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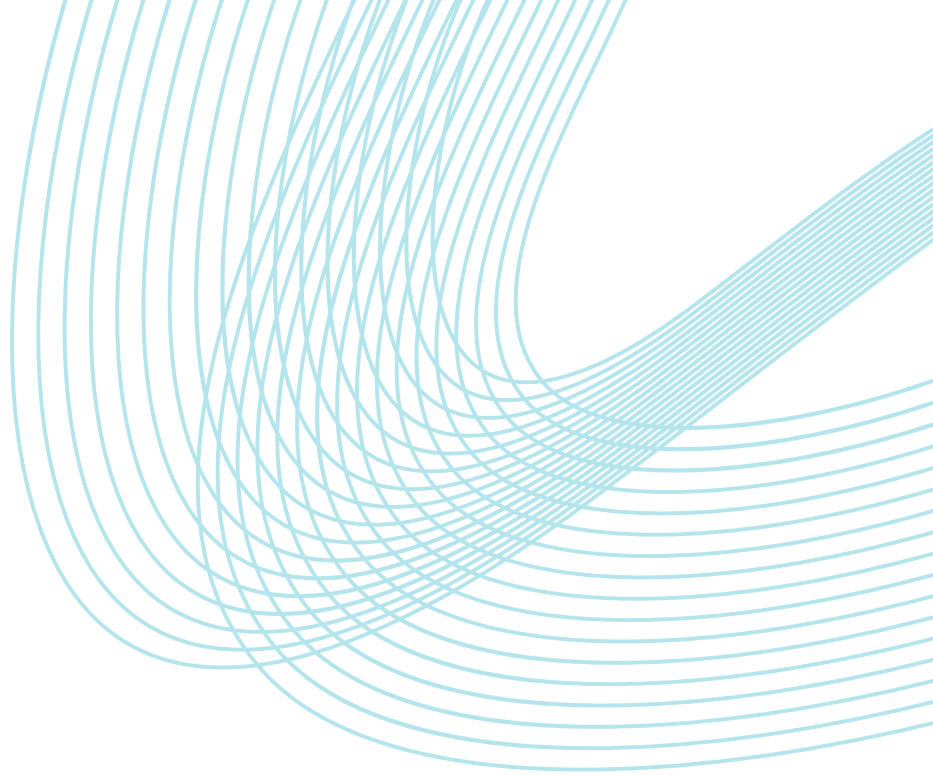
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APRIL 2025

# ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CANADA:

## CHALLENGES, IMPACTS, AND POLICY RESPONSES

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# OVERVIEW OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CANADA

Islamophobia in Canada is a growing concern, affecting the safety, well-being, and social inclusion of Muslim communities. It manifests in various ways, including stereotyping, discrimination, hate speech, and violence. This study shows that Islamophobia disproportionately affects visibly Muslim individuals, such as women wearing hijabs, making them more likely to experience harassment or violence.

Muslims in Canada face systemic barriers in employment, education, and access to services, often due to negative media portrayals and racial profiling. These challenges contribute to mental health distress, social exclusion, and fear of expressing religious identity.



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# DEMOGRAPHICS, HISTORICAL CONTEXT & DEFINITIONS

Islam is Canada's second-largest religion, with 1.8 million Muslims (5% of the population) as of 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2021). The Muslim population has more than doubled in the last two decades, growing from 2% in 2001 to 5% in 2021 due to immigration and increasing birth rates.

Muslim presence in Canada dates back to 1854, when the first recorded Muslim immigrant arrived. However, historians suggest that Black Muslim communities from West Africa may have arrived in Canada as early as the 1700s, though their history is less documented (Engagement-Report-MeetingPulse.pdf).

Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy (2024-2028) defines Islamophobia as:

"Racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear, or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic, and societal level."

Systemic Level: Discriminatory policies, racial profiling by law enforcement, and exclusion in hiring practices.

Community Level: Workplace discrimination, harassment in educational institutions, and negative media narratives.

Individual Level: Hate crimes, social exclusion, and microaggressions.



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# GOVERNMENT RESPONSES AND INITIATIVES

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To address Islamophobia, the Canadian government has introduced several measures

1

Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia: Appointed to develop policies and advise the government on reducing Islamophobia.

2

Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy (2024-2028): Focuses on policy changes, education, and public awareness campaigns.

3

Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate: Implements funding for community-led initiatives to tackle hate crimes.

4

Public Awareness Campaigns: Government agencies collaborate with civil society to counter misinformation and promote diversity (Government of Canada, 2023).



