

A Safe

& Secure

Digital

City

Malmö



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1. Preface: **We want to and we can create a safe and secure digital city**

New times require new ways of working preventively. In order to be effective, prevention work requires a systematic understanding of how, where and why geographically and locally rooted hate appears and spreads digitally. It also requires an understanding of the connections between occurrences of hate in the digital space and in the physical space. That is what the pilot initiative Malmö – A Safe and Secure Digital City is about. This publication describes the analysis done and the learnings made within this initiative.

It started with the joint realisation that we lacked common experiences at a municipal level when it comes to mapping, understanding, preventing and handling what occurs online in the geographical space of a city. We concluded that both the fast digital development and the lack of a toolbox specifically for the digital dimension are problematic for local safety promotion. Through repeated in depth analyses of hate in the digital city of Malmö, in collaboration with colleagues from the municipality, the Police and civil society, we have tried to gain a better digital understanding. This can help us to develop a digital approach which can be used in safety promotion online.

Together with the Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE) and Nordic Safe Cities (NSC), the pilot initiative Malmö – a Safe and Secure Digital City was started. Then suddenly, the pandemic arrived and the relevance and need for understanding life online as an integrated part of life in general increased even more. We wanted to understand what online hate is like in Malmö. And now that we know more about it, we want to take a broad approach against hate and for a safe and secure digital city. The analysis, which forms the basis of this report and pilot project, has been developed with the help of an algorithm that identifies hate expressed in Swedish. In the future, we hope to be able to teach the algorithm other languages. Even if the picture that emerges does not represent the complete truth, we have

gone from thinking that we might have a problem with online hate and threats to knowing that we actually do have a problem. Knowledge is key to action. We can no longer merely sit by and watch.

Along the way, we have been asked if it is really the role of the municipality to be online and what we have to do there. In reality, the question should perhaps be: "How could it not be the municipality's responsibility to be where its citizens are?" However, it takes a lot of effort from a local authority to get an exact or even approximate picture of how hate, extremism and racism are spread online within a city.

With this publication, we want to show the results and learnings of the analysis we have done. We also want to point to possible ways forward for the municipality, Police and civil society to jointly create safer and more secure digital municipalities. We want to inspire other local actors to break new ground together with us and work to create safety on our digital streets and town squares – because that is exactly how open groups and forums on the internet should be seen. Stop for a moment and reflect on what you have just read. When you start noticing the similarities between digital and physical places where people meet, walk past each other, exchange a few words or eavesdrop on a conversation, or just stop to look at something, then you have started to build your own digital awareness.

Per-Erik Ebbeståhl

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About us



Nordic Safe Cities is an alliance of member cities in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland that together build resilient local communities and help cities protect their citizens from polarisation, hate and extremism.



Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden and it is the fastest-growing of the three major cities in Sweden. Malmö has a young population, nearly half of which is under the age of 35. There are people from 183 different countries living in Malmö. Malmö should be a safe and secure city for everyone. To achieve this, the City of Malmö is working on several long-term preventive measures together with other actors. The City's ambition is that this work should be knowledge-based and systematic.

cve

The Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE) is tasked with developing the knowledge based and cross-sector work involved in preventing violent extremism on the national, regional, and local levels in Sweden. This includes, among other things, providing needs-based support to local actors, serving as a knowledge hub, and contributing to creating greater effectiveness and coordination in respect of the preventive measures. CVE is part of the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, or Brå for short) and has been a co-financer and dialogue partner of the project.



Common Consultancy is a team of strategy advisors specialising in digital and social media. They believe that digital information flows change who we are and what we do and they believe that understanding *how* is the key to success. Common Consultancy helps their customers thrive in the new digital reality.



Analyse & Tal

Analytics firm Analyse & Tal is specialised in counting what is difficult. They analyse complex issues like volunteering, digital communities, social measures as well as propaganda and spread of misinformation in social media. They find patterns and meaning in complexity, which is conveyed through careful and thorough analysis.



2. Background

The effect of hate on democratic dialogue

Freedom of speech is fundamental to a well-functioning democracy. It also entails a living democratic dialogue where different opinions can be heard and challenged. Current developments around the world are a clear signal of the need for strengthening the resilience of democracy in Sweden. The government's strategy to promote, strengthen and defend democracy describes how disinformation, propaganda and online hate risk having a negative effect on democratic society. The debate climate has hardened and there are people who avoid participating in democratic dialogue due to fear of hate and threats. Voices are being silenced and this threatens the base of our democracy.

According to a report from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society¹, seven percent of the Swedish population have been victims of online hate in the last year. A majority think that the tone on social media is too harsh and 8 out of 10 state that they avoid taking a stance on societal issues due to online hate. 65 percent of people between the age of 27 and 70, and 42 percent of those between 16 and 25, state that online hate is either a "quite significant" or "very significant" threat to democracy. Both young and old people report that online hate most often occurs around topics such as ethnicity or discrimination, or immigration or integration.²

Our challenges, work and mission in Malmö and Sweden

In Malmö, extensive work is being done to prevent and address hate in several different ways. It is done for example by protecting vital societal aspects, such as democracy and human rights, but also by working against those things that are unwanted in society: hate, threats, racism and extremism. Our analysis of hate on two social media platforms is one of many sources that can give us a better overall understanding of our challenges.

Reports about hate crime

In 2020 and 2021, the City of Malmö presented two reports on the topic of hate crime in Malmö. One of them highlights the experience of hate and hate crime of young citizens. In the report, youth from those groups, which according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) are most at risk, shared their everyday experiences: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Afro-Swedes, and LGBTQ+ youth.³ The second report is about people who in their professional roles are at risk of being subjected to prejudice, insults and hate crimes due to their skin colour, ethnicity, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.⁴

Long-term work against antisemitism and racism

The City of Malmö has also taken a long-term approach to preventing and combating antisemitism. This work includes two research-based investigations: one about antisemitism in Malmö's schools and one about antisemitism among adults living in Malmö. The City of Malmö has several coordinators who work with prevention and sensitisation in relation to hate crimes and different types of racism. In 2022, in order to protect democracy and human rights, additional initiatives to reduce and prevent hate crimes and insecurity are being launched.

1 <https://www.mucof.se/publikationer/ungas-upplevelser-av-nathat>
2 https://www.insightintelligence.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NathatiSverige2021_Web_1-7A.pdf

3 <https://malmo.se/Aktuellt/Artiklar-Malmo-stad/2020-11-12-Hatbrott-varje-dag---ungas-roster-gors-horda.html>
4 <https://malmo.se/Aktuellt/Artiklar-Malmo-stad/2021-02-10-Rapport-foreslar-forbatttrat-kontrollsystem-for-att-utlasa-krankningar-och-hatbrott.html>

Government assignment with the Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities

During the spring of 2022, the City of Malmö, the Police and the Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities (SST) have worked in collaboration with Muslim and secular civil society organisations to map issues with anti-Muslim racism in Malmö. The analysis in Malmö – A Safe and Secure Digital City, which shows that Muslims in Malmö are victims of extensive hate, is a source of knowledge to understand the online situation.

The objective of the government assignment is to increase the knowledge of the safety situation for Muslim congregations and organisations, as well as of their experience of Islamophobia and hate crimes at local, regional and national level. The work is to be done in such a way that the relations between Muslim congregations, municipalities, regions and relevant authorities are strengthened. The assignment is part of the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime.⁵

The City of Malmö, in consultation with SST has concluded that Malmö is an important geographical space for carrying out the pilot initiative connected to the government assignment. The City and SST have involved Muslim congregations and other actors in the development of the assignment at the local level, to ensure that it responds to the organisations' and congregations' needs. An inventory of problems has been carried out and the work to formulate measures is being done.

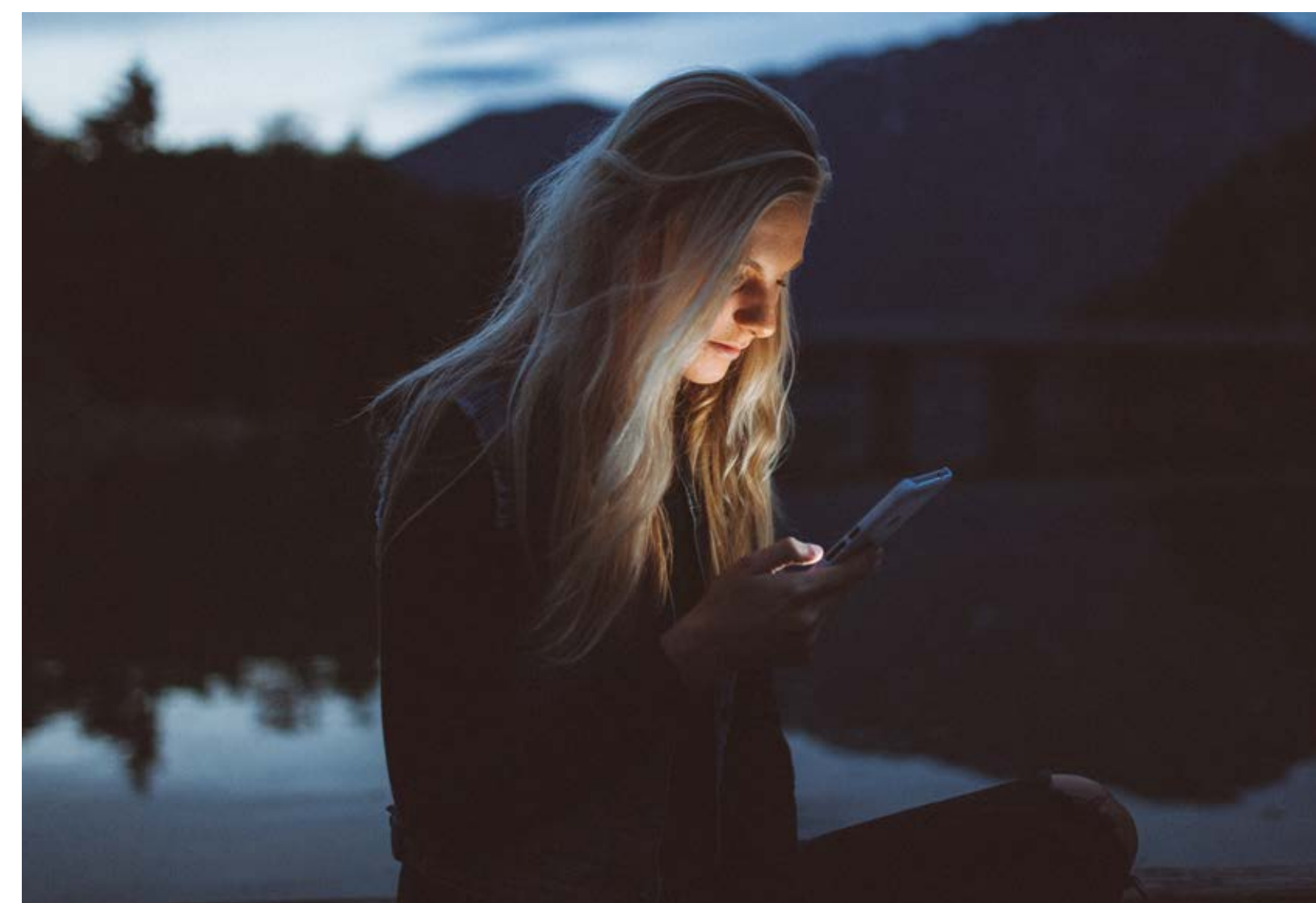
Hate crimes Work at a national level

The Swedish Government recognises the need to improve protection against racism and has identified this area as a priority in the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. The Government has also given the Swedish Police Authority the assignment to develop and improve its work on combating hate crimes and other crimes that are a threat to democracy. At the end of this publication, we have collected some links to reports and important actors in the area.

