TACKLING ONLINE HATE

RESPONDING TO ONLINE HATE SPEECH AND HATE CRIME

COALITION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY AND RIGHTS, AUGUST 2023

CORRA FOUNDATION
voice • power • change

CRER
coalition for racial
equality and rights

75% of children aged 8-17 have access to a smartphone.[a]

1 in 5 children have received harmful messages or images online.[b]

In a US-based survey, 75% of respondents said they had experienced online harassment on Facebook.[c]

11.2% of young people in Scotland would feel left out from their friends if they couldn't use social media at night.[d]

According to Ditch the Label, 68.6% of race-related hate speech on social media includes racist slurs or tropes.[e]

Between 2019 and mid-2021, there was a new post about race or ethnicity-based hate speech every 1.7 seconds on social media.[f]

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&?#!*
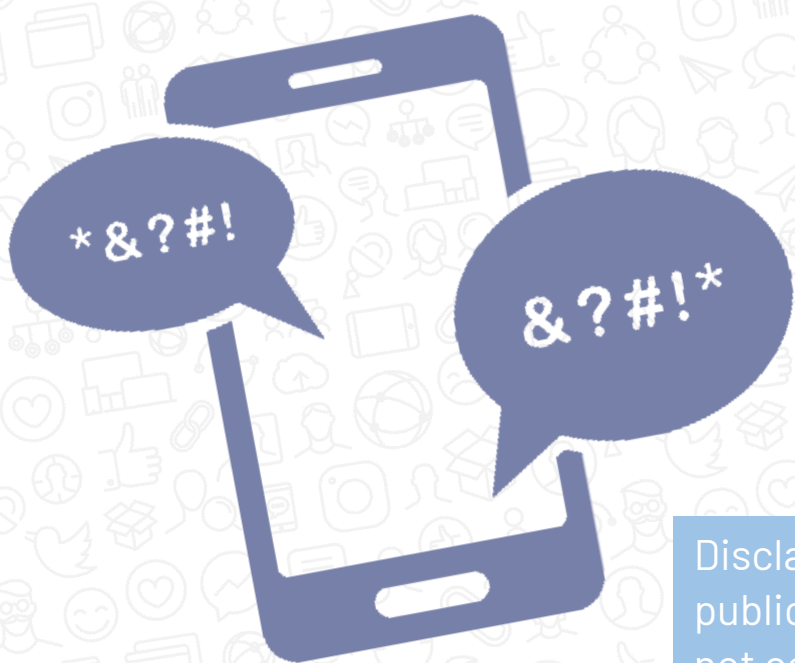
Disclaimer: the information in this publication is guidance and does not constitute legal advice.

References located at the end of this report.

Who We Are

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish anti-racism charity based in Glasgow. We are focused on working to eliminate racial discrimination and harassment and promote racial justice across Scotland.

Our key mission is to:

- Protect, enhance and promote the rights of Black and minority ethnic communities across all areas of life in Scotland; and to,
- Empower Black and minority ethnic communities to strengthen the social, economic and political capital of Black and minority ethnic communities.

CRER takes a rights-based approach, promoting relevant international, regional, and national human rights and equality conventions and legislation.

For more information on this report or the wider work of CRER or to request this guide in an alternative format, please contact:

Lucien Staddon Foster

Research Officer

research@crer.org.uk

WWW.CRER.ORG.UK

CRER is a charity registered in Scotland (SC029007)

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Introduction

Social media has transformed how we communicate, connect, and share information. However, the distance and anonymity provided by these platforms have made online hate and harassment a common feature of contemporary life.

The internet is an incredibly powerful resource, capable of providing immense entertainment and educational value to our lives and enabling us to connect with one another and the world around us like never before. In 2023, it is a truly inescapable part of daily life.

Over half the world now uses social media, with the average user spending almost 2.5 hours on these platforms every day.[1] However, using these platforms can also come with immense risks – as the far-reaching scope of these digital spaces can expose users to harmful, hateful and dangerous content. And while the perpetrators of online hate are often anonymous, the victims are very real.

Research has shown that harmful content and hate are becoming increasingly prevalent and easier to see online, fuelled by recent political shifts and engagement-focused algorithms.[2] This has significant offline implications, as evidence suggests that sharing hateful attitudes online can motivate harmful acts and violence in the physical world.

This can be particularly harmful to children and young people. With 175,000 children going online for the first time every day, the rapid and uncontrolled spread of online hate can have devastating effects.[3] Statistics from the UK reveal that two in five children have experienced online abuse,[4] and 33% of young people experiencing cyberbullying have had suicidal thoughts.[5]

Recognising and reporting harassment, hate and abuse on social media is vital to reducing online hate crime.

This guide will clarify:

- What is meant by hate speech and hate crime
- What the law and social media companies say
- How to report online hate speech to social media platforms and relevant authorities
- How to better manage your wellbeing in the face of online hate

What is Online Hate?

Online hate can take many forms, ranging from people sharing insensitive and prejudiced messages, memes and videos to coordinated harassment campaigns and the promotion of violence and extremism.

The anonymity provided by the internet can embolden people to share hateful and unacceptable things they wouldn't dare say in public. This normalises toxic and discriminatory behaviour in the real world, motivating people to spread hate and commit harmful acts offline.

In most cases, online hate sits in one of two categories:[6]

Direct Attacks	Indirect Attacks
Abusive attacks on someone's or a group's identity while using violent, dehumanising or degrading language	Jokes and memes which spread stereotypes and normalise discrimination and intolerance
Trolling comments intended to annoy and anger someone or a community	Conspiracy theories which spread distrust or dislike against a protected group
Flooding a user's or community page with hateful comments / posts	Coded messages used to spread hate without appearing openly prejudiced, such as code words, symbols or audio trends

Whether direct or indirect, being exposed to online hate can have incredibly harmful effects on our mental health, especially as hate incidents tend to target key aspects of our identities.[7]

For example, experiencing racism can leave victims feeling fearful, isolated and overwhelmed, contributing to intense mental health problems like anxiety disorders, depression, psychosis and suicidal feelings.[8]

When an online attack is driven by hatred or malice towards someone's actual or perceived identities, it can be considered **hate speech**.

In some cases, especially where content directly threatens a person or group or stirs up hatred and violence, this becomes a criminal offence – a **hate crime**.

Identifying Hate Speech

Hate speech is generally defined as communications which support or encourage violence, hatred or discrimination against people or groups because of their identities. It can be conveyed through any form of expression, such as spoken and written words, gestures and symbols, and online images and memes.[9]

Examples of hate speech include racism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism or any discriminatory communications targeting someone because of their **protected characteristics**.

What are your protected characteristics?

These characteristics are personal attributes that are legally protected from discrimination and harassment under the Equality Act 2010.

