

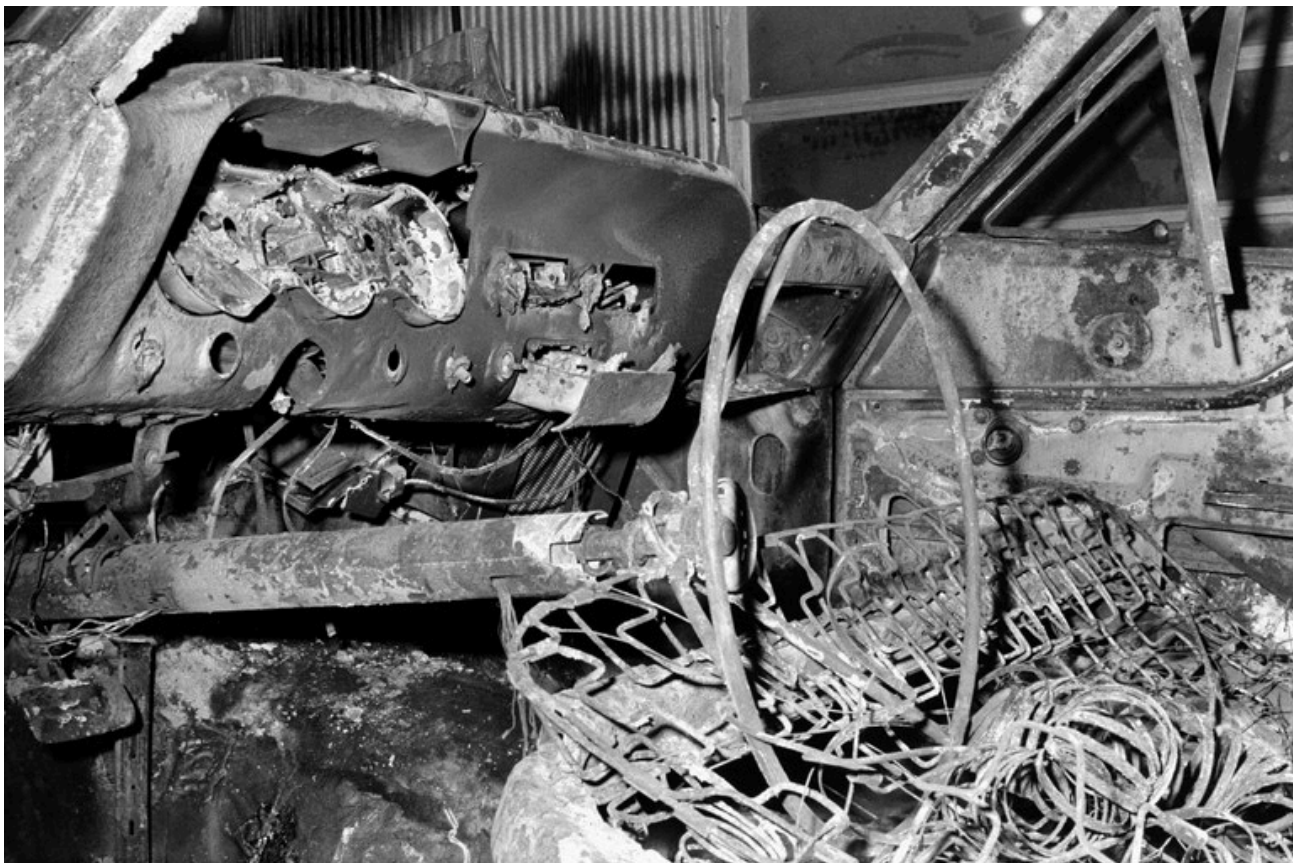
Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are the highest priority of the FBI's Civil Rights program, not only because of the devastating impact they have on families and communities, but also because groups that preach hatred and intolerance can plant the seed of terrorism here in our country. The Bureau investigates hundreds of these cases every year and works to detect and deter further incidents through law enforcement training, public outreach, and partnerships with a myriad of community groups.

