

“A Working definition of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim Hatred/Prejudice”

‘UNEDUCATED’

**‘GO BACK TO
YOUR COUNTRY’**

‘LETTERBOX’

‘OPPRESSED’

‘TERRORIST’

Submission from



TellMAMA
Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks

“A Working definition of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim Hatred/Prejudice”

Tell MAMA submission to APPG on British Muslims

Tell MAMA

16 November 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Tell MAMA is an independent and confidential support service for those who experience anti-Muslim prejudice, racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia in the UK.
- 1.2. Tell MAMA provides confidential assistance to those who experience anti-Muslim prejudice, abuse, racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia in the UK. As a third-party support service, Tell MAMA also supports victims of Islamophobic hate crime and can liaise with relevant police forces on behalf of victims (when requested), provides advocacy work and signposting for legal assistance.
- 1.3. Our support for victims and witnesses includes emotional support, signposting, and liaising with the police and other parties on their behalf when required. We receive reports from our free and confidential helpline, over email, via our official apps on the Apple and Android stores, through social media platforms, WhatsApp, or through our online form.
- 1.4. Our groundbreaking research is shaping government policy, including the Hate Crime Action Plan. In 2017, Tell MAMA recorded its biggest ever rise in reports with 1,201 verified cases, which included 839 reports having occurred offline or on a street-level.

2. Have you adopted a definition of Islamophobia in your line of work and if so what is it?

- 2.1. Our recent annual reports, published in 2018 and 2017, which cover the 2016 and 2017 reporting cycles, have used the terms Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred (and/or prejudice) interchangeably, partly for brevity because the term is established in existing academic literature and used by police forces nationwide when logging hate incidents and crimes.
- 2.2. Some perpetrators in our dataset demonstrate a disproportionate hatred of Islam which often has little to do with attacking or abusing Muslims directly. Therefore, we cannot always detach how some display a hatred of Islam from a hatred of Muslims. We affirm the fundamental right of freedom of expression and speech, but it comes with a responsibility to not harm others or threaten or incite violence.
- 2.3. In these reports, we have used a reworked version of the reworked version of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), working definition of antisemitism: "A certain perception of Muslims, which may be expressed as hatred or outward hostility towards Muslims. Hatred may take the form of anti-Muslim rhetoric and physical manifestations that are targeted towards Muslims (or non-Muslim individuals considered to be sympathetic to Muslims) and/or their property; or towards Muslim community institutions or religious and other related social institutions".
- 2.4. Our most recent annual report, for 2017, verified 1,201 verified incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia, with 70% of them taking place offline, meaning incidents often took place at the street level. We also recorded a disturbing 56% increase in incidents that involved discrimination, and an 88% increase in vandalism.
- 2.5. Abusive behaviour, 52% (n=441) and Physical attack, 18% (n=149) were the two largest categories of incidents verified in 2017. This constitutes a 30.6% rise in verified offline reports from the previous reporting period.
- 2.6. The 2017 report also identifies busy public spaces and transport networks as the two most common locations (public area, 34% n=282 and transport networks, 13% n=107). We have often highlighted how Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred limits the mobility of Muslims when in public spaces – be it when

