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**Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies**

# Anti-Muslim Hate Crime and the Far Right

June 2013

# Anti-Muslim Hate Crime and the Far Right

By


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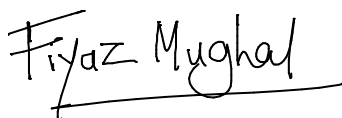Mark Littler
Dr Matthew Feldman

# Contents

# Foreword

This report and analysis by the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies at Teesside University is warmly welcome. It is an independent academic review of the work and data that has come out from the Tell MAMA project which is organised by Faith Matters. For over a decade, work with Muslim communities through Faith Matters has consistently led to statements and comments being made by members of these communities to project officers, about how they have suffered anti-Muslim prejudice. Many have stated that they have suffered repeat incidents and a national programme looking at this under-researched area of work was needed. This is what the Tell MAMA project attempts to do. More importantly, it also supports victims of anti-Muslim prejudice so that they can be signposted, casework undertaken and links with police forces made for possible prosecutions.

We are proud for the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies to analyse and review the evidential material from Tell MAMA and which primarily looks at the period of 2012 and early 2013. The Centre's experience on the far right was needed given that some material that Tell MAMA received and collated was directly related to far-right sympathisers and their targeting of Muslims, both online and offline. This is the first detailed evidential report on anti-Muslim prejudice and builds the foundation for this area of work. It also reflects a disturbing picture of anti-Muslim prejudice within the first year of operations of Tell MAMA. We are therefore proud to present this work in partnership with the Centre and with their academic independence maintained. This is essential given that there are social commentators who still believe that anti-Muslim prejudice is not real. This report which is based on hard, tangible data, we hope, should help to develop further work in this area.

*Fiyaz Mughal*

Fiyaz Mughal OBE FCMI FRSA.
Founder and Director of Faith Matters.

**1.    Introduction**

1.1    The 'Tell MAMA' (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) project was set up in 2012 by the inter-faith organisation, Faith Matters.[1] It was launched by Rt. Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 21 February 2012. The project, modelled on the work of the Community Security Trust (CST),[2] which monitors anti-Semitic incidents on behalf of Britain's Jewish community, allows people across England and Wales to record any attack that they have experienced as a consequence of their Muslim faith (or from someone perceiving them to be Muslim). The Tell MAMA service enables victims to report the details of the abuse that they have suffered, whether street-based or online. It is the first national project of its kind to specifically record anti-Muslim hate crime whilst also offering support to victims of anti-Muslim prejudice.

1.2    To raise awareness of this service amongst Muslim communities, Faith Matters, with funding from the DCLG, employed six regional officers in England and Wales who conducted extensive outreach activities into community centres, civil society organisations, mosques, and youth centres. This was combined with promotional campaigns on the Islam TV Channel, various community-focused advice and information sessions in Town Halls across England and Wales, a dedicated website, active Twitter and Facebook accounts, and joint partnerships with local police forces, local authorities, and with national civil society organisations like Victim Support, Neighbourhood Watch, and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

1.3    Victims can either use a free phone number to report incidents, or they can report through more high-tech channels, such as email, SMS text, Twitter, Facebook messaging, or through the Tell MAMA website. Information is collated into a special bespoke database that was developed by Tell MAMA. Trained caseworkers then verify whether the reported incident was anti-Muslim in nature.[3]

1.4    Like the CST, Tell MAMA functions as a third party reporting centre. It passes on information directly to police forces through the 'True Vision' reporting system, set up by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) to combat and report hate crimes. 'True Vision' provides a single reporting facility to all police forces, through a dedicated server hosted by the Metropolitan police.

1.5    Due to the fundamentally self-selecting nature of the Tell MAMA data, no definitive claims can be made as to the overall prevalence of anti-Muslim attacks in England and Wales. In any case such

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[1] Faith Matters, Tell MAMA's parent organisation, undertakes work on inter-faith integration, conflict resolution, and extremism prevention in Britain, Pakistan and the Middle East.

[2] The *Community Security Trust* (CST) has been compiling reports of anti-Semitic incidents since 1984. The CST publishes an annual report of cases. The CST also supports victims and provides communal defence for synagogues and Jewish schools.

[3] During 2012, 50 plus cases at this stage were not marked as anti-Muslim since there was little corroborating evidence.

attacks continue to be under-reported (see below). Nonetheless, the Tell MAMA data paints a troubling picture of low-level anti-Muslim harassment: incidents in the workplace, in the street, between neighbours and particularly online, which may not always hit the headlines but can still have an emotionally distressing, and in some cases devastating, effect on people's lives and their communities.[4]

1.6     The recently-launched Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies at Teesside University has been working with Faith Matters in the delivery of the Tell MAMA project. One outcome of this relationship is an independent quantifiable overview of the nature of anti-Muslim attacks, as well as, where possible, the background and affiliations of alleged perpetrators. While the Tell MAMA project is a new initiative and is invariably subject to teething problems,[5] the following report aims to highlight key features of the Tell MAMA dataset as they pertain to far right participation in anti-Muslim attacks - both offline and online.

## 2. Aims of the Report

2.1.    The aims of this report are as follows:

- To analyse the Tell MAMA dataset, covering the period 1 April 2012 - 30 April 2013 inclusive, in order to provide a quantifiable overview of perpetrator profile, attack type, and location occurrence;
- To examine the under-studied relationship between anti-Muslim hate crime and the far right.

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[4] Evidence suggests that hate crime impacts on wellbeing to a greater extent than non-hate crime. According to the British Crime Survey data for 2009/10 and 2010/11, 67% of hate crime victims experience anger; 50% annoyance; 40% shock; 35% loss of confidence/vulnerability; 39% fear; 23% anxiety; 20% depression; and 17% record difficulty sleeping. See Kevin Smith (ed.), Deborah Lader, Jacqueline Hoare and Ivy Lau, Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 'Hate Crime, cyber-security and the experience of crime among children', Supplementary volume 3 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11, Home Office: March 2012, p. 22.

[5] The Tell MAMA project has recently come under criticism from *Telegraph* journalist Andrew Gilligan, see for example, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10093568/The-truth-about-the-wave-of-attacks-on-Muslims-after-Woolwich-murder.html; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/10108098/Muslim-hate-monitor-to-lose-backing.html. For a response by Fiyaz Mughal, Director of Faith Matters, see http://tellmamauk.org/gilligan-the-reductionists/ and http://tellmamauk.org/gilligan-at-it-again-attack-the-vehicle-not-the-data-is-now-the-strategy/. For further commentary, see Matthew Feldman, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-matthew-feldman/edl-columnists-are-legitimising_b_3472599.html.

## 3. Anti-Muslim Hate Crime

3.1.     In the first place, it should be noted that 'hate crime' remains a 'somewhat slippery notion'.[6] Definitions of 'hate crime' vary from one country to the next, and even within countries (the United States, for example). In Britain the central point of reference - for practitioners at least - is the operational definition offered by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), a definition which is also shared by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS):

> Hate crime is any criminal offence committed against a person or property that is motivated by hostility towards someone based on their disability, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- physical attacks such as physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti and arson;
- threat of attack including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate, and unfounded, malicious complaints;
- verbal abuse, insults or harassment - taunting, offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace.[7]

3.2     According to this 'official' definition, anti-Muslim hate crime constitutes a form of *religious hate crime*. Anti-Muslim hate crime should be understood, therefore, as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based upon a person's religion or perceived religion, that is, their Muslim faith.

3.3     This can be distinguished from 'race hate' crime, which should be understood as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon a person's 'race' or perceived 'race'. A persistent difficulty, of course, is that such neat distinctions often break down in the real world. Anti-Muslim hate crime can be motivated, as one study has noted, by *political* fears about Muslims as a security or terrorist threat (rather than a fear about Islam per se),[8] and/or it might be motivated by racism (active discrimination against South Asians in particular as people associated with Islam). In reality, the distinction between race hate crime and religious hate crime can often become blurred, making conceptual and reporting clarity difficult.

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[6] See Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland, *Hate Crime: Impact, Causes, and Responses* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 7.

[7] See http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/fact_sheets/hate_crime/

[8] See Jonathan Githens-Mazier and Robert Lambert, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: a London Case Study* (University of Exeter: European Muslim Research Centre, 2010), p. 17.

**4. Official Statistics: the Scope of the Problem**

4.1      Since 2008 police forces have been recording, and collating data on the following five strands of hate crime:

- Race
- Faith and Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Transgender
- Disability[9]

4.2      Across the period 2006-7 to 2010-11, there had been a 26 per cent fall in the number of racially or religiously aggravated offences in England and Wales.[10] Nonetheless, for the calendar year 2011, total recorded hate crime from police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, still stood at an alarming 44,361 incidents, of which 35,875 were recorded as race hate crimes, and 1,773 were recorded as religious hate crimes.[11] According to preliminary research carried out by Faith Matters, as of early 2012 only 3 police forces out of a total of 43 collated information about Islamophobic/anti-Muslim hate crime.[12] However, an indicative breakdown (2011) from official figures reveals that of those where the victim's religion was 'known' (n. 1,216), 52 per cent (632) were recorded as religious hate crimes against Muslims (compared to 26 per cent against people of Jewish faith; and 14 per cent against people of Christian faith).[13] When it comes to religious hate crime, most victims are Muslim.

4.3      Figures provided by the CPS from the year 2011-12 reveal that the majority of defendants in both racist and religiously motivated hate crimes are men (83 per cent), White British (73.6 per cent), and aged 25-59 (54.2 per cent). Of the principal offence category for racial and religious hate crime, 49.6 per cent involved offences against the person, and 32.5 per cent involved various public order

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[9] It was reported in April 2013 that Greater Manchester police had become the first police force to add 'Alternative Subcultures' to the monitored list of hate crime strands.

[10] See Ministry of Justice, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System, 2010* (October 2011), p. 33.

[11] Total of recorded hate crime from police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during calendar year 2011, available online at http://www.report it.org.uk/files/final_acpo_hate_crime_data_2011_(revised_oct_2011)_1.pdf

[12] The Metropolitan police, City of London police, and Greater Manchester police.

