



The Leadership Conference
Education Fund

Cause for Concern 2024:

The State of Hate

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Acknowledgments

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Cause for Concern 2024: The State of Hate is the most recent publication in The Leadership Conference Education Fund's "Cause for Concern" series first published in 1997. This newest publication outlines an unmistakable pattern that has emerged during the last four presidential campaign cycles: Reported hate crimes increase during elections. "Cause for Concern 2024" provides recommendations for how to address the current state of hate as we approach a deeply concerning 2024 election cycle.

The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of statements and interpretations contained in this publication.

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Executive Summary

Each of the last four presidential campaign cycles has shown an unmistakable pattern: Reported hate crimes increase during elections. And while not all hate crimes and hate incidents are committed by white supremacists, as this paper outlines, white supremacists have been particularly active during the last four presidential elections. From the mainstreaming of hate and the failure of social media platforms to adequately address disinformation, the current climate is rife with opportunities for the trend of increased hate to continue into the 2024 election — unless action is taken.

In October 2023, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released the most recent statistics on hate crimes. These data showed that 2022 was the highest year on record for reported hate crimes since the FBI began publishing the data in 1991.¹ This marks the third consecutive year of record-high reports of hate crimes. But because law enforcement agencies do not have to report any data on hate crimes to the FBI, this is not the full picture. In fact, 2022 had the lowest amount of participation from law enforcement agencies since 2012.² Even though the most recent data show the highest number of reported hate crimes on record, we know the reality is far worse.

Tragically, since 2015, reported hate crimes have nearly doubled. The Trump candidacy empowered white nationalists and provided them with a platform³ — one they had been seeking with renewed intensity since the historic election of America’s first Black president in 2008. Since 2015, communities across the country have experienced some of the most violent and deadliest years for hate in modern history.

Today’s political climate is highly charged. From white supremacist and anti-government movements coalescing and moving more into the political mainstream, to conspiracy theories circulating online, to the amplification of hate by public officials, there are few — if any — signs that tensions will lessen.⁴ Movements grounded in attempts to whitewash history and deny the rights of the LGBTQ+ community have turned hate into campaign platforms. Furthermore, the most recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East has created a climate of increased hate targeting Arab, Jewish, and Muslim Americans.⁵ This is a climate that has been exploited by white supremacists seeking to further their hateful agendas.⁶

Contributing to the increase in hate are social media companies that have not internalized the lessons of the past and have set the stage for a 2024 election year that is at least as toxic online as past elections. Platforms have policies in place that curb and prevent the spread of hate and voting disinformation, but they do not consistently enforce them.⁷ In the last year, platforms have further cut back on enforcing disinformation, reduced or eliminated their trust and safety staff, and hollowed out protections against hate incitements on their platforms.

In this paper — the most recent publication in The Leadership Conference Education Fund’s “Cause for Concern” series first published in 1997 — we provide the following recommendations for how to address the current state of hate ahead of a deeply concerning 2024 election cycle:

- There is a critical need to improve hate crime data reporting. The Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act is legislation designed to address chronic underreporting of hate crime data by conditioning funding to large city police departments on their credible hate crime reporting to the FBI.
- The federal government should confront white supremacist violence in a manner consistent with civil and human rights.
- The federal government should promptly implement and provide regular status updates on the implementation and enforcement of President Biden’s May 2022 executive order mandate to address white supremacy and invidious discrimination in the hiring and retention of federal law enforcement officials.
- Social media platforms must invest in de-platforming hate for the upcoming local, state, and national elections.
- Public officials should speak out against hate and refrain from appeals to bigotry in election campaigns.



II. The State of Hate: Troubling Trends

According to research and historical data from the FBI, hate incidents and violence tend to increase around general elections.⁸ This has largely been the case since the FBI began publishing hate crime data in 1991. In more recent election cycles, white supremacist hate, and specifically white nationalists, have played a role in driving this trend.