- accessing public or private transport, when out shopping, or walking in public spaces.
- 2.7. Some victims feel inclined to reduce their everyday activities and geographic mobility due to their decreased confidence and worries about future incidents. Others felt held back at work and in education, and some go as far as dressing less Islamically to avoid abuse or violence. Furthermore, Mythen et al. (2009) found young Muslims were changing daily routines and carrying out 'practices of self-surveillance' when entering public spaces. This included changing their clothing, hiding facial hair, and debating the acceptable lengths of beards, and restricting verbal interactions, particularly on foreign policy.¹
 - 2.8. Having flexibility in our definition, we feel, allows our work to document and evidence how Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice are situational, criminal, hateful, and importantly, structural. We know that there are potential obstacles to achieving outcomes for victims of Islamophobic abuse, including institutional discrimination, widespread prejudice, and social barriers to reporting incidents and accessing public services. But, crucially, understanding how structural inequalities and institutional discrimination can help us understand how Muslims are often disadvantaged when they engage with law enforcement agencies and the courts due to institutional discrimination.²
 - 2.9. Tell MAMA has seen verified reports of discrimination increase by 111.76% in just two years, with 34 verified reports of discrimination in 2015, compared to 72 reports in 2017.
 - 2.10. In our 2016 annual report, '[A Constructed Threat: Identity, Intolerance and the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hatred](#)' we warned: "Muslims of all ages are at risk of discrimination in educational institutions, in the workplace, and near their homes when accessing public and private services. This goes beyond being passed over for roles, and often consists of ongoing 'low-level' abuse and mistreatment met with ignorance from those in authoritative and managerial roles when grievances were raised."³
 - 2.11. There is also a growing body of research which argues that a process of 'securitisation' frames Muslims more broadly as a 'suspect community'.⁴ Tell MAMA does, on occasion, deal with reports where the misuse of safeguarding policies has detrimentally impacted on Muslims.
 - 2.12. In our 2016 annual report, '[A Constructed Threat: Identity, Intolerance and the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hatred](#)', we highlighted this case study: "A Muslim mother contacted us after uniformed police officers attended their house to speak with her about her young son after he allegedly mentioned Syria to a member of staff. She added that her son has learning difficulties and the staff know him well. So, the idea of such a referral caused great distress. The police were satisfied that no

¹ Mythen, Gabe, Sandra Walklate, and Fatima Khan. "'I'm a Muslim, but I'm not a Terrorist': Victimization, Risky Identities and the Performance of Safety." *The British Journal of Criminology* 49, no. 6 (2009): 736-754.

² Landrine, H., Klonoff, E., Alcaraz, R., Scott, J., Wilkins, P. "Multiple Status Variables in Discrimination." In *The Social Psychology of Interpersonal Discrimination*, edited by Lott, B. and Maluso, D., pp. 183-224 (New York, 1995).

³ Tell MAMA. *Tell MAMA Annual Report 2016: A Constructed Threat: Identity, Intolerance and the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hatred* (2017).

⁴ Awan, I. "'I'm a Muslim not an Extremist': How the Prevent Strategy has constructed a 'Suspect' Community". *Politics & Policy* 40, no.6 (2012) pp.1158-85.

⁵ Cole, 'Austerity/Immiseration Capitalism and Islamophobia - or Twenty-first-century Multicultural Socialism?' (2014).

⁶ Mills et al. 'Extreme Hatred' (2015).

- further action was required. The mother added that she felt that the report was motivated by their Muslim identity.” There was the case of Mr Gulfraz, who suffered the indignity of having the police visit his home after his 7-year-old son expressed his happiness about a toy water pistol when at school in June 2017.⁷
- 2.13. A breakdown in trust between institutions and Muslims can reduce the reporting of Islamophobia and hate crime. This is true of universities, given how many Muslim students admitted to censoring their views after citing concerns about the current Prevent duty.⁸
- 2.14. In the [Executive Summary](#) of our 2017 annual report, we made general recommendations to a range of institutions: from the police and courts to educational institutions, and employers.
- 2.15. To rebuild trust, in the judicial system, for example, if judges better utilised the sentencing powers to hold perpetrators accountable, it can send out strong and powerful messages that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred will not be tolerated. This can help rebuild the deficit in trust that exists between Muslim communities and the criminal justice sector given the disproportionality that exists.
- 2.16. The Lammy review, written by David Lammy MP, found that individuals from Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds make up 25% of the prison population in England and Wales and 41% of the youth justice system, despite both groups accounting for just 14% of the general population. Moreover, Muslims account for 15% of the prison population in England and Wales yet account for just 5% of the general population, in a rise not linked to terrorism offences.⁹

3. What are the consequences of not adopting a definition of Islamophobia, if any?

- 3.1. Tell MAMA believes any definition of Islamophobia should always centre the voices and experiences of Muslims. We welcome further understanding of this issue in the hope that the debate can move beyond semantics whilst ensuring that fundamental rights are taken into consideration. From a research perspective, as Gerring (2001), argued: “to deprive the social science community of certain words, or of certain uses of commonly understood words, is bound to create confusion, and also to limit the usefulness of social science as a way of apprehending the world.”¹⁰
- 3.2. Islamophobia is a parallel concept like homophobia or xenophobia, not a clinical psychological term.¹¹ It, therefore, carries a broad set of negative attitudes and emotions directed at groups or individuals due to their perceived Muslim or

⁷ Kerbaj, R. ‘Alert over Muslim boy’s water pistol.’ The Times and The Sunday Times. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/alert-over-muslim-boys-water-pistol-w0hmmjg6b>

⁸ Busby, E. ‘Living in fear: One in three Muslim students attacked on campus as Islamophobic hate crime surges.’ The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/muslim-students-universities-islamophobic-national-union-students-nus-prevent-duty-a8260176.html>

⁹ The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the in the Criminal Justice System (2017). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf.

