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Executive summary

The Swedish National Report dealing with the impact of islamophobia on Muslim women was carried out through late October 2015 until January 2016. The conclusions of the report are based on the available, both official and unofficial, data related to racist violence and discrimination, along with semi-structured interviews with anti-racism, Muslim and/or feminist organisations, as well as with individuals and stakeholders engaged in human rights, anti-discrimination and equality related questions.

Given the testimonies of the women, organisations and stakeholders, the impact of islamophobia on Muslim women is a concerning issue. The concerns voiced by the women, organisations and stakeholders are that gendered islamophobia undermines access to economic, political and social equality. Muslim women are the targets of racist hate crimes, where physical and verbal attacks, harassment and violence have become normalised acts. The consequences are limited social mobility, unsafety and at times, curtailed ambitions with regards to employment and participation in the public arena.

Muslim women express concern regarding the growing pattern in which their vulnerability is of low priority, both within the Muslim civil society as well as outside of it. Acts of violence have for some women become normalised and there seems to be reluctance to report hate crime. The women who do report experiences of racist violence or discrimination express that they have no expectations that reporting the abuse will be of any significance.

The impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women is an under-researched area, which makes it difficult to understand the complexity of how different power relations and systems of oppression operate. For instance, the lack of aggregated data related to gender, religion and race makes it difficult to draw conclusions about Muslim women's living conditions in general and their position on the labour market in particular. Quantifying knowledge revolving around the question of Islamophobia should be a priority, if there is an interest to tackle Islamophobia against Muslim women. Otherwise, the risk is that a segment of the population, in this case, Muslim women, will continue to be curtailed in having the same power to shape society and their own lives.

Glossary

Islamophobia is a specific form of racism that refers to acts of violence and discrimination, as well as racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping and leading to exclusion and dehumanisation of Muslims, and all those perceived as such. It is a form of racism in the sense that it is the result of the social construction of a group as a race and to which specificities and stereotypes are attributed, in this case real or perceived religious belonging being used as a proxy for race. Consequently, even those who choose not to practice Islam - but who are perceived as Muslim because of their ethnicity, migration background or the wearing of other religious symbols - are subjected to discrimination.¹ Furthermore, it is explicitly acknowledged that referring to Islamophobia is different from censorship and that critical discussions on religion and religious practices should still be possible.²

Intersectionality is the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. It examines how various categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, proposing that each element or trait of a person is inextricably linked to all of the other elements.³ Researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw first defined the term in a 1989 article related to the experiences of Black women: "Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow into one direction and it may flow into another. If an accident happens at an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions, and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination".⁴ Intersectional discrimination refers to situations where several grounds operate and interact with each other at the same time in such a way that they are inseparable.

Headscarf is a general term that indicates those types of veils that Muslim women wear that cover the hair and head but leave the face uncovered. The most common Arabic term used to describe such style today is 'hijab'. This is also the most common type of veil worn by Muslim women in Europe.

Niqab is a type of face veil that covers the whole face leaving the area around the eyes clear. Muslim women in Europe who cover their face usually

¹ European Network Against Racism. 2015. *Briefing on Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe*.

² European Network Against Racism. 2016. *Forgotten Women - National Report for the Netherlands*.

³ De Francisco, Victoria P., Palczewski, Catherine H. 2014. *Gender in Communication*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage: 9.

⁴ Crenshaw, K. 1989. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*.

wear the niqab.

Veil is a piece of clothing intended to cover some part of the head or face. There are various types of veils that differently cover hair, ears, neck, and face.

Burqa is a type of female garment covering the full body, often leaving just a mesh screen for eyes. It is very rarely worn by Muslim women in Europe but often incorrectly used in public debates to refer to the niqab.

Feminism includes a range of diverse theoretical conceptions and social movements advocating women's rights in terms of emancipation, liberation and equality.⁵ Its general goal is to establish and achieve equal political, economic, personal and social rights for women, and equality of outcomes in all areas of social, political and personal life.⁶

Discrimination European law makes the distinction between two types of discrimination: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another, in a comparable situation, on ground of protected characteristics. Indirect discrimination applies when people belonging to the same groups suffer from different consequences as the result of apparently neutral provisions, criteria or practices.

Multiple discrimination is a type of discrimination where two or more grounds of discrimination such as gender, religion, ethnicity, class, nationality, etc. might be the basis of discrimination. Generally the term 'multiple discrimination' is seen as umbrella term for several different and occasionally overlapping concepts like 'compound/aggravated' discrimination (discrimination on the basis of two or more grounds at the same time where one ground adds to discrimination on another ground).

Structural/institutional discrimination occurs when rules, norms, routines, patterns or attitudes and behaviour in institutions such as schools, work places, public authorities and other societal structures represent obstacles to certain people in achieving the same rights and opportunities that are available to the majority of the population. Institutional discrimination can also occur from institutions' inability to counteract structural inequality, for example when cases of unequal conditions are treated as equal. In the first case, a difference is assumed, but in the second, unequal conditions are overlooked.

⁵ Hawkesworth, M.E. 2006. *Globalization and Feminist Activism*. Rowman & Littlefield: 25–27; and Beasley, Chris. 1999. *What is Feminism?* New York: Sage: 3–11.

⁶ Hooks, Bell. 2000. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press.

Secularism (*laïcité*) and neutrality

According to Amnesty International, “Secularism can be defined differently according to the specific historical and political context where it is used. It could, for example, refer to the specific form of organisation of the relations between the state and religious authorities implying the separation between the two. The term neutrality likewise can have different meanings depending on the specific historical and political context where it is used. It could refer, for example, to the state adopting an impartial stance towards all political, religious and philosophical beliefs. In some countries the term could refer to the duty of civil servants and public officials to be impartial towards users of public services. In France, for instance, the neutrality of public servants directly stemming from secularism implies a prohibition on them wearing any form of religious and cultural symbols and dress.”⁷

The bias indicator is defined as a negative opinion or assumption, intolerance or hatred against a group sharing common characteristics, or protected characteristics, which can be race or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, religion or belief.⁸

Hate crimes are criminal acts committed with a bias motive. It is this motive that makes hate crimes different from other crimes. The term ‘hate crime’ describes a type of crime, rather than a specific offence within a penal code.⁹

Hate speech is defined as a public expression of hate towards a person or a community because of its race or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, religion or belief. There is no common legal definition of it within EU Member States and the prohibited content differs among countries. Some jurisdictions criminalise incitement to hatred or insult. Others recognise hate speech when it denigrates a person’s dignity or honour. In some jurisdictions, the concept of hate speech is linked to the historical background of the country.¹⁰

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and refers to all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.¹¹

⁷ Amnesty International. 2012. *Choice and Prejudice: Discrimination against Muslims in Europe*.

⁸ ENAR. 2014. *Racist Crime in Europe: Shadow Report 2013-14*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Article 3 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Racism is an ideological construct that assigns a certain race and/or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes, as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the “superior race exercises domination and control over others”.¹²

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism particularly affects women and girls. It is linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and includes the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another. Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape and other forms of sexual violence.¹³

Glossary of Swedish organisations and institutions

Arbetsdomstolen, AD – Labour Court

Arbetskraftsundersökningarna, AKU – Labour Force Surveys

Byrån för Lika Rättigheter, BFLR – Bureau for Equal Rights

Brottsförebyggande Rådet, BRÅ – National Crime Prevention Council (NPC)

Diskrimineringsombudsmannen – Equality Ombudsman

Forum för Levande Historia – Forum for Living History

Göteborgs Rättighetscenter mot diskriminering, GBGRC – Gothenburg’s Human Rights Centre Against Discrimination

Institutet För Arbetsmarknad och Utbildningspolitisk utvärdering, IFAU – Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy

Levnadsnivåundersökningarna – Swedish living conditions survey

Medlingsinstitutet – Swedish National Mediation Office

Malmö Mot Diskriminering, MmD – Malmö Against Discrimination

Muslimska Kvinnoföreningen – Muslim Women’s Association

Muslimska Kvinnors Nätverk – Muslim Women’s Network

Muslimska Mänskliga Rättighetskommittén – Muslim Human Rights Committee

Nationella Trygghetsundersökningen, NTU – Swedish Crime Survey

Nämnden för statligt stöd till trossamfund, SST – Commission for government support for faith communities

¹² UN definition of racism – See: <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/imrdx.pdf>.

¹³ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexism>.

Rädda Barnen – Save the Children

Rättviseförmedlingen – Equalizers

Statens Offentliga Utredningar, SOU – State’s Public Inquiries

Statistiska Central Byrån, SCB – Statistics Sweden

Svenska Muslimer i Samarbete – Swedish Muslims in Cooperation

Örebro’s Rättighetscenter – Örebro’s Human Rights Centre

Introduction

ENAR's project "Forgotten Women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women" aims to document the disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on women and to strengthen alliances between the anti-racism and feminist movements in order to better address the intersectional discrimination affecting Muslim women or those perceived as such. Through a unique and innovative joint effort between the anti-racist (ENAR) and feminist movements, this project is a key step in a broader advocacy strategy that aims to encourage the Member States of the European Union to adopt specific national strategies to combat Islamophobia and to demonstrate the need to improve and strengthen the implementation of EU equality laws.

It has taken place between 2015 and 2016 in eight countries, chosen to get a representative picture of the situation of Muslim women in the European Union: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The aims of the project are:

- documenting the disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women;
- providing analysis to improve the implementation of equality law in cases of discrimination against Muslim women and women perceived as such;
- countering stereotypes about Muslim women and promoting more positive messages;
- fostering partnerships and strengthening alliances between the anti-racist and feminist movements in order to better address the intersectional discrimination affecting Muslim women (gender, race, class, nationality, migration status and religion)
- disseminating the findings of the research in advocacy settings (European and national) communication activities and lawyers' workshops.

The debate on Islamophobia has gained momentum over the past 10-15 years in Sweden, thanks to the work of Muslim, anti-racism and feminist organisations and members of the Swedish civil society. Discrimination in the labour and housing market, coupled with racist stereotypes in the media and hate crimes against members of Muslim communities, suggest that Islamophobia is a problem in Sweden. Although there is little research that takes a comprehensive approach of the scope, extent and consequences of Islamophobia in a Swedish context, the existing knowledge within the field suggests that Muslims in Sweden are a neglected group materially, socially and economically.

Like other forms of racism, Islamophobia is gendered. This means that Islamophobia can manifest itself differently for men, women and any groups at risk of discrimination based on their gender identity. Despite the fact that Muslim women have been pointed out as particularly vulnerable to anti-Muslim violence, gendered Islamophobia, and especially how factors such as race, religion and gender are intertwined, remains an under-researched field in the Swedish context. Existing research on gendered Islamophobia in a Swedish context is at least 7-10 years old. However, it suggests that Muslim women are treated less favourably, are subjected to harassment, and that experiences of discrimination are often related to the labour market.

This report sheds light on the disproportionate effect of Islamophobia on Muslim women. It includes Muslim women's testimonies of the consequences of discrimination in employment and racist violence. Equality bodies' and NGOs' anti-discrimination work related to Muslim women is also presented, along with recommendations on areas where there is room for improvement. Hopefully this report will be a starting point for discussions on how different stakeholders, including decision-makers, can work together to improve the implementation of equality law in cases of discrimination and racist violence against Muslim women.

Methodology

This report is based on:

- 45 in-depth interviews with Muslim women; of which 3 focus group interviews (5-8 people) in Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm
- Semi-structured interviews with five anti-discrimination offices
- 2 semi-structured interviews with the equality body
- 8 semi-structured interviews with anti-racism/feminist/Muslim organisations and actors raise questions about racism and equality
- Interview with police hate crime unit Stockholm City
- Interview with researcher Moa Bursell - responsible for the equality body's future case analysis
- 1 telephone interview with BRÅ
- Talks with the trade unions Kommunal and Vision
- 1 national roundtable with anti-racism, feminist and Muslim organisations

SECTION 1: Snapshot of inequalities

This section provides first and foremost headline findings and data for the Swedish national setting in relation to demography, employment, labour market inequalities, poverty, exclusion and discrimination. Disaggregated formal/institutional data in relation to religion and Muslim women are presented where possible.

1.1 Gender - Women in general

1.1.1 Demography

According to Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB)¹⁴, as of 31 December 2015 the Swedish population was estimated at 9 851 017.¹⁵ According to the calculations from Statistics Sweden from 2015, women accounted for 4 920 051 of the population.¹⁶

Table 1: Swedish population 2015¹⁷

Total population	Men	Women
9 851 017	4 930 966	4 920 051
	50,06 %	49,94%

1.1.2 Labour market inequalities

In this section overall labour market inequalities are presented. Special attention is given to women's salaries, most common professions and the type of managerial positions that women hold.

1.1.2.1 Salaries

There is a considerable gender pay gap (GPG) in Sweden despite the ban on gender pay differentials.¹⁸ According to data available relating to GPG presented by the Swedish National Mediation Office (Medlingsinstitutet) in the annual report *Wage bargaining and wage formation 2015* (Avtalsrörelsen och lönebildningen 2015), the GPG for the economy as a whole was 13.2%.¹⁹ At times GPG is explained as a result of differences between men and women performing different types of work in different labour market sectors, age, education and working hours. A large proportion of women make careers in education and the health care sector. These are occupations where wages in most cases are relatively low. Men are to a much greater extent found represented in areas of the labour market that generate higher wages, for example, technology and manufacturing²⁰.

¹⁴ The population statistics retrieved from Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån - SCB) are based on the population registry documented by the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket). As a government agency the Swedish Tax Agency administers the national tax collection, registers estate inventories and deals with the population registration:

<https://www.skatteverket.se/servicelankar/otherlanguages/inenglish/moreonskatteverket.4.7856a2b411550b99fb780009630.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/10810>

¹⁶ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/10810>

¹⁷ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/10813>

¹⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/sweden/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Sweden%20FINAL.pdf>

¹⁹ http://www.mi.se/files/PDF-er/att_bestalla/arsrapporter/AR_15_uppdatt.pdf

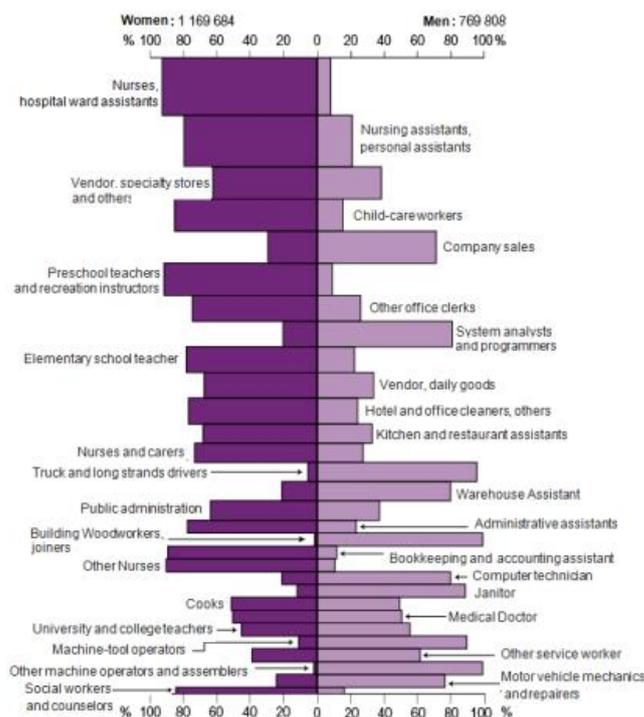
²⁰ <http://www.scb.se/sv /Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/Med-sma-steg-mot-ekonomisk-jamstalldhet/>

However, once the above mentioned factors are taken into account, an overall unexplained standard weighting GPG of 6.1% remains.²¹ The GPG varies from sector to sector. In the municipal sector where the gender representation is somewhat balanced, women's pay is 0,6% lower than that of men. The GPG manifest itself within the non-manual private sector, where women's pay is 8,6% lower than that of men's, while this difference within the manual private sector is 2,3%.²²

1.1.2.2 Professions

In total there are approximately 355 occupations in Sweden. Women work extensively in the public sector (approx. 85%) whereas men dominate the private sector (approx. 85%). Women tend to a greater extent to hold professions within child and elderly care. The diagram below (Diagram 1) illustrates the gender distribution in the 30 most common occupations as well as sectors of the labour market. The calculations are based on all employees aged 20-64 during 2013.²³

Diagram 1: The 30 most common occupations in 2013. Number and gender distribution (%)



According to the diagram above some of Sweden's most common occupations are in the healthcare sector. The largest occupational group is assistant nurses, with a total amount of 176 000 employees. Women make up 93% of the workforce in this occupational group.

