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RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

GENDER IDENTITY HATE CRIMES In California

December 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In California, state law generally defines a hate crime as a criminal offense motivated by bias against a person's protected characteristics, including gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or disability. The state's penal code includes several statutes that define hate crimes, prohibit civil rights violations based on protected characteristics, and provide sentence enhancements when bias is determined to be a motivating factor for the underlying crime. This report is part of a series on hate crimes and victimization targeting transgender and gender nonconforming people in California. It examines data reported to the California Department of Justice by law enforcement and prosecutors on hate crime incidents motivated by gender identity—specifically those involving anti-transgender or anti-gender nonconforming bias—from 2001 to 2024. Because substantial changes to the definitions and reporting practices for gender-identity hate crimes were implemented in the early 2010s, the report provides a more detailed analysis of the period from 2013 to 2024, when the data are more consistent and comparable.

KEY FINDINGS

Prevalence and Frequency

- Hate crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity have accounted for nearly a quarter (23%) of all reported hate crimes in California since 2001.
 - These were the second most common type of hate crime reported in the state after those based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry (59%).
- Hate crimes motivated by bias against a person's perceived gender are increasingly reported to the California Department of Justice (DOJ).
 - Since 2001, law enforcement agencies in California have recorded 678 incidents involving a reported hate crime motivated by anti-gender identity bias, averaging 28 incidents per year.
 - In 2013, the California DOJ added "anti-gender nonconforming" as a bias category distinct from "anti-transgender" for law enforcement agencies to use when recording hate crimes. Since then, 522 gender identity hate crime events involving anti-transgender and anti-gender nonconforming bias were recorded by law enforcement.
 - Reported hate crimes more than tripled from 25 in 2013 to 84 in 2024.
- There were at least 582 identified victims among the 522 gender identity hate crime events reported since 2013.

Geography and Location

- Since 2013, 124 law enforcement agencies across California have reported gender identity hate crimes.
 - The five agencies that recorded the largest number of hate crimes were responsible for reporting over three in five (62%) of all events since 2013.

- More populous counties accounted for a larger share of gender identity hate crimes.
 - Four counties accounted for nearly two-thirds (63%) of all reported gender identity hate crimes between 2013 and 2024: Los Angeles (47%), San Francisco (5%), Santa Clara (5%), and San Diego (5%). Together, 331 of the 522 total incidents occurred in these counties during this period.
 - Los Angeles County averaged about half (49%) of reported gender identity hate crimes statewide each year from 2013 to 2024.
- Almost half (47%) of all gender identity hate crimes happened in a public roadway or parking lot, and another 18% occurred in private residences or homes. The remainder were in a variety of locations such as schools, colleges, and universities, parks, public transportation, and bars or nightclubs.

Experiences of Violence and Victimization

- The vast majority (93%) of gender identity hate crime events since 2013 reported personal violence—such as assault—against the victim as the underlying crime; only a small fraction (7%) reported a property crime.
 - Gender identity hate crimes involving personal violence have risen noticeably since 2020. By 2024, the number had tripled, from 23 incidents in 2013 to 79 in 2024.
 - Over two-thirds (70%) of violent gender identity hate crimes reported either aggravated assault (35%) or simple assault (35%).
- Over three-fourths (78%) of reported violent gender identity hate crime events involved the use of a weapon, with bodily weapons like hands, feet, or teeth accounting for 44% of gender identity hate crimes alleging violence.
- In more than half (53%) of all gender identity hate crimes, bias was indicated through the use of verbal slurs.
- Gender identity hate crimes involving property are less likely to involve destruction of property and more likely to involve larceny (theft) compared to hate crimes motivated by other biases.
- Gender identity hate crimes are more likely to involve victims under the age of 18 (11% of events) than hate crimes motivated by other biases when the victim's age is available.

Persons Accused of Hate Crimes

- Gender identity hate crimes reported by law enforcement since 2013 were more likely to identify a suspect compared to hate crimes motivated by other types of bias (e.g., 89% compared to 76% of race/ethnicity hate crimes and 45% of religiously based hate crimes).
 - Hate crimes motivated by gender identity bias were more likely to involve multiple people accused of a hate crime than other types of hate crimes (e.g., 26% compared to 16% for race or ethnicity hate crimes and 12% for those related to religious bias).
 - People accused of gender identity hate crimes were more likely than other bias types to be under the age of 18 (e.g., 11% compared to 7% of hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity and 7% of those motivated by religious bias).

INTRODUCTION

Research shows that transgender and gender nonconforming people are more likely than their cisgender counterparts to experience criminal victimization.¹ This disparity extends to both *bias-motivated incidents*, in which a person experiences hostility because of a perceived personal or group characteristic—such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religion—and *hate crimes*, in which an underlying crime is motivated “in whole or in part” by a person’s real or perceived personal or group characteristic.²

Bias-motivated incidents are distinct from hate crimes. A hate crime involves a criminal offense that is motivated by bias against a protected class. In contrast, bias-motivated incidents do not include a criminal act. For example, yelling a slur at someone, while offensive, is not a criminal offense and is therefore considered a bias-motivated incident. For a hate crime to officially be recorded, the incident must be reported to law enforcement and subsequently classified as such by the police.³

Hate Crime = Criminal Offense + Bias Motivation

For an incident to officially be categorized and counted as a hate crime, several criteria must be met at a minimum. First, the incident must be reported to law enforcement. Second, law enforcement officials must identify that a crime occurred (allegation of an underlying crime). Finally, law enforcement must determine that the alleged crime was motivated at least in part by bias against an actual or perceived protected class. Federal hate crime laws, for example, protect individuals based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disability.⁴

This report analyzes reported gender identity hate crimes in California—alleged crimes motivated in whole or in part by a person’s real or perceived transgender status or gender nonconformity.⁵ It is part of a series of reports prepared by the Williams Institute examining gender identity-based hate crimes and violence against transgender people across California.

CALIFORNIA'S HATE CRIME LAWS

As one of the earliest adopters of hate crime legislation, California developed a legal framework that enumerates more protected characteristics than federal statutes, especially related to those motivated by bias against a person’s actual or perceived gender identity and expression.⁶ California law, like federal law, defines hate crimes as criminal acts and considers the underlying motivation. For an offense to be considered a hate crime, it must be determined that the act was committed at least in part because of the victim’s real or perceived identity characteristics.

¹ Flores, A. R., Meyer, I. H., Langton, L., & Herman, J. L. (2021). *Gender identity disparities in criminal victimization: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017–2018*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(4), 726–729; Meyer, I. H., & Flores, A. R. (2025). *Anti-LGBT victimization in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey (2022–2023)*. The Williams Institute.

² California Penal Code § 422.55 (2004). *Definitions—hate crime*.

³ see Arrayales, J., & Mallory, C. (forthcoming). *Overview of hate crime literature*. The Williams Institute.

⁴ *The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009*, 18 U.S.C. § 249; 42 U.S.C. § 3631; 18 U.S.C. § 245.

⁵ In this report, we use the term *gender identity hate crimes* to include incidents classified as “anti-transgender” and “anti-gender nonconforming.” These are the specific subcategories that law enforcement agencies use when recording bias motivation, and they are reflected as such in the official data published by the California Department of Justice.

⁶ Jenness, V., & Grattet, R. (2004). *Making Hate A Crime: From Social Movement to Law Enforcement*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Table 1 presents the relevant sections of California’s Penal Code related to hate crimes.⁷ These statutes define what constitutes a hate crime, specify protected characteristics, and define penalties for crimes proven to be motivated by bias. Importantly, California explicitly includes gender identity and gender expression within its legal definition of gender, thereby ensuring protections for transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals.⁸

Table 1. California’s Hate Crime Laws

PENAL CODE	DESCRIPTION
§ 422.55	Defines a hate crime as a criminal act committed, in whole or in part, because of the victim’s actual or perceived characteristics, including disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one or more of those actual or perceived characteristics
§ 422.6	Prohibits interference with a person’s civil rights (e.g., through threats or intimidation) based on protected characteristics, among other provisions.
§ 422.7	Provides sentence enhancements for misdemeanor offenses if bias is found to be a motivating factor.
§ 422.75	Provides sentence enhancements for felony offenses when bias is determined to be a motivating factor.
§ 422.56(c)	Defines “gender” to include not only biological sex but also gender identity and gender expression, defined as appearance or behavior may not conform to societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON GENDER IDENTITY HATE CRIMES

Data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) indicates a steady rise in the number of reported gender identity-based hate crimes, increasing from 114 offenses affecting 122 victims in 2015⁹ to 198 offenses impacting 227 victims in 2019.¹⁰ However, these statistics may understate the true scale of gender identity-based hate crimes nationally.¹¹ First, LGBTQ victims of crimes are less likely to report victimization to police than their non-LGBTQ counterparts.¹² And second, even when crimes are reported to the police, they are not reliably reported to the FBI. Law enforcement hate crime reporting to the FBI remains effectively voluntary as there are no enforcement mechanisms, sanctions, or dedicated resources to ensure compliance.

⁷ For a detailed overview of California’s hate crimes laws protecting gender identity see Arrayales, J., & Mallory, C. (forthcoming). *Inclusion of gender identity and expression in California and federal hate crime laws*. The Williams Institute.

⁸ A person need not identify as transgender or gender nonconforming to be protected under California’s hate crimes laws. A crime is eligible for an additional hate crimes charge if that crime was motivated at least in part by the *perception* of a person’s gender identity.

⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2016). *Table 1: Incidents, offenses, victims, and known offenders by bias motivation, 2015*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/tables-and-data-declarations/1tabledatadecpdf>

¹⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2020). *Table 1: Incidents, offenses, victims, and known offenders, by bias motivation, 2019*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019/topic-pages/tables/table-1.xls>; More recent national data is not currently available from the Department of Justice.

¹¹ Herek, G. M. (2017). Documenting hate crimes in the United States: Some considerations on data sources. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(2), 143–151.

¹² Grasso, J., Vogler, S., Greytak, E., Kindall, C., & Jenness, V. (2024). *Policing progress: Findings from a national survey of LGBTQ+ people’s experiences with law enforcement*. American Civil Liberties Union. <https://www.aclu.org/publications/policing-progress-findings-from-a-national-survey-of-lgbtq-peoples-experiences-with-law-enforcement>

The effect of hate crime victimization is profound and distinct from crime victimization that is not motivated by bias.¹³ Hate crimes cause not only physical harm but also psychological and emotional harm.¹⁴ Among transgender individuals in particular, such victimization has been linked to increased stress, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and greater social withdrawal.¹⁵ Beyond the individuals directly targeted, hate crimes can act as message crimes, resulting in an experience of fear and exclusion within the broader communities that share the victim's identity or group affiliation.¹⁶ For this reason, some scholars argue that "hate crimes hurt more" than other crimes.¹⁷ That added pain caused by hate crimes played a part in the Supreme Court's decision to uphold hate crime laws against a First Amendment challenge (*Wisconsin v. Mitchell*, 508 U.S. 476 (1993)).

THE CURRENT STUDY

This report analyzes the occurrence and context of gender identity hate crimes in California.¹⁸ Drawing on publicly available administrative data reported by California law enforcement agencies to the California Department of Justice, we examine trends in reported hate crimes, with a particular focus on gender identity hate crimes. For an incident to become a reported gender identity hate crime within the California Department of Justice data, the following must have occurred: 1) the incident was reported to law enforcement; 2) the reporting officer determined that a criminal offense (underlying crime) occurred, and 3) that the underlying crime was at least partly motivated by anti-transgender or anti-gender nonconforming bias; 4) a second law enforcement officer confirmed the reporting officer's determinations; and 5) the incident was reported by the law enforcement agency to the California Department of Justice.¹⁹

We begin with an analysis of overall hate crime trends from 2001—the first year in which hate crime data in California is publicly available—through 2024, the most recent complete year. We then briefly look at gender identity hate crimes during this time period, followed by a detailed analysis from 2013, the first year "gender nonconforming" was identified as its own bias subcategory.²⁰

¹³ Walters, M. A. (2025). Conceptualizing hate crime as group oppression. *Theoretical Criminology*, 1–20.

¹⁴ Paterson, J. L., Brown, R., & Walters, M. A. (2019). Feeling for and as a group member: Understanding LGBT victimization via group-based empathy and intergroup emotions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 58(1), 211–224; Paterson, J. L., Walters, M. A., Brown, R., & Carrasco, D. (2025). Angry and Afraid: Exploring the Impact of Mixed Emotional Reactions to Hate Crimes With LGBT+ and Muslim Communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 40(17–18), 4154–4180; Wenger, M. R., Lantz, B., & Gallardo, G. (2022). The Role of Hate Crime Victimization, Fear of Victimization, and Vicarious Victimization in COVID-19-Related Depression. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 49(12), 1746–1762.

