

# SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

## REGULAR MEETING ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, February 13, 2025, 11:00 A.M.



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

**LAUREN JOHNSON-NORRIS**  
Chair

**JENNIFER S. WANG**  
Vice Chair

**ADA BRICEÑO**  
Commissioner

**MARY IZADI**  
Commissioner

**MICHAEL KENT**  
Commissioner

**JO-ANNE P. MATSUBA**  
Commissioner

**RABBI RICK STEINBERG**  
Commissioner

ATTENDANCE: All Members Present

ABSENT: None

PRESENT: CEO/Government & Community Relations      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 11:07 A.M., BY CHAIR WANG**
2. Opening quote/reflection  
**CHAIR WANG READ THE COMMISSION'S MISSION STATEMENT, ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
3. Monthly Summary of Commission Activities  
**NO REPORT**

## SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

### OPEN FORUM

Eric Neshanian – Oral Re.: Human Relations Commission does not have any credibility. Stated Commission did not speak out about Mayor Farrah Khan. Commission is silent towards Armenians.

**HEARING/SPEAKER/PRESENTATION:** (None)

**ACTION ITEMS:** (Items 4 - 5)

4. Discussion and approval of 2025 Commission meeting calendar

1234567 **APPROVED AS PRESENTED**

x

5. Conduct new elections for Commission Chair and Vice Chair for 2025 calendar year

6123457 **ELECTED COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-NORRIS AS CHAIR**

x

1324567 **ELECTED COMMISSIONER WANG AS VICE CHAIR**

x

**INFORMATION ITEMS:** (Items 6 - 9)

6. Receive staff presentation on updated Human Relations Commission Bylaws

C.O. **RECEIVED; COMMISSIONER STEINBERG ASKED FOR CLARIFICATION ON WHETHER OR NOT COMMISSION CAN PROVIDE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS A DRAFT STATEMENT TO CONSIDER; AND DOES THE BOS WANT THEIR RECOMMENDATION AT END OF YEAR REGARDING NEW COMMISSION FORMAT**

7. Receive staff presentation on 2023 Hate Crime Report

**RECEIVED**

2613457 **CREATED AD HOC COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF COMMISSIONERS STEINBERG, KENT AND JOHNSON-NORRIS; AD HOC TO LOOK AT METHODOLOGY FOR REPORTING HATE CRIMES FOR ANNUAL REPORT AND CREATE A WORKING DEFINITION OF HATE INCIDENTS FOR THIS PURPOSE AND RECOMMEND WHETHER BROADENING THE SCOPE OF DATA COLLECTION SOURCES, BEYOND LAW ENFORCEMENT AND IF SO, USING WHAT METHODOLOGY TO COMPARE ON AN ANNUAL BASIS USING VALID AND RELIABLE DATA**

8. Update from OC Chiefs & Sheriff

**COMMISSIONER KENT REMINDED ALL THAT POLICE ARE HERE TO SERVE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS**

# SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

9. OCSD Interfaith Council Update

**ANNUAL EVENT HELD AT GARDEN GROVE MOSQUE; SANDRA HUTCHENS  
AWARD PRESENTED TO FORMER COMMISSIONER DOT LEACH**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS**

None

**ADJOURNED:** 12:08 P.M.

\*\*\* KEY \*\*\*

*Left Margin Notes*

1 Ada Briceño	A = Abstained
2 Lauren Johnson-Norris	X = Excused
3 Mary Izadi	
4 Michael Kent	N = No
5 Jo-Anne P. Matsuba	C.O. = Commission Order
6 Rabbi Rick Steinberg	
7 Jennifer S. Wang	Reso = Resolution
	Ord = Ordinance

*(1st number = Moved by; 2nd number = Seconded by)*

*/s/*

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*LAUREN JOHNSON-NORRIS*  
*Chair*

*/s/*

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*Jamie Ross, Deputy*  
*Clerk of the Commission*



*Orange County Human Relations Commission*

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Memorandum

February 13, 2025

To: Orange County Human Relations Commission

From: Jessica A. Witt, Executive Director

Subject: 2025 Human Relations Commission Meeting Calendar

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**Background:**

On January 7, 2025, the Orange County Board of Supervisors updated the Orange County Human Relations Commission (HRC) Bylaws which included updates to the HRC meeting calendar to quarterly.

**Discussion:**

As a result of the updates to the HRC Bylaws, the following meeting schedule is recommended for 2025. The meetings will all take place at the County Administration South Multi-Purpose Room for consistency and continue to be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 11 a.m. This quarterly schedule also keeps the HRC dark in July and December.

Proposed dates for the 2025 Commission Meetings are as follows:

- February 13, 2025
- May 8, 2025
- August 14, 2025
- November 13, 2025

**Recommended Action:**

Approve 2025 Meeting Calendar for the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

**BYLAWS OF THE ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**ARTICLE I. ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

- A. The name of this organization shall be Orange County Human Relations Commission, hereinafter referred to as "Commission."
- B. The official location and mailing address of the Commission shall be:  
County Executive Office - OC Human Relations Commission  
400 West Civic Center Drive,  
5<sup>th</sup>Floor  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**ARTICLE II. Establishment of Commission**

- A. The Commission was created by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, referred to hereinafter in this document as the "Board," by Resolution No. 71-196 on February 24, 1971, and formerly established by Ordinance No. 2799 on December 17, 1974 pursuant to Government Code section 50262.
- B. The members of the Commission are appointed by the Board pursuant to these Bylaws, adopted by resolution, and as prescribed by Section 1-2-251 of the Codified Ordinances of the County of Orange.
- C. The Commission is responsible to the County through such agency or agencies as the County may designate.

**ARTICLE III. Purpose and Functions**

- A. The purpose of the Commission is to work with the County to:  
  
Seek out the causes of tension and conflict, discrimination, and intolerance, based on race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or marital status, and attempt to eliminate those causes.
- B. The following are goals of the Commission:
  - 1. Promote equal justice before the law.
  - 2. Promote the protection of the dignity and integrity of every individual residing in Orange County.
  - 3. Promote education and training of all members of the Orange County Community relating to basic human rights and responsibilities.
  - 4. Promote the elimination of prejudice and discrimination among people based on race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and marital status.

C. In accordance with these Bylaws which have been duly approved by resolution, Section 1-2-251 of the Codified Ordinances of the County of Orange, and Government Code Section 50260 *et seq.*, the duties and functions of the Commission are as follows:

1. Receive and hear specific complaints and problems of discrimination; to discuss matters with the appropriate public or private agency for their action; to address when appropriate, make findings and report those findings.

2. Engage in research and education for the purpose of lessening and seeking to eliminate prejudice and its causes and its effects.

3. Coordinate and promote educational programs, which foster understanding among various groups within Orange County; and work for the development of constructive community educational programs to prevent future problems.

4. Recommend to the County projects and service priorities which will serve to prevent or alleviate social problems in Orange County.

5. Provide assistance and referral services to individuals and groups, which will facilitate understanding and participation in the decision-making process of Orange County institutions.

6. Consult and cooperate with Federal, State, County, City and other public and private bodies to improve human relations.

7. Prepare monthly reports of Commission events and Commission activities and ensure that Commission events are included in the County Master Event Calendar which will be voted on at the April Commission meeting each year for the following Fiscal Year.

8. Assist in preparing annual report on hate motivated crime for submission to the County pursuant to Government Code section 50265(e).