White supremacy is a racist ideology that rests on the belief that the white race is inherently superior to all other races. White nationalism has been used as an “attempt to cloak white supremacist ideas” in the language of racial separatism.⁹ Antisemitism is specifically a key component of white nationalist ideology. In the past decade, antisemitic conspiracy theories have been expressed both in the dark corners of the web and by elected officials and people with power and influence — including the spread of conspiracy theories that play off long-standing antisemitic stereotypes and tropes. One example of this is the myth of the “Great Replacement.” This idea is core to white nationalism and says that white people are being systematically replaced by people of color through immigration — which some claim is a strategy orchestrated by Jewish people.¹⁰

While it is important to note that not all hate crimes or hate incidents are committed by white supremacists, the threat of white supremacist violence has become a serious problem in the past four election cycles and has been identified by the FBI as the greatest domestic threat to the United States.¹¹

The amplification of hate and the widely unchecked circulation of conspiracy theories have consequences. For example, in 2017, white nationalists shouted racist and antisemitic chants — including “Jews will not replace us” — as they marched in Charlottesville, Virginia. Perpetrators of mass hate violence have cited these racist, antisemitic conspiracies as motivating factors for their attacks, from the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, and a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. These conspiracies have had deadly consequences and demonstrate that the fight against hate is intersectional.

2008 Election Cycle

The 2008 presidential election was historic. For many, the joy and pride they experienced on November 4, 2008, when the United States elected its first Black president, is something they will never forget. The celebration of a moment they thought may never come was energizing.

For others, the 2008 election was distressing and enraging — and energizing for a different, hateful reason. Providing a clear sign that the racial demographics of the United States were shifting, white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and anti-government militia movements began to organize. Indeed, research has shown that 2008 served as a “rebirth” of the anti-government militia movement from the 1990s.¹² As the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has documented, after falling off the radar for nearly a decade, the far-right, anti-government militia movement returned — and with a Black president leading the United States, the movement grew more politically engaged.

The final weeks of the 2008 election saw an increase in hate crimes targeting racial and ethnic minorities.¹³ Less than a month before Election Day, two white supremacists were arrested for planning to kill Black schoolchildren and assassinate then-Senator Obama.¹⁴ Just days after President Obama was elected, a Black church was burnt to the ground. From church burnings to physical assaults, an increase in violence and hate was also evident in the immediate aftermath of the election of President Barack Obama.¹⁵

According to the FBI, there were 2,951 reported anti-Black hate crimes in 2008 as racial tension grew during the run-up to and aftermath of that year’s presidential election. Anti-Black hate crimes spiked in 2008 — and while they have remained high since then, they have not returned to the same level as they were during President Obama’s first year in office.

2012 Election Cycle

Still responding to the electoral popularity of President Obama and more robust social and economic policies, white nationalists and some media commentators spoke of the end of “traditional America.”¹⁶ Some white nationalist leaders saw 2012 as their last chance to make their case to “white America” and used the reelection of President Obama as an opportunity to recruit and mobilize like-minded individuals.

One especially devastating hate crime occurred on August 5, when a white supremacist opened fire in a gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin — killing six. The Department of Justice labeled this mass shooting both as a hate crime and as an act of terror. This was the first mass hate crime in what would soon become a pattern of white nationalists targeting houses of worship and other public places.

2016 Election Cycle

The 2016 election cycle saw amplification of organized hate groups by elected officials and candidates, bringing the content to a broader American audience. When candidate Trump announced his campaign for president in 2015, he immediately set the tone of his campaign — and began fanning the flames of hate and emboldening white supremacists.

Hate crimes have been on the rise since 2015 and have not returned to pre-2016 election cycle numbers. Since Trump announced his campaign in 2015, the political climate has only grown more divisive, and organized white supremacist and anti-government movements have organized, coalesced, and merged into more spaces.

The 2016 election cycle saw devastating acts of violence. On June 17, 2015, a white supremacist who sought to start a “race war” targeted Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine Black churchgoers. Anti-Muslim bigotry was a clear trend in 2016 campaign rhetoric, and it had an impact on American Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. In addition to mosques and Islamic centers experiencing threats and hate, the day after President Trump signed the first “Muslim ban” executive order, a mosque in Victoria, Texas was burned to the ground. Anti-Muslim hate crimes increased by nearly 70 percent from 2014 to 2015.¹⁷ The following year saw an additional 26 percent increase.

