

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

# RESEARCH BRANCH



## **Overview Analysis of Racist Incidents Recorded in Northern Ireland by the RUC 1996-1999**

Neil Jarman, Community Development Centre

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The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Departments.



## Summary

This report is the first detailed analysis of the issue of racist harassment and violence in Northern Ireland. The report focuses on 357 incidents that were reported to, and recorded by, the RUC between January 1996 and December 1999. Over this four-year period, there has been an increase of over 400% in the number of recorded incidents. The annual total is continuing to rise and showed an increase of 45% between 1999 and 2000, from 186 to 269 incidents.

The rise in the number of reported incidents is probably due to a combination of factors, including a real rise in the number of racist incidents, a greater willingness of people to report such incidents to the police and a greater awareness by the police of the need to record racist incidents.

However, the fact that these figures include no reference to harassment experienced in schools or hospitals, no incidents recorded by any other statutory, community or voluntary body and few incidents reported by members of the Traveller community suggests that the current total represents a considerable under documentation of the true scale of racist harassment experienced by minority ethnic communities.

Since the publication of Sir William Macpherson's *Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* in 1999, the definition of a racist incident has been simplified and changed so that it now reads:

*'A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.*

A racist incident thus includes a wide range of actions and behaviour, which ranges from violent assault to verbal abuse, from attacks on property to threats on the person, from criminal activity to petty harassment. Perhaps more importantly the defining factor in the new definition is the perception of the person experiencing harassment rather than the motivation of the perpetrator.

The data suggests that racist harassment is a persistent backdrop to the lives of members of all of the diverse minority communities in Northern Ireland. Incidents have been reported involving men and women, children and the elderly; in urban Belfast and rural Fermanagh, in the home, place of work, the

street, in bars, in leisure centres. Incidents occur throughout the year and at all times of the day and night (although the majority are recorded from the late afternoon to the early hours). For many people racist harassment is a persistent factor in their life, and in many cases people experience numerous instances of racism before they choose to report it.

Some of the main findings are as follows:

- Racist harassment is experienced by all minority communities in Northern Ireland, although the largest number of incidents, and the highest ratio per head of population, has been reported by members of the Indian and Pakistani community.
- Although harassment is experienced by all sections of the minority communities, the number of incidents involving children increased from 8.5% of the total in 1996 to over 16% in 1999. Violence or physical assault was a factor in over 75% of cases involving children.
- Over 50% of all incidents were recorded in Belfast and over 70% of incidents were recorded in the Greater Belfast area. The areas with the most recorded incidents were South, North and East Belfast. Outside of Belfast, the highest number of incidents were recorded in Glengormley, Ballymena, Derry and Bangor.
- The areas with the most recorded incidents are in Protestant areas of South and North Belfast: Donegall Pass, the Village, and Lower North. Very few incidents have been recorded in West Belfast. This may be a reflection of racist attitudes but more likely it reflects the fact that housing is more readily available in Protestant working class areas than in Catholic working class areas.
- Most incidents are multi-faceted in that they involve a combination of racist abuse, violence to the person, damage to property, theft, threats or graffiti. Many involve verbal abuse or low-level damage to house or car, but a number involve assault with a weapon, petrol bombs or arson.
- Most incidents are recorded in or around the home – over 56% involve attacks on domestic property or affect people who are in their home.

22% of incidents are related to the place of work while 20% occurred in the street. Only 3.5% of incidents occurred in a leisure or social setting.

- This suggests that most incidents are not random – but rather that the victims are known in some way and targeted because of their ethnicity. Once the home location is identified, it is relatively easy for the perpetrators to undertake repeat or persistent harassment. In 6.5% of cases the victim had moved or was seeking to move home as a result of the racism.
- In 20% of cases, the perpetrator was identified as a neighbour or someone who lived locally, while up to 47% of cases may involve someone who lives close to the victim. The stereotypical perpetrator of racist harassment is a young white male who was acting in consort with other similar young white males. However in 12% of cases a female was also involved in harassment.

One of the key recommendations in the Stephen Lawrence Report was that responding to racist harassment was not simply a matter for the police but should involve *'close co-operation between the Police Service and local government and other agencies, including in particular Housing and Education departments'*. While the RUC appears to have responded positively to many of the recommendations in the report, other relevant agencies have yet to make an appropriate response to this growing problem.

As it stands, the police are continuing to take the lead in responding to racist incidents in Northern Ireland. However, this is much more than a policing issue and there is some urgency in ensuring that all relevant agencies and other bodies co-operate to create an appropriate and sustained response to racist harassment and violence.



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# 1. Introduction

Since 1997, the RUC has published annual figures of the number of racist incidents that are reported to them, a number which has been increasing year by year. All recent research that has been published on the minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland has acknowledged the ongoing presence of racist harassment in the lives of members of the minority communities (Connolly and Keenan 2000a, 2000b, Irwin and Dunn 1997, Hainsworth 1998). However, to date there has been no detailed analysis of the form, scale and nature of such harassment.

This preliminary report is the first attempt to provide such an overview of the scale and nature of racist harassment in Northern Ireland. It provides an analysis of 357 racist incidents recorded by the RUC between 1996 and 1999. It looks at, among other things, the ethnic grouping, the age and the gender of those reporting harassment; in which towns and cities harassment has occurred; whether the harassment took place at work, at home or in the street; the nature of the harassment and it provides some details of the perpetrators of racist harassment.

The data reveals that reports of incidents of racist harassment have been increasing each year since 1996; that racist harassment is a factor affecting all the various minority communities across a broad range of towns in Northern Ireland; that harassment affects children as well as senior citizens, women as well as men; that for many people the harassment is experienced in their own home, while for others harassment occurs at their place of work; and that for many people harassment is a repetitive and persistent fact of life here in which the harassers are people they recognise or who live locally.

Given what is known of the persistence of racist harassment in England and Wales (Bowling 1998, Lemos 2000, Rayner 2001), perhaps little of the information that is revealed in this report is surprising, however it is to be hoped that the facts that are drawn out will be useful in stimulating discussion about an appropriate response to the problem of racist harassment in Northern Ireland.

In England and Wales developing a response to racist harassment is now accepted as the responsibility of a broad range of statutory and voluntary agencies and groups, not just a problem for the police to deal with. Multi-

agency partnerships appear to have been accepted as a necessary response to the rise in domestic violence in Northern Ireland (DHSS and NIO 1995). However, according to the RUC there is little evidence of a multi-agency response to racist harassment in Northern Ireland besides informal links between the police and a small number of special interest groups. This needs to be addressed if Northern Ireland is to keep in step with recommendations made in the Stephen Lawrence Report.

This report is only a first step in documenting the nature of racist harassment in Northern Ireland. There are a number of areas in which this research needs to be developed to provide a fuller perspective on this problem. These include the following:

All the incidents between 1996 and 1999 have been entered onto a specially constructed database to facilitate the research project. The next stage is to document the 269 incidents that have been recorded in 2000 and to include those in an extended analysis. After that, incidents reported in 2001 can be added as well. This will allow an ongoing evaluation of the problem to be conducted.

There is also a need for a broad programme of qualitative research with members of minority ethnic communities, with police officers working with these communities and with other statutory and community groups to extend our understanding of the full scale of racist harassment. This will also enable us to begin to document what type of responses have already been initiated and with what level of success.

It will also be useful to look in some detail at some of the recent initiatives that have been developed in England and Wales and further a field in response to the problem of racist violence to see what lessons can be learnt and what mistakes might be avoided (Bowling 1998, Dummett 1997, Lemos 2000). This will be particularly important in evaluating the benefits and difficulties of multi-agency responses to racist violence.

An extension of this will be to explore the options for co-ordinated policy responses to racist harassment within an all-Ireland context at a time when racism and xenophobia are an increasing concern in the Republic (MacLachlan and O'Connell 2000) and when the government and agencies in the south are only just beginning to monitor the number of racist incidents (Haughey 2001).

Finally there is a need to look at the growth of the number of racist incidents within the wider context of 'hate crime', by including such issues as homophobic and sectarian harassment within the database and research programme.

This level of research, analysis and evaluation will permit the formulation of a series of recommendations that will provide the framework for a concerted and effective policy response that draws together the bodies within the devolved administration and the Northern Ireland Office to create an effective and co-ordinated response to the growing problem of violence and harassment in Northern Ireland.



## **2. Minority Communities in Northern Ireland**

There has long been a variety of minority ethnic communities resident in Northern Ireland (Kapur 1997) but for a long time their presence was obscured by the tensions and conflicts between the two dominant white communities. In spite of a number of recent reports and studies which have brought greater recognition of the history and status of the minority communities within Northern Irish society (Hainsworth 1998, Irwin and Dunn 1997, Mann-Kler 1997, McCann et al 1994) there are still large gaps in our knowledge of the scale and make up of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland.

