

Canadian Muslims face 'constant questioning' of whether they fit in society

by [Anita Elash](#) in the [April 12, 2017](#) issue

([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) Danyaal Raza, a family physician, was honored last year at the first-ever awards ceremony reserved for Muslim Canadians for his work in promoting better access to health care for vulnerable populations.

"It was a huge honor to be recognized by members of your own community for your contributions," he said. "At the same time, it saddens me that this is something Canadian Muslims need to do. It's a shame that if you are Muslim in Canada or the United States, you have to go out of your way to prove you are a good citizen."

Like Canadians of all faiths, Raza is struggling to come to terms with the lone-wolf terrorist attack on a Quebec City mosque late in January, which killed six people and injured 19.

The latest national census data shows Muslims make up about 3 percent of the Canadian population, the largest religious minority. About one-third of Canadian Muslims told researchers for a recent survey by the Environics Institute that they have experienced discrimination because of their religion or ethnicity.

"We tend to think of ourselves as very diverse and very accepting, but there's a constant questioning of whether Muslims fit in Canadian society," says Ruba Ali al-Hassani, an Iraqi Canadian Ph.D. student.

She and a fellow student at York University in Toronto founded the Canadian Association of Muslim Women in Law, an advocacy and networking group, after her colleague was asked to leave the university's law library because she was wearing a hijab.

Former prime minister Stephen Harper implemented a series of laws considered by many to be anti-immigrant and especially anti-Muslim, including the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, which toughened laws against forced marriages and added polygamy to the criminal code. Kellie Leitch, a leading contender in upcoming elections to replace Harper as leader of the Conservative Party, has made implementing a test of Canadian values for immigrants a key part of her platform.