



Refugee Council

Prisoners of Terrorism?

The impact of anti-terrorism measures
on refugees and asylum seekers in Britain

A Refugee Council Research Report
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1 Executive summary

This qualitative study aimed to explore refugees' and asylum seekers' views and experiences of the impact of anti-terrorism measures on their lives. 10 focus groups were held across Britain, with a total of 67 participants from refugee and asylum seeking communities.

The range of issues discussed in the focus groups is reflected in the different sections of the report. The discussions brought up a variety of perspectives and experiences from the participating refugees and asylum seekers. These varied between focus group locations, as well as between the backgrounds and profiles of the groups and the individual participants. The study's qualitative method enabled it to explore perceptions and experiences in depth. It did not seek to obtain a representative picture of the views of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK more generally. References to "refugees and asylum seekers" are based on the participants of this study, and the summary presented below simply reflects the key issues, experiences and views expressed in the group discussions. The study wanted to hear directly from diverse groups of refugees and asylum seekers and enable their voices to be heard in the wider debate.

Perceptions of the terrorist threat

1. Refugees and asylum seekers are afraid of terrorist attacks and want to support measures to prevent such attacks. They see no difference between their and the general public's fear and condemnation of terrorism. At the same time, refugees seem to be more affected by terrorist threats, as they display multi-dimensional fears that include the fear of being victimised by public, police and policy responses to terrorism. Refugees' fears are also heightened by experiences of violence in their countries of origin.

Perceptions of public attitudes

2. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that since 7/7 public attitudes show more fear and hostility towards refugees, especially Muslim refugees, which makes

them feel stereotyped as a threat and increases their own insecurity.

Perceptions of the media

3. Refugees and asylum seekers feel they are being presented as terrorists by the media, which they consider has had a negative influence on public attitudes.

Racism, Islamophobia and the impact on refugee integration

4. Racism, discrimination and harassment appear to have increased since 9/11 and 7/7, affecting especially Muslim refugees and asylum seekers, and particularly Muslim women.

5. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that integration and good community relations are impeded by the hostility and stereotypes generated by an anti-terrorist climate. In some locations and for some refugee groups, exclusion and segregation has increased.

Policy responses to terrorism

6. Refugees and asylum seekers criticise the government's approach to terrorism for establishing an automatic link between asylum seekers and terrorism. Policies are seen as inappropriately targeting refugees and asylum seekers and having a negative impact on their lives. Distinguishing asylum seekers from terrorists is deemed as an essential but missing premise of anti-terrorism policymaking.

7. Refugees and asylum seekers feel criminalised by the general public and political discourse as well as by specific policy and security responses to terrorism.

8. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that the government's understanding of terrorism does not allow for a distinction between terrorists and those engaged in resistance or opposition activities related to their countries of origin.

9. Refugees and asylum seekers display a high sense of insecurity, mainly legal insecurity related to a fear of deportation. This fear is heightened by the perceived lack of distinction between refugees and terrorist or criminal suspects.

Impact on civic and political participation

10. Measures against glorifying or encouraging terrorism are perceived as restricting freedom of speech specifically of refugees and asylum seekers, who as a result have become reluctant to speak freely.

11. The proscription of groups under the Terrorism Act is not widely known but criticised by those aware of this measure for its improper use against political organisations and for restricting political participation.

Impact on asylum process and decisions

12. A range of policies, perceived as responses to terrorism, are seen to have a direct and negative impact on the asylum determination process. Asylum seekers feel they are being equated with terrorists, leading to an increased refusal rate of asylum claims, especially from Muslim applicants.

13. There is a low awareness of the new clause in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 (Section 54) relating to exclusion from refugee status, but those familiar with the issue are concerned about the questionable reliability of country information and the detrimental effect on applicants' willingness to reveal the full nature of their political activities. There are concerns about the future of political refugees' rights and ability to seek and receive protection.

Relations with the police

14. Refugees and asylum seekers want to support the police in preventing further terrorist attacks, but feel targeted as terrorist suspects rather than as potential collaborators.

Prevention of terrorism

15. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that anti-terrorism measures could create resentment, which might impede

refugees' active collaboration and involvement in the prevention of terrorism. Stigmatisation and exclusion may even leave some refugees and asylum seekers vulnerable to the influence of extremists.

Impact on human rights culture

16. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that policy responses to terrorism, together with security measures and public attitudes, threaten to undermine Britain's human rights culture and democratic rule of law.

Impact on refugees' lives

17. Refugees and asylum seekers feel that the construction of a link between them and terrorism has had a negative impact on their lives. They report many difficulties they already face in relation to immigration and asylum measures, and consider that the terrorism discourse and measures have added an undue burden. Mainly concerned with asylum procedures, they have a low awareness of the details of anti-terrorism provisions in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and the Terrorism Act 2006, but a highly critical view of the wider public and policy debates on terrorism.

2 Introduction

Middlesbrough participant: [...] A group of white British, they started panicking seriously [when six black refugees entered a tube carriage]. [...] I started to feel like, what have I done, what was this, we're not terrorists, we're just normal people. But that was the feeling, at that time in London, and I felt sorry that these people are prisoners of terrorism.

North London participant: I have the right to support them [a proscribed group], [...] if I can't express this, that's not right, that's a restriction, that's like putting you inside a cell. That makes us like robots and I don't think that's right.

Security concerns have become a prominent feature of the public and policy discourse in Britain. Following the terrorist bombings in London on 7 July 2005, a range of new anti-terrorism measures has been debated and adopted with a view to increasing public security. For refugees, security concerns lie at the heart of their escape from their countries of origin and their claim for protection. Their expectation is to find security in the UK.

Yet security threats can be perceived, experienced and addressed in different ways by different individuals, groups and societies. In the aftermath of the London bombings, surveys were carried out to assess how the general population perceived and experienced the issue of terrorism and insecurities related to it. Studies were also conducted with a specific focus on the Muslim population, as they were assumed to be affected by a backlash, or a fear of backlash, based on the terrorists' claimed faith identity. This assumption has been substantiated by evidence presented about the immediate aftermath of the 7 July bombings.

On the face of it, there was no particular reason to conduct a separate study on refugees and the issue of terrorism and anti-terrorist security measures. There appeared to be no closer connection between refugees and terrorism than there was between the general population and terrorism. Having fled insecurity and sought protection in the UK, refugees and asylum seekers face a range of challenges in establishing their lives here, with the issue of terrorism barely registering – apart from the period right after 7/7 – among the array of practical problems reported in their daily interactions with agencies such as the Refugee Council.

Media headlines, however, suggest otherwise. Recent research pointed to the national media's role in constructing a link between national security concerns and asylum issues. At the same time, a range of new anti-terrorism measures has been debated since 7/7 and two key pieces of legislation came into force in spring 2006. It appears that the security paradigm has permeated immigration and asylum policies, evident in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, and specific security legislation, including provisions in the Terrorism Act 2006, may have particular relevance for non-nationals.

Therefore, this study set out to establish whether the anti-terrorism discourse and measures affect refugees and asylum seekers in ways that policymakers and service providers, including refugee supporting agencies, should be aware of. To do so, the study aimed to explore refugees' and asylum seekers' views and experiences of the impact of anti-terrorism measures on their lives. It sought to hear directly from diverse groups of refugees and asylum seekers, and employed a qualitative focus group methodology to explore a range of perspectives in different locations across Britain.

The study took into account that when assessing the impact of policies on a specific but diverse subgroup of the population, it is not always possible to isolate the specific factors contributing to an impact. Refugees and asylum seekers are not a uniform group, but encompass a wide range of faiths, ethnicities and nationalities. They may be affected by policy measures because of their identities as Muslims, black people or foreign nationals, rather than on the basis of their refugee or asylum seeking status. Racism, xenophobia or Islamophobia may affect them independently of, or in addition to, their migration status. Indeed, many participants in this study felt they were experiencing multiple disadvantages linked to various markers of identity. Where possible, the study aimed to isolate these effects. At the same time, it seems significant that refugees and asylum seekers form a population subgroup for which a number of potentially disadvantaging factors converges.

The study also paid attention to different levels of impact, from perceptions and feelings to behaviour and experiences. Participants were asked about their awareness, opinions, feelings and experiences and were encouraged to discuss these within the group. The analysis sought to distinguish between these modes, although not necessarily by weighting perceptions less than experiences, or by looking for the greatest number of participants raising a particular concern. For example, a perception of a rights violation by a few participants was not considered less significant than direct experiences of verbal abuse reported by many participants. Perceptions were not assessed according to their accuracy but in relation to their apparent or potential impact on the feelings and behaviour of participants. In the realm of public and policy discourse, perceptions are a key currency and can serve as evidence of failure of policy communication or of the policy itself.

In the context of security measures, a perception of becoming a target, an experience of being singled out or a feeling of alienation are all likely to increase fears and thus produce further insecurity. A spiral of insecurity can be fuelled by ineffective policy measures that affect some groups more than others. This study aimed to identify whether this is the case with regard to refugee and asylum seeking communities. The voices from refugees quoted in the epigraph above paint a picture of imprisonment in a cycle of fear – fear of terrorism, fear of refugees, fear of speaking out. This study hopes to contribute to confronting such fears.

3 Methodology

The research was carried out in the first half of 2006, with 10 focus groups held between 31 March 2006 and 28 June 2006.

Rationale

This qualitative study employed a focus group approach to obtain in-depth data on the perceptions and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Britain. The focus group approach was chosen to initiate discussions and explore how participants develop their responses and ideas through the exchange with others. Aware that the issue of terrorism constituted a sensitive subject, the study did not intend to elicit sensitive personal information. Rather, it sought to gather a range of views, illuminated from different angles, about a contentious topic of public discourse. Crucially, the objective was to foreground collective, not individual experiences, and to explore how communities address potential challenges arising from this issue.

The focus group approach was also chosen to facilitate refugees' participation in the ongoing discourse on anti-terrorist measures in the UK. The study aimed to listen to refugees and asylum seekers and allow their views and voices to be heard in the wider debate. The focus group method was considered as closely related to a consultative approach as possible, while prioritising and protecting the analytical rigour and integrity of a research study.

Drawing respondents exclusively from refugees and asylum seekers meant that the study did not use a comparator group of non-refugees to assess the relative values of findings. Nevertheless, comparative elements are present, as the data can be disaggregated for different groups of refugees, based on a sampling framework taking into account a range of potential locality and identity factors. Thus, while the findings cannot be directly compared to the population as a whole, or segments thereof, they can be used to compare – in a qualitative, not quantitative way

– different groups of refugees, e.g. London based and regional communities or people with refugee status and those in the asylum process, thereby both providing and comparing a snapshot of subsections of the refugee population.

Advisory Group

The study was guided by an external advisory group which provided expertise from academic, policy, political and community perspectives. The group advised on the context of anti-terrorism measures and debates, the current knowledge base, as well as priority areas for providing evidence on the potential impact of the anti-terrorism discourse on refugees, provided expertise on the research design, contributed to access negotiations, advised on strategies for addressing potential sensitivities and risks, and provided feedback on the policy and political relevance of the findings.

Sampling framework

The sampling framework was devised to identify possible locality and identity factors relevant to the research topic. It was designed to allow for an examination of group as well as individual factors.

To ensure that the study involved not only respondents already interested in or with specific experience of terrorism issues, the self-selection of pre-existing groups for participation was offset by simultaneously recruiting respondents from the general client population of refugee service agencies. The latter was the case, for example, in Hull and Middlesbrough. It enabled the study to capture the views and experiences of those who were not normally interested or involved in discussing social or political issues. However, the use

of different access methods did not appear to have a uniform effect on the data collected. For example, it did not confirm that respondents drawn from the general client population were necessarily less interested in or aware of the anti-terrorism discourse: even though, of all groups, the Hull participants were least interested in the research subject, as may be expected based on the way they were accessed, the Middlesbrough group, accessed through the same method, was very interested in engaging with these issues.

Sample size: The study achieved its intended sample size of 10 focus groups. The total number of individual participants was 67, with an average group size of around 7 individuals.

Location: The study was conducted at national level and aimed to cover a wide geographical range of focus group locations. This was achieved by holding groups in the following locations:

- Birmingham
- Glasgow
- Hull
- Leeds
- London (3)
- Middlesbrough
- Norwich
- Swansea

Focus groups were held in England, Scotland and Wales and included larger and smaller urban and suburban locations. A good balance was achieved between areas of historical refugee settlement and more recent dispersal areas, which also tended to correlate with areas of low and high ethnic diversity.

The sampling framework was based on the categories of gender, age, religion, race/ethnicity, asylum/refugee status, and region of origin. The study aimed to include diverse focus groups, with participants from a range of backgrounds under these categories, and more homogenous groups, with participants from broadly the same background. The latter included single-sex groups (women-only in Birmingham and men-only in Hull, North London and Leeds), faith-based groups (mainly Christian in West London and mainly Muslim in Swansea, Glasgow and East London), and groups with mainly refugees (Leeds and all London groups) or asylum seekers (Glasgow, Hull and Middlesbrough). Groups were also held with young refugees (East London) and older refugees (West London).

Access strategy

By assembling focus groups mainly from pre-existing groups, the study concentrated on respondents who have formed social connections beyond their immediate environment. This stressed a focus on collective rather than individual perspectives, in line with the research emphasis on obtaining responses at a community level in addition to individual views. It also meant that little intervention was possible to control the composition of groups and potential power relations within those groups, and that the history and interests of groups may have affected participants' interaction, thus conforming to pre-existing group dynamics. At the same time, the range of pre-existing groups involved was sufficiently broad to avoid bias towards particular types of group interests or histories. For example, discussions held included those with participants of a refugee mentoring project, a local network of refugee community organisations (RCOs), a refugee discussion group, a youth forum, as well as service user groups, with the latter category reflecting much less group cohesion than the former.

Extensive outreach was conducted across the country, with information disseminated to refugee networks and many faith-based and black and minority ethnic networks. Approximately 80 direct approaches were made to gatekeepers selected on the basis of sampling criteria. All organisations that contributed directly to arranging and hosting focus groups are listed below, unless they opted not to be named. Arrangements with participating organisations varied, with most agreeing to invite participants and provide premises. While the statutory sector, and specifically law enforcement bodies, was not approached directly, some of the information reached community safety and minority ethnic outreach staff at local police forces, who considered the focus of the research relevant to their work.