Irwin and Dunn's study concentrated on four communities: Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Travellers, Hainsworth's collection covered the same four groups with the inclusion of an essay on the Jewish community, probably the oldest existing minority in Ireland, while Mann-Kler also includes the Vietnamese/Chinese community.

However, the minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland are much more diverse than these six groups: there are Sikh communities in Belfast and Derry, a Filipino Association, an African Cultural Centre, an Islamic Centre, while the evidence from the police report forms and the Law Centre's work with asylum seekers (Tennant 2000) reveal an ever more varied range of backgrounds and cultures represented here.

However, there is no clear picture of the scale or size of the minority communities. No question on the ethnic status of the respondent was included in the Northern Ireland census until 2001 and therefore more accurate figures for each of the different communities will be available in the near future.

The most detailed attempt to enumerate the minority communities has been by Irwin and Dunn (1997). They estimated that the total population of the four main minority communities (including visitors) was between 6,270 and 8,270 persons and they estimated that this would increase to between 8,900 and 10,900 by the year 2001. Their figures are as follows:

**Table 1: Population of main minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland**

	Chinese	Indian	Pakistani	Traveller	Other	Total
1995	3125-5125	1050	641	1366	88	6270-8270
2001	5200-7200	1200	800	1700		8900-10900

There has been some dispute over the scale of these figures, in particular over the size of the Chinese community, which the Chinese Welfare Association has claimed is probably nearer 8,000 persons (Watson and McKnight 1998). The RUC force order on racial monitoring (92/97) approximates the size of the minority communities at some 15,000 persons, while McVeigh (1998) argues that a total figure of 20,000 persons would be a more reasonable estimate for all minority communities.

While the disputes will not be resolved until the 2001 census figures are available, it does seem clear that the figures labelled 'Other' by Irwin and Dunn are probably a gross underestimate of the number of people from other backgrounds and ethnic communities currently resident in Northern Ireland.

The size of the various minority communities is not of critical importance for this study. However, it is of some relevance to the issue of racist incidents, racist harassment and racist crime. The ratio of incidents per head of population will reasonably be expected to have some relation to the impact that such incidents have on the attitudes, fears and perceptions of members of those communities. A small number of incidents can have a significant impact on a small community.

There were almost 200 racist incidents recorded in Northern Ireland in 1999, and this figure rose to 269 incidents in 2000. This figure may still be small but they are large in relation to the size of the minority ethnic population: 200 incidents a year among a population of 15,000 people is the equivalent of 20,000 sectarian incidents among a population of 1,500,000 people. The recorded level of racist incidents is thus a significant number given the relatively small size of the communities here.

### 3. Defining Racist Incidents

In 1995 the RUC adopted the then current ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) definition of what was at the time termed a 'racially motivated incident'. This stated that a racially motivated incident was:

1. *Any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigating officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motivation, or any incidents which includes an allegation of racial motivation made by any person.*

The force order outlining police practice in dealing with racial incidents (No 92/97) follows this with a series of points, which attempt to further clarify and elaborate on this definition for police officers. These state that:

2. *The definition refers to 'incident' rather than crimes or offences, and therefore covers behaviour, which may not normally be considered police business. An example would be name-calling by children.*
3. *In addition to incidents, which are obviously racially motivated such as graffiti attacks, the definition includes any incident where an allegation of racial motivation is made by any person. This means that if any person, whether a victim or not, alleges that an incident is racially motivated, then the incident will be treated as racial.*
4. *Occasionally problems can arise in differentiating between racial and religious motives. For example whether an attack on a mosque has a racial motivation, or whether an anti-semitic motivation is racial or religious, is open to question. In both cases, if the victim or any person alleges a racial motivation, then it should be treated as a racial incident.*
5. *Nationality can sometimes be confused with race. For example, if a white person assaulted a Spanish holiday maker because of his dislike of Spanish people in general, would it be classified as a racial incident? The answer is no, as both fall within the same racial classification.*
6. *Whilst racial incidents often involve a white perpetrator and a member or another race as the victim, this is not always the case. A white person can equally be a victim. It can also be the case that an incident*

*involves non-whites, such as a racial assault by a Black on a Chinese person, or an Indian on a Black.*

The report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry written by Sir William Macpherson (1999) recommended that a simplified definition of racist incidents be adopted by all police services and other relevant agencies. He made the following recommendations:

12. *That the definition should be: 'A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.*
13. *That the term 'racist incident' must be understood to include crimes and non-crimes in policing terms. Both must be reported, recorded and investigated with equal commitment.*
14. *That this definition should be universally adopted by the Police, local government and other relevant agencies.*

Recommendation 14 is of some wider significance because it indicated that Macpherson recognised that responding to racist incidents and harassment could not be seen purely as a policing matter but demanded a co-ordinated response from a variety of relevant agencies and bodies. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The simplified definition of a racist incident also involved a significant shift in emphasis in how such incidents were to be understood. The change from 'racially motivated incidents' to 'racist incidents' involved a shift from an emphasis on the motivation of the perpetrator, towards prioritising the perception of the victim (HMIC 2001:40). It thus gives more importance to the impact of such incidents on the victim rather than focusing primarily on the intention of the perpetrator.

The recommendations were accepted by the Home Secretary and adopted into a wider *Code of Practice on reporting and recording racist incidents*. This definition has now been universally adopted by the police service '*and amongst other partner agencies*' in England and Wales (ACPO 2000, HMIC 2001, Home Office, 2000).

The new revised definition of a racist incident was also adopted by the RUC and has been implemented into their working practices.

The new simplified definition also has implications for the points of clarification set out in the RUC force order. An attack by a white person on another white person of a different nationality (point 5) would be regarded as racist and has been treated as such by the RUC since at least 1998 (Home Office 2000:3.10). Similarly an attack on a mosque (point 6) would be treated as a racist incident if any person considered it to be racist.

However this also raises awkward questions, which are specifically pertinent for Northern Ireland, such as whether an attack by a Catholic on a Protestant or vice versa should be treated as a racist incident. And if an attack on a mosque is racist, then is an attack on a chapel or church racist, and what about an attack on an Orange Hall or GAA club?

The current ACPO *Guide to Identifying and Combating Hate Crime* (2000) situates racist crime and racist incidents within the broader category of 'hate crime'. A hate crime is '*a crime where the perpetrator's prejudice against any identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised*' (section 2.1), racist incidents fall within this definition as do homophobic crimes and '*other forms of crimes against faith groups, groups within faiths (sectarianism), asylum seekers, disabled people, refugees, Romany people, Irish travellers and any other groups of no less importance.*' (Section 1.7). Thus current police thinking would categorise expression of sectarianism within the broader category of hate crime rather than as racist incidents.

Another significant factor in Macpherson's report was that the revised definition was deemed to be of relevance not just to the police but also to local government and other relevant agencies. Besides recommendation 14, which has been noted above, the report included the following recommendation:

17. *That there should be close co-operation between the Police Service and local government and other agencies, including in particular Housing and Education Departments, to ensure that all information as to racist incidents and crimes is shared and is readily available to all agencies.*

This was elaborated in the *Code of Practice on reporting and recording racist incidents* which stated '*there are many 'players' who may have a role in dealing with racist incidents*' and as well as those mentioned by Macpherson added: social services, Victim Support, race equality councils, multi-agency panels, religious organisations, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, tenant's associations and other community groups (section 1.6).

The *Code of Practice* recommends that multi-agency panels should operate as *an organised way to work together 'to provide information about racist incidents within an area that can be useful for prevention as well as investigation'* (section 4.1). Part of the multi-agency working should be to facilitate ease of reporting racist incidents for those people who do not want to report directly to the police. It notes that in some areas arrangements have been made to allow incidents to be reported in such diverse locations as mosques, churches, shops, libraries, schools, community centres, leisure centres, social services, hospitals and doctors surgeries (section 4.4).

The RUC have stated that they are not involved in any multi-agency panel involving statutory bodies, which are addressing the issue of racist harassment or crime although they have been working with a range of NGOs (NICEM, Chinese Welfare Association, Multi-Cultural resource Centre) and with Victim Support to improve reporting and recording of racist incidents.

This seems to be a key area in which agencies in Northern Ireland have been slow to respond to the Stephen Lawrence Report and to the rise in racist harassment locally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that racist incidents are still regarded primarily as a policing matter and that there is little structured communication or exchange of information between key agencies such as the education boards and the Housing Executive over this issue.

## 4. Monitoring Racist Incidents

The RUC began to monitor racially motivated incidents from 1 January 1995. However the format for recording the data changed in 1996 and this report is therefore based on an analysis of incidents recorded by the RUC between 1996 and 1999. The full data for 2000 was not available when this report was being compiled.

The data in this report is drawn from the incident report forms, which are completed by the Community Affairs Sergeant in each Sub-Division and forwarded to the Community Affairs Department in Headquarters. This report is based on an analysis of 357 racist incidents recorded over the four-year period by the police. These are broken down on a year-by-year basis in the table below.