²¹ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU\(2015\)510011_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU(2015)510011_EN.pdf)

²² [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU\(2015\)510011_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU(2015)510011_EN.pdf)

²³ The profession has been classified in accordance with the Swedish Standard Classification of Occupations, SSK. In total there are 355 occupations: <http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Arbetsmarknad/Sysselsattning-forvarvsarbete-och-arbetstider/Yrkesregistret-med-yrkesstatistik/59064/59071/133973/>

Only in three of the 30 most common occupations, is there a fairly equal distribution of women and men, i.e. a representation of 40-60% of each gender. These are: cooks with 54 % women and 46% men, physicians with 49% women and 51% men, as well as university and higher education teaching professionals with 46% women and 54% men.²⁴

The gender distribution in the labour market is also illustrated in the table (Table 2) below.²⁵

Industry and Sector	Women		Men		Gender distribution		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Women	Men	
Units for health care	555	27	133	7	81	19	
The education system	371	18	134	7	74	27	
Personal and cultural services etc.	96	5	68	3	59	41	
Hotels and restaurants	62	3	54	3	54	46	
Civil authorities and defence	160	8	132	7	55	45	
Credit institutions and insurance companies	49	2	44	2	53	47	
Business services	229	11	268	13	46	54	
Trade	212	11	249	12	46	54	
Real estate	23	1	35	2	39	61	
Information and communication companies	52	3	116	6	31	69	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8	0	26	1	25	76	
Carrier companies	51	3	166	8	24	76	
Manufacturing and extractive companies	115	6	360	18	24	76	
Companies in the energy and environment sector	11	1	35	2	23	77	
Construction industry	23	1	217	11	10	90	
Data not available	4	0	5	0	44	56	

1.1.2.3 Managerial positions

²⁴<http://www.sverigeisiffror.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/utbildning-jobb-och-pengar/sveriges-vanligaste-yrken/>

²⁵<http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Temaomraden/Jamstalldhet/Fordjupningar/I-och-utanfor-arbetskraften/Den-konssegregerade-arbetsmarknaden/Anstalda-20-64-ar-efter-naringsgren-och-sektor-2014/>

Even though the amount of women in the workforce has steadily increased since women's entrance in the labour market in the 1970s, the percentage of female managers has not seen the same steady development. Of the total number of managers in the labour market in total, approximately one-third are women. This figure can be compared with the early 2000s when about a quarter of managers were women.

The proportion of women in managerial positions differs between sectors. The largest proportion can be found in the public sector, and the lowest proportion of women in managerial positions is in the private sector. The reason as to why the percentage of female managers differs between sectors is partly because there is a higher proportion of women working in the public sector than in the private sector.²⁶

1.1.3 Employment/unemployment

The table below (Table 2) is based on aggregated data from the labour force survey (*Arbetskraftsundersökningarna – AKU*). The labour force survey which is compiled monthly, quarterly and annually, with emphasis on both number and proportion of employed and unemployed population, illustrates the developments in the labour market for the Swedish population aged 15-74 (SCB 2016:66).

Table 2: The labour force survey Arbetskraftsundersökningarna – AKU 28/1-2016²⁷

Employment, unemployment and labour force status (relative figures), for different ages. Comparison, men and women

Age	Relative rate (percent)								
	Employment rate ²⁸			Relative unemployment ²⁹			Relative employment rate ³⁰		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
15-24	42,2	45,3	43,7	21,2	19,4	20,3	53,6	56,3	54,9
25-54	87,9	83,3	85,6	5,8	5,8	5,8	93,3	88,3	90,9
55-74	49,7	42,6	46,2	5,3	4,3	4,8	52,5	44,5	48,5
15-74	68,8	64,4	66,6	7,5	7,2	7,4	74,4	69,5	72,0
<u>Thereof</u>									
16-64	78,2	75,1	76,7	7,7	7,3	7,5	84,8	81,0	82,9
20-64	82,5	78,4	80,5	6,9	6,4	6,7	88,7	83,7	86,2

²⁶ http://www.scb.se/sv/_Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Arbetsmarknad/Sysselsattning-forvarvsarbete-och-arbetstider/Yrkesregistret-med-yrkesstatistik/59064/59071/133985/

²⁷ The complete compiled statistics is available here: "28/1-2016 - Grundtabeller årsmedeltal 2015" <

http://www.scb.se/sv/_Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Arbetsmarknad/Arbetskraftsundersokningar/Arbetskraftsundersokningarna-AKU/23265/23272/Tvarsnittdata---originalvarden-ej-sasongsrensad/226595/>

²⁸ Employed percentage of the population.

²⁹ Unemployed percentage of labor force.

³⁰ The labor force as a percentage of the population.

1.1.4 Poverty, deprivation and exclusion

Mapping poverty is not an easy task. The challenge of mapping accurate data often lies with the different methods used to obtain the statistics. According to SCB the 'risk of poverty' is a measure that can be a focal point in order to estimate to what extent a segment of the population has difficulty achieving a living standard that corresponds to the general level of the population in the country (Andö, 2015). The risk of poverty is measured by investigating the proportion of the population with a disposable income below 60% of median income. An income below this threshold is an indication of the difficulty of achieving a living standard that corresponds to the general level of the population in the country (Andö, 2015).

According to a compilation made for the newspaper *Fria tidningar* by Statistics Sweden (SCB) in 2015, 16.3% of Swedish women had a disposable income below 60% of median income. In the compilation it is noted that this figure has increased by a small amount compared to 2013 when the figure stood at 16.1%. According to the compilation Sweden stands out among the Nordic countries, with regard to the risk of women falling into poverty.³¹

One of the explanations given for the noted increase is the over-representation of female seniors who risk falling into poverty, a factor which separates Sweden from the rest of the EU; 21% of female pensioners were at risk of falling into poverty compared with the EU average, which was at 15.7%. Also, newspaper's compilation based on the figures from Statistics Sweden notes that the income gap between male and female pensioners is greater in Sweden than in other Nordic countries.³²

1.1.5 Discrimination and violence

The Equality Ombudsman received a number of 250 discrimination complaints on the ground of gender during 2014. Most of the complaints concerned discrimination relating to the labour market but included other areas such as school, social services and housing. Furthermore, the Equality Ombudsman received discrimination complaints related to goods and services, health care as well as complaints relating to discriminatory treatment in contact with public servants. The complaints received by the Equality Ombudsman relating to gender discrimination and employment were mostly regarding pregnancy, disadvantages in relation to parental leave or sexual harassment. The grounds for discrimination are often interconnected and include ethnicity, gender, and sometimes in combination with age.³³

Several prevalence studies aiming at identifying the vulnerability of women to male violence in intimate relationships have been conducted in Sweden and the Nordic countries. The study *Våld och hälsa - En befolkningsundersökning om kvinnors och mäns våldsutsatthet samt kopplingen till hälsa* [Violence and Health - A population study of women's and men's exposure to violence and the link to health from 2014] shows that 14% of women and 5% of

³¹ Figures for Denmark (11,7%); Norway (11,9%); Finland (13,3%); EU (17,8). Figures available here: "Fler svenska kvinnor lever i fattigdom" [More Swedish women living in poverty]: <http://www.fria.nu/artikel/120362>

³² Figures for Denmark (10,1%); Finland (19,7%); Euro27 (15,7%). Figures available here: "Fler svenska kvinnor lever i fattigdom" [More Swedish women living in poverty]: <http://www.fria.nu/artikel/120362>

³³ "Kvinnor anmäler diskriminering på olika grunder" [Women report discrimination on various grounds]. Available here: <http://www.do.se/om-do/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt-under-2015/kvinnor-anmaler-diskriminering-pa-olika-grunder/>

men have at some point after the age of 18 been subjected to physical violence or threats of physical violence in a current or past relationship. Additionally, 20% of women and 8% of men in the study reported that they were subjected to repeated and systematic psychological violence by a current or former partner. The study also shows that about 7% of the women and 1% of the men had been subjected to sexual violence by a current or former partner at some point after the age of 18.

1.2 Islam/Muslims (as gender specific as possible)

1.2.1 Demography – proxies

Obtaining and presenting estimate figures on the size of the Muslim population in Sweden is a difficult task. During the second half of the 1900s categories of religion, language, race and ethnicity, gradually disappeared from the Swedish population census. Thus in the last official statistics obtainable from the population census including religious affiliation, only 15 people identified themselves belonging to "Islam", "Mohammedan" and "Sufi movement". Also, it should be noted that within this category, persons who identified themselves as “Buddhist”, "Confucius", “Brahma teaching” or "Taoist" were included. The information about the exact amount of persons who identified themselves as Muslims cannot be determined and any conclusions on this part is based on estimations (Larsson 2013:44).

In various reports and statistical compilations relating to determining the size of the Muslim population in Sweden, most are based on identifying various minority groups’ background or country of origin. The total figure for all persons with a ‘foreign background’ is according to the national population register from 31 December 2014, estimated at **2, 092, 206³⁴**. For a detailed illustration of the amount of men and women who make up the foreign-born population, see table 3:

Table 3: DEMOGRAPHY 2015 ³⁵				
	Native-born		Foreign-born	
Total population	Men	Women	Men	Women
9 851 017	3 840 457 39%	3 823 540 38.8%	1 090 509 11.1%	1 096 511 11.1%

When trying to assess the size of the Muslim population one comes across the research institute PEW’s figures from 2010. According to PEW, 451 000 people in Sweden had a background in so called ‘Muslim’ countries in 2010. Evidently, correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation is difficult to determine and often results in problematic estimates or dubious correlations. One of the reasons for this is that country of origin is not always a reliable indicator, as people from ‘Muslim’ countries can have a different religious affiliation than Islam.

Other calculations are based on the notion that everyone who has a Muslim parent is counted as second generation Muslim – and could be considered Muslim in a broad cultural

³⁴ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/10836>

³⁵ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/8189>

sense. Based on that calculation the number of Muslims amounted to 400 000 in 2007, a figure which today is considered to lie around 500 000-600 000, according to Max Stockman at Board of State support for religious communities - Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund, SST (Larsson & Sander, 2007:70-73).

1.2.2 Level of visibility/religious practice

According to the Board of state support for religious communities (Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund, SST) statistics from 2014, 110 000 people are served by Islamic congregations.³⁶ The statistics are based on the congregations' registered members.

The Muslim religious faith group representatives argue that this figure is misleading as it only takes into account the people who are willing to hand over their personal data. The representatives have noted that there is a fear among active visitors. The fears expressed are related to active visitors' previous experiences of fleeing from state oppression and persecution. Having active members share personal information is thus difficult as a result of existing distress that this information would be used in the wrong way or end up in the hands of the Swedish Security Services. In conclusion the representatives mean that their communities both serve and have far more people participating in their activities than what is reflected in the figures presented to the SST.

According to Max Stockman, administrator in charge of the contact with Muslim and Orthodox faith communities at SST, the faith communities' concern regarding misleading member numbers, has been a recurring discussion. Stockman explains that the Islamic Cooperation Council (Islamiska Samarbetsrådet – ISR), the umbrella organisation for Muslim faith communities, have throughout the years stressed that they have 160 000 registered members. This is a figure that SST will somehow take into account in the continuing discussions.

In the table below, the Muslim faith communities that make up the umbrella organisation Islamic Cooperation Council (ISR) are listed:

Faith community	Year formed	Number of congregations	Registered members
United Islamic Congregations in Sweden [FIFS -Förenade Islamiska Församlingar i Sverige] ³⁷	1974	52	36 064
Swedish Muslim Federation [SMF - Sveriges muslimska förbund] ³⁸	1981	40	56 766
Islamic Cultural Centre Union [IKUS - Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen] ³⁹	1984	14	10 532

³⁶ Statistik 2014 [Statistics 2014]. Available here:

<http://www.sst.a.se/statistik/statistik2014.4.1295346115121ad63f315d2a.html>

³⁷ [http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45307cf/1404386744129/Andra tryckningen samfunds broschyr inlaga version12+febr+33.pdf](http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45307cf/1404386744129/Andra_tryckningen_samfunds_broschyr_inlaga_version12+febr+33.pdf)

³⁸ [http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45309d9/1404386990617/Andra tryckningen samfunds broschyr inlaga version12+febr+37.pdf](http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45309d9/1404386990617/Andra_tryckningen_samfunds_broschyr_inlaga_version12+febr+37.pdf)

Swedish Islamic Congregations [SIF - Svenska islamiska församlingar] ⁴⁰	1999	20	17 034
Islamic Shia Congregation [ISS - Islamisk Shiasamfund]	1994	33	25 000
Bosniac Islamic Society [BIS - Bosniakiska islamiska samfundet] ⁴¹	1995	26	12 097

The Muslim faith communities listed above are the six Muslim national organisations eligible for state grants through SST. Among the communities and organisations that are outside the Islamic Cooperation Council are other major Muslim organisations, local groups and smaller initiatives [Stockman, phone conversation 2016-03-07].

Two actors who are not a part of the ISR are the Ahmadiyya Muslim Society [Ahmadiyya Muslimska Samfund]⁴² and Islamic Centre⁴³ in Malmö. Beside these organisations, there are number of other mosques, Muslim charities, Muslim schools, social and youth organisations which enable and provide platforms for Muslims to organise themselves.

1.2.3 Countries of origin

Based on the statistics on 31 December 2015, a total of 2,911,881 inhabitants of the Swedish population has a foreign background. This means that 29.54% of all residents in the country are either born abroad, or are born in Sweden but have one or two foreign-born parents.⁴⁴

In total residents with a background in Europe, North America and Oceania, make up 16,61% of the population, while residents with a background in Africa, Asia and Latin America make up 13,87% of the population. Sweden is therefore one of the most diverse societies in Europe.

A significant part of the migrant residents with a background in Africa and Asia stem from countries and regions in Asia and Africa where the majority of the population is considered predominantly Muslim. The Swedish Muslim minority tends to settle in larger cities and urban centres such as Greater Stockholm, Greater Göteborg and Greater Malmö, where they make up a substantial part of the total population. There is also a Swedish Muslim population originating from Central Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and West Asia, East as well as West Africa. Also, a sizeable number of Muslims from South Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia (Ibn Rushd's granted application for Equality Data Project from Open Society Foundations, 2015).

The following table is an illustration of the countries of origin of the Muslim population⁴⁵ as well as the number of inhabitants from these countries residing in Sweden.⁴⁶

³⁹ [http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c4530954/1404386912691/Andra tryckningen samfunds broschyr inlaga version12+febr+34.pdf](http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c4530954/1404386912691/Andra_tryckningen_samfunds_broschyr_inlaga_version12+febr+34.pdf)

⁴⁰ [http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c4530994/1404386964222/Andra tryckningen samfunds broschyr inlaga version12+febr+36.pdf](http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c4530994/1404386964222/Andra_tryckningen_samfunds_broschyr_inlaga_version12+febr+36.pdf)

⁴¹ [http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45307c9/1404386719199/Andra tryckningen samfunds broschyr inlaga version12+febr+32.pdf](http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.3d3be87146f5c25c45307c9/1404386719199/Andra_tryckningen_samfunds_broschyr_inlaga_version12+febr+32.pdf)

⁴² <http://www.ahmadiyya-islam.org/se/>

⁴³ <http://www.mosken.se/>

⁴⁴ The new Sweden and the Swedish hyper-diversity in numbers December 31, 2015 (Det nya Sverige och den svenska hypermångfalden i rena siffror den 31 december 2015): <https://tobiashubINETTE.wordpress.com/page/2/>

Country	Men	Women
1. Iraq	69 933	60 245
2. Iran	35 694	32 742
3. Syria	38 800	28 871
4. Somalia	28 934	28 972
5. Bosnia and Herzegovina	28 291	28 998
6. Turkey	25 440	20 706
7. Afghanistan	17 063	11 380
8. Lebanon	14 299	11 400
9. Eritrea	11 504	10 323
10. Ethiopia	8 133	8 012
11. Morocco	4 607	4 423
12. Bangladesh	4 231	2 981
13. Tunisia	3 152	1 682
14. Gambia	2 741	1 987
15. Sudan	1 798	1 507
16. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	1 617	1 375
17. Algeria	1 881	1 057
18. Democratic Republic of Congo	1 552	1 540
19. Indonesia	1 017	1 355
20. Libya	1 545	618
21. Malaysia	672	855
22. Yemen	785	548
23. Congo	400	398
24. Qatar	73	63
25. CAR	56	51

1.2.4 Labour market inequalities

1.2.4.1 Salaries

In a report by the Institute for Evaluation of Labour market and Education Policy [*Institutet För Arbetsmarknad och Utbildningspolitisk utvärdering* - IFAU], salaries of individuals who all received their highest education in Sweden but have different national backgrounds were compared. The authors compare the foreign-born inhabitants who came to Sweden before the age of 16 with individuals who have parents born in Sweden.⁴⁸

The report shows that the foreign-born residents have lower salaries than those with Swedish-born parents, even though both groups have received their highest education in

⁴⁵ This figure only includes 1st generation migrants.

