



Government  
of Canada

Office of the Federal  
Ombudsperson for Victims  
of Crime

Gouvernement  
du Canada

Bureau de l'ombudsman  
fédéral des victimes  
d'actes criminels



# Strengthening Access to Justice for Victims of Hate Crime in Canada

A Study by the Office of the Federal  
Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime

**October 2024**

Canada



The Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime is located on the traditional, unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial. Truth and reconciliation are needed to address state-perpetrated hate crimes against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

**We call on the Government of Canada to fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice.**

### **Traumatic content**

This document includes sensitive content that may be difficult to read. Materials about criminal victimization can cause distress. If you would like to access support, consider contacting the following resources:

**Hope for Wellness Helpline** (available 24/7 to Indigenous people in Canada)  
[www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca); 1-855-242-3310

**Victim Services Directory** (to find services near you)  
<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/victims-victimes/vsd-rsv/index.html>

**Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime** (for advocacy)  
[www.crcvc.ca](http://www.crcvc.ca); 1-877-232-2610

**pflag Canada** (for the 2SLGBTQ+ community, family, friends and allies)  
<https://pflagcanada.ca/contact/>

**B'nai Brith Canada** (operates an anti-hate hotline combating antisemitism and racism)  
<https://www.bnaibrith.ca/anti-hate-hotline>; 1-844-218-2624

**Naseeha Mental Health** (support for Muslim and non-muslims – 24/7 Helpline )  
<https://www.naseeha.org/services>; 1-866-627-3342

**Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Advocacy Group Hotline**  
<https://1-2-3.site>; 1-877-912-3123

If you have experienced criminal victimization and you believe your rights under the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* have not been respected, you can contact us:

**Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime**  
[www.victimfirst.gc.ca](http://www.victimfirst.gc.ca)  
1-866-481-8429

## Table of contents

Acknowledgements .....	3
Tribute .....	3
Survey Reveals Gaps in Hate Crime Response .....	4
By the numbers: .....	4
Context .....	5
Current Criminal Justice Responses to Hate .....	6
Effects of hate on victims .....	7
Victim Compensation .....	7
Why Identity Matters .....	8
Experiences of Indigenous, Black, and Asian Communities .....	8
2SLGBTQIA+ and Gender-Based Hate .....	9
Gender-based violence as a form of hate .....	10
Ageism and Disability-Based Hate .....	11
Class Discrimination and Hate Against People Who Are Unhoused .....	11
Ripple Effects of Hate .....	12
Learning from the Afzaal Family and London Community .....	12
Key Themes from the Sentencing Hearing .....	12
What We Heard from Police and Victim Services (n = 187) .....	17
Challenges .....	18
Community distrust leads to underreporting .....	18
Police have limited experience identifying hate crime .....	18
Police and victim services have limited resources .....	18
Prosecution is rarely successful .....	19
Opportunities .....	20
Training .....	20
Collaboration .....	20
Specialized hate-crime units .....	22
Legislative reform .....	22
Promising Practices .....	25
Momentum for Change .....	26
Recommendations .....	26
Appendix A – Hate Crime Resources .....	29

Federal Initiatives .....29

Understanding Hate Crime – Quick Facts .....29

Research & Reports: Learning more about Hate Crime .....30

Supporting Victims of Hate Crime .....30

Learning Opportunities .....31

Reporting Tools .....31

Appendix B - Three Federal Offices are Joining Forces to Combat Hate  
and Better Support Victims and Survivors .....32

References .....34

## Acknowledgements

We thank the following people who made this report possible:

Project leads from the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime:

- Mariam Musse, Acting Policy and Research Team Lead
- Aisling McCoy, Junior Policy and Research Analyst

Your passion for inclusion and equity makes us all better.

We thank the following people and organizations for generously sharing your expertise through our consultations:

- Dr. Barbara Perry, Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Ontario Tech University
- Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia
- Deborah Lyons, Canada's Special Envoy of Holocaust Remembrance and on Combatting Antisemitism
- Canadian Race Relations Foundation
- Ontario 211 Services
- Department of Justice, Research and Statistics Division
- Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat
- Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Vulnerable Persons Unit
- Hamilton Police Service, Hate Crime & Extremism Unit

We are especially grateful for the time and expertise shared by the law enforcement professionals and victim service workers across Canada who responded to our survey.

## Tribute

This report is dedicated to the victims and communities affected by hate in all its forms. It serves as a reminder of the deep, enduring harm caused by racism, prejudice, and intolerance.

Improvements to legislation, policy, policing, and support services can help, but that is not enough. We need societal transformation.

Hate persists when apathy prevails. We need to challenge ourselves and our communities to actively stand against hate, support victims, and work to dismantle the structures that enable it.

**This is a call to action. We all play a role in building a society that celebrates diversity and leaves no space for hate.**

## Survey Reveals Gaps in Hate Crime Response

The Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) completed a special study on hate crimes. Survey responses<sup>1</sup> from police and victim services highlight structural gaps in the resources and knowledge available to support victims of hate crimes.

**Why it matters: The majority of police and victim services see potential in the proposed *Online Harms Act* (Bill C-63<sup>2</sup>) to improve hate crime responses, yet resources, reporting tools and service responses need to be improved for effective implementation.**

### By the numbers:

Responses from police (n = 110) and victim services (n = 77)



**72% of police officers** said their police service **did not have a dedicated hate crime unit**. Of those that did, **44% had only one officer**, and most units were **established after 2020**.

**44% of victim services** had **fewer than 5 paid staff**, heavily **relying on volunteers to manage services**.



**73% of victim services** cited **limited resources** as a **significant barrier to providing adequate support** for hate crime victims.

Police officers estimated that only **35% of hate crime victims** that report to police will access **support services**.



**77% of police officers** and **82% of victim service workers** believed the proposed **standalone hate crime offence in Bill C-63** would be **helpful or very helpful**.

<sup>1</sup> Targeted Hate Crime Surveys conducted from May to July 2024 were completed by 110 police respondents and 77 victim services respondents across Canada. Data based on responses.

<sup>2</sup> Bill C-63, *An Act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, The Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet Child Pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session.

**47% of police officers believed the proposed peace bond for hate propaganda or hate-motivated crimes in Bill C-63 would be helpful, while 33% said it would be unhelpful.**



**73% of police officers did not believe the Attorney General's consent should be required for hate-motivated offences.**

**The bottom line:** Strategic investment in specialized hate crime units, support services, training and public awareness would improve responses to hate crime and better respect the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR).

## Context

More people in Canada are reporting hate crimes to police and raising concerns about how they have been targeted online. In 2023, there was a 32% increase in the number of hate crimes reported to police over the previous year.<sup>3</sup> This report explores the impact of hate crime in Canada, the needs of victims and emerging options to address hate crime through legislation, policy, and innovative support programs. The findings are informed by consultations with stakeholders and survey responses from 187 police and victim service providers across Canada.

**Why this, why now?** Recent global events have escalated hate-motivated incidents in person and online. Hate crimes target people based on parts of their identity and communicate a wider message of hate to others with similar identities. Most groups who are targeted already experience discrimination and are less likely to report their experience to police or access support services.

In 2023, Justice Canada published research analyzing national data on hate crimes, identifying the needs of victims, and exploring available responses in the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup> This study adds

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. (2024). *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2023*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240725/dq240725b-eng.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Ndegwa, A., & McDonald, S. (2023). *Hate Crimes in Canada*. Victims of Crime Research Digest 2023: Issue 16 (pp. 4-19). Department of Justice Canada. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd16-rr16/pdf/rsd\\_vcrd2023-eng.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd16-rr16/pdf/rsd_vcrd2023-eng.pdf)



recent data on police and victim service provider perceptions of responses to hate crimes and new measures proposed in the *Online Harms Act* (Bill C-63).<sup>5</sup>

### Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

The OFOVC has a mandate to improve access to federal programs and services for victims of crime, ensure policymakers are aware of systemic issues that negatively affect victims, and help ensure the quasi-constitutional provisions in the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* are upheld.

In July 2024, the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime announced MOUs with the following organizations to collaborate on strengthening federal responses to hate crime:<sup>6</sup>

- Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism
- Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia

Each organization will help us better understand the needs of people targeted by hate, share best practices, and strengthen our capacity to make appropriate referrals for Jewish and Muslim community members. This will strengthen the OFOVC's capacity to fulfill our obligation to ensure policymakers understand systemic issues that negatively affect victims of crime.

### Current Criminal Justice Responses to Hate

The *Criminal Code* contains the following provisions that target hate:

- [318\(1\) Advocating Genocide](#)
- [319\(1\) Public Incitement of Hatred](#)
- [319\(2\) Wilful Promotion of Hatred](#)
- [320.102 to 320.105 Conversion Therapy](#)
- [430 \(4.1\) Mischief Relating to Religious Property, Educational Institutions, etc.](#)

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<sup>5</sup> Government Bill (House of Commons) C-63 (44-1) - First Reading - An Act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts. <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-63/first-reading>

<sup>6</sup> Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (2024, July 25). *Three Federal Offices are Joining Forces to Combat Hate and Better Support Victims and Survivors*. Cision. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/three-federal-offices-are-joining-forces-to-combat-hate-and-better-support-victims-and-survivors-854240420.html>

Currently, there is **no standalone hate crime offence or definition of hate** in the *Criminal Code*, which causes problems with identifying, reporting, and tracking conviction rates of hate-motivated crimes.

