

# **No Longer A Problem?**

## **Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report provides an overview of the scale and nature of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Our definition of sectarian violence includes acts of violence, harassment and intimidation perpetrated by members of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities on members of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican communities and vice versa. The primary interest is in acts of non-militarised violence, including attacks on both persons and property, rather than on acts committed by members of paramilitary organisations. However, sectarian violence does include acts of extreme violence and may involve paramilitary activity.

This is the third report in a series commissioned by OFMDFM on hate crime in Northern Ireland. The two previous reports were based on an analysis of police data. This has not been possible for this report, as the police only began to gather data on sectarian incidents in a systematic and centralised manner in September 2004.

Instead we have made use of a variety of sources of data to construct fragments of a larger picture. This has involved use of a limited amount of police data: for some categories of violence and in some police command units. It also draws upon data from the Housing Executive, Fair Employment Tribunals and from newspaper reports.

The report describes recent surveys that include questions pertaining to experiences of sectarian violence or attitudes towards sectarianism; key policy documents and strategic plans by both central and local government that refer or relate to the problem of sectarian violence, and a review of the party manifestoes of Northern Irish political parties issued for the Assembly elections in November 2003.

The data reveals a somewhat patchy picture. It suggests that sectarian violence is worse in some areas than others and that it is a serious problem in parts of Belfast and some other urban locations. The data indicates that sectarian violence is a problem for many people in their home environment, and for others it is a problem in the workplace.

However, much of the sectarian violence takes place in the street and involves attacks on people, on property, on public transport. Furthermore, the boundaries between sectarian violence and ‘ordinary’ forms of violence – criminal damage, anti-social behaviour - are often blurred. This, it can be claimed, makes it difficult to quantify and record sectarian violence, because it is not always possible to determine what the motivation or the impact might be.

### **Data**

The PSNI provided a limited amount of data related to sectarian violence. This includes figures for attacks on certain forms of symbolic property on a Northern Ireland wide basis and localised data from six District Command Units - Coleraine, Foyle, Larne, Limavady, Newry and Mourne and North Belfast.

The police figures indicate that:

- There have been an average of five attacks a month on churches, chapels, Orange Halls, GAA and AOH clubs every year since 1994.
- The largest number of such incidents has occurred in Counties Antrim and Tyrone and the fewest in County Fermanagh.
- There were 376 cases of rioting and 1,014 disturbances in interface areas of North Belfast between 1996 and 2004. Over the same period there were 3,864 cases of criminal damage and 1,327 assaults in the areas.
- The police recorded 294 sectarian incidents in Larne between April 2001 and March 2004.
- The PSNI recorded 60 sectarian incidents in or near the Fountain area of Derry between April 2003 and January 2004.
- The police recorded smaller numbers of incidents in Coleraine (52 incidents between 1999 and 2002), Limavady (65 incidents between April 2001 and October 2003) and Newry and Mourne (13 incidents in 8 months between April and November 2003).

These incidents were largely of the most serious type, while ‘minor’ forms of sectarianism, such as verbal abuse, harassment, visual displays and graffiti are largely unrepresented. This suggests that if all police command units were encouraging the reporting and recording of all forms of sectarian incidents the total number of such incidents across Northern Ireland would be substantial.

Statistics from other statutory bodies also indicates that sectarian violence remains a significant issue in Northern Ireland:

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive data indicates that from 1991/92 an average of 1,378 people seek rehousing every year because of sectarian, racist or paramilitary intimidation.
- Research suggests that sectarian harassment in the workplace remains a problem, although it is largely undocumented. Data from the Office of Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunals indicates that from 2000 to March 2003, more than 500 people complained of discrimination because of their religious background each year.
- NIO figures indicate that interface barriers remain a presence in many urban areas and that at least 17 barriers have been built, extended or heightened in Belfast since the ceasefires of 1994.
- There are also indications that attacks on school properties and on public transport are a widespread problem, although it is not possible to disaggregate sectarian attacks from anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

## **Survey Findings**

There has been a limited amount of survey work on experiences of sectarian violence compared with the work that has been done in tracking changes in attitudes to the other community. Our review of recent data indicates that:

- More than one in four young people have experienced sectarian verbal abuse in the previous year;
- Young people are more likely to experience sectarian harassment and violence than older age groups;
- A high percentage of young people feel threatened or intimidated by murals and other visual displays, especially those of the other community;
- More than half of young people do not feel safe when in areas dominated by the other community, but that nearly half of young males had to travel to or through such areas at least once a week;
- A high percentage of young people favour a segregated living, schooling and working environment.

### **Policy Initiatives**

There have been a number of initiatives in response to concerns over sectarian violence. These include the introduction of hate crime legislation in September 2004, a review of police policy on hate crimes and the development of a multi-agency system for recording hate crime.

Also some local authorities have begun to develop responses to this problem, in particular through the work of Community Safety Partnerships, while the District Policing Partnerships, should monitor the effectiveness of police responses to sectarianism. These Initiatives are in their infancy and it remains to be seen what type of approaches will be put in place to respond to problems of sectarian violence and how willing and effective they will be in responding to the issue.

The political parties have given various levels of priority to the issue of sectarian violence. Some have fully formed policies and proposals; others have given less attention to the matter and have limited their response to general recognition of aspects of a broader problem.

The previous devolved administration did not address sectarianism to any extent, except in relation to football. However, this work prompted the Irish Football Association to respond to problems of sectarianism and this has led to significant improvements in behaviour at international matches.

A future assembly should build on this work and follow the example of the Scottish Executive, which convened a cross-party working group on religious hatred in November 2001. There is evidence that sectarianism is being taken seriously in Scotland, it would be important for a local administration to undertake similar work.

### **Recommendations**

The available data indicates that sectarianism remains a significant problem, but we only have a very fragmentary picture of the problem. The problem of sectarian violence has been allowed to persist with little consistent publicity, sustained opposition or structured policy responses. The following recommendations

specifically focus on the issue of sectarian violence, rather than the much wider issues of sectarianism and community relations, which are being addressed in the government response to the Shared Future consultation.

1. **Recording Sectarian Violence:** The PSNI has recently established a system for recording sectarian incidents and the Community Safety Unit (NIO) is also co-ordinating a system for recording and analysing all forms of hate crime. It is important that the creation of the two databases and recording processes are complementary and meet the recommendations for responding to forms of hate crime made in the Stephen Lawrence Report (1999).
2. **Maximising Information:** All agencies and organisations, which currently subsume acts of sectarian violence within broader bodies of data, should begin to record them specifically as sectarian acts. This data should be used to inform the policies and practices of the various organisations, but should also be included in the centralised monitoring system being developed by CSU.
3. **Surveying Experiences of Sectarianism:** There has been no specific survey of experiences of sectarian violence, intimidation and harassment. A baseline survey should be carried out and modules on experiences of sectarianism should be included in future surveys. Such a survey could be carried out by NISRA as part of its ongoing work or be developed as part of the work of the ARK project.
4. **A Framework Strategy:** Although a number of current policy developments have clear relevance to issues of sectarian violence, there would be a value in developing an overall strategy for dealing with sectarian violence (and other forms of hate crime) and for monitoring the impact of initiatives that aim to address the issue. The survey data could provide a platform for developing such a strategy.
5. **A Strategy for Interface Areas:** We endorse the recommendations in the recent Belfast Interface Project report *A Policy Agenda for the Interface*. We would urge central and local government and statutory bodies to develop a coherent and effective strategy to address the significant problems experienced by people living in interface areas.
6. **Building Local Knowledge:** Although there is a need for a broad overview of the issue of sectarian violence, there is also a need for locally specific knowledge of the problem. Surveys could be developed by and for local agencies, such as the District Policing Partnerships or the Community Safety Partnerships, to inform the development of local strategies.
7. **Developing Local Strategies:** The information provided by local authorities indicates a very uneven engagement with the issue of sectarian violence. The data from local surveys could be used to inform and develop more effective and joined up strategies to address this issue. All local authorities should be encouraged to develop strategic plans in response to sectarian violence as part of their Good Relations duties.

8. **Developing Existing Commitments:** Some very useful work has already been developed in relation to the issues of flags, emblems and visual displays and other activities, such as the building of bonfires; all of which can have an impact on community relations and can lead to feelings of intimidation and fear. Much of this work is in its infancy and it is important that it is sustained and developed over the next few years.
9. **Monitoring use of Hate Crime Legislation:** Hate Crime legislation has been introduced in Northern Ireland; however witnesses to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry into Hate Crime expressed scepticism at how widely it will be used and how effective it will be in practice. It will be important to monitor the use of the new legislation to see the impact the law is having, how it is being used and what deficiencies or difficulties there might be with the legislation. In particular it will be important to monitor the number of prosecutions for hate crime offences and the nature of sentences that are imposed, as is already being done in Scotland and England.
10. **Work with Perpetrators of Hate Crime:** It is also important to develop an effective approach to dealing with people sentenced for hate crime offences and for people who have been identified as perpetrators, but not convicted as such. A range of restorative justice programmes have been developed over recent years and it would be useful to explore how such a programme might be utilised with the perpetrators of hate crime.
11. **Civil Society Responses:** It is interesting to note the limited focus given to the subject of sectarian violence by civil society organisations. While many would claim to be anti-sectarian, much of such work takes place within a single identity context. Any substantial cross-community activity against sectarian violence only seems to occur in response to specific and horrific acts, but such reactions have rarely been sustained. It would be beneficial if some of the umbrella civil society organisations developed a more sustained campaign around this issue, as has begun to develop in response to racist violence.

## **Acknowledgement**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Northern Ireland was established on the basis that there is a fundamental difference between members of the Protestant and Catholic community with the two communities having distinctive and different cultures, histories, beliefs and allegiances. The presence of two essentialised and distinctive collective identities remains the fundamental basis for much of the social and political life in Northern Ireland. However, forms of ethnic identity do not simply remain, unchanged and unchanging, the sense of distinctiveness and difference is a process that has to be maintained and sustained through a variety of practices (Bourdieu 1977; Eriksen 1993; Smith 1986). These include many routine daily activities, social structures, institutions, ritual events, public celebrations and commemorations.

Among the key forms of activity that are used to mark and sustain ethnic difference are acts of violence, in which members of the other community are targeted, often at random. Such acts of violence are used to affirm positions of power and authority, establish control over territory and resources, instil fear, define the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and punish transgressors of the communal boundaries. Violence frequently becomes a more common and widespread activity at times of political tension and uncertainty. In such situations it may be used both to provide support for and offer opposition to change (Gledhill 1994; Horowitz 2001; Tambiah 1996; Varshney 2002).

Violence has been widely used in Ireland both to sustain and to challenge positions of power. The uses of state force, of rebellion, of paramilitary force have been extensively documented and analysed, so to a lesser degree have the more extensive outbreaks of inter-communal violence and rioting (see for example Boyd 1987; Farrell 2000; Purdie 1990; Wright 1996). Less attention has been paid to the more mundane incidents of violence and intimidation that help to maintain a sense of ethnic difference, fear and hostility on a daily basis.

These are the types of incidents that Frank Wright referred to as acts of 'representative violence'. These are incidents where the victim is targeted because he/she is, or is assumed to be, a member of the other community, where the victim thus represents the 'other' in its most general form, and where an act of representative violence is intentioned to warn, threaten or punish the other community in general, and as a collectivity. Such acts are one of the foundations of difference and polarisation and remain key elements in ensuring that the divisions between the two main communities remain important factors in the routine of daily lives.

Hostility and antipathy, expressed in forms of ideas, beliefs, practices and actions, by members of one of the two majority communities in Northern Ireland towards members of the other community is generally referred to as sectarianism. Historically sectarianism in Northern Ireland (and in Ireland more generally) has been associated with forms of discrimination and inequalities resulting from the differentials of power

between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Increasingly such differences have become less significant, and patterns of power and authority are much more diverse and varied, with considerable divergence of domination being possible in neighbouring territories. We therefore have adopted McVeigh's general definition of sectarianism, which was designed to acknowledge the presence of sectarianism in Ireland as a whole (McVeigh 1995:643):

*Sectarianism in Ireland is that changing set of ideas and practices, including, crucially, acts of violence, which serves to construct and reproduce the difference between, and unequal status of, Irish Protestants and Catholics.*

This definition highlights the importance of inequalities of power, the role of ideas and practices and the role of violence in the maintenance of the sense of difference. Sectarianism and sectarian violence are both well established phenomena in Ireland, but more particularly they remain contemporary phenomena. In spite of extensive legislation and numerous institutions that have been designed to reduce inequalities and guarantee equal rights, many of the key social structures and institutions, and many mundane and routine practices remain conditioned by, and contingent upon, a sense of sectarian difference.

It has been claimed in numerous seminars and workshops within the community and voluntary sector, that sectarianism remains such a prominent part of life in Northern Ireland that it is frequently not recognised nor regarded as a problem any longer. And, if it is acknowledged as a fact of life, it is frequently considered to be such a big problem that it has to be accommodated and worked around rather than challenged and confronted.

Sectarian violence falls within this conceptual framework. There is very little data available on sectarian violence to highlight developing trends. Furthermore, throughout 2004 the prominence of racist attacks led to speculation in the media that sectarian violence is no longer a significant problem. Individual cases may well be reported in the media, but the lack of wider statistics means that longer-term trends and patterns in acts of sectarian violence have not been monitored, described or analysed. The problem of sectarian violence is thus largely considered in subjective rather than objective terms.

This relative invisibility of the bigger picture of sectarian incidents is enhanced by the fact that levels of segregation across many areas of society are high and have been increasing (Northern Ireland Housing Executive 1999). The current levels of segregation mean that many people can live comfortably with little interaction with the 'other' and with a reduced fear of violence in their daily routines. The high levels of segregation also reduce the possibilities and opportunities for random sectarian attacks or acts of intimidation.

Furthermore, it has frequently been claimed by activists and politicians that the acts of violence that do get reported rarely occur in 'our' area and therefore they are not 'our' problem or responsibility. There are also different perceptions as to whether some

incidents or acts of violence are sectarian in nature or whether they are politically motivated or simply criminal in intent. Finally, it has often been implied that most sectarian attacks are due to loyalist paramilitaries, and are nothing to do with ‘decent’ people. These factors have all contributed to a process of denial of the scale of the problem and thus sectarian violence has remained largely undocumented.

