

RACIAL ATTACKS AND HARASSMENT

Accurate figures on the incidence of racial harassment are difficult to obtain, for several reasons:

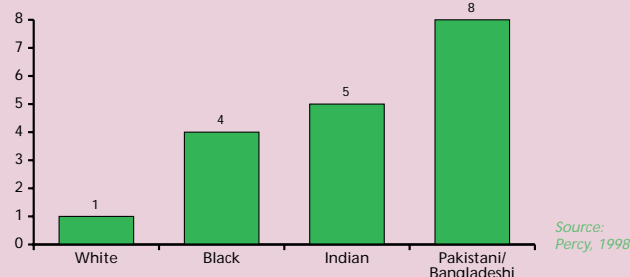
- victims are usually unlikely to have seen the offender(s) and may not suspect a racial motive even if there was one
- while many racial incidents go unsuspected, there are also instances of racial motivation being assumed where there was none
- suspicion is not enough on its own and victims rarely have sufficient evidence to say with certainty that an offence was racially motivated.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

► There are two official sources of information about racial harassment and violence: the British Crime Survey (BCS), which provides estimates of the levels of crime and trends in crime against people above the age of 16 and their households in England and Wales; and police records of racial incidents.

► The offences covered by the BCS are: vandalism, burglary, other household thefts, thefts of or from vehicles, bike theft, theft from the person, thefts of personal property, wounding, rob-

Figure 1. Percentage of each ethnic group who thought that race was a motive in one or more of the offences committed against them in 1995



bery and common assault. Threats of crime are also included as well as crimes where a racial motive has been alleged by the victim. Until 1994, such crimes were covered only in relation to South Asian and black victims – no other

does not cover damage to commercial premises, such as small shops, nor non-criminal expressions of racial prejudice and hostility, which account for much of the racial harassment experienced by black and Asian people.

An estimated 15% of all offences against Asians and blacks during 1995 were seen as racially motivated, compared to 1% against white people

ethnic minorities, such as Jews or Irish people, were included. However, the 1994 and 1996 BCS asked white respondents for the first time whether they thought race was a motive in any of the offences against them. The BCS

► The police are required to keep records of 'any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigating officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motivation; or any incident which includes an allegation of

NOTES

1. Since 1988, the BCS has boosted the sample of Asian and Afro-Caribbean respondents to provide better data for comparisons between ethnic groups. The 1996 BCS included 15,345 white respondents, 1,602 black respondents, 953 Indians, 456 Pakistanis and 160 Bangladeshis in both the core and boosted samples.
2. Compulsory ethnic monitoring in all police forces began in April 1996. The areas initially monitored were stops and searches, arrests, cautions and homicides. In April 1999 it will become mandatory for all forces to include gender, age, and type of offence in the information collected on notifiable arrests.
3. This factsheet follows the ethnic categories used in the 1991 census: Black (African, Caribbean or Other); Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; White; Chinese; and Other. The term 'ethnic minorities' is used to refer to people who did not tick the 'white' box when identifying their ethnic group. 'Non-white' ethnic minorities made up 5.6% of Britain's population in 1991.
4. In the main, percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

racial motivation made by any person'. Police records cover *all* racial incidents reported to the police, whether they are criminal offences or not. Unlike the BCS, they include incidents against victims of any ethnic group, incidents against people under 16 years of age and incidents against commercial premises. Yet, the number of racial incidents recorded by the police (even after taking into account the fact that reporting levels are low) falls well short of the number of crimes estimated by the BCS.

