

**ALL E.A.R.S. (Experiences of
Asylum and Refuge seekers) in
Bolton relating to hate crime.**

**Research report: To coincide with
Hate crime Awareness week
October 2017**



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Background

In early August 2016 The Be safe partnership comprising Bolton council and Greater Manchester Police made available a pot of funding for the borough of Bolton that would be utilised for a range of activities that would raise awareness of hate crime in Bolton. The North Bolton Support Group in collaboration with the Flowhession Foundation

successfully applied for funding to undertake a long-term research project that would interview Refuge and Asylum seekers from the largely African diaspora of Bolton. The research project would explore in a qualitative capacity through interviewing the Diasporas experiences of hate crime. A number of information events were held during February 2017 that gave potential participants an understanding of hate crime with a total of 30 half hour interviews taking place between the March and September 2017 timeframe. The interviews were facilitated with a lead researcher and experienced Somali translator due to the participants speaking little or no English and the majority of participants were Refugee/asylum seekers from the Somali population.



Migration history and trends of the Somali population within the UK: a brief snapshot (*Homeoffice, 2010, The Somali Muslim community in England, Understanding Ethnic communities*)



The presence and settlement of Somalis in significant numbers in the UK dates from the late 19th century, when many Somalis arrived as seamen in the British Merchant Navy. These Somalis settled in most port cities, with the majority putting down roots in Cardiff, Liverpool and the East London docks. A trickle of Somali immigrants started

arriving during the Second World War with the British navy and some stayed in search of employment. Due to the demand for Labour in the steel industry, Sheffield and South Yorkshire were among the first places the Somali community originally settled, on arrival in the 1940s. Since the closure of the steel plants and mines, many Somalis from the region have moved to other parts of the country, though a significant number still remain. Since the Republic of Somalia became independent in 1960, the country has been overwhelmed by a continuous series of problems including internal political upheaval, war with Ethiopia, droughts and famine, secession of various regions of the country, and clan based civil war. Migration from war torn and drought-ridden Somalia to other parts of the world has been a feature of the country for much of

the late 20th and early 21st century.

The first wave of refugees arrived in the UK via refugee camps in Ethiopia and Djibouti in the late 1980s. Most tended to settle alongside clan members, such as the former Somali seamen of the East End. Since 2000, the established community has attracted other Somalis from Europe who have started to move to the UK and settle in areas where there is an established Somali presence. A major draw is the desire to join both kin and fellow countrymen and women, and the diaspora now extends to a wide range of countries including the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Holland, Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, and Austria, along with Zambia and Tanzania. Between 1985 and the end of 2006, Somalia was consistently one of the top ten asylum applicant producing countries in the UK.¹⁰ Chart 1 shows the growth in asylum applications by Somalis to the UK rising from 305 in 1988 to a peak of 7,495 in 1999 and then dropping to 1,845 in 2006.

The main issues arising within Somali asylum applications in the UK relate to questions of state protection and internal relocation in the country of origin if the application is refused. The fracturing of the State and associated institutions in Somalia means that 'protection' that would otherwise be provided by the state can only be secured through clan membership or patronage. Somalis who are not members of one of the majority clans, or related sub-clans, may frequently be subjected to persecution and unable to access any adequate form of protection.

Many families have been torn apart by the war and many have relatives still living in the refugee camps of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Yemen. Most respondents in the

study expressed a deep worry and concern about such relatives, as well as their desire to bring them to the UK. Those with rights of residence are able to apply for family reunion through which they are entitled to bring spouses and children under eighteen years of age into the UK. Older children and elderly parents are only allowed into the UK on a discretionary basis. The current inflow is mainly composed of women and children, and is largely drawn from the wider diaspora, including many from other European countries, particularly the Netherlands and Scandinavia, rather than from those fleeing Somalia itself.

How the evidence base on Hate crime Informed the Research approach. (Home office, 2016 statistical bulletin, 11/16)

Definition of hate crime:

A Hate Incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender.

Hate crime current evidence

In 2015/16, there were 62,518 offences recorded by the police in which one or more hate crime strands were deemed to be a motivating factor. This was an increase of 19 per cent compared with the 52,465 hate crimes recorded in 2014/15.

