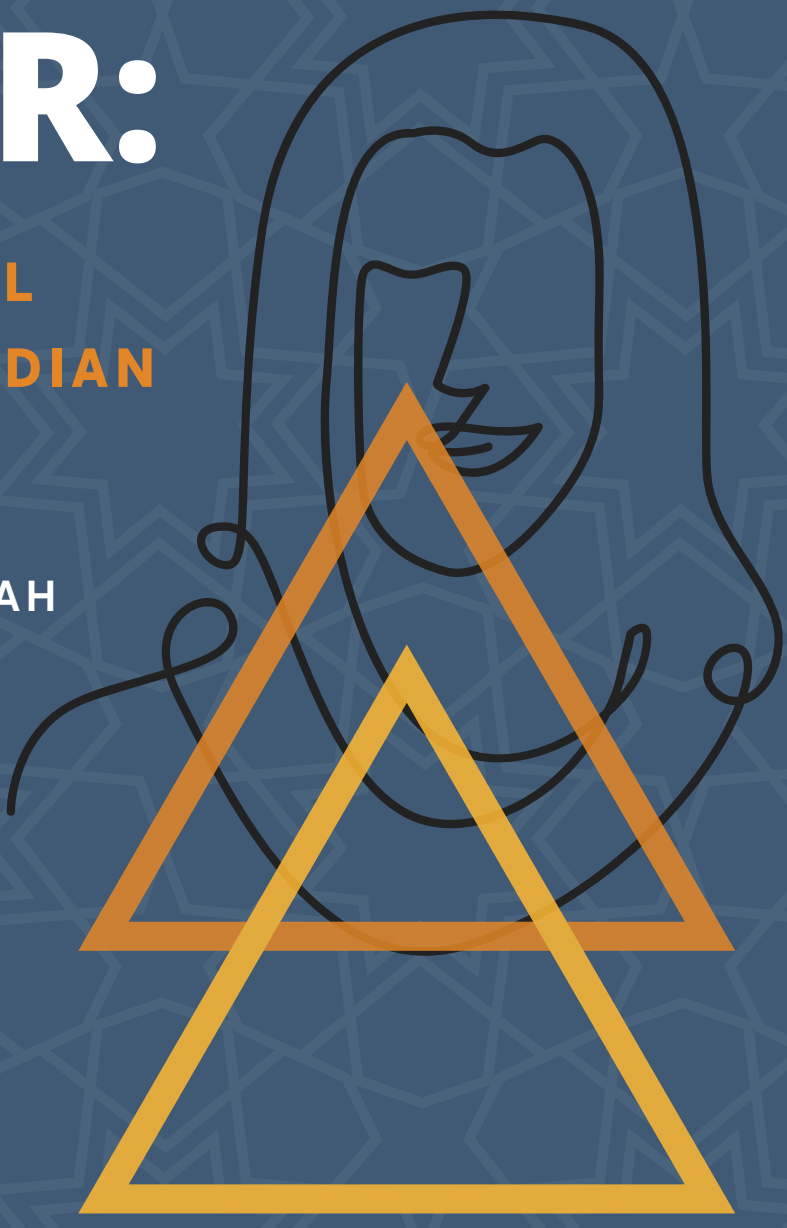
VOICES THAT MATTER:

AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN MUSLIM WOMEN

PREPARED BY SARAH SHAH



Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes (CCFM)

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, sisters. I acknowledge the Murdered and the Missing women, girls, and non-binary and Two-Spirit folk. As I report on the violence against Canadian Muslim women, especially newcomer Muslim mothers, I am reminded of the colonial violence, enacted across many generations, tearing First Nations children from their mothers and their ties to Indigenous culture, history, and tradition. We cannot undo the systems of violence against Muslim women on Turtle Island without addressing the systemic violence against Indigenous women, girls, and non-binary and Two-Spirit folk.

I also wish to acknowledge the brave Canadian Muslim women who stepped forward to participate in this study. The title of the report emerges from the statement made by a young Black Canadian Muslim woman. She stated,

> When you're Black or African, people see you as less than and different, like your voice doesn't even matter.

I want this young woman to know that her voice does matter. As do the voices of the women who participated in this study, women who echoed feeling like they are less than or mattered less. This report is my attempt to provide a summary of the painful, resilient, equally heart-wrenching and inspiring life stories shared by Canadian Muslim women living at the intersections of multiple identities. I do not have the words to express my gratitude to the women who made time despite overstretched schedules to share their wealth of lived experiences that made this report possible.

I thank Zainab Jamal and Ilham Ismail for their exceptional dedication to the project, including work related to translation, recruitment, and focus group facilitation. Their contributions ensured the inclusion of women who would otherwise not have participated in this study, women who reported experiencing frequent every day and systematic exclusion.

I am grateful to CCMW's board and leadership 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 expanding their service provisions and inclusion of Canadian Muslim women living at the margins.

This report was made possible through financial support from the Federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE).

Women and Gender Equality Canada
Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada
Canada

Author: Sarah Shah

ISBN: 978-1-7386870-0-8

Direct questions about this report to:
Canadian Council of Muslim Women
P.O. Box 73509, RPO Wychwood Toronto, ON M6C 4A7 Canada
info@ccmw.com
www.ccmw.com

Executive summary

Overview

This report unpacks the sociodemographic and economic outcomes and experiences of diverse groups of Canadian Muslim women including refugees, newcomers, Black, single mothers, queer, or women with diverse abilities using intersectionality as a framework.

Research Methods

This mixed methods research project draws on nationally representative quantitative data from the 2011 National Household Survey, an original qualitative survey, and a series of focus group and individual interviews with members of the target population groups.

Findings

An overview of Canadian Muslim women's sociodemographic and socioeconomic outcomes demonstrates inequities vis-à-vis non-Muslim women's outcomes. Among the specified groups of Canadian Muslim women, there were varying levels and forms of disparities.

Newcomers, including non-official languages speakers

Newcomers report significantly poorer outcomes, especially if they do not speak an official language. Newcomer women are often denied services, dismissed, and dehumanized. They experience discrimination in multiple social and public institutions, including when crossing the border, when using public transit, when seeking work and on the job, and in stores and other public spaces. Much of these experiences are due to social exclusion and not a lack of social capital—e.g., the women are aware of the services but denied access by social service providers. These experiences are exacerbated by barriers around language for those without official language skills, but even those that were able to speak English and French experienced discrimination. Failure to provide adequate service was notably a consistent theme reported by women who spoke non-official languages, and especially if they were mothers. Women are acutely aware of this treatment, but may not feel equipped to advocate for themselves given language barriers

Black and East African Canadian Muslim women

In quantitative data analyses, Black Canadian Muslim women are those that self-identified as “Black” on the race and ethnicity question, regardless of location of birth. East African Canadian Muslim women were identified through location of birth, and thus are first generation Canadians. Sociodemographic and socioeconomic outcomes for Black and East African Canadian Muslim women vis-à-vis the general sample of Canadian Muslim women reveal underlying systemic barriers blocking Black Canadian Muslim women from economic integration. In qualitative interviews, Black Canadian Muslim women describe being constantly burdened with and confronted by ideological expectations and assumptions. These expectations and assumptions are framed as the reason behind other experiences of discrimination, such as on the job market and in workplaces, which are identified as serious concerns for material and mental well-being. These concerns are exacerbated by familial expectations and demands, like earning for the family while being dissuaded from investing in one’s own education.

Single Mothers

In terms of quantitative outcomes, Canadian Muslim single mothers appear to be doing as well as the general sample of Canadian Muslim women, but qualitative analyses reveal a different story. They are achieving the same outcomes, but with very limited resources, and so these mothers have to work hard in multiple arenas,

stretching themselves beyond their means to make ends meet. Canadian Muslim single mothers report a high sense of self-efficacy to achieve such a difficult balance with limited resources, however their narratives highlighting this self-efficacy reveal the harrowing, often heart-breaking struggles these mothers endure for the sake of their children. Others—especially employers—aware of women's status as sole financial provider would take advantage of women's reliance on these limited resources (e.g., employment) to exploit the women. Additionally, single mothers report feeling isolated especially in the context of COVID. Canadian Muslim single mothers report wanting religious based information on and access to Islamic divorce.

Queer women

Given limitations in data availability, the analyses of Canadian Muslim women of diverse sexual identities draws on qualitative data. Canadian Muslim queer women report more anxiety and insecurity around their religious and ethnic identities compared to other participants. Queer women in this study report feeling excluded from social spaces, as their Muslim identity others them in queer spaces while their sexual orientation others them in Muslim spaces. Although other groups, like single mothers, report being scrutinized by Canadian Muslim communities, queer identified participants felt particularly unwelcome, and report experiences of hostility in Muslim-majority settings (e.g., the Masjid).

Women with diverse abilities

Like data on queer Canadian Muslims, data on Canadian Muslims with diverse abilities is limited. As such, the analyses in this report focus on qualitative data. Canadian Muslim women with diverse abilities experience a sense of nonbelonging general to other participants in the study, as a religious and ethnic minority. However, this sense of nonbelonging is exacerbated by their diverse abilities and needs. Their experience of having diverse abilities and needs is also framed by their identities as Canadian Muslim women. It is notable that the women who participated in this study report their diverse abilities do not affect their daily lives; thus, further research is necessary to better understand the diverse experiences of those who are differently abled, especially among Canadian Muslim women whose diverse abilities impact their daily lives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerge from the findings of this report. However, I stress that in implementing these suggestions, policymakers, politicians, and providers retain the responsibility of speaking with the women they intend to serve, and asking them directly how best to serve them. The following suggestions may or may not be relevant for all women, whose experiences and needs are nuanced, informed, and structured by the diversity in gender identity, race and ethnicity, geography, class, education and employment status, family structure, and so on.

Navigating the job market

In terms of navigating the job market, it should be no surprise that the Canadian system, which deflates immigrant credentials and generally has an anti-immigrant bias, is difficult especially for newcomers to integrate into. However, even women raised and educated in Canada experience discrimination. The women who seemed to be able to find work with more ease are those who used their identities as racialized Muslim women to secure work. In other words, they are able to capitalize on their "otherness" because of the racism endemic in Canadian social fabric. Recommendations emerging from these findings include a critical assessment of racism in hiring practices. Assumptions that employers make about Canadian Muslim women act as barriers to their employment.

Social isolation and social inclusion

Social isolation and inclusion emerge as serious concerns for multiple groups of women, but especially for newcomers and for single mothers. Newcomers who speak languages other than English or French felt especially excluded from Canadian public and social life. Some women who speak Pashto reported others of their ethnic communities would speak English instead, further alienating these women. Recommendations emerging from these findings include creating social support groups, for example to allow single mothers to socialize with others in similar situations without the weight of judgement or surveillance. This may differ based on the needs of the individuals, for example social support groups for newcomers should include people who are not newcomers so that the women can expand their social networks.

Regarding social inclusion, Canadian community and feminist organizations can address concerns about stereotypes related to Canadian Muslim women through education programs, demystifying Islam and Muslims to the Canadian public, trainings on how to be better allies to Canadian Muslim and other minority women, and educating Canadians on how to identify and safely respond to racist discrimination and violence.

Religious resources and support

It is clear the dominant culture in mainstream Muslim communities do not serve women or their children. The practice of husbands (and Imams) abusing their male privilege by denying women religious-based divorce needs to end. In addition to single mothers and newcomers who speak other languages, queer Muslims and sectarian minorities including Shia and Ismaili women also report feeling exclusion, and sometimes hostility, in mainstream Muslim spaces. Masjids need to do more to be inclusive of sexual, gender, and sectarian diversity if they are to truly meet the needs of the diverse Canadian Muslim populations. Additionally, they can provide support and resources and/or network with grassroots communities and organizations that centre diverse Muslim populations, like SMILE Canada Support Services, the Black Muslim Initiative, the network of Unity Mosques across Canada, Salaam Canada, Queer Muslim Resistance, the Women's Mosque of Canada, and of course, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

Culturally relevant and appropriate services

The findings of this study indicate that women asked for culturally relevant and appropriate services after experiencing exclusion and discrimination in mainstream servicing agencies or from service providers. In other words, culturally sensitive services would not be necessary if health and social service providers could practice empathy and extend care to these women, rather than dismissing them. To tackle health inequities and disparities, medical communities and social and health service providers need to critically assess the ways that systemic racism permeate the social service and health care systems. Practitioners especially need to be reflexively aware of when they dehumanize service recipients. Culturally-specific services are a superficial solution to underlying systemic injustices, and are rarely adequate, effective, or sufficient. The health care and social service systems need to be inclusive of the needs of diverse Canadians.

Support for community organizers

Across participant narratives, women's strengths as community organizers and resource builders are apparent in their narratives about how they saw the need for services and responded by creating those services. This ranged from casual social support for community members experiencing similar situations to creating funded community organizations. Thus, one way to support Canadian Muslim women is by creating support for these grassroots organizers, such as mentorship programs and other resource sharing networks. Although the women express pride and a sense of accomplishment over the resources and communities they built, they also share the often-heartbreaking situations they faced that created the need for those resources, as well as the uphill battles they fought to get resources or communities off the ground. Support services to assist these women building resources and communities would be a service to many.

Policymaking

Those who make decisions for others, including policymakers, community organizations, religious institutions, need to remember the importance and value of including diverse perspectives. I quote a participant: "When you're making policies, if you don't have a variety of voices at the table, you're going to end up with policies that work better for one group than the others." For policies to be inclusive, those who are excluded due to systemic discrimination need to be included. Failure to do so leads to detrimental consequences for many. As one woman shared,

> "Our community is never represented in programming or services. This affects us because when we are unable to communicate, we are unable to contribute to society, to speak up and bring forth change that we want to see. We feel unheard and unseen."
> [Translated from Pashto]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Overview

This report presents findings from a research project that investigates the experiences and outcomes of diverse groups of Canadian Muslim women by applying an intersectional lens to explore their socioeconomic [1] and demographic lived realities, with attention to their labour force participation and health seeking behaviour. Specifically, this project will focus on the unique barriers and facilitators (or enablers) to positive socioeconomic and health outcomes among Canadian Muslim women who are refugees, newcomers, Black, single mothers, queer, or women with diverse abilities.

This project will focus on Canadian Muslim women's social integration and experiences, including the diversity of their social networks and experiences when accessing social services (and service gaps). Where possible, analyses will disaggregate samples of Canadian Muslim women by their ethnic identity, immigrant status, socioeconomic status, geography, sexual orientation, and ability.

The research questions emerge from a review of literature, a review of CCMW's past research projects, and feedback from consultations with CCMW board members and leadership. The research questions guiding this project include:

- **What are the sociodemographic characteristics for different groups of Canadian Muslim women?**
- **What are the socioeconomic outcomes for different groups of Canadian Muslim women?**
- **What are the health outcomes and health seeking behaviour for different groups of Canadian Muslim women?**

[1] Socioeconomic status is a term that encompasses educational attainment, income levels, job prestige, home ownership, and additional economic values that signal social privilege.

Theoretical Framework

Feminism as a theoretical framework, or a way to understand our social world, has gone through several waves over the past several decades. Across different waves of feminism, a common goal is liberation for all people from gender-based oppression, whether they be women, men, or other genders. All feminists agree that gender-based oppression is wrong and needs to be challenged. However, each wave of feminism has a unique context that informs its development and legacy and, thus, the kinds of activism, policies, and solutions that emerge. After briefly describing important aspects of each wave, I focus on how solutions differ based on feminist approach. A simple, though perhaps overly crude, way to understand the different waves of feminism in Canada is as follows: first wave feminism (1800s-1920s) focused on legal equality, second wave feminism (1930s-1970s) focused on economic equality, and third wave feminism (1980s-present)[2] focuses on social equality.

First wave feminism emerged in the North American context after women were denied access to abolitionist movement meetings. Appalled at the gender-based exclusion, these activists who had been organizing to end slavery turned their attention to gender-based issues, with the right to vote and political power at the heart of their focus. This earlier wave of feminism also maintained an idea of complementary genders (rather than of equal genders), framing the virtues of femininity and especially motherhood as the justification for women's suffrage and equal political participation. The goals of first wave feminism, which focused on legal equality, were largely satisfied when women gained the right to vote. Although gender equal political representation is an ongoing struggle despite Prime Minister Trudeau's appointment of a diverse cabinet, after gaining the right to vote in 1918 the Canadian feminist agenda broadened as feminists began to see economic equality as the path to women's liberation.

Second wave feminism, aligned with liberal (and today, neoliberal) political approaches, centres economic gender equality as a top priority. Second wave feminism is considered a liberal approach (as opposed to a radical approach) because it seeks to find solutions within existing structures and institutions. In other words, for second wave feminists, women's liberation is sought through equal participation of genders in all

[2] There is a lack of consensus as to if and when third wave feminism has ended, as many frame the fourth and latter waves as extensions of third wave feminism. Likewise, the elements of third wave feminism largely emerge from Black feminism, which predates the 1980s.

aspects of economic and public life. Liberal feminism has been critiqued for equating men's status as the goal for women, because men are also subject to oppressive systems that other forms of feminism (e.g., radical feminism) seek to dismantle. Liberal feminism has also been critiqued for the way it homogenizes gender, framing the experience of privileged white women as the universal woman's experience.

Third (and latter) wave feminisms align with intersectionality. **Intersectionality** is a theoretical perspective developed largely by Black feminists like Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and many other powerful Black women intellectuals.

Intersectionality emerged in academia following the increasing presence of Black feminist academics like those just named; however, the intellectual legacy predates these women, who themselves trace their theoretical approaches back to Black women who lived through first wave feminism, some of whom endured American slavery, like Sojourner Truth, and some of whom historians tried to erase, like Maria Stewart. Black feminism centres the experiences, histories, and rich forms of knowledge and intellectual products of Black women, many of whom did not have access to normative privileged and privatized outlets (e.g., academia).

From Black feminism emerged intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw, that highlights the ways that systems of oppression interlock and operate together. According to intersectionality, it is not possible to address gender-based oppression without also addressing racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, lookism, speciesism—indeed, any form of –ism that creates a power inequality will inherently link to the larger hegemonic structures that create oppression. We all experience these oppressive –isms, however different forms of privilege operate at the same time, making it difficult to see the oppression clearly. It is for this reason that Collins argues that Black women's standpoint is especially important to understand how race and gender intersect, as the experiences of white women and black men present only part of the picture. By emphasizing the importance of addressing how multiple systems of oppression intersect, intersectional feminists argue gender is not universal; rather, gender is dynamic and is manifested in relation to other aspects of social location, including race, class, geography, religion, ability, and so on.

The kinds of solution an intersectional perspective would offer also align more closely with radical feminism than with liberal feminism, and this, I argue, is where we may see issues when liberal structures or organizations attempt to implement intersectional approaches. Liberal feminism and radical feminism frame very different approaches as solutions for gender inequality. While liberal feminist approaches would attempt to address gender inequality within existing institutions, radical feminist approaches would attempt to dismantle those very institutions. In other words, while liberal feminists would try to get women more seats at the table, radical feminists would dismantle the need for a table, allowing everyone space. We can see the conflict between these approaches when we look at issues impacting women, including women's employment-related choices.

When we consider women's employment-related choices, we see liberal and intersectional approaches offering opposing solutions. Consider the example of a woman who chooses to be a homemaker (let's assume for a moment this is a completely free choice, not coerced, and not a result of oppressive systems that may have impacted her decision to work at home). Liberal feminists may see this woman's choice as a betrayal to all women, since achieving economic equality and having women on par with men is the end goal. Consider Gloria Steinem's critique of young women voting for Bernie Sanders instead of Hillary Clinton—this is a liberal approach. Intersectionality would help us consider the fact that the fight for employment opportunities among mothers is indeed a privileged issue—immigrant, racialized, and poor women and mothers have been working for pay throughout post-industrial history. A woman choosing to work as a homemaker is practicing agency in making a choice, and intersectional feminists support and celebrate women's empowerment and agency regardless of what they choose. The tension between liberal and intersectional approaches maps on to the current federal administration's attempts at securing economic integration (a liberal agenda) of minority women (a superficially intersectional agenda).

Research Design

This is a mixed-methods project that draws on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The two sets of analyses are iterative and dialectical, as each offers insight to guide the other. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses offer specific ways of better understanding Canadian Muslim women.

The ***quantitative*** component of the project included analyses of the 2011 National Household Survey. The 2021 Census results are not yet released, but the analyses presented in this report can be repeated using the 2021 data to identify how outcomes have changed over the decade. While I initially planned to use the Canadian General Social Survey (2011, 2013, 2014, 2016) datasets as well as the Environics 2016 Survey of Muslims in Canada, these datasets did not have sample sizes large enough to provide appropriately robust analyses of subgroups of Canadian Muslim women.

For quantitative analyses, sample size is important. The larger the sample, the more accurately you can use the data to make predictions about the larger population that the sample represents. If the sample does not have enough cases of individuals (e.g., Canadian Muslim women with specific identities), the sample is not representative. Having a representative sample is important because quantitative analyses allow for researchers to identify prevalence, patterns, and disparities in socioeconomic and health related outcomes.

For ***qualitative*** analyses, sample size is less important. Instead, the richness of the data are prioritized. Ideally, qualitative study sample sizes are determined by the saturation of data (e.g., when newly collected data confirms preliminary findings, and does not offer new directions for inquiry). This is not always possible, especially when projects have limited time frames or are including populations that are difficult to reach. Nonetheless, in a mixed methods project, qualitative data are useful even when saturation is not achieved.

Unlike quantitative data, where analyses tell you something about the population, qualitative data tell you about processes of meaning-making, emotive experiences, and the richness of social realities that is missed by numeric data. While quantitative analyses are deductive, qualitative analyses tend to be inductive. And both together in mixed methods projects help triangulate data and make sense of sociological puzzles.

In this study, qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews, and where necessary, individual interviews. The qualitative data analyses helped to shed light on the trends and patterns, as well as the surprising findings, that emerge from quantitative analyses. For example, as expanded on in the findings section below, focusing on Canadian Muslim single mothers, the results from quantitative analyses and the lived realities narrated in qualitative data seem contradictory, until the two sets of data are put into conversation.

