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Still Overqualified and Underemployed?

Canadian Muslim Women's Experiences of Employment Barriers and Facilitators

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Acknowledgements

I first and foremost acknowledge the women of this land, Turtle Island. I acknowledge the warrior women, the land and water protectors, the Elders, grandmothers, mothers, daughters, and sisters. I acknowledge the Murdered and the Missing Indigenous women, girls, and non-binary and Two-Spirit folk. As I report on the significance of relationality and networks, I am reminded of the Indigenous teaching, “all my relations.” Especially as I consider the value of people over policies, I imagine a world where we truly decolonize our tendency to separate, isolate, and compete, and instead move towards collaboration, cooperation, and a harmonic balance as represented in the medicine wheel. We cannot undo the systems of violent colonization entrenched on Turtle Island without addressing the systemic violence against Indigenous women, girls, and non-binary and Two-Spirit folk. We, as Muslims, must remember it is our collective responsibility to redress injustices inflicted against First Nations peoples, and to join with them to collaborate and co-conspire in decolonial efforts.

I also wish to acknowledge the Canadian Muslim women who dedicated their time to this study. Despite juggling multiple responsibilities and commitments, these women stretched their schedules to accommodate participation in this study, and I am truly grateful. This report is my attempt to provide a summary of the harrowing, resilient, equally heart-wrenching and inspiring stories shared by Canadian Muslim women striving to create better lives for themselves and their families.

Likewise, this study could not have been possible without the support and participation of Canadian employers. Deeply invested in their employees’ wellbeing, these employers offered rich insight into workplace politics, demystifying aspects of Canadian Muslim experiences. They also shared best practices and strategies to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion from hiring through to advancement of employees. Their contributions will be especially impactful in the resource development phase of the ASPIRE project.

I humbly thank the research team for their exceptional dedication to and vital commitment in this study. Solely because of the research team, this study includes participants with diverse language skills, including French (Rana Alrabi and Kamilah Mohammad), Arabic (Rana Alrabi and Sumaya Bahar), Bangla (Silmy Abdullah and Shumona Shafinaz), Somali (Fatimah Dini and Asha-Keyf Dahir), Pashto (Zainab Jamal and Freshta Karimi), Persian (Farsi/Dari) (Zainab Jamal and Alina Haidary), and Urdu (Anam Kazim and Fatima Khan). The research team provided instrumental support with translation, recruitment, focus group facilitation, and transcription. Their contributions ensured the inclusion of women who would otherwise not have participated in this study, women who are confronted by some of the most difficult employment barriers to overcome including language barriers.

I am also grateful to the support of my students and research assistants in the Fall 2023 SOC408: Sociology of Anti-Muslim Racism course. Sample size is a challenge for national studies that draw on qualitative data, but with the team of research assistants, we were able to collect interviews with a large sample of Canadian Muslim women across the life course. This data especially was valuable in understanding how Canadian Muslim women’s employment experiences evolve as they age through their lives.

This report benefitted greatly thanks to critical insight and feedback from Kimia Ghomeshi, Fatimah Dini, Parvine Bahramian, Amal Masri, Nuzhat Jafri, and last but certainly not least, Firdaus Ali. Additionally, Firdaus was an excellent project manager, supporting every step of this project. I really felt like I was part of a team thanks to her inclusive approach to leadership.

This report would not have been possible without the creative talent and dedicated efforts of the design team lead by Hana Shafi. Despite battling against time, Hana generated powerful images that represent the complex and multilayered experiences of Canadian Muslim women navigating the labour market. Through her art, the findings of this study come to life. Alongside Hana, Zainab Imam, Iman Ahmednur, and Suleekha Hirsi carefully designed and produced this report.

I am grateful to CCMW's board, leadership, and staff, and to the PAC team, for their consistent support of the project, from inception and development to execution and data collection, through to data analysis and dissemination. CCMW has a history of strong leadership and compassionate support to all Canadian Muslim women, and this project is further evidence of their commitment to supporting Canadian Muslim women seeking avenues to achieve their employment dreams.

I am indebted to Professor Anver Emon, Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies at The University of Toronto, for his steadfast mentorship, support, and guidance. Through his tireless community engagement and dedicated creation of infrastructure at the Muslims in Canada Data Initiative, projects like this are made possible. I also appreciate his holding space as I grieved and raged about the state of the world, while he gently instilled hope for a better future.

I write this report in memory of Dr. Daood Hamdani, a pioneer in Canadian Muslim social research. I was fortunate to meet Dr. Hamdani before he passed away in 2019, after a long career of sincere service to the Canadian Muslim community. His passion for community engagement inspires my own. Among Dr. Hamdani's many collaborations with CCMW is the forerunner of this report, published two decades ago, "Muslim Women: Beyond Perceptions" as well as the accompany news release "Muslim Women in Canada: Over Educated and Under Employed" (2004). The title of this report and its contents are in conversation with Dr. Hamdani's findings.

Through this report I came to know how challenging it is for Canadian Muslim women to navigate the workplace and labour market. I wish to acknowledge every Canadian Muslim woman, and acknowledge the hardships you endured simply because you are a Muslim woman in Canada. We are so much more than our struggles. A Canadian Muslim woman with experience in senior management stated in an interview:

> **Eventually we'll be able to liberate ourselves from this systemic abuse... If you graduate university and you can't get a job because of your name. If you are qualified, and you have to start over because you wear a hijab on your head. This is abuse, this is financial abuse. This is exploitation. This is social abuse. It's really important for us to learn to name these things...**

As we "learn to name these things," we learn to break free and truly "liberate ourselves from this systemic abuse." I look forward to celebrating our collective liberation and success, inshallah

Author's Note

All statements in this document reflect the views of the author, only, and not necessarily those of CCMW nor others who contributed to the creation of this report. Any errors or omissions in this report are the sole responsibility of the author.

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Executive Summary

In 2004, Daood Hamdani collaborated with CCMW to examine the employment outcomes of Canadian Muslim women and found these women to be overqualified yet underemployed at higher rates than the general Canadian population. Twenty years later, (how) have things changed? Are employment disparities still confronting Canadian Muslim women?

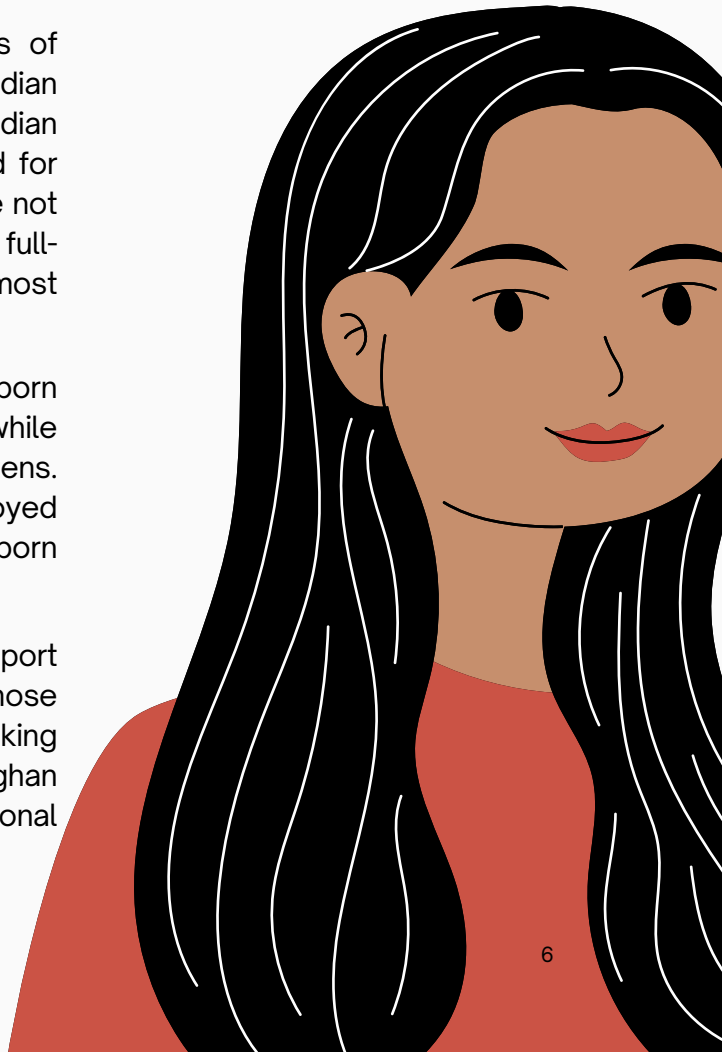
Findings of the current study indicate that Canadian Muslim women remain under- and unemployed at significantly higher rates than the general Canadian population. Canadian Muslim women are less likely to report being employed, working full-time, and holding senior or middle management positions compared with the general Canadian population. Conversely, they are more likely to report working part-time and being unemployed while looking for work. To help uncover why these rates persist, several sociodemographic indicators are examined in the ways they create barriers and/or facilitators to Canadian Muslim women's employment.

Citizenship

Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest levels of employment and full-time work, followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women and Muslim women who do not have Canadian citizenship. Muslim women seem to be especially penalized for not having Canadian citizenship: while Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens are least likely to be employed and working full-time, adults generally who are not Canadian citizens are most likely.

Canadian birth did not confer consistent benefits: Canadian born Muslim women reported similar levels of unemployment while looking for work as Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens. The percentage of Canadian born Muslim women unemployed and looking for work is twice that of the general Canadian born adult population.

Canadian Muslim women who entered Canada as refugees report much greater challenges to employment compared with those who entered as skilled or sponsored immigrants. Further breaking this down: not all refugees are treated the same, as Afghan women reported Ukrainian refugees were provided with additional resources they did not have access to.



Knowledge of official languages

Canadian Muslim women who speak both official languages reported the highest average employment, on par with the general population. Francophone Canadian Muslim women reported higher averages compared to their Anglophonic counterparts. Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest employment outcomes, at a rate significantly lower than their general adult counterparts. Though similar patterns appeared for full-time work status, Canadian Muslim women reported poorer outcomes across language skill categories compared to the general Canadian adult sample. While Francophone Canadian Muslim women enjoyed better outcomes related to employment, unemployment, and full-time work status, Anglophone Canadian Muslim women reported higher representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions

Narrative data reveal that language skills, especially familiarity with Canadian vernacular English, is an evolving experience. Across interviews and immigrant generations, it was clear women identified language and conversational skills as a barrier at the workplace. Immigrant participants noted the Canadian vernacular is different from English in their countries of origin. Canadian born Muslim women also echoed difficulty in navigating their white colleagues' conversations.

Generation of immigration

Immigrants who were born elsewhere and relocate to Canada are referred to as first generation Canadians, and their children who are born in Canada are referred to as second generation Canadians. Children born in Canada to second generation Canadians are referred to as third generation Canadians. Canadian Muslim women's employment outcomes improved with every successive generation. This contrasts with the pattern for the general Canadian adult sample, where second generation Canadians enjoyed the best outcomes.

In terms of experiential differences by immigrant generation, second generation Canadian Muslim women report more subtle forms of discrimination while their first generation counterparts share much more overtly racist experiences. First generation immigrant Canadian Muslim women often framed their own employment experiences as a sacrifice for their second generation Canadian children, while second generation Canadian Muslim women indicate their first generation Canadian parents hold them to unrealistic career expectations.

Race/ethnicity

In each category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had poorer employment outcomes compared to their general Canadian counterparts. The exceptions were for East Asian Canadian Muslim women, who were on par with East Asian Canadian women of any faith, and Latin American Canadian Muslim women, who report lower unemployment rates compared to the general Latin American Canadian adult population. Arab and West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported rates on par with their general Canadian counterparts, indicating that non-Muslim Arab and West Asian Canadians may be experiencing discrimination related to Islamophobia because of their ethnic identity regardless of their religious identity.

The racialization of the workplace through racial hierarchies and segregation was highlighted in interviews. Regardless of generation of immigration, Canadian Muslim women who worked in racially hierarchical and segregated settings, with white leadership and racialized subordinates, reported feeling more aware of their own racial subjectivity. They were keenly aware of their racial minority status when experiencing various social barriers at work, including socializing during and outside of work hours. Immigrant Black Canadian Muslim women are especially excluded by workplace racial hierarchies.

Location of studies

Canadian Muslim women who studied in North or South America not including Canada (i.e. “other Americas”) reported the highest levels of employment, followed by those who studied in Canada and Europe. Those who studied in South, Southeast, and East Asia were disadvantaged in comparison. This pattern was not observed for the general Canadian population, thus the differences between Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian adult sample who studied in South, Southeast, and East Asia were more dramatic than those who studied elsewhere.

In interviews, Canadian Muslim women who studied in their countries of origin reported having difficulty in getting their credentials recognized in Canada. Even those who were able to get their credentials recognized were confronted with an anti-immigrant bias, reflected in the rejection of their credentials (both degrees and experience). Of those who are not able to get their credentials recognized, some are able to mobilize resources and return to school for additional education while others are not. Those who do not return to school are forced to find alternative career paths, often turning to unskilled or entry level work. Through this experience of having their credentials rejected and unrecognized, participants described the toll on their mental wellbeing, their sense of self and self-esteem, and the loss of human capital.

Education

Increasing levels of education resulted in better employment outcomes for Canadian Muslim women, with one exception: regardless of education status, a consistent proportion of Canadian Muslim women reported looking for work while unemployed. This is unexpected, considering unemployment levels dropped off for the general Canadian population at increasing levels of education. Likewise, as education levels increased, Canadian Muslim women were less likely to report full-time work and more likely to report part-time work compared to the general Canadian adult sample. Thus, compared to their counterparts in the general population, more highly education Canadian Muslim women report especially poor outcomes.

Not surprisingly, during interviews many participants named education, and supports for education (e.g. financial assistance) as major enablers on their career paths. Thus, it is worth noting what barriers to education Canadian Muslim women encounter, including financial barriers, unsupportive spouses, a lack of adequate childcare assistance, especially daycare, and systemic workplace discrimination.

Area of studies

Generally, Canadian Muslim women who studied in the science, technology (including computer science and information technology), engineering, mathematics (STEM) and health care fields enjoyed better employment outcomes than did Canadian Muslim women who studied in the arts and humanities, social and behavioural sciences, law, and trades and services. Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are especially disadvantaged: compared with Canadians generally, Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are nearly half as likely to report current employment.

Marital status

Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the most favourable employment outcomes, followed by those who have never married, those who are currently married, and those who are not currently married (widows and divorcees). However, Canadian Muslim women who are not currently married reported being as likely to be employed and working full-time as the general population of Canadian widows and divorced women, and more likely to be unemployed and looking for work.

Canadian employers and Muslim women who participated in interviews offered a countervailing mechanism that marital status creates for women's employment: while supportive spouses can be an immense career enabler, unsupportive spouses can effectively sabotage Canadian Muslim women's career trajectories. Supports husbands (and male relatives) provide include encouraging wives to study and pursue the kinds of work the women actually wanted to do; assisting wives with transportation (e.g. daily commute); sharing in household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare; leveraging their professional and work networks to find job opportunities for their wives; and generally, they did not create additional barriers to sabotage their wives' career aspirations. Some husbands provided ambivalent support (e.g., even as they gave "permission" to allow their wives to work, they maintained limitations on what types of work their wives could engage in).

Age of Children

Compared with the general sample of Canadian women, Canadian Muslim women's employment was more negatively impacted by the presence of children across outcomes. During interviews, most women reported the presence of children in the home created a barrier, especially those who did not have a supportive spouse or other family (e.g. mothers) they could turn to for childcare assistance. It was not surprising that a main support women reported was childcare support, especially daycare. Even among the Canadian Muslim women who are utilizing childcare supports, there remains a clear need for additional services and programs to help meet the care deficit. Additionally, Canadian Muslim women with children also named remote work and time flexibility as enablers to employment. Although the lack of childcare creates a barrier, because raising children is expensive, they also motivated women to pursue paid work. This in turn limited unpaid opportunities, like volunteer work for newcomer women.

Province

Canadian Muslim women reported the most favourable employment outcomes in Quebec, followed by British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Although the order of provinces shifted a bit when considered different outcomes, Quebec remained at the top and New Brunswick at the bottom. In provinces where Canadian Muslim women experience poorer outcomes, the general sample of Canadian adults do not experience the same; indeed, while Canadian Muslim women seem on par with the general population in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, they lag behind significantly in other provinces, with the biggest difference in New Brunswick.

During interviews, Canadian Muslim women described and compared provinces. In comparisons with Ontario and Quebec, New Brunswick was framed as a less favorable province for Canadian Muslims, but Newfoundland and Labrador was painted as a better alternative for Canadian Muslim families with children. Among Canadian Muslim women based in Quebec, women described having work opportunities limited by anti-Muslim legislature, reported being silenced outside of work by their employers, and consistently mentioned hijab-donning women face more difficult challenges. Despite this, most women in the French language group reported not personally experiencing anti-Muslim discrimination, instead framing their experiences as other types of discrimination.

Age group

Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed, working full-time, or hold management positions compared to the general Canadian adult population regardless of age. Conversely, Canadian Muslim women are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work or working part-time than the general Canadian adult population regardless of age. Through interviews with Canadian Muslim women, it became evident that both younger and older Canadian Muslim women experienced age-based discrimination of different kinds. While younger Canadian Muslim women's expertise and authority were questioned, older Canadian Muslim women faced old age discrimination.

Longitudinal analysis

Longitudinal analyses track changes over time, and in this study changes from 2011 were noted against the 2021 Census. Canadian Muslim women's employment status remains consistent, but a portion of Canadian Muslim women have shifted from those who had never worked in 2011 to now unemployed and looking for work in 2021. A smaller proportion of Canadian Muslim women report working full-time, and a greater proportion report working part-time. One promising change is in legislative and senior management positions, where the percent of Canadian Muslim women almost doubled from 2011 to 2021. However, it is important to note that Canadian Muslim women remain underrepresented by over fourfold when compared to the general Canadian public.

Mental health and wellbeing

For participants who are currently employed and satisfied with their positions, there was evidence that engaging in paid work supported their mental wellbeing. Conversely, poor work conditions negatively impact mental wellbeing. These poor conditions include precarious employment, chronic under- and unemployment, lack of control over work conditions (e.g. timing or location), precarious or insecure work situations, and racial barriers barring Muslim women from advancement. Findings also indicate that Canadian Muslim women are internalizing their under- and unemployment issues as personal flaws. Several report seeking therapeutic support to identify what they need to change about themselves, even though the issue they are confronted by is a social problem rather than a personal problem.

Workplace hierarchy

Canadian Muslim women identified that race and gender segregation placed the majority of people of colour and immigrants in public service-oriented positions with no authority, white women in middle management above them, and white men in senior management at the top of an organization's hierarchy. These three levels of employment resulted in staunch differences in Canadian Muslim women's workplace experiences, including different kinds of employment barriers. Canadian Muslim women who report the most optimism are those still training for their careers and may be working part-time or temporary jobs in the lower levels of employment, and have not yet hit the job market where they will compete for middle and upper levels of employment.

Unwelcoming environments

As Canadian Muslim women climb up the workplace hierarchy, they experience increasing levels of discrimination and hostility. In mid-level employment, this was described by women as a general feeling of not belonging, as women said they "can't put my finger on it," but that, "there are hidden blocks," and they feel like their coworkers "just don't want us there." Women in upper levels of employment especially felt there were targeted and systematic attempts at blocking their progress and/or making their lives difficult at work. As mentioned above, when confronted by these increasingly hostile workplace environments, women in upper levels of employment, especially those in senior management, report not wanting to continue advancing given the diminishing rewards and increasing discrimination.

Institutional racism

Institutional racism can be described, briefly, as the ways in which racial hierarchies are maintained within organizations. In the current study, institutional racism can be identified through policies (e.g., not being allowed to modify breaks to accommodate Ramadan fasting), practices (e.g., socializing at bars after work hours), and characteristics of an organization (e.g., white-only mentors or senior employees) that create systemic barriers for Canadian Muslim women. Similar to the above subsection, findings indicate that women's experiences of institutional racism increase as they climb up the workplace hierarchy.

Workplace diversity

While most Canadian Muslim women across the three levels of workplace hierarchy report dissatisfaction with the diversity and inclusivity of their workplaces, these reports are especially concentrated among women in middle and upper levels of employment. Especially among the upper levels of employment, women report feeling diversity and inclusion is performative, not transformative: there was no real structural change in their workplace organizations. This was echoed by all racialized employers and only some of the white employers who participated in interviews. Canadian Muslim women in senior level positions consistently reported pressure to conform to Eurocentric norms. Canadian Muslim women also noted the issue of "coconuts," or people of colour who may be visible minorities but have taken on white dominant culture and internalized racism.

Life course and cohort effects

Especially for the second generation, Canadian Muslim women's career trajectory followed a similar pattern: when the women are younger, typically university students, they easily find work, and they typically work part-time entry level or retail positions while balancing school and other commitments. However, as they begin to transition to finding careers—stable, permanent, full-time work, they struggle to secure positions. This struggle follows Canadian Muslim women to retirement. Findings also indicate the possibility of cohort effects: both September 11th and the heinous murder of George Floyd sparked reconfigurations around the social construction of race in Canada in contrasting ways.

Policies that need rethinking

Policies may have been created with the intention of supporting the employees, however in practice these policies create additional barriers for Canadian Muslim women as well as Canadians more generally. These policies include approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices; religious accommodations; health insurance and benefits; and reporting mechanisms at the workplace.

Effective Resources

In terms of finding work, several Canadian Muslim women shared they found utility in their family and friend networks, including social media (e.g. Instagram or WhatsApp groups), applying online (LinkedIn, Indeed, Charity Village, and online job boards), and, for those already employed

advancing through internal opportunities. When it came to enablers that allowed Canadian Muslim women to continue working for pay, they mention daycare and other forms of childcare; supportive colleagues or work team, especially a caring manager; supportive home environment and family (to coordinate care, chores, and commuting); transportation to commute; location flexibility (e.g., remote work); time flexibility, and being able to take breaks as need for prayer or fast breaking; intrinsic value of the work itself; and the employee assistance program, which one participant shared was more effective than her union. These resources are not only effective for Canadian Muslim women but would be valuable for Canadians more generally.

Relationships: Networks and Mentors

Findings indicate the dire need for networking opportunities that connect immigrants with members of professional, occupational, or trade networks, and additional resources that would help immigrants and other Canadians build meaningful and useful connections. While some immigrants are able to do this by volunteering, securing paid work through uncompensated labour is an expensive route. The findings also indicate the importance of and need for diverse mentors in achieving desirable employment opportunities and career advancement.

Missing Supports

It is important to note that not all participants had access to the aforementioned resources; affordable childcare and before/after school programs were especially named as needed supports among the resources listed above. Immigrant Canadian Muslim women named needing support with technology training, social media skills and self-promotion training, financial aid for education, credential transfer assistance, and career advising. Participants, regardless of generation of immigration, reported additional missing supports including employment programs, in-house supports to network, prayer space, and religious accommodations.

Areas for future research

Discussions on avenues for future research can be found in the summary of findings and in the final section of the report below. Every completed study raises new research questions even as it addresses others, and lines of inquiry emerging from the current study are listed here:

- Are Canadian Muslim women more likely to be looking for work while employed compared to the general Canadian adult population? Why?
- Are Canadian Muslim women more likely to be in precarious employment situations compared to the general Canadian adult population? Why?
- Why are Muslim women more severely penalized for not having Canadian citizenship compared to the general adult non-citizen population?
- What are the social and employment experiences of non-citizen Muslim women in Canada? Why is there such a high proportion with missing employment data in the Census?
- Why are Muslim women more severely penalized for neither French nor English compared to the general adult population without these official language skills? What employment facilitators and enablers support the general Canadian population without official language skills?
- Despite generally having more positive employment outcomes, why do Francophone Canadian Muslim women have poorer outcomes in terms of representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions compared to their Anglophone counterpart?

- How many generations of immigration does it take for Canadian Muslim women to be on par with the general Canadian population?
- How does Islamophobia impact non-Muslim Canadians who are racialized as Muslim (e.g. non-Muslim Arab and non-Muslim West Asian Canadians)? How do non-Muslim Canadians experience this racialization?
- What are East Asian women's employment experiences? What resources, supports, and enablers are they drawing on to facilitate favourable employment outcomes?
- Why does education in South and Southeast Asia negatively impact Canadian Muslim women's employment outcomes, but not the general Canadian population?
- Why do Canadian Muslim women experience a decreasing (employment) return on their (educational) investments? Why does education not have the same payoff for Canadian Muslim women as it does for the general Canadian population?
- What are the social drivers for Canadian Muslim men who support their wives' employment? What is the meaning-making process when engaging in domestic work for these men?
- What employment and social supports do widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women need?
- What supports enable Canadian Muslim mothers of infants to maintain employment in management positions?
- How do Quebec-based Canadian Muslim women understand anti-Muslim legislation? What kinds of racial awareness or reflexivity do they engage in?
- Why are employment and unemployment averages for Canadian Muslim women so low in New Brunswick? What are the experiences of Canadian Muslim women in New Brunswick?
- What is the long-term impact of September 11th on Canadian Muslim women who entered the labour market in 2001?
- How will the restructuring of workplaces following the racial awakening brought on by Black Lives Matter impact the experience of racialized minorities, including Canadian Muslim women?
- How do social and economic realities in Canada shape global political and economic forces? Do immigrant receiving countries like Canada exacerbate global economic inequality by failing to integrate immigrants?

Still Overqualified and Underemployed? Canadian Muslim Women's Experiences of Employment Barriers and Facilitators

Canadian Muslim women, on average, boast significantly higher levels of education than the general Canadian population, yet are significantly more likely to report being unemployed and looking for work, or underemployed (e.g., overqualified for the position they hold). Given Dr. Daood Hamdani's findings two decades ago, it seems not much has changed despite regulatory compliance with anti-discriminatory policies, measures to improve diversity equity and inclusion (DEI), and social policies geared towards fighting racism, supporting immigrants, and seeking gender equality.

Why do Canadian Muslim women remain under- and unemployed at higher rates than other Canadians? Every day, I see bright-eyed and ambitious Canadian Muslim women achieving academic goals in university and scholarly settings, yet Canadian Muslim women past university struggle to find work. Why is this the case? What are the barriers that funnel women out of the workplace, and what are the supports that help them achieve their goals?

This report addresses the above questions with both numeric and narrative data. The numeric analyses highlight differences in employment outcomes between Canadian Muslim women and the general public across several key sociodemographic variables, including household and social characteristics. The narratives shed light on what the numbers mean, complicate general conclusions, and provide alternative lenses through which to understand Canadian Muslim women's work experiences. Both sets of data inform thematic explorations of social experiences as shaped by structural realities. The report concludes with suggestions for solution-oriented policy interventions and resource generations.

Study Parameters

This report highlights findings from the Addressing Systemic Problems and Inequities in Resolving Employment Issues (ASPIRE) study, a collaboration between the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) and the Muslims in Canada Data Initiative (MiCDI) at the Institute of Islamic Studies, The University of Toronto. This study is the first stage of a multi-year project to address the barriers Canadian Muslim women are confronted by when navigating the employment sector. The findings of the research study will inform recommendations and resources created during the course of the project including toolkits and workshop modules to be presented at a national employment conference scheduled for 2025

Research Scope

This study draws on both quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (narrative) data to uncover the barriers Canadian Muslim women face in the employment sector. Specifically, this study explores women's experiences ranging from searching for, retaining, advancing in, and developing employment opportunities. As such, this study focuses on the experiences of Canadian Muslim women who are unemployed, underemployed, currently employed, and no longer employed to reveal the barriers and enablers women experience in employment. The study focuses on Muslim women from across Canada, with attention to diverse social experiences including geographic location, immigrant generation, education levels and location of training, language ability, marital status, age and presence of young children, and additional household, socioeconomic, and demographic measures.

Questions

The research is guided by past scholarly and community-based research, including work by CCMW. The research questions emerge following consultations with the CCMW PAC team. In addressing each of these questions, findings presented disaggregate Canadian Muslim women in meaningful social categories (e.g., immigrant status, geographic location, etc.) to assess if and how Canadian Muslim women's experiences diverge or converge. The research questions guiding this project include:

Quantitative Research Questions:

- How do Canadian Muslim women's employment characteristics compare to the non-Muslim majority?
  - Employment status, full-time employment status, National Occupational Classification (NOC) status
- How do Canadian Muslim women's employment characteristics differ by within group diversity?
  - Citizenship, knowledge of official languages, generation of immigration, race/ethnicity, location of studies, education, area of studies, marital status, age of children, province, age group
- Have Canadian Muslim women's employment characteristics changed over time?
  - Longitudinal, life course, and cohort effects

Qualitative Research Questions:

- What barriers and enablers do Canadian Muslim women face when searching for jobs?
  - Once they find work, what is their experience of the paid work?
- What barriers and enablers do Canadian Muslim women face in retaining and advancing? jobs?
  - What types of promotional and development opportunities do they pursue?
  - How far are they able to advance in their careers?
  - What is their experience of taking maternity or other family related leave?
- How do Canadian Muslim women define employment success?
  - How do they achieve employment success?
  - What barriers and enablers do they experience in striving for employment success?

Methodology

This is a mixed-methods study that draws on multiple sources and forms of data and, thus, both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The two sets of analyses are iterative and dialectical, such that each analysis refines the other. For example, the variables selected for the numeric analyses emerged as salient through qualitative interviews and focus groups. Data gathered from focus groups were also used to shape the Canadian employer survey.

Preliminary findings were also disseminated to the ASPIRE PAC members to ensure a collaborative approach to the researchers, and to ensure the stakeholders' interests and voices are represented. These consultations also allowed for research redirections as the stakeholders saw fit—for example, samples of women who do not speak official languages were included, a suggestion raised by PAC members and embraced by the research team.

Quantitative methods

- Identifying prevalence, patterns, and disparities in socioeconomic and related outcomes
- 2021 Canadian Census data and 2011 National Household Survey
- Statistical procedures (bivariate analyses, longitudinal analyses)

Qualitative methods

- Meaning-making processes, social mechanisms, emotive experiences
- Sample of Canadian Muslim women (N=95)
  - Individual interviews (N=35)
  - Pre-interview questionnaire and focus group data (N=60)
- Sample of Canadian employers (N=50)
  - Original surveys (N=40)
  - Individual interviews (N=13)
- Inductive and deductive (or open and focused) coding

Qualitative Samples

The study's initial research design included focus groups of five Anglophonic Muslim women across the ten Canadian provinces (N = 50). Given that Ontario is home to over half of Canada's Muslims, there was an overwhelming response from this province, and additional focus groups from this province were collected. In addition to the four Ontario based focus groups, interviews were conducted with Canadian Muslim women in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatoon in English, and in Quebec in French. Unfortunately, no Muslim women from Manitoba, Nova Scotia, or Prince Edward Island committed to participating in the study, so no narrative analyses are available for these provinces. Additionally, there were no cases of Canadian Muslim women based in PEI in the 2021 Canadian Census; thus, numeric analyses for PEI are also omitted.

Interviews were initially limited to English speakers. After discussions around language diversity, the sample was revised to include women who either primarily or prefer to speak French, Arabic, Persian (Farsi/Dari), Pashto, Somali, Bangla, and Urdu. Bi- (and tri-) lingual research assistants were hired, trained, and supervised in sample recruitment as well as in data collection and management. Additionally, students in my Fall 2023 course on the Sociology of Anti-Muslim Racism (SOC408 at The University of Toronto Mississauga) collected individual interviews with Canadian Muslim women. Student research assistants were hired, trained, and supervised in sample recruitment as well as in data collection and management. Language RAs and student RAs were an invaluable feature of this study and helped generate data that informed the study's conclusion and recommendations.

The study also includes one focus group of queer and trans identified women. While there was discussion around having a separate focus group of diversely abled women, there is a small but sizable subsample of diversely abled women who participated in the above focus group interviews and volunteered how their diverse ability impacts their experience of work (and vice versa). There may be additional queer and trans women in the sample who did not identify themselves as such, and thus were presumed cis-gender and heterosexual. While both sexual minority status and diverse ability are stigmatized in Canadian social spaces, I note only sexual minorities were targeted in homophobic and transphobic responses to CCMW's social media posts advertising the study, and participants volunteered homophobic and transphobic comments in interviews but did not make ableist remarks.

One woman who participated in a province-based group, who later came out to me about their queer identity, mentioned they stayed closeted during the call for fear of being the target of homophobia and transphobia, but came out to me later when they felt safe. It is possible additional women remained closeted during data collection for fear of being targets of homophobia and transphobia, while women who are diversely abled felt more comfortable sharing their experiences given the absence of ableist comments during interviews.

In addition to Canadian Muslim women, this study also includes surveys and interviews with Canadian employers. The response to the invitation to participate in surveys was tepid, with an approximate response rate of 11% (N=40/350). However, interviews with the 13 employers yielded rich data that provided insight into "the other side" of Canadian Muslim women's employment experiences.

Analysis

The findings below present numeric and narrative analyses. The numeric analyses draw on data from the 2021 Canadian Census and the 2011 National Household Survey (which replaced the 2011 Census). Two-way and three-way tables present breakdowns of the spread of the Canadian population across measures of interest, like employment and social characteristics. Following comparisons of Canadian Muslim women's outcomes to the general population of Canadians, the report offers narrative data from Canadian employers and Muslim women to offer insight into numeric findings.