¹⁵ Barr, S. M., Snyder, K. E., Adelson, J. L., & Budge, S. L. (2022). Posttraumatic stress in the trans community: The roles of anti-transgender bias, non-affirmation, and internalized transphobia. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 9(4), 410–421; Benier, K. (2017). The harms of hate: Comparing the neighbouring practices and interactions of hate crime victims, non-hate crime victims and non-victims. *International Review of Victimology*, 23(2), 179–201; Walters, M. A., Paterson, J., Brown, R., & McDonnell, L. (2020). Hate Crimes Against Trans People: Assessing Emotions, Behaviors, and Attitudes Toward Criminal Justice Agencies. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(21–22), 4583–4613.

¹⁶ Iganski, P. (2001). Hate Crimes Hurt More. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(4), 626–638. Perry, B., & Alvi, S. (2012). 'We are all vulnerable': The *in terrorem* effects of hate crimes. *International Review of Victimology*, 18(1), 57–71; Arrayales, J., & Mallory, C. (forthcoming). *Overview of hate crime literature*. The Williams Institute.

¹⁷ Iganski, P. (2001). Hate Crimes Hurt More. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(4), 626–638.

¹⁸ Because hate crimes are defined by *actual or perceived* characteristics, "gender identity hate crimes" include incidents targeting transgender and gender-nonconforming people as well as individuals who were perceived to be such.

¹⁹ The hate crime data analyzed in this report are strongly shaped by law enforcement practices. An increase in reported hate crimes may indicate a genuine rise, but it could also reflect changes in how individual departments receive, investigate, and report incidents.

²⁰ Hate crimes motivated by gender and gender identity are recorded separately: "gender" includes bias motivations such as anti-male and anti-female, while "gender identity" refers specifically to hate crimes targeting people because they are perceived to be transgender or gender nonconforming.

RESULTS: GENDER IDENTITY HATE CRIMES

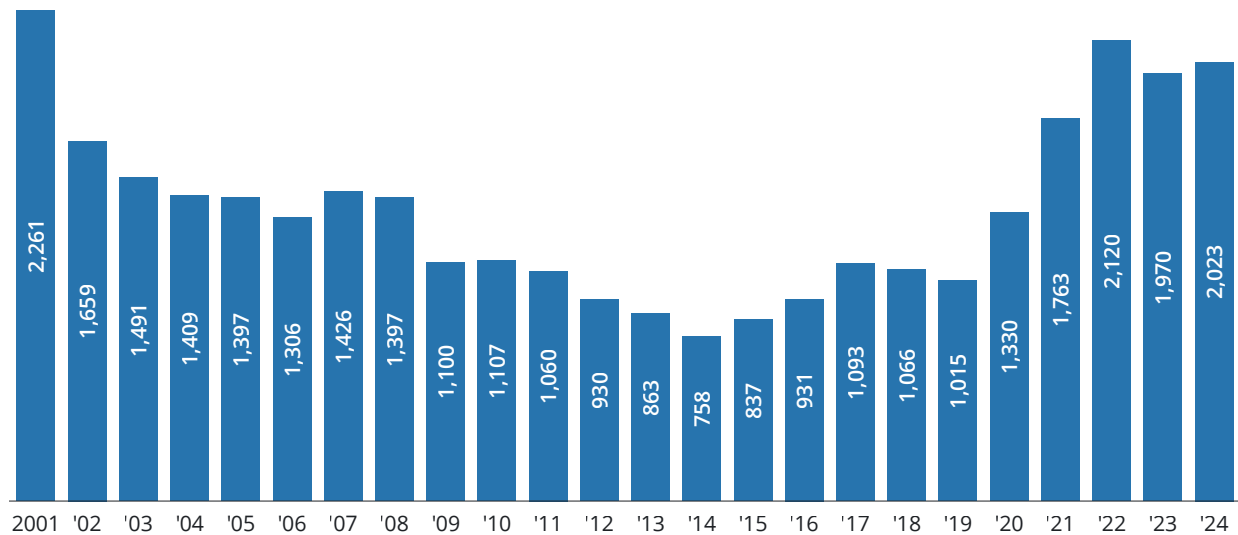
HATE CRIMES IN CALIFORNIA SINCE 2001

Since 2001, California law enforcement agencies have reported a total of 32,312 events involving a hate crime statewide, encompassing a range of protected classes such as race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity.

Reported hate crime events declined gradually in the years following 2001, reaching a low point in 2014, when only 758 events were reported. Beginning in 2015, however, hate crimes began to rise again, with substantial increases starting in 2020.²¹ Reported hate crimes rose by 31% between 2019 and 2020, followed by another 33% increase in 2021. This upward trajectory continued into 2022 with a 20% annual rise, before dipping by 7% in 2023. However, in 2024, events increased again by 3%.²²

Nearly one-in-five (19%) hate crimes reported during this 24-year span occurred in just the last three years (2022–2024), indicating a recent and substantial rise in reported hate crimes after a period of relative decline.

Figure 1. Hate crimes in California by year (CA DOJ, 2001-2024)

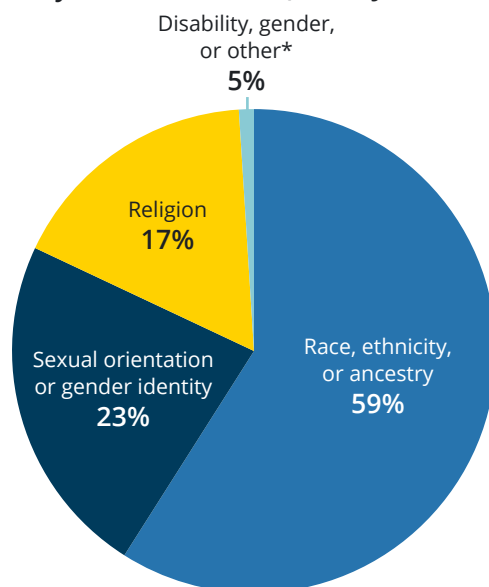


²¹ Some of the recent increase may be due to changes in reporting requirements.

²² Several departments did not report a full year of data in 2024 due to various factors, including issues with record management systems, reporting errors, staffing shortages, or failure to submit data. Notably, the San Diego Sheriff's Department was among these agencies, and it, along with the broader County of San Diego, accounts for some of the largest proportions of hate crimes, including those targeting individuals based on gender identity. See, California Department of Justice. (2025, June). *Hate Crime in California: 2024*. <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2025-06/Hate%20Crime%20In%20CA%202024.pdf>

Hate crimes targeting people who are, or are perceived to be, sexual and gender minorities²³ accounted for nearly a quarter (23%) of all reported events from 2001-2024, making them the second most common type of hate crime in the state after those based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry (59%).²⁴

Figure 2. Hate crimes in California by bias motivation (CA DOJ, 2001-2024)



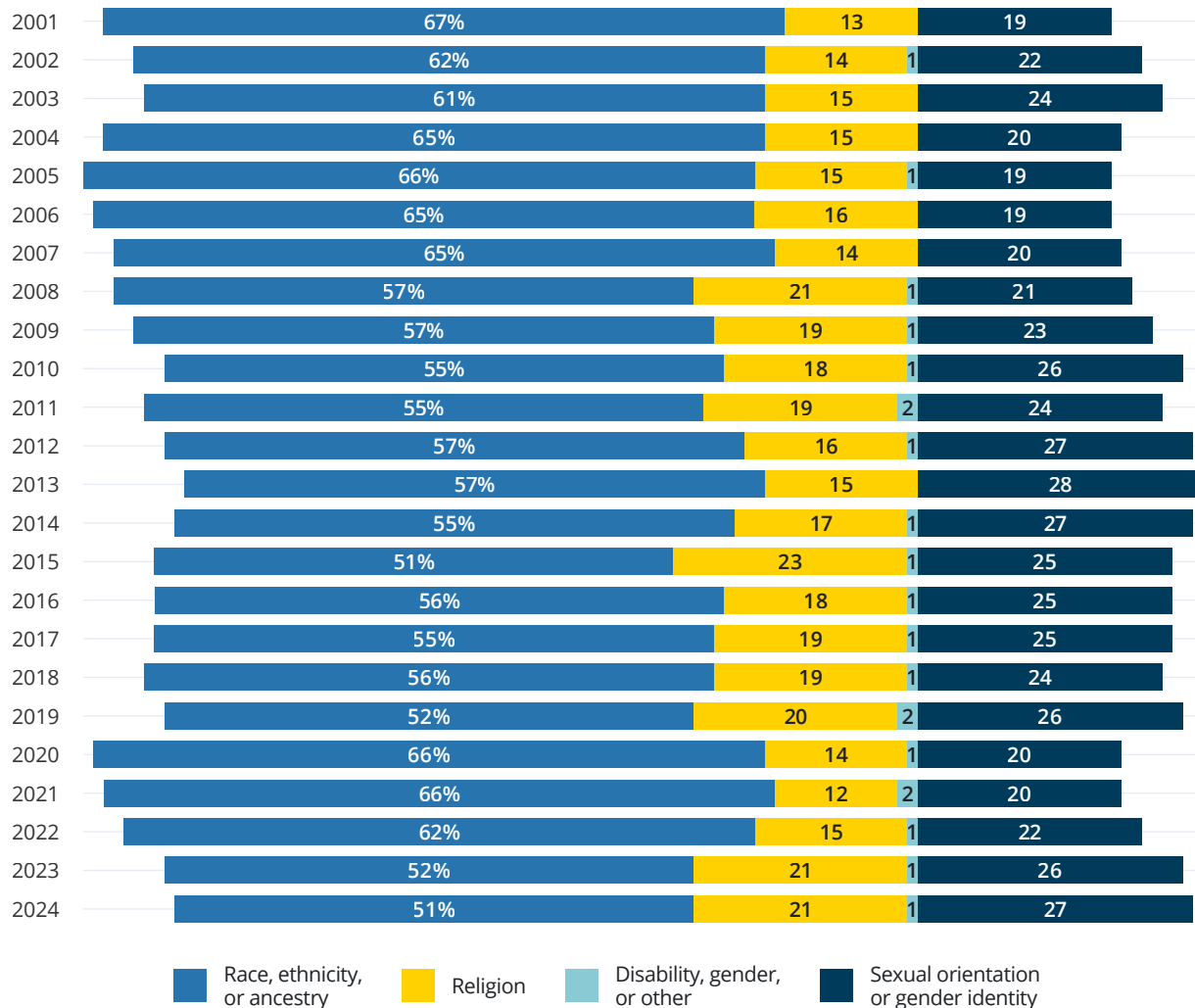
Note: *Hate crimes motivated by “gender” bias are distinct from those based on gender nonconformity and include offenses categorized as “anti-male” or “anti-female.” Additionally, bias events labeled as “other” include anti-heterosexual hate crimes, which we distinguish from those targeting LGBTQ individuals, classified under the broader category of “sexual orientation” bias.

While the total number of sexual orientation and gender identity hate crimes fluctuated over time, their share relative to all reported hate crimes has remained relatively stable, ranging between 19% and 28% annually from 2001 to 2024.

²³ State data includes “anti-heterosexual” incidents under the category of sexual orientation hate crimes. However, for the purposes of this analysis—which focuses specifically on the experiences of sexual and gender minorities—we have excluded those incidents from our count. Instead, we have reclassified them as “other” types of bias-motivated hate crimes.

²⁴ Bias motivation is classified according to the most serious form of bias involved in an incident. As a result, cases that include bias based on gender identity or gender nonconformity may be categorized under a different bias type if multiple motivations are present. Law enforcement are not required to indicate multiple biases.

