

December 2025

From Crisis to Action

How civil society leaders in Northern Ireland can better counter rising racist violence



More in
Common

The 
Community
Foundation
Northern Ireland

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Overview

Racist violence is rising in Northern Ireland. The last year saw more race incidents and race-motivated crimes recorded by the PSNI than ever before. In the year ending June 2025, Northern Ireland saw an almost 50 per cent increase in both race incidents and race crimes. Yet even these sobering figures likely understate the true scale of the problem. Throughout the interviews conducted for this report, interviewee after interviewee reported the recorded incidents as merely the "tip of the iceberg."

Behind these statistics are ethnic minority individuals and communities facing inexcusable threats and violence in their everyday lives. This rise means more harassment, more assaults, more families driven from their homes, more businesses destroyed. It means more young people bullied at school because of the colour of their skin, more people fearing vigilante attacks on their journey home from school or work.

In response to this crisis, the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland commissioned More in Common to conduct rapid research review addressing three main areas:

- Understanding where we are now with the levels of rising racist violence in Northern Ireland
- Exploring how did we get here by looking to the underlying causes of rising racist violence
- Examining where do we go from here and outlining how can leaders across sectors work together to prevent further violence

To answer these questions, More in Common employed a mixed-methods research approach:

- **Data analysis** examining PSNI hate crime statistics and other relevant NISRA datasets
- **Literature review** of academic and policy research on racist violence in Northern Ireland
- **Qualitative research** including in-depth interviews with community leaders affected by rising violence, those working in areas experiencing increased violence, and representatives from statutory agencies and civil society organisations

This initial analysis aims to inform the Community Foundation NI's ongoing strategy, work and fundraising efforts in this area. While further research is undoubtedly needed, these findings provide important insights into dynamics of rising racist violence in Northern Ireland - an area that More in Common will continue to explore as we expand our work in Northern Ireland.

Section 1: Where are we at?

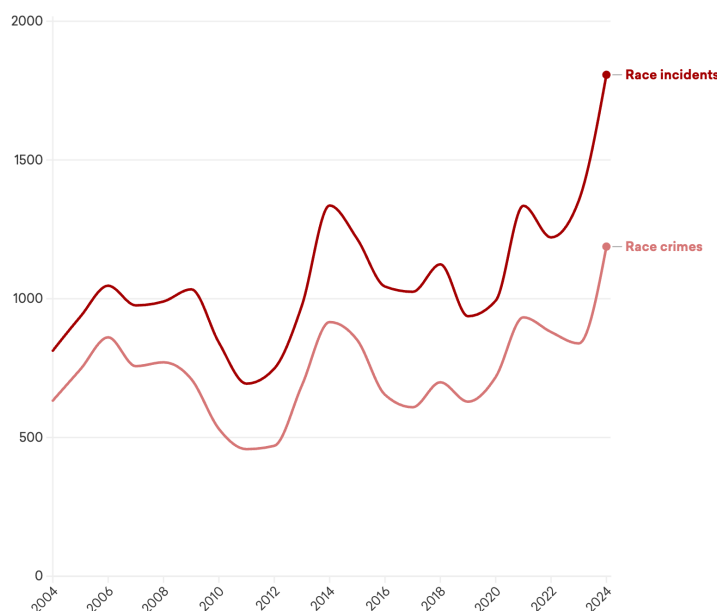
This section sets out More in Common's analysis of longitudinal Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) data on the nature and scale of race-motivated hate incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland.

Recorded race incidents and crimes are rising

The PSNI have been recording and publishing data on hate-motivated incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland since 2004. In the most recent year (July 2024–June 2025), the PSNI recorded 2,049 race incidents and 1,329 race crimes – an almost 50% increase on the previous year and the highest figures ever recorded.

While the rate of race incidents has fluctuated over the past 20 years, the recent trend is unambiguous: significant year-on-year increases, with each successive year surpassing the last. Given that reporting rates for hate incidents are widely acknowledged to be lower than the actual rates, increases or decreases in previous years may have reflected either improved or reduced reporting rather than substantive increase or decrease. The interviews that took place alongside this data analysis confirm unmistakably the current upward trajectory for race incidents in Northern Ireland.

Police recorded race incidents and crimes each month (2004–2025)



The tip of the iceberg

Our research conversations revealed a consistent message that official figures likely significantly underestimate the true scale of racist violence in Northern Ireland. Multiple interviewees described the current level of recorded incidents as "the tip of the iceberg," due to under-reporting by victims.