I note a commitment to intersectional analysis here, where systems of oppression are interlocking. As such, it is not possible to identify the effect of "gender" by looking at the flattened category of "Canadian women," because gender is inherently raced, classed, sexed, etc. I note a tendency for those who use the federal government's approach to studying gender, Gender Based Analysis + (GBA+), to assume an additive approach. Therefore, for three-way analyses (e.g. all analyses after initially presenting the outcome variables), I have provided comparisons between Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian population for all determinants below, except for marriage and presence of children, which are inherently gendered. Instead of comparing Canadian women's outcomes based on their Muslim status (an additive approach), a more critical analysis of the data yields patterns and matrixes of power that recreate socioeconomic hierarchies. As such, the data reveals the hierarchical workplace structure where, typically, white men enjoy the highest positions of authority and prestige, while women of colour take on the lowest positions and are often relegated to frontline or public facing positions.

American sociologists Evelyn Nakano Glenn and Mignon Duffy document the historical development and perpetuation of this gendered and racialized workplace hierarchy in the United States. According to their work, white women's social location within workplace hierarchies is situated between white men (at the top) and people of colour (at the bottom). White women are strategically placed to protect white men from people of colour. According to the findings of this study, a similar phenomenon is taking place in the Canadian context. Canadian Muslim women report experiencing increasing levels of discrimination, to outright hostility, when attempting to climb up the rungs of an organization (e.g., see Workplace Hierarchy below). Thus, simply comparing Canadian women's outcomes based on Muslim status would not allow for a deeper understanding of the relationality between groups of women, who are systemically interlinked.

Summary of Findings

The findings are divided into three sections. Section 1 summarizes the Numeric and Narrative Analyses, offering salient comparisons between Canadian Muslim women and the general population as well as within-group comparisons. Section 2 summarizes the Social Experiences and Structural Realities confronting Canadian Muslim women and provides a more critical lens into the processes and mechanisms that are driving workplace inequality and/or creating possibilities for change. Section 3 summarizes approaches Towards Solutions and offers insight into the supports and resources that enable Canadian Muslim women's employment success while also highlighting barriers and how they can be overcome.

Section I: Numeric and Narrative Analyses

Patterns by gender and Muslim affiliation around the three employment outcomes are described before turning to sociodemographic indicators that shape each outcome.

Employment status

A smaller proportion of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed **(44%)**, compared with Canadian non-Muslim women **(55%)** and men **(62%)** as well as the general population **(58%)**. Conversely, more Canadian Muslim women report being currently unemployed and looking for work **(9%)** compared with the general Canadian adult population **(5%)**. Refer to Table 1 below.

What these numbers do not demonstrate is that, even among the employed, many Canadian Muslim women face difficult work conditions. Across interviews with Canadian Muslim women across provinces, languages, and identity statuses, many Canadian Muslim women report being treated as "less than"—less competent, less dependable, less desirable—and therefore having to provide more, working "four times as hard" as their non-Muslim colleagues.

Work status

The numeric analyses focus of full- and part-time work status while the narrative analyses focus on paid and volunteer work status. Compared with the general population, Canadian Muslim women are less likely to report full-time employment but are more likely to report part-time employment. About 33% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed. This is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women **(45%)** and men **(59%)** as well as that of Canadian Muslim men **(56%)**. In terms of part-time employment, about 19% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed. This is higher than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women **(16%)** and men **(10%)** as well as that of Canadian Muslim men **(15%)**. Refer to Table 2 below.
Especially among newcomer immigrant women, volunteering was a strategy to cope with unemployment in three ways: women used volunteering as a way to gain Canadian experience; they made opportunities to network while volunteering; and lastly, women were able to gain a sense of purpose and find intrinsic value to their work.

National Occupational Classification (NOC) Status

There is an under-representation of Canadian Muslim women in management, professional occupations, technical occupations, trades and the arts, and an overrepresentation of these women in assisting occupations as well as retail sales and services compared with the Canadian adult public. About 0.19% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed in legislative or senior management positions. This is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (0.48%) and men (1.25%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (0.66%). About 13% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed in middle management positions, which is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (18%) and men (14%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (14%). Refer to Table 3 below.

From qualitative interviews with both Canadian employers and Canadian Muslim women, it was clear that diversity and representation among management, especially senior management, was a key factor in creating workplaces that foster diversity and equitable opportunities for equity-deserving populations. However, while employees at the lowest rungs of organizations tend to be people of colour, especially women of colour, the demographics shift in more senior level positions, where white people, especially white men, continue to dominate. White women tend to be wedged between white men and people of colour. Canadian Muslim women in middle and especially in senior management positions report increasing levels of workplace hostility, making upward mobility undesirable.

Citizenship

Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest levels of employment (55%), followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women (46%) and Muslim women who do not have Canadian citizenship (36%). Surprisingly, adults living in Canada who are not Canadian citizens were the most likely to report being currently employed (63%). In other words, while Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens are least likely to be employed (36%), adults generally who are not Canadian citizens are most likely to be employed (63%). Refer to Table 4 below.

Canadian born Muslim women reported similar levels of unemployment while looking for work as Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens (11% and 10%, respectively). The percentage of Canadian born Muslim women unemployed and looking for work is twice that of the general Canadian born adult population (11% vs. 5%). Refer to Table 4 below.

Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest levels of full-time employment (37%), followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women (36%) and Muslim women who do not have Canadian citizenship (26%). This is far lower than the average for adults living in Canada who are not Canadian citizens; these non-citizen adults were on par with those born in Canada (51% and 52%, respectively). Refer to Table 5 below.

Canadian born Muslim women were about as likely as naturalized Canadian Muslim women to hold legislative or senior management positions (0.20% and 0.23% respectively). Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest rate of employment in legislative and senior management positions (0.10%). Across citizenship statuses, Canadian Muslim women reported lower levels of employment in senior management compared with the general Canadian public. Employment rates in middle management were more comparable between Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian public. Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest levels of employment across employment categories, including the assisting occupations and retail, where Muslim women in Canada are generally overrepresented. Refer to Table 6 below.

Numeric analyses highlighted differences between categories based on citizenship status, and narrative data illuminate differences within categories. Canadian Muslim women who entered Canada as refugees report much greater challenges to employment compared with those who entered as skilled or sponsored immigrants. Further breaking this down: not all refugees are treated the same, as Afghan women reported Ukrainian refugees were provided with additional resources not available to Afghan refugees.

Knowledge of official languages

Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest average of employment (63%). Francophone Canadian Muslim women reported higher averages compared to their Anglophonic counterparts (54% and 42% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest employment (5%). Employment rates for Canadian Muslim women with knowledge of both official languages were fairly close to their general Canadian counterparts (63% and 67% respectively).

However, the difference is much larger for those who know neither official language, as the general Canadian adult average rate of employment is four times that of Canadian Muslim women (19% and 5%, respectively). Surprisingly, across language skills, Canadian Muslim women were significantly more likely to report looking for work while unemployed, except for those who speak neither official language. Refer to Table 7 below.

Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest average of full-time employment (48%). Francophonic Canadian Muslim women reported higher averages of full-time employment compared to their Anglophonic counterparts (40% and 31% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest full-time employment rates (4%). When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report full-time employment regardless of language skills. Refer to Table 8 below.

Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest levels of employment in legislative or senior management positions (0.50%). Anglophonic Canadian Muslim women reported higher levels of employment in senior management compared to their Francophonic counterparts (0.15% and 0.08% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest rates (0%). When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report employment in legislative and senior management regardless of language skills. Despite findings indicating more positive outcomes for Francophonic Canadian Muslim women, they have poorer outcomes in terms of representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions. Refer to Table 9 below.

Though Census data treats language as a binary—either you do or do not have language skills—narrative data reveal that language skills, especially familiarity with Canadian vernacular English, is an evolving experience. Across interviews and immigrant generations, it was clear women identified language and conversational skills as a barrier at the workplace. Immigrant participants noted that though they learned English in their countries of origin (which provide English-medium education post-British colonization), the English they learned is “different” from the English spoken here. Canadian born Muslim women also echoed difficulty in navigating their white colleagues’ water cooler conversations, which tended to focus on subjects the women were unfamiliar or uninterested in.

Generation of immigration

Immigrants who were born elsewhere and relocate to Canada are referred to as first generation Canadians, and their children who are born in Canada are referred to as second generation Canadians. Children born in Canada to second generation Canadians are referred to as third generation Canadians. Canadian Muslim women’s employment outcomes improved with every successive generation. This contrasts with the pattern for the general Canadian adult sample, where second generation Canadians enjoyed the best outcomes.

Of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment, the third generation had the highest levels (60%) followed by the second generation (55%) and the first generation (43%; Table 10). Of Canadian Muslim women reporting looking for work while being unemployed, the third generation had the lowest levels (5%) followed by the first generation (9%) and the second generation (12%). Refer to Table 10 below.

Third or more generation Canadian Muslim women had the highest levels of current full-time work (43%) followed by the second generation (37%) and the first generation (33%). Third generation Canadian Muslim women are slightly less likely to work full-time compared with first generation adult Canadians generally (43% vs. 49%). Refer to Table 11 below.

NOC Status. Of Canadian Muslim women in legislative or senior management positions, the second generation had the highest levels (0.23%) followed by the first generation (0.19%). Surprisingly, the mean for third generation or more Canadian Muslim women was 0%, indicating too few Canadian Muslim women who are third generation or beyond occupy these higher level positions to be picked up by the Census. In terms of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management, the third generation had the highest levels (23%) followed by the second generation (18%) and the first generation (12%; Table 12). Refer to Table 12 below.

An aspect of generational differences not highlighted in the numeric analyses is the differential experiences between first and second generation Canadian Muslims, and the relationship between the two. While second generation immigrant Canadian Muslim women report more subtle forms of discrimination, their first generation counterparts share much more overtly racist experiences. First generation immigrant Canadian Muslim women often framed their own employment experiences as a sacrifice for the second generation. On their part, second generation Canadian Muslim women often report pressure from family to secure "good jobs," indicating their parents do not understand the barriers they are often confronted by and set unrealistic career expectations. Second generation participants also mention how difficult it is for them to navigate higher education and the job market, because the advice their parents offer is often out of time and place.

Race/Ethnicity

In each category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of employment compared to their general Canadian counterparts. In almost every category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had higher rates of looking for work while unemployed compared to their general Canadian counterparts. The exceptions were for Latin American Canadian Muslim women, who report lower unemployment rates compared to the general Latin American Canadian adult population (5% vs 7%). Arab and West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported rates on par with their general Canadian counterparts, indicating that non-Muslim Arab and West Asian Canadians may be experiencing discrimination related to Islamophobia because of their ethnic identity regardless of their religious identity. Refer to Table 13 below.

In each category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of full-time employment compared to their general Canadian counterpart, and higher rates of part-time employment—except for East Asian Canadian Muslim women, who were on par with the general East Asian Canadian (and general Canadian) rate of about 13%. Refer to Table 14 below.

East Asian women reported the highest levels in legislative and senior management (1.19%), far ahead of the other sub-populations of Canadian Muslim women, including those who identify as White (0.35%), Arab (0.30%), West Asian (0.20%), and South Asian (0.12%). There were no cases of Canadian Muslim women who identify as Black, Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Indigenous who hold senior management or legislative positions in the 2021 Census dataset. This means that such few individuals exist in the larger population they may not have participated in the survey and therefore are not included in the sample. In almost every category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of senior-level management positions compared to their general Canadian counterparts.

The exception was for East Asian Canadian Muslim women, who far outpace their general East Asian Canadian counterparts (1.19% vs. 0.41%). In most categories of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates or were on par in middle-level management positions compared to their general Canadian counterparts. Refer to Table 15 below.

The racialization of the workplace through racial hierarchies and segregation are experiences shared by participants in this study's interviews. Regardless of generation of immigration, Canadian Muslim women who worked in settings that tended to be organized by racial hierarchies, with white leadership and racialized subordinates, reported feeling more aware of their own racial subjectivity. They were keenly aware of their racial minority status when experiencing various social barriers at work, including socializing during and outside of work hours. Immigrant Black Canadian Muslim women are especially excluded by workplace racial hierarchies.

Location of studies

Canadian Muslim women who studied in North or South America not including Canada (i.e. "other Americas") reported the highest levels of employment (67%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (66%), Europe (58%), South and Southeast Asia (41%), and East Asia (40%). Rates of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment were fairly consistent with their Canadian public counterparts, but Canadian Muslim women who studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report being currently employed compared to the Canadian adult public (41% vs. 71%) as well as those who studied in East Asia (40% vs. 51%). Likewise, Canadian Muslim women who studied in East Asia reported the highest percent of looking for work while unemployed (20%), followed by those who studied in South and Southeast Asia (11%), significantly higher than their general Canadian counterparts. Refer to Table 16 below.

Full-time employment status matched the patterns around employment status by location of studies. Canadian Muslim women who studied in the other Americas reported the highest levels of full-time employment (56%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (52%), Europe (52%), East Asia (35%), and South and Southeast Asia (31%). Rates of Canadian Muslim women reporting full-time employment were significantly lower than their Canadian public counterparts, except Canadian Muslim women who studied in other Americas were on par with their counterparts (56% vs. 58%) as well as those who studied in Europe (52% vs 55%). The largest difference was observed for those who studied in South and Southeast Asia (31% Canadian Muslim women; 62% Canadian adults). Interestingly, though Canadian adults who studied in South and Southeast Asia reported slightly higher levels of full-time employment than those who studied in Canada (62% vs. 61%), Canadian Muslim women who also studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report full-time employment compared with Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (31% vs. 52%). Refer to Table 17 below.

Canadian Muslim women who studied in Europe were most likely to report employment in legislative or senior management positions (0.57%), followed by those who studied in Canada (0.42%). Canadian Muslim women who studied in the remaining locations report far lower rates. For all locations of study, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in legislative and senior management positions than general Canadian adults. Refer to Table 18 below.

The numeric analyses complement the narratives offered by Canadian Muslim women. Those who studied in their countries of origin reported having difficulty in getting their credentials recognized in Canada. Even those who were able to get their credentials recognized were confronted with an anti-immigrant bias, reflected in their credentials (both degrees and experience) not being counted by Canadian employers. Of those who are not able to get their credentials recognized, some are able to mobilize resources and return to school for additional education while others are not. Those who do not return to school are forced to find alternative career paths, often turning to unskilled or entry level work. Through this experience of having their credentials rejected and unrecognized, participants described the toll on their mental wellbeing, their sense of self and self-esteem, and the loss of human capital.

Education

Expectedly, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment status increased for each level of education, from high school or less (26% employed), some college (52%), a bachelor's degree (56%), and postgrad (60%). Although employment status increased as education increased for Canadian Muslim women, unemployment for those looking for work surprisingly did not, averaging at about 9% across levels of education. This contrasts with the general Canadian adult population, for whom unemployment for those looking for work does decrease with each additional level of education. While the percentage of unemployed Canadian Muslim women looking for work is roughly double that of the general Canadian population at lower levels of education (9% vs. 5%), it is triple that of the Canadian adult public at the highest level of education (9% vs. 3%). Refer to Table 19 below. This indicates a significant issue regarding unemployment for Canadian Muslim women with higher levels of education in professional fields, confirmed by qualitative interviews and focus groups.

As with employment status, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current full-time work status increased for each level of education, from high school or less (17% employed full-time), some college (38%), a bachelor's degree (43%), and postgrad (50%). It is important to note that at each level of education, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed full-time than general Canadian adults. Likewise, Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report part-time employment at each level of education compared to adult Canadians generally. Refer to Table 20 below.

The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment status in legislative or senior management increased for each level of education, from high school or less (0.02% employed), some college (0.10%), a bachelor's degree (0.34%), and postgrad (0.51%). It is important to note that at each level of education, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in senior management than general Canadian adults.

The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management did not change drastically with education after some college (17%), as those with bachelors' degrees (18%) and postgrad (14%) reported similar rates. Similar to senior management positions, a smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in middle management than general Canadian adults; however, the differences are muted. While Canadian Muslim women are underrepresented in middle management, the underrepresentation is much worse for those in senior management. Refer to Table 21 below.

Not surprisingly, during interviews many participants named education, and supports for education (e.g. financial assistance) as major enablers on their career paths. Thus, it is worth noting what barriers to education Canadian Muslim women encounter, including financial barriers, unsupportive spouses, a lack of adequate childcare assistance, especially daycare, and systemic workplace discrimination. In all but a few of these cases of barriers to Canadian Muslim women's employment, the barriers appear to be arbitrary and not embedded in policy or resulting from an organization's functioning. Rather, they seem to result from an organization's structure and commitment to maintaining and reproducing racial hierarchies.

Area of studies

While any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's employment over the average rate (44%), some fields confer greater benefits while others seem to be marked with barriers to employment. Canadian Muslim women who reported studying engineering were the most likely to report current employment (65%) compared to those in the arts and humanities (47%). Compared with the general Canadian sample, Canadian Muslim women who studied law or for legal positions have notably lower employment rates (54% Canadian Muslim women vs. 71% general Canadian public) as do those who studied trades and services (47% vs. 65%) as well as arts and humanities (47% vs. 63%).

Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are especially disadvantaged: compared with Canadians generally, Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are nearly half as likely to report current employment (26% vs. 45%). Refer to Table 22 below.

While any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's employment over the average rate, this same benefit was not conferred to unemployment rates for those looking for work. The areas of studies where Canadian Muslim women report the lowest unemployment rates while looking for work include mathematics and computer science (8%) and health care (8%). The areas of studies where Canadian Muslim women report the highest unemployment rates while looking for work include trades (12%), social and behavioural sciences (11%), and legal professions or law (11%). Refer to Table 22 below.

Canadian Muslim women who reported studying engineering were the most likely to report current full-time employment (53%) compared to those in the arts and humanities (33%). Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report full-time work when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study. Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report part-time work when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study; this difference was especially pronounced for those who studied trades and services. Refer to Table 23 below.

Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report legislative or senior management positions if they studied engineering (0.59%), business and administration (0.54%), and legal professions (0.45%). Canadian Muslim women least likely to report legislative or senior management positions were those who studied education and teaching (0%), health care (0.07%), and sciences (0.12%). Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report employment in legislative and senior management when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study. Refer to Table 24 below.

Canadian Muslim women more likely to report middle management positions were those who studied business and administration (26%), legal professions (22%), and mathematics and computer science (20%). Canadian Muslim women least likely to report middle management positions were those who studied health care (9%), education and teaching (9%), and trades and services (12%). Canadian Muslim women were less likely to report employment in middle management when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study, with one exception: Canadian Muslim women who studied math or computer science were more likely to report current employment in middle management compared to the general public (20% vs. 16%). Refer to Table 24 below.

Marital status

Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest employment rates (63%), followed by those who have never married (52%), those who are currently married (44%), and those who are not currently married, including widows and divorcees (32%). Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married: widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of Canadian women (32% and 34% respectively). In terms of those currently unemployed, Canadian Muslim women who have never married reported the highest rates of looking for work while unemployed (13%), followed by Canadian Muslim women in common law unions (9%), currently married (8%), and those who are not currently married, including widows and divorcees (7%). Canadian Muslim women reported significantly higher rates of looking for work while unemployed compared to the general sample of Canadian women across marital statuses. Refer to Table 25 below.

Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest full-time employment rates (54%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who are currently married (34%), never married (32%), and not currently married (28%). Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of full-time employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married; these Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of divorced and widowed Canadian women (28% and 29% respectively). Canadian Muslim women who never married report the highest level of part-time work (29%). Refer to Table 27 below.

Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest employment in legislative and senior management (0.34%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who are currently married (0.23%), never married (0.14%), and not currently married (0.11%). A similar pattern emerged for Canadian Muslim women in middle management positions, Canadian Muslim women in common law unions (18%) and marriages (14%) or those who never married (14%) were more likely to report employment in middle management than those who were not currently married (9%). Canadian Muslim women reported less than half the rates of the general sample of Canadian women employed in legislative and senior management, with the exception of those who never married (0.14% Canadian Muslim women vs. 0.19% Canadian women). The differences for middle management positions were muted in comparison. Refer to Table 27 below.

What is not revealed in the numbers is the countervailing mechanism marital status seems to create for women's employment outcomes: while supportive spouses can be an immense career enabler, unsupportive spouses can effectively sabotage Canadian Muslim women's career trajectories. Husbands (and fathers, brothers, or other male relatives) engaged in a number of practical supports for women, including: encouraging wives to study and pursue the kinds of work the women actually wanted to do; assisting wives with transportation (e.g. daily commute); sharing in household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare; leveraging their professional and work networks to find job opportunities for their wives; and generally, they did not create additional barriers to sabotage their wives' career aspirations. Not all husbands and male relatives provided such support to their wives; and some husbands provided ambivalent support (e.g., even as they gave "permission" to allow their wives to work, they maintained limitations on what types of work their wives could engage in).

Age of children

Compared with the general sample of Canadian women, Canadian Muslim women's employment was more negatively impacted by the presence of children. For those with no children in the home, about half of both Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report employment (46%). However, Canadian Muslim women reported decreasing levels of employment as the age of the youngest child in the home decreased, while the general Canadian sample of women reported significantly higher rates of employment than those with no children. Canadian Muslim women without children at home report the lowest level of looking for work while unemployed on par with those who have children aged 25 years or older at home (7%). The rate is higher for those with children aged 2 through 24 (11%), and for those with children aged 1 year or younger at home (8%). In almost each category of youngest child's age, Canadian Muslim women were twice as likely to report looking for work while unemployed as the general sample of Canadian women. Refer to Table 28 below.

Similar to the above patterns, for those with no children in the home, Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report being as likely to work full-time (39% and 40%, respectively). However, Canadian Muslim women reported decreasing levels of full-time employment as the age of the youngest child in the home decreased, while the general Canadian sample of women reported significantly higher rates of full-time employment than those with no children. Refer to Table 29 below.

Canadian Muslim women with no children in the home reported the highest levels of employment in legislative and senior management (0.30%), followed by women with children one or younger at home (0.25%). The rates continue dropping for Canadian Muslim women with older ages of youngest children at home, to Canadian Muslim women with youngest children aged 25 or older (0.07%). Similarly, Canadian Muslim women with no children in the home reported the highest levels of employment in middle management alongside those with children one or younger at home (14%). However, the rates are more similar for Canadian Muslim women with older ages of youngest children at home (12-13%). Refer to Table 30 below.

During interviews, most women reported the presence of children in the home created a barrier, especially those who did not have a supportive spouse or other family (e.g. mothers) they could turn to for childcare assistance. It was not surprising that a main support women reported was childcare support, especially daycare. Even among the Canadian Muslim women who are utilizing childcare supports, there was a clear need for additional services and programs to help meet the care deficit. Additionally, Canadian Muslim women with children present in the home also named remote work and time flexibility as enablers to employment.

Province

Canadian Muslim women reported the highest level of employment in Quebec (56%), followed by Newfoundland and Labrador (50%), British Columbia (50%), Manitoba (46%), Alberta (44%), Saskatchewan (42%), Ontario (39%), Nova Scotia (38%), and New Brunswick (29%). The drop in employment level among Canadian Muslim women across provinces is not proportionate to the drop for the general sample of Canadian adults; indeed, while Canadian Muslim women seem on par with the general population in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, they lag behind significantly in other provinces, with the biggest difference in New Brunswick (29% Canadian Muslim women vs. 54% Canadian adults). Canadian Muslim women's unemployment averages varied across provinces as well, though the patterns diverge from the employment averages. Refer to Table 31 below.

Canadian Muslim women reported the highest level of full-time employment in Quebec (43%), followed by British Columbia (33%), Alberta (30%), Ontario (30%), Manitoba (29%), Saskatchewan (26%), Nova Scotia (19%), New Brunswick (18%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (17%). The largest difference between full-time employment rates of Canadian Muslim women compared with the general Canadian public was again in New Brunswick (18% vs. 52%), while the smallest difference was in Quebec (43% vs. 53%). Refer to Table 32 below.

Canadian Muslim women in Quebec (0.31%), British Columbia (0.28%), and Ontario (0.18%) reported employment in legislative and senior management positions. The mean for Canadian Muslim women in senior management positions in the remaining provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) was 0, indicating too few Canadian Muslim women reside in these provinces who occupy senior management positions to be picked up by the Census. Quebec had the highest rate of Canadian Muslim women in middle management (15%), followed by British Columbia (14%), Alberta (13%), Ontario (13%), Manitoba (10%), Saskatchewan (7%), and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (both at 4%). There was no representation of Canadian Muslim women in middle management residing in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 2021 Census sample. Rates of Canadian Muslim women in middle management are comparable to those of the general Canadian public in Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, but are much lower in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and especially in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Refer to Table 33 below.

During interviews, Canadian Muslim women described and compared provinces; the ways in which they describe the social environment sheds light on the variance of Canadian Muslim social experience across Canada. In comparisons with Ontario and Quebec, while New Brunswick was framed as a less favorable province for Canadian Muslims, Newfoundland and Labrador was painted as a better alternative for families with children, though things are slowly changing. Among Canadian Muslim women based in Quebec, women described having work opportunities limited by anti-Muslim legislature, reported being silenced outside of work by their employers, and consistently mentioned hijab-donning women face more difficult challenges. Despite this, most women in the French language group reported not personally experiencing anti-Muslim discrimination, instead framing their experiences as other types of discrimination.

Age group

About 42% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported current employment, compared with 51% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39), 48% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64), and 8% of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older). About 15% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported looking for work while unemployed, compared with 10% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39), 8% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64), and 2% of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older). Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed and looking for work than the general Canadian adult population in each age group. Refer to Table 34 below.

About 15% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported full-time employment, compared with 41% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39), 39% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64), and 7% of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older). Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed full-time than the general Canadian adult population in each age group, with the most pronounced difference for those aged 25-39 (early career years). Refer to Table 35 below.

The likelihood of reporting employment in legislative or senior management increased with age for both Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian adult sample. However, while both Canadian Muslim women and the general public start off with 0.05% representation in senior management for those age 18-24, the rates for Canadian Muslim women notably lag behind those of the Canadian public. Canadian Muslim women report similar rates of employment in middle management to the general Canadian population for those in the university or early career years; those aged 40-64 are notably lagging behind their general Canadian counterparts (14% Canadian Muslim women vs. 21% Canadian adults). Refer to Table 36 below.

Through interviews with Canadian Muslim women, it became evident that both younger and older Canadian Muslim women experienced age-based discrimination of different kinds. While younger Canadian Muslim women's expertise and authority were questioned, older Canadian Muslim women faced old age discrimination.

Longitudinal analysis

Longitudinal analyses track changes over time, and in this study changes from 2011 were noted against the 2021 Census. The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment was consistent from 2011 to 2021 (44%). However, the rate of Canadian Muslim women who are unemployed but looking for work rose slightly (7% to 9%). Adults in the general Canadian sample reported a decrease in current employment status (63% to 58%) but a nominal change to looking for work while unemployed (4% to 5%). In all, it seems Canadian Muslim women's employment status remains consistent, but a portion of Canadian Muslim women have shifted from those who had never worked in 2011 to now unemployed and looking for work in 2021. Refer to Table 37.

The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting full-time employment fell slightly from 2011 to 2021 (34% to 33%) while the rate of Canadian Muslim women employed part-time rose slightly (17% to 19%). Adults in the general Canadian sample reported a decrease in full-time employment status (55% to 51%) but a nominal change in part-time work (14% to 13%). Refer to Table 38 below.

The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in legislative and senior management positions almost doubled from 2011 to 2021 (0.10% to 0.19%). While the rate for the general public also increased during this time, from 0.80% in 2020 to 0.84% in 2021, Canadian Muslim women's increase far outpaces that of the general public. However, it is important to note that Canadian Muslim women remain underrepresented by over fourfold when compared to the general Canadian public (0.19% vs. 0.84%). The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management positions increased from 2011 to 2021 (10% to 13%). Refer to Table 39 below.

Mental health and wellbeing

For participants who are currently employed and satisfied with their positions, there was evidence that engaging in paid work supported their mental wellbeing. Conversely, poor work conditions negatively impact mental wellbeing. These poor conditions include precarious employment, chronic under- and unemployment, lack of control over work conditions (e.g. timing or location), precarious or insecure work situations, and racial barriers barring Muslim women from advancement. Findings also indicate that Canadian Muslim women are internalizing their under- and unemployment issues as personal flaws. Several report seeking therapeutic support to identify what they need to change about themselves, even though the issue they are confronted by is a social problem rather than a personal problem.

Section II: Social Experiences and Structural Realities

This section provides a critical lens into the processes and mechanisms that drive workplace inequality, which can curtail or create possibilities for change.

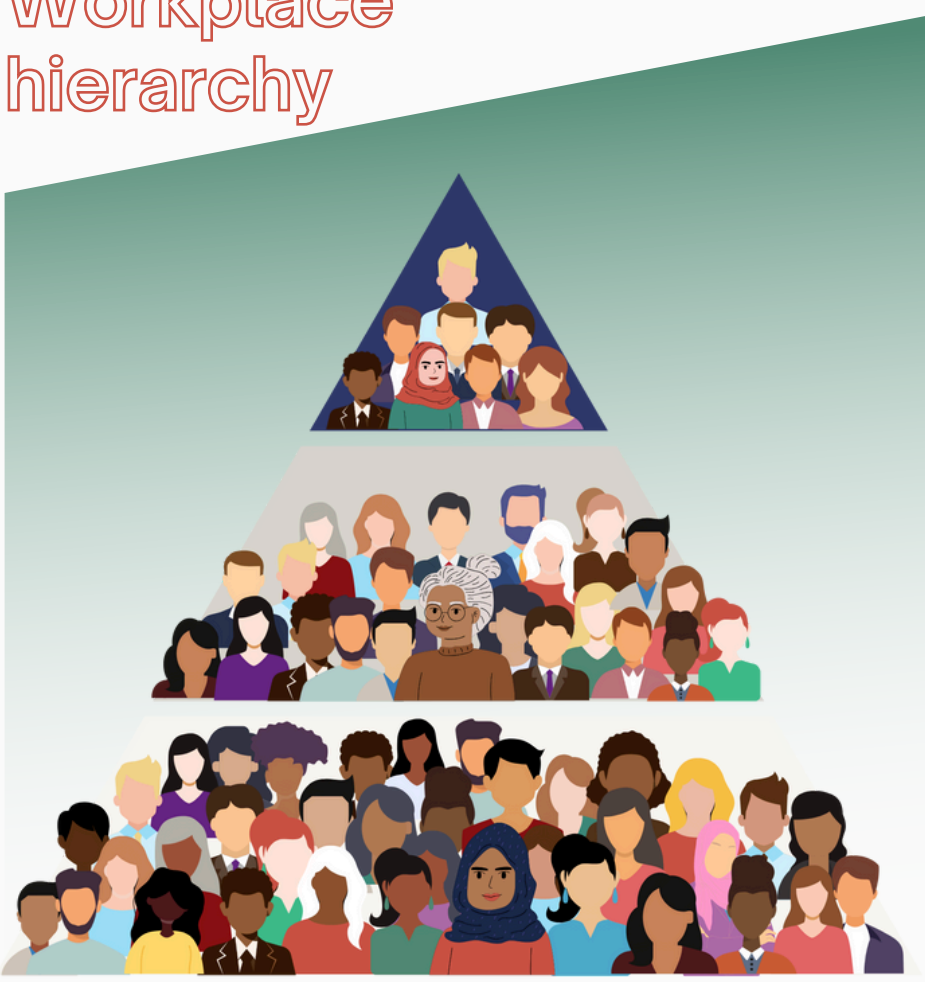
Workplace hierarchy

Three tiers of employment were identified by authority in the workplace hierarchy: first is the entry-level, service oriented, public-facing, what are referred to as the lower levels of employment; second, middle management, professionals, and other positions requiring extensive training and/or experience, and potentially some authority over others, referred to as the middle levels of employment; and finally, senior management, and other competitive occupations, which hold authority over others and decision making power in the workplace, referred to as the upper levels of employment.

Canadian Muslim women identified that, typically, race and gender segregation placed the majority of people of colour and immigrants in the first level, white women in the second level, and white men in the third level. These three levels of employment seniority resulted in staunch differences in employment experiences. Women who report the most optimism were those who are still training for their careers and may be working part-time or temporary jobs in the lower levels of employment, and have not yet hit the job market where they will compete in the middle and upper levels of employment. Findings indicate that women experience employment barriers and facilitators in contrasting ways given the levels of employment they are seeking or engaging in.

Unwelcoming environments

As Canadian Muslim women climb up the workplace hierarchy, they experience increasing levels of discrimination and hostility. In mid-level employment, this was described by women as a general feeling of not belonging, as women said they “can’t put my finger on it,” but that, “there are hidden blocks,” and they feel like their coworkers “just don’t want us there.” Women in upper levels of employment especially felt there were targeted and systematic attempts at blocking their progress and/or making their lives difficult at work. As mentioned above, when confronted by these increasingly hostile workplace environments, women in upper levels of employment, especially those in senior management, report not wanting to continue advancing given the diminishing rewards and increasing discrimination.



Institutional racism

Institutional racism can be described, briefly, as the ways in which racial hierarchies are maintained within organizations. In the current study, institutional racism can be identified through policies (e.g., not being allowed to modify breaks to accommodate Ramadan fasting), practices (e.g., socializing at bars after work hours), and characteristics of an organization (e.g., white-only mentors or senior employees) that create systemic barriers for Canadian Muslim women. Similar to the above subsection, findings indicate that women's experiences of institutional racism increase as they climb up the workplace hierarchy.

