

## **Written evidence from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, relating to The experiences of minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland Inquiry (MEM0030)**

I write in response to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's current inquiry into the experiences of minority ethnic and migrant people living and working in Northern Ireland to provide you with further information from the Police Service of Northern Ireland which we hope will be of use in your deliberations.

Given the importance of the issue and the frequency with which it has been raised through your oral and written evidence gathering, we have confined our response to providing further information in relation to the levels of hate crime experienced by minority ethnic and migrant communities.

At the outset, the PSNI recognises that crime against minority ethnic and migrant communities, particularly racist hate crime, is on the rise. There are a number of possible explanations for this. It may be an actual rise in incidents, an increase in confidence to report, or both. We fully appreciate hate crime is historically under reported and we would encourage any victim to come forward. We have attached our most recent statistical dataset to provide an overview of the current landscape.

Working with other criminal justice partners and advocacy groups, we are fully committed to doing everything we can to prevent crime, increase confidence to report and improve criminal justice outcomes for victims.

To assist with the Committee's deliberations, I have set out below some of the barriers that exist in effective policing of hate crime as well as work underway in the PSNI to improve how we deliver a visible, accessible, responsive and community-focused policing service for everyone living in Northern Ireland.

### **Barriers to effective policing of hate crime**

- **Legislative gaps** - at present there is no specific offence of hate crime in Northern Ireland which has an enhanced sentencing model for offences motivated by hate. The criteria for recording a hate motivated crime is not evidence-based but rather a subjective assessment by "any person" as to their perception of the motivation for the crime or incident. Utilising the enhanced sentencing model requires evidence of the hate motivation in a crime. This can lead to criticism where offences are prosecuted through the judicial system but the hate element is not recognised in sentencing. This disconnect when progressing recorded hate crimes through the judicial system often results in recorded hate crimes being prosecuted as the basic offence only, which has a negative impact on confidence levels.
- **Underreporting** - there is strong evidence to suggest that hate crimes are under reported meaning the true position of hate within society can be difficult to articulate. Whilst evidence suggests a number of factors contribute to under reporting, victims of a hate motivated incident or crime have additional barriers to contend with when reporting this type of criminality. The PSNI believes that the review into the hate crime legislation is a positive step towards building public confidence in this area.
- **Challenges with recording** - accurately recording protected characteristics remains challenging due to a range of operational and contextual factors. This results in data being difficult to interpret. This is particularly evidenced in certain strands such as ethnic background for identification of racial hatred.
- **Immigration status concerns** - in addition to the PSNI's own experience of working with victims of racist hate crime, we are acutely aware from anecdotal evidence from

advocacy groups that the fear of repercussions due to a victim's immigration position is a further barrier to reporting. The PSNI guidance is that officers should not routinely search police databases for the purpose of establishing the immigration status of a victim/witness or routinely seek proof of their entitlement to reside in the UK. When a victim/witness's immigration status open to question, their status as a victim/witness does not change. The focus of the police will remain to investigate the allegation the victim/witness has reported and to put in place such reasonable measures as are necessary to protect them.

## **What the PSNI is doing to improve**

The PSNI strives to continuously improve and develop effective strategies to promote hate crime awareness, encourage reporting and improve confidence amongst victims and the public. Hate crime is specifically mentioned in the *PSNI Annual Performance Plan 2021/2022* under Outcome 1: We have a safe community.

