The Rise in Hate Crimes in the U.S.
February 21, 2020 CIC Topic For Discussion

<u>Background Sheet</u>

Defining a Hate Crime-

Hate crimes are defined as "crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender or gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity," according to the **Hate Crime Statistics Act** passed by Congress in 1990. Hate crimes can be committed against people, property or society, and can include violent attacks, robbery, as well as arson and vandalism.

"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." With the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, the Bureau became authorized to also investigate crimes committed against those based on biases of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or gender. (https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes)

The FBI investigates domestic hate groups within guidelines established by the attorney general. Investigations are conducted only when a threat or advocacy of force is made; when the group has the apparent ability to carry out the proclaimed act; and when the act would constitute a potential violation of federal law. According to the FBI, a hate group's "primary purpose is to promote animosity, hostility, and malice against persons belonging to a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin which differs from that of the members of the organization." However, the FBI does not publish a list of their identified hate groups in America. Organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center attempt to track the activity and growth of so-called "hate groups" in America and has identified 1020 "hate groups" across the country who openly express some form of bias that disrespects other citizens because of their race, ethnicity, native language and customs, sexual orientation, religious identity or some other trait. According to their studies, hate groups have been on the rise around the country in the past three or more years. (https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map)
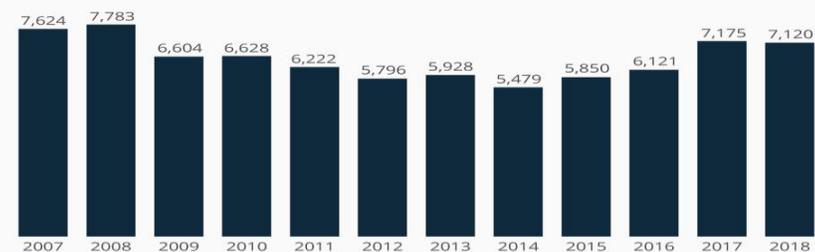
According to Statista data collection, the largest number of hate groups in 2017 were located in California (75), Florida (56), Texas (56), New York (48), Virginia (41), Georgia (40), Tennessee (37), Pennsylvania (36), Illinois (34), and North Carolina (32).

Data on Hate Crimes in the U.S.

Public perceptions suggest that violent acts and murders being categorized as "hate crimes" have rapidly increased in the last four years across the United States.   In 2018 the FBI released statistics that identified 7,120 hate crime incidents involving 8,496 offenses associated with hate based on data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Program submitted by 16,000 U.S. law enforcement agencies. The following diagram identifies in the total number of reported hated crimes as reported by the FBI over the past 11 years-

U.S. Hate Crimes Remain At Heightened Levels
Total number of hate crime incidents recorded by the FBI (2007-2018)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
7,624	7,783	6,604	6,628	6,222	5,796	5,928	5,479	5,850	6,121	7,175	7,120

The FBI defines a hate crime as a "criminal offence 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".

@StatistaCharts   Source: FBI   statista

As the above chart shows, in 2007 when hate crime data was first collected by the FBI, there were 7,624 identified hate crimes which increased to 7,783 in 2008. From 2008 to 2014 hate crimes were on the decline with increases going up beginning in 2016. Between 2016 and 2017, the FBI found a 17% increase in reported hate crime incidents. The 2018 FBI statistical study found that the 7,120 hate crime incidents reported by law enforcement agencies to the FBI for the year revealed 55 fewer incidents than what was reported in 2017.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics, however, reports a much larger number of hate crimes, typically over 20,000 from 2009 to 2017. Instead of using police data, the agency conducted the National Crime Victimization Survey and counted unreported offenses where hate languages and symbols were present. The Report noted that Hate crimes go unreported for many reasons: Many victims couldn't cite tangible evidence of hate to be used by the police; some Latinos were afraid of deportations if they report; LGBTQ people sometimes don't report because of distrust in the police or social stigma.
(https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2019/apr/03/hate-crimes-are-increasingly-reported-us/)

According to the U.S. Department of Justice statistics on Bias Motivation Categories for Victims of Single Incidents in 2018, 59.6% were racial/ethnic/ancestry bias, 18.7% were religious bias, 16.7% were sexual orientation bias, and 5% were gender/disability bias. Among the 8,496 hate crime offenses reported in 2018, 65.5% were crimes against persons, 31.1% were crimes against property, and 3.4% were crimes against society.