American Muslims were, of course, not the only community to experience increased hate during the 2016 election cycle. The Latino and immigrant communities were also the target of violent hate and white supremacist harassment and threats.¹⁸

Another devastating act of mass hate violence occurred on June 12, 2016, at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. While the FBI did not classify this shooting as a hate crime, 49 people — many of whom were Latino — were killed during the attack that targeted the LGBTQ+ community.

The month President Trump was elected in 2016, our country saw the highest number of hate crimes reported in more than a decade.¹⁹ Overall, the 2016 election cycle had a broad impact on the United States. In The Leadership Conference Education Fund’s report “Hate Magnified,” 66 percent of respondents felt that incidents or expressions of hate were getting worse, and 43 percent of respondents stated they experienced or witnessed a hate expression or incident in the previous two years.²⁰

The devastation from the 2016 election cycle, and the surge it provided to white supremacists, did not end in 2016. Indeed, during Trump’s second year in office, hard-right racist groups organized a “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where rally-goers shouted racist and antisemitic chants. The two-day event ended with a deadly car attack in which one person was killed and more than 30 were injured.



2020 Election Cycle

Even though hate crimes have been on the rise since 2015, 2020 saw a jump of more than 13 percent in reported hate crimes and a violent backlash against the racial justice protests of 2020. In his statement regarding the 2020 hate crime data release, Attorney General Merrick Garland stated: “These statistics show a rise in hate crimes committed against Black and African Americans, already the group most victimized.”²¹ The FBI reported 2,755 anti-Black hate crimes in 2020 — an increase from the 1,972 in 2019.²²

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-Asian bigotry stoked by public figures, major cities in the United States also saw an alarming increase in anti-Asian hate crimes from 2019 to 2020 — nearly a 150 percent increase.²³ In April 2020, Chinese for Affirmative Action and AAPI Equity Alliance released a report based on data they collected over the previous four weeks about incidents of coronavirus-related discrimination.²⁴ Between March 19 and April 15, 1,497 incidents of coronavirus-related discrimination were reported, including 219 incidents that reported either a physical assault or being coughed and spat on.

III. The State of Hate: 2024

Hate crimes have increased by more than 80 percent since 2015.

In October 2023, the FBI released the most recent hate crime statistics, which revealed that 2022 was the highest year on record for reported hate crimes since the FBI began publishing the data in 1991.²⁵ In contrast to the historically high number of reported hate crimes, 2022 included the fewest number of law enforcement agencies reporting hate crime data since 2012.²⁶

The October 2023 report included data from both the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Summary Reporting System (SRS). The data show a 7 percent increase from 2021.

The FBI's Hate Crime Statistics Program report is based on data from incidents reported to law enforcement. Yet many people do not report incidents to law enforcement for several reasons, including a historic distrust, concern that law enforcement would not take their report seriously, fear of reprisal, and other reasons. For the incident to make it into the FBI's annual report, law enforcement must record it in their system as a hate crime and then voluntarily submit the data to the FBI.²⁷ As this process demonstrates, there are many opportunities for a hate crime to fall through the cracks, resulting in widespread underreporting.

Another source of government hate crime data comes from DOJ's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This survey uses a different methodology and includes hate crime incidents that were both reported and not reported to law enforcement. A striking gap is revealed when comparing the two datasets. NCVS data demonstrate that most hate crime victimizations (66 percent) go unreported to law enforcement. And while the FBI's 2022 11,643 hate crime incidents is alarming, the NCVS documented an average of 243,770 hate crime victimizations in the United States from 2010 to 2019 — which would mean that an average of about 28 hate crime victimizations occur in this country every hour.²⁸

Despite being notoriously underreported, the FBI's data demonstrate trends that have aligned with the experiences of communities across the country — and the trends have been supported by research produced by community organizations.

IV. Cause for Concern: Looking Ahead

The current political climate and lack of accountability from social media platforms have worked hand in hand, creating outsized harm and establishing a significant cause for concern for the 2024 election cycle.

In a recent national survey, 80 percent or more of parents said that it was very or extremely important that their child be honest, ethical, hardworking, helpful to those in need, and accepting of people who are different from them.²⁹ Similarly, 80 percent of parents want to protect the ability of young people to have access to information where they can learn about and understand different perspectives and help them grow into adults who can think for themselves.³⁰

Nonetheless, the small number of well-funded and well-organized proponents of bigotry and hate are having an outsized effect relative to their actual numbers. With the assistance of more than 160 local and national groups, campaigns to whitewash U.S. history and deny the rights of the LGBTQ+ community have turned hate into campaign platforms.³¹ Even with a small constituency, these groups have made considerable inroads in the halls of power.

