ANTI-MUSLIM HOSTILITY, DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIME

Understanding Your Rights





Know
Your Rights



Find
Support



Take
Action

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Understanding Anti-Muslim Hostility

The Anti-Muslim Hostility Definition

The government appointed a working group in 2025 to recommend a non-statutory definition to cover different types of negative treatment of Muslims and across sectors and settings. The work led to the government formally endorsing a new (non-statutory) definition in March 2026 using the terminology 'anti-Muslim hostility':

1. Criminal acts targeting Muslims or people perceived to be Muslim

Anti-Muslim hostility is intentionally engaging in, assisting or encouraging criminal acts – including acts of violence, vandalism, harassment, or intimidation, whether physical, verbal, written or electronically communicated – that are directed at Muslims because of their religion or at those who are perceived to be Muslim, including where that perception is based on assumptions about ethnicity, race or appearance.

2. Prejudicial stereotyping intended to encourage hatred

It is also the prejudicial stereotyping of Muslims, or people perceived to be Muslim including because of their ethnic or racial backgrounds or their appearance, and treating them as a collective group defined by fixed and negative characteristics, with the intention of encouraging hatred against them, irrespective of their actual opinions, beliefs or actions as individuals.

3. Unlawful discrimination intended to disadvantage Muslims

It is engaging in unlawful discrimination where the relevant conduct – including the creation or use of practices and biases within institutions – is intended to disadvantage Muslims in public and economic life.

Note: *Each paragraph of the definition has been given a heading for clarity and are not part of the government's official definition. The definition's wording is reproduced unchanged.*

Why is the Anti-Muslim Hostility definition needed?

Over the years, different definitions and terms have been used to describe prejudice and hostility towards Muslims such as Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Muslim racism. Each emphasises different aspects of the problem and has prompted debate.

The government's adoption of a definition and using the term 'anti-Muslim hostility' aims to provide a shared understanding and support more consistent responses across workplaces, services and other settings.



Other terminology

Islamophobia

A widely used term for prejudice, discrimination and hostility towards Muslims. Some critics argue that the term can suggest a "fear of Islam" and may blur the distinction between criticism of Islam and hostility towards Muslims.

Anti-Muslim racism

Highlights how Muslims, despite their diverse backgrounds, can be stereotyped and targeted as if they belong to a single group. People may be targeted because of their name, ethnicity, clothing or appearance. Some question the term because Muslims are not a single racial group, but it describes how hostility can operate through racial assumptions.

Anti-Muslim hatred

Clearly identifies Muslims as the target. However, the word "hatred" may suggest only extreme hostility and lead to a narrower focus on hate crimes, overlooking less obvious prejudice and discrimination in workplaces and services.

How can the anti-Muslim hostility definition help?

Muslims and people perceived to be Muslim, can experience prejudice and hostility across many areas of life. This can include:

- **Hate crime**
  Criminal offences such as verbal and physical abuse, harassment, intimidation, and damage to property (vandalism), which can occur in person, online, or through written communication.
- **Workplace discrimination**
  Where individuals may be excluded, treated unfairly, or denied opportunities.
- **Discrimination when accessing services**
  Unequal treatment or exclusion when using healthcare, education, housing, transport, shops or other services.
- **Policies, laws, or institutional practices**
  Rules, decisions or organisational processes that unfairly disadvantage Muslims.
- **Stereotyping and dehumanisation**
  Portraying Muslims as a single group with negative characteristics, for example, as violent, oppressive or backward.



These portrayals, including in the media and online, can shape attitudes and influence how Muslims are treated across all areas of life.

The definition can help people describe their experiences and help those receiving reports or complaints recognise and respond to anti-Muslim hostility.

Organisations can also use it to improve staff training, policies and incident recording.

If the definition is non-statutory and laws already exist to address hate crime and discrimination, how can it be useful?

It complements existing legal protections

The definition helps people recognise anti-Muslim hostility and understand how existing hate crime and discrimination laws may apply. It can also inform how organisations respond to complaints and support prevention through clearer policies, staff training and better recording of incidents.

It helps name and recognise the problem

Anti-Muslim hostility can be minimised or dismissed. The definition provides a shared understanding of how anti-Muslim hostility can appear, helping people recognise and describe their experiences and helping those receiving complaints assess them in context and respond appropriately.

It can inform internal policies

Organisations can incorporate the definition into HR policies, codes of conduct, staff training and complaints procedures. This can clarify expectations and support consistent responses. (Any disciplinary action must still follow fair procedures and comply with existing law).

