It was surprising to us that so many young respondents did not know these texts. The *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* is thought by many Parsis to be a foundational document that tells the story of their migration from Iran and arrival in India, regardless of whether they think it mythological or factual.

1.1.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to view the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* as an historically accurate document (55.0% vs 34.8%). They were also more likely to say it was of most importance to their cultural and religious identity (25.3% vs 9.9%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to believe it to be a semi-mythological text (47.8% vs 32.9%) that was not important to them (36.6% vs 20.6%) (Tables 3 and 4).⁷ The story did not hold the same significance for second-generation migrants, as we saw that respondents whose parents had migrated were more likely never to have heard of it (17.2% vs 8.4%).⁸

Respondents in South Asia were much more likely to view the *Shahnameh* as historically accurate compared to respondents in North America (30.6% vs 11.9%) or any other region. They were also more likely to say it was of most importance (21.8% vs 7.6%) to their cultural and religious identity. Respondents in North America were much more likely than respondents in South Asia to view the *Shahnameh* as semi-mythological (54.9% vs 34.7%) or completely fictional (6.9% vs 2.6%) and to say the text was not important to them (48.6% vs 28.0%) (Table 5 and 6).⁹ Furthermore, contrary to the research suggesting that people who had migrated would place greater importance on these texts in a bid to hold onto their cultural traditions,ⁱⁱⁱ we found that respondents who had migrated were more likely to say the *Shahnameh* was not important to them (44.7% vs 33.3%).¹⁰

1.1.3 Children

Respondents with children were more likely than respondents without children to view the *Qisseh-ye-Sanjan* as historically accurate (49.3% vs 40.1%).¹¹

ⁱⁱⁱ In his literature review, Hinnells (2005, pp. 26-29) referenced research on diaspora communities, particularly South Asian communities in the UK, which emphasised certain recurring themes such as 'romanticising of the old country, and the tendency to become more Indian after migration than before.'

1.1.4 Sense of identity

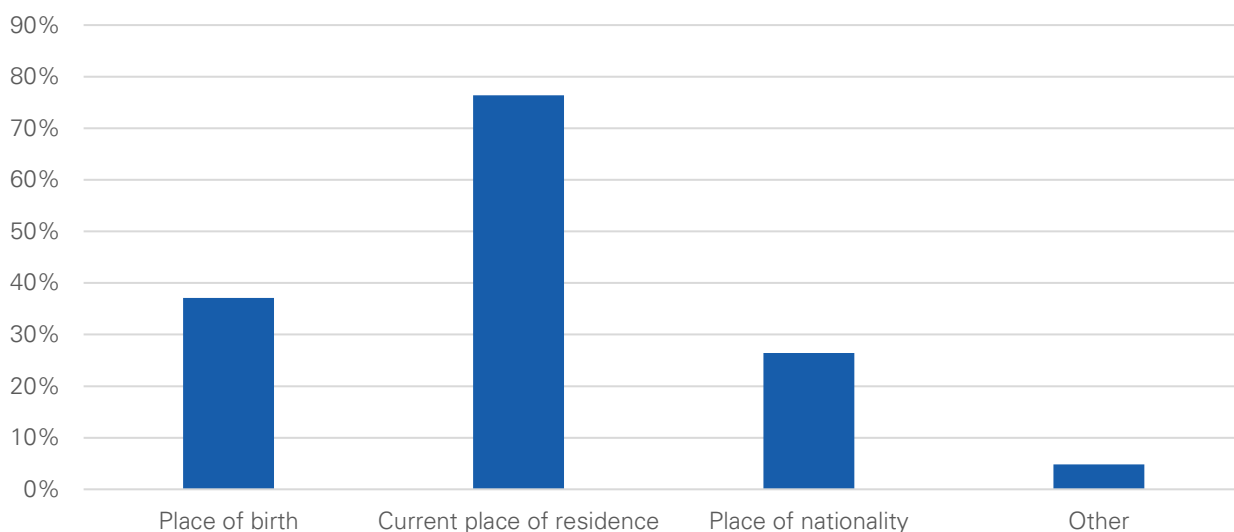
Respondents whose ethnic identity was central to them, who had a conservative socio-religious identity, and who said Zoroastrian rituals were very important to them, were most likely to view the *Qisseh-ye Sanjan* as historically accurate and say the text was of most importance or importance to them.¹² Respondents with a liberal socio-religious identity were more likely to say the text was not important to them (42.8%) than moderates (18.2%) or conservatives (10.6%).

Similarly, respondents whose ethnic identity was central to them, who had a conservative socio-religious identity, and who said Zoroastrian cultural and religious rituals were very important to them, were most likely to view the *Shahanmeh* as historically accurate and say the text was of most importance or importance to them.¹³ Respondents with a liberal socio-religious identity were more likely to say the text was not important to them (55.5%) than moderates (28.0%) or conservatives (14.3%).

1.2 Where people considered 'home' and felt they belonged

The question 'Where do you consider your 'home' where you feel you belong?' was asked to respondents who had migrated at some point in their lives. Migration can cause feelings of displacement and of not belonging in either the place of birth or residence. Where people consider 'home' and feel they belong is important as they are more likely and willing to contribute to society there, as we see in the Philanthropy section in Chapter 5.

For these reasons, it was interesting to note that 76.4% of respondents who had migrated considered their current place of residence 'home' where they felt they belonged, 37.1% chose their place of birth, 26.3% chose their place of nationality, and 4.8% of our respondents chose 'other' (Figure 1).¹⁴ As respondents were able to select multiple responses, there were many respondents who had a multi-faceted view of belonging. They did not belong or feel at 'home' in only one place, but in more than one place. Of the 1198 respondents who chose current place of residence, 30.8% also chose place of birth and 22.0% also chose place of nationality. This supports the idea that people do not seem torn between their birthplace or place of nationality and current place of residence, but embraced both.

Figure 1 – ‘Where do you consider your ‘home’ where you feel you belong?’^{iv}

1.2.1 Age

We found it interesting that respondents aged over 45 who had migrated were more likely to feel at home in their current place of residence compared to 18-45-year-olds who had migrated, who were more likely to feel at home in their place of birth.¹⁵ This is in keeping with Hinnells (2005, p. 677), who also found that ‘more elders asserted their identity in terms of the country of residence, rather than of birth’, and could be a feature of the length of time spent in a particular place and the networks developed there.

1.2.2 Gender

Men and women were equally likely to feel at home in their current place of residence (76.8% vs 76.0%).¹⁶

1.2.3 Region

Respondents who had migrated and lived in North America were much more likely to feel at ‘home’ in their current place of residence than those who had migrated and lived in South Asia (78.5% vs 63.4%) (Table 7).¹⁷ Migrant respondents whose parents had not migrated were more likely to feel at home in their place of birth (41.7% vs 28.2%) compared to respondents whose parents had migrated.¹⁸

^{iv} Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning that the total percentage is greater than 100%.

Table 7 – ‘Where do you consider your ‘home’ where you feel you belong?’ by Region^v

	Australasia (N=194)	Europe (N=32)	Iran (N=6)	Middle East (N=20)	North America (N=910)	South Asia (N=145)	South East Asia (N=28)	United Kingdom (N=145)	Rest of the world (N=5)
Place of birth	32.0%	53.1%	33.3%	55.0%	37.3%	36.6%	39.3%	42.1%	40.0%
Current place of residence	79.9%	75.0%	33.3%	55.0%	78.5%	63.4%	89.3%	72.4%	60.0%
Place of nationality	24.7%	34.4%	33.3%	40.0%	25.9%	22.1%	25.0%	33.8%	40.0%
Other	4.1%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%	9.7%	3.6%	4.8%	20.0%

1.3 Intracommunity Relationships

The health of relationships between community members is an important measure of a cohesive and vibrant community. Interactions between the Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis in India were first noted in the Persian *Rivayats*.^{vi} In the 18th and 19th centuries, notable Parsis such as Maneckji Limji Hataria^{vii} travelled to Iran. By the time of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, many Parsis had settled in Iran. However, after the Revolution, a new wave of Iranian Zoroastrians left Iran and settled in the diaspora, leading to tensions between them and the Parsis there as, ‘although Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis have preserved much of their common ancient heritage, there are nevertheless differences, some substantial, not only in secular culture (notably language, food, and music) but also in religion’ (Hinnells 2005, p. 80). More recently, significant steps have been taken by Iranian Zoroastrian and Parsi community leaders, including in the diaspora, to bridge these gaps between their communities.^{viii} The reasons behind tensions within the Parsi community have been well documented by various scholars and they are religious as well as social and cultural.^{ix}

^v Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning that the total percentages for each column are greater than 100%.

^{vi} A collection of letters dating from the 15th to the 17th centuries that documented the correspondence between Indian priests and their Iranian counterparts about a variety of topics including death rituals, marriage, the calendar, and conversion.

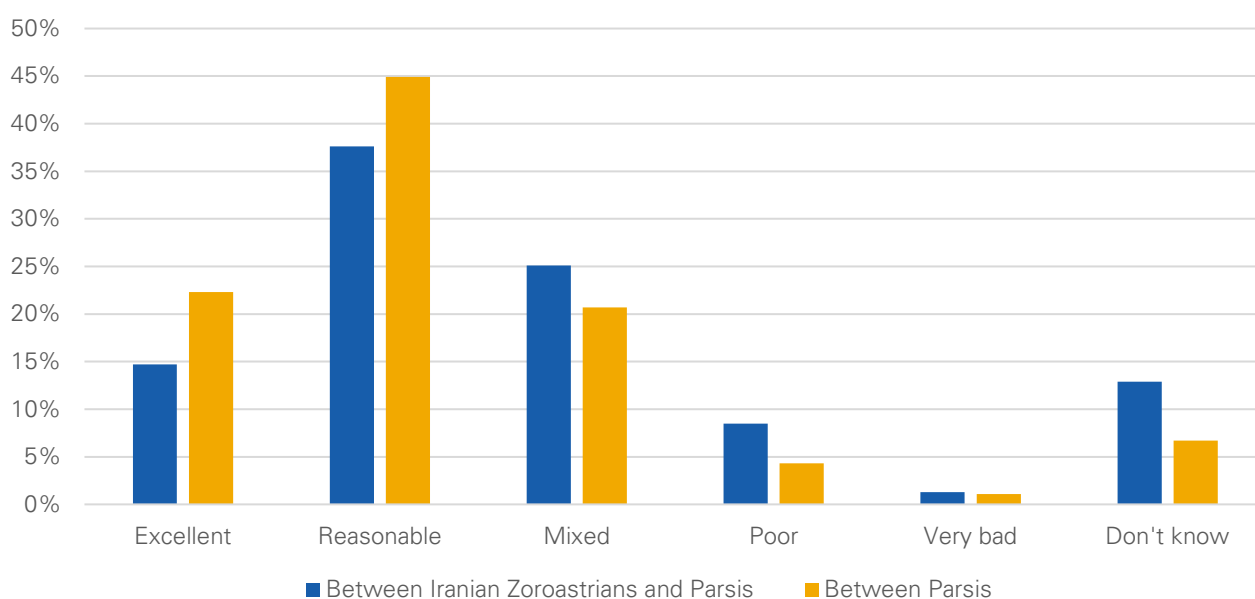
^{vii} For more information on Hataria, see Kotwal et al. (2016).

^{viii} A good example of this is the cooperation between the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) and the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). For a history of ZAGNY, see Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (n.d.).

^{ix} See Palsetia (2001) for disputes in India and Hinnells (2005) for disputes in the diaspora.

In-fighting and disharmony can have a devastating impact on a small community if it prevents members from fully engaging in community life. That is why it was encouraging to note that relationships between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis were viewed positively overall. There were slight variations in perceptions as can be seen in Figure 2 below, which shows that relationships between Parsis were more often viewed by respondents as excellent or reasonable. There was slightly more uncertainty about relationships between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis.¹⁹

Figure 2 – ‘How would you describe relations as they are in practice (not necessarily what you consider they should be) in the community?’



This did not mean that respondents denied that there was in-fighting or separation within the community. One respondent wanted more collaboration between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis thereby creating “religious education that encompasses both Parsi and Iranian traditions. We are near a predominantly Parsi temple...we take our kids to religious classes. There are many times we/they feel left out b/c the traditions and language are not the same.” Increasing community harmony was cited as a key issue in strengthening the future of the community. For example, one respondent stated that, “Strength comes from unity. The liberals and orthodox must come together for the religion to survive. The in-fighting is the sure way to extinction of a noble religion!”

1.3.1 Zoroastrian Identity

Although the number of Iranian Zoroastrian respondents was fewer than Parsi respondents, we found that respondents who identified as Iranian Zoroastrians were more likely to view the relationship between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis in a positive light. They were also more likely than Parsi Zoroastrians to say that relations between Parsis

were excellent (27.4% vs 21.3%). Parsis were more likely than Iranian Zoroastrians to say that relations between Parsis were mixed (22.0% vs 15.7%). Overall, relations were viewed positively, with less than 10% of respondents saying that relations between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis or between Parsis were poor or very bad (Table 8).²⁰

Table 8 – ‘How would you describe relations as they are in practice (not necessarily what you consider they should be) in the community?’ by Ethnicity

		Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian	Irani	Parsi Zoroastrian	Mixed- heritage	Other
Between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis	Excellent	20.5%	15.0%	13.2%	14.8%	2.1%
	Reasonable	41.3%	42.9%	36.8%	29.5%	19.1%
	Mixed	21.7%	24.1%	25.8%	27.9%	40.4%
	Poor	7.8%	14.3%	8.2%	11.5%	14.9%
	Very bad	1.9%	0.8%	1.2%	1.6%	2.1%
	Don't know	6.9%	3.0%	14.8%	14.8%	21.3%
Between Parsis	Excellent	27.4%	19.4%	21.3%	19.4%	8.5%
	Reasonable	42.6%	53.7%	45.6%	33.9%	34.0%
	Mixed	15.7%	17.9%	22.0%	27.4%	29.8%
	Poor	3.0%	2.2%	4.4%	4.8%	21.3%
	Very bad	0.9%	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
	Don't know	10.4%	6.0%	5.5%	14.5%	6.4%

1.3.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia were much more likely to view the relationship between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis as excellent (20.9% vs 7.5%) or reasonable (41.9% vs 31.6%) than those in North America. Respondents in North America were more likely to view the relationship between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis as mixed (29.7% vs 21.7%), poor (14.0% vs 3.9%), very bad (2.1% vs 0.7%) or not know (14.9% vs 11.0%).²¹

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to view the relationship between Parsis as excellent (26.5% vs 20.1%). Respondents in both regions were equally likely to view the relationship between Parsis as reasonable (44.8% vs 45.2%), mixed (19.1% vs 20.2%), poor (3.9% vs 3.5%) or very bad (1.1% vs 0.9%). Respondents in North America were much more likely to choose ‘do not know’ (10.1% vs 4.6%).²²

1.4 Level of openness about sexual identity

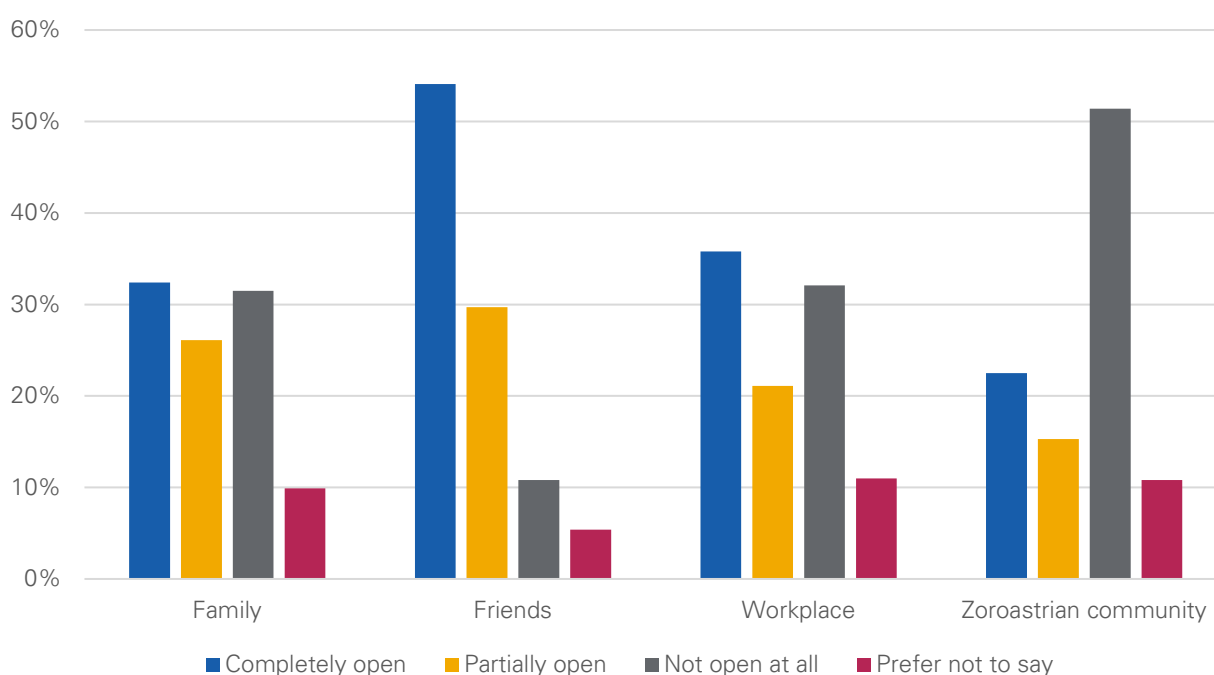
No academic research has been done on the Zoroastrian LGBTQ+ community and, although most respondents stated that they were straight / heterosexual (92.1%), we wanted to find out how an LGBTQ+ identity impacted interaction with others in the Zoroastrian community.²³ We also wanted to know what relations were like between LGBTQ+ respondents and their families.

53.3% of gay or lesbian and 49.2% of bisexual respondents were single. 61.7% of respondents who chose 'prefer not to say' when asked about their sexuality were married or in civil partnerships.²⁴ Of the gay or lesbian respondents who had a partner, 85.7% were with non-Zoroastrian partners. Of the bisexual respondents who had a partner, 46.9% were in a relationship with a non-Zoroastrian.²⁵ The number of respondents was very small, but gay or lesbian respondents were more likely to rarely or never participate in activities and events organised by the Zoroastrian community than straight respondents.²⁶

1.4.1 Open about sexual orientation

Respondents were more open about their sexual orientation with family, friends, and even their workplaces than they were with the wider Zoroastrian community. Just under a third of respondents were completely open with family (32.4%), over half were completely open with friends (54.1%), just over a third were completely open in the workplace (35.8%), but less than a quarter of respondents were completely open with the Zoroastrian community (22.5%) (Figure 3).²⁷

Figure 3 – 'How open about your sexual orientation are you with:'

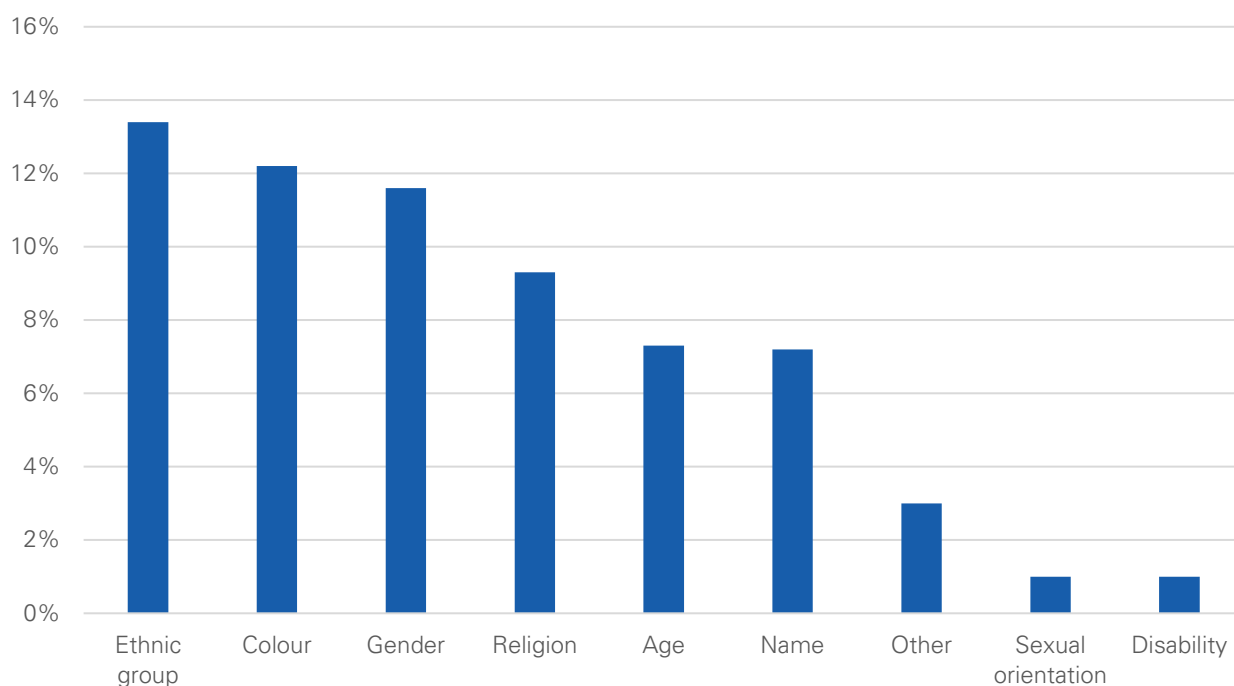


50.0% and 73.1% of 18-25-year-olds were not open at all with their family and with the Zoroastrian community, respectively. Openness did increase as age groups increased.²⁸ Women were more likely than men to say they were not open at all with family (38.5% vs 25.5%) as well as with the Zoroastrian community (57.7% vs 45.5%).²⁹ Respondents in South Asia were more likely to be completely open with the Zoroastrian community than respondents in North America (26.8% vs 17.8%), who were more likely to be partially open (24.4% vs 7.3%). They were equally likely to be completely open with their families (31.1% vs 31.7%) and not open at all with the Zoroastrian community (48.8% vs 46.7%).³⁰

1.5 Discrimination

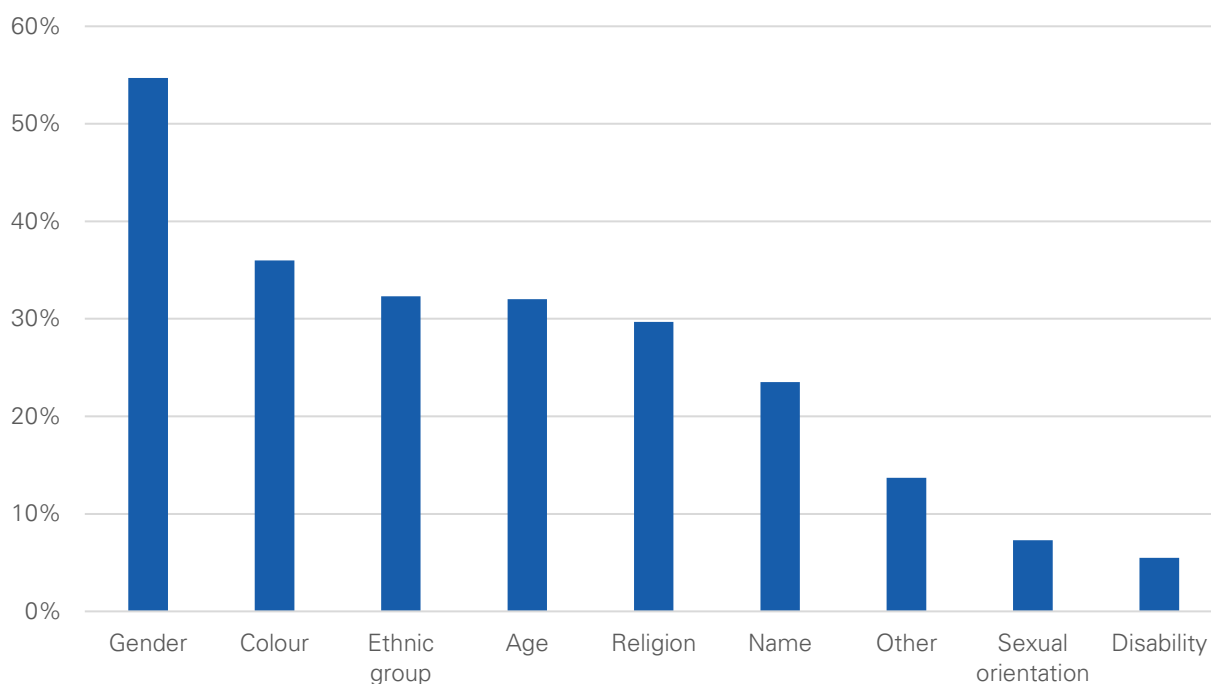
Most respondents said they did not feel discriminated against in any place or context (66.2%), even though discrimination is a common feature for many migrant communities (Figure 4).³¹

Figure 4 – ‘Have you ever faced discrimination? If so, for what reasons?’ (omitting those who said ‘No, none at all’)^x



^x Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Figure 5 – ‘Have you ever faced discrimination? If so, for what reasons?’^{xi} (only respondents who experienced discrimination within the Zoroastrian community or at a Zoroastrian place of worship / a religious setting)³²



1.5.1 Where respondents had perceived discrimination:

- a. 13.4% said they had perceived discrimination due to ethnicity³³
 - 1) at work (49.4%)
 - 2) at school or university (44.1%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (24.4%)
 - 4) when applying for a job (23.7%)
 - 5) when interacting with law enforcement (13.0%).
- b. 12.2% said they had perceived discrimination due to colour³⁴
 - 1) at work (46.2%)
 - 2) at school or university (45.8%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (28.2%)
 - 4) when applying for a job (23.3%)
 - 5) when interacting with law enforcement (14.8%)
- c. 11.6% said they had perceived discrimination due to gender³⁵
 - 1) at work (59.2%)
 - 2) at school or university (34.2%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (26.5%)
 - 4) within the Zoroastrian community (25.4%)
 - 5) at a Zoroastrian place of worship (23.0%)

^{xi} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

- d. 9.3% said they had perceived discrimination due to religion³⁶
- 1) at school or university (52.9%)
 - 2) at work (30.8%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (23.2%)
 - 4) when applying for a job (17.9%)
 - 5) within the Zoroastrian community (16.2%)
 - 6) at a Zoroastrian place of worship / a religious setting (12.9%).
 - 7) Women were more likely than men to face discrimination due to their religion at a Zoroastrian place of worship / religious setting (18.0% vs 7.5%)³⁷
- e. 7.3% said they had perceived discrimination due to age³⁸
- 1) at work (57.0%), at a social gathering (36.6%)
 - 2) when applying for a job (30.3%)
 - 3) and within the Zoroastrian community (22.5%)
 - 4) and at school or university (18.0%)
- f. 7.2% said they perceived discrimination due to their name³⁹
- 1) at school or university (60.6%), work (51.9%)
 - 2) when applying for a job (29.4%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (24.9%)
 - 4) and when interacting with law enforcement (11.4%)
- g. 1.0% said they had perceived discrimination due to sexual orientation⁴⁰
- 1) at school or university (50.0%)
 - 2) within the Zoroastrian community (42.1%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (34.2%),
 - 4) at work (31.6%)
 - 5) at a Zoroastrian place of worship / a religious setting (26.3%)
- h. 1.0% said they perceived discrimination due to disability⁴¹
- 1) at school or university (59.5%)
 - 2) at work (51.4%)
 - 3) at a social gathering (45.9%)
 - 4) when applying for a job (40.5%)
 - 5) within the Zoroastrian community (27.0%)
- i. 3.0% said they were discriminated against for 'other' reasons⁴²

We focus on discrimination due to gender as it is the centre of much debate within the community. 11.6% of respondents said they perceived discrimination due to their gender, 92.4% of whom were women.⁴³

1.5.2 Age (filtered to include women only)

As expected, older female respondents were more likely to perceive gender discrimination at work while younger female respondents were most likely to perceive gender discrimination at school or university and at social gatherings. However, what was

surprising to us was that younger female respondents were more likely than older female respondents to say they perceived discrimination at a Zoroastrian place of worship / religious setting and within the Zoroastrian community.⁴⁴ This suggests that discrimination against women has not diminished over time.

1.5.3 Region (filtered to include women only)

Women in South Asia recorded the lowest levels of discrimination across most of the options, and the highest percent of no discrimination (76.2%).⁴⁵ Women in South Asia were similarly likely to women in North America to perceive discrimination due to gender at a Zoroastrian place of worship (25.2% vs 22.7%) and the two groups were similar in relation to reported gender discrimination within the Zoroastrian community (26.0% vs 25.3%) (Table 9).⁴⁶ These statistics showed that respondents in the two regions faced near similar levels of gender discrimination, but we did not ask our respondents if they perceived discrimination in their place of residence, specifically. Therefore, there could be three reasons for this similarity:

- 1) While there is little to no 'institutional' discrimination with regards to membership of the Zoroastrian community in North America, respondents could have faced gender discrimination from other Zoroastrian community members.^{xii}
- 2) Respondents travelled to other places where they experienced discrimination. Many Zoroastrians in the diaspora travel back to South Asia for travel and holidays where they could perceive gender discrimination within the Zoroastrian community or in places of worship.
- 3) The levels of reported gender discrimination in South Asia could be low because those discriminated against were much more likely to be separate from and less involved with their local Zoroastrian communities and therefore possibly less likely to take the survey.