Traditionally, FBI investigations of hate crimes were limited to crimes in which the perpetrators acted based on a bias against the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin. In addition, investigations were restricted to those wherein the victim was engaged in a federally protected activity. With the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, the Bureau became authorized to investigate these crimes without this prohibition. This landmark legislation also expanded the role of the FBI to allow for the investigation of hate crimes committed against those based on biases of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or gender.

History

The FBI investigated what are now called hate crimes as far back as World War I. Our role increased following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Before then, the federal government took the position that protection of civil rights was a local function, not a federal one. However, the murders of civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, near Philadelphia, Mississippi, in June 1964 provided the impetus for a visible and sustained federal effort to protect and foster civil rights for African Americans. MIBURN, as the case was called (it stood for Mississippi Burning), became the largest federal investigation ever conducted in Mississippi. On October 20, 1967, seven men were convicted of conspiring to violate the constitutional rights of the slain civil rights workers. All seven were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to ten years.



Defining a Hate Crime

A hate crime is a traditional offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias. For the purposes of collecting statistics, the FBI has defined a hate crime as a “criminal offense 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.” Hate itself is not a crime—and the FBI is mindful of protecting freedom of speech and other civil liberties.

These efforts serve as a backstop for investigations by state and local authorities, which handle the vast majority of hate crime cases throughout the country.

The FBI’s Role

As part of its responsibility to uphold the civil rights of the American people, the FBI takes a number of steps to combat the problem of hate crimes. The following efforts serve as a backstop to investigations conducted by state and local law enforcement agencies, which handle the vast majority of bias crime investigations throughout the country.

Investigative Activities: The FBI is the lead investigative agency for criminal violations of federal civil rights statutes. The Bureau works closely with its local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement partners around the country in many of these cases.

Law Enforcement Support: The FBI works closely with state/local/tribal authorities on investigations, even when federal charges are not brought. FBI resources, forensic expertise, and experience in identification and proof of hate-based motivations often provide an invaluable complement to local law enforcement. Many cases are also prosecuted under state statutes such as murder, arson, or more recent local ethnic intimidation laws. Once the state prosecution begins, the Department of Justice monitors the proceedings in order to ensure that the federal interest is vindicated and the law is applied equally among the 95 U.S. Judicial Districts.

Prosecutive Decision: The FBI forwards results of completed investigations to local U.S. Attorneys Offices and the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice, which decide whether a federal prosecution is warranted. Prosecution of these crimes may move forward, for example, if local authorities are unwilling or unable to prosecute a crime of bias.

Hate Crimes Working Groups (HCWGs): The majority of the FBI’s field offices participate in local Hate Crime Working Groups. These Working Groups combine community and law enforcement resources to develop strategies to address local hate crime problems.

Public Outreach: The FBI has forged partnerships nationally and locally with many civil rights organizations to establish rapport, share information, address concerns, and cooperate in solving problems. These groups include such organizations as the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, American Association of University Women, Anti-Defamation League, Asian American Justice Center, Hindu American Foundation, Human Rights Campaign, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Center for Transgender Equality, National Council of Jewish Women, National Disability Rights Network, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, National Organization for Women, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, The Sikh Coalition, Southern Poverty Law Center, and many others.

Training: The FBI conducts hundreds of operational seminars, workshops, and training sessions annually for local law enforcement, minority and religious organizations, and community groups to promote cooperation and reduce civil rights abuses. Each year, the FBI also provides hate crimes training for new agents, hundreds of current agents, and thousands of police officers worldwide.