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This is the third report in a series commissioned by OFMDFM on aspects of hate crime in Northern Ireland. The two previous reports considered racist violence (Jarman and Monaghan 2003, 2004) and homophobic violence (Jarman and Tennant 2003). This report provides an overview of the scale and nature of sectarian violence within Northern Ireland.

Under our definition, sectarian violence includes acts of violence, harassment and intimidation perpetrated by members of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities on members of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican communities and vice versa. The report does not focus specifically on acts committed by members of paramilitary organisations towards the security forces, other paramilitaries or against members of their own communities (although some of the data indicates that such activities have been regarded as within the remit of sectarianism by some police command units). Nor does it focus on use of force by members of the police, army or other security forces. The primary interest is in the predominately low-level acts of non-militarised violence, including attacks on both persons and property that involve members of one of the two main communities as perpetrator and members of the other as victim. However, sectarian violence includes acts of extreme violence and may involve paramilitary activity.

The previous reports on hate crime were based on an analysis of police data, which has not been possible for this report, as the police have only gathered data on sectarian incidents in a systematic and centralised manner since September 2004. Instead we have sought out what sources of data are available in an attempt to construct some fragments of a larger picture. This has involved a limited use of police data for some categories of violence and in some police command units. It also draws upon data from the Housing Executive, Fair Employment Tribunals, and from newspaper reports gathered by the Pat Finucane Centre and published on their website.

The report reviews a number of surveys carried out over recent years, which include questions pertaining to experiences of sectarian violence or attitudes towards sectarianism. It also includes a small selection of data relating to attitudes and experiences of sectarianism in County Antrim, where a small number of studies can be used as an illustrative example of the scale of the problem in one county. The research includes a review of key policy documents and strategic plans that specifically refer or relate to the problem of sectarian violence, and also a review of the party manifestoes of the main Northern Irish political parties issued for the Assembly elections in November 2003.

ICR surveyed all of the 29 District Commanders of the PSNI and the 26 chief executives of each of the local councils to determine their understandings of the level of sectarian violence in each area and the nature of any initiatives being developed in response. Finally, a number of interviews were carried out and discussions held with people working for community and interface projects, with police officers and with political representatives to review developments and explore understandings of the scale of the problem.

## Chapter 2

### Police Data on Sectarian Incidents

Sectarianism is widely acknowledged to have been a major factor in the social and political environment of Northern Ireland and remains a key element in understanding contemporary social and political life. Similarly sectarian harassment and violence have been, and continue to be, significant problems in society. However, it is difficult to quantify the scale, nature, form and location of such violence and harassment since there is very little publicly available data on sectarian violence. Few sources of data distinguish sectarian violence and harassment from other forms of violence and harassment. Sectarian activity has been largely subsumed within the wider body of criminal violence and anti-social behaviour. This section offers some concrete data on sectarianism in Northern Ireland by identifying and analysing the limited range of available data and thus shed some light on the scale and nature of sectarian violence and harassment.

The PSNI began to collect data on sectarian incidents in all Divisional Command Units on 28 September 2004. Prior to that date some data was gathered in some individual command units, but not on a systematic basis, nor under a single formulation of a sectarian incident. The PSNI have now established a formal definition of a sectarian incident, which is based upon the definition of a racist incident set down in the Stephen Lawrence Report. The definition states that a sectarian incident is *'any incident perceived to be sectarian by the victim or any other person'*. This definition refers to the perpetration of any incident by an individual or a group against another, as a result of their perceived religion or political opinion.

The absence of any centralised police data on sectarian violence prior to September 2004 means that it is difficult to establish any base line for the problem, to identify any trends over time, to note which areas are particularly problematic areas or any other patterns. However, it has been possible to gather a small amount of specific information that provides some illustration of the levels of some forms of sectarian violence. The data we have been able to obtain includes:

- Figures for attacks on symbolic properties;
- Limited statistics on sectarian incidents in Coleraine, Foyle, Larne, Limavady and Newry and Mourne DCUs; and
- Selected information on violence in interface areas in Belfast.

This data offers some indications of the scale of the problem of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, but is only a limited and partial view. It is limited because it focuses on a small number of specific categories of violence, and because the data only relates to a small number of policing districts. The data is thus not representative of the scale or nature of the problem, but rather provides a snapshot that illustrates something of the continued significance of sectarian violence. It also suggests that different police divisions have had different understanding of what type of activity should be included

within the term sectarian violence and thus highlights the importance of a single overarching definition.

### Attacks on Property

The police have been able to provide Northern Ireland-wide figures for attacks on properties that have specific symbolic value. Such buildings include Orange Halls, GAA and AOH clubs, churches and chapels (religious buildings are treated as a single category rather than by religion). These are set out in Table 1. It might also be expected that the majority of such attacks would be reported to the police as the owners are likely to need to report damage for insurance or compensation purposes, thus making the figures reasonably accurate numbers of incidents that have occurred.

**Table 1: Attacks on Symbolic Properties, 1994-2002**

	Church/Chapel	Orange Hall	GAA/AOH	Total
1994	20	8	4	<b>32</b>
1995	52	42	6	<b>100</b>
1996	52	38	4	<b>94</b>
1997	41	41	6	<b>88</b>
1998	42	29	2	<b>73</b>
1999	15	26	1	<b>42</b>
2000	31	26	8	<b>65</b>
2001	30	16	12	<b>58</b>
2002	35	4	3	<b>42</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>594</b>

*Source: Central Statistics Unit, PSNI*

It should be noted however, that whilst many of these incidents might be sectarian in nature; it is not possible to confirm that all of them are. It is likely that the attacks on Orange Halls and GAA clubs are mostly sectarian and that many if not most of the attacks on religious properties are also sectarian, but in some cases the attacks may be more readily classified as acts of anti-social behaviour or vandalism.

It is worth making a number of points in relation to these figures:

- There have been an average of 1.26 attacks on symbolic properties each week (five attacks a month) over the nine-year period from 1994-2002;
- The largest number of incidents across all categories was in 1995, when there was extensive and widespread violence from both main communities following the dispute over the Drumcree parade;
- The worst period for attacks on properties were the four years between 1995-1998, this was also the period at which the parade disputes were at their height and inter-community tension was most intense;
- The lowest number of attacks since the ceasefires was in 1999, the first full year after the signing of the Agreement, but even then the overall figure was considerably higher than in 1994;

- Attacks on Orange Halls were at their highest point in 1995. This was the first year of the current cycle of parade disputes. Many of the attacks in this period were associated with the marching season and in areas where there were disputes over parades (Jarman and Bryan 1996: pp67-68);
- Attacks on Orange Halls did not decline below the level of the pre-ceasefire figure until 2002;
- Recorded attacks on GAA and AOH property have been considerably lower than attacks on Orange Halls, except in 2001, in which the largest number of attacks on nationalist properties were recorded, and in 2002 when few attacks were recorded on either Orange Halls or GAA/AOH clubs.

ICR sought data from each of the various church authorities and social organisations in relation to attacks on their properties. However, only the Orange Order was able to supply any relevant figures, and then only in relation to the years between 1990 and 1997. Their figures differ slightly from the data provided by the PSNI, and indicate that there were 7 attacks in 1990, 10 in 1991, 19 in 1992, 12 in 1993 and 9 in 1994. Thereafter attacks increased to 41 in 1995, 53 in 1996 and 41 in 1997. The Orange Order data indicates that attacks increased at the same time as the disputes over parades, although they claim a much larger number of attacks in 1996 than recorded by the police (53 as against 38). The figures also indicate that attacks on halls have been a persistent, if smaller scale, problem before the current cycle of protests began.

The data for attacks on symbolic property supplied by the police for the period between 1994 and 2000 was sufficiently detailed to facilitate analysis on county basis. This offers some perspectives on the different patterns of attacks in each of the six counties plus Belfast. The data for each of the four categories of property are set down in Table 2.

**Table 2: Attacks on Symbolic Property by County and Belfast, 1994-2000**

	Church/Chapel	Orange Hall	GAA/AOH	<b>Total</b>
Antrim	72	36	8	<b>116</b>
Armagh	22	36	2	<b>60</b>
Down	33	33	5	<b>71</b>
Fermanagh	2	9	2	<b>13</b>
Londonderry	25	17	6	<b>58</b>
Tyrone	37	59	3	<b>99</b>
Belfast	56	14	2	<b>72</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>479</b>

The figures reveal some distinctive patterns, notably:

- The largest number of incidents overall had occurred in County Antrim, 24% of all attacks on symbolic property occurred in this county;
- County Antrim also had a high proportion of the attacks on religious buildings and Nationalist properties: 29% of attacks on churches, GAA Clubs and AOH halls occurred in the county;

- The large number of attacks on Orange halls that occurred in County Tyrone, 60% of attacks on symbolic properties in the county involved attacks on Orange halls, and 29% of attacks on Orange Halls occurred in Tyrone;
- Very few incidents were recorded in County Fermanagh, less than 3% of all incidents occurred in Fermanagh and only two attacks on religious properties were recorded in a seven-year period. However, this figure is broadly representative given the small population of the county.

The data indicates that sectarian attacks on property have occurred widely across Northern Ireland and they are not constrained to urban areas but have taken place on properties in towns, villages and townlands throughout the north. However, the figures do indicate that proportionate to the population sectarian attacks on property have been high in Counties Antrim and Tyrone, and to a lesser extent in County Armagh, but they have been much lower in County Down.

### **Local Data on Sectarian Incidents**

ICR contacted each of the 29 PSNI District Command Units in order to get a local police assessment of the scale and nature of sectarian violence in all areas across Northern Ireland. We held interviews with senior officers in 15 Command Units and we received written responses from a further 9 Command Units. We did not receive a response from the police in Antrim, Banbridge, Fermanagh or Strabane.

As a result of these contacts ICR was supplied with some limited data on sectarian incidents from the police in five District Command Units – Coleraine, Foyle, Larne, Limavady and Newry and Mourne. Each of the areas supplied data for different time periods and they cover different types of incidents. The different sets of data are therefore not directly comparable. This illustrates the need, both for a common definition of a sectarian incident and for a standardised system of recording such incidents.

**Coleraine:** The PSNI in Coleraine was able to provide data on sectarian incidents over a period of three and a half years from 1999 until 1 September 2002. During this period they recorded 52 sectarian incidents. These are set out in Table 3. The police could not provide any data on assaults of a sectarian nature, but they stated that they believed that there were not a great number in their area. The police noted that while sectarian violence was an issue in the Command Unit, it was not significant in regard to the overall number of incidents they recorded.

The police noted that the main actors in perpetrating sectarian violence have been the two main loyalist paramilitary groups, the UDA and the UVF. They also observed that the reduction of pipe bomb incidents in 2002 occurred after a loyalist paramilitary blew himself up while handling such a pipe bomb.

It is worth noting that the data supplied by Coleraine DCU documents incidents of a more violent nature and primarily those with a paramilitary input. This suggests that the police see a considerable overlap, if not a complete equivalence, between

paramilitary and sectarian violence and have not paid as much regard to recording the less extreme forms of sectarian activities.

**Table 3: Sectarian Violence in Coleraine DCU, 1999-2002**

Incident	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Murder	0	0	1	1	2
Shooting	2	6	1	2	11
Pipe Bomb	0	10	16	2	28
Intimidation, Pun. Beating	5	1	0	2	8
Petrol Bomb	0	0	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>52</b>

Source: PSNI Coleraine

However, the police also noted that there had been a spate of minor criminal damage in Kilrea in 2002, in which young Catholic males had caused damage to a number of Protestant businesses in the town. However, these incidents were not included in the data they supplied to ICR and are not reflected in the above table.

**Foyle:** ICR requested information on incidents in the Fountain area of the city of Derry, as this is the main interface area on the west bank of the Foyle. The police were able to provide a list of incidents from April 2003 until the end of January 2004. The figures indicate that there were 40 incidents between April and August 2003 and a further 20 between September 2003 and January 2004. The data for the first period was broken down by month, while the data for the second period was not.

The incidents are set out in Table 4 below. The category of disturbances includes paint bombing, stone throwing, fireworks, youths causing annoyance and arrests for disorderly behaviour. The ten disturbances between September 2003 and January 2004 include 6 paint bomb incidents, 1 case of stone throwing, 2 incidents involving fireworks and 1 case of youths causing annoyance.

**Table 4: Incidents of Disorder in the Fountain area of Derry, April 2003 – January 2004**

Incident	April	May	June	July	August	Sept/Jan	Total
Petrol Bomb	2	0	1	4	2	8	17
Hoax Bomb	0	1	3	0	0	2	6
Disturbances	5	5	4	3	1	10	28
Crim Damage	5	2	1	1	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: PSNI Foyle

It is worth noting that the number of incidents does not follow the supposed rise in tensions of the marching season, with the smallest number of recorded incidents occurring in August, the month of the main Apprentice Boys parade. Rather, there is a steady number of all types of incidents throughout the ten-month period.

**Larne:** The PSNI provided figures for sectarian incidents in Larne from April 2001 until 10 March 2004. The statistics reveal that they recorded a total of 294 sectarian incidents in the DCU area in less than three years. There were 136 recorded incidents in 2001/02, 112 the following year and 46 between April 2003 and 10 March 2004. No specific details of the incidents were provided.

The police did provide an analysis of 47 sectarian incidents in Larne between 9 May and 26 June 2002. This sequence began when serious disorder broke out following a Rangers-Celtic match, with 18 sectarian incidents recorded over the next four days. This indicates that there were a total of 66 sectarian incidents in the town in less than two months. The police report reveals that most incidents were perpetrated by the UDA and their youth wing, the Ulster Young Militants. The victims were predominately Catholic.

Of the 47 incidents that were analysed in detail, 31 (67%) involved cases of criminal damage (16 (50%) of these were against homes and 13 (42%) involved damage to vehicles), 9 (19%) cases involved intimidation (including threats and hoax bombs), while 7 (14%) involved physical assault. The police analysis revealed that the worst time for sectarian attacks was on Wednesday and Friday nights, 35 (75%) of all incidents occurred between 11pm and 3am, which coincides with closing time for pubs.