- To address this, police services across Canada and Statistics Canada have attempted to define<sup>7</sup> and standardize the reporting of hate crimes.
- Another remedy commonly used is [Section 718.2\(a\)\(i\)](#) of the *Criminal Code* which allows a Court to consider if the crime was motivated by hate as an aggravating factor at sentencing.

## Effects of hate on victims

### Hate crimes cause significant harm.<sup>8</sup>

- Hate crimes cause deep psychological harm and social disruption.
- Victims experience psychological trauma, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Victims may alter their behaviours, leading to isolation and a sense of vulnerability.
- Hate crimes are ‘message crimes’ that intend to make the targeted group afraid. This can lead to altered behaviours and loss of connection across targeted communities.
- Hate crimes foster a culture of fear within the broader society, normalize discrimination, and damage community cohesion and perceptions of public safety.

**Hate crimes harm entire communities.** Hate crimes send a message that members of a particular group are hated, devalued or unwelcome and therefore vulnerable to future victimization.<sup>9</sup> This perceived and enduring threat of potential victimization can cause serious trauma to the targeted victim and their broader community.<sup>10</sup>

### Victim Compensation

While most provinces and territories have compensation programs that offer support for victims and survivors of crime, there are limited victim services in Canada that specialize in hate crimes.

- A quick review of victim compensation programs across Canada showed that most compensation schemes address the needs of victims of crime in general by providing access to counselling, home security devices, funeral costs, or crime scene clean up.

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<sup>7</sup> The uniform crime reporting survey (URC) use to collect and report crime data. The UCR 2023 [defines](#) a hate crime as a “criminal violation motivated by hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor, such as profession or political beliefs.”

<sup>8</sup> Ndegwa, A., & McDonald, S. (2023). *Hate Crimes in Canada*. Victims of Crime Research Digest, Issue 16 (pp. 4-19). Department of Justice Canada. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd16-rr16/pdf/rsd\\_vcrd2023-eng.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd16-rr16/pdf/rsd_vcrd2023-eng.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Fashola, S. (2011). *Understanding the Community Impact of Hate Crimes: A case study*. Victims of Crime Research Digest, Issue No. 4. Department of Justice Canada. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rd4-rr4/p4.html#sec4>

<sup>10</sup> Wemmers, J-A. M. (2017). *Victimology: A Canadian perspective*. University of Toronto Press.

- Eligibility requirements for victim compensation programs often refer to “violent” or “serious” crimes, overlooking the fact that hate crimes can also encompass non-violent acts with profound psychological effects.

## Why Identity Matters

The needs of survivors are related to which of their identities were targeted by hate. This section highlights personal stories and community experiences to deepen the understanding of how hate crimes uniquely impact various groups.

### Experiences of Indigenous, Black, and Asian Communities

Indigenous, Black, and Asian communities in Canada have experienced historical and ongoing systemic discrimination and violence.

- **Hate crimes are experienced as ongoing acts of oppression that have continued for generations.** For Indigenous peoples, colonial violence, including residential schools and policies like the *Indian Act*, cause ongoing trauma and marginalization. Systemic racism within institutions like the criminal justice and child welfare systems perpetuate cycles of discrimination.<sup>11</sup> Critically, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People highlights the need for continued systemic action and accountability to address these issues.
- **These acts make it difficult to feel included.** The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing biases, notably anti-Asian hate, which surged due to stereotypes linking Asians with the virus. Vulnerable groups, including older adults and youth, were mainly targeted.<sup>12</sup> For many Asian people in Canada, the emotional burden of the pandemic intersected with experiences of hate and discrimination.
- **Racism and bias within institutions make it difficult to report hate crimes.** Similar systemic failures are evident in the handling of anti-Black hate crimes, where racism and misogyny within law enforcement can affect case outcomes and discourage reporting.<sup>13</sup> Underreporting remains a significant issue across all three communities due to factors including:

<sup>11</sup> Department of Justice. (2024). *Understanding the Overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Criminal Justice System*. State of the Criminal Justice System Dashboard. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/socjs-esjp/en/ind-aut/uo-cs>

<sup>12</sup> Zhang, K., Wang, A., & Yan, J. (2024). *One Hotline, Many Cold Lines – An Analysis of Victim Cases Reported to the Hotline 1-2-3*. Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Advocacy Group Association of Canada. <https://voicesandbridges.org/one-hotline-many-cold-lines/>

<sup>13</sup> Dawson, M. (2022). *Considering Gender-Based Violence as a Form of Hate: A Socio-Legal Examination*. British Columbia’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. [https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson\\_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf](https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf)

- fear and distrust in law enforcement
- language barriers for services
- fear of retaliation
- normalization of hate incidents and online hate
- even when incidents are reported, responses from authorities are often inadequate, with some officers displaying overt or implicit biases.<sup>14</sup>

## 2SLGBTQIA+ and Gender-Based Hate

Throughout the years, discriminatory laws<sup>15</sup> have marginalized 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and recent data suggest they are more likely to suffer physical harm from hate crimes than other targeted groups.

### By the Numbers:

- In 2023, hate crimes targeting sexual orientation (860 reports, a 69% increase from the previous year) and sex and gender (123 reports) have both been on the rise over the years.<sup>16</sup>
- Transfemicide—particularly among racialized, Two-Spirited, or Indigenous people and sex workers—remains a critical issue. For many in this community, a lack of family support exacerbates their vulnerability after a hate incident.<sup>17</sup>

### Gender-based hate is pervasive both offline and online.

- Over 1 in 4 girls and gender-diverse youth in Canada have experienced online hate, and 1 in 2 has witnessed it.<sup>18</sup> Online spaces frequently amplify sexist and misogynistic rhetoric, compelling victims to censor themselves or leave platforms altogether.
- Dr. Myrna Dawson, Director of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice & Accountability, continues to advocate for gender-based violence to be recognized as a form

<sup>14</sup> Mosaic Institute. (2023). *Understanding Hate in Ontario*.

[https://www.mosaicinstitute.ca/files/ugd/8de27d\\_bb7b7799460d47bcb763ad604cde1065.pdf](https://www.mosaicinstitute.ca/files/ugd/8de27d_bb7b7799460d47bcb763ad604cde1065.pdf); Zhang, K., Wang, A., & Yan, J. (2024). *One Hotline, Many Cold Lines – An Analysis of Victim Cases Reported to the Hotline 1-2-3*. Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Advocacy Group Association of Canada. <https://voicesandbridges.org/one-hotline-many-cold-lines/>

<sup>15</sup> In 2017, the Prime Minister issued an apology to LGBTQ2 Canadians for the oppression they endured. Trudeau, J. (2017, November 28). Remarks by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to apologize to LGBTQ2 Canadians. [Ottawa, Ontario].

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians#:~:text=It%20is%20because%20of%20your,of%20Canada%3A%20We%20were%20wrong>

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. (2024). *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2023*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240725/dq240725b-eng.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Garrison, R., & Thompson, D. (2023). *White Paper on The Status of Trans and Gender Diverse People*.

[https://randallgarrison.ndp.ca/sites/default/files/white\\_paper\\_on\\_the\\_status\\_of\\_trans\\_and\\_gender\\_diverse\\_people-english\\_0.pdf](https://randallgarrison.ndp.ca/sites/default/files/white_paper_on_the_status_of_trans_and_gender_diverse_people-english_0.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Canada. (2022). *#BLOCKHATE Centering Survivors and Taking Action on Gendered Online Hate in Canada – National Report*. <https://ywcaCanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Block-Hate-Report-October-2022-corrected-1.pdf>

of hate crime, pointing to clear examples of high-profile cases such as the Toronto van attack and the École Polytechnique murders.<sup>19</sup>

## Gender-based violence as a form of hate

Gender-based violence (GBV) offences have the potential to be treated as hate crimes under the *Criminal Code* in cases where women, girls, and sexual minorities have been targeted. Despite evidence of misogyny in several high-profile Canadian femicides, perpetrators were not charged with hate crimes, and hate was not an aggravating factor in sentencing.<sup>20</sup>

- **Femicide, the intentional act of murder against a woman or girl because of their gender, is a global issue on the rise.**<sup>21</sup> The perpetrator is commonly an intimate partner or family member but can also be an acquaintance or stranger. According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, there were 187 victims of femicide in Canada in 2023.<sup>22</sup> While femicide is not an offence in the *Criminal Code*, many have called for it to be included.<sup>23</sup>
- **Including GBV in Hate Crime Legislation:** Debates about including GBV in hate crime laws have highlighted the benefits and challenges of this approach.
  - **Benefits:** Sends a strong message that violence rooted in misogyny is intolerable, increases public awareness, and enhances women's perceived safety and agency specifically in public spaces.
  - **Challenges:** Adding GBV to hate crime laws risk being a symbolic measure without proper enforcement, has the potential to overwhelm the courts and would require significant resources to train criminal justice professionals in all jurisdictions. Adding GBV to hate crime laws may hurt victims, forcing them to confront deeper hostility from loved ones.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dawson, M. (2022, July 13). *Toronto Woman Set on Fire: Violence Against Women and Girls Should be Treated as a Hate Crime*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/toronto-woman-set-on-fire-violence-against-women-and-girls-should-be-treated-as-a-hate-crime-186024>

