THE PRACTICE OF AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS ON MOONSIGHTING BEGINNING OF RAMADAN AND EID

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The beginning and ending of lunar months hold significant religious and cultural importance for Muslims around the world. They determine when two pillars of Islam, Ramadan fasting and pilgrimage, will be practiced each year. Every year, the commencement and conclusion of Ramadan and Eid are subject to controversy and dispute, particularly for Muslims in Western countries.

This dispute escalated in 2023. For those who follow local and regional moonsighting to mark the beginning of the lunar month, Saturday 22 April marked the celebration of Eid, which was supported by the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC). Following ANIC's announcement, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and Sydney's Lakemba Mosque announced Eid would fall on Friday 21, relying on a different calculation methodology.

An online survey was conducted among Australian Muslims to gather data on their practices and experiences in Australia. The survey was carefully prepared and passed through the ethics committee at Charles Sturt University. This is the first time in Australia and to our knowledge around the world when Muslims have been asked about their practices and opinions on this issue. The results published in this report make a historic contribution.

To ensure the research sample represents the Australian Muslim population, participants from different age groups, genders, ethnicities, religious backgrounds and states across Australia were targeted. Muslim organisations, mosques and major religious groups that follow a particular methodology were contacted to help promote the survey so it could reach a diverse and large number of participants.

The response to the online survey was overwhelming. A total of 5,584 participants across the country responded to the survey within the two weeks of data collection immediately after Eid 2023. This high level of participation reflects the issue's importance, strong interest and impact on the Australian Muslim community.

The summary of results are:

- Australian Muslims rely on three major sources when deciding the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. The majority (52.1%) of respondents rely on Moonsighting Australia or other online moonsighting reporting platforms as their primary source. 21.6% of respondents rely on their local mosque or organisation to establish the start of Ramadan, indicating the significant influence and role of Islamic organisations across Australia.
- 15.3% of participants indicated they follow the announcement of ANIC and the Mufti of Australia. This is high as a single organisation but low considering this is the peak body of all imams in Australia and that ANIC makes the announcement

directly to the community. It is unclear which mosques follow the ANIC announcement orwhether they determine Ramadan and Eid independently.

- Significantly, these rates are different for subcommunities. For example:
  - » The Lebanese/Arab community is split evenly between following their mosque and ANIC with 28.5% and 28.0%, respectively. Only slightly less, 23.9% follow Moonsighting Australia. Interestingly, following their country of origin was only 0.6%.
  - » For the Turkish community, though following country of origin is 16.1%, the largest portion is following a local mosque/Islamic organisation with 28.5%. Since Turkish mosques follow Diyanet and Turkey, this means most Australian Turks follow Turkey (44.6%). Nevertheless, Australian Turks are shifting their sources, with 18.8% following moonsighting and 14.6% following ANIC.
  - » The African Muslim community largely follows Moonsighting Australia (48.4%) followed by a local mosque (32.8%) and ANIC (11.7%).
- The majority of respondents (64%) consider local moonsighting as a method to establish the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. This suggests a significant preference for observing the moon locally within Australia and shows that Australian Muslims are beginning to think independently to their country of origin.
- The various astronomical calculations (under 14% to 6%) relate to the birth of the new moon and possibility of sighting the moon in Australia, regionally and globally. This result indicates that a significant proportion of participants consider scientific calculations with varying methods as their basis to determine who they choose to follow.
- These findings illustrate the diversity of approaches used by respondents when deciding whom to follow for establishing Ramadan and Eid, reflecting a range of considerations, including local, regional and global sightings, as well as different scientific calculations.
- The majority of participants (83.2%) expressed confidence in the accuracy of the source they follow to determine the beginning of Ramadan and Eid.
- 79.2% of participants have remained consistent in their methodology of choice and which authority they follow over the past five years. However, 20.8% of participants have indicated they changed their method. Regarding their switch, the majority cited family-related reasons as the primary motivation while others mentioned learning about another method being more accurate. Some participants expressed a desire to be with the majority in the community.
- Significantly, 31% of participants (1,712) acknowledged that some of their family members have started Ramadan or Eid on different days in the past three years. This indicates Muslim families experience internal variation or disagreement regarding the beginning and ending of Ramadan.
- About half of the respondents who had family differences reported strong to severe impact on their family relations when any family members started Ramadan and Eid on different days. This corresponds to about 15% of the Australian Muslim population.
- While many families appear to have a unified start to Ramadan and Eid and accommodate their differences when they arise, about one-third of Muslim families in Australia do not enjoy a unified Eid experience.
- When asked "What do you feel should be the ultimate outcome to the issue of Muslims starting Ramadan and Eid on different days?" 43% of the participants expressed a desire for unity, a future in which all Australian Muslims start Ramadan and Eid on the same day.
- 35.2% of participants indicated that Australian Muslims will eventually accept that different interpretations will always be there as part of the freedom of interpretation inherent in Islamic law.
- 21.8% of respondents had a more pessimistic view and indicated the Australian Muslim community will not be able to achieve unity and the issue will remain unresolved for the foreseeable future.
- The final question of the survey was open-ended as to what improvements or changes Muslim community members would like to see in the process of the start of Ramadan and Eid in Australia. 2,787 participants shared their thoughts and suggestions regarding improvements or changes. Based on the quantity of responses received, it is evident this is a significant topic of interest and importance to the Australian Muslim community. Samples of these comments are provided in the last section of this report.

The results of the survey reveal how the decisions of Muslim authorities impact Australian Muslims. Education and awareness campaigns can help improve the community's general understanding on moonsighting. More importantly, the results provide a useful indication to Muslim organisations on how they can approach the issue in the future to promote unity within the community rather than continuing to repeat the debate.

BACKGROUND

Every year, the commencement and conclusion of Ramadan and Eid are subject to controversy. Muslims nervously anticipate and debate different start dates. They are happy when most Muslims start on the same day and disappointed when the community fails to identify the start of Ramadan and Eid on the same day. In 2023, this dispute in Australia escalated. For those who follow local and regional moonsighting to mark the beginning of the lunar month, Saturday 22 April marked the celebration of Eid, which was supported by the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC). ANIC uses a calculation method according to local possibility of sighting. Following ANIC's announcement, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and Sydney's Lakemba Mosque announced that Eid would fall on Friday 21, relying on a different calculation methodology. This scenario was unusual as, historically, ANIC and AFIC have announced the beginning and ending of Ramadan on the same day based on a calculation method.

