

SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, May 14, 2026, 11:00 A.M.



County Administration South
601 N. Ross Street, Multipurpose Room
Santa Ana, California 92701

LAUREN JOHNSON-NORRIS
Chair

JO-ANNE P. MATSUBA
Vice Chair

ADA BRICEÑO
Commissioner

TAI DO
Commissioner

MARY IZADI
Commissioner

MICHAEL KENT
Commissioner

RABBI RICK STEINBERG
Commissioner

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners Izadi, Johnson-Norris, Kent, Matsuba and Steinberg

ABSENT: Commissioners Briceño and Do

PRESENT: Chief Operating Officer Jessica Witt
Clerk of the Commission Jamie Ross & Alessandra Esquivel, Deputy Clerks

The Orange County Human Relations Commission is an independent advisory body, and our positions do not necessarily reflect the positions of the County of Orange Board of Supervisors.

1. Call the Meeting to Order
MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:01 A.M., BY CHAIR JOHNSON-NORRIS
2. Opening quote/reflection – Commissioner Briceño
CHAIR JOHNSON-NORRIS OPENED WITH A QUOTE FROM FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS

COMMISSION STEINBERG ANNOUNCED THIS AS HIS LAST MEETING, REFLECTED ON THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION AND THANKED FORMER SUPERVISOR SPITZER AND SUPERVISOR WAGNER FOR APPOINTING AND REAPPOINTING HIM TO SERVE

SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

3. Monthly Summary of Commission Activities
NO REPORT

OPEN FORUM

Alan Woo – Oral Re.: Stop the Hate Project; portal to report hate crimes and the need for people to understand the need to report hate crimes.

Eric Neshanian – Oral Re.: Armenian genocide; stated ADL denied Armenian genocide; lack of Commission response to former Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan’s comments.

HEARING/SPEAKER/PRESENTATION: (None)

ACTION ITEMS: (None)

INFORMATION ITEMS: (Items 4 - 8)

4. Receive updated presentation from Orange County District Attorney’s Office on DOJ Hate Crimes Grant
PRESENTED; CHAIR JOHNSON-NORRIS REQUESTED DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE WORK WITH COMMISSION TO SEE HOW CONNECTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC CAN BE MADE REGARDING THE REPORTING PORTAL; CEO TO REPORT BACK TO COMMISSION
5. Receive presentation on the 2024 Hate Crime Report
RECEIVED; COMMISSIONER STEINBERG REQUESTED A FOOTNOTE IN 2025 REPORT REGARDING IT BEING A TRANSITIONAL YEAR; COMMISSIONER KENT REQUESTED TO SEE HATE INCIDENTS INCLUDED IN THE FUTURE
6. Receive update from County Executive Office
NO REPORT
7. Update from OC Chiefs & Sheriff
COMMISSIONER KENT NOTED ANXIETY IN COMMUNITIES, ROAD RAGE INCIDENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH CALLS
8. OCSD Interfaith Council Update
COMMISSIONER STEINBERG ANNOUNCED HE IS STAYING ON THE INTERFAITH COUNCIL AND WILL FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO DO THE REPORT AT FUTURE COMMISSION MEETINGS

ADJOURNED: 12:07 P.M.

/s/

LAUREN JOHNSON-NORRIS
Chair

/s/

Jamie Ross, Deputy
Clerk of the Commission



20 | Orange County 24 | Hate Crime Report

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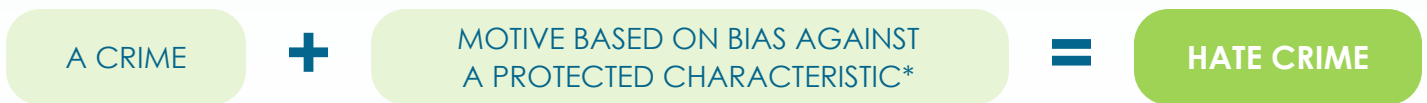
Introduction

The County of Orange (County) is committed to creating a safe and inclusive community for everyone. Population surveys are important to be able to gauge the safety and inclusivity of communities by providing context for those who have experienced an act of hate. The [California Health Interview Survey \(CHIS\)](#) is the nation's largest state health survey, providing critical data on Californians and various racial and ethnic groups. Conducted by UCLA Center for Health Policy and Research, CHIS interviews approximately 20,000 adults per year using address-based sampling. The survey covers a wide range of topics, including mental health, social determinants and health disparities. The CHIS 2024 questionnaire data included an assessment of residents who have experienced an act of hate. An act of hate included both a potential hate crime or hate incident. After defining the act of hate, the questionnaire asked participants: **"During the past 12 months, have you directly experienced an act of hate?"** Of those who responded in Orange County (OC), 9.8% reported experiencing an act of hate. This equates to approximately 1 in 10 residents.

The County recognizes this report is a reflection of hate crimes that are reported and prosecuted – which does not encompass all hate activity in OC as there is underreporting of both hate crimes and hate incidents to law enforcement agencies (LEAs). This report provides information from local LEAs and the Orange County District Attorney's Office (OCDA) regarding reporting, filing, prosecuting and efforts to reduce acts of hate in OC. In addition, the data provided in this report represents a snapshot in time. Therefore, outcomes of investigations may lead to differences of reporting during a different timeframe. The following is included in this report:

Hate Crime Reporting

Hate crime events are included as an extension of data presented in the California (CA) Attorney General's (AG) 2024 Hate Crime Report. This includes details submitted to the CA Department of Justice (DOJ) for hate crime events for all law enforcement agencies in OC.



Orange County District Attorney Efforts

OCDA is the only entity in the County with the legal authority to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a reported hate crime is in fact a hate crime. Additional information within this report has been provided by OCDA regarding cases submitted for review, filing outcomes, examples of hate crime prosecutions and OCDA's ongoing efforts to reduce and ensure prosecution of hate crimes.

Due to the underreporting, anonymity in reporting, and multiple agencies that collect information with different definitions of hate incidents, hate incidents are not included in this report.

The U.S. Department of Justice defines a hate incident as a non-criminal act motivated by bias against a person's actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or gender, which doesn't rise to the level of a federal crime but still causes harm, like name-calling, insults, or displaying offensive material that doesn't threaten violence or damage property, often addressed under civil rights or campus policies rather than criminal law.



*Note: Protected characteristics are listed on the following page.