<sup>20</sup> Dawson, M. (2022). *Considering Gender-Based Violence as a Form of Hate: A Socio-Legal Examination*. British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. [https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson\\_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf](https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> UN Women. (2023). *Five Essential Facts to Know About Femicide*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/11/five-essential-facts-to-know-about-femicide>

<sup>22</sup> Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. (n.d.). *2023 Victims*. Femicide in Canada. <https://femicideincanada.ca/aboutus/remembering/2023-victims/>

<sup>23</sup> Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. (n.d.). *Femicide and the Law*. Femicide in Canada. <https://femicideincanada.ca/femicide-law/>

<sup>24</sup> Dawson, M. (2022). *Considering Gender-Based Violence as a Form of Hate: A Socio-Legal Examination*. British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. [https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson\\_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf](https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Considering-gender-based-violence-as-a-form-of-hate-by-Dr.-Dawson_BCOHRCs-Inquiry-into-hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf)

## Ageism and Disability-Based Hate

Older adults and people with disabilities face distinct challenges related to hate crimes, often compounded by ageism and ableism. They may fear that people in caregiving roles will restrict their independence if they report a hate crime, or they may feel unsafe living alone. The intersectionality of age and disability further complicates their experiences, especially as older adults are more likely to have disabilities.<sup>25</sup>

- During the pandemic, older adults were frequently depicted as burdens, leading to increased discrimination in healthcare and broader society.<sup>26</sup> This ageist rhetoric devalued their lives and contributed to their marginalization.
- There is a growing population of older adults in Canada, and they are less likely to be the victim of violent crime compared to other generations as victimization generally decreases with age.<sup>27</sup> Comparatively, older adults may be less likely to report cases of victimization to police compared to younger generations.<sup>28</sup>
- People with disabilities similarly face pervasive discrimination starting from a young age and is often normalized.<sup>29</sup> This normalization of hate and discrimination often makes it difficult for victims to understand when incidents are a crime, resulting in one reason for underreporting.

## Class Discrimination and Hate Against People Who Are Unhoused

Hate crimes targeting people who are unhoused and those facing class discrimination is emerging as critical concerns.<sup>30</sup> Violence against people experiencing homelessness is rising, fuelled by societal attitudes that stigmatize poverty and view people who are unhoused as less deserving of

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<sup>25</sup> Ramirez, L., Monahan, C., Palacios-Espinosa, X., & Levy, S. R. (2022). Intersections of Ageism Toward Older Adults and Other Isms During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78(4), 965-990. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12574>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Conroy, S. & Sutton, D. (2022). *Violence Against Seniors and Their Perceptions of Safety in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00011-eng.htm#r17>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Burch, L. (2022). 'We shouldn't be told to shut up, we should be told we can speak out': Reflections on using arts-based methods to research disability hate crime. *Qualitative Social Work*, 21(2), 393-412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250211002888>

<sup>30</sup> Kiritchenko, S., Curto, G., Nejadgholi, I., & Fraser, K. C. (2023). *Aporophobia: An Overlooked Type of Toxic Language Targeting the Poor*. National Research Council of Canada. <https://publications-cnrc.canada.ca/eng/view/ft?id=1df5f636-cb93-465c-a06f-8f39ecc4a1c7>; Landry, M-C. & Houle, M-J. (2022, August 3). *Ending Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness Starts with Upholding their Human rights*. Canadian Human Rights Commission. <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/resources/ending-violence-against-people-experiencing-homelessness-starts-upholding-their-human>; Mair, K., Greene, C., Tetrault, J., & Mari, M. (2023, December 20). *Canada Must Recognize Anti-Homeless Attacks as Hate Crimes*. Winnipeg Free Press. <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/uncategorized/2023/12/20/canada-must-recognize-anti-homeless-attacks-as-hate-crimes>; Urbanik, M-M., Maier, K., Tetrault, J. E. C., & Greene, C. (2023). Hate Crime and Class Vulnerability: A Case Study of White Nationalist Violence Against Unhoused Indigenous People. *British Journal of Criminology*, 64(4), 863-880. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azad065>

rights and protection.<sup>31</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people without housing were subjected to discriminatory and dehumanizing behaviours.<sup>32</sup> The current focus in politics, law enforcement, and the media on "countering violent extremism" (CVE) often overlooks the everyday violence faced by these communities.<sup>33</sup>

Addressing these issues requires:

- legislative changes to include people experiencing homelessness as a protected category
- a comprehensive strategy that includes housing initiatives, welfare policies, and reimagined policing practices.<sup>34</sup>

## Ripple Effects of Hate

### Learning from the Afzaal Family and London Community

On June 6, 2021, a hate-motivated attack took the lives of four members of the Afzaal family during an evening walk in London, Ontario. Salman Afzaal (46), his wife Madiha (44), their 15-year-old daughter Yumnah and Salman's 74-year-old mother Talat, were tragically killed, leaving Fayez Afzaal (9), the sole family member who survived the attack.

- Following an 11-week trial, the offender was convicted of first-degree murder and attempted murder. In addition, Justice Pomerance found that the offender's actions constituted terrorist activity.<sup>35</sup> This landmark decision is the first time in Canadian history that a jury heard arguments about a white supremacist act of violence and believed it was terrorism.<sup>36</sup>

### Key Themes from the Sentencing Hearing

In January 2024, as part of our efforts to stay engaged with victims of crime across Canada, our Policy Team Lead, Mariam Musse, observed the sentencing hearings in London, Ontario. Over 70 victim and community impact statements were entered as evidence, highlighting the far-reaching and devastating effects of the crime on the victims and the broader London community.

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<sup>31</sup> Urbanik, M-M., Maier, K., Tetrault, J. E. C., & Greene, C. (2023). Hate Crime and Class Vulnerability: A Case Study of White Nationalist Violence Against Unhoused Indigenous People. *British Journal of Criminology*, 64(4), 863-880. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azad065>

<sup>32</sup> Chapados, S., Roebuck, B. S., Macdonald, S. A., Dej, E., Hust, C., & McGlinchey, D. (2023). Homelessness, COVID-19, and discourses of contagion. *SSM-Qualitative Research in Health*, 3, 100276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2023.100276>

<sup>33</sup> Urbanik, M-M., Maier, K., Tetrault, J. E. C., & Greene, C. (2023). Hate Crime and Class Vulnerability: A Case Study of White Nationalist Violence Against Unhoused Indigenous People. *British Journal of Criminology*, 64(4), 863-880. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azad065>

<sup>34</sup> Research and resources are available through the Homeless Hub. <https://homelesshub.ca/>

<sup>35</sup> Public Prosecution Service of Canada (February 22, 2024). *Terrorism in Veltman Murder Case*. [https://www.ppsc-sppc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/2024/22\\_02\\_24.html](https://www.ppsc-sppc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/2024/22_02_24.html)

<sup>36</sup> LeBel, J. (2023, November 16). *Nathaniel Veltman guilty of 1<sup>st</sup>-degree murder, fears remain for Muslim community*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10095556/nathaniel-veltman-verdict/>



- **Emotional and psychological impact:** The impact of the attack continues to affect the day-to-day lives of survivors. Many reported symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression, making it difficult for them to carry out normal activities, and losing motivation at work or school.
- **Survivor guilt:** Community members expressed guilt about being able to carry on with their lives and had conflicted emotions returning to a semblance of normalcy. Friends of the family felt guilty about making new friends.
- **Re-traumatized by the trial:** Family members expressed how revisiting the details of the tragedy during the trial was traumatic. The trial, which took place two years after the attack, forced them to relive many painful moments.
- **Fear and heightened anxiety:** A recurring theme throughout the victim impact statements was fear—fear that stemmed from the attack and its broader implications for safety and belonging. Community members felt unsafe walking in their own neighbourhoods, going to school, or attending religious institutions.
- **Freedom of religion and expression:** This sense of vulnerability was echoed by Muslim women who questioned whether they should continue wearing their hijabs in public, and by a member of the Jewish community who said that they hesitated to display a Hanukkah menorah in their window, fearing another hate-motivated attack. The constant awareness that they, too, could be victims of such violence was debilitating for many.
- **Sense of belonging:** For many, the attack shook their belief in belonging to Canadian society. Some expressed doubts about their choice to immigrate to Canada, feeling that this violent act and its aftermath made them question the safety and acceptance they once felt.
- **Wide reaching:** These statements took many forms, from in-person readings to virtual submissions from Pakistan and the United States, demonstrating the global reach of the tragedy and the importance of victims' voices in the justice process.

