

# XENOPHOBIC AND NOTABLY ISLAMOPHOBIC ACTS OF HATE

SUMMARY

RESEARCH CARRIED OUT ACROSS QUEBEC

PRESENTED AS PART OF THE QUEBEC  
GOVERNMENT'S 2015-2018  
ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT RADICALIZATION:  
*"LA RADICALISATION AU QUÉBEC: AGIR,  
PRÉVENIR, DÉTECTER ET VIVRE ENSEMBLE"*



Commission  
des droits de la personne  
et des droits de la jeunesse

Québec

*"I'm going to kill you and your entire family.  
I'll slit your throat like one of your feast sheep."*

*"You Black people can barely even feed yourselves; why do you come here and cause trouble?"; "Go back to your shitty country."*

*"I was walking down the street and a young man walked by me [...]. He punched me in the face and shouted, "goddamned Jew!"*

*"What kind of model of society is this for my children when they see that I have to fight racism all the time?"*

*"It affects me a lot because you're always having to fight prejudice. I continuously have to prove to people who I really am."*

*"At first I belittled myself and accepted it, I was running away, but I have changed. I said – No, these are serious things we are letting slide."*

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

Under its five-year action plan to combat radicalization,<sup>1</sup> the government of Quebec mandated the Commission to document xenophobic and Islamophobic acts of hate:

- > to fill a research gap on the issue of acts of hate in Quebec.
- > to gain a clearer picture of the situation by documenting the sociological and legal aspects of these acts and the various forms they can take.
- > to identify ways of preventing and combatting the phenomenon and to make appropriate recommendations to the government.

The Commission decided to undertake a qualitative study of the experiences of people who have faced acts of hate on one or more occasions. Our methodology involved analyzing information gathered through one-on-one interviews with these individuals.

In keeping with the mandate of the government action plan, the Commission has focused on acts of hate that were committed on the basis of 'race', colour, ethnic or national origin, and religion. The Commission met with 86 individuals who have experienced this type of act in order to gain an understanding of their experience.

Among these individuals:

- > 72 identify as Black or Arab, which are the two largest "visible minority" minority groups in Quebec and those most likely to experience xenophobia;
- > 51 identify as Muslim, and are thus susceptible to Islamophobia.

A person may be subjected to an act of hate on other grounds, in an intersectional perspective. The 14 prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* are:

'Race', colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, and a disability or the use of means to palliate a disability.

1 The "Plan d'action gouvernemental 2015-2018—La radicalisation au Québec: agir, prévenir, détecter et vivre ensemble".

# WHAT IS AN ACT OF HATE?

For the purposes of this study, the definition of a xenophobic or Islamophobic act of hate is:

*A virulent and serious form of discrimination that takes the form of extreme displays of emotion, hostility or hatred. Acts of hate target individuals or groups that already experience stigma and prejudice, and who are protected by the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. A variety of actions and words can be described as being motivated by hate, including racist slurs or threats made in person or in writing, including on the internet, physical assaults, and vandalism of personal property, businesses, places of worship or community centers.*

*Acts of hate infringe on the dignity, integrity and safety of the people who are targeted. As such,*

*they constitute a serious violation of fundamental rights and other Charter rights, including the right to equality. They affect the victims' self-esteem, sense of belonging and ability to take part in community life.*

*In addition to affecting specific victims, acts of hate negatively impact victims' entire communities, not to mention inter-community relations and society as a whole.*

*Hate-motivated acts or speech are classified as xenophobic when they target groups or individuals on the basis of 'race', colour, ethnic or national origin, or a combination of these grounds. They are classified as Islamophobic when they target groups or individuals on the basis of their real or perceived affiliation with Islam.*

## ACTS OF HATE AND THE LAW

An act of hate could be:

- > a *Criminal Code* offence, such as public incitement of hatred, wilful promotion of hatred other than in a private conversation, hate-motivated assault or threats, and mischief against religious property
- > a violation of the human rights and freedoms protected by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, such as:
  - discriminatory speech
  - discriminatory acts such as caricatures, graffiti, signage, contemptuous attitudes or rejection
  - distribution, publication or public exhibition of a notice, symbol or sign involving discrimination.

