



Office of Justice Programs Fact Sheet

Research, Programs, and Initiatives that Address Hate Crimes

April 2022

BACKGROUND

Hate crimes (also known as “bias crimes”) are recognized as a distinct category of crimes that have a broader impact than most other kinds of crimes because the victims are not the only target of the criminal act but also others like them. Entire communities may feel the impact of a hate crime. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines hate crimes as “criminal offense[s] against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.”¹

Most states and U.S. territories have hate crime statutes enforced by state and local law enforcement; however, the laws and definitions vary widely across jurisdictions with regard to bias motivated crimes (e.g., religion, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, the crimes covered, and the penalty enhancements).² For example, forty-seven states and the District of Columbia include race/color as a bias category, while 15 states and the District of Columbia include gender identity.³ Even if a state or territory does not have a hate crimes law, hate crimes can still be reported to the FBI.

NCVS Findings:⁵

- On average, U.S. residents experienced approximately 246,900 hate crime victimizations each year between 2005 and 2019. The number of hate crimes ranged from about 173,600 to 305,390 during this period.
 - During the five-year aggregate period of 2015-19, the majority of hate crimes involved simple assault (62%) and aggravated assault (18%).
 - During 2015-19, approximately 42% of violent hate crime victimizations were not reported to police.
 - The most common reason that victims gave for not reporting to police was that the victimization was handled another way, such as privately or through a non-law enforcement official.
- During 2015-19, an estimated 59% of violent hate crime victimizations reported by victims were motivated by bias against their race, ethnicity or national origin.

OVERVIEW

The Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is committed to advancing work that promotes civil rights and racial equity, increases access to justice, supports crime victims and individuals impacted by the justice system, strengthens community safety and protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and the community. OJP provides states and localities with federal leadership, grants, training and technical assistance, and other resources. OJP supports state and local crime-fighting efforts, funds thousands of victim service programs, helps communities manage sex offenders, addresses the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provides vital research and data.

OJP RESEARCH, PROGRAMS, AND INITIATIVES TO COMBAT HATE CRIMES

Research and Data

OJP's **National Institute of Justice** (NIJ) supported a study by the **National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)** that researched pathways to hate crime perpetration and found that, in light of diverse motivations, demographic characteristics, and traits, the tools needed to monitor and rehabilitate individuals who commit hate crimes must be flexible and capable of addressing risks in heterogeneous populations. The study created the first-ever dataset of a national sample of individuals arrested or indicted for hate crimes by assembling data from 1990 to 2018 into a database known as the Bias Incidents and Actors Study, or BIAS, and a [report](#) of these findings was released.

NCVS Findings cont'd:

- In nearly a quarter of violent hate crime victimizations, victims believed they were targeted because of bias against their gender (24%), against persons or groups they were associated with (23%) or against their sexual orientation (20%).
- Approximately 1 in 10 violent hate crime victimizations were thought to be motivated by bias against the victim's disability (11%) or religion (9%).
- Victims reported that more than half (56%) of violent hate crimes were committed by a stranger during 2015-19.
- Though property crimes made up 10% of all hate crimes captured by the NCVS during 2015-19, similar to violent hate crimes, victims suspected that race, ethnicity, or national origin bias was the motivation for the crime in a majority of property hate crime victimizations (69%).
- In nearly half of property hate crime victimizations, victims believed that the crime was motivated by bias against their religion (48%) or disability (45%).
- About 2 in 5 property hate crime victimizations were thought to be motivated by bias against the victim's gender (43%).

NIJ also made an [award](#) to the University of New Hampshire to conduct a three-year study (2019-2021) to gather detailed, nationally representative data on hate crime incidents known to police. The data collected in this study was used to determine how agency-level policies affect the reporting and investigation of hate crimes, identify categories of hate crime offenses, and identify characteristics of individuals suspected of perpetrating hate crimes.

OJP's **Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** is the nation's primary source of information on criminal victimization. From the NCVS, BJS published *Hate Crime Victimization, 2005-2019*, which examines the number of hate crimes committed over time, characteristics of hate crimes, perceived bias motivations for these hate crimes, whether these hate crimes were reported to police or why they were not reported, and demographic characteristics of victims and those who commit these offenses. BJS is also conducting research on how to improve the measurement of hate crime in the NCVS⁴. In addition, BJS used data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Hate Crime Statistics Program (HCSP) to publish *Hate Crime Recorded by Law Enforcement, 2010-2019*, which examines incidents and victims of hate crime recorded by law enforcement. Data from BJS's Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP) were used to publish *Federal Hate Crime Prosecutions, 2005-2019*, which reports statistics on federal hate crime prosecutions and case dispositions in U.S. district court, including sentencing outcomes for defendants who were convicted of a hate crime.