Attacks on teaching about race and gender, and attacks on school diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (so-called “bans on CRT”), led to a wave of legislation across state and federal legislatures. Since 2020, more than 350 pieces of so-called “anti-critical race theory” legislation have been introduced in legislatures across the country — and of those introduced, 33 have already been adopted. This effort is a backlash to the racial reckoning of 2020 when the murder of George Floyd and resulting movement for justice prompted long overdue attention to structural racism — including how U.S. history is being taught in schools.³²

In May 2023, the Human Rights Campaign published a snapshot of 2023 anti-LGBTQ+ state legislative activity, which noted that a record high of more than 520 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in state legislatures.³³ More than 220 of those bills specifically target transgender and non-binary people.³⁴

Even the introduction of legislation itself is a cause for concern because we know that hate crimes increase during election cycles — a time when rhetoric and public dialogue tend to be more divisive and more inflammatory. Government-sanctioned discrimination and bigotry, as reflected in legislation to ban books, gag teachers, or marginalize transgender children, contribute to the normalization of hatred.

The fact that social media platforms have not adequately addressed disinformation has helped attacks on equity and inclusion garner an outsized amount of attention given the relative lack of support from parents. As outlined in the Human Rights Campaign’s “Digital Hate” report in 2022, the “frequency with which hate appears in our feeds normalizes untrue narratives, infecting millions of users, and then extremist politicians, seeking power, play to those misinformed audiences, treating their highly visible misbeliefs as though they are a legitimate evidence base for hateful, demonizing policies.”³⁵

In 2023, GLAAD and the Anti-Defamation League released data that showed more than 700 incidents of violence and threats targeting LGBTQ people over the past year.³⁶

A wave of hateful disinformation claiming that LGBTQ+ people “groom” children has spread widely on social media, contributing to the introduction of more than 520 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in state legislatures. Social media giant Meta profited off anti-LGBTQ+ advertisements and failed to act in a manner consistent with their stated policies.³⁷ Similarly, Twitter failed to enforce its “hateful conduct” policy by failing to act on 99 percent of the most viewed hateful tweets identified by researchers.³⁸

The antisemitic, xenophobic “great replacement” conspiracy — which has inspired many deadly hate crimes — has also garnered increased attention. Some elected officials have even promoted the conspiracy, providing a false sense of legitimacy. Other harmful content that platforms have permitted to circulate online has included the “big lie” that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump, the targeting of Asian Americans as the cause of the pandemic, and disinformation about anti-racist teaching.

Moreover, the platforms have had significant layoffs over the last year, eliminating more than 40,000 jobs, including at least hundreds of positions relating to trust and safety.³⁹ X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, has laid off 82 percent of its workforce since Elon Musk took over the company, including the entire trust and safety team.⁴⁰ Experts have said that this has led to a dramatic rise in disinformation and hate speech, including an exponential increase in racist and antisemitic content.⁴¹

When social media platforms use algorithms that amplify hate, fail to enforce their own policies against hate, and profit off the targeting of communities, people suffer — and democracy is undermined.

Recommendations

There is a critical need to improve hate crime data reporting. The bipartisan Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act (IRPHA) is legislation designed to address chronic underreporting of hate crime data by conditioning funding to large city police departments on their credible hate crime reporting to the FBI.

The Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990, which was modified in 2009, requires the U.S. attorney general to collect data on hate crimes. It does not, however, require law enforcement agencies to submit the data to the Department of Justice or FBI — leading to a major undercount of hate crimes.

What is included in federal hate crime statistics is just as important as what is excluded — the stories of those directly impacted by hate. Every data point is a story. Without improved hate crime reporting, too many stories go untold and unheard. To counter the scourge of hate crimes and hate incidents, we need to better understand what communities are experiencing. We need to hear the stories.