1.5.4 Work and education (filtered to include women only)

70.1% of women who had experienced gender discrimination in North America said they had perceived discrimination at work and 43.3% at school or university. The field of STEM and manufacturing had the highest level of gender discrimination, with 50.0% of women working in the field who had experienced gender discrimination saying they had experienced it at work.⁴⁷

^{xii} Most local North American associations offer membership to *navjoted* Zoroastrians professing the faith with at least one Zoroastrian parent; some offer membership to anyone who self-identifies as Zoroastrian; only one excludes membership to those who have married out of the Zoroastrian community.

1.5.5 At a Zoroastrian place of worship (filtered to include women only)

Of the 105 respondents who said they had experienced gender discrimination at a Zoroastrian place of worship / religious setting, only 52.0% had a non-Zoroastrian spouse or partner. This meant that respondents who were single (27.6%) or in a relationship with a Zoroastrian (41.3%) also experienced gender discrimination in a Zoroastrian place of worship / religious setting.⁴⁸ What could be the reason for this? Could it be because of the way they were perceived in that environment?

Table 9 – ‘Where have you faced discrimination because of your gender?’ by Region (women who experienced gender discrimination in North America and South Asia only)

	North America (N=194)	South Asia (N=127)
At work	70.1%	43.3%
At a Zoroastrian place of worship / a religious setting	22.7%	25.2%
At school or university	43.3%	18.1%
Within the Zoroastrian community	25.3%	26.0%
At a social gathering	26.8%	21.3%
When applying for a job	22.2%	16.5%
When applying to an educational institution	3.6%	3.9%
When applying to social services	0.0%	1.6%
Immigration laws	0.5%	0.8%
In legal matters	3.6%	10.2%
When applying for a mortgage / bank loan	4.1%	2.4%
When interacting with law enforcement	3.6%	8.7%
Other	1.5%	9.4%

2. INTERACTION AND INVOLVEMENT

As part of the global diaspora, the Zoroastrian community has integrated with and contributed to their host communities wherever in the world they have chosen to settle. In this section, we focus on how involved our respondents were with the wider Zoroastrian community and what this meant for their religious and cultural lives.

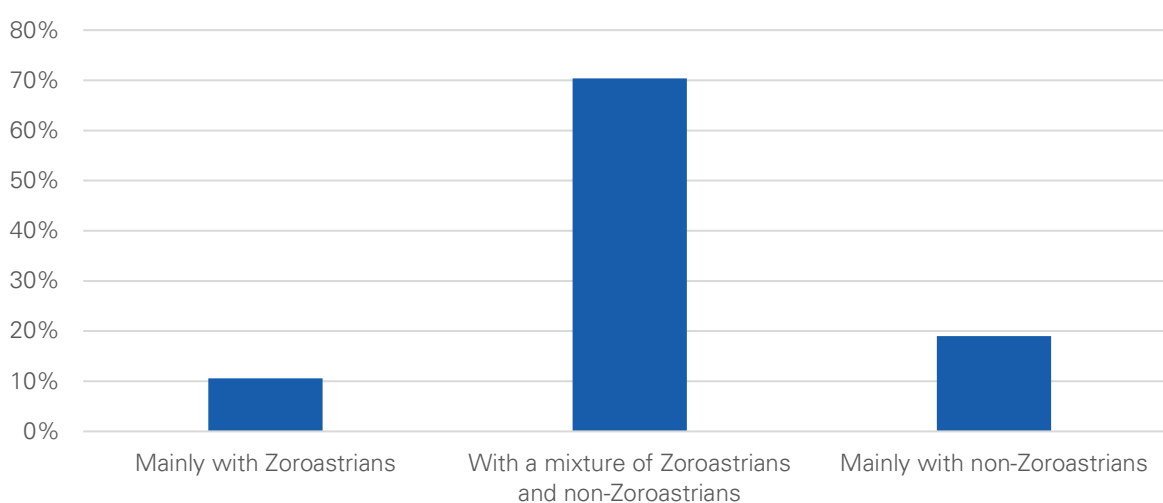
Who they socialised with, the activities they participated in, the language used to communicate in their home and where they get their news from helps us to understand

this process better. We asked if regular interaction and involvement is associated with greater religiosity (self-identity and practice) or cultural observance.

2.1 Who people socialise with

Considering that the Zoroastrian community is so well integrated within their host communities in India as well as in the diaspora, it was unsurprising that 70.4% of respondents socialised with a mixture of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians. However, it was surprising that more respondents socialised mainly with non-Zoroastrians (19.0%) than mainly with Zoroastrians (10.6%) (Figure 6).⁴⁹

Figure 6 – ‘Who do you socialise with?’



2.1.1 Age

Most respondents across all age groups socialised with a mixture of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians. Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to socialise mainly with Zoroastrians. Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to socialise mainly with non-Zoroastrians.⁵⁰

2.1.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to socialise mainly with Zoroastrians (12.8% vs 7.8%) and a mixture of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians (76.4% vs 62.8%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to socialise mainly with non-Zoroastrians (29.4% vs 10.8%).⁵¹ This is unsurprising as the Zoroastrian population is small and many people live in places where they, as Zoroastrians, are in the minority and they do not have many Zoroastrians that they could socialise with. On the other hand, it is notable that this small population does not seem to be insular, with only a minority socialising mainly with other Zoroastrians.

2.1.3 Migration

Respondents who had migrated were slightly more likely to socialise mainly with non-Zoroastrians than respondents who had not migrated (21.2% vs 17.7%).⁵² However, if respondents' parents had migrated, they were much more likely to socialise mainly with non-Zoroastrians (32.3% vs 14.5%).⁵³

2.2 Language spoken at home

In terms of the main language spoken at home, 50.2% of respondents spoke English, 46.1% spoke Gujarati, 2.3% spoke Farsi, and 0.8% spoke Zoroastrian Dari. As we had few respondents from Iran, it was not surprising to see the low numbers of Farsi and Zoroastrian Dari speakers (Table 10).⁵⁴

Table 10 – 'What is the main language spoken in your home?' (Top 5 responses)

Responses (Select one option)	Percentage of respondents	
English	50.2%	(N=2172)
Gujarati	46.1%	(N=1998)
Farsi / Persian	2.3%	(N=101)
Zoroastrian Dari	0.8%	(N=33)
Hindi	0.2%	(N=10)

2.2.1 Age

English and Gujarati were spoken across the age groups. A high percentage of young people had Gujarati as the main language spoken at home (50.5% of 18-35-year-olds).⁵⁵ Almost half of 18-25-year-olds could only speak the Gujarati language (45.1%) whereas 19.6% could speak, read and write Gujarati. Proficiency increased as age groups increased, with 49.2% of 66-75-year-olds able to speak, read, and write Gujarati.⁵⁶

2.2.2 Region

68.3% of respondents in North America spoke English at home and only 24.7% spoke Gujarati. In South Asia, 66.1% of respondents spoke Gujarati and 32.9% spoke English. Respondents were more likely to only understand Gujarati (as opposed to speaking and writing it) in North America compared to respondents in South Asia (18.3% vs 3.5%). Hinnells observes that Gujarati was 'a language acquired after migration to India and was not part of their [Parsis'] ancient heritage. But in losing this linguistic facility, some parents fear that the young are missing out on an important part of their culture, from the fun of *nataks* [theatre plays] on the history of the religion and other cultural features of their history in Gujarat' (Hinnells 2005, p. 727).

North America had the second highest percentage of respondents who spoke Farsi as their main language at home (5.4%) after Iran (71.4%) (Table 11).⁵⁷ North America also had the second highest percentage of respondents able to speak, read and write Farsi (8.1%) after Iran (95.5%).⁵⁸

It must be noted here that the survey was made available to respondents in three languages: English, Gujarati and Farsi. Despite nearly half our respondents speaking Gujarati at home, only 0.6% took the survey in Gujarati, and only 0.7% took the survey in Farsi.

Table 11 - 'What is the main language spoken in your home?' by Region (Top 4 responses)

	Australasia (N=241)	Europe (N=46)	Iran (N=21)	Middle East (N=68)	North America (N=1272)	South Asia (N=2221)	South East Asia (N=43)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
English	74.3%	67.4%	0.0%	57.4%	68.3%	32.9%	65.1%	79.3%	81.8%
Gujarati	24.1%	15.2%	0.0%	42.6%	24.7%	66.1%	32.6%	18.0%	9.1%
Farsi / Persian	0.8%	4.3%	71.4%	0.0%	5.4%	0.1%	2.3%	2.7%	0.0%
Zoroastrian Dari	0.8%	2.2%	28.6%	0.0%	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

2.2.3 Migration

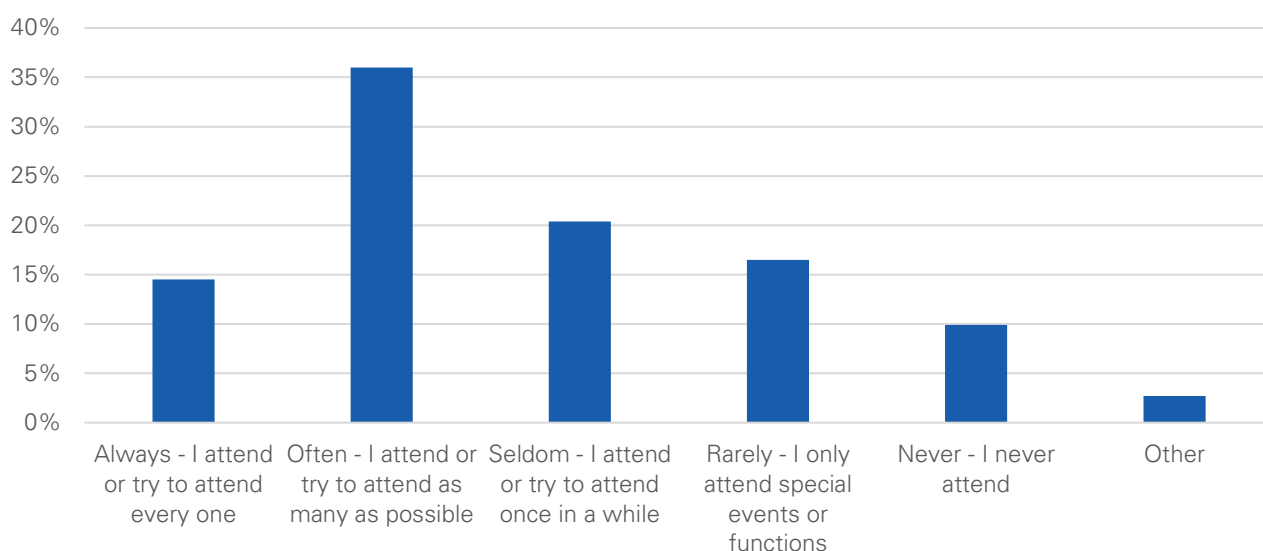
Only 28.4% of respondents who had migrated said they spoke Gujarati at home.⁵⁹ Respondents whose parents had migrated were less likely to speak Gujarati at home (21.6%).⁶⁰ However, the figure rose again among respondents whose grandparents had migrated (27.9%) and had presumably been a more active influence in their grandchildren's lives.⁶¹ As Hinnells (2005, p. 727) noted, 'few Parsis use Gujarati extensively in their home, except when conversing with grandparents'. So, the presence of grandparents, either in the home or close by, did improve the likelihood of speaking Gujarati to a certain extent.

Respondents who spoke Gujarati at home and the few respondents who spoke Zoroastrian Dari were more likely to always participate in activities and events organised by the Zoroastrian community.⁶²

2.3 Participating in Zoroastrian community activities and events

Social interaction is crucial for maintaining community harmony and relationships, and for developing new ones. We asked respondents if they participated in activities, events, and functions organised by their local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre. 36.0% of respondents said they participated often, 20.4% said seldom, 16.5% said rarely, 14.5% said always, 9.9% said never and 2.7% chose 'other' (Figure 7).⁶³

Figure 7 – 'Do you participate in activities, events, and functions organised by your local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre?'



In general, older respondents were more likely to say they always and often participated and younger respondents were most likely to say they seldom, rarely and never participated.⁶⁴ Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to always participate (18.0% vs 12.5%). Respondents in South Asia were more likely to rarely (18.5% vs 14.0%) and never (10.7% vs 7.7%) participate. Respondents in both regions were equally likely to participate often and seldom.⁶⁵

2.3.1 Types of community activities and events

There are many different types of activities and events that are organised by community associations. We wanted to know how popular these activities and events were for our respondents. By far the most popular were *navroze* events and functions, which were attended by 85.2% of respondents. The next most popular were community get-togethers, which nearly half of respondents (46.9%) attended. The full list of events is given in Table 12.

2.3.2 Age

Overall, most events and activities were more popular amongst the older generation than the younger generation. Activities we thought might appeal more to younger respondents such as online events and Zoroastrian Congresses were equally popular amongst the youngest and oldest age groups. The only activities that were more popular amongst the younger generation were New Year’s Eve parties, sporting activities and activities organised for young people such as camps and classes for children, meet and greet / socialising for young adults, and LGBTQ+ events.⁶⁶

Table 12 – ‘What types of activities, events and functions do you participate in that are organised by your local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre?’^{xiii}

Responses (Select all that apply)	Percentage of responses	
<i>Navroze</i> Events and Function	85.2%	(N=3101)
Community get-togethers	46.9%	(N=1705)
New Year’s Eve Party (31 Dec)	38.8%	(N=1411)
Sporting Activities and Events	36.2%	(N=1317)
Musical / Drama / Dancing / Talent Show or Performance	30.8%	(N=1120)
Educational lectures on Zoroastrian history / culture	30.6%	(N=1115)
Camps and classes for children	24.1%	(N=876)
Meet and Greet / Socialising events for Young Adults	22.9%	(N=834)
Zoroastrian Congresses	20.5%	(N=744)
Online events	19.7%	(N=717)
Community outreach to help needy community members	19.2%	(N=697)
Business / Profession Orientated Events	13.0%	(N=474)
Events for senior citizens	12.7%	(N=463)
Interfaith	8.9%	(N=322)
Professional women’s networking events	5.2%	(N=189)
Events for LGBTQ+	1.8%	(N=67)
Other	1.5%	(N=56)

2.3.3 Gender

Men and women were equally likely to participate in community get-togethers (46.4% vs 47.3%) and most other events, but men were more likely to participate in business / profession-orientated events (16.9% vs 9.4%) whereas women were more likely to participate in camps and classes for children (28.0% vs 20.1%).⁶⁷

^{xiii} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

When looking at the youngest age group (18-25-year-olds), men were more likely to attend social / meet and greet events for young adults, and women were more likely to participate in Zoroastrian Congresses and community get-togethers, all of which are events where young people could meet each other.⁶⁸

2.3.4 Region

There were limited variations in the types of activities respondents participated in by region. Respondents in North America were more likely to attend *navroze* functions, camps and classes for children, meet and greet / socialising events for young adults, business / professional orientated events, educational lectures on Zoroastrian history and culture, interfaith events, and Zoroastrian congresses. Respondents in South Asia were more likely to attend New Year's Eve parties, sporting activities and events, music / drama / dancing / talent show or performance, community get-togethers, and online events (Table 13).⁶⁹

Table 13 – 'What types of activities, events and functions do you participate in that are organised by your local Zoroastrian community, community association, or community centre?' by Region (North America and South Asia only)^{xiv}

	North America (N=1100)	South Asia (N=1845)
Navroze Events and Function	90.5%	80.8%
Community get-togethers	56.5%	38.4%
New Year's Eve Party (31 Dec)	34.8%	41.1%
Sporting Activities and Events	31.0%	38.8%
Musical / Drama / Dancing / Talent Show or Performance	27.5%	34.3%
Educational lectures on Zoroastrian history / culture	40.1%	23.6%
Camps and classes for children	29.4%	22.2%
Meet and Greet / Socialising events for Young Adults	24.5%	20.4%
Zoroastrian Congresses	36.9%	7.6%
Online events	28.1%	13.6%
Community outreach to help needy community members	22.7%	16.0%
Business / Profession Orientated Events	15.4%	10.2%
Events for senior citizens	14.2%	11.5%
Interfaith	14.0%	3.9%
Professional women's networking events	4.8%	4.8%
Events for LGBTQ+	2.3%	1.4%
Other	2.1%	1.3%

^{xiv} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

2.4 What respondents liked about participating in community activities and events

We asked respondents who attended community activities what they enjoyed about participating in them. The most popular response was 'Feeling a sense of belonging to a wider community' (67.6%), followed by 'Celebrating and preserving my roots and heritage' (65.4%). The full list of answer options is given in Table 14.

Table 14 – 'What do you like about participating in these activities, events and functions?'^{xv}

Responses (Select all that apply)	Percentage of responses	
Feeling a sense of belonging to a wider community	67.6%	(N=2484)
Celebrating and preserving my roots and heritage	65.4%	(N=2400)
The food	59.5%	(N=2184)
Meeting new people	52.9%	(N=1944)
The camaraderie with the community members / feel-good factor	49.4%	(N=1814)
Learning new things	47.5%	(N=1744)
Sense of familiarity / identifying with my cultural homeland	43.4%	(N=1594)
Pass down heritage to my children and encourage them to be involved with the community	41.7%	(N=1532)
Practise my culture by being able to speak my mother tongue or wear traditional clothes	34.7%	(N=1274)
Feeling a sense of national pride	21.2%	(N=777)
Other	1.0%	(N=37)

2.4.1 Age

Most reasons for liking to participate in community events and functions were similarly popular across the age groups. The only variations were to be expected, with meeting new people and learning new things being more popular in younger age groups and the camaraderie with the community members / feel good factor increasing in popularity as age groups increased.⁷⁰

2.4.2 Gender

Most reasons were similarly popular for men and women, but women were more likely to say they enjoyed attending events because they could engage with their culture by being able to speak their mother tongue or wear traditional clothes (37.4% vs 31.9%), feel a sense of camaraderie with the community members (52.0% vs 46.8%), and get a sense of familiarity / identifying with their cultural homeland (46.6% vs 40.0%). Men were more

^{xv} Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

likely to say they enjoyed attending events because they were able to celebrate and preserve their roots and heritage (66.7% vs 64.3%) and meet new people (55.0% vs 50.9%).⁷¹

Looking at gender differences in age, young women aged 18-25 years old were more likely than men of the same age to choose feeling a sense of belonging to a wider community, the food, and a sense of familiarity / identifying with a cultural homeland as reasons to enjoy attending Zoroastrian community events. Passing down heritage to children and encouraging them to be involved was most important for 36-45-year-old women, who were more likely to be raising a family.⁷²

2.4.3 Region

Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to say they enjoyed all aspects of attending events except for 'Feeling a sense of national pride', in which the two regions were equal.⁷³

2.4.4 Migration

Respondents who had migrated were more likely than respondents who had not migrated to say they enjoyed all aspects of attending events. But the three biggest differences between those who had migrated and those who had not migrated were:⁷⁴

- a. Sense of familiarity / identifying with my cultural homeland (56.9% vs 35.4%)
- b. Camaraderie with the community members/feel good factor (61.5% vs 42.3%)
- c. Practise my culture by being able to speak my mother tongue (43.6% vs 29.4%)

2.5 What respondents didn't like about participating in community activities and events

We also asked about aspects of participation that respondents did not like. 43.0% chose 'none of the above', indicating that many people had favourable experiences of participating in activities and events organised by the Zoroastrian community. The next most popular choice was 'I participate with family and friends, not the wider community' (22.5%), closely followed by 'Distance to the events and functions is too far to travel' (21.3%). The full list of answer options are given in Table 15 below.

Table 15 – ‘What do you dislike about participating in these activities, events and functions?’^{xvi}

Responses (Select all that apply)	Percentage of responses
None of the above	43.0% (N=1520)
I participate with family and friends, not the wider community	22.5% (N=793)
Distance to the events and functions is too far to travel	21.3% (N=753)
I don't have the time or energy	10.8% (N=383)
I don't know anyone or have any friends / Feel left out	9.6% (N=339)
My spouse, partner or children dont have fun or get bored	6.6% (N=232)
I don't feel like I belong / I feel different to the others present	6.4% (N=226)
I don't enjoy myself when I go	4.3% (N=152)
I don't feel welcome	3.7% (N=129)
Other	2.9% (N=104)
My spouse, partner or children are not allowed to or discouraged from attending	2.3% (N=81)
My non-Zoroastrian parent is not allowed to or discouraged from attending	0.7% (N=26)

2.5.1 Age

Many community leaders we have spoken to over the course of this project have told us of their frustration and sadness at not seeing young faces at community events. This was an important issue for them as they wanted young people to become more involved with community activities and life. We can see that younger respondents (18-35) were more likely to say they didn't attend events and activities because they didn't know anyone or have any friends / felt left out. Perhaps, because of this, they didn't feel they belonged / felt different to the others present. They were also more likely than older respondents to say they didn't have the time or energy to participate – possibly because of work and social pressures – and that the distance to events was too far to travel (Table 16).

^{xvi} Respondents were able to select multiple responses, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

Table 16 – ‘What do you dislike about participating in these activities, events and functions?’ by Age^{xvii}

	18-25 (N=328)	26-35 (N=595)	36-45 (N=577)	46-55 (N=605)	56-65 (N=594)	66-75 (N=551)	76+ (N=282)
I participate with family and friends, not the wider community	18.3%	18.2%	21.5%	19.5%	27.1%	24.7%	30.5%
I don't know anyone or have any friends / Feel left out	22.6%	16.1%	11.8%	6.8%	3.7%	4.0%	5.7%
I don't have the time or energy	18.6%	16.0%	11.4%	7.6%	6.7%	10.0%	7.1%
Distance to the events and functions is too far to travel	23.8%	25.2%	22.7%	20.8%	17.0%	20.7%	18.8%
I don't enjoy myself when I go	5.8%	6.4%	4.5%	3.8%	3.4%	2.7%	3.9%
I don't feel welcome	4.6%	5.5%	4.5%	4.1%	2.2%	2.4%	1.4%
I don't feel like I belong / I feel different to the others present	12.5%	10.8%	7.1%	4.6%	4.4%	3.6%	2.1%
My spouse, partner or children don't have fun or get bored	0.3%	2.7%	8.8%	10.2%	7.7%	7.8%	4.6%
My non-Zoroastrian parent is not allowed to or discouraged from attending	1.5%	1.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%
My spouse, partner or children are not allowed to or discouraged from attending	2.7%	2.7%	3.1%	1.3%	3.0%	1.3%	1.8%
None of the above	37.2%	38.5%	41.4%	47.4%	46.3%	45.2%	42.2%
Other	3.0%	4.2%	3.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	1.4%

^{xvii} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

2.5.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia were much more likely than those in North America to say they participated at home with family and friends and not with the wider community (30.5% vs 12.5%). Respondents in North America were more likely not to attend because the distance to events was too far to travel (32.0% vs 14.3%), they felt like they didn't belong / felt different to the others present (9.5% vs 4.9%), or their spouse, partner or children didn't enjoy themselves (9.3% vs 4.4%) (see Table 17).⁷⁵

Looking at regional differences in gender, women in North America were more likely than those in South Asia to say that they didn't know anyone / felt left out and like they didn't belong / felt different to the others present.⁷⁶ Men in South Asia were more likely than men in North America to say they didn't have fun at events.⁷⁷

2.6 Reasons for never participating in community activities and events

There were a few respondents (9.9%) who stated that they never attended events and we were curious to know why. The four most popular reasons for not attending were:⁷⁸

- I participate with family and friends, not the wider community (37.6%)
- Distance to the events and functions is too far to travel (24.1%)
- I don't know anyone or have any friends / Feel left out (22.8%)
- I don't enjoy myself when I go (22.5%)

Of those who wrote about why they never attended events, a few said they were not outgoing and did not feel comfortable attending events. For example, one respondent said "I am an introvert so don't like to mingle". Another said they were "not a party person". Other comments included having a different mindset to or belief system to those who attend community events. For example, one respondent said, "My views are divergent from most people there". And in response to 'Other (Please specify) one respondent said: "In general, I don't like community events because they exclude a lot of others. I hate calling other humans 'outsiders' and creating distance when the world needs togetherness. Orthodox views and beliefs are a waste of my time and energy. I don't believe Parsi's are the best. They are sadly some of the most racist people".

Table 17 – ‘What do you dislike about participating in these activities, events and functions?’ by Region^{xviii}

	Australasia (N=218)	Europe (N=31)	Iran (N=16)	Middle East (N=54)	North America (N=1062)	South Asia (N=1791)	South East Asia (N=41)	United Kingdom (N=167)	Rest of the world (N=9)
I participate with family and friends, not the wider community	14.7%	9.7%	31.3%	25.9%	12.5%	30.5%	12.2%	15.0%	11.1%
I don't know anyone or have any friends / Feel left out	6.0%	3.2%	18.8%	13.0%	10.3%	9.2%	12.2%	13.8%	0.0%
I don't have the time or energy	8.7%	6.5%	18.8%	5.6%	9.1%	12.9%	9.8%	7.8%	0.0%
Distance to the events and functions is too far to travel	19.3%	12.9%	18.8%	7.4%	32.0%	14.3%	7.3%	43.1%	11.1%
I don't enjoy myself when I go	3.7%	3.2%	6.3%	0.0%	3.9%	4.9%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%
I don't feel welcome	2.3%	3.2%	12.5%	1.9%	4.0%	3.3%	2.4%	7.2%	0.0%
I don't feel like I belong / I feel different to the others present	3.2%	3.2%	6.3%	3.7%	9.5%	4.9%	2.4%	9.6%	11.1%
My spouse, partner or children don't have fun or get bored	8.3%	3.2%	0.0%	1.9%	9.3%	4.4%	17.1%	9.6%	0.0%
My non-Zoroastrian parent is not allowed to or discouraged from attending	0.0%	3.2%	6.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.8%	4.9%	1.2%	0.0%
My spouse, partner or children are not allowed to or discouraged from attending	1.4%	16.1%	12.5%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	2.4%	4.2%	11.1%
None of the above	51.4%	61.3%	43.8%	55.6%	42.6%	41.9%	56.1%	31.1%	66.7%
Other	5.5%	3.2%	0.0%	1.9%	4.8%	1.3%	0.0%	6.0%	22.2%

^{xviii} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

2.7 News Sources

The Zoroastrian community has a long history in print media and the 'news' business. They were credited with establishing the first indigenous printing press in Western India, when Rustom Caresajee printed the first English calendar in 1780.^{xix} In 1812, Fardoonji Marzban established a Parsi printing press and in 1822 established the Bombay Presidency's first and the country's second vernacular newspaper – *Bombay Samachar*.^{xx}

With the rise of social media, we assumed that the popularity of the print media for Zoroastrian community news and information would have changed, but most respondents still relied on 'traditional' Zoroastrian community news sources such as word of mouth and Zoroastrian community newspapers and newsletters.⁷⁹ 63.9% of respondents said they obtained their Zoroastrian community news and information by word of mouth from family / friends / neighbours, 53.7% from a traditional Zoroastrian community newspaper or magazine, 43.4% from Zoroastrian community association website / newsletter, 42.8% from WhatsApp / Telegram, 40.3% from Facebook / Instagram, and 10.1% from YouTube / Podcasts.^{xxi}

2.7.1 Age

Older respondents were more likely to get Zoroastrian community news and information from traditional newspapers and magazines than younger respondents. Younger respondents (18-25-year-olds) were most likely to rely on word of mouth (78.0%) and less than half (45.5%) read traditional newspapers and magazines. Social media was much more popular with younger than older respondents.⁸⁰

2.7.2 Gender

Men were slightly more likely to get Zoroastrian community news and information from traditional newspapers (55.5% vs 52.2%) compared to women, who were more likely to rely on word of mouth (65.8% vs 61.8%) and Facebook / Instagram (42.5% vs 38.0%).⁸¹

2.7.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than those in North America to get Zoroastrian community news and information from traditional newspapers (70.5% vs 35.1%) and use all forms of social media. Respondents in North America were most likely to rely on word of mouth (66.0% vs 60.2%) and use Zoroastrian community association websites / newsletters (65.5% vs 28.6%).⁸²

^{xix} See Palsetia (2001, p. 178) for more information.

