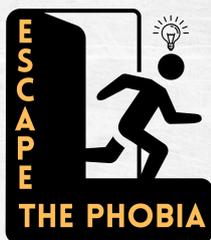


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2021



ESCAPE the phobia Report | 2021

This report was written within the project "**ESCAPE the phobia**", a 1-year project carried out by the non-profit organization Awesome People (www.awesomepeople.se) 2020-09-01-2021-11-30 with funding from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF).

The **overall aim** of the project was to reduce the prevalence of xenophobia and intolerance among young people aged 15-20 and to provide teachers and youth leaders with innovative tools in this work.

The project created **three educational escape rooms**: one about Islamophobia, one about Afrophobia, and one about Homophobia. An outline for a workshop was also developed. The educational escape rooms and workshops have been tested and evaluated with a reference group consisting of 22 young people who belonged to one or more of the following groups:

1. Muslim, 2. African descent, 3. LGBTQ + (some did not belong to any of these groups). In the project we visited three High Schools in Örebro where 360 students got to play the educational escape rooms and participate in the workshop. We also organized public events.

Together with the reference group, podcasts were recorded where they discuss the topics. Stories of young people's experiences of Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and Homophobia were also collected by the reference group and formed the basis of a social media campaign to draw attention to the project, the project's themes, and the project's results. Those in the reference group who did not participate in podcasts were also allowed to write down their thoughts on Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and Homophobia.

The project included a reading of literature and research on Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and Homophobia, which were summarized in short reports and formed the basis for the creation of the three educational escape rooms + reflections created in the project.

Reports written by:

Karin Wouda

Carmen Ionita

Fia Lindstedt

Viktor Lemoine

All material produced in the project can be downloaded free of charge from Awesome People's website www.awesomepeople.se.

Reports



Islamophobia report

What is Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is a term for racism against Muslims and can also be defined as hatred of Muslims or those who are believed to be Muslims. However, it is a difficult concept to handle as it is difficult to distinguish between criticism of Muslims as a population, Muslims as a theological term for followers of Islam and Islam as a religious system (Otterbeck & Bevelander 2006). By putting words to and thereby making normalized prejudices visible, one can, however, facilitate mobilization against discrimination and exclusion. Andreas Malm writes in the book "Hatred of Muslims" (Hatet mot muslimer) (2009) that racism is not directed against Islam as a religion but against Muslims as people and that legitimate criticism of Islam and racism against Muslims are two different things. Mattias Gardell states in "Islamophobia" (Islamofobi) (2011) that the concept of Islamophobia stands for fear of Islam and exaggerated notions that Islam is a religion that leads to negative behaviors and that Muslims' presence in a society is a danger. Otterbeck & Bevelander believe that there are different Islamophobias and that one and the same person can distance themselves from one type of Islamophobic discourse while he or she affirms another (Otterbeck & Bevelander 2006).

Islamophobes build up notions that Islam is only the "religion of the sword" and that the only thing Muslims want is to build a caliphate in Europe and it is the most fanatical Islamists who are allowed to represent all Muslims. The Eurabia conspiracy theory is a central part of the Western discourse on Islam and is about the fear that Muslims will establish a parallel rule of law in Europe (Malm 2009, Lewander & Hagström 2011). The historical roots of the idea of Islamophobia can be found in the medieval crusades, the "Turkish terror" and Europe's expansion where contemporary Islamophobia is no longer primarily based on the image of Islam as a threat to true Christianity but as a threat to secularized Swedish society (Gardell, 2011).

Why does Islamophobia occur?

Attitude surveys show that Islamophobic views are stronger among those who do not know any Muslims. In a segregated society, we are dependent on our access to images and media research shows that nine out of ten news related to Islam and Muslims are characterized by negative thematization, acts of terrorism, war, fanaticism and oppression of women. While these are social facts that also occur "in the Muslim world" but not only there, we lack other equally real social facts that would have balanced the picture.

What is important to remember is that Muslim culture is multifaceted and seeing Muslims as a unified group can help to conceal individual Muslims' other group affiliations such as nationality, ethnicity, class and gender and their individual life projects (Otterbeck & Bevelander 2006). In the mega-survey about Muslims, John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed found that Muslims' future dreams were not about Jihad but about better jobs and freedom of speech (Malm, 2009). Furthermore, according to the World Value Study, a vast majority of Muslims (94.2%) in Turkey, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Jordan, Iraq and Malaysia believed that democracy was a very or fairly good political system (Gardell 2011).

Effects of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a growing problem in Sweden, according to Nina Jakku (2018), which is reflected in hate crimes, discrimination in the labor and housing markets and racial profiling. In Sweden, an individual has a 50% higher chance of getting a job with a Swedish name than an Arabic first name (Abdelkader, 2017) and there are fifteen higher numbers who want to change their name from Muhammed (Malm 2009). There are also threats and violence against Muslims, especially Muslim women who wear the veil (Abdelkader, 2017). Muslim women, especially veil-wearing women, are seen as a homogeneous group that lacks power and is oppressed (Jakku 2018). A growing Islamophobia also threatens religious freedom when Muslims are restricted in their religious practice. In 2016, 66% of mosques in Europe were exposed to vandalism, arson and bomb threats (Abdelkader, 2017).

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Homophobia report

What is homophobia?

There are several ways to define homophobia; as "an ideology, a perception or a conscious value of an individual, a group or a society and which expresses a strongly negative view of homosexuality or of gay and bisexual people" (Dahl, 2004) but can also be explained as "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Some definitions include bisexuality while others speak of biphobia separated from homophobia.

The word homophobia is often attributed to the psychotherapist George Weinberg, who around 1967 worked to "cure" homosexuals (who were then considered sick) in the United States. Weinberg saw that many of his own teachers were so phobic about homosexuality that he coined the word homophobia based on this (Dahl, 2004). In Sweden, too, homosexuality was long considered a disease, but in 1979 homosexuality was removed from the National Board of Health and Welfare's register of diseases after a group of activists occupied the National Board of Health and Welfare's premises and demanded that the disease stamp be removed (RFSU, 2009).