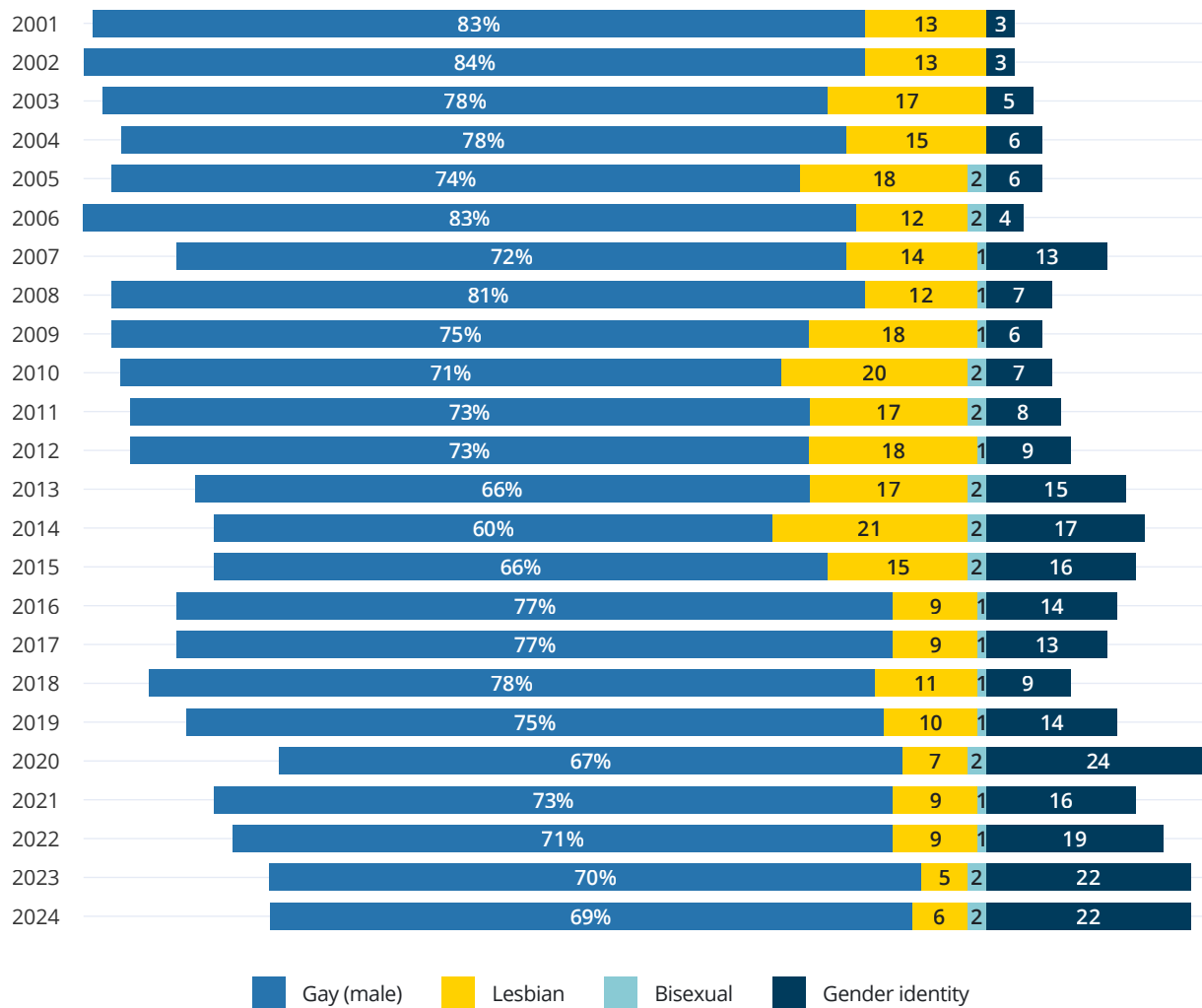
Figure 3. Percent of hate crimes in California by year and bias motivation (CA DOJ, 2001-2024)



However, the distribution of specific bias motivations within hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity has shifted substantially over time. Anti-gay (male) hate crimes consistently made up the largest share of anti-LGBTQ events—and continue to rise in reported events every year—but their proportion declined from over 80% in the early 2000s to around 69% in 2024. Anti-lesbian hate crimes also decreased in their share of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes, falling from a high of approximately 16% in the early 2000s to just 6% in 2024.

In contrast, the proportion of hate crimes motivated by bias against transgender and gender nonconforming individuals substantially increased. In 2001, these events accounted for just 3% of all anti-LGBTQ hate crimes. Their share began rising throughout the 2010s, especially after 2013, when “gender nonconformity” was first added as a distinct bias subcategory, reaching 15% that year. The upward trend continued, with gender identity hate crimes peaking at 24% of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes in 2020 and remaining elevated at 22% in 2023 and 2024.

Figure 4. Percent of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes in California by year and bias motivation (CA DOJ, 2001-2024)



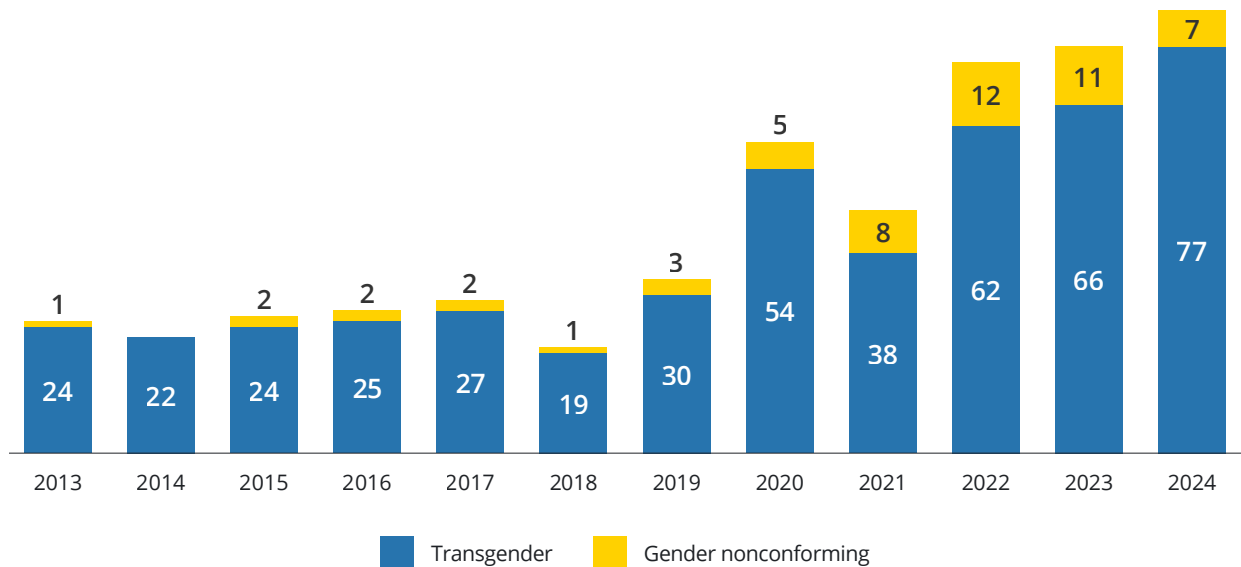
Between 2001 and 2024, California law enforcement agencies reported 678 hate crime events motivated by anti-gender identity bias to the state—including both anti-transgender and anti-gender nonconforming bias—averaging 28 events per year. (See also Figure 5 below.)

Hate-crime reporting practices underwent major changes in the early 2010s as states, including California, began aligning their systems with the federal Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. In 2013, the California Department of Justice added “anti-gender nonconforming” as a distinct bias category, allowing agencies to explicitly classify gender identity hate crimes as anti-transgender and/or anti-gender nonconforming. This shift marked a substantive change in how gender identity hate crimes were defined, coded, and reported across the state, as well as how law enforcement responded to such incidents. For this reason, the remainder of our analysis focuses on the period from 2013 to 2024, when more consistent and comparable data are available, allowing for internal validity and meaningful comparisons.

PREVALENCE AND FREQUENCY OF GENDER IDENTITY HATE CRIMES

Since 2013, there have been 522 events involving a reported hate crime motivated by anti-transgender and anti-gender nonconforming bias reported in California. The number of gender identity hate crimes has more than tripled between 2013 and 2024, from 25 reported hate crimes in 2013 (24 anti-transgender, one anti-gender nonconforming), to 84 hate crimes in 2024 (77 anti-transgender, seven anti-gender nonconforming). While the total number of gender identity hate crimes remained relatively stable from 2013 to 2020, there was a notable yearly rise starting in 2020.

Figure 5. Number of gender identity hate crimes in California by year (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

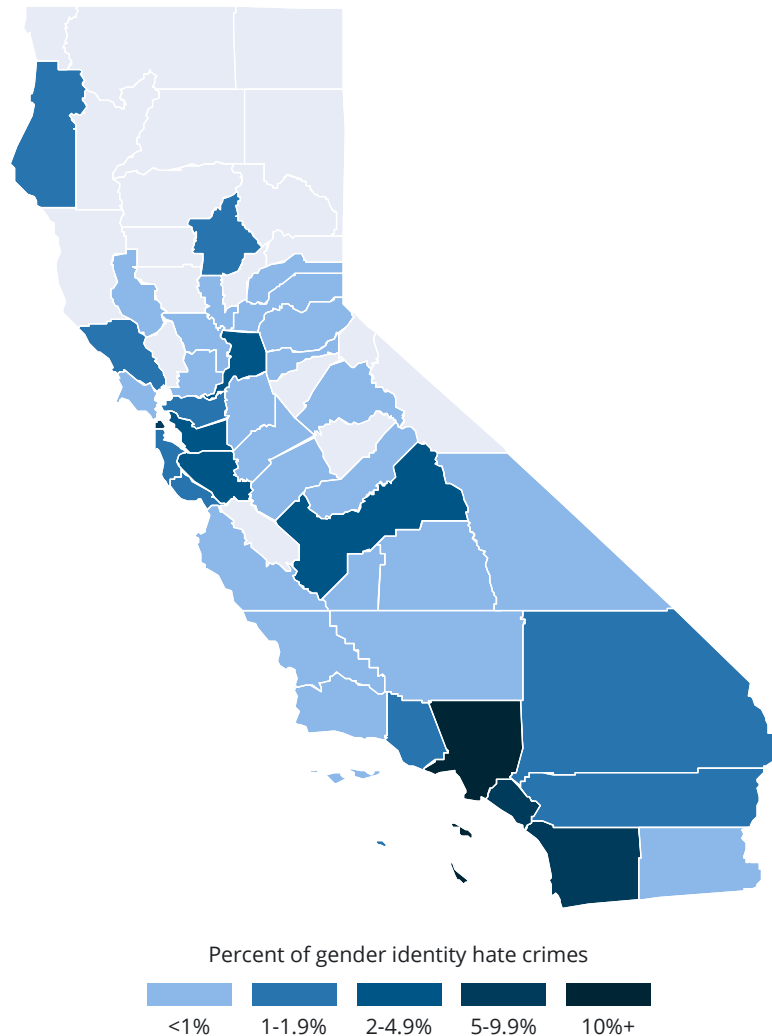


THE GEOGRAPHY AND LOCATION OF GENDER IDENTITY HATE CRIMES

Geography

Gender identity hate crimes have been reported across California. Law enforcement agencies in 39 out of California’s 58 counties reported at least one of these hate crimes since 2013.

Figure 6. Percent of gender identity hate crimes in California by county (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

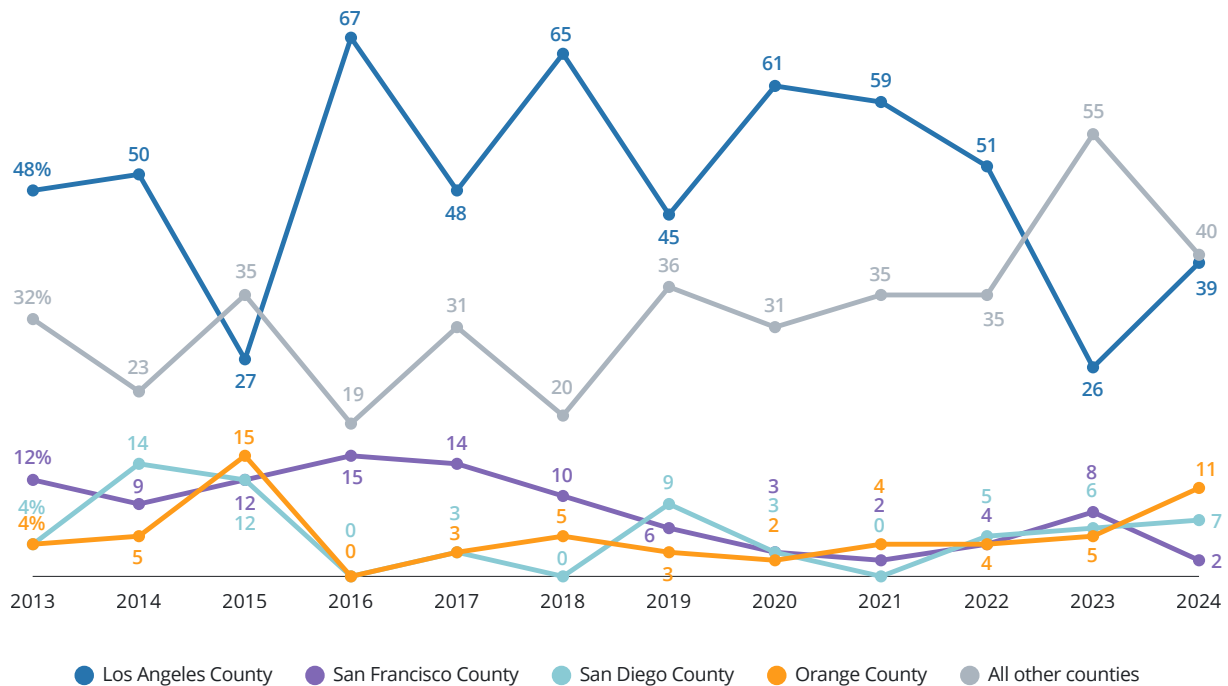


However, one county—Los Angeles—accounted for nearly half (47%) of all gender identity hate crimes since gender nonconformity was added as a bias category in 2013.²⁵ San Francisco accounted for 7% and San Diego and Orange each accounted for 5% of the total. Together, these four counties reported 64% of the events during this period. Los Angeles County consistently reported the highest share of gender identity hate crimes, with its annual share ranging from 27% in 2015 to a peak of 67% in 2016. Between 2013 and 2024, Los Angeles averaged 49% of all gender identity hate crimes statewide annually.²⁶

²⁵ Los Angeles County reported the highest number of hate crime incidents overall, accounting for 38.42% of all reported hate crimes between 2013 and 2024. Of all hate crimes originating in Los Angeles County during this time, 4.03% were motivated by anti-transgender or anti-gender nonconforming bias. In its most recent hate crimes report, LA County's Commission on Human Relations reported that 8% of all hate crimes in the county in 2024 were motivated by anti-transgender bias, and another 1% was motivated by anti-nonbinary bias. See Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. (2025). *2024 Hate Crime Report* [PDF]. Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/07d89f78-f080-457e-85ed-918b08eba88a/Final_2024%20Hate%20Crime%Report-Digital.pdf

²⁶ Some of these differences may stem from variations in law enforcement training, reporting practices, and available agency resources, as previously mentioned; California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2025, June). *Hate Crime Context* [PDF]. California OpenJustice. <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/dataset/2025-07/Hate%20Crime-context%2006162025.pdf>

Figure 7. Percent of gender identity hate crimes in California counties by year (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



It is important to note, however, that variation in the number of reported gender identity hate crimes between counties may stem from a variety of factors such as the size of departments, differences in reporting practices, police training on hate crimes, population size, and other population characteristics.²⁷

Law Enforcement Agencies

The collection and reporting of gender identity hate crime data is generally a function of law enforcement agency policies and practices. Since 2013, 124 law enforcement agencies have reported one or more gender identity hate crimes. The Los Angeles Police Department reported a greater number of hate crimes than any other law enforcement agency. The top five police and sheriff departments by number of reported events accounted for nearly two-thirds (62%) of all events.²⁸ The pattern largely follows that at the county level—wide geographic representation of law enforcement agencies reporting gender identity hate crimes, but with extreme concentration at the top.