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

2.8 Types of news

The majority of respondents (72.7%) said that they read Zoroastrian community news and information from the community's oldest and longest running newspaper, *Jam-e-Jamshed*, established in 1832. 68.9% read its newest weekly, *Parsi Times*, established in 2011. 37.5% read *Parsiana*, a magazine established in 1964.^{xxii} 23.7% read *FEZANA Journal*, established in 1988 for a North American audience. Of the Iranian newspapers, 1.9% read *Amordad News* and 1.1% read *Beresad*. 6.7% read none of the above.⁸³

2.8.1 Region

The two Indian weeklies were far more popular in South Asia than North America, with 85.6% of those in South Asia reading *Jam-e-Jamshed* and 79.4% reading *Parsi Times*. *Parsiana* was equally read in North America and South Asia (38.6% vs 35.5%), but was also popular in Australasia (47.7%). *FEZANA Journal* was most read in North America (74.4% vs 7.8% in South Asia) (Table 18).⁸⁴

Table 18 – 'Which of these newspapers and magazines do you read?' by Region^{xxiii}

	Australasia (N=86)	Europe (N=15)	Iran (N=9)	Middle East (N=23)	North America (N=414)	South Asia (N=1478)	South East Asia (N=17)	United Kingdom (N=58)	Rest of the world (N=3)
Jam-e-Jamshed	62.8%	60.0%	44.4%	78.3%	31.9%	85.6%	70.6%	65.5%	66.7%
Parsi Times	58.1%	80.0%	33.3%	91.3%	36.0%	79.4%	70.6%	58.6%	33.3%
Parsiana	47.7%	26.7%	33.3%	47.8%	38.6%	35.5%	64.7%	50.0%	33.3%
Amordad News	2.3%	0.0%	77.8%	4.3%	5.1%	0.4%	5.9%	5.2%	0.0%
FEZANA Journal	32.6%	6.7%	55.6%	13.0%	74.4%	7.8%	35.3%	27.6%	33.3%
Beresad	2.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	2.9%	0.3%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%
None of the above	19.8%	6.7%	11.1%	4.3%	11.8%	4.0%	11.8%	15.5%	0.0%

^{xxii} It might seem odd that a community of under 100,000 in India have two weekly newspapers and one bimonthly magazine. However, all three news sources serve a different purpose and cater to a different audience member as pointed out by the editor of *Parsiana*, Jehangir Patel, 'while *Parsiana* caters to more liberal community members and has a larger readership outside India as well, *Jam-e-Jamshed* has a bent towards religious and historical writings. *Parsi Times* attracts the youth' (Nair 2010).

^{xxiii} Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

2.9 Other news sources

For news outside the community, 60.1% of respondents said they got their news from social media, 51.1% from national newspapers, 47.5% from television, 41.2% from local community newspapers (hard copy or online), 29.7% from international newspapers (hard copy or online), 19.2% from radio, and 11.3% from journals.⁸⁵

2.9.1 Age

Older respondents were much more likely to get their general news from TV, radio, and national newspapers, while younger respondents got theirs from social media and international newspapers.⁸⁶

2.9.2 Gender

Men were more likely to read local, national, and international newspapers and journals. Women were more likely to listen to the radio and use social media.⁸⁷

2.9.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were slightly more likely than those in North America to read local community newspapers (44.9% vs 39.5%) and use social media (60.9% vs 56.3%) to access general news. Respondents in North America were more likely than those in South Asia to read national (53.2% vs 49.2%) and international (39.1% vs 18.8%) newspapers, watch TV news (55.7% vs 41.5%), and listen to news on the radio (31.9% vs 8.1%).⁸⁸

3. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

The data on 'expressions of identity' tells us that there is a conservative-liberal divide in terms of the importance of the literature (*Qisseh-ye Sanjan* and *Shahnameh*). Whether respondents believed them to be historically accurate or not, these are epic narratives with heroic characters and tales of romance and resilience. The lack of knowledge about them, especially amongst the youth population, was surprising.

Relationships between Parsis were seen in a more positive light than between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis. There are many possible factors that could be the cause of this. Historically and culturally the two communities have evolved differently since their separation, which began over a thousand years ago. In the diaspora there is perhaps less interaction between them than might be expected, perhaps because of these differences.

Respondents felt most at 'home' and experienced feelings of belonging in their place of residence, but a third of respondents reported multiple places of belonging. This showed

us that people still felt connectedness and belonging to places of birth and nationality even when they had emigrated.

Very few people said they were LGBTQ+, and those who did were largely not open about their sexuality with their families and the Zoroastrian community. We also found that younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to identify as gay / lesbian / bisexual but were less likely than older respondents to be open about it.

In general, few respondents felt discriminated against. Respondents who reported discrimination mostly experienced it in their lives at work, when applying for a job, or at school or university. Focusing on gender discrimination within the Zoroastrian community or at a Zoroastrian place of worship, the data told us that the levels of gender discrimination felt by women were similar in South Asia and North America.

We learned that respondents socialised mostly with a mix of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, demonstrating that they were generally well integrated with their respective host communities.

Most people enjoyed participating in activities organised by Zoroastrian community leaders. Those who did attend but did not enjoy themselves said it was because they didn't know anyone and felt left out. Very few people said they didn't attend because their spouse or family member were not allowed to or was discouraged from attending.

The Survey showed that people still used traditional newspapers and community newsletters for Zoroastrian community news and information, but many, particularly young people, used social media for other local, national, and international news.

ENDNOTES

The table numbers below refer to the document 'Gen Z and Beyond - Ch.3 Identity and Interaction Appendix', which can be accessed at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation>

- ¹ See Table 1
- ² See Table 2
- ³ See Table 3
- ⁴ See Table 4
- ⁵ See Table 5
- ⁶ See Table 6
- ⁷ See Tables 7 and 8 for breakdown by country
- ⁸ See Table 9
- ⁹ See Tables 10 and 11 for breakdown by country
- ¹⁰ See Table 12
- ¹¹ See Table 13
- ¹² See Tables 14 to 19
- ¹³ See Tables 20 to 25
- ¹⁴ See Table 26
- ¹⁵ See Table 27
- ¹⁶ See Table 28
- ¹⁷ See Table 29 for breakdown by country
- ¹⁸ See Table 30
- ¹⁹ See Tables 31 and 32
- ²⁰ See Tables 33 and 34
- ²¹ See Table 35
- ²² See Table 36
- ²³ See Table 37
- ²⁴ See Table 38
- ²⁵ See Table 39
- ²⁶ See Table 40
- ²⁷ See Table 41
- ²⁸ See Table 42
- ²⁹ See Table 43
- ³⁰ See Table 44
- ³¹ See Table 45
- ³² See Table 46
- ³³ See Table 47
- ³⁴ See Table 48
- ³⁵ See Table 49
- ³⁶ See Table 50
- ³⁷ See Table 51
- ³⁸ See Table 52
- ³⁹ See Table 53
- ⁴⁰ See Table 54
- ⁴¹ See Table 55
- ⁴² See Table 56
- ⁴³ See Table 57
- ⁴⁴ See Table 58
- ⁴⁵ See Table 59
- ⁴⁶ See Table 60 for all regions and countries
- ⁴⁷ See Table 61
- ⁴⁸ See Tables 62 and 63
- ⁴⁹ See Table 64
- ⁵⁰ See Table 65
- ⁵¹ See Table 66
- ⁵² See Table 67

- ⁵³ See Table 68
- ⁵⁴ See Table 69 for the full list
- ⁵⁵ See Table 70
- ⁵⁶ See Table 71
- ⁵⁷ See Table 72 for full list and breakdown by country
- ⁵⁸ See Table 73
- ⁵⁹ See Table 74
- ⁶⁰ See Table 75
- ⁶¹ See Table 76
- ⁶² See Table 77
- ⁶³ See Table 78
- ⁶⁴ See Table 79
- ⁶⁵ See Table 80
- ⁶⁶ See Table 81
- ⁶⁷ See Table 82
- ⁶⁸ See Table 83
- ⁶⁹ See Table 84 for all regions and countries
- ⁷⁰ See Table 85
- ⁷¹ See Table 86
- ⁷² See Tables 87 and 88
- ⁷³ See Table 89
- ⁷⁴ See Table 90
- ⁷⁵ See Table 91 for breakdown by country
- ⁷⁶ See Table 92
- ⁷⁷ See Table 93
- ⁷⁸ See Table 94
- ⁷⁹ See Table 95
- ⁸⁰ See Table 96
- ⁸¹ See Table 97
- ⁸² See Table 98
- ⁸³ See Table 99
- ⁸⁴ See Table 100 for breakdown by country
- ⁸⁵ See Table 101
- ⁸⁶ See Table 102
- ⁸⁷ See Table 103
- ⁸⁸ See Table 104

CHAPTER 4 - RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

1. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

1.1 Practising Zoroastrians

1.1.1 Region

1.2 Not Practising Zoroastrianism

1.2.1 Gender

1.2.2 Region

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3.4.2 Region

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3.5.2 Gender

3.5.3 Region

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- 3.6.1 Age
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4.1 *Navjote* ceremony

- 4.1.1 Age
- 4.1.2 Region
- 4.1.3 Children

4.2 Soul at death

- 4.2.1 Age
- 4.2.2 Gender
- 4.2.3 Region

4.3 Authority in religious disputes

- 4.3.1 Region
- 4.3.2 Socio-religious identity

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5.1 Born into a priestly family

- 5.1.1 Region
- 5.1.2 Socio-religious identity

5.2 Priestly training

- 5.2.1 Region
- 5.2.2 Socio-religious identity

5.3 Practising priests

- 5.3.1 Region
- 5.3.2 Socio-religious identity

5.4 Part-time or non-practising priests

- 5.4.1 Age
- 5.4.2 Region
- 5.4.3 Socio-religious identity

6. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

CHAPTER 4 - RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Religious beliefs and practices around the world are in flux. Pew Research (2015) projected that the religious profile of the world would change from 2010 to 2050 due to an increase in non-religious or religiously unaffiliated people, religious conversion, international migration, and differences in youth populations around the world.

We have already noted that the demographic structure of the Zoroastrian community has changed over the past few decades. The Community section of the following chapter on Aspirations sets out how survey respondents viewed the community's small, ageing population as its greatest threat. However, when asked about the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community, nearly half our respondents chose 'teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture'.

In his study on the Zoroastrian diaspora, Hinnells (2005, pp. 141-142) looked at various religious beliefs and practices and found that while religious education was low, religious activity was high. In this chapter we focus on respondents' religious beliefs and practices, but also look at respondents' religious education and their level of understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers. Where possible, we compared our survey data with the data collected by Hinnells. This will help us understand where the trends (if any) are leading. We asked if there were differences between older and younger generations, between men and women, between respondents in different regions, between respondents with and without children, and between different socio-religious identities.

We start by looking at 1) respondents' religious education and their understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers, 2) their observance of rituals and practices which include rites of passage, and 3) their religious beliefs. We end this chapter by looking at the priesthood and the reasons why respondents from priestly families did not become full-time priests.

We must reiterate here that all respondents in this section have both Zoroastrian parents and 99% have undergone a *navjote*ⁱ ceremony which initiates a person into the Zoroastrian religion. Given this, it was surprising to see the range of answers. Even in such a small community, there is so much variation in belief and practice.

ⁱ The *navjote* (new birth) or, as it is known in Iran, the *sudreh-pushi* (putting on the muslin undershirt) ceremony is a rite of passage in the life of a Zoroastrian. It is a religious initiation ceremony in which the initiate is invested with the *sudreh* (sacred shirt) and *kusti* (sacred girdle), becomes 'endowed with ritual agency' and responsible for their own actions. For more information about the *navjote* / *sudreh-pushi* ceremony, please see Stausberg (2000/2014).

1. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Before we asked about respondents' religious beliefs and practices, we asked if they considered themselves practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians. If they did not, how did they identify?

1.1 Practising Zoroastrians

The vast majority of respondents considered themselves practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians (91.8%).¹ Practice was high across all age groups, but it was lowest among the youngest age group (88.8% for 18-25-year-olds).² There were no variations in religious identity due to gender.³

1.1.1 Region

Across all the regions, practice was highest in South Asia. 94.4% of respondents from the region said they were a practising or semi-practising Zoroastrian compared to 89.7% of respondents from North America (Table 1).⁴

Table 1 – 'Do you consider yourself a practising, or partially practising, Zoroastrian?' by Region

	Australasia (N=243)	Europe (N=45)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1258)	South Asia (N=2199)	South East Asia (N=43)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Yes	91.8%	73.3%	77.3%	92.9%	89.7%	94.4%	93.0%	83.8%	81.8%
No	8.2%	26.7%	22.7%	7.1%	10.3%	5.6%	7.0%	16.2%	18.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

1.2 Not practising Zoroastrianism

8.2% of our respondents said they were not practising nor semi-practising Zoroastrians. For this category, we asked whether they were a) atheist, b) agnostic, c) mixed-faith d) spiritual e) belonged to a different religion. Of those respondents, 40.0% said they were spiritual, 21.4% said they were agnostic, 20.9% said they were atheist, and 9.6% said they were mixed-faith. 8.1% said they had other religious beliefs.⁵ It was interesting to note that many of the respondents who chose this option said they were religious or believed in the Zoroastrian religion but did not practise the faith.

1.2.1 Gender

Men were more likely than women to be atheist (25.6% vs 16.1%), agnostic (25.6% vs 16.8%) or have other religious beliefs (10.0% vs 6.2%). Women were more likely than men to be spiritual (50.3% vs 30.6%) or mixed-faith (10.6% vs 8.3%).⁶

1.2.2 Region

Respondents in North America were more likely to be atheist (24.4% vs 14.3%) or agnostic (21.3% vs 13.4%) compared to those in South Asia, where they were more likely to be mixed-faith (4.7% vs 16.8%) or have other religious beliefs (7.1% vs 13.4%). Respondents in both North America and South Asia were equally likely to be spiritual (42.5% vs 42.0%) (Table 2).⁷

Table 2 – ‘Do you consider yourself a practising, or partially practising, Zoroastrian?:’ by Regionⁱⁱ

	Australasia (N=20)	Europe (N=12)	Iran (N=5)	Middle East (N=5)	North America (N=127)	South Asia (N=119)	South East Asia (N=3)	United Kingdom (N=36)	Rest of the world (N=1)
Atheist	20.0%	25.0%	40.0%	20.0%	24.4%	14.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%
Agnostic	25.0%	33.3%	0.0%	20.0%	21.3%	13.4%	0.0%	36.1%	100.0%
Mixed- faith	5.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%	16.8%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Spiritual	50.0%	25.0%	60.0%	20.0%	42.5%	42.0%	100.0%	19.4%	0.0%
Religious (Other)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	7.1%	13.4%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

ⁱⁱ This question is only asked to people who have said they are not a practising, or partially practising, Zoroastrian.

2. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education is a priority for many community organisations and associations.ⁱⁱⁱ We asked respondents who had taught them about the religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) as children and how they learnt about it as adults. We then looked at their understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers and how they viewed the translation and interpretation of Zoroastrian texts by scholars who have been taught (and teach) in Western academic institutions.

2.1 Learning about the religion

Learning about Zoroastrianism may happen in childhood and beyond into adulthood. We asked participants about their religious learning at both life stages. Our survey found that only 0.6% of respondents said that they were never taught about the religion as a child, suggesting there should be a high level of religious and ritual literacy.⁸ Respondents were most likely to have been taught the religion as a child by members of their family, particularly by their mother (75.2%). Outside the family, respondents were most likely to have been taught as children by a priest (31.4%) or a teacher at a group / community religion class (28.6%). This is not surprising as priests are primarily responsible for teaching the *navjote* prayers. 12.8% said they taught themselves about the religion when they were young.^{iv}

In adulthood,^v respondents were most likely to learn about the religion through their family (66.1%) and or be self-taught (32.6%).⁹

2.1.1 Age

Respondents across all age groups were taught about the religion as children most commonly by their mother. Older respondents were more likely than any other age group to say they taught themselves as children (Table 3). Reflecting on their learning about Zoroastrianism during adulthood, younger respondents were more likely to rely on their family to learn about the religion (Table 4).

ⁱⁱⁱ The FEZANA Religious Education Committee noted on their website that ‘a consensus has emerged in North America to place religious education for children, youth, and adults as the highest priority.’ (FEZANA, 1995/2023). This is a sentiment that will be shared by many Zoroastrian communities around the world.

^{iv} Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

^v Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

Table 3 – ‘Who taught you about the Zoroastrian religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) as a child?’ by Age^{vi}

	18-25 (N=421)	26-35 (N=760)	36-45 (N=723)	46-55 (N=736)	56-65 (N=697)	66-75 (N=636)	76+ (N=337)
Mother	81.2%	77.8%	78.7%	71.6%	72.5%	72.6%	72.1%
Father	72.7%	66.3%	61.3%	55.4%	47.5%	47.2%	49.0%
A grandparent or other family member	67.0%	57.8%	60.2%	46.2%	34.9%	30.8%	32.3%
Zoroastrian friend	13.8%	9.7%	9.8%	7.6%	6.9%	4.4%	3.3%
Teacher at group / community religion classes	38.7%	38.0%	33.7%	28.8%	23.0%	17.0%	16.3%
A Mobed / Priest or Mobedyar / Behdin Pasbaan / Assistant Priest	38.5%	35.9%	28.9%	27.7%	27.8%	34.4%	27.3%
Self-taught	8.8%	8.9%	13.0%	13.6%	16.5%	13.4%	15.1%
I was never taught or learnt the prayers	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.9%
Not applicable	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%
Other	0.5%	0.8%	1.1%	1.4%	1.0%	1.4%	2.4%

Table 4 – ‘How did you learn about the religion as an adult?’ by Age^{vii}

	18-25 (N=407)	26-35 (N=751)	36-45 (N=711)	46-55 (N=719)	56-65 (N=695)	66-75 (N=627)	76+ (N=327)
Family	79.6%	72.2%	66.4%	66.2%	59.9%	59.3%	60.2%
Friends	25.8%	29.0%	26.6%	27.1%	25.3%	24.1%	20.8%
Priests	30.5%	28.5%	29.1%	29.9%	26.0%	29.3%	26.6%
Teachers / Formal education	13.8%	15.8%	14.9%	12.5%	10.8%	14.2%	14.7%
Self-taught	21.6%	27.4%	32.6%	33.4%	38.1%	36.4%	37.0%
Never taught or learned the religion as an adult	10.8%	12.6%	14.9%	12.2%	12.7%	11.6%	12.2%

^{vi} Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

^{vii} Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

2.1.2 Region

We can see how the ways in which people learnt about the religion during their childhood and adulthood varied according to region from Tables 5 and 6 below. For example, respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to be taught the religion as children by their mothers (83.5% vs 68.7%) and teachers (35.6% vs 24.8%).¹⁰

For respondents who learnt about the religion as an adult, those in South Asia were more likely to learn from family (70.9% vs 58.6%) compared to respondents in North America, who were more likely to be self-taught (37.7% vs 27.6%).¹¹

2.2 Understanding the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers

As explored in section 1.1 of this chapter, a high percentage of those who responded to our survey considered themselves to be practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians. Prayers in Zoroastrianism, which form an important part of Zoroastrian religious practice, are in the ancient Avestan language and not readily understood. Translations are available to read but most prayers are taught to children and recited in the original language.

We were interested to know whether participants had an understanding of the meaning of the prayers that they recited. Most respondents said they had some (27.7%) or basic (28.0%) understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers. More respondents said they had no understanding (18.9%) than full understanding (11.8%).¹²

2.2.1 Gender

Understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers was spread evenly across the two genders, but men were more likely to claim to have no understanding (22.3%) compared to women (15.8%).¹³

Table 5 - 'Who taught you about the Zoroastrian religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) as a child?' by Region^{viii}

	Australasia (N=243)	Europe (N=45)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1260)	South Asia (N=2199)	South East Asia (N=43)	United Kingdom (N=223)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Mother	84.8%	64.4%	81.8%	75.7%	83.5%	68.7%	76.7%	80.7%	54.5%
Father	62.6%	55.6%	59.1%	57.1%	66.4%	50.4%	58.1%	58.3%	54.5%
A grandparent or other family member	48.1%	48.9%	45.5%	58.6%	50.4%	44.8%	46.5%	50.2%	63.6%
Zoroastrian friend	10.3%	11.1%	18.2%	10.0%	8.2%	7.5%	9.3%	9.9%	0.0%
Teacher at group / community religion classes	28.8%	20.0%	45.5%	31.4%	35.6%	24.8%	20.9%	28.7%	27.3%
A Mobed / Priest or Mobedyar / Behdin Pasbaan / Assistant Priest	28.0%	28.9%	27.3%	35.7%	30.4%	32.2%	32.6%	33.2%	18.2%
Self-taught	9.9%	11.1%	36.4%	17.1%	12.9%	12.5%	9.3%	16.1%	9.1%
I was never taught or learnt the prayers	0.8%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Not applicable	0.0%	4.4%	4.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%

^{viii} Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

Table 6 – ‘How did you learn about the religion as an adult?’ by Region^{ix}

	Australasia (N=240)	Europe (N=43)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1237)	South Asia (N=2161)	South East Asia (N=43)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Family	61.3%	55.8%	45.5%	74.3%	58.6%	70.9%	60.5%	67.6%	72.7%
Friends	26.3%	20.9%	31.8%	31.4%	29.3%	23.8%	30.2%	29.7%	9.1%
Priests	21.7%	18.6%	36.4%	30.0%	28.7%	29.5%	23.3%	25.2%	18.2%
Teachers / Formal education	10.0%	16.3%	31.8%	10.0%	15.8%	13.0%	9.3%	14.9%	9.1%
Self-taught	34.6%	44.2%	54.5%	31.4%	37.7%	27.6%	44.2%	38.3%	36.4%
Never taught or learned the religion as an adult	20.0%	18.6%	13.6%	14.3%	14.9%	10.0%	18.6%	12.2%	9.1%

^{ix} Respondents were able to choose multiple answers, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%.

2.2.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely to say they had full understanding of the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers than those in North America (15.1% vs 9.2%).

Respondents in North America and South Asia were similarly aligned on the other levels of understanding (Table 7).¹⁴

Table 7 – ‘Do you understand the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=243)	Europe (N=44)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1246)	South Asia (N=2173)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Yes	6.2%	2.3%	4.5%	10.0%	9.2%	15.1%	2.3%	5.9%	27.3%
Mostly	9.9%	9.1%	36.4%	8.6%	14.8%	12.9%	13.6%	14.4%	0.0%
Some	25.5%	15.9%	36.4%	35.7%	28.8%	27.4%	27.3%	28.8%	18.2%
Basics	37.0%	34.1%	22.7%	24.3%	29.9%	25.4%	27.3%	30.2%	45.5%
None	21.4%	38.6%	0.0%	21.4%	17.2%	19.2%	29.5%	20.7%	9.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.2.3 Learnt about the religion

Respondents who fully understood the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers were the most likely to have been taught by a *mobed*/ priest as a child (47.0%) or as an adult (47.1%) (Tables 8 and 9). This could be because priests are more likely to be knowledgeable not just about the pronunciation and recitation of Zoroastrian prayers but also about their meaning, and are in a better position to pass on that knowledge in community religious classes for children and adults.

Table 8 - 'Who taught you about the Zoroastrian religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) as a child?' by 'Do you understand the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers?'

	Yes (N=504)	Mostly (N=576)	Some (N=1182)	Basics (N=1189)	None (N=802)
Mother	73.8%	77.4%	76.6%	76.4%	70.6%
Father	51.0%	62.5%	61.4%	57.0%	51.0%
A grandparent or other family member	38.9%	46.9%	51.0%	48.5%	46.0%
Zoroastrian friend	8.9%	9.9%	8.3%	7.4%	7.0%
Teacher at group / community religion classes	25.4%	35.9%	32.1%	27.5%	22.1%
A Mobed / Priest or Mobedyar / Behdin Pasbaan / Assistant Priest	47.0%	37.2%	31.6%	25.9%	25.8%
Self-taught	15.5%	18.2%	14.1%	11.0%	8.0%
I was never taught or learnt the prayers	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	1.5%
Not applicable	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Other	1.8%	1.6%	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%

Table 9 – 'How did you learn about the religion as an adult?' by 'Do you understand the meaning of Zoroastrian prayers?'

	Yes (N=499)	Mostly (N=573)	Some (N=1170)	Basics (N=1179)	None (N=798)
Family	75.4%	71.2%	70.3%	63.4%	54.4%
Friends	24.0%	27.6%	30.1%	25.9%	20.3%
Priests	47.1%	35.8%	32.3%	23.8%	13.5%
Teachers / Formal education	15.0%	21.3%	16.9%	10.9%	7.1%
Self-taught	30.5%	44.7%	35.8%	31.0%	22.4%
Never taught or learned the religion as an adult	2.8%	3.7%	7.4%	15.7%	28.2%

2.3 Translation and interpretation of Zoroastrian texts

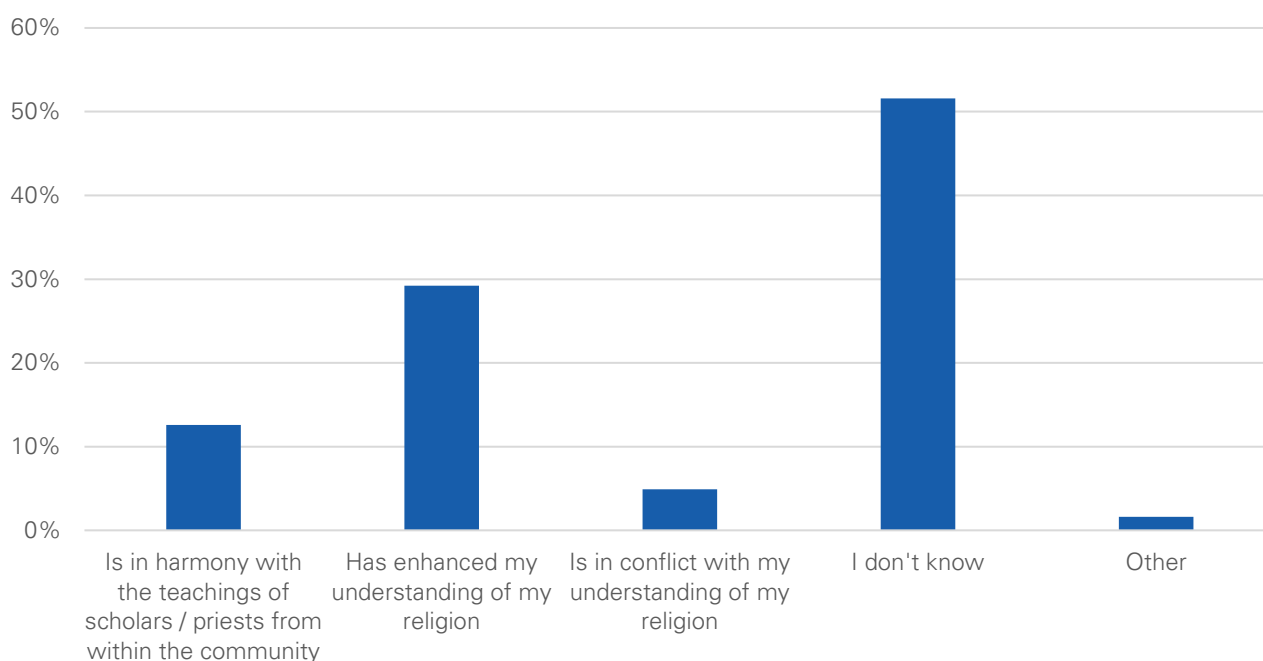
Zoroastrian religious texts were translated and interpreted by Orientalist scholars beginning in the 18th century (the survey question refers to scholars in the West). We asked respondents if these translations and interpretations were aligned with their own understanding of their faith. Only 12.6% of respondents said this input was in harmony with the teachings of scholars / priests from within the community, 29.2% said it had

enhanced their understanding of the religion, and 4.9% said it was in conflict with their understanding of the religion.¹⁵ 51.6% said they didn't know (Figure 1).^x

A few respondents who chose 'other' and added their input to this question felt that they were not fully aware about or had trouble accessing the scholarly work that had been done or was ongoing. For example, one respondent stated: "I did not know these texts were translated. The translations I have seen are so extremely complicated to understand." Another respondent said, "It's hard to say as we don't always have access to these texts and we can't compare them to Parsi/Iranian scholarly interpretations."

Other respondents felt that the meaning of the texts got lost in translation. One respondent stated that a "direct translation without a spiritual realisation distorts the text converted". For example, one respondent stated that they felt ambivalent, and while Western scholarship has "increased our understanding of the religion and its philosophy... their [Western scholars'] lack of understanding of the culture and misinterpretations have also given a skewed view of Zarathushtra's subtle and nuanced philosophy".

Figure 1 – 'Zoroastrian religious texts have been translated and interpreted by scholars from the West since the 18th century. Do you think this input:'^{xi}



^x Respondents who chose 'Not applicable' have been excluded from our analysis

^{xi} Respondents could choose only one option.

2.3.1 Socio-religious identity

Almost a third of all conservatives, moderates and liberals stated that the Western translations and interpretations of Zoroastrian religious texts had enhanced their understanding of their religion. However, there was some disagreement across socio-religious identities with regards to whether these translations and interpretations were in harmony or in conflict with teachings of scholars/priests from the community and with respondents' own understanding of their religion. Conservatives were more likely than the other groups to say the translation and interpretation of Zoroastrian texts by scholars in the West was in harmony with the teachings of scholars / priests from within the community (24.9% conservatives vs 14.6% moderates vs 7.3% liberals). Conservatives were also more likely than the other groups to say this knowledge was in conflict (8.4%) with their understanding of their religion. Liberals were the most likely of all the groups to say they didn't know (57.5%).¹⁶

3. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

In the following section we assess respondents' level of religious activity. Would it be impacted by limited and/or informal religious education? We first asked respondents about the importance of Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices, followed by their adherence to them.

