CONTENTS

GETTING READY

Icebreaker: What type of political persona would suit you best?

A. **Imagine you are a politician.** Answer honestly if you can, bearing in mind that you need to communicate as much through image and habit as through speeches.

1. **How do you dress in public?**
    a. Carefully and professionally, occasionally signalling value
    b. Formally and consistently, usually in a suit to signal seriousness and competence
    c. Expensively and recognisably, with a strong personal brand

2. **When photographed eating in public, you are most comfortable…**
    a. In ordinary cafés or school canteens, where the message is restraint and responsibility
    b. In modest local restaurants, often connected to specific communities or cultures
    c. In highly visible settings, from famous steakhouses to fast-food brands everyone recognises

3. **Your public eating habits should suggest that you are…**
    a. Sensible and socially responsible, choosing meals that signal moderation and care
    b. Grounded in everyday reality, eating food that reflects real prices and real lives
    c. Confident and unapologetic, treating food as part of personal authority

4. **Your food preferences are best described as…**
    a. Balanced and socially acceptable, favouring ordinary, accessible places rather than luxury dining
    b. Affordable and culturally meaningful, such as local neighbourhood restaurants linked to identity and community
    c. Branded and repetitive, from familiar fast-food chains to high-end hotel dining rooms

5. **How do you relate to sport as part of your public image?**
    a. You participate in organised sporting events to signal discipline and civic engagement
    b. You support or join community-based activities rather than elite competitions
    c. You associate sport with status and personal leisure, favouring exclusive environments

6. **When the media talks about your family life, you prefer that it is…**
    a. Visible but discreet, projecting stability without becoming the main story
    b. Largely private, even if your partner has their own public identity and career
    c. Fully part of your public persona, including your spouse and adult children as recognisable figures in their own right

7. **Your attitude towards personal taste (food, clothes, lifestyle) is…**
    a. Leaders should set a careful example
    b. Leaders should reflect real people

c. Leaders should be themselves, whatever the reaction

8. **Your overall attitude to personal taste (food, clothes, lifestyle) is that…**
    a. It should quietly reinforce responsibility
    b. It should reflect lived reality
    c. It should reinforce authority and confidence

Results

Mostly as – The Mayor of London
Your public persona is careful, controlled, and strongly aware of symbolism. Like _____, you treat everyday choices — from food to clothing — as quiet signals of responsibility rather than personal expression. Programmes such as free school lunches fit naturally into your image, because food is framed as a public duty, not a lifestyle statement. You favour moderation over spectacle, and even when you reference sport or environmental issues, it is done seriously, sometimes earnestly, with the understanding that leaders are always being watched. Your humour, when it appears, is restrained and self-aware rather than performative.

Mostly bs – The Mayor of New-York
Your public persona is built on credibility and closeness to everyday reality, even now as Mayor of New York City. Like _____, you combine policy seriousness with an accessible sense of humour, using familiar references — from food prices to football — to make complex issues feel human and immediate. Food appears in your politics as evidence rather than performance, a way to talk concretely about inflation and inequality without sounding abstract or distant. Your formal dress signals competence rather than status, while your enthusiasm for football places you firmly in shared, popular culture. Power, in your case, is presented as something that should remain visible, relatable, and just slightly self-aware.

Mostly cs – The President
Your persona is built around confidence, repetition, and visibility rather than nuance; your public image is inseparable from personal branding. Like _____, you treat food, clothing, and leisure as extensions of personal authority, whether through luxury tailoring, familiar fast-food brands, or highly recognisable settings. Sport and competition matter as symbols of winning, not participation, and humour appears mainly as provocation or exaggeration rather than subtle irony. Family life, wealth, and taste are not kept in the background but folded directly into the public image. The message is consistent: leadership is not about restraint, but about dominance and certainty.

Document 1: London Mayor Sadiq Khan Talks to David Gura about COP 30 and Zorhan Mamdani

Bloomberg Talks, November 3, 2025

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDZI23fFnF4 **- Listen to 03:22 - the end**

1. **Before you listen - present the document briefly (nature, source, date/context, topic and guesses about why Khan mentions them)**

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Listen to the assigned section of the podcast once

2. **Make corrections to the presentation of the document if needed**

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Listen again to part 1 : 03:22-04:40

Take notes about:

1. **London in the context of the NYC mayoral race at the time of recording**

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2. **Sadiq Khan's response to the weaponisation of his city**
    a. **Why the same kind of people hate both London and New York**

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    b. **Why Mamdani's religion is actually irrelevant**

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Listen again to part 2 : 04:41-07:35

3. **Sadiq Khan's thoughts on Mamdani's mayoral campaign**

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5. **Sadiq Khan's thoughts on what it means to be the mayor of a global city**

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6. **Sadiq Khan on being the Muslim mayor of a great city**

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7. **What Sadiq Khan thinks Zohran Mamdani will do as the mayor of New York, and why.**

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Listen again to part 3 : 07:35-the end

8. **Sadiq Khan concludes**

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CASE STUDIES

Document 2: There's one photograph all politicians fear: the one of them eating

Jay Rayner, *The Observer*, 19 April 2015

Short of being photographed as one of those curving toilet doors on a Virgin Train slides gently open, revealing a mess of bare knees and shirt tails, there is one photograph that the modern politician fears more than any other: the eating shot. Look at what that image of Ed Miliband eating a bacon sandwich did to him: the way the lips folded back and curled, how the eyes began to roll back in his head like he had reached some private moment of truth. That one image raised a brutal question: could you imagine this man, the one with the expression like the ketamine has just kicked in, running the country?