Voluntary sector organisations and networks, including RCOs and faith-based groups, which indicated an interest in supporting the study but were unable to contribute directly, offered a range of explanations for barriers to participation. Apart from organisational and logistical reasons, explanations ranged from the sensitivity of the research topic, to the predominance of other pressing issues such as destitution, lack of right to work and failed asylum claims. In the Hull focus group, the latter issue was addressed explicitly:

Hull participant: *People have a lot of problem, about self, you know, don't thinking about terrorists, you know. [...] We have better reasons, saying, not working, stay on the street [...].*

Refugees and asylum seekers in rural regions proved hardest to reach. Despite outreach efforts, it was not possible to hold a group discussion in a rural area, which one gatekeeper explained by pointing to the fast turnaround of clients received. Reasons for non-participation were also obtained from a small number of individuals who came to a scheduled meeting but then decided against taking part. Apart from issues of timing, these individuals cited their discomfort with the recording of the discussion, or their scepticism about the role of discourse and evidence in influencing what they regarded as a very negative political and policy context. The researcher also had a phone conversation with one individual who wanted to participate but was subject to control orders which restricted his ability to meet and speak with others. As the study did not aim to include individuals subject to criminal proceedings under the Terrorism Act, non-participation by this segment of the refugee population did not affect the study's ability to meet sampling targets. However, the concerns expressed by this Algerian man about, as he saw it, the severe negative impact of anti-terrorism measures on the entire Algerian community in the UK, were reflected in the comments of a number of experts and stakeholders in the sector, although only partially by the seven Algerian participants in this study, which all came from a different political background than those Algerians subject to control orders. In the Swansea focus group, participants (two of them Algerian refugees) speculated that asylum seekers from Algeria, who had been invited to the discussion, may have been afraid to come and talk openly about sensitive issues:

Participant 1: *Because, with my best regards to you, they know that no one can do for them anything. Because we spoke a lot – useless.*

RC: *You think that's why people don't want to come and talk?*

Participant 2: *Yes. Or sometimes they're afraid.*

Participant 3: *Yes, sometimes they are.*

Participant 1: *I talk, but at the same time I'm afraid. Because I have a responsibility to my family.*

Focus group sessions

All participants were recruited through gatekeepers, with the researcher holding no contact details for individual participants. All participants were provided with full information about the purposes, methods and utilisation of the research in advance of the group discussion. They were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Participants and the researcher signed an informed consent form prior to the discussion. Some

participants expressed concerns about confidentiality and anonymity and sought additional personal assurances from the researcher.

Focus groups were based on a topic guide designed by the researcher and agreed by the advisory group. This was slightly amended after the first focus group (Leeds), but these amendments did not compromise the data collected in that first session. Discussions were generally conducted in English, though occasionally participants helped each other by providing ad hoc interpretation (Norwich, Hull). While professional interpreters supported the Glasgow group, as the discussion was held as part of a regular meeting always serviced by professional interpreters, the vast majority of the discussion was carried out in English.

All participants were requested to complete a monitoring form prior to the group discussion. 67 monitoring forms were received. Guided by the sampling framework, these forms collected basic data on gender, age, religion, race/ethnicity, asylum/refugee status, length of stay in the UK and country of origin. An analysis of the forms received yielded the following summary profile of participants:

Focus group participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the draft report, which was sent to gatekeeper organisations for dissemination to participants. Apart from some positive feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the report, no comments or requests for changes were received. Any future activities arising from this project will be communicated to participants.

Contributing organisations and individuals

A significant number of people supported this study by helping to identify potential focus group participants. The author wishes to express her gratitude especially to the following organisations and individuals, who contributed directly to arranging the ten focus groups:

- Centre 167 (Gary Pounder) and HANA (Anny Woods), Hull
- Community Integration Partnership (Jo Burill and Dally Panesar), Birmingham
- Framework for Dialogue Group, Pollokshaw (Londi Beketch Luyeye), Glasgow
- Kurdish Community Centre (Ali Has) and Halkevi (Nihal Ates), London
- Leeds Metropolitan University (Emma Butcher and Max Farrar), Leeds
- Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum (Zrinka Bralo and Myriam Cherti), London

- New Routes/Roots
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- Clara Odofin and Sophia Swithern, Oxfam UK

4 Perceptions of terrorist threat

This study aimed to explore refugees' perceptions and experiences of responses to the terrorist threat in the UK. Perceptions of such responses could partly be shaped by perceptions of the terrorist threat itself. If refugees had a particular view of the terrorist threat, and one that was different from perceptions reported in studies of the general population, then they might also have a different perspective on the responses to terrorism.

Hence all group discussions started out by exploring participants' views of the terrorist threat. Immediate responses from all groups showed that the fear of terrorist attacks was ubiquitous, and that refugees saw no difference between their and the general public's fear and condemnation of terrorism. As the discussions went on to explore those fears, a more complex picture emerged. It appeared that refugees' anxieties went much deeper than a fear of further attacks. A multi-layered sense of insecurity became visible, with different levels of fear relating to victimisation not only by terrorists, but also by the public, the police and the state. Refugees were afraid of becoming victims of attacks, victims of public hostility, victims of police errors and victims of policy responses, such as an increasingly harsh asylum process. They were afraid of terrorism and at the same time afraid of being linked to terrorism and targeted by anti-terrorist measures. In that sense, the exploration of refugees' fears of terrorism at the outset of the focus groups already foreshadowed the later discussions of the responses to terrorism.

Refugees' fear of terrorist attacks

Participants stressed that their fear of terrorist attacks was no different from that of the general population. They believed that all people were similarly threatened, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or faith. They pointed out that refugees and Muslims had been victims of the London attack on 7 July 2005. As terrorists adopted an indiscriminate approach to their victims, everyone in Britain had to worry about becoming a victim in the future.

***Hull participant 1:** [W]e are scared for somebody making a bomb, because we are same people, same*

English people, we all live in this country, refugees and English people. [...]

***Hull participant 2:** Nothing different between us, like British people or refugee people or asylum seeker, or ethnic minority who live in this country. There's nothing different between them to, we scared of terrorists as well. We ran away from the terrorists, from the, you know. That's what we all think, nothing different. If anything happened in this country, it's happening to us as well, we are worried about it, we are afraid about it.*

While all participants were concerned about future terrorist attacks and reflected on ways to increase their own safety as well as that of others, it appeared that levels of fear were highest in the immediate aftermath of 7/7. Many participants recounted their experiences around that time, and the fears attached to these. One male participant speculated that women might be more afraid than men; however, while the women-only focus group in Birmingham spoke very openly about their fears, so did many male participants elsewhere.

A number of participants revealed they were particularly afraid of terrorist attacks – perhaps more so than British people – because their fears were heightened by experiences of physical insecurity in their countries of origin. They recounted personal experiences of suffering and escaping from indiscriminate violence. Britain was seen by many as a safe haven, but the terrorist attacks in London threatened that hope for a safe future.

Birmingham participant: Especially us refugees and asylum seekers - most of the time we came out of our countries to get safe, save our lives. Now, where will we go now, if it can happen here.

Some specifically classified the violence they fled from as the violence of terrorism. They recognised that compared to the levels of terrorist activity in their countries of origin, Britain remained comparatively safe; nevertheless, the terrorist threat brought up memories of what they had gone through before coming to Britain. The Hull group in particular recounted traumatising incidents of violence in Iraq and viewed the terrorist threat in Britain in this context.

Hull participant 1 [with interpreter]: *That's why he's more safe here, and against the terrorists all over. He's says there's more terrorists in Iraq, that why we don't want to go back to Iraq.[...]*

Hull participant 2: *[In Iraq] They're killing people in front of your face, shooting bullets, but we can't see things like that in here, maybe happens once [in] two years, three years, but still more safe. But the lives are a bit difficult for us here. We worry same as you worry, we're not happy. We're against these things [terrorist attacks] happen.*

Refugees' fear of victimisation

Intertwined with all participants' perceptions of the terrorist threat were their perceptions of a threat from a backlash following a terrorist attack. They were afraid of public, police and state reactions against them. This multi-dimensional sense of insecurity appeared to distinguish refugees' perceptions of the terrorist threat from those of the general public. An overview of the different levels of fear follows below, before being explored further in subsequent chapters.

According to participants in all focus groups, refugees' fears of becoming victims of terrorism were accompanied by fears of being victimised by public reactions to terrorism.

Glasgow participant 1: *The victim part that started after the 7/7 for asylum seekers, everyone can feel it, everyone who's an asylum seeker can feel that.*

Victimisation was seen to start with British people projecting their own fears onto refugees, on the grounds of refugees looking and sounding different.

Birmingham participant: *When you speak your own language on the trains, in the bus, the humiliation, the whole thing has taken over even us, we have the whole fear, we do not feel free. We are scared over terrorism, because the terrorist does not know whom they are going to kill, we are among those British people, so we are scared. And the person who is next to me, to us, is also scared from us.*

Such public fears were interpreted by participants as an indication that refugees were stereotyped and targeted as terrorists themselves.

Middlesbrough participant: *We're worried as refugees more than English people, because sometimes English people when they get attack from terrorists - which is terrorists everywhere in the world - so sometimes, some people they start targeting us and they think these people, the refugees and asylum seekers, maybe they are part of the terrorists. And this make us in the position, in the place of the terrorist and we have to reduce it or stop it somehow.*

Some participants expressed fear not only of being targeted by the public but also by the police. They were concerned about getting arrested on false suspicion or even subjected to violent police action.

West London participant: *So of course we're afraid that when we are in the bus or so something might happen. An explosion, but also something that's on the other side of the coin. I know, I've seen other people who have been arrested simply because they look like someone who's after something. I've seen lots of people.*

An East London participant reflected on her fear of being targeted by the police in terms of her growing feeling of paranoia, which has led her to place the risks of experiencing verbal abuse and getting shot on a continuum of threat rooted in the terrorism discourse. At the same time, she was quite specific in identifying race and faith as the main risk factors.

East London participant: *I think the scare is actually, we can be targeted for no reason, just shot at without being warned. Just being targeted without being warned is the main concern. That guy [Mr de Menezes shot by the police in Stockwell] was never, he got shot without any warning, and the same thing with the guys in Forest Gate. Just like this. The guys from Forest Gate said, you know, the reason they've been targeted, the only thing they're guilty of is because they they've got long beard, and they've got yellow skin, you know. So I could be walking, I remember my sister, at the time she was wearing her scarf [...]. At the bus stop, she was verbally attacked, being called Osama bin Laden's daughter [...]. You get paranoid, you know.*

Participants also spoke about anxieties arising from being singled out by security measures. They explained how they tried to adapt their behaviour to appear as inconspicuous as possible. Such self-consciousness

may be what prompted participants in most groups to demonstrate their unequivocal condemnation of terrorism at various points throughout the discussions. In two groups, participants admitted their own preconceptions about the profile of potential terrorists, as they spoke of scrutinising Muslim men with bags on a bus or airplane. They felt that this enabled them to better understand, though not condone, public fears directed at refugees.

At the same time, refugees' own fears appeared to arise even before acquiring any first hand experience of public hostility. One participant from the same nationality as one of the suspects of the failed London attacks recalled his anxiety about potential negative official and public reactions when arriving in Britain.

Middlesbrough participant: *[W]hen I came here [to England], in August, I was scared [...]. We are many Eritrean coming to the Home Office and we know what has happened a month ago, and we were scared, you know. We are Eritrean, we are black, we are asylum seeker, and just now month ago, you know, but I don't know.*

Fears about being victimised by policy responses to terrorism figured prominently in many groups. Refugees were seen as an already disadvantaged group which could suffer greatly if they were now also being linked to concerns around national security.

Glasgow participant 2: *Terrorism is really a big issue because it is interlinked with asylum seekers and refugees which are already a particular disadvantaged group [...]. [Because terrorism] touches national security it makes asylum seekers and refugees, who are already in very very precarious state more disadvantaged, the fact that they are being linked to terrorism, and all the bad things. It's a very worrying concern.*

Another Glasgow participant believed victimisation of asylum seekers, or certain groups of asylum seekers, through government policy was already evident.

Glasgow participant 3: *We are victims also about attacks in London, we are also a victim of the bomb because you know now we are getting bad decisions for immigration. They just don't care about our case, what is it, just it is oh he's Algerian, Algerians they've got the bomb. So they don't like Algerians in UK.*

Worried about a victimisation of refugees in the policy response to terrorism, another participant suggested examining the effectiveness and impact of the anti-terrorism measures.

Leeds participant: *But my problem is just the way the strategy to prevent terrorism or to protect the public from any terrorist attack is handled. What are the negative effects of the different strategies or the campaign against terrorism? Is it free from discrimination? Doesn't it have any negative impact? Is it really deterring terrorism?*

5 Perceptions of public attitudes

The study sought refugees' views on the development of public attitudes since the London attacks on 7/7, while taking into account that 'the public' or, as used in the question to participants, 'British people', was an abstract category that participants tended to interpret as either individuals or the media.

Indeed it appeared that views of public attitudes were more differentiated, and in some groups positive, when participants thought of individuals in their locality, and more negative when they focused on a national discourse driven by the media. Equally problematic was the question of a change in attitudes, particularly as participants felt that the public image of refugees had already become increasingly negative over the past few years, so that the role of the terrorism discourse in this context was difficult to isolate.

The perception that public attitudes had not noticeably changed was prevalent in Norwich, where participants explicitly said that while the media and policy discourse had become more hostile, local people had resisted that negative influence. Norwich, together with Swansea, also gave the impression of the most positive community relations, and the assessment of public attitudes was probably guided by that.

In Birmingham, participants distinguished between friends or acquaintances and the general public. They did not see a change in their friends' behaviour, but were clear that the public's attitudes towards refugees had become more negative. At the same time, they struggled with generalising 'the public' in terms of race or nationality. In the following exchange, the participant had first criticised the government for regarding asylum seekers as terrorists.

RC: *Are you mainly talking about the government's assumptions or also about the British public?*

Birmingham participant 1: *It creeps into the minds of especially those people who are pure English people.*

Birmingham participant 2: *Yes.*

RC: *People who were born here, you mean?*

Birmingham participant 1: *Well, there are some*

people who are born here but – I have friends who are British but you cannot say, you know, they have that feeling that I am a refugee; some of my best friends are born British, they are white people. But there are these English people who do not believe that any refugee or asylum seeker is not a terrorist. They see us as a terrorist.

Birmingham participant 3: *They look at you sitting next to you on the bus, and they move to the next seat.*

Others, jointly: *Yes.*

Similar exchanges took place in the West London group, where participants gave examples of an increased hostility in public attitudes, while also insisting they did not want to make generalisations about 'British people', when it was such generalisations they criticised with regard to refugees. They stressed that not all British people had negative attitudes towards refugees. A participant in Middlesbrough, however, reflecting on friends as well as the public, recounted that even friendships had become strained in the aftermath of 7/7.

Public fears and hostility

Most groups felt that 7/7 had led to a change in public attitudes in at least two regards. Firstly, asylum seekers tended to be perceived as terrorists, and secondly, as a consequence, people had become afraid of asylum seekers. Such fear then occasionally expressed itself in hostility towards refugees, as experienced directly by a number of participants, and in turn led to refugees themselves becoming increasingly disillusioned, upset and fearful.

Birmingham participant 4: *British citizen, people born in this country, think asylum seeker and refugees equal terror. Asylum seeker and refugees equal murder. [...]*

RC: How does that make you feel?

Birmingham participant 4: I'm an asylum seeker but I'm not a terrorist or a murderer. I feel so disappointed.

Other Birmingham participants thought that the equation between refugees and terrorists had resulted in a more general form of xenophobia.

Birmingham participant 3: English people are affected in some way by that terrorism. They think that's all foreigner, they don't want foreigners. They've changed. They say we don't want you anymore, why can't you all leave the country.

Others, jointly: Yes.

In Glasgow, however, the feeling was that stereotyping, hostility and abuse was specifically directed towards refugees and asylum seekers, not foreigners more generally – or at least not white foreigners.

