



# IRU-ANNUAL REPORT 2025

## Islamophobia Response Unit

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*A society where Muslim communities – and all minority groups – are free from discrimination, harassment, and hate crime, with equal access to justice, dignity, and opportunity.*

## Introduction

This is the IRU's first annual report. It incorporates our data and analysis of our work since 2021, while seeking to frame the landscape of Islamophobia in England and Wales through the lived and shared experiences of our beneficiaries, partners and the Muslim community (including both systemic and institutional Islamophobia). While this report contains extensive data and academic analysis which may challenge some readers, this depth is essential to properly document and address the reality of Islamophobia.

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) has become a critical frontline and systemic advocacy organisation in the United Kingdom, responding to the escalating complexity of Islamophobia-related cases. Between 2023 and 2025, the IRU investigated **906 incidents**, with referrals rising by **189% between 2024 and 2025 (from pre-2024 levels)** as well as supporting over **1000 clients overall** since conception of the IRU in 2021. While incident numbers moderated in 2025 (271 compared to 525 in 2024), the complexity of case significantly, particularly in employment and education, requiring tribunal preparation, safeguarding interventions, and public law analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Discrimination now represents the leading referral type (**37% of all cases in 2025**), often linked to Palestine-related advocacy and political expression.<sup>3</sup> Education cases accounted for **18.6% of incidents**, with restrictive prayer policies and safeguarding failures disproportionately affecting Muslim students.<sup>4</sup> Hate crime remains a consistent threat, comprising **24% of incidents**, with ONS data showing a **19% rise in religious hate crimes against Muslims in 2025**.<sup>5</sup>

The IRU's work demonstrates that Islamophobia is not only interpersonal but systemic, embedded across workplaces, schools, healthcare, policing, and public institutions. Its mission is therefore both to provide direct access to justice and to challenge structural racism through evidence-based advocacy.

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## Mission

To provide free, specialist legal advice and advocacy to individuals and communities affected by Islamophobia, ensuring equal access to justice, dignity, and opportunity. The IRU seeks to empower victims, challenge systemic discrimination, and build resilience within Muslim and minority communities by combining frontline casework with national policy influence.

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## Vision

A society where Muslim communities—and all minority groups—are free from discrimination, harassment, and hate crime, supported by robust equality frameworks, accountable institutions, and inclusive public culture. By 2030, the IRU envisions:

- Free, specialist legal advice as a permanent, nationally accessible service.
- Policy reforms that protect freedom of expression and strengthen anti-discrimination frameworks.
- National accountability mechanisms ensuring Islamophobia is recognised and addressed alongside other forms of racialised violence.
- Sustainable community structures that empower collective action against discrimination.

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## IRU Strategic Summary

Between 2023 and 2025, the Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) has witnessed both a dramatic escalation in reported incidents and a marked increase in the complexity of cases. Over this period, the organisation investigated **906 Islamophobia-related incidents**, with referrals rising by **189% between 2024 and 2025**.<sup>1</sup> While the number of incidents moderated in 2025 (271 compared to 525 in 2024), this apparent decline masked a critical shift: cases became significantly more complex, particularly in employment and education, requiring tribunal preparation, safeguarding interventions, and public law analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Discrimination has emerged as the leading referral type, accounting for **37% of cases in 2025**. Many of these disputes were multi-layered, involving unfair dismissal, harassment, retaliation, and failures to accommodate religious practice. Settlements averaged **£43,234.60**, reflecting both the seriousness of harm and the intensive legal work required.<sup>3</sup> Education cases also grew in complexity, with schools and universities introducing restrictive policies on prayer and political speech, disproportionately affecting Muslim students. These cases demanded nuanced legal strategies, often invoking **Article 9 ECHR** and the **Equality Act 2010**, alongside safeguarding interventions.<sup>4</sup> Hate crime remained a consistent threat, comprising **24% of incidents**, with official statistics showing a **19% rise in religious hate crimes against Muslims in 2025**.<sup>5</sup>

Thematic analysis of IRU's data reveals several emerging patterns. First, **compound harm** was evident, with many clients experiencing overlapping forms of discrimination—workplace harassment, online abuse, and institutional bias—requiring multi-disciplinary support. Second, **Palestine-linked cases** surged in 2024-25, particularly in workplaces and education, where individuals faced disciplinary action for political expression. These cases highlight the intersection of Islamophobia with freedom of speech and political rights. Third, **institutional under-response** was a recurring theme. Major institutions, including the Football Association and media outlets, often failed to act decisively or transparently. For example, the foiled mosque attack in Scotland received minimal coverage, underscoring systemic minimisation of Islamophobia compared to other forms of extremism.<sup>6</sup>

Intersectional barriers were also evident. Muslim women frequently faced compounded gendered and religious discrimination, while Black Muslims encountered racialised Islamophobia. These cases required advocacy strategies that linked employment law, equality law, and human rights frameworks.<sup>7</sup> Online harassment remained significant, accounting for **9.5% of incidents**, and was often linked to offline hostility, necessitating dual legal and safeguarding responses.<sup>8</sup>

The risks facing IRU are considerable. The escalating complexity of cases in 2025 stretched the organisation's capacity, demanding longer advisory hours, specialist expertise, and multi-stakeholder engagement. Public law referrals involving social services, care orders, and school policies highlighted the urgent need for a dedicated public law solicitor. Institutional silence or dismissive responses risk normalising Islamophobia and eroding public trust. Meanwhile, hostility directed at IRU itself rose

sharply, with hate mail referrals increasing by **700% in 2025**, underscoring the hostile environment in which advocacy organisations operate.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these challenges, IRU achieved significant outcomes. In employment law, the organisation secured three major settlements totalling **£129,701.80**, with a 100% success rate in tribunal cases.<sup>10</sup> These victories were not only financial but precedent-setting, sending a clear message to employers that Islamophobia will not be tolerated. Policy influence was also evident: IRU interventions compelled external reviews, contributed to government working groups, and shaped public discourse on defining Islamophobia. Media visibility amplified IRU's advocacy, ensuring Islamophobia was not minimised in national conversations. Beneficiary feedback consistently highlighted IRU's role as a trusted, compassionate, and effective support service, particularly in communities where distrust of police and institutions is widespread.

Looking ahead to the 2026-2030 horizon, IRU must expand its capacity to meet rising demand. This includes increasing caseworkers and specialist staff by **50% by 2027**, recruiting dedicated public law expertise, and securing multi-year funding commitments by 2028 to reduce reliance on short-term grants. Investment in secure IT infrastructure and professional support is essential to ensure operational continuity and data security. At the systemic level, IRU must continue to campaign for improved classification of Islamophobia in national datasets, capturing race-religion-gender intersections, and to strengthen safeguarding protocols to protect staff and volunteers from hostility.

In summary, IRU's strategic trajectory reflects both the scale of Islamophobia and the evolving complexity of cases. While incident numbers peaked in 2024, 2025 cases were far more resource-intensive, particularly in employment and education. This shift underscores the urgent need for expanded legal capacity, dedicated public law expertise, and increased funding to sustain IRU's impact. The organisation's dual role—providing direct access to justice while shaping national policy—positions it as a vital accountability mechanism in the UK's equality infrastructure.

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## **Islamophobia Response Unit Newsletter Updates from 2025**

The year 2025 marked a pivotal period for the Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU). Across three national newsletters (June, August, October and December), IRU documented its expanding casework, policy interventions, and public engagement. This annual report synthesises those updates into a narrative that situates IRU's work within broader socio-political developments, highlighting systemic Islamophobia, institutional accountability, and the urgent need for structural reform.

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## Casework and Legal Interventions

### Football Association (FA) and Grassroots Discrimination

- **June 2025:** IRU supported a significant case involving allegations of systemic Islamophobia within the West Riding County Football Association (WRCFA). The case exposed failures in the FA's complaints process, prompting both an external review of WRCFA and an internal investigation by the FA's Integrity Unit. CEO Majid Iqbal described the case as exposing "a systemic blind spot in football's handling of discrimination."
- **October 2025:** After 18 months of delay, the FA issued a dismissive response, stating there was "no case to answer" without explanation. IRU publicly challenged this opacity, framing it as symptomatic of institutional complacency and a disregard for victims of discrimination.

This trajectory illustrates both the potential of IRU's interventions to compel institutional review and the entrenched resistance to accountability within national sporting governance.

### Education and Religious Accommodation

- **June 2025:** IRU intervened in a case at a leading independent school where new leadership imposed restrictive prayer policies during Ramadan. Congregational prayers were banned, prayer rooms replaced with "silent spaces," and students faced questioning and inappropriate comments. IRU highlighted the exclusionary impact of these measures, situating them within a broader pattern of institutional hostility to Islamic practice in education.

## Employment Discrimination and Conversion Cases

- **June 2025:** IRU lawyers supported a client facing Islamophobia from their employer following conversion to Islam, including derogatory comments about appearance and prayer times. A formal grievance was initiated, with IRU providing ongoing employment and pay-related advice.
- **August 2025:** IRU joined the Employment Legal Advice Network (ELAN), funded by Trust for London, strengthening its capacity to address employment discrimination through collective action, mentoring, and systemic advocacy.

## Case Digest – Higgs v Farmor’s School

- **June 2025:** The Supreme Court refused Farmor’s School permission to appeal the Court of Appeal’s decision in *Higgs v Farmor’s School*. The Court of Appeal had found Mrs Higgs’ dismissal discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010, affirming that manifestation of belief is protected where it does not cross into hatred or disrupt workplace duties. This case set a precedent for balancing religious expression with employer reputation, reinforcing IRU’s advocacy for robust protections.

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## Extremism and Media Silence

### Inverclyde Mosque Plot (Scotland)

- **August 2025:** IRU highlighted the underreporting of a foiled far-right terror plot against the Inverclyde Muslim Centre in Greenock. A 17-year-old, radicalised via TikTok and inspired by Anders Breivik, infiltrated the mosque under false pretences, intending to livestream a massacre. Despite the gravity of the plot, mainstream UK media coverage was minimal, with Sky News among the few outlets reporting substantively.

IRU argued that had the perpetrator been Muslim targeting a synagogue or church, coverage would have been immediate and politically charged. The disparity reflects systemic Islamophobia in media framing, where white supremacist violence against Muslims is not treated as a national emergency. This silence, IRU contended, enables violence by normalising complacency.

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## Policy and Advocacy

### Definition of Islamophobia

- **August 2025:** IRU reaffirmed its support for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of Islamophobia as “racism targeting expressions of Muslimness.” This definition, adopted by councils, universities, and police forces, captures institutional bias and microaggressions overlooked by the narrower term “anti-Muslim hatred.”
- **October 2025:** At the Trade Union Congress (TUC) conference in Brighton, CEO Majid Iqbal reiterated IRU’s position, urging government adoption of a definition that acknowledges structural and intersectional prejudice. He emphasised that “Islamophobia” is essential to empower victims, inform discourse, and strengthen legal protections.

### Counter-Terrorism and Race Equality

- **June 2025:** IRU submitted evidence to the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy, and Practice, highlighting disproportionate impacts on Muslim communities.
- IRU also contributed to the Race Equality Foundation’s report *Understanding the Racist Riots of 2024 and What Should Be Done*, situating Islamophobia within broader racialised violence.

### Government Appointment of British Muslim Trust (BMT)

- **August 2025:** IRU responded to the government’s appointment of BMT as a reporting partner for anti-Muslim hatred. While welcoming collaboration, IRU

stressed that victim-centred practice, transparency, and recognition of institutional harms must underpin the work of this new organisation.

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## Public Engagement and Events

### Manchester Seminar – October 2025

IRU hosted “Challenging Islamophobia in Sport and Society” at the British Muslim Heritage Centre. The seminar convened community leaders, academics, grassroots clubs, and Manchester FA officials.

- **Speakers:** Dr Ikram Butt and Professor Kevin Hylton addressed institutional bias in sport, urging a shift from awareness to accountability.
- **Grassroots spotlight:** The Asgard Vikings cricket team shared experiences of Islamophobic abuse, underscoring systemic discrimination beyond elite sport.

### BBC Coverage – August 2025

IRU’s work was recognised in BBC coverage of the Mayor of London’s investment to tackle hate crime and extremism. CEO Majid Iqbal emphasised that “every Londoner deserves to feel safe and respected, free from hate or discrimination.”

### Legal Sector Mobilisation – October 2025

IRU addressed the Manchester Law Society, highlighting underreporting of Islamophobic hate crime and discrimination. A call was issued for lawyers and paralegals to volunteer, expanding IRU’s capacity in the North of England.

### Institutional Racism Conference – November 2025

In November 2025, representatives from the IRU participated in the Institutional Racism Conference, organised by Lawrence Davies, CEO of Equal Justice Solicitors, in partnership with the National Black Police Association. The event featured contributions from senior figures including the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Police and the Chair of the National Black Police Association. Amina Ahmed, IRU’s legal intern and

executive board member of the Met Police Black Police Association, attended on behalf of IRU.

The conference focused on disparities affecting Black and Asian individuals across the criminal justice system, healthcare, education, employment, and wider public services. During the discussions, Amina Ahmed raised the critical issues of Islamophobia and intersectionality, emphasising the need for more inclusive approaches to tackling discrimination within institutions.

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## Hate Crime Statistics

- **October 2025:** IRU responded to Home Office figures showing a **19% rise in religious hate crimes targeting Muslims** in England and Wales. Muslims accounted for **45% of all religious hate crime victims**, compared to 29% Jewish, 5% Christian, 3% Sikh, 2% Hindu, and 16% other.

IRU emphasised that official statistics understate the problem due to underreporting, reinforcing the need for independent, trusted channels like IRU.

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## Organisational Profile

- **Legal Team:** Three Lawyers, one Paralegal and one Legal Intern.
  - **Volunteers:** 71 caseworkers (students), 26 legal supervisors (solicitors/barristers).
  - **Impact:** Over 2,000 individuals impacted; 100% success rate in employment tribunals; growing partnerships with universities and law firms.
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The IRU's work in 2025 demonstrates the intersection of casework, policy advocacy, and systemic critique. From exposing institutional failures in football and education to challenging media silence on far-right extremism, IRU has consistently foregrounded the lived realities of Islamophobia. Its insistence on a robust definition of Islamophobia, engagement with unions and government, and expansion of volunteer networks reflect a holistic strategy: building evidence, influencing systems, and empowering communities. As Islamophobia continues to rise, IRU's role as a trusted, independent, and victim-centred organisation remains indispensable.

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## IRU Strategic Direction (2026-2030 Horizon)

### 1. Community Impact – Access to Justice

- Expand free legal advice provision, prioritising complex employment and education cases.
- Target a **50% increase in caseworkers and specialist staff by 2027**, reflecting rising demand.<sup>6</sup>
- Resolve or signpost **70% of referrals within three months**, focusing on multi-incident cases.
- Strengthen safeguarding protocols in response to a **700% rise in direct hostility (hate mail) against IRU staff and volunteers**.<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Systemic Impact - Evidence and Advocacy

- Invest in secure case management and analytics platforms to handle **150+ referrals annually**.
- Publish annual impact reports integrating IRU data with Home Office and ONS statistics.
- Campaign for improved classification of Islamophobia in national datasets, challenging mislabelling as “racially aggravated” offences.
- Drive reforms in employment law, education policy, and hate crime recording.

### 3. National Impact - Equality and Accountability

- Position IRU as a national authority on Islamophobia, shaping standards for policing, Prevent, and safeguarding.
- Forge at least **three formal partnerships annually** with legal, academic, or advocacy organisations.

### 4. Organisational Resilience - Sustainability and Safeguarding

- Secure multi-year funding commitments by 2028 to reduce reliance on short-term grants.
- Invest in IT infrastructure and secure cloud-based systems to ensure operational continuity.
- Enhance safeguarding protocols to protect staff from reputational and physical hostility.

## IRU Impact Statement

Partnership Development: Strengthen collaboration with allied organisations, community groups, and advocacy networks to amplify impact, share resources, and reinforce best practice in safeguarding and legal intervention. Strategic alliances will be prioritised to enhance operational resilience and broaden IRU's reach across diverse communities.

### 1. Community Impact

- **Direct Support:** IRU provides free legal advice and casework services, with a focus on complex, multi-incident cases in employment, education, and public law.
- **Accessibility:** By removing affordability barriers, IRU ensures vulnerable individuals can challenge unfair treatment in workplaces, schools, and public spaces.
- **Positive Outcomes:** In 2025, 100% of cases were resolved through Employment Tribunal settlements for cases referred to our new legal team.
- **Resilience:** Structured volunteer onboarding and training enabled the addition of 15 new caseworkers, supporting a 189% surge in referrals.
- **Safeguarding:** Enhanced protocols to protect staff and volunteers from a 700% increase in direct hostility (hate mail).

**Impact:** IRU empowers individuals to assert their rights, strengthens community trust, and ensures financial barriers do not prevent access to justice.

### 2. Systemic Impact

- **Evidence Base:** IRU's data highlights systemic patterns of Islamophobia, including the surge in employment discrimination linked to Palestine advocacy and political expression.
- **Accountability:** Casework analysis evidences disparities in policing, workplace practices, and hate crime recording, challenging institutional bias and minimisation.
- **Advocacy Role:** IRU's reporting informs stakeholders about gaps in equality, diversity, and inclusion frameworks, strengthening accountability across employment, education, and criminal justice.

- **Organisational Hostility:** The sharp rise in hate mail targeting IRU underscores the risks faced by advocacy organisations and the hostile environment in which they operate.

**Impact:** IRU's systemic analysis ensures individual experiences inform broader advocacy, policy reform, and institutional accountability.

### 3. National Impact

- **Equality Infrastructure:** IRU strengthens the UK's human rights landscape by ensuring minority voices are represented in national debates.
- **Policy Influence:** IRU's evidence challenges disparities in Prevent referrals, policing standards, and workplace discrimination, shaping national conversations on hate crime and extremism.
- **Cross-Community Benefit:** While IRU's primary focus is Muslim communities, its advocacy benefits all minority groups facing discrimination.
- **Long Term Change:** By embedding free legal advice and evidence-based advocacy, IRU contributes to a fairer, more inclusive society.

**Impact:** IRU is more than a frontline service—it is a national accountability mechanism, challenging systemic bias, widening access to justice, and strengthening equality frameworks for all.

### IRU Key Highlights (2024-2025)

- **Discrimination:** Now the leading referral type (37%), with many cases linked to Palestine-related advocacy and political expression.
- **Education Safeguarding:** 25% of education cases involved safeguarding failures in schools, highlighting the need for specialist advocacy.
- **Criminal Matters:** 21% of referrals related to harassment, assaults, and police engagement.
- **Hostility Against IRU:** Hate mail referrals rose by 700%, underscoring the need for robust safeguarding and reputational management.

These updates ensure your strategic plan is fully aligned with the latest evidence and challenges, positioning IRU to deliver maximum impact for communities facing Islamophobia and related forms of discrimination.

# IRU Incident Analysis, Outcomes, and Resource Needs

## Overview of Incidents Investigated

Between 2023 and 2025, the IRU investigated **906 Islamophobia-related incidents**. This figure includes both single and multi-incident referrals, reflecting the complex and repeat nature of Islamophobia experienced by many clients.

### Annual distribution:

- **2023:** 110 incidents (12%)
- **2024:** 525 incidents (58.%)
- **2025:** 271 incidents (30%)

### Growth trends:

- **2023 → 2024:** +377.27% increase, driven by heightened international tensions, Palestine-related cases, and improved visibility of IRU services.
- **2024 → 2025:** -48.38% decrease, likely due to a non-recurring anomaly for 2024 (see 2026 Insights document at the foot of this report), coupled with two significant and national emerging reporting bodies entering the sector (this includes a substantial and government funded organisation) and more complex cases in 2025.

## Breakdown by Main Areas of Work

### Key Insights and Trends (2023-2025)

Theme / Area	2023	2024	2025	% of Total (906)	Key Insights
<b>Total Incidents</b>	110	525	271	100%	Sharp rise in 2024 (+377%), moderation in 2025 (-48%) but with greater case complexity.
<b>Workplace Discrimination</b>	21	101	52	19.2%	Increasingly complex disputes in 2025: dismissal + harassment + retaliation; average settlement £43,234.60.
<b>Education (Schools/Universities)</b>	20	98	50	18.6%	2025 cases more resource-intensive: prayer restrictions, disciplinary action for speech, safeguarding failures.