Your protected characteristics are your: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Sometimes it can be hard to recognise hate speech, especially if you are unfamiliar with the language and terminology hate groups use. While some hate speech might be direct and obvious, such as **slurs** and similar identity-based insults, it can also take the form of coded language and indirect remarks, such as **stereotypes** and **dog whistles**. This can make it harder for the public to identify and

What is a slur?

A slur is an inherently offensive word or phrase used as an insulting label for those with protected characteristics

report hate speech, enabling those who share certain prejudices to connect and engage with wider audiences without appearing openly hateful or getting caught by moderation systems.[10]

Dog whistles describe expressions and statements with a secondary meaning intended to be understood by a particular group of people. They are often deployed to spread thinly veiled hatred whilst dodging accusations of discrimination, as no direct reference was made towards a marginalised group.[11]

Hate Speech and Hate Crimes

In Scotland, we legislate against hateful behaviour to protect victims and send a clear message to perpetrators and wider society that hate, whether online or offline, is never acceptable.

Within this legislation, we use the term hate crime to describe behaviour and actions that are both criminal and rooted in prejudice.

Hate crimes can take a number of forms, including, but not limited to:

- Threatening behaviour
- Verbal abuse or insults
- Assault
- Damage to property
- Harassment
- Encouraging others to commit hate crimes

Scottish hate crime legislation also applies to online communications. This means that online messages, videos or pictures that stir up hate, target a person or group because of hate, threaten or encourage violence, or are extremely/grossly offensive can be considered crimes.[12]

However, it should be noted that not all hate speech is considered a hate crime. By definition, a hate crime requires a criminal offence to be motivated by malice, hatred and ill will.

For this reason, the use of bigoted and prejudiced language does not in itself violate hate crime laws unless they could be reasonably said to cause fear or alarm, such as direct threats of violence, or stir up hatred towards a particular group of people.[13]

Important: You don't have to be a member of the targeted group(s) to be a victim of a hate crime, as the law applies to crimes based on someone's belief about your identity, even if that is incorrect.

Sometimes it is difficult to know if something is a hate crime. If you believe that it may be, it's important to report it to the police, whether directly or through a third-party reporting centre. They can determine whether an offence has been committed.

What Does the Law Say?

You are legally protected from discrimination by both international and Scotland-specific law. For instance, under Article 20(2) of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, everyone has the right to be protected from discrimination and violence.

In Scotland, several pieces of legislation concern hate and discrimination. However, when dealing with hate incidents and other offences motivated by prejudice, we primarily consider the **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021**.[14]

This legislation builds upon pre-existing hate crime laws by making specific provisions for racially aggravated harassment and offences relating to the stirring up of hatred against specific groups.

[1] Aggravation of offences by prejudice

(1) An offence is aggravated by prejudice if ---

    (a) Where there is a specific victim of the offence –

        (i) At the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after doing so, the offender demonstrates malice and ill-will towards the victim, and

        (ii) The malice and ill-will is based on the victim's membership or presumed membership of a group defined by reference to a characteristic mentioned in subsection (2), or

    (b) Whether or not there is a specific victim of the offence, the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by malice and ill-will towards a group of persons based on the group being defined by reference to a characteristic mentioned in subsection (2).

(3) It is immaterial whether or not the offender's malice and ill-will is also based (to any extent) on any other factor.

(4) Evidence from a single source is sufficient to prove that an offence is aggravated by prejudice.

(2) Racially aggravated harassment

(1) A person commits an offence if the person –

   (a) pursues a racially aggravated course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another person and –

      (i) is intended to amount to harassment of that person, or

      (ii) occurs in circumstances where it would appear to a reasonable person that it would amount to harassment of that person, or

   (b) acts in a manner which is racially aggravated and which causes, or is intended to cause, another person alarm or distress.

(2) A course of conduct or an action is racially aggravated if –

   (a) at the time of carrying out the course of conduct or action, or immediately before or after doing so –

      (i) the offender demonstrates malice and ill-will towards the victim, and

      (ii) the malice and ill-will is based on the victim's membership or presumed membership of a group defined by reference to race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins, or

   (b) the course of conduct or action is motivated (wholly or partly) by malice and ill-will towards a group of persons based on the group being defined by reference to race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins.

(4) A course of conduct must involve conduct on at least two occasions.

(5) In this section –

"conduct" includes speech,

"harassment" of a person includes causing the person alarm or distress,

"membership", in relation to a group, includes association with members of that group,

"presumed" means presumed by the offender

(3) Stirring up hatred

(1) A person commits an offence if –

    (a) the person –

        (i) behaves in a manner that a reasonable person would consider to be threatening, abusive or insulting, or

        (ii) communicates to another person material that a reasonable person would consider to be threatening, abusive or insulting, and

    (b) either –

        (i) in doing so, the person intends to stir up hatred against a group of persons based on the group being defined by reference to race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins, or

        (ii) a reasonable person would consider the behaviour or the communication of the material to be likely to result in hatred being stirred up against such group.

(2) A person commits an offence if–

    (a) The person –

        (i) behaves in a manner that a reasonable person would consider threatening or abusive, or

        (ii) communicates to another person material that a reasonable person would consider to be threatening or abusive, and

    (b) in doing so, the person intends to stir up hatred against a group of person based on the group being defined by reference to a characteristic mentioned in subsection (3).

(8) For the purposes of subsections (1)(a)(ii) and (2)(a)(ii), the ways in which a person may communicate material to another person are by–

    (a) displaying, publishing or distributing the material,

    (b) giving, sending, showing or playing the material to another person,

    (c) making the material available to another person in any other way.

Online Hate in Scotland

While some steps have been taken to tackle discrimination and prejudice in Scotland, hate remains a prominent part of some people's lives, particularly within minority communities.

Recent statistics from the Scottish Household Survey show that 9% of adults in Scotland have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months.[15] This rose to 22% of Black and minority ethnic adults and 17% of Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual adults.

We also know that a large share of hate is experienced online, as despite significant progress in legal protections and rights, many social media platforms remain hostile environments for minority communities. For instance, a survey by LGBT Youth Scotland found that over a third of LGBTQ+ young people had experienced online bullying due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.[16]

Online hate in numbers

While there is limited data specific to Scotland, UK-wide statistics show that 2% of hate crimes in England and Wales occurred online

However, it is often difficult to put the prevalence of hate into numbers as both on- and offline hate are consistently underreported.

This is sometimes linked to people not feeling adequately supported through the often-traumatic reporting process or feeling as though their report will not be treated seriously and acted upon.[17] In a survey of young LGBTQ+ people in Scotland, just 17% of respondents said that they would feel confident reporting a hate crime to the police.[18]

So, while the police recorded 5,738 hate crimes in 2022-23, this fails to capture the full extent to which hate is peddled and experienced in Scotland.

What Do Social Media Platforms Say?

We all have a duty to challenge and reduce hate in our society. In recognition of this, most social media companies have a set of rules to protect users from discrimination and will remove hateful content.

These rules are called **Community Guidelines** or **Terms of Service**, which you typically agree to when creating an account. While the specific details of these policies will vary between apps, all major platforms take a stance against hate and prohibit hateful and harmful behaviour.

For example, this is what some major platforms say about hate speech and discriminatory behaviour in their community guidelines:

Facebook prohibits the use of *"dehumanising speech, harmful stereotypes, statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt, disgust or dismissal, cursing, calls for exclusion or segregation"* and *"the usage of slurs that are used to attack people on the basis of their protected characteristics"*

Instagram prohibits *"content that contains credible threats or hate speech,"* specifying that it is *"never okay to encourage violence or attack anyone based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, disabilities, or diseases"*

TikTok prohibits *"content that contains hate speech, hateful ideologies or involves hateful behaviour and will remove any content that violates these rules"*

Twitter (X) prohibits direct attacks on *"other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease"*

You can also find similar rules on platforms like YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, Discord and WhatsApp. To see all of these guidelines in one place, you may wish to visit the Report Harmful Content website.

Reporting Online Hate

While all major platforms have rules against hateful conduct and communications, some users continue to use social media to share discriminatory views and directly attack minority groups.

To counter this, some platforms use automatic and AI-driven systems to identify and remove hateful content, but in most cases, platforms rely on their users to report content that they find inappropriate or harmful.

The best way to report hateful and abusive content is usually on-app, using the report option attached to the content itself. Using these features is an important step in keeping online spaces safe and inclusive, as social media companies can remove offensive content and suspend or ban users breaking the rules.

In some cases, online hate can constitute a hate crime, particularly when content stirs up hate or directly threatens and encourages violence towards someone because of hate.

If you have experienced or witnessed what you think might be a hate crime, you can report this to the police or a third-party reporting service.

To report a hate crime to the police, you can:

- Call 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergencies,
- Go in person to a police station, or
- Complete an online Hate Crime Reporting Form.

If you don't feel comfortable contacting police services or want additional support in reporting a hate crime, you can also use a third-party hate crime reporting service or report anonymously through CrimeStoppers.
To find a full list of local third-party reporting centres and services, please consult the Police Scotland website.
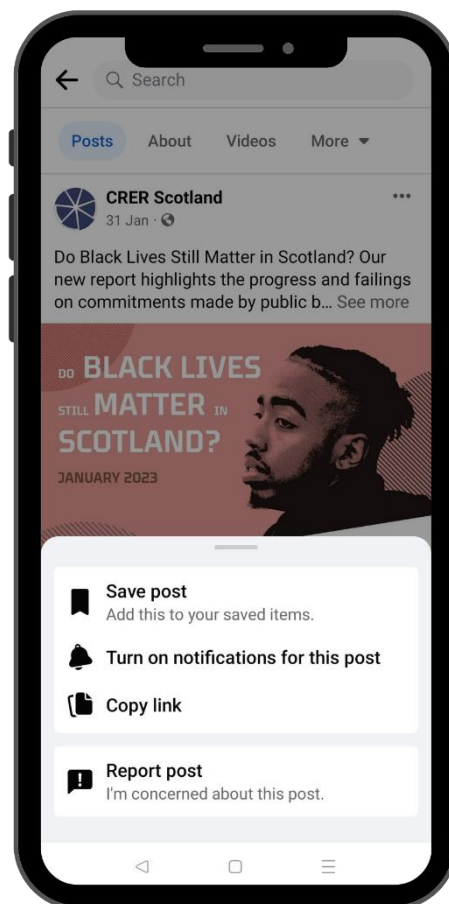
How to Report on Social Media

On most social media platforms, you can report offensive and harmful content as soon as you see it. In most cases, this option can be accessed via a drop-down menu or by selecting the [•••] option.

However, in some cases, you may need to get in contact with a platform's support or moderation team by email or separate website.

Over the next few pages, we will show you how to report different types of content on each major platform. However, we also recommend keeping a separate record of your experiences by gathering evidence of hateful conduct. By saving messages and taking screenshots of abusive content, you can easily present evidence to moderation teams but also any other authorities if things start to escalate.

Reporting Online Hate 1, 2, 3

1. REPORT THE CONTENT TO THE PLATFORM

- Almost all social media platforms will have an in-app reporting system - you can usually find the 'Report' option behind a [•••] menu on the content itself
- You should familiarise yourself with a platform's Community Guidelines

2. IS IT HATE SPEECH OR A HATE CRIME?

- If the content might be criminal, you should report it to the police or a third-party service
- If you're not sure it's a hate crime, you can still report it and the police will decide what to do next

3. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

- Witnessing or experiencing hate can significantly impact our mental health and emotional wellbeing. It is completely natural to feel upset and overwhelmed
- It is important to take a step back from these online spaces and focus on your wellbeing. You are not alone, and there is always support available

Facebook

Facebook is the world's most popular social network, with nearly 2 billion daily active users

Statistics show that for every 10,000 content views on Facebook, two are of hateful content

Reporting a post:
You can report a Facebook post right where you see it. Select the [•••] icon in the top-right to see more options and select 'Report post'

Reporting a comment:
On mobile, press and hold on a comment to see more options and select 'Report Comment'

On a browser, click the [•••] icon

Reporting a message:
To report a hateful message on mobile, press and hold to see more options, select the [•••] icon and tap 'Report'

Unfortunately, there is no way to report a message from a web browser but you can report someone's profile

Reporting a profile:
Navigate to a user's profile and select the [•••] icon below their name and picture. Select 'Report profile'. If you're on a web browser, this may read 'Find support or report'
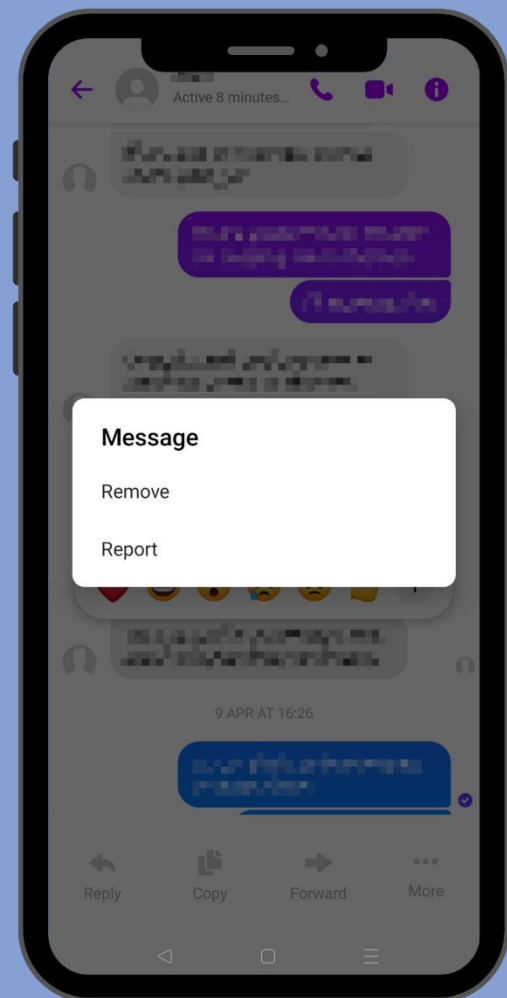
Instagram

