

Canadian Labour Congress

Islamophobia at Work: Challenges and Opportunities



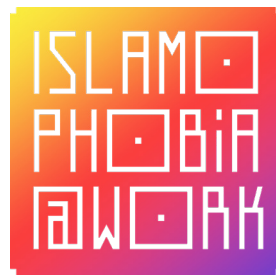


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A woman wearing a dark brown hijab and a brown button-down shirt with a subtle pattern stands in a covered walkway. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Her right hand is raised towards her chest. The background is blurred, showing greenery and the structural elements of the walkway.

Introduction: Challenging Islamophobia

In recent decades, ordinary people identifying as Muslims have increasingly been caricatured, feared, attacked, vilified and demonized in popular culture and media, political discourse, and everyday life. This inequitable treatment is rooted in historic structural and institutional racism and discrimination and began well before the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States of America, but intensified amidst the tightening of national security laws and anti-terrorism measures in the wake of these events. Over the past decade, political movements and parties carrying the banner of hate towards Muslims have proliferated, emerging in new regions, in new forms, and with a new determination and menace towards Muslim people.

Islamophobia is expressed with varying levels of intensity in different countries, and political discourse in Canada is not a carbon copy of the United States or any other country.¹ But it would be profoundly mistaken and dangerously complacent to think that these forces are not prevalent in Canada and growing. Racism toward Muslims is among the most virulent, pervasive and violent expressions of group hatred evident in Canada today. On January 27, 2017, this hatred exploded in the mass murder of six worshippers in a Québec City mosque, shattering lives, families and an entire community. Yet this act of terrorism was not the only destructive eruption of a widespread, ongoing antagonism toward people who identify as Muslim as well as those who are perceived to be Muslim.

Where antipathy toward Muslims stops short of violent hatred, Canadian public opinion research finds exceptional hostility and suspicion toward

Muslims among a significant proportion of the population.² Right-wing groups have stoked fear and opposition to irregular migration and the Government of Canada's decision to resettle 40,000 Syrian refugees in Canada between November 2015 and March 2016, an act of humanitarianism and responsible internationalism that a majority of Canadians take pride in and support. A December 2018 public opinion survey found that no fewer than one in four respondents feel Canada would be better off with no Muslims, and more than one in five feel the country would be better off if it was more white.³

This report argues that Canada's unions and working people should view this development as deeply alarming, threatening, and urgently in need of a response.

Workers in Canada, including union members, are not immune from the larger societal forces of racism, prejudice and discrimination than is the Canadian population as a whole.

¹Adams, Michael. *Could it Happen Here? Canada in the Age of Trump and Brexit*, Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2017.

²"Of all the distinct groups in Canadian society today, Muslims are most widely considered to be the "other" because of where they come from, associations with terrorism in other countries, and specific religious practices like head coverings." Environics Institute for Survey Research and Canadian Race Relations Foundation. *Focus Canada Winter 2018: Canadian public opinion about immigration and minority groups*, March 22, 2018, p. 2.

³Anderson, Bruce, & David Coletto. "Assessment of the Trudeau Government at Year End," *Abacus Data*, 28 December 2018. <http://abacusdata.ca/assessment-of-the-trudeau-government-at-year-end/> (accessed January 2, 2019).

Its purpose is to stimulate a much-needed and difficult conversation that will spur more collective action, not just among union members, but also a much broader range of stakeholders in Canadian society including employers and government. It is intended to contribute to introspection, and a conversation within unions, and in society as a whole, about the roots of anti-Muslim sentiment and the importance and urgency of confronting it. In so doing, this report attempts to provide a specific trade union perspective on this issue: why it is important, and what analysis do unions specifically bring to the issue.


Actions to address and interrupt Islamophobia must be broad-based and grounded in public education, evidence, coalition building and policy-development. These actions begin with acknowledging Canada's historic and active engagement with colonialism and its' current extension manifested as imperialism in the global south. The labour movement must play a leading role in this effort. The labour movement in Canada has fought and will continue to fight for those who experience and endure racism, discrimination, oppression and hate. Although Canada's unions have made great strides towards challenging

racism and other forms of oppression, there is much more to unpack, unlearn, challenge, interrupt and disrupt. For these reasons, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) calls on unions and working people to understand and challenge Islamophobia.

In 1989, the mass murder of women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal shocked men and women in the labour movement awake to the evil of male violence against women and girls, and the urgency of putting an end to this violence as a priority in all areas of union work. The brutal murder of six Muslim men in January 2017 praying at the Centre culturel Islamique de Québec in Québec City must result in the same sustained awakening to the urgency of confronting and combatting Islamophobia.⁴ The victims and families of Québec City deserve no less.



⁴ McKenna, Kate, and Jonathan Montpetit. "Suspect in mosque shooting a moderate conservative turned extremist, say friends, classmates," *CBC News*, 31 January 2017.

A photograph of a person holding a large, crumpled cardboard sign. The sign has the words "FEAR LESS" on the top line and "LOVE MORE" on the bottom line, both in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The person holding the sign is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt. The background is blurred, showing trees and a building. The image is framed with a white border.

FEAR LESS
LOVE MORE

A woman with dark, curly hair and a confident expression stands with her arms crossed. She is wearing a black sleeveless top and light grey trousers. The background is a dark, textured grey. The text "Islamophobia is a Workers' Issue" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Islamophobia is a Workers' Issue

The direct and imminent threat of far-right extremism, white supremacy, racism, and xenophobia aims to destabilize democracy in Canada. Anti-Muslim discrimination or Islamophobia is a defining and unifying feature of far right-wing politics in Canada and internationally. In many cases, mistrust and demonization of Muslims have become a lightening rod for a range of social, economic and cultural grievances, fueling the fears and resentments of people who dislike and mistrust media, academia, government and other institutions. Such nativist political movements denounce and vilify “others” – including Muslims, migrants, people of colour – who they see as eroding their values and identity, and depriving them of their rights, privileges and prosperity as sovereign citizens of their country, denying that this right was obtained through violent colonial tactics in the first place.

Today, politicians, those with affinity to Right-wing ideology and far-Right extremist groups, commonly and unabashedly cultivate ignorance, fear and hatred of Muslims and Islam to scapegoat one group of people in order to channel diverse grievances and resentments, divert attention from the underlying causes of these resentments, and gain political and electoral power.

Far from being isolated or immune from these currents, workers and their unions are profoundly influenced and affected by these developments. Racism and discrimination have always been existential challenges for workers striving to form unions to foster solidarity and coordinated action to fight social injustices for working people. At pivotal moments, workers facing racism and discrimination have formed and built unions

in order to strengthen collective demands for equity and freedom from bigotry.⁵ On other occasions, unions have struggled to understand and overcome the destructive consequences of prejudice and discrimination towards immigrants and workers of different races, ethnicities and religious backgrounds for solidarity and collective power.

Many unions today prioritize the task of educating and mobilizing against racism, and hatred toward refugees and immigrants. Yet workers in Canada, including union members, are not immune from the larger societal forces of racism, prejudice and discrimination than is the Canadian population as a whole. In painful episodes of this history, unions have attempted to exploit and even promote fears and resentment toward racialized groups to achieve short-term gains.⁶ Against the backdrop of profound demographic changes and an increasingly diverse working class, more and more unions grasp not only the injustice, but also the harm caused by such practices.

The direct and imminent threat of far-right extremism, white supremacy, racism, and xenophobia aims to destabilize democracy in Canada.

⁵ Mathieu, Sarah-Jane (Saje). “North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle Against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880-1920,” in Brian D. Palmer and Joan Sangster, eds. *Class, Gender, and Race in Canadian Working-Class History*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁶ Ibid.

Today, unions are typically at the forefront of demanding recognition and justice for oppressed and disadvantaged groups. Now more than ever, the labour movement in Canada must champion diversity, inclusion and equity, particularly with respect to Muslim people in Canada, who are among the most isolated and demonized in this country. As always, unions must understand, confront, and interrupt racism and discrimination in our workplaces, our organizations, and our society. This involves a multi-faceted approach to addressing and challenging oppression on the individual and societal levels, as well as the structural and institutional levels.

Unions must respond to the growth of right-wing populism, polarizing politics and growing distrust for fundamental democratic processes because the looming threat of broad apathy is consequential and far-reaching.