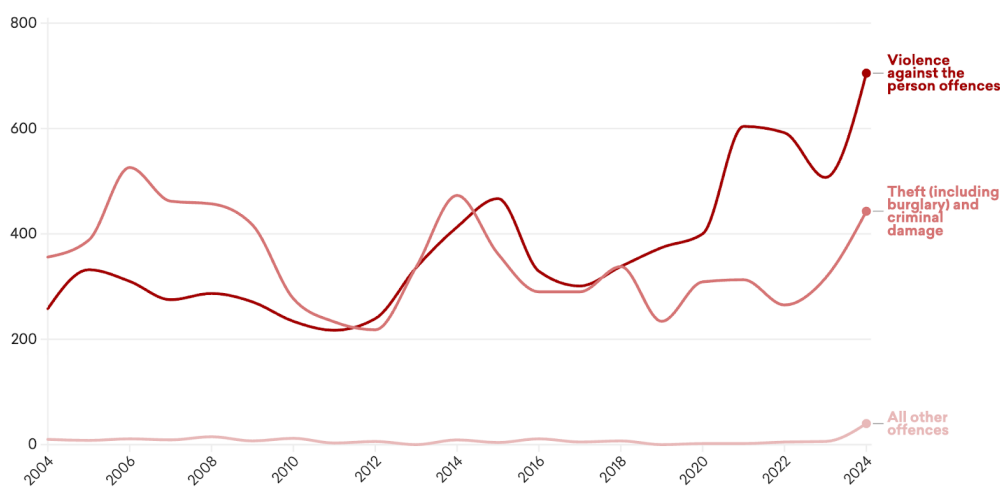
Several key barriers to reporting emerged from our interviews that explain the potential for these records to be the tip of the iceberg. First, fear of retaliation from perpetrators prevents many ethnic minority individuals from making official reports. Second, a lack of confidence that reporting will lead to meaningful action or resolution discourages victims from coming forward. Third, practical barriers – particularly language difficulties – can create additional obstacles to reporting incidents. Fourth, in both loyalist and republican areas, there have been instances of some victims being intimidated after initially engaging with the police.

The changing nature of racist violence

Analysis of 20 years of hate motivated crime data reveals a clear shift in the nature of race-motivated crimes. Between 2004-2012, property crimes dominated – theft, criminal damage, and burglary. Since 2018, however, violence against the person offences has become predominant, particularly harassment and assault offences.

Our interviews also highlighted a perceived surge in online racist hate. While comprehensive data remains limited, both ethnic minority individuals and organisations supporting these communities reported what they perceived as significant increases in digital harassment and abuse.

Change in types of race crime recorded (2004-2025)

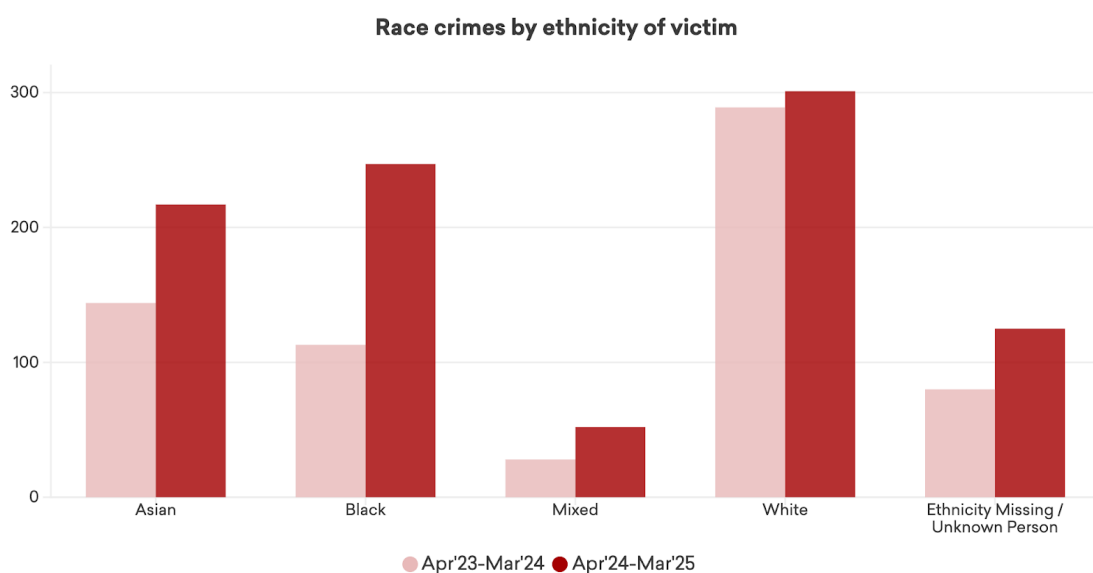


Additional evidence reinforces these concerns. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance found that two in five minority ethnic students in Northern Ireland experience racist bullying at school. The 2024 Young Northern Ireland Life and Times survey also revealed that over half of 2,000 16-year-olds surveyed had witnessed racist bullying or harassment at school. Throughout our interviews – in line with findings in previous public consultations and calls for evidence – the safety of ethnic minority young people at school emerges as a paramount concern for many ethnic minority communities particularly parents.