On August 12, 2019, Haifa Jabara and Susan Bro published an op-ed in The New York Times, sharing with the world the devastating story of why their paths crossed. They wrote that August 12 was forever ingrained in their memories, as it was the date their children were murdered in hate crimes — exactly one year apart from each other. In 2016, Haifa’s son Khalid was shot and killed by a neighbor in an anti-Arab hate crime on the front steps of his family home in Tulsa, Oklahoma. One year later, Susan’s daughter, Heather Heyer, was murdered by a white supremacist who intentionally plowed his car into a crowd of counter protesters during the violence inspired by the “Unite the Right” racist mob on the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia. Haifa and Susan also shared that neither of these high-profile murders was originally reported as a hate crime in official government data, though they were eventually prosecuted as hate crimes. They wrote, “In the eyes of the government, they were not even data points.”⁴²

Regrettably, the stories of Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer are not an exception to the rule — they are an example of how easily hate crimes can fall through the cracks.

In May 2021, President Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act — which includes the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer NO HATE Act — into law. Among other things, this law improves hate crime data collection and reporting. And while it is a significant step in the right direction, more must be done. Notably, the IRPHA will condition federal funding to police agencies serving large cities on credible hate crime reporting to the FBI.

The federal government should confront white supremacist violence in a manner that does not harm those most likely to be targeted for hate.

Hate crime enforcement has long been a civil rights issue. Confronting white supremacist violence is in large part why the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division was founded. Yet, in more recent years, hate crimes have increasingly been framed in a national security context as acts of domestic terrorism. This is in part because there is an overlap in the legal definitions of a hate crime and an act of domestic terrorism, and in part because of what legal and investigative authorities are allowed for the different classifications. The federal government must confront white supremacist violence and hate crimes through the civil rights infrastructure — and must not double down on a national security apparatus that has historically harmed racial, religious, and ethnic minorities.⁴³

The federal government should promptly implement and provide regular status updates on the implementation and enforcement of President Biden’s May 2022 executive order mandate to address white supremacy and invidious discrimination in the hiring and retention of federal law enforcement officials.

Among the many initiatives designed to make policing safer and more effective — and strengthen trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve — this executive order required the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to publish guidance to:

- (iv) develop best practices for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection procedures, including vetting mechanisms and ongoing employment screening, that, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability.



This standard, designed to avoid the hiring and retention of officers who promote white supremacy and other forms of discrimination and bigotry within the nation's 145,000 federal law enforcement officials, is an important step forward — and a model for state and local police agencies as well.

OPM published guidance in October,⁴⁴ but it is far from clear how it is being implemented or enforced. A White House fact sheet,⁴⁵ released on the one-year anniversary of the executive order on policing,⁴⁶ provided this status report:

“An Office of Personnel Management (OPM)-led working group of federal law enforcement agencies has developed an action plan identifying a set of core policies and best practices to be used across all federal law enforcement agencies regarding recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention. The working group also identified best practices for performance evaluations and promotion decisions for federal law enforcement officers, as well as for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection and screening procedures.”⁴⁷

Yet the OPM guidance provided no timetables for implementation of the executive order’s mandate — and it is far from clear how it is being implemented or enforced within federal agencies. In March, 30 members of Congress, led by Reps. Sean Casten (D. Ill.) and Jamie Raskin (D. Md.), wrote to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, Attorney General Merrick Garland, and FBI Director Christopher Wray urging them to “swiftly formalize internal procedures to prevent the onboarding and promotion of officers that have promoted white supremacy, bias-based violence, or engaged in other forms of racist misconduct.”⁴⁸



All federal agencies should promptly act to prohibit individuals who engage in white supremacist or discriminatory conduct from serving as law enforcement officials — and Congress should exercise its oversight authority to ensure this important executive order mandate is carried out.

Social media platforms must take accountability for their role in increased hate.

Social media companies need to be accountable for their role in the increase in hate crimes. Meta, Twitter, and YouTube should ensure they are resourcing content moderation teams appropriately to meet the challenge of increased hate leading up to the 2024 general election, including the ability to monitor live-streamed content that is increasingly being used by white nationalists. In the wake of mass layoffs, these companies must re-build their teams that monitor disinformation, safety, and content moderation.

Platforms should be able to capture unauthentic behavior and disinformation campaigns before the disinformation spreads and act swiftly to remove accounts that engage in or purposefully share disinformation.