The police reported that they initiated a threefold response to the surge in violence. They arrested a number of individuals, they initiated targeted patrolling in the areas where most attacks took place and they made appeals through the media for support and information. They also believed that a combination of police action and pressure from within the UDA brought the cycle of attacks to an end. The statistics indicate that recorded incidents fell from 23 in June 2002 to 7 the following month.

In February 2003 the *Irish News* cited claims by SDLP Councillor Danny O'Connor that at least 300 Catholics had moved away from Larne between 1998 and the end of 2002 because of the levels of violence and intimidation (*Irish News* 19.2.03). This may suggest that the spate of violence that the police focused on in their analysis in 2002 followed a sustained period of harassment and intimidation of Catholics in the town. The data also suggests that the extra attention given to this issue had some success as the police noted a significant decline in recorded incidents after June 2002.

The PSNI in Larne were the first District Command Unit to set a target within its local policing plan in relation to sectarian incidents. The 2003-2004 plan had an objective 'to maintain low levels of sectarianism in Larne' with a target of 'keep the average monthly levels of sectarian incidents equal or less than 5.5 a month'. This meant that the police aimed to reduce levels of sectarian incidents to no more than 66 a year. Data supplied to ICR reveals that the police recorded 95 incidents in the 20 months since July 2002, an average of less than five a month. However, more than five incidents were recorded in nine of those months. The figure of 46 attacks for 2003/04 remains a significant number in a small town such as Larne. The scale of the incidents over

recent years offers further indication of the need to record data on sectarian incidents, and of the value in setting clear targets for the police to respond to such problems.

**Limavady:** The police in Limavady provided figures for sectarian incidents for a two and a half year period from April 2001 until October 2003 (Table 5). These show that sectarian violence was not a major policing problem most of the time, but that it became more so during the marching season and particularly if major parades were held in the area.

**Table 5: Sectarian Incidents in Limavady DCU, 2001-2003**

Incident	1-4-2001 - 31-3-2002	1-4-2002 – 31-3-2003	1-4-2003 – 31-10-2003	<b>Total</b>
Assault	11	9	5	<b>25</b>
Criminal Damage	9	7	3	<b>19</b>
Intimidation/Threat	5	7	3	<b>15</b>
Petrol Bomb / Firearms/Explosives	3	2	0	<b>5</b>
Burglary	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>65</b>

*Source: PSNI Limavady*

The police noted that loyalists were responsible for most of the increase in the number of incidents during the summer months, but they also noted that the sectarian violence was not primarily associated with paramilitary organisations.

The police also reported that the main type of criminal damage was broken windows and that there could be particular problems with nationalist youths throwing stones at buses travelling through Ballykelly and Greysteel carrying band members and members of loyal orders to parades.

**Newry and Mourne:** The police in Newry and Mourne recorded 13 non-violent hate crimes, including sectarian, racist and homophobic incidents, in an eight-month period between April 2003 and November 2003. These incidents involved cases of graffiti and various forms of criminal damage. They also noted one case of arson. They could not offer any indication of who the perpetrators might be. They also noted that there were problems associated with parades in Kilkeel from time to time, but they offered no data in regard to this issue.

**North Belfast:** The police in North Belfast made available statistics for a range of crimes and public order incidents from 1996 to 2004 in the major interface areas in the area. These are Clifton Park Avenue/Lower Oldpark/Manor Street; Alliance/Glenbryn; Torrens/Wyndham Street/Oldpark Road/Oldpark Avenue; Westland/Little America; Duncairn Gardens/Halliday's Road; Limestone Road/Parkside/Mountcollyer; and Whitewell/White City/Graymount.

Table 6 lists the combined figures for these seven areas for incidents of criminal damage, assault, riot and disturbances. Not all of the recorded incidents would necessarily be classified as a sectarian incident. However, given the fragmented and contentious social geography it is likely that many of the incidents are associated with the sectarian divisions in the area. The numerous riots and disturbances are the result of clashes between people from neighbouring and opposing communities.

**Table 6: Sectarian Disorder in Interface Areas in North Belfast, 1996-2004**

	Criminal Damage	Assault	Riot	Disturbance	Total
1996	267	67	90		<b>424</b>
1997	444	113	73		<b>630</b>
1998	416	105	67		<b>588</b>
1999	318	124	86		<b>528</b>
2000	668	250	0	364	<b>1,282</b>
2001	978	341	59	328	<b>1,706</b>
2002/03	593	207	0	104	<b>904</b>
2003/04	199	136	1	225	<b>561</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,883</b>	<b>1,343</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>1,021</b>	<b>6,623</b>

*Source: PSNI North Belfast.*

The incidents occurred over a period when inter-communal tensions have been particularly high. The increase in tension was initially linked to protests over the Tour of the North parade in June 1996, and in response to the dispute over the Drumcree parade in Portadown the following month (Jarman 1997). However, since that time the fragmented nature of the local geography and politics, historical suspicion, fear and animosities and the cyclical nature of the parades disputes have helped to feed and sustain local tensions and provoked further inter-communal clashes. This set up and sustained a local cycle of violence and counter violence (Jarman 2002, 2003).

The number of riots and incidents has declined significantly since 2001. That year marks the high point of the current cycle of sectarian clashes, with the persistent protests in relation to the dispute over access to Holy Cross Primary School (Cadwallader 2004). It also marked the watershed between the violence being treated as a local problem, which would be resolved by local people and recognition for the need for more substantial and sustained interventions. On one level the local communities recognised the need to pull back from the process of escalation, while the Government commissioned the North Belfast Community Action Project to review the causes of the persistent violence in the area. In response to the Community Action Project report (2002), the Government established the North Belfast Community Action Unit to facilitate a sustained intervention in the area.

There was also a change in policing tactics, which saw the introduction of an extensive network of CCTV cameras in interface areas across North Belfast. According to the PSNI this coincided with a significant decline in incidents of public disorder. However, while this may have had an impact on the number of riots, the

continuance of significant numbers of disturbances of public order reveals the persistence of tensions in the area.

## **Summary**

These small data sets from six District Command Units indicate that sectarian violence is a factor in each of the areas that have provided information. The data suggests that it is also a relatively minor problem in terms of the number of incidents that have been recorded, however it is also evident that it would become a demonstrably more significant problem in the light of the following:

- If the references to ongoing problems, such as the stoning of buses, criminal damage in Kilrea, disputes in Kilkeel, which are not acknowledged in the formal figures were included in the data sets, the figures in each area would be considerably higher;
- The recorded incidents are largely the most serious type of incidents, while ‘minor’ forms of sectarianism, verbal abuse, low level harassment, visual displays and graffiti are largely unrepresented; and
- Recorded incidents only refer to incidents that had come to the attention of the police and that the police have subsequently defined as sectarian. If people were encouraged to report sectarian incidents and were encouraged to state that they believed there was a sectarian motivation the numbers would undoubtedly increase.

The data from Foyle and North Belfast relating to interface violence is of a more specific kind than that presented by the other DCUs. It should probably be considered as atypical except for those DCU areas that also had significant interface problems. This would mean that comparable data would most readily be expected from areas such as East Belfast and Craigavon and possibly Newtownabbey and South Belfast.

The limited nature of the data and the evident gaps suggests that if all DCUs encouraged the reporting and recording of all forms of sectarian incidents the total number of such incidents across Northern Ireland would be substantial. This is illustrated to some extent by the broad range of locations that have experienced attacks on symbolic properties and similarly with the data on attacks on buses and coaches.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Other Data on Sectarian Violence**

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is not the only organisation that might be expected to collate data on sectarian violence. However, it has proved difficult to obtain data in relation to such incidents from public bodies in Northern Ireland, as most organisations do not isolate sectarian violence from more generalised violence, harassment or intimidation.

One prominent source of such material is the media. We thus include a summary of reports of sectarian violence from numerous newspapers, local and national across Northern Ireland, which were collected and summarised by the Pat Finucane Centre between 1999 and 2003. We review this data below.

We have also gathered some data from the Housing Executive that sheds light on some aspects of sectarianism and sectarian aggression in Northern Ireland and from the Fair Employment Tribunals on complaints of discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs or political opinion. The data sources include the following:

- Figures for people presenting as homeless due to intimidation, supplied by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
- Data on complaints made to the Fair Employment Tribunal from 2000 to March 2003.
- Finally, we review data from the NIO on the number of interface barriers across Northern Ireland and consider what impact the ceasefires have had on these structures.

ICR has also gathered other sets of data that include forms of sectarian violence, but for which the scale of the sectarian element is not clear. This includes police data on attacks on schools and on buses and coaches, and from Translink for attacks on their property. While some of these incidents will be sectarian in motivation, all of them are evidence of the scale of general low-level violence and disorder, which is often classified as ‘anti-social behaviour’. There is often a blurred boundary between sectarian violence and anti-social behaviour, for example hostilities between groups of youths from different estates might be manifest in forms of vandalism and attacks on individuals, which in some circumstances would be classified as sectarian and in others as anti-social behaviour. This data is attached as an appendix.

#### **Pat Finucane Centre Data**

Between 1999 and June 2003 the Pat Finucane Centre, based in Derry, monitored a wide range of daily and weekly newspapers across Northern Ireland for reports of sectarian violence. The site includes a diverse range of references to sectarian incidents, whilst the site also includes some racist incidents and also reports of comments and commentaries of other key issues, which have sectarian undertones. This material is available on the Pat Finucane Centre website at [www.serve.com/pfc](http://www.serve.com/pfc).

With the exception of the Pat Finucane Centre, no community or voluntary organisation has, to our knowledge, systematically collect data on sectarian violence.

This material offers an extensive review of sectarian violence, however because the site provides just a summary of the articles it is not possible to carry out an analysis of the data. Nevertheless it is possible to track the number of incidents over a five-year period and this can be broken down to offer some comparative details of changing trends as well as offering some details of the broad location of incidents.

Table 7 illustrates the number of incidents each year in each county plus Belfast. Incidents in the Derry city area are included in those listed for County Londonderry. The Table reveals that the largest number of incidents have been reported in Belfast, although it should be noted that many of the reports refer to incidents in North Belfast, associated with the Holy Cross Primary School dispute, and in East Belfast, which were associated with violence at the Short Strand-Cluan Place interface.

**Table 7: Sectarian Incidents by Year and County.**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	<b>Total</b>
Antrim	27	52	56	27	25	<b>187</b>
Armagh	13	14	14	7	6	<b>54</b>
Down	8	14	9	8	3	<b>42</b>
Fermanagh	0	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
L'derry	13	24	58	43	14	<b>152</b>
Tyrone	6	4	13	4	2	<b>29</b>
Belfast	39	71	197	295	52	<b>654</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>1,120</b>

*Source: Pat Finucane Centre. Note 2003 figures are for six months until end the end of June.*

The data also shows that the largest numbers of incidents, outside of Belfast, were recorded in Counties Antrim and Londonderry, while few incidents were recorded in Counties Down and Tyrone and only two incidents were recorded in County Fermanagh. There are some parallels and some differences with the police data on attacks on symbolic properties. These show similar high levels of attacks in County Antrim and low levels in Down and Fermanagh. However, there is a contrast between the higher levels of incidents in County Londonderry in the Pat Finucane data and the low number of incidents in Tyrone.

### **Residential Intimidation**

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive collects figures for the number of people applying to them for accommodation because they are homeless and the number of people that they accept as legitimately homeless (Table 8). These figures include people living in private accommodation as well as social housing. The Executive provides figures for a number of distinct categories including intimidation, neighbourhood harassment, mortgage arrears, loss of rented accommodation, loss of NIHE accommodation, domestic violence, sexual abuse, breakdown of

family/relationship, fire or flood damage, release from prison, hospital discharge and others.

The category of homeless due to intimidation includes people who have been subjected to intimidation for three separate reasons: terrorism, sectarianism and racism. Only a single figure is available for the three categories of intimidation. Not all those who claim to need rehousing due to intimidation are accepted as such by NIHE, a decision is only made after interviewing the applicant, consulting with the police or security forces, and considering any other relevant information. In recent years feuding among loyalist paramilitary groups has also been a factor in demands for rehousing.

The figures indicate that in the ten years since the paramilitary ceasefires were declared nearly 14,000 people have sought rehousing due to intimidation. Over this period there has been an average figure of 1,378 people claiming to be intimidated every year, while and in both 1997-98 and 1998-99 the figure rose to over 1,700 people. While there appears to be some correlation between claims for rehousing due to intimidation and the recent rise in sectarian tensions related to the disputes over parades and recurrent interface violence, there is a significant underlying problem.

**Table 8: Numbers Homeless due to Intimidation and Harassment**

	Presenting Intimidation	Accepted Intimidation	Presenting Total	Accepting Total
1991-92	757		10,801	4,148
1992-93	1,042		10,099	4,061
1993-94	1,038		9,731	3,971
1994-95	1,072		10,068	4,014
1995-96	1,028		10,768	4,319
1996-97	1,647		11,092	4,708
1997-98	1,775		11,672	4,956
1998-99	1,736		11,552	4,997
1999-2000	877		10,997	5,192
2000-01	1,675	1,071	12,694	6,457
2001-02	1,348	858	14,164	7,374
2002-03	1,530	1,077	16,426	8,580
2003-04	1,190	685	17,150	8,594

*Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive*

Since 2000-01 separate figures have been provided for those who claim to have been intimidated and those who have been accepted for rehousing due to intimidation. In this four-year period a total of 5,743 people have sought rehousing while in 3,691 of these cases, 64% of the total, the claims of intimidation were accepted by the Housing Executive.

Figures for the number of accepted cases of intimidation have also been broken down by area (Table 9). The South East area includes Bangor, Downpatrick, Lisburn and

Newtownards. The South Area includes Armagh, Banbridge, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Lurgan/Brownlow, Newry and Portadown. The North East area includes Antrim, Ballycastle, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, and Newtownabbey. The West area includes Cookstown, Derry, Limavady, Magherafelt, Omagh and Strabane.