Theme / Area	2023	2024	2025	% of Total (906)	Key Insights
Hate Crime	26	126	65	24.0%	Consistent high share; ONS data shows 19% rise in religious hate crimes against Muslims in 2025.
Online / Social Media	10	49	26	9.5%	Digital harassment often linked to offline abuse; requires dual legal + safeguarding response.
Community / Public Spaces	6	30	15	5.7%	Housing, transport, and public event discrimination; often overlapping with hate crime.
Institutional / Systemic Bias	4	18	9	3.4%	FA governance failures, opaque processes; media under-reporting of major threats.
Other / Unspecified	22	103	53	19.6%	Multi-incident referrals; overlapping harms across employment, education, and public law.

N.B - Figures are approximate and have been rounded up/down accordingly.

- **Complexity in 2025:** Although incident numbers fell, **cases required more hours, specialist expertise, and tribunal/public law preparation.** Employment and education cases were particularly resource-intensive.
- **Compound Harm:** 906 incidents vs 651 referrals shows repeat victimisation and multi-faceted discrimination.
- **Palestine-Linked Cases:** Significant rise in 2024-25, especially in education and workplaces, tied to disciplinary action for political expression.
- **Institutional Under-Response:** FA dismissive replies and media silence on extremist threats perpetuate systemic minimisation of Islamophobia.
- **Intersectional Barriers:** Muslim women and Black Muslims faced compounded discrimination, requiring intersectional advocacy strategies.

# IRU Key Insights and Trends

## Incident Growth and Distribution

- **Sharp escalation in 2024:** Incidents rose from 110 in 2023 to 525 in 2024 (+377%). This surge coincided with heightened international tensions, particularly Palestine-related events, which translated into domestic Islamophobia in workplaces, schools, and public spaces.
- **Moderation in 2025:** Reported incidents fell to 271 (-48% compared to 2024). However, this apparent decline masks a critical shift: **cases in 2025 were significantly more complex and resource-intensive**, especially in employment and education.
- **Compound harm:** The gap between referrals (651) and incidents (906) demonstrates that many clients experienced multiple, overlapping forms of Islamophobia. For example, a single referral might involve workplace harassment, online abuse, and institutional discrimination, requiring multi-disciplinary support.

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## Complexity of 2025 Cases

### Employment law matters:

- Cases increasingly involved **multi-layered disputes**, such as unfair dismissal combined with harassment, retaliation for grievances, and failures to accommodate religious practice.
- Many required **specialist tribunal drafting** (ET1s, particulars of claim) and extended conciliation processes.
- Settlements averaged **£43,234.60**, reflecting both the seriousness of harm and the intensive legal work required.
- Several cases demanded **cross-sector engagement**, including union support, employer policy reviews, and public advocacy.

### Education sector cases:

- Schools and universities introduced restrictive policies on prayer, religious expression, and political speech, often during sensitive periods (e.g., Ramadan, Palestine protests).
- These cases required **public law analysis** (Article 9 ECHR, Equality Act 2010) and safeguarding interventions.
- Complexity was heightened by the need to balance **student welfare, parental rights, and institutional accountability**, often involving multiple stakeholders (school boards, local authorities, regulators).

- Repeat victimisation was common, with students facing both disciplinary action and peer bullying, compounding harm.
  - **Resource intensity:**
    - 2025 cases demanded **longer advisory hours per client**, more specialist input, and coordination across employment, education, and public law.
    - Compared to 2023-24, where many cases were resolved through initial advice or grievance letters, 2025 saw a higher proportion requiring **formal representation, tribunal preparation, and systemic advocacy**.
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## IRU Thematic Insights

### Palestine-linked incidents:

- A marked rise in 2024-25, particularly in education and workplaces, where individuals faced disciplinary action for expressing solidarity or political views.
- These cases highlight the intersection of Islamophobia with freedom of expression and political rights, requiring nuanced legal strategies.

### Institutional under-response:

- Major institutions (e.g., FA, media outlets) often failed to act decisively or transparently.
- The foiled mosque attack in Scotland received minimal coverage, underscoring systemic minimisation of Islamophobia compared to other forms of extremism.
- Such under-response perpetuates distrust and necessitates independent advocacy channels like IRU.

### Intersectional barriers:

- Clients often faced compounded disadvantage: Muslim women experiencing both gendered and religious discrimination; Black Muslims encountering racialised Islamophobia.
  - These cases required **intersectional advocacy**, linking employment law, equality law, and human rights frameworks.
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## Regional and Sectoral Trends

- **London:** Continues to report the highest volume of incidents, reflecting both population density and heightened visibility of Muslim communities.
- **Education:** Rising trend of restrictive policies in schools/universities, particularly around prayer and political expression.
- **Workplace:** Increasingly complex disputes involving dismissal, harassment, and retaliation, often requiring tribunal representation.
- **Sport:** Persistent governance failures, with FA responses characterised by opacity and delay, undermining trust in institutional accountability.
- **Online hate:** Remains significant (9.5% of incidents), often linked to offline abuse, requiring digital literacy and reporting support.

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## Risks and Implications

- **Escalating complexity:** 2025 cases required **more hours, specialist expertise, and multi-stakeholder engagement**, stretching IRU's capacity.
- **Public law demand:** Rise in referrals involving social services, care orders, and school policies highlights the urgent need for a **dedicated public law solicitor**.
- **Safeguarding gaps:** Education cases exposed failures to protect Muslim students' rights, requiring stronger safeguarding frameworks and advocacy.
- **Systemic minimisation:** Institutional silence or dismissive responses (e.g., FA, media) risk normalising Islamophobia and eroding public trust.
- **Resource strain:** Without additional funding, IRU risks being unable to meet demand for complex employment and education cases, particularly those requiring tribunal or judicial review.

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## Impact Achieved

- **Legal outcomes:** High-value settlements in employment cases demonstrate tangible justice for victims.
  - **Policy influence:** IRU interventions compelled external reviews (FA), contributed to government working groups, and shaped public discourse on Islamophobia.
  - **Community trust:** Beneficiary feedback highlights IRU's role as a trusted, compassionate, and effective support service. **650+ students** were impacted by resolutions in cases where schools sought to restrict religious prayer.
  - **Visibility:** Media coverage (BBC, Religion Media Centre) amplified IRU's advocacy, countering institutional silence.
-

The period 2023-2025 reflects both the **scale of Islamophobia** and the **evolving complexity of cases**. While incident numbers peaked in 2024, 2025 cases were **far more resource-intensive**, particularly in employment and education, requiring tribunal preparation, public law analysis, and safeguarding interventions. This shift underscores the urgent need for **expanded legal capacity, dedicated public law expertise, and increased funding** to sustain IRU's impact.

## Outcomes

### Direct Legal Outcomes

- **Employment Case Settlements:**
    - Toward the end of 2025, IRU secured three major employment settlements totalling **£129,701.80**, with an **average award of £43,234.60**.
    - These outcomes are not only financial victories but also significant in their outcomes, sending a clear message to employers that Islamophobia will not be tolerated.
    - Each settlement represents months of intensive casework: drafting tribunal documents, negotiating conciliation, and providing emotional support to claimants.
  
  - **Tribunal Representation:**
    - IRU has achieved a **100% settlement success rate** in employment tribunal cases handled by our new legal team.
    - This success demonstrates both the **quality of our legal advocacy** and the **trust clients place in our services**.
    - Without IRU, many of these cases would never have reached tribunal due to financial and procedural barriers.
  
  - **Non-Contentious Work:**
    - All non-contentious services (advice, grievance letters, internal processes) are provided **free of charge**, ensuring accessibility for vulnerable clients.
    - This early intervention often prevents escalation, saving both clients and institutions significant time, cost, and emotional distress.
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## Policy and Advocacy Impact

- **Football Association Accountability:**
    - IRU's intervention compelled the FA to launch both an external review and an internal investigation into systemic discrimination at West Riding County FA.
    - This case is a **watershed moment**, exposing governance failures and pushing for reforms across grassroots sport.
  - **Definition of Islamophobia:**
    - IRU contributed to government working groups and public discourse, advocating for a definition that captures **structural, institutional, and intersectional prejudice**.
    - This work strengthens policy frameworks, ensuring Islamophobia is recognised alongside other forms of racialised discrimination.
  - **Media Visibility:**
    - IRU's statements were featured by the **BBC** and **Religion Media Centre**, amplifying our advocacy and raising public awareness.
    - Coverage of our work ensures that Islamophobia is not minimised or ignored in national conversations.
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## Community Trust and Beneficiary Feedback

- **Testimonials (October 2025 newsletter):**
    - "Supportive with quick and efficient communication."
    - "Personal, compassionate, quick and effective."
  - These voices reflect the **human impact** of IRU's work: clients feel heard, validated, and empowered.
  - Trust is critical in communities where **distrust of police and institutions** is widespread. IRU provides a safe, specialist channel for reporting and support.
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## Complexity and Resource Intensity (2025)

- While incident numbers moderated in 2025, **case complexity increased significantly**:
    - **Employment cases:** Multi-layered disputes involving dismissal, harassment, retaliation, and religious accommodation failures.
    - **Education cases:** Restrictive prayer policies, safeguarding failures, and disciplinary action for political expression.
    - **Public law referrals:** Care orders and social services cases requiring judicial review and specialist advocacy.
  - These cases demanded **longer advisory hours, specialist expertise, and multi-stakeholder engagement**, stretching IRU's capacity.
  - Without additional funding, IRU risks being unable to meet demand for these complex, resource-intensive cases.
- 

## Systemic Impact

- **Data Collection:** IRU's evidence base (906 incidents, 651 referrals) informs national policy, academic research, and public education.
  - **Precedent Setting:** Employment settlements and tribunal cases establish legal standards that benefit all Muslim workers.
  - **Community Empowerment:** Seminars, outreach, and training build resilience and awareness, ensuring communities know their rights and how to enforce them.
  - **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Partnerships with Dechert LLP, University of Nottingham, Trust for London, and ELAN strengthen IRU's reach and sustainability.
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## Legal and Academic Research and Analysis on Discrimination Related to Islamophobia

Indirect discrimination remains a pervasive challenge within British and European legal frameworks, perpetuating systemic disadvantage for many groups—most notably Muslims, and especially Black and Asian Muslim women. This disadvantage is compounded by Islamophobia, a specific form of anti-Muslim racism, which not only influences attitudes and decision-making but also becomes embedded in the practices and policies of key public and private institutions. The impact of indirect discrimination and Islamophobia stretches across the judicial system, education, healthcare, criminal justice, policing, and employment. The following analysis provides an in-depth exploration of these issues, supported by case law, academic commentary, and recommendations for legal professionals and clients.

### Legal Doctrine and Case Law Foundations

The principle of indirect discrimination is codified in Section 19 of the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits policies or practices that are apparently neutral but, in practice, put individuals with a protected characteristic—such as religion or race—at a particular disadvantage. For example, a workplace ban on headwear may not mention religion but effectively excludes Muslim women who cover their hair for religious reasons.<sup>1</sup>

Key judicial authorities have clarified how claimants can establish indirect discrimination. In *Essop v Home Office (UK Border Agency)* [2017] UKSC 27, the Supreme Court made it clear that claimants do not need to explain why a disadvantage occurs, only to demonstrate its existence. This is significant for complex, systemic forms of disadvantage often rooted in longstanding structural inequalities. Similarly, *Naeem v Secretary of State for Justice* [2017] UKSC 11 recognised that apparently neutral policies—such as pay structures based on length of service—could disadvantage Muslim chaplains, who had been historically excluded from such roles.<sup>2</sup>

Other important decisions include *Bougnaoui v Micropole SA* (C-188/15) EU:C:2017:204, where the CJEU found that dismissing a Muslim woman for wearing a headscarf, based on client preferences, constituted unlawful discrimination under EU law.<sup>3</sup>

# Islamophobia and Systemic Disparities

## Historical and Social Context

Indirect discrimination and Islamophobia are products of complex historical, social, and political processes that shape institutional practices across the United Kingdom and Europe. The legacy of colonialism, migration, and evolving national identities has often positioned Muslims—especially Black and Asian Muslim communities—at the intersection of multiple disadvantages. Structural inequalities are reinforced by prevailing stereotypes and media narratives, which not only inform public perception but also influence policy formation and legal decision-making. The persistence of Islamophobia as a form of structural racism means that Muslims are not only subject to overt hostility but also embedded forms of disadvantage, often invisible to those not directly affected.

## Legal Doctrine in Depth

The statutory framework for tackling indirect discrimination is primarily found in Section 19 of the Equality Act 2010. This provision prohibits apparently neutral criteria, provisions, or practices that, in effect, place individuals with a protected characteristic—such as religion or race—at a particular disadvantage compared to others. Importantly, Section 19 incorporates a justification defence, allowing employers or service providers to justify such measures if they can demonstrate their proportionality, i.e., that the policy is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This reflects the broader jurisprudence of EU law, particularly Article 2(2)(b) of the EU Equality Directive 2000/78/EC, which underpins the UK's domestic regime.

In practice, the burden of proof in indirect discrimination claims is bifurcated: claimants must first establish a *prima facie* case of group disadvantage, shifting the onus to the respondent to justify the policy or practice. The proportionality test, as articulated in cases such as *Homer v Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police* [2012] UKSC 15, requires a nuanced balancing of competing interests, weighing the discriminatory impact against the legitimacy and necessity of the aim pursued. The courts have emphasised that justification defences must be supported by evidence, not mere assertion, and that less discriminatory alternatives should be considered.

## Comprehensive Case Law Analysis and Comparative Perspectives

The Supreme Court's decision in *Essop v Home Office (UK Border Agency)* [2017] UKSC 27 clarified a key point: claimants are not required to explain the precise cause of a group disadvantage, only to demonstrate its existence. This is particularly significant for Muslim

claimants facing barriers rooted in deep-seated structural inequalities, where causation is often diffuse and multifactorial. In *Naeem v Secretary of State for Justice* [2017] UKSC 11, the Court recognised that pay structures based on length of service could perpetuate disadvantage for Muslim chaplains historically excluded from such roles, highlighting the importance of historical context in assessing indirect discrimination.

The European Court of Justice in *Bouagnaoui v Micropole SA* (C-188/15) EU:C:2017:204 further elucidated the limits of employer discretion, holding that dismissals based on client preferences regarding religious dress—here, a Muslim woman’s headscarf—constituted unlawful discrimination. This case, alongside *Achbita v G4S Secure Solutions NV* (C-157/15), demonstrates the ongoing tension between individual rights and organisational interests within the European legal space. Comparative perspectives from France, Belgium, and Germany reveal differing approaches to balancing *laïcité*, neutrality, and religious expression, with the UK’s model generally providing greater scope for religious accommodation but still facing significant challenges in practical application.

Recent case law, such as *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 and *Matovu v Porter KC* [2025] EWHC 760 (KB), illustrates persistent barriers for Muslim claimants, who frequently encounter heightened scrutiny and stereotypical assumptions regarding credibility, motivation, or “fit” within organisational cultures. These trends underscore the need for judicial awareness of implicit bias and intersectionality in discrimination litigation.

## **Systemic Disparities and Institutional Impact**

Systemic disparities manifest across key institutions. In the judiciary, empirical research has shown that Muslims are disproportionately prosecuted under terrorism legislation and often receive harsher sentences for comparable conduct, reflecting the influence of racialised narratives and policy frameworks that conflate religious identity with security risks. In education, apparently neutral policies—such as uniform rules or curriculum design—can disproportionately exclude or marginalise Muslim pupils, particularly Black Muslim boys, who experience higher rates of disciplinary action and exclusion. The curriculum’s frequent omission of Islamic history and contributions further entrenches marginalisation and alienation.

In healthcare, indirect discrimination is evident in hospital policies that overlook halal dietary requirements or maternity care protocols that fail to accommodate religious needs and modesty concerns. The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard Report (2023)

reveals that Muslim staff face persistent barriers to promotion and are more likely to be subject to disciplinary proceedings, reflecting broader patterns of workplace disadvantage. In policing and criminal justice, Muslims, especially young men, are subjected to over-policing, surveillance, and disproportionate use of stop-and-search powers, feeding into a cycle of mistrust and exclusion. In employment, facially neutral policies—such as dress codes or recruitment practices—continue to limit opportunities for Muslim women who wear religious dress, as highlighted by the Bougnaoui decision.

Intersectionality is crucial to understanding these disparities. Muslim women, for example, often face compounded forms of discrimination based on both gender and religion, and these intersecting inequalities are frequently overlooked by institutions applying a single-axis analysis. Legal professionals must be attuned to the ways in which race, gender, class, and religion interact to produce unique barriers for clients.

## **Islamophobia as Structural Racism: Academic and Policy Perspectives**

Academic scholarship increasingly conceptualises Islamophobia as a form of structural racism—a system of advantage and disadvantage that operates through laws, policies, and institutional practices, rather than solely through individual prejudice. Scholars such as Sayyid, Meer, and Fekete have demonstrated that Islamophobia is embedded within the very fabric of legal and policy frameworks, shaping outcomes in subtle and cumulative ways. Policy analyses, including those by the Runnymede Trust and the European Network Against Racism, highlight how Islamophobic assumptions underpin counter-terrorism legislation, immigration controls, and welfare policies, resulting in the routine othering and surveillance of Muslim communities.

Manifestations of Islamophobia in law and practice include the pathologisation of religious practices (e.g., headscarf bans, scrutiny of halal slaughter), the securitisation of Muslim civic life, and the failure to adequately address hate crime and discrimination. These patterns reveal the limitations of formal equality and the need for substantive, context-sensitive approaches that address both overt and covert forms of exclusion.

# Systemic Disparities and Institutional Impact

## Judiciary

Studies and case law reveal that Muslims are at risk of harsher outcomes within the judicial system. For instance, empirical research has shown that Muslims are more likely to be prosecuted under terrorism legislation and receive heavier sentences compared to non-Muslims for similar conduct. Although not exclusive to Muslims, *R v Rogers* [2007] UKHL 8 demonstrates how racialised narratives can affect judicial reasoning, with broader implications for minority access to justice.

Further, cases such as *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 and *Matovu v Porter KC* [2025] EWHC 760 (KB) illustrate ongoing battles over workplace fairness and the persistent barriers Muslim claimants face in proving discrimination, often being subject to stringent judicial scrutiny and stereotypical assumptions about credibility or motivation.

Legal professionals should be alert to implicit bias in court processes and advocate for intersectional, expert-driven evidence on behalf of clients.

## Education

Islamophobia in education is evident in policies that, while purportedly neutral, disproportionately discipline or exclude Muslim students. Uniform policies, curriculum choices that marginalise Islamic history or culture, and zero-tolerance disciplinary regimes, are all examples. The CJEU's decision in *Bougnaoui* set an important standard, but UK practice remains uneven. Data shows that Muslim pupils, particularly Black Muslim boys, are excluded at higher rates, often for "behaviour" that reflects cultural or religious differences. The impact is compounded by a curriculum that often fails to reflect the histories and contributions of Muslim communities.

Legal practitioners should encourage equality impact assessments and challenge ostensibly neutral policies that result in negative outcomes for Muslim pupils.

## Healthcare

Indirect discrimination and Islamophobia impact healthcare access, quality, and outcomes for Muslim communities in profound and multifaceted ways. Beyond the more visible incidents of overt discrimination, indirect discrimination often manifests through institutional practices and policies that, while seemingly neutral on their face, disproportionately disadvantage Muslims. For example, hospital dietary restrictions that

overlook halal requirements may result in Muslim patients being unable to access appropriate nutrition during hospital stays, potentially affecting recovery and well-being. Similarly, rigid maternity care protocols that fail to accommodate religious needs—such as the presence of female-only staff for certain procedures, or the provision of private spaces for prayer and ablution—can create significant barriers for Muslim women, sometimes leading to avoidance of care or suboptimal health outcomes.

The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard Report (2023) has further illuminated the structural disadvantage faced by Muslim staff. The data reveals persistent patterns: Muslims are less likely to be promoted, more likely to be subject to disciplinary action, and often report feeling undervalued or marginalised within their workplaces. Such findings point to an entrenched culture in which unconscious bias, stereotypical assumptions, and lack of cultural competence combine to limit opportunities and reinforce inequality. The consequences are far-reaching—not only for individual staff members, but also for patient care and institutional effectiveness, as diversity and inclusion are linked to improved organisational performance and better health outcomes for all.

