

**THE HATE CRIME EXPERIENCES OF THOSE FROM
ALTERNATIVE SUBCULTURES:
RESULTS FROM A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY
THE SOPHIE LANCASTER FOUNDATION**

FINAL REPORT

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For the Sophie Lancaster Foundation

October 2023



www.sophielancasterfoundation.com

1.0 Introduction

In order to gather an insight into the targeted victimisation of alternative subcultures, in 2022 the Sophie Lancaster Foundation conducted a survey of the experiences of hate crime of those from alternative subcultural backgrounds. To help facilitate this, the Foundation recruited a panel made up of academic specialists and hate crime experts from the universities of Leicester, Plymouth and Surrey and from Stop Hate UK and RTSI (Right to Subcultural Identity), Sweden. The survey was subsequently developed by this group and had the overall aims of assessing:

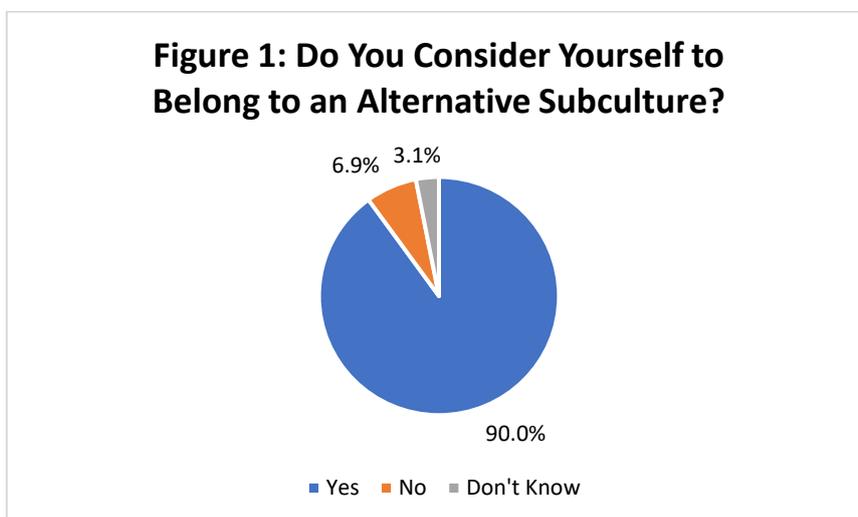
- the types of hate crime people from alternative subcultures experience;
- the effect it has on their lives;
- the levels of hate crime reporting among victims.

The survey was open to respondents from June to December 2022. It was promoted on social media, online, in print and at festivals, and could be completed in either hard copy or online formats. In the end, 290 surveys were completed.

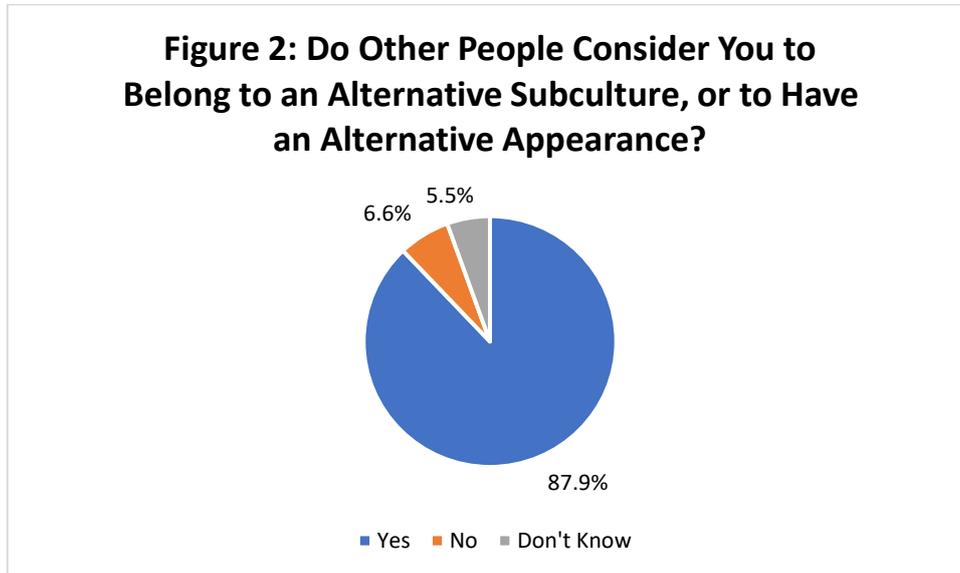
The results are summarised in this report, written by lead authors Professor Jon Garland and Moslem Boushehrian (both University of Surrey – for further information, see Appendix 1) with input from the expert panel.

2.0 Profile of Respondents

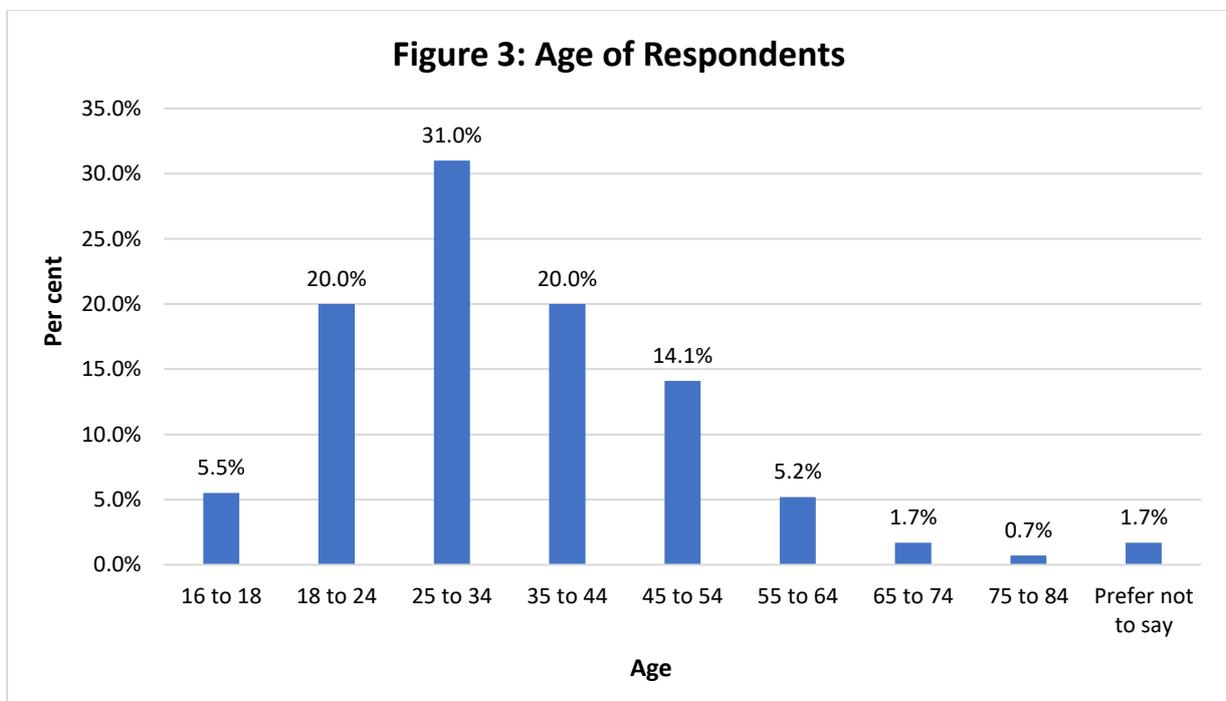
Nine out of ten of respondents (90%) considered themselves as belonging to an alternative subculture with just 6.9% feeling that they didn't.



