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After 2016 Election, Campus Hate Crimes Seemed to Jump. Here's What the Data Tell Us.

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I n the charged weeks after the election of Donald J. Trump, analysts and advocacy groups noted a rise in reports of hate crimes. Colleges seemed to be seeing that rise as much as any public spaces.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that acts of campus harassment and violence were on the upswing. (*The Chronicle* collected much of that evidence in a [running](#) [roundup.](#)) There was a grim logic behind the anecdotes: As spaces often populated by the religious and ethnic minority groups Trump pilloried during his bruising campaign, college campuses were natural incubators for conflict. Many campus incidents, in fact, involved [references to the president-elect.](#)

But was there really a surge in hate-motivated episodes across public and private colleges and universities? That was hard to say until recently, when government data began to shed light on campus crime in 2016. According to [new information](#) from the U.S. Department of Education, the number of reported campus hate crimes increased by 25 percent from 2015 to 2016. Meanwhile, additional college-specific data, collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, suggests the election itself played a role in the surge of reported cases.

Here's a guide to that data.

Hate crimes were up in 2016.

The Education Department data consist of disclosures made under the Clery Act, the federal law that requires colleges to report crimes committed on their campuses. In 2016, the department found, colleges and universities reported a total of 1,250 hate crimes, defined as offenses motivated by biases of race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

That was a clear increase from the status quo. Over the previous four years, colleges reported an average of 970 hate crimes annually, with little variation from year to year.

The campus-specific data match broad national trends. The FBI reported a 67-percent spike nationally in hate crimes against Muslims from 2014 to 2015. In 2016, the bureau reported, the number of hate crimes across the United States increased by 5 percent from the previous year. Likewise, starting in September 2016, the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism and the Southern Poverty Law Center cited hundreds of campus incidents in 2016, before and after Election Day, related to the promotion of white supremacy and other bigoted views.

Nearly all types of hate crimes were reported more often.

The most commonly reported hate crimes in 2016, as in each of the previous four years, were offenses associated with racial bias. They accounted for 40 percent of all hate crimes reported by colleges. Nineteen percent of reported hate crimes were motivated by victims' religious affiliation. Rises in both of those categories followed significant upswings in 2015.

Campus crimes in which gender identity was the motivating factor also rose in 2016, with 50 cases reported. (The Education Department added the reporting requirement for that class of hate crime, which is distinct from the department's broader "gender" category, in 2015.)

More than 38 percent of hate crimes reported by colleges involved hate-motivated vandalism and destruction of property, an increase of 95 offenses from 2015. An additional 38 percent of offenses were classified as criminal acts of intimidation. Acts of physical assault, both simple and aggravated, represented 16 percent of overall reports — a nearly 50-percent increase from 2015.

Was there a "Trump Effect"? At the very least, there seemed to be an election effect.

More-granular data reported by law-enforcement agencies at public colleges and universities to the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that there was an extraordinary spike in college hate crimes in November 2016.

From 2012 to 2015, police departments at select public colleges, universities, and medical schools reported an average of 20 hate crimes in the month of November. In November 2016, however, the same group of departments reported 48 hate crimes to the FBI. Before that, the most hate-related incidents the group of colleges had reported in one month was 40, in February 2014.

This chart, displaying hate-crime reports from five years of FBI data, shows the general arc of campus incidents from month to month — and just how uncommon the November 2016 spike was.

CNN, using FBI data first reported by ProPublica, found a similar aberrant and upward trend in hate crimes nationally during the last three months of 2016. ProPublica also provided FBI data, with detail down to the campus level, to *The Chronicle* for its analysis of college-specific hate crimes.

There's no simple way to identify precisely how much of a role the divisive campaign, and Trump's election, played in the spike. Critics have accused President Trump, both during his campaign and presidency, of arousing and mainstreaming racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia.

The president's reactions to criticism of his rhetoric have varied. In a [postelection interview] with *60 Minutes,* he said he was "so saddened" to learn of bigoted acts committed by his supporters, and he urged those supporters to "stop it." But exactly one year ago, he [berated a reporter] for asking a question about how the government would respond to the uptick in anti-Semitic acts in the wake of bomb threats against Jewish centers.

As the election recedes into the past, anecdotal evidence suggests that divisions have not healed. This month the Anti-Defamation League reported a [258-percent increase in white-supremacist propaganda] on campuses from the fall of 2016 to the fall of 2017, affecting 216 campuses across the country.

And on Tuesday a Wayne State University student [allegedly pulled a knife] on a group of student activists, telling them, "I think all immigrants should be deported or killed," one of the activists recounted. Wayne State has since suspended the student.

Here's an institution-by-institution breakdown of the hate-crime data analyzed by *The Chronicle:*

Notes on These Data

Charts based on Education Department data do not include hate crimes motivated by gender identity, a category colleges were first required to report in 2015. The full table of hate-crime data does include those offenses. Education Department data include hate crimes that occurred on a campus, at off-campus locations like fraternity houses and hostels, and on public property adjacent to and accessible from a campus.

In the table, institutional figures include hate crimes reported both at main and branch campuses. The table does not include institutions that reported no hate crimes in either 2015 or 2016.

Correction (2/20/2018, 1:34 p.m.): Because of a technical error, the original table mistakenly excluded institutions with one or more hate crimes reported in 2015 and zero hate crimes reported in 2016. The table has been updated to correct the error, which did not affect the analysis of the data.

Update (2/27/2018, 3:09 p.m.): Because of inaccurate data submitted to the Department of Education by the college, Lebanon Valley College was listed as having reported two hate crimes in 2015. In fact it reported one such crime. The table has been updated to reflect the corrected data.