¹⁰ Gerring, John. Social science methodology: A criterial framework. Cambridge University Press, 2001. 67.

¹¹ Bleich, Erik. “What is Islamophobia and how much is there? Theorizing and measuring an emerging comparative concept.” American Behavioral Scientist 55, no. 12 (2011): 1581-1600.

Islamic identity, and is analogous to terms like racism, antisemitism, and sexism.¹²

- 3.3. In an analysis of Halliday's (1999) critique of the term Islamophobia, Meer & Modood (2009) argued that it became irrelevant or impossible to separate the impact of appearing Muslim, from that of appearing to follow Islam, given how the everyday racism which followed 9/11 and 7/7 saw Sikhs, for example, racialised as 'Arabs', demonstrating the interwoven discrimination and/or hostility towards Muslims and Islam.¹³ Therefore, they argue, any understanding of Islamophobia should be situated in a framework of cultural racism and racialisation.¹⁴ Any definition should be mindful of this concept, and we remind you that in 2017, over half of our victims in this dataset are visibly Muslim women (53%, n=353), where data was available (N=669). With some perpetrators targeting women because of their hijab (or other Islamic clothing). We have long documented how Muslim women, who wear the niqab (face veil), also face a disproportionate amount of abuse and/or violence.¹⁵ On August 14, 2018, The Times newspaper highlighted how we had received 21 reports from Muslim women, 14 of whom wear the hijab and seven women who the niqab, who reported abuse a week after Boris Johnson's column said Muslim women who wear the niqab look like "bank robbers" and "letterboxes".¹⁶
- 3.4. High-profile events, along with associated media coverage, stimulate public discourse on issues such as terrorism, religious expression, and immigration can legitimise racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic prejudice. Individuals with underlying prejudice may feel emboldened to victimise those they feel to be deserving of abuse to defend the status of the dominant 'in-group'. The government and media outlets must consider how their choice of language influences wider public discourse. And, therefore, a clear framework of understanding of what anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia is, can help empower communities to challenge such language, and, ideally, create the means to hold high-profile individuals and politicians accountable for their language, whilst ensuring that whilst fundamental rights are protected, whilst ensuring that racialised and discriminatory language and attitudes are not normalised.

4. What actions or behaviours are captured by the definition of Islamophobia that you employ?

- 4.1. Tell MAMA captures incidents and reports of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred which happen within the geographic borders of the United Kingdom, and this extends to incidents on social media platforms and other websites.
- 4.2. As previously stated, in our 2017 annual report, '[Beyond the Incident: Outcomes for Victims of anti-Muslim Prejudice](#)' we recorded a total of 1,330 reports. Of these reports, 1,201 were verified as being anti-Muslim or Islamophobic in nature

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Meer, Nasar, and Tariq Modood. "Refutations of racism in the 'Muslim question'." *Patterns of prejudice* 43, no. 3-4 (2009): 341-343.

¹⁴ Ibid. 344.

¹⁵ "Muslim Woman in Niqab Told She Should Be 'shot'." TELL MAMA. Last modified August 17, 2018. <https://tellmama.org/muslim-woman-in-niqab-told-she-should-be-shot/>.

¹⁶ Webber, Esther. "Rise in Reports of Verbal Abuse Against Muslim Women After Boris Johnson Burka Comments." *The Times & The Sunday Times*. Last modified August 14, 2018. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rise-in-reports-of-verbal-abuse-against-muslim-women-after-boris-johnson-burka-comments-jbbd9kwcg>.

and as having occurred in the UK between January and December 2017. More than two-thirds of verified incidents occurred offline, or on a street-level (70%, n=839), which represents a 30% rise in offline reports when compared to the previous reporting period (n=643). An offline, or street-level, incident means that the incident occurred in-person between a victim and a perpetrator.

