

Hate crime

TheSite.org looks at hate crimes, and how to cope with or prevent them.

Hate crime is when someone attacks another person verbally, via mail or email, or perhaps physically, and the crime is driven by the attacker's prejudice against a particular group of people. While more hate crime is verbal than physical, that does not mean it's not serious, or very upsetting for the person being harassed.

The important thing with hate crime is that it's down to the attacker's perception of the other person. For example, John writes Paul a nasty email because he thinks Paul is gay. Even if Paul is not actually gay, John was still attacking him because John thought he was. That is still a homophobic hate crime, because of the motivation of the attacker.

The two most common forms of hate crime are racism and homophobia.

- **Racism:** When a person commits a crime against someone because of the colour of their skin, their ethnic background, their accent or use of a foreign language, that is racism - a hate crime.
- **Homophobia/Transphobia:** When someone is victimised because of their sexuality, because they are, or the attacker thinks they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual, that is hate crime.
- **Other kinds of hate crime:** Violence or harassment against people because of their religion, refugee or asylum seeker status or disability is also hate crime. Domestic violence can also be considered by the police to be a hate crime, but is treated separately.

How often does it happen?

All regional police have teams dedicated to hate crime, and the Diversity Directorate is the Metropolitan Police's division handling hate crime policy. Their statistics show that in the Metropolitan's region alone there were 11,799 reported incidents of racist and religious hate crime and 1,359 reported incidents of homophobic hate crime in the 12 months leading up to January 2006.

That's a huge number of prejudice-motivated crimes! But the true figure is estimated to be even higher because hate crime is under-reported due to the victim being too scared or embarrassed to let someone know it happened.

What should you do if it happens to you or someone you know?

Don't retaliate: you could risk violence or make the situation worse.

Do tell someone about it: hate crime is inexcusable and should be dealt with as soon as possible. If you're at school or college, tell a teacher or staff member what has happened and they'll help you sort it out and help you decide whether you want to inform the police.

In any situation, it's your right to go to the police, report a crime and have it investigated. If you're scared to go to the police there are hundreds of third-party reporting sites. These places are community centres, other public places like churches or mosques, and sometimes certain private houses where you can discuss your situation with a person trained to fill in a crime form to notify the police. You can even notify the police of a non-urgent crime over the internet.

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Source: <http://www.thesite.org/homelawandmoney/law/victims/hatecrime>