Introduction to Malmö – A Safe and Secure Digital City

Can the municipality, the Police and civil society jointly get better at understanding and preventing online hate by mapping it? That was the basic question that the parties in the pilot project asked themselves when starting this initiative.

In 2020, the City of Malmö became a member of the network Nordic Safe Cities (NSC). The membership was initially planned for two years. The management of NSC and the City Administration Office of the City of Malmö reasoned around what could be done within this time-frame. Knowing how long it takes to see the results of preventive efforts, we agreed on trying to find a method for understanding our digital city. Three months later, the pandemic broke out. Today we can see that this was precisely the right time to start since many of us came to spend more time online during the pandemic. The Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism was invited as a dialogue partner in the project since the City of Malmö and NSC saw it as interesting in the long term for other Swedish and Nordic cities to learn from the results of Malmö – A Safe and Secure Digital City.



⁵ <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2021/10/uppdrag-till-myndigheten-for-stod-till-trossamfund-att-oka-kunskapen-om-sakerhet-for-moskeer-och-muslimska-forsamlingar/>

During the project, we found good examples of tools for working online. Reports about online hate have been written by several think tanks and central authorities. There are organisations that run projects against online hate. There are schools that work very actively with source criticism and fact checking. There are digital initiatives that work for better online environments. There are municipalities whose elected officials have adopted guidelines for how debates should be conducted online and offline. There are states whose police have online safety promotion patrols. There are many municipalities, including the City of Malmö, that engage personnel who through their work are in contact with citizens on social media. However, when we looked for inspirational sources that had mapped the digital life of a limited geographical space, like a city, we could not find any. That is exactly what we have done now in Malmö – to create a situational awareness that can help develop a safe and secure digital city.

We know that digital messages and disinformation that strive to polarise spread quickly. In the same way, occurrences in the physical environment can escalate online. They can have consequences for both the digital and the physical environment. During Easter 2022, Qurans were set on fire and violent riots broke out in the physical environment in a number of Swedish municipalities. But how many people understand the digital connections and the logic and mechanisms behind these expressions? Some careful learnings can be drawn from Malmö's experiences and hopefully be of use to others. It appears as increasingly important to systematically measure the temperature of digital environments; partly to map hate, but also to promote the positive communities. Then, preventive and responsive measures can be shaped so that people can feel safe online. Online life is a big and important part of many people's lives and a place for everything from conversations about popcorn grass to difficult discussions about societal challenges. Freedom of expression is essential to a functional democracy. When conversations die down due to hate, and fear of hate, then democracy is threatened. That is why we need to understand the digital mechanisms and work to promote participation in democratic dialogue.



3. Methodology

About the tool

A situational awareness of digital Malmö is a new point of departure for shaping safety promotion and preventive measures from the outside. Situational awareness gives local actors the preconditions for understanding what hate looks like, towards whom it is directed, what it is triggered by and in which open forums it flourishes. This way, Malmö can strengthen its current efforts to combat hate as well as to create new measures, online and offline, in a more knowledge-based way.

It is important to emphasise that the results are based on a number of considerations (see below) and that no tool alone can explain the full reality. The City of Malmö sees the pilot project's results as an important piece of the puzzle that, together with other pieces, can give better conditions for discovering and understanding the dynamics of hate between online and offline, and thereby organise the preventive work.

Nordic Safe Cities engaged the tech companies Analyse & Tal and Common Consultancy to "build Malmö as a digital city" and develop the language algorithm that has learned to identify and classify hate speech through artificial intelligence (AI). Thanks to this, we can see how and when hate peaks, how much hate there is in the digital city and towards whom it is directed.

During 2021 and 2022, the parties behind the initiative have gathered a number of preventive actors in Malmö (different branches within the municipality, the Police and civil society) and presented three analyses to them. The meetings have not only focused on digital hate, but also on how existing preventive measures can be strengthened and how new initiatives can be launched based on the analyses.

The technique and methodology that have been developed are "open source" and thereby available for other actors who want to use and/or develop it further within their local context. Other Nordic cities have expressed an interest in Malmö's pilot initiative and the work thereby also enters a new phase outside of Malmö. It is driven by Nordic Safe Cities in collaboration with Common Consultancy and Analyse & Tal. New pilot initiatives are just around the corner.

Points of departure

Online actions can be as serious as those offline. What is expressed online can have consequences offline – and vice versa. If life online is not considered in preventive and safety-enhancing measures, then we are not looking at the full picture. Freedom of expression is fundamental to a functional democracy as well as for a living democratic dialogue where different opinions can be heard and challenged. At the same time, several reports conclude that people and civil society actors avoid speaking about certain societal issues due to hate and threats. Voices quieten and that threatens democracy. At the same time, we lacked a broader picture of what online hate is like in Malmö.

This analysis is a complement to other analyses in the area of safety that the City of Malmö and other actors are carrying out. It does not claim to explain anything beyond what is described in these methodological considerations.

All methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand that the choice of platforms, the digital map and the Swedish language, give one picture of reality. Other choices would surely have given a different picture. That is why it is important to also use other sources of knowledge in order to come closer to the complex and true reality. Research, other reports and practical experiences are also important in order to get the full picture.

This is a pilot initiative which now enters a new phase of investigating new ways for the municipality, the Police, civil society actors and others to work jointly with a digital aspect of safety promotion in a city.

Methodological foundations

The analysis in the project builds on the following methodological foundations:

- The data used in the project was retrieved between 1 January 2019 and 28 February 2022.
- Choice of platforms: Facebook and Flashback.
- Malmö is geographically coded on Facebook, which means that the (approximately 700) pages and groups that were first identified through different searches and then analysed can with certainty be tied to Malmö “geographically”. This forms the basis for Malmö as a digital city.
- Malmö on Flashback is not geographically coded, which means that the approximately 400 threads with “Malmö” in their name that have been identified and analysed cannot with full certainty be tied to Malmö geographically, but rather represent the narrative about Malmö.
- The AI-tool is based on the Swedish language.
- The analysis is built on open pages and groups or threads – as the approach is preventive and situational and not investigative in its nature. These pages and groups should be seen as parallels to physical streets and town squares.
- GDPR Compliance, which among other things means that we do not look at the sender of the hate (beyond the content).

Concepts

Hate, threats, violent extremism, racism. We have chosen to focus on hate in the pilot study – and use it throughout this publication, although other concepts may be mentioned when we refer to the work of others. It is possible to look at hate in relation to other concepts and phenomena: violent extremism, threats, hate crime and racism. The tool can differentiate between different levels of hate and perceive differences between hate that is or is not violent. In order to not confuse the reader with different concepts, we have chosen to use the concept hate throughout this publication, even if there are also connections (so-called nexuses) to, or preliminary stages of, other phenomena.

The digital city

Facebook

**The “largest discussion”
in Malmö**

**74% of all Swedish
people use it**

**Around 700 pages
and groups in Malmö**

Flashback

**The most openly hateful
discourse in and about Malmö**

**32% of Swedish people
use the forum**

**+ 450 threads about
Malmö**

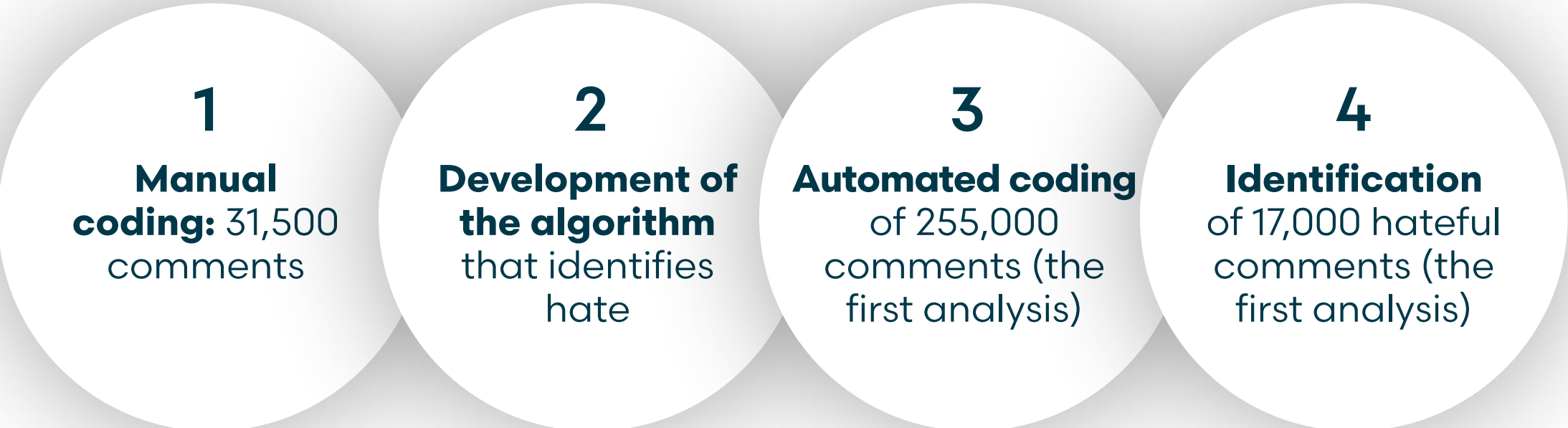
*

Internet does not have a physical geography and social media are not organised according to where people live. To measure the level of hate in a city we, as a first step, developed a “digital map” of Malmö that captured discussions occurring in, but also about, the city. The choice, after many long discussions in the steering group, fell on Facebook and the discussion forum Flashback. Facebook was chosen because it is the most common social media in Sweden. Almost three fourths of all Swedes use the platform, which thereby can give a broad picture of the public discourse. Flashback was chosen to get a picture of how Malmö was discussed “from the outside”. It is a large national discussion forum where participants are anonymous, which makes it a breeding ground for hate. Flashback has a permissive character, freedom of speech is held high and there is a high tolerance for differing and sometimes taboo opinions. About one third of all Swedish people use and discuss issues on Flashback.

On Facebook, we identified approximately 700 pages with over 500 followers and public groups with over 2,000 followers, which all could be tied to Malmö through their name. Some examples of these pages are local authorities, educational institutions, city districts, media, gaming and cultural sites, politicians and political parties, civil society organisations, neighbourhood area groups. On Flashback, slightly more than 450 threads were identified which were about Malmö and contained the name of the city in the thread name.