- 4.3. Crimes or incidents that are classified as 'online' occurred on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter, or on other Internet-based platforms, were verified as having happened within the UK, and account for a third of reports in 2017 (n=362), which represents a 16.3% rise in reports when compared to the previous year (n=311). This small rise can be partially attributed to the way in which ideologically-motivated accounts felt emboldened by major trigger events, (such as terrorist attacks) and broader Islamophobic discourses in the public sphere.
- 4.4. The 'online' figure, however, should be viewed as part of a wider trend in our datasets where there has been a marked shift towards more serious offline incidents such as physical attacks, threatening behaviour, discrimination, and abuse more generally, along with a growing awareness of Tell MAMA in Muslim communities, among key stakeholders, and partners, resulting in a greater willingness amongst victims and witnesses to report.
- 4.5. Muslims in the UK come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and this often reflected in our datasets. For example, in 2017, 38.8% of victims were Asian, 7.9% were Arab, 4.9% were White, 3.8% had mixed or multiple ethnicities and 3.5% were black. This means that victims contacting Tell MAMA will experience different forms of Islamophobia because of their religion *and* ethnicity.
- 4.6. Any definition must factor in how the racialisation of Muslims and Islam means, for example, that white converts are verbally abused with racial epithets like 'P*ki'. Racialisation concerns "cultural factors in addition to traditional, physical markers of race and ethnicity"¹⁷ which also impact non-Muslims, including Hindus and Sikhs, due to the 'othering' and delegitimising of their non-Western faiths, by framing it through a racial lens.¹⁸
- 4.7. This also occurs at a structural and institutional level, at a structural and institutional level, at a micro level, reactive groups of individuals composed of various ethnicities, classes, and genders interact through a process of 'familial socialisation and shared cultural values'.¹⁹ Seeking to understand these group dynamics help us to understand the paradox of how some individuals can simultaneously hold positive and negative views of minorities (in this case Muslims) and differentiate between racist attitudes and prejudicial behaviours.²⁰ By applying a 'differentialist' model of racialisation, we can understand how the exclusion of others is due to 'essentialised' forms of cultural differences.²¹
- 4.8. The variety of experiences Muslims face because of their ethnicity and religious identity concerns the impact of disproportionality in the use of stop and search

¹⁷ Selod, Saher, and David G. Embrick. "Racialization and Muslims: Situating the Muslim experience in race scholarship." *Sociology Compass* 7, no. 8 (2013): 644-655.

¹⁸ Joshi, Khyati Y. "The racialization of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism in the United States." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39, no. 3 (2006): 211-226.

¹⁹ Phillips, Coretta. "Institutional racism and ethnic inequalities: An expanded multilevel framework." *Journal of social policy* 40, no. 1 (2011): 173-192.

²⁰ Terry, Deborah J., L. Blackwood, M. A. Hogg, and D. Johnson. "Prejudiced attitudes, group norms, and discriminatory behaviour." In *International journal of psychology*, vol. 35, no. 3/4, pp. 222-222. Psychology Press, 2000.

²¹ Balibar, Étienne. "La construction du racisme." *Actuel Marx* 2 (2005): 11-28.

powers, and, more broadly, in counter-terrorism powers, also shape the perception of law enforcement among Muslims in Britain. Data published last year exposed a wide racial gap in the use of stop and search powers, where individuals classed as black were eight times more likely to be stopped than white people, while those classed as being from other minority ethnic groups were four times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people.²² Research published in 2016 found that “all minority ethnic communities are affected by disproportionality but we see that people belonging to the category ‘Asian’ and ‘Chinese and Other’—which includes Arabs—are the most likely to be affected by anti-terrorism powers.”²³