[13] Indicative Breakdown of Police Recorded Religious Hate Crimes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2011, available online at http://report-it.org.uk/files/religious_hate_crime_data_2011_published_(june_2013).pdf

offences.[14] The primary sites of (official) reported hate crimes are most often public spaces (parks, streets, footpaths) although there is an increased probability of faith-based hate crime occurring in the vicinity of religious/community buildings.[15]

4.4　Official figures do need to be approached with caution. For one, there is the perennial problem of under-reporting. In the first place, hate crime is not well understood by the public (for example, a victim might be unaware that they have been the victim of hate crime). Moreover, evidence from the British Crime Survey (2009/10; 2010/11) suggests that over 50 per cent of hate crime incidents go unreported, and therefore the majority of victims will suffer in silence.[16] Before deciding whether to report an incident, victims typically undertake a cost/benefit analysis. The seriousness of the crime is a major factor in this decision process.[17] Incidents often go unreported due to a lack of confidence in the police; because the victim was unaware that the police would be interested; or because incidents happen too frequently to report one specific incident. Local campaigns have resulted in increased reporting in some areas. However, to improve reporting more generally greater trust between the police and vulnerable communities is imperative.[18]

4.5　Compared to other minorities vulnerable to hate crime, Muslims are treated differently. While LGBT communities, for instance, are portrayed in police discourse as vulnerable to hate crime, and policy is focused on building trust with these communities, Muslims are not generally portrayed in such a straightforward manner.[19] Although they are seen as vulnerable to hate crime, the primary focus has been on their vulnerability to extremism or radicalisation. The police, therefore, face a dilemma: should they adopt 'hard' or 'soft' engagement strategies in dealing with Muslim communities? 'Hard' strategies target intelligence gathering, utilising community surveillance and informants, while 'soft' strategies prioritise trust building and community policing. Under PREVENT, the policing of Muslim communities has tended to construct Muslim communities as 'suspect populations'. This has reinforced the impression that Muslims are viewed by the authorities as potential terrorists or terrorist sympathisers leading to their reluctance to report anti-Muslim hate incidents to the police.

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[14] See Crown Prosecution Service, *Hate Crimes and Crimes Against Older People Report 2011-12* (October 2012), pp. 15-16.

[15] Nicole Asquith, 'Verbal and textual hostility', in Neil Chakraborti (ed.) *Hate Crime: Concepts, Policy, Future Directions* (Uffculme: Willan Publishing, 2010), p. 107.

[16] See 'Hate Crime, cyber-security and the experience of crime among children', p. 20.

[17] Kris Christmann and Kevin Wong, 'Hate crime victims and hate crime reporting: some impertinent questions', in Chakraborti (ed.) *Hate Crime*, p. 169 & pp. 204-5.

[18] Christmann & Wong, 'Hate crime victims and hate crime reporting: some impertinent questions', p. 205.

[19] See Derek McGhee, 'From hate to "Prevent": community safety and counter-terrorism', in Chakraborti (ed.) *Hate Crime*, pp. 162-193.

4.6    When anti-Muslim hate crime is reported, in some cases it will not have been possible to establish anti-Muslim hatred, or religious hatred may have been ignored in favour of establishing racial motivation (the most common category of hate crime) given that, in practice, the two can overlap. This further underscores the need for third-party reporting as a way of collecting more accurate data.

4.7    Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in England and Wales with 2.7 million people (4.8 per cent of population). Most of Britain's Muslims reside in London (1.13 million) and Muslims comprise 12.4 per cent of London's residents (35 per cent in Tower Hamlets).[20] Whilst research from the Institute of Race Relations[21] demonstrates that race hate crime is no longer confined to major urban centres - the geography of hate is shifting to more small town or even rural contexts - London still remains Britain's 'capital of hate crime':[22] in 2011 it accounted for around 22 per cent of race hate crime, and around 35 per cent of religious hate crime.[23] Metropolitan police figures recorded 333 anti-Muslim incidents in 2010/11; and 337 incidents during 2012.[24] More recent figures suggest that for the year end May 2013, there had been a +147.5 per cent increase in anti-Muslim hate crime in the capital.[25] London, having the largest population, still dominates the picture but it is worth noting that both Leicestershire and Greater Manchester witnessed higher rates of hate crime per 1,000 crimes committed.

4.8    As for victimisation rates, regrettably official data on ethnicity remains patchy and incomplete. Nonetheless, from previous research on hate crime in London, it would seem that Asians (people from the Indian sub-continent) experience the highest mean rate of victimisation.[26] Moreover, close to

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[20] See Office for National Statistics, News Release: Census gives insights into characteristics of London's population, 11 December 2012.

[21] See Jon Burnett, *Racial Violence: Facing Reality* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 2013).

[22] Paul Iganski, *Hate Crime and the City* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2008), p. 47.

[23] Total of recorded hate crime from police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during calendar year 2011.

[24] *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 June 2013.

[25] See http://www.met.police.uk/crimefigures/textonly_month.htm. These figures relate to statutorily notifiable offences only and reveal an increase from 40 (May 2011-May 2012) to 99 (May 2012-May 2013).

[26] See Iganski, *Hate Crime and the City*, p 49.

one-third of hate crime victims in 2010/11 had been victimised more than once in the previous year.[27] Low-level hate crime can escalate if not dealt with quickly and effectively.[28]

4.9    As the authors of a University of Exeter report on anti-Muslim hate crime have already noted, the menace of harassment, intimidation and violence against individuals forms just one dimension to anti-Muslim hate crime. They suggest that since 9/11, between 40 and 60 per cent of mosques, Islamic centres, and Muslim organisations have experienced at least one form of attack that could have been reported as hate crime. They estimate that a figure of between 100 and 200 hate crimes a year against mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations 'is not unreasonable and probably highly conservative'.[29]

4.10    Another dimension to anti-Muslim hate crime - one that has become increasingly common in recent years - occurs online.[30] This 'cyberhate' typically involves cases of harassment, abuse, and incitement on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, bebo, MySpace), blogs, chat rooms, and so on. The online domain remains under-researched, despite the fact that around eight of ten adults engage in some form of internet activity every day, or almost every day. Significantly, since the mid-1990s the far right has become increasingly drawn to online spaces. The English Defence League (EDL), in particular, views online activity as central to its organisational identity. Facebook is the favoured mode of communication between EDL supporters.[31] Such is the growth of 'online hate' that a 2009 compendium of web-hate sites, games, and chat rooms ran to more than 160 pages.[32]

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[27] 'Hate Crime, cyber-security and the experience of crime among children', p. 20.

[28] See HM Government, *Challenge it, Report it, Stop it – The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime*, March 2012, p. 7.

[29] Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazier, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies* (University of Exeter: European Muslim Research Centre, 2011), p. 106.

[30] This has been recognised by ACPO which offers victims the following guidance: 1.Report it to website administrator. 2. Report it to the hosting company 3. Report illegal Internet material to the police (illegal material could be in words, pictures, videos, and even music and could include messages calling for racial or religious violence; web pages with pictures, videos or descriptions that glorify violence against anyone due to their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or because they are transgender; and chat forums where people ask other people to commit hate crimes).

[31] For an overview of the far right and its early adoption of the internet technology, see Nigel Copsey, 'Extremism on the net: The extreme right and the value of the Internet', in Rachel Gibson, Paul Nixon and Stephen Ward (eds) *Political Parties and the Internet: Net Gain* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 218-233. For more recent developments, see Paul Jackson and Gerry Gable (eds) *Far-Right.Com: Nationalist Extremism on the Internet* (Searchlight/RNM Publications, 2011).

[32] See Raymond A. Franklin, *The Hate Directory* (15 February 2009, release 13.1).

**5. Perpetrators: Hate Crime and the Far Right**

5.1     In the British context, traditional approaches have downplayed the relationship between hate crime and the far right. Thus, for Christopher T. Husbands:

> When one considers how well-known it is that such crimes are under-reported and/or under-recorded, it is self-evident in the British context that there are just not enough extreme-right activists to be committing them: Instead, there is a wider penumbra of hate-crime perpetrators, outside formal mobilization by the extreme right.[33]

For Husbands, it is obvious that 'such crimes are committed by a far wider stratum of the population than those active, or even particularly sympathetic to, the extreme right'.[34]

5.2      Organised far-right extremists are, according to standard accounts, responsible for only a very small proportion of hate crime in Britain. Research on racial violence in 2009, undertaken by the Institute of Race Relations, reveals that just 24 of the perpetrators in 660 cases belonged to a far-right party or used fascist symbols.[35] Forget the popular stereotype of the shaven-headed extremist, most perpetrators of racial violence, it seems, are characterised by their very *ordinariness*.[36]

5.3     Such accounts are, however, shaped by a conventional reading of the situational context of 'everyday' hate crime, that is, crimes that take place offline, on the street or in the home, are often random and/or opportunistic, involving general abuse, harassment, assault, and damage to property/vandalism.  Much less attention has been paid to online hate crime, which can be the precursor to more physically threatening offline incidents. Moreover, when far-right activists do commit hate crime offences, there is some evidence to suggest that 'the incident may be more premeditated and extreme than those perpetrated by "ordinary" members of the public'.[37] Here, one might make reference to Soho nail bomber, and former British National Party (BNP) member, David Copeland as one of the more obvious examples. Yet there are others who were caught before they could wreak havoc (such as Neil Lewington who used his bedroom as a bomb-making factory).[38]

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[33] See Christopher T. Husbands, 'Country Report Great Britain', in Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009), p. 264.

[34] Ibid.

[35] See *Racial Violence: The Buried Issue*, by Harmit Athwal, Jenny Bourne, and Rebecca Wood, Institute of Race Relations Briefing Paper No. 6, 2010.

[36] See Iganski, *Hate Crime and the City*, p. 42.

[37] Charraborti & Garland, *Hate Crime*, p. 138.

[38] See 'Man "on cusp" of bombing campaign', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8124449.stm.

5.4    Of course it goes without saying that post 9/11, and especially post 7/7 the Muslim community has been singled out for vitriolic attack by the far right.[39] Britain's most successful electoral far-right party, the British National Party, has initiated numerous campaigns against Britain's Muslim communities. In the wake of 9/11, the BNP widely distributed a leaflet entitled 'The Truth about **I.S.L.A.M'** with **I.S.L.A.M** supposedly an acronym for '**I**ntolerance, **S**laughter, **L**ooting, **A**rson and **M**oletastation of women'. In 2004 Nick Griffin described Islam as 'an evil, wicked faith'. Following the 7/7 London bombings the BNP distributed a leaflet that carried an aerial photograph of the bus ravaged by one of the London bombs, along with the slogan 'maybe now its time to start listening to the BNP'. There have been various BNP campaigns against 'grooming' by 'Muslim paedophile' gangs; the BNP has also alleged that British Muslims (Pakistanis in particular) are responsible for the heroin trade.

