



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0086, 14 May 2019

General Debate on the definition of Islamophobia

Summary

A general debate on the definition of Islamophobia will take place in the Commons Chamber on Thursday 16 May 2019. The debate was originally scheduled for 11 April 2019.

The subject of the debate was determined by the backbench Business Committee following an application by Wes Streeting MP and Anna Soubry MP. The debate will take place on the motion that: This House has considered the definition of Islamophobia.

This Debate Pack contains information on definitions of Islamophobia, statutory provisions relevant to Islamophobia and statistics on Islamophobia in the UK.

Subject specialists and contributors to this pack:

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

By David Torrance

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1. Definition of Islamophobia

In October 2017, Baroness Warsi (Conservative), in an oral question in the House of Lords, asked the Government whether it had a definition of Islamophobia. Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, replied that the Government was committed to eradicating religious hatred and intolerance. However, regarding a definition, Lord Bourne stated:

The Government do not currently endorse a particular definition of Islamophobia. Previous attempts by others to define this term have not succeeded in attracting consensus or widespread acceptance.¹

Various organisations and commentators have argued that an agreed definition would aid initiatives to tackle Islamophobia. Consequently, the Government has been urged to adopt a formal definition of Islamophobia, in the same way the Government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism in December 2016.²

Runnymede Trust Definition

In 1997, the race equality think tank, the [Runnymede Trust](#), published the report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, which is credited with introducing the term "Islamophobia" to public policy discourse in the UK.³ The report provided the following definition of Islamophobia, along with a summary of criticisms of the term:

Islamophobia refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam. It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs. The term is not, admittedly, ideal. Critics of it consider that its use panders to what they call political correctness, that it stifles legitimate criticism of Islam, and that it demonises and stigmatises anyone who wishes to engage in such criticism.⁴

In November 2017, to mark the 20th anniversary of the report's publication, the Runnymede Trust published an updated report, *Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All*. The report claimed that in the intervening 20 years "anti-Muslim prejudice has grown further and wider".⁵

The report offered three explanations for the increase in anti-Muslim prejudice. First, an increase in terrorist incidents domestically and internationally since 2001 had contributed to a culture in which "the fear and threat of terrorism can be inflated by Islamophobia, and that

¹ [HL Hansard, 17 October 2017, col 486](#)

² Prime Minister's Office, ['Government Leads the Way in Tackling Anti-Semitism'](#), 12 December 2016.

³ All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, [Islamophobia Defined: The Inquiry into a Working Definition of Islamophobia](#), 2018, p 23.

⁴ Runnymede Trust, [Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All](#), 1997, p4.

⁵ Runnymede Trust, [Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All](#), November 2017, p5.

Islamophobia can increase in the wake of terrorist attacks”.⁶ Second, compared with 20 years ago, “British Muslims are a larger, better-organized and more settled community”.⁷ Third, there is now more data about British Muslims; “their population, distribution, attitudes and outcomes, in the labour market, education, housing and health”.⁸

In the foreword to the 2017 report, Baroness Warsi claimed that to challenge Islamophobia “the starting point must surely be a definition, a mechanism that leads to accountability”.⁹ The report recommended that the Government should adopt its updated definition of Islamophobia.¹⁰ The report provided both a short definition – “Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism” – and a longer definition:

Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.¹¹

All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims Inquiry Definition

Prompted by the Government’s reluctance to adopt a formal definition of Islamophobia, the [All Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) on British Muslims](#) established an inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia in April 2018.¹² The APPG claimed that “no amount of documentation of the evidence of discriminatory outcomes faced by Muslims [...] can satisfy our desire to reverse these results if we cannot begin from the point of an agreed definition”.¹³

Following a “widespread consultation with academics, lawyers [and] Muslim organisations”, it recommended the adoption of the following definition:

Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.¹⁴

The definition was supported by a range of Muslim organisations, including the [Muslim Council of Britain](#) (MCB). The MCB’s general secretary, Harun Khan, stated:

Muslim organisations from different parts of the country and different backgrounds have come together to make a resounding call on our political leaders to adopt this definition. We hope that they all understand the importance of listening to communities, and look forward to their positive response.¹⁵

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p v.

¹⁰ Ibid., p2.

¹¹ Ibid., p1.

¹² All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, [Islamophobia Defined: The Inquiry into a Working Definition of Islamophobia](#), 2018, p10.

¹³ Ibid., p9.

¹⁴ Ibid., p11.

¹⁵ Muslim Council of Britain, [‘British Muslim Organisations Rally for Proposed Definition of Islamophobia’](#), 2 December 2018.

However, the APPG report has also faced criticism. Andrew Gilligan, writing in the *Spectator*, criticised the report's proposed set of tests for ascertaining whether "contentious speech is indeed reasonable criticism or Islamophobia masquerading as 'legitimate criticism'".¹⁶ He claimed that some of the tests—such as whether the speaker sincerely cares about the issue in question or is simply using it to attack Muslims—were so broad that they could be difficult to police.¹⁷

The APPG report has also been criticised by the [National Secular Society](#) (NSS), one of the organisations that submitted evidence to the inquiry. In a letter to the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, urging the Government not to adopt the definition, the NSS described it as "vague and unworkable" and that it "conflates hatred of, and discrimination against, Muslims with criticism of Islam".¹⁸

Subsequently, in December 2018, the Government was asked, in a written parliamentary question in the House of Lords, about the definition of Islamophobia and whether it:

Consider[ed] Islamophobia to be a form of racism; and if so, whether they will adopt a definition of Islamophobia comparable to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism.¹⁹

In reply, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth stressed that the Government took Islamophobia very seriously and that it was committed to tackling all hate crime. He stated, "it is now of vital importance that we hear a range of views on the proposed definition".²⁰

For further information, see Lords Library Note LLN-2018-0142, [Islamophobia in the UK](#), which was published on 14 December 2018.

Other definitions

In 2005, the [Council of Europe](#) said Islamophobia was the:

fear of or prejudiced viewpoint towards Islam, Muslims and matters pertaining to them [taking] the shape of daily forms of racism and discrimination or more violent forms, Islamophobia is a violation of human rights.²¹

A section of the 2016 definition offered by the [Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research](#) stated that:

Islamophobia operates by constructing a static 'Muslim' identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalized for all Muslims.²²

¹⁶ Andrew Gilligan, '[The Danger of the 'Islamophobia' Label](#)', *Spectator*, 8 December 2018.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ National Secular Society, '[Home Secretary Urged Not to Adopt Definition of 'Islamophobia'](#)', 9 December 2018.

¹⁹ House of Lords, '[Written Question: Religious Hatred: Islam](#)', 10 December 2018, HL11998.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ <http://eumuslim.net/2010/05/19/political-exploitation-of-islamophobia-in-post-communist-albania/>

²² <https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/call-for-reports/2016-2/>

2. Islamophobia and the law

There is no specific law prohibiting Islamophobia. However, anti-Islam activity might be covered by more general legislation on hate crime, online abuse, and equalities.

2.1 Hate crime policy and legislation

A general overview of the Government's approach to hate crime is set out in [Action Against Hate: The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime](#).

There are three different ways that legislation deals with hate crime motivated on the grounds of race or religion: offences of stirring up hatred; aggravated forms of certain "basic" criminal offences; and enhanced sentencing for offences motivated by hate.

[Crown Prosecution Service](#) (CPS) guidance notes that case law has "concluded that persons associated by their religious beliefs may also be part of a racial group", and that prosecutors should "consider on the facts of each case if the aggravating feature arises from hostility towards a religious belief or a racial group (or a combination of both)".²³

See the following CPS publications for full details of the offences described below:

- [Racist and Religious Hate Crime - Prosecution Guidance](#)
- [Public statement on prosecuting racist and religious hate crime](#)

Stirring up hatred

[Part III of the Public Order Act 1986](#) criminalises certain acts that are intended to stir up racial hatred. [Part IIIA of the 1986 Act](#) makes similar provision for certain acts intended to stir up religious hatred.²⁴

Racial hatred is defined as "hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins". Religious hatred is defined as "hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief".

The acts covered by the 1986 Act include:

- the use of words or behaviour, or the display or written material;
- the publication or distribution of written material;
- the public performance of a play;
- the distribution, showing or playing of a recording of images or sounds;
- the broadcasting or a programme including images or sounds; and
- the possession of inflammatory material.

²³ CPS, [Racist and Religious Hate Crime - Prosecution Guidance](#), August 2018.

²⁴ Part IIIA also covers conduct intended to stir up hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation.

There are some significant differences between the Part III and Part IIIA offences.

The words, behaviour or material must be “threatening, abusive or insulting” for the purposes of the Part III offences on racial hatred, but they must be “threatening” for the purposes of the Part IIIA offences on religious hatred.

The Part III offences can be committed either where the defendant intended to stir up racial hatred, or where it was likely (having regard to all the circumstances) that such hatred would be stirred up. The Part IIIA offences can only be committed where the defendant intended to stir up religious hatred: reckless conduct is not covered.