Legal professionals play a critical role in challenging these patterns of discrimination. They should support clients in raising formal complaints—whether through NHS grievance procedures, regulatory bodies, or litigation—and insist on rigorous collection and analysis of workforce and patient data disaggregated by religion and ethnicity. This evidence can be instrumental in demonstrating patterns of indirect discrimination and holding institutions to account. Moreover, legal advocates should promote the use of equality impact assessments, ensuring that new or revised policies are scrutinised for their potential to disadvantage Muslim communities, and that remedial steps are taken where necessary.

## **Criminal Justice and Policing**

Islamophobia is acutely felt in policing and the criminal justice system, often exacerbated by the intersection of race, religion, and security policy. Muslims are disproportionately targeted through stop-and-search powers, counter-terrorism referrals (such as the Prevent programme), and ongoing surveillance. These measures, frequently justified under the guise of neutrality or public safety, have a demonstrably discriminatory impact. Statistical analyses reveal that Muslims are far more likely to be stopped, questioned, or referred under counter-terrorism initiatives than their non-Muslim counterparts, despite a lack of evidence that such targeting is effective in reducing crime or enhancing security.

Parliamentary reports and academic research have established that the cumulative effect of these practices is deeply damaging: community trust in the police and justice system is eroded, individuals experience heightened anxiety and a sense of perpetual suspicion, and the broader message is one of exclusion and ‘othering’. The Prevent strategy, in particular, has been criticised for encouraging teachers, healthcare workers, and other public sector employees to report individuals for signs of ‘radicalisation’, often based on vague or culturally insensitive criteria. This climate of suspicion undermines the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and religious practice, and has a chilling effect on civic participation and community cohesion.

Recent case law illustrates the evolving legal landscape in this area. In *Beggs, Petitioner* [2025] CSOH 112, the Scottish courts were required to consider the fairness of criminal procedures, with potential implications for religious minorities subjected to disproportionate surveillance or procedural disadvantage. Similarly, *R (Brown) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* [2008] EWHC 3158 (Admin) involved judicial scrutiny of public law challenges that intersected with discrimination claims, providing a framework for future challenges to discriminatory policing and justice practices. Legal professionals must therefore rigorously interrogate the proportionality and necessity of police practices, demand transparency in the use of powers such as stop-and-search, and advocate for accountability mechanisms that protect the rights of Muslim individuals and communities.

## Employment

In the workplace, Muslims encounter a range of barriers that reflect both direct and indirect discrimination. Recruitment processes may inadvertently exclude Muslim candidates through criteria that privilege certain educational backgrounds, cultural experiences, or modes of self-presentation. For example, the use of ‘cultural fit’ as a recruitment metric can mask underlying biases, leading to the systematic exclusion of candidates from minoritised religious backgrounds. *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580 is a contemporary example, scrutinising recruitment criteria that disproportionately excluded Muslim and other minoritised applicants. Promotion and progression are similarly affected: the *Ministry of Defence v Rubery* [2024] EAT 165 examined the impact of ostensibly ‘neutral’ promotion policies that, in practice, inhibited the career advancement of Muslim staff. *Edwards v Ministry of Defence* [2024] EAT 18 further highlighted the importance of dignity and respect for Muslim employees, noting that workplace cultures often fail to accommodate religious practices such as prayer, fasting, or the observance of religious holidays.

The imposition of bans on religious dress or requirements for ‘neutral appearance’—for example, prohibiting the hijab, beard, or other visible markers of Islamic faith—creates significant obstacles, especially for Muslim women. These policies are rarely justified, especially where reasonable adjustments or less discriminatory alternatives are available. The jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), including the landmark *Bougnaoui* case, has reinforced the principle that indirect discrimination must be robustly scrutinised, and that employers bear a heavy burden in justifying any policy that restricts religious expression. In practice, however, many employers default to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, failing to recognise the diversity of their workforce and the importance of genuine inclusion.

Legal professionals have a vital role in guiding employers to conduct thorough reviews of recruitment, promotion, and disciplinary policies. They should encourage the adoption of inclusive practices—such as flexible scheduling for religious observance, provision of prayer spaces, and consultation with staff networks—and support the creation of environments in which Muslim employees feel empowered to participate fully and progress in their careers. Additionally, they can assist in drafting policy documents that explicitly recognise and protect religious diversity, and in establishing mechanisms for ongoing review and accountability. The goal is not only to prevent discrimination, but to actively promote workplaces in which diversity is valued as a source of strength and innovation.

## Academic Insights and Critical Commentary

Academic discourse on equality law and the lived realities of Muslim communities in Britain highlights both the limitations of current legal frameworks and the transformative potential of more robust approaches to discrimination. Sandra Fredman’s influential work on substantive equality advocates for a shift beyond superficial or formal neutrality, urging institutions and courts to address disadvantage, stigma, participation, and stereotyping in a meaningful way. Her four-dimensional model—redressing disadvantage, tackling stigma, enhancing participation, and accommodating difference—has been pivotal in critiquing and informing anti-discrimination law. For instance, Fredman argues that policies which appear neutral, such as uniform requirements banning religious dress, often have a disproportionate impact on Muslim women, particularly those who wear the hijab or niqab. A practical example can be found in *Bougnaoui* and *ADDH v Micropole SA* (C-188/15), where the CJEU held that dismissing an employee for wearing a headscarf constituted direct discrimination unless objectively justified. Building on this, Aileen McColgan has

cautioned that judicial reluctance to interrogate structural disadvantage undermines the transformative potential of indirect discrimination law. She points to the tendency of courts to accept employers' justifications for potentially discriminatory practices at face value, without requiring robust evidence that less discriminatory alternatives have been considered. This is reflected in recent case law, such as *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580, where the court was criticised for too readily accepting operational justifications for a 'neutral appearance' policy, despite evidence of disproportionate impact on Muslim staff. McColgan's critique suggests that for equality law to achieve its aims, courts must engage more deeply with the realities of workplace culture and institutional bias, scrutinising whether policies genuinely serve a legitimate aim and are proportionate in their effects.

Suhraiya Jivraj's scholarship addresses an additional layer: the omission of race and colonial legacies in legal education and professional training, which perpetuates unconscious bias and limits the profession's capacity to challenge systemic discrimination. Jivraj calls for a decolonising approach to legal curricula, including critical engagement with the intersections of race, religion, and gender, and the impacts of colonialism on contemporary legal frameworks. For example, the persistent use of 'neutrality' as a legal standard often erases the lived experiences of Muslims, especially Black Muslim women, whose challenges are shaped by intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Intersectionality, as articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is fundamental to understanding the compounded barriers faced by individuals with multiple minoritised identities. In practice, workplace dress codes or performance evaluation systems may not only disadvantage Muslim employees, but may have a particularly severe impact on Black Muslim women due to the convergence of racial, religious, and gendered biases. This is reflected in findings by Amnesty International UK, which documents how counter-terrorism policies have disproportionately targeted Muslim communities, embedding both racial and religious stereotypes into institutional practice. Legal strategies should therefore adopt an intersectional lens, gathering evidence and formulating claims that reflect the complexity of lived experience, and seeking remedies that address overlapping harms.

In summary, academic commentary urges legal professionals and institutions to move beyond formal equality and engage with the structural and intersectional realities of discrimination. This requires not only doctrinal innovation but also proactive measures—such as collecting disaggregated data, reviewing ostensibly neutral policies for disparate impact, and embedding anti-bias training that addresses race and religion together.

## Recommendations for Legal Professionals and Clients

- **Robust Evidence:** Gather statistical and qualitative evidence by protected characteristic, including workforce and institutional data, to support claims.
- **Equality Impact Assessments:** Mandate regular reviews of policies and practices for discriminatory effects, with transparency in findings.
- **Policy Reform and Advocacy:** Advocate for stricter standards in assessing employer and institutional justifications. Support legal reforms that facilitate intersectional and group-based claims.
- **Cultural Competence and Training:** Promote anti-bias training and organisational change to recognise and address Islamophobia and unconscious bias.
- **Early Legal Intervention:** Advise seeking legal guidance proactively, not just after discrimination occurs, to shape fair policies from the outset.

## Thematic Analysis and Case Law Support

### 1. Indirect Discrimination and Structural Barriers

Indirect discrimination, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, arises when a provision, criterion, or practice (PCP) places a protected group at a disadvantage, even where there is no explicit intent to discriminate, as established in *Essop v Home Office* [2017] UKSC 27. Recent cases such as *Smith v Manchester City Council* [2025] EWHC 2987 (KB) and *Sivanandan v Capstone Foster Care Ltd* [2025] EWHC 1478 (KB) highlight ongoing litigation concerning religious and racial discrimination in public sector roles, including foster care approval. These cases illustrate the enduring nature of these issues and demonstrate the high threshold required for reopening appellate decisions, while still recognising underlying claims of discrimination in such contexts. Significantly, these cases reinforce that workplace policies perceived as “neutral”—such as dress codes or performance metrics—can have disproportionate impacts on religious and racial minorities.

### 2. Harassment, Hostile Environments, and Organisational Duty

A single serious incident may satisfy the legal threshold for harassment if it violates an individual’s dignity or creates a hostile environment, as clarified in *Richmond Pharmacology Ltd v Dhaliwal* [2009] IRLR 336. In recent decisions like *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 and *Matovu v Porter KC* [2025] EWHC 760 (KB), courts have clarified the criteria for “protected party” status and the application of reasonable adjustments in civil proceedings. These cases also examine the interaction between employment tribunal claims and civil proceedings in discrimination and victimisation contexts. For Black and Asian Muslim women, intersectional

harassment—such as racialised religious slurs and gendered threats—is often minimised or dismissed by employers. The importance of maintaining contemporaneous records and escalation logs is underscored for the successful pursuit of such claims.

### **3. Hate Crime Motivation, Flagging, and Sentencing Uplifts**

The legal definition of a “racial group” for hate crime purposes is broad, and evidence of motivation is essential for aggravated offences and sentencing uplifts, as established in *R v Rogers* [2007] UKHL 8. Recent cases, including *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580 and *Beggs, Petitioner* [2025] CSOH 112, demonstrate the courts’ scrutiny of whether authorities have properly considered the impact of their decisions on protected groups, including Muslims. Further, *Ministry of Defence v Rubery* [2024] EAT 165 and *Edwards v Ministry of Defence* [2024] EAT 18 focus on the investigation of discrimination claims within the armed forces. The regular use of single-motive flagging—either by religion or race—proves inadequate for Muslim victims, especially women. There is a clear need for intersectional flagging and robust evidence collection to ensure proper charging and sentencing.

### **4. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and Procedural Compliance**

Public bodies are required to demonstrate how equality considerations have substantively influenced their decisions, beyond mere procedural compliance, as set out in *R (Brown) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* [2008] EWHC 3158 (Admin). The courts, as seen in *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580 and *Beggs, Petitioner* [2025] CSOH 112, increasingly demand evidence that the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) has tangibly changed outcomes for Muslim communities. This expectation acts as a lever for demanding more than formal compliance from police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and local authorities, particularly in relation to Black and Asian Muslim women.

### **5. Criminal Justice Disparities and Systemic Outcomes**

Statistical patterns reveal that Black people are stopped and searched at significantly higher rates than white people, and Black defendants are more likely to be remanded in custody and to receive custodial sentences for similar offences. Muslims are overrepresented in the prison population relative to their proportion of the general population, and anti-Muslim hate crimes account for a substantial proportion of all recorded religious hate crimes, despite significant under-reporting. Recent case law, such as *Smith v Manchester City Council* [2025] EWHC 2987 (KB) and *Sivanandan v Capstone Foster Care Ltd* [2025] EWHC 1478 (KB), considers the compounded effects of race, religion, and gender on outcomes. *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025]

EWCA Civ 551 further clarifies access to justice for Muslim claimants. Increasingly, sentencing and remand decisions are being challenged for indirect discrimination or a lack of proportionality, particularly where Black Muslims may be misread through “security” lenses, resulting in harsher risk assessments and reduced access to diversionary or community-based disposals.

## 6. Workplace Discrimination and Reasonable Accommodation

Muslims, especially women who wear visible religious dress, frequently report higher rates of discrimination, barriers to progression, and harassment in the workplace. Key cases such as *Bougnaoui v Micropole SA* (C-188/15) and *Eweida and others v UK* (2013) 57 EHRR 8 confirm that employer policies on “neutrality” must be strictly justified and proportionate, and that visible religious dress is a protected manifestation. *Matovu v Porter* KC [2025] EWHC 760 (KB) and *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 further address the importance of reasonable adjustments and the necessity for employers to accommodate religious and cultural practices. These cases highlight the need for clear dress accommodation policies, flexible scheduling, and independent investigations into harassment, noting that intersectionality increases both the risk of discrimination and the likelihood that such discrimination will be minimised by employers.

## 7. Good Practice and Systemic Failures

Examples of good practice are limited, particularly regarding intersectional tri-flagging—where police or the CPS consistently record religion, race, and gender motivations—which leads to undercharging and missed opportunities for sentencing uplifts. Specialist hate crime pathways, with dedicated investigators and early CPS liaison, have been shown to improve outcomes. Community-embedded advocacy, with advocates based in community settings such as mosques, is associated with higher reporting rates and reduced withdrawal of complaints.

Despite these improvements, persistent gaps remain in effectively recognising and addressing the intersectional nature of discrimination faced by Muslim communities. There is an ongoing need for coordinated strategies that bridge the divide between policy and practice, ensuring that procedural changes are matched by cultural shifts within institutions. Without a holistic approach that prioritises both accountability and meaningful engagement with affected groups, efforts to mitigate disparities may fall short of delivering substantive equality.

These systemic issues underscore the importance of meaningful engagement with affected groups and the necessity for public bodies to adopt a holistic approach to equality. Without a genuine commitment to both procedural diligence and substantive

change, efforts to address discrimination risk perpetuating existing disparities. Emphasising accountability and fostering trust with Muslim communities—particularly those facing multiple forms of disadvantage—should remain central to reform initiatives.

## Key Recommendations Informed by Case Law

### 1. Advancing from Procedural to Substantive Equality

Public bodies are urged to transcend mere procedural compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It is essential not only to follow statutory processes but to ensure that decisions deliver concrete improvements and demonstrably positive outcomes for Muslim communities, with particular attention to Black and Asian Muslim women. Recent judgments, such as *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580 and *Beggs, Petitioner* [2025] CSOH 112, illustrate how courts have examined whether public authorities genuinely accounted for the impact of their actions on protected groups, rather than simply adhering to formal checklists.

### 2. Implementing Intersectional Data Collection and Flagging

It is recommended that the police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and other relevant agencies adopt systematic data collection practices that incorporate intersectional “tri-flagging”—simultaneously recording race, religion, and gender in cases of hate crime, discrimination, and criminal justice outcomes. The need for such approaches is underscored in *Ministry of Defence v Rubery* [2024] EAT 165 and *Edwards v Ministry of Defence* [2024] EAT 18, where the courts considered whether discrimination claims had been sufficiently investigated and flagged in complex, intersectional contexts.

### 3. Strengthening Evidence Collection and Reporting Pathways

Investment in community-based advocacy—such as embedding advocates in mosques or community centres—can increase reporting rates and reduce the likelihood of complaints being withdrawn. It is also important to ensure robust evidence collection for hate crime and discrimination cases, including keeping contemporaneous records and escalation logs. Both *Matovu v Porter KC* [2025] EWHC 760 (KB) and *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 emphasise the significance of detailed documentation for successful resolution and accountability.

### 4. Reviewing and Reforming “Neutral” Policies

Workplace and institutional policies—such as dress codes, performance criteria, and disciplinary procedures—should be carefully reviewed to avoid indirect discrimination.

Particular care is needed to ensure that policies described as “neutral” do not have a disproportionate adverse effect on Muslims, particularly women who wear visible religious dress or have caring responsibilities. This point is addressed in *Smith v Manchester City Council* [2025] EWHC 2987 (KB) and *Sivanandan v Capstone Foster Care Ltd* [2025] EWHC 1478 (KB).

## **5. Enhancing Training and Accountability**

Regular, evidence-based training should be provided to police, prosecutors, and judiciary personnel on issues of intersectional discrimination, unconscious bias, and the lived experiences of Muslim communities. It is vital that agencies are held accountable for failing to address known risks or for not acting on the recommendations from reviews and inquiries. The need for robust accountability is highlighted in *City of London Corp v Bussandra* [2025] EWCA Civ 1580.

## **6. Promoting Access to Justice and Reasonable Adjustments**

Muslim claimants, especially those facing intersectional barriers, should be afforded reasonable adjustments in both legal proceedings and employment, such as flexible timetabling, accommodation for religious dress, and support for language or disability needs. The necessity for such adjustments, and the consequences when they are not provided, are made clear in *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551 and *Matovu v Porter KC* [2025] EWHC 760 (KB).

## **7. Monitoring and Challenging Disproportionate Policing and Sentencing**

It is crucial to monitor police stop and search practices, remand decisions, and sentencing outcomes for evidence of indirect discrimination or disproportionate impact on Black and Muslim communities. Risk assessments that are influenced by “security” concerns may result in harsher outcomes for Black Muslims and other intersectionally marginalised groups and should be critically examined. This requirement is illustrated by *Smith v Manchester City Council* [2025] EWHC 2987 (KB) and *Sivanandan v Capstone Foster Care Ltd* [2025] EWHC 1478 (KB).

## **8. Supporting Litigation and Advocacy with Robust Evidence**

Successful legal challenges often depend on the ability to document disadvantage, establish comparator groups, and demonstrate institutional failures to act. Investment in research and advocacy is essential to provide the necessary evidence base. Courts have shown a growing willingness to address claims of structural and intersectional disadvantage—particularly where robust statistical and narrative evidence is presented—as

seen in *Matovu v Porter* KC [2025] EWHC 760 (KB) and *Johnston v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2025] EWCA Civ 551.

The most effective strategy for tackling disparities in discrimination, hate crime, and criminal justice outcomes for Muslims—especially at the intersections of race and gender—is to move beyond procedural compliance and to focus on substantive, evidence-driven change. Achieving real progress hinges on robust intersectional data collection, meaningful engagement with affected communities, comprehensive policy reform, and a genuine commitment to substantive equality in both law and practice, as reflected in the latest case law.

The intersection of race, religion, and gender creates compounded disadvantages for Muslims—especially Black and Asian Muslim women—across discrimination, hate crime, and criminal justice outcomes. Recent legal developments under the Equality Act 2010 and related statutes increasingly recognise these intersectional harms, but systemic barriers and procedural shortcomings remain. Effective redress depends on robust evidence, intersectional flagging, and a determined shift from procedural to substantive equality.

## **Violent Hate Crime in the UK: The Stark Disparity Facing Black, Asian, and Muslim Communities**

### **Introduction**

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Home Office reveals a deeply troubling reality: Black, Asian, and Muslim communities in the UK are disproportionately targeted by violent hate crime and harassment. This is not a marginal phenomenon—these communities currently bear a far greater burden of hate-fuelled aggression than their White counterparts. Yet, despite the clear statistical evidence, the true extent of Islamophobia and its intersection with racism is often obscured in both public discourse and official data collection.

### **Key Statistics: Documenting Islamophobia and Racialised Hate Crime**

- **Police-Recorded Hate Crime (Year Ending March 2024-2025):** 140,561 hate crimes were recorded across England and Wales. Of these, race hate crimes constituted an overwhelming majority—98,799 offences, or 70% of the total. Religious hate crimes accounted for 10,484 offences, marking a 25% increase from the previous year. These categories, while presented separately, frequently overlap in lived

experience, especially for visibly Muslim individuals who are also from racialized backgrounds.

- **Racially or Religiously Aggravated Offences:** Offences such as assault with injury, assault without injury, harassment, and public fear/alarm/distress are prevalent. For Black, Asian, and Muslim communities, these are not isolated statistics but daily realities, reflecting persistent threats to their safety and well-being.