Lastly, companies should close loopholes that allow candidates and public figures to espouse disinformation, and they should prohibit advertisements that would otherwise violate their community standards.

Public officials should speak out against hate.

Hate crimes are message crimes. To help counter the impact of hate crimes, we must counter the message the perpetrators seek to send. Anti-Black racism, antisemitism, xenophobia, transphobia, and all forms of hate should be excluded from campaign tactics.

Public officials should use their platforms to speak out against hate and never engage — not only does it send a message of inclusion to those targeted, but speaking out against hate can reduce the amount of hate crimes committed.



Appendix

Hate Crimes Motivated by Bias Against a Race, Ethnicity, or Ancestry

Anti-Arab Hate Crimes

In their report, “Underreported Under Threat,” the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) detailed the history of anti-Arab hate in the United States. AAIF explains that the historical negative portrayal of Arabs by the media and entertainment industries — as well as discriminatory government policies, a political climate of exclusion, and the “backlash” effect to acts of mass violence — have all contributed to the targeting of Arab Americans.⁴⁹ Anti-Arab hate, which is based on ethnicity and ancestry, has often been conflated with anti-Muslim sentiment and vice versa.

2022 was the seventh consecutive year that the FBI has published data on anti-Arab hate since the anti-Arab category (Bias Motivation Code 31) was removed from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program before being reinstated in 2015.

While the 2022 data showed a slight decrease in reported hate crimes, the most recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East has led to an increase in hate targeting Arab Americans. This devastating increase in anti-Arab hate received national attention when six-year-old Palestinian American Wadea Al-Fayoume was stabbed to death in his home in Illinois on October 14, 2023. His mother was also brutally attacked. Reports of anti-Arab hate incidents continued through the end of the year. In December, three Palestinian American college students were shot in Burlington, Vermont. The incident is being investigated to determine if it was a hate crime.

Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander Hate Crimes

As noted in The Leadership Conference Education Fund’s 2009 report “Confronting the New Faces of Hate: Hate Crimes in America,” ignorance, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment lead to hate violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.⁵⁰ From the Chinese Exclusion Act to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the vicious murder of Vincent Chin — anti-Asian hate has long been a part of U.S. history. Most recently, the Asian community experienced an alarming increase in hate in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic and growing anti-China rhetoric from elected officials.

While the most recent data from the FBI showed a decrease in anti-Asian hate crime incidents reported from 2021 to 2022, reported anti-Asian hate crimes remain above pre-COVID numbers. Reported anti-Asian hate crimes increased 60 percent from 2019 to 2020 and 168 percent from 2020 to 2021. In addition, anti-Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander hate crimes more than doubled from 2020 to 2021.⁵¹ 2021 was a devastating year for the Asian American community that included a deadly shooting in Atlanta, Georgia on March 16, 2021, in which the perpetrator targeted Asian-run businesses — killing eight people, six of whom were Asian women.

Stop AAPI Hate, which launched in March 2020 due to the increase in anti-AAPI hate in the wake of COVID-19, documented more than 11,000 hate incidents over a two-year period. While a small percentage of hate incidents meet the definition of a hate crime, it demonstrates an increase in the targeted hate that the AAPI community has been experiencing.⁵² Further, in a national survey in the fall of 2021, Stop AAPI Hate found that one in five Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders had experienced a hate incident in 2020 or 2021.

Anti-Black or African American Hate Crimes

Anti-Black or African American violence remains the “prototypical hate crime.”⁵³ These crimes have an especially negative impact on society for the devastating history they conjure — from the racial terror of lynchings and cross and church burnings, to the murders of Emmett Till and James Byrd, Jr., to the massacres at the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina and a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, New York — Black Americans remain the most frequent victims of hate crimes.

The FBI reported a 4 percent increase in anti-Black hate crimes from 2021 to 2022. This follows a 14 percent increase from 2020 to 2021 and a 49 percent increase from 2019 to 2020, when there was a violent backlash to the racial justice protests of 2020.⁵⁴ Reported anti-Black hate crimes have not dropped below 2020 numbers.