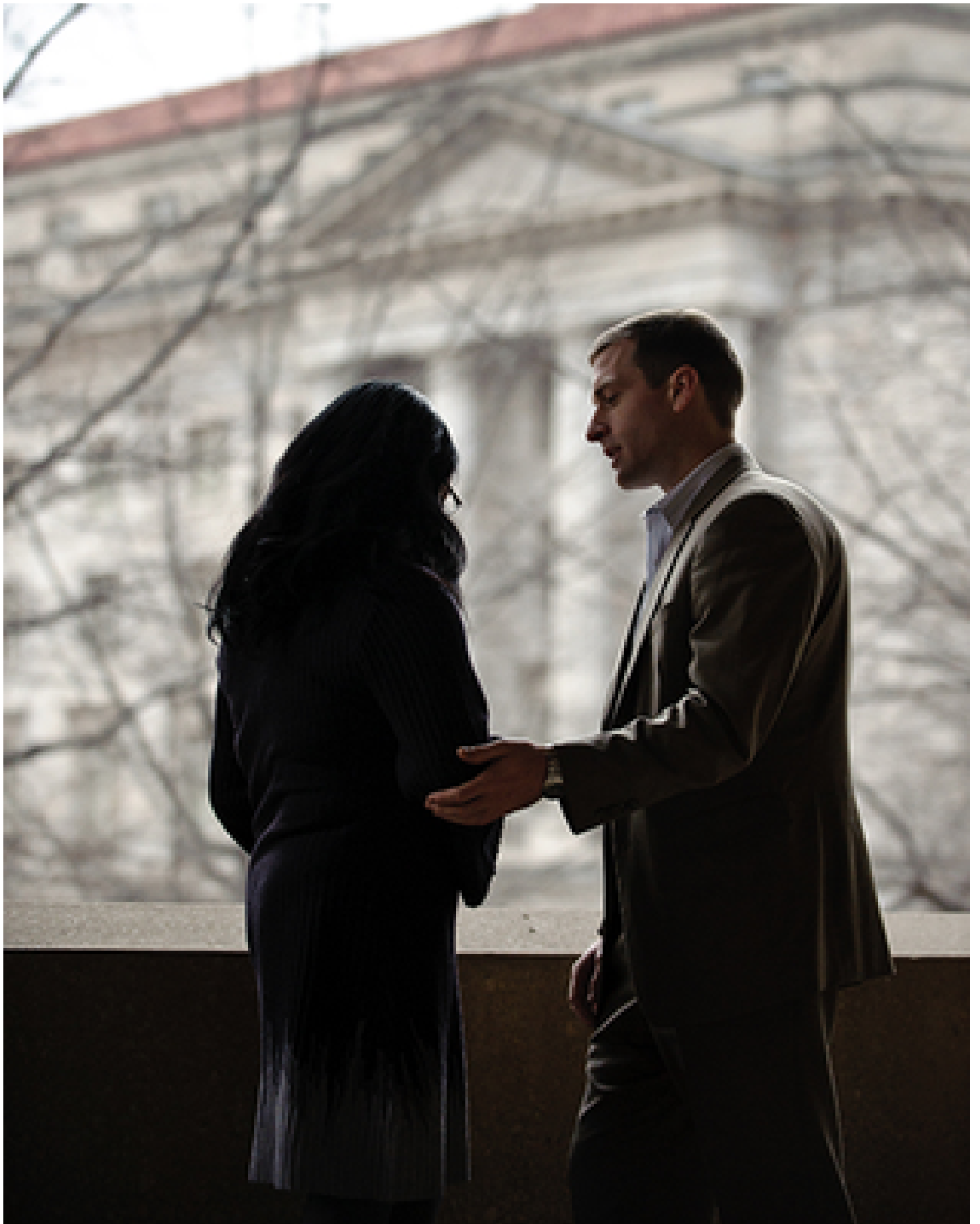
Hate Crime Statistics

The FBI has gathered and published hate crime statistics every year since 1992. Our latest reports:

- 2014 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014>)
- 2013 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2013>)
- 2012 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012>)
- 2011 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2011>)
- 2010 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2010>)

For more information please visit ucr.fbi.gov (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://ucr.fbi.gov/>).

FBI Resources



Victim Assistance

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-assistance>)

The FBI is committed to ensuring that victims receive the rights they are entitled to and the assistance they need to cope with crime. Treating...



Shepard/Byrd Act Brochure

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/shepard-byrd-act-brochure-pdf.pdf/view>)

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 gives the FBI authority to...

External Resources

- U.S. Justice Dept. Civil Rights Division (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170204103052/https://www.justice.gov/crt>)