The Australian Muslim Times (AMUST) published an article with a post-analysis on the determination of Eid (2023), "Unusually there was a hybrid scenario followed in Australia this year where Ramadan fasting was announced by Lakemba Mosque authorities from Thursday 23 March while Eid was announced well in advance to be celebrated on Friday 21 April."[1] As a result, the Muslim community was confused and in chaos due to the conflicting declarations of the two peak Islamic organisations.

The beginning and ending of lunar months hold significant religious and cultural importance for Muslims around the world. They determine when two pillars of Islam, Ramadan fasting and pilgrimage, will be practiced each year. One of the most established methods to establishing the lunar months and determining the timing of major religious rituals and festive times is by sighting the new moon. The issue of establishing lunar months, however, has become more complex and contentious over the past couple of decades, particularly in the context of modern science and globalised societies where diverse interpretations of scholars of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and technological advancements have introduced new methods of determining how to sight the moon and establish the beginning of the lunar month. The contentiousness of the issue is particularly experienced and highlighted by Muslims in Western countries who come from diverse religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The Muslim community in Australia is equally diverse, leading to a plethora of opinions on what is the best approach to determine the lunar months, with some scholars and organisations advocating for physical moonsighting only (whether it is conducted locally, regionally or globally) and others supporting astronomical calculations or following a Muslim majority country such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Pakistan. This invariably causes the Australian Muslim community to begin Ramadan on different days, which eventually leads to them celebrating Eid on different days. Consequently, the difference in starting days affects the unity and solidarity of the Muslim community in Australia, an aspect that is important for the spirit of Ramadan and how it is practiced. Different starting dates further creates confusion and misunderstanding among non-Muslims about the observance of Ramadan.

As part of PhD research on the issue of moonsighting, an online survey was conducted among Australian Muslims to gather data on their practices and experiences in Australia. The survey was aimed at collecting information from a wide range of individuals and communities, and to shed light on the current state of the practice and the different perspectives and opinions that exist within the community.

The response to the online survey was overwhelming. Over 5,584 participants across the country responded to the survey within a few days of its release. The survey was supported by a diverse range of respondents, including individuals, community leaders and organisations across Australia. Such high levels of participation reflect the importance of the issue and strong interest of the Australian Muslim community on issues related to moonsighting and the start of Ramadan and Eid in Australia.

The survey results provide valuable insights into the current practices of moonsighting in Australia, including the methods different parts of the community use to determine the start and end of Ramadan, and the challenges faced by individuals and families when determining which methodology they should adopt and authority to follow. The data collected from the survey gives important insights to promote greater understanding on the topic of moonsighting as well as unity within the community while appreciating the diverse views of scholars on the issue. The survey results reveal specific areas where education and awareness campaigns can help improve the community's general understanding on moonsighting and more importantly, to promote unity within the community rather than continuing the debate on the varying opinions.

[1] Zia Ahmad, "Post-analysis of Eid Day Determination: 1444 AH/2023 CE," AMUST (*Australian Muslim Times*), April 27, 2023.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was carefully prepared and passed through the ethics committee at Charles Sturt University. It was designed to gather data on various aspects of moonsighting practices, including participants' understanding on the topic, their preferred methods of establishing the beginning and end of Ramadan, their attitudes towards other methods, and the social implications the issue may have caused in their families. The survey was conducted online and made available to the public via social media platforms, word of mouth and Islamic organisations across Australia. The data was collected over two weeks, during which 5,584 participants from diverse backgrounds and communities across Australia completed the survey.

The survey questions were structured with open-ended and closed questions, which allowed the participants to express their views on the issue of establishing the beginning and ending of Ramadan. The data collected from the survey was analysed through statistical methods to draw meaningful insights and conclusions that would be relevant to the research objectives. Overall, the methodology used in this survey aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse opinions of Australian Muslims related to moonsighting practices in Australia.

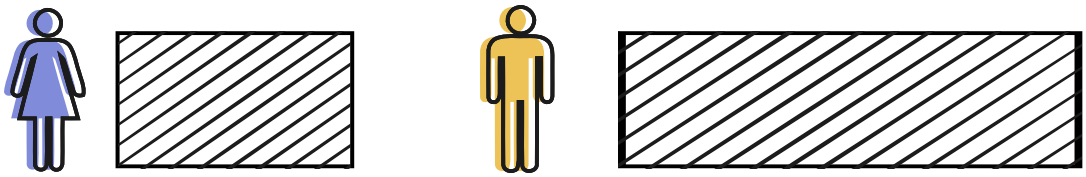
To ensure the sample was representative of the Australian Muslim population, participants from different age groups, genders, ethnicities, religious backgrounds and states across Australia were targeted. Organisations such as ANIC, AFIC and other major religious groups that follow a particular methodology, were contacted to help promote the survey so it could reach a large number of participants from various backgrounds.

The final question of the survey, which was an open-ended question, provided an opportunity for the participants to share their perspectives and suggestions regarding any changes they would like to see regarding establishing the beginning and end of Ramadan in Australia really enabled the participants to express their views. Despite being an optional question, more than 2,700 participants provided their feedback. This level of response highlights the high level of interest and concern among the participants regarding the issue of moonsighting in Australia.

RESULTS

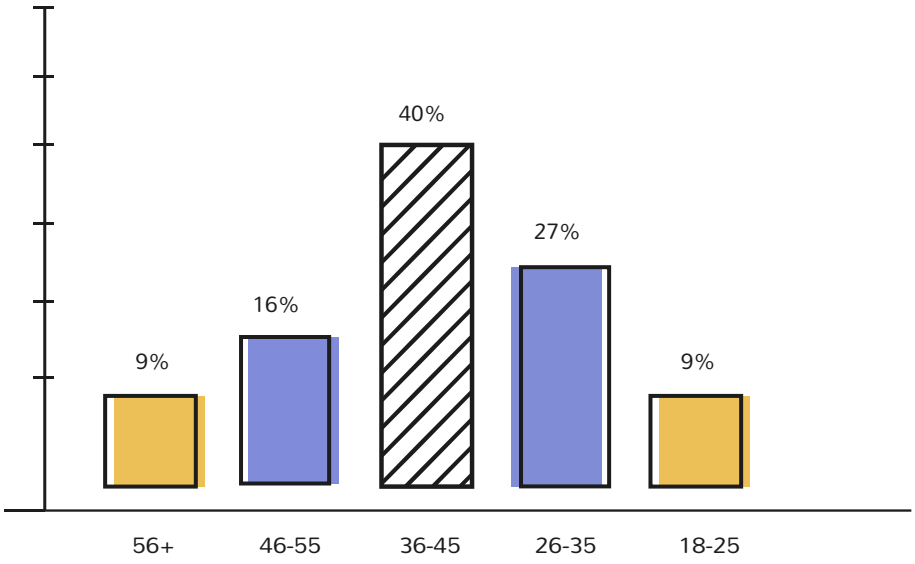


WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?



