Law and Disorder: Rising Hate Crime Rates and Fluctuating Voter Turnout

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Did you know that hate crimes in California have increased by 159% in the last decade (Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 1, 2023)? California is known for being a sanctuary state for immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, and other minorities. The state population has become more and more diverse over the years along with the Latino population growing. However, despite the state being more accepting of ethnic, religious, sexual, and gender minorities, California remains the state with the highest number of hate crimes as of 2023 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1, 2025).

Rising hate crime rates bring great concern for the safety of minorities, but also endanger minority ability to exercise their civil rights and liberties due to the fear of harassment and violence. Victims of hate crimes often avoid reporting the crimes enacted upon them due to fear of being targeted again or endangering their families. Targeted and surrounding communities are faced with thick tension between “in-groups” and “out-groups” where minorities have to avoid spaces to protect themselves. However, dim-lit streets are not the only spaces they may avoid, like, polling places. Hate crimes have been increasing during presidential elections recently as the Trump candidacy provides a platform for white nationalists” (The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2023, 2). This rise raises concern for national elections and local elections, especially in areas with higher rates of people of color (POC). Hate crimes “send a message that it is dangerous to vote and deter members of historically marginalized groups from participating in the democratic process” (Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 2020, 2). Thus, minority groups may avoid voting for fear of retaliation and violence, leading to decreased political participation and harm to democracy.

This paper investigates this concern further by exploring the relationship between hate crimes and voter turnout. The broad question this paper addresses is: "How do hate crime rates impact voter turnout?" Specifically, "In California counties, do more hate crime incidents per 100,000 residents decrease the percentage of voter turnout than counties with fewer hate crime incidents per 100,000 residents during the 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 presidential and election years?" To answer this question, I compared the presidential and midterm general election voter turnout of high hate crime event counties against low hate crime event counties in all 58 counties in California from 2012-2022. I found that hate crime events per capita and voter turnout in general elections did not correlate. However, I conclude with a discussion of how confounding variables may have affected this relationship and what this means for combating hate crimes in California counties in the future.

Context and Significance

The California Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) defines hate crimes 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" (CJSC, 1, 2023). These offenses are reported to the California DOJ by law enforcement agencies, though these hate crimes may be underreported due to victims fearing retaliation (CJSC, 3, 2023).

As mentioned above, hate crimes are becoming an increasingly concerning issue in California. Hate crimes have been rising in recent years at rapid rates from 2019-2022 and have only started to decline in 2023, with crimes against Jewish and Arab/Muslim Californians on the rise (CJSC, 2, 2023). According to the CJSC, in 2023, hate crime events involving a religious

bias rose by 30%, while anti-Black crimes continue to represent a huge portion of overall reported hate crimes at 518 hate crimes total (CJSC, 2, 2023). These results could be attributed to the conflict in Gaza during this period for the rise in religion-based hate crimes. As for the rise of race-based hate crimes from 2019-2022, this could be a form of retaliation to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, the alienation of immigrants pushed by President Trump, and the blaming of Asian Americans for COVID-19.

Hate crimes have been recognized as an issue that must be addressed in state legislation, as seen with CA AB 449, which makes "adoption of a hate crimes policy by a state and local law enforcement agency mandatory" (LegInfo, 1, 2023). This act amended hate crime sections of the Penal Code and passed in 2023. The passing of CA AB 485 in 2017 addressed this issue as well by requiring local law enforcement to post monthly updates on hate crimes on their websites (LegiScan, 1, 2022). However, despite more hate crime legislation passing, California held about 1/7 of the total hate crimes in the US in 2019 and has continued to have the highest number of hate crimes in the country since 1996 (FBI, 1, 2019). California's total number of hate incidents exceeding all other states matters more than ever, especially with rising anti-semitism, anti-LGBTQ+, and anti-Muslim on the rise. If the past Trump administration's misinformation and push for white supremacist thought was able to drive hate crimes up in 2021, the current administration can do the same. Thus, hate crimes must be combated by targeting fake news and protecting marginalized communities.

Hate-based violence can have a devastating impact where individuals begin to avoid spaces due to fear of being targeted and harassed. Instilling fear in California counties prevents targeted groups and surrounding communities from exercising their right to vote. Thus, citizens

cannot support the policies that matter to them and support the candidates who represent their voices. Hate crimes need to be addressed further to protect the safety of California communities along with their right to vote and be involved in political processes.

Literature Review

Methodologically, previous studies on crime and voter turnout have used different types of crime, elections, voters, and units of analysis. Nonetheless, these studies have not looked at hate crimes and voter turnout in general elections at a county level in California, which sets this paper apart.