²⁷ California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2025, June). *Hate Crime Context* [PDF]. California OpenJustice. <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/dataset/2025-07/Hate%20Crime-context%2006162025.pdf>

²⁸ Higher numbers of reported gender identity hate crimes do not necessarily indicate that a particular area experiences more gender identity hate crimes.

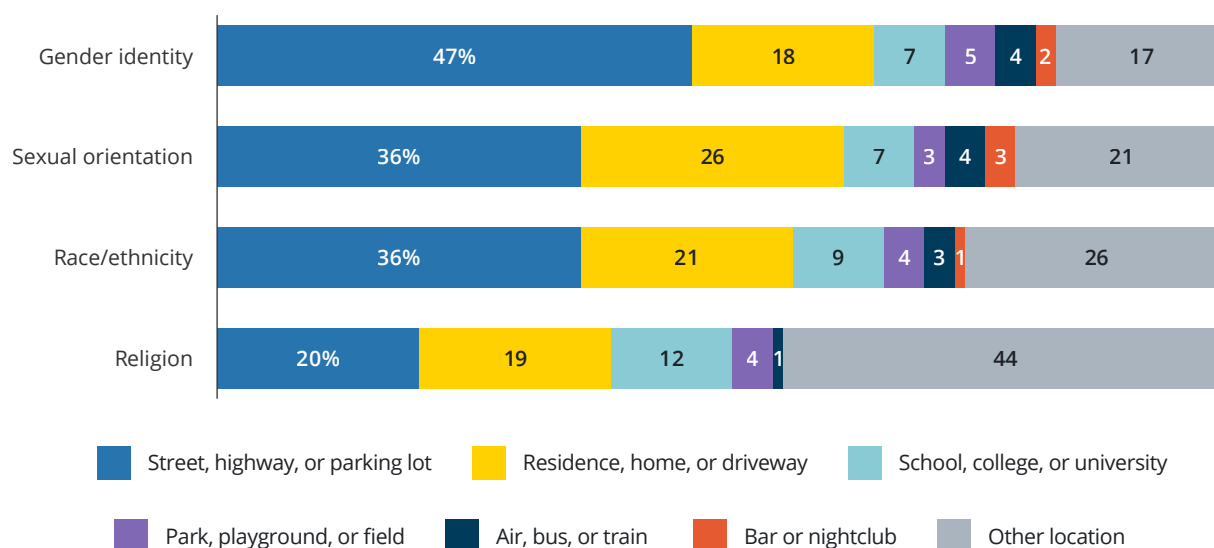
Table 2. Police and sheriff departments with the highest number of reported gender identity hate crimes in California (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

POLICE DEPARTMENTS		SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENTS	
Department	# of Hate Crimes	Department	# of Hate Crimes
Los Angeles	206	Los Angeles	18
San Francisco	34	Sacramento	7
San Diego	21	Santa Clara	5
Sacramento	10	Orange	5
Fresno	10	San Bernardino	5
Total % Share	54%	Total % Share	8%

Location Types

Gender identity hate crimes in California are more likely to be experienced out in the open. About half (47%) of all gender identity hate crimes occurred in public roadways such as streets, roadways, highways, sidewalks, and parking lots, a share that was significantly higher than hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation (36%), race/ethnicity (36%), or religious hate crimes (20%).²⁹ About one in five (18%) gender identity hate crimes occurred in private residences.

Figure 8. Percent of hate crime locations in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

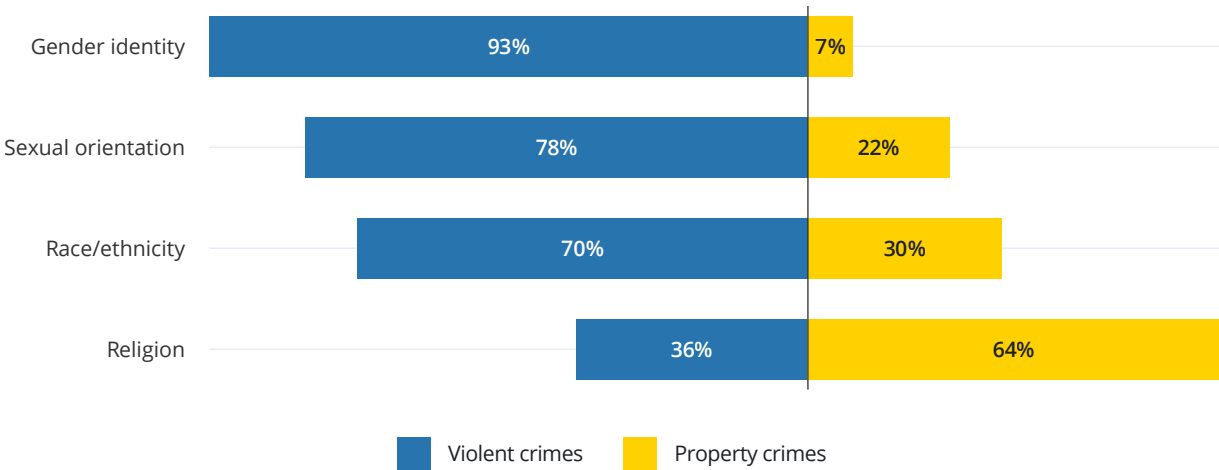


²⁹ The odds that a hate crime occurred in roadways were 1.55 times higher than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 1.29–1.87); 1.56 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.31–1.87); 3.55 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 2.92–4.32).

Experiences of Violence and Victimization

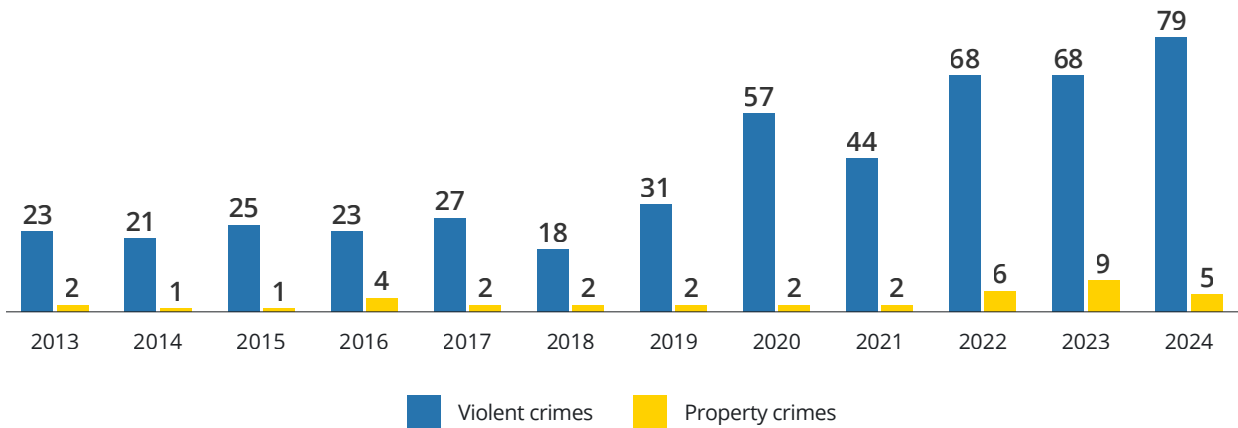
Gender identity hate crimes are overwhelmingly acts of violence against a person. In California, the vast majority (93%) of reported gender identity hate crimes involved allegations of violence—such as assault—against people, while only 7% alleged an underlying property crime.³⁰ In contrast, nearly two-thirds (64%) of religiously motivated hate crimes involved an underlying property crime (for example, vandalism or arson).

Figure 9. Percent of types of hate crimes in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



Violent victimization appears to be increasing, with a dramatic rise beginning in 2020. By 2024, the number of violent hate crimes had more than tripled compared to 2013, rising from 23 events in 2013 to 79 violent events in 2024.

Figure 10. Number of yearly gender identity hate crime events in California by crime type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

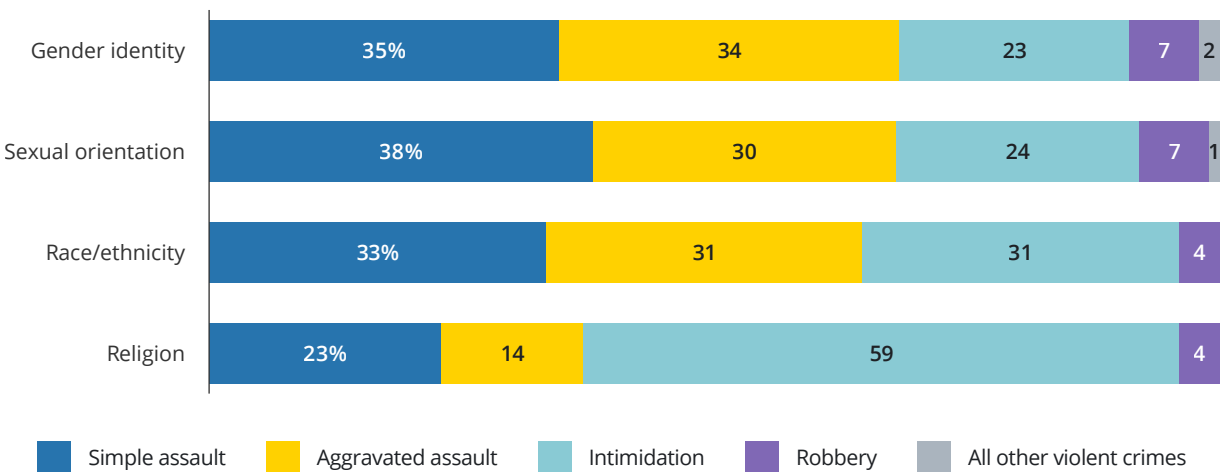


³⁰ The odds that a gender identity hate crime was a violent crime were 3.59 times higher than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 2.55–5.04); 5.34 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 3.82–7.45); 22.90 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 16.31–32.14).

Types of Violent Crimes

Most people who experienced violent gender identity hate crimes reported physical assault. These hate crimes more often involved allegations of assault than other types of bias crimes.³¹ Nearly two-thirds of these hate crimes involved either aggravated assault (34%) or simple assault (35%).³² In contrast, intimidation accounted for 23% of gender identity hate crimes, a smaller share compared to hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity (31%) or religious bias (59%).