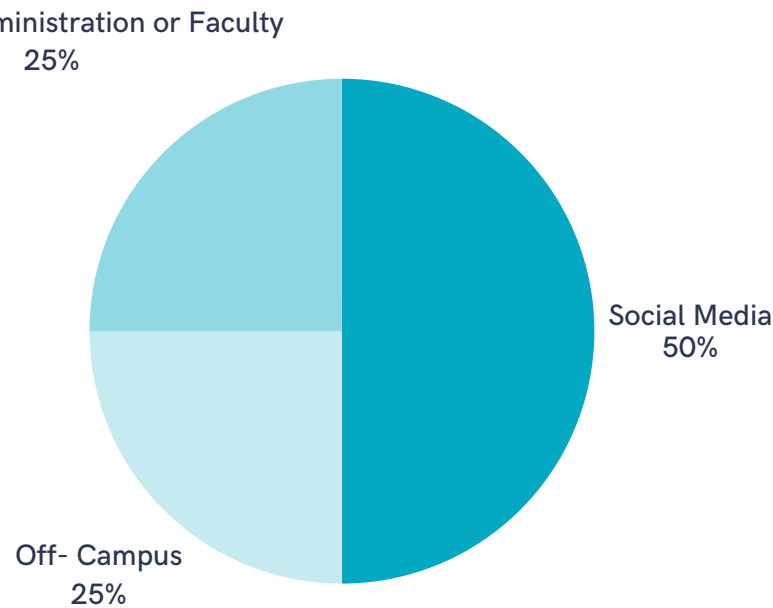
# ASSESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

This study was conducted as part of a funded research initiative aimed at understanding Islamophobia on university campuses, examining both direct experiences and institutional responses. The study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms and identify areas for improvement.

Survey Participation: 11 students participated in the focus group study

## Types of Islamophobic Incidents

- **50%** occurred on social media, often involving hate speech or derogatory comments.
- **25%** took place off-campus, including public interactions involving students.
- **25%** involved university administration or faculty, raising concerns about institutional bias and discrimination.



## Experiences with Islamophobia

- **25%** had witnessed Islamophobic incidents, highlighting the presence of bias and discrimination even if not personally targeted.



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# ASSESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

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## Barriers to Reporting

Despite the presence of an Islamophobia Hotline and other reporting mechanisms, respondents cited several challenges in coming forward:

- Fear of retaliation from peers, faculty, or administration.
- Uncertainty about the reporting process, including a lack of clarity on how complaints are handled.
- Lack of trust in university action, with some students believing their complaints would be dismissed or not taken seriously.

The findings indicate a need for greater transparency, trust-building, and awareness campaigns to encourage reporting and institutional accountability.



# UNDERSTANDING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE COMMUNITY

As part of the same funded research initiative, a parallel study was conducted among mosque attendees to assess Islamophobia in community settings. This study aimed to explore real-world experiences, the perceived usefulness of support systems, and barriers to reporting

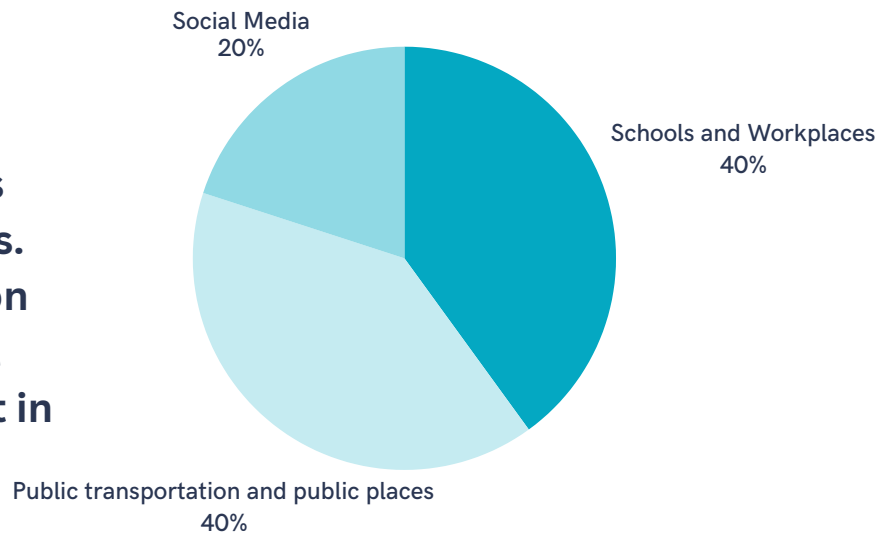
Survey Participation: 10 mosque attendees participated in the study

## Personal Experiences with Islamophobia

- 20% of respondents reported frequent experiences with Islamophobia.
- 40% occasionally faced Islamophobia.
- 40% knew others who had been victims of Islamophobia.

## Common Locations of Islamophobic Incidents

- 40% reported incidents in schools and workplaces, suggesting that discrimination extends beyond social settings into institutional environments.
- 40% cited public transportation and public spaces, indicating a widespread fear of harassment in everyday life.
- 20% reported online Islamophobia, particularly on social media, where harassment often goes unpunished.



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# UNDERSTANDING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE COMMUNITY

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## Barriers to Reporting

Although an Islamophobia Hotline was available, respondents expressed hesitation in using it. Reasons included:

- **80%** believed reporting would not lead to real change, reflecting skepticism toward authorities and the effectiveness of institutional responses.
- **20%** cited lack of awareness about available reporting mechanisms.
- **60%** felt that their experiences were not serious enough to report, a reflection of normalized discrimination in their daily lives.