“...they’re importing this xenophobic political rhetoric from openly illiberal political parties in Europe, and the reason is, it sells domestically... That’s the completely unvarnished truth about what’s going on with this discourse in Canada.”

— Craig Damian Smith, associate director of the Global Migration Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto, commenting on the Conservative Party and far-Right opposition to the Government of Canada’s December 2018 decision to vote in favour of the United Nations Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. Teresa Wright, “Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen Defends Canada Signing onto UN Migration Pact,” *National Post*, December 7, 2018.







Defining Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a complex, multi-faceted and well-studied phenomenon.⁷ It has been defined as “the dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims.”⁸ This view includes seeing all Muslims as the same and unchanging, with no real distinctions between the plurality of communities and their histories; seeing Muslims as separate from society, as Other with no values in common with Westerners and not influenced by Western culture in any way; seeing Islam as an inherently violent religion and political ideology; seeing all Muslims as religious radicals or fanatics; and seeing all of Islam and Muslims as inherently mistreating of women and generally traditionalist.⁹

During its 2017-18 study of systemic racism and religious discrimination in Canada, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage heard testimony proposing various definitions of Islamophobia. Several witnesses referred to “anti-Muslim discrimination or hate,” and “an irrational fear or hatred of Muslims or Islam that leads to discrimination.” Going further, one witness referred to “a criticizing or scathing negative opinion that might directly or indirectly cause humiliation or damage to the reputation and or incite to hatred and to violence against a person or a group of persons for the only reason that they are of Muslim faith.”¹⁰

Perhaps most comprehensively, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) defined Islamophobia not just as an irrational fear or hatred of Muslims, but as “stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia leads to viewing Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.”¹¹ The tightening of national security and anti-terrorism laws beginning in 2001 have fueled surveillance and intimidation of Muslims in Canada and perpetuated a climate of scrutiny, fear and suspicion that have led to prejudice and discrimination.¹²

While important and useful as a general definition, this conceptualization of Islamophobia must be broadened to encompass, at one end of the spectrum, daily negative or denigrating interactions, exchanges and innuendos aimed at Muslims, to overt acts of exclusion, discrimination and hatred aimed at individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general, and on an institutional, systemic and societal level.

This broad definition therefore includes “micro-aggressions,” defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group.”¹³

⁷ The Runnymede Trust. “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All”, *Report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia*, 1997; Elahi, Farah, and Omar Khan, eds. *Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All*, Runnymede Trust, 2017.

⁸ Wilkins-Laflamme, Sarah. “Islamophobia in Canada: Measuring the Realities of Negative Attitudes Toward Muslims and Religious Discrimination,” *Canadian Review of Sociology*, vol. 55, issue 1, February 2018.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia*, Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, February 2018.

¹¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed*. Section 3.3 *Racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia*.

¹² Hanniman, Wayne. “Canadian Muslims, Islamophobia and National Security,” *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 36, 2008; Perry, Barbara. “All of a Sudden, There Are Muslims’: Visibilities and Islamophobic Violence in Canada,” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 4, No. 3, 2015; Bahdi, Reem. “Narrating Dignity: Islamophobia, Racial Profiling, and National Security Before the Supreme Court of Canada,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 55, 2018.

¹³ Wing Sue, Derald. “Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation,” *Social Service Review*, vol. 85, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 519-521.

Micro-aggressions, compounded by other forms of racial and religious aggression and discrimination, make Muslims the “other”, and have an injurious and painful impact on Muslims in incremental and cumulative ways.

Islamophobia should be understood as encompassing a set of exclusionary practices targeting Muslims. In *Andrews v. Law Society of British Columbia*, the Supreme Court of Canada defined discrimination as a “distinction, whether intentional or not, based on motives related to the personal characteristics of an individual or a group of individuals, which impose on this individual or group burdens, obligations or disadvantages not imposed on others, or prevent or restrict the access to the possibilities, benefits and advantages offered to other members of society.”¹⁴ Discrimination can be direct and explicit, if individuals identifying as Muslim are denied a right or a freedom, either in work, employment, school or in the marketplace, through the actions of government organizations, by ethnic profiling, or by verbal and physical intimidation and violence. If direct discrimination is enshrined in law and public policy, it takes the form of institutionalized and official discrimination. Discrimination can also be casual and backhanded, as often occurs in media representation and portrayal of Muslim communities.

Racism toward Muslims is among the most virulent, pervasive and violent expressions of group hatred evident in Canada today.



¹⁴ *Andrews v. Law Society of British Columbia* [1989] R.C.S. 143.





Understanding Islamophobia: Causes and Effects

Islamophobia is not unique to Canada, but rather manifests itself in many countries around the world. As a complex societal phenomenon, it is understood to have roots in the interaction of several different dynamics:

- Ignorance of non-Muslims about Muslims and Islam;
- Media and cultural portrayals of Muslims that equate Islamic belief with religious fundamentalism and politically-inspired violence and terrorism;
- Political parties and movements exploiting anxiety and resentment rooted in growing inequality, economic insecurity, and downward pressure on living standards;
- Military confrontation between Western states and fundamentalist movements in the Middle East, North Africa and other regions; and
- Domestic political currents that scapegoat vulnerable groups as being responsible for a perceived deterioration in physical and economic security, a perception fostered by news and media outlets.

Fear, hate and antagonism toward Muslims is not naturally occurring or spontaneous. It has been fomented over decades by right-wing politicians, nationalists, think tanks, media groups, online bigots, fundamentalist religious leaders, and white supremacists.¹⁵ Such online networks vilifying Muslims appear to have been instrumental in the January 2017 murder of six Muslim men praying at the Centre culturel Islamique de Québec in Québec City.¹⁶

In addition to Islamophobic politics, far-Right groups also commonly trade in anti-Semitic, xenophobic, racist and homophobic languages and symbolism.

Islamophobia in Canada is fueled by global events and foreign policy positions of Canadian political parties, the Government of Canada, and its allies, particularly toward countries with significant Muslim populations in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. As part of the US-led “global war on terror,” Western states’ concerns over the perceived risk that predominantly young Muslim men could become radicalized has been used to justify the surveillance of Muslims’ religious and political lives.¹⁷

Individuals identifying as Muslims are also more likely to identify as a person of colour, and to be more highly educated than the average person.

¹⁵ Lean, Nathan. *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*, London: Pluto, 2012.

¹⁶ McKenna, Kate, and Jonathan Montpetit. “Suspect in Mosque Shooting a Moderate Conservative Turned Extremist, Say Friends, Classmates,” *CBC News*, 31 January 2017.

¹⁷ Kundnani, Arun. *The Muslims are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*, London: Verso, 2014; Perry, Barbara. “‘All of a Sudden, There Are Muslims’: Visibilities and Islamophobic Violence in Canada,” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 4, No. 3, 2015; MacDonald, Erin Geneva. “Muslims in Canada: Collective Identities, Attitudes of Otherment and Canadian Muslim Perspectives on Radicalism,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 2015.



Socio-Economic Dislocation and the Rise of the Far-Right

For these reasons, understanding Islamophobia requires understanding the contemporary rise and salience of the far-Right. To understand the contemporary force of the far-Right, we need to understand the large-scale social and economic shocks and transformations that occurred in the first two decades of the 21st century.

The contemporary politics of demonizing and scapegoating of Muslim people, immigrants and other groups cannot be understood without an understanding of the deep social and economic transformations occurring over the past decade. Industrialized countries have gone through wrenching changes affecting millions of people and entire regions, communities, and industries. In the course of the last decade, the world went through the most serious financial crisis and economic recessions since the Great Depression, followed by a prolonged, weak, and unequal economic recovery. In many countries, particularly in Europe and the United States, elites bailed out banks and the financial industry, while imposing austerity on already hard-hit populations by slashing social programs, laying off government workers, and hiking taxes on working populations.¹⁸ In this crisis, millions lost homes, jobs, and livelihoods as others profited. Whole regions have been ravaged by addiction epidemics, declining life expectancies, and social breakdown.¹⁹ A tiny elite has seen its incomes rise rapidly, while most working people have struggled to stave off declining economic prospects. Virtually all of the economic growth has gone to the top 1%, while incomes have stagnated or fallen in the bottom 90% and social mobility has stalled.²⁰

Resentment is widespread at the way the political and economic system is rigged against working people, and for the benefit of a few. For years, trade unions and social democratic parties have sharply criticized these trends and the policy choices that reinforce them. But the Right-wing has also seized the critique of political parties and governments that have overseen and orchestrated this rising inequality and insecurity. The extreme Right, with its poisonous language and politics, has concentrated diverse grievances into anger at a political and economic system where the rules are rigged to favour only a few. In this respect, the present has similarities to previous historical periods of great social and economic crisis, when movements appealing to exclusionary racial identity and nationalism have found greater appeal.²¹

With this conceptual and historical background, it is important to understand the actual contours of Muslim people's lived experience in Canada.