**ARTICLE IV. Appointment and Membership**

A. Membership of the Commission is to be composed as follows:

a. There shall be 7 members that comprise the Commission. Five Commissioners shall be appointed by the Board with each Supervisor nominating one Commissioner from inside or outside of the District that the Supervisor represents. No person living outside of the Supervisor's District shall be nominated for appointment to the Commission without the written consent of the Supervisor representing the District where the nominee resides.

b. Two Commissioners at-large shall be nominated by the Orange County Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs Association and appointed by the Board as follows:

- One at-large appointment shall be a representative from the Orange County Sheriff.
- The other at-large appointment shall be a Chief of a local police department within Orange County.

B. Qualifications for Commission Membership

1. The following criteria will be used for all membership appointments:

a. Commissioners shall be broadly representative of different racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status groups in Orange County.

b. Residency and Voting Requirements: Except where the Board finds it is in the best interest of the County to waive voter and residency requirements, all members of the Commission shall be:

i. registered voters in the County; and,

ii. reside in the district of the nominating member of the Board, unless Supervisor representing the district where the nominee resides provides written consent for the nomination.

c. Participation on the Commission as a Commissioner requires:

i. Supporting the purpose and goals of the Commission as delineated in Article III.

ii. Serving as a member on at least one standing or ad hoc committee of the Commission.

C. Length of Commission Membership

1. All regular Commission member appointments shall be for a term concurrent with the term of office of the nominating member of the Board. A member of the Commission whose term of office is expiring with that of the nominating Supervisor shall have the option of reapplying for membership for appointment.

2. All at-large Commission member appointments shall be for a period of two years from the date of appointment.

3. Appointments made to fill a vacancy left by a Commissioner before the expiration of the term of that Commissioner shall be for the remaining term of that member.

4. Pursuant to Government Code section 1302, a member whose term has expired shall continue serving as a member until reappointed or replaced.

5. Any Commissioner who fails to attend three consecutive regular meetings, or over half of the regular meetings in a year, shall automatically vacate the

position of Commissioner.

6. Commissioners may have their membership terminated without cause by the appointing Board member. A vacancy thereby created shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

**ARTICLE V. Commission Officers**

A. Commission officers shall consist of:

1. A Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Commission shall every year conduct an election of officers annually during the first Commission meeting of each calendar year by majority vote, a quorum being present.

a. Nominations will be taken from the floor (and Commissioners can self-nominate) at the first Commission meeting of the year.

b. For elections involving two candidates running for the same position, in the case of a tie, the tie shall be broken by a coin toss. If the meeting is conducted remotely, the coin toss shall be conducted on video and visible through the duration of the coin toss. The County shall conduct the coin toss.

c. For elections involving more than two candidates running for the same position, in the case of a tie involving the two candidates with the highest votes, a runoff election shall be held between the candidates with the two highest votes. If a tie remains, it shall be broken by coin toss, as described above. In the case of a three-way tie, a runoff election shall be held for all three candidates. If a tie remains, all three candidates shall have one representative coin toss, conducted by the County. The winning candidate is the candidate whose coin differentiates itself from the other two.

2. The Chairperson shall:

a. In coordination with the Commissioners, prepare a monthly meeting agenda.

b. Preside over all regular and special meetings.

c. Act as an ex officio member on all standing and ad hoc committees.

d. Establish committees and coordinate the appointment of members thereto.

e. Perform all other responsibilities assigned to the Chairperson under these bylaws.

f. If the Vice-Chairperson succeeds to the Chairperson, as described in Article V(A)(3)(b), the new Chairperson shall appoint a Commissioner to the Vice Chairperson for the remainder of the former Vice Chairperson's term of



office.

3. The Vice Chairperson shall:

a. Assume the duties of the Chairperson when the Chairperson is absent or unable to perform the duties if the Chairperson.

b. Perform all other responsibilities allocated to the Vice-Chairperson under these bylaws.

c. If the Chairperson becomes vacant, the Vice-Chairperson shall succeed to the Chairperson for the balance of the former Chairperson's term of office.

4. The terms for officers of the Commission shall be for one year. The term of office for the officers shall take effect on January 1st of the calendar year following the vote of officers.

5. No person, except a member of the Board, may serve as Chairperson of the Commission for more than three consecutive terms.

6. No person, except a member of the Board, may serve simultaneously as Chairperson for two or more Boards, Commissions, or Committees.

**ARTICLE VI. Duties of Members**

A. Members shall attend meetings of the Commission and of ad hoc and standing committees to which they are appointed.

B. Members shall notify the Chairperson of the Commission of any expected absence for a meeting by 5:00 p.m. of the day before a regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

C. In the performance of its responsibilities, the Commission shall not engage in nor employ any unlawfully discriminatory practices in the provision of services or benefits, assignment of accommodations, treatment, employment of personnel or in any other respect on the basis of sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, religion, age, marital status, medical condition, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability or any other protected group in accordance with the requirements of all applicable County, state, or federal laws.

D. Members of the Commission shall comply with the County Equal Employment Opportunity and Antiharassment Policy and Procedures.

E. Members of the Commission shall comply with County Code of Ethics.

F. Members of the Commission shall operate strictly within designated purposes, duties, and functions of the Commission, as described more fully in Article III.

**ARTICLE VII. Committees and Subcommittees**

A. Ad Hoc Committees: The Chairperson may establish ad hoc committees of less than a quorum of the Commission's membership to accomplish time-limited tasks that support the goals of the Commission. Ad Hoc Committees shall have a date of expiration.

Terms of appointment for ad hoc committees shall be solely for the period of time required to fulfill the ad hoc committee's purpose.

B. When appropriate, committees may call on other knowledgeable individuals who are not Commission members to act as consultants to the committees. Said individuals shall be subject to the conflict-of-interest statutes, regulations, ordinances, bylaws and guidelines.

**ARTICLE VIII. Meetings and Actions**

C. The Commission shall, at its last meeting of each calendar year adopt a schedule of regular meetings and transmit that schedule in writing to members, the County, and the public at large. The Commission shall hold 4 meetings each year.

D. All Commission meetings shall be open, public and noticed in conformance with the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act, California Government Code section 54950 et seq., as amended and held at a location within Orange County, California approved by the County during regular business hours and at no cost to the County that satisfies the access requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

1. Notice shall be given 72 hours prior to the meeting. Regular meetings shall be held at the regular time and date, location identified by the County and at no additional cost to the County.

E. Special meetings of the Commission may be called either by the Chairperson or at the request of a majority of Commission members. Notice of special meetings shall:

1. Notice of meeting shall be made no later than 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

2. Notice shall state the business to be considered and whether alternative technological means may be used such as telephone or video conferencing, as technological resource availability permits and as permissible by the Ralph M. Brown Act.

F. Quorum Requirements

1. Quorum requirements are as follows:

a. General Meetings: Quorum shall be no less than 50%+1 of the membership.

G. Voting Majority: Decisions and acts made by majority vote of the members at any duly constituted meeting shall be regarded as acts of the Commission, except as otherwise provided by these Bylaws, as applicable.

1. Members choosing to abstain from voting on specific actions will not affect majority requirements. Abstentions are considered a “non-vote” – neither a vote in the affirmative nor in the negative. However, in order for an action to be passed, a majority of the quorum casting votes must vote in the affirmative.