It demonstrates commitment

Adopting the definition and putting it into practice signals that anti-Muslim hostility is taken seriously. This can help build trust among Muslim employees and service users and encourage them to raise concerns.

Does the definition restrict freedom of speech?

NO

The definition does not restrict lawful freedom of expression or change existing law. People remain free to question, criticise and express views that may offend, including criticism of Islam, religious beliefs and practices. Concerns about individuals, including criminal behaviour, can still be raised. The definition focuses on hostility towards people and does not introduce a blasphemy law.



Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights(ECHR) protects freedom of expression, but this right is not absolute. Existing laws restrict conduct such as incitement to violence, harassment and unlawful discrimination. Context matters, including in the workplace, where expression must be considered alongside colleagues' rights and lawful workplace policies.

Does the definition give Muslims special treatment or additional legal protection?

NO

The definition does not create additional legal rights or change existing laws. It helps people and organisations recognise and respond to anti-Muslim hostility.

Recognising anti-Muslim hostility is a response to a documented problem, rather than preferential treatment. The government also supports the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. Both definitions support efforts to address hostility towards the communities concerned.

Why is it important to tackle anti-Muslim hostility?

The abuse, hatred, hostility, discrimination and stereotyping directed at Muslims can have deep and lasting impacts. These include:

- **Fears for safety and restricted freedom of movement and expression**

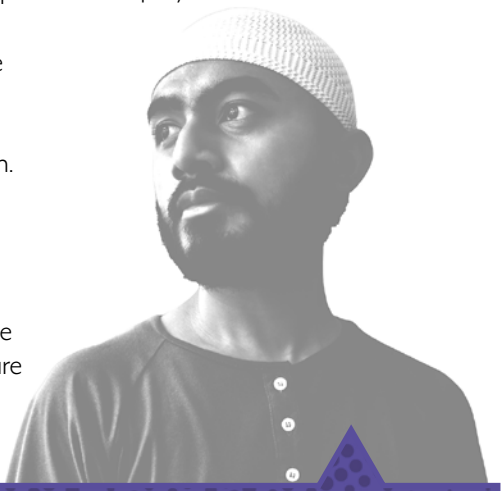
  Anti-Muslim hostility can leave people fearing for their own safety and that of their families. Fear of harassment or violence may lead them to avoid certain places or limit everyday activities. Some may also feel compelled to conceal their Muslim identity or change their appearance, for example, wearing a hat instead of a headscarf, to reduce the risk of being targeted.

- **Inequitable access to services**

  Discriminatory treatment can prevent Muslims from receiving the support they need and undermine trust in services. In healthcare, inadequate treatment or fear of discrimination may lead people to delay seeking help, allowing conditions to worsen. When reports to the police are not taken seriously, victims may be denied justice and perpetrators may escape accountability. These experiences can discourage people from seeking help or reporting future incidents.

- **Discrimination in the workplace**

  Bias and assumptions during recruitment can cause qualified Muslim candidates to be overlooked, limiting their employment opportunities. At work, harassment, offensive jokes and stereotyping can make employees feel undervalued, unsafe and unwelcome. If left unchallenged, this behaviour can become normalised. Over time, it can erode confidence, harm mental health and lead employees to disengage, conceal their Muslim identity or leave their jobs. Employers may also face discrimination claims at employment tribunals.



The anti-Muslim hostility definition provides a useful framework for understanding the issues discussed in the following sections on discrimination, the Equality Act and hate crime.

Training, Reporting and Support

Muslim Women's Network UK provides in-person and online training on the anti-Muslim hostility definition and its practical application. To enquire, email contact@mwnuk.co.uk