The average user spends 53 minutes every day on Instagram

Nearly one-fifth of adults in Scotland get their news from Instagram

Reporting a post:
You can report a post directly from your feed. Select the [•••] icon in the top-right to see more options and select 'Report'

Reporting a direct message:
On mobile, press and hold on a message to see more options and select 'Report'

Reporting a comment:
To report a comment on mobile, tap the comment and select the (!) icon in the top-right

Reporting a profile:
On mobile, navigate to a user's profile and tap the [•••] icon in the top-right. Select the 'Report' option

Reporting a Reel or Live:
Tap the (:) icon on the right side of your screen. Select the Report option

Reporting without an account:
If you don't have an Instagram account, you can report hateful content using a Support Request form
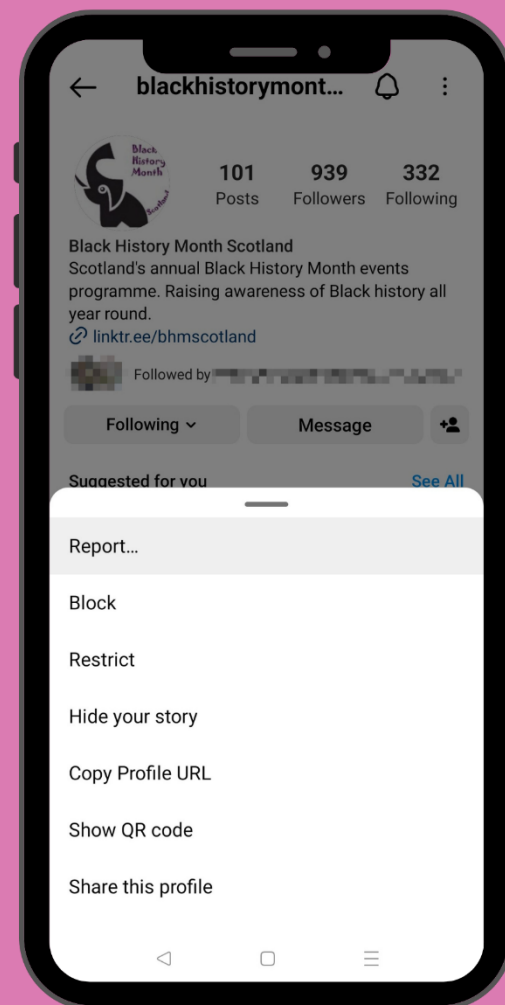
TikTok

TikTok is quickly becoming one of the world's most popular social media platforms

In 2022, TikTok was the world's most downloaded and high-earning app

Reporting a TikTok:
You can report a TikTok by pressing and holding on the video and selecting the 'Report' option

Reporting a comment:
On mobile, long-press on the comment to see more options and select the 'Report' option

For multiple comments, long-press to select a comment or tap the pencil icon in the top-left corner, select 'Manage multiple comments'. Select offending comments, tap the 'more' option, and select 'Report comments'

Reporting a profile:
Go to a user's profile, and tap the [•••] icon in the top-right. Select 'Report' and follow the instructions provided

Reporting a direct message:
Open your chat with the user and select the [•••] icon in the top-right. Select the 'Report' option

Reporting a livestream:
Tap 'Share' and select 'Report'

Reporting a Sound:
Select the Sound menu from the options on the right side of your screen. Tap 'Share' and select the 'Report sound' option

Reporting without an account:
If you don't have a TikTok account but want to submit a report, you can use an online Feedback Form to flag offensive media. To do this, you'll need a link to the content – you can find this from the 'Share' option
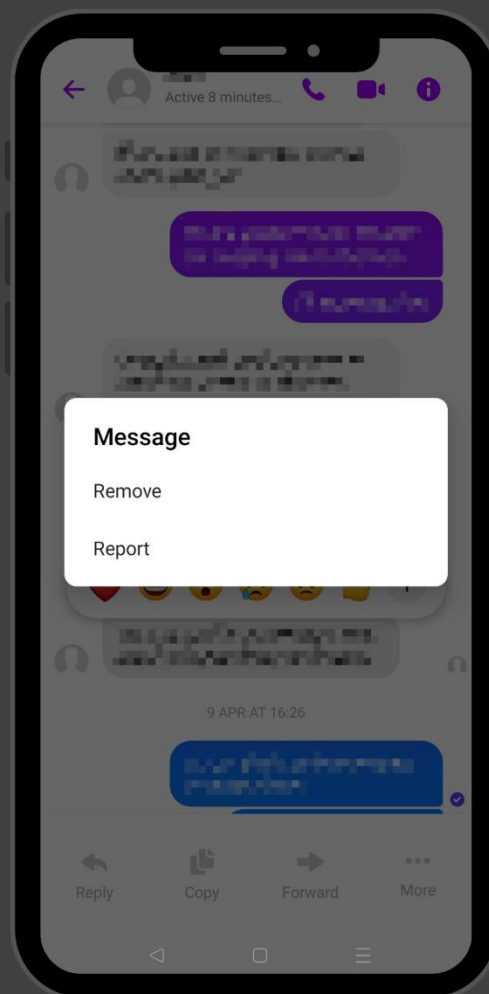
Twitter (X)

With nearly 600 million monthly active users, Twitter (X) is the most popular social media site for news

However, reports suggest that hate speech has become increasingly prevalent on the platform

Reporting a Tweet:
Select the post from your feed and tap the (⋮) icon above the Tweet to see more options. Select 'Report Tweet' from the bottom of the list

Reporting a user:
Navigate to a user's profile and tap the (⋮) icon in the top-right. Select the 'Report' option

When reporting a user, you'll be asked to provide evidence of them breaching site policy by selecting example Tweets

Reporting a direct message:
On mobile, press and hold on a message to see more options and select 'Report message'