- 4.9. Our work continues to demonstrate how Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred has a disproportionate impact on Muslim women. We identified 978 victims and 1,161 perpetrators in 839 incidents in our 2017 dataset. Most victims are female (57.5%, n=562) while most perpetrators are male (64.6%, n=750). A clear majority (72%) of the perpetrators are white men (518) where ethnicity and gender data are available (n=724). Over half of the victims are visibly Muslim women (53%, n=353) where data is available (n=669).
- 4.10. The gendered dynamic of such abuse and discrimination, as the language of some male perpetrators often fuses xenophobic or racialised language with misogyny. For example, an elderly visibly Muslim woman was targeted by three men with a dog in the street. They pushed her, threatened her with the dog and verbally abused her, calling her a ‘refugee b*tch’, ‘f***** immigrant’, and threatened to ‘deport’ her. In another incident, a man threatened a visibly Muslim woman with a bottle saying, ‘I’m going f***** hit you in the c*nt with this’ before throwing the bottle at her.
- 4.11. Over half of the victims in our 2017 report are visibly Muslim women (53%, n=353), where Muslim visibility data was available (N=669). However, perpetrators of Islamophobic abuse often refer to their Islamic clothing, suggesting that they have selected the victim based on their religious clothing. For example, in one case a young Muslim woman was travelling on a London bus when a man entered and grabbed her possessions and started swearing at her. When she confronted him, he replied: “I have no respect for you because you have a hijab on. Shut up, f*ck you.”
- 4.12. The targeting of Muslim women due to their overt religious identity demonstrates how the hijab has become an ‘essentialist’ way to see “Muslimness”, which, in turn, ‘others’ Muslim women through a process where their visible identity is seen to embody all the ‘problematic and threatening about Islam and Muslims’.²⁴ Others contend that the visibility of the headscarf reinforces the “age-old stereotypes about Muslim women as meek and submissive” amongst perpetrators.²⁵
- 4.13. The gendered nature of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred is best understood through the framework of intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American legal scholar, in 1989, who argued: “because the

²² Dodd, Vikram. ‘Stop and search eight times more likely to target black people’. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/oct/26/stop-and-search-eight-times-more-likely-to-target-black-people>.

²³ ‘In numbers: counter-terrorism powers disproportionately affect ethnic and religious minorities in Britain’. Faith Matters. Available at: <https://www.faith-matters.org/2016/05/18/numbers-counter-terrorism-powers-disproportionately-affect-ethnic-religious-minorities-britain/>.

²⁴ Allen, Chris. “Exploring the Impact of Islamophobia on Visible Muslim Women Victims: A British Case Study.” *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 3, no. 2 (2014): 137-159.

²⁵ Carland, Susan. “Islamophobia, fear of loss of freedom, and the Muslim woman.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 4 (2011): 469-473.

intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.”²⁶ This concept articulates ‘politics of survival for black women’ and presents a framework to stop the essentialism of difference.²⁷ Other academics have taken this framework further, with the hope of broadening the discussion to understand both oppression and privilege, due to the ‘messy and embodied’ nature of intersectionality,²⁸ whilst detailing the privilege of being able-bodied in academia whilst facing structural and personal forms of oppression.²⁹ This is an important reflection, and ties into the work of Tell MAMA, and our partnership work on CATCH (Community Alliance To Combat Hate), which means that we receive referrals from partner organisations because Muslims have been targeted for multiple identities – for example, a person can experience hatred, abuse, violence or discrimination because they are disabled *and* Muslim.

- 4.14. Victims and perpetrators of Islamophobic incidents can be of any age. However, the most common age range of victims was 26–35 and the most common age range of perpetrators was 13–18 (where the data was available). Given that many cases involve low-level abuse, harassment or violence, victims understandably are sometimes unable to recall the precise age of the perpetrator. The age range of perpetrators may reflect a wider problem of Islamophobic bullying in educational institutions. Islamophobic reports can be targeted at Muslim teachers but also directed at Muslims by their teachers.
- 4.15. Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic incidents take a wide variety of forms, ranging from overt physical attacks in public to subtle forms of discrimination or derogatory comments in schools or in the workplace. Hate crime can have major consequences for victims and their families, both physically and psychologically.

²⁶ Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." U. Chi. Legal F. (1989): 139.

²⁷ Jordan-Zachery, Julia S. "Am I a black woman or a woman who is black? A few thoughts on the meaning of intersectionality." Politics & Gender 3, no. 2 (2007): 254-263.

²⁸ Ahmed, Sara. Living a feminist life. Duke University Press, 2017.

²⁹ Ibid.



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