ISLAMOPHOBIA & PHILANTHROPY

OCTOBER 2025

WORKING TOGETHER TO CHANGE NARRATIVES

Béati FONDATION

INSPIRIT FOUNDATION   FONDATION INSPIRIT

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FOREWORD

⚠ This document addresses Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, and systemic racism. It touches upon painful realities and violence that may be upsetting. We recognize the burden this may place on those affected and remind readers of the importance of preserving their well-being while reading.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
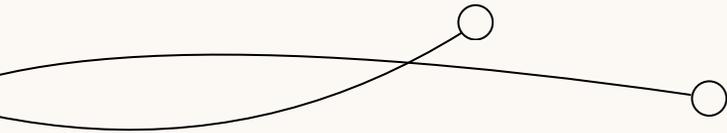
We acknowledge that we live, work, and gather on the unceded ancestral lands of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, here in Quebec as everywhere on Turtle Island. For millennia, these peoples have been the guardians of these territories and have maintained relationships with the land based on respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. In contrast, colonialism and capitalism have imposed a logic of appropriation, exploitation, and destruction that threatens our living environments and our common future. Talking about Islamophobia and systemic racism requires acknowledging the persistent hold that colonialism and capitalism have on our societies and territories.

Numerous migrants arrive here after having been displaced by economic, ecological, and political violence, echoing the experiences of Indigenous peoples. By settling on these lands, often unaware of Canada's colonial project, they become unwitting participants in its perpetuation. As a result, we are collectively challenged to reflect on the power relations at play and to cultivate solidarity that does not replicate the logic of dispossession.

We also acknowledge that the earth itself and all living things it hosts—waters, forests, animals, plants—are under constant attack from ever-expanding colonialism and capitalism, fueling climate crises and biodiversity loss.

The struggles against Islamophobia, against all forms of racism, and for the rights of migrants are intimately linked to the struggle for ecological justice and the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. They call for deep solidarity that honours not only human rights, but also the rights of the earth and future generations.

In that spirit, with humility and determination, we reaffirm our commitment to building relationships based on justice, respect, and shared responsibility, so that life, in all its forms, is protected and celebrated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
A continuous process

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This report builds on a long tradition of reflections, actions, and work carried out by affected individuals, intellectuals, artists, community leaders, and activists in Quebec and elsewhere who condemn Islamophobia in all its forms and stand in solidarity with all affected by it.

These grassroots movements are rooted in broader mobilization efforts against systemic racism, colonization, and capitalist exploitation of bodies and territories. They have shaped theoretical frameworks, a shared language, and collective practices that are essential for naming and countering Islamophobia. They also carry their own histories, voices, and knowledge, forged by the trajectories and imaginations of Muslim communities themselves.

We know that the fight against Islamophobia is closely linked to all those who aim to dismantle systemic oppression. Each struggle sheds light on the workings of domination and opens up possibilities for imagining other futures.

Finally, we remain mindful of the many invisible debts and solidarities that underpin this work, made possible through collective knowledge, struggle, and resistance, often without leaving explicit traces or our full awareness. We express our sincere gratitude to all those who, through their past and present struggles, have paved the way for this reflection.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on several complementary approaches, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data, documentary analysis, and direct consultations with stakeholders and the philanthropic sector. Data collection and analysis took place from January 2024 to June 2025, inclusive. The use of different methodological tools has a clear objective: to cross-reference perspectives and reinforce the reliability of findings. By combining quantitative data, qualitative analysis, and the voices of actors in the field, we ensure that the recommendations proposed are based on a 360° understanding of Islamophobia and philanthropic dynamics.

Sources and Tools Used

- **12 individual structured interviews conducted by the Fondation Béati team.**
- **Two reports commissioned** specifically for this project:
  - Islamophobie au Québec : définitions, historique, contexte et impacts sur les communautés musulmanes (literature review) – 2024 – Dania Suleman.
  - Analyse statistique (recensement 2021) et revue littéraire, accompagnées d'entrevues terrain pour identifier les besoins et aspirations des organismes musulmans – 2024 – Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (OIRQ).
- **Internal document reviews and analyses** conducted by the Fondation Béati team.

Philanthropic Sector Survey, Conducted by Épisode

A web survey was conducted by Épisode from March 4 to April 1, 2025, among 230 philanthropic foundations active in Quebec. It collected:

- An overall participation rate of 15.2%, or 35 responses in total, including:
  - 24 complete responses
  - 4 usable partial responses
  - 7 incomplete responses not included

*Although the response rate of 15.2% may seem modest, it is consistent with the participation generally observed for this type of sector survey and is in line with our expectations. The 35 responding foundations nevertheless offer a diverse sample (in terms of size, mission, and type of structure), allowing us to identify significant trends in perceptions of Islamophobia and current philanthropic practices.

Focus Groups Led by OIRQ

Two focus groups were held on October 31 and November 22, 2024, mainly in person, with a hybrid format to facilitate participation. They brought together a dozen people involved in various local, regional, and national Muslim organizations to explore the realities, experiences, and needs of communities in terms of their social and structural dynamics. The sessions, structured around open-ended questions, included roundtable discussions and collective brainstorming to ensure equitable participation and enrich perspectives. Data collection based on audio recordings, detailed notes, and participation sheets allowed for a summary mapping of the organizations consulted.

The ideas and needs expressed during these meetings directly inform the findings presented below, ensuring that the recommendations take into account the reality on the ground.

Introducing Dania Suleman,
Dania Suleman is a Muslim Quebecer born in Montreal who has been committed to fighting prejudice against her community since her student days. A lawyer, she devoted her master's thesis to the reconciliation of religious freedom and gender equality from a post-colonial feminist perspective. This work inspired her book Les Malentendues (2021). She defends the idea that religion, which is dynamic and evolving, can be fully integrated into democratic, inclusive, and feminist societies.

Introducing Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec
The Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (OIRQ) is an independent research organization that documents the inequalities experienced by racialized people in Quebec. Through statistical analyses, qualitative studies, and collaborations with community actors, OIRQ aims to equip institutional circles and inform public policy in order to better tackle systemic racism.

Épisode
Épisode is a strategic consulting firm which plays a key role in the evolution of philanthropic culture in Quebec. Their support has inspired organizations, companies, and foundations in developing a strategic vision for their social and philanthropic engagement. Their mission is to structure philanthropic initiatives to maximize the impact of actions and support their clients in reaching their full potential.

POSITIONALITY, LIMITATIONS, AND GAPS

This report contributes to an already rich and complex field of study, long shaped by researchers, intellectuals, activists, and those with lived experiences. It is not an exhaustive study of Islamophobia, nor does it seek to replace the in-depth work that already exists. Its primary objective is to bring together existing knowledge and analysis and apply it specifically to the realities and levers of the philanthropic sector in Quebec.

Although Islamophobia is a global phenomenon closely linked to broader Western dynamics, this report focuses on the **Quebec context**, allowing us to explore local particularities, but it is also limited in terms of the scope of our conclusions beyond this area. Quebec is a distinct society, where identity issues are different from those in France—which has a direct colonial history in North Africa—or the United States, where Islamophobia is often used to justify global military dominance. Here, Islamophobia is rooted in a space already structured by linguistic tensions, the presence of Indigenous peoples, and more than a century of successive waves of migration.

Muslim identity is inherently diverse and deeply heterogeneous, encompassing a variety of religious traditions, languages, cultures, racial, socioeconomic, and migratory realities. Inevitably, this report presents certain blind spots: it does not claim to cover all of the experiences of Muslims in Quebec. This great diversity poses significant methodological challenges.

Globally, approximately **60% of Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia**, while in Quebec, communities from these regions represent a much smaller proportion (less than 10% of Quebec's Muslims). **Historically, the first Muslims to arrive in the Americas were mainly enslaved Black people**. In Quebec, however, Marcel Trudel's research has found no link between the transatlantic slave trade to New France and Islamized populations. According to Aly Ndiaye, an independent historian specializing in Afro-Quebec history, the systematic cross-referencing of records—names of enslaved people, origin, and year of arrival—nevertheless supports the hypothesis of a Muslim presence within this enslaved population during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Today, approximately **10% of Muslims in Quebec are Black**, a figure that could increase given the migratory preferences for French-speaking countries, many of which in sub-Saharan Africa have predominantly Muslim populations. There are still few studies that analyze in depth the realities of Muslims at the intersections of these identities, highlighting the need for more detailed and attentive research on these intersections.

POSITIONALITY, LIMITATIONS, AND GAPS

Given this context, our analysis has chosen to focus on the **intersection between Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism**, in line with critiques of Orientalism. This approach is justified in particular by the high proportion of Arab Muslims in Quebec (nearly half), but also because, in the Islamophobic imagination, Muslim identity is often confused with Arabness. However, it remains essential to recognize that Islamophobia also targets non-Arab Muslim communities and can affect non-Muslim Arabs or other groups perceived, in the Western view, as "Arab" simply because of their features or supposed origin.

It is important to note that choosing to focus our analysis on Islamophobia in no way minimizes or prioritizes other forms of systemic racism or discrimination. Each configuration—whether anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, or any other form of oppression—requires careful investigation, rooted in its own historical and sociopolitical contexts. From an intersectional perspective, these realities reinforce and complexify each other; understanding them in detail is a prerequisite for formulating truly inclusive strategies for change that will have positive outcomes for all communities seeking equity.

This work is geared toward the **philanthropic sector** operating primarily in Quebec, and seeks to mobilize it around an issue that is still too often marginalized. We speak here as a foundation concerned with these issues, not as academic experts on the phenomenon. We acknowledge that this report does not replace the detailed research and analysis conducted by those who have been working on these subjects for years.

We are aware of our own positionality and wish to clarify that the team who drafted this report acts as an ally and partner to the communities concerned. Some of us come from Muslim backgrounds, others do not, but all share a commitment to confronting Islamophobia through a social justice lens. This plurality of perspectives has informed our analysis, while also reminding us to remain attentive to our limitations and areas we may have overlooked.

THE PROJECT BACKGROUND
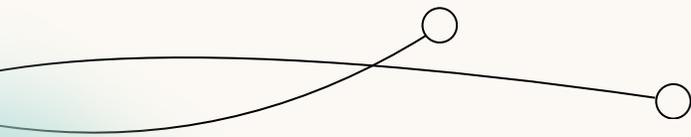
This report is the result of a collaboration between two foundations with a longstanding commitment to fighting inequality and injustice. The Canada-wide Inspirit Foundation chose to partner with Fondation Béati to benefit from its roots in Quebec and explore Islamophobia in its local dimensions and specificities.

This collaboration arose from shared observations made during numerous discussions: both foundations recognized that by joining forces—one with its Canada-wide perspective focused on changing narratives, the other with its roots in Quebec communities—they could more effectively equip the entire philanthropic community to tackle Islamophobia.

Inspirit Foundation is committed to changing narratives and has identified Islamophobia as a pressing issue for the philanthropic community. The Fondation Béati, meanwhile, in keeping with the tradition of the social justice aspect of Quebec community movements, has stood out for example when taking a position in public debates on secularism and opposing Bill 21, which it considers contrary to the principles of justice and equity because of its discriminatory impact on certain religious communities (particularly affecting Muslim women wearing religious symbols).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islamophobia is now one of the most insidious threats to social cohesion and equality in Quebec and Canada. Hate incidents against Muslims are increasing at an alarming rate, fueled by polarizing rhetoric and exclusionary policies. This phenomenon does not only affect the communities themselves: by undermining the fundamental rights of some of our fellow citizens, it weakens the democratic foundation of living together. The philanthropic sector finds itself now at a turning point. Given the sector's commitment to justice and equity, it has unique leverage to change the course of events and build a more inclusive future. This report paints a picture of Islamophobia in Quebec and proposes an action plan that calls on foundations to help reduce it.

Here are the key findings and leverages identified:

1| The urgency to act is confirmed by the numbers

In Canada, reported hate crimes against people of the Muslim faith have risen dramatically (+1,300% in the last quarter of 2023 - According to the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)), and in Quebec, Quebecers of this faith are already the most targeted minority. Behind these extreme acts lies a set of systemic mechanisms—laws, discourse, and practices—that insidiously exclude many citizens from full participation in society. Doing nothing means allowing these divisions to widen.

2| A challenge for social cohesion and human rights

Islamophobia is not a "community issue" limited to Muslims—it is a threat to society as a whole. By attacking the dignity and rights of a section of the population, it undermines the promise of equality for all. Combating Islamophobia means strengthening democracy and protecting all minorities: it is essential for a resilient social fabric, where everyone feels they belong.

3| Young, educated, engaged, but marginalized communities

Quebec's Muslim population, 70% of whom are first-generation immigrants, is particularly young (median age 30) and highly educated (almost twice as many university graduates as the Quebec average). Yet they suffer from an unemployment rate that is almost double the average and a climate of growing insecurity (73% of Muslim women say they feel less safe since 2019). This waste of talent and potential has a high human and economic cost. Investing in the inclusion of these communities therefore represents a gain for society as a whole.

4| A philanthropic sector that is aware but in need of tools

Quebec foundations widely recognize that Islamophobia is an important issue that needs to be addressed. However, our survey reveals that only 21% of them feel they have a good understanding of this issue, and more than half do not yet have internal mechanisms in place to address specific biases against Muslim communities. The community expresses openness and no reluctance in principle—the obstacles are mainly based on a lack of knowledge, contacts, and reference points. Similarly, Muslim organizations, although wary of institutional circles (for fear of misunderstanding or stigmatization), are showing a growing interest in collaboration. These two worlds are beginning to come together around shared values of trust and fairness.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5| The unique role of philanthropy is an asset

Philanthropy has the capacity for innovation and rapid responses. Where institutions stagnate or regress, foundations can act as a constructive counterweight. They can fund spaces for dialogue, solidarity, and empowerment for communities that experience exclusion. In other words, they have a responsibility not only to do no harm (not to unintentionally contribute to Islamophobic initiatives), but also to do better: to actively support positive alternatives that promote justice and social cohesion.

7| A historic opportunity for convergence

By adopting these approaches, foundations will do much more than fight a form of discrimination. They will give substance to their JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) commitments by applying them to an issue that is often overlooked. They will help rewrite the collective narrative by promoting the full citizenship of Muslim Quebecers. Seizing this opportunity will not only prevent irreversible social divisions from taking root, but also demonstrate that Quebec and Canadian philanthropy remains at the forefront of positive societal change. By protecting the rights of a targeted community, we are renewing our promise of a just society for all.

6| Clear principles for action and concrete solutions

To provide guidance to foundations, the report proposes six strategic areas and around 40 operational measures that can be adapted to the size and mission of each foundation. These include:

1| **Equitable funding** – by directing more donations and grants to projects led by members of Muslim communities and simplifying procedures to eliminate access biases;

2| **Impact investing** – by mobilizing 95% of assets according to ethical criteria that exclude hate and exploring solidarity-based financial instruments (e.g., community bonds, shareholder engagement, etc.);

3| **Inclusive governance and recruitment** – ensuring diverse representation in decision-making bodies and training staff in intercultural and anti-discrimination skills;

4| **Using influence capital** – taking a public stand against stigmatization, supporting positive counter-narratives, and carefully advocating for equitable public policies;

5| **Learning and sharing power** – by engaging in continuous learning alongside communities, co-creating solutions, and transferring resources and expertise where they will have the greatest impact;

6| **Building lasting community partnerships** – by supporting capacity building for Muslim organizations, creating safe spaces for dialogue, and joint projects aimed at fostering intercultural understanding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report calls on the philanthropic community to take thoughtful and concerted action. The findings are clear: Islamophobia threatens our shared values, but the tools to combat it exist and are within our reach. Whether large or small, foundations can take concrete steps today—funding differently, investing ethically, opening up to new partners—that will make a tangible difference. By transforming our practices in partnership with the communities concerned, we can stem the tide of hatred and strengthen the social fabric. This document is more than just an analysis; it is a strategic tool to inspire, guide, and support every philanthropic actor who wants to build a more inclusive, resilient, and united Quebec. Now is the time to act: together, let us mobilize our resources and our will to combat Islamophobia and write a new chapter in social justice.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Islamophobia is now a transnational issue permeating political discourse, legal frameworks, and everyday interactions. Beyond the spectacular acts of hatred that attract media attention, it is rooted in social structures where colonialism, securitarianism, and economic inequality intertwine. Quebec occupies a unique place in this context: a French-speaking minority society within Canada, marked by a history of debates on identity and secularism, and by a recent and diverse migratory fabric. The Islamophobia that unfolds there has its own expressions, fueled both by global references and local particularities—linguistic tensions, public policies targeting religious symbols, and polarized media coverage.