Reporting a Twitter Space:
If you come across a hateful Twitter Space, you can report it by selecting the [•••] icon in the top-right and tapping 'Report this space'
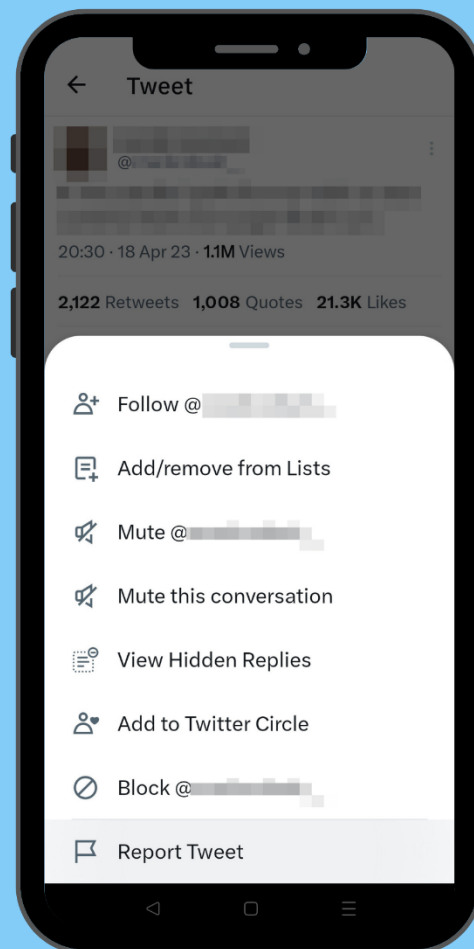
It is important to note that since its new ownership, Twitter's policies are highly prone to change.

If you use Twitter (X) regularly, we recommend you stay updated with these changes, as they may affect your ability to respond to hateful content.

YouTube

Over 500 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute

YouTube claims it removes 94% of rule-breaking content before anyone sees it

** You must have an account to report on YouTube **

Reporting a video or livestream:
On mobile, select the Settings icon in the top-right of the video player, then select the 'Report' option

On a browser, select the [•••] icon beneath the video player. Select 'Report' from the drop-down menu

Reporting a comment:
Tap the (:) icon next to the comment and select 'Report'. Follow the on-screen instructions to explain your report

Reporting a Short:
Tap the (:) icon in the top-right of your screen. Select the Report option

Reporting a profile:
Go to the channel's 'About' tab and select 'Report user'. You'll be asked whether you want to report the user, the profile picture, or the channel art

Reporting a playlist:
Below the playlist's title, select the [•••] option and choose 'Report Playlist'. Select the reason for your report and tap 'Submit'
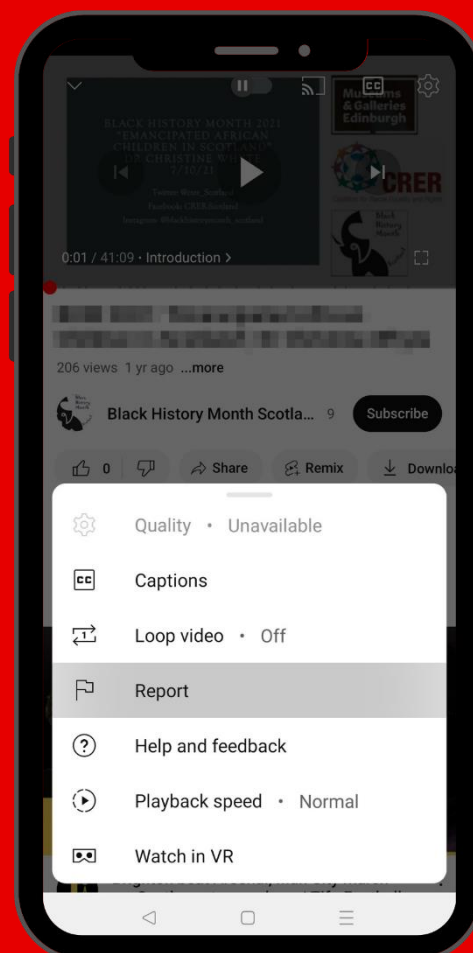
Snapchat

Snapchat has over 620 million users, 60% of whom are under 24

While Snaps disappear after you see them, Snapchat will still be able to see a Snap if you report it

You can submit a report to Snapchat's Trust & Safety Team using in-app reporting features or by completing an <u>online form</u>.

Reporting a Snapchat account:
Swipe left to open the Chat screen, and press and hold on the profile's name. Tap 'Manage Friendship,' and select 'Report' from the pop-up menu

Reporting a specific Snap or Story:
Press and hold on a Snap or Story and tap 'Report Snap'

Reporting a Public Profile:
Tap the [•••] icon at the top of their page and select 'Report'. You will be asked to provide more details on why you are submitting a report

Reporting a Snapchat Lens:
If you find a Snapchat Lens that breaches Community Guidelines, pull up the Lens in the Lens carousel, tap (i) above the Lens, and select 'Report'
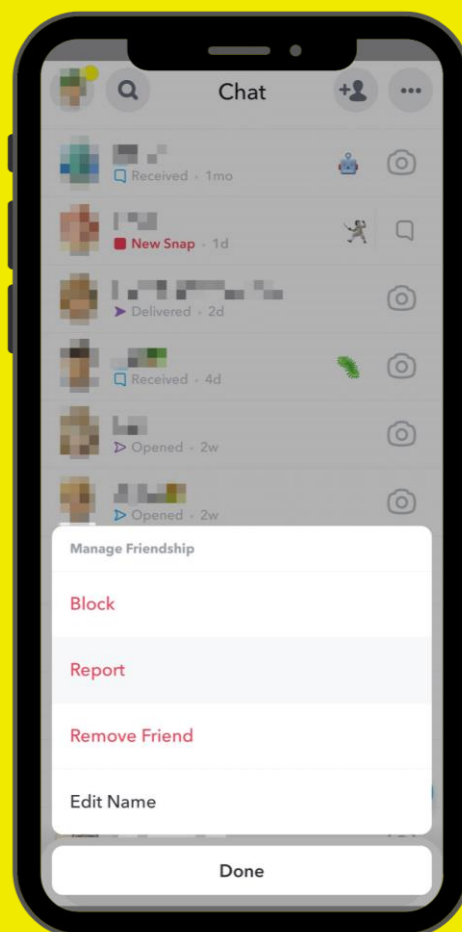
What happens after I report?
Snapchat's Trust & Safety Team will review all reports, however, they will not typically let you know their decision or the outcome of your report

Reddit

There were over 52 million active users on Reddit in 2022

According to Reddit, there are 40,000 potentially hateful pieces of content posted every day

Every Reddit post and comment has a built-in report button, but you can also submit a report through Reddit's [online form](#).