⁴⁶ To ease the reading, the countries are sorted by the number of migrants from each country

⁴⁷ Utrikes-födda – Foreign-born

<http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START_BE_BE0101_BE0101E/UtrikesFoddaR/table/tabViewLayout1/?rxid=67471ec5-fdf2-4010-b27c-b48d2dbf402a>

⁴⁸ Katz and Österberg

Sweden.⁴⁹ The pay gap varies widely depending on the country of origin, according to the report's results. Although the foreign-born residents came here as children, several groups of men in this category have 5-10 percentage points lower wages than their native counterparts. This applies in particular to those from Asia, Africa or Latin America.⁵⁰

The major negative coefficients with respect to the wages of different groups in the report, suggests that especially those who came to Sweden as children from Southern Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East have jobs in sectors and industries where wages are relatively low. A contributing factor to men with a background in non-European countries is that they are more often than Swedish-born men, employed in sectors of the labour market with a high proportion of women. These are sectors which are often characterised by lower wages. For example, more than a quarter of the men from the Horn of Africa have a profession where the percentage of women is at least 75%. The figure for men with Swedish-born parents is 7%. This is however not the case for men from Turkey, who are heavily over-represented in the "trade and restaurant" sector, meaning their salaries are comparable to for instance men from the Horn of Africa.⁵¹

In 2010 *Levnadsnivåundersökningarna* – the Swedish living standards survey⁵² for the first time focused on the foreign-born population's education, employment, wages and economics and religion. Approximately 3,500 randomly selected foreign-born residents were interviewed in depth in their homes. The results from the survey showed that women with a background in the EU15, North America, Oceania, have about 9-10% higher salaries on average than women born in Sweden. Women from Europe and Latin America have about the same salary as women who are born in Sweden. Women from Africa and Asia have about 5% below the average wage compared to their counterparts born in EU15, North America, Oceania and Latin America. When the different length of education and acquired working years between the groups is taken into account, the result is that there are no wage differences between women with a Swedish background and women from the EU15 and Nordic countries. In total women born outside the EU15 and the Nordic countries, have an approximately 5-10% lower hourly rate than women born in Sweden.⁵³

Furthermore, it is often difficult for those with a foreign background to raise their salaries by for instance higher education. This is especially true for residents born outside Europe. A man with Swedish-born parents for instance, increases his salary by 21% by studying another three years, while a person who immigrated from the Middle East will increase his wage by 15% if he decides to acquire higher education. Women have consistently lower return on their education than men with the same background.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Katz and Österberg, 2013:27

⁵⁰ Katz and Österberg, 2013:25f

⁵¹ Katz and Österberg, 2013:23

⁵² The Swedish living standards survey is a longitudinal social science survey. It was first conducted in 1968. Thereafter, it has been replicated in 1974, 1981, 1991, 2000 and 2010. The basis for LNU is a random sample of 1/1000 of the Swedish population between 15 and 75 years of age. Since 1991, the lower age limit for the LNU was raised to 18 years.

⁵³ LNU 2010. Accessed March 13, 2016. <http://www.reglab.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/utlandsfodda-LNU.pdf>

⁵⁴ Katz and Österberg, 2013:2

1.2.4.2 Professions

The following table (Table 6) illustrates the most common occupations in general, and the amount of women employed in each occupation based on region of origin.

Occupation	Africa	Asia	Europe excl. Nordic countries	Sweden
5132 Nurses and hospital ward assistants	4273	8369	9758	132 803
5133 Nursing assistants, personal assistants, etc.	4798	8566	8406	96 117
5131 Child-care workers	961	5379	4440	69 404
3310 Preschool teachers and recreation instructors				
5222 Retailers, specialty retail	233	2155	2686	74 142
2330 Elementary school teachers	345	2112	2511	55 455
4190 Other office clerks	193	1365	2269	56 256
9122 Hotel and office cleaners	2024	7358	10632	30 789
5221 Salesmen, groceries	118	1404	1834	45 930
5134 Nurses and carers	631	1256	1581	43 721
9130 Kitchen and catering assistants	642	4567	3394	36 101
4120 Accounting clerks	100	815	1755	38 298
3239 Nursing	329	1273	1581	37 450
3431 Administrative Assistants	131	853	1500	33 648
2470 Administrators in public administration	125	705	1183	29 914
3415 Corporate sales	61	674	947	25 415
4112 Office secretaries, medical secretaries, etc.	50	368	650	23 269
2492 Social workers and counsellors	124	606	799	21 754
3433 Accountants and others	42	394	759	17 971
4222 Receptionists etc.	69	468	622	17 906

1.2.4.3 Managerial positions

As for the highest managerial employees of the country the study “Foreign background - asset or obstacle on the road to power?” [*Utländsk bakgrund – tillgång eller hinder på vägen*]

⁵⁵The table illustrates only first generation migrants. Accessed November 13, 2015: <http://www.scb.se/sv /Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Arbetsmarknad/Sysselsattning-forvarvsarbete-och-arbetstider/Yrkesregistret-med-yrkesstatistik/59064/59071/133975/>

mot makt?] from 2004 showed that of the 20 000 senior managers within Swedish society in all areas, i.e. all major corporate directors, all business managers in the public sector, all the directors and executives, all municipalities and county directors, all cultural institution managers, all the top executives within higher education and research community, all editors, all of the major organisations, senior officials including trade unions, associations, social movement unions, etc., only a total of 183 persons had some background in South America, Africa and Asia. It was a total of 183 persons, or 0.9%, which is a substantial under-representation given the fact that the proportion of people with non-European backgrounds in total was at 11-12% at that time.⁵⁶

As for more recent data relating to the foreign-born population and managerial positions, see the tables in the appendix (Table 6: Employees aged 16-64 years, by managerial positions and region of birth, 2013, women, and Table 7: Employees aged 16-64 years by managerial positions and region of birth, 2013, men).

Women with a background in Africa and Asia are to a higher degree in managerial positions in sectors such as health care, trade, hotels and restaurants, as is illustrated in the table (Table 8: Most common managerial positions for women aged 16-64 years, by region of birth, 2013) transport, communications, small enterprises in trade, hotels and restaurants, transport:

Table 8: Most common managerial positions for women aged 16-64 years, by region of birth, 2013

Managerial position	Africa	Asia
Operation managers in health care	30	145
Operation managers in trade, hotels and restaurants, transport and communications	19	202
Managers of small enterprises in trade, hotels and restaurants, transport and communications	17	206

1.2.5 Employment/unemployment

The Swedish labour market has at least in the past ten years been characterised by having the greatest difference in the industrialised world in terms of having a job or not, between the native-born and foreign-born population. This distinction applies both to those who have what is identified as 'low education background' and those who have acquired a higher education. In practice, Sweden is considered to be at the bottom of the industrialised world with regard to providing migrants jobs, and specifically to its residents who have a background in, or are born in Africa, Asia and South America, where it is best for the latter and the worst for the former. Below is a table illustrating the population over 16 years old by employment status, region of birth, gender, in 2014:

⁵⁶ Göransson 2005:21

Table 8: Population 16+ years by employment status, region of birth, gender, 2014								
	Africa ⁵⁷		Asia ⁵⁸		Europe excl. nordic countries ⁵⁹		Sweden ⁶⁰	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employed	32 868	24 155	113 775	102 904	148 585	130 327	2 052 034	1,893,358
Unemployed	40 992	41 070	117 411	131 771	110 975	132 424	1, 186 732	1 366 141

The major differences and figures are in many cases explained to be a result of differences in education level. However, the differences remain even when only those with higher education are compared with each other – education seems to pay off for some and not others. Generally, the native-born population with a higher education tend to have a better position in the labour market than for those born in Africa, Asia and South America.

1.2.6 Poverty, deprivation and exclusion

The risk of poverty for the foreign-born population is five times higher than its counterpart: the Swedish born with children. This is despite the former category having an income and employment.⁶¹

According to Save the Children's latest report, having a foreign background or being a single parent are explained as factors that independently increase the risk of children being forced to live in economically poor conditions. Having a foreign background and living in a single parent household can result in a life of financial vulnerability. As a result, these two factors together result in unequal economic conditions. More than half, 53.4% of all children of single parents with a foreign background lived in financial vulnerability in 2013, compared with only 2% of all the children who lived with both their Swedish-born parents. The economic conditions are explained to be determined by difficulties in entering the labour market and the lack of support with respect to public security systems, regarding for instance parental leave, sickness and unemployment.⁶²

1.2.7 Discrimination and hate crime

The effect of discrimination on foreign born's job opportunities is a well-studied area, both in Sweden and in other countries. Many of the studies are based on regression analysis, where the difference in employment rates between native and foreign born that cannot be explained by differences in observable characteristics, is interpreted as discrimination.⁶³

However, whatever method the researchers have used the common conclusion is that people with a foreign background are discriminated against in the labour market. Both Swedish and international research point to this. For example, people identified as immigrants are not called for interview as often as those identified as Swedish, even with

⁵⁷ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/8226>

⁵⁸ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/8227>

⁵⁹ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/8228>

⁶⁰ <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/8229>

⁶¹ Stenberg, 2013

⁶² Rädde Barnen, 2015:24ff

⁶³ The state's public inquiries: SOU 2005:41; see also SOU 2005:56; SOU 2006:59; SOU 2006:60

equal qualifications. Certain groups are particularly affected which is demonstrated in the quantitative study “*Evidence of Ethnic Discrimination in the Swedish Labour Market using Experimental Data*”, which finds that job seekers with Arabic-sounding names have a 50% lower chance of being invited to a job interview than other applicants.⁶⁴

Several anti-discrimination actors describe that they in multiple instances encounter cases in which Muslim women are excluded from work and education in the health care sector as a result of their clothing.⁶⁵

A survey among young people’s attitudes towards Islam and Muslims shows that a quarter of young people of Muslim background have been victims of abuse. Girls have often been subjected to verbal harassment and boys more often to violence.⁶⁶

According to statistics from the National Crime Prevention Council, assault and harassment is the most common type of Islamophobic crimes, and 18 percent of the cases occur in a public place. Many of those affected are precisely Muslim women wearing headscarves. Only three percent of Islamophobic hate crimes are tied to the perpetrator of the crime.⁶⁷

1.3 Islamophobia and gender

1.3.1 Level of visibility

A rough estimate of the amount of Muslim women in Sweden is hard to come across, and an exact figure on the amount of women who identify themselves as Muslim is even harder to establish, one of the reasons being the lack of disaggregated data. As a result of the national debates and suggestions to ban the face-veil within the educational sector, it has been estimated that approximately 100 women wore the niqab in 2009.⁶⁸ Usually this figure is presented to demonstrate the absurdity of making this a national concern, given how few women in a Swedish context wear the niqab.

1.3.2 Discrimination and hate crime

A consistent finding in the few existing studies relating to Muslim women, hate crime and discrimination, is that Muslim women are easy targets for verbal as well as physical abuse from people who are complete strangers to them. It is mainly women who by wearing the headscarf can be identified as Muslims, who become clear targets of racist slurs, violence and discrimination. Qualitative studies show that women are primarily an easy target for Islamophobia, both verbal and physical violence as well as discrimination. Johanna Sixtensson’s interview study “*Hemma och främmande i staden - Home and foreign in the city*”, reveals recounted experiences of 19 Muslim women’s feelings of a sense of security in Malmö. Experiences of discrimination, intimidation, harassment and physical abuse are part of the nature of hate crimes directed against the women.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Carlsson and Rooth, 2006

⁶⁵ Phone-Interview, anti-discrimination office Västerbotten, January 18, 2016. See also: <http://www.vk.se/1321473/muslimska-kvinnor-exkluderas?mobil>

⁶⁶ Forum för levande historia, Islamofobi - Forum for Living History, Islamophobia, 2006:52f

⁶⁷ BRÅ, 2015a

⁶⁸ Roald, 2009

⁶⁹ Sixtensson, 2009

The racist humiliation and violence Muslim women experience is something that has been touched upon by other researchers. As Englund (2006: 69) shows based on her interview survey with 90 women, it is on the street and out among the general public that experiences of negative and differential treatment occur. This treatment manifests itself in swearing and verbal abuse. Some of the women in the study testify that they have been called "terrorists" and other offensive expressions.

In the National Board for State Aid to Religious Communities (SST) report, Muslim organisations state that Islamophobic acts and threats are very common, particularly against women wearing the veil. The Muslim organisations attest to experiences of young women getting in touch via e-mail with mosques to get theological guidance on matters concerning the veil. Based on experiences of this choice meaning increased difficulty in everyday Swedish life, the women's questions revolve around whether there are interpretations of Islam that justify not wearing a veil.⁷⁰

Moreover, the interviews with the 45 women in this report reveal stories of being verbally and physically abused. The nature of the verbal and physical abuse varies from being called "terrorist", "Muslim whore", to having one's headscarf removed. The most common place for abuse is public areas such as in shops, public transport and at the supermarket. The women in the report reveal that day-to-day strategies involve having to adapt their movements when out in public. Some of the women have thought about removing their headscarf because the abuse at times becomes unbearable, whereas five women have actually taken off their headscarf as a result of the abuse they have experienced. A number of women express that they would like to wear the headscarf/face veil, but the knowledge of becoming a target for discrimination and racist violence makes them wary of making such a decision. Furthermore, experiences of not wanting to disclose one's religious identity for fear of ill-treatment are expressed.

⁷⁰ SST, 2014

SECTION 2: TEMPERATURE TEST

This section offers a general insight into the wider picture of Sweden and attitudes to Muslim women. In some regards, specific incidences and events that have contributed to shaping or influencing public and political thinking are addressed.

2.1 Media

The importance of media for our understanding of the world is confirmed in one of the state's public inquiry reports "Media's Us and Them – Medias' significance for structural discrimination" [*Mediernas Vi och Dem – Mediernas betydelse för strukturell diskriminering*]. One of the most important conclusions of this inquiry is that the media presents the world into two groups, based on an "us and them" dichotomy. This in turn, forms the basis for news evaluation and reporting.⁷¹

Several media researchers have concluded that a negative and stereotypical image of Islam and Muslims is presented in the media. The recurring image is one in which Islam and Muslims in general often appear, or are associated, with negative or stereotypical notions such as violence, terror and oppression of women.⁷² The "Swedish" person stands for modernity, freedom and equality, while the "Muslim" stands for tradition, oppression and patriarchy.⁷³

When the Swedish public service television for the first time aired the programme Halal-TV in which three Muslim women, all wearing the headscarf, were hosts, the programme sparked a national debate, even before the first episode was broadcasted. The programme aimed to highlight the relationship between "Swedish identity, cultural values and an increasingly multicultural population". However it became evident that three women – who happened to wear the headscarf – could not present a programme on current affairs in Sweden, without having to account for other Muslim States' or governments' treatment of women, along with perceptions of what the headscarf represents in those environments. Many contributions to the debate consisted of opinions in which Muslim values were portrayed to oppose basic Swedish values about inclusion and democracy.⁷⁴

The debate about Muslim women in the media is related to oppression, the headscarf and the full-veil. Muslim women's organisations have been critical of how media use images of women wearing the veil when reporting about terrorism and oppression. The organisations Muslimiska Kvinnoföreningen, Muslimiska kvinnoätverket and Dunya's kvinno- och tjejjour argue that the images of Muslim women in media coverage relating to violence, oppression, islamism and fundamentalism, cement ideas of the headscarf or the veil as a problem. An article calling for the eradication of all the world religions, is coupled with an image of a woman wearing the headscarf and her forehead on the ground. An opinion entitled "Islamism is gaining a foothold in Hjällbo" includes an image of a woman wearing the headscarf carrying her grocery bags.

