

FORGOTTEN WOMEN: THE IMPACT OF ISLAMOPHOBIA ON MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



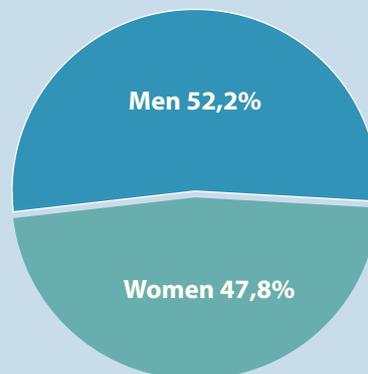
The majority of Muslims in England and Wales are born in the UK. Based on the entire Muslim population (including men and women), ethnic Pakistanis and Bangladeshis constitute over half of the Muslim population in England and Wales, followed by a smaller proportion of White Muslims and Black African Muslims.

There are Muslim women in England, Wales and Scotland. The majority of Muslim women are young: approximately 49% of Muslim women in England and Wales are under 25 years of age. A further 35% are between the ages 25 to 44 and a key demographic in the labour market. There is a similar distribution

in Scotland: 47% are under 25 and 37% between 25 and 44 years of age. This young demographic is increasingly well-educated, with 36% of British Muslim women in London choosing to go to university.

There are over
2.7 million
Muslims in the United
Kingdom, constituting
approximately **4.5%**
of the population.

Muslim population in England, Wales and Scotland



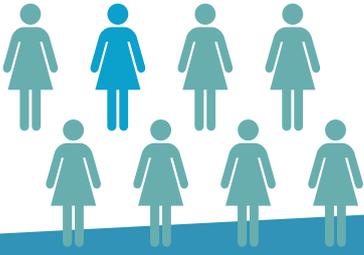
Total population
2.787.000

COURT CASE

In *Azmi v Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council*, a teaching assistant wanted to wear a niqab in the classroom when with a male teacher, claiming that her suspension for refusing to remove the veil was direct discrimination. The Employment Appeal Tribunal found instead that the treatment was indirectly discriminatory, disadvantaging her as a Muslim. However, the appeal also found that the discrimination was

proportionate as the children needed to see her face in order to get the best quality education. This decision has 'far-reaching' effect because 'it means that most of the cases involving religious dress as well as those involving time off for religious observance are dealt with as cases of indirect discrimination. This means that their success of otherwise will depend on the courts' view of proportionality'.





One in eight Pakistani women

are asked about marriage and family aspirations in job interviews whereas only one in thirty white women are asked such a question.



The most prescient issue regarding discrimination in the workplace for Muslim women refers to widespread misconceptions about religious dress. **43% of women** surveyed felt they 'were treated differently or encountered discrimination at interviews because they were Muslim'. Furthermore, **50% of women wearing the hijab** felt they had "missed out on progression opportunities because of religious discrimination and that the wearing of the hijab had been a factor".

Situation and discrimination in employment: additional obstacles when a woman and a Muslim

Women

The 2014 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) demonstrates that women employed full-time continue to be **paid 14.2 per cent less** in hourly wages than their male counterparts while women in part-time employment incur pay shortfalls of 4.8 per cent. Women fill fewer



senior roles than men. Despite gains in some sectors, there are losses in others, suggesting that increased representation in senior posts has not progressed significantly in recent years. The shrinking public sector is the only stratum of the labour market that supports women's leadership.

Ethnic minorities

A study found that ethnic minority applicants had to **send 74% more applications than their white counterparts to achieve an equal level of success**. There is also evidence of name discrimination, where Muslim or ethnic sounding names get fewer interviews and considerations from potential employers. Such penalties are described in academic literature as 'ethnic penalties'.



While austerity and cuts impact women in general, Black and Minority Ethnicity women (BME), including a majority of Muslim women, face significant and particular challenges that white women do not. BME workers, and in particular Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi minorities, experience **significant gaps in pay equality compared to white women** of the same qualifications. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women seem to face the most acute penalties in terms of unemployment and over-qualification when compared to white women.

Muslim women

Muslim women face multiple discrimination when searching for employment, in career progression, and in gender-based pay equity. **This multiple discrimination is a composition of gender-based, ethnic, and religious factors**. Forms of direct and indirect discrimination that affect Muslim women emerge at recruitment and application stages.

Recent work confirms that ethnic penalties are compounded and intensified by a **'Muslim penalty'**. There is evidence that suggests that stereotypes and outdated assumptions about Muslim women's gender roles and cultural differences drive these penalties.

Researchers Khattab and Johnston find clear evidence of a 'Muslim penalty', demonstrating that unlike Hindu Indians who are almost 1.49 times as likely as a white British Christian to access the salariat, Muslim Indians are 0.86 times as likely to acquire such a job. Similarly, White Muslims are approximately 0.72 times as likely as a white Christian or non-religious woman to access the salariat and the odds for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are significantly worse. In fact, according to them Muslim women with degrees have a lower likelihood to attain a job commensurate with their qualifications than their White British Christian counterparts.

