



Azerbaijan Women's Support Centre (AWSC)

THE GROWING IMPACT OF HATE CRIMES AGAINST THE AZERBAIJANI COMMUNITY SINCE JULY 12, 2020

AZERBAIJANI WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTRE (AWSC)

TORONTO, CANADA

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Introduction

Ever since the military attack of Armenian military forces against Azerbaijan on July 12, 2020, the numerous documented hate crime attacks against individuals of the Azerbaijani ethnicity, as well as their communities, have taken place in Los Angeles, Brussels, Toronto, London, Moscow, etc. The police departments of some of the aforementioned cities have launched hate crime investigations against the attackers of Armenian origin for willfully causing physical, psychological and emotional harm. Unfortunately, these hate crimes have caused severe safety concerns in Azerbaijani communities across the world.

However, this is the first time that these hate crimes against the Azerbaijani community take an organized form, across the borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The letters of the Azerbaijani community members to the Amnesty International highlight the details of these hate crimes and incidents against the individual members and groups in various countries. One letter includes the horrific incident that took place in Los Angeles and is titled, "Los Angeles Police Department has launched three hate crime investigations against Armenian Americans after they brutally beat peaceful Azerbaijani protesters in Brentwood, California, on June 21, 2020". Four Azerbaijanis were rushed to the emergency room in UCLA. Videos of the beatings contain graphic images some viewers might find disturbing because they reek of ethnic hatred and contain obscene, racist slurs, and violence. <https://twitter.com/ALavrina/status/1285849976027873280?s=20>

Many Armenian have taken their anger to Instagram in July, as it has been discovered that they tried to offer \$500 in exchange for information about Azerbaijani families living in California. Due to this horrific finding, countless Azerbaijani women are afraid to leave their homes with their children in Central Los Angeles. These groups have been reported to the US Homeland Security, and an investigation is underway. <https://twitter.com/tixtixxanimm/status/1287448783069077506?s=20>

In Brussels, Belgium, on July 22, 2020, five Armenians are seen on video chasing a young Azerbaijani man into the woods and proceeding to beat him and kick him with their feet violently. The victim was taken to the nearest hospital with multiple injuries, including one where his face is completely bleeding. The Armenian attackers filmed the video themselves and gleefully shared



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it online, priding themselves on their ethnically motivated violence.
<https://twitter.com/fatimaeyub/status/1286331918003437570?s=20>

Furthermore, in Brussels, on the same day (July 22), a mob dangerously armed with sharp cutting tools and stones attacked the Azerbaijani Embassy, causing psychical injuries to six Azerbaijanis, including a correspondent of the European Bureau of “Real TV”, Khatira Abdullazade. She immediately received medical treatment on the same day. Employees of the diplomatic mission were also injured, and there was massive destruction in the mission's administrative building, including broken windows, the car of a member of the Azerbaijani community was damaged, and an attempt was made to attack the area where the diplomats' family members live <https://www.eureporter.co/politics/2020/07/25/unprecedented-attack-on-a-diplomatic-mission-of-azerbaijan-in-europe/>”

Many members and leaders of the Azerbaijani community across the globe reported that one of the worrying and concerning reasons for these hate crimes is the involvement of the “Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia” (ASALA), an Armenian terrorist organization. For example, on the 18th of July 2020, members of ASALA terrorist organization were also present at the Azerbaijan Embassy in the Netherlands, specifically, The Hague.

Similarly, the members of ASALA were present at the Los Angeles protest on July 22, 2020. As per the witnesses and video recordings, the crowd of more than a thousand Armenians was recorded shouting racist anti-Azerbaijani slurs, attacking a group of Azerbaijani protestors, stomping on the Azerbaijani flag while laughing, and making disturbing murder threats.

ASALA is a terrorist organization that is responsible for a significant number of terror attacks and without any shame they wear a T-shirt with their organization name on it in the Netherlands as well. Between 1975 and 1985, ASALA organized a total of 84 incidents which resulted in the murdering of 46 people and injuring more than 299.

Therefore, AWSC is carrying out this hate crime and hate incident survey among the women of the Azerbaijani origin in Canada. By conducting this survey among the community members, we aimed to get an understanding of what people in the community feel regarding their safety and the kind of hate crimes they are concerned to be a subject too.

