



Types of workplace discrimination experienced by Muslim women wearing hijab

The issue of discrimination experienced by Muslim women who wear hijab when they apply for work was established in 2000 through consultations conducted by Women Working With Immigrant Women (WWIW) with Muslim serving organizations and through surveys of labour organizations and institutions such as the Ontario Human Rights Commission to find out what information these organizations kept on this issue. While everyone was aware that this is an issue, and they all agreed that Muslim women who wear hijab experienced discrimination in employment, no documentation existed. In 2001, WWIW conducted the study *“No Hijab is Permitted Here”* which documented the experience of Muslim women wearing hijab when they apply for work in the manufacturing, sales and service sectors. The study revealed that women who wear hijab are given incorrect information regarding job availability, are denied the opportunity to apply for jobs, made to feel invisible and unwelcome when applying, they are fired from jobs, and they are harassed in the workplace as a result of wearing hijab. Muslim women wearing hijab experienced this discrimination regardless of their age, skin colour, experience in Canada, accent, mannerisms and education.

The following are examples of experiences reported by Muslim women wearing hijab and comments made by employers which illustrate the barriers and types of discrimination, which women experience.

- Told by employer that she should remove “head cap”
- Asked by employer to remove hijab
- Told over the phone by employer to go to the company to fill out an application form, however when she arrived soon after at the company, wearing hijab, she was told the position was taken
- She applied for a job not wearing hijab, and was offered the position. When she showed up for work wearing hijab she was told that the position was not available
- Verbal harassment on the job against religion and culture
- Harassment and yelling from supervisor around prayers
- Physical harassment by stomping on prayer mats; when she complained of this treatment, she was fired
- Given a back room or store room job when she understood she was being hired for a sales job
- Told by employer that she would be hired on condition of removing her hijab
- Told by employment agency that she should change her name from Mohammed to something else because it will be hard to get a job with that last name

- Told by job search facilitator that her chances are limited at finding a job when she is wearing hijab
- While wearing hijab she was told by employer that there was not a job available. Then she went back to the same workplace without hijab and was told to wait five minutes, and then she was hired on the spot. She showed up at work wearing hijab and was fired without a reason
- Told by employer that hijab will get caught on the line
- Told by the company that they were not hiring, however the advertisement for the position was still in the paper
- Not getting promoted or upgraded
- Received bad looks from interviewer
- Hygiene and health concerns were used against her because of wearing hijab
- Given night shifts which no one else was willing to take
- Told by company “we don’t have jobs for Arabs”; this woman’s last name was “Arab”
- Told by employer that pants and headscarf outfit was not suitable, yet company had no dress code
- Told by employer that the available job need male workers; she later found out that women were hired for the position
- She had to quit job as a result of harassment by Supervisor
- “You will make dirty the foods that you handle”
- “You cannot work wearing that thing”
- “Do you wear that all the time”
- “Can you work with hijab”
- “Are you planning on taking that thing off your head while working”
- “Do not want women who wear hijab for safety reasons”
- “No hijab is permitted here”
- “Do not wear Islamic head scarf”
- “You cannot work in a factory while wearing hijab”