¹⁸ Tooze, Adam. *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*, New York: Viking, 2018; Varoufakis, Yanis. *Adults in the Room: My Battle with Europe's Deep Establishment*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.

¹⁹ Macy, Beth. *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018; Belzak, Lisa, and Jessica Halverson. "The Opioid Crisis in Canada: a National Perspective," *Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada*, 38:6, 2018

²⁰ Osberg, Lars. *The Age of Increasing Inequality: The Astonishing Rise of Canada's 1%*, Toronto: Lorimer, 2018.

²¹ Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation*, New York: Rinehart and Company, 1944.

A portrait of a young man with dark hair, wearing a black cap and a blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green foliage and a white car.

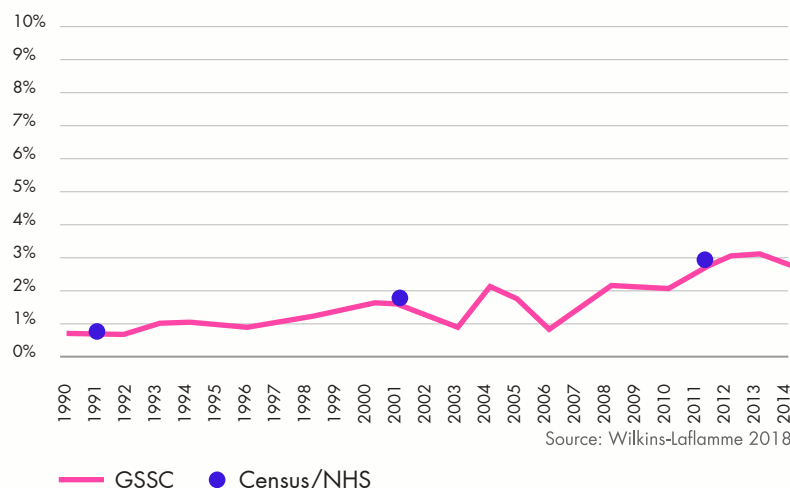
Muslims in Canada Today

While estimates vary as to the size of the Muslim population in Canada, those identifying as Muslims constitute a diverse, dynamic and small but growing population, especially in large urban centres.

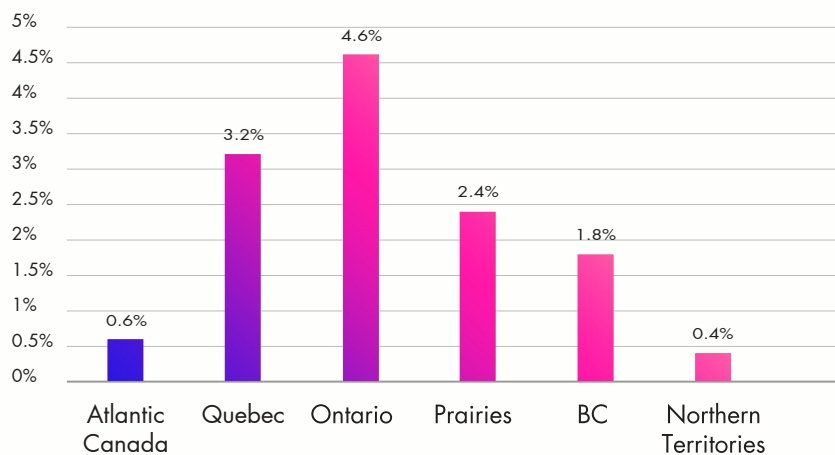
Statistics Canada estimates in 2011, there were 1.1 million Muslims in Canada or 3.2% of the total Canadian population.²² In 2016, there were 760,000 people over the age of 15 who identify as Muslim in Canada.²³

In comparison, Christians were the largest religious group in Canada with 22.1 million people or 63.7% of the total population.²⁴

Adult Muslim Population as a Share of the Total Canadian Population



The highest share of Muslims in Canada reside in Ontario, and lowest proportion live in Canada's territories.



Source: Wilkins-Laflamme 2018

²² Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 99-010-X2011037. Statistics Canada's Census of Population includes the question of religious affiliation every 10 years; data was last collected on religious affiliation in the 2011 National Household Survey. The question was not included in the 2016 Census of Population, and census data will next be compiled on religious affiliation in the 2021 census.

²³ Statistics Canada. General Social Survey (cycle 30), 2016.

²⁴ Ibid.

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, approximately 72% of people in Canada identifying as Muslims were born outside of the country, a proportion well above the 20% of individuals in Canada born outside of the country.²⁵ Principal regions of origin for immigrant Muslims were Northern and Eastern Africa, West Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia.



Most Muslims in Canada reside in large cities; in 2011, 62% of Muslims lived just in Toronto and Montreal. Relative to the Canadian population as a whole, the Muslim population in Canada is on average younger: approximately three in five of Muslims in Canada are under 35 years of age, as compared to 43% among the Canadian population as a whole. Individuals identifying as Muslims are also more likely to identify as a person of colour, and to be more highly educated than the average person. An estimated 88% of Muslim Canadians identify as a member of a racialized group (compared to 17% among the population as a whole), and approximately 35% of adult Muslim Canadians hold a university degree (against 20% among the Canadian population).

Like many religious denominations, the Muslim community in Canada is characterized by significant diversity, even though it is commonly perceived and portrayed as a homogeneous group.²⁶ The diversity of Muslim identity and experience includes affiliation with a religious sect (branch), immigration status, immigrant or Canadian-born, racialized, gender identity and sexual orientation, cultural background and practices, and their country of origin for immigrants.

Islam features two major sects: Sunni and Shia (Shiite). Each sect itself has different and numerous branches. Sunnis account for about 85% of all Muslims around the world. Muslims in Canada also have different immigration statuses. They may be Canadian-born, immigrants who have taken up permanent residency or citizenship in Canada, refugees, people who are claiming refugee status, temporary workers or students. The Muslim population are a combination of Canadian-born (28%), immigrants to Canada (68%) or permanent residents (4%).²⁷

Over the last three decades, immigration trends have continued to increase, in part to address the pressure on population and labour force growth due to Canada's decreasing birth rate and the ageing population. There was a noticeable increase in overall immigration trends in the 1990s where immigration numbers were usually over 200,000 persons a year.²⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising to find that since 1991, immigration accounts for 57% of today's Muslim population in Canada.

²⁵ Wilkins-Laflamme, Sarah. "Islamophobia in Canada: Measuring the Realities of Negative Attitudes Toward Muslims and Religious Discrimination," *Canadian Review of Sociology*, vol. 55, issue 1, February 2018.

²⁶ Rahman, Momim, and Ayesha Valliani. "Challenging the Opposition of LGBT Identities and Muslim Cultures: Initial Research on the Experiences of LGBT Muslims in Canada," *Theology & Sexuality*, 22 (1 2), May 2016.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Statistics Canada. "150 years of Immigration in Canada," *Canadian Megatrends*, June 29, 2016.

While Muslims have immigrated to Canada from every continent in the world, roughly 63% of Muslims have originated in Asia and 29% immigrated to Canada from Africa.²⁹ The largest number of Muslim immigrants from a single country was from Pakistan, followed by Iran.³⁰ Muslims in Canada are a diverse demographic exhibiting a range of different ways in which religious commitment, practice and observance are carried out by worshippers, reflecting immigration status, country of origin, cultural background, and other variables.

According to National Household Survey data, 88% (925,135) of Muslims in Canada are racialized, and 22% (128,810) are not racialized. The largest population of racialized Muslims are South Asians, followed by Arab and then by West Asian.