⁷¹ Mediernas Vi och Dem – Mediernas betydelse för strukturell diskriminering SOU 2006:21

⁷² Hvitfelt, 1998; Brune 1998; Brune, 2006:41f; Johansson, 2006:171f

⁷³ Brune, 2006

⁷⁴ Lövheim and Axner, 2011

The problem of using images of random Muslim women in the media has been highlighted in the preliminary study of Muslims and Islam in Swedish news media. There were few articles, only 3 out of 503 articles, relating directly to Muslim women. However, pictures of women wearing the headscarf were used in 33 articles of the articles (Aziz, 2015).

A debate about women wearing the veil in advertisement erupted during 2015. Those critical of the headscarf and the veil stressed the importance of discussing the veil as a symbol of oppression. This inspired the founder of the blog *Nyans:Muslim* (Nuance:Muslim)⁷⁵ to compile op-ed articles relating to the headscarf and the veil in the three largest newspapers in Sweden during the years 2008-2015. During these years 72 articles relating to the veil directly or indirectly were published; 69 articles were written by women as well as men who do not wear the headscarf or the veil themselves; 43 articles opposed the veil or the headscarf; 29 articles defended the right to wear the headscarf or the veil; 3 articles were written by women who wear the veil or headscarf.⁷⁶

When Muslim women and girls are portrayed as individuals with agency, it occurs most often through direct or indirect contrast to the expected. The image of 'the strong Muslim woman, or the image of the Muslim woman as an individual with agency, often comes across as something remarkable and surprising.'⁷⁷

2.2 Political spaces

Discussions in the Swedish political landscape in relation to Islam and Muslims generally relates to four types of discourse; integration, gender equality, security and homogeneity.⁷⁸ Politicians have addressed Muslim women's situation in Sweden through the gender equality discourse. In public documents and policies Muslim women are described as oppressed, and their oppression is linked to the lack of equality between Muslim men and women.⁷⁹

Political discussions about Muslim women have also mostly revolved around the banning of face veils in schools, workplaces and public spaces. Proposals to ban the veil have come from the Centre Party, the Liberals, the Moderates and the Swedish Democrats.

Two MPs from the Centre Party, Staffan Danielsson and Lennart Pettersson, submitted a motion proposing a ban on the use of the burqa or the niqab. Danielsson and Pettersson stressed in their motion that they had difficulty understanding women who for religious reasons hide their faces. They explained that the acceptance of this "strange practice" is troubling, and they argued that the face veil is both an issue of democracy and equality and that there are limits on democratic rights, as democracy also entails obligations, according to

⁷⁵ Nyans:Muslim is a blog which was started in 2014 with the aim of being a platform where Muslim voices from a broad spectrum can be heard, and where Islam and the aspects that affect the Swedish Muslim life, without interference from the majority society, can be discussed.

⁷⁶ "We must problematize the veil!" – Are we or are we not?" ("Vi måste problematisera slöjan!" – Görs det eller inte?). Amanj Aziz. 2015. Accessed March 3, 2016. <http://www.nyansmuslim.se/2015/10/05/vi-maste-problematisera-slojan-gors-det-eller-inte/>

⁷⁷ Axnéer, 2015:57

⁷⁸ Cato, 2012: 275

⁷⁹ Cato, 2012: 275-276

the MPs. In the motion, Danielsson and Pettersson explained that a ban would also help women who wear the face veil.⁸⁰ The MPs justified their stance in an article by arguing that someone "must have the courage" to debate the veil as a problem. They also stressed that they could not let the Sweden Democrats be the only ones to state that the veil is problematic.⁸¹

The Swedish Democrats have in turn proposed banning the full veil in schools in twelve municipalities. The MPs Kent Ekeröth and Björn Söder also proposed banning religious signs within the police department, explaining that "a police officer with a headscarf signals that this police officer is more than just a police officer, and that the officers holds other loyalties." Jan Björklund, party leader for the Liberals, proclaimed during elections in 2010 that the full veil, which he compared with the balaclava (rånarluva), would be banned in schools.⁸² Further, other prominent figures such as former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, also former leader of the Moderate party, and the then integration minister from the Social Democrats, Mona Sahlin, have made remarks regarding Muslim Women's victim status in reference to the full veil, and implicitly or explicitly linked the issue to the western Swedish women's liberation and to integration.⁸³

Policy debates also often put the emphasis on differences between western 'values' and the other (Islam), rather than concrete policy positions on gender equality. Even though the debate has centred around the full veil, the headscarf has also become an issue in the debate relating to the oppression of women. For instance, during the election campaign in 2006, Nyamko Sabuni, at the time an MP in the Liberal party, suggested that banning the headscarf for all girls under 15 years old, could be a tool to combat "honour crimes".⁸⁴

The Moderate Party in the municipality of Norrköping recently claimed that the headscarf was a symbol for maintaining honour culture. The party proposes that the Norrköping municipality must actively work against this honour culture and explore the possibility of introducing a local regulation on headscarves for girls under 15 years old. Representatives from the Moderate party also argued that the face-veil is not compatible with a line of work where communication and social interaction are important. In short, representatives from the Moderate party in Norrköping presented two proposals in which they argue for a ban on veils that hide the face for employees within the municipality⁸⁵.

2.3 Public opinion

Earlier research regarding attitudes toward Muslims and Islam has examined adult Swedes' 'attitudes to Islam'⁸⁶ and secondary school students' attitudes to Muslims in half of Sweden.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Forslag/Motioner/Anvandningen-av-burka-eller-ni_GX02K250/?text=true

⁸¹ Danielsson and Pettersson, 2009. See also Danielsson, 2009

⁸² Björklund, 2010

⁸³ Sveriges Radio, 2010

⁸⁴ Sabuni, 2006

⁸⁵ "Regulations on headscarves on minors" [Regelverk mot slöja mot minderåriga]:

<http://www.moderat.se/nyhetsartikel/regelverk-mot-sloja-pa-minderariga>

⁸⁶ (Hvitfelt, 1991)

The first survey examining attitudes toward Islam among the Swedish people is from the 1990s, and was conducted by Håkan Hvitfelt. According to the survey about 65% of Swedes had negative views about Islam.⁸⁸ Approximately 88% of respondents felt that Islam could not be compatible with Swedish democracy and about 65% of respondents felt that Islam oppresses Muslim women.⁸⁹

The Network of Swedish Muslims in Cooperation⁹⁰ highlights in its report to the United Nations Committee of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination that as in the rest of Europe, the Swedish racist discourse is characterised by Islamophobia. Islam is described in generic terms, a collective term for all things that are considered different. Concepts such as refugees, Muslims and immigrants tend to overlap in the public discussions on Islam and Muslims in Sweden.⁹¹

Attitudes towards Muslim women are often addressed in relation to clothing and in particular the headscarf or the veil. Sentiments towards the headscarf among men who themselves are not Muslim for instance, range between a sense of skepticism, feeling sorry for women who wear the headscarf, or descriptions of the headscarf as "tragic".⁹²

The latest public opinion polls related to Islam and Muslims in general, and Muslim women in particular can be found in Mångfaldsbarometern – Diversity survey. According to Mångfaldsbarometern, 64.4 % of the Swedish population believes Muslim women are oppressed. Negative attitudes towards Muslim women are related to the type of clothes they wear. The results of the survey seem to suggest that Swedes have different attitudes towards different forms of covering; around 83% are against the niqab and burqa, but 65% accept the hijab.⁹³

⁸⁷ (Otterbeck and Bevelander, 2006)

⁸⁸ (Hvitfelt, 1991: 100 & 102)

⁸⁹ (Hvitfelt, 1991: 104-105)

⁹⁰ The Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network was established six years ago, after the 2010 Swedish parliamentary elections where the Sweden Democrats, an Islamophobic party, were elected into parliament. The network is a collaboration between Swedish Muslim umbrella organisations, and aims to be a platform where concerns regarding the racist and Islamophobic climate in Sweden can be addressed. The report written in 2013 to the United Nations Committee of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination was the first time such a broad group of Swedish Muslims addressed the United Nations as one body. The report is available here: <http://www.islamiskaforbundet.se/sv/doc/Report.pdf>.

⁹¹ Sabuni, 2013

⁹² Songur and Englund 2007:120

⁹³ Mella, Orlando, Freshteh Ahmadi, Irving Palm. 2013. Mångfaldsbarometern. Gävle: Gävle University Press.

SECTION 3: Employment

3.1 Informal data

3.1.1 Employment/labour market data

Informal data related to Muslim women's employment and their position in the labour market, are hard to come across. What is often addressed, both officially, and unofficially, is that the 'foreign born' group, has had lower employment rates than the native-born since the 1970s.⁹⁴ Since the existing informal data are not related to Muslim women specifically, no space will be given to present this data here.

3.1.2 Discrimination in the workplace

In a questionnaire sent to Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB's (SEB)⁹⁵ Panel consisting of 1 300 small and medium-sized enterprises, the respondents were asked about what qualities they choose and what qualities they opt out of a prospective employee. One of the questions that the respondents were asked was "How do you relate to employees wearing clothes with visual religious attributes (such as a headscarf, turban)?" The majority, 40% of the respondents, thought it was unthinkable that an employee would wear clothes with visual religious attributes, 32% responded that they prefer not to enable employees to wear clothes with visual religious attributes, while 28% chose not to give a comment to the question.

The opposition against Muslim women wearing the headscarf was also brought under scrutiny in a news story at one of Sweden's largest newspapers, *Aftonbladet*. A reporter at the newspaper *Aftonbladet* conducted an investigation during the spring of 2014.⁹⁶ The reporter called assistance officers at 20 randomly selected municipalities asking whether there was a possibility of not being catered for by staff wearing a headscarf. *Aftonbladet* revealed that in 16 out of 20 municipalities, service users could be 'spared' staff who wear the headscarf. One of the municipalities, Gnesta, responded that home services try to cater to the needs of the clients to the greatest extent possible.

The response was immediate, not least from trade unions. In an article published shortly after this was revealed, Annelie Norström from Kommunal⁹⁷ and Veronika Karlsson from Vision⁹⁸, stated that demands such as staff without headscarf, are unacceptable and that these demands ultimately affect the members of their unions:

⁹⁴ Segerfeldt, F. 2013. En Arbetsmarknad För Alla, så kan Integrationen Förbättras. Migro

⁹⁵ SEB is a North European financial group with headquarters in Stockholm

⁹⁶ *Aftonbladet* avslöjar: Erbjuder 'slöjfräa' vårdare till äldre. Accessed November 14, 2015.

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20413763.ab>

⁹⁷ Phone interview (November 16, 2015) and email correspondence with Kommunal. Kommunal is a union with half a million members. Their members work within municipalities, county councils and the private sector. Kommunal mobilise members within a couple of hundred different professional groups.

⁹⁸ Email correspondence with Vision. Vision is a trade union and has 176 000 members. Their members represent over 4,000 professions. For example, managers, engineers, human resources specialists, social workers, economists, priests, therapy assistants, administrators, medical secretaries and assistants. Many members are academics. Vision's members have jobs that support the welfare of the public sector and in private companies. The members also work in the Swedish Church and the Free Church. Vision is Sweden's largest trade union for managers in the public sector.

“Our trade unions organise some 200 000 welfare workers in the health care sector. Many have a background in countries outside of Europe. They are managers, administrators, but not least, nurses, nursing assistants and personal assistants. Without them, welfare does not work, not a single day.”⁹⁹

Sagal Barre, a Muslim woman who has worked within the nursing and elderly care sector, was asked for a response in an interview with *Aftonbladet*. She stressed in the interview that having worked in the elderly care sector, the headscarf has never interfered with her work, and that she would rather be out of work than take it off.¹⁰⁰

The anti-racism network “Together for Eskilstuna” arranged a rally for equal conditions in elderly care as a result of several municipalities saying that service users could opt out of staff wearing the headscarf. This notion of a ‘headscarf-free’ care was rejected by Mikael Edlund, from the Social Democrats and Chairman of the care committee, who attended the rally. Speakers also included Zaynab Ouahabi from the Muslim Council of Sweden who stated:

*“To offer headscarf-free care is discrimination and racism. Our headscarf is a symbol and a garment that means a lot to those who choose to wear it. The headscarf is my strength and my pride.”*¹⁰¹

Muslim women's experiences of discrimination in relation to employment can also be found in different exam papers. Essays in this area are not extensive and are mostly qualitative in their nature. With that said, given the lack of research or data within this field, the exam papers can give an insight into Muslim women's experiences of discrimination.

In the exam papers it appears that Muslim women's experiences of exclusion from the labour market are complex. The experience of negative treatment from employers is a red thread in the interviewed women's stories and factors such as religion, ethnicity and race are often intertwined. For instance, the studies' empirical material suggests that work-related tasks and privileges such as internal training are divided differently amongst the work force depending on ethnicity. The foreign-born/Muslim women have expressed that they for instance receive less internal training and that they receive lower pay for their work. Overall, the studies illustrate that the negative experiences of these women have led many of them to feel invisible. Additionally, what transpires in the studies is that the perception of the women is closely intertwined with the public's perception of the headscarf in itself as a marker of something different and backward.

3.2 Under-reporting

3.2.1 Formal and informal data

The issue of under-reporting in the area of discrimination and employment has been addressed in the previous research study by the Integration Board.¹⁰² Very few of the

⁹⁹ <http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/article20556655.ab>

¹⁰⁰ “Vi jobbar inte med sjalen, vi jobbar med hjärtat” <<http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20414185.ab>>

¹⁰¹ “Står upp för lika villkor i äldre vården” <<http://ekuriren.se/nyheter/eskilstuna/1.3035820-star-upp-for-lika-villkor-i-aldrevarden>>

¹⁰² Integrationsverket (2006). Rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – Antisemitism och islamofobi 2005. Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2006:02.

women who participated in the study reported any cases of discrimination.¹⁰³ Only 11 people out of the 90 respondents replied that they have reported the incident to any instance. Three of the cases were notified to the DO, two people said they reported the incident to a trade union, two people turned to the police and four people reported that they have notified another authority. As to the question of why so few decided to report the ill-treatment or discrimination, most women (38 respondents) expressed that they felt it would not make a difference whether or not they report their experiences of discrimination.¹⁰⁴ 15 women responded that they do not trust the authorities, while 14 responded that they had no knowledge of the law; five women stated they have no experience of discrimination; four women said they were not aware of the existence of the Equality Ombudsman, while two responded that they could not be bothered.¹⁰⁵ To sum up the result of the survey; the majority of respondents who answered this question, nearly half of the 90 participants, did not think that reporting experiences of discrimination or negative treatment had any significance.

3.2.2 Explanations for under-reporting

The question of under-reporting has been addressed in interviews with the anti-discrimination offices. For instance, the questions for Örebro's rättighets center revolved around why they receive so few cases from Muslim women, as they are aware that Islamophobia is a problem in Sweden. The informant at the anti-discrimination office makes one cautious assumption about the reason for under-reporting by Muslim women:

"There could be several reasons for this. Perhaps the target group, Muslim women, may not be aware that the office exists and can be helpful in for instance free legal advice sessions. In that case, we need to become better at informing about our services. We have already had discussions about how we can work better on questions related to Islamophobia and discrimination. Also, I know by experience that reporting discrimination can be painstaking and daunting, which can make it difficult for an already vulnerable group to call attention to ill-treatment."¹⁰⁶

Other anti-discrimination offices underscore that working with the issue of under-reporting can be a question of relevant information not reaching the groups who risk being discriminated. The informant at Malmö mot Diskriminering states that under-reporting could be the result of the victims not always knowing where to turn to. For Malmö Mot Diskriminering, this can be a question of making the antidiscrimination office more available:

"We would need to reach out more to our target groups both in Malmö, but perhaps above all, outside Malmö. Our experience is that many do not know where to turn if they suffer discrimination and we would like to work more to spread relevant information about our work to vulnerable groups."