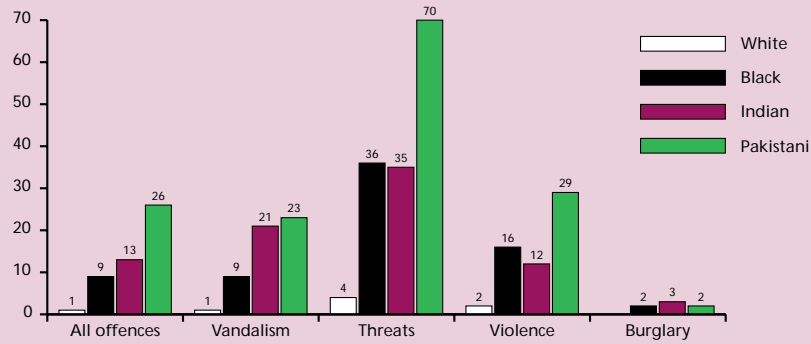
THE RISKS OF VICTIMISATION

► The proportions of BCS respondents from each ethnic group who said they had experienced one or more racially motivated offences during 1995 ranged from 8% of

In 1997/8, the police recorded 13,878 racial incidents in England and Wales, an increase of 6% over the previous year.

In Scotland the figure rose by 35% from 811 to 1,097 incidents

Figure 2. Proportion of offences seen as racially motivated, by ethnic group and type of offence, 1995



Note: Based on combined 1994 and 1996 BCS core and boost samples, weighted data. The numbers for Bangladeshis were too small for detailed analysis.

Source: Percy, 1998

Pakistanis, 5% of Indians – significantly up by 2% since 1993 – and 4% of Caribbeans to 1% of white people (see Figure 1). Since white people make up about 94% of the UK population, the *number* of offences estimated against the white population as a whole was greater than the number estimated against the Asian and black populations.

► The 1996 BCS estimated that 382,000 offences (or just over 2% of all offences reported to the BCS in 1995) were considered by the victims to be motivated by racism. Of those, an estimated 101,000 offences were committed against Asians and 42,000 against black people, making a total of 143,000 offences (or 15% of the estimated 984,000 offences committed against them in total during 1995); and an estimated 238,000 offences were committed against white people (or 1% of all offences against them).

► As Figure 2 shows, Pakistanis were most likely to think that the offences against them were motivated by racism: they identified 26% of all the offences against them as having been racially motivated (compared to 13%

for Indians, 9% for Caribbeans and 1% for white people), and this rose to 70% in the case of threats.

► 69% of victims of threats who were certain that the offence was racially motivated gave the use of racist language as their reason for believing this. In the case of vandalism, where there is less likelihood of direct contact between offender and victim, the reason cited by 48% of victims was the simple fact of their race. About one fifth of victims thought the crime was racially motivated because something similar had happened before (Percy, 1998).

► Among both Caribbeans and Asians, greater proportions of offences were perceived to be racially motivated in non-inner city areas (24%) than in the inner city (16%) (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996).

RACIAL INCIDENTS RECORDED BY THE POLICE

► In 1997/8, the police recorded 13,878 racial incidents involving victims from all ethnic groups in England and Wales, an increase of 6% over the previous year. The number fell far short of the 382,000

crimes estimated by the 1996 BCS as having been motivated by racism.

► Part of the explanation for this difference lies in the fact that not all incidents are reported to the police. According to the 1996 BCS, only 45% of racially motivated offences were reported to the police during 1995. Ethnic minority victims were much less likely to report them than white victims, with an estimated 29% of offences involving ethnic minority victims (about 41,000) reported in 1995 compared to 55% (about 131,000) of those involving white victims (Percy, 1998). Pakistanis are least likely to report even serious threats to the police, even though, as a group, they are the most vulnerable to this offence – only 15% of them reported threats to the police in 1987 and 1991, taken together, compared to 34% of white and 50% of Indian victims (Fitzgerald & Hale, 1996).

► Secondly, not all racial incidents are recorded as such by the police. This may be because the victim does not refer to the racial element or because the police fail to note it.

► Increases in the number

of racial incidents recorded by the police do not necessarily mean that racial harassment is increasing. They may also indicate a greater readiness among victims to report an incident to the police, or a greater readiness among the police to record an incident as a racial incident.

► As Table 1 shows, most of the racial incidents in England and Wales took place in the Metropolitan Police (Met) area, where nearly half of the ethnic minority population of Britain live. 1997/8 saw the number of recorded incidents there rise to their highest level, up 4% on

the previous year. At 37%, Asians made up by far the largest group of victims, followed by blacks and whites, at 27% each. Of the 5,862 racial incidents recorded by the Met in 1997/8, 92 were anti-Semitic incidents.