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# KEY TAKEAWAYS

The findings from both the university and mosque community studies provide critical insights into the nature, frequency, and impact of Islamophobia in Canada. These studies highlight systemic gaps in awareness, reporting, and institutional trust, revealing the following key concerns:

## 1 Islamophobia is Present but Often Underreported

Despite the presence of Islamophobia in both academic and public spaces, many individuals do not report incidents due to fear of retaliation, uncertainty about the process, or a belief that their complaint will not lead to meaningful action. The low reporting rates indicate a need for greater transparency in how reports are handled and stronger protections against retaliation.

## 2 Public Spaces are Not Always Safe for Muslim Communities

In the mosque community study, 40% of respondents reported experiencing Islamophobia in public transportation and shared spaces, reinforcing concerns about harassment in everyday life. This highlights the need for:

- Increased safety measures in public spaces.
- Public awareness campaigns to promote inclusivity.
- Harsher penalties for hate-motivated attacks.

## 3 Social Media is a Key Site for Islamophobia

Both studies found that online spaces are a major platform for Islamophobic incidents, with 50% of reported cases on university campuses occurring on social media. This underscores the need for:

- Stronger social media regulations to combat hate speech.
- Educational campaigns on responsible digital behavior.
- Support systems for victims of online harassment.

## 4 Institutional and Systemic Bias Exists

At the university level, 25% of incidents involved faculty or administration, suggesting the need for anti-bias training and institutional accountability in educational settings. The presence of systemic discrimination in workplaces, schools, and public services further demonstrates that Islamophobia is not limited to isolated incidents but rather embedded in institutional structures.



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## 1 Barriers to Reporting Must Be Addressed

A major issue highlighted in both studies is the lack of trust in reporting mechanisms:

- 80% of mosque study respondents believed reporting incidents would not lead to real change.
- Many students hesitated to report due to fear of retaliation or concerns about confidentiality.

To address this, institutions must:

- Improve transparency in handling reports and communicate outcomes to complainants.
- Strengthen protections against retaliation for those who report incidents.
- Ensure that reporting channels are well-publicized, accessible, and trusted by affected communities.

## 2 Education and Awareness are Critical

Both studies show that many people remain unaware of existing support systems, including the Islamophobia Hotline. This indicates a gap in outreach efforts. Steps to improve awareness include:

- Mandatory anti-Islamophobia training in universities and workplaces.
- Increased promotion of support services through social media, campus events, and public advertising.
- Incorporating education on Islamophobia into school curriculums to challenge stereotypes from an early age.

## 3 Collective Action is Needed

To Combat Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a societal issue that requires a multi-sector response. The studies suggest that meaningful change will only occur if:

- Government policies address systemic discrimination through stronger legal protections and funding for anti-racism initiatives.
- Universities and workplaces actively combat Islamophobia by fostering inclusive environments.
- Civil society and grassroots organizations engage in outreach, advocacy, and community support efforts.



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# IMPACTS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

The impacts of Islamophobia are severe, affecting individuals, families, and communities. Key consequences include

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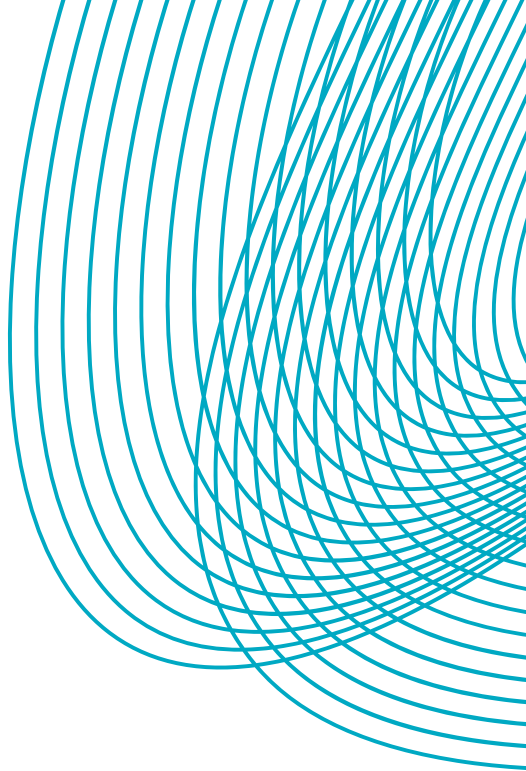
**Religious Discrimination:** Many Muslims report difficulties in practicing their faith openly due to fear of harassment or exclusion (Islamophobia Hotline. (April, 2024). Survey on Islamophobia Experiences and Reporting Mechanisms in University and Mosque Communities. Internal Research Report).

**Targeted Violence:** Canada has the highest number of targeted killings of Muslims among G7 nations, with notable attacks such as the Quebec City Mosque shooting (2017) and the London, Ontario truck attack (2021) (Statistics Canada, 2022).

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**Mental and Emotional Distress:** Fear of discrimination affects mental health, with many Muslims expressing anxiety about public safety, job security, and social acceptance (Islamophobia Hotline. (April, 2024). Survey on Islamophobia Experiences and Reporting Mechanisms in University and Mosque Communities. Internal Research Report).





# QUESTIONS? CONTACT US.



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