



# Hate Crime Against Faith Groups in The UK

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## 1. 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, 2017-18, issued on 16 October 2018. It shows that in the 12 months to 31 March 2018, reported hate crimes in all categories increased by 17%. (This followed a 29% rise the previous year, the largest increase since crimes were first recorded in this way in 2011-12). There were significant rises in both racially and religiously motivated crime.

	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>% increase</b>
All recorded hate crime	62,518	80,393	94,098	+17
Racially motivated	49,419	62,685	71,251	+14
Religiously motivated	4,400	5,949	8,336	+40

(The percentage increase is from 2016-17 to 2017-18)

- The Home Office report concluded that the main reasons for the increase over the two years were improvements in police recording and growing public awareness about hate crime. But it said there also short-term increases following certain events such as the EU referendum in June 2016, and the terrorist attacks of 2017.
- According to the 2018 Home Office report, about 56% of all hate crime recorded in 2017-18 involved public order offences. A total of 33% of crimes recorded involved violence against the person, of which about a quarter of incidents resulted in injury, and 6% of crime recorded involved criminal damage or arson.
- Incidents of racially and religiously motivated hate crime are more likely to result in court proceedings than similar non-aggravated offences. In 2017-18:
  - 16% of racially or religiously aggravated public fear, alarm and distress offences were dealt with by charge/summons compared with 7% of non-aggravated equivalent offences;
  - 17% of racially or religiously aggravated assault offences were dealt with by charge/summons compared with 10% of non-aggravated assaults;
  - 9% of racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage offences resulted in charge/summons, compared with 6% of non-aggravated criminal damage offences;
  - The Home Office says these comparisons reflect the serious nature of racially or religiously aggravated offences.

## 2. SCOTLAND

- In June 2018, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service reported that 3,249 cases of racially motivated crime had been reported in 2017-18, fewer by exactly 100 than the previous year, and the lowest number reported since 2003-4.
- The number of religiously aggravated offences reported was 642, down from 673 the previous year, which had been the highest number reported since 2012-13.

### 3. 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.
- Figures released in 2018 show a slight decrease on the previous year of racially motivated incidents (1,045, down from 1,048) and of religious motivated incidents (81, down from 86).

### 4. ANTISEMITIC HATE CRIME

- Incidents of antisemitic hate crime in the UK are recorded by a Jewish charity, the Community Security Trust (CST). In February 2018, it published its Antisemitic Incidents Report for 2017, which showed that 1,382 antisemitic incidents had been recorded that year, the highest total recorded for a calendar year, and a 3% increase on the total for the previous year.
- Three-quarters of all these incidents took place in London and Greater Manchester, the UK's two biggest Jewish communities.
- The most common type of antisemitic incident recorded during 2017 involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public.
- There were 145 incidents of violent antisemitic assault, up from 106 the previous year. These covered a broad range, from common assault to actual bodily harm. None of these violent incidents was classified (by CST) as extreme violence, meaning grievous bodily harm or threat to life.
- The report pointed to a rise in all forms of hate crime following the EU referendum, as well as publicity surrounding alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party. It says these factors may have caused higher levels of incidents as well as encouraged more reporting of antisemitic incidents from victims and witnesses in the Jewish community. This was different from previous record highs, in 2009 and 2014, when conflicts in Israel and Gaza acted as sudden "trigger" events, leading to identifiable spikes in incident numbers.

## 5. ANTI-MUSLIM HATE CRIME

- Police in Manchester and London reported surges in anti-Muslim hate crime following the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017 and the London Bridge attack the next month.
- The number of anti-Muslim attacks in Manchester increased fivefold after the concert bombing. The charity Tell Mama, which records incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime, registered 139 incidents in the week following the attack, compared with 25 the previous week.

## 6. 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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