► In 1997/8, 1,097 racial incidents were recorded by police forces in Scotland, up 35% on the previous year. The force recording the highest number of racial incidents was Strathclyde (461 – an increase of 124%) followed by Lothian & Borders (315), Central (114), and Tayside (105). The rise in incidents in

Strathclyde may be explained by the campaign mounted by the police to encourage reporting.

► The Home Office Police Research Group calculated a racially motivated incident rate (RMI) per 1,000 of the ethnic minority population in each force in 1996/7. This gives a very different picture, if a somewhat rough and ready one – it hides the differences between ethnic minority groups, and the fact that victims of racial incidents can also be white (Maynard & Read, 1997).

► Forces with widely varying numbers of

incidents, such as the Met (5,621 incidents), West Yorkshire (623 incidents) and Leicestershire (299 incidents), had RMI rates under four. Northumbria, on the other hand, had both a large number of incidents (488) and a high RMI rate (22.5). Some forces had a disproportionate number of incidents relative to their ethnic minority populations; for example Cumbria (39 incidents and an RMI rate of 19.5), Dorset (70 incidents and an RMI rate of 10.4) and Gwent (78 incidents and an RMI rate of 11.5).

TYPE OF OFFENCE

► The bulk of racial incidents in 1996/7 were less serious offences: 38% involved verbal harassment and 20% criminal damage to property. The incidence of verbal harassment was lowest in North Wales (0%) and highest in Northumbria (84%) (Maynard & Read, 1997).

► 21% of all racial incidents involved assaults, and 2% were serious crimes against the person. In Cambridgeshire, where the total number of racial incidents was low, 22% were serious crimes against the person, an offence which made up only 1.5% of all crimes in the area.

► In the Met area, assaults accounted for 30% of racial incidents in 1996/7; criminal damage for 22% of incidents; and abusive behaviour for 12%, with other offences making up the remainder.

► Between 1994/5 and 1996/7, 1,363 (3.7%) of the 37,206 racial incidents recorded by the police in England and Wales

Table 1. Racial incidents reported to the police in England, Wales and Scotland in 1996/7 and 1997/8

FORCE	1996/7 No.	1997/8 No.	FORCE	1996/7 No.	1997/8 No.
England					
Avon and Somerset	310	409	Lincolnshire	7	6
Bedfordshire	77	75	Merseyside	162	241
Cambridgeshire	141	147	Metropolitan Police	5,621	5,862
Cheshire	92	78	Norfolk	56	89
City of London	10	6	North Yorkshire	43	41
Cleveland	68	76	Northamptonshire	195	318
Cumbria	37	46	Northumbria	488	444
Derbyshire	208	174	Nottinghamshire	330	391
Devon and Cornwall	82	90	South Yorkshire	169	213
Dorset	67	86	Staffordshire	225	214
Durham	24	37	Suffolk	74	54
Essex	116	160	Surrey	55	45
Gloucestershire	34	32	Sussex	260	298
Greater Manchester	595	624	Thames Valley	233	279
Hampshire	178	219	Warwickshire	66	107
Hertfordshire	295	288	West Mercia	64	57
Humberside	55	72	West Midlands	725	632
Kent	256	276	West Yorkshire	623	644
Lancashire	337	311	Wiltshire	35	59
Leicestershire	299	237	Total	12,667	13,437
Scotland			Wales		
Central	105	114	Dyfed Powys	18	17
Dumfries & Galloway	4	5	Gwent	60	45
Fife	53	33	North Wales	4	12
Grampian	37	56	South Wales	357	367
Lothian & Borders	287	315	Total	439	441
Northern	0	8			
Strathclyde	206	461			
Tayside	119	105			
Total	811	1,097	ENGLAND & WALES	13,106	13,878
			SCOTLAND	811	1,097

38% of racial incidents in 1996/7 involved verbal harassment, and 20% criminal damage to property. Assaults made up 21% of all incidents, and 2% were serious crimes against the person

involved serious offences: 866 were serious assaults, 482 were attacks involving explosives or arson, ten were homicides and five attempted homicides (House of Commons).