Workplace diversity

While most Canadian Muslim women across the three levels of workplace hierarchy report dissatisfaction with the diversity and inclusivity of their workplaces, these reports are especially concentrated among women in middle and upper levels of employment. Especially among the upper levels of employment, women report feeling diversity and inclusion is performative, not transformative: there was no real structural change in their workplace organizations. This was echoed by all racialized employers and only some of the white employers who participated in interviews. Canadian Muslim women in senior level positions consistently reported pressure to conform to Eurocentric norms. Canadian Muslim women also noted the issue of "coconuts," or people of colour who may be visible minorities but have taken on white dominant culture and internalized racism.

Life course and cohort effects

A life course effect can be observed when groups experience similar transitions or turning points that impact the course of their lives. For example, women's reduced career potential after giving birth to their first children ("the mommy track") is a life course effect. This is different from a cohort effect, where (typically public) events impact a group of people in an age category. Cohorts include generations (boomers, millennials, etc.) A cohort effect can be observed in, for example, the Great Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The partition left an imprint on the way then-children of the Indian subcontinent see the world, and their perspective is unique to their generational experience.

Findings indicate that, especially for the second generation, Canadian Muslim women's career trajectory followed a similar pattern: when the women are younger, typically university students, they easily find work, and they typically work part-time entry level or retail positions while balancing school and other commitments. However, as they graduate from school, complete their internships, satisfy requirements for experience, and begin to transition to finding careers—stable, permanent, full-time work, they struggle. They do not secure positions that would allow them to continue gaining experience; then they get trapped into a cycle of contractual and precarious labor, quite possibly for the rest of their working lives. Findings also indicate the possibility of cohort effects: both September 11th and the heinous murder of George Floyd sparked reconfigurations around the social construction of race in Canada in contrasting ways. There was a surge of Islamophobia after September 11th, but a rise in consciousness about white privilege and anti-Black racism after Floyd's murder.

Policies that need rethinking

Policies may have been created with the intention of supporting the employees, however in practice these policies create additional barriers for Canadian Muslim women as well as Canadians more generally. These policies include approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices; religious accommodations; health insurance and benefits; and reporting mechanisms at the workplace. Regarding DEI practices, nearly all participants, both employers and Muslim women, stated they felt diversity training as a policy does not work, especially with older white Canadians who do not engage in racial reflexivity. Regarding religious accommodations, Canadian Muslim women named repeated instances where policies were put ahead of people and created inhumane situations. For example, a fasting Canadian Muslim woman was not permitted to take her meal break at sunset, despite a previous manager permitting her to do so; instead, she had to take a break earlier in the day while she was still fasting, and was only allowed to eat after her shift was over. Additionally, data indicate some employers misunderstand the concept of "religious accommodations," and instead expect Muslim women to accommodate others at work. Finally, regarding reporting mechanisms at the workplace, the study findings indicate that no participant in the study, across Canadian employers and Muslim women, describe an effective reporting mechanism at their workplace.

Section III: Towards Solutions

The final section of this report provides recommendations emerging from the study findings and insight into the supports that enable Canadian Muslim women's employment success while also shedding light on barriers and how they can be overcome.

Effective Resources

In terms of finding work, several Canadian Muslim women shared they found utility in their family and friend networks, including social media (e.g. Instagram or Whatsapp groups), applying online (LinkedIn, Indeed, Charity Village, and online job boards), and, for those already employed, advancing through internal opportunities. When it came to enablers that allowed Canadian Muslim women to continue working for pay, they mention daycare and other forms of childcare; supportive colleagues or work team, especially a caring manager; supportive home environment and family (to coordinate care, chores, and commuting); transportation to commute; location flexibility (e.g., remote work); time flexibility, and being able to take breaks as need for prayer or fast breaking; intrinsic value of the work itself; and the employee assistance program, which one participant shared was more effective than her union. These resources are not only effective for Canadian Muslim women but would be valuable for Canadians more generally.

Relationships: Networks and Mentors

As demonstrated in interviews with Canadian employers and Muslim women, when it comes to getting and keeping work, how well one can perform one's work task is less important than how well one knows the manager. Unfortunately, most immigrants do not know how deeply entrenched nepotism is in Canadian workplaces, and therefore rely on meritocracy by submitting their CVs and resumes to locations that will likely never bother to acknowledge the application—a discouraging experience in itself. Some are able to strategically find volunteer or short-term opportunities, which allow the women to build networks they can then use to pursue better opportunities. The immigrant women who are able to make the right connections often forge these opportunities through volunteering, but uncompensated labour is not an option for all women, especially those with family responsibilities.

Findings indicate the dire need for networking opportunities that connect immigrants with members of professional, occupational, or trade networks, and additional resources that would help immigrants and other Canadians build meaningful and useful connections. The findings also indicate the importance of and need for diverse mentors in achieving desirable employment opportunities and career advancement.

Missing Supports

It is important to note that not all participants had access to the aforementioned resources; affordable childcare and before/after school programs were especially named as needed supports among the resources listed above. Immigrant Canadian Muslim women named needing support with technology training, social media skills and self-promotion training, financial aid for education, credential transfer assistance, and career advising. Participants, regardless of generation of immigration, reported additional missing supports including employment programs, in-house supports to network, prayer space, and religious accommodations.

Areas for future research

Employment outcomes. Better measures of employment outcomes are needed. The Canadian Census includes measures of employment as unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, and employed. The "employed" category should be disaggregated such that those who are employed and looking for work can be parsed. Additional measures to track the impact of the neoliberal economy (e.g., permanent or contract work, etc.) can facilitate meaningful decoding of Census data.

Citizenship. While Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens are least likely to be employed, adults generally who are not Canadian citizens are most likely to be employed. Further research is needed to identify why the lack of Canadian citizenship would be an apparently unique barrier for Muslim women. Likewise, Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest levels of employment across occupational categories, including the assisting occupations and retail, where Muslim women in Canada are generally overrepresented. Occupation category information for more than half of Canadian Muslim women who are not citizens was not available, making this an important line of future inquiry.

Official language skills. Despite findings indicating more positive outcomes for Francophone Canadian Muslim women compared to their Anglophone counterparts, they have poorer outcomes in terms of representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions. In the focus group with Francophone Canadian Muslim women, those who reside in Quebec mentioned anti-Muslim legislation, like Bill 21, acted as a barrier to advancing in the fields they wanted to pursue; some report switching career direction in order to avoid being penalized by the legislation. Further research is needed to unpack how Francophone Muslim women navigate the labour market.

Employment rates for Canadian Muslim women with knowledge of both official languages were fairly close to their general Canadian counterparts. However, Canadian Muslim women who know neither official language had an employment average one-fourth that of the general Canadian adult sample. It would seem that Canadian Muslim women without official language skills are especially penalized. A line of inquiry into what facilitators and enablers supporting those in the general Canadian population without official language skills would help shed light on what supports may be missing for Canadian Muslim women.

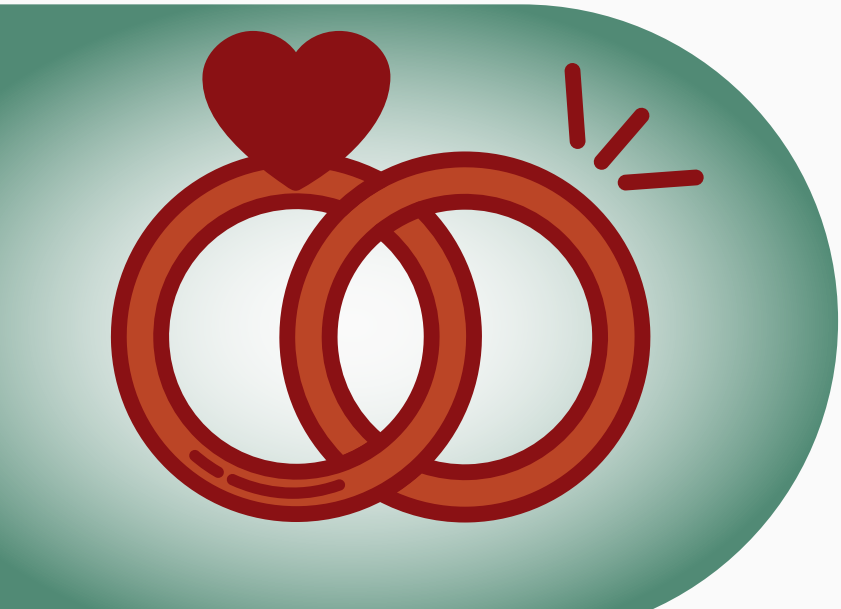
Generation of immigration. Some findings indicate that third generation Canadian Muslim women are enjoying employment outcomes on par with the general population of Canadians. However, these findings are inconsistent. For example, while third generation Canadian Muslim women were more likely than Canadian adults generally to report working in professional occupations (17% vs. 11%), they were also more likely to report working in retail sales and services (21% vs. 12%). Further research is required to unpack the mechanisms impacting Canadian Muslim women's employment by immigration of generation.

Race/ethnicity. Arab and West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported rates on par with their general Canadian counterparts, indicating that non-Muslim Arab and West Asian Canadians may be experiencing discrimination related to Islamophobia because of their ethnic identity regardless of their religious identity. Further research is needed to assess the impact of Islamophobia on non-Muslims.

Despite having the highest rate of women in senior management and the second highest rate of overall employment, East Asian Canadian Muslim women who reported studying in East Asia had the lowest employment rate. Further research is needed to shed light on the strategies and supports East Asian Canadian Muslim women engage to generate such positive socioeconomic outcomes, and why those who studied in East Asia may face specific barriers.

Location of studies. While Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada were on par with the general Canadian public in reporting full-time employment, those who studied in South and Southeast Asia were markedly behind. This is surprising because Canadian adults who studied in South and Southeast Asia reported slightly higher levels of full-time employment than those who studied in Canada, Canadian Muslim women who also studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report full-time employment compared with Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada. Given these statistics, it is very difficult to imagine only immigration is acting as a barrier here; there is something about being an immigrant Muslim woman that is especially impactful for those who studied in South and Southeast Asia.

Education. Although employment rates increased as education status increased for Canadian Muslim women, unemployment for those looking for work surprisingly stayed consistent. This contrasts with the general Canadian adult population, for whom unemployment for those looking for work does decrease with each additional level of education. While the percent of unemployed Canadian Muslim women looking for work is roughly double that of the general Canadian population at lower levels of education, it is triple that of the Canadian adult public at the highest level of education. This indicates a significant issue regarding unemployment for Canadian Muslim women in professional fields, confirmed by qualitative interviews and focus groups. In other words, while higher education confers employment benefits for Canadians generally, it does not for Muslim women specifically.



Marital status. Widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women reported employment outcomes on par with the general population for employment status and full-time work, but were significantly more likely to report being currently unemployed and looking for work.

These findings indicate divorced and widowed Canadian Muslim women may be over engaged in the labour market due to a lack of social and financial supports. Further research into the forms of support, resources, and policies that may ease widowed and divorced women's financial hardship is needed.

Age of youngest child. Compared with the general sample of Canadian women, it appears Canadian Muslim women's employment was more impacted by the presence of young children. For those with no children in the home, about half of both Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report employment. However, while the decreasing age of youngest child led to decreasing average employment levels for Canadian Muslim women, there was an increase in the employment levels for the general Canadian sample of women. Similar patterns emerged around full-time employment rates.

Canadian Muslim mothers may be prioritizing care for their children over paid work, but considering unemployment rates for Canadian Muslim mothers looking for work also increase with the decreasing age of the youngest child, it would appear there may also be other factors at play, including a lack of support. Several employers noted how they observed Canadian Muslim women take on an unequal share of childcare responsibilities during the pandemic lockdown compared with Canadians of other faiths, and Canadian Muslim women repeatedly mentioned they want their male counterparts to step up and take initiative with housework and childcare. Research into Canadian Muslim men's masculinity and gendering of work may help shed light on why Muslim men are reluctant to take on their fair share in the domestic context.

Provinces. Despite being home to the majority of Canada's Muslims, Ontario is lagging Quebec and British Columbia in integrating Muslim women into the paid workforce. While half or more of Canadian Muslim women report being employed in Quebec and British Columbia, just over a third of Ontario based Canadian Muslim women report the same. Further research is needed to unpack province-specific barriers to employment.
New Brunswick boasts the lowest levels of Canadian Muslim women who are looking for work while unemployed. This is surprising because the largest difference between full-time employment rates of Canadian Muslim women compared with the general Canadian public was in New Brunswick. From qualitative interviews, it is clear New Brunswick is an unwelcoming environment for immigrant Muslims, especially Canadian Muslim women, and Muslim families leave New Brunswick for better opportunities in other provinces (according to the 2021 Census, to Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta). More research is needed to understand the experiences of Canadian Muslim women in New Brunswick.

Longitudinal analysis. When considering how socioeconomic realities and work conditions have evolved over time, it is important to note a number of changes have restructured the economy and workplace, including the neoliberal restructuring of career tracks, inflation, pandemic-related disruptions, and increased interest in diversity initiatives following public and socially impactful events. Further research is required to measure the extent of the impact of 9/11 on Canadian Muslim women's labour market participation as well as how DEI initiatives following George Floyd's murder may be restructuring Canadian workplaces.

Local economy, global inequality. Given the increasing connections of our global village, the social and economic realities in Canada may be impacting global political and economic forces. Further research is needed to illuminate how immigrant receiving countries like Canada might be exacerbating global economic inequality by failing to integrate immigrants.

Expanded Findings

The expanded findings provide both numeric and narrative evidence embedded in summaries of analyses. The three sections follow the structure as above. The first section, Numeric and Narrative Analyses, offers comparisons between Canadian Muslim women and the general population and also provides narrative data from Canadian employers and Muslim women across a host of indicators. The next section, Social Experiences and Structural Realities, provides a more critical lens into the processes and mechanisms that are driving workplace inequality and/or creating possibilities for change. This section provides implications for and critiques of existing policies. The final section, Towards Solutions, offers insight into the supports and resources that enable Canadian Muslim women's employment success while also highlighting barriers and how they can be overcome. This final section also offers avenues for research.

Section I: Numeric and Narrative Analyses

This section offers comparisons of Canadian Muslim women to the general Canadian population as well as narratives of Canadian employers and Muslim women. The section opens with a focus on the outcomes of interest: employment status, full-time and part-time work status, and National Occupational Classification (NOC) status. This is followed by a focus on indicators of interest, which emerged from qualitative data analyses. These indicators include citizenship, knowledge of official languages, generation of immigration, race/ethnicity, location of studies, education, area of studies, marital status, age of children, province, age group, longitudinal analysis, mental health and wellbeing.

1. Outcomes

Employment Status. Table 1 provides subsample analyses by gender and Muslim identity. According to Table 1, about 44% of all adult Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed. This is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (55%) and men (62%) as well as the general population (58%). Surprisingly, Canadian Muslim men reported employment rates slightly higher than the sample of non-Muslim men (64% vs. 62%).

TABLE 1

Table 1. Employment Status by Gender and Muslim Status of Adult Canadians, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslims		Canadian Non-Muslims		All Canadian Adults	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Subsample/% of Population	1.98%	2.10%	49.16%	46.76%	51.15%	48.85%
Employment Status						
Employed	44%	64%	55%	62%	54%	62%
Unemployed, looking for Work	9%	9%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Unemployed, not looking for work	25%	19%	34%	28%	34%	28%
Never worked/NA	21%	8%	7%	5%	7%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Turning to unemployment, about 9% of all adult Canadian Muslim women reported being currently unemployed and looking for work compared with 5% of the general Canadian adult population. Canadian Muslims regardless of gender report twice the likelihood of looking for work while unemployed compared with their non-Muslim counterparts (9% Canadian Muslims vs. 4% Canadian Muslim women and 5% Canadian Muslim men). This was surprising, given the earlier finding that Canadian Muslim men reported employment rates slightly higher than the sample of non-Muslim men (64% vs. 62%).

Narratives. According to the above quantitative findings, Canadian Muslim women are less likely to report current employment status than either Canadian Muslim men or Canadians more generally. What these numbers do not demonstrate is that, even among the employed, many Canadian Muslim women face undesirable work conditions. Across interviews with Canadian Muslim women across provinces, languages, and identity statuses, many Canadian Muslim women report being treated as "less than"—less competent, less dependable, less desirable. After hearing how another participant was bounced from one contract to another, not able to "seal the deal," another British Columbia based Muslim woman shared that:

> **It's hard to seal the deal, to get the full-time job. It is like you're always being tested. I mean, you have to work 110%, while maybe your colleague, who is white, works 10%. That has been my experience. That was my experience at the university. And in that position, which was a contract for three years. And when [someone in a senior leadership position made a racist comment that R complained about]. I was then, one week later, told 'I don't have enough money to continue your contract, you'll be replaced by a research assistant.' She was a Caucasian woman who had no formal education. Like (another participant) said, you know, you start to seek therapy and kind of think, okay? Like, it gets to a point where you have to bend, bend, bend, and that goes against your DNA. Your predisposition like this is not who I am, but you stay quiet because you need the job. And then you ask yourself, okay, well, is it like, what do I do now? Is it because I'm strong, or do I speak out, and you speak out in a way that's you know, that's very diplomatic. And there's always that thought in the back of my mind. Okay, just remember, if you're asked a question, answer it very diplomatically. It's because of who you are.**

Hearing this, another participant, who is in upper management, said, "that's how they do it. They don't fire you, it's in the non-renewal of contracts." In the above participants' case, she was replaced by someone who had fewer credentials, but the right social fit—the replacement would likely not speak up to the senior leader, as this participant did. The participant also notes, as did many other Canadian Muslim women, the negative effect of poor work conditions on her sense of self and wellbeing. Faced with unfavorable work conditions, many Canadian Muslim women turn to seeking employment elsewhere. The numbers of individuals currently employed and seeking work are not recorded by the Census. However, if they were recorded, I would expect to find higher rates of Canadian Muslim women looking for work elsewhere compared to the general population.

However, looking for work while employed is also challenging. One Ontario based immigrant Canadian Muslim woman of South Asian origin noted that the job market was so difficult, she decided to return to school:

> **I have been here in Canada for the last 13 years. I came with a degree from back home. I had a Master's degree in [STEM field]. I tried to find a job relevant to my teaching because I was a teacher there, so I tried to find a similar position here, which was really difficult at that time, and I didn't find anything. So, I decided to upgrade my education, and I got admission in university. I completed my doctoral degree in [STEM field]. After that, I did a postdoctoral fellowship for three years, and now after that, I'm still working on a contract. It's not easy to find a secure, permanent position, I don't know why.**

This participant names pursuing education as strategy to overcome unemployment, but without success. Education is discussed further below, along with other indicators, after the remaining employment outcomes are discussed.

Work Status. Table 2 provides subsample analyses by gender and Muslim identity: about 33% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed. This is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (45%) and men (59%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (56%). In terms of part-time employment, about 19% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed. This is higher than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (16%) and men (10%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (15%).

TABLE 2

Table 2. Full-Time and Part-Time Status by Gender and Muslim Status of Adult Canadians, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslims		Canadian Non-Muslims		All Canadian Adults	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Full time	33%	56%	45%	59%	45%	59%
Part time	19%	15%	16%	10%	16%	10%
Not applicable	48%	29%	39%	31%	40%	31%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Narratives. In the preceding analyses drawing on quantitative data, full-time and part-time work status was considered. In the following analyses, Canadian Muslim women's experiences of paid and volunteer work are considered. Especially among newcomer immigrant women, volunteering was a strategy to cope with unemployment in three ways: women used volunteering as a way to gain Canadian experience; they made opportunities to network while volunteering; and finally, women were able to gain a sense of purpose and find intrinsic value to their work. A Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Bangla mentioned volunteering helped her "get a recommendation," and allowed her to "learn about job opportunities and funding from the government." A Canadian Afghan Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi mentioned how she pursued volunteering when she came to Canada:

> **I'll never forget a video I saw by an Indian businessman who had come to Canada. He shared his experiences with newcomers and talked about his seven secrets to success, one of which was volunteering. He emphasized that you could transfer some of your talents and change your career path if needed. I learned a lot from that video...**

I immediately went to an immigrant settlement organization, the organization supporting us, and told them I wanted to volunteer. They first declined, stating that as their client, it wasn't possible. I then reached out to an Afghan women's association that spoke our language, and they offered me a volunteering opportunity as soon as they could. I volunteered with them for two months, leveraging my presentation facilitation skills gained in Afghanistan. This experience highlighted how you can make use of transferable skills.

For this participant, volunteering had not yet resulted in employment. However, for other women, it did allow for some success in gaining access to employment opportunities. For example, a first generation Canadian Muslim woman based in Newfoundland and Labrador mentioned:

I used to volunteer my time at this community radio show at my university. I did that for a year, did it purely for fun, and volunteered my time. But I think in that one year that I spent there I developed the skills and the prerequisites that were required which then got me involved in a freelance project which then caught the attention of someone at the [company I am currently employed at]. They were looking for someone who could fulfill a position of this nature, and that's how they reached out to me.

While this participant enjoyed an exceptionally positive success story, most Canadian Muslim women report somewhat different narratives. Most describe getting a foot in the door through volunteering, and still going through a formal hiring and screening process. While some are still not selected, others do report gaining employment through this route. A Canadian Afghan Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi mentioned how she was able to find paid work through volunteering:

After volunteering for two months for free, I gained a year of work experience and a set salary. Volunteering played a significant role in my journey. The current position I hold today, I found after a year of building work experience. ... There were days when I served tea to guests as a volunteer, but even that became a valuable experience, as it taught me how to communicate with clients. It was a form of client interaction that helped me grow.

The participant names how she sought out learning experiences throughout her time volunteering, which allowed her to utilize her volunteer experience well as she secured paid work. It is important to note that there were barriers Canadian Muslim women experienced even when it came to volunteering. For example, one Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Pashto mentioned:

I have friends here who also have kids to take care of. They've been told to start with volunteering to gain experience, but they face a challenge. When they go out to volunteer, they wonder where to leave their kids. Sending them to daycare costs money they don't have, and the places where they volunteer don't have childcare available. Plus, transportation can be expensive.

Additionally, even when women are able to make volunteering a logistical reality, they sometimes are not able to secure volunteering positions. One Francophone Canadian Muslim woman recalls:

> **I remember when I came even to be a volunteer, I will never forget that, I came here with a minimum of 10 years of experience in volunteering , such as the [charity] in [country]. When I came here just to be a volunteer, I could not get a volunteer position with [charity]. I passed all the interviews, everything online, over the phone, but when they met me, she refused me, and I understood why. I knew, however, that in the room where we waited for the interviews, there were two young people with whom I spoke, they just needed to do this experience for their diploma. They had no connection with the organization per se, but afterwards I was refused. When I asked for explanations, they said that I did not correspond to the profile, but I knew that wasn't it, in fact. I mean a volunteer position that is, I give all my skills, everything I've done really, I offer it for free and despite that, I was refused. These were moments that marked me in life that I will never forget.**

While most women in this study did not have as much difficulty securing volunteer positions, it is important to note that for some women, there were significant barriers. For most Canadian Muslim women who volunteered in this study, volunteering proved a useful way to gain employment skills and opportunities.

National Occupational Classification (NOC) Status. While there is an under-representation of Canadian Muslim women in management, professional occupations, technical occupations, trades and the arts, there is an overrepresentation of these women in assisting occupations as well as retail sales and services compared with the Canadian adult public. From qualitative interviews with both Canadian employers and Canadian Muslim women, it was clear that diversity and representation among management, especially senior management, positions were a key factor in creating workplace contexts that foster diversity and equitable opportunities for equity-deserving populations. Thus, the below analyses focus on senior and middle management.

A fraction of a percent (0.19%) of Canadian Muslim women reported occupations in legislative and senior management positions; though the rate for the general Canadian population is over four times that of Canadian Muslim women, it is still a fraction of a percent (at 0.84%). There is more proximity in terms of middle-level management, where about 13% of Canadian Muslim women reported holding these positions, compared with about 16% of the general Canadian population (not shown in Table 3; refer to Table 6).
Table 3 provides subsample analyses by gender and Muslim identity: about 0.19% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed in legislative or senior management positions. This is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (0.48%) and men (1.25%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (0.66%). About 13% of Canadian Muslim women report being currently employed in middle management positions, which is lower than the average for Canadian non-Muslim women (18%) and men (14%) as well as that of Canadian Muslim men (14%).

TABLE 3

Table 3. National Occupational Category (NOC) Status by Gender and Muslim Status of Adult Canadians, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslims		Canadian Non-Muslims		All Canadian Adults	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Legislative and senior managers	0.19%	0.66%	0.48%	1.25%	0.47%	1.22%
Middle management occupations	13%	14%	18%	14%	18%	14%
Professional occupations	13%	18%	14%	11%	14%	12%
Technical occupations	2%	8%	3%	13%	3%	13%
Assisting occupations	12%	19%	11%	20%	11%	20%
Art, culture and sport	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Retail sales and services	16%	15%	15%	11%	15%	11%
Not available	43%	24%	36%	29%	37%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Narratives. Workplace hierarchy and segregation was especially named through levels of authority and management. While employees at the lowest rungs of an organization tend to be people of colour, especially women of colour, the demographics shift and white people, especially white men, tend to occupy more senior level positions. White women tend to be wedged between white men and people of colour. From the perspectives of the Muslim women in this study, workplace segregation was especially an issue in upper management, where they experienced an overrepresentation of white women and an underrepresentation of anyone else. One participant described her workplace as:

> **In terms of senior management positions, all white females. And I just went to a conference, and I kid you not. I was like the only person wearing a hijab, and one of the few people of colour present. The topic of the conference was based on racism. So the demographic was very shocking. And I, even when I was presenting to the room--I was presenting on [an area I have expertise on], and I was so intimidated because the room was just a sea of white women, and like a few white males. Even though it's not something that's spoken about. It's still so shocking. How like the majority is white females, despite the changing--like in the health care program, it's different. But like in terms of management position, people going to conferences. It's just white females.**

Though the above example features the Muslim woman away at a conference, such experiences happen at the workplace as well. This is especially reported by participants who note that their ideas are often given less value than white women, or their credibility is questioned in relation to white women. One mentioned how she is often read by patients or other members of the public as being subordinate to the white female students she trains:

> **I remember I was training a new graduate. She was just, essentially, fresh out of school. And we went into patients' rooms, and the patients would direct all the questions to her as if she's the senior. And then, after she would come outside. She's like, 'Oh, like, why were they talking to me?' And I'm just like, 'what do you think?' [Laughs]. So, yeah, there's a lot of instances like that. It's unfortunate. And again, like I said, like every shift, I feel like I just have to prove myself.**

The concentration of, and preference for, white women occupying senior management was a consistent theme across interviews with Canadian Muslim women in non-Muslim majority organizations. Even those who identified unique workplace environments that, for example, “privilege hiring women and immigrants” nonetheless still privileged white women in senior management.

A few Canadian Muslim women in this study were employed in senior management at the time of their interviews. When asked about their experiences, they named specific challenges around keeping and advancing in their positions, including a lack of mentorship as well as a general environment of hostility (both items mentioned briefly here; themes engaged with further below). When I asked one participant to share how she would describe the ways coworkers created hostile environments, she said:

> **It was definitely the tone of voice. And then we four hijabis became very close friends. We started comparing notes, and we were like, “wait a second, this woman. Oh, she talks like this to you. Oh, she talks like that to me, too! I thought it was just me.” Whereas they wouldn't do that, they wouldn't dare do that with a white woman... We were just left on our own, like we didn't have mentorship. There was no sponsor in the same way that other white people were being groomed for more success. It was just like you should just fend for yourself. It was just very insidious, and then we would hear more and more about other Muslims, who were also confronting the exact same thing, or different forms, the discrimination. So it is very systemic, it is very entrenched. They were very good at disguising it, but we all knew, you could feel it. But you couldn't say directly, because there was no smoking gun evidence or anything like that.**

When managers were the kinds of managers participants in this study would describe as “good”—managers who were inclusive, who cared, who made an effort to create human connections and community at work, they were often subject to similar kinds of experiences as the Muslim women they protected. For example, one Canadian Muslim woman describes a previous manager who was white and not Muslim, but as a gay man he was invested in being inclusive, and was an “amazing, amazing” manager. Nonetheless, she shares that:

> **He was subject to nasty violent hateful untrue remarks by a staff person, and people knew who did it, but (no one wanted to acknowledge it). And he was very supportive of Islam and Muslims, and he knew things about Canadian Muslims and I was like, ‘wow, how did you know about all these things?’ But people didn't like him—he was openly gay. They didn’t like what he was promoting, about being inclusive to all people and being supportive of—not just of Muslims, but everyone. Putting out messaging about different holidays. People didn't like that. So again, right like, how do we support those who are supporting Muslims? They're also faced with these things that you can't put your finger on. Even when you put your finger on it, you still can't do anything about it.**

In addition to the lack of good mentors and managers, Canadian Muslim women also report being confronted by hostile work environments that discourage them from seeking continued advancement, and in some cases, employment. These experiences included structural realities of white institutions, including all-white interview panels, all-white mentor options, all-white management, etc. In one experience, a participant mentioned how she attempted to seek promotional opportunities for over a decade, but that eventually she stopped because "there would always be people who would not even look at me in the eye," and those people typically would "give me a low mark" on the interview as well.
Several participants mentioned they had stopped attempting to seek further career advancement. One Canadian Muslim woman mentioned:

> **I was rising in my career. And then it came to a point where I was like, 'this is not worth it. This is not worth the mental stress, the Islamophobia, the lack of support.' And so it was just a decision for my own wellbeing to say, 'I have to step away from this now, even though it was really good for my career development--like it was really fast pace, I accomplished a lot of things in a short amount of time, but it was like I could tell that they really don't care about me, there is no support. And then, the rampant Islamophobia. It was just like there's no point. And I saw that happen with other colleagues as well. And so, I noticed, like the white people in my age group. They were being groomed as if they were like their children. It was very much like a mother, father, grandfather, grandchild, relationship, only for the white employees. And so it's like, you know, that's not my position like no one's gonna do that for me. So yeah, for me. I kind of reached where I wanted to go and then realized that this is not worth it at all.**

Another Canadian Muslim woman who worked in upper management also commented on her experience. Similar to the Muslim woman above, she did not feel she had the support (or protection) of a mentor, and like the gay male manager described above, she also seemed to be the subject of great scrutiny for her inclusive practices aimed at advancing diversity.

> **I was also extra scrutinized as a racialized manager. It didn't matter how much I did to prove how much more competent I was than some of my colleagues who are also managers. I was always last in line from promotions last in line, for whatever. Anytime I would hire racialized individuals, especially Muslim Africans, Black African Muslims, and even South Asian. There was a lot more scrutiny than if I hired Karen from around the corner. And Karen could get away with just being cute, but Fatima would have to be very cute, very resourceful, like almost performing at a manager's level in just a simple retail sales associate position, versus Karen, who just had to stand there and look pretty.**

This manager also shared how her decisions around who to hire were often micromanaged by her superiors to try to maintain the racialized and gendered expectations of the workplace. The themes around mentorship and workplace diversity are discussed further below.

Among the qualitative sample of participants, women who were unemployed, underemployed, and employed but wanted to advance in their careers experienced barriers to their career ambitions, and were often uncertain of what those barriers were. I describe how each barrier manifests for participants along the indicators discussed below. Whenever available, I also highlight supports and enablers that facilitate Canadian Muslim women's career success.

2. Citizenship

Employment Status. Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest levels of employment (55%), followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women (46%) and Muslim women who do not have Canadian citizenship (36%; Table 4). Likewise, adults in the general public born in Canada reported higher levels of employment (59%) than naturalized Canadian adults (54%). However, adults living in Canada who are not Canadian citizens were the most likely to report being currently employed (63%). In other words, while Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens are least likely to be employed (36%), adults generally who are not Canadian citizens are most likely to be employed (63%).

TABLE 4A

Table 4a. Employment Status by Citizenship Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
Citizen by birth	55%	11%	22%	12%	100%
Naturalized citizen	46%	8%	27%	19%	100%
Not Canadian citizen	36%	10%	24%	30%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%

TABLE 4B

Table 4b. Employment Status by Citizenship Status of All Canadian Adults in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
Citizen by birth	59%	5%	32%	5%	100%
Naturalized citizen	54%	5%	33%	8%	100%
Not Canadian citizen	63%	6%	20%	11%	100%
Total	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

According to Table 4, naturalized Canadian Muslim women born elsewhere reported the lowest levels of looking for work while unemployed (8%). Surprisingly, Canadian born Muslim women reported similar levels of unemployment while looking for work as Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens (11% and 10%, respectively). Canadian born Muslim women were more than twice as likely to report being unemployed and looking for work compared with general Canadian adults born in Canada (11% vs. 5%).

Full- and Part-time Work Status. According to Table 5, Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest levels of full-time employment (37%), followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women (36%) and Muslim women who do not have Canadian citizenship (26%). Likewise, adults in the general public born in Canada reported higher levels of employment (52%) than naturalized Canadian adults (48%). Adults living in Canada who are not Canadian citizens were on par with those born in Canada (51% and 52%, respectively).

