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# Tackling Racism in Northern Ireland: 'The Race Hate Capital of Europe'

**COLIN KNOX\***

*\*School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy, University of Ulster, Shore Road,  
Jordanstown, BT 37 0QB  
email: cg.knox@ulster.ac.uk*

## **Abstract**

Northern Ireland has been dubbed by the media as the 'race hate capital of Europe' and attracted recent international criticism after one hundred Roma families were forced to flee their homes following racist attacks. This paper examines the problem of racism in Northern Ireland from a number of perspectives. First, it considers the effectiveness of the Government's response to racism against its *Racial Equality Strategy 2005–10* using performance criteria designed to track the implementation of the strategy. Second, it considers and empirically tests the assertion in the literature that sectarianism shapes the way in which racism is reproduced and experienced. Third, it explores racism at the level of the individual – which factors influence people in Northern Ireland to exhibit racist behaviour. Finally, the paper considers the likely policy implications of the research findings in the context of devolved government where addressing racism is part of a wider political imbroglio which has gridlocked decision-making within the power-sharing Executive of Northern Ireland.

## **Introduction and background**

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's deputy First Minister in the power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland, recently argued that Ireland is affected by three great evils: sectarianism, racism and partitionism. While the issue of partitionism is central to Sinn Féin's political ideology, it is racism in Northern Ireland which has from 2003/04 attracted censorious media attention both locally and internationally. At that time there were vicious attacks against the Chinese community living in Belfast, the largest settled minority ethnic group. This earned Northern Ireland the unenviable title of 'race hate capital of Europe', a place which had no appeal for migrants during the years of political turmoil but now appears unable to cope with multiculturalism, a situation reminiscent of Britain in the 1950s (Chrisafis, 2004: 1). Police investigating these racist attacks linked them to two paramilitary groups: the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

The absence of far-right politics in Northern Ireland offered a mistaken perception that migrants could expect a tolerant and welcoming society. Such was the conviction that racism did not present as a problem, that the legislative framework equivalent to the 1976 Race Relations Act in Britain was not introduced

38 into Northern Ireland until the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997,  
 39 over 20 years later. Rolston (2004), however, claims that loyalists have had a long-  
 40 standing, on-off relationship with fascist groups in Britain for over three decades,  
 41 and predicted the rise in racism in Northern Ireland. He argued

42 it would be wrong to believe that there were parts of Northern Ireland that are not and never  
 43 could be guilty of racism . . . to paraphrase Brecht, racism is a bitch in heat at the moment [in  
 44 2004] and there's no telling how large the litter will be. (Rolston, 2004: 6)

45 In a society characterised by sectarianism, accompanying violence and mistrust  
 46 of 'the other', racism became a 'natural' part of the whole ambit of hate crime  
 47 to which Northern Ireland is well-accustomed. Overt racism reared its ugly head  
 48 once again in April 2009, when Northern Ireland and Polish football fans clashed  
 49 in Belfast before a World Cup qualifying match. The incident spilled over into  
 50 racist attacks against Polish residents, and some 50 people fled the staunchly  
 51 loyalist Village area of south Belfast.

52 In an unrelated incident soon after, one hundred Roma families were forced  
 53 to take shelter in a church hall, evacuating their homes in the Lisburn Road area of  
 54 south Belfast after they were targeted by racists. The incident made international  
 55 news and underscored Northern Ireland's reputation as intolerant and a centre of  
 56 race hate crime. The scale of this hate crime against the Roma community and the  
 57 media coverage which it attracted with families fleeing their homes, belongings  
 58 in hand, prompted high-profile Childline founder, Esther Rantzen, to say of  
 59 Northern Ireland 'they are addicted to hatred, they are addicted to violence as  
 60 if it gives them some kind of exhilaration . . . You see a lot of prejudice in the  
 61 rest of the UK but why turn it into violence? Maybe people miss the old days of  
 62 the Troubles' (BBC Question Time, 18 June 2009). The Anti Racism Network in  
 63 Northern Ireland were angry about the attacks on the Roma families, claiming the  
 64 families had been subjected to harassment for some months and had not received  
 65 adequate protection. They also accused local politicians of deliberately blaming  
 66 immigrants for the lack of jobs and resources caused by the global recession.  
 67 The country's only minority ethnic elected representative, Alliance Party MLA,  
 68 Anna Lo, argued in a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly that 'in order to  
 69 eliminate racism, we must also tackle sectarianism – the twin evils of prejudice'.

70 It is against this background that we attempt to examine three key questions:  
 71

- 72 ● What has been the Government's response in seeking to tackle increased  
 73 racism?
- 74 ● Using the Government's own performance criteria, how effective has their  
 75 approach been so far?
- 76 ● What factors influence racist attitudes among people in Northern Ireland?

77 We begin with an overview of previous research on racism in Northern  
78 Ireland.

### 79 **The literature**

80 The UK social policy literature, according to Craig (2007), has neglected the  
81 issue of 'race' both as political practice and academic pursuit. He finds this a  
82 striking omission because social policy as a discipline is concerned variously with  
83 citizenship rights, welfare, equality, poverty alleviation and social engineering.  
84 Craig offers evidence to illustrate that the British state is only marginally  
85 concerned with the welfare of minorities. He listed: continuing discrimination  
86 against minorities, the failure of social welfare to maintain adequate incomes,  
87 residential segregation of minorities and evidence of structural racism and  
88 discrimination in education and health services. Craig (2007: 620) concludes  
89 that despite a number of 'community relations' initiatives and race relations  
90 legislative interventions that 'racism persists in all welfare sectors'.

91 The most obvious point of comparison for Northern Ireland within the wider  
92 UK literature is on the theme of community cohesion. The racial disturbances in  
93 Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in May 2001 and subsequent investigations found  
94 people living ethnically segregated lives. As a response, policy interventions were  
95 aimed at strengthening cohesion, the new framework for British government  
96 policy on race relations (Cantle, 2005). The subsequent work of Paul Thomas  
97 (2007), who examined how community cohesion is operationalised by youth  
98 workers in Oldham, provides evidence of the intervention in practice. Although  
99 community cohesion has been criticised (Kundnani, 2002) as an attack on  
100 multi-culturalism and a throw-back to assimilation policies (Back *et al.*, 2002;  
101 Schuster and Solomos, 2004), Thomas is positive about the potential offered by  
102 meaningful direct contact among people of different ethnic backgrounds. The  
103 interesting comparison with Northern Ireland is that 'meaningful contact' has  
104 been the underpinning rationale for much of the community relations work  
105 addressing religious segregation in the parallel lives of Catholics and Protestants  
106 from the 1980s onwards. Hence, a plethora of policy interventions in Northern  
107 Ireland have been about increasing interaction, integration, shared space and  
108 shared values, culminating in the policy document *A Shared Future* (OFMDFM,  
109 2005a). The parallel in Great Britain was Cantle's idea of a shared vision  
110 around a common set of values which could be homogenising for the different  
111 communities. This approach has also informed policies in Northern Ireland  
112 aimed at tackling racism as evidenced by the links between the government  
113 'good relations' and 'racial equality' strategies.

