

Identifying Anti-immigration movements: Mapping Hate Crimes and Groups in the US

Jesica María Ramírez Toscano¹

Summary

Given the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in recent years, we analyze the evolution of hate groups and crimes against the immigrant community in the United States. In this analysis, we were able to identify risk regions characterized by a greater number of groups or hate crimes per million population. We also study and analyze how this sentiment has emerged in the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect that these hate groups have on the socio-economic development of the United States. Therefore, it is essential the participation and cooperation of governments and civil organizations in the fight against anti-immigrant sentiment, to promote cultural diversity and protection of the immigrant community.

Introduction

In the last two decades, discrimination against immigrants in the United States² and around the world has increased significantly and worryingly. The severe economic recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis, terrorist attacks, particularly the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the increasing number of foreign residents (including undocumented immigrants) are some of the factors that have driven the emergence anti-immigrant movements (i.e. policies, groups, ideologies) and xenophobic actions (e.g. hate crimes, hate propaganda).

Likewise, President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric has served as a bridge to criminalize migrants and promote policies against this community, such as: ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (attempted but unsuccessful), banning of people from several Muslim countries, family separation at the border, reducing refugee admissions, and recently, the temporal suspension of foreign work visas (labeled by the Trump administration as an “effort” to preserve US jobs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Additionally, some senior officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have been identified with "close ties" with various anti-immigrant hate groups³. For example, Ken Cuccinelli, who was named acting director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, is one of the founders of the State

¹ jamireztoscano@uchicago.edu

² [The Rise of Anti-Immigrant Sentiments in the U.S.: Arizona and Alabama, emblematic cases](#). Mónica Vereá.

³ [The Anti-Immigrant Extremists in Charge of the U.S. Immigration System](#). Jessica Cobian, June 2019.

Legislators for Legal Immigration. This group has been labeled as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center due to the group's close ties to white supremacists. In another case, Julie Kirchner as a Customs and Border Protection advisor, who was a former executive director of FAIR (an organization with anti-migrant ideologies), helped draft RAISE, a bill that aimed to cut legal immigration in half by limiting the possibility of family reunification, cutting refugee admissions in half and eliminating the diversity visa program.

Therefore, one way to understand how this anti-immigrant sentiment has evolved in the United States is through the study of hate groups and hate crimes. In this report, we use two main sources of data:

- Hate groups identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center
- Hate crimes according to the Uniform Crime Report of the United States

Furthermore, we contextualize the anti-immigrant sentiment in the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, where there has been greater reports of hate crimes against immigrant groups (or groups of immigrant descent such as Asian Americans), as well as an emergence of misinformation and prejudices about immigration, and, consequently, greater efforts to promote anti-immigrant policies in the United States.