3.1 Importance of Zoroastrian religious rituals and cultural practices

Religious rituals and cultural practices range from ceremonies performed by priests inside fire temples to domestic rituals performed in the home by lay people. The majority of respondents said Zoroastrian rituals and practices were very or quite important to them (58.4%). Only 5.1% said they were not at all important.¹⁷

3.1.1 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than those in North America to say rituals were very important to them (36.5% vs 22.6%). Those in North America were more likely to say rituals and practices were moderately (29.6% vs 22.4%) and slightly (15.5% vs 7.6%) important to them. Respondents in North America and South Asia were similarly likely to say Zoroastrian religious and cultural rituals and practices were quite (27.0% vs 29.2%) and not at all (5.3% vs 4.3%) important to them (Table 10).¹⁸

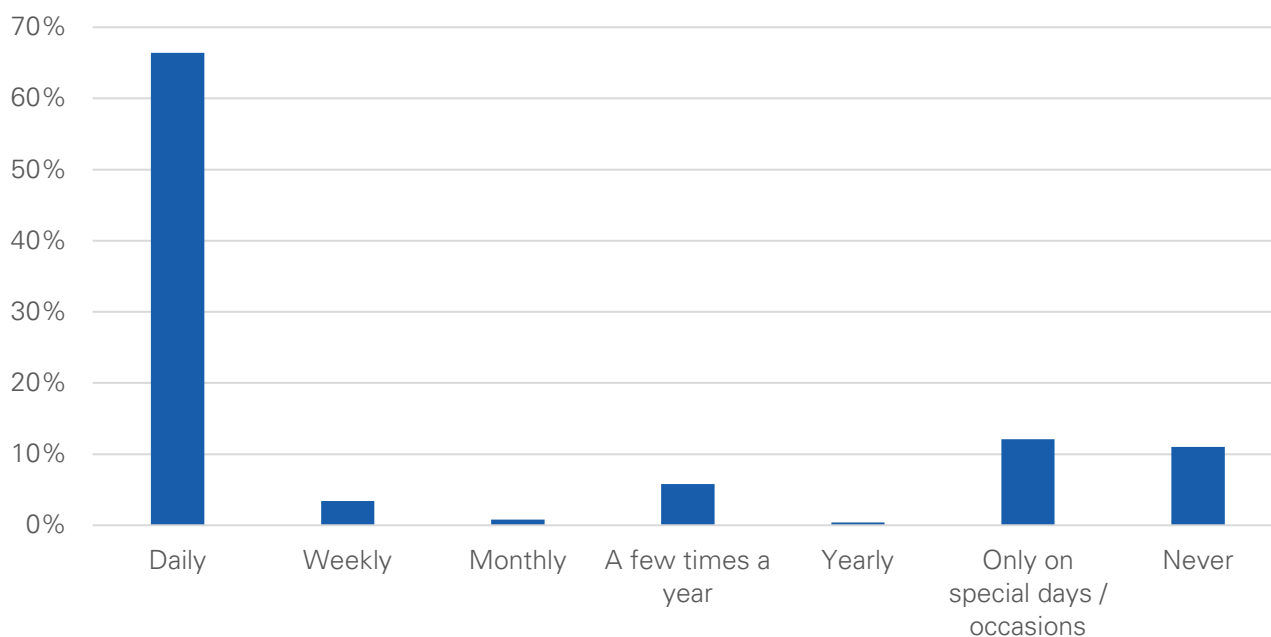
3.1.2 Children

There were no substantial variations between respondents with and without children.¹⁹

3.2 Basic *kusti* ritual

The *kusti* ritual^{xii} is the foundational religious ritual that is performed by a Zoroastrian after their *navjote* ceremony. 66.4% of respondents did the *kusti* ritual daily, 12.1% did it only on special days / occasions, 11.0% never did it, 5.8% did it a few times a year, and 3.4% did it weekly (Figure 2).²⁰

Figure 2 – ‘How often do you perform your basic *kusti* prayer ritual?’



3.2.1 Age

The older age groups were more likely to perform the *kusti* ritual daily compared to the younger generation. The younger age groups were more likely to perform it weekly, monthly, a few times a year, yearly, and only on special occasions. Those who never do it were spread out evenly across the age groups.²¹

3.2.2 Gender

Men were more likely than women to perform the *kusti* ritual daily (71.9% vs 61.1%). Women were more likely than men to perform it a few times a year (7.5% vs 4.1%) and only on special days / occasions (14.8% vs 9.3%). Men and women are equally likely never to perform it (11.9% vs 10.1%).²²

^{xii} The *kusti* is a ‘sacred cord’ that is wrapped around the waist three times and tied with two reef knots, one at the front and one at the back. The *kusti* ritual, the untying and retying of the cord whilst reciting prayers should be performed five times a day. The *kusti* protects the wearer from evil and impurity. The ritual renews its efficacy after, for example, going to the toilet. This strict form of practice is not followed for most lay persons today. For more information on the *kusti*, see Choksy and Kotwal (2014).

3.2.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to perform the *kusti* ritual daily (78.3% vs 51.7%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to perform it a few times a year (7.0% vs 4.6%), only on special days/occasions (17.3% vs 8.2%) and never perform it (18.2% vs 5.6%) (Table 11).²³

Table 11 - 'How often do you perform your basic *kusti* prayer ritual?' by Region

	Australasia (N=242)	Europe (N=43)	Iran (N=19)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1223)	South Asia (N=2186)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=220)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Daily	61.2%	41.9%	26.3%	74.3%	51.7%	78.3%	56.8%	46.8%	54.5%
Weekly	7.0%	4.7%	0.0%	2.9%	3.8%	2.6%	0.0%	6.4%	0.0%
Monthly	0.4%	2.3%	10.5%	0.0%	1.1%	0.5%	2.3%	1.4%	0.0%
A few times a year	6.2%	16.3%	10.5%	4.3%	7.0%	4.6%	13.6%	7.3%	9.1%
Yearly	0.4%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Only on special days / occasions	12.8%	14.0%	26.3%	12.9%	17.3%	8.2%	18.2%	16.8%	18.2%
Never	12.0%	20.9%	21.1%	5.7%	18.2%	5.6%	9.1%	21.4%	18.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.2.4 Children

Respondents with children were more likely to perform the *kusti* ritual daily (70.0% vs 60.3%). Respondents without children were more likely than those with children to perform the *kusti* at all other intervals, including never (13.5 vs 9.7%).²⁴

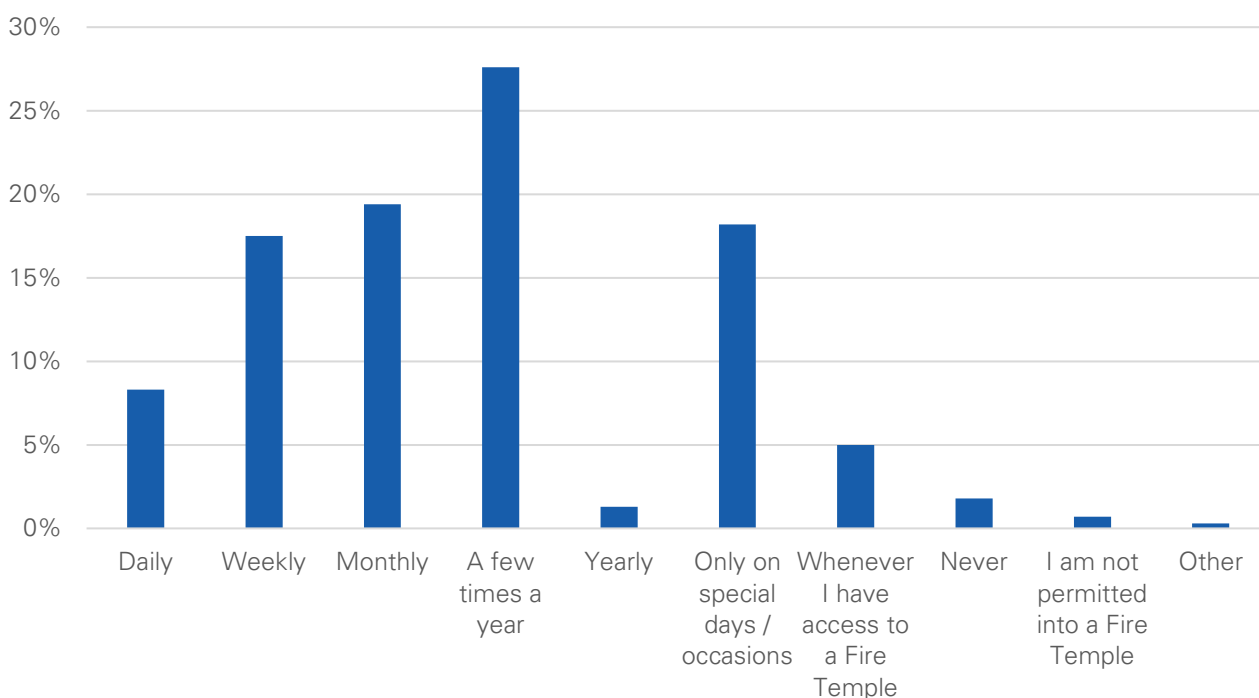
3.3 Worship in a fire temple

There are three grades of fires that are housed in fire temples: the *atash behram*, *atash ādarān* and *atash dādgāh*.^{xiii} The first and highest grade of fire, the *atash behram*, is created using fires from 16 different sources and its consecration using complex ritual ceremonies can take over a year. There are only nine *atash behram* fire temples in the world, one in Iran and eight in India. The second grade of fire, the *atash ādarān*, is created using fires from four different sources and is consecrated within a period of eight weeks. There are over 60 *atash ādarān* fire temples in Iran and South Asia (India and Pakistan). The third grade of fire, the *atash dādgāh*, does not require any consecration ceremonies and this fire may be lit in the prayer hall or room in a community centre.

Only 4.6% of respondents worshipped in a fire temple daily. 19.8% worshipped a few times a year, 15.0% worshipped only on special days / occasions, 11.6% worshipped monthly, 30.7% worshipped whenever they had access to a fire temple, and 5.4% never worshipped in a fire temple.²⁵

As consecrated fire temples are situated in South Asia and Iran, to find out more about practice of worship in a fire temple we filtered by location first to include respondents in South Asia and Iran only (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – ‘How often do you worship in a Fire Temple?’ (South Asia and Iran only)²⁶



^{xiii} For a full list Zoroastrian fire temples and places of worship around the world see Giara (1998/2002).

3.3.1 Age

8.3% of respondents in South Asia and Iran worshipped at the fire temple daily. However, 18-25-year-olds were the most likely to worship daily (9.9%), possibly because they were still living at home and encouraged by their parents to worship regularly. This figure was closely followed by 46-55-year-olds (9.8%), possibly because they were trying to set a positive example for their young children to follow. Middle-aged respondents (46-65) were the most likely to worship in a fire temple a few times a year (31.9%), while older respondents (66+) went only on special occasions (23.9%).²⁷ This was surprising to us but could be because older respondents found it more convenient to worship at home. Only 1.8% of respondents from South Asia and Iran said they never worship in a fire temple.

3.3.2 Gender

Men were more likely to worship in a fire temple daily (11.7% vs 4.5%) compared to women in South Asia and Iran. Women were more likely to worship monthly, a few times a year and only on special occasions.²⁸

3.3.3 Location of home

Those living in a *baug* were much more likely to worship in a fire temple daily (11.0% vs 3.4%) and weekly (21.0% vs 7.9%) compared to those who live in predominantly non-Zoroastrian neighbourhoods in South Asia and Iran. Having proximity to the fire temple was associated with regular worship.²⁹

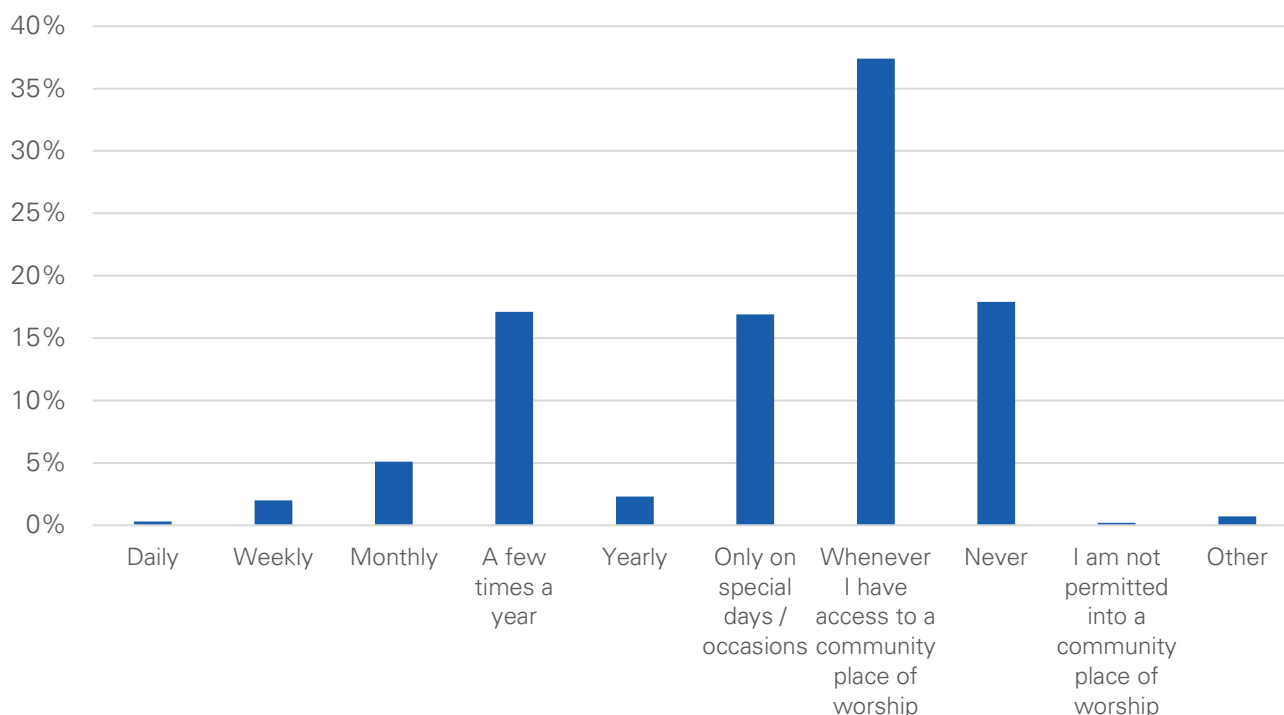
3.4 Worship in a community place of worship

Community places of worship are community centres with prayer halls housing an *atash dādgāh* fire. These are multi-purpose centres for community members of all ages to gather, celebrate events and festivals, and worship under one roof. Recently, communities in the diaspora have taken on full-time priests to cater to the needs of their community members. For example, the UK has two full-time priests and Hong Kong has one.

Respondents were most likely to visit a community place of worship whenever they had access to one (24.3%), a few times a year (20.4%), or never (17.5%).³⁰

As community places of worship were most likely to be outside South Asia and Iran, we filtered the following by respondents only in the diaspora (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – ‘How often do you worship in a community place of worship?’ (excluding South Asia and Iran)³¹



3.4.1 Age

Respondents were most likely to worship in a community place of worship whenever they had access to one (36.8%). Older respondents (76+ year-olds) were most likely to go only on special occasions. Respondents aged 36-45 were the most likely to attend monthly (6.6%).³² This could be because they were young parents who attend monthly religious classes with their children. We found that 9.7% of respondents in this age group who had children attended monthly, compared to only 1.1% of those without children.³³

3.4.2 Region

Overall, regular attendance was low, and across the regions most said they worshipped whenever they had access to a place of worship. Since these are community centres rather than fire temples, the opportunity to worship there is limited to occasions when there is a religious ceremony such as a *jashn*. In some community centres there is a prayer room with a fire that is lit whenever religious rituals are performed. The fact that there is not an ever-burning fire perhaps explains why, for example, in the UK, where there are two community centres, respondents were more likely to never worship there (23.9%) (Table 12).³⁴

Table 12 – ‘How often do you worship in a community place of worship?’ by Region (excluding South Asia and Iran)

	Australasia (N=244)	Europe (N=43)	Middle East (N=68)	North America (N=1247)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Daily	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Weekly	2.0%	0.0%	4.4%	1.9%	4.5%	1.4%	0.0%
Monthly	5.7%	0.0%	1.5%	5.9%	4.5%	2.3%	0.0%
A few times a year	18.4%	2.3%	7.4%	18.6%	29.5%	11.3%	9.1%
Yearly	1.6%	11.6%	4.4%	2.1%	6.8%	1.4%	0.0%
Only on special days / occasions	15.2%	7.0%	2.9%	17.6%	15.9%	20.7%	18.2%
Whenever I have access to a community place of worship	40.6%	44.2%	51.5%	36.2%	22.7%	36.9%	45.5%
Never	15.6%	34.9%	20.6%	16.6%	15.9%	23.9%	27.3%
I am not permitted into a community place of worship	0.4%	0.0%	1.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Other	0.4%	0.0%	5.9%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.5 Purity laws

Purity laws in Zoroastrianism refer to the spiritual or cosmic as well as the physical.^{xiv} The latter include separation during menstruation and disposing of hair and nail clippings in the correct manner. Purity laws were observed by 48.6% of respondents.³⁵ 40.8% said they did not observe any purity laws and 10.6% said they were not aware of any.^{xv}

3.5.1 Age

Apart from the oldest age group (76+), observance of purity laws was fairly even across the age groups. Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to be unaware of purity laws. For example, 20.7% of 18-25-year-olds said they were not aware of any purity laws compared to only 10.2% of 76+ year-olds.³⁶

^{xiv} All dead matter is considered a source of pollution in Zoroastrianism. For more information, please see Boyce (1992/2012).

^{xv} Respondents who selected ‘Not applicable’ to this question have been excluded from our analysis.

3.5.2 Gender

Both genders had equal levels of non-observance but women were more likely than men to observe purity laws (50.8% vs 46.3%). Although this isn't a big margin, this difference is likely due to the fact that purity laws have a greater impact on women than men (menstruation, childbirth, etc.).³⁷

3.5.3 Region

Observance was much higher in South Asia compared to North America (58.5% vs 35.6%). It was also quite high in Australasia (45.6%), possibly because migration to that part of the world, especially to New Zealand, was comparatively recent and respondents there had held onto traditional practices more than in other regions (Table 13).³⁸

Table 13 – 'Do you observe any traditional purity laws?' by Region

	Australasia (N=241)	Europe (N=43)	Iran (N=20)	Middle East (N=67)	North America (N=1212)	South Asia (N=2111)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=216)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Yes	45.6%	23.3%	55.0%	56.7%	35.6%	58.5%	27.3%	36.1%	45.5%
No	47.7%	53.5%	40.0%	31.3%	52.7%	31.3%	61.4%	52.8%	45.5%
I am not aware of any purity laws	6.6%	23.3%	5.0%	11.9%	11.7%	10.2%	11.4%	11.1%	9.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.6 Preferred funeral practice

There has been some controversy about funeral practices in India, where *dokhmeneshni* is still performed.^{xvi} It was abandoned in Iran some 40 years ago and there are no *dakhmas* in the diaspora. It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss the controversy on who can and cannot be consigned to the *dakhma* and the use of other modes of disposal, but we wanted to know if the controversy had had an impact on respondents and what would be respondents' preferred funeral practices if they had the choice.^{xvii}

In this study, we found that 49.5% of respondents preferred *dokhmeneshni* (in theory if not practice), 38.3% preferred cremation and 6.9% preferred burial.³⁹ Many of the 5.3% of

^{xvi} *Dokhmeneshni* is a mode of disposal of the dead whereby the corpse is laid in a *dakhma* or Tower of Silence, a raised, circular building, to be exposed to the rays of the sun and consumed by carrion birds.

^{xvii} For an explanation of this controversy, see Vevaina (2013).

respondents who preferred other funeral practices said they wanted to donate their organs or “donate [their] body to science (research, education, etc)”. There was also a preference for eco-burials which is, as explained by one respondent, “a decomposable pod that turns the body into a tree”.

3.6.1 Age

Younger respondents were much more likely to prefer *dokhmeneshni* (55.1% of 18-25-year-olds) compared to older respondents, who were much more likely to prefer cremation (58.1% of 76+ preferred cremation). Those aged 36-45 were the most likely to prefer *dokhmeneshni* (57.4%). We wondered if this trend was regional so looked at South Asia and North America individually. The pattern remains for both, although it is less pronounced in South Asia and more pronounced in North America.⁴⁰ Although least popular in general, burial was more popular with younger rather than older respondents (Table 14).

Table 14 – ‘Which funeral practice would you prefer for yourself if you had the choice?’ by Age

	18-25 (N=396)	26-35 (N=733)	36-45 (N=692)	46-55 (N=712)	56-65 (N=690)	66-75 (N=621)	76+ (N=329)
<i>Dokhmeneshni</i> / Tower of Silence	55.1%	54.3%	57.4%	49.2%	49.3%	40.6%	33.7%
Cremation	28.3%	32.3%	29.6%	38.2%	40.4%	49.0%	58.1%
Burial	10.9%	8.0%	7.4%	6.7%	7.2%	3.9%	3.6%
Other	5.8%	5.3%	5.6%	5.9%	3.0%	6.6%	4.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.6.2 Gender

Men were more likely than women to prefer *dokhmeneshni* (54.7% vs 44.6%). Women were more likely than men to prefer cremation (42.9% vs 33.7%) and burial (7.6% vs 6.2%).⁴¹

3.6.3 Region

It was unsurprising that respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America (or any other region) to prefer *dokhmeneshni* (67.3% vs 26.5%).

Respondents in North America were the most likely to prefer cremation (59.2%), while those in South Asia and Iran were the least likely (22.3% and 20.0%, respectively).

Respondents in North America and South Asia were similarly likely to prefer burial (7.4% vs 6.4%) (Table 15).⁴²

In his study on diaspora Zoroastrians, Hinnells (2005, p. 142) found that 'only 19% said that they wanted a funeral at a Tower of Silence, compared with 47% who preferred cremation. Only 8% preferred burial.' When we excluded respondents from India and Iran from our data, we found that 30.9% preferred a funeral at a Tower of Silence, 54.3% preferred cremation and 8.5% preferred burial.⁴³

Table 15 – 'Which funeral practice would you prefer for yourself if you had the choice?' by Region

	Australasia (N=241)	Europe (N=44)	Iran (N=20)	Middle East (N=66)	North America (N=1222)	South Asia (N=2127)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=215)	Rest of the world (N=10)
<i>Dokhmeneshni</i> / Tower of Silence	30.7%	36.4%	35.0%	59.1%	26.5%	67.3%	43.2%	32.6%	10.0%
Cremation	56.8%	45.5%	20.0%	31.8%	59.2%	22.3%	45.5%	55.3%	50.0%
Burial	6.2%	4.5%	40.0%	7.6%	7.4%	6.4%	11.4%	6.0%	30.0%
Other	6.2%	13.6%	5.0%	1.5%	6.9%	4.0%	0.0%	6.0%	10.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

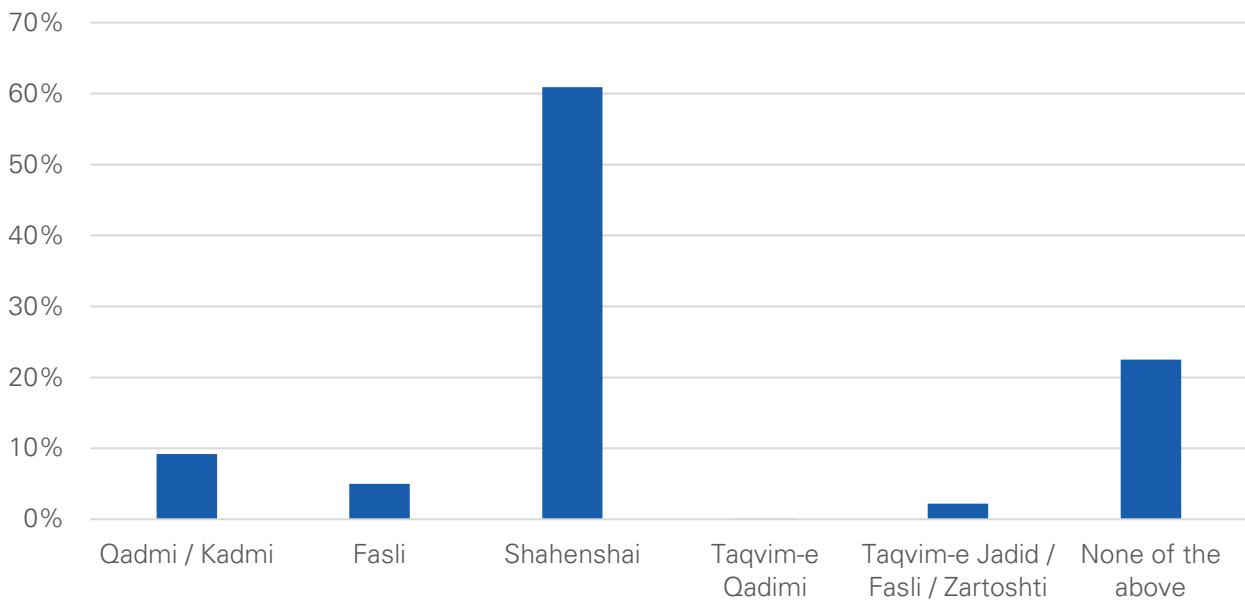
3.7 Events celebrated

Zoroastrians around the world use various calendars to mark their religious days and celebrate cultural festivals.^{xviii}

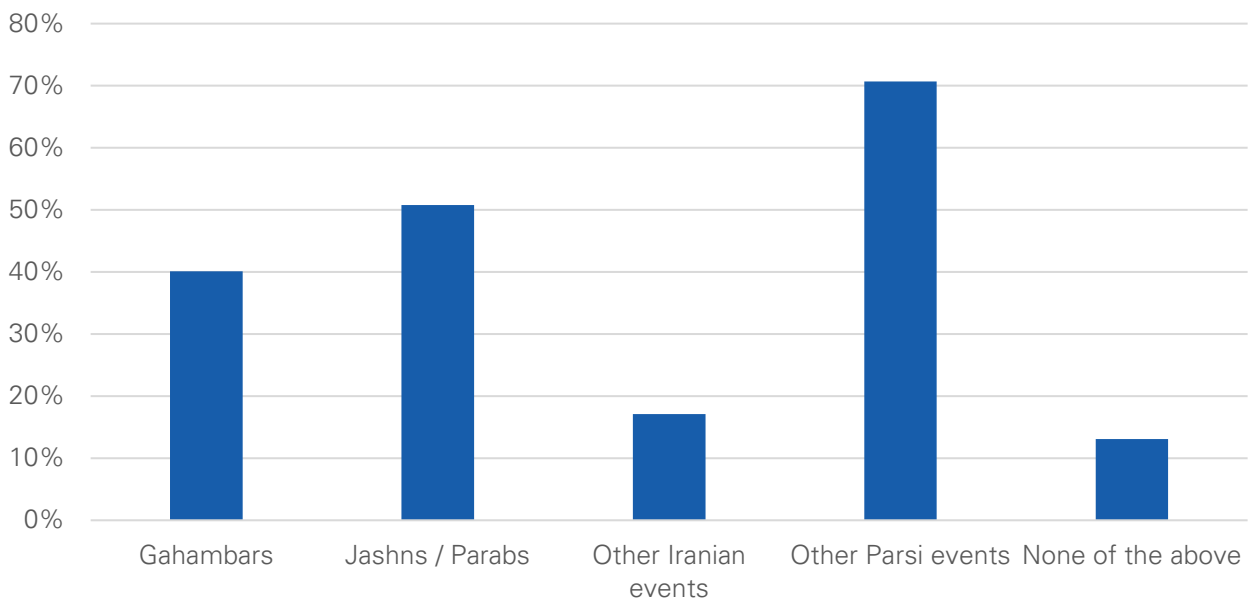
Of the Parsi calendars, 60.9% of respondents observed Shahenshai calendar, 9.2% observed Qadmi / Kadmi and 5.0% observed Fasli. Of the Iranian calendars, 0.1% observed Taqvim-e Qadimi, 2.2% observed Taqvim-e Jadid / Fasli / Zartoshti and 22.5% said they did not observe any Zoroastrian calendar (Figure 5).⁴⁴

^{xviii} To learn more about ancient and modern Zoroastrian calendars see Panaino, Abdollahy, & Balland (1990).

Figure 5 – ‘Which Zoroastrian calendar do you observe?’



We asked respondents which events they celebrated. 40.1% said they celebrated *gahambars*, 50.8% celebrated *jashns* and *parabs*, 17.1% celebrated other Iranian festivals, 70.7% celebrated other Parsi festivals and 13.1% did not observe any (Figure 6).⁴⁵

Figure 6 – ‘Which of these events do you celebrate / observe?’^{xix}

^{xix} Respondents were able to select multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

3.7.1 Age

All events were celebrated evenly across the age groups. Younger respondents were more likely than those older to not celebrate anything.⁴⁶

3.7.2 Gender

Men celebrated *gahambars* more than women (43.3% vs 37.2%) but otherwise all events were celebrated equally between the genders.⁴⁷

3.7.3 Region

The UK and Europe had the highest levels of respondents who did not celebrate religious festivals (19.6% and 25.0%). Respondents in Australasia were mostly likely to celebrate *gahambars* (53.9%). Outside Iran, North America had the highest level of celebration for Iranian events.⁴⁸ Tables showing the regional variations of where the religious days and cultural events were observed and celebrated are in Appendix – Religious Beliefs and Practices, Tables 50-54.⁴⁹

3.8 Non-Zoroastrian customs and religious practice

We have already discussed how Zoroastrians are well integrated within their host communities. Both Hinnells^{xx} in 2005 and Bharat and Desai^{xxi} in 2017 noted that some Zoroastrians had faith in other religions. When we asked respondents if they observed the customs and religious practices of other religions, 12.3% said yes, 26.6% said occasionally, and 61.2% said no.⁵⁰ Of those who answered 'yes' and 'occasionally', 79.2% observed Hindu customs, 15.9% observed Muslim customs, 59.4% observed Christian customs, and 9.7% observed Buddhist customs (Table 16).