Since these hate crimes and incidents are fresh and unresolved, participating in this kind of survey was and is still a sensitive subject to discuss. Therefore, our survey did not include a request to provide personal information. In some cases, some participants did provide sensitive information and we treated them with strict confidentiality and full due respect. The only limitation and restriction to the confidentiality and privacy matter were with any cases of child harm, neglect, or harm to self and others.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of resources with respect to hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe. However, there are rich primary and secondary materials that highlight the terrors committed against Turks by groups and terror organizations.



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The purpose of this present study is to empirically present the impact of the hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis, especially after July 12, 2020, in North America and Europe.

The Context of Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents

The hate crimes and hate incidents against individual members of the Azerbaijani community have a direct connection to the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan, including the July 12, 2020 aggression, when, in an attempt to seize strategic positions in Azerbaijan, the Armenian military violated ceasefire agreements by attacking the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in Tovuz. As of now, a total of 11 Azerbaijani soldiers and 4 Azerbaijani civilians have been killed. Armenia is currently continuing to attack both the military and civilian structures in Tovuz, Azerbaijan. Tovuz, a province in Northwestern Azerbaijan, is a completely different region of Azerbaijan, separate from Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been illegally occupied by Armenia since 1993.

Canada has always supported and continues to support the United Nations Security Council resolutions: 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993). All of the countries present in this council signed these resolutions expressing their concern about the occupation of the Azerbaijani lands.

Currently, the total of Azerbaijan's occupied territories by Armenian state include: Nagorno-Karabakh - 4,400 km²; Kalbajar - 1,936 km²; Lachin - 1,835 km²; Qubadli - 802 km²; Jabrayil - 1,050 km², excluding village Cocuk Merjanli; Zangilan - 707 km²; Agdam - 1,094 km²; Fuzuli - 1,386 km² as well as the occupied villages of Qazakh: Sofulu, Barxudarli, Baganis Ayrim, Qizil Hacili, Yuxari Eskipara, Asagi Eskipara and Kheyrim. As a result of the occupation, today, more than 1,000,000 Azerbaijanis were forcibly removed from their homes and lands and forced to seek refuge.

The Definition of Hate Crime and Hate Incidents

The Department of Justice of Government of Canada defines a hate crime and a hate incident as "A criminal offence committed against a person or property that is based solely upon the victim's race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability."

Similarly, the US Department of Justice defines hate crime as, "A criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin" (US Department of Justice Hate Crime Statistics Act 2004, Appendix A, (b)(1)).

According to Carolyn Turpin-Petrosino (2015, p.2), "A hate crime is comprised of at least two components, (1) the predicate or base criminal offence, such as harassment or intimidation, aggravated assault, malicious damage, arson, or even murder, and (2) evidence that the perpetrator's actions are motivated by prejudice or animus against the group represented by the victim."



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Hate crimes and incidents have a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities and damage the social cohesion of the society. In this regard, according to American Psychological Association (APA) (1998) notes, “message crimes in that the perpetrator is sending a message to the members of a certain group that they are despised, devalued, or unwelcome in a particular neighbourhood, community, school, or workplace.”

Antonio E. Puente, APA President, (2017) has as well reported that “psychological research has shown that prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination can have adverse effects on both the targets and the perpetrators.”

The American Psychological Association (2008) reports that hate crimes and incidents “take place on two levels; not only is it an attack on one’s physical self, but it is also an attack on one’s very identity”.

Psychological research has proven to show that prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination can have adverse effects on both the targets and the perpetrators.

Cogan (2002) also notes that as a result of the hate crime and incident, the victim might reject “the aspect of themselves that was the target of the attack or associating a core part of their identity with fear, loss, and vulnerability” (p. 178).

Due to the nature and extent and impact of these hate crimes, Federal Bureau of Investigation (2017) treats hate crimes and incidents as a “criminal offence against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender or gender identity.

Methodology

A short survey was designed for the female members of the Azerbaijani community in Canada to find out how these hate crimes and incidents affect individuals of the Azerbaijani community. According to Check & Schutt (2012, p. 160), the survey is "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions."

The Survey included the following questions:

1. Are you a female above the age of 18?
2. Do you live in Canada?
3. Taking into consideration the recent hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe, do you have any safety concerns?
4. Are you now afraid to use the Azerbaijani flag, or other any other symbols in your cars, house or public spaces, where you think you might be the subject of a hate Crime or a Hate Incident?
5. Do you have safety concern for your children and loved ones after the aforementioned at Crimes and hate Incidents?



