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# **US Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion**

**MAY 2023 REPORT**

## US Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion

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# Assessment

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### US Hate Crimes Motivated by Religion

This report reexamines hate-crime data and statistics in the United States, providing an update to the current situation regarding hate crime incidents and identifying the groups most frequently targeted in religiously motivated hate crimes. Anti-Semitic hate crimes were the highest reported throughout the United States and, along with anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh hate crimes, have increased in recent years. Local hate crime data also shows an upward trend in these hate crimes in the past three years, and this upward trend will likely continue.

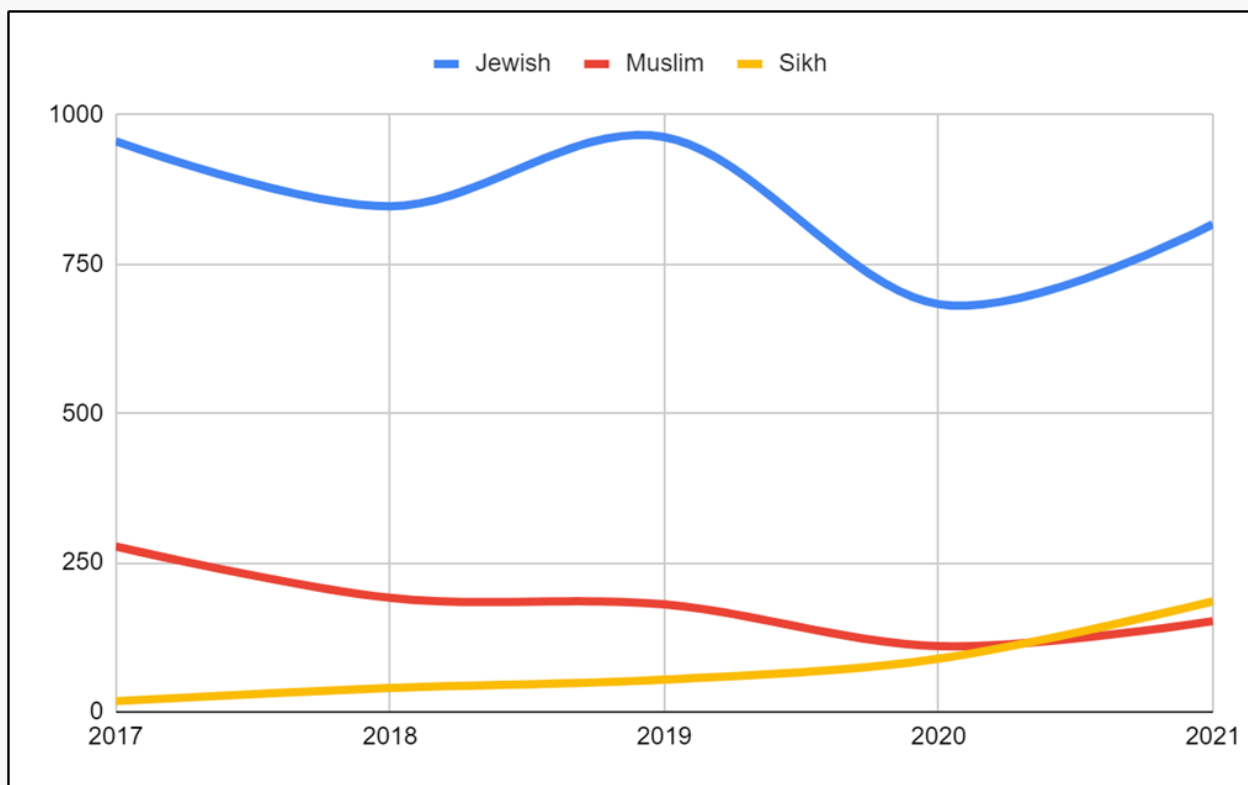
### Key Takeaways:

- According to FBI data for 2021, a total of 1,590 reported hate crime incidents involved biases against race or ethnicity, representing 15 percent of all hate crimes.
- Jews are among the most frequently targeted demographic groups in many major cities, though trends in anti-Semitic hate crimes differ somewhat between official and third-party sources.
- Anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh hate crimes generally spike during the same periods due to mistaken and racist perceptions of Sikhs as Arab Muslims.
- Five-year trends show that despite decreases in religiously motivated hate crimes before 2020, these hate crimes are trending upward, and this trend will likely continue.

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### Overview

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) publishes data each year on the number of hate crimes that have been committed in the United States. In March 2023, the FBI issued a supplemental report on previously released statistics on hate crimes committed in 2021, the latest year for which data is available. According to these statistics, a total of 1,590 reported hate crime incidents involved biases against race or ethnicity, representing approximately 15 percent of all hate crimes according to the FBI.



