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Muslims in France Facing Job Discrimination, Study Shows

By Helene Fouquet - Nov 22, 2010

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Muslims in France have a lower chance of being hired than Christians, a study published by the Washington-based [National Academy of Sciences](#) showed.

“We have established a clear, albeit uncomfortable, finding,” the study, carried out by researchers at Stanford University, [Paris I Pantheon - Sorbonne](#) University and University of California-San Diego, said in its conclusions. “Muslims have faced barriers to economic integration in France that are higher than they would have been if everything about them were the same save for their religion.”

Researchers mailed 275 pairs of resumes, all identical, except for the names, to companies based in France. They sent the resume of a fake Senegalese Christian called Marie Diouf and of her fictitious counterpart, a Muslim Senegalese named Khadija Diouf. For every 100 positive responses Marie the Christian received, Khadija, the Muslim, got 38. That’s 2.5 times less.

“This is in fact a low estimate,” Marie-Anne Valfort, an [assistant professor](#) at the Sorbonne university said in an interview. “Had the candidate been a man, the discrimination may likely have been bigger.” She said Senegalese identity had been chosen for both fictitious candidates in order to help eliminate the race factor as a reason for discrimination.

Muslim Population

Muslims residing in France -- both foreign nationals and French citizens -- comprise an estimated 6.3 percent of the population, or about 4 million people, according to French authorities. The figure is an estimate because statistics on race and religion are forbidden in France, a practice long regarded as a bulwark of the republic’s concept of “equality” among its citizens.

French citizens of Arab descent face discrimination, according to past studies. Today’s report, published by the proceedings of the [National Academy of Sciences](#), is the first that studies job discrimination against Muslims.

France’s statistics office, Insee, showed in a Nov. 12 study that the employment rate of French men of [North African descent](#), of whom at least one of the parents is of immigrant

origin, is 21 percentage points lower than the average national rate of 86 percent. For North African women, the rate is 18 percentage points lower.

A May 2006 study by the government's [High Authority Against Discrimination](#) showed that 40 percent of all discrimination in France is based on a person's origin and 45 percent happens at the workplace.

'Prison'

President [Nicolas Sarkozy](#) enacted a law this year that bans the wearing in the streets and in public places of the burqa, a Muslim full-face veil. He pledged to safeguard the "values" of France and said "we don't want" veiled women in France in a televised interview Nov. 16, calling the veil a "prison."

"There are 2,000 Muslim religious sites in France, but no minarets and [no muezzin](#) for the prayers," Sarkozy said in the televised interview. "Everyone can live their religion but we want an Islam of France and not Islam in France."

The [National Front](#), the anti-immigration political party, launched an ad campaign last month that shows a map of France, with minarets and a fully veiled woman, with the caption: "No to Islamism." One of the party's leaders, Marine Le Pen, has also used radio interviews to criticize increased sale of [halal meat](#) in France.

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