Hate Crime Reporting

Law enforcement takes the lead in crime reporting by acting as the first point of contact in creating a report when a call is received by the LEA from a community member. Additionally, LEAs collect reported information and investigate to determine what type of criminal act occurred. Along with documenting, transmitting crime data to state and federal agencies is also mandated as all local LEAs are required to submit data to the CA DOJ in compliance with CA Penal Code section 13023.



CA PENAL CODE SECTION 422.55 HATE CRIME

A criminal act committed, in whole or in part, because of one or more of the following actual or perceived characteristics of the victim: (1) Disability, (2) Gender, (3) Nationality, (4) Race or ethnicity, (5) Religion, (6) Sexual orientation, (7) Association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

Although all hate crime events are reported to the DOJ by local law enforcement agencies, hate crime reporting can differ between jurisdictions. The following factors may influence the volume of hate crimes reported to DOJ:

1. Cultural practices of individuals and their likeliness to report hate crimes to law enforcement agencies
2. Strength and investigative emphasis of law enforcement agencies
3. Policies and law enforcement agencies
4. Community policing practices



When possible, comparisons to CA statewide statistics are also presented to give context to the details of the reported hate crime events. Data is reported by year, which reflects the calendar year - January through December.

The CA AG reports hate crimes as events. The CA AG defines a hate crime event as, “**...an occurrence where a hate crime is involved and the information about the event is a crime report or source document that meets the criteria for a hate crime and has been reported to the DOJ.**” Examples of hate crime events include assault of an individual, graffiti, or vandalism motivated by bias of a protected social group.

Hate crime events do not include hate incidents. According to the CA DOJ, “**hate incidents are acts of prejudice that are not crimes and do not involve violence, threats or property damage.**” There are some hate incidents that are not hate crimes but are considered to be unlawful discrimination. Examples of hate incidents include flyers left on vehicles with offensive language and symbols or yelling racial slurs with no violence or threat.

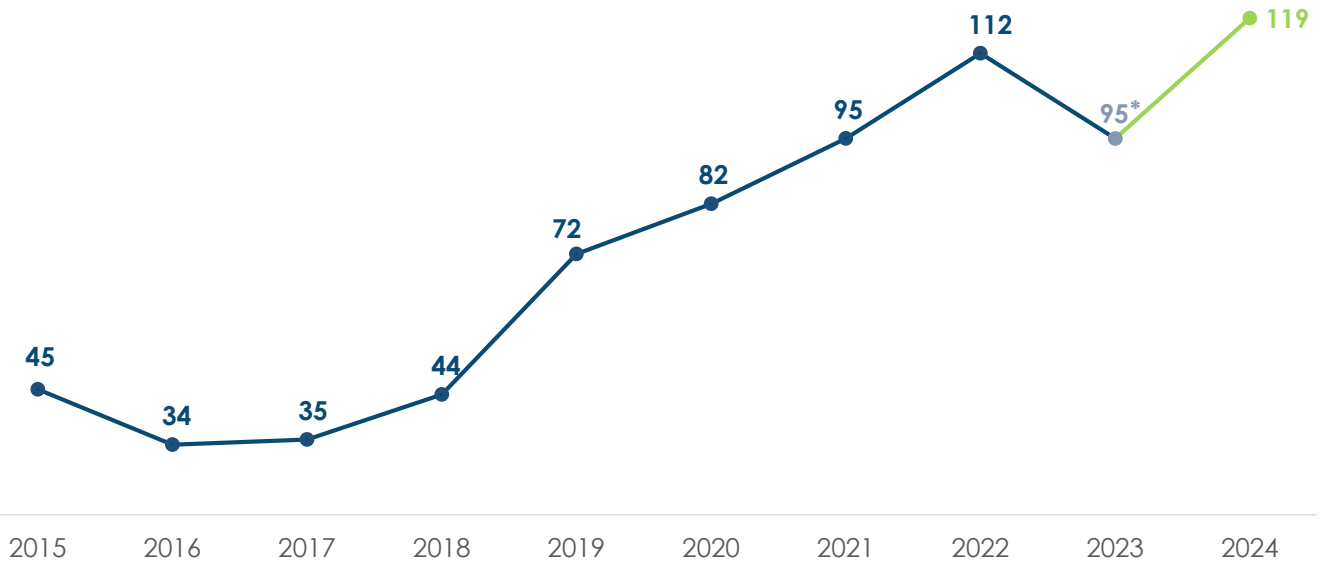
Within a hate crime event, multiple people may be involved. For example, there may be one or more suspects, one or more victims targeted, and/or one or more offenses involved for each event. Hate crime event data was retrieved from the reporting of hate crimes by OC local law enforcement agencies to CA DOJ as mandated.

OC Hate Crime Events

A total of 119 hate crime events were reported in OC in 2024, among which, 12 were considered multiple bias events. Multiple bias events have evidence of more than one bias (e.g., religion and gender, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation, etc.) to have been a reason for the offense. The figure below displays the trend for reported hate crime events over the past ten years. Although LEAs have made efforts to increase reporting, it is unknown if there is an increase in 2024 due to the incomplete reporting from four LEAs not submitting all their data in 2023.



Yearly Trend of Reported Hate Crime Events in Orange County



*Note: Hate crime data partially reported by four OC Jurisdictions

Hate Crime Events by Jurisdiction

There are 41 reporting local law enforcement agencies in OC. These agencies include city police agencies, the OC Sheriff's Department, college campus police, the CA Highway Patrol and the Union Pacific Railroad. Comparisons of hate crime reporting between jurisdictions should be made with caution due to the following factors as reported by the CA DOJ: demographic diversity and population density, size of law enforcement agencies and training received in identification of hate crimes by law enforcement officers in each jurisdiction. Hate crime events by jurisdiction in 2020 through 2024 are included in the table below. There were 16 local law enforcement agencies within OC that reported zero hate crime events in 2024. The jurisdiction with the most hate crimes reported is Irvine with 19, followed by Huntington Beach with 12.

“The fact that the City of Irvine has the highest number of reported hate crimes in Orange County is a reflection of the trust between the Irvine Police Department and the community we serve. We know that hate crimes and hate incidents are under-reported across the nation. Our residents feel safe coming forward because we have built open lines of communication and strengthened community partnerships through ongoing outreach and engagement. We will continue working side-by-side with our community members, faith-based organizations, businesses, and advocacy groups to ensure every person feels safe, valued, and heard.”