Almost nine out of 10 of respondents felt that others considered them to belong to an alternative subculture.

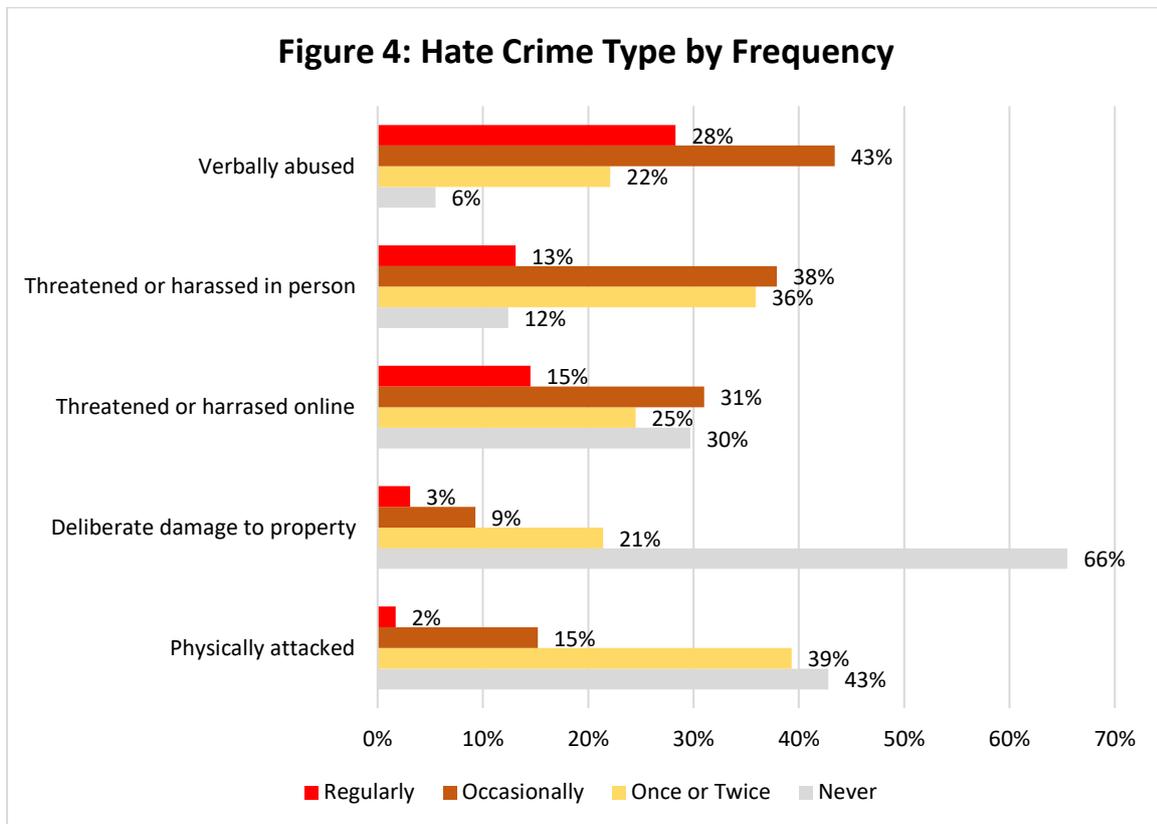


The age range with the highest number of respondents was 25-34, with just under a third of respondents (31%) in that group. Both the 18-24 and 35-44 categories had 20% of respondents in each. Interestingly, 7.6% of respondents were in the age categories of 55 and above, showing the longevity of alternative subcultural membership.



3.0 Experiences of Hate Crime

Overall, 80% of participants had been the victim of at least one of the forms of hate crime in the graph below on a *regular* or *occasional* basis while 5% of participants had experienced *all* forms of hate crime on *regular* or *occasional* basis. The most regularly experienced form of hate crime was verbal abuse (with 28% of respondents experiencing it on a regular basis), followed by being threatened or harassed online (15%), threatened or harassed in person (13%), deliberate damage to property (3%) and being physically attacked (2%). A small but worrying percentage of participants, 5% (15 participants out of 290) had experienced both verbal and physical attacks on a regular basis.



Respondents also had the opportunity to add their own free text comments on the targeting of alternative subcultures, with the following quotations typical of the experiences of many:

“From a young age I have been targeted due to my looks. After one specific incident when I was about 12, I began to change how I looked to try to avoid this happening. This was because me and my friends had stones thrown at us on one of our first times out in the city by ourselves. I have been spat on, regularly verbally abused”.

“Some will straight up not look or talk to you, others will start asking probing questions like am I a racist or do I perform sexual acts as part of some ritual”.

“I have been followed, I was even followed by a group of men when I was heavily pregnant as they shouted harassment at me one evening. I have been called names online, messaged abuse, had people make fun of me and people take pictures of me in public”.

“From personal experience being alternative in high school I was laughed at for my clothing choices, laughed at for the way I would colour my hair, mocked for by what I would enjoy or found interesting. I've had stones thrown at me whilst walking with my boyfriend at the time, followed home from school when I was a teenager by a group of non-alternative people. Been called the usual 'weirdo', 'creep' by people as well. Had food thrown at me at a public food court in a shopping centre”.

“I had my jaw broken in 3 places when I was pushed to the ground & repeatedly kicked in the face. The incident started with verbal harassment then escalated. I was attacked by 5 people because of the way I look”.

“I was lucky to escape one situation. I was attacked because of how I was dressed, punched to the ground and then punched and kicked repeatedly until I was fortunate enough to roll over and get to my feet and run away”.

“I've been called offensive names, harassed, followed, glass thrown at me, punched. I just want to get on with my life and be authentic”.