**Table 2: Racist incidents recorded 1996-1999**

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
35	40	96	186	269

For interest my figures can be compared with figures provided by the Community Affairs Department, with those published in the Chief Constable's Annual Report and with figures in the 1999/2000 report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

**Table 3: Racist incidents in Northern Ireland 1996-1999**

	1996, 96/97	1997, 97/98	1998, 98/99	1999, 99/00	Total
Jarman	35	40	96	186	357
Comm. Aff.	39	40	106	197	382
Ann. Report		25	90	237	352
HMIC	91	67	94		252

The wide variation in figures is somewhat worrying especially as the published figures (those in the Annual Report and HMIC's report) differ considerably from my own and from those made available to me by Community Affairs. This variation in figures is further compounded by figures published in Hainsworth

(1998) for 1995 and 1996. White (1998:80) cites a figure of 66 incidents for 1995 while Watson and McKnight (1998:150) cite figures of 55-60 for 1995 and 43 for 1996 and thus giving a fourth figure for that year.

I do not intend to analyse possible reasons for the variations in any detail in this report although it is worth making two brief points.

- First the figures in the Annual Report and the HMIC report refer to the financial year whereas my figures refer to a calendar year.
- Second there are a small number of incidents where a group of three or four people have been subject to racist harassment and where three or four report forms have been submitted. I have treated these as a single incident with multiple injured parties rather than a number of separate incidents.

The most obvious fact that each of these sets of statistics (except for the HMIC figures) illustrate is that there has been a substantial increase in the number of reported incidents over this period with an increase of over 400% between 1996 and 1999. Table 4 shows the annual percentage increase based on my own data and the figures from the RUC Annual Report.

**Table 4: Percentage annual increase of racist incidents**

	<b>1996-1997</b>	<b>1997-1998</b>	<b>1998-1999</b>	<b>1996-1999</b>
Jarman	14%	140%	94%	431%
Comm. Aff.	2.5%	165%	86%	405%
Ann. Report		260%	163%	888%

The figures for 2000, which showed an increase to 269 incidents, indicate that the annual increase is continuing if at a slower percentage rate.

There are a number of reasons that can be put forward to explain the increase in recorded incidents.

1. There has been a real increase in the number of racist incidents that have occurred in Northern Ireland.

2. There has been an increase in the number of incidents being reported to the police.
3. There has been an increase in the willingness or the awareness of police officers to record incidents as racist incidents.
4. The changed definition of a racist incident, which focuses on perception rather than motivation, may also have been a contributory factor.

While all these factors have probably contributed to the increase in recorded incidents, it is perhaps the willingness to report to the police that is the major factor in this increase. Research in England and Wales in recent years has suggested that perhaps as few as 1 in 20 incidents were being reported to the police (Holdaway 1996) while more recent research suggests that it is the increased willingness of members of minority ethnic groups to report incidents, in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry that has accounted in large part for the 107% rise in recorded incidents in England and Wales from April 1999 to April 2000 (Rayner 2001).

There are a number of underlying factors that are felt to sustain a lack of willingness by members of minority ethnic communities to report racist incidents. These include:

- Feeling that the incident is not serious enough to be worth reporting
- Believing that the police will respond to crimes but not to mere 'incidents'.
- A belief that police officers are ignorant of their responsibility to record racist incidents.
- A general suspicion or mistrust of the police.
- Language and/or cultural barriers, which enhance an unwillingness to engage with the police.

Dealing effectively with these concerns is clearly an important issue for the police and the level of confidence that members of minority communities have in their local police officers will probably be reflected in the documenting of racist incidents. However, such confidence will only be sustained if the reporting and recording of such incidents is seen to generate an effective and consistent response.

The Stephen Lawrence Report made a number of recommendations with regard to improving the documentation of racist incidents. It argued that there should be a *'comprehensive system of reporting and recording all racist incidents and crimes'* (recommendation 15) which should include *'the ability to report at locations other than police stations and the ability to report 24 hours a day.'* (Recommendation 16).

The report went on *'There should be close co-operation between Police Services and local government and other agencies, including in particular Housing and Education Departments, to ensure that all information as to racist incidents and crimes is shared and is readily available to all agencies.'* (Recommendation 17).

The increase in the number of racist incidents being recorded by the police may in part be taken to indicate that there have been some moves towards creating greater confidence in the police within the minority ethnic communities. This may be particularly the case in those areas which have seen a sudden emergence of racist incidents as a local factor in 1999 (see below section 6), in this case the growth in figures may well be in large part due to the relationship between local people who have been targeted by racist harassment and the local Community Affairs sergeant.

Having said that, one should note that incidents reported by Travellers still form an extremely small percentage of the overall figures and are a much smaller number than might be expected given the relative size of the community and the attitude of many within the majority communities to Travellers (Connolly and Keenan 2000a, 2000b; Mann-Kler 1997). Although attempts have been made to improve the relationship between Travellers and the police there is obviously considerable work still to be done.

## 5. Minority Ethnic Communities and Racist Harassment

The RUC report forms place the injured parties of racist harassment in one of six racial categories, which are broadly based on the largest minority communities in Northern Ireland. The categories are:

- **Black:** people from Central and Southern Africa and those of African descent living in other countries.
- **Chinese:** includes people from China, Hong Kong and people of Chinese descent from Malaysia and Singapore, but not Malays, Koreans, Japanese who are classified as Other.
- **Indian sub-continent:** people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- **Other:** people from North Africa, South America, South East Asia, Japanese, Koreans and anyone who does not fall into the other five categories.
- **Traveller:** those who consider themselves and are accepted as other Travellers as such.
- **White:** includes all Europeans and people of European descent.

In addition to the information on racial groupings described above, the following details can be drawn from information provided on the racial incident forms.

- The 'Indian' community is a diverse category and include Hindus and Sikhs who are primarily from India, Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh and Tamils from Sri Lanka. However, there are also people who have been included in the Other category who describe themselves as Muslim.
- The category of 'Others' includes an extremely varied group of nationalities and communities and includes individuals who described themselves or were described on the report form as: Arab, Asian, Bengali, Iranian, Japanese, Jordanian, Korean, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Palestinian and Turkish.
- The White category includes individuals who described themselves or were described as: English, German, Greek and Spanish as well as two instances involving persons describing themselves as Irish.

According to the explanatory note for the racist incident report forms the victim is asked to make their own classification of their status within the six racial categories.

**Table 5: Number of recorded incidents for each of the six racial categories 1996-1999.**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total	%
Black	2	3	9	17	31	8.5
Chinese	21	13	19	59	112	31
Indian	10	18	53	72	153	43
Other	2	5	12	18	37	10
Traveller				9	9	2.5
White		1	3	11	15	4
Total	35	40	96	186	357	

The overall number of incidents relating to each of the six racial categories over the four-year period raises a number of questions. They reflect upon and raise questions about the relationship between the number of incidents that actually occur and the number of incidents reported to and recorded by the police. They also perhaps give an insight into the nature of the relationships between the various communities and the police. This is especially suggestive when one compares the overall figures for the three largest minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland: the Chinese, Indian and Traveller communities.

Although the Chinese community are the largest minority ethnic community in Northern Ireland and they reported the most incidents in 1996 (21/35), in each of the subsequent years members of the Indian community have reported the most incidents.

- Incidents relating to the Indian community account for 43% of all incidents in the four-year period compared with 31% of incidents reported by the Chinese community.

- In contrast there were no racially motivated incidents recorded involving the Traveller community, the third largest minority community in Northern Ireland, prior to 1999.

If the number of recorded incidents does reflect the situation accurately then the Indian community is suffering considerably more harassment per head of population than either the Chinese or the Traveller community. This would also appear to contrast with the evidence reported by Irwin and Dunn (1997:100-1) who stated that *'the Chinese community is more likely to experience all forms of harassment than the other ethnic groups'*.

The estimated size of the broader South Asian/Indian community (including Pakistanis) is some 1600 persons while figures for the Chinese community vary from 3000 to 8000 and the Traveller community numbers some 1400 persons (Irwin 1997, Watson and McKnight 1999). Based on the number of incidents recorded in 1999 the Indian community would have experienced 45 incidents per 1000 persons while the Chinese community would have experienced between 7 and 20 per 1000 persons and the Traveller community experienced some 6.5 incidents per 1000 persons.

While this may well be a reasonable reflection of the relative number of incidents experienced by each community, it may also be a reflection of the differing attitudes towards, and relationship between, the three communities and the police.

Anecdotal evidence, for instance, has suggested that the relationship between Travellers and the police is often extremely poor, with anti-Traveller prejudice widespread within the police (Jarman 1999). The small number of incidents recorded in which Travellers have reported being victims of racism suggest that some inroads have been made with this regard, but the small number of such incidents also suggests that there is a long way to go.

Similarly, while some considerable work has been done to improve the working relationship between the RUC and the Chinese community, it may well still be the case that *'fear and suspicion about the police will often prevent individuals approaching their local police station, choosing in preference to approach their own community association'* (Watson and McKnight 1999:149).