H. Minutes: The Clerk of the Board shall prepare and publish the minutes for each meeting of the Commission

**ARTICLE IX. Compensation and Reimbursement**

A. Commission members shall not be eligible to receive compensation or reimbursement of expenses.

B. The Commission and Commissioners shall have no authority to accept gifts or donations on behalf of the County or Board.

**ARTICLE X. Removal and Resignation of Members**

A. Removal: The Board may, at any time and without cause, remove any Commission member from office prior to the expiration of his/her term of office by a majority vote or unilaterally by the appointing Supervisor as described in Article IV.

B. Resignation: Resignation of Commission members shall be affected by a written letter of resignation submitted to the Chairperson of the Commission and to the County.

C. The Chairperson shall notify the Clerk of the Board in writing of any vacancies within 5 days of learning the existence of any such vacancy.

**ARTICLE XI. Authority and Advocacy**

A. Parliamentary Authority: The Chairperson shall preside and manage Commission meetings using parliamentary procedure consistent with these bylaws, any special rules of order the Commission may adopt, and any applicable County, state, and federal law.

B. Commission recommendations on legislation must be approved by the majority vote of a quorum of the Commission and submitted to the County Executive Office of Legislative Affairs through the County Department responsible to support the Commission for recommendation to the Board. The Commission shall not take positions on legislation without official approval by the Board.

**ARTICLE XII. Conflict of Interest**

1. Members of the Commission and any of its committees or subcommittees shall abstain from voting on any issue in which they may be personally interested to avoid a conflict of interest in accordance with County, state, and federal laws and shall refrain from engaging in any behavior that conflicts with the best interest of the County.

2. Members of the Commission shall not vote nor attempt to influence any other Commission member on a matter under consideration by the Commission or any of its committees or subcommittees:

a. Regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity that such member represents); or

b. That would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member; or

c. Engage in any other activity constituting a conflict of interest under County, state, or federal law.

3. If a question arises as to whether a conflict exists that may prevent a member from voting, the Chairperson or designee shall consult with designated County staff to assist them in making that determination.

4. In order to avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict, all nominees to become members of the Commission shall disclose on forms provided by the County information regarding their private economic interests that may be implicated by their service on the Commission.

5. Neither Commission nor any of its members shall promote, directly or indirectly, a political party, political candidate, or political activity using the name, title, emblem, or any other identifier of Commission such as Commissioner title.

6. No assets or assistance provided by County to the Commission shall be used for sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization, except as otherwise permitted by law.

7. Individual Commissioners may attend Events other than agenzized Commission meetings, Commission committee meetings, and other Commission events (these non-Commission events hereinafter referred to as "Event" or "Events") in his or her official Commissioner capacity, provided the Commissioner's attendance and conduct at such Event is authorized in advance by the Commission, and/or Chairperson of the Commission, and does not violate the rules, and requirements, and standards applicable to the Commissioners and the Commission.

8. When a Commissioner attends an Event in his or her official Commissioner capacity, he or she must avoid acting outside of the scope of the Commission's and/or the Chairperson's authorization(s) to attend the Event,

violating these Bylaws, applicable state and federal laws, the Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code Section 54950 et. seq., the Orange County Code of Ethics, and other County policies that may now, or hereafter, be applicable.

9. Commissioners shall not, in their capacity as Commissioners, engage in political advocacy; issue press releases or purport to speak/act on behalf of the Commission, or the County; accept, solicit, or direct campaign contributions; use County resources of any kind for political or personal purposes; inadvertently engage in communications that violate the Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code Section 54950 et. seq.; and/or engage in conduct that has the potential to create a conflict of interest.

**ARTICLE XIII. Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws**

A. County Recommended Amendments:

1. A quorum of the Commission being present, shall be required to review and recommend or oppose Bylaw amendments being presented for Board approval. The Bylaws become effective upon approval of the Board. Commission and County staff positions will be stated in the Agenda Staff Report seeking Board approval.

B. Commission Recommended Amendments:

1. Any member of the Commission may propose amendments to these Bylaws.

2. Proposed amendments shall be submitted in writing and made available to each member of the Commission in compliance with the Brown Act.

3. A quorum being present, shall be required to consider Bylaw amendments being presented. An affirmative vote of a quorum (50% +1 of those present) shall be required to recommend Bylaw amendments for Board approval. Any amendments to the Bylaws become effective upon approval by the Board. Commission and County staff positions will be stated in the Agenda Staff Report seeking Board approval.

**ARTICLE XIV. Severability**

Should any part term, portion or provision of these Bylaws be determined to be in conflict with any law or otherwise unenforceable or ineffectual, the remaining parts, terms, portions or provisions shall be deemed severable, and their validity shall not be affected thereby, provided such remaining portions or provisions can be construed in substance to constitute the provisions that the members intended to enact in the first instance.

**ARTICLE XI. Staffing Support**

A. Staff support may be provided by a County Department to provide support to the Commission in conjunction with the work of the Commission.

B. The County may also provide staff support to the Commission through a duly approved contract with a contractor, as approved by the County.

**ARTICLE XVI. Clerk of the Board**

A. Attendance at Meetings

1. The Clerk of the Board, or a representative designated by the Clerk, shall attend each meeting of the Commission and maintain a record of all proceedings and directions of the Commission. Agenda items or groups of items will be called by the Clerk.

B. Preparation and Distribution of Agenda

1. The Clerk of the Board will post and distribute all agendas of the Commission meetings. The agenda shall consist of a brief general description of each item to be considered by the Commission, pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code section 54950 et seq.

2. The Clerk of the Board will also post and distribute all supplemental agendas when there has been an item added, continued, deleted, and/or modified since the distribution of the initial meeting agenda.

3. The regular Commission meeting agenda will be distributed and made available to the public at least 72 hours prior to the meeting, pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code section 54950 et seq.

Adopted by Board Resolution Number 71 -196 on 2/24/1971

Amended by Board Resolution Number 82-1868 on 12/14/1982

Amended by Board Resolution Number 85-1648 on 11/19/1985

Amended by Board Resolution Number 15-099-15-106 on 9/22/2015

Amended by Board Recommended Action on 10/31/2017

Amended by Board Resolution Number 22-092 on 6/28/2022

Amended by Board Resolution Number 25-xxx on 1/14/2025



# 2023 Orange County Hate Crime Report

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## Introduction

The County of Orange is committed to reducing, prosecuting and monitoring hate crimes. This report is an extension of data presented in the [California Attorney General's \(AG\) 2023 Hate Crime Report](#) and uses the information regarding details of hate crime events that have been reported to different law enforcement agencies in Orange County. Additional information within this report has been provided by the Orange County's District Attorney's (OCDA) office regarding cases submitted for review, examples of hate crime prosecutions and OCDA's efforts to reduce hate crimes.

# Hate Crime Event Details

All local law enforcement agencies are required to report hate crimes to the Department of Justice (DOJ) in compliance with California Penal Code section 13023. California Penal Code section 422.55 defines a hate crime as, “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, hate crime reporting can differ between agencies. As stated in the 2023 California Attorney General's Hate Crime report:

“

*The DOJ requests that each law enforcement agency establish procedures incorporating a two-tier review (decision-making) process. The first level is done by the initial officer who responds to the suspected hate crime incident. At the second level, each report is reviewed by at least one other officer to confirm that the event was, in fact, a hate crime.*

*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*

”

National and State comparisons are presented in this report when possible to give context to the details regarding the reported hate crimes. Caution should be used with the 2023 data due to some agencies submitting partial data for the year. Data is reported by year, which reflects the calendar year - January through December.