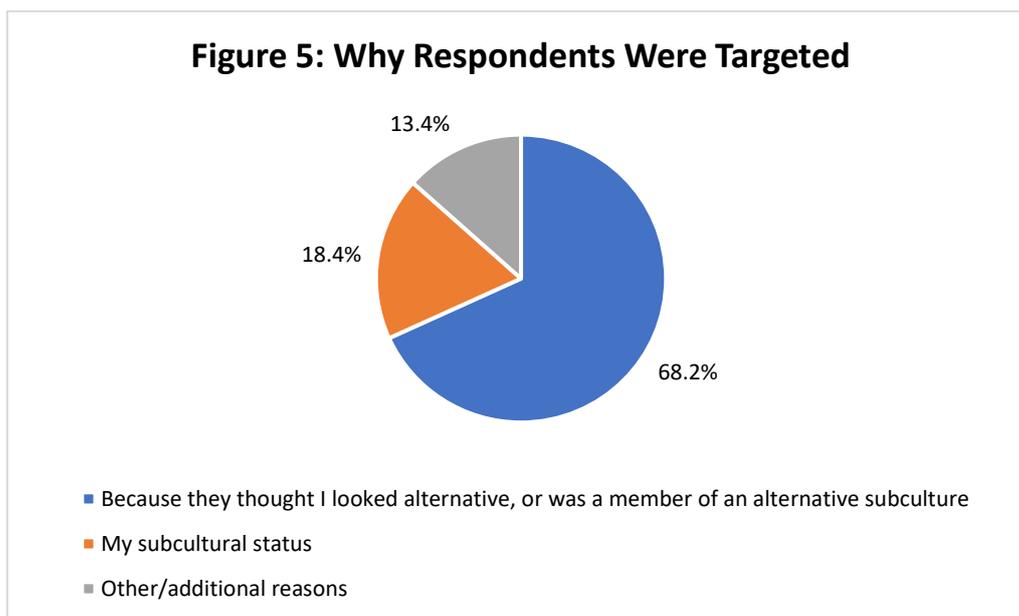
“I have been verbally and physically attacked by strangers since I was 13 years old because I look like a goth. I'm literally just trying to exist how I feel most like myself and have groups of grown men throw drinks over my face for it”.

“So much more needs to be done. When I go outside I make sure I have a spare change of clothes because I expect to either be spat on or have drinks thrown out of cars at me. The looks and comments are constant but expected. I am so

tired, angry and upset with getting repeatedly attacked and not being taken seriously. This needs to change”.

“As a result of this I experienced the constant shift in peoples attitude once learning of me being alternative, during the school summer holidays I would have a mohawk & a lot of the kids wouldn't talk to me until I had to get rid of it for school, I was also specifically singled out in a maths class because the teacher used a picture of a punk with a mohawk as an example of degenerative members of society who don't care about what others have to look at”.

Participants were asked why they felt they were targeted, with 68.2% responding ‘Because they thought I looked alternative, or was a member of an alternative subculture’, 18.4% ‘My subcultural status’, and 13.4% ‘Other/additional reasons’.



The ‘Other/additional reasons’ took the form of free text answers which were thematically analysed and coded into the categories in the table below, with the ‘Frequency’ column denoting the number of times each category was mentioned.

Table 1: Perceived Underlying Reason for Being Targeted

Reason	Frequency
Religion	1
Ethnicity	2
Race	2
Gender	2
Disability	6
LGBTQ+	13
<i>Transgender identity</i>	8
Bullying	1
Jealousy	1
Being on my own	1
Perceived attention-seeking	2
Age	3
Identity	3
Non-conformity	3
Being Different	7
Miscellaneous	12
Appearance	36
<i>Physical appearance</i>	4

As shown in Table 1 above, two major causes of being targeted were perceived to be down to the respondent's 'appearance' and the combination of intersectional characteristics that would make participants vulnerable to the legally recognised forms of hate crime such as sexual orientation, transgender identity, disability, race, and religion.

Among the comments made by participants were:

"I had it all, spat on in the street, beaten up etc".

"I was 'vile', 'sickening' and a 'crime against nature'".

"Because I see things in a different way to them".

"Because I was a 'jitter', a 'mosher' in a small town full of chavs".

"He said he hated goths and would like to kill them as I was walking home".

"I have been insulted in person and online my own family says that I am abnormal".

"Once I was told that the world would be a better place if "gross" people like me didn't exist".

"I've been bullied as an adult too...just because I'm a quiet person I guess".

"I was frequently called 'a dirty mosher' or a 'goth freak' and was told to 'go slit your wrists emo kid'".

"I was a door supervisor for an alternative rock club. On my way home from one of my last shifts I was attacked, stabbed and kicked on the floor by some people I did not allow into the venue due to them harassing some regulars for looking 'different'".

"I'm also quite reserved so I might come across as an 'easy target'".

"I've been bullied and abused purely based off how I look. It has happened more than I'd like to think about. This has caused paranoia and fear of judgement well into my mid-20's, from incidents that have happened as far back as when I was 13 and 14 years old. It's something that has never left me".

Later in the survey respondents were asked to comment further on the types of victimisation they had experienced:

"My appearance isn't hurting anyone, yet I've had rocks thrown at me, pictures/videos taken without my consent, verbally abused. I'm not doing anything wrong, so it doesn't make any sense to me. Why do people care so much?"

"Alternative subcultures are very much tied in with marginalised communities, especially queer ones. Alternative ways of looking and being are an expression

of self, and tied in with who we are and how we navigate the world. Crime towards us is rooted in homophobia, transphobia, ableism, you name it”.

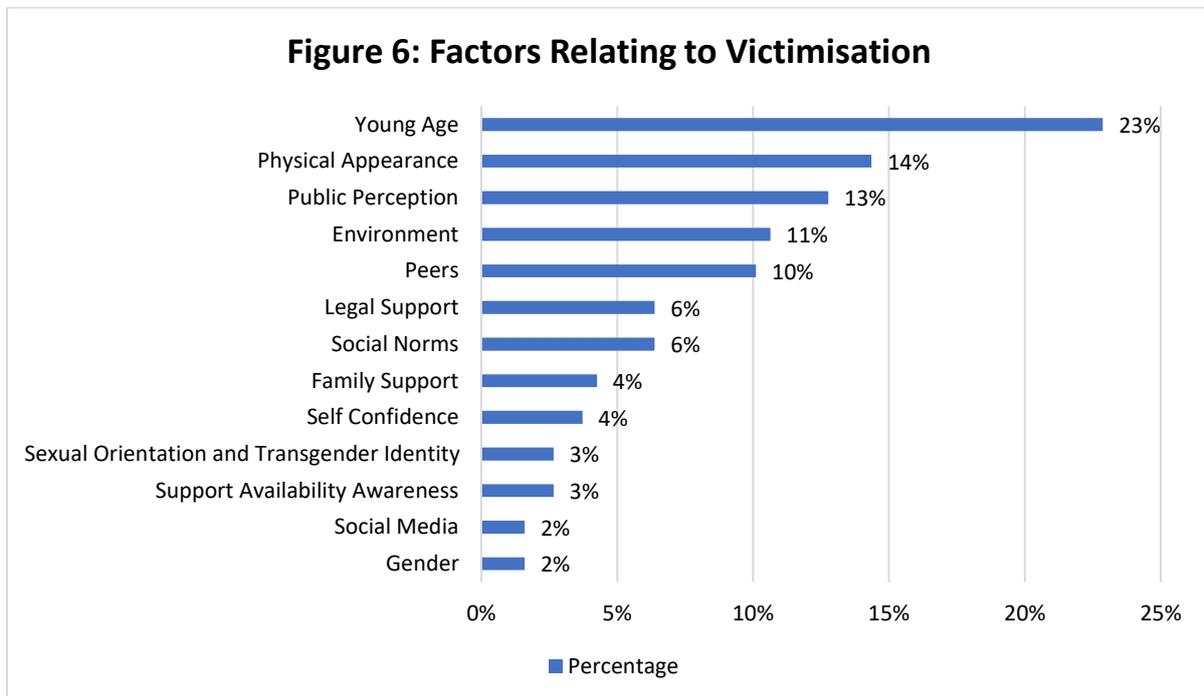
“I feel many who are not alternative, instantly judge and there is a massive ignorance and hate towards alternative subcultures, for no reason other than we look different and they can’t accept or don’t understand it”.