Existing studies researching voter turnout have looked at different kinds of crime or specific hate crimes rather than hate crimes against minorities. Some researchers looked at crime and violence to understand if remittances still had the same effect on electoral participation in Mexico, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa (Garcia & Maydom, 1, 2021). Others aimed to understand the relationship between crime victimization from non-violent and violent crime and voter turnout in Denmark because previous studies had not done that before (Sønderskov et al., 1, 2022). Previously, studies focused on organized crime-related violence to see if organized crime group activity would demobilize voters during electoral campaigns in Mexico (Ley, 1, 2018). Earlier research looked at anti-Latino hate crimes because little research understood how state-level political and social conditions have affected Latino electoral participation in the U.S. (Bueker, 1, 2013). More recent papers studied how the “large influx of refugees to Germany in 2014 and 2015” and “anti-refugee sentiment” impacted anti-refugee hate crimes (Entorf & Lange, 1, 2023)

Though the relationship between these different types of crime and specific hate crimes is significant, these papers fail to look at hate crimes as a whole or hate crimes at all. A rise in hate crimes can have a heightened reaction in minorities that may make up a huge proportion of voters. As such, it is critical to study specific crimes that may target certain populations, such as hate crimes. By the same token, looking at certain hate crimes to look at certain groups can produce valuable information. However, studying all kinds of hate crimes allows researchers to make inferences about how hate crimes as a whole impact all voter turnout. My research toed this line between general crimes and group-specific hate crimes to fill in the lack of info regarding the study of all hate crimes and their impact on voter turnout.

Another methodological gap in existing research is that some studies only focused on national or federal elections (Garcia & Maydom, 2021, Bueker, 2013, Entorf & Lange, 2023). Garcia & Maydom (2021) demonstrated that existing research showed that violence hurts political participation in federal elections, which they wanted to replicate to see how remittance recipients' participation was affected by such crimes. Bueker (2013) examines voter turnout for federal elections of U.S. states because turnout would increase or decrease depending on if the state was a battleground state, and they wanted to focus on highly contested states due to the potential positive effect on Latino voter turnout. Entorf & Lange (2023) explored the regional variation in support for the Nazi party, which is why they took data from federal elections to see how Nazi vote shares varied alongside refugee voter turnout.

The use of national elections for voter turnout can be significant because they provide the most data regarding voter turnout due to their higher voter turnout. However, this can be problematic for hate crimes vs. voter turnout studies because a perceived higher voter turnout

could be due to the higher voter turnout of nationwide elections instead. Less popular elections can address this confounding variable, which my research would account for by using voter turnout from presidential and midterm general elections. General election voter turnout is significant because they occur during presidential and non-presidential years, but provide more data than primary elections, which have less voter turnout. Additionally, increased voter turnout during these elections would show that citizens care about the crime and violence they are experiencing locally, not just at the national level.

An additional methodological gap is that some existing papers have focused on specific groups of voters in their research. Previous research looked at remittance recipients, specifically, to find out whether their isolation as immigrants from national affairs was disrupted by crime and violence (Garcia & Maydom, 1, 2011). Other studies have looked at hate crimes and voter turnout, but of certain ethnic groups, like Latinos, due to the lack of knowledge of their voting behaviors (Bueker, 2, 2013). Other researchers focused on how refugee voter turnout was impacted by anti-refugee hate crimes during the large influx of refugees to Germany in 2014-2015 (Entorf & Lange, 1, 2023). It makes sense for Bueker (2013) and Entorf and Lange (2023) to focus their research on specific voter populations when their studies gather data about specific hate crimes. In addition, these voter groups each represent different minorities whose voter turnout could be unrepresented in previous research.

Despite this, it would be informative to know how all groups, not just specific minority groups are affected by hate crimes because tensions do not just build from a singular group's hate crimes alone. Rising hate crimes in certain areas can push both minority voters and majority voters to or away from the polls. Inspecting minority voter groups can be significant, though,

they are not the only groups affected by hate crimes. Furthermore, zeroing in on specific voters ignores the other voters affected by hate crimes in the area. In my research, I studied all hate crimes and all voter turnout in each county rather than focusing on specific groups because a broader scope of the relationship between these variables could make trends more apparent among affected and non-affected populations, such as POC vs. non-POC.

Finally, the lack of more local units of analysis acts as another methodological gap among existing studies. Some researchers choose to be more specific with an individual scope (Garcia & Maydom, 2021, Sønderskov et al., 2022, Ley, 2018), while others use a state-level scope (Bueker, 2013). However, very few have done a county-level scope of the relationship between hate crimes and voter turnout in the U.S., let alone California which is a gap my research fills in.

Individual-level studies are important because such research can be more palatable to audiences at a personal level. However, papers that use an individual scope (Garcia & Maydom, 2021, Sønderskov et al., 2022, Ley, 2018) when looking at crime and voter turnout are lacking in their ability to look at regional variations in these countries. As a result, any possible regional trends, such as urbanization or rurality impacting voter turnout go overlooked. As seen in how researchers who found variation in low and high-crime contexts for individuals (Garcia & Maydom, 2021) cannot say the same about larger areas and communities.

