

New York City's Interracial Hate Crimes Epidemic Analyzed

America's most multicultural city challenges assumptions on the nature of hate crimes

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Abstract

In the last five years, the rates at which hate crimes are reported in America's largest cities have dramatically increased. Consequently, it is one of the top priorities of lawmakers to create policies that will diminish the rates at which these crimes are committed. However, progress in this sector has been stymied by the inability of academics to identify definite, as opposed to circumstantial, factors which promote the increasing incidences of hate crimes. Leading researchers have suggested that hate crimes often occur as a reaction to an influx of minority migration or the rising economic statuses of minority groups. A careful analysis of data surrounding demographic change suggests this is unlikely a contributing factor to the rise in hate crimes. Instead, the data points to the conclusion that the factors which motivate the frequency with which hate crimes are committed reflect dissimilar, case-by-case circumstances rather than concrete demographic or economic trends.

QR Codes



Chart 1/2

Chart 3

Chart 4

Introduction

Hate crimes are defined as a crime motivated by prejudice or bias against the victim's presumed group. Nevertheless, what constitutes a hate crime and the extent to which certain crimes are motivated by hate have been the topic of significant scholarly discourse. However, what can not be debated is that hate crimes are becoming increasingly prevalent in America. In 2021, the frequency with which hate crimes were reported reached a decade high, with 7,759 cases reported. This upsurge is particularly pronounced in America's largest cities, where reports of hate crimes increased by over 50% over the last five years. Given this drastic increase, I believe it is necessary to study the motivating factors which promote an increase in the rate of reported hate crimes.

The proliferation of hate crimes is an especially significant issue to me as rates of reported hate crimes in New York City, my home, increased by 76% within the last year. There is no doubt that New York's status as America's most populated and diverse city contributed to this figure. Nevertheless, I suspect that there are other motivating factors that I wish to identify through an analysis of New York City's hate crime statistics.

Researchers have yet to come to a definite conclusion regarding the factors which correspond to an increase in hate crimes. Often, events that spark suspicion toward a certain group act as a catalyst for rising rates of hate crimes. An example of this is the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes following the proliferation of the Covid-19 virus. However, these events are unpredictable and isolated. Thus, they offer little insight into the underlying elements which encourage an increase in the rate of hate crimes. However, as opposed to the factors which cause hate crimes, recent research has centered around those who perpetrate these crimes. In 2017, the FBI divided those who perpetrated hate crimes into four archetypes which are as follows:

1. Thrill seekers who commit these crimes for "the thrill of it."
2. Defenders who seek to protect what they believe to constitute their territory.
3. Retaliators who commit hate crimes as a means of retaliation.
4. Missionaries who believe it is their mission in life to eradicate another group

This project will focus on number 2, the defenders who are the only group that can be operationalized using the data available for this research to test this theory. Of these classes, defenders appear to be the only category of perpetrators whose crimes are fueled by socioeconomic circumstances rather than a whim(1), distinct events(3), or profound hatred(4). The defenders instead act out of notions of "cultural survival," believing that they are being superseded. However, this insight into the psyche of "defenders" begs the question of how these people come to believe that they need to target other groups as a means of defending their culture.

Researchers have identified changing demographics as a leading factor that drives "defensive" hate crimes. According to the Defended Neighborhoods Theory, hate crimes are more frequently committed in areas where out-groups make up a smaller proportion of the population. In these situations, those committing hate crimes view their acts as a means of defending against threats posed to identities and cultural conceptions based upon long-standing racial or ethnic homogeneity. This effect is especially potent in areas undergoing recent demographic change as, in these areas, increased out-group migration is seen as a larger threat to homogeneity. The prospect of a once dominant group becoming a minority can lead members of the group to fear the relegated position, which is intrinsic to minority status. Thus, members of the group may feel obligated to attack members of other groups as a means of preserving their dominance. This can be seen as multiple studies have confirmed that "a link exists between" levels of hostility towards a minority group and recent increases in migration of said group. This notion seems to be confirmed by research which found that in large cities such as New York and Chicago, anti-black hate crimes were most likely to occur in predominantly white neighborhoods, which were on the precipice of becoming more ethnically diverse.