The targets of increasing racist violence

The PSNI records the ethnicity and nationality of the victims of race-motivated crimes and publishes this data alongside their annual reporting on incidents and crimes with hate motivation. Analysing the data from the past two full years of hate crime statistics and a clearer picture emerges of who is being targeted in the recent rises in racist violence.

Between the year ending March 24 and March 25, there was a 51 per cent increase in the race crimes involving victims with an Asian ethnicity, there was a more than doubling (119% increase) in race crime with victims with a Black ethnicity, and smaller increases were recorded for those of mixed or white ethnicity and those where ethnicity was missing or unknown.



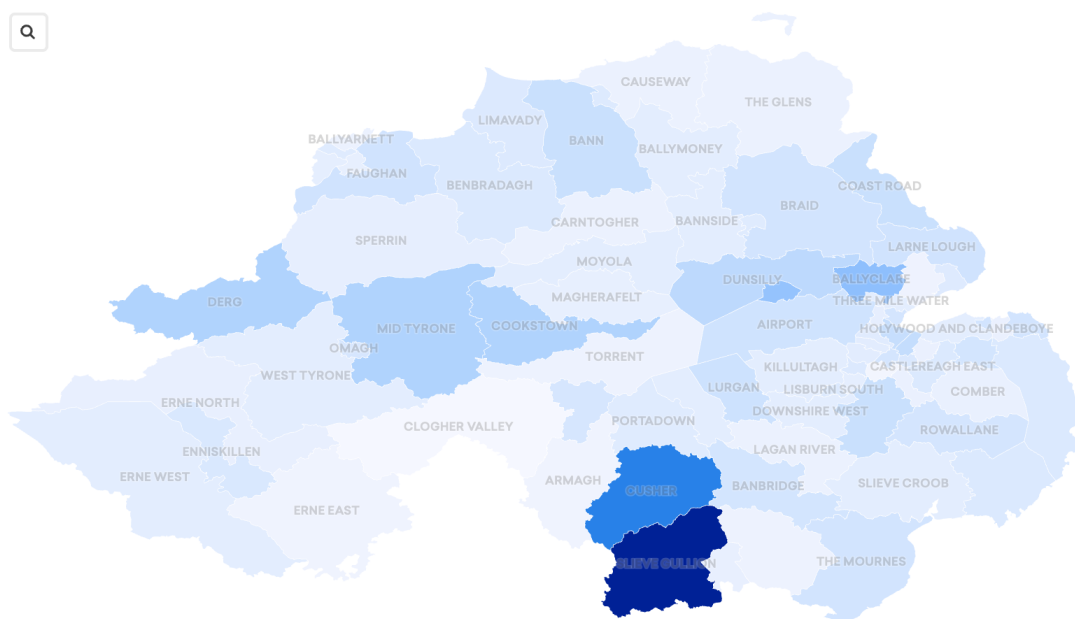
When looking through the lens of nationality (also recorded in race crime statistics by the PSNI), the most significant increases between 2024 and 2025 were with people with Indian and Nigerian nationality.

The geography of rising racist violence

While most hate incidents and hate crimes take place in Belfast (just over half of all incidents and crimes), our analysis shows that race crimes have risen significantly over the last year across Northern Ireland. Both in terms of the overall numbers in district electoral areas and in terms of percentage increase over the last year. While the majority of cases remain concentrated in Belfast, some of the largest percentage increases occur outside of Belfast. In some cases, this is due to the very small number of incidents in the past but it does illustrate the broader reality that race-motivated incidents are taking place across Northern Ireland.

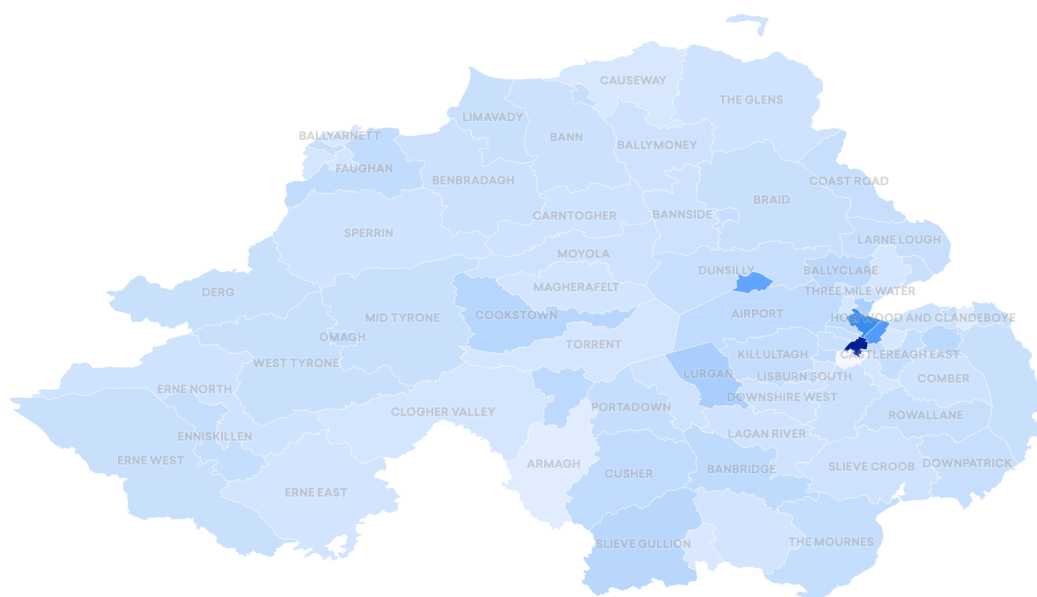
Percentage increase in race incidents by DEA (23/24-24/25)