► In 1996/7 and 1997/8 the police identified eight homicides where there was a racial motivation: four victims were white, one black, two Asian and one of 'other' ethnic origin. A suspect was

identified in all cases except one, where the victim was white (Home Office, 1998).

'LOW LEVEL' HARASSMENT

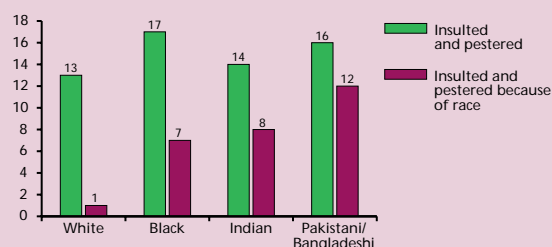
► The 1994 and 1996 BCS asked respondents whether they had been insulted or pestered in the street or in another public place during the previous year, and, if so, whether they thought the incident was racially motivated. Levels of harassment were sizeable but roughly similar for all groups – between 13% and 17% – but the harassment was more likely to be of a racist nature among ethnic minorities, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (12%, compared to 7% among blacks and under 1% among whites). See Figure 3.

► Among 16-24 year-olds, 85% of Caribbeans and 50% of Asians did not feel they could rely on the police to protect them from racial harassment (Modood & Berthoud, 1997).

FEAR OF RACIAL VIOLENCE

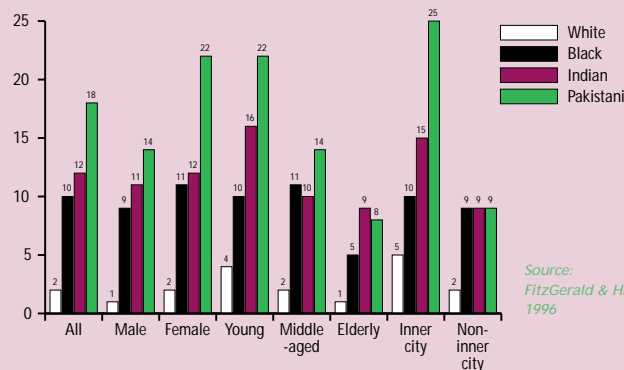
► Asked by the 1992 BCS whether racial attacks were a problem in their area, over half the respondents in all groups said 'no', ranging from 82% of whites to 62% of

Figure 3. 'Low level' harassment and racial harassment, 1995



Source: Percy, 1998

Figure 4. Proportions seeing racial attacks as a very or fairly big problem in their area, by sex, age, geographic location and ethnic group, 1992 BCS



Source: FitzGerald & Hale, 1996

Carib-beans and 56% of Asians. Among those who saw racial attacks as a very or fairly big problem in their area, white people were least likely (2%) to consider them a problem and Pakistanis most likely (18%). Figure 4 gives details by sex, age, geographic location and ethnic group.

► Victims of racially motivated offences from all ethnic minority groups were more afraid of going out at night than victims of 'ordinary' offences. In areas where racial attacks were a problem, all groups, including white (32%), expressed fear of being out at night (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996).

THE OFFENDERS

► The perpetrators of the more widespread forms of racial harassment, such as vandalised cars, smashed windows, malicious and threatening telephone calls or notes, or noxious substances stuffed through letterboxes, are less likely to have been seen by the victims. Information about the perpetrators of racially motivated offences is therefore limited to those more serious offences, such as threats or violence, where the victims could say something about their assailants.

► Perpetrators of racially motivated offences range from very young children to pensioners. Both men and women are involved, often acting together as groups of friends or families. As Table 2 shows, according to the 1996 BCS, 8 out of 10 offences in 1995 were committed by men, and women were more likely to join them in racially motivated incidents than in 'ordinary' threats and violence (16% as against 8%). Four in 10 racially motivated offences were committed by 16-25 year-olds, and 12% by school children. Racially motivated offences were more likely than other offences to be committed by more than one offender: 29% of them involved four or more assailants compared to 17% of other offences. Nearly two-thirds of racially motivated offences were committed by white perpetrators and 18% by black perpetrators.