**Table 9: Numbers of Acceptances due to Intimidation by Region**

	Belfast	S E	South	N E	West	Total
2000-01	651	91	74	190	85	<b>1,071</b>
2001-02	444	100	66	182	44	<b>836</b>
2002-03	543	183	62	244	45	<b>1,077</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,638</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>2,984</b>
<i>Total %</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>102</i>
% Housing Stock	25	21	17	21	17	<b>101</b>

*Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive*

Table 9 indicates that Belfast had the largest proportion of acceptances in this category and that both the North East area and the South East area show increasing numbers of people being intimidated over the last three years. In contrast the figures for the Southern area and the Western area have both declined over this brief period. When the percentages of numbers intimidated in each area are compared with the percentages of the NIHE housing stock figures in each area the data indicates that intimidation is a far more serious problem in Belfast than might be expected. Belfast contains 25% of NIHE stock but accounts for 55% of cases of intimidation.

The data indicates that while much working class housing is already segregated, sectarian intimidation remains a significant problem. This suggests that the process of residential segregation is an ongoing one in some areas as people continue to experience intimidation due to their perceived ethno-political background.

### **Fair Employment Tribunals**

The workplace has been one of the areas where sectarian discrimination has been challenged through legislation. It is also an arena where sectarian harassment remains a problem, although there has not been much research on the issue in recent years. The Fair Employment Commission included questions on experiences of sectarian harassment in the 1994 and 1996 NI Social Omnibus Surveys (Equality Commission 2000). This revealed that nearly 13% of those surveyed had experienced sectarian harassment at some stage in their working lives, with Catholics nearly twice as likely as Protestants to have such experiences (18.6% compared with 9.6%). The findings also reveal that the most prominent forms of harassment were sectarian graffiti; sectarian jokes; being ostracised; sectarian songs; threat of violence and actual physical violence. The survey also revealed that in 60% of cases where an individual had experienced sectarian intimidation no formal complaint had been made.

According to a recent study for OFMDFM by Dickson, Hargie and Nelson (2002) there has been little research on cross community relations in the workplace, and therefore there is little information on the scale of sectarian harassment. The authors did however note that research by Shirlow and others found that almost half of those sampled had experienced intimidation in the workplace due to their religious affiliation and that fear was a major factor in the choices people made when they were seeking work (Dickson, Hargie and Nelson 2002: 4).

ICR were able to obtain figures from the Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunals in relation to complaints registered with the Fair Employment Tribunal, although once again the data covered only a limited period of time. The Tribunal is an independent judicial body comprising a legally qualified chairperson, a representative of employers' bodies and a representative of employees' bodies. OITFET deals with complaints of discrimination based on religious beliefs or political opinion under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

The FET provided data for the number of complaints registered for the period 2000 to March 2003. In 2000 they received 561 complaints and in 2001 they received 613 complaints. They also changed to recording complaints from a calendar year to a financial year and for the 15 month period January 2001 to March 2002 they received 747 complaints while for the financial year April 2002-March 2003 they received 501 complaints. These are set down in Table 10, along with the figures for the number of promulgations by the Tribunal in the same period.

**Table 10: Complaints and Promulgations by the Fair Employment Tribunal, 2000-March 2003**

	2000		2001-March 2002		Apr 2002-Mar 2003	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Complaints	561		747		501	
Allowed	2	0.4	11	2	5	1
Dismissed	41	8	59	9	37	7
Dismissed/Struck Out	24	5	17	3	8	2
Withdrawn	297	56	320	51	270	53
Conciliation	58	11	78	12	69	13
Settled	102	19	131	21	118	23
Stayed	9	2	11	2	7	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>101.4</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunals*

The table reveals that over 50% of all complaints were withdrawn before the Tribunal either heard a case or announced a decision. A complaint may be withdrawn for a number of reasons, including because an agreement has been reached between the parties, a further 21% of cases were settled with an agreement between the parties. Overall only a small percentage of complaints are determined by the tribunal each

year. The Tribunal found in favour of the applicant in only 5% of cases in 2000 and in 16% and 10% of cases in the following two years.

### **Interface Barriers**

One clear indicator of the ongoing problem of sectarian violence is in the persistent presence of interface barriers in Belfast, Derry Londonderry, Lurgan and Portadown. Data supplied by the NIO Civil Representatives identify 37 such structures in the four locations. Twenty-seven of these are in Belfast, four in Derry Londonderry, while there is one in Lurgan and five in Portadown (Belfast Interface Project 2004; Jarman 2005).

No interface barriers have been removed since the ceasefires were declared in 1994, however the NIO data indicates that eighteen of the 27 barriers in Belfast have been built, extended or raised in height since 1994. This includes four of the seven interface barriers in West Belfast, each of the four barriers in East Belfast and ten of the 16 barriers in North Belfast.

Interface barriers are only erected on the recommendation of the security forces and any decision is based on the security needs in the area and is usually based on an ongoing problem of violence and disorder. The barriers remain in most cases because local people want them to remain and because they create a sense of safety and security, that otherwise would not exist.

### **Summary**

This section reviews data on sectarian violence from a range of bodies and organisations. The review confirms that there is a limited range of data available on this subject. However, the data does confirm that sectarian violence remains a significant issue in Northern Ireland.

- Figures from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive indicate that an average of 1378 people seek rehousing each year because of sectarian, racist or paramilitary intimidation.
- Limited recent research suggests sectarian harassment in the workplace remains a problem, although the scale of the problem is largely undocumented. However, data from OITFET indicates that more than 500 people make complaints in relation to forms of discrimination because of their religious background, although few of these complaints are upheld.
- Data from the NIO indicates that interface barriers remains a presence in many urban areas and that at least 17 barriers in Belfast have been built, extended or heightened since the ceasefires of 1994.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Fear, Safety and Sectarianism**

The continued physical presence of the numerous interface barriers is one indicator of how the fear of sectarian attacks impacts significantly on people's daily lives. Fred Boal and Frank Burton were among the first to explore how the patterns of segregation were actually made, sustained and developed in the early years of the Troubles, while John Darby (1986) documented the impact of intimidation and violence on patterns of segregation and attitudes to the 'other' during the worst of the Troubles. Later, Brendan Murtagh (1994) noted how feelings of safety depended on the levels of tension and violence in the locality and how the patterns of avoidance and separation functioned in rural areas as well as in urban interface communities (1999, 2002).

More recently Peter Shirlow and others have explored how the routine practices of daily life in interface areas in North and East Belfast are significantly structured by personal and communal understandings of the sectarian geography. They describe how the sense of fear affects how people move around, how this is related to the time of day, or months of the year, which shops they use, what services are considered accessible, what workplaces are considered safe, as well as problems associated with going to school and socialising (Shirlow 1998; Shirlow et al 2002; Lysaght and Basten 2003).

Most recently Paul Connolly has documented how the reality of sectarian division is understood and embodied by young children of primary school age and how this more deeply impacts on those children who live in or near interface areas and for whom the reality of such divisions has most impact (Connolly and Healy 2004).

These various studies indicate how it is not necessarily the experience of violence that is important but rather the possibility of violence and the fear of violence. That fear creates a variety of 'chill factors' that helps to sustain and further the separation of the two main communities and increases the scale of communal polarisation.

#### **Survey Data on Sectarianism**

The experiences of sectarianism and attitudes towards the other community have been considered in a small number of surveys over recent years. However, there is still a relatively small amount of data relating specifically to people's experiences of sectarian violence. The Community Attitudes Survey ([www.csu.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk)) carried out since 1992-93, focuses on public perceptions of crime, law and order and policing issues. However, it does not contain anything specifically on experiences or understanding of sectarian violence. The questions in the section on levels of crime specifically asks 'Thinking of non-sectarian crime....', while the list of possible policing priorities also exclude reference to sectarianism. In fact the only reference to sectarian violence is in the later section of the questionnaires where it is coupled with

references to ‘terrorist activity’, suggesting that sectarian violence is seen as very close to if not synonymous with paramilitary activity.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board commissioned a survey of people’s attitudes to policing in June 2003. This Northern Ireland wide postal survey received 16,798 responses and aimed to identify the main policing problems in each District Command Unit. The results were used to identify policing priorities and to inform the thinking and planning of the District Policing Partnerships. As with the Community Attitudes Survey people were asked to identify problems in their area from a diverse list of crimes and activities. Unfortunately, there was no reference to sectarianism or sectarian crime included within the list.

A second survey commissioned in May 2004 received 15,361 responses. Once again, people were asked to identify problems in their area from a diverse list of crimes and activities, this time ‘Sectarian Attacks’ was included as an option (Table 11). Across Northern Ireland, almost one in ten respondents identified this issue as being among their top five concerns. However, individual District Command Units (whose boundaries are identical to District Council boundaries) differed widely, with over one quarter of the respondents in Larne ranking ‘Sectarian Attacks’ among their top five concerns, compared with only 2% of the respondents in Moyle.

**Table 11: Public Concern about ‘Sectarian Attacks’, by District Command Unit**

<b>District Command Unit</b>	<b>‘Sectarian Attacks’ highlighted as the number one concern (%)</b>	<b>‘Sectarian Attacks’ highlighted within the top five concerns (%)</b>
Antrim	3	17
Ards	0	5
Armagh	1	8
Ballymena	1	10
Ballymoney	0	8
Banbridge	1	7
Belfast East	1	8
Belfast North	5	22
Belfast South	2	14
Belfast West	1	5
Carrickfergus	0	8
Castlereagh	0	5
Coleraine	0	8
Cookstown	0	4
Craigavon	1	9
Derry	1	10
Down	2	8
Dungannon	0	4
Fermanagh	0	3
Larne	4	27
Limavady	0	9

Lisburn	1	10
Magherafelt	2	15
Moyle	0	2
Newry and Mourne	1	6
Newtownabbey	3	18
North Down	1	6
Omagh	0	4
Strabane	1	9
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>

*Source: DPP Public Consultation Survey May 2004, Northern Ireland Policing Board*

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey of 1998 and 2001 included questions of relevance to the issue of sectarian violence in the section on fear of crime (French and Campbell 2002; NIO 2003). However, the questions linked sectarian attacks and racist attacks together, thus reducing the clarity of the responses. The 2001 survey found that 13% of respondents thought that race or sectarian attack was a ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ big problem in their local area. This figure was up from 10% in the 1998 survey, although it was still considered less of a problem than teenagers hanging around, vandalism and graffiti, drug using and dealing and rubbish.

Respondents in Belfast also cited concern of sectarian and racist attack as more of a problem than did those in other parts of Northern Ireland. In Belfast 21% considered this a problem compared with only 9% in the west of Northern Ireland. Similarly young people considered it more of a problem than older people. There was little difference by gender and no difference in the perceptions of Protestants and Catholics (French and Campbell 2002:14).

The 2001 Northern Ireland Crime Survey also found that 26% of respondents said that they were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ worried about race or sectarian attacks and this compared with 16% of respondents to the 2001/02 British Crime Survey. Women expressed higher rates of concern than men, and young people were more concerned than older people. More dramatically 2% of professionals expressed concern, whereas 22% of unskilled people did so (French and Campbell 2002:17-18). This suggests that sectarian violence has more impact on the working class than on the middle classes.

### **Experiences of Harassment**

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT), the Young Life and Times Survey (YLT), and the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (YPBAS), all have some information that relates to either experiences of sectarian harassment and violence, feelings of intimidation and safety and attitudes towards the other community (see [www.ark.ac.uk](http://www.ark.ac.uk) and [www.csu.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk) for the data).

The 1998 YLT survey of 12-17 year olds was the first to ask questions about experiences of abuse. People were asked ‘have you ever been threatened by other people or verbally abused because of your religion’, 27% answered yes and 71% said no. Of those 27% who had experienced threats and abuse 7% had experienced ‘a lot’, 63% said ‘a little’ and 36% said ‘hardly at all’. 54% of those who had experience of

abuse said it occurred in the street, 13% said a cinema or leisure centre, 11% said it occurred at school and 5% said the abuse occurred in a shop. Finally 47% said that they avoided going to particular places because of the risk of abuse or threats.

The YPBA Survey of 2000 was carried out among 6000 young people aged 11-16. This found that 35% of respondents had been called names because of their religion and 13% reported being assaulted because of their religion, while 25% of respondents reported that they had been caught up in a riot at some stage in their life. The survey also revealed that 36% of young people were ‘worried about being called names because of your religion’ and 46% were worried about being assaulted because of their religion. Furthermore 22% of young people thought it quite or very likely that they would be assaulted, at some time or other, because of their religion.

The 2003 YPBA Survey found that 13% of young people had been verbally abused or harassed because of religion, race or skin colour in the previous 12 months, while 4% had been assaulted in the same period. The same survey also found that 27% were worried about the possibility of verbal abuse and 29% were worried about the possibility of assault because of religion, race or skin colour. While the percentages were lower in the 2003 survey compared with the previous findings, there were still high levels of fear of sectarian abuse and assault. The 2003 survey also found that 9% of young people admitted to having ‘attacked, threatened or been rude to someone because of their religion’ in the previous 12 months. Thus while just over 1 in 8 young people had experienced forms of sectarian harassment and violence, 1 in 11 admitted being a perpetrator of such harassment.

In 2002 the NILT Survey also asked people if they had been verbally abused or shouted at because of their religion within the last year. Overall 8% said they had suffered verbal abuse in the last year, while this figure rose to 11% of males. The percentage increased to 25% of the 18-24 age category, but declined to 11% of 25-34 year olds and 7% of those aged 35-44. The details of these findings are set down in Table 12.

**Table 12: Experiences of Sectarian Harassment and Violence**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
YLT (1998)	27	71
YPBA (2000) – Verbal Abuse	35	65
YPBA (2000) – Assault	13	87
YPBA (2003) - Abuse	13	87
YPBA (2003) – Assault	4	96
NILT (2002) – All Ages	8	92
NILT (2002) - 18-24	25	75
NILT (2002) - 25-34	11	89

It should be noted that none of these surveys broke this data down by community background. The findings clearly indicate that young people experience higher levels of abuse and harassment than older people, and while the three surveys of young

people cover slightly differing age ranges each indicated high levels of verbal harassment. Although the figures suggest a decline in experiences of abuse and violence, the later surveys ask specifically about experiences within the past year, whereas the earlier surveys ask about lifetime experiences.

The 2004 Young Life and Times survey asked young people whether they had ever been injured due to a sectarian incident. This indicated that 5.5% of young people had been injured due to a sectarian incident. Males were more likely to have been injured than females (8% compared to 4%) and Catholics were more likely than Protestants to have experienced an injury (6% compared to 4%). Furthermore, 30% of young people claimed that a member of their family or a close friend had been injured due to a sectarian incident. Thus knowledge of the impact of sectarian violence is much higher than direct personal experience.

