

## PSNI Statistics for Racially Motivated Incidents and Crimes

The incidence of racially motivated incidents and crime\*, recorded by the police, rose in the previous decade with 813 incidents and 634 crimes recorded in 2004/5 and 1,038 incidents and 712 crimes in 2009/10. Since then there was a reduction with 750 racist incidents and 470 racist crimes in 2012/13. (The PSNI statistics give details on the type of offences committed, the ethnicity and nationality of victims, the policing areas where the incidents and crime occurred and the clearance rate. [www.psni.police.uk/racist\\_incidents\\_and\\_crimes\\_in\\_northern\\_ireland\\_2004-05\\_to\\_2012-13.xls](http://www.psni.police.uk/racist_incidents_and_crimes_in_northern_ireland_2004-05_to_2012-13.xls))

In 2013/14 the trend was reversed dramatically. The PSNI recorded 982 racist incidents, an increase of over 30% on the previous year. Racially motivated crimes rose by 47%. There were instances of multiple attacks in the same area. See, for example, a *Belfast Telegraph* article about attacks on the homes of Polish people in East Belfast. [www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/seven-attacks-in-10-days-as-racist-gang-targets-polish-community-in-east-belfast-29924518.htm](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/seven-attacks-in-10-days-as-racist-gang-targets-polish-community-in-east-belfast-29924518.htm)

There is also concern that the official statistics underestimate the problem. Many people do not report attacks. These are comments from a survey among Polish people. Of the people who said they had been harassed only about a third had gone to the police and were asked to explain why.

‘Because I didn’t have a clue where is the nearest station.’

‘Going to Police won’t change anything. You learn manners at home, that’s what they [local youths] lack. Police can’t teach them good behaviour’

‘Because I think the Police would not do anything about it.’

‘Because it doesn’t make any difference. I spoke with my landlord, he put in new windows but he was afraid to go to the Police himself in case of retaliation.’

*The experience of Polish people surveyed by Dr Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee, ‘Za Chlebem’: The Impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland, NICEM, 2009.*

There are very few prosecutions using the hate crime legislation that result in convictions where there is an increased sentence because the crime has been shown to be racially motivated.

Dr Neil Jarman of the Centre for Conflict Research said in 2012:

Last year the police recorded 1719 ‘crimes with a hate motivation’, but there were only seven successful prosecutions using the ‘aggravated by hostility’ aspect of the law. Whether this is because of failures by the police in evidence gathering or flagging up the hate element, or failure of the prosecution service to pursue this aspect of the offence is unclear to date, but we lag behind GB in our success in prosecuting hate crime offenders.

The NI Human Rights Commission published the report *Racist Hate Crime: Human Rights and the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland* in 2013. [www.nihrc.org/documents/103141\\_NIHRC\\_Racist%20Hate%20Crime\\_4\\_Combined%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.nihrc.org/documents/103141_NIHRC_Racist%20Hate%20Crime_4_Combined%20(2).pdf) It is critical of how the ‘aggravated by racial hostility’

elements of the Criminal Justice (No.2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 are interpreted. Some cases where racial hostility was demonstrated were not progressed as hate crimes. Interviews with victims and support workers demonstrate dissatisfaction with how the police and judicial authorities communicate about the progress of cases. There were many recommendations to strengthen the elements of protection, prevention, prohibition (including the criminalisation of race hate speech) and sanction of race hate crime; and the more effective support of victims, including the speedy identification of repeat victims. In October 2013, in responding to the report, Justice Minister, David Ford pointed to recent improvements and stated that

By Autumn 2014, we hope to have in place a 'data capture' system which will accurately record the flow of hate crime cases through the system enabling agencies to identify issues or areas for improvement.

The PSNI is also carrying out an ongoing review and sample exercise of hate crime cases to ensure good practice and lessons learned on investigative standards. They are also developing a hate crime toolkit for all officers.

He also said that the new five year Victim and Witness Strategy would also deliver significant improvements including a statutory entitlement to make a written personal statement setting out how crime has affected them.

[www.dojni.gov.uk/index/media-centre/ford-responds-to-human-rights-commission-report-on-hate-crime.htm](http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/media-centre/ford-responds-to-human-rights-commission-report-on-hate-crime.htm)

\*The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) defines

**A Hate Incident as:** Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.

**A Hate Crime as:** Any hate incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.