Glasgow participant: But since that what happened in London, everything has [...] changed. People, they are thinking asylum seekers or refugees – I don't say foreign people because that includes European, they are not targeted at all – but asylum seekers or refugees who are targeted by abuse from local people and they think we bring that kind of terrorism in their countries.

A number of participants elsewhere agreed with this assessment. They felt it was refugees in particular who were being targeted and criminalised as terrorists. A Hull participant pointed out that refugees, despite having been innocent victims of terrorists in the countries they fled from, were now being abused as alleged perpetrators of terrorism.

Hull participant: [P]eople [are] shouting and swearing and saying things nasty to us. They thought we made that terrorist attacks in London. Even if we are just the people who's attacked in [their home] countries.

The young person's group in East London considered their refugee background as an important but not the only factor in their stigmatisation. They thought that the visible markers of identity that constructed them as targets of public hostility included race, faith, refugee status and national origin. They felt that the confluence of all of these factors played a role in what they perceived as their criminalisation.

East London participant 1: When it comes to black people, we're in that group. When it comes to Muslims, we're in that group. When it comes to refugees, we're

in that group. And we have our column, Somalis, now, in as, like, we are a group. And it feels like, you know, where's the escape.

East London participant 2: For example, like, when crime happens on TV, they just say Somali.

This perception of being cast in the role of criminals appears to have contributed to an increase in refugees' own feelings of insecurity and to a reduction in their social contacts.

Birmingham participant: I see a lot of English people say, these [refugees] are criminals, raping women, killing people. When I'm walking with someone, I used to them [English people] coming up saying hello, but now they are not and I'm scared of them more than before.

According to many participants, fear appeared to dominate and strain interactions between refugees and British people.

Hull participant: I think in people English, now many people scared about refugee. [...] It's now very difficult from two years ago. Now many people English very difficult.

Perhaps not surprisingly, such fears were experienced as particularly acute in the settings of public transport and public services. The following Middlesbrough exchange outlines how stricter security measures seemed to increase both public fears of refugees, and refugees' fears of being victimised.

Middlesbrough participant 1: [Y]ou can feel [the fear] when the security gets tightened after the London terrorism and people are affected with it are people who haven't got the IDs which recognised by everyone. [...] [T]he person who may had to wait longer in a queue, the person who may have to have even stricter checks on, is the person without an ID, and here we're looking at most people from the migrant groups and in particular refugees and people seeking asylum. You know, a lot of places won't recognise people's – refugees' or particularly asylum seeking ID cards, and hence they have to keep people more to wait. And what do other people think on the queue, as the queue was going slowly, and wait comes to you. So what is the perception of other people and how do they treat you?

Middlesbrough participant 2: Don't forget your own perception, how you feel when you're treated like that. You're afraid, you fear...

Middlesbrough participant 1: Yes.

Middlesbrough participant 2: ... you feel like people pointing at you, as you are a terrorist.

Three other participants: Yes.

Middlesbrough participant 2: You feel that way.

This illustrated how fear can turn both British people and refugees into prisoners of terrorism, as evoked in this report's title quote from a Middlesbrough participant.

Responses to public fears

Participants attempted to seek explanations for public fears and hostility directed towards them. In their view, the media, and also politicians, played a key role, as discussed in sections 6 and 8 below. But they also looked at themselves, often in a defensive and occasionally even ashamed way.

Glasgow participant 1: It's [the terrorist attacks] very bad for the asylum seekers. The people here they start thinking bad.

Others, jointly: Yes.

Glasgow participant 2: Some people think all asylum seekers are terrorists.

Glasgow participant 1: Yes.

RC: Who thinks that?

Glasgow participant 1: Maybe some people. Because I came from Algeria. Algeria is a lot of problems with terrorism. This is why the people, they start to think.

In the above exchange, the explanation for public stereotyping is informed by the participant's national origin, which she assumes other people could find threatening due to a history of terrorist activities in her home country. In other groups, participants recalled how sharing the national origin of the suspects of the failed London attacks appeared to be a trigger for people's hostility, albeit limited to the weeks and months following the attacks.

Middlesbrough participant: [O]n suspicion of the London bombings in July, the people who acted on this were from East Africa, particularly from Eritrea, and me being from that part of the world, I started to get, I would say, quite a direct hatred.

Despite criticising such generalisations from the public, two participants, both women, admitted to feeling ashamed about the perceived connection between terrorism and their country of origin. A London participant – from the same national origin as one of failed London attacks suspects – recalled a reaction she received when telling enquirers where she was from.

West London participant: [People] are laughing and they say as a joke, "you know you've become a terrorist". So you are a terrorist, you know, they told me. But I feel, of course, inside I feel shame, because for one person, whole the country, whole the place, it's become a terrorist. Of course it does affect.

Reactions from the young people of the East London group were very different. The perceived increase in public hostility was understood as part of the anger and fear experienced by most Londoners, including themselves. Participants sought to tackle this by showing a strong, collective resolve to overcome their feelings of anger and helplessness and not allow their own victimisation.

East London participant 1: [We came together] after the attacks, yeah, when all these events happened, and as a group we can tell each other what to do and how to solve what happened.

East London participant 2: We became like a support system to ourselves.

East London participant 1: Yeah, to ourselves. Why did you need a support system?

East London participant 2: Because I think when stuff like that happened, you are so angry, really, you could be driven to certain, you're just like, oh I can't take this anymore. It was either, do I hate my religion, because sometimes you really are mad at the people bombing, that would be bombing themselves, you know. And then you're mad at the way you're treated by the other party, you know, like two parties. So you're kind of stuck in the middle again. So we felt, you know what, we have something to escape to and we can do something about it as a group. That's what we felt and that's the first thing we did when the bombings happened. Because there's so much negative about the Somalis, them being refugees and asylum seekers all the time, sponging off people's money, and we wanna say no.

6 Perceptions of the media

In all groups there was almost unanimous condemnation of the national media's reporting of refugee and asylum issues in the context of the terrorist attacks. Participants felt that the media, and specifically the tabloid press, falsely linked issues of asylum and terrorism. In their view, the media was guilty of stereotyping refugees, and particularly Muslims, as terrorists, thus criminalising them. Participants believed the impact of such reporting was evident in hostile public attitudes, tensions in community relations and refugees' increased feeling of insecurity. The following quotes illustrate the intensity of participants' views on this issue.

Middlesbrough participant: *In England, the media here in Europe, if this terrorism attacks happened in any Arab countries, they didn't give the same attention, you know, to talk about. But here in this country, if you are black, you are criminal, if you are Muslim, you are criminal.*

North London participant: *[The tabloids say it] in such simple terms, it's basically encouraging a sense of hatred against communities and refugees. [...]. They branded us all sorts of things, terrorists now.*

Leeds participant: *[The tabloids] brand especially asylum seekers and refugees as the undesirable, the outsider, the criminals.*

From participants' negative impressions of media reporting, the discussions moved on to consider the impact of such coverage on society. Many participants felt that the media's influence on public attitudes could not be underestimated.

Birmingham participant: *Another way in which the media do really make a mistake. Because when they*

are preaching these things, they also brainwash people here, and this breeds racism towards all foreigners.

How such influence was exerted in practice was described in the following contribution:

Middlesbrough participant: *When the London bombing happened, the people on the TV, the way the presenters put their stories, [...] they were more stressing about their [the terrorists] origin, where they came from, and about their application for asylum, and where they moved. So the more they stressed on those points about immigration, where their country of origin is, the more they are attracting the general public attention to put their hatred towards the points that they are focusing.*

A number of participants criticised the media's stereotyping of asylum seekers based on the background of some of the terrorist suspects. While one or two pointed out that none of the 7/7 bombers actually had a refugee background, others did not distinguish between the suspects of the failed London attacks and the perpetrators of the 7/7 attacks. Their impression was simply that the London terrorists included refugees. This could be indicative of how pervasive the media influence has been, leading even refugees to believe that the 7/7 attacks were carried out by refugees.

The media's influence on public attitudes was seen as detrimental to the development of social and community relations more generally and in the longer term. The effects were described in terms of a culture of blame and disrespect, and a creation of divisions between people.

Leeds participant: *[T]he media is reckless. Whatever they are reporting translates into the message that the*

source of all the problems is the refugee community. The source of all the damage for this country is the refugee community. This will be translated into value systems. A new generation devoid of respect is being moulded out.

According to the following participant, the damage to community relations may have already been done by singling out Muslims, casting them as the enemy of British people and thus separating them from the British and from their own stake in British society.

North London participant: *After 7/7 to me that seemed, especially Sun and Mirror, seemed to segregate English people from Muslim. And they are seen as two. English people and Muslims and most of them are terrorists. They always put English people killed in terrorist attacks, there wasn't any news of Muslim people in those attacks.*

RC: *How does that make you feel?*

North London participant: *We feel segregated by that.*

Refugees' feelings of segregation, isolation and victimisation highlighted the negative effect of media reporting on individuals. Participants considered the media a key factor in increasing their feeling of insecurity after the terrorist attacks. The following participants, of the same national origins as the suspects of the failed attacks, pointed to the media's role in making them feel insecure.

Leeds participant: *[T]here is this feeling of insecurity after that, especially after the media were pounding on it – from Ethiopia, from Somalia, they were asylum seekers, refugees, they were on benefit; it created something.*

East London participant: *[T]he media literally slandered us, you know, on every occasion, any chance they could. The worst was the benefit bomber, he was on benefits or something. And I remember, I was in the train, thinking, I felt everybody's looking at me at the train.*

Others explained their insecurity in terms of feeling morally degraded or ashamed, thus effectively shouldering the responsibility for irresponsible media stereotyping.

Swansea participant: *[E]very time there is something about Algeria in the newspapers or on the TV, it's always about terrorists. And I feel really ashamed of it.*

West London participant: *People's perception is fuelled by the news, by the media. How the media portray*

things, how the media talk about something. The media is a very big problem. There's a lot of generalisation going on. Sometimes when you go into the street – "terrorists, they're terrorists", you know. This is morally degrading.

7 Racism, Islamophobia and the impact on refugee integration

Many participants reported experiencing abusive and discriminatory behaviour arising from negative public and media attitudes. They gave examples of such behaviour directed against refugees and asylum seekers, and against Asian, black and Muslim people more generally. They saw this emanating from a public equation of asylum seekers and terrorists on the one hand, and a racialisation of terrorists on the other. At the same time, it was not always possible to establish a causal connection between the terrorism discourse and increased racism, xenophobia and discrimination, as refugee communities and minority ethnic people tended to be in already disadvantaged positions prior to the terrorist attacks. The direct and negative impact of the terrorism discourse on Muslim refugees, however, was felt across all groups, and participants deplored the media and public stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists. A potential negative impact on community relations and refugees' integration into British society was seen as a cause for concern, though in practice this appeared to depend largely on local contexts.

Racism and discrimination

An exasperation and disbelief about public stereotyping on the basis of migration status, race and faith were palpable among participants.

Middlesbrough participant: *Such a bad step to take from the media, from everybody. What will happen in the future, where it is no black people, it is no Muslims perpetrating these things? Because we already stereotyping, these are terrorists, these are bad people.*

Another participant issued a plea for open-mindedness:

Birmingham participant: *But a terrorist can be black, can be English, can be anyone. Open your mind, your head.*

The perceived consequences of stereotyping were illustrated with some examples of racist or xenophobic incidents after 7/7. The rate and severity of incidents varied considerably across the different geographic locations, with almost none recalled in the Norwich and Swansea groups, and considerably more in Hull, Middlesbrough and London. A direct link between these incidents and the 7/7 attacks was often not obvious, except in the number of cases referring to abuse experienced on public transport. Perhaps unsurprisingly, almost every group had an example of a negative experience when using public transport, usually the bus, relating to either passengers or the driver. With the terrorist attacks in London, Madrid and New York targeting mass transport, people were likely to feel under pressure and reminded of terrorism when confined to a cramped public space shared with strangers. Participants' experience of abuse in these situations could be interpreted as evidence for the public stereotyping of refugees as terrorists on national, racial and religious grounds.

Leeds participant: *I think there are some visible changes in the local community. I heard many stories of attempts to harassment and attack. [...] The people we quite often meet in the bus stare at us and sometimes have a very unfriendly attitude, they just show us an unwelcoming sort of attitude. I myself remember that I was harassed once or twice by members of the local community. It was immediately after the July attack.*

Middlesbrough participant: *And all the people in the bus, they're scared. I know many British people*

they don't like asylum seekers, but they're not talking, but I can see this in their face, in their eyes, but they didn't talk. It really hurt me.

Participants also reported experiencing discrimination in more institutional forms, usually in the context of new security measures. The areas of employment and banking were mentioned with specific examples. The following example indicated the negative impact new banking security measures have had on the operation of refugee community organisations. This was in addition to racist attitudes reported by another participant. Difficulties with banks were also mentioned by a refugee network in London, although not as part of a focus group discussion. The key problem emerging over the past year appeared to be the requirement of forms of personal identification that many refugees do not hold.

Middlesbrough participant: *We were trying to open a bank account [...]. They are not accepting the travel document, and I think, the whole foundation we're trying to build, an organisation we try to build, we don't know. Many of the group they've got to produce an ID. So it has an impact, a direct impact, they're afraid now [that] terrorists are trying to open a bank account.*

With regard to employment, examples from Swansea showed the direct link made between certain refugee nationalities, in these cases Palestinian and Algerian, and terrorist activities. One participant recalled an unofficial reaction received from a university when discussing a potential job applicant from Algeria:

Swansea participant: *[H]e said, tell me the speciality and the nationality. I said mathematics and microbiology and he said no, ask her to change [her speciality subjects], because she's from Algeria, she can never get a job in this area.*

Here the stereotyping of refugees on the basis of nationality was presumably linked to Algerian asylum seekers in detention or under control orders in connection with the ricin trial last year (in which they were cleared). The following participant adopted a broader perspective on discrimination by linking it to more general forms of abuse directed against refugees.

Glasgow participant: *We are abused by all communities. You go to get a job, no you are a terrorist, a terrorist – that creates another terrorist in society, you know. They feel abused by everyone in the society.*

While this raised the issue of resentment triggered by abuse and exclusion (further discussed in section

12), others pointed to insecurity as a consequence of discrimination and harassment.

Harassment and concerns about safety

Participants recalled a number of incidents of physical harassment, and it appeared that some groups, particularly Muslim women, were considerably more affected than others. Participants of the young person's group, as well as some participants, mainly parents, in other groups, felt that young people were at particular risk of abuse. Concerns over personal safety therefore varied according to gender, faith and age, as well as location. They were most pronounced in the case of Muslim women, although a more general example deserves to be quoted as well:

Leeds participant: *[Working as a postman], the area that I was delivering mail was a white area. You could not see a black or an Asian face. So especially after what I saw on TV, I was insecure. Maybe it's what I created in my own mind but I was so insecure, I had to quit my job. That was not the only reason, but part of the reason was that I was not feeling secure at all. An Ethiopian being involved [in the failed London attacks], it created some community tension, and made me feel insecure. The area I'm living in, which is predominantly Asia and refugee communities, I feel safe there, but delivering post in that white area was difficult for me, I was feeling insecure.*

Most agreed that this feeling of insecurity was especially prevalent among Muslim women wearing the hijab. This visible sign of faith, interpreted also as an indicator of irreconcilable difference, made them particularly vulnerable to stereotyping, abuse and harassment. While this impact has by no means been restricted to refugee women, and has been recognised as a problem in European countries since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, many refugee women have found this a new and extra burden added to their already precarious situation. The following experiences recalled in the Glasgow group were discussed in similar tones in Swansea, Birmingham and London.