114 Northern Ireland, understandably, is replete with literature that analyses its  
115 protracted conflict and constitutional settlement. Such scholarship has crowded  
116 out, to some extent, the academic analysis of the insidious problem of racism.

117 This is the starting point for a review of the literature on racism in Northern  
 118 Ireland, which could broadly be categorised under four key themes: a denial  
 119 of the problem, evidence of institutional racism, racism incidents and crime  
 120 and, finally, suggested links between sectarianism and racism. We structure the  
 121 reporting of the research under these broad headings.

### 122 **Denial of the problem**

123 Hainsworth (1998: 1) drew attention to the whole issue of racism in a  
 124 collection of research, the aim of which was to counter the suggestion ‘that racism  
 125 is not a problem in Northern Ireland’. He argued that one of the consequences of  
 126 the conflict has been ‘the tendency to neglect, ignore or minimise ethnic minority  
 127 problems, such as individual or institutional racism, as the preoccupation  
 128 with traditional socio-political matters has left scant room for other agendas’  
 129 (Hainsworth, 1998: 3). In the same collection, McVeigh also contended that there  
 130 was an overt denial that racism existed in Northern Ireland because there were  
 131 no black people, yet argued that minority ethnic people experienced systematic  
 132 racism: ‘it is not the absence of racism but rather the relative absence of discussion  
 133 of racism which makes Ireland different from most European countries’ (1998:  
 134 14). McVeigh goes on to suggest that, because sectarianism pervades Northern  
 135 Ireland, it also structures the way in which racism is reproduced and experienced.  
 136 He concluded:

137 when we look at the ways in which social relations between the minority and majority ethnic  
 138 communities in Northern Ireland have become racialised, it becomes clear that racism is  
 139 structured by sectarianism as a dominating feature. . . In other words, racism in Northern  
 140 Ireland has a certain specificity. (McVeigh, 1998: 31)

### 141 **Evidence of institutional racism**

142 Mann-Kler (1997) conducted action research using 39 focus groups to capture  
 143 the experiences of minority ethnic groups using public services in Northern  
 144 Ireland such as health, social services, social security, education and training,  
 145 housing and policing, and found widespread evidence of institutional racism.  
 146 Findings included: minority ethnic groups had little knowledge of preventative  
 147 healthcare services, due to a lack of accessible information; racial harassment  
 148 of some families had been severe; and many women felt that the police did not  
 149 take racial attacks seriously. Mann-Kler contended that it has only been since the  
 150 ceasefires in 1994 that attention to racism began to emerge on the wider public  
 151 agenda. Connolly (2002), in an overview of available research evidence on race  
 152 and racism in Northern Ireland, found that although there is significant diversity  
 153 within the minority ethnic population, and hence differing needs, there were  
 154 several common problems that they faced. These problems included: difficulties  
 155 accessing existing services by those who speak little or no English, general lack

156 of knowledge and/or awareness of particular services offered, the need for more  
 157 staff training by service providers in relation to issues of ‘race’, the failure to  
 158 meet the basic cultural needs of minority ethnic people and significant levels of  
 159 racism and racist harassment experienced by minority ethnic people in Northern  
 160 Ireland (see also Bell *et al.*’s research, 2004, on the social problems and personal  
 161 needs of people moving to Northern Ireland to take up employment).

### 162 **Racism incidents/crimes**

163 Jarman and Monaghan (2003) report on the scale and nature of racial  
 164 harassment based on an analysis of racist incidents recorded by the police between  
 165 1996 and 2001. They noted that, although the number of recorded incidents was  
 166 relatively small, Northern Ireland had a high ratio of racist incidents for the size  
 167 of the minority ethnic population compared with England and Wales during  
 168 this period. Precise comparison between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is  
 169 difficult to make. Home Office police-recorded crime statistics for England and  
 170 Wales in 2008/09 show a total of 34,231 incidents involving racially/religiously  
 171 aggravated crime disaggregated by: inflicting grievous body harm (GBH), less  
 172 serious wounding, harassment/public, assault without injury, actual bodily harm  
 173 (ABH) or other injury (Home Office, 2009). During 2008/09, Northern Ireland  
 174 recorded 1,788 sectarian and racist crimes in 2008/09 (PSNI statistics). Taking into  
 175 account population size, England and Wales had 0.63 and Northern Ireland 1.00  
 176 hate crimes per 1,000 population, respectively. The Republic of Ireland does not  
 177 record hate crime; figures are subsumed under wider categories such as assaults,  
 178 harassment and related offences. The most numerous forms of racist harassment  
 179 in Northern Ireland were abuse and attacks on property, but about one-quarter  
 180 of the incidents involved a form of physical assault. Almost half the incidents  
 181 occurred in Belfast, most of which were recorded in Protestant working-class  
 182 areas.

183 Empirical findings from a detailed study of the incidence of racial crime in  
 184 the London Borough of Newham indicated significantly higher rates where there  
 185 was a large white majority and smaller groups of other ethnicities (Brimicombe  
 186 *et al.*, 2001). Given the higher per capita influx of migrant workers to Northern  
 187 Ireland than other parts of the UK (discussed later), the ethnic mix could well  
 188 be important in understanding the level of racism in loyalist areas. Jarman  
 189 (2003) also examined the relationship between racist harassment and children  
 190 and young people by considering evidence from police records of cases of such  
 191 abuse and associated violence. He found that young people are more likely  
 192 to be subjected to physical assault as part of any harassment, but, equally,  
 193 young people were also significant perpetrators of racism and racist harassment.  
 194 Jarman concluded ‘the stereotypical perpetrator of racist harassment in Northern  
 195 Ireland is a young white male over the age of 16 acting in consort with  
 196 other young white males’ (2003: 138). An interesting comparison here is with

197 a Home Office study which looked at the perpetrators of racial harassment  
 198 and violence in two London boroughs and found that: young children, youths,  
 199 adults and older people, including pensioners (male and female in all groups)  
 200 were involved. Their views towards minority ethnic groups were shared by the  
 201 wider communities to which they belonged. Perpetrators saw this as legitimising  
 202 their actions (Sibbitt, 1997). Ray *et al.*'s study (2004: 364) on the perpetrators of  
 203 racist violence in Greater Manchester also found that when 'inherited meanings  
 204 of territory and neighbourhood become factored and uncertain', there is an  
 205 unacknowledged shame which can be transformed into rage against minority  
 206 ethnic communities. In this case English communities had once shared experience  
 207 of the manufacturing industry; territoriality in Northern Ireland is quite different  
 208 and relates to single-identity communities now seen by perpetrators of racial  
 209 violence as under threat from 'outsiders' (ethnic minorities).

#### 210 **The link between sectarianism and racism**

211 It was Brewer (1992) who first juxtaposed sectarianism and racism. He began  
 212 by offering a definition of sectarianism and compared it to the concept of racism.  
 213 He argued that there were points of convergence but also differences. Racism  
 214 and sectarianism converge in the sense that both involve 'social stratification,  
 215 producing inequality in a structured manner rather than randomly' and there  
 216 are similarities in the way in which they are experienced 'at the level of ideas,  
 217 individual action and social structure'. The key difference is that 'race' is a much  
 218 more visible and deterministic marker than 'sect' and overlaps more completely  
 219 with other important social boundaries such as class' – sect is more ambiguous,  
 220 a sub-type of ethnic stratification, whereas religion is one source of ethnic  
 221 differentiation. As a result, Brewer contended that 'sect' has better explanatory  
 222 power 'to account for patterns of stratification and life chances that occur under  
 223 its name' (Brewer, 1992: 353).