(https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics)

In November of 2019 The FBI released a report that noted:
•In hate crimes fueled by racism, African Americans continue to be the most frequently targeted, though anti-black incidents overall fell to a record low share of all hate crime in 2018.
•There was a mixed picture for religious minorities: Anti-Muslim incidents decreased for the second year in a row, but still make up nearly 15% of religiously motivated acts. Anti-Sikh attacks tripled between 2017 and 2018.
•Anti-Semitic homicides in the U.S. reached their highest level ever as a result of the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh that killed 11 people in October 2018.
•Latinos continued to experience an increase in racially motivated incidents. Levin, the researcher, said such incidents rose 13% over one year and 48% over five years.
•The LGBTQ community also faced bias-motivated attacks in 2018. Incidents targeting gay males increased by nearly 7%, and anti-transgender hate crimes rose nearly 34%.
•Anti-Latino, anti-gay, anti-Asian, anti-disability, anti-transgender, anti-Sikh and anti-white hate crimes increased in 2018.
•Crimes against property, like vandalism and robbery, decreased by 19% from 2017 to 2018.

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Possible Causes of Hate Crimes

The causes of hate crimes are varied and complex. Investigations often reveal that perpetrators of hate crimes express or exhibit motives that were rooted in some form of individual, social, cultural or religious bias- frequently identified as either racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, ideologies about white supremacy, or fears and resentments that U.S. citizens are being marginalized socially, politically and economically by non-native Americans.

University of California, Los Angeles psychologist Edward Dunbar, PhD, has examined, using data from the Los Angeles Police Department profile of 550 perpetrators of hate crimes, what drives hate-crime behavior, including such factors as motivation, childhood histories and levels of psychological pathology. His finding suggest that those who commit hate crimes are not mentally ill in the traditional sense--they're not diagnostically schizophrenic or manic depressive, but do share a high level of aggression and antisocial behavior. "These people are not psychotic, but they're consistently very troubled, very disturbed, very problematic members of our community who pose a huge risk for future violence". Dunbar's study suggests that childhood histories of these offenders show high levels of parental or caretaker abuse and use of violence to solve family problems. His study also suggests that people who commit bias crimes are also more likely to deliberate on and plan their attacks rather than commit more spontaneous crimes, suggesting a strong pre-meditative component to these crimes. Those who commit hate crimes also show a history of such actions, beginning with smaller incidents and moving up to more serious ones and a marked tendency to channel their hostility toward groups their social connections believe are a threat to their way of life. (http://edunbar.bol.ucla.edu/research.html)

Other social psychologists have identified a phenomenon known as the "out-group homogeneity effect that allows for unexamined stereotypes and a willingness to ignore individuating information about members of out-groups, lumping them all into a single disliked category. Researchers often point to a number of factors that contribute to the use of violence motivated by hated against certain groups of people:
- The identified "outsiders", "deviants", "inferiors", or "minorities" represent some kind of existential threat to the perpetrators personal religious and social values, their cultural or ethnic heritage, their racial identity, or their national identity and security.
- The identified "others" challenge in some way the power, the pride, and the privileges that the inside group has enjoyed and wishes to maintain.
- The identified targets serve as scapegoats for dealing with certain personal anxieties, competitive failures, or unrealized social hopes that the perpetrator(s) have within themselves.

Some Ways to Address Hate Crimes

In seeking to reduce the rise in hate crimes a number of strategies have been employed- ranging from (a) imposing severe legal punishments for those committing a hate crime and support law enforcement efforts, (b) to advocating for mental illness resources to address violent perpetrators of hate crimes, (c) to identifying and monitoring the activity of hate groups in the U.S., (d) to reinforcing civic ideas about religious tolerance, appreciation for cultural and racial differences, recognition of legal rights for all citizens, the strength that comes from a rich ethnic and social diversity, and the U.S. being a nation of immigrants who have come from highly divergent backgrounds, etc., (e) to encouraging implicit bias training and cultural competency skills in local communities and in business organizations.
(http://archive.ncpc.org/topics/hate-crime.html)