- **Representation** - The PSNI will be launching a recruitment campaign in Autumn 2021 where we will be seeking to recruit a pool of candidates that is reflective of the community we serve. Whilst we have made progress in attracting candidates from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, with a greater proportion of candidates than representation in the wider population, we are committed to doing more to improve.
- **Recording and reporting** - the PSNI has developed an analytical tool for all front line officers to be able to identify repeat victims and suspects of hate crime. This provides accessible information to enable Districts to identify the most vulnerable members of each community and provide a preventative or problem solving approach to assisting them through our neighbourhood policing model. In addition, we are in the process of reviewing the procedures for recording hate crime to enhance the data quality and also streamline the approach for front line officers. This will assist in providing better data quality around protected characteristics which should result in better analytical work being conducted and ultimately a better service being provided.
- **Improving our engagement** - as a result of the review into the Policing operation of the Black Lives Matter protests in Northern Ireland in 2020 where our response was found to be unfair and discriminatory, the PSNI recognises confidence from ethnic minority communities in the PSNI has been significantly and negatively impacted. From senior leadership to local neighbourhood teams, we are committed to rectifying this and restoring confidence. The Chief Constable has mandated the creation of the Strategic Community Engagement Team, a group of the most senior officers and staff across the Service, which will help enable and encourage greater co-ordination, information sharing and organisational learning in the sphere of engagement. Work has been ongoing with members of both the Belfast and the North West Migrant Forums to shape and inform this key pillar of our engagement strategy.
- **Supporting policy change** - Judge Marrinan recently completed a review of the Hate Crime legislation in Northern Ireland in which 34 recommendations were made. The PSNI is fully supportive of this review and are currently working with partners to understand how to progress these recommendations in a way which provides the maximum long term benefit to the public.

## **Conclusion**

All hate crime is unacceptable and is of serious concern to the PSNI. We are committed to working with partners to prevent crime, increase confidence in reporting and improving criminal justice outcomes for victims.

The PSNI is determined to continue to make positive steps towards building public confidence in the Police's ability to effectively prevent and tackle racist hate crime.

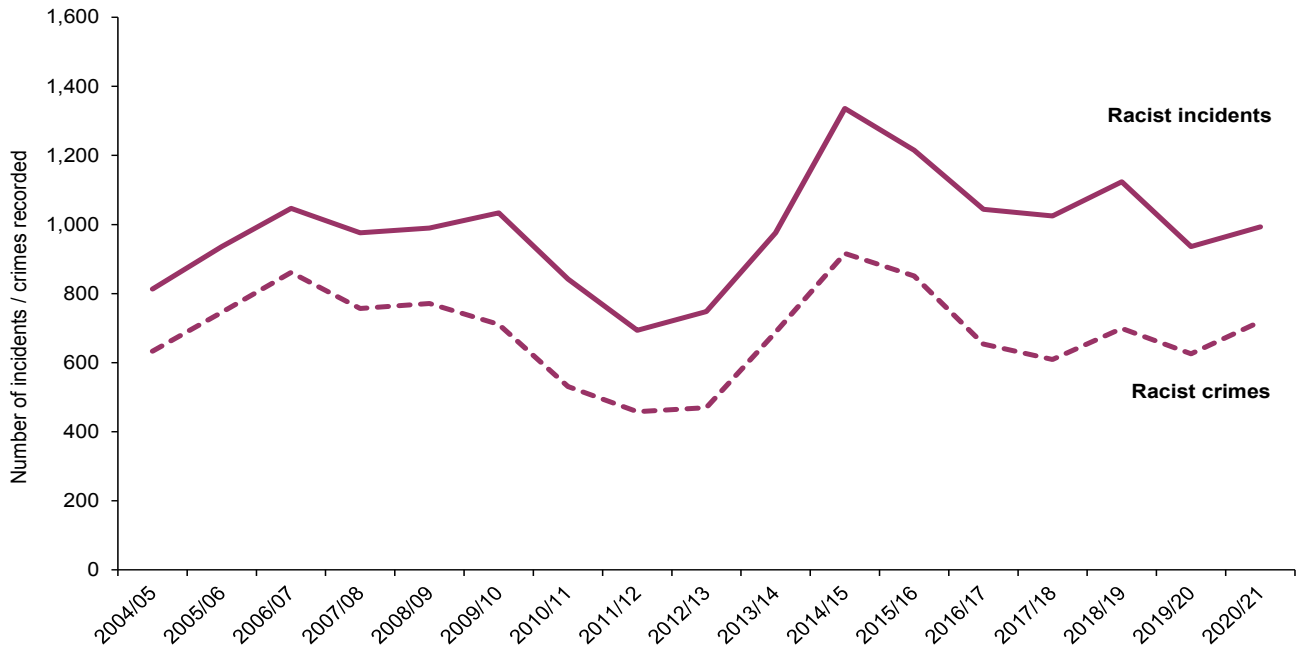
We look forward to considering the Committee's findings and welcome the opportunity to provide any further information that may be of assistance.