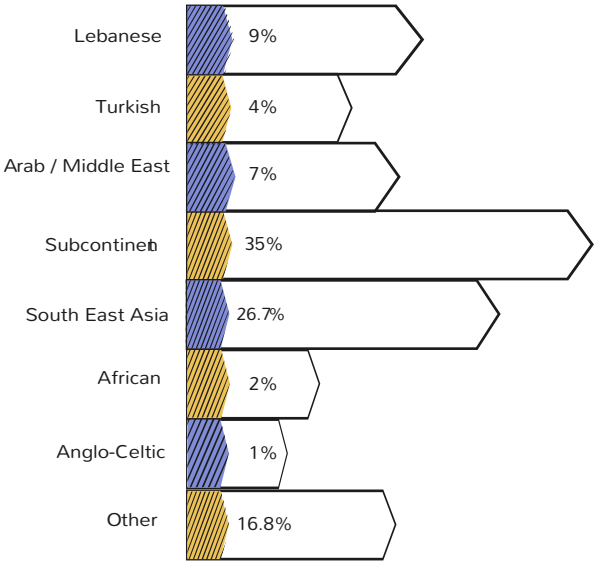
62.36% of participants were male and 37.64% were female. This shows the issues around moonsighting affect the whole community irrespective of gender. While the female participation is lower, it is still significantly large for the results to be generalised across the community.

WHAT IS YOUR AGE?



Participants came from all age groups showing that the sample represents the community. There were 498 responses from people aged 56 or above. It shows the Muslim community in the older category can speak English and are concerned with the issue researched. The majority of the participants fall into the 36-45 age group, with 39.6% (2,212) respondents. This group is also usually leads family practices of Ramadan. This suggests this age group is particularly interested in or engaged with the topic of moonsighting.

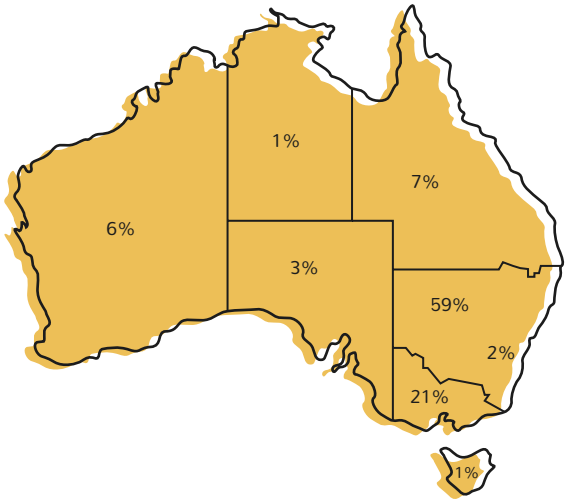
WHAT IS YOUR MAJORITY ETHNIC HERITAGE?



These results indicate the largest ethnic group among the survey respondents was from the Subcontinent, representing 35.2% of the total. Southeast Asians comprise the second largest group, accounting for 26.7% of participants. The "other" category was selected by 16.8% of respondents with a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds beyond the specific categories listed. Additionally, the Lebanese/Middle Eastern, Turkish and African communities collectively represent 20.1% of the respondents.

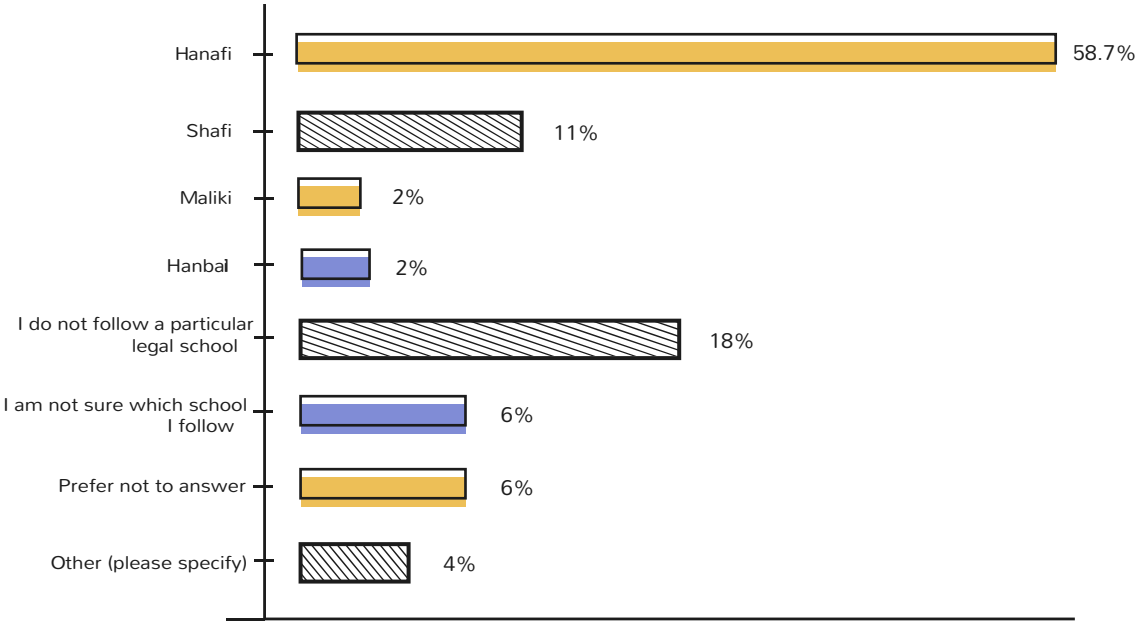
These results suggest the survey captured a significant proportion of participants from the Subcontinent community. However, the lower response rate from other ethnic groups does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest or opinion on the issues of moonsighting in Australia. This could be due to the survey reach, communication channels or varying levels of awareness about the survey. Although every effort was made to target various ethnic groups across Australia, the survey spread among the subcontinent community through social media and WhatsApp messages, which contributed to a larger response from this group in comparison to other ethnic groups.

