
Racist Violence in the United Kingdom

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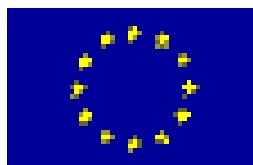
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An assessment of overall trends and patterns

Data collection

Official data on racist violence and harassment is available in the UK, mainly through the following sources:

- The Crown Prosecution Service publishes data annually on racist and religious crime. Since 2008 it has been subsumed within a report on hate crime more generally;
- The British Crime Survey (BCS) annually collects information of crimes committed against individuals (personal crimes including common assault, robbery, threats and wounding) and their properties (household crimes, including thefts, vandalism and burglary). It includes a sample boost of black and minority ethnic communities to survey their attitudes, fears and perceptions of crime and whether they think that these were racially motivated.
- Police data on racist incidents (and on the different types of racially and religiously aggravated offences) are published annually by the Ministry of Justice in 'Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System', which also includes data from the CPS and BCS.

Although official government data exists on ethnicity and victimisation in relation to crime generally, there is a no up-to-date data broken down by ethnicity on the victims of racially motivated crimes in particular. Data is available from the British Crime Survey¹ on the risk of racially motivated victimisation for different ethnic groups, but this data is only available from 2002/2003 and 2004/2005, and this is now out of date.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Hate Crime report 2008-2009 states that data on the ethnicity of victims is available but that the 'completeness and accuracy of this information remains under development'² and it is therefore not included in the report. Data on the ethnicity of victims of racist violence may be available locally, and some police forces publish such information; however, this has not been published nationally. Without such data we cannot obtain a national picture and ascertain the extent to which one ethnic group might be more at risk of racially motivated victimisation than another.

Schools are required to record incidents of racist bullying but this is done at school level and there is no available national data on that.

Overall, NGOs who specifically work to support victims of racist violence do keep records of incidents and ethnicity of victims but this only concerns the cases that are brought to them. It is nevertheless interesting to note that all NGOs surveyed stated that they do record the ethnicity of victims of racist incidents.

¹ Jansson, Krista *Black and Minority Ethnic Groups' experiences and perceptions of crime, racially motivated crime, and the police: Findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey, Home Office Online Report 25/06* (n.p.: Crown Copyright, 2006).

² Crown Prosecution Service, *Hate crime report 2008-2009*, (London: Blackbuns of Bolton 2010), p.27.

One area of concern to NGOs is the fact that in the last few years, race specific data is becoming lost due to the broadening of reports to “hate crime”, as opposed to racist crimes specifically. For instance, whereas CPS used to provide a breakdown of victims of racist crime by ethnicity (and religious crimes by religious affiliation), this breakdown is no longer available since the report began covering all hate crimes.

In relation to NGO monitoring of racism, the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) collates information on racial violence by monitoring daily over 300 media sources across the UK. In a recent report, IRR has published data relating to 660 cases of racial violence that took place in 2009. It does not claim to give a comprehensive account of racist violence, since these are only the cases covered by the news, as monitored by IRR. However, the latter is the only NGO to have studied such a large number of racist incidents in recent years³.

Trends and Victims

It is important to differentiate between the figures reported by the police and the British Crime Survey figures. The latter tend to report higher numbers of racially motivated incidents (207,000 in 2007/08⁴, compared to 58,445 reported by the police for the same period). Reasons for that are numerous and include the fact that a lot of the incidents mentioned in BCS do not always constitute prosecutable offences. In addition, victims might not feel like reporting racist incidents due to lack of confidence in the police, and because they feel that their case would not be taken seriously⁵.

