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Restrictions on Women's Religious Attire

More countries restrict women's ability to wear religious symbols or attire than require women to dress a certain way

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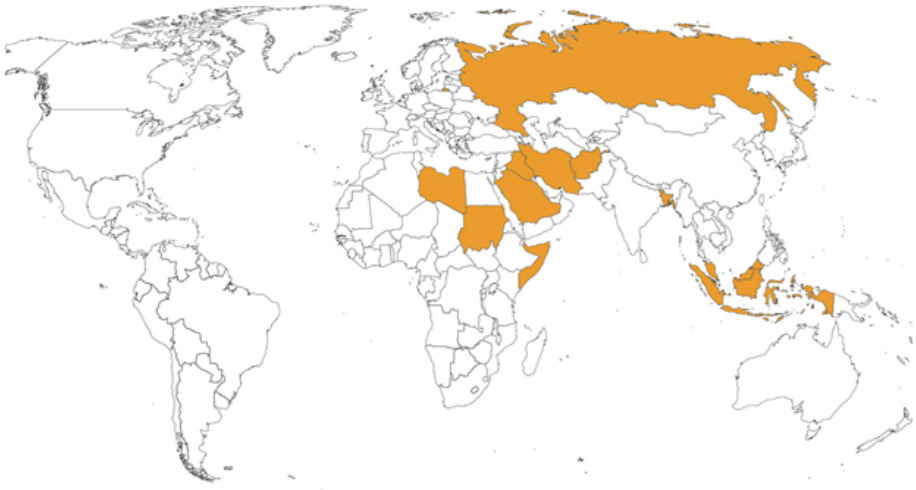
In many countries around the world, women's choices about their attire and appearance are restricted to some degree by government laws, policies or regulations. In recent years, most of these countries have had laws or policies that ban women from wearing religious attire in public places or limit their ability to do so in some circumstances. By comparison, far fewer countries require women to wear particular types of attire (such as headscarves or long dresses) for religious reasons.

As part of its annual study on government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion, Pew Research Center tracks the number of countries where some level of government – national, provincial or local – regulates "the wearing of religious symbols, such as head coverings for women and facial hair for men."[1] Looking at only those laws, policies or regulations that apply specifically to women, the Center finds that 50 of the 198 countries and territories included in the study had at least one law or policy regulating women's religious attire in 2012 and 2013, the two most recent years for which data are available. About three-quarters of those countries (39 of the 50, or 78%) had a law or policy *limiting women's ability* to wear

religious attire, while about a quarter (12 of the 50, or 24%) had at least one law or policy *requiring women* to wear particular attire. Some of these laws or policies applied nationwide, while others were imposed at the provincial, state or local level. One country – Russia – had policies forbidding women from wearing religious attire (in the territory of Stavropol, where Muslim headscarves, or hijabs, were banned in public schools) as well as policies requiring women to wear religious attire (in Chechnya, where women were required to wear hijabs in all public buildings).[2]

Where women's religious dress was required

Countries where some level of government required women to wear religious attire in certain circumstances in 2012 or 2013



Americas	Asia-Pacific	Europe	Middle East-N. Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa
None	Afghanistan Bangladesh Brunei Indonesia Iran Malaysia	Russia	Iraq Libya Saudi Arabia Sudan	Somalia

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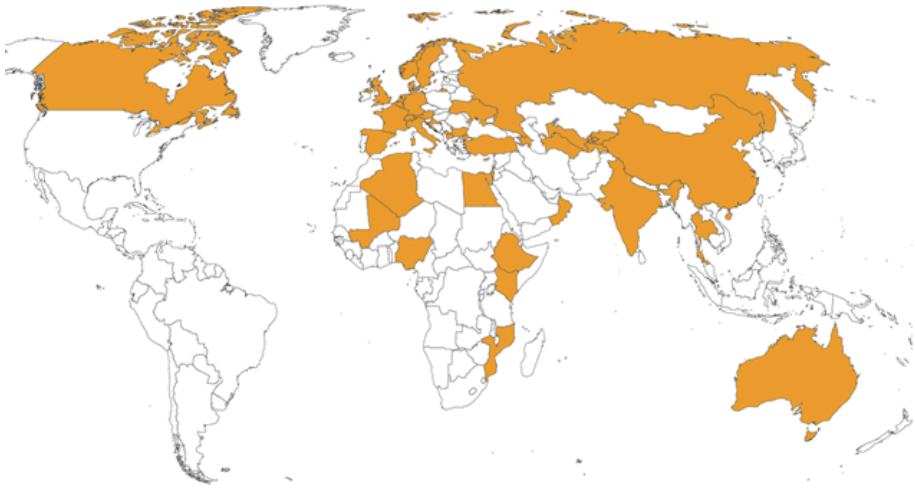
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Laws or policies limiting women's ability to wear religious attire were particularly common in Europe, where 18 of the region's 45 countries (40%) had at least one such restriction in 2012-2013.[3] Several European countries effectively banned certain types of religious garb in public places. In France, for example, authorities continued to enforce a law passed in 2010 that prohibits people from covering their faces in public places, including government buildings, public transportation and venues such as restaurants and movie theaters. Those who did not comply with a police officer's request to uncover their face could be fined or ordered to attend a citizenship class.[4] A similar