An additional factor that appears to motivate hate crimes is changing economic fortunes among certain groups. The economic scarcity inherent to capitalism creates competition over limited resources between different groups. Increased competition, thus, motivates increasingly discriminatory behavior amongst majority groups who seek to preserve their economic and social advantages. Consequently, the majority groups often resort to Gary Becker's concept of envious behavior, actions that seek to decrease the welfare of the victim rather than increase that of the perpetrator. Therefore, it can be expected that when the average income of a minority group begins to increase, hate crimes targeted toward that minority group will accordingly increase. A 2002 study by Eastern Economic Journal seemingly confirmed this, concluding after a study of FBI statistics that "proxies for envy, such as relative income, have a significant effect on the hate crime rate"(Gale, 2014).

From this background information, I conclude that the two leading factors which motivate increases in the rate of defensive hate crimes are changing demographics and economic fortunes. Therefore, I expect that hate crimes against certain groups will be most prevalent in areas where the population of said group or their economic circumstances have recently increased.

As previously mentioned, the rapid rise in hate crimes seen in America suggests that it is critical that the motives behind this rise be studied. This is especially true given the rising division of racial and ethnic lines in this country, a division that is inflamed by acts such as hate crimes. Therefore, I believe the results of this data analysis will be beneficial to, and hopefully help to inform, the construction of policies seeking to address the increasing frequency in which hate crimes occur by identifying the factors which promote hate crimes in large cities.

Methodology

This project will incorporate three sources of data as well as Tableau public to construct data visualizations. First, I will utilize the NYPD's official database of hate crime statistics from 2019-2022. This database includes statistics on all recorded hate crimes during this time frame.

| Variable | What it entails | Possible values | Limitation |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Complaint Year Number (CYN) | Complaints of hate time per year | Infinite | Underreporting? |
| Bias Motive Description(BMD) | What prejudices motivated the crime | Anti Asian Anti Black Anti Hispanic Anti White | Compressed from 35 to 4 categories |
| Boro | Which county it of NYC it occurred in | 1= Manhattan 2= The Bronx 3= Brooklyn 4= Queens 5= Staten Island | N/A |
| Arrest Date | When the crime was committed | 2019-2022 | 65% percent null |

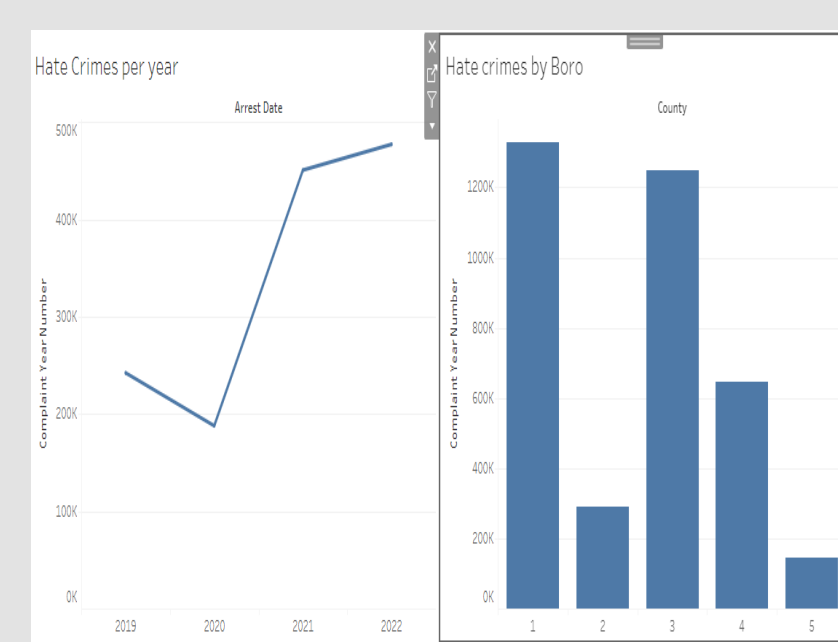
The next source of data utilized will be the NYC decennial census which tracks changes in population percentage by ethnicity from 2010 to 2020. From this data, it can be found which Boros and neighborhoods have had the most significant changes in the demographic of their residents.