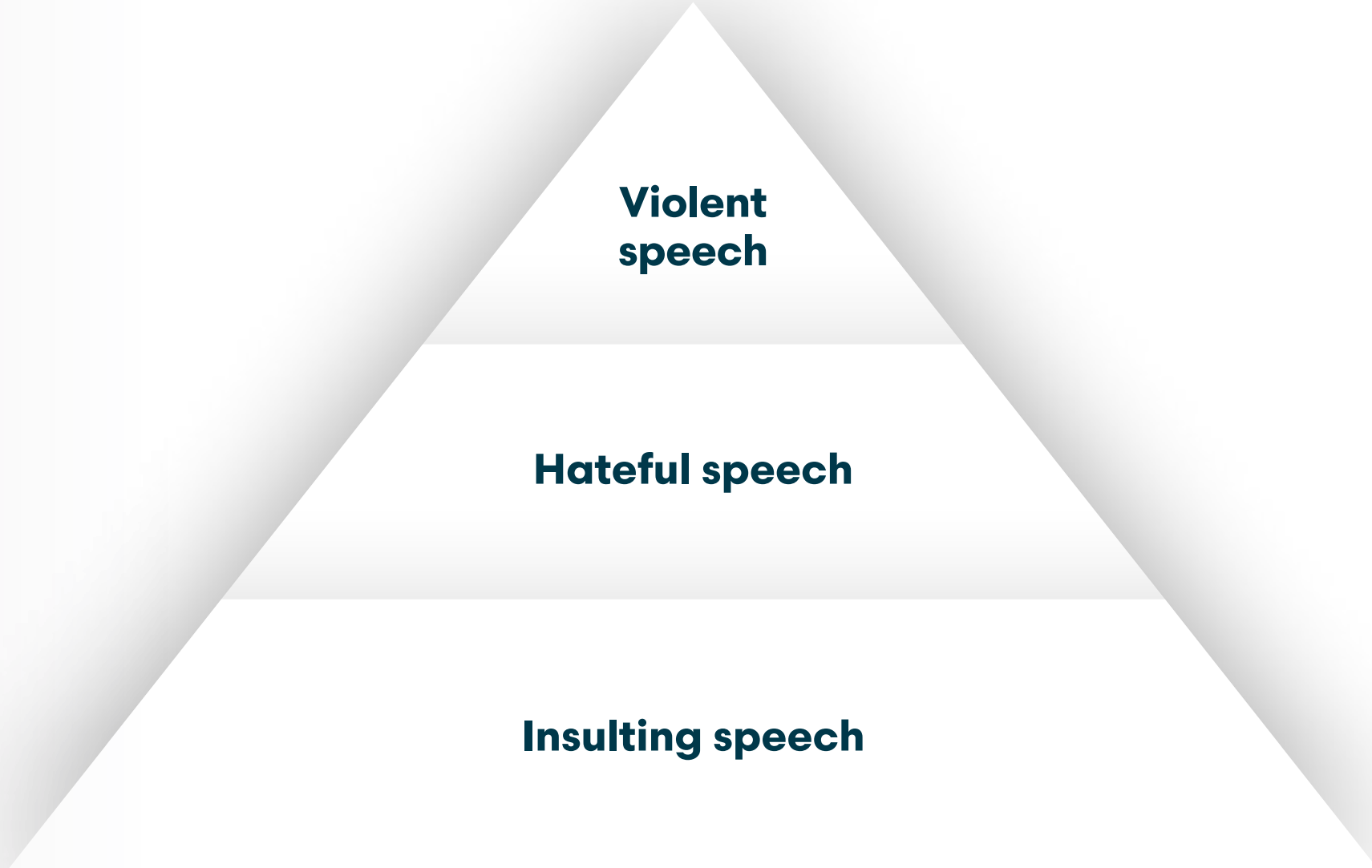
The choice of pages, groups and threads from the two platforms is, of course, far from comprehensive and does not fully capture all digital activity that relates to Malmö. For example, you cannot see those conversations that take place in closed Facebook groups, only those that occur in public groups. Neither can you with full certainty say that the digital activity occurring on the two platforms is occurring physically in Malmö – particularly not those conversations taking place on Flashback. That being said, the platforms still are two good representations of the digital city of Malmö, which combined, give a picture of the digital activity that with high certainty can be tied to the city and is about the city.

The algorithm



After choosing the platforms, the project developed a ‘hate algorithm’ that can recognise and react to different types of hateful discourse. The algorithm builds on machine learning and is based on 31,500 com-

ments from Facebook and Flashback which have been manually coded by a group of mother tongue Swedish speakers (annotators). When coding, a Swedish language model was used which means that the algorithm can only identify hate that is expressed in Swedish.



For the analysis and the algorithm, the project has developed the following definitions of hateful discourse:

Insulting speech

The use of humiliating and insulting comments which are not based on ethnicity, religious beliefs, skin colour, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, political beliefs or gender.

Hate speech

The use of humiliating and insulting comments which are based on ethnicity, religious beliefs, skin colour, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, political beliefs or gender identity, groups, representatives of these groups or institutions that represent them.

Violent speech

Defined as statements that directly or indirectly encourage, promote or glorify violence.

Data

Data from the two platforms was gathered both through Facebook's GRAPH API and through scraping. On Facebook, data is based on anonymised posts, comments and reactions. On Flashback, data builds on published posts by anonymous user identities in different threads about Malmö.

Three different analyses were made at the following times: in March 2021, in August 2021 and in March 2022. In addition to the three analyses, an in-depth analysis was made in May 2021. The analyses thereby do not cover the Easter riots of April 2022.



"World pride. The day when mentally ill people are celebrated. Haha what a fucking joke. Lock them up and throw away the key – it would be in everyone's best interest! [Minority] are not like the rest of us, they need help and therapy until they understand that their sick brains don't have anything to do with the rest of the world."

4. Analytical insights

A photograph of a car engulfed in flames at night. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with thick black smoke rising from the vehicle. The car is parked on a cobblestone street. In the background, a wall features a circular sign with a bicycle icon. The overall scene is dark, with the fire providing the primary light source.

When does hate occur?

When does hate occur?

The analysis shows that hate changes and varies over time. It also shows that the hate that flourishes online is often connected to incidents that occur in the physical environment. Everything that happens in the physical city of Malmö is also discussed online, and just as Malmö's inhabitants discuss their city, schools, restaurants and cultural life, they also discuss criminal and violent events. The latter two awaken strong feelings and it is in these discussions that hate especially emerges. The project has analysed hate in the digital city between 2019 and 2022 and the analyses show that the biggest fluctuations in hate are connected to the violent events that took place in 2019 and 2020. Hate was especially noticeable in connection with two murders that received a lot of attention in the media and the violent riots that took place in Malmö after a public burning of the Quran.



Burning of the Quran followed by riots

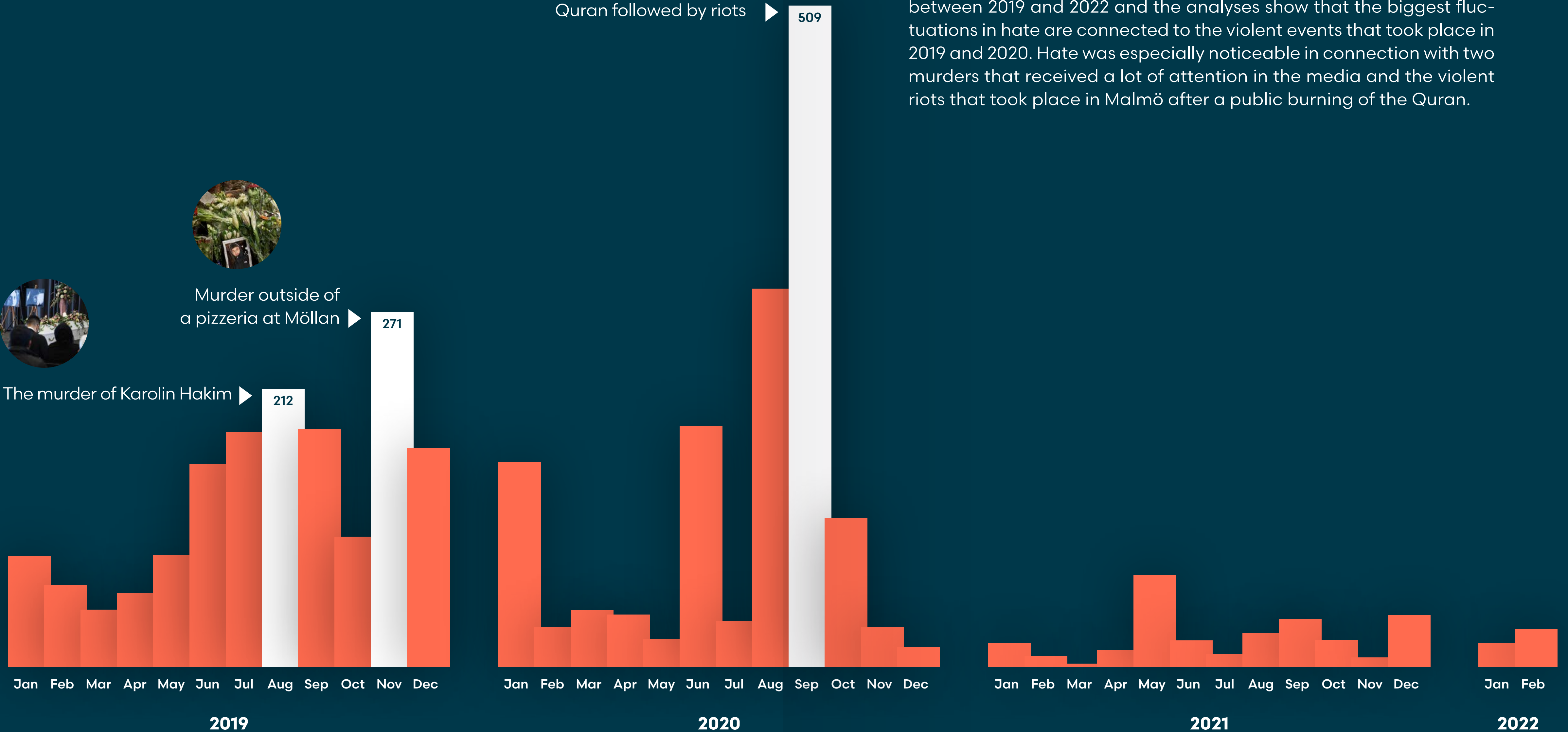


Murder outside of a pizzeria at Möllan



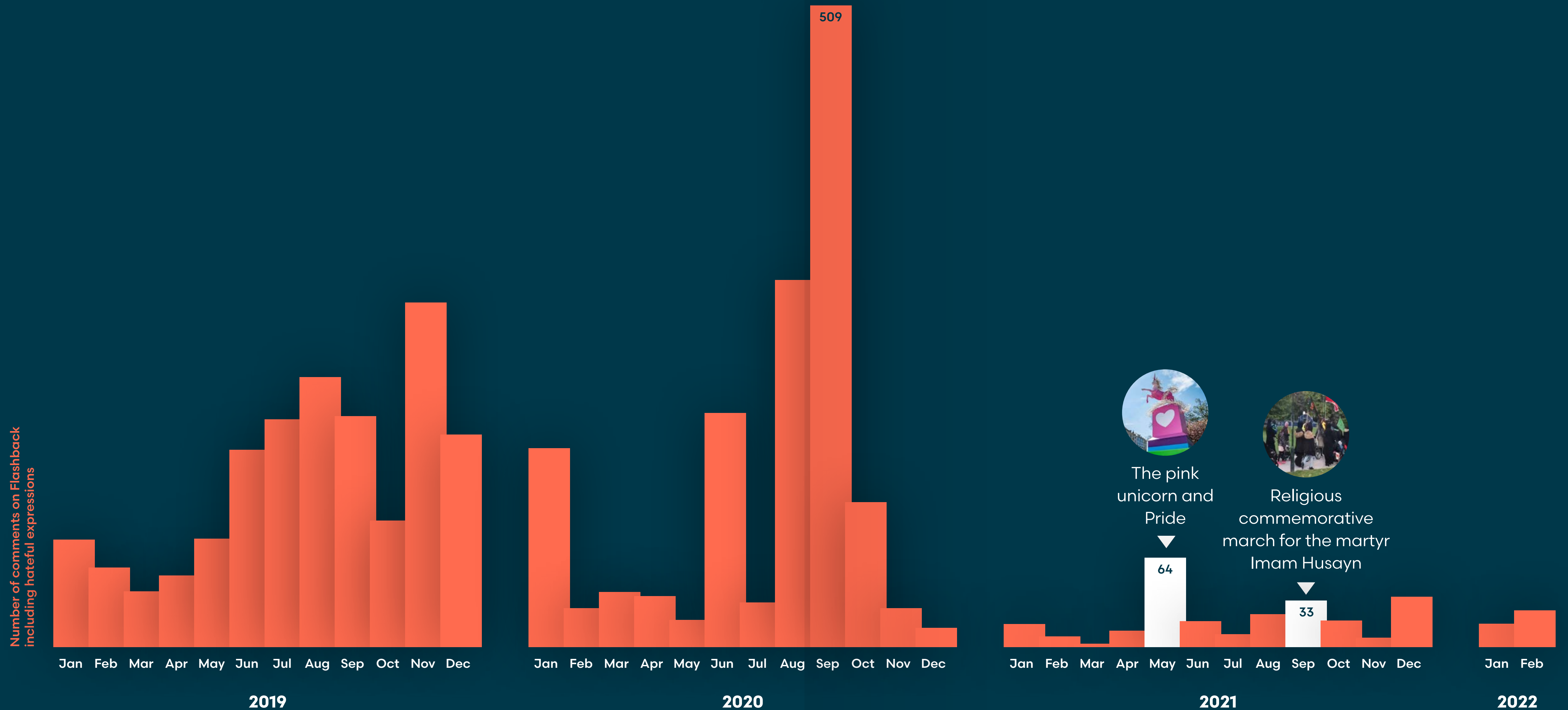
The murder of Karolin Hakim

Number of comments on Flashback including hateful expressions



When does hate occur?

