

Fact Sheet on the Study: Visibility of Bias Crimes against Persons Marked as "Foreign" in Bremen

Context and Objective of the Study

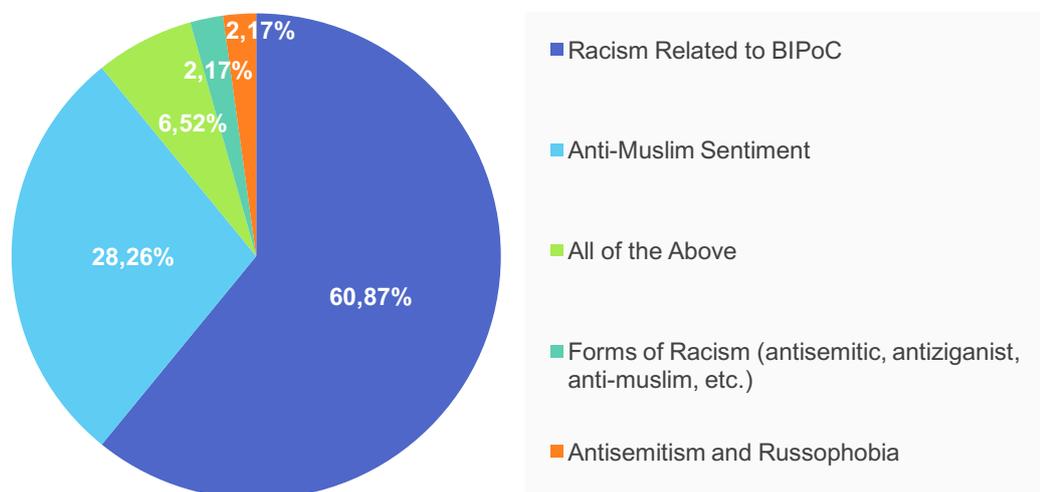
The Bremer Rat für Integration (Bremen Council for Integration) has received an increasing number of complaints about cases of racist and prejudice-motivated discrimination in Bremen. Yet to date, no systematic data has been gathered on this issue. For this reason, a cooperation project between the Bremer Rat für Integration (BRI), the Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Officer of the Bremen Police Department, and the Academic Expert for Diversity at the University of Bremen has been initiated. In the summer semester of 2021, a research project led by the latter was carried out by forty students in the bachelor's degree program in Cultural Studies at the University of Bremen. The project was conducted as explorative research, focusing on the question: *What do people, prejudicially labelled as "foreign", experience in Bremen – And what can we do against hate crime and everyday racism?* The mixed methods project consists of a quantitative survey developed with the cooperation partners as well as qualitative interviews based on cultural studies. The project is intended to illuminate unreported cases in order to be able to take measures for better protection against discrimination and violence, thereby appealing to both individuals and institutions. The study itself was initially conducted without financial resources and was only possible through the extraordinary commitment of those involved. It should therefore be seen as an introduction to a topic that concerns every one of us and which demands more attention, e.g. in the form of further, long-term studies and, more particularly, through protection, information, and awareness-raising measures. In the following, selected results of the quantitative part of the study (the survey) are presented.

TRIGGER WARNING: EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE ARE DISCUSSED HEREINAFTER.

Central Findings

Who participated in the survey? Among the 123 participants, an almost equal number of people position themselves as female (52%) and male (48%). The age spectrum is broad, with the 20-30 age group being the most represented group (71%). Responding to the free-response question "How would you name your affiliation? (migration background, refugee experience, religious affiliation ...)", a quarter of the participants (26%) answered that they were "German", the majority (59%) that they had "migration experience", and 10% that they had "refugee experience". 5% identify above all as human beings.