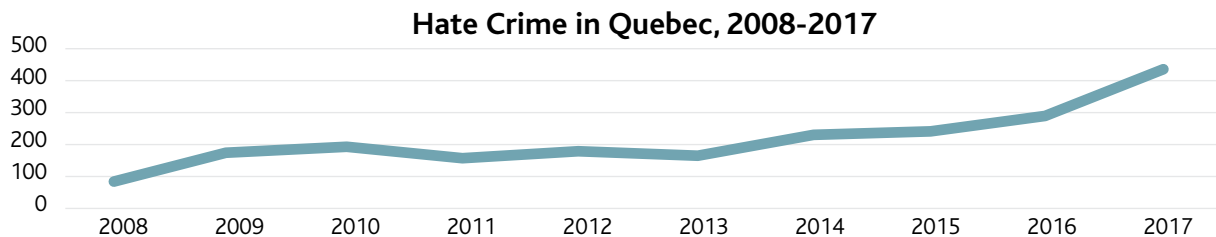
## KEY CONCEPTS

'Xenophobia' means the fear of that which is perceived as being 'foreign' to one's own group, and that is perceived as threatening one's own identity, culture or values. Individuals who are perceived in this way may be the target of discriminatory attitudes, speech or actions on the basis of their 'race', colour, and ethnic or national origin.

'Islamophobia' targets Muslims and people who are perceived as being Muslim. It can take the form of negative and stereotypical portrayals, discrimination in various sectors of society, and violence. Talking about Islamophobia is important as it names a reality. It also allows us to see that discrimination against Muslims is not an individual act, but part of a broader historical and systemic reality.

Social structures and public discourse can fuel xenophobia and Islamophobia. For example, some groups will participate in the crystallization of xenophobia and Islamophobia among certain segments of the population by spreading messages online and through social networks that demonize 'foreigners' and people perceived as such (racialized people, Muslims, etc.), and even incite action against such people.

# WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SAY?



- > Statistics Canada figures focus exclusively on 'hate crimes' as defined in the *Criminal Code* and are compiled by police services.
- > Hate crime has increased in Canada in recent years, with sometimes significant variations between provinces.
  - **Between 2015 and 2016**, hate crime rose by **21% in Quebec** (compared to 3% in Canada as a whole).
  - **2017** saw unprecedented levels of hate crime, with more than 2000 recorded incidents in the whole country. This represented an increase of **49% in Quebec** (compared to 47% in Canada).
  - Preliminary data suggests that hate crime in Canada **decreased by 13% in 2018**. Despite this decline, the number of hate crimes **remains nonetheless greater** than the one registered every year since 2009, except 2017.
- > The majority of these crimes were motivated by hatred on the basis of 'race', ethnic origin or religion.
- > In Quebec, the racialized and religious minority groups most targeted by the hate crime reported to police in 2017 were Muslim (**24%**), Arab (**11%**), Jewish (**10%**) and Black (**7.5%**).
- > Actual figures are likely much higher, as:
  - very few victims report such acts to the police, and
  - complaints are not always registered and classified as hate-motivated.



## WHO ARE THE RESPONDENTS?

The Commission conducted research with 86 individuals who had experienced an act of hate during the past decade (from 2007 to 2017).





The purpose of the study was to better understand the experience and point of view of victims of acts of hate, and to understand the circumstances surrounding the incident, the impact on the victims' life and the reasons why victims chose to use or not use existing protection mechanisms (e.g. police reporting). These 86 respondents answered a semi-directive questionnaire.

## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The study consisted of 140 interviews, conducted in different regions of Quebec between March 2017 and October 2018, with:

**86**

victims of hate acts;

**47**

members of community, religious and other organizations;

**6**

police services.

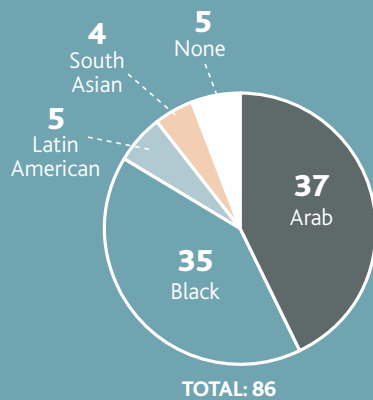
The regions we visited were:



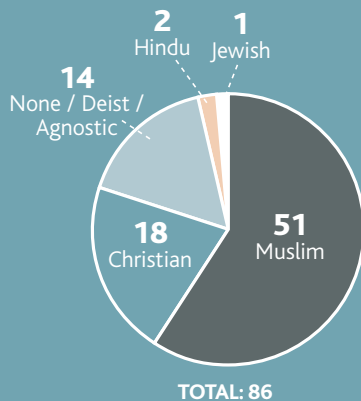
## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The 86 victims are diverse in terms of their sex, age, country of origin, visible minority group, religion, socio-economic status, immigration status, date of arrival in Quebec, and region of residence.