Not merely extreme violent events such as murder and explosions trigger hate. Hate also increases when the rights of minorities are discussed online in issues such as racial profiling or at physical demonstrations, such as Black Lives Matter or Malmö Pride. In the same way, hate increases when minorities make their religion or symbolic figures visible, such as in the example of the religious commemorative march for the martyr Imam Husayn.



A man is sitting at a desk in a dimly lit room, looking at his phone. A laptop and a desk lamp are visible on the desk. The scene is set at night, with a window in the background showing a dark view. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused.

Where does most hate occur?

Where does most hate occur?

0.1%

Facebook

3.8%

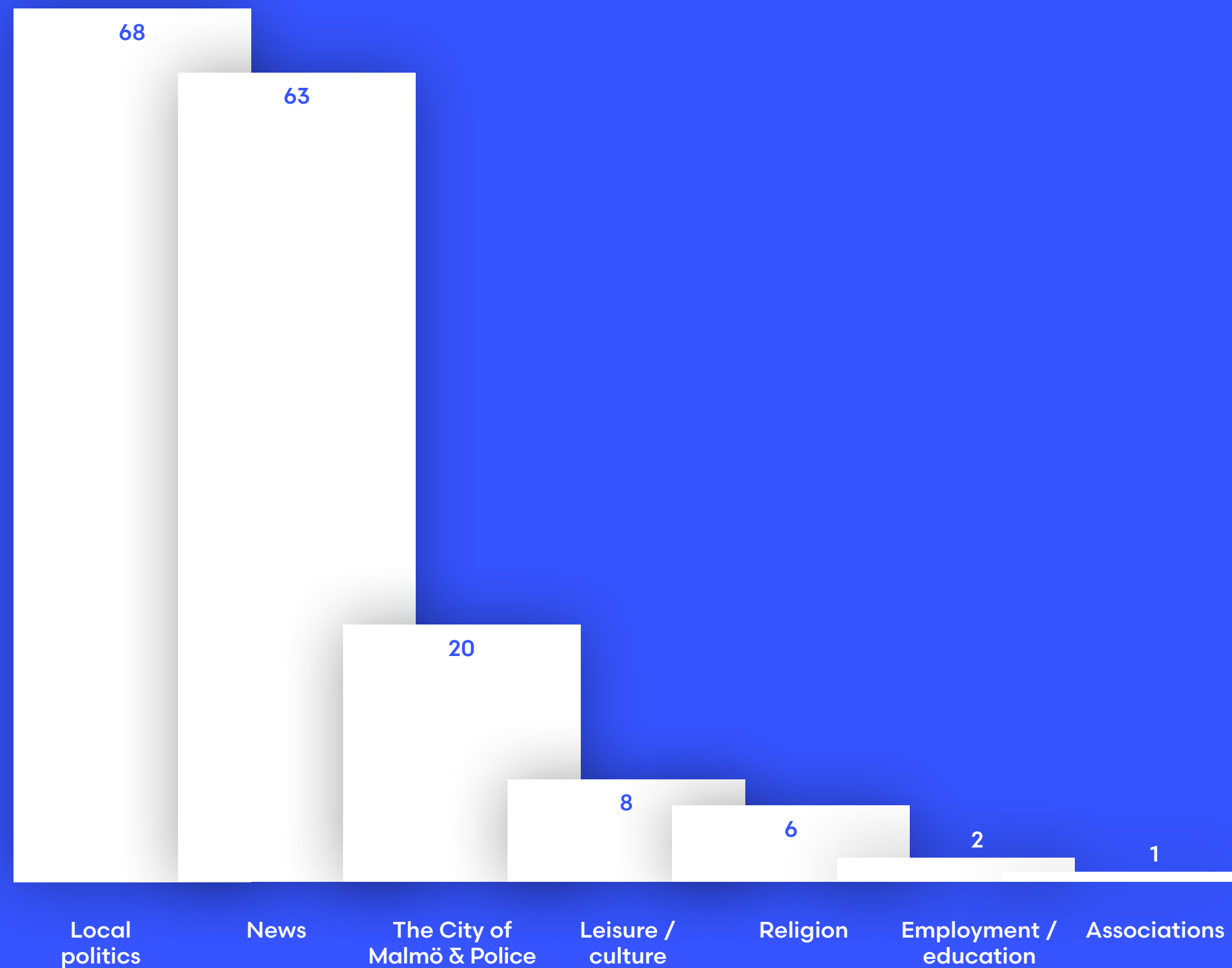
Flashback

In general, hate occurs to a greater extent on Flashback than on Facebook. One explanation may be that the profiles on Flashback are anonymous and that Meta (Facebook) has stricter guidelines for what can be expressed on the platform. Similarly, the conversational tone might be milder when expressing oneself publicly in the local vicinity – in comparison with a national conversation that is taking place in a comment section of a nation-wide forum. In addition, Facebook is moderated to a much greater extent (mainly by page and group administrators) than Flashback. Flashback is a forum which lays much greater weight on freedom of expression and, although hate speech is not accepted according to the rules of the platform (and can lead to expulsion), the amount of hate indicates that the moderation either is inefficient or not prioritised.

On Facebook, hate occurs on pages about politics and news

On Facebook, the amount of hate is, as mentioned, much lower and pages cannot be connected to specific topics. However, a majority of the hate identified through the analysis is found on pages about news and politics. Part of the hate expressed is related to violent events just like on Flashback, and some is related to more politically oriented discussions about, for example, integration or immigration.

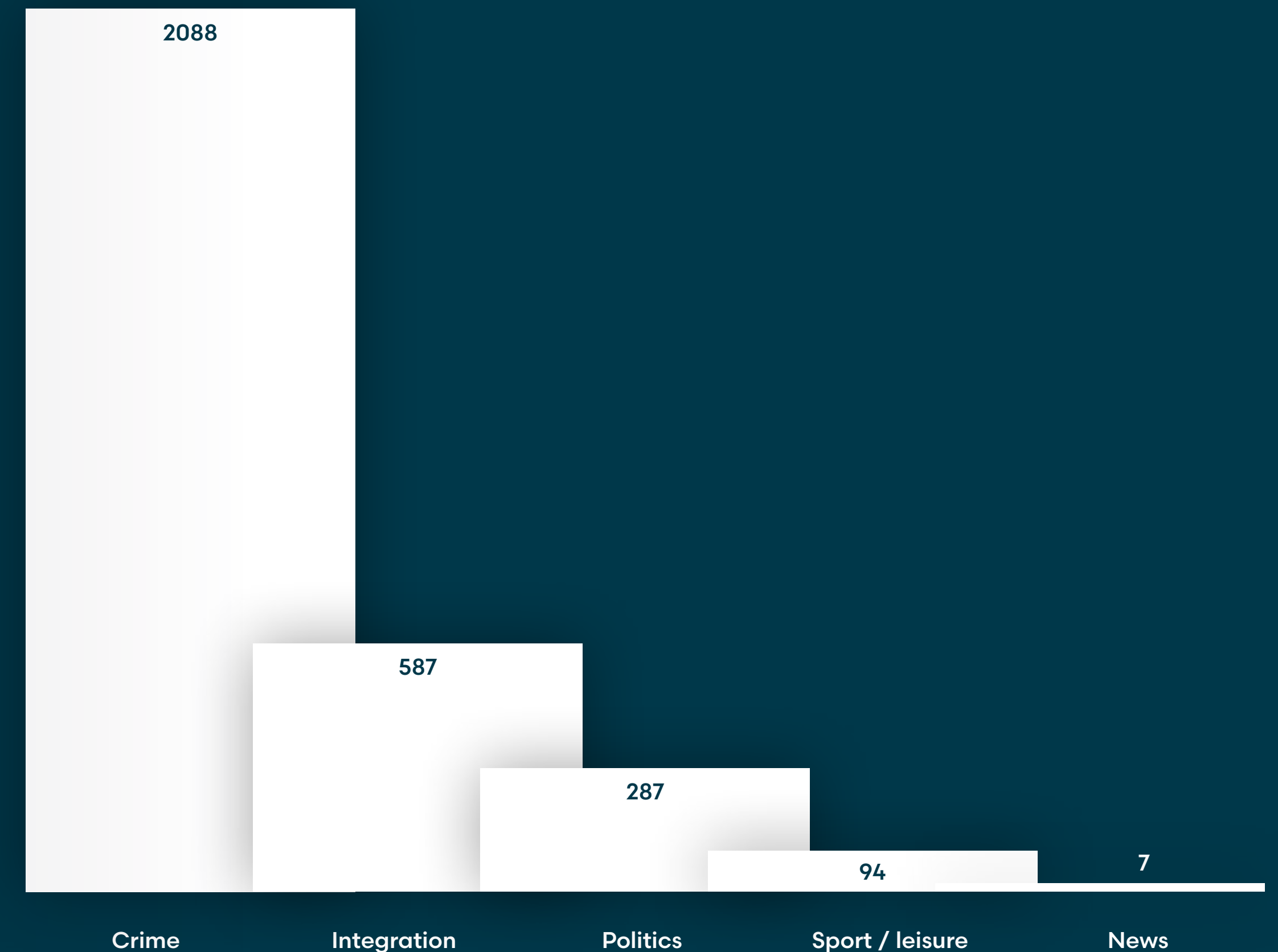
Number of comments that include hateful expressions during the period January 2019 – December 2020



On Flashback discussions about crime result in the most hate

Flashback categorises threads into specific subjects. When they are analysed based on the level of hate a clear picture emerges. The most hateful threads are often connected to specific violent events that people consider have been the fault of people from ethnic or religious minorities. In these cases the hate is particularly prominent. The majority of the ethno-religious hate is Islamophobic or anti-Muslim.