-75 1100



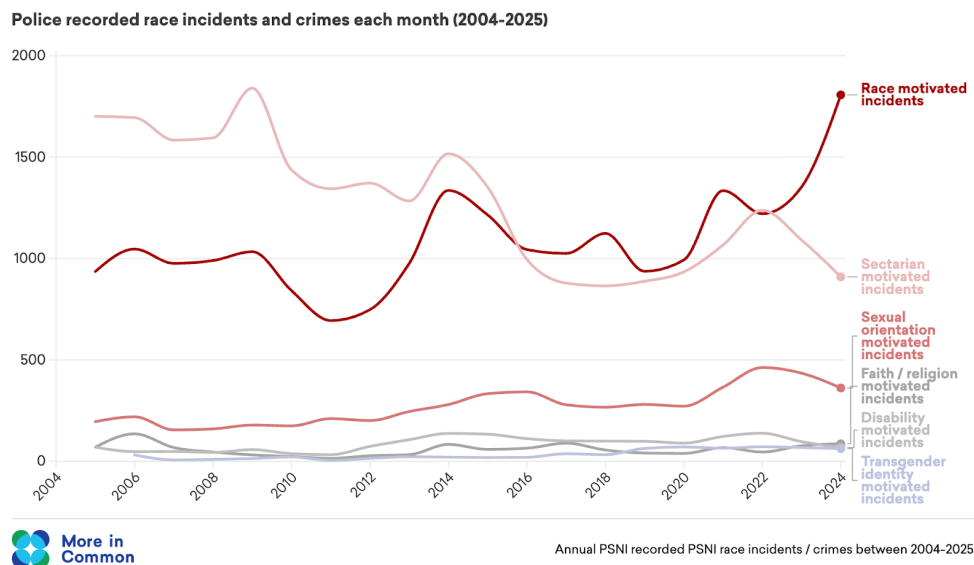
Increase in number of race incidents by DEA (23/24-24/25)

-21 134



Rising racist violence in context

What's also clear from the research is that the incidence of race incidents is rising starkly while other forms of hate-motivated incidents and crimes are either falling or plateauing in recent years. There has also been a significant divergence between race-motivated incidents and sectarian incidents in recent years with the former overtaking the latter in the reverse of early trends.



The human impact of rising racist violence

Throughout our research, interviewees described the profound everyday impacts of rising racist violence across Northern Ireland. Children withdrawing from schools, business owners not opening or shutting up shop completely, healthcare workers altering routes home to avoid confrontation or vigilante style attacks. Beyond the devastating individual impacts that individuals shared with us, many point to the broader "ripple effect" of each incident –where an attack on one individual or family can make an entire community feel unsafe with many considering their long-term future here in Northern Ireland.

Section 2: How did we get here?

The causes of rising racist violence in Northern Ireland are complex and interconnected. No single factor explains this surge in violence. Through our interviews, data analysis and literature review, seven key drivers emerged that together help explain the rising racist violence in Northern Ireland. These include:

- Short-term trigger events
- Longer-term socio-economic pressures
- Persistent racist attitudes
- Fragmented media and information environment
- The complex role of paramilitary groups
- Integration failures
- Leadership shortcomings

This section seeks to outline the nature of these factors that provides the context for increasing racist violence in Northern Ireland and that also provides the basis for our recommendations in section three.

Short-term trigger events

Across communities experiencing recent violence – from Ballymena to Belfast – interviewees consistently identified specific trigger events that transformed underlying tensions into violence. These triggers varied: alleged crimes, the opening of asylum accommodation, or pieces of viral social media content among a whole series of other potential trigger events. While interviewees told us that triggers alone didn't cause the violence, their role in crystallising existing tensions into harassment, assault, riots, and property damage was not to be under-estimated.