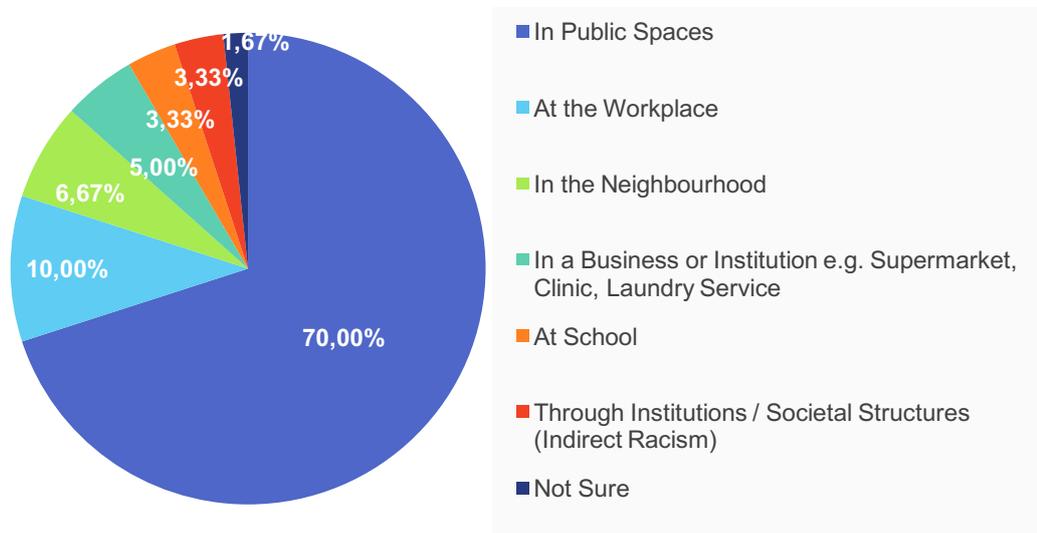
Have you experienced racist violence yourself (or as a witness) within the past two years? 65 participants answered "Yes". Of these, 39 had experienced racist violence in Bremen themselves, and/or 45 had witnessed it. When asked to give an assessment of what motivated the violence (given the specification of e.g. anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiments, racism with reference to BIPOC, ...), "racism with reference to BIPOC" (61%) was primarily mentioned, followed by "anti-Muslim racism" (28%). Other statements refer to "all the reasons mentioned above" as well as diverse forms of racism. Intersectional connections, i.e. interactions with other forms of discrimination, were also mentioned. This is visualized below:



1 What do you think was the reason for the racist violence?

Where did the bias-motivated crime committed against persons marked as "foreign" take place?

In most cases, it happened in public spaces. Bus stops, public transport, and the central train station are specifically mentioned. The second most frequently mentioned place of the incidents were workplaces and schools, as well as neighbourhoods, hallways, and specific public spaces such as supermarkets, clinics, and laundromats. In addition, it can be stressed here that racist violence is experienced as an everyday occurrence as well as indirect and subtle. The following graphic gives an overview of the localization as stated:



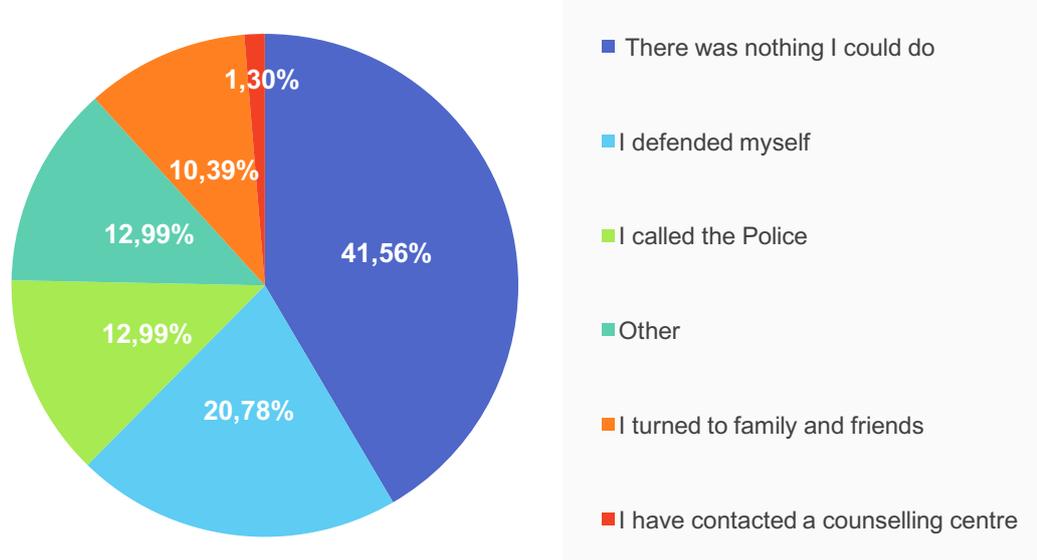
2 Where exactly did the crime take place?