^{xx} Hinnells (2005, p. 142) noted of his respondents' religious practices that 'not all of the religious practice was strictly Zoroastrian, so 14% said that they venerated Sai Baba, and 3% also venerated Jalaram Bapa and St Francis Xavier.'

^{xxi} Bharat and Desai (Eds.) (2017, p. 287) noted that 'some Zoroastrians also tend to turn to other religions besides following their own. In the family study, more than half of the respondents, 59% (654) said they had faith in other religions and over two-thirds, 67.8% (748) had religious symbols such as idols and books of other faiths in their homes.'

Table 16 – ‘Which other customs or religious practices do you observe?’ by ‘Do you observe any customs or religious practices of other religions?’^{xxii}

	Yes (N=455)	Occasionally (N=982)	Total (N=1437)
Hindu	77.4%	80.0%	79.2%
Muslim	22.9%	12.7%	15.9%
Christian	60.7%	58.8%	59.4%
Buddhist	9.7%	9.7%	9.7%
Other	5.9%	5.4%	5.6%

Many respondents who chose ‘other’ said they respected all religions. For example, one respondent stated, “I respect all religions and I know certain prayers of other religions too. And on and off visit their temples, churches, or mosques whenever I feel like visiting.” For another respondent, it was more about being a part of the local community, as they said they “have been celebrating some of the main events that local community observe”. There was also a spirituality aspect to some of the responses. For example, one respondent said they believed in a “higher consciousness wherein religion is all one. Energy vibration flow into oneness.” Some other popular responses were Meher Baba, Sai Baba, Judaism and Sikhism.

3.8.1 Gender

Men were more likely never to observe non-Zoroastrian customs and religious practice compared to women (65.6% vs 57.2%).⁵¹ Of those who did, women were more likely to observe Christian customs (61.2% vs 56.9%), while men more likely to observe Muslim customs (17.8% vs 14.5%). Hindu and Buddhist customs and practices were observed equally by both genders.⁵²

3.8.2 Region

Compared to Bharat’s (2017) study, observance of customs or religious practices in the South Asia region of our study was relatively low. Only 39.7.9% of respondents in South Asia said they observed (regularly and occasionally) customs or religious practices of other religions. This is similar to respondents in North America (38.2%). Observance, occasional observance, and no observance was spread evenly across the regions.⁵³ The host community had some influence on the non-Zoroastrian religious practice of respondents, as those in South Asia were more likely to observe Hindu religious practices and those in North America were more likely to observe Christian religious practices. What was

^{xxii} Respondents were able to select multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

interesting was respondents in Australasia and the UK were more likely to observe Hindu rather than Christian religious practices (Table 17).

Table 17 – ‘Which other customs or religious practices do you observe?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=74)	Europe (N=12)	Iran (N=2)	Middle East (N=28)	North America (N=414)	South Asia (N=756)	South East Asia (N=16)	United Kingdom (N=73)	Rest of the world (N=5)
Hindu	75.7%	58.3%	50.0%	89.3%	63.0%	89.8%	87.5%	68.5%	80.0%
Muslim	18.9%	8.3%	50.0%	32.1%	10.9%	18.1%	0.0%	12.3%	20.0%
Christian	66.2%	75.0%	100.0%	75.0%	72.9%	49.2%	68.8%	67.1%	60.0%
Buddhist	10.8%	25.0%	0.0%	10.7%	10.4%	8.5%	6.3%	11.0%	0.0%
Other	8.1%	25.0%	0.0%	7.1%	6.3%	4.5%	0.0%	8.2%	20.0%

3.8.3 Ethnicity of partner

Respondents with non-Zoroastrian partners were more likely to say they observed customs or religious practices of other religions regularly (18.5% vs 11.1%) and occasionally (32.1% vs 26.1%) compared to respondents with Zoroastrian partners. 49.3% of those partnered with non-Zoroastrians observed only Zoroastrian practices as compared to 62.8% of those partnered with Zoroastrian partners.⁵⁴ The difference between these two numbers demonstrates that partnering with a non-Zoroastrian is associated with a higher likelihood of observing customs and practices from other religions, as traditions from both partners may be shared in a relationship.

4. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

4.1 *Navjote* ceremony

We asked respondents whether they thought the *navjote* ceremony was necessary for a) a Zoroastrian religious identity alone, b) an ethno-cultural identity only, c) both, or d) neither. 36.6% said Zoroastrian religious identity only, 7.7% said ethnocultural identity only, 46.4% said both, 5.6% said neither, and 3.7% said they didn't know.⁵⁵

4.1.1 Age

Younger respondents were more likely to believe that a *navjote* ceremony was necessary for both a religious and ethnocultural identity than older respondents, who were more likely

to believe that the *navjote* ceremony was necessary for a Zoroastrian religious identity only (Table 18).

Table 18 – ‘For which of the following do you believe a *navjote* / *sudreh-push*i ceremony is necessary?’ by Age

	18-25 (N=421)	26-35 (N=759)	36-45 (N=719)	46-55 (N=731)	56-65 (N=696)	66-75 (N=636)	76+ (N=335)
A Zoroastrian religious identity	29.7%	30.7%	35.0%	36.3%	39.8%	42.5%	44.5%
A Zarthoshty / Iranian Zoroastrian or Irani or Parsi ethnocultural identity	7.8%	9.0%	7.8%	6.4%	8.3%	7.2%	7.2%
Both	50.8%	47.8%	46.2%	48.7%	45.4%	43.2%	40.9%
Neither	6.4%	6.3%	7.0%	5.2%	4.2%	5.3%	4.5%
I don't know	5.2%	6.2%	4.0%	3.4%	2.3%	1.7%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.1.2 Region

Respondents in South Asia and North America were equally likely to believe a *navjote* was needed for both a religious and ethno-cultural identity (46.6% vs 45.6%). Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to believe that a *navjote* was needed for a religious identity only (39.7% vs 32.4%) and an ethnocultural identity only (8.4% vs 6.1%) (Table 19).⁵⁶

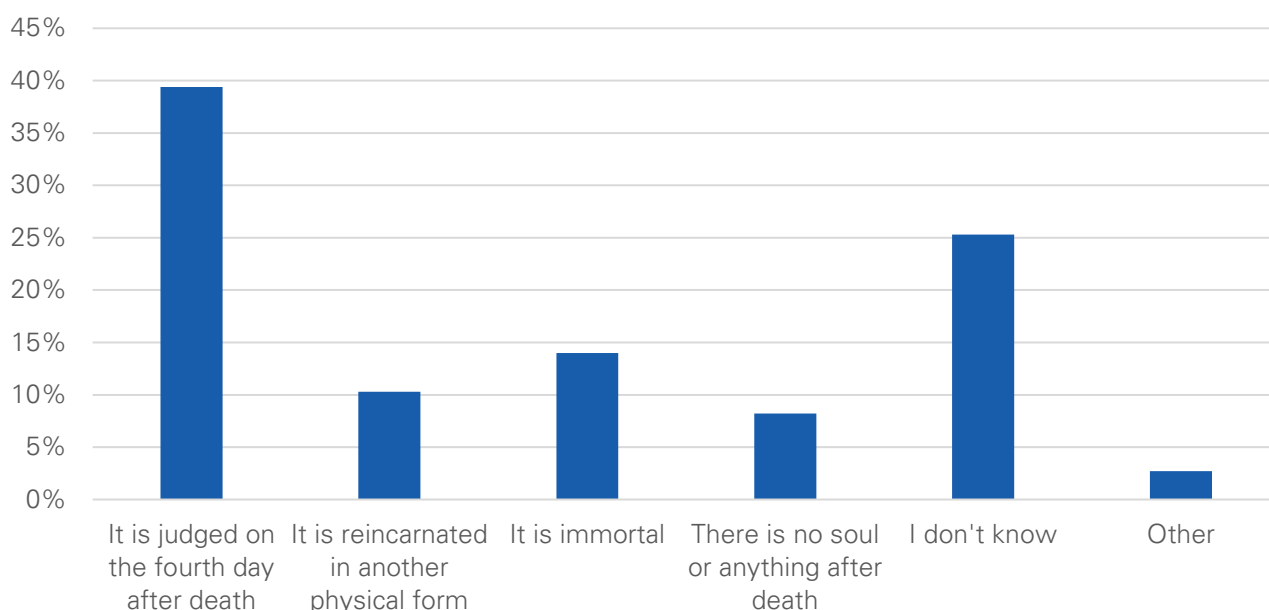
4.1.3 Children

Respondents with children were more likely than those without to believe that a *navjote* was needed for a religious identity (39.2% vs 31.9%). Respondents without children were more likely to believe that a *navjote* was needed for neither a religious nor an ethno-cultural identity, or to say that they didn't know.⁵⁷

4.2 Soul at death

Zoroastrian eschatology has influenced respondents' religious beliefs and practices, as we found in the Philanthropy section of the following chapter on Aspirations. We asked our respondents what they believed happened to the soul at death. 39.4% held the traditional Zoroastrian belief that the soul is judged on the fourth day after death and goes to heaven or hell before the final judgement at the end of time. 14.0% said the soul is immortal, 10.3% said it is reincarnated in another physical form, 8.2% said there was no soul or anything after death, 25.3% said they didn't know, and 2.7% said other (Figure 7).⁵⁸

Figure 7 – 'What do you think happens to the soul at death?'^{xxiii}



4.2.1 Age

There was little variation in age for respondents who held the traditional Zoroastrian beliefs. Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to believe the soul was reincarnated in another physical form. Older respondents were more likely to believe the soul was immortal.⁵⁹

^{xxiii} The first complete answer option is: 'It is judged on the fourth day after death and goes to heaven or hell before the final judgement at the end of time'.

4.2.2 Gender

Men and women were similarly likely to believe in the traditional Zoroastrian view (38.2% vs 40.6%). They were also similarly likely to say that the soul was reincarnated in another physical form (9.6% vs 10.9%). Men were more likely than women to believe there is no soul or anything after death (10.0% vs 6.6%) or say that they didn't know (28.0% vs 22.8%).⁶⁰

4.2.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to believe in the traditional Zoroastrian belief (46.1% vs 29.8%). Respondents in North America were more likely not to believe in a soul or anything after death (11.0% vs 5.7%) or say they didn't know (26.9% vs 20.7%). Respondents in North America and South Asia had similar levels of belief in reincarnation (9.6% vs 10.9%) and the immortal soul (15.9% vs 12.8%) (Table 20).⁶¹

4.3 Authority in religious disputes

At the time of writing, the Zoroastrian community has five High Priests and each Zoroastrian community Association around the world has a group of community leaders. Traditionally, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), as the largest and wealthiest Trust, were the de facto leaders in India. We asked our respondents whose opinion they believed was most important when religious disputes arose. 33.4% of respondents said priests (including high priests) and 11.1% said local association leaders (non-priestly). 34.7% said not applicable, implying that many people chose not to get involved. 20.8% gave other options, saying, for example, that they trust their family's opinions or the people who are most knowledgeable about the issue at hand.⁶² Many respondents also stated that they would make up their own minds about religious disputes. To us, this highlights a low level of engagement with ongoing community matters as respondents did not appear to view established community authorities as points of reference to resolve religious disputes within the community. For example, one respondent stated:

“My understanding of Zoroastrianism is that interpretations are up to the individual more than anything. My opinion and interpretation is what matters most. Priests can suggest and guide, but in the end, I choose how I live and practice my religion.”

Does this aspect of independent thought have its roots in Zoroastrian scripture? As one respondent noted, “One has to use one's *vohu manah* to find the solutions - so it may be a combination of sources.”

4.3.1 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to say that priests were the ultimate authority in religious disputes (40.6% vs 24.3%). Respondents in North America were more likely than respondents in South Asia to give other options (26.0% vs 14.8%). Both regions were similarly likely to place importance on the opinions of local association leaders (11.6% vs 11.5%) (Table 21).⁶³

Table 21 – ‘When religious disputes arise, whose opinion do you believe is most important?’ by Region^{xxiv}

	Australasia (N=240)	Europe (N=44)	Iran (N=19)	Middle East (N=65)	North America (N=1219)	South Asia (N=2116)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=212)	Rest of the world (N=10)
Priests	26.7%	13.6%	36.8%	44.6%	24.3%	40.6%	34.1%	21.7%	30.0%
Local association leaders	12.5%	6.8%	21.1%	9.2%	11.6%	11.5%	9.1%	7.1%	0.0%
Not applicable	35.4%	40.9%	31.6%	24.6%	38.1%	33.0%	27.3%	35.8%	30.0%
Other	25.4%	38.6%	10.5%	21.5%	26.0%	14.8%	29.5%	35.4%	40.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.3.2 Socio-religious identity

Respondents who described their socio-religious identity as conservative were the most likely to believe the opinions of priests are most important in a religious dispute (60.0%). This figure was lower for respondents who identified as moderate (42.7%) and far lower for those who had a liberal identity (17.9%).⁶⁴

5. PRIESTHOOD

Since the middle of the 19th century, in both Iran and India, there has been a steady decline in the number of young men wishing to undergo training for the priesthood. Better education, the growth of the middle classes, the move from rural to urban centres, plus greater professional opportunities were factors in this decline since the priesthood was, and remains, a poorly paid profession. In India, the priesthood is a hereditary calling.

^{xxiv} In the answer options, ‘Priests’ are specified as including high priests, and ‘Local association leaders’ are specified as being non-priestly.

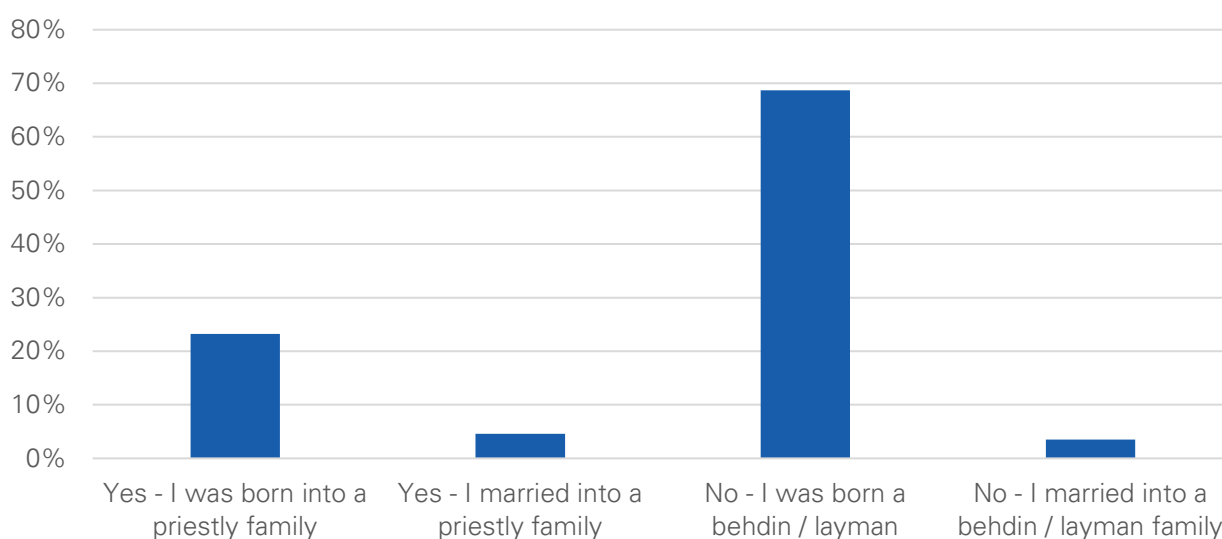
Priestly training at a madrassa is for boys born into a priestly family (*oosta*). Female members of priestly families are known as *oosti*. Laymen, known as *behdin*, are permitted only to train as assistant priests, *mobedyar*.

In Iran, hereditary practising priests are now very few. In 2018 there were only 12 out of 57 working priests who were of hereditary calling, *mobedzadeh*, and only one training for the priesthood. Today, the performance of religious rituals and ceremonies is carried out mainly by laymen trained as *mobedyars*. This development took place during the 1970s when the Mobedan Council (Tehran *Anjoman-e Mobedan*) decided to increase the number of priests by training members of the laity, who until then had not been eligible by birthright: 'The old *mowbeds* who can perform the ceremonies could not explain the Zarathushti religion to the visitors [at the fire temples], so there was a need for young, well-trained priests. I recall the young, eager *mowbedyars* in those days answered the need to give a good overview of the Zarathushti religion.'^{xxv} The creation of the category of *mobedyars*, in Iran, opened the way for women to be admitted to the priesthood. The first eight female *mobedyars* were ordained in 2011 and were welcomed by some in India, while being rejected by others. This study looks into how many respondents born into a priestly family decide to become full-time priests and explores the reasons why many do not.

5.1 Born into a priestly family

Of our respondents, 23.2% were born into a priestly family.⁶⁵ 4.6% married into a priestly family, 68.7% were *behdin* / laymen, and 3.5% married into a *behdin* / layman family (Figure 8).^{xxvi}

Figure 8 – 'Are you from a priestly family?'



^{xxv} Vahidi (2010, p. 55) in Stewart (2018, p. 22).

^{xxvi} Respondents who selected 'Not applicable' to this question have been excluded from our analysis.

5.1.1 Region

25.8% of respondents in North America and 22.0% of respondents in South Asia were born into a priestly family (Table 22).⁶⁶

Table 22 – ‘Are you from a priestly family?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=225)	Europe (N=41)	Iran (N=18)	Middle East (N=68)	North America (N=1122)	South Asia (N=1989)	South East Asia (N=39)	United Kingdom (N=199)	Rest of the world (N=9)
Yes - I was born into a priestly family	23.1%	34.1%	27.8%	30.9%	25.8%	22.0%	23.1%	21.1%	11.1%
Yes - I married into a priestly family	4.9%	0.0%	5.6%	7.4%	3.7%	5.2%	5.1%	4.0%	0.0%
No - I was born a <i>behdin</i> / layman	70.2%	61.0%	66.7%	58.8%	68.1%	68.3%	69.2%	73.4%	88.9%
No - I married into a <i>behdin</i> / layman family	1.8%	4.9%	0.0%	2.9%	2.5%	4.5%	2.6%	1.5%	0.0%
Not Applicable	23.1%	34.1%	27.8%	30.9%	25.8%	22.0%	23.1%	21.1%	11.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.1.2 Socio-religious identity

It was interesting to see that respondents who were born into a priestly family were less likely to be conservative (11.3%) than those who married into a priestly family (17.4%) or those who were born into a *behdin* / layman family (16.7%) (Table 23).

Table 23 – ‘How would you describe your socio-religious identity?’ by ‘Are you from a priestly family?’

	Yes - I was born into a priestly family (N=885)	Yes - I married into a priestly family (N=178)	No - I was born a <i>behdin</i> / layman (N=2624)	No - I married into a <i>behdin</i> / layman family (N=132)
Conservative	11.3%	17.4%	9.2%	16.7%
Moderate	43.7%	47.8%	45.1%	49.2%
Liberal	44.2%	33.1%	44.4%	33.3%
Other	0.8%	1.7%	1.2%	0.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.2 Priestly training

There are two levels of priestly classifications in India – *navar* and *martab*. To become a *navar*, meaning ‘new carrier of offerings’, the initiate must learn several prayers including the *Yasna* and *Visperad* by heart and undergo two *bareshnum* or nine-day ritual purification ceremonies.^{xxvii} Attainment of this first level allows the priest to perform all the *hoshmordi* or outer rituals plus *navjote* / *sudreh-pushi* and wedding ceremonies. The second level of priestly classification, the *martab* (meaning ‘the exalted’) ceremony is usually performed a few years after the *navar*, but can be performed in adulthood as well. This involves undergoing one *bareshnum* and fluently reading ‘the 22 chapters of the Vendidad interspersed with the *Yasna* and *Visperad*’.^{xxviii} This level of attainment allows the priest to perform *pāvmehel* or inner rituals such as the *Yasna* and *Vendidad* ceremonies, and give *boi* (literally meaning ‘fragrance’, a ritual to feed the fire) in consecrated fire temples.^{xxix}

In Iran, priests undergo the *nowzuti* or *navar* ceremony, which does not require the initiate to undergo a *bareshnum*. As with other priestly ceremonies it has been shortened considerably, as have the ‘inner rituals’ which take place in the *yazishngah*, or ritual precinct of the fire temple. These are traditionally only performed by fully qualified *mobeds*. Those performed in the *dar-e-mehr*, or fire temple, mainly relate to *sudreh-pushis* (the Iranian term for the Parsi *navjote*), death ceremonies and *jashns*.^{xxx}

^{xxvii} For more information on the *navar* ceremony see Karanjia (n.d.).

^{xxviii} For more information on the *martab* ceremony see Karanjia (n.d.).

^{xxix} For more information on the *boi* ritual see Karanjia (n.d.A)

^{xxx} For a full description of priestly training in Iran together with the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ rituals still performed see Stewart (2018, pp. 23-28).

Out of the 499 male respondents born into a priestly family,⁶⁷ only 24.3% were trained as a *navar* and a further 28.9% were *navar martab*.⁶⁸ This means that of the 24.1% of male respondents who were born into a priestly family, 53.2% of this group were trained as priests. Only 0.8% of respondents as a whole were assistant priests / *mobedyar*.⁶⁹

There is only one priestly training school left in the world, the Dadar Athornan Institute in Mumbai, which offers 'religious as well as secular education to children of the priestly class and train[s] them to be good priests who can be spiritual guides.'^{xxxi} Not everyone who becomes a priest attends the priestly training school. Those interested in becoming priests but unable to board at the school, or attend classes because of the distance, learn the prayers at home, usually with private tuition and training given by priests. The volume of literature and rituals that need to be memorised to qualify a fully-fledged priest is challenging to undertake from outside the priestly training school environment, which provides a structured and rigorous religious studies programme.

5.2.1 Region

Looking only at men who were born into a priestly family, 24.5% of respondents in North America and 24.7% of those in South Asia were *navars*. 40.9% in South Asia and 12.9% in North America were *navar martab*. This indicates that children in South Asia were more likely to train further (Table 24).⁷⁰

Looking at all respondents, 1.0% of South Asian (19) and 0.8% (9) of North American respondents were assistant priests / *mobedyar* / *behdin pasbaan*. Three respondents said that they were born a *behdin* / layman but had also trained as *navar-martab*. Two of these respondents were from South Asia, and one from North America.⁷¹

^{xxxi} Dadar Athornan Institute (n.d.)

Table 24 – ‘Did you undertake priestly training?’ by Region (Men born into a priestly family only)^{xxxii}

	Australasia (N=35)	Europe (N=4)	Iran (N=3)	Middle East (N=7)	North America (N=147)	South Asia (N=259)	South East Asia (N=5)	United Kingdom (N=23)
Yes - I am a <i>navar</i>	25.7%	25.0%	33.3%	14.3%	24.5%	24.7%	20.0%	17.4%
Yes - I am a <i>navar-martab</i>	22.9%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	12.9%	40.9%	20.0%	21.7%
Yes – I am an assistant priest – <i>mobedyar / behdin pasbaan</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
No	51.4%	75.0%	66.7%	71.4%	62.6%	33.2%	60.0%	60.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.2.2 Socio-religious identity

Respondents who were a *navar* were similarly likely to be conservative as respondents who had not undergone any priestly training (10.8% vs 9.7%). However, those who were *navar martab* and assistant priests / *mobeyar / behdin pasbaan* were twice as likely to be conservative (20.3% and 26.7% respectively) compared to *navars* and respondents who had not undergone any priestly training (10.8% and 9.7%, respectively) (Table 25). This is likely because the decision to undertake priestly training to become a *navar martab* or as a layperson training to be an assistant priest requires a (high) level of religiosity and commitment.

Table 25 – ‘How do you describe your socio-religious identity?’ by ‘Did you undertake priestly training?’

	Yes - I am a <i>navar</i> (N=120)	Yes - I am a <i>navar-martab</i> (N=143)	Yes - I am an assistant priest - <i>mobedyar / behdin pasbaan</i> (N=30)	No (N=3506)
Conservative	10.8%	20.3%	26.7%	9.7%
Moderate	47.5%	47.6%	30.0%	45.0%
Liberal	40.0%	32.2%	36.7%	44.2%
Other	1.7%	0.0%	6.7%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

^{xxxii} ‘Rest of world’ has been excluded for this question due to a lack of respondents.

5.3 Practising priests

Of the respondents who said they were *navar*, *navar martab* or assistant priests / *mobeyar* / *behdin pasbaan*, only 14.5% worked full-time in a fire temple or place of worship. 17.5% worked part-time in a fire temple or place of worship, 38.9% said they performed some ceremonies occasionally and 29.0% said they did not practise at all.⁷²

5.3.1 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely to be working full-time (20.3% vs 3.0%) or part-time (24.0% vs 3.0%) than those in North America. Respondents in North America were more likely to work occasionally than those in South Asia (68.7% vs 26.6%).⁷³ This is to be expected due to the number and nature of the fire temples in South Asia compared to other regions.

5.3.2 Socio-religious identity

Priests who worked part-time were more likely to be conservative compared to priests who worked full-time in a fire temple or place of worship (35.3% vs 27.9%). Priests who performed ceremonies occasionally or didn't practise at all were least likely to be conservative (11.4% and 8.2%).⁷⁴

5.4 Part-time or non-practising priests

As there is a shortage of full-time priests, especially in India, we asked priests why they did not work as full-time priests in a fire temple or place of worship.^{xxxiii} 47.8% said that they were not interested in *mobedi* (priestly work) or that they had other interests. Other reasons included financial concerns (31.2%), restrictions of lifestyle and freedoms (20.9%) and no scope for practising in their location (22.1%). Only 4.0% said they faced pressure from family and society.⁷⁵ 15.4% chose 'other' reasons. Most people did not see the priesthood as a viable career option. As one respondent stated, they "did not intend to make it a career path, I do it as community service". For those who were interested, they were put off as the priesthood did not receive the respect and financial remuneration they felt was deserved. One respondent stated:

"Also there's no growth when it comes to being a full time Priest. It has sleepless nights because of going for *uthamnu* or doing *vandidad* and also because there is no satisfaction from the *behdins* even after we do so much. Also, there is no Mediclaim, which was being offered earlier. Recently, a few trusts are doing so."

^{xxxiii} Respondents could select multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

5.4.1 Age

Younger respondents (18-25-year-olds) were most likely to say they were not interested or had other interests (63.2%). 26-35-year-olds were equally put off by financial concerns (40.3%) and restrictions on lifestyle and freedoms (38.8%).⁷⁶

5.4.2 Region

Financial concerns and restrictions on lifestyle and freedoms were more prominent reasons for not being a full-time priest amongst respondents in South Asia than North America. Respondents in North America were more likely to be faced with no scope for practising in their location (37.5% vs 12.8%). Respondents in North America and South Asia were similarly likely not to be interested or have other interests (50.0% vs 51.7%) (Table 26).⁷⁷

Table 26 – ‘Why are you not a full-time mobed?’ by Region (North America and South Asia only)^{xxxiv}

	North America (N=64)	South Asia (N=149)
Financial concerns	25.0%	34.2%
Restrictions on lifestyle and freedoms	12.5%	24.8%
Pressure from family / society	3.1%	4.7%
Not interested / Other interests	50.0%	51.7%
No scope for practising in my location	37.5%	12.8%
Other	17.2%	13.4%

5.4.3 Socio-religious identity

Respondents who described themselves as liberal were the most likely to say they were not interested or had other interests (58.3%). Conservative and moderate respondents were more likely to say there was no scope for practising in their location (30.6% and 26.4% respectively) compared to liberal respondents (16.7%).⁷⁸

^{xxxiv} Respondents could select multiple answers, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%. Regions other than North America and South Asia have been excluded due to a lack of respondents for this question.

6. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

The data on religious education tells us that most respondents were practising or semi-practising Zoroastrians. There was also a small percentage of respondents who said they were Zoroastrian and had faith in but did not practise the religion.

In terms of religious education, the religion (prayers, ceremonies, rituals) was taught informally by the family, and as Hinnells (2005) found, there was limited formal education. So, while prayers were taught to children, there was limited understanding of the meaning of prayers. There was a small increase in understanding when the religion was taught in a more formal setting by priests or teachers.

The respondents to the survey were almost evenly divided between those who felt positively towards and those who were unclear about their views on Western translations and interpretations of Zoroastrian religious text. Positive views included feeling these texts to be in harmony with the teaching from inside the community, as well as feeling that these texts enhanced their own learning about their religion.

Despite limited religious education, respondents were religiously active in performing basic rituals and practices. There were regional differences for all religious practices as respondents in South Asia were more likely to be religiously inclined compared to respondents in the diaspora.

In terms of age, a mixed, complex picture emerged for younger respondents. They were most likely to worship in a fire temple daily (in South Asia) and choose *dokhmeneshni* as their preferred funeral practice. However, they were also least likely to be aware of purity laws or perform the *kusti* ritual daily. But, far from being a group disinclined towards religious practice, we see areas in which their practice is more regular and more shaped by traditional preferences than older age groups. It is true to say that this is not across the board, but our findings do challenge perceptions of a religiously apathetic youth.