Anti-Hispanic or Latino Hate Crimes

Anti-immigrant sentiment has long contributed to hate targeting the Hispanic and Latino communities. In 1999, UnidosUS (at the time known as the National Council of La Raza), published “The Mainstreaming of Hate,” which documented a marked increase in the targeting of Hispanic and Latino communities. This report, from more than 20 years ago, sadly remains relevant. As noted in the report, “the perception that Latinos are ‘foreign,’ ‘un-American,’ or illegal immigrants has translated into numerous incidents of discrimination, threats, and actual violence involving private citizens and vigilantes.”⁵⁵

More than 20 years later, this anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric has become increasingly prevalent as mainstream news outlets, public officials, and — most recently — digital and social media platforms alike have scaled the perpetuation of hate and bias towards Latinos.⁵⁶ Anti-Latino and, specifically, anti-Mexican rhetoric was a central part of Donald Trump’s campaign for president in 2016. Indeed, he set the tone of what to expect during his announcement speech in 2015 when he referred to Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and drug dealers.⁵⁷ This racist rhetoric continued throughout his presidency and contributed to devastating violence against Hispanic and Latino communities.

In 2018, the Hispanic and Latino communities experienced the highest number of reported hate crimes in more than a decade. Regrettably, this alarming trend did not stop in 2018. In 2019, 23 people were killed and more than 20 were injured in a mass hate crime in El Paso, Texas. This remains the deadliest attack on Latinos in the United States in modern history. Notably, the day before the El Paso attack, Texas Governor Greg Abbott released a fundraising letter exclaiming the need to “defend Texas” from immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.⁵⁸ The El Paso shooter’s manifesto mirrored this same language, as he claimed to be “simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement.”⁵⁹ This link underscores the ways that anti-Latino xenophobia continues to be weaponized for political gain, is perpetuated by mainstream news and social media platforms, and directly influences the increased targeting of Latinos for hate-fueled violence. Indeed, the 2022 FBI data showed the highest number of anti-Hispanic hate crimes ever reported — a 6 percent increase from 2021 to 2022. This follows a 35 percent increase from 2020 to 2021.⁶⁰

This is not an all-inclusive list of communities targeted for hate based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry. The FBI also collects data on anti-American Indian or Alaska Native, Anti-Multiple Races, and Anti-Other Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry.

Hate Crimes Motivated by Bias Against a Religion

Anti-Islamic (Muslim) Hate Crimes

American Muslims continue to be targeted with mosque vandalism, street violence, and other threats to their safety — especially during charged election years. 2022 saw a slight, 3 percent, increase in reported anti-Muslim hate crimes. From 2020 to 2021, the community was subjected to a 40 percent increase in reported hate crimes. This comes after decades of violence stemming from bigotry and hateful campaign rhetoric.

While increases in hate crimes against American Muslims are often framed in terms of the aftermath of 9/11, recent election years have shown a frightening resurgence. Anti-Muslim and birtherist rhetoric against former President Obama date back to his first Senate election in 2006, when his opponent suggested he was not a “true Christian.”⁶¹ Attacks on President Obama’s patriotism, faith, and citizenship continued, and they were amplified throughout and following his presidency and served as a pre-cursor to broader anti-Muslim rhetoric in the 2016 and 2020 campaigns.

Anti-Muslim campaign rhetoric and hate crimes peaked during Donald Trump’s campaigns for the presidency, with the spike in 2016 marking the highest number of reported hate crimes against the community since 2001.

Since then, American Muslims have been targeted in vehicular attacks, mosque bombings, vandalism, and assaults across the country.^{62, 63, 64}

American Muslims have been experiencing an increase in hate in the wake of the most recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East.

Anti-Jewish Hate Crimes

As antisemitism has been used as a tool of division and fear, anti-Jewish hate crimes and incidents have increased. Furthermore, antisemitic conspiracy theories have become increasingly normalized and seek to sow distrust in our democracy and institutions and fuel violence against Jews and a number of other communities.

According to the FBI, the number of reported anti-Jewish hate crime incidents increased 36 percent from 2021 to 2022, following a 20 percent increase from 2020 to 2021. Antisemitic incidents are also on the rise, according to data collected by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). ADL's most recent Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, published in March 2023, documented a record high of 3,697 antisemitic incidents in 2022, a 36 percent increase from 2021.⁶⁵ While hate crimes make up only a small percentage of hate incidents, ADL documented a 26 percent increase in antisemitic assaults and a 51 percent increase in antisemitic vandalism incidents from 2021 to 2022.