### VISIBLE MINORITY GROUP



### RELIGION



## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

**3**

On average, each respondent had experienced 3 xenophobic and/or Islamophobic acts.

**35%**

of victims had to change their lifestyle as a result of the acts of hate they suffered

**78%**

of acts were not reported.



Acts of hate are a serious form of discrimination that undermine social equality and well-being.



The human cost of these acts is real.



These acts have negative psychological effects on the victims.



Acts of hate are often experienced in addition to other kinds of discrimination, such as systemic discrimination (employment, housing, etc.)




News coverage and negative media portrayals of certain groups can fuel acts of hate. Racialized people, immigrants and Muslims are particularly targeted.



Numerous barriers discourage victims from reporting acts of hate to relevant authorities.



Despite their seriousness, many acts of hate committed in Quebec remain invisible. The phenomenon does not receive the attention it deserves.



*"A man in his car said to me, 'Hey you fucking Nigger, don't steal our cars!'; A woman told me to fuck off in the street. ; A man drove by me and shouted, [ORIGINAL ENGLISH] 'Fuck you!'; When I was at a park, a man drove by me and said, [ORIGINAL ENGLISH] 'Black faggot!'; I was walking with my white girlfriend, and a man asked her, 'What are you doing dating a Nigger?'"*

The same person reported all of these comments

# THE NATURE OF ACTS OF HATE

## PHYSICAL ASSAULT

Of the 86 individuals interviewed, 21 testified to having experienced physical attacks motivated by hatred (sometimes accompanied by explicitly xenophobic or Islamophobic speech). Women and men experienced similar levels of such assault.

Seven women who wear hijab reported experiencing relatively serious assaults, sometimes more than once, for example:

- > One woman reported that a car deliberately drove into her;
- > Another woman reported being shoved with her child on public transit;
- > One respondent reported having a stranger push against her, shouting insults.

***"I noticed that a car had been following me for a few days, sometimes the people would shout, 'Bin Laden!' at me. One time, [...] three people in front of me blocked my way [...] They pulled on my hijab and I fell to my back. Then they started kicking me [...]"***

## SPEECH AND THREATS

Seventy-seven of the 86 victims interviewed (90%), reported experiencing numerous xenophobic or Islamophobic comments or threats in the past decade. Most of these comments were intense and violent.

***"Dirty Arab", "Dirty Nigger", "Dirty race"; "Dirty immigrant"; "There are so many of you. We have to send you back home"; "You've been imported to steal our jobs"; "Terrorists!",***

***"You're just here for the welfare cheques", [ORIGINAL ENGLISH] "Brown Paki piece of shit"; etc.***

Xenophobic and racist insults are experienced over and over again by the same person.

Almost all of the women who wear hijab (nearly 27 respondents) said that they frequently receive insulting remarks.

Online speech and threats are similar to those experienced face-to-face, but are at times even more intense and vulgar. People who are in the public eye are especially susceptible to online vitriol. Several organizations have expressed concern about the proliferation of online hate speech:

***"[...] calling for murder online, and the sheer amount of [hateful] online comments is beyond the pale; there has been an outpouring of hatred that reflects real beliefs, there are threats; not to mention the issue of fake news."***

***"A lot of people lash out online, it's a medium that allows people to say whatever they want with no restraint or censorship."***

## VANDALISM

Fifteen respondents had experienced acts of vandalism against their property or the place of worship they attend.

Every single mosque in the regions visited by the Commission has experienced at least one act of vandalism in the past decade.

***"Our children's safety is threatened from many directions. When a mosque gets vandalized for example, that leaves a person feeling insecure."***





# HOW DO ACTS OF HATE AFFECT VICTIMS?

## PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

*"There's a really big difference between the first time it happens, and all the other times. [...] The first time, your feelings of injustice, incomprehension and pain are enormous. You weren't expecting it. [...] But then, you get used to it, you learn to protect yourself [...] I remind myself that I play a role, so, it's not really me these things are happening to, it's my public persona. You'd lose your mind otherwise."*



## FEAR AND ANXIETY

"I was afraid and couldn't sleep."