“It’s usually groups of teens, and older drunk men that are the scariest because they get aggressive”.

“I have been laughed at and heckled several times by large groups of people, usually teenagers, usually boys and usually when I am alone”.

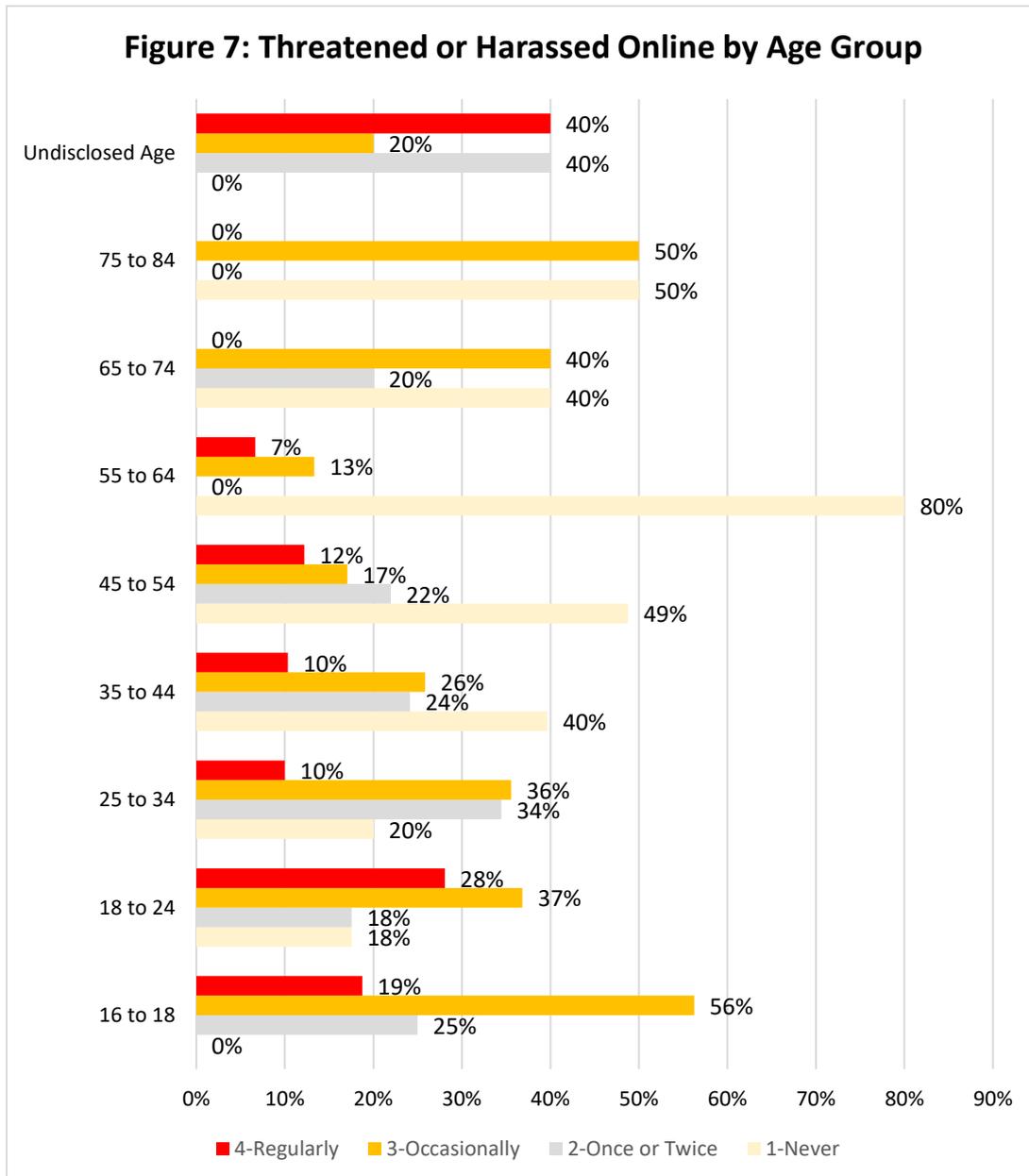
“It tends to happen at night when you come across people on drink or drugs, it emboldens them to single you out”.

There were other factors respondents suggested in relation to victimisation. Their free text responses were coded as follows:



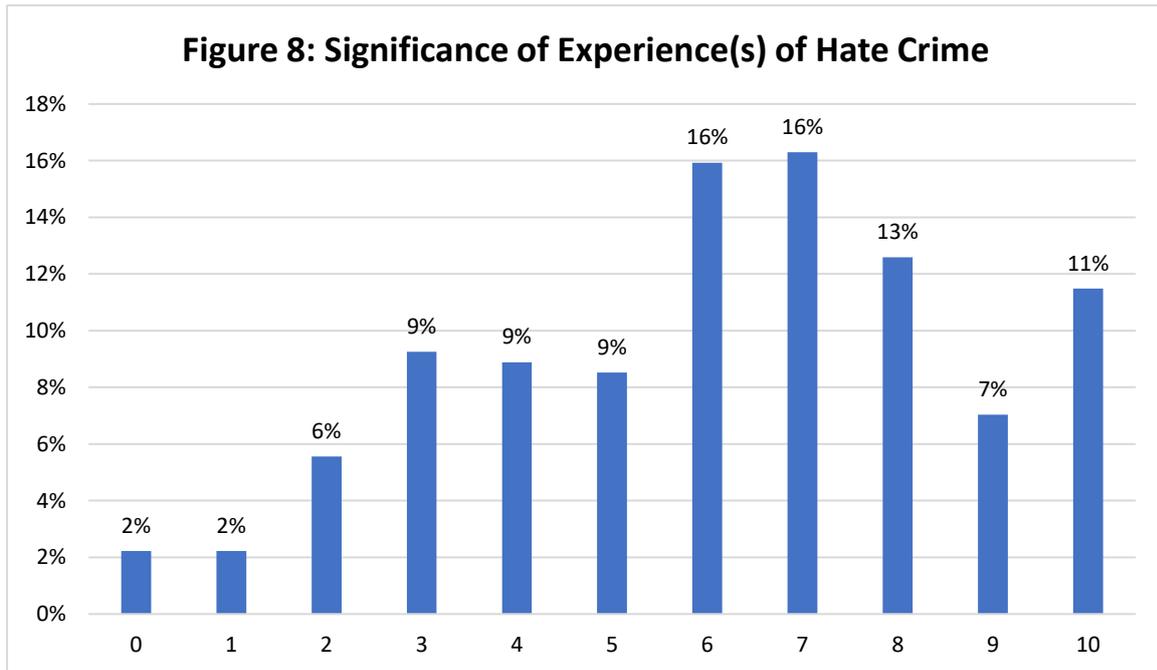
3.1 Threatened or Harassed Online

The following chart shows the percentage of participants from each age group who were victims of online threats or harassment. The age groups targeted most in this way were (perhaps unsurprisingly) the younger ones, with 75% of 16 to 18-year olds and 65% of 18 to 24-year olds experiencing this abuse occasionally or regularly compared to 29% of 45 to 54-year olds and 20% for 55 to 64-year olds.



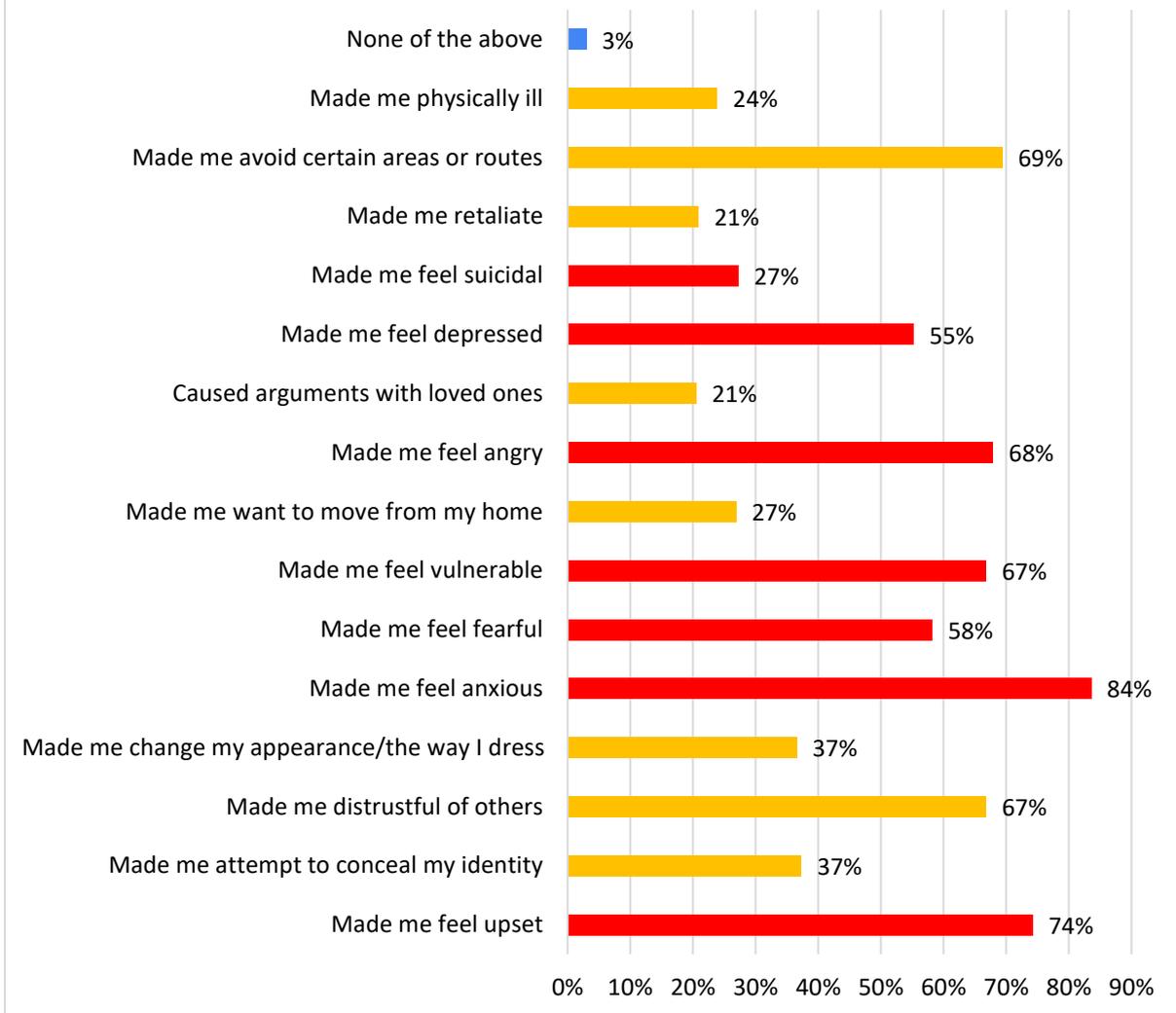
4.0 Impact of Hate Crime

Respondents were asked to rate how their experience(s) of hate crime had affected them on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being 'Not at all' and 10 being 'Extremely affected'. It's clear from respondents' answers that their experience(s) of hate crime have affected them significantly, with just over 6 out of 10 (63%) rating the impact at 6 or above – indeed, 11% chose the highest rating.



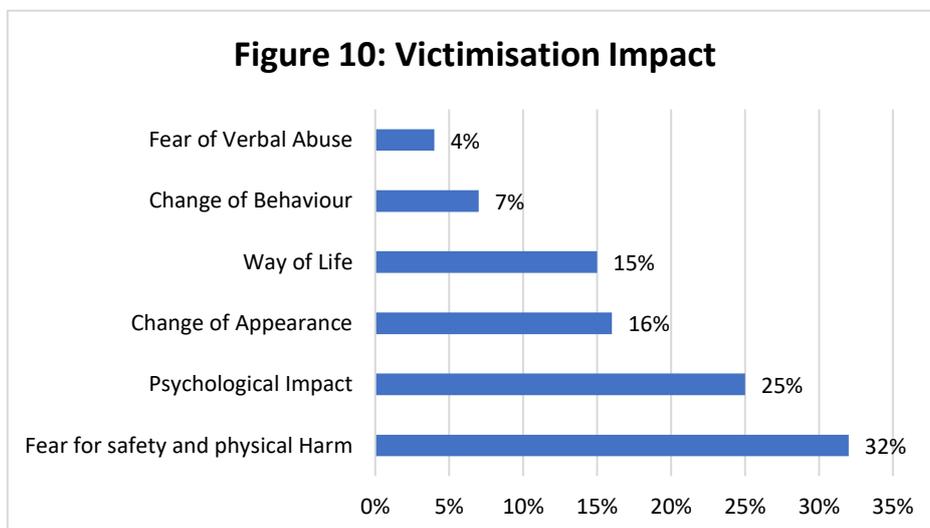
In the graph below, the hate crime effects have been separated into the ones that have resulted in change of behaviour (shown in orange), and the ones who have impacted the participant emotionally or have caused emotional reaction (shown in red). As the graph shows, the most common effects reported were 'Made me feel anxious' (84%), 'Made me feel upset' (74%), 'Made me angry' (68%) and 'Made me feel vulnerable' (67%).