Figure 11. Percent of violent hate crimes resulting in events in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



Use of Weapons in Violent Crimes

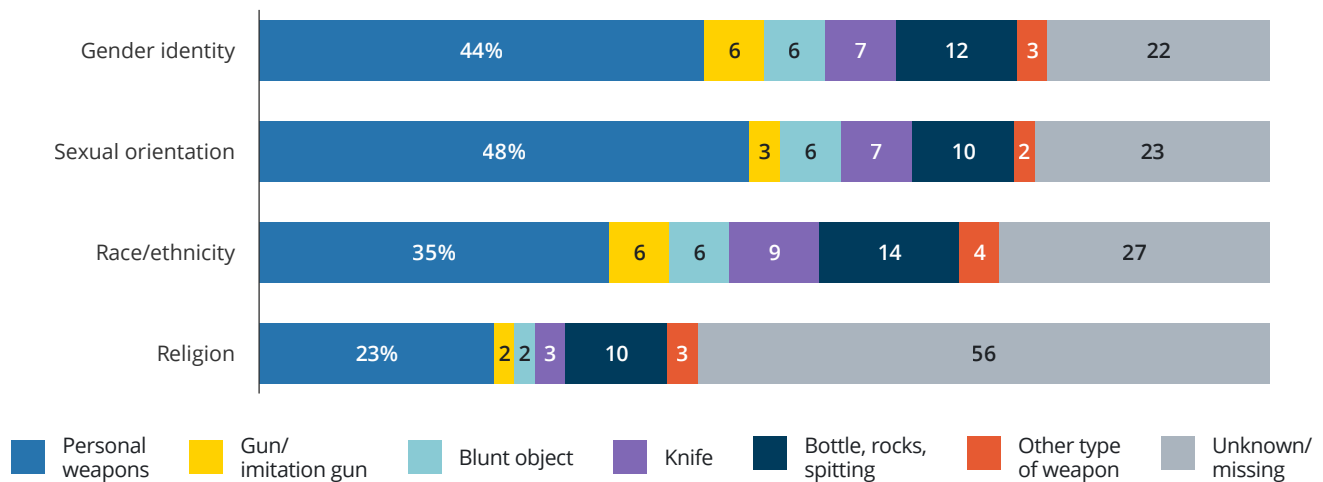
People targeted because of their gender identity were more frequently subjected to physical violence committed by another person as a result of hate crimes compared to others. Over three-fourths (78%) of violent hate crimes motivated by gender identity bias involved a weapon. Compared to other hate crimes, gender identity hate crimes were more likely to involve direct physical attacks using the body as a weapon, such as punching, kicking, or biting (44%).³³ In contrast, the use of bodily weapons in violent crimes was less common in hate crimes motivated by race/ethnicity (35%) or religiously motivated hate crimes (23%).

³¹ The odds that a gender identity hate crime involved an assault were 1.25 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.02–1.52); 3.73 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 2.95–4.70)

³² In California simple assault involves an attempted use of force or violence against another person. Aggravated assault is assault with a deadly weapon or force likely to cause great bodily harm. Cal. Penal Code §§ 240, 245 (West 2025).

³³ The odds that a gender identity hate crime involved personal weapons were 1.47 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.22–1.77); 2.61 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 2.07–3.30).

Figure 12. Percent of weapons used in violent hate crimes in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



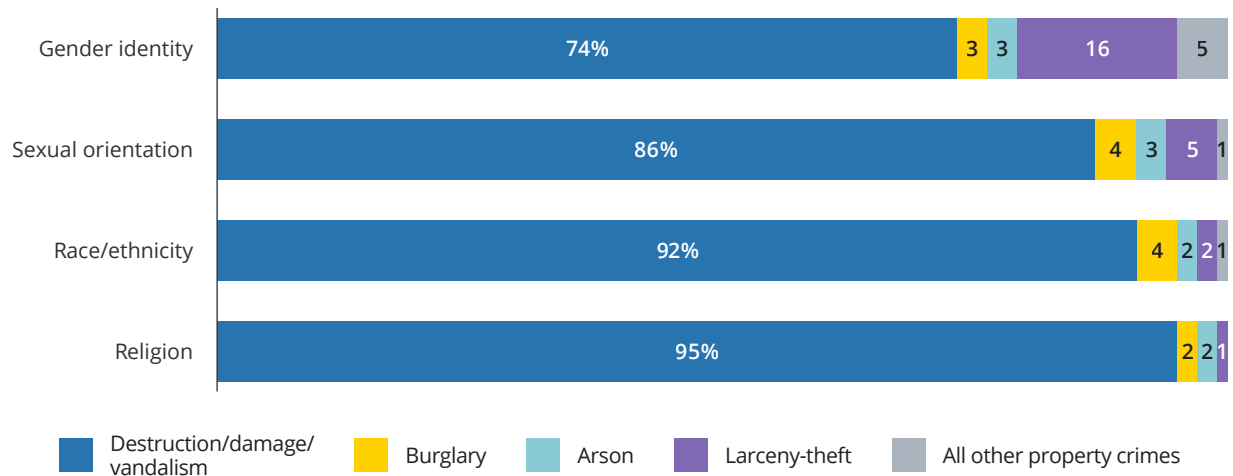
Types of Property Crimes

Although property crimes made up a relatively small share of gender identity hate crimes (7%), there were notable differences compared to hate crimes motivated by other forms of bias. The majority (74%) of gender identity property hate crimes involved the destruction, damage, or vandalism of property. However, compared to property crimes motivated by other biases, those related to gender identity were relatively less likely to involve destruction of property³⁴ and more likely to involve larceny (theft).³⁵

Among gender identity hate crimes related to property offenses, 74% involved destruction of property, whereas destruction of property accounted for 86% to 95% of property crimes linked to sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, or religious bias. In contrast, 16% of gender identity-related property crimes involved larceny-theft, a figure much higher than the 1% to 5% observed among other bias categories.

³⁴ The odds that a gender identity property-related hate crime involved property damage were 0.44 times lower than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 0.21–0.94); 0.25 times lower than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 0.12–0.53); 0.15 times lower than for religious bias (95% CI: 0.07–0.32).

³⁵ The odds that a gender identity property-related hate crime involved larceny were 3.49 times higher than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 1.37–8.86); 9.78 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 3.91–24.44); 15.67 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 5.93–41.43).

Figure 13. Percent of property hate crimes in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

Evidence of Bias

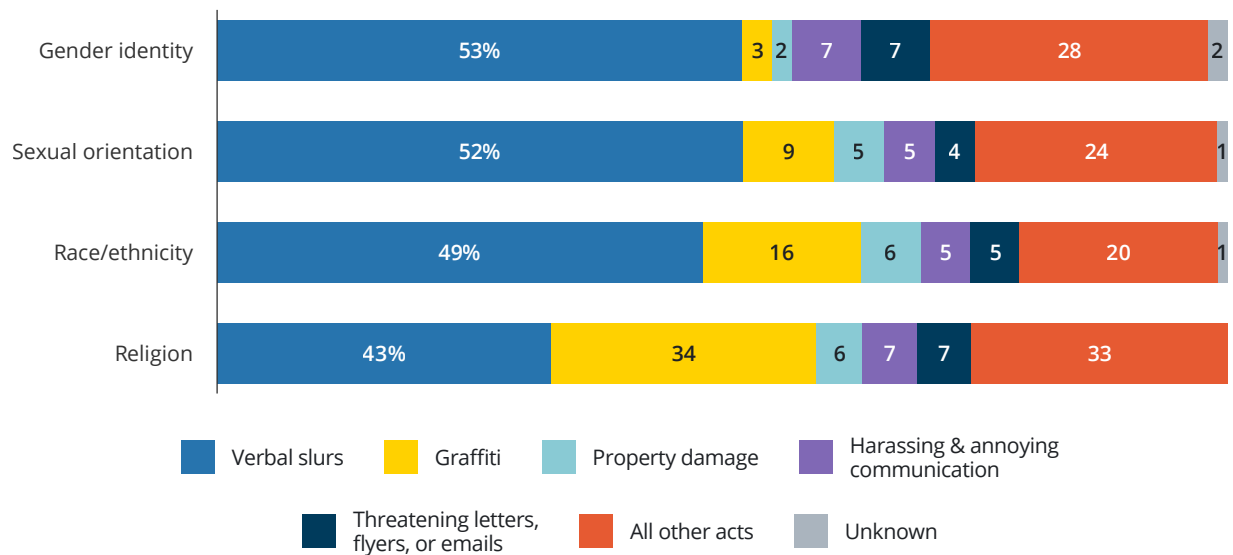
We have some information on the underlying evidence of bias that informed the hate crime determination. The patterns suggest that people who experience hate crimes because of their perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity are more likely than not to have direct contact with those accused of the hate crime.

In the majority (53%) of gender identity hate crimes, law enforcement reported that the underlying crime was accompanied by verbal slurs. In this regard, gender identity hate crimes appear similar to those motivated by bias against individuals' perceived sexual orientation (52%) and race/ethnicity (49%). Across all three groups, the person accused of the bias was likely directly observed by the victim.³⁶ In contrast, graffiti was much more likely to be reported in religiously motivated hate crimes (34%) than for gender identity (3%), and to a lesser extent in those motivated by race/ethnicity (16%).³⁷

³⁶ The odds that a gender identity hate crime involved verbal slurs were 1.19 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.00–1.43); 7.46 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 6.08–9.15).

³⁷ The odds that a gender identity hate crime involved graffiti or property damage as the bias indicators were 0.28 times lower than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 0.19–0.44); 0.17 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 0.11–0.26); 0.07 times lower than for religious bias (95% CI: 0.05–0.11).

Figure 14. Percent of offensive acts that indicated bias in hate crimes in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



Victim Age Groups

Among the 522 gender identity hate crimes in California between 2013 and 2024, there were 582 identified victims: 469 adults (81%) and 52 people under the age of 18 (9%). The remaining 10% of victims were missing an age group classification.

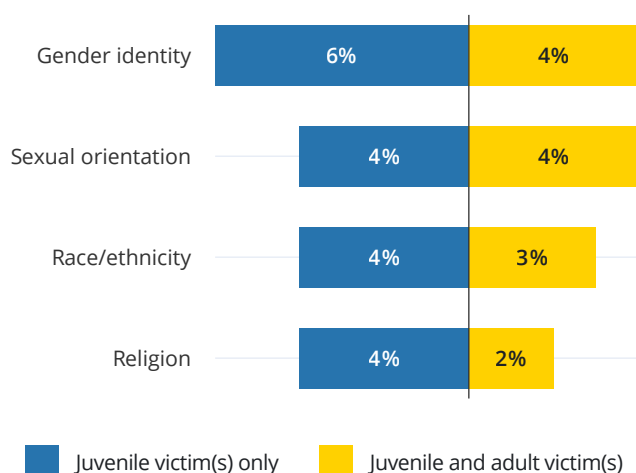
Table 3. Total adult and juvenile victims in gender identity hate crimes in California (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

VICTIMS	NUMBER (%)
Adult victims	469 (81%)
Youth under age 18 victims	52 (9%)
Unknown age of victims	61 (10%)
Total individual victims	582 (100%)

A greater proportion of gender identity hate crime events involved victims under the age of 18—either exclusively (6%) or alongside adult victims (4%)—than hate crimes motivated by other types of bias when the victim’s age group was known.³⁸ Among hate crimes with identified suspects, 10% of gender identity hate crimes involved a victim under the age of 18, compared to 8% of sexual orientation hate crimes, 7% of race/ethnicity hate crimes, and 6% of religious hate crimes.

³⁸ When victims were identified, the odds that a gender identity hate crime involved a juvenile victim were 1.82 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.31-2.52); 2.95 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 2.01-4.32).

Figure 15. Percent of gender identity hate crimes involving juvenile (less than 18 years old) and adult victims in California by bias type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)

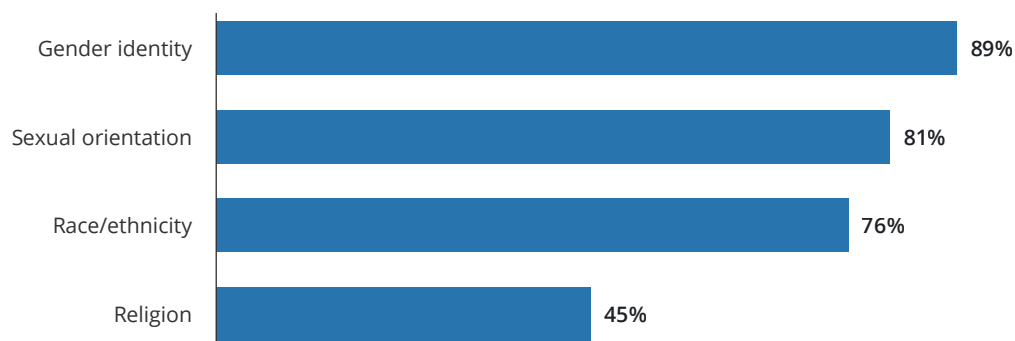


PEOPLE ACCUSED OF HATE CRIMES

Total Number of People Accused

There were 610 people identified as suspects across the 522 gender identity hate crime events reported since 2013 in California. As suggested by the frequency of verbal slurs and violent victimization, gender identity hate crimes were more likely to have identifiable suspects than other bias-related events.³⁹ Suspects were identified in 89% of gender identity hate crime events. By comparison, suspects were identified in 81% of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, 76% in those related to race/ethnicity, and just 45% in religion-based hate crimes.