Homophobia can take many different forms, it can range from abuse and threats to vandalism or slander on the internet. But it can also be about completely different areas than these. This may, for example, be an interpreter who refuses to say certain LGBTQ-related concepts that may make it difficult for an asylum seeker to tell about their reasons for asylum (RFSL, 2017), whether same-sex couples are prevented from entering into marriage in certain countries or called institutional homophobia which is seen in, for example, laws, politics, practice and in the invisibility of homosexuals in the mass media (Oxford Reference, u.å.).

There are four distinct types of homophobia:

Personal and internalized homophobia are prejudices based on personal beliefs that homosexuals are sinful, immoral, sick, inferior heterosexual persons, or that they are incomplete women and men.

Personal homophobia is experienced as fear, discomfort, disapproval, hatred or disgust (LGBT Resource Center, 2010). If homosexuals themselves feel personal homophobia, it is called internalized homophobia, which means that one assumes society's negative opinions about homosexuals and self-acceptance becomes difficult. This can lead to self-hatred and in some cases self-harming behavior because one can not live up to hegemonic gender expectations (Oxford Reference, u.å.).

Personal and internalized homophobia is often based on ignorance and misinformation and just as with racism and sexism, people learn to be homophobic. Myths about homosexuals remain in society despite the fact that accurate information is readily available, many adults continue to believe in stereotypes they learned as children and some religious and conservative organizations hold on and create new untruths about homosexuals (LGBT Resource Center, 2010).

Interpersonal homophobia is based on personal homophobia but is expressed through, for example, verbal or physical harassment, by “joking” about homosexuals, using abusive words or other forms of individual forms of discrimination. In extreme cases, homosexuals can be abused or physically harassed simply because of the attacker's homophobia. However, non-violent harassment or forms of discrimination are more common.

Homophobia can then be expressed, for example, by relatives of a homosexual person distancing themselves or by colleagues distancing themselves from the person and treating them coldly. Interpersonal homophobia can be explained by psychological factors associated with prejudice, people who do not feel completely comfortable with their own sexuality or feel threatened by homosexuality are often more firm in their perceptions of what is sexual right and can try to punish or force their own belief in homosexuals (LGBT Resource Center, 2010).

Institutional homophobia highlights the many ways in which governments, corporations, churches, and other institutions and organizations discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation. Institutional homophobia can be expressed, for example, by religious organizations, either explicitly or implicitly, having policies against homosexuals or governments that do not guarantee citizens' rights regardless of sexual orientation. Institutional homophobia is caused in part by power struggles. In societies, scapegoats are created to maintain the status quo and existing positions of power. This can be used to avoid taking responsibility for injustice, social and economic problems or to retain their privileges (LGBT Resource Center, 2010).

Cultural homophobia affects the social standards and norms that mean that it is better or more moral to be heterosexual than homosexual. Cultural homophobia can for example be seen in TV, advertising and print ads as many characters are heterosexual and most romantic relationships involve a man and a woman and this means that homosexual persons may feel overlooked. Cultural homophobia is largely caused by the social norms that dictate “correct” sexuality. Sexual contact between men and women has been practiced in all societies throughout history and is the norm in most cultures and societies. This leads to homosexuality being seen as deviant (LGBT Resource Center, 2010).

Why does homophobia occur?

There are many explanations for why homophobia occurs, and in “Beyond 'Homophobia': A Social Psychological Perspective on Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men” various psychological aspects are addressed (Herek, 1984). Herek writes that a person can unknowingly form negative feelings towards homosexuals, as a way of dealing with internal conflicts. Examples of internal conflicts that can be assumed to be related to homophobia are those that involve one's gender identity and/or even the choice of “sexual object” (often a person). When a person unconsciously feels that his inner urges are unacceptable, those qualities are projected onto homosexuals, and by the person then rejecting homosexuals, he also rejects his own urges, without having to face them. The conflict is externalized and becomes easier for the person to handle.

Another reason is religious homophobia, and even here the underlying factors are more complicated than it may seem. One motivation for religious homophobia is that same-sex relationships have historically been linked to idols and heresy.

Contrary to popular belief, homosexuality has been widely accepted in the past (in the sense that it existed then, which is not necessarily the same as we know it now), but ceased to be accepted in the West in antiquity due to ascetic philosophies, especially Catholicism. However, same-sex Christian marriage has been documented in Europe until the 12th century. Another factor regarding religious homophobia is the connection between religion and society - sometimes religion is a clear product of currents and wills in society, and not the other way around. Thus, homophobia in religion can sometimes be a "by-product" that has arisen in connection with some other change in society / religion. An example of this is when the Baptists, who were a relatively tolerant religion, in the United States in 1845 were divided between the north and the south because the Baptists in the southern states were for slavery (a thought that dominated their society) and those in the north were not. . Then two versions of the same religion were created that had great differences in values. Furthermore, sexism, racism and homophobia are connected empirically, but it is unclear exactly why (Wilets, 2016).

Effects of homophobia

The effects of homophobia can affect the health of homosexuals in many different ways. Among other things, studies show that young LGBTQ people generally have lower self-esteem, feel insecure and have poor trust in other people and have suicidal thoughts to a greater extent than other young people. For example, 25 per cent of gay and bisexual women aged 16–29 state that they have attempted suicide, compared with 8 per cent of heterosexual women of the same age (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2010). Other effects include depression, poor relationships, chronic stress, sexual risk behaviors and poorer medical care (Medical News Today, 2021).

In adolescence, it is important for many to feel a sense of belonging to a group, and to "fit in". This makes it difficult for homosexuals in a heteronormative society, where they fall outside the scope of what fits in because of something they can not change. This can lead to many different problems, and in a study of public health in the National Board of Youth Affairs' report Hon Hen Han (2010) one can observe the effects of homophobia in society in the form of poorer health in especially homosexual young people. They are generally in good health, but less so than heterosexual young people, especially when it comes to mental illness and the risky use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco. Homosexual young people are particularly affected, compared to older homosexuals.