224 McVeigh and Rolston argue that sectarianism is a form of racism rooted in  
 225 the process of British imperialism in Ireland, and sectarianism can be directly  
 226 attributed to 'the nature of the state rather than the politics it contains' (2007:  
 227 7). Sectarianism, they contend, prevailed during the Stormont era of Unionist  
 228 majority rule (1920–72), continued during direct rule by the British Government,  
 229 is still evident in the post-Good Friday Northern Ireland and is inadequately  
 230 addressed through a 'good relations' model which seeks to conjoin racism and  
 231 sectarianism. The Good Friday Agreement, they claim, 'helped create the context  
 232 in which new levels of racism were to flourish'. A peaceful Northern Ireland and,  
 233 in turn, economic growth attracted migrant workers who located in less crowded  
 234 loyalist working-class areas, so 'post-Good Friday Agreement, new communities  
 235 of colour found themselves situated in the midst of this volatile situation and  
 236 became key targets for loyalist rage' and, as a result, racism became a 'close ally  
 237 of sectarianism' (McVeigh and Rolston, 2007: 12). The researchers argue that

238 explanations for the rise in racism have included ‘the facile logic that there is a  
 239 finite amount of hate in Northern Ireland and now, given the dying throes of  
 240 sectarianism in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement, racism has increased’.  
 241 They challenge what they see as the errors in this assumption:

242 For a start, people are perfectly capable of being both sectarian and racist. Moreover, as the  
 243 concentration of racist attacks in loyalist areas reveals, being sectarian is an advantage in being  
 244 racist. But the state’s approach to racism fails to name the problem, avoiding the obvious and  
 245 problematic correlation between loyalism and racism to focus on the problem being that of two  
 246 generic camps: ‘them’ and ‘us’. (McVeigh and Rolston, 2007: 13)

247 The link between sectarianism and racism is also recognised at the European  
 248 level. For example, the European Union adopted two directives (2000/43/EC and  
 249 2000/78/EC) prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of racial  
 250 or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. The  
 251 Commission has since then set out an overarching strategy for the positive and  
 252 active promotion of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. In the  
 253 context of Northern Ireland the link between sectarianism and racism and the  
 254 policy instruments used to address both is made clear by government when it  
 255 stated that the

256 Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations aims to eliminate both racism and  
 257 sectarianism . . . the policies and mechanisms being put in place to implement good relations  
 258 are not just about the scourge of sectarianism. They apply equally to tackling racism and  
 259 promoting good race relations. (OFMDFM, 2005b: 10)

260 This joint approach is justified by government on the basis that the common goal  
 261 is to create a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance, whether on racial or  
 262 religious grounds, characterised by equity, respect for diversity and recognition  
 263 of mutual interdependence. Hence, there are common policy instruments to  
 264 tackle racism and sectarianism: legal protection, policies and practices aimed at  
 265 mainstreaming the fight against racism and sectarianism, acting in partnership  
 266 with civil society to tackle the underlying causes and education and awareness  
 267 raising to encourage human rights education in the school curriculum and higher  
 268 education institutions.

269 There are two things which come out of this review of the literature. First, is  
 270 the problem, as McVeigh and Rolston contend, of ‘an obvious and problematic  
 271 correlation between loyalism and racism’? They produce no empirical evidence  
 272 of this. Second, existing research appears to focus on institutional racism and a  
 273 gap exists in our understanding as to what motivates or influences people in their  
 274 racist attitudes and behaviour to earn Northern Ireland this media sobriquet, the  
 275 ‘race hate capital of Europe’.

276 Connolly and Khaoury (2008: 207–8) confirm that much of the research to  
 277 date has concentrated on institutional racism in Northern Ireland, and, while  
 278 they acknowledge that this has been important in drawing attention to the

279 structural and routine nature of racial discrimination, there has been too much  
 280 emphasis on this as a way of conceptualising the problem. They suggest the need  
 281 ‘to begin naming and interrogating whiteness . . . to address racism at its source’  
 282 and highlight different approaches taken by nationalist and unionist politicians,  
 283 leaders of loyalism and republicanism in their responses to race issues in Northern  
 284 Ireland, calling for research in this area. A recent example is where a Democratic  
 285 Unionist Party Member of the Legislative Assembly in a debate in the Northern  
 286 Ireland Assembly, demanded local jobs for local people:

287 We must face reality. As a result of the recession, a number of migrant workers have returned  
 288 to their own countries. A practical and sensitive approach must be taken to calls for jobs to be  
 289 retained for our own local workers. Although we are aware of the immense contribution that  
 290 migrant workers make, nevertheless, in the middle of a recession and in the face of increased  
 291 unemployment, we must get our priorities right in securing employment for our local people.  
 292 (Buchanan, 2009: 35)

293 The comparative example here is the debate in Great Britain that racialised  
 294 tensions are fuelled by competition for scarce resources. Dench *et al.* (2006) exam-  
 295 ined the hostility directed towards Bangladeshis by white East Enders in London.  
 296 Initially, tensions emerged over competition for work. While this remains an issue,  
 297 increasingly it has been replaced by competition between the communities over  
 298 access to welfare support and public services, including education and housing.  
 299 Dench *et al.* explain this as follows: ‘the state reception of new comers has ridden  
 300 over the existing local community’s assumptions about their ownership of public  
 301 resources’ which ‘precipitated a loss of confidence in the fairness of British social  
 302 democracy’ (2006: 229). Hence, minority ethnic groups compete for opportuni-  
 303 ties and social welfare on equal terms with white Britons without ‘appearing to  
 304 have earned their rights’ to do so. In other words, a stable democracy demands  
 305 a ‘fair balance between what citizens put into society and what they get out of it’  
 306 (Dench *et al.*, 2006: 224). The researchers contend that middle-class liberals have  
 307 ‘promoted a swathe of political measures and institutions which consolidate the  
 308 rights of minorities while multiplying the sanctions against indigenous whites  
 309 who object to this’ (Dench *et al.*, 2006: 6). In short, the increased emphasis on  
 310 people’s rights has been at the expense of their responsibilities.

311 Although Dench *et al.*’s work has been criticised by Moore (2008: 350) as  
 312 ‘lacking in intellectual coherence’ and being conceptually confusing, issues raised  
 313 in their work resonate in the Northern Ireland context. For example, there is a  
 314 protracted debate about the introduction of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland,  
 315 which grapples with tensions between rights and responsibilities. Specifically,  
 316 there are recommendations to strengthen the right to equality and prohibition  
 317 of discrimination for national minorities, supplementary to the Human Rights  
 318 Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights (Northern Ireland  
 319 Human Rights Commission, 2008: 33). Against this backdrop, Northern Ireland  
 320 politicians claiming protection for local jobs can be accused of racism or

321 xenophobia. These comments have been prompted by the economic downturn.  
 322 Until recently it was recognised that migrant workers filled skills gaps in specific  
 323 sectors of the Northern Ireland economy (health, food processing, construction,  
 324 hospitality and retail). Have attitudes to migrant workers changed as threats to  
 325 'local' jobs increase? Can the rise in racist incidents and crimes be explained (in  
 326 part) by competition for jobs?