Quantitative Analyses: National Household Survey (2011)

This study provides sociodemographic, socioeconomic, and health outcomes for diverse groups of Canadian Muslim women. To address questions regarding demographic distributions, socioeconomic status, and household characteristics, this study draws on the National Household Survey (2011). The 2011 Canadian National Household Survey (NHS) was a part of Statistics Canada's Census Program and replaced the traditional long-form questionnaire for 2011. Between May and August 2011, the NHS was distributed in English and French to a random sampling of 30% of Canadian private dwellings. As participation in the NHS was voluntary, the response rate was 68.6 percent (Statistics Canada, 2013).

The NHS includes all individuals who usually live in Canada, including the provinces and the territories. Thus, it includes citizens, permanent residents, and nonpermanent residents (e.g., refugee claimants, individuals with work or study permits, and their cohabiting family members). Individuals *not* covered by the NHS include representatives of foreign governments assigned to embassies, high commissions or other diplomatic missions in Canada, members of the armed forces of another country stationed in Canada, Canadian citizens living in other countries, and residents of another country who are temporarily visiting Canada.

The analyses include immigration and mobility characteristics, education and employment statuses, family and household characteristics, as well as racial/ethnic identity and language skills. For the sake of parsimony and ease of readability, some response categories have been collapsed. Tabulations of original variables are available upon request.

I have presented the results of quantitative analyses in Figures and Tables below. I remind the reader that the Census, including the NHS, is based on a sample of Canadians that have been weighted to represent all Canadians. The data are presented in tables as both counts and as percentages of the subgroup (such that all values within a column for a variable total to 100%). While counts represent numbers of actual Canadians, I remind the reader that these counts are estimations based on a sample. In other words, results are estimations rather than actual statistics.

The statistics derived from quantitative analyses present demographic distributions, socioeconomic status, household characteristics, and additional social measures. Without narrative data, however, these statistics lack substantive meaning. To address this gap, the current project includes focus group interviews with Canadian Muslim women with diverse identities.

Qualitative Analyses: Focus Group and Individual Interviews

All participants were asked about labour market participation and health seeking behaviour, with an additional focus on barriers and facilitators to positive (or desired) outcomes (Appendix C). Participants often included their identities as part and parcel of their narratives. When this did not happen, participants were asked how religion intersects with their identity and lived experiences, and how this plays a role (or not) in their socioeconomic and health experiences. Each group was asked to further reflect on their own unique identities (listed in Participant Groups below).

Participants were also surveyed in order to gain insight into their socioeconomic and demographic lived realities (Appendix B). This qualitative survey data helped to ground the qualitative interview data in relation to quantitative data, but is not presented here. Given identifiable information and confidentiality agreements with participants, this data (and any qualitative data) would not be released upon request. I conducted all interviews, unless specified otherwise below.

Initially, the purpose of individual interviews was intended to explore a specific participant's experiences further, to gain insight into a sensitive topic that might not be suited for a group environment, to gather information about a group that is non-responsive to group interview recruitment, or to gain insight into the experiences of women who identify with multiple categories above (e.g., a queer Muslim woman with diverse abilities). However, individual interviews also became a solution for participants whose specific needs made attending a scheduled group meeting difficult. For example, there was no focus group for those with diverse abilities (although the group was repeatedly scheduled), but there were individual interviews with women with diverse abilities.

Participant Groups

Newcomers

Newcomers are defined as immigrants who have been in Canada for five years or less. Newcomers are identified in the quantitative survey by a variable that measures when respondents arrived in Canada. Newcomers who do not speak an official language (English or French) are identified through an additional variable, knowledge of official languages (KOL). This group is alternatively referred to in the current report as newcomers without official language skills, and/or newcomers who speak non-official languages.

In qualitative interviews, newcomers self-identify but were informed about the five-year time frame. Although the research team had translated the recruitment flyer into additional languages (French, Arabic, Persian/Farsi, Urdu, Somali), only Pashto speaking women stepped forward. And although it was just one group of women, their experiences as newcomers and with limited English skills help to highlight the struggles that newcomers experience in the Canadian context. The focus group of women who speak Pashto was conducted by a CCMW team member who is a native-Pashto speaker, and who also translated and transcribed the interviews and assisted the participants in completing the qualitative study survey.

Black women

Canadian Muslim Black women were identified in quantitative data through a variable that asked respondents to select their ethnic identity, with "Black" as one of the response category options.

Stakeholders were further interested in the experiences of Somali women specifically. Unfortunately, the public access NHS does not allow for specification of Somali Canadians, however it does allow for specification of respondents born in East African countries. Therefore, analyses below present both the general category of Black Canadian Muslim women as well as Canadian Muslim women born in East African countries. In the qualitative sample, despite the extensive efforts of a CCMW team member, who is Somali-identified, no Somali women opted to participate in the study. However, the sample does include Black Canadian Muslim women. The focus group with Black Canadian Muslim women was conducted by Ilham.

Chinese women

Stakeholders were specifically interested in the experiences and needs of Uyghur women. However, no Uyghur (or more generally, Chinese) Canadian Muslim woman opted into the qualitative study. Nonetheless, the overview of demographic outcomes includes Chinese Canadian Muslim women. The quantitative data did not allow for specification of Chinese ethnicities, e.g. Uyghur; however "Chinese" was an option respondents could select for their ethnic identity. Thus, the outcomes for Chinese Canadian Muslim women are presented below.

Single mothers

Canadian Muslim single mothers were identified in the quantitative data through a variable on household type, with "sole parent family" as a response category. Given the arrangement of variables, it was not possible to identify single mothers who may be living in other contexts, like with extended family. However, all of the participants in the qualitative portion of the study were living in sole parent family households—in other words, none were living with extended families or other household arrangements. Thus, the quantitative analyses are suited to inform the qualitative analyses.

Queer women

The quantitative data do not include measures of sexual or gender diversity. While the Canadian General Social Surveys do include these items, the sample sizes were too small to be meaningful for this report (see also Shah 2019 in which I highlight the shortcomings of extant quantitative Canadian Muslim data). However, queer identified women did opt into the qualitative portion of the study, and so their experiences are discussed in the findings section below.

Women with diverse abilities

The quantitative data do not include measures of the diversity of abilities or needs. However, several Canadian Muslim women with diverse needs did attempt to participate, and in the end two of these women were able to participate. Though the sample is small, and appropriate quantitative data do not exist, the women's experiences are rich and provide a meaningful window into their social realities and the ways their identities intersect with race, religion, gender, and abilities.

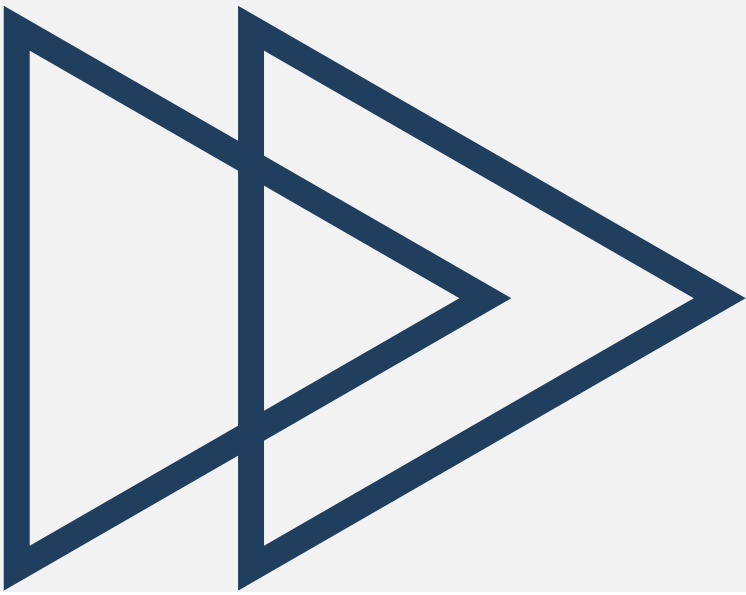
Sample limitations

Any purposive sample will inevitably omit important voices, and this sample is no exception. In compliance with research ethics, we required a restriction to women who are able to fully consent. Thus, minor women (e.g., those under 18) and women with cognitive impairments that prevent them from giving full consent were excluded. Additionally, women who were previously Muslim and no longer identify as Muslim in any form (religiously, culturally, etc.) will be excluded.

This sample likely omitted additional important voices due to various participant concerns, including potential for surveillance by government or political entities (e.g. for refugees and/or newcomers), being "outted" (e.g. for queer or trans women living in unsafe social environments), censure by co-residing relatives in instances of abuse, and additional concerns. As this project aims to capture experiences of Muslim women sitting at important intersections that need to be addressed, these omitted voices remain of concern as we collect, analyze, and assess the data as well as the implications emerging from this report.

There were specific groups of women that this study attempted to include, namely Indigenous women and trans women. Canadian Indigenous Muslim women's experiences have not been previously explored in scholarship. Unfortunately, this important group of women were not reachable. Although there was a very small sample of Indigenous Canadian Muslim women in the quantitative data, the sample was too small to be meaningful in this report. Making policy recommendations from such scant data would be irresponsible (see also Shah 2019). In terms of data on Canadian Muslim trans women, there is no known dataset that could identify this population. Unfortunately, although queer women did participate in the study, as far as I know all women participants in this study were cis gendered females.

In my own experience and from what recruiters shared, the women who opted out of the study gave varying reasons for not participating, or provided soft rejections (e.g., saying they would participate but not confirming or following through with participation). Of those who gave concrete rejections, most reported being already stretched for time, Zoom and video call fatigued, and a general sense of having limited energy. For those with diverse abilities and needs, many repeatedly rescheduled interviews due to their conditions, and in the end only two were able to participate. Participants were compensated monetarily, though this compensation may not have offset the emotional and other intangible costs for participating.



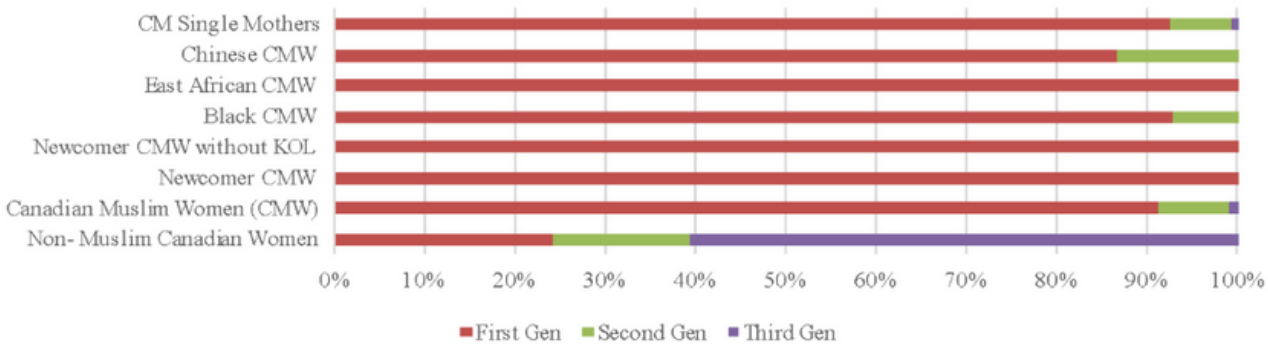
Findings

In the following sections, the findings are organized thematically. First the results of the quantitative analyses are presented, breaking down each outcome and comparing the results for each subgroup of Canadian Muslim women. After this bird's eye view of all groups of Canadian Muslim women, the report presents findings for each group of women separately, drawing on both quantitative (if available) and qualitative data. Specifically, this report presents findings for groups of newcomers including those with non-official language skills, Black and East African women, single mothers, queer women, and women with diverse abilities.

Demographic Characteristics of Canadian Muslim Women

Figure 1 presents the distribution of Canadian women by immigrant generation and identity category. The majority of adult non-Muslim Canadian women are third generation or beyond and born Canadian citizens (Figures 1 and 2). The majority of adult Canadian Muslim women are first generation and citizens through naturalization. Nine out of ten Canadian Muslim women are first generation Canadians. This was true for Chinese and Black Muslim women (who are identified through ethnic identity). The East African women in the sample, identified through birth in East African countries, all reported first generation status. Canadian Muslim single mothers reported similar distributions to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women.

Figure 1. Immigrant Generation Status of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent
NHS 2011 Weighted Results



The distribution of citizenship status is presented in **Figure 2**. While nearly all non-Muslim Canadian women are citizens (94%), less than three-quarters of Muslim Canadian women are citizens (73%). The majority of newcomers, or Canadian Muslim women who have been in Canada for five years or less, are not Canadian citizens (82%), and this figure is greater among those without official language skills (87%). Black Muslim women mirror the trend for the overall Canadian Muslim women. Surprisingly, East African Muslim women were more likely to report citizenship (87%) compared to the overall Black Muslim women sample (87% vs. 74%). Canadian Muslim single mothers are somewhat more likely to report citizenship compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women (78% vs. 73%).

Figure 2. Citizenship Status of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent
NHS 2011 Weighted Results

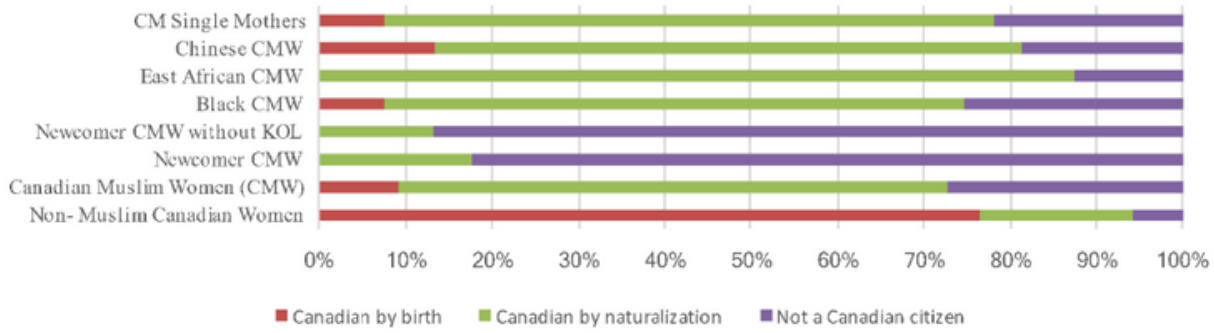
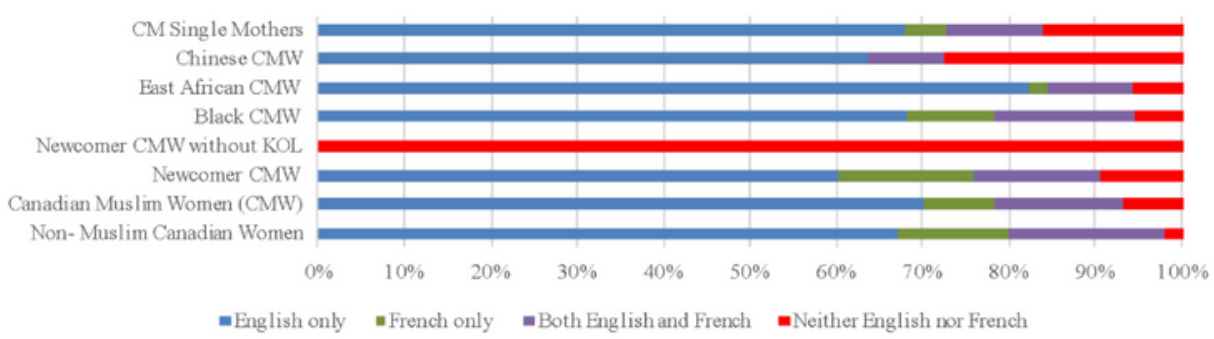
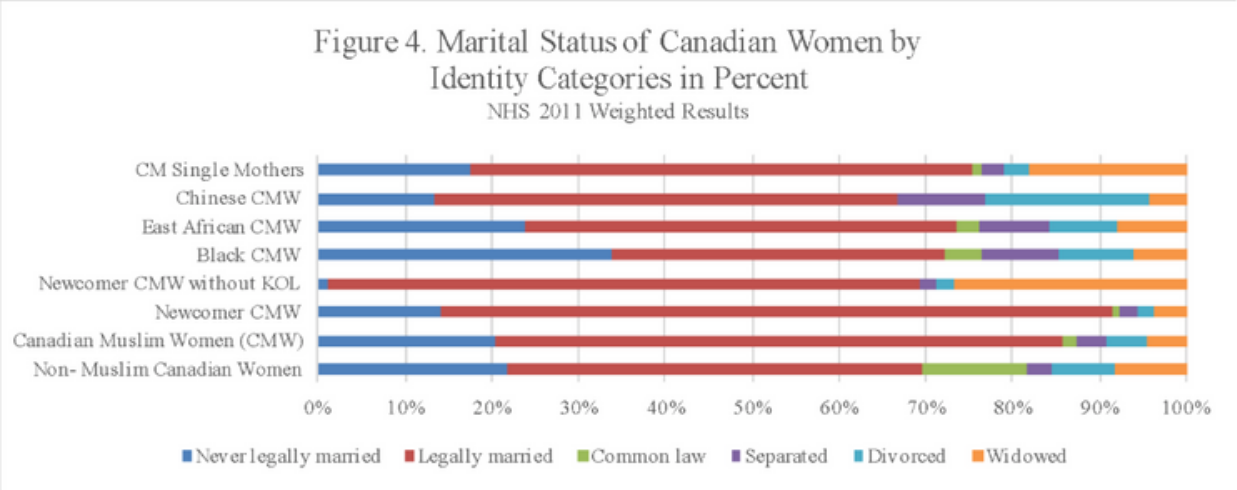


Figure 3 presents the distribution of knowledge of Canada's official languages, English and French. The red bar portion represents the percentage of women who speak neither language, and we see that significantly more Canadian Muslim women compared to non-Muslim women fall into this category (7% vs. 2%). Among the specific groups, significantly more newcomer women know neither language compared to any other category (9%), except for Chinese Canadian Muslim women, who report the highest percentage of knowing neither language (28%). Sixteen percent of Canadian Muslim single mothers in the sample reported knowing neither language.

Figure 3. Canadian Women's Knowledge of Official Languages by Identity Categories in Percent
NHS 2011 Weighted Results



The distribution of Canadian women's marital statuses is presented in **Figure 4.** Not surprisingly, currently married was the most frequented category for all groups of women. Over three-quarters of newcomer Canadian Muslim women are currently married (77%). Over one-quarter of newcomers without knowledge of official languages are widowed (27%), implying these women may be the mothers of adult immigrant children reuniting with their families.



The distribution of household size is presented in **Figure 5.** The most populated category for all groups of women were households of 3-5 persons. Among those reporting households with six or more persons, we see that four times the percent of Canadian Muslim women compared to non-Muslims (20% vs 5%). Among Canadian Muslim women, newcomers without official language skills (30%) and Black Canadian Muslim women (26%) are especially overrepresented, but East African Canadian Muslim women report a slightly lower response (19%) compared to the overall Canadian Muslim women sample (20%).

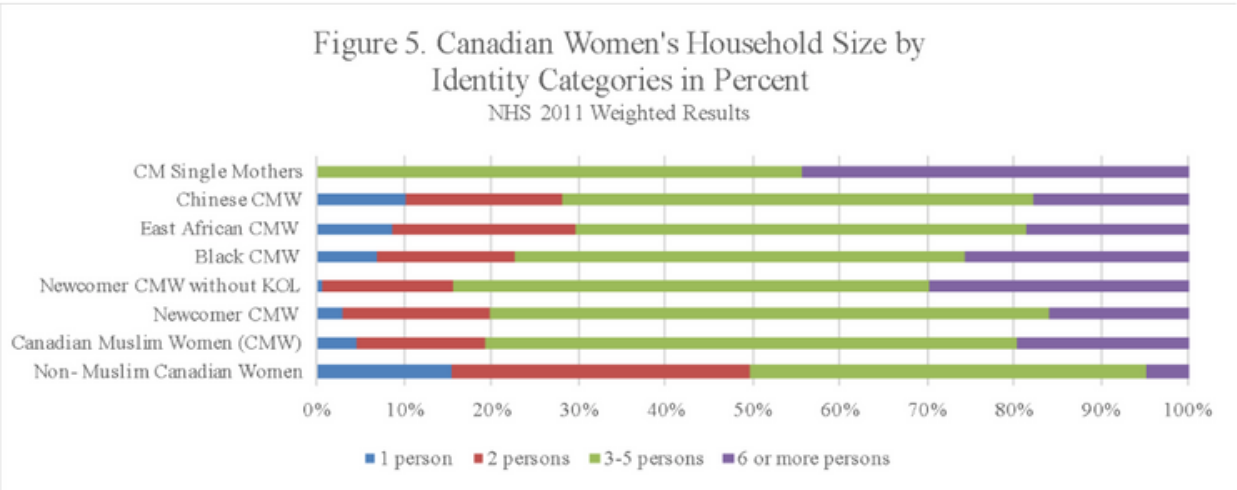


Figure 6 presents the distribution of Canadian women in different household types. Single-family households were the most frequently reported category for all groups of women, except single mothers who by definition live in "other-family" households. Extra-census families include multi-family households and also families with non-census family members, like a grandparent or a cousin and so on. More Muslim women (19%), especially newcomers without official language skills (47%), report living in extra-census family households compared to non-Muslim Canadian women (12%). Conversely, more non-Muslim women report living in non-family households compared to Canadian Muslim women (19% vs 7%). However, compared to the overall Canadian Muslim women sample (7%), proportionately more Black (12%), East African (13%) and Chinese (10%) Muslim women reported living in non-family households.