IN WHICH STATE DO YOU LIVE?



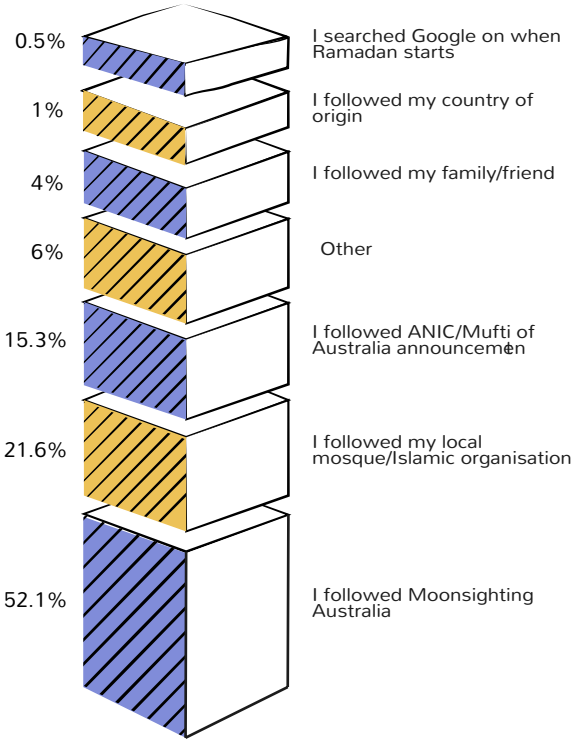
59.1% of the participants were from NSW. While NSW has a large Muslim population. Given that major Islamic organisations such as ANIC, AFIC and Moonsighting Australia are based in NSW or have their headquarters here, it comes as no surprise that the majority of the respondents in the survey were from NSW. This suggests that Muslims in NSW were more responsive to the survey considering the conflicting announcements made by ANIC, AFIC and Lakemba Mosque. 1,156 (20.8%) responses were received from Victoria, which highlights the issues surrounding Ramadan and Eid dates are also significant within Victorian Muslim community. There were notable and sufficient responses from other states and territories, making the results of the survey applicable to the entire Muslim community in Australia.

WHAT ISLAMIC LEGAL SCHOOL DO YOU FOLLOW?



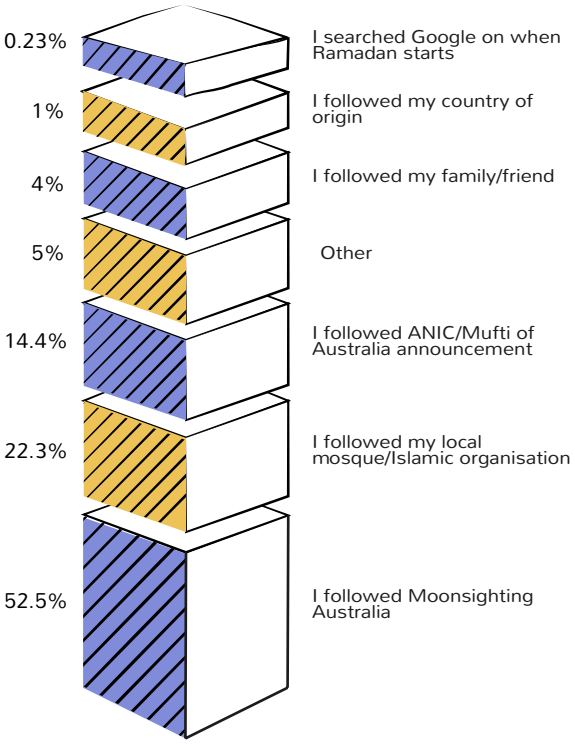
Given the demographics of the survey respondents, it is not surprising to see a higher representation of the Hanafi school of thought (58.7%), as it is predominantly followed in the Subcontinent region. 18.4% of the respondents indicated they do not follow a school of thought, which represents that Australian Muslims are becoming less attached to the Islamic schools followed by their ethnic origin.
Out of the 210 (3.8%) respondents who selected the "other" option, 73 identified themselves as Shia/Ja'fari, despite there not being a specific option for the Shia community in the survey. This suggests a number of Shia respondents proactively chose the "other" category to indicate their affiliation, emphasising their desire to participate in the survey and their interest in moonsighting issues in Australia.

HOW DID YOU KNOW OR ESTABLISH THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN?



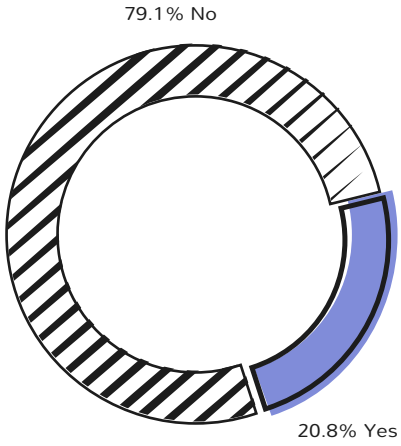
These results show that Australian Muslims rely on three major sources. The majority (52.1%) of respondents rely on Moonsighting Australia or another online moonsighting reporting platform as their primary source for determining the beginning of Ramadan.
21.6% of respondents rely on their local mosque or organisation to establish the start of Ramadan, indicating the influence and role of Islamic organisations across Australia.
15.3% of participants indicated they follow the announcement of ANIC or the Mufti of Australia. This is high as a single entity but low considering this the peak body of all imams in Australia and makes the announcement directly to the community. It is unclear which mosques follow the ANIC announcement or whether mosques determine Ramadan and Eid independently of ANIC.

WHO DID YOU FOLLOW IN ESTABLISHING THE DAY OF EID?



The results of this question were similar to the previous question. 52.5% followed Moonsighting Australia while 22.3% followed their local mosque or organisation and 14.4% of participants said they followed the announcement of the Mufti of Australia/ANIC. The slight decrease in the number of participants who relied on ANIC/Mufti of Australia to determine the day of Eid, compared to when they commenced Ramadan, could be attributed to the conflict between ANIC and AFIC regarding the announcement of the day of Eid.