Violence against women, hate crime and hate speech: Muslim women at the intersection of violence

Anti-Muslim hate crimes are recorded under both racially-motivated and religiously motivated categories by police forces, showing that Islamophobia is a term that transcends definitions of racial and religious hate. However, **information on racial or religious hate crimes is not broken down by gender**, making it impossible to disaggregate gender dynamics from the hate crime statistics. According to formal crime surveys, South Asians report a higher level of hate crime experiences than any other ethnicity in Britain. Compared to other religions, Muslims are the most frequent victims of racially and religiously motivated hate crime.

Muslim women face significant levels of racism, harassment, abuse and, in some cases, violence due to their religious identity. The challenges faced by Muslim women can be made particularly acute for those that are 'visibly' Muslim: wearing the hijab, niqab or burqa increases the likelihood that a woman will be targeted for a hate crime.

According to Tell MAMA, a confidential third-party reporting service, **Muslim women are more likely than men to be victims of hate crimes.** Tell MAMA broadly receives three types of anti-Muslim cases that affect women: threats and verbal abuse, violence and assault, and online hate. Threats and verbal abuse are the most common and it appears to be an almost everyday experience for Muslim women on public transport, in the street, and in their neighbourhoods: 54% of offline victims were women. Verbal abuse is often directly related to stories in the news, demonstrating that the language of verbal abuse centres on ongoing news issues that reference Muslim communities in a negative way.

While most cases do end at verbal abuse, they are sometimes met with violence against Muslim women in varying degrees. Hate crimes usually occur in public spaces and one of the most common crimes includes spitting at women who wear the hijab or pulling their clothing in order to remove it. Offline attacks tend to spike during major international incidents, as was the case after the attacks in Paris in November 2015. In the week following the attacks, anti-Muslim hate crimes reported to Tell MAMA increased threefold, with 115 attacks observed in one week.

Around two-thirds of the cases reported to Tell MAMA in 2014 occurred online. **Online hate attacks are increasing** and a significant concern on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, with verbal abuse and hate speech being the most common incidents. Online abuse references world events even more frequently than in-person attacks. While there is a particular relationship between anti-Muslim hate and far-right discourse (half of the cases reference the far-right), individual Facebook and Twitter users make direct attacks on Muslim users as well. Often the most radical of these users will single out Muslim users, generally women, and engage in targeted campaigns of harassment, abuse, and even threats. These platforms present significant legal challenges in terms of prosecution and law-enforcement and there have been reports when social media platforms are not able or not willing to take down such offensive accounts.

Violence against women



European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014)

Muslim respondents to the Crime Survey of England and Wales reported hate crimes that are categorised under the 'racial' strand in the highest proportion. They are also three times as likely as any other religious category to have experienced religiously motivated hate crime. While these numbers are only indicative, they show that **people identifying with an Islamic faith experience racially and religiously motivated hate crime more frequently than those of other faiths.**



Often women are more identifiable due to their expression of religious identity through clothing and this might trigger attacks. According to Tell MAMA, of the 34 cases of women targeted with verbal abuse in person, 23 - **68%** - were wearing identifiably religious clothing.

MEDIA

A YouGov poll finds that 74% of the British public claim that they know nothing or next to nothing about Islam and 64% get their information about Islam through the media. British Muslims have overwhelmingly been represented through security concerns and cultural difference. Further, the representation of Muslims women abroad, especially in geographies of war (in areas including Afghanistan,

Iraq, and Syria), through frames of war and conflict, thus as victims and in precarious situation, further impact Muslims domestically. British Muslim women have primarily been explored in the media through frames around the veil. The niqab, burqa and other veiling practices that cover the face are either seen as 'passive' forms of radicalisation or as a symbol of female oppression. In particular, full-face veiling is seen as

fundamentally 'other' to 'Britishness', incompatible with modern liberal society, and presents specific threats to counter-terrorism policing. Both of these ways to depict the veil and therefore Muslim women are limiting the sense of agency of Muslim women.



MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

To Member States and EU institutions, equality bodies, trade unions

- 1 Ensure that the legislation protecting against discrimination in the labour market and against hate crimes effectively protects Muslim women.
- 2 Disaggregate the statistics on hate crime strands by gender.
- 3 Ensure a more consistent and harmonised policing of anti-Muslim hate crime across the UK.
- 4 Promote awareness of police and third-party reporting services such as Tell MAMA and what actually constitutes a hate crime to address under-reporting.
- 5 Address the significant impact of counter-terrorism policing in confirming and re-asserting many of the stereotypes about Muslims and Muslim women in particular.

To employers:

- 1 Develop a business case for diversity and reach out to various sources for recruitment.
- 2 Target diversity and ensure training on diversity issues.
- 3 Use self-regulatory mechanisms such as the National Equality Standard.
- 4 Tackle false stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim women and their attitudes to work .



www.enar-eu.org

This factsheet is based on the findings of research undertaken by Iman Abou Atta Bharath Ganesh in the United Kingdom in the frame of ENAR's project "Forgotten women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women". The research was conducted between December 2014 and January 2016.

With the support of:

