## **Call for input: Report on Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination**

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This evidence is based on four studies for which I provide more information and links below. I would be more than happy to provide any additional information and/or copies of publications and can be contacted via email ([peter.hopkins@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:peter.hopkins@ncl.ac.uk))

***Study 1*** was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council project and is about the everyday experiences of Muslim and non-Muslim young people growing up in urban, suburban and rural Scotland. Overall this project worked with 382 young people (aged 12 -25) from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds including Muslim young people, other South Asian youth (such as Sikhs, Hindus and non-religious South Asians), asylum seekers and refugees, international students, Central and Eastern European migrants and white Scottish youth. Most lived in Scotland’s main cities, but some were from Dumfries, Fife and Inverness. Our final [report](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/youngpeople/publicationsandoutputs/finalreport/Faith,%20Ethnicity,%20Place%20final%20report.pdf) and two pieces in the Conversation, one about the [operation of Islamophobia](https://theconversation.com/eight-ways-that-islamophobia-operates-in-everyday-life-64444) and a second about [non-Muslim experiences of Islamophobia](https://theconversation.com/young-non-muslims-face-islamophobia-too-72302). There have also been several publications from this project

***Study 2*** was a project where we examined the political interests and political participation of young Muslims (aged 15-27) in Scotland. This work involved 39 interviews, 34 of which were with young Muslims with the remaining 5 being with politicians and public figures. Most of the participants lived in the Greater Glasgow area. There is a final [report](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/media/sites/researchwebsites/youngmuslims/MuslimYouthScotland.pdf) from this project, a [Conversation](https://theconversation.com/young-muslims-want-to-participate-in-politics-but-prejudice-and-islamophobia-may-be-stopping-them-73985) piece and other publications.

***Study 3*** was funded by the European Commission and sought to map anti-Muslim acts in London and Paris. This [project](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/sama/) also explored the experiences of 30 victims of Islamophobia in London including their responses to incidents of Islamophobia and how this has shaped their everyday lives more broadly. There is a piece in the [Conversation](https://theconversation.com/islamophobia-in-paris-and-london-how-it-differs-and-why-94793) about this work.

**Study 4** focuses on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in the North East of England where we collaborated with TellMAMA to complete a survey and focus groups to produce a final [report](https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ISLAMOPHOBIA-AND-ANTI-MUSLIM-HATRED-IN-NORTH-EAST-ENGLAND-090620.pdf) setting out the key features of Islamophobia in this region of the UK.

We have also combined the findings of the first three studies into a short informative booklet called [*Understanding Islamophobia*](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/youngmuslims/outputs/Understanding%20Islamophobia%202018.pdf).

1. ***Please provide information on what you understand by the terms Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred; on the intersection between anti-Muslim hatred, racism and xenophobia and on the historical and modern contexts, including geopolitical, socio-and religious factors, of anti-Muslim hatred.***

We use a broad definition of Islamophobia that encompasses all forms of discrimination, hatred or exclusion (e.g. discursive, material, structural and/or interpersonal) directed at Muslims or those who are perceived to be Muslim. Here, Islamophobia includes a diversity of anti-Muslim acts targeted at individuals, groups or institutions that are perceived as being associated with the Islamic faith. We agree with the focus of the Runnymede Trust and the APPG on British Muslims that Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism. As such, Islamophobia is directed at Muslims as well as other ethnic and religious minority groups who are mistaken for being Muslim. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred are essentially similar phenomenon with some preferring the latter due to the political contestation over the term Islamophobia.

***2.******Discrimination in law and practice***

***2a) Restrictions on the exercise and manifestation of the right to freedom of religion of belief in private or in community with others.***

Across all of the studies, there is evidence of the freedom of religion or belief being restricted, monitored and placed under increasing surveillance. This includes resistance to mosque development, direct experiences of verbal abuse and physical assault in workplaces, on public transport and in public places. Many also referred to the production and sharing of material that stigmatised their religious faith and threated their rights to freedom of religion or belief (e.g. the Punish a Muslim day letter). From those in study 2 who have engaged in political and public life, some were worried that they may be seen as too political or as radical and others still were frustrated by troubling stereotypes based on assumptions about their gender, race or social class. Simplistic stereotypes about Muslim young people need to be challenged in order to enable them to participate in public life.

***2c) Counter-terrorism measures, preventing violent extremism legislations, de-radicalisation programmes, migration and integration policies, anti-foreigners or citizenship laws that evidently discriminate against Muslims based on religious or racial profiling and have negative impacts on them, for example, leading to arbitrary arrests, detention or sentencing.***

**For** many young Muslims involved in studies 1 and 2, the Prevent strategy in the UK was considered to have highly stigmatised their religious identity and put their behaviour and beliefs under a great deal of scrutiny and suspicion. Key stakeholders were also seen to be reinforcing such problematic stereotypes about Muslims through religious and racial profiling in schools, colleges and universities. Muslim students felt increasingly scrutinised on university campuses which limited the extent to which they felt they could express their religious identities openly.

***3. Social attitude, hate speech, attacks and violence against Muslims***

We found evidence of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred across a diverse set of domains. Examples here include:

**Online** – on social media or other platforms, where people share Islamophobic material, images or viewpoints. Online Islamophobia can include words, images, videos, music, discussion forums and messages:

“Yesterday I was watching a YouTube video and it was just a pretty harmless video of people trying Pakistani snacks. And obviously I just randomly went to the comments section just to see what people wrote about. And loads of people were just kind of against Muslims and saying how Muslims should be thrown out of America, thrown out of UK, all kinds of racist comments that you just kind of feel…You just kind of feel scared knowing that people like that are out there”

**Offline** – street-based Islamophobia tends to be about stereotyping and demonising Muslims or about calling for physical violence against them. We find that many such incidences take place on public transport, on the way to/from school or work, or outside of places of workshop. Many offline incidents of Islamophobia involve abusive behaviour or physical attack, and these are some of the most common experiences in the UK.

**Personally** – through one-to-one interactions that are Islamophobic in nature. For example, this could be interactions that Islamophobic in nature between two colleagues at work or between two passers-by on public transport or on the street.

“We just thought we’ll go out and something to eat, it’s just Saturday night [after Prayers], like midnight and we were in Jubbahs [white tunics], we walked into the centre, we heard like people singing Rule Britannia and this was literally a couple of weeks after that incident, the Woolwich, and the amount of abuse we got and the amount of stares we got”

**Nationally** – through negative government or political policies, strategies, campaigns and initiatives that stigmatise Muslims and work to monitor and control Muslim citizens. The Prevent strategy was regularly cited as an approach that fostered an environment in which Islamophobia can flourish.

**Institutionally and structurally** – through institutional decision-making processes that operate to exclude Muslim employees and customers in diverse ways, or to place Muslims under surveillance. This may include Islamophobia by the institutions of the state such as police forces, local authorities or government agencies, and some of this is motivated by policies such as Prevent. In addition, Islamophobia may work through structures that exclude Muslims such as those relating to educational progression, promotion at work or access to health, welfare or public life:

“You can be stopped by random police checks as well, when you are walking… They think you are out to cause trouble…when you are just walking home”

Islamophobia in institutional contexts was frequently experiences by Muslim women in France form study 3.

**Resistance to mosque development** – planning permission may be refused due to collective Islamophobia mobilised through petitions and lobbying, and internal Islamophobia within planning departments.

“There was a news article in the [local paper] because we’ve got the new mosque…. the headline was… ‘old pub has turned to a mosque’, and you read the comments and you read what people say. That’s the kind of things you get discouraged from, that’s the kind of racism you, kind of, read. Which, I mean, it’s people’s comments you read”

**Locally** - Islamophobia operates in everyday public spaces where people interact such as on the street, in shopping areas and on public transport.

“I feel there’s a distrust between our neighbours because our house has been robbed four times… I felt like that they must have known it was Eid for them to know that we were out the house…maybe our neighbours had been looking out the window and seen that we’d gone and they just, when we’d gone they just go in”

Most incidents are in public spaces or on transport networks. As this set of contexts make clear, Islamophobia is found across a diversity of everyday places in the UK and represents a serious challenge.

**Mobility** – many Muslims in study 4 referred to experiencing Islamophobia whilst driving (both from other drivers and the passengers accompanying these other drivers but also from people walking on the street) or on public transport.

**Shopping** – supermarkets were key places where Muslims recall experiencing Islamophobia from customers but crucially in the vast majority of cases, members of supermarket staff did not intervene.