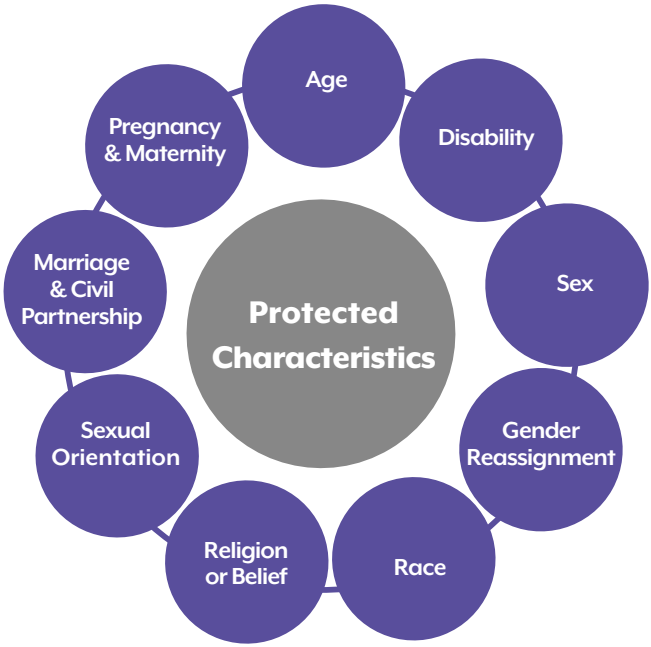


Muslim Women's Network UK has established Muslim Safety Net, a dedicated helpline where people can report incidents of anti-Muslim hostility, seek advice and receive support.

0303 330 0288
07311 876 378 (WhatsApp/text)
contact@muslimsafetynet.org.uk
@muslimsafetynet

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is what happens when you are treated unfairly or unequally based on certain characteristics such as your religion or belief, sex, race (which can sometimes include caste), marital status or a limited number of other 'protected characteristics'. It is against the law (Equality Act 2010) to discriminate against anyone because of these 'protected characteristics'.



The Equality Act 2010 protects you from discrimination by:

- Employers.
- Businesses and organisations which provide goods or services like banks, shops and utility companies.
- Health and care providers like hospitals and care homes.
- Schools, colleges and other education providers.
- Someone you rent or buy a property from, such as housing associations and estate agents.
- Transport services such as buses, trains and taxis.
- Public bodies such as government departments and local authorities.

Types of Discrimination



Direct Discrimination

This is where someone treats you badly (less favourably) because of your race / religion / sex.

Example: You are a Muslim woman who wears a niqab. You are in a large group of friends (you are the only Muslim) that walks into a restaurant and asks to be seated. The manager says *"sorry, but I don't serve people like her"* (pointing at you). A valid assumption might be that the manager meant 'Muslims' when he said people like you. If this can be proven this would be unlawful direct discrimination.

Example: Being paid less because you are a woman (sex discrimination).

Example: Being told that one cannot wear a symbol of their faith e.g. headscarf (religious discrimination).

Example: When a disabled person in a wheelchair cannot get access into a building (disability discrimination.)

Indirect Discrimination

This is where there is a rule in place that affects everyone, but which causes a particular difficulty for people from one race / religion / sex. Sometimes this type of discrimination can be justified.

Example: Just before Ramadhan an employer changes the shift pattern so that all employees have to work Fridays, late afternoon/early evening once every two weeks. Unless the employer has a vital business reason for doing this, it will be unlawful indirect discrimination against Muslims.



Harassment

This is where you are subjected to treatment (which may or may not include words) that leaves you feeling intimidated, degraded, humiliated or distressed.

Example: A girl goes into the library at college. The male security guards try and touch her breasts when she walks past them. She tells them to stop it but they think it's funny and try to do it again when she walks out. This amounts to unlawful harassment on the grounds of sex.

Victimisation

This is where you have complained that you think you have been discriminated against and you are treated badly because you made the complaint.

Example: You are an Asian man working in a supermarket. You complain that two colleagues – a white woman and a black man – have loudly been making derogatory remarks about your race. You complain about it to your boss, but nothing is done and later that week your overtime hours are cut. No one else's are. This could be unlawful victimisation.

Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments

This type of discrimination applies only to disabled people, including those with physical or mental impairments. Employers and service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to prevent disabled people from being placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people. This could include changes to working arrangements, physical environments or the way services are provided. Failure to make reasonable adjustments where required by law amounts to discrimination.

Example: A woman who is a bookkeeper in a small company has an accident meaning she will permanently have walking difficulties and will need a stick. Her office is upstairs but there is no lift. A reasonable adjustment would be to move her office downstairs.

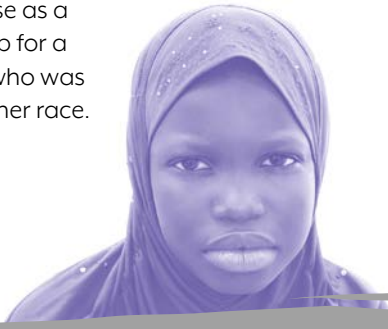
Discrimination Arising from Disability

This applies only to disabled people. It occurs when someone is treated unfavourably because of something that arises as a consequence of their disability, unless the treatment can be objectively justified.

Example: A woman has serious depression and finds it very difficult to concentrate at work. She can only deal with processing 10 orders a day instead of the 15 required. Her employer dismisses her without enquiring into why she has low productivity. This could be discrimination.