Now consider all the politicians run ragged by the election campaign so far, and have pity on their souls. For all day every day what they are thinking is this: please God, let nobody take a picture of me eating. It so terrified David Cameron that, apparently haunted by Miliband bacon sandwich gate, he responded to a hot dog encountered on the campaign trail by eating it with a knife and fork. And he still managed to look a bit of a knob.

It's terribly unfair. In the old days politicians were allowed to be dignified and remote figures, other-worldly emissaries from Planet Leadership. Now, in the age of the selfie and the close-up, we insist they be just like us. We insist they be human. And what could be more human than the act of eating? Eating is genuinely a shared experience.

The problem is it's an ugly, ungainly shared experience. It's just too human.

Try watching the people you love eating. It's a mess. As you open your mouth, there's a flash of wobble and pink of the sort the pathologist will see when they come to conduct the inevitable postmortem on your chilling cadaver. There is the sticky shine of saliva, there's the way your eyelids flutter, your lips roll outwards. Ever seen a German Shepherd running excitedly towards its owner, its tongue flapping in the wind? That's you, photographed eating, only without the excitement.

This shouldn't be regarded as a negative. Eating is messy because it's meant to be. Show me someone who daintily forks away morsels between tidy, pursed lips and I will show you someone who could never be my friend. Recently I was invited to participate in a wretched "art" project, which involved eating with other people in silence. No surprise that it would be in Berlin. I would rather lick the inside of my composting box than take part in something like that which sucks the life from the dining table. Eating should be noisy and generous, a mess of flailing body parts.

Curiously, moving images of people eating are fine, which is good because television is full of them. Some of them are of me. It's the freeze frame that doesn't work. Even Barack Obama, the coolest politician on the planet, looks unelectable when photographed eating. If you really want to put yourself off your lunch Google the image of Barack Obama and David Cameron eating together at a ball game. They look like unloved cats expelling fur balls. Me, I refuse to be photographed eating. It's a red line. I won't do it. And do you know who else was never photographed eating? Winston Churchill, a chap who knew a thing or two about maintaining his dignity. That's who. I rest my case.

FOOD

1. Sadiq Khan's Tooting: a food and drink street tour

Isabel Choat, *The Guardian*, 23 Oct 2014

Sadiq Khan enjoying a pint (of lime soda) inside the Wheatsheaf, Tooting. Photograph: Graham Turner for the Guardian

The sweep of gentrification down the Northern line has reached Tooting and there is much talk of a cluster of trendy new restaurants and bars, particularly around Tooting Broadway. The Chicken Shop, run by the Soho House crowd, has generated the most excitement, but the revamped Castle pub, the Little Bar on Mitcham Road, Honest Burgers on the High Street and Tota are also always busy.

So far these newcomers have only added to the character of the area. Tooting is not the new Shoreditch – as some (estate agents?) have optimistically dubbed it. The neighbourhood seems that rare thing: a community that has retained its independent spirit and character. This is no clone town; the High Street is dominated by Indian and Pakistani shops and restaurants that continue to thrive, and tonight the neighbourhood will be abuzz with families celebrating the Hindu festival of Diwali.

Sadiq Khan, the local MP (and, under Gordon Brown, the first Muslim to attend cabinet meetings) will be among the thousands celebrating the festival (he attends most local festivals regardless of the faith). Born and raised in Tooting, he still lives there, and is a regular at many of the Asian eateries.

I should declare an interest at this point – I live in Tooting – but it is one of the best streets in the capital if you want to experience a slice of multicultural London that hasn't been gentrified beyond recognition (hello Northcote Road) and a taste of real street food (none of your over-priced pop-up vans here, thank you). For the first in a new series of features focusing on one street in a city, we asked Khan to take us on a tour of his favourite places between Tooting Bec and Tooting Broadway tube stops.

The Wheatsheaf

As with all good nights out, ours starts in a pub. The Wheatsheaf was a scruffy, unwelcoming boozer until the Antic group, masters of turning old-man pubs into quirky drinking holes, took it over in 2010, revamping it with shabby-chic touches: taxidermy (what pub doesn't have a stuffed animal these days?), mismatched mirrors and a wall of shoe heels. There are at least five ales on tap, including two local guest ales – this week Twickenham by the By The Horns brewery, and a daily changing menu with mains from £9.50. "When I was growing up, it was an IRA pub and I used to run past it," says Sadiq. "Now I come here even though I don't drink. There are quizzes on Sunday nights and we hold fundraising events here." Last year, Sadiq ran a campaign to save the Wheatsheaf from redevelopment, successfully putting a stop to it becoming a Tesco Metro. Sadly, this hasn't stopped the landlord deciding to build a block of luxury flats on the site, though the pub, albeit a smaller one, should remain.

- *2 Upper Tooting Road, wheatsheaftootingbec.com*

Spice Village

A large refectory-style restaurant and takeaway, Spice Village is often full of families. As with almost every Asian restaurant in Tooting, the naan bread is made fresh to order, with a chef tirelessly spinning dough and baking it in the tandoor. Specials include fish tikka (marinated and cooked on a skewer) and *shahi haleem* (lamb cooked with lentils).

Sadiq recommends: masala fish (marinated and fried cod), £5.99.