Racialized Muslim population by race/ethnicity, 2011

Race or Ethnicity	Number	Share of racialized Muslims
South Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)	383,365	41.4%
Arab	268,165	29.0%
West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)	139,615	15.1%
Black	90,535	9.8%
Chinese	1,600	0.2%
Filipino	1,550	0.2%
Latin American	1,875	0.2%
Southeast Asian	9,750	1.1%
Korean	75	0.0%
Japanese	180	0.0%
Visible minority and multiple visible minorities	28,430	3.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011037

²⁹ Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 99-010-X2011037.

³⁰ Ibid.



Work and Income

Although limited data are available on the income and employment of people identifying as Muslims, some broad generalizations are possible. On average, newcomers to Canada identifying as Muslims face a higher risk of living on low-incomes. Immigrants who identified as Muslim were much more likely to have an annual income below \$20,000 (46%) than people of other religions who immigrated to Canada (29%), and Muslim immigrants were less likely to be in higher income brackets.

Income of immigrant Muslims also varies by gender; 52% of Muslim women who immigrated to Canada are in the lowest income bracket, compared to 41% of Muslim men who immigrated to Canada. This compares to 25% for all men, and 36% for all women.

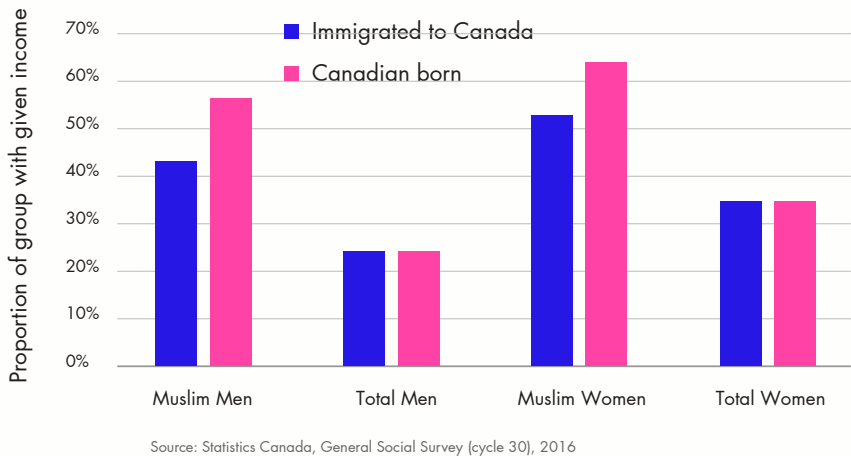
Three-quarters of Muslim men were employed in 2016, the same proportion as for all men. Fifty-six per cent of Muslim women were employed in 2016, compared to 66% of all women.

While 67% of Muslims in Canada report being employed, only 45% say their paid job is their main activity, compared to 56% of the total. Muslims were far more likely to be temporarily out of work (9.6% compared to 4.5%), going to school (25.5% compared to 12.5%), or caring for children/household work (10.4% compared to 4.6%). Muslims were also much less likely than other Canadians to be retired or ill (9.3% compared to 22.4%). Within Muslim respondents, women performed almost all of the unpaid care work, and almost no Muslim women reported being retired or having a long-term illness. Among those who were employed, Muslim women were most likely to have paid sick leave, paid vacation leave, and maternity/parental leave, but least likely to have a workplace pension plan, disability insurance, supplemental medical or dental care, or worker's compensation.

Income of immigrants to Canada, 2016



Proportion of each group with income less than \$20,000, 2016





Attitudes in Canada Toward Muslim People

Partly underpinning the mistrust and hostility in Canada toward people of Muslim faith is ignorance and factually-incorrect perceptions of Muslim people. Canadians of Sikh faith and non-Muslims from other racialized communities associated with Islam such as Arabs, South Asians and West Asians are commonly mistaken for Muslims.³¹ In some instances, municipal declarations and ordinances represent an assortment of stereotypes and fears not just about Muslims but about people of other faiths as well, including banning Kirpans,³² a Khalsa Sikh article of faith to be worn by followers at all times.

This everyday ignorance fuels the widespread perception among Muslims in Canada that Canadians as a whole have a poor understanding of Islam and Muslims.³³

Governments in Canada have also enacted legislation targeting Muslim people. On October 18, 2017, the Quebec National Assembly passed Bill 62, the religious neutrality act.³⁴ Section 10 of the Act requires that government and public sector personnel must exercise their functions with their face uncovered, and that persons who request a service from government and public agencies must have their face uncovered when the service is provided. Among other government and public sector bodies, this section applies to government departments, municipalities and municipal agencies, public transit authorities, public health and social service institutions, physicians, dentists and midwives, and school boards and general and vocational colleges.

Muslim community associations, human rights organizations and unions spoke out in opposition to the Bill. That same month, public opinion surveys found high levels of support for the legislation among Quebec residents and significant support among residents of Canada outside of Quebec for a prohibition on women wearing niqabs from visiting government offices.³⁵

In November 2017, the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) filed an application for judicial review in Quebec Superior Court, requesting in addition a stay on section 10 of the Act. They argued that Section 10 violates the guarantees of freedom of religion and the right to equality enshrined in both the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. On December 1, the court granted a temporary stay on this provision.

In May 2018, the Quebec government released official guidelines determining how the restriction on people who cover their faces in public for religious reasons would take place in practice when giving or receiving public services, in addition to the procedure for granting exemptions for religious reasons. The NCCM and CCLA returned to court to argue that the guidelines were inadequate in preventing serious discrimination against Muslim women. The court agreed to leave the stay in effect until the court had decided the constitutionality of the law itself.³⁶

³¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. 2013. *Human Rights and Creed Research and Consultation Report* (OHRC, 2013), Section 3.2.3.

³² Moore, Dene. "Quebec Town Bans Kirpans, Stoning Women," *Globe and Mail*, 30 January 2007.

³³ Zaidi, Mukarram Ali, and Ahmed Makhdoom. "Muslim Community Engagement Study," *Think for Actions in conjunction with Insights Matter*, 2017.

³⁴ Formally, *An Act to foster adherence to State religious neutrality and, in particular, to provide a framework for requests for accommodations on religious grounds in certain bodies*.

³⁵ Angus Reid Institute. Four-in-ten outside Quebec would prohibit women wearing niqabs from receiving government services, October 27, 2017, <http://angusreid.org/bill-62-face-covering/> (accessed July 8, 2018); Abedi, Maham. "68% of Canadians want Quebec's face-coverings ban in their province," *Global News*, 27 October 2017 <https://globalnews.ca/news/3828752/quebec-face-covering-ban-support-canada-poll/> (accessed July 8, 2018)

³⁶ National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, "NCCM & CCLA Successfully Obtain Renewed Stay Against Quebec's Bill 62," news release, <https://www.nccm.ca/en-fr-nccm-ccla-successfully-obtain-renewed-stay-against-quebecs-bill-62-le-cnmc-et-laccl-parviennent-a-obtenir-un-autre-sursis-sur-ladoption-du-projet-de-loi-62-d/>.



Discrimination and Violence Experienced by Muslims in Canada

Racism, prejudice, intimidation and violence toward Muslims in Canada is widespread and well documented in academic research, police hate crime statistics, public opinion surveys, and human rights commission reports.³⁷ Over a five year span ending in October 31, 2017, approximately one-quarter of all complaints accepted by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) alleged employment discrimination or discrimination related to service-provision based on race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, or some combination of these.³⁸ Of the complaints accepted citing discrimination based on religion, the most commonly cited religious identity, in 40% of the complaints, was Muslim.³⁹ Discriminatory treatment of Muslim travellers at Canadian borders was among the issues raised in these complaints.

Hate Crimes Against Muslims

Muslims in Canada are victims of a significant proportion of hate crimes motivated by religion, race or ethnicity recorded in Canada each year. However, official reporting of hate crimes targeting Muslims likely understates the extent of criminal

acts singling out Muslims. According to Statistics Canada, in 2014, 11% of individuals affiliated with a non-Christian religion reported experiencing discrimination based on their religion compared to 1% of those who were Christians. Forty-six per cent of victims of discrimination and violent victimization based on their religion did not report them to the police.⁴⁰

There are two categories of police-reported hate crime incidences: non-violent and violent incidences. Non-violent hate incidences include public incitement of hatred and genocide, as well as advocating mischief in relation to religious property, general mischief, crimes against property (e.g., break and enter), and disturbing the peace. Violent hate crimes include criminal harassment, assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm, aggravated assault, uttering threats, crimes against persons involving violence or threat of violence (e.g., homicide, attempted murder, robbery, and harassing telephone calls.