It is perhaps the case, therefore, that the differing levels of reported harassment are as much a factor of police-community relations as they are a reflection of the reality of everyday life for members of minority ethnic communities.

## Previous Experience of Racist Harassment

It is also important to recognise that in many such cases the victims of racist harassment have experienced previous examples of such harassment. **In 149 of the 357 cases recorded (42% of the total) the injured party reported that they had previous experience of racist harassment.** In some cases the previous harassment had been reported to the police but in many instances the injured party had endured persistent abuse, and worse, before they finally turned to the police for a response.

The data indicates that the Indian community have reported the highest percentage of cases where the injured party had indicated they had suffered previous harassment, with over 50% of injured parties experiencing racist harassment previously. However, each of the six racial category groups has reported significant levels of previous harassment.

**Table 6: Number and percentage of cases where victim has previously experienced racist harassment**

	Previously Reported	%
Black	8	26
Chinese	39	35
Indian	78	51
Other	15	41
Traveller	2	22
White	7	47

It is also reasonable for these numbers to be treated as a minimum level of previous harassment because in many cases the question of whether there had been a previous incident had been left blank on the police report form. Furthermore, the question demands only a yes or no answer and therefore does not take into account, or acknowledge cases of multiple or persistent

harassment. It is thus difficult to get a clear picture of the true level of repeat harassment from the information provided.

Nevertheless, there is a small but significant number of cases where there is reference to repeat harassment over a period of time, sometimes years, and which has not previously been reported to the authorities and other examples where once one case has been recorded others steadily follow, to indicate that persistent and repetitive harassment is a serious problem for a number of families and individuals.

## **Re-housing due to Racist Harassment**

There are also 23 cases where the report form indicated that the injured party had moved house (7 cases), was planning to move house (9 cases) or had contacted the Housing Executive with the aim of seeking new accommodation (7 cases) as a result of the racist harassment they had received. In many of these cases the report form gives no indication whether there had been any previous incidents of racist harassment.

Information was requested from the Housing Executive on the numbers of persons who had applied for re-housing on the grounds of racist harassment, their reply included the following:

*Regarding racial harassment, under the Common Selection Scheme for housing (implemented in November 2000) intimidation points will be awarded to an application where the applicant's home has been destroyed or seriously damaged or where the applicant cannot be reasonably be expected to live or to resume living in their home due to serious or imminent risk.*

**However the Housing Executive could not supply any figures for the number of cases where people had requested, or been approved for, re-housing as a result of racist harassment as such data was not specifically isolated or collected.**



## 6. Gender and Age of Victim

The report forms identify the person reporting a racist incident by gender and in many cases also include the age of the victim. However, the form does not require all persons who may feel themselves to be injured parties to be identified. Thus, in the case of incidents at or near to a domestic property or a place of work, only a single injured party need be identified although many more people, whether members of a household or co-workers may also be affected by the incident. The table below therefore indicates the gender and age of those reporting racist incidents and in the case of children, where they are the primary recipients of racist harassment.

**Table 7: Gender and age of victims of reported racist incidents.**

	Black	Chinese	Indian	Other	Traveller	White	Total
Male Adult	15	57	102	32	4	4	214
Fem. Adult	10	48	50	7	3	7	125
Male 60+		2	3			1	6
Fem. 60+						1	1
Male Child	3	8	9	1	3	3	27
Fem. Child	4	2	3				9

The figures are greater than the individual number of incidents because in several incidents both males and females have been subject to harassment. There are also a small number of incidents in which adults and children are both identified as primary targets of harassment.

Those people identified as over 60 are the people who specifically gave their age as over 60; persons whose age is not noted have been simply classed as adults.

The data indicates that 61.5% of racist incidents included male adult victims, 35% of incidents included female adult victims and 10% of incidents included children under the age of 16. It suggests that Indian males were more than twice as likely to report an incident than an Indian female (68% and 32%), whereas among the Chinese community males reported 55% of incidents while females reported 45%. The biggest contrast was between the Other grouping

in which males reported 82% of incidents and the White group in which females reported 63% of all incidents.

Some of this variation will result from the different demographic profiles of the various communities; some will result from varying cultural practices, while some will result from differentiated gender working patterns. However, because of the method of recording information the data on age and gender could also reasonably be assumed to be a reflection on those members of the household or workplace with authority or with better command of English than with those who necessarily feel affected by an incident. One might speculate that males would report incidents more frequently than females where both are present and/or affected and similarly that the elderly might be less likely to report incidents in multi-generational households or workplaces.

Furthermore, it is not possible to identify the number of people resident in a property or the number of persons working in premises, which are subjected to racist harassment from the current data. Therefore, while the report forms suggest that most racist incidents have a single injured party, this may be far from the truth. Attacks on family property or on family members will affect all members of the household and incidents in the work place will affect all people who work there. The number of people affected by racist incidents and racist harassment will therefore be considerably higher than the number of incidents that are recorded.

It is also reasonable to assume that the data drawn from the report forms will severely underestimate both the number of children and the number of elderly people who experience some form of racist harassment unless they are the immediate victims. For example, at least 13 incidents can be identified which involve a household – with children being identified as present when an incident occurred, but again this must be taken as the bare minimum of such incidents.

## **Incidents involving children**

The number of incidents involving children as the primary target of racial harassment has steadily increased from 2 in 1996 to 23 incidents in 1999. Incidents involving children both as primary target and as members of a household who had been targeted increased from 3 in 1996 to 30 in 1999.

**The percentage of incidents involving children almost doubled over the four-year period from 8.5% of all incidents in 1996 to 16.1% in 1999.**

The children who suffered harassment ranged in age from 2 to 16; in most cases they were alone and in the street or other public place when the incident occurred. In most cases there was more than one perpetrator involved in the harassment and, in general, the harassers were older than the victim.

**Table 8: Number of incidents involving children 1996-1999**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Child	2	2	7	23	34
Household	1	3	2	7	13
Total	3	5	9	30	41
%	8.5	12.5	9.4	16.1	11.5

In all of these cases the child was subjected to racial abuse, most frequently from one or more elder children although a small number of incidents involve abuse by an adult. **More significantly, in 22 of the 34 cases the child also reported physical assault as well as verbal abuse and in another 4 cases stones were thrown at the child.** This proportion of combined verbal abuse and physical assault towards children is much higher than in cases of harassment involving adults.

Overall, 17 of the 34 incidents involving direct harassment of children were part of an ongoing cycle of harassment, while another 4 incidents involved persons known to the victim and 6 occurred on the way to or from school. At most, only 8 could be considered random attacks or incidents of abuse.

Once again these figures should be considered a minimum number on at least three counts.

1. RUC report forms do not have to record whether children were present when an incident occurred and, given the number of incidents which occur in or near the domestic arena, it is likely that children are far more exposed to the impact of racist harassment than these figures suggest.

2. **No incidents have been recorded in relation to racist harassment that has taken place in schools** and it is clear from the research by Connolly and Keenan that *'racist bullying and harassment is a serious problem for a significant proportion of minority ethnic children in schools.'* (2000b: 65). Although at least six of the incidents occurred on the way home from school or can be linked to school in some way, the fact that school based racial harassment is completely absent from the police figures highlights a key gap in the statistics. Furthermore, it reflects on Macpherson's recommendation (see section 2 above) that all relevant agencies should work together to ensure that information on racist harassment is shared and available to all.
3. At least seventeen of the thirty-four recorded incidents mention previous incidents of a similar nature and suggests that the decision to call in the police was made because of the ongoing and persistent nature of the problem. If all of these previous incidents were recorded then the scale of racist harassment of children would have considerably higher.

**The scale and impact of racist harassment on children and young people is probably severely underestimated, both because of the lack of requirement to document all those exposed to racist harassment, because of the high percentage of incidents that occur in the domestic arena (see section 9) and because of the lack of any documentation of any racist harassment in schools, youth clubs or similar in the RUC figures.**

This is one area where a range of relevant agencies needs to come together, both to determine the scale of the problem and to begin to formulate an appropriate response.

However, before this stage is reached it will be necessary for schools and other educational establishments to accept that there is a problem with, or a potential for, racist bullying. In one example in North Belfast a local school was approached on behalf of children from one minority community and the issue of racist bullying was raised as a factor in the regular and persistent absence of some children. However, the head teacher became most defensive at this suggestion and insisted that they did not have any such problems at the school.

This is one small indication that there is still some considerable work to be done before all relevant agencies and institutions are seen to be responding to this issue.



## 7. Geographical Location of Incidents

Racially motivated incidents have been recorded in 43 towns or villages across all six counties of Northern Ireland. Table 9 identifies the number of locations and the number of incidents that have been recorded in each of the six counties plus Belfast.