- *32-34 Upper Tooting Road, spicevillage.co.uk*

Ambala

Ambala is one of the most popular Asian sweet shops in Tooting – during religious festivals queues of people, stocking up on boxes of *mithai* (Asian sweets), snake out of the door. At Eid this year the shop was open until 2am and sold 500kg of sweets. "People I know from Pakistan prefer Ambala's sweets to the ones in Pakistan," says Sadiq. Glass cabinets are filled with tray upon tray of the sticky, chewy morsels made from flour, milk and nuts. The most popular, *habshi halwa*, is a gooey mixture of cashew, almond and pistachio nuts with cardamom, while children love the super-sweet, syrupy *gulab jamun*.

Sadiq recommends: *pistachio barfi* (£10.30 a kilo).

- *48 Upper Tooting Road, ambalafoods.com*

Pooja

Another hugely popular sweet emporium, the strictly-vegetarian Pooja, has been open for 18 years and is run by a Muslim and a Hindu. As with many of the traditional outlets on this stretch, it plays a big role in the community, providing food free-of-charge to local charities and mosques during festivals. As well as traditional Pakistani goodies, Pooja's cabinets are filled with Middle Eastern sweets and Turkish delight, while the shelves are heaving with bags of *panipuri*, the semolina shells that are filled with potato and chickpeas. But if you order one thing here, it should be the *chana chaat* (£2-£3) which, according to Sadiq, "is the best in the world". The Pakistani street food is a mix of chickpeas, potato, chives with garlic and chili and tamarind sauces. Individual sweets cost from 30p, or £4-£5 for half a kilo.

Sadiq recommends: *chana chaat*

- *168-170 Upper Tooting Road, poojasweets.com*

Mirch Masala

A Tooting institution, Mirch Masala has previously made the final of the Tiffin Cup, the Westminster competition where MPs nominate the best south Asian restaurant on their patch. Mirch is a simple, authentic, great-value Pakistani restaurant. Families come at weekends for the *nihari*, slow-cooked lamb on the bone; but it's busy every day. Food is cooked fresh on open grills and served in *karahi* (cast-iron pots). The ginger chicken and sizzling garlic prawns are fantastic. Sadiq orders us a platter of barbecue hunks of chicken and lamb tikka, masala fish, and fresh passion fruit juice. Mirch Masala is a bring-your-own-alcohol restaurant.
Sadiq recommends: the *chili paneer* (£3.30) and the *nihari* (£7).

- *213 Upper Tooting Road, mirchmasalarestaurant.co.uk*

Lahore Karahi

Recently refurbished, the better for fitting in the endless stream of enthusiastic locals, Lahore Karachi is probably the busiest restaurant in Tooting. Opened in 1995 by Zahid Iqbal (a one-time Pakistani MP), it was one of the first Asian restaurants on the high road. Now there are up to 20 on this stretch. For our second meal of the evening Sadiq orders *seekh kebab* (minced lamb with fried onion and capsicum), *chicken methi* (with fenugreek), a basket of roti and naans, and a round of mango lassis. Lahore is byo too.
Sadiq recommends: *chicken methi, £6.50.*

- *1 Tooting High Street, lahorekarahirestaurant.co.uk*

Radha Krishna Bhavan

Another long-standing south Asian favourite, Radha Krisha Bhavan, just south of Tooting Broadway tube, opened in 1999, and according to Sadiq is one of Tooting's friendliest: "The staff are brilliant", he says. "My top tip is one of the Malabar dishes: rice pancakes fermented with ground coconut and coconut milk. You can get them with vegetables, fish, or king prawns. And leave room for the traditional Keralan side dishes. I always get the *avail*, a fresh vegetable dish with yoghurt and spices, and the green banana is good too."
Sadiq recommends: king prawn malabar, from £7.95.

- *86 Tooting High Street, tootingsouthindian.co.uk*

Tota

The only non-Pakistani restaurant on the list, Tota was the first of the new breed of modern bars and restaurants to open in Tooting. It may be named after an Anglo-Saxon chief but it bears all the hallmarks of the 21st-century bistro: bare-brick walls, wooden floor, factory lights. A popular brunch spot – homemade granola, pancakes, huevos rancheros, and Bloody Mary's – it takes pride in well-sourced ingredients (fish is supplied by Moxon's in Clapham) and is a firm local favourite for "team Sadiq" who had their Christmas dinner here last year. It's the end of the tour so we order pudding - a rich chocolate tart which finishes me off. Every one of the places on this list is worth a visit, just perhaps not all in the same evening.
Sadiq recommends: pancakes with blueberry compote, £6.50.

- *102 Tooting High Street, tota-restaurant.co.uk*

2. How Zohran Mamdani Built a Campaign Around Food

Priya Krishna, *The New York Times*, September 30, 2025

The late-night visit to Kabab King was ostensibly for a campaign interview. But the minute the food hit the table, Zohran Mamdani became lost in the chicken biryani in front of him, digging into the plate with gleeful abandon.

After a few minutes, a light dawned. He looked up and apologized for not sharing. “Sorry,” he said sheepishly. “As you can tell, I’m hungry.”

He continued to apologize throughout the meal at Kabab King, a 24-hour restaurant in Jackson Heights, Queens, that he’s been visiting since high school.

The Democratic nominee and front-runner for mayor, Mr. Mamdani is keenly aware how attentive New Yorkers are to how their politicians interact with food, and how judgmental they can be. The former mayor Bill de Blasio was mocked in 2014 for eating a pizza with a fork and knife rather than folded and by hand in the New York style. The current mayor, Eric Adams, faced a similar scolding when he was spotted eating fish after professing to follow a plant-based diet.