Longer-term socio-economic pressures

Economic deprivation featured prominently in our in-depth interview conversations about the wider context to rising racist violence. Our data analysis shows however a more complex relationship between deprivation and rising race incidents. More in Common analysis of Multiple Deprivation Index scores reveals that while many high-race-incident areas experience significant deprivation, more prosperous areas also see significant numbers of race incidents. The take-away from the analysis suggests that deprivation can create conditions for community tension and rising numbers of race incidents but this is far from inevitable.

Housing also emerged as a particularly acute pressure point in our research conversations. Multiple interviewees described how competition for social housing and concerns about allocation policies have intensified community tensions, creating perceived competition

between established residents and newcomers. In Ballymena specifically, there was significant criticism of landlords in the area for both failing to register or be compliant with HMO regulations and failing to upkeep their properties which contributed to broader community tensions.

Enduring racist attitudes

Enduring racist attitudes undeniably fuel rising racist violence in Northern Ireland. The 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey reveals the depth of the problem: more than half of people in Northern Ireland (56 per cent) respondents believe racial prejudice has increased over the past five years. The same survey found that 15% of people would not accept a Muslim as a close friend, while 11% expressed the same view about people from minority ethnic groups. These perceptions translate into the everyday experiences of minority ethnic people living in Northern Ireland. Research from 2022 commissioned by Belfast City Council found that approximately 40% of ethnic minority interviewees had experienced racist hate crime.

Fragmented media and information environments

Interviewees attested to how digital platforms and social media have transformed how racist violence spreads and sustains itself in Northern Ireland. For example with the recent violence in Ballymena earlier this year, interviewees described how TikTok videos from self-styled "citizen journalists" drew young outsiders into local tensions, prolonging and intensifying violence over a number of days. Interviewees also spoke to the speed of social media circulation outpacing on-the-ground fact-checking by community leaders, allowing misinformation to shape real-world actions before corrections could take hold.

Analysis by the CAJ, Unison and the Rabble Collective following the recent violence in Ballymena set out the role social media plays in enabling and multiplying the effects of racist violence. Their analysis finds that social media has taken on a more active role in organising anti-migrant activism such as through identifying homes or co-ordinating vigilante patrols. They find an increased use of the "Concerned Resident" or "Concerned Parent" framing and their conclusion is the social media role in the Ballymena violence has served as a spring board for more confident and visible anti-migrant presence in local communities.

The complex role of paramilitaries in rising racist violence

Our research revealed clear disagreement with interviewees about the role of paramilitary involvement in rising racist violence in Northern Ireland. While some interviewees insisted that paramilitaries - especially loyalist groups - actively orchestrate attacks, those working directly with paramilitary and ex-paramilitary organisations painted a more nuanced picture. While some argued that this is a predominantly or exclusively loyalist paramilitary

problem, the majority of our interviewees disagreed suggesting that incidents in Newry and Derry and the involvement of the far-right, far-left and other extremist groups both from Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland mean that the causes of racist violence cut across traditional sectarian lines. There was however broad agreement of the highly localised nature of paramilitary involvement in racist violence.

However, across the research, interviewees broadly identified three main responses from paramilitary groups to rising racist incidents: active involvement, indifference, and active opposition. A summary of the nature of each response as recounted across the interviews is outlined below.

The indifferent: Interviewees described the largest group of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland remaining fairly passive in response to rising racist violence. The reasons given for this 'indifference' were varied. Some described the indifference as tacit approval but without the consequences of potential backlash. Others said the indifference was feigned to mask the loss of control that some paramilitary groups are experiencing in their communities - they wouldn't be able to escalate or prevent escalation if they so desired. The final explanation was that some organisations are genuinely committed towards disbanding their organisations and so take no active role (positive or negative) in their communities.

The Actively Involved: Interviewees identified another faction of paramilitaries actively engaged in racist violence, though many interviewees disagreed about its size. Some described it as a small minority, while others argued that 'freelancers' - former paramilitaries operating outside formal command structures - represent a significant and growing cause of racist violence and should be considered as part of paramilitary groups actively involving themselves in racist violence.

The freelancer phenomenon dominated many interviews. Most agreed that former paramilitaries increasingly operate independently, conducting vigilante patrols and organising racist incidents without explicit organizational sanction. Yet a key disagreement emerged in the interviews over whether these individuals really were rogue actors or whether they were operating with the tacit approval of the leadership of paramilitary groups. This ambiguity - whether the violence stems from sanctioned activity, tolerated freelancing, or genuine rogue action - complicates any response to paramilitary-linked racist violence. Individuals working on disbandment and transitioning of paramilitaries also pointed to how some of the previous tools used to tackle paramilitarism failed to work in the context of racist violence.