5.5    The English Defence League - originally formed in 2009 – has been the other major far-right anti-Muslim protagonist. The EDL is a deeply Islamophobic[40] new social movement that has prioritised street-based activity, having organised countless demonstrations across England over recent years, many leading to confrontational violence (despite its disingenuous claim to be peacefully protesting against militant Islam). The EDL, as its 'Mission Statement' reveals, is defined by its open hostility to Islam (and not just militant Islam). The EDL insists that radical Islam has a 'stranglehold on British Muslims' and calls for an 'Islamic reformation' whereby Muslims have the right to demand reform of their own religion; it maintains that Sharia law is incompatible with democratic principles; it understoods Islam as a totalitarian 'political and social ideology' (blurring the distinction between mainstream and militant Islam); and it calls for a defence of English culture against policy-makers who 'deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land'. If, as the EDL claim, other 'foreign' cultures can integrate and adapt, Islam (and not just its militant form) is in fundamental conflict with 'Englishness'. The 'English Muslim' becomes an impossible identity. The final point in the EDL's Mission Statement commits the EDL to a broader international struggle against 'Islamic intolerance'. Drawing upon the cultural 'clash of civilisations'

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[39] It should be pointed out that before the 9/11 attacks, the BNP had already been increasingly targeting Islam and Muslims.

[40] According to the 1997 Runnymede definition, Islamophobia is said to be comprised of eight components 1) Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change; 2) Islam is seen as separate and 'other'. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them; 3) Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist; 4) Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilisations'; 5) Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage; 6) Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand; 7) Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society; 8) Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal.

thesis, the vast expanse and complexity of the modern world is reduced to a crude and simple 'us' (the West) against 'them' (Muslims).[41]

5.6     Many of the English Defence League's views on Islam do replicate those of the BNP but the EDL insists that it stands opposed to the BNP, and to other traditional far-right organisations. The EDL endeavours to style itself as pro-Israeli, pro-liberal, multi-faith/ethnic and sometimes even 'multi-cultural' (which has led to some uncertainty over whether the organisation should be labelled 'far right'). In fact, rather than support the BNP, the EDL leadership recently endorsed the 'libertarian' United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which under its former leader, Lord Pearson, adopted an openly critical stance towards Islam. Responding to the EDL's endorsement, a UKIP spokesman declared that 'if you are an EDL supporter then you are not welcome in UKIP'.[42] UKIP does ban EDL 'members' (and former BNP members) from joining the party. An obvious issue here is that the EDL is a 'non-membership' organisation (its 'supporters' sign up online through Facebook).[43] Although UKIP distances itself from the far right, its position reveals the growing receptivity to anti-Muslim and xenophobic attitudes amongst the right-wing of mainstream politics.

5.7      UKIP has appropriated some obvious far-right themes (opposition to immigration; 'Islamification'; multiculturalism; anti-EU); it also draws (increasingly) from the same reservoirs of public support as the BNP/EDL.[44] But UKIP is rarely included in classifications of the far right (and it is not classified as far right in this report). The reporting approach adopted by Tell MAMA means that identification of the perpetrator(s) link with the far right is, in the first instance, dependent on the victim's perception. In the case of offline attacks, this would typically relate to verbal comments made by the perpetrator(s) such as 'No Surrender!' or 'NFSE' ('No Fucking Surrender Ever'), which are favoured sayings of EDL supporters; and/or identification on the clothing of perpetrator(s) (such as an EDL badge, for example). In the case of online attacks, Tell MAMA caseworkers seek verification of outward expressions of support for the far right/or far-right organisations on social media sites. It is also worth noting that where no specific link is made by the victim, this does not mean that the perpetrator is not associated with the far right, merely that the victim did not recognise such a link.

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[41] See http://englishdefenceleague.org/mission-statement

[42] See http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/453603/20130404/edl-ukip-elections.htm

[43] Its main Facebook page had 140,000 'likes' as of 11 June 2013.

[44] See for example, Jon Cruddas et al., *The Far Right in London: A Challenge for Local Democracy* (York: Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2005); Matthew Goodwin and Jocelyn Evans, *From Voting to Violence? Far Right Extremism in Britain* (London: Hope not Hate/Searchlight Educational Trust).

## 6.    Tell MAMA Dataset Results

6.1    The data collected reveals that in the period examined – 1 April 2012 to 30 April 2013 inclusive – there were 584 recorded incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime. As we have seen, hate crime, particularly against Muslims, is under-reported. Indeed, the Tell MAMA project was developed with the specific intention of overcoming the unwillingness of many in Muslim communities to report incidents to the police. The data collected reveals that 37 per cent of those who reported cases to Tell MAMA had already reported the incident to the police. In 63 per cent of cases (almost 2 in every 3) victims did not report the incident to the police. As this suggests, the problem of under-reporting remains a significant challenge.

**REPORTING OF ANTI-MUSLIM HATE CRIMES**



214

370

■ Reported to Police
■ Not Reported
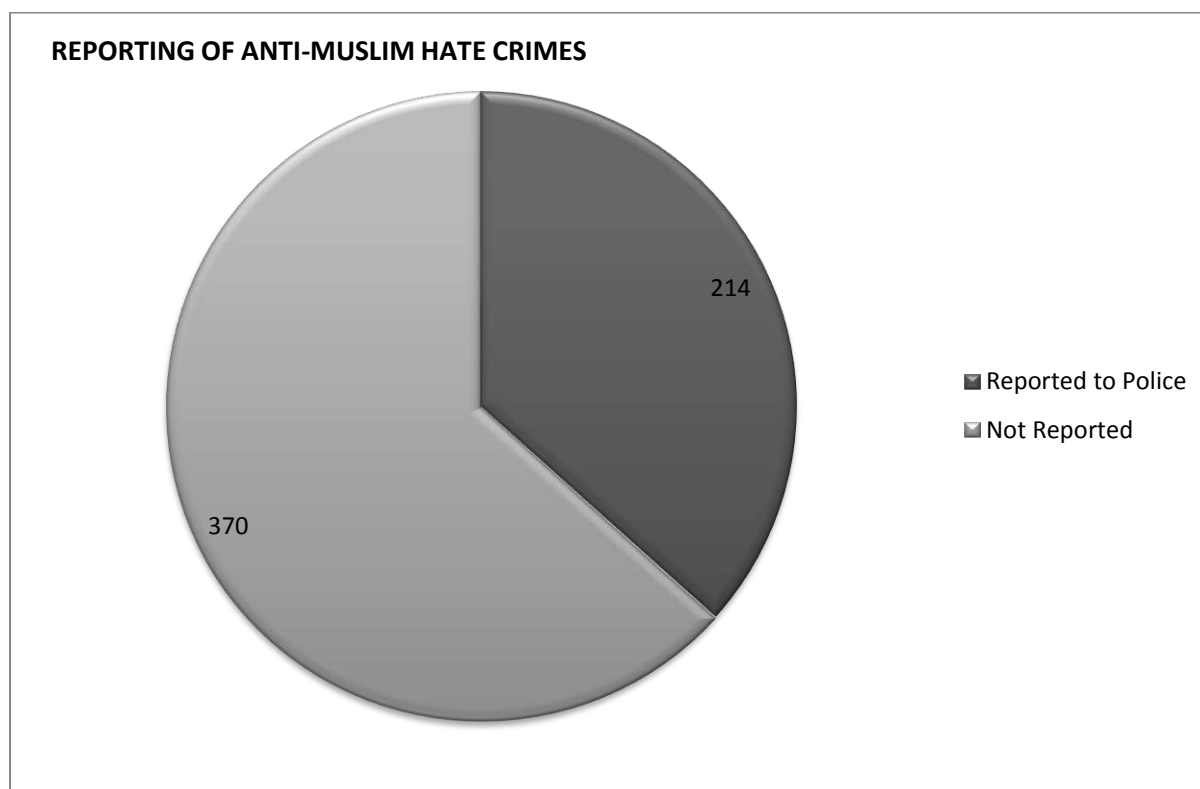
6.2    Whilst in no sense can the Tell MAMA dataset be taken as definitive of any national trends, the statistical evidence that it does offer is more representative then previously available data. Academic Chris Allen, for instance, has downplayed the significance of previous datasets collected by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and the Forum against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR) on the grounds that they were London based and, therefore, not representative of England (let alone the rest of the UK). Allen was also unconvinced by the definition of Islamophobia used in categorising incidents and, for both these reasons, he regarded the evidence gathered as more indicative than conclusive.[45] As mentioned earlier, the definition of anti-Muslim hate crime utilised in this report sits within the category of religious hate crime (as used by ACPO, the CPS and other

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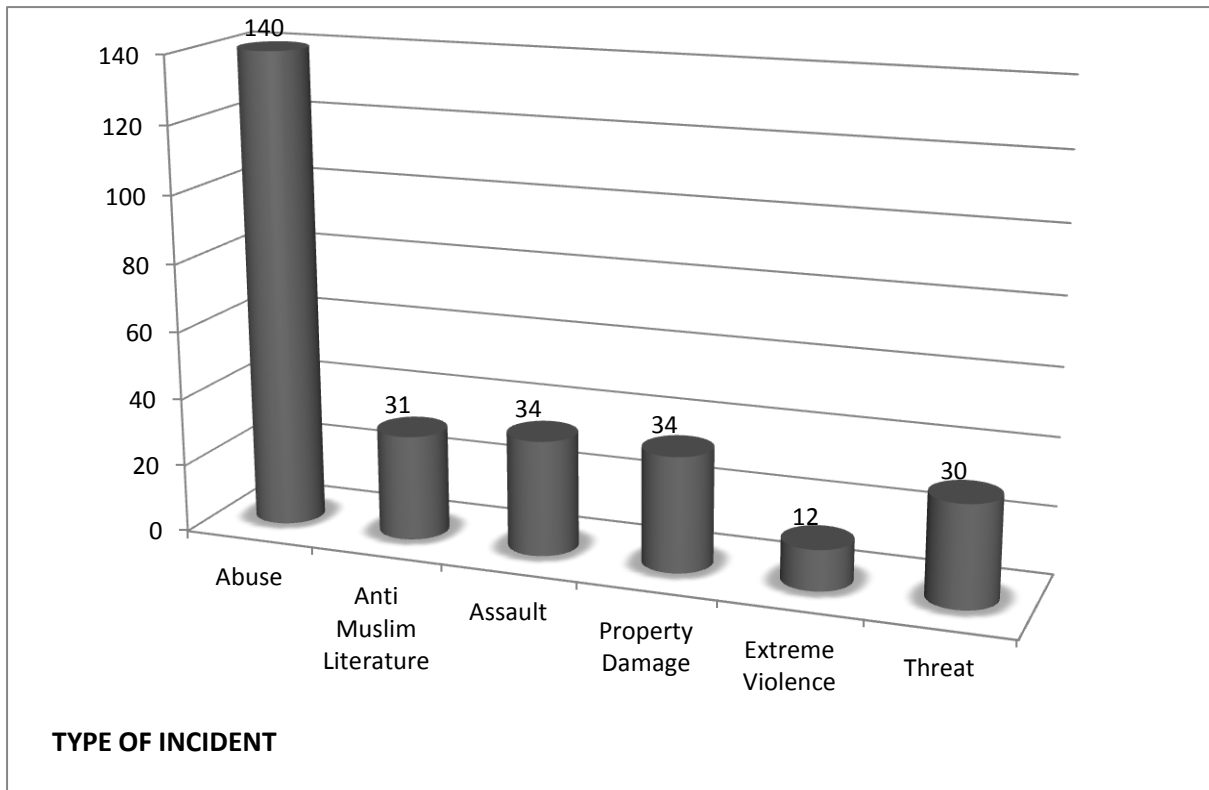[45] Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 124.

practitioners). Accordingly, this report has refrained from using the terms 'Islamophobic incidents' or 'Islamophobic hate crime'.