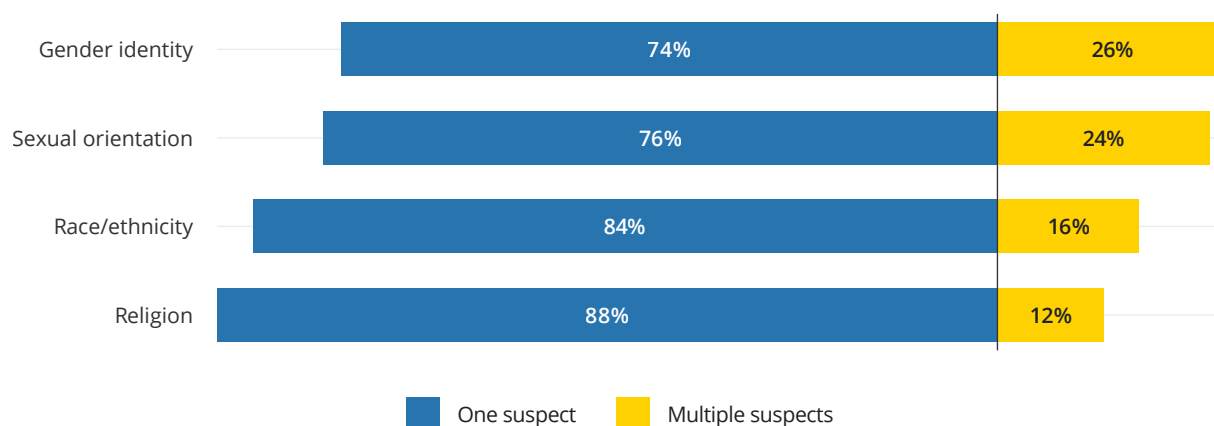
Figure 16. Percent of hate crimes with identified suspects in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



³⁹ The odds that a gender identity hate crime involved identified suspects were 1.91 times higher than for sexual orientation bias (95% CI: 1.43–2.56); 2.68 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 2.03–3.56); 10.10 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 7.58–13.46).

When suspects were identified, hate crimes motivated by gender identity more often involved multiple suspects.⁴⁰ About one in four (26%) of these events involved two or more suspects—about the same (24%) as for sexual orientation-based hate crimes. However, only 16% of those motivated by race/ethnicity, and just 12% of religiously motivated hate crimes included multiple suspects.

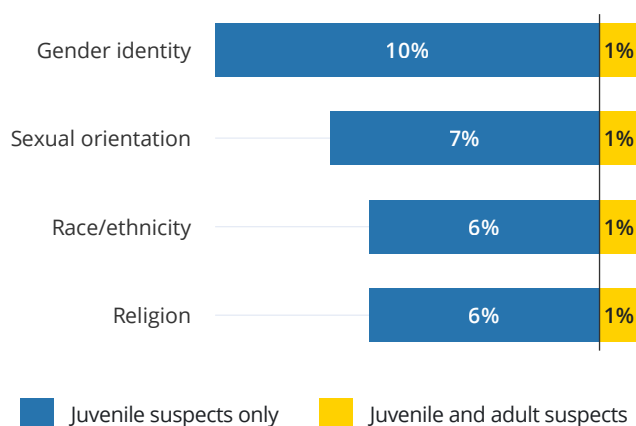
Figure 17. Percent of total suspects in hate crimes in California by motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



Age Groups

Gender identity hate crimes were the most likely to involve a person younger than 18 years old as a suspect when age data were available.⁴¹ Indeed, one in ten gender identity hate crimes involved only persons under the age of 18 as suspects, compared to 7% for sexual orientation, 6% for race/ethnicity, and 6% for religion-based hate crime events. Very few (about 1%) of hate crimes, regardless of bias type, involve both youth and adults.

Figure 18. Age profiles of individuals suspected of committing hate crimes in California by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



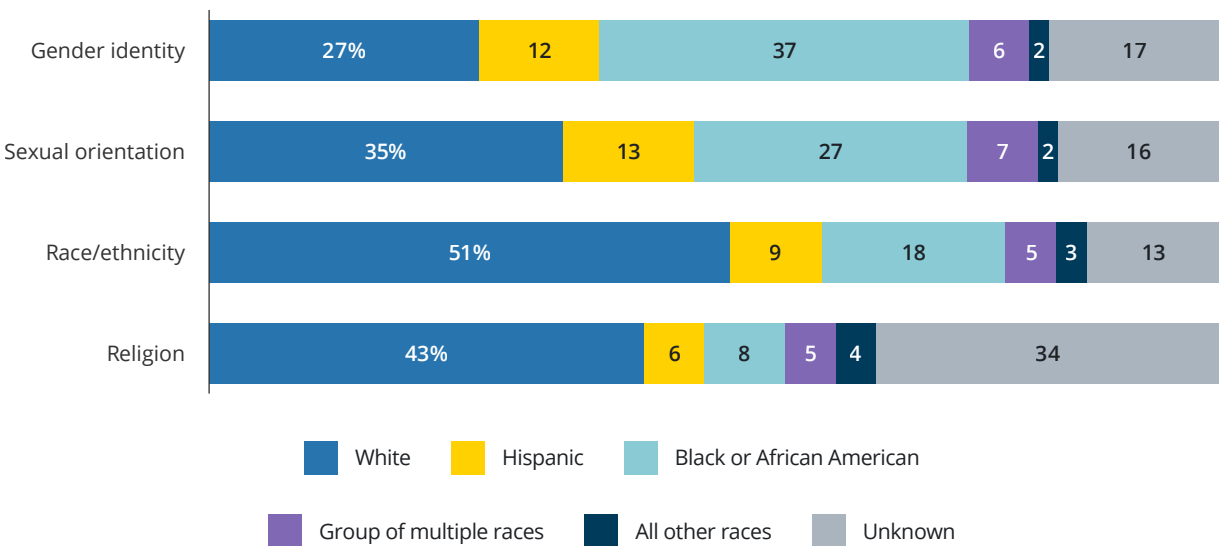
⁴⁰ In hate crimes in which suspects were identified, the odds that a gender identity hate crime involved multiple suspects were 1.85 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.49–2.30); 2.52 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 1.93–3.30).

⁴¹ When suspects were identified, the odds that a gender identity hate crime involved juvenile suspects were 1.56 times higher than for race/ethnicity bias (95% CI: 1.12–2.17); 1.50 times higher than for religious bias (95% CI: 1.02–2.22).

Race/Ethnicity

People accused of gender identity hate crimes appeared to be more racially diverse than in other hate crime types.⁴² Black or African American individuals made up the largest share (37%) of people identified as suspects in these hate crimes, which is higher than their share in sexual orientation (27%), race/ethnicity (18%), and religion-based (8%) hate crimes. Hispanic/Latino individuals accounted for 12% of people identified as suspects in gender identity hate crimes. In contrast, race/ethnicity-motivated hate crimes were committed mainly by white suspects (51%), while religion-based hate crimes had a high proportion of white suspects (43%), followed by unknown suspect races (34%).

Figure 19. Percent of suspect race in California hate crimes by bias motivation type (CA DOJ, 2013-2024)



⁴² Findings related to the race or ethnicity of alleged suspects should be interpreted with caution due to the large proportion of cases in each bias-motivated hate-crime category with “unknown” suspect information.

CONCLUSION

Transgender and gender nonconforming individuals face increased violence and victimization relative to their cisgender counterparts.⁴³ Reports of gender identity hate crimes in California have markedly increased over time, especially since gender identity hate crimes have broadened to include anti-gender nonconforming bias in 2013, and again from around 2020. Reports of gender identity hate crimes, motivated by anti-transgender and anti-gender nonconforming bias, occur across California, but are heavily concentrated in Southern California and the Bay Area, where larger gender-nonconforming populations reside. These findings could be the result of concentrated areas of such incidents, or they could be indicative of contextually driven law enforcement policies and practices. Reported gender identity hate crimes tend to occur in public spaces, especially on streets, highways, and in parking lots. They are more violent than crimes motivated by other bias types and are more likely to involve suspects who were later identified than crimes motivated by other bias types. These events are also more likely to involve multiple suspects compared to other types of bias-motivated crimes.

The findings in this report indicate that gender identity hate crimes are increasingly identified and reported by law enforcement to the California Department of Justice. However, this report is limited by its necessary reliance on publicly available administrative data collected by law enforcement agencies. Hate crimes are underreported to police.⁴⁴ Transgender and gender nonconforming communities, in particular, often report lower levels of trust in police and heightened fears of secondary victimization by law enforcement, relative to cisgender and gender conforming people.⁴⁵ Research consistently shows that transgender and gender nonconforming people experience high rates of discrimination, harassment, or bias at the hands of law enforcement.⁴⁶ Negative encounters with police powerfully discourage victims from reporting hate crimes or seeking assistance through formal legal channels.⁴⁷ As we can only observe hate crimes reported to and validated by law enforcement, the true scale and nature of hate crimes against these populations is likely significantly underrepresented.

⁴³ Flores, A. R., Meyer, I. H., Langton, L., & Herman, J. L. (2021). *Gender identity disparities in criminal victimization: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017–2018*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(4), 726–729; Meyer, I. H., & Flores, A. R. (2025). *Anti-LGBT victimization in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey (2022–2023)*. The Williams Institute.

⁴⁴ Erentzen, C., & Schuller, R. (2020). Exploring the Dark Figure of Hate: Experiences with Police Bias and the Under-reporting of Hate Crime. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 62(2), 64–97; Herek, G. M. (2017). Documenting hate crimes in the United States: Some considerations on data sources. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(2), 143–151; Pezzella, F. S., Fetzer, M. D., & Keller, T. (2019). The Dark Figure of Hate Crime Underreporting. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1–24.

⁴⁵ Gauthier, J., Medina, K., & Dierkhising, C. (2021). Analysis of Hate Crimes in Transgender Communities. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 17(2), 4–14; Grasso, J., Vogler, S., Greytak, E., Kindall, C., & Jenness, V. (2024). *Policing Progress: Findings from a National Survey of LGBTQ+ People's Experiences with Law Enforcement*. American Civil Liberties Union.

⁴⁶ Arrayales, J., & Mallory, C. (forthcoming). *Overview of hate crime literature*. The Williams Institute; Avalos, Susana, and April Carrillo. 2024. “‘Took My Money, Called Me a Guy, and Made Me Sleep in Jail Overnight’: Police Procedural Failings When Interacting with Trans Folx.” *Policing and Society* 1–16; Grasso, J., Vogler, S., Greytak, E., Kindall, C., & Jenness, V. (2024). *Policing Progress: Findings from a National Survey of LGBTQ+ People's Experiences with Law Enforcement*. American Civil Liberties Union; Jenness, Valerie, and Alexis Rowland. 2024. “The Structure and Operation of the Transgender Criminal Legal System Nexus in the United States: Inequalities, Administrative Violence, and Injustice at Every Turn.” *Annual Review of Criminology* 7(1):283–309; Serpe, Christine R., and Kevin L. Nadal. 2017. “Perceptions of Police: Experiences in the Trans Community.” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 29(3):280–99; Stenersen, Madeline R., Kathryn Thomas, and Sherry McKee. 2022. “Police and Transgender and Gender Diverse People in the United States: A Brief Note on Interaction, Harassment, and Violence.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37(23–24):23527–40.

⁴⁷ Erentzen, C., & Schuller, R. (2020). Exploring the Dark Figure of Hate: Experiences with Police Bias and the Under-reporting of Hate Crime. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 62(2), 64–97; Meyer, Seth J., and Paige L. Moore. 2025. “‘Who YA GONNA CALL?’ Maybe Not the Police: Transgender Peoples’ Perceptions of and Experiences With the Police.” *Public Administration Quarterly* 1–14.

California's strict privacy laws concerning crime data additionally limit access to detailed information, hindering a deeper analysis of gender identity hate crimes.⁴⁸ We do not know specific gender identities, ages, or racial and ethnic backgrounds of people who experience hate crimes because of their actual or perceived gender identity. Law enforcement agencies are not required to submit more detailed information on hate crimes to the California Department of Justice. Even when crimes are reported, only the primary bias motivation is publicly recorded and available. This can lead to an undercount of gender identity hate crimes, particularly in cases involving multiple biases, where law enforcement does not deem gender identity as the most significant or where law enforcement may misattribute the type of bias.⁴⁹ This means that we are unable to identify the extent to which transgender and gender nonconforming people who are also racial, ethnic, or religious minorities may disproportionately experience gender identity hate crimes. Reporting bias may also have affected our results. Because police and sheriff's departments' reporting may be inconsistent across the state, we cannot assess whether geographic variations in hate crimes reflect actual variations in the occurrence of hate crimes or simply differences in the practices and policies of departments across the state.

Despite the study's limitations, these findings underscore the importance of distinguishing gender identity hate crimes from other types of bias-motivated offenses when shaping prevention strategies, policy responses, and support services. Gender identity hate crimes, which are acknowledged by police, exhibit distinct characteristics, as shown throughout this report. Effectively addressing and ultimately reducing these crimes requires policies and interventions that are informed by the unique dynamics and experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals.

PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Below, we offer some recommendations based on the findings presented in this report and are limited to areas where we have primary data and analysis.

