

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past two decades awareness of Islamophobia has increased, whether in terms of discrimination against Muslims, or in terms of public and policy discussion of it. Runnymede has produced this report, *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all*, to gather together the evidence on Islamophobia in Britain today, and to suggest how we should respond to it.

This report is being published on the 20th anniversary of our initial report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, which first brought the term to public and policy prominence, in Britain and indeed beyond. This edited volume updates and extends the evidence over the past 20 years in three main sections.

Part I outlines Runnymede's understanding of Islamophobia, Part II maps out the evidence on Islamophobia in various domains, while Part III presents different conceptions of Islamophobia. The report may be viewed as moving from chapters that fully reflect Runnymede's corporate view in Part I, to those that reflect individual authors' viewpoints in Part III. While this volume therefore presents Runnymede's position on Islamophobia, we have also included a range of voices to cover the diversity of current debates.

Too many of the public debates on Islamophobia lack the nuance of the chapters in Part III, or fail to refer to the evidence we gather in Part II. Our aim in this report is to improve the accuracy and quality of public and policy debate and action in response to Islamophobia. We do not claim to cover all the issues affecting British Muslims, nor are we arguing that Islamophobia is the only challenge Muslims face. Instead, this report outlines why Islamophobia matters to everyone in 21st-century Britain, and how we all can and should respond to it.

To that end, we offer a short and long-form definition of Islamophobia. As we explain at greater length in the Introduction, we fully recognize the complexity of issues that 'Islamophobia' picks out, and acknowledge some limitations of the term.

The original Islamophobia report states that the term refers to three phenomena:

- Unfounded hostility towards Islam;
- Practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities;
- Exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.

We mainly agree with this broad definition. In our view, the focus should be on the second and third phenomena. To clarify the scope of how Islamophobia should be understood in a social and policy context in Britain, we offer the following definition of Islamophobia.

Definition: Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism.

This is obviously a short definition. We have also developed a longer-form definition, building on the United Nations definition of racism generally.

Longer definition: Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

We have offered these definitions to forestall further confusion about the nature of Islamophobia, but also to focus policy and social change on what could best tackle Islamophobia and so improve British Muslims' lives. The definition therefore is not simply what Runnymede thinks is the best analytical account of what Islamophobia is, but also points to our various recommendations on how to respond to it.

Reflecting on the evidence in the report, and the need to chart a better response to Islamophobia, Runnymede offers the following 10 recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The government should adopt our definition of Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism. As with many Black and minority ethnic groups, Muslims experience disadvantage and discrimination in a wide range of institutions and environments, from schools to the labour market to prisons to violence on the street. Policies to tackle Islamophobia should be developed in line with policies to tackle racial discrimination more generally, with the focus also on the real effects on people. Islamophobia is a complex issue, but so too are all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

2. Public services but also private and charity sector employers should collect more data on Muslims and other faith/non-faith groups.

Given evidence of a specific 'Muslim penalty' across different sectors, and the diversity of the Muslim population, using existing census group ethnicity categories cannot capture the experience of Muslims in the public and private sectors. This should be part of wider efforts of public services and employers to improve their data collection, including response rates, on ethnic monitoring. Historically, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group categories were used as proxies for Muslim; these groups currently account for just over half (55%) of British Muslims.

3. The government should reintroduce a target to reduce child poverty, and develop a wider anti-poverty strategy. Given that over half of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children live in poverty, and given that the rates of poverty among Muslims generally are much higher than the average, tackling poverty would greatly improve British Muslims' opportunities and outcomes. Preventing poverty is especially important for children not just morally but also because it is a good preventive strategy for reducing inequalities in later life and for improving integration.

4. Following up on its strong and commendable commitment to collecting race equality data, the government should adopt a wider strategy to tackle those inequalities which particularly affect British Muslims. This should be a central plank of its integration strategy. The Race Disparity Audit has revealed inequalities across a range of outcomes, from health, housing and environment to education, employment and criminal justice. Tackling these inequalities – including but not limited to barriers to accessing English language provision – should be a priority for every government department (and local authority), and should also

be linked up across government departments in a wider strategy to tackle racial inequalities at every stage of the life course.