The numbers of hate crime offences in 2015/16 for the five centrally monitored strands were as follows:

- 49,419 (79%) were race hate crimes;
- 7,194 (12%) were sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 4,400 (7%) were religious hate crimes;
- 3,629 (6%) were disability hate crimes; and
- 858 (1%) were transgender hate crimes.

It is possible for a hate crime offence to have more than one motivating factor which is why the above numbers sum to more than 62,518 and 100 per cent.

There were increases in offences recorded for all five of the monitored hate crime strands between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

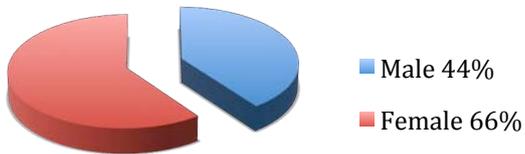
Research approach

It was felt that a clear set of qualitative questions would be asked to the 30 participants that would illicit a deeper understanding of their experiences of hate crime, but also their support networks, feelings towards any incidents and how they felt the police could make reporting easier. The questions were therefore carefully crafted to take in to consideration the language, emotional, cultural and socio-economic barriers refugee and asylum seekers from the diaspora have in reporting hate crime through official channels. The 6 questions each participant was asked were:

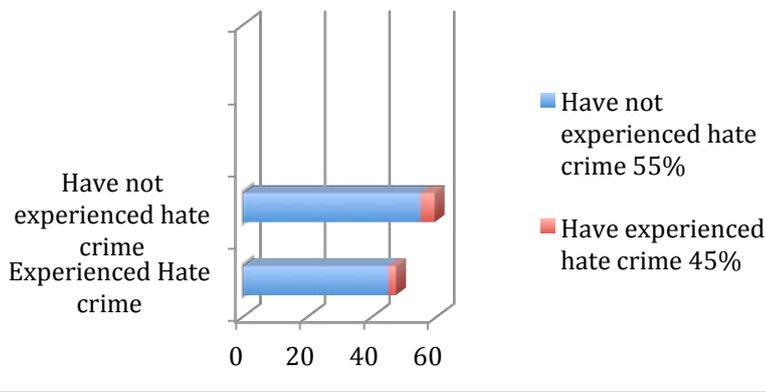
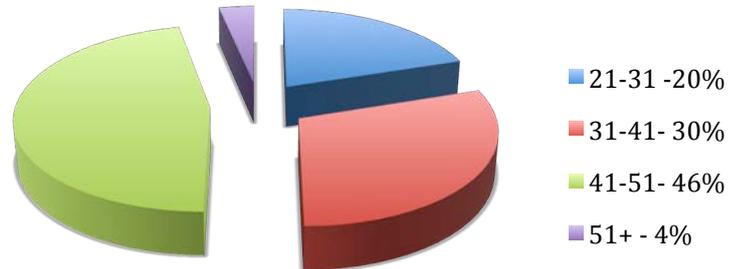
1. Have you experienced a hate crime in the last 6 months?
2. Could you describe what happened?
3. How did it make you feel?
4. Did you tell anybody or have a support network?
5. How can agencies make it easier for you to report hate crime?
6. What do you think the police can do make it easier for you to get support for hate crime.