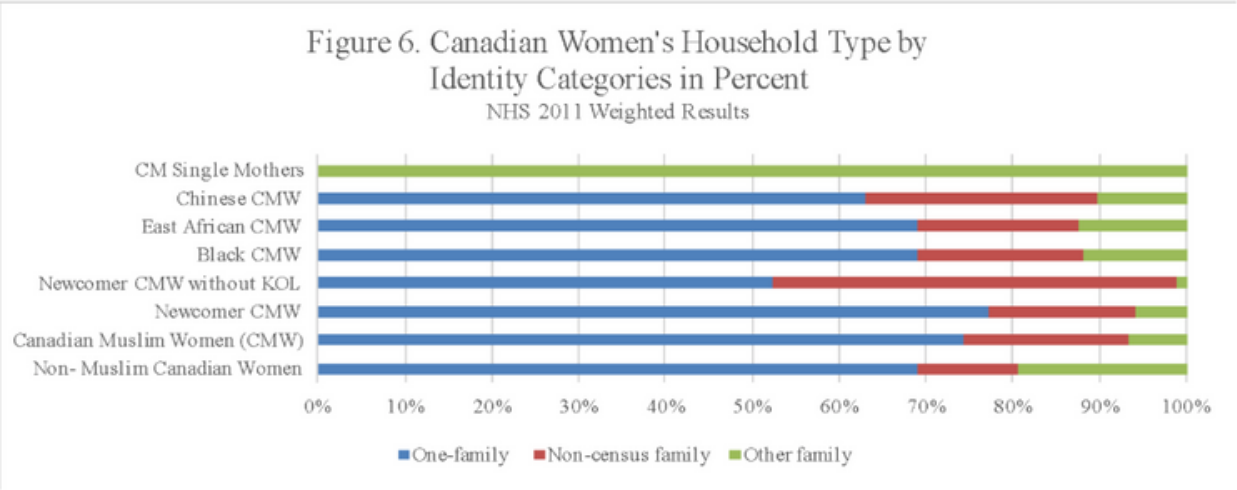
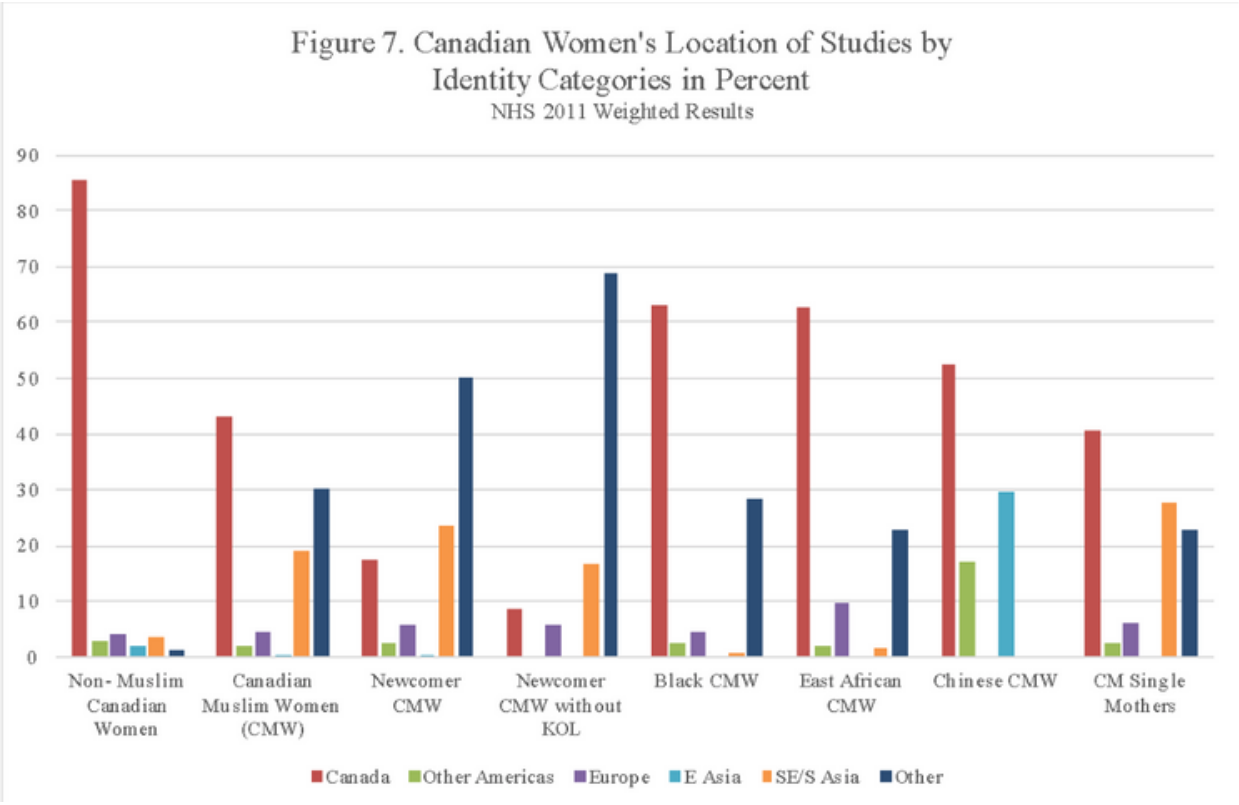
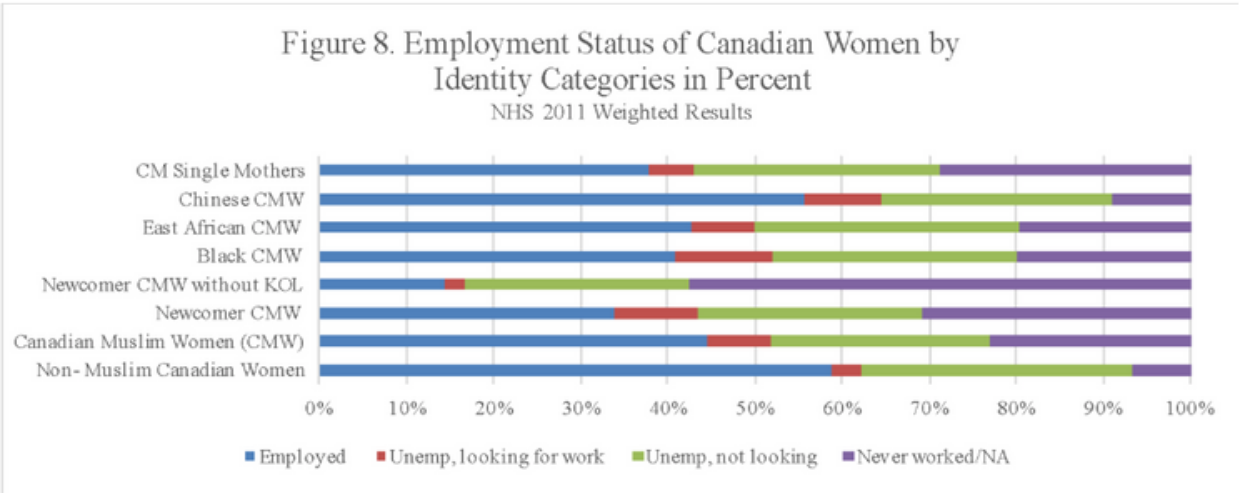


Figure 7 presents the distribution of location of studies for Canadian women. This specifically refers to the location of the last or terminal degree. Canadian Muslim women are half as likely to report Canadian education compared to non-Muslim women (43% vs. 86%), and newcomers are even less likely (17%), especially newcomers without official language skills (9%). Black and East African Canadian Muslim women (63%) are more likely than the overall Muslim women population to report Canadian education. This implies that first generation Black Canadian Muslim women are more likely to pursue Canadian education after immigration, which may be a response to the greater degrees of discrimination they experience across multiple domains of public and private social life, including the job market.



The distribution of employment status of Canadian women is presented in **Figure 8.** Compared to non-Muslim women, Canadian Muslim women are less likely to be employed (59% vs. 44%) and twice as likely to be unemployed and looking for work (3% vs. 7%). And compared to all Canadian Muslim women, newcomer, Black, and Chinese Muslim women and single mothers are less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed and not looking for work. The majority of newcomers without official language skills reported never having worked (58%).



The distribution of Canadian women among the National Occupational Classifications (NOC) is presented in **Figure 9**. Most non-Muslim women are concentrated in occupations related to business, finance, and administration (27%) or sales and service (28%). Sales and service related occupations are proportionately more reported among Canadian Muslim women (33%), especially newcomers (36%) without language skills (43%), Black women (44%), East African women (33%) and single mothers (35%).

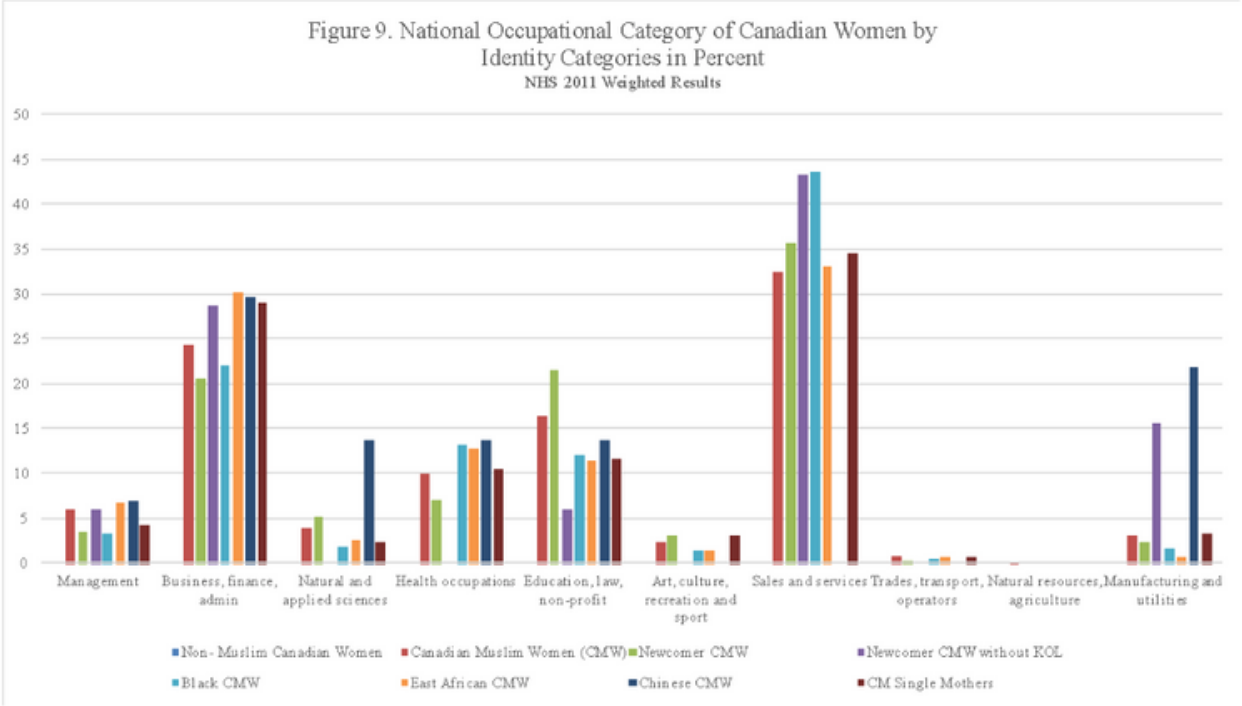
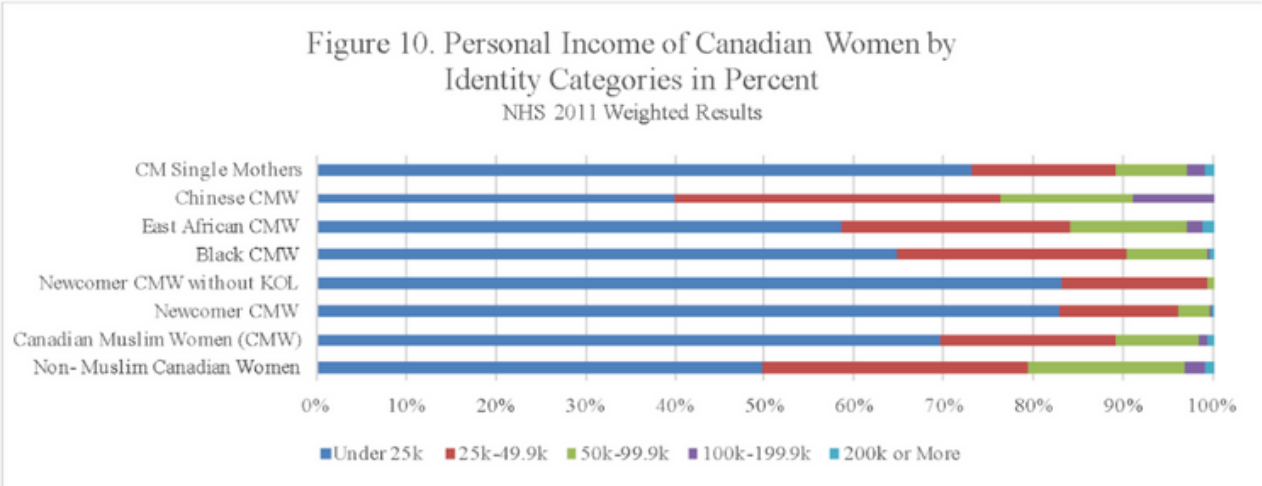
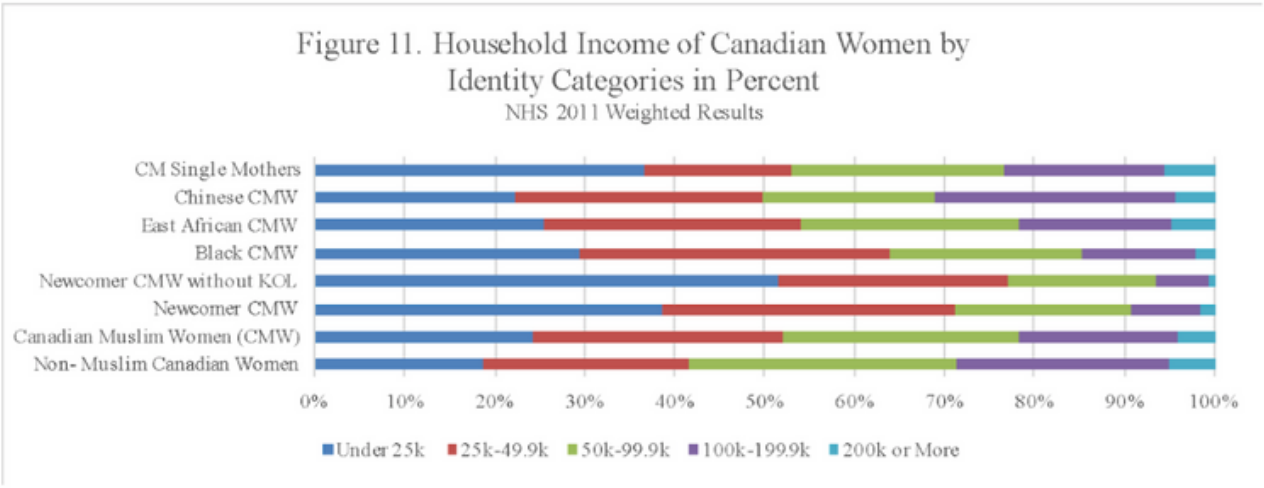


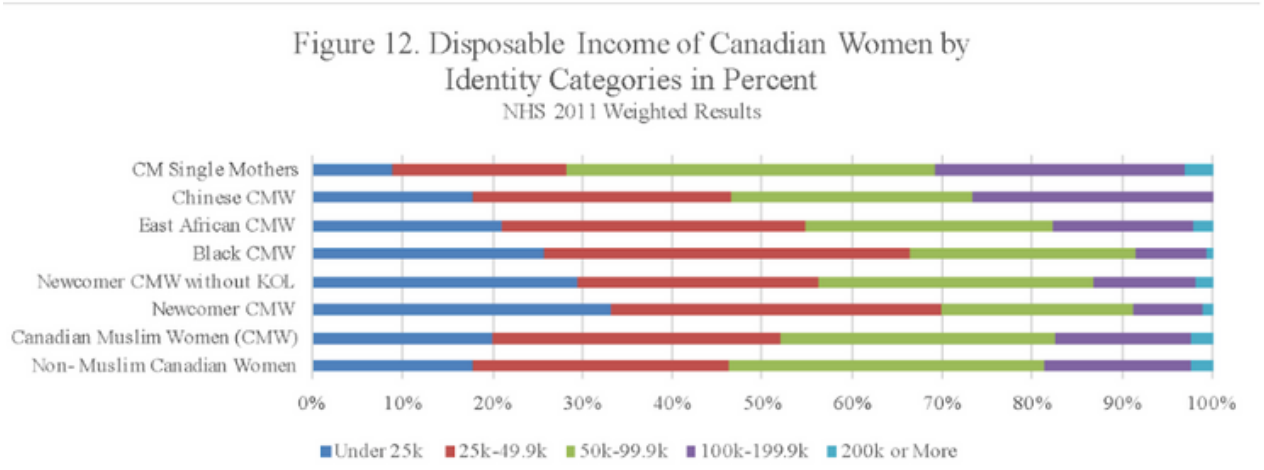
Figure 10 presents the distribution of personal income among Canadian women. The most frequented category of personal income was under 25k per year, though only 40% of Chinese Muslim women reported this income category, compared to 70% of all Canadian Muslim women and 50% of non-Muslim women. The under 25k per year category was proportionately higher among newcomers regardless of language skills (83%) and single mothers (73%).



Distributions of household income are presented in **Figure 11**. Focusing on those with under 25k annually, we again see similar patterns with Canadian Muslim women newcomers (39%) especially those without official language skills (52%) overrepresented compared to other categories of women.



Although, according to **Figure 10**, proportionately fewer Black Muslim (65%) and East African women (59%) report a personal income under 25k compared to the overall Canadian Muslim women population (70%), in **Figure 11** we see a greater proportion of Black Muslim (30%) and East African women (25%) reporting a household income under 25k compared to the overall Canadian Muslim women sample (19%). This implies that, compared to other Canadian Muslim women, Black Canadian Muslim women provide a greater proportion of their household income.



The distribution of annual disposable income among Canadian women is presented in **Figure 12**. Similar to the patterns of disadvantage observed for personal and household income, the data indicates that newcomer Canadian Muslim women are overrepresented in the 25k per year category. Surprisingly, however, newcomers without official language skills seemed more advantaged than newcomers more generally. This is surprising given the distributions of annual household income, and further research is required to explain this finding.

Figure 12. Disposable Income of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent
NHS 2011 Weighted Results

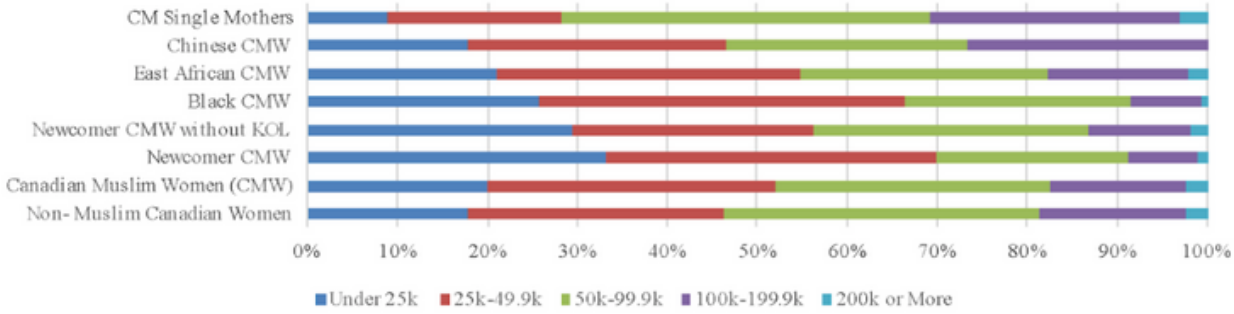


Figure 13. Percent of Canadian Women Living Below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) by Identity Categories
NHS 2011 Weighted Results

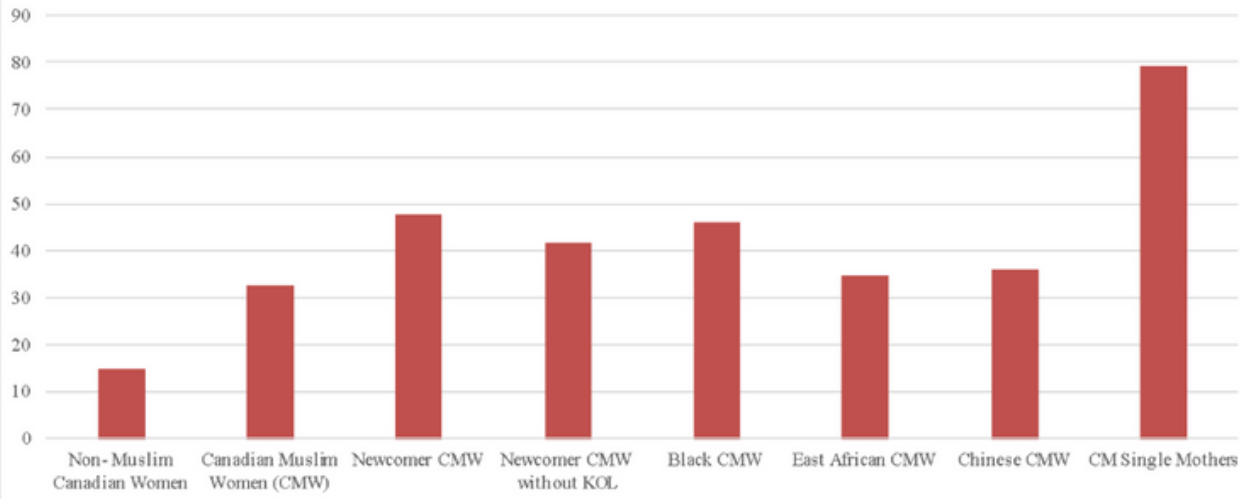
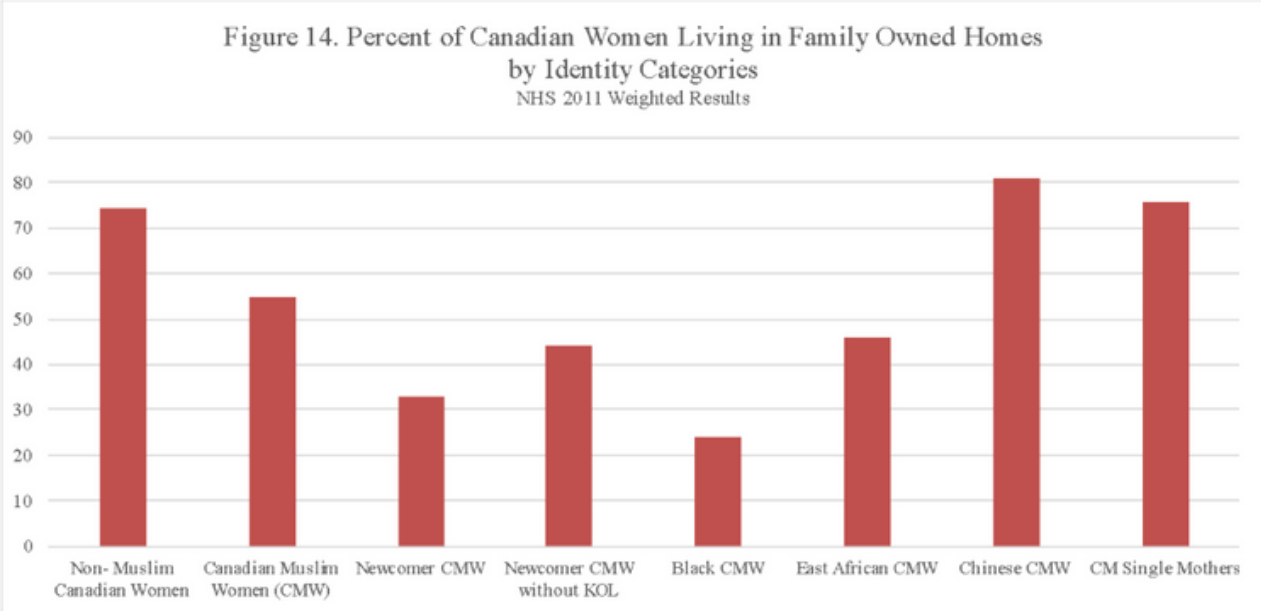


Figure 13 presents the distribution of those living in households below the low income cut off (LICO). Canadian Muslim women are more than twice as likely to report living in LICO households as non-Muslim women (33% vs. 15%). All sub categories of Muslim women reported higher percentages than the overall Canadian Muslim women sample (see Table 3b).

