

Notes from the GLO virtual seminar

Place: [Virtual Seminar](#) (Zoom meeting)

Date: July 04, 2024

Time: 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. (Halifax)

Meeting called by : [Global Labor Organization \(GLO\)](#)

Author of these notes: Maya Saradammal – MAE program

Type of meeting: - The GLO Virtual Seminar Series has been established in 2020 with a frequency of one event per month as a regular GLO activity. The seminars are hosted by the School of Economics at the University of Kent, the GLO key partner university in the UK.

Speaker: -

Dr. Ather H. Akbari

Professor of Economics, **Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia**
Member GLO

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a slide titled "Some conclusions and directions for future policy and research" is displayed. The slide content includes three bullet points: "To encourage labour force participation what accommodations can be made of religious practices of workers at their workplaces?", "What role can religious organizations play in encouraging the economic participation of their members? How can these organizations collaborate in this regard?", and "Evidence-based research on labour force participation and employment of religious minorities will be instructive for labour policy seeking to enhance their contributions." The slide also features the logo of the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University. On the right side of the meeting, there is a grid of video thumbnails for several participants, including Almas Heshmati, Cynthia Bansak, Syed Ather Akbari, M. Maloob Piracha, and Peter Lang. To the right of the grid is a "Participants (18)" list with search and control icons for each participant.

Discussion Topic: - Religious affiliation and human capital returns in Canada

Content of the discussion: -

Context

- Immigration trends shaped Canada's religious composition: Admissions to Canada steadily increased from 2011-2023, except for a dip during the

pandemic, reflecting the Canadian government's liberal immigration policies.

- Post-1961 policy changes increased immigration from non-Western countries: The removal of the “preferred country class” allowed more immigrants from Asia and Africa, altering the ethnic and religious composition of Canada.

Objectives of the study: -

- Examine economic integration of Canadians by religious affiliation: The study focuses on labour market performance indicators such as participation, unemployment, and employment income among different religious groups.
- Analyze labour market indicators: The research aims to assess the rates of return on human capital investments using econometric analysis of employment income, focusing on differences across religious groups.

Data Used: -

Micro-data based on a 25 percent sample of the Canadian population drawn from the 2021 Canadian Census.

Religious Composition of Canada:

53% of Canadians identify as Christians, 35% report no religion or secular perspectives, and 12% belong to other religions. The study focuses on this 12% whose composition is rising, including Buddhist (0.9%), Hindu (2.3%), Jewish (0.9%), Muslim (4.9%), Sikh (2.1%), Traditional spirituality (0.2%), and Other (0.6%).

Key Findings

Labour Force Participation:

- Highest among Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, and Muslim groups. These groups show higher labour force participation, with Muslims having the highest unemployment rate among non-indigenous groups. Christian population are mostly Canadian born and lower national unemployment rate.
- Jewish population has the highest average employment income. Similar trends are observed in the US and Australia, where Jewish immigrants also report higher earnings.

Impact of Religiosity:

- Regular participation in religious activities correlates with a higher sense of belonging and civic engagement.
- Higher community engagement is observed among Sikhs and Muslims.

Theoretical Considerations:

Supply Side Factors:

Religious norms affecting job choices and hours worked: Religious practices, such as prayer times and job restrictions, can limit the types of employment or hours that individuals from certain religions can pursue.

Demand Side Factors:

Market attitudes and discrimination: Discriminatory preferences by employers can impact hiring decisions, affecting the labour market outcomes for religious minorities.

Economic Indicators: Relative to those declaring no religion/secular

- Jews have the highest earning advantage: - Jewish individuals earn 15% more than those with no declared religion, while Muslims earn 10% less.
- Sikhs and Christians showed no statistically significant income difference
- Canadian degrees offer an earning premium: Immigrants with Canadian degrees, especially Muslims and Sikhs, earn more than those with foreign degrees.

Returns to Education:

National rate of return is 6.3%. Christians have the highest returns, closely followed by Jews, indicating a narrowing gap in educational returns between these groups.

Conclusions and Future Directions:

- Rising immigrant inflows increase diversity: The growing immigrant population is leading to a more diverse ethnic and religious landscape in Canada.

- Significant labour market performance variations across religious groups: Notable differences in employment outcomes suggest the need for further investigation into the causes, including:
 - Supply vs. demand side factors: Understanding whether differences are driven by individual choices or external market conditions.
 - Variability within religious affiliations: Examining the heterogeneity within religious groups to better understand internal differences.
 - Impact of ethnicity vs. religious mix: Determining how much of the observed performance differences are due to ethnicity compared to religious affiliation.

Recommendations for policy and research:

- Accommodate religious practices in workplaces: Implement workplace policies that respect religious practices to encourage labour force participation.
- Encourage religious organizations to support economic participation: Religious groups can play a crucial role in helping their members integrate economically.
- Conduct evidence-based research: Further research on labour force participation and employment outcomes for religious minorities will guide labour policies aimed at enhancing their contributions.