As a philanthropic foundation committed to an approach based on trust and justice, we consider it essential to document these dynamics for three main reasons. First, Islamophobia, like any form of structural racism, erodes social cohesion and compromises fundamental rights, allowing these attitudes to proliferate, which in turn weakens the entire democratic system. Second, Quebec's Muslim communities are young, highly educated, and have considerable potential for creativity, innovation, and civic engagement; their exclusion is costly, both humanly and economically. Finally, the philanthropic sector has the financial and institutional agility to initiate transformations that other, more constrained actors are slow to implement: financing initiatives led by those directly concerned, supporting independent research, and creating spaces for dialogue capable of de-escalating polarization.

Therefore, this report is designed to serve as strategic leverage. It draws on the lived experience of Muslim communities, rigorous data, and open dialogue with the philanthropic community. Its ambition is twofold: to offer a nuanced diagnosis of the mechanisms at play in Quebec and to propose concrete ways for philanthropy to contribute, in a manner consistent with its values, to transforming these realities. The following section ("Why Take Action?") will specify the immediate issues that make this approach essential and detail the relevance of sustained philanthropic engagement.

OBJECTIVES

This report is based on concrete data and is the result of a collaborative effort with those directly affected, enriched by structured dialogue with the philanthropic community. The sector survey reveals a genuine desire to take action, but conversations with the organizations concerned also confirm the persistent gap between the reality experienced by Muslim Quebecers and public perceptions.

Aware of the financial, relational, and symbolic leverage that foundations have to generate positive outcomes, we are framing this report as part of a broader strategy designed to support the philanthropic sector in achieving its commitments to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). Four objectives structure this first stage:

1| **Clarify the issues**
To provide a nuanced and informed perspective on contemporary expressions of Islamophobia in Quebec, in order to equip the philanthropic community with a solid, shared knowledge base.

2| **Align philanthropic commitments**
To highlight how the social mission of foundations converges with the need to support initiatives originating in the Muslim community by identifying ways to apply JEDI principles to fund and support these initiatives.

3| **Use tools to act**
To draw practical guidelines that support agile, collaborative interventions and foster social transformation.

4| **Encourage long-term engagement**
To promote dialogue between philanthropic, community, and institutional actors to make the fight against Islamophobia part of a lasting effort to build social cohesion, for the benefit of all communities seeking equity.

READING THE DOCUMENT

This report is intended for individuals in the philanthropic sector who seek to anchor their actions in embodied and sustainable social justice in Quebec. Whether you work for a family, a private, community, or public foundation, or whether you are a consultant, member of a network, or program manager, you will find concrete benchmarks, in-depth analyses, and strategic proposals to guide your practices in a context where Islamophobia constitutes a major flaw in our collective equity-seeking project .

Each section has been developed to serve as a tool for decision-making, reflection, and transformation within our institutions:

"Why Take Action?" sets out the structural, ethical, and strategic reasons why philanthropy must be involved in the fight against Islamophobia.

"Understanding to Transform" offers a nuanced framework for understanding the realities experienced by the Muslim community, which is essential for adjusting our levers of intervention and strengthening our solidarity.

"Changing Narratives" invites us to deconstruct dominant representations to favour more accurate, inclusive, and empowering narratives.

"Converging" maps the points of contact—but also the gaps—between philanthropic and community circles in order to build structural bridges.

"Taking Action: Recommendations and Next Steps" turns these findings into strategic guidelines to inform policies on funding, governance, partnership, and public positioning.

Appendices provide terminological, historical, and analytical resources to support informed action.

READING THE DOCUMENT

This report is neither neutral nor detached: it reflects a desire to take action, in a spirit of solidarity and in line with JEDI commitments (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion). It is an invitation to do better, together, with clarity, rigor, and courage.

Whether you choose to read this report in its entirety or go directly to the sections that interest you most, we invite you to keep in mind how these sections complement each other. Each part reinforces the others to offer a comprehensive overview and concrete leverage points.

In short, Islamophobia is a multi-faceted challenge that affects all of Quebec society. For philanthropy, responding to this issue means preventing the weakening of the social fabric, promoting human potential, and demonstrating leadership by initiating changes that other actors are slow to undertake.

WHY TAKE ACTION?

Fighting Islamophobia is not a philanthropic impulse of the moment: it is a strategic and ethical response to an injustice that undermines the social fabric, compromises fundamental rights, and weakens the credibility of our commitments. This section aims to answer questions that many actors in the sector are asking: why is this a priority now? How does it directly affect us? What are the risks of ignoring it and the potential benefits of fully embracing it?

As foundations, we have a role in promoting social cohesion, investing in tomorrow's solutions, and preserving democratic ties. This means identifying dynamics of exclusion that permeate our societies—and sometimes our institutions—and not looking away under the pretext of complexity or polarization.

This section provides context, data, and analysis to situate the link between Islamophobia, collective responsibility, and philanthropic impact. Our sector cannot transform systems without addressing those that produce exclusion, even (and especially) when this requires taking an explicit stance.

WHY TAKE ACTION AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA NOW?

Because the global **rise in hate speech and authoritarian ideologies**, exacerbated by geopolitical crises—particularly in the Middle East—is fueling Islamophobia and weakening the social fabric.

Because in Canada, **hate crimes targeting Muslim individuals rose by 1,300%** (last quarter of 2023 – NCCM, 2024), with tangible repercussions on their safety, mental health, and socio-economic conditions.

Because **in Quebec, Islamophobia—still rarely recognized as structural racism**—is normalized by policies and narratives that legitimize exclusion and isolation.

Because human rights organizations (CDPDJ, Ligue des droits et libertés, etc.) are increasingly **warning of the urgent need for collective action against Islamophobia**.

WHY IS PHILANTHROPY A STRATEGIC LEVERAGE?

Because it possesses a **level of agility and foresight that public authorities lack**, enabling it to immediately support initiatives that prevent social divisions from deepening.

Because by catalyzing flexible resources, it can **unleash considerable collective potential**: young, highly educated, and innovative Muslim communities that are held back by structural barriers.

Because by learning from past financing that may have reinforced hatred, it can **support solidarity and alternatives** that promote rights, fostering sustainable social benefits.

Because it cannot combat systemic racism without explicitly placing the fight against Islamophobia at the heart of its strategies, ensuring **the consistency and credibility of its commitments to communities seeking equity.**

WHY NOW?
A Changing Context and an Urgent Need for Action

Since we started working on this report, several events have confirmed the controversial, polarizing, and intensifying nature of Islamophobia. In a context marked by the rise of the far right, fascism, and hate speech—is this really the right time to talk about Islamophobia? We believe that it is exactly the right time.

Global rise in hate speech and fascism

In March 2025, on the occasion of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned of a "growing concern about anti-Muslim hatred" worldwide, directly linked to the conflicts in the Middle East[1]. These global trends are not abstract: they find direct echoes in Canada and Quebec, not only in statistics but also in political and media discourse. Moreover, the situation in Palestine and the massive violence inflicted on Palestinians often serve as a pretext for an intensification of Islamophobic rhetoric in the West, fueling harmful generalizations and discriminatory security policies.

Alarming local data

Official data are alarming and show a tangible deterioration of the situation. In Canada, the number of reported hate incidents targeting the Muslim community has skyrocketed, with a dramatic increase of nearly 1,300% in the last quarter of 2023 (NCCM, 2024)[2]. In Quebec, Muslims already represent the community most targeted by hate crimes reported to the police: in 2017, they accounted for 24% of these crimes, far ahead of Arab (11%), Jewish (10%), and Black (7.5%) communities (Statistics Canada)[3]. At the same time, despite numerous legal challenges, the Quebec government is maintaining Bill 21 on secularism, which directly restricts freedom of worship, affecting Muslim women who wear the hijab in public spaces and contributing to their exclusion from the job market[4].

Beyond these explicit manifestations of discrimination and hatred, the day-to-day reality of Muslim communities is striking. In Quebec, Muslims are a young, educated, and dynamic community, now representing more than 5% of the provincial population (Statistics Canada, 2021). However, despite their high level of education—nearly half hold a university degree, twice the Quebec average—they face persistent precariousness. The unemployment rate among Muslims is 11.7% for men and 14.3% for women, compared to 7.7% for all men in Quebec and 7.4% for all women in Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2021), which is almost double the average and highlights the extent of underemployment and systemic discrimination in the labour market.

This marginalization is certainly economic, but it also affects mental health, sense of belonging, and social participation. A survey conducted three years after the adoption of Bill 21 shows that 73% of Muslim women in Quebec feel that their sense of security has deteriorated, while 64% say that their willingness to participate in public life has decreased (Association for Canadian Studies, 2022)[5]. This is not only a few isolated acts of hatred—however serious and traumatic—but rather a set of systemic mechanisms that hinder the full participation of Quebecers of the Muslim faith.

A lack of political and institutional recognition of Islamophobia in Quebec
In Quebec, Islamophobia is rarely recognized as an expression of structural racism, although it is deeply rooted in certain institutional practices and legal norms. The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) has pointed out that public policies and political discourse have a tendency of sidestepping the very existence of systemic racism, most often attributing acts of Islamophobia to isolated individual behaviours rather than to institutional and political mechanisms that perpetuate discrimination.

Repeated invocations of secularism reinforce the reluctance to explicitly name Islamophobia, as they present as neutral, while often having the effect of excluding Muslims. Bill 94 and the ensuing debates are an eloquent example of this, with the proposed restrictions targeting mainly symbols worn by Muslim women. Meanwhile, different media narratives take part in this dynamic: by focusing on conflict or threat, they legitimize stereotypes and obscure the structural determinants of exclusion, thereby delaying the adoption of coherent, rights-based public responses.

Findings by Quebec human rights organizations
The Ligue des droits et libertés and the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse agree that Islamophobia is neither a marginal nor a secondary issue. It must instead be recognized, analyzed, and pushed back against through legal, educational, institutional, and community actions. The fight against Islamophobia is not only a matter of individual rights, but also a matter of social cohesion, structural equality, and protection against hatred.

In 2025, the findings are clear: without decisive action by actors such as foundations, these dynamics are likely to become even more entrenched. This report comes at a pivotal moment when philanthropy can help change the course of events before the divisiveness becomes irreversible.

WHY PHILANTHROPY?

Philanthropy occupies a unique position to anticipate, prevent, and transform social dynamics before they become irreversible. It has already committed to major projects related to justice, equity, and human rights, and by resolutely tackling the rise of Islamophobia, it can consolidate its missions and amplify their scope. In the current context, the philanthropic community not only has the opportunity, but the responsibility to rise up to this challenge. It can do so by leveraging what sets it apart: its ability to fund and equip relevant solutions, to act as a lever, and to invest in a more equitable and shared future.

Global responsibility: Anticipating the rise of social divisions and financing cohesion, now

In Quebec, seven out of ten Muslims were born abroad (first generation), reflecting the recent migratory nature of this population compared to other groups that have been established for several generations (Statistics Canada, 2021). In addition, 43% of Muslims have arrived since 2011, reflecting a migratory trend that is likely to intensify as a result of global geopolitical, climate, and economic crises. Worldwide, Muslims represent nearly 2 billion people, or nearly a quarter of the population, making their presence and movement part of irreversible demographic dynamics.

As a society, we have a collective and legal responsibility to welcome migrants and refugees with dignity, in accordance with our international commitments, notably the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration[6]. This responsibility is particularly significant in light of the setbacks observed in the United States, where mass deportations and coercive migration policies are undermining fundamental rights. Closer to home, the recent introduction of Bill C-2 in Canada, currently under discussion, is raising concerns about the weakening of our own commitments.

Since September 11, 2001, Muslims—and especially migrants from Arab or predominantly Muslim countries—have too often been perceived as "security risks." This perception is used to justify restrictive immigration measures that prolong their legal vulnerability and exacerbate stigmatization. Several analyses—notably those by McAndrew & Bakhshaei[7] (2012) and the CDPDJ[8] —show that structural Islamophobia fuels and feeds off immigration policies that indirectly target Muslim migrants in the name of "assimilation" or "neutrality reinforcing existing injustices that lead to exclusion, permanently weaken the Muslim community, and ultimately undermine the cohesion of the collective fabric that philanthropy is specifically tasked with strengthening.

An archival document from the Canadian Senate states that "from 2016 to 2021, Canada witnessed the highest number of Muslims killed in targeted, hate-motivated attacks of all the G7 countries, according to the National Council of Canadian Muslims[9]."

Unlocking human and economic potential: Investing in communities

Muslim communities in Quebec are characterized by their young demographic and high level of education: the median age is 30, compared to 42.4 for the population as a whole, and nearly 40% hold a university degree, which is higher than the Quebec average (Statistics Canada, 2021). This generational gap can be explained in part by the recent migratory nature of this population, but above all, it reveals considerable social and economic potential for the decades to come.

However, this potential remains largely untapped. Data show that Quebec's Muslim population experiences higher levels of unemployment and poverty, and lower income than the rest of the population. Even more concerning is that the poverty rate varies little between newly arrived Muslims and those born in Canada, suggesting that this precariousness is less related to the migration process than to structural dynamics of exclusion. In other words, even the language skills and cultural familiarity of the second generation do not offer the expected economic gains[10].

Young Muslims are under unique pressure: in a Canada-wide study (Canadian Muslim Youth and the Complex Dynamics of State-Driven "Radicalization," Narratives, 2022)[11], many reported feeling a constant need to prove that they were not radicalized, in addition to experiencing racial discrimination and, for young Black Muslims, increased surveillance and profiling[12]. This climate limits their full participation and fuels unnecessary tensions.

In a world where Muslims make up a quarter of the population and Asia plays an increasingly important role in the global economy, prejudice also undermines innovation, competitiveness, and openness to new markets. Promoting the inclusion of Muslim communities means investing in a prosperous, dynamic, and fully diverse society.

Philanthropy, a force for balance: Catalyzing solidarity and protecting rights

Analyses conducted by the organization CAIR[13] and Professor Jasmin Zine[14] reveal that, through certain donor-advised funds, millions of dollars from foundations have been funneled to organizations promoting Islamophobia, thereby contributing to an "ecosystem of hate." This finding serves as a reminder that, in the absence of rigorous safeguards, philanthropy can—even unintentionally—reinforce exclusionary dynamics.

Meanwhile, over the past few years, public institutions have taken steps that institutionalize Islamophobia rather than reducing it. In Quebec, Bill 21 (and, more recently, Bill 94) aims to restrict fundamental rights by making freedom of religion conditional on the removal of all visible signs. The government has even resorted to repeated use of the notwithstanding clause—an abuse denounced by the CDPDJ[15] and the Ligue des droits et libertés[16] as well as by international bodies. At the federal level, a report[17] highlights that the Canada Revenue Agency disproportionately applies its anti-terrorism financing policies, particularly exposing Muslim charities to audits and sanctions that undermine an entire community ecosystem.

In this context, the philanthropic sector has a unique lever at its disposal: financing and supporting spaces for solidarity, social innovation, and the defense of rights where institutional frameworks are insufficient. Fully assuming this responsibility means not only avoiding any participation, even indirect, in Islamophobia, but actively supporting initiatives that strengthen justice, social cohesion, and positive outcomes for all equity-seeking communities.

Taking action to remain true to our values and strengthen social cohesion

Recognizing Islamophobia as a key issue in terms of fundamental rights and social cohesion is fully in line with the ambition already shared by a large part of the philanthropic sector. With its sustained commitment to JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) initiatives and the transformation of systemic dynamics, the philanthropic sector now has a strategic opportunity to deepen its consistency and maximize its positive impact. By mobilizing its resources and expertise, it can prevent social division, support fundamental rights, and consolidate an inclusive and resilient collective fabric.

Islamophobia is not characterized only by cultural discomfort or a question of insufficient tolerance; it is inherent to structural dynamics that can undermine equal rights and collective dignity. Overlooking its significance risks exposing the idea of an inclusive and equitable society to increased fragmentation, limiting the ability of the state and philanthropic actors to protect and support communities seeking equity.

Treating Islamophobia as a genuine human rights issue begins with acknowledging its impact and the need for a systemic response, to then engage our collective responsibility toward guaranteeing truly equal treatment.

The philanthropic sector in fact strengthens its mission by explicitly integrating the fight against Islamophobia into its anti-racist perspectives and practices, thereby reaffirming and amplifying it. Foundations have always sought to encourage more just, supportive, and inclusive societies. Today, in the face of rising intolerance, Islamophobia needs to be named and responded to head-on. In a context of increasing authoritarianism on a global scale, protecting the rights of a stigmatized minority such as Muslims creates a protective buffer for us all—a safety net for all minorities and for democracy itself. History teaches us that the way a society treats its minority groups—whether religious, linguistic, racial, cultural, or otherwise marginalized—is a key indicator of its democratic health. It is up to us to ensure that philanthropy contributes to writing a history of which we can all be proud, where no community is left behind.