There is a “freedom of expression” defence to the religious hatred offences. This states that nothing in Part IIIA

shall be read or given effect in a way which prohibits or restricts discussion, criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse of particular religions or the beliefs or practices of their adherents, or of any other belief system or the beliefs or practices of its adherents, or proselytising or urging adherents of a different religion or belief system to cease practising their religion or belief system.²⁵

Aggravated offences

Under the [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#), perpetrators of specified “basic” criminal offences can be charged with an aggravated form of the offence (carrying a longer maximum sentence) if they demonstrated or were motivated by hostility on the basis of race or religion.

The specified offences covered by the 1998 Act include assault, criminal damage, public order offences, harassment and stalking. The CPS says that “monitoring had indicated that these were the most common types of crime experienced by the victims of racially and religiously aggravated violence or harassment”.²⁶

Enhanced sentencing

[Section 145 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003](#) applies when the court is sentencing an offender for an offence other than one of the aggravated offences under the 1998 Act.

Section 145 requires the court to consider whether the offence was racially or religiously aggravated. If so, the court must treat that as an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes and must state in open court that the offence was so aggravated.

2.2 Online abuse

There are several general criminal offences that could be used to prosecute online Islamophobia. The most relevant general offences that could be used are as follows:

²⁵ [Section 29J of the 1986 Act](#)

²⁶ CPS, [Public statement on prosecuting racist and religious hate crime](#), August 2017, p2.

- [section 1 of the *Malicious Communications Act 1988*](#), which makes it an offence to send indecent, grossly offensive, threatening or false electronic communications if the purpose (or one of the purposes) of the sender is to cause the recipient distress or anxiety.
- [section 127 of the *Communications Act 2003*](#), which makes it an offence to use a public electronic communications network to send a message (or other matter) that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or to send a false message "for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another".
- Harassment or stalking offences under [sections 2, 2A, 4 or 4A of the *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*](#).

The Crown Prosecution Service has published guidance on the use of these offences (and others) to prosecute social media communications: see [Legal guidance: Social Media: Guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media](#).

When sentencing for such offences in the context of anti-Semitic online abuse, the courts could make use of the enhanced sentencing regime under section 145 of the *Criminal Justice Act 2003* as set out above.

In February 2018 the Government asked the [Law Commission](#) to "review the laws around offensive communications and assess whether they provide the right protection to victims online". The Law Commission published its [Scoping Report](#) in November 2018, and [says](#) that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will analyse this and decide on next steps.

In October 2018, the Government also asked the Law Commission to conduct a wide-range review into hate crime more generally.²⁷ The Law Commission launched its review in March 2019 with the publication of [Hate Crime: Background to Our Review](#). The Law Commission's [hate crime project page](#) states that a full consultation paper will be published in early 2020.

The Government is due to issue a social media code of practice under [s103 of the *Digital Economy Act 2017*](#). The code will include guidance for social media platforms on dealing with bullying or insulting conduct. The Government has published a draft Code of Practice in its [response](#) to its consultation on the [Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#). Further details are expected in a White Paper, which on 13 February 2019 the Government said would be published 'shortly'.²⁸

2.3 Equality Act 2010

The *Equality Act 2010* prohibits discrimination in relation to "protected characteristics" which includes [religion](#).²⁹ Discriminating against a person by reason of their Islamic faith may constitute unlawful discrimination. This includes direct discrimination as well as indirect.

²⁷ Law Commission, [Law Commission review into hate crime announced](#), 18 October 2018.

²⁸ [PO 217141, 13 February 2019](#)

²⁹ *Equality Act 2010*, section 10.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice ("PCP") puts a person with a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage compared with persons with whom they do not share the characteristic. Unlike direct religious discrimination, which is always unlawful, indirect discrimination may be lawful if it can be shown that the PCP is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

For example, there is relatively recent case law on the issue of whether private employers are permitted to ban female Muslim employees from wearing headscarves at work, as part of a general workplace ban on all religious symbols. The issue was considered by the Court of Justice of the EU in *Achbita and another v G4S Secure Solutions NV* (Case C-157/15) (14 March 2017).

The Court provided guidance to national courts on the relevant law, stating that such a ban might be lawful "where the employer had a policy of upholding political, philosophical or religious neutrality in customer-facing roles".

3. Religious Hate crime statistics

Police Recorded Crime figures on the number of religious hate crimes that were Islamophobic, anti-Semitic or relate to other faiths are provided in the Home Office's [Hate Crime Statistics 2017/18](#). The statistics are considered experimental. The recording of religious hate crime is based on the perceived religious target of the offender. In some cases, more than one religion will be targeted, and in others the actual targeted religion will differ from the intended one.

The data shows that 52% of religious hate crimes recorded by the police were against Muslims. 12% were anti-Jewish in nature; 5% were anti-Christian with 21% of offences being recorded as "unknown." The figures produced in the Home Office publication excludes data from the Metropolitan and Lancashire police forces.