Reporting a post or comment:
On the iOS or Android app, report a post or comment by tapping the [•••] menu and then selecting 'Report'

On a browser, report a post or comment by clicking the 'Report' button directly beneath it

Reporting a chat or private message:
On the iOS or Android app, select the chat message. If this is the first exchange between you and the user, a prompt will ask you to accept or ignore the chat request. Once accepted, tap and hold the message and select 'Report message'

On a browser, click the chat request or message, roll over it with the cursor and select the flag icon

Reporting a user or community:
There is no way to directly report a user or an entire subreddit. Instead, you should report specific posts, comments or messages that highlight the issue

Reporting without a Reddit account:
If you don't have a Reddit account, you can use a [Request Form](#) to report any violations of platform rules and content policy. Please note: Reddit does not accept screenshots as evidence, so make sure to gather URLs
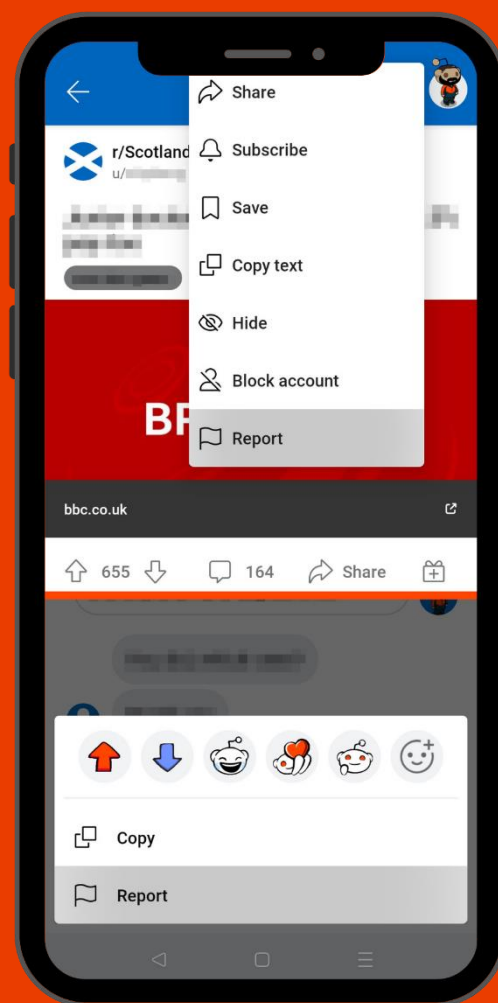
Twitch

Over 22 billion hours of livestreams were watched by Twitch viewers in 2022

Over 65% of Twitch users are young people

When submitting a report on Twitch, it may be helpful to include a description of the violation and timestamps of when it occurred.

Reporting a stream, VOD, clip or channel:
If you're watching on a browser, select the (:) icon in the bottom-right of the video player – this will also give you the option to report the channel name, avatar, or any chat messages

On mobile, navigate to the user's channel, tap the [•••] icon in the top-right, and select the 'Report' option

You should provide a detailed description of the offence in the *Tell Us More* field when sending a report

Reporting a stream chat message:
On mobile, tap the username next to the message and select the 'Report' option. You'll be asked to provide a reason for your report

On a browser, click on the user's name to access the (:) menu, and select the 'Report' option

Reporting a Whisper:
Select the Cog icon in the top-right of the Whisper window and select the 'Report' option. You'll be asked for more information about the violation and to categorise it in reference to Twitch's site policy
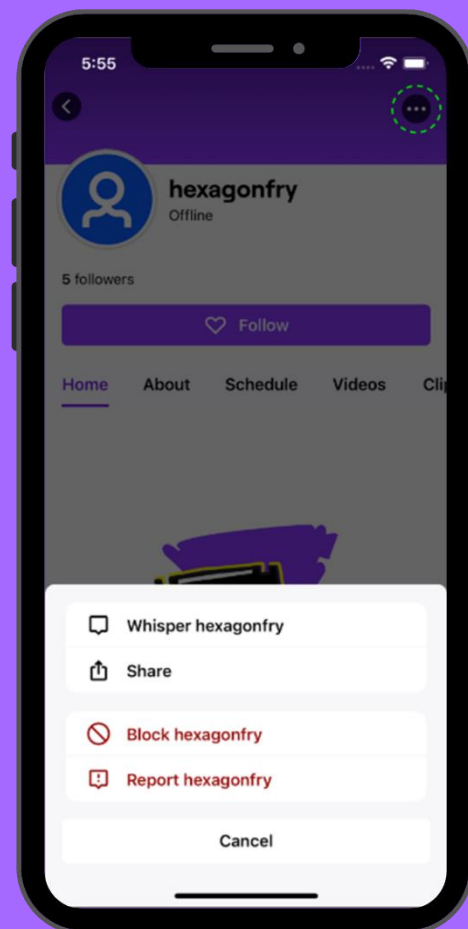
WhatsApp

WhatsApp processes more than 1 billion messages in a single day, with 2 billion monthly users

Reporting a WhatsApp message:
Long press on an offending message to highlight it, and tap the (:) icon in the top right to see more options. Select 'Report' – this will send the last five messages sent to the user or group chat to WhatsApp for review

Reporting a WhatsApp contact:
Open a chat with the user you want to report, tap the [•••] icon, followed by the 'More' option. Select 'Report'

You will be asked whether you want to block the user and clear their messages from your chat log

Reporting a WhatsApp group:
To report a WhatsApp group chat, tap the (:) icon in the top-right corner and select 'Group Info'. Then, scroll to the bottom of this screen and select 'Report Group'
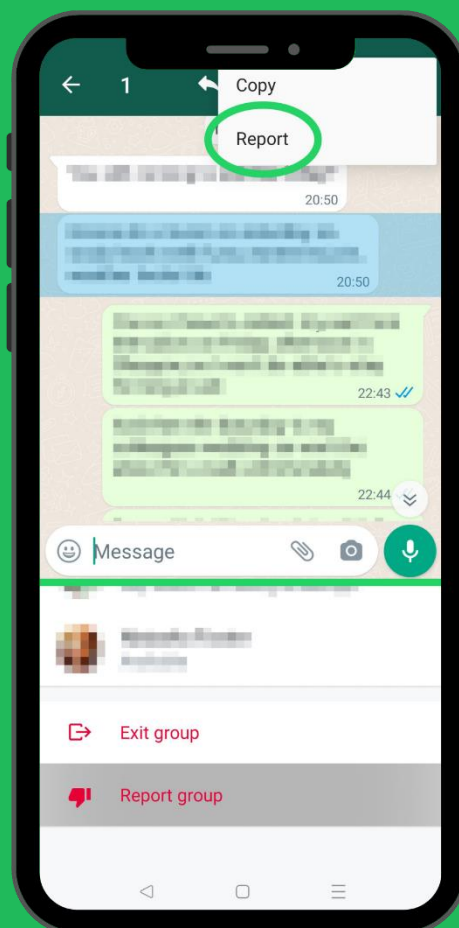
You will be asked whether you want to report and leave the group chat or whether you would just like to submit a report

Once reported, WhatsApp will be able to monitor this group chat and determine whether any of its Terms of Service have been violated

Discord

Discord is a message-board platform primarily used by online and gaming communities

Every day, around 4 billion messages are exchanged on Discord between some 300 million users

You can sometimes report hate directly through Discord, but in most cases, you'll need to use their <u>online reporting form</u>.