*September 2021*

## Appendix A: Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland (Racist Motivation chapter)

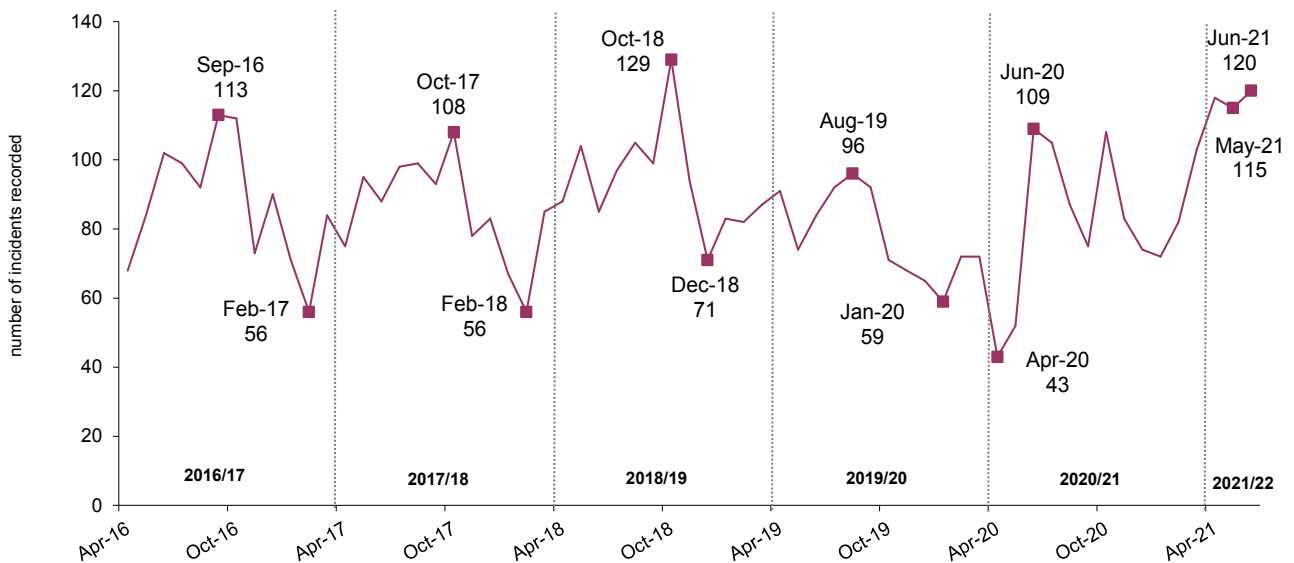
Following a decline in levels of racist incidents and crimes between 2009/10 and 2011/12 increases were seen each year between 2011/12 and 2014/15 (the highest recorded in the series). Levels have trended downwards since 2014/15 with the exception of increases seen in 2018/19 and 2020/21. The number of incidents recorded in 2020/21 is the eighth highest in the data series, with the number of crimes being the seventh highest.

**Figure 1 Trends in racist incidents and crimes recorded by the police since 2004/05**



Since 2016/17 racist incidents have tended to reach their highest levels around September or October each year, with the lowest levels recorded between December and March; August 2019, April 2020 and June 2020 are an exception to this pattern. Figure 2 shows the pattern of racist incidents over the last five financial years and the emerging pattern in the current financial year 2021/22.

**Figure 2 Police recorded racist incidents each month April 2016 to June 2021, showing highest and lowest levels in each financial year**