Of the cases analysed by IRR, nearly 80% of the victims of racial violence were men, and just 20% were women. In terms of the age of victims, almost 90% were over the age of 18. In cases where the ethnicity of the victim was known, just over 45% were Asian, 18% black, 10% white British, 7% Polish, 1.25% Chinese and 1.25% from Traveller communities. 1.8% of the cases examined were anti-Semitic, in 7% of the cases the victims were Muslim. Although information on the victim’s immigration status is not always known, in 10% the victims were migrant workers, refugees, or asylum seekers. In terms of professions most at risk of being victims of racist violence, the largest group was taxi drivers, followed by take-away and restaurant workers, shopkeepers and police officers⁶.

Nearly 93% of the perpetrators were white, 3.8% were Asian and 2.8% Black. 85% of the perpetrators were male and 15% are female. 60% of the attacks are perpetrated by children or young adults under 25, many of whom are active in gangs.

³ Athwal, Harmit, Bourne, Jenny and Wood, Rebecca, *Racial violence: the buried issue*, IRR briefing paper no. 6 (London: IRR, 2010) p.10 http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/IRR_Briefing_No.6.pdf, Accessed 30 June 2010.

⁴ *Ibid* p.21.

⁵ Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Lambert, Robert, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: A London Case Study*. (n.p.: European Muslim Research Centre, 2010) and Adamson, Sue et al. *Hidden from public view? Racism against the UK’s Chinese population*. (London: the Monitoring Group, 2009).

⁶ Athwal, Harmit, Bourne, Jenny and Wood, Rebecca, *Racial violence: the buried issue*, IRR briefing paper no. 6 (London: IRR, 2010) p.15.

In addition, the IRR research shows that 89 people have lost their lives in violent racist attacks since the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. 'Of these, [...] 46% of all victims were Asian and 26% were Black. The vast majority of perpetrators, 94%, were White British people'⁷.

Studies carried out by NGOs or research institutions have highlighted racist violence targeted at some communities specifically. However, it is important to note that reporting on the existing analyses made by various NGOs on racist violence directed at specific communities, does not necessarily provide a balanced or comprehensive picture of all the groups being victimised in the UK. For instance, there are many other communities besides those reported on here, whose experiences of racist violence have not necessarily been documented specifically, but this does not mean that the problem is not occurring amongst these segments of the population.

The Community Security Trust (CST), records anti-Semitic incidents. These can range from physical attacks to anti-Semitic posters. In 2009 CST recorded 924 antisemitic incidents, the highest annual total since CST began recording in 1984. This is an increase of 69% from 2008, and follows two years of falling incident rates in 2007 and 2008⁸.

Chinese people are an under researched ethnic group in the UK, generally owing to their relative small population size compared to other ethnic minorities. Research carried out by The Monitoring Group has however indicated that they are subject to substantial levels of racist abuse, ranging from racist name-calling to extreme violence, including murder⁹.

The European Muslim Research Centre has produced a report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in London. Based on interviews with victims, perpetrators and witnesses of hate crimes in London, the report documents Muslim Londoners experience of anti-Muslim attacks including murder, assaults, arson, and less serious assaults such as spitting or abusive words and behaviour. This report is based on a case study of Muslim communities in London, and as such, cannot be said to provide a national picture¹⁰. The ECRI Report on the UK, published in March 2010, raises concerns about the lack of appropriate monitoring of incidents of religious hatred targeting Muslims in particular¹¹. The last study investigating levels of Islamophobic acts goes back to 2005, when the then European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia reported on the impact of the 7 July 2005 London bomb attacks on Muslim communities. At the time, it looked at both official and NGO sources and found that in the immediate period after the London bombings, there was a short-term increase in

⁷ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁸ Community Security Trust *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2009* (Community Security Trust: n.p., 2010).

⁹ Adamson, Sue et al. *Hidden from public view? Racism against the UK's Chinese population*. (London: the Monitoring Group, 2009).

¹⁰ Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Lambert, Robert, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: A London Case Study*. (n.p.: European Muslim Research Centre, 2010).