WITHIN THE LAST 5 YEARS HAVE YOU EVER FOLLOWED A DIFFERENT METHOD OF DETERMINING THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN AND EID THAN YOUR CURRENT METHOD?

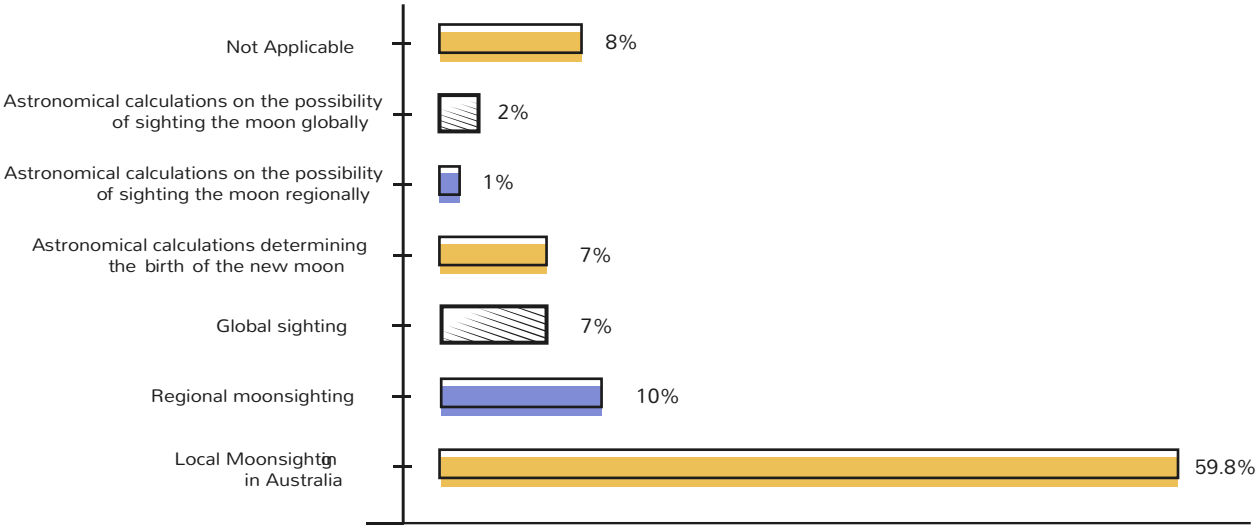


These results suggest the chosen method for determining the start of Ramadan and Eid has remained consistent for the majority of participants. Importantly, while the percentage of those who answered "yes" may appear relatively low at 20.8%, when generalised to the entire Muslim population, this rate represents a significant portion of the Australian Muslim community.

All participants who answered "yes" to this question were given the opportunity to provide an explanation for their decision. In most cases, respondents cited family-related reasons as the primary motivation for their switch while others mentioned learning about a method being more accurate. Some participants expressed a desire to be with the majority in the community.

These reasons demonstrate the complicated interplay of factors such as family relations, personal beliefs, acquisition of knowledge and social influences (whether from community leaders, friends or colleagues) that contribute to individuals' choices in switching methods for determining the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. The wide range of responses underscores the diverse experiences and perspectives within the surveyed population, emphasising the richness of their individual journeys and viewpoints.

IN DECIDING WHO TO FOLLOW, DID YOU CONSIDER ANY OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS OF ESTABLISHING THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN AND EID?



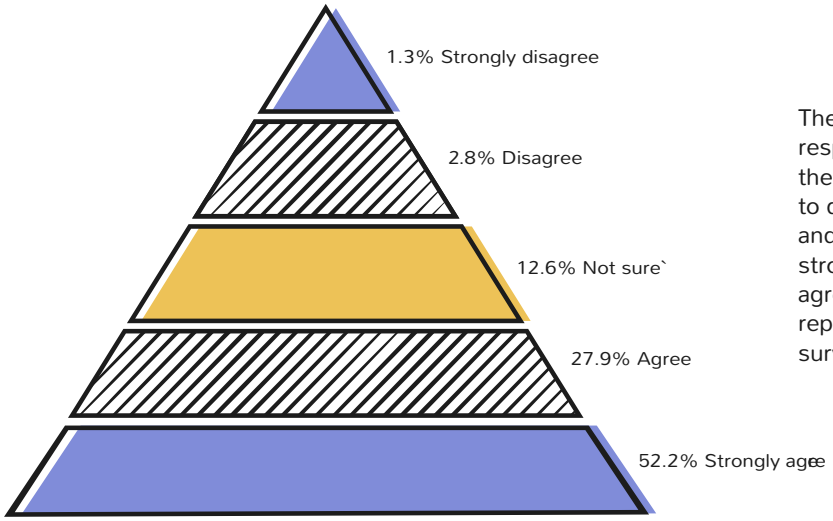
In this question, participants were allowed to select multiple options based on the methods they considered for determining the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. The results above do not account for participants who selected a single answer; rather, they show the results based on the total percentage of respondents who selected multiple options. Further analysis of the data reveals 3,742 participants chose only one option.

The majority of participants, accounting for 59.8%, expressed a preference for relying on local moonsighting within Australia. 10.1% of respondents favoured regional moonsighting, considering moon sightings within a broader regional area. 6.9% of participants indicated a preference for global sightings, which entails considering moonsightings from various parts of the world.

Astronomical calculations determining the "birth" of the new moon was chosen by 6.5% of respondents. This approach relies on scientific calculations to determine the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. Astronomical calculations on the possibility of sighting the moon regionally and globally was chosen by a small number of participants – 1.4% and 1.5%, respectively.

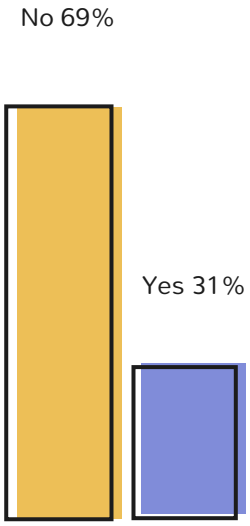
These findings illustrate the diversity of approaches used by respondents when deciding whom to follow for moonsighting, reflecting a range of considerations, including local, regional and global sightings, as well as different scientific calculations.

