

Hate crimes

A **hate crime** (also known as a **bias-motivated crime**) is a prejudice-motivated crime which occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of their membership (or perceived membership) of a certain social group or racial demographic.

Examples of such groups can include ethnicity, disability, language, nationality, physical appearance, age, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Non-criminal actions that are motivated by these reasons are often called "bias incidents".

"Hate crime" generally refers to criminal acts which are seen to have been motivated by bias against one or more of the social groups listed above, or by bias against their derivatives. Incidents may involve physical assault, homicide, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse (which includes slurs) or insults, or offensive graffiti or letters (hate mail).

Hate crimes can have significant and wide-ranging psychological consequences, not only for their direct victims but for others as well:

Impact on the individual victim - psychological and affective instabilities; repercussions on the victim's identity and self-esteem.

Effect on the targeted group - generalized terror in the group to which the victim belongs, inspiring feelings of vulnerability among its other members, who could be the next hate crime victims.

Effect on other vulnerable groups - threatening effects on minority groups or on groups that identify themselves with the targeted group.

Effect on the community as a whole - divisions and factionalism arising in response to hate crimes are particularly damaging to multicultural societies.

Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination, stipulating that "[t]he enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in [the] Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."

The **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** has drafted and adopted a range of Resolutions and other instruments aimed at furthering standards in this area, notably in terms of systematically addressing all forms of racial discrimination and protecting certain groups from hate crime and violence.