State-level studies are significant because they can make comparisons of states that may differentiate on several levels, such as government, laws or economy. Previous research addresses hate crimes and Latino voter turnout at a state level that allows for such comparisons (Bueker, 1, 2013). However, researchers can still make the same comparisons between territories

within a state from a county, municipal, or district level. Additionally, observations can be made, not just about the state as a whole, but about specific regions, such as high hate crime or low hate crime areas. My study accounts for these specific areas by recording the voter turnout of the top 117 counties with the highest number of hate crime events and the bottom 117 counties with the lowest number of hate crime events. Broader scopes, like state-levels, make assumptions about these specific regions, which can be misleading. Though some studies have done more local units of analysis before, they are lacking in other areas. Entorf and Lange (2023) address the policy issue of hate crimes and their impact on voter turnout at a district level, similar to county-level research. However, its focus is on refugees alone. Similarly, Garcia and Maydom (2021) study Mexico's crime and voter turnout from a municipal level, though the research fails to look at hate crimes, specifically.

Though Bueker's (2013) findings focus on a specific group's hate crimes and voter turnout, their research indicates that group conflict leads to political mobilization among Latinos because Latino-specific hate crimes were the biggest predictor of voter turnout among naturalized Latinos (Bueker, 403, 2013). Understanding that Bueker's (2013) research is the most similar to mine through geographic scope, I intend to base my hypothesis on her study, despite previous concerns regarding hate crime events silencing victims and surrounding communities.

Theory, Hypotheses, and Causal Mechanism

One of my conceptual hypotheses is that an increase in hate crime rates would increase voter turnout. My operational hypothesis is that California counties that face more hate crime incidents per 100,000 people would see higher voter turnout for general elections than California

counties that face fewer hate crime incidents per 100,000 people during the 2012-2022 general election years. The theory and causal mechanism behind this hypothesis is that individuals will be incentivized to participate in the voting process after experiencing hate-based violence targeting their communities. However, despite the concern that hate-based violence may polarize and isolate communities, making them lose faith in their justice government, previous studies, like Bueker (2013), have revealed minorities who are alienated through hate crimes are motivated to exercise their right to vote.

An additional hypothesis I had was that I expected an increase in hate crimes in counties with more POC would lead to an increase in voter turnout. My operational hypothesis is that California counties with above-average POC percentages would see higher voter turnout for general elections than California counties with below-average POC percentages during the 2012-2022 election years.

To build on the causal mechanism outlined above, not only did I expect counties with more hate crimes will have higher voter turnout due to motivation to ensure safer communities, but I also expected that increasing hate crime in counties with higher percentages of POC would push citizens to vote more due to group consciousness, which is where group identification pushes individuals to pursue collective action to advocate for shared interests. Being surrounded by people who look and identify as the same identity as yours can encourage citizens to confide in one another. Additionally, groups are motivated to band together against harassment and violence enacted upon their communities. With more and more hate crimes reported in their counties, more minorities perceive such violence as a threat they must collectively act upon by calling on representatives to ensure their neighborhoods are safe and protected.

Research Design

My independent variable is the number of hate crimes per capita. I measured this variable by dividing the number of reported hate crime events by the population in each California county and each general election year during 2012-2022. Then, I multiplied this by 100,000. I chose this specific operationalization because by using a per capita measure, I can make more accurate comparisons between different counties that may have significantly different population sizes. My data source for the independent variable is the California DOJ's CJSC hate crime 2012-2022 annual reports and the California Department of Finance's (DOF) "E4 - Historical Population Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State" for 2010-2020 and 2020-2024.

My dependent variable is the voter turnout percentage. I measured this variable by dividing total voters by eligible-to-register voters in each California county and each general election year during 2012-2022. Then, I multiplied this by 100%. I chose this specific operationalization because a percentage can be used to compare counties with differing amounts of eligible-to-register voters and total voters more easily, without having to look at two variables for each observation. My data source for the dependent variable is the California Secretary of State's (SOS) "Voter Participation Statistics by County" 2012-2022 general election reports.

Some control variables that I accounted for when analyzing the relationship between hate crime events per capita and voter turnout percentage are median household income per capita and average POC percentage. These variables were considered because more voter turnout may be seen in areas with more income or areas with higher amounts of POC. However, this may be

attributed to the fact that those with more income are more likely to be educated, and higher education links to higher voter turnout (Kim, 1, 2023). Areas with more POC may be more likely to vote due to group consciousness spurring collective action, as mentioned in previous literature (Bueker, 391, 2013).

Median household income per capita influences the relationship between my independent and dependent variables because individuals with higher family incomes may have higher voter turnout than individuals with lower family incomes. Controlling for education would have been better due to those with higher levels of education being more likely to vote (Kim, 1, 2023). However, some years were missing in data collections for education levels in California counties, so I opted for household income instead, which has a minor correlation with voter turnout ($r = 0.29$). I measured median household income by taking the median household income in each California county and each general election year during 2012-2022. To calculate below-average and above-average median household income, I took the California median household income from 2012-2022. Then, I marked each median household income observation as below or above the California median household income observations, depending on the year. The data source for this control variable is the United States Census Bureau's "Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates" for 2012-2022.