Michael Kent
Irvine Police Chief

JURISDICTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Aliso Viejo	6	0	1	1	4 ^[1]
Anaheim	0	5	1 ^[1]	2	3
Brea	0	1	0	0	1
Buena Park	1	0	0	1	2
CA Highway Patrol - Orange	0	0	0	0	0
Costa Mesa	8	2	5	5 ^[2]	7
CSU Fullerton	0	0	1	0	1
Cypress	1	5	4	1	1
Dana Point	1	2	2	1	2
Fountain Valley	0	0	0	3	1
Fullerton	1	1	6	5 ^[1]	7 ^[1]
Garden Grove	9	9	2	1 ^[2]	6
Huntington Beach	4	8	7	8	12
Irvine Valley College	0	0	0	0	0

JURISDICTION	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Irvine	7	15	19 ^[1]	14	19 ^[1]
La Habra	1	1	1	0	1
La Palma	0	1	1	0	0
Laguna Beach	0	0	1	0	1
Laguna Hills	1	1	0	0	1
Laguna Niguel	0	0	1	1	2 ^[1]
Laguna Woods	0	0	1	0	0
Lake Forest	1	0	1	1	3 ^[1]
Los Alamitos	0	0	0	1	1
Mission Viejo	0	2	1	1	3 ^[1]
Newport Beach	0	0	2	4	0
Orange County Sheriff's Department	0	0	1	7 ^[1]	8 ^[1]
Orange Coast DPR	0	0	0	1	0
Orange	4	5	4	1 ^[2]	4
Placentia	1	2	0	0	3 ^[1]
Rancho Santa Margarita	0	0	0	0	1
San Clemente	1	1	1	1	3 ^[1]
San Juan Capistrano	0	0	1	0	1
Santa Ana	16	18	32	17	8 ^[1]
Seal Beach	0	3	3	1	3
Stanton	0	0	1	1 ^[1]	0
Tustin	0	4	5	1	0
UC Irvine	4	1	3	6	1
Union Pacific Railroad - Orange	0	0	0	0	0
Villa Park	0	0	0	0	1 ^[1]
Westminster	6	4	3	9 ^[1,2]	4
Yorba Linda	2	3	1	0	4
TOTAL	82	95	112	95	119

[1] Jurisdictions reported a multiple bias hate crime event.

[2] Agencies partially reported for 2023. Numbers for these jurisdictions may be higher than what is displayed.

Hate Crime Event Details

Reported hate crime events contain different reporting elements that describe each potential hate crime. Victims, when known, are included in the reporting. A victim can have more than one offense committed against them. According to the CA DOJ, the following elements are reported for each potential hate crime:

- Occurrence of one or more criminal offenses
- Committed against one or more victims
- One or more suspects or perpetrators involved

These totals are then classified and counted by the following categories. The most frequent items within these categories are listed below.

TYPE OF BIAS MOTIVATION

- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender

TYPE OF VICTIM

- Individual
- Government
- Business
- Religious

CRIME LOCATION

- Highway/Road/Alley/Street
- Residence/Home/Driveway
- Parking Lot/Garage
- Church/Synagogue/Temple
- Park/Playground
- School-Elementary/Secondary

TYPE OF CRIME

- Aggregated Assault
- Burglary
- Destruction/Vandalism
- Murder

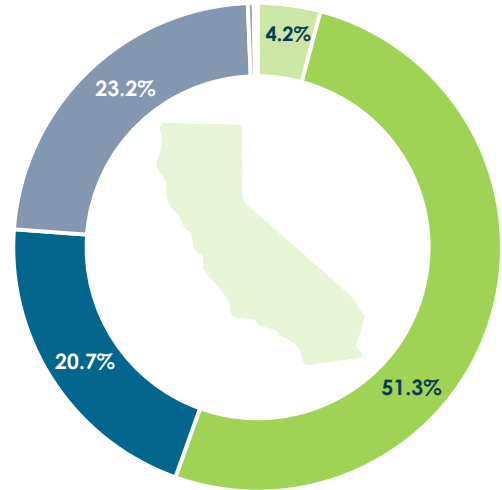
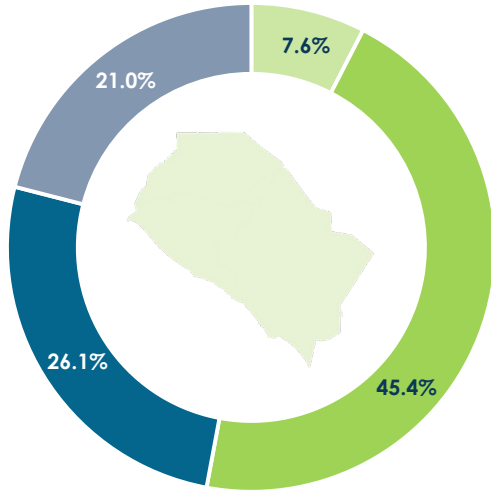
Type of Bias

Bias, or a perceived negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical/mental disability, is tracked at the time of reporting for hate crime events. The most serious bias, or most evident bias, is identified by the officer. Most serious bias types have six reporting categories. These include gender, gender nonconforming, race/ethnicity/ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, and disability.

Nationally, in 2024, the top bias for hate crime events was based on race/ethnicity/ancestry which accounted for 55.5% of all events ([Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer](#)), among which slightly over half were anti-Black or African American bias, and it accounted for 28% of all hate crime events nationally. This percentage is consistent with CA in which 25% of hate crime events were motivated by anti-Black or African American bias. The trend also appeared in OC, where most of the hate crime events were anti-Black or African American racially motivated (26%) followed by anti-Jewish (24%).

Similar to national trends, slightly over half (51.3%) of the reported hate crime events in CA are race/ethnicity/ancestry related. This is followed by sexual orientation (23.2%) and religion (20.7%). Gender, gender nonconforming, and disability together consist of almost 5%. Although lower than the nation and state, OC follows a similar trend with the highest bias type, race/ethnicity/ancestry (45.4%). Religion (26.1%) is the second highest, which is higher than CA overall and then sexual orientation (21.0%) which is slightly lower. In 2024, there were no reported disability and gender related hate crime events in OC. Details are provided in the figure and table on the following page.

