Police Scotland

Hate Crime on Public Transport

September 2026

Thank You

Thank you for taking part in this research.

This presentation provides a concise summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the full report. The report was informed by the experiences, observations and suggestions shared by participants throughout the research.

Your contribution has played an important role in helping identify ways to improve safety, confidence, reporting and support for those affected by hate crime on public transport.

Project background

Hate crime and anti-social behaviours across the rail network are on the rise throughout the UK. In Scotland, ScotRail services continue to face ongoing anti-social behaviour, abuse directed at staff, and alcohol-related incidents associated with hate crime.

Detection rates are hindered by several factors, including difficulties identifying offenders, as well as limited engagement from witnesses and victims.

Many incidents go unreported, particularly among minority communities and other vulnerable passengers. Incidents also tend to be concentrated around predictable times and settings and may be exacerbated by limited visibility of law enforcement as well as low awareness of reporting channels.



The impact is wide-reaching affecting victim safety and wellbeing, staff confidence, and public trust in the network. Passenger confidence has suffered as the perception of safety is significantly lower than it should be.

This is not solely a crime problem – it is a confidence, reporting, and visibility issue.

The overarching aim of the research was to support a joint discussion with the British Transport Police and ScotRail on the scale, nature, and response to hate crime and associated anti-social behaviour on rail services in the Glasgow area, and to agree a coordinated action plan.

Project objectives



About the research

- Spoke with 24 representatives from community and support organisations across Glasgow.
- Explored experiences of hate crime and safety on public transport.
- Discussed reporting behaviour, barriers to reporting and support needs.
- Gathered ideas for improving safety and confidence across the transport network.



Hate crime is commonly experienced and many said it is on the increase.

Hate crime remains a significant concern

Participants described:

- Frequent experiences of verbal abuse, harassment and microaggressions.
- Incidents affecting people perceived as “different” because of ethnicity, faith, disability, gender, sexuality or other characteristics.
- Concerns on public transport as well as bus stops and train stations.
- A feeling that hostility and intolerance are becoming more visible in society.

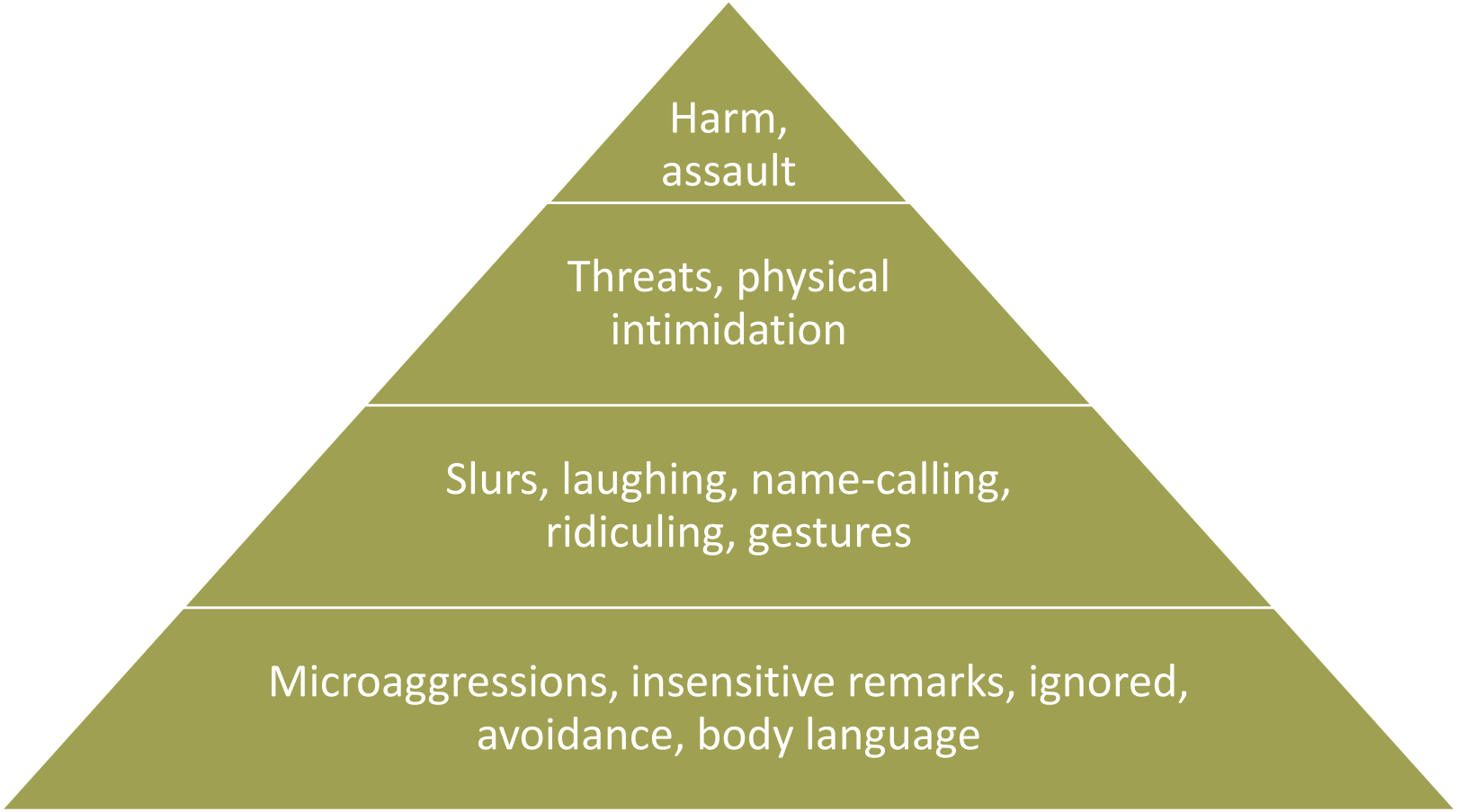
Key message:

While serious incidents do occur, everyday hostility and microaggressions were reported far more frequently.