People of color percentages influence the relationship between my independent and dependent variables because counties with higher POC populations may have a higher voter turnout percentage. After all, it is more likely that larger communities of minorities that feel the same sentiments about hate crimes will come together compared to smaller minority communities. Additionally, there seems to be a minor correlation between POC percentage and

voter turnout (r = -0.24). I measured POC percentage by dividing all race estimates, except white, by the total population estimate in each California county and each general election year. Then, I multiplied this by 100%. Again, percentages are easier to work with for comparisons between counties with differing race population numbers. To calculate below-average and above-average POC percentages, I took the California race estimates of 2012-2022, excluding whites, and divided them by the total population estimate of each year, respectively. Then, I multiplied each California POC percentage observation by 100% and marked each POC percentage observation by county if it was above or below the state one for that year. The data source for this variable is the United States Census Bureau's "DPO5 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates," specifically the 2012-2022 "ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles."

My unit of analysis is California counties. I examined multiple cases over time. Specifically, I looked at an N-size of 58 counties in California during the 2012-2022 general election years.

Research Methods

For this project, I conducted a large-n, longitudinal analysis to explore how hate crime events impacted voter turnout across California counties. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to evaluate the relationship between hate crime events per capita and voter turnout percentage. To address the differences in median household income, I ran a t-test to compare the voter turnout of high hate crime event counties vs. low hate crime event counties, below-average vs. above-average POC percentage counties, and below-average vs. above-average median

household income counties. Geospatial analysis mapped hate crime events per capita across the 58 counties through county maps to emphasize how hate crimes have increased over the years.

The final analysis includes seven key figures: maps illustrating hate crime events per capita across California counties in 2012 and 2022 to emphasize the rise in hate crimes in recent years (Figures 1a and 1b), a box-and-whisker plot comparing the voter turnout of high, medium, and low hate crime event counties (Figure 2), line graphs depicting average hate crime events per capita and voter turnout over time from 2012-2022 (Figure 3a and 3b), a scatterplot comparing the relationship between hate crimes and voter turnout for below-average POC percentage and above-average POC percentage counties (Figure 4), and finally, a scatterplot highlighting the difference between below-state median household income and above-state median household income counties when comparing hate crimes and voter turnout (Figure 5).

Results

Through the geospatial analysis of California counties and their hate crime events, it is apparent that hate crime events were less common in 2012, with more non-colored areas and fewer darker-shaded areas being present (Figure 1a). Additionally, the range on the right shows the highest hate crime events per capita being 10.7 (Figure 1a). However, hate crime events per capita in 2022 had a higher maximum of 19.2 (Figure 1b). Additionally, there appear to be no non-colored areas, and many counties have become darker over the past decade (Figure 1b). These county maps reveal that hate crime events have risen over the years, which supports the California DOJ's reports of hate crimes increasing by 159% in the last decade (CJSC, 1), raising concern for minority populations.

Figures 1a and 1b. Hate Crime Events: 2012 vs. 2022 (Data Source: CJSC and DOF)

To answer my research question, I created this box-and-whisker plot to compare counties with high and low hate crime events (HCE) to see if their voter turnout percentage varies (Figure 2). By sorting the hate crime events based on the top 117, middle 117, and lowest 117 counties, I found no relationship between high HCE counties having higher voter turnout than low HCE counties. The quartiles and medians of the groups are around the same value (Figure 2). High HCE counties have a higher maximum and lower minimum voter turnout than low HCE counties (Figure 2). Running a t-test between high HCE counties and low HCE counties supports my findings because there is no statistically significant relationship between the two groups, specifically, a p-value of 0.96. Overall, the data does not support my hypothesis of counties with

more hate crime events having higher voter turnout compared to counties with fewer hate crime events.