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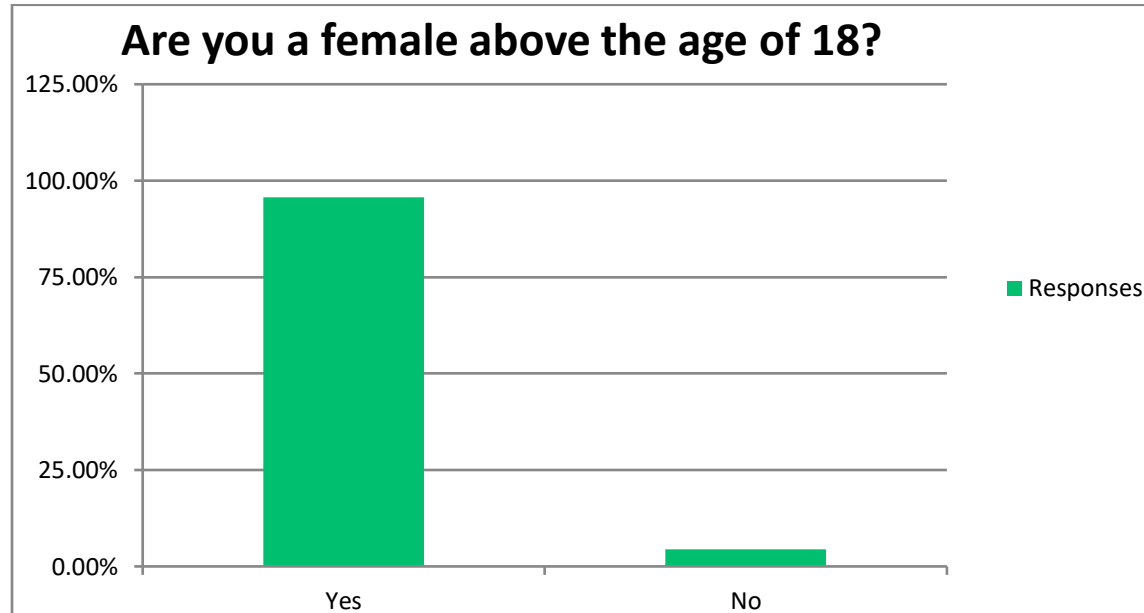
6. Where do you think you or your loved ones, might perhaps be subject to hate Crime or hate Incident might happen? Please choose all that apply.
7. Do you think the police, the media and elected officials take hate Crimes against Azerbaijanis seriously?

The present study also includes the collection of data on hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis, which also includes data available on social media and mainstream media. However, only the survey findings from Canada are the focus of this article. Nevertheless, we will also present brief information on non-Canadian data as well.

The survey consisted of two parts. Firstly, we asked the individuals to respond to questions regarding demographic information, such as their age, gender and their status in Canada. The second part consisted of direct questions regarding the impact of hate crimes and incidents.

Overall, 131 (95.62%) adults aged 18 and above and 6 (4.38%) below the age of 18, participated in the survey. 125 (89.83%) of these participants live in Canada and 14 (10.07%), are not Canadian residents.

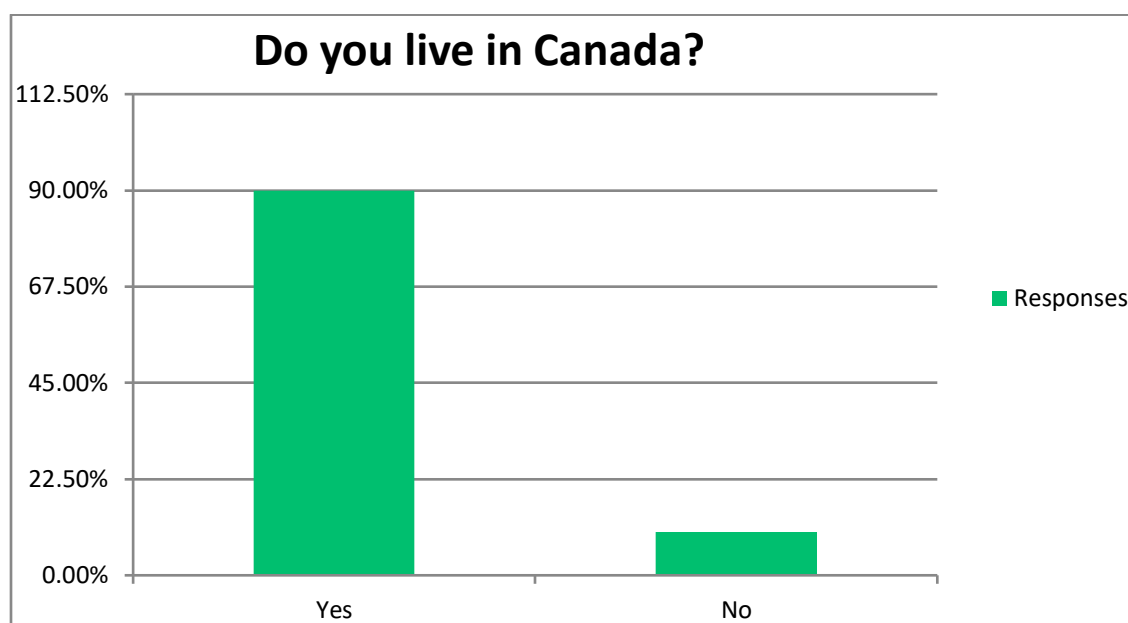
Table 1: Demographic Feature of Respondents