I AM CONFIDENT IN THE ACCURACY OF THE SOURCE I FOLLOW TO BEGIN RAMADAN AND EID



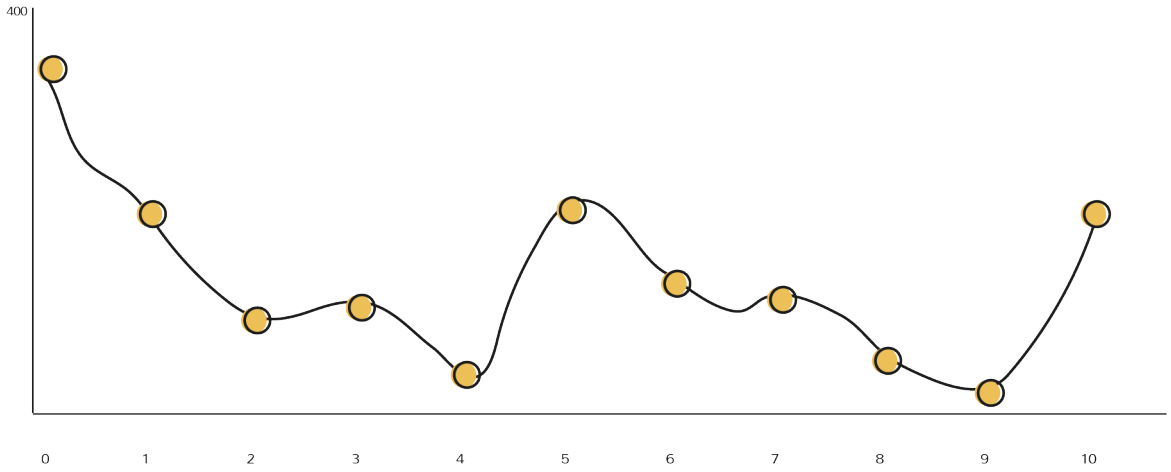
These results show the majority of respondents expressed confidence in the accuracy of the source they follow to determine the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. More specifically, 55.2% strongly agreed, and an additional 27.9% agreed with the statement, collectively representing a significant portion of the surveyed population.

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS HAVE THE MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY STARTED RAMADAN OR EID ON DIFFERENT DAYS?



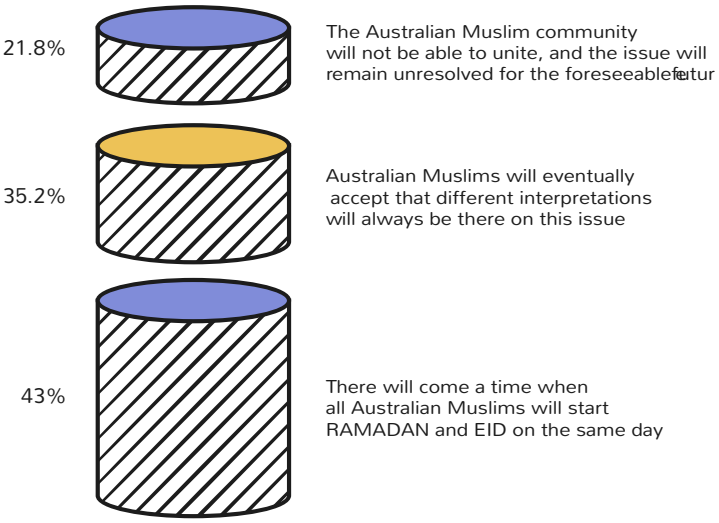
The high "no" response suggests a high level of consistency and unity within immediate family members regarding issues on moonsighting and how they determine the beginning of Ramadan and Eid.
Significantly though, 31% of participants (1,712) acknowledged that some of their family members did start Ramadan or Eid on different days in the past three years. This indicates variation or disagreement within families regarding the beginning and ending of Ramadan.
These findings highlight the diversity of experiences and practices within families, with many finding a way to have a unified start to Ramadan and Eid but one-third of the surveyed Muslim participants in Australia do not enjoy a unified Eid experience.

HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS?



As a follow up question to the previous one, participants were asked about the impact of starting Ramadan or celebrating Eid on different days within their families on their family relations. Participants were required to rate, on a scale of zero to ten, the extent to which the difference in starting Ramadan or Eid on different days affected their family. A rating of zero implied no impact at all, while a rating of ten indicated a severe impact on family dynamics.
Although a median of 4 from a total of 1,576 respondents suggests a moderate level of effect on families, it is important to note the average rating only represents an aggregate of individual responses. 12.5% of participants (who had family members start Ramadan or Eid on different days) experienced severe negative impact.
The sizable number of participants (346) rated the impact of starting Ramadan or celebrating Eid on different days as 0, indicating they perceived no effect on their family dynamics. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents did not experience any noticeable disruptions or conflicts within their families related to this issue.
However, 188 participants (11.9%) rated the impact as 10, indicating a severe effect on their family relations. This suggests a significant subset of respondents experienced heightened challenges, conflicts or difficulties within their families due to the differences in starting Ramadan or Eid on different days.
The remaining ratings from 1 to 9 represent varying degrees of impact experienced by those that contributed to this question. Most of the respondents fell within the middle range of the scale, with ratings of 4 (76), 5 (197) and 6 (122). This suggests a substantial proportion of participants felt a moderate impact on their family dynamics, with neither negligible nor severe effects.
Nevertheless, about half the respondents reported strong to severe impacts on their family relations when any family members started Ramadan and Eid on different days. This corresponds to about 15% of the Australian Muslim population.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL SHOULD BE THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME TO THE ISSUE OF MUSLIMS STARTING RAMADAN AND EID ON DIFFERENT DAYS?



Participants were given three options:

1. There will come a time when all Australian Muslims will start Ramadan and Eid on the same day
2. The Australian Muslim community will not be able to unite, and the issue will remain unresolved for the foreseeable future
3. Australian Muslims will eventually accept that different interpretations will always be there on this issue

The responses reflect the diverse perspectives within the community regarding the ideal resolution to the issue of moonsighting in Australia. The largest proportion of respondents (43%) expressed a desire for unity, a future in which all Australian Muslims start Ramadan and Eid on the same day.

