



# Hate crimes reported to the police in 2020

A compilation of the cases that were classified as hate crimes by the police

**The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) - centre for knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures**

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**English summary of Brå report 2021:17**

# Summary

This report presents Brå's statistics on offences reported to the police in 2020 where hate was the underlying motive. The statistics are based on reported crimes that the police classified as hate crimes and where Brå identified hate as the underlying motive. The report is a descriptive compilation and comprises an investigation of the police's hate crime classification, and an account of the hate crime motives Brå identified, as well as crime categories, type of crime scene, and the victim's gender and relationship to the perpetrator. In addition to this, statistics were also reported on the regional distribution of the reported offences, i.e., divided across the police regions where they were registered, and statistics on the distribution of hate crimes per municipality, based on where the offences took place.

## Changes in Brå's statistics on hate crimes reported to the police

As of 2020, Brå's statistics of offences reported to the police where hate was identified as the motive, constitute a comprehensive investigation of all police reports that the police classified as hate crimes. The statistics are based on a different data selection than Brå's previous hate crime statistics, which means that the statistics in this report are not comparable with Brå's previous hate crime statistics.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the consistently lower levels of crime with hate as the underlying motive included in this report do not mean that there has been an actual reduction in the number of reported hate crimes, but that this is a consequence of a change in the selection of reports reviewed by Brå.

The changes to the selection and the method were carried out to increase the relevance of the statistics. The new statistics can be used as a more relevant basis for following up administrative decisions on reported crimes with hate as the underlying motive. The changes also make it possible to use hate crime statistics as a tool for following up operations, such as evaluating the police's initial handling of reported offences classified as hate crimes. The statistics thus become more relevant to the police's operational activities.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Brå 2019b.

## The police's hate crimes classification

In the Police's case management system, DurTvå, the police officer taking the report must classify whether what has been reported could be a potential hate crime. Of the police reports made in 2020, 6,301 were classified as hate crimes. In Brå's review of these police reports, 3,398 of the reports were identified as crimes where hate was the underlying motive, or the equivalent of 54 percent. Several reports revealed that more than one hate-crime motive was referenced, which resulted in a total of 3,709 identified hate crimes. In 41 percent of the reports, Brå could not identify hate as the motive, and in 5 percent of them, Brå found that hate was potentially a motive, but the information in the police report was too limited to establish this.

## All hate crimes

At an overall level, xenophobic and racist hate crimes (55 percent) were the most common among the reported hate crimes in 2020, followed by hate crimes against religious groups (17 percent) and LGBTQI-related hate crimes (13 percent). In addition, 15 percent of the reported hate crimes were judged to be unspecified hate crimes. In these reports, it would appear that a hate crime had been committed, but it was not possible to deduce the specific motive behind the reported offence.

In most types of hate crimes, the most common crime category was harassment, which accounted for a total of 25 percent of all reported hate crimes in 2020. After harassment, agitation against an ethnic or national group (23 percent) was most common among all reported offences, followed by unlawful threats (15 percent).

The most common crime scene in the police reports was a public place (20 percent), followed by the victim's home, or in close proximity to it (19 percent), and at the victim's place of work (11 percent). Hate crimes in digital environments were also common; chat, text message and phone (9 percent), social media (6 percent) and other online forums (2 percent) accounted for a total of 17 percent of the reported hate crimes. Another 10 percent of the offences took place in a school environment (physical or digital).

The victim was male in 38 percent of the reports and female in 27 percent. In 28 percent of the reports, no crime was committed against a natural person.

These reports largely related to crimes such as graffiti, malicious damage, and agitation against an ethnic or national group.

In 32 percent of the reports, the perpetrator was a person who was not known to the victim. It was also common for the relationship to be judged as being irrelevant (26 percent), which means that there was no relevant relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. This was usually due to the fact that the hate crime was not directed at a specific person, group, or activity. In 10 percent of the police reports, the perpetrator was a neighbour of the victim and in 8 percent a person who the victim knew by name or appearance. Relatively few of the reported hate crimes were committed by a school friend (3 percent), colleague (1 percent), friend/acquaintance (2 percent), relative (2 percent) or former partner (1 percent) of the victim.