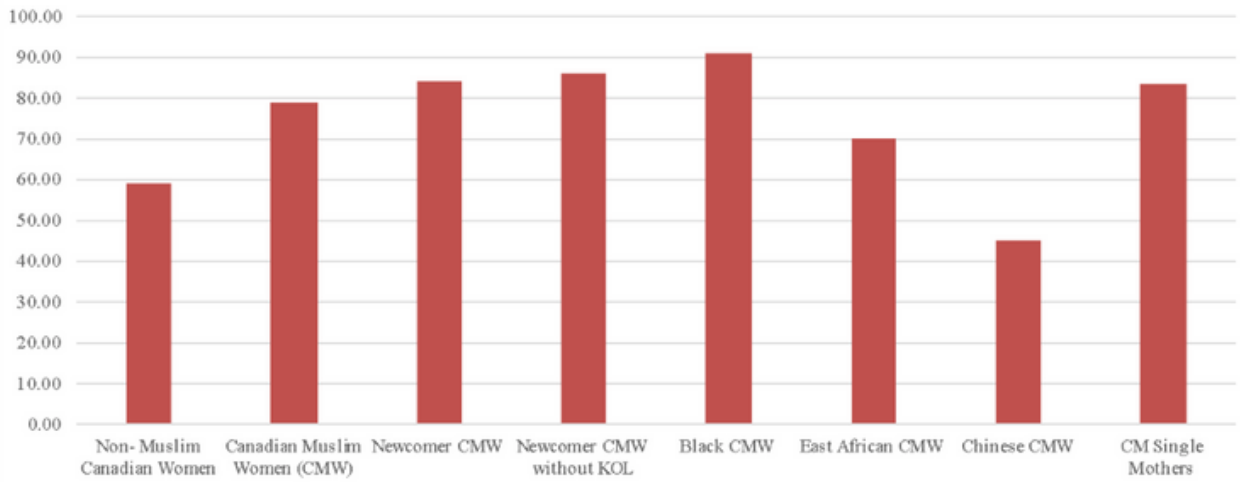
The distribution of Canadian women reporting residence in family-owned homes is presented in **Figure 14**. Canadian Muslim women are less likely to own their homes compared to non-Muslim women (55% vs. 75%), and this is even more so the case for newcomers (33%) without official language skills (44%) and Black (24%) Muslim women. Chinese Muslim women, however, were more likely to own their homes compared to even the non-Muslim women sample (81% vs. 75%).



Among those who live in family-owned homes, we see similar types of disadvantage in terms of the presence of a mortgage, presented in **Figure 15**. Non-Muslim women are less likely to have mortgages (60%) than Canadian Muslim women (79%), especially those who are newcomers (84%) without official language skills (86%), single mothers (84%) or Black (91%). Canadian Muslim East African women (70%) and especially Chinese Muslim women (45%) were less likely to report the presence of a mortgage compared to the overall Canadian Muslim women sample (79%).

The disparity between the overall Black Canadian Muslim women response (91%) and the East African Canadian Muslim women response (70%) is noteworthy. This finding implies that as generations of Black Canadian Muslims continue living in Canada, they experience an increase in socioeconomic disparities. This finding reflects research on health disparities in the US, which find that African American babies who are recent immigrants have healthier birthweights, but that birthweights deteriorate for latter generations as families are exposed to routine and systemic racial violence.

Figure 15. Mortgage Presence Among Canadian Women Living in Family Owned Homes by Identity Categories in Percent
NHS 2011 Weighted Results



The tables that follow present data from Figures 1-15 with actual counts and percentages. The next sections present intersectional analyses centering the lived experiences and needs of specific groups of Canadian Muslim women, including newcomers with and without official language skills, Black women, single mothers, queer women, and women with diverse abilities.

Table 1a. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Generation of Immigration								
First	3,093,336	307,566	58,396	5,527	25,201	31996	624	20,437
Second	1,934,603	26,700	0	0	1,966	0	96	1,503
Third	7,774,627	2,756	0	0	0	0	0	128
Citizenship								
Canadian by birth	9,723,368	29,392	0	0	1,998	32	96	1,631
Canadian by naturalization	2,264,458	208,212	9,911	712	17,858	27,637	490	15,129
Not a Canadian citizen	732,552	89,450	46,538	4,687	6,794	4,001	134	4,700
Knowledge of Official								
English only	8,607,563	236,530	35,099	0	18,543	26,347	458	14,998
French only	1,615,105	27,358	9,234	0	2,717	643	0	1,061
Both English and French	2,325,106	50,303	8,536	0	4,417	3,156	64	2,463
Neither English nor French	257,727	22,959	5,527	5527	1,490	1,850	198	3,546
Marital Status								
Never legally married	2,777,920	68,797	8,231	64	9,198	7,656	96	3,856
Legally married	6,122,900	219,894	45,137	3,771	10,411	15,892	384	12,790
Common law	1,539,744	6,038	544	0	1,118	772	0	191
Separated	360,203	11,240	1,146	90	2,424	2,653	74	607
Divorced	965,386	15,581	1,092	128	2,355	2,459	134	617
Widowed	1,039,348	15,600	2,246	1,474	1,661	2,564	32	4,007
Household Size								
1 person	1,960,860	14,918	1,682	32	1,811	2,740	74	0
2 persons	4,397,251	49,725	9,805	832	4,315	6,762	128	0
3-5 persons	5,794,785	205,482	37,415	2,999	14,026	16,518	390	12,150
6 or more persons	631,378	65,871	9,235	1,632	6,983	5,976	128	9,630

Table 1b. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Generation of Immigration								
First	24.16	91.26	100.00	100.00	92.76	100.00	86.67	92.61
Second	15.11	7.92	0.00	0.00	7.24	0.00	13.33	6.81
Third	60.73	0.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.58
Citizenship								
Canadian by birth	76.44	8.99	0.00	0.00	7.50	0.10	13.33	7.60
Canadian by naturalization	17.80	63.66	17.56	13.19	67.01	87.27	68.06	70.50
Not a Canadian citizen	5.76	27.35	82.44	86.81	25.49	12.63	18.61	21.90
Knowledge of Official								
English only	67.22	70.16	60.11	0.00	68.26	82.34	63.61	67.96
French only	12.61	8.11	15.81	0.00	10.00	2.01	0.00	4.81
Both English and French	18.16	14.92	14.62	0.00	16.26	9.86	8.89	11.16
Neither English nor French	2.01	6.81	9.46	100.00	5.48	5.78	27.50	16.07
Marital Status								
Never legally married	21.69	20.41	14.10	1.16	33.86	23.93	13.33	17.47
Legally married	47.81	65.22	77.29	68.23	38.32	49.67	53.33	57.96
Common law	12.02	1.79	0.93		4.12	2.41		0.87
Separated	2.81	3.33	1.96	1.63	8.92	8.29	10.28	2.75
Divorced	7.54	4.62	1.87	2.32	8.67	7.69	18.61	2.80
Widowed	8.12	4.63	3.85	26.67	6.11	8.01	4.44	18.16
Household Size								
1 person	15.34	4.44	2.89	0.58	6.67	8.56	10.28	0.00
2 persons	34.40	14.80	16.87	15.14	15.90	21.13	17.78	0.00
3-5 persons	45.33	61.16	64.36	54.58	51.69	51.63	54.17	55.79
6 or more persons	4.94	19.60	15.88	29.70	25.73	18.68	17.78	44.21

Table 2a. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Household Type								
One-family	8,833,881	250,473	45,009	2,887	18,764	22,122	454	0
Non-census family	1,484,640	64,017	9,902	2,576	5,142	5,866	192	0
Other family	2,486,980	22,660	3,485	64	3,261	4,008	74	22,068
Location of Studies								
Canada	6,164,309	88,351	6,776	96	7,601	9,397	224	4718
Other Americas	219,875	4,694	973	0	297	320	74	288
Europe	298,963	9,278	2,238	64	556	1,503	0	704
E Asia	157,876	288	96	0	0	0	128	0
SE/S Asia	282,340	39,577	9,214	192	117	277	0	3,209
Other	81,444	61,244	19,604	777	3,434	3,431	0	2,646
Employment Status								
Employed	7,514,344	149,509	19,671	788	11,119	13,662	400	8,286
Unemp, looking for work	443,453	25,243	5,688	128	2,979	2,274	64	1,135
Unemp, not looking	4,002,157	84,789	15,052	1,427	7,630	9,773	192	6,273
Never worked/NA	841,097	77,449	17,889	3,184	5,407	6,255	64	6310
NOCS								
Management	668,816	10,322	871	64	418	1,000	32	401
Business, finance, admin	2,271,110	41,469	5,008	303	2,754	4,438	138	2,736
Natural and applied sciences	262,216	6,694	1,280	0	224	384	64	224
Health occupations	909,870	16,925	1,719	0	1,641	1,865	64	992
Education, law, non-profit	1,147,249	27,872	5,198	64	1,497	1,691	64	1,101
Art, culture, recreation and sport	315,849	4,022	776	0	192	224	0	303
Sales and services	2,329,399	55,278	8,672	455	5,427	4,829	0	3256
Trades, transport, operators	154,350	1,414	96	0	64	96	0	64
Natural resources, agriculture	120,733	128	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing and utilities	232,232	5,349	581	165	200	96	102	320

Table 2b. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Household Type								
One-family	68.99	74.29	77.08	52.23	69.07	69.14	63.06	0.00
Non-census family	11.59	18.99	16.96	46.61	18.93	18.33	26.67	0.00
Other family	19.42	6.72	5.97	1.16	12.00	12.53	10.28	100.00
Location of Studies								
Canada	85.56	43.43	17.42	8.50	63.32	62.95	52.58	40.80
Other Americas	3.05	2.31	2.50	0.00	2.47	2.14	17.37	2.49
Europe	4.15	4.56	5.75	5.67	4.63	10.07	0.00	6.09
E Asia	2.19	0.14	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.05	0.00
SE/S Asia	3.92	19.45	23.69	17.01	0.97	1.86	0.00	27.75
Other	1.13	30.11	50.39	68.82	28.60	22.98	0.00	22.88
Employment Status								
Employed	58.70	44.37	33.74	14.26	40.98	42.74	55.56	37.66
Unemp, looking for work	3.46	7.49	9.76	2.32	10.98	7.11	8.89	5.16
Unemp, not looking	31.26	25.16	25.82	25.82	28.12	30.58	26.67	28.51
Never worked/NA	6.57	22.98	30.68	57.61	19.93	19.57	8.89	28.68
NOCS								
Management	7.95	6.09	3.60	6.09	3.37	6.84	6.90	4.27
Business, finance, admin	27.00	24.47	20.69	28.83	22.18	30.35	29.74	29.12
Natural and applied sciences	3.12	3.95	5.29	0.00	1.80	2.63	13.79	2.38
Health occupations	10.82	9.99	7.10	0.00	13.22	12.75	13.79	10.56
Education, law, non-profit	13.64	16.45	21.48	6.09	12.06	11.56	13.79	11.72
Art, culture, recreation and sport	3.75	2.37	3.21	0.00	1.55	1.53	0.00	3.22
Sales and services	27.69	32.62	35.83	43.29	43.71	33.02	0.00	34.65
Trades, transport, operators	1.83	0.83	0.40	0.00	0.52	0.66	0.00	0.68
Natural resources, agriculture	1.44	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Manufacturing and utilities	2.76	3.16	2.40	15.70	1.61	0.66	21.98	3.41

Table 3a. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Total Personal Income								
Under 25k	6,367,235	234,232	47,798	4,538	17,531	18,659	288	16,061
25k-49.9k	3,785,268	65,360	7,747	893	6,890	8,140	262	3,562
50k-99.9k	2,225,674	30,851	2,002	32	2,394	4,163	106	1,773
100k-199.9k	295,326	3,946	96	0	96	586	64	416
200k or More	117,203	1,944	96	0	96	352	0	192
Total Household Income								
Under 25k	2,300,967	77,725	21,261	2,746	7,628	7,900	160	7,913
25k-49.9k	2,813,805	90,192	17,911	1,368	8,881	8,814	198	3,523
50k-99.9k	3,651,921	84,541	10,867	869	5,519	7,591	138	5,118
100k-199.9k	2,910,701	56,732	4,223	320	3,305	5,248	192	3,843
200k or More	629,101	13,173	868	32	516	1,477	32	1,223
Disposable Income								
Under 25k	2,167,873	64,558	18,442	1,568	6,600	6,405	128	1,848
25k-49.9k	3,473,953	102,788	20,311	1,426	10,468	10,248	208	4,020
50k-99.9k	4,233,892	98,045	11,808	1,637	6,485	8,386	192	8,596
100k-199.9k	2,012,782	49,299	4,360	608	2,033	4,791	192	5,803
200k or More	272,399	7,312	556	96	160	641	0	640
Household Below LICO								
No	10,833,528	225,617	30,235	3,182	14,562	20,845	458	17,520
Yes	1,927,416	110,876	27,600	2,281	12,477	11,087	262	4,548
Home Ownership								
Family Owned	9,461,467	179,913	18,803	2,316	6,243	14,469	586	16,308
Rented or Band housing	3,233,338	147,899	37,723	2,916	19,773	17,011	134	5,163
Presence of mortgage								
No	3,804,316	37,489	2,968	320	544	4333	320	2,631
Yes	5,525,572	142,392	15,835	1,996	5,699	10136	266	13,677

Table 3b. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Identity Categories in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL	Black CMW	East African CMW	Chinese CMW	CM Single Mothers
Total Personal Income								
Under 25k	49.78	69.64	82.78	83.07	64.91	58.49	40.00	72.99
25k-49.9k	29.59	19.43	13.42	16.35	25.51	25.52	36.39	16.19
50k-99.9k	17.40	9.17	3.47	0.59	8.86	13.05	14.72	8.06
100k-199.9k	2.31	1.17	0.17	0.00	0.36	1.84	8.89	1.89
200k or More	0.92	0.58	0.17	0.00	0.36	1.10	0.00	0.87
Total Household Income								
Under 25k	18.70	24.11	38.57	51.47	29.51	25.46	22.22	36.6
25k-49.9k	22.86	27.98	32.49	25.64	34.36	28.40	27.50	16.3
50k-99.9k	29.67	26.23	19.71	16.29	21.35	24.46	19.17	23.67
100k-199.9k	23.65	17.60	7.66	6.00	12.79	16.91	26.67	17.78
200k or More	5.11	4.09	1.57	0.60	2.00	4.76	4.44	5.66
Disposable Income								
Under 25k	17.83	20.05	33.24	29.39	25.64	21.02	17.78	8.84
25k-49.9k	28.57	31.92	36.61	26.73	40.66	33.63	28.89	19.23
50k-99.9k	34.82	30.45	21.28	30.68	25.19	27.52	26.67	41.12
100k-199.9k	16.55	15.31	7.86	11.40	7.90	15.72	26.67	27.76
200k or More	2.24	2.27	1.00	1.80	0.62	2.10	0.00	3.06
Household Below LICO								
No	84.90	67.05	52.28	58.25	53.86	65.28	63.61	79.39
Yes	15.10	32.95	47.72	41.75	46.14	34.72	36.39	20.61
Home Ownership								
Family Owned	74.53	54.88	33.26	44.27	24.00	45.96	81.39	75.95
Rented or Band housing	25.47	45.12	66.74	55.73	76.00	54.04	18.61	24.05
Presence of mortgage								
No	40.78	20.84	15.78	13.82	8.71	29.95	54.61	16.13
Yes	59.22	79.16	84.22	86.18	91.29	70.05	45.39	83.87

Newcomer Canadian Muslim Women

Newcomers are defined as immigrants to Canada who have been in the country for five years or less. Given the responses from focus group interviews (below), newcomers without knowledge of official language skills (KOL, e.g., those who do not speak English nor French) were further parsed out in the quantitative analyses. Newcomers generally are more likely to report knowing neither official language compared to the general Canadian Muslim population (**Table 4**). Newcomers, especially those without official language skills, are significantly less likely to be Canadian citizens.

Table 4. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Newcomer Status and Language Skills in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL
Generation of Immigration				
First	24.16	91.26	100.00	100.00
Second	15.11	7.92	0.00	0.00
Third	60.73	0.82	0.00	0.00
Citizenship				
Canadian by birth	76.44	8.99	0.00	0.00
Canadian by naturalization	17.80	63.66	17.56	13.19
Not a Canadian citizen	5.76	27.35	82.44	86.81
Knowledge of Official Languages				
English only	67.22	70.16	60.11	0.00
French only	12.61	8.11	15.81	0.00
Both English and French	18.16	14.92	14.62	0.00
Neither English nor French	2.01	6.81	9.46	100.00
Marital Status				
Never legally married	21.69	20.41	14.10	1.16
Legally married	47.81	65.22	77.29	68.23
Common law	12.02	1.79	0.93	
Separated	2.81	3.33	1.96	1.63
Divorced	7.54	4.62	1.87	2.32
Widowed	8.12	4.63	3.85	26.67
Household Size				
1 person	15.34	4.44	2.89	0.58
2 persons	34.40	14.80	16.87	15.14
3-5 persons	45.33	61.16	64.36	54.58
6 or more persons	4.94	19.60	15.88	29.70

Compared to Canadian Muslim women generally, newcomer Canadian Muslim women are more likely to be currently married. Those without official language skills are more likely to be widowed. Newcomers, especially those without official language skills, live in larger households than Canadian Muslim women generally (Table 4) and are more likely to live in non-census family homes including extended family homes (Table 5). Together, this indicates that newcomer women without official language skills are the mothers of adult immigrant children reuniting with extended families.

Table 5. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Newcomer Status and Language Skills in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL
Household Type				
One-family	68.99	74.29	77.08	52.23
Non-census family	11.59	18.99	16.96	46.61
Other family	19.42	6.72	5.97	1.16
Location of Studies				
Canada	85.56	43.43	17.42	8.50
Other Americas	3.05	2.31	2.50	0.00
Europe	4.15	4.56	5.75	5.67
E Asia	2.19	0.14	0.25	0.00
SE/S Asia	3.92	19.45	23.69	17.01
Other	1.13	30.11	50.39	68.82
Employment Status				
Employed	58.70	44.37	33.74	14.26
Unemp, looking for work	3.46	7.49	9.76	2.32
Unemp, not looking	31.26	25.16	25.82	25.82
Never worked/NA	6.57	22.98	30.68	57.61
NOCS				
Management	7.95	6.09	3.60	6.09
Business, finance, admin	27.00	24.47	20.69	28.83
Natural and applied sciences	3.12	3.95	5.29	0.00
Health occupations	10.82	9.99	7.10	0.00
Education, law, non-profit	13.64	16.45	21.48	6.09
Art, culture, recreation and sport	3.75	2.37	3.21	0.00
Sales and services	27.69	32.62	35.83	43.29
Trades, transport, operators	1.83	0.83	0.40	0.00
Natural resources, agriculture	1.44	0.08	0.00	0.00
Manufacturing and utilities	2.76	3.16	2.40	15.70

In terms of location of studies, newcomer Canadian Muslim women, especially those without official language skills, are significantly less likely to report terminal degrees in Canada compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample, and less likely to report current employment status (Table 5). While similar proportions of Canadian Muslim women report being unemployed and not looking for work irrespective of newcomer status or official language skills, there were differences in proportions of those who are unemployed and looking for work: a greater proportion of newcomers report being unemployed and looking for work compared to Canadian Muslim women generally, but a smaller proportion of newcomers without official language skills report being unemployed and looking for work.

The greatest occupational concentration of Canadian Muslim women is in sales and services (Table 5). The proportions of newcomers, especially those without official language skills, was greater than the overall Canadian Muslim women sample. The next highest occupational concentration of Canadian Muslim women is in business, finance and administration, and while a smaller proportion of newcomers report this occupational status compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample, a greater proportion of newcomers without official language skills selected this occupational category. It is likely that these women are working in family-owned or ethnic businesses, as was the case for multiple participants in the qualitative portion of this study.