However, it is not only homosexuals who are negatively affected by homophobia. Homophobia can, for example, inhibit heterosexuals' ability to form close, intimate relationships with people of their own gender, for fear of being perceived as homosexual (LGBT Resource Center, 2010).

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Afrophobia report

What is afrophobia?

Afrophobia is defined as the collection of different forms of racism that target people of African descent, more specifically “descendants of the African victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade”; however, the term can also be widened to encompass, more generally, forms of racism targeted at people who identify themselves as “Black” (European Commission, 2018).

The European Network Against Racism describes afrophobia as “a specific form of racism that refers to any act of violence or discrimination including racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping, and leading to the exclusion and dehumanisation of people of African descent. It can take many forms: dislike, bias, oppression, racism and structural and institutional discrimination, among others. Afrophobia is the result of the social construction of race to which genetic and/or cultural specificities and stereotypes are attributed (racialisation). This constructed relationship is deeply embedded in the collective European imagination and continues to impact the lives of people of African descent and Black Europeans.” (p.2)

Where does afrophobia come from?

The report published by the Afro-Swedes Organisation brings up the interesting fact that there was no racism recorded from in the ancient or medieval Europe in the form it exists nowadays. In those times, Africans were depicted as “good” or “evil” depending on their religions belonging: basically, based on whether they were or not Christians. European’s Christianity functioned as the dividing line.

Around 1500, Europe’s powerful nations colonised North and South America and this is when they also started to transport African prisoners across the Atlantic. In order to legitimise their acts of kidnapping and trading people as slaves (which would have been unacceptable and sanctioned on their continent), Europeans painted the picture of Africans as being inferior and so, deserving the treatment they were receiving. This racist discourse has been spread since European companies were making good profits through slavery. So Africans became known as intellectually inferior, born for slave labour, similar to monkeys, lazy, ugly and dangerous. It is important to know the origin of these notions which does not have any objective evidence, but it was socially constructed.

What are the reasons for afrophobia, both for individuals (psychologically) and societies?

As in any complex phenomenon, the answer cannot be a straightforward one, and the reasons are manifold, but we will focus on (1) the legacy of the racist discourse created during the slave trade period which persists and is deeply woven into the fabric of our society, (2) the current economical interests in the African continent, (3) at a more individual level, the inherited trauma and how the psychological effects of exploitation cannot simply be washed away. In her book “White Fragility”, Robin DiAngelo explains that in order to justify the unequal treatment of Black people, powerful nations created the idea of racial inferiority. It was not the belief in racial inferiority that triggered unequal treatment, but vice versa: first Black people were exploited for their resources, not according to their appearance.

The ideology of unequal races came after to justify the reality of exploitation. "Racism is a systemic, societal institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This limited view of such a multi-layered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicates them."

Afrophobia continued after the end of slavery of colonialism. Hundreds of years of exploitation of the resources and bodies of Black people cannot simply be deleted. Nowadays the economy of many powerful nations is relying on Africa's resources. It is mentioned in the report by the Afro-Swedes Organisation that "afrophobia would not continue to exist if there was no one to profit from it". Formally, slavery ended with the colonisation of the African continent by the powerful nations of Europe; during the Berlin conference (1884-85) under the pretext of bringing civilisation in African countries, the frontiers have been redrawn disregarding the cultural background of actual people living there and the powerful nations of Europe divided the continent between areas of influence, or colonies. It was not until the 1960s that Africa was decolonised; however, the Afro-Swedes Organisation mentions a fairly unknown part of history where the European Economic Community (founded in 1957) which was later integrated in the European Union, has been formed with the purpose of securing access to African resources and so, for the Western European countries to secure their position between the United States and the Soviet Union after the WWII.

The African countries were forced into signing trade agreements that were at their disadvantage and stopped them from evolving. Even today, the EU's trade agreements with Africa are to the detriment of African countries: they have to choose between exporting raw materials with discounted custom duties to Europe (which hinders African countries from developing their own economies) or exporting finished products with very high taxes (which will not allow them to compete on the European market). The current situation is often mentioned as neo-colonialism.

What is the current situation in Sweden/the world regarding afrophobia? What are the effects of afrophobia?

Sweden is recognised worldwide for its militant actions towards end of slavery and is recognised as a strong international voice for decolonisation and Third World liberation. It is in the top countries worldwide to have progressive migration and integration policies, as well as the most radical anti-discrimination legislation in the world. Also, self-reportedly, Swedes hold the world record of only 4.9% perceiving themselves as being intolerant or having a negative attitude towards diversity and migration (Hübinette, 2014). In 2009/2011, Sweden banished the term race from its antidiscrimination law. Some argue the efforts put into not talking about race made it difficult for different manifestations of racism to be signalled out and impossible to have debates challenging stereotypes and historical dominant modes and structures of representation (Gindt & Potvin, 2020).

A qualitative research presented by the Afro-Swedes Organisation mentioned that Afro-Swedes experience racism in 3 forms: racist language, insults about their physical and personal integrity and being pointed out to or receiving differential treatment or being avoided by others. However, because it is so difficult to talk about race, black Swedes have a difficult time to articulate their experiences of being discriminated.

Present expressions of afrophobia include: **everyday racism** (microaggressions such as being taken as stupid, gazes, pauses, moods of people around, unusual or aggressive behaviour of those around), **exoticism and consumption** (black women being told by white people that they dance well, are musical or exotically beautiful which may sound positive but are based on the notion of nobility of the white; also, a widespread mystification of Africa as “primitive”, travelling to Africa including sometimes so-called village tours), **Swedish colour blindness and exceptionalism** (the view that Sweden is a country of solidarity, freed from racism, makes it less acceptable for people still suffering because of afrophobia to highlight in the public space. This view hides the various forms of everyday racism and discrimination that black people still live with in today's Sweden).

