
HATE CRIME REPORTING IS INCONSISTENT AND INADEQUATE

The FBI's HCS tracks incidents of hate and the communities most affected. The Bureau first began publication of this data in 1991, in response to passage of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990.

The effectiveness of the FBI's data collection is limited because the FBI does not require mandatory reporting by local law enforcement agencies. Often, those local agencies fail to accurately report or even collect hate crimes data. In fact, 87 percent of all participating police agencies reported zero hate crimes to the FBI in 2017.² More than 1,000 agencies failed to report any data on hate crimes to the FBI. In addition, local and state hate crime laws are a patchwork of definitions that do not always match the federal definition. The result is significant undercounting of hate crimes. From 2011 to 2015, the FBI tally averaged 5,855 hate crimes a year. However, the BJS survey of hate crimes documented 236,000 incidents during this same time, a difference of several orders of magnitude.³

More than half of all hate crimes victims do not report the crimes against them (54 percent from 2011 to 2015).⁴ This is increasingly true of members of immigrant communities who may not feel safe reporting incidents to members of law enforcement. All told, this indicates that the total number of hate crimes is significantly undercounted. In fact, the murders of Heather Heyer and Khalil Jabara, some of the most widely reported hate crimes in recent memory, were not counted as hate crimes. Without mandatory reporting and a nationwide, standardized definition of hate crimes, the existing data collection mechanisms will continue to profoundly undercount the prevalence of hate crimes.

RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IS A MAJOR DRIVER OF HATE-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.

The Southern Poverty Law Center noted a record 1020 hate groups in the U.S. in 2018, the vast majority of which espouse white nationalist views.⁵ Of the hate crimes reported in 2017, more than half (50.7 percent) of the perpetrators were white,⁶ although there is no way to definitively count how many were motivated by white supremacy or white nationalist ideas.

Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2018



Note: Total deaths include both ideologically and non-ideologically motivated killings.

Source: ADL

The Anti-Defamation League found that in 2018, of the 50 extremist-related murders committed in 2018, the vast majority were by far-right extremists with 78 percent perpetrated by white supremacists.⁷ The ADL also hosts a database mapping incidents of hate crimes committed since 2016. An analysis of the database found a significant increase in hate crimes in counties that hosted rallies for President Trump in 2016.⁸ A separate analysis of the FBI HCS data drew similar conclusions.⁹ This data suggests a strong correlation between hateful political rhetoric and a spike in hate crimes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hate Magnified, a report from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights analyzed 4,000 powerful stories of hate crimes and found that 84 percent of Americans perceive that hate crime is on the rise.¹⁰ The report ends with a set of recommendations that could significantly blunt the impact of white nationalism, including mandatory reporting of hate crimes, increased funding for data collection, public education, and the condemnation of hate speech and acts by political and public figures.

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