| Variable | What it entails | Possible values | Limitation |
|----------|---|-----------------|------------|
| ANH_pch | Change in percentage of demographic that occupies as Asian non-Hispanic between 2010-2020 | Infinite | N/A |
| BNH_pch | Change in percentage of demographic that occupies as Black non-Hispanic between 2010-2020 | Infinite | N/A |
| WNH_pch | Change in percentage of demographic that occupies as White-Hispanic between 2010-2020 | Infinite | N/A |

Finally, the NYC Gov poverty statistics will be used to evaluate the changing economic circumstances of different groups.

| Variable | What it entails | Possible values | Limitation |
|-----------|--|--|---|
| WAGP_adj | Wages or salary income in last 12 months adjusted for income factors | 1-9999 | Does not explain what income factors are adjusted for |
| Ethnicity | Ethnicity of respondents | 1. White 2. Black 3. Asian 4. Hispanic 5. Other race | Option for other obscures results |

Preliminary Results



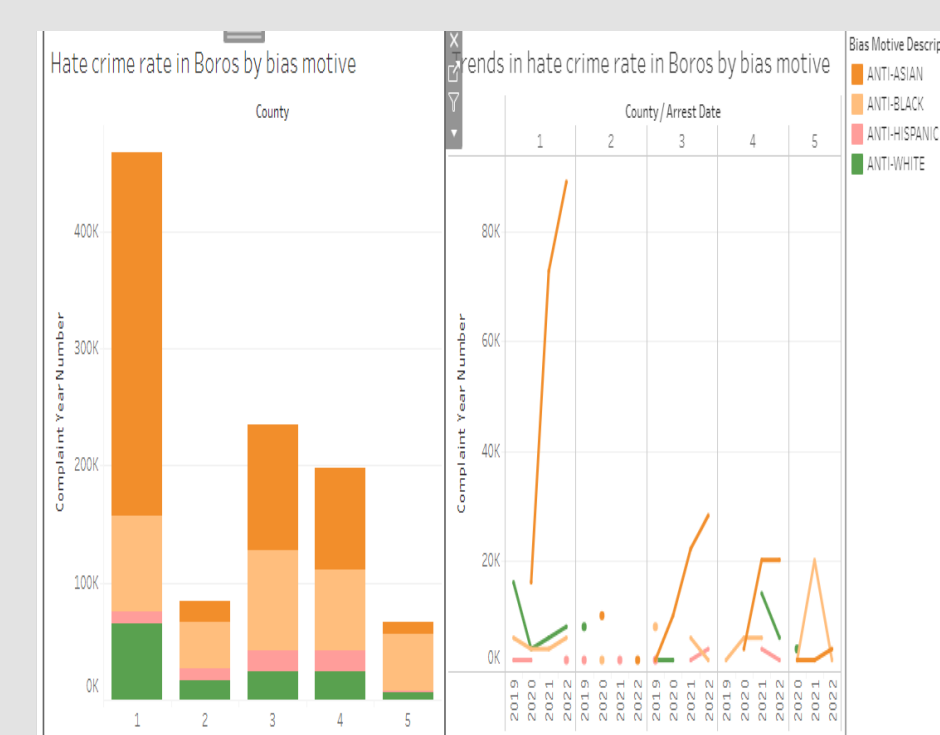
Rates of Hate Crimes per Year in NYC between 2019-2022 & Rates of Hate Crimes by Boro

These preliminary graphs are intended to add context, which will guide the means by which the rest of this project will be conducted. From these graphs general trends in Hate Crimes can be gleaned.