policy was in effect in Belgium, where police continued to enforce a 2011 federal law banning people from wearing clothing that covers the face, or large parts of it, in public places. Violators could be fined and/or detained for up to seven days.[5] In December 2012, Belgium's Constitutional Court upheld the ban, ruling that it was necessary to protect public safety, ensure equality between men and women and preserve "a certain conception of 'living together' in society."[6]

Where women's religious dress was restricted

Countries where some level of government prevented women from wearing religious attire in certain circumstances in 2012 or 2013



Americas	Asia-Pacific	Europe		Middle East-N. Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa
Canada	Australia	Austria	Norway	Algeria	Ethiopia
	Azerbaijan	Belgium	Macedonia	Egypt	Kenya
	China	Bulgaria	Russia	Israel	Mali
	India	Croatia	Spain	Oman	Mozambique
	Kyrgyzstan	Denmark	Sweden		Nigeria
	Singapore	France	Switzer-		
	Tajikistan	Germany	land		
	Thailand	Italy	Ukraine		
	Turkey	Kosovo	U.K.		
	Turkmenistan	Neth.			
	Uzbekistan				

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[10. See U.S. Department of State. May 20, 2013. "Algeria." 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom.]

[12. See Human Rights Watch. 2014. "World Report 2014: Indonesia.]

[18. See U.S. Department of State. July 28, 2014. "Kenya." 2013 Report on International Religious Freedom. Also see Namlola, Juma. March 25, 2015. "Muslim Leaders to Appeal High Court Ban on Veils in Schools." The Nation.]

[19. See U.S. Department of State. July 28, 2014. "Canada." 2013 Report on International Religious Freedom.]

[21. For more details on the index and the sources, see the Methodology for Pew Research Center's February 2015 report "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities."]

The Center's studies on religious restrictions are part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world. This project is jointly funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation.

Women also faced harassment over religious dress

Even in countries that do not officially regulate women's attire, women sometimes face social pressure to conform to local customs or societal norms concerning religious dress. Failure to comply can lead to harassment or acts of hostility directed at women by private individuals, organizations or social groups. This includes cases in which women are harassed for wearing religious dress, as well as cases in which they are harassed for perceived violations of religious dress codes. Pew Research Center's latest study on religious restrictions and hostilities finds that more than 50 countries had at least one incident involving this type of harassment in 2013.[7]

Harassment of women over religious dress is one of the 13 measures that make up Pew Research Center's annual index measuring the extent of social hostilities involving religion across the world.[8] To track harassment of women over religious dress, researchers at the Center comb through the same information sources used to track government restrictions on religion.

It is important to note that the coding of this measure simply reflects the presence or absence of harassment in a particular country, not the extent of the harassment. A country that had a single incident of harassment is coded the same as one that had widespread harassment. It is also very likely that the sources do not capture every incident of harassment in a particular

country, especially incidents that occurred within families. In addition, the definition of harassment used in the sources is very broad, covering everything from name-calling to physical assaults. The sources do not attempt to differentiate between the types of harassment or determine the severity of the harassment. However, the sources are particularly likely to take note of very serious incidents of harassment and high-profile incidents that result in media coverage. Therefore, the coding of this measure gives a general sense of how widespread such harassment is around the world and how it may contribute to the climate of human rights and religious freedom in particular countries.

As noted above, the question included in the Social Hostilities Index ("were women harassed for violating religious dress codes?") does not differentiate between harassment of women for wearing religious attire or for not wearing religious attire. For this report, researchers went back and recoded the data from 2012 and 2013 to determine how many countries had reports of each type of harassment.

During this two-year period, women were harassed for wearing religious dress in 33 of the 198 countries (17%). By contrast, women were harassed for not abiding by religious dress codes in 23 of the 198 countries (12%). There were relatively few countries in which both types of harassment occurred in 2012 and 2013 (five countries, or 3%).