Number of comments that include hateful expressions during the period January 2019 – December 2020



A photograph showing the backs of three women wearing hijabs, walking away from the camera on a paved path in a park. The woman on the left wears a dark olive-green coat and a black and white patterned hijab, carrying a large maroon backpack. The woman in the center wears a maroon coat and a light pink hijab. The woman on the right wears a black quilted leather jacket and a blue hijab. The background consists of trees with yellow and green autumn leaves. The text "Whom is the hate directed towards?" is overlaid in white, bold font across the middle of the image.

Whom is the hate directed towards?

The Islamophobic hate

The three analyses present the same unequivocal picture. The vast majority – between 75% and 97% of all hate is ethnic, religious, or ethno-religious in nature. This means that most hate is directed towards people with an ethno-religious minority background. There is also another conclusion that recurs in all three analyses: that the majority of the ethno-religious hate is Islamophobic or anti Muslim. There are smaller variations between the three analyses, but Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism makes up the absolute largest part of the ethno-religious hate on both platforms. Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, is expressed in various different ways and directed towards religion, ethnicity, nationality or cultural characteristics.

Described as violent, dumb and of lacking morals.

Portrayed as having ruined Malmö and as all being criminal, without exceptions.

Described as “parasites” in Sweden and not contributing to society.

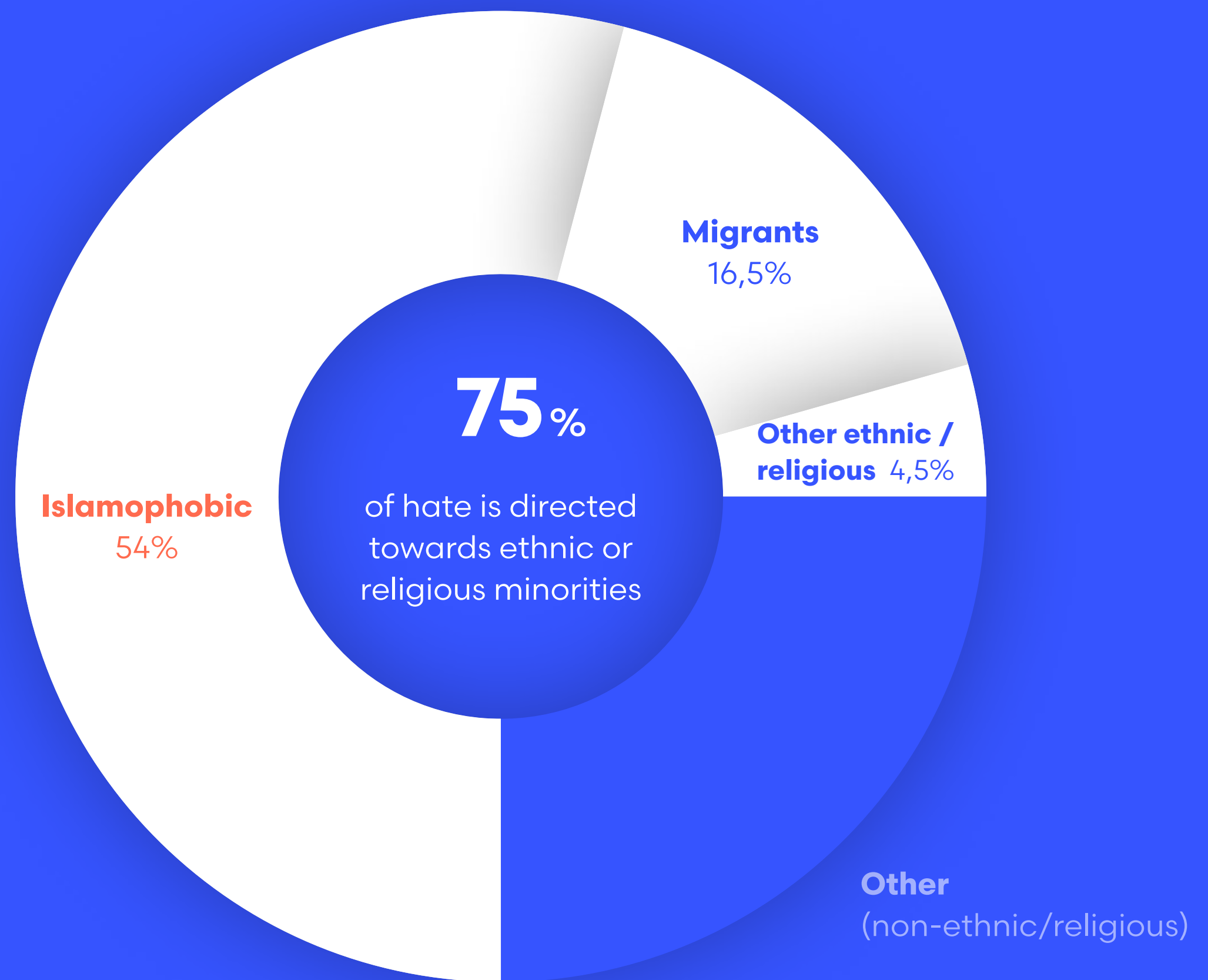
”

“Nasty damn disgusting roaches. Such fucking cowards!!! Parasites who drag their culture here and abuse our noble legal system”⁶

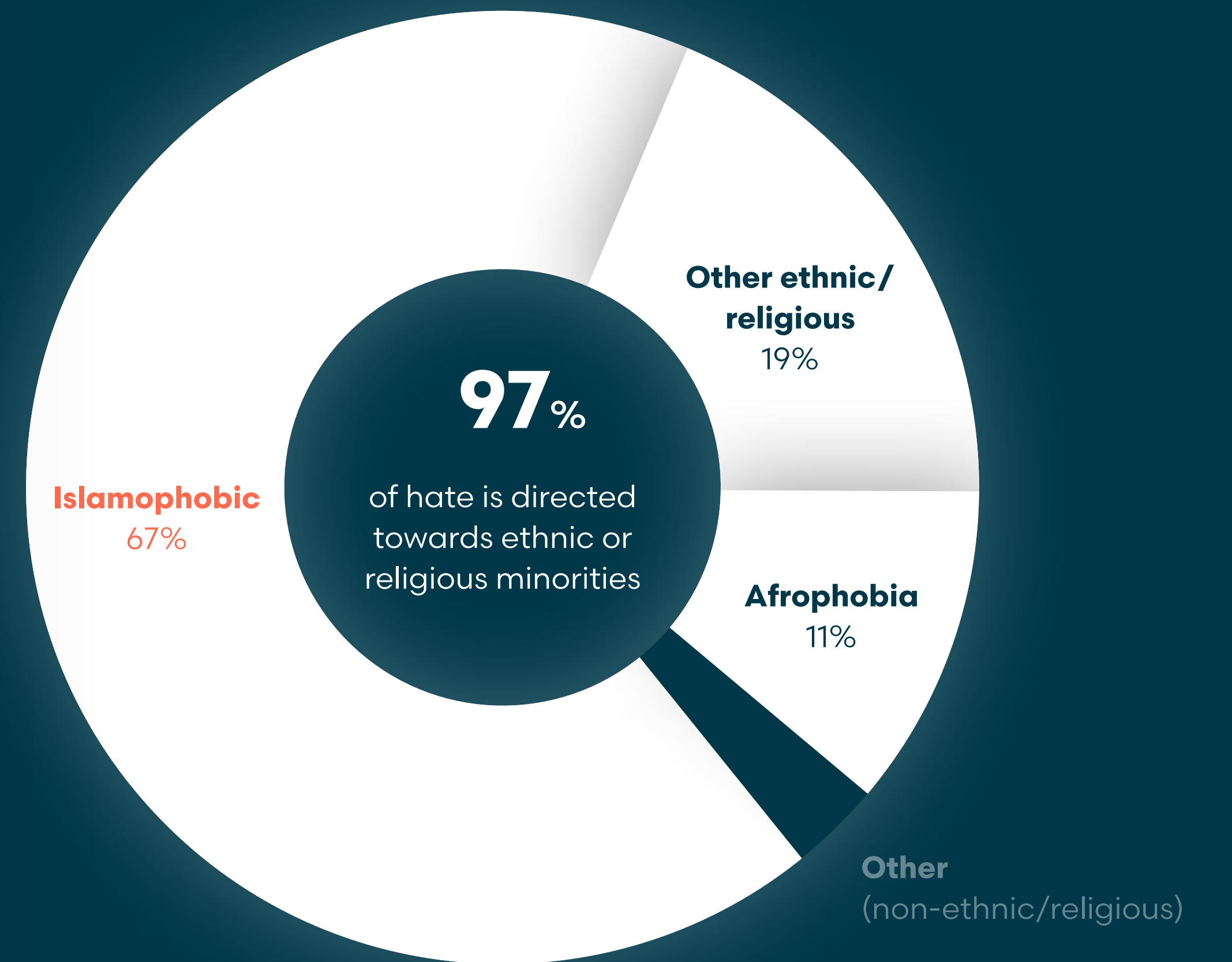
Almost all hate is directed towards ethnic or religious minorities

The absolute majority of ethnic/religious hate is Islamophobic/anti-Muslim

Number of comments that include hateful expressions during the period January 2019 – December 2020



Facebook



Flashback

Types of hate in and about Malmö

Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism can roughly be divided into three categories. The first is “hate as language” or “everyday racism,” that is, hate which is often hidden behind an ironic tone. The next category is “hate as narrative,” which can be recognised through a more or less connected narrative about a number of imagined negative traits in Muslims. The third category can be described as “hate as ideology,” where hate is connected to ideologically racist narratives and theories as for example those found in extreme right movements.

Hate as language

” Isn’t it mostly [minority] who hang out at libraries nowadays?⁷

⁷ Original comment in Swedish: “Är det inte mest [minoritet] som hänger på bibliotek nuförtiden?”

Hate as narrative

” [Minority] who get rich and buy into rich areas continue to rape, rob and murder. They become corrupt, cheap and manipulate through their businesses and positions.⁸

⁸ Original comment in Swedish: “[Minoritet] som blir rika och köper in sig i rika områden fortsätter med våldtäkter, rån, och mord. Dem blir korrupta, fuskar och manipulerat genom sina företag eller sina positioner”

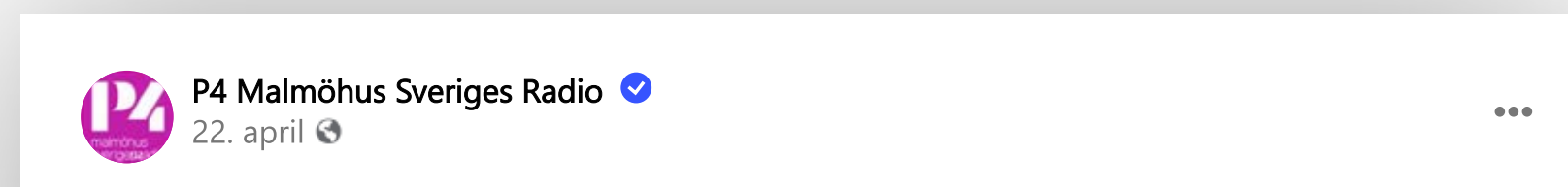
Hate as ideology

” That’s what the civil war will be about. I don’t give a fuck about [minority] and [minority]. They are foreigners and don’t know better cause they have walnut brains with psychopathic personality traits.⁹

⁹ Original comment in Swedish: “Det är det som inbördeskriget kommer att handla om. Jag skiter i [minoritet] och [minoritet]. De är utlänningar och vet inte bättre för de har valnöts-hjärnor med psykopatiska personlighetsdrag.”