The first graph, entitled "Hate Crimes Per Year," reveals that since 2019 the number of hate crimes reported to the NYPD has drastically risen from around 250K reports per year to nearly 500K reports per year. Consequently, indicating the importance of this study by confirming that hate crimes are increasing within New York. Moreover, the data demonstrates a drastic rise in the rate of hate crimes from 2020 to 2021, most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second graph, entitled "Hate crimes by Boro," displays far more hate crimes committed in Manhattan and Brooklyn than in any other Boro. These results suggest that hate crimes are geographically dependent in that, even within one city, rates differ dramatically in different areas. Therefore, the data regarding the rate of hate crimes by Boro confirm the importance of using Boro as a variable, suggesting that the Defended Neighborhood theory is correct in its notion that rates of hate crimes are affected by geographical factors.

Results



Hate Crime Rates and Bias Motive

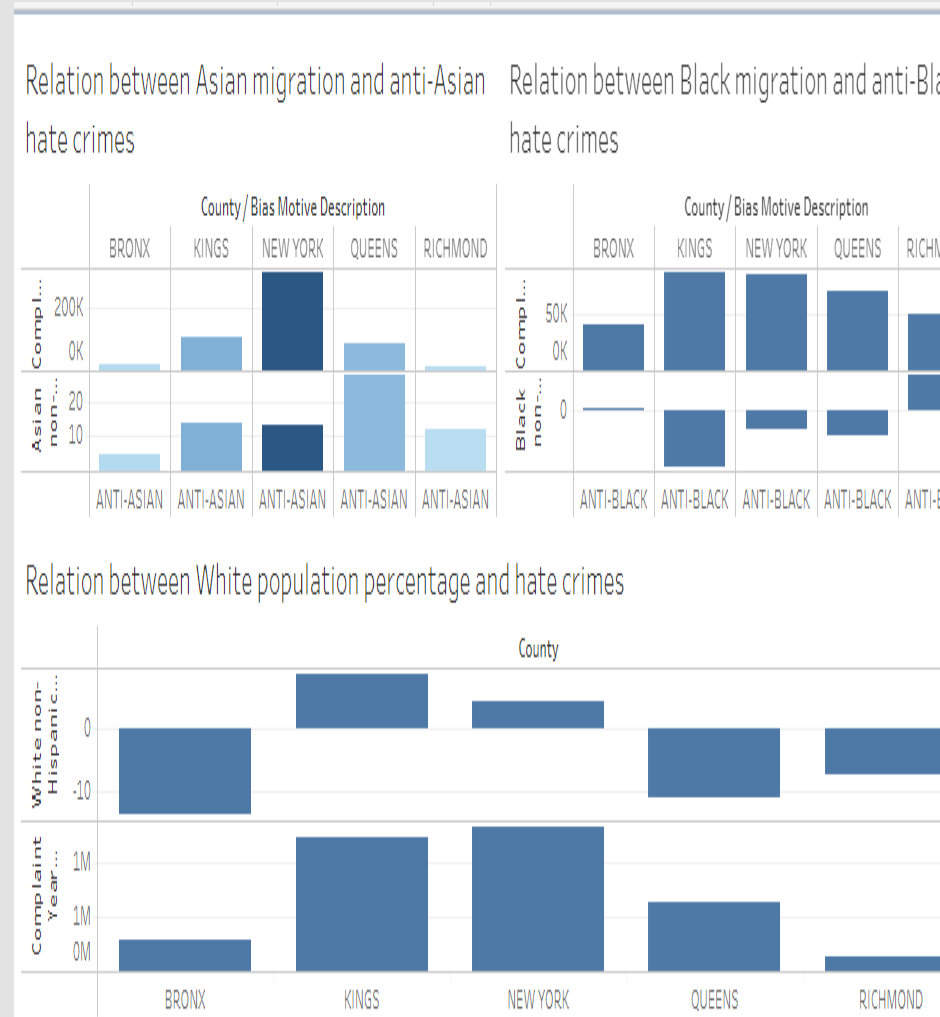
My analysis of the data begins with these two graphs which identify the groups who are most frequently the victims of Hate-crimes by Boro and how the frequency of these attacks changes annually. These graphs indicate that anti-Asian and anti-Black hate crimes should specifically be investigated.