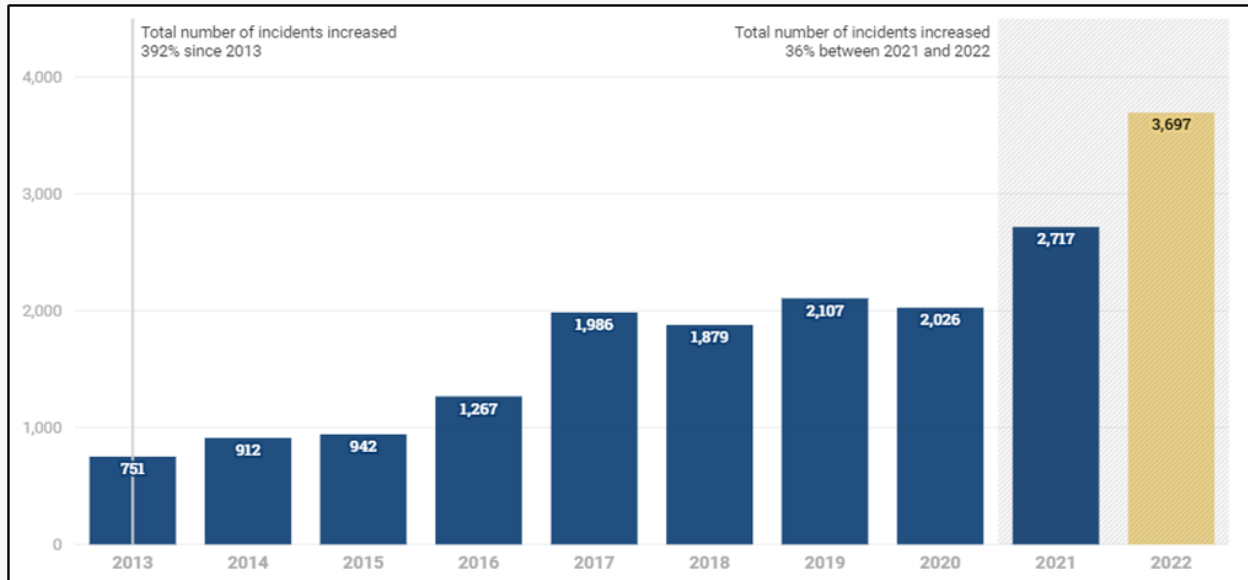
Above: Number of hate crimes committed with an anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, or anti-Sikh bias according to FBI data, 2017–2021

### Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes

Jews are among the most frequently targeted demographic groups in many major cities. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported in April 2022 that it had identified 2,717 anti-Semitic hate crimes in 2021, and it noted that this was the highest number of anti-Semitic hate crimes

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it had identified at any point since it began gathering reports in 1979. This reported increase is reflected in reports from various municipal agencies in major US cities.



*Above: Number of reported anti-Semitic hate crimes, 2013–2022, according to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL)*