35.2% of participants indicated that Australian Muslims will eventually accept that different interpretations will always be there as part of freedom of interpretation inherent in Islamic law. This response suggests recognition of the ongoing diversity of perspectives and ikhtilaf (differences of opinion) within the community and an inclination towards tolerance and acceptance of differing practices.

21.8% of respondents believe the Australian Muslim community will not be able to achieve unity on this matter and the issue will remain unresolved for the foreseeable future. This viewpoint suggests a pessimistic outlook regarding the potential for consensus or agreement within the community. A possible reason for this relatively high percentage could be attributed to recent events and controversies, particularly the open conflict that took place this year involving ANIC, AFIC and Lakemba Mosque.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

The final question of the survey was open-ended: What improvements or changes would you like to see in the process of the start and end of Ramadan and Eid in Australia? 2,787 participants took part in this question and shared their thoughts and suggestions regarding improvements or changes they would like to see. Based on the quantity of responses received, it is evident this is a significant topic of interest and importance to the Australian Muslim community.

The majority of comments in this section of the survey revolved around the themes of unity and need for major organisations (mainly AFIC, ANIC and Moonsighting Australia) to collaborate and find a resolution to the ongoing dilemma of establishing the beginning of Ramadan and Eid. Many respondents expressed their desire for a unified approach, emphasising the importance of everyone coming together to address the issue.

A significant number of participants, however, commented that the issue of moonsighting should not be perceived solely as matter of unity. Rather, they emphasised that true unity lies in accepting and respecting different opinions and perspectives. These respondents highlighted the significance of adopting an environment of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance within the Muslim community while acknowledging that diversity of viewpoints is inevitable.

The comments will be analysed thoroughly in the thesis and future publications. Below are a sample of noteworthy comments:

"As the general public, we have no say in the start and end of these dates. Qualified individuals either calculate astronomically or sight the moon, their results should just be results, but the public criticise each other for following one way. I've never been reprimanded for the choice I've gone with, I'm lucky to have an accepting community, maybe leaders and organisations that are responsible for making statements should also add a clause reminding their congregation to maintain salamah between alternate opinions."

"Logically, the local moonsighting method should be agreed upon. Historically, this was the preferred method throughout history, before sycophantism and lack of foresight influenced our community leaders – to the point where the level of trust in them has now stooped to the same level we have for politicians. Thanks for your efforts, may Allah Ta'ala reward you."

"Education and awareness based on the Qur'an and Sunnah is a must to eliminate differences amongst Muslims with tolerance and patience will help us all inshaAllah."

"I feel the Muslim community in general and Australian Muslim scholars in particular have preferred differences rather than agreeing on a solution to this issue. Surely, issues like this existed throughout Islamic history; however, in today's world where we have tools and communication advances at our disposal, it is an irony that the ulema of this community are not able to find a solution to at least put this issue to rest locally and agree on one way to establish and beginning and end of Ramadan in Australia as a whole. There is a need to establish a single central authority/committee which should decide this internally irrespective of whatever method they use and unanimously give a single fatwa to establish these key dates. It just feels so bad to see people celebrating Eid or starting to fast on different days in the same city, leave alone the whole country. It's high time a solution to this problem is resolved once and for all!"

"Muslims residing in Australia should follow local moonsighting not country of birth or regional or Saudi. We live in Australia and follow local moonsighting throughout the year – why cause disunity at Ramadhaan and Eid?"

"Muslim leaders need to have a united front. They should remove their ego when making such important decisions affecting the Muslim community on all important topics. Using the Islamic law and sunnah not their politics and ego. Time for a change within the organisation making these important decisions."

"Regional moonsighting has fractured an otherwise united group. Local moonsighting has been widely accepted for years as the preferred moonsighting method and there was acceptance that some groups favour calculation or following Saudi Arabia. There were no fights or disagreements until the introduction of regional moonsighting, which has been poorly implemented with poor communication, no website, no monthly announcements, longer delays and the creation of division within masjids. Our family has been involved with local moonsighting for many years and we would like to see reversion of all moonsighting groups back to Australian moonsighting, without the complications of regional moonsighting. We were previously united and we would like to see all moonsighting groups united again."

"I think having Eid on the same day is not a sign of unity. Unity is recognising the difference and diversity. Embrace diversity and that is unity. People are moving toward moonsighting; however, there will be differences based on local, regional and global moonsighting. Accept that a diversity of people are following moonsighting."

"We should be more focused on the essence of Eid (celebrations, family, community) rather than spoiling it with debates and arguments over when moon is sighted."

"It's not to do specifically with Ramadan, but there should be a more general effort to educate people on how valid differences of opinion work. And how if it's a valid difference of opinion then there's automatic forgiveness for whoever made a mistake with a matter of ijtihad. People who present themselves as scholars should also not incite anxieties by making big claims like 'people who followed calculation's Eid prayers are not

valid.' They're not valid according to the belief that calculations aren't valid and they are according to the belief that they are."

"I think having a common method is impossible in Australia because of Muslims from all different backgrounds. Therefore, there is no need for efforts to unite all Australian Muslims on the same day. Rather, each community should be able to agree on the same day as they celebrate their Eid together."

"I think regional moonsighting is something all parties could agree upon and even though I follow local moonsighting, I think there is scope for regional moonsighting to bring everyone together."

"Acknowledgement that there are many schools of thought within Islam that do not fall under mainstream Sunni organisations in Australia. We have very often had differences in our starting and ending days and it speaks to the wide variety of beliefs and legal interpretations in our faith. This is not a bad thing. Perhaps reverting to our simpler times is the answer – see the moon, fast and celebrate according to this."

"A consensus between the different leaders or sects of the religion to discuss and determine a start and end date for the holy month. The inability to have a discussion between these scholars undermines our ability to seek out consensus and be united in one of the pillars of Islam. This for many years has been a joke and is only emphasised by those people outside the faith looking at a religion that is unable to reach resolution on what should be a very straightforward process."

"All imams of Australia should come together, i.e. the local moonsighting ones, the regional ones, the global moonsighting ones and the calculation ones, they should all come together at one table and see who is the majority as this will be a true display of democracy and unity. Then whichever group is the majority, the Grand Mufti should enact this opinion over the whole Australian population via his official statement even it be against the Grand Mufti's opinion or even the people's opinion. They don't have to come all on one table. Instead, a survey can be sent to all the known imams/aalims/muftis to see which opinion is the majority. Currently, the Grand Mufti follows calculations yet none of the famous imams who appear on social media follow calculations. Rather, they follow local or regional sighting. How strange! What is the point of the Grand Mufti then?"