**Table 9: Incidents by county**

	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Incidents</b>	<b>% Incidents</b>
Belfast	1	186	52
Antrim	13	74	21
Armagh	4	28	7.9
Down	10	27	7.6
Fermanagh	4	4	1.1
Londonderry	3	16	4.5
Tyrone	8	21	6
Total	43	356	100

These figures can be usefully compared with the data in Irwin and Dunn's 1997 report which analysed the geographical distribution of ethnic groups in Northern Ireland in three broad zones: Belfast, Northern Ireland East of the Bann and Northern Ireland West of the Bann (in which they included Moyle and Newry and Mourne District Council Areas). These figures are based on the assumption that the area categorised as West of the Bann includes incidents recorded in Armagh city, Coleraine and Portrush, and Newry and Warrenpoint

**Table 10: Percentage minority ethnic population and racist incident by zone**

	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>% Minority Population</b>	<b>Number of incidents</b>	<b>% Racist Incidents</b>
Belfast	1974	38	186	52
East NI	1854	36	117	33
West NI	1347	26	54	15

Irwin and Dunn's figures indicate that 38% of the minority ethnic population live in Belfast, however over half of all racially motivated incidents between 1996 and 1999 were recorded in Belfast and only in 1999 did Belfast not account for more than 50% of all incidents when the figure dropped to 44.6% (see Table 11). The table thus illustrates that there has been a significantly higher proportion of racist incidents recorded in relation to the size of the minority ethnic population in Belfast and a smaller proportion of incidents recorded in the area West of the Bann than might be expected.

The regional location of incidents in Belfast can be further broken down into five relatively discrete zones: North, South, East, West and Centre. For this report Crumlin Road serves as the boundary between North and West Belfast; the M1 motorway serves as the boundary between West and South Belfast and the Ormeau Road serves as the boundary between South and East Belfast. The central area is defined as the core commercial, entertainment and leisure area bounded by the River Lagan, York street, Frederick Street, Carrick Hill, Millfield, College Square, Great Victoria Street, Dublin Road, Ormeau Avenue and Cromac Street and including Bradbury Place and Botanic Avenue.

Racist incidents were not evenly or randomly distributed across the city.

- **Most incidents were recorded in the south of the city, with 90 incidents recorded over the four years or 25 % of the total incidents for Northern Ireland.**
- **North Belfast recorded the second greatest number with 49 incidents over four years, 13.7% of the total.**
- **There were 28 incidents recorded in East Belfast.**
- **There were 13 incidents recorded in the central Belfast area.**
- **In contrast only 6 incidents were recorded in West Belfast (encompassing both the Shankill and Falls area) over the same four-year period.**

If these five zones of Belfast were treated as distinct urban areas they would rank as the first (South Belfast), second (North), third (East), sixth (Centre) and fifteenth (West) most significant areas for racist incidents in Northern Ireland

**Table 11: Incidents in Belfast**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total	%
Centre			5	8	13	3.6
East	2	6	4	16	28	7.5
North	1	4	28	16	49	13.7
South	17	14	20	39	90	25
West			2	4	6	1.7
Total	20	24	59	83	186	
% of total	57	60	61.4	44.6		

Irwin and Dunn's data does not give any indication of the residential location of minority ethnic groups in Belfast, and with the exception of the Chinese community in the Donegall Pass area of South Belfast and a small Sikh community in the Alexandra Park Avenue area of North Belfast, there are no significant geographically defined minority ethnic communities. However, it is worth noting that South and North Belfast are the two areas with the highest number of recorded racist incidents and both of these two small communities feature prominently in the number of recorded incidents.

In South Belfast the highest number of incidents, 58 out of 90 (or 64%), were recorded in the inner city and university area. This includes:

- 29 incidents in the Donegall Pass area;
- 16 incidents in the Village area;
- 7 incidents in the Lisburn Road area;
- 6 incidents in the University area.

Furthermore, another 9 of the 13 incidents recorded in the Central Belfast area took place in the area between Dublin Road, Bradbury Place and Botanic Avenue, adjacent to the inner city south area. **This means that the inner South Belfast residential and leisure zone is the area with the most racist incidents in Northern Ireland. This area has recorded the most incidents in each year except 1998.** The majority of these incidents affected the Chinese community living and working in the area.

The other areas of South Belfast where significant numbers of incidents were recorded are Finaghy (10 incidents), Belvoir (5 incidents) and the Ormeau Road (5 incidents).

In North Belfast, 39 of the 49 incidents between 1996 and 1999 were recorded in an area between Glandore Avenue and the Limestone Road. The incidents were centred on Alexandra Park Avenue where 30 of the 48 incidents occurred. The remaining incidents were scattered across the area. The majority of the incidents in North Belfast affected the small Sikh community resident in the area.

In contrast to South and North Belfast, the incidents in East and West Belfast were spread broadly across the area with no significant clusters.

**When one looks more closely at the micro geography of Belfast it is evident that the majority of incidents have been recorded in predominately Protestant working class areas.** This is a principle factor in South, North and East Belfast: 38 out of 49 incidents in North Belfast were in predominately Protestant working class areas; in South Belfast 68 out of the 90 incidents were in predominately Protestant areas while in East Belfast 20 out of 28 incidents were in predominately Protestant working class areas. In contrast, only 5 incidents were recorded in predominately Catholic areas of North Belfast while West Belfast is perhaps distinctive for the lack of racist incidents with only 6 out of a total of 186 incidents recorded in that part of the city.

It may well be that this is an indication of a greater level of racial prejudice among working class Protestants. Indeed, Connolly and Keenan noted that Protestants were *'more likely to be racially prejudiced than Catholics'* (2000a: 26). However, they also went on to state that such general comparisons *'represents a rather blunt instrument that is incapable of identifying and distinguishing between the many differences that exist ... within each community'* (p27). They conclude that a number of factors tend to influence racial prejudice and in particular sectarian attitudes, religion, educational attainment, age and whether they have a friend from a minority community are *key issues (p35), but that it is nevertheless a 'complex phenomenon, which can be found within any social group'*.

One factor that may be of some significance with this regard is that more members of minority ethnic communities live in 'Protestant' areas than live in 'Catholic' areas. Certainly, in North Belfast, Protestant areas are seen as declining communities often with large numbers of empty properties while the Catholic community are crying out for more houses in 'their' areas. It may well be the cases that many members of minority communities have chosen to live in Protestant areas because that is where houses are widely available and where the prices are lower.

However, there is a widely accepted pattern of residential segregation of the two majority ethnic communities with widespread sectarian antagonism towards the 'Other'. This segregation has been increasing in recent years partly in response to the tensions of the marching season (Northern Ireland Housing Executive 1999). Although there is no evidence of an increase in racist harassment as part of an increase in tension in July (see below section 9) hostility towards minority ethnic communities can be seen as another expression of the hostility towards the 'Other' that has been more commonly expressed towards the other majority ethnic community.

This is not to suggest that racist violence has increased during the peace process because other expressions of violent hostility have been subjected to more restraint or control, but rather that the widespread acceptance of sectarian difference and residential segregation as a fact of life in Northern Ireland feeds a suspicion of otherness which helps to underpin racist harassment.

## **Incidents Outside of Belfast**

Those towns, villages or other areas, outside of Belfast and which have recorded three or more incidents over the four-year period are shown in Table 12 below.

The year-by-year data for recorded incidents shows distinctly uneven patterns, with no location, apart from possibly Glengormley, showing persistent patterns of racist incidents over the entire period. Ballymena, which currently stands in third, place for racist incidents had recorded only a single incident prior to 1999, while Bangor (5th place) and Dunmurray (10th place) had no incidents recorded prior to that year.

**Table 12: Towns with more than 3 racist incidents since 1996.**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Glengormley	4		6	11	21
Ballymena			1	15	16
Lon/Derry	1	4	7	1	13
Bangor				12	12
Armagh	4			4	8
Carrick	1		1	6	8
N'abbey			2	6	8
Portadown	1	2	2	3	8
Dunmurray				7	7
Lurgan		1	4	1	7
Omagh		1	2	3	6
Craigavon		1	2	2	5
Dungannon			4	1	5
Antrim		1		2	3
Dundonald		1	1	1	3
Hollywood				3	3
Strabane				3	3

This list illustrates that a large proportion of those incidents occurring outside of Belfast have been recorded in towns, which make up the Greater Belfast area. Towns in south County Antrim such as Glengormley, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Dunmurray, Antrim, Lisburn and Templepatrick account for 49 incidents, while towns in north County Down such as Bangor, Dundonald, Hollywood, Carryduff and Newtownards account for a further 20.

**Thus 255 out of the 357 incidents, or 72% of the total, have been recorded in the Greater Belfast area.**

The other principle areas in which racist incidents were recorded were the Lurgan-Craigavon-Portadown conurbation where 19 incidents (5.3% of total incidents) have been recorded, Ballymena with 16 recorded incidents (4.5% of the total) and Derry/ Londonderry with 13 incidents (3.6% of the total) over the four-year period.