Glasgow participant 1 (with interpreter): *After what happened in London in July, the impact for Algerian women, for example, people were afraid to wear the scarf, because they were being targeted or intimidated, or go to the mosque.*

Glasgow participant 2: *[M]y friend who lives in London. She's wearing the hijab. Before the 7/7 she was very happy, free, you know, no people look at*

her, she's never been abused for anyone. But after the bombs, after the attack from 7/7, she has been, you know people swearing at her, they are calling her terrorist. And some [other] friend, they were attacked as well, by kicking her, and so they gets to hospital to have some treatment there. So that affect a lot.

Glasgow participant 3: It's not just in London, it's in Scotland as well. People had that problem with hijab, they hit them.

Such experiences of intimidation and harassment were perceived as causing Muslim refugee women to lose their confidence and isolate themselves, restricting their participation in even the most basic functions of public life.

Swansea participant: So if you look to media, people now are looking to Muslims, they are terrorists, they are looking to Muslims, not only adult Muslims, even children, they are now suffering because of that, and women. If after this accident, Muslim women come with the scarf, for sure she's not feeling that she's confident or free or, she's afraid. They're afraid to go outside, even for shopping. Yes, maybe not in all areas this happened, but discrimination is there.

The young person's group in London also pointed to safety issues arising for Muslim girls. At the same time, they had significant concerns about the safety of all young people who were identifiable as black Muslim refugees. As young people, they considered their public lives as involving greater exposure to hostile public behaviour compared to the lives of older people, who operated in fairly closed circles of interaction. In this context, the young East London participants spoke about their own fears of going outside, as well as their parent's fears.

East London participant 1: I always hear people in other areas getting attacked, at the bus stop, at the mosque or something like that, yeah. Parents are always warning about that. That kind of stuff makes you scared to go outside.

East London participant 2: Parents are scared as well, you get locked in your own house. [...]

East London participant 3: Parents go on about it a lot.

East London participant 2: Parents go on, I means since [7/7], it's affected every household. Every household worries.

While these fears were explicitly placed in the context of the terrorist attacks, both 9/11 and 7/7, wider concerns about racism seemed also at play, together with an

awareness of risks facing young people, particularly boys, more generally. Some instances of abuse were reported, though participants stressed that they had adopted a preventative approach that was not based on the first-hand experience of a serious attack.

East London participant 1: [...] [I]f you walk by yourself nowadays, there's a big chance something happening to you. [...]

East London participant 3: What we do is we stick together and everybody when they're going home will drop each other off, one by one, till the last person gets home. [...]

East London participant 4: In certain areas, you cannot leave your friend by himself, cause you know that that person may be attacked.

East London participant 5: I remember when they chucked eggs at him, he was at the bus stop, because he was by himself. [...]

East London participant 4: [B]efore that [the terrorist attacks], it was different, people were all friends, doesn't matter what race they were. Really? They were all friends, yeah, but as you grow up, with this bomb going on, people like try and got different little groups.

East London participant 1: For protection and stuff.

The young people's reaction to their feeling of insecurity after the terrorist attacks aimed to protect themselves from public hostility by forming a tight-knit group based on their national origin and faith.

Impact on Muslim refugees

All groups stressed the negative impact of the terrorism discourse on Muslim refugees, with safety concerns facing Muslim women and youth constituting only one aspect. At the root of the problem they saw an equation of Muslims with terrorists, manifest in media reporting, public attitudes and policy responses to terrorism.

Birmingham participant: They say terrorism is Muslim, but I don't understand, who is terrorist? Terrorism is not Muslim. Even Muslims are scared about terrorism.

Norwich participant 1: When we speak about terrorism, I think all focus just about Muslim.

Norwich participant 2: Exactly.

Norwich participant 1: I don't know why. All Muslims are not terrorists.

Norwich participant 2: He is right. This needs to be more qualified. Now, the public opinion, the public eyes look just at Muslim as terrorists. The Muslim people is not terrorists, it's some of them.

Norwich participant 1: We're anti-terrorists.

Norwich participant 2: *Because the Muslim people doesn't like the terror.*

East London participant: *[T]hey assume that every girl that's wearing a hijab and wrapped up, or every guy with a long beard, he's a terrorist or extremist.*

Most participants, especially those who identified themselves as Muslim, found it incomprehensible how all members of a particular faith could be generalised as terrorists and seen as a threat. Taking into account that the terrorists considered themselves Muslims, participants felt that a more appropriate approach would be to reflect on the circumstances of their upbringing and lives in Britain.

Hull participant 1: *And everywhere they say that Muslims are terrorists.*

RC: *Where do they say that?*

Hull participant 1: *From everywhere, media everywhere, not only British, they say it's Muslim. And not everyone they have a different idea about that. For example, if you ask me, where they came from directly, and I'd say from Muslim people. It's true. But what kind of Muslim? Up to now they didn't have an idea, how they became that terrorist from where, how they grow up. [...]*

Hull participant 1: *The problem, everybody said all bombs Muslim. We are Muslim. And somebody say I'm Muslim and make a bomb, inside this [terrorist] is no Muslim, Muslim no allowed to anybody make a bomb, anywhere.*

But the consensus was that the media did not allow for such differentiation and reflection. Participants felt strongly that it was the media that had generated the public perception of Muslims as terrorists.

West London participant: *The whole thing goes back to the media. One of the connotations that the media use very frequently, is "Muslim terrorism", "Muslim terrorism", "Muslim terrorism".*

Norwich participant 2: *I'm 45 years old, I never ever heard 'Muslim terrorist' [...].*

RC: *So that's a new term?*

Norwich participant 2: *For me it's new.*

RC: *Where do you hear it?*

Norwich participant 2: *I hear here [in Britain].*

Norwich participant 3: *In the media.*

Norwich participant 2: *Yes, in the media, exactly, I watch TV. I never ever heard it before, 'Muslim terrorist'.*

It was pointed out that a stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists was facilitated by the media's omission to report about the Muslims who became victims of terrorists.

Swansea participant 1: *If you look at the statistics, you will find that these terrorists, Muslim extremists, they have killed more Muslims than non-Muslims [...]. So we are, the Muslims are, the first victims of these people. [...]*

Swansea participant 2: *When it happened, it happened to Muslims among them. So they're killing Muslims also.*

In most groups, participants were concerned about the negative impact the equation of Muslims with terrorists had on refugees' lives. Many perceived a discrimination of Muslims in the asylum process, with higher refusal rates and stricter police reporting requirements, as discussed in section 10.

Others highlighted the divisive and disruptive effect on community relations in general, and on already vulnerable refugee communities in particular.

Impact on community relations

Some groups, for example in Glasgow and Leeds, reported a definite increase in tensions in local community relations after the terrorist attacks; others, for example in Norwich and Swansea, seemed not to be affected.

Glasgow participant: *[E]specially when the 7/7 happened in London, there's a lot of tension within communities. There was a lot of fear and scepticism within refugee communities in Glasgow.*

Regardless of their local situation, some participants voiced concerns about the potential negative impact of public hostility and stereotyping on refugees' ability to make and maintain social contacts and to integrate into British society.

North London participant: *I think excluding one community, I mean admittedly, it's mainly the Muslim population that's most affected. But targeting them as a whole has affected the other communities such as us. That's where the danger lies. It's had a knock-on effect on other communities, that's why we feel the same, we don't feel we can integrate properly into society and do things as we wish, because we're essentially looked upon as, I don't know, as terrorists or some other brand they come up with.*

At the same time, participants in the North and West London groups felt that in their city, the negative impact of stereotyping in the wake of the terrorist attacks was mitigated by London's ethnic, racial and religious diversity. Cross-community contacts and recognition of people's varied backgrounds and experiences formed an integral part of life in London, which made it easier for refugees to overcome their feeling of insecurity.

However, such advantages of diversity were not experienced by the young people in the East London group. They felt quite strongly that the terrorist attacks had encouraged young people to form groups based exclusively on race, faith and, primarily, national origin, which they saw as drivers of segregation. Such groups replaced a shared sense of belonging, of Britishness, which participants considered desirable but beyond their reach. Since the 2001 terrorist attacks and discourse, they felt increasingly isolated from, and not accepted by, their British-born peers, and in turn did not really feel they belonged to Britain.

East London participant 1: *[T]hey have to belong to a group.*

East London participant 2: *To defend themselves, for safety reasons. You're only in a group where you're accepted. I think if you have English friends, they're like, oh, your people do that, don't they. You always have to explain yourself.*

East London participant 3: *You're not accepted as British.*

East London participant 2: *Exactly. Are you saying there was some point in time when that was different? Yes, before September 11. I think that was totally different.*

East London participant 1: *There was never a mention of nationality, like you meet people, like, what is your name, where do you live, you start like a conversation about other things, but now you meet each other, first thing, like one of the first questions in your conversation, like, where you're from.*

East London participant 2: *What religion are you, has become the second question now.*

East London participant 3: *I'm British – no, no, no. Where are you from...*

East London participant 4: *...originally, yeah.*

East London participant 2: *Legally we are British, but we don't feel like we are...*

East London participant 5: *... accepted.*

Views in Middlesbrough were equally pessimistic. A participant described what he considered the breakdown of multicultural society after 7/7.

Middlesbrough participant: *I think in a generation England tried to make this culture, mix of culture, but after this September 11, start to broke all that, and start you see the white people go there, the coloured people go like that, and make everything, all the world is unsafe. For us now, the refugees, we're afraid to go back to our countries, because it's getting worse there, and we worry, because we see this slide of peace in this side of the world. We worry that it comes here as well.*

This analysis suggested that growing racial divisions and hostility mirrored refugees' experiences with inter-ethnic and perhaps terrorist violence in their home countries, which they had sought to escape by coming to Britain. In this way, refugees were thought to be particularly affected by social and community tensions, in addition to problems they faced on the grounds of race and faith.

While participants continued to feel much safer in Britain than in their country of origin, many pointed to increasing difficulties in developing relationships with British people and establishing trust in a context of stereotyping based on, and exacerbating, fear and insecurity.

Leeds participant: *The experience that you pass through as an asylum seeker or refugee is not one that makes you feel, yes I belong here, I want to be a part of this life, I want to feel British. What happened after the July attack, everything made it worse. There were times went I felt all alone. [...] And you feel so helpless, excluded, you feel like surplus, like you have nothing to lose, and that is perilous. [...] For me, with all that I read in the newspapers, which portray me as an outsider, an alien, a criminal, as good-for-nothing, it is hard for me. I wish I felt all positive, that I could say I belong here.*

While the public reaction to the terrorist attacks was seen as adding to the feeling of isolation and exclusion experienced by individuals going through the asylum process, government policy that has determined not only the asylum process but also the response to terrorism was perceived as jeopardizing good community relations and integration more widely.

North London participant: *I think it's [the terrorist attacks] also had an impact on how we can integrate with English people, for instance our neighbours or friends, colleagues, etc. And ultimately they've got views about us and we can't as individuals defeat, it's impossible to break the views they have against us because of government policy. Therefore it's made integration with neighbours or colleagues and friends much more difficult than we would like to.*

8 Policy responses to terrorism

The study aimed to assess refugees' awareness of national policy responses to terrorism, especially those proposed and agreed since 7/7, as well as their views of those policies and the effect these policies have on their lives. Discussions focused in particular on two provisions of the Terrorism Act 2006 (encouragement of terrorism and proscription of terrorist organisations), and on the asylum determination process. Therefore, these are addressed in separate sections below. The general policy environment, the government's approach to terrorism and specific policies and measures considered important by participants are discussed in the following.

Perceptions of a volatile policy environment

Overall, the awareness of the details of specific policies or legislative measures was fairly low, especially of measures not directly related to the field of immigration and asylum. Not surprisingly, participants were more familiar with policies immediately relevant to their asylum application or refugee status than with the provisions of the Terrorism Act. Equally predictable was their greater awareness of those issues that had been widely discussed in the media, such as detention without trial and deportation of foreign criminals. Awareness of and interest in policy issues widely differed both between and, to a lesser extent, within groups, though no discernable pattern based on participants' profiles emerged.

Participants referred to a broad range of policies they considered relevant to their lives and linked to the terrorism discourse. Some policies were – mistakenly – assumed to be direct consequences of 7/7, others were seen in the wider context of the terrorism discourse after 9/11. The overwhelming impression was that policy responses to terrorism were inappropriately directed at refugees and asylum seekers.

This was the common thread tying together an array of policies that participants criticised in the context of responses to terrorism. These ranged from stricter family reunion and marriage rules to a withdrawal of family amnesty, and from Section 4 and voluntary returns programmes to immigration offences sentencing and ID cards. A number of participants spoke about their feeling of insecurity related to detention without trial under the Terrorism Act, and in two groups participants had heard about refugees being arrested, and then released without charge, under the Terrorism Act, based on their political or religious contacts. While objecting against pre-charge

detention as an anti-terrorism measure, one participant remarked that many asylum seekers were already kept in detention for many months for administrative reasons which formed part of immigration measures.

Some participants expressed their disillusion with the sheer number and range of changing policies targeted at them, which in the case of the following participant led to a distrust of the entire political system.

Hull participant [through interpreter]: *He doesn't believe in this country there are any rules, because day by day the rules getting changed, and the rules from yesterday came out, today expired. There's no rules in this country, he says.*

Other participants pointed to the contradictory nature of some of the new rules and policies and suspected that this was due to the policies' focus on targeting asylum seekers in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

Leeds participant 1: *Those new policies, people think are influenced by what happened in July, the terrorist attacks, and their relation with asylum seekers. The five years limbo, and the contradictory policy, 'Integration Matters', and then the recent one, electronic tagging...*

Leeds participant 2: *Yes.*

Leeds participant 1: *... and monitoring. People feel they are being targeted because of what happened in July.*

Perceptions of government approach: linking asylum seekers with terrorists

Despite varying levels of policy awareness, all groups criticised the government's response to terrorism for establishing a direct link between asylum seekers and

terrorism. As this link was considered to form the core of the post 7/7 policy environment, specific policy measures were widely seen as having a negative effect on refugees and asylum seekers. In most participants' views, devising measures against terrorism was crucial, but compromised by directing them against asylum seekers. Distinguishing asylum seekers from terrorists was deemed as an essential but missing premise of anti-terrorism policymaking.

Birmingham participant: *There is an asylum seeker who had come here for fear of persecution and there is a terrorist who thinks, I have to kill people. These are two different people. And they should be treated in different...*

Others: *...in different ways.*

Rather than heeding this call for a differentiated approach, the government was thought to regard asylum seekers as terrorists and to adopt approaches, language and measures that treated them as such. Groups in Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, North London and Middlesbrough were particularly outspoken, emphasising the negative impact of stereotyping on individuals, communities and society as a whole.