The NILT surveys in 2000 and 2002 and the YLT survey of 2003 and 2004 also asked whether people had felt intimidated by the presence of murals, kerb paintings and flags. Overall 26% of young people indicated that they had felt intimidated by loyalist paintings and displays and 20% had felt intimidated by similar republican displays. The breakdown by community background is set out in Table 13. The findings are unsurprising in so far as they indicate that Protestants felt more intimidated by republican symbolic displays than loyalist displays and vice versa.

**Table 13: Respondents who felt intimidated by symbolic displays in the last year.**

	Loyalist Displays (%)	Republican Displays (%)	Football Strips (%)
Prot. NILT 2000	18	21	
Prot. NILT 2002	19	27	
Prot YLT 2003	15	35	24
Prot YLT 2004	14	36	26
RC. NILT 2000	25	7	
RC. NILT 2002	25	12	
RC. YLT 2003	54	14	32
RC YLT 2004	55	15	29
Neither NILT 2000	21	23	
Neither NILT 2002	26	20	
Neither YLT 2003	27	30	25
Neither YLT 2004	26	29	22

The Young Life and Times survey suggests that much higher levels of intimidation were felt towards displays of the other side by younger people, with up to one in three Protestants feeling intimidated by republican displays and more than half of Catholics feeling intimidated by loyalist displays in one survey. The surveys also indicate that around one in four young people who define themselves as neither Protestant nor Catholic feel intimidated by both loyalist and republican symbolic displays and nearly one in five Protestants felt intimidated by loyalist displays and up to one in seven Catholics felt intimidated by republican displays. In each survey males and females

expressed similar feelings towards the symbolic displays except in relation to football strips, these made 34% of males feel intimidated compared with 24% of females.

### **Feeling Safe**

The YPBA Survey asked a number of questions about young people's feelings of safety. These indicated that 21% of respondents felt the area in which they live was unsafe, with 41% citing sectarian name calling as a factor affecting their sense of safety and 37% citing sectarian assault as a factor. Furthermore 42% said they were worried about going into their nearest town centre at night, with 36% citing sectarian name calling as a factor and 44% citing fear of sectarian assault. These figures indicate significant and worrying levels of fear among young people in relation to sectarian harassment and violence.

The data in the YPBA Survey was not broken down by community background, but the findings from the 2003 YLT survey indicated high levels of concern among young people about going into areas dominated by the other community. It showed that 59% of young Protestants felt less safe in mainly Catholic areas, compared with 9% of Catholics and 39% of those who had no religious affiliation, while 61% of young Catholics felt less safe in Protestant areas compared with 13% of Protestants and 27% with no religion. These stark figures contrast with feelings of safety in mixed areas with only 17% of Protestants, 16% of Catholics and 10% of no religion said they felt less safe.

The survey also found that despite fears for their safety, young people did travel either to or through areas where they felt less safe, 26% of young people said they did this either every day or several times a week and 66% said that they had to go into or through areas in which they felt less safe at least once a month. The patterns for such activity for Protestants and Catholics were very similar, but young males were more likely to have to travel to or through areas where they felt less safe on a frequent basis than young females, with 48% and 39% respectively doing so at least once a week.

### **Living With One's Own**

The two Life and Times surveys have also asked about people's preferences for living in neighbourhoods with their own religion or in mixed residential communities. The NILT survey has asked this question each year since 1998, the findings indicate that between 19% and 26% favour living with their own community, with males favouring this option slightly more than females. Protestants also favour single identity communities more than Catholics with an average figure over the five years of 27% of Protestants against 18% of Catholics.

The 2003 YLT survey showed a significant minority of preferences for single identity residential areas, schooling and work places among young people, with more than one in three young people preferring to live with their own community, more than four in ten favouring segregated schooling and nearly one in five young people favouring single identity workplaces (Table 14).

**Table 14: Percentage of Young People Favouring Single Identity Residential Areas, Schooling and Workplaces.**

	Living (%)	School (%)	Work (%)
Protestant	42	42	17
Catholic	33	48	20
Males	40	47	23
Females	31	39	13
All	35	42	17

*Source: Young Life and Times 2003*

It is worth noting the different patterns that emerge from this data, with young Protestants favouring single identity residential areas, while young Catholics indicate greater preferences for single identity schooling and workplaces. Furthermore higher percentages of males favour all forms of segregation than females. However in all cases a majority do not favour segregation.

### **Summary**

There has been a surprisingly limited amount of survey work on people's experiences of sectarian violence compared with the work that has been done in tracking general changes in attitudes to the other community (Hughes and Donnelly 2001, 2002; Hughes et al 2003; Wilford and Wilson 2003). This review of the recent data indicates that:

- More than one in four young people have experienced sectarian verbal abuse in the previous year;
- Young people are more likely to experience sectarian harassment and violence than older age groups;
- A high percentage of young people feel threatened or intimidated by murals and other visual displays, especially those of the other community;
- More than one in two young people do not feel safe when in areas dominated by the other community, but that nearly half of young males had to travel to or through such areas at least once a week;
- A significant minority of young people favour a segregated living, schooling and working environment.

## **Chapter 5**

### **A Localised Review of Sectarian Violence**

The various collections of data suggest that outside of Belfast, County Antrim is the area with the highest incidence of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. The police have acknowledged that there have been significant problems in Larne over recent years, while anecdotal reports also suggest significant, if sporadic, problems exist in Antrim, Coleraine and Glengormley. This section focuses on problems of sectarian violence in County Antrim by drawing on data from ongoing work that ICR is engaged in across the area as well as a review of local studies of the Antrim, Ballymena and Newtownabbey district council areas. Data on the number of incidents recorded by the police in Coleraine and Larne is included in Chapter 2 above.

#### **Young People and Violence Survey**

ICR carried out a survey of 1,150 young people aged 12-17 in the Northern Health and Social Services Board area, including research in Antrim, Coleraine, Cookstown and Larne. The survey and focus groups questioned the young people about their attitudes and experiences to a variety of forms of violence and anti-social behaviour.

The questionnaire asked if they had been threatened or verbally abused because of their religion, just over one third of the sample said they had been threatened or abused because of their religion, with 7% saying that this had occurred 'a lot', while 29% said they had been 'sometimes'. Catholics were twice as likely to have experienced sectarian threats compared with Protestants (50% as against 24%). This imbalance in experiences may well be related to the relative balance of population in the area, Catholics are a minority community in most of the areas surveyed.

Furthermore, 71% of young Catholics and 56% of young Protestants felt that there were occasions when they might be at risk because of their community background. Eighteen percent of respondents said they felt at risk at a cinema, 17% said while shopping, 16% said at or going to school, and 15% said at playing fields. Thirty percent of the sample said they would avoid going to particular places because of the risk of abuse, while 6% said they could not avoid going to a problem place where they felt at risk of abuse.

The survey also asked people whether they had ever felt threatened by murals, kerb paintings or flags, 26% said they had felt threatened by loyalist visual displays, while 18% said they had felt threatened by republican displays. These figures are very similar to the culminative findings of other surveys of young people attitudes towards such visual displays (see previous section).

The respondents were also asked if they had felt intimidated by someone wearing a particular sports strip or certain school uniforms. Thirty percent of Catholics and 15% of Protestants said that they had felt intimidated at some time by persons wearing

sports strips, while 19% of the total sample said they had felt intimidated by someone because of the school uniform they were wearing.

Although this research did not focus specifically or in any great detail on experiences of sectarian violence, it is clear from the response that many young people had personal experience of threat or abuse because of their background, while a high percentage of the sample felt that they might be at risk in certain public areas. Other recent research has suggested that a small number of attacks can have a significant ripple effect and can cause 'chill factors' within a much wider community than had directly experienced the violence (Shirlow 1998, Shirlow et al 2002)

## **Antrim**

Antrim Borough Council was one of the first local councils to actively explore issues around community safety and carried out a community safety audit in 2000 (Antrim Community Safety Committee 2000). The unpublished report indicated that there had been 89 cases of sectarian intimidation recorded by the Antrim Branch of Victim Support between 17 July 1999 and 24 March 2000, which had not been reported to the police. This included 65 instances reported by Catholics and 25 by Protestants, with the largest number of incidents occurring in the Stiles estate with 20 cases (6 Protestants and 14 Catholics) and Randalstown with 19 cases (4 Protestants and 15 Catholics).

The community safety survey explored the issue of sectarian intimidation in more detail. Residents were asked about their concerns in relation to sectarian intimidation and it was found that overall 42% stated that they were either worried or very worried about the issue, although it ranked below concerns over drug abuse, lack of things for young people to do, under age drinking and vandalism. However, when the borough wide data was broken down into different towns and estates it indicated that 54% of residents of Randalstown were worried about sectarian intimidation, as were 50% of residents in Crumlin while in Antrim concern was at a lower level and ranged from 30% to 46% on different estates.

Overall 50% of people identified sectarian intimidation as a problem, although once again this was considered a lower problem than issues to do with drugs and young people. Perceptions of the scale of the problem varied between the different towns and estates, with a high of 73% of residents in Crumlin identifying sectarian intimidation as a problem and 58% of residents of Rathenraw, to only 22% in Springfarm and Townparks North.

Respondents were also asked about what they considered to be policing priorities and in this case between 96% and 100% of residents in each of the areas stated that sectarian intimidation should be considered a priority issue for the police. At the same time, borough-wide, 70% of respondents said that the police performance was good or average in dealing with sectarian intimidation, but this number dropped to 49% in the Parkhall/Steeple estate area. The report also noted that 'older people, women and

Protestants were more likely to rate police performance in this area as good or average' (Antrim Community Safety Committee 2000:16).

Sectarian intimidation was also found to be a problem in local town centres, with 74% of respondents saying it was a problem in Antrim, 78% said it was a problem with Randalstown and 58% identifying it as a problem with Crumlin. But while sectarian intimidation was considered to be the most serious problem for Randalstown it was only the third most serious problem for Antrim (after drug abuse and physical assault).

The findings of the Community Safety Audit were confirmed by the findings of a community conference on intimidation held in 2002 (Macauley Associates 2002). Local tensions were identified as an ongoing problem perpetuated by a spate of clashes between residents of the predominately Protestant Styles estate and the predominately Catholic Rathenraw estate over the summer of 2003, which persisted with clashes between young children going to neighbouring schools. This was confirmed by ongoing work by ICR on issues related to young people in the Antrim area carried out for the Northern Health and Social Services Board (Byrne, Hamilton and Hansson 2003).

## **Ballymena**

Ballymena Borough Council published a Good Relations Audit and Strategy document in February 2001. This lists eight key community relations issues which were identified as areas of concern in a consultation of council officers, elected representatives and community representatives. The eight issues include intimidation and the marking of territory, respect for cultural traditions and the needs of minority ethnic people. It also identified a need for better single identity work, inter-church work and community training in the borough.

The report also includes the findings of a survey of local residents. This indicated that 33% of respondents believed there was a community relations problem in the borough, 50% of respondents believed that paramilitary activity needed to be addressed, 47% identified intimidation and 37% felt that sectarian graffiti as a problem, while 34% said that kerb painting and flag flying was a problem. On each of these issues more people stated that they were not satisfied with the current response to the problem than were satisfied. Finally, the report included actions and performance measures in relation to each of the eight key issues. However, in relation to intimidation and territorial marking these were little more than recommending further research and the development of an action plan.

In an interview, the PSNI in Ballymena agreed that there were ongoing problems due to the presence of paramilitary groups, and in particular, due to the activities of the youth groups affiliated to both loyalist and republican groups. They also noted that there had been problems with flags, visual displays and bonfires in some estates and they were aware of occasional sectarian attacks on individuals. The police also noted that there had been recurrent and persistent problems between young people in the

town centre and the two main shopping centres and some of the main streets had been effectively divided between young people from the two main communities.

ICR was also informed that there had been a number of attacks on school children waiting at bus stops in which the young people could be identified either by their school uniforms or by the bus stop they were at. The police said that the schools were often unwilling to engage with the problem if the attacks took place outside the school property and were unwilling to engage with outside partners, because they were afraid that publicising the attacks would reflect badly on the school. The PSNI stated that much of this violence was episodic and that agencies were beginning to work together to develop ways of reducing such episodes.

### **Newtownabbey**

In 2003 the Community Relations Council commissioned a brief review of sectarianism in Newtownabbey. This indicated that experiences of sectarian violence were widespread in the borough. A review of newspaper cuttings held by the local authority indicated that a wide range of incidents occurred on a regular basis. These include attacks on Catholic graves in Carnmoney cemetery, particularly around the time of Cemetery Sunday (which took place in May 2002 and September 2003). In 2002 loyalists rioted following a protest against the ceremony and over the next few weeks numerous graves were damaged. Attacks on both Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches followed over the next several months. In 2003 a number of graves were attacked in the run up to Cemetery Sunday and loyalists were again involved in violence and disorder following the ceremony.

There were also numerous reports of sectarian vandalism, of clashes among youths in various housing estates and of rival gang fights and attacks on individuals in Glengormley. Rioting followed Rangers versus Celtic matches on two occasions in March 2003, there were attacks on individuals, on school buses, on buses carrying loyalist bands, and on a bus carrying Celtic supporters. There were reports of arson attacks on homes, of individuals intimidated from their homes, while council workers were threatened and intimidated in the Bawnmore estate on a number of occasions.

The local police commander noted that the PSNI were still investigating 17 murders in the borough. These include five recent killings that were attributed to loyalist paramilitaries and which were motivated by sectarianism: Gary Moore in December 2000, Trevor Lowry in April 2001, Gavin Brett in July 2001, Daniel McColgan in January 2002 and Gerard Lawlor in July 2002.

Some of these themes were picked up in the Newtownabbey LSP *Integrated Local Strategy 2003-2010*, published in April 2003. The document included a SWOT analysis based on the local socio economic profile and on the findings of consultation documents carried out between 1997 and 2001. The analysis identified more weaknesses than strengths including: ongoing tensions and divisions between the Catholic and Protestant communities in the Borough; high levels of paramilitary activity; and no strategy to address issues such as murals, flags and painting of

kerbstones. The strategy document also identified: a lack of community pride, increasing long-term unemployment, increasing crime rate, no focal point or local stimulus for young people, low levels of volunteering in youth work and weak community capacity. All of which may well contribute to the levels of sectarianism.