We found that a high proportion of respondents were traditional in their religious beliefs. Most respondents said the *navjote* ceremony was needed for both a religious as well as an ethnocultural identity. This implied that ethnicity and religion were linked together in the minds of many respondents. Many respondents also held the traditional view when it came to their beliefs about what happens to the soul after death and about the authoritative opinion in religious disputes.

As part of the mixed picture emerging from the younger participants, we once again noted that they were more or equally traditional in their responses as older respondents. Younger respondents were more likely to believe than older respondents that the *navjote* ceremony was needed for both a religious and an ethnocultural identity. They were also as likely as

older respondents to believe in the traditional Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs and say that the opinion of priests is most important in religious disputes.

There are many priests who are trained but are not practising in any capacity, either full-time, part-time, or occasionally. There are a variety of reasons why priests do not take up *mobedi* full-time, including being poorly paid and needing to supplement their incomes with another job, having undergone a professional training in something other than the priesthood, or having other interests in life more generally.

ENDNOTES

The table numbers below refer to the document 'Gen Z and Beyond - Ch.4 Religious Beliefs and Practices Appendix', which can be accessed at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation>

- ¹ See Table 1
- ² See Table 2
- ³ See Table 3
- ⁴ See Table 4 for breakdown by country
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- ⁶ See Table 6
- ⁷ See Table 7 for breakdown by country
- ⁸ See Table 8
- ⁹ See Table 9
- ¹⁰ See Table 10 for breakdown by country
- ¹¹ See Table 11 for breakdown by country
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- ¹⁹ See Table 19
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- ²¹ See Table 21
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- ²³ See Table 23 for breakdown by country
- ²⁴ See Table 24
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- ²⁷ See Table 27
- ²⁸ See Table 28
- ²⁹ See Table 29
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- ³¹ See Table 31
- ³² See Table 32
- ³³ See Table 33
- ³⁴ See Table 34 for breakdown by country
- ³⁵ See Table 35
- ³⁶ See Table 36
- ³⁷ See Table 37
- ³⁸ See Table 38 for breakdown by country
- ³⁹ See Table 39
- ⁴⁰ See Tables 40 and 41
- ⁴¹ See Table 42
- ⁴² See Table 43 for breakdown by country
- ⁴³ See Table 44
- ⁴⁴ See Table 45
- ⁴⁵ See Table 46
- ⁴⁶ See Table 47
- ⁴⁷ See Table 48
- ⁴⁸ See Table 49
- ⁴⁹ See Table 50 to 54
- ⁵⁰ See Table 55
- ⁵¹ See Table 56

- ⁵² See Table 57
- ⁵³ See Table 58 for breakdown by country
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- ⁵⁷ See Table 62
- ⁵⁸ See Table 63
- ⁵⁹ See Table 64
- ⁶⁰ See Table 65
- ⁶¹ See Table 66 for breakdown by country
- ⁶² See Table 67
- ⁶³ See Table 68 for breakdown by country
- ⁶⁴ See Table 69
- ⁶⁵ See Table 70
- ⁶⁶ See Table 71 for breakdown by country
- ⁶⁷ See Table 72
- ⁶⁸ See Table 73
- ⁶⁹ See Table 74
- ⁷⁰ See Table 75 for breakdown by country
- ⁷¹ See Table 76
- ⁷² See Table 77
- ⁷³ See Table 78
- ⁷⁴ See Table 79
- ⁷⁵ See Table 80
- ⁷⁶ See Table 81
- ⁷⁷ See Table 82
- ⁷⁸ See Table 83

CHAPTER 5 - ASPIRATIONS

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4. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

CHAPTER 5 - ASPIRATIONS

Our report concludes the data analysis with a chapter on Aspirations. In chapters 1-4 we examined data drawn from questions in the Survey that addressed the three overarching themes of Family, Identity and Interaction, and Religious Beliefs and Practices. This data has allowed us to describe what is going on in the community today. Chapter 5 is rather different in that it covers various hypothetical scenarios, asking people to give their views on certain topics and exploring what they want for the future. We have focused on specific areas seeking to understand what people aspire to in terms of education and employment, their reasons for and against becoming an entrepreneur and their ideas about philanthropy. We also look at how people see their role within the community, asking, for example, what subjects they would like to learn more about, what are the threats and challenges they think the community faced and what can be done to strengthen it in the future.

1. EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Education and employment are important social metrics for the Zoroastrian community. In India and Iran, from the nineteenth century onwards, Zoroastrian social reformists and philanthropists were some of the first to establish educational institutions such as schools, universities, and technical colleges. They were also pioneers in education for girls and viewed education as not only being crucial for personal upliftment but as a driver of social change. Hinnells (2005, pp. 49-53) said that 'educational achievements are a characteristic feature of the Parsi community' and outlined the differences in educational attainment and employment patterns between Parsis and the wider population, and between Parsi men and women.ⁱ Today, education and the success of women in the workplace is viewed as a double-edged sword. On the one hand it has 'given this community empowerment and emancipation',ⁱⁱ but social progress, especially female education and employment, is seen by many in the community to be the cause of intermarriage, late or no marriage, and a decline in population.ⁱⁱⁱ

Given the importance of education and employment for the Zoroastrian community, we asked respondents for their highest academic or vocational qualifications and their employment status.^{iv} In this section, we examine the sub-themes of education and employment, including if and how religious identity, belief, and practice is different for respondents of varying education levels and employment status.

ⁱ Hinnells 2005, p.49-53.

ⁱⁱ Dadrawala (2019)

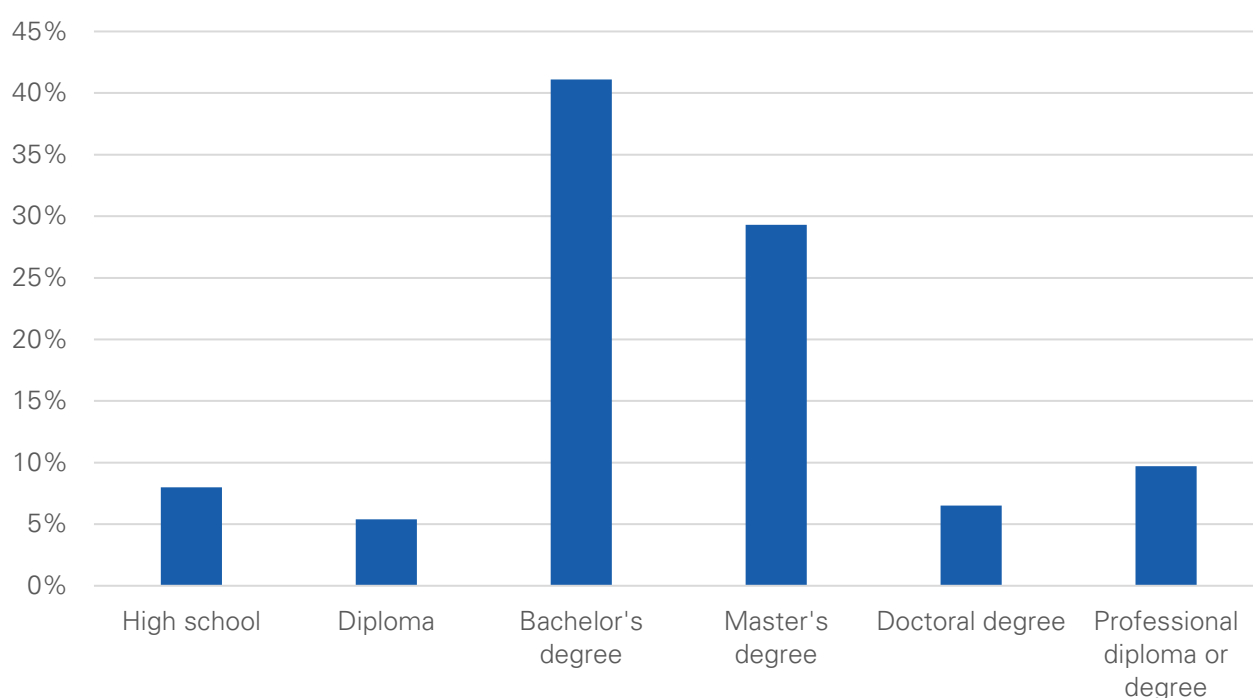
ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} When we discuss respondents with high school qualifications or a bachelor's degree, we are referring to respondents whose *highest* level of qualification is high school or a bachelor's degree.

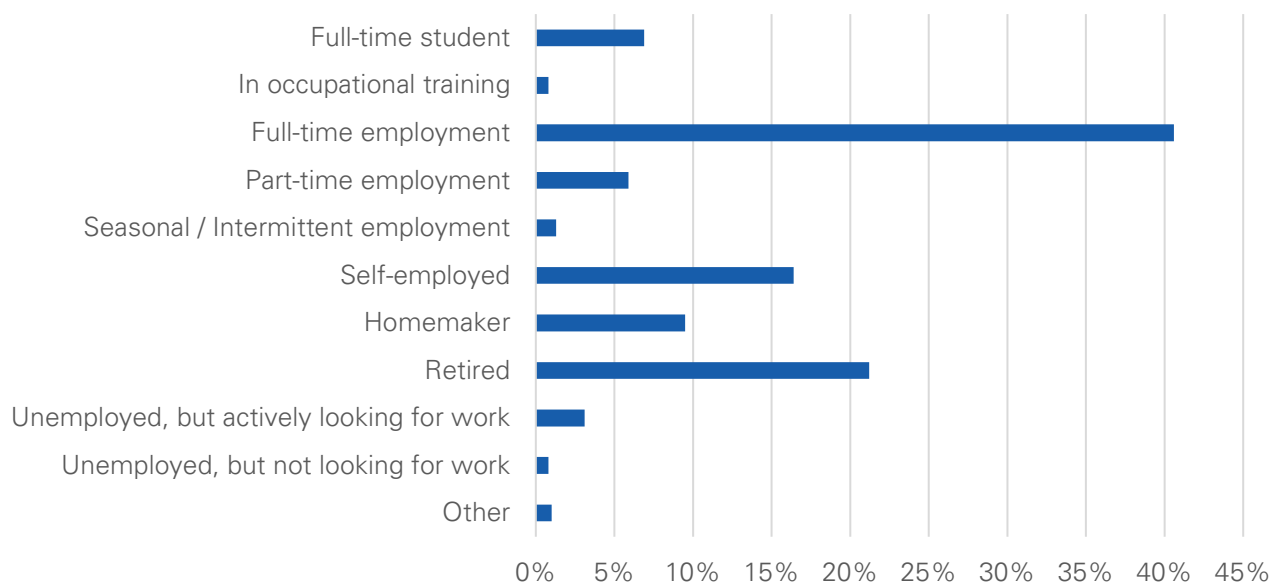
1.1 Education, employment and field of work

It is unsurprising that a majority of survey respondents had high levels of education (Figure 1) and employment (Figure 2). Overall, in terms of education level, 41.1% of respondents had a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, nearly a third (29.3%) had a master's degree, a further 9.7% had professional qualifications and 6.5% had doctoral degrees. Less than 14% had qualifications lower than a bachelor's degree, with 8.0% having no more than a high school qualification and 5.4% with no more than a diploma.¹

Figure 1 – 'What is your highest academic / vocational qualification?'

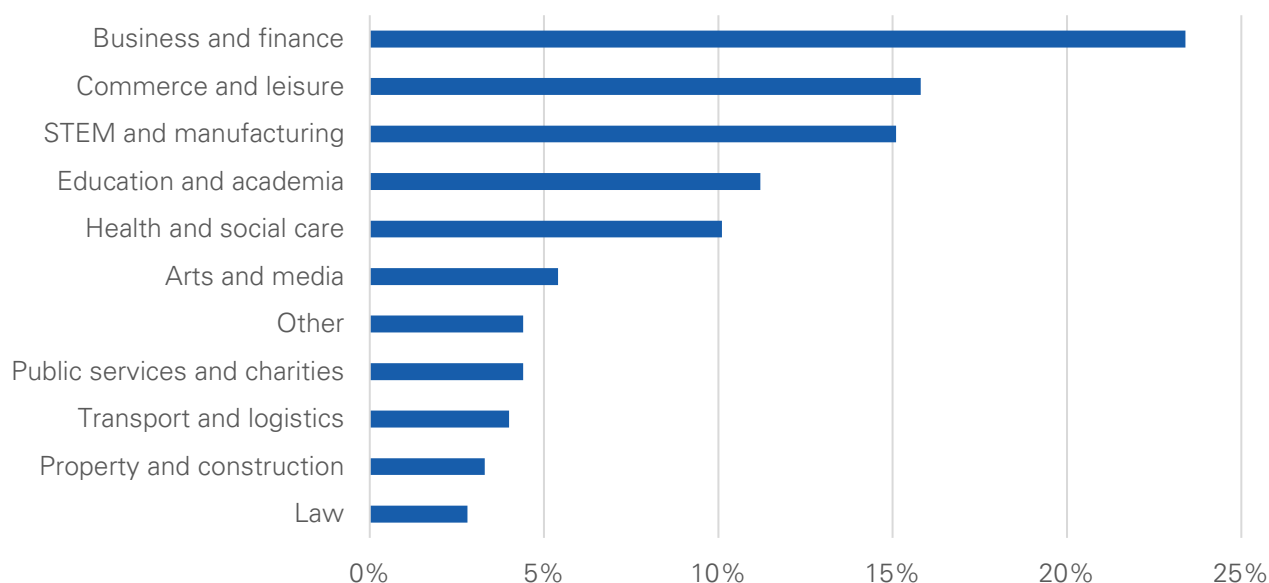


In terms of employment or occupation, 6.9% of respondents were in full-time education, 0.8% in occupational training, 40.6% in full-time employment, 5.9% in part-time employment, 1.3% in seasonal or intermittent employment, 16.4% were self-employed, 9.5% were homemakers, 21.2% were retired, 3.1% were unemployed but actively looking for work and 0.8% were unemployed but not looking for work.²

Figure 2 – ‘What is your current employment status?’^v

The most popular field of work was business and finance with 23.4% of total respondents. The second most popular field was commerce and leisure (15.8%) and then STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and manufacturing (15.1%).³ Over half of respondents were in these three fields. In the questionnaire, we gave a longer list of options for field of work, which we grouped into the options seen in Figure 3 to allow for more meaningful analysis.

Figure 3 – ‘Which field do you currently work in?’



^v Respondents were able to choose more than one of these categories.

More than half (57.2%) of 18-25-year-old respondents were full-time students. This high level of education expresses itself across the age groups in low unemployment levels, with a majority of those who were unemployed actively looking for work. In the 26-35-year-old age group, 66.9% were in full-time work. In the 36-45-year-old age group, we see a higher proportion of homemakers (12.5% from 6.2% in 26-35-year-old age group). The 46-55 age group had the highest proportion of respondents who were self-employed (22.2%) and homemakers (14.6%). Self-employment was the highest employment status for respondents aged 66 and over who had not retired.⁴

For the youngest age group (18-25-year-olds), the two most popular fields of work were commerce and leisure, and STEM and manufacturing (both 20.0%), closely followed by business and finance (18.5%). Younger groups also had a higher percentage of respondents working in arts and media, and a lower percentage in education and academia.⁵

1.1.2 Gender

Regarding education levels and gender, it is a common belief that women are more educated than men within the community, and our data suggests this is true to a certain extent. In this study, we found that more women than men attained a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification (45.9% vs 36.4%), but that more men went on to attain a highest qualification of a master's degree and/or professional qualification.^{vi} Significantly, there was gender parity for respondents with doctoral degrees (Table 2).

Table 2 - Highest academic / vocational qualification, by Gender

	Male (N=2119)	Female (N=2209)
High school	8.0%	7.6%
Diploma	5.9%	4.9%
Bachelor's degree	36.4%	45.9%
Master's degree	31.0%	27.8%
Doctoral degree	6.7%	6.2%
Professional diploma or degree	12.0%	7.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

^{vi} Not as a point of comparison but as background to this issue, Hinnells (2005, p. 49) noted that Prof Malini Karkal who studied the Parsi community in Greater Mumbai in 1982 found a similar pattern: '35.08% of men and 37.27% of women under the age of 40 were graduates (postgraduate figures for the same age group are 8.93% for men and 7.61% for women).'

There were also disparities in occupation between genders.⁶ Women were slightly more likely than men to be in full-time education (8.0% vs 5.7%). Men were more likely to be in full-time employment (46.2% vs 35.4%), with more women in part-time employment (8.2% vs 3.4%). Men were more likely than women to be self-employed (19.8% vs 13.1%), but the most significant gender divide was when it came to those who chose 'homemaker' as their occupation. Women were much more likely to be homemakers than men (18.4% vs 0.2%). Men were more likely to say they were retired (23.9% vs 18.6%) perhaps indicating that women who were homemakers never retired!^{vii}

Women were much more likely to be in fields of work such as arts and media, education and academia, health and social care and public services and charity. Men were much more likely to be in fields of work such as business and finance, property and construction, STEM and manufacturing, and transport and logistics. Both were equally likely to be in commerce and leisure, and women were slightly more likely to work in law.⁷ We may however be seeing a shift, as younger women were more likely than older women to be working in certain male-dominated fields. For example, 9.8% of 18-35-year-old women worked in STEM and manufacturing compared to just 6.4% of women aged 46-65, and fewer younger women worked in public services and charities than older women.⁸

1.1.3 Region

Education levels were high across the main regions (Table 3).⁹ We found a similar percentage of full-time students in North America (6.9%) and South Asia (7.1%), which runs contrary to the widespread notion that young people in South Asia are less interested in education.

South Asia had a higher proportion of respondents who had completed professional qualifications instead of postgraduate degrees and were more likely to be in self-employment than in North America (19.0% vs 12.4%) showing a level of ambition (labour market structures notwithstanding). This will be further discussed in the following section on Entrepreneurship. Our data showed similar levels of unemployment in both regions.¹⁰

^{vii} Respondents were able to choose more than one occupational status.

Table 3 - Highest academic / vocational qualification, by Region

	Australasia (N=244)	Europe (N=45)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1271)	South Asia (N=2231)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=224)	Rest of the world (N=11)
High school	4.5%	4.4%	0.0%	4.3%	4.0%	11.3%	4.5%	4.5%	0.0%
Diploma	4.5%	6.7%	27.3%	5.7%	3.7%	5.9%	2.3%	10.7%	9.1%
Bachelor's degree	42.2%	20.0%	27.3%	42.9%	35.6%	45.4%	40.9%	33.0%	63.6%
Master's degree	30.3%	44.4%	22.7%	32.9%	35.5%	25.4%	34.1%	25.4%	27.3%
Doctoral degree	4.1%	15.6%	13.6%	1.4%	13.7%	2.1%	9.1%	9.4%	0.0%
Professional diploma/ degree	14.3%	8.9%	9.1%	12.9%	7.5%	10.0%	9.1%	17.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Looking at gender differences in employment between regions, men and women were more likely to be in full-time employment in North America than South Asia (44.5% vs 37.2%). Part-time employment was equally low between men in North America and South Asia, but women in North America were more likely to be in part-time employment than women in South Asia (10.1% vs 6.2%).¹¹ Could this be due to more time flexibility at work in North America? In comparison, women in South Asia were more likely to be homemakers (24.7% vs 11.3%) than women in North America.¹² This could be because of community housing, which, being subsidised, means that there is less need for everyone in the household to work to cover rents and/or mortgages.

There were also some variations in terms of fields of work by region, with respondents in South Asia more likely than those in North America to be in arts and media, business and finance, commerce and leisure, law, and transport and logistics and respondents. Respondents in North America were more likely to work in health and social care, public services and charities, and STEM and manufacturing. Both were equally likely to be in education and academia (both 11.5%).¹³

There were notable gender differences between regions for field of work. Women in North America were more likely than women in South Asia to be in STEM and manufacturing (12.1% vs 3.1%). Women in South Asia were more likely than women in North America to be in education and academia (21.9% vs 14.5%).¹⁴ Interestingly, amongst men, education and academia was more popular in North America (8.2%) compared to men in South Asia (4.3%).¹⁵

1.1.4 Migration

Respondents with master's and doctoral degrees were the most likely to have migrated (43.7% and 61.6% respectively) (Table 4) and to have done so to pursue higher studies / education (53.3% and 69.8% respectively) (Table 5). The importance of education was also evidenced by respondents who migrated not for their own but their children's education and future. Exploring competing reasons for migration, we see that doing so for the future education of children is a more common driver for those in the lowest education group (23.3%) or those with a professional diploma / degree (23.9%) than those in other groups.

Table 4 – 'Have you migrated at any time in your life?', by Highest academic / vocational qualification

	High school (N=345)	Diploma (N=235)	Bachelor's degree (N=1780)	Master's degree (N=1274)	Doctoral degree (N=279)	Professional diploma/degree (N=421)
Yes	17.4%	30.6%	30.1%	43.7%	61.6%	38.7%
No	82.6%	69.4%	69.9%	56.3%	38.4%	61.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5 – 'Why did you emigrate?', by Highest academic / vocational qualification^{viii}

	High school (N=60)	Diploma (N=71)	Bachelor's degree (N=535)	Master's degree (N=557)	Doctoral degree (N=172)	Professional diploma or degree (N=163)
Better standard of living	43.3%	42.3%	43.7%	49.0%	35.5%	44.8%
Higher studies / education	15.0%	18.3%	20.7%	53.3%	69.8%	26.4%
Work opportunities	21.7%	23.9%	30.1%	42.9%	40.1%	33.1%
To be with a spouse or partner / marriage	28.3%	26.8%	26.7%	17.4%	11.6%	19.0%
Religious, social, or political persecution / discrimination	1.7%	4.2%	3.9%	2.9%	9.3%	3.7%
Healthcare	5.0%	5.6%	2.8%	2.2%	1.7%	4.3%
Children's education and future	23.3%	18.3%	15.0%	13.5%	7.0%	23.9%
To be close to family, friends, or community	10.0%	9.9%	9.2%	4.5%	1.2%	3.7%
Other	8.3%	7.0%	8.0%	4.5%	5.8%	11.7%

^{viii} Respondents were able choose up to three reasons for migration.

This shows that upward mobility is a strong driver and that making personal life changes for the sake of children's education is not just the purview of parents who are already highly educated. This bodes well for the community in the sense that education is not remaining nested within the educated, but rather is being prioritised highly also by those who have not received it themselves.

1.1.5 Job Satisfaction

Most respondents (45.5%) claimed to have job satisfaction all the time and only 2.1% claimed to have no job satisfaction at all or only very rarely.¹⁶ Self-employed respondents were the most likely to say they had job satisfaction all the time (57.9%). Those in full-time employment and occupational training were most likely to say that they had job satisfaction but it could be better (40.7% and 43.8% respectively).^{ix} Homemakers had high levels of complete job satisfaction (51.9%) but also the highest level of no job satisfaction (7.4%) (Table 6). When asked whether their job satisfaction could be improved by factors such as career mentoring, work-life balance, stability and security, training and upskilling, praise and acknowledgement, and/or greater responsibility, homemakers were most likely to feel that none would improve their satisfaction (43.4%).

Of those in either full-time or part-time employment, most wanted a raise in salary (54.2% and 43.2% respectively) and work-life balance (49.1% and 38.8% respectively). The most popular answers for self-employed respondents were work-life balance (38.8%) and security and stability (29.7%), while 27.4% said that none of the answer options would increase their job satisfaction.¹⁷

When asked what their ideal occupation would be, 38.6% of respondents said that they were already in their ideal occupation.¹⁸ There was a clear gender divide as women were more likely to choose arts and media, health and social care, law, education and academia, public services and charities as their ideal occupation. Men were more likely to choose STEM and manufacturing and transport and logistics. 143 respondents chose homemaker as their ideal occupation, only nine of whom were men.¹⁹

^{ix} Only 32 respondents said they were in occupational training.

Table 6 – ‘Do you have job satisfaction in your current occupation?’ by Employment status^x

	Full-time student (N=64)	In occupational training (N=32)	Full-time employment (N=1756)	Part-time employment (N=256)	Seasonal / Intermittent employment (N=56)	Self-employed (N=710)	Homemaker (N=364)	Other (N=43)
Yes, all the time	34.4%	31.3%	40.5%	37.9%	26.8%	57.9%	51.9%	55.8%
Yes, but it could be better	26.6%	43.8%	40.7%	37.1%	37.5%	28.5%	24.7%	23.3%
At times, it comes and goes	31.3%	21.9%	15.9%	19.5%	26.8%	11.5%	14.0%	14.0%
Very rarely	3.1%	3.1%	1.7%	3.1%	5.4%	1.1%	1.9%	2.3%
No, none at all	4.7%	0.0%	1.2%	2.3%	3.6%	1.0%	7.4%	4.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

^x Respondents were able to select multiple employment statuses. Columns for Retired and Unemployed have been omitted, as these respondents had also selected another employment status. Respondents who only chose Retired or Unemployed were not asked the question on job satisfaction.

1.1.6 Marital status

Community discourse attributes an increase in marriages outside the community to the pursuit of higher education and employment outside the home.^{xi} Just over a fifth (20.4%) of respondents had a non-Zoroastrian partner.²⁰ Amongst full-time students who were in a relationship, 40.3% had a non-Zoroastrian partner.²¹ Full-time students were also the most likely to be single (75.7%).²²

Homemakers were most likely to be married (90.3%) and had the lowest rates of intermarriage (11.8%) after seasonal/intermittent employment (8.8%).^{xii} Although we found that higher education levels increased respondents' likelihood of being married, in a relationship, or engaged, the likelihood of having a non-Zoroastrian spouse increased with higher education levels: 7.9% of respondents with no more than a high school qualification married outside of the community compared to 37.0% of respondents with doctoral degrees.²³

1.2 Education level and religious beliefs and practices

Secularisation theory, which has long been part of academic discourse, posits that people with higher levels of education are less likely to identify with and practise a religion than those with lower levels of education. A study by Pew Centre about religion and education around the world found no clear-cut answer to the question: Does more education lead to less religion?^{xiii} While global trends tend to suggest religiously unaffiliated adults are more highly educated, the picture is more nuanced as religious affiliation and education are influenced by many factors including place of birth and country of residence, minority and migration statuses, and type of educational institution. The literature would suggest that the more highly educated people are, the less traditionally religious they are in their beliefs and devotional practices.

In this study, we explored the correlation between education and religious practice by asking respondents:

- 1) Whether they broadly identified themselves as practising, or partially practising, Zoroastrians.
- 2) The extent to which Zoroastrian religious and cultural rituals and practices were of importance to them.

^{xi} Dadrawala (2019)

^{xii} We saw in the Family chapter (Sec 1.2.2, p. 21) that approximately equal proportions of male and female respondents were married outside the community. Homemakers may have the lowest levels of intermarriage because of their occupation rather than because they were women. Only 34 respondents said they were in seasonal/intermittent employment.

^{xiii} Pew Research (2016, p. 58)

- 3) The extent to which they practised the faith based on certain markers, such as performing the *kusti* ritual, observing purity laws, and observing/celebrating traditional days or religious festivals.

In response to the first point, the majority (91.8%) of respondents in this study considered themselves to be practising or partially practising Zoroastrians.²⁴ It is worth pointing out here that practising, or partially practising, Zoroastrians were probably more likely to participate in the survey in the first place. This could account for the substantial percentage of responses in the affirmative as people who did not consider themselves to be practising or partially practising were less likely to participate in a survey about the community and religion. Our data did not show a correlation between levels of education and whether respondents identified themselves as practising (or partially practising) Zoroastrians.²⁵

In response to the second point, the majority (83.5%) of respondents stated that Zoroastrian religious and cultural rituals and practices were very, quite or moderately important to them.²⁶ Only 5.1% stated they were not at all important. However, their importance varied with levels of education. Compared to respondents with doctoral degrees, respondents with only a high school qualification were more likely to say that religious rituals were very important to them (45.8% vs 18.3%).²⁷

Further correlation between education levels and the way the faith is practised and perceived is discussed below. In most instances we observed a stark difference between the highest and the lowest levels of education in terms of the detail of religious belief and practice.

One key practice for Zoroastrians is the *kusti* ritual. Most respondents performed the *kusti* ritual 'daily' (66.4%), followed by 'only on special occasions' (12.1%) and 'never' (11.0%).²⁸ Looking more closely at the data, those with only a high school qualification were most likely to perform it daily (81.4%) and least likely never to perform it (5.4%). In comparison, respondents with doctoral degrees were least likely to perform it daily (46.5%) and most likely never to perform it (18.2%).²⁹ With regard to other key observances, respondents with only a high school qualification were also most likely to observe purity laws (57.1%) and observe traditional events such as *gahambars* (53.9%) and *jashns / parabs* (60.8%).³⁰

Furthermore, we wished to explore the correlation between respondents' education levels and their beliefs with respect to:

- 1) Which identity a *navjote / sudreh pushi* is necessary for
- 2) The most important voice in a religious dispute
- 3) What happens to the soul at death
- 4) Respondents' preferred funeral practice
- 5) The importance of ethnic identity

The *navjote* ceremony is a crucial milestone in the life of a Zoroastrian child and the majority of respondents (99.0%) had undergone the ceremony.³¹ When asked, nearly half of respondents believed it to be necessary for both a Zoroastrian religious identity and an Iranian/Parsi/Irani ethnocultural identity (46.4%).³² Interestingly, 49.6% of respondents with no more than a high school qualification believed it to be necessary only for a Zoroastrian religious identity and not for an ethno-cultural identity compared to 30.1% of respondents with a doctoral degree. 12.8% of those with a doctoral degree believed it was unnecessary for either identity.³³

For resolving religious disputes, 33.4% of respondents believed the opinion of the priesthood was most important.³⁴ Respondents with no more than a high school qualification were most likely to believe this (41.8%) while respondents with doctoral degrees were the least likely (21.5%). This group was also the most likely to believe the opinion of local association leaders was the most important.³⁵

Respondents were asked about their beliefs regarding the soul at death. The most popular response referred to the traditional^{xiv} Zoroastrian belief whereby the soul is judged on the fourth day after death and goes to heaven or hell before the final judgement at the end of time (39.4%).³⁶ This belief was held most strongly by those with only a high school qualification (Table 7). Other beliefs such as reincarnation and an immortal soul were selected by 10.3% and 14.0% respectively. The percentage of respondents who did not believe in a soul or there being anything after death was lowest for those with no more than a high school qualification (3.4%) and highest for those with a doctoral degree (20.4%). Significantly, more than a quarter of respondents (25.3%) said that they 'don't know'.