"I turn on the alarm system at home and I've taken out good life insurance."

"I feared for my safety. For a while, I only went out if I was with someone."

## ISOLATION

"I didn't want to leave my house anymore. I felt completely isolated."

"I avoid looking people in the eye. In the subway, I keep close to the walls."

## DEPRESSION

"I failed my classes, lost my funding, and fell into profound depression."

"I didn't receive any support or follow-up. My anxiety about racism from white people has increased. I've gained weight and lost my zest for life."

## FEAR FOR THE FUTURE

"I ask myself a lot of questions about my place in Quebec society, about how my children will fit in. At least my own background allows me to identify with several different countries. But what can my children do when their own country treats them like outsiders?"

## HUMILIATION

"It's shocking, it's humiliating. I don't bring it on myself, I don't provoke people. I behave with respect for others and expect the same in return."

## FEELINGS OF EXCLUSION

"The main feelings are fear and exclusion. You also feel rejection. 'Why does he hate me so much? Why would he tell me to go back to where I came from?'"

"Like it or not, they can't go past our blackness. [Even though I was born here], I don't feel at home, I feel like a foreigner."

## FRUSTRATION AND WEARINESS

"It's extremely difficult. The first time, the feeling of injustice made me weep."

"I felt frustrated. But now I've moved beyond sadness. I'm fed up of saying the same thing over and over. I don't feel respected."

## LOSS OF CONFIDENCE

"It affects me in every way: poor self-esteem, questioning myself, feeling like an outsider, losing my self-confidence, feeling like a failure, not being respected if I lose my financial independence, not being useful to society. I feel like I can't help my children, my family. It's a feeling of failure, of broken dreams, of having missed the boat."

## DEPARTURE

"I am a child of Quebec, but this is just too much. I feel I have given a lot to this place in the past 30 years, but now I am open to living elsewhere."

The most commonly reported feeling is fear, along with exclusion, humiliation and frustration.

For some victims, the incident led to depression.

The respondents also testified to the anger they felt as a result of an act of hate.

*"I felt excluded and stigmatized. I felt that I was being defined by others, that my freedom of expression had been taken away from me. The labels that have been imposed on me feel like psychological assaults."*

The respondents also felt that the frequency of racist comments and negative attitudes may be as harmful as a particularly violent act of hatred that occurred only once.

Nevertheless, many respondents affirmed their desire not only to withstand racism, but to move forward in resistance.

## EFFECTS ON DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

More than one third of respondents (30/86) have changed their habits as a result of acts of hate they have experienced. For many, this means avoiding certain places or not going out alone. It appears that people who are exposed to discriminatory and hateful behaviour can respond by choosing to remain in the safety of their homes, neighbourhoods or communities. This severely limits these people's mobility and level of social participation.

These feelings of exclusion and danger are heightened for women, who can be exposed to acts like sexual assault, physical attacks, street harassment, etc. When public space becomes a dangerous place, these women can be led into isolation. A racialized or hijab-wearing woman who experiences regular hostility may respond by reducing her comings and goings.

More broadly, the psychological effects experienced by the respondents bear witness to wide-scale violations of these people's Charter rights to personal security and inviolability; the safeguard of their dignity, honour and reputation; the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of their property; and their right to equal treatment.

## EFFECTS OF NEWS COVERAGE AND MEDIA PORTRAYALS

The majority of respondents believe that the public image of their group has gotten worse over the past decade.

They emphasized the consequences of news coverage, societal debates and media discourse that targets their communities (immigrants, racialized people, Muslims, etc.).

These messages deteriorate the social fabric by reinforcing negative portrayals of certain groups and by fuelling discriminatory attitudes that, at the extreme end of the spectrum, can take the form of acts of hate. It is a context that serves to heighten many respondents' feelings of exclusion.

For example, many respondents referred to the damaging effects of the 2013 societal debate surrounding the 'Charter of Quebec Values' and its repercussions on the general climate of hostility toward Muslims. The respondents who wear hijab experienced a marked increase in discrimination and acts of hate during that period.

***"It was already unbearable and difficult to find work after the 2007 'reasonable accommodations' debate. With the 2013 Charter [of Quebec Values], the situation became intolerable. Radio, television.. It was all about how awful we were. I cried a lot and became depressed. I was afraid for my children."***

***"That Charter [of Quebec Values] was a real Pandora's box."***

The 2017 attack on Quebec City's *Grande Mosquée* was the other most-cited event by the respondents.