Other Types of Discrimination

- In some cases it will be discrimination if you are treated badly because someone thinks you are a particular religion or race even if you are not.
- In some cases it will be discrimination if you are treated badly because of someone else's religion, race, sex or disability e.g. if you are treated badly by your employer because you have a disabled child that you need to care for, or because as a black woman you stood up for a colleague of Asian origin who was being abused because of her race.
- If your fellow employees or customers are being abusive to you because or your sex, race of religion and your employer does nothing to stop it, your employer's failure to act may be unlawful discrimination.
- Hate crimes (although not usually referred to as being discrimination) are criminal acts that have been motivated by the victim's race, religion or disability (see page 25 for more details).



Muslim women and girls may face discrimination on multiple fronts e.g. due to their gender, ethnicity, religion and their clothing.

Discrimination when Accessing Goods and Services

Individuals or businesses that sell goods or provide services to the public cannot discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their sex, race, religion etc.

These are very wide ranging provisions and cover everything from someone in a local restaurant refusing to serve someone because of their caste to a university not providing the same facilities to men and women.



Example

Yasmin and Atoofa were travelling together through London and needed to catch a bus. Yasmin was wearing a hijab, and Atoofa had a niqab. The driver refused to let them on the bus as he said they were "a threat" to other passengers. This was an act of direct discrimination.

Example

Sadia and Aziz, a Muslim couple of Pakistani heritage, visit the Lake District for the weekend. They approach a bed and breakfast displaying a 'Vacancies' sign, but the proprietor tells them no rooms are available. Shortly afterwards, they see the proprietor offering a room to another couple who arrive without a reservation. Suspecting discrimination because of their religion or ethnicity, Sadia and Aziz could bring a claim under the Equality Act 2010 in the County Court.

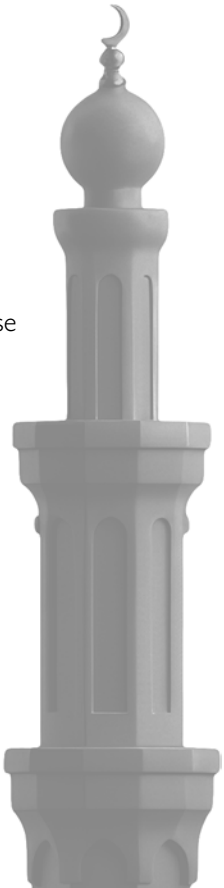
Note: *Where there are different, but equal, services provided to – say men and women – there may be no discrimination.*

Example

Amina, a Muslim woman who wears a hijab, attends a hospital appointment for persistent abdominal pain. She requests a female healthcare professional to carry out an intimate examination because of her religious beliefs. Although a female professional is available, the doctor dismisses her request, telling her to put her religious beliefs aside if she wants NHS treatment. Feeling humiliated, Amina leaves without being examined.

NHS patients can request same-sex healthcare professionals for intimate examinations, and reasonable efforts should be made to accommodate such requests. Although refusal may be justified for clinical or staffing reasons, the doctor's dismissive attitude towards Amina's religious beliefs, combined with the refusal to consider her request despite a female professional being available, could amount to religious discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Exemptions not covered by the Equality Act 2010



Religious acts of worship are not covered by the Act, which gives some limited exemptions to religious and other belief organisations. These exemptions permit them to act in a way that would normally be prohibited, which means being able to discriminate because of some protected characteristics in the way they operate. This means they could provide (or even refuse to provide) all or some of their servicesto people based on a protected characteristic.

For example, mosques may not employ women in certain roles (e.g. imam) or have separate services for men and women because they could claim they are complying with the doctrines of the religion and to avoid offending a significant number of its followers.

However, gender discrimination does not apply to all services provided by religious organisations. So services that are provided that are not 'for the purposes of religion' e.g. community services or activities, the mosque would need to make equal provision for men and women. Failure to do so could be unlawful.

Taking Action

Make a Complaint

You could try to informally resolve the matter by contacting the trader or service provider or asking for their complaints policy and complain formally in writing. They may offer an apology or compensation.

Taking a Complaint Further

If you are not satisfied with the response or do not receive a reply, you can contact your local citizens advice bureau, the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) helpline or an ombudsman for that service.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

If the issue is not resolved, you can use Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to resolve the situation. This is where an independent professional, called a mediator, conciliator or arbitrator, is used to help find a solution to a problem. Sometimes you can use a local community or religious mediation service free of charge. If you want to take legal action, the courts now generally expect you to have considered the use of ADR, before you start court action. *(You can contact the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) helpline for help with finding a mediator or conciliator).*

Legal Action

You may be able to take legal action against the trader or service provider. If you want to make a discrimination claim you need to apply to the court within 6 months of the discrimination you are complaining about. You should contact a specialist discrimination solicitor or barrister for more advice about whether you can bring a claim in the county court.