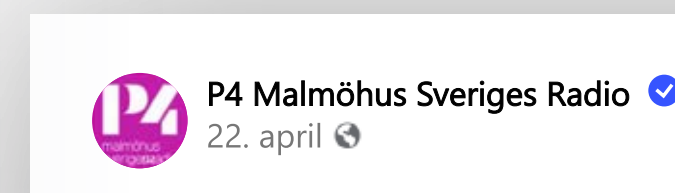
Irony on Facebook is on the verge of hate

On Facebook, hate is not expressed as ideology but more often in the shape of irony, balancing on the border of the category "hate as narrative." On Flashback, hate conversely is expressed both as narrative and as ideology, and is much more open.



**WHICH SMELL WOULD
YOU PREFER TO AVOID?**

"That of dirty gym clothes,
perfume-doused sweaty
[minority]." ¹⁰



**SVT is going to make a new
version of the TV series
Saltkråkan. Who do you
think should play the part of
Uncle Melker?**

"Muhammed"

–

"It would have to be
some new Swede?"

–

"Probably someone
multicultural chosen by the
politically correct mafia." ¹¹

Violent speech

While the analyses do not find any directly violent speech on Facebook, they do on Flashback. About 4 percent of the total amount of hate on the platform can be described as violent – and in the cases we have analysed it is exclusively directed towards Muslims. This becomes especially apparent when they are portrayed as “something that threatens the existence or wellbeing of society” or in the form of an expressed fear that “Sweden is under attack and being taken over by people with Muslim background.”

Indirect incitement of violence

”

Well, I hope someone in the police uses their gun tonight when riots start and that they hit a [minority].

Put in the Brazilian death patrols and some hardened Spetznaz forces against the [minority] children.

How many of your sons have to be robbed and beat up before you let go of your cock? Twenty new laser men ¹² in Malmö would be enough to make [minority] afraid to go out at night. ¹³

¹² The Laser Man, or “Lasermannen” in Swedish, was a far-right extremist who in the early nineties shot immigrants and foreigners based on his strong hatred towards these groups. He shot 11 people and murdered one before he was captured and convicted.

¹³ Original Swedish comments: Nåväl hoppas någon av poliserna använder sitt tjänst vapen ikväll när de blir kravaller o prickar en [minoritet]. / Nej in med brasilianska dödspatruller och lite härdade spetznas styrkor mot [minoritet]baaarnen / Hur många av era söner ska behöva rånas och misshandlas innan ni får kuken ur handen? Det skulle räcka med en tjugo nya lasermän i Malmö för att få [minoritet] att inte våga ge sig ut på kvällarna.

Personal intention to use violence

”

Well done police by the way. I would not have been as nice though. I would’ve beat [minority] black and blue, I can promise you that.

I would have beat him up and punched out every crooked tooth on [minority]...

Maybe some [minority] will move out to my neighbourhood, cause you want a little international Middle-Eastern feeling with bang-bang. Was thinking of going to bed with a sniper gun at my place and shooting some rascals when I get the chance! ¹⁴

¹⁴ Original Swedish comments: “Bra jobbat av polisen förövrigt. Jag hade dock inte varit lika snäll. Jag hade slagit [minoritet] gul och blå, det kan jag lova er.” / “Jag hade bankat upp honom och slagit ut varenda snedvriden tand på [minoritet]...” / “Kanske flyttar det lite [minoritet] med ut i mina kvarter, men man vill ju ha lite internationell mellanöstern-känsla med pang-pang Tänkte lägga mig med ett snipergevär uppe hos mig och skjuta prick på lite odågor när jag får chansen!”

The anti-Muslim/Islamophobic myth about the decline of society

The portrayal of Sweden as a country in decline and no longer a proud nation of purely ethnic Swedes is connected to the racist conspiracy about the decline of society, where people with Muslim background are thought to be intentionally trying to replace ethnic Swedes (the replacement theory). This story seems to feed the fear of being “under attack.” It is dangerous because it can legitimate violence, which is considered to be justified due to a perceived need for self-defence.

- ▶ The perception that Sweden is disappearing or already has disappeared in certain parts of Malmö.
- ▶ In conjunction with the theory that the different cultures are in opposition to each other and never can exist peacefully side by side.
- ▶ Recurring narratives that the clash of cultures inevitably will lead to a civil war.

”

What happens to our daughters if [minority] become a majority in the country? In the end it will mean civil war. Can't believe that people don't get this. ¹⁵

The conspiracy theory and antisemitism

As Malmö was the host of the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism, arranged by the Swedish government on 13 October 2021, anti-Semitic hate was especially considered in the second analysis.

The conspiracy theory:

Jewish people are considered to rule society from the top and exert very large direct or indirect power.

According to the conspiracy, Jewish life is threatened by a “racially homogenous” Sweden. They promote a multicultural society. Therefore, the conspiracy theorists end up with the paradoxical conclusion that it is the Jewish people who have wanted “mass-immigration” from Arabic/Muslim countries.

There is a conspiracy between politicians, the media and cultural life and the Jewish power. That is why antisemitism is discussed so little in the ethnic minority environments.

”

BLM is a very obvious proxy for power leverage by [minority], but it is still the majority populations of the USA and Europe who are the primary host animals for the exploitation and enslavement that's occurring. ¹⁶

¹⁵ Original Swedish comment: Vad händer med våra döttrar om [minoritet] blir en majoritet i landet? Till slut blir det ett inbördeskrig. Att inte folk fattar detta, är de de primära värddjuren för utsugning och förslavning finns.

Hate directed towards Islam and Muslims

Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism is the dominant form of hate in the Swedish language on both social media platforms, but it broadens when other minorities are suspected of crimes. In addition, events that put a focus on the rights of minorities, such as for example Black Lives Matter, lead to hate against Afro-Swedes.

54%

Facebook

67%

Flashback

Hate directed towards LGBTQIA+

Hate against LGBTQIA+ people does not take up much space in the wider hateful discourse, but it does show up during specific events such as Pride events. In these cases, the hate is directed towards LGBTQIA+ people and their sexuality which is described in terms of a disease but also as a sign of a society in decline. It also awakens hate as it shows, according to the senders, that Malmö would rather support LGBTQIA+-people than heterosexual men. Discussions about LGBTQIA+ individuals also lead to Islamophobic/anti-Muslim hate, since there is a perception that there among the majority of Muslims exists a hate against this group.

3%

0.4%

Hate is connected to many feelings...

The analysis has looked at what is expressed in relation to Islamophobic/anti-Muslim racism and has made it into a nominal value, without judging or reviewing it. In all three analyses, it is clear that there, under the ethno-religious, anti-Muslim hate, lies a feeling that one's personal security, identity and culture are threatened. This, according to the perpetrators of the hate, is worsened by the fact that public authorities, media and politicians in Sweden – as they see it – choose sides in favour of Swedes with ethno-religious minority background. This is perceived as a failure by those who spread the most hate.

Feeling unsafe in one's own city.

A feeling of loss of a clearly defined national identity.

Feeling like a stranger in one's own neighbourhood.

The feeling of not being taken seriously by media and politicians – of being deceived.

A feeling of being forgotten and overlooked by public authorities.

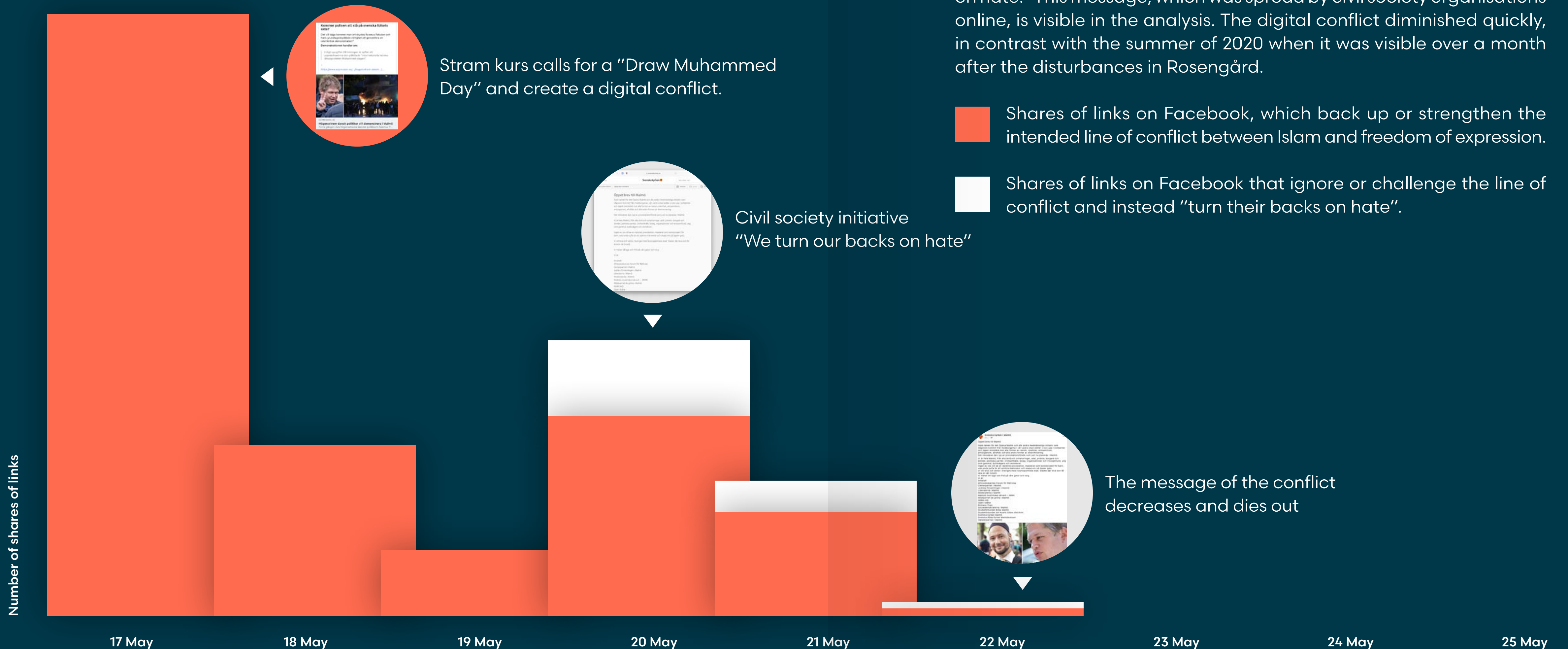
The perception that one's masculinity is threatened.



When does hate decrease?