327 Before addressing the substantive issues raised by existing research, we  
 328 consider the size of the minority ethnic community in Northern Ireland, what  
 329 the Government's existing policies are to tackle racism and how they have  
 330 performed to date.

### 331 **The policy context**

#### 332 **The minor ethnic population**

333 The 2001 Northern Ireland Census quantified the size of the settled minority  
 334 ethnic communities as 14,279, or 0.8 per cent of the total population (1.68 million  
 335 at that time). This figure comprised: Chinese as the largest minority ethnic group  
 336 (4,100), South Asians (2,500), Irish Travellers (1,700) and African Caribbeans  
 337 (1,100) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2005). The census statis-  
 338 tics are now dated, and some researchers estimate that the current figure could  
 339 be as high as 45,000 (Gallagher, 2007). Transient populations are more difficult  
 340 to estimate. The number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland was  
 341 approximately: 25,000 in 2005, 31,000 in 2006, 32,000 in 2007 and 27,000 in 2008,  
 342 around 5 per cent of the Northern Ireland workforce (Northern Ireland Statistics  
 343 and Research Agency, 2009). This represents a marked increase in international  
 344 inflows and is related to the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004,  
 345 when people from countries in Central and Eastern Europe (the so-called A8  
 346 countries) were allowed to come and work in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

347 One measure of the influx of migrant workers is the Worker Registration  
 348 Scheme (WRS) managed by the UK Border Agency on behalf of the Home  
 349 Office. The scheme is used to register migrant workers from the A8 countries.  
 350 Border Agency statistics show between 1 May 2004 and 31 March 2009, a total  
 351 of 949,000 people registered with the WRS in the United Kingdom. Of these,  
 352 36,500 (or 4 per cent of the UK total) registered to work in Northern Ireland.  
 353 In contrast, the Northern Ireland population makes up around 3 per cent of the  
 354 UK population, thus indicating the scale of A8 migration to Northern Ireland.  
 355 Table 1 shows that between May 2004 and March 2009, Northern Ireland had  
 356 about one-third more migrant workers registering on a per capita basis than the  
 357 rest of the United Kingdom, with about 21 WRS registrations for every 1,000  
 358 persons in Northern Ireland compared to nearly 16 WRS registrations for every  
 359 1,000 persons in the UK as a whole (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research  
 360 Agency, 2009: 10). Overall, the statistics indicate an increasing number of settled

TABLE 1. WRS registrations per 1,000 population (May 2004–March 2009)

Country	WRS registrations (May 2004–March 2009)	2007 population estimate	WRS registrations per 1,000 population
England	808,500	51,092,000	15.8
Scotland	79,500	5,144,000	15.4
Wales	25,000	2,980,000	8.3
Northern Ireland	36,500	1,759,000	20.8
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>949,000</b>	<b>60,975,000</b>	<b>15.6</b>

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2009).

361 minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland and a relatively large influx of  
362 migrant workers from 2004 onwards.

### 363 **Government policy**

364 In July 2005, the (direct rule) Government launched its policy document *A*  
365 *Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005–10*, which aimed: to tackle racial  
366 inequalities in Northern Ireland and to open up opportunity for all, to eradicate  
367 racism and hate crime and, together with *A Shared Future*, to initiate actions to  
368 promote good race relations (OFMDFM, 2005b: 5; Hughes, 2008). The strategy  
369 defined racism to include: racist ideologies, prejudiced attitudes, discriminatory  
370 behaviour, structural arrangements and institutionalised practices resulting in  
371 racial inequality. The race strategy was underpinned by, and intended to com-  
372 plement, the existing and developing legislative framework including the Race  
373 Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and statutory duties set out in Section 75  
374 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order  
375 1997 made it unlawful to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on racial  
376 grounds in the areas of: employment and training; education; the provision of  
377 goods, facilities or services; and the disposal and management of premises and  
378 advertisements. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (section 75) requires departments  
379 and other public authorities in carrying out their functions to have ‘*due regard*  
380 to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial  
381 group’. It also requires them to ‘*have regard* to the desirability of promoting good  
382 relations’ between persons of different racial group. There is an acknowledgement  
383 in the strategy that government cannot, by itself, eradicate racism but would  
384 play its part alongside other stakeholders in tackling this insidious problem.  
385 To achieve the aims as outlined in the *Racial Equality Strategy*, a follow-on  
386 implementation plan was launched in March 2006, which committed government  
387 departments and their agencies to a wide range of actions to tackle racism and  
388 racial inequalities. The Government’s response to racism, according to the First

389 Minister, was robust and well-funded. The problem has been over-hyped by the  
390 media and rested with a tiny minority of racist people (Robinson, 2009: 288).

### 391 **Effectiveness of Racial Equality Strategy?**

392 Does the government's defence of its record on tackling racism stand up to  
393 scrutiny? We consider how the government has performed against its own *Racial*  
394 *Equality Strategy*. The analysis is structured in the following way:

- 395 ● Using baseline indicators from the Office of First Minister and deputy First  
396 Minister's *Shared Future and Racial Equality Strategy Baseline Report* (2007),  
397 we track trends in racism over time. In other words, if the government  
398 was reporting progress in tackling racism in Northern Ireland using its *own*  
399 indicators, how effective has it been?
- 400 ● We consider the social distance scale, an alternative to the government's  
401 measures above, as a means of capturing racism in a one-dimensional way.  
402 This social distance measure of racism is then used to investigate McVeigh and  
403 Rolston's (2007) assertion in the literature that sectarianism may structure  
404 how racism is produced and reproduced. The link between sectarianism and  
405 racism is therefore empirically tested.
- 406 ● Finally, using the most recent Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data  
407 (2008/09) , we attempt to model the influences on people's racist attitudes. Q1  
408 In other words, which factors are likely to impact on whether someone in  
409 Northern Ireland is racist? We do this using multi-variate binary logistic  
410 regression and arrive at a combination of factors that predict (within limits)  
411 racist attitudes in Northern Ireland.

412 We begin by assessing government's performance in tackling racism. The  
413 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) developed a  
414 number of thematic priorities to improve good relations in Northern Ireland and  
415 linked these to a set of measurable outcomes. These were part of the outworking of  
416 the Government's *Shared Future* and *Racial Equality* strategies. The first priority  
417 outcome established by OFMDFM is that: 'Northern Ireland society is free from  
418 racism, sectarianism and prejudice' (Office of the First Minister and deputy First  
419 Minister and Northern Ireland Statistics Agency, 2007: 8).

420 Baseline indicators were established as a way of quantitatively tracking racism  
421 trends in Northern Ireland. The *specific* racism indicators in the OFMDFM report  
422 are set out in Table 2. We have collated current information on *each* of these  
423 indicators to provide a rounded picture on the effectiveness of the government's  
424 strategy since its inception to tackle racism.