Both violent and non-violent manifestations of religiously motivated and race and ethnicity-motivated hate crime are significant in Canada.

Change in violent and non-violent hate crimes by race/ethnicity and religion in 2017 from 2016

	Race and Ethnicity			Religion		
	2016	2017	Change 2017 from 2016	2016	2017	Change 2017 from 2016
Total	629	824	31%	450	826	84%
Non-violent violations	334	436	31%	328	631	92%
Violent violations	295	388	32%	122	195	60%

Note: Percentages are rounded.

³⁷ Perry, Barbara. "All of a Sudden, There Are Muslims': Visibilities and Islamophobic Violence in Canada," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 4, No. 3, 2015.

³⁸ Canadian Human Rights Commission, *Submission To The Standing Committee On Canadian Heritage*, November 20, 2017.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibrahim, Dyna. "Violent Victimization and Discrimination, by Religious Affiliation in Canada, 2014," *Statistics Canada*, April 12, 2018.

In 2017, hate crimes targeting race and ethnicity increased by 31% for non-violent as well as for violent violations. Overall, hate crimes motivated by religion increased by 84% in 2017 from 2016; with a huge 92% increase for non-violent incidences and 60% increase for violent incidences.⁴¹

In 2017, police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion accounted for 41% of all hate crimes, while hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity amounted to 43% of the total.⁴² Annual hate crime incidents in Canada motivated by religion increased by 80% in 2017 compared to 2016. Specifically, the number of hate crimes against Muslims in 2017 increased 2.5 times compared to 2016, and 3.5 times when compared to 2014.⁴³

In 2017, hate crime incidents increased the most sharply in Ontario, largely due to more hate crimes against Muslim (+207%), Black (+84%) and Jewish (+41%) people. Quebec reported the second largest increase in hate crimes for 2017, where incidents against Muslims almost tripled from 2016. February 2017, the month following the mass shooting at the Centre culturel Islamique du Québec, saw the highest spike of reported incidents, accounting for 26% of Quebec's annual number of hate crimes against Muslims.

At times, the perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate crimes direct their actions against someone or people who they believe are Muslims. Many Muslims in Canada are Black, or have South Asian, or Arab/West Asian heritage and cultural backgrounds; consequently, police-reported hate crimes motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity may reflect Islamophobia based on the intersection of religion, race and cultural background. In other words, Islamophobia may be manifested as one component of police-reported hate incidents motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity, since hate-crime perpetrators may assume someone who is brown is a Muslim. For instance, in September of 2017, media reported that at a

public event, a heckler assumed Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the New Democratic Party and a Sikh man with a turban, also called Dastar, was Muslim, and accused him of foisting Shariah law upon Canadians, and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, a religious and political group.⁴⁴

Police-reported hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity increased to 43% in 2017 from 32% in 2016. This increase was primarily due to more hate crimes against Black (+50%) and Arab/West Asian (+27%) people.



Police Reported Hate Crimes by Religion, Canada, 2014-2017

	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Religion	429	34	469	35	460	33	842	41
Jewish	213	17	178	13	221	16	360	18
Muslim	99	8	159	12	139	10	349	17
Catholic	35	3	55	4	27	2	39	2
Other	49	4	41	3	37	3	57	3
Religion not specified	33	3	36	3	36	3	37	2

Note: Other includes motivations based on religions but not otherwise stated (for example, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist)

Source: Statistics Canada, "Police-Reported Hate Crime, 2017," November 29, 2018.

Police Reported Hate Crimes by Race/Ethnicity, Canada, 2014-2017

	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Black	238	19	224	17	214	15	321	16
Eastern or Southeast Asian	52	4	49	4	61	4	61	3
South Asian	49	4	48	4	72	5	67	3
Arab or West Asian	69	5	92	7	112	8	142	7
Aboriginal	37	3	35	3	30	2	31	2
White	49	4	38	3	36	3	46	2
Other	106	8	130	10	125	9	169	8
Race not specified	11	1	25	2	16	1	41	2

Source: Statistics Canada, "Police-Reported Hate Crime, 2017," November 29, 2018.

⁴¹ Statistics Canada. "Police-Reported Hate Crime, 2017," *The Daily*, November 29, 2018.

November 29, 2018.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ McLaughlin, Amara. "Jagmeet Singh Praised for 'Calm and Positive' Reaction to Anti-Muslim Heckler," *CBC News*, 11 September 2017.



Gendered Islamophobia

Muslim women and girls are especially vulnerable to hate crimes by virtue of their status as Muslim women.⁴⁵ It is the combination and interaction of gender, racialization and religion that makes Muslim women vulnerable to bias-motivated violence and intimidation. Many Muslim women in Canada and around the world choose to wear head coverings such as the hijab, niqab or burka for various reasons including, but not limited to, showing modesty and to signify faith. As discussed earlier, the hijab and niqab are vigorously debated and reported by media in Canada and frequently politicized.

The interaction of gender, religion, race and culture is especially acute for Muslim women who cover. Their visibility puts them at higher risk and makes them much more vulnerable to gender-based Islamophobia because they are immediate identifiable targets for perpetrators motivated by hate against Muslims and gender-based violence.

A recent study shows the very high rate of unreported gender-based violence against Muslim women in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).⁴⁶ This qualitative report documents the everyday Islamophobic experiences and impact on Muslim women. The Muslim women in the study reported incidences of being spat at, yelled at, sworn at and experienced physical as well as sexual assaults. Of the 40 Islamophobic incidences documented in the study, only three incidences were reported to the police.⁴⁷



⁴⁵ Perry, Barbara. "Gendered Islamophobia: Hate Crime Against Muslim Women," *Social Identities*, , vol. 20, No. 1, 2014.

⁴⁶ Syed, Fatima. "New Study Shows Prevalence of Unreported Islamophobic Incidents against Muslim Women in GTA," *Toronto Star*, 19 January 2018.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

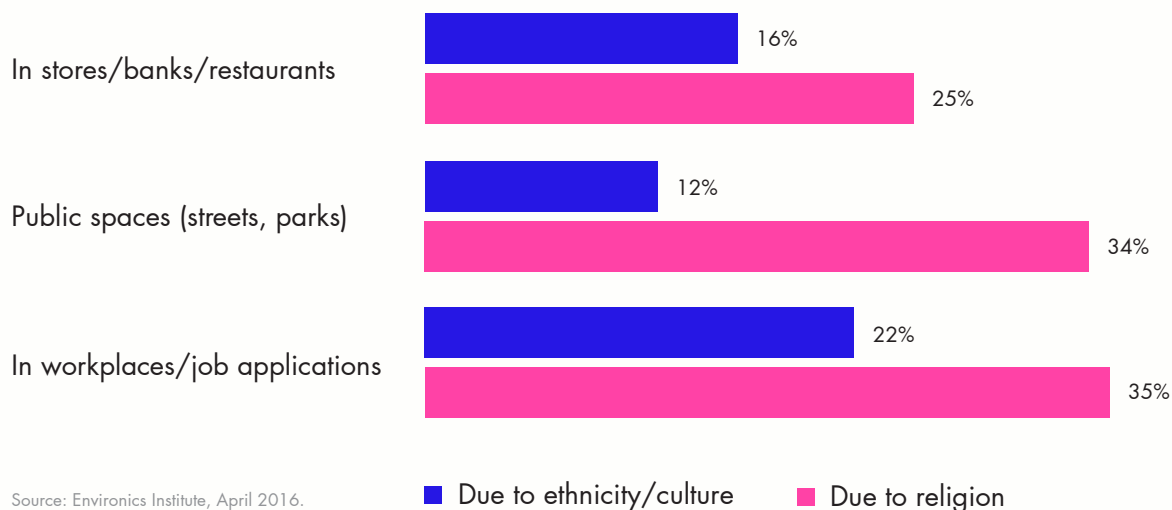
A photograph of a barista in a dark shirt and apron pouring coffee from a silver kettle into a glass carafe. The scene is set in a modern coffee shop with various coffee-making equipment visible. The text "Workplace Discrimination Against Muslims" is overlaid in white.