List of Ombudsman Services

To make a complaint about
THE POLICE

Independent Office
for Police Conduct

T: **0300 020 0096**

www.policeconduct.gov.uk

To make a complaint about
A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Local Government Ombudsman

T: **0300 061 0614**

www.lgo.org.uk

To make a complaint about
PUBLIC BODIES

e.g. Government departments and health service etc.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

T: **0345 015 4033**

www.ombudsman.org.uk

To make a complaint about
THE MEDIA

Independent Press Standards Organisation

T: **0300 123 22 20**
E: **inquiries@ipso.co.uk**

www.ipso.co.uk

To make a complaint about
PEOPLE IN CUSTODY

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

T: **020 7633 4100**
E: **mail@ppo.gov.uk**

www.ppo.gov.uk

To make a complaint about
SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

Ofcom

Fill in an online form **www.ofcom.org.uk/make-a-complaint**

www.ofcom.org.uk

To make a complaint about
SOCIAL HOUSING LANDLORDS

Housing Ombudsman Services

T: **0300 111 3000**

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

To make a complaint about
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial Ombudsman Services

T: **0800 023 4567**

www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Discrimination at Work

Although this is not an exhaustive list, you may be treated unfairly because of your protected characteristics in the following ways:

- During recruitment and selection
- When determining pay and benefits
- When determining terms and conditions e.g. working practices such as hours of work, dress codes, the physical conditions of the workplace, the atmosphere and environment, holidays, etc.
- During training, development, promotion and appraisals
- During dismissal, redundancy and retirement
- When undergoing discipline and grievances
- Due to bullying and harassment

Example

Shazia is a receptionist at work. She is Muslim and wears a jilbab. She has four receptionist colleagues who are not Muslim. She is told by a non Muslim colleague, Kathryn, that the manager, Liz, had said "I wish Shazia would start wearing normal clothes and not a jilbab to work. She gets some really strange looks from customers." Shortly afterwards redundancies are announced and Shazia is the one receptionist who is selected for redundancy because she is given a low mark for customer relations. Shazia has a claim for religious discrimination that she could take to an employment tribunal.

Case Study

Muslim woman sacked for refusing to wear headscarf (2009)

In 2009, Ghazala Khan, 31, was sacked after only two weeks of working at an Estate Agent. Her Muslim boss claimed she was "not respectable" because her hair was not covered and told her to wear a headscarf even though her non-Muslim women colleagues were not asked to wear headscarves. He also told Miss Khan that his wife and female relatives all wore veils and said her parents had given her far too much freedom and that if she had been his daughter she would have been long since "married off". An employment tribunal ruled she had been the victim of sexual and religious discrimination (due to her lack of religion or belief) and awarded more than £13,500.

Intersectional Discrimination

What is intersectional discrimination?

This is when discrimination occurs on the basis of more than one perceived characteristic e.g. a Muslim woman could be discriminated on the combined grounds of her religion, ethnicity and gender i.e. because she is an Asian Muslim woman.

Can claims be made on multiple discrimination?

A person experiencing discrimination because of different protected characteristics has to bring a separate claim for each protected characteristic. In the previous example (page 19), it would mean case one for race, one for faith and one for sex. Each type of discrimination would be dealt with separately (rather than them being considered together) and comparator would be identified. For example, the employer could try to show that she is not being treated less favourably by making the following comparisons:

a. for racial discrimination - compare her treatment with another Asian female employee who is not Muslim

b. for faith discrimination - compare her treatment with another Muslim employee who is a male

c. for sex discrimination - compare her treatment with another woman who is of another race e.g. white

It is clear that considering each ground separately makes discrimination harder to prove. This often results in individuals choosing one protected characteristic to make the claim.



Are there future plans to change the law on intersectional discrimination?

During the 2024 General Elections, the Labour Party pledged to change the law to recognise intersectional discrimination so that one claim can consider how discrimination arises from a specific combination of characteristics. Legislative changes may therefore be made in the near future.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can an employer prevent a woman from wearing hijab?

An employee who is forced to or prevented from wearing clothing which offends their religion or belief could give rise to a claim of indirect discrimination if the employer does not have a reasonable justification for the rule. Your employer should make sure any dress code does not discriminate against you. A flexible dress code is usually possible, as long as health and safety requirements are not at risk.