### 425 **Indicator 1: Number of racial incidents and crimes recorded**

426 The data on racist incidents and crimes have been collected from the Police Service  
427 of Northern Ireland (PSNI) annual crime statistics beginning with baseline year

TABLE 2. Base line indicators – racism measures

Indicators	Baseline figures	General historic trend	Data source	Year of baseline data
No 1: Number of racial incidents and crimes recorded	Racial incidents = 936 Racial crimes = 746	Incidents – up by 15%; Crimes – up by 18% (since 2004/05)	PSNI	2005/06
No. 2: Percentage of people who believe there is more racial prejudice than there was 5 years ago	68%	Up from 12% in 1994	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey Data (1994)	2005
No. 3: Percentage of people who believe there will be more racial prejudice in 5 years time	43%	Up from 11% in 1994	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey Data (1994)	2005
No. 4: Percentage of people who believe people from a minority ethnic community are less respected than they once were	49%	n/a	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey Data	2005
No. 5: Percentage of people who are prejudiced against a minority ethnic community	‘Very prejudiced’ = 1%; ‘A little prejudiced’ = 24%	Since 1994: ‘Very’ = no change; ‘A little’ = up from 10%	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey Data (1994)	2005

Source: Extracted from: Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and Northern Ireland Statistics Agency (2007) *A Shared Future and Racial Equality Strategy: Good Relations Indicators Baseline Report*.

428 2004/05. The PSNI define a racial incident as any incident, which may or may  
 429 not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other  
 430 person as being motivated by prejudice or hate. In addition, we collected data on  
 431 sectarian incidents and crimes over the same period to provide some basis for  
 432 comparison. These data are presented in Figure 1. The data show a trend increase  
 433 over the five-year period in racial incidents/crimes and corresponding decrease  
 434 in sectarian incidents/crimes. In short, as sectarian crimes have decreased, racist  
 435 incidents have increased.

436 It should, however, be noted that data on the number of racial incidents/  
 437 crimes must be set within a context of an active campaign by the PSNI  
 438 to encourage reporting. Minority ethnic groups claimed that they had little  
 439 confidence in reporting hate crime to the police in an enquiry conducted by the  
 440 Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. This resulted in a recommendation that the

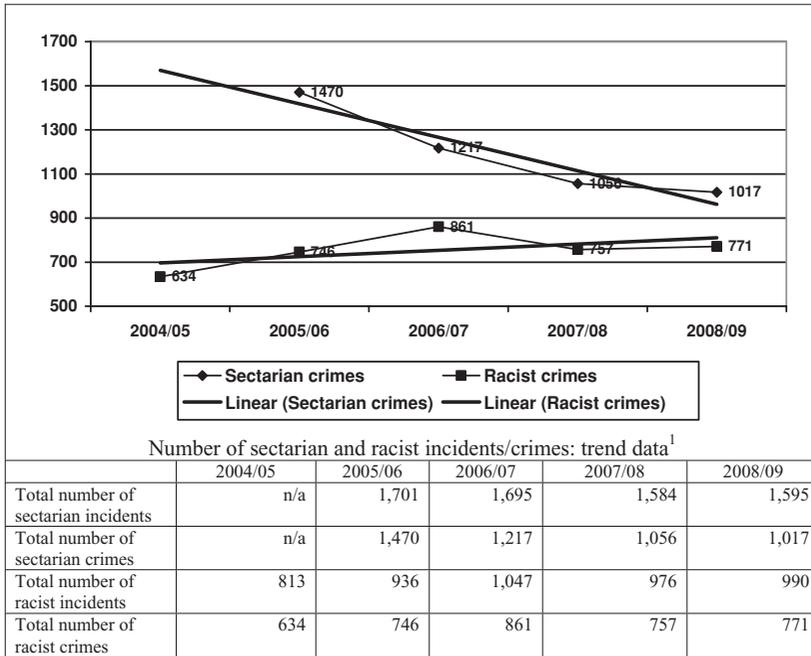


Figure 1. Racism and sectarian trends

Note: <sup>1</sup>Recorded racist crimes (sometimes referred to as notifiable offences) are those which are deemed to be indictable or triable-either-way. In the same way as incidents are identified as having a hate motivation, a crime will be recorded as having the relevant hate motivation where the victim or any other person perceives it as such. Not all incidents will result in the recording of a crime. Crimes with hate motivations are classified according to the Home Office counting rules.

Source: Collated from PSNI annual crime statistics reports; available at: [www.psn.police.uk/index/updates/updates\\_statistics.htm](http://www.psn.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics.htm)

441 police work closely with other statutory agencies and victim support groups to  
 442 'improve general confidence in the reporting system, address reasons for under-  
 443 reporting and unwillingness to prosecute' (House of Commons, Northern Ireland  
 444 Affairs Committee, 2004: 49). The PSNI published a policy directive in 2006,  
 445 'Police Response to Hate Incidents', in which they acknowledged the reasons for  
 446 under-reporting and put in place a series of measures to address this problem. The  
 447 measures included: improved recording, response and investigation procedures  
 448 on hate crime incidents; having specialist officers (Minority Liaison Officers)  
 449 available in every police district; support for victims; partnership working with  
 450 statutory and non-statutory partners to address the problem; and training for  
 451 officers in the implementation of the directive. The outworking of this policy can  
 452 be seen in high-profile publicity campaigns launched by the PSNI and aimed at

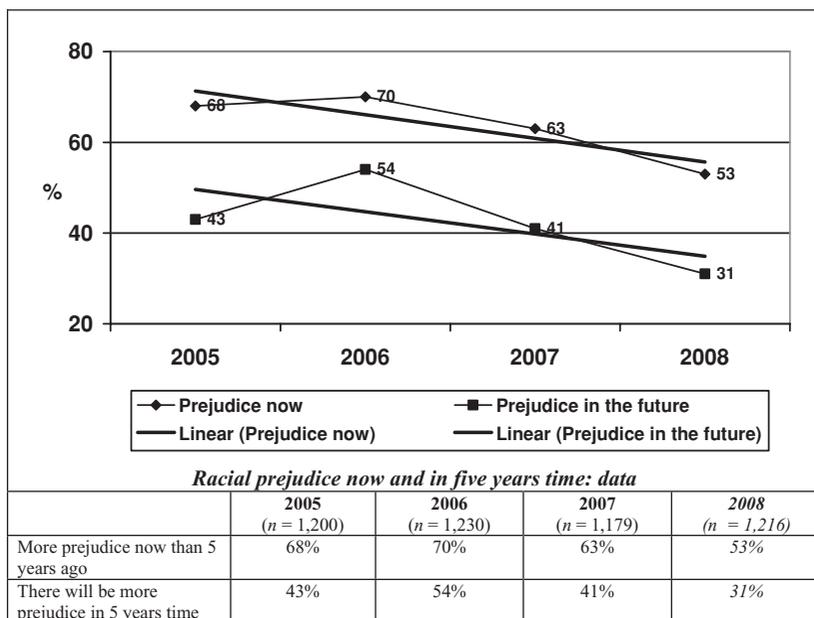


Figure 2. Prejudice trends

Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2005–2008/09.