Turning to **Table 6**, we find similar patterns of disadvantage. Compared to Canadian Muslim women generally, a greater proportion of newcomer Canadian Muslim women report personal incomes of $25,000 per year or less, especially those without official language skills. This is consistent with annual household income, where less than a quarter of Canadian Muslim women report $25,000 per year or less but over half of newcomers without official language skills report the same.

However, patterns shift regarding disposable income and the low income cut off, where newcomers without official language skills have better outcomes than the general newcomer Canadian Muslim women sample. Further research is required to disentangle this finding. Nonetheless, newcomers reported poorer outcomes compared to Canadian Muslim women generally.

While over half of Canadian Muslim women report living in family-owned homes, about a third of newcomers report the same. More newcomers without language skills report living in family-owned homes compared to the general newcomer Canadian Muslim women sample, but less than the general Canadian Muslim women sample. Surprisingly, among those in family-owned homes, a lower proportion of newcomers without official language skills report the presence of a mortgage compared to the general samples of newcomer and Canadian Muslim women. This is notably the only measure where newcomer Canadian Muslim women without official language skills reported more favourable outcomes compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample.

Table 6. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Newcomer Status and Language Skills in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	Newcomer CMW	Newcomer CMW without KOL
Total Personal Income				
Under 25k	49.78	69.64	82.78	83.07
25k-49.9k	29.59	19.43	13.42	16.35
50k-99.9k	17.40	9.17	3.47	0.59
100k-199.9k	2.31	1.17	0.17	0.00
200k or More	0.92	0.58	0.17	0.00
Total Household Income				
Under 25k	18.70	24.11	38.57	51.47
25k-49.9k	22.86	27.98	32.49	25.64
50k-99.9k	29.67	26.23	19.71	16.29
100k-199.9k	23.65	17.60	7.66	6.00
200k or More	5.11	4.09	1.57	0.60
Disposable Income				
Under 25k	17.83	20.05	33.24	29.39
25k-49.9k	28.57	31.92	36.61	26.73
50k-99.9k	34.82	30.45	21.28	30.68
100k-199.9k	16.55	15.31	7.86	11.40
200k or More	2.24	2.27	1.00	1.80
Household Below LICO				
No	84.90	67.05	52.28	58.25
Yes	15.10	32.95	47.72	41.75
Home Ownership				
Family Owned	74.53	54.88	33.26	44.27
Rented or Band housing	25.47	45.12	66.74	55.73
Presence of mortgage				
No	40.78	20.84	15.78	13.82
Yes	59.22	79.16	84.22	86.18

When we consider the qualitative data garnered from interviews and focus group interviews with Canadian Muslim women, it is not difficult to see the multiple measures of systemic inequality manifest in their everyday lives. Though the participants in the qualitative portion of this study were largely more privileged than the average Canadian Muslim woman of the specific population they represent, one even reporting, “I know I’m not an ideal candidate,” they nonetheless experienced the intersections under analysis, namely of gender, race, religion, immigration status, language ability, and geography.

Newcomer Canadian Muslim women experienced marginality in multiple social and public institutions, including when crossing the border, when using public transit, in stores and other public spaces, when seeking work, and on the job. These experiences are exacerbated by barriers around language for those without official language skills, but even those that were able to speak English and French experienced discrimination. For example, despite having American citizenship, when she attempted to relocate to live with her husband, she was denied access. I asked her why, and she said:

R: They assumed I was going to try living here permanently, as a US citizen, without trying to get my Canadian status.

I: But isn't that legal?

R: Yeah, I don't know. I think there was racism—I was in Montreal, I was wearing hijab, so—I don't know. When I was coming to meet my husband for coffee, to go on dates—I would have to come to Canada (through Ontario) because he couldn't leave. I told them I was going to get married and move in August, no one said anything. But the day I tried to come, move, they sent me back. And every time now, that I go to the US or Europe, there's a note in the system on my name so they ask me about that Montreal situation every single time. It's been 2.5 years, I'm a permanent resident, and they still question me. Now whenever I think about the border, I get anxiety, my stomach starts hurting. I don't want to go to the US because I know when I come back, they're going to question me, I have a baby, she's going to start crying. It's horrible. They said it won't disappear from the system until I'm a citizen.

Our conversation carried into her experiences of life in Canada. Unfortunately, she continued experiencing discriminatory treatment when travelling even domestically. When attempting to use transit in Toronto, she stated:

> When I first came here, you know that cliché that Canadian people are so nice? Like they say "sorry." When I first came, [I had trouble using the transit system.] One day I missed my stop, and I asked the driver for a transfer so I could get off and go back to the right stop. He didn't give it to me. I think this was discrimination. He didn't give the transfer, so I got off the bus and walked home. It was snowing, I was pregnant, I just cried. At that time, I was thinking, "Oh, this is Canada? This is how nice they are?" [Chuckles sadly] I didn't believe it. At that time, everything just piled up—my experiences at the border, this, and then us not knowing when we would get our permanent residence status, the job application—everything just piled up. I felt I didn't want to be here.

Our conversation carried into her experiences of life in Canada. Unfortunately, she continued experiencing discriminatory treatment when travelling even domestically. When attempting to use transit in Toronto, she stated:

> One time I was getting off the bus and I had a double stroller, so I tried to tell the bus driver in broken English to lower the step so that I can push the stroller off the bus smoothly, however he argued with me saying that he could not lower it. I told him that I've boarded the bus many times and I've seen it being lowered. He asked me to get off the bus since he can't do anything about it, so I pushed the stroller down anyway and it was a big jump causing my kids to get scared and wake up from their nap. He acted as if he didn't care at all and just closed the doors after me. I've seen bus drivers lower and adjust the

> bus step for people without even asking. Sometimes it's not even the words that make you feel unwelcome. It' s the stares and the looks that are always present wherever I go.

Failure to provide adequate service was notably a consistent theme in the narratives provided by women who spoke non-official languages. What also becomes apparent is the gut-wrenching saturation of these experiences for mothers.

In patriarchal societies, women are granted very limited protections. However, mothers are still provided social status and privileges, reflecting both the social value of birthing the next generation as well as the biological imperative for the survival of the species. In Canadian transit systems, passengers are routinely reminded to give up their seats and other comforts to those who have greater need, including pregnant women and mothers. However, in the experiences of the newcomers above, the transit workers themselves denied pregnant women service. This reflects the racist underpinnings in Canadian society, where especially in light of the increasing tolls of child fatalities at residential schools, we see that all children should matter, but they do not.

While the experiences may be dismissed as situational or gendered—e.g., male bus drivers impatient during busy commute times—the newcomer participants who speak non-official languages shared repeated instances of being denied services across different public institutions and by different social actors. Surely, we could expect mothers to be treated well in a hospital labour and delivery ward, however, one participant shares:

> When I gave birth to my daughter, I asked the nurse to give me my daughter so that I could give her milk. I was paralyzed from the stomach down and I said, "give me my daughter," my English wasn't that good so I didn't say please although my intonation was far from demanding. She became very aggressive with me and said, "don't you know how to say please?" She gave me my daughter and when I asked for formula she said "breastfeed her!" and left. I could barely move, let alone breastfeed her and I started crying. I was all alone and I spent the night crying. At that moment I felt mistreated and since I didn't know English well, I couldn't defend or speak up for myself.

None of the women who speak non-official languages report being currently employed. The newcomers who do speak official languages report being employed, but that it was very difficult to secure work. One participant shared an experience after submitting an application at a Toronto shop looking for help, she turned back and she observed:

> They threw my application away because of my appearance [my hijab]—they didn't know anything else about me. That demotivated me a lot. Throughout the past five years, I was questioning whether or not I should be wearing hijab, and these things added to my plate. I decided to take it off a year ago. These weren't the only reasons, but they added to it. I got very demotivated because I thought every job I was applying to, it was because of my appearance, I didn't hear back from any of the jobs I applied to. I got demotivated. And since I don't have Canadian experience, even though I have American experience, Canadian employers don't want that—they want Canadian.

This newcomer Canadian Muslim woman voiced what participants across the many subgroups of the sample reported: the Canadian labour market is difficult to crack for Muslims across the different identities, and particularly for newcomers.

The only newcomer who did not report great difficulty was an exception in several ways. This participant, trained in sociology, armed with two graduate degrees, knew about the difficulties newcomers experience when integrating into Canadian society, especially into the labour market. Now working with newcomers settling in Canada herself, she reflects:

My experience may not be representative of how others experience it. I am a sociologist and have a human rights degree from Europe. I was working for civil society organizations for well over a decade in Pakistan, and most of them were international organizations. I was working with the UN. Career-wise, it was a big move for me—at the UN, you get in, and you get out when you retire. But we chose to move, I left that job. I started applying from Pakistan, and I was prepared—I was reading immigrant experiences online, it was harrowing, it was fearful especially when you convert your life savings into Canadian dollars from a weak currency, it amounts to nothing and you feel like, "ok what have I been doing all my life?" So, I started applying while I was still in Pakistan. I did get interview calls. I wasn't challenged—alhumdulillah I'm really lucky in that way, I'm grateful for it. I had secured the job before I caught the flight. I was mentally at rest, I had a month to settle and start work.

Unlike other participants, this participant stated she integrated with ease. When I asked what factors helped provide that ease, she notes:

> I had income, and the language, so it was easier for me. But it was not easy, even with these things. Like even with money, if you want to rent—well, you don't have a history. Or going to the school, they have a list of documents they need just to get the kids enrolled. So, I don't know how someone who doesn't have the language does it, it was difficult.

Language skills were repeatedly identified as a major barrier. Compounded with language, newcomers who do not speak official languages noted the way they dress was also a major barrier to social inclusion. They state:

> I've noticed women are treated differently based on what they choose to wear. We're made to feel othered and in need of saving. They think that if you don't know English, you've come from a very backwards and unintelligent lifestyle. I always feel judged for the way I dress and speak.
>
> A lot of our unpleasant encounters stem from the fact that we are visibly Muslim (hijab and Abaya), and don't speak English that well. Our Muslim identity combined with our newcomer status affect our interactions with the world. These differences make us stand out from the rest of the society. They treat us differently and don't respect us the way people should be respected. What can I say, hopefully one day we learn the language and we are treated better.

While newcomers who speak non-official languages feel learning the language may help with social inclusion, language remains a barrier even for those with official language skills. And mental well-being directly impacts participants' language abilities. A newcomer who is also a single mother and experiencing depression stated, "When I don't feel the environment is safe, I lose my verbal skills. Not just in English, but even in my native language." Another participant educated in the US and Canada was asked what her biggest challenge living in Canada was, she commented on language and communication:

> I don't go to school, I don't work, my husband is Turkish, our friends are all Turkish. I feel like my English language skills are slipping. I feel like I'll have really deep thoughts and I can communicate them in Turkish, not English. And my biggest fear in life is being a shallow person, and in English I feel like I sound like a shallow person. When someone is talking about spiritualism or philosophy, I have thoughts but I can't express them in English. And then in Turkish, because my friends have lived in Turkey their whole life but I've traveled, I left Turkey when I was eight. So in Turkish, I'm not as good as them either. There's just no language I can express myself in. I think this is the biggest challenge I'm facing internally. And then, I have to balance being a mom and a student, I don't know how that will work out. My husband will be working during the day, so I'll have to find support. I don't know, I didn't want to postpone it any further. My plan was to take one gap year, but then I was pregnant and couldn't. Now there's a three-year gap, I didn't want to lose my motivation. I felt I would get used to being at home, and it'll just get harder because she'll have other needs as she gets older.

This participant echoes the existential dilemma voiced by several participants, of feeling a lack of belonging to neither Canadian society nor societies in countries of origin. Scholars refer to this as a liminal space, of being in-between rather than part of a given society. Ironic in a bitter sense, this participant was privileged through her American and Canadian education and was able to express this feeling of being unable to express her feelings. Those without or with less developed official language skills are left with the feelings but the lack of expression, exacerbating isolation in a new country.

I asked the participant trained in sociology and working on settling refugees in Canada about common challenges Canadian Muslim women experience. She stated:

> I classify them too—refugees have a completely different context if they're government funded or privately sponsored. Once they get here, because they have lived through so much trauma, it becomes really difficult. Especially for women. And if you come from a context where gender inequities were prevalent, or—sometimes women are protected and shielded in their ways and they choose to be that way. Their social mobility is limited and they're not doing a lot outside the house. Over here, you have to. So, we work with women who are scared to step out of the house because it is scary for them. They came from a place where there was war or conflict, or abuse and harassment. They don't know how to take a bus or understand a map. Some arrive in more disadvantaged situations where there are families that have absolutely nothing.

However, she notes that things are not that much better if women do step out and begin integrating, since women take on survival jobs more readily than men. Because women's employment status vis-à-vis men's unemployment status changes domestic dynamics, women are pressured with housework and child care (e.g., the second shift) with little to no assistance. And on top of that, they are confronted by a stigma around seeking mental health support.

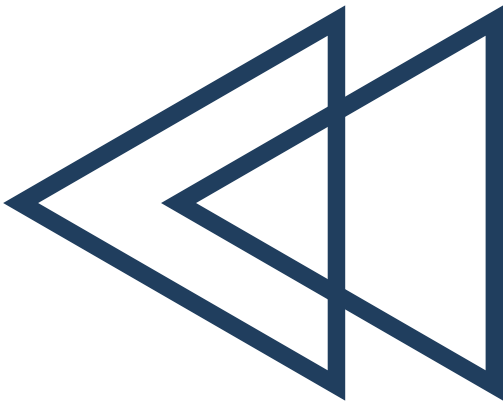
In addition to the changes to domestic arrangements, refugee and newcomer women who have experienced violent trauma contend with unsupportive and sometimes emotionally hostile environments in Canada. For example, one newcomer participant who states she has PTSD from experiencing the Arab Spring among other past experiences notes the insensitivity of university professors and classrooms. Despite her professors being feminists, she shared that

> I told the professors I'm not comfortable seeing pictures of war. The first professor said, "if you're not comfortable talking about war, rape, you should leave my class." I didn't leave the class, I stayed and I did really well. But she made no accommodations for me whatsoever. The second professor—she quoted from Roxanne Gay's Bad Feminist, and she said, "oh I don't believe in trigger warnings." One of the [other] students, she showed a picture of Abu Ghraib.

> I was in shock. I ran out of the class, I started sobbing, I had an anxiety attack. When it was over, I came back to class—I'm not usually like that, I'm not a dramatic person. And the professor was like, "let's talk about appropriate and inappropriate images." I was so upset, like, "if you just listened to me in the first place this wouldn't have happened." So, I went to the accessibility services and told them they had to write a letter for my professors and to take this seriously. It worked out in the end. But I'm so concerned about newcomers and refugees who come and, maybe they don't have the language skills to communicate this, and so these people have to experience this again and again and again because it's not in the law, it's not acknowledged that these things are not acceptable.

Although this participant was able to secure accommodations, this was not the norm. Most participants report difficulty accessing even services that are granted without accommodations.

Newcomer women, especially those who speak non-official languages, experienced direct refusal of public services, discrimination in multiple social and public institutions, and difficulties in navigating Canadian public spaces, from the transit system to the work place. Much of these experiences were due to social exclusion and not lack of social capital—e.g., the women were aware of the services but denied access by social service providers. Mothers especially were targets for this discrimination.



Black and East African Canadian Muslim Women

In quantitative analyses, Black Canadian Muslim women include all NHS participants who indicated they are women, Muslim, and identify as Black ethnically. The variables did not allow for specificity to certain countries—namely, Somalia, which was the country of origin of interest to CCMW given the understudied needs of Somali women in Canada. Instead, East African Muslim women are identified through birth in an East African country. Unsurprisingly, all East African women report being first generation Canadian. Black Canadian Muslim women were slightly more likely to report being first generation compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women **(Table 7)**.

Table 7. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Black and East African Muslim Identity in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	Black CMW	East African CMW
Generation of Immigration				
First	24.16	91.26	92.76	100.00
Second	15.11	7.92	7.24	0.00
Third	60.73	0.82	0.00	0.00
Citizenship				
Canadian by birth	76.44	8.99	7.50	0.10
Canadian by naturalization	17.80	63.66	67.01	87.27
Not a Canadian citizen	5.76	27.35	25.49	12.63
Knowledge of Official Languages				
English only	67.22	70.16	68.26	82.34
French only	12.61	8.11	10.00	2.01
Both English and French	18.16	14.92	16.26	9.86
Neither English nor French	2.01	6.81	5.48	5.78
Marital Status				
Never legally married	21.69	20.41	33.86	23.93
Legally married	47.81	65.22	38.32	49.67
Common law	12.02	1.79	4.12	2.41
Separated	2.81	3.33	8.92	8.29
Divorced	7.54	4.62	8.67	7.69
Widowed	8.12	4.63	6.11	8.01
Household Size				
1 person	15.34	4.44	6.67	8.56
2 persons	34.40	14.80	15.90	21.13
3-5 persons	45.33	61.16	51.69	51.63
6 or more persons	4.94	19.60	25.73	18.68

However, compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women, Black and especially East African Muslim women were more likely to report Canadian citizenship (**Table 7**). This may reflect a countervailing mechanism: because Black Canadians are more scrutinized and surveilled than other Canadians, securing legal status in otherwise precarious citizenship contexts becomes a mechanism for material and social survival. It is also possible that Black Canadian Muslims are more likely or readily deported or prevented from crossing the border without legal status compared to other immigrant populations.

Compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample, Black and East African Muslim women are more likely to have official language skills and less likely to be currently married **(Table 7)**. While the general Canadian Muslim women sample reports higher proportions of moderate households (3-5 persons), Black and East African women are more likely to report living alone or in smaller or larger households (**Table 7**). Thus, they were also less likely to report living in a single-family household compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample (**Table 8)**.

In terms of location of studies, Black and East African Muslim women were much more likely to have terminal Canadian degrees compared to the general Muslim women sample: while less than half of Canadian Muslim women report Canadian degrees, nearly two-thirds of Black and East African women did **(Table 8)**. Nonetheless, they report slightly lower employment rates compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample, and higher rates of unemployment. This again points to an underlying racist barrier Black Muslim women are confronted with. While the common assumption is that Canadian education is preferred to Canadian employers, this does not greatly enhance Black women's chances of employment vis-à-vis the general Canadian Muslim sample. Compared to the non-Muslim women sample, nearly four times the proportion of Black women report being unemployed and looking for work (3% vs. 11%).

The greatest occupational concentration of Canadian Muslim women is in sales and services **(Table 8)**. The proportions of Black women in sales and services was greater than the overall Canadian Muslim women sample. The next highest occupational concentration of Canadian Muslim women is in business, finance and administration, and while a smaller proportion of Black women report this occupational status compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample, a greater proportion of East African women selected this occupational category.

It is likely that these women are working in family-owned or ethnic businesses, as mentioned above for newcomers without official language skills.

Turning to **Table 9**, we explore outcomes related to income and household finances. Compared to Canadian Muslim women generally, a greater proportion of Black and East African Canadian Muslim women report personal incomes of $25k - $50k per year. However, a greater proportion of Black and East Canadian Muslim women report household incomes as well as disposable incomes of under $50k per year, implying that Black Canadian Muslim women earn a greater share of the household income compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample. A greater proportion of Black and East African women report living in households below the low income cut off (LICO) compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women.

Table 8. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Black and East African Muslim Identity in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women	Black CMW	East African CMW
Household Type				
One-family	68.99	74.29	69.07	69.14
Non-census family	11.59	18.99	18.93	18.33
Other family	19.42	6.72	12.00	12.53
Location of Studies				
Canada	85.56	43.43	63.32	62.95
Other Americas	3.05	2.31	2.47	2.14
Europe	4.15	4.56	4.63	10.07
E Asia	2.19	0.14	0.00	0.00
SE/S Asia	3.92	19.45	0.97	1.86
Other	1.13	30.11	28.60	22.98
Employment Status				
Employed	58.70	44.37	40.98	42.74
Unemp, looking for work	3.46	7.49	10.98	7.11
Unemp, not looking	31.26	25.16	28.12	30.58
Never worked/NA	6.57	22.98	19.93	19.57
NOCS				
Management	7.95	6.09	3.37	6.84
Business, finance, admin	27.00	24.47	22.18	30.35
Natural and applied sciences	3.12	3.95	1.80	2.63
Health occupations	10.82	9.99	13.22	12.75
Education, law, non-profit	13.64	16.45	12.06	11.56
Art, culture, recreation and sport	3.75	2.37	1.55	1.53
Sales and services	27.69	32.62	43.71	33.02
Trades, transport, operators	1.83	0.83	0.52	0.66
Natural resources, agriculture	1.44	0.08	0.00	0.00
Manufacturing and utilities	2.76	3.16	1.61	0.66

Table 9. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Black and East African Muslim Identity in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	Black CMW	East African CMW
Total Personal Income				
Under 25k	49.78	69.64	64.91	58.49
25k-49.9k	29.59	19.43	25.51	25.52
50k-99.9k	17.40	9.17	8.86	13.05
100k-199.9k	2.31	1.17	0.36	1.84
200k or More	0.92	0.58	0.36	1.10
Total Household Income Under 25k				
Under 25k	18.70	24.11	29.51	25.46
25k-49.9k	22.86	27.98	34.36	28.40
50k-99.9k	29.67	26.23	21.35	24.46
100k-199.9k	23.65	17.60	12.79	16.91
200k or More	5.11	4.09	2.00	4.76
Disposable Income				
Under 25k	17.83	20.05	25.64	21.02
25k-49.9k	28.57	31.92	40.66	33.63
50k-99.9k	34.82	30.45	25.19	27.52
100k-199.9k	16.55	15.31	7.90	15.72
200k or More	2.24	2.27	0.62	2.10
Household Below LICO				
No	84.90	67.05	53.86	65.28
Yes	15.10	32.95	46.14	34.72
Home Ownership				
Family Owned	74.53	54.88	24.00	45.96
Rented or Band housing	25.47	45.12	76.00	54.04
Presence of mortgage				
No	40.78	20.84	8.71	29.95
Yes	59.22	79.16	91.29	70.05

While over half of Canadian Muslim women report living in family-owned homes, less than a quarter of Black Muslim women report the same (Table 9). Significantly more East African women report living in family-owned homes compared to the general Black Canadian Muslim women sample, but less than the general Canadian Muslim women sample. A similar pattern emerged for newcomers and newcomers without official language skills. Another similar pattern emerges for mortgages: among those in family-owned homes, a lower proportion of newcomers without official language skills report the presence of a mortgage compared to the general samples of newcomer and Canadian Muslim women. Likewise, a lower proportion of East African women living in family-owned homes report the presence of a mortgage compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women, but Black Muslim women are much more likely to report the presence of a mortgage compared to the general Canadian Muslim women sample.