The Opposed: Interviewees then described a third group actively working to prevent or de-escalate racist violence. These paramilitaries intervene directly when tensions rise - dispersing crowds or using their influence (sometimes coercive) to discourage further escalation or attacks whether through warnings or patrols. Several interviewees described situations where these groups successfully prevented violence that the PSNI couldn't or

wouldn't address - either because communities wouldn't engage with police or because paramilitary intervention carried more weight with potential perpetrators. However, other interviewees were uncomfortable with the state engaging with paramilitary organisations on these issues which risks justifying their continued existence and slowing any route to disbandment.

Integration failures

In communities experiencing violence, interviewees frequently linked incidents to integration failures. In Ballymena, the issue was described as hyperlocal – the over-concentration of Roma families in specific streets that broader statistics obscured. Residents described years of unaddressed concerns about integration that eventually erupted into violence.

While some exploited these tensions to advance broader immigration campaigns including concerns about channel crossing and asylum accommodation, the underlying community concerns in Ballymena often predated current debates. Home Office data also confirms no asylum seekers were housed in Ballymena in the period leading up to the June 2025 violence so while broader immigration concern may have been a factor in the violence, the specific causes in Ballymena focused more significantly on immigration failures.

Leadership shortcomings

Across all sectors, interviewees expressed frustration with political leadership, though assessments varied. Many described inadequate condemnation of violence, unfulfilled promises of support for affected businesses, and absence during critical moments. Others, however, recognized that political leadership extends beyond statements in responses to crisis - crediting some politicians for sustained engagement with affected communities, important behind-the-scenes work, and attempts to address underlying tensions before they erupted into violence.

The challenge of defining effective leadership became apparent in these conversations. While few could articulate exactly what successful political intervention would look like, most agreed that reactive responses alone - whether statements or emergency support - have proven insufficient. The consensus pointed toward a need for more proactive, sustained engagement that both prevents violence and supports long-term community recovery. Some politicians were acknowledged for attempting this deeper work, though interviewees stressed these efforts remain the exception rather than the rule.

Section 3: Where do we go from here?

The Community Foundation NI asked More in Common to explore what leaders across Northern Ireland – particularly in philanthropy and civil society – can do to counter the rise in racist violence. Our analysis of literature, data, and extensive interviews with community and civil society leaders points toward a new grantmaking and programming in this area. This section presents our recommendations, organised around one foundational principle and six supporting pillars.

Foundational principle: Investing in people and community leadership

Throughout our research, we asked interviewees for ideas about specific projects or approaches that could be scaled to address rising racist violence in Northern Ireland. The consistent finding was that no single perfect intervention or project exists. Instead, tackling a societal challenge of this nature and magnitude requires multiple approaches, tested and refined on the ground.

One theme dominated our conversations: **investing in people**. Interviewees consistently attributed communities' ability to prevent or contain racist violence to the quality of local leadership. Projects and programmes, they argued, were merely tools – the real imperative should be developing community leaders who command local trust and can navigate complex challenges.

While funders often acknowledge the importance of people and talent, implementing this principle in practice is likely to require some significant shifts in grantmaking practice.

Interestingly, when asked about funding levels, interviewees endorsed the current graduated approach. They saw value across the spectrum – from hundreds of pounds for immediate needs or micro-projects to tens of thousands for sustained programmes. Different amounts serve different purposes and interviewees thought that was worth continuing.

This means both cultivating new leaders and supporting existing ones with resources and autonomy to address violence effectively – trusting their judgment about what works, whether that's organising community contact initiatives or simply buying paint to refresh neglected spaces.

In Northern Ireland's context, this approach carries particular significance. Building alternative community leadership offers pathways beyond paramilitary structures, whose complex role in racist violence we explored in Section 2. More work is needed in building a group of leaders at the local level across Northern Ireland capable of commanding the

confidence of their communities and accelerating the disbandment of paramilitarism in the process.

Pillar 1: Strengthening victim support

Our research interviews identified failures in supporting victims of racist violence, reinforcing findings from previous evidence reviews and calls for evidence.

Failed Business Support: A pressing concern for interviewees was the compensation process for businesses damaged by racist violence. Interviewees described how victims faced an overly complex and bureaucratic process leading to months of delays while agencies disputed responsibility, leaving destroyed businesses in limbo. When compensation did arrive, it rarely covered actual losses. Several interviewees argued for more fundamental reform of the current system for compensation – streamlining the claims process and expanding community recovery funds, currently limited to charities and community groups, to include affected businesses.

Education System Failures Schools emerged as another critical failure point for supporting victims of racist violence. Interviewees consistently reported that schools are not addressing racist bullying effectively – speaking to the high level of concern among parents of ethnic minority students and a broad feeling among teachers and school leadership of feeling ill-equipped and unsupported in handling racially motivated incidents.