Civil society participation in the debate was noticeable

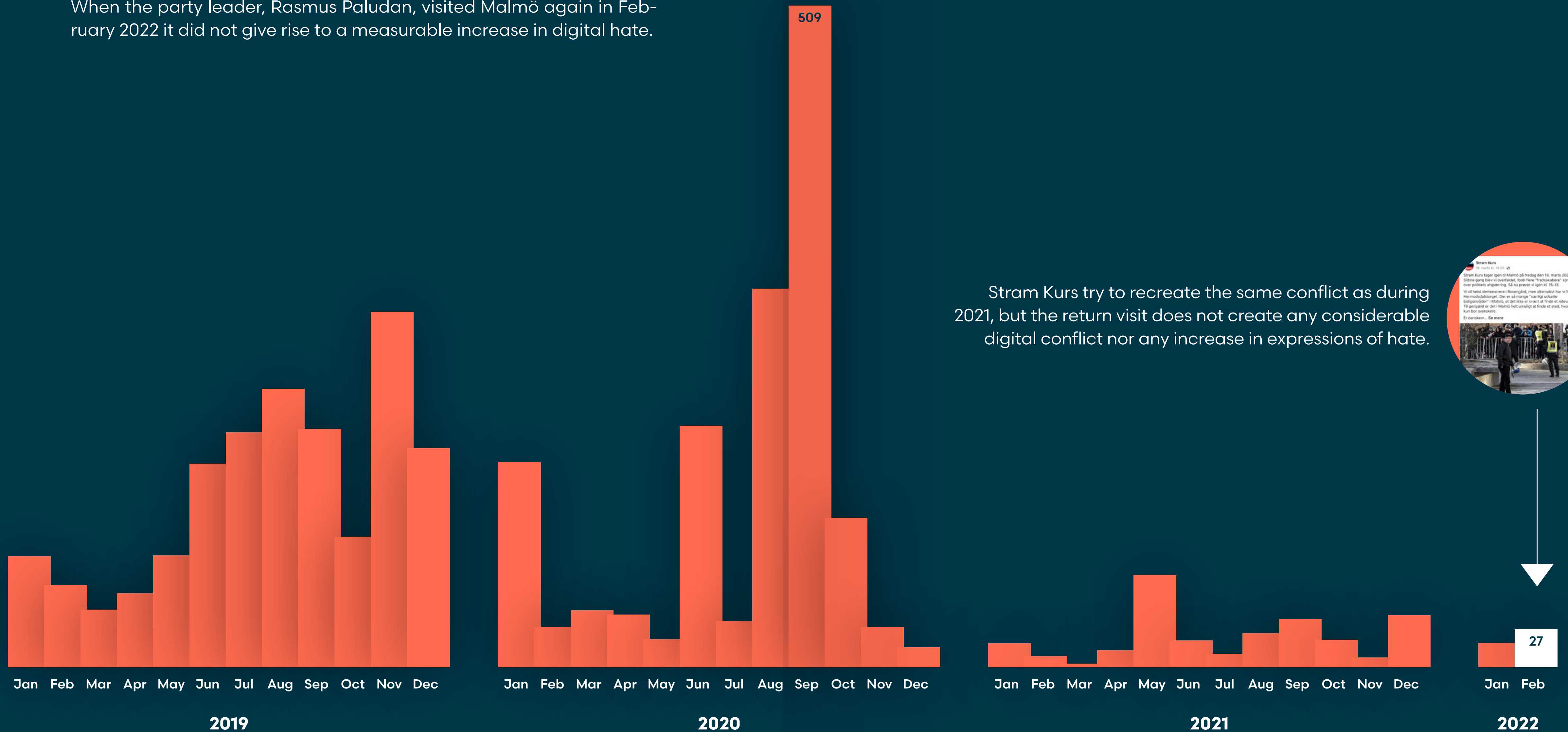
When the extreme right politician Rasmus Paludan at the end of May 2021 called for a “Draw Muhammed Day” there were concerns that it, beyond creating disturbances in the city, would also lead to an increase in hate against Swedes of Muslim background. During the week that led up to the day, Paludan’s party Stram Kurs had also managed to create a (digital) line of conflict between, on the one hand, his party as “protectors of freedom of speech” and, on the other hand, a presumed violent reaction from Swedish Muslims. This line of conflict was challenged by actors in Malmö, both physically and digitally, when they joined forces with civil society behind the message: “We turn our backs on hate.” This message, which was spread by civil society organisations online, is visible in the analysis. The digital conflict diminished quickly, in contrast with the summer of 2020 when it was visible over a month after the disturbances in Rosengård.



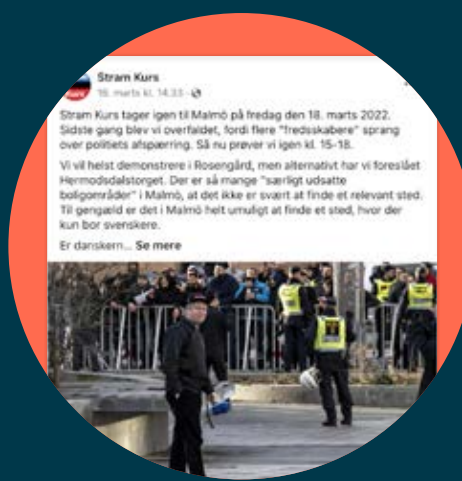
Rasmus Paludan's return visit in February 2022 did not increase the digital hate

When the party leader, Rasmus Paludan, visited Malmö again in February 2022 it did not give rise to a measurable increase in digital hate.

Number of comments on Flashback including expressions of hate



Stram Kurs try to recreate the same conflict as during 2021, but the return visit does not create any considerable digital conflict nor any increase in expressions of hate.



27

The positive effect civil society had on the de-escalation of lines of conflict, which the extreme right politician's party had tried to create, cannot likely explain the general decrease in hate seen in 2021 and 2022, compared to the great amount of hate in 2019 and 2020. We cannot make any definitive conclusions, but there are several possible explanations for the decrease in hate. There have not been as many violent events during 2021 and up to February 2022 as there were during 2019 and 2020. Therefore, the level of hate may have decreased. It can also be that parts of the communities that spread a lot of hate have moved on to other platforms where it is possible to express hate more openly and extremely. The pandemic may also have played a role. In addition, it may be that the debate culture has changed in discussions on Flashback. Regardless of the reason, the trend is clear: the level of hate expressed in threads about Malmö on Flashback has decreased from a high to a more moderate level.

Some conclusions

- Digital hate is often connected to events in the physical city and can sometimes be predicted.
- Hate increases when minorities and others stand up for the rights of a minority – and hate is then directed towards that minority.
- Most hate is directed towards people perceived to have MENA/Muslim background – Islamophobic/anti-Muslim racism – but also the Jewish minority (in form of anti-Semitic ideas), Afro-Swedes and LGBTQIA+ people are often victims of hate when they are in focus.
- The content of hateful comments shows that the senders feel that the Swedish identity/nation/masculinity is threatened, that the city is unsafe and foreign and that authorities do not take this perceived threat seriously. However, the picture is mixed.
- Nuanced voices can make a difference, but are not very prevalent.

5. The Way Forward

Towards a safer and more secure digital city

What we are doing

Much is being done to prevent and combat hate and extremism in Malmö, but to better understand and combat hate online we have to strengthen our digital approach and prevention work. In order to do this, we have formulated three ways forward with the goal of strengthening digital presence and the prevention work, across sectors and together with the municipality, the Police, civil society and elected officials.

The City of Malmö's main accounts on social media consist of platforms for dialogue between people of differing views, but they are also places where citizens choose to vent their frustration, hate and prejudices. What we have been able to follow there for several years is what we also see in a greater perspective in these analyses. Taking the Constitution of Sweden (ch. 1 par. 2) as our starting point, we have since a few years back actively worked to promote democracy on social media. In practice, this means that we explain and promote the democratic values of our Constitution in the dialogue with our citizens. We respond to all comments that include factual errors, rumours, myths or disinformation. In this dialogue, we take an active stance for democratic values and even respond to those rumours which we perceive to be in the gray zone and could be perceived as discriminatory, without breaking our own rules for comments. To strengthen the ability of our personnel to do this, we have developed a simulator for social media, where they, in a safe environment, can practise replying and handling conversations on social media in different scenarios. The knowledge the personnel who work with social media have, should be a part of the continued work.

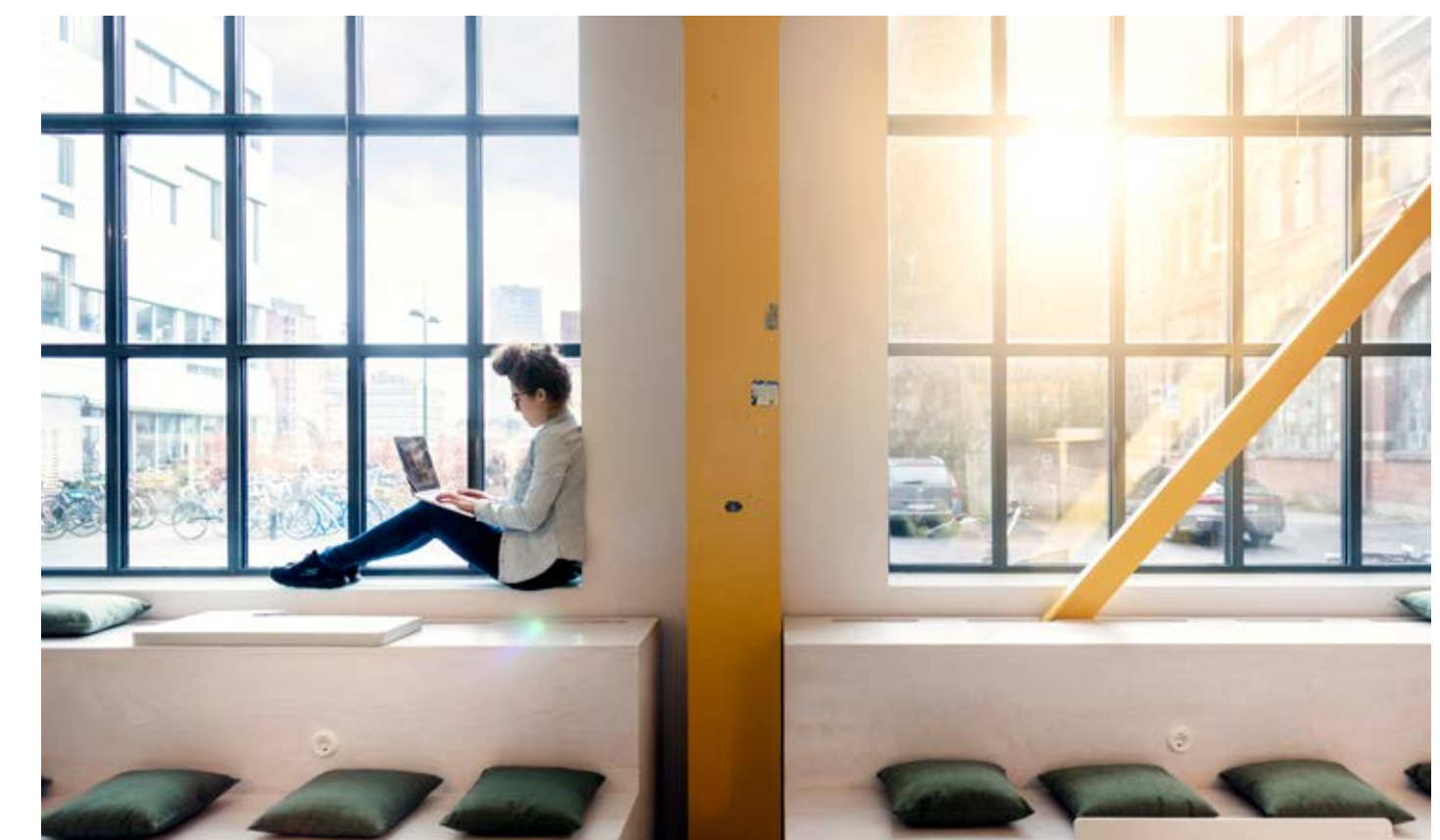
What we need to do

We started this work with the ambition of better understanding our digital landscape and together we have come part of the way in growing that understanding. We have started to work on an action plan

divided into three groups of actors: one for the City of Malmö and the Police, one for civil society and one for elected officials. We see that in the coming years coordination from the City Administration Office will be required – but the power to really change and improve the digital landscape lies mainly with Malmö's inhabitants. But it also lies with the municipality's personnel, Police personnel, organisations and religious congregations and with elected officials.