CHANGING THE FOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY
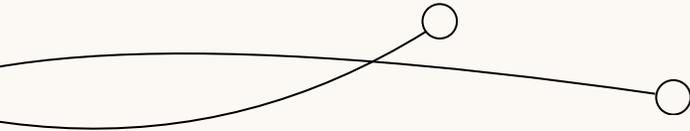
Islamophobia develops through relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims in shared spaces, whether social, political, media-related, or symbolic. It affects daily life, deprives people of their rights in real time, and weakens the fabric of democracy. Revisiting these dynamics begins with meeting others: learning to know them with curiosity, free from fear, prejudice, or pity.

The experience of Islamophobia endured by Muslims should not mean that only they understand it—too often, the responsibility for identifying and combating this form of racism falls on their shoulders. They are expected to bear witness, explain, and raise awareness, as if their experiences alone should educate others. This injunction transforms the experience of discrimination into an unfair educational burden that relies on their expertise.

By contrast, many non-Muslims exclude themselves from the debate for fear of saying the wrong thing, speaking on behalf of others, or exposing themselves to criticism. Others remain silent for fear of being perceived as overly political, or simply because they are tired of the complexity of social debates. Avoidance or withdrawal inadvertently contribute to perpetuating the problem.

Recognizing that Islamophobia is a relational dynamic means understanding that it affects everyone involved in these contexts, whether Muslim or not. It also means accepting that responsibility cannot be delegated: each person has a role to play, provided they enter into this commitment with a clear understanding of their own place, privileges, and vulnerabilities.

Finally, the fight against Islamophobia requires moving beyond reducing Muslim people to their religious affiliation. Muslim communities in Quebec and Canada are diverse, with multiple backgrounds, identities, and aspirations. Many simply seek to be recognized as full citizens, in all their complexity.

The next section offers a shift in perspective, from "the other" to a shared "us," to learn more about Muslim communities and to identify our responsibilities in this relationship.

By shifting the focus of responsibility—from "them" to "us"—it becomes clear that combating Islamophobia is everyone's business.
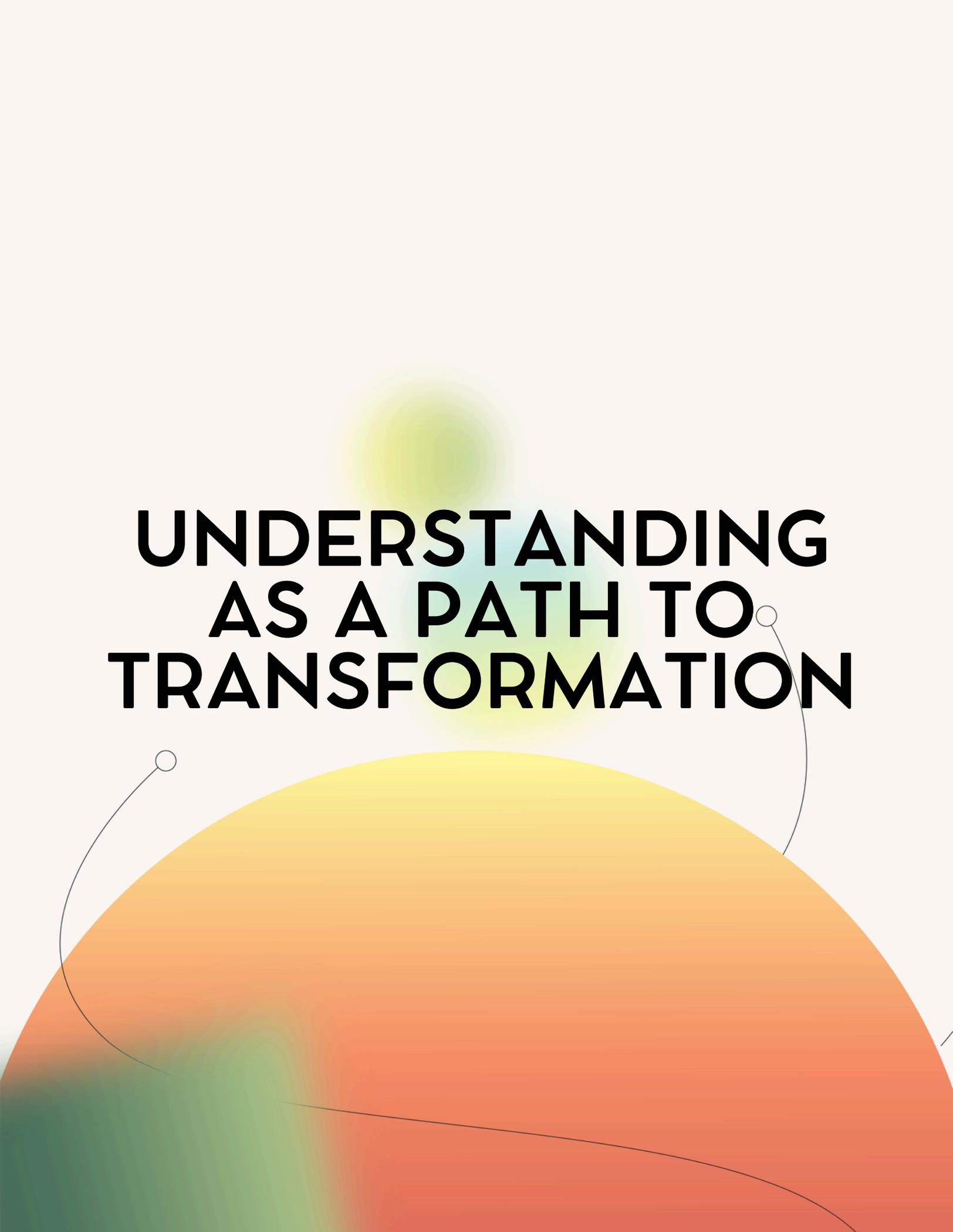
UNDERSTANDING AS A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION

CONTEXTS AND REALITIES
OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES
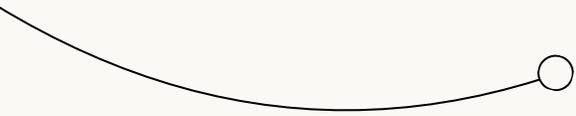
While many players in the philanthropic sector are already aware of the realities experienced by the Muslim community, our understanding must continue to be refined in order to listen differently, to act more fairly, to support relevant strategies, and to embody a stance of solidarity that does not reproduce blind spots.

Understanding does not mean knowing everything: above all, it means recognizing that our dominant references (institutional, media, educational) have often produced biased, fragmented, or stereotypical knowledge about Muslims. This calls for collective relearning, with humility and rigor.

This section provides a nuanced summary of the diversity of Muslim communities in Quebec—their trajectories, contributions, and structural vulnerabilities. It provides the sector with the tools to move from intuition to analysis, and from intention to strategic alignment. It serves as a working basis for any individual or philanthropic organization wishing to take concrete action in a consistent and legitimate manner.

This section draws, among other sources, on two reports produced specifically as part of this project:
- Dania Suleman (2024), Islamophobia in Quebec: Definitions, Historical Background, Context, and Impacts on Muslim Communities (literature review);
- Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (2024), Statistical Analysis (2021 Census) and Literature Review.

Several of the data points and excerpts cited in this report are drawn from these works.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

Globally[18]
Source: Pew Research Center
- In 2020, there were an estimated 2 billion Muslims, representing 25.6% of the world's population (¼).
- Between 2010 and 2020, the Muslim community grew by 347 million—the fastest growth among major religions[19] (estimated at 30% for 2050)[20]
- Distribution by region (2020)
  - ° Asia-Pacific: ~62% of Muslims
  - ° Middle East and North Africa (MENA): ~20%
  - ° Sub-Saharan Africa: ~ 16%
  - ° Europe : ~2 %
  - ° Americas (North and South): ~1%

In Canada
2021 Census – Statistics Canada
- 1.8 million people in Canada (5%)
- Half live in Ontario (942,990)
- A quarter live in Quebec (421,710)

In Quebec
2021 Census – Statistics Canada
- 421,715 people self-identified as Muslim in 2021

Montreal
- 90% of Muslims in Quebec live in the Montreal area.
- 9% of Montreal's population is Muslim.

Laval
the largest concentration of Muslims in Quebec
- 13% of the population is Muslim

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

The **Muslim population of Quebec** is predominantly immigrant (70%) with varied origins, but predominantly from the Maghreb; half of its members identify with Arab ethnicity, 10% with Black ethnicity, and 20% do not consider themselves to be an ethnic minority. This is a comparatively young population that lives mainly in family contexts (couples with children). With a strong presence in the Montreal area, this population is significantly more French-speaking than English-speaking. Despite higher levels of economic activity and education than the Quebec population as a whole, Muslims are comparatively more affected by unemployment, low income, and poverty[21].

In **the Montreal metropolitan** area, muslim communities tend to be concentrated in a few neighbourhoods such as Ville Saint-Laurent and Parc-Extension. However, data show that religion is not a primary determinant in the residential choices of Muslim immigrants. In fact, social class, the main language spoken in the neighbourhood, and the presence of a migrant contingent from their country or region of origin are the main factors that drive Muslim immigrants to settle in a specific neighbourhood[22].

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam is a monotheistic religion whose foundations were revealed to the prophet Muhammad who Muslims consider to be the last messenger in a long prophetic tradition during the 7th century in the Arabian Peninsula, in Mecca. It is the second largest religion in terms of number of followers, with approximately 2 billion Muslims worldwide.

In Arabic, the word Islam literally means "submission," in the sense of a trusting surrender to God, and it shares the same etymological root (s-l-m) as the word "peace." Those who follow this faith are called Muslims, meaning "those who submit to God."

Fundamental principles of Islam:

Belief in one God (Allah): Islam teaches that there is only one God, called Allah in Arabic (the same God as in Judaism and Christianity). There is no Trinity or divine incarnation: God is unique, indivisible, and incomparable.

The Quran: The holy book of Islam, considered to be the literal word of God.

The Five Pillars are widely shared spiritual and practical principles in Islam, regarded as fundamental reference points for the majority of Muslims.
- Profession of faith (shahada): "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger."
- Prayer (salat): 5 times a day, at times determined by the position of the sun, facing Mecca.
- Almsgiving (zakat): obligatory donation to the most needy.
- Fasting during Ramadan (sawm).
- Pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj), at least once in a lifetime, if possible.

The community (umma): Islam strongly values collective ethics such as mutual aid, solidarity, and social justice. The umma is the global spiritual community of Muslims.

Distinctions and diversity in Islam

Islam is made up of **several major branches**, each encompassing a plurality of traditions.
- Sunni Islam (the majority, around 85%)
- Shia Islam (particularly in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon)
- And other branches (Ibadism, Sufism, etc.)

There is **no centralized clergy** (such as the Pope in catholicism): practices vary according to culture, legal schools, and local traditions.

Islam is not homogeneous: it is found in highly diverse contexts (Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe), with a wide range of languages, cultures, and histories. Yet in the West, dominant representations of Islam tend to obscure this plurality, reducing it to stereotypes shaped by Orientalism, security-driven suspicion, and narratives of threat.

PHILANTHROPY IN ISLAM

A spiritual and social duty: Zakat and the culture of giving

In Islam, philanthropy is not just an act of generosity; it is deeply rooted in faith and in a worldview where wealth is seen as a responsibility.

Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, is an annual religious obligation that requires Muslims who have owned assets exceeding a minimum threshold (called nisab) for one year to give 2.5% of their liquid assets (cash, gold, commercial goods) to people in need. It is not simply a redistribution mechanism to reduce poverty: it is also a means of investing in the resilience and autonomy of communities.

In addition to zakat, there is sadaqa, meaning voluntary charity without limits or obligations, which can be monetary or in kind. These two concepts are mentioned more than 80 times in the Quran and are often linked to prayer, emphasizing how social justice is inseparable from spirituality.

Thus, much like other religions that link prosperity to the moral obligation to support communities seeking equity, Islam offers a framework in which wealth becomes a lever for collective transformation and concrete solidarity.

A living and resilient tradition deeply rooted in our community

Starting in the 1960s, Montreal's Muslim community had to lobby for official recognition of Islam as a minority religion. This mobilization led to the adoption of Private Bill 194 by the National Assembly of Quebec in 1965, followed by the 1971 construction of a community centre that became a focal point for Muslim communities. This community centre became a focal point for cultural and social life and laid the foundations for transforming individual acts of solidarity into lasting collective commitments toward philanthropy.

Today, this philanthropic tradition continues in a structured manner: there are some 359 active Muslim charities in Canada, which generated more than $520 million in revenue in 2018, although the majority remain small local organizations[23]. Despite significant obstacles—including legal profiling and increased audits after 9/11, which have weakened many of these organizations—these communities continue to organize and invest in solidarity missions, such as the Zakat House of Canada, which structures and pools donations to better meet local needs[24].

To read on the subject:
Article by Abdul Nakua in The Philanthropist: "The Path of Islamic Philanthropy in Canada: From Community Development to Social Innovation."

Beyond giving: Ethical and inspiring financial practices

Over the centuries, Islam has developed an economic philosophy that seeks to reconcile fairness, transparency, and social responsibility. In addition to zakat and sadaqa, it includes:

- **Waqf**: similar to social trusts, allowing assets or funds to be allocated on a long-term basis to educational, health, or community causes.
- **Sukuk**: the Islamic equivalent of bonds, backed by tangible assets, offering an ethical alternative to traditional financing.
- **Mudaraba and musharaka partnerships:** relying on profit and loss sharing, promoting collective investment while avoiding speculative debt.

A still underestimated potential[25]

While precise data for Canada or Quebec are lacking, American studies show that Muslims give 70% more on average than the general population, and that they direct a large portion of their donations toward social and international aid, extending beyond places of worship. Even with caution, these findings point to a vibrant and dynamic philanthropic force that remains largely underrecognized.

For the philanthropic sector, acknowledging and supporting it means not only building on a long-standing and living tradition of solidarity and social innovation, but also opening the door to more equitable and transformative partnerships.

MUSLIM REALITIES IN QUEBEC

Data and excerpts drawn from Portrait de la population musulmane du Québec 2024 [Portrait of the Muslim Population in Quebec 2024], Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (unpublished report).

Migration realities

In Quebec, seven out of ten Muslims were born abroad (first generation), reflecting the recent migration status of this population compared to other communities. Only one in five Muslim immigrants (21%) arrived in Quebec before 2000, while 43% of this population arrived after 2011.[26]

> **70%**
> of Quebec's Muslim population is made up of immigrants.

Muslim population in Quebec

Migrant generation	421 715	100,0
First generation	293 590	69.6
Second generation	124 240	29.5
Third generation or more	3 885	0.9

Youth

The median age of Quebec's Muslim population is 30, which is significantly lower than that of the general Quebec population. This difference can be explained by the recent migratory status of this population, as immigrants tend to be younger on average than the native population.

There is little information available on the social situation of young Muslims in Quebec (or Canada), but it is worth noting that this group is often analyzed through the lens of social issues and youth deviance (radicalization, crime, etc.). As the issue of radicalization has been funded by governments, numerous studies have been produced along these lines. In one of these studies, conducted on a pan-Canadian scale, several young Muslims expressed feeling pressure to prove their lack of radicalization, a challenge that adds to the racial discrimination they often face[27]. This reality was particularly difficult for young Black Muslims, who reported increased experiences of state surveillance and profiling[28].

MUSLIM REALITIES IN QUEBEC

Family situation
The majority of Muslims are part of a household consisting of a married couple with children.

Family situation	Muslim population of Quebec	General population of Quebec	Muslim population of Ontario
Married	57.1	32.9	56.3
Coupled with children	65.0	39.9	56.9

Language
43% of Muslim individuals in Quebec speak French as the main language at home, and 91.2% speak French fluently.

Knowledge of official languages	Muslim population of Quebec	General population of Quebec	Muslim population of Ontario
French as the language most often spoken at home	43.3	77.3	1.0
English as the language most often spoken at home	7.3	10.4	42.2
Speaks English and French	47.9	46.7	8.7
Speaks neither English nor French	3.1	1.0	4.5

MUSLIM REALITIES IN QUEBEC

Education

Nearly 40% of Quebec's Muslim population holds a university degree, a higher proportion than in the general population.