The report recommended increasing levels of community development work and dialogue as a way to reduce visible displays of sectarian, flags, murals and graffiti. No specific actions or targets were made in relation to the ongoing sectarian tensions and paramilitary activity, although they might broadly be included within the frame of much of the community development and capacity building work. However, the document did highlight both the responsibility and work of the Housing Executive in relation to sectarian intimidation and visual displays and the future development of a borough wide community safety strategy and community policing initiatives as key elements in responding to such concerns.

### **Summary**

The data on sectarian violence indicates that there are significant problems in some areas of County Antrim. This review of recent surveys and assessments from three council areas, Antrim, Ballymena and Newtownabbey, indicates that there is some local acknowledgement of the problem, and recognition of the need to develop appropriate responses. However, apart from some survey work and data collection in Antrim, little has been done to investigate the scale of the problem, or to confirm or refute popular perceptions. More consideration is given to the nature and scale of local initiatives in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6

### Policy Developments

In February 2004 the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee announced that it would conduct an inquiry into hate crime in Northern Ireland. The committee set out as its three objectives:

- To explore the reasons for the reported increase in crimes and incidents motivated by hatred within and between communities in Northern Ireland;
- To examine the effectiveness of measures taken by government and relevant agencies to tackle prejudice, and to support the victims of such prejudice; and
- To assess the effectiveness of the existing law and proposed changes to that law.

This inquiry is further evidence that sectarianism and other forms of prejudice are increasingly acknowledged as a problem in Northern Ireland and an issue that needs to be addressed in the policy agenda. It is also evidence that politicians as well as policy makers are more willing to look at how it might most appropriately be tackled. The approaches of the various local political parties to sectarianism are discussed in the next chapter, while this one reviews current and recent policy initiatives.

A number of recent policy initiatives have acknowledged that sectarian violence is an ongoing problem that requires specific and sustained responses, however most of these are, at best, at an early stage of implementation and they have had no significant impact on the problem as yet. The main initiatives that might be expected to have most impact or responsibility for dealing with sectarian violence are the new hate crime legislation; the implementation of a multi-agency procedure for recording and analysing sectarian incidents; the development of local strategies and targets in relation to sectarian incidents. These are discussed below.

Other policy initiatives such as *A Shared Future* (OFMDFM 2003), *People and Place: A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Department of Social Development 2003) and *Creating a Safer Northern Ireland through Partnership* (Community Safety Unit 2003), will also be important factors in building a wider, more integrated and longer term policy agenda which will impact upon sectarianism and sectarian violence. There is thus some considerable scope for building on these documents in developing practical engagement with the issue.

Work has begun on some issues related to expressions of sectarianism such as the displays of flags and emblems and bonfires. There have been a number of initiatives related to reducing the number, location and natures of flags flown across Northern Ireland and a review on the use of flags and emblems has been prepared for OFMDFM from the Institute of Irish Studies at Queens University. A report on bonfires prepared by an interagency working group convened by the Department of the Environment (Interagency Working Group on Bonfires 2004) made a number of recommendations, including greater enforcement of statutory requirements and the

need for more concerted work with groups and communities on the ground. Both projects represent early stages of work in raising these contentious issues in a constructive way, but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

### **Hate Crime Legislation**

In November 2002 the Northern Ireland Office published a consultation document on 'Race Crime and Sectarian Crime Legislation'. This provided for the option of provision for increased sentencing for racist and sectarian violence and bringing Northern Ireland in line with the law in England and Wales. The consultation produced a number of responses, which led to the publication of draft hate crime legislation, which would cover racist, sectarian and homophobic violence.

In April 2004 Northern Ireland Affairs Committee began an inquiry into Hate Crime in Northern Ireland and in May published an interim report, which recommended that disability be included as a further category of hate crime (NIAC 2004a). The government accepted this recommendation and amended the draft legislation (NIAC 2004b). The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, under which crimes that evidence hatred and hostility related to a person because of their race, religion, sexual orientation or disability should be treated as an aggravating factor by a judge when sentencing, became law on 28 September 2004.

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry in hate crime is expected to report early in 2005. The evidence from the public hearings suggests considerable concern about the scale of such violence and a need to monitor the use and the success of the new legislation introduced in response.

### **Recording Sectarian Incidents**

The PSNI established a force wide procedure for recording sectarian incidents in September 2004. This broadly replicates the existing procedures for recording racist and homophobic incidents. The Policing Board noted 'continued levels of sectarian crime within society' and identifiable trends of sectarian motivated crime in the 2003-2006 Policing Plan, but they did not establish any performance indicators or targets for sectarian incidents, although they did set targets for racist and homophobic incidents (CAJ 2003:31). It is assumed that such targets will be established in future policing plans.

The Community Safety Unit's strategy document *Creating a Safer Northern Ireland through Partnership* identifies nine key issues to be targeted over the period 2002-2007. Key issue 6 is 'Offences motivated by prejudice and hatred'. The document notes that 'crime resulting from sectarianism and paramilitary activity continues to increase and severely impacts on the quality of life and health on many people in NI' and sets out an objective 'to work with community relations and other organisations to reduce levels of crime with a sectarian motivation'. Among the identified action points are reference to hate crime legislation, the need for a clear framework for

recording and monitoring racist incidents and to conduct research on the extent and nature of racist crime.

The CSU convened a broad ranging working group, including the PSNI and other statutory and voluntary sector organisations, to investigate the best way to develop an integrated system to record and monitor hate crimes and sectarian incidents. The working group aims to have a computerised system for reporting and recording all forms of hate crime, with the active participation of a multi-agency partnership of statutory bodies and voluntary organisations, in place by early in 2005.

### **Monitoring Sectarianism Locally**

Two bodies that should have primary responsibility for responding to sectarian violence on a local basis are the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and Community Safety Partnerships. The DPPs were established in 2003, in line with recommendations in the Patten Report (1999). They have responsibility for monitoring local-level policing, consulting opinion on matters of crime and policing, and advising the police of such opinions and concerns. The DPPs also have an advisory input into local policing plans, which are produced by the local commander and set the policing priorities for the area. They thus have an opportunity to establish concerns about sectarianism in each area, establish targets and indicators and track police performance. The first Northern Ireland wide survey of opinion for DPPs carried out in June 2003 did not include any questions in relation to sectarianism, but the subsequent survey in 2004 did (see Table 11 above). It is expected that targets in relation to sectarian violence will be included in all future local policing plans.

Community Safety Partnerships have now been established in all district council areas and are required to carry out community safety audits to inform their work. The evidence from the first audits to be published, in Antrim (ASC 2000) and Lisburn (City of Lisburn nd), suggest that the partnerships might be well placed to gauge local opinion and concerns about sectarianism and thus be in a position to develop appropriate local responses. However, an ICR request to all 26 local councils for information on problems of sectarianism in their area did not receive a very reassuring response. It remains to be seen how effectively the Community Safety Partnerships deal with this issue.

Another important recent document is the Belfast Interface Project report *A Policy Agenda for the Interface* (2004). This provides a summary overview of key issues affecting interface areas and communities and highlights the need for a sustained and co-ordinated attempt to respond to the wide range of issues affecting such areas, and which are necessary to break the cycle of violence, marginalisation and poverty. The report also includes a detailed range of recommendations for governmental and statutory bodies, which illustrates something of the awareness and thinking that exists at the community level of the types of intervention that would be most beneficial.

## **Councils and Sectarian Violence**

ICR wrote to the Chief Executive Officers of all 26 local authorities in Northern Ireland requesting information related to problems of sectarian violence in their area. We also requested information on any policy initiatives that have been developed in response to problems related to sectarianism, and information on any partnerships with statutory or community organisations in relation to dealing with sectarianism.

We received a response from twelve councils: Ballymoney, Banbridge, Belfast, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Craigavon, Down, Fermanagh, Lisburn, North Down and Strabane. We received an acknowledgement of receipt of our request from Newry and Mourne but no response to the questions we asked. The responses ranged from a brief page of answers to the provision of substantial policy documents. The following section reviews the responses to each of the seven questions that we asked.

- 1. Has your authority carried out any research, surveys or opinion polls to determine if sectarian violence and harassment is, or is considered to be, a problem in your area? If so could you provide details and any relevant documentation.*

Belfast, Craigavon, Down, Lisburn and North Down all referred to research that had been carried out with relevance to this subject. Belfast cited a survey of 2001 in which 46% of respondents cited the Troubles and the level of violence as the worst thing about living in Belfast and 8% cited sectarianism and bad community relations. Belfast City Council also noted that they had commissioned an audit of anti-sectarian activity in 2002 and were preparing a further mapping and evaluation of such work.

Craigavon had carried out surveys of attitudes to community relations in 2001 and 2003. The executive summaries to these reports suggest that people feel that community relations have deteriorated due to the Drumcree dispute, but no comment was made on sectarian violence per se.

Down District Council had carried out a community relations survey, which noted that ‘some respondents, but not many, have said that sectarian violence and harassment are an issue’. The council also noted that ‘sectarian issues/incidents in our District appears to be low in comparison to other areas’.

Lisburn City Council carried out a survey in November 2002 as part of its community safety audit. However questions about experiences of sectarian violence were only asked in one area, Colin, for some reason. This survey found that 1.5% of respondents had been subject to a sectarian attack, a similar figure for those who had been victim of physical assault (City of Lisburn nd: 36).

North Down Council cited the findings of the District Policing Partnership survey in 2003 and noted that sectarian violence and harassment were not identified as a problem within North Down. However this response is somewhat misleading. The DPP survey asked people ‘What do you feel are the biggest problems in your District

Council?’ and offered a list of 19 options plus ‘other’. While these included ‘racial/homophobic crime’ they did not include ‘sectarian violence/crime’ as an option.

2. *Does your authority have any policy or policies designed to respond to or challenge sectarian harassment and violence? If it does would you supply a copy of any relevant documentation.*

There were a variety of responses to this question. Belfast, Coleraine, Craigavon, Fermanagh, Lisburn and North Down cited policies related to harassment of staff, Cookstown and Craigavon noted the role of the Community Relations Officer, Lisburn cited policy developed by the community safety partnership, while Belfast referred to its Good Relations Strategy, launched in November 2003.

Craigavon, Down, Lisburn and Strabane all enclosed copies of their community relations strategy documents. Each of these documents included reference to specific actions to address what were called ‘hard issues’. In Down this referred to the need to address the consequences of segregated space, in Craigavon the hard issues were paramilitarism, drugs and tensions around interfaces, Lisburn identified flag flying, kerb painting, sectarian graffiti and interface areas as the main areas of concern, while Strabane District Council acknowledged geographical polarisation, community tensions and the need to increase engagement of the Protestant community as the main issues.

3. *Does your authority have any sub-committee or similar responsible for addressing issues such as sectarian violence and harassment? If so please provide details.*

A number of councils cited the Community Safety Partnership as the most relevant body in relation to this question, although they also noted that these bodies were in their infancy. The District Policing Partnership was also acknowledged as an appropriate body for dealing with such issues, as was the Local Strategy Partnership.

Some councils also have specific committees with responsibility for issues relating to sectarianism. These include Ballymoney, which has a Community Relations Advisory Committee, Belfast has a Good Relations Steering Panel, Cookstown has a CR sub-committee, while Down has a Cultural Issues Working Group

4. *Does your authority have any officers or members of staff responsible for responding to or addressing issues such as sectarian violence and harassment? If so please provide details.*

Many respondents highlighted the role of Community Safety Officers, Community Relations Officers, the Community Development Unit, Good Relations Officers or staff of the Local Strategy Partnership as the key people within the council. However, some councils do not appear to have any members of staff with specific responsibility for dealing with issues of sectarianism and sectarian violence.

5. *Is your authority working with any local communities or community organisations in response to problems of sectarian violence and harassment? If so please provide details.*

A number of councils claimed they had no regular or ongoing work with local community-based organisations; others stated that council officers responded to specific issues rather than maintain ongoing work. Fermanagh noted the work with Enniskillen Cultural Expression in Public Spaces as a broad partnership set up to address a contentious issue; Banbridge cited ongoing work with groups to deal with paramilitary flags. Craigavon, Lisburn and North Down all gave examples of ongoing work with local communities and organisations as part of a longer-term response to local problems. Other councils noted that while they provided support for such initiatives, they did not have the expertise to take the lead in responding to such issues.

6. *Is your authority working in partnership with any other statutory bodies in response to issues of sectarian violence and harassment? If so please provide details.*

Most councils cited a range of statutory bodies that they worked with on a regular basis. Some of these, including the PSNI, DPP, Housing Executive, Community Safety Partnership, were widely mentioned as appropriate bodies, while some councils also referred to work with Health and Social Services Boards and Education and Library Boards in this regard. Others also acknowledged their involvement in specific local partnerships such as the North Belfast Community Action Unit, Kilcooley Interagency and other local fora.

7. *Has the authority set up a Community Safety Forum or Unit, or similar body or does it participate in a Community Safety Forum or similar body convened by other parties? If it has, has this body addressed issues of sectarian violence and harassment? Please provide details.*

All councils who responded to our request for information have either already established a community safety forum/partnership or are in the process of establishing such a body. From the brief evidence provided there seems to be a variety of models for the different community safety initiatives. Some are council projects, while others are independent of the council. Some partnerships already have staff in post and some are in the process of carrying out community safety audits. Most respondents stated that the audit process would be used to determine priority areas of activity.

## **Summary**

There have been a number of policy initiatives in response to concerns over sectarian violence. These include hate crime legislation, and plans for a wider system for recording hate crime. However, these are at early stages of development and it is too soon to determine how effective they might be.

Some considerable emphasis is also being placed on developing local responses to the problems, in particular through the work of Community Safety Partnerships, while the District Policing Partnerships should also be to the fore in monitoring the effectiveness of police responses to sectarianism. Both of these bodies are in their infancy and it remains to be seen what type of approaches will be put in place to respond to problems of sectarian harassment and violence and how willing and effective they will be in responding to the issue.

