

Do international jihadi terror attacks lead to an increase in local anti-Muslim hate crimes? Analysing data from the Greater Manchester Police, **Ria Ivandic, Tom Kirchmaier** and **Stephen Machin** find that the Muslim population faces a media-magnified likelihood of victimisation in the days following such attacks.

Jihadi attacks, the media and anti-Muslim hate crime

In recent years, the frequency of jihadi terrorist attacks around the world has risen. Various commentators argue that this increase – alongside the resulting media coverage, successive waves of migration and drops in real living standards – has contributed to increased Islamophobia, general anti-Muslim sentiments and a surge in populist politics in the West. Our research shows that in the UK, minority Muslim communities now face surges in hate crime that are especially evident after terrorist attacks far from where they live.

We provide new, large-scale quantitative evidence of the local impact on Islamophobic hate crime and incident occurrence following ten international jihadi terror attacks. We use rich, high-frequency administrative data from the Greater Manchester Police covering the period from 2008 to 2018.

The unique nature of the data, and the unpredictability of terror attacks, provide a quasi-experimental setting, which allows us to draw reliable conclusions about the temporal impact of jihadi terror attacks on local Islamophobic hate crimes and incidents, the direction of causality between the media and hate crime, and the characteristics of hate crime perpetrators and their victims.

Hate crime following terror attacks

Using a ‘difference-in-differences’ empirical research design with weekly variation across Islamophobic hate crime (the ‘treatment’ group) and other types of hate crimes (the ‘controls’), there is evidence of a sizable effect of jihadi terrorist attacks on Islamophobic hate crime.

Real-time media coverage underpins the surge in local hate crimes that follow a terror attack

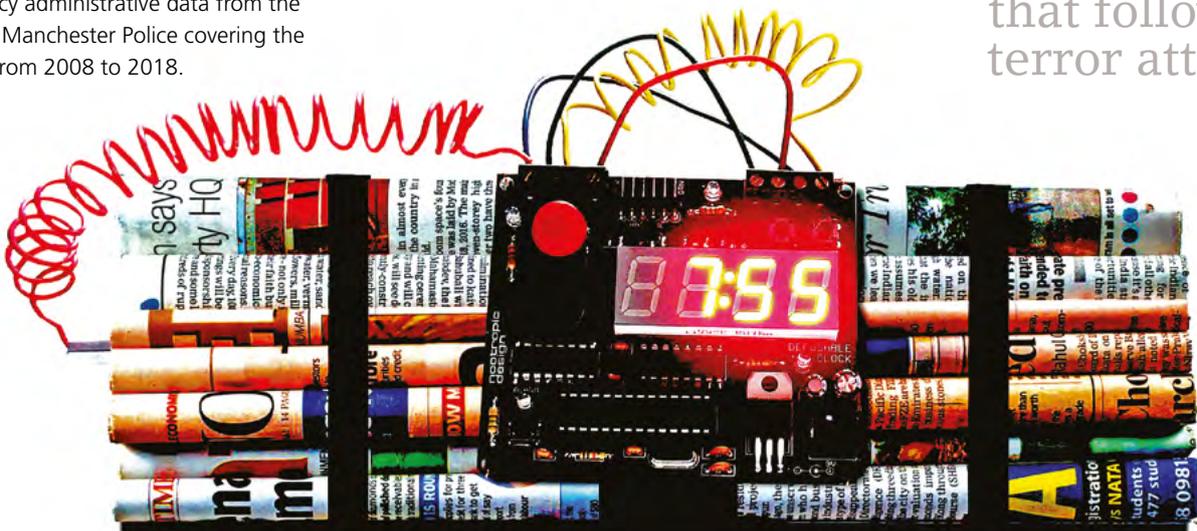
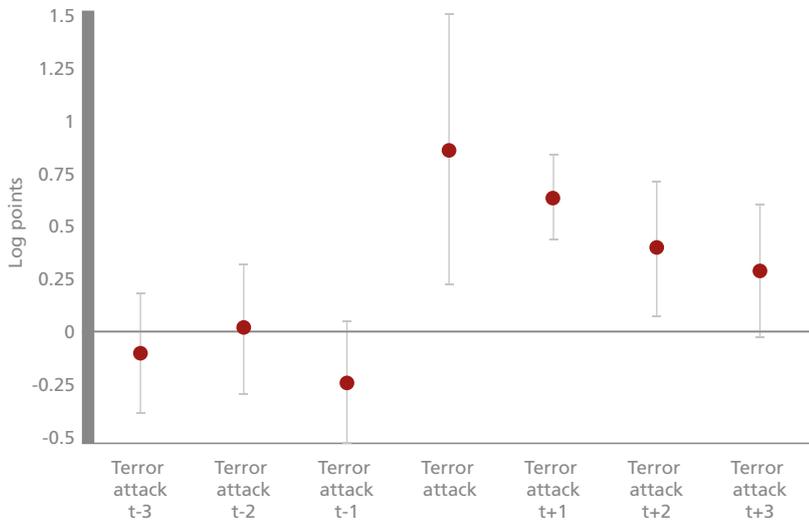