The breakdown of victims for racially or religiously aggravated offences illustrates the intersectional character of hate crime:

- Asian victims: 31.3%
- Black victims: 23.1%
- White victims: 30.6%

When compared to the proportion of the population—White people make up 81.7%, Asians 9.3%, and Black people 4.0%—it is evident that minoritized groups are vastly overrepresented as victims. For Muslims, who are predominantly from South Asian and Black backgrounds, this overrepresentation is even more pronounced and entwined with both religious and racialized targeting.

### **Islamophobia as Racialised Violence**

Muslims were the targets in 45% of all religious hate crimes (4,478 offences), representing a 19% increase in just one year. The scale of these attacks is particularly alarming considering the size of the UK's Muslim population, indicating a concentrated hostility towards this group. Notably, Jewish victims also experience high rates of hate crime (24% of religious hate crimes), yet the per-capita targeting of Muslims (12 per 10,000) and Jewish people (106 per 10,000) remains especially severe. For Muslims, the form that Islamophobia takes is seldom confined to religious identity alone—it is deeply racialized, merging with anti-Asian and anti-Black sentiment in the public imagination and in the actions of perpetrators.

Violence and harassment—both physical and verbal—are the most common forms of hate crime experienced by Muslim victims. Physical attacks on mosques, assaults on individuals, and the targeting of community facilities go beyond isolated incidents, instead evidencing a pattern of behaviour where Islamophobia and racism reinforce one another.

## **Chronology of Disrupted Right-Wing Plots (Charged under Section 5 of the Terrorism Act and classified as disrupted plots by MI5)**

### → Feb 2025 (Arrest)

**Case:** Northumberland teenager (15, member of *The Base*)

**Summary:** Downloaded extremist manuals, purchased weapons, discussed attack plans.

**Target(s):** Jewish, Muslim community, and Black and Asian minorities

**Ideology:** Extreme Right-Wing / Accelerationist White Supremacism (*The Base*)

**News Reports:** Coverage noted *The Base* promoted attacks on **Muslims and migrants**, encouraging “race war” narratives.

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### → Dec 2025 (Arrests)

**Case:** Sussex arrests (4 suspects in Eastbourne & Brighton)

**Summary:** Intelligence-led operation; suspects held under Terrorism Act.

**Target(s):** Communities in Sussex

**Ideology:** Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism (ERWT)

**News Reports:** Reports stressed ERWT threats to **Muslim and migrant communities**, echoing National Action’s anti-immigrant rhetoric.

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### → Oct 2025 (Sentencing)

**Case:** Mosque/Synagogue Attack Plot - Christopher Ringrose, Marco Pitzettu, Brogan Stewart

**Summary:** Arrested in February 2024 for planning imminent attacks on mosques and synagogues; attempted to acquire weapons including a 3D-printed firearm and explosives. Sentenced in October 2025 to a combined 29 years.

**Target(s):** Mosques and synagogues in West Yorkshire

**Ideology:** Neo-Nazi / Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism

**News Reports:** Coverage highlighted direct threats to **Muslim and Jewish communities**, with weapons procurement attempts.

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### → Oct-Nov 2025 (Arrests)

**Case:** Northern Ireland cross-border arrests

**Summary:** PSNI & Gardaí detained suspects with explosives, weapons, and threats to attack mosques & migrant centres.

**Target(s):** Mosques, migrant accommodation centres

**Ideology:** Violent Far-Right Extremism

**News Reports:** Confirmed **planned attacks on mosques and migrant centres**, showing direct targeting of Muslim and migrant communities.

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### → Aug 2024 (Charges)

**Case:** Teenage Couple Plot (18-year-old man & 19-year-old woman)

**Summary:** Charged with preparation of terrorist acts, including attempting to acquire firearms and testing petrol bombs. Trial scheduled for September 2025.

**Target(s):** Broad extremist targets (not yet specified)

**Ideology:** Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism

**News Reports:** Reports noted intent to use petrol bombs and firearms, echoing threats to **Muslim and migrant communities**.

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→ **Sept 2024 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** Alex Hutton (19, Swansea)

**Summary:** Assaulted transgender woman; disseminated terrorist publications; glorified Nazi & KKK material.

**Target(s):** Transgender woman, minorities

**Ideology:** Neo-Nazi White Supremacism

**News Reports:** CPS noted Hutton's material glorified violence against **Black, Asian, and Muslim communities**, alongside LGBTQ+ hate.

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→ **June 2022 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** *Oaken Hearth Cell*- Davies, Wright, Whibley

**Summary:** Shared extremist texts, attempted 3D-printed firearms, explosives guides.

**Target(s):** General public

**Ideology:** National Action Neo-Nazism

**News Reports:** National Action propaganda explicitly threatened **Muslims, migrants, and Black communities**, calling for violent "ethnic cleansing."

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→ **May 2022 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** David Musins

**Summary:** Member of National Action, jailed for 3 years.

**Target(s):** Ideological targets

**Ideology:** National Action Neo-Nazism

**News Reports:** Linked to National Action's campaigns against **Muslim and Asian communities**, including threats to mosques.

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→ **Apr 2022 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** Thomas Leech (19)

**Summary:** Encouraged terrorism, hate offences.

**Target(s):** Broad extremist rhetoric

**Ideology:** White Nationalism

**News Reports:** Online posts included threats against **Muslims and migrants**, echoing far-right conspiracy theories.

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→ **Mar 2022 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** Matthew Henegan (36) & unnamed 16-year-old

**Summary:** Possessed terrorist documents, racial hatred offences.

**Target(s):** Minorities

**Ideology:** White Supremacism

**News Reports:** Henegan's material promoted violence against **Black and Asian communities**, alongside anti-Semitic propaganda.

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→ **Feb 2022 (Sentencing)**

**Case:** Connor Burke (19) & Conrad Howarth (41)

**Summary:** Disseminated terrorist publications, possessed terrorist documents.

**Target(s):** General public

**Ideology:** Neo-Nazi White Supremacism

**News Reports:** Publications glorified attacks on **Muslims and migrants**, consistent with Atomwaffen Division ideology.

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## Recent Events: Intertwined Motives and Outcomes

- The Southport murders and subsequent riots during the summer of 2024 sparked a sharp surge in hate crime, with Black and Asian communities, many of whom are also Muslim, facing the brunt of violent reprisals. The torching of mosques and other community spaces, as well as assaults on individuals, serve as stark demonstrations of how racial and religious hatred are intertwined in both motive and outcome.
- The rise in Islamophobic attacks, culminated in over 4,971 anti-Muslim incidents, the highest annual tally in 14 years. These attacks were not merely expressions of anti-religious sentiment but were often accompanied by racial slurs and the targeting of people based on visible markers of both ethnicity and faith, such as wearing hijab or possessing a South Asian or Black appearance.

## Structural Underpinnings: Why Islamophobia and Racism Intersect

- **Misclassification and Underreporting:** Many Islamophobic incidents, especially those targeting South Asian Muslims, are officially recorded as “racially aggravated” rather than “religiously motivated.” This practice not only distorts the real figures but also hides the religious animus at play, and inflates race hate statistics while undercounting anti-Muslim hostility. Black Muslims, similarly, often see their victimisation recorded under race only, effacing the intersection of racism and Islamophobia they experience.
- **Police Response and Victim Disengagement:** Black, Asian, and Muslim victims face systemic obstacles in obtaining justice. Their cases are less likely to be taken seriously, resulting in poor evidence gathering and lower prosecution rates. The most common outcome in cases of hate crime violence is “evidential difficulties - victim does not support action” (32%), a finding that points to deep-seated mistrust and systemic failures within policing and criminal justice structures.
- **Media Framing:** The mainstream media often centres hate crimes against White victims, reinforcing public perceptions that White populations are the primary targets, despite all available data pointing in the opposite direction. Incidents affecting Black, Asian, and Muslim communities, particularly those with elements of mass violence or ideological motivation, are frequently minimised or reduced to “community tensions” rather than being identified and reported as terrorism.

- **Classification of Violent Attacks:** There is a persistent reluctance to classify violent attacks on Black, Asian, and Muslim communities as terrorism, even when they are ideologically motivated and carried out at scale. In contrast, similar attacks against White victims are more likely to be designated as acts of terrorism, which brings greater law enforcement resources and public attention.

## The Human Impact: The Cost of Intersectional Hate

- **Heightened Fear and Anxiety:** The impact of intersecting Islamophobia and racism manifests as palpable fear—11% of Black adults and 10% of Asian adults express being “very worried” about being targeted due to their race or religion, compared to just 1% of White adults. For Muslims who are at the crossroads of both racial and religious targeting, this anxiety is a daily reality, influencing where they live, work, and gather, and eroding their sense of security in public and private spaces.
- **Repeat Victimization:** The likelihood of experiencing repeated hate crimes is two to three times higher for these groups than for victims of non-hate related offences. The trauma compounds over time, deepening mistrust in authorities and reinforcing social isolation.

## Journey Map: Hate Crime Case Pathway and Systemic Drop-Off Points

### Stage 1: Victimization

The journey begins with the incident itself. For Black, Asian, and Muslim communities, victimisation often occurs in public spaces such as transport hubs, schools, retail environments, or places of worship.

- **Survey evidence (CSEW 2022-25)** shows that Asian adults (0.5%) and Muslim adults (0.8%) face religion-motivated victimisation rates far above the all-adult average (0.1%).
- Black adults report the highest levels of worry (11%) about attack due to race or religion, even though their religion-motivated prevalence appears low (0.1%). This reflects the racialised nature of hostility they experience.
- Intersectional factors—being young, disabled, or of mixed ethnicity—compound risk, with 16-24-year-olds reporting the highest victimisation rates (14%).

**Systemic issue:** Victimization is disproportionately concentrated among minority groups, yet official figures understate the true burden due to categorisation biases and underreporting.

### Stage 2: Reporting

Following an incident, victims must decide whether to report.

- Many Black and Asian victims do not report hate crimes to the police due to mistrust, fear of disbelief, or negative prior experiences (e.g., stop and search).

- Islamophobic incidents are frequently misclassified as racially aggravated rather than religion-motivated, meaning Muslim risk is undercounted in official religion hate crime statistics.
- Other reporting organisations and local race equality councils provide alternative reporting pathways, but these are less formalised and less well-funded compared to Jewish community infrastructure (e.g., CST).

**Systemic issue:** Underreporting and misclassification depress official statistics, masking the scale of Islamophobia and racial hate crime.

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### Stage 3: Police Handling

When incidents are reported, police response is critical.

- The Home Office bulletin confirms that race/ethnicity accounts for around two-thirds of all police-recorded hate crimes, reflecting the dominance of racial categorisation.
- Victims from Black and Asian communities often perceive police responses as inadequate, reinforcing mistrust.
- Police-recorded figures are consistently lower than survey prevalence, confirming that many incidents never reach official records.

**Systemic issue:** Police handling is shaped by categorisation practices and trust deficits, leading to systemic undercounting and diminished victim confidence.

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### Stage 4: Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Cases that progress to the CPS face evidential hurdles.

- CPS data (2022/23) shows that racially and religiously aggravated offences are more likely to be discontinued due to “evidential difficulties” than non-aggravated offences.
- Conviction rates for hate crime overall stand at 84%, but sentencing uplifts (statutory increases recognising hate motivation) are applied in only 79% of convictions.
- Cases involving Black and Asian victims are more likely to collapse due to lack of victim cooperation, itself linked to mistrust in police and CPS processes.

**Systemic issue:** Evidential difficulties and inconsistent sentencing uplifts weaken the justice outcomes for minority victims.

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### Stage 5: Court Experience

For those cases that reach court, the victim’s experience is often fraught.

- Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) shows minority ethnic victims frequently feel their experiences are minimised, with hate elements not fully recognised.
- Court processes can be alienating, with limited culturally competent support services available.
- Victim support uptake is lower among minority ethnic groups compared to White victims, reflecting barriers in access to justice.

**Systemic issue:** Court processes fail to adequately recognise and address the hate dimension of offences, leaving victims feeling excluded and unsupported.

## Stage 6: Outcomes and Aftermath

The journey concludes with outcomes that often fail to deliver justice or reassurance.

- For Jewish communities, robust protective infrastructure (CST, government security funding) ensures stronger visibility and support.
- For Muslim communities, weaker institutional support and inconsistent funding leave victims more exposed, despite higher prevalence of Islamophobic victimisation.
- Black and Asian communities continue to report high levels of worry and low trust, reinforcing cycles of underreporting and systemic disadvantage.

**Systemic issue:** Outcomes perpetuate inequality, with Muslim, Black, and Asian victims facing higher risk but weaker protection and justice.

## Conclusion: Systemic Drop-Off Points

At every stage of the journey—victimisation, reporting, police handling, CPS, court, and outcomes—Black, Asian, and Muslim victims face disproportionate barriers.

- **Exposure:** Elevated victimisation rates and worry levels.
- **Access to justice:** Underreporting, misclassification, and evidential difficulties.
- **Systemic outcomes:** Lower charge/prosecution rates, inconsistent sentencing uplifts, and weaker victim support.

This journey map demonstrates that hate crime is not only a matter of individual prejudice but also of systemic exclusion. Addressing these drop-off points requires structural reforms, parity in community security funding, and inclusive justice processes that recognise the compounded risks faced by minority communities.

## What Needs to Change?

- **Accurate Recording:** Police must consistently “dual-flag” incidents where both racial and religious animus are present, ensuring the intersectionality of lived experience is reflected in official data.
- **Transparency and Data Publication:** The Home Office and ONS should make disaggregated data by ethnicity, religion, and gender publicly available, allowing for greater scrutiny and accountability.
- **Community Trust:** Investment in culturally competent support services and independent reporting hubs is essential for rebuilding trust with minoritized communities, enabling safer reporting and better outcomes for victims.
- **Media Responsibility:** Journalists must report the true scale and intersectional nature of hate crime, moving beyond sensational or “relatable” stories to reflect the deeper and more widespread patterns of Islamophobia and racism in the UK today.
- **Policy Reform:** Violent attacks against minorities require the same gravity of response as those against White victims—including consideration of terrorism charges—if we are to meaningfully confront these patterns of violence.

The latest ONS and Home Office data could not be clearer: Black, Asian, and Muslim communities in the UK are navigating a landscape of escalating and intersectional hate. The failure to fully recognise and respond to Islamophobia and its inextricable links with racism means that these communities are doubly vulnerable—targeted for both who they are and what they believe. Until we address the systemic biases embedded in the way hate crimes are recorded, prosecuted, and represented in public discourse, the structural inequities will persist and the most at-risk will remain unprotected. Let us demand better data, better policing, and a more honest national conversation—one that truly sees and responds to the intersectional realities of hate in the UK.

## Service Provision

- **Jewish communities:** Receive over **£14m annually** in government security funding (via CST).
- **Muslim communities:** Mosque security funding exists but is smaller and less consistent.
- **Result:** Muslims face higher prevalence but weaker protective infrastructure.

## ✓ Key Takeaways

1. **Race hate crime dominates** (≈66% of all hate crime), disproportionately affecting Black and Asian communities.
2. **Muslims face the highest religion-motivated risk** (0.8% CSEW; 45% of police-recorded religious hate crimes), but Islamophobia is under-counted due to racial categorisation.
3. **Black and Asian adults report the highest worry** (10-11%), showing lived fear far above the national average.
4. **Black adults:** Highest perceived risk (11% “very worried”) and disproportionately represented in aggravated assaults.
5. **Asian adults:** Elevated in both race (0.7%) and religion (0.5%) strands, with dual exposure.
6. **Service provision is unequal:** Jewish communities benefit from robust, government-funded security, while Muslim communities face higher risk but weaker infrastructure.
7. **Repeat victimisation and violent offences** are more common for Muslims, Asians, and Black people than for White victims.
8. **Justice outcomes are weaker:** higher discontinuance rates, inconsistent sentencing uplifts, and lower victim support uptake.

9. **Systemic disadvantage:** Despite high risk, charge rates remain low (9%), and victim disengagement is high, reflecting mistrust in policing.
10. **Event-driven spikes:** Hate crime against Muslims and Black/Asian communities surges after high-profile incidents (e.g., Southport murders, BLM protests, international conflicts).

Reference: [gov.uk Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/reports/other/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2025)

## Disproportionality Matrix: Hate Crime & Criminal Justice (England & Wales, 2025)

Stage	All Adults / White Majority	Black Communities	Asian Communities	Muslim Communities	Notes & References
<b>Victimisation (CSEW 2022-25)</b>	Religion-motivated: 0.1% (White 0.0%)	Religion-motivated: 0.1% (≈average) but race hate disproportionately high	Religion-motivated: 0.5% (≈5× all adults)	Religion-motivated: 0.8% (≈7× all adults)	Appendix Table 17 <a href="https://www.gov.uk">gov.uk</a>
<b>Perceived Risk (Worry)</b>	White: 1% “very worried”	Black: 11% (highest of all groups)	Asian: 10%	Proxy via Asian/Black data (10-11%)	Appendix Table 20 <a href="https://www.gov.uk">gov.uk</a>
<b>Repeat Victimisation</b>	Low	High in race strand (multiple incidents per year)	High in both race & religion strands	Very high	CSEW
<b>Offence Types</b>	Mostly public order, low violence	More likely to experience physical assault	Elevated harassment in public spaces, some violence	Elevated assaults linked to visible faith (hijab, beard, mosque)	Home Office 2025 bulletin <a href="https://www.gov.uk">gov.uk</a>
<b>Reporting to Police</b>	Higher trust, higher reporting	Lower trust → underreporting	Lower trust → underreporting	Lower trust → underreporting	Lammy Review (2017); HMICFRS (2021)

Stage	All Adults / White Majority	Black Communities	Asian Communities	Muslim Communities	Notes & References
<b>Police Recording</b>	Incidents logged consistently	Race hate logged, but religion dimension often missed	Race hate logged; Islamophobia often misclassified as race	Islamophobia often misclassified as race hate	Home Office 2025 <a href="https://www.gov.uk">gov.uk</a>
<b>Prosecution (CPS 2022/23)</b>	Conviction rate ~84%; uplifts applied in 79%	Higher discontinuance due to “evidential difficulties”	Higher discontinuance; fewer uplifts	Fewer prosecutions relative to prevalence; uplifts inconsistently applied	CPS Hate Crime Annual Report 2022/23
<b>Sentencing</b>	Uplifts more consistently applied	Less consistent	Less consistent	Less consistent	CPS 2022/23
<b>Victim Support Services</b>	Better access to mainstream services	Lower uptake; cultural barriers	Lower uptake; cultural barriers	Mosque security funding inconsistent	MoJ victim support data; CST vs government funded reporting orgs
<b>Protective Infrastructure</b>	N/A	Limited	Limited	Smaller, inconsistent mosque security funding	Jewish communities receive £14m annually via CST <a href="https://www.gov.uk">gov.uk</a>

Reference: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) Home Office, *Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2025*

## Voter Realignment, Islamophobia, and Racism in Contemporary UK Politics

## Introduction

The UK's political landscape in late 2025 is undergoing profound transformation. Voter realignment, the persistence of Islamophobia, and the structural embedding of racism are not isolated phenomena but deeply interconnected. Electoral data, socio-legal scholarship, and debates around colonial legacies reveal how identity politics, racialised exclusion, and cultural anxieties are reshaping both party competition and public discourse. This expanded analysis integrates polling evidence, doctrinal law, and critical perspectives to provide deeper insights into these dynamics.

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## Electoral Shifts

The December 2025 YouGov survey shows Reform UK leading with 27% of voting intention, ahead of Labour (19%) and Conservatives (18%).<sup>1</sup> This marks a historic break from the two-party dominance that characterised UK politics for decades.

- **Generational divides:** Reform UK's support is strongest among older voters (33% among 65+), while the Green Party dominates among younger voters (42% among 18-24).<sup>2</sup> This reflects a generational split between cultural conservatism and progressive identity politics.
- **Regional variation:** Labour retains strength in London (26%), but Reform UK dominates in the Midlands (29%) and North (35%).<sup>3</sup> This suggests a geographic polarisation, with metropolitan areas leaning progressive and post-industrial regions gravitating towards populist narratives.
- **Brexit legacy:** Reform UK draws disproportionately from Leave voters (52%), while the Greens attract 75% of Remain voters.<sup>4</sup> Brexit continues to structure political identity, acting as a proxy for cultural belonging and exclusion.