But no mayoral candidate’s relationship to food has been more scrutinized or showcased than Mr. Mamdani’s, often by his own choice. A devotee of delis and bodegas who once filmed a music video at Kabab King under the rap moniker “Mr. Cardamom,” he is harnessing food as both campaign tool and policy plank.

Mr. Mamdani — at 33, suddenly one of the most famous faces in American politics — has proposed opening a city-owned grocery store in each of the five boroughs to make ingredients more affordable, and repealing some of the laws and regulations that have curtailed street vending. He has held news conferences at his favorite restaurants, and conducted many press interviews inside them.

And the social-media blitz that has been widely credited for his success often focuses on food. In posts with hundreds of thousands of views, he has framed his central message — making the city more affordable — around specific culinary benchmarks like the rising price of halal chicken and rice, and used Bengali sweets as props to explain ranked-choice voting.

The way Mr. Mamdani references food at “the personal level and the policy level — and his skill in doing it is probably unusual, if not completely new,” said Grant Davis Reeher, a political science professor at Syracuse University.

Others worry that those skills won’t translate to political leadership. “The mechanics of running the city government and the city are far different than the feel-good images you can make on social media,” said Jim Kessler, the executive vice president for policy at Third Way, a think tank run by moderate Democrats. “Governing as an influencer will not work. People need results.”

Food has been a staple of retail politics for as long as candidates have gnawed on pork ribs at state fairs to display a common touch. And as inflation and healthy eating have become hot issues, it’s commonplace to hear campaign speeches about egg prices or artificial food dyes.

Mr. Mamdani said that for him, food is less a campaign strategy than it is an instinctual medium for talking to voters. Amir Hamja for The New York Times

But Mr. Mamdani leverages food in a different, more powerful way, said Adam Bozzi, a Washington-based Democratic political strategist who is not involved with any of the mayoral campaigns.

Food is “part of his language to make his politics really accessible,” Mr. Bozzi said. It’s a background character in his videos, meant to make the setting — and him — feel familiar to voters. “Which is different from the actual food being the event, like ‘I am eating fried butter or the cheesesteak.’ That feels a little more contrived.”

Mr. Mamdani’s focus on street foods and inexpensive neighborhood restaurants serves a bigger strategy: portraying himself as a relatable everyman. And while dropping in at restaurants is nothing new for New York politicians, what is different is the way Mr. Mamdani interacts with the owners, said Basil Smikle Jr., a former executive director of the New York State Democratic Party who is now a professor at Columbia’s School of Professional Studies.

“He uses food in the way that an influencer might,” said Dr. Smikle, “versus a Kamala or JD Vance, where it is a little more structured, a little more organized, a little more scripted. He seems more comfortable engaging.”

SPORTS

3. Sadiq Khan: why I'm running the London Marathon

Sadiq Khan, *The Guardian*, 12 March 2014

Evening Standard

"Have you got an alibi?" The question I'd asked hundreds of times in my former life as a defence lawyer was now a question for me.

How could I wriggle out of the idea that I should run the London Marathon? I knew I'd need a good alibi. The idea had come from my friend, the journalist David Cohen. And my wife Saadiya was weighing in – I had to do something to balance my passion for Mars bars.

I tried a few lines: I am not a runner. I am not fit. I don't have the right kit. And 26.2 miles is an awful long way! There had been the odd jog around Tooting Common in my constituency in south London, fuelled by guilt about the Mars bars, but that's about it. Saadiya was unmoved and David was full of gentle reassurances.

The clincher was the one that has worked for thousands of London marathon runners past and present – a chance to help a good cause. And there's no doubt that the Dispossessed Fund is a brilliant one. Their work tackling poverty and deprivation across London is inspiring.

So on 2 February, I laced up my trainers and headed out on my first training run for the London Marathon 2014. The longest I can remember running is 10K – and that's a jog, mind you. Having started pretty late in the day, David has put me on a strict training regime. And on that first rainy morning I found it tough. Really tough. Getting into a steady stride in the drizzle took a while, but after about 5K or so it started to feel better. I relaxed, and running in a rhythm began to feel more natural. Several laps of the Common later I felt pretty pleased with having run a decent 12k – far further than I expected – and headed home for a bath (and, yes, a well-deserved Mars bar).

The smugness didn't last long – I can't describe the pain I was in the next day. Hobbling around parliament, trying to hide my limp from other MPs who I hadn't yet told about my new project. I learned my lesson the hard way: don't neglect warming down and stretching after a long run.

A few weeks on and, dare I say it, the training is going well. On a Sunday in late February I ran my first ever road race – David and I, along with my good friend and local GP Dr Tom Coffey, took part in the Hampton Court half marathon.

Meanwhile, each run is a little easier, and the stiffness the next day is more manageable. Another lesson I've learned: I need music to run to. I've found some good tracks, from Jay-Z to Paul Weller. More than once I've been caught attempting to sing along while running to an 80s classics.

But then there other times when running gives you a peacefulness and focus of mind that is an amazing escape from the Westminster bustle. My morning runs have become one of the only times I have during the week to reflect and take stock. And there are the obvious benefits. I feel fitter than I have in a very long time. And I am lighter than I have been for a while, too!

Three things have kept me pounding when my legs are screaming to stop. First, the huge number of projects supported by the Dispossessed Fund across London, from law centres to youth clubs, careers training to tackling gang culture. The charity has so far touched the lives of more than 100,000 Londoners, and knowing the money I hope to raise will go to help even more is a real boost to keep going.

Second, I am proud to be running in the same marathon that my Olympic hero Mo Farah will be competing in (and winning – come on Mo!).