AROUND 52% OF RELIGIOUS HATE CRIMES RECORDED BY POLICE ^a WERE ISLAMOPHOBIC		
	Number of offences	Percentage
Muslim	2,965	52.2%
Unknown	1,174	20.7%
Jewish	672	11.8%
Other	311	5.5%
Christian	264	4.6%
No religion	237	4.2%
Sikh	117	2.1%
Hindu	58	1.0%
Buddhist	19	0.3%
Total number of targeted religions ^b	5,817	
Total number of offences	5,680	

Notes:

a) Excludes data from the Metropolitan and Lancashire police forces.

b) In some offences more than one religion has been recorded as being targeted.

Source: Home Office, Hate Crime, [England and Wales, 2017 to 2018: data tables](#), Table B1, 16 October 2018.

The CSEW provides data on the proportion of adults by ethnicity and religion who have been the victims of religiously motivated hate crime. The proportion of all adults that have been victims of religiously motivated hate crime in the 2015/16 to 2017/18 combined dataset is 0.1%. This has remained unchanged from the 2007/08 and 2008/09 combined dataset. Muslims in the 2015/16 to 2017/18 combined dataset were most likely to be the victims of religion motivated hate crime with 0.8% of Muslims claiming to have been the victims of such attacks. Hindus formed the second most likely religion to have been victims of religiously motivated hate crime (0.5%).

PERCENTAGE^a OF ADULTS AGED 16 AND OVER WHO WERE VICTIMS OF RELIGION-MOTIVATED HATE CRIME, BY ETHNICITY AND RELIGION				
England and Wales				
	2007/08 & 2008/09	2009/10 to 2011/12	2012/13 to 2014/15	2015/16 to 2017/18
Ethnic group^b				
White	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	0.8	0.1	0.6	0.1
Asian/Asian British	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.5
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Other ethnic group	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5
Religion				
Christian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Buddhist	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4
Hindu	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.5
Muslim	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.8
Other	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.2
No religion	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
All Adults	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

Notes:

- a) This percentage is calculated treating a household crime as a personal crime.
- b) Ethnic group is based on the 2011 Census definition of ethnic group which now includes Chinese in the Asian/Asian British group.

Source: Home Office, [Hate Crime, England and Wales 2017/18 Appendix Tables](#), Table 3.10, 16 October 2018.

The [Metropolitan Police](#) Service (MPS) and the [MOPAC](#) produce statistics on Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and faith hate crimes in the capital. Further statistics are available from Freedom of Information requests or those recorded by [Tell MAMA](#) concerning Islamophobia or the [Community Security Trust \(CST\)](#) regarding anti-Semitism.

It should also be noted that a substantial proportion of what are termed Islamophobic hate crimes are directed at non-Muslims who are mistaken for Muslims. For instance, an FOI request to the MPS disclosed that in 2016, 7% of victims of what were termed as Islamophobic hate crimes were non-Muslims while 19% were of unknown faith or had not been contacted to determine their faith.³⁰

Islamophobia

[Tell Mama \(Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks\)](#) records incidents of Islamophobia as well as providing support to its victims. The organisation takes and records reports from victims or witnesses of anti-Muslim incidents and crime as well as incidents of online Islamophobic abuse within and originating from the UK. As with police recorded

³⁰ FOI request to MPS, [Victims of Islamophobic Hate Crime by Muslim/Non Muslim-recorded between 01/01/2016 and 31/12/2016](#).

²¹ Tell Mama, *Beyond the Incident: Outcomes for Victims of Anti-Muslim Prejudice, 2017 Annual Report*, p26.

figures there is likely to be a gap between the number of crimes reported to Tell Mama and the actual number.³¹

The key findings of Tell Mama's [2017 report](#) regarding Islamophobic incidents were:

- 1,380 reports in 2017 were recorded, of which 1,201 reports were verified by Tell Mama staff;
- More than two-thirds of verified incidents occurred 'offline', or at street level (70%), a 30% rise in offline reports compared with 2016;
- Over the last three years, the organisation recorded a steady increase in offline anti-Muslim incidents year-on-year. Between 2015 and 2016 Tell Mama recorded a 47% increase in street-level incidents;
- A 475% increase in the number of offline Islamophobic incidents reported in the week after the 2016 EU referendum. This spike was dwarfed by the 700% increase recorded in the week following the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017, with 72 reports recorded in the seven days after the terror attack, compared with 9 reports in the previous week;
- The two most common forms of offline incidents in 2017 were Abusive Behaviour and Physical Attack: 70% of verified offline incidents included directly abusive, violent, or threatening behaviour (Abusive Behaviour 52%; Physical Attack 18%);
- The report recorded a 56% rise in discrimination and an 88% increase in vandalism when compared with 2016;
- Incidents often occurred in busy public areas or transport networks (Public Area 34%, Transport Networks 13%);
- Previous annual reports indicate that Islamophobia is heavily gendered. The 2017 report showed that the majority of victims are female (57.5%,) while most perpetrators are male (64.6%). Most of the perpetrators were white men (72%);
- There was a 14% (362 crimes) rise in confirmed **online hate crime** in comparison with 2016 (311 crimes). This figure is below the 2015 figure of 364. Despite the slight rise in online reports, it should be viewed as part of a wider trend in Tell Mama data sets, seeing a marked shift towards more serious offline incidents.³²

In November 2018, Tell Mama published an [interim report](#) for 2018 covering Islamophobic incidents between January and June 2018.

The main findings were:

- 685 reports were recorded by Tell MAMA of which 608 were confirmed as Islamophobic. 66% were street based, while 34% were online;
- The majority of attacks involved abusive behaviour (45%) followed by assaults (15%);
- Of the attacks that weren't online, the highest proportion took place in a public area (29%). The second most common location was a household or on private property (17%);

³² Ibid., pp5-6.

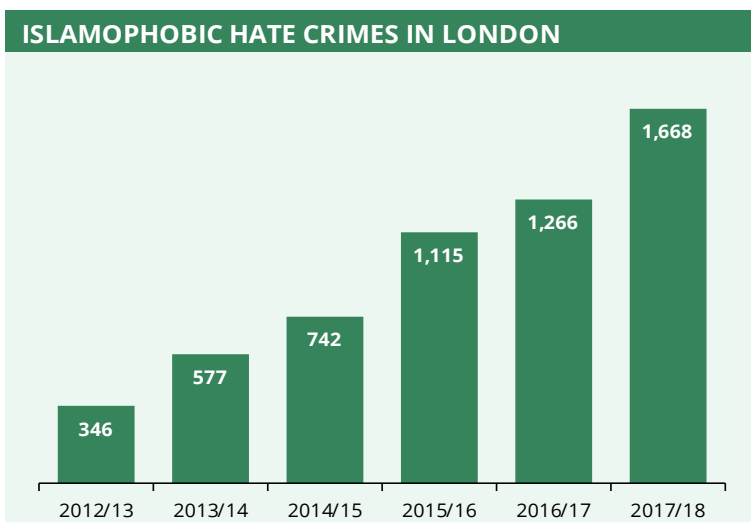
- Of the verified online reports 60% were recorded on Twitter.

Based on responses from 42 of the 45 Police Forces in the UK regarding the number of Islamophobic hate crimes directed at mosques, the Press Association suggests that:

- Hate crimes targeting mosques and other Islamic places of worship across the UK more than doubled between 2016 and 2017;
- 110 hate crimes targeted mosques between March and July 2017, up from just 47 over the same period in 2016;
- 25 forces saw a year-on-year increase in hate crimes targeting mosques, the biggest rise reported was by Greater Manchester Police (9 crimes, up from 0) and London’s MPS (17 crimes, up from 8);
- Threats, harassment or other intimidating behaviour more than tripled, from 14 crimes in 2016 to 49 in 2017;
- Violent crime against individuals more than doubled from 5 recorded crimes against worshippers at mosques in 2016 to 11 crimes in 2017;
- Crimes recorded as vandalism or criminal damage increased from 12 in 2016 to 15 in 2017.³³

Islamophobia in London

According to 2017 ONS Annual Population Survey figures, around 38% of the Muslim population in Great Britain live in London. Data from the MPS shows that the number of Islamophobic hate crime incidents in London has increased by 382% since 2012/13. The increase in police recorded figures in London can be partly attributed as stated earlier to improved recording by the police.