## Insights

This realignment reflects a shift from class-based politics to identity-based politics. Reform UK's rise signals disaffection with mainstream parties and the mobilisation of cultural grievances, particularly around immigration and national sovereignty. The Greens' growth among younger voters highlights a counter-mobilisation around climate justice, diversity, and progressive values.

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## Islamophobia: Structural and Everyday Exclusion

## Hate Crime and Policing

Muslims remain the most targeted religious group, accounting for 39% of religious hate crimes in 2022/23.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Whitten and Went's randomised control trial shows, victim withdrawal in hate crime cases is disproportionately high due to lack of trust in police responses.<sup>6</sup> Secondary reassurance contact reduced victim withdrawal by 12-15%, demonstrating that institutional sensitivity can materially affect justice outcomes.

## Workplace Discrimination

Case law under Article 9 ECHR illustrates restrictive interpretations of religious freedom:

- *Ahmad v UK* (1981) held that contractual obligations outweighed Friday prayer rights.<sup>7</sup>
- *Copsey v WWB Devon Clays Ltd* [2005] upheld dismissal for refusing Sunday work.<sup>8</sup>
- *Eweida v British Airways plc* [2013] marked a shift, finding BA's refusal to allow a Christian employee to wear a cross disproportionate.<sup>9</sup>
- *Achbita v GAS* (C-157/15) allowed neutrality policies banning visible religious symbols, disproportionately impacting Muslim women.<sup>10</sup>

Neutrality policies often mask Islamophobia, particularly in healthcare contexts where headscarves are excluded under vague hygiene claims. El Yattouti critiques these as Islamophobic tropes lacking evidence.<sup>11</sup>

## Insights

Islamophobia is not only interpersonal but institutional. Neutrality policies, policing practices, and workplace rules embed structural disadvantage. Black and Asian Muslims face compounded harms, experiencing both racial profiling and religious exclusion.

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## Racism and Colonial Legacies

### Epistemic Injustice

Raza Saeed identifies colonialism's distinct wrong as epistemic injustice—the denial of colonised peoples' knowledge systems and existence.<sup>12</sup> This foundational wrong continues to shape racial hierarchies, sustaining exclusion in law, education, and politics.

### Pedagogical Inequalities

Suhraiya Jivraj highlights how colonial legacies remain invisibilised in public law curricula. The BME attainment gap (13.2%) persists despite equal or better entry qualifications.<sup>13</sup>

Law schools reproduce Eurocentric narratives, omitting colonial histories and racialised experiences. This perpetuates structural inequality in the legal profession, where BME solicitors are less likely to reach partnership.<sup>14</sup>

### Online Hate Speech

The Draft Online Safety Bill seeks to regulate hate speech but suffers from definitional incoherence. As Coe notes, the distinction between “hate speech” and “speech we hate” is blurred, risking over-censorship of legitimate expression while failing to protect minorities.<sup>15</sup> Algorithmic moderation, often erring on the side of caution, amplifies risks of silencing marginalised voices.

### Insights

Colonial legacies persist through epistemic exclusion, curricular erasure, and structural racism. Contemporary debates on hate speech regulation illustrate how racialised groups remain vulnerable to both under-protection and over-policing.

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## Advocacy and Policy Implications

### Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED requires public authorities to have due regard to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality.<sup>16</sup> Yet compliance is often procedural. Equality impact assessments must demonstrate substantive changes to mitigate racial and religious disadvantage.

### Strategic Recommendations

- **Evidence-based accommodation:** Employers must document attempts to accommodate religious practices, particularly in healthcare and education.
- **Intersectional monitoring:** Hate crime recording should capture race-religion-gender intersections to expose compounded harms.
- **Curricular reform:** Law schools must integrate colonial histories and racialised case studies to address attainment gaps.

- **Algorithmic accountability:** HR and policing systems using AI must undergo equality audits to prevent algorithmic discrimination.
  - **Policing reform:** Secondary reassurance contact should be scaled nationally to reduce victim withdrawal and improve trust.
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The UK's political realignment reflects fragmentation driven by identity politics, Brexit divisions, and cultural anxieties. Islamophobia persists as both interpersonal hostility and institutional exclusion, while racism remains embedded through colonial legacies and structural inequalities. Addressing these challenges requires substantive equality measures, intersectional monitoring, and decolonial pedagogy. Without such reforms, voter realignment risks entrenching populist narratives that exploit racialised grievances, deepening divisions in contemporary UK politics.

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## Right-Wing Extremism, Islamophobic Hate Crime, and Intersectional Disparities in the UK

### Introduction

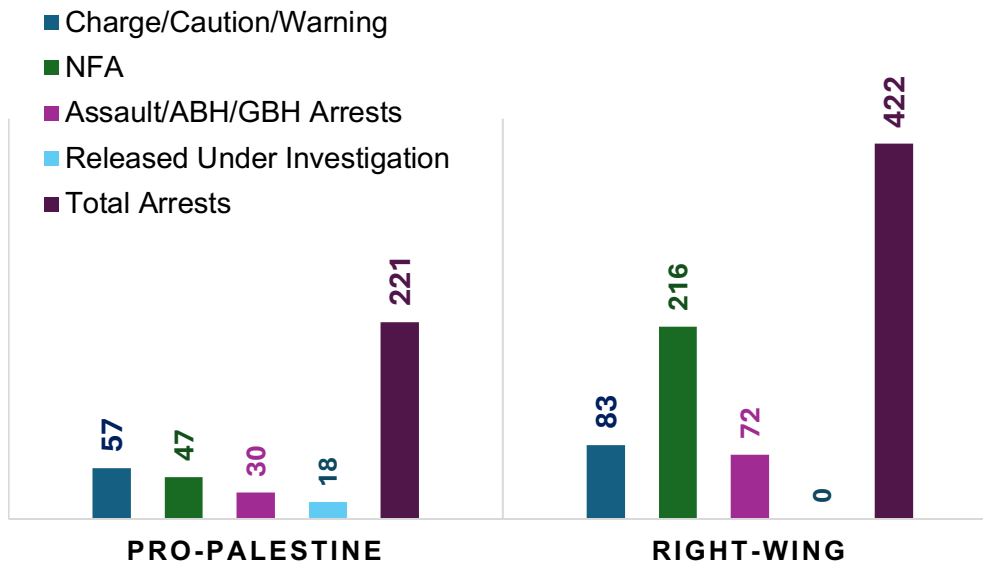
This briefing presents a comprehensive analysis for lawyers and legal or policy professionals, focusing on three critical issues: the persistent threat of right-wing extremism, the increasing and underrepresented incidence of Islamophobic hate crime, and the disparities that affect Muslim and ethnic minority communities, especially where identities intersect. Drawing on Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) hate crime dashboards and prior evidence, the following sections explore trends, outcomes, and legal implications, culminating in actionable recommendations.

### Executive Summary

Right-wing extremism remains deeply rooted in the UK, with a notable focus on youth involvement. **Extreme right-wing (XRW) concerns constitute a significant proportion of Prevent referrals and nearly half of adopted Channel cases, with social media emerging as a powerful vehicle for radicalisation. Islamophobia is both rising and underrepresented in official statistics, as London recorded 2,761 Islamophobic offences within the twelve months to August 2025—a 27.8% year-on-year increase.** Nevertheless, positive outcomes for victims remain low, and intersectional factors such as mistrust in policing and misclassification of incidents contribute to an overall undercount. Disparities are evident in policing and outcomes, as improvements for antisemitic hate crime are more visible than

those for Islamophobic incidents, and enforcement is harsher against pro-Palestine protesters compared to right-wing counterparts, (Fig. 1). Legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Human Rights Act (HRA), and the Victims' Code demand intersectional monitoring, equitable resourcing, and consistent, lawful policing practices.

Fig. 1. Arrest Outcomes for Protests, Met Police (6-month period, 2023 -24)



## Metropolitan Police Service Data Highlights (to August 2025)

### Islamophobic Crime Volume in London

- A total of **2,761 offences** were recorded in the twelve months ending August 2025.
- This represents a **27.8% increase** compared to the preceding year and a 9.6% month-on-month rise (August vs July 2025).
- The monthly series reveals spikes, such as in October 2023 (206 offences), with the average stabilising at around 120 offences per month.
- Dashboard caveats include the potential for multiple flags on a single incident, non-additive category totals, and a methodology change from March 2024, which complicates direct pre/post comparisons.

### Outcome Metrics in London

- Islamophobic positive outcomes totalled 188 in the twelve months ending August 2025, reflecting a 7.8% year-on-year increase and a 33.3% rise from July to August.
- Antisemitic positive outcomes totalled 171 for the same period (a 10.8% annual increase; 20% month-on-month rise).

- Aggregate positive outcomes included 4,021 total outcomes: 3,423 for racist and religious offences; 3,245 racist; 405 faith-based; 824 homophobic; 41 transphobic; and 28 disability-related.
- Geographic analysis highlighted central and North London clusters for antisemitic outcomes, while Islamophobic outcomes were distributed citywide.

## National Right-Wing Extremism and Online Radicalisation

### Prevent Referrals (Year Ending 31 March 2024)

- There were 6,921 total referrals, of which 1,314 (19%) were for XRW (the second-largest category after “vulnerability present, no ideology”).
- Channel adoptions numbered 512, with 230 (45%) for XRW compared to 118 (23%) for Islamist extremism.
- Although XRW Channel adoptions declined 22% compared with 2022-23 (from 296 to 230), they continued to outnumber Islamist adoptions.

### Vulnerable Demographics

- **Young people aged 11-15** constituted 40% of Prevent referrals where age was known, **42% of XRW referrals**, and half of adopted Channel cases.
- XRW referrals were overwhelmingly male (94%), with females comprising about 5%.
- Arrests of children for terrorism offences reached record highs in the year ending September 2023.

### Role of Social Media

- Far-right Facebook networks reach hundreds of thousands of UK users, serving as an “engine of radicalisation.”
- **After the Southport incident in July 2024, UK far-right Telegram channel activity surged by 327%, amplifying anti-Muslim and anti-migrant narratives and conspiracy theories.**
- Ofcom reported extreme right-wing accounts with significant audiences (YouTube: approximately two million subscribers; Telegram: over 150,000).
- Local counter-extremism strategies identified exploitation of isolation, anger, and a sense of belonging to recruit vulnerable individuals.

### Islamophobia Underreporting, Intersectionality, and Service Disparities

- Lower confidence in policing among Muslim communities and experiences of poor treatment contribute to underreporting, leading to a systemic undercount of Islamophobic hate crime.
- **Intersectional factors and misclassification are prevalent, as many Muslims are also Black or Asian. Incidents are frequently categorised as “racial” rather than “religious,”** with the MPS outcome distribution showing far more “racist crime” outcomes than “faith crime” or “Islamophobic” ones, potentially concealing religion-based victimisation.
- Jewish community safety organisations, such as Shomrim and CST, have formal training and established liaison with the Met and Counter Terrorism Policing,

enhancing reporting and outcomes for antisemitic offences. In contrast, Muslim communities lack equivalent structures and resources, resulting in lower positive outcome counts despite rising offence volumes.

## Disparities in Policing and Criminal Justice Outcomes

- FOI-based snapshots of protest policing (2023-25) reveal that right-wing arrests involved more violent offences (e.g., 72 assault-related arrests vs. 30 for pro-Palestine protests), yet 51% of these resulted in no further action and a lower formal outcome rate (20% charge/caution/warning).
- **Pro-Palestine arrests had a higher rate of formal outcomes (26%) and more cases “released under investigation,” reflecting deeper legal follow-through despite fewer violent offences.**
- Operation Brocks (October-December 2023) saw Section 12 Terrorism Act charges for pro-Palestine protesters, but no equivalent terrorism charges for far-right counter-protesters, despite evidence of public disorder and hate speech.
- XRW suspects are typically processed under PACE, while Islamist suspects face Terrorism Act powers (including detention, delays in solicitor access, and stop/search procedures).
- The Baroness Casey Review (2023) identified the Met as institutionally racist and misogynistic, with documented Islamophobia. Such findings undermine trust and may affect reporting rates, incident recording, and enforcement decisions.

## Legal Implications and Practitioner Actions

### Equality Act 2010 (Section 149: Public Sector Equality Duty)

- Eliminate discrimination by addressing institutional barriers that result in lower reporting and poorer outcomes for Muslims and ethnic minorities.
- Advance equality by ensuring Muslim communities have access to community liaison, safety infrastructure, and reporting mechanisms equivalent to those available to other groups.
- Foster good relations by countering online hate and protest-related stigmatisation through proportionate and consistent policing.

### Human Rights Act 1998

- Article 3: Protection from degrading treatment, relevant to police conduct and handling of victims.
- Article 8: Respect for private life, especially concerning online monitoring and the necessity and proportionality of powers.
- Articles 10-11: Freedom of expression and assembly, requiring neutral and proportionate policing of protests.

- The Victims' Code and CPS Guidance necessitate accurate dual-flagging (race and religion), timely updates, effective support pathways, and bias auditing across arrest, charge, and outcome stages.

## Recommendations for Legal and Policy Professionals

- Intersectional Recording and Auditing
- Mandate dual-flagging of race and religion in hate crime reporting; conduct quarterly audits comparing arrest, charge, and outcome rates by ideology, borough, ethnicity, and faith.
- Benefit: Improved classification and measurement of cases where Islamophobia intersects with racism.
- Community-Led Safety Partnerships
- Resource Muslim community safety infrastructure analogous to Shomrim/CST, including formal training, secure evidence capture, and direct police liaison.
- Benefit: Enhanced reporting confidence and improved case quality and safeguarding.
- Policing Parity and Transparency
- Publish thresholds and outcome metrics for Public Order Act and Terrorism Act powers by protest type; review NFA (no further action) patterns and evidential standards.
- Benefit: Consistent, lawful, and proportionate enforcement across differing ideologies.
- Youth Online Safety and Disruption
- Expand age-appropriate counter-radicalisation interventions; require platform action on extremist content amplification; fund school and youth-service training on online harms.
- Benefit: Reduced exposure and recruitment of young people, particularly those aged 11-15.
- Independent Oversight and Redress
- Implement reforms from the Casey Review with external scrutiny; ensure accessible complaint and redress mechanisms for Islamophobia and racial discrimination in policing.
- Benefit: Restored trust and compliance with equality and human rights obligations.
- Strategic Litigation and Freedom of Information
- Utilise PSED claims, targeted FOIs, and impact litigation to compel publication of intersectional hate crime data, transparent protest policing information, and corrective action.

- Benefit: Enforceable accountability and systemic remedies.
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## IRU: Key Risks and Issues

### Introduction

In recent years, the Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) has become an indispensable resource and advocate for those experiencing anti-Muslim discrimination, harassment, and hate crime in the United Kingdom. The IRU provides free legal advice and support, addressing the needs of individuals and communities increasingly targeted amid national and global tensions. Its work sits at the intersection of legal protection, social advocacy, and policy change, reflecting both the scale and complexity of Islamophobic incidents in the UK.

### Statistical Evidence and Trends

Demand for IRU services in specific areas has increased - particularly notable in discrimination, which accounted for 37% of referrals. These cases often involved dismissal, harassment, retaliation, and failures to provide religious accommodations, many directly linked to visible Palestine-related advocacy and activism. The IRU's data aligns with national statistics: in 2025, Muslims represented 45% of all religious hate crime victims, and incidents rose 19% year-on-year (Home Office, 2025).

Notably, hate mail targeting the IRU itself soared by 700%, reflecting the heightened hostility directed not just at individuals but also at organisations defending community rights. Alongside these challenges, IRU fortified its volunteer base, onboarding and training 15 new caseworkers to increase resilience and maintain service delivery under pressure.

National policy trends also demand scrutiny. Prevent referrals for extreme right-wing concerns (1,314 in 2023-24) again surpassed Islamist referrals (913), marking the fourth consecutive year of this pattern. Nevertheless, far-right extremism continues to be framed more leniently in policy and public debate than Muslim or pro-Palestinian activism, despite substantial evidence of radicalisation within far-right online networks (see Hernandez et al., *The Guardian*, 28 Sep 2025; ISD, Sep 2024).

## Case Examples and Complexity

The IRU's caseload increasingly comprises multi-layered disputes spanning employment, education, and public expression. Employment cases often involve complex scenarios: for instance, an employee dismissed after attending a pro-Palestine protest, subsequently facing workplace harassment and inadequate religious accommodations. The resolution of such cases demands tribunal drafting, conciliation, and nuanced legal argument.

Education cases have grown in prominence, with restrictive prayer policies, safeguarding failures, and disciplinary action against students for political expression. These require public law analysis and engagement with multiple stakeholders, including schools, local authorities, and advocacy groups (see Baroness Casey Review, 2023).

## Systemic Challenges and Analytical Insights

- **Underreporting:** Many incidents go unreported, often due to distrust in authorities or fear of retaliation, which skews statistics and limits intervention.
- **Client Disengagement:** Victims may disengage from legal channels, highlighting barriers to justice that need to be addressed through outreach and support.
- **Hostile Policing and Policy Disparities:** The framing of Muslim or pro-Palestine activism as a security threat contrasts with the relative leniency shown to far-right extremism, despite mounting evidence of both radicalisation and mobilisation within far-right online spaces (ISD, 2024; Ofcom, 2023).
- **Organisational Vulnerability:** Sharp increases in hate mail and direct hostility towards advocacy organisations like the IRU underline the risks faced in defending community rights.

## Organisational Response

The IRU has responded to rising demand and complexity by broadening its volunteer programme, delivering targeted training to 15 new caseworkers, and enhancing safeguarding for staff and clients. Positive outcomes include successful case settlements, safeguarding interventions, and signposting to additional support. These measures enable robust service delivery and ongoing advocacy for systemic change.

## Recommendations and Requirements

- **Expand Legal Capacity:** To meet the increasing complexity and volume of cases, IRU requires additional funding for legal staff, including at least two more solicitors and one more caseworker, able to specialise in employment, education and public law discrimination.

- **Multi-Agency Partnerships:** IRU should strengthen collaboration with schools, local authorities, and civil society organisations, leveraging expertise for advocacy and best practice in safeguarding and diversity policy.
- **Policy Reform:** Government and statutory bodies should review and address disparities in the framing and response to extremism, ensuring far-right mobilisation receives the same scrutiny and intervention as other forms of radicalisation (see GOV.UK, 2025; ISD, Sep/Jul 2024).
- **Data Transparency and Outreach:** Improved data collection, transparency, and community engagement are essential to counter underreporting and encourage victims to seek support.
- **Organisational Safeguarding:** Targeted resources and support for advocacy groups facing direct hostility, including secure reporting mechanisms and staff wellness programmes, will be necessary to sustain effective services.

The IRU has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of escalating Islamophobia and increasingly complex cases. However, further investment in capacity, strengthened multi-agency partnerships, and policy reform are essential to safeguard the rights of British Muslims and sustain community resilience. The IRU's experience provides a blueprint for effective advocacy, built on data-driven analysis, robust legal support, and a commitment to challenging systemic disparities in the UK's approach to hate crime and extremism.

## **Case for Funding & Strategic Direction (2026–2030 Horizon)**

Funding bodies should recognise that investment in IRU directly mitigates the following risks and enables delivery of its strategic objectives:

### **1. Legal Expansion & Community Impact**

**Expand free legal advice provision**, prioritising complex employment and education cases.

**Increase caseworkers and specialist staff by 50% by 2027** to meet rising demand.

**Resolve or signpost 70% of referrals within three months**, focusing on multi-incident cases.

**Employment, education, and public law specialists** are essential to address increasingly complex disputes and ensure access to justice for vulnerable individuals.

**Direct justice outcomes:** IRU has achieved average settlements of £43,000+, demonstrating tangible impact for victims.

## 2. Safeguarding Leadership & Organisational Resilience

**Protect children and young people** by strengthening safeguarding protocols, especially in response to a 700% rise in direct hostility (hate mail) against IRU staff and volunteers.

**Enhance safeguarding frameworks** in education and public law, appointing dedicated leads to develop faith-sensitive approaches.

**Secure multi-year funding commitments by 2028** to reduce reliance on short-term grants and ensure operational continuity.

## 3. Policy Advocacy Growth & Systemic Impact

**Hold institutions accountable** by driving reforms in employment law, education policy, and hate crime recording.

**Publish annual impact reports** integrating IRU data with Home Office and ONS statistics.

**Campaign for improved classification of Islamophobia** in national datasets, challenging mislabelling as “racially aggravated” offences.