Level of education	Muslim population of Quebec	General population of Quebec	Muslim population of Ontario
Holds a bachelor's degree or higher	39.5	23.5	50.7
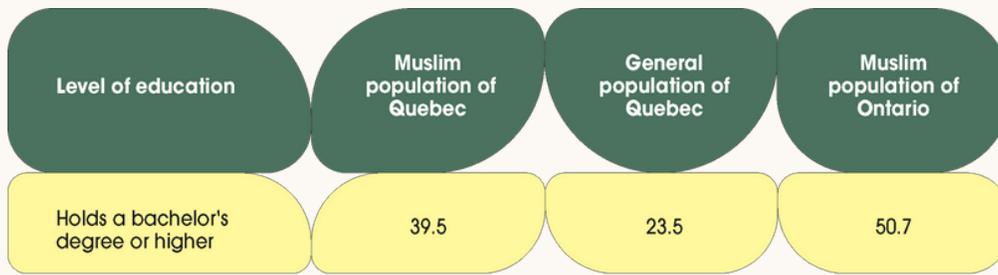
Identity distribution (self-reported)

In Quebec, slightly more than half of Muslims identify as belonging to the "Arab" visible minority (whereas this identity encompasses about a quarter of Muslims in Ontario). One in five Muslims in Quebec do not identify with any visible minority (which may imply that they consider themselves non-racialized or "white"), almost three times more than in Ontario. One in ten Muslims identify as "Black" (African or of African descent).

In Quebec, 51.1% of Muslim individuals identify as Arab.

Identification	Quebec	Ontario
Arab	51.1	20.6
Not a visible minority	21.1	7.7
Black	10.5	9.4
South Asian	8.5	43.7
West Asian	6.6	12.9

Religious diversity

Diversity in the countries of origin of Quebec's Muslims is reflected in their religious affiliations. Globally, approximately 15% of Muslims are Shiite, while the vast majority are Sunni. However, in Quebec, the proportion of Shiite Muslims is estimated at around 30% due to significant immigration from countries such as Lebanon and Iran, where Shiism is the dominant denomination.[29]

MUSLIM REALITIES IN QUEBEC

Socioeconomic profile

Quebec's Muslim population has lower incomes than the rest of the population, with higher levels of unemployment and poverty, and lower income.

Income in 2019 (in $)	Muslim population of Quebec	General population of Quebec	General population of Ontario
Median income for men after taxes	28 000	37 600	26 600
Median income for women after taxes	24 800	30 600	21 000

It is interesting to note that despite the median income of Muslim men and women[30] being higher in Quebec than in Ontario, a recent study reveals that 76% of Muslim workers in Quebec consider their work experience to be more difficult than that of Muslim workers in the rest of Canada.[31] Several participants in this study attributed this reality to the adoption of Bill 21.

As mentioned above, it is particularly worrying that there is little difference in poverty rates between newly arrived Muslims and those born in Canada. The poverty rates in these communities cannot be explained by the migration process, and the linguistic familiarity and social structures associated with second-generation immigrants do not seem to have the expected economic benefits.[32]

MUSLIM REALITIES IN QUEBEC

The Muslim population in Quebec is comparatively more active in the healthcare, social assistance, and education sectors, particularly due to women's employment in traditionally female-dominated sectors (25.5% in healthcare and social assistance and 13.4% in education).

Industry	Muslim population of Quebec	General population of Quebec	General population of Ontario
Healthcare and social assistance	14.8	14.2	11.0
Retail	12.4	11.8	13.1
Manufacturing	9.4	10.3	6.8
Professional, scientific, and technical services	9.0	7.9	12.0
Transportation and warehousing	8.9	4.8	9.3
Educational services	8.8	7.8	7.0
Accommodation and food services	6.5	5.4	6.1
Administrative, support, waste management, and remediation services	5.7	3.9	5.0
Public administrations	5.4	6.7	4.3
Finance and insurance	5.1	3.9	6.5

ISLAMOPHOBIA
A Historical and Global Construct
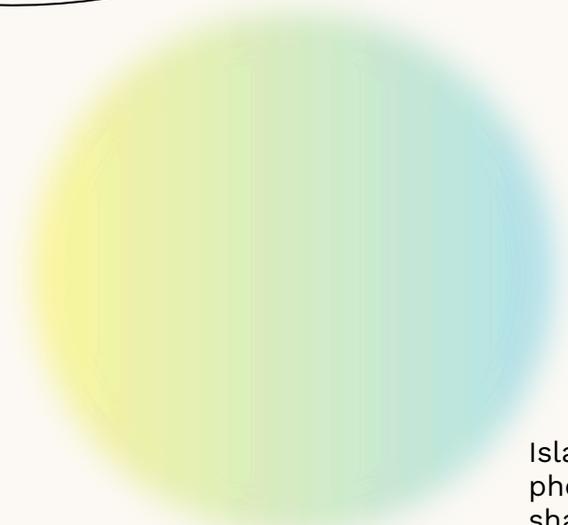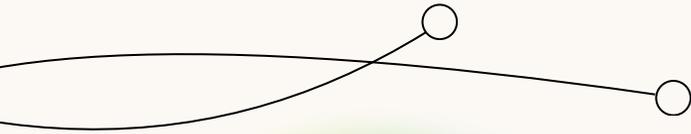
Islamophobia is not an isolated or country-specific phenomenon: it is rooted in global dynamics and takes shape across different contexts. In China, the persecution of the Uyghurs illustrates a particularly brutal form of state Islamophobia; in Myanmar, the Rohingya are victims of ethnic cleansing; in Bosnia, the 1995 Srebrenica massacre marked a high point in Islamophobic violence in Europe.

In this report, we examine how Islamophobia unfolds in the West, and more specifically in Quebec. In the West, it cuts across the political spectrum and is veiled in discourses focused on security, assimilation, or purported universalism.

It is important to note that Islamophobia also affects the community sector: work such as Espaces Féminins Pluriels[33] by Institut F at Diversité d'Abord[34] at The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) has shown how racism and colonial logic are also reproduced in community and non-profit organizations in Quebec, marginalizing Muslims even in spaces that are supposed to be inclusive.

This section will cover these realities to offer a more thorough understanding of how Islamophobia is constructed, trivialized, and produces structural effects. Then, courses of action will be identified.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Definition of Islamophobia

Etymologically, Islamophobia refers to the fear or apprehension of Islam as a religion. However, in everyday language, the term also encompasses attitudes of hostility, or even hatred, toward Muslims in general. Merriam-Webster defines it as "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam"[35], while according to the United Nations, Islamophobia refers to fear, prejudice, and hatred toward Muslims.[36]

- The term first appeared in 1910, introduced by Alain Quellien, author of Politique musulmane dans l'Afrique occidentale française (Muslim Politics in French West Africa), who defined it as "prejudice against Islam widespread among Western and Christian civilizations."[37]
- The term "Islamophobia" only really became widespread in the public sphere after the publication of a report by the Runnymede Trust, a British think tank committed to racial equality issues, in 1997.[38] This report, entitled "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," received widespread attention, bringing it public and political recognition.
- After September 11, 2001, Western institutions funded reports and organized meetings to analyze and combat Islamophobia. Various surveys were conducted by associations, NGOs, and foundations, and the term was used in speeches at the UN, which brought legitimacy and international recognition.[39]

The majority of researchers assert that Islamophobia is a form of structural racism rather than simply being an irrational fear, as the etymology of the word suggests.[40]

> The rise of the concept of Islamophobia has tended to overshadow the expression "anti-Arab racism," effectively leading to the use of the term 'Muslims' instead of 'Arabs,' and vice-versa—even though the two are not synonymous.
>
> Dania Suleman

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Who Is Affected by Islamophobia?

Islamophobia does not only target practicing Muslims. It targets anyone perceived as Muslim, regardless of their actual faith, level of practice, or even religion. In Quebec, Arab Christians and atheists are discriminated against simply because of their name, language, or culture, which are often mistakenly associated with Islam. In Arabic, the word "Allah" simply means "God," and expressions such as "Allahu Akbar" ("God is great") or "InshaAllah" ("God willing") are commonly used by all Arabic speakers, whether they are Christian, Muslim, or of another faith. However, several Canadian studies, reports, and testimonials—academic, journalistic, and community-based—show that these ordinary Arabic expressions are often perceived in Quebec and Canadian public spaces as markers of threat and insecurity. This erroneous association is documented on three levels: in academic research on Muslim security, in political or media statements when a violent act is committed, and in accounts of Islamophobia experienced firsthand.[41-42]

Sikh communities, whose symbols (turban, beard) are confused with those attributed to Muslims, are also affected.[43] This reveals the extent to which Islamophobia is based on a distorted understanding of cultural and religious differences and on a racialized interpretation of appearance.

This phenomenon particularly affects immigrants and their children from predominantly Muslim countries, as well as Maghrebi and Arab communities[44], which make up more of Quebec's population (approximately 50%) than those from South Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. This partly explains why Islamophobia often takes the form of Arabophobia[45].

What is targeted: Visible signs and practices

Islamophobia is often expressed through a fixation on certain "signs" or practices perceived as Muslim, even when they are not exclusively so. In Quebec, the hijab (headscarf) and, to a greater degree, the niqab (full veil, worn by a tiny minority, with an estimated 50 women wearing the niqab across the province)[46] are the focus of most debates. There is strong opposition to the veil, with 48.9% of the population against it, compared to lower levels of social acceptance for the cross (5.5%), the kippah (25.8%) or the turban (30.5%)[47].

But other markers are just as targeted: beards or kufis (small head coverings for men, associated with modesty), the Arabic language, or even prayers, especially when performed in public spaces. A recent incident in the summer of 2024 involved Muslims praying collectively in a park in Ahuntsic after the religious holiday of Eid. This prayer, which lasted 8 to 10 minutes, prompted at least 15 complaints from residents.[48] The borough mayor therefore indicated that she would consider banning religious ceremonies in parks. With the politicization of street prayers in Quebec, the situation seems to be escalating even further.

Halal[49], Ramadan[50], or any request for accommodation based around these realities also become objects of suspicion. It is not Muslim spirituality that is rejected, but rather its visible expression, whose otherness is interpreted as threatening.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

A Long History of Islamophobia: From Orientalism to Contemporary Anti-Palestinian Racism
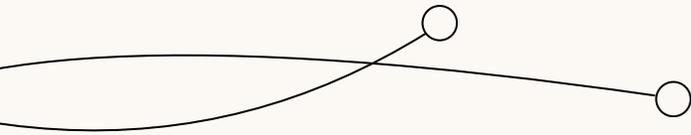
Looking through history is helpful to understand why certain gestures, clothing, or words trigger mistrust or even rejection today: the history of colonial narratives, racial hierarchies, and power structures that gradually constructed the "Orient," the "Arab," and then the "Muslim" as figures of otherness. These theoretical frameworks—Orientalism, racialization, colonialism—may at first seem abstract and distant from our realities, but they are essential for decoding the persistence of discriminatory dynamics that we mistakenly believe to be mere cultural misunderstandings.

By engaging with these constructs, it becomes possible to dissect how representations have been forged to legitimize the continued conquest and exploitation of distant territories , to increase access to resources, public spaces, and funding. This critical thinking is a useful tool for the philanthropic sector to prevent reproducing—even unintentionally—the same blind spots that have long limited the full citizenship of entire populations when defining our programs, criteria, and language.

In other words, understanding the intellectual architecture of Islamophobia means shedding light on the narrative aspect of inequalities: what is visible (a headscarf, prayer, speaking Arabic) is only threatening because it is part of a broader imaginary that has slowly become ingrained over centuries. Unfolding this history will therefore allow us, in the pages that follow, to identify the levers for action: what should be funded? What narratives should be supported? What alliances must be built to permanently deconstruct these patterns of exclusion?

ISLAMOPHOBIA
From Colonial Imaginaries to Contemporary Stereotypes

Orientalism: A Matrix of Otherness

Orientalism provides the ideological framework that shapes the Western view of Arabs and Muslims. According to Edward Said, it refers to a structure of thought through which the West fantasizes about an "Orient"—irrational, passive, sometimes threatening—as a mirror image of a West that considers itself rational, civilized, and Christian.[51] This opposition not only serves to name the "Other"; it also helps to construct Western identity itself, while legitimizing its economic, colonial, and political enterprises.

These representations, which began in literature and academia, quickly spread to the media, politics, and then charity; 19th-century missionary philanthropy bears traces of this, as do certain contemporary accounts of supposed aid to predominantly Muslim countries. As Said demonstrated (Orientalism, 1978), Orientalism is not neutral knowledge, but a system of representations that contributes to making the East governable and inferior.

Arabophobia: From exotic curiosity to biological racialization

In the 19th century, the Orientalist view intensified and shifted toward a biological racialization of Arab peoples. Arabophobia then classified Arabs among populations considered inferior: described as violent, fanatical, and even morally deviant. Spread by colonial science and popular culture, these representations have served to establish economic and political domination, justifying, for example, the colonization of Algeria or the occupation of Egypt.

According to Ella Shohat (1992), colonial representations construct "the Arab" as a radical other, frequently sexualized and dehumanized, in order to construct an image of Europeans as superior. In this context, "Arabs" are visible and tangible, but still dominated; otherness is placed upon their bodies, biologized and hierarchized.

A postcolonial reconfiguration of "race"

When "biological" racism became socially unacceptable in the 20th century, systems of domination found new justifications. With postcolonial immigration to Europe and North America, and especially after September 11, 2001, Muslim presence became a permanent feature of Western cities. Racism was reconfigured: it now targeted beliefs, rituals, and culture, while continuing to racialize bodies.

Islamophobia associates Islam with the oppression of women (headscarves, patriarchy), violence (terrorism), intolerance (reduced and essentialized to what is referred to as Sharia law), and a supposed incompatibility with democracy. These stereotypes not only affect the image we have of people perceived as Muslim—they also influence their actual access to housing, employment, and even funding for community projects.

When religion functions as a racial marker, it activates the same mechanisms of exclusion as the biological racism denounced above. Them over there becomes them over here—an idea that reinforces suspicious otherness. Islam is mobilized as a pretext for legitimate racism, often concealed behind the defense of secularism, security, or what are described as "common values."

This shift has been studied by Nacira Guénif, Houria Bouteldja, and Nadia Fadil, who have analyzed the concept of the racialization of religion at length. It cuts across the political spectrum and is even found in progressive or universalist discourse, including in Quebec and Canada, in debates on secularism, immigration, and neutrality.

In the world of philanthropy, these mechanisms can subtly influence the perceived eligibility of Muslim organizations for grants or the public reception of initiatives supported by foundations.

ISLAMOPHOBIA
From Colonial Imaginaries to Contemporary Stereotypes

Anti-Palestinian racism: The extreme end of the continuum

Anti-Palestinian racism in the West is an extreme form of this historical continuum, particularly visible since the Second Intifada (2000) and reinforced during 2023-2024. Beyond social and symbolic domination, the very existence of a people is being denied, as described by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), who have highlighted the denial of the Nakba (1948)*, the justification of violence, the refusal to recognize Palestinians as an Indigenous population, and the defamation that portrays them as anti-Semitic or inherently violent.

Joseph Massad (2015) illustrates how Palestinian representation in contemporary political and media discourse is part of an imaginary that places them at the extreme end of the "dangerous Arab" stereotype. They are portrayed as Muslim, radicalized, and dehumanized, which makes their killing conceivable, even justifiable

The rhetorical shortcuts employed include dehumanization, security suspicion, and reversal of victimhood, echoing those used against other Muslim minorities, but here, the denial of collective rights and the destruction of civilian infrastructure also target memory, narratives, and social spaces. Many international human rights organizations (e.g., Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International) have documented policies, rhetoric, and practices that undermine the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and fundamental dignity. Several sources (ICC, Genocide Researchers) now refer to a genocide being perpetrated in Gaza.

*The Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) refers to the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians and the destruction of over 500 villages during the creation of Israel in 1948.
For Palestinians, it marks the beginning of an ongoing exile and dispossession — a core element of their collective memory and their struggle for justice and return.

Acknowledging this dynamic means recognizing, in line with the historical continuity outlined above, how a process of othering can lead to calling into question the very existence of a group. For the philanthropic sector, this highlights the need for a twofold approach:

Pour le secteur philanthropique, cela rappelle la nécessité d'un double discernement :
- ensuring that narratives legitimizing the erasure of a population are not reproduced, even indirectly,
- and supporting initiatives that reaffirm the equal value of human life and the right of peoples to preserve their history, culture, and living environments.

In tracing this history, we see that today's Islamophobia is part of a continuum: it recycles and adapts old patterns of domination. Philanthropy must lucidly and effectively support initiatives that finally break the chain of these discriminatory narratives.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN QUEBEC

The roots of Islamophobia are deep, entangled with a long history of prejudice and global power dynamics. These inherited fears, cultivated over centuries, found fertile ground in Quebec long before the presence of the Muslim communities they now target.

Today, these perceptions continue to carry significant weight in Quebec. According to a 2023 survey conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, 52% of Quebecers report having an unfavorable opinion of Islam, compared to 36% elsewhere in Canada. The study also shows that a substantial segment of Quebec's population — 30% — expresses a very negative view of Islam and its associated practices. This rate is nearly twice as high as in the rest of the country.

For example, more than half of Quebecers continue to support Bill 21, which prohibits the wearing of religious symbols in certain public functions. Meanwhile, barely a quarter of the population elsewhere in Canada support this policy. These data illustrate a unique context where historical fears toward Muslims take specific forms in Quebec[52]. They also remind us that, more broadly, racism is often underestimated or under-recognized in Quebec's public sphere, even when it comes to naming and understanding its systemic roots.