The AG reports hate crimes as events. The AG defines hate crime events 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 within Orange County. According to the California 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. Hate incidents are not included in this report.

A hate crime event may involve multiple people. 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 presented in this report was retrieved from the mandated reporting of hate crimes by Orange County local law enforcement agencies to the California DOJ. Although all agencies reported to the DOJ in 2023, there may be slight underreporting of the hate crimes presented in this report. Partial reporting occurred for some agencies due to issues in their Records Management Systems (RMS) as they were transitioning to the implementation of Incident Based Reporting during the year. The following agencies are the local law enforcement agencies with partial reporting: Costa Mesa Police Department; Garden Grove Police Department; Orange Police Department; and Westminster Police Department.

# OC Hate Crime Trends

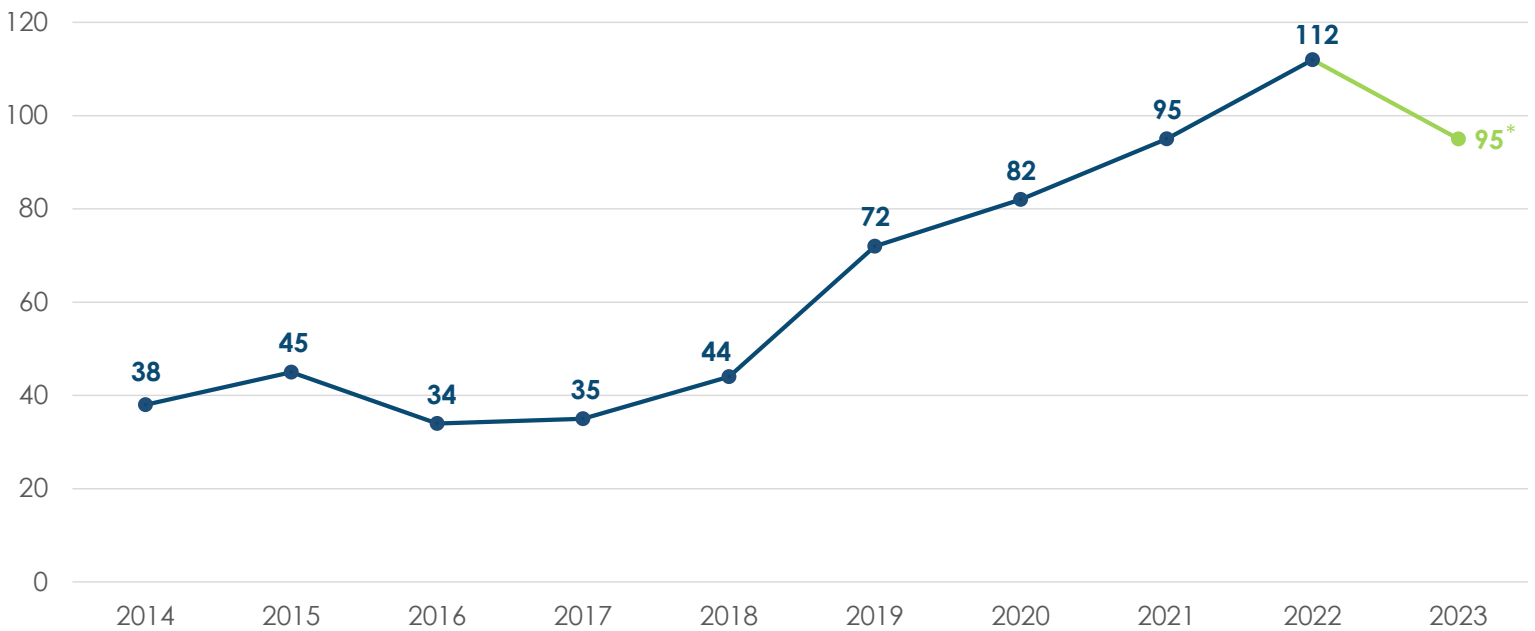
In 2023, within Orange County, there were a total of 95 hate crime events reported. This number may be underrepresented due to the four Orange County agencies partially reporting for the year. Of the 95 reported hate crime events, four were considered multiple bias events. Multiple bias events have implications of more than one bias (e.g., religion and gender, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation) to have been a reason for the offense. The trend for reported hate crime events from the past 10 years are displayed below.

95\*

HATE CRIME EVENTS REPORTED IN 2023

*\*This number includes four law enforcement agencies within Orange County that partially reported in 2023.*

## Overall Hate Crime Events in Orange County




*\*Note: Includes multiple bias events; hate crime data partially reported by four OC Jurisdictions*

