

# Secondary exposure to hate crime can harm community cohesion

June 10 2021

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Secondary exposure to hate crime can influence negative perceptions of ethnic minorities and harm social relations in neighborhoods, new research from Monash University has found.

Simply hearing about—not witnessing—hate crime can cause individuals to reject ethnic migrants and exclude them from their communities, with significant implications for community cohesion in multi-ethnic neighborhoods.

These findings, the first of their kind, were led by researchers from the Monash Migration and Inclusion Center and published in the paper, "The vicarious effects of hate: Inter-ethnic hate crime in the neighborhood and its consequences for exclusion and anticipated rejection," in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

Hate crimes are defined as violent, destructive or threatening behavior where the perpetrator is motivated by prejudice towards the victim.

Researchers used Melbourne survey data from the 2020 social exclusivism survey for their paper to determine if incidents of hate crime lead to empathy or hostility, how individuals learn of hate crime and whether this influences how they respond. The survey comprised 2,570 randomly sampled residents across 155 randomly selected suburbs in the Greater Melbourne area.

Secondary information can be through gossip, [social media](#) or [local newspapers](#), where narratives about incidents become racialised and ethnic minorities and migrants are associated with crime and disorder.

"In Australia, this is particularly visible through narratives of blackness, immigration and crime and political and media rhetoric such as the "African gangs' discourse in Melbourne," lead researcher and Ph.D. candidate Chloe Keel said.

"Hearing about crime can lead individuals to overestimate the levels of crime in their area, and second-hand tales of crime shape how individuals process events, exacerbate conflict in communities and encourage rhetoric around immigration and crime."

More than three-quarters of survey participants had not heard or witnessed a hate crime incident, nine percent reported hearing about someone being harassed or attacked because of their skin color,

ethnicity, race or religion, and about 10 percent of the participants witnessed an event.

Researchers also found:

- Witnessing hate crime increases anger towards ethnic minorities
- Those who hear about incidents of hate in their suburb are more likely to expect to be rejected by immigrants in their local community on the basis of their race and / or ethnicity
- Hearing about hate crime in your suburb increases negative attitudes towards migrants
- Hearing about hate crime also increased intended exclusionary actions towards new migrants

"This second-hand information and subsequent response has massive implications for community cohesion in multi-ethnic neighborhoods," said Ms Keel.

Researchers analyzed demographic data behind the results, which showed older participants report significantly more anger when hearing about hate crime than younger participants, along with those who did not have a university qualification and those living in neighborhoods with higher levels of concentrated disadvantaged.

Overseas-born participants were more positive to ethnic minorities, along with those in the highest income bracket, participants who identified as religious and also those who affiliated with progressive political parties (Greens and Labor).

Ms Keel said secondary exposure to hate [crime](#) in neighborhoods appears to incite hostility and exclusion towards minorities and new migrants, while witnessing ethnically, racially and religiously-motivated hate incites anger to diversity.

"In communities where ethnic minorities are targeted, the blame appears to be attributed to them by their fellow residents," she said. "This could lead to fragmented social relations, reinforced boundaries between groups in the community and harm the potential for bystander action in response to hate."

**More information:** Chloe Keel et al, The vicarious effects of hate: inter-ethnic hate crime in the neighborhood and its consequences for exclusion and anticipated rejection, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2021.1930094](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1930094)

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Secondary exposure to hate crime can harm community cohesion (2021, June 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-06-secondary-exposure-crime-cohesion.html>

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