What happened exactly? With 82%, “verbal violence (e.g. insults, threats, name-calling, ...)” is the most frequently reported form of violence. This is followed by “physical violence (e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, etc.)” and “other” with 27% each. The least frequently mentioned is “damage to property, also to places or objects that are identity-forming (e.g. my car was scratched, a monument was graffitied, ...)” with 6%.

How are perpetrators being described? It is observable that perpetrators are often described as middle-aged to old, white/German/blond, and with light coloured eyes.

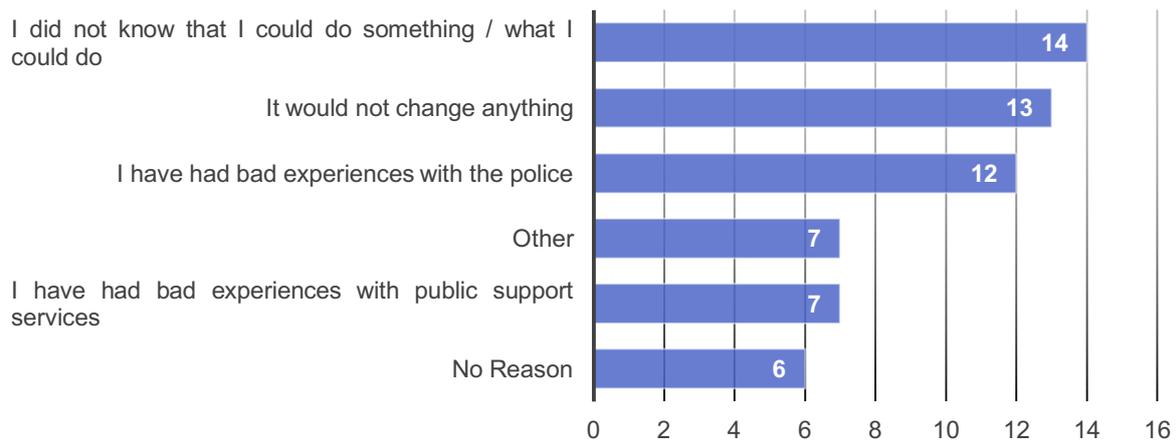
What feelings do racist and/or prejudiced crimes trigger in those affected? When given answers, the majority mentioned anger (28%), closely followed by sadness (21%). Shame (17%), insecurity (15%), and fear (14%) are reported in roughly similar proportions. It was possible to give more than one answer. People who commented on other feelings also stated that they felt "ambivalent" or "frustrated". They also felt "disappointed" and "violated in their dignity".

How did you react to the crime? Regarding this question, 42% of the respondents state that they were unable to do anything. 21% said they had defended themselves. 10% have turned to friends and family for help. 13% called the police, and only 1% went to a counselling centre:



3 How did you respond to the crime?

What prevented those affected from taking legal action? Many stated that they did not know what or that they could do something and/or had the feeling that it would not help their situation. These and other reasons can be seen in the graphic below (47 people answered, multiple answers were possible):



4 If something prevented you from taking action against it, what was it? (Displayed in absolute numbers.)

What do the participants need/want for their protection? There is a great need to question the existing system with regard to (structural and everyday) racism. The following chart summarises (multiple answers were possible, 61 people responded to this question):



5 What would you need or want to be protected? (Displayed in absolute numbers.)

Outlook

Finally, we reference the detailed study-report of the results of the explorative study *Visibility of Bias Crimes against Persons Marked as "Foreign" in Bremen*. The study-report will combine the quantitative part (survey) presented here, with the qualitative (interviews) and will also be published in spring 2022. The study provides insight into the perspectives of people living in Bremen who are affected by bias-motivated violence. Further quantitative and qualitative research on the topic is urgently needed and requires corresponding funding and resources. Here, it is crucial that the executing institutions are independent. An orientation towards researchers and other groups including people from BIPOC groups and communities with migration experience is indispensable. For surveys, it will be necessary to go beyond multilingual offers and explain the objectives and questions to potential participants in more detail and easier accessible language. The lack of help from witnesses, seen in the study, requires broad awareness-raising and education, as the participants point out. For those who are the potential targeted persons of the crimes, there is an urgent need for protective measures as well as accessible information towards taking action and / or counselling.

Image Sources: Own Illustration.
Bremen, Spring 2022.