***4. Multiple discrimination and hatred suffered by Muslims in vulnerable situations***

From all of our studies, we know that different constituents of the population are affected by Islamophobia. Although the Muslim community are negatively affected by Islamophobia, it affects other groups who mistaken for being Muslim and so experience Islamophobia as a result of this. Specific cohorts of the population affected by Islamophobia are:

(1) **visible Muslim women** tend to be the main victims of Islamophobia. **Men** who visibility display their Muslim identity through their dress or beard and men who belong to visible minority ethnic groups are also affected by Islamophobia;

(2) **Children and young people** regularly experience Islamophobia at school and in public spaces as they are negotiating the transition to adulthood;

(3) **ethnic and religious minorities** experience Islamophobia – it directly affects Muslims but also other groups of people who are mistaken for being Muslim such as Sikhs, Hindus and other people of South Asian heritage. It can also affect Black African and Caribbean people;

(4) those **wearing clothes perceived as Islamic** experience Islamophobia regardless of their religious faith;

(5) **migrants**, including asylum seekers and refugees of diverse faiths and none but also people who are recognised as ‘not-quite-white’ such as Central and Eastern European migrants recall experiencing Islamophobia.

There were also some additional social divisions whereby Islamophobia could fester:

**Admadiyyan Muslims and Islamophobia** - some minority Muslim groups such as the Ahmadiyyans were actively excluded by the mainstream Muslim community. There were examples of Islamophobia within Muslim communities where some families excluded or mistrusted due to their affiliation as Ahmadiyyan. This was connected to complex histories of persecution of Ahmadiyyans with them being identified as not being “proper Muslims”:

“you get comments here and there by other groups but it’s something like we just ignore… disbelievers or scum, just, abusive languages…But different Muslims when they find out that we’re Ahmadiyya, but at the moment we’ve not received any abuse by Christians or Hindus or Sikhs. It’s been primarily all…other Muslims.”

**National identities and Islamophobia** – there were some examples in our research of intra-faith Islamophobia between Muslims of different national or regional affiliations such as between South Asian and Arab Muslims or between Muslims from the African continent and those who were born in the UK.

“A lady came and she wanted the same thing, she wanted to buy it. The lady was from his country because they were speaking the same thing. I saw her literally buying the same price that I wanted for that item and I could not believe it. So there is even interracial discrimination even within Muslims because there are different communities. I found it really, really shocking”.

**Asylum seekers and Islamophobia** – our research found that many asylum seekers were victims of Islamophobia as they were labelled as originating from ‘dangerous’ places. These perceptions are connected to stereotyping and criminalisation in global political discourse and media coverage of immigration and ‘refugee crisis’.

***5. Good practice in identifying and tackling anti-Muslim hatred, undertaken by civil society and international organisations***

Our research from study 2 found that there are some indicators that politics could be playing a positive role in challenging Islamophobia through the presence of emerging Muslim role-models. There was a sense that there is an emerging and growing presence of publicly prominent Muslims in Scotland and they are very important when it comes to challenging Islamophobia. If those in public roles can foster good relations and openly challenge discrimination, then this would be an important step in establishing a more positive relationship between politics and Islamophobia. Related to this, some young Muslims were motivated to actively engage in politics as a mechanism for challenging Islamophobia.

Some further examples that could be included here are:

* The work of the Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia in the Scottish Parliament. One specific initiative of this group has been to develop a set of [media guidelines](https://36v.c53.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Media-guidelines-reporting-on-Muslims-and-Islam-full-report.pdf) about reporting on Muslims and Islam as negative media coverage was identified as a challenge for many Muslims. These guidelines were endorsed by the National Union of Journalists in Scotland and also feature on the webpages of [IMPRESS](https://impress.press/news/guest-blog-media-guidelines-reporting-muslims-islam.html), an independent monitor of the press. This group – one of the most active in the Scottish Parliament also provides a forum for Muslims to engage in political life. This group are also in the process of finalising an inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland given the lack of data in this context.
* A [hate crimes in the UK](https://vimeo.com/305473420) video was developed to educate students at university induction sessions about hate crime and how to respond to and report it. This video is now used by other universities in the UK and also by Northumbria Police in their Hate Crime Champions training.
* The [Understanding Islamophobia](https://research.ncl.ac.uk/youngmuslims/outputs/Understanding%20Islamophobia%202018.pdf) booklet and a linked [public lecture](https://campus.recap.ncl.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Embed.aspx?id=b300c014-553c-4912-85dc-a9bd00b11a8e&v=1&_ga=2.74308370.187827457.1608575819-341507093.1594307976) provide examples of how educational initiatives can engage with diverse audiences to challenge negative stereotyping and challenge anti-Muslim hatred.