TABLE 5

Table 5. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Citizenship Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
Citizen by birth	37%	27%	36%	100%	52%	13%	34%	100%
Naturalized citizen	36%	18%	46%	100%	48%	11%	40%	100%
Not Canadian citizen	25%	16%	58%	100%	51%	16%	33%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%

NOC Status. Canadian born Muslim women were about as likely as naturalized Canadian Muslim women to hold legislative or senior management positions (0.20% and 0.23% respectively). Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest rate of employment in legislative and senior management positions (0.10%). Adults of the general public born in Canada reported higher levels of employment in legislative and senior management positions (0.95%) than naturalized Canadian adults (0.67%). Adults living in Canada who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest rate of employment in legislative and senior management positions (0.38%). Across citizenship statuses, Canadian Muslim women reported lower levels of employment in senior management compared with the general Canadian public.

TABLE 6A

Table 6a. Occupational Categories by Citizenship Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Citizen by birth	0.20%	18%	16%	2%	8%	2%	24%	29%	100%
Naturalized citizen	0.23%	14%	13%	2%	14%	1%	14%	42%	100%
Not Canadian citizen	0.10%	10%	10%	1%	9%	1%	15%	53%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 6B

Table 6b. Occupational Categories by Citizenship Status of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Citizen by birth	0.95%	17%	12%	8%	15%	2%	12%	32%	100%
Naturalized citizen	0.67%	15%	14%	6%	14%	1%	12%	38%	100%
Not Canadian citizen	0.38%	14%	14%	6%	18%	2%	18%	28%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

Employment rates in middle management were more comparable between Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian public. Canadian born Muslim women reported the highest level of employment in middle management (18%), followed by naturalized Canadian Muslim women (14%) and Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens (10%). Interestingly, Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest levels of employment across employment categories, including the assisting occupations and retail, where Muslim women in Canada are generally overrepresented.

Narratives. While the above analyses highlighted the differences between those who are Canadian citizens and those who are not, the analyses do not demonstrate the differences within categories. Canadian Muslim women who entered Canada as refugees report much greater challenges to employment compared with those who entered as skilled or sponsored immigrants; however, not all identify their challenges as emerging from their status as refugees. For example, one Arabic speaking Canadian Muslim woman reported that she "arrived in Canada as a refugee at the end of 2017" and stated her challenges emerge from her status as an immigrant and due to language. Like other Canadian Muslim women who preferred to participate in Arabic in this study, she says she does not feel she has experienced anti-Muslim discrimination, though she also reports feeling uncomfortable in public because she wears hijab. Other participants were able to articulate the unique challenges they faces as refugees, such as this Afghan Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi:

> **"While I was fortunate to find work quickly, many of those who arrived with me haven't been as fortunate. I know people who have been volunteering without pay for a years and still haven't been able to secure a paid job... We should have better access to decent healthcare. Support for refugees is minimal. For the first six months, we were housed in hotels. As refugees, what assistance did we receive? There was little to no help with finding housing from the government. Finding rentals was incredibly challenging. I still know people who are searching for housing and need co-signers... In the first six months, you'd be lucky to get used to transportation, banking, and so on. It's extremely challenging to learn the language, familiarize yourself with Canadian systems and way of life, and maintain a job all at the same time. Support should have extended to at least two years."**

Though in a separate interview, a participant who preferred to speak in Pashto echoed the concerns shared above, and mentioned that not all refugees are treated the same:

> **"I've noticed differences in how Ukrainian refugees and Afghan refugees are treated. The two groups are treated differently when it comes to accessing services and job opportunities. Ukrainian refugees seem to receive more help when it comes to finding jobs, housing, and transportation (like tokens and Presto cards). There also appear to be more training and workshops designed for their specific needs."**

Another aspect of Canadian Muslim experience that the numbers do not shed light on is the number of landed immigrants who may be leaving the country. In a longer narrative about the difficulty of finding paid work, a Saskatchewan-based Canadian Muslim woman stated:

> **"This is something that bothers every new immigrant to Canada. Especially for the skilled workers who applied as skilled workers... One of my friends stayed for three years, looking, applying everywhere, and he couldn't find anything. It's horrible for anyone who has a family, and they are coming here because they think there are opportunities as skilled workers...**

And then when people come here, they can't find a job… People are leaving after they spend lots of time, lots of money from their savings, and then they find it's not worth it to stay here. So, lots of them are leaving after that, because they cannot find jobs.

The Census data does not allow for tracking to identify rates of immigrant emigration. It is unknown if these immigrants become emigrants before or after obtaining Canadian citizenship.

3. Knowledge of official languages

Employment Status. Not surprisingly, Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest levels of employment (63%, Table 7). More surprisingly, Francophone Canadian Muslim women reported higher levels of employment compared to their Anglophonic counterparts (54% and 42% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest employment rates (5%). It is interesting to note that employment rates for Canadian Muslim women with knowledge of both official languages were fairly close to their general Canadian counterparts (63% and 67% respectively). However, the difference is much larger for those who know neither official language, as the general Canadian adult average rate of employment is four times that of Canadian Muslim women (19% and 5%, respectively).

TABLE 7

Table 7. Employment Status by Knowledge of Official Languages of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
English only	42%	10%	28%	20%	100%	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%
French only	54%	7%	21%	18%	100%	51%	2%	37%	10%	100%
Both	63%	9%	19%	9%	100%	67%	4%	25%	3%	100%
Neither	5%	3%	21%	72%	100%	19%	4%	44%	33%	100%
Not available	47%	17%	21%	15%	100%	54%	6%	27%	13%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

According to Table 7, Canadian Muslim women who speak neither official language reported the lowest rate of unemployment while looking for work (3%), followed by Francophonic Canadian Muslim women (7%), Canadian Muslim women who speak both official languages (9%) and Anglophonic Canadian Muslim women (10%). Across language skills, Canadian Muslim women were significantly more likely to report looking for work while unemployed, except for those who speak neither official language.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. According to Table 8, Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest levels of full-time employment (48%). More surprisingly, Francophonic Canadian Muslim women reported higher levels of full-time employment compared to their Anglophonic counterparts (40% and 31% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest employment rates (4%). When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report full-time employment regardless of language skills. It is interesting to note that the difference was smallest among Francophones (40% Canadian Muslim women, 46% Canadian adults).

TABLE 8

Table 8. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Knowledge of Official Languages of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
English only	31%	20%	49%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%
French only	40%	18%	43%	100%	46%	10%	44%	100%
Both	48%	21%	30%	100%	59%	15%	26%	100%
Neither	4%	3%	93%	100%	17%	7%	76%	100%
Not available	40%	21%	38%	100%	43%	15%	43%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%

NOC Status. According to Table 9, Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest levels of employment in legislative or senior management positions (0.50%). Anglophonic Canadian Muslim women reported higher levels of employment in senior management compared to their Francophonic counterparts (0.15% and 0.08% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest rates (0%). When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report employment in legislative and senior management regardless of language skills. It is interesting to note that despite earlier findings indicating more positive outcomes for Francophonic Canadian Muslim women, they have poorer outcomes in terms of representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions.

TABLE 9A

Table 9a. Occupational Categories by Knowledge of Official Languages of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
English only	0.15%	13%	12%	2%	11%	1%	16%	44%	100%
French only	0.08%	10%	10%	3%	25%	0%	15%	37%	100%
Both	0.50%	20%	22%	3%	11%	2%	18%	25%	100%
Neither	0.00%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%	5%	91%	100%
Not available	0.00%	4%	4%	0%	23%	0%	23%	45%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 9B

Table 9b. Occupational Categories by Knowledge of Official Languages of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
English only	0.72%	16%	12%	8%	16%	2%	13%	33%	100%
French only	0.70%	12%	6%	8%	19%	1%	12%	42%	100%
Both	1.45%	18%	20%	8%	12%	3%	13%	23%	100%
Neither	0.16%	5%	1%	2%	10%	0%	9%	73%	100%
Not available	0.19%	8%	7%	3%	19%	1%	18%	44%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

Canadian Muslim women who speak both French and English reported the highest levels of employment in middle management positions (20%). Anglophonic Canadian Muslim women reported higher levels of employment in middle management compared to their Francophonic counterparts (13% and 10% respectively). Those who spoke neither official language reported the lowest rates (2%). When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were almost as likely to report employment in middle management with one exception:

Canadian Muslim women who speak both languages were slightly more likely to report employment in middle management than their general Canadian adult counterparts (20% vs. 18%).

Narratives. The Census provides data on knowledge of official languages, English and French, as discrete categories—either one knows the languages or they do not. However, the lived reality of Canadian Muslim women is that language familiarity—especially familiarity with Canadian vernacular English—is an evolving experience. For one Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi, it was also a religious experience, and she mentions:

> **A scholar, possibly from Egypt but raised in Switzerland, emphasized the importance of learning and abiding by the rules and laws of the country you live in. Learning the language and actively participating in your new homeland is crucial. Discrimination exists everywhere, and it often arises from "us versus them" mentalities.**

Regardless of whether or not others saw language assimilation as religiously prescribed, they recognized how important communication was for them at work. A Canadian Muslim immigrant woman who preferred to speak in Arabic mentioned that her workplace includes women of different cultures, but she still feels she needs to prove herself because she's an immigrant, dark-skinned, and wears a hijab. There are barriers due to language because she can't understand some things her colleagues say even though they are friendly. She feels if another colleague were to ask a question it would seem justified, but if she asks the same question she feels she would seem "stupid." Likewise, another Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in French—Canada's other official language—stated,

> **And when they invite me out to eat sometimes, we don't know if we can consume the food so we're uneasy with going, other times it doesn't matter and we go but even when you do go, you are not happy to go. Having a smile and laughing a lot, it's integrating and sometimes we don't even understand them, it has to be said, it has been about 16 years since I worked with [institution name] and when they tell jokes sometimes, I don't understand, honestly, and I don't always tell them that I didn't understand the joke. And today I went to a meeting where there were two or three sentences that were said, and I didn't know what it meant. It's not serious but we have this difficulty as Muslims to integrate into their way of life.**

This participant hits on the idea of language skills as integral to integration, nuanced further by the experiences shared by a Bangla speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant woman:

> **I don't have any bad experiences with finding work. My friend recommended the position and I got the job easily. But I didn't understand a lot of things. I learned a lot after starting to work. I had a language barrier, our English [in Bangladesh] is different from English in Canada. But after working, my English improved, and I got the confidence to start school. Working was good for me.**

This participant, like others in this study, emphasizes the nuances of Canadian vernacular in language; that words or expressions in Canada mean something different from other contexts. This is especially important to recognize as newcomers who assume they can speak English are frustrated when they realize they are still encountering communication and language-based barriers. A Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi shares:

> **When I first arrived, I could only introduce myself in English. Attending events and meeting people was quite disheartening because, despite all my knowledge, I couldn't participate or share my thoughts due to language barriers. Others made me feel inadequate just because I couldn't speak the language fluently. We often tie intelligence with English proficiency, even though language is merely a tool for communication and not an indicator of one's knowledge and life experiences.**

Though language is "merely a tool for communication," it is a vital tool that allows these women to express their "knowledge and life experiences."

4. Generation of immigration

Employment Status. Immigrants who were born elsewhere and relocate to Canada are referred to as first generation Canadians, and their children who are born in Canada are referred to as second generation Canadians. Children born in Canada to second generation Canadians are referred to as third generation Canadians.

Of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment, the third generation had the highest levels (60%) followed by the second generation (55%) and the first generation (43%; Table 10). This increase across generations is not apparent for the overall Canadian population, among whom second generation Canadians report a higher level of employment (60%) compared with the first (56%) and the third and beyond (58%). Additionally, the within-group difference of means for the general Canadian population was much smaller than that of the Canadian Muslim women (4% vs 17%). It is worth noting that while the first and second generations of Canadian Muslim women report lower rates of employment compared to their general Canadian counterparts, third generation Canadian Muslim women fare slightly better than their counterparts (60% vs. 58%).

TABLE 10A

Table 10a. Employment Status by Generation of Immigration of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
First	43%	9%	26%	22%	100%
Second	55%	12%	21%	12%	100%
Third and more	60%	5%	26%	8%	100%
Not available					
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%

TABLE 10B

Table 10b. Employment Status by Generation of Immigration of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
First	56%	5%	29%	9%	100%
Second	60%	6%	29%	4%	100%
Third and more	58%	4%	32%	5%	100%
Not available	69%	6%	20%	4%	100%
Total	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

According to Table 10, of Canadian Muslim women reporting looking for work while being unemployed, the third generation had the lowest levels (5%) followed by the first generation (9%) and the second generation (12%). This pattern of rates was observed for the general Canadian adult sample as well. While Canadian Muslim women's rates of being unemployed and looking for work are nearly twice those of the general Canadian adult sample for first and second generation Canadians, the differences are remarkably muted for third generation Canadian Muslim women and their general Canadian counterparts (5% and 4% respectively).

Full- and Part-time Work Status. Of Canadian Muslim women reporting current full-time employment, the third generation had the highest levels (43%) followed by the second generation (37%) and the first generation (33%; Table 11). This increase across generations is not apparent for the overall Canadian population, among whom second and third generation Canadians report higher rates of full-time employment (52%) compared with the first-generation Canadians (49%). It is interesting to note here that third generation Canadian Muslim women are slightly less likely to work full-time compared with first generation adult Canadians generally (43% vs. 49%). Additionally, the within-group difference of means for the general Canadian population was smaller than that of the Canadian Muslim women (3% vs 10%).

TABLE 11

Table 11. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Generation of Immigration of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
First	33%	18%	50%	100%	49%	13%	39%	100%
Second	37%	28%	34%	100%	52%	15%	32%	100%
Third and more	43%	20%	38%	100%	52%	12%	35%	100%
Not available					59%	19%	22%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%

NOC Status. Of Canadian Muslim women in legislative or senior management positions, the second generation had the highest levels (0.23%) followed by the first generation (0.19%). Surprisingly, the mean for third generation or more Canadian Muslim women was 0, indicating too few Canadian Muslim women who are third generation or beyond occupy these higher level positions to be picked up by the Census. This pattern was different for the general Canadian adult sample, where third or more generation Canadian adults were about as likely to hold legislative and senior management positions (0.93% and 1.03%, respectively).

TABLE 12A

Table 12a. Occupational Categories by Generation of Immigration of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
First	0.19%	12%	12%	2%	12%	1%	15%	45%	100%
Second	0.23%	18%	17%	2%	8%	2%	24%	28%	100%
Third and more	0.00%	23%	17%	2%	11%	2%	21%	25%	100%
Not available									
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 12B

Table 12b. Occupational Categories by Generation of Immigration of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
First	0.59%	14%	14%	6%	15%	2%	14%	35%	100%
Second	1.03%	19%	16%	7%	12%	3%	13%	29%	100%
Third and more	0.93%	16%	11%	9%	16%	2%	12%	32%	100%
Not available	0.48%	15%	16%	6%	15%	2%	16%	30%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

In terms of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management, the third generation had the highest levels (23%) followed by the second generation (18%) and the first generation (12%; Table 12). This increase across generations is not apparent for the overall Canadian population, among whom second generation Canadians report a higher level of employment in middle management (19%) compared with the first (14%) and the third and beyond (16%). Additionally, the within-group difference of means for the general Canadian population was much smaller than that of the Canadian Muslim women (5% vs 11%). It is worth noting that while the first and second generations of Canadian Muslim women report lower rates of employment in middle management positions compared to their general Canadian counterparts, third generation Canadian Muslim women fare better than their counterparts (23% vs. 16%).

Narratives. An aspect of generational differences not highlighted in the quantitative analyses above is the differential experiences between first and second generation Canadian Muslims, and the relationship between the two. While second generation immigrant Canadian Muslim women report more subtle forms of discrimination, their first generation counterparts share much more overtly racist experiences. For example, an Ontario-based immigrant woman recounts being told by her manager,

> **She said, 'Before you immigrants came, when I was growing up, we could go to Church and spend time with our families because everything was closed on Sundays. Now all these immigrants are coming, things are open and people are busy with work so there are not as many church goers.' She was angry. Even when she wouldn't say things like that out loud, I knew it was on her mind, I could feel a boundary even as we sat side by side.**

First generation immigrant women describe navigating sometimes intolerable situations, and they would often contrast their experiences with the (assumed to be better) second generation. For example, an immigrant Canadian Muslim woman expressed shock when a second generation participant in her focus group described experiencing similar kinds of discrimination that she herself experienced. She shared,

> **Like [the second generation participant] mentioned, there's a boundary, we don't feel fully included. And she was born here! I didn't know, I thought the new generations had the language, they know how to socialize, they know how to talk the small talk, water cooler talk. But even they still have barriers. My generation doesn't have those skills, we cannot make workplace friendships. We're still humans, and we need humans. We need to build that trust and relationships. Well, maybe through our work we build trust. But the relationships, sincere relationships. We need those.**

Not all first generation participants expressed this surprise, as some women had adult children and/or were aware of the experiences of others. For example, an Ontario based immigrant Muslim woman who earned an MSW before arriving in Canada completed a BSW at a top Canadian university after settling here. She also has several certificates from additional Canadian institutions. Nonetheless, she is volunteering because she cannot find paid work:

> **For the last 10 years, I have been having trouble finding jobs, or it was short term, contact or part-time. So those are the difficulties I'm experiencing. Last year I applied, I had an excellent interview, they gave positive responses to me too. But I was ultimately not hired. So yeah, to keep myself busy and active, I just continue to volunteer.**

When asked why she did not get the position, the participant mentioned she did not ask for feedback, but because she feels that compared to new "fresh graduates," she is not a competitive choice as an immigrant, whose first language is not English or French, who has health concerns. She also said

> **It is a competitive market, I cannot sell myself. I see even young people—my son—struggling to find work, they're in the same position. There are other immigrant women who have more education than me—they're doctors, PhDs, they're having this struggle too, they're not getting work.**

First generation immigrant women often framed their own employment experiences as a sacrifice for the second generation. For example, an immigrant Canadian Muslim woman and mother shared,

> **I felt the first generation will come here and have to struggle so that the second generation, you kids, will get the jobs. And I see my kids are doing well. But for me and my own personal goals, I feel I had to struggle a lot. This wouldn't have been required if I had stayed back in my own country (Bangladesh).**

Here, the participant mentions an important finding, as many second generation women expressed family pressure to secure "good" jobs, jobs that are permanent, secure, offer benefits—jobs that were often not offered to their first generation parents. At the same time, second generation participants in this study mention how difficult it is for them to navigate higher education and the job market, because the advice their parents offer is often, literally, out of time and place.

The second and latter generation participants also offered positive reflections on their experiences, as one participant mentions that her generation is "used to diversity":

> **One thing that I was thinking about as we were talking about what makes you stay in your workplace. I would say I feel like it's a trend that I see with age. Let's say, my age category. I'm 20 years old. At work, a lot of us are around that age, like 18-20. And I feel like since we all go to school and we do have lots of diverse environments at school, too, I feel like everyone's used to that. And they're just comfortable with diversity. Because even growing up in that environment, I feel like everyone's just normal about it. But I feel like as you do look at age like people who are a little bit older, that's not the case.**

Though other participants did not mention observing this difference, this finding does indicate a cohort effect, which is explored further below.

It is also important to mention that not all Canadian Muslims share a similar experience around generations of immigration mentioned above. Those in New Brunswick, for example, are referred to as newcomers, and no other terms are given. A New Brunswick-based Canadian Muslim woman shares,

> **Well, there's very few immigrants that land in New Brunswick that stay beyond 5 years. So, the concept of first generation born [sic, second generation] doesn't actually happen here. And it's very different. Being the first generation born in a construct where there are no other first generation born versus like. There are some like, I am good friends with a Bengali first generation. And he has a very similar experience to mine. He and his younger siblings. But that's pretty much it. I can't think of anyone who has come who has stayed, who's first generation born who stayed, who's existed as long as we have in this environment.**

The concept of first, second, and additional generations does not land in New Brunswick, because it is a particularly uninviting environment for Canadian Muslims (especially women; this is discussed further below).

5. Race/Ethnicity

Employment Status. Canadian Muslim women who identified as Southeast Asian had the highest percent currently employed (54%), followed by East Asian (51%), White (49%), Latin American (46%), Black (45%), Arab (45%), West Asian (44%), Indigenous (42%), and South Asian (42%; see Table 13). In each category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of employment compared to their general Canadian counterparts.

TABLE 13

Table 13. Employment Status by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
Southeast Asian	54%	13%	22%	12%	100%	57%	7%	25%	11%	100%
Other groups	54%	7%	23%	16%	100%	61%	6%	24%	9%	100%
East Asian	51%	7%	29%	13%	100%	59%	5%	26%	10%	100%
White	49%	6%	30%	16%	100%	57%	4%	34%	5%	100%
Multiple groups	48%	10%	25%	18%	100%	65%	8%	21%	6%	100%
Latin American	46%	5%	25%	24%	100%	65%	7%	22%	7%	100%
Black	45%	12%	24%	19%	100%	62%	8%	22%	8%	100%
Arab	45%	9%	23%	23%	100%	55%	9%	21%	15%	100%
Average (Total)	*44%*	*9%*	*25%*	*21%*	*100%*	*58%*	*5%*	*31%*	*6%*	*100%*
West Asian	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	57%	9%	22%	12%	100%
Indigenous peoples	42%	8%	19%	31%	100%	53%	7%	31%	9%	100%
South Asian	42%	9%	28%	21%	100%	64%	7%	20%	9%	100%
Not available	-	-	-	-	-	69%	6%	20%	4%	100%

Though Southeast Asian Canadian Muslim women report the highest level of employment, they also report the highest levels of being unemployed and looking for work (13%), followed by those identified as Black (12%), South Asian (9%), West Asian (9%), Arab (9%), Indigenous (8%), East Asian (7%), White (6%), and Latin American (5%). About 25% of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently unemployed and not looking for work, with White Canadian Muslim women reporting the highest levels (30%) and Indigenous Canadian Muslim women reporting the lowest levels (19%). In almost every category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had higher rates of looking for work while unemployed compared to their general Canadian counterparts. The exceptions were for Latin American Canadian Muslim women, who report lower rates compared to the general Latin American Canadian adult population (5% vs 7%). Arab and West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported rates on par with their general Canadian counterparts, indicating that non-Muslim Arab and West Asian Canadians may be experiencing discrimination related to Islamophobia because of their ethnic identity regardless of their religious identity.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. According to Table 14, Canadian Muslim women who identified as East Asian had the highest percent currently employed full-time (42%), followed by Southeast Asian (41%), White (39%), Black (36%), Latin American (36%), Arab (32%), West Asian (31%), Indigenous (31%), and South Asian (31%). West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported the highest levels of part-time employment (23%) and East Asian Canadian Muslim women report the lowest levels (13%), on par with the adult Canadian general public. In each category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of full-time employment compared to their general Canadian counterpart, and higher rates of part-time employment—except for East Asian Canadian Muslim women, who were on par with the general East Asian Canadian (and general Canadian) rate of about 13%.

TABLE 14

Table 14. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
East Asian	42%	13%	45%	100%	51%	13%	35%	100%
Other groups	41%	17%	41%	100%	53%	13%	33%	100%
Southeast Asian	41%	23%	36%	100%	50%	13%	36%	100%
White	39%	17%	44%	100%	51%	12%	37%	100%
Black	36%	17%	47%	100%	53%	15%	32%	100%
Multiple groups	36%	21%	42%	100%	54%	19%	27%	100%
Latin American	36%	15%	49%	100%	57%	14%	29%	100%
Average (Total)	*33%*	*19%*	*48%*	*100%*	*51%*	*13%*	*36%*	*100%*
Arab	32%	18%	49%	100%	46%	16%	38%	100%
West Asian	31%	23%	46%	100%	47%	18%	35%	100%
South Asian	31%	18%	51%	100%	53%	14%	33%	100%
Indigenous peoples	31%	15%	54%	100%	48%	12%	40%	100%
Not available	-	-	-	-	59%	19%	22%	100%

NOC Status. East Asian women reported the highest levels in legislative and senior management (1.19%), far ahead of the other sub-populations of Canadian Muslim women, including those who identify as White (0.35%), Arab (0.30%), West Asian (0.20%), and South Asian (0.12%; Table 15). There were no cases of Canadian Muslim women who identify as Black, Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Indigenous who hold senior management or legislative positions in the 2021 Census dataset. This does not mean they do not exist, but that such few individuals exist in the larger population they may not have participated in the survey and therefore are not included in the sample. We can interpret these zeros as representing a very, very small likelihood in the general population. In almost every category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of senior-level management positions compared to their general Canadian counterparts. The exception was for East Asian Canadian Muslim women, who far outpace their general East Asian Canadian counterparts (1.19% vs. 0.41%).

TABLE 15A

Table 15a. Occupational Categories by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
East Asian	1.19%	7%	15%	5%	14%	0%	17%	40%	100%
White	0.35%	14%	12%	3%	12%	1%	18%	40%	100%
Arab	0.30%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	13%	45%	100%
Multiple groups	0.24%	12%	16%	1%	13%	2%	18%	37%	100%
West Asian	0.20%	12%	14%	2%	10%	2%	19%	40%	100%
Average Total	*0.19%*	*13%*	*13%*	*2%*	*12%*	*1%*	*16%*	*43%*	*100%*
Other groups	0.18%	14%	15%	2%	15%	1%	17%	36%	100%
South Asian	0.12%	14%	12%	2%	11%	1%	14%	46%	100%
Black	0.00%	11%	9%	2%	17%	1%	19%	42%	100%
Latin American	0.00%	20%	10%	0%	12%	2%	15%	41%	100%
Southeast Asian	0.00%	20%	10%	2%	14%	0%	23%	32%	100%
Indigenous peoples	0.00%	15%	0%	0%	8%	0%	23%	54%	100%
Not available									

TABLE 15B

Table 15b. Occupational Categories by Ethnic/Racial Identity of all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
East Asian	0.41%	16%	15%	5%	14%	2%	16%	31%	100%
White	1.00%	16%	12%	8%	15%	2%	11%	34%	100%
Arab	0.61%	14%	16%	6%	14%	1%	15%	34%	100%
Multiple groups	0.78%	18%	18%	6%	14%	4%	17%	23%	100%
West Asian	0.52%	13%	18%	7%	13%	2%	16%	29%	100%
Average Total	*0.84%*	*16%*	*13%*	*8%*	*15%*	*2%*	*13%*	*33%*	*100%*
Other groups	0.56%	16%	15%	7%	16%	2%	14%	29%	100%
South Asian	0.53%	16%	16%	5%	18%	1%	16%	27%	100%
Black	0.30%	12%	12%	5%	24%	1%	18%	27%	100%
Latin American	0.38%	16%	12%	7%	19%	2%	18%	25%	100%
Southeast Asian	0.36%	13%	11%	6%	15%	1%	20%	32%	100%
Indigenous peoples	0.50%	12%	7%	8%	20%	1%	14%	38%	100%
Not available	0.54%	16%	15%	6%	16%	2%	16%	28%	100%

Though, on average, about 13% of Canadian Muslim women hold middle management positions, there was a range based on racial/ethnic identity. Latin American and Southeast Asian Muslim women reported the highest rates (20%), followed by those identifying as Indigenous (15%), South Asian (14%), White (14%), Arab (13%), West Asian (12%), Black (11%), and East Asian (7%). In almost every category of racial or ethnic identity, Canadian Muslim women had lower rates of middle-level management positions compared to their general Canadian counterparts. The exceptions were for Latin American Canadian Muslim women (20% vs 16%), Southeast Asian Canadian Muslim women (20% vs 13%) and Indigenous Canadian Muslim women (15% vs 12%).

Narratives. The Census collects data on the racial and ethnic identities of individuals, but not the racial or ethnic traits of their workplaces. The racialization of the workplace through racial hierarchies and segregation are experiences shared by participants in this study's interviews. Regardless of generation of immigration, Canadian Muslim women who worked in settings that tended to be organized by racial hierarchies, with white leadership and racialized subordinates, reported feeling more aware of their own racial subjectivity. They were keenly aware of their racial minority status when experiencing various social barriers at work, including around non-work related conversation. For example, when a second generation Canadian Muslim woman was asked to describe the barriers she experiences at work, she mentions,

> **"Yeah, I feel like, a lot of the white men and women in the workplace, they socialize with each other much more easily. And although, I can talk to them, they can talk to me, but I don't really feel like I fit in or belong as much as they seem to fit in and belong with each other. It's hard to explain. But just the way they culturally socialize with each other and culturally talk about their day and their weekend. I'm born and raised here, and I still don't socialize that way. I feel like that makes a big difference. And also, then with that skill, you're able to chat up with the managers much more easily that way."**

Another participant echoed the above themes, indicating a white homosocial small talk at the workplace created a barrier for her, and also that racial hierarchies played a role in her experiences at work:

> **It's like very subtle, the way kind of talk about their weekend, or the movies, their family, music. Also, I do a lot of work with community partners and outreach, and I have a colleague who does that with me, and she's in her early fifties, I think. And she's white, and a lot of times people just look at her and talk rather than look at me, like I'm seen as like the assistant or something even though I'm her superior. And I told my mom and she said a lot of it also could be to do with ageism, because I've experienced this at another job as well, and people just naturally respect like the older person. And so, people just look at the older person, they talk to her. And then on top of that, she's like a white older person. So there's just more respect. Even if I were going to outreach and events with Muslim organizations or any South Asian organization, they'll always respect the white woman rather than someone who looks like them. So there's like just a mixture of that, even within our own people.**

Here, the participant names internalized racism as an issue in the Muslim communities as well. At the individual level, there were also moments where participants expressed having to modify their appearance and/or change their names to lighten their racialization.

One participant noted that after she graduated from university, despite being the top of her class and having a number of qualifications and experience on her resume, she was not getting called back for interviews. Because of her very Muslim last name, she was advised to remove it from her resume. She changed her name on the resume, and then suddenly,

> **I was getting much more interview requests—from none to suddenly many. I noticed that shift. And I was like, Oh, that's strange, so I'm actually getting interviewed. When I didn't get that, at all, when I had my full name on there. I've applied to like more than 200 positions, and I noticed that immediate shift.**

This participant is a light-skinned Canadian Muslim woman and feels confident about getting a position after getting to the interview stage—her (Muslim) name was what posed a barrier. However, for darker-toned Canadian Muslim women, the barrier does not end at the interview stage. As a Francophone Black Canadian Muslim woman shared,

> **I think there are systemic barriers, which come back to me being a black woman. When you first meet someone for an interview, being an immigrant, it can sometimes work against us instead of it being seen as an advantage. This is what prevents me, having access to these jobs.**

A Canadian Muslim woman who has worked in upper management shared that most employers do not even get to the point of evaluating education when they see the applicant is racialized:

> **I've seen the applications of racialized people be removed off the counter, torn immediately, and thrown in the garbage, because they showed up racialized. Those companies would still not hire hijabis, or even interview them. Or if they send an email with a resume that has a different name on it—the job offer is revoked.**

Even after getting the job, if they get the job, Canadian Muslim women, especially those who wear hijab and especially those who identify as Black, report being constantly tested and scrutinized. They are often treated as less than other employees, and this can manifest in, for example, significantly less compensation. A Black Somali Canadian Muslim woman shares,

> **Personally, for me in my last job, because I was a black woman, I knew for a fact I got treated differently because everyone I worked with were white, majority male, and if there was a woman, she was old and white as well. The strategy I used was to try to avoid them, be respectful and always keep to myself, who knows they were probably thinking that they were doing me a favour by giving me a job. You never know their intentions, so I was always hesitant about certain things about my pay, so when I was applying for my current position, I remember talking to the girl who I was supposed to replace, and she shared how much she was making at the time. However, when I got offered the job, the amount was significantly below what she was getting, and what I was previously told I would get. And I'm thinking because I was interviewed by an old white man and when he saw me, he probably thought he should reduce the amount. Because I'm Black, Somali and Muslim. And to be honest after that interview, I couldn't look at him the same way, and I have been working for him for over a year now. To be honest, I knew it in my heart, when I got the phone call from the employer about the interview and the girl was telling me about the position and the salary I should expect, I knew as soon as they saw me they would change that. It is unfortunate, but a lot of times when they see us as a Black woman, they think we aren't smart enough, and that we don't understand all the funny things that are happening behind us. In my case, I knew the salary was reduced, and I didn't say anything, even though I should have, I let it go because I believe God will deal with him and will serve me justice.**

Research has well documented the experiences of Black women, regardless of faith background, at the workplace, and how they are constantly and continually undermined. Yet, they are still achieving success. One participant took note of this, and therefore holds Black women as her benchmark:

> **My colleague said, 'you're just amazing. You're talking like a white man.' I thought it was funny, because maybe, a white man is somebody who speaks assertively, and who does not back down. For in [my work area], you can't be talking as if you don't know what you're talking about. So, when she said that I'd have to say, 'Well, I would compare myself to a Black woman.' They were mistreated, even more so than myself. In the case of my Black female colleagues, I thought that their learning opportunities were dismal. Even if there would be opportunities in writing for them, they would not be pursued. That would be the case for pretty much every Black female colleague that I've ever had, and then if she wore hijab, oh, God! Like that's even worse, they would just leave. Actually, I had one cleaning lady who was a medical doctor and she spoke seven languages—seven! I remember how she would tell me that she is very happy cleaning bathrooms, because she does not want to deal with the politics and the garbage that she has to deal with as a medical practitioner. She was more qualified than even my director at the time for [top senior position]. She also had European expertise and experience. So anyways very, very disheartening. But yeah, I would say, if I were to compare myself, I would compare myself to the experiences of the Black women.**

The participant notes that the Black woman in her example would prefer to engage in manual labour rather than in her professional career because of the racial politics and challenges of navigating work in white dominated workplaces. This participant herself also left the politics of race at the workplace by creating work opportunities for herself (and others) as an entrepreneur. Several other women in this study reported that they did not pursue opportunities to advance in their organizations due to the lack of support and exposure to racial discrimination at the workplace. The only participants who did not report feeling racial discrimination at the workplace were those who either worked in racially diverse settings, worked in positions that valued their racial identity (e.g., as a part of the work performed), and/or worked for managers who embraced participants' full humanity and expressed a willingness to support religious-based accommodations.