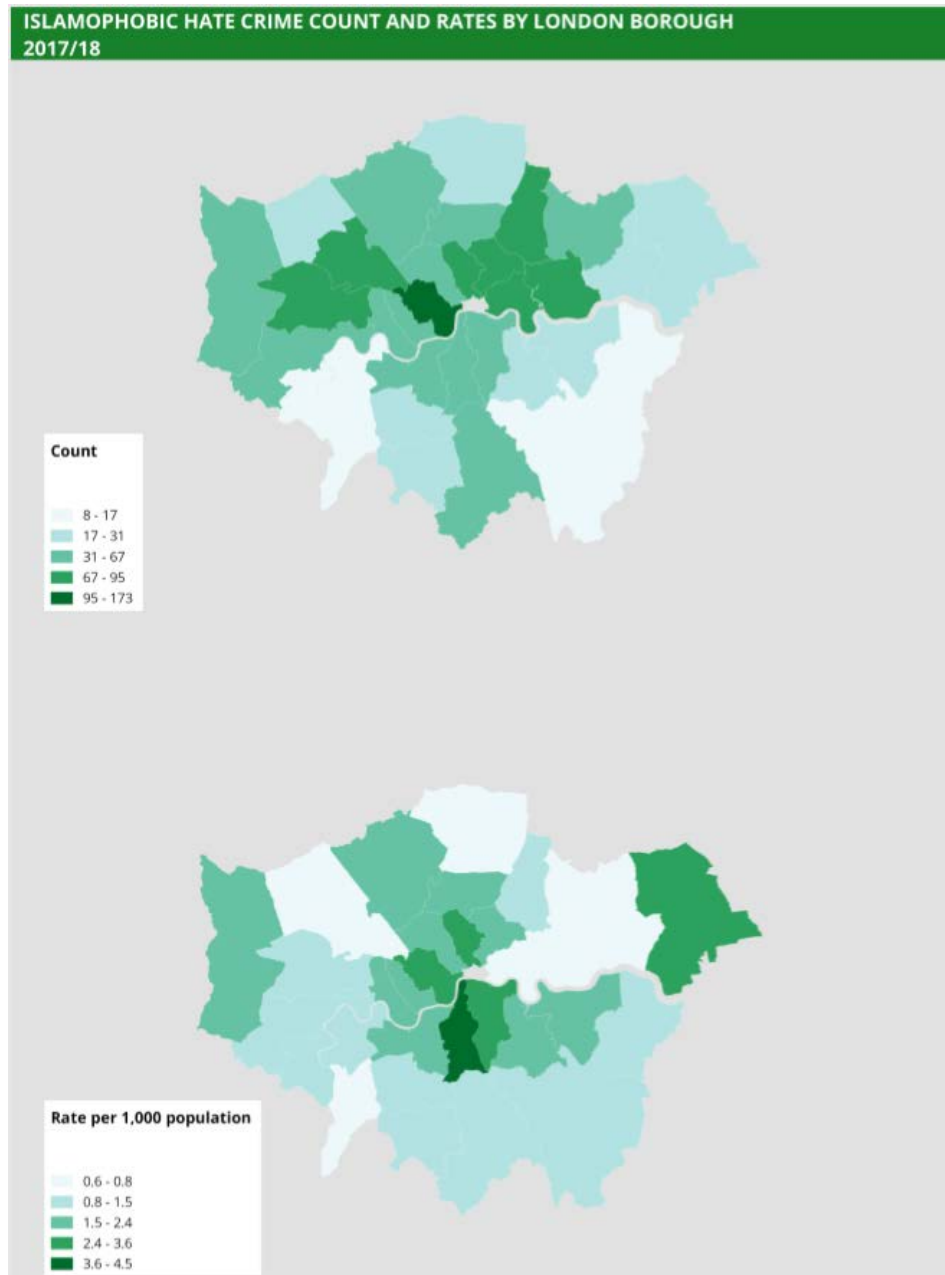


Source: MPS, [Hate Crime or Special Crime Dashboard](#) Accessed 13 December 2018

The following maps show the number of Islamophobic incidents in each London borough during 2017/18 and the rates per 1,000 Muslim residents in the boroughs using 2017 population estimates. Given the large proportion of victims of Islamophobia in the capital who are not

³³ Huffington Post, *Hate Crimes targeting Mosques in UK More than Double In A Year*, 9 October 2017. The figures are likely to be incomplete and polices forces differ in how they record their statistics.

actually Muslims or have not been identified as Muslims these rates should be treated with caution.



The London borough with the highest number of Islamophobic hate crime offences in 2017/18 was Westminster with 173 followed by Tower Hamlets (95) and Newham (93). The London borough with the largest Muslim population is Newham followed by Tower Hamlets. When looking at the rate of Islamophobic hate crime offences in each London borough per 1,000 Muslims residents, Lambeth ranked highest with 4.5, followed by Islington (3.6), then Westminster (3.3). Enfield and Barking and Dagenham (both 0.6) had the lowest rate of Islamophobic hate crime offences.

Commons Library Briefing paper CBP-8537, [Hate Crime Statistics](#), 28 March 2019, includes more context and data.

4. Press coverage of Islamophobia

On 4 July 2018, Sayeeda Warsi, a former co-chair of the Conservatives, criticised her party's plan to tackle Islamophobia:

The party needs to be proactive and change its culture. The availability of non-mandatory diversity training is not enough. Those who are most likely to offend will not be inclined to take part. The training should be compulsory for at least those about whom concerns have been raised [...]