Law Enforcement Prosecution, Training, and Resources

OJP's **Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)** supports police and prosecutorial agencies in responding to hate crimes and provides funding and other support through a number of programs and services. BJA's **Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Program** supports state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution agencies and their partners in conducting outreach, educating practitioners and the public, and investigating and prosecuting hate crimes based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. The program promotes efforts to build strong collaborations between law enforcement, prosecution, community-based organizations, and universities and colleges to conduct outreach and education to persons and groups at risk for hate crimes. BJA's **Emmett Till Cold Case Investigations Program** supports law enforcement and prosecutors in their efforts to investigate and resolve cold-case homicides that involve civil rights violations. In addition, BJA's **Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program** provides funding to support a range of criminal justice programming, including those that combat hate crimes. In June 2021, to address the issue of a rise in hate crime, BJA sent [guidance](#) to State Administrators to clarify that JAG funds could be used to increase patrols and deployments that bolster the security of at-risk nonprofit organizations, including synagogues, churches, mosques, and other places of worship. BJA's **State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training (SLATT) Program** provides no-cost and role-based training, resources, and technical assistance to state, local, and tribal law

enforcement officers and agencies to prevent acts of terrorism, targeted violence, and hate crimes. BJA's SLATT Program recently held [two webinars](#) designed to prepare law enforcement officers and agencies to ethically identify, interdict, prevent, and respond to acts of terrorism, targeted violence, and hate crime. In addition, BJA intends to establish two new programs in FY2022 to address hate crimes: The Community-Based Approaches to Advancing Justice and the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act Programs. The [Community-Based Approaches to Advancing Justice Program](#) will support community-based organizations and civil rights groups with implementing comprehensive approaches to promote community awareness and preparedness, increase victim reporting, strengthen community resiliency, and improve responses to hate crimes. Through the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act Program, BJA will provide funds to BJS to award several site-based awards to state, local, or tribal jurisdictions focused on compliance with NIBRS reporting, and also provide funds to OVC to award site-based funding for [hate crimes reporting hotline services](#).

Resources for Youth and Schools

BJA's [Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Program \(STOP\)](#) aims to improve school safety by providing students and teachers with the tools to recognize, respond quickly to, and prevent acts of violence, including hate crimes.

OJP's [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's \(OJJDP\) Preventing Youth Hate Crimes and Bullying Initiative](#) is a comprehensive national effort to prevent youth hate crimes and identity-based bullying. OJJDP takes a multipronged approach through this initiative to increase awareness and understanding of the impact of youth hate crime and bias; identify best practices and evidence-based strategies to build protective factors in youth and help youth resist and disengage from extremist hate groups; ensure youth have a voice on the topic of hate crime; provide an opportunity for partners to work meaningfully with and for young people; and provide grantees, interested communities, and the field at large with tools to change the attitude and behavior of at-risk youth. The initiative launched in October 2021 with a two-day [virtual symposium](#), followed by a series of [twelve webinars](#). The [webinars](#) provide juvenile justice professionals, law enforcement, and school communities with an understanding of youth hate crimes and hate groups, along with strategies to prevent hate crimes and mitigate microaggressions and implicit bias. Additional components of the initiative include the release of [Hate Crimes and Youth](#), a literature review focusing on the involvement of youth in hate crimes, as well as the development of a curriculum for the prevention and early intervention of youth hate crimes, bias based bullying, and radicalization, and the release of a special report on these issues.

Resources for Youth and Communities

OJP's **Office for Victims of Crime's (OVC) Services to Support Victims of Hate Crime and Strengthen Communities Program** supports field generated, innovative strategies, approaches, and models to assist individuals, groups, and communities impacted by hate crime. OVC also provides training and technical assistance to state, local, and tribal service providers to help identify and serve hate crime victims. For example, OVC's Training and Technical Assistance Center provides online training on [hate and bias crimes](#) and also hosted an [Expert Q&A session](#) on creating safe spaces for transgender survivors.

1 "Defining a Hate Crime," FBI.gov, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes#Definition>

2 "Federal Laws and Statutes," United States Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/laws-and-policies#>

3 "Federal Laws and Statutes," United States Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/laws-and-policies>

4 Enhancing the Measurement of Hate Crime in the NCVS: Developing and Testing Improvements to the Survey Questions, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/bjs/grants/301033.pdf>

5 "BJS Hate Crime Victimization, 2005–2019", <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/hate-crime-victimization-2005-2019>