

# New research shows that French Muslims experience extraordinary discrimination in the job market

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By **John Sides** November 23, 2015

In the wake of the Paris attacks, I [noted previous research](#) documenting the extent to which French Muslims experience discrimination. One important piece of evidence comes from experiments in the French job market.

In these experiments, researchers create résumés for fictitious individuals, varying the religious background of those people, and then submit applications to job openings. The question is how frequently those individuals receive a callback or an e-mail from the employer.

One such experiment was conducted in France in 2013-2014, and the results have just been published. (A short summary is [here](#).) The author is [Marie-Anne Valfort](#). Here are four of its many important findings:

**1) Relative to Catholics and Jews, Muslim applicants are much less likely to be contacted by employers.**

The applicants in this experiment had the same basic biographies and qualifications. They were all French citizens of Lebanese origin, born in 1988, immigrated to France in time to attend high school and became French nationals in 2008.

But they varied in their religious backgrounds. Via several cues — the applicants' names, the religious identity of their middle school in Lebanon, and the religious affinity of the scouting organization they had worked with in France — the applicants' religious identity as Catholics, Jews or Muslims was clear.

And religious identity made a big difference. Here is the percentage of each group that was contacted by an employer after they applied for the job:

Only about 10 percent of Muslims were contacted, compared with 16 percent of Jews and 21 percent of Catholics. This shows evidence of discrimination against Jews, but even greater discrimination against Muslims.

## **2) Muslim men experience especially high levels of discrimination.**

This graph breaks down callback rates by both religion and gender. It's really pretty remarkable, if unsurprising:

In general, men are less likely than women to be called back. But the penalty for being a Muslim man is particularly large: Only 5 percent of Muslim men received any contact from employers. Valfort writes:

Whereas the callback rate for practicing female Catholic applicants is “only” 40% higher than that for practicing Muslim women, the callback rate for practicing Catholic men is close to four times higher than that of practicing Muslim men.

## **3) Muslim men experience less (but still substantial) discrimination when they signal that they are secular.**

In the experiment, some “applicants” indicated an experience that would signal their commitment to the French ideal of “laïcité,” or state secularism: “did youth work in the laic scouting association Girl and Boy Scouts of France.”

For Muslim men, in particular, reporting this experience led to more callbacks:

## **4) French Muslims are punished even if their names aren't “foreign.”**

In the experiment, the Catholic applicants were called Michel and Nathalie, the Jewish applicants were called Dov and Esther, and the Muslim applicants were called Mohammed and Samira.

One might think that the Jewish and Muslim applicants suffered discrimination because of their foreign-sounding names, not because of their religion per se. So Valfort's experiment included applicants who were called “Adam” or “Myriam” and who, in various applications, were described as Catholic, Jewish or Muslim.

Did this reduce discrimination? For several of the different applicants, it did not:

Unsurprisingly, Esther gains nothing when she is called Myriam. But adopting a more familiar first name brings no benefit to Dov or Samira either, though theirs are more exotic.

Only “Mohammed” received more callbacks when he was called “Adam” instead — about 10 percent vs. 5 percent. But even a Muslim man named “Adam” is much less likely to be called back than any other group in the experiment.

I've summarized only a few findings from this study. For more, see [the report](#). There is also an [interactive Web site](#) that presents the experimental set-up and main results. Valfort's new book with Claire Adida and David Laitin is [“Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies.”](#)

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