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Table 2: Demographic Feature of Respondents

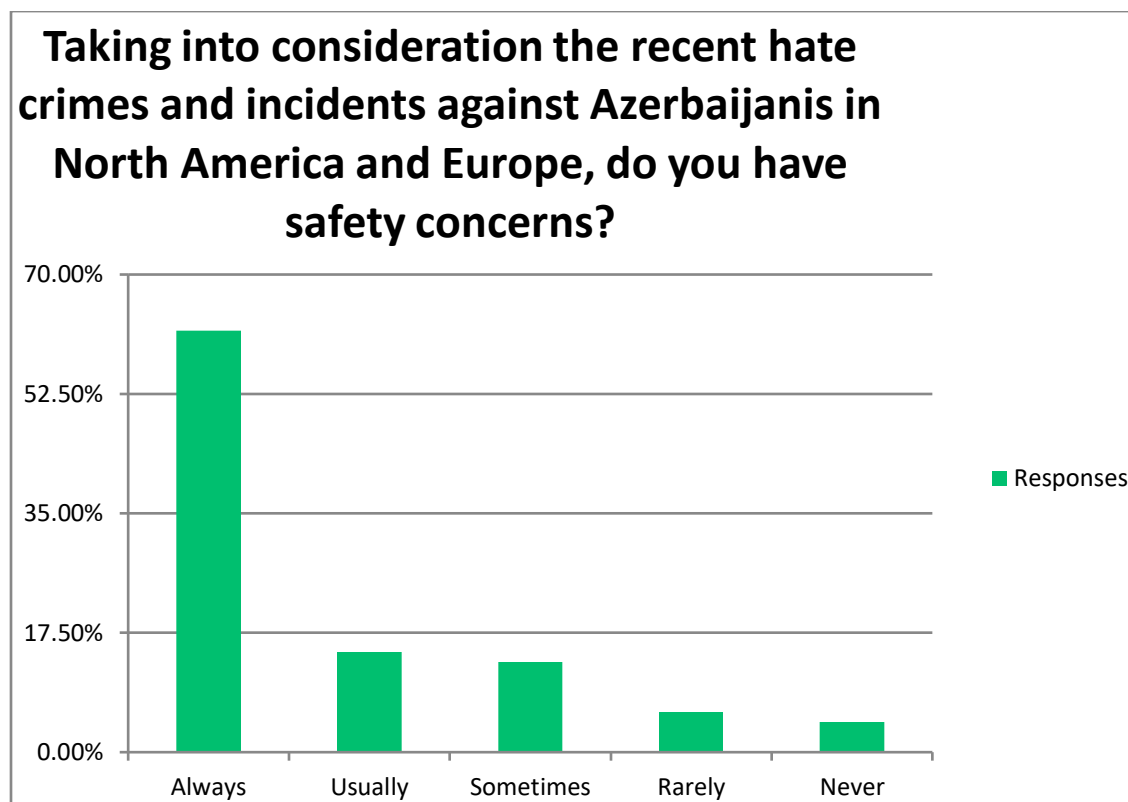


We asked survey respondents a series of questions that were intended to capture the extent of their safety concerns regarding the fear of occurred hate crimes and also the possibility of hate crime victimization. Out of 137 respondents, 84 (61.76%), reported that after the recent hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe, they constantly have fears and safety concerns; 20 of these participants (14.71%) reported that they usually have safety concerns; 18 of these participants (13.24%) reported sometimes they have safety concerns; 8 of these participants (5.88%) reported that they rarely have and finally, 6 of these participants (4.41 %) reported that they do not have safety concerns.