6.3     In relation to the location of offline incidents (n. 150), more reported incidents - 44 per cent - took place in the London area than in any other single location. However, a significant number of reported incidents occurred in the Midlands (21 per cent), and Southern England (excluding London), 10 per cent. Yorkshire and Lancashire each contributed 8 per cent to the overall incident rate. The data can, therefore, be regarded as more geographically representative than previous London-based studies.

6.3     Furthermore, the data suggests that online expressions of anti-Muslim sentiment have reached significant proportions, with 74 per cent of incidents reported to Tell MAMA taking place online compared to 26 per cent being committed in the physical world.



**NUMBER OF INCIDENTS**

Offline, 150

Online, 434
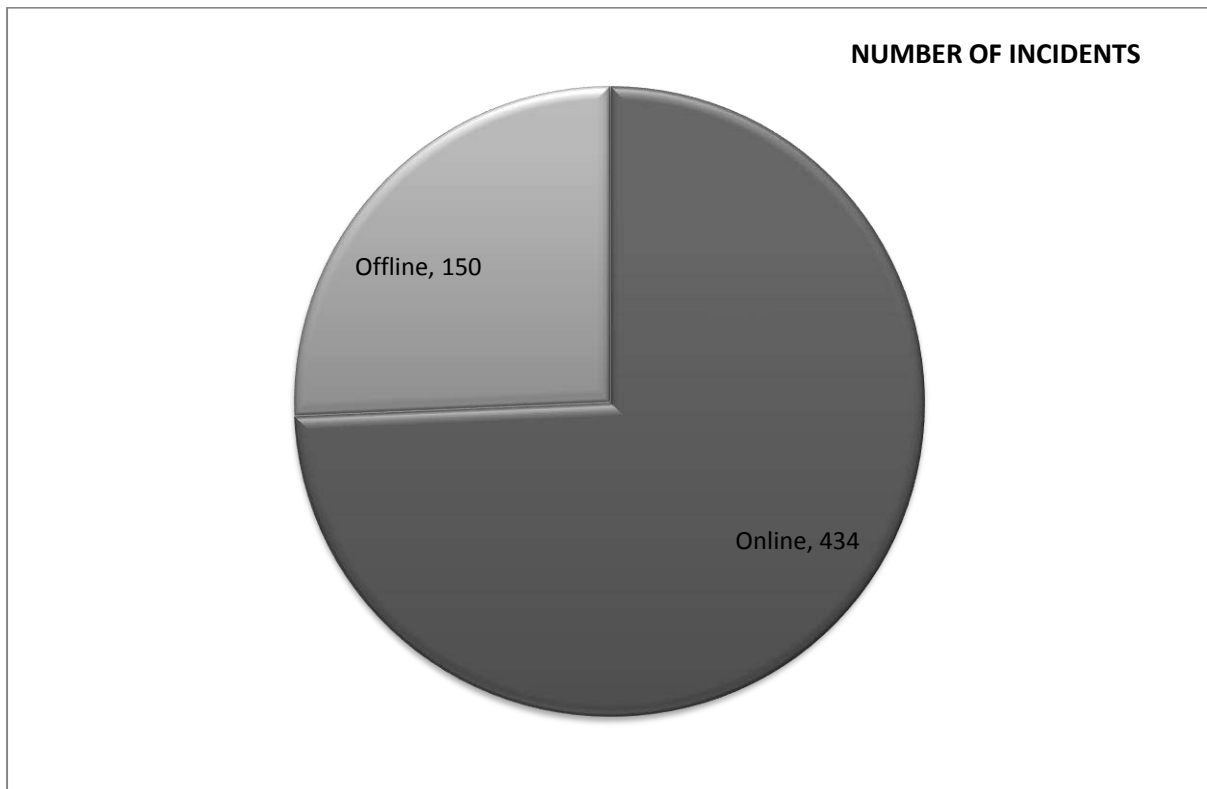
6.4     Of reported attacks committed offline, 1 in every 2 involved incidents of abusive behaviour. The occurrences of assaults, threats, and property damage are less frequent and fairly similar in number, with assault and property damage each taking place in 12 per cent of cases and threats being made in 11 per cent. The dissemination of anti-Muslim literature occurred in 11 per cent of cases. Significantly, only 8 per cent of incidents were described as involving 'extreme violence'.

140

140

120

100

80

60

40

31          34          34
20                                                    30
0                                              12

Abuse    Anti      Assault   Property  Extreme   Threat
         Muslim              Damage    Violence
         Literature

**TYPE OF INCIDENT**

6.5      Reported incidents of verbal abuse included direct insults and offensive comments either on
the streets, in the workplace, in or near mosques, or around people's neighbourhoods. The insults
deployed include references to 'Pakis'; rape; paedophiles; inbreeding; incest; jihad; terrorists; bombs;
filth; 'muzzrats'; and various animals including dogs; pigs; goats; and baboons. However, openly
racist language is recorded as a feature of only a minority (12 per cent) of incidents (in official
statistics racist motivation is reported as occurring more frequently).

**INCIDENCE OF RACIST LANGUAGE**
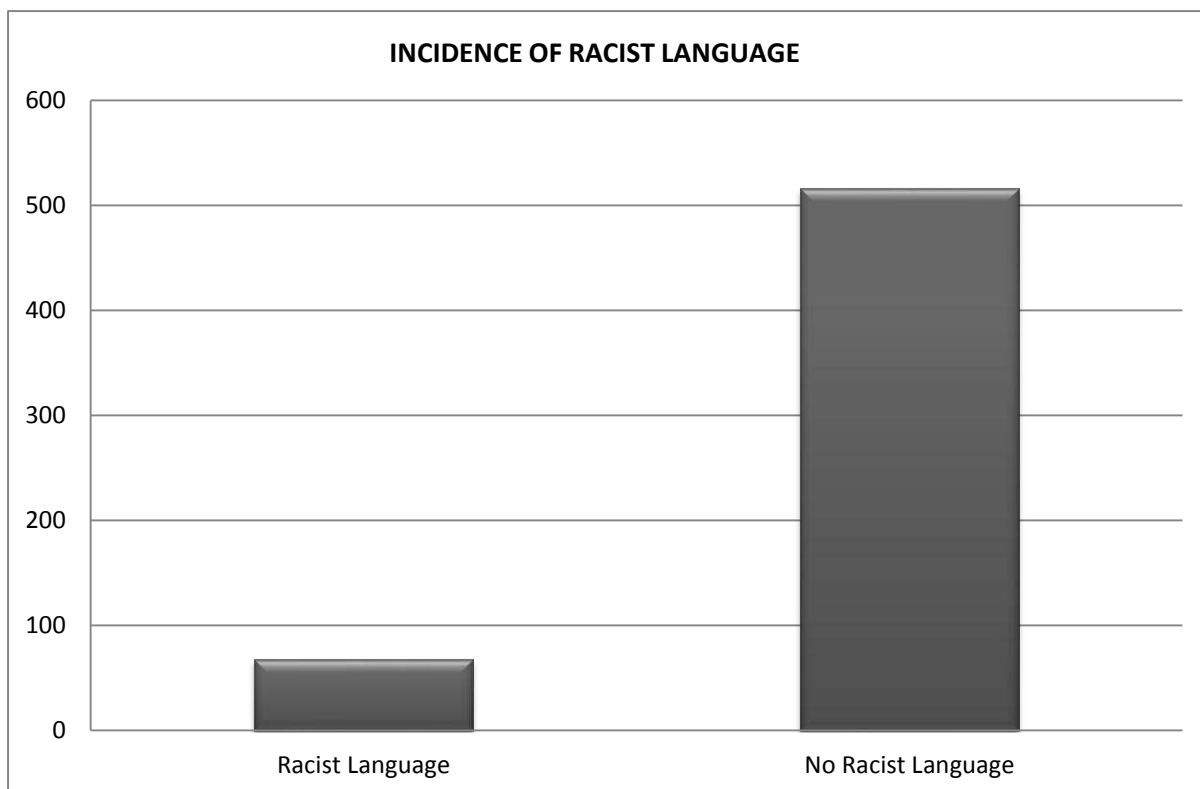


6.6.    The reported offline incidents that took place were mainly street based – 55 per cent - with 18 per cent taking place at mosques and other Islamic institutions and 13 per cent at workplaces and schools. Among this latter category the dataset records several instances of bullying at school and in the workplace continuing over a period of time and which the victims found very distressing.[46] The majority of incidents involving mosques were described by respondents as damage or desecration. These incidents ranged from the placing of a pig's head; graffiti; damage to the Koran; broken windows; and a bomb hoax through to one verified case of arson. The remaining incidents were abusive behaviour and the distribution of anti-Muslim literature.[47] A typical example of the latter is the following snapshot:

> **'Last week we had a car drive past Lea Bridge Road Mosque with the individuals tearing out pages of the Quran.'**
>
> Ref. 398

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[46] Main database ref. 288 and supplementary database (1) refs. 33 & 49.