However, being more available is a question of resources, according to the informant at MmD:

"But then we also need more resources in order to receive and investigate / push more cases. Our experience tells us that when we often work more outward and

¹⁰³ See Table 7, p. 114 in Integrationsverket (2006). Rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – Antisemitism och islamofobi 2005. Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2006:02.

¹⁰⁴ See p. 114-115 in Integrationsverket (2006). Rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – Antisemitism och islamofobi 2005. Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2006:02

¹⁰⁵ See p. 66 in Integrationsverket (2006). Rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – Antisemitism och islamofobi 2005. Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2006:02

¹⁰⁶ Phone interview, December, 9 2015

move ourselves to public meeting places, outside in residential areas for instance, we often come in contact with more women.”

As for Byrån För Lika Rättigheter, the issue of under-reporting continues to exist. The informant at BFLR sees a pattern regarding the notifiers that could explain the reasons for under-reporting. Mainly it is a question of lack of time but also a question of fear as one is uncertain of the consequences that might follow if one would decide to report the experience of discrimination:

“Many times in cases involving women with a so called foreign background, whether it is Muslim women or not, I notice two things. Partly it is the question of time. Some are uncertain about the process in itself, they wonder how will this work. How should I go on about this? And they often ask themselves how much is this going to take of my time? There is already so much to do with work, family and children, if they have children that is. They basically say that they don’t have the time to pursue a discrimination matter.”¹⁰⁷

Another pattern that the informant at BFLR has seen in her case work is that a fear of repercussions seems to exist amongst those who have experienced discrimination:

“And above all, I sense that the person does not want to be in any trouble. The women who contact us can be apologetic towards us when they call. They do not want to be a burden. And they fear that there will be consequences. There is talk of a ‘dot’, and women have expressed that they do not want to get a speck from their employer as this could mean difficulties getting a new job, or keeping the job they already have. These are some concerns that are expressed by women we have come in contact with.”¹⁰⁸

In conclusion the question of under-reporting engages many of the stakeholders who work with anti-discrimination related questions. The reasons for under-reporting are hard to determine. The case-workers’ experiences indicate that under-reporting can be a result of the fact that those who feel discriminated against might fear repercussions by employers. It could also be a question of the anti-discrimination offices’ availability or lack of information regarding where to turn to if one feels discriminated against. These are issues that can be solved or at least improved, if only the anti-discrimination offices were given the needed resources to tackle them, according to the informants.

3.3 Legislation, policies and case law

3.1.2 Descriptive overview

Prohibition of discrimination is regulated in two provisions in Swedish law. Protection against discrimination is included in the Penal Code Chapter 16 § 9. This type of crime can lead to a fine or imprisonment and is reported to the police. In addition, unlawful discrimination can also, beyond discrimination, be a hate crime. The second regulation related to discrimination in Swedish law is the protection against civil discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslagen 2008: 567).

¹⁰⁷ Phone interview, December 1, 2015

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

The current Anti-Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslagen 2008:567)¹⁰⁹ entered into force on 1 January 2009.¹¹⁰ The new Discrimination Act, at the time, replaced the previous seven pieces of legislation on discrimination. Along with this, two new discrimination grounds were introduced; discrimination on the grounds of age and transgender identity or expression. The Anti-Discrimination Act, which is inspired by, and designed in accordance with a number of EU directives¹¹¹, was extended to new areas; namely public employment, military service as well as civilian service, all training activities, public meetings and public events. The Act also includes prohibition of discrimination against interns and temporary or borrowed labour.¹¹²

In short, the prohibition of discrimination applies in three main areas: employment, education and community life.¹¹³

3.1.3 Level of implementation of the EU legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment and any EU initiatives/measures implemented at the national level

Rules prohibiting ethnic discrimination, and the promotion of equal opportunities and equal treatment in public operation, existed in the Swedish Constitution before the accession to for instance the EEA Agreement. Nevertheless, following the implementation of the Race Equality and the Working Life Directives, Swedish anti-discrimination law became more closely connected with the EU's principle of equal treatment.¹¹⁴

In 2002 the government set up a parliamentary committee whose main task was to consider the possibility of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that would cover several or all grounds of discrimination and all sectors of society in one law. The findings of the assigned task were presented in "The state's public inquiries A coherent discrimination legislation" [SOU 2006:22 En sammanhållen diskrimineringslagstiftning].¹¹⁵ For instance, the provision's purpose in § 4 was changed from "promote ethnic diversity" to "promote equal rights and opportunities". The law was revised in 2005 and 2006. The prohibition of discrimination now includes the entire recruitment process and also the management and distribution of work, termination, resignation or other similar restrictive measures against an employee.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Diskrimineringslag 2008:567. Accessed November 7, 2015. <https://lagen.nu/2008:567>; Diskrimineringslagen 2008:567. Accessed November 7, 2015. <http://www.do.se/lag-och-ratt/diskrimineringslagen/>

¹¹⁰ Svensk Författningssamling (Swedish Code of Statutes 2008:567). Accessed November 7, 2015. [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567/](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567/.). A

¹¹¹ See section 3.2.2 "Level of implementation of the EU legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment and any EU initiatives/measures implemented at the national level".

¹¹² Fact Sheet: New Anti-discrimination legislation. Government Offices of Sweden. Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. 2009. Accessed November 7, 2015. <http://www.government.se/contentassets/fdd977b5d2ba43459ab3c02fd7e99d5b/fact-sheet-new-anti-discrimination-legislation-and-a-new-agency-the-equality-ombudsman>

¹¹³ Phone-interview, Eva Nikell,

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The state's public inquiries 2006:22 *A coherent discrimination legislation* [SOU 2006:22 En sammanhållen diskrimineringslagstiftning] Part 1 and 2. Accessed November 9, 11, 17, 2015.

<http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/3cf2d71bb06d4bc894918aefaa24d1b3/en-sammanhallen-diskrimineringslagstiftning-missiv-t.o.m.-kapitel-8;> http://fpes.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/disk_kap9-16.pdf

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

When the Anti-Discrimination Act replaced the seven previous anti-discrimination legislations, the Equal Treatment Directive (Directive 76/207 / EEC, as amended by Directive 2002 / 73 / EC, the current Directive 2006/54 / EC), the Racial Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43 / EC) and the Equality Directive (Directive 2000/78 / EC) were finally transposed into Swedish law.

This means that the Anti-Discrimination Act contains prohibitions of discrimination that apply to areas such as working life, educational activities, labour market policy activities, employment services not under public contract, starting or running a business, professional recognition, membership of certain organisations, goods, services and housing, meetings and public events, health and medical care, social services, social insurance, unemployment insurance, financial support for studies as well as public employment.¹¹⁷

3.4 Case studies and examples

3.4.1 Media

In 2002 a Muslim woman wearing the headscarf was asked to host the programme Mosaik on the Public Service Television (SVT). She accepted this offer. It turned out, however, that the offer was not anchored with management, who announced that she was welcome as a presenter if she took off her headscarf. The woman declined the offer and the woman was instead offered a position as a reporter at Mosaik. SVT's management, through Hans Hernborn, then director of SVT programmes secretariat, stated that the headscarf was in direct conflict with the public service assignment and argued that the headscarf suggests lack of impartiality.¹¹⁸

As the head of Swedish Television's Programme Secretariat implied that the headscarf suggests bias and that the public service mandate requires employees to be neutral in terms of both politics and religion, the case made national news. Despite the woman not reporting the case to the Equality Ombudsman, the Ombudsman was asked to comment. The Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination at the time, Margareta Wadstein, stated that if the woman was declined the position as a presenter because she wears a headscarf as an expression of her religion, this could be considered as a violation of the law.¹¹⁹

The issue of representation and discrimination within the media in relation to Muslim women has been addressed by the Network Swedish Muslims in Cooperation. Public Service's stance on whether or not Muslim women wearing the headscarf can be news presenters, had not changed at all by 2013, when the issue was raised in the Network

¹¹⁷ Fact Sheet: New Anti-discrimination legislation. Government Offices of Sweden. Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. 2009. Accessed November 7, 2015.

<http://www.government.se/contentassets/fdd977b5d2ba43459ab3c02fd7e99d5b/fact-sheet-new-anti-discrimination-legislation-and-a-new-agency-the-equality-ombudsman>

¹¹⁸ "Slöja hindrar kvinna från att bli programledare – Headscarf hinders woman from becoming program hostess". Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=147268>

¹¹⁹ "Journalist med slöja nekas jobb på SVT – Journalist with headscarf denied job at SVT" Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=147377>

Swedish Muslims in Cooperation's alternative report to the United Nations.¹²⁰ The Swedish Muslims in Cooperation have stressed that the public service stance on banning religious symbols is not consistent with the principles of religious freedom. The Network has argued that the stance affects Muslim women's chances of employability and enhances the discrimination of a segment of the population.¹²¹ Further, the network stressed that this stance could be seen as incompatible with public service goals of becoming a more diverse institution.¹²²

The issue of diversity in the media has been revived as a result of the latest report from *Rättviseförmedlingen – Equalizers*.¹²³ Women and individuals of non-Nordic background are significantly under-represented in Swedish news media today, according to Seher Yilmaz, from *Rättviseförmedlingen – Equalizers*.¹²⁴ Only 9.1% of foreign-born people, or as stated in the report "people of non-Nordic background", are represented, despite the fact that this population group amounts to 18% of Sweden's population.¹²⁵

Yilmaz stressed that the report does not address representation on the grounds of religion. However, a conclusion that one can draw from the results, according to Yilmaz, is that the chances of being seen and heard in the Swedish media if one is woman, with a non-Nordic background and Muslim, are slim.¹²⁶

The way in which Muslim women are portrayed when they are in fact seen in the media, was a topic of discussion in the focus-group interviews for this report in Gothenburg and Stockholm.¹²⁷ According to the interviewees, the existing narrative on Muslim women in the Swedish media is one full of stereotypes. One reoccurring narrative about Muslim women is that they are oppressed, a notion that is reinforced by the one-sided narrative about the headscarf.¹²⁸

Muslim women's portrayal in the media is also discussed in the Equality Ombudsman's report on "Islam, Muslims and the media".¹²⁹ The report concludes that the desire to provide a more nuanced picture or narrative of Muslim women, risks reinforcing stereotypes. When Muslim women and girls were portrayed, it occurred most often through direct or indirect contrast to the expected. Media frequently convey the recurring idea of the strong Muslim woman despite her surroundings and the idea that it is remarkable and surprising that a Muslim woman has agency.¹³⁰

¹²⁰ SVT får skarp kritik för "slöjförbud" i rutan. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.svt.se/kultur/svt-far-kritik-for-forbud-mot-huvudduk>

¹²¹ Sabuni, Kitimbwa. 2013. Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network Alternative Report. Stockholm.

¹²² SVT får skarp kritik för "slöjförbud" i rutan. Accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.svt.se/kultur/svt-far-kritik-for-forbud-mot-huvudduk>

¹²³ Rättviseförmedlingen. 2015. Rättvisaren. Stockholm.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Rättviseförmedlingen. 2015. Rättvisaren. Stockholm

¹²⁶ Phone-interview December 18, 2015

¹²⁷ Focus-group interview Gothenburg January 5, 2016. Focus-group interview Stockholm, January 6, 2016.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2015. Representationer, Stereotype och Nyhetsvärdering: Rapport från Medieanalys om Representationer av Muslimer i Svenska Nyheter. Rapport 2015:1. Ödeshög: Danagård

¹³⁰ Ibid.

3.4.2 Political spaces

Muslims' involvement in politics in Sweden has throughout the years proven in many ways to be a controversial issue. Being a practicing Muslim and a politician means that one is scrutinised and questioned.¹³¹ When Sweden appointed its first Muslim minister, Mehmet Kaplan, from the Green Party, the party's inboxes were "flooded by hate mail".¹³²

Precise statistics on individuals who are Muslim women and have been elected to local city councils or national Parliament do not exist. Throughout the years however, the few openly Muslim women who have made references to their Muslim background, have stirred debate by putting forward arguments with Islamophobic tendencies. The former Minister of Integration, Nyamko Sabuni (Liberal Party), called for the closure of Islamic independent schools. Additionally, her suggestions that young women should have a gynaecological test to see whether they have been victims of female circumcision, have also been criticised. Nalin Pekgul, previously representative for the Social Democrats in the national Parliament, has made her share of accusations towards Muslim organisations by classifying them as "Islamists".

Mariam Osman Sherifay on the other hand, former representative for the Social Democrats,¹³³ has been vocal on questions related to Islamophobia. She was one of the Swedish politicians who were at the forefront when the Swedish Democrats published an article stating that Muslims should be considered the biggest foreign threat since World War II.¹³⁴

When Mariam Osman Sherifay moved on to working politically in her local council, she was in the public eye for a brief moment as a result of receiving an anonymous death threat. She was called "muslim n*****" and a "terrorist lover". In an interview about politicians' experiences of threats, Sherifay conveyed that she felt distressed about being attacked¹³⁵:

"I cried. It felt like someone undressed me. This person did not attack me based on my political views, but because of how I look, my skin colour, gender and faith."¹³⁶

She reported the incident to the police. The person responsible for the threats signed the emails containing the threats with both his first and last name, which made it easier for the district court to convict him and to compensate Mariam.¹³⁷

3.4.3 Court cases

3.4.3.1 The headscarf

A woman sent in an inquiry that she was looking for work to a hotel. At a meeting with the recruiting manager, it was made clear to the woman that she would not be able to get work

¹³¹ Larsson, Göran. 2014. Islam och Muslimer i Sverige: En Kunskapsöversikt. No. 4. Stockholm: Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund (SST)

¹³² MP får hatmejl om muslimsk minister. Accessed November 21, 2015. <http://www.dagen.se/mp-f%C3%A5r-hatmejl-om-muslimsk-minister-1.275068>

¹³³ Mariam Osman Sherifay was a Member of the Parliament for the Social Democrats between 2002-2006.

¹³⁴ Gardell, Mattias. 2010. Islamofobi. Stockholm: Leopard Förlag

¹³⁵ Många politiker utsatta för hot. Accessed November 21, 2015.

<http://arkiv.mitti.se:4711/2008/36/sundbyberg/MISU05A20080902SUV1.pdf>

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

as a cleaner if she wore the headscarf. The reason given was that the hotel's dress code did not permit 'headgear' for employees who would come in contact with the hotel's guests.

The Equality Ombudsman received a complaint from the woman on 8 August 2012. The Equality Ombudsman chose to sue the hotel for indirect discrimination associated with the job applicant's ethnic affiliation to the Labour Court. The Equality Ombudsman requested that the hotel pay SEK 50 000 in compensation for discrimination to the woman. Because the hotel admitted that they discriminated against the woman the parties reached a settlement, in which the hotel paid 50 000 in compensation for discrimination to the woman.¹³⁸

A high school student who had been to an introductory meeting before the summer training was subsequently denied internship at a hairdresser. The girl visited the salon and café along with an officer from the school. A hairdresser who rented part of the salon explained that the girl could not conduct her internship if she wore the headscarf, because it was not compatible with the salon's dress policy.

The Equality Ombudsman sued the employer and the case was brought to the Labour Court (AD) for discrimination associated with the girl's religion and gender. But AD stated in the verdict that the Ombudsman failed to demonstrate that the hairdresser who rejected the girl had the right to act on the employer's behalf. AD dismissed the case, as well as the Equality Ombudsman's action for compensation for discrimination. The Equality Ombudsman was sentenced to pay the salon and the café for litigation costs.¹³⁹

In the winter of 2007, two Muslim women employees at the gym Friskis and Sveltis in Malmö, reported that their manager had made negative comments about their choice to wear a headscarf, fast and not eat pork. The women conveyed that they had also been told that they could not find permanent employment as long as they wore headscarves. According to the women, the manager wanted to look under their headscarve and suggested that they could just show their hair to him.¹⁴⁰

The Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination (Omed, at the time), received a complaint from the women on 27 February 2008. In the complaint the women conveyed that their boss had repeatedly subjected them to harassment based on the grounds of religion and gender. Omed brought a lawsuit against the gym Friskis and Sveltis. The Labour Court (AD) came to the conclusion that it could not be proven that the manager had subjected the women to discrimination and harassment associated with religion. The court also believed that the women had not made sufficiently clear to the manager that they felt offended by his comments. Although the manager was tactless, it was meant as a joke, according to AD.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ansökan om stämning. Accessed November 23, 2015; March 18 2016;

<http://www.do.se/globalassets/diskrimineringsarenen/stamning/stamning-hotell-anm-2013235.pdf>

¹³⁹ Mål nr A 68/10. Accessed November 23, 24, 2015; March 18 2016.