Snapshot of research: Key data dashboard

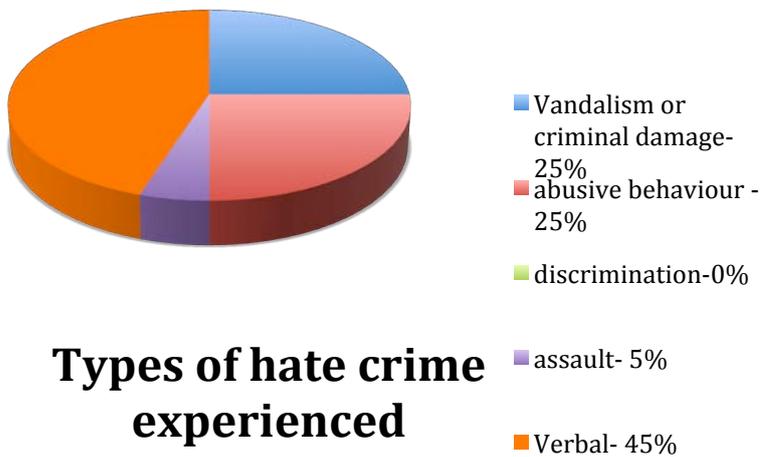
Gender



Age

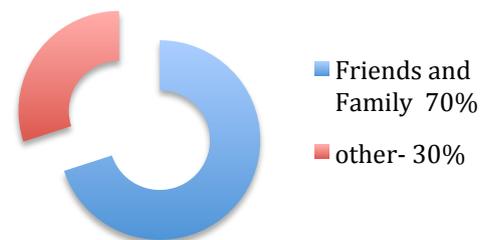


Of those that experienced hate crime 50% did not report it to the police, as they felt it would do nothing



Types of hate crime experienced

Support networks



Discussion and analysis of interview data

1. Have you experienced a hate crime in the last 6 months?

The majority of participants had not experienced hate crime (55%), however there was 45% of the sample did say they had experienced it. A further breakdown of those who did experience hate crime revealed that there were largely female. This may have been for a number of reasons including the fact that Asylum and refugee women from the segment largely wore *jilbaab* (*an Arabic outer garment worn to conceal the body*) that makes them particularly visible and make them prone to certain types of hate crime such as verbal abuse. Further the fact that the majority of participants that reported hate crime were women could also indicate the fact that female members of any community can be perceived as more of a target due to their gender etc.

2. Could you describe what happened?

The majority of incidents fell under the verbal abuse (45%) category. Experiences of the sample were particularly diverse. For instance **Participant F** stated that a white neighbor had used expletives and derogatory names about his religion and culture when his son's football had fell in the neighbours garden. The neighbor had also stated 'this is my country and my area! Go home!'. **Participant B** stated that she had attended the local mosque to pick up her children around 7pm and had walked along the main road. Two elderly men had used expletives to refer to her dress and had used derogatory names such as 'terrorist' and 'bomber' as she had walked past. **Participant E** explains that she had visited

Bolton Market and a group of teenagers chanted 'take it off, take it off! You're in England now!' referring to her Nikab (face veil). Further **Participant J** had further elaborated on how he had boarded a bus with his three children from the town center to his home. At one of the bus stops a young man boarded the bus and during the journey commented to Participant J that he was not comfortable with Participant J's bag as it could have 'anything in it'.

Abusive behavior was reported by the sample too (**25%**). For instance **participant R** explained that someone had been knocking on her door when she had moved in to a new rented property. They had left rubbish at the front door. They had also targeted her sons by throwing stones and using expletives at them. **Participant R** explained that she and her sons had reported the incident to the police but nothing was done about it. Further **Participant U** explains that she had visited Tesco on the same day as the Westminster attack and as she had left the supermarket a group of white youths had attempted to take off her Nikab (face veil) she put her groceries down and began shouting and screaming and took her phone out to say she would ring the police and the youths dispersed. **Participant A** explained that he had been the subject of verbal abuse and taunts by a group of builders who had begun work on a building site when he had returned from work from on an early morning shift. He felt that reporting this incident would make no difference as there were no witnesses nor was he able to speak fluent enough English to narrate it.

Vandalism and criminal damage was reported by a number of participants as well (**25%**). **Participant K** explained how his neighbor had forced his dog upon him intentionally and used expletives and derogatory language to him. Participant K went with a friend to the police station to report this but felt that no appropriate action had been taken. When the neighbor found out that Participant K had reported him to the police the neighbor had intentionally kicked Participant K's front door and continued to swear and taunt him. **Participant M** explains that offensive language referring to her religion and ethnicity had been graffitied on her wall. She had reported it to the police and also housing association. She was then given a camera by the housing association to record and the individuals were recorded doing the offence and were cautioned. **Participant L** explained that her children were verbally abused by local youths and that on a number of occasions there had been an attempt to burn her bins overnight that had not been successful. She strongly suspected that it was the afore mentioned youths that had attempted to carry out the act but had no proof.

3. How did it make you feel?

The sample reported a mix of emotions and feelings relating to the hate crime experienced. This range from confusion as some participants *did understand* that they were being verbally abused but due to lack of English skills were not able to comprehend what was being said. Other participants explained they were particularly frightened for their own safety and that of their children when they were with them during a hate crime incident. There were also feelings of frustration and anger in that participants felt that they

had escaped tyranny and oppression in their country of origin to begin a new life here in the United Kingdom only to find that they were subject to similar experiences here. Participants were also grateful to be able to explore their emotions and experiences regarding hate crime during this research exercise.

