

Anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination

Guidance from the
National Association of Muslim Police (NAMPA)

Muslims making a positive difference to policing



Introduction

Why is there a need for this guidance?

In 2017, there was a [vehicle terror-attack](#) against worshippers outside Finsbury park mosque in London. This resulted in one death and at least eight others injured. The person responsible was inspired by anti-Muslim propaganda and the attack demonstrated what deep hatred can do. Since then, there has been a growth in right-wing radicalisation with extremists such as the proscribed group National Action promoting [anti-Islamic messages](#).

Right-wing radicalisation accounted for [46% of all Prevent referrals](#) that were adopted as Channel cases during 2020/21. This was an increase from the previous year and by far the largest category for radicalisation recorded within the UK.

Anti-Muslim hatred is a growing problem within the UK, and it can often be mistaken for race hate, or overlooked entirely. Clear guidance is required to define anti-Muslim hatred and all its components.

Purpose and benefits

This resource has been developed for police forces to provide thorough guidance on how to identify anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination.

The guidance can be used to deal with hate incidents and crimes more effectively, promote a more inclusive environment and improve trust and confidence within the Muslim community.

Effective recording and responses to hate crime can reduce community tensions and build positive relationships in society.



Tackling anti-Muslim hatred

The 2020 National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) [survey](#) identified Islamophobia as the biggest challenge for Muslims in the UK. The survey highlighted an underreporting of Islamophobic incidents, which has been an ongoing issue since NAMP launched in 2007.

Concerns were also raised about how anti-Muslim hate incidents are investigated. Issues of Islamophobia in the workplace were also highlighted, which affect trust and confidence, retention rates, promotion opportunities and overall morale.

Currently, NAMP works with the police service and partner organisations to provide support and raise awareness about anti-Muslim hatred. This helps ensure that hate incidents are recorded correctly, and that the individual needs of the victims are considered during any subsequent investigation.

Terminology

The terms 'Islamophobia', 'anti-Islam' or 'anti-Muslim hatred' are often used interchangeably to describe a strong dislike and/or mistreatment towards Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims. This can manifest in religious discrimination and/or religion-motivated hate crime.

These terms refer to a set of behaviours and structures that can express feelings of fear, dislike, hostility, negative perceptions, and prejudice towards Muslims.

What is anti-Muslim hatred?

Anti-Muslim hatred can be found in crimes that involve violence, as well as in subtler elements, such as discrimination and inequality. It can manifest in many ways, such as:

- discrimination in the workforce
- negative coverage in the media
- disparity in treatment
- negative feelings towards Muslim immigration or communities
- inequality of opportunity
- violence against Muslims

In recent times, we have seen crimes committed that have been motivated by hatred towards Islam and/or Muslims. Some examples of such crimes have been:

- arson attacks against mosques
- anti-Muslim graffiti
- anti-Islam hate campaigns on social media
- vehicles ramming into Muslim gatherings
- acid attacks
- forcible removal of head coverings worn by Muslims

Hate crime & survey data

In 2017, the Home Office made it mandatory for police forces to report on the perceived religion of victims of hate crime. From 2017 to 2022, [Home Office statistics](#) for police-recorded crime data in England and Wales have shown on a yearly basis that Muslims, or those perceived as Muslims, make up the highest percentage of religious hate crime. In 2021/22, this was [42% of all religious hate crimes](#).

[Muslims within the UK](#) are ethnically diverse and the majority are from ethnic minority communities which is why we often see anti-Muslim hatred intersecting with racism.

In 2021/22, race hate crime accounted for 70% of all hate crimes across England and Wales, while religious hate crime accounted for 5.6%. In 2021/22 religious hate crimes increased by 37% to 8,730 offences. This is the highest number of religious hate crimes recorded to date.

The 2007 to 2020 Crime Survey for England and Wales, as well as [Office for National Statistics](#) findings, showed that [Muslim adults were most likely to be a victim of racially motivated and religion-motivated hate crime](#).

The non-governmental organisation Tell MAMA reported an increase of [692% anti-Muslim hate incidents](#) in the week that followed the 2019 Christchurch terror attacks in New Zealand. This is a common pattern following other terror attacks. It was also seen after the Manchester Arena terror attack in 2017, where

[anti-Muslim hate crime rose by 505%](#) in comparison to the previous year.

In 2022, the University of Birmingham conducted a [survey](#) in relation to Islamophobia, which found that 'Muslims are the UK's second least liked group'.

The study also found that the British public are almost three times more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than they are of other religions, and they are also more confident in making judgements and incorrect assumptions about Islam than they are for other non-Christian faiths.

'Prejudice towards Islam and Muslims stands out in the UK, not only because it is much more widespread than most forms of racism, but also because prejudice toward Islam is more common among those who are wealthier and well-educated.'

Dr Stephen H. Jones

Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham.

The Christchurch terror attacks shows how anti-Muslim sentiment can develop into extremist ideology. This terror attack aimed at Muslims resulted in 51 people killed and 40 others injured.