Reporting a Discord message:
On mobile, press and hold on the message and select 'Report'

On PC, right-click the message or click the [•••] icon next to the message, then click 'Report'

Reporting a Discord community:
On mobile, you can report an entire server by opening the channel menu and selecting the [•••] icon in the top-right. At the bottom of this menu, you will see a 'Report Server' option

On PC, you'll need to get the server ID by right-clicking its profile image and submitting this ID to the online form

Reporting a Discord user:
On PC, you will need their user ID – you can get this by right-clicking their display name and selecting the 'Copy user ID' option. You'll then have to use Discord's online reporting form

Submit a request

What can we help you with?

Trust & Safety

Your email address

How can we help?

-

Subject

Description

Attachments (optional)

Add file or drop files here

Reporting through the online form:
If you're reporting on PC, you'll need to use Discord's online reporting form. This will ask you for details of the violation based on a few set questions – you'll also need to provide a link to the offensive/rule-breaking content. To generate a URL for a Discord message, right-click on the message and select the 'Copy Message Link' option

Other Sites and Platforms

Almost every social media platform prohibits hate speech within their **Community Guidelines** or **Terms of Service**. However, outside of mainstream apps and websites, the policies and the actions available to you might look a bit different.

You can find more guidance on how to report hateful and offensive content on the Report Harmful Content website. This contains an overview of site policy and instructions on reporting offensive content on over 25 online platforms, including search engines, dating apps and networking/conference platforms.

However, if you spend time on some of the more alternative parts of the internet, you may have more limited options when responding to online hate. Some online spaces pride themselves on their lack of moderation and content policy and can end up harbouring some of the most harmful and toxic online communities, such as hate groups.

Despite this, all sites still have **legal responsibilities** regarding hate crimes and violence. So, if a website itself is hateful or supports violence, you should report it to the police (either directly or via a third-party reporting service) and the website's **hosting company**.

Hosting companies provide the space and infrastructure on which a website exists, and they often have their own rules about what they are willing to host. You can find out which company hosts a website by pasting their URL into the 'Who is hosting this?' website. You can then contact them directly or pass their details to the police.

What Happens After You Report?

Once you report something on social media, it is up to the platform to decide what to do next.

Typically, if the content is found to violate Community Guidelines or a platform's Terms of Service, it will be removed. And in some cases, the person who posted it will be temporarily or permanently banned, losing access to their account.

Facebook will remove posts that violate its Community Standards and will issue strikes to rule-breaking users. If a user severely or repeatedly breaks the rules, Facebook will restrict the account, preventing them from creating content and limiting their public interactions

Instagram may remove offending content, disable accounts, or apply other restrictions to users breaching the platform's Community Guidelines. Following your report, you may be able to check its status through the Support Requests menu

TikTok will remove any content that violates its community guidelines and may permanently ban users involved in severe or repeated violations

Twitter (X) considers several factors when determining possible penalties, including the severity of the violation and the user's previous record of rule violations. In 2023, possible enforcement options include downranking Tweets in replies, excluding Tweets from the recommended feed, Tweet removal, and in rare cases, suspending accounts

YouTube may remove offensive content and will issue a Community Guidelines strike to rule-breaking accounts. If a channel receives three strikes in 90 days or commits a particularly severe violation, it will be terminated

You can check the status of a report on your Report History

Snapchat will remove content that violates its Community Guidelines and may terminate or limit the visibility of offending accounts

If **Reddit** finds that a user or community has breached its content policy, it may: issue warnings, add restrictions to accounts, directly remove content, temporarily or permanently suspend accounts, or ban entire Reddit communities

Twitch may take a range of actions, including issuing warnings, temporary suspensions, and indefinite suspensions for more serious or repeat offences

WhatsApp may ban accounts if they find their activity is in violation of its Terms of Service

Discord may take a number of steps against users and communities, including warnings, removing content, suspending or removing offensive accounts and servers, and potentially reporting users to law enforcement

While the exact policies vary between sites, most platforms have procedures in place to penalise accounts that post hateful content.

Therefore, by reporting online hate as soon as you see it, you can limit the impact of hateful users and help prevent them from causing further harm.

Platforms will usually provide confirmation that they have received your report and will notify you of their decision and any actions they take.
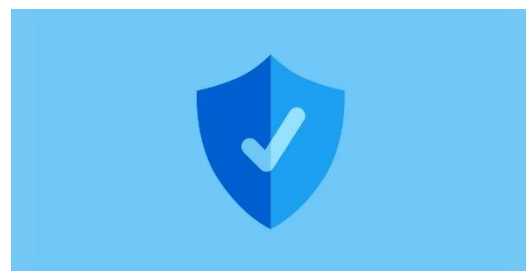
An update on your report

Thanks again for letting us know. Our investigation found this account violated the Twitter Rules:

- Violating our rules against hateful conduct.

We appreciate your help in improving everyone's experience on Twitter. You can learn more about reporting abusive behavior here.

What if Hateful Content isn't Removed?

Sometimes, social media platforms don't take the actions you would expect them to.

If you think a platform has not taken sufficient action or has made an incorrect decision, you may be able to appeal the original decision and request a **second review**.

For example, on Instagram, if you disagree with the decision they make from your report, you will be given an opportunity to request a review of your report. Instagram will review its decision within 24 hours of your appeal and will notify you if a mistake was made.

There are also services that aim to act as mediators between users and social media platforms to support victims, hold platforms accountable to their Community Guidelines, and ensure that hate and abuse are appropriately dealt with.

Report Harmful Content is a service provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre to empower anyone who has come across harmful, but not necessarily criminal, content to report it to social media platforms and review/appeal outcomes of previous reports. To escalate an issue, file a report on the Report Harmful Content website.

Delete Online Abuse is a similar service provided by Ditch The Label, a global youth charity with expertise in bullying and harassment. You can submit a report to them via Ditch The Label's website.