North London participant: *I feel communities such as ours, and the Asians and other communities, are specifically targeted.*

RC: *By whom?*

North London participant: *Essentially by the government. It's created an atmosphere where refugees are seen as the evil of society. This in turn is going to create an intolerable society. Whereas the government's role should be to encourage integration, I think.*

The long-term impact on public attitudes, social relations and cohesion was highlighted here. A number of participants saw a direct, causal link between the government's approach and increasingly hostile public attitudes. They pointed to the negative influence the government's targeting of a particular community could have on the development of society's values.

Leeds participant: *When you are just categorising a certain group of people, who are following a certain religion, as terrorists, and when we are victimising, directly or indirectly, a certain group of society, such as refugees because of the campaign against terrorism, what is worrying me is that a new value is being put forward [...]*

At the same time, participants were also searching for explanations for this perceived equation of asylum seekers with terrorists.

Glasgow participant: *On the impact of terrorism on asylum seekers, we have first of all to make a difference between who is an asylum seeker and who is a terrorist. Because at this point everything is crashing together. [...] When now the government from UK is targeting all the asylum seeker because of what's happening on 7/7, I think that is wrong because I believe the asylum seekers they are [continues with interpreter] the weakest group in the community, and that's the group the government is able to put the pressure on and to show that they are controlling the most vulnerable.*

In this case, the participant appeared to suggest that the government considered asylum seekers an easy target, and that a focus on asylum seekers in the context of terrorism matched the policy objective of exercising more control over this group and over the asylum process more generally. This explanation tied in with a perception that the anti-terrorism discourse has exacerbated the inappropriate treatment of asylum seekers that many experienced as criminalisation. In the Leeds group the impression of criminalisation was summarised as follows:

Leeds participant: *You expect freedom but you are tagged like a criminal, told you are illegal but you're not, you have registered as an asylum seeker, you are not bogus. I'm not a liar, I'm not a thief, I'm not a criminal. I'm a decent human being. When you arrive here, you don't have a choice of where to go, you have to give your fingerprints at the airport, even though I have never committed a crime. That makes you feel like a criminal. It totally changes your view, it's a shock for you.*

While there was no unanimous view as to whether the perceived criminalisation of asylum seekers had taken place independently of the terrorism discourse or was caused by it, a number of participants described their acute feeling of being criminalised in contexts beyond the asylum process, ranging from the media to security measures to public policies. While people in the asylum process, and those of Muslim faith, were particularly vulnerable, it was pointed out that all refugees appeared to be affected by stigmatisation and criminalisation.

North London: *I think the most important thing is to try and combat this notion that a refugee is basically a bad person. That's what's happened, and that's the atmosphere that's been created. [...]. The term refugee is nearly equated with the term criminal. And that's essentially in society it means the same thing, nowadays. [...] There's some stigma that's attached to the term refugee, which criminalises a huge segment of the population.*

Some participants, particularly those from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia – the countries of origin of the suspects of the failed attacks of 21 July 05 – thought that the criminalisation of asylum seekers was motivated by the refugee background of the suspects of the failed London attacks. They had personally experienced discrimination on grounds of sharing the suspects' national origins, and thus argued vehemently against taking the background of the suspects as a basis for connecting all refugees to terrorism. The discussions repeatedly evoked the innocence of refugees and asylum seekers as opposed to the criminality of terrorists or convicted criminals, and the failure of public and policy discourses to make that distinction.

Birmingham participant: *[The government] think, offering refugees and asylum seekers indefinite leave to remain in this country, they are the people who are terrorising the country. So the government relates asylum and refugees in connection with the terrorists, simply because the people who acted in that were refugees and asylum seekers a long time ago, and they were offered a place to live in this country. [...] So the government has to change their way of thinking, their way of relating the whole issue towards the asylum. Asylum seekers are suffering for nothing. Most of the asylum seekers are honest Muslims, they are honest Christians. Millions of them, they have no plans, they have no idea what is going on. So the whole thing, it is really affecting the innocent people. It is really affecting the lives of the people who should be, who are very, very innocent.*

Critical views of the definition of terrorism

The widespread perception among participants that policy responses to terrorism tended to equate asylum seekers with terrorists led many of them to question the government's understanding of terrorism. While most were unfamiliar with the exact legal definition set out in the Terrorism Act, many were able to give examples of how the government has classified certain people, organisations and activities as terrorist. They felt the government's understanding of terrorism had shortcomings on three separate accounts: an imbalance between condemning individual terrorist activities while committing violence against civilians in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan; a construction of a hierarchy of victims of terrorism; and a lack of distinction between terrorists and legitimate forms of resistance.

Many participants diverted to foreign policy issues when discussing the government's definition of terrorism. They were particularly concerned about the

war in Iraq, and some spoke in this context of state terrorism exercised by Western governments and a double standard applied when defining terrorism.

Norwich participant: *They [British and American governments] just call everyone terrorists. They can go to any country, do whatever they want, wreck, as in Iraq, and no one calls them terrorist. And then when some come and fight for freedom, they call them terrorists.*

Some also detected such double standard with regard to the victims of terrorism. Participants in Swansea bemoaned that terrorists were only recognised as such when citizens of Britain or other Western countries got killed, not when their victims were Muslims, especially not Muslims residing in Arab, African or Asian countries. The impression that Muslims were less likely to be recognised as victims correlated with the perception that Muslims were generally considered to be the perpetrators, the terrorists.

Norwich participant 1: *I want to speak about terrorism. We should explain who is terrorist. Somebody just speaking about religion, and somebody they believe something, the same as Osama bin Laden.*

RC: *You think there's a difference?*

Norwich participant 1: *Yes, it's different. But somebody here or in another country, if anyone's speaking about religion, or Islam, his ideas about Islam, they say he's a terrorist.*

Norwich participant 2: *If you're preaching Islam you're a terrorist.*

Norwich participant 1: *Yes.*

The focus groups confirmed that it was important to refugees, both at the asylum application stage and in the integration process, that their political activities, including support of resistance struggles, could be recognised in the context of rights-based movements in their countries of origin, as opposed to terrorist activities. That distinction was identified as the basis for seeking protection from political and state persecution. Some participants felt that the government's broad and loose understanding of terrorism no longer allowed it to make that distinction, thus undermining everyone's right to seek refuge from persecution.

North London participant: *[T]he way they define it in the Act is completely one-side because it disregards community feeling. For instance, the old saying, one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter, is completely true, isn't it. [...] If you call somebody a terrorist because they're resisting against a government, because of persecution, against the state, because they*

wiped your villages out, because they've caused millions of countrymen to flee or to migrate from villages to cities where they're now essentially homeless, unemployed and susceptible to or vulnerable to all sorts of things such as persecution etc, then I think there's a huge problem there because we have to think about who the terrorist is. Is it the state or is it the people who are resisting against it? And that's where the government has gone wrong.

Insecurities about deportation policies

In discussing the impact of policy responses to terrorism, the focus groups revealed high levels of anxiety and insecurity about potential deportation back to the countries of origin. This was present not only among asylum seeking participants but also among refugees, including naturalised refugees. Such insecurities appeared to arise from the national discourse on asylum in the context of terrorism, reinforced by some individual experiences of refusals and detention. This in turn led to perceptions of policy measures that did not always correspond to existing policies.

In the specific context of anti-terrorism measures, the fear of becoming subjected to deportation was closely linked to the perception that the government did not distinguish between refugees and terrorists. Some participants explicitly agreed with deporting terrorists, while others had reservations on grounds of safety in the country of origin, but none felt confident that the government was able to differentiate between terrorists and refugees. The following two participants describe their concerns about deportation from a personal perspective on the one hand and a policy perspective on the other.

Norwich participant: *[W]hen the situation was really terrorist or was scary, I thought Home Office is going to deport all asylum seekers, or reject, to their country, and it was really big problem for us. Every movement, every change caused us to think we are not safe here, because they just pinpoint you and they look at you as a terrorist, or as a Muslim.*

Glasgow participant: *[S]ince 7/7, bad laws came out. Like all asylum seekers' cases should be deported to their countries. This law never been before the attack in London. It just came after the attack. So immigration and Home Office become really tough with asylum seekers and refugees, and it made wrong decisions against good cases.*

Such perceptions of policies, regardless of their accuracy, gave rise to anxieties about deportation and a general feeling of insecurity. Participants revealed a

number of specific fears, which appeared triggered by policy and media debates. One participant was afraid of becoming subject to extraordinary rendition, others referred to the government's option of deporting even citizens by depriving dual nationals of their citizenship.

Middlesbrough participant 1: *[W]e came here because we believe in human rights, and we believe we are safe, and we love to keep this country safe, but we worry that maybe there's something wrong with, somebody with wrong idea think about us. We get kidnapped and sent back somewhere and we'd be tortured.*

Middlesbrough participant 2: *Because that was also, I don't know whether this was a law but certainly it was on the discussion on the media. If someone is originally from somewhere else, regardless his nationality, whether he is British or not, if he's suspected of terrorism, then ultimately he could be deported to where he came from. So that was, I think, something which worried us.*

The public debate about deportation of foreign nationals who had served a prison sentence – which took place during the fieldwork period in spring 06 – also figured prominently in participants' minds. Some felt that these foreign nationals had all been described as asylum seekers in the public discourse, and thereby added to their own insecurity, while others thought that singling out a small number of foreigners from the large cohort of British offenders was indicative of xenophobic attitudes. Yet others believed that the failure to deport released foreign prisoners illustrated the government's double standard, with convicted criminals, whose victims may well have included refugees, remaining in Britain and innocent asylum seekers being deported. As in the case of terrorist attacks, participants identified a twofold victimisation of asylum seekers:

Birmingham participant: *But when we are victims of these criminals on one side, on the other side we are victims also to the government.*

In Glasgow and Swansea, the issue of deportation of criminals and terrorists prompted reflections on the relationship between criminal law, which applied to everyone equally, and immigration law, which allowed discrimination on the basis of nationality. One participant argued for a simple principle of equality:

Swansea participant: *[I]f people are having family here, have established their own life here, they have to be treated like anybody else. If they commit a crime, then they have to go to prison. I think the British*

government should just use the same laws as they use on native people.

In the following exchange, the two participants agreed in principle that terrorists or other criminals should be prosecuted, but could be seen to argue for a separation of immigration and criminal law proceedings. The first speaker appeared to call for terrorist suspects to be dealt with in the existing criminal law system, not under the broad detention and deportation provisions of immigration law, and the second speaker seemed to insist that asylum seekers be treated according to immigration provisions, and not criminalised in the asylum process.

Glasgow participant 1: *I don't believe that thing should be generalised, we should look at individual cases. If somebody has actually committed a crime, they should face the law. The law is already there, the legal system is there. Everything, you know. The state should leave this to the judiciary, they should not be influencing the judiciary. It's not fair. If they overrule the judiciary, it means there is no impartiality there.*

Glasgow participant 2: *[...] If he's a terrorist, even if his country is not safe, they have to send him back because he's a terrorist. As a terrorist you must face that. [...] But we have to make a difference between a real asylum seeker who is not a terrorist, who's come to seek a safety place. For this one, if the government say [...] all asylum seekers are like that [i.e. terrorists], like they are doing now. On this point they are wrong, because they are generalising everything, they think all the asylum seekers they come in this country they are terrorists. We are not terrorists.*

Views on whether terrorist suspects should be deported to unsafe countries were similarly characterised by concerns about the application of such deportation measures not only to suspects but also to asylum seekers. While some participants thought it was appropriate to proceed with deporting terrorist suspects regardless of safety concerns, others were sceptical mainly because they did not believe the government would distinguish between deporting suspects and deporting asylum seekers. An example from an Algerian participant illustrated that the government was seen to treat terrorist suspects and asylum seekers along a continuum of present and future terrorist threat.

Swansea participant: *[I]f you take the example of Algerians, they [the UK government] think they [the Algerian terrorist suspects] are a threat for the British society; they want to get rid of them. They want to send them back to Algeria. They think all the failed asylum*

seekers should also go back, because they might be terrorists in few days or few months or so.

It appeared to be this perceived lack of distinction between terrorist and criminal suspects on the one hand and refugees and asylum seekers on the other that heightened refugees' sense of insecurity.

9 Impact on civic and political participation

Participation in public life has been recognised as key to refugee integration . This study aimed to assess whether new and expanded provisions under the Terrorism Act 2006 have changed the way refugees view and experience their civic and political engagement in British society.

Many participants regarded community and cross-community activities as distinct from political engagement. The notion of politics was given a narrow interpretation of party politics at one end of the spectrum and political extremism leading terrorism at the other end. This was contrasted with community activities, ranging from cultural initiatives to inter-faith dialogue to consultations with the police, which were preferred over formal politics and more prevalent among participants. Activities in this informal realm appeared not to have changed much since 7/7. While in one of the London groups participants criticised the lack of formal political engagement among refugees and RCOs, this was not seen as related to the terrorism events and discourse.

Some participants saw their participation in community and civic life more directly as a form of political engagement. These included individuals from refugee groups with a tradition of engagement in political independence movements relating to their region of origin, as well as those with a personal history of public and political activism. Men appeared to be overrepresented among these participants, and they were more outspoken than women in their criticism of the implications of the new legislative measures.

In the focus groups composed mainly of asylum seekers, the prevailing reluctance to engage in civic and political life was explained in different ways. Participants in Hull were wary of political tensions dissecting their country of origin, which they found reflected in communities from their country here in the UK. In Swansea, one participant active in cross-community initiatives felt that political involvement was linked to extremism. In Norwich, participants felt that during the asylum process, which in their case had been ongoing for years, legal insecurity precluded any

engagement in public activities that could be regarded as political by the Home Office. In Middlesbrough, participants disagreed about the relevance and role of political engagement but all professed feeling reluctant to speak and act freely.

While registering an overall scepticism towards formal political engagement, the discussions also revealed that those participants who had been interested or involved in political discussions, groups and activities had become increasingly cautious in their engagement as debates about measures under successive Terrorism Acts progressed. As presented below, participants in Norwich, Middlesbrough and North London explicitly raised the problem of a decrease in refugees' public involvement, especially engagement of a more overtly political nature. The exception to this increasingly reluctant approach to civic engagement was the young people's group in East London. Participants came from a pre-existing group that had formed after 7/7 as a defensive support system to enable young refugees to tackle community tensions and negative public perceptions.

To explore attitudes towards civic and political participation in the context of the terrorism discourse, groups were asked directly about the measures under the Terrorism Act 2006 that relate to expressing political views and participating in political activities. These include the new provision against encouraging, or glorifying, terrorism, and the older but recently expanded provision that proscribes organisations based on their perceived affiliation with terrorist activities.

The majority of participants were not aware of the exact provisions of the law, though many had heard, in one form or another, about the glorification offence, which had been extensively discussed in the media. There

was much less awareness of the list of proscribed organisations, with only the London groups explicitly referring to organisations they knew to have been outlawed. Opinions on either of these provisions under the Terrorism Act were divided. Those that were aware of the provisions tended to oppose them, while those that had been unaware were inclined to express support for any legal measures designed to fight terrorism. This support came in the form of a general condemnation of terrorism, which was prevalent among all groups. Here is an example from Hull, where participants had not heard of the glorification debate and provision:

Hull participant: *We're against these people who supporting terrorists, by writing, by speaking, by anything.*

Lacking awareness of the legal and policy context, some participants reiterated their condemnation of terrorism but were not in a position to reflect on the substance of anti-terrorism measures.