### **Attack on Quebec City's *Grande Mosquée* "An Electric Shock"**

On January 29, 2017 a heavily armed man entered the mosque and opened fire on the 42 people inside, killing six men: Mamadou Tanou Barry, Ibrahima Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Abdelkrim Hassane, Azzeddine Soufiane and Aboubaker Thabti.

The attack created a shockwave and a great deal of fear:

***"The Quebec City attacks were like an electric shock: people realized that not all Muslims are terrorists, [...] that even as Quebecers, we face discrimination and hatred because of our religion."***


Many respondents also mentioned the outpouring of solidarity that they experienced:

***"Despite all the horror of the Quebec City tragedy, it was wonderful to see all the subsequent support and solidarity."***

# OTHER EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION







*"Finally, one of the people who works there told me openly: 'You are the best, but they will never hire you because of your headscarf.'"*

In addition to overt acts of hate, respondents have also experienced discrimination in other direct, indirect and systemic ways. As these events form part of these people's experience, they have been included in this study.

Of the 86 respondents, 67 mentioned other experiences of discrimination. Fifty-six mentioned having faced employment discrimination, an experience that they describe as being central to their lives.

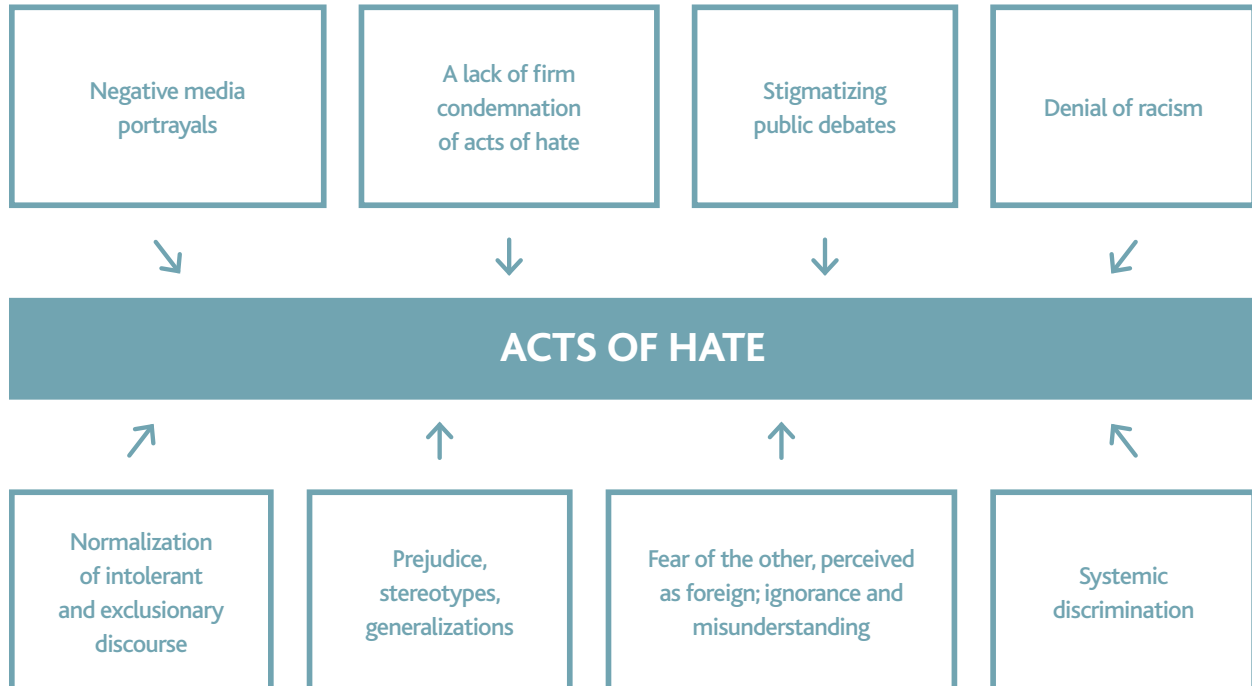
***"I have a master's degree in literature, but when I was looking for work, all I got offered was labour jobs like cleaning or picking vegetables."***

***"For me, the unemployment rate is the biggest problem. I could give you plenty of examples of employment discrimination based on people's skin colour and origins. Skilled immigrants who don't get hired. Employers barely even hide it, the positions remain open! It's a serious problem! Since I've been working as an employment counsellor, quite frankly, this is all I see!"***

Many individuals had also experienced discrimination in health services, education and housing, and had faced racial profiling, primarily by police.