## Chapter 7

### Political Parties and Sectarianism

ICR sought to establish the views of the main political parties in relation to responding to sectarian violence. We collected all manifesto documents published in the campaign for the Assembly elections in November 2003. However, we were somewhat surprised to read how little reference was made to this issue by some of the parties. As a result we searched party websites for further information on their thinking on this issue and wrote to them requesting details of all policies and resolutions that they had passed or adopted which might refer to sectarian violence. We received responses from Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionist Party to this request. The UUP sent a copy of their submission to the Shared Future consultation, while a meeting was arranged with Sinn Fein at which they provided a more detailed briefing of their position on this issue.

A recent report (Foley and Robinson 2004) explored in some detail the attitudes of individual local politicians to community relations in Northern Ireland. While this report does not directly address the issues that form the focus of this study, it does form a useful complementary guide to the attitudes and opinions of key political figures to the subject of building better relationships between the two main communities. The following section, in contrast, provides a summary of the formal positions taken by each of the main parties in relation to responding to sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Most of this information is taken from the party manifestos but in some cases is supported by information from policy documents and other papers.

#### Alliance Party

The Alliance Party manifesto contained an extensive section on the position of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. This section began with the following overview:

*Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society. But rather than these communal divisions being addressed and overcome, they are becoming institutionalised. Sectarianism and segregation remain major scars on Northern Ireland, and have even intensified in recent years. Sectarian attitudes are not restricted to those in and around interfaces, but permeate throughout society. Sectarianism is about prejudice, scapegoating, and putting people into boxes...The healing of our communal divisions must be the greatest priority for our political institutions, and thus lies at the heart of Alliance's policy agenda.*

The manifesto listed a number of priorities for the party, including:

1. Develop a new community relations strategy for Northern Ireland.

2. Actively encourage de-segregation and communal integration, through appropriate policies and by placing a duty upon all government departments and public sector agencies.
3. Provide support for the work of the Community Relations Council, and significantly increase its budget, in order to expand its project work.
4. Achieve a target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.
5. Make the promotion and maintenance of mixed housing an explicit objective of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
6. Urge the police and criminal justice agencies to adopt a more pro-active policy of protecting and serving those individuals who choose to mix with others, in the name of preserving a common civic space.
7. Enforce the civil duties on public agencies, such as the Road Service and the Housing Executive, to ensure that their property is free from paramilitary, sectarian or racist flags, murals and graffiti.
8. Ensure that public sector agencies build new leisure, educational, health, social and community facilities with an explicit objective to encourage mixing.

These ideas have been developed further in a policy paper on community relations, while the case for hate crime legislation was made in another policy paper.

### **Democratic Unionist Party**

The DUP manifesto made only passing reference to sectarianism, in the section on priorities for policing and justice, where the party argued for *‘tougher sentences for hate crimes’*. However, more detail was offered in their policy paper on policing and justice, entitled ‘Free from Fear’, where they argued that offences motivated by sectarianism *‘go to the heart of the difficulties which have been encountered in Northern Ireland’* and they stated that there is something *‘particularly repugnant’* in crimes motivated by hatred, whether racist or sectarian. The document argued for statutory provision for higher sentences for hate crime rather than the introduction of a new range of distinct criminal offences.

### **Green Party**

The Green Party manifesto contained a section entitled ‘Justice and Equality’, which highlighted the need to focus on the reasons for crime rather than simply the consequences. They emphasised the need for social and economic measures to ensure a full sense of security and argued for resources to be allocated to the most deprived areas to break the cycle of poverty, drugs and crime, with a special focus on flashpoint areas blighted by sectarian violence.

### **Progressive Unionist Party**

The PUP manifesto identified the party as *‘dedicated to an anti-sectarian, pluralist and equitable society’* and whilst the document promoted conflict transformation

work, community politics, human rights and equality it did not specifically refer to any policies designed to respond to or tackle sectarianism and sectarian violence.

## **Sinn Fein**

The introductory section to the Sinn Fein manifesto claimed that the party had '*brought forward major initiatives to tackle sectarianism and racism*' and '*resolutely defended the right to freedom from sectarian harassment*'. In the section setting out the priorities for 2003-2008, the party made a commitment to '*the defence and realisation of the right to freedom from sectarian harassment*'. However, there was no elaboration of either of these points in the manifesto, although there were two references to sectarianism in the main body of the document.

The final section of the Sinn Fein manifesto, entitled 'Multiculturalism: Promoting Diversity', contained party thinking on racism, asylum seekers and refugees and Travellers. The section on racism stated '*Sinn Fein recognise that sectarianism and racism must be eliminated from society*'. The only other reference to sectarianism was in the section on housing, which stated that '*housing in the Six Counties continues to be an area of sectarian inequality*' and demanded reforms of the Housing Executive's policies and practices to effectively tackle '*disproportionate levels of poverty in the nationalist community*'.

A more recent document from Belfast Sinn Fein noted that '*institutional and individual sectarianism can have no place in our society. Programmes and campaigns aimed at removing sectarianism from the workplace, the schoolyard, the health service and other public provision must be developed*'.

## **Social Democratic and Labour Party**

The SDLP manifesto contained a section entitled 'Tackling sectarianism, promoting victims' rights', which argued that sectarianism and segregation are interlinked and any attempts to build a shared and pluralist society must go hand in hand with policies and practices to tackle sectarianism. The SDLP offered a detailed list of specific goals in relation to responding to sectarianism:

1. A new Sectarian and Hate Crimes Act, which would include
  - an overhaul on laws on incitement to hatred;
  - constraints on flags and graffiti;
  - restrictions on the use of hate language and paramilitary symbols at parades;
  - outlawing sectarian chanting at football matches;
  - tougher sentences for crimes motivated by sectarianism;
  - a requirement on the police to monitor sectarian offences;
2. A duty on District Councils to devise plans to tackle sectarianism;
3. A Good Relations Commission to drive attempts to create better relations;
4. A partnership of political parties, trade unions, employers, churches and the community and voluntary sector to combat sectarianism;

5. Mainstreaming of good relations and community development work;
6. Co-ordinated action in education and the youth sector for sharing and cross community contact;
7. Encouraging mixed estates;
8. Ensuring shared spaces; and
9. North/South common action on racism, incitement to hatred law reform and community relations.

In another section of the manifesto on policing the party stated that it would require every police district to have a strategy to deal with sectarian crime.

### **Ulster Unionist Party**

The UUP manifesto listed five key pledges where it would focus its energies for the duration of the next assembly. The fourth of these states that it will work for ‘*a radical pro-active Community Relations policy to focus on where the need is greatest, such as sectarian interfaces*’. The party does not elaborate on this in the manifesto. However, they did send a copy of their submission to the Shared Future consultation in response to our request for policy documents.

In this submission the party affirms its support for a society ‘*where tolerance and mutual respect are the main drivers*’, but they noted that progress would be quicker if violence and paramilitarism were ended. The submission identifies the main areas of activity for future community relations work as: communities in conflict in interface areas; community development and capacity building projects; projects designed to reduce intra-community conflict; youth programmes; projects promoting diversity and tolerance; and projects developing community links East/West and North/South. No details were offered as to how these ideas might be translated into practice.

### **Women’s Coalition**

The Women’s Coalition manifesto contained a section entitled ‘Developing our Communities’, which states that ‘*Fostering safe and cohesive communities is an essential part of building peace in society...Housing, education and employment policies must help to tackle sectarianism through an integrated and proactive strategy.*’ The manifesto emphasised the need to give greater support to community relations work and called for an ‘*inclusive forum*’ to promote good relations, tackle sectarianism and respond to interface violence. It did not elaborate on how the Coalition’s policies on housing, education and employment would be part of a broader programme to respond to sectarianism.

### **Workers Party**

The Workers Party identified sectarianism and racism as the second strand of their five-point programme. They too made the link between segregation and sectarianism and argued that ‘*division re-inforces sectarian prejudice and practice*’. Their manifesto argued for the need to (i) remove sectarian graffiti and symbols; (ii) provide

greater support for integrated education; (iii) maintain mixed housing areas; (iv) have a policy objective of an integrated society and (v) promote the concept of a common citizenship.

## **Summary**

The views summarised above indicate the degree of importance given to sectarian violence by each of the main political parties in Northern Ireland. Some parties have developed a relatively fully formed policy and proposals in relation to the issue; others limited their response to general recognition of aspects of a broad problem.

The current initiatives on hate crime legislation, on systems for recording and monitoring hate crime and the hate crime inquiry have come through the NIO or Westminster, rather than Stormont, and it remains to be seen what type of initiatives might be instigated by any future devolved administration.

The previous administration did not address issues of sectarianism to any great extent, except in relation to sport, and in particular to football (Northern Ireland Assembly 2001; Advisory Panel 2001). This work was valuable in prompting the development of initiatives to respond to sectarianism by the Irish Football Association and led to significant improvements in behaviour at international matches.

A future assembly could build on this work and follow the example of the Scottish Executive, which convened a cross-party working group on religious hatred in November 2001. Their report was published in 2002 and was followed by a survey of sectarianism in Glasgow (NFO Social Research 2003). This is evidence that the issue of sectarianism is being taken seriously in Scotland, it would be important for a local administration to undertake similar work.

## Chapter 8

### Factors Underpinning Sectarian Violence

In interviews with police officers, politicians, community workers and activists a number of recurrent issues were cited as important elements in understanding why certain forms of sectarian violence occurred and persisted. None of these factors are new, nor are they perhaps surprising but it is useful to restate them as important factors in understanding the different patterns and experiences of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. There is a very real sense in which the sectarian divisions of society, and the necessary hostilities, fear, mistrust and suspicions which sustain and underpin such divisions, have become so deeply embedded in daily routines and normative behaviours that they are not recognised as sectarian, but rather are accepted as ‘the way things are’.

**Interface Areas:** Residential segregation has become accepted as part of the normative demographic profile across Northern Ireland, although with different degrees of segregation in different areas, both within and between policing districts. Many police officers acknowledged the importance of either the presence or absence of formal interfaces between predominately Protestant areas and predominately Catholic areas as a key factor in influencing the likelihood of sectarian violence. This was particularly the case in Belfast and a limited number of urban centres.

However, residential segregation creates a variety of interfaces between, and within estates. Some are formalised and visible, while others are invisible and require local knowledge to negotiate. Such formal interfaces are largely an urban phenomenon, but less formalised buffer zones between segregated residential areas also extend to smaller towns, villages and rural areas. It was also acknowledged that while segregation on some scale is something of a norm in Northern Ireland, the location of the buffer zones and/or interfaces could and did change as a result of such factors as intimidation, demographic shift and redevelopment (Jarman 2005).

The normative pattern means that new housing developments and brown-field redevelopment readily becomes incorporated into the sectarian equation. Housing developments may be opposed, because there is a potential for them to be dominated by the other community, or there may be demands for a ‘protective’ barrier to be included in the development, or a development may indeed open up a new interface or extend an existing one.

**Segregated ‘Neutral Spaces’:** Many people referred to the less visible patterns of segregation that are evident in the ‘neutral’ spaces of the commercial centres of many towns. Although such spaces are theoretically neutral, shared or common ‘civic’ spaces, in practice they are often claimed or used by one community, while being largely avoided by the other. Again many of these patterns may be well established and known to local residents but they may also shift as a result of redevelopment or changes in the local demographic profile.

The divide in Lurgan is well known, the dispute over the Drumcree parade made Portadown town centre a no-go area for many Catholics, young male Catholics similarly avoid Larne town centre, Protestants may choose to shop in Limavady or Coleraine rather than cross the river Foyle, Catholics from Twinbrook and Poleglass use Belfast city centre rather than Lisburn, while Protestants do not socialise in the centre of Ballycastle, the centre of Glengormley has become an interface of sorts as rival groups of young males seek to exert their control over 'civic space', the two shopping centres in Ballymena are similarly contested and claimed by rival groups of young males. Similar patterns are repeated in towns and villages across Northern Ireland.

**Parades and the Marching Season:** Patterns of behaviour may also change according to the time of year, with many people citing the marching season as the worst time for increasing tensions and increasing numbers of sectarian incidents. Many cited the dispute over the Drumcree parade as the most significant factor in raising tensions over recent years and one that has had a subsequent impact on tensions over local parades. This suggested that there was often little that could be done to influence events, except to manage the increasing tensions, as the issue was not specifically a local problem, but rather a local response to a Northern Ireland wide problem. However, in many areas the local parades were often an additional factor in increasing local tensions as were the associated visual displays and accompanying bonfires.

**Flags and Murals:** These were cited as a problem in many areas and one that required ongoing police attention. Many police officers noted that either they did not have the powers to remove flags that many people believed they had or felt they should have, and that attempting to remove flags without agreement could too easily lead to an escalation of the problem. A number of people commented that there had been some recognition of this issue within some communities and organisations and there had been a reduction in the numbers of the more overt paramilitary flags since the summer of 2003.

It was also noted that the presence of flags and visual displays associated with the marching season in 'civic' spaces was a chill factor for many people. It was felt that such displays were either erected with little consideration for their potential or likely impact on community relations, or specifically to reaffirm a local sense of identity and territorial control. This can be illustrated by paraphrasing the comments of two District Commanders. One noted that they 'did not have any sectarian incidents in the town centre, which was largely a neutral space, although there are flags and arches in the centre every July'. He also noted that 'residents from certain local estates do not use the centre except to send their children to the local school' rather they go to a neighbouring commercial centre to shop. Another Commander noted that 'sectarianism in the town is so bad that people no longer notice it' and the local council, which is ever more polarised, see no problem in putting up bunting each July.

**Paramilitary Organisations:** Many people cited the activities of paramilitary organisations as an important element of sectarian violence. In particular the UDA,

and its youth wing the Ulster Young Militants, was regarded as the most problematic and aggressive of such organisations. In some areas police officers tended to equate sectarian violence with paramilitary violence and thus to focus their interest on the most extreme and militarised expression of hostility to the other community, rather than paying attention to lower level forms of intimidation that underpin paramilitary sectarian violence.