Percentage of Canadians with a negative perception of Islam

Region	Percentage
British Columbia	36%
Alberta	41%
Saskatchewan	44%
Manitoba	37%
Ontario	40%
Atlantic Canada	36%
Quebec	52%
Northwest Territories	39%
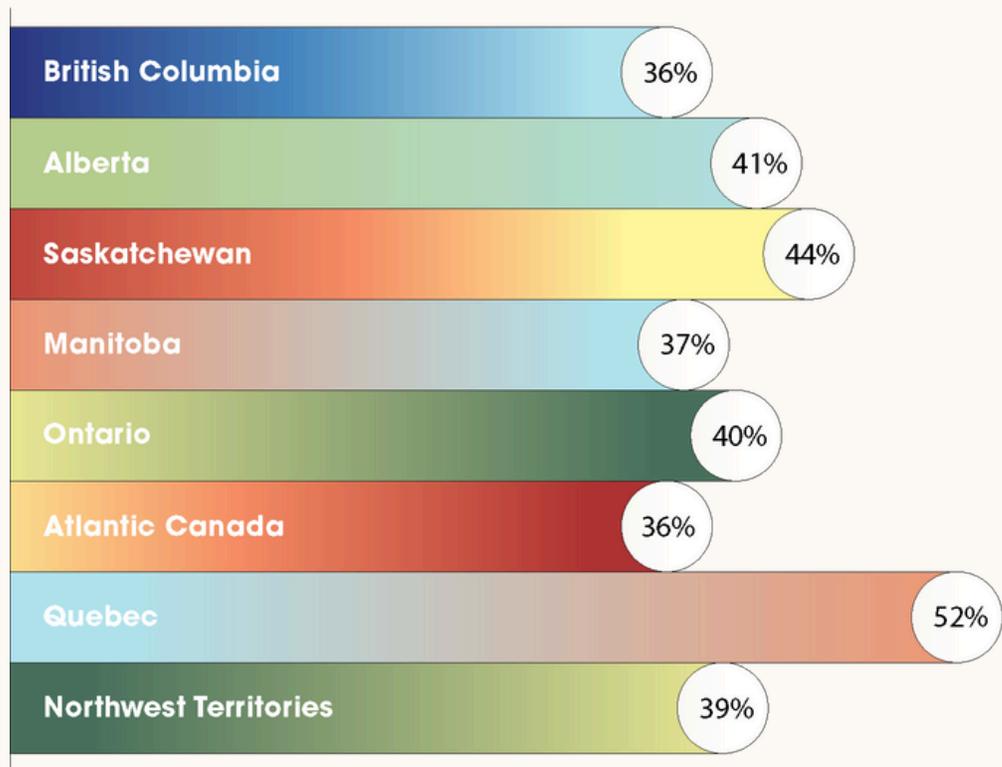
Source: Adapted from Canadian Guide to Understanding and Combating Islamophobia: Towards a More Inclusive Canada (Government of Canada, Office of the Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia), using data from the Angus Reid Institute (March 13, 2023), "Islamophobia in Canada: Four Mindsets Indicate Negativity Is Nationwide, Most Intense in Quebec."

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN QUEBEC

September 11: The Security Turning Point and Racialization

For most Muslims, September 11, 2001 marks a "before" and "after."[53] While xenophobia, or fear of the Other, already existed in Quebec, this date profoundly transformed the climate: Islamophobia became more systemic and openly security-oriented.[54] Across Canada, borders have been tightened, national security has become a heightened priority in many sectors, and there has been a rise in suspicious rhetoric, particularly in the media. In Quebec, there has also been a shift in perception: a 2020 study by Professor Lefebvre shows that the majority of Quebecers now associate violent extremism primarily with Islam. The study also reveals that possible motivations behind a violent act are interpreted according to individuals first names: a person with an Arabic-sounding first name will be more easily perceived as acting out of extremist ideology, while a French-sounding first name will be more likely to evoke mental health issues.[55] This idea reflects how much the fear of terrorism, fueled by the post-9/11 context, has reinforced the racialization of Muslim communities and given way to more mistrust.

Politicizing the "Muslim Question" in Quebec

Over time, the "Muslim question" has become a central topic in the Quebec public sphere, shaped by several political controversies that have fueled negative perceptions and concrete exclusionary practices.

2006 marked a turning point came with the debate on reasonable accommodation, triggered by the Multani case which focused on the wearing of kirpans in schools. This climate led to the establishment of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in 2007, which traveled throughout Quebec to gauge concerns about religious minorities. Numerous xenophobic comments were recorded, revealing the depth of stereotypes.[56] A Léger poll conducted at the time confirmed that 49% of French-speaking Quebecers had an unfavourable opinion of Muslims, compared to 33% of English-speaking Canadians, and this proportion rose to 56% in 2010.[57] In this context, many Muslims have had to adapt their behaviour. For example, they deliberately delay their prayers so as not to "inconvenience" their employers, even though, contrary to popular opinion, Muslims are not the religious group that requests the most accommodations.[58-59]

According to the Collectif pour l'inclusion, in 2013, the establishment of the Quebec Values Charter coincided with a fivefold increase of hate incidents against Muslim women in one month.[60] The Ligue des droits et libertés then noted that from 2014 to 2017, hate crimes related to ethnic origin increased by 65.5%, and those motivated by religion, by 64.6%.[61]

This momentum culminated in 2019 with the adoption of Bill 21 on state secularism, which prohibits the wearing of religious symbols in several public sectors. While all religious groups are affected, Muslim women who wear the hijab suffer by far the most direct consequences, particularly in the education sector.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN QUEBEC

Tragic Events and their Repercussions

On January 29, 2017, a Quebec man entered the mosque of the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre and opened fire on worshippers. Six men were killed and nineteen others wounded. It was the first shooting targeting a Muslim place of worship in Canada and the most violent attack ever committed against Muslims in the country.

This tragedy is part of a larger rise in hate crimes: according to Statistics Canada, acts targeting Muslims more than doubled between 2016 and 2017, from 139 to 349 incidents, a third of which occurred in Quebec. This made 2017 the most violent year on record for Muslims in Canada.[62] Between 2018 and 2022, the country recorded a median of 136 hate crimes per year against this community.[63] In 2022, 44% of Quebecers still reported having a negative opinion of Muslims. In 2024, that figure rose to 52%.

These figures however are below the actual numbers. Many victims do not file complaints out of fear or resignation,[64] as pointed out by the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse: "victims often prefer to withdraw into themselves."[65] Hate crimes in Quebec have taken many forms: pig's blood in Saguenay, excrement in Shawinigan, arson in Sept-Îles, smashed windows in Saint-Hyacinthe, death threats in Dorval, and even an Arab driver stabbed in Montreal.[66]

This insecurity is felt acutely by Muslim women. Nearly 75% of them say they feel less safe in public spaces since the adoption of Bill 21[67] which has only reinforced the already unfavourable climate.

State Underfunding

Finally, Islamophobia does not only appear in rhetoric and legislation: it also translates into an imbalance in the funding of Muslim communities. According to the commissioned OIRQ report[68] published in 2024, several Muslim organizations in Quebec struggle to access government funding, and especially provincial funding, due to systemic barriers and persistent prejudice. Participants report that it is "quite difficult to obtain funding when the organization has the word 'Muslim' in its name," and that even without explicit reference to it, applications to the provincial government often go unanswered.

This lack of structural support contrasts with an opposite reality: investigations, particularly in the United States, have shown that traditional philanthropic funds have at times been used to finance explicitly Islamophobic networks.

This twofold observation — the underfunding of Muslim-led initiatives and the past or indirect funding of hateful narratives — underscores the urgency for the philanthropic sector to help restore balance by actively supporting spaces that foster equality, solidarity, and social cohesion.

CHANGING NARRATIVES

Islamophobia is a form of violence experienced by Muslims. Ultimately, it is a symptom of a deep fracture in our societies. The true threat to our social fabric is not the presence of Muslim communities, but Islamophobia itself.

Islamophobia, like other forms of racism or discrimination, is not only a present in every day; it is also an imaginary and discursive construct, a system of perceptions that structures the ways in which we see, speak, and represent ourselves. Philanthropic practices cannot be transformed without changing the narratives that underpin them.

This section directly addresses professionals in the philanthropic sector: how do our own narratives—explicit or implicit—contribute to perpetuating certain forms of power? What frameworks, languages, and unspoken assumptions do we use (or avoid) when we talk about "diversity," "neutrality," and "living together"? And how can we support counter-narratives rooted in dignity, complexity, and self-determination?

Changing narratives means recognizing the asymmetries at work in our political culture and institutions to better dismantle them at their roots. It also means making a strategic choice: to support the lives of the people concerned and highlight their humanity, diversity, and aspirations.

Why Reconsider our Narratives?

Narratives are based and created according to a particular worldview, which then affects funding strategies. These outlooks implicitly define who "counts," what outcomes are worth measuring, and whose voices are legitimate. Even a well-intentioned narrative can normalize old power relations by claiming neutrality or performance, risking the reproduction of the status quo and the depoliticization of the inequalities that structure resource access.

Conversely, a conscious narrative of asymmetries makes it possible to:

- Legitimize community self-determination as a condition for success, rather than as a variable to be controlled;
- Shift project evaluation toward indicators that capture the quality of social ties (trust, security, sense of belonging);
- Transform the donor-beneficiary relationship into a partnership, where accountability is built jointly and reflects the situated knowledge of the people concerned.

Philanthropy can embody this narrative shift to reconfigure an entirely new model that serves social cohesion, rather than simply adding to a warped existing model.

Questioning the Internal Narratives of the Philanthropic Sector

In recent years, many Quebec foundations have begun seriously examining their practices by creating learning spaces, inviting historically marginalized voices to sit on their decision-making bodies, and revisiting their criteria for measuring impact. This evolution reflects a genuine commitment to philanthropy based on trust and equity. This report is part of the movement to continually deepen the analysis of certain traditional narratives that continue to influence, sometimes in subtle ways, how resources are allocated.

First, **neutrality as a sanctuary value** should be reconsidered. Claiming to be neutral in a context marked by power imbalances often amounts to making those imbalances invisible; however, several foundations now recognize that each grant can contribute to redefining the social field. It is therefore not a question of abandoning the ideal of neutrality, but of reshaping it, and understanding it as a shared responsibility that can help identify structural biases and correct them, rather than an apolitical stance.

Secondly, the concept of **diversity as an aside** is gradually changing. More and more organizations understand that plurality cannot be relegated to project selection criteria, but rather that it must be part of the entire cycle, from the formulation of strategic priorities and composition of decision-making committees, to the definition of indicators. This change in perspective requires adapting administrative procedures and language to enable organizations from equity-seeking communities to participate fully, without having to conform to external standards that undermine their situated knowledge.

Finally, **performance evaluation methods** in professional settings should be updated. Strictly quantitative indicators remain useful for measuring immediate effects, but they do not capture the depth of desired changes around subjects like sense of security, capacity for action, or creation of solidarity networks. Several foundations are already experimenting approaches that combine quantitative data with qualitative data, developed with the people concerned. These experiments are paving the way for evaluation frameworks that are better suited to the complexity of social change.

By acknowledging the progress made and clearly identifying remaining challenges, this report aims to add to the collective momentum in building philanthropy that, rather than compensating for inequalities, contributes to transforming them by continuously revisiting its own narratives, criteria, and decision-making processes. Each of these three narratives—neutrality, peripheral diversity, and quantitative performance—is permeated by Islamophobia: if not careful, these frameworks can either mitigate its effects or, conversely, perpetuate them. This awareness paves the way for the transition to the analysis of media and political narratives, where representations that shape our philanthropic orientations are crystallized and disseminated.

BETWEEN SECTORS, MEDIA, AND POLITICS
Echoing Narratives

Narratives shape philanthropic decisions and are influenced by the media and political signals. Alarmist articles or polarized legislative debates can have a direct impact on how foundations assess "risk" or are assessed perceive the "legitimacy" of certain actors. The philanthropic community must recognize this impact and mobilize its symbolic and financial capital to support counter-narratives rooted in dignity, equality, and plurality, rather than amplifying discourse based on mistrust . Such a position requires constant critical examination—how do our own narrative choices reinforce or challenge the representations conveyed by the media and enshrined in policy? This clarity is essential to transform collective imaginaries rather than reproduce them.

The media: Amplifying fears and shaping perceptions

Since the mid-2000s, Quebec media outlets have seen a marked increase in articles about Islam and Muslims. A CJF study showed that in 2017, La Presse+ published 1,536 articles on the subject, Le Devoir 1,293, and Le Journal de Montréal 883.[69] However, the term "Islamophobia" appeared in only about 8% of these articles, often to minimize or mock the issue.

A study of Quebec newspapers and references to Muslims or Islam in the news showed a significant increase starting in 2006 (see table below)[70]. This research is particularly interesting because it highlights the relentless focus on the place of Muslims in Quebec specifically. Beyond the September 11 attacks, issues specific to the Canadian and Quebec contexts have fueled the media frenzy surrounding Muslims and the role of religion in a secular society.[71]

Quebec media almost systematically associate the veil and niqab with debates on secularism or accommodations, fueling the idea of an invasive and problematic Muslim presence. This coverage contributes to misperceptions: polls have shown that the public greatly overestimates the demographic weight of Muslims in Quebec and considers them more "demanding" than other racialized or migrant groups.[72] For more than 15 years, researchers have been warning that most fears surrounding Muslims are less about objective realities than a media construct.[73]
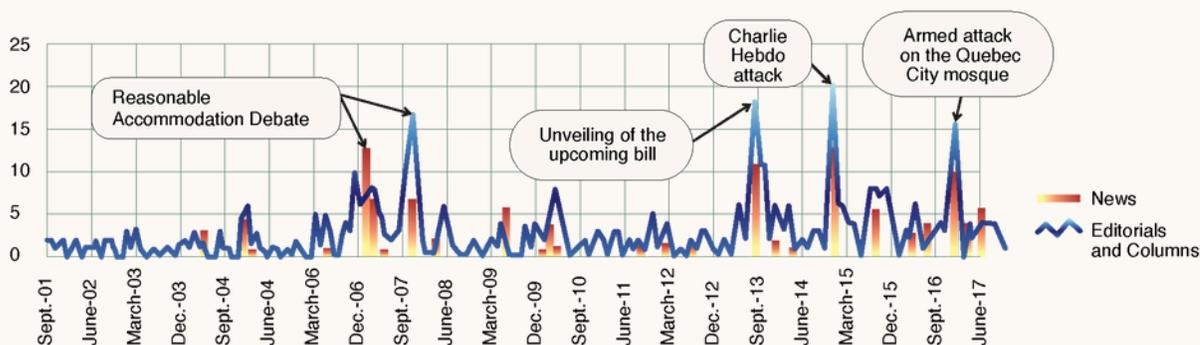
Chronological table showing the occurrence of the words "Muslim," "minority," and "Quebec" in the newspapers Le Devoir, Le Journal de Montréal, and La Presse (2001–2017)

Politics: Institutionalizing exclusion

Quebec politicians have also played a key role in this development. Several bills—62 and 21, and more recently Bill 94—are based on a certain conception of secularism to restrict religious freedom, disproportionately affecting Muslim communities and particularly women who wear the hijab.

At the same time, Islamophobic rhetoric openly expressed on social media or in public spaces by elected officials or candidates is rarely punished, reinforcing the social legitimacy of such statements.[74-75-76] The safety of Muslim communities has not been treated as a political priority nor is there any recognition of the ongoing genocide in Palestine by municipal, provincial, or federal governments, contributing to this double standard.

At the federal level, Muslim charities face discrimination documented by the Canada Revenue Agency,[77] which disproportionately applies its anti-terrorism policies to them. This climate of systemic suspicion has been described as "layered suspicion" in a report that reveals the extent of structural bias against these organizations.

The report "Changement de narratif: besoins et aspiratios des organismes musulmans" (OIRQ, 2024) highlighted the growing gap between Muslim communities and other segments of Canadian and Quebec society, including the philanthropic sector.

These findings encourage foundations to rely on evidence rather than exaggerated perceptions when defining their funding priorities.

> "It's two stories that don't want to mix, and yet they're coming together—they're already mixed."
> Sarah El Attar

In practical terms, how can these principles be turned into action? The first step is to deconstruct the false oppositions and stereotypes inherited from history — the dominant narratives that fuel mistrust — in order to rebuild more accurate and shared stories. Next, it is necessary to reinvest in our fundamental values — secularism, feminism, and democracy — through an inclusive lens. Finally, we must build new bridges between philanthropy and communities.