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Feedback

Feedback from the reference group

In the project, we worked with a reference group consisting of 22 young people aged 15-18 in Örebro with different backgrounds regarding ethnicity, religion, and sexual identity. The reference group got to test the educational escape rooms and give feedback, they got to test parts of the workshop and record the project's podcasts where they discuss the topics of Islamophobia, Homophobia, and Afrophobia. Those who did not participate in podcasts were instead allowed to write down their thoughts on the topics.

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"I think it is important with educational escape rooms in schools, you learn a lot and you have to think more to solve the riddles, and it becomes almost automatic that you think about the topic as well. It is not really possible to avoid it in the same way as some do when they find it difficult. It also makes learning fun, and you get very into it.

I also think the take a step forward game we played with different roles is very good for getting to know how others feel. When we ran it, I got a Muslim girl as a role, and then I had to think about that role, and then I felt that I became more understanding."

”

— Participant in the reference group

What did you think about playing the educational escape rooms about Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and Homophobia?

- Very nice
- Good
- Educational
- It was great fun and informative
- I thought it was very fun and educational
- It was fun
- It was fun
- Great fun and educational, would love to do something similar again
- It was fun and new things
- I thought it was super fun! It was really fun with the rooms and important topics
- It was very instructive and interesting
- It was great fun and in terms of knowledge
- It was fun
- It was fun and I learned some new things
- I thought it was good
- I thought it was great fun and my group was very nice. It was a wonderful mix of people and everyone had good thoughts and different thoughts above all.
- It was fun that what we wanted to do is about the three phobias, which makes it more interesting to make it something more positive at the same time as it is instructive
- It was fun, taught me to collaborate
- The escape room was great fun and it was the first time I did it and I think it went well
- It was also great fun to try different things, but at the same time it was a bit difficult
- I thought it was a fun way to learn and would definitely like to do it again
- I thought it was fun

What are your thoughts on the Escape the phobia project?

- Nothing
- I think it should be good
- Good and useful in life
- It seems to work well and it is very informative
- I think it is very smart, fun and educational way to spread information about important topics
- Sounds interesting and a fun way to learn about the different topics
- It was good
- It seems like a good project!
- I have no idea
- Good thoughts! I think it is a nice learning project
- It was very instructive
- That everyone is equally worthy and you must accept everyone no matter how you are and what you look like. One should not judge others
- It is an interesting project
- I think it is a good project that helps young people
- It is a good project and I think it will teach many
- It is an important topic for both children and young people to find out about what it really is like in society about the people who are vulnerable because they are not accepted in their own society as individuals.
- Very nice, creative.
- These are good projects that can help young people
- I think it's going to be fun
- Fun and very exciting
- I thought it was a good way to learn about the prejudices and opinions of other people. Unfortunately, there are people who dislike different people because of ethnicity and religion.
- I think it is important with this project that you can benefit from and learn a lot about society's problems.

One of the answers from a participant in the reference group on afrophobia:

What did you learn in the learning escape room about Afrophobia?

"I learned more about the history of Africa such as the Berlin Conference. How with a stroke of a pen on a map, families, cultures, and languages were divided into colonies without the supervision of what already existed."

What feelings did you get from the room?

"When I participated in the escape room, I was shocked that people in a completely different continent could decide how an entire ethnic group would live. How could the people who are people like you and me, have no care for the people who were so badly affected. It's not just about land when redrawing a map. It is also about cultures that are divided and families that are torn apart. When I thought about these things in retrospect, I got pretty angry."

Did anything change regarding your attitude to the subject in the room? If so, what?

"After the escape room, my attitude towards Afrophobia did not change much, it just got stronger and I realized that just being neutral was not enough. We need to be anti-racist to reduce this societal problem and eventually reach the ultimate goal of eliminating racism completely from the world. So we can live in a world where we are not judged for our skin color or our ethnicity, where we are all equal people."

What is the most important insight you bring with you from the room?

"The most important insight I take with me is that we are all born human beings, even if our skin color is different or if we come from different countries, it should not affect how others look at us. What should affect others' perceptions of people is how they behave and how they are as people."

One of the answers from a participant in the reference group on homophobia:

What did you learn in the educational escape room about homophobia?

"I learned a little more about the feeling that you can also have that that girl has no one to support her, we checked her mobile as well and she has none of her family to be with her and this loneliness does not feel good. We read her letter which made me sad because she wrote how she feels and she is the same person and there is no reason for parents to hate her and I think they should be for her."

What feelings did you get from the room?

"After we read the letter she wrote to her family, I became very sad for her and I was angry at her parents and I thought how can they be so mean to their child and why do they not want to help her instead and be happy for her. It makes me sad when this happened and it will happen in the future as well and there are always parents who can not accept their children. They think that the child should be and always be who they want to be and never think about what they want and they do not care about their feelings and what they think or what they should do and who they want to be in life."

Did anything change regarding your attitude to the subject in the room? If so, what?

"Not so much because I'm not homophobic and have friends who are gay but I hope something will change with homophobic attitudes that bully and call LGBTQ people bad words and they always want to change LGBTQ people to hetero and never want to accept LGBTQ people.

But it is also important that LGBTQ people never think about people who bully, and do not get annoyed or sad when they meet homophobes because it is important not to be affected."

What is the most important insight you bring with you from the room?

"Helping people I see at school or I know with the same problem talk to and become friends with so that they do not feel or be alone when their family does not want to accept them and help them accept themselves first and not be sad about because of parents or society."

One of the answers from a participant in the reference group on islamophobia:

What did you learn in the educational escape room about islamophobia?

"In the educational escape room about Islamophobia, it was a lot about prejudice. That all the different suspects were named Mohammed but had completely different backgrounds and appearances. I probably did not immediately think that just for one of the suspects was a Muslim, he was the perpetrator, but I thought that instead, it was the man who was a Nazi. But I think it's good to learn to think about, to not just go on things like religion or ethnicity, but look at what the person is actually interested in, and how he or she is as a human being. It turned out then that it was actually the Nazi, and that is logical because that person believed in an ideology that is hateful and violent."