Does an employee have a right to take religious holidays?

If an employee is prevented from taking a religious holiday even though they have followed the proper procedures for requesting holidays providing taking time off does not interfere with the smooth running of the organisation, then an employee could have a claim for indirect discrimination. However, the employer can argue that is had an objective reason for refusing the holiday.

Does an employee have a right to ask for prayer facilities?

There is no specific requirement for an employer to provide prayer facilities. Your employer does not have to give you time off or provide facilities for religious observance. However, it is good practice for employers to try and provide such facilities if possible. For example, if you need a prayer room and there is a suitable room available your employer should consider your request seriously provided it does not disrupt others or your ability to do your job properly.

Can I refuse to handle certain foods?

A person may not want to handle certain foods as it is forbidden to be eaten in their religion. For example, if you work in a supermarket, you may not want to handle pork. You should speak to your employer and ask if your work schedule could be arranged so you do not have to do this. An employer does not have to agree but they should try to accomodate your request, provided it does not affect the business.

Note: *Sometimes treatment that looks discriminatory is not, e.g. it is unlawful to advertise a job stating that you will only employ someone who is a man, or a woman, or of a particular racial background, but if there is a particular occupational requirement for the job holder to have that protected characteristic, this is not unlawful. So, for example, jobs at women's refuges can be advertised for just women, or jobs as ministers of religion may be reserved solely for men (depending on the religion).*

Workplace Sexual Harassment

What does the law state?

Employers must take steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This is now a requirement of the Worker Protection Act 2023 (Amendment of Equality Act 2010), which came into force on the 26th October 2024.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature and could include:

- spreading sexual rumours about a person
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- telling sexually offensive jokes
- displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- asking questions about someone's sex life
- making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment
- making sexual comments about someone's body, clothing or appearance
- touching someone against their will, for example hugging them
- sexual assault or rape

To be sexual harassment, the unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature must have either:

a. violated a person's dignity

b. created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person

Behaviors that some individuals may view as joking, banter, or a part of workplace culture could actually constitute sexual harassment.



What is the extent of the employer's responsibility?

Employers must take steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and covers harassment via social media and by customers / clients (e.g. service users, people at conferences or events etc).

What steps must employers take?

Examples of steps employers can take include:

1. Carry out regular risk assessments to identify situations where sexual harassment may occur. This could include using employee surveys, looking at complaint records, assessing feedback from exit interviews and identifying power imbalances that could make some employees more vulnerable.
2. Anticipate scenarios when its workers may be subject to sexual harassment in the course of employment and take action to prevent such harassment taking place.
3. Implement effective policies and procedures and training managers and staff on a regular basis.
4. Have appropriate awareness raising warnings against sexual harassment.
2. Create a zero-tolerance culture regarding sexual harassment
6. Encourage reporting of sexual harassment.
7. Have a robust complaints procedure ensuring allegations of sexual harassmentare dealt with swiftly and effectively.



If you have been subjected to sexual harassment (whether it is a one-off act or a pattern of behaviour), you can submit a grievance to your employer. The complaint should be thoroughly investigated, regardless of seniority of people involved.

Taking Action ▶ Think about the following questions

- Why do you believe you have been discriminated against e.g. because of gender, race, religion etc. or combination?
- How were you discriminated against?
- When were you discriminated against?
- If dismissal – was grievance procedure followed and warnings given?
- If dismissal – what reasons were given?
- How are others treated?
- What is the composition of the workforce?
- How long have you been employed there?
- Do you have evidence of discrimination? e.g. emails, logged incidents, witnesses etc.

Speak to Employer

Try and get issue resolved informally, if this does not work, then follow the company grievance procedure.

Taking Legal Action

To take employer to tribunal you must:

- Take action **WITHIN 3 MONTHS** of employment ending or incident happening
- Contact **ACAS** (Advisory, Conciliation, and Arbitration Service) first.

Contact ACAS

ACAS is a FREE SERVICE. They advise both employees and employers on their employment rights. They will try and resolve the dispute dispute through a process called early conciliation, without having to go through an employment tribunal that can be stressful and costly. Their telephone number is: **0300 123 1100.** Also the **Equality Advisory Support Service Helpline** should be contacted on **0808 800 0082**

Conciliation Successful

Your claim is settled and there is no need for further action.

Conciliation Unsuccessful

ACAS gives you a certificate number and you have one month to bring claim.