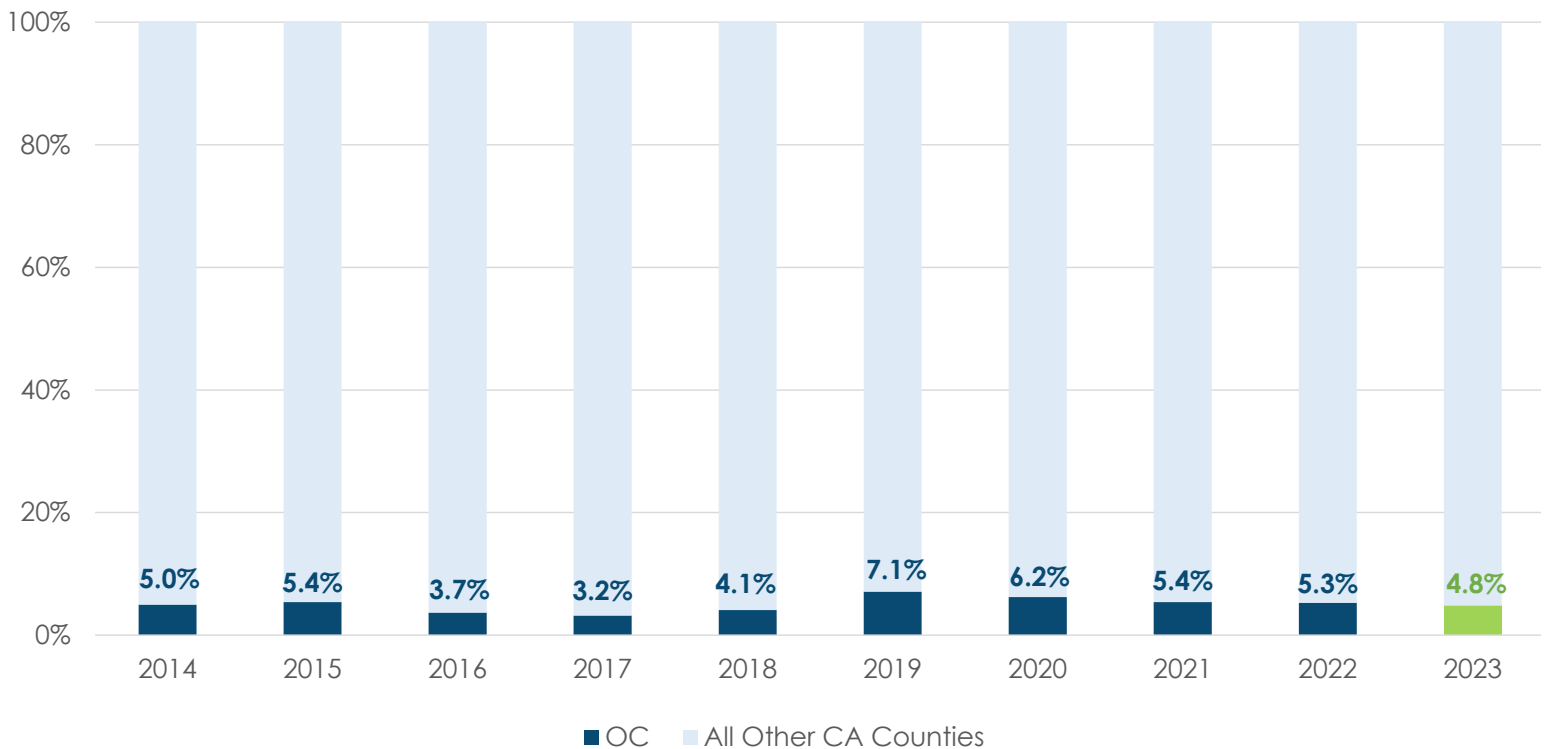
# OC Hate Crime Trends

According to the United States Census Bureau, the 2020 Decennial Census resulted in Orange County population (3,186,989) consisting of 8.0% of the total population within California (39,538,223). Over the past ten years, Orange County reported hate crime events have ranged from 3.2% to 7.1% of all reported hate crime events within California for a given year. This trend suggests that Orange County hate crime events are reported at a lower ratio based on population comparisons to the state. For 2023, the reported hate crime events are 4.8% of all hate crime events reported within California. Details of the ten-year trend are displayed below.

ORANGE COUNTY REPORTED **4.8%** OF CALIFORNIA HATE CRIME EVENTS IN 2023



## OC Hate Crime Events - Percentage within California



# OC Hate Crime by Jurisdiction

All local law enforcement agencies are required to report to the DOJ. In Orange County, there are 41 reporting agencies which include city police agencies, the Orange County Sheriff Department, college campus police, the California Highway Patrol and the Union Pacific Railroad. Comparisons between jurisdictions should be made with caution due to the following factors as reported by the DOJ:

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY AND POPULATION DENSITY

SIZE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

TRAINING RECEIVED IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF HATE CRIMES BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN EACH JURISDICTION

The jurisdiction with the most hate crime events reported in 2023 is Santa Ana with 17, followed by Irvine with 14 hate crime events. There were 15 local law enforcement agencies within Orange County that reported zero hate crime events in 2023. Hate crime events by jurisdiction in 2022 and 2023 are displayed below.

JURISDICTION	2022	2023
Aliso Viejo	1	1
Anaheim	1 <sup>[1]</sup>	2
Brea	0	0
Buena Park	0	1
CA Highway Patrol - Orange	0	0
Costa Mesa	5	5 <sup>[2]</sup>
CSU Fullerton	1	0
Cypress	4	1
Dana Point	2	1
Fountain Valley	0	3
Fullerton	6	5 <sup>[1]</sup>
Garden Grove	2	1 <sup>[2]</sup>
Huntington Beach	7	8
Irvine Valley College	0	0
Irvine	19 <sup>[1]</sup>	14
La Habra	1	0
La Palma	1	0

JURISDICTION	2022	2023
Laguna Beach	1	0
Laguna Hills	0	0
Laguna Niguel	1	1
Laguna Woods	1	0
Lake Forest	1	1
Los Alamitos	0	1
Mission Viejo	1	1
Newport Beach	2	4
Orange County Sheriff's Department	1	7 <sup>[1]</sup>
Orange Coast DPR	0	1
Orange	4	1 <sup>[2]</sup>
Placentia	0	0
Rancho Santa Margarita	0	0
San Clemente	1	1
San Juan Capistrano	1	0
Santa Ana	32	17
Seal Beach	3	1
Stanton	1	1 <sup>[1]</sup>
Tustin	5	1
UC Irvine	3	6
Union Pacific Railroad - Orange	0	0
Villa Park	0	0
Westminster	3	9 <sup>[1,2]</sup>
Yorba Linda	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>95</b>

[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.

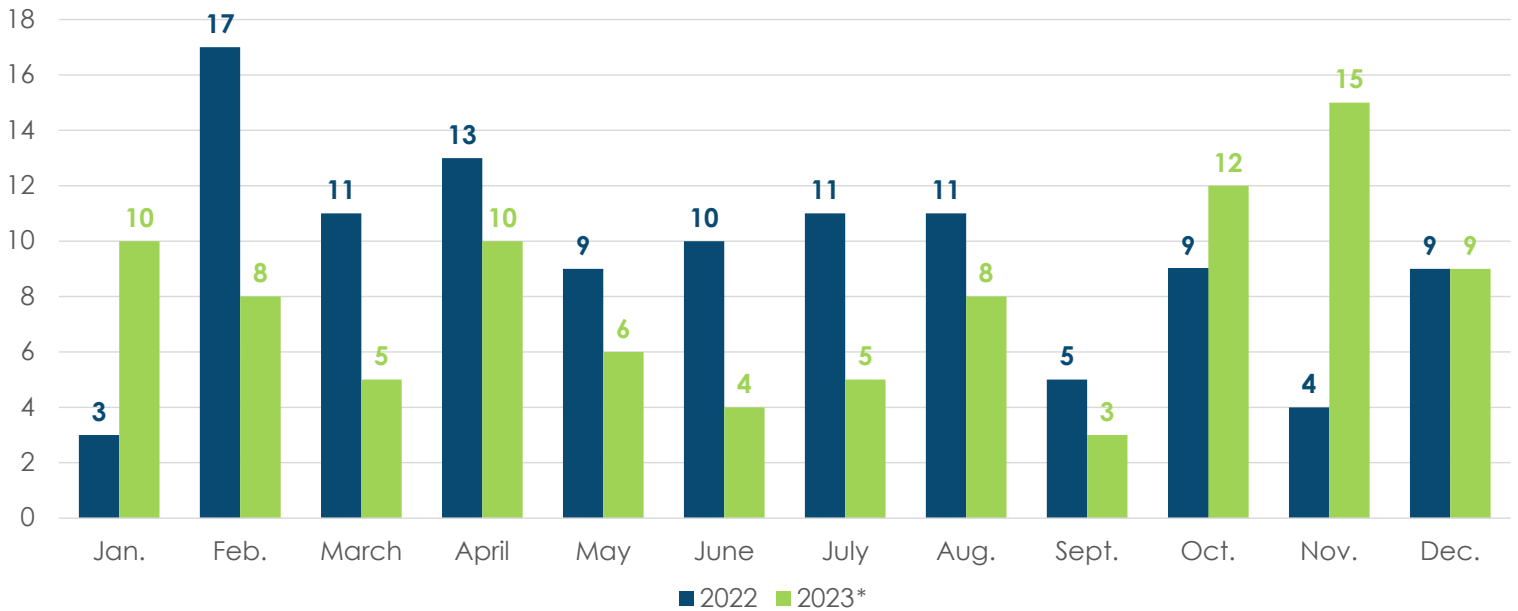
# OC Hate Crime by Month

Hate crime events fluctuate by month during the year and are not typically consistent from year to year. In 2023, the month with the most hate crime events was in November, with a total of 15 hate crime events. September was the month with the least reported hate crime events with a total of three. Monthly details are displayed below.