Structural Barriers to Support Beyond these immediate gaps, interviewees identified how funding structures themselves can obstruct effective victim support. Artificial boundaries between service provision and advocacy create unnecessary constraints – organizations must choose between delivering frontline support or advocating for systemic change. Yet interviewees insisted effective victim support requires both: direct services inform better advocacy, while advocacy work improves service delivery. This virtuous cycle, where practical experience shapes policy recommendations and policy work enhances direct support, remains broken by some funding restrictions.

Pillar 2: Develop better rapid response capacity

Given the role of trigger events in sparking violence, communities need enhanced capacity for rapid intervention. This requires two distinct capabilities including preventing escalation and de-escalating active violence.

Preventing escalation

Community leaders need the resources, support and relationships to identify tensions early and resolve them quickly. One interviewee recalled a previous CFNI's intervention in South Belfast, where community friction over clothes drying in streets was resolved simply by purchasing clothes horses for residents in that area at a cost of £500. While not all triggers

are so easily addressed, the example illustrates the potential of rapid, practical responses. Effective intervention requires leaders who understand their communities, can engage all stakeholders, and focus on practical solutions.

De-escalating active violence

When violence erupts – and current trends suggest it will again – community leaders need better de-escalation skills. While police maintain primary responsibility for public order, local community leaders can play crucial supporting roles. Historically, local paramilitary groups have filled this space through coercive methods. Building credible community-based alternatives should be a priority as paramilitary groups disband. This again requires leaders who understand their communities, can engage all stakeholders including the police and prioritise practical de-escalation methods.

Improving crisis communications

An area for development in both preventing escalation and de-escalating active violence is improving crisis communications in the lead up to and when racist violence breaks out.

Interviewees highlighted two specific challenges. First, responding to violence triggered by crimes involving migrants requires nuanced communication that neither minimises individual incidents nor stigmatises entire communities. Interviewees felt it was possible to do both of these but current efforts fell short.

Second, some interviewees criticised current anti-racist demonstrations in response to rising racist violence as risking alienating potential through narrowly focusing on a small group of their most vocal supporters rather than aiming to engage a broader swathe of the public in Northern Ireland. Interviewees felt that more effective demonstrations of solidarity in response to racist violence would require broader coalitions and more inclusive approaches to counter rising racist violence more effectively.

Pillar 3: Addressing structural drivers

While structural factors alone don't explain rising racist violence, housing pressures, economic hardship, and deprivation create conditions and the context for community tensions and racist violence to flourish. Funders investing in interventions addressing these root causes can multiply the impact of broader anti-racist efforts.

Interviewees talked about how efforts which support housing, economic development, and community regeneration do more than improve material conditions – they can help reduce the zero sum thinking and address the legitimate broader community grievances that extremists exploit to pit communities against each other. Interviewees told us that when people in their area feel secure in their housing, employment, and future prospects, they're less likely to be susceptible to narratives that blame newcomers for failures. Several

interviewees described how visible improvements to neglected areas – even as simple as some street trees, new bins or painted streets – had the potential to change the entire dynamic and conversation on community relations.

This approach also embeds anti-racism efforts within broader social improvements benefiting all communities. Rather than positioning anti-racism work as something separate from or competing with other community needs, it becomes part of more comprehensive neighbourhood renewal. Interviewees talked about racist violence as a societal problem demanding societal solutions – not isolated interventions but comprehensive responses that strengthen the entire community. Some interviewees said that they felt the most effective anti-racism work would not use that name, but would look like and sound like effective community development work that creates conditions where racism and racist violence struggles to take root.

Pillar 4: Expand meaningful contact initiatives

Academic research and our interviewees' experience converge on a clear finding: well-designed, sustained contact between different communities remains one of the most effective interventions against rising prejudice. However, both literature and our conversations emphasize a crucial caveat—implementation determines whether these initiatives succeed or fail. Successful contact initiatives share several key characteristics that emerged consistently across our interviews:

Natural, not forced: Effective programmes embed contact in everyday settings – local sports clubs, cafes, parent-toddler groups – rather than formal workshops branded as "contact initiatives." Several interviewees emphasized building on existing community structures: welcoming newcomers into established walking clubs or traditional events rather than creating parallel "multicultural" alternatives. Interviewees argued that this approach feels more authentic and proves more sustainable.

Relationships before metrics: While evaluation matters for accountability, interviewees warned against letting measurement dominate. They described the damage caused by heavy-handed evaluation requirements – the awkwardness of participants completing attitude surveys before meeting neighbours, the artificiality when every interaction must be documented for funders. When data collection overshadows human connection, relationship-building suffers.

Careful preparation and genuine choice: Several interviewees stressed that victims need separate support before any contact work begins. Participation must remain genuinely voluntary – forced interactions can deepen rather than reduce tensions.

Giving relationship building time: Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that prejudice reduction requires patience. Quick photo opportunities showing diverse groups together may satisfy funders but achieve little lasting change. Real shifts in attitudes develop

through sustained interaction over months, not hours. Rushing the process or demanding immediate results undermines the deep relationship-building that actually changes hearts and minds.