In general, harassment of women over religious dress was in line with government laws, policies or regulations. For instance, in the 39 countries that restricted women's ability to wear certain kinds of religious attire, two-thirds of all incidents of harassment involved women who were wearing such attire. And in the 12 countries that mandated some form of religious dress, all the incidents of harassment reported in the study's sources involved women who failed to abide by the dress codes.

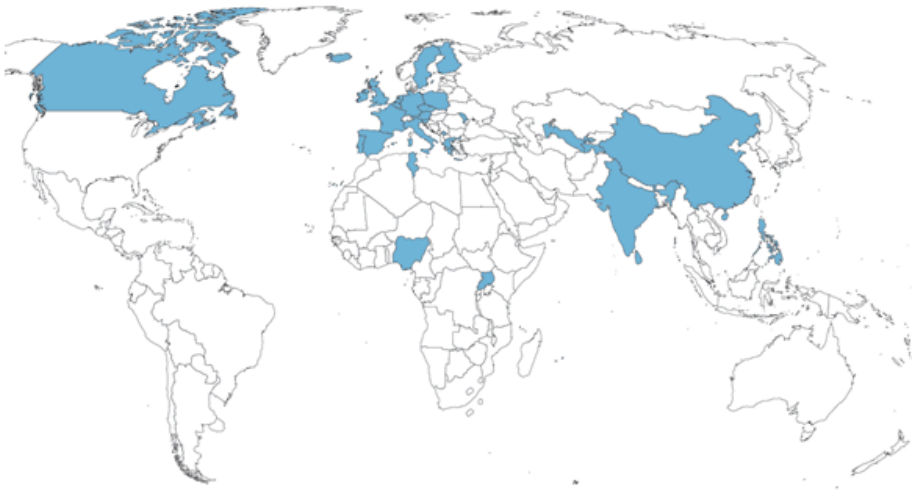
Type of harassment women faced over religious dress varied by region

When it comes to reported incidents of harassment, Europe stands out in one key respect: In nearly half of the region's

countries (21 of 45), there was at least one report of women being harassed for wearing religious attire in 2012-2013. This is a higher percentage than in the four other regions included in the study.

Where women were harassed for wearing religious dress

Countries that had at least one incident of this type of harassment in 2012 or 2013



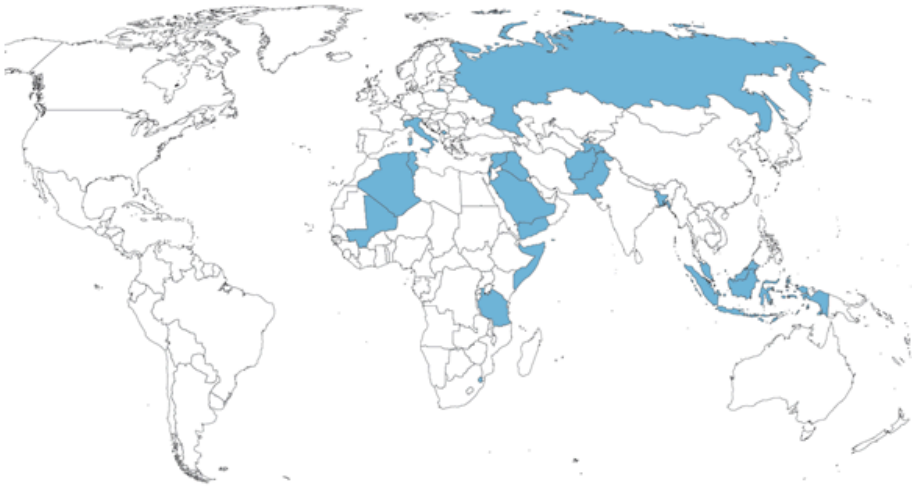
Americas	Asia-Pacific	Europe		Middle East-N. Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa
Canada	China	Austria	Liechten.	Tunisia	Mauritius
	India	Belgium	Malta		Nigeria
	Maldives	Czech Rep.	Moldova		Uganda
	Philippines	Finland	Neth.		
	Sri Lanka	France	Poland		
	Tajikistan	Germany	Portugal		
	Uzbekistan	Greece	Slovenia		
		Iceland	Spain		
		Ireland	Sweden		
		Italy	U.K.		
		Kosovo			

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Where women were harassed for NOT wearing religious dress

Countries that had at least one incident of this type of harassment in 2012 or 2013



Americas	Asia-Pacific	Europe	Middle East-N. Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa
None	Afghanistan	Italy	Algeria	Mali
	Bangladesh	Kosovo	Iraq	Somalia
	Brunei	Russia	Israel	Swaziland
	Indonesia		Palestinian territories	Tanzania
	Malaysia		Saudi Arabia	
	Maldives		Syria	
	Pakistan		Tunisia	
	Tajikistan		Yemen	

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[25. See Spitálszky, Andrea. 2013. "National Shadow Reports 2012-2013: Spain." European Network Against Racism.]