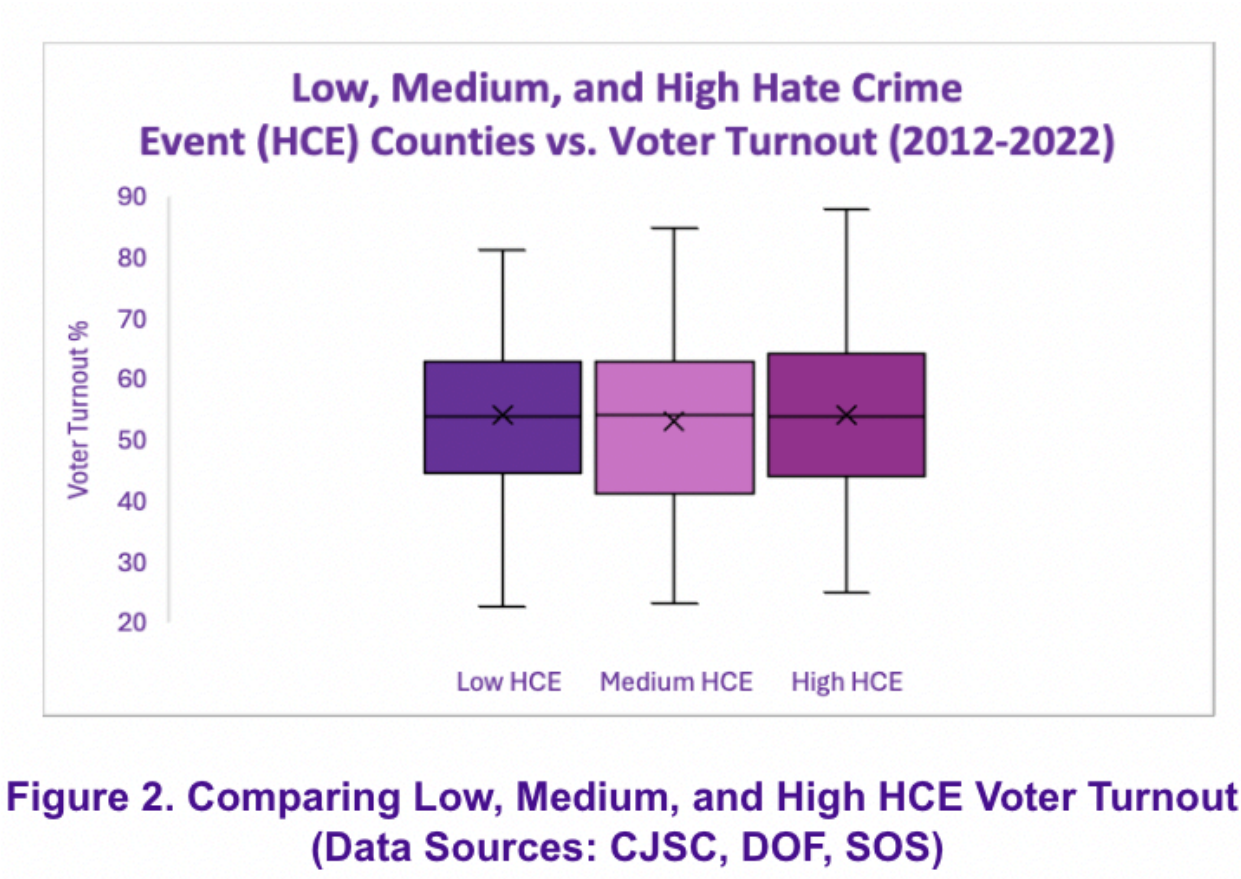
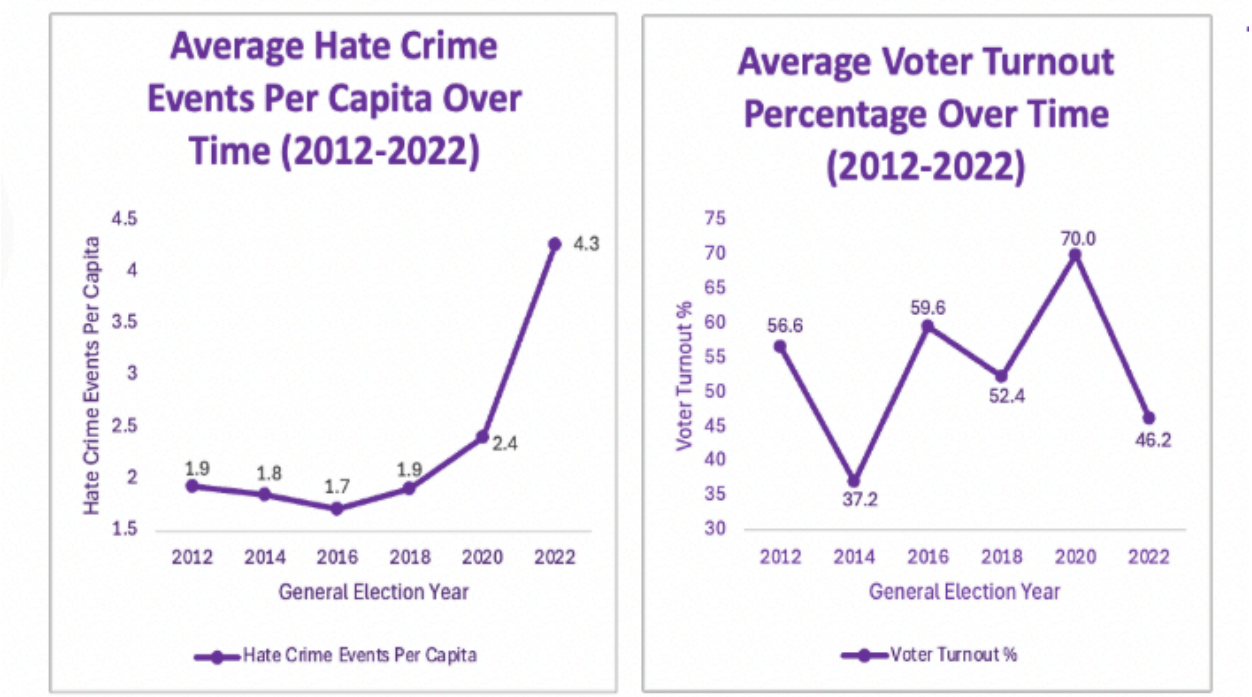