However, this was not the case in the young person's group, even though participants were unaware of the legislation. They spontaneously offered arguments against both the glorification offence and the proscription of terrorist groups on the grounds of equal treatment. Participants resented that freedom of speech seemed absolute for those disparaging Islam – while unaware of the debates around the provision against incitement to religious hatred – but restricted for those supporting all forms of Islam, including fundamentalism. Similarly, they thought it was disproportionate to focus on outlawing Islamist groups while the existence of racist organisations continued to offend and exclude them.

East London participant: *I'm not saying they should encourage those kind of groups, but then again there's the rise of the BNP. And if they're not allowing others, that clearly tells you that you're not wanted, so it's best of you to leave.*

Glorification of terrorism and freedom of speech

Discussions of the provision against glorification or encouragement of terrorism were lively, with different perspectives emerging. Overall, most comments reflected severe concerns about the measure's impact on the right to freedom of speech. Differences in opinion appeared to arise partly on the basis of existing political affiliations relating to the countries of origin, e.g. Kurdish refugees from Turkey and Algerian refugees opposing the Islamist movement seemed

to be situated on opposing sides of the debate. The strongest criticism of the glorification provision came from male participants in Middlesbrough and North London, with only one or two concerned voices from female participants.

Criticism of the glorification provision was made on three different but related grounds: the British human rights tradition which participants distinguished from the countries they fled from, participants' own equal right to speak out and take part alongside British citizens, and the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism. Arguments based on Britain's human rights tradition and the fight against terrorism are illustrated in the following contribution.

Middlesbrough participant 1: *If England, England made, I think you don't have anything, you have fish and chips, you have the bus, the red bus, you have the post, whatever, all these rubbish things, but you have one thing. You have freedom of speech and you have political opinions, different kind of political. If you lose that, that's it, you are not, England disappears, nothing. And now all these laws and all these things, they try to destroy that. Try to make you live in hatred. That's if you speak something, you'll be accused. And that create terrorist. Because if the people don't talk, like in our country, is dictator, doesn't allowed us to talk and make us wrong. But if you talk, you free to speak, there'll be no terrorist there.*

Comments from many participants confirmed that refugees can be particularly sensitive with regard to what they see as Britain's human rights tradition and values, given their personal background of fleeing dictatorships and seeking refuge from human rights violations. This is the basis for making a connection between authoritarianism and terrorism on the one hand and political freedoms and absence of terrorism on the other, as suggested by the participant quoted above. It is likely that freedom of speech would have been a problem for many participants in their home countries, hence a number of them expressed fears that relinquishing the right to freedom of speech in Britain would place them in a situation similar to those they had fled, ruled by violence, including terrorism. Others stressed that it would impede their integration into British society by making it difficult for them to interact freely and openly with others.

North London participant: *[T]he 2006 [Terrorism] Act, it's got measures such as glorification, which has, which affects us as a community immensely because we are essentially here because of persecution from the*

states that we come from. And I think we have the right to support people who are resisting against that state. And therefore I have the right personally to praise them for that, to be able to say their names and to be able to keep them in my memory. That should be my right. This new legislation prohibits any kind of discussion about this. And I mean it's basically targeting people like us. It's got huge human rights issues, such as freedom of speech for general people but it affects us, people like us, more because we, that's our feelings. It's not only freedom of speech, it's how we feel. If we can't express our feelings to people, then how are we expected to integrate?

The specific targeting of refugee communities by anti-terrorism laws was felt by a number of participants, and they expressed strong concerns about the glorification provision on equality grounds. It was thought that freedom of speech had lost its status as a universal right and had become a privilege enjoyed only by British people.

Middlesbrough participant 2: *[I]f I openly say what I think to the main root of the problem, then I could easily be taken to be, or seen, or considered as supporter of terrorism and that of course falls clearly into glorifying terrorism act, which is a law on itself now. But if my British neighbour stands up and says no, British government is completely wrong on invading Iraq, on prosecuting someone because of terrorism and things, nothing will happen for him. He's openly opposing the government, but what will happen to him in terms of his security is far better off than what I would face. Because I could easily be conceived as terrorism supporter, but they would not be terrorism supporter, they would simply be considered as someone who is expressing his views and his rights.*

The explicit reference to the Terrorism Act indicates that this law is perceived to pertain specifically to refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, rather than function as a general criminal law which applies to everyone in the UK. This perception can then induce a form of self-censorship, as the following examples show, based on the fear of being accused of committing an offence under the Terrorism Act.

Middlesbrough participant 3: *But now there are all these laws, is because somewhere I'm afraid of saying too much. Two other participants nod. I'm afraid of people taking it the wrong way, wrong side instead of what I want to put, want to say, really.*

West London participant: For example, I know a lot of people who see what happens on the Palestinian

issue as a big issue, but this means that you don't talk about this. You have to shut up. Mind your business. For example, lots of people have strong feelings about what's happening in Iraq. So we don't talk about it.

Among asylum seekers, the Terrorism Act appears to exacerbate a more general reluctance to speak freely, which was found among those less focused on criminal law provisions and more on the legal insecurity inferred by asylum and immigration policies.

Norwich participant: *Although here the main reason for going to a democratic country and living in freedom is you can say everything you think. But after a while, because of those changes in the policies, I find it quite difficult to just define your idea or express you will easily. [...]*

RC: *Why do you personally find it difficult to express your views?*

Norwich participant: *Because of all those fear about accusing being a terrorist or against the law, you're just don't be that stable, stabilised in this country.*

This feeling of instability and insecurity was intensified, in the eyes of some participants, by what they regarded as the vagueness of the glorification provision. A number of participants felt that in their already precarious situation they preferred to err on the side of caution, as they felt unsure what constituted an offence and what did not.

Norwich participant 1: *I don't think the police or the Home Office has made clear to anybody... Norwich participant 2: Yes.*

Norwich participant 1: *... what they mean by glorification of terrorism.*

Norwich participant 2: *Yes, the problem is you don't know what to say or what is included.*

Norwich participant 1: *So does that mean that if I go and shout I like Bin Laden, I'm gonna get in prison or what?*

Norwich participant 2: *Yes.*

Norwich participant 1: *So it's not very clear.*

Uncertainty of the scope of the glorification offence was also at the heart of a lively discussion in the Glasgow group. While largely unaware of the exact legal provision, a number of participants emphasised how wrong it would be to glorify and encourage terrorism in any way. Although all accepted this point in principle, some argued that in practice, everything depended on those who had the power to interpret and apply the law.

Glasgow participant 1: *I don't think it's right, even at home for example, father and mother you can't say*

something bad in front of the children, because they can copy bad behaviour, it's the same way the government is talking about. If somebody says go kill people, or some bad word. That's not good to preach in front of people. So I think the government is right.

Glasgow participant 2: Yes, to preach wrong thing is very bad. If the government says anything about that, I agree with it. For me no negotiate with terrorists because you cannot negotiate with terrorists, because they are bad people [...].

Glasgow participant 3: I don't think I can encourage the government to negotiate with terrorists, because terrorism is wrong. It touches everybody, from every spectrum. But what I'm saying is the power that they have to direct this person what he say is wrong or right. Now we know there are a lot of policies that are coming in that are against us, and we as asylum seekers we can put forth our views in terms of how it is affecting us to gain public support. And based on the way that we're putting it, because the government have this power to say ok what you're saying is right or wrong. They may use that in a very wrong way. That is my concern. And that's why the glorification to me doesn't make sense. Because the government will use it in the wrong way. Not necessarily looking at the terrorism but looking at other issues, because that's where they feel they will have public support, because asylum seekers are always a scapegoat. And this glorification thing will come in one way or the other, in terms of the way we are faring. And that's what my concern is.

This last speaker, among others, clearly thought that in the case of the glorification provision, the chosen method of fighting terrorism had the capacity to go beyond the agreed principle of anti-terrorism and be used for other, more contentious purposes instead. Even if the intention behind the law, i.e. the fight against terrorism, could be supported, the specific measure could not.

Proscribed organisations and freedom of assembly

Many of the issues raised in relation to proscribed groups overlapped with the discussion of the definition of terrorism and the glorification offence. The most striking observation regarding this specific anti-terrorism measure was that hardly any participants were aware of the existence of a list of proscribed organisations. In the two London groups where participants were aware of the law and able to name at least one such organisation, condemnation of their proscription was unequivocal. In these cases participants were convinced that the proscribed group they knew was

falsely designated as a terrorist organisation. This was seen as indicative of the wrong approach taken by this provision under the Terrorism Act. In contrast, in the other focus groups where participants ventured an opinion on a law they were unfamiliar with, the feeling prevailed that terrorist organisations should indeed be outlawed. As with the glorification provision, it appeared to be a matter of principle versus practice, with those who had practical experience of the law criticising its improper application and expressing their anxieties evoked by the expectation of such application.

In the following case, both provisions (glorification and proscription) under the Terrorism Act appeared to have had a combined negative effect on political participation. This was not caused by an actual application of the law but simply by an awareness that the government now has the legal tools to monitor asylum seekers' and refugees' activities and associations, if it chooses to do so. The participant recounted feeling too insecure to exercise her right to freedom of assembly.

Norwich participant 1: Actually, last year I was going to take part in an event which was prepared by an organisation, there were a few people from Iraq which work with the injured people. It was going to explain to real situation, the use of chemical things in the war. They just wanted to talk about this matter. But as I am an asylum seeker, I was really scared to take part in this kind of event, because there is no distinction between what is terrorist glorification and what you can talk about.

RC: So you were reluctant to participate?

Norwich participant 1: Yes. I was going, I had really liked to take part, but because I was afraid.

Norwich participant 2: Because it might affect your case?

Norwich participant 1: Exactly, yes. I thought maybe it's going to be against my situation, my status, if you go and be in favour of ordinary people in Iraq. That's why I was put off. Because there is no explanation [of what is or is not prohibited].

Participants with refugee status, for example those involved in the Leeds discussion, expressed fewer concerns about political engagement. This suggests that the impact of the Terrorism Act appears more pronounced when viewed in conjunction with immigration and asylum law. A Norwich participant made this very explicit:

Norwich participant 1: Sometimes you're just afraid of being accused of being a dangerous person or a criminal. Especially after those terrorist attacks in

London and also 9/11, I found it that people preferred to have a typical life, and are scared of talking about these political issues. To be honest, I found myself less and less active in here. [...]

RC: Would you be worried about joining a group?

Norwich participant 1: Let me tell you, be honest with you, I haven't been given the status, I prefer to be in this situation, while I'm not sure about the status, the Home Office view.

Drawing this link between political engagement and immigration status suggests that participants feel that universal rights (freedom of speech and assembly) have been particularised and tied to specific circumstances. The following example, relating to the citizenship stage of the immigration process, illustrates this further:

North London participant 1: I know many people who are [...] in the UK for a long time, they've got the right to apply for citizenship to get British passport. But this year, many of those people get refusal letter from Home Office and it says, we know of your contact with [organisation x], so because of security reasons, we refuse to give you citizenship.

RC: Are you saying the citizenship application involves a test of your political convictions?

North London participants 1 and 2 jointly: Yes, it does. Now it does.

North London participant 2: Like he says, I've come across many people who've come to me and asked me to read the letter they've got. And it says in the letter clearly, because of your past activities, we're unable to give you citizenship, because of state security.

RC: How many people do you think might be affected?

North London participant 1: I know a few people, they're my friends, like 6, 7 people, they applied and they got this letter from Home Office. So they have no any right to apply.

North London participant 2: They can't travel, 'cause they don't have any passport.

RC: How does the Home Office know about their affiliation?

North London participant 2: When you come to the country, you're asked to say why you suffered persecution.

RC: That's at the asylum stage.

North London participant 2: Exactly. And if you explain your feelings, and your involvement with the, say for instance, [organisation x], then you're giving the Home Office evidence that you're involved with the [organisation x], even if it's just as a sympathiser. And they're using that now, that sort of evidence, against people.

In addition to evidencing that the proscribed group provision has been used to deny citizenship to certain groups of refugees, this exchange also suggests a potential dilemma arising at the stage of the asylum interview. Protection in the UK is sought on the basis of affiliation with certain political groups, but these groups may now be outlawed in the UK as well as in the country of origin, thus defeating the purpose of asking for protection.

North London participant 3: Before I went on protests and marches, we used to take placards of [organisation x], which people see as terrorist group, other people see them as freedom fighters. And I have the right to support them, because that's my thinking, feeling towards them. I don't care about what they think, it's my feeling, and if I can't express this, that's not right, that's a restriction, that's like putting you inside a cell. That makes us like robots and I don't think that's right.

North London participant 2: True.

RC: Specifically about [organisation x], you mentioned they are outlawed. How does that affect you personally?

North London participant 1: People who came [...] because of their sympathy to [organisation x] they came to this country. In this case, today, European countries and England as well, says [organisation x] is a terrorist [organisation]. In this case, for example, because I came to this country to improve myself and freely to talk about everything, to talk about every politic issues and to talk my language, and if I sympathise to [organisation x], to live freely and to sympathise to [organisation x], but in this case I should go to another country from the UK to live freely.

This exchange shows participants' frustration of getting caught in a circle of political restrictions that spans the UK and their country of origin.

10 Impact on asylum process and decisions

The asylum determination process

Most participants who were still in the asylum process, especially the groups in Glasgow, Middlesbrough, Birmingham and Hull, were convinced that the terrorist attacks and the public discourse on terrorism had a direct and negative impact on the asylum determination process. They felt that the government's default position was to equate asylum seekers with terrorists and that this was directly reflected in an increased refusal rate of asylum cases.

Birmingham participant 1: *The government try to equalise the person who is an asylum seeker or refugee with a terrorist. They don't see there is no connection between the two. The asylum claim should be viewed on its own sake.*

Birmingham participant 2: *That is how we see it, anyway. Some of us have a problem because of that thing which happened [i.e. 7/7].*

Birmingham participant 1: *They tried to link it and to make it very, very difficult for an asylum application to come through. They tried to tighten the rules as much as they can.*

These concerns about cases being decided on the basis of terrorism-related suspicions rather than merit were mirrored in the following, more general remark by a London participant.

North London participant: *On the issue of asylum applications, one, it can be said that there's a change of culture, because what's happened now is, every application is refused by the Home Office regardless of its merits.*

In addition to pointing to an increase in refused asylum claims, participants identified other aspects of the

asylum process they considered influenced by the issue of terrorism. These ranged from Section 4 and voluntary returns programmes (of particular concern to the Iraqi participants in Hull) to a perceived withdrawal of an amnesty for asylum seeking families. The following exchange in Glasgow illustrates this.