Hiding behind bureaucracy and using process as a fig leaf is not the answer. This is a lesson Labour learned in its row over antisemitism. That fiasco holds some lessons for us Conservatives. We rightly and swiftly called Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters out. I hope and believe we did so from a genuine position of abhorrence at the comments and actions of some Labour members. But the longer we fail to address Islamophobia in our own backyard, the more likely our concerns on antisemitism are to appear politically motivated.³⁴

On 2 March 2019, a Conservative councillor was suspended after a Facebook group he moderated was found to contain Islamophobic and racist comments. The Muslim Council of Britain said it was further evidence of a "significant problem":

A Facebook group led by Conservative politicians containing unashamed bigotry has made it completely apparent that there is a significant problem with racism and Islamophobia within the party of government. Polls revealing that half of all Conservative voters in 2017 believe Islam to be a threat to the British way of life have shown how widespread this sentiment is. We reiterate our call for the government to launch an inquiry into Islamophobia and lead by example by committing to tackle bigotry everywhere, not just where it's politically convenient.³⁵

On 24 March 2019, the chairman of the [Conservative Muslim Forum](#), Mohammed Amin, called on his party to publish a set of formal disciplinary processes after the *Guardian* reported 15 examples of politicians posting "objectionable" content online. He said:

There is a problem, in my view, particularly at grassroots level, with far too many people who have absorbed anti-Muslim bigotry, because there is quite a lot of it around. In terms of terrorism carried out in the name of Islam – 9/11, 7/7 etc – it's quite easy to see where these anti-Muslim ideas come from. But the party as a whole, in my view, hasn't succeeded in getting to grips with that.

There is one fundamental change that is required. There needs to be a more transparent process, much clearer criteria, which are published. Not just criteria for suspending people but criteria for unsuspending people [...] what we need is a clear published rule book.³⁶

³⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/04/inquiry-tory-islamophobia>

³⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-islamophobia-councillor-mosque-facebook-martyn-york-a8804486.html>

³⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/24/tory-islamophobia-row-15-suspended-councillors-quietly-reinstated>

5. Parliamentary Questions

[Religious Buildings: Security](#)

Asked by: Qureshi, Yasmin

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what policing budget funds have been allocated to the protection of mosques.

Answering member: Victoria Atkins | Department: Home Office

Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for setting local priorities and allocating budgets accordingly. Therefore, this information is not collected centrally

However, we know the Police and Crime Commissioner and their Chief Constables continue to place a high priority on protecting places of worship as part of their core activity particularly in relation to hate crime. Following the attacks in New Zealand local police have increased patrolling and security measures around mosques and other places of worship to enhance safety and reassure the public

In addition, protective security advice is provided by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI). NaCTSO have published sector specific protective security advice and guidance for owners and operators of crowded places sites such as places of worship, to allow them to identify key risks and consider what steps to take.

05 Apr 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 237670

[Racial Discrimination](#)

Asked by: Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to produce a definition of (1) Islamophobia, and (2) other forms of racism.

**Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
| Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

The Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred will be undertaking a programme of work to consider a definition following consultation, which effectively tackles prejudice and hatred.

Government is clear that all forms of hate crime, including race-related hate crime, are unacceptable and there is legislation in place to deal with perpetrators of hateful acts. We have asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of the current hate crime legislation.

04 Apr 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL14838

[Community Relations: Islam](#)

Asked by: Qureshi, Yasmin

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to implement the commitment in the integration communities action plan to support the anti-muslim hatred working group to work with IPSO to develop guidance for (a) editors and (b) journalists to tackle the negative portrayal of muslims in the media.

Answering member: Mrs Heather Wheeler | Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Members of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group (AMHWG) continue to engage with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) on the development of guidance for editors and journalists on the reporting of Muslims in the media. Members are currently working with IPSO to develop and refine the guidance.

This work is an important contribution towards commitments set out in the Integrated Communities Action Plan and Government's Hate Crime Action Plan refresh.

01 Apr 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 237675

[Engagements](#)

Asked by: Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton)

This weekend The Guardian reported that 15 Tory councillors who were suspended for Islamophobia or racism had been quietly reinstated. The Conservative party has so far failed to quell fears that it is in denial about Islamophobia. Since I asked the Prime Minister about this issue in June 2018, there has been no concrete action. Will she instruct her party chairman to respond to the three letters that I have sent him on this subject, and when will the Tory party adopt the definition of Islamophobia set out by the all-parliamentary group on British Muslims, as the Labour party, the Lib Dems, Plaid Cymru, the Mayor of London and councils across the country have done?

