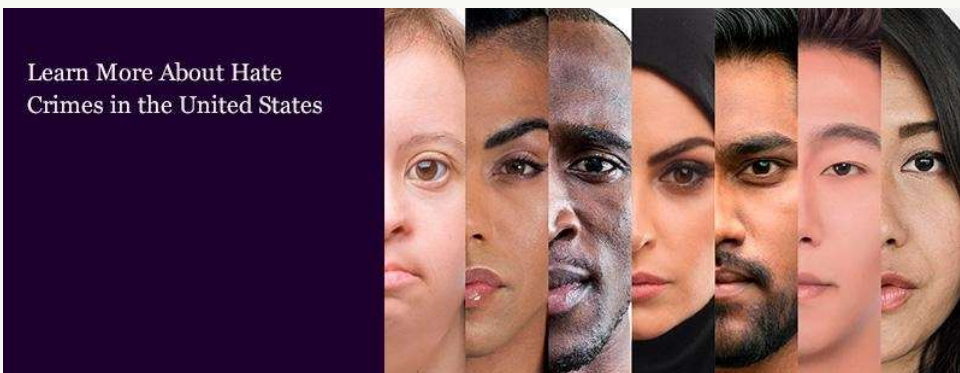




SWITCH VIEWS List View Chart View



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Experts estimate an average of 250,000 hate crimes were committed each year between 2004 and 2015 in the United States. The majority of these were not reported to law enforcement. [Read more here.](#)

What is a hate crime?



In the simplest terms, a hate crime must include both "hate" and a "crime."

Hate

The term "hate" can be misleading. When used in a hate crime law, the word "hate" does not mean rage, anger, or general dislike. In this context "hate" means bias against people or groups with specific characteristics that are defined by the law.

At the federal level, hate crime laws include crimes committed on the basis of the victim's perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Most state hate crime laws include crimes committed on the basis of race, color, and religion; many also include crimes committed on the basis of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disability.

Under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, people cannot be prosecuted simply for their beliefs. People may be offended or upset about beliefs that are untrue or based upon false stereotypes, but it is not a crime to express offensive beliefs, or to join with others who share such views. However, the First Amendment does not protect against committing a crime, just because the conduct is rooted in philosophical beliefs.

Crime

The "crime" in hate crime is often a violent crime, such as assault, murder, arson, vandalism, or threats to commit such crimes. It may also cover conspiring or asking another person to commit such crimes, even if the crime was never carried out.

Why have hate crime laws?

Hate crimes have a broader effect than most other kinds of crime. Hate crime victims include not only the crime's immediate target but also others like them. Hate crimes affect families, communities, and at times, the entire nation.

Why report hate crimes?

The Hate Crimes Reporting Gap is the significant disparity between hate crimes that actually occur and those reported to law enforcement. It is critical to report hate crimes not only to show support and get help for victims, but also to send a clear message

that the community will not tolerate these kinds of crimes. Reporting hate crimes allows communities and law enforcement to fully understand the scope of the problem in a community and put resources toward preventing and addressing attacks based on bias and hate.

Terminology

Hate Crime: At the federal level, a crime motivated by bias against race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Bias or Hate Incident: Acts of prejudice that are not crimes and do not involve violence, threats, or property damage.

Scenario - Color

Six black men assaulted and seriously injured a white man and his Asian male friend as they were walking through a residential neighborhood. Witnesses stated the victims were attacked because they were trespassing in a "black" neighborhood.

Scenario - Disability

A group home for persons with psychiatric disabilities who were in transition back into the community was the site of a reported arson. Investigation revealed that neighbors had expressed many concerns about the group home in town meetings and were angry that the house was located in their community. Shortly before the fire was reported, a witness heard a man state, "I'll get rid of those 'crazies,' I'll burn them out." Twelve persons, including patients and staff, suffered second and third degree burns.

Scenario - Ethnicity

Two Palestinian university students speaking in Arabic were attending a department reception when another student, a white male, deliberately bumped into one of them. When one Palestinian student said, "Hey, watch where you're going," the white student responded by saying, "I'll go wherever I want. This is my country, you Arab!" The aggressor proceeded to punch the Palestinian student in the face.

Scenario - Gender

A man entered a community college and shot and killed a female in a corridor. He then entered a classroom with 10 women and 48 men, fired a shot into the ceiling and said, "I want the women! I hate feminists!" He sent all of the men from the room, lined the women up against the wall and opened fire, killing 6 of the women and wounding the others.

Scenario - Gender Identity

A transgender woman was walking down the street near her home when three men walking toward her said, "Hey, what's your problem? Huh?" She kept walking, trying to ignore them. However, as they got close, one yelled "We don't want no queers in this neighborhood!" and a second one knocked her to the ground.

Scenario - Race

In a parking lot next to a bar, a 29-year-old Japanese American male was attacked by a 51-year-old white male wielding a tire iron. The victim suffered severe lacerations and a broken arm. Investigation revealed that the offender and victim had previously exchanged racial insults in the bar. The offender initiated the exchange by calling the victim by a well-known and recognized epithet used against the Japanese and complained that the Japanese were taking away jobs from Americans.

Scenario - Religion

Overnight, unknown persons broke into a synagogue and destroyed several priceless religious objects. The perpetrators drew a large swastika on the door and wrote "Death to Jews" on a wall. Although other valuable items were present, none were stolen.

Scenario - Sexual Orientation

Five gay, male friends, some of whom were wearing makeup and jewelry, were exiting a well-known gay bar when they were approached by a group of men who were unknown to them. The men began to ridicule the gay men's feminine appearance and shouted "Sissy!" "Girly-men!" and other slurs at them then escalated to physically attacking the victims, rendering them unconscious.

Click on any of the bias categories to view a scenario of a hate crime or bias incident involving that category.

Was this page helpful?

Yes No