At a time when reports of antisemitism are already at a record high, antisemitic hate has increased significantly since the most recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East. From threats and acts of hate and violence directed at Jewish students on college campuses to the vandalism of synagogues, Jewish Americans have experienced an increase in hate, harassment, and discrimination since the terror attack in Israel on October 7 and Israel's response. In just the three months after October 7, ADL's preliminary data shows antisemitic incidents reached 3,291 incidents. According to the ADL, this three-month tally is higher than the total number of antisemitic incidents tracked in any year in the last decade, except for calendar year 2022.⁶⁶

Anti-Sikh Hate Crimes

Sikhs in the United States have faced bias and discrimination for generations, which can foreshadow systemic problems for the country. After 9/11, one of the first deadly hate crimes in a larger wave of backlash targeted Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American who was murdered outside his gas station on September 15, 2001. In addition, one of the worst attacks on an American house of worship occurred on August 5, 2012, when a white supremacist initially murdered six Sikhs inside a gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, with a seventh victim dying from his injuries in 2020. Since then, more houses of worship from other faiths have been attacked.

The intersectionality of the racial, religious, and national origin identity of Sikhs makes them targets of hate often driven by xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiments, and white supremacy. Since the FBI started tracking anti-Sikh hate crimes in 2015, Sikhs have consistently been among the top five most targeted religious communities. The number of reported anti-Sikh hate crimes has increased significantly over the years, reaching a record high in 2022. Currently, anti-Sikh hate crimes are the second most common form of religiously motivated hate crimes after anti-Jewish hate crimes.

This is not an all-inclusive list of communities targeted for hate based on religion. The FBI also collects data on anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant, anti-Other Religion, anti-Multiple Religions, anti-Church of Jesus Christ, anti-Jehovah's Witness, anti-Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, other), anti-Other Christian, anti-Buddhist, anti-Hindu, and anti-atheism/agnosticism. For this report's purposes, the top three categories from the 2021 data were included above.

Hate Crimes Motivated by Bias Against Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity

Anti-LGBTQ Hate Crimes

The LGBTQ+ community has been the target of discriminatory laws, conspiracy theories, organized hate, and hate crimes. From the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, to the shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the amount of hate violence targeting the LGBTQ+ community has been staggering. As political rhetoric and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has significantly increased, incidents of violence have as well.

While national data collection efforts fail to capture many hate crimes, reported numbers continue to demonstrate increases. Reported hate crimes based on sexual orientation increased 19 percent from 2021 to 2022, following a 54 percent increase from 2020 to 2021. Anti-lesbian hate crimes increased more than 80 percent in 2021. In 2022, anti-gay hate crimes increased 13 percent, following a 40 percent increase from 2020 to 2021. Hate crimes directed against people and property on the basis of gender identity in 2022 increased 37 percent over 2021 reported data – by far the highest reported since the FBI began collecting this specific data in 2013.

The National Center for Transgender Equality notes that “one in four trans people have faced a bias-driven assault, and rates are higher for trans women and trans people of color.”⁶⁷ 2022 saw a 35 percent increase in reported anti-transgender hate crimes, following a 15 percent increase in reported hate crimes targeting transgender individuals in 2021. Fatal violence, particularly against Black and Latina transgender women, occurs with startling frequency.⁶⁸

Hate Crimes Motivated by Bias Against Disability

Anti-Disability Hate Crimes

As noted in “Confronting the New Faces of Hate: Hate Crimes in America,” bias against people with disabilities takes many forms and often results in discriminatory actions in employment, housing, and public accommodations. It can also manifest in the form of violence and hate.

While hate crime data is underreported in general, hate crimes against individuals with disabilities are especially undercounted. This is for many reasons, including because disability-based hate crimes are frequently mislabeled as “abuse” and are not reported from the education or social services system to law enforcement.

In 1994, the category of “disability” was added to the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990. In 1997, the FBI began to collect data on anti-disability hate crimes under the Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Reported anti-disability hate crimes increased 11 percent from 2021 to 2022. The number of reported hate crimes based on mental health decreased slightly, while the number of reported hate crimes based on physical disability increased by 37 percent.

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