Despite these views, 49.5% would choose *dokhmeneshni*^{xv} as their preferred funeral practice if given the choice.³⁷ Again, respondents with no more than a high school qualification were most likely to prefer it (65.2%) while respondents with a doctoral degree were the least likely (27.3%). The preference for cremation (38.3% in total) was also

^{xiv} According to Zoroastrian scriptures such as the *Bundahishn*.

^{xv} Note that the practise of *dokhmeneshni* is not possible outside India.

highest among respondents with doctoral degrees (54.6%) and lowest among respondents with no more than a high school qualification (26.8%).³⁸

Most respondents viewed their ethnic identity as either a central (54.0%) or a small but important (40.9%) part of who they were.³⁹ Of those with no more than a high school qualification, 62.2% said that their ethnic identity was central to their sense of who they were. For those with doctoral degrees, this figure was lower at 46.6%.⁴⁰ Whilst there are some differences by education, we find that overall ethnic identity is important to many people's lives.

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY

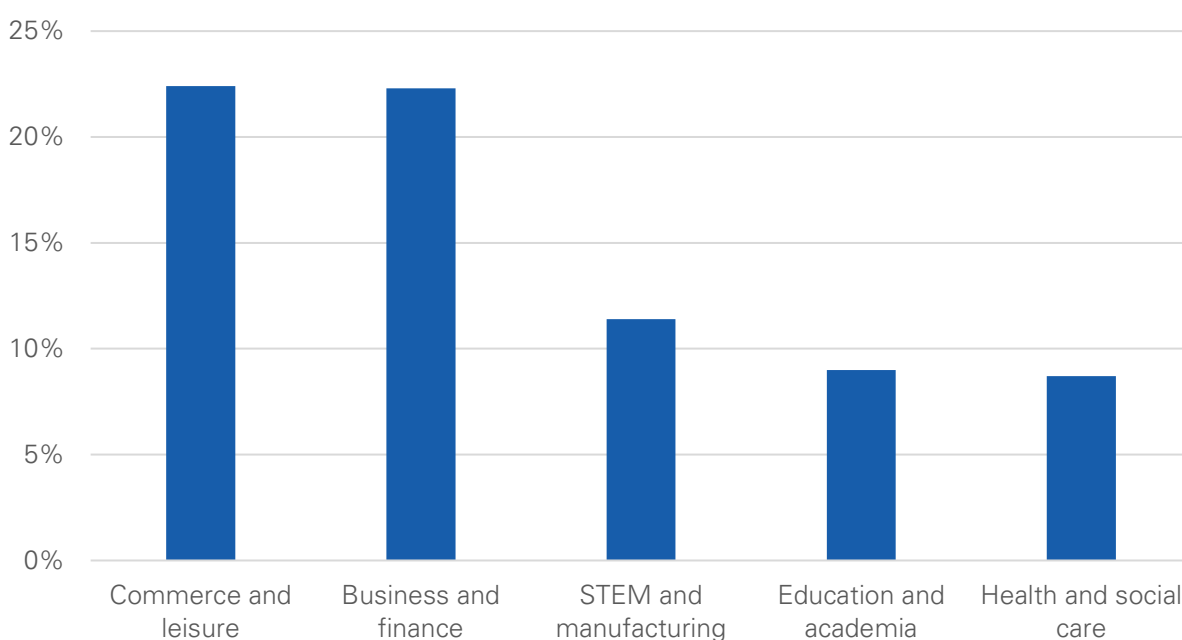
2.1 Entrepreneurship – Are you an entrepreneur?

Success in business is closely linked to philanthropy. We will start by looking at entrepreneurship with reference to the questions from the survey that covered this topic. Broadly we want to look at what the main challenges are that may prevent people becoming entrepreneurs. Do people prefer job security over risk and business? Have people become complacent because life is too easy for them?

In defining entrepreneurship, we are simply referring to people in business. However, there is a difference between those who set up on their own and encounter the risks involved with such a venture, and those who are employed in business with a degree of job security. Furthermore, 65.4% of respondents who said they were self-employed also said they were an entrepreneur, and 65.6% of entrepreneurs said they were self-employed. Therefore, 34.6% of self-employed respondents do not describe themselves as entrepreneurs. In addition, 13.0% of entrepreneurs said they were retired or unemployed. Some people see being an entrepreneur as part of who they are even if they are no longer actively running a business.⁴¹

To the question ‘Are you an entrepreneur?’ 16.4% of our respondents said they were entrepreneurs.⁴² The most common field of work for entrepreneurs was commerce and leisure (22.4%), closely followed by business and finance (22.3%), followed by STEM and manufacturing (11.4%) (Figure 4).⁴³

Figure 4 – Entrepreneurs’ top five fields of work



2.1.1 Age

As one might expect, those aged between 46 and 55 were most like to identify themselves as an entrepreneur (22.9%). Unsurprisingly, young people (18-25-year-olds) were the least likely to be entrepreneurs (5.0%), whereas a surprising 9.9% of 76+ year olds said they were entrepreneurs, indicating that they have remained engaged with their businesses long after the usual retirement age, as mentioned above.⁴⁴

2.1.2 Gender

Of our respondents who were entrepreneurs, 61.4% were men and 38.6% were women.⁴⁵

2.1.3 Region

There is a narrow margin between people in South Asia who said they were entrepreneurs (15.6%) and those in North America (16.9%) (Table 8).⁴⁶

Table 8 – ‘Are you an entrepreneur?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=244)	Europe (N=46)	Iran (N=22)	Middle East (N=70)	North America (N=1263)	South Asia (N=2212)	South East Asia (N=44)	United Kingdom (N=222)	Rest of the world (N=11)
Yes	19.3%	21.7%	13.6%	10.0%	16.9%	15.6%	20.5%	15.8%	27.3%
No	80.7%	78.3%	86.4%	90.0%	83.1%	84.4%	79.5%	84.2%	72.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.2 Interest in becoming an entrepreneur

To the question ‘Would you be interested in becoming an entrepreneur and starting your own business?’ 47.5% said no, 29.1% said maybe and only 23.4% said yes. With all the emphasis on entrepreneurship within the community, this is low.⁴⁷

2.2.1 Age

The Survey showed that the younger generations were more interested in becoming entrepreneurs, with 26-35-year-olds most likely to say ‘yes’ (35.8%) and 18-25-year-olds most likely to say ‘maybe’ (37.6%) (Table 9).

Table 9 – ‘Would you be interested in becoming an entrepreneur and starting your own business?’ by Age

	18-25 (N=402)	26-35 (N=662)	36-45 (N=578)	46-55 (N=567)	56-65 (N=558)	66-75 (N=537)	76+ (N=297)	Total (N=3601)
Yes	34.8%	35.8%	31.0%	26.3%	15.2%	8.2%	2.7%	23.4%
No	27.6%	30.5%	36.0%	39.0%	55.9%	75.4%	84.8%	47.5%
Maybe	37.6%	33.7%	33.0%	34.7%	28.9%	16.4%	12.5%	29.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.2.2 Gender

Men were more likely to want to become entrepreneurs than women (27.5% vs 19.9%).⁴⁸

2.2.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were much more likely to say they were interested in becoming an entrepreneur than those in North America (26.6% vs 17.5%) (Table 10).⁴⁹ This remained true when looking only at respondents aged 18-25 in each region (38.4% vs 29.7%).⁵⁰ This goes against the narrative that community members in South Asia, especially the youth, are not interested in becoming entrepreneurs.^{xvi}

Table 10 – ‘Would you be interested in becoming an entrepreneur and starting your own business?’ by Region

	Australasia (N=197)	Europe (N=36)	Iran (N=19)	Middle East (N=63)	North America (N=1042)	South Asia (N=1861)	South East Asia (N=35)	United Kingdom (N=186)	Rest of the world (N=8)
Yes	19.3%	22.2%	57.9%	30.2%	17.5%	26.6%	28.6%	22.0%	50.0%
No	50.3%	41.7%	26.3%	33.3%	53.6%	44.5%	54.3%	47.3%	12.5%
Maybe	30.5%	36.1%	15.8%	36.5%	28.9%	28.9%	17.1%	30.6%	37.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

^{xvi} For example, in an interview, the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce Global President, Captain Percy Master said that, “when Zoroastrian organizations the world over are giving encouragement to the youth, my only regret is that the youth in India are not showing an interest in the welfare of the community. They are happy to remain in their comfort zone. The drive to rise and do something extraordinary is lacking”. For the full interview, see Parsiana (2022).

2.2.4 Migration

Respondents who had migrated at some point in their lives were less likely than those who had never migrated to be interested in becoming an entrepreneur (17.8% vs 26.2%).⁵¹ Of those respondents who said they had migrated from one country to another due to religious, social, or political persecution / discrimination, over a quarter (25.4%) were entrepreneurs.⁵² Could people who have faced hardship be more willing to face the challenges of entrepreneurship?

2.2.5 Who they socialise with

Well over half (63.1%) of respondents who said that they socialised mainly with Zoroastrians were not interested in becoming an entrepreneur. In contrast, less than half of respondents who socialised with a mixture of Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, or with mainly non-Zoroastrians, said that they were not interested in becoming an entrepreneur (Table 11). This pattern remained true when looking both North America and South Asia respectively.⁵³ We could note that those who mix outside the community were maybe more outward looking and able to find a wider range of business opportunities.

Table 11 – ‘Would you be interested in becoming an entrepreneur and starting your own business?’ by ‘Who do you socialise with?’

	Mainly with Zoroastrians (N=388)	With a mixture of Zoroastrians and non- Zoroastrians (N=2525)	Mainly with non- Zoroastrians (N=674)
Yes	16.5%	23.9%	25.4%
No	63.1%	46.1%	43.5%
Maybe	20.4%	29.9%	31.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.3 Challenges to entrepreneurship

Question 50 in the questionnaire addressed the challenges faced by those who stated they were not entrepreneurs but were interested in becoming entrepreneurs. If these respondents wished to become entrepreneurs, what was stopping them?^{xvii} Question 51 in the questionnaire asked those who were already entrepreneurs about the challenges they faced when they started their entrepreneurship journey.^{xviii}

^{xvii} Respondents were able to pick more than one challenge.

^{xviii} Respondents were able to pick more than one challenge.

We asked the above questions because we wished to understand whether the perceived challenges of those who would like to be entrepreneurs were also the main challenges faced by those who were entrepreneurs. Are there challenges that are feared but not actually experienced? Or challenges experienced but not anticipated? Is there anything that can be learnt about how the existing entrepreneurs in the community might support those who aspire to become entrepreneurs?

2.3.1 Age

We compared the challenges faced by those aged 18-35 who aspired to be entrepreneurs (Table 12) to the challenges faced by those aged 45-65 who were entrepreneurs (Table 13). For both groups the most popular choice was funding and financing. For entrepreneurs aged 46-65, the second most popular choice was 'Risks of setting up alone'. But for young aspiring entrepreneurs, the second most popular choice was knowledge and resources, followed by lack of mentorship / guidance and lack of confidence / fear of failure. It is possible that a lack of entrepreneurial spirit means that the young are easily deterred from overcoming these challenges.

Table 12 – 'What are the main challenges to you becoming an entrepreneur?' by Age

	18-25 (N=279)	26-35 (N=457)	36-45 (N=366)	46-55 (N=342)	56-65 (N=243)	66-75 (N=131)	76+ (N=45)	Total (N=1863)
Funding and finances	76.3%	77.7%	74.3%	67.5%	60.5%	49.6%	42.2%	69.9%
Knowledge and resources	62.0%	60.2%	55.2%	50.9%	46.1%	45.0%	13.3%	53.7%
Lack of confidence / Fear of failure	46.2%	50.5%	47.3%	48.2%	34.2%	28.2%	8.9%	44.1%
Lack of mentorship or guidance	54.1%	49.0%	39.6%	42.1%	36.2%	27.5%	20.0%	42.8%
Risks of setting up alone	47.3%	51.9%	53.0%	52.0%	43.2%	34.4%	31.1%	48.6%
Gender discrimination	12.2%	5.3%	2.2%	3.2%	0.4%	1.5%	0.0%	4.3%
Age discrimination	12.5%	2.6%	4.4%	7.9%	16.5%	27.5%	35.6%	9.8%
Ethnic discrimination	8.6%	5.7%	3.3%	2.6%	3.3%	1.5%	6.7%	4.5%
Other	6.1%	3.7%	4.9%	5.6%	4.1%	6.9%	17.8%	5.3%

Table 13 – ‘What were the main challenges to you becoming an entrepreneur?’ by Age

	18-25 (N=21)	26-35 (N=97)	36-45 (N=141)	46-55 (N=157)	56-65 (N=129)	66-75 (N=94)	76+ (N=26)	Total (N=665)
Funding and finances	66.7%	67.0%	59.6%	61.1%	52.7%	48.9%	61.5%	58.5%
Knowledge and resources	38.1%	37.1%	38.3%	32.5%	29.5%	24.5%	42.3%	33.2%
Lack of confidence / Fear of failure	57.1%	32.0%	31.9%	29.3%	17.8%	17.0%	19.2%	26.8%
Lack of mentorship or guidance	23.8%	36.1%	39.0%	33.1%	29.5%	14.9%	19.2%	30.7%
Risks of setting up alone	47.6%	43.3%	47.5%	41.4%	45.7%	34.0%	38.5%	42.9%
Gender discrimination	0.0%	10.3%	7.8%	3.8%	1.6%	5.3%	3.8%	5.3%
Age discrimination	19.0%	14.4%	5.0%	4.5%	3.1%	7.4%	0.0%	6.5%
Ethnic discrimination	4.8%	8.2%	5.7%	4.5%	11.6%	13.8%	0.0%	7.8%
Other	0.0%	7.2%	7.1%	8.9%	7.0%	4.3%	3.8%	6.8%

When comparing challenges faced due to gender, age, and ethnic discrimination, the youngest respondents (18-25-year-olds) were the most likely to perceive ethnic discrimination (8.6%) as a challenge to becoming an entrepreneur. 18-25-year-old women, in particular, were more concerned about gender (21.7% vs 2.1% for men). For older respondents (66+ years) who wished to be entrepreneurs, age discrimination was perceived to be a challenge (29.5%).

2.3.2 Gender

Male respondents who were interested in becoming entrepreneurs were slightly more likely than women to say funding and finances were the main challenges facing them in becoming an entrepreneur (72.6% vs 67.2%). However, women had higher percentages across all other categories (Table 14).

Table 14 - 'What are the main challenges to you becoming an entrepreneur?' by Gender

	Male (N=940)	Female (N=916)
Funding and finances	72.6%	67.2%
Knowledge and resources	50.7%	57.0%
Lack of confidence / Fear of failure	42.3%	46.0%
Lack of mentorship or guidance	41.9%	43.8%
Risks of setting up alone	48.3%	48.9%
Gender discrimination	1.0%	7.6%
Age discrimination	8.4%	11.1%
Ethnic discrimination	3.9%	4.8%
Other	5.9%	4.7%

2.3.3 Region

Most expected challenges of those aspiring to be entrepreneurs were the same for both main regions we are comparing (Table 15). The main differences in region were ethnic discrimination in North America, which was higher than in South Asia (7.2% vs 2.9%). Funding and finances were a bigger challenge in South Asia than North America (72.4% vs 64.8%), whereas knowledge and resources were a bigger challenge in North America than South Asia (59.7% vs 49.6%).⁵⁴

Table 15 – 'What are the main challenges to you becoming an entrepreneur?' by Region (North America and South Asia only)

	North America (N=352)	South Asia (N=822)
Funding and finances	64.8%	72.4%
Knowledge and resources	59.7%	49.6%
Lack of confidence / Fear of failure	49.4%	42.2%
Lack of mentorship or guidance	44.1%	42.5%
Risks of setting up alone	50.0%	47.7%
Gender discrimination	4.2%	4.4%
Age discrimination	8.4%	10.7%
Ethnic discrimination	7.2%	2.9%
Other	7.2%	3.9%

2.4 Philanthropy

The idea that the accumulation of wealth is not to be discouraged is perhaps unique to Zoroastrianism.^{xix} In Zoroastrian eschatological doctrine there are two judgments: the individual, which happens following death, and the universal judgement, which will occur at the end of time. Both are described in the Pahlavi book of the *Bundahishn*, Creation. This provides a prototype for the balance that is maintained between the person's duty towards themselves and to society. Through the performance of good actions, people can address both their spiritual needs as well as the practical needs of society as a whole.

One of the principal ways of performing such actions has been through religious charity, which in turn is linked to success in business. Throughout history, both in Iran and India, religious institutions, places of worship and ritual precincts, as well as civic facilities and endowed family memorials, tended to be established by pious foundations.^{xx} In a sense, philanthropy can be said to equate to Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. This phrase constitutes an essential component of belief in the afterlife in Zoroastrianism. We were interested to discover whether people made this link. In other words, do people associate the religion they practise with the doctrines and teachings in the religious literature?

To answer this research question, we asked respondents what they believed happens to the soul at death (Figure 5). As we have seen, the fate of the soul in the afterlife depends on the good deeds a person has performed in their life.

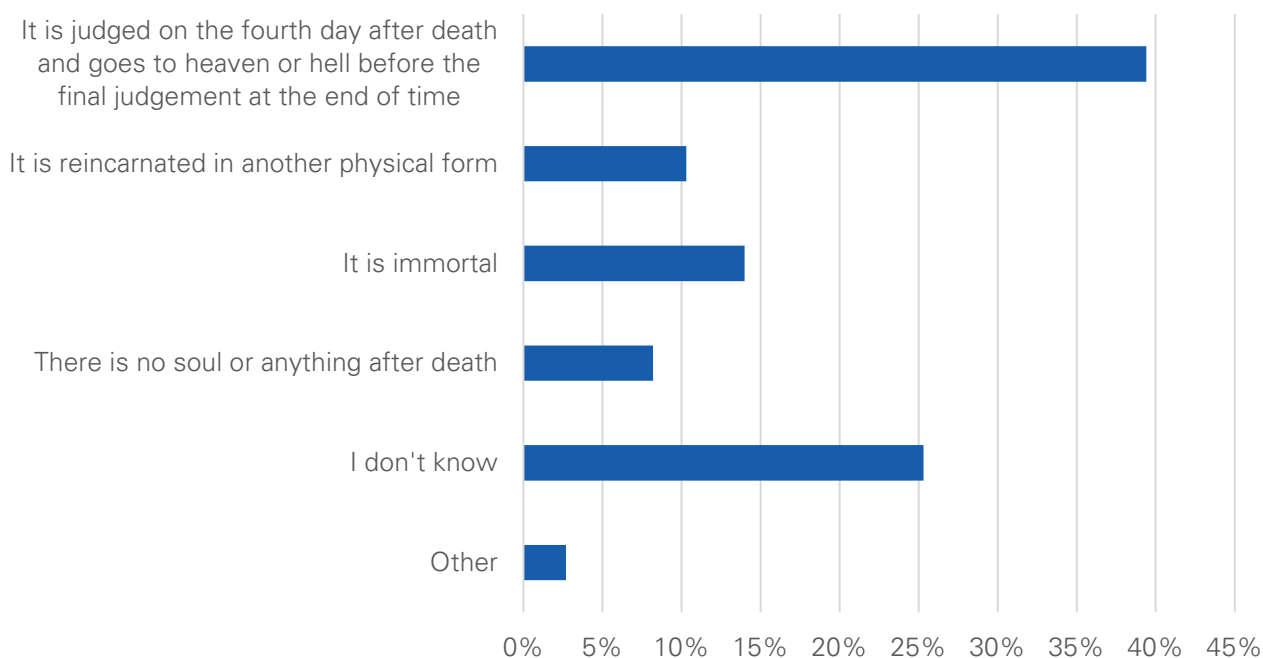
In this question, people had the option to say they believed that:

- a) the soul was judged on the 4th day after death and goes to heaven or hell before the final judgement at the end of time (49.4%)
- b) the soul is reincarnated in another physical form (10.3%)
- c) it is immortal (14.0%)
- d) there is no soul or anything after death (8.2%)
- e) don't know (25.3%)
- f) offered another belief (2.7%).⁵⁵

^{xix} As R C Zaehner pointed out several decades ago: 'the whole ethos of Zoroastrianism is one of productivity, of giving *and* receiving, and of growth – growth in virtue on the one hand and growth in wealth on the other; and it is doubtful whether any other religion could define man's 'perfect desire' as being a 'desire to amass worldly goods as much as to further righteousness thereby' (DKM. 97.9-11). R.C. Zaehner (1961, p. 279).

^{xx} Stewart (2012, p. 62).

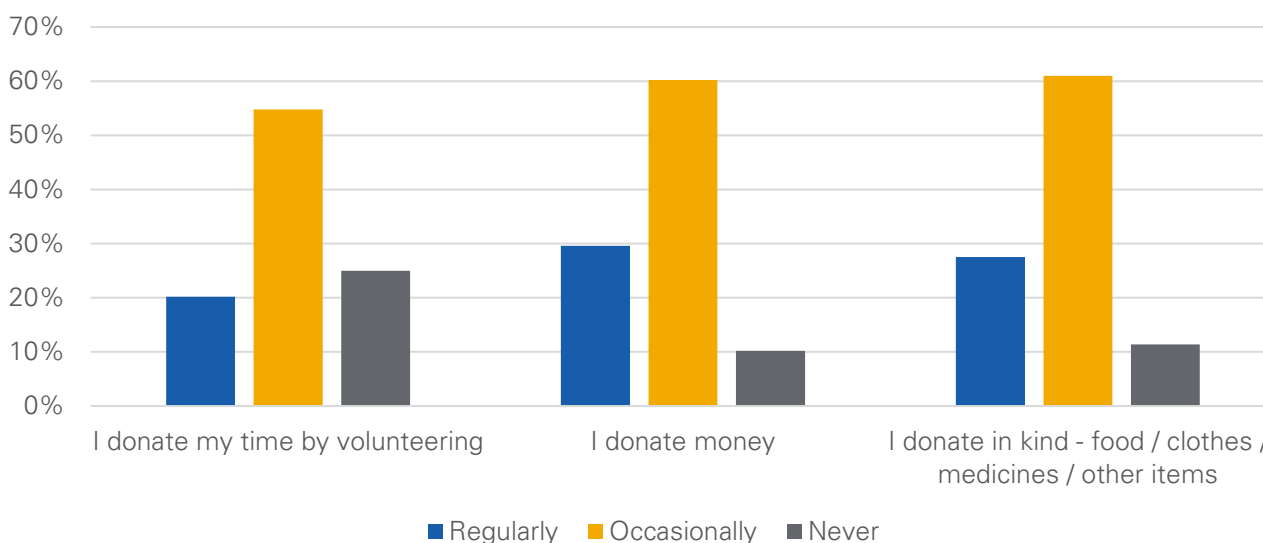
Figure 5 – ‘What do you think happens to the soul at death?’



What stands out here is that of those surveyed, the majority believed in the traditional teachings of the religion. If we add those that believe the soul is immortal to those that believed in the judgements at death and at the end of time we arrive at 63.4%. These are the two categories that represent Zoroastrian eschatological teaching.

To find out how people practise philanthropy, we asked respondents about three ways in which they give: time, money and donating in kind (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – ‘Do you support philanthropic causes?’



We found that 20.2% volunteer their time regularly, 54.8% volunteer occasionally and 25.0% never volunteer at all. 29.6% donate money regularly, 60.2% donate money occasionally and 10.2% never donate money. 27.5% donate in kind regularly, 61.0% donate in kind occasionally and 11.4% never donate in kind.⁵⁶

We look briefly at the three categories by age, gender, region, those with and without children, and entrepreneurship.

2.4.1 Age

Older respondents were more likely to volunteer their time, donate money or donate in kind than younger respondents.⁵⁷

2.4.2 Gender

Overall, women were slightly more likely to volunteer their time regularly (21.7% vs 18.4%) or to give money regularly (30.8% vs 28.3%) and were much more likely to donate in kind (31.7% vs 23.0%).⁵⁸

2.4.3 Region

Respondents in North America were much more likely than those in South Asia to volunteer time regularly (29.2% vs 13.4%) and donate money (41.9% vs 20.6%) or in kind (35.5% vs 22.4%) regularly (Table 16).⁵⁹

Table 16 – ‘Do you support philanthropic causes?’ by Region (North America and South Asia only)

		North America	South Asia
I donate my time by volunteering	Regularly	29.2%	13.4%
	Occasionally	55.7%	55.7%
	Never	15.1%	30.9%
I donate money	Regularly	41.9%	20.6%
	Occasionally	52.5%	66.1%
	Never	5.5%	13.3%
I donate in kind - food / clothes / medicines / other items	Regularly	35.5%	22.4%
	Occasionally	54.0%	65.9%
	Never	10.5%	11.6%

It is worth noting that compared to those who felt most at home in their place of birth or place of nationality, respondents who felt most at home in their current place of residence were most likely to regularly volunteer time (30.4%) and donate in kind (36.0%).⁶⁰

2.4.4 Entrepreneurship

Respondents who were entrepreneurs were more likely than non-entrepreneurs to volunteer time regularly (32.5% vs 17.7%), to donate money regularly (37.5% vs 28.2%) and to donate in-kind regularly (35.0% vs 26.0%).⁶¹ This underpins our observation (p.188) that entrepreneurs are more willing to spend time with the community and take an interest in its development. It could also mean that entrepreneurs are likely to be engaged in fundraising activities and are more likely to be successful if they lead by example.

2.4.5 Socio-religious identity

When we looked at socio-religious identity, we found that respondents who identified as liberal were more likely than conservatives to regularly volunteer time (23.2% vs 19.6%), money (34.6% vs 26.7%) and donate in-kind (31.8% vs 21.0%). Respondents who identified as conservative were most likely to never volunteer time (27.3%), donate money (12.6%) or to donate in-kind (15.5%).⁶² In North America, conservatives were equally likely as liberals to volunteer regularly (30.8% vs 30.2%) but less likely to regularly donate money (41.5% vs 45.2%) or in kind (31.3% vs 37.6%).⁶³ In South Asia, liberals were just 1.2% more likely than conservatives to volunteer time regularly, but also most likely to never volunteer time. They were much more likely to regularly donate money or in kind.⁶⁴

2.5 Types of philanthropic causes

Respondents were asked what philanthropic causes they supported, Zoroastrian and/or non-Zoroastrian. Interesting to note is that 72.5% of people gave to both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian causes, 12.5% gave to non-Zoroastrian causes alone and only 9.1% gave to Zoroastrian causes alone.⁶⁵ Since the population of our survey is largely divided between the old diaspora (India) and the new diaspora (mainly North America), this bears out the notion that Zoroastrians are known for their generosity to the host community and the locality where they have settled. This is probably why Zoroastrians have been so good at integrating into the majority or host community wherever they have settled while maintaining both their wealth and their traditions.