Make Claim to Employment Tribunal

Submit form ET1.
No fee is payable.

Employment Tribunal Deal with Claim

It writes to employer, gives them 28 days to respond. Considers claim and may offer mediation. If it doesn't get resolved and goes to full tribunal hearing – there are no fees to pay.

Further information including any fees that may be applicable: ***www.gov.uk/employment-tribunals/before-you-make-claim***
Legal expenses may be covered through trade union or professional association membership. You should also check whether your home or car insurance includes legal expenses cover.

What is a Hate Crime?

- **Although hate crimes are a type of discrimination, they are not usually referred to as such.**
- **Hate crimes are acts of violence or hostility directed at people because of who they are or who someone thinks they are and can happen randomly or be part of a campaign of continued harassment and victimisation.**
- **Hate crimes are violence or hostility motivated by prejudice based on one of the following:**
  - **Disability**
  - **Sexual orientation**
  - **Race**
  - **Religion**
  - **Transgender identity**

Online hate crime and stirring up racial and religious ratred

Online abuse targeting people because of their race or religion can amount to a hate crime. This includes stirring up hatred against groups of people because of their race or religious beliefs. However, the current legal threshold for stirring up religious hatred is higher than for racial hatred, as the words, behaviour or material must also be threatening.

Sex-based hostility and hate crime

Sex is not currently one of the five nationally monitored hate crime categories in England and Wales. However, since April 2026, intentional harassment, alarm or distress in public because of someone's sex or presumed sex has been a specific aggravated criminal offence, carrying a maximum prison sentence of two years. This provides protection against certain forms of sex-based harassment but does not cover every crime motivated by hostility towards women or men.

Muslim women targeted because of their religion and sex

Where a Muslim woman experiences harassment because she is a woman, and the incident also involves hostility towards her actual or perceived religion, it may constitute both a sex-based harassment offence and a religious hate crime. Both aspects should be considered by the police and prosecutors.

Types of Hate Crime

The following are examples of hostility or violence that can amount to a hate crime:

Physical Abuse	Spitting, punching, kicking, slapping, pushing, sexual abuse or behaviour which leads to physical injury
Threats	Stating intentions to abuse or attack which may be verbal, recorded, in writing or abusive gestures
Verbal Abuse	Name calling, swearing, abusive telephone calls, offensive jokes etc.
Written or Printed Abuse	Using prejudiced or abusive language in letters by post, leaflets, posters, postings on social media, text messages etc.
Damage to Property	Vandalism, graffiti, throwing rubbish, arson etc.
Harassment	Persistent intimidating or threatening behaviour, which is spread over a period of time e.g. malicious complaints against you, hoax calls, etc.

Example

Essa, a Black man, works in a restaurant. He is used to groups of white customers coming in, drinking alcohol and being loud, but usually they are just laughing amongst themselves. On one occasion they start to have a loud argument between themselves about immigration, and some of the men start shouting at Essa, telling him to go back to 'his own country'. Essa feels threatened and scared they will assault him and the police are called. The men carry on being abusive.

***Note**: Inciting others to commit hate crimes is also against the law*

Anyone can be a victim of a hate crime regardless of their race or ethnicity

Example

Susie, a white woman, is waiting at a bus stop and three South Asian men approach her and begin shouting racist abuse about her being white. One of the men spits at her. Feeling frightened and threatened, Susie calls the police. This could constitute a racially aggravated offence because the men have demonstrated hostility towards Susie based on her race.

Safety Advice

Here are some safety tips to follow if you are out and about:

1. Stay alert and be vigilant so you are aware of your surroundings e.g. try to avoid using headphones while walking, take care when crossing roads or if you have parked in a car park and look around you before getting in your car and immediately lock your doors
2. When using public transport, try not to use the window seat so you cannot be blocked in and alert driver and asks others for help or ask them to call the police.
3. When using crowded railway stations stand away from the edge of the platform and be aware of people around you.
4. Try and stay in well-lit areas and carry a personal alarm.
5. Avoid taking short cuts through unsafe areas e.g. parks, isolated areas etc.
6. Dangerous driving - do not sacrifice your own safety so don't respond by swerving, breaking suddenly or breaking your speed limit - concentrate on your driving. Memorise the number plate and make a note of it when you stop driving. Drive to a public place or police station and report to the police. Keep car doors locked and windows closed.