Glasgow participant 1: *The victim part that started after the 7/7 for asylum seekers, everyone can feel it, everyone who's an asylum seeker can feel that. When they was targeting them, when they was dealing with their case. Everything was very, very tough after the 7th of July. [...]*

Glasgow participant 2: *It was coming, the amnesty. Just because of the terrorism, they stopped.*

Glasgow participant 3: *Yes, that's true. We expected in last August a new amnesty to give to families. It was ready to come out but once the attack happened, they withdrew the amnesty, so we couldn't benefit from it.*

Glasgow participant 4: *Of more than 10,000 families that are in Glasgow or in Scotland, more than 7000 or 6000 were refused. There's a link between what happened to London and the refusal rate that's happening up here in Scotland.*

While criticising the perceived negative impact of anti-terrorism measures on the asylum determination process, many participants also emphasised that they sympathised with the government's intention of keeping terrorists out of Britain. Some pointed out that the government had to react to the terrorists' abuse of the asylum system, and that Britain had the right to increase its efforts against terrorists entering the country. In Middlesbrough, one participant's explanation of the increased refusal rate with discrimination against those asylum applicants who resembled the regional and ethnic profile of known terrorists, was countered

by another participant with an example of the history of terrorism in a refugee producing country (Algeria) and the government's intention of keeping terrorists out.

Middlesbrough participant 1: *I think it's very clear that the amount of the asylum seeker start to be less. The amount of the people who get status start to be less. We see something like very awkward. We feel, we came from Africa or Middle East or Asia, we're now not wanted. England doesn't want us. Make me feel like prepare they bring somebody, they need worker or people to be in this country, coming from East Europe. And that's one of the impacts. [...]*

Middlesbrough participant 2: *[...] I think the government is trying now to put a bit of brake on letting people, you know making sure they're not letting anyone terrorist in their country.*

In other groups, there was some qualified agreement with the government's approach described in Middlesbrough.

Birmingham participant: *If they can really prove that this person is connected with terrorists back home, I can support them to refuse this person. It would threaten the country, they shouldn't come into my country. This will be ok.*

However, what participants elsewhere regarded as problematic was not a situation where terrorist connections could be proved, but where such connections were merely assumed. They outlined the negative effects that the generalised assumption of a correlation between asylum seekers and terrorists could have, especially on certain groups of asylum seekers. With regard to Algerian refugees, for example, participants were concerned about the negative impact on asylum seekers from Algeria caused by associating all Algerians with terrorism. Algerian participants in Swansea and Glasgow voiced their concerns about a perceived high refusal rate of applicants from Algeria, based on associating all applicants with a few high profile suspects from Algeria. They felt such stereotyping hurt the most vulnerable, those who were seeking protection from terrorism.

The perceived increase of refusal and deportation rates was seen to undermine the functioning of the refugee protection system in a number of ways. In addition to the exclusion from protection of those in need, the issue of irregular entry or stay was raised. A Leeds participant had experienced that the widespread assumption that asylum cases were refused without consideration of their merits prompted potential asylum seekers either

not to claim asylum, or to discontinue reporting to the police and instead live in Britain without papers.

Leeds participant: *Every asylum seeker when they come here and claim asylum, they don't want to go back. But now, something is going on, something really different. Some people when they come to England, they don't want to register with police.*

RC: *They might not want to claim asylum?*

Leeds participant: *Yes, they don't want to claim.*

RC: *Why?*

Leeds participant: *Because they might get a negative decision, they will be put in detention centres, they will be returned back to their home country. On the one side government meanwhile make strong law about terrorism, on the other side people that are not coming are not registered with police.*

RC: *Are you aware of people that haven't registered?*

Leeds participant: *Lot of. They live here, they are just working.*

Based on this experience, a harsher asylum process, motivated by the fight against terrorism, may in fact defeat its purpose and instead increase insecurity by re-directing people from legal to illegal routes.

Police reporting requirements may play a role in this development, at least in so far as they appear to support perceptions of an increasing harshness of the asylum process. A number of participants spoke of personal experiences relating to stricter reporting requirements in more intimidating environments. Some asylum seeking participants, especially in Glasgow and Norwich, had the impression that the London bombings either started or increased the requirement for asylum seekers to report to authorities on a regular basis.

Norwich participant: *I didn't use to go to police station until 7 July. It started exactly after this event. They sent me a letter, you should go to the police station and report quickly. Before that I lived nearly three years without.*

One participant, from a Christian background, gave an example where reporting requirements appeared stricter for Muslim asylum seekers than for others, in this case dating back to the period before July 2005.

Leeds participant: *The Eritrean and I were asked to sign in once a month – the Christians – and those two Muslims, we were sharing a NASS accommodation, one of them was signing every week, the other, Mohammed, was asked to sign in every single day.*

Mainly I think because he is a Muslim. This was before the July attacks, but it is an extension of 9/11, we are not focusing on a concrete thing but the war on terror, which is all over the world. After the July attacks, I wonder how Mohammed would be feeling now.

A number of Muslim participants expressed their concerns about discrimination of Muslim applicants more directly. There was widespread agreement in the Glasgow, Hull, Swansea, East London and Norwich groups that asylum cases from Muslims, and especially from Muslims from specific countries and regions, were treated less favourably than other cases, or even rejected outright on the grounds of religion. One participant assumed that this was a particular problem for men, yet the speaker below is female.

RC: *Are you familiar with the way the government is defining terrorism?*

Glasgow participant: *Yes. Because one thing, especially being Muslim, I think our case in the Home Office, as soon they know you are Muslim, your asylum case is out of it. Because they think all Muslim, they are terrorists. You understand? Like my case, it was more than two years in the Home Office. As soon as 7/7, I had a reply, you have to go back to your country. I think they look at it according to your religion. And if they know you are Muslim, you're out of it.*

It is particularly telling that this participant explained the perceived differential treatment of Muslims in response to a question about how terrorism is defined. She clearly thought that for the government, Islam and terrorism had in fact become synonymous.

The assumption that Muslim refugees might be treated unfairly in the asylum process also seemed to lie beneath the frustration expressed by a Swansea participant about the postponement of her asylum hearing until the autumn of 2005.

Swansea participant: *I don't know if because I come from Algeria and I'm Muslim, I don't know, but they postponed the hearing till I could be in the new rule. So instead of having the indefinite, I'm having only five years [leave to remain]. [...] Now I don't understand when the Home Office talk about integration, if we are given 5 years we don't know what's going to happen after 5 years, if we are going to be sent back or, I don't know.*

In referring to the insecurity conferred by the possibility of forced return after five years, the participant also echoed remarks made in Leeds about the tension between a time

limited refugee status and official integration objectives. Participants both in Swansea and Leeds felt that the new limited leave to remain was adopted as an anti-terrorism measure, rather than a measure taken under the government's refugee integration policy framework. For them it illustrated once more that the government had significantly altered the asylum process on the basis of linking all refugees with terrorism.

Exclusion from seeking refuge

The arguably most significant terrorism-related change to asylum law has been the exclusion clause introduced in the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, one of the explicit anti-terrorism measures added to the draft bill in the autumn of 2005. This clause excludes applicants from being considered for asylum if they are thought to be associated in some form with an activity or organisation in their country of origin which is regarded as terrorist on the grounds of being linked to violence, serious damage to property or disruption to electronic systems. This exclusion goes significantly beyond the exclusion clause in the Refugee Convention. On protection grounds, the Refugee Council actively opposed this new provision before and during its passage through parliament, though this study took care not to provide any details of this to gatekeepers or participants. In force since April 2006, the exclusion clause's implementation and its impact on refugees remains to be monitored and assessed. At this early stage, the research objective was to ascertain whether asylum seekers and refugees had been aware of the debates on exclusion, what their views on this measure were and whether they had any experience of asylum proceedings where issues relevant to the exclusion clause had been a factor.

Most participants were not aware of the specific exclusion provision in the new law. Their concerns about increasing refusal rates and deportation, as discussed above, were not based on an awareness of all the grounds that could lead to refusal and ultimately deportation. Some recognised that criteria relating to an applicant's political activities had always been part of the asylum determination process, though they neither indicated an awareness of the nature of the criteria applied, nor a concern that claims could fail on the basis of not meeting those criteria. In all groups, it was expressed repeatedly that there is a fundamental distinction between asylum seekers seeking safety in Britain and terrorists coming to Britain to commit crimes. With this distinction firmly in participants' minds, they found it difficult to reflect on need for applicants to prove that their case was motivated by a quest for safety rather than terrorism.

However, some groups, especially those in Glasgow and Middlesbrough which consisted almost exclusively of asylum seekers, did raise and debate issues pertaining to the new exclusion clause. The Middlesbrough group included some asylum seekers who had arrived in Britain after 7/7 and filed their claims while the new measure was under discussion. Nevertheless, it was mainly asylum seekers who had been in the process for some years who reflected on the specific implications of applying the exclusion clause. In Middlesbrough, one example was cited of an asylum applicant who lost their appeal in court because their political activity in their home country, which in their eyes entailed fighting for freedom, was interpreted by the judge as association with a terrorist organisation. A Middlesbrough participant concludes that applicants may have to be increasingly careful about what they reveal in their asylum claim.

Middlesbrough participant: *Now if you carry a gun [in the country of origin], regardless whether you're fighting for your own country, regardless whether you are fighting for your own rights, you are considered to be as a terrorist. And that's a terrorist which is you. Now, when you start getting letters of support, either from your party to convince the Home Office to show that you have a fear of persecution, then you must be extremely careful on how you say this, otherwise they may turn around and tell you that you are a terrorist, or your organisation is a terrorist activity. So that does not count, or doesn't give your claim any weight.*

A London participant argued that such increased caution, the reluctance to speak about the reason for claiming asylum, could undermine the right to seek asylum, in so far as the claim to this right requires an explanation of the persecution faced in the country of origin. The participant links this dilemma not directly to the exclusion clause, of which he may not be aware, but to the provision against glorification of terrorism.

North London participant: *[I]f you outlaw people speaking about their feelings back at home, and the persecution that they've got, then how can you seek asylum, technically. Because the whole purpose of asylum is to express your feelings about persecution that you had, and also about the activities that you were in. But now it's illegal to do that. So how can you seek asylum in this country? Legally, you would have committed an offence.*

Participants in Leeds and Glasgow discussed the problem of exclusion not from the perspective of what information would be revealed, but how this information would be assessed by the Home Office.

Leeds participant 1: *E.g. if nobody will have the right to claim asylum if he has got any record of terrorist activity back home, how could they monitor that? Who the hell could tell them? It's rather like telling the dictators back home to come up with some sort of fabricated cases to criminalise those who are fleeing the country against their political activity.*

Glasgow participant: *[H]ow is the Home Office going to ascertain that somebody actually belong to a group? We know a lot of wrong decisions have been made by the Home Office, because they don't have up to date country information.*

With these questions around the reliability of information received by the Home Office, combined with a potential reluctance of asylum applicants to reveal the full nature of their political activities, participants expressed concerns about the future of political refugees' rights and ability to seek and receive protection.

Leeds participant 2: *By this standard, as their government has branded them as terrorists, they cannot [claim asylum] - but they are really facing a real threat to their life.*

11 Relations with the police

As implementers of anti-terrorism measures, the police play a key role in addressing public fears and concerns about terrorism. In this they rely on acceptance and support from all population groups. At the same time, police actions, including carrying out anti-terrorism operations, may impact differently on some people compared to others. This study explored whether refugees feel particularly affected by police activities, as well as the relations they have with the police in the context of anti-terrorism measures.

Participants' experiences with the police varied considerably, mainly based on location but also to some extent on age, gender and faith. The Hull, Middlesbrough, East and North London groups reported a range of negative encounters with the police, although only the Middlesbrough incidents appeared directly related to terrorism. The Birmingham group gave a number of examples of the police not taking appropriate action to protect refugees. Other groups had little or no experience of police actions that involved refugees, and the Swansea group viewed the police in a very positive light.

Experiences of police actions

Most experiences participants had with the police did not appear to be related to terrorism, although many were interpreted by participants in light of the terrorism discourse. This suggested that examples chosen by participants illustrated their own feelings as well as perceived police attitudes. These feelings and attitudes show refugees' precarious sense of safety, as well as their perceptions of how the police approach the issue of terrorist threats.

Many negative examples recounted by participants involved young Muslim men. As the Hull and North London discussions were men-only groups, their profile may have skewed the nature of the examples given. At the same time, an increase in the proportion of young Asian men subjected to stop and search has been reported elsewhere. The examples also correspond with participants' perceptions of attitudes towards Muslim refugees more generally (section 7).

Participants in London, Hull, Birmingham, Middlesbrough and Swansea all cited stop and search practices as an

issue for refugees, particularly Muslim refugees. Their examples can be summarised with the following quote:

North London participant: *I think the most significant thing is the stop and search. Asian, for instance, they're stopped now. It used to be the black people and now it's the Asians, isn't it. It's shifted. It's now you stop and search an Asian, and that's the norm of the police, I think.*

The young people's group in East London also considered themselves targeted by the police and reported many low level encounters with the police, in which they felt singled out on the basis of their national origin. They explained the dilemma they faced in terms of seeking safety in numbers on the one hand, and being targeted by police because of their public presence as a group. They perceived their own safety concerns clashing with those of the police, instead of receiving support from the police.

East London participant 1: *You need to stick with people, like, in case something happens, you know, they can help you.*

East London participant 2: *But if you're sticking with people, the police will treat you differently.*

East London participant 3: *Yeah, that's the thing.*

East London participant 2: *But we use groups like that for protection.*

Negative experiences reported in other groups included incidents that appeared indicative of xenophobic attitudes displayed by the police. This was clearly the case in Hull, where participants appeared to live in an environment of hostility coming from both the public and the police. Nevertheless, participants found explanations for the tough police approach

they described, including the difficult socio-economic situation in Hull. The Swansea group, albeit under very different local circumstances, was equally sympathetic when recounting a stop and search incident involving an Asian woman.

This was different in Middlesbrough, where participants told of serious police actions taken against Muslims under the Terrorism Act, of which none led to prosecutions. They had also experienced other negative encounters with the police. In the example below, a tentative connection with terrorism was made, leading to a forceful plea against the prevailing climate of hostility towards refugees. The participant described how a refugee carrying a large bag was approached and searched by the police. She continued:

Middlesbrough participant: *And he was so afraid, he said, I don't have the right to walk with my bag, what's wrong with it? I think that they were thinking, they had a, I don't know, connected with terrorism, I don't know. It's not right. It's not right. We don't get the space to breathe. Every time you walk, you have to think, you know, am I doing what I'm supposed to do? You know? You don't feel safe. But when these people, I'm talking about white, yeah. When you come to our country, you're welcome. You don't feel afraid, we don't treat you like terrorists. But when we come here, we get a different, you know, a different atmosphere, we're not welcome. Why? Why does it have to be like this?*

In this case, police action increased refugees' sense of insecurity, as well as their feeling of being targeted as terrorists on racial or nationality grounds.

Perceptions of the role of the police

Based on their experiences, a number of participants reflected on the police's role in the fight against terrorism. A Hull participant pointed to the right of the police to maintain security, including national security, even if it involved harsh and possibly discriminatory actions. A Birmingham participant felt more uneasy about this. During the discussion, she referred repeatedly to the police shooting of Mr de Menezes in London after 7/7.