Islamophobia is a form of injustice that threatens the very foundations of a fair and equal society. Ignoring this reality weakens the principle of equal protection for all citizens, deepens social divides, and undermines the State's duty to protect its populations, particularly the most marginalized groups.

In the face of these threats, it is essential for civil society and philanthropic institutions to mobilize in defense of the rights of religious minorities, including Muslims. Recognizing religious and cultural diversity is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral imperative for any society that aspires to equality and social justice. Combating Islamophobia also means upholding the very foundations of human dignity for all.

Deconstructing Dominant Narratives

We must deconstruct the narratives that we tell ourselves in the West to reassure ourselves—the stories in which We (Quebecers, Westerners) are naturally democratic, egalitarian, and secular, as opposed to Them (Muslims), who are supposedly antithetical to these values.

Rights are not attributes of identity, but political and universal constructs. Equality, secularism, and democracy are not innate to Quebec or the West: they are universal ideals, hard-won all over the world—including here in Quebec, through the struggles of trade unionists, feminists, and language activists.

Islamophobia is a paralyzing trap. It locks Muslim people into a suspicious identity that they must constantly justify or correct. It also traps non-Muslim Quebecers in an illusion of moral or civilizational superiority, which distracts them from their own blind spots: persistent sexism, systemic racism, economic inequalities, and a reluctance to confront their own colonial history, both past and present, effectively preventing our society from moving forward.

REINVESTING IN FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Secularism, Feminism, Democracy

Human rights, democracy, and equality require the constant contribution of all sectors of society, including the philanthropic sector. They are neither immutable achievements nor trophies.

Tackling Islamophobia means reclaiming:
- **Secularism**, as freedom of conscience and benevolent neutrality from institutions;
- **Feminisms**, where multiple paths to emancipation are recognized;
- **Democracy**, defined by real equality of access to rights and decision-making spaces.

By strengthening these three pillars, philanthropy can help solidify a Quebec society that benefits everyone.

Secularism: Neutrality of the State, Plurality of Citizens

Islamophobic narrative

The visible presence of Muslim religious symbols is framed as a threat to state neutrality, thereby legitimizing the exclusion of Muslim individuals from certain jobs or public spaces.

Legal basis	Points of concern raised by rights organizations	Experiences of Muslim communities
According to the Act respecting the laicity of the State (2019), the Quebec government is secular, which implies: - Separation between public institutions and religions, - Religious neutrality of the State, - Equality of all citizens, - Freedom of conscience and religion. The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (1975) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) protect these fundamental freedoms, reinforced by international human rights commitments.	The Ligue des droits et libertés warns against dogmatic secularism, which, by excessively restricting individual freedoms, distorts the original principle. The Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) points out that secularism aims for institutional neutrality, not individual uniformity, and has expressed concern about the discriminatory impacts of Bill 21.	Concrete restrictions on freedom of conscience (dress code, zoning of places of worship, access to certain jobs); A climate of increased stigmatization, which makes it more difficult for them to practice their faith in public spaces.

Alternative narrative

Inclusive secularism protects the neutrality of the state while ensuring that everyone, believers and non-believers alike, has an equal place in the common and public sphere.

REINVESTING IN FUNDAMENTAL VALUES
Secularism, Feminism, Democracy

Plural Feminisms*: Multiple Equalities and Self-Determination

Islamophobic narrative
Muslim women are necessarily oppressed, and therefore Islam is incompatible with gender equality, which justifies banning their religious symbols rather than guaranteeing them autonomy of choice.

Legal basis	Points of concern raised by rights organizations	Experiences of Muslim communities
The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (1975) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) guarantee equality between women and men as well as freedom of conscience and religion.	The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) emphasized that restricting access to public employment for veiled women constitutes discrimination based on gender and religion.	There are a variety of reasons why Muslim women choose to wear the veil, such as their identity, spirituality, or even political stance.
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), ratified by Canada, recognizes women's autonomy, including their religious choices.	The Fédération des femmes du Québec and other feminist groups point out that equality cannot be achieved by excluding women from the public sphere.	Muslim women face a combination of Islamophobia and sexism; high rates of discrimination in hiring and in the housing market.
		Nearly 73% say they feel less safe in public spaces since the adoption of Bill 21.[78]

Alternative narrative
Inclusive feminism protects the body and the material and political autonomy of every woman. It combats all forms of sexism without reproducing exclusions.

*Diversity of feminisms
The term covers a variety of movements: intersectional feminism, Indigenous feminism, secular feminism, reformist Muslim feminism, decolonial feminism, queer feminism, Black feminism, and others. All share a desire for social and gender-based justice, but take different paths and prioritize different issues.
It is a movement and a way of thinking that aims for gender equality and the liberation of women from all forms of oppression and discrimination, based on women's right to control their own bodies and make their own choices without coercion.

REINVESTING IN FUNDAMENTAL VALUES
Secularism, Feminism, Democracy

Democracy: Participation and Equality Before the Law

Islamophobic narrative
Muslims are portrayed as having an allegiance and a religious political agenda (reduced and simplified to what is referred to as Sharia law) that threatens democratic sovereignty, institutions, and national cohesion.

Legal basis

Democracy is a political system that bases the legitimacy of power on the expression of the will of all citizens, who are considered equal.[79]

The Quebec Charter (1975) and the Canadian Charter (1982) guarantee civil and political rights, including freedom of association, expression, and religion.

At the international level, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR -1966)[80] enshrines equal access to public service (Art. 25(c)).

Points of concern raised by rights organizations

The League for Rights and Freedoms and Amnesty International Canada warn that measures such as Bill 21 weaken the rule of law and democratic quality if they fuel exclusion and discrimination.

The CDPDJ emphasizes that secularism aims to ensure the neutrality of institutions, not the standardization of individuals, and has expressed concerns about the discriminatory effects of Bill 21.

Several studies show that Muslims theoretically have the same civil rights as others, but encounter invisible barriers, including increased border control, suspicion regarding security, and underrepresentation in public office.

Experiences of Muslim communities

Muslim associations are regularly called into question, which discourages civic engagement.

A feeling of exclusion and of second-class citizenship especially since the adoption of Bill 21.

Alternative narrative
A vibrant democracy is achieved through equal participation of all. Groups that help keep it in check help and charters protect minorities (including religious minorities), thereby strengthening social cohesion.

By reaffirming these principles in all their inclusive breadth, philanthropy can bring people together across divides. This does not mean rejecting secularism, feminism, or democracy—on the contrary, it means acting as their guardians by refusing to allow them to be used as tools of exclusion.

CONVERGING

CONVERGING

Cross-Referenced Findings and Opportunities

Real transformation emerges when intentions converge — and when gaps are openly acknowledged. This section brings into dialogue two perspectives: that of the philanthropic sector and that of Muslim community organizations. It offers practitioners a data-informed analysis to help outline the contours of a possible, sustainable, and transformative collaboration.

It explores structural barriers, inherited mistrust, patterns of underrepresentation, and institutional silences — but also highlights key points of anchorage: emerging practices of trust-based philanthropy, a growing willingness to build bridges, and a mutual recognition that remains modest yet genuine.

This section is particularly useful for professionals engaged in program design, evaluation, partnerships, or internal policy transformation. It sheds light on the levers that can be mobilized to move beyond intentions and build meaningful, structural alliances.

Surveys of the philanthropic sector and focus groups with Muslim communitiess

In the spring of 2025, a qualitative survey was conducted among Quebec and Canadian foundations that invest in Quebec, in order to better understand how the issue of Islamophobia is taken into account in their funding practices and internal dynamics. The survey reached 230 public and private foundations, 15% of which participated (a response rate that corresponds to the average observed for this type of initiative). The diversity of the foundations surveyed in terms of size, language, and scope of action, is reflected in the respondents' profiles. The survey revealed that the community has a keen interest in the issue and a clear willingness to take action.

Meanwhile, the Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (Quebec Observatory on Racial Inequality) hosted two discussion groups in the fall of 2024, bringing together people from 13 local, regional, and national Muslim organizations. Held mainly in person, with a hybrid format to encourage participation, these meetings explored the realities, experiences, and needs of communities through open and collaborative exchanges. The findings reveal a lack of knowledge about the philanthropic sector, a certain mistrust of it, and a clear need for better support.

A Shared Desire to Move Forward, but Structural Barriers

Data from a survey conducted among Quebec's philanthropic sector reveal a clear finding: Islamophobia is recognized as an important issue. However, its practical integration into practices remains limited. The foundations surveyed say they lack tools, training, and, above all, detailed knowledge of the realities experienced by Muslim communities. Only 21% consider themselves to have a good understanding of these issues, and more than half have no formal mechanisms in place to counter specific biases or stereotypes. However, none mentioned any ideological reluctance to fund these communities—the obstacles cited are primarily structural: difficulty in identifying partners, lack of applications received, or absence of consolidated networks, to name a few.

The findings are somewhat similar among Muslim organizations surveyed by the OIRQ in 2024. These groups report a lack of knowledge about the philanthropic sector, which they perceive as complex and lacking in transparency, as well as a heightened sense of caution when it comes to submitting funding applications. The organizations' teams mention adapting their vocabulary to appear "less threatening," as they fear offending or being misunderstood—which demonstrates the direct impact of Islamophobia on funding relationships.

100%

Respondents consider Islamophobia to be a social problem

29%	Priority issue
67%	To be addressed alongside other issues
4%	Other: Yes, more than other issues, but not necessarily a priority

Building Trust and a Mutual Interest in Strengthening It

Despite these barriers, the data reveal promising opportunities. Foundations are beginning to adopt practices known as "trust-based philanthropy" (simplified forms, multi-year support, flexibility in reporting), which are precisely those that Muslim organizations consider most suited to their reality. These organizations also report more positive experiences with foundations than with government donors, appreciating the more direct and less standardized relationship that develops with them.

This convergence paves the way for concrete alliances. On the philanthropic side, several respondents expressed a desire to do more, including training their teams, systematically including cultural and religious considerations in funding criteria, or publicly supporting Muslim communities—an initiative that still remains rare today (only 11% of foundations do so). On the community side, Muslim organizations emphasize their need for autonomy, safe spaces to pursue their mission, and support that allows them to speak collectively, in a context where the political and media climate exacerbates mistrust.

Implementation of initiatives to simplify the grant application process:

68%	Streamlining administrative requirements
21%	Delegating decision-making to external selection committees
14%	Providing training for project leaders
43%	Others: • Simplified application steps • Simplified or non-required reporting • Multi-year funding • Relational approach • Partial delegation of decision-making

Key Challenge: Transforming Mistrust Into Constructive Collaboration

In other words, the groundwork is there. Philanthropy wants to equip itself to better understand and fund these realities; Muslim organizations see this support as an opportunity to consolidate their autonomy. There is a need for more dialogue as the values are already aligned.

And this dialogue is an opportunity to move beyond isolated projects and instead strengthen lasting ties through improved mutual recognition and concrete initiatives (cross-training, dedicated funds, support for community infrastructure, spaces for co-construction). This will allow for a collective response that matches the structural injustices observed and to give substance to the promises of inclusion that Quebec—and philanthropy itself—aspire to fulfill.

Perception of the role of foundations in combating Islamophobia

Four key positions emerge from the survey

1 Explicit and structured commitment

2 Broad intersectional approach

3 Indirect support through general equity initiatives

4 Lack of engagement or perception of non-applicability
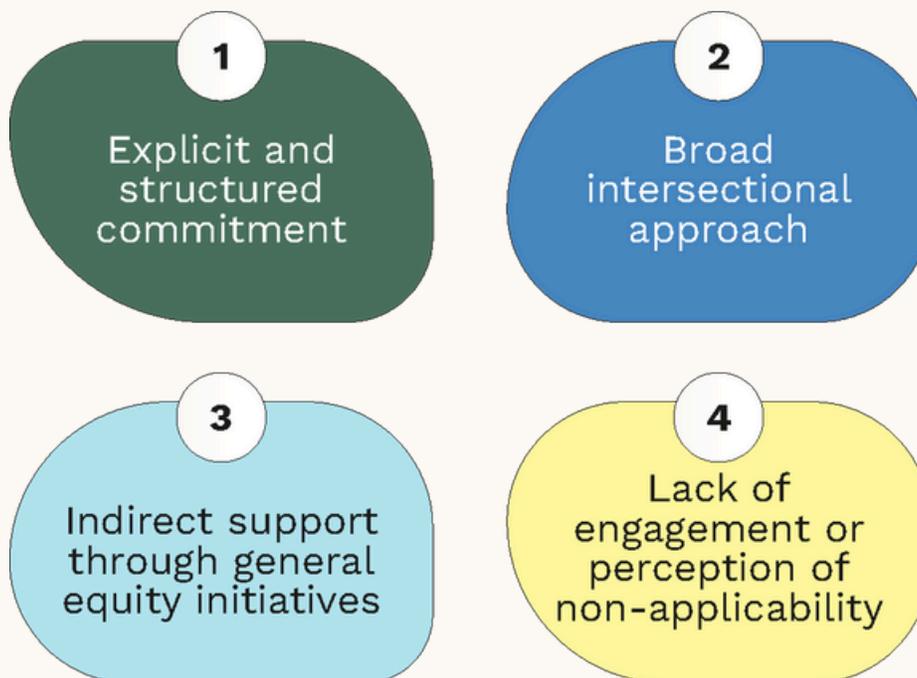
TAKING
ACTION

TAKING ACTION
Recommendations and Next Steps
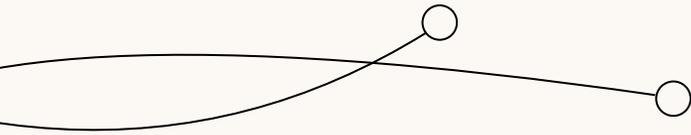
A commitment to combating Islamophobia requires fundamentally rethinking our practices (in funding, governance, public stance, alliances, and internal processes) in order to move from intention to concrete action. This project builds on initiatives already launched by several foundations and philanthropic networks aimed at embedding justice and equity at the heart of their actions. It is a collective and ongoing effort to align our values with our modes of intervention.

This section is intended as a professional guide, informed by the findings of our research and formulated to support systemic, strategic, and collaborative action. Each recommendation draws on lessons learned from our work and that of the sector and proposes ways to strengthen our collective impact. They are structured according to the major philanthropic levers of the —financial capital, influence, human resources, governance, learning, and partnerships—to cover all the dimensions that need to be transformed.

To go beyond a list of prescribed actions and adapt these frameworks to specific contexts and organizations, the following recommendations aim to fuel the transformations already underway, strengthen the coherence between our intentions and our structures, and make the fight against Islamophobia an essential component of our commitment to human rights and social justice.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In total, we present six strategic areas broken down into 39 concrete measures designed to mobilize all of our resources—whether financial, human, influenced-based, or knowledge-based. Each foundation regardless of its size is invited to choose, adapt, and prioritize these ideas. The goal is not to implement everything simultaneously, but to move forward in a coherent manner, step by step, according to foundations' capacity for action and regulatory framework. Here are some tips for tailoring efforts to the foundation's profile:

- **Smaller foundations:** Focus on simplifying funding applications, explicitly adding religious minorities (including Muslims) to your JEDI targets, and achieving a basic level of ESG alignment in your investments.
- **Foundations with significant investment capacity:** explore instruments such as community bonds, shareholder engagement, and explore the possibility of investing a portion of your endowment in impact funds designed to support Muslim communities or communities that follow Islamic ethics.
- **High-profile foundations:** leverage your influence to support coalitions and collective platforms, change public narratives around the Muslim community all the while ensuring that these efforts are carried out in partnership with the communities concerned and their narratives, and advocate (cautiously and in line with your mission) for public policy reforms when they are discriminatory.

Reading code
Before breaking down each area, we've put the main people involved in each measure in brackets, just to give you an idea. These codes help you figure out who within or around the foundation could take on the recommendation:

`GOV` Board of directors/governance and ethics committee,

`SEL` Selection committee and program teams,

`STR` Strategic development committee/management

`FIN` Finance department/responsible investment committee

`RH` Management/human resources committee

`CST` External consultants or advisors in the sector

`EFM` External investment fund managers

`PN` Philanthropic sector networks and associations

Area 1: Fair and ethical funding (donations and grants)

Funding is the primary lever that can be used to provide concrete support for the fight against Islamophobia. The way foundations award their donations and grants can either perpetuate inequalities or strengthen the capacity of marginalized communities to take action. By adopting more flexible, inclusive, and cooperative funding practices, funders provide Muslim organizations with the stability and confidence they need to develop their missions over the long term.

GOV **SEL** **STR**

1. Commit to stable and flexible funding: increase the proportion of multi-year grants and operating support awarded to Muslim organizations, in order to offer them the predictability and flexibility they need to develop their missions over the long term.