Though the quantitative data did not delve into the intersection of being Black and a newcomer, the qualitative data provide windows into the lives of newcomer Black Canadian Muslim women. Again, although the participants in the qualitative portion of this study were largely more privileged than the average Canadian Muslim woman of the specific population they represent, they nonetheless were subject to discriminatory experiences across aspects of their social and material realities.

I also note that, despite the focus group of Black Canadian Muslim women being conducted by a Black Canadian Muslim woman, there remained an air of caution in the group when sharing experiences. This is not surprising, again, given the social atmosphere of scrutiny and surveillance Black Canadians, Muslim Canadians, and women are subjected to (expanded on below). Thus, the statements shared in this group interview tended towards generalizations rather than personal experiences. The participants were also significantly younger than other participants in the study, and thus may have fewer lived experiences and less developed language to share those experiences at this point in their life course. Participants who were mothers were most able to express their experiences, and none of the Black women who participated were mothers nor yet married at the time of the study.

Nonetheless, the depth of experiences, whether embodied or vicarious, expressed by the sample of Black Canadian Muslim women provided rich narratives that centred their lived histories and the political implications of social realities contextualizing those lives. When asked about the most pressing challenges they are experiencing, the Black women in the focus groups commented on the stereotypes with which they are confronted, assumptions others make about them, and the expectations that they are held to. In other words, these participants felt the weight of ideologies attached to their marginalized identities. One participant articulates the experience as:

“When you’re Black or African, people see you as less than and different, like your voice doesn't even matter.”

The context of these ideological assumptions and expectations were experienced in both public and private spaces. For example, participants referred to personal and vicarious experiences of being dismissed by health care providers, evidence of the intersections of racial and gender discrimination—e.g., research demonstrates that proportionately more Black women die of childbirth in developed countries because doctors and medical staff dismiss their pain as exaggerations.

Likewise, discriminatory experiences on the job market and in workplaces were identified as serious concerns for material and mental well-being. These concerns were exacerbated by familial expectations and household demands, which were further nuanced by domestic arrangements like birth order. For example, Black Canadian Muslim women are expected to earn and help financially provide for the home, while simultaneously they are made to feel investing in their education is selfish. Participants directly linked these contradictory expectations to mental health concerns. One Black Canadian Muslim woman participant states,

> Barriers to my mental health would be expectations, responsibilities—things that are seen as my duties [can create guilt]. For a long time, I was always trying to see what I was doing wrong—I thought it was my fault, I didn't realize there were external factors affecting me… There are certain [family and work] expectations and responsibilities that weigh me down.

Eldest daughters especially experience this pressure, as they are expected to act as second mothers and care for younger siblings and the home while also acting as second fathers to help provide financially and attend to matters outside the home. One participant mentioned she wanted to continue pursuing education, but had to "compromise those goals" and change her plans for the sake of the family's finances.

Black Canadian Muslim women report experiencing anxiety as they are stretched too thin, investing in education to secure a promising financial future while being pressured to know how to cook, clean, and attend to domestic duties. One participant stated she feels immense guilt for taking breaks, as her sense of self-worth is tied to being always productive.

Despite experiencing a range of mental health symptoms, Black Canadian Muslim women feel a stigma around reaching out for support because they are expected to be the **"strong Black woman, you can't have the full range of emotions."**

This echoes research on the sociology of emotions, which indicates that the less social power allocated to a social group, the less social acceptance there will be for that group to express emotionality, particularly "negative" emotions like sadness or anger. This is also where the phenomenon of tone policing emerges. Participants noted that because of social expectation, Black women are more likely to ignore their own health needs and care for others instead.

Participants noted that despite the need for mental health and self-care resources given the multiple arenas of stress in the lives of Black Canadian Muslim women, that resources are limited, inadequate, and unavailable. In terms of mental health support, one participant states,

> **There aren't enough resources for religious minorities in general, but especially not for Black Muslims. Like counseling is based on western assumptions, not our lives [lived experiences], not our culture.**

When discussing other forms of health seeking behaviour, the lack of adequate resources is again highlighted, and named as an item exacerbating poor mental health. One participant states,

> **There aren't spaces for women to exercise freely and feel safe. I did go to one place that said they had a space exclusively for women, but it wasn't even closed off. That is discouraging in itself—I need so much motivation to exercise as it is, and then [being confronted with this] makes it even harder.**

In other words, inadequate resources have the effect of exacerbating distress rather than relieving it. Across social and public institutions, Black Canadian Muslim women experience inadequate services and resources as they are confronted by systemic and everyday racism in the public sphere and gendered expectations in the private sphere. They are held to impossible expectations of providing for the family while also sacrificing their education to care for the family. Thus, while other Canadian Muslim women in this study pointed to assumptions others (e.g., those outside their homes) made about them, Black Canadian Muslim women reported contending with expectations even within families.

Homes proved not to be the same safe haven for Black Canadian Muslim women, a notable finding given the focus on safety and protection within Black family homes described by Collins and other Black feminists.[3] This finding reflects the intersection these women occupy, of being from Muslim-majority contexts while also being of African descent.

In Muslim-majority contexts, like the Yemeni families studied by Dorsky and Stevenson,[4] patriarchal family structures mean that parents invest in sons' education because sons stay with the family; investing in daughters' education is framed as investing in someone else's family. Parents may also be wary of daughters being too educated to secure marital matches—something that the Black Canadian Muslim women participants of the current study echoed. And in the general Canadian context, we do see this marriage gradient, of men marrying "down" and women marrying "up." However, unlike the Yemeni families that Dorsky and Stevenson studied, where girls (however reluctantly) consented to the system because of the social and economic benefits that marriage would confer to them, Black Canadian Muslim women do not have access to these same privileges. In fact, in the Canadian context, Black Muslim women largely continue (or start) working after marriage. This is in part due to structural barriers, like racism, that prevent Black Muslim men from earning a wage that could sustain the family independently—indeed, as of the end of the 21st century, many Canadian families regardless of race or religion need at least two incomes for financial stability given ever-increasing costs of living paired with lagged income increases.

However, the centrality of Black women in Black families predates the structural barriers that impact Black men's participation in family life. Indeed, approaching our understanding of Black families using this Eurocentric assumption, of male headed households being the norm, is a failed attempt at intersectionality. Mothers are central to Black families regardless of how involved fathers are (see especially Chapter 8 in Collins' Black Feminist Thought). While this centrality of mothers may facilitate Black women's self-investment for the sake of their families in a general context, for Muslims, the focus on sacrificing education for the sake of the family creates a countervailing mechanism that pressures Canadian Black Muslim women with contradictory and confusing messages, in turn impacting their mental wellbeing.

[3] See especially Collins' work, *Black Feminist Thought.*

[4] *Dorsky, Susan and Thomas B. Stevenson (1995) "Childhood and Education in Highland North Yemen." Pp. 309-324 in Children in the Muslim Middle East, edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.*

Canadian Muslim Single Mothers

The distribution of single mothers across the immigrant generations is remarkably similar to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women (Table 10). Single mothers are significantly more likely to be Canadian citizens, and through naturalization. Despite the greater likelihood of holding citizenship, single mothers are more likely to report knowing neither official language compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women. Single mothers are less likely to be currently married and more likely to be widowed.

Table 10. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Single Mother Status in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	CM Single Mothers
Generation of Immigration			
First	24.16	91.26	92.61
Second	15.11	7.92	6.81
Third	60.73	0.82	0.58
Citizenship			
Canadian by birth	76.44	8.99	7.60
Canadian by naturalization	17.80	63.66	70.50
Not a Canadian citizen	5.76	27.35	21.90
Knowledge of Official Languages			
English only	67.22	70.16	67.96
French only	12.61	8.11	4.81
Both English and French	18.16	14.92	11.16
Neither English nor French	2.01	6.81	16.07
Marital Status			
Never legally married	21.69	20.41	17.47
Legally married	47.81	65.22	57.96
Common law	12.02	1.79	0.87
Separated	2.81	3.33	2.75
Divorced	7.54	4.62	2.80
Widowed	8.12	4.63	18.16
Household Size			
1 person	15.34	4.44	0.00
2 persons	34.40	14.80	0.00
3-5 persons	45.33	61.16	55.79
6 or more persons	4.94	19.60	44.21

Surprisingly, single mothers were less likely than the general sample of Canadian Muslim women to report any other marital category, including being divorced or separated (Table 10). This may reflect Canadian Muslim women who are raising their children in Canada alone, but still be married to spouses who are estranged either in Canada or other countries. Given the taboo around divorce and identifying as separated, as well as the difficulty in obtaining Islamic-based divorce that most single mothers in the qualitative focus group report, these women may continue to identify as married even though they are raising their children alone.

Table 11. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Single Mother Status in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Canadian Muslim Women	CM Single Mothers
Household Type			
One-family	68.99	74.29	0.00
Non-census family	11.59	18.99	0.00
Other family	19.42	6.72	100.00
Location of Studies			
Canada	85.56	43.43	40.80
Other Americas	3.05	2.31	2.49
Europe	4.15	4.56	6.09
E Asia	2.19	0.14	0.00
SE/S Asia	3.92	19.45	27.75
Other	1.13	30.11	22.88
Employment Status			
Employed	58.70	44.37	37.66
Unemp, looking for work	3.46	7.49	5.16
Unemp, not looking	31.26	25.16	28.51
Never worked/NA	6.57	22.98	28.68
NOCS			
Management	7.95	6.09	4.27
Business, finance, admin	27.00	24.47	29.12
Natural and applied sciences	3.12	3.95	2.38
Health occupations	10.82	9.99	10.56
Education, law, non-profit	13.64	16.45	11.72
Art, culture, recreation and sport	3.75	2.37	3.22
Sales and services	27.69	32.62	34.65
Trades, transport, operators	1.83	0.83	0.68
Natural resources, agriculture	1.44	0.08	0
Manufacturing and utilities	2.76	3.16	3.41

Table 12. Characteristics of Canadian Women by Single Mother Status in Percent, NHS 2011 Weighted Results

	Non-Muslim Canadian Women	Muslim Women (CMW)	CM Single Mothers
Total Personal Income			
Under 25k	49.78	69.64	72.99
25k-49.9k	29.59	19.43	16.19
50k-99.9k	17.40	9.17	8.06
100k-199.9k	2.31	1.17	1.89
200k or More	0.92	0.58	0.87
Total Household Income			
Under 25k	18.70	24.11	36.6
25k-49.9k	22.86	27.98	16.3
50k-99.9k	29.67	26.23	23.67
100k-199.9k	23.65	17.60	17.78
200k or More	5.11	4.09	5.66
Disposable Income			
Under 25k	17.83	20.05	8.84
25k-49.9k	28.57	31.92	19.23
50k-99.9k	34.82	30.45	41.12
100k-199.9k	16.55	15.31	27.76
200k or More	2.24	2.27	3.06
Household Below LICO			
No	84.90	67.05	79.39
Yes	15.10	32.95	20.61
Home Ownership			
Family Owned	74.53	54.88	75.95
Rented or Band housing	25.47	45.12	24.05
Presence of mortgage			
No	40.78	20.84	16.13
Yes	59.22	79.16	83.87

Significantly more single mothers report living in larger households than the general sample of Canadian Muslim women. By definition, they live in other-family households (Table 11). In terms of location of studies, single mothers present a somewhat similar distribution across locations as the general sample of Canadian Muslim women, though remarkably more report terminal degrees in Southeast and South Asia. A smaller proportion of single mothers report current employment or employment seeking status compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women. Conversely, more single mothers report not looking for work and having never been employed.

Canadian Muslim single mothers were four times as likely to report having never worked compared to non-Muslim Canadian women (29% vs. 7%). The distribution of single mothers across occupational categories was similar to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women, though with notably more single mothers in business, finance, and administration.

Turning to Table 12, we find patterns of disadvantage in income distributions. Compared to Canadian Muslim women generally, a greater proportion of single mothers report personal incomes of $25,000 per year or less. This is consistent with annual household income, where less than a quarter of Canadian Muslim women report $25,000 per year or less but over one-third of single mothers report the same. However, patterns shift regarding disposable income and the low income cut off, where single mothers report better outcomes than the general newcomer Canadian Muslim women sample. Nonetheless, single mothers reported poorer outcomes compared to Canadian Muslim women generally. While over half of Canadian Muslim women report living in family-owned homes, about three-quarters of single mothers report the same. Among those in family-owned homes, a higher proportion of single mothers report the presence of a mortgage compared to the general sample of Canadian Muslim women.

Across several of the above measures, it may seem that Canadian Muslim single mothers are doing remarkably well. The single mothers I spoke to echoed this sentiment, some participants repeating that, **“single moms are the most resilient people I know. They can get anything done!”**

There is likely a selection factor at play—only the women who have social, human, and economic capital (e.g., a network of friends, job skills, and money) combined with a developed sense of mastery and environmental control can take the risk to live as single mothers in contexts where the odds are stacked against them. For example, one of the participants managed to start a now highly lucrative business, write and publish a memoir, and sole-parent during COVID. Thus, it may appear that the women are able to navigate their lives with relative ease. However, Canadian Muslim single mothers present with unique challenges that are not captured in the quantitative data. Through qualitative focus group discussions, we better understand the hurdles of their day to day lives. When asked how she found the motivation and energy to accomplish lofty goals, the entrepreneur-author states,

> I had to think outside the box and couldn't rely on the government or anyone—I could only rely on myself. This is the thing about being a single mom, you really learn to be independent. You have to feed yourself and your child, you have to secure housing. There are resources, but I learned from my experience that I have to think and find my own solutions. Whatever resources come later, I welcome them, but I learned I couldn't rely on them. I have to be the problem-solver.

Other single mothers echoed this participant's sentiments of having to be independent. Multiple mothers referred to the challenges of being without family and traditional support structures in "a foreign land":

> There aren't spaces for women to exercise freely and feel safe. I did go to one place that said they had a space exclusively for women, I have no family here. Typical immigrant story—you get married and you're shipped to a foreign land and you're told to build a life, but you're not given the tools, you learn as you go. When you take the path of living the life yourself with kids, trying to sustain a job, and I work for a nonprofit so money is tight. The constant fear of being let go, or "we can't accommodate you and your kids," it is a constant fear that I live with, because it's something that organizations do.

This participant is naming the "mommy track," or the penalty that women pay at work for having children. This can manifest as being skipped over for promotions or opportunities, being expected to take on less work and fewer hours, or being outright fired for assumptions that mothers will prioritize childcare over employment responsibilities—their husbands, after all, would be the ones to prioritize employment over childcare responsibilities. But in the case of single mothers, there is no other breadwinner—they win their own bread and feed their kids too. Some employers exploited the financial reliance of single mothers on their jobs, and coerced them to work in unfavourable working conditions. One participant reported symptoms consistent with chronic post-traumatic stress disorder due to her employer's exploitive practices.

Other single mothers also discus deleterious impact of the demands of work and family life, especially in the context of COVID. For example, while all participants reported feelings some degrees of social isolation due to COVID, single mothers had it especially bad, as people they would regularly socialize with avoided them due to their children, "**they are afraid of getting COVID from the kids.**" For mothers of school aged children, the mandatory online schooling created difficult challenges for single mothers, one stating:

> We didn't choose to have the kids at home, online schooling, the government mandated that. But the mental stress it causes someone who's trying to provide for the family, and maintain the mental sanity—it's understated to say we were just stressed—we're stretched beyond our means. You're asking about resources? They closed down daycare [anger in voice], they cut back on child care subsidies. What about rent subsidies? What about people like us? People like us are the most vulnerable, we're hit the hardest, we're lucky enough to have a voice that we can at least verbalize our anguish. There are those that have suffered and have fallen through the cracks—who is looking after them?

From single mothers' narratives, it is clear COVID has exacerbated the stress of being stretched too thin, but also that these mothers experience a great deal of stress irrespective of COVID. Due to discrimination both within secular Canadian society as well as within Canadian Muslim communities. Single mothers experience anti-Muslim sentiment on the job market, while working, and while accessing services (e.g., booking medical appointments). They also report experiencing a great deal of scrutiny and surveillance in their ethnic and religious communities.

The scrutiny single mothers experience from Canadian Muslim communities revolves around the assumed threat now-single women pose to men (apparently as temptresses), the seemingly automatic support communities and even family networks offer to men (as women are blamed for the failed marriage), and the lack of support for women seeking divorce (though the same is easily granted to men).

In terms of single mothers being seen as threats to men, multiple participants noted that the women they were friends with while married suddenly became cold, unwelcoming, and uninviting to the participants as soon as "the cat came out of the bag" and the communities discovered the dissolved union. Part of this was the communities treating the newly divorced women as social pariahs undergoing "hostile alienation", but also women felt others believed they were sexually promiscuous. And so, their married friends abandoned them. The one single mother reported a supportive social network, but her network was comprised solely of other separated and divorced women.

The abandonment that women experience upon divorce is exacerbated by the apparently unconditional support that their ex-husbands receive. One participant named the power structures within communities that uphold male privilege at fault:

> **Even if people are sympathetic, they can see it was the man's fault, these are male dominated communities and they are run by men. You're not going to get support. I would be reluctant to ask in that setting.**

For another participant, the lack of support from the masjid was especially disappointing because, when she attempted to access support through secular channels, she was told, "we don't think we should be involved, maybe you should ask your community for help." The Canadian Muslim communities' support for men and disservice to women is especially apparent in the asymmetrical practices around granting religious based divorce.

When divorce was mentioned during the focus group discussions, I first thought the participants were discussing legal (secular Canadian) divorce and mentioned CCMW's legal services. The participants were quick to correct me—they wanted access to, or even information about, religious based divorce. One participant stated,

> I told my dad I got divorced, and he said, "yeah that's just a Canadian divorce, I need you to annul the nikkah." So the whole process of nikkah—I had a stamped paper showing I was [legally] divorced, I sent that to the Imams, but they dismissed it. They asked, "what are your principles? What are the grounds on which you're asking for a divorce?" And even then, it took me four months after getting all the paperwork from the Canadian system, to prove to the Imams that my context of taking divorce constitutes your khula parameters. But why should I have to do that? It was a 36-page long document. Legal aid was extremely helpful. It was my community that put a halt in the process.

Other participants echoed their frustrations around the ease of access for their exes to pursue religious divorce if they so chose, but the hurdles that they were presented with on the basis of their gender. One participant lamented the lack of even information regarding divorce, for the sake of her children:

> Other Muslim kids tell my kids, "what? You're not allowed to divorce in Islam!" I'm not a religious scholar, but I have to be able to respond to my kids and explain these things. Our mosques are not giving us the services we need, we can't access those services in the public sector—the public sector is not equipped to deal with the issues that our kids are facing. It's a huge lack of service that municipalities have to look into. We and our kids are a victim of this deficit.

When divorce was mentioned during the focus group discussions, I first thought the participants were discussing legal (secular Canadian) divorce and mentioned CCMW's legal services. The participants were quick to correct me—they wanted access to, or even information about, religious based divorce. One participant stated,

> I told my dad I got divorced, and he said, "yeah that's just a Canadian divorce, I need you to annul the nikkah." So the whole process of nikkah—I had a stamped paper showing I was [legally] divorced, I sent that to the Imams, but they dismissed it. They asked, "what are your principles? What are the grounds on which you're asking for a divorce?" And even then, it took me four months after getting all the paperwork from the Canadian system, to prove to the Imams that my context of taking divorce constitutes your khula parameters. But why should I have to do that? It was a 36-page long document. Legal aid was extremely helpful. It was my community that put a halt in the process.

Other participants echoed their frustrations around the ease of access for their exes to pursue religious divorce if they so chose, but the hurdles that they were presented with on the basis of their gender. One participant lamented the lack of even information regarding divorce, for the sake of her children:

> Other Muslim kids tell my kids, "what? You're not allowed to divorce in Islam!" I'm not a religious scholar, but I have to be able to respond to my kids and explain these things. Our mosques are not giving us the services we need, we can't access those services in the public sector—the public sector is not equipped to deal with the issues that our kids are facing. It's a huge lack of service that municipalities have to look into. We and our kids are a victim of this deficit.

While Canadian Muslim single mothers appear to be performing remarkably well vis-à-vis other Canadian Muslim women, under closer inspection we can see they are fighting against all odds to stay afloat. These women are remarkably resilient and able to move mountains—and, they should not need to. These women are fighting battles on a daily basis to make ends meet.

Queer Canadian Muslim Women

Although the quantitative data on Canadian Muslim queer and trans women was not robust enough for the purposes of this report, the narratives provided by queer participants provide important insight.

Of the three queer participants, one was a newcomer, one a refugee, and one identified as diversely abled. Their experiences mirrored the experiences of others in the sample, but were also unique given their sexual diversity. Like previously discussed groups, the queer women reported concerns around language and cultural retention, difficulties on the job market, and discrimination in social and public institutions. Language was particularly important for one queer identified participant, who stated,

> I feel like I'm losing my language. The skills that I had before, I'm losing. That's really hard for me. But something positive of when I came to Canada, I started really working on—finding my language important. I got really interested in [Bahraini culture]. I dedicated my entire master's thesis to this topic. I became very interested in educating about the plight of my people. I mean people in diaspora always care more about their culture and country than people who actually live in it. I hate it when I'm there because of the oppression, but then I have a romanticized idea whenever I leave.