► Racially motivated offences are much more likely to form part of a series than other offences: 74% of racially motivated offences against Pakistanis, 61% against Caribbeans and 57% against Indians were not isolated occurrences, compared to 39%, 35% and

Table 2. Perpetrators of racially motivated and non-racially motivated offences, 1996 BCS

	RM ¹ %	Non-RM %
Victims who described the offender	91	50
Ethnicity of the offender		
White	63	81
Black	18	8
Asian	9	3
Other	1	2
Mixed	10	4
No. of offenders		
1	32	58
2	22	17
3	17	8
4+	29	17
Sex of the offender		
Male	81	81
Female	4	11
Both	16	8
Victim/offender relationship²		
Stranger	57	71
Casual	34	14
Well-known	9	14
Age of the offender		
School	12	15
16-24	42	38
Over 24	36	41
Mixed	10	5
<i>Base</i>	<i>(238)</i>	<i>(4,570)</i>

1. Includes only those offences which the victims were certain were racially motivated.

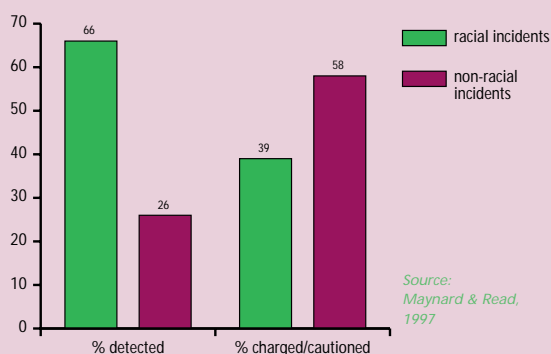
2. Includes incidents where the victim could not say anything about the offenders, if the respondent could not provide any information, it was assumed the offender was a stranger. Other columns exclude incidents where the victim could not say anything about the offender.

Source: Percy, 1998

33%, respectively, of 'ordinary' offences (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996). In 1996/7, the highest proportion of repeat victims was found in Cumbria, where 38% of victims (15 out of 39) had been the subject of a racial

incident previously recorded by the police, followed by 32% in West Yorkshire (202 out of 623 victims). The forces with the lowest recorded rates of repeat victimisation were Devon & Cornwall

Figure 5. Detection, charging and cautioning of racial and non-racial incidents, 1996/7



Note: The rate of detection for racial incidents includes all incidents where a suspect was identified, no matter what subsequent action was taken. The data on non-racial incidents, taken from Home Office criminal statistics for England & Wales 1995, are less inclusive: for example they do not include incidents dealt with by means of a warning.

(1% or 1 out of 81) and Nottinghamshire (3% or 12 out of 349) (Maynard & Read, 1997).

► Racially motivated offences against Pakistanis, in particular, were more likely to involve use of a weapon (49%) than other offences (6%). The distress caused by racially motivated offences was also markedly greater than for other offences (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996).

POLICE DETECTION RATES

► On average, suspects are more likely to be detected in racial incidents than in non-racial incidents, but less likely to be charged or cautioned. Excluding incidents where there was little chance of identifying a suspect, 39% of cases in 1996/7 resulted in a charge or caution (see Figure 5). The remainder were dealt with informally, around half on the victims' wishes and half on police advice.

► Racial incidents involving criminal damage to property were much more likely to be cleared up in 1996/7 than non-racial incidents (47% as against 19%), whereas the detection rate for racial incidents involving verbal abuse (public order offences) was comparatively low (75% as against 95% for non-racial cases). The proportion of police forces taking no further action on racial incidents involving verbal harassment ranged from a high of 86% in West Yorkshire to a low of 3% in Warwickshire (Maynard & Read, 1997).