The first graph, entitled "Hate crime rate in Boros by Bias Motive," reveals that the two most common BMDs are anti-Asian and anti-black. These findings suggest that in the subsequent analysis, anti-Asian and anti-black hate crimes should be utilized to determine the effects of demographics and economic conditions on the rate of hate crimes. Moreover, it can be seen that in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, anti-Asian hate crimes are most prevalent, while anti-Black hate crimes are most prevalent in the Bronx and Staten Island. Accordingly, this graph bolsters the notion that the nature of hate crimes is geographically dependent.

From the next graph, entitled "Trends in hate crime rate in Boros by bias motive," clear trends in the rates of hate crimes by Boro can be established. For instance, this graph shows a significant increase in anti-Asian hate crimes between 2019 and 2021 in Manhattan and a significant decrease in anti-Hispanic hate crimes between 2021 and 2022 in Staten Island. The extent to which these rates fluctuate, therefore, suggests that hate crime rates depend on changing rather than static factors.

Next, the effects of demographic change on rates of hate crimes are considered

Contrary to researchers' findings, the first graph, "Relation between Asian migration and anti-Asian hate crimes," indicates little to no correlation between the two factors. Manhattan (referred to here as New York county) has by far the highest number of anti-Asian hate crimes, only the third most significant change in the percentage of the Asian population. Conversely, Queens has by far the highest increase in the percentage of the Asian population yet only the third most anti-Asian hate crimes.



Migration and Changes in Rates of Reported Hate Crimes Within NYC

Data regarding anti-Black hate crimes further suggests a lack of correlation between migration and rates of hate crimes. As seen in the graph entitled, "Relation between black migration and anti-Black hate crimes," anti-Black hate crimes were far more common in Boros with declining black populations than those where the black population increased. Thus, these results invalidate the defended neighborhood hypothesis, which suggests that hate crimes are most prevalent in areas with growing minority populations. Instead, the results regarding anti-Black hate crimes suggest the opposite, that hate crimes are more frequent in areas with decreasing minority populations. In contrast, the results regarding anti-Asian hate crimes indicate no correlation between demographics and hate crime rates.

Finally, as seen in the graph entitled "Relation between White population percentage and hate crimes," in areas where the white population decreases, the rate of hate crimes also decreases, while the opposite is true in areas where the white population increases. These findings counter my research suggesting that decreasing the white population correlates with higher rates of hate crimes.

Finally, the relationship between a racial groups' yearly income and the rate of hate crimes targeted that group are analyzed

These graphs reveal the relationship between the economic circumstances of ethnic groups and the rate of hate crimes toward these groups. My research indicated that rising hate crime rates are often a response to the increasing economic fortune of minority groups. However, my results suggest the opposite. As seen in the graph entitled "Relation between Asian WAGP_adj and anti-Asian hate crimes by Boros" in Manhattan, where Asian-identifying residents have the lowest average yearly wages, anti-Asian hate crimes are by far the most prevalent. Meanwhile, in Brooklyn, Asian residents earn significantly more than their racial counterparts in other Boros, and rates of anti-Asian hate crimes are comparable to Queens, where the average Asian resident makes 25k less a year.

Regarding anti-Black hate crimes, it also appears that income has little effect on the rate at which these crimes are committed. While it is true that Anti-Black hate crimes are most prevalent in Brooklyn, a Boro where Black residents out-earn their racial counterparts, only 1,000 more were reported than in Manhattan, where Black residents earn the least of any Boro. Moreover, despite Black residents earning roughly the same in the Bronx and Queens, there were over 30k more reports of anti-Black hate crimes in the latter than in the former.