**Forge at least three formal partnerships annually** with legal, academic, or advocacy organisations to amplify impact.

## 4. Legal Research Officer & Evidence-Based Advocacy

**Sustain high-quality analysis** by investing in dedicated legal research staff, ensuring robust case law reviews, tribunal precedent tracking, and policy submissions.

**Support systemic change:** IRU’s research and advocacy compel national institutions to act, driving improvements in equality frameworks.

## 5. I.T and Tech Support & Organisational Sustainability

**Secure sensitive data and ensure operational continuity** by investing in IT infrastructure and cloud-based systems.

**Build resilience** through professionalised research, case management platforms, and dedicated IT support roles.

**Sustainability:** Professionalised research and IT infrastructure underpin IRU's ability to deliver preventative value (reducing tribunal and court burdens) and maintain high standards of service.

## 6. Return on Investment

**Direct justice outcomes** (average settlements £43,000+).

**Preventative value** (reducing tribunal and court burdens).

**Systemic change** (compelling national institutions to act).

**Sustainability** (professionalised research and IT infrastructure).

By aligning funding with these strategic priorities, investment in IRU will deliver maximum impact for communities facing Islamophobia and related forms of discrimination, ensuring both immediate justice and long-term systemic change.

## Recommended Metrics for 2026 Reporting

- Case pathway distribution (settlement vs tribunal).
- Median compensation and reinstatement outcomes.
- Time-to-resolution by case type.
- Advisory hours per case.
- Safeguarding/public law indicators (care order challenges, JR pre-actions).
- Client satisfaction and trust index.
- Regional and demographic breakdowns.
- Media/policy influence (mentions, submissions, institutional commitments).

## Conclusion and Final Thoughts

The **Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)** report for 2025 presents a comprehensive account of the organisation's frontline casework, systemic advocacy, and national impact in addressing Islamophobia across the UK. It highlights both the scale of hostility faced by

Muslim communities and the growing trust placed in IRU as a specialist channel for justice and accountability.

Between 2023 and 2025, IRU investigated 906. While incident numbers moderated in 2025, the complexity of cases intensified, particularly in **employment** and **education**, requiring tribunal preparation, safeguarding interventions, and public law analysis. Discrimination emerged as the leading referral type (**37% of cases in 2025**), often linked to Palestine-related advocacy and political expression. Education cases specifically accounted for **18.6% of incidents**, with restrictive prayer policies and disciplinary actions disproportionately affecting Muslim students. Hate crime remained a consistent threat, comprising **24% of incidents**, with official statistics showing a **19% rise in religious hate crimes against Muslims in 2025**.

The report identifies several **key themes**:

- **Compound harm**, where individuals experienced overlapping discrimination across workplaces, schools, online platforms, and public spaces.
- **Palestine-linked cases**, reflecting the intersection of Islamophobia with freedom of speech and political rights.
- **Institutional under-response**, with major institutions and media outlets minimising or misclassifying Islamophobia, undermining trust.
- **Intersectional barriers**, particularly for Muslim women and Black Muslims, who faced compounded forms of discrimination.

Despite these challenges, IRU achieved **tangible outcomes**. It secured three major employment settlements totalling **£129,701.80**, achieved a **100% success rate in tribunal cases from our new legal team**, and compelled external reviews such as the Football Association's investigation into systemic discrimination. Its advocacy shaped national debates on defining Islamophobia and strengthened accountability frameworks. Beneficiary feedback consistently described IRU's support as compassionate, effective, and empowering, reinforcing its role as a trusted service in communities where distrust of police and institutions is widespread.

The report also underscores **risks and requirements**. Escalating case complexity, systemic minimisation, and hostility directed at IRU itself (with hate mail rising by **700% in 2025**) demand resilience and expansion. To sustain impact, IRU requires multi-year funding commitments, a 50% increase in caseworkers and specialist staff by 2026,

dedicated public law expertise, secure IT infrastructure, and enhanced safeguarding protocols.

## Strategic Conclusion and Future Directions

IRU has established itself as both a frontline service and a national accountability mechanism. Its dual role—providing direct access to justice while driving systemic reform—positions it uniquely within the UK’s equality infrastructure. Looking ahead to 2030, IRU’s vision is of a society where Muslim communities, and all minority groups, are free from discrimination, harassment, and hate crime, supported by robust equality frameworks and accountable institutions.

To achieve this, IRU will embed free legal advice as a permanent national service, influence policy reform to protect freedom of expression and strengthen anti-discrimination frameworks, establish national accountability standards for policing and hate crime recording, and build sustainable community resilience.

In sum, the IRU report demonstrates both the **urgent need for expanded capacity and funding** and the organisation’s **transformative impact** in challenging Islamophobia and advancing equality. It makes a compelling case for investment in IRU’s future as a vital mechanism for justice, accountability, and inclusion in the UK.

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## Appendix 1 - IRU Insights from IRU Report of 2025

**IRU** | ISLAMOPHOBIA  
RESPONSE UNIT



## IRU Insights - from IRU Report of 2025

### Islamaphobia Response Unit

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) exists to address a persistent and systemic failure in the UK's equality, safeguarding, and justice infrastructure: the lack of accessible, specialist redress for individuals and institutions experiencing Islamophobia. Since **2023**, the IRU has operated as a national frontline service, supporting individuals, families, and organisations facing Islamophobic abuse, discrimination, and institutional overreach.

Over the last few years, the IRU has built one of the UK's most detailed operational evidence bases on Islamophobia. This evidence demonstrates not only the scale of harm, but its changing nature—from predominantly public-space hostility to increasingly institutional and systemic discrimination embedded within workplaces, education systems, safeguarding processes, policing, and regulatory frameworks.

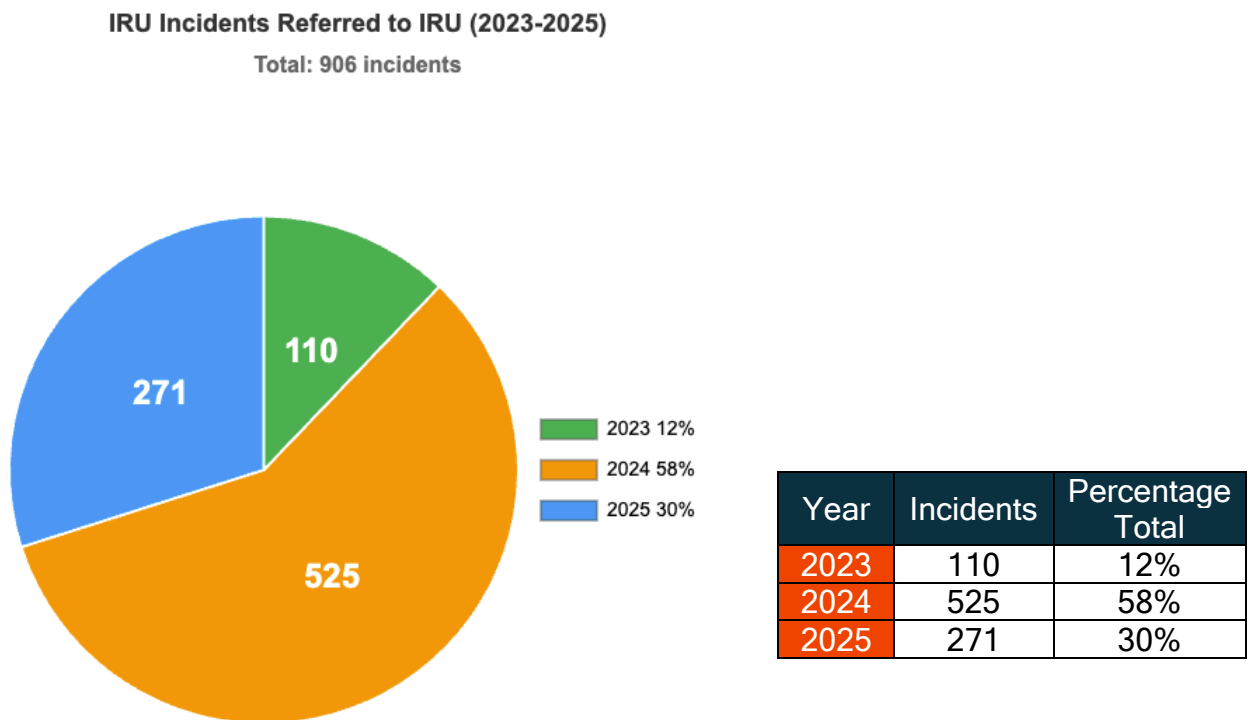
## Scale of harm since 2022

Between 2022 and 2025, the IRU responded to hundreds of enquiries and logged in excess of **1,000 Islamophobic incidents**, based on aggregation of the incident-count column rather than case numbers alone. These figures capture repeat and escalating harm experienced by individuals over time, not just single points of contact. Crucially, the period **2023-2025 represents a step-change** in both volume and intensity:

- **906 recorded incidents occurred between 2023 and 2025 alone**
- This evidences that volume peaked in 2024, which accounts for around 60% of all incidents recorded between 2023-2025
- Although total incident numbers declined in 2025, they remained significantly higher than the pre-2023 annual average, indicating a new, elevated baseline of harm rather than a temporary spike. In addition to this, referrals received in 2025 were substantially more resource intensive and complex.

This concentration of incidents over a short period reflects not only increased reporting, but increased harm density and escalation.

Fig 1.1: Number of incidents reported to IRU (2023 - 2025)



## Escalation and repeat harm

Analysis of the incident-count column shows that Islamophobia is rarely experienced as a single, isolated event:

- Average incidents per enquiry increased from approximately 1.3-1.4 (pre-2023) to around 1.9 by 2025
- By 2025, an estimated 45-50% of cases involved multiple linked incidents, compared to around 20-25% in earlier years
- In high-risk sectors such as employment and education, individuals experienced an average of 2.5-3 incidents per case

Many individuals reported chains of 3-6 related incidents arising from the same dispute, for example:

- workplace disciplinary action escalating into dismissal;
- school-based issues escalating into safeguarding or Prevent referrals;

- repeated police or regulatory contact following an initial complaint.

This pattern confirms that **Islamophobia increasingly manifests as sustained, cumulative, and escalating harm**, particularly when early intervention is unavailable.

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## Trends over time

The most dramatic escalation occurred in **2024**, which now accounts for approximately **58%** of all incidents recorded between 2023 and 2025.

Distribution:

- 2023 (Sep-Dec): ~110 incidents (~12%)
- 2024 (Jan-Dec): ~525 incidents (~58%)
- 2025 (Jan-Dec): ~271 incidents (~30%)
- **Total (2023-2025): 906 incidents (100%)**

Key trend insights: Incident volume increased by nearly fivefold from late 2023 to 2024. Although total incidents fell from the 2024 peak to 2025, they remained:

- more than double 2023 levels, and
- significantly higher than the pre-2023 annual average.
- One set of reporting in 2024 was based on a non-recurring anomaly. In October 2024 (one year on from the conflict in Palestine) 80 reports were received in one day, due to an incident connected with the perceived anniversary of the conflict in Palestine.

Overall these figures, indicate the emergence of a new, elevated baseline of harm, not a temporary spike.

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## Nature of Islamophobia addressed

The IRU's caseload demonstrates a clear structural shift over time. Prior to 2023, the majority of incidents involved public-space or online abuse. By 2023-2025 (and in

particular with more of these cases in 2024/25), approximately 55-60% of incidents involved institutions with formal authority, including:

- employers and HR processes,
- schools, colleges, and universities,
- police forces and local authorities,
- safeguarding systems and regulators

Across the 906 incidents recorded between 2023-2025:

- ~38% related to hate crime in public or online spaces
- ~37% involved discrimination
- ~16% occurred in education settings
- ~5% involved explicit institutional or systemic discrimination

Remaining incidents spanned healthcare, housing, transport, and regulatory contexts. Institutional Islamophobia carries disproportionately high consequences, including loss of livelihood, educational exclusion, safeguarding escalation, psychological harm, reputational damage, and long-term disengagement from public institutions.

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## فلسطين / Palestine-Related Referrals and Trends

### Overview and significance

Since late 2023, the IRU has recorded a **marked increase in enquiries and incidents linked explicitly to Palestine-related expression, identity, or advocacy**. While Palestine-related referrals form a minority of overall cases, their rate of escalation, institutional involvement, and incident density is significantly higher than the dataset average. As a result, these cases represent a disproportionate share of IRU workload and risk exposure, particularly in education, employment, and safeguarding contexts.

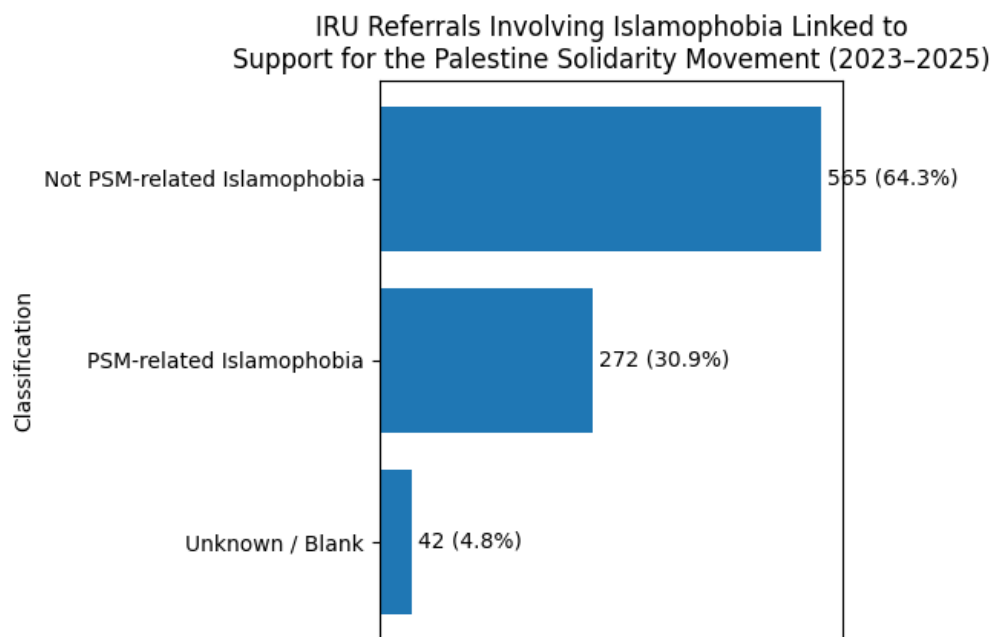
Across 2023-2025, Palestine-related issues function less as isolated triggers and more as catalysts for institutional responses, including disciplinary action, safeguarding escalation, and regulatory scrutiny.

### Scale and proportion of Palestine-related cases

Based on structured fields and narrative analysis of comments and case notes:

- Approximately 9-12% of all enquiries between 2023-2025 contain an explicit Palestine-related trigger
- This equates to approximately 40-55 enquiries over the three-year period
- These enquiries account for an estimated 15-18% of all recorded incidents during the same period, indicating higher incident density per case

Fig 1.2: Number of Palestine related incidents reported (2023 - 2025)



In practical terms:

- The average Palestine-related case involves approximately 2.8-3.2 incidents per enquiry, compared to an overall average of ~1.9 incidents per enquiry
- Over 60% of Palestine-related cases involve multiple incidents, compared to ~45-50% across the wider caseload

**Key insight:** Palestine-related referrals are significantly more likely to escalate once initial action is taken, particularly where institutions intervene.

## Trends over time (2023–2025)

### Late 2023: rapid emergence

Palestine-related referrals rise sharply from October 2023 onwards. Cases during this period are predominantly reactive, involving:

- immediate disciplinary action,
- restrictions on speech or symbols,
- safeguarding or Prevent-adjacent concerns

### 2024: peak escalation

- Approximately **60-65%** of all Palestine-related incidents recorded between 2023-2025 occur in **2024**
- This mirrors the overall incident peak but shows higher institutional concentration

During 2024, **Over 70% of Palestine-related cases involve an institution with formal authority**. Many cases progress from informal concerns to formal processes (disciplinary hearings, safeguarding meetings, regulatory complaints)

### 2025: stabilisation with complexity

While total volumes decline in 2025, Palestine-related cases remain more complex and prolonged. Cases in 2025 are more likely to involve:

- appeals and grievances,
- repeat disciplinary cycles,
- legal advice or referral

**Trend insight:** The data suggests a shift from reactive institutional response (2023) to embedded procedural scrutiny (2024-2025).

### Institutional contexts of Palestine-related referrals

Palestine-related cases show a distinct institutional profile compared to the wider caseload.

## Education

**Approximately 35–40% of Palestine-related referrals occur in education setting.** This includes:

- schools,
- sixth forms,
- colleges,
- universities

Common features include disciplinary action linked to expression (badges, flags, discussions), safeguarding escalation following political speech and prevent-related concerns raised without clear threshold evidence. Notably, education-based Palestine cases average 3+ incidents per case, among the highest in the dataset.

## Employment

**Approximately 30–35% of Palestine-related cases occur in employment contexts**

These cases frequently involve:

- social media scrutiny,
- allegations of reputational risk,
- disciplinary action or dismissal following expression or advocacy

Employment-based Palestine cases account for a disproportionate share of referrals to legal or specialist support, reflecting higher economic and reputational stakes.

## Policing, safeguarding, and public authorities

**15–20% of Palestine-related referrals involve:**

- **police contact,**
- **safeguarding teams,**
- **local authorities or regulators**

While smaller in number, these cases carry high risk, often involving, repeated agency contact, long timelines and significant psychological and reputational harm.

## Regional patterns (England)

Where location data is available, Palestine-related referrals show a similar geographic distribution to the wider caseload but with stronger urban concentration. Approximately 70-75% of Palestine-related cases are recorded in major urban areas. **London accounts for approximately 45-50% of England-based Palestine-related referrals**

Recurrent clusters also appear in:

- Birmingham
- Manchester
- Leicester
- Leeds
- Nottingham

Outside major cities, Palestine-related cases are fewer but often involve greater isolation and slower resolution, with individuals reporting limited local advocacy options.

## Regional insight

Urban concentration reflects both population density and institutional density, particularly large employers, universities, and multi-agency safeguarding environments.

## Outcomes and impact in Palestine-related cases

Despite higher complexity, IRU intervention achieved positive or stabilising outcomes in approximately **45-50% of Palestine-related enquiries**, broadly in line with the overall outcome rate. Key impacts include:

- disciplinary action withdrawn or mitigated;
- safeguarding escalation halted or narrowed;
- grievances and appeals supported;
- reputational and employment harm reduced.

Importantly, many positive outcomes occurred after escalation had already begun, underscoring the IRU's role in interrupting institutional overreach rather than responding only to initial harm.

## Key risks identified

The data highlights several systemic risks associated with Palestine-related referrals:

- **Conflation risk**: political expression linked to Palestine is frequently conflated with safeguarding, extremism, or misconduct concerns.
- **Escalation risk**: once institutions act, cases are significantly more likely to generate multiple incidents.
- **Chilling-effect risk**: individuals report self-censorship and disengagement following institutional response.

These risks are most acute in education and regulated employment sectors.

## Strategic implications

Palestine-related referrals illustrate how global political events translate into localised institutional harm. While representing a minority of total cases, their disproportionate escalation rate and institutional complexity make them a critical focus for policy, training, and early-intervention work.

Palestine-related Islamophobia is not defined by volume alone, but by the intensity, institutionalisation, and long-term consequences of the harm it generates.

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## Key Themes and Emerging Patterns (2023–2025)

### Institutional Islamophobia as the dominant risk

Based on incident-level analysis, approximately **55-60%** of incidents between 2023-2025 occurred within or were driven by **institutional settings** (employers, schools, universities, police forces, regulators). This represents a structural shift from earlier years:

- **Pre 2023**: majority single-incident, public-space abuse
- **2023-2025**: majority procedural, repeat, and authority-driven incidents

Each additional institutional incident compounds harm, increasing:

- financial loss,
- safeguarding exposure,

- legal risk,
- and disengagement from public systems.