What feelings did you get from the room?

"The feelings I got in the room were very compassionate; I felt sorry for the people who were suspected only because of religion or appearance. I was saddened to read the story of one of them, whose wife had been attacked for wearing a veil."

Did anything change regarding your attitude to the subject in the room? If so, what?

"Yes, my attitude to the subject probably changed a bit. Of course, I want to believe that I am a person completely free from prejudice, but I am not. And this room has taught me not only to judge from the first thought you get but to think a little. It could be the media that has portrayed a distorted image of something, or people around you that make you think a certain way. But trying to ask yourself if you really think so, is right as well, is probably a good thing to take with you."

What is the most important insight you bring with you from the room?

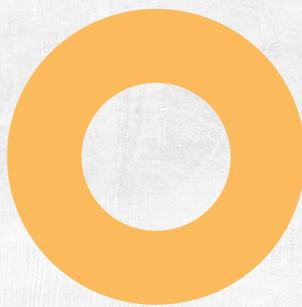
"Something interesting one in our group mentioned, and as I also read somewhere, is that the first thought you get is the thought you are taught to think, while the second is what you actually think. I think it is so incredibly good and useful. Sometimes I can find myself thinking something, and then wonder why I thought so?! I thought that was completely wrong! And to then become aware that, okay, the first thing maybe was just what society has taught me to think, but I actually get to think one more time and reason with me what my as well as final thought will be. That I myself have power over what I think, not my prejudices, is an important insight I take with me from the room. "

Feedback from the public event

Within the project, we organized public events during Örebro's Human Rights Days where the public got to play our educational escape rooms about Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and Homophobia at Kulturhuset. We mainly reached young people during these days and Svt Örebro made a news feature about the event which can be watched here: <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/orebro/islamofobi-ende-l-av-orebros-manskliga-rattighetsdagar-1>

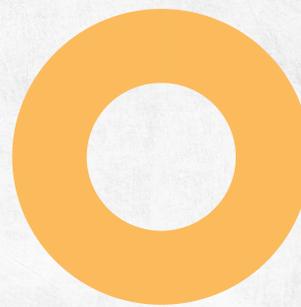
Here is the feedback from the ones who answered the evaluation (14 answers):

Do you think the room was interesting?



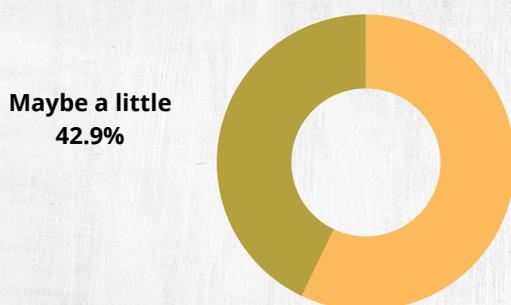
Yes absolutely!
100%

Was it a fun and creative way to learn through educational escape rooms?



Yes absolutely!
100%

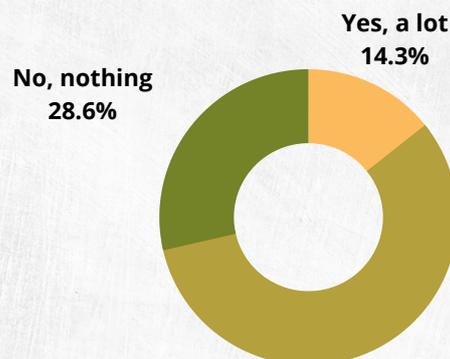
Have you gained more knowledge about Islamophobia/Afrophobia/Homophobia?



Maybe a little
42.9%

Yes, very much
57.1%

Do you feel that your xenophobia and intolerance have decreased?



Yes, a lot
14.3%

No, nothing
28.6%

Maybe a little
57.1%

Other comments

"Very fun activity"

"Fun"

"It was very fun and educational!"

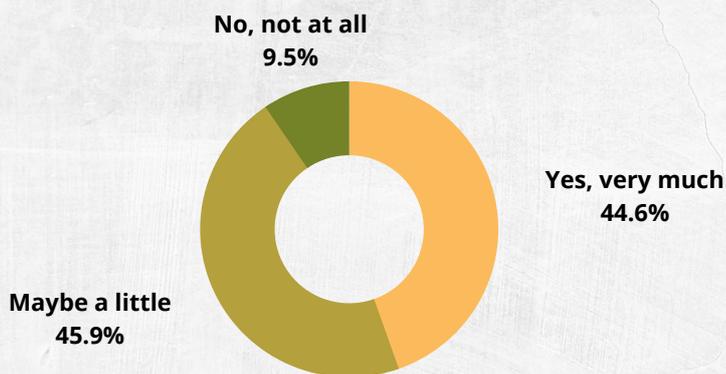
Feedback from the school tour

In the project, we conducted a school tour where we visited three schools in Örebro and a total of 360 students played one or more educational escape rooms. After the students had played an educational escape room, they had to answer a questionnaire. Due to the fact that we did not have time to complete the survey with all students and that the link to the survey did not work at one time, not everyone who played was able to answer the survey. **The majority of those who answered that they did not feel that their xenophobia and intolerance had decreased refer to the fact that they did not have one from the beginning.**

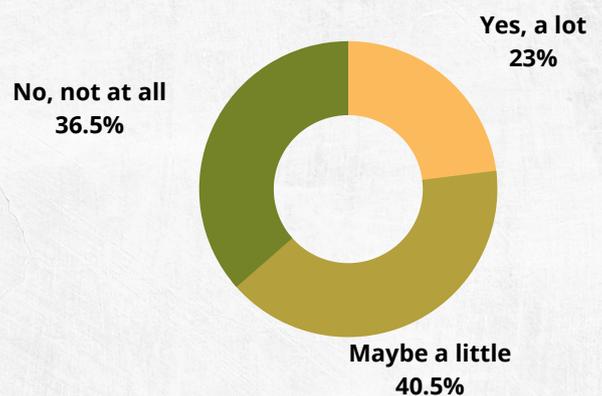
Educational escape room about Islamophobia