¹¹ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on the United Kingdom* (n.p.: ECRI, March 2010) p.41.

hostility directed towards minority communities across the UK. Specifically in London, the Metropolitan Police in London recorded a dramatic increase in faith-related hate crimes in the 5 weeks following the bombings, in comparison with the same period in 2004¹².

ECRI also notes that in recent years, migrant workers have been the targets of racist violence, in particular in Belfast, where in May and June 2009 a wave of violence directed at migrants and their families prompted Belfast to be referred to as the 'race hate capital of Europe'. In this way, research into hate crime found that '[a]ttacks on Poles, Lithuanians, and other immigrants from the new E.U. member states became a major new component of hate crime violence, particularly in Scotland and Northern Ireland'¹³.

Trends

Overall, the number of racial incidents recorded by the police shows a 7% decrease between 2006/7 and 2007/8. A similar decline occurred between 2001/2 and 2002/3, but otherwise the national total for racial incidents recorded by the police has risen every year since 1999/2000, when it stood at 47,701. The figure of 57,055 for 2007/8, although down on the previous year, was nevertheless nearly 20% higher than in 1999/2000¹⁴. The number of reported incidents dropped a further 4% to 55,865 in 2008/09¹⁵. This trend was also evident in racially or religiously aggravated offences for the same period and also dropped in 2007/08 10% to 38,327 and to 36,752 in 2008/09.

The trends in victimisation are widely differentiated between regions in the UK¹⁶. When broken down by police force area there is a large variance in trends for different areas ranging from a 41% decrease (North Yorkshire) in the number of racist incidents to a 79% increase (South Yorkshire)¹⁷.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from the trends observed. Research carried out in 2005 found that police forces and other criminal agencies felt that the level of reporting of racist incidents had increased as a result of the new definition of a racist incident adopted following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. However, variations in recorded data may reflect differences in the extent to which victims report such incidents as well as in recording practices of different police forces, rather than representing an actual increase or decrease in racist incidents.¹⁸

Context of trends observed

¹² European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *The Impact of 7 July 2005 London Bomb Attacks on Muslim Communities in the EU*, (Vienna: EUMC, 2005).

¹³ Human Rights First, *2008 Hate Crime Survey* (n.p.: Human Rights First, 2008) p.27.

¹⁴ Athwal, Harmit, Bourne, Jenny and Wood, Rebecca, *Racial violence: the buried issue, IRR briefing paper no. 6* (London: IRR, 2010) p.21.

¹⁵ Ministry of Justice, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2008/09* (n.p.: Crown Copyright, June 2010), p9.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p18.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.21.

¹⁸ Rollock, Nicola *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry 10 Years on – An Analysis of the Literature* (London: Runnymede Trust, February 2009) p.31.

General Crime

Reported incidents of racial violence have dropped in line with an overall decrease in reported incidents of crime from 2007/08 to 2008/09 (decrease of 4% of racist incidents compared to 5% decrease in overall crimes recorded by the police)¹⁹.

BNP and racist violence

Regional variation in cases of racist violence may be explained by the effect of far-right strongholds²⁰. Racially motivated violence, theft and criminal damage more than doubled in the year after the BNP won council seats in three areas; Barking and Dagenham, Epping Forest and Chelmsley Wood²¹. Data analysed from 11 police forces covering 29 wards, (division of a city for administrative purposes) across England where voters have elected BNP councillors in the past six years showed that in eight wards reports of hate crime rose, 14 wards followed national trends and there was no change in four wards (3 had insignificant data)²². It is however difficult to draw conclusions from this data as the political success of the BNP in areas with high violence could be read as the party choosing to focus on areas where there is already racial tension.

Media

A study carried out by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) found that inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely²³.

Political Context

An example of the extent to which political context can influence the incidence of racist violence is well demonstrated by the trends in anti-semitic incidents in 2009. In January and February 2009 there was a dramatic rise in anti-Semitic incidents, during and after the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. CST suggests this distortion of the rates in the UK as a result of pressures generated by major trigger events overseas highlights the fragility of the baseline trend for anti-semitic incidents²⁴.