Figure 9: Effect of Hate Crime Victimization



In the free text section, respondents also commented on the impact that their experience of being targeted had had on them. These were then coded into the following categories:

Figure 10: Victimization Impact



Respondents also reported some harrowing effects of being targeted:

“I was bullied, harassed, beaten at threatened over the years because I was emo and because of my music taste and appearance. Additionally sexually assaulted and beaten once because I was ‘emo’ and fetishized. Two other times i was just sexually assaulted, not beaten. It has made me hide myself and affected me greatly in how I present myself and allow myself to look, as well as creating lasting mental effects and trauma. I had harmed myself from 13-15 because of these events”.

“This sort of treatment has made my whole life change and my personality change. I am not as self-confident as I would ordinarily be”.

“I haven't changed how I look in the years that have passed [since my victimisation] but I am extremely cautious when it comes to going anywhere, especially anyway quiet alone, particularly at night”.

“I have been harassed constantly on the streets because of being goth and it made me stop taking public transport unless I absolutely had to as I didn't feel safe”.

“My experiences of alt hate crime have definitely made me withdraw my personality and expression. I no longer dress as alternative as I used to, for fear for confrontation and judgement”.

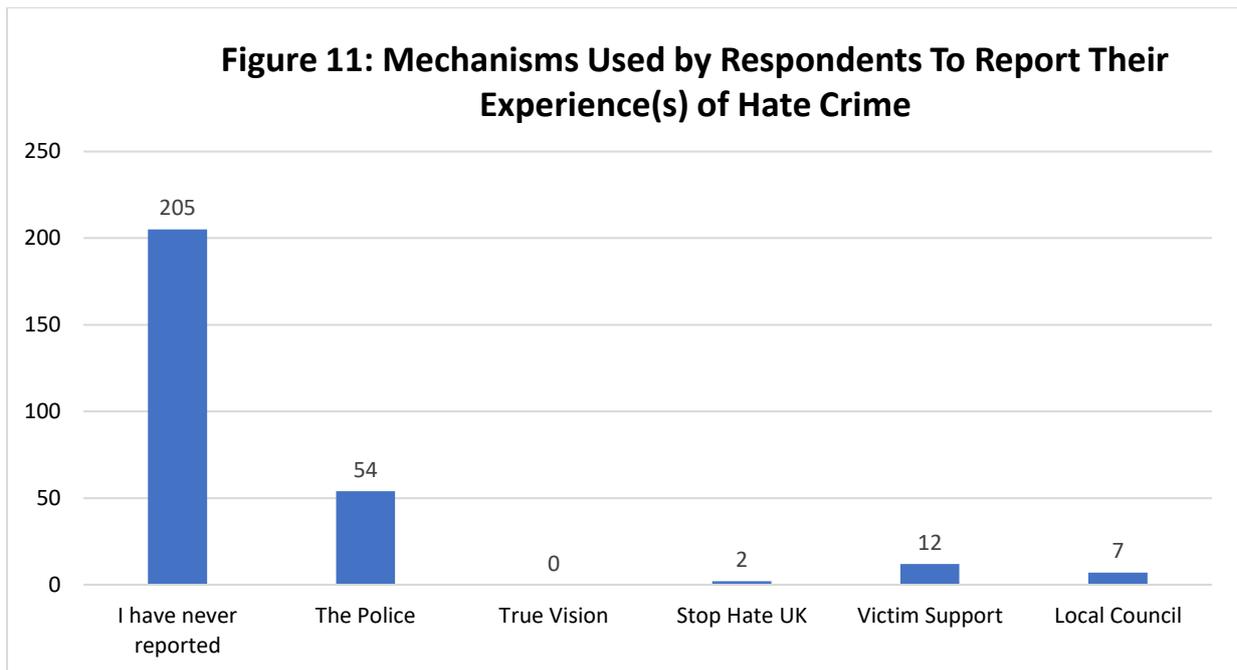
“I have suffered abuse for being a member of the alternative subculture on and off for 22 years. As a result, I have crippling anxiety and I avoid large crowds of people I suspect would direct abuse towards me”.

“It sounds silly writing it but now I'm just a jeans and a T-shirt guy, piercings are all hidden away now. I'd love to just be me for a day again. But I'm scared people laugh and point, look and stare. I just want to be left alone”.

“During my teenage years, I was scared of being myself. The comments I got at school and in my town made me feel like I couldn't be myself, and I wasn't myself for a number of years”.

5.0 Reporting Experiences of Hate Crime

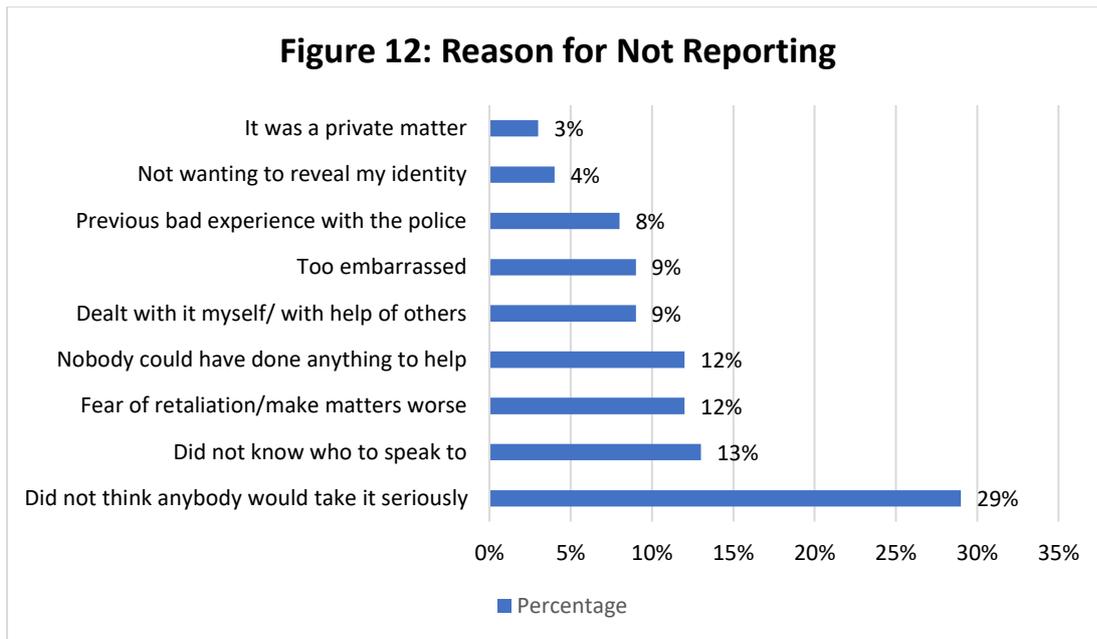
The vast majority of respondents, 73%, had never reported their experience(s) of hate crime to anyone. Of those that did, the reporting mechanism most used was the police (19%), followed by Victim Support (4%), local council (3%) and Stop Hate UK (1%), while none had used True Vision.