Workplace Discrimination Against Muslims

Very few studies focus directly on job and workplace discrimination experienced by Muslims. A 2016 survey of Muslims in Canada by the Environics Institute found that one-third of Muslim Canadians have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years due to their

religion, ethnicity, culture, language or sex.⁴⁸ These incidences were most commonly experienced in workplaces, job applications, public spaces (streets, parks), and in stores, banks, and restaurants.⁴⁹

Milieus in which Muslim Canadians Report Experiencing Discrimination over the Previous Five Years, 2016



In interviews and surveys of working Muslim women in manufacturing, retail and commercial services, the authors of a 2002 study found that a very high proportion of Muslim women encountered employers referring to their hijab in the course of applying and interviewing for paid positions.⁵⁰ The same study found that two in five women reported being asked to remove the hijab as a condition of employment. A related study summarizing the experiences of Muslim working women in Toronto reported that:

"Women who wear hijabs are given incorrect information regarding job availability, are denied the opportunity to apply for jobs, made to feel invisible and unwelcome when applying, they are fired from jobs, and they are harassed in the workplace as a result of wearing hijab. Muslim women wearing hijab experienced this discrimination regardless of their age, skin colour, experience in Canada, accent, mannerisms and education."⁵¹

⁴⁸ The Environics Institute for Survey Research. "Survey of Muslims in Canada: Final Report," Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Persad, Judy Vashti, and Salome Lukas. " 'No Hijab is Permitted Here': A Study on the Experiences of Muslim Women Wearing Hijab Applying for Work in the Manufacturing, Sales and Service Sectors, " Toronto: Women Working with Immigrant Women, 2002.

⁵¹ Women Working With Immigrant Women. "Types of Workplace Discrimination Experienced by Muslim Women Wearing Hijab," Best Workplace Policies and Practices: Accommodating the Workplace Needs of Muslim Women Wearing Hijab, Toronto, 2004.

Anti-Muslim harassment and bigotry may occur in workplaces in which there are manifestations of other forms of discrimination. In July 2017, five long-serving employees of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) filed a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against the agency. The statement of claim alleged long-standing anti-Muslim harassment and discrimination by management in CSIS offices in multiple cities, in addition to rampant racism and homophobia.⁵² CSIS management quickly settled the suit.⁵³

Many forms of race-based, gender-based and religious-based discrimination at work experienced by Muslims in Canada can be ameliorated through broad-based, overlapping and adequately funded workplace anti-discrimination measures, mandated and supported as a government priority.

Academic research has demonstrated the existence of significant bias in hiring individuals with Chinese, Indian or Pakistani last name versus an Anglo-Canadian name. The Asian-name disadvantage was found to be slightly worse for women than for men and higher in smaller workplaces than large establishments.⁵⁴

In recognition of unconscious and unintentional hiring bias, the federal government introduced a name blind recruitment pilot project in April 2017.⁵⁵ To date, the project has not been adequately designed to test hiring bias in the federal public service and therefore requires an overhaul of its methodology in order to credibly detect and address hiring bias.⁵⁶



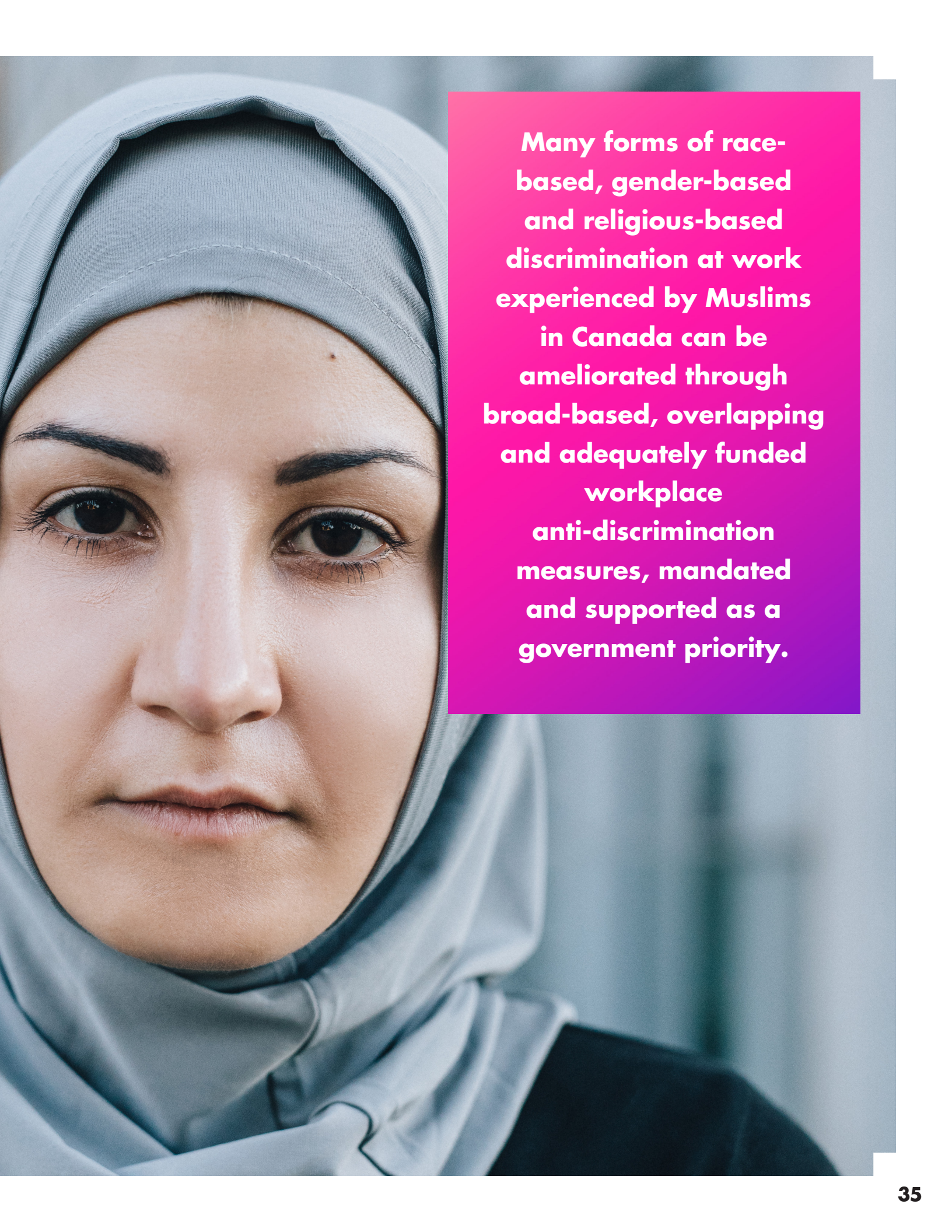
⁵² *John Doe #1 et al. v. Canada* (July 13, 2017) Toronto T-1032-17 (FCTD) (Statement of Claim).

⁵³ Shephard, Michelle. "CSIS Settles Multimillion-Dollar Lawsuit with Employees who Claimed Workplace Islamophobia, Racism and Homophobia," *Toronto Star*, 14 December 2017.

⁵⁴ Banerjee, Rupa, Jeffrey G. Reitz, and Philip Oreopoulos. "Do Large Employers Treat Racial Minorities More Fairly? An Analysis of Canadian Field Experiment Data," *Canadian Public Policy*, 44:1, March 2018.

⁵⁵ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. "What's in a Name? Name-Blind Recruitment Comes to the Government of Canada," news release, 17 April 2018.

⁵⁶ Reitz, Jeffrey G., Rupa Banerjee, and Philip Oreopoulos. "Can We Avoid Bias in Hiring Practices?" *Policy Options*, 6 July 2018.



Many forms of race-based, gender-based and religious-based discrimination at work experienced by Muslims in Canada can be ameliorated through broad-based, overlapping and adequately funded workplace anti-discrimination measures, mandated and supported as a government priority.

A portrait of a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and a necklace with a teardrop pendant. The background is a blurred green outdoor setting. The text "Confronting Islamophobia in Canada" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Confronting Islamophobia in Canada

Confronting Islamophobia in Canada must begin with naming the phenomenon and drawing attention to the issue. The discussion of Islamophobia in Canada has recently been advanced by the introduction and debate of Motion 103 in the House of Commons in December 2016. The motion originated in a June 2016 petition to the government of Canada (petition e-411) initiated by Mr. Samer Majzoub, President of the Canadian Muslim Forum. It read, “We, the undersigned, Citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the House of Commons to join us in recognizing that extremist individuals do not represent the religion of Islam, and in condemning all forms of Islamophobia.”