And third, I am desperate to beat my good mate Ed Balls, the shadow chancellor, who is running the marathon for the third time in support of Whizz-Kidz and Action for Stammering Children. I've told Ed it will be a victory for youth over experience, plus I'll have the crowd on my side because I'm the home boy. Competitive, moi?

I'll keep you posted on my progress in the weeks ahead – and any advice or tips would be gratefully received. You can find me on Twitter @SadiqKhan and #YesWeKhan and at virginmoneygiving.com/SadiqKhan.

- *Rt Hon Sadiq Khan is shadow London minister and the Labour MP for Tooting.*

4. **The US love of football is reaching new levels. Just look at Arsenal super-fan Zohran Mamdani**

Bryan Armen Graham, *The Guardian*, 1 December 2025

Zohran Mamdani at a football tournament in Brooklyn, New York, 19 October 2025. Photograph: Katie Godowski/MediaPunch/Shutterstock

When Zohran Mamdani made an appearance on The Adam Friedland Show last week, the newly elected mayor of New York was expecting the typical nimble rundown of politics, jokes and conversational detours. What he wasn't expecting was Ian Wright suddenly filling a phone screen with a congratulatory video. The former England and Arsenal striker saluted him on "what you've achieved", urged him to channel that "winning energy" into the job ahead before signing off with a nod to the Arsenal manager, Mikel Arteta. Mamdani cheesed guilelessly as it played before finally blurting out: "I love this man."

For a moment, the incoming mayor of the most powerful city in the United States was simply another geeked-out Arsenal obsessive left weak by one of his childhood heroes. And in that moment lies something revealing about how football fandom in the US has changed. This was not a politician deploying a sports reference for relatability; it was a display of genuine allegiance that's planted at the intersection of two different stories about how Americans have come to love the global game.

What Mamdani's reaction captured, in miniature, is the broader moment US soccer now finds itself in. Stateside interest has quietly climbed to unprecedented levels: Premier League audiences have grown for more than a decade; every big club now has thriving US supporters' groups; and football has entered the cultural bloodstream through celebrity-ownership projects such as Ryan Reynolds and Wrexham (and its various rip-offs), through athletes drifting into national politics (Cristiano Ronaldo turning a White House visit into a surreal photo-op) and through the long on-ramp to next summer's big, beautiful World Cup on home soil. The game is no longer niche, no longer coastal, no longer the preserve of immigrant communities or brunch-hour Europhiles.

Mamdani's politics add another note. His petition against Fifa's dynamic pricing for 2026 World Cup tickets – which he called an "affront to the game" on the Guardian's Football Weekly podcast – reflects a view of football as community infrastructure rather than luxury entertainment. It treats the sport as something that belongs to working-class people and immigrant families, not the unfolding late-capitalist hellscape of ticketing algorithms and resale platforms. That stance is both global and deeply local; both socialist and recognisably football-supporter logic.

Mamdani's affinity with Arsenal lands with added weight because it reveals what the sport already means in the US: a cross-class, multi-ethnic, diasporic, online, joyful cultural force. For a couple of decades now, Arsenal in particular have occupied a curiously prominent place in the imaginations of American progressives. During the Arsène Wenger years, the club became a kind of cultural shorthand for the liberal intelligentsia. They played "European" football at a time when the term connoted sophistication: Henry gliding, Pires drifting, Wenger lecturing about diet and psychology. On the east coast, when matches were finally moved from pay-per-view to the broader availability of Fox Soccer channel, 7am kick-offs became ritualised social markers. For many, supporting Arsenal was less a sporting choice than a signal of curated worldliness.

But this is only one strand of the US's football story, and not the one Mamdani comes from. He was born and raised in Kampala and Cape Town before his family relocated when he was seven to Morningside Heights in Upper Manhattan, as the great Wenger teams of the early 00s further informed his sporting consciousness. His Arsenal was the Arsenal of Kanu, Lauren, Kolo Touré, Eboué and Song – a club whose African spine made it beloved across the continent long before it became fashionable in Brooklyn. When he says that Arsenal might be the most popular club in Uganda, he's expressing a deeper truth about the Premier League's longstanding place in African diasporic culture.

And Arsenal itself increasingly leans into this heritage. Last season's alternative kit, designed by the Sierra Leone-born Foday Dumbuya, explicitly honoured its African fanbase. It followed the Jamaica-themed pre-match strip launched at Notting Hill carnival, part of a broader cultural moment that has long intertwined Arsenal with Black British identity and, increasingly, with the US-based Black creative community, where culture-shapers such as Spike Lee and Jay-Z have embraced the club's diaspora-rich sensibility. The Arsenal that influenced Mamdani is the same Arsenal that helped define modern British multiculturalism, which helps explain why his reaction to Wright resonated so widely.

These two versions of fandom – the curated and the inherited – have long existed along parallel tracks in a country of 340 million souls. What feels new is the way these stories are converging. Mamdani's reaction united them perfectly: the diasporic Arsenal of his childhood colliding with the online Arsenal of US millennials and gen Z. The Premier League's rise in the US – via NBC's deft marketing and commercial strategy, social media, Instagram fan accounts and matchday rituals – has flattened the cultural landscape. A Somali teenager in Minneapolis, a Mexican-American kid in Phoenix and a 38-year-old Brooklyn journalist all speak the same meme-literate Gooner dialect now. And a whole lot more of them are wearing Messi's Inter Miami shirt. The effect is a US football culture that is finally shared. No longer the province of any one demographic, but a hybrid of diaspora, youth culture, TikTok, brunch spots and streetwear.

