



The kids who hunt gays

Children as young as ten, hunting in packs, are responsible for bashings of gays and lesbians, new research shows.

And many of the attacks took place within full view of passers by.

The information is revealed in the findings of the Streetwatch violence monitoring project, co-ordinated by the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and the Counselling Service. The project's full report is to be released next week.

67 bashings were studied. They occurred in the six months between November 1988 and April 1989.

One of the clearest findings is that the younger the bashers, the bigger are the packs in which they hunt for gays and lesbians.

In six percent of the bashings, the age of the attackers was estimated at between ten and fifteen years.

43 percent of bashings were carried out by people between 15 and 20, and 40 percent were between 20 and 25.

Teenagers tended to strike in gangs of between 10 and 15, researcher Gary Cox said. "The schools have got to do something about this. A lot of these attackers are schoolkids."

The average size of gangs

was five, with a maximum of 15.

"But for our people, the old adage of safety in numbers seems to offer no guarantee," Cox said.

48 percent of those bashed were with friends or acquaintances at the time.

A huge majority of people reporting being bashed — 81 percent —

suffered serious injury.

Of those, 82 percent received head injuries.

94 percent of assailants were male. And most of their victims — 72 percent — were between 25 and 39.

Only 22 percent of cases involved robbery. But in an overwhelming 79 percent, people believed they had

been bashed because of being gay or lesbian.

Only nine percent of respondents believed their sexuality was not a motive.

Assailants in 74 percent of cases made anti gay taunts.

Almost all attacks appeared to involve some sort of anti gay intent, Cox said.

"One class of attacks is clearly hate crime.

"But another class may be to do with robbery. They see gays as soft targets. Their attitude may not be so much hate as derision."

Many of the attacks happened within the likely view of passers by, the research shows.

The vast majority of attacks — 73 percent — happened between Thursday and Sunday morning. And many occurred in the Oxford Street area between 9pm and 11pm — when the weekend streets are busy.

The Streetwatch project began when activists

realised that few anti gay assaults were being reported to police. Police action and resourcing depends on statistical information.

Even among the Streetwatch respondents — whom Cox said were the sort of people most likely to report incidents — only 48 percent contacted the police.

And of these, many are unlikely to have resulted in a formal police report.

Of those who didn't contact police, most said there was little the police could do.

Only 17 percent were deterred because they believed police wouldn't take them seriously.

And only one percent cited embarrassment.

Those who did contact police were generally happy with the service they received. 56 percent said police were supportive and helpful, with 19 percent reporting aggressive, homophobic or unhelpful service.

Danish rush to wedlock

More than 400 gay and lesbian couples in Denmark are reported to have married within three weeks after gay marriages were made legal.

On 1 October last year, Denmark became the first country in the world to legalise marriages between people of the same sex. The newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* carried out an informal survey of town halls in centres throughout the country.

"Obviously the real number after three months is much greater," Else Slange, president of the Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians, said. Meanwhile, activists will fight measures which prevent gay adoption and which allow the Lutheran Church to refuse to officiate at gay and lesbian weddings.

A recent opinion poll showed 64 percent of Danes approve of the new gay marriage law. Among those under fifty, the figure rises to 70 or 80 percent.

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Mardi Gras Association \$22,000.

One spectator suffered a cardiac arrest during the parade.

An ambulance was called. The same ambulance picked up another spectator who had overdosed on drugs.

A fire engine threaded through Oxford Street, on its way to a fire in Yurong Street.

400 marshals worked in the rain for four hours. And about 90 police patrolled the parade route and party area throughout the evening.

There was close co-operation between police and Mardi Gras officials. Senior police sat with Mardi Gras personnel in the parade's mobile radio control centre.

The initiative of police and Mardi Gras organisers to prevent people from viewing the parade from awnings was successful — though the real test may be yet to come, when future parades attract normal sized crowds in fine weather.

"Only a few people climbed onto the awnings, and they came down quickly when they were told to," Westmore

Gras Party in the show-grounds' vast Government Pavilion when an over enthusiastic partygoer climbed onto one of the large girders holding the roof up.

Perched high above the heads of the crowd, he continued dancing — disregarding the danger to himself and others.

The hall was cleared in eight minutes, after public address announcements. But the high level dancer, apparently not realising that the hall was being cleared because of him, also obeyed the order.

By the time a hydraulic lift could be brought in, he had climbed down from his rooftop perch.

About 25 people were treated by first aid workers for adverse drug reactions, after taking apparently adulterated drugs.

Several had fits because of bad drugs, Tony Westmore said.

"It seems some of the stuff people bought wasn't what they paid for," he said.

"It may also have been the case that people took too much."

Despite unprecedented police presence, all night lighting in Moore Park and patrols by Mardi Gras security guards, some partygoers' cars were vandalised.

About four cars were significantly damaged, with panels kicked in and aerials snapped off.

One car was doused with petrol, apparently in an attempt to set it on fire.

The vandals were interrupted at about 8am by one of the car's owners.

Almost as the parade ended, the rain stopped. The party's programme of outside entertainment went ahead as stars gradually appeared in the night sky.

Outside, scalpers were selling tickets, which cost \$39, for \$80. But they had overestimated demand. Later, the price dropped to \$20.

Party tickets sold out more than a week before the event.

But Mardi Gras advertisements had publicised that there were to be no tickets sold at the door. And overseas and interstate