Emotional Impact of Hate Crime	
Annoyance	Anger
Shock	Loss of confidence
Feeling vulnerable	Fear
Difficulty sleeping	Crying
Anxiety / panic attacks	Depression

Taking Action and Reporting

You should take the following steps if you think you have suffered a hate crime:

- **Call them out:** You can ask the perpetrator to stop. In some circumstances the person may not realise what they've said is offensive and they will stop if asked. Never miss an opportunity to challenge the stereotypes that lead to discrimination.
- **Do not retaliate:** if you respond and use words that are equally offensive you may damage your chances of making a successful claim (e.g. of harassment), or damage the chances of a successful prosecution (hate crime).
- **Gather evidence:** it is very important that gather as much evidence as you can, quickly. This might be:
  - **Getting witnesses** - if someone was nearby when the incident happened, ask them immediately if they can confirm what happened and ask if they would be willing to be a witness. Ask for their name and phone number.
  - **Writing it down** - as soon as possible write down your account of what happened. The sooner you can do this, the better as if all ends up in court, judges are more likely to believe the person whose statement was written soonest after incident.
  - **Keeping evidence** - keep copies of texts, emails and online abuse (which could also be reported to social media companies). Also take photos of injuries and damage to property. You could even discreetly film incidents.
  - **Keep a diary** - if there is a series of incidents taking place, you should write down the dates and details of what happened. This is a particularly strong bit of evidence that police and lawyers would find very useful.
  - **Reporting through third party centres** - If you do not feel comfortable reporting directly to the police, you can contact other services such as those listed on pages 30-31, including Muslim Safety Net Helpline (www.muslimsafetynet.org.uk) who can advise and assist with reporting.
  - **Reporting to the Police** - If you or anyone you know feel you have suffered a hate crime, then you should report it as a hate incident by contacting the police on 101. Even if you don't want it to be investigated further you should report it to the police as they are keen to build up a picture of how many incidents are happening and where. You can also report on line at www.report-it.org.uk. However, not all hate incidents will amount to criminal offences but those that do will become hate crimes.

In an emergency always call the police on 999

Importance of reporting hate crime

40% Every year around 40% of all religious hate crime are targeted against Muslims. In year ending March 2026, this amounted to 5132 offences, 13% increase on the previous year.

80% 80% of Muslims who experience hate incidents, do not report them

(Anti-Muslim Hate - Concerns and Experiences Report by MWNUK, Sept 2024)

The actual number of hate crime incidents against Muslims is likely to be much higher.

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Even if legal action is not possible because the perpetrator is not identifiable, it is important to report incidents to the police and or helplines / reporting hubs. Data is important to capture the levels of hatred towards Muslims for more responsive policies.

Your right to incidents recorded as religious hate crime



If victims perceive that the hate crime they have experienced was motivated by hostility because of a particular personal characteristic such as their Muslim faith, then they have a right to have that recorded as such by the police (even if the police later find insufficient evidence to charge offenders).

It is important to tell the police officers recording the incidents how you want the incident logged. Do not assume they will record it as religious hate crime.

Further Support and Advice

Muslim Safety Net

Anti-Muslim hostility helpline and support service.

T :**0303 330 0288** T :**07311 876 378** (WhatsApp/text)
E: **contact@muslimsafetynet.org.uk**

www.muslimsafetynet.org.uk

British Transport Police

Report non-emergency incidents that have occurred on the tube or rail services.

T: **0800 405040** Txt: **61016**

www.btp.police.uk/ro/report

True Vision

Platform owned by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
They have a page specifically on how to report hate crime:
www.report-it.org.uk/report_a_hate_crime

E: **enquiries@report-it.org.uk**

www.report-it.org.uk

Stop Hate UK

One of the leading national organisations working to challenge all forms of hate crime and discrimination, based on any aspect of an individual's identity. Stop Hate UK provides independent, confidential and accessible reporting and support for victims, witnesses and third parties.

E: **info@stophateuk.org**

www.stophateuk.org

Law Centres Network

There are currently 42 Law Centres across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and they offer legal advice and may be able to take on casework and representation for those who cannot afford a lawyer.

www.lawcentres.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Contains lots of guidance about discrimination and your right as an individual not to be discriminated against.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Equality and Advisory Support Service (EASS)

A telephone helpline that will give advice if you believe you have been discriminated against, not just in relation to employment, but also if the discrimination took place in a shop or when trying to access services. They can advise you how to access legal help.

T: **0808 800 0082**

www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.

T: **0300 123 1100**

www.acas.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Provides general advice on discrimination matters and offers a face to face service if you need to speak to someone directly. They are able to recommend how you should proceed and suggest where to go for further help if needed.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

MWNUK
Muslim Women's Network UK

www.mwnuk.co.uk