**15 MOST HATE CRIME EVENTS REPORTED IN NOV.**

**3 LEAST HATE CRIME EVENTS REPORTED IN SEPT.**

**Total Hate Crimes Reported by Month**



*\*This number includes four law enforcement agencies within Orange County that partially reported in 2023.*



# Hate Crime Event Details

Reported hate crime events contain different reporting elements that describe the 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 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:

### TYPE OF BIAS MOTIVATION

- Anti-black or African-American
- Anti-Hispanic or Latino
- Anti-Jewish
- Anti-Gay

### TYPE OF CRIME

- Murder
- Aggregated Assault
- Burglary
- Destruction/Vandalism

### CRIME LOCATION

- Residence
- Street
- Synagogue
- School

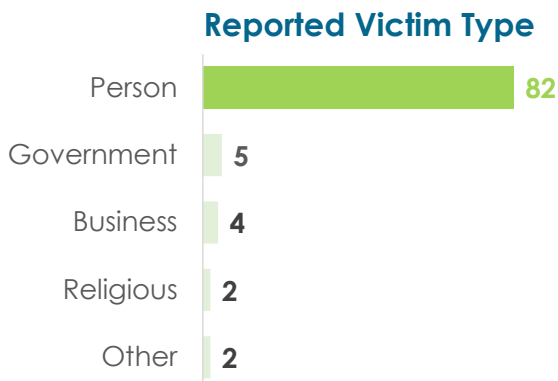
### TYPE OF VICTIM

- Individual
- Property

Victims, or those who were affected by the hate crime event, are tracked and reported when possible. There are five reporting categories which include: person; government; business; religious; and other. Nationally in 2023, the highest reported victim type was person which accounted for 80.8% of all reported hate crime events ([Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer](#)). This is the highest reported victim type category (12,584) followed by business (1,141) and then government (728). California follows a similar trend with person (2,001) as the highest reported victim type. Government (221) and business (151) do not follow the same trend as the national data as there are more government victims in California. Orange County follows a similar trend to California, in which person is reported most frequently as the victim type and results in a similar percentage (86.3%), followed by government and then business.

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 Orange County were adults (87) compared to juvenile victims (9). 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. 2023 Orange County victim information is displayed below.

## 2023 Victim Information\*



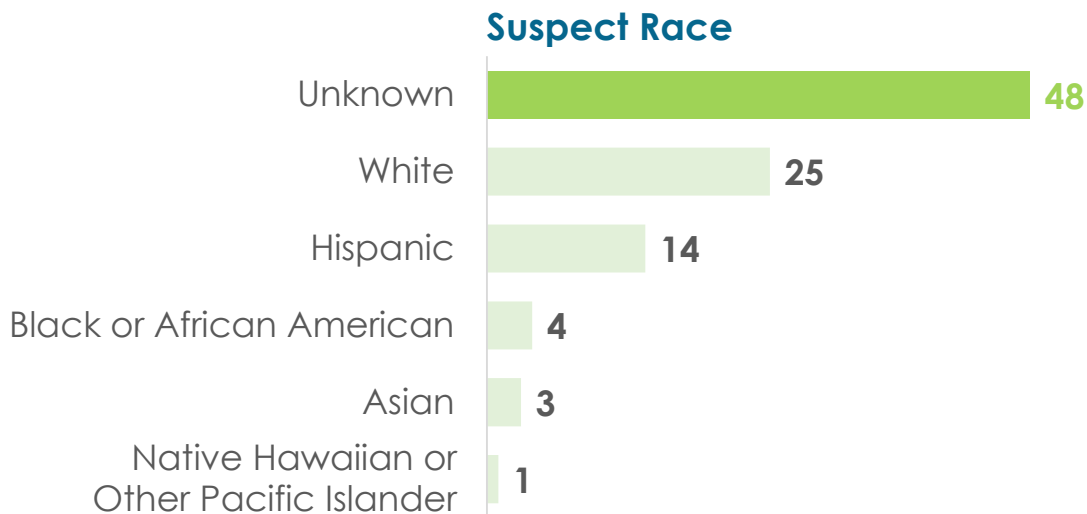
\*Victims are not always determined for all events.

# Hate Crime Event Details

The person committing the crime is the suspect. The suspect's information is also captured, when possible, for hate crime events. Due to the nature of hate crimes not always happening 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 Orange County in 2023, 68 were adults and 16 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, as the highest category of suspect race is unknown (48), followed by White (25) and Hispanic (14). 2023 Orange County suspect information is displayed below.

## 2023 Suspect Information\*



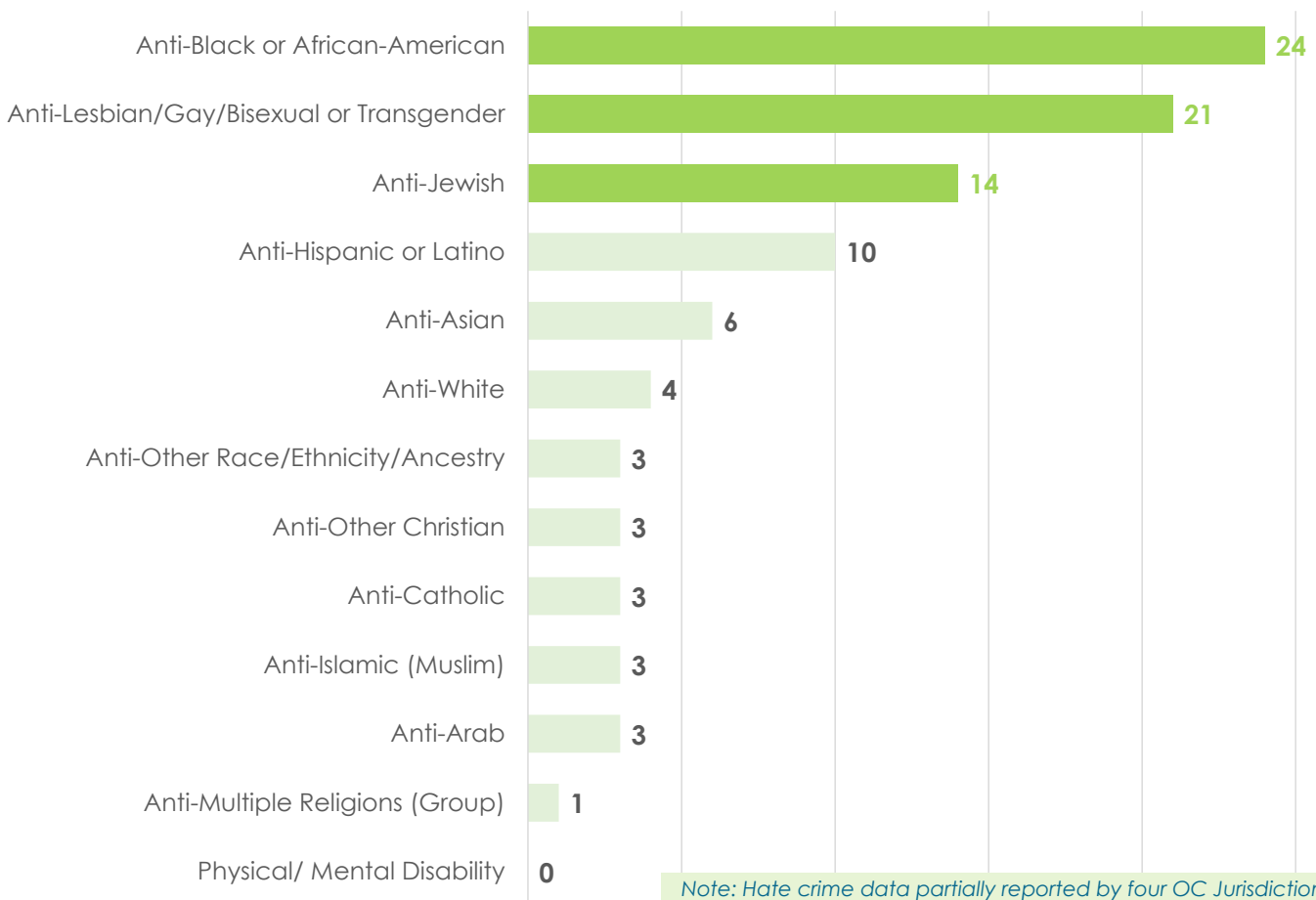
*\*Suspects are not always determined for all events. There may be more than one suspect per reported Hate Crime event and suspect race is unknown most of the time.*



