



A CLOSER LOOK

*Hate Incidents in California and
How California Can Respond*

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CATALYST
CALIFORNIA
Advancing Racial Justice

MOSAIC
Movement Solidarity
Among AAPI Communities



Executive Summary

Hate continues to impact millions of Californians, threatening the safety, well-being, and belonging of communities across the state. While Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities have experienced heightened attention in recent years due to anti-Asian hate, they are not alone. Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Southwest Asian/North African (SWANA), LGBTQ+, immigrant, religious minority, people with disabilities and other historically marginalized communities continue to experience hate crimes, hate incidents, and discrimination that cause lasting harm to individuals, families, and communities. Yet hate remains significantly underreported, particularly among communities that face language barriers, immigration-related concerns, or other barriers to accessing government systems and services.¹ Furthermore, these communities often experience inequities in the social determinants of hate - defined as the structural conditions and public systems that shape communities' vulnerability to hate and influences communities' ability to prevent and respond to hate.

California has emerged as a national leader in addressing hate through investments such as the Stop the Hate Program and the CA vs. Hate reporting and resource network. These initiatives have expanded access to culturally responsive services, improved reporting pathways, and strengthened community-based responses to hate. However, the need remains substantial. Millions of Californians continue to experience or witness acts of hate each year, and community organizations remain under-resourced relative to the scale of the challenge. California must build on the progress already achieved by reinvesting in proven anti-hate infrastructure, including Stop the Hate and CA vs. Hate, which has shut down due to budget constraints, to ensure all Californians have access to prevention, support, and healing services.

Like health, hate is shaped by broader social and structural conditions—a concept we refer to as the social determinants of hate.

THE PROBLEM: HATE PERSISTS ACROSS CALIFORNIA

Hate and discrimination have long shaped California's history. Although often viewed as a national leader on civil rights, California has enacted and enforced policies that harmed communities of color—from violence against California Native peoples, to laws that permitted the enslavement of African Americans despite California's admission to the Union as a free state, the Chinese Exclusion era and anti-Chinese violence, the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and decades of housing segregation, community disinvestment, and other discriminatory public policies that disproportionately harmed Black, Latinx, and other marginalized communities.² Many of these state-sanctioned practices created lasting inequities whose effects continue today. Contemporary hate crimes and hate incidents are not disconnected from this history.



Hate remains a persistent reality for communities throughout California. Although hate crimes often receive the greatest public attention, they represent only a fraction of the hate experienced by Californians.³ Many acts of hate never rise to the level of a criminal offense but nonetheless inflict serious harm through harassment, intimidation, threats, discrimination⁴, and exclusion. These hate incidents often go unreported, making it difficult to fully capture the scope of the problem.

The impacts extend far beyond individual victims. Experiences of hate can contribute to fear, social isolation, mental health challenges, economic insecurity, and reduced participation in community life.⁵ Entire communities may alter daily routines, avoid public spaces, or withdraw from civic engagement when they feel unsafe or unwelcome.⁶

STORY FROM THE GROUND

When a teacher called 14-year-old Mahmoud a “little terrorist,” he told her the remark was racist but she laughed it off, saying it was a joke from her favorite movie. This was the first time a racist comment came from a trusted adult, leaving Mahmoud feeling unsupported and unsafe. AccessCal, a community-based organization with Stop the Hate funding, provided Mahmoud with counseling to affirm his feelings and help him work through his anxiety. The healing journey is still ongoing, but with AccessCal’s support, Mahmoud is beginning to feel more grounded and confident.⁷