74 answers

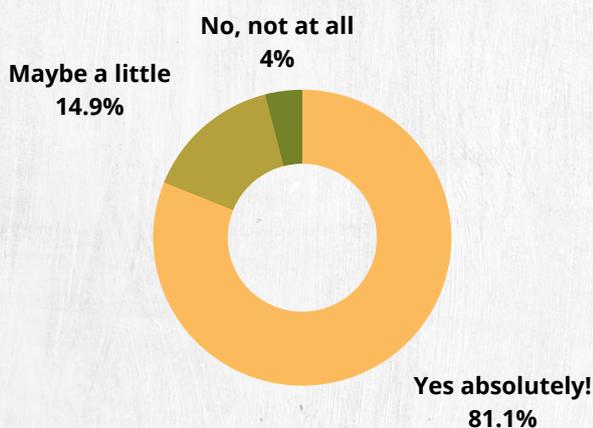
Have you gained more knowledge about Islamophobia?



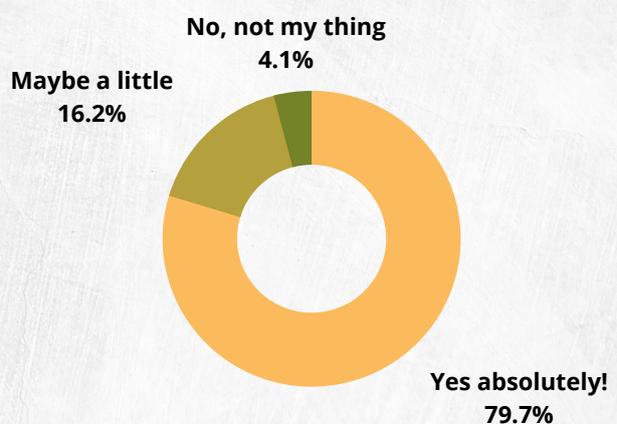
Do you feel that your xenophobia and intolerance have decreased?



Do you think the room was interesting?



Was it a fun and creative way to learn through educational escape rooms?



Examples of what the students learned:

"Not to prejudice anyone"

"That the media has 9/10 negative articles about Islam in particular, which was to a much greater extent than I thought"

"I learned not to judge people by what group they are in"

"A lot about Islamophobia"

"Not all Muslims are bad"

"Other people who do not have e.g. Swedish name does not get as many opportunities to get a job"

"Not to draw hasty conclusions"

"Everyone from Islam is not a terrorist"

"Learned a lot"

"That it's a big problem"

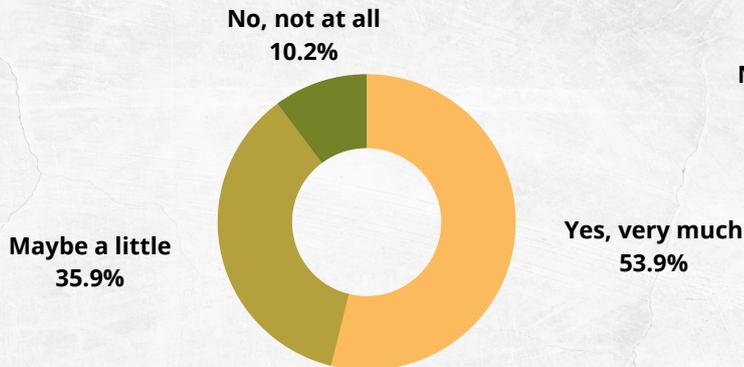
"That Islamophobia is bad and affects Muslims a lot"

"Standing up against Islamophobia"

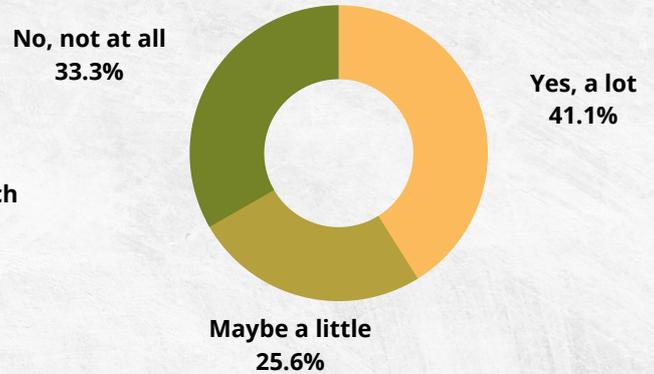
"That people named Mohammed change their names to make it easier to get a job"

"I had not really reflected on it as a big problem before but now I learned how it affects individuals and society. Then I saw how big the problem actually is."

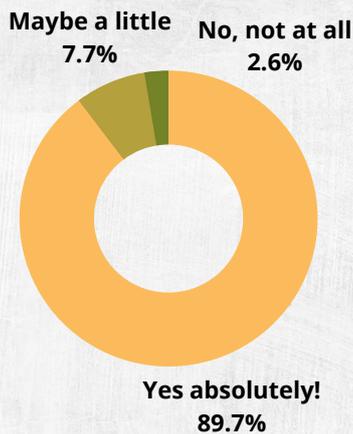
Have you gained more knowledge about Afrophobia?



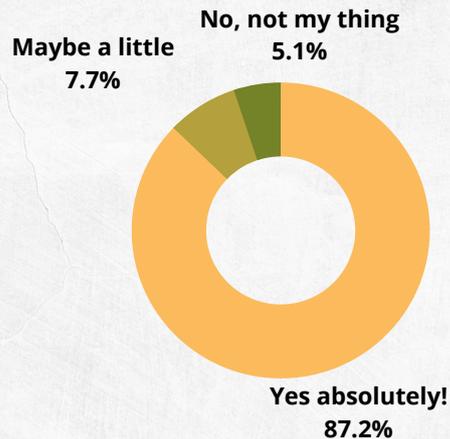
Do you feel that your xenophobia and intolerance have decreased?



