



Hate crime against faith groups in the UK

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ENGLAND AND WALES

- Hate crime is defined as “any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic”. This definition was agreed in 2007 by the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Prison Service (now the National Offender Management Service) and other agencies that make up the criminal justice system.
- The Home Office publishes annual figures showing the number of hate crimes recorded by the police. They divide hate crime into five categories:
 - Race and ethnicity
 - Religion and belief
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
 - Transgender identity
- Crimes against faith groups are recorded under religion and belief, or race and ethnicity, or both, as the police sometimes record crimes under more than one category.
- The latest available figures are contained in a Home Office bulletin, *Hate Crime England and Wales 2018-19*, issued on 15 October 2019. It shows that in the 12 months to 31 March 2019, reported hate crimes in all categories increased by 10%. This continued an upward trend with hate crimes recorded by the police more than doubling since 2012-13 (from 42,255 to 103,379 offences).
- The majority of hate crimes were racially motivated, accounting for about three-quarters of offences.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% increase
All recorded hate crime	80,393	94,121	103,379	+10
Racially motivated	62,685	71,264	78,991	+11
Religiously motivated	5,949	8,339	8,566	+3

(The percentage increase is from 2017-18 to 2018-19)

- Of the 8,566 religiously motivated hate crimes, information on the specific religion being targeted was provided in 7,446 cases. Of these, 47% of the incidents recorded were against Muslims (3,530 offences), and 18% were against Jews (1,326 offences).
- The Home Office report concluded that while increases in hate crime over the five years to 2019 had been driven mainly by improvements in crime recording by the police, there had been spikes in hate crime after events such as the EU referendum in 2016 and the terrorist attacks in 2017.
- About 54% of all hate crime recorded in 2018-19 were for public order offences. A further 36% involved violence against the person. Together, these offence categories accounted for 91% of all hate crime recorded by the police.
- Incidents of racially and religiously motivated hate crime are more likely to result in court proceedings than similar non-aggravated offences. In 2018-19:
 - 13% of racially or religiously aggravated public fear, alarm and distress offences were dealt with by charge/summons compared with 5% of non-aggravated equivalent offences.
 - 12% of racially or religiously aggravated assault offences were dealt with by charge/summons compared with 8% of non-aggravated assaults.
 - 7% of racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage offences resulted in charge/summons, compared with 5% of non-aggravated criminal damage offences.
 - The Home Office says these comparisons reflect the serious nature of racially or religiously aggravated offences.

SCOTLAND

- In June 2019, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service reported that 2,880 cases of racially motivated crime had been reported in 2018-19, 12% fewer than the previous year, and the lowest number since consistent figures became available in 2003-4.
- The number of religiously aggravated offences reported was 529, down from 642 the previous year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- In addition to the five categories of hate crime recognised by the UK government, the Northern Ireland criminal justice system recognises a sixth category, sectarianism. Figures released in 2017 show that for the first time since records began, racially motivated crimes in Northern Ireland had begun to exceed those connected to traditional sectarian disputes. That trend has continued since.
- Figures released in 2019 show a slight increase on the previous year of racially motivated incidents (1,124, up from 1,025). There was a decrease in religiously motivated incidents (56, down from 90)

ANTISEMITIC HATE CRIME

- Incidents of antisemitic hate crime in the UK are recorded by a Jewish charity, the Community Security Trust (CST), which publishes six-monthly reports. In August 2019, it reported that in the first six months of 2019, there had been 892 reported incidents of antisemitism in the UK, an increase of 10% over the same period in 2018, and the highest total compared with previous years. Roughly two-thirds of the incidents took place in London and Manchester, home to the two largest Jewish communities.
- The number of violent antisemitic assaults rose from 62 in the first half of 2018 to 85 in the same period of 2019. None was classified by the CST as “extreme violence”. There were 38 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property, and 710 of abusive behaviour, including verbal abuse, graffiti and abuse via social media and hate mail.
- The highest monthly totals were in February and March, when the trust recorded 55 incidents specifically related to allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

ANTI-MUSLIM HATE CRIME

- During 2018, the charity Tell Mama says it received 1,282 reports of anti-Muslim hate crime. In addition, it says it heard of a further 1,891 incidents from 20 police forces in the UK with whom it shares data. There were slight reductions compared with the previous year in both online and offline (street-based) abuse, possibly because of the spikes that had occurred after the 2017 terrorist attacks. The charity says that in August 2018, it recorded 38 instances of anti-Muslim abuse in the week after comments by Boris Johnson, likening veiled Muslim women to letterboxes and bank robbers. In the previous week there had been eight such incidents.

PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

- The definition of hate crime agreed in 2007 talks about crimes motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on personal characteristic. Such crimes would include, for example, the Finsbury Park Mosque attack in June 2017, in which the perpetrator, Darren Osborne, was clearly targeting Muslims.
- The Manchester Arena bombing and the London Bridge/Borough Market attacks are less easily categorised. In neither case was a specific faith group being targeted. Rather these were random attacks in which the victims included different races, and followers of several religions and none. These could be described as attacks against the western way of life. But while specific religious or faith groups may not have been the target, a questionable interpretation of religion may have provided the motive.

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