6. Location of studies

Employment Status. According to Table 16, Canadian Muslim women who studied in North or South America not including Canada (i.e. "other Americas") reported the highest levels of employment (67%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (66%), Europe (58%), South and Southeast Asia (41%), and East Asia (40%). Rates of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment were fairly consistent with their Canadian public counterparts with some exceptions: Canadian Muslim women who studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report being currently employed compared to the Canadian adult public (41% vs. 71%) as well as those who studied in East Asia (40% vs. 51%).

TABLE 16

Table 16. Employment Status by Location of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking	Unemployed, not	Never worked/NA	Total
East Asia	40%	20%	35%	5%	100%	51%	5%	35%	8%	100%
South & Southeast Asia	41%	11%	29%	19%	100%	71%	5%	18%	5%	100%
Canada	66%	10%	20%	4%	100%	68%	4%	26%	2%	100%
Average (Total)	*44%*	*9%*	*25%*	*21%*	*100%*	*58%*	*5%*	*31%*	*6%*	*100%*
Europe	58%	9%	26%	7%	100%	60%	4%	32%	3%	100%
Other	48%	9%	27%	17%	100%	65%	7%	21%	7%	100%
Not Available	26%	9%	28%	37%	100%	45%	6%	38%	11%	100%
Other Americas	67%	5%	20%	8%	100%	66%	4%	27%	3%	100%

Canadian Muslim women who studied in East Asia reported the highest percent of looking for work while unemployed (20%), followed by those who studied in South and Southeast Asia (11%), Canada (10%), Europe (9%), and other Americas (5%). Compared with the general Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly more likely to report looking for work while unemployed across locations of study. The difference was particularly pronounced for those who studied in East Asia (20% Canadian Muslim women, 5% general Canadian adults).

Full- and Part-time Work Status. Full-time employment status matched the patterns around employment status by location of studies. According to Table 17, Canadian Muslim women who studied in the other Americas reported the highest levels of full-time employment (56%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (52%), Europe (52%), East Asia (35%), and South and Southeast Asia (31%).

TABLE 17

Table 17. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Location of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicabl	Total
Other Americas	56%	15%	29%	100%	58%	13%	29%	100%
Canada	52%	22%	26%	100%	61%	13%	26%	100%
Europe	52%	13%	35%	100%	55%	10%	35%	100%
Other	35%	18%	47%	100%	55%	15%	30%	100%
East Asia	35%	40%	25%	100%	44%	13%	43%	100%
Average (Total)	*33%*	*19%*	*48%*	*100%*	*51%*	*13%*	*36%*	*100%*
South & Southeast Asia	31%	21%	49%	100%	62%	13%	25%	100%
Not Available	17%	17%	66%	100%	38%	14%	48%	100%

Rates of Canadian Muslim women reporting full-time employment were significantly lower than their Canadian public counterparts with some exceptions: Canadian Muslim women who studied in other Americas were on par with their counterparts (56% vs. 58%) as well as those who studied in Europe (52% vs 55%). The largest difference was observed for those who studied in South and Southeast Asia (31% Canadian Muslim women; 62% Canadian adults). Interestingly, though Canadian adults who studied in South and Southeast Asia reported slightly higher levels of full-time employment than those who studied in Canada (62% vs. 61%), Canadian Muslim women who also studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report full-time employment compared with Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (31% vs. 52%).

NOC Status. According to Table 18, Canadian Muslim women who studied in Europe were most likely to report employment in legislative or senior management positions (0.57%), followed by those who studied in Canada (0.42%). Canadian Muslim women who studied in the remaining locations report far lower rates, including South and Southeast Asia (0.06%), other Americas (0%), and East Asia (0%). For all locations of study, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in legislative and senior management positions than general Canadian adults.

TABLE 18A

Table 18a. Occupational Categories by Location of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Europe	0.57%	18%	31%	2%	7%	3%	9%	31%	100%
Canada	0.42%	20%	25%	4%	14%	2%	15%	21%	100%
Other	0.25%	12%	15%	3%	14%	2%	12%	42%	100%
Average (Total)	*0.19%*	*13%*	*13%*	*2%*	*12%*	*1%*	*16%*	*43%*	*100%*
South & Southeast Asia	0.06%	13%	10%	2%	14%	1%	15%	45%	100%
Not Available	0.02%	8%	1%	0%	9%	1%	19%	62%	100%
Other Americas	0.00%	26%	30%	3%	8%	3%	7%	23%	100%
East Asia	0.00%	10%	10%	5%	10%	0%	40%	25%	100%

TABLE 18B

Table 18b. Occupational Categories by Location of Studies of all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Europe	1.23%	17%	22%	6%	9%	3%	7%	34%	100%
Canada	1.20%	18%	20%	11%	13%	3%	10%	24%	100%
Other	0.76%	16%	21%	7%	16%	2%	12%	27%	100%
Average (Total)	*0.84%*	*16%*	*13%*	*8%*	*15%*	*2%*	*13%*	*33%*	*100%*
South & Southeast Asia	0.33%	17%	16%	6%	22%	1%	17%	21%	100%
Not Available	0.40%	13%	2%	4%	19%	1%	17%	44%	100%
Other Americas	1.39%	18%	27%	5%	10%	4%	9%	27%	100%
East Asia	0.68%	17%	15%	5%	8%	2%	13%	40%	100%

Narratives. Canadian Muslim women who studied in their countries of origin reported having difficulty in getting their credentials recognized in Canada. Even those who were able to get their credentials recognized were confronted with an anti-immigrant bias, reflected in their credentials, both degrees and experience, not being counted by Canadian employers.

Of those who are not able to get their credentials recognized, some are able to mobilize resources and return to school for additional education while others are not. Those who do not return to school are forced to find alternative career paths, often turning to unskilled or entry level work. A Francophone Canadian Muslim woman shares,

> **We came as refugees, not immigrants, and now we are citizens. Canada has a lot of qualified immigrants but a lot of the people who are qualified are instead driving Ubers. For example, my husband was a teacher with 25 years of experience, but he can't work. He tried for a long time, even getting an equivalent diploma, he knows English, he learned French, he took two exams: he passed the first one but not the second one.**

> **And now he drives Uber, unfortunately. There are so many doctors, engineers—and there is now a shortage in hospitals, there are shortages in technicians, doctors.**

While arguments may possibly be made around why this experience would manifest for those competing on the job market, it is difficult to understand why educational degrees would not translate within the academic setting. Nonetheless, a Bangla speaking participant who had earned a Master's degree before immigrating came to Canada and decided to pursue a PhD. Despite having a Master's already, and despite the fact that she was going to continue studying in the same field, she had to get another Master's degree in Canada because her Bengali Master's degree was not recognized as sufficient.

Among the women whose credentials are recognized, some are unable to find work and decide to return to school, while others are able to secure work. However, those that secure work are often in insecure positions, including contract or temporary work. One first generation Canadian Muslim woman who has been in Canada for over 15 years but studied before immigration comments on previous employment, where she was stuck in contract positions:

> **They saw the potential in me, but they did not want me to offer a new supervisory position to me. At the beginning, they said they wanted somebody—because it was for the youth program, 'We want youth working with them.' So, I felt age was a barrier for me at that time, even though my qualifications were much more than what the other qualified people working in the same position, where they were. Sometimes, they were not even graduates there, no university degrees. So, it felt bad that after having put in so many years of education and moving here—and I came as a skilled worker, the immigration. I felt there is a disconnect between Immigration Canada and the workforce. What they want us to gently slide into, because there is no connection there. They don't recognize your credentials, even though I got the [Canadian] accreditation. They still want you to do workplace experience. I understand that totally. But how many years is that workplace experience? When am I experienced enough? That is my question.**

Though this participant's credentials were recognized, it is important to note that other women from Bangladesh experienced more barriers to transferring their credentials. Notably, participants from both Bangladesh and Afghanistan especially commented on the lack of support for transferring credentials. A Farsi speaking Afghan Canadian Muslim woman shared,

> **When newcomers start their lives here from scratch, it's crucial for at least one person, if not both, to be working. It's not like Afghanistan, where one person could support an entire family of ten. Here, it's very difficult for a single income to sustain a household. When we first arrived, our initial challenge was the certification of our educational credentials. If our degrees were readily accepted, we would have had better job opportunities. Language proficiency is another obstacle that limits access to higher-paying jobs.**

Another woman in the same focus group shared that she feels “disheartened” when she reflects on how her hard earned education is not recognized nor respected here. She also mentions,

> **Newcomers bring valuable work experience from their home countries, but this lack of Canadian experience prevents us from securing many positions, even if we have the required credentials. Secondly, an important issue that many mothers deal with is childcare. The system is structured in a way that whatever you earn is largely spent on monthly expenses, leaving very little at the end of the month.**

In another example, an Afghan Canadian Muslim woman shares about how location of studies played a role for her current employment opportunities:

> **Something I've personally faced is the language barrier. When applying for jobs, they seem to give preference to those who speak fluently and without an accent. Canadian degrees and certificates are also highly valued. Let me share an incident: I volunteered with an organization for a while and later applied for a position. Someone from outside got the role with just a 6-month certificate, while I have a master's degree from Afghanistan. Simply because they had a certificate from a Canadian college, they were chosen for the position. This kind of discrimination, where educational credentials are ranked based on their origin, creates obstacles for newcomers seeking work in their field. It feels like all those years of studying don't count for much here.**

Here the participant highlights how another applicant was chosen over her, even though she was volunteering for the organization and he was unknown to them, because of her foreign education. She segues to mentioning this after describing her language skills as a barrier, noting that Canadian employers prefer those who speak “without” an accent—or rather, with a Canadian accent. Here, she seems to be signaling something about the racialization of work, and how foreign credentials and foreign accents create barriers getting hired.

This was confirmed in an interview with an employer, who mentioned her workplace is diverse and boasts a workforce of immigrant Muslim women who would likely not get hired elsewhere. I asked about,

> **Interviewer: The women wouldn’t get hired elsewhere… What would the barrier be? Do they not have the right qualifications? Or is it just a matter of their racial—**
>
> **Employer: [False starts]. I know we have hired a lot of people who have degrees from back home, but then have done maybe some equivalency testing or some additional courses and upgrading in Canada, and we've hired them, and I know with some agencies, you'd have to be—I don't want to say desperate, but they would prefer somebody with a Canadian university education than somebody who's coming in with one from back home.**
>
> **Interviewer: Ok, so they don’t have Canadian qualifications. Do you feel like it makes a difference?**

Employer: Yes.

Interviewer: Can I ask more about that? What do you feel—like, are they not as prepared as those who have Canadian qualifications?

Employer: No, I honestly, I really don't think it has anything to do with me, or any of management, thinking that they're not qualified because of it. I think it's as simple as bias, comfort, and seeing institutional names that you're familiar with. Then when you're seeing a resume, you're seeing an institution. Sometimes you're seeing a country, and you're just simply not familiar with it. I think it's more of that than me not feeling like 'oh, because this person did their MSW in India that they're not as qualified,' but more of just, not familiar. That's what I think. As somebody who has their education in Canada, I know [Canadian university]'s framework for certain things. I know [Canadian university]. And I know [Canadian university], because if you've been around and you hear, and you work with placement students from those schools. So, you have a familiarity of what you're going to get, versus, you're seeing international degrees.

Though the employer frames this reality as not racially motivated—and it is not—it has racial consequences. Namely, it creates a situation in which employers only hire (or tend to hire) applicants with some form of shared social and/or cultural experience, recreating existing racial dynamics and distributions at the workplace.

7. Education

Employment Status. Not surprisingly, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment status increased for each level of education, from high school or less (26% employed), some college (52%), a bachelor's degree (56%), and postgrad (60%; Table 19). It is important to note that at each level of education, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed than general Canadian adults.

TABLE 19

Table 19. Employment Status by Educational Attainment Level of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
High school or less	26%	9%	28%	37%	100%	45%	6%	38%	11%	100%
Some college	52%	10%	26%	12%	100%	63%	4%	29%	3%	100%
Bachelors	56%	9%	24%	11%	100%	71%	4%	22%	2%	100%
Postgrad	60%	9%	22%	9%	100%	73%	3%	22%	2%	100%
Not available	42%	14%	26%	19%	100%	66%	6%	19%	10%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

Although employment status increased as education increased for Canadian Muslim women, unemployment for those looking for work surprisingly did not, averaging at about 9% across levels of education. This contrasts with the general Canadian adult population, for whom unemployment for those looking for work does decrease with each additional level of education. While the percentage of unemployed Canadian Muslim women looking for work is roughly double that of the general Canadian population at lower levels of education, it is triple that of the Canadian adult public at the highest level of education (9% vs. 3%).

This indicates a significant issue regarding unemployment for Canadian Muslim women with higher levels of education in professional fields, confirmed by qualitative interviews and focus groups.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. Not surprisingly, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current full-time employment status increased for each level of education, from high school or less (17% employed full-time), some college (38%), a bachelor's degree (43%), and postgrad (50%; Table 20). It is important to note that at each level of education, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed full-time than general Canadian adults. Likewise, Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report part-time employment at each level of education compared to adult Canadians generally.

TABLE 20

Table 20. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Educational Attainment Level of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
High school or less	17%	17%	66%	100%	38%	14%	48%	100%
Some college	38%	22%	39%	100%	57%	12%	30%	100%
Bachelors	43%	20%	37%	100%	63%	13%	23%	100%
Postgrad	50%	17%	33%	100%	65%	12%	23%	100%
Not available	26%	26%	49%	100%	54%	18%	27%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%

NOC Status. According to Table 21, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment status in legislative or senior management increased for each level of education, from high school or less (0.02% employed), some college (0.10%), a bachelor's degree (0.34%), and postgrad (0.51%). It is important to note that at each level of education, a significantly smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in senior management than general Canadian adults.

TABLE 21A

Table 21a. Occupational Categories by Educational Attainment Level of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
High school or less	0.02%	8%	1%	0%	9%	1%	19%	62%	100%
Some college	0.10%	17%	6%	4%	19%	1%	19%	34%	100%
Bachelors	0.34%	18%	21%	3%	11%	2%	13%	32%	100%
Postgrad	0.51%	14%	35%	3%	9%	1%	9%	29%	100%
Not available	0.00%	12%	15%	0%	14%	1%	16%	42%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 21B

Table 21b. Occupational Categories by Educational Attainment Level of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
High school or less	0.40%	13%	2%	4%	19%	1%	17%	44%	100%
Some college	0.69%	18%	6%	15%	18%	2%	12%	28%	100%
Bachelors	1.47%	20%	32%	4%	9%	3%	9%	21%	100%
Postgrad	2.05%	15%	46%	3%	5%	3%	5%	21%	100%
Not available	0.52%	12%	25%	4%	10%	2%	9%	38%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management did not change drastically with education after some college (17%), as those with bachelors' degrees (18%) and postgrad (14%) reported similar rates. Similar to senior management positions, a smaller percentage of Canadian Muslim women reported being currently employed in middle management than general Canadian adults; however, the differences are not as dramatic as they are for senior management positions. In other words, while Canadian Muslim women are underrepresented in middle management, the underrepresentation is much worse for those in senior management.

Narratives. Canadian Muslim women are, on average, more educated than the general Canadian population. Not surprisingly, many participants in this study named education, and supports for education (e.g. financial assistance) as major enablers on their career paths. Thus, it is worth noting what barriers to education Canadian Muslim women encounter.

Barriers to education in Canada was a particularly strong theme in the focus groups of Canadian Muslim women who spoke languages other than English and French. An Arabic speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant woman noted she is not able to return to school because she sends remittances to family in her home country; she must work and can neither afford the cost nor the time an education would require. Urdu and Bangla speaking participants mention they wish their husbands and/or mothers were able to provide support with childcare and housework so that they could pursue training programs. A Bangla speaking Canadian Muslim woman shared,

> **To this day, I haven't been able to study here, because I didn't have the environment to do so. This makes me angry. I don't have time. I work part-time, the rest of the time I take care of my children and take care of my house. I can't maintain my household if I study full-time. I am still having to wait till my kids get older. But I am also getting old. If I want to study, my husband will tell me to wait until they are a little older. He's still not ready for me to be involved in anything full-time. It's a barrier for me. I need more support from my husband. I wish he had encouraged me to study full-time or go for a job that I like. Perhaps then, I would have been able to do it. Right now, I am in a survival job. This isn't my dream job. We compromise a lot, but it turns into a big sacrifice.**

Not surprisingly, childcare assistance, especially daycare, was repeatedly named as a main enabler for both further education as well as employment.

Unfortunately, education does not guarantee employment, and various excuses have been provided above: that the location of studies is unfamiliar to employers; that employers are looking for someone younger; that employers are looking for someone with more experience. One immigrant Canadian Muslim woman based in Saskatchewan reported a frustrating response from her employer. She had just completed an MBA and sought advancement in her organization—this is after a number of failed attempts of applying for positions internally. She was sure she would get a position, as she had been with the company for a number of years, was a stellar employee, and now had Canadian credentials. However, she reports:

> **I met with the HR manager. She was nice to me, actually, and I haven't felt that they are treating me badly. But the thing is, she told me something that was nonsense to me.**

She told me, 'Okay, we need somebody to hit the ground running, we don't have time to train.' So, I asked her, 'what do you think I should do?' And she told me, 'you need to go outside the firm to find a position, and then you can apply again for a higher position in this company.' To me, this is ridiculous. I'm working with you, I gain a lot of experience with you. And now you are advising me to go outside the firm, just to get a higher position, and then return back to you.

In all but a few of these cases of barriers to Canadian Muslim women's employment, the barriers appear to be arbitrary and not embedded in policy or resulting from an organization's functioning. Rather, they seem to result from an organization's structure, namely in maintaining and reproducing racial hierarchies.

8. Area of studies (numeric data only)

This section features numeric data, only. The qualitative data reinforce findings from the quantitative analyses, rendering inclusion of qualitative narratives redundant. Disclosing Canadian Muslim women's areas of study and academic experiences may jeopardize their confidentiality. Thus, numeric findings are presented below sans narratives.

Employment Status. According to Table 22, while any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's employment over the average rate (44%), some fields confer greater benefits while others seem to be marked with barriers to employment. Canadian Muslim women who reported studying engineering were the most likely to report current employment (65%) compared to those in the arts and humanities (47%). Compared with the general Canadian sample, Canadian Muslim women who studied law or for legal positions have notably lower employment rates (54% Canadian Muslim women vs. 71% general Canadian public) as do those who studied trades and services (47% vs. 65%) as well as arts and humanities (47% vs. 63%). Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are especially disadvantaged, as only 26% report current employment, compared with 45% of the general Canadian sample. In other words, compared with Canadians generally, Canadian Muslim women without postsecondary education are nearly half as likely to report current employment.

TABLE 22

Table 22. Employment Status by Area of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
Engineering and engineering technology	65%	9%	18%	8%	100%	71%	4%	22%	2%	100%
Mathematics and computer and information	61%	8%	21%	10%	100%	76%	5%	17%	2%	100%
Health care	61%	8%	22%	9%	100%	67%	3%	28%	3%	100%
Business and administration	59%	10%	22%	9%	100%	69%	4%	24%	2%	100%
Social and behavioural sciences	55%	11%	24%	11%	100%	70%	5%	23%	2%	100%
Legal professions and studies	54%	11%	28%	7%	100%	71%	4%	23%	2%	100%
Science and science technology	53%	9%	28%	11%	100%	68%	5%	25%	3%	100%
Education and teaching	53%	10%	26%	12%	100%	59%	2%	36%	3%	100%
Not available	51%	13%	24%	11%	100%	70%	7%	20%	4%	100%
Trades, services, and natural resources	47%	12%	30%	10%	100%	65%	4%	28%	3%	100%
Arts and humanities	47%	8%	28%	17%	100%	63%	5%	28%	3%	100%
Average (Total)	*44%*	*9%*	*25%*	*21%*	*100%*	*58%*	*5%*	*31%*	*6%*	*100%*
No postsecondary certificate or diploma	26%	9%	28%	37%	100%	45%	6%	38%	11%	100%
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

While any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's employment over the average rate, this same benefit was not conferred to unemployment rates for those looking for work (Table 22). The areas of studies where Canadian Muslim women report the lowest unemployment rates while looking for work include mathematics and computer science (8%) and health care (8%).

While the rate of Canadian Muslim women who studied arts and humanities and are currently unemployed looking for work is also low (8%), this must be considered in context of two additional notes: compared to those who studied health, math, or computer science, Canadian Muslim women who studied arts and humanities are much more likely to report being unemployed and not looking for work or having never worked. The areas of studies where Canadian Muslim women report the highest unemployment rates while looking for work include trades (12%), social and behavioural sciences (11%), and legal professions or law (11%). Canadian Muslim women report higher rates of unemployment while looking for work across areas of study compared with general Canadian adults.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. According to Table 23, while any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's full-time employment over the average rate (33%), some fields conferred greater benefits while others seem to be marked with barriers to full-time employment. Canadian Muslim women who reported studying engineering were the most likely to report current full-time employment (53%) compared to those in the arts and humanities (33%). Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report full-time work when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study. While any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's full-time employment over the average rate, this same benefit was not conferred to part-time work status (Table 23). Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report part-time work when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study; this difference was especially pronounced for those who studied trades and services.

TABLE 23

Table 23. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Area of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
Engineering and engineering technology	53%	16%	31%	100%	68%	8%	25%	100%
Mathematics and computer and information	51%	18%	31%	100%	71%	9%	20%	100%
Business and administration	50%	16%	34%	100%	63%	11%	26%	100%
Legal professions and studies	45%	17%	38%	100%	65%	11%	24%	100%
Health care	43%	24%	33%	100%	54%	17%	29%	100%
Social and behavioural sciences	41%	22%	38%	100%	60%	16%	24%	100%
Trades, services, and natural resources	40%	21%	39%	100%	63%	9%	28%	100%
Science and science technology	39%	23%	37%	100%	59%	15%	26%	100%
Education and teaching	39%	20%	41%	100%	50%	12%	38%	100%
Not available	38%	26%	36%	100%	60%	19%	21%	100%
Arts and humanities	33%	21%	46%	100%	52%	18%	29%	100%
Average (Total)	*33%*	*19%*	*48%*	*100%*	*51%*	*13%*	*36%*	*100%*
No postsecondary certificate or diploma	17%	17%	66%	100%	38%	14%	48%	100%
Not applicable	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%

NOC Status. While any postsecondary education improved Canadian Muslim women's employment generally, some fields conferred greater representation than others when it came to managerial positions (Table 24). Canadian Muslim women who were more likely to report legislative or senior management positions were those who studied engineering (0.59%), business and administration (0.54%), and legal professions (0.45%). Canadian Muslim women least likely to report legislative or senior management positions were those who studied education and teaching (0%), health care (0.07%), and sciences (0.12%). Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report employment in legislative and senior management when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study.

TABLE 24A

Table 24a. Occupational Categories by Area of Studies of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Education and teaching	0.59%	12%	37%	6%	7%	2%	9%	26%	100%
Average (Total)	*0.54%*	*26%*	*17%*	*1%*	*8%*	*1%*	*17%*	*29%*	*100%*
Health care	0.45%	22%	14%	1%	15%	1%	13%	33%	100%
Trades, services, and natural resources	0.41%	12%	12%	4%	14%	3%	21%	34%	100%
Not applicable	0.40%	12%	16%	2%	8%	2%	20%	39%	100%
Science and science technology	0.37%	16%	13%	1%	20%	2%	16%	32%	100%
Legal professions and studies	0.25%	20%	26%	5%	9%	0%	11%	28%	100%
Social and behavioural sciences	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%
Arts and humanities	0.17%	17%	9%	2%	13%	4%	15%	40%	100%
Not available	0.12%	13%	22%	5%	11%	2%	13%	33%	100%
Engineering and engineering technology	0.07%	9%	30%	8%	17%	0%	9%	29%	100%
Mathematics and computer and information	0.02%	8%	1%	0%	9%	1%	19%	62%	100%
Business and administration	0.00%	9%	25%	0%	25%	1%	6%	34%	100%
No postsecondary certificate or diploma	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

TABLE 24B

Table 24b. Occupational Categories by Area of Studies of all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Education and teaching	1.45%	15%	26%	17%	12%	1%	6%	22%	100%
Average (Total)	*2.28%*	*32%*	*17%*	*2%*	*7%*	*1%*	*14%*	*24%*	*100%*
Health care	1.58%	23%	35%	1%	11%	1%	7%	21%	100%
Trades, services, and natural resources	0.67%	12%	6%	25%	19%	1%	11%	25%	100%
Not applicable	0.54%	17%	14%	6%	17%	4%	14%	28%	100%
Science and science technology	1.40%	21%	21%	2%	17%	4%	11%	22%	100%
Legal professions and studies	1.07%	16%	37%	10%	7%	3%	9%	18%	100%
Social and behavioural sciences	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%
Arts and humanities	0.99%	18%	14%	3%	10%	13%	13%	27%	100%
Not available	0.94%	16%	30%	9%	10%	2%	9%	24%	100%
Engineering and engineering technology	0.20%	10%	29%	11%	16%	1%	6%	27%	100%
Mathematics and computer and information	0.40%	13%	2%	4%	19%	1%	17%	44%	100%
Business and administration	0.46%	9%	38%	1%	11%	1%	4%	35%	100%
No postsecondary certificate or diploma	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Canadian Muslim women who were more likely to report middle management positions were those who studied business and administration (26%), legal professions (22%), and mathematics and computer science (20%). Canadian Muslim women least likely to report middle management positions were those who studied health care (9%), education and teaching (9%), and trades and services (12%). Canadian Muslim women were less likely to report employment in middle management when compared with the general Canadian public regardless of areas of study, with one exception: Canadian Muslim women who studied math or computer science were more likely to report current employment in middle management compared to the general public (20% vs. 16%).

9. Marital status

Employment Status. According to Table 25, Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest employment rates (63%), followed by those who have never married (52%), those who are currently married (44%), and those who are not currently married, including widows and divorcees (32%). Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married: widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of Canadian women (32% and 34% respectively).

TABLE 25A

Table 25a. Employment Status by Marital Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
Common Law	63%	9%	21%	7%	100%
Never Married	52%	13%	20%	15%	100%
Not available	45%	13%	21%	21%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%
Currently Married	44%	8%	27%	21%	100%
Not Currently Married	32%	7%	29%	32%	100%

TABLE 25B

Table 25b. Employment Status by Marital Status of all Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adult Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for Work	Unemployed, not looking for work	Never worked/NA	Total
Common Law	72%	4%	22%	3%	100%
Never Married	61%	8%	23%	7%	100%
Not available	65%	6%	23%	7%	100%
Total	54%	4%	34%	7%	100%
Currently Married	54%	3%	36%	7%	100%
Not Currently Married	34%	3%	51%	13%	100%

Canadian Muslim women who have never married reported the highest rates of looking for work while unemployed (13%; Table 25), followed by Canadian Muslim women in common law unions (9%), currently married (8%), and those who are not currently married, including widows and divorcees (7%). Canadian Muslim women reported significantly higher rates of looking for work while unemployed compared to the general sample of Canadian women across marital statuses.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest full-time employment rates (54%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who are currently married (34%), never married (32%), and not currently married (28%; Table 26).

Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of full-time employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married: widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of Canadian women (28% and 29% respectively). Canadian Muslim women who never married report the highest level of part-time work (29%), possibly reflecting their life stage (e.g., students at university). Canadian Muslim women in common law unions and marriages were more likely to report part-time employment compared to Canadian Muslim women who are not currently married (17% vs. 10%).

TABLE 26

Table 26. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Marital Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adult Women			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
Common Law	54%	17%	30%	100%	63%	14%	23%	100%
Currently Married	34%	17%	49%	100%	45%	14%	41%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	45%	16%	40%	100%
Never Married	32%	29%	38%	100%	46%	24%	30%	100%
Not available	29%	26%	45%	100%	54%	19%	27%	100%
Not Currently Married	28%	10%	63%	100%	29%	9%	62%	100%

NOC Status. According to Table 27, Canadian Muslim women in common law unions reported the highest employment in legislative and senior management (0.34%), followed by Canadian Muslim women who are currently married (0.23%), never married (0.14%), and not currently married (0.11%). A similar pattern emerged for Canadian Muslim women in middle management positions, Canadian Muslim women in common law unions (18%) and marriages (14%) or those who never married (14%) were more likely to report employment in middle management than those who were not currently married (9%).

TABLE 27A

Table 27a. Occupational Categories by Marital Status of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Common Law	0.34%	18%	18%	4%	14%	3%	20%	23%	100%
Currently Married	0.23%	14%	13%	2%	13%	1%	13%	45%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%
Never Married	0.14%	14%	14%	2%	9%	2%	26%	32%	100%
Not Currently Married	0.11%	9%	8%	2%	11%	1%	9%	61%	100%
Not available	0.00%	8%	18%	0%	8%	0%	24%	42%	100%

TABLE 27B

Table 27b. Occupational Categories by Marital Status of all Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adult Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Common Law	0.68%	23%	19%	5%	14%	3%	16%	19%	100%
Currently Married	0.63%	20%	15%	3%	11%	2%	12%	38%	100%
Total	0.47%	18%	14%	3%	11%	2%	15%	37%	100%
Never Married	0.19%	17%	14%	3%	13%	3%	25%	25%	100%
Not Currently Married	0.28%	12%	7%	1%	8%	1%	10%	61%	100%
Not available	0.00%	16%	10%	2%	12%	2%	18%	40%	100%

Canadian Muslim women reported less than half the rates of the general sample of Canadian women employed in legislative and senior management, with the exception of those who never married (0.14% Canadian Muslim women vs. 0.19% Canadian women). Though the rates of Canadian women in middle management were higher than those of Canadian Muslim women across marital statuses, the differences were not as substantive as the differences in legislative and senior management.

Narratives. The impact of marital status on employment outcomes for Canadian Muslim women was provided above. What is not revealed in the numbers is the countervailing mechanism marital status seems to create for women's employment outcomes: while supportive spouses can be an immense career enabler, unsupportive spouses can effectively sabotage career trajectories.

Husbands (and fathers, brothers, or other male relatives) who were supportive engaged in a number of practical supports for women, including: encouraging wives to study and pursue the kinds of work the women actually wanted to do; assisting wives with transportation (e.g. dropping off and picking up from work); sharing in household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare; leveraging their professional and work networks to find job opportunities for their wives; and generally, they did not create additional barriers to sabotage their wives' career aspirations.

Not all husbands and male relatives provided such support to their wives; and some provided ambivalent support (e.g., as they gave "permission" to allow their wives to work, they maintained limitations on what work their wives could engage in). One participant also noted that although her husband and father have been supportive, other main relatives have not:

> **Participant: When I was going to start studying [STEM field], I actually had male distant relatives call up my mother and say, 'Why are you letting her do this? This is an insane choice,' and it's like, I barely know you. Why do you suddenly have an input on what I'm gonna do? And weirdly enough, at the workplace, I've had more criticism from Muslim men compared to their white counterparts. There has been—and they're very casual about it, and then try to pass it off as a joke. But it's almost like they resent that I'm there.**
>
> **Interviewer: Yeah, do you feel like they treat white women the same way as well? Or do you feel like you're kind of—**
>
> **Participant: They love them! They love them [all group members laugh].**

In social constellations where family and community opinions about one's household matter, where concepts of honour and shame still hold weight, it is worth noting that these men stand by their wives' (or daughters' or sisters') choices to break out of traditional gender expectations. And it is unfortunate that women must contend with such external pressure. One mother who is employed mentions,

> **My son has special needs. We felt as parents, me and my husband, that one of us has to stay home to give our son full-time care. So, the idea was that one of us had to stay home to give that full-time care, and at that time in my life I felt like I was more patient, my husband doesn't have any patience at all, so I felt like I would be the most suitable person to take on this task. So, we agreed mutually, both of us, and the understanding at that time was—my husband was like, 'well, it's just a short period of time, anyway. Once he has grown up, you know. Maybe once this phase is done you can always go back to work.' But I think my in-laws and my parents were like, 'no!' They maybe thought like, 'No, this is how she's going to be. She's not gonna go back to work.' So then when I started going back to work, they were very disappointed. They were like, 'what about your son?' Even now, years later, I get slight remarks from them.**

A few participants in the study also indicated they felt the misinterpretation of Islam, in which women are ordained to take on housework and submission to their husbands, was responsible for the undue pressure Canadian Muslim women feel in a marital and maternal context.

Participant: There's always one person on which more responsibility falls, especially in our communities as compared to the other communities.

I: Can you explain that a little bit more? Do you mean that the responsibilities tend to fall on mothers? What is "our communities", and who are you comparing them to?