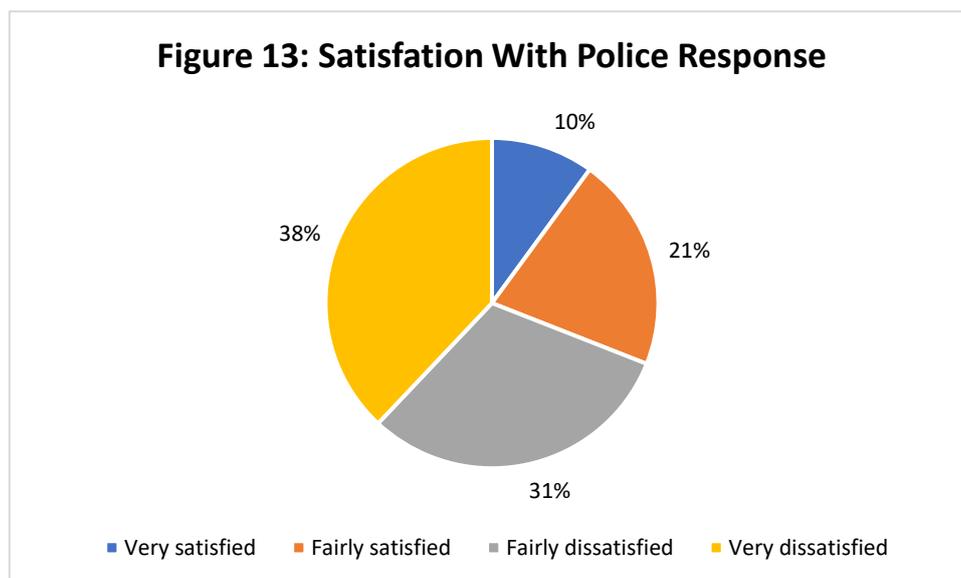
Respondents were also asked why they didn't report their hate crime. The most common response (29%) was that they didn't think anyone would take it seriously, followed by 'Did not know who to speak to' (13%) and 'Fear of retaliation/make things worse' (12%).

One respondent commented:

"I only reported my last experience to the police, with a friend (since we were both victims), and the police did nothing and closed the case immediately. She asked for a restraining order, since these attacks to her property and verbal insults came from her neighbour, but the police have not granted her that. So she's scared. I was living with her so I was too".



For those that had reported to the police, 31% were satisfied to a degree with their experience, while 69% were dissatisfied to a degree.



Respondents were asked if they'd like to give more information about the organisations they'd had dealings with, in their own words. This was then analysed thematically, a process which revealed that the commonest reasons for dissatisfaction with reporting hate crimes were:

- a lack of specific hate crime-related training for officers;
- insensitivity of police officers and/or staff members;
- dissatisfaction with how investigations were processed and concluded.

With regards to the last point, some participants mentioned that they had notified the police of available CCTV footage and/or the identity of the perpetrators, but no further action was taken.

6.0 Respondents' Experience of Support

The majority of participants found support within their community, peers, and to a lesser extent, family members. Family support mentioned by participants was less about parents who understood the subcultural leanings of their children and more about their experience of being parents who were in alternative subcultures themselves.

Another factor frequently mentioned was dissatisfaction with how school staff, charity operators and police officers missed opportunities to help victims; often due, it was felt by participants, to the perception of those institutions/organisations that the incidents were not serious enough to follow up. Indeed, there were a number of comments from participants about the lack of support they received when they were in school:

"Most of my experience was when I was younger from 'friends' and my own family. It was hardly even classed as bullying when I was in school and actually became worse when someone found out I was self-harming. I wasn't offered help from anyone except my best friend (now my husband), and I'm ashamed of all of the adults that had the opportunity to help me and chose to call me disgusting instead".

"I didn't have much support growing up, doubt there was much on offer, it has affected me negatively and even as an adult who is quite confident in their personality and in my ability to defend myself I still feel vulnerable as there's still a sense of us being 'fair game' for attacks".

"I've been bullied all the way through secondary for being alternative and not once did anyone do anything to stop it".

“There is a culture of victim blaming starting in schools. Expressing yourself is seen as provocative of the offender and this attitude, though unspoken, stretches to reporting to authorities”.

“The most memorable incident I experienced was at senior school. I was attacked by a group of ‘popular’ girls in the toilets, my friend reported it to the headmaster who called me into his office and told me to expect this kind of treatment due to the way I looked. I still feel angry about his narrowmindedness and reluctance to tackle the problem, even after 25 years I wish I had reported him”.

7.0 Should the Targeted Victimisation of Alternative Subcultures Be Viewed as a Hate Crime?

A number of participants felt that the targeted victimisation of subcultures should be treated as a hate crime and it was a source of frustration that the Law Commission did not conclude, in its 2021 review, that alternative subcultures should be classified as a hate crime victim group. Typical comments included:

*“It's ridiculous that this kind of attack is still not being treated as a hate crime. As someone who has been a goth for over thirty years and received hospital treatment following an incident (when a guy clearly targeted our group for being ‘different’) I remember being told that getting bottled by someone screaming “F***** freaks, look at the state of them, f***** deserve all they get’ etc, etc, wasn't classed as a hate crime”.*

“It absolutely is a hate crime. 35+ years ago my friends and I were spat at, verbally abused, threatened because of how we choose to express ourselves and all that's changed is we have gotten more skilled at knowing when to get out of somewhere, avoid certain types of places. I recently went to Rebellion with a group of friends and we all commented how good it was to feel we could really relax, we felt safe surrounded by people we knew wouldn't target us. We should feel safe all the time. It broke my heart, as a woman in her mid-30s,

when Sophie was murdered. Knowing our people were still being targeted and attacked and a beautiful girl murdered, all because we are different. That is hate crime”.

“It’s something which needs to be recognised by the authorities as a hate crime because that’s what it is! People are seriously affected by it daily and consequences are needed otherwise nobody will be able to get the dignity or justice they deserve. The authorities have said they won’t be recognising it since there isn’t enough sufficient evidence... there is so much evidence. Just nobody reports it since there are no official rules and regulations in place for crimes of this matter. It’s truly appalling”.