Pillar 5: Strengthen information infrastructure

Interviewees spoke of the importance of developing more sophisticated systems for gathering, analysing, and sharing information if we want to more effectively tackle racist violence in Northern Ireland.

Building coordination and early warning capacity

Several interviewees talked about the importance of some sort of dedicated hub – either a new organisation or resourcing a hub within an existing organisation – to connect those working at community level across Northern Ireland. Interviewees saw the hub as serving a few functions:

First, it would gather community intelligence on emerging tensions. Community workers often sense brewing problems weeks before incidents occur: unusual social media activity, changes in school playground dynamics, new graffiti, shifts in who uses which spaces. Currently, these observations remain fragmented and given that community tensions in one area have spilled over into others – the need for better co-ordination is clear.

Second, it would monitor digital spaces where tensions build and violence organises. Interviewees described both themselves and community workers feeling overwhelmed trying to track fast-moving online narratives across TikTok, WhatsApp groups and local Facebook pages. A coordinated monitoring function could identify emerging threats, track misinformation campaigns, and alert communities to potential incoming threats.

Third, it would support increased incident reporting by providing a trusted intermediary between minority ethnic communities and police. Many victims hesitate to report directly to PSNI but might share experiences with community organisations.

While existing organisations in Great Britain and Republic of Ireland monitor far-right extremism, interviewees felt that Northern Ireland's unique dynamics – the intersection with paramilitarism, sectarian divisions, alongside the influence of other extremist groups – would benefit from having dedicated local expertise and focused on addressing extremism across the board rather than a specific focus on the far right for example.

Improving information quality in public discourse

Interviewees also spoke to the need for community leaders to have better tools to counter the misinformation that fuels violence. FactCheckNI's model offers important lessons, particularly their strategy of training trusted community figures rather than simply

publishing corrections online. There are clear opportunities to expand the work of FactCheckNI and others to strengthen the information infrastructure in this space.

However, fact-checking alone won't solve the underlying problems. As several interviewees noted, racist violence often builds on genuine and legitimate community concerns. Interviewees argued that effective and robust responses must go beyond correcting false claims to addressing underlying anxieties.

Pillar Six: Generating actionable research

Throughout our interviews, interviewees talked about their frustration at operating partially blind in this area – making decisions without data about broader public or community attitudes and this knowledge gap limiting the effectiveness of community engagement.

Several interviewees spoke of the importance of developing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of public attitudes towards issues such as immigration and integration, and understanding it through the lens of different segments of society and different voter groups given the high political sensitivities of this work. Work which explores not just the what of public opinion, but the why as well was something that interviewees across the piece thought would be helpful.

Interviewees also talked about the speed of research and the rapid turnaround research in crisis scenarios would add much value rather than waiting for longer-term research projects to deliver.

Broader lessons for funders

In addition to the pillars identified above, several other learnings emerged from our interviews that should provide opportunity for reflection among funders working on these issues, these include:

- **Risk tolerance:** Some interviewees felt that current approaches were overly cautious. They said some examples of failure would indicate appropriate risk-taking and innovation.
- **Leadership criteria:** Requirements that work for funders elsewhere may not fit Northern Ireland's demographics for example several interviewees pointed out that insisting on specific ethnic minority leadership of organisations can both limit the applicant pool and unfairly burden minority-led organisations.
- **Holistic approaches:** Interviewees felt that isolated anti-racism interventions prove less effective than those embedded within broader community development programmes. They said that racist violence doesn't exist in isolation and neither should the response to it.
- **Measurement fixation:** Over-emphasis on quantifiable outcomes drives investment toward easily measured but potentially less effective interventions. There was a plea from some interviewees for impact to matter more than metrics.

Appendix 1: Methodology

This rapid research review project employed a mixed-methods approach over eight weeks (September-November 2025) to examine the rise in racist violence in Northern Ireland and identify effective responses.

Quantitative Analysis

More in Common analysed 20 years of Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) hate crime statistics (2004-2025), examining trends in incident types, victim demographics, and geographic distribution. This was supplemented by analysis of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) datasets including Multiple Deprivation Measures and demographic data to identify correlations between area characteristics and incident rates.

Literature Review

More in Common conducted a rapid evidence review of academic literature and policy reports examining racist violence in Northern Ireland, focusing on publications from 2020-2025. This included peer-reviewed articles, government reports, civil society research, and international comparative studies on hate crime and community tensions.

Qualitative Research

The core of our research consisted of semi-structured interviews in both 1:1 and focus group settings with community leaders in areas experiencing increased incidents, leaders from ethnic minority communities affected by racist violence, statutory agency representatives working on violence and racism issues and civil society practitioners working on anti-racism and community cohesion. Interviews were conducted anonymously to protect the identity of interviewees and ensure candid responses.



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