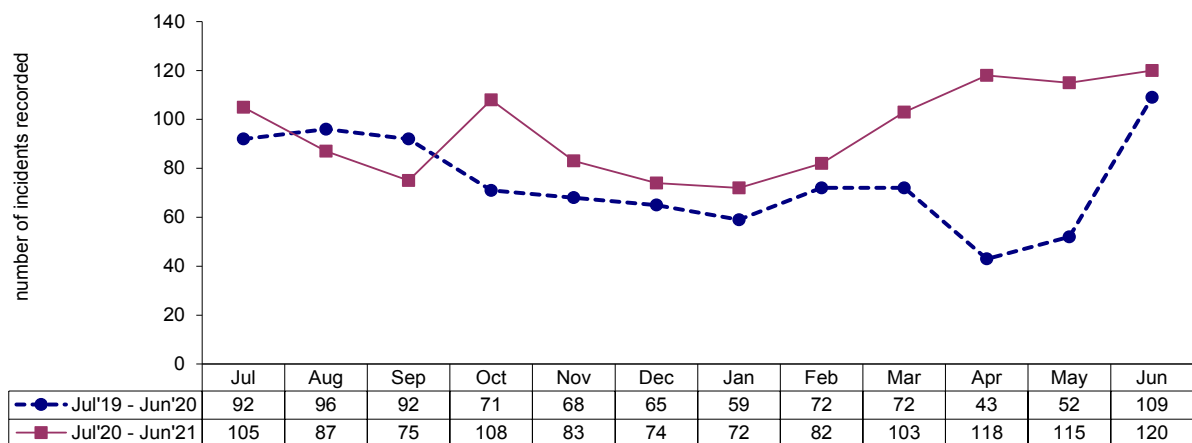


#### 4. What has been happening to levels of racist incidents and crimes more recently?

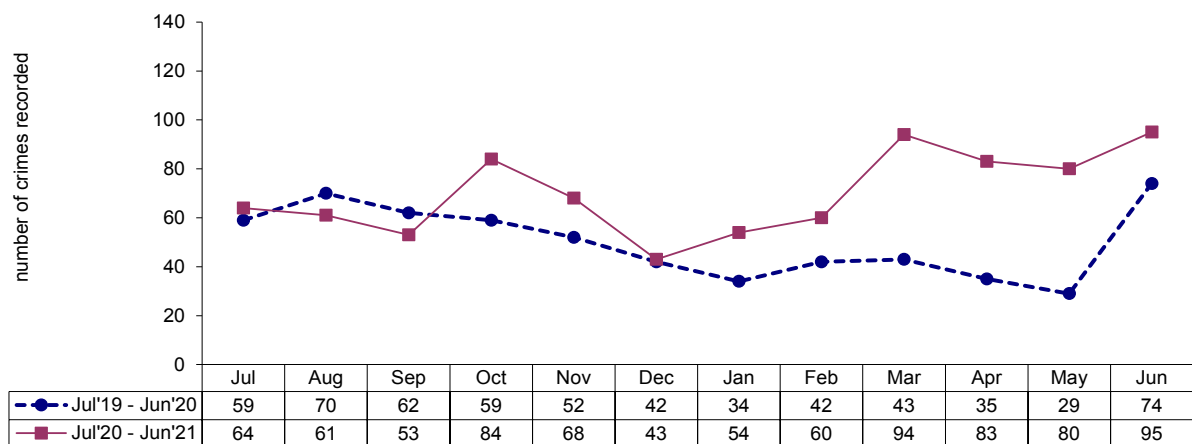
In 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021:

- There were higher levels of both racist incidents and crimes recorded when compared with the previous 12 months. [Table 2]
- There were 1,142 racist incidents recorded by the police in Northern Ireland, 251 more than for the previous 12 months. [Table 2]
- The number of racist crimes recorded by the police was 839, an increase of 238 on the previous 12 months. [Table 2]
- There were 6 racist incidents and 4 racist crimes per 10,000 population<sup>1</sup>, compared with 5 racists incidents and 3 racist crimes per 10,000 population in the previous 12 months.
- Racist crimes represented 0.8% of all police recorded crime.
- There was an increase of 109 in violence against the person offences, while offences of theft, burglary and criminal damage rose by 129. All other offences remained unchanged at 15. [Table 2]

**Figure 3** Racist incidents recorded by the police July 2019 to June 2021



**Figure 4** Racist crimes recorded by the police July 2019 to June 2021



<sup>1</sup> Crime per 10,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,895,510 for 2020, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation. Mid-year population estimates are available from the [NISRA website](#).