# Hate Crime Event Details

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 also tracked at the time of reporting for hate crime events. The most serious bias, or most evident bias, is identified by the officer. Nationally in 2023, the top bias for hate crime events was based on Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry which accounted for 58.4% of all events. Of the 58.4% slightly over half were anti-Black or African American bias. Overall, anti-Black or African American bias accounted for 30% of all hate crime events nationally. This percentage is also consistent with California in which 30% of hate crime events were motivated by anti-Black or African American Bias. The trend is also apparent in Orange County, where most of the hate crime events were racially motivated as anti-Black or African American (24) followed by the second category of anti-Jewish (14) as displayed below.

## Most Serious Bias Reported

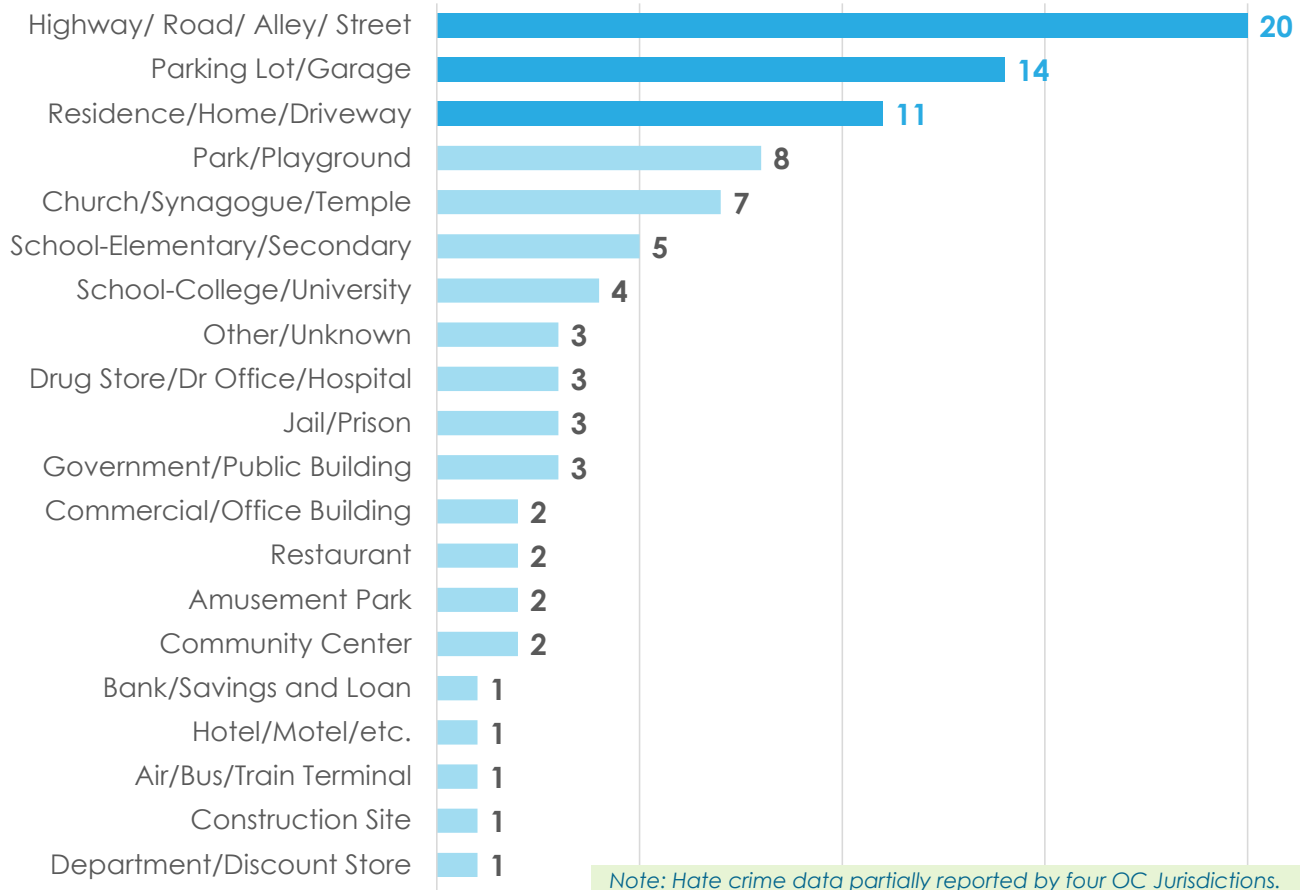


# Hate Crime Event Details

The location is also determined and reported for where the hate crime event occurred. The location categories used in reporting follow Uniform Crime Reporting program location specifications developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In 2023 within California, the most frequently reported location of a hate crime event occurred at a highway/road/alley/street in which 27.7% took place. This was followed by 18.8% at residence/home/driveways and 8.5% at parking lot/garage categories.

Orange County followed a similar trend in which 21.5% of hate crime events happened at a highway/road/alley/street, 15.1% at a parking lot/garage and 12.0% at a residence/home/driveway. The number of hate crime events at each reported location are displayed below.

## Reported Location



# 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.*



Many members of the public are not aware of how the OCDA's Office determines 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 District Attorney.

When a police report is made, the report is submitted to the District Attorney's Office for review. The primary responsibility of a Deputy District Attorney reviewing the case is 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 District Attorneys will review the police reports and any accompanying evidence and the jury instructions for that particular crime. 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 District Attorney determines there is insufficient admissible evidence to prove a case beyond a reasonable doubt, the Deputy District Attorney can reject the case or send it back to the police agency for further follow-up investigation. If the Deputy District Attorney reviews the case and determines that a crime was committed, as dictated by the jury instructions, the Deputy District Attorney will initiate a criminal complaint, which will start the criminal court process.

## 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 DA's office 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

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*To hate someone simply for who they are is a hate like no other. It targets our identity and our self-worth to attempt to render us worthless. But every one of us has worth and meaning – and every one of us brings value to our collective table of who we all are and who we want to be as a community. The acceptance of hate by one of us is a condemnation of all of us because silence is what allows hate to flourish. Here in Orange County, there is no tolerance for hate. And those who commit acts of hate against others will be punished and those who are victimized by hate will be protected. - Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer*

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The 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.

The 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 6-7](#), Orange County 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 Special Prosecutions 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.

