

Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are the highest priority of the FBI's civil rights program because of the devastating impact they have on families and communities.

The Bureau investigates hundreds of these cases every year, and we work to detect and prevent incidents through law enforcement training, public outreach, and partnerships with community groups.

Traditionally, FBI investigations of hate crimes were limited to crimes in which the perpetrators acted based on a bias against the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin. In addition, investigations were restricted to those wherein the victim was engaged in a federally protected activity. With the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, the Bureau became authorized to also investigate crimes committed against those based on biases of sex, disability, or actual or perceived sexual orientation.



If you believe you are a victim or a witness of a hate crime, we encourage you to report it to the FBI by calling 1-800-CALL-FBI or submitting a tip at tips.fbi.gov. You can remain anonymous. [Learn more](#)

History

The FBI investigated what are now called hate crimes as far back as World War I. Our role increased following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Before then, the federal government took the position that protection of civil rights was a local function, not a federal one. However, the murders of civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, near Philadelphia, Mississippi, in June 1964 provided the impetus for a visible and sustained federal effort to protect and foster civil rights for African Americans.

The case, known as Mississippi Burning, became the largest federal investigation ever conducted in Mississippi. On October 20, 1967, seven men were convicted of conspiring to violate the constitutional rights of the slain civil rights workers. All seven were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years.



Defining a Hate Crime