Participant: I think in Muslim communities generally, there's more responsibilities on the mother. We have a responsibility for our kids, but we also have this Islamic aspect of. we should put our husbands before ourselves from an Islamic perspective. It has been said very often on the other side, that the Prophet (Muhammad) generally did his own chores, and he helped with the chores around the house—that part is played down more. It's played down as compared to the role of the woman, that she should obey the husband and so on, those are more played up. It isn't a balance, it's always about 'have my rights been fulfilled' rather than 'am I fulfilling the rights of others.' And if that playing field was level, then we could probably succeed further.

Though interviewers redirected conversations to focus on work, a focus on Muslim men—and their mistreatment of Muslim women—emerged as a repeated theme across focus groups and interviews, a finding worth noting. Some women shared their personal experiences, and their resentment towards husbands for failing to provide adequate financial or emotional support, though some shared examples of defying their husbands and pursuing work. For example, one Bangla speaking Canadian Muslim woman shared:

> **My husband was never supportive, whether it was about my education or work. But I was determined to do what I wanted to do. I started working. Then, I decided I wanted to work in healthcare. So, I have to study ahead. I studied all day, I worked part-time a couple of times a week. I would do all the work at home plus take care of my children. I faced a lot of problems. But I would say, if you want to do it, it's hard to do, but you should do it. When you get older, you will lose motivation. When I was younger, I used to think, I am getting older and I am not going to be able to study. Now I realize that I made the right decision at the right time. I would say, even if you don't work full-time, you should start school. If you study, you can stay home with your kids and advance yourself at the same time.**

It is not surprising, then, that when asked what supports would make working easier, many Bangla and Urdu speaking women indicated support from husbands would help them continue working. In one conversation when one woman stated, "If I could come home and see that my husband had cooked and the household work was done, that would be the most helpful. Not that he should do all of it, but I wish he participated" another immediately chimed in, "I wanted to say the same thing." A third participant echoed,

> **Not having help from my husband is one of the barriers. Even before coming to this meeting, I had to prepare food for my two kids and snacks for my husband. In Bangladesh, I used to hear that husbands participate equally abroad, in other countries.**

> **But I didn't see that after I came here. My husband grew up here. He's been here since high school. But he still asks for water when he is at the dinner table. … I wish the women from the previous generation, the mothers of men, would prepare them a little bit to help their wives who are working. This is a huge barrier for me. My two children are very close in age, they are several months apart. So I had to struggle a lot in Canada. It felt as if everything was working against me. I wish there was support at home. Some days I felt as though I wasn't going to survive this. Maybe I would have to go back home. I wish husbands in our culture were more supportive.**

Women, regardless of their marital status, echoed concern about Muslim husbands and their treatment of Muslim women. They echoed the sentiments expressed above, that mothers need to raise sons who are good partners to modern women:

> **We are raising women to be empowered and educated. But sometimes people forget to educate their boys on how to be with an empowered woman. From my home country when I visit, I do see that a lot of the girls have really strived to be educated now, and their parents have taken a lot of pride into sending them to school, but when it comes time to marriage, the mindset of the boys and their parents is still very like, 'oh, so, she will be making perfect rotis at home.' I think we're doing a disservice to men by not raising them for the current era.**

Likewise, one Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Urdu offered policy interventions for Muslim men immigrating to Canada:

> **Pakistani men in the community need to have a more opened mind, they need to be more educated. If it was in my hands, I would make them go through a workshop to inform them about programs and things that are available. The thing is, they need to integrate around these things, adopting new ways.**

While more critique than commendation was levied against Muslim men, it is important to remember that supportive spouses are among the top resources Canadian Muslim women name. Therefore, policies involving Muslim men or power dynamics within the household should keep in mind the potential for powerful domestic allies.

10. Age of children

Employment Status. Compared with the general sample of Canadian women, it appears Canadian Muslim women's employment was more impacted by the presence of children (Table 28). For those with no children in the home, about half of both Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report employment (46%). However, Canadian Muslim women reported decreasing levels of employment as the age of the youngest child in the home decreased, while the general Canadian sample of women reported significantly higher rates of employment than those with no children.

TABLE 28

Table 28. Employment Status by Age of Youngest Child in Household of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adult Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
Children 1 and under	32%	8%	35%	26%	100%	58%	4%	32%	5%	100%
Children 2 - 5	41%	11%	24%	24%	100%	68%	6%	21%	5%	100%
Children 6 - 14	49%	11%	22%	18%	100%	74%	6%	16%	5%	100%
Children 15 - 24	49%	11%	23%	17%	100%	68%	7%	19%	5%	100%
Children 25 and older	37%	7%	31%	25%	100%	47%	4%	39%	10%	100%
No children	46%	7%	27%	19%	100%	46%	3%	44%	7%	100%
Not available	44%	8%	25%	24%	100%	44%	4%	42%	10%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	54%	4%	34%	7%	100%

Canadian Muslim women without children at home report the lowest level of looking for work while unemployed along with those who have children aged 25 years or older at home (7%). The rate increased for those with children aged 15 years or older (11%), aged 6 years or older (11%), and aged 2 years or older (11%), dropping down again for those with children aged 1 year or younger at home (8%). In almost each category of youngest child's age, Canadian Muslim women were twice as likely to report looking for work while unemployed as the general sample of Canadian women.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. For those with no children in the home, similar rates of Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report full-time employment (39% and 40%, respectively; Table 29). However, Canadian Muslim women reported decreasing levels of full-time employment as the age of the youngest child in the home decreased, while the general Canadian sample of women reported significantly higher rates of full-time employment than those with no children.

TABLE 29

Table 29. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Age of Youngest Child in Household of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adult Women			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicabl	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicabl	Total
Children 1 and under	29%	12%	59%	100%	53%	14%	33%	100%
Children 2 - 5	29%	17%	54%	100%	54%	19%	27%	100%
Children 6 - 14	33%	24%	42%	100%	59%	20%	21%	100%
Children 15 - 24	33%	26%	41%	100%	52%	25%	23%	100%
Children 25 and older	32%	12%	56%	100%	41%	13%	47%	100%
No children	39%	14%	46%	100%	40%	13%	48%	100%
Not available	35%	14%	51%	100%	37%	12%	51%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	45%	16%	40%	100%

NOC Status. While Canadian Muslim women's employment seemed to be impacted by the presence of children, different patterns emerge around management-related occupations. Canadian Muslim women with no children in the home reported the highest levels of employment in legislative and senior management (0.30%), followed by women with children one or younger at home (0.25%). The rates continue dropping for Canadian Muslim women with older ages of youngest children at home, to Canadian Muslim women with youngest children aged 25 or older (0.07%). Similarly, Canadian Muslim women with no children in the home reported the highest levels of employment in middle management alongside those with children one or younger at home (14%). However, the rates are more similar for Canadian Muslim women with older ages of youngest children at home (12-13%).

TABLE 30A

Table 30a. Occupational Categories by Age of Youngest Child in Household of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Children 1 and under	0.25%	14%	12%	2%	8%	1%	9%	53%	100%
Children 2 - 5	0.15%	12%	13%	2%	12%	1%	12%	49%	100%
Children 6 - 14	0.18%	13%	12%	2%	16%	1%	18%	37%	100%
Children 15 - 24	0.13%	13%	11%	2%	14%	1%	22%	36%	100%
Children 25 and older	0.07%	13%	11%	2%	9%	1%	12%	52%	100%
No children	0.30%	14%	16%	2%	9%	1%	15%	42%	100%
Not available	0.28%	13%	13%	2%	9%	1%	15%	47%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 30B

Table 30b. Occupational Categories by Age of Youngest Child in Household of all Women in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adult Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Children 1 and under	0.40%	19%	24%	5%	12%	2%	12%	25%	100%
Children 2 - 5	0.54%	20%	22%	4%	14%	2%	14%	24%	100%
Children 6 - 14	1%	23%	19%	4%	16%	3%	17%	18%	100%
Children 15 - 24	0.55%	21%	14%	3%	15%	3%	24%	20%	100%
Children 25 and older	0.26%	16%	10%	2%	11%	2%	14%	45%	100%
No children	0.54%	18%	12%	3%	9%	2%	11%	45%	100%
Not available	0.28%	14%	11%	2%	9%	2%	13%	49%	100%
Total	0.47%	18%	14%	3%	11%	2%	15%	37%	100%

Narratives. The presence of children at home created a potential barrier for most women, especially those who did not report having a supportive spouse or other family (e.g. mothers) they could turn to for support and childcare assistance. A Farsi speaking Afghan Canadian Muslim immigrant woman shared,

> **"Childcare is expensive, and organizations rarely offer on-site childcare or support. In Canada, there are two significant issues: healthcare and childcare support. While we have excellent doctors and state-of-the-art medical procedures and research, accessing healthcare in a timely manner can be challenging due to long wait times. Additionally, affordable daycare options are often not available to us. So, you end up working just to cover childcare fees, which can make it more financially viable to stay home instead. This is a significant obstacle that prevents mothers from engaging in paid work."**

Likewise, as a British Columbia based Canadian Muslim mother reflected on the barriers that made it difficult to work, she listed childcare as the most immediate barrier, followed by concerns related to a disability and transportation. Notably, among women who named childcare as a barrier to work, childcare tended to be the first item on the list.

When considering how childcare impacts Canadian Muslim women's employment experiences, structural and logistical considerations become immediately apparent. A Bangla speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant mother commented on the need for childcare as she shared about how the lack of childcare shapes her availability to work:

> **Family was a factor. I had two small children. So timing was a big issue for me. Even if I wanted to, I didn't have the courage to apply for evening or night shift or full-time work. Because my children were my first priority. There was no one to watch them. My husband couldn't afford daycare. We didn't have any subsidy. I feel that if there was cheap daycare available, I could have done something a lot sooner. I wouldn't have lost those five years of my life. I started working when both my children started school. When my younger daughter started school last year in September, that was the first day of my work. My availability for work was from 8:30 to 2:30, so that I could drop my kids off to school, and then pick them up after work.**

Likewise, a Farsi speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant mother based in British Columbia noted there were "good job opportunities in other cities, but if I were to move there, I would end up spending a significant amount on childcare fees. These jobs could have added to my experience," but the barrier of childcare made the opportunity less possible. While this mother was unable to move locations, another mother was unable to move positions to a more senior role:

> **My manager asked me if I wanted to be a manager as I'd been working for five years. But because my kid is small, and I am studying, I had no time. That's why I had to decline. But my experience is good at work. I don't feel like I am not moving ahead because I am Muslim. The reason was caring for my child. I personally never liked daycare. That's why I didn't work for a long time. When my daughter turned two, I decided to work. My husband and I took turns in shifts, so I could work. I want to give my kids time at least until they are 10. That's why I wanted to study, because at least that way I can stay home with them. I hope I never have to put my kids in daycare.**

While this mother wished to avoid daycare completely, other Canadian Muslim mothers leveraged this resource—though not all did so willingly or happily. Some mothers were displeased with the lack of cultural sensitivity or awareness of Muslim religiosity in the daycares. For example, a Quebec based Canadian Muslim Francophone woman mentioned,

> **When I had the children, I had a lot of trouble finding a daycare, I think it's a problem that is still there. There is also another notion that comes up a lot all the time even now, and that is women who drop their children off at daycare, they have a lot of problems with halal food... The participation of our children in the various activities such Halloween Christmas. They had told me that my son was crying the whole day because he didn't receive anything for Christmas, Santa Claus did not get anything for him. Then I said, 'you didn't know that you had to give me notice, or else outright tell me, keep him at home for the day.' And then if I decide to keep my child at home, I must be absent from work to watch him, and I call them saying I have a parental responsibility.**

An Arabic speaking mother, also based in Quebec, mentioned she was considering homeschooling her children, despite engaging in three hours of transit each day to and from work and school. She raised concerns over what her children would be exposed to in the schools, and feels protecting her children is her responsibility.

When work and family responsibilities compete, it seems that most mothers are forced to make a sacrifice. A Farsi speaking immigrant woman noted

> **Financial support is crucial if you want to enter the labour market and work in your chosen field. I know successful doctors who had to have their children raised by their parents or other family members because they couldn't balance raising a family with their careers. Unfortunately, many people are forced to choose between caring for their family and working. A robust support system is essential if you want to give your best effort.**

Likewise, a Pashto speaking immigrant woman shared,

> **I have another friend who is a doctor and has three kids. She's been at home for the past year because she couldn't arrange childcare to enable her to work. She did find jobs a few times, but childcare was always a hurdle.**

It is not surprising, then, that some immigrant mothers might stall entry into paid work when their children are young due to the difficulty of navigating paid work balanced with home and childcare responsibilities. A Farsi speaking immigrant woman notes,

> **In general, the biggest challenge for newcomers is the recognition of their educational background. Many of us have degrees, but upon arrival, we often dedicate our early years to taking care of our families. It's a natural choice when affordable childcare is not available, we stay home and prioritize our children over our own goals and dreams.**

Thus, at least some of the motivation for mothers to take on full-time unpaid work (e.g. as a homemaker) may be a response to the challenges in obtaining paid work.

11. Province

Employment Status. Canadian Muslim women reported the highest level of employment in Quebec (56%), followed by Newfoundland and Labrador (50%), British Columbia (50%), Manitoba (46%), Alberta (44%), Saskatchewan (42%), Ontario (39%), Nova Scotia (38%), and New Brunswick (29%; Table 31). The drop in employment level among Canadian Muslim women across provinces is not proportionate to the drop for the general sample of Canadian adults; indeed, while Canadian Muslim women seem on par with the general population in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, they lag behind significantly in other provinces, with a difference of 25% in New Brunswick (29% Canadian Muslim women vs. 54% Canadian adults).

TABLE 31

Table 31. Employment Status by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults						
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Differences	Differences
Newfoundland and Labrador	50%	17%	8%	25%	100%	48%	8%	38%	7%	100%	-2%	-9%
Saskatchewan	42%	11%	16%	31%	100%	61%	4%	29%	6%	100%	20%	-7%
Nova Scotia	38%	11%	19%	32%	100%	52%	6%	37%	5%	100%	15%	-6%
Alberta	44%	11%	23%	22%	100%	62%	6%	27%	5%	100%	18%	-4%
Ontario	39%	10%	29%	22%	100%	56%	5%	32%	7%	100%	17%	-4%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%	14%	-4%
Manitoba	46%	9%	21%	25%	100%	61%	4%	29%	6%	100%	15%	-5%
Quebec	56%	8%	20%	16%	100%	60%	3%	30%	7%	100%	4%	-4%
British Columbia	50%	7%	24%	19%	100%	59%	4%	32%	5%	100%	9%	-3%
New Brunswick	29%	2%	25%	43%	100%	54%	5%	35%	6%	100%	25%	3%

Although Newfoundland and Labrador ranked second in the highest rates of Canadian Muslim women's employment, it also ranked highest in rates of Canadian Muslim women's unemployment. Canadian Muslim women reported the highest level of unemployment while looking for work in Newfoundland and Labrador (17%), Saskatchewan (11%), Nova Scotia (11%), Alberta (11%), Ontario (10%), Manitoba (9%), Quebec (8%), British Columbia (7%), and New Brunswick (2%).

Full- and Part-time Work Status. According to Table 32, Canadian Muslim women reported the highest level of full-time employment in Quebec (43%), followed by British Columbia (33%), Alberta (30%), Ontario (30%), Manitoba (29%), Saskatchewan (26%), Nova Scotia (19%), New Brunswick (18%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (17%). The largest difference between full-time employment rates of Canadian Muslim women compared with the general Canadian public was in New Brunswick (34% difference; 18% vs. 52%), while the smallest difference was in Quebec (10% difference; 43% vs. 53%). Conversely, the smallest difference in rates of part-time employment was also New Brunswick (2% difference, 12% Canadian Muslim women vs. 10% Canadian adults). While New Brunswick had the lowest rate of Canadian Muslim women engaged in part-time work (12%), Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest (42%). About one-fifth to one-quarter of Canadian Muslim women in the remaining provinces engaged in part-time employment (18% - 24%).

TABLE 32

Table 32. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Ordered Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults					
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	difference	difference
New Brunswick	18%	12%	71%	100%	52%	10%	38%	100%	34%	-2%
Nova Scotia	19%	18%	63%	100%	49%	12%	39%	100%	30%	-6%
Ontario	30%	18%	51%	100%	51%	13%	37%	100%	20%	-5%
Alberta	30%	19%	51%	100%	54%	14%	32%	100%	23%	-4%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%	18%	-6%
Quebec	43%	19%	38%	100%	53%	12%	34%	100%	11%	-7%
Saskatchewan	26%	20%	54%	100%	53%	13%	34%	100%	27%	-7%
British Columbia	33%	22%	45%	100%	49%	15%	36%	100%	16%	-7%
Manitoba	29%	24%	48%	100%	52%	13%	34%	100%	24%	-11%
Newfoundland and Labrador	17%	42%	42%	100%	49%	10%	42%	100%	32%	-32%

NOC Status. Canadian Muslim women in Quebec (0.31%), British Columbia (0.28%), and Ontario (0.18%) reported employment in legislative and senior management positions (Table 33). The mean for Canadian Muslim women in senior management positions in the remaining provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) was 0, indicating too few Canadian Muslim women reside in these provinces who occupy senior management positions to be picked up by the Census. Across provinces, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report employment in legislative or senior management positions compared with the general Canadian adult sample.

TABLE 33A

Table 33a. Occupational Categories by Ethnic/Racial Identity of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.00%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	33%	42%	100%
New Brunswick	0.00%	4%	4%	0%	4%	0%	14%	75%	100%
Nova Scotia	0.00%	4%	6%	0%	13%	0%	13%	65%	100%
Saskatchewan	0.00%	7%	8%	1%	6%	0%	22%	56%	100%
Manitoba	0.00%	10%	10%	1%	13%	0%	17%	48%	100%
Ontario	0.18%	13%	12%	2%	11%	1%	15%	46%	100%
Alberta	0.00%	13%	10%	1%	12%	0%	17%	47%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%
British Columbia	0.28%	14%	13%	2%	10%	2%	18%	42%	100%
Quebec	0.31%	15%	15%	3%	16%	1%	17%	33%	100%

TABLE 33B

Table 33b. Occupational Categories by Ethnic/Racial Identity of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.46%	11%	9%	8%	17%	1%	12%	41%	100%
New Brunswick	0.56%	13%	10%	8%	17%	1%	13%	38%	100%
Nova Scotia	0.49%	13%	11%	7%	16%	1%	13%	38%	100%
Saskatchewan	0.54%	18%	11%	8%	17%	1%	12%	33%	100%
Manitoba	0.55%	16%	10%	8%	18%	1%	13%	34%	100%
Ontario	0.82%	16%	14%	7%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%
Alberta	0.71%	18%	13%	10%	17%	2%	13%	28%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%
British Columbia	0.77%	16%	12%	8%	15%	3%	13%	33%	100%
Quebec	1.16%	15%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	32%	100%

Quebec had the highest rate of Canadian Muslim women in middle management (15%), followed by British Columbia (14%), Alberta (13%), Ontario (13%), Manitoba (10%), Saskatchewan (7%), and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (both at 4%). There was no representation of Canadian Muslim women in middle management residing in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 2021 Census sample. Rates of Canadian Muslim women in middle management are comparable to those of the general Canadian public in Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, but begin to differ in Manitoba, Saskachwan, and especially in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Narratives. The above numeric analyses shed light on the distributions of Canadian Muslim women across the provinces, and the socioeconomic outcomes they face in each province. Though not directly related to workplace experiences, participant descriptions and comparisons of provinces emerged in some narratives; the ways in which they describe the social environment sheds light on the variance of Canadian Muslim social experience across Canada.

Participants who were based in New Brunswick as well as Newfoundland and Labrador had spent time in Ontario and Quebec and offered comparisons. While New Brunswick was a less favorable province for Canadian Muslims, Newfoundland and Labrador was framed as a better alternative for families with children, though things are slowly changing.

When one New Brunswick based participant was commenting on how difficult things were for Muslim women in the province, I asked if she would consider moving to another province, like Ontario. Her response: *"I would cut off my own limb to move to Ontario. There is no limit to what I would do to move to Ontario."* When I asked her to share more about her experiences in Ontario, she mentioned

> Here, no one is like me. But when I [lived in Ontario], it was so wonderful. The oddballs were people who weren't like me. It was very different. I mean, you still had a lot of local settlers, like European settlers, and you had a lot of foreign students, but there was such a larger population of students. You had that diversity and cultural identity based on not just that settler history, and that made it very different, and it made it easier to communicate, to relate, to connect with human beings on a more personal level. … It was nice. I mean, I still connected with Canadian Muslims that were growing up within the community. And I still had that commonality with them. But it was just--It was nice. It was a sense of safety, emotional safety, social safety. Psychological safety. I could be myself and all of my quirks, they weren't threatening or rejected. They weren't threatening to the people around me. Nor were they rejected by the people around me. They just simply were. And it was nice to just simply exist, just being. And you'd hope that as a society. We'd evolved to that point. I don't know when we're gonna evolve to that point, but it was just. It was nice, because I think it was my first taste of not feeling insecure in my own skin and having an opportunity to express myself, even if it was outside of the home.

This participant returned to New Brunswick due to family responsibilities, but continues to hope for relocation. Though narratives from Canadian Muslims in New Brunswick paint Ontario positively, it is important to note that Canadian Muslims based in Newfoundland and Labrador would differ. One immigrant Canadian Muslim woman based in Newfoundland and Labrador shares,

> **For me, I was in Toronto, and truth be told, I didn't really like it. To me, it seems more crowded, more competitive, more complex. I love Saint John's, and I don't want to move from here. When I graduated, almost everyone, my family members and my friends and my acquaintances, asked me whether I'm leaving the province. I said, 'No. I wanna be here because it's calm and quiet. It's closer to nature.' I don't find that complex lifestyle here that I have experienced in other big cities, not only in Toronto, like whatever big cities, I always found it complicated. I personally have not experienced anything regarding Islamophobia or anti Muslim discrimination. Neither have my friends ever mentioned these activities.**

However, this participant notes she is seeing things are changing and not as welcoming towards Muslims in recent time:

> Participant: I see changes into people's behavior, or like the way they treat people outside. especially if they identify you as a Muslim. For me I am. I wear hijab. So whenever anyone sees me, they know on the very first sight that I'm a Muslim. But nowadays, for example, after the COVID, I have seen changes in people's approaches towards me compared to people's approaches before COVID, so there is very recent change.
>
> **Interviewer: Can you give an example, do you feel like people are colder or rude, or what is the change?**

Participant: It's not welcoming. For example, I'll give a very small example. In Newfoundland, when we cross the road, and the car stops when you're crossing the road, it's a natural and simple gesture to nod or wave to the driver just to say, 'Thank you,' and they nod in response or just smile, or they wave back to us as well. I have observed, like during the winter when I'm using my hoodie, my snow jacket's hoodie. They don't see my hijab, and at that time they wave and smile back at me as well. But in the summer and fall, when my hijab is visible, I hardly see any one waving back to me. So this kind of non-welcoming attitude I'm seeing nowadays, but it was not there before. It is a very simple and very light example, but if you feel it, you feel the differences.

Similarly, another participant from Newfoundland and Labrador commented on pacing and spacing differences between Saint John's and Toronto:

> **If you're seeking meaning, if you're seeking acceptance, and if you want to connect to people on a one-on-one basis. I felt like that was one of the most expensive things to purchase in a big city like Toronto, someone's time where they actually listen to you and don't worry about catching the next train or getting on onto the highway before they beat the traffic. In comparison to Saint John's, I think we're very fortunate to not have that dynamic expand in that way. That's not to say it's not happening. It is, of course… a lot of people are starting to move into various different parts of the country, Saint John's as one of them… But compared to that, I feel like Saint John's is still a place where you can request someone's time and not be reminded that time is expensive.**

Likewise, after a participant made comments about Montreal, I prompted her to draw comparisons between Saint John's and Montreal:

Participant: Yeah, Montreal is big, different actually. Here it's a small city and the people are so kind, so nice. And if you go out in the morning, you see the same people at night. The community is so small and there is a good Muslim community. We can see the Muslims here in this community, we know them. In the big city, you feel it's so crowded yet you feel alone. The people there, nobody knows each other. You can live in the same building but you don't know each other. In Saint John's, the people are so kind, and you can live well with your family here. But in the big city it's a little bit hard to get a community with the children, and other families, I think. Here you can deal with the people so easily and the people are so kind, and they deal well with Muslims, they are empathetic towards us. I think the people here are different from those in Montreal. I think the experience here is good for me.

Interviewer: What was it like in Montreal compared to Saint John's?

Participant: I think in Montreal, the lifestyle is different from here. I love the big city, actually. But here it's better for raising a family. The lifestyle there is so nice, and you can go out every weekend and try out different places, but here life is the same every day. But it's good for the children and the family.

Among Canadian Muslim women based in Quebec, a surprising finding emerged: even as women described having work opportunities limited by anti-Muslim legislature, even as women described being silenced outside of work by their employers, even as women described how much worse off hijab-donning women have it, most women reported not experiencing anti-Muslim discrimination. This may be a selection factor; it may be an artifact of communicating across multiple languages; and it may be a difference in how violence and discrimination are conceptualized.

12. Age group

Employment Status. According to Table 34, about 42% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported current employment, compared with 51% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39) and 48% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64). A small group of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older) continued to work (8%). Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed than the general Canadian adult population in each age group, with the most pronounced difference for those aged 25-39 (early career years).

TABLE 34

Table 34. Employment Status by Age Group of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women					All Canadian Adults				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
18-24	42%	15%	23%	20%	100%	58%	11%	21%	10%	100%
25-39	51%	10%	23%	16%	100%	78%	6%	14%	3%	100%
40-64	48%	8%	24%	19%	100%	71%	5%	21%	3%	100%
65 and over	8%	2%	44%	46%	100%	13%	1%	73%	13%	100%
Not available	24%	5%	31%	40%	100%	50%	4%	33%	13%	100%
Total	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

About 15% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported looking for work while unemployed, compared with 10% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39) and 8% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64). A small group of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older) continued to look for work while unemployed (2%). Canadian Muslim women are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work than the general Canadian adult population in each age group.

Full- and Part-time Work Status. About 15% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported full-time employment, compared with 41% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39) and 39% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64; Table 35). A small group of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older) continued to work full-time (7%). Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed full-time than the general Canadian adult population in each age group, with the most pronounced difference for those aged 25-39 (early career years).

TABLE 35

Table 35. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Age Group of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women				All Canadian Adults			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
18-24	15%	38%	46%	100%	35%	36%	29%	100%
25-39	41%	17%	42%	100%	71%	12%	17%	100%
40-64	39%	17%	44%	100%	66%	11%	23%	100%
65 and over	7%	4%	89%	100%	10%	7%	82%	100%
Not available	14%	25%	61%	100%	37%	23%	41%	100%
Total	33%	19%	48%	100%	51%	13%	36%	100%

In terms of part-time work, about 38% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported part-time employment, compared with 17% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39) and 17% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64). A small group of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older) continued to work part-time (4%). Canadian Muslim women are slightly more likely to be employed part-time than the general Canadian adult population in each age group, with the most pronounced difference for those aged 40-64.

NOC Status. According to Table 36, the likelihood of reporting employment in legislative or senior management increased with age for both Canadian Muslim women and the general Canadian adult sample. However, while both Canadian Muslim women and the general public start off with 0.05% representation in senior management for those age 18-24, the rates for Canadian Muslim women notably lag behind those of the Canadian public: by age 40-64, while 1.41% of the general Canadian public reports employment in legislative and senior management, only 0.27% of Canadian Muslim women age 40-64 report the same. While the general population of Canadian adults report a threefold increase in senior management between ages 25-39 (0.58%) and 40-64 (1.41%), the increase is significantly muted for Canadian Muslim women (0.20% to 0.27%).

TABLE 36A

Table 36a. Occupational Categories by Age Group of Adult Canadian Muslim Women in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
18-24	0.05%	11%	7%	1%	9%	2%	32%	38%	100%
25-39	0.20%	16%	18%	3%	10%	2%	14%	37%	100%
40-64	0.27%	14%	12%	2%	17%	1%	14%	40%	100%
65 and over	0.08%	4%	2%	0%	3%	0%	3%	88%	100%
Not available	0.00%	5%	10%	1%	5%	1%	14%	64%	100%
Total	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%

TABLE 36B

Table 36b. Occupational Categories by Age Group of all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census weighted data

	All Canadian Adults								
	Legislative and senior managers	Middle management occupations	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
18-24	0.05%	10%	7%	6%	19%	3%	33%	22%	100%
25-39	0.58%	19%	20%	11%	18%	3%	14%	13%	100%
40-64	1.41%	21%	15%	9%	19%	2%	12%	21%	100%
65 and over	0.44%	5%	3%	2%	4%	1%	4%	81%	100%
Not available	0.00%	12%	7%	5%	16%	2%	14%	44%	100%
Total	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

In terms of employment in middle management, about 11% of university-aged Canadian Muslim women (18-24) reported part-time employment, compared with 16% of Canadian Muslim women in the early career years (25-39) and 14% of Canadian Muslim women in their middle career years (40-64). A small group of Canadian Muslim women over retirement age (65 and older) report being employed in middle management positions (4%). Canadian Muslim women report similar rates of employment in middle management to the general Canadian population for those in the university or early career years; those aged 40-64 are notably lagging behind their general Canadian counterparts (14% Canadian Muslim women vs. 21% Canadian adults).

It is interesting to note that there is an underrepresentation of Canadian Muslim women in management, professional occupations, trades, technical occupations, and the arts, as well as an overrepresentation of these women in assisting occupations and retail sales and services compared with the Canadian adult public. However, Table 36 demonstrates that there may be a temporal effect at play, such that older Canadian Muslim women are especially disadvantaged vis-à-vis the general Canadian public, but younger Canadian Muslim women are not. Given these findings, a longitudinal analysis was conducted to determine how outcomes for Canadian Muslim women have changed since 2011 (see below).

Narratives. Through interviews with Canadian Muslim women, it became evident that both younger and older Canadian Muslim women experienced age-based discrimination of different kinds. While younger Canadian Muslim women's experience was questioned as described above, older Canadian Muslim women faced direct forms of old age discrimination. For example, a Pashto-speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant woman shared that she ended up working for free because she was considered too old to work for pay:

> **Both my bachelor's and master's degrees have been recognized in Canada. I've taken [additional courses and training in Canada, including English language classes]. The learning center suggested I could work with the English I know and recommended [a social service organization focused on newcomers]. I joined and did well for the first few weeks. [The teacher] mentioned job openings that we could apply for. He recommended a specific teaching position at a school and gave me a contact number. They needed someone urgently, so I called and introduced myself. However, the lady on the phone asked for my age, and when I shared it, she said they don't consider applicants over 35 due to their policy. I felt discouraged. My teacher said I should try volunteering. I asked the school, and my age was no longer an issue.**

Notably, immigrant Muslim women were more likely to report old age discrimination than their Canadian born counterparts: according to the 2021 Census, roughly 47% of first generation Canadian Muslim age 40-64 women reported current employment, compared with over 70% of latter generations of Canadian Muslim women in the same age range (analyses not shown but available upon request). Conversely, 8.5% of first generation Canadian Muslim aged 40-64 women reported looking for work while being unemployed, compared with less than 5% of latter generations of Canadian Muslim women in the same age group. There were too few cases of second and beyond generations of Canadian Muslim women to analyze the trends for those over 65.

Despite how anti-immigrant bias exacerbates barriers for older Canadian Muslim women, they tended not to frame their experience as impacted by racism. For example, a Pashto speaking Afghan Canadian Muslim immigrant woman shares,

> **If employers don't call us back, it might be because of our age and language skills, not necessarily because they're racist… Once, I joined a work training program with 35 people, and I was the only one who wasn't [of the same ethnic group as the rest].**

> **Later, they all moved on to the next round, but I didn't. I wondered if it was because of my age or religion, but I can't be sure. Since they were non-Canadians, it wouldn't be right to label it as discriminatory by Canadians.**

Here the participant shares evidence to reject the idea that her experience of old age discrimination is racially informed. However, she notes "language skills" as a possible barrier, and mentions being the only non-member of an ethnic group and the only person to not advance to the next round. She also reinforces the idea that only white Canadians are Canadians, while racialized Canadians are not. Similarly, other immigrant Canadian Muslim women also frame experiences as not racially informed, even though they share evidence of a racialized social process.

Also evident in these narratives is how, not surprisingly, old age discrimination becomes worse over time, and women's internal resources are worn down in response. One Bangla-speaking woman expressed how she feels disheartened by her (un)employment experience. When asked about how she would describe employment success, she stated,

> **It means nothing to me now, because I have been rejected from my dreams twice—both in [a job I was really interested in] and not being able to do a PhD in my field. I still don't know why that didn't happen. I lost my satisfaction and don't know if I will ever get it back. Age is a big barrier but there is nothing you can do about that.**

It is important to note that women in this study expressed incredible levels of resilience, self sufficiency, creativity, and resourcefulness in navigating labour market challenges and barriers, but this took an immense toll on their mental wellbeing, leaving some women feeling ultimately defeated and like "there is nothing you can do" about the barriers encountered when pursuing gainful employment.