Please note: these two services are based in England and so may refer people who want to report a hate crime to a website called True Vision. Police Scotland does not take reports through True Vision. In Scotland, reports need to go directly to Police Scotland or through one of Scotland's third-party reporting centres.

Serious Incidents: Reporting Hate Crimes

In some cases, something you see online can be considered a hate crime, and you may need to do more than just flag it as abusive content.

It is rare for online hate to lead to face-to-face incidents. However, if you think you may be in immediate physical danger, this is an emergency and you should call the police on 999.

More commonly, online communications that stir up hate, target a person or group because of hate, threaten or encourage violence, or are extremely/grossly offensive can be considered crimes in Scotland.

If you experience or witness an incident that might be a hate crime, it is important to take action and report it to the relevant authorities. In the unfortunate event of this happening, you should:

- Try your best to stay calm
- Collect evidence of the experience by saving messages, screenshots and links related to the incident
- Report online content to the social media platform
- If you believe that a hate crime has occurred, report this to the police and show them the evidence you have collected
- Block abusive social media users and limit your privacy settings
- Look after yourself: incidents like these can be deeply traumatic, and it is important to protect our mental health as best as we can.

If you do not feel comfortable talking to the police about your experience, you should consider using a third-party reporting service. These services help connect victims and witnesses to the support they need, and their specially trained staff will assist you in reporting any hate incidents to the police. If you report via a third-party organisation, you can even choose to stay anonymous.

We understand how difficult it can be to report hate crimes to the police, especially if you are worried about being treated disrespectfully or unsympathetically. However, it is extremely important to find the courage to report hate crimes and pursue justice. **Only by reporting can action be achieved.**

Serious Incidents: Policing & Prosecution

When the police first receive your report, it will be recorded as a hate incident and **an investigation will be launched to determine whether a hate crime has occurred**.

If the police believe that evidence gathered from your report and their investigation into the incident can support a prosecution, **they will escalate your report to the local Procurator Fiscal**, who works for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to prosecute crime.

At this stage, the police are no longer responsible for your case. The Procurator Fiscal will consider the report and determine what – if any – action must be taken. This includes warnings, fines, compensation offers, social work diversion, and prosecution.

COPFS will consider the case from all angles, including that of the victim, the wider community and the person accused of the crime.

If the Procurator Fiscal deems it appropriate, and the accused pleads not guilty, you may have to go to court. The Procurator Fiscal will also decide which type of court the proceedings should be taken in – this will depend on the nature of the offence, the sentencing powers of the respective courts, and whether the accused has a criminal record.

However, **in many cases, you will not have to go to court**. If you do, you can get help with the process through the Victim Information and Advice Service (VIA) and Victim Support Scotland (VSS).

If you are concerned about giving evidence, particularly about your privacy and safety, you should tell the Procurator Fiscal and special measures may be considered.

The recent statistics

89% of charges relating to race crime led to court proceedings in 2022-23

No action was taken in respect of 2% of race-related charges

If the crime was committed by someone under the age of 16, the case may be referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). Victims and witnesses do not attend these proceedings, as confidential information will be discussed.[19]

Looking After Yourself

Everyone reacts differently to being the target of hate. How you react depends on lots of different things – such as the nature of the incident itself, your past experiences, and the support you have around you.

Just as we all have physical health, we also have mental health, and it is important that we take time to look after it, especially when something has happened that makes us feel more vulnerable.

Experiencing hate can often make us feel:

Unwelcome, lonely or isolated. Especially if people or organisations have said or implied that you don't belong.

Anxious, fearful and unsafe. You may worry about how people are going to perceive and treat you.

Stressed. All kinds of hate can contribute to stress.

Unusual, strange and unlike yourself. Especially if people highlight, mock or criticise things that are 'different' about you.

Confused or unsure about whether you've experienced discrimination. This is especially true if others ignore or deny your experiences, leaving you questioning your reality and experiences.

Forced to suppress how you feel. You may find that you can't show or fully feel your natural responses, causing the experience to stay with you for a long time.

Overwhelmed or worn down. You may encounter hate regularly in lots of different parts of your life. This can have a cumulative effect on your mental health, making you feel surrounded by hate.[20]

All of these feelings are entirely natural and valid. You might find that you are able to move on from this experience with time; however, in the short term, some people find it useful to identify coping strategies that work for them, such as journalling or spending time with friends or in nature.

Conclusion

Hate and discrimination have no place in our society, and whether we encounter it in person or online, we all have a duty to challenge it.

This guide has hopefully provided you with the information and tools to better recognise and tackle hate on social media and in other online spaces whilst also directing you to the appropriate supports and resources if you encounter it yourself.

Reporting Online Hate 1, 2, 3

1. REPORT THE CONTENT TO THE PLATFORM

- Almost all social media platforms will have an in-app reporting system - you can usually find the 'Report' option behind a [•••] menu on the content itself
- You should familiarise yourself with a platform's Community Guidelines

2. IS IT HATE SPEECH OR A HATE CRIME?

- If the content might be criminal, you should report it to the police or a third-party service
- If you're not sure it's a hate crime, you can still report it and the police will decide what to do next

3. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

- Witnessing or experiencing hate can significantly impact our mental health and emotional wellbeing. It is completely natural to feel upset and overwhelmed
- It is important to take a step back from these online spaces and focus on your wellbeing. You are not alone, and there is always support available

Helpful Resources and Places for Support

CRER is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of website content or other services provided by external organisations. Please bear in mind that organisations working on a UK-wide basis may focus on England and Wales, and may not have knowledge of hate crime law as it applies in Scotland.

General Support After Crime

Citizens Advice: 0131 550 1000

Police Scotland: 101 (non-emergency)

Victim Support Scotland: 0800 160 1985

Mental Health Support

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87

NHS 24: 111

Samaritans: 116 123

SAMH: 0141 530 1000

Shout: Text 85258

LGBTQI+ Support

LGBT Helpline Scotland: 0300 123 2423

Stonewall Scotland: 0800 050 2020

LGBT Youth Scotland: info@lgbtyouth.org.uk

MindOut: info@mindout.org.uk

Support tailored for Black and Minority Ethnic People

Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN):
administrator@baatn.org.uk

Intercultural Youth Scotland: MHS@interculturalyoutscotland.org

Saheliya (for women and girls):
Edinburgh – 0131 556 9302
Glasgow – 0141 552 6540

Support for Children and Young People

ChildLine: 0800 1111

PAPYRUS HOPELine: 0800 068 4141

The Mix: 0808 808 4994

YoungMinds: Text: 85258

Additional Places for Support

AMINA (for Muslim Women): 0808 801 0301

Glasgow Disability Alliance: 0141 556 7103

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities: 0141 638 6411

Voices of Experience Scotland: Useful Contacts Page

Additional Reading

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