[47] For example, main database refs 92, 109, 251, 282, 295, 296, &  352. Supplementary database (1) Refs 5 & 41. Supplementary database (2) refs. 298, 303, 388, & 398.
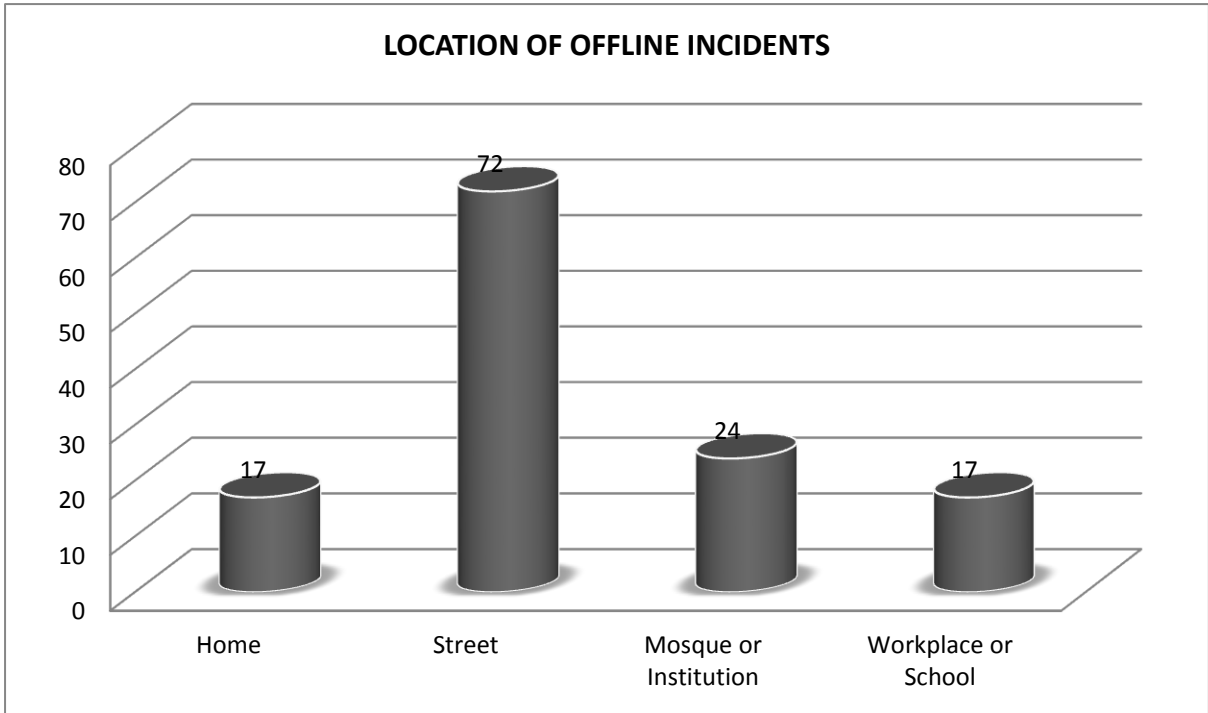
**LOCATION OF OFFLINE INCIDENTS**



Of the reported offline offences the majority of victims were female and, of these, over 80 per cent were women who were easily identifiable as Muslim, i.e. wearing the hijab or niqab.

**GENDER BREAKDOWN FOR OFFLINE VICTIMS**
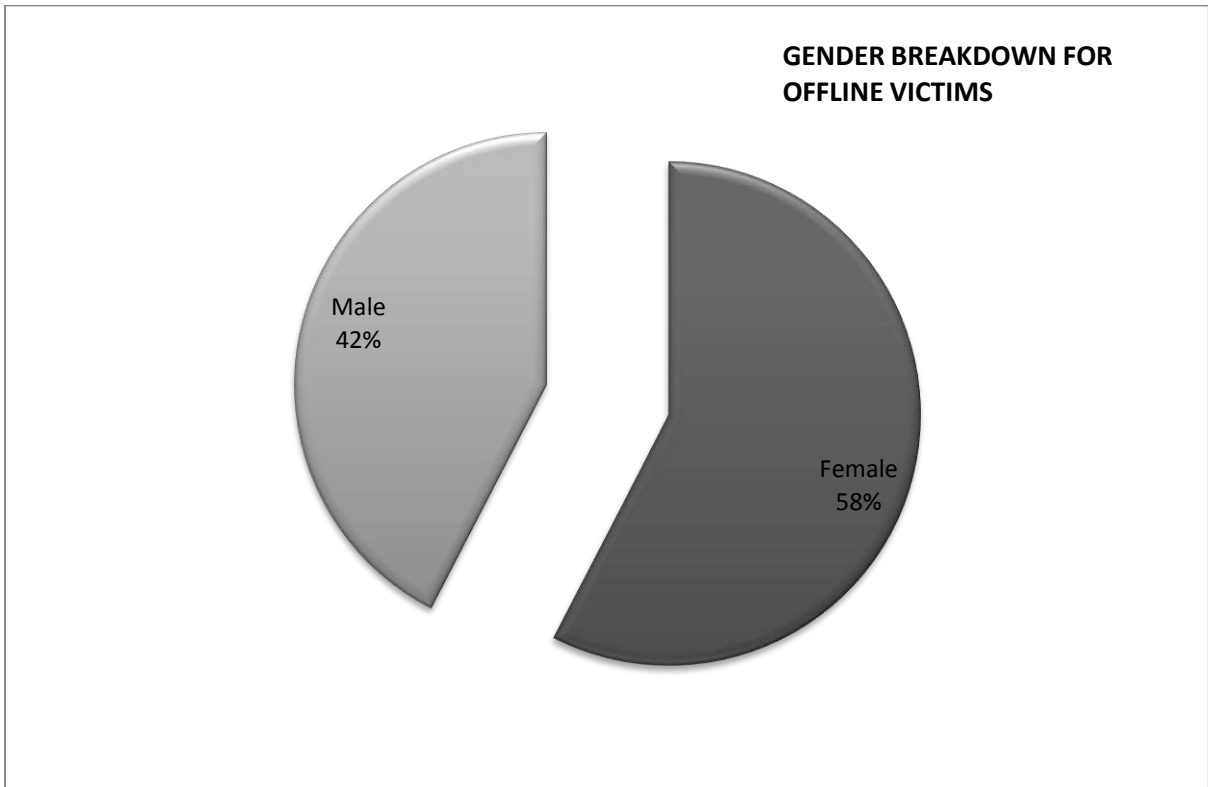


In one reported incident the victim had only recently started wearing the hijab:

'for the past 6 months when i have started to wear a hijab i have been getting people pushing me on the floor and being very rude to me on the bus or trying to take off my hijab and calling me a terrorist. 3 weeks ago i was walking to the mosque to pray Maghrib and i had 2 black boys push me to the floor and then 2 white boys came from behind me and spit on me , they told me that im a paki and they wish that all muslims were dead. the most thing that broke my heart and made me cry is when i walked away and they said the most horrible things about allah.'

Ref 358

In the cases with male victims, over 70 per cent were not wearing clothing identifiable as Muslim.

**IDENTIFIABILITY OF VICTIMS**



Wearing Muslim Clothing 41%

Not Wearing Muslim Clothing 59%
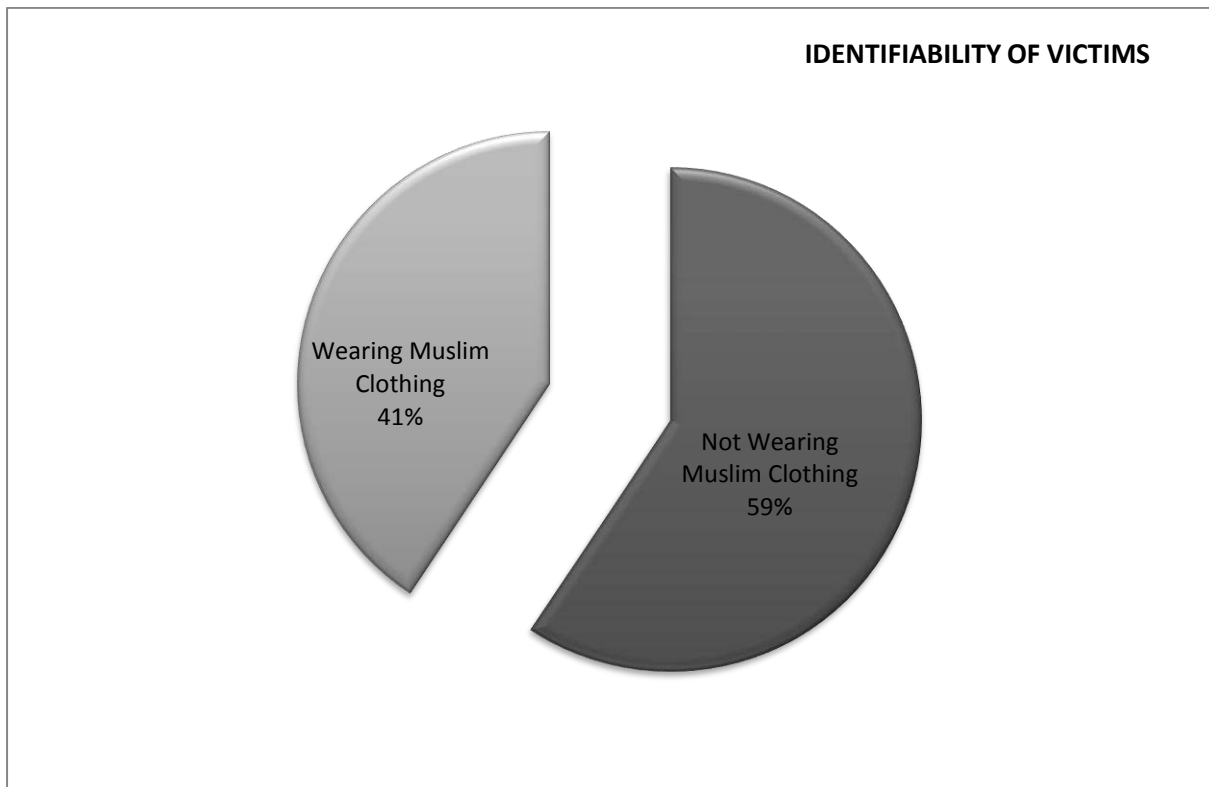
6.7 The offline incidents reported to Tell MAMA are overwhelmingly committed by males aged 40 or younger.