13. Longitudinal analysis (numeric analyses only)

Longitudinal analyses track changes over time. The qualitative data in this study was collected from August 2023 through May 2024. Because of the cross-sectional (e.g., one-time only) collection of interview data, longitudinal analyses were not possible. However, because the Census collects data across time, longitudinal analyses with numeric data was possible, presented below.

Employment Status. According to Table 37, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting current employment was consistent from 2011 to 2021 (44%). However, the rate of Canadian Muslim women who are unemployed but looking for work rose slightly (7% to 9%). Adults in the general Canadian sample reported a decrease in current employment status (63% to 58%) but a nominal change to looking for work while unemployed (4% to 5%). In all, it seems Canadian Muslim women's employment status remains consistent, but a subgroup of Canadian Muslim women's representation has shifted from those who had never worked in 2011 to now unemployed and looking for work in 2021.

TABLE 37

Table 37. Employment Status by Census Wave Subsample of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census and 2011 National Household Survey

	Canadian Muslim Women				
	Employed	Unemployed, looking for	Unemployed, not looking	Never worked/NA	Total
2011					
Canadian Muslim Women	44%	7%	25%	23%	100%
All Canadian Adults	63%	4%	28%	5%	100%
2021					
Canadian Muslim Women	44%	9%	25%	21%	100%
All Canadian Adults	58%	5%	31%	6%	100%

Full- and Part-time Work Status. The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting full-time employment fell slightly from 2011 to 2021 (34% to 33%; Table 38). The rate of Canadian Muslim women employed part-time rose slightly (17% to 19%). Adults in the general Canadian sample reported a decrease in full-time employment status (55% to 51%) but a nominal change to part-time work (14% to 13%). In all, it seems Canadian Muslim women's full-time employment status has dropped slightly between 2011 and 2021, while part-time employment status rose slightly during the same time period.

TABLE 38

Table 38. Fulltime and Part-time Work Status by Census Wave Subsample of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census

	Canadian Muslim Women			
	Full time	Part time	Not applicable	Total
2011				
Canadian Muslim Women	34%	17%	49%	100%
All Canadian Adults	55%	14%	30%	100%
2021				
Canadian Muslim Women	33%	19%	48%	100%
All Canadian Adults	51%	13%	36%	100%

NOC Status. According to Table 39, the percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in legislative and senior management positions almost doubled from 2011 to 2021 (0.10% to 0.19%). While the rate for the general public also increased during this time, from 0.80% in 2020 to 0.84% in 2021, Canadian Muslim women's increase far outpaces that of the general public. However, it is important to note that Canadian Muslim women remain underrepresented by over fourfold when compared to the general Canadian public (0.19% vs. 0.84%). The percent of Canadian Muslim women reporting employment in middle management positions also increased, but not as dramatically, from 2011 to 2021 (10% to 13%). The general public decreased slightly during this time, from 18% in 2011 to 16% in 2021, helping to close the gap between Canadian Muslim women and the general public from 8% in 2011 to 3% in 2021.

TABLE 39

Table 39. Occupational Categories by Census Wave Subsample of Adult Canadian Muslim Women and all Canadians in Percents, 2021 Canadian Census and 2011 National Household Survey weighted data

	Canadian Muslim Women								
	Legislative and senior	Middle management	Professional occupations	Technical occupations	Assisting occupations	Art, culture and sport	Retail sales and services	Not available	Total
2011									
Canadian Muslim Women	0.10%	10%	10%	3%	12%	1%	14%	50%	100%
All Canadian Adults	0.80%	18%	12%	5%	21%	2%	12%	30%	100%
2021									
Canadian Muslim Women	0.19%	13%	13%	2%	12%	1%	16%	43%	100%
All Canadian Adults	0.84%	16%	13%	8%	15%	2%	13%	33%	100%

Canadian Muslim women continue to be overrepresented in the retail sales and services occupations, rising slightly from 2011 (14%) to 2021 (16%). During the same time, adults in the general Canadian sample also reported a slight increase in retail sales and services occupations (12% to 13%). Notably fewer adults in the general sample of Canadians report employment in assisting occupations (21% to 15%), but the level of Canadian Muslim women in those occupations has remained consistent between 2011 and 2021 (12%). While there was a slight underrepresentation of Canadian Muslim women in professional occupations in 2011 when compared to adults in the general Canadian sample (10% vs. 12%), the gap has closed in 2021 (13%). However, note that Canadian Muslim women are more likely to have a bachelor's or postgrad degree compared with the general Canadian population; thus Canadian Muslim women should report higher rates of employment in professional or managerial positions compared with the general Canadian sample.

14. Mental health and wellbeing (narrative data only)

The Census does not include questions on mental or general health and wellbeing. However, mental health concerns emerged as a saturated theme during focus groups and interviews, and thus this section features narrative analyses.

Narratives. Engagement in paid work can act as a support in facilitating individuals to realize their personal potential and actualize their goals. For participants who are currently employed and satisfied with their position, there was evidence that engaging in paid work supported their mental wellbeing. For example, one Ontario based immigrant Muslim woman shares, "Having a job helps my mental health, having something to do. And having the routine and structure helps me." Conversely, poor work conditions can negatively impact mental wellbeing. These poor conditions include precarious employment, chronic under- and unemployment, lack of control over work conditions (e.g. timing or location), precarious or insecure work situations, and racial barriers barring Muslim women from advancement. A first generation professional woman in her 60s who has been struggling to find work for the past 10 years mentioned,

> **"Not getting work has a really bad impact on mental health. When you don't have work for a long time, and also you don't have money, you feel depression, anger, frustration. Luckily, I am able to manage that now, but 10 years ago I didn't. It was difficult… These past 10 years, it's really taken a toll on my health."**

Though this participant was able to expand her personal resources to meet the challenges of her employment conditions, she notes how the experiences have "taken a toll" on her mental health. Although not a question asked during the interview, several women in this study volunteered how poor work experiences also took tolls on their mental wellbeing.

For example, one second generation Canadian Muslim woman who dons hijab shared how she was repeatedly passed over for other candidates who were less qualified, but that the candidates who were chosen were either "white" or sometimes women of colour who were "lighter" than the participant. Despite working in a field, and a workplace, that is framed as "progressive," she would feel others' regard of her Muslimness (expressed through her visible hijab) poses a barrier. She shares,

> **I would get a temporary role, and... it felt like I was always being tested with certain things to kind of see how critical my analysis was. And I've had to have lots of therapy around this, because at a point you start to think like, is it something about you? Is it a fundamental issue that you're not able to move forward? And honestly, it's still a question. But I'm leaning into this idea that I think that my critique of progressive spaces is that you can't be too critical, because then you become a threat. And so, that was an issue. So yeah, outside of my current role, where I'm permanent, job security and precarity has always been an issue. And in my experience has always been directly linked to my race and my faith.**

Though now in a secure position, this participant notes how detrimental precarious work, and being racialized at work, was to her mental wellbeing. It is important to note that after this participant shared the above reflection, the other women in the group all echoed experiences of internalizing their employment troubles, thinking they were personal problems instead of social issues. Some participants reported not realizing how terrible their work conditions were until invited to reflect during the interview. For example, a Somali speaking Canadian Muslim woman shared, ***"Talking about this makes me realize how bad it is and it makes me upset. I appreciate you asking me those questions, because I never thought about these questions, and how I don't have any rights at all."***

While most women expressed the poor mental health impact of current employment conditions, some—especially those still pursuing training or education—expressed concern over future employment conditions. For example, when asked about employment success, one Bangla speaking Canadian Muslim immigrant woman shares,

> **I don't know what I will face when I become a [health care professional]. Sometimes I am scared, my patients might be rude to me maybe because I am a hijabi, or because I am not from this country. Success for me is my job satisfaction, how supportive and cooperative my team and manager are towards me. Workplace environment needs to be good. Otherwise, it's a cause of mental stress.**

Likewise, a second generation Canadian Muslim based in British Columbia who is still in school but engaged in paid work responds to a question on pursuing opportunities for advancement:

> **I'm constantly looking to grow. I'm a young worker, and I think the world is my oyster still, so I'm always looking to improve myself. I will say that I've been more successful in upgrading skills than I have been in actually securing the next big thing. I can't really tell you why. It's one of those things that you just kind of think, 'is it me? Is it me?' I'm always interested, and I'm expressing it, but, constantly getting picked over… Most of the roles in my area of work are historically dominated by white people.**

As these experiences of poor employment conditions and unequal opportunities compounded across women's employment history and life experience, so too did the impact of the work conditions compound in deleteriously impacting women's mental wellbeing. When asked about barriers to employment, one participant indicates her mental health is a concern:

> **I think the barrier would be the impact on my mental health. [After an egregious workplace experience], I was diagnosed with PTSD… [I don't want to keep pursuing employment opportunities because] I don't think my mental health could take this again. While I love my field, I love the impact that I make and the achievements I've been able to accomplish. But there's a sense of [pauses], I just don't care anymore because it's not making an impact in a systemic way. So maybe I've lost my passion for it.**

While poor work conditions impact participants' mental wellbeing and motivation to continue working, others mentioned the impact of poor work conditions on mental wellbeing spanned beyond the workplace. As one Canadian Muslim woman in senior management was sharing about the impact of her poor work conditions on her mental health, I asked if she felt like these experiences impacted her life beyond the workplace. She responded,

> **I would say so. I mean, I brought that negative energy to everything else, whether it was my family or [people I wanted to get closer to]. I would start talking about work and now, when I look back at that, I'm like, 'Oh, my gosh!' I don't even know what that looked like to the other person, or I was just looking to those people for, 'Hey, support me!' Or, 'oh, my gosh, I'm going through this thing.' And so, I would definitely agree that, like I do, if it's bad, I take it with me into these other relationships?**

To navigate employment related stress, many participants named personal resources (e.g., self-sufficiency, perseverance, a sense of control over life's conditions), though only some were able to successfully leverage these resources to protect their mental wellbeing. For example, an Afghan Canadian Muslim immigrant woman who preferred to participate in Farsi shares her experience:

> **[When we arrived, we were precariously housed and] I experienced a lot of stress. In Afghanistan, I had multiple jobs. I worked at multiple universities, and was involved with [a renown international organization] where I worked with university students. Suddenly, in Canada, all that experience became irrelevant. All the progress we had made in Afghanistan, over 20 years, and all my accomplishments, including earning a Master's degree in International Relations and a Bachelor's in Law and Political Science, seemed to vanish as I found myself without a job. Going from a high-income position to having nothing was incredibly stressful. However, I didn't give up. I fought the circumstances and worked hard to find a solution rather than dwell on the stress.**

While other participants also shared an attempt to rely on personal resources to overcome employment stress in protecting their mental health, this was not a very effective strategy. Some participants leveraged religious resources, like turning to God and prayer as supports, which was an effective coping mechanism but did not address the structural issues around stress generating employment conditions. Instead, the most effective resource identified in the findings of the current study is a sense of workplace integration. When a Saskatchewan based immigrant Canadian Muslim woman was asked about supports that help her stay employed, she shared,

> **My colleagues are supportive. For example, when I have a hectic day, they can support me mentally. So, this is very much important to listen to you and give you mental support and provide you with the things that you need.**

In interview discussions on the importance of workplace integration as a support for mental wellness, I note religious accommodations were often mentioned by participants. Mental health has been previously named a “social mirror” as it reflects social realities. It may be that participant mental health reflects how much employers care about employees, and one mechanism employers express their care for is through religious accommodations. In comparing how she was treated at a previous workplace, one Canadian Muslim woman shares,

> **At my previous workplace, they didn't want to give breaks for prayer. But then, when I joined here, on the first day I went to my manager, because prayer is a huge priority for me. I always prioritize that. So, I want to pray on time. And I remember when I mentioned this, she was like, ‘Oh, no problem!’ And the workplace that I went to was mostly white, but… she was like, ‘It's fine if you want to pray, you can just use one of the quiet rooms’—we have quiet rooms where we can take a mental break to decompress. And it was not a big deal. She said, ‘you wanna pray, you can go and pray even outside [at a masjid] if your like, during your break time.’ So that was, that was a huge thing for me Alhumdulillah [praise God]. I was very happy with that.**

Because this experience stood in such stark contrast to the participant's earlier experiences, namely workplaces that didn't accommodate prayer, I asked what made this new workplace different, what allowed it to accommodate prayer. She said,

> **I think the main difference was that the previous company was very focused on the output, efficiency, producing really quick. Whereas the focus of this company seems to be employee wellness. They even have a mental health hour every week, I can take one hour and it's a paid hour. And you're supposed to take it every week. If you don't, the manager will email you, and they'll be like, why aren't you taking your mental health hour? So, they seem to prioritize the welfare of the employees, whereas in the previous organization, it was all about the output.**

What is important to note here is that this participant did not receive "special accommodations" or treatment—this participant's needs were easily addressed through the employer's existing supports for employee wellbeing—namely, a decompression room accessible for the participant and all her colleagues. This is important to highlight, because resources and/or policies that support Canadian Muslim women are supportive of all employees, not just Canadian Muslim women—and this is discussed further below.

Section II: Social Experiences and Structural Realities

This section provides a critical lens into the processes and mechanisms that drive workplace inequality, which can curtail or create possibilities for change. Specific themes identified include workplace hierarchy, unwelcoming environments, institutional racism, workplace diversity, life course and cohort effects, and policies that need rethinking.

1. Workplace hierarchy

A marker of experience emerged from the hierarchical position Canadian Muslim women occupied at the workplace. A related finding is that immigrant women's pre-migration employment experience directly impacts women's framing of current experiences, including framing of current goals, regardless of current employment characteristics. For example, women who earned graduate degrees or worked in professional occupations pre-migration retained aspirations of working in their chosen careers after migration (with the exception of those who suffered negative impact to their mental wellness, see above). However, confronted by under- and unemployment, Canadian Muslim women internalize the experience and start believing something is wrong with them (rather than the reality of an anti-immigrant neoliberal economy that makes securing stable work a challenge). Despite experiencing negative effects on their mental health, they continue to pursue careers—but rarely "land that dream job," and so may lose optimism. They may also go through multiple experiences of training (and retraining) in order to keep pursuing work, with the goal of securing a "good job"—a respectable and permanent position with job security, a supportive team of colleagues and supervisors, and intrinsic value.

Three tiers of employment were identified by seniority: first is the entry-level, service oriented, public-facing, what are referred to as the lower levels of employment; second, middle management, professionals, and other positions requiring extensive training and/or experience, and potentially some authority over others, referred to as the middle levels of employment; and finally, senior management, and other competitive occupations, which hold authority over others and decision making power in the workplace, referred to as the upper levels of employment.

Participants identified that, typically, race and gender segregation placed the majority of people of colour and immigrants in the first level, white women in the second level, and white men in the third level. These three levels of employment seniority resulted in staunch differences in employment experiences (see Table 1 below). Given these findings, along with the pattern noted above, it is not surprising that the women who reported the most optimism were those who are still training for their careers, and may be working part-time or temporary jobs in the lower levels of employment, and have not yet hit the job market where they will compete in the middle and upper levels of employment (consider the young participant quoted above, who sees the world as her "oyster").

Table 40. Workplace Experiences of Muslim Women in Canada by Workplace Hierarchy

Experience	Lower levels of employment	Middle levels of employment	Upper levels of employment
Competition (who has it easier)	Men of colour	White women	White men
Workplace social integration	Generally feels very welcome, supported by coworkers	Feels something is off, can't put finger on it	Feels unwelcome, outright hostility
Discrimination	Rare	Subtle	Overt discrimination

Findings indicate that women experience employment barriers and facilitators in contrasting ways given the levels of employment they are seeking or engaging in. The gradation of level of employment played a role in shaping the below experiences.

2. Unwelcoming environments

As the level of employment increases, reports of workplace discrimination and hostility also increase. At the more subtle levels, this was described by women as a general feeling of not belonging, as women said they "can't put my finger on it," but that, "there are hidden blocks," and they feel like their coworkers "just don't want us there." Women in upper levels of employment especially felt there were targeted and systematic attempts at blocking their progress and/or making their lives difficult at work. In an interview with an employer who is racialized but not Muslim, the employer noted how a supervisor at their organization resented the success of Canadian Muslim women:

> **The moment [white employers feel] they are no longer at the top, or they feel like they're losing out because you got something. [They feel entitled.]... And I can only imagine that for Muslim women in leadership positions, they [white employers] have a problem with their [Canadian Muslim women's] success. [Referring to a specific Canadian Muslim woman's experience], the supervisor and the department has a problem with her success. And when she brings up legitimate issues.**

As mentioned above, when confronted by these increasingly hostile workplace environments, women in upper levels of employment, especially those in senior management, report not wanting to continue advancing given the diminishing rewards and increasing discrimination.

3. Institutional racism

Institutional racism can be described, briefly, as the ways in which racial hierarchies are maintained within organizations. In the current study, institutional racism can be identified through policies (e.g., not being allowed to modify breaks to accommodate Ramadan fasting), practices (e.g., socializing at bars after work hours), and characteristics of an organization (e.g., white-only mentors or senior employees) that create systemic barriers for Canadian Muslim women. Similar to the above subsection, findings indicate that women's experiences of institutional racism differ by levels of employment. Those at lower levels of employment did not perceive institutional racism; they report feeling fortunate to have the opportunity to work and to work with supportive colleagues. The women at middle and upper levels of employment, however, were affected by and perceptive to institutional racism.

Canadian Muslim women at middle levels of employment perceived white women as having an advantage, while those at upper levels of employment perceived white Canadians generally and white men specifically to have an advantage. Both groups mentioned issues with the whiteness of higher levels within their workplaces; for example, multiple women reported there are mentors available to support advancement, however all mentors are white. There are multiple reports of women feeling excluded by the whiteness of homosocial behaviour at work; for example, water cooler conversations about going up to the cottage for the weekend, or other quintessential white Canadian social practices that feel alienating to people of colour. One participant mentioned feeling like senior employees "groomed" her white colleagues as if they were "their own children"; another participant joked about a game she and her other racialized colleagues would play when their white counterparts would engage in conversations on these quintessential white social practices. Research is replete with documentation on how workplace culture can alienate women and racial minorities; this is reflected in the experiences of Canadian Muslim women, especially those in higher levels of employment.

4. Workplace diversity

While most Canadian Muslim women across the three levels of employment report dissatisfaction with the diversity and inclusivity of their workplaces, these reports are especially concentrated among women in middle and upper levels of employment. Especially among the upper levels of employment, women report feeling diversity and inclusion is performative, not transformative; there was no real structural change. Notably, this was echoed by employers of colour and only some of the white employers who participated in interviews.

When women of colour, including Canadian Muslim women, are able to break through to upper levels of employment including senior management, they are personally scrutinized and are pressured to conform to Eurocentric norms while their performance at work is also scrutinized to maintain racial hierarchies at the workplace. Take, for example, a participant who worked in upper management and described how others at work would make comments about her (racialized) appearance and also question her decisions when hiring people of colour, especially Black Muslim Canadians. With this pressure, Canadian Muslim women may "codeswitch" and, for example, "act white" in order to navigate the social world of work. This is observed by Canadian Muslim women in subordinate positions of employment. One participant, for example, reflects on workplace diversity and "coconuts":

> **There is little bit of diversity in [my institution]. But I find that it's just the way they look, but inside, the way they carry themselves is very white—what you would call a coconut, like you look brown, but inside you're white. The way you talk, the way you eat, the way you dress is totally white. So, I find that that makes a difference, too. And I mean, employers are able to play the diversity card by hiring someone who is a coconut. I don't mean it as a negative thing, like if they're born and raised here, or if their parents are also born and raised here, it's natural for that to happen. But yeah… I just feel like I'm going there to work rather than going there to hang out with colleagues after work, because I don't socialize that way.**

Here the participant is naming the ways in which racial hierarchies are maintained even when "diversity" may be observed, because even if positions of power are occupied by people of colour, those racialized managers seem to have been co-opted from the perspective of Canadian Muslim women subordinates. This is not to say that Canadian Muslim women in upper levels of employment necessarily submit to becoming "coconuts"; they find ways to actively resist this pressure and the expectation to whiten themselves. A participant of African origin in senior management, for example, mentions befriending the only other racialized colleague after recognizing they both resisted the pressure to conform to whiteness:

> **Participant: I hate this comparison, but it's the field slave versus the house slave, and which one are you? And I think we measured each other based on that.**
>
> **Interviewer: I'm getting the sense that you both saw each other as field slaves?**
>
> **Participant: Yeah… Sometimes we have to overtly own the truth. And sometimes overtly owning the truth will allow those around us to also be willing to overtly own the truth. And I think that as a community of racialized bodies, a community of religious minority bodies, a community that's culturally different, a community of settlers brought here by essentially exploitative settlers and the circumstances that followed. We're all, in a way, conditioned to be house slaves. Yeah. We really are. It's set up that way. And I think a lot of us don't realize that we have the option of not being the house slave, and it's horrible to even say it as an option. But it's through that, that eventually we'll be able to liberate ourselves from this systemic abuse, because that's what it is. There's no other description for it. If you graduate university and you can't get a job because of your name. If you are qualified, and you have to start over because you wear a hijab on your head. If you—this is abuse, this is financial abuse. This is exploitation. This is social abuse. And so, it's really important for us to learn to name these things and for us to say the names of these things. And it it's funny that it is not necessarily just the culture. But it's all systemic colonialism. We don't want to see the chains we're wearing.**

5. Life course and cohort effects

While the above quantitative analyses helped shed light on longitudinal effects (changes across time), the qualitative data revealed life course and cohort effects. A life course effect can be observed when individuals experience similar transitions or turning points that impact the course of their life.

For example, women's reduced career potential after giving birth to their first child ("the mommy track") is a life course effect. This is different from a cohort effect, where (typically public) events impact a group of people in an age category. Cohorts include generations (boomers, millennials, etc.) A cohort effect can be observed in, for example, the Great Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947: Zarqa Nawaz, like other Canadian Pakistani Muslims, jokes that her father's stories always begin with the partition. Indeed, those who were children at the time witnessed violence and bloodshed, as well as significant and structural changes to their economic, political, and social realities. The partition left an imprint on the way they see the world, and their perspective is unique to their generation and experience.

Through interviews with Canadian Muslim women and employers in the current study, evidence emerged for a life course effect as well as cohort effects. In terms of the life course effect, I observed that, especially for the second generation, Canadian Muslim women's career trajectory followed a similar pattern: when the women are younger, typically university students, they easily find work, and they typically work part-time entry level or retail jobs while balancing school and other commitments. However, as they graduate from school, complete their internship, satisfy requirements for experience, and begin to transition to finding careers—stable, permanent, full-time work, they struggle. They do not get the positions that would allow them to continue gaining experience; then they get trapped into a cycle of contractual and precarious labor, quite possibly for the rest of their working lives. Given the consistency of this finding across interviews regardless of participant's age category, geographic location, or other extenuating circumstances, this finding appears to be a life course effect.

Interviews with Canadian employers complicate the above finding by introducing the possibility of cohort effects: both September 11th and the heinous murder of George Floyd sparked reconfigurations around the social construction of race in Canada. There was a surge of Islamophobia after September 11th given the way western elites mobilized narratives of "the Muslim terrorist" in order to justify the invasion of Afghanistan and later Iraq, among countless examples of military aggression against Muslim-majority countries (see also ISPU's report of the manufacture of Islamophobia during election cycles).

The effect of 9/11 emerged during a post-interview conversation with an employer about study findings. I shared how I was finding a strange discrepancy: I spoke with highly educated and qualified Canadian Muslim women who could not find work, yet I was also speaking with employers who struggled to find educated and qualified candidates of diverse backgrounds:

> **Interviewer: I'm trying to figure out why there's such a mismatch. Because these women are well educated and have the experience, but then their applications don't seem to get accepted.**
>
> **Employer: Is it a generational thing, like the same women [e.g. a cohort effect]? Like the 20 year olds now are doing that, but the 45 year olds never were able to do it—like it's the same women finding that they're not getting the jobs?**
>
> **Interviewer: [Considers the suggestion against the data.] Perhaps; so, what happened to the 45 year olds when they were 20? [Both pause.] Ah, 2001; September 11th.**
>
> **Employer: Oh! Yeah. That'll do it.**

In other words, if racialized and gendered work barriers did not exist, Canadian Muslim women who are now in their 40s could expect to be on par with the rest of their cohort, investing in climbing the corporate ladder after having secured some form of permanent employment with authority or seniority. In order to do so, they would have had to have access to the same work opportunities in their 20s as the average Canadian. However, because of the Islamophobic backlash after September 11th, they were confronted by limited opportunities and a job market unfavourable for Canadian Muslims. A second generation Arab Canadian Muslim woman shared that while she had "experienced racism long before 9/11, it became more obvious. You could really put your finger on it after 9/11."

Because of the way the Census is collected (religious affiliation is collected every 10 years) it is difficult to deduce the effect of September 11th on Canadian Muslim women's employment. While the date for the 2001 Canadian Census is May 15, 2001, just before the tragic events, the next cycle to include data on religious affiliation was in 2011; such few datapoints over such a long period of time makes capturing trends difficult. Nonetheless, as Canadian Muslim women experience a life course effect upon entry into the formal labour market, it may be that those who entered the labour market during the heightened period of post 9/11 Islamophobia[2] have poorer outcomes due to a cohort effect. While the long term impact of September 11th may have caused barriers to become more difficult to overcome, another cohort effect emerged that may help to reduce race-based barriers.

Multiple employers mentioned that as of 2021, they are taking diversity seriously, implementing policies around hiring to generate more inclusive workplaces. When asked what spurred this interest in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), multiple employers mentioned the murder of George Floyd. After this Chicago-based father was killed by police officers, Black Lives Matter had effectively organized to stir public consciousness around anti-Black racism and police violence specifically, and institutional racism more broadly. One employer commented on the impact of Floyd's murder on their organization, and how it coincided with internal processes:

> **I think around the time of the George Floyd murder and the Black Lives Matter movement really gaining momentum. It was just so central in people's thinking as with a lot of organizations. There was a feeling that it was important to be investing in that work. So it wasn't that nothing had been happening before, particularly in terms of our approaches to our external work. A lot of that was happening before. But yeah, I think that there was a turning internally. I've been with [organization] now for [a few] years, and my role is new. The organization had grown really quickly, and so there was simultaneously this real need for general internal capacity building. There were no internal policies. There was no performance management—people were like, 'I don't know what I'm being evaluated against like, I don't feel secure in this.' [Mentions additional internal changes.] So, I think there were a whole bunch of things that were happening at once.**

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[2] It would be more accurate to say that this Islamophobia was generated in order to manufacture public consent for the military invasions and interventions (e.g., droning) of Afghanistan, Iraq, and a number of other Muslim majority countries. However, popular framing in the West refers to this time period as "post-9/11," in much of the same way that "October 7th" is used to frame the current genocide against Palestinians.

> **Generally, a need for internal infrastructures to support a growing organization and make sure that there were systems so that people were clear about things, and then simultaneously, being aware of the fact that not everybody has the same experience of finding work and being employed, and wanting to address that.**

This narrative was repeated across several interviews with employers—that there was a simultaneous recognition of both the internal logistical needs of the organization as well as a social awakening around race consciousness. Though not all white employers named Floyd's murder as inspiring diverse hiring practices (some simply and commonsensically said hiring diversity is "the right thing to do,"), I came to anticipate George Floyd's murder as a crucial moment for white employers to begin to understand the significance of race. Thus, I was surprised to find that racialized employers were also "activated" by the tragedy, given that they, as racialized subjects, have personal experiences with racism. Nonetheless, one Black Canadian employer, who co-owns a business with a partner who is also racialized, shared:

> **For me personally. It activated me, you know, as a person of color, living in a predominantly white community, my home community, my work community. I have shied away from talking about issues around race intentionally, in many cases, to my detriment, and I think the murder of George Floyd ignited a part of me that said, 'No, I've had enough of this. I'm going to speak up, and I'm going to speak loud. And I'm going to address these issues.' And it gave me permission to talk about these things. And I think it was just sort of a beautiful synchronicity with that event happening, and the launching of our company, that we had the autonomy and flexibility, and also capacity to do this and to hire people intentionally in this way and be unapologetic about it.**

An important item to note is that, for employers inspired to ensure their workplaces are inclusive and diverse, the focus is on hiring Black Canadians specifically—and rightfully so, given the entrenched anti-Black racism in Canadian society that all non-Black Canadians, including non-Black Muslims, benefit from. Thus, though several of the employers are actively recruiting racialized Canadians, the focus on Black Canadians does not translate into increases in Canadian Muslim women getting hired. Multiple employers reported having diverse workplaces in terms of gender and sexual identity, race, and ability, but not necessarily religion. Multiple employers in this study reported they do not have Muslim women employees, or that they do not know (not all Muslim women are visibly Muslim).

Another important item to note is that only four years have passed since Floyd's murder, and institutional change can take time. Thus, though some changes have already been implemented, we can anticipate seeing the fruition of this racial transformation in the coming years—assuming employers and organizations continue the momentum towards inclusive diversity and equity.

6. Policies that need rethinking

Through interviews with Canadian employers and Muslim women, a theme of ineffective and/or counterproductive policies emerged. These policies may have been created with the intention of supporting the employees, however in practice the policies create additional barriers for Canadian Muslim women as well as Canadians more generally. These policies include approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices; religious accommodations; health insurance and benefits; and reporting mechanisms at the workplace.

Regarding DEI practices, participants across the samples stated they felt diversity training as a policy does not work. A Canadian Muslim woman shared her perspective on why: “They do the training initiatives, but people who have privilege, well they don’t want to let it go. So then, the trainings aren’t very effective.” This was echoed by a racialized employer who notes middle aged white women, especially, in her organization are entrenched in their privilege and will do the trainings but do not integrate the teachings into their worldview or approach at work: “People don't really take it to heart. They kind of just do it for the sake of doing it.” Age initially emerged as an important consideration as, across interviews with employers, a theme emerged where white women in their mid 40s or older were resistant to DEI practices, while white women especially in their mid 30s to 40s were embracing DEI practices. When I mentioned this observation to a racialized employer, she said,

> **I would just disagree with the second part of that. I think there's a lot of white women who are in their mid 30 s, early 40s, and they will say all the right things, and they will try to, but they never see themselves as the root of the problem, like they never asked, ‘Why should I be occupying this space [in DEI management]?’ That self-reflexivity is still missing in that new generation, even if they understand all the theories a lot better than the old guard. They will never argue with you to be like, ‘It's just gender. It's not race.’ They'll never say that. They will know what intersectionality is, and all this stuff. But they will never see themselves occupying that space as a leadership position in EDI as a problem.**

This employer points to the lack of racial reflexivity as what causes the disconnect between DEI theory and practice. Racial reflexivity is the practice of critical awareness of one’s racial identity and the privileges and/or barriers one experiences vis-à-vis people of other racial identities. I note that an employer in this study falls into the older white women category yet expressed a great deal of racial reflexivity; an employee working in her organization confirmed her employer’s racial awareness created a positive, supportive, and nurturing work environment. Thus, the generational (cohort) effect is explained through racial reflexivity, such that older women may have had fewer opportunities to become racially aware and reflexive compared with the younger generation. As a policy intervention, the findings of this study indicate that racial reflexivity should be integrated into DEI trainings, so that people with race-based privilege can become more aware of that privilege and how it marginalizes others.

As an application of this racial reflexivity, I point to another policy that needs to be addressed: practices around accommodations that isolate Canadian Muslim women. One employer shared an experience around religious accommodations at her workplace:

> **One of my staff, she was a white woman. I guess there was one incident where she had walked in on [a Muslim employee] praying, and so in a staff meeting she brought it up. She said, 'I am totally fine [with you praying]. But can you put some type of sign up? Because I feel really, really bad when I walk in.' I've walked in on her [Muslim employee] too, and she's very much, 'don't worry about it.' But everybody else feels really, really bad. So, I actually did have to get a sign, laminate it, get a hook, the whole shebang. I said, 'please use this because as much as you're fine, people walk in and it's making everybody else feel uncomfortable because we don't want to be interrupting you during your prayers.'**

Though this moment was framed as religious accommodation for the Muslim employee, in reality the Muslim employee is having to accommodate everyone else by having to use the sign—note, she was comfortable; they were not. Accommodations should not single out an employee, isolate them, or make them feel uncomfortable. Muslims perform ritual prayers in congregation, in community. While it is considerate to be respectful when sharing space with someone in prayer, it is not a private act that need be done in seclusion. While some Muslim women may prefer privacy and seclusion during prayer, the employee in question did not; nonetheless, she had to create a private and secluded space for her colleagues' comfort. Racial reflexivity could have allowed the employer, who is also racialized but not Muslim, to better understand how the sign "othered" the Muslim employee.

Another policy that requires reconsideration is the inclusion of children and partners, only, as dependents on health insurance and benefit plans. Several second generation Canadian Muslim women indicated that they are responsible for caring for or sharing resources with their elderly parents, but their parents are not recognized as family eligible for health care. In one Canadian Muslim woman's case, whose mother was fighting cancer, the health coverage would have been a major support for her and her family. Canadian Muslim women are not the only Canadians caring for their parents or belonging to the sandwich generation; thus, reconsidering health insurance policies would benefit Canadians more generally, especially as public health insurance continues to erode under neoliberal economic restructuring. In other words, a recommendation emerging from the findings of this study indicates health insurance and benefits policies should expand to include family members otherwise excluded, including parents.