Most Serious Bias Type

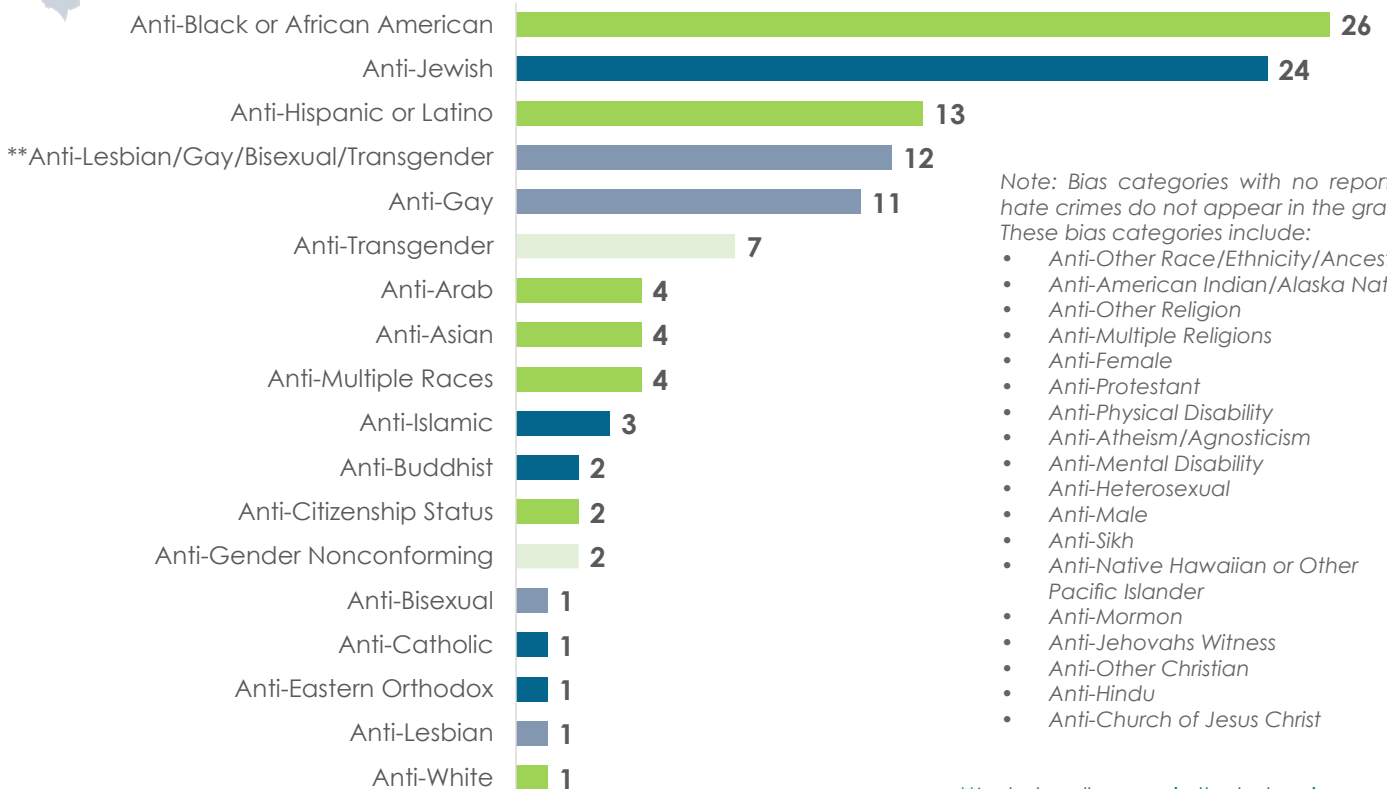


BIAS	OC	CA
Gender Nonconforming	9	84
Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry	54	1,038
Religion	31	419
Sexual Orientation	25	469
*Disability	0	8
*Gender	0	5
Overall	119	2,023

*Disability and Gender are below 0.5% for CA.



Most Serious Bias Reported



Note: Bias categories with no reported hate crimes do not appear in the graph. These bias categories include:

- Anti-Other Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry
- Anti-American Indian/Alaska Native
- Anti-Other Religion
- Anti-Multiple Religions
- Anti-Female
- Anti-Protestant
- Anti-Physical Disability
- Anti-Atheism/Agnosticism
- Anti-Mental Disability
- Anti-Heterosexual
- Anti-Male
- Anti-Sikh
- Anti-Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Anti-Mormon
- Anti-Jehovahs Witness
- Anti-Other Christian
- Anti-Hindu
- Anti-Church of Jesus Christ

**Includes all groups in the hate crime event.

Hate Crime Event Details

Victim

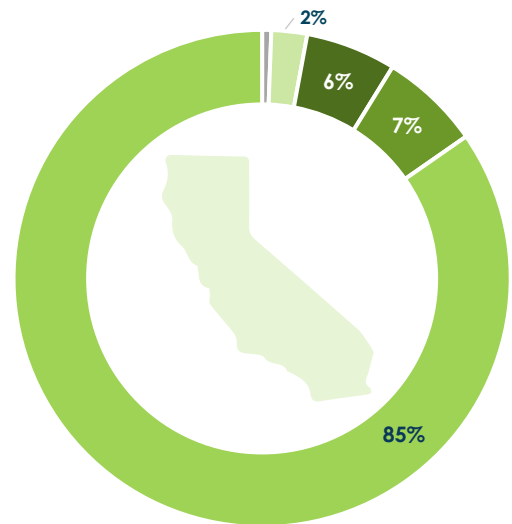
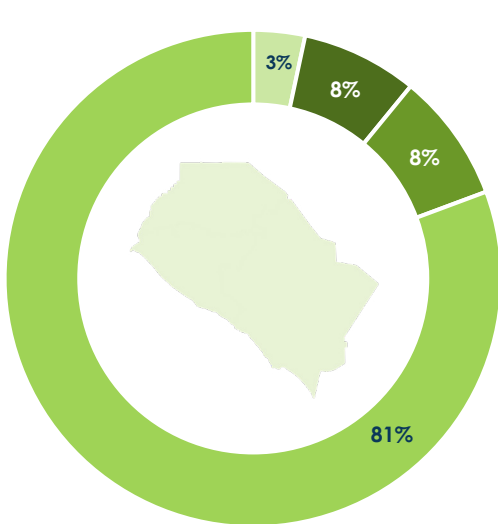
Victims, or those who were affected by hate crime events, are tracked and reported when possible. There are five reporting categories which include individuals, government, business, religious, and other. CA follows a similar trend as OC with individuals as the highest reported victim type.