Figure 2. Comparing Low, Medium, and High HCE Voter Turnout (Data Sources: CJSC, DOF, SOS)

As time passed between 2012-2022, average hate crime events per capita have had a 226% increase since 2012 compared to 2022, with increases happening from 2018-2022 (Figure 3a). From 2012-2016, the average hate crime events per capita would differ by 0.1-0.2 until 2018 (Figure 3a). However, because these are reported hate crimes, it is possible that the perceived increase could be due to more awareness and encouragement around reporting recently.

In contrast, average voter turnout percentage has fluctuated every 2 years from 2012-2022, with dips during 2014, 2018, and 2022, and rises during 2012, 2016, and 2020 (Figure 3b). These rises may be impacted by the fact that they are presidential election years,

which increases voter turnout. Notably, the largest rise was 70% average voter turnout during 2020 (Figure 3b). These two line graphs side-by-side reveal no trends or patterns over time when comparing hate crime events per capita and voter turnout percentage (Figures 3a and 3b).



Figures 3a and 3b. Average Hate Crime Events and Voter Turnout Over Time (Data Sources: CJSC, DOF, SOS)

As hate crime events per capita increase, voter turnout percentage has a slight increase in above-average POC percentage counties (Figure 4). In contrast, as hate crime events per capita increase, voter turnout percentage has a slight decrease in below-average POC percentage counties (Figure 4). There is a weak positive relationship between counties with more POC and hate crimes and voter turnout due to the R-squared value is 0.0043 (Figure 4). There is a weaker negative relationship between counties with fewer POC and hate crimes and voter turnout with

the R-squared value being 0.0029 (Figure 4). Running a t-test between the voter turnouts of below and above-average POC percentage counties reveals that the difference between these two groups is not statistically significant due to a p-value of 0.14. Additionally, there appears to be no significant relationship between hate crime events per capita and voter turnout based on the scatter plot distribution (Figure 4). After running a correlation analysis using Pearson's r, I found a correlation coefficient of -0.04, which supports the finding of no correlation between hate crime events per capita and voter turnout percentage.

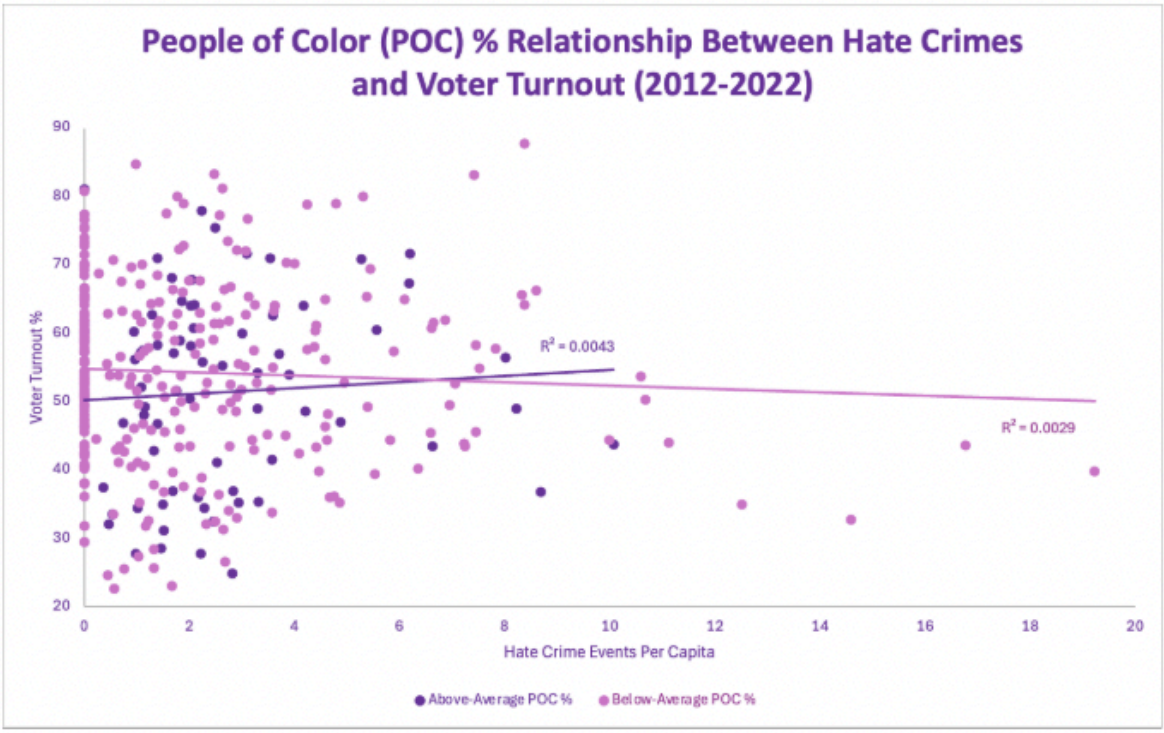


Figure 4. POC Relationship Between Hate Crimes and Voter Turnout (Data Sources: CJSC, DOF, SOS, U.S. Census Bureau)