Female
22%

Male
78%
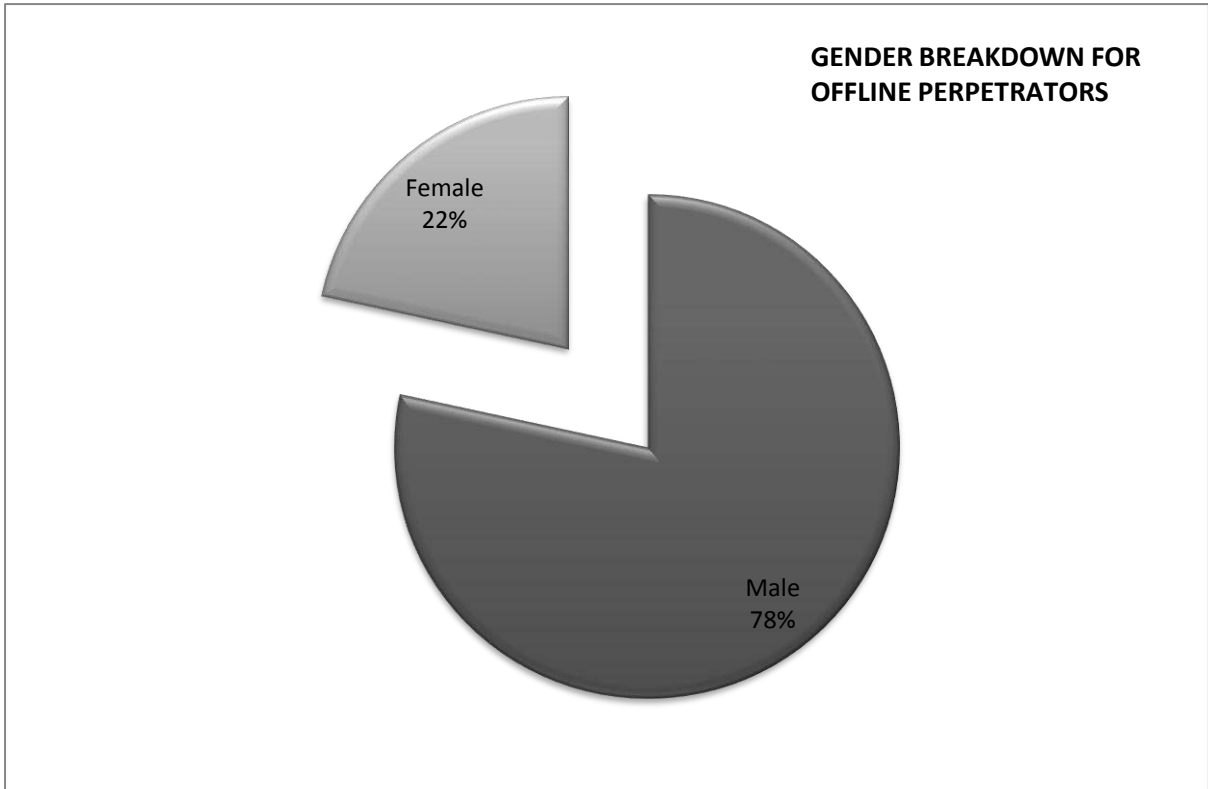
Most offline incidents were recorded as being perpetrated by people in their late teens, twenties and thirties (the difficulty of reliably identifying attacker demographics online precluded the use of age-related indicators in our analysis of online attacks).

**AGE OF OFFLINE
PERPETRATORS**
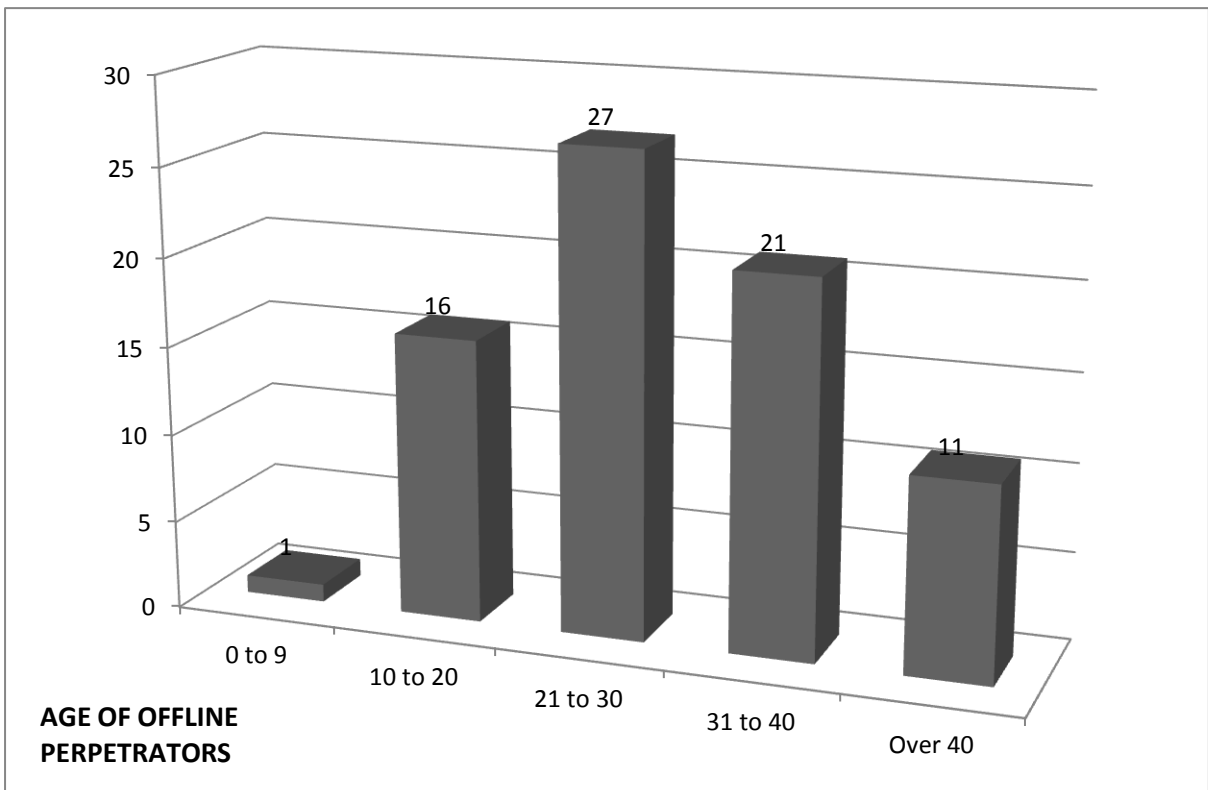
## 7.0    **Links to the Far Right**

7.1     The majority of offline incidents do not have any reported link to the far right. Nonetheless nearly 1 in 4 of offline cases did report a perceived link to the far right – a link identified and reported by the victim. Of the 29 incidents that reported a link to the far right, 11 were associated with the EDL; 5 with the BNP; and 1 with the National Front.



OFFLINE LINKS TO THE FAR RIGHT

29

121

■ Linked to Far Right
■ Not Linked to Far Right
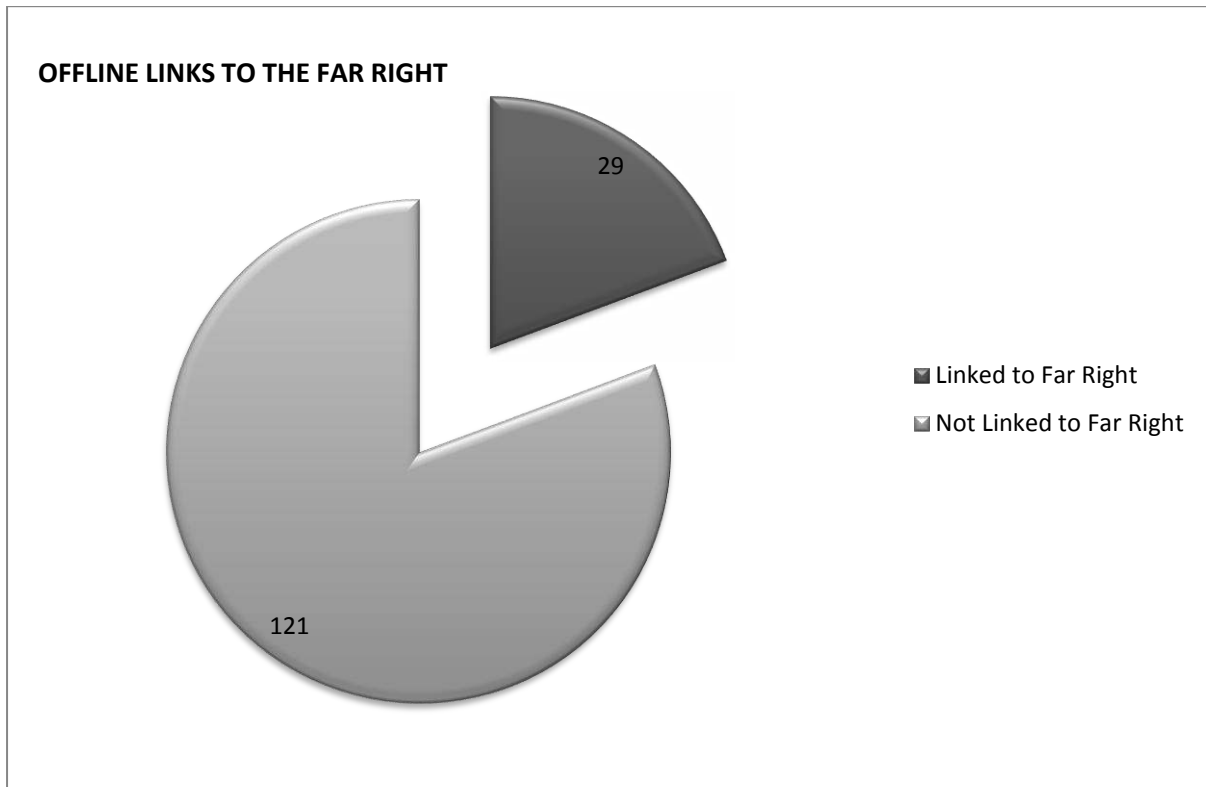
7.2     A significant finding here is that the far right is more clearly associated with the majority of online cases. The majority of the incidents of Muslim hate crime reported to Tell MAMA are online incidents and 300 – 69 per cent - of these online cases reported a link to the far right. Clearly, the far right is utilising the Internet to disseminate its anti-Muslim vitriol more widely and more effectively. This finding is endorsed by the emerging secondary literature, which, while lacking significant empirical evidence, also suggests that the far right are increasingly developing their online presence. In the USA online anti-Muslim activity tends to focus around high profile right-wing figures such as Pamela Geller, Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes or Martin Kramer.[48] The Tell MAMA data records no incidents involving similar well-known British figures. To date, for instance, the EDL's 'Tommy Robinson' is the most prominent individual reported to Tell MAMA for online hate crime. In one

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[48] Nathan Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), p.51.

instance Robinson was reported for a tweet allegedly contemplating the gang rape of Muslim women.[49]