Improve data collection and access

California DOJ maintains a public data portal on hate crimes, but the information reported by law enforcement and prosecutors to the state is limited.⁵⁰ Currently, law enforcement officers are required to complete forms identifying the type of hate crime, but the information captured is often incomplete. For instance, officers only report what they think is the most serious type of bias involved in an event,

⁴⁸ In response to multiple data requests, we were informed that various departments, including the California Department of Justice, could not provide detailed incident-level data (e.g., victim demographics and characteristics) or narrative reports due to state legal restrictions, specifically Government Code §§ 7923.60 and 7927.705, the latter of which incorporates the privacy protections guaranteed by Cal. Const., art. I, § 1.

⁴⁹ While California law requires law enforcement officers to receive training on gender, gender identity, and gender expression during their academy education, it remains unclear whether this training leads to a clear and accurate understanding of gender and sexual orientation. Bias motivations may be incorrectly attributed to sexual orientation rather than gender identity, especially in the absence of a full contextual understanding of the incident, such as the specific indicators of motivations behind the act, the actions taken by the alleged suspect, and the identities of those affected. Without this context, it is difficult to accurately assess the true scope and nature of gender identity hate crimes; According to O. Martinez (personal communication, December 12, 2024).

⁵⁰ California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2025). *Hate Crime: Data Set Overview and History*. <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/dataset/2025-07/Hate%20Crime-context%2006162025.pdf>; California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2025). *Hate Crime Prosecution Survey: Data set overview and history*. https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/dataset/2025-06/Hate%20Crime%20Prosecution%20Survey%20Context_06162025.pdf.

preventing analysis of how individuals may be targeted by multiple intersecting biases. Similarly, prosecutors report statistics on hate crimes referred, filed, and disposed; however, these reports are collected only in aggregate form, making it difficult to analyze how different types of hate crimes are prosecuted depending on the underlying bias.

To better inform prevention and response strategies, data collection and reporting should include more comprehensive details, such as incident characteristics, reporting outcomes, and case dispositions. Expanding data collection to capture and report all reported bias motivations, along with detailed victim demographics—including age, race, and gender—would provide a clearer understanding of the scope and impact of hate crimes. Information on hate crimes reported to law enforcement that are not ultimately identified as hate crimes by police following their investigation should also be systematically collected and reported to the state. While certain sensitive information may not be suitable for public release, it should still be gathered in de-identified or aggregate form and made available to researchers and policymakers to support analysis, research, and evidence-based interventions.

Develop and support alternative options for hate incident reporting

Transgender and gender nonconforming people—as well as many other communities disproportionately impacted by hate crimes—have long-standing histories of negative relationships with law enforcement and the broader criminal legal system.⁵¹ As a result, many victims are reluctant to report hate crimes due to fear, distrust, or stigma. Research consistently shows that these communities underreport victimization, meaning the true extent of hate crimes against them is likely higher than official statistics indicate.

Some organizations have begun collecting information on bias-motivated incidents outside traditional law enforcement channels.⁵² Expanding confidential, community-based reporting options—such as hotlines, mobile apps, or trusted third-party organizations—can boost reporting rates and provide more accurate data on the prevalence and characteristics of hate incidents, including those that do not rise to the level of prosecutable hate crimes. California has already taken an important step with the creation of the California vs. Hate hotline.⁵³ Data collected through these alternative reporting mechanisms should be systematically analyzed, aggregated, and shared (in de-identified form where necessary) to support research, policy development, and targeted prevention strategies.

⁵¹ Arrayales, J., Mallory, C., & Grasso, J. (2025). *Law Enforcement and LGBTQ People*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Police-Interactions-LGBTQ-Nov-2025.pdf>; Avalos, S. (2024). The Trans Experience With the Criminal Legal System. *Crime & Delinquency*, 70(5), 1505–1515; Carpenter, L., & Marshall, R. B. (2017). Walking While Trans: Profiling of Transgender Women by Law Enforcement, and the Problem of Proof. *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law*, 24(1), 5–38; Meyer, S. J., & Moore, P. L. (2025). “Who YA GONNA CALL?” Maybe not the Police: Transgender Peoples’ Perceptions of and Experiences With the Police. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 1–14; Stenersen, M. R., Thomas, K., & McKee, S. (2022). Police and Transgender and Gender Diverse People in the United States: A Brief Note on Interaction, Harassment, and Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(23–24), 23527–23540.

⁵² See the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission for an example of local hate crime reports that incorporate data from law enforcement, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, and school districts: Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. (2025). *Publications & documents*. Human Relations Commission, Los Angeles County. <https://hrc.lacounty.gov/stop-violence-2>

⁵³ California vs. Hate. (2025). *CA vs Hate*. <https://www.cavshate.org>

Enhance law enforcement hate crimes reporting requirements

Law enforcement officers serve as gatekeepers in how hate crimes are officially documented and have the potential to significantly improve policies and practices for identifying and reporting both hate crimes and related incidents. To accomplish this, ongoing training for law enforcement officers on identifying, documenting, and responding to hate crimes is critical. Officers in California are currently required to receive academy-level instruction on gender identity, gender expression, and relevant laws—including hate crime statutes—but these topics require continuous reinforcement and updates throughout an officer's career.⁵⁴ It remains unclear whether these training requirements are consistently implemented or how compliance is monitored. Further research is needed to assess both adherence to these requirements and the effectiveness of the training.

Variation in hate crime reporting across counties and agencies may reflect differences in resources, training, and understanding of how to recognize and categorize bias-motivated crimes. Collecting data from both community organizations and law enforcement agencies—on reported incidents as well as events identified by police as hate crimes—would provide insight into how and when officers determine that an incident meets the legal threshold for a hate crime. This information could help identify gaps in training, ensure consistent application of the law, and reduce disparities across jurisdictions.

Establishing accountability measures is equally important. Regular audits of police hate crime reports, coupled with community feedback mechanisms, can improve reporting accuracy, increase transparency, and strengthen trust between law enforcement and the communities most affected by hate crimes. For example, policies could require local agencies to incorporate input from community advisory councils, public forums, and partnerships with advocacy organizations. Additionally, penalties could be established for law enforcement departments that fail to comply with reporting requirements. Together, these measures help ensure that hate crimes are both properly documented and effectively addressed.

⁵⁴ Cal. Penal Code § 13519.41.

DATA AND METHODS

DATA SOURCE

In June 2025, we obtained California hate crime data covering 2001 to 2024 from the California Department of Justice’s OpenJustice—a state-run data portal that publishes incident-level data on hate crimes as well as summary-level data on hate crime prosecutions, among other data related to the criminal legal system in California.⁵⁵

Since 1994, the California Attorney General’s Hate Crime Reporting Program has required all law enforcement agencies in the state to submit monthly hate crime data to the Department of Justice’s Criminal Justice Statistics Center. Although all agencies are required to participate, the consistency and quality of reporting can vary from year to year due to factors such as department policies, practices, and culture.⁵⁶

An incident is classified as a hate crime by OpenJustice if two conditions are met: 1) the responding officer identifies bias as a potential motivating factor, and 2) at least one additional officer reviews and confirms that assessment. As a result, the dataset includes only incidents that were reported to law enforcement and confirmed as motivated by bias against a protected class, as determined by at least two law enforcement officers.⁵⁷ Each entry represents an incident recognized as a hate crime, but not necessarily one that led to an arrest. Outcome information, such as arrests or final dispositions, is not available. However, a summary of prosecutorial outcomes for all types of bias-motivated incidents is included in the appendix.⁵⁸

DATA LIMITATIONS

There are several data limitations related to the OpenJustice data. First, each hate crime was recorded under only one main type of bias, which law enforcement considers the most serious. For hate crimes motivated by more than one factor (e.g., gender identity and race), only one of those bias motivations was designated the “most serious bias.” This means that some crimes that may have been gender identity hate crimes based on anti-transgender or anti-gender nonconforming bias may be listed under another bias-motivated category, which could lead to an undercount of gender identity-based hate crimes, just as there may be an undercount of other hate crimes. Although the data indicate whether an incident

⁵⁵ While incident-level and summary-level data on hate crimes were first published in 2016, data collected in earlier years were made available retroactively; <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/data>

⁵⁶ California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. (2025, June). *Hate Crime Context* [PDF]. California OpenJustice. <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/dataset/2025-07/Hate%20Crime-context%2006162025.pdf>; State of California Department of Justice. 1996. “Hate Crime in California 1996.” <https://oag.ca.gov/cjsc/publications/hatecrimes/hc1996>

⁵⁷ Scholars have highlighted the limitations of hate crime data collected by law enforcement, noting that it only captures incidents reported to authorities. Research consistently shows that hate crimes, particularly those targeting LGBTQ individuals, are significantly underreported. As such, the data presented here should be understood as representing only a small portion of the bias motivated violence experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming people. See, Briones-Robinson, R., Powers, R. A., & Socia, K. M. (2016). Sexual orientation bias crimes: Examination of reporting, perception of police bias, and differential police response. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43(12), 1688–1709; Gauthier, J., Medina, K., & Dierkhising, C. (2021). Analysis of hate crimes in transgender communities. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 17(2), 4–14; Herek, G. M. (2017). Documenting hate crimes in the United States: Some considerations on data sources. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(2), 143–151; Pezzella, F. S., Fetzner, M. D., & Keller, T. (2019). The dark figure of hate crime underreporting. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(1), 1–24; Shields, D. M. (2021). Stonewalling in the Brick City: Perceptions of and experiences with seeking police assistance among LGBTQ citizens. *Social Sciences*, 10(16), 2–37.

⁵⁸ Prosecutorial data does not disaggregate by types of bias. Therefore, we cannot analyze gender-identity hate crime prosecutions on their own.

involves multiple biases, they do not specify what those additional biases are, making intersectional analyses infeasible.⁵⁹

Second, significant gaps remain in the available data. The California DOJ has acknowledged issues such as errors in record management systems, mistakes in reporting, staffing shortages, and some departments failing to submit reports. In some cases, entire police departments note they were “unable to report the full year of data,” or are noted as not reporting hate crimes in a given year(s) or month(s).

Finally, there may be jurisdiction-level differences in how hate crime data is collected and reported to the California DOJ. How hate crimes are identified or classified may differ greatly across jurisdictions, largely depending on the practices and priorities of individual police departments. Local policing culture, department policies, and how well officers are trained to investigate these cases all play a role in the recognition and investigation of hate crimes.⁶⁰ Legislation passed in 2018 mandated that California law enforcement officers receive training on topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity as part of their initial academy curriculum.⁶¹ However, it remains unclear how consistently or effectively this requirement has been implemented since the law’s enactment, including for officers who completed their academy training prior to the amended law.⁶² While California does mandate annual continuing education for officers, there is currently no statewide requirement that this training include instruction on LGBTQ issues or hate crimes specifically. As a result, the enforcement and classification of such crimes can remain inconsistent, with some departments better prepared than others to identify and respond to hate-motivated incidents.

METHODOLOGY

Unless otherwise noted, our analysis focuses on the years 2013 through 2024, the period during which anti-transgender and anti-gender nonconforming biases were both officially recognized and recorded as distinct gender identity bias categories in California and in the dataset. The findings presented are primarily descriptive in nature. To determine whether the differences observed between gender identity bias and other types of bias-motivated incidents are statistically significant, we employ logistic regression models. Detailed results from the regression analyses are provided in the footnotes for reference.

⁵⁹ In an analysis of hate incident experiences in California in 2024, 40% of individuals aged 12 and older who reported experiencing hate attributed it to multiple identities or characteristics. See, Bates, A. J., & Babey, S. H. (2025, October 9). *Hate acts increased in California in 2024, new data show*. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/newsroom/blog/fact-sheet-hate-incidents-chis>.

⁶⁰ Jenness, V., & Grattet, R. (2005). The Law-In-Between: The Effects of Organizational Perviousness on the Policing of Hate Crime. *Social Problems*, 52(3), 337–359.

⁶¹ California Penal Code § 13519.41. (2018). Peace officer training: Sexual orientation and gender identity.

⁶² Prior research on LGBTQ diversity training in law enforcement reveals both receptiveness and resistance among officers. In one study, some officers engaged positively by seeking clarification and asking how to better support LGBTQ individuals. At the same time, officers also expressed resistance by defending existing policing practices, voicing concerns that such training might harm public perception of their work, or articulating negative beliefs of LGBTQ people—such as the perception that LGBTQ people seek special rights, that discrimination is no longer a relevant issue, that language sensitivity is overstated, or that allegations of discrimination are inaccurate or used manipulatively; see, Israel, T., Bettergarcia, J. N., Delucio, K., Avellar, T. R., Harkness, A., & Goodman, J. A. (2017). Reactions of law enforcement to LGBTQ diversity training. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 28(2), 197–226.