Do you think the room was interesting?



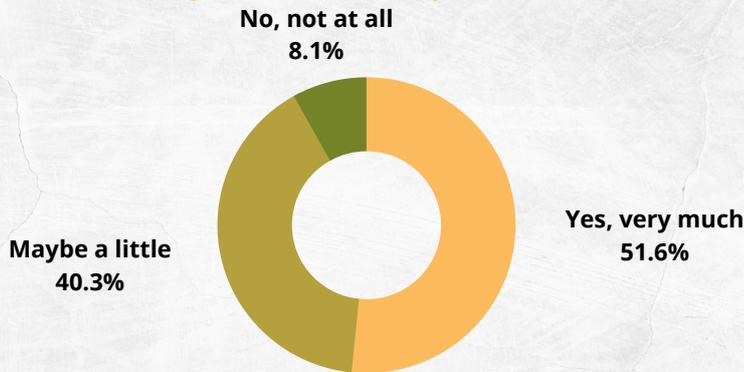
Was it a fun and creative way to learn through educational escape rooms?



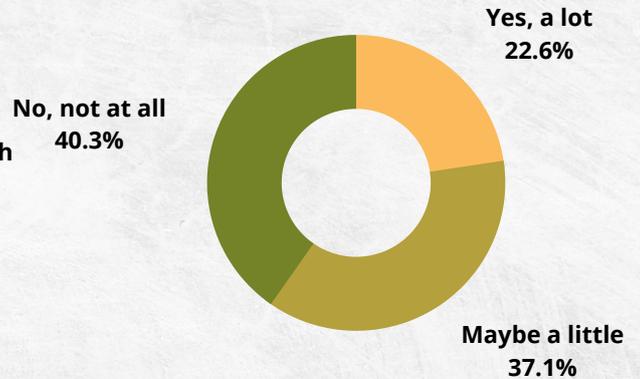
Examples of what the students learned:

- "That you no longer use the word race"
- "That most African immigrants to Sweden come from Somalia"
- "The word race was removed in 2011"
- "More about racism"
- "What it is and the history"
- "A little bit of everything"
- "That it was not Africans who drew lines between the countries"
- "About Afrophobia"
- "I learned when some African countries became independent and some fun facts about the countries"
- "I have learned a lot with new important information"
- "Working together"
- "Teamwork makes the dream work"
- "On what Afrophobia is and how to reduce it"
- "That racism exists in all cultures"

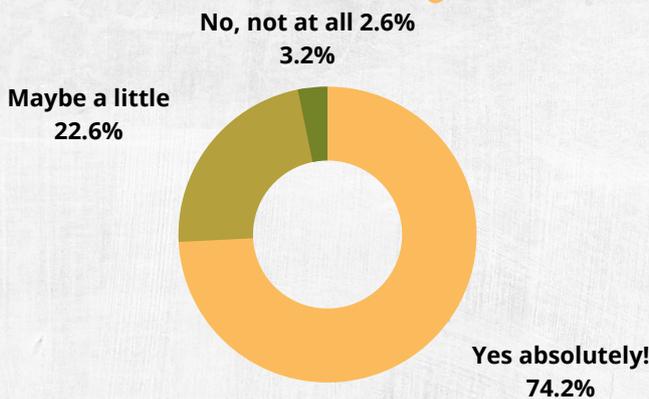
Have you gained more knowledge about homophobia?



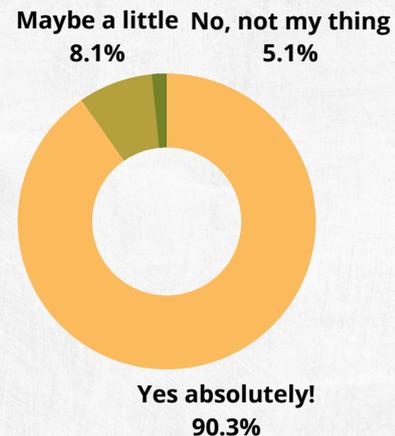
Do you feel that your xenophobia and intolerance have decreased?



Do you think the room was interesting?



Was it a fun and creative way to learn through educational escape rooms?



Examples of what the students learned:

- "I learned about laws I did not know"
- "That you needed to sterilize yourself before 2013 as a trans"
- "New words and their meaning"
- "That homophobia has been around for a very long time"
- "I'm an LGBTQ + myself, but I learned a lot about statistics about what it's like for other LGBTQ + people around the world."
- "Since I am LGBTQ + myself, I think it is important that both I and others learn"
- "I learned more about the names of all sexual orientations"
- "More on homophobia"
- "Accept others"
- "Respect"
- "That ¼ of all the world's population live in countries where it is illegal to be homosexual"
- "How can it be for a gay or bisexual"
- "Taught Me About Homophobia and LGBTQ"
- "Many dates where many changes have taken place"
- "More about numbers and how many people actually feel bad about this"

Social media campaign

In the project the reference group collected **stories** among themselves, their friends and family about Islamophobia, Afrophobia and Homophobia.

These stories formed the social media campaign in the project which can be found at Awesome People's social media #awesomepeoplese and <https://www.facebook.com/AwesomePeopleSE>.



Together with the reference group we also produced **podcasts** about Islamophobia, Afrophobia and Homophobia. The podcasts can be found here:

- Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3BnCl3P>
- Google: <https://bit.ly/362OKyv>
- Podbean: <https://awesomepeople.podbean.com/>



Islamophobia

"There are so many racists in Sweden and by racists, I mean people who hate Muslims. I cannot go out with my cultural clothes out on the town or anywhere else without someone saying some nasty comment to me. Comments such as "Out of our country" or "you are not worth anything". It is very difficult, and I want it to end immediately. "

"I know a Muslim girl who lives in England now. When she was 12, she was bullied by two girls who were her classmates. The girls did not like my friend and once when the class had sports, the girls came and pulled hard on her veil. My friend was so angry and sad that she cried and then she ran to the teacher, but the teacher did nothing more than tell the girls to say sorry to my friend. They did, but they were not punished. The teacher did not call their parents. What the teacher did not understand is that the veil was important to her."