Recording and Prosecution of racist crime

The CPS has taken specific initiatives to reduce unsuccessful hate crimes prosecutions, including quarterly performance reporting obligations and rating of areas, themed reviews and data analysis. It has also taken initiatives to share good practice and

¹⁹ Walker A, Flatley J, Kershaw C and Moon D (eds.) *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 07/09*. (London: Home Office, 2009) p.1 and Ministry of Justice, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2008/09* (n.p.: Crown Copyright, June 2010) p17.

²⁰ Booth, R. 2010 "Rise in hate crime follows BNP council election victories", *The Guardian*, 24 June, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/jan/15/hate-crime-bnp-local-council-elections> accessed 30 June 2010.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Guardian* "Does hate crime rise where the BNP has councillors? The data" <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/may/19/hate-crime-bnp-data> accessed 30 June 2010.

²³ ICAR 'Media Image, Community Impact. Assessing the impact of media and political images of refugees and asylum seekers on community relations in London' (London : King's College, April 2004).

²⁴ Community Security Trust (2010) *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2009*.

lessons learnt²⁵. In addition, the CPS has produced detailed guidance on the prosecution of racially and religiously motivated offences. The police appear to have improved in recording attacks that could be racially motivated however, in a number of cases; the racial element is not actually brought before the court²⁶. This may be the result of plea bargaining where the defendant agrees to plead guilty to a less serious charge, for example in which allegations of racial aggravation are dropped²⁷. There has also been a call by victim support groups for the police to improve the way in which they gather evidence given the high evidential standards that must be met in order to prove racial or religious aggravation as defined under Section 28 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998²⁸.

Support for victims of violence is regional in nature and therefore it is difficult to make generalisations regarding the responsiveness of the police nationally. Many local authorities provide a racial incident reporting service which cooperates with the police and other agencies, as well as with community groups, however there is little data to illustrate the efficacy of these units.

Typical case study

This case study was provided by a victim support non governmental organisation

This case relates to a black man from Nigeria. He is married to a local woman and has been living here for approximately two years. He was alone walking down a main road in the Belfast area in the late afternoon.

Two white local men in their mid-20s began following him and being racially abusive. The victim did not recognize the men and as there was nobody about he took out his mobile and threatened to call the police. The men ran up to him and knocked him to the ground. One man wrenched his arm behind his back, dislocating his shoulder, and took the mobile they then began hitting him until he passed out. Another local man was passing by and saw what was happening he tried to intervene but the attackers started attacking him as well and then fled. The victim passed out and woke up in the hospital. The injuries to his arm required several surgeries and were so severe that he was no longer able to carry on his job, as it required heavy lifting. He was dismissed and is now unemployed. This has caused him great personal distress and has put a strain on his marriage as well. The police attended the hospital and took a statement but no perpetrators were apprehended. The organisation has helped the victim with the employment issue by referring him to a job agency and is continuing to assist him with his compensation claim.

²⁵ Crown Prosecution Service, *Handling Sensitive Race Hate Crime: An Overview of good practice and lessons learnt in the CPS Merseyside handling of racist murder of Anthony Walker* (n.p.: CPS May 2006).

²⁶ Athwal, Harmit, Bourne, Jenny and Wood, Rebecca, *Racial violence: the buried issue, IRR briefing paper no. 6* (London: IRR, 2010) p8.

²⁷ Ibid, p.20.

²⁸ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on the United Kingdom* (n.p.: ECRI, March 2010).