One can also locate the distribution of racist incidents in relation to the local government council boundaries. Table 13 lists the twenty-six local council areas with the number of racist incidents recorded within each council area.

**Table 13: Racist incidents recorded in each of the Local District Council areas.**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>District Council</b>	<b>No of Incidents</b>
1	Belfast	175
2	Newtownabbey	31
3	Craigavon	19
4	Ballymena	18
5	Castlereagh	17
6	North Down	15
7	Derry	13
8	Lisburn	9
9=	Armagh	8
	Carrick	8
11=	Dungannon	6
	Omagh	6
13	Strabane	5
14=	Coleraine	4
	Fermanagh	4
16=	Antrim	3
	Down	3
	Magherfelt	3
	Newry and Mourne	3
20	Cookstown	2
21=	Ards	1
	Ballymoney	1
	Banbridge	1
	Larne	1
25=	Limavady	0
	Moyle	0

Irwin and Dunn provide a list of the ten District Council areas with the highest proportion of residents from minority ethnic communities, these can be

compared with the number and percentage of racist incidents that have been recorded in each of the same areas.

**Table 14: Incidents per District Council with highest numbers of minority ethnic groups.**

	<b>% Enumerated</b>	<b>Number Incidents</b>	<b>% Incidents</b>	<b>Enumeration Rank</b>	<b>Incident Rank</b>
Belfast	38.1	186	52	1	1
Craigavon	6.5	19	5.3	2	3
Newry/Mourne	4.7	3	0.8	3	16
Ballymena	4.6	18	5	4=	4
Derry	4.6	13	3.6	4=	7
Lisburn	4	10	2.8	6	8
Dungannon	3.9	6	1.7	7	11=
North Down	3.7	15	4.2	8	6
Newtownabbey	3.5	31	8.7	9	2
Coleraine	3.2	4	1.1	10	14

It is interesting to note the differences in the rankings with regard to numbers of racist incidents recorded and the relative size of the minority ethnic population. Belfast, Newtownabbey, North Down and Ballymena all have a higher percentage of reported incidents than their percentage of the minority community population while the other six District Council areas have a smaller percentage of incidents than their percentage of the minority population might suggest would be expected.

## 8. Relationship between Place and Racist Incidents

In this section I look at the relationship between the ethnic background of the victim and the place in which racist incidents occurred.

It is difficult to draw any strong conclusions from the data on racist incidents until there is more information available on the specific size and composition of the minority ethnic communities in specific towns and counties of Northern Ireland. At present evidence of the residential base of the different minority ethnic communities is scarce and again I draw largely on the data in Irwin and Dunn's report, although one should once again note the reservations that one must have with this material.

Their research on the Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Traveller communities gives the following percentages for Belfast and East and West of Northern Ireland (Irwin and Dunn 1997:74-76).

**Table 15: Distribution of population for four main ethnic groups**

	Chinese	Indian	Pakistani	Traveller
Belfast	41	36	34	35
East NI	45	28	59	5
West NI	14	35	7	61

Irwin and Dunn's research shows that:

- The Indian community is fairly evenly spread across all three areas with significant communities in Derry/Londonderry, Coleraine and Magherafelt as well as Belfast, and smaller communities in Craigavon, Lisburn and Newtownabbey.
- The Chinese community is heavily concentrated in Belfast but with significant numbers living in the area East of the Bann, in Craigavon, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down and Ballymena.
- There is a large Pakistani community in Belfast with other significant communities in Ballymena, Craigavon and North Down.

- The Traveller community in contrast is largely based in the area west of the Bann with the largest communities, outside of Belfast, in Newry and Mourne and Dungannon.

The following table shows the percentage of racist incidents for the main groups identified by Irwin and Dunn (although with the figures for the Indian and Pakistani communities combined) and adapted to the same boundaries for East and West Northern Ireland as Irwin and Dunn utilised.

**Table 16: Percentage of racist incidents by ethnic group and area**

	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Traveller</b>
Belfast	65	48	22
East NI	24	38	22
West NI	11	14	56

Thus, the incidents related to the Chinese community are over represented in Belfast in relation to the size of the community and under represented in the East while broadly in-line with the proportion of the community in the West.

It is difficult to draw any inferences from the Indian figures because they are not directly comparable to Irwin and Dunn's categories but they do suggest that there is an under representation of figures from the West of Northern Ireland.

The Traveller community is probably significantly under represented in the figures overall and the small number of incidents (2 in Belfast) makes it difficult to draw any conclusions.

The following table shows the number of incidents recorded by the police for each of the six racial categories in each of the six counties plus Belfast.

**Table 17: Incidents by racial category and county**

	Black	Chinese	Indian	Other	Traveller	White
Belfast	17	72	73	18	2	4
Antrim	7	8	47	9		3
Armagh	1	8	11	4	1	3
Down		17	4	1	2	3
Fermanagh	1		1			2
Londonderry	2	4	9	1		
Tyrone	3	2	8	4	4	
Total	31	112	153	37	9	15

Not only does Belfast have the highest number of racist incidents overall but it was also the location for 65% of incidents relating to the Chinese community, 53% of the Black community, 49% of Others and 48% of incidents relating to the Indian community.

It also shows that County Antrim is the county with the second highest proportion of incidents for the Indian community (31% of their total); for Others (24%) and for Blacks (22%) but that County Down has the second highest proportion of incidents for the Chinese community with 15% of all incidents.

It is possible to draw out a number of suggestive relationships between minority communities and location. The data can be presented in two ways:

- The percentage of incidents involving a specific community in a location;
- The percentage of incidents in a location affecting a specific community.

It is also illustrative to compare the place/ethnicity relationship between the two main communities the Indian and the Chinese. In the absence of hard population figures this may highlight some indication of locality-ethnicity tensions and/or it may indicate something of the relationship between local communities and the police.

## **Chinese Community**

Incidents involving the Chinese community were recorded in 22 locations but the numerically most significant areas were South Belfast, East Belfast and Bangor.

- 49% (54) of incidents involving the Chinese community occurred in South Belfast.
- 10% (11) of incidents involving the Chinese community occurred in East Belfast.
- 8% (9) of incidents involving the Chinese community occurred in Bangor.
- 75% of incidents in Bangor (9/12) involved the Chinese community (0% Indian).
- 61% of incidents in South Belfast (54/89) involved the Chinese community (17% Indian 15/89).
- 39% of incidents in East Belfast (11/28) involved the Chinese community (32% Indian 9/28).

## **Indian Community**

Incidents involving the Indian community were recorded in 23 locations but the numerically most significant areas were North Belfast, Newtownabbey, Ballymena East Belfast and South Belfast.

- 27% (42) of incidents involving the Indian community occurred in North Belfast.
- 14% (18) of incidents involving the Indian community occurred in Newtownabbey;
- 10% (15) of incidents involving the Indian community occurred in South Belfast;
- 8% (12) of incidents involving the Indian community occurred in Ballymena;
- 87% of incidents in North Belfast (42/49) involved the Indian community (6% Chinese 3/49).

- 76% of incidents in Newtownabbey (22/29) involved the Indian community (7% Chinese 2/29)
- 75% of incidents in Ballymena (12/16) involved the Indian community (6% Chinese 1/12).
- 32% of incidents in East Belfast (11/28) involved the Indian community (39% Chinese 11/28).
- 17% of incidents in South Belfast (15/89) involved the Indian community (61% Chinese 54/89).

**Thus, while both the Chinese and Indian communities have experienced some considerable degree of harassment, it is largely in different geographical areas. The harassment experienced by the Chinese community has its core in South Belfast and to a lesser extent through East Belfast and into North Down. In contrast, the harassment of the Indian community is centred in North Belfast, from Newtownabbey to Ballymena and through South and East Belfast.**

Incidents relating to the Black community, to Others and to Whites all show a heavy bias to the greater Belfast area.

Incidents involving the **Black Community** were recorded in 12 locations.

- 53% (17) of incidents involving the Black community occurred in Belfast.
- 72% (23) of incidents involving the Black community occurred in the Greater Belfast area.

Incidents involving **Others** were recorded in 14 locations.

- 49% (17) of incidents involving Others occurred in Belfast.
- 63% (22) of incidents involving Others occurred in the Greater Belfast area.

Incidents involving **Whites** were recorded in 11 locations.

- 69% (11) of incidents involving whites occurred in the Greater Belfast area.
- 50% (2) of incidents recorded in Fermanagh involved whites.

Incidents involving **Travellers** were recorded in 7 locations.

- 44% (4) of incidents involving Travellers occurred in the Greater Belfast area.
- 44% (4) of incidents involving Travellers occurred in County Tyrone

This analysis highlights the fact that while Belfast and the towns around Belfast are the most prominent areas for racist incidents to take place, there are also some distinct patterns that emerge, primarily in relation to incidents affecting the Chinese and Indian communities.