**Table 2 Racist incidents and crimes recorded by the police**

		Numbers		
		Jul'19 to Jun'20	Jul'20 to Jun'21	change
<b>Incidents</b>		<b>891</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Crimes</b>	Violence against the person offences	365	474	109
	Theft (including burglary) & criminal damage	221	350	129
	All other offences	15	15	0
	<b>Total crimes (racist motivation)</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>238</b>

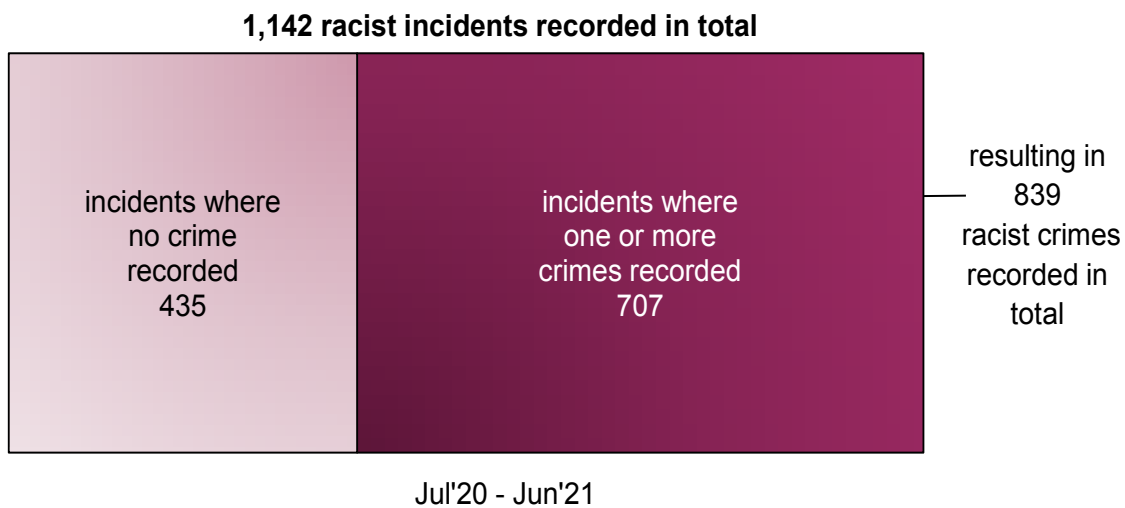
**What is the difference between a racist incident and racist crime recorded by the police?**

Not all racist incidents will result in the recording of a crime, as what has occurred in the incident may not be of the level of severity that would result in a racist crime being recorded. Some racist incidents will result in multiple crimes being recorded. **Racist crimes are included in the incident count and the two should not be added together.**

Figure 5 shows how racist incidents are broken down into those with and without crimes.

In the twelve months to 30 June 2021 there were 1,142 incidents recorded by the police where there was a racist motivation. Of these, there were 435 incidents which did not involve a crime (i.e. incidents where the circumstances did not amount to an offence being committed). The remaining 707 incidents involved one or more crimes (amounting to 839 racist crimes in total). Around two in five incidents recorded in this time period did not result in a crime being recorded.

