

New study points to religion as basis for discrimination against Muslims in France

Report released today by the French-American Foundation and Sciences Po

New York and Paris, March 25, 2010 – A newly-released study offers the first conclusive evidence that there is religious discrimination in the French labor market. In a report released today by the French-American Foundation (New York) and France's "Sciences-Po" (Institut d'études politiques de Paris), researchers said the study is "unambiguous in finding significant religious discrimination against Muslims in at least one job sector in France."

The report, "Les Français musulmans sont-ils discriminés dans leur propre pays? Une étude expérimentale sur le marché du travail,"* describes the research conducted in 2009 by Stanford Professor, David D. Laitin, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in collaboration with French research firm, ISM-CORUM.

The study is the first to successfully isolate religion as the source of anti-Muslim discrimination in France from discrimination that may be caused by a "country effect" related to the North African origins of most French Muslims. Approximately three quarters of the estimated five million Muslims living in France originated from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia, all former French colonies.

To overcome the country effect problem, the study's researchers focused on a French population originating from a country outside North Africa, surveying more than 500 second-generation Senegalese Muslims and Christians. The survey showed that the Muslims suffer a significant economic disadvantage. After controlling for other factors, such as education, the researchers concluded that the disadvantage could not be explained by any factor other than religious heritage.

The researchers next conducted a "correspondence test," creating employment CVs for three fictional job-seekers with differing religious and national signals, one an apparently French-indigenous individual, one a French-Senegalese with a Christian given name and one a French-Senegalese with a Muslim given name. The CVs were then sent in pairs, one from the "French" applicant and the other from either the "Christian" or "Muslim" applicant, in response to advertised positions at 300 French companies. The results showed clearly that the "Christian" job applicant was more than twice as likely to receive a call back as the "Muslim" applicant.

"The results showing evidence of discrimination due purely to religion, not national origin, meet the highest standards of statistical significance," commented Dr. Laitin. "There is no doubt that anti-Muslim discrimination is holding back Muslim economic success in at least one sector of the French labor market. We now need to focus on better understanding the mechanisms that drive the discrimination our research has identified."

David Laitin was the invited professor of the French-American Foundation -Sciences Po "Equal Opportunity" scholar-in-residence program. He and his team have presented the conclusions of their study at Sciences Po, at the Halde and one of France's leading grassroots organizations, SOS Racisme. *"The program's objective, in addition to its academic mission, is to help inform other key stakeholders engaged in the ongoing public debate on discrimination issues,"* said French-American Foundation Policy Programs Director, Ioanna Kohler. *"We are hopeful that this trans-Atlantic dialogue will contribute to effective equal opportunity policy approaches."*

* Are France's Muslims discriminated against in their own country? An experimental study on the employment market.

*David D. Laitin is the Watkins Professor of Political Science at Stanford University. In February-March 2010, David Laitin was the invited professor of the French-American Foundation -Sciences Po "Equal Opportunity" scholar-in-residence program. For a fuller description of this research, conducted in collaboration with Claire Adida (Stanford University) and Marie-Anne Volfert (Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne), see Les Français musulmans sont-ils discriminés dans leur propre pays? Une étude expérimentale sur le marché du travail, * posted on the French-American Foundation website http://frenchamerican.org/cms/laitin_en.*

The French-American Foundation

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