***"I responded to an advertisement for housing. [...] When we got there, [...] they asked [my wife and me], 'Are you Canadian citizens?' Then the woman said, 'It's just that my husband told me not to rent to people of colour'."***

## WHAT DO VICTIMS BELIEVE FUELS ACTS OF HATE?





## SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The 86 respondents expressed differing feelings about their life in Quebec and their ability to make a difference.

Just under half expressed a strong sense of belonging in Quebec, although many of them were critical of racist rhetoric and negative media portrayals here.

***"I am proud to be a Quebecer and wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I love the people here, but the media denigrates us."***

The other half feel excluded and discriminated against. Many find that they have eternal 'foreigner' status, whether they were born in Canada, have lived here for a long time, or arrived more recently.

***"I believe that we will always be outsiders; we'll never fit in. You can become economically functional here, but you can't integrate socially."***

Nineteen respondents stated their desire to leave Quebec, some reluctantly.


***"Quebec is part of who I am. We're here to fight, to help bring about change. But lately I've been considering living elsewhere. [...] I'm usually quite a fighter, but this has become exhausting."***

Some are determined to make a difference, while others are more pessimistic and fear for the future, especially for their children.

***"My worries are about my child being treated differently and excluded."***

Respondents with stable employment, especially those who work in their field, are more likely to feel content in Quebec than those who are unemployed and/or have experienced systemic discrimination or major downgrading of their qualifications.

Many respondents referred to problems of ignorance and prejudice. In some cities, ignorance and mistrust of immigrants could be related to the fact that their numbers are few or that they have arrived there only recently. Furthermore, several respondents and organizations expressed concern about the entrenchment and increased visibility of far right groups in certain areas.



"It's been ten years of micro-aggression. But it's so incessant and it affects so many people. That's why I'm testifying today. I can't take it anymore."



# USE OF PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND SAFEGUARDS

Only a small proportion of acts, however they will potentially be qualified, are reported to authorities. In total, only 22% of the acts described in this study were reported to an authority. Of these, less than half were reported to police.

The respondents provided many reasons for not reporting an act:

- > unfamiliarity with laws and protections;
- > downplaying the experience;
- > believing that legal action would be pointless due to a lack of evidence or because they would not be believed;
- > fear of repercussions;
- > mistrust of institutions, especially the police, primarily because of racial profiling.

# REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING AN ACT

## UNFAMILIARITY WITH LAWS and LEGAL REMEDIES

"I was a newcomer; I didn't know where to complain."

"Back then, I didn't have enough information. Now I encourage women to do it [file a complaint]."

## POOR POLICE HANDLING

"The police weren't taking my complaint seriously but I insisted. They concluded that the threats were not overt. For me, the worst was when the police investigator told me that I didn't seem that afraid of dying, given that I continued my activism!"

"[The police] told us, 'She's just an old lady and has no police history.' They tried to dissuade us. [...] They told us at least three times not to pursue the complaint."

## DOWNPLAYING THE EXPERIENCE

"I didn't think that what I had experienced was significant enough to report. [...] It actually didn't occur to me, I never thought of doing so."

## DISCOURAGEMENT and RESIGNATION

"Sometimes I just let things slide, I get weary. Besides, there's no point reporting things to the police, they won't do anything. I don't know who we can turn to."

"No, I don't go to the police about it. If I did, I'd be there all the time!"

## IMMIGRATION STATUS

"Immigrants here are willing to accept everything, [including] hateful and discriminatory acts, because they need their Canadian documents."

"I was afraid to go to the police because I didn't have my papers yet."

## CLASSIFICATION AS ACTS OF HATE

"When a mosque was vandalized, it did not get classified as a hate crime because the perpetrator had been drunk. This is a major issue."

"The person will be found to have a record, but nothing to do with the mosque. They will be deemed to have mental health problems. So we didn't pursue it; we didn't file a complaint."

## POLICE PROFILING

"Twice, I have been pulled over while driving. One time, a policeman turned on his flashers and asked me, 'how does someone like you pay for a car like this?'"

"File a complaint? Why? [...] The police themselves are racist."