"There is nothing wrong with starting Eid on different days as the methods are Islamically valid. However, the announcement of Eid should not be a platform for lead voices to debate and expose their misalignments. There should be two bodies, one following strict moonsighting and one following astronomical calculations. Each valid in their own right. Ideally, I'd like these bodies to merge but that won't be the case. People depend on predictors and styles that are compatible with their lives, which is valid, and the moonsighting is an activity that is valid. We should understand Islamically different routes of accessing the truth does not mean a clash but rather the diversity the rasul (pbuh) has shared with us that enable us to practice Islam in a way that is compatible."

"Local mosques should provide a written explanation on a noticeboard for choosing the day for the start and end of Ramadan and Eid in Australia."

"I think that ANIC should adopt a well thought out campaign program to firstly educate the Muslim community about the issue, and then discuss with each mosque/ organisation what will follow and announce the methodologies followed for all to see."

"Moon should be sighted regionally in the same time zone especially from majority Islamic countries that share same time zone as Australia. Malaysia Indonesia shares the same time zone."

"Explaining to people how calculation was proven wrong especially in 2023 Ramadan Eid and even in 2016 Eid calculations, which they were forced to change. Hence, this proves that calculation cannot be trusted as if it is wrong once it can be wrong many times."



"The start and end of Ramadan is very dependent on different opinions of Islamic scholars. It is not an issue for Muslims in Australia or any other country in the world. If you follow this method follow it, no blame on you, and don't put the blame on someone who follows another method."

"It should only be according to moonsighting. When I was young, I never recall this being an issue. We all followed the moon and therefore all celebrated the same day. As soon as logistics and planning started to come into it, it became split. Especially here in NSW with the largest mosque Lakemba, the only ones to celebrate according to the north rather than sighting. Disappointing to have a divided community."

"I would like to see all the Muslims of Australia following the moonsighting and starting Ramadan on the same day and end on the same day. Using calculations should only be a MEANS to assist in the moonsighting. It should only estimate when the moon might be sighted. But following the teaching of our Prophet Muhammad is fundamental and physically seeing the moon has to be the way for all Muslims."

"All the Muslim leaders and imams need to discuss this topic and find an amicable outcome in those 11 months and not during Ramadan. This year I did see among the leaders and Imams the need for consensus among common grounds and hence this is best time to start their engagement. This needs discussion not only at the Australia level but may require world leaders too to come together, Australia may give it a start. Of all the various valid opinions, I personally prefer regional moonsighting to be the most suitable option that all should agree to."

"All the different groups with different interpretations must present their methodologies published and must follow the same principles and guidelines and methodologies consistently not shifting and switching every now and then according to the leaders' discretion."

"Since the leaders probably won't all agree on one method, I think there should be more education around choosing a person or organisation and sticking with it, as well as that all methods are correct. And the importance of not dividing families and that we're not accountable if we follow a sheikh/organisation and stick with it. The way I see it is there are different schools of thought, so we all pray differently, but we still pray side by side. We don't criticise each other. There are so many differences in Islamic practice. This is just another one."

"Have one mufti/national Islamic organisation that all Muslims (at least 95% of the country) should follow. When there are so many different organisations and six self-appointed mufti (from different cultural ethnicities of the world) there are bound to be clashes and people doing different things. The Middle East is all local moonsighting and so is a small island where Muslims are minority (Sri Lanka), who usually celebrate a day later after the Middle East. But there is no division within the community as they follow the one and only Muslim national organisation. It really shouldn't be this complicated and, to be honest, almost a joke with all the confusion in Australia."

"There will always be difference of opinion and interpretation on the start of Ramadan and Eid as there is no established rule of moonsighting. There are many variables to look at and





it's hard to come together on one. However, I would like to see umbrella organisations established all over Australia where they agree on some common terms and announce one Ramadan, Eid every year so Muslims can celebrate it in harmony and show unity, which is far more important than fighting over different technical interpretations that are hard to validate. I am very optimistic and hopeful, but I don't see it happening in the near future."

"Regional sighting is probably the most reasonable and compromised position between the two extreme positions of moonsighting vs calculations. It gives the best opportunity to coincide and gives a chance to physical sighting while maintaining the sunnah."

"A critical analysis of the history of the sight ability chart, which is published to show geographic possibility of sighting the moon through naked eyes and validate if the suggested outcome is always achieved. That might allow to align the other sects to come on one page that we can scientifically predict the sighting without shaking the founding principle of 'sight ability' of the moon. The charts are published on moon sighting Australia website every year."

"Discussion between moonsighting, ANIC, AFIC and all masjids to understand everyone's viewpoint and come to an agreement."

"There are far too many 'muftis' (six alone within the Sunni community) for people to be confident in what they are doing – it leads to mass confusion and debate. The AFIC vs ANIC situation doesn't help either. As someone who grew up in the Gulf, I find the moon debates in Australia incredibly frustrating; I never encountered this issue overseas."

"Masajid and organisations like ANIC or AFIC must establish their methodology before Ramadan and advise their followers well in advance of the month starting. The main problem for me is not that they have different approaches but that they start changing or even determining their approach a few days out from Eid. That's lazy and not acceptable from community leadership."

"I expect a uniform decision through consensus among ANIC, AFIC and Moonsighting Australia."

"One mufti/Islamic body in NSW. AFIC and ANIC should determine the start and end of Ramadan together as they have done in previous years. This year, they made Eid very confusing for many Muslims by disagreeing. They should have adopted the majority view and issued one Eid start date."

"I believe if moonsighting Australia was to try and include our neighbouring countries like Indonesia, for example, it would make a big difference. That being said, I am not sure what the scholars have said about this method."

"I don't think having a central body will make everyone celebrate on the same day (e.g. ANIC). There will always be different interpretations. I know some people see this as the disunity and breakdown of the ummah and there's a lot of comparison with other religions and how they don't have such problems. However, I think Sheikh Hamza Yusuf framed it as something positive, i.e. Muslims are so concerned and passionate about getting the correct day for Ramadan/ Eid, which we don't see in other religions. I do not think improvement is needed, only a change in mindset, more understanding and less finger pointing."

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