The age of the victim(s) is also captured and categorized by adult, those 18 years and older, and juvenile, those under 18 years of age. Most of the victims who reported hate crime events in OC were adults (120) compared to juvenile victims (13). The total of adults and juveniles reported are greater than the number of hate crime events because for some hate crime events, more than one victim was involved. Victim information is displayed below.

120
ADULT VICTIMS

13
JUVENILE VICTIMS INVOLVED IN HATE CRIME EVENTS DURING 2024

Victim Information*



VICTIM INFORMATION	OC	CA
Other**	0	12
Religious	4	47
Business	9	119
Government	10	132
Individual	96	1,713
Overall	119	2,023

*Victims are not always determined for all events.

**Other is below 1% for CA.

Hate Crime Event Details

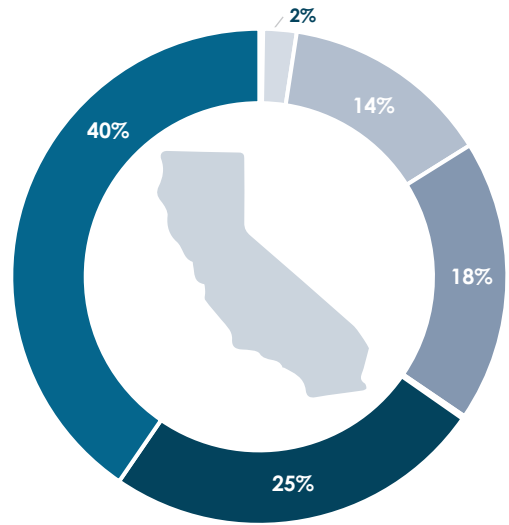
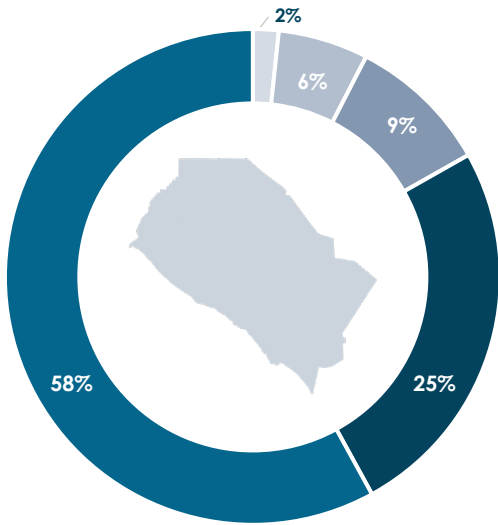
Suspect

Information about the person committing the crime (i.e. suspect), is also captured, when possible, for hate crime events. Due to the nature of hate crimes not always being witnessed or occurring in person (e.g., graffiti, damage to property, virtual, etc.), a suspect is not always identified and/or reported. It is also possible for multiple suspects to be involved in one hate crime event. For the suspects that were identified in OC in 2024, 72 were adults and 24 were juveniles. The total number of suspects is greater than the number of hate crime events reported, indicating there were multiple suspects involved in some of the hate crimes. In addition, when suspects are identified, the race of the suspect is not always known. This is true most of the time in OC, as the highest category of suspect race is unknown (69), followed by White (30) and Hispanic (11). Suspect information is displayed below.

72
ADULT SUSPECTS

24
JUVENILE SUSPECTS IDENTIFIED IN HATE CRIME EVENTS DURING 2024

Suspect Information



SUSPECT INFORMATION	OC	CA
*Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	4
*American Indian or Alaska Native	0	5
Asian	2	44
Black or African American	7	277
Hispanic	11	372
White	30	503
Unknown	69	818
Overall	119	2,023

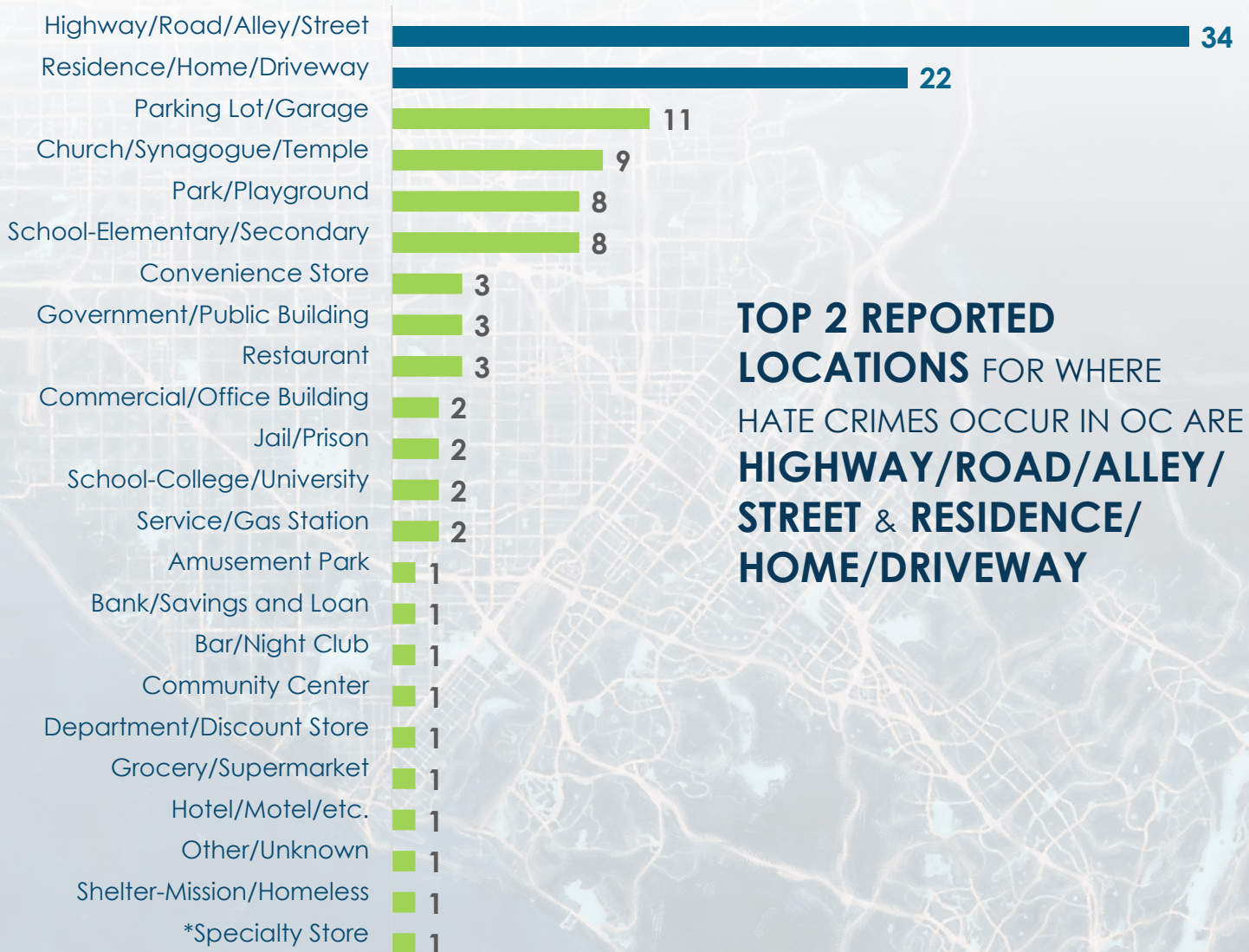
*Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaska Native are below 0.5% for CA.