## LACK OF TRUST IN THE SYSTEM

"Who's going to believe me? The police won't listen to me talk about that. And I don't really trust them."

"Its not that I don't know my rights, it's the feeling that [pursuing them] won't change a thing."

"It feels like the system is designed to keep me down."

## DIFFICULTY PROVIDING EVIDENCE

"You think the rule of law applies here, but actually, these things are hard to prove, so you just give up."

"Where is it going to take me? Will I be taken seriously? Are they going to tell me that it's just my perception?"

The respondents described problematic interactions they had with police when trying to report an act of hate:

- > In about 15 cases, the police either encouraged the victim not to file a complaint or refused to register the complaint and did not refer the victim to another resource.
- > Victims of acts of hate described experiences of police brutality and/or racial profiling. Many expressed deep mistrust of the police.
- > For some respondents, this mistrust was already in place, as a result of past experiences or hearsay; for others, it was borne out of a negative experience when trying to file a complaint about an act of hate.
- > Victims without stable immigration status are particularly reluctant to become involved with police. Some state they do not wish to pursue any recourse until they have become Canadian citizens.

Many of the interviewed organizations and victims of acts of hate spoke critically of flawed police processing, slow-moving proceedings, lack of serious investigation, and inadequate follow-up once a case has been opened.

Some respondents took steps to report the incident to a service other than the police, such as:

- > competent institutions that receive complaints of discrimination or harassment;
- > authorities that are directly responsible for a sector or a place, such as teachers, security guards, or human resources departments.

The respondents have reported acts of hate to: the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*; the *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail*, the Police Ethics Commissioner, and the *Régie du logement*.

## POLICE PERSPECTIVES

The majority of the police representatives we met believed in taking a preventative approach to combatting hate incidents and hate crimes.

However, several challenges remain:

- > all of these police departments have only recently undertaken to prevent hate incidents and hate crimes;
- > few have a properly developed organizational structure for doing so;
- > many displayed a fairly low level of concern about the issue;
- > only a few departments appear to have engaged in in-depth reflection on the issue (i.e. causes, effective means of address, issues of non-reporting) and to be capable of monitoring the impact of polarizing societal debates and the phenomenon of acts of hate.
- > for example, the SPVM has established a unit of hate incidents and hate crimes

The police departments responded to the attack on Quebec's Grand Mosque on January 29, 2017 in varying ways.

- > Some have heightened their surveillance of places of worship, especially mosques.
- > Some have started encouraging victims to report hate incidents and hate crimes.
- > For some, the attack demonstrated the importance of fighting the issue: the Quebec City Police force (SPVQ), for example, has introduced training on the topic.

In general, however, few police departments provide their officers with specific training on hate crimes and hate incidents. This has the effect of:

- > limiting police officers' capacity to understand, recognize and register such acts;
- > distorting the statistical portrait of hate crime in their jurisdiction;
- > limiting opportunities to refer victims to the Commission where discrimination under the Charter may have taken place.

Most of the police representatives we met with spoke of the importance of building ties with the different communities they serve, but none appear to be actively addressing the issue of certain communities' mistrust of the police.



# THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission is responsible for making recommendations to the government to promote and uphold the principles enshrined in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

Further to this study on xenophobic and Islamophobic acts of hate, the Commission hereby makes seven recommendations to the government and sets out commitments that it also undertakes to pursue. These recommendations and commitments fall into four broad categories.

## **STRONGER GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IN PREVENTING AND COMBATING HATE ACTS AND DISCRIMINATION**

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

The Commission recommends that the government explicitly acknowledge the phenomenon and seriousness of acts of hate. As such, it reiterates its earlier recommendation for a government policy against racism and all forms of discrimination, including extreme forms like acts of hate.

In particular, such a policy should identify and acknowledge the discriminatory nature of the systemic barriers faced by racialized people across various sectors of society. Specific measures to reduce acts of hate should be adopted.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

The Commission recommends that the government give priority to preventive actions, such as a public awareness campaign to combat acts of hate, including those based on xenophobia and Islamophobia.

Such a campaign should focus on preventing acts of hate in public places and should be carried out in collaboration with parties such as transit authorities, security agencies and the retail sector.