**ONLINE LINKS TO FAR RIGHT**

134

300

■ Online Linked to Far Right
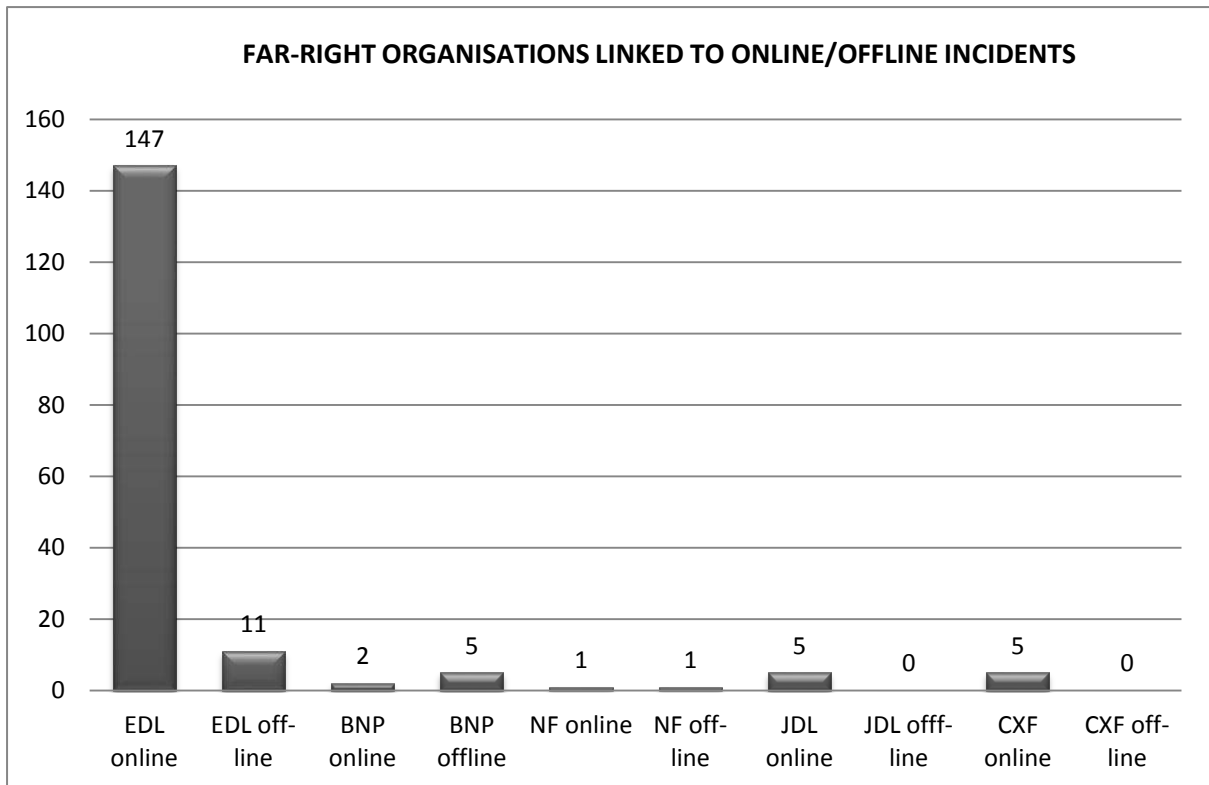■ Online Not Linked to Far Right
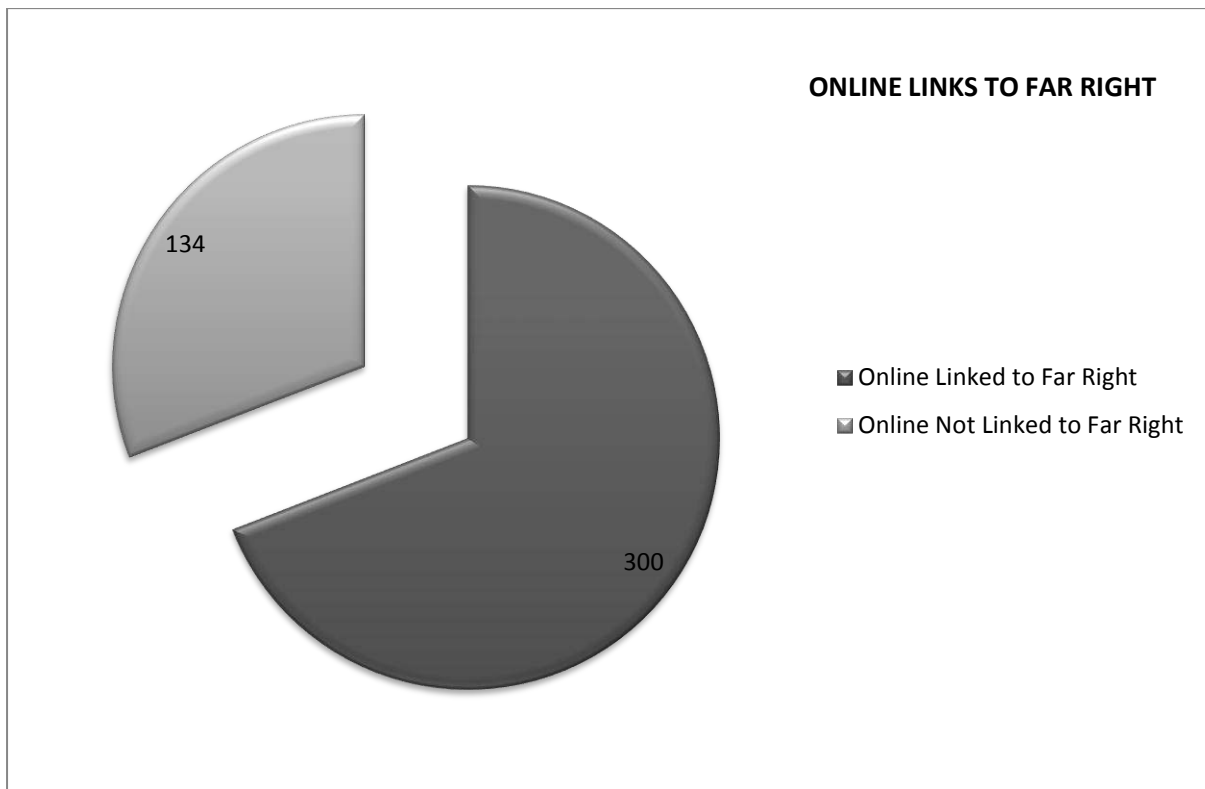
7.3     The English Defence League is the far-right organisation most active on the Internet in terms of disseminating anti-Muslim sentiments. EDL supporters/sympathisers have been identified in 147 of these cases, the CXF (Combined Ex-Forces)[50] five, the JDL (Jewish Defence League)[51] four, and the BNP just two. Although both the EDL and the BNP deploy anti-Muslim propaganda in their campaigns, the volume of reported online anti-Muslim hate crime incidents linked specifically to the EDL suggests that it is the English Defence League (and not the BNP) which is most visibly making its online presence felt in terms of anti-Muslim attacks. As of March 2013, Tell MAMA's work had led to the arrests of 21 EDL supporters.[52]

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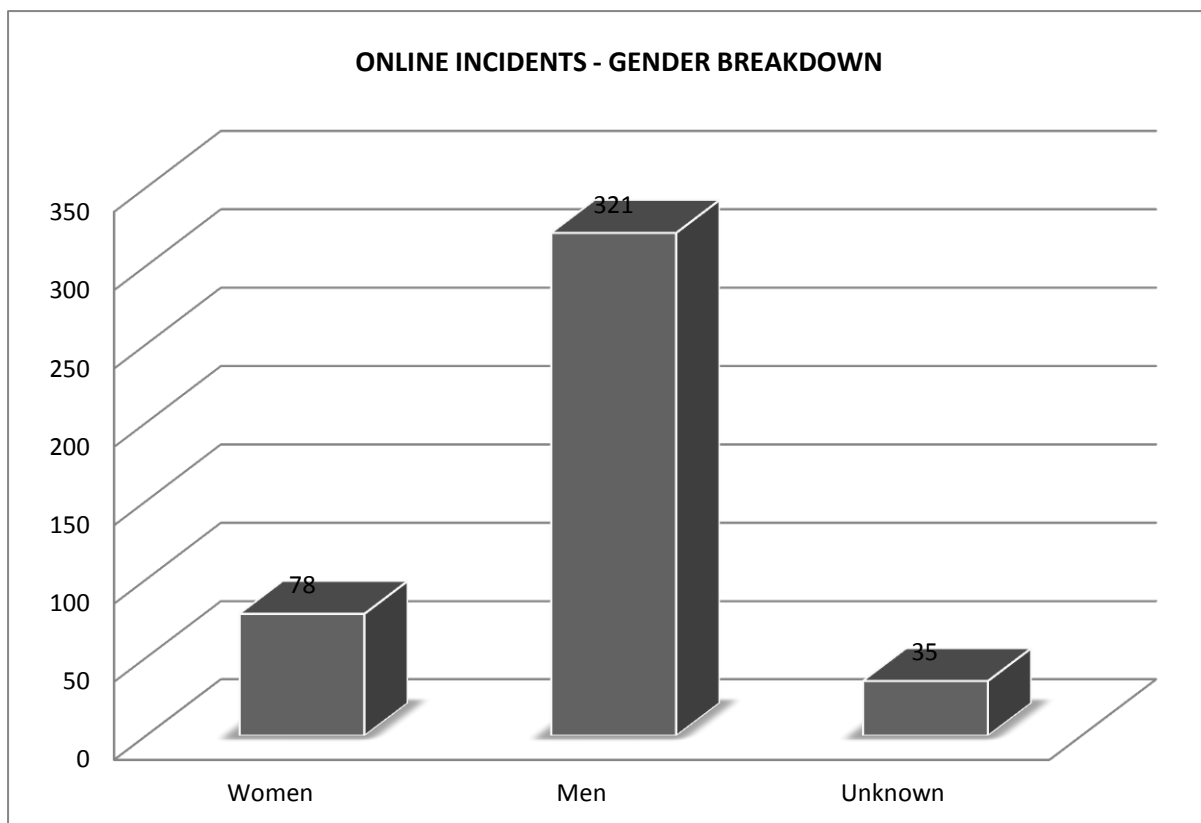[49] Main database, ref 637.

[50] Originally formed in 2011, the Combined Ex-Forces is a small EDL splinter group.

[51] The Jewish Defence League is an offshoot of the EDL's Jewish Division and is believed to be run by Roberta Moore.

[52] See http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/fiyaz-mughal/islamophobia-anti-muslim-hatred_b_2853468.html

## FAR-RIGHT ORGANISATIONS LINKED TO ONLINE/OFFLINE INCIDENTS

Bar chart with values:
- EDL online: 147
- EDL off-line: 11
- BNP online: 2
- BNP offline: 5
- NF online: 1
- NF off-line: 1
- JDL online: 5
- JDL offf-line: 0
- CXF online: 5
- CXF off-line: 0

Y-axis scale from 0 to 160 in increments of 20.

7.4    Women were responsible for 78 - 18 per cent - of the online incidents reported. Of these cases, 18 reported a link with the EDL. In seven cases these women were allegedly advocating offline violence against Muslims including burning Muslims, killing Muslim babies, blowing up mosques and smearing buildings associated with Muslims with dog faeces. The religiously offensive comments recorded included references to Mohammed as a paedophile and Satan's prophet, Islam being a cult, and insulting remarks about the Koran. Racist remarks were, in turn, mainly anti-Pakistani comments and references to dirt and filth. More generally there were comments accusing Muslims of rape; paedophilia; incest; interbreeding; being terrorists; and killing Jews.