<http://www.do.se/globalassets/diskrimineringsarenen/arbetsdomstol/dom-arbetsdomstol-frisersalong-anm-20091618.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Mål nr A 219/08. Accessed November 23, 24, 2015; March 18, 2016.

<http://www.do.se/globalassets/diskrimineringsarenen/arbetsdomstol/dom-arbetsdomstol-friskis-sveltis-omed-20081762.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

3.4.3.2 Current cases

At the moment the Equality Ombudsman has a case involving a Muslim woman studying to become a dentist. During 2013 and in early 2014 the woman had a number of meetings with representatives of the Karolinska Institute, including the infection control officer, clinic manager, clinic coordinator and director of studies. She stated that she could not wear short-sleeved work clothes for religious reasons and that she instead was prepared to wear disposable covers for the arms in clinical practice.¹⁴²

In February 2014 Karolinska Institutet (KI) decided to maintain the requirement, that the dental students in the dentistry programme at Karolinska Institute have to wear a short-sleeved uniform when working with patients. The woman made a complaint to the Equality Ombudsman on 26 February 2014.¹⁴³

The Equality Ombudsman has investigated the incident and believes that it should be possible to adapt the clothing rules. The Equality Ombudsman believes that KI's stance means that students with certain religious beliefs will be affected in an overly restrictive manner and that KI is thereby guilty of indirect discrimination. The Equality Ombudsman has sued KI and asked for compensation of 60,000kr for discrimination to the woman.¹⁴⁴

Malmö mot Diskriminering currently has two court cases involving Muslim women who have reported experiences of discrimination on the ground of religion. Both cases involve the health care sector, and one is related to the issue of disposable sleeves in clinical practice. The lawyer in charge of the case explains that requiring students to wear the short-sleeved dress code is a procedure that appears neutral but which in practice means that women who for religious reasons want to cover their arms, are not allowed to do so. Not allowing disposable sleeves is not a necessary or appropriate measure to achieve the objective of ensuring good hygiene in clinical practice, according to the informant at Malmö mot Diskriminering. In the current lawsuit brought forward by Malmö mot Diskriminering, it is stressed that this means that the complainant is subjected to unfair treatment that has a direct connection with discrimination on the ground of religion. According to the informant at Malmö mot Diskriminering, the issue with disposable sleeves in clinical practice is full of mixed messages that are often to the Muslim women's disadvantage:

*"The social board sends out mixed messages and puts Muslim women in a situation where the guidelines are unclear and where it is up to the individual employer to make an interpretation. An interpretation that often leads to the disadvantage of Muslim women."*¹⁴⁵

3.4.4 'Human stories'

In the interviews with Muslim women for the purpose of this report, the stories of discrimination experienced by the women vary from direct to indirect discrimination. The negative treatment that the women in the report report, comes from both employers, colleagues, as well as clients. In this section Muslim women's stories of discrimination are presented.

¹⁴² Lawsuit, ANM 2014/1987 handling 9. Accessed November 25, 2015, March 18, 19, 2016.

<http://www.do.se/globalassets/diskrimineringsarenanden/stamning/stamning-karolinska-institutet-anm-20141987.pdf>

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Email correspondence with Malmö mot Diskriminering, December 4, 2015.

3.4.4.1 *Colleagues overstepping their boundaries*

A majority of the women interviewed, 26 out of 45, have experienced negative treatment from colleagues. The encounters are connected to comments with regard to their headscarf. They are described as micro-aggressions that have become normalised, especially around the lunch table in the workplace. The women describe the encounters as an invasion of their privacy, and report that these encounters have often led to feelings of anxiety.

Aaliyah explains that her experiences of discrimination in the workplace are related to colleagues using racist and offensive expressions, along with snide remarks or questions relating to her wearing the headscarf:

“I have not experienced any discrimination by my employer, not that I can recall. But I have experienced discrimination by colleagues. My former colleagues have used racist and offensive expressions such as the n-word, others have questioned my choice of wearing the headscarf, while others have reproduced stereotypes that my parents would probably force me to marry against my will. There are also colleagues who have tried to make me into this suspicious subject by associating me with people travelling to Syria.” - Aaliyah¹⁴⁶

Samira notes that the headscarf always seems to become a topic of discussion, and gives an example of how one of her colleagues was especially invasive with his questions regarding her headscarf:

“This colleague must have asked me about my choice to wear the hijab so many times that I have stopped counting. He seems to find a way to always make the conversation about who has made me wear the headscarf, insinuating that I could possibly not have made that choice on my own.” - Samira¹⁴⁷

The issue of having to explain the choice of wearing the headscarf is also brought up by Ruqiya:

“I have had the question of who has forced me to wear the headscarf asked to me countless times. Last time it happened was when I was showing my wedding pictures to my colleagues. I was questioned about whether or not I had chosen my husband of my own accord or not, along with ‘Did he force you to wear the headscarf?’ And it’s such a provocative question because obviously this person and I had worked together for more than three years, and they knew I wore the headscarf long before I even met my husband.” - Ruqiya¹⁴⁸

3.4.4.2 *Presumed incompetence*

Muslim women in decision making/investigative positions relate experiences of customers and clients who demand that they be replaced. The women explain that the customers/clients assume that they (the Muslim women) are less competent than white colleagues. The degree of abuse from clients and customers vary:

“One of the clients had written to my boss that she did not trust that I could be impartial in her case given that I probably come from a culture where women are hated. My boss handled it well, however, this kind of behaviour strikes a nerve with me; how can I be disqualified on the basis of racist stereotypes and not my actions?” - Mona¹⁴⁹

It was the first introductory meeting with the client. I noticed pretty soon that something was not quite right. The client refused to look me in the eyes and would only keep eye contact with the

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Aaliyah, November 28, 2015

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Samira, December 17, 2015

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Ruqiya, January 4, 2016

¹⁴⁹ Interview Mona, January 2, 2016

interpreter. We were going to draw up an action-plan which meant I had to ask questions related to the clients' background. The first response to my question about her work experience was 'I'm sick. I'm disgusted just by looking at you.' In conversation with the interpreter afterwards, I was told she said a lot of derogatory things which the interpreter decided not to interpret out of respect for me." - Farhiya¹⁵⁰

3.4.4.3 Potential employers making faith a problem

Radia, Hajer and Rahma report that they have experienced discrimination in the recruitment process when applying for different jobs:

"I've experienced discrimination when I go to interviews. Questions about my origin and faith appear frequently as a topic for discussion. Since I don't understand how these questions are relevant for the position as shop assistant, I shut them down immediately. Not surprisingly, I am often told that I have not gone on to the next part of the procedure for potential employment." - Radia¹⁵¹

"I've had potential employers ask me flat out if I would consider taking off the hijab for the vacancy." - Sumeya¹⁵²

"When I sat down for the interview for the shop assistant vacancy at the optician the employer's first question, which was not really a question, but rather a statement, was: 'just so you know, you cannot pray here'. No questions about my qualifications were asked, and the interview was over before I knew it. It was bizarre." - Rahma¹⁵³

3.4.4.4 Hiding one's Muslim identity

Some of the interviewees touch upon different strategies in handling discrimination. Stories of deciding not to disclose one's religious identities emerge.

The circumstances that led Idil to keep her religious identity a secret, have to do with fear of discrimination as well as fear of having her competence suddenly questioned:

"I have worked with anti-discrimination and human rights issues for nearly 10 years. I know, it is such a paradox. I have worked on these issues in order for people to be able to be who they are, but at the same time, I have not managed to be myself, because I have seen how discrimination makes people vulnerable. I understood that it would not benefit me to disclose my religious identity. I was afraid to have my competence and skills questioned. You know, questions of whether or not I am competent to work with gender equality or LGBT rights." - Idil

However, not disclosing this piece of information has proven difficult:

"For many years, I kept quiet at work about the fact that I am a Muslim. I mean, this was possible in my case, you know, because I am white and a convert, and did not wear the headscarf for example (...) but it finally became unbearable." - Idil¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Interview Farhiya, January 2, 2016

¹⁵¹ Interview Radia, November 29, 2015

¹⁵² Interview Sumeya, December 4, 2015

¹⁵³ Interview Rahma, December 18, 2015

¹⁵⁴ Phone interview with Idil, December 13, 2015

SECTION 4: Racist violence and speech

4.1 Formal data

Since 1976 the National Crime Prevention Council (Brottsförebyggande rådet – BRÅ) has been responsible for producing data and disseminating knowledge related to crime and crime prevention work¹⁵⁵. The National Crime Prevention Council (NPC) is responsible for collecting data on hate crime data based on information from the police and the prosecution authority. Since BRÅ was assigned the task of presenting hate crime related statistics in 2006¹⁵⁶, hate crimes with Islamophobic motives have been documented as a separate category in official statistics. The NPC presents its report on hate crimes annually. The report's statistics are always based on the number of incidents reported to the police that are identified as having a hate motivation during the previous year. Crimes that are never reported are not included in the statistics. This is an important factor to keep in mind when interpreting these statistics. For this reason, BRÅ underscores the importance of its annual safety survey which deals with statistics on self-reported exposure to hate crime¹⁵⁷ and vulnerability.

In 2014 about 6,270 hate crimes were reported to the police. It is the highest level of reported hate crimes since 2006. This means that the reported amount of hate crimes was 14% more compared to 2013 (BRÅ annual report, 2015). In 2013 about 35,000 people were affected by 67,000 anti-religious hate crimes. The total amount of hate crimes with an Islamophobic motive was 492 cases.

Of the reported hate crimes 40% consisted of unlawful threats or harassment directed at a person, but without any physical contact occurring. Crimes via the Internet accounted for 21% of the reports, and in 15% of cases the person affected was exposed to physical violence.

Westerberg stresses that it is difficult to determine the exact amount of women who have been victims of anti-religious hate crimes as the statistics on hate crimes presented by BRÅ are not broken down by gender:

“As for the question of anti-religious motivated hate crimes and gender distribution, we usually refer to the National Safety Survey (Nationella Trygghetsundersökningen – NTU). Between the years 2011-2013, 62% of the population who have experiences of anti-religious hate crimes were female and 38% were male.” (Sara Westerberg, phone interview, 20151112)

Victimisation surveys which are conducted annually are used to measure unreported crime. The important difference between hate crime statistics and NTU is that hate crime statistics are based on reports received in 2014 with the identified hate crime motive (identified by BRÅ), while the NTU is based on self-reported victimisation in 2013 through interviews with 12 500 people in Sweden. Therefore, the number of hate crimes presented in the studies can

¹⁵⁵The National Crime Prevention Council (BRÅ) is a Swedish State administration, which comes under the Ministry of Justice and has the task of contributing to the development of knowledge within criminal policy matters and to promote crime prevention. More information on BRÅ is available here:

<https://www.bra.se/bra/bra-in-english/home/about-bra.html>

¹⁵⁶ Until 2006 this was a responsibility of the Swedish National Security Police

¹⁵⁷ Phone interview with Sara Westerberg at BRÅ, 2015-11-12

differ. The reports cannot be compared straight off but should be seen as complementary to each other (BRÅ, annual report 2014:32).

The most common scene for unlawful threat / harassment was a public place, followed by, or adjacent to the victim's own home. In almost half the cases the perpetrator is unknown. An example of an assault with Islamophobic motive according to BRÅ, could manifest itself in the following manner:

Nadia reports that a gang of young boys stood outside her house and shouted "terrorist" and "ghost". Nadia feels offended when she thinks it's because she wears a headscarf and she is the only Muslim in the residential area. She thinks it's the same boys who on previous occasions have rang her doorbell and then ran away (BRÅ, 2015:82).

The issue of assaults with Islamophobic motives directed at individuals is a concern for Muslim organisations. In the spring of 2014, the National Board for State Aid to Religious Communities (SST) was commissioned by the Ministry of Employment to map xenophobic acts against religious communities.¹⁵⁸ In the mapping, the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, along with members from the Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu communities were included.¹⁵⁹ As a result of the violence and threats directed against religious communities, individuals and groups are said to be hindered in their constitutional right to religious practice (Ministry of Employment, 2014:2).

The representatives of Muslim organisations reported that Islamophobic acts and threats are very common, particularly against women wearing the veil.¹⁶⁰ The organisations further attest to experiences of young women getting in touch with the mosques to get theological guidance on matters concerning the headscarf. The theological guidance sought by the women revolved around questions about interpretations of Islam justifying not wearing a veil, as the women explained that this choice meant increased difficulty and vulnerability in everyday life (SST, 2014:6). Muslim women's vulnerability has also been highlighted in SST's presentation of the assigned government commission "safeguard democracy" [Värna demokratin]:

"The situation is particularly serious for Muslim women. On top of the general lack of safety that a lot of women can relate to, many Muslim women express being at risk for a particular sort of discrimination, especially if they wear a headscarf.... It can also result in angry comments at the swimming pool or confrontation on the street." (SST, 2015:35)

¹⁵⁸ Mission to map xenophobic acts against religious communities [Uppdrag att kartlägga främlingsfientliga handlingar mot trossamfund]. The government commission report entails mapping of xenophobic acts against both the members of religious communities as well as the communities' premises. The report is part of efforts to prevent and counteract xenophobia and the purpose is according to the government commission to uphold the principle of equality of all people. More information is available here: <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/064183f679da4232b3f4d1d63145c6e5/uppdrag-att-kartlagga-framlingsfientliga-handlingar-mot-trossamfund-a20141470disk>

¹⁵⁹ A full list of representatives from the religious communities who took part in the mapping can be found in the SST's report on pages 56-57 and 59-60. The full report "Xenophobic acts towards religious communities. A survey of religious groups and individuals vulnerability in Sweden in 2014 [Främlingsfientliga handlingar mot trossamfund. En kartläggning av religiösa grupper och individers utsatthet i Sverige 2014] is available here: http://www.sst.a.se/download/18.7ff7efd4149a34542b72544/1415786732240/ffattacker_samanf+A4.pdf

¹⁶⁰ The representatives who reported this are from FIFS, SMF, ISS and SIF.

In general, official data specifically addressing or shedding light on Muslim women's vulnerability to racist violence are difficult to come across in a Swedish context. Relevant data on the issue are of qualitative nature, and stretch at least 7-15 years back in time.

The racist violence Muslim women experience has been addressed in interview studies with both religious organisations, as well as Muslim women. Muslim women have expressed in the conducted reports that they believe they are treated less favourably in public places and on the streets because they wear the headscarf. The women are perceived as bearers of geopolitical events and representatives of negative stereotypes of Muslims as a group (Larsson, 2003). The negative treatment of women in public places manifests itself in verbal abuse:

“It is on the streets and in public places that the majority of the women experience negative treatment. And some of the women in the survey testify that they have been called "terrorist" and other offensive expressions.” (Englund, 2006:69)

Muslim women recount experiences of intimidation, harassment and physical abuse as part of daily life. The violence directed at the women can be seen as both structural and symbolical. The humiliation and violence are connected to their clothing (Sixtensson 2009; Listerborn 2011; Englund 2006).

The nature of the vulnerability manifests itself on different levels. The verbal violations consist of epithets or snide comments and glances. The violations range from strangers shoving the women to spitting, trying to pull off the veil or having complete strangers let dogs on them (Sixtensson 2009; Listerborn 2011).