453 encouraging the reporting and awareness of hate crimes and incidents under the  
 454 advertising banner ‘nobody deserves it and nobody deserves to get away with it’.

455 The remaining indicators (nos. 2–5 in Table 2) for measuring racism  
 456 are attitudinal data collected via an annual probability survey of inhabitants  
 457 across Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys gather  
 458 information through face-to-face interviews with about 1,200 adults aged 18 years  
 459 or over. The samples for the annual surveys consist of a systematic random sample  
 460 of addresses selected from the government’s Land and Property Services Agency  
 461 list of private addresses.<sup>1</sup>

462 Data have therefore been extracted from the yearly surveys to provide an  
 463 overview of racism in Northern Ireland as defined by OFMDFM indicators. The  
 464 first two indicators we consider here relate to perceptions of racism now and in  
 465 five years time.

466 **Indicator 2: Percentage of people who believe there is more racial prejudice**  
 467 **than there was five years ago**

468 **Indicator 3: Percentage of people who believe there will be more racial prejudice**  
 469 **in five years time**

470 The results of these two indicators are set out in Figure 2, where the trend lines  
 471 indicate a reduction in perceptions of prejudice: in other words, people believe

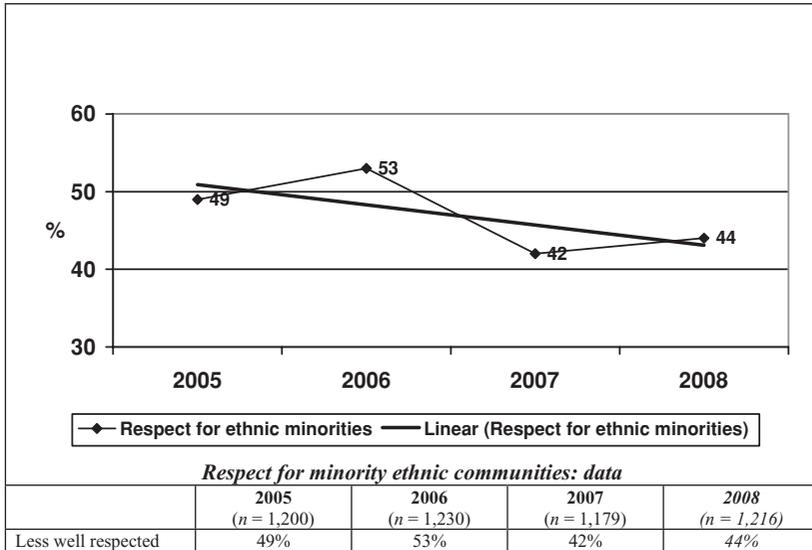


Figure 3. Respect for ethnic minorities

Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2005–2008/09.

472 there is less prejudice now than previously and this trend will continue into the  
473 future.

474 **Indicator 4: Percentage of people who believe people from a minority ethnic**  
475 **community are less respected than they once were**

476 The results are set out in Figure 3. The data show the percentage of people who  
477 ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ that minority ethnic communities are less respected  
478 in Northern Ireland than they once were. The trend would seem to indicate  
479 a growing acceptance of, and respect for, minority ethnic groups, although it  
480 should be borne in mind that these data do not include the recent high-profile  
481 racist incidents in 2009.

482 **Indicator 5: Percentage of people who are prejudiced against a minority ethnic**  
483 **community**

484 The results are shown in Figure 4 and indicate an increased trend in self-reported  
485 prejudice.

486 So, what do these results, using measures devised by OFMDFM, tell us  
487 about the priority theme of government that ‘Northern Ireland is free from  
488 racism and prejudice’? Is the government’s *Racial Equality Strategy* successful,  
489 based on its own indicators of effectiveness? If the above indicators constitute a  
490 ‘shopping basket’ of composite measures devised by government to capture the

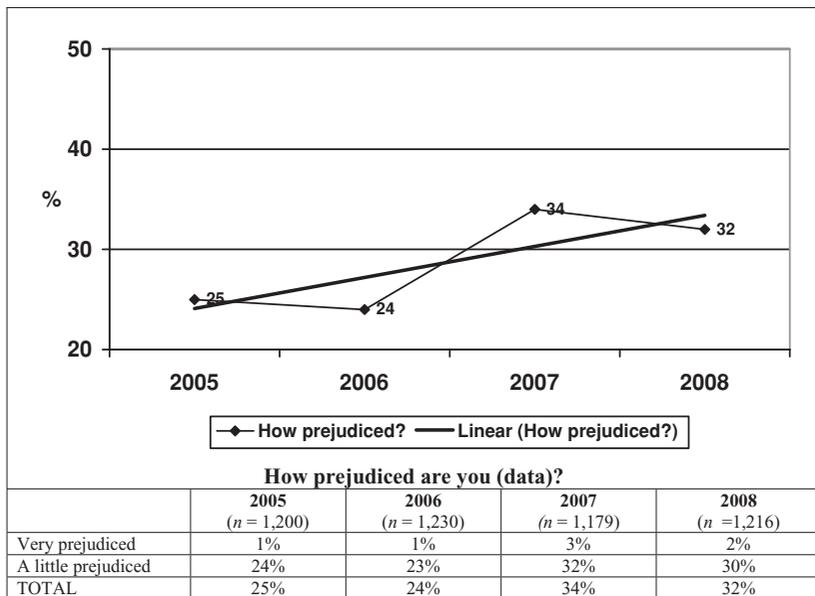


Figure 4. How prejudiced are you?

Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2005–2008/09.

491 extent of racism and prejudice in Northern Ireland, then we can conclude the  
 492 following:

- 493 • There is an upward trend in the number of reported racist incidents/crimes  
 494 and corresponding decrease in sectarian incidents/crimes officially recorded  
 495 by the PSNI.
- 496 • Respondents think that there is less racial prejudice now than five years ago,  
 497 and there will be less prejudice in five years time.
- 498 • The level of respect for minority ethnic communities has improved over the  
 499 last four years, although the very public events of 2009 are not reflected in  
 500 the data, and one suspects would significantly change people’s viewpoint on  
 501 this issue.
- 502 • Respondents considered themselves to be increasingly more prejudiced  
 503 against minority ethnic communities over time – a result which is somewhat  
 504 at odds with the finding (above) that racial prejudice at the macro level has  
 505 reduced over time and into the future (but, again, the data do not reflect the  
 506 events of 2009).

507 In summary, the Government can take little solace from the implementation  
 508 of its *Racial Equality Strategy*. Northern Ireland has some way to go before being  
 509 described as a country ‘free from racism and prejudice’ – the declared aim of the  
 510 strategy.

### The extent of racism

But are the Government's measures of racism, as outlined above, a true indication of the extent of racism in Northern Ireland? How valid and reliable, for example, are the data from a question which asks people directly if they would describe themselves as prejudiced (indicator 5 above)? Such a measure is more likely to underestimate the extent of racism in Northern Ireland because respondents are unwilling to admit to being prejudiced or racist, as this is a socially undesirable viewpoint. Hence, this type of questioning is flawed and does not take into account the many different kinds of racial prejudice that exist: from blatant forms, such as name-calling, to more subtle racial prejudice that includes racist banter and 'jokes'. Furthermore, respondents themselves may have different opinions about what constitutes racism and therefore interpret the question differently.