Note how this participant is anxious about retaining her language of origin, not official Canadian language skills. Another queer identified participant did name lack of English skills as an issue when she first arrived in Canada, but also that as soon as she graduated high school, she "moved to Toronto so I could be around people of colour." This participant continued on by sharing,

> I wish I had a connection to other Palestinians or to Palestine. I've never been to Palestine. Where I'm from, it's now Israel. I have family members who are Israeli citizens and who work in Israel. When I do meet people and I tell them where I'm from, they're like, "oh you're a sellout."

This participant's disconnection from her people of shared ethnicity is exacerbated by the fact that her country of origin, Palestine, is under threat due to settler colonialism.

Unlike other participants discussed earlier, who seem secure in their ethnic and religious identities even if they expressed anxieties about their children's identities, queer identified participants were anxious to retain both their cultural and religious identities but seemed less anxious to integrate into Canada. For example, previously discussed groups of participants fixated on breaking the Canadian job market, framing it as a major concern. Queer identified participants also describe the long and difficult process through which they secure jobs, but they frame it matter-of-factly, as if the process difficulty is a given and not a major concern. It is noteworthy that all three queer identified participants hold jobs that they are satisfied with, even if they are experiencing varying levels of precarious economic states.

Although other groups, like single mothers, report being scrutinized by Canadian Muslim communities, queer identified participants felt particularly unwelcome. For example, one participant highlighted how she should probably seek therapy, but cannot due to the nature of her work (if suspected of having mental health concerns, this participant would lose access to certain aspects of her profession). She notes,

> I probably should seek therapy, being a Muslim, and dealing with different factors—being Muslim, being queer, dealing with—like you witness injustice, you have to stay silent. These are the things that impact me personally, mentally.

When I asked if she has support within her communities—either Muslim or queer—she said,

> No. I have a queer—a transgender friend. We actually grew up together. He was Sudanese and I witnessed his transition from female to male. I remember in 2016, we were hanging out in Toronto and he said that because I work in [law enforcement], as a byproduct I am racist. So, I don't—we'd known each other for 12, 14 years at that point. I was like, what do you mean I'm racist? That's a very strong word to throw around and to say just because—a lot of Muslims and queer people—I get it. They've had a lot of bad experiences, I've witnessed these bad experiences, but [such an overgeneralization], it's disheartening. So, in that sense, no I don't feel I have support especially when my close friends—I witnessed their adversities and their struggles, they say these things. Plus, actual Muslims—I have friends who are Muslims and I would never come out to them, even though they know, because at the end of the day they're still homophobic. Even if they aren't homophobic, they don't agree or claim that I need help or—if you look at their lives, nothing against them, but they actually commit sins that they're clearly cut in the Quran, you can't do it—it's not my business, it's between them and their Maker, but—so I don't get support from there. And then at work [sad chuckle], bless their hearts, I find white people generally ignorant. And not from a place of hate, they just don't understand or care to learn about other things. And they maintain their bubble and apply their own standards on others, which is now where we have friction between communities.

This participant feels unsupported by queer friends because of the nature of her work, by the Muslim community due to her queer identity, and by her workplace colleagues because of her Muslim identity.

In short, there is no space where this participant can feel included. What is especially telling in this participant's narrative, and across the narratives of queer-identified participants, is her reference to heterosexual, homophobic Muslims as "actual Muslims." This hints at the possible identity fragmentation that queer-identified Canadian Muslims experience, resulting in their disproportionate fixation on retaining religious and ethnic identity, especially when compared to other Canadian Muslims in this study, who are preoccupied with integrating. It may be that while heterosexual Canadian Muslims experience the brunt of systemic violence from non-Muslim others, queer Canadian Muslims experience the brunt of systemic violence from non-queer others. When asked what her most pressing challenge is, one queer-identified participant states,

> I don't have a safe space anywhere I go. I can't come out to Muslims—not that they'd be violent, but I can't be myself with them. I can see people removing themselves from my life. My friend, she's doing her PhD, and she tells me I need to turn to God. [Laughs] I am with God—I fast, I pray, I'm a pretty spiritual person as it is. I do my own volunteer work for refugees, I do free translation work, what more—not that I want credit for it, but what do you mean "turn to God"? How am I not being a decent person? And then within my own family, I can't be outspoken about my sexuality—but as long as it's not out loud, it's ok. "Don't bring shame to the family name," or whatever.

Another queer-identified participant adds that being Shia is another level of marginalization, as she experiences anti-Shia sentiment in Sunni-majority spaces, and homophobia in Shia spaces. Another queer-identified participant adds being Ismaili, and she experiences Twelver bias in Shia spaces, and the exclusion of Ismailis from Muslim spaces:

> I remember a specific thing on campus, the Muslim Student Association wouldn't include Ismailis under their umbrella because they decided that Ismailis are not really Muslims.

That's less my experience now, I am friends with much more inclusive Muslims. But in university, having people tell us, "you're not really Muslim, you're Ismaili," that was really tough

The consistent theme across narratives of queer identified women demonstrate repeated experiences of social exclusion due to their gender, sexuality, and religious identities. Unlike other groups of participants, who feel excluded from Canadian social and public spaces, queer-identified participants were more similar to single mothers, who reported repeated experiences of scrutiny, surveillance, and exclusion from the Canadian Muslim communities. But unlike single mothers in this sample, the queer-identified participants also expressed anxiety about retaining religious and ethnic identities.

Canadian Muslim Women with Diverse Abilities

Like queer and trans women, the data on Canadian Muslim women with diverse abilities was inadequate for the purposes of reporting. However, qualitative interviews help us understand their unique experiences better. Unfortunately, only two participants were able to complete interviews, as the remaining participants dropped out of the study due to needs related to their diverse abilities. The two who did participate required separate interviews to accommodate their personal schedules and diverse needs—and ended up being a boon, as one participant also identified as queer while the other participant had more conservative religious leanings (but was not homophobic, as she stated during the interview).

> It's a catch 22 because I need to go to work because I need to work, I need the money, but I'm also worried about my health because I am more susceptible to getting COVID. I haven't been able to see anyone or do any social outings—that's been tough, just being holed up in my house all day long. It's been tough and stressful.

When asked if she is being supported for mental health through services like therapy, this participant responds

> No, especially right now because I'm experiencing financial strain, I can't afford to pay a counselor. Right now I go through this system, and I just found out they're shifting to this short term policy, and that's unfortunate because mental health is not a short term thing. So I will be losing my counselor in 6 to 8 sessions. That's been stressful. Finding services within the context of low income and diverse—I don't even know where to start looking. And the waiting lists are so long, so many people are in need, and I'm sorta stable so I'm like at the bottom of the list. I wouldn't even know where to start looking for queer Muslim therapists—is that even a thing? Do we even have queer Muslim female counseling services? It's so niche. I would prefer a woman of colour, but beggars can't be choosers.

For the other participant with diverse needs, who has a rare genetic disorder that is managed through diet and as such, does not affect her as much anymore, COVID did still exacerbate issues related to having a diverse need. However, the impact must be understood through her life course history and experience as a Canadian Muslim woman.

This participant was diagnosed as a young adult, and reports feeling strain on both her physical and mental health, because, "As a Muslim, there's already dietary restrictions, and then on top of that I have even more restrictions."

She also encountered peer pressure from peers at school, who demanded she "just eat with us," highlighting how she already felt excluded socially as a Canadian Muslim. Things at home were not much better, as her parents would badger her with questions, not understanding her condition themselves, and asking, "when will you get back to normal?"

She emigrated to Canada with her mother and sisters, her father having to stay back because of the inadequate uptake of immigrants into the Canadian labour market.

Her mother, who did not speak English well, was not able to navigate the health care system or discuss the participant's condition with doctors and medical staff. The participant reflects on this experience, and how it shaped her current aspirations:

> My mom was really scared, she never had a kid staying at the hospital for like 10 days. But emotionally, nothing was touched on—if I felt overwhelmed, "oh just read more Quran." You know, those basic things that immigrant parents talk about. And at that point I wasn't as aware of mental health, but I think that's why I studied [social and health related field]. I don't want future generations of immigrant kids to go through what I went through.

She reports how, on repeated occasions, when she was met with missing or inadequate resources for Canadian Muslims or immigrants more generally, she would organize to create the resource herself. Though this participant was able to see the glass as half full over time, rising to the challenge, she reflects that she initially "hated" the experience of having to learn and navigate systems of care and services, because, "already, being a Muslim teenager in Canada, you feel out of place anyway." She reflects,

> I lived in a very white town. The school I went to, when I was in grade 11, there was only me and two other girls that were brown—out of 300 students. I was the only hijabi—and I wore niqab back then, I was the only niqabi [chuckles], and I didn't have any friends, except the teachers. I felt out of place and it was exhausting because I felt I had to constantly prove, "yes I wear the niqab but that doesn't mean I'm oppressed." It was just a struggle to wake up every morning and go to school, but I did it because I wanted to finish high school and move on to university.

Beyond the standard classroom, she was able to educate and advocate for herself in the health care system, which in turn helped her and her sisters educate her mother. She is now motivated to continue this line of work and help educate and create resources for new immigrants and their children, so no one has to experience what she did.

This kind of entrepreneurial spirit was especially noted among single mothers, but a consistent theme across participant groups as Canadian Muslim women are placed in unique positions to build communities and create resources —which based on historical accounts by Daood Hamdani and Murray Hogben, are consistent across Canadian Muslim history.

Returning to the participant's experiences, she reports repeated instances of feeling othered by (white) Canadians because of her Muslim identity especially in grade school, though this eased in university as she encountered more Canadian Muslims and felt a sense of belonging and community. Nonetheless, she has to fight to feel included even among other Muslims of her ethnic origin.

While other participants felt easily accepted by societies and communities in their countries of origin (or their parents' countries of origin), this participant did not. When she returns to her parents' birth country, she feels like an outsider for not being able to eat the same foods as her relatives. From my outsider's perspective, it seems this could be remedied if her relatives included foods that she could also eat, but cultural practices around food preparation and consumption make this accommodation unlikely. In lieu of being included at the table, literally, this participant settles on maintaining boundaries—that others should not make "insensitive" comments about her dietary restrictions. This sentiment around wanting healthy interpersonal boundaries—of not having to explain or defend one's life choices to others, especially family and extended family—was repeated by queer women and single mothers. However, for this participant, the boundary was being drawn around her eating habits and not her household structure or lifestyle, and the way she framed the badgering made it apparent that entering more intimate spaces meant the comments were also more insidious.

I did not draw on the experiences of other participants with diverse abilities due to confidentiality. However, several aspects of her experiences overlap with the participant whose experiences are unfolded above. Both describe their diverse abilities and needs as no longer impacting their lives, and yet they have both carved their lives in response to those needs simultaneous to being Canadian Muslim women. Both frame their narratives as overcoming the disparities they experienced related to the lack of social inclusion and accommodation of their diverse abilities and needs. This implies that their experiences would be different from other Canadian Muslim women, for example those who have diverse needs that continue to be unmet—and therefore, for example, they are unable to participate in research like the current study.

There remains a gap in better knowing how diverse abilities and needs impact Canadian Muslim women. Nonetheless, the participants in this study shared their lived experiences and highlighted how their experiences are shaped through identity and ability. **The implications and recommendations emerging from these findings are discussed in the next section.**

Implications and Recommendations

Before turning to the implications and recommendations emerging from the findings of the current study, I remind the reader (who may be more familiar with working from a liberal feminist approach) that intersectional approaches centre the women and their experiences (see Theoretical Framework). While a liberal approach to recommendations would start with an organization or level of government and identify what the institution can do effectively and efficiently for as many women as possible, an intersectional approach would not. Instead, an intersectional approach to recommendations starts with centering the women's experiences and then identifying solutions to address gaps in service provisions, and with the understanding that these gaps need to be addressed at multiple levels and across separate but interconnected institutions.

Intersectional approaches are more holistic and call on organizations to critically, intentionally, and mindfully centre the women and their needs. It is not a matter of ticking off boxes—an overly crude generalization of more liberal and institutional approaches. If an organization seeks to serve as many people as effectively as possible, this inherently strays away from intersectional approaches that, again, centre the unique experiences of a specific group of women.

With this in mind, I provide recommendations organized by specific needs identified by participants in the study. These needs relate to navigating the job market and resources for workers, social isolation and social inclusion, religious resources and support, culturally relevant and appropriate services, and support for community organizers. I end with a special note on policymaking.

Labour Market Resources

Most participants in this study are professionally successful if their work centres on their own (religious, immigrant) identity. There were rare exceptions of women entrepreneurs who were able to break into the business world with timely ideas, or women who were able to navigate their social networks for professional opportunities. For the most part, however, women who are pursuing careers that did not centre on their Muslimness or ethnic identities had a difficult time securing work.

One participant commented, “me being me is a good thing, I’ve never had to worry about finding work, Alhumdulillah. I’ve chosen fields where me speaking Arabic and having an Arab name has been a good thing.” The fact that most of the women who were able to be professionally successful benefitted from their (othered) identities reflects the fact that Canadian Muslims, especially Canadian Muslim women, are not properly integrated into Canadian society. They have careers that, ironically, highlight their other-ness.

A finding consistent with most research on immigrant integration in Canada is the lack of systemic and institutional support for newcomers to access work comparable to the work they had prior to immigration. Addressing credential deflation through credential translation and career transference programs would help newcomers navigate the labour market. One participant asked,

> “Canada is really open to accepting immigrants, but what are they doing for the immigrants? Let’s be real. They’re struggling with jobs. The reason my dad [didn’t come to Canada with us] was because he couldn't find the same level of job here. He eventually did, but only because one of his friends networked with him. Not many people have that, have friends in Canada, they come here and start from scratch. Canada invites immigrants but then doesn’t have services for immigrants.

The one newcomer participant that reported relative success in integrating into the Canadian labour market was a sociologist, and was skilled at drawing on her own experiences to be the ideal candidate for the position she now works in. This again highlights the difficulties of breaking into the Canadian labour market, as newcomers should not need to be experts on social processes in order to integrate into a society.

Hiring practices need to be critically addressed and assessed for racism, including microaggressions. Assumptions that employers make about Canadian Muslim women act as barriers to employment. For example, one participant (who does not foster homophobic attitudes) was repeatedly questioned about serving LGBTQ clients during a job interview. Although she responded in ways that highlighted her care for any client regardless of their sexual orientation, she nonetheless was not hired for that position. This participant also shared that she stopped wearing niqab in order to better serve her clients. Yet employers' assumptions about her religious practices and beliefs impeding her ability to perform her work responsibilities continue to pose issues for her employment status.

Social Isolation and Inclusion

All participants reported feeling socially isolated during COVID, but this was especially the case for single mothers and newcomers, and particularly newcomers with non-official language skills. The data indicate that over one-quarter of Canadian Muslim women newcomers who do not speak English or French are widows. Old age and widowhood are already significant indicators for isolation; relocation and language exacerbate this. Community organizations can address this need by offering social support and similar services to elderly Canadian Muslims specifically.

One newcomer commented on how she experienced all the kinds of isolation a fellow Black Canadian Muslim woman faced, but had it even worse given her status as a newcomer:

> For me, I would say it's the same as [fellow group member], except that we moved here about a year ago and then the lockdown happened. Like, just as we were starting to try to familiarize with the country and culture and the people. Even though I've been here for a year, I feel like—I mean, I know I'm still a newcomer, but I feel like if the lockdown didn't happen I'd be much more comfortable, much more easygoing with everything. I feel like I wasn't able to meet people, especially whether they're from my cultural background or Muslims just generally. There was no interaction, going to the mosque was not exactly an option. So, it's like the ice—the feeling of coming to a new place, and you know you're prepared that you have to put in a lot of effort and a lot of work, you know to blend in and to get to know people to make connections. And that was just taken away—the opportunity was taken away, I mean it's no one's fault. So, I think that doubles down on the isolation, I mean I tried to keep busy. I just keep myself busy but there are times it gets really hard.

Here we see the typical forms of social support, like religious and ethnic communities, are not accessible nor useful for newcomers. Religious, ethnic, and other community organizations can address this need by organizing opportunities for sustained and supportive social spaces targeted at newcomers but not only for newcomers, as the goal is to allow newcomers to meet other Canadians.

Likewise, social groups for single mothers would help to address the isolation they experience due to communal ostracization and social exclusion. The single mothers in the current study specified they wanted spaces that were exclusive to single mothers, and preferably single mothers of similar religious and/or ethnic backgrounds. One participant stated,

> I find the biggest challenge is having a culturally sensitive support network that would be cognizant of our multilayered challenges within these identities. I would love to see a hotline or a network of resources nationwide that we could contact for support or just to discuss with people who would understand. Like a single women and families support group. A lot of families struggle with the lack of support given to children of split families. Maybe for children also to have a support group that they can have a counsellor led group; they have them for kids of split families here, but when you have the additional layer of being from a different background those don't always work.

Other single mothers echoed support for spaces where they and their children could socialize with each other, being exhausted by the constant othering they experience in mainstream Muslim and mainstream Canadian spaces.

In terms of inclusion into mainstream Canadian spaces, it is evident that Canadian Muslim women are tired of having to educate the (white) Canadian mainstream. The expectation for Canadian Muslims to educate others is an Orientalist microaggression and one that falsely gives the impression of agency to the victim. In other words, it may feel like one is empowered through being in a position to inform the other, but in reality the energy and efforts do little to structural racism driving the ideologies (see especially the work of Tahseen Shams). One participant commented on how she eventually came to realize her coworker's discriminatory behaviour:

> She's really white and she always made assumptions about me. At some point, I got so exhausted by her assumptions and was like, just look it up man. She was like, oh so you probably don't know how to drive because you're a Muslim woman. I'm like, you can see my car outside, I don't know what you're talking about. Stuff like that, pretty stereotypical about Muslim women that were pretty annoying to constantly break down. I'd work with her just once a month, and I was pretty new, so I would just put up with it and I think she was taking advantage of that too. But now I know what discrimination is, and identify it, speak up about it.

Although in this instance the participant's experiences seem benign, it is important to recognize that the social system that allows for such microaggressions to continue is also responsible for acts of violence, ranging from street harassment to murder. One participant expressed this as a general sense of having less social worth,

> I definitely feel that people have felt more emboldened to hurl abuse because I am a brown skinned woman. That because I'm different or maybe an immigrant, that I might not say anything back because I'm scared or will put up with it. Especially when it comes to white men, they are definitely more emboldened—they feel superior because they are white and male and I'm brown and female. Especially when it comes to public kinds of abuse, they assume that because I'm a woman and brown, I won't say anything back… White women experience this too, but I think as a woman of colour I have more to fear because in society I am seen as having less worth, as having less of a right to exist.

Canadian community and feminist organizations can address these concerns through education programs, demystifying Islam and Muslims to the Canadian public, training on how to be better allies to Canadian Muslim and other minority women, and educating Canadians on how to identify and safely respond to racist discrimination and violence.

Religious Resources and Support

Religious leaders, organizations, and communities are leaving Canadian Muslim women underserved. While the general gender disparities in Masjid spaces and board politics have been explored elsewhere, this report focuses on the experiences of women at the margins specifically. However, the context of gender hierarchies at Masjids cannot be ignored, as that hierarchy is responsible for the disservice of Canadian Muslim women at the margins.

For example, single mothers particularly want easier access to divorce, or even information about how to process a religious-based divorce. From participant narratives, imams and other religious leaders acting as gatekeepers seem oblivious to the real harm they are inflicting on Muslim women and their children. While men are easily granted divorce (or even multiple wives, which is illegal in Canada), women struggle to gather basic religious information. It is notable that the participants seemed to think the sexist double standard was religiously based (e.g., the Shariah), and not the consequence of men acting as gatekeepers to protect other men. Imams interested in serving all (and not half) of their congregation need to better prioritize the needs and interests of women and children.

Organizing resources to make religious-based divorce and information about it more easily accessible would help ease the burden many (already secularly divorced) women are facing. As a preventative measure, I encourage women seeking marriage to have written into their marriage contracts (*'aqd*, *nikkah*) the right to divorce, provisions for which already exist in Islamic tradition—see pages 10-16 of CCMW's Marriage Contract Toolkit,[5] a rich resource to peruse regardless of one's current marital status. In addition to knowledge-based resources and services related to divorce, single mothers need to feel included within mainstream Muslim spaces.

Several groups of women in this study report feeling excluded and unwelcome in mainstream Canadian Muslim spaces, including women who are queer, single mothers, and newcomers who do not speak official languages. The finding related to the latter group is especially disheartening, as many newcomers who do speak English named religious organizations and communities as being essential supports for their integration in Canada.

[5] www.ccmw.com/publications/2019/1/22/marriage-contract

One newcomer who primarily spoke Pashto stated,

> The first time I went to the masjid, I started to cry and felt at home after a very long time. For a newcomer from a Muslim country, the mosque to me has become a safe and familiar place of belonging and community

However, Pashto-speaking newcomers also reported feeling excluded and snubbed from community members. For example, one noted that community members avoided speaking in their "mother tongue," speaking only in English, making her feel unwelcome. Another shared that,

> I've experienced anti-Muslim sentiments from non-whites including Farsi speaking Afghans and other minority groups. In social gatherings with my husband's family, I feel unwelcome and judged. They rarely try to include me in conversations. Most of them choose to speak English amongst themselves.

Although not a finding in this project, from my own experience conducting research in the Canadian Muslim community over the past decade, I know there is a complementary need for language skills: first and especially second generation Canadian parents who want their children to retain language skills. Ethnic and community organizations could set up a service for newcomers wishing to improve their official language skills with parents who want their children to be exposed to and learn their mother tongue. And, again, Masjids and Muslim communities need to do more to be inclusive to all Muslims.

In addition to single mothers and newcomers who speak other languages, queer Muslims and Shia Muslims also report feeling exclusion, and sometimes hostility, in mainstream Muslim spaces. One participant, who is straight and Sunni, and who generally feels included at the Masjid personally, reports she has witnessed anti-Black racism, among other forms of violence. She notes that the Masjid is really the only place she's been able to access Muslim-specific resources, but also that:

> Let's be honest, the Masjid isn't really an open space. You want to make space for all kinds of Muslims, regardless of how they identify themselves, who they are, so they can feel comfortable in the space.