CLOTHING

5. Sadiq Khan: The real reason I don't wear ties

Scarlett Russell, *The Times*, 20 April 2025

You never wear ties. Why not?

I actually love ties. I wore them for 11 years as a lawyer and 11 years as a member of parliament, but when I was running to be mayor [in 2016] I wanted to be authentic and comfortable. I met Giorgio Armani in 2016. I told him this story of when I used to have a Saturday job on Oxford Street and save up my money to buy Armani ties in the Christmas sales. The next day I turned up at work and there was a bag full of Armani ties he'd sent me. I sent him a thank-you note, but didn't have the heart to tell him that I don't really wear them much any more.

Do your twentysomething daughters borrow your clothes?

They tease me a lot. What I think is fashionable they call "retro", but they do love my sweatshirts.

What's the most treasured item in your wardrobe?

I got married to my wife, Saadiya, in 1994. Her mother is a seamstress and measured me up before going to Pakistan, where she made me a bespoke pearl-coloured sherwani. I've still got it and, even better, 30 years on I still fit into it.

What do you wear to take out the bins?

Nike, Adidas or Champion grey jogging bottoms, sweatshirts and a pair of trainers. In my mind I look cool in leisurewear, like David Beckham. My neighbours probably think I look like David Brent.

Whose wardrobe would you love for the day?

Riz Ahmed, Idris Elba, Bill Nighy — and Daniel Craig's Tom Ford suits in James Bond.

Do you have any fashion regrets?

I bought some suits in the 1980s that had padded shoulders. They looked so much better in LA Law when Jimmy Smits wore them, but I'm afraid that, on me, they do not look cool.

How many suits do you own?

I'm a hoarder. I've kept suits for a long time and not counted them. A piece of advice I took from Bill Nighy years ago was to wear only blue suits. They're quintessentially smart, fit any kind of event and you can wear a white shirt without a tie and still look smart.

What is your favourite thing about London Fashion Week?

Recently I was at the Harris Reed show at Tate Britain. From out of nowhere Florence Pugh turned up. A few years ago I went to Molly Goddard and Adwoa Aboah just turned up, so that's what I love about Fashion Week, the people who just appear. Also, how [labels] reimagine venues and completely change how you experience them. And, of course, the designers and clothes.

Who is your favourite London designer?

For men's, Paul Smith. When I buy gifts for my daughters I go to Vivienne Westwood — the jewellery is fantastic. Oliver Spencer is special; I'm wearing a pair of his shoes now. And I wear Fred Perry all the time.

You have to travel a lot for your job. Any packing hacks?

During one of the Black Friday sales I invested in a really good Briggs & Riley suit bag. A decent suit bag means you can pack quite a bit in if you're only carrying hand luggage. I pack a lot of white shirts, a spare T-shirt for the flight and, if it's hot, linen, because it looks cool even when it's crumpled.

Khan at his swearing-in ceremony last year - LUCY YOUNG / EVENING STANDARD / EYEVINE

Speaking of linen, the green suit you wore for your swearing-in ceremony last year caused quite a stir …

I was in the clothes shop Percival in Soho with my daughters and rang my team at City Hall, saying: "I've got this suit I want to wear. Two things — it's linen and my daughters are advising I buy it in green." Everyone in the office shouted: "No. Stick with black or blue."I went with green — my daughters had seen the campaign close up and knew that I wanted to be the "first green mayor". They thought it was cool, and they were right.

6. **What Zohran Mamdani's suit tells us about the man and the way society is changing**

Jad Salfiti, *The Guardian*, 2 Jan 2026

The New York Times

Buoyed up by an ingenious campaign, Mamdani caught the imagination of the world like no other New York mayoral candidate of recent times. But whether he was throwing his hands in the air at a hip-hop club or at a premiere party for the film Marty Supreme, one thing on his campaign trail rarely changed: he was almost always in a suit. Loosely tailored, modern with soft shoulders, yet conventional and ordinary, his is a typically middle-class millennial suit – well, as typical as it can be for a generation that rarely bothers to wear one.

"The suit is in this weird position," says men's fashion writer Derek Guy (AKA Twitter's "the menswear guy") over the phone from California. "It's been dying a slow death since the end of the second world war," with the real dip arriving in the 1990s with "the rise of business casual".

"It's basically only worn in the most formal locations: weddings, funerals, to some extent, court appearances," Guy says. "It's sort of like the kimono in Japan," in that it "essentially represents a tradition that has long ceded from daily life." Many politicians "wear a suit to say: 'I am a politician, you can trust me. You should vote for me. I have authority.'" But while the suit has historically signalled this, today it performs authority in the hope of winning public confidence. As Guy explains: "Since we're also living in a liberal democracy, politicians want to seem relatable, because they're trying to get your votes." In many

ways, a suit is just a subtle form of drag, in that it performs masculinity, authority and even proximity to power. Or at least how politicians are expected to look.

Mamdani's preferred suit is from Suitsupply, a Dutch label that retails in the £400-£1,200 range, placing it firmly in the mid-market bracket. "Mamdani is very much a product of his background," says Guy. "A relatively young person in his 30s, he's neither poor nor exceptionally wealthy." To that end, his mid-level suit will resonate with the demographic most likely to support him: people in their 30s and 40s, college graduates making middle-class incomes, often frustrated by the cost of housing. It's exactly the kind of suit they might wear themselves. Not cheap but not extravagant, Mamdani's suits arguably don't contradict his proposed policies – a rent freeze; building 200,000 permanently affordable, union-built, rent-stabilised homes; fare-free public buses; and universal early-childhood care.