**Figure 5 Racist incidents and crimes**



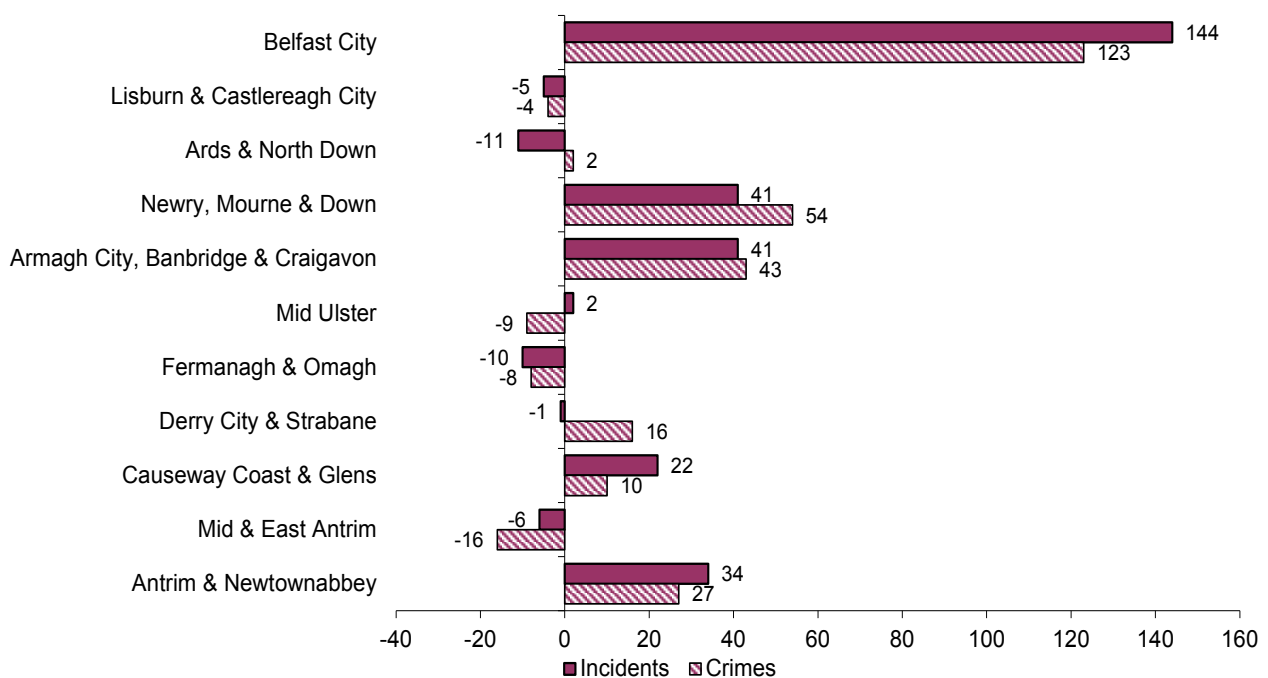
## 5. Racist incidents and crimes - what has been happening in policing districts?

When comparing the current and previous 12 months, six policing districts showed an increase in the number of racist incidents, with seven showing an increase in the number of racist crimes. Belfast City policing district, which accounts for around two out of five racist incidents and crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, showed an increase in both incidents (144) and crimes (123). [Table 3]

**Table 3 Racist incidents and crimes recorded by police, by policing district**

	Numbers					
	Racist Incidents			Racist Crimes		
	Jul'19 to Jun'20	Jul'20 to Jun'21	change	Jul'19 to Jun'20	Jul'20 to Jun'21	change
Belfast City	367	511	144	240	363	123
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	51	46	-5	34	30	-4
Ards & North Down	55	44	-11	22	24	2
Newry, Mourne & Down	40	81	41	25	79	54
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	92	133	41	59	102	43
Mid Ulster	49	51	2	41	32	-9
Fermanagh & Omagh	36	26	-10	29	21	-8
Derry City & Strabane	61	60	-1	40	56	16
Causeway Coast & Glens	33	55	22	24	34	10
Mid & East Antrim	54	48	-6	49	33	-16
Antrim & Newtownabbey	53	87	34	38	65	27
No Area Assigned	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>238</b>

**Figure 6 Change in police recorded racist incidents and crimes by policing district, 12 months to June 2021 compared with the previous 12 months**



## 6. What are the ethnicities and nationalities of racist crime victims?

**Ethnicity:** Different ethnicity classifications have been used within the PSNI crime recording systems since 2007/08. Table 10 in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#) reflects racist crimes by the ethnicity of the victim grouped by Asian, Black, Mixed/Other and White ethnicities. The historic classifications that are no longer available for selection on the NICHE system are separately identified. These may still be identified in the data where the victim details were recorded while the historic classifications were in use.

**Nationality:** Table 11 in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#) shows the nationalities of victims of racist crime. These figures are based on nationality only and do not take into account the victim's ethnicity.

**Ethnicity and Nationality combined:** Not all victims of the same nationality have the same ethnicity. This is particularly evident for those victims of racist crimes who identify their nationality as UK and Ireland. Table 12 in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#) shows the most frequently recorded victim nationalities for each ethnicity. This makes it possible to see, for example, the number of victims with UK and Ireland nationality who have Asian, Black or White ethnicity. This can also be seen in relation to a number of other nationalities.

**Figure 7 Ethnicity of victims of racist crimes, July 2020 to June 2021**

The ethnicity of victims of racist crimes is available in at least 76 per cent of records, while the nationality is available in at least 74%