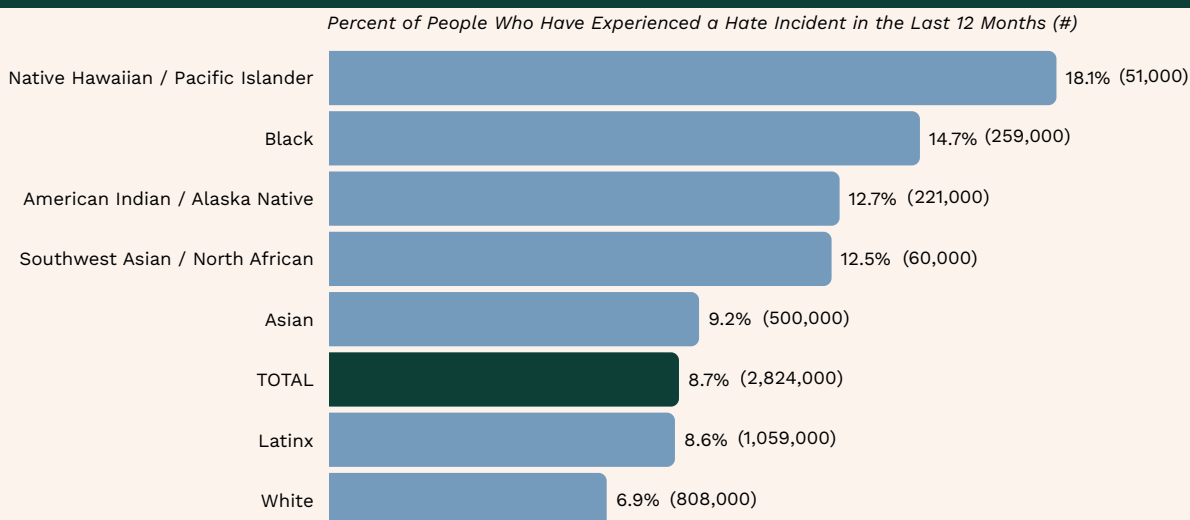
While AAPI communities continue to face anti-Asian hate and xenophobia, other marginalized communities—including Black, Latinx, Indigenous, SWANA, LGBTQ+, immigrant, Jewish, Muslim, and other communities—also experience high levels of hate and discrimination.⁸ These experiences are often compounded by longstanding inequities and barriers to accessing services and support.

Addressing hate requires more than responding after harm occurs. **Like health, hate is shaped by broader social and structural conditions—a concept we refer to as the social determinants of hate.**⁹ Factors such as poverty, educational inequities, housing instability, social isolation, discrimination, and unequal access to culturally responsive services can increase vulnerability, deepen mistrust, and create conditions in which hate is more likely to emerge and persist.¹⁰ These same conditions can also make it more difficult for communities to report incidents, access support, and recover after experiencing harm.

Media environments also play a role in shaping the social determinants of hate. Research shows that exposure to hateful content in both traditional media and social media can normalize prejudice, reduce trust between groups, contribute to a broader climate of hostility, and negatively affect the psychological well-being of individuals and communities.¹¹ Preventing hate therefore requires sustained investments not only in responding to incidents, but also in strengthening the community conditions that promote safety, belonging, and resilience. Reducing inequities in community conditions and systems then is itself a form of hate prevention such that communities with stronger social connections, trusted institutions, economic stability, access to information and services, and the ability to respond collectively are better positioned both to withstand hate and to prevent it from escalating.

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

Between 2023-2024, nearly 3M Californians experienced one or more hate incidents



Data Source: California Health Interview Survey 2023-2024 Pooled Estimates. Teens and adults were asked "During the past 12 months, do you think you directly experienced a hate incident?"

Data Notes: American Indian / Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander, Southwest Asian / North African include people who identify as that race alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity including Latinx. Asian, Black, and White races include people who identify as that race alone.

Hate remains a persistent and growing challenge across California. According to the California Department of Justice, reported hate crime events increased by 141.7% between 2015 and 2024, demonstrating that bias-motivated violence and intimidation continue to affect communities throughout the state.¹²

The accompanying chart illustrates how much hate incidents impact Californians across all race groups. Pacific Islanders (18.1%) and Black Californians (14.7%) were most likely to experience such incidents. The third and fourth most impacted groups, American Indian / Alaska Natives and Southwest Asian / North Africans, were nearly 1.5x more likely to experience a hate incident than the average Californian.

Latinx and Asian Americans self-report hate experiences on par with the California average. Specifically, over 1 million Latinx and about a half million Asian Californians reported having recently experienced hate incidents, a number far greater than the number of incidents reported by the California Department of Justice.¹³

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Taken together, these data show that hate remains widespread — affecting millions of Californians across multiple communities.

Hate is not limited to race or ethnicity. California has also seen continued increases in hate crimes targeting people because of their religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Jewish, Muslim, and LGBTQIA+ communities continue to experience elevated levels of bias-motivated harassment and violence, underscoring that hate affects Californians across many identities and backgrounds.¹⁴ These trends reinforce the need for sustained investments in prevention, culturally responsive services, and community-based interventions that protect all communities targeted by hate.

BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

California's experience demonstrates that effective responses to hate must be community-centered, culturally responsive, and accessible to those most harmed. Individuals who experience hate are often more likely to seek support from trusted community organizations than from traditional government systems. As a result, investments in community-based service providers are critical to ensuring survivors can access meaningful assistance. Meaningful assistance can include victim advocacy, mental health and healing support, legal services, safety planning, help reporting or document incidents, navigation to other needed services, and opportunities for community connection and collective response.

Programs are most effective when they recognize and address the diverse needs of California's communities, including language access, cultural competency, immigration-related concerns, and barriers to reporting. Services that are delivered by trusted organizations and in the languages spoken by impacted communities are more likely to reach survivors and connect them with needed resources. Effective responses to hate are also necessarily holistic. A person harmed by hate may need counseling, legal assistance, immigration support, benefits navigation, help with housing or employment, or connection to community - not simply a service labeled as a "hate" intervention. Addressing these needs can reduce the harms caused by hate, restore stability and belonging, and strengthen a person's and community's ability to recover and remain safe.

California has become a national model through investments such as Stop the Hate and CA vs. Hate. Together, these efforts have expanded access to victim services, increased community outreach and education, created non-law-enforcement reporting options, and strengthened partnerships between government and community organizations. Through Stop the Hate alone, more than 180 community-based organizations have received funding to provide culturally responsive prevention, intervention, and healing services, supporting nearly 1.9 million Californians across the state.¹⁵ These investments have helped build trusted infrastructure that allows communities to report incidents, receive support, and access pathways toward healing and recovery.¹⁶



THE LESSON IS CLEAR

Sustained investments in culturally responsive, community-based solutions work. California has already established a strong foundation for addressing hate; the challenge now is ensuring that this infrastructure remains available to the communities that depend on it.

THE GAP: COMMUNITIES LACK ADEQUATE SUPPORT TO RECOVER

Despite important progress, significant gaps remain in California's response to hate. Many survivors continue to face barriers to reporting incidents and accessing services. Fear of retaliation, concerns about immigration status, language barriers, lack of awareness of available resources, and mistrust of institutions can prevent individuals from seeking help. Community-based organizations such as those that have received grants from the Stop The Hate program often serve as the first and most trusted point of contact for adversely affected individuals, yet many operate with limited resources and capacity.

These organizations provide essential services such as victim advocacy, mental health support, and legal assistance. However, demand frequently exceeds available resources.

Just as importantly, California has not invested enough in preventing hate before it occurs. While responding to incidents is essential, long-term reductions in hate require sustained investments that address the social determinants of hate—the underlying social and economic conditions that shape whether hate can take root and whether communities have the resources to respond. These interventions include public education, community engagement, bystander training, youth programming, cross-cultural relationship building, and investments that strengthen community cohesion, opportunity, and trust. Moreover, additional effort is needed to counter hate speech in traditional and social media and to promote media literacy. Without addressing these underlying conditions, California will remain in a cycle of responding to harm rather than preventing it.

Continued investments in programs like Stop the Hate and CA vs. Hate, which closed due to budget constraints, offers an opportunity to close all three gaps—improving reporting, expanding culturally competent services, and strengthening prevention efforts that make communities safer before hate escalates into violence. California has built the infrastructure; now it must ensure that infrastructure has the resources to meet both today's needs and tomorrow's challenges.

THE ASK: BUILD ON PROVEN INFRASTRUCTURE



California has already built a strong foundation for combating hate. Through Stop the Hate and previously through CA vs. Hate, the state established trusted systems that connect survivors with support, strengthen community-based responses, and help prevent future harm. These investments were and are working—but the need remains substantial. The persistence of hate should not be viewed as evidence that these programs have failed. Rather, it demonstrates the scale and complexity of the challenge.

As long as millions of Californians continue to experience or witness acts of hate, California must maintain and strengthen the infrastructure designed to address it.

State leaders should commit to sustained funding for anti-hate programs, including reinvestment in Stop the Hate and the CA vs. Hate reporting and resource network. Doing so will ensure that communities across California have access to culturally responsive services, trusted reporting pathways, prevention programs, and support for recovery and healing.

California has demonstrated national leadership in addressing hate. Now is the time to build on that progress—not retreat from it. Continued investment will help ensure that all Californians, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other identities, can live with dignity, safety, and belonging.

Endnotes

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