As hate crime events per capita increase, voter turnout percentage slightly increases in above-average median household income counties (Figure 5). There is a weak positive

relationship between wealthier counties and voter turnout and hate crime events, as seen with an R-squared value of 0.0061 (Figure 5). In contrast, as hate crime events per capita increase, voter turnout percentage has a slight decrease in below-average median household income counties (Figure 5). There is a weak negative relationship between less fortunate counties and voter turnout and hate crime events, as seen with an R-squared value of 0.0151 (Figure 5). However, a t-test between above-average and below-average median household income counties reveals a statistically significant difference between the two groups because the p-value is 0.00000021.

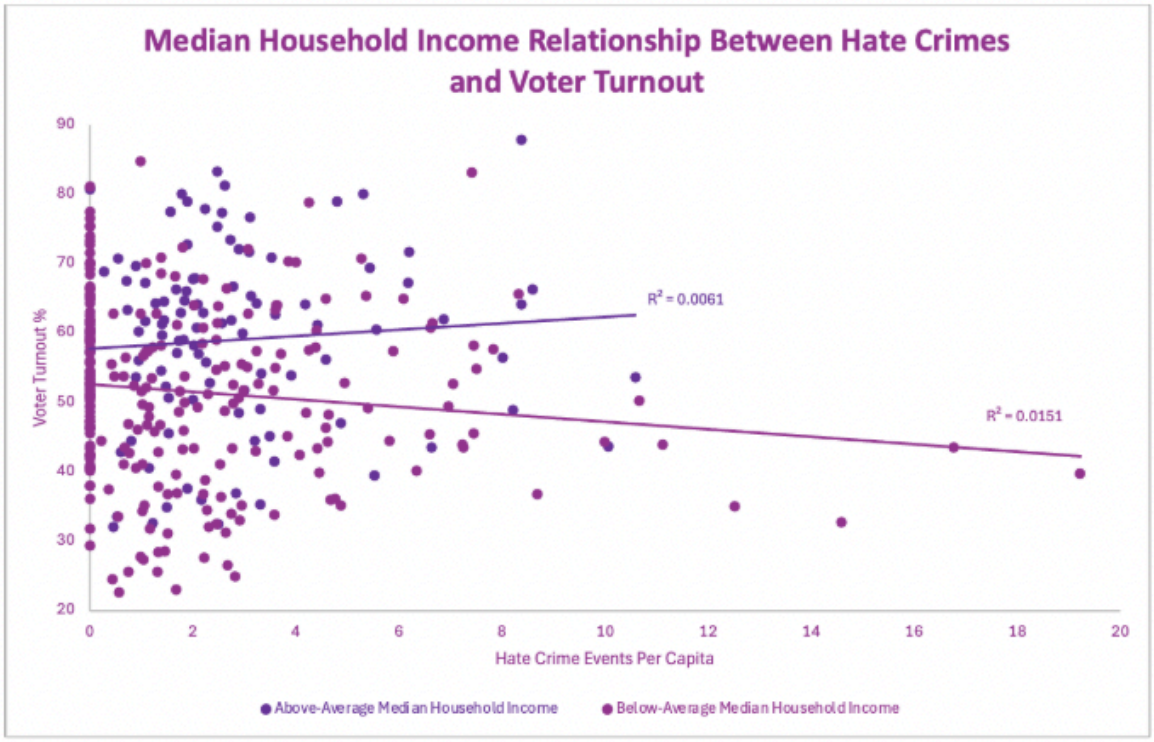


Figure 4. Median Household Income Relationship Between Hate Crimes and Voter Turnout (Data Sources: CJSC, DOF, SOS, U.S. Census Bureau)

Discussion and Research Implications

My research question asked whether California counties with more hate crimes see decreased voter turnout rates in general elections compared to those with fewer hate crime events from 2012-2022. Overall, this study did not support my first hypothesis. My results found that as hate crimes increased among California counties, voter turnout slightly decreased, however, only by an insignificant margin ($r = -0.04$). Such a margin suggests no relationship between my variables. Additionally, high HCE counties and low HCE counties had no statistically significant difference in voter turnout (p-value = 0.96). Thus, no correlation was found between hate crime events per capita and voter turnout percentage, contradicting my expectations.