"You could never imagine Donald Trump wearing Suitsupply; he's a Brioni person," says Guy, referring to the luxurious Italian suits that Trump wears, which cost from £3,480-£10,600 off the rack: "He's extremely wealthy and grew up in that New York real-estate world. A power suit fits naturally with that tycoon class, just as more accessible brands fit naturally with Mamdani's cohort."

Perhaps the point is what Dr Matthew Sterling Benson-Strohmayer, an economic historian at the London School of Economics, refers to as the "performance of banality", summoning the suit's long career as a uniform of political power, with Mamdani's particular choice tapping into a studied modesty, neither shabby nor showy – "respectability politics" in an inconspicuous suit – to help him appeal to as many voters as possible. But Benson-Strohmayer thinks Mamdani would be aware of the suit's military and colonial legacy: "The suit isn't neutral; historians of the empire have long noted that its contemporary origins lie in military or colonial administration." He also sees the suit as a form of protective armour: "I think if you're Brown, you aren't going to get taken as seriously in these white spaces." The suit becomes a way of signalling legitimacy, perhaps especially to those who might question said legitimacy.

This kind of sartorial "code-switching" is hardly a new phenomenon. Even Mohandas Gandhi, whose most iconic image was him cross-legged in a hand-spun dhoti with a shawl draped over his shoulder, once donned a three-piece suit as he trained as a young barrister in London. These days, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has started swapping his usual fatigues for a black suit, albeit one without the tie.

The suit Mamdani chooses, according to David Kuchta, the author of The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity, is symbolic/significant. "As a Muslim child of immigrants of Indian descent and a democratic socialist, he is under pressure to conform to what many American voters look for as a sign of leadership," he says, while simultaneously needing to walk a tightrope by "not looking like an elitist selling out his non-mainstream roots and values".

But Kuchta is acutely aware of the double standards applied to who wears suits and what is read into it when they do. "That may come in part from Mamdani being a millennial, able to adopt different identities to fit the occasion, but it may also be part of his multicultural background, where code-switching between languages, customs and clothing styles is common," he says. "White males can remain unnoticed," but when women and ethnic minorities "attempt to gain the power that suits represent," they must carefully navigate the codes associated with them.

PRIVATE LIFE

7. **Sadiq Khan on meeting his wife, embarrassing his daughters and the dating advice he gives to single friends**

The Evening Standard, 14 February 2024

Sadiq Khan — Mayor of London, the first ever Muslim mayor of a Western capital and the man who set a new record as our city's first mayor to secure a historic third term — is telling me about his mission to give more hugs.

"I went from having six brothers and a sister, to having two children who are women… I think that more female environment has changed my behaviour for the better," the former human rights lawyer and Labour MP for Tooting tells me, shortly after pulling our former editor Dylan Jones into a warm embrace as he arrives at The Standard offices on Finsbury Square. "Now I make a point of giving hugs to my male friends, to my colleagues, to people I haven't seen in a while. It's a way of showing love without needing to say 'I love you'."

Love, fatherhood and public displays of affection might not be your regular subject for the man in charge of our capital's transport, housing and climate policies for the majority of the last decade and more commonly pressed on subjects from London's ultra-low emission zone (Ulez) to soaring crime rates.

But this is exactly the point. Khan, 54, is here to take part in a special Valentine's episode of our her dating podcast, *London Love Stories* with Katie Strick, and appears to be enjoying a rare chance to talk about these softer, fuzzier elements of his day-to-day, whether it's date nights with his wife Saadiya, visiting his elderly mother every morning before work, or the weekly games of football and tennis he plays with his friends in Tooting — an example of the non-romantic forms of love that the pandemic taught him were just as important for mental wellbeing as the romantic stuff, and a key element of what he believes to be the real joy of London: the interactions between Londoners

themselves. He leans into the brief, posing jovially with a bouquet of roses and cosying in among the pink cushions of our television studio for a more informal chat about matters of the heart.

His own Valentine, Saadiya — his wife of the last three decades, a fellow solicitor and Tooting-raised Muslim who just so happens to be the child of a bus driver like her husband — is at home with the family dog, Luna, and readying herself for date night. The couple have tickets to see Sarah Jessica Parker's in Plaza Suite at the Savoy Theatre, and are looking forward to a night out as a two — though they'll be being careful not to make any public displays of affection for fear of embarrassing their daughters Anisha and Ammarah, as they did several years ago, when Khan was pictured serenading his wife at a 2019 Lionel Richie concert in Hyde Park (Richie's hit, Endless Love, has long been their go-to couple song).

The pair met when they were teenagers and their love story reads like your classic high-school-sweetheart-happily-ever-after: he was at the local boys school, Ernest Bevin Academy, seen externally as the "tough, hard school" in the area, while Saadiya attended the local mixed school, Graveney, where the headteacher, Mr Stapleton, went to great lengths to keep the girls from being "courted" by other local boys.

A determined young Khan managed to get around that headteacher, somehow, and started dating with his now-wife while they were in sixth form. "We fell in love quite young," he tells me, looking relaxed under the interview spotlight despite rarely speaking about his romantic life in public. "When I meet people who haven't spent time with someone from my background, I tease them and say we had an arranged marriage when we were very young… Then we carry on the story and say we arranged ourselves."