In partial response to the petition, itself unanimously adopted in the House of Commons, federal Liberal Member of Parliament Iqra Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills) introduced Private Members’ Motion 103 in the House of Commons on December 5, 2016. The motion called on the government to:

- (a) recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear;
- (b) condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination and take note of House of Commons’ petition e-411 and the issues raised by it; and
- (c) request that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage undertake a study on how the government could:

- (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia, in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making, and

- (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities, and that the Committee should present its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee should make recommendations that the government may use to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the *Constitution Acts*, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

In April 2017, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage formally commenced the study referenced in M-103, and in June, it began meetings initiating its study of systemic racism and religious discrimination in Canada. Having heard testimony from witnesses through the fall, the Committee adopted its report in January and presented it to the House on February 1, 2018. The report, entitled *Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia*, contained 30 separate recommendations. Although the report’s recommendations as a whole would benefit all racialized and religious communities in Canada, including Muslim communities, only two of the report’s recommendations specifically mentioned Islamophobia.

Canada has submitted reports under the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) since 1971. In its most recent comments on Canada’s June 2016 submission, the Committee expressed concern regarding reports of discriminatory hiring practices and discrimination in the workplace faced by ethnic minorities, migrants and Indigenous Peoples.

The Committee noted that alone among the provinces, only Quebec has legislated mandatory employment equity in the public sector, and that federal employment equity regulations had been amended to reduce the labour rights approach conditions of the mandatory contractor compliance mechanism. The Committee went on to observe there is no mandatory employment equity for private employers at the provincial level.⁵⁷

Among other measures, the UN Committee recommended the Government of Canada:

- Provide adequate training to employers and awareness-raising campaigns for employees about their rights and effective recourse for reporting violations, in order to ensure the elimination of discriminatory hiring practices and discrimination against ethnic minorities in the workplace;
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the existing employment equity regime and make necessary changes to increase the representation of ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples in the workforce;
- Request all public bodies to collect and publish data on the ethnic composition of the public service periodically. That data should include statistics that disaggregate the total number of employees, job categories, and numbers at middle managerial levels and higher levels;
- Request all contractors and public service agencies be required to do the same, and that private employers to publish similar disaggregated data on their workforce and take measures to ensure the elimination of discriminatory employment practices against ethnic minorities in hiring, retention and promotion;

- Determine whether professional accreditation bodies perpetuate discriminatory barriers to certification of certain ethnic candidates, particularly those who received their academic qualifications in other countries;
- Take effective measures to ensure that labour inspections and other administrative or legal procedures reach all industries, with a view to detecting labour rights violations, bringing perpetrators to justice and compensating victims; and
- Provide comprehensive data on the coverage of labour inspections and of other administrative or legal procedures, including statistics on inspection visits, violations detected, sanctions or penalties imposed over the review period and compensation provided to victims, disaggregated, inter alia, by type of violation, industry or occupation, age, sex, national origin and ethnic origin of the victim.



⁵⁷ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. *Concluding Observations on the Combined Twenty-First to Twenty-Third Periodic Reports of Canada*, CERD/C/CAN/CO/21-23, 13 September 2017.



A portrait of a man with short dark hair, a beard, and a tattoo on his neck. He is wearing a grey long-sleeved henley shirt. The word "Conclusion" is written in large white letters across the middle of the image. To the right, a portion of another person wearing a light blue button-down shirt is visible.

Conclusion



The most important and minacious political current today, in Canada and around the world, is the renewed rise of nativist and ethnic nationalist political movements that target, blame, and exclude marginalized groups based on their race, ethnicity, culture and/or religion. A central organizing theme of its identity and politics includes hostility to Muslim people and to Islam.

Far from being senseless or a product of pure ignorance, these dangerous political expressions arise from very real pressures on incomes, economic prospects and social status. Increasingly, the tectonic social and economic shifts shaking the foundations of Western liberal democracies threaten the broad consensus forged over decades regarding shared values of equity, human rights, and social, political and economic inclusion. Many people in Canada, especially working people, are angry, anxious and frustrated with an economic and political system that seems unwilling or incapable of registering their concerns and meeting their needs.

This environment reaffirms the need and potential of trade unions and their agenda of inclusion, social justice, equitable redistribution, and shared prosperity. But it is also perilous for unions. To date, the far-Right has responded more rapidly and effectively than the Left to this deep sense of grievance among working people. In the European Union, the United States, and Latin America, the deep dissatisfaction with conventional politics has thus far been mobilized by the Right rather than the Left.

This division and scapegoating represent a grave threat to working people and their organizations, which depend on inclusiveness, equity and solidarity for economic and social power. The scapegoating targets working people and their organizations. If allowed to continue unabated, a marginalized, isolated, and vilified minority of mostly racialized Muslim workers, second-class citizenry could emerge.

Working people and their unions cannot and will not remain idle or silent in the face of the threat of the far-right. They must respond by engaging members, educating and tackling workplace discrimination head on. Doing so will not only nurture a stable, inclusive and equitable future for Canadian society and democracy; it will also renew our organizations and confirm the contemporary relevance of unions as vehicles of inclusive and progressive social change.

As far-right movements grow in power and influence, Islamophobia, as one arm of a broad and dangerous machine operationalizing hate, immediate attention and urgent action from unions across Canada is not only required, but necessary. Workers continue to be directly impacted by the further erosion of Canada's democracy. There is an immense socio-economic cost to not responding to Islamophobia in workplaces and communities in Canada and if action is not strategically and deliberately taken now, workers pay the price.

"The labour movement's struggle for equity and human rights and against prejudice and hatred is now more urgent than ever. Economic racism and low-wage, gender-based, occupational segregation are defining features of our unequal and profoundly unfair economic model.

As widespread insecurity and deep resentment of this unfairness hardens, extremist political movements peddle hatred and fear to focus anger against the very workers and communities worst affected by growing insecurity and inequality.

If unions are unable or unwilling to take up these struggles and champion the rights of the disadvantaged and marginalized, they will find it difficult to demonstrate their relevance for a growing number of workers.

At the same time, the collective focus, coordination and resources, and capacity to strengthen solidarity between working people mean the labour movement can advance these struggles in crucially important ways.

If the labour movement is to renew and revitalize itself, it must continue to champion the goals of inclusion, equity, fairness, and shared prosperity and opportunity."

— Canadian Labour Congress, Equity for a Fair Future, Policy Paper adopted by the 2017 Constitutional Convention, Toronto.





Recommendations

The recommendations below are intended for unions, governments and public and private sector employers. They are not intended to be exhaustive; employers, governments and unions should identify avenues to combat Islamophobia and foster inclusiveness and respect for human rights in ways that best fit their organizations and workplace needs. Nor are they meant to form an indivisible whole; unions, employers and businesses should adopt recommendations, in an appropriate sequence of measures, which suit their urgent needs and priorities. What is important is that initiatives to combat Islamophobia are undertaken now, they reinforce one another, and they create momentum toward a new and transformed relationship with Muslim people in Canada.