GOV **SEL** **STR**

2. Allocate funds dedicated to Muslim community initiatives: create budget envelopes specifically reserved for projects led for and by the Muslim community (arts, media, education, social justice, etc.), ensuring that selection criteria are developed in collaboration with the people concerned and adapted to their realities.

GOV **SEL**

3. Adopt trust-based philanthropy: simplify application and accountability processes for organizations from equity-seeking communities , provide them with unconditional or low-restriction funding where possible, and build funding relationships based on mutual support rather than control.

GOV **STR**

4. Explicitly include religious minorities in your equity goals: formally include the Muslim community (and other religious minorities) among the target audiences of your JEDI programs and funding allocation equity targets to ensure that they receive the same opportunities as other marginalized groups.

GOV	Board of directors/governance and ethics committee	**RH**	Management/human resources committee
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STR	Strategic development committee/management	**EFM**	External investment fund managers
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Reading code

Area 1: Fair and ethical funding (donations and grants)

SEL **CST**

5. Implement measures to improve accessibility to applications: offer alternative methods for submitting projects (e.g., video submissions), provide support tools such as a multilingual virtual assistant or a telephone helpline, and offer simplified, bilingual application templates to remove barriers to funding.

GOV **SEL**

6. Create a rapid response fund: establish a mechanism for awarding small emergency grants (e.g., < $25,000) within a few weeks to support agile action in the event of an incident of Islamophobia (legal support, psychosocial support, community mobilization, etc.)

GOV **STR** **PN**

7. Cooperate among donors: strengthen coordination and collaboration among foundations on the issue of combating Islamophobia (co-financing, exchange of best practices, joint calls for projects), in order to increase the collective impact of financial support and avoid blind spots or duplication of funding.

GOV **SEL** **RH**

8. Adopt a care-inspired funding approach: recognize that Muslim community organizations face challenging realities on a daily basis, often linked to global or local events (political crises, Islamophobic acts, polarizing debates). This means adjusting your funding practices to reflect understanding and compassion.

GOV **STR** **PN**

9. Support autonomous financial vehicles: support the creation of an autonomous philanthropic fund or foundation led by community representatives. The sector acts in equal partnership when providing financial and technical support for the emergence of an independent structure that defines its own priorities and criteria. This measure strengthens the financial self-determination of Muslim communities, which can funnel resources directly to the projects they deem most relevant to their empowerment.

GOV Board of directors/governance and ethics committee

SEL Selection committee and program teams

STR Strategic development committee/management

FIN Finance department/responsible investment committee

RH Management/human resources committee

CST External consultants or advisors in the sector

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PN Philanthropic sector networks and associations

Reading code

Area 2 : Invest | Strategically mobilize 95% of the portfolio

While grants represent 5% of a foundation's resources, invested capital accounts for the remaining 95%—a powerful lever for social change that is often underutilized. Aligning investments with our equity values allows us to combat Islamophobia indirectly but structurally, by influencing corporate practices and directing capital toward promising solutions for Muslim communities. Foundations, whether they manage their endowments internally or entrust them to third parties, have strategic leeway to invest responsibly and in solidarity.

GOV **FIN** **CST**

1. Adopt an ESG+Equity-aligned investment policy: formalize guidelines for ethical portfolio management, including the exclusion of companies that generate or monetize hate, misinformation, or religious discrimination, and the proactive inclusion of those that promote diversity and human rights (particularly religious rights) in their practices.

GOV **FIN** **EFM**

2. Direct a portion of the endowment toward social impact: allocate a targeted percentage of your assets to impact investment funds that support economic inclusion, access to housing, or entrepreneurship in Muslim communities. This can be done through existing funds or by developing new socially-minded financial vehicles.

FIN **EFM** **PN**

3. Explore investments that comply with Islamic ethics: invest in financial instruments that are compatible with Islamic principles (interest-free investments, sukuk bonds, profit and loss sharing vehicles). Where appropriate, participate in the creation of an impact fund that complies with the ethical and spiritual principles of Islam in partnership with other actors, in order to support projects aligned with the values of Muslim communities.

FIN **CST**

4. Issue or subscribe to community bonds: finance, through bond loans, collective infrastructure (cultural centres, clinics, housing cooperatives) supported by Muslim organizations. These community bonds offer a modest return, but have a high social impact within the neighbourhoods and communities they touch.

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Reading code

FIN **GOV** **CST**

5. Establish catalytic capital: use part of your financial resources as leverage by offering loan guarantees, taking "patient" equity stakes, or providing mezzanine capital to social enterprises from Muslim communities. This seed capital, which assumes greater risk or lower returns, unlocks other investments in projects with high social impact.

FIN **PN**

6. Practice shareholder engagement: as a shareholder, use your voice to influence companies—submitting shareholder resolutions, proxy voting, direct dialogue—to demand monitoring of hateful content on platforms, transparency on religious diversity within the workforce, and internal anti-discrimination policies.

FIN **EFM**

7. Place a portion of cash reserves in community financial institutions: deposit cash (working capital, term deposits) with credit unions, ethical banks, or community finance institutions aligned with social justice. This indirectly supports the financing of inclusive local projects while diversifying the foundation's financial partners.

FIN **CST**

8. Diversify portfolio management mandates: entrust part of your assets to management firms owned or run by people from equity-seeking communities. This broadens the diversity of the financial value chain while enabling a transfer of expertise to managers who are often underrepresented in the sector.

GOV **FIN**

9. Publish an annual portfolio alignment report: demonstrate transparency by reporting annually on the progress of your responsible endowment—the percentage of assets invested according to your ethical criteria, a summary of shareholder votes and engagements, and observed social impacts. This publicly available report reinforces accountability and encourages other actors to follow suit.

GOV **FIN**

10. Formalize an ethical divestment protocol: adopt a clear policy to plan for the rapid exclusion and withdrawal of companies directly or indirectly linked to hate speech, serious human rights violations, or religious discrimination. The mechanism includes alert thresholds, an exit schedule, and ideally, public monitoring and aligning asset management with JEDI commitments.

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Reading code

Area 3: Inclusive governance and human resources

Foundation leadership and internal teams must reflect the diversity of society in order to fully understand and serve all communities. Strengthening inclusive governance and adopting equitable human resources practices are therefore key leverage: by diversifying the voices around the table and ensuring a workplace free of discrimination, the foundation ensures that its decisions and operations incorporate the perspectives of those affected by Islamophobia.

GOV **RH**

1. Increase representation in leadership bodies: include more Muslim individuals—including Muslim women and Arabic-speaking Muslims—on boards of directors, strategic committees, and management teams. Diverse representation at the top ensures a better understanding of the realities of the communities concerned and more informed decisions.

GOV **SEL** **STR**

2. Establish participatory governance: actively involve the communities concerned in the foundation's decision-making processes. For example, create an advisory committee comprising representatives of Muslim communities to co-develop strategic directions, define funding criteria, and participate in project evaluation. This sharing of decision-making power ensures that philanthropic actions respond to real needs on the ground.

RH **GOV**

3. Adopt internal policies around diversity and equity: establish clear guidelines and sanction all forms of discrimination or bias within the organization. A written Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy backed by governance will anchor these principles into all aspects of the foundation's management.

RH **GOV**

4. Establish a confidential complaint procedure: provide employees, volunteers, and partners with a safe channel to report any incidents of discrimination or harassment related to Islamophobia (or any other form of racism). This procedure must include a clear protocol for handling complaints, including the possibility of independent investigations, and ensure that corrective measures are communicated.

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Reading code

Area 3: Inclusive governance and human resources

RH **CST**

5. Strengthen ongoing training on bias: regularly train staff and managers on conscious and unconscious biases, with a special focus on biases targeting Muslims and the dynamics of structural racism. Conduct practical workshops (e.g., analysis of religious issues in project risks, inclusive practices at events) to embed these lessons in everyday professional life.

RH

6. Recruit and retain diverse talent: adapt HR practices to promote the hiring, retention, and career development of people of colour, particularly Muslims. For example, introduce anonymous application screening, diversify recruitment channels to reach a wider pool of candidates, promote intercultural and linguistic skills as assets, and offer career support. A truly inclusive and representative workplace strengthens the foundation's ability to understand and serve all communities.

RH **GOV**

7. Establish an internal solidarity initiative: when events affect Muslim communities, send a message of solidarity, offer access to confidential psychosocial support, and allow for paid leave on an ad hoc basis. This empathetic response protects the well-being of affected employees and volunteers and demonstrates a respectful organizational culture.

RH **GOV**

8. Offer flexibility for religious holidays: allow employees to exchange a non-mandatory public holiday for paid personal leave and make working hours flexible so they can celebrate Eid or rest during Ramadan. This measure is easy to implement and normalizes religious diversity without significantly impacting operations.

RH **GOV**

9. Share the burden of inclusive education fairly: fund external training and educational resources so that all staff can develop their anti-racism skills, rather than relying on Muslim employees to explain Islamophobia. This approach avoids tokenization, distributes the learning effort, and reinforces collective responsibility.

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Reading code

Area 4: Harnessing influence capital and strengthening advocacy

Beyond the financial weight, foundations have considerable influence capital through their credibility, networks, and public voice, which they can leverage to affect discourse and policies. Although not all foundations can or wish to intervene in the political arena, each can contribute in its own way to reducing Islamophobia in the public sphere. For those able to do so, taking firm public positions or supporting advocacy is a natural extension of their social mission. Foundations that prefer avoiding the political arena can still take action behind the scenes, amplifying positive narratives and bringing stakeholders together around common solutions.

GOV **SEL** **STR**

1. Support advocacy work: fund and support civil society organizations that fight racism and defend the rights of Muslim people. By supporting actors such as legal clinics, civil liberties groups, and public policy watchdogs, philanthropy helps create a counterweight that can roll back Islamophobic initiatives and propose equitable legislative alternatives.

GOV **PN**

2. Take a public stance against Islamophobia: when the foundation has the legal and strategic latitude to do so, publish statements, opinion pieces, or press releases—alone or in coalition—condemning discriminatory rhetoric or measures and reaffirming equal rights. This public stance, supported by community partners, signals a firm commitment to democracy and helps transform the public narrative.

PN **SEL**

3. Foster positivity in media discourse: tap into the networks and credibility of the philanthropic sector to encourage more responsible and nuanced media coverage of Muslim realities. This may involve supporting community media or alternative platforms that give a voice to Muslims, funding public awareness campaigns to break down stereotypes, or developing training programs for media professionals on diversity and bias.

GOV **STR** **PN**

4. Play a unifying and catalytic role: capitalize on your ability to bring together affected communities, decision-makers, public institutions, the private sector, and other actors to initiate a constructive dialogue on the fight against Islamophobia. By creating these spaces for consultation and cooperation, foundations can facilitate the emergence of common commitments, align complementary initiatives, and amplify the reach of each collectively developed intervention.

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Reading code

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Area 5: Learn, document, share, and transfer power

To remain effective and legitimate, foundations must engage in a process of continuous learning alongside the communities they support. Deepening our understanding of the realities experienced by Muslim people, rigorously documenting the dynamics of Islamophobia, and widely sharing this knowledge allows us to refine our strategies and equip all stakeholders involved. This learning process goes hand in hand with a reflection on the transfer of power: agency and leadership are redistributed when communities' expertise are recognized and they can take part in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

RH **GOV** **CST**

1. Provide ongoing training and awareness-raising for philanthropic actors: invest in developing your teams' knowledge (employees, managers, and even donors) of the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic realities of Muslim communities. Regularly organize workshops, cross-training sessions, and visits in partnership with Muslim organizations to deconstruct stereotypes, increase mutual understanding, and integrate a decolonial perspective into your programs. This learning process must also include introspection on our own institutional biases and privileges in order to adjust our practices accordingly.

STR **CST**

2. Document and analyze Islamophobia in a collaborative approach: support independent and collaborative research that helps to better understand the extent and evolution of Islamophobia in Quebec and around the world. Specifically, fund studies conducted between academic researchers and members of Muslim communities, encourage the collection of specific socio-demographic data around markers like employment, income, and health—broken down by religious affiliation where applicatble—,, and build rigorous knowledge bases on which to base action. Foundations ensure that results collected through qualitative and quantitative data accurately reflect the reality on the ground when the people concerned participate directly in defining the research questions.

PN **STR**

3. Share knowledge freely and openly: widely disseminate the information and analyses you have gathered in a way that is accessible. For example, produce clear summaries, infographics, and striking data visualizations illustrating the situation of Muslim communities and the state of Islamophobia in Quebec. Make this knowledge easily accessible to others by offering open-access publications (reports, multilingual webinars, practical fact sheets) and adopting open licenses to allow for the reuse of content. Shared knowledge will equip not only the philanthropic sector, but also other actors (municipalities, educational institutions, businesses) in the fight against prejudice.

GOV Board of directors/governance and ethics committee

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Reading code

Area 6: Community partnerships and empowerment

When dealing with a systemic issue such as Islamophobia, it is essential to work with the communities concerned—rather than for them. Building lasting partnerships with Muslim organizations and investing in the empowerment of these communities greatly increases the effectiveness of philanthropic actions. By focusing on equal relationships, supporting the development of local leadership, and contributing to financial autonomy, foundations are helping truly decolonize philanthropy and create lasting social justice.

SEL **STR**

1. Establish lasting partnerships with Muslim organizations: shift from a one-off funding approach to a long-term collaborative approach. Co-develop projects from the outset, maintain regular dialogue with community leaders, and adjust your support in line with changing needs. By adopting a relationship of equals based on mutual respect and recognition, joint actions have a farther reach.

SEL **STR**

2. Support the emergence of strong leadership within communities: fund mentoring, training, and networking programs for young Muslims and current community leaders. By strengthening mobilization, advocacy, and project management capacities within the communities, philanthropy helps to bring forth a new generation of diverse spokespersons and decision-makers capable of influencing social change.

SEL **STR**

3. Prioritize the well-being and resilience of people facing Islamophobia: include funding for support services for individuals directly affected by discrimination and hate. Whether funding hotlines, support groups, legal clinics, or community healing activities, these initiatives strengthen communities' capacity to overcome adversity and remain engaged in civic life despite hardship.

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Reading code

GOV **STR** **PN**

4. Promote the financial autonomy of affected communities: support the creation of philanthropic structures led by the communities themselves. For example, help establish an autonomous fund or foundation dedicated to the priorities of Muslim communities. Provide technical and financial support for an entity that is governed by representatives of the populations concerned. This allows communities to exercise direct control over some of the resources, invest in their own solutions, and direct funding toward what they deem most relevant to their empowerment.

Each foundation can draw elements from these recommendations that resonate with its mission, values, and capabilities. The important thing is to move forward in good faith, while daring to challenge the status quo and making these changes permanent. Decolonizing philanthropy means combining financial, human, influence, and knowledge resources, to help build a Quebec where no one has to choose between their faith and full citizenship.

6 areas

39 recommendations

1 - Fair and ethical funding

Commit to stable and flexible funding

Allocate funds dedicated to Muslim community initiatives

Adopt trust-based philanthropy

Explicitly include religious minorities in your equity goals

Implement measures to improve accessibility to applications

Create a rapid response fund

Cooperate among donors

Adopt a care-inspired funding approach

Support autonomous financial vehicles

2 - Invest

Adopt an ESG+Equity-aligned investment policy

Direct a portion of the endowment toward social impact

Explore investments that comply with Islamic ethics

Issue or subscribe to community bonds

Establish catalytic capital

Practice shareholder engagement

Place a portion of cash reserves in community financial institutions

Diversify portfolio management mandates

Publish an annual portfolio alignment report

Formalize an ethical divestment protocol

3 - Governance and human resources

Increase representation in leadership bodies

Establish participatory governance

Adopt internal policies around diversity and equity

Establish a confidential complaint procedure

Strengthen ongoing training on bias

Recruit and retain diverse talent

Establish an internal solidarity initiative

Offer flexibility for religious holidays

Share the burden of inclusive education fairly

4 - Influence and advocacy

Support advocacy work

Take a public stance against Islamophobia

Foster positivity in media discourse

Play a unifying and catalytic role

5 - Learn, document, and transfer power

Provide ongoing training and awareness-raising for philanthropic actors

Document and analyze Islamophobia in a collaborative approach

Share knowledge freely and openly

6 - partnerships

Establish lasting partnerships with Muslim organizations

Support the emergence of strong leadership within communities

Prioritize the well-being and resilience of people facing Islamophobia

Promote the financial autonomy of affected communities

CONCLUSION

Confronted with Islamophobia, Quebec's philanthropic sector finds itself at a crossroads. This report has highlighted how Islamophobia is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather a symptom of deeply rooted systemic inequalities, held up by colonialism, post-9/11 security measures, or intersecting dynamics of structural racism and sexism. Philanthropy has the responsibility to take action against Islamophobia if we are to remain true to our purpose and our principles of universal rights.

