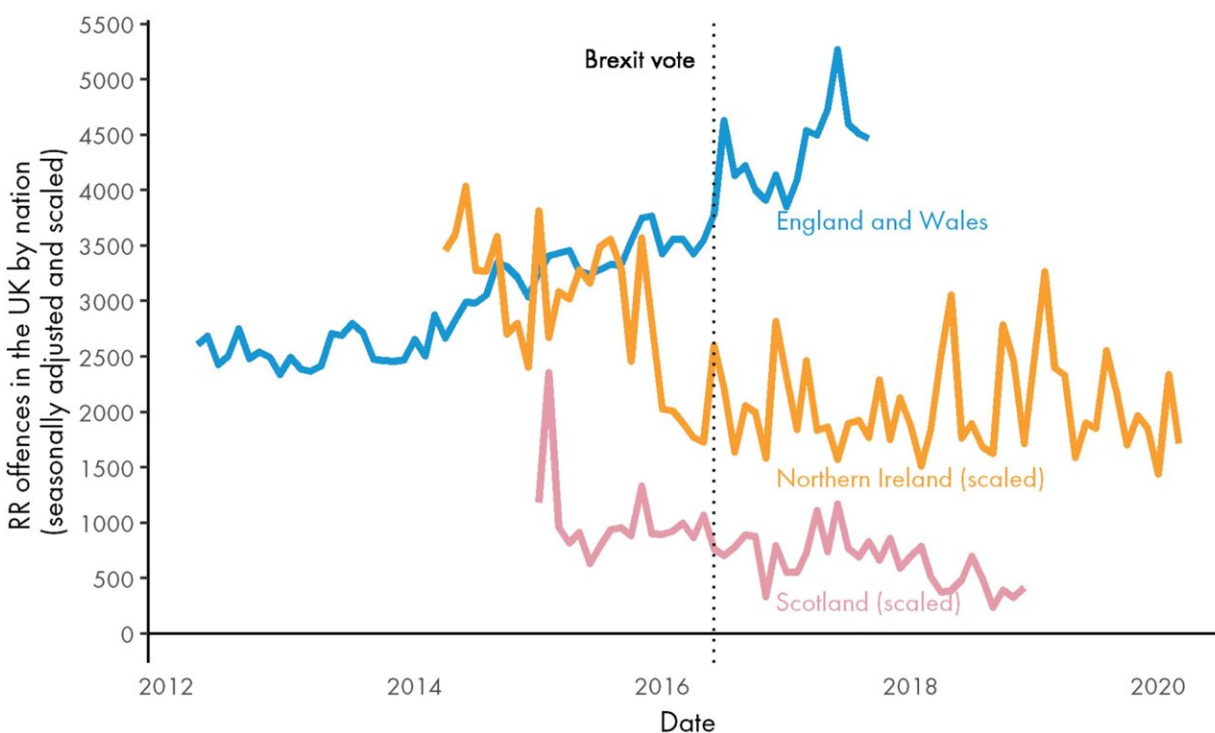


Areas of UK where more people voted 'remain' saw smaller increases in hate crimes following historic Brexit vote

October 6 2022



RR offense counts over time in nations of the United Kingdom. Credit: *The British Journal of Criminology* (2022). DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azac071

Parts of the UK that were against Brexit experienced less of a spike in hate crimes after the vote compared to leave areas, research from Cardiff University shows.

The paper, published in *The British Journal of Criminology*, provides the first Brexit-related race and religious hate crime comparison between England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Researchers combined a variety of data sets from different sources—including police recorded statistics, the Crime Survey of England and Wales and social media activity to investigate the possible factors that led to a rise in hate crime following the historic referendum in 2016.

Researchers examined data for each police force area in England and Wales and found those areas with greater remain [vote](#) shares tended to have smaller increases in [hate crimes](#) in the month after the Brexit vote. For example, Surrey, which had a remain vote share of 52%, saw 12% less of an increase in hate crimes compared to Essex, which had a remain vote share of 38%.

Scotland and Northern Ireland, which each have one police force and where most people voted to remain, also showed smaller increases.

Taking into account 31 other "trigger" events that occurred between October 2016 and December 2017, including the Westminster and London Bridge terror attacks, the findings show the Brexit vote led to the second highest spike in hate crimes. The only event in the period which led to more hate crimes was the Manchester Arena attack.

Lead author Professor Matthew Williams, director of HateLab, based at Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences says that their "findings show that leave areas across all corners of the UK saw larger spikes in hate crimes following the historic Brexit vote. It could be that the outcome of the vote meant some individuals with prejudicial views felt more justified in their opinions, leading them to be more vocal and confident to commit race and religious hate crimes—either on the streets

or via [social media platforms](#)."

"Our [statistical model](#) also shows that the rise in hate crimes was not because of an increase in reporting by victims and witnesses or increased appeals for information from police—two reasons previously used to explain away the rise—but down to the number of crimes that were actually perpetrated and recorded by police."

In 2017, the Brexit vote was linked by the Home Office to the largest increase in police recorded hate crime since records began.

According to this research paper, in July 2016—the month following the vote—there were an additional 1,100 hate crimes committed in England and Wales—either in person or on social media, equivalent to a 29% rise.

Professor Williams says that "there seems to be no slowing in the rise in [police](#) recorded hate crime, and in the regularity of trigger events that seem to have powerful observable positive associations with the hardening of prejudiced attitudes and in turn the expression of identity-based hostility."

"Significant questions remain over the short- and long-term governance of hate crime. The Government's continued reliance on traditional criminal justice interventions of more or better policing and harsher sentencing must remain under question. That hate [crime](#) is so dependent on temporal forces clearly suggests a reassessment is in order. Further research is needed to understand these links better."

More information: M L Williams et al, The Effect of the Brexit Vote on the Variation in Race and Religious Hate Crimes in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, *The British Journal of Criminology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azac071](https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac071)

Provided by Cardiff University

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