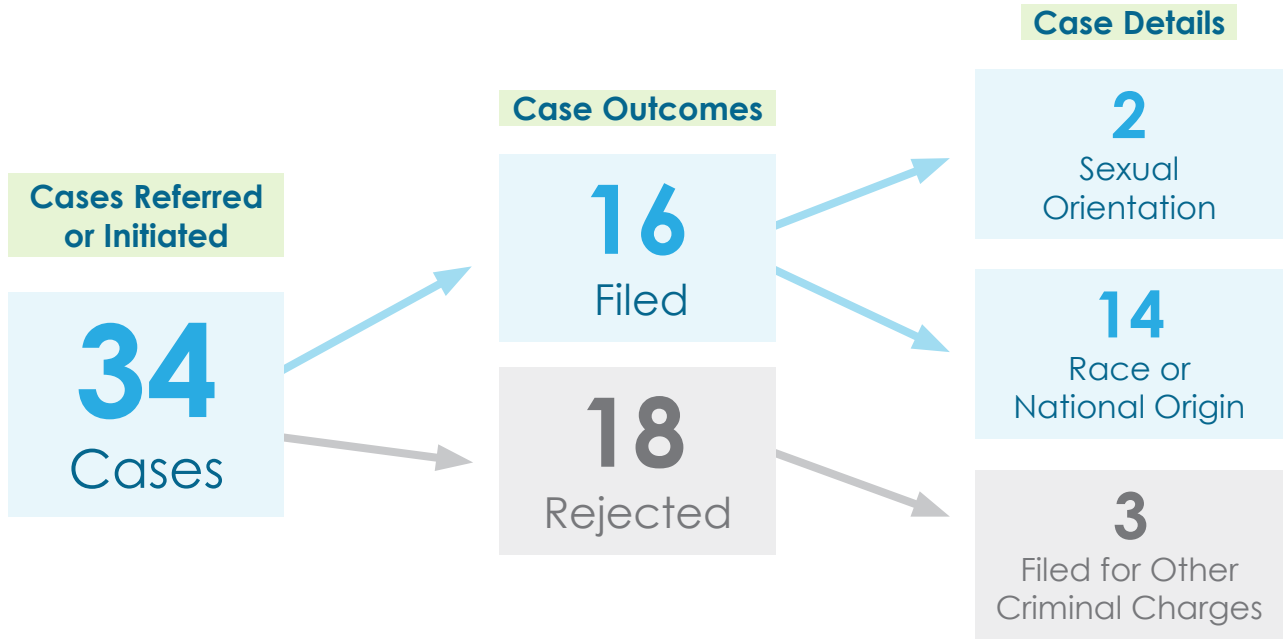
The OCDA Hate Crimes Unit is the embodiment of the OCDA's aggressive stance on protecting public safety and its recognition that a hate crime is not committed against a single individual; it is a crime committed against our entire community. The scars may not necessarily be physical, but they are permanent.

Between January 2019 and May 2021, the 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 crimes 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

## 2023 Hate Crimes Reviewed by OC District Attorney's Office



Of the 95 Hate Crime Events reported to law enforcement agencies, only 34 were referred to OCDA for criminal review as hate crimes. This is not unusual as investigations may determine that no criminal statutes were violated (e.g. hate incident), the incidents were not hate-based, or that the evidence was insufficient to establish probable cause that a crime occurred. Similarly, there may be significant evidentiary issues such as the inability to identify a perpetrator or locate victims and necessary witnesses. In these situations, a referral for potential criminal filing may not be warranted.

The cases for review for 2023 are close to the number of potential hate crimes submitted to the OCDA by law enforcement for review over the last three years. In 2021, 39 potential hate crimes were submitted for review and in 2022 there were 37 cases submitted. This trend is displayed below.

### Cases Referred or Initiated





# OC Hate Crime Prosecution Examples

## RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY RING TARGETING ASIAN HOMEOWNERS

*Hate crime charges filed May 17, 2023*

In May 2023, following a more than nine-month investigation by the Brea Police Department into a residential burglary ring, multiple defendants were arrested in a multi-county operation. Seven of those defendants have been charged with hate crimes enhancements for specifically targeting Asian homeowners, charges that recognize the targeting of a specific group of people for financial gain. Menes Carter, 20, of San Jacinto was sentenced to four years in state prison after pleading guilty to three felony counts of first-degree residential burglary, one felony count of conspiracy to commit burglary, and three felony hate crime enhancements. The other six defendants charged with hate crimes enhancements are awaiting trial.

## IMMIGRATION AGENT IMPOSTERS CHARGED FOR TARGETING HISPANIC VICTIMS

*Hate crime charges filed June 26, 2024*

In June 2024, the OCDA charged two Romanian nationals with hate crimes for posing as United States immigration agents while targeting Hispanic victims across Orange County whom they believed were undocumented immigrants fearful of deportation in order to steal their cash and debit cards. The men are accused of displaying fake law enforcement badges while they spoke to their victims in Spanish and threatened to have them deported if they refused to hand over money and debit cards. The two suspects, who are believed to be in the United States illegally and have ties to Romanian organized criminal organizations, have also been charged with felony kidnapping, false imprisonment, and robberies in Contra Costa County, and are suspected to have carried out similar crimes in Santa Clara County, and possibly in the states of Washington and New York.

Both suspects were charged with 13 felony counts of second-degree robbery, one felony count of attempted robbery, one felony count of attempted kidnapping and 15 felony hate crime enhancements in connection with 15 different victims in Orange County. In many of these incidents they identified themselves as agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents or FBI agents. They each face a maximum sentence of life in state prison if convicted on all counts.

## GAY AND JEWISH MOTIVATED MURDERER CONVICTED

*Hate crime charges filed August 2, 2018*

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. Woodward faces a maximum sentence of life without the possibility of parole in state prison. On November 15, 2024, Woodward was sentenced to live in prison without the possibility of parole.



## OCDA's Office Accomplishments & Next Steps

As a result of the investment in eradicating hate, the OCDA was selected by the United States Department of Justice as a recipient of the four-year, \$1.4 million Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Grant<sup>[1]</sup>, to be a regional leader to combat hate crimes.

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Grant provides the OCDA with the incredible opportunity to add to the strong foundation that OCDA has 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.

Over the last five years, the OCDA has been a strong voice in the conversation to eradicate hate in Orange County. From writing opinion pieces in the Orange County 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, the OCDA has embraced its role in helping shaping Orange County's attitude toward hate while empowering the residents we serve with the information they need to protect themselves and protect others. The OCDA has also been educating Orange County Superior Court judges the catastrophic impact of hate crimes on an individual as well as the community as a whole.

Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer successfully appealed a five-year sentence<sup>[2]</sup> 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, is facing 38-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 law enforcement, the 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. The OCDA also redesigned the agency's website to ensure language access for our diverse community. In 2022, the OCDA convened a roundtable on hate crimes and together with California Attorney General 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 Attorney General Bonta in the fall of 2023 in Irvine. Recently, the District Attorney was asked to participate in a multi-episode series on iHeart radio entitled, Hate: Modern Antisemitism. These efforts represent only a small sampling of OCDA's efforts to educate the community and bring awareness to the negative impacts of hate incidents and crimes throughout Orange County. OCDA's engagement on this topic has been welcomed by both local law enforcement agencies and community-based-organizations, resulting in formal collaborations with the Anti-Defamation League, the LGBTQ Center, and the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

[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.

# 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 United States Department of Justice website: <https://justice.gov/hatecrimes>.

The United States Census Bureau, California and Orange County Population Data: <https://data.census.gov>.



## Orange County District Attorney

To learn more about the Orange County District Attorney's Office's efforts to eradicate hate, please visit: [www.orangecountyda.org](http://www.orangecountyda.org).