Hate Crime Event Details

Location

The location is also determined and reported for where hate crime events occurred. The location categories used in reporting follow uniform crime reporting program location specifications developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In 2024, the most frequently (27.1%) reported location of a hate crime event in CA occurred at a highway/road/alley/street, followed by residence/home/driveway (20.5%) and parking lot/garage categories (7.5%). OC followed a similar trend in which 28.6% of hate crime events happened at a highway/road/alley/street, 18.5% at a residence/home/driveway and 12.0% at a parking lot/garage. These percentages include one reported hate crime event without an identified location. All reported locations with frequencies are displayed in figure below.

Reported Location of Hate Crime Event



TOP 2 REPORTED LOCATIONS FOR WHERE HATE CRIMES OCCUR IN OC ARE **HIGHWAY/ROAD/ALLEY/STREET & RESIDENCE/HOME/DRIVEWAY**

*Examples of speciality stores include stores such as electronic, furniture and appliance.

OC Process for Filing



The prosecutor is an independent administrator of justice. The primary responsibility of a prosecutor is to seek justice, which can only be achieved by the representation and presentation of the truth. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that the guilty are held accountable, that the innocent are protected from unwarranted harm, and that the rights of all participants, particularly victims of crime, are respected.

National Prosecution Standards, Third Edition, National District Attorney's Association



The process for filing criminal charges with the DA's Office is a multi-step process that begins with law enforcement. After law enforcement investigates, a report or case is referred to the DA's Office. OCDA then makes the final decision on whether to file formal charges after reviewing LEA reports and evidence to determine whether a crime has been committed. Sometimes there are hate incidents that do not rise to the level of a crime based on the "elements" necessary to prove that crime occurred. The process is a fundamental part of the role of a Deputy DA.

A Deputy DA reviews the case to determine whether or not there is sufficient admissible evidence to convict the accused of the particular crime and to authorize the filing of appropriate charges. In making this determination Deputy DAs will review the police reports and any accompanying evidence, and the applicable statutes. Criminal charges will not be filed as a result of improper factors such as:

1. The race, religion, nationality, sex, occupation, economic class, or political association or position of the victim, witnesses or the accused;
2. The mere fact of a request to charge by a police agency, private citizen, or public official;
3. Public or journalistic pressure to charge;
4. The facilitation of an investigation including obtaining a statement from the accused; or
5. To assist or impede, purposely or intentionally, the efforts of any public official, candidate, or prospective candidate for elective or appointed public office.

If the Deputy DA determines there is insufficient admissible evidence to prove a case beyond a reasonable doubt, the Deputy DA can reject the case or send it back to the police agency for further follow-up investigation. If the Deputy DA reviews the case and determines that a crime was committed, as dictated by the law, the Deputy DA will initiate a criminal complaint, which will start the criminal court process as displayed on the right.

Police Agency Process

- I Report of law violation by public
- II Investigation is conducted
- III If sufficient evidence, an arrest is made
- IV A police report is written
- V Case is presented to the OCDA for filing/charging consideration

District Attorney Process

- I Deputy District Attorney reviews case
- II Deputy District Attorney either:
 - Rejects case,
 - Sends it back for follow-up or
 - Files a complaint
- III If Deputy District Attorney files the case, the criminal court process begins and a victim advocate is assigned



OC District Attorney's Office



The beauty of Orange County is found in our diversity, not our differences. Hate will not be tolerated here or anywhere. It is the work of an incredibly dedicated coalition of law enforcement partners, community organizations, victim advocates, educators, and elected leaders, which is helping to empower victims of hate to stand up and for haters to be held fully accountable. We must as a county continue to speak up - and speak out against hate. As the elected District Attorney of Orange County, I don't care who you love, but I care who you hate. I have - and will continue to - prosecute hate crimes to the fullest extent and send an unequivocal message to haters that hate will not be tolerated here - or anywhere.

Todd Spitzer
Orange County District Attorney



OCDA is the only entity in the county with the legal authority to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a reported hate crime event is in fact a hate crime. Every case submitted to the OCDA for a possible hate crime criminal filing is thoroughly reviewed by a veteran prosecutor to determine if the government can meet its legal burden to file hate crime charges beyond a reasonable doubt, as detailed on the previous page.

OCDA has also taken a proactive role in community outreach and education to provide information to the public about hate crimes and hate incidents; explaining the legal distinctions between these two factual events as well as the process by which potential hate crimes are investigated, reviewed and prosecuted.

As a result of a significant increase in potential hate crimes being reported to law enforcement as displayed on [page 6](#), OC District Attorney Todd Spitzer announced in May 2021 the creation of his Hate Crimes Unit. The Hate Crimes Unit is overseen by the Office's Special Prosecutions Unit, a specialized unit within the District Attorney's Office. The Hate Crimes Unit is focused on prosecuting crimes in which the perpetrators acted based on a bias against the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or gender. The OCDA Hate Crimes Unit is staffed by three prosecutors, two investigators and is supervised by the head of the Special Prosecutions Unit and a Senior Assistant District Attorney. In addition to prosecuting hate crimes, the Hate Crimes Unit also works with our law enforcement partners to train first responders on how to improve their hate crime investigations while also educating members of our community on how to identify hate crimes and hate incidents and how to effectively report them to law enforcement.