What is striking in the stories of the women is how this vulnerability is a part of the women's daily lives - a kind of everyday racism, as Listerborn highlights - and the normalisation of the vulnerability to attacks. As a result of the normalisation of the violence women make constant risk assessments in order to avoid harassment. This is partly done by adapting one's movement in general and avoiding moving around in specific areas of certain cities. This vulnerability is said to be connected to women wearing the veil, which makes it easier to identify them as Muslims (Englund, 2006:56).¹⁶¹

The stories also confirm that the nature of the violence started with the women's choice to wear the veil. Two of the women in Sixtensson's study were Swedish converts and attest to the clear differences in treatment in the public places, despite their 'Swedish' background. With that said, the intersection of race and religion in the experiences of violence is complicated and not easily defined, as factors of race, religion and gender are intertwined in experiences of racist violence (Sixtensson, 2009).

4.1.1 Historical trends

According to BRÅ, The development of racist violence directed at Muslim women is difficult to explain or determine. The small amount of earlier research dealing with Islamophobia and Muslim women's experiences highlights that many Muslim women experienced September 11, 2001, as the beginning of a clear increase in negative attitudes towards them (Englund, 2006:69, Larsson 2003).

¹⁶¹ See also Englund 2006:63

4.2 Informal data

In 2008 Mehrako Masifi, human rights activist and academic with a background in human rights and international relations, conducted a survey on hate crime experiences among young Muslims. The results which she presented were based on the 250 people who responded to the survey; over 90% of the participants had been victims of hate crimes due to their faith, about 70% of the victims were young women wearing the headscarf or the veil. Of the 250 who took part in the survey, only three people had reported the incident to the police. According to Masifi, the official statistics on hate crimes are far from an accurate reflection of reality. Out of 250 people only 247 people reported their experiences of hate crime, which according to Masifi is an indication that these experiences are invisible in the statistics, as these unreported assaults are not registered and have officially not taken place. Having heard many stories of discrimination and hate crime, Johanna Lihagen, with a background as a prison imam, decided there was a need to share the stories of Muslim women. This resulted in the Instagram account "#Muslimskvinna" (Muslim woman) which today has around 12,500 followers (Lihagen, 2014).¹⁶² Lihagen, who was inspired by the Instagram account "SvartKvinna" (BlackWoman), initiated her own account with the purpose of displaying Muslim women's experiences of discrimination, racist violence as well as general stories relating to what it is like to be a Muslim woman in Sweden.¹⁶³

Lihagen has in interviews expressed that the violations have become worse. Lihagen notes that most of the attacks are by men in their 50s. Her own experiences of assault have occurred in central public locations and on the tram. As for the stories sent in by private people, and anonymously publicised on the Instagram account Muslimskvinna, the nature of the racist violence varies. Women share stories of experiences of racist slurs, physical assault and negative treatment from the police.

Expressen¹⁶⁴ - Hatet Mot Slöjan [The Hate Against the Headscarf]

The Swedish newspaper *Expressen* ran the series "Hate against the headscarf", during spring 2015, featuring five Muslim women Ramla, Amal, Fatima, Halima and Sabrin. The women in the series, all wearing the headscarf, share stories of being called "easter crone", "oppressed", "Muslim pussy". In the series they give examples of how they are marked as different: people, completely unknown to them, tell them to "return to where they come from". The women share experiences of being spat at in the face and having their headscarf forcefully removed as well as incidents of physical abuse. Also, in the series, with Ramla and Halima's stories, the experiences of being identified as Black, woman and Muslim become especially clear. These attacks are usually coupled with racist slurs in reference to their skin colour.

¹⁶² An interview with Lihagen about #Muslimskvinna can be found here: <http://goteborg.etc.se/inrikes/oppn-islamofobi-har-blivit-mer-accepterad>.

¹⁶³ The Instagram account is available here: <https://www.instagram.com/muslimskvinna/>

¹⁶⁴ Expressen is a Swedish national newspaper.

4.3 Under-reporting

Hate crimes are likely to be among the most under-reported offences.¹⁶⁵ The issue of under-reporting in the case of Muslim women has been addressed in the few official studies related to Muslim women and experiences of racist violence. Despite the women sharing experiences of being subjected to threats and harassment in public spaces, few chose to report the harassment. The reasons given are manifold. In summary these include lack of trust towards the legal system, fear of reprisals, the fact that reporting in itself is a tiring and time-consuming process, as well as lack of knowledge about the legal means available.

Göran Stanton, investigator at Stockholm's hate crime group, explains that the difficulty in investigating hate crimes lies in the fact that they are not sufficiently prioritised. Previously the re-reporting of hate crimes was a priority for the National Security Police. Instead, more focus has been placed on re-reporting offences of violence in close relationships, crime in public spaces and residential burglary. Stanton states that he also believes many people do not report everyday racist slurs and violence. He believes that it is simply because it has become a normal experience for the victims.¹⁶⁶

The reasons for unreported cases vary and may be due to several factors. According to BRÅ's annual report, it could be because the person does not define whatever they suffered as a hate crime. Additional reasons may be that they see the crime as mild, but it may also be that the targeted person harbours feelings of shame for having been exposed, or that reporting will not lead to the preferred outcome in terms of a criminal conviction. Another listed explanation for under-reporting is that the presented statistics do not necessarily reflect the amount of reported cases of hate crimes due to administrative shortcomings by the police or investigators at BRÅ.¹⁶⁷

The Muslim women in this study have different experiences of hate crimes. Out of the 45 women, only 10 have decided to report incidents of verbal and physical assault. For some, the incidents of verbal assault are so many, that reporting every incident is too time-consuming:

“Do you know how many times a day complete strangers can tell me to go home or call me a terrorist? Half of my time would probably be spent on reporting racist comments I receive just travelling to and from work. And for what? Seriously, what are the odds that random racists would be caught for verbally abusing me?” - Leila

“For my part, the verbal attacks have always occurred on the go, by people who I just happen to pass by. It happens like the blink of an eye and before I have the opportunity to even understand what just happened, the culprit is gone. We're talking about a matter of seconds. The process of reporting is long, it's not worth it, and reporting it means living through these moments, over and over again. I don't have that kind of time.” – Sara

¹⁶⁵ BRÅ 2015:24-25

¹⁶⁶ Phone interview, December 12, 2015

¹⁶⁷ This is considered to be an administrative issue: the hate crimes subject is not addressed in free text or free text does not contain words found in the keyword list. If a reported incident is to be included in the statistics, it needs to match the existing criminal codes in the system and be consistent with the National Council for Crime Prevention's definition of hate crimes. Finally, the reported incident must be determined as a hate crime by the responsible investigator at the National Council for Crime Prevention.

“I have both acquaintances, friends and family members who have experienced being told to stop ruining this country, who have been spat at and had their headscarf removed and so on. Not one single case has actually led anywhere. Most of the times that I have been verbally abused, I have had my children with me. I would rather spend the time taking care of my children’s feelings than reporting incidents that will definitely result in nothing and will mean a complete waste of time on my part.” – Kadra

Others express that they have decided not to report because they would rather forget that the incidents of abuse have occurred:

“Obviously... of course, being told at least once a week that I don’t belong here, or being pushed, hearing remarks about how I should take my headscarf off and having no one witnessing, it’s hurtful. Saying this out loud, to someone else, to a police officer who cannot relate, it’s not worth it. I would rather just forget it happened, and that way, I don’t give this stranger the power to humiliate me further.” – Ifrah

“Honestly, I can’t be bothered re-living the complete indifference. A completely full bus of people, including the driver, heard how I was called sandn*****, disgusting with reference to my headscarf, and not one single person reacted or came to my defence. It was so humiliating. I’m not going to put myself through that, you know, retell this, and be met with indifference yet again.” – Fatou

While some state that they understand the importance of reporting incidents of abuse, they explain that they just do not get around to actually reporting it to the police. The reasons for not getting around to reporting the incidents can be:

“I always have the intention to report, but then a lot of other things come in my way. But of course, I understand the importance of reporting these incidents.” - Asha

“I’m not sure why I haven’t reported these accounts of verbal abuse. A couple of years ago I didn’t actually understand that verbal abuse was even seen as a form of hate crime. And today, they are normal elements in my daily life. Basically it’s taking time for me to understand the seriousness of hearing all the disparaging comments.” – Loubna

Sweden has been criticised on numerous occasions for its handling of hate crimes. Racially motivated crime is increasing while the investigations and prosecutions for these crimes are decreasing: "Sweden must ensure that reports of xenophobic and racist hate crimes lead to better investigation, prosecution and punishment. Police across the country should establish special hate crimes units", writes the UN.

In 2014 the investigator for the government commission concerning hate crimes noted the problem of under-reporting of hate crimes in Sweden. The investigator commented on the existence of a culture of silence or normalisation process, which affects people's ability to live and work freely in society.¹⁶⁸

4.4 Legislation, policies and case law

4.4.1 The development of a national legislative framework

At EU level, the Council of Ministers issued in 2008 a Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism by means of criminal law. Under this decision, which

¹⁶⁸ Polisen, utvecklingsavdelningen, Återredovisning av regeringsuppdraget beträffande hatbrott, februari 2015, sid. 4 - Police, Development, Reporting back by the government commission concerning hate crimes, February 2015, p.4

is binding for Member States, states should take measures to ensure that racist and xenophobic motivation is considered an aggravating circumstance, or, alternatively, that the courts could take such motives into account when determining sanctions.¹⁶⁹

A specific bill concerning the adoption of the Framework Decision was not necessary according to the Swedish Government. According to the Ministry of Justice, existing Swedish legislation meets the provisions of the Framework Decision.

The existing Swedish legislation that the Ministry of Justice refers to is the Penal Code, Chapter 29, section 2 (7), in which hate crime/racist crime is outlawed.

To understand the Swedish national legislative framework regarding racially motivated crimes, one can examine the Government Bill 1993/94: 101 "Measures to combat racist crime and ethnic discrimination in employment". The bill is a result of the national public inquiry "Organised racism".¹⁷⁰

In 1994, a few months before the referendum on Sweden's EU membership, an addition to the Penal Code Chapter 29, Section 2, paragraph 7, was introduced under the heading "sharpening of penalty rule". The addition introduced addressed the aggravating circumstances needed to be taken into account in assessing the seriousness of the crime: "if the motive for the crime was to violate a person, ethnic group or other such group of persons because of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or other similar circumstance".

The addition to the Chapter 29, Section 2, Paragraph 7 of the Penal Code was introduced and meant more specifically that racist, xenophobic and homophobic motives would be taken into account as aggravating circumstances when evaluating accountability of an offence. In short, the penal value of a crime should be assessed by whether the motive of the crime affects a person, ethnic group, on the grounds of race, religious belief, colour, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or another similar circumstance. Today this addition is at times referred to as "the hate crime rule".

4.4.2 Level of implementation of the EU legislation

According to national law Sweden has until recently lacked a coherent definition of hate crimes. In 2014, however, the National Police was tasked by the government in consultation with the prosecutor's office and the National Crime Prevention Council (BRÅ), to promote a coherent practical application of the concept. The definition reported in 2015 reads that hate crimes consist of:

- the crime of incitement to racial hatred: the Penal Code Chapter 16. Section 8
- unlawful discrimination: the Penal Code Chapter 16. Section 9,
- as well as all other crimes violating a person, ethnic group or other such group of persons because of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual

¹⁶⁹ European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, 2008

¹⁷⁰ This is the product of the criticism directed at Sweden from the UN committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), due to the fact that Sweden has not criminalized racist organizations.

orientation or another similar circumstance (compare: toughening penalty rule in the Penal Code 29 Chap. 2 §7).¹⁷¹

According to this, a 'hate motive' needs to exist when a crime is committed in order for it to be regarded as an aggravating factor that will lead to a more severe punishment than if this specific motive is lacking. The legislative history of the punishment sharpening is justified in the following words:

*"our social order is based on the fact that all people have an equal value regardless of race, colour and ethnic origin. Racism and similar expressions that manifests themselves in contempt and oppression of vulnerable groups are incompatible with fundamental values and therefore can never be accepted."*¹⁷²

The current Swedish legislation complies with the provisions of the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA. The main provision of the Framework Decision is implemented in the Penal Code, and covers agitation against a national or ethnic group, as well as agitation on the ground of sexual orientation.

Racist violence and other hate crimes are also addressed in other existing legal provisions. For instance, hate speech is forbidden in criminal provisions, and is regulated in the two constitutional laws relating to Freedom of Press (Tryckfrihetsförordningen) and Freedom of Speech (Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen). Hence hate speech is regulated in the Swedish Penal Code Ch 16 paragraph 8.

The Victims' Directive

In December 2010, the European Commission, asked the Council to examine how the legislation related to victims could be improved. Additionally, the Commission was given the task to examine the possibility of creating a comprehensive legal instrument for the protection of victims. The opportunity for the EU to legislate in this area was opened up as the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. On 18 May 2011 the Commission presented a raft of measures to strengthen the rights of crime victims in the EU. The package consisted of three parts, part of which was the proposal for the Victims Directive [COM (2011) 275final]. As a complement to the Commission's package, the Council adopted on 10 June 2011, a resolution for victims' rights, the so-called Budapest Roadmap. In the resolution, the Council concluded, inter alia, that measures should be taken at EU level to strengthen victims' rights and protection of victims.

For the Directive to be transposed, an addition has been made in a Swedish context with regard to the rules on interpretation and translation for a victim in criminal proceedings. If a plaintiff does not speak Swedish, an interpreter should be hired at meetings before the court for instance. Also, if a translation is of significant importance to the aggrieved party to be

¹⁷¹ Polisen, utvecklingsavdelningen, Återredovisning av regeringsuppdraget beträffande hatbrott, februari 2015, sid. 13 - Police, Development, Reporting back by the government commission concerning hate crimes, February 2015, p.13

¹⁷² Prop. 1993/94:101 p. 21-22.

able to exercise their right, the Court should also offer to translate a document or important parts of it.¹⁷³

The Government has also decided on a package of measures as part of the implementation of the Victims' Directive¹⁷⁴. The biggest change that Directive entails is that the police in each case has to make an individual protection assessment to determine if the victim needs special safeguards during the investigation and trial. Furthermore, victims shall be informed about how their case is progressing and which authority is to provide information about the victim's case. Also, the aggrieved party can ask to receive a notification if the offender has been released. Along with this, the victim should as soon as possible receive information about the protective measures and the possibility of alternative accommodation¹⁷⁵.

In order to make referrals of victims to relevant support services or appropriate organisations easier, there is a close cooperation between the police and Victim Support Sweden - Swedish Association for Victim Support, *Brottsofferjourernas Riksförbund* (FRA, 2014:54)¹⁷⁶.

4.5 Case studies and examples

4.5.1 The assault of a pregnant woman in Fagersjö

In 2013, a 20 year old pregnant woman in Fagersjö, a suburb of Stockholm, was violently attacked. According to the woman, she was assaulted by an unknown man. The woman recounted how the man tried to pull off her headscarf. He then, according to the woman, shouted that "those like you should not be here!", before he pounded her head against a car, so hard that she lost consciousness. The case has been on standstill ever since because of lack of evidence, but received nationwide media attention.

4.5.2 The assault of Halima on the bus

Halima, who wears a headscarf, was attacked by an older man on the bus on her way home. She was on the phone with a friend as an older man sat next to her, despite plenty of other available seats. The man demanded she switch her phone off. The man started raising his voice and saying: "*They do not have bags and mobile phones in their countries but here they flash around with it.*" The man, who Halima at first ignored, continued raising his voice and knocked - the phone out of her hand. This led Halima to stand up and shout that he is not allowed to touch her. At that moment, the older man pretended that nothing happened. Suddenly he hit Halima's stomach, kidneys and ribs with his elbow. Someone on the bus intervened and forced the 74-year-old man off the bus.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Directives on strengthening the rights and protection of victims in the EU [Direktiv om stärkta rättigheter och skydd för brottsoffer inom EU]: <http://www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se/nyheter/direktiv-om-starkta-rattigheter-och-skydd-for-brottsoffer-inom-eu>

¹⁷⁴ The amendments and the package apply from 1 November 2015:

<http://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2015/02/malsagandens-rattigheter-starks/>

¹⁷⁵ Directives on strengthening the rights and protection of victims in the EU [Direktiv om stärkta rättigheter och skydd för brottsoffer inom EU]: <http://www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se/nyheter/direktiv-om-starkta-rattigheter-och-skydd-for-brottsoffer-inom-eu>

¹⁷⁶ http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-victims-crime-eu-support_en_0.pdf

¹⁷⁷ "Hate against the veil - Hatet mot slöjan" - <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/hatet-mot-slojan/del-2/>

The man was reported for hate crime, mistreatment, harassment and abuse. In the verdict it was stated that she had been assaulted precisely because of her background. In this case, the man was convicted of assault and the sentence was probation and a fine. As for Halima, she expressed clear disappointment with the sentence, and stated that hate crime is not taken seriously.¹⁷⁸

4.5.3 Several years of harassment of Aisha in Tomelilla

The case of Aisha in Tomelilla has also gained nationwide media attention. Aisha had at the moment when the story was reported, lived in Sweden for a little more than a year. She had come with her young daughter from Somalia, and was studying Swedish and worked as a dishwasher in the large kitchen in a retirement home. Every time she approached the secondary school adjacent to her daughter's kindergarten, some students screamed racist slurs at her. The students would also make scornful remarks about her headscarf such as "*take off your curtain*". The harassment from the pupils intensified, and escalated to them throwing objects at her; snowballs during the winter, water balloons during the summer and rocks whenever.