The most significant areas for racist harassment of the Chinese community are in South Belfast, East Belfast and in Bangor, whereas the Indian community experience most harassment in North Belfast, Newtownabbey and Ballymena. However, it is also evident that the Indian community receive significant harassment in South and East Belfast.

## 9. Location of Racist Incidents

This section deals with the nature of the location in which many racist incidents took place. These have been grouped into four relatively discrete areas: in or near the home, in the street or other public place, at work and in a social or leisure setting. This last category includes incidents that occurred at pubs, clubs, restaurants or fast food outlets and at leisure centres where the injured party was a customer rather than in their working environment.

In most cases, the category of the location is clear cut but there are occasional instances where boundaries are, or maybe, blurred, for example where the perpetrators of harassment are in the street and the injured party in the domestic arena; or where a car was damaged outside a home, but these are a relatively small number of cases.

Of the racist incidents recorded between 1996 and 1999:

- 202 or 56.5% took place at or involved attacks on the home.
- 78 or 22% took place at the victim's place of work.
- 70 or 20% took place in the street.
- 13 or 3.5% occurred at places of leisure

There were also 50 incidents (14% of the total) which involved an attack on a motor vehicle, these are also included in the above figures in relation to the location of the car at the time of the attack, the majority of which (47/50) took place in the vicinity of the home.

**Table 18: Number of recorded incidents in each of four categories for each racial group.**

	Home	Work	Street	Leisure
Black	10	5	15	2
Chinese	66	32	14	2
Indian	87	31	33	3
Other	21	8	6	3
Traveller	5		1	3
White	12	2	2	
Total	202	78	70	13

This table shows that 44% of incidents in the home were reported by members of the Indian community and 33% by the Chinese community, while 41% of incidents at work were reported by the Chinese community and 40% by members of the Indian community. The Indian community reported 47% of incidents that occurred in the street while members of the Chinese and Black communities each reported 20% of incidents.

However, if these figures are viewed as a percentage of incidents per ethnic group a different pattern emerges as can be seen in the table below. The percentage of incidents that occurred in the home is very similar for Chinese, Indian, Others and Travellers with between 55 and 58% of all reported incidents occurring in the domestic arena. Only the figures for the White and the Black groups fall significantly out of this range. The Black community in contrast report a much higher percentage of incidents that occur in the street than any of the other groups.

**Table 19: Percentage figures for each location category per ethnic group**

	Home	Work	Street	Leisure
Black	33	16	45	6
Chinese	58	28	12	2
Indian	56	20	21	2
Other	55	21	16	8
Traveller	56		11	33
White	75	12.5	12.5	

Two other interesting figures are the relatively high percentage (28%) of incidents involving the Chinese community that occurred at their workplace, and the high percentage of incidents involving Travellers that occurred in a leisure setting (although this is based on a very small number of incidents).

These figures raise issues about the randomness of racist incidents: how far are the targets specifically or individually chosen and how far are they are chosen by chance and are thus targeted more as a representative victim of an ethnic community than as an individual.

**The relatively high percentage of figures for most groups for incidents that occur in or near the domestic arena suggests that in many cases the victims are known to the perpetrators in some way – they are not random victims of racist attacks but individually chosen.** The fact that, in many cases, the victim recognises or even knows the perpetrator confirms this (see section 12).

**In contrast, many of the attacks and incidents that occur in the street may be considered more likely to be random attacks.** For example, in one incident, a motorist stopped to help another driver whose car had broken down and was verbally abused and physically assaulted for his pains. In another case a man sitting at traffic lights in his car was assaulted by two men who opened the car door and began to punch him. These seem to be pure cases of random racist assault.

Incidents that occur in the workplace may fall somewhere between these two poles. A high proportion of such incidents (50/78 incidents) were reported at restaurants or food outlets of some kind - 27/31 for the Chinese community; 16/31 for the Indian and 6/8 for Others, while another 13 occurred at a shop. These are environments where the white community know they will encounter the minority ethnic other but not necessarily who a particular individual will be. Such attacks may thus incorporate elements of random representativeness and personal harassment of a local individual.

Consideration of the form and the nature of the attack may appear relatively abstract in these circumstances but it may be relevant to whether an individual feels the need to report it – will it do any good, is it likely to happen again? – and also in formulating an appropriate response – persistent or repetitious attacks are more amenable to problem solving methods than random attacks.



## 10. Nature of Racist Incidents

The nature of the incidents of racist harassment experienced by members of minority ethnic communities is extremely diverse, but nevertheless they can be usefully grouped into four main categories of harassment: physical assault; abuse; damage to property; and theft. However each of the incidents recorded by the police may include one or more of these forms of harassment, for example, in an extreme case an individual may be verbally harassed, physically attacked, have their car damaged and be robbed as part of a single event. The total figures documented in the tables below are therefore greater than the total of 357 incidents recorded between 1996 and 1999.

**Table 20: Number of incidents in each of four main categories per racial group**

	Assault	Abuse	Property	Theft	Total Incidents
Black	15	23	10	2	31
Chinese	22	48	64	20	112
Indian	31	87	75	4	153
Other	10	23	23	2	37
Traveller	2	8	1		9
White	7	9	6	1	15
Total	87	198	179	29	

The figures for assault show that 24% of recorded incidents involve some form of assault. These range from the use of or threat of weapons to being hit by stones. Most incidents involving physical assault involve the punching, hitting or kicking but there have been ten recorded incidents in which weapons of some sort were carried and the use of them threatened. In 8 of these cases the weapons were used in attacks upon members of the Chinese community. There have been another 6 cases in which the victim was hit by a stone or other missile, four of these cases involved members of the Indian community.

In spite of the predominance of the threat or actual use of weapons or stones against members of the Chinese and Indian community, **assault is a more significant factor in incidents relating to Blacks and Whites where 49%**

**and 46% of incidents respectively include some form of assault, in contrast assault is a factor in around 20% of cases reported by the Indian and Chinese communities.** It may well be that the high proportion of incidents involving the Black community that occur in the street is a factor in the high proportion of incidents involving assault, although this explanation has less validity for the white community.

The figures indicate that racist abuse is the most common form of harassment for five of the six racial categories. **Some form of abuse features in 89% of incidents involving Travellers, in 74% of cases involving Blacks, 62 % of Others, 60% of Whites, 57% of members of the Indian community.**

However, racist abuse is only recorded in 43% of cases involving members of the Chinese community. This is perhaps surprising because it contrast strikingly with the findings of Irwin and Dunn. One result of their survey of members of the main minority ethnic groups was that they found that members of the Chinese community had generally suffered more widespread harassment than other minority groups (Irwin and Dunn 1997:101). This is not substantiated by the data on the police report forms.

These figures probably understate the significance of racial abuse as many report forms do not state whether abuse was a factor or not and in cases of serious assault or damage to property examples of abuse may not be included on the report form.

Abuse can also be further broken down into a number of sub-categories: verbal abuse, threats, written abuse in the form of letters, telephone abuse, graffiti and discrimination. The number of incidents involving each of these forms of abuse is shown in Table 21 below.

**Table 21: Number of incidents of different forms of racist abuse**

	Verbal	Threats	Written	Telephone	Graffiti	Discrim
Black	20	2			1	
Chinese	34	7		3	4	
Indian	60	9	4	4	10	
Other	18	2			2	1
Traveller	5	1				2
White	7	1		1		
Total	144	22	4	8	17	3

This variety of forms of recorded racist abuse indicates that such abuse is often not a random act but rather in the cases involving the use of the telephone, abusive letters and graffiti written on someone's house it clearly involves some detailed knowledge of the injured party. Similarly cases of verbal abuse may also involve a threat of further action to the injured party. In such cases, there is a real concern that the perpetrators of the abuse know, or are monitoring the behaviour of the people that they are harassing and thus increasing the likelihood that such action will occur again (see also section 10 below).

**Table 22: Nature of damage to property**

	Black	Chinese	Indian	Other	Traveller	White	Total
Windows		17	18	2	1	1	39
Stones	3	15	16	6		1	41
House	2	9	3	4		2	20
Garden			1	1		2	4
Fire	1	1	5	2			9
Fireworks		1	2				3
P. Bombs			2				2
Business	1	3	5				9
Vehicle	1	18	23	8			50
Other	1						1
Total	10	64	75	23	1	6	

Attacks on, or damage to, property are almost as numerous as instances of racist abuse: **62% of incidents reported by those in the racial category Others involve some form of damage to property, as do 57% of incidents involving the Chinese community and 49% involving the Indian community.** Damage to property can also be broken down into a number of sub-categories of damage or action. These include having windows broken, having stones or missiles thrown at property, fireworks through the letter box, petrol bombs thrown, fires started, damage caused to vehicles, to the garden, and general damage caused to one's home or to one's business. These are enumerated in Table 22 above.