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Table 3: Safety Concerns after the Recent Hate Crimes and Incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe



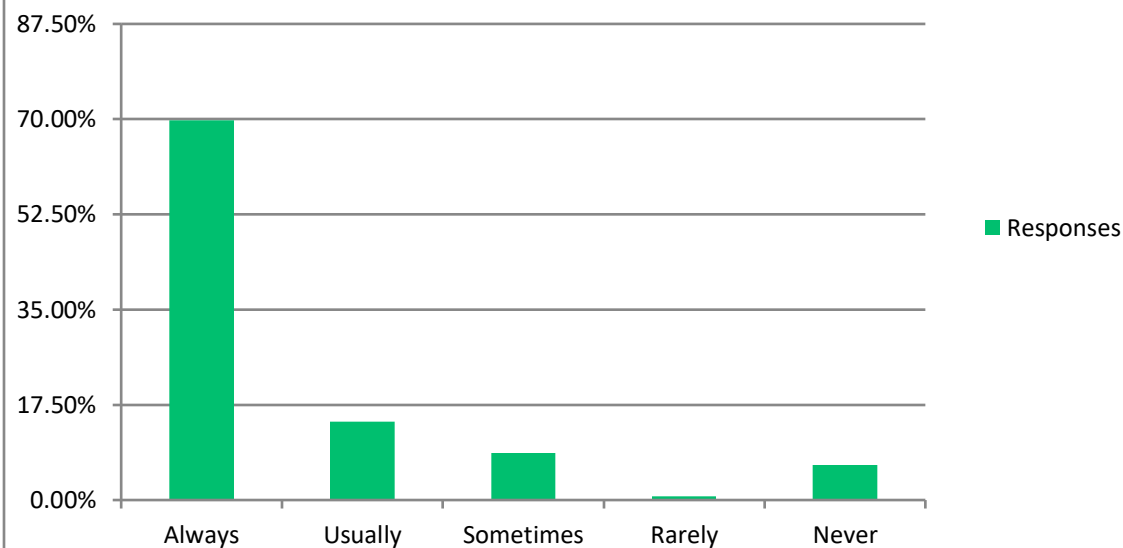
Among the participants, 97 out of 139 (69.78%) participants reported that after the recent hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe, they believe that they are a subject to these crimes and are now afraid to use the Azerbaijani flag, and other symbols in their cars, houses and public spaces. 20 (14.39%) respondents reported they usually have safety concerns, 12 (8.63%) responded they sometimes do, 1 (0.72%) reported they rarely do, and 9 (6.47%) reported they do not have any fear to use the state and other attributes of Azerbaijan in private and public spaces.

Table 4: Fear to Use Attributes of Azerbaijan



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Are you now afraid to use Azerbaijani flags, or other symbols in your cars, houses or public spaces where you think you might be subject of Hate Crime or Hate Incident?