### **The Quasi-Constitutional Victim Right to Participation**

While several victims expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their victim impact statements, it is important to emphasize that **presenting these statements is not a courtesy—it is a right**. The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (2015) enshrines that victims have the right to submit these statements in all cases. However, there remains a significant gap in awareness. A 2020 study



found that no victim impact or community impact statements were submitted in 69% of hate crime cases.<sup>37</sup>

### Remarks from Justice Pomerance

Justice Pomerance underscored the significance of victim impact statements (VIS):

*“It is important that those affected be given a voice and that they be heard during the sentencing process.”*

After two days of hearing statements, the judge expressed deep emotion, saying,

*“This courtroom is usually filled with the words of lawyers and judges, but for these two days, it has been filled with the voices of those who knew and loved the Afzaal family. Your words have been powerful, elegant, and poignant.”*

The Afzaal family was clearly beloved by their family, friends and community. Their loss has left a deep void. It was equally clear that the actions of one person had a profound ripple effect, impacting not just the direct victims, but the entire City of London, other faith groups, and Muslims across the world.

The trauma-informed approach demonstrated by the judge, along with the respectful handling of victim impact statements, highlighted the potential for a transformation in the criminal justice system. These voices remind us that, while the criminal justice system focuses on accountability, it can also prioritize the needs and voices of victims to ensure a sense of justice, healing, and validation.

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<sup>37</sup> Provost-Yombo, K., Loudon, C., & McDonald, S. (2020). *Hate as an Aggravating Factor at Sentencing: A Review of the Case Law from 2007-2020*. Department of Justice. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/hafs-hcadp/pdf/RSD\\_RR2020\\_Hate\\_Sentencing\\_Case\\_Law\\_EN.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/hafs-hcadp/pdf/RSD_RR2020_Hate_Sentencing_Case_Law_EN.pdf)

### Targeted by hate: A personal reflection from Mariam Musse

I work at the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime. I went to London, Ontario to attend the sentencing hearing and show our support for the Afzaal family.

The night before the sentencing hearing, I was the target of a racist and Islamophobic attack<sup>38</sup> simply for being a Black Muslim woman. I chose to report the incident even though I was hesitant about how the criminal justice system would respond. I know that hate crimes are underreported and that accurate data from people who have been targeted is helpful.

- **Reporting the incident to the police was frustrating** —the barriers to reporting hate crimes were clear. My experience was initially dismissed as a prank by teenagers despite my description of the perpetrator as an adult white male. I felt like a burden to the police. I felt discouraged from pursuing the case further since I hadn't captured the vehicle's license plate, and identifying the attacker was deemed unlikely because multiple people were in the car.
- **I was mad at myself for not noting key details**, feeling as if I was to blame if the police couldn't catch the perpetrator. Only after I pointed out the irony of my visit did the officer's attitude change, and later that night, another officer came to my hotel and took my statement.

Despite promises of follow-up, **I've received little to no updates on the investigation**. This experience highlights the very reason I hesitate to promote reporting hate crimes: the common belief that nothing will be done has proven to be true in my experience. **The *Canadian Victims' Bill of Rights* only guarantees victims the right to information when requested**, but even when that right is exercised, meaningful updates are rarely provided, making it difficult to maintain faith in the system. These acts of hate, no matter how "minor" they seem, contribute to a climate of fear and division. While this experience was a personal reminder of the pervasive nature of racism and Islamophobia in Canada, **my resolve has only been strengthened**.

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<sup>38</sup> Hager, M. (2024, January 19). *Attack on federal hate-crimes researcher raises questions about barriers to reporting*. The Globe and Mail. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-attack-on-federal-hate-crimes-researcher-raises-questions-about/>

### Response from London Police: A follow-up reflection from Mariam Musse, October 2024

As part of the OFOVC's responsibility to engage with any organization that may not be portrayed positively, the Ombudsperson requested a meeting with Chief of Police, Thai Truong of London Police Service to provide an opportunity to respond.

On October 28, 2024, Chief Truong and Deputy Chief of Community Trust and Frontline Operations, Paul Bastien, travelled to Ottawa from London to discuss the report with me in person with the Ombudsperson and Executive Director present.

- **Both the Chief and Deputy Chief were incredibly kind.** They took the time to listen to my experience, accepted responsibility, offered apologies and acknowledged areas that needed improvement.
- They expressed gratitude for my decision to report, stating that **reporting not only aids in data collection but can also establish connections with other cases**, which is why my investigation is still open.

A key takeaway from the meeting is that more work needs to be done to improve the experiences of hate crime victims who choose to engage with police.

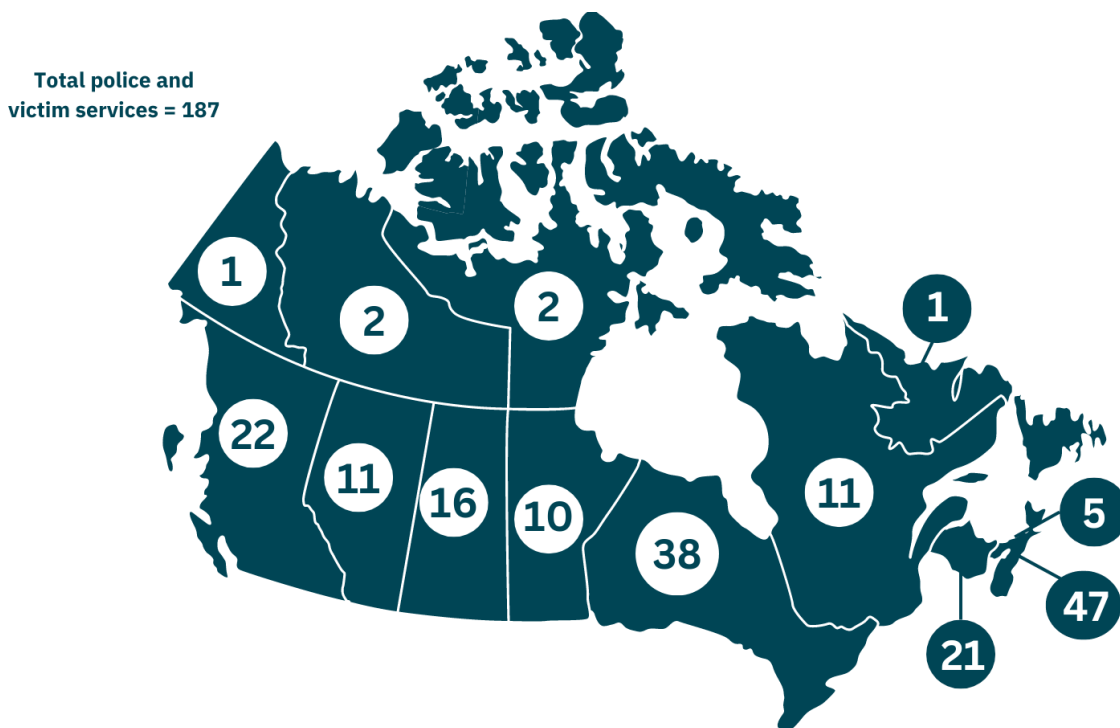
While the exact nature of that work may still be evolving, I found the sincerity and humility of the Chief and Deputy Chief to be commendable and restorative. I entered the meeting with some uncertainty, but **I left feeling a sense of understanding and hope for positive outcomes.**

## What We Heard from Police and Victim Services (n = 187)

From May to July 2024, the Office conducted rapid consultations with police and victim services across Canada to better understand the supports and services provided to victims of hate crimes and the potential impacts of new legislation.

**We received a total of 187 responses (110 from police and 77 from victim services),** and conducted informal interviews with academics, community leaders, service providers, and police organizations.

Several key themes emerged, including the underreporting of hate crimes, resource constraints, legal challenges, and the need for specialized training.



# Challenges

## Community distrust leads to underreporting

- **Victims are not reporting to police.** Underreporting to police remains a significant barrier to laying charges for hate crimes, gathering accurate data, and connecting victims to support. Respondents cited several reasons for this, including fear of police, distrust due to systemic racism and the stigma of reporting in small communities. Even when victims report, they may hesitate to support investigations due to concerns about retaliation.
- **Hesitancy to access police-based victim services.** Victim service providers said that when communities do not have trust in police, they are less likely to seek support from police-based victim services. Additionally, it can be difficult to access police-based victim services without a referral from the police. Victims who want support but do not want to involve police can fear that information they share with police-based victim services will be shared with police without their consent. In some communities, victim services are provided by community-based organizations. Support after hate crimes may come from religious, cultural, or other identity-based groups.