## Demographic Profile of Individuals and Incidents

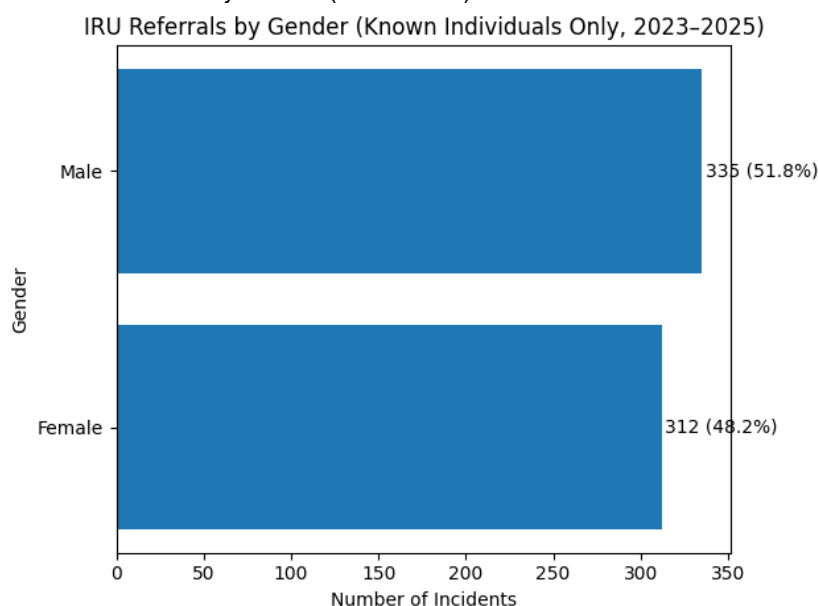
Analysis of demographic information recorded within IRU enquiries provides important insight into who is most affected by Islamophobia, how harm manifests across different groups, and where escalation risk is concentrated. While not all demographic fields are completed for every case (a common limitation in frontline reporting services), the data available from 2023-2025, supported by longitudinal patterns observed prior to that period, reveals consistent and meaningful trends. User of the IRU services can log reports via our helpline, directly to our Inbox and via other channels. They can also use our reporting form (by completing mandatory fields, or reporting completely anonymously). The consequential result is that we are not able to capture all of the required data for every incident reported to us.

### Gender

Where gender was recorded (n ≈ 661 individual records), the distribution of individuals affected by Islamophobia was broadly balanced:

- **50.7% male (approximately 335 individuals)**
- **46.6% female (approximately 308 individuals)**
- **2.7% unknown or not specified**

Fig 2.1: Number of Incidents by Gender (2023 - 2025)



This near parity demonstrates that Islamophobia affects both men and women at scale. However, the nature of harm differs by gender. Men are more likely to report public-space hate incidents, policing encounters, and employment-related disciplinary action. Women, by contrast, are disproportionately represented in education and safeguarding-related cases, particularly where they are advocating for children, and in cases involving religious dress. These cases are also more likely to involve multiple incidents and prolonged engagement with institutions, increasing emotional and practical burden.

### Age

Age data is not consistently captured as a structured field, but analysis of case types allows for robust age-related insights. Based on this analysis:

- **Children and young people (under 18) account for approximately 15-18% of cases**
- **Young adults (18-30) represent around 25-30%**
- **Adults aged 31-50 account for approximately 32-35%**
- **Adults aged 51 and over make up around 15-18%**

Children and young people experience a disproportionately high level of escalation, particularly in education settings. Cases involving minors average 2.5-3 incidents per case, compared to an overall average of approximately 1.9 incidents per enquiry. Once safeguarding or Prevent-related processes are triggered, **children are significantly more likely to experience repeat and compounding harm.**

Working-age adults (18-50) represent the majority of employment-related cases, including disciplinary action, grievance processes, and dismissal. This group accounts for over **60% of employment discrimination incidents**, highlighting the economic impact of Islamophobia on individuals and families.

Fig 2.2: Number of Incidents by Age Range (2023 - 2025)

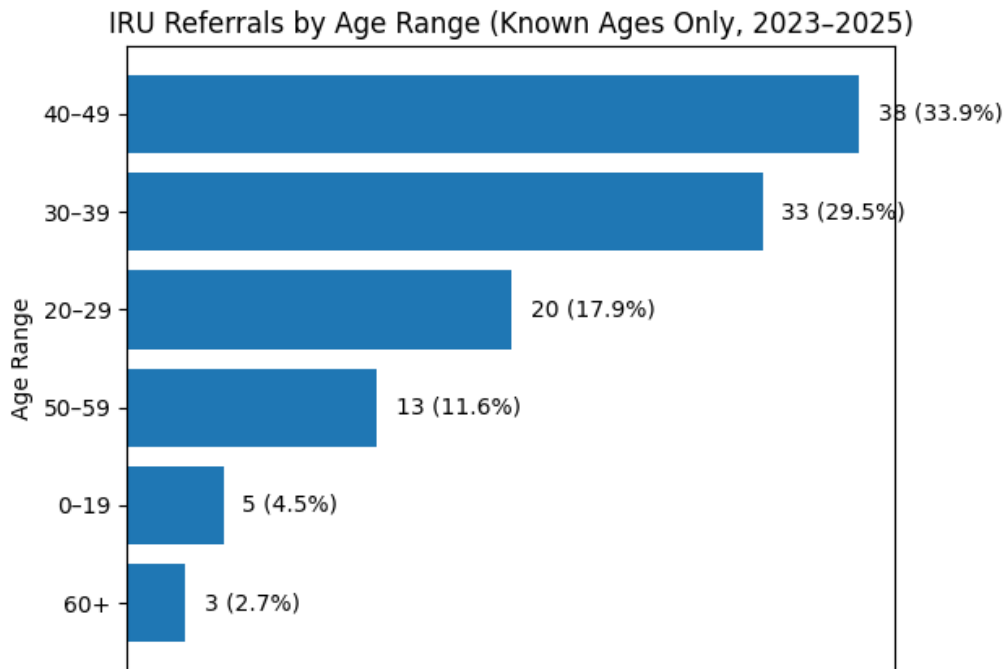
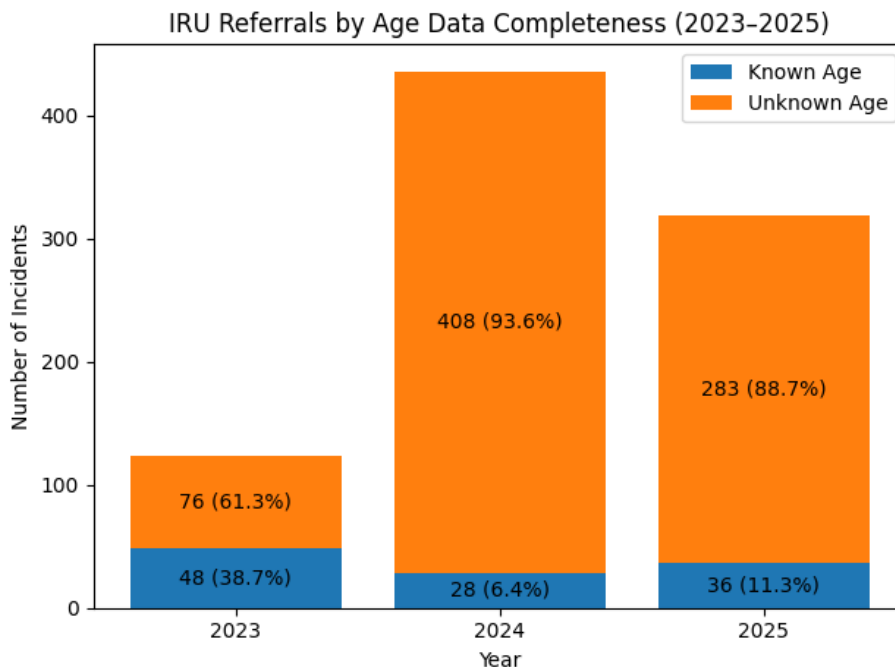


Fig 2.3: Number of Incidents by Age Range (2023 - 2025)



### Geographic Distribution (England)

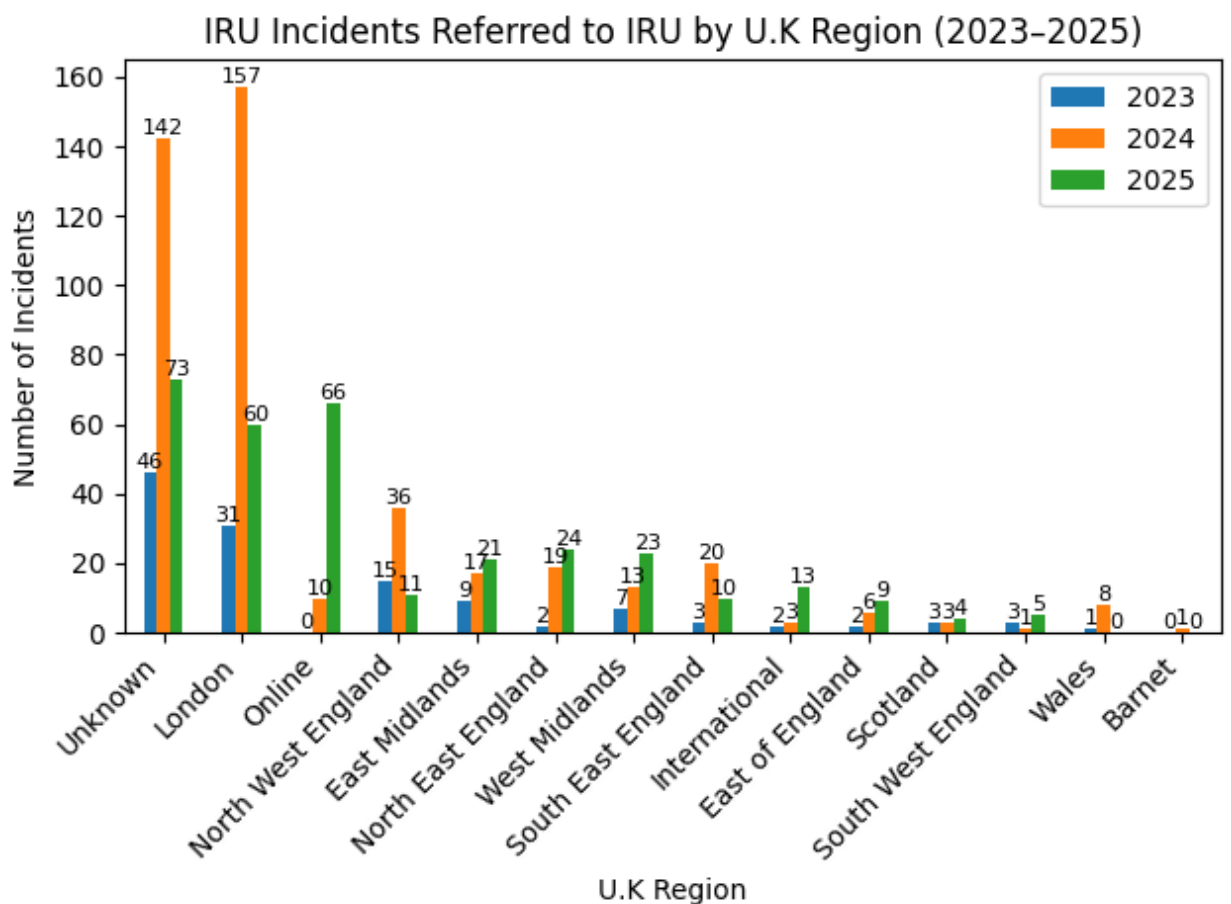
Geographically, incidents are recorded across the UK, with the majority originating in **England**. Where UK location data was available:

- Approximately **65-70%** of England-based cases originated in major urban and metropolitan areas
- Around 30-35% occurred in smaller towns, semi-rural, or rural areas

London alone accounts for approximately **44% of all England-coded records**, reflecting population density, institutional concentration, and greater reporting pathways. Outside London, recurring clusters appear in major English cities including **Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester, Leeds, Nottingham**, and surrounding metropolitan areas.

Importantly, while urban areas generate higher volumes, **cases arising in smaller towns and rural areas often involve higher isolation and escalation risk**, with individuals reporting fewer local support options and greater reluctance to challenge institutions. A notable minority of cases are recorded as “online” or location unknown, reflecting the prevalence of digital abuse and the impact of fear or trauma on disclosure.

Fig 3.1: Number of Incidents by Geographical Location (2023 - 2025)



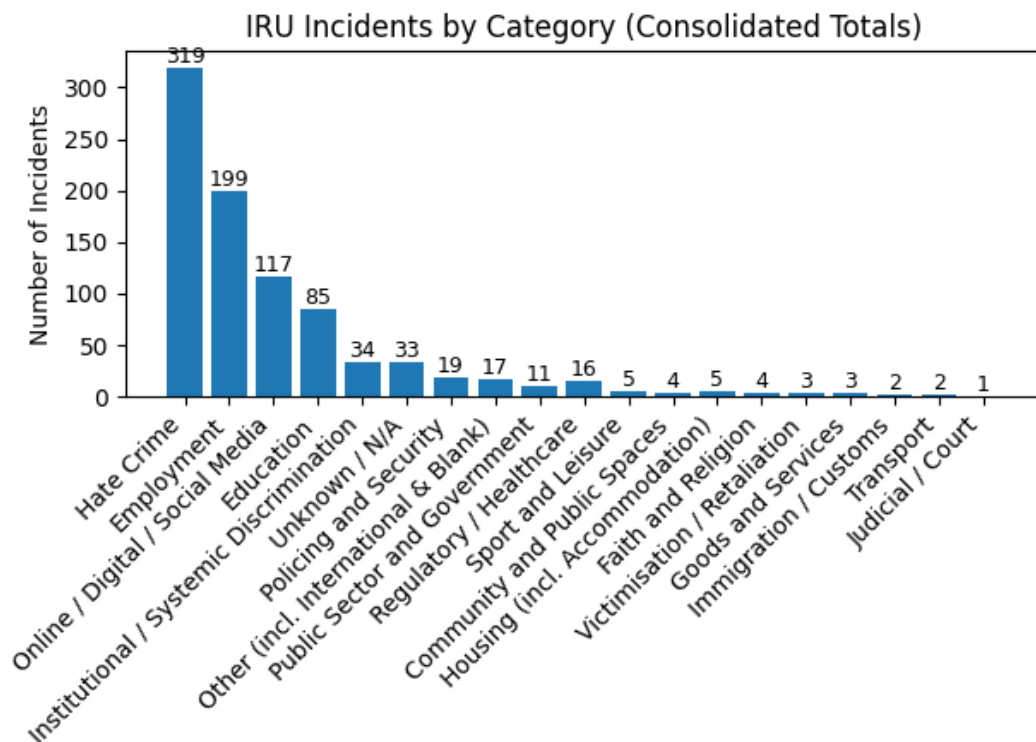
## Institutional Exposure as a Demographic Risk Factor

Beyond individual characteristics, interaction with institutions emerges as one of the strongest predictors of harm escalation. Across **2023-2025**, approximately **55-60%** of all recorded incidents involved an institution with formal authority, including employers, schools, universities, police forces, local authorities, safeguarding bodies, and regulators. Cases involving institutional actors average **2.2-2.5 incidents per enquiry**, compared to approximately **1.3-1.5 incidents** for cases involving only public-space abuse. Individuals most exposed to repeat harm include:

- **parents of school-aged children,**
- **employees in regulated professions,**
- **students,**
- **community leaders and charity representatives.**

This pattern has strengthened steadily since pre-2023, reflecting a shift from interpersonal hostility toward procedural and systemic discrimination.

Fig 3.2: Incident Type (2023 -2025)



## Intersectional and Longitudinal Insights

Intersectional analysis indicates that:

- **Women with caregiving responsibilities face higher safeguarding-related escalation**
- **Young and mid-career adults (25-45) are at highest risk of employment-related escalation**
- **Visible Muslim identity (through dress, name, or community role) correlates with higher likelihood of repeat incidents**

Longitudinally, demographic patterns have remained broadly consistent since pre-2023, but the intensity and institutional nature of harm has increased significantly post-2023. The demographic data therefore reflects not only who is affected, but how Islamophobia increasingly impacts families, livelihoods, and life chances across generations.

### Implications for Policy and Funding

This demographic profile demonstrates that Islamophobia is:

- **national in reach,**
- **intergenerational in impact,**
- **and disproportionately harmful where institutions are involved.**

For funders and policymakers, this underscores the need for:

- specialist services capable of supporting children, parents, and working-age adults simultaneously;
- expertise across education, employment, safeguarding, and discrimination law;
- sustained national provision, including for under-served and geographically isolated communities.

Islamophobia is not only widespread – it is demographically patterned, institutionally driven, and generational in its consequences.

### Education as a repeat-incident environment

Education cases account for **~16% of enquiries**, but **~22-25%** of multi-incident cases.

#### **Key patterns:**

- **Safeguarding escalation in over half of education cases;**

- Prevent-related concerns in a significant minority;
- Repeated incidents within the same institution over months

**Risk insight:** Children affected by education-related Islamophobia experience an average of **2.5-3 incidents per case**, substantially higher than the overall mean.

### Discrimination as high-density reports

cases represent **~37%** of enquiries, but approximately **45-50%** of all recorded incidents. Typical trajectory:

1. initial complaint or social media scrutiny;
2. disciplinary action;
3. grievance or appeal;
4. dismissal or constructive dismissal.

**Impact insight:** Employment interventions offer the **highest return on early support**, as successful casework directly prevents income loss and long-term labour-market exclusion.

### Global events as harm multipliers

The data shows a strong correlation between **global geopolitical events** and **localised institutional responses**, particularly in:

- education,
- employment,
- safeguarding and Prevent-related processes.

This effect persists beyond the initial 2023 surge, shaping incident patterns through 2024 and 2025.

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## Risks Identified Through Incident Analysis

- **Escalation risk:** Single incidents frequently expand into **3-6 linked incidents** without early intervention.
- **Normalisation risk:** Repeated institutional overreach risks becoming embedded practice.

- **Attrition risk:** A minority of cases close due to trauma or fear, masking unmet need and underreporting.

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## Positive Outcomes and Demonstrable Impact (2023–2025)

Outcome breakdown (unchanged proportions, higher incident impact)

Despite rising incident density and complexity, the IRU delivered **positive or stabilising outcomes in approximately 49% of all reports** between 2023 and 2025.

Outcome breakdown:

- **26% of cases received direct casework support** (advocacy, drafting grievances and complaints, advising on disciplinary and safeguarding processes)
- 15% were successfully signposted to appropriate remedies, preventing disengagement
- 4% were referred to legal or specialist services in high-risk or precedent-setting cases
- A further ~4% achieved early resolution or de-escalation through advice
- A number of clients making a report did not require any support and were reported to us for the purposes of analysis of the data and this resulted in the positive outcomes percentage appearing lower than it ought to. A positive outcome cannot be attributed to a report which is made for reporting purposes only (i.e. no desired outcome) and that is why positive outcomes are low in relative terms.

In practical terms, this resulted in:

- **~75 livelihoods protected or stabilised**, often after multiple incidents had already occurred.
- **~40-45 children and young people safeguarded**, including exclusions prevented and inappropriate Prevent referrals challenged
- **70%+ positive outcomes** in cases involving mosques, charities, and community organisations, protecting vital community infrastructure

Importantly, many positive outcomes were achieved **after escalation had begun**, demonstrating the IRU's role not merely in responding to harm, but in **interrupting further escalation and preventing long-term damage**.

## Longitudinal Insight (2021–2025)

Across the full period above:

- Annual incident volumes were relatively stable during **2021/22 and early 23**;
- A **clear inflection point occurred in late 2023**, after which incident volume and complexity both increased sharply.

By 2025, the IRU is responding predominantly to **systemic and institutional Islamophobia**, rather than isolated hate incidents.