Finally, Canadian Muslim women also report ineffective reporting mechanisms, proscribing effective change. No participant in the study, across Canadian employers and Muslim women, describe an effective reporting mechanism at their workplace. Women noted that making complaints was counterintuitive; not only would the offender not be held accountable, it would also increase the level of hostility the women were experiencing, and some were pressured to quit or transfer to a different part of the organization. The participants mentioned that those who complained were seen as the problem, one even citing COCo's infographic, "The 'Problem' Woman of Colour in Nonprofit Organizations." Notably, when the participant shared the infographic, the other women on the call echoed the experience. Additionally, racialized employers also named this phenomenon, but white employers did not mention it regardless of their racial reflexivity.

For those who did attempt to report discrimination at the workplace, they note several ineffective responses including publicly shaming the perpetrator, making the team take additional diversity trainings, gaslighting employees and denying the incidents, being challenged on a lack of evidence especially when there are no witnesses, and having to wait for lengthy processes. Upon hearing another participant comment on the ineffective reporting mechanism at her workplace, a Canadian Muslim woman who works in HR shared:

> **I think I'm in a unique position because this [dealing with reporting mechanisms] is my job. I've had to process and deal with discrimination and harassment complaints. So, I think it will be more valuable for me to give a global assessment. It's ineffective, regardless of which workplace I've gone to, especially depending on the structure of the human rights department or the equity department, if it's not independent of HR or legal. These things will often impact the neutrality of those departments. And I've seen it firsthand myself. So, unfortunately, as much as we have these systems, I usually don't even encourage people to use them, just because, just like [other participant] said, you have to do a cost benefit analysis of, 'is this actually going to be worth it? I'm already facing racism, Islamophobia, all of this stuff. Is it going to be worth it?' And unfortunately, I have to say across the board, I haven't seen a truly independent system.**

Thus, policy interventions for reporting mechanisms emerging from this study include: keeping human rights and equity departments separate from HR and legal departments; ensuring targets of violence are given protection from further victimization; holding perpetrators accountable in compassionate ways that encourage the development of their racial reflexivity to understand the nature of the harm they are committing; and processes that are time efficient and do not drag on, a situation that in itself can cause additional stress for those involved in the complaint process.

Section III: Towards Solutions

The final section of this report provides recommendations emerging from the study findings and insight into the supports that enable Canadian Muslim women's employment success while also shedding light on barriers and how they can be overcome. Highlighted below are effective resources, especially networks and mentors, missing supports or resources still needed, and finally, avenues for future research.

1. Effective Resources

As Canadian Muslim women shared their experiences of entering the labour market, finding work, and maintaining or advancing in their careers, they mentioned effective resources that enabled their employment. In terms of finding work, several women shared they found utility in their family and friend networks, including social media (e.g. Instagram or Whatsapp groups), applying online (LinkedIn, Indeed, Charity Village, and online job boards), and, for those already employed, advancing through internal opportunities.

When it came to enablers that allowed Canadian Muslim women to continue working for pay, they mention daycare and other forms of childcare; supportive colleagues or work team, especially a caring manager; supportive home environment and family (to coordinate care, chores, and commuting); transportation to commute; location flexibility (e.g., remote work); time flexibility, and being able to take breaks as need for prayer or fast breaking; intrinsic value of the work itself; and the employee assistance program, which one participant shared was more effective than her union.

What is important to note about these resources is that they are not effective for only Canadian Muslim women but would be valuable resources for others as well. Consider, for example, this Canadian Muslim woman's experience of how remote work alleviated the difficulty of navigating disability and single parenting responsibilities:

> **"We have to go into the office twice or three times a week. I'm exempt from that because I can stay home, work remotely. Because all of my equipment is set up [to accommodate the disability] and to set it up at the office, that's almost impossible. It's gonna take hours and special experts to set everything up so being with a disability, I have the added blessing of being at home. But as I'm also a single mother. So having just the kids, you know, come home. And then I'm home already. It's been amazing."**

Remote work options would support not only Canadian Muslim women, but also single mothers, Canadians with diverse abilities or disabilities, and anyone needing to balance multiple responsibilities—which describes most Canadian adults. Similarly, the other resources listed above would also support Canadians generally and are not specific to Canadian Muslim women.

For policymakers, it is important to note that policies created centered on the "average worker" (a white Christian straight cisgender male) will necessarily disadvantage those who do not share the privileges of the average worker. However, policies created centered on those most marginalized will also advantage those who hold privilege. A Canadian employer who participated in this study volunteered his thoughts on policy and workplace design:

> **Employer: I think it'd be interesting to think about some of these challenges from a workplace design perspective. What are the leading edge practices in recruiting and retention? I think a good goal for a lot of organizations is, 'How could I be the best place for a young single parent to work?' And if we start with that frame and add in the levels of culture [race] and faith to it, I think that actually helps us think through these problems in a universal design approach, like having a wheelchair ramp isn't just good for the person with the wheelchair, it's good for the person with the stroller. It's good for the person with the cane. It's good for the person doing delivery.**
>
> **Interviewer: You mentioned starting with a young single parent, why's that?**

> **Employer: Oh, because I think societally, they have the most expectations on them, right? They might be dealing—if they're in the sandwich generation dealing with expectations of their parents and their kids and all the scheduling stuff. If you could design around their needs, you're going to make it better for everybody.**

To engage in ethical and socially responsible decision making, policymakers are encouraged to think about employees at the margins. Enhancement of and access to the resources named above would support Canadian Muslim women and benefit all Canadians.

2. Relationships: Networks and Mentors

A disheartening finding in this study points to how the Canadian labour market seems to value connections over credentials. Immigrants arrive in Canada with the belief that if they work hard, they will make it. And if they do not achieve their career aspirations, then at least their children will. Their perspective is shaped by the social construction of the west as liberal, rational, and bureaucratized. The west is imagined to be a context where meritocracy decides who gets hired or fired, but the reality is starkly different. As demonstrated in interviews with Canadian employers and Muslim women, when it comes to getting and keeping work, how well one can perform one's work task is less important than how well one knows the manager.

Unfortunately, most immigrants do not know how deeply entrenched nepotism is in Canadian workplaces, and therefore rely on meritocracy by submitting their CVs and resumes to locations that will likely never bother to acknowledge the application—a discouraging experience in itself. Some are able to strategically find volunteer or short-term opportunities, which allow the women to build networks they can then use to pursue better opportunities. The immigrant women who are able to make the right connections often forge these opportunities through volunteering. Considering the history of indentured service, it appears volunteering may be a current reconstruction of the penalties immigrants pay in order to break into the Canadian labour market.

Many immigrant Muslim women are not able to pursue volunteering as a route to career opportunities because the financial burden of caring for a family in a new setting with limited social resources or assistance makes working for free impossible. Thus, they take on positions for which they are overqualified—including, for example, several women with graduate degrees working at fast food chains or for notoriously poor employers like Walmart. While working in these retail and service positions—which do not allow women the opportunity to build meaningful or useful networks—women continue to apply for better positions because they believe in meritocracy. And because they believe in meritocracy, they assume their unemployment is a function of their own deficiencies—they must not be qualified enough, or experienced enough, or that they lack the correct credentials, when in reality, they lack the right connections. And the tragedy of this situation lies in the loss of potential opportunities Canadian Muslim women would have had, had they not become Canadian.

As an intervention, I would recommend the creation of networking opportunities that connect immigrants with members of professional, occupational, or trade networks. In other words, a resource that would help immigrants build meaningful and useful connections. An immigrant Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Pashto shared:

> **It would be helpful if social service organizations could help us connect with the companies and organizations we're interested in. I'm a civil engineer, and construction companies could provide training and opportunities for us to volunteer in different roles like monitoring or design.**

As mentioned above, such a networking service would benefit not only Canadian Muslims but other immigrants, young Canadians entering the labour market, and Canadian employers seeking to recruit talent or skilled workers.

The findings also indicate the importance of mentors in achieving desirable employment opportunities and career advancement. A second generation Canadian Muslim woman notes how a relationship with her supportive mentor was crucial to her career ambitions and trajectory:

> **I was very lucky to get a lot of experience, but I really think it comes down to one connection that I built with a professor. I felt like early on in my undergraduate career, I would just talk to her about my own ideas, what I was going through and how school was. I think she saw my potential, and she would encourage me. I always doubted myself, and she would be like 'No, you should have more faith in what you know, and go ahead. Apply for that scholarship. Do this, do that.' So, I think her mentorship really paved the way for me. And I think, if I didn't have that relationship, I probably just would have been an entry level healthcare worker forever. When I was applying for my Master's program, she spoke to me, 'Hey, you should consider this route. I'm not telling you to do it, but consider it.' So, I think that one person really was my strongest resource.**

I asked if the professor is also Muslim, and the participant mentioned the professor is a white woman,

> **But she's very, very inclusive. It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, she always makes an effort to hear your story... And she's thinking about your positionality. What do you want to share with the world? So, I think with her, even though she's not Muslim, and we don't really share much in terms of our sociodemographics. She really—just as a person, she sees you as a person, really wants you to be the best that you can be.**

Two important findings related to mentorship and supervision emerged in this study and are reflected in the above exchange. The first finding relates to mentors and supervisors seeing Canadian Muslim women as people, as human. This is unpacked above (see Policies that Need Rethinking).

The second finding related to mentorship and supervision that emerged from the study points to strategies Canadian Muslim women may consider. While some Canadian Muslim women accepted mentorship from (non-Muslim) white Canadians, not all did. Canadian Muslim women in middle and upper levels of employment, especially, reported not pursuing mentorship opportunities because all available mentors are white. In a larger narrative about barriers to advancement, this second generation Canadian Muslim woman shares,

> **Participant: I want to be mentored, and I go to the person. That person has no idea about the hurdles and the specific obstacles I faced, right? So, if it was at least like a brown woman, she would have found some commonalities between me and her. And I think that's true. In many of the organizations that I worked, most of the mentors are white. I feel like there's a lack of diversity over there.**
>
> **Interviewer: Did you end up selecting one of those candidates as your mentor?**
>
> **Participant: No, because I felt like I wouldn't have that connection. No disrespect. It's just that you know her struggles and my struggles would be very different from mine. So I didn't. I don't think that would have been useful for me.**

Likewise, another participant commented on how she felt white mentors would not understand or be able to empathize with how she was impacted by a number of Islamophobic attacks, including the Quebec Mosque shooting and the terrorist attack against the Afzal family, as well as how she has been impacted by the current genocide against Palestinians. This sentiment, of not being understood by white women, was repeatedly echoed, and notably by Canadian Muslim women who had experienced racial discrimination at school or work. In other words, past discriminatory experiences are informing their current decisions. This is by no means blaming Canadian Muslims for not taking on opportunities; rather, it is explaining their risk averse decision.

While not all Canadian Muslim women with white mentors in the current study report positive experiences, the vast majority do. As a recommendation to Canadian Muslim women, I would encourage pursuing and accepting mentorship opportunities based on how the mentor sees and treats you rather than if they share common sociodemographic characteristics or religious identity. Whether or not someone understands us is irrelevant if they care about us, because with care comes compassion and understanding. As the participant above shared, mentors who “see you as a person” can become your “strongest resource.”

3. Missing Supports

Before naming missing supports, it is important to note that not all participants had access to the aforementioned resources; thus, for some participants, these supports are missing. Affordable childcare and before/after school programs were especially named as needed supports among the resources listed above. Additional missing supports were identified by Canadian Muslim women. After describing the missing supports uniquely identified by immigrant women, I turn to supports missing for all.

Immigrant Canadian Muslim women experience unique barriers vis-à-vis Canadian born Muslim women, and these barriers were named when participants were asked to share what resources do not exist that they would want access to. These missing resources include technology training, social media skills and self-promotion training, financial aid for education, credential transfer assistance, and career advising. In terms of support with technology training, an immigrant Afghan Canadian Muslim woman who preferred to participate in Farsi shared,

> **Having technological literacy is important. Many people may get hired, but keeping a job becomes difficult when you're not proficient with the computer systems required for your role. I know some who have lost their jobs because their understanding of computers and programs wasn't up to par. I personally face this challenge in my current job. Many of us from Afghanistan aren't used to advanced programs, systems, or databases and feel pressured to catch up with our colleagues here. I'm sure these basic systems may not be difficult for those born here or who immigrated when they were young.**

Likewise, immigrant Canadian Muslim women also named support around social media skills and self-promotion as missing. One immigrant Canadian Muslim woman mentioned she was not hired for a position because the recruiters wanted to see her social media profile, and she is not active. Another participant mentioned she had pursued all the resources and avenues available to her, but what she needs support in is how to situate herself on the competitive job market:

> **I have collected resources from many organizations. But the support they provide is very basic. They want to update my resume—that would have helped like 10 years back. There's a lot of [negative] experiences... At the beginning I had frustration, anger, and shame. I went to different professionals, they offered feedback and I tried it all, I tried the different ways, I applied the feedback. I even work as a pre-employment counselor in my neighborhood community sometimes... The problem for people in my generation is marketing.**

While immigrant Canadian Muslim women feel the need for support around skills that may be missing, they also report needing support with skills they already have. Many women in this study report challenges around transferring their credentials post-migration, some mentioning their Masters degrees were translated to diplomas in the Canadian context. An immigrant Canadian Muslim woman shared,

> **Our primary request is for the government to make it easier for us to transfer and certify our credentials. They can implement exams to ensure that our qualifications meet the criteria... Our country of origin should not determine whether our credentials are accepted or not. I hold two master's degrees...**

> **Employers should take a holistic approach when screening prospective employees, considering their skills and qualifications rather than their place of origin.**

Complementing the above missing resource, there were also immigrant women who reported they wanted to pursue further education or training, but were not sure what they needed in order to secure paid employment. When asked what resources she felt were missing, one immigrant Canadian Muslim woman responded immediately,

> **Career advising. What courses should I take, what certificates do I need. I am doing this on my own by looking at the requirements of the job postings. I still can't get an OSAP loan, I haven't been here a whole year yet [even though I was able to get OSAP before].**

This participant lived, studied, and worked in Canada before needing to return to her country of origin for family responsibilities. Now back in Canada, her previous time in the country is not recognized and thus she is ineligible to apply for financial assistance. Financial aid for education was named as a missing support by several others, as the cost of higher education can be prohibitive to advancement:

> **Regarding strategies, there should be financial support available for newcomers who want to pursue further education. They can repay it once they've secured a good job. In my case, I faced three challenges when considering further studies: family responsibilities, the high cost of education, and the feeling that it might be too late due to the first two obstacles.**

The above named missing supports were particularly important for immigrant Canadian Muslim women. Participants, regardless of generation of immigration, reported additional missing supports including employment programs, in-house supports to network, prayer space, and religious accommodations.

When reporting on programs or supports that helped Canadian Muslim women secure employment, several mentioned programs or supports that no longer exist, like the Job Finders Club. Likewise, participants also noted how the programs tended to be short lived or sporadic. An Afghan Canadian Muslim woman who participated in Pashto noted,

> **I've noticed that there are programs available for women in refugee communities, but they often appear sporadic or short-lived. To make a real impact, these programs should be offered regularly, not just once or twice a month. I'm not sure if the YMCA does it differently. I'm not sure why YMCA does it like this.**

The participants also note that these programs and services tend to be situational and not structural, thereby making the resources less effective:

> **The settlement agency that assisted us when I first arrived [in Canada] was valuable. They conducted a survey of newcomers and sat down with each of us to gather information about our language skills, educational background, as well as our skills and hobbies. Some of them even helped us with writing our resumes. However, the issue is that none of this information was put into action. We didn't see any outcomes or results from all the hard work they did. No one followed up with us once we left the hotel.**

One specific structural resource requested by Canadian Muslim women was an opportunity to meet and socialize with other employees of marginalized identities within an organization. A second generation Canadian Muslim woman notes how she was impacted when she finally had a chance to meet and get to know another racialized colleague:

> **She worked there forever but we hadn't spoken before this random dinner. She had it way worse than I did, and I didn't know any of that until that dinner, because it was like such an informal setting, and she was like sharing one thing after the other... I think the ability to network with not just Muslims, but any person of color, because our experiences are so similar and having that connection is a support. So, I think just that in house support would go a long way for me.**

Just as this in house support would be a resource for Canadian Muslims and non-Muslims alike, so too would other supports benefit Canadians regardless of faith.

Several Canadian Muslim women named prayer space as a missing resource. Among those who had access to prayer space, they mentioned their workplaces created a decompression space for anyone to enjoy a moment of silence in, whether they were decompressing, meditating, or praying. Prayer spaces do not need to be used exclusively for Muslim prayer; the only requirement is ritual cleanliness (tahirah). Thus, offering decompression spaces would benefit not only Canadian Muslim women, but other employees as well. Decompression spaces are notably features of organizations and workplaces that prioritize employee wellbeing.

Likewise, religious accommodations for Ramadan and Eid were often mentioned as missing resources. While time flexibility (mentioned in effective resources above) would address concerns related to religious accommodations for Ramadan and Eid, the women who name these concerns notably do not have time flexibility as an aspect of their work. Instead, Canadian Muslim women shared how their managers denied them time arrangements (e.g., moving a lunch hour to fast breaking time at sunset) due to "policies," even as these organizations made accommodations for other holidays, including Pride month. Regardless of faith, adjusting policies to support employees who need time considerations would allow employees to navigate the many commitments and responsibilities they juggle, making it easier for employees to focus on work when they are at work (see more below).

4. Areas for future research

This section highlights findings that indicate further research is needed. The findings are organized by the socioeconomic and sociodemographic measures referenced above. The discussion integrates both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Employment outcomes. The economy has shifted in the past few decades, from traditional job opportunities to new job conditions. Earlier job conditions included permanency, a stable salary (with benefits), and opportunities to advance through the organization. The average worker in the 1950s could expect to join a company and work for that same company through to retirement; along the way, the worker would advance through the ranks and retire well. This is no longer the case, as the market has shifted from role-based labour to project-based labour. Increasingly, workers are hired on contract for temporary projects, and where earlier employees could expect mutual loyalty and job permanency, current employees are left to market themselves and continually seek new employment. Scholars indicate the shift in the economy has impacted women, people of colour, and immigrants more so than the rest of the population.

In the current study, findings indicate that women at the lower levels of employment are not greatly bothered by neoliberal job conditions; many are able to find service-oriented positions that may not pay well but do offer job stability and permanency. However, women in higher levels of employment report being greatly, and negatively, impacted by the "gig economy." The few who are able to secure permanent positions are content with the stability, but most women were on and/or between contracts. Given these realities, better measures of employment outcomes are needed. For example, the Canadian Census includes measures of employment as unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, and employed. The "employed" category ought to be disaggregated such that those who are employed and looking for work can be parsed. Additional measures to track the impact of the neoliberal economy (e.g., permanent or contract work, etc.) can facilitate meaningful decoding of Census data.

Citizenship. While Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens are least likely to be employed (36%), adults generally who are not Canadian citizens are most likely to be employed (63%; Table 4). Further research is needed to identify why the lack of Canadian citizenship would be an apparently unique barrier for Muslim women.

Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens reported the lowest levels of employment across occupational categories, including the assisting occupations and retail, where Muslim women in Canada are generally overrepresented (Table 6). Occupation category information for more than half (53%) of Canadian Muslim women who are not citizens was not available, making this an important line of future inquiry.

Official language skills. Surprisingly, Francophonic Canadian Muslim women fared better than their Anglophonic counterparts, and also had the lowest unemployment rate of all the language categories. When compared with the overall Canadian adult sample, Canadian Muslim women were significantly less likely to report full-time employment regardless of language skills, but that the difference was smallest among Francophones (40% Canadian Muslim women, 46% Canadian adults). Despite these findings indicating more positive outcomes for Francophonic Canadian Muslim women, they have poorer outcomes in terms of representation in legislative, senior management, and middle management positions (Table 9).

In the focus group with Francophone Canadian Muslim women, those who reside in Quebec mentioned anti-Muslim legislation, like Bill 21, acted as a barrier to advancing in the fields they wanted to pursue; some report switching career direction in order to avoid being penalized by the legislation. Further research is needed to unpack how Francophone Muslim women navigate the labour market.

Employment rates for Canadian Muslim women with knowledge of both official languages were fairly close to their general Canadian counterparts (63% and 67% respectively). However, the difference is much larger for those who know neither official language, as the general Canadian adult average rate of employment is four times that of Canadian Muslim women (19% and 5%, respectively). It would seem that Canadian Muslim women without official language skills are especially penalized. While efforts are already underway to facilitate language learning for new immigrants, a line of inquiry into what facilitators and enablers supporting those in the general Canadian population without official language skills would help shed light on what supports may be missing for Canadian Muslim women.

Generation of immigration. While the first and second generations of Canadian Muslim women report lower rates of employment compared to their general Canadian counterparts, third generation Canadian Muslim women fair slightly better than their counterparts (60% vs. 58%; Table 10). Likewise, while Canadian Muslim women's rates of being unemployed and looking for work are nearly twice those of the general Canadian adult sample for first- and second-generation Canadians, the differences are remarkably muted for third generation Canadian Muslim women and their general Canadian counterparts (5% and 4% respectively). These findings indicate that it may take up to three or more generations for Canadian Muslim women to overcome the barriers that limit their participation in the paid workforce.

Despite third generation Canadian Muslim women generally enjoying somewhat better outcomes than their first and second generation counterparts, this pattern was not observed for those in legislative or senior management positions. Surprisingly, the mean for third generation or more Canadian Muslim women was 0 (Table 12), indicating too few Canadian Muslim women who are third generation or beyond occupy these higher level positions to be picked up by the Census. Conversely, compared with Canadian adults, third generation Canadian Muslim women were more likely to report working in middle management positions (23% vs. 16%). While third generation Canadian Muslim women were more likely than Canadian adults generally to report working in professional occupations (17% vs. 11%), they were also more likely to report working in retail sales and services (21% vs. 12%).

However, it is also important to note that the barriers confronting immigrant Canadian Muslim women do not mean that second and latter generation Canadian Muslim women necessarily have better outcomes. For example, Canadian born Muslim women reported similar levels of unemployment while looking for work as Muslim women who are not Canadian citizens (11% and 10%, respectively; Table 4). Clearly, Canadian birth does not confer benefits to these women. Additionally, Canadian born Muslim women were more than twice as likely to report being unemployed and looking for work compared with general Canadian adults born in Canada (11% vs. 5%), a difference much larger than their counterparts born elsewhere. Further research is required to unpack the mechanisms impacting Canadian Muslim women's employment by immigration of generation.

Race/ethnicity. Canadian Muslim women who identify as Arab, West Asian, South Asian, Black, and Indigenous reported the poorest employment outcomes. Arab and West Asian Canadian Muslim women reported rates on par with their general Canadian counterparts, indicating that non-Muslim Arab and West Asian Canadians may be experiencing discrimination related to Islamophobia because of their ethnic identity regardless of their religious identity. Further research is needed to assess the impact of Islamophobia on non-Muslims.

Despite having the highest rate of women in senior management and the second highest rate of overall employment, East Asian Canadian Muslim women who reported studying in East Asia had the lowest employment rate (Table 16). Further research is needed to shed light on the strategies and supports East Asian Canadian Muslim women engage to generate such positive socioeconomic outcomes, and why those who studied in East Asia may face specific barriers.

Location of studies. While Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada were on par with the general Canadian public in reporting full-time employment (66% and 68% respectively), those who studied in South and Southeast Asia were markedly behind (40% and 71%; Table 16). Interestingly, though Canadian adults who studied in South and Southeast Asia reported slightly higher levels of full-time employment than those who studied in Canada (62% vs. 61%), Canadian Muslim women who also studied in South and Southeast Asia were significantly less likely to report full-time employment compared with Canadian Muslim women who studied in Canada (31% vs. 52%).

Given these statistics, it is very difficult to imagine only immigration is acting as a barrier here; there is something about being an immigrant Muslim woman that is especially impactful for those who studied in South and Southeast Asia. This finding also counters the assumption that poor Canadian Muslim socioeconomic outcomes are a result of the higher proportion of immigrants in Canadian Muslim communities. These assumptions often point to anti-immigrant discrimination and dismiss Islamophobia; the current finding indicates that even when factors around anti-immigrant bias, like location of studies, are considered, there is significant evidence for the impact of gendered Islamophobia.

Education. Although employment rates increased as education status increased for Canadian Muslim women, unemployment for those looking for work surprisingly did not decrease, averaging at about 9% across levels of education. This contrasts with the general Canadian adult population, for whom unemployment for those looking for work does decrease with each additional level of education. While the percent of unemployed Canadian Muslim women looking for work is roughly double that of the general Canadian population at lower levels of education, it is triple that of the Canadian adult public at the highest level of education (9% vs. 3%). This indicates a significant issue regarding unemployment for Canadian Muslim women in professional fields, confirmed by qualitative interviews and focus groups. In other words, while higher education confers employment benefits for Canadians generally, it does not for Muslim women specifically.

Marital status. Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married: widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of Canadian women (32% and 34% respectively; Table 25). Likewise, Canadian Muslim women reported significantly lower rates of full-time employment compared to the general sample of Canadian women, except for those who are not currently married: widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were on par with the general sample of Canadian women (28% and 29% respectively).

Conversely, widowed and divorced Canadian Muslim women were more than twice as likely to report being unemployed and looking for work compared to the general sample of Canadian women (7% vs. 3%), yet almost half as likely to report being unemployed and not looking for work (29% vs. 51%). Taken together, these findings indicate divorced and widowed Canadian Muslim women may be over engaged in the labour market due to a lack of social and economic supports. Further research into the forms of support, resources, and policies that may ease widowed and divorced women's financial hardship is needed.

Age of youngest child. Compared with the general sample of Canadian women, it appears Canadian Muslim women's employment was more impacted by the presence of young children. For those with no children in the home, about half of both Canadian Muslim women and the general sample of Canadian women report employment (46%, Table 28). However, Canadian Muslim women reported decreasing levels of employment as the age of the youngest child in the home decreased, while the general Canadian sample of women reported significantly higher rates of employment than those with no children. Similar patterns emerged around full-time employment rates (Table 29). Canadian Muslim mothers may be prioritizing care for their children over paid work, but considering unemployment rates for Canadian Muslim mothers looking for work also increase with the decreasing age of the youngest child, it would appear there may also be other forces at play, including a lack of support. Several employers noted how they observed Canadian Muslim women take on an unequal amount of childcare responsibilities during the pandemic lockdown, and Canadian Muslim women repeatedly mentioned they want their male counterparts to step up and take initiative with housework and childcare. Research into Canadian Muslim men's masculinity and gendering of work may help shed light on why Muslim men are reluctant to take on their fair share in the domestic context.

Although Canadian Muslim women's employment seemed to be impacted by the presence of children, different patterns emerge around management-related occupations. Compared to Canadian Muslim women with youngest children aged 2 or older at home, those with children aged 1 or younger were overrepresented in management related occupations, only. This finding may indicate that Canadian Muslim women who are employed while having a child aged one year or younger at home are in positions that provide exceptional maternity benefits that allow Canadian Muslim women to continue working, uninterrupted by family responsibilities. Canadian Muslim women with children aged 1 or younger are underrepresented in the remaining occupations, indicating there may be insufficient maternity related supports for Canadian Muslim women. Further research is needed to assess the realities facing Canadian Muslim mothers of infants and how childcare impacts their employment.

Provinces. Despite being home to the majority of Canada's Muslims, Ontario is lagging Quebec and British Columbia in integrating Muslim women into the paid workforce. While half or more of Canadian Muslim women report being employed in Quebec and British Columbia, just over a third of Ontario based Canadian Muslim women report the same.

Surprisingly, New Brunswick boasts the lowest levels of Canadian Muslim women who are looking for work while unemployed (Table 31). The largest difference between full-time employment rates of Canadian Muslim women compared with the general Canadian public was in New Brunswick (34% difference; 18% vs. 52%), while the smallest difference in rates of part-time employment was also New Brunswick (2% difference, 12% Canadian Muslim women vs. 10% Canadian adults).

From qualitative interviews, it is clear New Brunswick is an unwelcoming environment for immigrant Muslims, especially Canadian Muslim women, and Muslim families leave New Brunswick for better opportunities in other provinces (according to the 2021 Census, to Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta; analyses not shown but available upon request). Canadian Muslim women in New Brunswick may be disproportionately taking on part-time positions in the absence of opportunities for full-time work. This may also be occurring in Newfoundland and Labrador, where Canadian Muslim women are over four times more likely to report part-time work compared with the general Canadian sample (42% vs. 10%).

Longitudinal analysis. When considering how socioeconomic realities and work conditions have evolved over time, it is important to note a number of changes have restructured the economy and workplace, including the neoliberal restructuring of career tracks, inflation, pandemic-related disruptions, and increased interest in diversity initiatives following public and socially impactful events.

For example, the Black Lives Matter movement mobilized in May of 2020 after the brutal murder of George Floyd by a police officer. This tragedy and the social mobilization that followed resulted in a rise of racial consciousness, and actors within social institutions began to engage in critical self-reflection (racial reflexivity). A number of employers I spoke with mentioned George Floyd's murder specifically when describing the relatively new focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion practices at the workplace. However, a racialized employer also called out white employers for their lack of racial reflexivity. Further research can shed light on employers' racial reflexivity and the impact it has on workplace racial justice.

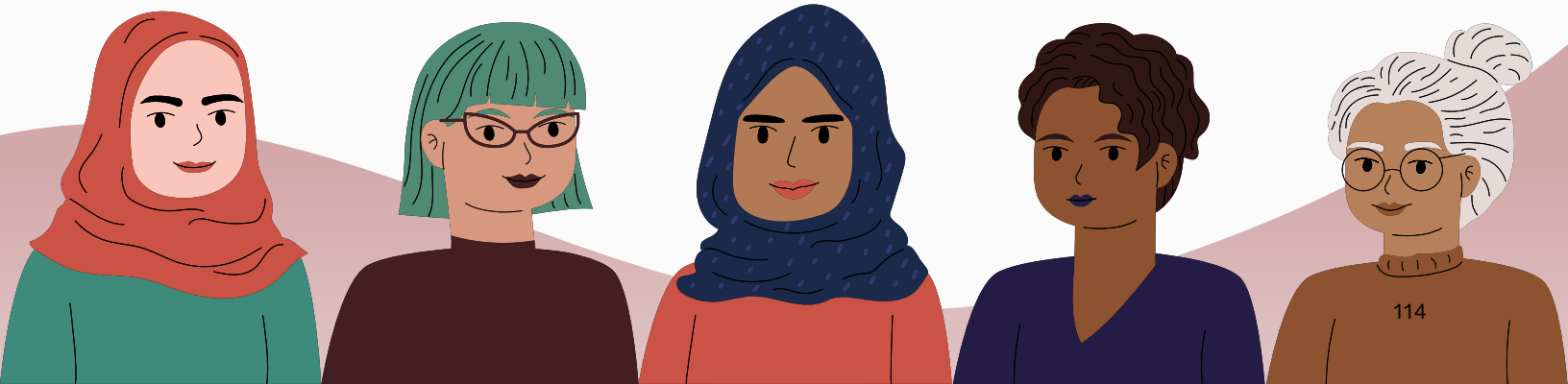
Additionally, the 2021 Census was collected a year after George Floyd's murder. While some workplaces may have been able to strategize and respond to the need for racial inclusion with that year, the employers I spoke with indicated this is still a work in progress. Thus, the 2021 Census may have been too soon after George Floyd's murder to capture the social impact. I anticipate we can properly observe the impact of the George Floyd effect on improving inclusion and diversity within workplaces in future Census cycles.

In addition to George Floyd's murder, September 11th was also named as an impactful public event that affected Canadian Muslim women's employment. Given the way the Census is collected (religious affiliation is measured every 10 years) it is difficult to deduce the effect of September 11th on Canadian Muslim women's employment. While the date for the 2001 Canadian Census is May 15, 2001, just before the tragic events, the next cycle to include data on religious affiliation was in 2011; such few datapoints over such a long period of time makes capturing trends difficult. Nonetheless, even as Canadian Muslim women experience a life course effect upon entry into the formal labour market, it may be that those who entered the labour market during the heightened period of post 9/11 Islamophobia have poorer outcomes due to a cohort effect. Further research is required to measure the extent of the impact of 9/11 on Canadian Muslim women's labour market participation.

Local economy, global inequality. A final thematic discussion point connects the local economy to global inequality. To return to the quote opening this report:

> **Eventually we'll be able to liberate ourselves from this systemic abuse... If you graduate university and you can't get a job because of your name. If you are qualified, and you have to start over because you wear a hijab on your head. This is abuse, this is financial abuse. This is exploitation. This is social abuse. It's really important for us to learn to name these things...**

Here, the participant is calling out the lack of integration between Canadian immigration and employment policies, a situation that leaves highly trained and skilled immigrant Canadian Muslim women jobless. While the participant focuses on the Canadian context when exploring this "systemic abuse", I note it has larger consequences. This practice exacerbates global inequality, because it creates a brain drain of skilled workers from previously colonized nations and a surplus of those workers in colonizing nations. And global conflict ensures those who have the means to leave (e.g., skilled workers) will flee, precluding the development of local infrastructure. This is a cycle that is exacerbating global inequality and making the world's poor poorer and the rich richer. Further research is needed to illuminate how immigrant receiving countries like Canada might be exacerbating global economic inequality by failing to integrate immigrants.



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