Recommendations

- Further research is needed to gain better understanding of the trends of racist violence reported over a given time.
- A breakdown of ethnicity of victims should be provided in national, governmental data, including from CPS and Ministry of Justice. The fact that reporting mechanisms have now been extended to cover all forms of hate crime should not prevent appropriate data being made available on racist crime in particular.
- The British Crime Survey should report on BME groups' experiences of racist violence and victimization, based on its findings. The last such study dates back to 2005.
- Better data is needed on racist violence against asylum-seekers and refugees and new migrant groups.
- Data on racist violence in schools need to be collected, collated and analysed more effectively.
- Increased inter-agency working is required between the police, council and anti-social behaviour units to tackle racist crime effectively²⁹.

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²⁹ Newham Monitoring Project, *Casework Overview 2007-2008*, <http://www.nmp.org.uk/reports/> accessed 30 June 2010.

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Annex 1

Although UKREN does not record incidents of racist violence, we have engaged with some of our member organisations who do undertake this kind of activity. Of the 10 organisations who completed the questionnaire, half were local organisations that covered a specific region of the UK, and half were UK-wide in scope. One of the organisations was based in Scotland, and one in Northern Ireland, the rest were based in England. 4 out of 10 worked specifically on racist violence, and 6 worked on combating racism in society more generally. Only one of the organisations worked with one specific community, the Jewish community, and the remit of the 9 others included all ethnic groups. Six of the organisations just monitored incidents of racist violence, and four were also engaged in casework. The following two sections are based on an analysis of the responses of 10 NGOs to the questionnaire on racist violence.

Recording incidents of racist violence

The organisations from which we obtained responses were selected due to the fact that they record incidents of racist violence in the first instance. Most organisations recorded descriptions of incidents for individual cases, and 3 recorded the numbers of incidents.

All 10 NGOs keep records of the characteristics of victims, including age, sex, ethnic identity, language, religion, and national origin. A third of the NGOs recorded other characteristics of the victims such as sexual orientation, disability, home address, occupation and immigration status. One organisation also collected specific information on children victims, such as the psychological impact and effect on health. Organisations also often recorded whether police or other agencies were contacted, statutory response, the outcome of the case, and one organisation recorded victim satisfaction and repeat victimisation. Nearly all of the NGOs (9 out of 10) kept records of the incidents broken down into types including physical violence, verbal abuse and threats, and damage to property.

Nearly all of the NGOs (9 out of 10) kept records of the locations of the incidents reported. Details recorded included the street, neighbourhood, post code, local authority and town, and occasionally type of location eg. taxi, bus stop. 8 out of 10 of the NGOs kept records about the perpetrators of the incidents recorded. Most of the NGOs recorded the age, sex, ethnic identity, religion, national origin and whether the perpetrator was affiliated to any extreme group. Fewer organisations recorded the language of the perpetrators. It was also mentioned that it is often the case that the victims do not know many details about the perpetrators.

Only 2 out of 10 of the NGOs had carried out or commissioned any victim surveys of racist violence. One organisation did this quite frequently, and the other carried out a one-off research project on victims' experiences within the criminal justice system. 4 out

of the 10 NGOs reported that their records of incidents of racist violence were used by national or international bodies for their monitoring of racist violence.

Reviewing incidents of racist violence

The majority of all NGOs (8 out of 10) review records they keep of incidents of reported racist violence. The frequency with which organisations review their records varied from monthly to annually. The reviews were carried out in preparation for reports, in casework meetings, and as part of regular reviews of casework. Reviews were used both for the organisation itself, and for outside agencies, in order to report back to the management committee or to funders. Six organisations produced a report based on their reviews.

Six of the NGOs used the reviews to plan their response to racist violence. Examples given were to plan security and policy responses, to undertake social policy work, to develop support plans, to respond to consultations, and to highlight gaps in policy and services for statutory agencies and government. Just over half of the organisation (6 out of 10) claim to have used reviews to plan the resources of their NGO, including reviewing trends in case work to assist in planning delivery of future work and to highlight any cases which may have an impact on the organisation's strategic direction or policy.

Three of the organisations used reviews to make claims for additional resources, and one claimed although this was undertaken; their efforts to seek additional funds were unsuccessful.