A more reliable measure of racial prejudice can be found in questions relating to social distance, although these are not without limitations and can also underestimate levels of racial prejudice. Questions relating to social distance in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey are based on a variant of the Bogardus (1925) social distance scale, which measures the willingness of respondents to participate in social contact with specific groups of people. The scale is a psychological test which uses a cumulative or Guttman scale to determine the degree of closeness with members of other ethnic groups. The questions posed in the 2008/09 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey are as follows:

*Would you accept people from other ethnic groups as:*

- *Tourists in Northern Ireland?*
- *A resident of Northern Ireland living and working here?*
- *A resident in your local area?*
- *A colleague?*
- *A close friend?*
- *A relative by marriage?*

This type of questioning is cumulative in that if a respondent in the survey accepts or agrees with one particular item, (s)he will also accept all previous items. Hence, if a survey respondent accepts someone from another ethnic group as a relative by marriage, (s)he is also likely to accept people from minority ethnic groups as a close friend, colleague, resident in the local area and so on. The simplicity of such a scale means that we can arrive at a one-dimensional assessment of racial attitudes. Although the scale has been criticised as too simple in that the social distance between intimate relationships may be quite different than those with, for example, tourists in Northern Ireland, it is nonetheless an effective way of probing the extent or degree of racial attitudes. In other words, those respondents who would accept people from other ethnic groups as a relative by marriage exhibit no social distance and therefore no prejudice. This is therefore

TABLE 3. Social distance scale on prejudice ( $n = 1,216$ )

Would you accept people from other ethnic groups as:	Yes
Tourists in Northern Ireland?	98%
A resident of Northern Ireland living and working here?	91%
A resident in your local area?	89%
A colleague?	90%
A close friend?	80%
A relative by marriage?	76%

*Source:* Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2008/09.

551 a one-dimensional measure that becomes useful in further analysis of racism in  
552 Northern Ireland.

553 If we consider the results of 2008/09 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey  
554 on the above questions, they largely confirm the cumulative nature of the social  
555 distance approach with respondents 'pressed' to discover the degree of social  
556 distance they could accept (see Table 3). Respondents become less willing to  
557 accept minority ethnic groups the closer the social distance, and hence accepting  
558 someone from another ethnic group as 'a relative by marriage' is a more accurate  
559 measure of racism than simply asking them 'are you prejudiced' (indicator 5  
560 above).

### 561 **Does sectarianism shape racism?**

562 The theoretical literature suggests that racism is the new sectarianism in  
563 Northern Ireland or that sectarianism may structure how racism is produced  
564 and reproduced (McVeigh, 1998). The literature also suggests that racism and  
565 sectarianism are inter-related in that they both have similar roots and expression,  
566 and sectarianism may lead to less receptive attitudes towards minority ethnic  
567 people. This theoretical contention has not been tested empirically. In an  
568 effort to explore the relationship between these two variables (sectarianism and  
569 racism), the following questions from the 2008/09 Northern Ireland Life and  
570 Times Survey data set were used as proxy measures of sectarianism and racism,  
571 respectively:

#### 572 **(a) Measuring sectarianism:**

573 ■ *Would you mind if a close relative were to marry someone of a different religion?*

574 According to Connolly and Keenan (2000:29), unwillingness to accept those from  
575 the other religion, be it Catholic or Protestant, as friends, colleagues or as relatives  
576 by marriage 'could be loosely termed as sectarianism'.

TABLE 4. Sectarianism by racism ( $n = 1,185$ )

Marry someone of a different religion		Accept minority ethnic as a relative by marriage		Total
		YES	NO	
Would mind a lot	Count	31	26	57
	% within marry someone of a different religion	54.4%	45.6%	100.0%
	% of total	2.6%	2.2%	4.8%
Would mind a little	Count	99	86	185
	% within marry someone of a different religion	53.5%	46.5%	100.0%
	% of total	8.4%	7.3%	15.6%
Would not mind	Count	774	169	943
	% within marry someone of a different religion	82.1%	17.9%	100.0%
	% of total	65.3%	14.3%	79.6%
<b>Total</b>	Count	904	281	1,185
	% of total	76.3%	23.7%	100.0%

**(b) Measuring racism:**

The variable which we use as a proxy for prejudice or racism is the social distance measure discussed above:

- *Would you be willing to accept people from other minority ethnic groups as a relative by way of marrying a close member of your family?*

We cross-tabulate these two variables using data from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Social Attitudes 2008/09 to find if there is an association between sectarian and racist attitudes. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Considering the results in Table 4 we can see that:

- 82 per cent of those who 'would not mind' marrying someone from a different religion would also accept a minority ethnic relative by marriage.
- Whereas only 54 per cent of those who 'mind a lot' or 'mind a little' marrying someone from a different religion would also accept a minority ethnic relative by marriage.

The results therefore tell us that there is a significant association (see Table 5) between people's attitudes to marrying someone of a different religion and their willingness to accept a member of the minority ethnic community as a close family member. This highly significant result ( $\chi^2 = 85.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates

TABLE 5. Chi-square tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	85.637 <sup>1</sup>	2	0.000
Likelihood ratio	77.238	2	0.000
Linear-by-linear Association	73.666	1	0.000
N of valid cases	1,185		

Notes: <sup>1</sup> 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5.

The minimum expected count is 13.52.

Summary result:  $\chi^2 = 85.64, p < 0.001$ .

Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2008/09.

595 that there is an association between sectarian and racist attitudes which people  
596 in Northern Ireland hold: those with sectarian views are more likely to be racist.

597 **What influences racism?**

598 To further understand which factors influence or predict racist attitudes in  
599 Northern Ireland, we conducted a binary logistic regression. The purpose of  
600 this analysis is to assess the impact of a set of selected predictors on a dependent  
601 variable: racist attitudes. In other words, we are interested in finding out which  
602 variables predict the likelihood of people in Northern Ireland being racist. Binary  
603 logistic regression allows us to test the predictive ability of a set of variables while  
604 controlling for the effects of other predictors in the model. Using data from the  
605 2008/09 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, we therefore select a categorical  
606 dichotomous variable which is a proxy measure of racism and a set of predictor  
607 variables.

608 The social distance variable, discussed above, in relation to whether someone  
609 would be prepared to accept a member of the minority ethnic community as a  
610 relative by marriage, appears to be a good proxy for measuring racism. We  
611 therefore use this measure as the dependent variable in the logistic regression  
612 analysis. We also list those predictor variables which we think might influence  
613 whether someone is racist. These are set out in Table 6.

