

Follow up to questions from Senators - June 13 meeting

Question 1 (Request from Senator Jaffer):

Regarding question 1, a full PDF copy of NCCM's 61 policy recommendations that include federal, provincial, and municipal reforms to combat Islamophobia at the bottom of the response. In order for government leaders to properly combat Islamophobia they must put into action all of these recommendations. These reforms are from the voices of countless Muslims who spoke with NCCM staff during a nationwide consultation period that took place after the June 21st, 2021, London family massacre.

Question 2 (Request from the Acting Chair, Senator Boyer):

Similar to the study conducted in the U.K, there have been several studies by accredited organizations that have found an alarmingly high percentage of Islamophobic sentiment within Canada. In 2012, The Association for Canadian Studies conducted a study which found that 52% of Canadians feel that Muslims can only be trusted "a little" or "not at all" and 42% of Canadians think discrimination against Muslims is "mainly their fault". In 2017, the Angus Reid Institute surveyed over 1500 Canadians and found that 46% of Canadians have a disfavorable view of Islam, more so than any other religious tradition.

Further, according to the National Census, "Canadian Muslims" are diverse multiple ancestral identities (i.e., descendants, recent immigrants, converts). The National Census also found that: a percentage 88% identify as a member of a racialized group, 3 in 5 Muslims in Canada are under 35 years of age. 35% of working age Muslims have a university degree (i.e., much higher than the national average of 20%) and are primarily concentrated in major cities (two thirds living in Toronto and Montreal alone). Yet, Canadian Muslims still have the highest unemployment rates of 13.9% versus the national average of 7.8% and a median income lower than all Canadians. Further, Dr. Eddy NG and Dr. Suzanne Gagnon highlighted in a study on racialized unemployment, that "unemployment rates are highest for Arabs (13.5 %), Blacks (12.5 %), and West Asians (11.0 %)" (NG 5). The study also noted that these unemployment rates may be bolstered by "the "Muslim penalty"—arising out of anti-Muslim sentiments" (NG 5). Dr. Nabil Khattab also noted in his study on Canadian minorities in the labor market that "all Muslim groups" face the highest rates of unemployment with a reported percentage that "exceeds 10%", adding on that unemployment for Muslims is especially high for "Arab and Black Muslims (17% and 21%, respectively)" (Khattab 1226). These percentages demonstrate that Islamophobia is not only rampant within Canadian society but is also institutionalized within Canadian workforces. What is also noteworthy about the surveys conducted is the years in which they took place. Both surveys conducted in 2012 and 2017 took place before the Quebec City Mosque shooting which left six Canadian Muslims dead and countless others injured. After the Quebec City Mosque shooting, violent hate crimes against Muslims skyrocketed by 151%. In essence, since the completion of these surveys, Canada has witnessed two mass murders of Muslims (2017, 2021), one unprovoked murder of a Muslim elderly man

(2020), and very literally, countless other attacks against visible Muslims. While several strides have been taken to combat Islamophobia, it is evident that more than needs to be done

Briefly returning to the specific topic of discrimination in the workplace, it is imperative to note the blatant discrimination that has taken place since the start of the pandemic. There are a number of case files submitted to NCCM's incident report bank by Hijab wearing Muslim women who reported that potential employers would lose interest in hiring them upon discovering that they wear the hijab. This would typically happen after a successful phone interview (which many employers took advantage of during the height of the pandemic).

Question 3: (Request from Senator Omidvar):

The primary victims of violent, hateful direct Islamophobic attacks are Muslim women (especially those who wear the hijab). The question should not necessarily be how Islamophobia impacts Muslim women in particular, but rather how severe are the negative impacts of direct Islamophobic incidents against Muslim women.

It is hard to narrow down these negative impacts because they are so diverse. However, it is essentially rooted in the stereotypes (that are in no way accurate) that Canada holds about Muslim women. Stereotypes such as advancing the notion that Muslim women who wear the Hijab are oppressed or backwards. These stereotypes have stark psychological impacts on Muslim women when they are allowed to be perpetuated without accountability. As to the reason women are often the primary victims of violent or verbally aggressive Islamophobic incidents is obvious: it is because that they wear the Hijab. Muslim women who wear the Hijab are easily identifiable and thus become easy targets for hateful sentiments. To add on, gendered Islamophobia is not only real but a primary aspect of violent and direct Islamophobic incidents. To say that there are many cases of violent and verbally aggressive Islamophobic incidents against Hijab wearing women filed through NCCM's incident report bank would be a gross understatement. Dealing with hateful incidents towards Muslim women is a constant battle that NCCM's legal team faces.

Further, while Bill 21 has been briefly mentioned, it is imperative that the immense discrimination this Bill perpetuates against Hijab wearing Muslim women and the message it sends to Islamophobes is reiterated. The most common report to NCCM of discrimination against Muslim women is related to incidents that take place in the workplace. As a result of Bill 21, there is societal pressure for Muslim women to take their hijab off. Finally, in terms of proportionality, Bill 21 when put into practice mainly targets Muslim women who wear the Hijab by far. This presents Muslim women who wish to wear the Hijab with an ultimatum of either practicing a part of their faith or adhering to a one size fits culture and ideology that Canada has been upholding for several years.

Citations:

Khattab, Nabil, et al. "Visible Minorities in the Canadian Labour Market: Disentangling the Effect of Religion and Ethnicity." *Ethnicities*, vol. 20, no. 6, Dec. 2020, pp. 1218–1245, doi:10.1177/1468796819847750.

NG , Eddy, and Suzanne Gagnon. "Employment Gaps and Underemployment for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada." *Public Policy Forum*, 27 Jan. 2020, <https://ppforum.ca/publications/underemployment-for-racialized-groups-and-immigrants-in-canada/>.

https://www.nccm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Policy-Recommendations_NCCM.pdf

All the best,

Ahmad Al Qadi | Assistant Advocacy Officer
NCCM – National Council of Canadian Muslims
ahmad@nccm.ca | www.nccm.ca
613-805-2075
Twitter: @nccm
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NCCMuslims/>
Toll free: +1-866-524-0004
GTA, ON