## Police have limited experience identifying hate crime

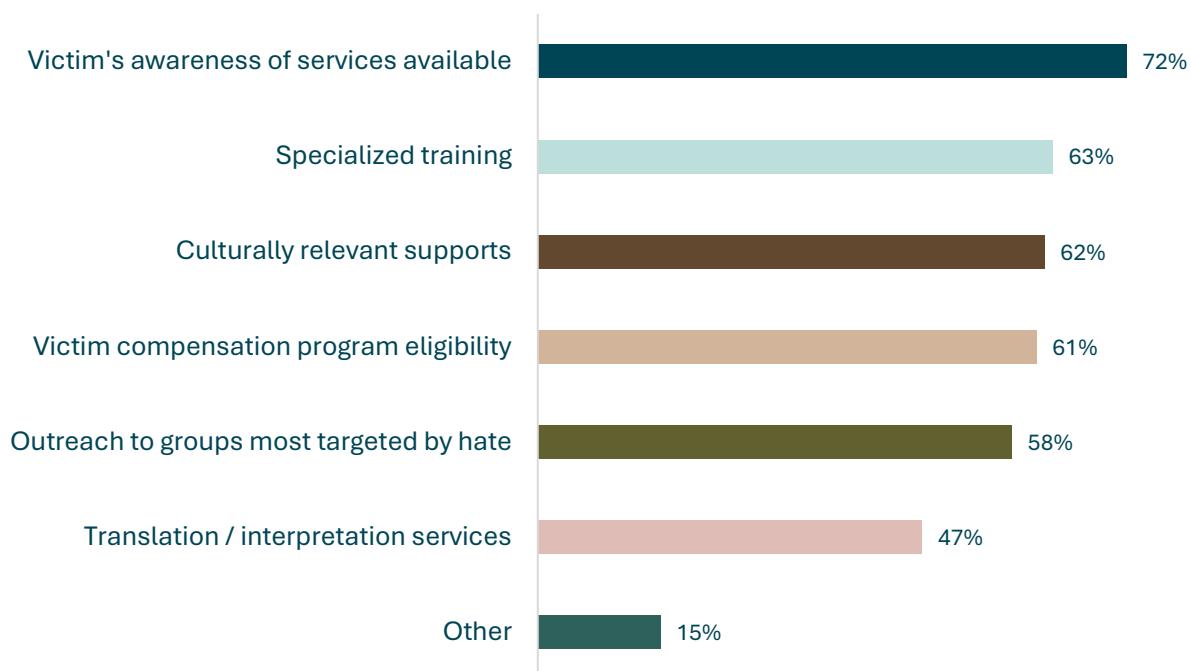
- **Challenges defining hate crime.** Several police officers said they had little experience dealing with hate crime. Police officers noted difficulties in determining whether a reported incident was motivated by hate and found the language in current legislation vague. This language has led to varied interpretations of hate crimes across police services.
- **Freedom of speech vs. hate speech.** It can be difficult for police and members of the public to differentiate freedom of speech vs. hate speech. The lack of clarity complicates investigations, leads to inconsistent case management, and reduces reporting.

## Police and victim services have limited resources

- **Resources are not sufficient to provide specialized support.** Victim service providers highlighted that if victims do not qualify for compensation, it is costly for the victim to pay out of pocket to receive counselling. There are limited opportunities for specialized trauma therapy on hate crime across Canada and group focused therapy may work well for some groups but not be appropriate for other victims.
- **Police investigations are time consuming and can lack collaboration.** There is often delay from frontline officers to provide information to investigators or the file is delayed due to the need for specialized police resources to assist. If there is a specific hate crime unit with only one officer, a large case can be overwhelming. If there is not enough evidence, Crown prosecutors will not proceed. In addition, many officers find it hard to locate and identify perpetrators, especially perpetrators of online hate which needs specialized resources to be able to track.

- **Funding for public education and outreach.** Both police and victim services highlighted that more funding is needed to help communities impacted by hate crime. Since many victims come from marginalized communities, policymakers may not understand their experiences, and victims of hate crime may not be familiar with existing supports.
- **Staffing shortages.** Almost half of victim service organizations (45%) reported having fewer than five paid employees. A third (30%) reported that they have no volunteers while another third (30%) relied on 10+ volunteers to help provide services. Seventy-three percent of victim service organizations identified resource limitations as a barrier to comprehensive service delivery, among other challenges:

### Challenges identified by victim services (n = 76)



### Prosecution is rarely successful

- **Challenges obtaining approval.** Police officers were frustrated with the approval process for hate crime cases. They need to find sufficient evidence for a strong case, then Crown prosecutors must decide whether to proceed amidst competing pressures, then the Attorney General has final approval. This leads to delays and challenges securing convictions.
- **Sentencing regulations are not adequate and not deterring crime.** Respondents felt that sentencing for hate crimes was often inadequate and failed to act as a deterrent. Delays in the court process and stay of charges mean some accused are being released with no accountability regardless of the impact on the victim or community.

# Opportunities

## Training

- Police identified the need for specialized training:
  - **Hate crime identification and investigation.** Clearer guidelines and standardized training approaches using real case studies. Training should be specific to the type of hate crimes experienced, with accessible quick reference materials such as a visual flow chart of investigation procedures.
  - **Online hate.** Specialized training for investigations that are primarily online and cross jurisdictions.
  - **Legal training.** Applying hate crime laws under the *Criminal Code*, including collaboration with Crown prosecutors to build stronger cases. Police also suggested Crown prosecutors and judges may need more training on how to apply section 718.2 (a)(i) of the *Criminal Code* specifically in the context of hate crimes.
  - **Cultural sensitivity and anti-bias/anti-racism.** Understanding diverse religions and cultures, including the realities of Indigenous peoples. Police said this is essential for building trust with diverse communities.
  - **Victim-centred and trauma-informed practice.** To better support and refer victims of hate crimes to appropriate resources.
- **Training delivery.** Police requested hybrid training or to have options between in-person and online delivery. They also requested peer education from police departments with expertise in hate crime investigations and networking to exchange best practices.
- **Victim services want specialized training to be accessible to them.** With limited resources and time, it can be difficult to pay for training or identify people with the required knowledge and availability.

## Collaboration

- **Police want more collaboration across jurisdictions.** Police want to share knowledge on investigative practices and build stronger collaboration for investigations online where multiple jurisdictions are involved.
- **Indigenous and non-indigenous police cooperation can be strengthened.** Indigenous police services reported that effective collaboration with non-Indigenous police services improves information sharing and consistency in case management. They noted that non-Indigenous officers can lack awareness of Indigenous community dynamics, which can be a barrier to effective collaboration.
- **Victim services want to strengthen their referrals.** Victim service providers described efforts to better connect with mental health services, 2SLGBTQ+ services, and culturally sensitive organizations. Police-based, community-based, and court-based victim services work with a wide range of partners.

### Victim services key contacts by sector

Police-based Victim Services	Community-based Victim Services	Court-based Victim Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community-based victim services</li><li>• The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)</li><li>• Police Hate Crime Units</li><li>• Community organizations</li><li>• Mental Health supports</li><li>• Clinical support</li><li>• Multicultural organizations</li><li>• Indigenous Services</li><li>• Immigration Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Police</li><li>• Community organizations</li><li>• Not-for-profit organizations</li><li>• Counselling services</li><li>• Multicultural Organizations</li><li>• Immigration Services</li><li>• Shelters/Housing supports</li><li>• Religious organizations</li><li>• 2SLGBTQ+ Support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crown Prosecutors</li><li>• Legal Aid</li><li>• Police Services</li><li>• Police Victim Services Units</li><li>• Shelter / Housing Supports</li></ul>

- **Addressing gaps in victim support services.** Communities have limited and inconsistent resources to support victims of hate crime. Existing services do help to meet some needs, and generally focus on:
  - victim services like safety planning,
  - counselling and mental health support,
  - cultural services including immigration services,
  - providing information and referrals,
  - assisting in removing graffiti, and
  - legal and court support.
- **Victims of hate crime have unique needs.** Court-based victim services provide information and support to victims of hate crime if their cases proceed to court. Respondents in that sector highlighted the need for greater sensitivity to the wider impact on communities, heightened media attention, and victims' fear of being dismissed or misunderstood by criminal justice personnel.



- **Informal supports are critical resources.** Victims of hate crimes may be more likely to access services within their own communities, such as cultural community centres, religious organizations, or 2SLGBTQ+ support programs. These organizations may already carry the weight of responding to hate, without resources allocated to them. In our consultations, we heard that it may cost less and be more effective to invest in resources people already access rather than focusing only on building capacity in victim services.

### Specialized hate-crime units

Of the 110 police units surveyed, **31 (28%) had specialized hate crime units**. The majority of these units were **established within the last four years**, with **46% created before 2020**, 38% between 2020 and 2022, and **15% in 2023 or later**.