Birmingham participant: *[T]he guy that [got] killed, it made me angry, it made me more hurt. Before they attack a person who can have a bomb, they have to be careful. [...] They need to be careful and check who is who. I was really afraid when all this happened. I want them to be more careful, who is doing it, who is not doing it, so that they don't kill a person who didn't do it.*

This concern about potential police errors in carrying out anti-terrorism operations was expressed most strongly in the East and North London groups, following the Forest Gate anti-terrorism raid in June 06. Asked about their views of the police in general, a young North London participant responded as follows:

North London participant: *There's a feeling that they became more harsh, just the way they, yesterday [in Forest Gate], they shot a person, it might be innocent, like the Brazilian they've shot, it's easier to shoot people for the police.*

Collaboration with the police

If experiences with the police left some refugees feeling unsafe, or targeted as terrorist suspects, there might be a risk that they could feel less inclined, or less able, to collaborate with the police in countering terrorism. While there was no evidence in any of the focus groups that this could take the form of actively refusing collaboration, some participants suggested that the channels of communication and the trust required to actively pursue such communication were lacking. A participant in Birmingham summed up her reaction to what she perceived as a growing atmosphere of suspicion towards refugees.

Birmingham participant: *I don't trust no one, and not the police.*

A participant in the East London group sought to move beyond such general distrust of the police, which also dominated the young people's discussion. After recounting a negative encounter with the police, described as an inappropriate response to a violent racist incident, she reflects on her willingness to address the prejudice against refugees she considers endemic in the police forces.

East London participant 1: *[M]y sister till now, she cannot hear the word police, she literally can't stand the word police, she's just blatant, I hate them. My response was, I really need to work with them, I need to get into their work. Somebody needs to get in there, and you know...*

East London participant 2: *...sort them out.*

East London participant 1: *Really. They really can't do this to people. [...] How many young people do you hear about who are being beaten up by, whatever, and they died. But nobody follows it up, because he's young and black. Nobody cares. And if you're a refugee, that's even worse. You ain't even from this country; why did you come here, you know, that's the first thing you hear.*

Even if I'm black, we're British. But at the end of the day, we're all seen as refugee, we all came as refugees and asylum seekers.

The willingness amongst refugees to overcome barriers, address police misconceptions and pursue a collaboration in principle was certainly made clear by many participants. In the West London and Glasgow groups, a couple of participants who occupied leadership roles in their local communities referred to joint initiatives with the police in the immediate aftermath of 7/7. In a wider context, the intention expressed by individual refugees to co-operate with the police seemed guided by their fear of terrorist attacks, as demonstrated by a Hull participant who spontaneously pointed to his readiness to report information about terrorists to the police.

Hull participant: *We scared every time, we looking, if we find something, if we know about something about this I will call police.*

However, even though this willingness to co-operate was mirrored in Middlesbrough, here it was seen as a rather one-sided effort, with the police failing to pursue a collaborative approach.

Middlesbrough participant [acting as interpreter for another participant]: *He's trying to say [...] police must co-operate to asylum seeker or everyone, because if an asylum seeker like me, saw something bad, like terrorism, I can just tell them, there's something bad here. But if the police don't want to talk with us, you know, that's bad.*

RC: *Do you have the feeling that the police doesn't really co-operate with you?*

Others in unison: Yes

The range of negative police contacts reported by Middlesbrough participants suggested that these made them feel treated as suspects of anti-terrorist investigations rather than as potential partners in police actions against terrorist threats. Such sentiments were echoed in North London, where, furthermore, participants had the impression that their community was under surveillance by the intelligence services.

Security measures in general, even when aimed at the general public, were felt by many participants to be applied in discriminatory and demeaning ways. This was how two female asylum seekers in Glasgow described the circumstances of their weekly reporting to the authorities:

Glasgow participant 1: *And when you go there, it's like a prison. To people out is looking like we are like a criminal. [Background noise]*

RC: *Did you just say 'like a criminal'?*

Glasgow participant 1: Yes.

Others, jointly: Yes.

Glasgow participant 1: *We are treated as criminal. And our children as well. Scottish people are watching.*

Glasgow participant 2: *Since this 7/7 when we go to sign in the immigration. It's a very, very big problem going there. [Explains going through three separate search stages.] And the way they search you is very wrong. Men, women, everyone take their hands, open your bag, search your pockets, search everything, screen you. We're not a criminal.*

These impressions of being targeted by law enforcement – be it the police, security officers or intelligence services – on the basis of refugee status, race or faith, appeared to reinforce refugees' perception of being treated as criminals (as discussed in section 8).

12 Prevention of terrorism

The study did not ask participants about their ideas for preventing or countering terrorism more effectively, but in almost all groups suggestions emerged on how to improve measures against terrorism. All of these suggestions arose from participants' criticism of the ineffectiveness, or even counter-effectiveness of current anti-terrorism measures.

How not to fight terrorism

Many participants felt that the current anti-terrorism discourse and measures did more to alienate people from the fight against terrorism, or even to push them towards terrorism, than to prevent or counter terrorism. In particular, they thought that public stereotyping of refugees, an increasingly harsh asylum process and policies restricting people's freedoms made it more, not less, difficult to tackle terrorism.

There was a sense that the generalisation and stereotyping of refugees as terrorists, which characterised key elements of the public discourse, increased social divisions and refugees' alienation. A Leeds participant was especially concerned about the impact of public hostility on refugee youth.

Leeds participant 1: *For example, in the minds of the offspring of the refugee community, for example my own children, what they are hearing is all about hate. What they are encountering in their schools is that they are treated as an alien, rather than friends. What that's developing is losing a sense of belonging to this country, and the rift is just getting wider and wider between the two communities. This is a vengeful attitude that is growing.*

The loss of a sense of belonging was indeed reflected in the young people's group, together with a sense that the public and police responses to terrorism exacerbated rather than addressed alienation, segregation and community tensions. Nevertheless, their own practical reaction of coming together as a support group and raising awareness in local communities constituted a positive intervention in this apparent spiral of fear and hate.

Participants in other groups were worried about resentful attitudes arising from what they saw as

mistreatment of asylum seekers in an increasingly strict asylum process. Again their concerns mainly focused on children. One participant deplored the practice of taking families from their homes and placing them, together with their children, in detention. She felt that this criminalised children and could breed resentment as they grew older.

Birmingham participant: *[I]f a child is treated as a criminal and he's innocent, I think they create this enmity in these children towards the government. The acts of the government towards the asylum seekers, they create anger and humiliation, it affects your minds, and you can do something out of your mind because of the anger you have, because of the way you are treated.*

Another participant expressed this concern in even more drastic terms, arising out of her criticism of deportation measures, especially those including children.

Glasgow participant: *They are creating more terrorism with this way to deport people. How this situation affect ourselves and affect also children, once they are deported against their will to their countries, and they have no idea of their origin, they become future terrorists against UK [...].*

Resentful attitudes were also seen to affect adults who felt humiliated and disrespected in the asylum process. In the following example, the distrust encountered in the asylum hearing increases a participant's own growing feeling of bitterness.

Middlesbrough participant: *Coming here thinking that things here will be better, but me and my sister we went to court and after one week, or two weeks I think, we received a letter from the adjudicator, and she said I*

don't agree with the things you said, I think you're lying. [...] If you want you can go back to my country see how people are suffering, how people are dying. How can you just say it's not true? And ever since these things happened, I don't really feel good about myself. This kind of feeling, that's what push people to do things like what happened on 7th of July, things like this.

Participants also identified explicit anti-terrorism laws such as the glorification offence and the proscription of organisations as counter-productive. Firstly, they considered restricting freedom of speech could also limit the information flow that would otherwise assist in preventing terrorist attacks.

Leeds participant 2: *I don't see the purpose of the [rant] against glorifying terrorism, and it may even have a negative impact. If you pass a policy like that, then people will withhold their things to themselves and you don't know what's going on in their minds. So it even creates more danger, you are like burying a landmine.*

Secondly, laws that curtailed political freedom were seen as encouraging unlawful political engagement.

North London participant: *[...] [Unlawful] demonstrations, which leads us to terrorism, which leads people to terrorism. Instead of restricting terrorism, they push people to terrorism.*

RC: *You think instead of fighting terrorism they are creating...*

North London participant: *...yes, terrorists. It's easier to put laws for them.*

How to counter the threat of terrorism

On the basis of their assessment of current anti-terrorism measures, participants put forward three key suggestions for tackling terrorism more effectively.

Firstly, they thought refugee communities should actively be asked for support. The assumption was that there could be public safety benefits if communities were asked for help in preventing terrorism, instead of being targeted as a threat themselves.

West London participant 1: *[B]y generalisation, instead of analysing the things that are bad in a group, the whole community is kept in a trap like that, to scare them, to make them a threat. [...] But [...] in fact we should be asked as a community to help to find these people [the terrorists]. And then we would live safer, in harmony with everyone, and there wouldn't be any problem.*

Secondly, participants suggested involving refugee communities in collaborative efforts to tackle terrorism, rather than alienating or marginalising them.

West London participant 2: *Refugees want to protect themselves, want to distance themselves from those [terrorist] groups. It's better to create awareness about how to participate in anti-terrorism measures, without alienating other people. [...] [But] if their communities are under attack, or being marginalised, I think the individual frustration will go on and it will take a different direction. But if you create awareness and know how to combat terrorism in own area, then these people have to be involved. Then things will be ok. Because people don't support terrorism. But they get victimised because of their colour, their religion.*

Thirdly, participants stressed the importance of integration. They thought that exclusion from society and a lack of a sense of belonging could make people more vulnerable to the influence of extremist ideologies. This could affect British-born people, such as those who carried out the 7/7 attacks, as much as refugees. Making all people feel respected, valued and included in British society was seen as the best measure against terrorism.

Swansea participant: *If we talk about people in Britain, if I can say the extremist Muslims, or the bombs suicides, I think it's about integration. If people feel they are part of the British society, they will not feel frustrated, and then they won't be, I don't think they would be brainwashed by other people. So I think it's about, because if somebody feels he's excluded from the society, then I suppose he or she will develop a sort of hatred towards British society. And automatically if somebody from this kind of organisations is willing to recruit, that person will be the best one to recruit, the easiest one to recruit. So I think it's about integration, really. People should feel really at home in this society.*

Conclusion: Negative impact of anti-terrorism measures on refugees and asylum seekers

This study explored the impact of anti-terrorism measures on refugees and asylum seekers. It found this impact to be primarily negative, without yielding security benefits in return. The following assessment by a Leeds participant summarised many of the concerns that emerged in the focus groups.

Leeds participant 1: *The campaign against terrorism is irrational, inconsistent and disturbs harmony and societal growth. And it is uncivilised, that means it tries to resolve conflict in ways that breed further hate and violence, bringing about more destruction and disorder to the country. It is also undemocratic, because it creates dark holes where civil liberties and freedom of conscience are threatened by a totalitarian style of governance. It's also immoral, because it is degrading and dehumanising with no respect to the basic natural virtues of humanity.*

Impact on human rights culture

Refugees have fled to the UK to seek safety and protection from persecution. Many participants stressed that in fleeing authoritarian regimes where their public and private lives were subjected to the exercise of arbitrary power and violence, they sought a future in a democratic country where the rule of law was accountable and grounded in universal human rights. The group discussions revealed that many participants had become disillusioned about finding such democracy and human rights in the UK. Most of them still felt much safer and freer than in their country of origin, but their disappointment was palpable. They worried that public attitudes and political reactions to the issue of terrorism were threatening their safety and protection, and that policy responses and security measures had begun to undermine some of the human rights they expected to find in the UK.

A West London participant described refugees' loss of confidence in Britain's human rights system, based on their increasing marginalisation in the context of the terrorism discourse.

West London participant: *If people are unsympathetic then the politicians want to crack down because they need the support of the people. Therefore, the issue of terrorism, and people feel, like Somalis, Eritreans, Ethiopians, which basically because of the situation back home and of the situation here, felt more and more marginalised. And this is a big problem. They took away part of the confidence you had. In the system. Because the fact that they came here is that it is a better system, it respects human rights and protects people and so on. So this kind of thing [terrorism] is very hurtful. And also the response [to terrorism].*

Another participant saw persistent racism as a cause for disillusion.

Leeds participant: *People look to England for freedom and democracy, and you expect to be treated like a human being, because here is civilisation, here is progress. But I never expected in the 21st century that racism would be an issue in Britain. I thought it was long gone and buried, but it is still bright.*

In addition to personal experiences of marginalisation, discrimination and racism, participants also attributed their disillusion directly to a changed policy environment after the terrorist attacks, in which laws were seen to be adopted that removed people's rights.

North London participant 1: *[A]fter 7/7 attacks it made it easier to put laws that takes away rights, human rights away from people.*

Some participants explained that any policies and measures which could be seen as infringing on people's rights were of particular concern to them as refugees, firstly because they felt targeted by those

measures, and secondly because they had first hand experience of authoritarian regimes and thus had a clear view of what could lie at the end of a potentially slippery slope introduced by recent policy changes. One participant expressed this in rather pessimistic and harsh terms:

North London participant 2: *[The] UK I believe it changed and it became like a third world country. Doesn't matter about education, about good life, about the money, but it's only changed in, it became like police country, like Turkey. Turkey is a police country not a democratic country. It changed because if I'm not thinking like government, I'm a terrorist for them. So where is the human rights, where is the thinking in different ways?*

The existence of a human rights culture, and the democratic rule of law to guarantee and protect those rights, was clearly seen as important by many refugees participating in this study, and many expressed doubts that immigration, asylum and anti-terrorism measures adopted as part of the fight against terrorism were compatible with human rights and democracy.

Impact on refugees' lives

Participants in all focus groups clearly felt that the construction of a link between asylum and terrorism has had a negative impact on their lives. Throughout the discussions they referred to many difficulties they already faced in relation to immigration and asylum measures. As much as they supported developing effective responses to terrorism, they considered that the anti-terrorism climate had in fact failed to enhance security and instead added an undue burden to their own lives.

Concerned with asylum procedures and barriers to integration, participants came to view a range of policies that affect them in the light of the anti-terrorism climate. These perceptions contributed to the occasionally overwhelming sense of insecurity that was palpable throughout the discussions.

Within refugee and asylum seeking communities, some groups appeared to be more affected than others. For example, Muslim women were seen as objects of public hostility, and young Muslim men felt targeted by the police. Asylum seekers thought that the entire asylum process had been negatively influenced by security priorities that focused on Muslim applicants and selected nationalities.

The negative impact of the responses to terrorism was felt in areas ranging from threats to personal safety, increased racism and xenophobia and discomfort about policing to a harsher asylum process, restrictions to protection rights and barriers to integrating into British society and developing a sense of belonging. Multiple levels of fear appeared to be linked to a sense of isolation and exclusion, thus impeding community relations and civic participation. The growth of communities of fear seemed to threaten the goal of building cohesive communities.

If the constructed link between asylum and terrorism exacerbated challenges already faced by refugees and asylum seekers, then it may be the role of refugee support agencies to contribute to deconstructing that link and addressing the security concerns expressed by refugees and asylum seekers. Agencies as well as policymakers may need to reflect on the how the imposition of a national security paradigm on asylum and immigration policies affects the security needs of those seeking protection in the UK. This study has shown that rather than enhancing security, current anti-terrorism measures can contribute to creating communities of fear.