This is an example of how hatred towards Islam and the Muslim community can lead to devastating consequences.

The fact that the police and partners recorded an increase in hate crime when the only role of Muslims in the Christchurch atrocity was as victims indicates the deep-rooted nature of anti-Muslim hatred.

Islamophobia has been on the rise for many years, and it is imperative that the issue of anti-Muslim hatred is addressed accordingly and dealt with robustly.

NAMP definition for anti-Muslim hatred

Anti-Muslim hatred definition

“Anti-Muslim hatred encompasses a range of negative perceptions and attitudes towards Muslims. This may be expressed as a prejudice against and/or hatred towards Muslims, taking the form of rhetorical, physical, or discriminatory behaviour. It may be directed towards Muslim or non-Muslim individuals, the wider Muslim community and/or Muslim property.”

Muslim stigmatisation

Anti-Muslim hatred frequently links Muslims to terrorism, and it is often used to blame Muslims for issues within society. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and action, employing sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Anti-Muslim hatred examples

Examples of anti-Muslim hatred in daily life, the media, schools, the workplace, and the religious sphere could include, but are not limited to:

- calling for, aiding or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims.
- calling for, aiding or justifying damage or destruction of property, such as mosques and other religious establishments.
- making deceitful, dehumanising, demonising or stereotypical allegations about Muslims.
- accusing Muslims collectively of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group, or even for acts committed by those perceived to be Muslims.
- rhetoric that links Islam to terrorism and/or terrorist activity.
- accusing Muslims collectively of being supportive of terrorist organisations and/or other illegal practices.
- using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia, such as illustrations of Muslims carrying bombs, to characterise Muslims.
- holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of a government in a country where Muslims form the majority.
- treating Muslims less favourably due to perceptions driven by negative stereotypes of the Muslim community.
- treating Muslims less favourably based on their religious beliefs and practices.

Anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents

Hate crimes and incidents

Hate crimes and incidents are any crime or incident where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is targeted. This is a broad and inclusive definition. A victim, complainant or the person reporting the incident does not have to be a member of the group. In fact, anyone who is perceived to be or associated with an identifiable group of people (even mistakenly), could be a victim of a hate crime or targeted by a non-crime hate incident motivated by hostility.

Enhanced sentencing

The [Sentencing Act 2020](#) makes provisions for enhanced sentencing where the offender demonstrated hostility based on the victim's membership or presumed membership of a religious group, or if the offence was motivated by hostility towards members of a religious group.

Anti-Muslim sectarianism

Hatred within the same faith may exist between individuals from different factions. This can be considered as anti-Muslim hatred if the incident is perceived by the victim to be motivated by differences in belief.

Anti-Muslim hate incidents

Examples of anti-Muslim non-crime hate incidents that typically affect Muslims could include, but are not limited to:

- abusive gestures
- online or verbal insults
- bullying
- discrimination in the workplace

Anti-Muslim hate crimes

Criminal acts may be classed as anti-Muslim hate when people or property (such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries) are targeted because they are, or are perceived to be, Muslim or linked to Muslims.

Examples of anti-Muslim hate crime that typically affect Muslims could include, but are not limited to:

- physical assault
- damage to property
- offensive graffiti
- arson
- inciting hatred
- malicious communications
- harassment

Independent Office for Police Conduct referrals

The appropriate authority must refer complaints and recordable conduct matters that include:

- allegations of conduct that constitutes a criminal offence.
- behaviour that is liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- The allegation or behaviour must be aggravated by discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of a person's religion.

Anti-Muslim discrimination

Anti-Muslim discrimination

Anti-Muslim discrimination is a type of anti-Muslim hate incident that typically affects Muslims within the workplace.

Religion or belief is one of the nine protected characteristics within the [Equality Act 2010](#). It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone because of a protected characteristic. Muslims are therefore protected under religion or belief.

Anti-Muslim discrimination may occur when Muslims are precluded from practising their faith or when they are denied opportunities or services that are available to others.

Workplace discrimination

Workplace discrimination falls into several categories. Although not a definitive list, the examples of anti-Muslim discrimination in this document are based on NAMP members' experiences.

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic they hold.

Example 1: A Muslim member of staff is not permitted to take a break to pray, whereas a non-Muslim colleague is permitted to take a smoking break.

Example 2: A Muslim officer is being investigated for misconduct and is asked questions about his religion that are disproportionate and unrelated to the investigation.

Example 3: A female officer becomes Muslim, and her manager starts to treat her negatively and with suspicion because she has started praying and wearing a headscarf.

Example 4: A Muslim officer is not given a development opportunity based on the negative bias towards his religious appearance, whereas his non-Muslim colleague is provided the opportunity.

Associative discrimination (a form of direct discrimination) is when a person is treated unfairly because of the protected characteristic of someone they are associated with.

Example: A member of staff was not offered a promotion because they have been seen associating with a Muslim colleague.

Discrimination by perception (a form of direct discrimination) is when a person is treated unfairly because they are perceived to hold a certain protected characteristic when this is not true.