### Xenophobic and racist hate crimes

Among the hate crime motives identified in 2020, 15 percent were Afrophobic, 1 percent antiziganist, 1 percent hate crimes against the Sami and 37 percent other xenophobic and racist crimes. The latter category included both general and unspecified xenophobic and racist hate crime motives, as well as hate crimes aimed at specific ethnicities and nationalities that were too few in number to be reported separately. The statistics shed light on a complex and varied crime structure. The xenophobic and racist hate crimes that occurred were in the form of harassment, threats, and violent crime; in public as well as private and digital environments; directed against men and women as well as against non-natural persons; as well as by perpetrators who were unknown and related, colleagues and neighbours. Assault was more common in police reports of hate crimes that had an identified Afrophobic motive than in the other xenophobic and racist hate crimes. Defamation also occurred more frequently in Afrophobic hate crimes than with any other form of underlying motive. Characteristic of the identified antiziganist hate crimes, compared to other hate crimes, was unlawful discrimination and victimization by service personnel. Violence, threats, and harassment in public places and in the home of the victim were also characteristic of antiziganist hate crimes.

### Hate crimes against religious groups

Hate crimes against religious groups were the second most common category of hate crimes in 2020. These included antisemitic hate crimes (5 percent of

all hate crimes), Islamophobic (9 percent), Christophobic (2 percent) and other hate crimes against religious groups (2 percent). Hate crimes against religious groups differed significantly from one another. The antisemitic hate crimes consisted largely of agitation against an ethnic or national group on social media and in public, and most of these cases concerned general antisemitic messages that were not directed at a specific person. The Islamophobic hate crimes consisted mainly of the crime categories harassment, agitation against an ethnic or national group and unlawful threats, and Islamophobic hate crime was one of the few crimes where women were victimized more frequently than men. The Christophobic hate crimes were characterized by a significant share of unlawful threats and that the victim was often male. Nazi graffiti on churches was also common.

### LGBTQI-related hate crimes

The LGBTQI-related hate crimes included homophobic hate crimes (8 percent of all hate crimes), transphobic (2 percent) and other LGBTQI-related hate crimes (3 percent). What distinguished the identified homophobic hate crimes in 2020 was partly the large proportion of men who were subjected to it, and partly the relatively large spread of crime category, crime scene and relationship between perpetrator and victim. The identified transphobic hate crimes in 2020 were characterized by a substantial proportion of crimes in digital environments and in particular via direct communication such as chat, text message and phone. These crimes affected women slightly more often than men and the crime categories varied. The other LGBTQI-related hate crimes largely consisted of general anti-LGBTQI-related offences, such as threats or malicious damage to Pride events and associations involved in LGBTQI issues, as well as malicious damage and theft of pride flags. In a few reports, it was also possible to identify a biphobic motive.

### Regional distribution

Of the police reports classified as hate crime in 2020, most were registered in the Stockholm police region (27 percent), followed by Region South (21 percent) and Region West (18 percent). Even when differences in population are taken into account, the Stockholm region had the most hate-crime classified police reports (38 per 100,000 inhabitants, average population), followed again by Region South (35 reports per 100,000 inhabitants). This was followed by Region North (33 police reports per 100,000 inhabitants).

The most common hate crimes in all the police regions were xenophobic and racist hate crimes. The largest proportion of reported offences where Brå identified hate as the underlying motive took place in or near major cities and urban centres.



# References

Brottsförebyggande rådet, Brå (2019b). *Hatbrott 2018. Statistik över polisanmälda brott med identifierade hatbrottsmotiv*. Rapport 2019:13. Stockholm: Brottsförebyggande rådet.



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