2.5.1 Age

Older respondents (56+) were more likely to donate solely to Zoroastrian causes, whereas those aged 55 and under were more likely to donate solely to non-Zoroastrian causes.⁶⁶

2.5.2 Gender

Men were more likely than women to donate to solely Zoroastrian causes (11.4% vs 6.9%) or to neither cause (6.7% vs 5.1%).⁶⁷

2.5.3 Region

Respondents in South Asia were more likely than respondents in North America to donate to only Zoroastrian causes (12.4% vs 4.8%) or neither cause (8.1% vs 2.9%) (Table 17).⁶⁸

2.5.4 Socio-religious identity

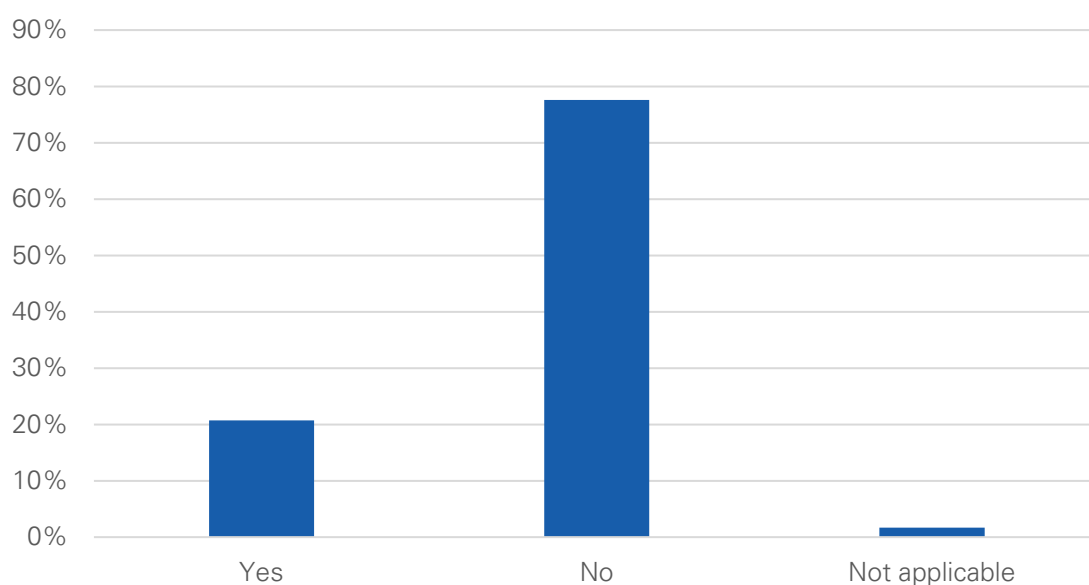
Respondents who identified as conservative were the most likely to donate to solely Zoroastrian causes (21.7%). Those who identified as moderate were most likely to donate to both causes (76.4%), while those who identified as liberal were most likely group to donate to only non-Zoroastrian causes (19.6%).⁶⁹

2.6 Financial assistance from Zoroastrian Trusts or Association

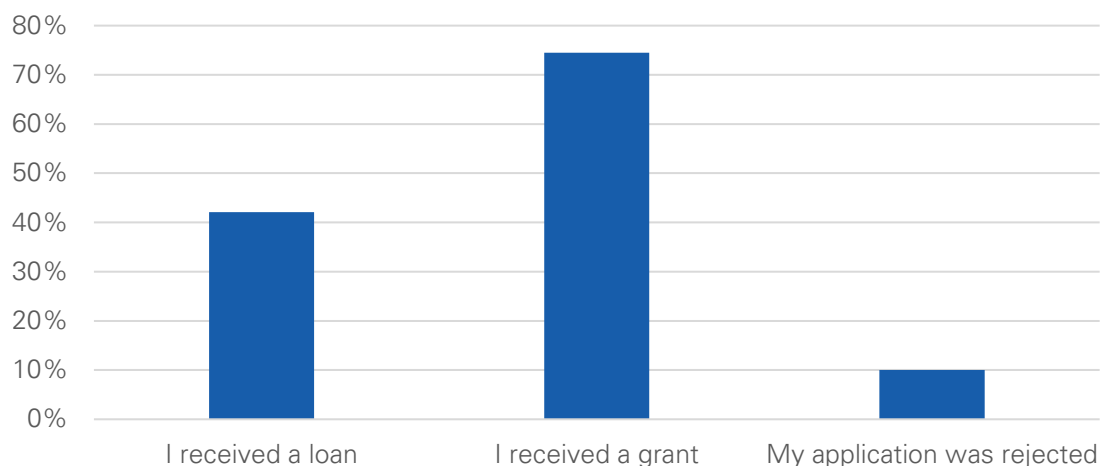
With respect to recipients of philanthropy, we asked about the various ways in which people could apply for grants and loans. There are numerous schemes supported by entrepreneurs / philanthropists which offer financial assistance, for example for scholarships.^{xxi} Respondents were asked whether they had ever applied for financial assistance for further education (college or university), and if so, if they had received a loan (to be paid back), grant, or if their application had been rejected.

20.7% of respondents had applied for financial assistance for further education (Figure 7).⁷⁰ Out of those respondents, 42.1% received a loan, 74.5% received a grant, and 10.0% had their application rejected (Figure 8). It is worth pointing out here that many people received both a loan and a grant.⁷¹

Figure 7 – ‘Have you ever applied for financial assistance for further education, such as college or university, or from a Zoroastrian trust or association?’



^{xxi} The SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji scholarship scheme is an example.

Figure 8 – ‘What was the outcome of your application(s)?’^{xxii}

2.6.1 Age

Younger respondents were most likely to have applied for financial assistance, which is unsurprising given the number of Zoroastrian charitable trusts in India^{xxiii} and in the diaspora^{xxiv} providing funding for educational purposes.⁷²

Across the age groups, respondents were much more likely to receive a grant than a loan except for the oldest (76+), who had received more loans (65.8%) than grants (61.6%). It was interesting to note that the likelihood of a financial assistance application being rejected decreased in the older age groups. For example, 19.4% of 18-25-year-olds said they had an application rejected compared to 2.0% of 66-75-year-olds and 0% for 76+.⁷³ This could be due to various reasons including less knowledge about the funding available, fewer applicants, and less competition for funds.

2.6.2 Gender

Men were more likely than women to apply (24.8% vs 16.7%) for financial assistance and to receive a loan (46.9% vs 34.9%). Men and women were equally likely to receive a grant (75.4% vs 73.1%) and to have their application rejected (9.1% vs 11.3%).⁷⁴

2.6.3 Region

Respondents in North America were more likely to have applied for financial assistance than respondents in South Asia (26.2% vs 18.1%).⁷⁵ Respondents in South Asia were more likely to receive a grant compared to respondents in North America (77.9% vs 72.3%), who

^{xxii} Respondents could select more than one answer option.

^{xxiii} <https://zoroastriansnet.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/parsi-community-charitable-trust2.pdf>

^{xxiv} Key examples include large community Trusts such as the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, the Zoroastrian Trusts Funds of Europe and the Zoroastrian Charity Trusts of Honk Kong and Macau.

were much more likely to receive a loan than respondents in South Asia (57.1% vs 28.1%) (Table 18).⁷⁶

Table 18 – ‘What was the outcome of your application(s) [for financial assistance]?’ by Region^{xxv}

	Australasia (N=53)	Europe (N=12)	Iran (N=1)	Middle East (N=13)	North America (N=329)	South Asia (N=402)	South East Asia (N=8)	United Kingdom (N=25)	Rest of the world (N=2)
I received a loan	43.4%	58.3%	100.0%	23.1%	57.1%	28.1%	37.5%	60.0%	0.0%
I received a grant	77.4%	91.7%	0.0%	69.2%	72.3%	77.9%	75.0%	60.0%	50.0%
My application was rejected	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	11.2%	8.7%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%

3. COMMUNITY

There are many ways of looking at the Zoroastrian community in terms of how it functions and how it generates a sense of belonging. We linked people’s sense of belonging to the following questions in the Survey:

1. Which subjects are you most interested in learning more about? (Q128)
2. What are the greatest threats to the community? (Q129)
3. What do you consider to be the most significant factors in strengthening the community? (Q131)

Question 1 above covers a wide range of subjects that people expressed a desire to learn more about: aspects of their religion (including rituals and their significance), the history of their people, Zoroastrian philosophy and ethics, the scriptures and their meaning, Parsi and Iranian history, culture, languages and literature. It is these elements that set Zoroastrians apart from other socio-religious communities, wherever they live today. The sense of belonging is perhaps more significant since, wherever Zoroastrians live today, they belong to an ethnic/religious minority. Even in Iran, although ethnically Iranian, Zoroastrians have belonged to a religious minority since the 7th century.

^{xxv} Respondents could select more than one answer option.

Our three questions are also linked to each other. For example, by far the most popular response to question 3 (below) was ‘teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture’. A lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and ritual was often cited as a reason for the community being under threat. We have included these three questions under this theme, Aspirations, because they will be of interest to community leaders who wish to know more about ways to engage with their membership and understand their hopes and fears for the future of the community as a whole.

3.1 Perceptions of community

Before this Survey, there was no information on a global scale that indicated what subjects people were interested in. Below is the frequencies table that shows the popularity of each of the subjects that people wished to know more about (Table 19). The results may encourage leaders and support their activities in community centres and associations.

Table 19 – ‘Which of these are you interested in learning more about?’

Responses (Select all that apply)	Percentage of respondents ^{xxvi}	
Zoroastrian rituals and their significance	50.3%	(N=2069)
Parsi / Irani history	49.2%	(N=2023)
Zoroastrian philosophy and ethics	47.8%	(N=1964)
Zoroastrian scripture and their meaning	43.4%	(N=1784)
The <i>Shahnameh</i>	40.7%	(N=1675)
Iranian history	35.0%	(N=1440)
Parsi / Irani culture and cultural traditions e.g. sari wearing or cookery classes / <i>sēs</i> rituals	32.6%	(N=1340)
Iranian culture and heritage e.g. setting the <i>haft-seen</i> table	26.4%	(N=1084)
Parsi / Irani arts - literature, music, painting, theatre, dance	25.1%	(N=1032)
Ancient languages: Avestan and Pahlavi	22.1%	(N=908)
Farsi and / or Zoroastrian Dari languages	21.0%	(N=865)
Parsi Gujarati language	19.6%	(N=807)
None of the above	11.3%	(N=463)
Other	1.4%	(N=59)

^{xxvi} These percentages refer to the total number of respondents who selected each answer option. Respondents could select as many responses as they liked, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

The first message to take from the table above is that only 11.3% of those surveyed did not want to learn more about any of the given topics. This paints an overall picture of a community keen to engage and learn more. Interestingly, just over 50% of respondents were interested in learning more about Zoroastrian rituals and their significance. This is despite the popular perception that those who are ‘liberal-minded’ in the community are not interested in the detail of religious rituals. It is worth noting that Zoroastrian rituals refer both to those performed by priests and those performed by priests and laymen and women. Traditionally, the priesthood was hereditary both in Iran and India, and remains so in India today for those undertaking the *navar/martab*. In addition, there are several rituals that belong exclusively to women in lay devotional life. Topics on the religion and history were the most popular choices. Ancient and modern languages were the least popular topics.

Below is a frequencies table that lists responses to the second question on threats to the community (Table 20). 59.4% thought that the small, ageing population was the fundamental problem.

Table 20 – ‘In your opinion, what are the greatest threats to the Zoroastrian religion and the Iranian / Parsi / Irani ethnocultural identity?’^{xxvii}

Responses (Select up to 3 responses)	Percentage of respondents	
Small, ageing population	59.5%	(N=2459)
Unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and fully accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women	45.1%	(N=1864)
Lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals	35.6%	(N=1472)
In-fighting in the community	29.2%	(N=1206)
Marrying later in life or not marrying at all	22.3%	(N=923)
Marrying outside the community	21.5%	(N=887)
Parents not passing down religious traditions to children	14.0%	(N=579)
Migration to the West and the influence of Western culture	13.2%	(N=545)
Different rules in different associations and trusts	11.2%	(N=462)
Apathetic and lethargic population	9.5%	(N=393)
Lack of respect for the authority of priesthood	7.8%	(N=324)
Loss of entrepreneurial spirit	5.7%	(N=237)
Increase in atheism / agnosticism / non-religion	4.9%	(N=202)
Other	2.9%	(N=121)

^{xxvii} These percentages refer to the total number of respondents who selected each answer option. Respondents could select up to three responses, meaning the total percentage is greater than 100%.

The third and final question gives us the data on what people think needs to be done to strengthen the future of the community (Table 21).

Table 21 – ‘Which of the following factors do you consider the most significant in strengthening the future of the community?’

Responses (Select one response)	Percentage of respondents	
Teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture	49.1%	(N=2012)
Education – youth, vocational, scientific, higher education, retraining	13.2%	(N=541)
Entrepreneurship – adding economic, social and intellectual value to the community	11.3%	(N=463)
Being more outward looking and engaged with global issues such as climate change, migration and infectious diseases	9.1%	(N=373)
Giving back - helping social causes, education / scholarship, other	7.7%	(N=316)
Other	5.4%	(N=220)
Care for the elderly - providing resources and programmes	4.2%	(N=172)
Total	100%	(N=4097)

When discussing the three questions we have chosen to apply to ‘Community’ we have cross-referenced them with the most significant criteria to discuss: age, gender, region, marital status and children, and religious disputes.

3.1.1 Age

According to our data, the older generation (76+) were the most likely to say that they were not interested in learning more about any of the given topics.

The 18-25-year-olds had the highest percentage of respondents who said they were interested in learning more about Zoroastrian scriptures and their meaning, Zoroastrian rituals and their significance, Parsi / Irani history, culture and arts, and all of the languages (Table 22).⁷⁷ This is significant as leaders regularly voice concerns that young people do not attend educational events such as lectures.

3.1.2 Gender

Our data shows that men were more likely than women to be interested in learning about Iranian history (38.1% vs 32.1%), Zoroastrian scriptures and their meaning (45.2% vs 41.6%), Zoroastrian philosophy and ethics (50.0% vs 45.8%) and Parsi / Irani history (54.0% vs 44.6%). Women showed a greater interest in Zoroastrian rituals and their significance (54.0% vs 46.7%), Parsi / Irani culture and cultural traditions (39.9% vs 24.9%) and Parsi / Irani arts (28.0% vs 22.0%). Here, it is possible that women were interested in those rituals that belonged to the domestic sphere in which they were the sole performers and/or in which they participated.

Both men and women were interested in Iranian culture and heritage (25.3% vs 27.4%), the *Shahnameh* (40.8% vs 40.7%), Farsi and/or Zoroastrian Dari languages (20.7% vs 21.2%), ancient languages (23.1% vs 21.1%), and Parsi Gujarati language (19.3% vs 19.7%).⁷⁸

In terms of greatest threats the community faced in the future, there were mainly minor differences with women slightly more concerned than men about the lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals and parents neglecting to pass down religious traditions to their children. The only really significant difference between genders was that women were much more likely to be concerned about the unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and accept the children of intermarried men and women (50.1% vs 39.8%).⁷⁹

In terms of the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community, men were more likely than women to choose entrepreneurship as the most significant factor (14.3% vs 8.5%). Women were slightly more likely to select teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture (50.9% vs 47.5%) and being more outward looking (10.7% vs 7.4%).⁸⁰

3.1.3 Region

Proportionally, more respondents in North America reported interest in each of the topics set out, as compared to respondents in South Asia, but the widest gaps occurred in the following: Iranian culture and heritage (29.9% vs 22.6%), Zoroastrian scriptures and their meaning (51.7% vs 37.5%), Zoroastrian rituals and their significance (54.8% vs 47.2%), Zoroastrian philosophy and ethics (57.0% vs 40.7%), Parsi / Irani culture and cultural traditions (37.6% vs 28.4%), and Parsi Gujarati language (24.4% vs 15.5%).⁸¹

Responses from both the main regions showed that there was little difference in what people thought about threats to the community. One surprising result was that a higher proportion of respondents in North America were concerned about migration to the west

than those in South Asia (15.0% vs 11.6%).⁸² There is no obvious answer as to why this should be the case. It may be that those migrating from South Asia consider it as aspirational and therefore not a problem, whereas those already settled in North America, as migrants from a previous generation, are concerned that traditions are being lost. There were distinctions between the two biggest regions – North America and South Asia – when it came to strengthening the community. Respondents in South Asia considered entrepreneurship (14.1% vs 7.7%), education (15.0% vs 10.3%), care for the elderly (5.9% vs 2.6%) and giving back (8.9% vs 6.1%) to be more significant factors than those in North America. North American respondents considered teaching the next generation (54.6% vs 45.7%) and being more outward looking (11.6% vs 6.5%) to be more significant factors than respondents in South Asia. 7.1% of respondents in North America and 3.9% in South Asia also picked 'other'.⁸³

3.1.4 Marital status

There were no big differences in subjects of interest according to marital status (Table 24). However, we thought it an important demographic marker to include because marriage is an important topic within the Zoroastrian community for several reasons (see the marriage section in the Family theme). A higher proportion of respondents who were in a relationship with a non-Zoroastrian selected each subject of interest compared to those in a relationship with a Zoroastrian. This was particularly noticeable for Parsi Gujarati language (25.8% vs 14.9%), Zoroastrian philosophy and ethics (54.7% vs 46.3%) and Parsi / Irani arts (28.7% vs 20.4%).⁸⁴ This remained true when looking solely at respondents in South Asia, although to a lesser extent, and was even more pronounced when looking at respondents in North America.⁸⁵

Respondents with children were less likely to be interested in learning more about all topics of interest.⁸⁶ Most threats were of equal concern to people whether they had children or not. There were some which concerned respondents with children more, including migration to the west (15.0% vs 9.9%), marrying later in life or not at all (23.3% vs 20.1%) and marrying outside the community (23.0% vs 19.1%).⁸⁷

3.1.5 Education and Employment

Respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to be more interested in learning about all subjects.⁸⁸

Respondents with only high school qualifications were the most likely to perceive a lack of respect for the authority of the priesthood as the greatest threat facing the community.⁸⁹ Connecting this to our previous finding of this group turning to the priesthood for the settling of religious disputes, this suggests that those with lower levels of education placed a higher value on the religious structures of Zoroastrianism.

Those in self-employment were the most likely to consider entrepreneurship to be the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community (16.9%), indicating that their focus was more on the economic strength of the community. Respondents in full-time education were most likely to consider education to be the most significant factor in strengthening the future of the community (16.1%), maybe because they saw education as securing their future and thus the community's future (Table 25).

3.1.6 Entrepreneurship

Of those who stated they were entrepreneurs, 19.1% chose entrepreneurship as the greatest strength for the community in the future, compared to 9.8% of those who were not entrepreneurs.⁹⁰ With regard to the greatest threats the community faced, entrepreneurs were more likely to state that 'loss of entrepreneurial spirit' was the greatest threat (11.9%) compared to non-entrepreneurs (4.5%).⁹¹

With regard to the strengthening factors, entrepreneurs were more likely than non-entrepreneurs to participate in business / profession orientated events (26.3% vs 10.4%), professional women's networking events (8.6% vs 4.5%), community outreach to help needy community members (24.3% vs 18.1%), Zoroastrian congresses (27.0% vs 19.1%), and youth orientated events such as camps and classes for children (26.8% vs 23.6%), meet and greet (27.0% vs 22.1%) and sporting activities and events (40.6% vs 35.4%).⁹² In short, they were socially active members of the community interested in its welfare and development. For this reason, perhaps, entrepreneurs were more likely than non-entrepreneurs to always attend events (17.2% vs 14.0%).⁹³

Table 24 – ‘In your opinion, what are the greatest threats to the Zoroastrian religion and the Iranian / Parsi / Irani ethnocultural identity?’ by Marital status^{xxviii}

	Single (Never Married) (N=921)	In a relationship (N=229)	Engaged (N=35)	Married / Civil Partnership (N=2606)	Separated (N=24)	Divorced (N=127)	Widowed (N=156)	Prefer not to answer (N=28)
Small, ageing population	60.6%	56.3%	42.9%	59.8%	45.8%	51.2%	64.7%	60.7%
Lack of knowledge and understanding about the religion and rituals	35.4%	34.9%	54.3%	35.9%	25.0%	37.8%	28.8%	42.9%
Lack of respect for the authority of priesthood	8.4%	8.7%	2.9%	7.7%	4.2%	5.5%	10.3%	3.6%
Different rules in different associations and trusts	12.2%	15.3%	14.3%	10.5%	12.5%	11.8%	8.3%	17.9%
Migration to the West and the influence of Western culture	10.9%	9.2%	8.6%	14.3%	4.2%	13.4%	16.7%	10.7%
Loss of entrepreneurial spirit	4.7%	4.8%	2.9%	6.2%	4.2%	7.1%	4.5%	7.1%
Unwillingness to reform issues of intermarriage and fully accept the children of intermarried Zoroastrian men and women	40.7%	54.1%	45.7%	45.8%	50.0%	52.8%	41.0%	32.1%
Apathetic and lethargic population	9.3%	6.1%	2.9%	10.2%	4.2%	9.4%	8.3%	0.0%
Marrying later in life or not marrying at all	23.0%	15.3%	17.1%	22.3%	41.7%	18.9%	31.4%	14.3%
Marrying outside the community	19.5%	14.4%	22.9%	22.5%	16.7%	19.7%	28.8%	14.3%
Parents not passing down religious traditions to children	13.0%	13.5%	11.4%	14.1%	25.0%	16.5%	14.1%	21.4%
Increase in atheism / agnosticism / non-religion	6.5%	10.5%	8.6%	4.1%	4.2%	3.9%	1.9%	0.0%
In-fighting in the community	28.4%	28.8%	37.1%	29.4%	37.5%	29.1%	26.3%	39.3%
Other	3.4%	4.4%	8.6%	2.5%	4.2%	5.5%	1.9%	7.1%

^{xxviii} Respondents could choose up to three responses for the greatest threats, meaning the total percentages are greater than 100%. The column for ‘Other’ has been omitted due to a lack of responses.

Table 25 - 'Which of the following factors do you consider the most significant in strengthening the future of the community?', by Employment status^{xxix}

	Full-time student (N=273)	Full-time employment (N=1640)	Part-time employment (N=239)	Self-employed (N=667)	Homemaker (N=396)	Retired (N=891)	Unemployed but actively looking for work (N=126)	Unemployed but not looking for work (N=33)	Other (N=43)	Total (N=4088)
Teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture	52.4%	51.0%	47.7%	44.1%	50.8%	48.8%	52.4%	39.4%	51.2%	49.2%
Entrepreneurship	11.0%	11.5%	7.1%	16.9%	5.3%	9.9%	15.9%	18.2%	7.0%	11.3%
Education	16.1%	12.3%	13.4%	12.1%	14.6%	13.0%	15.9%	3.0%	11.6%	13.2%
Care for the elderly	1.8%	3.2%	4.6%	2.4%	8.1%	6.3%	2.4%	6.1%	2.3%	4.2%
Giving back	7.0%	8.2%	6.3%	7.2%	7.1%	7.9%	2.4%	15.2%	9.3%	7.7%
Being more outward looking and engaged with global issues	7.0%	8.5%	13.4%	9.7%	8.8%	10.3%	7.1%	6.1%	7.0%	9.1%
Other	4.8%	5.3%	7.5%	7.5%	5.3%	3.8%	4.0%	12.1%	11.6%	5.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

^{xxix} The columns for 'In occupational training' and 'Seasonal / Intermittent employment' have been omitted due to a lack of responses. Respondents could select multiple employment statuses.

4. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

Our data showed a socially mobile, highly educated population who are becoming more highly educated; most of our youngest respondents were in full-time education and those who were not highly educated themselves, although small in number, were primarily motivated to migrate for the benefit of their children's education and future. The majority of respondents were practising or partially practising the religion regardless of education level. Although religious and ethnic identity was strong, we found that levels of religious belief and practice varied according to levels of secular education, with higher levels of education corresponding to less strongly held and less traditional religious beliefs and practices.

The golden era of Parsi entrepreneurship in the 19th and 20th centuries, reflected in the Iranian Zoroastrian community as well, is often seen as a benchmark by which to measure the entrepreneurial spirit of today's younger generation. This is perhaps misleading because circumstances have changed substantially, and the demographics are so different with a large Zoroastrian diaspora that settled as a result of multiple migrations at different times in the past two hundred years. Our data in the previous section of Education and Employment shows that young people's priorities and interests are diverse and that many are working in fields that require a high level of education, such as STEM. At the same time, we note young people have a limited interest in entrepreneurship, which is reflected in recent scholarship on the impact of technological improvements on the 'incentives of individuals to start their own business'.^{xxx}

Philanthropy is closely linked with Zoroastrian teachings. The data showed the community living up to its reputation of generosity, not just to 'their own', but being investors in and benefactors of community in the widest sense. There is also a clear link between entrepreneurship and philanthropy. Entrepreneurs were more invested in the community as they were more likely than non-entrepreneurs to regularly volunteer their time, donate money and donate in-kind.

Most respondents were interested in learning about some aspect of the religion or culture. This is useful information for community leaders who are interested in engaging community members, organising events and activities, and creating a welcoming environment in public spaces. The greatest perceived threat to the community is its small, ageing population. People were very aware of the demographic decline, and they believed that teaching the next generation about the Zoroastrian religion and culture was the most significant way to strengthen the community in the future.

^{xxx} Salgado (2020).

We conclude this Report with some of the quotes from the Survey where we asked respondents to suggest *how* their idea for strengthening the future of the community might be achieved. As it was the most popular option, many respondents spoke about teaching the next generation about Zoroastrian religion and culture through in-person and online religious classes and lectures. The following quotes offered slightly differently ways of teaching:

“Creating an exchange program where youth from all over the world can travel to different parts (families) and learn about religion and beliefs.”

“Educating the youth via social media platforms (not webinars), creating interactive Zoroastrian app-based games for kids that help them learn about their religion and culture. World-wide Zoroastrian religious competitions with incentives for winners.”

“Building and maintaining a well put together encyclopaedia/database of various Zoroastrian teachings, culture, meaning, networking which is unbiased and peer reviewed by reputable scholars in the community.”

The second option was ‘Entrepreneurship – adding economic, social and intellectual value to the community’:

“Personal and community wealth provides political power and greater knowledge of and acceptance of our microscopic communities. Plus, it will provide greater personal freedoms to be active in issues that will, directly and indirectly, help us survive.”

The third option was ‘Education – youth, vocational, scientific higher education, retraining’. Many people who chose this option spoke about improving religious education:

“Need to train our young children through workshops. Platform for interacting with role models. financial support for best and feasible ideas. Training and guidance from young days. Teach them how it can impact positively on the community, confidence.”

The fourth option was ‘Care for the elderly – providing resources and programmes’:

“Panchayets/Trusts to send their knowledgeable persons to find out on door-to-door basis, in their vicinity, to help the poor Parsis, in whatever way they can, check their health problems, give them enough relief to survive. Good food, clothing, shelter.”

The fifth option was 'Giving back – helping causes, education / scholarship, other':

"Endowing scholarships helps young people achieve their education. Hope that being helped by the community will encourage them to be an integral part of the community and to give back when they can."

The sixth option was 'Being more outward looking and engaged with global issues such as climate change, migration and infectious diseases':

"Contributing and adding value towards solving global issues strengthens the position and name of the community, and can develop enthusiasm in the younger generations and motivate them to be more involved."

"Climate change and diminishing resources on our planet, such as water, are issues that will likely be a major threat to all existence on Earth in 25-50 years. We need to work with other communities on these issues and be agents of change."

"Participating in public square with other humans to achieve the common goals of sustainability. speaking out when seeing/facing social injustice and promotion of misinformation via social media. Making individuals & National leaders accountable."

ENDNOTES

The table numbers below refer to the document 'Gen Z and Beyond - Ch.5 Aspirations Appendix', which can be accessed at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/gen-z-and-beyond-survey-every-generation>

- ¹ See Table 1
- ² See Table 2
- ³ See Table 3
- ⁴ See Table 4
- ⁵ See Table 5
- ⁶ See Table 6
- ⁷ See Table 7
- ⁸ See Table 8
- ⁹ See Table 9 for breakdown by country
- ¹⁰ See Table 10
- ¹¹ See Table 11
- ¹² See Table 12
- ¹³ See Table 13
- ¹⁴ See Table 14
- ¹⁵ See Table 15
- ¹⁶ See Table 16
- ¹⁷ See Table 17
- ¹⁸ See Table 18
- ¹⁹ See Table 19
- ²⁰ See Table 20
- ²¹ See Table 21
- ²² See Table 22
- ²³ See Table 23 and 24
- ²⁴ See Table 25
- ²⁵ See Table 26
- ²⁶ See Table 27
- ²⁷ See Table 28
- ²⁸ See Table 29
- ²⁹ See Table 30
- ³⁰ See Tables 31 and 32
- ³¹ See Table 33
- ³² See Table 34
- ³³ See Table 35
- ³⁴ See Table 36
- ³⁵ See Table 37
- ³⁶ See Table 38
- ³⁷ See Table 39
- ³⁸ See Table 40
- ³⁹ See Table 41
- ⁴⁰ See Table 42
- ⁴¹ See Table 43
- ⁴² See Table 44
- ⁴³ See Table 45
- ⁴⁴ See Table 46
- ⁴⁵ See Table 47
- ⁴⁶ See Table 48 for breakdown by country
- ⁴⁷ See Table 49
- ⁴⁸ See Table 50
- ⁴⁹ See Table 51 for breakdown by country
- ⁵⁰ See Table 52
- ⁵¹ See Table 53

- 52 See Table 54
- 53 See Tables 55 and 56
- 54 See Table 57 for all regions and breakdown by country
- 55 See Table 58
- 56 See Tables 59 to 61
- 57 See Tables 62 to 64
- 58 See Tables 65 to 67
- 59 See Tables 68 to 70 for all regions and breakdown by country
- 60 See Tables 71 to 73
- 61 See Tables 74 to 76
- 62 See Tables 77 to 79
- 63 See Tables 80 to 82
- 64 See Tables 83 to 85
- 65 See Table 86
- 66 See Table 87
- 67 See Table 88
- 68 See Table 89 for breakdown by country
- 69 See Table 90
- 70 See Table 91
- 71 See Table 92
- 72 See Table 93
- 73 See Table 94
- 74 See Table 95 and 96
- 75 See Table 97
- 76 See Table 98 for breakdown by country
- 77 See Table 99 for the full table
- 78 See Table 100
- 79 See Table 101
- 80 See Table 102
- 81 See Table 103
- 82 See Table 104
- 83 See Table 105
- 84 See Table 106
- 85 See Tables 107 and 108
- 86 See Table 109
- 87 See Table 110
- 88 See Table 111
- 89 See Table 112
- 90 See Table 113
- 91 See Table 114
- 92 See Table 115
- 93 See Table 116

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