

Race / Hate Crime

Driver – Social

Related Drivers – Counter Terrorism, Equality, Diversity & Human Rights, Forced Marriage & 'Honour'- Based Violence, Neighbourhood Policing, Violent Crime – Domestic Violence, Violent Crime – Gun and Gang Violence, Violent Crime – Knife Crime, Violent Crime – Sexual Violence, Criminal Legislation, Police Powers, Information Sharing, Migration, Public Confidence in Policing, Stop & Search, Jean Charles de Menzes Shooting, Youth Crime

Background

The number of racially aggravated offences reported to police in England and Wales has increased from 2003 to 2007.¹ Overall there was a 39 per cent rise in the number of race crimes, although virtually all forces recorded much greater individual increases. In Merseyside, for example, there was a 94 per cent increase in racially aggravated offences reported to police and in South Yorkshire the number rose from 242 to 1,037, an increase of 330 per cent in 4 years.

A recent government citizenship survey showed an increase in perceptions of levels of racism in Britain. Of those surveyed, 56 per cent said they believe there is more racial prejudice in Britain now than five years ago.²

Furthermore, the Commission for Racial Equality warned that segregation - residentially, socially and in the workplace - is growing, and that extremism, both political and religious, is on the rise as people become increasingly disillusioned and disconnected from each other.³

In the report, *Access to Justice: A review of the existing evidence of the experiences of minority groups based on ethnicity, identity and sexuality* researchers conducted a review of research exploring the experiences minority groups who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Research found during the review indicated that racist victimisation was significant when considering minority ethnic communities and their experiences of crime.⁴ Findings from the British Crime Survey suggested more than one third of assaults directed against Asian and black people were considered to be racially motivated by respondents.⁵

The *Access to Justice* researchers had seen evidence that established members of BME communities were more likely to be victims of crime, and a significant number of these victims had experienced racist crime. The reporting of this appeared to be lower than other types of crime, suggesting even higher levels of victimisation.

The Equalities Review Panel echoed these findings, they estimated that most racial and religious hate crime, and as much as 90% of homophobic hate crime goes unreported because victims are too frightened or embarrassed to report the crime.⁶ The report went on to recommend that criminal justice agencies should introduce standard collection mechanisms that allow comprehensive and consistent monitoring of hate crimes for different population groups at every stage of the criminal justice system.

The Access to Justice review highlighted a number of factors which appeared to account for the under reporting of crimes against BME communities. One factor identified in the research related to how organisations supporting victims tended to ignore or marginalise ethno-cultural factors. A study by Chakraborti and Garland (2003) highlighted how some of the respondents in their study argued that some agencies did not understand there were differences between the beliefs and cultural practices of British Asian communities.⁷

Additionally, a review by Garland *et al.* (2006) found the diversity within minority ethnic communities was a theme prevalent within research literature. They highlighted it was important to take into consideration the specific histories and experiences of specific communities, rather than relying on broad racial categories. These general classifications could obscure significant differences between ethnic communities.⁸

The charity, Stonewall, carried out the first statistically significant national survey on homophobic hate crime, supported by the Home Office, after the conviction of two men for the homophobic murder of Jody Dobrowski in June 2006. The report showed that:

- One in five has been a victim of homophobic hate crimes in the last three years.
- Three in four don't report incidents to the police as many believe no action will follow.
- Only 1% of those that did report the crime or incident resulted in a conviction.
- Two thirds of those who reported incidents to the police were not offered or referred to advice or support services.⁹

The report's ten key recommendations include encouraging police to improve the recording of homophobic hate incidents and help lesbian and gay people to report them. The then Home Secretary Jacqui Smith welcomed the recommendations accompanying the report. She said:

'In the 21st century no one in Britain should ever feel under threat of verbal or physical violence just because of their sexual orientation. We're determined that lesbian and gay people should have the confidence to report crimes to the police knowing that they will be taken seriously, the crime investigated and their privacy respected. Our key priorities are to increase reporting; increase offences brought to justice and to tackle repeat victimisation and hotspots.'