8.0 Conclusion

This report has highlighted the significance of the problem of hate crime directed towards alternative subcultures. It has shown that nearly 9 out of ten respondents (87%) felt that they had been targeted due to their subcultural status or because they looked different. It also revealed that four out of five (80%) of survey respondents had experienced at least one form of hate crime on a regular or occasional basis, with 87% being threatened or harassed in person, 71% threatened or harassed online and over half (56%) being physically attacked. The impact of being victimised was very significant too, with over four out of five respondents (84%) reporting feeling anxious, nearly seven out of ten (69%) avoiding certain areas or routes after being targeted and over a quarter (27%) feeling suicidal.

These statistics paint a picture of a significant social problem. Yet, worryingly, almost three quarters (73%) of respondents had never reported their hate crime to any organisation, meaning that not only did they not receive the help and support on offer but also that their victimisation went unrecorded. If victimisation goes unrecorded then the true extent of this phenomenon remains unknown, leading to a lack of recognition of the problem by many criminal justice agencies. Without this recognition, the voices and experiences of these hate crime victims will continue to go unheard. This report has aimed to fill that void and to demonstrate the importance of this issue. It is hoped that it can play a part in improving the experiences of victims of alternative subcultural hate crime.

Appendix 1: About the Authors

Moslem Boushehrian

Moslem is a Postgraduate Researcher in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey. His research interests are hate crime, ethnicity, social perception, wellbeing, and policing. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Stop Hate UK, Hampshire Hate Crime Silver Group, Surrey Race Advisory Group, and CPS Southeast Hate Crime scrutiny panel.

Jon Garland

Jon Garland is Professor of Criminology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey. He has conducted extensive research into hate crime, prisons, far-right groups, racism in rural and isolated areas, policing, and racism, anti-racism and disorder in football, and has published six books and numerous journal articles in those areas. He is Chair of the Board of Trustees of Stop Hate UK, on the Board of the International Network for Hate Studies and on the Steering Committee of the British Society of Criminology Hate Crime Network. He undertakes equality and diversity work with prisons across the male and female estates.

Appendix 2: Survey Questionnaire



ALTERNATIVE SUB-CULTURE HATE CRIME HELP US TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPERIENCE

It will shape our work and direct our priorities

ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Law Commission published a report in December 2021, having been asked by the Government to review hate crime laws and examine whether any further characteristics should be added to the five currently monitored (race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity).

The report stated that there was insufficient evidence that criminal targeting of alternative sub-cultures was prevalent. This meant that there was not “a strong demonstrable need to extend protection to this group.”

We would like to share your experiences in regard to any abuse, harassment or violence you have experienced – particularly if you belong to an alternative sub-culture and you know that was why you were targeted or feel that was the case.

We would also like to understand if you reported any incidents and if you did, who you reported it to, and your experience of reporting.

WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE?

We would like you to complete this questionnaire if you are aged 16 or over.

WHAT WILL THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY BE USED FOR?

The findings from this research will help the Sophie Lancaster Foundation (SLF) gain a greater insight into your experience. We will use the results to help decide our policy for alternative sub-culture hate crime and our strategies to address it.

All the information included within the survey will be treated in the strictest confidence and stored securely by the research team.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact: The Sophie Lancaster Foundation

Tel: 01706 216969 **Email:** enquiries@sophielancasterfoundation.com

Q1(a) Do you consider yourself to belong to an alternative sub-culture?

* Yes

No

Don't know

Q1(b) Do other people consider you to belong to an alternative sub-culture, or to have an alternative appearance? *

Yes

No

Don't know

Q2 How old are you? *

16 to 18

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 to 84

85 or over

Prefer not to say

Q3 Where do you live?

If you are UK based, what is your postcode?

For non-UK please state country of residence

Q4 In very rare situations, the SLF might want to contact you to discuss your experiences in more detail? Would you be willing to be contacted? *

Yes

No

If you are willing to be contacted, please fill in your details below

First Name

Last Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City

County

Post Code

Country

Email

Contact Number

For the purposes of this survey hate incidents and crimes are defined as:

Any non-crime incident or any criminal offence which is perceived to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person's identity or group status.

This includes a wide range of acts such as being threatened or harassed, being called an abusive name, being bullied, or being physically attacked, to name some examples.

Q5 How often, if at all, have you been a victim of the following hate crimes?**Please tick one box only for each row**

Verbally Abused

- Regularly
 Occasionally
 Once or Twice
 Never

- Regularly
 Occasionally
 Once or Twice
 Never

Threatened or harassed in online

- Regularly
 Occasionally
 Once or Twice
 Never

Deliberate damage to property

- Regularly
 Occasionally
 Once or Twice
 Never

Physically attacked

- Regularly
 Occasionally

Once or Twice

Never

If you ticked Never to all responses in Q5, GO TO Q12

Q6 If you have been a victim of hate crime, why do you think you were targeted?

My sub-cultural status

Because they thought I looked alternative, or was a member of an alternative sub-culture

Other/additional reason(s) - please specify

Q7 How significantly has your experience(s) of hate crime affected you overall? ⓘ

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Q8 In what ways has your experience(s) of hate crime affected you?

Made me feel upset

Made me attempt to conceal my identity

Made me distrustful of others

Made me change my appearance/the way I dress

Made me feel anxious

Made me feel fearful

Made me feel vulnerable

Made me want to move from my home

Made me feel angry

Caused arguments with loved ones

Made me feel depressed

Made me feel suicidal

Made me retaliate

Made me avoid certain areas or routes

Made me physically ill

None of the above

Other - Please Specify

Q9 Who, if anyone, have you reported your experience(s) of hate crime to?

I have never reported

The Police

True Vision, online hate crime reporting

Stop Hate UK

Victim Support

Local Council

Other - Please Specify

If you have never reported your experience of hate crime go to question 10

If you have reported your experience of hate crime go to question 11

Q10 If you have not reported your experience(s) of hate crime, why was that?

It was a private matter

Did not think anybody would take it seriously

Dealt with it myself/with help of others

Fear of retaliation/make matters worse

Did not know who to speak to

Not want to reveal my identity

Too embarrassed

Previous bad experience with the police

Nobody could not have done anything to help

Other - Please Specify

Q11(a) If you have reported Hate Crime to the organisation(s) mentioned in question 9, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your experience?

Please tick each box that applies (you may have more than one tick per row if you have reported more than once)

The Police

Very Satisfied

Fairly Satisfied

- Fairly Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

True Vision

- Very Satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Fairly Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Stop Hate

- Very Satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Fairly Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Victim Support

- Very Satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Fairly Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Local Council

- Very Satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Fairly Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Other - Please Specify

Q11(b) Would you like to give further information about the reasons for your rating, stating the organisation(s) you are referring to?

Q12 Would you like to make any other comments about your personal experience or feelings about alternative sub-culture hate crime?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

The Sophie Lancaster Foundation, 87 Deardengate, Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 5SN Registered Charity Number 1129689