There should be room for the plurality that freedom of speech and expression, disagreement and differing views entails, but we should jointly turn our backs on hate. Hate should not be met with more hate. This work obviously reaches far beyond the analysis of which we now see the results. The reasons for hate need to be understood and we need to ensure that all good forces have the tools to contribute to a safe and secure digital city. The perspective should be systematic in such a way that what we do on the one hand does not have any negative effect on the other. Vulnerabilities should not be posed against each other; that does not create safety. If one group in society is the victim of hate, the whole society is a victim of hate.

To combat hate, we need to build on what we already have, together with those who already do preventive work in the city. Instead of creating new initiatives and wrongfully signalling that this is a new challenge, we see it as one security challenge among others, which we have the tools to tackle. It is not a new problem but rather another dimension and another place. Preventive knowledge exists in many parts of the city, within the Police and in civil society. The roles we have on our physical streets and town squares, we should also have digitally.



What if we did things differently?

Goals for 2025

- What if all of the City and the Police personnel had a basic understanding of hate, threats and antagonisms that build up and flourish online?
- What if the City, the Police, civil society and elected officials did not differentiate between physical and digital streets and town squares?
- What if the City and Police personnel used an hour a week to better understand social media outside of their own flows?
- What if the digital safety team had tested different methods and developed a long-term model for digital prevention in Malmö?
- What if we cooperate around which actors in Malmö could intervene at online events, based on the roles that we have during offline events?
- What if Malmö were Sweden's most safe and secure digital city?

Three digital ways forward

During the following years, the City Administration Office of Malmö will coordinate and support the development in three areas in order to make the city's digital streets and squares an as natural part of the city's safety promotion as the physical streets and squares are today. The City Administration Office has an assignment from the municipal council to lead (and develop) the City's overarching safety promotion work, and therefore already cooperates with a number of relevant departments and actors in all sectors of society. The City of Malmö and the Police have formalised their collaboration in an agreement, within which the municipality's and the Police's efforts and commitments will also be included.

The City of Malmö also has existing collaborations with civil society actors where the pilot initiative work should also be involved.

In terms of the work with elected officials in the City, discussions are ongoing with the most relevant municipal councillors.

Some preparatory work has already been completed while more remains to be done. The three parts of the action plan are described below, in terms of what has been done and what is planned.



1. The City of Malmö and the Police. A digital safety team

With the ambition to prevent, combat and address polarisation in the digital debate, in the long-term as well as during acute crises.



2. Civil society: A digital intervention network

With the ambition to strengthen the digital voice of the city's civil society organisations so that they can contribute to online safety, to a more nuanced debate and to a safe local online democracy.



3. Elected officials

With the ambition to strengthen the ability to take action for a safe and secure local democracy and a non-polarising and inclusive debate climate.

1. The City of Malmö and the Police

A digital safety team



Representatives from the City of Malmö and the Police have started to build a digital safety team. We have concluded that the continued work with Malmö – A Safe and Secure Digital City, should initially be connected to the pre-existing cooperation within the framework for SSPF (school, social services, police and leisure). The intention is to identify concrete proposals for how we can prevent online hate as well as to identify which resources are needed to become even better. We do not do it because we think that the youth spread more hate or that they are exposed to more hate than adults (some research on online hate rather shows that it is adults who are spreading hate). However, we do need to learn from the youth. They do not make a distinction between online and offline in the same way as older people do, and that is the direction in which we also need to move. This also means that the work for a safe and secure digital city will not exclusively take place on the platforms that have been mapped in this analysis.

The division of roles is central to the work of the safety team: The Police investigate and prevent crimes; the City supports individuals and victims, but also works on a broader level to correct factual errors and communicate to promote democracy and safety. The purpose of the team is to prevent online hate and contribute to creating a safe and secure digital city by raising the digital awareness/perspective in local actors such as the Police, the municipality and civil society. The team should therefore also ensure that personnel of the City of Malmö who work preventively have the opportunity to continuously strengthen their knowledge of online hate. This also includes knowing

where the digital risks are and which narratives one should be particularly observant of in conversations with Malmö's inhabitants.

Focus area

1. Create and share knowledge

- a. Enhance knowledge through existing tools on social media and analysis (such as the Malmö-algorithm, Talkwalker, Näthatsgranskaren, knowledge from the communication department and other actors, for example the Khalifa Ihler Institute, Nordic Safe Cities and Strong Cities Network).

2. Broaden the knowledge of organisations and train them on a digital approach

- a. Increase the knowledge of relevant actors in organisations so that personnel themselves develop a digital approach and thereby use the knowledge of digital insecurity in their existing preventive work.
- b. Share knowledge about digital (risk) behaviour widely in the organisation (with many different professions).
- c. Make sure that relevant knowledge from social media is used in acute emergency situations in the city and that affected actors have access to a thorough knowledge base that can support the work for safety and security.

3. Initiate digital interventions

- a. Strengthen the City of Malmö in its ability to moderate on its platforms.
- b. Formulate and develop the role of the Police online.
- c. Train and strengthen civil society in their ability to moderate the internet.
- d. Inspire citizens to engage in efforts for a better and safer tone of debate on digital forums.
- e. Inspire other organisations and businesses to create their own interventions on their platforms for a safer and more secure digital city.

2. Civil society

A digital intervention network



The City of Malmö has begun its work to initiate a digital intervention network together with civil society actors. Through the active participation of civil society, the spread of digital efforts can be enhanced. Civil society actors are in touch with a large part of Malmö's inhabitants and can reach, understand and mobilise them. The analyses have shown that their mobilisation is visible and can make a difference. The network thereby can contribute to strengthening civil society's understanding of the role they can play in creating a safer and more secure digital city. Just like the City and the Police, civil society actors need to enhance their knowledge of existing tools on social media.

The City of Malmö is holding talks with representatives from umbrella organisations that coordinate civil society organisations in Malmö and which have vast networks with both small and large organisations and religious organisations. The plan is to do the training once more in a "train the trainers" session, that is, the same actors who take part in the training will in the next step train a larger number of organisations belonging to the umbrella organisation. These will then take over and develop the training concept and train increasingly more people. The City Administration Office will form a link between the work done by civil society actors and the work undertaken by the Police and the municipality as described above.

In November 2021, a digital pilot training was conducted with representatives from civil society. Based on the pilot training Malmö's digital action principles were formulated, with support from the project team and the Khalifa Ihler Institute.

Malmö's digital action principles

Organisationerna tränas utifrån Malmö's digitala handlingsprinciper i syfte att skapa trygghet för föreningar att agera digitalt och därmed bidra till ett mer nyanserat debattklimat. Nätverket ska bygga vidare på det framgångsrika främjande och förebyggande arbete som redan görs i civilsamhället och säkerställa att detta arbete även har en relevant digital vinkel.

Why do we do it?

- We want a respectful democratic dialogue in which everyone feels safe to participate.
- Nobody should be the victim of hate on the internet.
- There is a need to portray Malmö in a more nuanced way.

What can civil society contribute with?

- Making problems visible, talking about them and how they can be addressed.
- Telling alternative, personal and nuanced stories about Malmö and supporting others who do the same.
- Not accepting lines of conflict supposed by others, but rather putting forward possible alternatives.

How can civil society do it?

- Only write things which could be said directly to a person standing in front of you.
- Document and inform.
- Do not act too quickly or without thinking first.

How do we respond to hate?

- Only write things which could also be said face to face.
- Remain calm and be kind.
- Do not condemn the sender, but comment on the hateful tone and how it might affect readers: *"Everyone has the right to be treated with respect"* rather than, *"You haven't understood how to talk to people"*
- Invite others to join the conversation by using hashtags or tagging other organisations in Malmö or Sweden.

3. Elected officials/politicians



Safe local politics that build on a non-polarising and inclusive debate climate online and offline

One of the conclusions of the analysis is that some hate and threats occur on the parties'/politicians' own Facebook pages as part of the debate between politicians and/or other people in or outside of the city. This is a phenomenon that stretches way beyond Malmö. Several studies (see links below) show how public discourse has become hateful, sometimes extreme, and how politicians are particularly vulnerable to precisely hate, threats and harassment.

Politicians play an important role in influencing public discourse by promoting an inclusive and nuanced public debate, even on controversial issues. Politicians, and many others, need to be given the possibility and tools to defend and strengthen local democracy. As elected officials, they can contribute to a climate where everyone is given the possibility to speak up and participate in the debate, and not refrain from discussions or democratic participation due to fear of being the victim of harassment or hate. Political debates and discussions online or offline can of course be harsh and aspire for change – but at the same time they need to be factual and respectful. How to determine when a discussion has crossed the line for what is acceptable – when there is a personal attack or hate is expressed – continuously needs to be formulated and agreed upon through dialogue. There are examples of how to do it, from the Nordics as well as from the rest of Europe.

Mainly, it is done in two ways:

- Develop efforts to ensure that elected officials in Malmö know what they should do if they are the victim of hate or threats. This work is ongoing and democratically important for many reasons: one being that currently active politicians should want to continue their political mission; another being that coming generations should be willing to take on political assignments.
- Promote a discussion about how the political parties in Malmö see the common rules of engagement online and offline with regards to hate – how they want these to be and how the City Administration Office can contribute in their development.

In conclusion

The City Administration Office recognises that the efforts of the three different groups of actors – the City of Malmö and the Police, civil society and elected officials – eventually need to be combined for the fight against hate to really be noticed and felt. The City Administration Office sees itself as a natural coordinator of these efforts, although the three groups described above need to develop within their current co-operation structures far beyond the work of the Office. That is where development in the digital area truly can get its own life and power.



Read more

<https://skr.se/skr/demokratiledningstyrning/politiskstyrningfortroendevalda/hothatvaldmotfortroendevalda/hotochhatidigitalamiljoer.14644.html>

<https://skr.se/skr/demokratiledningstyrning/politiskstyrningfortroendevalda/hothatvaldmotfortroendevalda/hotochhatidigitalamiljoer/nattrollochinternetkunskap.16224.html>

https://bra.se/download/18.1f8c9903175f8b2aa70762d/1622553459528/2021_3_Islamofobiska_hatbrott.pdf

<https://www.regeringen.se/48d2e5/contentassets/4e8ed-488ce034340a7c04eb064cb3092/samlat-grepp-mot-rasism-och-hatbrott--nationell-plan-mot-rasism-liknande-former-av-fientlighet-och-hatbrott>

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<http://media.skl.se/samtalstonen/>

<https://www.mucf.se/publikationer/kartlaggning-av-hot-och-hat-mot-det-civila-samhallet>

<https://www.mucf.se/publikationer/ungas-upplevelser-av-nathat>

<https://www.jagarhar.se/>

<https://www.dia.govt.nz/Process-for-responding-to-violent-extremism-online#Transparency-report>

<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-5-revised-on-preventing-and-comb/1680a5ae44>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-racism/about-mandate>

<https://malmo.se/download/18.4f363e7d1766a784a-f11a96d/1613644369102/Skolg%C3%A5rdsrasism,%20konspirationsteorier%20och%20utanf%C3%B6rskap%20,%20slutversion.pdf>

Other actors in the area

The Khalifa Ihler Institute
<https://www.khalifaihler.org/>

RAN
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran_en

YouthCan
<https://www.youthcan.net/>

Kofi Annan Foundation
<https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/>

Strong cities network (Institute for strategic dialogue)
<https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/en/>

Näthatsgranskaren
<https://xn--nathatsgranskaren-vnb.se/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/548170525365320>