A spokesperson for ACPO said that the statistics 'speak for themselves and this cannot be accepted'. The findings offer the police service a real opportunity to make real improvements in terms of how homophobic incidents are dealt with but also in terms of raising confidence in reporting incidents in the first place.¹⁰

A running theme in the examples above is that of the importance of encouraging minority groups to seek support from the police and other organisations. For crime and victim experiences, the police held the vanguard in providing a route to access justice. Where mistrust in the police was found, evidence indicated this impacted directly on the reporting of crime, particularly when it was related to or associated with identity, ethnicity, sexuality and culture.^{4,11, 12}

Access to Justice makes the following recommendations to improve the access to justice for minority groups:

- Where legislation is enacted or guidance amended its application in practice should be closely monitored in order to ensure its translation into front-line provision. This would be particularly important if institutional racism and prejudice, and perceptions of this within minority communities are to be addressed.
- Service providers, organisations and agencies should focus upon training on an ongoing basis that addresses the needs of minority groups, with a focus on the need to be sensitive to ethnicity, culture and identity and on how individually tailored support could be provided, whatever people's circumstance.⁴

Potential Skills Needs

Communication skills – to communicate effectively with minority groups and communities

Community policing skills – encourage more people to become involved in crime reduction alongside operational policing tasks

Customer service skills – delivering a consistent high quality service

Data collection and management skills – recording and collecting data in line with a particular system (e.g. homophobic hate crime)

Equality and diversity skills – to treat people appropriately and sensitively as well as better understand the cultural issues of the communities they serve

Investigation skills – to identify cases of hate and racial aggravated crime

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

Relationship building skills – to engage with the community to maintain public confidence

'Soft' skills – personal qualities and interpersonal skills necessary to effectively deal with the public

Victim and witness care skills – to treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

¹ [NPIA \(June 2008\) NPIA Digest. London: NPIA p5](#)

² [Department for Communities and Local Government 2007 Citizenship Survey](#)

³ a) [Commission for Racial Equality 'Monitoring and Enforcement Report 2005-2007'](#); b) [Commission for Racial Equality Press Release](#); c) [Commission for Racial Equality \(2007\) A lot done, a lot to do: Our vision for an integrated Britain. London: Commission for Racial Equality.](#)

⁴ [Mason, P., Hughes, N., Heck, R., Spalek, B. Ward, N., & Norman, A. \(2009\) Access to Justice: a review of existing evidence of the experiences of minority groups based on ethnicity, identity and sexuality. London: Ministry of Justice.](#)

⁵ Bowling, B., & Phillips, C. (2003) Racist Victimisation in England and Wales, in Hawkins, D. (ed) *Violent Crime: assessing race and ethnic differences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: pp. 154-170.

⁶ [Equalities Review Panel \(2007\) *Fairness and Freedom: The final report of the Equalities Review*. London: Cabinet Office.](#)

⁷ Chakraborti, N., & Garland, J. (2003) *Under-researched and overlooked: an exploration of the attitudes of rural minority ethnic communities towards crime, community safety and the criminal justice system*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29(3): 563-572.

⁸ Garland, J., Spalek, B., & Chakraborti, N. (2006) *Hearing Lost Voices: Issues in Researching Hidden Minority Ethnic Communities*. *British Journal of Criminology* 46: 423-437.

⁹ [Stonewall, Dick, S. 2008, Homophobic Hate Crime. The Gay British Crime Survey 2008.](#)

¹⁰ [NPIA \(August 2008\) *NPIA Digest*. London: NPIA p 44.](#)

¹¹ [Gervais, M.C. \(2008\) *The Drivers of Black and Asian People's Perceptions of Racial Discrimination by Public Services: A qualitative study*. London: Communities and Local Government.](#)

¹² [House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee \(2007\) *Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System*. vol 1, HC 181-I, London: The Stationery Office Limited.](#)