Recommendations to Trade Unions

1. Champion fairness, equity and social justice for Muslims in Canada. Speak out, immediately, against any backlash or incidents of discrimination against Muslims in your community. Organize with allies and spokespeople from the Muslim community so you can find ways to speak out together.
2. Provide bystander training and tools to union and labour council members so they are equipped to immediately speak out against discriminatory words or actions when encountered, no matter where they occur.
3. Invest in educating members about the threat to workers represented by Islamophobia and its destructive consequences for workers' human rights, solidarity, and labour organizations.
4. Press governments and human rights commissions to invest in better data gathering on the incidence and manifestations of Islamophobia in the workplace.
5. Engage and educate members about the dangers represented by the Islamophobic far-right political movements.
6. Prioritize education around economic inequality and insecurity to attack the social and economic foundations of xenophobia, nativism and racial nationalism.
7. Continue to work alongside the peace movement and faith groups to demand diplomatic and peaceful resolution of international conflicts, while opposing Western military intervention against Muslim nations justified by the "global war on terror".
8. Advocate and collectively bargain for the creation of workplace human rights committees along the lines of the internal responsibility system, as proposed by the 2000 *Canadian Human Rights Act* Review Panel (La Forest report).
9. Press the Government of Canada to restore the legal employment equity requirements for federal contractors.
10. Press all levels of government to adopt proactive pay equity legislation to eliminate wage disparities between men and Black women, Indigenous and Muslim women.
11. Support the work of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)'s Diversity Committee in increasing the participation and representation of Muslim actors and characters in TV, film, radio and other cultural media in Canada, and in resisting the vilification and stereotyping of Muslim people in media content in Canada.
12. Outreach and invite Muslim community allies to labour meetings, gatherings and events, and provide space to learn about the experiences and perspectives of Muslims themselves and

- learn about the work that unions and labour organizations are doing. Small gatherings for sharing and exchanging information, even just conversation can break down barriers and build solidarity.
13. Partner with service organizations, community groups, schools and places of worship in your community that are providing services or assistance to Muslims.
 14. Lobby the federal government to ensure Canada's humanitarian commitment to refugees continues and to lead by example, by standing up to any racism and hatred directed towards Muslim newcomers and other racialized groups in Canada and internationally.
 15. Include articles, commentaries or blogs in internal communication networks, so members can learn more about Muslims in Canada and how to help. Quickly deal with any backlash from members on your social networks too.
 16. Co-host and co-sponsor activities at community events (fairs, festivals, tournaments, etc.) where union members, community members and Muslims in Canada can interact: tobogganing races, hot chocolate or fruit cocktail socials, bake sales, BBQs, picnics, potluck suppers, etc.
 17. Seek out the leadership of your local Muslim community to keep the communication channels open between the community and your local union and labour council leadership.
 18. Publicly profile and promote union and labour council's support and efforts in fighting discrimination against Muslims; sending a strong signal to everyone in the community. For example, write a letter to the editor or an opinion piece for local media, co-author it with community allies to show there is widespread support, organize a public statement (like a news release) to publicize your support efforts locally and how that connects with efforts across the country.
 19. Work with the CLC, affiliate unions and labour councils to actively participate in the federal government's cross-country consultations on a new national anti-racism approach to find new ways to collaborate and combat discrimination.
 20. Work to increase equity representation in CLC committees and on decision making bodies such as Canadian Council.

Recommendations to Government

1. Implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination contained in its *Concluding Observations on the Combined Twenty-First to Twenty-Third Periodic Reports of Canada*.
2. Working with Muslim community associations, human rights bodies, trade unions and civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, develop a strategy to combat the growth of anti-Muslim hate groups and online and social media dissemination of Islamophobia.
3. Employ both an equity and intersectional lens, for existing and future legislation, regulations and policies in order to promote respect, dignity and fairness, and support diversity and equality for all people in communities across Canada.
4. Repeal and amend legislation that promotes racism and hate including Bill C-59 (the *National Security Act*) and Bill S-7 (the *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*).
5. Convene open and public cross-country consultations to find new ways to combat discrimination in a new national anti-racism strategy.

6. Reinstate Canada's Action Plan Against Racism (CAPAR) to comply with the requirements of the United Nations World Conference against Racism.
7. Provide more funding to support anti-racism and anti-oppression programs, especially programs to combat Islamophobia.
8. Act on the 30 recommendations submitted by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in the report, entitled *Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia*.
5. Make anti-Islamophobia and anti-racism education or training available to leadership, managers and employees.
6. Implement name-blind recruiting and hiring practices at both the staff and management levels, and ensure there is no bias, prejudice or discrimination against employees from diverse backgrounds, including Muslim employees, in the entire employment process including onboarding, retention, and promotion.
7. Ensure there is no bias, prejudice or discrimination against employees from diverse backgrounds, including Muslim employees, in wages and compensation.

Recommendations to Employers

1. Ensure employers, management and employees understand their obligations under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to Muslim employees in the workplace and to create a fair and healthy workplace free from discrimination, harassment, prejudice and bias. Provide resources to ensure that racialized and/or Muslim employees know their rights in the workplace.
2. Develop organizational and workplace policies and practices that are fair, equitable and free from discrimination, harassment or retaliation against anyone, including racialized and/or Muslim employees who work for the organization or those who receive services from it.
3. Create and ensure a positive and constructive organizational and workplace culture that is safe and respectful of multiple diversities of their employees, including Muslim employees.
4. Review organizational and business policies, practices and services as well as organizational by-laws to remove any existing or potential barriers to a discrimination, harassment and bullying-free workplace for diverse employees including Muslim employees.
8. Create joint workplace committees with leadership, management and employees through bargaining agents or Muslim and/or racialized employee representatives to develop, monitor, and evaluate anti-Muslim and anti-racism initiatives.
9. Work with employees, through bargaining agents or Muslim and/or racialized employee representatives, ensure there are policies and procedures to address workplace harassment, violence or bullying. Reports of such incidences should be reported promptly and appropriate remedies taken.
10. Establish and publicly promote a commitment from leadership, at the top levels of the organization or business, against Islamophobia in the workplace and society.
11. Ensure that the duty to accommodate Muslim employees' needs concerning religious observance by addressing existing or preventable barriers, for example:
 - a. Prayers two of the five times a day are during a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday.

A quiet, clean space in the workplace with some privacy is desirable;

- b. Washing (ablution) of face, hands, arms, and feet with clean water is required of Muslims before prayer. This can be done in the workplace washrooms, or a place with running water;
- c. Friday congregational prayer is about one hour around lunchtime. An employer, in discussion with the Muslim employee, can arrange flexible work hours such as coming in earlier or leaving later on Friday;
- d. Fasting during Ramadan is an important practice in Islam. Muslims abstain from food and drink including water from dawn until sunset for one month. An employer, in discussion with the Muslim employee, can arrange:
 - i. for flexible work hours such as shortening the workday if a lunch break is not taken by the employee; and
 - ii. for the employee to be exempt from work meetings and events that serve food and drinks during Ramadan.
- e. Social and work events celebrating religious holidays of other faiths where alcohol is served may not be comfortable for Muslims. These employees should not be penalized for not participating in such events. Also, a Muslim employee should not be asked to serve or sell religiously offensive (haram) products, such as alcohol;
- f. Pilgrimage (Hajj) to the city of Mecca, which takes about a week, is required of Muslim adults at least once in their lifetime. Muslim employees may use their vacation days and/or unpaid days to fulfill this rite.

The employee and employer should discuss to find available dates and options;

- g. Holidays for religious observance and celebration (Eids) happens twice a year. Canadian employers are required by law to give Muslim employees two full days for religious observances in addition to vacation and statutory holidays;
- h. Clothing and behaviour for Muslims must be modest according to Islam. Muslim men are required to wear loose and non-transparent clothing covering, at a minimum, from their navel to their knees. Some Muslim men wear a small head covering, called a kufi. Some Muslim women wear loose-fitting, non-revealing clothing as well as a hijab, or some a face veil. The employer and Muslim employee may want to discuss workplace dress code exemptions, if necessary;
- i. Many Muslim men for religious reasons wear beards. For health and safety reasons in the workplace, employers may require employees with beards to use proper covering such as hairnets or masks;
- j. Some Muslims do not practice shaking hands with an unrelated person of the opposite sex as a sign of modesty and avoid any physical contact with members of the opposite gender; and
- k. Dietary requirements for Muslims prohibit the consumption of alcohol, pork, and pork by-products according to the *Qur'an*, Islam's religious book. Many practicing Muslims will only consume halal meat and poultry slaughtered according to certain standards of slaughter and preparation.

Examples adapted from: <https://www.nccm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NCCM-Employer-GUIDE-PF.pdf>

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A Note on the Research Sources:

Limited labour market, income and workplace data exist for Muslim individuals and households in Canada. In addition to scholarly and academic research, this report relies primarily on Statistics Canada data from the 2011 National Household Survey and the 2016 General Social Survey (Cycle 30). Recently, the government of Canada has acknowledged data gaps with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, and other variables, committing in Budget 2018 to strengthen diversity data-gathering and dissemination. Among these commitments was the creation of a new centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics at Statistics Canada that will act as GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis+) data hub to support future, evidence-based policy development and decision-making. In the future, additional and disaggregated data will allow for more detailed research and analysis regarding the social and economic circumstances of Muslim people in Canada.