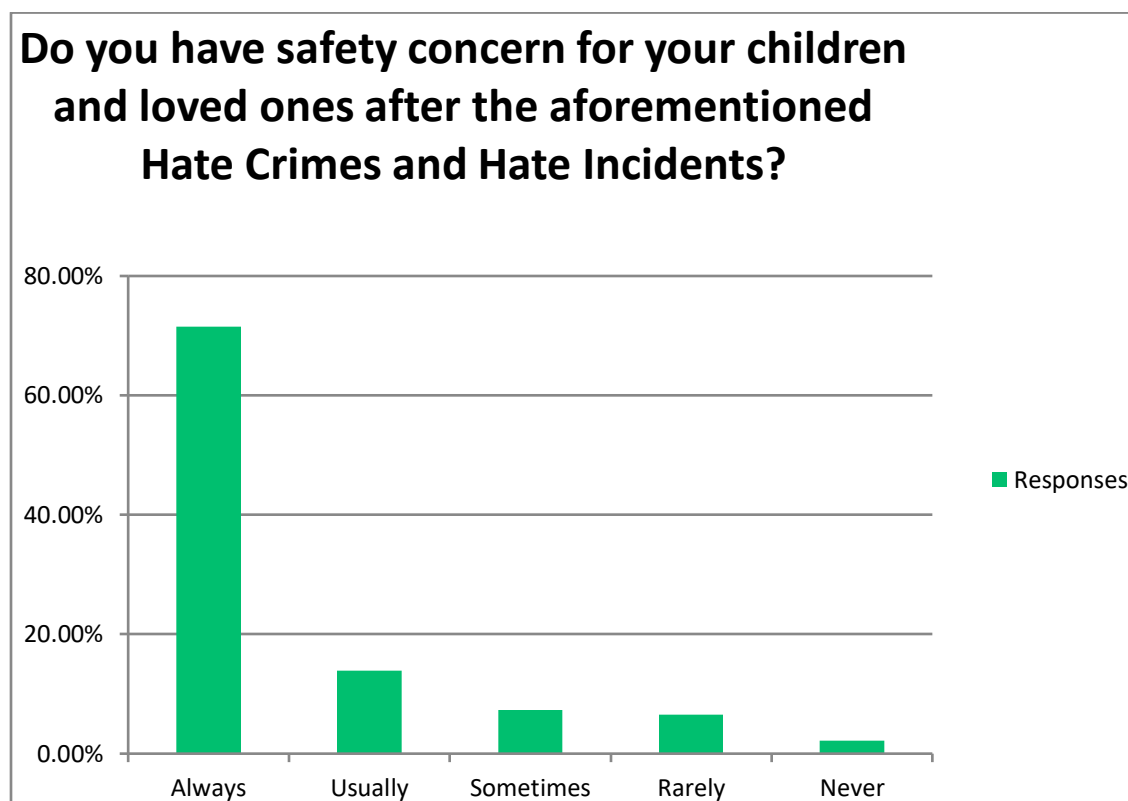


In respect to the question about the safety concern for children and loved ones, 137 responded to the question. 98 (71.53%) of the participants reported that they constantly fear expressing their countries flag and symbols and 19 (13.87%) of the respondents reported that they usually have safety concerns after the aforementioned hate crimes and hate incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe. 10 (7.30%) of the respondents reported that they sometimes have some concerns, 9 (6.57%) reported that they rarely do and 3 (2.19%) respondents reported that they do not have such concern for their children and loved ones.



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Table 5: Safety Concern for Children and Other Loves Ones

