

FBI report shows surge in anti-Muslim attacks, rise in hate crimes

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [December 21, 2016](#) issue

Although Jewish people remain the most frequent victims in America of hate crimes based on religion, the number of incidents against Muslims surged in 2015, according to newly released data from the FBI.

Hate crimes against Muslims spiked 67 percent from 2014 to 2015, with 257 anti-Muslim incidents.

Robert McCaw, government affairs director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said the increase in anti-Muslim incidents accelerated after the election.

The FBI data show 664 incidents against Jewish people and institutions, motivated by anti-Semitism—a rise of about 9 percent.

“We are troubled that the FBI’s annual hate crimes report revealed an increase in the number of reported hate crimes—including an increase in the number of race-based crimes, crimes directed against Jews, and against the LGBT communities—and a significant increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes,” said Marvin D. Nathan, national chair of the Anti-Defamation League. “It is essential not to just assume a direct connection between these reported hate crimes and the inflammatory and divisive presidential election campaign. However, community climate matters and we have documented an unprecedented amount of bigotry and intolerance on the campaign trail.”

The FBI, which collects data on hate crimes leveled at victims because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity, reported 5,818 incidents in 2015 overall, an increase of more than 6 percent from the previous year.

Of those crimes, about 20 percent were categorized as crimes rooted in religious bias. In the previous year, such crimes accounted for about 17 percent of the total hate crimes.

“This unprecedented increase in bigotry of all kinds must be repudiated in the strongest terms possible by all our nation’s leaders, beginning with President-elect Donald Trump,” McCaw said.

The new FBI data confirm CAIR’s own report of an unprecedented number of incidents targeting mosques in 2015.

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, and other experts on bigotry noted that the FBI report, though it represents the best data available on hate crimes, underestimates the problem.

“Despite the extraordinary outreach and enforcement work by the Justice Department, it is disturbing that at least 85 police agencies in cities over 100,000 in population did not participate in this report—or affirmatively reported that they had zero hate crimes,” he said. “Data drives policy. . . . And the FBI’s annual report is the most important national snapshot of the hate crime problem in America.”

The largest group of hate crimes—nearly 60 percent—were motivated by racial or ethnic hatred, the report shows. Of those, more than half targeted black Americans.

[In one incident a week before the election, the building of the predominantly black Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Greenville, Mississippi, was burned and vandalized with “Vote Trump” spray painted on its outside wall. In the three weeks following the incident, donors contributed more than \$260,000 on a GoFundMe page set up with an initial goal of \$10,000.

The predominantly white First Baptist Church of Greenville, part of the Southern Baptist Convention, offered its chapel for the Hopewell congregation to hold services while it rebuilds, [the Associated Press reported](#).

“They opened their doors to us to stay as long as we want,” Clarence Green, the bishop who serves Hopewell, told AP. “A wall of hatred is being torn down through the spirit of love.”] —Religion News Service