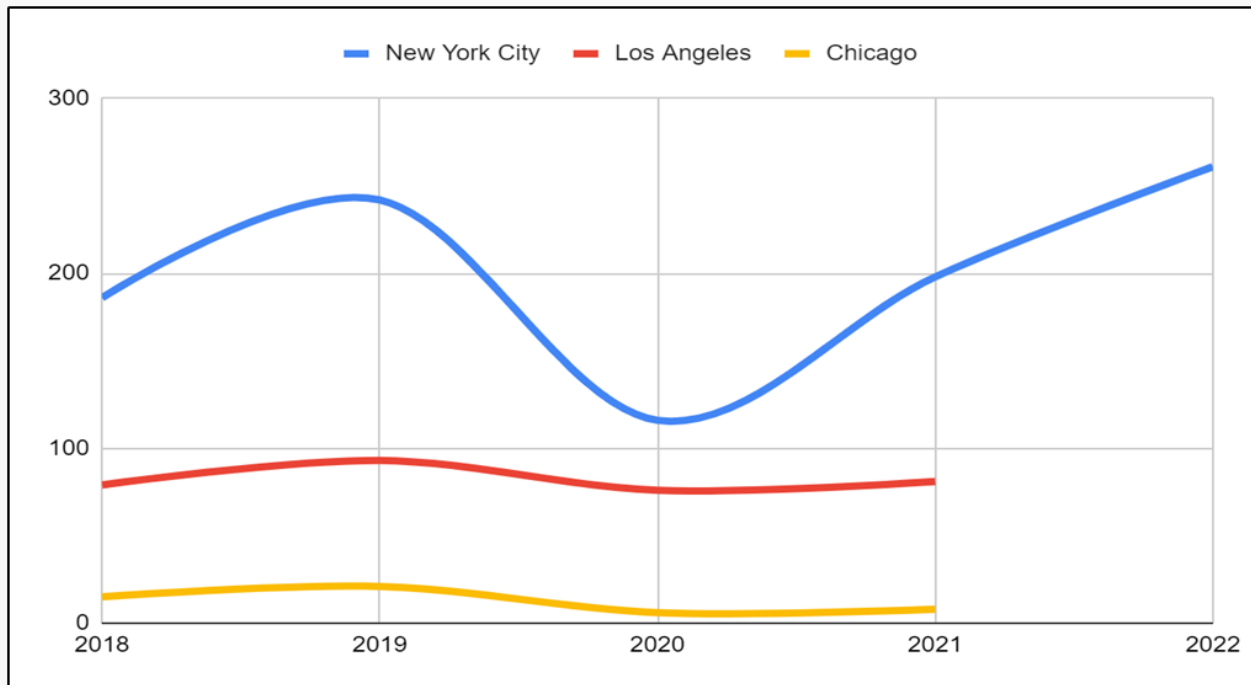
The Chicago city government’s Commission on Human Relations revealed in October 2022 that it had identified a 71 percent year-to-date increase in overall reported hate crimes compared to the previous year. The largest share of these reports affected the city’s Jewish community, representing 23 percent of reported hate crimes. In December 2022, the city of Los Angeles published its report on hate crime statistics for 2021, finding that hate crimes motivated by religious bias increased by 29 percent compared to 2020 and that 74 percent of the reported hate crimes in this category were anti-Semitic. Data from the New York City municipal government shows that hate crimes targeting Jews and Jewish institutions represent the greatest share of reported hate crimes in the city at approximately 43 percent of all hate crimes.

The Jewish population represents approximately 2.2 percent of the total US population, while anti-Jewish hate crimes represent approximately 7.5 percent of all reported hate crimes according to FBI data.

Reports of anti-Semitic hate crimes decreased somewhat in 2020, likely due to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but reports from third-party organizations, and municipal agencies indicate that anti-Semitic hate crimes overall have continued to increase since that time. While federal law enforcement data showed an overall decrease in anti-Semitic hate crimes

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from 2017 to 2020, an increase in these hate crimes was reported in 2021. An analysis of five-year trends in anti-Semitic hate crimes show that except for 2020, the number of these hate crimes reported each year continue to increase, and this upward trend is likely to continue.



*Above: Number of anti-Semitic hate crimes reported by the cities of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, 2018–2022*

## Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes

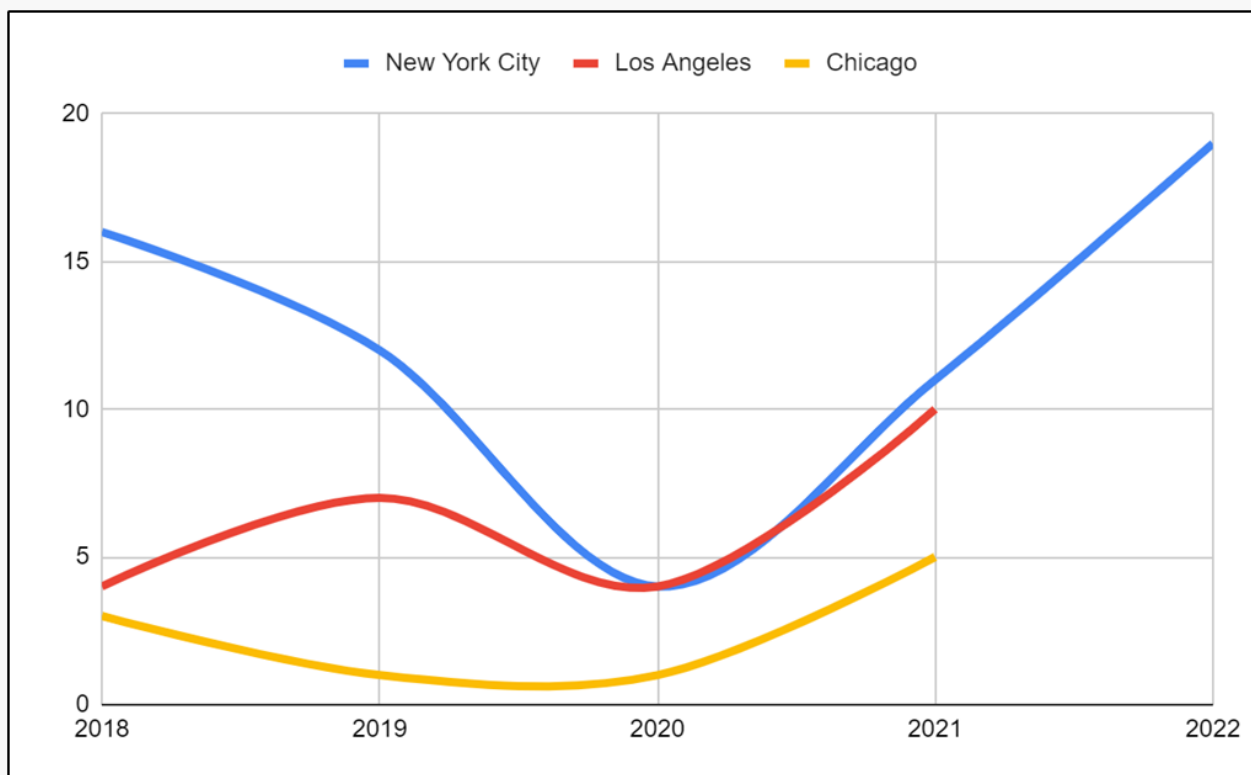
Anti-Muslim hate crimes often spike during times when Muslims and Islam are targeted or highlighted in political statements. A spike in anti-Muslim hate crimes was initially reported in 2001 following the 9/11 attacks, and an additional spike was reported in 2016 that some members of the Muslim community blamed on statements from former US President Donald Trump.