[The Prime Minister](#)

The Conservative party has a complaints process that deals with complaints of Islamophobia and of any other sort against councillors or other members of the party. It is absolutely clear that discrimination or abuse of any kind is wrong. We take action where there are cases of discrimination or abuse. The hon. Gentleman says that we have not acted since he raised this issue in 2018. We have acted on cases. The party chairman takes very seriously any allegations that are brought before the party and we will continue to do so.

27 Mar 2019 | Prime Minister's questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 657 c319

[Religious Hatred: Islam](#)

Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help protect Ahmadiyya Muslim citizens from verbal and physical attack and abuse on religious grounds.

Answering member: Mrs Heather Wheeler | Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Government is clear that everyone in Britain has the right to feel safe and at ease. Verbal and physical attacks and abuse on religious grounds are hate crimes and will be dealt with appropriately by the police and criminal justice system. As part of our efforts to tackle hate crime, the Government supports the work of the Cross-Government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, which represents a range of perspectives, including those of the Ahmadiyya community. We also support Tell

MAMA, a service which spreads awareness about Anti-Muslim hate crime and Islamophobia, and provides victim support, amongst a number of other initiatives.

20 Feb 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 220121

[Islamophobia](#)

The Archbishop of York: My Lords, on the overall question of definitions, sometimes it is much easier to do things when we handle them as concepts. In the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, we struggled with the question of racism, particularly when it is found in institutions, so we ended up saying: “The concept that we apply to this case of institutional racism is this”. That is much easier than a definition because a definition can restrict what you want to say. Is it not better to learn from what the Stephen Lawrence inquiry did? We in that inquiry also struggled with the question of homophobic incidents in many other places. In the end, we adopted the word “concept” as opposed to a definition, because a definition is always contingent on who speaks and who does what. May I advise that it might be worth while visiting the way in which the Stephen Lawrence inquiry handled the question of institutional racism?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the most reverend Primate is right and I take his advice on this very seriously. There is obviously major work to be done here and I will certainly revisit issues relating to the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and how we learned from what came forward there. It is vital that we get this right; I am sure we all share in that ambition. It is about making sure that we do it, not about rushing to judgment and coming to a set conclusion without looking at the evidence. I am keen to see the evidence and to act on it.

14 Jan 2019 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Lords | 795 c9

[Engagements](#)

Emma Dent Coad (Kensington): Will the Prime Minister please update the House on the progress being made to appoint independent panel members—as agreed with, among others, the Muslim Council of Britain—for the inquiry on Islamophobia in the Conservative party?

Answered by: The Prime Minister: I can say to the hon. Lady that issues relating to any particular concerns or allegations that have been raised in the Conservative party are properly investigated and considered through the new code of conduct that we have introduced. Every complaint that has been made is being or has been investigated, and appropriate action has been taken, including in some cases suspending and expelling members. We are also taking further steps. We are working in conjunction with TellMAMA, making diversity training more widely available and improving how local associations deal with complaints. There should be no place in this country for discrimination, and it is right that as a political party we are working to ensure that we take action when any complaints are made about those within our party.

10 Oct 2018 | Prime Minister's questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 647 cc143-260

[Islamophobia](#)

Asked by: Sandy Martin: What discussions has the Minister had with social media companies about improving the way in which they take down anti-Muslim and Islamophobic hate crime messages from their platforms?

Answered by: Nigel Adams | Department: Women and Equalities:

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: it is important that we continue dialogue with social media companies. Across Government, colleagues are already having such discussions with social media companies, and it is important that anything that incites hatred is taken down immediately. I hope that the social media companies are listening.

13 Sep 2018 | Oral questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 646 c862

[Religious Hatred: Islam](#)

Asked by: Baroness Afshar: To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they have put in place to protect Muslim citizens from verbal and physical attack and abuse on religious grounds.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

| Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government: The Government deplores all hate crime including Islamophobia and is committed to tackling it. Nobody should be a target for hate because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability.

We have a strong legal framework in place with criminal penalties for offences such as incitement to religious hatred, racially or religiously aggravated offences such as intentionally causing harassment, alarm or distress, as well as increased sentences for offences motivated by prejudice hostility or prejudice based on a person's real or perceived religion.

We support Tell MAMA in their work to encourage greater reporting of anti-Muslim hatred and to support victims of hate crime. We also fund projects such as Streetwise and the Anne Frank Trust to work with young people to tackle prejudice and discrimination which may lay the foundations for hate crime in the future.

If anyone feels they have been a victim of hate crime, they should report this directly to their local police force, through the online True Vision portal or to Tell MAMA, who will be able to provide assistance and proceed appropriately.

05 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL8953

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