► 54% of Indians, 54% of

Pakistanis and 62% of Caribbeans were dissatisfied with the police response to their case (FitzGerald & Hale, 1996).

PROSECUTION

► The Crown Prosecution Service monitors prosecution decisions and outcomes on all racial

83% of cases

of racially

motivated crimes

prosecuted in

1997/8 resulted in

convictions.

However, sentences

were increased in

only 22% of

cases where the

racial element had

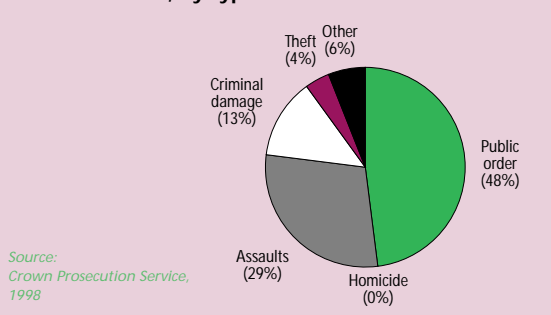
been brought to

the court's notice.

incident files sent to them by the police. In 1997/8, the CPS received 1,506 cases from the police and prosecuted 1,324 of these, an increase of 10% on the previous year; 1,151 of the cases prosecuted contained admissible evidence of racial motivation.

► Almost 90% of the racially motivated offences prosecuted were offences of actual or threatened violence against persons or

Figure 6. Racially motivated offences prosecuted in 1997/8, by type of offence



property: 48% were public order offences, 29% assaults, and 13% involved criminal damage (see Figure 6).

► Most defendants (64%) pleaded guilty, and the overall conviction rate including not guilty pleas was 83%.

► The racial element in the case was brought to the court's attention in 981 (85%) of the 1,151 cases prosecuted either on a guilty plea or in a contested trial. However, the sentences passed were increased in only 22% of such cases.

► Crown Courts were most likely to increase sentences in cases where the racial element had been brought to their

attention – 28% of defendants had their sentences increased, compared to 21% in youth courts and 19% in magistrates' courts (see Table 3).

Public Order Act 1986

► In 1997, of 100 prosecutions under the incitement to racial hatred provisions (sections 18 – 23) of the Public Order Act 1986, 21 defendants were found guilty and sentenced, 13 (62%) of them to immediate custody for an average of 9.5 months. During the same period, 12 offenders, five of them under the age of 21, were cautioned.

THE LAW

► The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which came into force on 1 October 1998, created nine new racially

aggravated offences. This was achieved by adding the factor of racial aggravation to existing offences of assault, criminal damage, offences under Part I of the Public Order Act 1986 and offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. If there is not sufficient evidence of racial aggravation, when the new offences are tried on indictment in the Crown Court, juries will still be able to convict for the basic offence. Alternative verdicts are not currently permitted in magistrates' courts.

► Racially aggravated offences will attract sentences up to two years higher than the existing offences if it can be proved that the defendant demonstrated racial hostility at the time of the offence or immediately before, or that the offence was motivated wholly or partly by racial hostility. Murder and grievous bodily harm with intent or arson already carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

► The Act also places a duty on courts to treat any evidence that an offence was racially aggravated as a factor which increases its seriousness; this applies to *all* offences, not just the new racially aggravated offences. Furthermore, a declaration must be made in open court at the time of sentencing that racial aggravation was a factor.

Table 3. Prosecution of defendants charged with racially motivated offences, 1997/8

	(a) Cases prosecuted, with admissible evidence of racial motivation		(b) Court notified of racial element		(c) Sentence increased	
	No.	% of No. (a)	No.	% of No. (b)	No.	% of No. (c)
Crown court	335	266	79	74	28	
Youth court	186	160	86	33	21	
Magistrates' court	630	555	88	107	19	
Total	1,151	981	85	214	22	

Source: Crown Prosecution Service, 1998

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CRE Factsheets are produced using the best data available at the time, and are updated periodically. A separate factsheet is available on *Criminal Justice in England and Wales*.



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which gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live
free from discrimination and prejudice and from the
fear of racial harassment and violence.*