Third-party studies of anti-Muslim hate crimes, such as a survey by the Muslim Community Network, have claimed that Muslim Americans face much higher numbers of hate crimes than official statistics indicate. The Muslim Community Network survey found, for example, that at least 49 percent of surveyed Muslims reported being victims to a hate crime, including 44 percent of surveyed Muslims just between the ages of 10 and 18 who reported being victims to a hate crime in 2019 alone.

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The Muslim population represents approximately 1 percent of the total US population, while anti-Muslim hate crimes represent approximately 1.4 percent of all reported hate crimes in 2021, according to FBI data.

Reports of anti-Muslim hate crimes are inconsistent between national and city-level data. While nationally, a spike in anti-Muslim hate crimes was reported in 2017 that surpassed the level of hate crime reports identified following the 9/11 attacks, FBI data on hate crimes from the last five years for which data has been released indicate an overall decline in anti-Muslim hate crimes, though the number of these crimes increase somewhat in 2021. However, city-level data from the cities of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago show that these hate crimes have been increasing since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of anti-Muslim hate crimes is expected to continue increasing in the coming years throughout the United States.



*Above: Number of anti-Muslim hate crimes reported by the cities of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, 2018–2022*

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### Anti-Sikh Hate Crimes

A review of trends in anti-Sikh hate crimes indicates a possible connection to Islamophobic sentiment rather than biases specifically against the Sikh community. This assessment is supported by the surges in anti-Sikh hate crimes reported alongside surges in anti-Muslim hate crimes. Following the 9/11 attacks, for example, the Sikh community saw a significant increase in hate crime reports, and anecdotal reports of anti-Sikh hate crimes often attribute the incidents to the perpetrators' mistaken and racist perceptions of Sikhs as Arab Muslims. Similar trends have been identified in other countries with a prominent Sikh population such as the United Kingdom. A surge in anti-Sikh hate crimes is likely to occur alongside surges in anti-Muslim sentiment and hate crimes in the United States.

The Sikh population in the United States is approximately 500,000, representing 0.1 percent of the total population, while anti-Sikh hate crimes represented approximately 1.7 percent of all reported hate crime incidents in 2021, according to FBI data.

A minimal number of anti-Sikh hate crimes have been reported by the cities of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago over the past five years. This may be because these larger municipalities do not publish data on hate crimes against the Sikh community in the same way that federal authorities do or because anti-Sikh hate crimes are more often committed outside of larger metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, federal hate crime data indicates that anti-Sikh hate crimes have increased consistently over the past five years for which data has been published. This trend is likely to continue.

### Conclusions

The numbers and trends in religiously motivated hate crimes differ significantly between federal, local, and third-party sources, but an upward trend in these hate crimes has been reported in all identified sources since at least 2020. Anti-Semitic hate crimes remain the most significant religiously motivated hate crime. While anti-Sikh hate crimes have not been reported in significant numbers in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, they have historically spiked during periods of significant anti-Muslim sentiment. Trends from the past five years indicate that hate crimes motivated by a religious bias are likely to increase in the coming years.

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