In part this might be a legacy of an older style policing approach, which did indeed focus more on paramilitarism, but in part it may also be due to the fact that the police do not as yet have responsibility for monitoring lower levels of sectarian incidents, in the way that they do for racist and homophobic incidents, and there is thus no requirement on them to formally record, document and analyse such activities. There was also a suggestion that some communities had become 'immune' to the presence of paramilitary organisations in their midst and individuals either chose to turn a blind eye to their activities or were unable to mobilise in opposition to them.

**Young Men:** were frequently cited as a main actor in many forms of sectarian violence. This ranged from their involvement in casual, if systematic, stone throwing (at vehicles, over interfaces, at buses, at houses occupied by someone from the other side, at commercial premises, as well as at the police), to fights between rival gangs over access to local resources, space or territory (cinemas, shops, leisure facilities) to attacks on pupils from different schools (who can be identified by their uniform or by the bus stop they wait at) to random attacks on unknown individuals in the wrong place. Some of this activity may be encouraged by paramilitary organisations, but some of it appears to be a response to the residual levels of segregation and underlying sectarianism in society. However, it should also be noted that many of the patterns of behaviour exhibited by young males is not dramatically different from young males in many other industrialised societies, except that in Northern Ireland such behaviour is also mediated through a lens of sectarianism.

**Low-Level Sectarian Intimidation:** It was noted that the police did not necessarily find it easy to keep informed of low-level forms of sectarian harassment. In some cases this was because people did not, or would not, report such incidents, or because some low level behaviour was dealt with effectively by local communities, or because such incidents were dealt with by other agencies, in particular the Housing Executive was seen as a front line agency in responding to intimidation in the domestic sphere. However, it was acknowledged that it was important that the police should respond to low level sectarian violence, as it was easy for such behaviour to become established as a local pattern and have the potential to escalate to the intimidation of other individuals or increase in severity into paramilitarised violence.

**Changing Patterns of Sectarian Violence:** Among police officers there was a belief that levels of sectarian violence were not getting any worse, even if they were not especially getting any better. However, in the absence of hard data on the number and nature of sectarian incidents it is difficult to confirm whether this has any solid basis or is another element of the general acknowledgement of the pervasive presence of sectarianism. The brief snapshots of data indicate diverging patterns of activity over

quite short time periods and different patterns of violence in different areas. But in part this may well be due to the type of incidents that the police have chosen to classify as sectarian, as much as it reflects activity on the ground.

In a number of areas, particularly interface areas in North and East Belfast and in relation to town centres, police officers cited the introduction and use of CCTV cameras as a factor in reducing the number of attacks. However, questions were raised as to whether the cameras reduced the levels of violence or simply displaced it to neighbouring areas beyond the gaze of the cameras. It may well be that CCTV has a different impact in different types of area. Those located on interfaces may well have been a factor in the apparent reduction of activity in areas where the potential zone of violence is limited. However, the cameras in town centres may simply displace the violence to areas beyond the view of the CCTV system.

Many identified the high levels of residential segregation and self-segregation in relation to shared space as factors that have reduced the opportunity for sectarian violence. As such much of the recorded and documented violence in recent years has been associated with set-piece events and with larger scale confrontations between rival groups or communities (parades, interfaces, Rangers-Celtic matches), rather than smaller scale incidents where individuals are the principle target.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The data that we have assembled in relation to sectarian violence in Northern Ireland indicates that it remains a significant problem for many people and in many areas. However, the data offers only a fragmentary picture of the problem. It is almost as if no one wants to focus on the subject in case it is revealed to be too big a problem. One senior police officer suggested that if the PSNI attempted to record all sectarian incidents, as opposed to sectarian crimes, then they would be overwhelmed.

The available data reveals a somewhat patchy picture. It suggests that sectarian violence is worse in some areas than others, that it has been a serious problem in parts of Belfast and some other urban locations, but it is a variable rather than a constant problem. The data indicates that sectarian violence and intimidation is a problem for many people in their home environment, for others it is a problem in the workplace.

However, much of the sectarian violence takes place in the street and involves attacks on people, on property, on public transport. Furthermore the boundaries between sectarian violence and ‘ordinary’ forms of violence – criminal damage, anti-social behaviour - are often blurred. This, it can be claimed, makes it difficult to quantify and record sectarian violence, because it is not always possible to determine what the motivation or the impact might be.

This report suggests that we should not err on the side on caution on this issue. Rather we should acknowledge that the ease with which a wide variety of forms of sectarian violence is allowed to persist, with little consistent publicity, sustained opposition or structured policy responses, indicates either a disbelief that there is a problem, that it is not a significant problem, or that we can not really do much about it anyway. This sustained lack of attention and action is in turn a factor that allows other forms of violence to become acceptable in some quarters.

Northern Ireland is a violent society. The worst of the violence of the Troubles may be past us, but paramilitary violence continues, paramilitary ‘punishment’ attacks continue at a high level, racist, homophobic and domestic violence have all increased since the ceasefires, public disorder has been a sustained problem over recent years and many forms of violent crime continue to rise (Jarman 2004).

#### **Recommendations**

This section offers a limited number of recommendations that might contribute to developing an effective response to sectarian violence. The recommendations are specifically focused on the issue of forms of sectarian violence, rather than the much wider issues of sectarianism and community relations, which will be addressed in the Government response to the Shared Future consultation.

It is also pertinent to acknowledge that although there is currently little data on sectarian violence a number of initiatives to address this deficit are in progress.

1. **Recording Sectarian Violence:** The PSNI has recently established a system for recording sectarian incidents and the Community Safety Unit (NIO) is also co-ordinating a system for recording and analysing all forms of hate crime. It is important that the creation of the two databases and recording processes are complementary and meet the recommendations for responding to forms of hate crime made in the Stephen Lawrence Report (1999).
2. **Maximising Information:** All agencies and organisations, which currently subsume acts of sectarian violence within broader bodies of data, should begin to record them specifically as sectarian acts. This data should be used to inform the policies and practices of the various organisations, but should also be included in the centralised monitoring system being developed by CSU.
3. **Surveying Experiences of Sectarianism:** There has been no specific survey of experiences of sectarian violence, intimidation and harassment. A baseline survey should be carried out and modules on experiences of sectarianism should be included in future surveys. Such a survey could be carried out by NISRA as part of its ongoing work or be developed as part of the work of the ARK project.
4. **A Framework Strategy:** Although a number of current policy developments have clear relevance to issues of sectarian violence, there would be a value in developing an overall strategy for dealing with sectarian violence (and other forms of hate crime) and for monitoring the impact of initiatives that aim to address the issue. The survey data could provide a platform for developing such a strategy.
5. **A Strategy for Interface Areas:** We endorse the recommendations in the recent Belfast Interface Project report *A Policy Agenda for the Interface*. We would urge central and local government and statutory bodies to develop a coherent and effective strategy to address the significant problems experienced by people living in interface areas.
6. **Building Local Knowledge:** Although there is a need for a broad overview of the issue of sectarian violence, there is also a need for locally specific knowledge of the problem. Surveys could be developed by and for local agencies, such as the District Policing Partnerships or the Community Safety Partnerships, to inform the development of local strategies.
7. **Developing Local Strategies:** The information provided by local authorities indicates a very uneven engagement with the issue of sectarian violence. The data from local surveys could be used to inform and develop more effective and joined up strategies to address this issue. All local authorities should be encouraged to develop strategic plans in response to sectarian violence as part of their Good Relations duties.

8. **Developing Existing Commitments:** Some very useful work has already been developed in relation to the issues of flags, emblems and visual displays and other activities, such as the building of bonfires; all of which can have an impact on community relations and can lead to feelings of intimidation and fear. Much of this work is in its infancy and it is important that it is sustained and developed over the next few years.
9. **Monitoring use of Hate Crime Legislation:** Although Hate Crime legislation has been introduced in Northern Ireland; some degree of scepticism has been expressed at how widely it will be used and how effective it will be in practice. It will be important to monitor the use of the new legislation to see the impact the law is having, how it is being used and what deficiencies or difficulties there might be with the legislation. In particular it will be important to monitor the number of prosecutions for hate crime offences and the nature of sentence that are imposed, as is already being done in Scotland and England.
10. **Work with Perpetrators of Hate Crime:** It is also important to develop an effective approach to dealing with people sentenced for hate crime offences and for people who have been identified as perpetrators, but not convicted as such. A range of restorative justice programmes have been developed over recent years and it would be useful to explore how such programme might be utilised with the perpetrators of hate crime.
11. **Civil Society Responses:** It is interesting to note the limited focus given to the subject of sectarian violence by civil society organisations. While many would claim to be anti-sectarian, much of such work takes place within a single identity context. Any substantial cross-community activity against sectarian violence only seems to occur in response to specific and horrific acts, but such reactions have rarely been sustained. It would be beneficial if some of the umbrella civil society organisations developed a more sustained campaign around this issue, as has begun to develop in response to racist violence.

## Appendix

The following section reviews data for attacks on schools and forms of public transport provided by the PSNI and Translink. Some, but not necessarily all, of the incidents recorded in the data sets will be a result of sectarian violence.

### Attacks on Property

The police data for attacks on churches, chapels, Orange halls, GAA clubs and Hibernian halls has been discussed in a previous section. The data for attacks on schools is discussed separately because it is not clear what percentage of such attacks might be sectarian and what percentage might be simple vandalism. Research on the parade disputes and interface violence in North Belfast indicated that sectarian attacks on schools were a feature of the disorder of the later 1990s (Jarman 1997; Jarman and Bryan 1996).

**Table 15: Attacks on Schools, 1994-2002**

	Attacks
1994	27
1995	41
1996	76
1997	36
1998	44
1999	30
2000	28
2001	33
2002	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>352</b>

*Source: Central Statistics Unit, PSNI*

The data indicates that there was a peak in the number of attacks on schools recorded by the police in 1996, and that the numbers have fluctuated in the following years. However, there have been more attacks recorded in each year since the current cycle of parade disputes began than in the last year before they started.

The data for attacks on schools can be broken down by each county for the period between 1994 and 2000, this offers some perspectives on the different patterns of attacks in each of the six counties plus Belfast. This data is set down in Table 16.

The figures indicate that while the largest number of attacks is in the Belfast area, there have been a relatively high percentage of attacks on schools in County Antrim, while the percentage of attacks in the other counties is proportionate to or below the number that might be expected given the population.

**Table 16: Attacks on Schools by County and Belfast, 1994-2000**

	No of Attacks	%
Antrim	76	29
Armagh	19	7
Down	35	13
Fermanagh	6	2
Londonderry	32	12
Tyrone	17	6
Belfast	78	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>99</b>

**Attacks on Public Transport**

There have been numerous reports in the media documenting attacks on buses taking children to school. In many cases, such attacks, many of them also by children, have been considered sectarian. There have also been a number of cases where buses being used to take people to parades have also been attacked and damaged, again with a presumed sectarian motivation.

The PSNI has data for attacks on public and private buses and coaches. Table 17 sets out the total number of incidents of criminal damage for all 29 DCUs across Northern Ireland for the two years 2001-02 and 2002-03.

The figures reveal diverging levels of damage to buses across Northern Ireland, with a concentration of damage in the Greater Belfast area. 2,076 of the 2,765 incidents, 75% of the total, occurred in Belfast, Lisburn and Newtownabbey. North Belfast has experienced extensive street violence over recent years and in particular the disputes over access to Holy Cross Primary School in 2001 led to considerable rioting as well as persistent low-level disorder. Similarly the large numbers of attacks on buses in East Belfast coincided with a period of recurrent interface violence.

**Table 17: Criminal Damage to Buses by Region**

DCU	2001-2002	2002-2003	<b>Total</b>
North Belfast	669	278	<b>947</b>
West Belfast	177	196	<b>373</b>
East Belfast	123	149	<b>272</b>
Newtownabbey	104	88	<b>192</b>
Lisburn	97	70	<b>167</b>
South Belfast	80	45	<b>125</b>
Foyle	68	45	<b>113</b>
Craigavon	49	53	<b>102</b>
Castlereagh	32	46	<b>78</b>
Antrim	28	25	<b>53</b>
Ards	24	13	<b>37</b>
Limavady	12	24	<b>36</b>

Strabane	14	20	<b>34</b>
Coleraine	21	12	<b>33</b>
Down	13	14	<b>27</b>
Newry and Mourne	12	12	<b>24</b>
North Down	12	12	<b>24</b>
Armagh	12	10	<b>22</b>
Ballymena	8	10	<b>18</b>
Fermanagh	4	11	<b>15</b>
Dungannon	7	6	<b>13</b>
Omagh	10	3	<b>13</b>
Magherafelt	5	5	<b>10</b>
Carrickfergus	6	3	<b>9</b>
Banbridge	5	3	<b>8</b>
Cookstown	4	3	<b>7</b>
Ballymoney	3	3	<b>6</b>
Larne	2	2	<b>4</b>
Moyle	2	1	<b>3</b>
NI Total	1,603	1,162	<b>2,765</b>

Source: Central Statistics Unit, PSNI

Translink have provided figures for the number of buses and trains that have suffered broken windows over the last 5 years. Table 18 indicates that there have been significant numbers of broken windows on vehicles owned by Citybus and on trains run by Northern Ireland Railways. They reveal a dramatic rise in attacks on Citybus vehicles in 2000-2001 and in 2001-2002, a pattern that is replicated to some extent in relation to the patterns of attacks on Ulsterbus vehicles. However, as with all the other figures, there is no way of confirming how many of these incidents are sectarian.

**Table 18: Damage and Attacks on Translink Buses and Trains, 1998-2003**

	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	<b>Total</b>
Ulsterbus Windows	487	243	489	538	325	<b>2,082</b>
Citybus Windows	672	650	947	1,322	683	<b>4,274</b>
NIR Windows	547	566	547	681	699	<b>3,040</b>
All Windows	1,706	1,459	1,983	2,541	1,707	<b>9,396</b>
All Robbery	29	36	35	54	38	<b>192</b>
All Assault	40	33	26	49	58	<b>206</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>1,528</b>	<b>2,044</b>	<b>2,644</b>	<b>1,803</b>	

Source: Translink

The figures for robberies and assaults on Translink staff are included as comparison with cases of criminal damage. It is interesting to note that the number of assaults and robberies do not follow the same fluctuations as cases of criminal damage and, as might be expected, it is easier to map rises and falls in the number of cases of criminal damage with the ebbs and flows of the broader political situation.

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