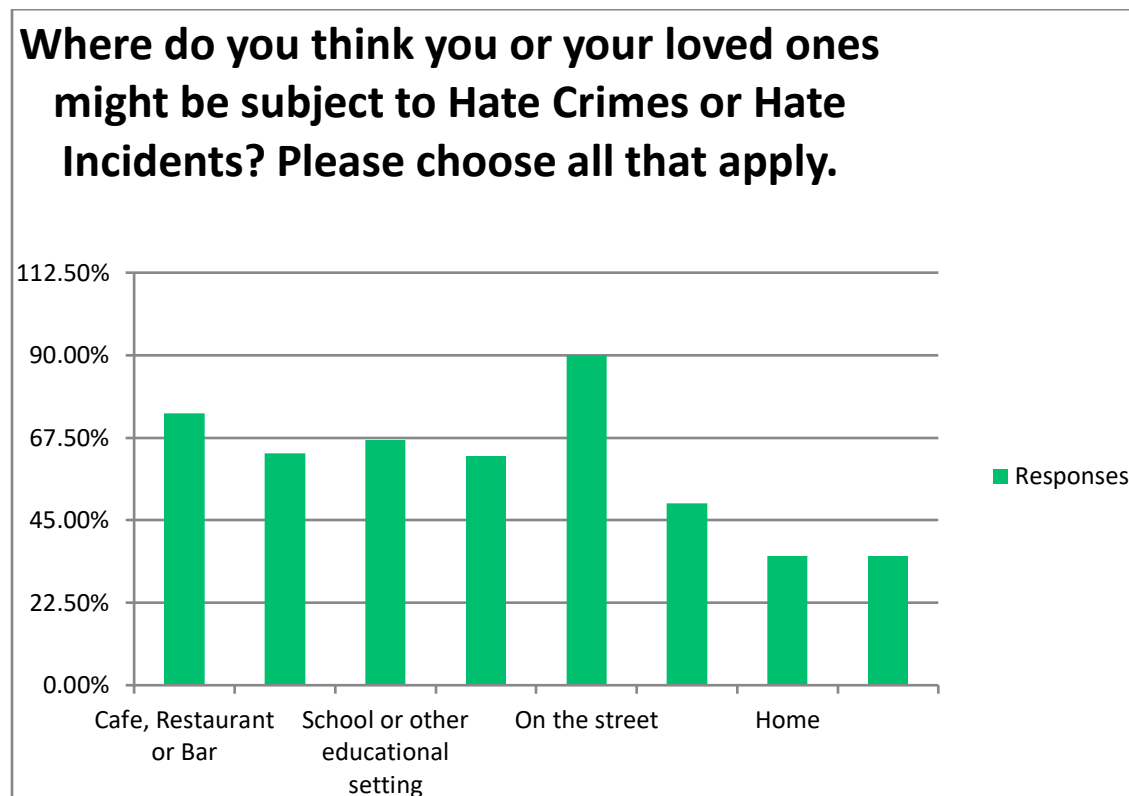


The respondents were also asked whether they or their loved ones might fear or have safety concerns and/or be subject to hate crimes and incidents. The participants were allowed to choose more than one option. 139 responded to this question with the following reported being: 103 (74.10%) reported it might happen in cafés, restaurants or bars; 88 (63.31%) reported they fear it in public transport; 93 (66.91%) reported in schools or other educational settings; 87 (62.59 %) reported in stores or shopping malls; 125 (89.93%) reported in the streets; 69 (49.64%) reported in any setting of workplace; 49 (35.25%) reported in their home and 49 (35.25) respondents reported that it might happen on other settings.



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Table 6: The Setting Where Hate Crimes or Hate Incidents Might Happen Against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe

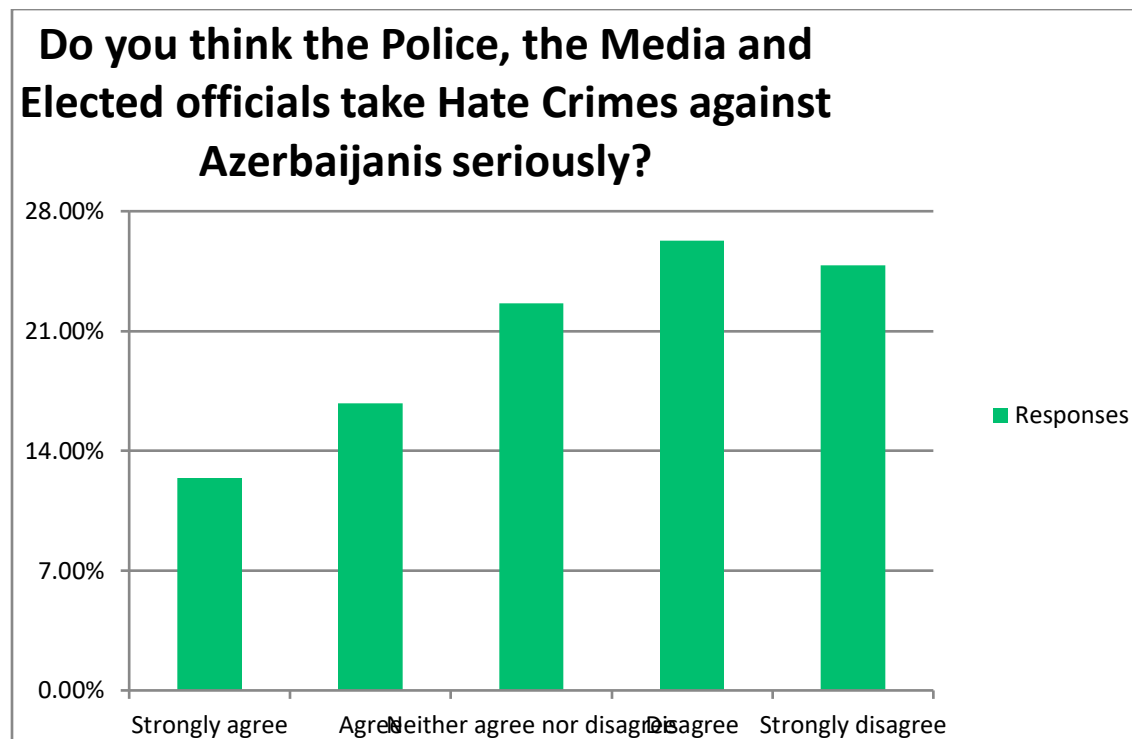


In regards to the question on whether the police, the media and elected officials take hate crimes and hate incidents against Azerbaijanis seriously, 137 respondents responded to the question and we've reported the following observations: 36 (26.28%) reported that they disagree and 34 (24.82%) of participants reported that they strongly disagree that the police, the media and elected officials take the attacks against Azerbaijanis seriously. Among the participants, 23 (16.70%) of the participants agree and 17 (12.41%) of the participants reported they strongly agree. Lastly, 31 (22.63%) of the participants reported that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.