**ONLINE INCIDENTS - GENDER BREAKDOWN**

| | |
|---|---|
| 350 | |
| 300 | |
| 250 | |
| 200 | |
| 150 | |
| 100 | 78 |
| 50 | |
| 0 | |

Women: 78    Men: 321    Unknown: 35

7.5      Significantly the dataset reveals that the majority of perpetrators of reported online incidents make some kind of threat of offline action. Comments made by those recording the incidents indicate that, over time, repeat offenders become increasingly aggressive.[53] Insults are very similar to those deployed in street and mosque-based incidents but the threats can be very intimidating, even extending to the prospect of the perpetrator coming to the victim's house and killing their children. Further research is urgently needed to qualify the frequency of cases where online hate is the precursor to real-life incidents.

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[53] An example of this is the extremely unpleasant remarks made by 'Guru Marc', see main database refs 572, 599, 617 and supplementary database (2), ref 243.

No Threat to Offline Action
35%

Threatened Offline Action
65%
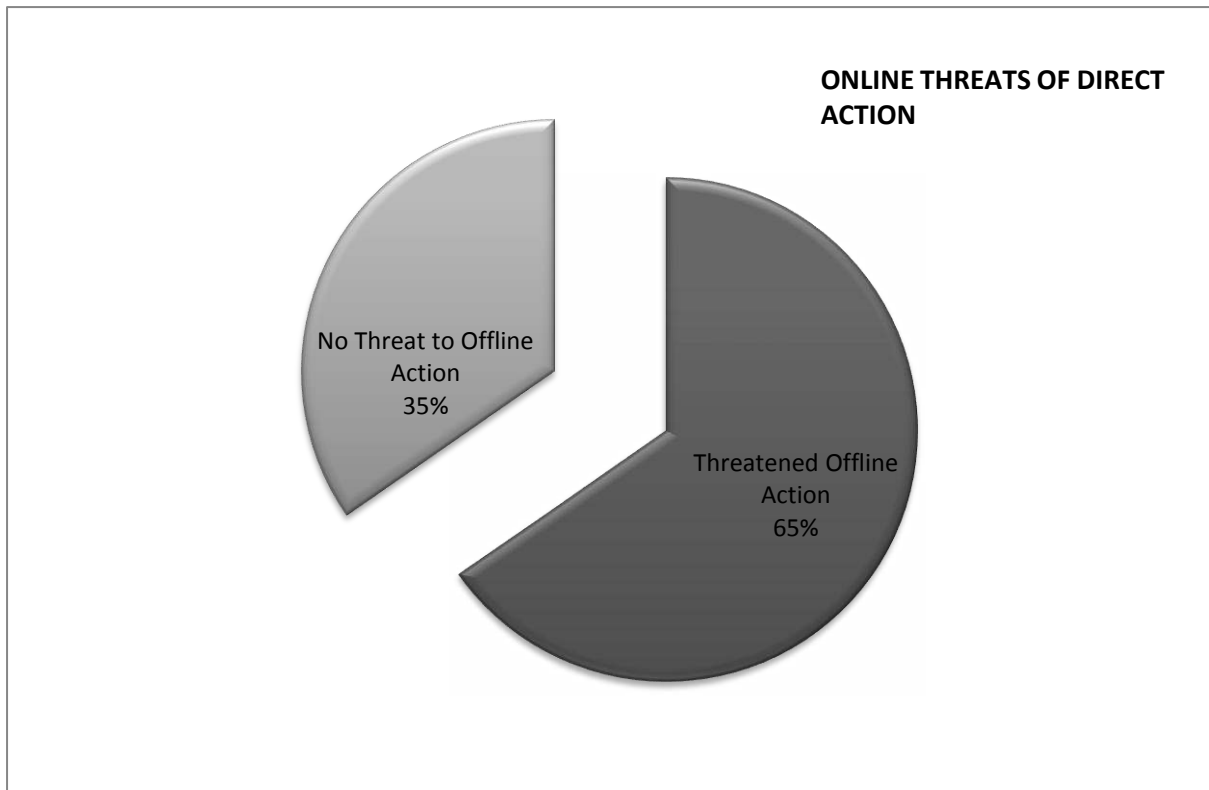
7.6      Snapshot examples of EDL-linked online comments

**Just pour pigs blood in every reservoir in Britain, the whole land will be tainted, good bye muzzrats!'**

EDL Yorkshire
Ref. 308

**@fifteenheretics 'Sadly, Britain is full of these filthy Muslim immigrants. Someone should 'teach him a lesson' and cut his head off #edl'**

EDL sympathiser
Ref. 243

**'Have you seen the price of meat? And Muslim babies are so plentiful! Sharia allows sodomising babies! #EDL'**
Ref. 370

**'you can lead a muslim to culture but you can't make him think #edl'**

EDL sympathiser
Ref. 302

**@EDLTrobinson @TellMamaUK 'If u have a lecherous fool for a prophet and consider him a perfect man then u will be mocked, full  stop.'**

Ref. 377

'There is no such thing as a moderate Muslim.They are all nutjobs Because they are animals.'

'Tommy Robinson'
Ref. 313

'Pakistan factory fires kill at least 261 …SUCH A SHAME LOOOOOOOL

French mosque smeared with excrement in new vandalism on Muslim places of worship … Loooool love it!!'

EDL Birmingham
Ref. 365

The following comment has been directed against Mohamed Ansar on twitter…
'You fucking disgrace go and hang yourself with your beard and I will come round and shove bacon in your scummy shit cunt mouth EDL!!!'

EDL supporter Ref. 392

'Hope your mosque has fire insurance Muslim immigrant cunt. Fried halal.'•
'You raped British women and children. Now you can pay.'

EDL ☐
Ref. 293

'islam is not a religion its a child molesting cult … @MoAnsar@TellMamaUK he needs to be deported out of a cannon … please fuck off back to your cave you paedo'

Infidels of Britain
Ref. 378

'face it cunt Muhammad had sex with Aysha wen she was 9 that's pedo'

EDL
Ref. 391

'…we don't marry our dad like you dirty muzrats'

EDL supporter
Ref. 389

**8.0     Key Findings**

- Reluctance to report incidents to the police remains a significant problem;
- Offline incidents that were reported were mainly street based (55 per cent) with 18 per cent taking place at mosques and other Islamic institutions and 13 per cent at workplaces and schools;
- 1 in every 2 reported offline attacks involved low-level abuse and harassment, with less than 10 per cent involving extreme violence;
- Of the reported offline offences the majority of victims were female and, of these, over 80 per cent were women who were easily identifiable as Muslim, i.e. wearing the hijab or niqab;
- Most offline perpetrators were reported as male (78 per cent) and under the age of forty;
- The majority of reported offline incidents were not linked to the far right, but a far right link was nonetheless reported in almost 1 in every 4 offline cases;
- Most reported anti-Muslim hate crime incidents occurred online (74 per cent);
- The majority of reported online cases did include threats of offline action and therefore should not be dismissed or underestimated;
- Most perpetrators of online anti-Muslim hate crime were reported as male;
- Nearly 70 per cent of online incidents reported a link to the far right;
- Of the online incidents that reported a link to the far right, it is the EDL, rather than the BNP, that was specifically named in 49 per cent of such cases. The English Defence League is the far-right organisation that is most implicated in disseminating anti-Muslim hate online.
- The overall link to the far right reported by victims stood at 56 per cent for the period 1 April 2012 to 30 April 2013 - 300 online incidents reported a link to the far right; 29 offline cases reported such a link.

**9.0     Post-Woolwich Addendum**

9.1     This report was unable to investigate attack chronology since any spikes shown in the data might only reflect a change in the numbers of people aware of the Tell MAMA service. However, the response to the horrific murder of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich on 22 May 2013 does allow researchers to isolate cause and effect, quantifying any increase in anti-Muslim hate incidents. In the wake of the 7/7 bombings, for instance, the Metropolitan police reported a sharp but temporary increase in the level of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents. By the end of August 2005 the level of incidents had fallen back to the number of incidents that were being recorded prior to the bombings.[54]

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[54] See Iganski, *Hate Crime and the City*, p. 135.

9.2    The baseline of reported hate crime for the period under our study (April 2012 to April 2013 inclusive) was an average of 1.5 incidents per day. Below are the verified figures recorded by Tell MAMA for the period 22 May to 25 June (inclusive). The figures reveal a total of 241 reported incidents across a 35 day period – an average baseline figure of 6 to 7 reported incidents per day:

|  | 22-27th May | 28-3rd June | 4-10th June | 11-17th June | 18-25th June |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of incidents | 110 | 40 | 29 | 26 | 36 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

9.3    Reported incidents ranged from general verbal abuse targeted at visible Muslim females through to incendiary devices thrown against a number of mosques (although in keeping with the findings here, less than one in 12 cases reported to Tell MAMA involved the physical targeting of individuals, such as the throwing of objects and/or attempts to forcibly remove Islamic clothing). On 10 June 2013, Metropolitan Police Commander Simon Letchford told the Radio 4 *Today* programme that recorded attacks against Muslims in London had increased eightfold following the Woolwich murder (increasing sharply from one incident per day to around eight per day). ACPO announced that it had received 136 complaints of anti-Muslim hate incidents in the week following Lee Rigby's murder. These were reported directly to ACPO via its True Vision site for hate crimes, and included physical offences and internet material. However, ACPO also revealed a fall from 136 to 37 reported incidents in the period between 29 May and 4 June.[55]

9.4    Further research is now urgently required in order to establish whether baseline figures return to 'normal' (the experience after 7/7 suggests that this will probably be the case assuming the absence of further precipitating incidents). Any lasting increase in baseline rates could indicate that the Woolwich incident has had a significant cumulative effect upon anti-Muslim hate crime over the longer term.

9.5    As for final reflections, there remains an obvious danger of overstating the incidence and proliferation of anti-Muslim hate crime. On the whole British society remains open and tolerant. Tellingly, a YouGov survey from October 2012 revealed that just 3 per cent identified 'Muslims in Britain' as the *single* most important issue facing the country, and just 3 per cent agreed with both the values and methods of the English Defence League. On the other hand, the survey data also revealed that 21 per cent agreed with the values of the EDL (if not their methods); that 49 per cent agreed that there would be a 'clash of civilisations' between

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[55] See http://www.report-it.org.uk/true_vision_records_a_significant_weekly_reduct

Muslims and native white Britons; and that 54 per cent agreed that relationships between Britain's different ethnic, racial or religious groups would get worse.[56]

9.6     The contextual causes of popular anti-Muslim sentiment remain subject to on-going debate. The 9/11 and 7/7 attacks; counter-terrorism policy; demonisation of Muslims by the mainstream media (and by sections of the political mainstream); the demise of traditional national identities; concerns over multiculturalism; globalisation (and others); have all been cited as important factors. Anti-Muslim hate crime is one manifestation of this anti-Muslim sentiment, and it would be wrong to dismiss its significance (or even subject it to relativism, that is to say, compare it with cases of Jihadi extremism). The bottom line is that anti-Muslim hate crime can have a corrosive impact upon individual well-being, upon families, upon communities, and ultimately upon social cohesion.



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