The OCDA Hate Crimes Unit is the embodiment of the OCDA's aggressive stance on protecting public safety and its recognition that a hate crime is not committed against a single individual; it is a crime committed against our entire community. **"The scars may not necessarily be physical, but they are permanent."**

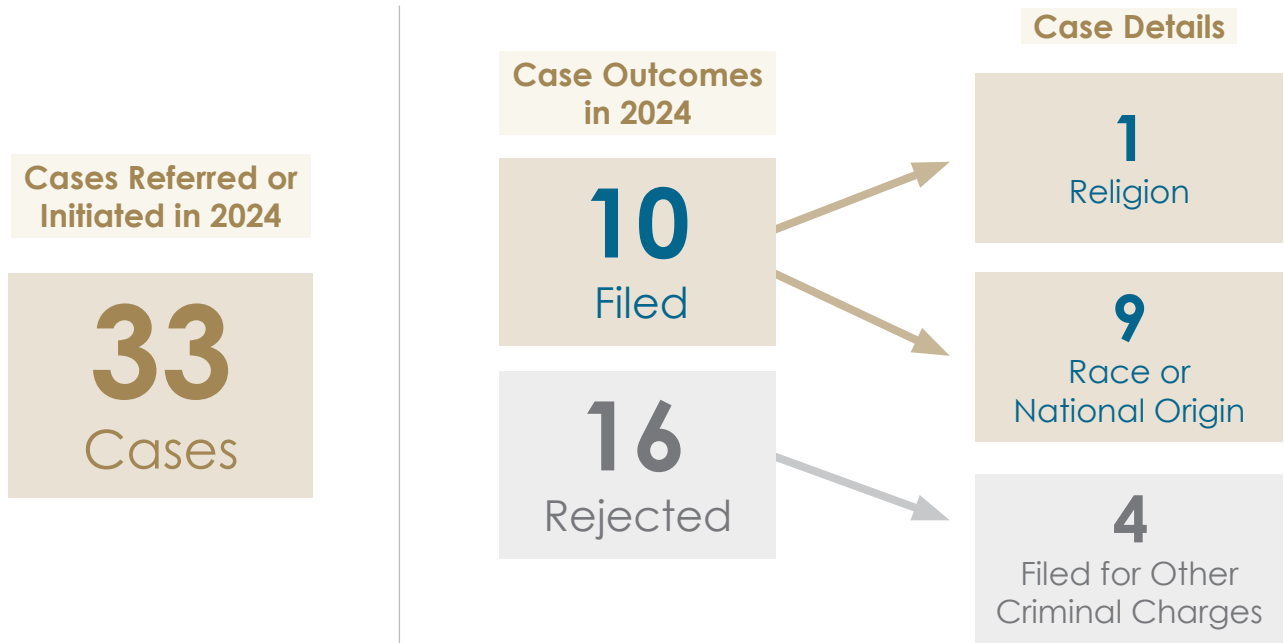
Between January 2019 and May 2021, OCDA prosecuted more than twice the number of hate crimes compared to the number of hate crimes prosecuted in the previous 25 years by prior administrations.

- In 2023, the OCDA received 34 cases that were directly referred to our office for hate crime consideration or initiated by our office. After a thorough review of the evidence, hate crime charges were filed in 16 of those cases.
- Of the 16 cases that were filed as hate crimes, 14 involved crimes motivated by bias against race or national origin. Two of the cases filed involved crimes motivated by bias against sexual orientation.
- Out of the 18 cases that were rejected due to insufficient evidence to prove a hate crime, other criminal charges were filed in three of the cases.



OC District Attorney's Office

Hate Crimes Reviewed by OC District Attorney's Office



Cases Referred or Initiated

In 2021, 39 potential hate crimes were submitted for review and in 2022 there were 37 cases submitted. There were 34 and 33 in 2023 and 2024, respectively. These numbers are consistent with the number of potential hate crimes submitted to the OCDA by law enforcement for review over the last four years as presented in the figure below.



Prosecution Examples

● CASE #24NM02088 PEOPLE V. MARC DAVID ALMERA

On February 3, 2024, 54-year-old Marc David Almera was wearing a jacket with a Ku Klux Klan patch and carrying a notebook with white supremacist drawings when he confronted two Asian high school students who were walking to campus in Fullerton, calling them "aliens" and anti-Asian slurs and threatening to spill the drinks they were carrying. Almera used his hand to simulate a gun and put up both of his arms to flex his muscles and kissed his bicep, causing the teenagers to fear for their safety. When he was arrested by the Fullerton Police Department, Almera had several items of clothing that featured the Confederate flag, an Iron Cross and two hand-drawn SS lightning bolts, a common white supremacist/neo-Nazi symbol derived from Schutzstaffel (SS) of Nazi Germany. Almera pled guilty to one misdemeanor count of violation of civil rights and was sentenced to 90 days in the OC Jail and one-year informal probation.

● CASE #23NF0623 PEOPLE V. CHRISTOPHER ROGERS

On March 11, 2023, 32-year-old Christopher Rogers was asked to leave a Brea Walmart by a store employee who was receiving multiple complaints about Rogers staring inappropriately at children and women. Rogers knocked the employee's cell phone from his hand and kicked it away before slapping the employee in the face several times. A Hispanic customer who witnessed Rogers attack the employee intervened and was attacked by Rogers, who punched the man in the face knocking him to the ground as the man's horrified fiancé screamed for him to stop. Brea police officers arrested Rogers a short distance away. Under Miranda, Rogers told Brea police he attacked the customer that intervened because he hates Mexicans and Mexicans shouldn't be talking to him. Rogers was convicted in a 2014 hate crime where he entered a Santa Ana business and yelled racial slurs at the Hispanic manager and his family and tried to hit an elderly man in the face. In April 2024, Rogers pled guilty in connection to the Brea attack to one felony count of violation of civil rights causing violent injury, one felony enhancement of committing a hate crime with a prior conviction, and one misdemeanor count of battery. He was sentenced to 16 months in state prison to be served in conjunction with a two-year state prison sentenced for an attempted robbery conviction.