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The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

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RESEARCH THAT MATTERS



APPENDIX

HATE CRIME CATEGORIES IN CALIFORNIA

BIAS CATEGORY	BIAS TYPE
Gender Identity	Anti-Transgender Anti-Gender Nonconforming
Sexual Orientation	Anti-Gay (Male) Anti-Lesbian Anti-Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual or Transgender (Mixed Group) Anti-Heterosexual* Anti-Bisexual
Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry	Anti-White Anti-Black or African American Anti-American Indian/Alaska Native Anti-Asian Anti-Multiple Races/Group Anti-Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Anti-Arab Anti-Hispanic or Latino Anti-Other Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry Anti-Citizenship
Religion	Anti-Jewish Anti-Catholic Anti-Protestant Anti-Islamic (Muslim) Anti-Other Religion Anti-Multiple Religions/Group Anti-Theism/Agnosticism Anti-Mormon (2015-2023) Anti-Church of Jesus Christ (2024-Current) Anti-Jehovah's Witness Anti-Eastern Orthodox (Russian/Greek/ Other) Anti-Other Christian Anti-Buddhist Anti-Hindu Anti-Sikh
Disability	Anti-Physical Disability Anti-Mental Disability
Gender	Anti-Male Anti-Female

Note: *For the purpose of this report, anti-heterosexual was recategorized as "other."

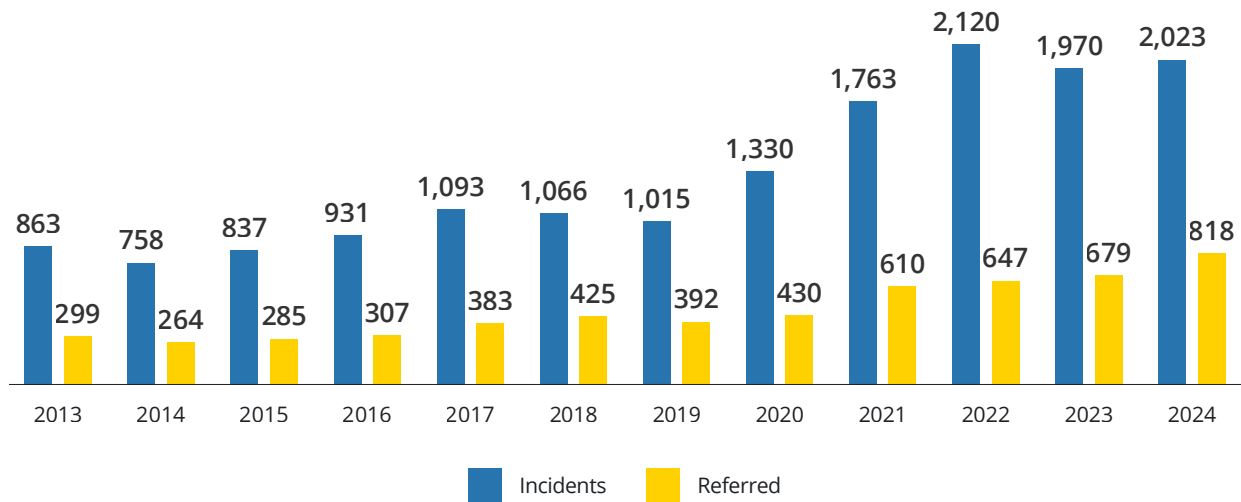
HATE CRIME PROSECUTIONS

Along with incident-level data on hate crimes, the California OpenJustice Portal also provides aggregate data on hate crime prosecutions but does not disaggregate it by specific bias types. Nonetheless, the data reveals important patterns and trends in the frequency of overall hate crime case referrals to prosecutors, the filing of hate crime charges, and the resulting case outcomes.

Referred

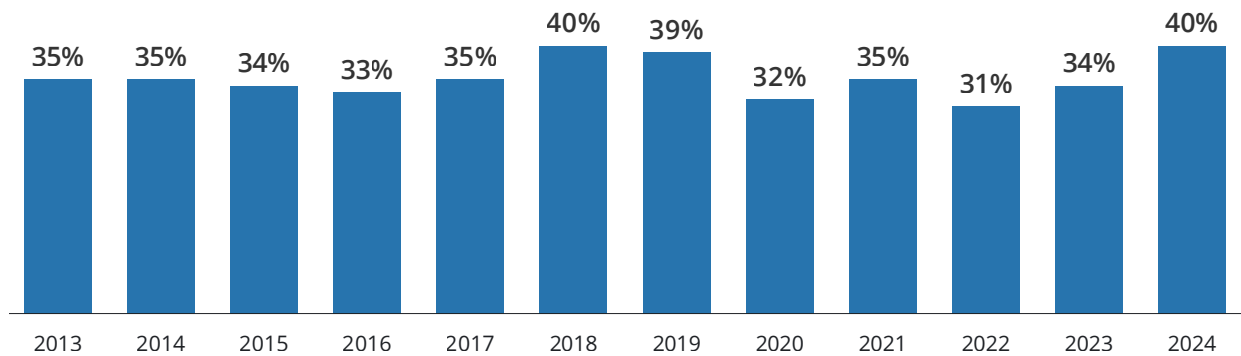
As the number of bias-motivated incidents confirmed by law enforcement has increased, so too has the number of cases referred to prosecutors. Over the past decade, annual referrals have more than doubled—from approximately 300 in the mid-2010s to over 600 per year between 2021 and 2024.

Figure A1. Number of hate crimes reported by law enforcement and referred for prosecution in California



However, the proportion of hate crimes referred to prosecutors over time has remained relatively stable, averaging about 35% of all incidents reported by law enforcement annually, suggesting that a large share (65%) are recognized by law enforcement as hate crimes, but not referred for prosecution.

Figure A2. Percent of hate crimes referred to prosecutors in California (2013-2024)

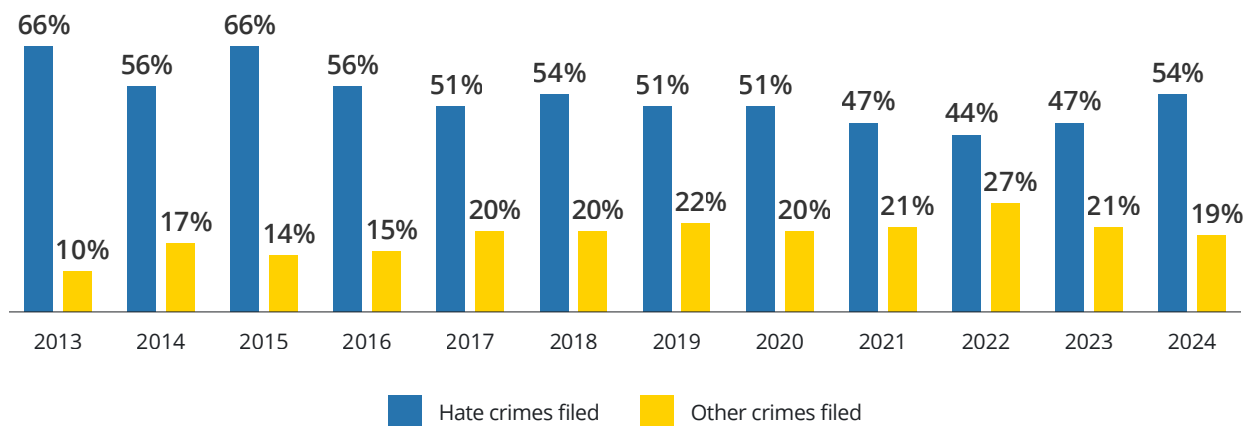


Filed by Prosecutors

Of all hate crime cases referred to prosecutors by law enforcement, 70% resulted in prosecutors filing charges. However, only about half (50%) of all cases referred to prosecutors are filed specifically as hate crimes, while another 20% are prosecuted under different criminal charges without hate crime enhancements. The remainder (30%) are not filed by prosecutors.

Over time, the share of referred cases filed as hate crimes has declined from 66% in 2013 to a low of 44% in 2022, slightly rising to 47% in 2023 and 54% in 2024. Conversely, the proportion of referred cases initially flagged by law enforcement as hate crimes but ultimately prosecuted as other offenses has doubled, from 10% in 2013 to a peak of 27% in 2022 and 21% in 2023.

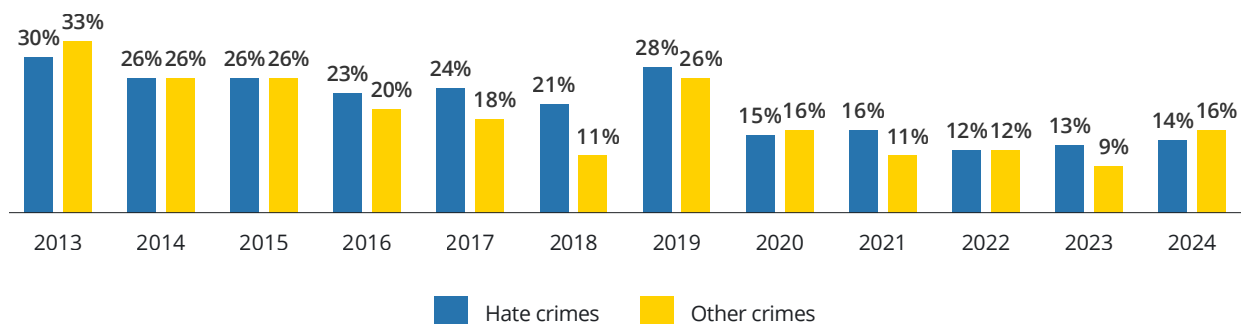
Figure A3. Percent of hate crimes referrals from law enforcement that result in prosecutor filings in California



Convictions

Of the overall number of cases that were referred by law enforcement as hate crimes and filed by prosecutors as either hate crimes or another type of crime, an increasingly smaller share has resulted in convictions over time. In 2013, approximately one-third (30%) of filed cases by prosecutors led to hate crime convictions, while another third (33%) resulted in convictions for other offenses. By 2024, these rates had dropped significantly, with only 14% of filed cases ending in hate crime convictions and just 16% resulting in convictions for other crimes.

Figure A4. Percent of hate and other crimes filed by prosecutors that result in convictions in California



Conclusion

The findings presented here reflect prosecution trends across all bias-motivated incidents reported by law enforcement. Despite an overall increase in the number of reported incidents by law enforcement and referrals to prosecutors, the likelihood that they lead to charges being filed by prosecutors and that those charges result in convictions (whether by guilty pleas or trial verdicts) has declined substantially over time. This suggests growing gaps in the progression from incident reporting to legal accountability within the hate crime enforcement process. It is important to note that the available data does not allow for disaggregation by specific bias types (e.g., gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion), limiting the ability to assess whether these trends vary across different categories of hate crimes.

Although the data do not allow us to isolate hate crimes specifically motivated by gender identity bias, it is possible that filing and conviction rates for these cases are even lower or may decline, which may reflect broader patterns of bias against LGBTQ individuals broadly, and transgender people specifically, within the criminal legal system.⁶³ Scholars have highlighted how anti-transgender legislation, policy, and the resulting cycles of violence and discrimination are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.⁶⁴ Prosecutors and courts, like other institutions, are not immune to the influence of rising anti-transgender rhetoric and legislation across the country and at the federal level.⁶⁵ Furthermore, anti-transgender rhetoric, such as President Donald Trump's executive order redefining gender⁶⁶ may result in the negative impact of the prosecution and adjudication of these cases. Even where laws, such as California's hate crime protections,⁶⁷ explicitly safeguard gender identity and expression, such symbolic policy actions can shape biases among legal actors—causing law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, or juries to unconsciously devalue transgender victims or doubt the seriousness of crimes targeting them. This combination of broader legal and symbolic factors—in and beyond California—reduces the likelihood of justice for gender identity-motivated crimes within the criminal legal system.

⁶³ Cox, J., Daquin, & Neal, T. M. S. (2022). Discretionary Prosecutorial Decision-Making: Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Bias in Intimate Partner Violence. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 49(11), 1699–1719; Jenness, V., & Rowland, A. (2024). The Structure and Operation of the Transgender Criminal Legal System Nexus in the United States: Inequalities, Administrative Violence, and Injustice at Every Turn. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 7(1), 283–309.

⁶⁴ Brightman, S., Lenning, E., Lurie, K. J., & DeJong, C. (2024). Anti-Transgender Ideology, Laws, and Homicide: An Analysis of the Trifecta of Violence. *Homicide Studies*, 28(3), 251–269; Lenning, E., Brightman, S., & Buist, C. L. (2021). The Trifecta of Violence: A Socio-Historical Comparison of Lynching and Violence Against Transgender Women. *Critical Criminology*, 29(1), 151–172.

⁶⁵ American Civil Liberties Union. 2025. "Legislative Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in 2025." Accessed June 14, 2025. <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2025>; Trans Legislation. 2025. "2025 Anti-Trans Bills Tracker." Accessed June 14, 2025. <https://translegislation.com>.

⁶⁶ Executive Order 14168. 2025. *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government*. January 5. The White House. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02090/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal>;

⁶⁷ California. 2024. *California Penal Code*, § 422.56(c).