614 The results of the binary logistic regression analysis using the variables above  
615 are set out in Table 7. The omnibus tests of model coefficients show a highly  
616 significant value ( $p < 0.0005$ ), and the Hosmer and Lemeshow test supports the  
617 conclusion that the model is a good fit (chi-square value of 12.23 and  $p > 0.05$ ). In  
618 other words, the variables included in the model, when combined, are significant  
619 predictors of racism. The model summary statistics indicate that between 21.7  
620 per cent and 31.7 per cent of the variability in the dependent variable is explained  
621 by this set of predictor variables. The Wald test shows that there are five variables  
622 which contribute significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) to the predictive ability of the model,  
623 and the negative/positive B values allows us to establish the relative importance

TABLE 6. Variables in the analysis

Variable types	Variable code in NILTS 2008/09 survey data	Description of the variable in survey	Variable recoded or transformed to:	Coding for binary logistic regression
Categorical dependent variable	MEGRELA	Would you be willing to accept people from other ethnic minority groups as a relative by way of marrying a close relative of your family?	RACIST	Yes/No
Predictor variable	SMARRRLG	Would you mind if a close relative were to marry someone of a different religion?	SECTARIAN	Yes/No
Predictor variable	MIGWRK1	Do you agree that migrant workers are generally good for Northern Ireland's economy?	MIGRANTS	Yes/No
Predictor variable	OUTOFNI	Have you ever lived outside Northern Ireland for more than 6 months?	ABROAD	Yes/No
Predictor variable	MEGCONT	Do you have regular direct contact with people from minority ethnic backgrounds?	CONTACT	Yes/No
Predictor variable	RAGE	Age of respondent	RAGE	Respondent's age
Predictor variable	RSEX	Gender of the respondent	GENDER	Male or female
Predictor variable	RELIGCAT	Religion of respondent	RELIGION	Catholic or Protestant

TABLE 7. Factors influencing racism in Northern Ireland

Variables in the equation						
Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Sectarian	-1.121	0.210	28.421	1	0.000	0.326
Migrants	-1.550	0.197	61.804	1	0.000	0.212
Religion	-0.535	0.201	7.112	1	0.008	0.586
Contact	-0.290	0.203	2.043	1	0.153	0.749
Gender	-0.033	0.189	0.029	1	0.864	0.968
Rage	0.036	0.006	34.175	1	0.000	1.037
Abroad	-0.531	0.232	5.239	1	0.022	0.588
Constant	-0.673	0.412	2.674	1	0.102	0.510

Omnibus tests of model coefficients				
		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	187.401	7	0.000
	Block	187.401	7	0.000
	Model	187.401	7	0.000

Hosmer and Lemeshow test			
Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	12.225	8	0.141

Model summary			
Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R-square	Nagelkerke R-square
1	698.456	0.217	0.317

Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data 2008.

624 of each predictive variable and the direction of the relationship. The results from  
625 the binary logistic regression are as follows:

- 626 • The most powerful predictor of racist attitudes is a respondent's attitude  
627 to whether 'migrant workers are generally good for Northern Ireland's  
628 economy'. Those who hold the view that 'migrant workers are good for  
629 the economy' are likely to be less racist.

- 630 ● A respondent's attitude to whether 'you mind if a close relative were to marry  
631 someone of a different religion' also predicts racism. This question is a proxy  
632 (social distance) measure of sectarianism, and hence those who hold sectarian  
633 attitudes are more likely to be racist.
- 634 ● Religion of respondent – protestants are more likely to hold racist attitudes  
635 than Catholics.
- 636 ● If the respondent had lived outside Northern Ireland for more than six  
637 months – those who have only lived in Northern Ireland are more likely to  
638 have racist attitudes compared with those who have lived outside Northern  
639 Ireland for six months or more.
- 640 ● Age of respondent – older people in Northern Ireland are more likely to  
641 display racist attitudes. This is not to ignore Jarman's work (2003) which  
642 highlighted the role of young people in racist harassment, bearing in mind  
643 the survey respondents in the NILTS data were aged 18+ years.

644 Interestingly, those variables which were *not* significant in the model were:  
645 frequency of contact with minority ethnic groups, and the gender of respondents.

## 646 Conclusions

647 Given the upsurge in racist violence in Northern Ireland and accompanying  
648 international condemnation, this paper has attempted to do several things.  
649 First, it has evaluated the effectiveness of the Government's *Racial Equality*  
650 *Strategy* launched in 2005 using its own performance criteria. The 'shopping  
651 basket' of measures shows increasing racist crimes, a corresponding decrease in  
652 sectarianism and an upward trend in levels of individual prejudice. Second, we  
653 tested the assertion in the literature that sectarianism shapes the way in which  
654 racism is reproduced/experienced, and found a significant association: those  
655 with sectarian views are more likely to be racist. Finally, responding to Connolly  
656 and Khaoury's (2008) call to interrogate individual (as opposed to institutional)  
657 racism, we investigated factors likely to predict racist attitudes. We concluded  
658 from these analyses that the most likely indicators of racist attitudes were: views  
659 on migrants' contribution to the Northern Ireland economy, sectarian attitudes,  
660 religion, whether respondents had lived outside of Northern Ireland and age,  
661 respectively.

662 What are the policy implications of these results? It is clear that the  
663 Government's *Racial Equality Strategy*, based on its own performance criteria,  
664 has been ineffective to date. Two things appear to be significant here. The failure  
665 of the main political parties (Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin) to agree  
666 on a future policy, although one is promised (*Cohesion, Sharing and Integration*),  
667 has allowed government departments and agencies to evade their responsibilities  
668 in a public policy vacuum. Yet government departments and agencies can claim  
669 that without political agreement there is little imperative to address racism. In

670 addition, there are mixed political messages. Some politicians have called for  
 671 'local jobs for local people' and accused minority ethnic representative groups of  
 672 whipping up hysteria to attract greater funding. These remarks are insensitive, at  
 673 best, during times of racial tension. Yet, others express more inclusive comments,  
 674 an example of which is given by one political leader during a debate in the  
 675 Northern Ireland Assembly:

676 Growing diversity can have a genuinely leavening effect on a society that has long been frozen  
 677 into a two-traditions divide, and it has the potential to act as a powerful lever on the old  
 678 attitudes to difference that have maintained that divide. Put simply, the growing richness of our  
 679 diverse society in Northern Ireland has the power to help healing. (Sir Reg Empey, Minister for  
 680 Employment and Learning and Ulster Unionist Leader, 2009: 41)

681 This research also points to wider policy implications. The most likely predictor  
 682 of racist attitudes is how people perceive the role of migrant workers in the  
 683 Northern Ireland economy. The mantra 'local jobs for local people' merely  
 684 reinforces the notion, particularly during a recession, that migrants are 'taking'  
 685 local jobs and, in turn, contributes to racist attitudes. Because sectarianism  
 686 and racism are associated there needs to be a combined approach to tackling  
 687 these issues, yet responsibility is vested in a plethora of bodies and agencies  
 688 such as OFMDFM, the Equality Commission, the Community Relations  
 689 Council, local authorities and the now inactive Racial Equality Forum. The  
 690 latter, somewhat ironically, was established to facilitate a partnership approach  
 691 and joint working between government departments, statutory bodies and  
 692 voluntary/community organisations. Finally, government must face up to the fact  
 693 that locating migrant workers in working-class loyalist areas has merely provided  
 694 an opportunity for *sectarian* gangs to engage in *racist* hate crime, a 'transferable  
 695 skill'.

### 696 Note

697 1 The annual survey data are available to researchers at: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>.

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