Figure 1:
The effect of a jihadi terrorist attack on Islamophobic hate crime, three week leads and lags



The immediate spike upwards is shown in Figure 1. This is followed by higher post-attack levels for three weeks, with a decline as time elapses from the week of the attack. An important empirical confirmation of the reliability of our results is that there is no evidence of differential pre-trends in the three weeks before the attack.

In the weeks after attacks occur, Islamophobic hate crime incidence is higher than before, so that cumulatively Islamophobic hate crime ends up at a higher level. Considering that the estimates show the average across the ten attacks, therefore at least partially as a consequence of the attacks, by 2018 the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents stood

at a considerably higher level than before the attacks. Indeed, by 2018, there were around four times more hate crimes and incidents than ten years earlier.

Victims and perpetrators

Islamophobic hate crimes and incidents are highly concentrated in less densely populated suburban areas with a higher share of Arab and Muslim populations (and lower British and white populations). This is visually contrasted in Figure 2 where the left panel shows the concentration of the location of Islamophobic hate crimes alongside the share of the Muslim population in the right panel.

Having access to offender data makes

it possible to conduct a novel study of the characteristics of perpetrators of Islamophobic hate crime. These offenders are older and more likely to be white. On average, they commit crimes in slightly larger groups than other types of crimes. While 60% of offenders live within 2km of the location of the committed hate crime, they tend not to live in the neighbourhoods of their victims, but in neighbouring places.

The impact of media coverage

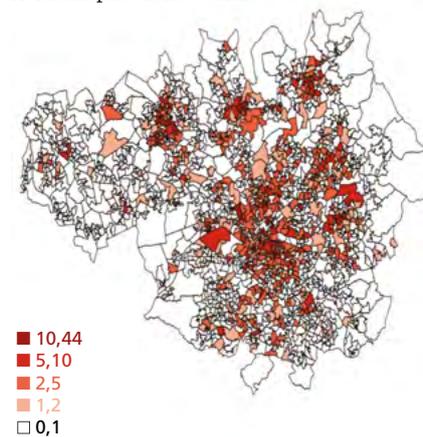
In terms of mechanisms at play, the main argument is that attitudes and behaviour (including criminality) towards particular groups, such as Muslims, have scope to be altered by actual attacks and that they can be triggered or magnified by media coverage. The way in which the media report on terrorism, and whether that affects individual behaviour, is both highly sensitive and controversial.

Previous work finds that terrorist attacks by a Muslim perpetrator attract on average about four and half times more media coverage, controlling for a number of characteristics (Kearns et al, 2019). The authors of that study show that US media outlets disproportionately emphasise the smaller number of terrorist attacks by Muslims, leading them to argue that Americans have an exaggerated sense of the jihadi terrorism threat. Thus, 'attitudinal shocks' may cause individuals (maybe with a prior inclination being tipped over a threshold by the media) to become perpetrators of hate crime.

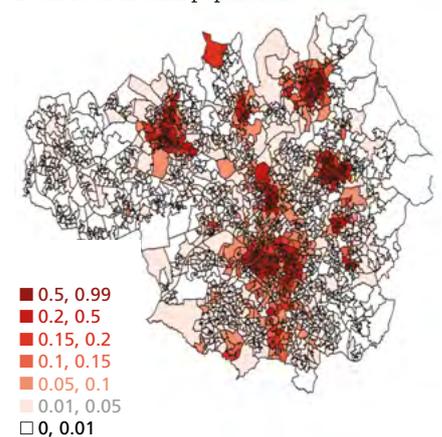
It is perhaps not surprising that such inflammatory reporting has the scope to

Figure 2:
Geographical variation across Greater Manchester

A. Islamophobic hate crime



B. Share of Muslim population



There was a peak in hate crime in Manchester on the second and third days after the Paris attacks in November 2016

magnify hate crime. Indeed, study of daily data reveals real-time media to be a causal mechanism underpinning the surge in local hate crimes and incidents that follow an attack.

This is also shown visually in Figure 3a for the case of the Paris attacks in November 2016, where hate crime peaks follow the peak in newspaper reporting. Replicating the difference-in-differences analysis on daily data, we find that a peak in hate crime occurred on the second and third days following the attack, as shown in Figure 3b. This provides support for the view that Islamophobia is not only an immediate response to the attack, but that

it is also incited by the information on perpetrators and victims presented by the media in the days following the attack.