● GAY AND JEWISH MOTIVATED MURDERER CONVICTED

On July 3, 2024, after a three-month trial, the OCDA convicted a Newport Beach man of a hate motivated murder for stabbing Blaze Bernstein, his gay and Jewish former high school classmate, to death in a Lake Forest park after reconnecting on a dating app for men seeking men. A knife belonging to defendant Samuel Woodward that had the defendant's father's name engraved on it was found with the victim's blood on it. Blood droplets were also found on a skull mask that prosecutors argued Woodward wore to represent his allegiance to Atomwaffen, a Neo-Nazi and homophobic group that the defendant traveled to Texas to train with after studying their teachings. Woodward continued to draw pictures related to Atomwaffen and their beliefs following his arrest for Bernstein's murder. On November 15, 2024, Woodward was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Accomplishments & Next Steps

In 2023, OCDA was awarded a four-year \$1.6 million grant from the U.S. DOJ Civil Rights Division to lead training, prosecution, and community outreach efforts related to hate crimes in our region. This prestigious Mathew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crime Grant^[1] allows us to collaborate with various stakeholders, including the County's Human Relations Commission, the OC Board of Supervisors, the OC Sheriff's Department, the OC Department of Education, local school districts and LEAs and more than 30 community-based organizations (CBOs).

Over the last six years, the OCDA has been a strong voice in the conversation to eradicate hate in OC. From writing opinion pieces in the *OC Register* to send a strong message that hate motivated crimes will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, to hosting "A Conversation About Race" trainings for our prosecutors and law enforcement in the wake of national protests, over the murder of George Floyd, OCDA has embraced its role in helping shaping OC's attitude toward hate while empowering the residents we serve with the information they need to protect themselves and protect others.

OCDA has also been educating OC Superior Court Judges on the catastrophic impact of hate crimes on an individual as well as the community as a whole. District Attorney Todd Spitzer successfully appealed a five-year sentence^[2] given to a white supremacist third-striker who attacked a Black pregnant woman at a Fullerton bus stop and threatened to kill her baby while hurling racial slurs at the woman as she ran for her life – and the life of her unborn baby. As a result of the appellate decision, Tyson Mayfield, who is tattooed with a swastika and Nazi SS lightning bolts, was convicted and sentenced to 27 years to life for the hate-motivated attack. Recognizing the need to build trust and encourage reporting among communities who have historically demonstrated mistrust towards LEAs, OCDA conducted multiple press conferences and listening sessions in diverse communities throughout the County while confronting anti-Asian sentiments in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Language access has been a priority for these outreach efforts, resulting in multilingual translations and materials. OCDA also redesigned the agency's website to ensure language access for our diverse community. In 2022, OCDA convened a roundtable on hate crimes and together with CA AG Rob Bonta, hosted a community conversation in one of the County's most diverse cities, Santa Ana. A second roundtable on hate crimes was convened with AG Bonta in the fall of 2023 in Irvine.

Through the CA DOJ grant, OCDA is building on those already robust efforts to provide comprehensive training, outreach, and resources for victims regarding hate crimes – as a way to ensure accountability while also engaging in vital prevention efforts.

In addition to case review and prosecution, OCDA conducted numerous law enforcement trainings, developed a curriculum for school administrators and teachers, and engaged in numerous community outreach events to educate the community we serve about our efforts to combat and prevent hate. OCDA, in collaboration with government, law enforcement, and community partners, is working on countywide efforts such as developing a reporting portal to enhance hate incidents/hate crime reporting options. OCDA is committed to ensuring the accuracy and completeness of data collection so that precious taxpayer dollars can be efficiently and effectively allocated to addressing the underlying causes of hate-motivated crimes along with educational and enforcement efforts, and most importantly the support of the victims of hate through trauma-informed service providers.

To learn more about OCDA efforts to eradicate hate, please visit www.orangecountyda.org

[1] The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Grant provides the OCDA with the incredible opportunity to add to the strong foundation we have already built to prevent and prosecute hate crimes, including creating a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certified multi-day hate crimes course for law enforcement, creating a curriculum for K-12 school administrators and educators, and working with community-based organizations and the Orange County Board of Supervisors to host community listening sessions to facilitate honest conversations about hate in our communities and develop collective strategies to address it.

[2] Judge Roger B. Robbins' decision to strike Mayfield's prior 2005 mayhem conviction, in which he made racist comments towards a couple while punching the male victim repeatedly in the face, causing a gash in his mouth that required eight stitches, allowed him to sentence Mayfield to five years in state prison instead of the mandatory 25 years to life required by California's Three Strikes Law. Mayfield was facing 38 years and four months to life in state prison as a result of sentencing enhancements charged in the case.

Conclusion

The County recognizes that many OC residents are affected by all acts of hate, which include both hate crimes and hate incidents. While this report includes hate crime events that were reported by community members to their LEAs, many residents have experienced acts of hate. As stated in the introduction, the CHIS survey estimates that approximately 1 in 10 residents had experienced an act of hate during the past 12 months. The County supports and encourages residents to report hate crimes and possible hate crimes to LEAs. Any act of hate can also be reported to [CA vs Hate](#) by phone or through their online reporting. CA vs Hate also provides resources and support to all victims and witnesses of hate acts.

In addition to CA vs Hate, the OCDA will continue their work and partnering with agencies to address acts of hate occurring within OC. To stay current with this work and the release of the portal to report hate incidents please use this [link](#).

To access the 2023 Hate Crime Report and other reports developed by the County Executive Office, please use this [link](#).

CALIFORNIA IS FOR EVERYONE

To Report A Hate Act
Call 833-8-NO-HATE
or Visit CAvsHate.org



References

California Report

2023 Hate Crime in California, Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice. Hate Crime in California 2023.

Data Resources

Hate crime data displayed in this report is retrieved from the publicly available State of California Department of Justice, Open Justice Data Portal, through the following website:

<https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/data>

National and state comparisons were made with the data posted on the U.S. Department of Justice website: <https://justice.gov/hatecrimes>

U.S. Census Bureau, CA and OC Population Data:

<https://data.census.gov>

CA Health Interview Survey from University of California, Los Angeles:

<https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/california-health-interview-survey-chis>