

# Research Guide for Hate Crimes

## Introduction to Hate Crimes

A hate crime is criminal behavior motivated in whole, or in part, by bias. Hate crimes can be crimes against property, such as vandalism, or crimes against persons, such as assault. At the federal level, hate crime laws cover incidents involving race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity/national origin and disability. Some states also provide protections for other categories, such as gender identity.

Experts debate the number of hate crimes that occur each year in the United States. National data published by the FBI since 1992 have shown annual totals of about 6,000 to 10,000, depending on the year. But a 2005 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found an average annual total of 191,000 hate crimes. That means the real level of hate crime could run between 19 and 31 times higher than the numbers that the FBI has been officially reporting for more than a decade.

It is important to distinguish between hate crimes and bias incidents. Bias incidents, such as bigoted name-calling, certainly involve bias, but they do not always involve a criminal act. All hate crimes are bias incidents, but not all bias incidents are criminal. Bias incidents can and should be dealt with in schools and workplaces through anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, but they are unlikely to be resolved within the justice system.

Just remember: for an incident to be a hate crime, two things must be present — a crime and a bias motivation.

## Key People, Places and Concepts

- Hate crimes
- Bias incidents
- State and federal laws dealing with hate crimes
- Recourse for bias incidents that are not criminal — in schools, states and the nation

## Focus Questions

1. What is the difference between a hate crime and a bias incident?
2. How are hate crimes and bias incidents related to other expressions of bigotry, from bullying to genocide?
3. How can a community work to prevent hate crimes? Respond to hate crimes?
4. How can our school prevent hate crimes and/or bias incidents?

## Resources

Ladder of Prejudice Activity  
[www.tolerance.org/activity/ladder-prejudice](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/ladder-prejudice)

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
[www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)

Southern Poverty Law Center  
[www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)

Hate Crimes Research Network  
[www.hatecrime.net](http://www.hatecrime.net)

Anti-Defamation League  
[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

Matthew Shepard Foundation  
[www.matthewshepard.org](http://www.matthewshepard.org)

Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence  
[www.preventinghate.org](http://www.preventinghate.org)

Partners Against Hate  
[www.partnersagainsthate.org](http://www.partnersagainsthate.org)