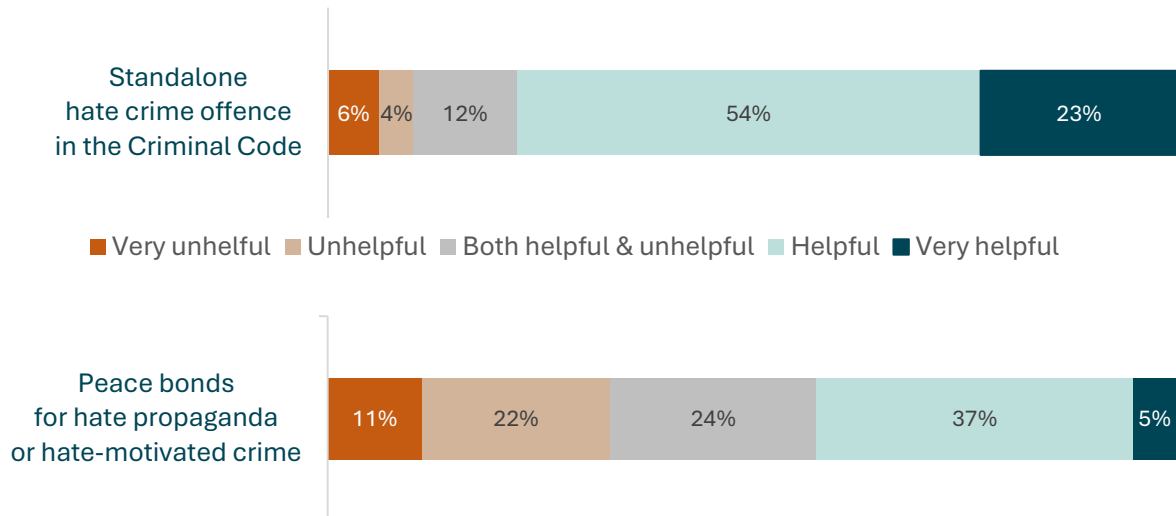
- **Benefits of specialized units include knowledge and collaboration.** The unit has specific knowledge and is provided with special training. This fosters collaboration with other officers to better investigate files and ensures timely responses. Ability to educate the public and do community outreach which leads to **increased public awareness**.
- **Internal challenges around awareness of specialized units.** Many respondents were unfamiliar with the role of their organization's hate crime unit, highlighting the need for better internal communication.

### Legislative reform

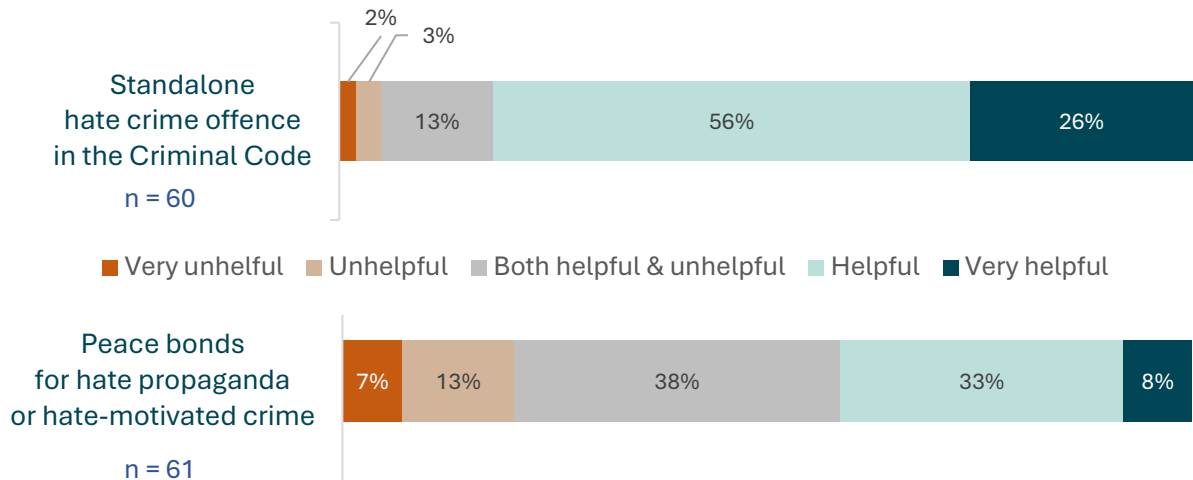
**Bill C-63 (Online Harms Act).** On February 26, 2024, the Government of Canada introduced [Bill C-63 \(Online Harms Act\)](#) which aims to address online sexual exploitation, hate speech and hate crimes. Our Office began its special study on hate crimes before Bill C-63 was introduced, so we were able to add timely questions about the proposed measures to our consultations.

- **Standalone hate crime offence needed.** 77% of police and 82% of victim service providers believed a standalone hate crime offence in the *Criminal Code* would be helpful or very helpful (See figure below). They said a standalone offence would clarify legal definitions and empower effective prosecution of cases. One police respondent highlighted that some hate crimes do not fit within other *Criminal Code* offences.
- **Peace bonds have “no teeth.”** Less than half of police (42%) and victim service providers (41%) said the proposed peace bond for hate propaganda or hate-motivated crime would be helpful or very helpful (see figure below). They said peace bonds are not a good deterrent as they are rarely taken seriously by the perpetrator. They are often used by Crown prosecutors as a ‘first resort’ instead of laying charges. Survivors may feel that using peace bonds for hate crimes minimizes the harm they have experienced. Police said that peace bonds are not helpful without consequences for breaking them, and since courts are overburdened, administration of justice offences are a low priority.

### Police showed support for a standalone hate crime offence and limited support for peace bonds (n = 99)



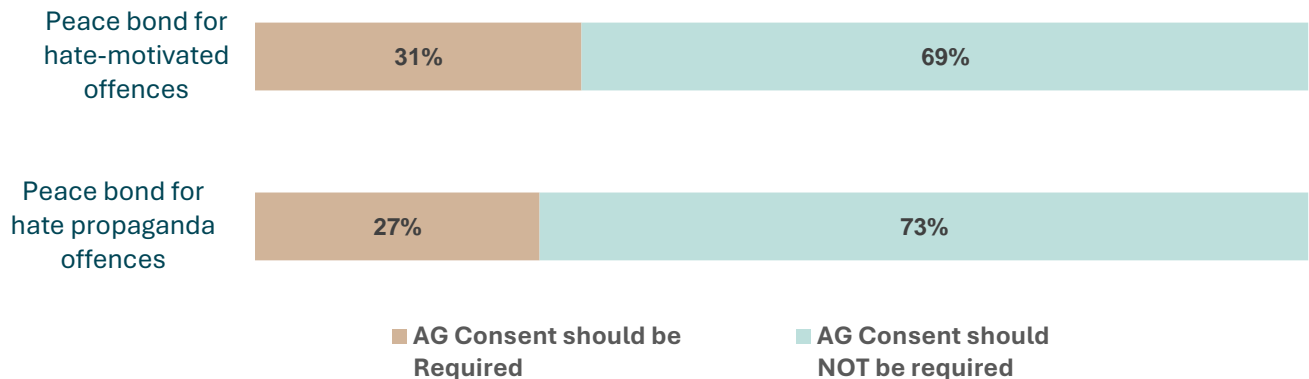
### Victim services showed support for a standalone hate crime offence and some support for peace bonds



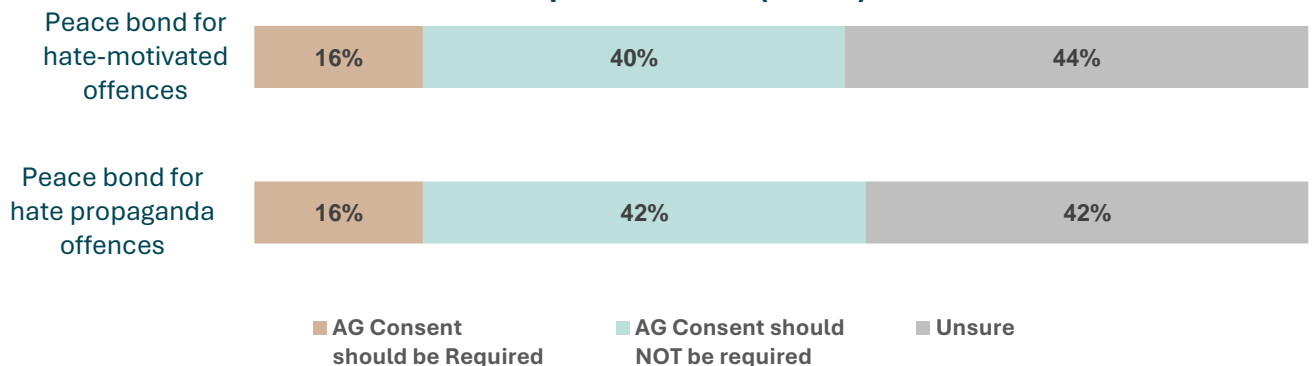
- **Legislation needs to change.** Many of the measures in Bill C-63 are strongly supported by law enforcement and victim services. Canadians targeted by hate are experiencing discrimination and violation of their freedom of expression or religion. When people are targeted online, it brings hate into their homes and workplaces.
- **Hate-specific offences.** One idea was an enhancement to the common charges used to prosecute hate crimes, such as assaults, threats, or harassment (i.e. hate crime – assault).

- **The overburdened justice system is a bigger issue.** Application of the Supreme Court of Canada’s Jordan decision<sup>39</sup> means many cases are being stayed after 18 months in provincial courts and 30 months in superior courts.<sup>40</sup> Respondents mentioned that the measures in Bill C-63 will only add value if court delays are resolved.