One afternoon, as the harassment had been going on for almost over half a year, a rock hit Aisha in the head. When her six-year-old daughter got a stone in the back, Aisha went to a school nurse. The school's principal, who noted that there were major problems with racism among the pupils, reported this to the police. The police never got back to talking to Aisha, who could identify the pupils. On the reporter's question about why the police officer in charge at the time had not contacted Aisha, the answer was: there were no investigative resources to follow up the case. The police meant that it was believed that the pupils were younger than fifteen years old, and that it would therefore be difficult to get a conviction. It turned out that the police almost immediately after the incidents were reported to have ticked the box "reconnaissance missing".¹⁷⁹

4.5.4 Political spaces

As mentioned, the debate on Muslim women in Sweden is often related to discussions on prohibitions, and in particular the banning of the full veil along with op-eds on the headscarf as a symbol for oppression. Proposals to ban the full veil have come from for instance the Center Party, the Liberal Party, Moderate Party and the Swedish Democrats. It has often been in direct connection with whether or not such clothing is deemed suitable in the education sphere, both for teachers and pupils.

In political spaces, the debate on the full veil has been mainly restricted to the question of education and the school environment. The debate on the headscarf has been recurrent in discussions relating to honour-violence, but has throughout the years gained attention in other segments of society when politicians have addressed it.

Lately, discussions on the headscarf among politicians have gained momentum. Political representatives active in the Left Party and Liberals have been particularly vocal about the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/niklas-orrenius-elever-kastade-sten-pa-aishas-barn-for-nojes-skull/>

symbolism of the headscarf. The presence of more women wearing the headscarf in the suburbs where a large part of the population is Muslim, has been equated with a sign of Islamisation and the presence of reactionary forces in Swedish suburbs.¹⁸⁰

Among the fiercest critics of H&M's and Åhlens fall campaign was Gulan Avci, MP (Liberal) and Chair of the Liberal women. Avci went so far as to accuse the campaign to promote the "Islamist" interest. The Liberal MP explained on both national television and in an op-ed, that the headscarf is a garment that dictatorial regimes use to maintain the oppression of women, and should be seen through that lens. This is an argument that has been recurring in the Swedish public debate on Muslim women and the headscarf.¹⁸¹

4.5.5 Court cases

On 4 August, 2012 a man attacked a woman on the street in Malmö. He threw a shoe in her face and hit her head against a wall. This left the woman unconscious. When the woman's daughter intervened, the man beat her too. While beating the women, the man screamed racial slurs such as *"You're ruining this country"*. The attack on the women was stopped when people passing by overpowered the perpetrator (Malmö District Court No. B7642-12). The Police was called to the scene. The perpetrator, who was one of the driving forces of the Free Press Society (Tryckfrihetssällskapet), an organisation whose definition of freedom of the press exclusively extends to the "right" to offend Muslims and mock and defame Islam, then directed Islamophobic insults against one of the Muslim police officers who arrived at the scene.

In early April 2014 the court announced its verdict. The man was convicted in the District Court, however, only to community service for the assault, not for hate crime. The man was sentenced with probation and 75 hours of community service (Malmö District Court No. B7642-12). The court considered that there was not sufficient evidence that he attacked the women as a result of their religious belonging, despite racial slurs and abusive epithets indicating otherwise, and although he was known for his opinions about Muslims.

The sentence was appealed against in the Court of Appeal, which stated that the assault was in fact a hate crime with an anti-Muslim bias. Due to the assault being classified as a hate crime, the penalty and damages ascribed to 56-year-old to pay for the victims, Mariam and Sabrieh, increased. Penalty for the abuse was according to the Court of Appeal, two months in prison. However, the Court of Appeal weighed in that the man lost his job as a teacher because of the attack, and decided on probation instead.

The case of the assault of Mariam and Sabrieh, and the debate surrounding it illustrates the fact that hate crimes are legally challenging, not least when it comes to allegations of hostile actions against religious communities and their members.

4.5.6 'Human stories'

This section provides personal testimonies from women who have experienced Islamophobia/racism. All women who have been interviewed for the purpose of this report, have shared stories of having been subjected to verbal abuse. The women attest to being

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/debatt/1.978928-islamismen-far-allt-storre-faste-i-hjallbo>

¹⁸¹ <http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/debattamnen/samhalle/article21548120.ab>

called “muslim whore”, “terrorist”, “easter witch”. Out of the 45 informants, 13 of the women have experienced physical abuse from people who are unknown to them. The physical attacks range from having the full-veil or the head-scarf torn off, to being pushed or beaten. Both the physical and verbal attacks have mostly occurred in public places such as the bus, the tram and/or in grocery shops. Besides some of the testimonies from the women’s experiences of racist violence, this section contains a presentation on how the experiences of violence have affected the women and their families as well as what they have done or do differently as a response to handle their experiences of abuse.

4.5.6.1 The nature of verbal abuse

Leila shares experiences of how complete strangers tend to direct racial slurs at her. Usually this happens when she is in public places like grocery stores, shopping malls or bus stops:

“I’m always as surprised as ever when complete strangers tell me to go back to where I came from, or mutter ‘fucking Muslim’, or call me ‘easter witch’. The part that surprises me is how cowardly these people can be. Because as soon as I confront them by asking ‘Excuse me, what did you just say’, they walk off and pretend they can’t hear me.”¹⁸²

4.5.6.2 The nature of physical abuse

Hala and her friends were on their way for a coffee in town. While on the bus, discussing an appropriate coffee shop, an older man, two or three seats in front of them, started yelling at them. Hala expresses that this was kind of unexpected. He called them “Muslim whores” and told them to shut up or else he would have to make them shut up. Hala’s friend told the man that he could shut up himself, as he seemed to be the only one yelling in the bus. He was frantically yelling for 2-3 minutes, something Hala describes as quite unsettling. Hala and her friends decided to get off two stops before their designated destination:

“We decided to get off from the back-door of the bus in order to avoid passing him by. However, as we are standing at the door, waiting for the bus to stop so that we could get off, the man decides to march towards us: ‘Did I not tell you to shut up?’, he asked before he slapped me! I completely froze. The bus had stopped, and my friends were telling me to get off. The man then pushed me off the bus, with such force that I ended up on the pavement. I was surprised when the bus took off. How could the bus driver just take off? Until today, I can’t grasp that the bus took off like nothing happened.”¹⁸³

4.5.6.3 A life with elements of security measures

Anna lives in a town in the north of Sweden, which she describes as “quite white and segregated”. She works at an educational association, specifically on discrimination and human rights-related questions. She describes that being a woman with a headscarf in the north of Sweden can be challenging as it is, but once one works on questions relating to racism, one easily becomes a target. The issue of security has been something that Lisa has had to prioritise, and especially security measures at work, because of past experiences of threats and verbal assaults:

“We’ve had to take some security measures. I have an alarm that I carry with me when I’m working.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Interview, December 3, 2015

¹⁸³ Interview, November 18, 2015

¹⁸⁴ Phone interview, December 20, 2015

The feeling of not being able to feel safe is shared by Kaoula, who recently moved back to Malmö, from Stockholm. According to Kaoula, the racial diversity is more visible in Malmö's central parts than in Stockholm. On the hand, she stresses that Malmö is a city where you have to think carefully about the areas you can move around in. She goes on to explain that she constantly assesses her safety:

*"Basically, I've become this person who constantly evaluates risks and potential dangers. I feel like I have to look around when I'm on the go. I'm occupied in making sure that I know what to do, just in case something would happen. It's exhausting."*¹⁸⁵

Yasmin says that she, out of habit, makes sure that she tells her family where she is going. She has also adjusted her attire, just to enhance a sense of some safety:

*"I make sure that it is not possible to pull off my niqab by not letting the back-part, the sort of string, hang out. I make sure I always wear flat, good comfortable shoes. Basically, I make sure nothing I'm wearing is easily pulled. And, most importantly, I think a lot about my posture. I make sure I stand tall and proud in order to send off signals that I have every right to be here, you know? It's important."*¹⁸⁶

4.5.6.4 Becoming each other's support system

To handle the frustration, Kaoula and Anna both explain that they spend some time giving and receiving advice related to handling experiences of racist violence. Anna stresses the importance of talking about experiences of racist violence:

*"We tell each other about these incidents of attacks, because there is obviously a need to talk about them."*¹⁸⁷

Anna continues:

*"We tell each other to report. I report all incidents. I think I've reported 15 incidents. I mean, we all kind of know that nothing will happen regarding these incidents, but for me, it's just a question of principle, and because I work on these questions, I feel obliged to at least do my part of it".*¹⁸⁸

4.6 Good practice

As for now, there are no governmental, statutory and/or institutional initiatives or practice focusing on recording Muslim women's vulnerability and experiences of Islamophobia related violence. However, there are existing initiatives where there is potential to address issues of hate crime and Muslim women. In this section the initiatives are presented along with proposals on how the work related to the issues of Muslim women's vulnerability to Islamophobic violence can be incorporated in existing initiatives or designed.

4.6.1 Hate crime groups

There are currently no initiatives relating specifically to Muslim women. Existing initiatives dealing with racist violence such as the hate crime groups in Malmö and Stockholm are aware of Muslim women's vulnerability. There is however room for improvement. One step in the right direction for the police's hate crime group in Stockholm is that their services will now be available to a larger part of the population in the Stockholm area, as opposed to just Stockholm city. Perhaps what hate crime groups could focus on is a more systematic

¹⁸⁵ Focus-group interview, December 31, 2015

¹⁸⁶ Phone interview, December 20, 2015

¹⁸⁷ Phone interview, December 20, 2015

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

recording of both the nature and the extent of Islamophobic hate crimes directed at Muslim women.

4.6.2 The Commission for government support for faith communities – SST

As a government agency, SST has addressed issues relating to racist violence directed at faith communities. The findings from SST's previous work within this field indicate that Muslim organisations have highlighted how Muslim women are particularly vulnerable to Islamophobic violence. Muslim women who have taken part in SST's "Safeguard Democracy", have also expressed concerns relating to their vulnerability. SST could further assist faith communities by funding special initiatives directed at Muslim women. This could be a starting point to facilitate the necessary means to strengthen both existing initiatives by Muslim women in which promotion of safety and equal rights are in focus, but also help to foster new initiatives.

4.6.3 Trade unions, anti-racism and feminist movements

Swedish Muslim woman - Integrity, Self-Defence & Rights

As a result of the Islamophobic violence against Muslim women, Muslim women's association – *Muslimska Kvinnoföreningen*¹⁸⁹ started a study circle. The aim was to facilitate discussions about the Muslim woman's self-image, her right to privacy and her ability to verbally and physically defend herself with the help of existing civil rights and legal protective and safety measures available.

Civil Rights Office and Hatbrott.se

The Civil Rights Office and Hatbrott.se have as a result of working first with Hatbrott.se, seen the need for an institution that protects and supports Muslims' rights in society. Because of the considerable lack of knowledge that prevails regarding where to turn to when your rights are violated and how to go about claiming them, the Civil Rights Office offer free legal advice. The person seeking legal advice is also allocated a contact person following their case and who will help with information that the specific case requires.

Hijab Petition - Hijabuppropet¹⁹⁰

During the summer of 2013 the highly publicised assault and hate crime against a heavily pregnant woman sparked a national discussion on the increasing racist hatred and violence against Muslim women. This event gave rise to the acclaimed Hijab Petition - *Hijabuppropet*. The Hijab Petition, started by five Muslim women, was a call for solidarity with Muslim women in general and the assaulted woman in particular. Prominent Swedish politicians, activists and citizens wore the hijab for a day, in support of the right to safety for Muslim women who wear the veil. Hijabuppropet was a call to discuss what happened and draw attention to the increase in hate crime statistics and racism against Muslim women, which led to a formal meeting between the Muslim women who initiated the call, and the Minister of Justice, Beatrice Ask.

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.mkforeningen.nu/>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/hijabuppropet/>

5. Conclusion

The lack of disaggregated data related to gender, religion and race makes it difficult to draw conclusions about Muslim women's living conditions in general and their position in the labour market in particular.

The interviews with NGOs, the police hate crime group, Equality Ombudsman, Muslim women's organisations and Muslim women, demonstrate that elements of discrimination, verbal as well as physical abuse are part of Muslim women's daily life.

Muslim women who wear the headscarf attest to experiences of micro-agressions, related to having their agency and competence questioned by fellow colleagues or potential employers. Others have their career ambitions curtailed as a result of dress codes in certain segments of the labour market.

The overall goal of the Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own lives. However, it is worrisome that requirements related to dress codes in certain segments of the labour market, that seem neutral at first, have led to stigmatising an already vulnerable segment of the population. Having a section of the population, in this case Muslim women, being excluded from the labour market as a result of requirements that cannot be proven to be a necessary or appropriate measure to achieve the objective of ensuring good hygiene in for instance clinical practice, needs to be addressed. These practices risk making it difficult for Muslim women to have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

Muslim women attest that their vulnerability is of low priority, both within the Muslim civil society as well as outside of it. There seems to be reluctance to report hate crime, and those who do report it, have no expectations that reporting the abuse will be of any significance.

6. Recommendations

- Initiate a tailored regional human rights programme aimed at improving the knowledge regarding anti-discrimination and hate crime law amongst Muslim women;
- Initiate a tailored regional educational training programme for police, teachers, staff within the public and private sector that offer services to the inhabitants, with focus on addressing the root causes of anti-Muslim sentiment and its consequences for Muslim women;
- A national call centre monitoring anti-Muslim hate crimes and hate-motivated incidents against Muslim women through data collection;
- Provide training on hate crime and anti-discrimination law for mosques and non-governmental organisations that come in contact with Muslim women, in order for them to be able to advise as well as record and report instances of discrimination and hate crimes;
- Employers should establish an anti-discrimination plan including clear positive action measures;
- Collect disaggregated data relating to the grounds of discrimination within trade unions in order to better understand the extent and forms in which discrimination occurs and manifests itself. This monitoring should be connected to the trade unions' ambitions to take all necessary steps to combat discrimination of its members;
- Establish grants to local forums that can offer support to women who have been victims of discrimination and racism;
- Identify the extent of the consequences of discrimination in other social sectors such as education and health care. The government should pay attention to Muslim women's situation as victims of discrimination and hate crime by supplying means for additional research that maps the consequences of Islamophobia on the living conditions of Muslim women;
- The Swedish government should comply with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's (CERD) recommendation by providing official statistics on the composition of the population so that more can be known about the population's living conditions as well as causes, extent, nature and effects of racial and religious discrimination in Sweden. The methods for collecting this sort of data should be developed in dialogue with minority groups before settling on appropriate methodological approaches;
- The government should set up a fund to provide financial assistance for individuals and associations to bring litigation in discrimination cases. This would ensure that the legal aid system be strengthened so as to make it possible for more actors to bring litigation in discrimination cases;
- The penalty compensation, which the government introduced to facilitate the provision of higher levels of compensation to victims of discrimination and to act as a deterrent against discrimination, should be raised to levels where they can actually fulfil their purpose of deterring companies and institutions from discriminating;

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