Khan talks me through a few of the highlights of his and Saadiya's love story since then — day dates watching the pelicans in St James' Park; a recent evening he surprised her with tickets to see her favourite artist John Legend at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club; becoming parents ("I love being an uncle, a husband and a son, but of all the things I am I think my favourite is being a dad") — and swerves my question about the rumours that he once wooed his wife over a filet-o-fish in a Croydon McDonalds. "There'll be people listening to this who may not be able to afford fine dining so my advice is: even franchises on the high street can be romantic with the right person," he says with a knowing grin.

8. **Gen Z's 'first lady': how Rama Duwaji, Mamdani's wife, is reshaping political fashion**

Jess Cartner-Morley, *The Guardian*, November 12, 2025

Zohran Mamdani speaks to reporters as Rama Duwaji, his wife, looks on before casting his ballot in early primary voting in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens, New York, on 19 June 2025. Photograph: Shuran Huang/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

It is the most traditional of assets for any ambitious young male politician: a fashionably dressed, beautiful young wife. But as with everything else about the rise of Zohran Mamdani, his wife, Rama Duwaji, represents a new era of politics which speaks to a new generation of voters.

Married to the soon-to-be leader of the biggest city in the US, Duwaji, 28, is arguably the US's first generation Z "first lady". Duwaji is an artist and illustrator of Syrian heritage, whose work explores themes of Arab identity, female experience and social justice. Working in paint, line-drawing, ceramics and animation, she graduated with a master's degree in fine arts from New York's School of Visual Arts in 2024.

It is fair to assume that one does not pursue a career as a socially conscious artist contributing line drawings to niche left-leaning publications with the aim of becoming a global celebrity. But Duwaji's life took an unexpected turn when, in 2021, she met Mamdani. The couple married in February this year, about eight months before Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City, and Duwaji was thrust into the spotlight as New York City's 28-year-old first lady. In the week since Mamdani's triumph, Vogue headlines have included "Zohran Mamdani and Rama Duwaji Are Making Finding Love on Hinge Seem Possible Again" and "Fall's Next Cool-Girl Haircut Is Officially the Rama".

First lady is one of the most high-profile spots in US politics and culture. From Eleanor Roosevelt's civil rights advocacy to Hillary Clinton's healthcare reforms, the political wives of the White House have long been impactful players on the political scene. As the first lady of a city, rather than the nation, the stakes are more muted for Duwaji – but the buzz around her husband is shining a spotlight on both of the new inhabitants of Gracie Mansion.

Duwaji's victory-speech look was sober: all-black, with a high neck and calf-length skirt, and silver jewellery. But her low-key style did not deflect a feverish online reaction, with her chic dark bob and vintage-style boatneck top bringing instant comparisons to Audrey Hepburn. The outfit was notable for being consistent with Duwaji's personal style, rather than a cut-and-paste political wife style. ("Rama Duwaji Is New York City's First Lady, and She's Not Wearing a Sheath Dress," noted Harper's Bazaar magazine approvingly.) Fashion industry paper Women's Wear Daily reported her style choices under the headline "Rama Duwaji's Election Night Look Bridges Brooklyn and the Middle East", noting that Duwaji's denim top, embellished with laser-etched embroidery, was by the Palestinian-Jordanian designer Zeid Hijazi. The choice of a Palestinian designer was widely interpreted as a deliberate and political choice by Duwaji, who has expressed clear and vocal support for the plight of Gaza. Duwaji's velvet and lace Ulla Johnson skirt and silver Eddie Borgo earrings showed support for two independent New York designers drawn from outside the traditional high-status Manhattan names – Oscar de la Renta, Carolina Herrera and Michael Kors – with whom modern first ladies have been most associated.

In their style and in the story of their relationship, Mamdani and Duwaji blend youthful energy with traditional elements. Mamdani maximises his youthful advantage as a digital native and uses social media as a political broadcast channel, but does so while wearing the most traditional of outfits: a dark suit and tie. Duwaji, likewise, steers clear of the first lady cosplay of a pastel skirt suit, but her quirky retro-tinged elegance has a ladylike tone, albeit one forged in the vintage boutiques of Brooklyn rather than the department stores of Fifth Avenue. She has a taste for chunky flat boots and oversized white shirts, layered necklaces and winged black eyeliner. These are recognisable as the authentic style choices of a 28-year-old woman, but they do not present as challenging or radical. Likewise, their love story is both strikingly modern – the two met on Hinge – and solidly traditional in being formalised by marriage. Wedding photos shared on Mamdani's Instagram show the couple holding hands on the subway as they travel to city hall, Duwaji wearing a vintage coat and her trademark flat boots with a short white dress, Mamdani carrying an umbrella. Their combination of romcom-worthy New York spirit and down-to-earth, affordability-conscious relatability has charmed the public.

In the ultimate cultural flex, Duwaji has already had a vibe shift named after her. "Aloof wife autumn" is trending on social media after a New York Post headline reported that the new mayor-elect's "aloof wife … quietly steered his campaign from behind the scenes". Duwaji's husband is conspicuously absent from her Instagram page, where she posts street selfies in chic monochrome outfits and "things I saw that made me want to make art". Her creative purpose and cool-toned self-possession are in striking contrast to the docile, gingham-aproned "tradwife" aesthetic that has stormed the TikTok algorithms in recent years.

As a visual artist, Duwaji is aware of the power of image-making. She is also comfortable moving in the circles of the more avant garde end of the fashion industry, recently attending a catwalk show for Diotima, which is helmed by Rachel Scott, an American designer of Jamaican heritage who is a rising industry star. Scott, who dedicated the collection to "the honour of all displaced persons", said that she invited Duwaji because she was "intrigued by her work and her personal style".