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Table 7: The Perception on Whether Police, the Media and Elected Officials Take Hate Crimes and Incidents Seriously against Azerbaijanis



Discussion

The findings in this study suggest that on average, many women of Azerbaijani origin inhibit higher levels of fear and more likely to feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods regarding the recent hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe. Survey respondents also reported that they have growing safety concerns regarding the safety of their children as well as their loved ones., but on the other hand, only a very little number of respondents reported not being afraid for their personal safety and for the safety of their children and loved ones.

The participants were also asked where they fear these incidents might happen to them and their loved ones. Majority of them reported feeling unsafe in the street (89.93%), in café, restaurant, bars, (74.10 %), on public transport, such as TTC, uber, etc. (63.31%), and school and other educational settings (62.50%). However, we do not have a clear idea whether such fear might affect their comfort levels regarding going to such places or participation in public events and activities.

We also did not ask the participants regarding their support networks, except relying on police, media and elected officials to prevent and manage hate crimes and incidents. If we take into consideration that many Azerbaijanis are considered new communities in North America and



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Europe, we can assume that many of them are not familiar or do not know how to navigate support networks in the community. For example, we do not know how many of them are familiar with the support resources found in Canada in which they can reach out to find help such as the Policy Centre for Victim Issues of the Department of Justice Canada and the Ontario Victims Services Secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General which both have a Victim Services directory to help victims of hate crimes and incidents.

To conclude all of the above information, this study suggests that since the recent hate crimes and incidents against Azerbaijanis in North America and Europe, many Azerbaijani women and young girls, have a significant amount of safety concerns and fears of being a victim of hate crimes and hate incidents after recent incidents have occurred. The survey did not ask the participants to reveal clinical levels of post-traumatic stress or vicarious trauma from hate crimes that took place in their communities in North America and Europe but shows sufficient information on their growing concerns of safety for their children and loved ones. We also do not have an explicit idea about certain risk factors on the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979), including being an immigrant and having personally experienced victimization. However, the survey respondents reported certain attributes of Azerbaijan, such as the flag and symbols, are risk factors for being a victim of hate crimes and incidents.

Findings from this study also point to several interesting additional research questions, for example, with the exception of people in their social network, why do targeted identity communities underutilize existing resources and networks for support? Is there a difference between the impacts hate crimes have on rural communities and the impacts they have on urban communities?

As in any research, this study also has limitations with firstly being a small number of women and girls responded to survey questions within two days, therefore, the results in this questionnaire is a result of a short matter of time and with this barrier, came other obstacles such as language and internet access.

To add on to the last paragraph, we only used an Internet-delivered questionnaire; therefore, individuals without access to a computer, phone or internet, were excluded from participation and therefore could not reach out and give. Unfortunately, some individuals such as newcomers and elderly people, could not understand or read in English, and therefore could not respond and answer any of the questions. The survey also did not include questions regarding the participants income, education or personal experience in regard to the context of this study.

Conclusion

Ever since July 12th, 2020, the world is witnessing new aggression from Armenia against Azerbaijan. This aggression confirms one more time the true approach adopted by the Armenian state which disturbs peace and security in the region by continuing forcible occupation of 20 per



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cent of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory, which includes the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts.

AWSC regrets that the extent of this aggression crossed the borders and turned into hate crimes against Azerbaijanis in Europe and North America. Unfortunately, such acts turned into various forms such as bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination, physical assault, aggression, criminal acts, etc.

The aim of this study was to look at the experience and effects of hate crime and incidents against female members of the Azerbaijani community in North America and Europe. Although the numbers of Azerbaijanis who have been directly victimized by hate crimes and incidents in North America and Europe are relatively unknown, the impact of each individual incident on community well-being is undeniable. The participants feel the threat of being victimized raises questions regarding taking safety concern of Azerbaijanis seriously.

AWSC also regret that despite the fact that multiple letters, emails, petitions were sent to the Elected Officials in Canada, the members of the community have not been contacted. The members of the community feel that their concern is not taken seriously by the media which they assume highlight only the other side of the story instead of creating balance in both sides. AWSC is aware that the indifference by elected officials to the concern of the Azerbaijani community decreases trust and increases safety concern among the members of the Azerbaijani community.

AWSC also strongly condemn all acts of hate crimes and denounce all kinds of hate crimes and violent acts against any individual and communities. The hate crimes targeting any community, ethnic, religious and political groups require us to take a firm stance and confront it with all legal means.

AWSC invites elected officials, media, parents, community leaders and educators to become aware of their roles and take action against hate crimes, aggression, bullying and violence in their respective communities. We believe that it takes a village and that together we are strong to maintain peace and security, including the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair relations among nations.



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