Though my results prove to be insignificant, it is possible that my findings could be affected by presidential election years and their effect on voter turnout in general elections. Presidential election years tend to have higher voter turnout due to their popularity. Thus, citizens are more likely to exercise their right to vote for general elections during such periods, which would explain the sudden spikes in average voter turnout over time (Figure 3b). Additionally, the minimal decrease in voter turnout during increasing hate crime events may be due to the rise in fear in targeted communities, especially immigrants during COVID-19, which blamed many Asian Americans. Other reasons for the decrease may be Trump spreading anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican, and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric during his presidency.

However, the alternative explanation that fear in targeted communities may be deterring voters away from the polls is contradicted by the finding that counties with more POC had a slight increase in voter turnout as hate crime events increased, whereas counties with fewer POC had a slight decrease (Figure 4). This result supports my hypothesis that as hate crimes increase in above-average POC percentage counties, voter turnout would increase, and vice versa in

below-average POC percentage counties. This finding may be attributed to group consciousness encouraging individuals to band together to fight against hate crimes affecting targeted communities (Bueker, 391, 2013). Where individuals are made to feel like outsiders and confide in others to pursue collective action and make change locally.

Unsurprisingly, as hate crimes increased in wealthier counties, voter turnout increased, and as hate crimes increased in poorer counties, voter turnout decreased. A statistically significant difference was found between these two types of counties through voter turnout (p-value = 0.00000021). These results support existing studies that discovered higher levels of income inequality reduce voter turnout and widen the turnout gap between rich and poor (Polacko, 2021, 1). Such differences between wealthy and poor counties may be attributed to how voting takes time that less fortunate communities may not have much of while putting food on the table. Additionally, lower-income communities have less access to higher education, and more education is related to higher voter turnout as citizens become more informed.

These findings have several significant implications. The research clearly shows that hate crimes have been increasing over time in California counties, regardless of their relationship to voter turnout. This increase during 2012-2022 may be attributed to the past Trump administration that targeted immigrants and pushed racist rhetoric. It is possible as well that more victims have found the courage to report hate crimes over the years as more people keep coming forward. Other factors may be that Anti-Muslim and anti-semitic hate crimes have been on the rise due to the Israel-Hamas war drawing out in the Middle East. The rise in hate crime events is not to be taken lightly when misinformation and fake news can spur violence against targeted populations. Policymakers should aim to not only combat hate crimes through local law

enforcement but also work on reducing stigma around minority populations and creating more safety measures for affected citizens. Counties with below-average median household incomes are of greater concern because their voter turnout has a significant difference compared to above-average median household income counties, and should be aided further by local government representatives.

Limitations and Research Extensions

Although my research provides important insights into how median household income and people of color percentages interact with hate crime events and voter turnout, several limitations should be explored further by future research.

This study failed to examine confounding variables that may impact the relationship between hate crimes and voter turnout. As mentioned before, presidential election years have increased voter turnout, which motivates voters to mobilize during general elections. Not accounting for presidential election years skewed the distribution during 2012, 2016, and 2020 (Figure 3b). If future research replicates this study, I recommend that they focus on only non-presidential election years where voter turnout is not affected by the popularity of the presidential election season. Additionally, this study does account for income but not education. Education is another variable that significantly impacts voter turnout because the more informed one is, the more likely one is to turn out to vote. Income cannot predict education level because voter turnout could remain the same for adults who enter poverty later because they already attained their diplomas, but drop when children who have not finished their education enter poverty early on.

Further research should explore LGBTQ+ and religious minority population percentages and how they impact the relationship between hate crime events and voter turnout. I controlled for only POC populations in this study when looking at hate crimes of all populations. However, it would have been significant to see how other minorities affected by hate crimes differ in voter turnout, not just individuals affected by race-based hate crimes. Specifically, exploring religious minorities is important with LGBTQ+ hate crimes on the rise and the 30% increase in religion-based hate crimes that may be affected by the conflict in Gaza.

Conclusion

California's hate crimes are increasing at concerning rates. The state has already laid out how to address such crimes in court, but what about the safety of affected populations and educating citizens to prevent further misinformation and violence from spreading? Though my research found an insignificant difference between high hate crime event counties and low hate crime event counties in terms of voter turnout, this study reveals what could become of racial gaps and income gaps in voter turnout if hate crimes continue to rise. These findings demonstrate that despite a small margin of difference, counties with more hate crimes occurring and counties with lower incomes have less voter turnout. My research highlights the impending disparities in voter turnout if policymakers fail to address hate-based violence preemptively. Creating and heightening more penalties may deter individuals from committing more violence, but not as much as educating less-informed citizens and changing harmful views about minority populations. While this study has barely touched the surface of how hate crimes may be affecting voter turnout using different temporal scopes, units of analyses, or control variables, I hope that

further research can fill in these gaps and encourage the creation of more preventative policies that target hate crimes at its root.

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