5. Employers and employment support organizations should address barriers to equal labour market participation. Policies addressing racial discrimination within the labour market will also improve outcomes for minority faith groups. This includes: publishing pay gaps, name-blind CVs, ensuring long- and shortlists reflect the local working-age population, measuring managers' ability to progress minorities as a key performance indicator, and accountability for outcomes not just by human resources or senior leadership but at every level of management.

6. Race equality, Muslim and other faith-led civil society groups and organizations should work more closely together to build a common platform to challenge all forms of racism and prejudice. It is not enough for people or organizations to challenge only the form of discrimination that directly affects them; anti-discrimination and equality are universal principles that must be defended even when doing so doesn't have a direct effect on us personally. It is important to understand that different forms of racism have different attributes, whether anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim or anti-black, and that it is therefore reasonable and justifiable to understand and respond to specific forms of racism. But challenging racism requires challenging it in all its forms, and understanding anti-racism as a wider human rights and equality position entails defending other groups that experience discrimination too.

7. Local mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners should ensure appropriate resources are allocated to tackling hate crime effectively at a local level. In addition to criminal justice sanctions for the most serious hate crime offenders, the government should utilize community-based, restorative and rehabilitative interventions to tackle hate crime.

The Home Office's 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan commits to preventing hate crime by challenging the beliefs and attitudes underpinning such crimes and to working with young people and schools. This must involve **addressing the core curriculum and ensuring the history of migration is taught effectively.** See www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk.

Finally, and in line with the concluding recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the government should ensure that **public officials do not partake in hate speech, and that they robustly challenge hate speech and condemn any hateful ideas or policies** that promote intolerance and hostility.

8. There should be a full independent and fully transparent inquiry into the government's counter-terrorism strategy. The government should recognize its statutory equality obligations as set out in the public sector equality duty (PSED) in the implementation of all counter-terrorism policies. Counter-terrorism measures must not lead to discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion, descent, or national or ethnic origin, in purpose or effect.

There is substantial evidence that among the government's four counter-terrorism strands, the current Prevent policy is discriminatory, disproportionate and counterproductive. **Given the mounting evidence, the independent review must answer whether the Prevent strategy should be withdrawn and how to better separate the state's security apparatus from wider safeguarding or social policy strategies.** The government should develop funding and support Muslim and other disadvantaged communities to improve opportunities, encourage civic participation, and so provide the grounds for effective integration, but these policies should not be conceived in terms of counter-terrorism, and should not target British Muslims only.

9. Full protection of freedom of speech and the freedom of the press is consistent with tackling inaccurate and discriminatory reporting. Media regulators should intervene more proactively in cases of allegedly discriminatory reporting, and in so doing reflect the spirit of equalities legislation, as recommended by the Leveson Inquiry. **Where inaccurate or misleading content is published, corrections or retractions should be given equal prominence,** and not relegated to a small box in an inconspicuous position.

A press regulator should investigate the prevalence of Islamophobia, racism and hatred espoused in the press. This should focus on accuracy and discrimination, but also consider whether individual stories have wider negative effects on whole ethnic groups, and on wider social attitudes. The press and the wider media should publish data on the ethnic and class

diversity of their journalists, editors and senior management, and establish targets in line with local working-age populations.

The government should establish a group of media practitioners, and representatives from the press, local authorities and race equality NGOs, to initiate new strategies to combat racial prejudice in the media and negative public perceptions of minority ethnic groups. All politicians should show greater accountability for the impact on race relations of negative media coverage and misrepresentation of minority ethnic and religious groups.

10. Tackling Islamophobia is a responsibility for all of us. There is a need for greater awareness of how Islamophobia and all forms of racism affect people's lives in modern Britain. It is good that British Muslims increasingly challenge Islamophobia. However, to challenge and end Islamophobia and all forms of racism effectively, we all need to confront and condemn it where we see it, and commit to raising awareness in others of its wider effects. Tackling Islamophobia and all forms of racism is not only the responsibility of Muslims or ethnic minorities, but nor is it only the government or the state that must show greater responsibility in tackling it. Employers, neighbours, teachers and fellow citizens must all work to raise awareness and to act to combat racism wherever and however it appears.