They show that most incidents involving physical damage to property involve broken windows or stones thrown at the house or damage to a vehicle parked near someone's home. Perhaps most worrying is the small, but significant, number of incidents involving fires being started, fireworks being pushed through letter boxes and in two cases petrol bombs being thrown at a house. **Nine of the fourteen incidents involving fire or some form or other were attacks on members of the Indian community.**

Finally, the smallest category of incidents numerically is theft, with 29 of the 357 recorded incidents including some form of theft of which seven were some form of burglary. **Theft and burglary is most significant among incidents reported by the Chinese community with some 18% of such incidents including a theft of some kind and six of the seven burglaries involved the Chinese community.** In contrast, in each of the other racial categories less than 7% of incidents include any theft. Furthermore, six of the ten cases involving the use of a weapon have been thefts against members of the Chinese community.

These figures show that the nature or form of racist harassment experienced by the different communities has slightly different profiles.

- All the communities experience a significant degree of verbal abuse, although the Chinese community reports such abuse less frequently than the others.
- Over 50% of incidents reported by both the Chinese and Other communities and almost 50% of cases reported by the Indian community involve some form of damage to property.
- Blacks and Whites both experience a much higher percentage of cases involving physical assault than do other communities.
- Members of the Chinese community report most cases involving the use of a weapon, the Chinese community also report most cases of theft or burglary in which many of these weapons were used.
- Members of the Indian community were most likely to report attacks involving fire, fireworks or petrol bombs.

## **11. Time of Year and Time of Day of Incidents**

Over the four years under consideration, racist incidents have been recorded fairly evenly over the year. Most incidents (43) have been recorded in October and the least (19) have been recorded in March.

On a quarterly basis the frequency of incidents has been recorded in reverse order, with 109 incidents occurring in the final quarter (October-December), with 98 recorded between July-September; 75 incidents recorded between April and June and 67 between January and March. This pattern also occurred in 1997 and 1999 (as well as over the entire four year period) but completely different frequency patterns emerged in 1996 and 1998.

Apart from in 1996 when there were a number of instances of car theft related to the Drumcree protests, there does not appear to be any correlation between racist incidents and the marching season. In fact there appears to have been fewer such incidents in late June and early July than might have been expected (see Figure 1 over).

### **Time of day of incident**

The time of day that the incident occurred is supposed to be recorded on the police report form, however only 81% (288) of report forms had the time of the incident recorded. In some cases incidents were reported after a person returned from a period away or on holiday, in which case the time was unknown, others were recorded as being discovered when the person got up in the morning and were thus recorded as having taken place overnight or during the day while the person was at work.

Figure 2 (over) documents the number of incidents recorded in each of eight three-hour blocks throughout the day. This shows that the vast amount of incidents were recorded in the afternoon, evening and night time, between 3pm and 3am, while only a very small percentage of incidents were recorded in the twelve hours from 3am to 3pm.

- Only 27 or 7.5% of racist incidents occurred in the morning and early afternoon, between 6am and 3pm.

- 14% of incidents, 51 in total, occurred in the late afternoon between 3pm and 6pm.
- A similar proportion (50 incidents or 14% of the total) occurred in the early evening between 6pm and 9pm.
- 61 incidents or 17% of the total occurred in the later evening between 9pm and midnight.
- The largest single figure, 90 incidents, or 25% of the total, occurred overnight between midnight and 6am.

## 12. Perpetrators of Racist Incidents

The police report forms can frequently give some information about the perpetrators of racist incidents. However, while this is often vague, and therefore of limited value too the police, it can be useful for constructing general patterns regarding the identity of perpetrators and perpetrator groups.

In 146 of the incidents, or 41% of all the cases, the perpetrator was unknown. This could be because of a number of factors, for example the incident occurred overnight or while the person was at work or because an object was thrown but the thrower unseen etc. **However, this also means that in 59% of all cases the perpetrator has been seen or identified to some extent by the injured party or by a third party.**

This group of 211 cases can be further broken down by degrees of identification: whether the person was simply seen and can thus be identified broadly by age, gender, ethnicity etc; if the person was identified as someone living locally or was even an immediate neighbour; and finally if the person is identified by name on the form either because he/she was apprehended or known to the victim.

- There were 80 cases, or 22% of the total, where the perpetrator was seen by the injured party.
- There were 50 cases, or 14% of the total, where the perpetrator was recognised and identified as 'local' by the injured party.
- There were 81 cases, or 23% of the total, where the perpetrator could be identified by name.
- Of these, in 22 cases, or 6% of the total, the perpetrator was identified as a neighbour by the injured party.

One could also combine the categories of 'local' and 'neighbour' to illustrate that **in 20% of cases the perpetrator of the racist harassment was someone who lived close to the injured party.** Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that many of the 146 incidents in which the perpetrator was unseen were also carried out by local people. This might be more particularly likely in the 96 cases where windows were broken on a home, missiles thrown at the home or other damage was done to the home or to a vehicle parked near the

home. **This would, therefore, indicate that perhaps 168 or 47% of all incidents were perpetrated by people living close to those injured in some way by racist harassment.**

The forms can also reveal something of the age, gender and ethnicity of the perpetrators of racist harassment. However, the figures are uneven because not all forms contain the same amount of information.

### **Age of Perpetrators**

There were 209 cases where the age of the perpetrator was indicated in some way. In 111 cases (54%) the perpetrator was described as an adult. In 69 cases (33%) the perpetrator was described as a youth and in 28 cases (13%) the perpetrator was a child. In one case an adult and child were both involved in the harassment.

### **Gender of Perpetrators**

There were 188 cases where the gender of the perpetrator was identified. In 166 cases (87%) the perpetrator was a male, in 13 cases (7%) the perpetrator was a female and in 9 cases (5%) both males and females were involved in the harassment.

### **Ethnic group of Perpetrator**

There were 211 cases where it was possible to determine the broad ethnic background of the perpetrator. In 210 cases the perpetrator was identified as White, in a single case the perpetrator was described as Black.

### **Number of Perpetrators**

The report forms also reveal that in 74 cases (36% of cases where the data was given) a single person was involved in the harassment while in 131 cases (63% of cases) more than one person was involved in the harassment.

### **Stereotyping**

In generalising from these various pieces of information, the data on the police report forms suggests that the principle perpetrator of racist harassment is a

white male, over the age of 16, who is acting in consort with one or more similar white males and that these young white males will live near to, and therefore know the victim of their racism.

However, having identified the rather predictable perpetrator one should not ignore some of the other facts revealed by the data of 357 racist incidents:

- In 12% of cases females were involved in racist harassment and,
- In 13% of cases the perpetrator was a child under the age of 16.



### **13. Police Response to Racist Harassment**

It is not always easy to determine the scale or even the nature of the police response to these cases from the report forms, apart from the fact that the police have paid a visit to the injured party and have taken down the details of the incident. The report forms do not always include relevant details of police responses to such incidents and, where they do, it may only indicate the earliest stages of a response.

The bare details of the police response is as follows:

- In six cases the police spoke to one or more suspects;
- In ten cases the police arrested one or more suspects;
- In one case a person was bound over;
- One person was cautioned;
- One person was charged;
- In two cases a prosecution was taken.

While this appears to be an extremely low response to the number of cases involved, there are a number of possible factors, which affect this apparent low response.

- It is clear that, in a number of these cases, the police are being asked to respond to incidents rather than to crimes. While this is a necessary part of the response to racist incidents, there is often little formal action that can be taken if no crime has been committed.
- It is also clear that, in over 40% of all cases, there is no visual evidence of the perpetrator and there is therefore little that can be done.
- In cases of verbal abuse, where the perpetrator is often identified, it is often likely to be one person's word against another as to what happened and what was said. While it is possible for a police officer to speak to the alleged perpetrator, there is little more that can be done.
- In many cases of criminal damage to vehicle or to property there may be few indications of the identity of the perpetrator, tyres are slashed overnight, a stone is thrown and the perpetrator disappears before he/she can be seen.

Evidence from England and Wales suggests that the response rate by police forces to racist incidents is very varied and, in cases of verbal harassment, a very high proportion of incidents were deemed to require 'no further police action' (Maynard and Read 1997). However, there is always a concern that such a lack of response will merely feed the lack of faith in the police by the minority communities and thus makes them less likely to report further incidents.

If people are being encouraged to notify the police of racist incidents knowing that there is little that the police can do to apprehend the perpetrator, then the focus of the police response should perhaps be more on finding creative solutions to reduce the opportunity for such crimes in the first place. In North Belfast, persistent attacks on vehicles belonging to the Sikh community were reduced by providing a space for the vehicles to be parked in or near to the local police station. While this may be a short-term solution, it has helped to build the relationship between the police and the Sikh community and may provide space for a more permanent resolution to the problems in the area.

Future responses to racist harassment need to be as much about intelligence-led, problem solving; multi-agency approaches as simple policing responses to criminal activity. There is a need to build upon and extend relationships between the minority families or communities being targeted and the police but also to widen these to include other relevant statutory agencies and community organisations if the type of multi-agency response to racist crime recommended by Macpherson is to be realised and effective.

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