"I have always had to wear a veil; it was not something I wanted or felt comfortable in. Even at a young age, I always heard comments about what I looked like because of my veil such as. "Easter witch are you already here, Easter has already passed" or "Terrorist you hide bombs under your veil" and much more. So, what I heard as a young person made everything much worse when I got more anxiety about my veil but luckily, I told my mother when I was 14 that I did not want it and explained everything to her and she took it well and let me take it off, instead of getting angry she supported me."

"When I was much younger, there was a lot on the news about Muslims committing terrorist and then I became a little hesitant and scared. When my parents then decided to go to Dubai on holiday so that dad could see what it was like there because he might start working there, I was against going there because I had heard on TV that it was Muslim terrorist groups who carried out terrorist acts. However, they did not listen to me and later in the summer we sat on the plane to Dubai to have a holiday that I was very hesitant about. When we landed and took the taxi to our hotel, I saw how kind everyone was, but I still had my suspicions. After spending a little more time there, it felt like I became less and less scared and in the end, I realized that I had been wrong all the time and that not all Muslims are bad."

Homophobia

"I was 13 years old when I came out to a guy, I had had contact with for a long time and when he found out it did not end well. He took a slight stranglehold on me and said in a high tone "do you think I'm fucking gay or" several times then he let me go and when I got home, I saw that he had deleted me everywhere. "

"Being gay is not easy which it should be because every time I quarrel with someone I'm always called 'fucking gay', 'shut up you gay bastard' or something like that. They take in sexual orientation as a counter-argument just because they know I'm right and they can't think of anything they can say against, so the easiest thing is to say, ' your fucking gay shut up now '. Not a day goes by without me hearing something about my orientation or "cool" guys dropping comments every time I walk past them in the canteen. "

"When my friend would come out as bisexual to his mother, he told her that he thinks he is bi but that he is unsure about it, so he wanted her to keep it a secret and not tell anyone. The mother was comfortable with the fact that her son was bisexual but not very good at keeping secrets, she outed him on Facebook so everyone she knew including my friend's big brother. My friend's relationship with his parents was not very good, his father is not good with feelings so he could never talk about such things with him, and he did not have good contact with his mother, the only one he felt comfortable with was his big brother. When his big brother heard about it, he came to my friend and asked him in an aggressive way if he really was a bi, my friend had to lie and suppress his sexuality because he did not want to disappoint his big brother who he knew was a bit homophobic. To this day, he does not dare to come out and has to live as something he is not."

"I grew up in a religious home in a small town. I went to a small school with people who had very narrow opinions and mindsets. As a result, I never really learned anything about LGBTQ +. However, I heard nasty comments at school against LGBTQ + people and felt that I did not agree with the opinions of others. After a while, I let go of religion because I felt it did not suit me. Later in life I changed school and was opened to a new world, here people were not only accepting LGBTQ+ but also people within LGBTQ + who I later became friends with who also taught me more about the subject. Even today, I see people with hateful opinions against LGBTQ + people and sigh. Why can't we just accept each other?"

"My relatives are Christian fundamentalists. This means that they read the Bible verbatim and think that it is God's own word that must not be changed. My mother's cousin was gay. Being gay in that context is tantamount to being a sinner, a bad person, a disgrace. Throughout his life he was told that he was possessed by demons, that he needed to be saved. They did not accept him for who he was, which meant that he could not live with himself either. He took his own life. Last winter I was at the funeral, and not even then did the talk of demons that had ruled him end. His mother said, "Now I can finally have peace for his demons."



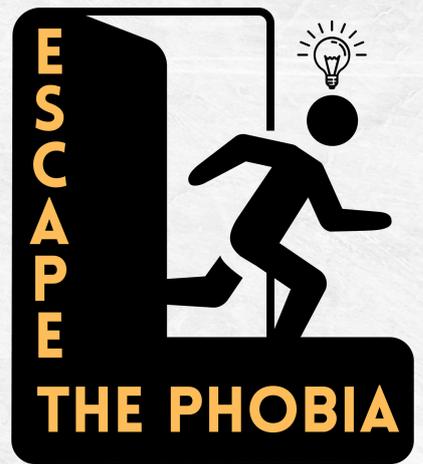
Afrophobia

"My friend who is 19 years old is dark-skinned and has heard racist comments several times in her life, however, this situation was one of the worst. She was waiting for the bus when two white men approached her, she noticed that they were drug-affected. One of them sat down next to her and asked what the * n-word * is doing now and she stood up, one of the men stood in front of her and said how much do you cost for two hours. Then the other commented that she is free of charge let's take her home. My friend started screaming and attracted attention and several people came forward and helped her. "

"My friend is from Eritrea. He has explained to me how many times he has been called that word. He said it feels like a second name he got from strangers he doesn't even know. He has told how he has been beaten by others when he has been out for a walk. He has also said that he was threatened with death precisely because of his skin color. "

"When I was in Syria, I never met Africans, the only time was when I travelled to other countries. Me and my friends or like the whole family thought that Africans are stupid and not as smart as other people. When I moved to Sweden I felt sorry for them because I thought they understood nothing but one day at school when we had math and I was in the same group as a guy with African origin, I thought I was so bad at math but I do not have to worry because he does not understand either. But he wrote on all questions, and I was shocked because I did not know he was so smart and I looked like an idiot in class. It was that day that I understood how prejudice can affect us in society and our thoughts."

"It was a wonderful summer day when my family and I were in Gothenburg. We had just had dinner and were going to a café when we came across a demonstration organized by Nordfront. The group of white men filled the street with an unpleasant feeling of hatred. We thought it was so uncomfortable that we had to leave. If I, as a white person, thought it was hard, you can imagine how hard and scary it must have been for someone with a different origin and skin colour. I think it reflects how Afrophobia can turn into hatred and how unpleasant and unnatural it is."



R·E·P·O·R·T