As actors committed to the common good, we have a collective responsibility to rise to these challenges and take action. This means challenging our reflexes, rethinking our models, and embracing a truly systemic vision of social change to tackle Islamophobia and help protect Muslim communities. More broadly, the effects will contribute to building a more just society for all groups seeking equity. By taking up the fight against this specific form of hatred, Quebec philanthropy is also strengthening its commitment to combating all forms of exclusion.

This challenge is also an opportunity. Fighting Islamophobia pushes us to innovate, build new bridges between communities, and adopt more inclusive and transparent practices that will benefit our entire ecosystem. By daring to converge—between foundations, with Muslim communities, and alongside other civil society partners—we amplify the reach of each intervention and lay the foundations for transformative philanthropy to address the root causes of injustice rather than merely treating its symptoms.

Ultimately, committing to fighting Islamophobia aligns with philanthropy's original and overarching purpose: to defend fundamental rights and to promote human dignity and social justice. In standing against Islamophobia, foundations show that true solidarity knows no ethnic or religious bounds—it cements social cohesion. Philanthropy can serve as a model for creating a more unified world where equality and respect are values that are put into action.

It is now up to us to turn intentions into action. The recommendations proposed in this report outline an ambitious but achievable roadmap toward bolder and fairer philanthropy. It is up to each foundation and each donor to take on these recommendations, adapt them to their context, and use them as a lever for tangible change. The task is vast but shared: by joining forces, sharing our knowledge, and supporting Muslim communities with humility and determination, we can push back against Islamophobia and, in doing so, strengthen the foundations of a truly inclusive Quebec.

Let us commit fully, together, to ensuring that the philanthropic promise of equity and justice is fulfilled.

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APPENDICES

The appendices provide practical and conceptual resources to support the implementation of the preceding recommendations. To act in an informed and consistent manner, foundations need a shared language, concrete tools, and strategic benchmarks. This section provides a critical glossary of key terms, a list of acronyms used, and examples of criteria and tools to guide philanthropic action from a social justice perspective.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

- **CAIR**: Council on American-Islamic Relations
- **CDFI**: Community Development Financial Institution
- **CDPDJ**: Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission)
- **CEDAW**: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- **CJPME**: Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
- **COco**: The Centre for Community Organizations
- **EDI**: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (often used interchangeably with JEDI when the concept of justice is implied)
- **ESG**: Environmental, Social, and Governance (criteria used in responsible investing to assess the non-financial performance of companies)
- **ICCPR**: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- **JEDI**: Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (a term encompassing the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, with the addition of social justice)
- **LDL**: Ligue des droits et libertés (in French)
- **NCCM**: National Council of Canadian Muslims
- **NPO**: Non-profit organization (e.g., associations, foundations, charities)
- **OIRQ**: Observatoire des inégalités raciales au Québec (in French)
- **QC**: Quebec
- **UN**: United Nations

EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA FOR IMPACTFUL PRIVATE PLACEMENTS

When a foundation decides to invest in private companies, projects, or funds that are not listed on the stock market to generate social impact, it is essential to define clear criteria to guide these investments. Here are a few examples that could be included in an impact investment analysis grid:

- **Contribution to reducing inequality:** The project or company must demonstrate that it brings concrete improvements for a marginalized population (for example, by creating jobs for young Muslims in a context of employment discrimination, or by facilitating access to housing for families from minority backgrounds).
- **Respect for human rights and ethical standards:** Ensure that no investments are made in entities whose practices seriously violate fundamental rights. This includes excluding any investments linked to forced labor, oppressive surveillance of populations (such as mass surveillance targeting religious communities), or projects that violate international humanitarian law.
- **Inclusive governance:** Examine the extent to which the company or project integrates diversity into its decision-making bodies and adopts internal anti-discrimination policies. A company that is majority-owned or managed by people from underrepresented groups (including religious minorities) or that involves beneficiaries in its governance will be valued, as it reflects power sharing and a greater understanding of needs on the ground.
- **Measurable community benefits:** Prioritize investments whose positive impacts are quantifiable and monitored over time. For example, an investment in a service cooperative could be evaluated based on the number of members of racialized communities it lifts out of economic insecurity, or a community real estate investment fund based on the number of affordable housing units created in neighbourhoods that are homes to minority groups. minorities.
- **Cultural or religious alignment:** Where applicable, consider whether the investment is consistent with the cultural or religious values of the communities concerned. For example, an investment fund that complies with Islamic finance principles (no usurious interest, speculative or unethical activities) could be a positive inclusion criterion if the foundation seeks to support initiatives aligned with the beliefs of its Muslim beneficiaries.

GUIDELINES TO BE COMMUNICATED TO FUND MANAGERS REGARDING SHAREHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

If the foundation entrusts the management of its endowment to external managers or mutual funds, it is advisable to provide them with clear guidelines regarding expectations in terms of shareholder engagement (action taken as an investor). Here are some examples of instructions that a foundation could communicate to its portfolio managers:

- **Prioritize diversity and anti-hate issues in voting:** Require managers to vote, on behalf of the foundation, in favour of shareholder resolutions that promote diversity (e.g., adopting inclusive hiring policies, publishing data on staff and management diversity) and that they support proposals to strengthen the moderation of hate speech on online platforms or hold companies accountable for practices that fuel hate.
- **Proactive dialogue with portfolio companies:** Ask managers to regularly talk with portfolio companies about topics such as preventing workplace harassment (including forms of religious discrimination), monitoring and moderating extremist content on social media, or complying with international standards in supply chains. The goal is for the foundation, through its agents, to push companies to improve their practices rather than simply playing a passive role as an investor.
- **Report on actions taken:** Require managers to provide periodic reports detailing shareholder engagement initiatives undertaken in line with the foundation's values. This report could include a list of votes cast on ESG/JEDI resolutions, the results of dialogues with companies (and the progress or commitments obtained from them), as well as any partnerships the manager has with responsible investor coalitions. This information will enable the foundation to monitor the alignment of financial management with its social mission and to readjust its mandates as necessary.

JEDI SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR ISLAMOPHOBIA

Self-assessment or organizational analysis tools that focus on JEDI objectives are useful in supporting foundations' internal systems and take into account the context of Islamophobia. Such tools include diagnostic grids, questionnaires, or analytical frameworks that foundations can apply to their own practices in order to identify their strengths and blind spots. Several groups and researchers have already developed guides on this subject: for example, in 2015, the American coalition D5 created a <u>DEI self-assessment grid for foundations</u> (later translated by Philanthropic Foundations Canada) that covers five strategic areas and proposes best practices to adopt. Similarly, Canadian organizations offer <u>DEI toolkits for NPOs</u> (in French). Drawing on these existing resources, we propose a simplified self-assessment tool that is specifically tailored to help include Muslim communities and the fight against Islamophobia.

The tool is organized into four sections made up of questions and evaluation criteria. A foundation can use it to conduct annual or biannual internal reviews and check off the items it considers accomplished, noting those in progress, and identifying those that require future action. This exercise can be carried out in a participatory manner (involving various team members, or even external partners for a cross-check) in order to enrich the reflection process.

1. Leadership and governance

Strategic priorities:
- Is the commitment to combating Islamophobia explicitly included in the foundation's strategic documents (JEDI plan, theory of change, etc.)?
- Has the board of directors discussed and approved objectives along these lines?

Representation:
- Does the composition of the board of directors and management reflect ethnocultural and religious diversity?
- Are there people of Muslim faith or from racialized communities among the decision-makers? If not, are external consultation mechanisms in place to compensate for this lack of representation?

Training and awareness for leaders:
- Have board members and senior managers received training or information on the concept of <u>systemic racism</u> (in French), unconscious bias, and the specific realities experienced by Muslim communities (e.g., through readings, workshops, testimonials)?
- Are they comfortable with JEDI vocabulary (do they understand, for example, the difference between individual prejudice and systemic discrimination)?

Accountability:
- Does a governance body (JEDI committee or other) monitor the foundation's progress on diversity and inclusion, and take religion into account when doing so?
- Do EDI performance indicators influence the evaluation of the senior leader (e.g., in their annual review)?

2. Organizational culture and human resources management

Inclusive work environment:
- Does the foundation foster an environment where everyone, regardless of their identity (including religious), feels respected and valued?
- Is there a clear zero-tolerance policy toward discriminatory comments or actions (including Islamophobia)?

Accommodations and HR practices:
- Has the foundation put in place accommodations for the religious needs of its employees (flexible schedules for Ramadan or Friday prayers, prayer or meditation space, understanding of dietary restrictions at events, etc.)?
- Are these measures formalized and known to all?

Recruitment and training:
- Are the foundation's recruitment and selection processes designed to reduce bias (training for recruiters, anonymization of resumes, diversification of job posting channels, etc.)?
- When candidates have equal skills, does the organization make an effort to hire people from underrepresented groups?
- In addition, is regular training on EDI offered to staff to maintain awareness over the long term?

Learning and improvement:
- Does the foundation encourage sharing experiences on inclusion issues (e.g., team discussions after a workshop, or informal exchanges on each person's discoveries in this area)?
- Are (inevitable) mistakes or missteps analyzed without complacency but in a constructive spirit, in order to learn from them?

3. Grant allocation and relations with grantees

Accessibility of programs:
- When issuing a call for projects, does the foundation ensure that the information reaches grassroots organizations, including those run by religious minorities?
- Do the eligibility criteria not de facto exclude certain types of organizations (for example, requiring an organization to have been incorporated for five years may disadvantage young community associations)?
- Is the language used in communications inclusive and explicit about openness to projects involving Muslim communities?

Fair processes:
- Does the selection process include safeguards against bias? For example, is the selection committee diverse or trained in objectivity?
- Does it have clear criteria to avoid purely subjective judgments?
- Does it ask additional questions to project leaders from backgrounds less familiar with philanthropy, rather than dismissing them outright due to unspoken assumptions or misunderstandings?

Capacity building support:
- Does the foundation offer, directly or through partners, support to small emerging organizations (coaching, mentoring, management assistance, etc.) to help them build up their skills and sustain their actions? This capacity building approach is important in enabling grassroots groups (often from marginalized communities) to scale up and eventually access more substantial funding.

Respect and trust:
- Are relationships with grantee organizations characterized by mutual respect?
- Does the foundation seek feedback from its beneficiaries to improve its own practices (e.g., through an anonymous satisfaction survey or post-funding consultation)?
- Does it allow funded organizations reasonable flexibility in the use of funds (e.g., adapting the project along the way if the context changes), thereby demonstrating trust in their expertise in the field?

4. Public communication and sectoral engagement

Public statements:
- Does the foundation communicate its commitments to diversity and inclusion in its annual reports or on its website?
- Does it highlight the projects it supports that combat racism or promote social cohesion?
- In the event of a major hate incident in society, has it ever considered publishing a message of solidarity or support for those affected? This is not about turning every tragedy into an opportunity to communicate, but about checking whether the foundation feels legitimate and ready to uphold its values in public when it matters.

Collaboration and partnerships:
- Does the foundation participate in collectives, round tables, or industry events on JEDI issues?
- Is it a member of networks or coalitions (local or national) working to combat racism, promote migrant inclusion, prevent hatred, etc.? If so, does it contribute actively (by sharing data, co-financing joint initiatives, hosting activities, etc.)? If not, has it identified potential partners for the future?

Constructive influence:
- Does the foundation use its influential power with other donors, partners, or decision-makers to promote equity? For example, has it ever raised awareness among other philanthropists about Islamophobia (even if only informally)?
- Has it engaged in dialogue with public authorities on issues affecting its beneficiaries (without necessarily lobbying officially, but by sharing its experience in the field)?
- The idea is to see whether the foundation positions itself as a positive opinion leader in the wider ecosystem.

Transparency and sector learning:
- Does the foundation publish information about its JEDI practices and their results? For example, does it share disaggregated data (if available) on the diversity of its grantees, or case studies on what has worked or failed in its inclusion efforts?
- Foundations help advance the entire field by making certain data public (while respecting necessary confidentiality). This commitment goes hand in hand with signing voluntary transparency charters or initiatives.

Each foundation can supplement or adjust this questionnaire according to its specific needs. The important thing is to use it as a tool for internal dialogue: the above questions can serve as a basis for frank discussions within the team or board of directors, in order to celebrate progress and collectively recognize areas for improvement. Such a review, repeated periodically, will help to stay on course and permanently embed a JEDI culture in the organization.

SHORT GLOSSARY

Islamophobia
Hostility, mistrust, or hatred toward Islam and Muslim people. Islamophobia takes root in stereotypes, institutional discrimination, and violence. It is often a product of historical Orientalism, associations with terrorism, or contemporary xenophobic ideologies. The term "anti-Muslim racism" is also used to emphasize that this is a form of racism targeting a group perceived through the prism of religion.

Systemic racism
A form of racism embedded in social, economic, and political structures that creates persistent inequalities between groups even in the absence of individual discriminatory intentions. In a context of systemic racism, institutional norms, laws, or practices can indirectly disadvantage certain groups (e.g., racialized or religious minorities) and reproduce historical disadvantages. Recognizing systemic racism means looking beyond overtly hateful acts to analyze the dynamics of power and privilege embedded in systems.

Intersectionality
A concept describing how different forms of oppression or discrimination (based on gender, race, religion, social class, etc.) interact and accumulate. Applied to Islamophobia, intersectionality helps us understand, for example, that veiled Muslim women may experience both sexism and religious racism. An intersectional approach encourages foundations to take into account the complexity of identities and experiences in order to develop more fair and inclusive interventions.

Secularism
The principle of separation between public institutions and religious organizations, aimed at guaranteeing the neutrality of the state with regard to religions and the freedom of conscience of citizens. In Quebec, secularism takes on a particular flavour (sometimes referred to as "Quebec-style secularism") with, in particular, Bill 21, which prohibits certain state employees from wearing religious symbols. While the goal of secularism is to ensure equal treatment, it can be exploited to justify measures perceived as disproportionately targeting religious minorities—which then fuels Islamophobia under the guise of freedom or feminist discourse.

Responsible divestment
A strategy that involves withdrawing investments from companies or sectors considered ethically problematic or contrary to one's values. For example, practicing responsible divestment may mean excluding from one's portfolio companies involved in the sale of arms to authoritarian regimes, the exploitation, or violations of international law. This concept, linked to sustainable investing, provides tools for foundations who wish to align their financial endowments with their human rights' commitments.

SHORT GLOSSARY

Orientalisme

A term popularized by Edward Said in Orientalism (1978), it refers to the way in which the West (Europe, North America) has constructed stereotypical representations of "the Orient"—Arab, Muslim, and Asian peoples—by contrasting them with a supposedly rational and civilized West. Orientalism is a discourse of power that has been used to justify colonization and cultural domination by presenting the Orient as exotic, backward, or threatening.

This construct is not solely the result of colonial policy: Western writers, researchers, artists, and media outlets have contributed to it, and its effects continue to this day. Contemporary Islamophobia draws on old Orientalist stereotypes, caricaturing Muslims as a homogeneous group that is ultimately hostile to "Western values."

Since Said, several researchers (e.g., Houria Bouteldja, Gil Anidjar, Judith Butler, David Theo Goldberg, Nadia Fadil, Lila Abu-Lughod, Joseph Massad) have shown that Orientalism still affects perceptions: in post-9/11 security discourse, in popular culture (Jack Shaheen has identified more than 1,000 Hollywood films depicting "Arabs" as terrorists or despots), and in certain forms of imperial feminism that claim to save Muslim women.

In short, Orientalism essentializes the "Orient" and has real political effects. Islamophobia is part of a long history of domination and unequal narratives that must be deconstructed.

Arabe

The term Arab is a complex, shifting, and historically constructed category that can refer to linguistic, cultural, geopolitical, and even racialized realities depending on the context. It does not refer to a race, a homogeneous identity, or a single religious group.

In this report, we use the term "Arab" primarily to refer to populations originating from or hailing from the 22 member states of the League of Arab States, namely: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.

Hate crimes (Canada): Legal clarifications

The Canadian Criminal Code does not define a specific offense called a <u>hate crime</u>, but the term is used by the police and Statistics Canada to refer to any criminal offense motivated by hatred or prejudice toward an identifiable group. In short, if a person commits a criminal act (assault, vandalism, etc.) because of the victim's race, religion, gender, or other characteristic, it is considered a hate crime. The Criminal Code also includes offenses of "hate propaganda" (public incitement to hatred, promotion of genocide, etc.). In court, when it is proven that an ordinary crime is motivated by hatred, this constitutes an aggravating circumstance in sentencing. For example, graffiti is a misdemeanor, but if it is a swastika on a mosque, it is a hate crime, punishable by a more severe sentence.

Hate incidents

A non-legal term referring to non-criminal hateful acts (offensive speech, discrimination, harassment without direct threats, etc.). They do not fall under the Criminal Code, but can be just as traumatic and are often recorded by human rights commissions.