Finally, it seems no trend can be found in the earnings of White residents and overall rates of hate crimes. In Brooklyn, where White residents earn the most of those in any Boro, contrary to what research would suggest, there are by far the most hate crimes. However, in Staten Island, where White residents earn the least, there are the fewest reports of hate crimes.

Limitations

In analyzing the results of this analysis, one must also consider the limitations of this project. Hate crimes are statistically one of the most under-reported crimes. Furthermore, research has found that certain races report hate crimes at rates less frequently than others.

Moreover, New York City is an imperfect city for analyzing trends in hate crime. As the most diverse city in the United States, how different races and ethnic groups interact with New York City does not reflect patterns likely to be found in other areas of the nation.

Due to the disproportionate amount of first and second-generation immigrants, many New Yorks are more likely to identify themselves by ethnicity than race. Consequently, racial boundaries and identities are more fluid in New York than is typical in America.

Finally, the data which I conducted this project with is imperfect. The race or ethnicity of the perpetrator, a valuable and insightful criterion, is not included in NYPD hate crime statistics. Moreover, data regarding demographics and economic well-being are divided by Boro instead of neighborhood. Therefore, data from disparate areas with distinct ethnic, racial, and political constituents are grouped under one geographical category.

Further research

Ultimately, the inconclusive results of this project suggest that more research must be conducted regarding the factors influencing hate crimes. I believe the lack of actionable results is a result of an inherent flaw within the experiment. The disparity in the means by which migration and economic fortunes affect rates of anti-Asian hate crimes, and anti-Black hate crimes suggests that hate crimes targeting different groups are motivated by different factors and, thus, should be studied separately. This view is supported by researchers such as Donald P. Green and Jennifer K. Smith, who, in their paper *Hate Crimes, An Emergent Research Agenda*, advanced the narrative that hate crimes motivated by bias towards different groups are inherently dissimilar and thus should be studied and analyzed as such.

If I had more time and/or resources to complete this project, I would not have limited my analysis to hate crimes committed in New York City. Future research into this issue should analyze various urban, suburban, and rural regions across the United States to accommodate cultural differences. I also believe that future studies should assess the geographical nature of hate crimes on the basis of neighborhood rather than city, such that irregularities are accounted for. Conversely, for it to be concluded that economic factors do not motivate hate crimes, other metrics of economic success, such as employment and wealth, should be considered along with income.

As mentioned, the lack of information on the race of the perpetrators of these crimes limited this study. Future studies should analyze if perpetrators of different races are motivated by distinct factors. I also suspect that the factors which would motivate lesser crimes, such as vandalism, differ greatly from those which would motivate murder. Therefore, further research should attempt to take into consideration different types of hate crimes.

Finally, I believe that future studies of rates of hate crimes should look to analyze how these rates are affected by government policy. Researchers have historically had difficulty identifying the factors influencing the rates of hate crimes. Given the diverse motivations for hate crimes and how hate crimes directed at different groups are motivated by different factors, it is possible that definitive causes for increased rates of hate crime may never be identified. I, therefore, believe that the focus of researchers should shift to preventative measures. Accordingly, policy, rather than casual, based research, will be most effective in informing future measures to decrease the rate of hate crimes.

Conclusion

Ultimately, my attempts to test the theories by using a data-driven approach did not find evidence to support current theories of hate crime motivation. However, significant stories could be extracted from the data. That rates of hate crimes differ by year indicates that these rates are affected by current events and circumstances. Moreover, the disparity in the frequency with which hate crimes targeting certain groups are committed by Boro indicates that geographical factors also play a role in influencing hate crime rates.

Nevertheless, as opposed to what researchers have found, my statistics show that changing demographics and economic fortunes among different racial groups have little to no effect on the rate at which hate crimes targeting these groups are committed. Consequently, no definitive conclusion regarding how policy should address the rise in hate crimes can be made from this project without further research.

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