Long-term costs

The kinds of hate crimes studied in our research have significant economic and social costs for individual victims and their communities. There is a serious danger that the result will be fragmentation and alienation of minority communities, as shown, for example, by a study of the United States (Gould and Klor, 2014). This is not good for inequality, nor for economic and social cohesion.

Finally, it is clearly worrying that hate crime is magnified by the way that media coverage is structured and presented. This presents pressing issues for wider society about how the media go about their business of reporting on terror attacks and other sensitive events.

A big challenge, which should be made a priority by policy-makers and regulators, is the extent to which sensationalist, exaggerated and downright inaccurate reporting needs to be more carefully monitored and where necessary regulated. This applies to conventional modes of media coverage and more broadly to online and social media coverage.

Figure 3a: Daily time series around the Paris attacks

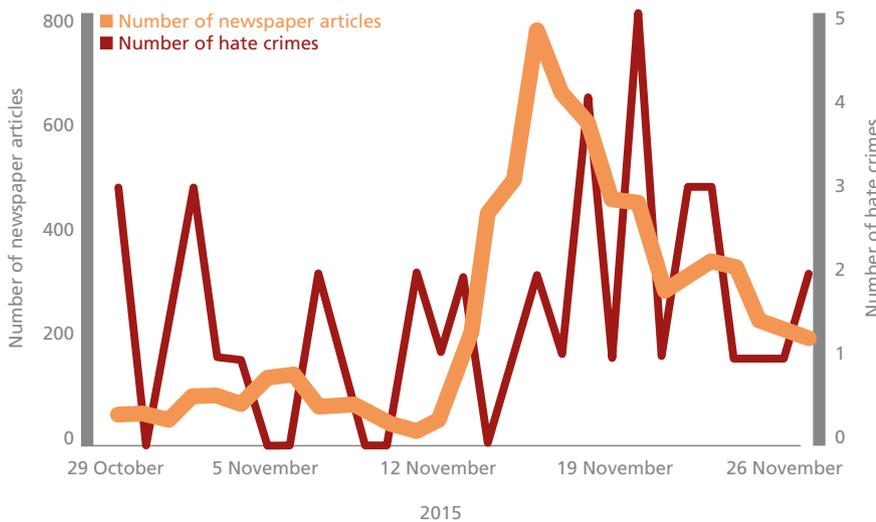
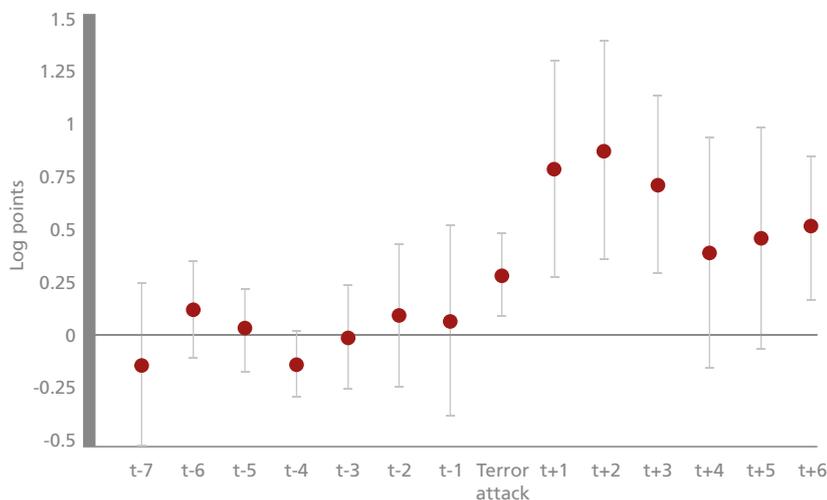


Figure 3b: Daily difference-in-differences



This article summarises ‘Jihadi Attacks, Media and Local Hate Crime’ by Ria Ivandic, Tom Kirchmaier and Stephen Machin, CEP Discussion Paper No. 1615 (<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1615.pdf>).

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Further reading

Eric Gould and Esteban Klor (2014) ‘The Long run Effect of 9/11: Terrorism, Backlash, and the Assimilation of Muslim Immigrants in the West’, *Economic Journal* 126(597): 2064-2114.

Erin Kearns, Allison Betus and Anthony Lemieux (2019) ‘Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention Than Others?’, *Justice Quarterly*.

Islamophobia is not only an immediate response to an attack: it is also incited by information on perpetrators and victims presented by the media