4. Did you tell anybody or have a support network?

One major theme that stood out within this question was that participants did not feel confident reporting such incidents to the police in total (**50%**). For instance **Participant S** explained that they would not go to the police, as ‘wouldn’t do anything’, **Participant V** explained that as they did not have the same legal status as other people they felt that their concerns would not be properly investigated or addressed. **Participant R** for instance felt that she had gone to the police and reported stones being thrown at her children alongside verbal abuse and that nothing of significance was done about this. In terms of support network it appears that participants who had experienced hate crime confided within their immediate family and friend social structures and this was true of (70%) of the sample. This can be in part due to the social structure of Somali/African refugee and asylum seekers in that there have close kinship and familial ties. For instance **Participant L** explains this phenomenon ‘In our culture we tell and share our problems with our family firstly, its because they are living with us and we are always happy to help one another’, whilst **Participant E** explained ‘ I told my friend who has lived in Bolton for 10 years and is Somali, she told me she had experienced similar things and her advice and how she dealt with her experiences helped me be strong’.

5. How can agencies make it easier for you to report hate crime?

There were a number of suggestions for this question. They can be broadly categorised under two key themes. **Firstly**, more African/asylum seeker support organisations being designated as hate crime report centers in Bolton as participant felt that this arrangement could make reporting the crime to someone from their own ethnic background easier.

Participant J makes a good point about this ‘ It would be a good idea to let us tell our own people about hate crime because in our country the police are seen as oppressors and rulers, I know this in not what happens here in the UK and the police are here to protect the people. I just think asylum and refugees have the same image of the police, that’s why reporting to someone from our own community would make sure more people from our community report hate crime’. **Secondly**, Participants also felt that on arrival to Bolton agencies could give information in the Somali language about hate crime reporting and the rights that citizens had in this area. Participants felt that such arrangements were really important as refugee/asylum seekers come to the UK having already experiencing trauma, loss, oppression and are overwhelmed by instances of hate crime here. **Participant K** makes the point well ‘I think the council needs to give information about hate crime in Somali language to new asylum seekers and refugees. Even having a Somali charity talk about it to them will comfort and help asylum and refugee seekers. When I came to the UK I felt that I will be living happily and escape the years of hardship, but when we experience hate crime its hard to go to the police or talk about it because we think that we left these problems behind us in our country’.

6. What do you think the police can do to make it easier for you to get support for hate crime?

Participants felt there were a number of ways in which the police could make it easier to support them when being victims of hate crime. The **first theme** that emerged from the interview data within this question was around recruitment of African police officers. Many participants felt that the police force did have BME officers such as south Asian but these officers did not have the understandings of how to deal with the African community. The second theme that emerged was about the police raising awareness about the issue. The **second theme** that surfaced was that participants felt that there was not enough published literature in African community languages within this area. Many had learnt about the intricacies of hate crime and reporting structure after they had attended the information day in February 2017 set up by this research project. As **Participant V** explains 'I did not know there was a law about hate crime, I thought that it was something that most Asylum seekers/refugee may have experienced and that it was normal, it is important for the police give information to our communities about this. Giving the information in our own language would help'.

Recommendations;

- 1) Increase the number of Somali, refugee/asylum seeker organisations that are designated as third party hate crime reporting centers
- 2) The council can look in to offering a leaflet in community languages to newly arrived asylum seekers/refugees around hate crime and reporting methods.
- 3) The council can liaise with local Somali groups to arrange a short discussion with new arrivals around hate crime and reporting structures.
- 4) GMP can strengthen recruitment of African police officers possibly through targeted campaigns within the community.
- 5) GMP can ensure more information about hate crime and reporting structures to be circulated to asylum seekers and refugees in their own community languages.

Conclusions

This was a small-scale study that investigated within a qualitative context very complex phenomenon. It has shone a light directly on experiences, concerns and feelings of newly arrived migrants to the town in relation to hate crime. The recommendations made by participants can contribute towards providing better service provision and quality information about hate crime to new arrivals and work towards building a more harmonious and tolerant society.