Masjids need to do more to be inclusive of sexual, gender, and sectarian diversity if they are to meet the needs of the diverse Canadian Muslim communities. Additionally, they can provide support and resources and/or network with grassroots communities and organizations that cater to more diverse Muslim populations, like SMILE Canada Support Services, the Black Muslim Initiative, the network of Unity Mosques across Canada, Salaam Canada, Queer Muslim Resistance, the Women's Mosque of Canada, and of course, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

Culturally Relevant Services

Not surprisingly, all groups of Canadian Muslim women in this study identified the need for culturally relevant social and health services. The reasoning for this need, however, did not emerge from an idea of "Muslim exceptionalism," or that Muslims are a special type of case needing unique accommodations (see research by Kazemipur; see also my 2020 report on Canadian Muslim public health). Instead, the need for culturally specific social and health services emerged from a need to be protected from systemic racism within the health care field.

The women experienced the consequences of systemic racism within the health care system, especially newcomer mothers, and as a response wanted culturally specific services. For example, a participant who identifies as queer and diversely-abled emphatically stated that she wanted a queer Muslim woman therapist. When describing her experiences with therapists to date, she mentioned that she has to educate her mental health care providers, who are typically older white women, because they are "unable to understand or relate to experiences of racial minorities." In reality, however, a therapist's ability to "understand or relate" comes down to the therapist's ability to empathize with the client, and the ability to empathize comes down to the ability to humanize. If a therapist rejects the client's humanity, because of xenophobia for example, the therapist will not be able to humanize nor empathize with the client, and the client is then forced to explain their own humanity to the therapist in what outwardly appears to be free education. As mentioned above, this feels empowering to the client but in reality, they are empowering a racist system. Another participant who also identifies as queer and also has an older white woman therapist stated,

> The services have been really beneficial. I am lucky—my therapist has a sliding scale and put me on the lowest scale because I don't have OHIP. I told her I'm broke but I need a therapist, and she understood that. She's been really, really helpful and understanding. She's been working with me in a really positive sense, she's made tremendous changes in my life. I'm always getting things out of it… I feel like she is able to understand and hold space, she can relate experiences and just listen even if she hasn't had my experience in her practice before. I've been having problems as a newcomer with my mental health, and it's been hard for me to cope as a newcomer to Canada. She's been so helpful with my health. She was able to give me grounding tips and how to problem-solve really quickly—I wasn't expecting her to be able to fix the issue that quickly or even understand what I was trying to say—it's been amazing.

While this participant was fortunate to receive health care services from a provider who treated her like a human being, others were less fortunate, particularly the women who speak non-official languages. As mentioned above, these women were treated much more poorly than others in the sample, often dismissed and denied services. One participant reported,

> No one has guided or assisted me in accessing care from specialists. I've been on a waitlist for a specialist and operation for my [health] issues since 2019, and just recently been informed that the wait will be even longer. I wish the doctor could provide a pathway or some advice to access the care faster since my [health] issues are very hard on me and are very difficult. I have been constantly brushed off and told to wait…wait…and wait.. I don't know how much longer I can wait. I've cried countless times to the staff begging for an appointment and I was told that, "you probably also have depression too since you're crying as it isn't a crying matter." [Translated from Pashto]

It may be possible that this participant has symptoms of depression, but note that these symptoms are in response to the health care system. In other words, trying to access the health care system is causing the participant's depressive symptoms. This reinforces the finding that participants request culturally sensitive resources in response to being excluded from basic services given to other (white, middle class, Christian) Canadians.

To tackle health inequities and disparities, medical communities and social and health service providers need to critically assess the ways that systemic racism permeate the social service and health care systems. Practitioners especially need to be reflexively aware of when they dehumanize service recipients.Culturally-specific services are a band-aid solution to underlying systemic injustices, and are rarely adequate, effective, or sufficient— for example, one Pashto-speaking participant noted she hardly receives Pashto-translators; being paired with Farsi or Urdu translators, she tries to make do. This is hardly a solution. The health care and social service systems need to be inclusive of the needs of diverse Canadians, especially the gatekeepers and service providers.

Support for Community Organizers

Across the different groups of Canadian Muslim women I spoke to, I noted several women were community organizers and resource builders. Across narratives, women recounted how they saw the need for services and responded by creating those services. This ranged from casual support for community members experiencing similar situations to creating funded community organizations. Thus, one way to support Canadian Muslim women is by creating support for these grassroots organizers, such as mentorship programs and other resource sharing networks.

I note that although the women expressed pride and a sense of accomplishment over the resources and communities they built, they also shared the often-heartbreaking situations they faced that created the need for those resources, as well as the uphill battles they fought to get resources or communities off the ground. One noted how agencies “put on a good face” and post images of “a Muslim in hijab or a Muslim man in a beard,” but these superficial tactics fail to provide tangible utility in service provision. Support services to assist women building resources and communities would be a service to many.

A Final Note on Policy Making

As a final note to policymakers, community organizations, religious institutions, and any decision-making body, I quote a participant: “When you’re making policies, if you don't have a variety of voices at the table, you’re going to end up with policies that work better for one group than the others.” For policies to be inclusive, those who are typically excluded due to systemic discrimination need to be included. Failure to do so leads to detrimental consequences for many. As one woman stated,

> Our community is never represented in programming or services. This affects us because when we are unable to communicate, we are unable to contribute to society, to speak up and bring forth change that we want to see. We feel unheard and unseen. [Translated from Pashto]

Appendices

Appendix B. Qualitative Survey

Research Study on Muslim Women's Experiences

Introduction

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the experiences of diverse groups of Canadian Muslim. Specifically, this project will focus on your social, economic, and health experiences. You are invited to participate in this study if you identify as a Canadian Muslim woman and also as a refugee, newcomer, Black, Indigenous, single mother, queer and/or trans, or someone with diverse abilities (or disabilities).

Investigator

Dr. Sarah Shah, PhD, Principal Investigator
Research Consultant, Canadian Council for Muslim Women
Phone: 647-637-8514
Availability: Monday to Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm

Description of the Research and Procedures

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and involves the completion of a survey and participation in group interviews. You will be grouped with others of similar backgrounds or identities. The group interview is expected to take approximately 90 minutes. Due to COVID-related social distancing, all group interviews will be held over a virtual platform (e.g. Zoom). The meetings will be audio-recorded for data purposes. You will be required to use your video, and to ensure you participate in a secure space where others are not present (young children excepted).

Potential Harms

The survey and interview questions ask about your life experiences. The interview questions are more general, and the survey questions are more specific. You may feel discomfort (e.g., emotional distress) when answering some questions about experiences of discrimination or abuse.

Potential Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, this study has the potential to help us better understand the diverse experiences of Canadian Muslim women, and to offer guidance to policy makers, service providers, and others who serve the Canadian Muslim population.

Protecting Your Information – Confidentiality & Privacy

Your identity and responses to the survey will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission unless required by law. Your survey and interview responses will be combined with other responses from individuals included in this study in order to analyze the results of the study. The following steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of your information: Your identity and responses to the survey will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission unless required by law. Your survey and interview responses will be combined with other responses from individuals included in this study in order to analyze the results of the study. The following steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of your information:

- Your interview responses will be identified with a participant code and will not contain any identifiable information, including your name, address, and telephone number.
- All data will be stored on a secure password protected computer, and is not accessible to any unauthorized personnel.
- Identifiable information and data collected during surveys and interviews will only be accessible to the principal investigator (Dr. Sarah Shah).
- Results of this study will report data from groups and not individuals; therefore no individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

Finally, it is important to understand that despite these protections being in place, experience in similar studies indicates that there is the risk of unintentional release of information. The principal investigator (Dr. Sarah Shah) will protect your records and keep all the information in your study file confidential to the greatest extent possible. The chance that this information will accidentally be given to someone else is small.

To ensure your safety and privacy, the researcher or interviewer will maintain the confidentiality of your interview responses. All participants are expected to maintain the group's privacy and confidentiality, and everyone will be expected to refrain from sharing or repeating information from the group meeting. Survey question responses will not be shared with anyone and will be kept confidential.

Study Results

The results of this study will be published by CCMW and in academic literature. Results will also be collected into a series of working reports to be presented in policy forums. We may also share results with relevant partners in academia, health care and social service institutions, community agencies, and government departments. If you are interested in the results, the principal investigator (Dr. Sarah Shah) can provide you with a copy of the findings.

Costs to Participation and Reimbursement

You will not receive reimbursements or incentives for the cost to participate in this study. The researcher's aim is to interview you in the most convenient location, at the most convenient time, in order to minimize any costs you would incur as a result of your participation in this study.

Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study, or to withdraw from this study at any point with no negative consequences. Your decision to participate or to decline participation will not have an impact on the access you and your family currently or may receive in the future from CCMW. If you decide to withdraw, the information you had provided will be removed from the study and destroyed. You may also refuse to answer any interview questions. Finally, skipping questions or withdrawing at any point will not affect your current or future relationship with CCMW in any way.

Study Contact

If you require further information or have concerns about the research study, please contact the study's Principal Investigator, Dr. Sarah Shah at 647-637-8514 during business hours.

Appendix B. Qualitative Survey

Directions: You will be asked a series of questions about your life. Your responses will remain private and confidential and will not be discussed at any point during the group interview meeting. Please respond to each question.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS

Please enter the name of the city where you live: _____

Enter the FIRST THREE DIGITS of your postal code: _____

Which province do you reside in? _____

What is your year of birth? _____

Which country were you born in? _____

If outside Canada, what year did you immigrate? _____

Are you a Canadian citizen? _____

Which ethnicity do you identify with? _____

What is your highest level of education? _____

Where did you obtain your highest degree or certificate? _____

What is your marital status? _____

What is your personal annual income? _____

What is your household annual income? _____

LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status?

- Working full-time (35 hours or more a week)
- Working part-time (working less than 35 hours a week)
- Self-employed
- Holding two jobs or doing more than one shift at the same job
- On maternity or paternity leave
- Full-time homemaker
- Full-time homemaker and attending school
- Unemployed, looking for work
- Retired
- Full-time student
- Working part-time and attending school
- Other. Please specify: _____

If you do not work full-time outside the home and are not looking for a job, what is the main reason?

- Your family responsibilities keep you busy
- Your religious beliefs
- Your volunteer work keeps you occupied
- You looked for a job for a long time and then gave up
- Your spouse disapproves of your working
- You agreed to conditions (pre-nup) not to work after marriage
- A family member (other than your spouse) disapproves of your working
- Other. Please specify: _____

In the last ONE MONTH, who did most of the housework work in your household?

- You
- Your spouse
- Your parents
- Other relatives
- Paid household help
- You and your spouse share it more or less equally
- Other. Please specify: _____

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement[2]: "A working mother can establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home."

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Which occupations were you trained for? _____

Which occupations are you working in now? _____

In your experience, what are the main barriers to finding a job that fits your qualifications? Please CHECK THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT BARRIERS.

- Lack of evaluation and recognition of foreign education, credentials, or qualifications
- Lack of recognition for foreign work experience
- Proficiency in English
- Proficiency in French
- Proficiency in both English and French
- Lack of knowledge about the Canadian culture
- Workplace practices
- Lack of Canadian work experience that employers demand
- Racial discrimination
- Anti-Muslim feeling
- Union rules and regulations
- Lack of uniformity in rules between provincial regulatory bodies
- Employers not fully engaged in hiring immigrants
- Employers are looking for young people rather than experienced workers
- Lack of security clearance
- Employers raising the level of education or training required for the position
- Standardized testing which all applicants for any position must undergo but which is not necessarily related to the skills for the job
- Employers benefit from under-employing people
- Lack of networking opportunities
- Lack of exposure to occupational organizations or associations
- Financial burden for certification in Canada

HEALTH

How would you rate your overall health?
Excellent Good Fair Poor Very poor

How would you rate your physical health?
Excellent Good Fair Poor Very poor

How would you rate your mental health?
Excellent Good Fair Poor Very poor

List all illnesses, conditions, or diseases you have been diagnosed with: _____

If you are experiencing any health problems, what is the FIRST action that you will take?
- Consult a physician
- Consult a pharmacist at pharmacy outlet
- Consult a traditional or naturopathic practitioner
- Self-medication

In the past three months, how did you take your medicines to treat your health problems?
- Based on physician's advice
- Based on past experience with similar illnesses
- Based on advice from relatives, friends and media
- Not applicable

When is the last time you had an annual checkup? _____

When is the last time you had a pap smear? _____

When is the last time you had a breast exam? _____

If you responded "Never" to the last two items, do you identify as a trans woman?
Yes No Unsure

Are you seeing a counselor for mental health?
Yes No, but I have in the past No

How effective would you rate your counselor with helping you?
Very effective Effective Ineffective Very ineffective

Have you ever experienced abuse from a family member you live with? Yes No Unsure

Have you ever experienced abuse from a family member you do not live with?
Yes No Unsure

Have you ever experienced abuse from a non-relative?
Yes No Unsure

Were you physically abused?
Yes No Unsure

How old were you when this first happened? _____

How old were you when this happened last? _____

Were you sexually abused?
Yes No Unsure

How old were you when this first happened? _____

How old were you when this happened last? _____

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Stores are within easy walking distance of my home.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Parking is difficult in local shopping areas.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

There are many places to go within easy walking distance of my home.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

It is easy to walk to a transit stop (bus, train) from my home.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

My neighbourhood is difficult to walk in.
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

There are major barriers to walking in my local area that make it hard to get from place to place (for example, freeways, railway lines, rivers).
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Social services are easy to apply for
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Not applicable

I have experienced challenges in accessing child care
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Not applicable

I have experienced challenges in applying for housing assistance
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Not applicable

I have experienced challenges in accessing services related to family violence
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Not applicable

List all social services you have applied for (even if denied): _____

List all social services you are receiving: _____

FAMILY CLIMATE

Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

We all have a say in household plans
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

The adults in this household understand and agree on household decisions
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Household members put each other down
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

We argue a lot and never solve our problems
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Our happiest times are at home
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Household members easily express warmth and caring toward each other
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

When things go wrong, we blame each other
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Household members pay attention to each other and listen to what is said
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

DISCRIMINATION AND UNFAIR TREATMENT

In the past five years, have you personally experienced:

Verbal insults or abuse Yes No Unsure

Threatening words or gestures Yes No Unsure

Physical attack Yes No Unsure

Vandalism Yes No Unsure

Destruction of property Yes No Unsure

Loss of employment Yes No Unsure

Being passed over for promotion Yes No Unsure

Had your input or efforts ignored at work Yes No Unsure

Difficulty getting hired Yes No Unsure

Difficulty requesting religious accommodations (e.g. day off for Eid) Yes No Unsure

Bullying or harassment (including cyber bullying or phone calls) Yes No Unsure

Theft, robbery, break and entry Yes No Unsure

Assault (including sexual assault) Yes No Unsure

Fraud Yes No Unsure

In your opinion, were any of these experiences hate crimes*? Yes No Unsure
*Note: Hate crimes are defined as crimes motivated by the offender's bias, prejudice or hate based on the victim's race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, dress, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor.

How often did you experience such discrimination or unfair treatment?
Often Sometimes Rarely

For which reason or reasons do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT ARE APPLICABLE. Was it because of:

- Sex/gender
- Ethnicity or culture
- Race or skin colour
- Physical appearance
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Physical or mental disability
- Language
- Other. Please specify: _____

In which place or situation did you experience discrimination or unfair treatment? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT ARE APPLICABLE. Was it:

- Bank, store, restaurant
- Work environment
- Police
- Courts
- Canadian border
- School, college, or training environment
- Other. Please specify: _____

Has your personal experience of discrimination changed in the last 5 years:
Increased Decreased Remained unchanged

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Please indicate how much you agree with each statement:

I have a strong sense of belonging to the neighborhood I currently live in
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have a strong sense of belonging to my cultural or ethnic group
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have a strong sense of belonging to my religious group
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have a strong sense of belonging to Canada
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have a strong sense of belonging to the country of my origin or ancestors
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

How many of your close friends would you say are Muslims?
All of them Most of them About half of them A few of them None

How many of your neighbors do you know?
All of them Most of them About half of them A few of them None

In the LAST THREE MONTHS, how many new people did you meet outside of work or school, you intend to stay in contact with?
1-3 people 4-6 people 7-9 people 10 or more people

Where do your parents live?
With me in Canada
With me outside of Canada
Not with me but in the same Canadian city
Not with me but in the same Canadian province
Not with me but in elsewhere in Canada
Not with me and outside of Canada

Where do your parents-in-law live?
- With me in Canada
- With me outside of Canada
- Not with me but in the same Canadian city
- Not with me but in the same Canadian province
- Not with me but in elsewhere in Canada
- Not with me and outside of Canada

How often do you go to an Islamic centre (mosque, imambargah, jamatkhana, dergah, etc).
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- At least 3 times a year
- Once or twice a year
- Not applicable (N/A)

Please answer the following questions about the Islamic centre(s) (mosque, imambargah, jamatkhana, dergah, etc) you attend:

Is it important for you that Islamic centres make all people feel welcome?
Yes No Unsure

Do you feel welcome at your Islamic centres?
Yes No Unsure

Are the facilities in your Islamic centres adequate for your social needs?
Yes No Unsure

Are the facilities in your Islamic centres adequate for your cultural needs?
Yes No Unsure

Are the facilities in your Islamic centres adequate for your religious needs?
Yes No Unsure

Do you volunteer in the governance of your Islamic centre?
Yes No Unsure

Do men and women have equal voices in the governance of your Islamic centre?
Yes. No Unsure

Please indicate how much you agree with the following:

I am comfortable if my DAUGHTER OR SISTER was going to marry someone:

Who is a Muslim and from the same ethnic group as you
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is a Muslim and from a different ethnic group
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who converts to Islam
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is from among the people of the Book
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is a non-Muslim (other than among people of the Book)
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I am comfortable if my SON OR BROTHER was going to marry someone:

Who is a Muslim and from the same ethnic group as you
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is a Muslim and from a different ethnic group
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who converts to Islam
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is from among the people of the Book
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Who is a non-Muslim (other than among people of the Book)
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Are you a member of, or do you attend events organized by, any of the following types of these organizations? CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY

- Religion affiliated groups (e.g. Muslim groups, interfaith groups)
- Professional associations including union membership
- Non-profit, charitable organizations (excluding religion affiliated organizations)
- Ethnic organizations (excluding religious affiliated groups)
- Cultural groups (heritage society, genealogical society, film society, dance troupe)
- Hobby groups (book club, gardening club, stamp collectors association, etc)
- School, neighbourhood, or community-associated groups (e.g., block parents, alumni association, school volunteer
- Support groups or social service organizations
- Advocacy group for a specific cause
- Political party

- Other. Please specify: _____
- I am not a member of any of the above types of organizations

How often do you attend meetings organized by the group (s) identified above?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Not applicable

In the LAST FIVE YEARS, has your involvement with non-Muslim organizations such as inter-faith groups, food banks, changed?

Increased Decreased Remained the same Not applicable

In the LAST FIVE YEARS, have you become more or less interested in getting involved with non-Muslim organizations?

More interested Less interested No change Not applicable

Please circle the response that represents your experience:

I volunteered for a Muslim organization in the last one year Yes No

I volunteered for a non-Muslim organization in the last one year

Yes No

CHILDREN

I have pre-school aged children (6 years or younger) Yes No

I have school aged children (6 to 18 years of age) Yes No

I have adult children (18 years or older) that live with me

Yes No

I have adult children (18 years or older) that live elsewhere Yes No

Which statement is most true for you? (Select only one)

- When my children grow up, I want them to retain their parents culture, only
- When my children grow up, I want them to adopt and adapt to Canadian culture and also retain their parents culture
- When my children grow up, I want them to adopt and adapt to Canadian culture, only
- I do not have children

Appendix C. Focus Group Interview Questions

As Canadian Muslim women, what are the most pressing challenges facing you today?
- Probe on specific group identity: what about Muslim women who are also [X]?

How does being a [X] Muslim woman impact your experiences in masjids/Muslim communities?
How does being a [X] Muslim woman impact your experiences in Canadian public spaces?
What assumptions do you feel people make about you as a [X] Muslim woman?
- Probe: who is it making these assumptions?
- Probe on context: At work? At job interviews? At stores? In mosques? When seeking social services? At the doctor's office?

[If items mentioned are not related to socioeconomic/health concerns, relate them below]

LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION
(For currently employed) Is your current job what you trained for?
[If no] What happened?
[For either response] How did you find your current job?
(For all) What issues came up when you were applying for work?
- Probe on specific group identity: how did being a [X] Muslim women play a role?

What were key resources, people, or strategies that helped you find work?
- Probe: how did these resources help overcome the challenge of having a job?

Besides the job market, what are other issues that make it difficult to work?
- Probe: family and household/unpaid work responsibilities
- Probe: transportation, location, other logistical issues

How do you manage these issues? What are resources, people, or strategies that help?
- Probe: how did these resources help overcome the challenge of having a job?

What would make it easier for you to work in a job you want to do?
- Probe: Access to child care, public transit, housing, transference of credentials
- Probe: What are your experiences relating to these barriers? (Ask for stories)
- What are social services currently missing that could enable your labour market participation?

HEALTH
How do you take care of your health?
- Probe: diet, exercise, mental wellbeing/destressing, medication, medical checkups, etc.

What are your specific health concerns as a [X] Muslim woman?
What are barriers that make it difficult to take care of your health?
- Probe: family and household/unpaid work responsibilities
- Probe: paid work responsibilities
- Probe: transportation, location, other logistical issues
- Probe: additional social services and public supports to facilitate health seeking

What resources, people, or strategies make it easier for you to take care of your health?
- Probe: how do these resources help you be healthy?

Can you tell us about experiences you've had at the doctor's office as a [X] Muslim woman?
- Probe: stereotypes / assumptions from medical care providers
- Probe: policies or practices that alienate you from the services

Anything to add? [Conclude, remind participants about confidentiality]

Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes (CCFM)

Author: Sarah Shah

Direct questions about this report to:
Canadian Council of Muslim Women
P.O. Box 73509, RPO Wychwood Toronto, ON M6C 4A7 Canada
info@ccmw.com
www.ccmw.com

This report was made possible through financial support from the Federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE).

Women and Gender Equality Canada
Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada
Canada