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

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

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.

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

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