Relatively few European countries (three of the 45, or 7%) had incidents in which women were harassed for not wearing religious attire. One country that did was Russia. Women in the Russian republic of Chechnya were pressured to wear headscarves in public places as part of President Ramzan Kadyrov's so-called "virtue campaign," and in the Chechen capital of Grozny, several women were attacked with paintball guns when they appeared in public without wearing headscarves.[9]

[29. See Human Rights Watch. 2013. "Tunisia. World Report 2013."]

[31. See U.S. Department of State. May 20, 2013. "The Philippines." 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom. Also see Aug. 5, 2012. "Philippine School Bans Students from Wearing Hijab." Agence France-Presse.]

[33. See U.S. Department of State May 20, 2013. "Nigeria." 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom.]

[36. See Human Rights Watch. 2014. "World Report 2014: Canada." Also see Peritz, Ingrid, and Les Perreaux. Sept. 10, 2013. "Quebec Reveals Religious Symbols to be Banned from Public Sector." The Globe and Mail. The proposed "charter of values" died the following year, after Parti Quebecois was defeated in Quebec's 2014 general election. See Séguin, Rhéal. April 7, 2014. "Marois to Step Down in Wake of Stunning Defeat at the Hands of Liberals." The Globe and Mail.]

There were no reports in the study's sources of women being harassed over religious dress in the United States in 2012-2013. However, it is important to note that the data collection process for the U.S. is slightly different than for the rest of the world since one of the primary sources used for the study – the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report – does not cover the U.S. To make sure events in the U.S. are not overlooked, researchers examine reports from the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, as well as those primary sources that do include data on the United States, including reports by the Anti-Defamation League, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group and the United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Overall, the U.S. has moderate levels of both government restrictions on religion and social hostilities toward religious groups, ranking somewhere in the middle range of nearly 200 countries analyzed in Pew Research Center's most recent report on religious restrictions and hostilities worldwide.[10]

Next: Methodology

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1. For more details, see Pew Research Center's February 2015 report "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities." ↩

2. See U.S. Department of State. July 28, 2014. "Russia." 2013 Report on International Religious Freedom. Also see Barry, Ellen. March 18, 2013. "Local Russian Hijab Ban Puts Muslims in a Squeeze." The New York Times. ↩

3. For background, see Human Rights Watch. Dec. 21, 2010. "Questions and Answers on Restrictions on Religious Dress and Symbols in Europe." ↩

4. See U.S. Department of State. July 28, 2014. "France." 2013 Report on International Religious Freedom. According to the State Department's 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom: "The policy of the police is not to enforce the law in private locations, or around places of worship, where the law's application would unduly interfere with the free exercise of religion. ... If an individual refuses to remove the garment, police may take the person to the local police station to verify his or her identity. However, an individual may not be questioned or held for more than four hours." Also see Willsher, Kim. July 1, 2014. "France's Burqa Ban Upheld by Human Rights Court." The Guardian. ↩

5. See U.S. Department of State. July 28, 2014. "Belgium." 2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Also see July 23, 2011. "Belgian Ban on Full Veils Comes Into Force." BBC News. ↩

6. See U.S. Department of State. May 20, 2013. "Belgium." 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom. Also see Chaib, Saila Ouald. Dec. 14, 2012. "Belgian Constitutional Court says Ban on Face Coverings Does not Violate Human Rights." The Strasbourg Observer. ↩

7. See Pew Research Center's February 2015 report "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities." ↩

8. For more details on the index, see Pew Research Center's February 2015 report "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities." ↩

9. See Human Rights Watch. 2013. "Russia. World Report 2013." Also see Human Rights Watch. 2012. "Virtue Campaign on Women in Chechnya Under Ramzan Kadyrov." ↩

10. See Pew Research Center's February 2015 report "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities." Also see Pew Research Center's March 25, 2015, Fact Tank post, "How the U.S. compares with the rest of the world on religious restrictions." ↩

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