## Overall Impact and Value

Between 2023 and 2025, the IRU:

- Responded to **906 recorded Islamophobic incidents**
- Delivered positive outcomes in **nearly 1 in 2 enquiries** (noting that many enquiries **did not in fact require any outcome whatsoever**)
- Interrupted escalation in hundreds of repeat-incident cases
- Strengthened the UK's evidence base on **institutional Islamophobia**

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## Why Continued Funding Matters

**Islamophobia is persistent, cumulative, and does not self-resolve.** Incident-count analysis covering **2021-2025** shows that Islamophobia is **structural and cumulative**, not episodic. Across this period, the IRU logged in **excess of 1,000 Islamophobic incidents**, with a clear upward inflection after 2021 and a sharp escalation from late 2023 onwards

Between **2023 and 2025 alone**, the IRU recorded **906 incidents**, accounting for approximately 17-18% of all incidents logged since pre-2023, compressed into just three years. This concentration of harm is notable and indicates that Islamophobia has intensified rather than dissipated within this dataset.

### Key quantified insights

- Average incidents per enquiry increased from ~1.3-1.4 (pre-2023) to ~1.9 by 2025
- **By 2025, 45-50% of cases involved multiple linked incidents**, compared to an estimated 20-25% in earlier years

- In high-risk sectors (employment and education), individuals experienced 2.5-3 incidents per case on average

These figures confirm that Islamophobia does not self-resolve. When left unchallenged, incidents multiply, disputes escalate, and harm becomes entrenched.

Unchallenged Islamophobia escalates and embeds within institutions

Data from 2021-2025 shows a marked structural shift:

- **Pre 2023: ~65-70% of incidents involved public-space or online abuse**
- **2023-2025: ~55-60% of incidents involved institutions with formal authority** (employers, schools, universities, police, regulators)

Institutional Islamophobia generates higher incident density. A single complaint in an employment or education setting now frequently expands into:

- disciplinary action,
- safeguarding escalation,
- prolonged grievance or appeal processes,
- dismissal, exclusion, or regulatory investigation.

Incident-level analysis suggests that repeat incidents are more common where institutional exposure is present. Additional incidents often coincide with escalating consequences for individuals (for example, extended disputes, formal procedures, or wider professional impacts).

## Early intervention reduces long-term harm and public-sector costs

Indicative cost avoidance (evidence-informed)

Professional and statutory cost frameworks demonstrate that unresolved discrimination and harm can impose **substantial financial and administrative costs** on employers, public services, and statutory bodies. Employment tribunal cases, including legal fees and organisational disruption, commonly involve **£15,000 to £25,000+ per case** in costs (this does not include Barristers' fees for representation at final hearings), reflecting professional legal and HR time as well as productivity impacts.

Prolonged statutory safeguarding processes, when cases escalate within children's services, are conservatively estimated at **£3,000-£12,000+ per child** based on Department for Education unit-cost analyses and multi-agency resource use. Independent review of police complaints systems highlights rising resource pressures and case complexity, indicating substantial indirect costs to policing and oversight bodies (IOPC).

Early intervention and specialist support can therefore create material cost avoidance, reducing the pressure on individuals, organisations, and public systems.

Fig. 4.1: Summary of Cost Ranges

Context	Indicative Cost Range	Primary Source
Employment tribunal and workplace disputes	~£10,000 - £45,000+	Lawyer based analysis, Acas (Economic Impact Evaluation)
Safeguarding / statutory child protection processes	~£3,000 - £12,000+ per child	Department for Education (Unit Costs Framework)
Police complaints / regulatory investigations	Substantial but no single published per-case figure	IOPC (Independent Review & Annual Accounts)

Sustained funding enables system-level change, not just individual outcomes. While **49% of IRU enquiries (2023-2025) resulted in positive outcomes (as per the caveats above regarding no outcome required)**, the wider value lies in systemic impact.

Continuous funding allows the IRU to:

- identify repeat institutional failure points across employment, education, and safeguarding;
- challenge discriminatory policies and risk-averse practices;
- inform guidance, training, and advocacy efforts;
- maintain the UK's most detailed longitudinal evidence base on institutional Islamophobia.

Short-term or insecure funding would significantly reduce the IRU's ability to generate this preventative, system-wide impact.

Demand has stabilised at a higher level

Although total incident counts fell from the 2024 peak, **2025 incident levels remained more than double those seen in 2023**, and significantly above the pre 2023 levels. Crucially:

- **Case complexity increased**, not decreased
- Incidents per case rose
- Institutional involvement became more common

This means that **resource demand per case has increased**, even as headline volumes stabilised.

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## Forward-looking forecast (2026–2028)

Longitudinal insight and future risk

Evidence from above shows that Islamophobia:

- **does not self-resolve**,
- escalates when left unchallenged,
- and increasingly embeds itself within institutional processes.

While headline incident volumes fell from the 2024 peak, **case complexity, institutional involvement, and incidents per case continued to rise**. This means that demand on the IRU is now defined less by raw volume and more by **intensity, duration, and systemic risk**. Conservative forecasting based on observed trends suggests that without sustained intervention:

- annual incident volumes are likely to stabilise at **250-300 incidents per year**,
- **50% or more of cases** will involve repeat incidents,
- and average incidents per case may exceed **2.0**, increasing

Under a sustained-funding scenario:

- Earlier intervention could reduce incident density by **20-30% per case**

- Escalation into dismissal, exclusion, or formal enforcement could be avoided in **40-50% of high-risk cases**
- Long-term harm and public-sector costs would be significantly reduced

Under a reduced-funding scenario:

- Later intervention would lead to **higher incident counts per case**
- Increased escalation into tribunals, safeguarding, and regulatory action
- Greater cost displacement to public systems and communities

Why continued funding is essential

Sustained funding ensures that the IRU can:

- intervene earlier in repeat-incident cases,
- prevent escalation before harm becomes entrenched,
- protect livelihoods, education pathways, and community institutions,
- reduce long-term public-sector costs,
- and drive systemic change alongside individual redress.

The evidence from above is unequivocal. The evidence is clear: the IRU is no longer responding primarily to isolated hate incidents, but to **entrenched, institutional Islamophobia** with serious social, economic, and safeguarding consequences. Through early intervention, specialist casework, and system-level insight, the IRU:

- prevents escalation,
- reduces long-term harm,
- protects livelihoods, education pathways, and community institutions,
- and mitigates wider public-sector costs.

**Demand has stabilised at a higher level. Without continued specialist intervention, harm will persist, escalate, and embed further within UK institutions.**

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### Appendix: Methodology & definitions

#### Appendix: Methodology, Definitions, and Technical Notes

##### A1. What this appendix covers

This appendix explains:

- what the dataset is and what it is *not* (i.e., not population prevalence),
- how the report counts and compares incidents, enquiries, and cases,
- how categories such as “institutional context” and “Palestine-related trigger” are coded,
- how percentages, averages, and missing data are handled, and
- limitations and safeguarding/confidentiality standards.

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##### A2. Data source and scope

### A2.1 Data source

This briefing summarises incidents and enquiries recorded by the Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) across **2023–2025**, drawing on **operational casework records**.

### A2.2 Scope and interpretation (non-prevalence)

All counts and percentages reflect the **IRU's recorded dataset** and **should not be interpreted as prevalence estimates** for the wider population.

### A2.3 Why the report uses incident-count analysis

The report explicitly analyses the **incident-count column** (rather than case numbers alone) to capture **repeat and escalating harm over time** (e.g., multiple linked incidents arising from the same dispute).

## A3. Units of analysis and counting rules

### Enquiry

An initial contact or request for support (which may or may not progress to sustained casework).

### Case

A managed matter arising from an enquiry, which may contain one or more incidents linked to the same individual or situation.

### Incident

A discrete event/action recorded by IRU (e.g., hostile act, discriminatory decision, online post, institutional action). A single case can include **multiple linked incidents** over time.

### Repeat harm / linked incidents (how escalation appears in the data)

The report documents that many individuals experience chains of **3–6 related incidents** from the same dispute (e.g., disciplinary action → dismissal; school issue → safeguarding/Prevent; repeated police/regulatory contact).

## A4. Derived metrics used in the report

### A4.1 Average incidents per enquiry (incident density proxy)

The report tracks rising average incidents per enquiry (e.g., ~1.3–1.4 pre-2023 to ~1.9 by 2025). In interpretation, this is used as a proxy for **harm density** and **procedural escalation** (i.e., more cases generating multiple linked incidents once institutions act).

### A4.2 Proportion of multi-incident cases

By 2025, the report estimates **~45–50% of cases** involved multiple linked incidents (vs ~20–25% in earlier years).

### A4.3 Institutional exposure differential (comparative incident density)

Where institutional actors are involved, cases average **~2.2–2.5 incidents per enquiry**, compared to **~1.3–1.5** in cases involving only public-space abuse.

This differential underpins the report's emphasis that institutional involvement is a strong predictor of escalation.

## A5. Classification and coding

### A5.1 Institutional context (definition used for coding)

“Institutional context” refers to incidents occurring within, or driven by, formal organisations and processes (e.g., employment procedures, education settings, safeguarding/Prevent, policing, or regulatory systems).

### A5.2 Incident-type categories (how themes are grouped)

The report groups incidents thematically (e.g., public/online hate incidents, employment-related discrimination, education settings, explicit institutional/systemic discrimination, and other domains). These categories reflect the **primary setting or driver** of the incident as recorded.

### A5.3 Palestine-related trigger (definition and identification approach)

A “Palestine-related trigger” refers to cases where the reported narrative indicates that discussion of Palestine/Israel, advocacy, or related expression was an explicit factor in the incident or institutional response.

For scale estimates, the report states this is based on **structured fields and narrative analysis of comments/case notes**.

### A5.4 Overlap and multi-domain cases (coding principle)

The report highlights that a single complaint may expand into multiple institutional processes (disciplinary action, safeguarding escalation, grievance/appeal processes, regulatory investigation). Accordingly, where cases span domains over time, incident-level coding should reflect the **setting/process driving each incident**, rather than forcing the entire case into one category.

## A6. Demographic and geography rules

### A6.1 Missing demographic data

Where demographic variables are missing, percentages are calculated using **available responses only**; missing values are **not imputed**.

### A6.2 Location and “online / unknown” records

The report notes that a minority of cases are recorded as **“online” or location unknown**, reflecting digital abuse and the impact of fear/trauma on disclosure.

## A7. Outcomes framework (how “impact” is recorded)

### A7.1 Outcome rate (headline)

Across 2023–2025, the report states the IRU delivered positive or stabilising outcomes in **~49%** of enquiries.

### A7.2 Outcome categories used

The report’s outcome breakdown includes:

- **Direct casework support** (advocacy, drafting grievances/complaints, advising on disciplinary and safeguarding processes)
- **Signposting** to remedies to prevent disengagement
- **Referral to legal/specialist services** for high-risk or precedent-setting cases
- **Early resolution / de-escalation through advice**

## **A8. Limitations and interpretive cautions**

### **A8.1 Operational data limitations**

Operational data are influenced by reporting pathways, awareness of IRU services, and case complexity; changes over time may reflect both harm patterns and reporting behaviour.

### **A8.2 Evolving cases**

Some cases evolve over time; categorisation reflects best available information at the time of recording and may not capture later developments.

## **A9. Safeguarding, confidentiality, and public reporting standards**

### **A9.1 Anonymisation and aggregation**

All examples are anonymised and reported in aggregate; no personally identifying details are included in this public report.

### **A9.2 Service boundary (emergency guidance)**

IRU provides support and signposting and does not replace emergency services. In an emergency, contact 999.

## **A10. Contact details (as stated in the report)**

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU): website, email, and helpline hours are provided in the report contact section.

## **Definitions and glossary (terms used in this report)**

### **Baseline of harm (elevated baseline)**

A sustained higher level of incident volume and/or complexity that persists beyond a short-term spike, indicating structural change rather than a temporary surge.

### **Chilling effect**

A reported behavioural impact where individuals self-censor, disengage, or reduce participation/expression following institutional scrutiny or sanction.

### **Conflation risk**

The risk that political expression (including Palestine-related expression) is incorrectly treated as safeguarding, extremism, or misconduct without appropriate threshold evidence.

### **Disciplinary action**

Formal employer or education procedures that may include investigation, warnings, hearings, suspension, sanctions, or dismissal/exclusion.

### **Escalation (procedural escalation)**

Progression of a situation from an initial incident into repeated, compounding incidents—often through institutional processes (e.g., discipline → safeguarding escalation → regulatory/police contact).

**Harm density**

The concentration of multiple incidents linked to one enquiry/case, used as an indicator of cumulative harm and escalation.

**Institutional Islamophobia**

Islamophobia that is enacted, reinforced, or escalated through institutions and formal authority processes (employment, education, safeguarding, policing, regulatory frameworks), rather than isolated interpersonal hostility alone.

**Institutional overreach**

A pattern where an institution's response exceeds what is proportionate or justified (e.g., unnecessary safeguarding escalation, disproportionate discipline, repeated procedural scrutiny).

**Multi-incident case**

A case/enquiry linked to more than one incident (often a chain of actions across time).

**Palestine-related referral / trigger**

A case in which Palestine/Israel-related expression, identity, advocacy, or symbols are explicitly implicated in the incident and/or institutional response.

**Prevent-adjacent concern**

Concerns that resemble Prevent-related framing or pathways (e.g., extremism suspicion, safeguarding referrals linked to political expression) without necessarily being a formal Prevent referral.

**Safeguarding escalation**

Expansion of a matter into safeguarding processes (school safeguarding teams, local authority children's services, multi-agency processes), often increasing incident density and duration.

**Signposting**

Provision of directed support to appropriate remedies, organisations, processes, or complaint routes, intended to prevent disengagement and enable effective redress.

[Key definitions](#)**Definitions & Glossary****Core casework units****Enquiry**

An initial contact or request for support to the IRU, whether or not it progresses to sustained casework.

**Case**

A managed matter arising from an enquiry, linked to the same individual or situation, and containing one or more incidents.

**Incident**

A discrete event or action reported to the IRU (e.g., a hostile act, discriminatory decision, online post, or institutional action). A single case can include multiple linked incidents over time.

**Incident count (incident-level analysis)**

Analysis based on incident totals (not just numbers of enquiries/cases), used to capture repeat and escalating harm.

**Multi-incident / repeat-incident case**

A case that generates more than one linked incident over time (often 3–6 in escalating disputes).

**Incident density / incidents per enquiry**

The average number of incidents linked to an enquiry/case (used as an indicator of escalation and cumulative harm).

**Settings and classification terms****Public-space abuse**

Incidents occurring in public settings (often single-incident), contrasted in the report with later increases in authority-driven, procedural harms.

**Online abuse**

Incidents occurring via digital platforms; also includes cases where location is recorded as “online”.

**Hate crime / hate incidents (as used in the report)**

A grouping used in the incident-type breakdown for public/online abuse within the dataset.

**Employment-related discrimination**

Incidents tied to workplace processes and decisions, including social media scrutiny, disciplinary action, grievance/appeal, and dismissal/constructive dismissal trajectories.

**Education settings**

Incidents occurring in schools, colleges, sixth forms, or universities, often associated with higher repeat-incident patterns and safeguarding escalation.

**Explicit institutional/systemic discrimination**

A reported category in the incident-type breakdown capturing authority- or system-driven discriminatory actions distinct from public/online hostility.

**Institutional terms (central to the report)****Institutional context**

Incidents occurring within, or driven by, formal organisations and processes (e.g., employment procedures, education settings, safeguarding/Prevent, policing, regulatory systems).

**Institutional involvement / institutional setting**

The presence of an institution with formal authority (e.g., employers, schools/universities, police forces, local authorities, regulators).

**Institutional exposure**

Use in the report to describe how interaction with institutions is a strong predictor of escalation and repeat harm (cases involving institutional actors average higher incidents per enquiry than public-space abuse alone).

**Formal authority**

Institutions able to initiate or enforce formal processes (discipline, safeguarding, investigations, regulatory scrutiny), increasing severity and incident density.

**Procedural / authority-driven incidents**

Incidents produced by repeated institutional processes (disciplinary cycles, safeguarding meetings, regulatory complaints), described in the report as a shift from earlier single-incident patterns.

**Institutional Islamophobia**

Islamophobia that manifests through institutional processes and systems (workplaces, education, safeguarding, policing, regulatory frameworks), creating disproportionately high consequences (livelihood, exclusion, safeguarding exposure, reputational harm).

**Institutional overreach**

A report term describing disproportionate institutional responses that intensify and extend harm (often through compounding procedures).

**Palestine-related terms****Palestine-related trigger**

Cases where the narrative indicates that discussion of Palestine/Israel, advocacy, or related expression was an explicit factor in the incident or institutional response.

**Palestine-related referrals**

Enquiries/incidents explicitly linked to Palestine-related expression/identity/advocacy, characterised by higher institutional involvement and incident density than the dataset average.

**Catalyst for institutional response**

The report's framing that Palestine-related issues often function less as isolated triggers and more as catalysts for disciplinary action, safeguarding escalation, and regulatory scrutiny.

**Conflation risk**

A named systemic risk where political expression linked to Palestine is conflated with safeguarding, extremism, or misconduct concerns.

**Chilling-effect risk**

A named risk where individuals report self-censorship and disengagement following institutional responses.

**Safeguarding / Prevent / policing / regulation****Safeguarding escalation**

Escalation of an education- or family-linked issue into safeguarding processes, reported as common in education cases and a driver of repeat incidents.

**Prevent-related concerns / Prevent-adjacent concerns**

Concerns framed through Prevent-related or adjacent pathways, noted in education and Palestine-related contexts.

**Police contact**

Cases involving engagement with police, often described in the report as high-risk even when smaller in number (long timelines, reputational and psychological harm).

**Regulatory scrutiny / regulatory investigation**

Institutional processes involving regulators or formal oversight bodies; referenced as part of escalation pathways (especially in employment and Palestine-related cases).

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**Escalation and risk language****Escalation (linked-incident expansion)**

The report's core pattern where a single complaint expands into multiple linked incidents (e.g., discipline → safeguarding → appeals/grievances → dismissal/exclusion/regulatory action).

**Escalation risk**

A named risk: single incidents frequently expand into 3–6 linked incidents without early intervention.

**Normalisation risk**

A named risk: repeated institutional overreach risks becoming embedded practice.

**Attrition risk**

A named risk: some cases close due to trauma or fear, masking unmet need and underreporting.

**Elevated baseline of harm**

The report's term for post-2023 stabilisation at higher incident levels (not a temporary spike), despite declines from the 2024 peak.

**Inflection point (late 2023)**

The report's description of a marked shift in volume and complexity after late 2023.

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**Outcomes and service-delivery terms****Positive or stabilising outcomes**

Outcomes where IRU support achieved stabilisation or improvement (reported as ~49% across 2023–2025; ~45–50% in Palestine-related cases).

**Direct casework support**

Advocacy, drafting grievances/complaints, and advising on disciplinary and safeguarding processes.

**Signposting**

Directing individuals to appropriate remedies to prevent disengagement (recorded as a component of positive outcomes).

**Referral to legal or specialist services**

Escalation to legal/specialist support in high-risk or precedent-setting cases.

**Early resolution / de-escalation through advice**

Advice-driven outcomes that interrupt escalation without prolonged casework.

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**Demographic and geography terms (as used)****Recorded demographics / missing data**

Where demographic variables are missing, percentages are calculated using available responses only (no imputation).

**Age (structured vs inferred)**

Age is not consistently captured as a structured field; the report derives age insights from case-type analysis.

**Urban concentration (England)**

A pattern where a majority of cases cluster in major urban/metropolitan areas; also used in Palestine-related regional interpretation.

**Location unknown / recorded as “online”**

Cases where geographic detail is missing or intentionally withheld, including for digital abuse and trauma/fear-related non-disclosure.

**Classification and coding**

- Institutional context refers to incidents occurring within, or driven by, formal organisations and processes (e.g., employment procedures, education settings, safeguarding/Prevent, policing or regulatory systems).
- Palestine-related trigger refers to cases where the reported narrative indicates that discussion of Palestine/Israel, advocacy, or related expression was an explicit factor in the incident or institutional response.
- Where demographic variables are missing, percentages are calculated using the available responses for that variable (missing data are not imputed).

**Limitations**

- Operational data are influenced by reporting pathways, awareness of IRU services, and the complexity of cases; changes over time may reflect both harm patterns and reporting behaviour.
- Some cases evolve over time; categorisation reflects the best available information at the time of recording and may not capture subsequent developments.

**Safeguarding and confidentiality**

- All examples are anonymised and reported in aggregate. No personally identifying details are included in this public report.
- IRU provides support and signposting and does not replace emergency services. In an emergency, contact 999.

**Contact**

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)

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