Example: A member of staff was not given a job interview due to having an Arabic name and the perception that they are Muslim, when in fact this was not the case.

Microaggressions

Overt discrimination known as macroaggressions can be easier to identify as discrimination. More subtle forms of discrimination are known as microaggressions, which are not necessarily felt immediately but do have a notable impact over time. It is important that these do not go unchecked, as they can significantly affect morale.

Example 1: A non-Muslim person intentionally offering a Muslim food, whilst knowing they are fasting during Ramadan.

Example 2: A non-Muslim person telling a Muslim person that 'racism and Islamophobia aren't an issue in today's society'.

Example 3: A non-Muslim person calling a Muslim 'backwards' for choosing not to go out socialising and drinking because it conflicts with their religious beliefs.

Bias

Life experiences can shape the way people think and perceive others. Although everyone has their own biases, it is important to recognise this, especially when it comes to decision making.

Bias can be simplified into two categories: treating someone more favourably and treating someone less favourably. A bias is not always conscious and can often manifest unconsciously.

A decision may be based on pre-conceived ideas and false beliefs. These stereotypes could, for example, lead to a Muslim being treated wrongfully due to a negative assumption made about Islam.

Example 1: A Muslim officer grows a beard and starts attending Friday prayers at the mosque. Based on this information, it is perceived by his manager that he has become extreme and is subsequently referred to Prevent.

Example 2: An officer visits a Muslim household to take a statement and sees several wall hangings displaying what appears to be Arabic calligraphy. The officer assumes that these Islamic symbols represent extremist groups and makes a Prevent referral based solely on this information.

Example 3: A Muslim staff member is struggling to maintain their workload. Based on the manager's biases against Muslims, she automatically assumes the individual is being lazy before considering other possibilities, such as welfare or personal circumstances.

Example 4: A positive action officer is struggling to recruit ethnic minority females and disregards the Muslim female demographic based on incorrect assumptions about their abilities or potential to join the police service.

NAMP recommendations

Representative workforce

All police forces should be aligned to and delivering on the [NPCC Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Strategy 2018-2025](#).

The policing vision is to have a more representative workforce that will align the right skills, powers and experience to meet challenging requirements. The representation of Muslims within the workforce should be reflective of community demographics. This will foster better relationships and create a greater sense of belonging.

Islamic awareness training

All police forces should have diversity, equality and inclusion training that is delivered to officers and staff. It should include content on all types of discrimination, bias, positive action, hate crime and relevant legislation. Topics relating to anti-Muslim hatred should also be addressed. Various training packages specifically relating to anti-Muslim hatred, Muslim inclusivity, and Islamic and cultural awareness are available via NAMP.

Hate incidents and crimes

All police forces should have a system in place for recording and categorising anti-Muslim hate incidents and crimes. Officers and staff should have an adequate understanding of the issues faced by the Muslim community. The provisions for enhanced sentencing can be found in [Sentencing Act 2020](#).

Internal hate incidents

All police forces should have a process to centrally record all types of hate incidents and discrimination within the workplace, which will help identify common themes, trends and repeat offenders. Professional standard departments should ensure that severity assessments are carried out. They should also ensure that officers and staff are culturally competent and are familiar with the [Independent Police Complaints Commission guidelines for handling allegations of discrimination](#).

Consultation with Muslim networks

It is recommended that the local Association of Muslim Police within each police force are consulted on matters relating to anti-Muslim hatred or discrimination. They can help to contextualise any religious matters and to provide severity assessments for the allegations made.

Line managers and supervisors

Officers and staff with line management responsibilities should refer all anti-Muslim incidents brought to their attention to their professional standards department.

All officers and staff

Members of the police service should familiarise themselves with this document and have a good understanding of the [Code of Ethics](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#). This will help them to recognise discrimination and empower them to report any inappropriate workplace behaviour.

For further information on responding to hate, please see [College of Policing Guidance](#).

External hate incidents and crimes

If someone is a victim of anti-Muslim hate crime, they have several options for reporting a crime or incident:

- call 999 in an emergency.
- if you're deaf or hard of hearing, you can use textphone service 18000 or text 999 if pre-registered with the emergency SMS service.
- call 101 for non-emergencies.
- call in person at any police station.
- some police forces have online reporting forms or live chat.
- independent hate crime recording centres within the community.
- online via [Religious hate crime - True Vision \(report-it.org.uk\)](#) or other reporting services.

Ensure that as much detail about the incident or crime is provided, including date, time, location, witnesses and any other pertinent information.

About the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP)

NAMP was established to create a stronger network for Muslim officers and staff to address inequality and unfairness within the police service.

It is a constituted body that includes police officers of all ranks, police staff, police community support officers and special constables. NAMP's aims include promoting understanding and awareness of Islam, supporting learning and development for its members and strengthening community cohesion.

muslim.police.uk

Follow NAMP on Twitter [@Official_NAMP](https://twitter.com/Official_NAMP) 

