

# Hate Crimes and Extremism

In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in targeted hate violence and the normalization of corrosive, hateful, and destructive ideologies based on white supremacy. Across the Deep South, especially in communities of color, there is an urgent need for action to prevent hate-fueled extremism and bias-motivated criminal activity.

The SPLC has long sought to expose, counter, and mitigate the harm caused by hate and extremism. We currently track more than 1,300 white supremacist and hard-right extremist groups operating across the country, publish investigative reports, and offer expert analysis to Congress, the media, and the public.

## **SPLC Year in Hate and Extremism Report**

SPLC has published an annual census of U.S. hate and extremist groups upholding white supremacy in the United States for the past 30 years. The report offers a comprehensive analysis of these groups' activities and threats to inform the public and policymakers, support impacted communities, and protect democracy. Our most recent report, published in June 2024, documents trends in hard-right activity as a tool for media, advocates, and communities working to prevent radicalization and counter white supremacy, disinformation, and false conspiracies. The report underscores the harms created by hate and extremism, particularly for Black and Brown communities, and uplifts stories of resilience of those pushing back.

In our 2023 report, the SPLC documented 835 active antigovernment groups (an increase from 702 in 2022) and 595 active hate groups (an increase from 523 in 2022), including record numbers of white nationalist and anti-LGBTQ+ groups. The report revealed an intensifying effort by antigovernment extremists to undermine democratic institutions, especially at the local level. Other highlights from this year's report:

- Extremists and those opposing inclusive democracy spent the last year legitimizing insurrection, painting hate as virtuous and transforming conspiracy theories into mainstream narratives – all in preparation for one of the most significant elections in U.S. history.
- Communities of color, immigrant communities, minority faith communities and LGBTQ+ communities have all been targeted – and experienced the negative effects of hate-filled rhetoric and antigovernment conspiracies through actions such as banning books, protesting drag story hours, and using school boards as political battlegrounds.



## **SPLC Policy Recommendations**

The administration and Congress must take meaningful action that prioritizes combating all forms of hate, promoting mutual respect and understanding, and ensuring that all people in America, regardless of their background, feel protected and valued.

### **Speak Out Against Hate and Extremism**

It is impossible to overstate the importance of elected officials, business leaders, and community officials using their public platforms to condemn hate crimes, threats to historically Black colleges and universities, and vandalism and violence against houses of worship and other minority institutions.

### **Make Hate Crime Reporting Mandatory**

We cannot address our nation's hate crime problem without accurate data. The SPLC and a broad group of civil rights organizations support H.R. 7648, the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act, which would condition federal funding for law enforcement agencies serving populations over 100,000 people on credible HCSA reporting.

### **Enforce Hate Crime Laws**

We welcome the progress made by the Biden administration to increase hate crime training, enforcement, and prevention initiatives, including under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 and the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which authorizes incentive grants to spark improved local and state hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives.

- Extremist rhetoric about antisemitism seeped into mainstream narratives at an alarming pace in 2023, particularly after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack, blurring the lines between legitimate criticism of the Israeli government's actions and outright antisemitism. And we also tracked a shift back to hardline Islamophobia after Oct. 7, 2023, from anti-Muslim groups.
- Schools remain a primary target for local extremist mobilization. One group at the forefront of this reactionary anti-student inclusion movement is Moms for Liberty, a Florida-based group that has been working to burnish connections to far-right politicians and normalize assaults on inclusive education.
- Christian supremacy and dominionism are now animating features of antigovernment conspiracies and movement organizing, with the goal of transforming U.S. culture and politics into an authoritarian state. Efforts by these activists to make Christianity authoritative and supreme in everyone's lives represents the greatest threat to American democracy that most people have never heard of.

### **Hate Crime Data**

Under the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (HCSA), the FBI is required to compile hate crime data from the approximately 18,000 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement authorities and to publish an annual report. The data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity, and also by state, city, county, and college or university. For more than 30 years, despite incomplete and inconsistent data reporting by the nation's law enforcement agencies, the HCSA report has been the most important, most comprehensive national snapshot of hate violence in the United States. Every year since 1991, race-based crimes have been the most numerous, with crimes against Black people always making up the highest number of race-based crimes by far.

The 2022 HCSA report documented 11,643 hate crime incidents – the highest figures the FBI has ever recorded. The report documented the highest number of race-based hate crimes ever (including the highest number of anti-Black crimes since 1996 and highest number of anti-Hispanic crimes ever), along with the highest number of crimes directed against people because of religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Unfortunately, reporting is voluntary for state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, and many do not provide their information. In 2022, a year of record reported hate crimes, law enforcement participation in the FBI's data collection program declined for the fifth straight year. In fact, thousands of law enforcement agencies did not report any hate crime data to the FBI. Notably, over 80 cities serving populations of over 100,000 people either did not report any hate crimes, or affirmatively reported that they had zero hate crimes.

### **Fund Prevention Initiatives**

- Federal agencies, including the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services, should establish and fund programs to build community resiliency against hate, to inoculate against extremism, and to empower adults to help steer young people away from violent extremism. The trailblazing work the SPLC is doing with American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) provides a valuable model and resources
- The Biden administration should work with Congress to ensure adequate funding to fulfill the full promise of the very welcome government and public-private initiatives announced at the September 2022 United We Stand Summit.
- Congress and the Department of Education should fund programs to develop and promote civics education and develop and fund curricula addressing structural racism and activities that celebrate our nation's diversity.

### **Teach Truth**

We must teach young people the unvarnished truth about American history – both good and bad – so that we can learn lessons from the past to shape a better future. Concealing the truth about our history does not protect our youth; it makes them susceptible to misinformation and fails to equip them with the digital literacy and critical thinking skills they need to navigate a new age where disinformation and manipulation are spreading. The SPLC's Learning for Justice program is a model for needed resources in our nation's schools.

### **Improve Government Response to Political Violence and Domestic Extremism**

- We must ensure that the planners and perpetrators of the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol – and those who financed and inspired them to action – are held accountable, with real consequences.

- The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs must continue to address white supremacy and extremism in the armed forces. Extremism in military must be addressed at every stage: recruitment, expanding and clarifying prohibitions against advocating for, or involvement in, supremacist or extremist activity for active-duty personnel – and more extensive efforts to help veterans transition into civilian life, including counseling, mental health, and social welfare services.

**Promote Online Safety and Hold Tech and Social Media Companies Accountable**

- Consistent with the First Amendment and privacy considerations, the Biden administration and Congress should adopt rules and regulations to ensure that tech companies increase accountability and transparency and comply with civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination.
- The Biden administration and Congress should provide incentives for tech companies to create and enforce policies and terms of service to ensure that social media networks, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not provide platforms where hateful activities and extremism can grow.

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