## THE COMMISSION'S COMMITMENTS

- > To develop information tools on acts of hate and existing protection mechanisms for integration into Charter rights and freedoms training programs;
- > To develop public education on acts of hate, including a component on Charter protections, in collaboration with groups defending the rights of racialized and religious minority groups.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

The Commission urges the government to continue current efforts to combat acts of hate, including online hate speech, in keeping with its obligations and with international action being taken in this regard.

To this end, the Commission recommends that the government establish a working group made up of representatives of the relevant ministries, the public security sector, news outlets, internet distributors, major social media networks, the *Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec*, and the Quebec Press Council, as well as specialists, academics, and representatives of groups such as those defending the rights of racialized and religious minority groups.

Drawing on similar initiatives elsewhere, this group should work to:

- > identify and implement tools to combat hate speech, particularly in public and online, including on social media;
- > develop measures to promote fair and equitable media and journalistic treatment of issues affecting racialized minorities;
- > develop measures to improve digital literacy among the general public (especially youth) and among groups and individuals working to prevent and combat hate speech.

### THE COMMISSION'S COMMITMENT:

To collaborate with this working group to promote Charter rights and protections and raise public awareness of the Commission's Charter responsibilities.

## CONTINUE EFFORTS TO DOCUMENT HATE ACTS

### RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Commission recommends that the government support further research on hate-related issues and develop tools to better understand the causes, forms, and consequences of acts of hate.

It also recommends that the government promote and implement standardized best practices for quantifying acts of hate and hate crimes in Quebec. This will improve data quality (on victims, contexts, outcome of police and legal procedures, etc.) and place the government in a better position to understand how this phenomenon is developing and to provide long-term solutions.

### THE COMMISSION'S COMMITMENT:

To continue its research on acts of hate that target individuals and groups on the basis of the fourteen prohibited grounds of discrimination.

## PROVIDE TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS ON HATE ACTS AND DISCRIMINATION

### RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Commission recommends to the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur* and the *École nationale de police du Québec*:

- > that all police training involve the acquisition of expertise on hate incidents and hate crimes in Quebec;
- > that the continuing education programs in all Quebec police departments include proper handling of hate-motivated crime and incidents, and that police be subject to on-the-job assessment of these skills;
- > that organizations that represent communities at risk of hate-motivated crime and incidents, such as racialized and religious minority groups, be consulted in developing such training.

### THE COMMISSION'S COMMITMENT:

The Commission will provide police training sessions on the Charter and its protections to interested police departments so they can understand when to refer victims of discrimination to the Commission.

## **IMPROVE TRUST RELATIONS BETWEEN MINORITIES AND POLICE SERVICES TO FACILITATE THE REPORTING OF HATE ACTS**

### **RECOMMENDATION 6:**

The Commission recommends that the government set up a working group made up of representatives of police, relevant associations and groups, as well as victim support groups to develop and implement ways of addressing the existing barriers to reporting acts of hate, and to improve support for victims during legal procedures.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7:**

In order to improve trust relations between victims and police, the implementation of proactive tools to eliminate racial profiling by police must be a priority. In this regard, the Commission reiterates its recommendations to police from its consultation report on racial profiling and systemic discrimination of racialized youth.<sup>2</sup>

### **THE COMMISSION'S COMMITMENT:**

To strengthen its collaboration with community organizations that work with people at risk of xenophobic and/or Islamophobic acts of hate, so that these organizations can better guide and support these individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, *Racial Profiling And Systemic Discrimination Of Racialized Youth – Report Of The Consultation On Racial Profiling And Its Consequences*, Paul Eid, Johanne Magloire and Michèle Turenne, 2011, p. 113-117.

# CONCLUSION

Hate speech is gaining traction and increasing in a variety of settings. Some public discourse have set loose racist speech and contributed to the stigmatization of certain communities. Such messages deteriorate the social fabric by reinforcing negative portrayals of certain groups and by fuelling discriminatory attitudes that, at the extreme end of the spectrum, can take the form of acts of hate. This context has heightened the feelings of exclusion expressed by many of the respondents.

Internationally, populist and far-right parties' rise to power has facilitated the rise of antiimmigration and antiMuslim groups here and now.

In this study, the Commission has proposed concrete solutions to the government and its ministries, as well as to other parties. The role of these parties, in collaboration with members of civil society, is paramount in developing public policies that provide structural and systemic responses to discrimination in general, and to acts of hate in particular.

**“I don’t want  
fear to control  
my life.”**

**Commission des droits de la personne  
et des droits de la jeunesse**

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