### Police felt Attorney General consent should NOT BE required for peace bonds (n = 99)



### Victim Services had mixed views on Attorney General consent for peace bonds (n = 62)



<sup>39</sup> R. v. Jordan, 2016 SCC 27, [2016] 1 S.C.R. 631

<sup>40</sup> The 2016 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R. v. Jordan*, found that the delay from J’s charges from December 2008 to the trial end date of February 2013 was unreasonable and that it violated s.11(b) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (to be tried within a reasonable time). This case set out a new framework where the presumptive ceiling for provincial court is 18 months and superior court is 30 months. The defence can apply for a stay of prosecution, whereupon the Crown must show that the delay is due to exceptional circumstances.

## Promising Practices

Organizations across Canada are pioneering strategies to combat hate through third-party reporting tools, education resources and innovative technology such as mobile applications.

- **Third-party reporting:** Ontario 211 has partnered with regional 211 service partners and community organizations in Kingston, London and Perth-Huron to propose a province-wide reporting tool, inspired by the UK's model, which leverages existing systems in place to provide a 24/7 reporting hotline coupled with a vast network for community-based client referrals, filling a crucial gap in hate crime reporting by providing services and referrals.
- **Data collection:** Initiatives by the Coalition for Muslim Women Kitchener-Waterloo<sup>41</sup> and #StopHateAB<sup>42</sup> aim to track hate incidents, enhancing data collection and support.
- **Training:** Educational efforts shared with us include a comprehensive manual for front-line workers on dealing with victims of hate.<sup>43</sup>
- **Digital tools:** As we are living in an increasingly digital world, innovative initiatives like the Eradicate Hate 2.0 mobile app<sup>44</sup>, B'nai Brith Canada's Anti-Hate App<sup>45</sup>, Resilience B.C. Anti-Racism Network represent targeted approaches to educate, support, and empower victims and communities against hate.

These initiatives underscore a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive and multi-pronged strategies that address hate crimes. [See [Appendix A](#) for a broader list of resources].

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<sup>41</sup> The Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo. (n.d.). *Report hate crime*. Reporting Hate. <https://reportinghate.ca/>

<sup>42</sup> #StopHateAB. *Document a hate incident*. Stop Hate AB. <https://stophateab.ca/document/>

<sup>43</sup> Hill, J. K. (2024, June 12). *Working with victims of hate*. Department of Justice. <https://canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/www2-tavh2/index.html>

<sup>44</sup> *EradicateHate* is digital toolkit aimed at raising awareness of online hate intended for children and youth, available for download at the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

<sup>45</sup> *Anti-Hate* allows for users to report antisemitism and hate incidents, available for download at the Google Play and Apple App Store.

## Momentum for Change

The Government of Canada has committed to tackling hate, and there is growing momentum. Budget 2024 announced the creation of a National Action Plan to Combat Hate,<sup>46</sup> sustained funding for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, release of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024,<sup>47</sup> Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan,<sup>48</sup> sustained funding for the Office of the Special Representative to Combat Islamophobia (OSRCI) and the Office of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism (OSEPHRCI).

## Recommendations

1. **Ensure victim rights play a central role in Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate.** The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR)<sup>49</sup> is quasi-constitutional and must be considered in federal policy or legislation on victims of crime. The rights to information, protection, participation, to seek restitution and to file a complaint are important levers to strengthen access to justice for victims of hate crime. The CVBR builds on Canada's commitment to implementing the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power.<sup>50</sup>
2. **Strengthen existing complaint mechanisms.** Victims of hate crime need multiple opportunities for resolution because of the barriers they experience. We support efforts to strengthen access to human rights complaint mechanisms and encourage equivalent consideration of ways to streamline complaint mechanisms in the criminal justice system.
3. **Amend the *Criminal Code* to create a standalone hate crime offence.** The proposed offence should not require consent from the Attorney General. Without a standalone hate crime offence or definition of hate in the *Criminal Code*, there will continue to be challenges identifying, reporting, and tracking conviction rates of hate-motivated crimes.

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<sup>46</sup> Canadian Heritage. (2024). *Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pch/documents/campaigns/combating-hate/CAPCH-EN.pdf>; Canadian Heritage. (2024). *The Government of Canada launches Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/09/the-government-of-canada-launches-canadas-action-plan-on-combatting-hate.html>

<sup>47</sup> Canadian Heritage. (2024) *Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/combating-racism-discrimination/canada-anti-racism-strategy.html>

<sup>48</sup> Women and Gender Equality Canada. (2022). *Canada's First Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan... Building our Future, with Pride*. Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan.html>

<sup>49</sup> *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*, S.C. 2015, c.13, s.2. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-23.7/page-1.html>

<sup>50</sup> United Nations. (1985). *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* (Resolution A/RES/40/34). <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/40/34>

4. **Clarify the evidentiary basis to apply section 718.2(a)(i) of the *Criminal Code*.** Without a standalone offence, hate crimes are often charged as other offences (mischief, assault) and hate motivation is used as an aggravating factor at sentencing. Mixing hate crimes and other crimes hides the prevalence and patterns of hate crimes. Judges have varied interpretations of the extent of motivation required to apply hate as an aggravating factor at sentencing. Dr. Ferguson, a Professor of Law at the University of Victoria suggested the following revision:

Evidence that the offence was motivated **in a significant (i.e. more than trivial) way** by bias, prejudice or hate, **or the offender was reckless or penally negligent in respect to the harm that would probably be caused by his or her prejudice, bias or hate**, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor.<sup>51</sup>

5. **Consider hate-specific offences.** Hate-specific variations of the common *Criminal Code* offences used to lay charges for hate crimes (hate crime – assault).
6. **Add “Femicide” and its definition to the *Criminal Code*.** This would respond to recommendation 79 of the Renfrew County Inquest.<sup>52</sup> It could be included as a hate-specific offence (femicide - homicide), as a standalone offence, or be added to section 718.2(a) of the *Criminal Code* as a specific aggravating factor for sentencing.
7. **Establish accountability for online hate speech and algorithmic discrimination.** Algorithms, which are often tailored based on users’ personal information and behaviour, can inadvertently amplify harmful content, including hate speech and misinformation. Platforms should ensure that their algorithms are not used to target or promote hateful content, and they actively prevent the spread of online hate. Stricter measures and transparency are needed to hold companies accountable. Proprietary algorithms and business practices of online communication companies should not violate the *Charter* rights of Canadians.
8. **Develop a National Resource Hub.** A resource hub within an existing department could facilitate a Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group to create **national standards** for preventing and investigating hate crimes and meeting the needs of victims.

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<sup>51</sup> Ferguson, G (2016). A review of principles and purposes of the sentencing in sections 718-718.21 of the *Criminal Code*. Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/rppss-eodpa/index.html>

<sup>52</sup> Office of the Chief Coroner. (2022). *Verdict of Coroner’s Jury*. [https://lukesplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CKW-Inquest-Verdict-Recommendations-SIGNED\\_Redacted.pdf](https://lukesplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CKW-Inquest-Verdict-Recommendations-SIGNED_Redacted.pdf)

9. **Invest in training for police and victim services.** Budget 2024 announced \$28 million for the Federal Victims Strategy to provide support to victims following a hate-motivated crime. A resource hub could gather best practices from across Canada and collaborate with police and victim services to develop and deliver training. We recommend further investment in the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to expand their Building Bridges Workshops.<sup>53</sup>
10. **Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice.** This is an important step in addressing state-perpetrated hate crimes against Indigenous Peoples.
11. **Consider legal mechanisms to counter Indian Residential School denialism.** Review findings from the Independent Special Interlocutor's Interim Report<sup>54</sup> on Missing Children and Unmarked Graves. This includes considering legal mechanisms to address Indian Residential School denialism.
12. **Continue improving the Canada Community Security Program (CCSP).** This program provides essential funding to communities at risk of hate-motivated incidents or crimes to enhance security measures at their gathering spaces. Securing these spaces is costly,<sup>55</sup> and applicants have faced challenges completing the application process and being approved.<sup>56</sup> We are pleased to see the recent renewal of the fund and efforts to reduce barriers. We recommend continued outreach, technical assistance, and a process evaluation to continue making the fund more accessible to those who need it most.
13. **Honour commitments made in Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate.** This can be done by creating an expected results framework with clear outcomes for each pillar, to be reviewed annually, similar to the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

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<sup>53</sup> Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2024). Building Bridges Workshops. <https://crrf-fcrr.ca/building-bridges-workshops/>

<sup>54</sup> Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. (2023, June). *Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*. [https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/OSI\\_InterimReport\\_June-2023\\_WEB.pdf](https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/OSI_InterimReport_June-2023_WEB.pdf). Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor

<sup>55</sup> Marceau, R. (2024, May 23). Evidence [Number 105]. House of Commons, Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/JUST/meeting-105/evidence>

<sup>56</sup> Nalir, S. (2024, June 3). Evidence [Number 107]. House of Commons, Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/JUST/meeting-107/evidence>

## Appendix A – Hate Crime Resources

### Federal Initiatives

**Canada’s Action Plan on Combatting Hate**, *Canadian Heritage*

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pch/documents/campaigns/combating-hate/CAPCH-EN.pdf>

**Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028**,  
*Canadian Heritage*

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/combating-racism-discrimination/canada-anti-racism-strategy.html#a2>

**Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan**, *Women and Gender Equality Canada*

<https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan-2022.html>

**The Indigenous Justice Strategy**, *Department of Justice Canada*

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/ijr-dja/ijs-sja/index.html>

**National Hate Crimes Task Force**,

*Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canadian Race Relations Foundation*

<https://rcmp.ca/en/hate-motivated-crimes-and-incidents/hate-crimes-task-force#s2>

**A Roadmap for Transformative Change: Canada’s Black Justice Strategy**, *Akwasi Owusu-Bempah and Zilla Jones (Department of Justice)*

[https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/cbjs-scnj/transformative-transformateur/pdf/CS-24-110-CBJS-GV-DA\\_06-25-24-EN.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/cbjs-scnj/transformative-transformateur/pdf/CS-24-110-CBJS-GV-DA_06-25-24-EN.pdf)

### Understanding Hate Crime – Quick Facts

**The Facts about Gendered Digital Hate, Harassment, and Violence**

*Canadian Women’s Foundation*

<https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/online-hate-and-cyberviolence/>

**Hate Crime and incidents in Canada: Facts trends and information for frontline police officers**

*Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)*

<https://rcmp.ca/en/corporate-information/publications-and-manuals/hate-crimes-and-incidents-canada>

**Hate Crime Laws in Canada**

*Criminal Code Help*

<https://www.criminalcodehelp.ca/offences/hate-crime/>

**Hate-Motivated and Bias-Motivated Crime**

*Peel Regional Police*

<https://www.peelpolice.ca/en/report-it/hate-motivated-and-bias-motivated-crime.aspx>



## Research & Reports: Learning more about Hate Crime

### **#BLOCKHATE Centering Survivors and Taking Action on Gendered Online Hate in Canada –**

**National Report** *Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Canada*

<https://ywcacanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Block-Hate-Report-October-2022-corrected-1.pdf>

### **Hate as an Aggravating Factor at Sentencing: A Review of the Case Law from 2007-2020**

*Kundera-Provost-Yombo, Cynthia Loudon and Susan McDonald (Department of Justice)*

[https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/hafs-hcadp/pdf/RSD\\_RR2020\\_Hate\\_Sentencing\\_Case\\_Law\\_EN.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/hafs-hcadp/pdf/RSD_RR2020_Hate_Sentencing_Case_Law_EN.pdf)

### **Inquiry into hate in the pandemic**

*British Columbia’s Human Rights Commissioner*

<https://hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca/>

### **One Hotline, Many Cold Lines – An Analysis of Victim Cases Reported to the Hotline 1-2-3**

*Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Advocacy Group Association of Canada (SAAHCAG).*

<https://voicesandbridges.org/one-hotline-many-cold-lines/>

### **Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes: Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities**

*Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/0/448696.pdf>

### **Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide**

*Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/317166>

### **Understanding Hate in Ontario**

*Mosaic Institute*

<https://www.mosaicinstitute.ca/understanding-hate-in-ontario>

### **White Paper on The Status of Trans and Gender Diverse People**

*Randall Garrison, MP and Dylana Thompson*

[https://randallgarrison.ndp.ca/sites/default/files/white\\_paper\\_on\\_the\\_status\\_of\\_trans\\_and\\_gender\\_diverse\\_people-\\_english\\_\\_0.pdf](https://randallgarrison.ndp.ca/sites/default/files/white_paper_on_the_status_of_trans_and_gender_diverse_people-_english__0.pdf)

## Supporting Victims of Hate Crime

### **An Exploration of the Needs of Victims of Hate Crime**

*Susan McDonald and Andrea Hogue, Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice*

[https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2010/justice/J4-13-2007-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/justice/J4-13-2007-eng.pdf)

### **Reimagining a Path to Support All Canadians**

*Canadian Race Relations Foundation*

[https://crrf-fcrr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A\\_review\\_of\\_services\\_for\\_victims\\_of\\_hate\\_in\\_Canada.pdf](https://crrf-fcrr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A_review_of_services_for_victims_of_hate_in_Canada.pdf)

**United For All: Together we can overcome hate and violence**

*United Way East Ontario*

<https://www.unitedwayeo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/U4All-Action-Plan-2021.pdf>

**Working with Victims of Hate**

*James K. Hill, PhD*

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/wwwvh2-tavh2/index.html>

**Learning Opportunities**

**#Eradicate Hate 2.0 Mobile App**, *Council of Agencies Serving South Asians*

<https://www.cassa.ca/eradicatehate-2-0/>

**Annual Hate Crime Conference**, *York Regional Police*

<https://calendar.yrp.ca/yrpinternal/Detail/2024-09-23-0800-5th-Annual-Hate-Crime-Conference-2024>

**Building Bridges Workshops**, *Canadian Race Relations Foundation*

<https://crrf-fcrr.ca/building-bridges-workshops/>

**Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network**, *Province of British Columbia*

<https://www.resiliencebc.ca/>

**Reporting Tools**

**Confidential Reporting Anti-Hate App**, *B'nai Brith Canada*

<https://www.bnaibrith.ca/anti-hate-hotline/>

**Documenting Hate Incidents in Alberta**, *#StopHateAB*

<https://stophateab.ca/>

**Islamophobia-Motivated Incident Reporting Tool**

*National Council of Canadian Muslims and Tawheed Community Centre*

<https://imirt.ca/>

**Racism Incident Reporting and Referral Service Program**

*Lakehead Social Planning Council, Thunder Bay*

<https://www.lspc.ca/incidentreport/>

**Report Hate**, *Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo*

<https://reportinghate.ca/>

## Appendix B - Three Federal Offices are Joining Forces to Combat Hate and Better Support Victims and Survivors<sup>57</sup>

Ottawa, ON—July 25, 2024

With hate crimes consistently on the rise, the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) is announcing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia and with Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.

Today, Statistics Canada reported that the number of hate crimes recorded by police in our country increased again by 32% in 2023. This marks a fifth consecutive increase and a cumulative rise of 163%, or more than doubling since 2018.<sup>58</sup>

The signing of these MOUs is not just timely, but crucial. They underscore the federal government's commitment to combatting hate and represent a significant step forward in supporting the needs of victims of crime, particularly those affected by antisemitism and islamophobia across Canada.

Under these MOUs, each organization commits to working with the OFOVC, making referrals and sharing information and best practices, to support those negatively impacted by criminal justice policies, services, or programs under federal jurisdiction. The aim is also to improve access for victims of crime in Jewish and Muslim communities to existing federal programs and services.

Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, highlighted the importance of the collaboration: "Islamophobia is a pervasive issue that affects many communities in Canada. Through this partnership, we aim to enhance our ability to support victims of hate crimes and discrimination so that they know they are not alone. Together, we can create a more inclusive and just society for all."

"For far too long, Jews have been disproportionately targeted as victims of hate in this country. I welcome this commitment to fostering a collaborative approach to addressing hate crime and discrimination; there is no room for hate against Jews, Muslims or any community in Canada. Let's work together to uphold the dignity of each person in our midst, bolstered by our shared values of compassion, understanding, and tolerance," said Deborah Lyons, Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.

Dr. Benjamin Roebuck, Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership: "These collaborative agreements are a great step in strengthening our efforts to support victims of crime, particularly those affected by antisemitism and islamophobia. By collaborating with the Office of the Special Envoy and Special Representative, we can better

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<sup>57</sup> Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (2024, July 25). *Three Federal Offices are Joining Forces to Combat Hate and Better Support Victims and Survivors*. Cision. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/three-federal-offices-are-joining-forces-to-combat-hate-and-better-support-victims-and-survivors-854240420.html>

<sup>58</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0191-01 Police-reported hate crime, number of incidents and rate per 100,000 population, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Canadian Forces Military Police

address the unique challenges faced by hate crime survivors and help ensure they receive the support they need.”

The OFOVC is planning an information exchange session in the fall with both offices, and all are dedicated to working closely to ensure that all victims receive the support they need and to promote a society free from hate and intolerance. Addressing hate crimes requires a more proactive and responsive approach, one where decision-makers listen to the concerns and experiences of affected Canadians.

The OFOVC is conducting a special study on hate crimes and online hate. Consultations with stakeholders, policing units and victim services across Canada have recently come to a close. The final report is scheduled for release in fall 2024. It will outline what we heard and the challenges that victims of hate face when they ask for help or access services.

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[ofovc-bofvac.media@ombud.gc.ca](mailto:ofovc-bofvac.media@ombud.gc.ca)

**Office of Canada’s Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia**

Media Relations - Canadian Heritage

[media@pch.gc.ca](mailto:media@pch.gc.ca)

819-994-9101

1-866-569-6155

**Canada’s Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism**

[envoyespecialDeborahLyons-specialenvoyDeborahLyons@pch.gc.ca](mailto:envoyespecialDeborahLyons-specialenvoyDeborahLyons@pch.gc.ca)

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