Majority of hate crime experiences comprised of microaggression with fewer mentions of physical assault.





The impact on individuals and communities is severe.

The impact goes beyond the incident itself

Participants described:

- Increased anxiety, fear and stress.
- Reduced confidence using public transport.
- Avoiding journeys, appointments, education or employment opportunities.
- Wider impacts on families and communities.
- Reduced feelings of belonging and inclusion.

Key message:

Fear of hate crime is changing how some people travel and participate in daily life.

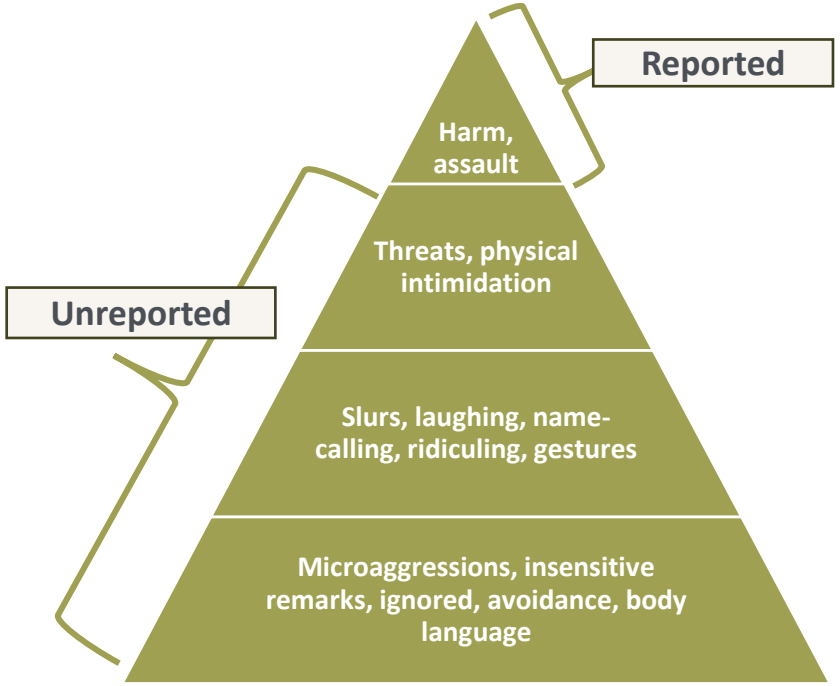


Many incidents go unreported due to practical, personal and systematic barriers.

Why incidents often go unreported

Participants told us that reporting can be difficult because of:

- Language and accessibility barriers.
- Uncertainty about what qualifies as hate crime.
- Lack of awareness of reporting routes.
- Concerns that nothing will happen after reporting.
- Fear of negative consequences or retaliation.
- Previous negative experiences with reporting systems.



Key message:

Many incidents never enter official reporting systems, particularly lower level but harmful experiences.

Communities identified clear priorities for improving safety, reporting and support.

Priorities for improvement

Participants highlighted the need for:

- Clearer reporting information.
- Accessible and multilingual communications.
- Greater visibility of police and transport staff.
- Better awareness of support available.
- Stronger engagement with communities.
- Trauma-informed and culturally sensitive responses.
- Clear consequences for perpetrators.







Future trust-building requires visible action, communication and ongoing engagement.

Building confidence and trust

Participants want to see:

- More visible reassurance on public transport.
- Stronger communication about actions taken following reports.
- Ongoing engagement between police and communities.
- Improved awareness campaigns.
- Action to address online hostility and misinformation.
- Greater collaboration between police, transport operators and communities.



Conclusions

Hate Crime and fear are changing behaviour
People are altering travel patterns, avoiding journeys and reducing participation in community life.

Under-reporting is substantial and multi-layered
Barriers include language, accessibility, trust, fear of consequences and uncertainty about reporting processes.

Much of the harm lies below the reporting threshold
Everyday hostility and microaggressions are often normalised and go unreported, yet they have a cumulative impact on confidence, belonging and willingness to travel.

Public transport reflects wider social tensions
Respondents consistently linked transport experiences to anti-migrant rhetoric, racism, misinformation, social media and political discourse, and broader social division. The transport system itself was not felt to be the root cause. Rather, buses, bus stops, trains and stations were felt to be places where wide society tensions become visible.

Trust and confidence are central issues
Across migrant, refugee, disability and community organisations, trust repeatedly emerged as a major factor. This included trust in police, reporting systems, incidents being taken seriously and that reporting hate crime would lead to action.

Visible support and reassurance matter
Feelings of safety are influenced not only by incidents themselves but by confidence that help is available when needed.

Recommendations

- **Make reporting more accessible, visible and understandable**
  - Promote reporting routes more visibly across public transport.
  - Provide multilingual and accessible reporting options.
  - Use clear, simple explanations of what happens after a report is made.
  - Keep victims updated on progress and outcomes.
  - Increase awareness of third-party reporting options.



- **Strengthen trust and confidence through sustained community engagement**
  - Build long-term relationships with trusted community organisations.
  - Deliver regular outreach and awareness sessions in community settings.
  - Increase opportunities for informal engagement with police.
  - Ensure engagement is sustained rather than reactive following incidents.



- **Improve safety and reassurance across the transport network**
  - Increase the visibility of staff and support services on public transport.
  - Pay particular attention to bus stops and waiting environments.
  - Improve signposting to help and support.



Thank you

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