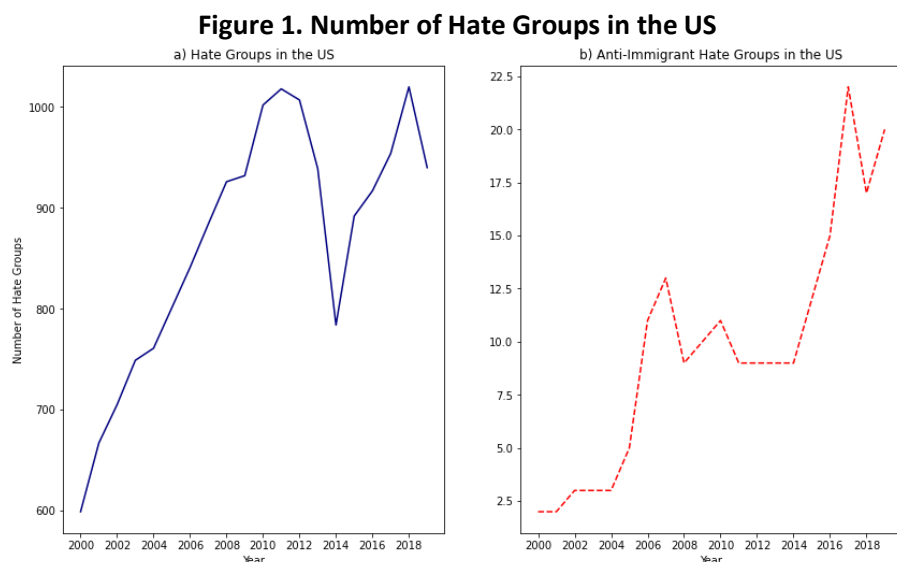
Hate Groups in the US

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)⁴, a hate group is an organization that, according to its official principles, the statements of its leaders or its activities, has beliefs or practices that attack or malign a whole class of people, generally for its immutable characteristics. Anti-immigrant hate groups are the most extreme of the hundreds of nativist groups that have proliferated since the late 1990s when anti-immigration xenophobia began to rise to levels not seen in the United States since the 1920s. Most hate groups are also anti-immigrant, but anti-migrant hate groups only focus on the immigrant population, generally arguing that immigrants cannot assimilate, have lower intellectual capacity than white people, bring diseases or that they are inherently more criminal. Although many groups legitimately criticize US immigration policies, anti-immigrant hate groups go much further by promoting racist propaganda and ideas about non-white immigrants.

⁴ The Southern Poverty Law Center is an American nonprofit legal advocacy organization specializing in civil rights and public interest litigation.

In recent years, we have seen a persistent increase in the number of hate groups. In particular, the increase in anti-immigrant groups to a level of approximately 20 groups in 2019 is notable (Figure 1). In this sense, it is worth noting that Anti-Immigrant groups are not as predominantly as White Nationalist or Black-separatist groups. Anti-Immigrant groups in 2019 represented only 2% of the total hate groups in the US. However, several hate groups with white nationalist or neo-Nazi ideologies have also targeted immigrant communities⁵. For example, on August 3rd, 2019, Patrick Crusius, a white nationalist shot and killed 23 people and injured 23 individuals intending to target Mexicans.

There are several reasons that may explain the increase in hate groups such as: the slow economic recovery and lack of jobs, greater awareness about the level of immigrants and non-white and ethnic groups in the United States, the projection that in 2050 the United States will not it will be a country with a white majority (US Census), the socio-political destabilization of the hegemonic bloc of white Protestant heterosexual men, among others⁶. Likewise, the recent increase in hate groups coincides with the Trump campaign and presidency, which has intensified white resentment over immigration and the country's changing demographics.



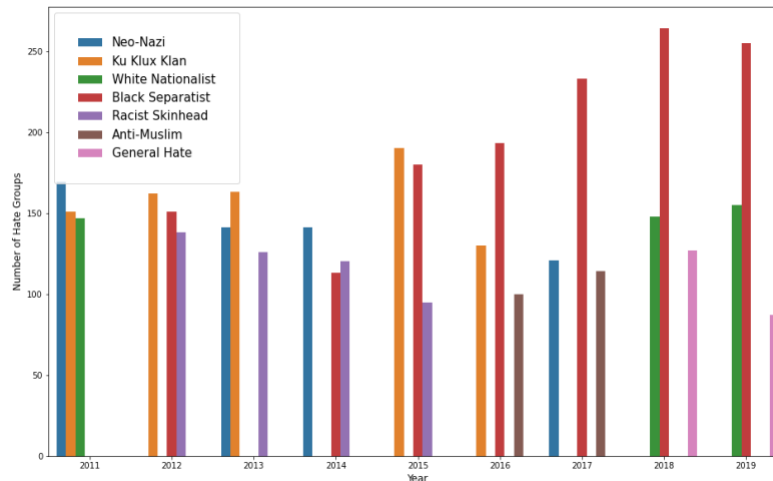
Source: Southern Poverty Law Center

⁵ ['White power ideology': why El Paso is part of a growing global threat](#). August 2019.

⁶ Turpin-Petrosino, C. (2015) Understanding Hate Crimes: Acts, Motives, Offenders, Victims and Justice.

As shown in figure 2, in the last decade, the most prominent ideology in hate groups has been “black separatists”⁷ followed by white nationalist ideologies, showing that racism is the most important determinant of groups. hate in the US.

Figure 2. Number of Hate Groups in the Top 3 Ideologies of Each Year



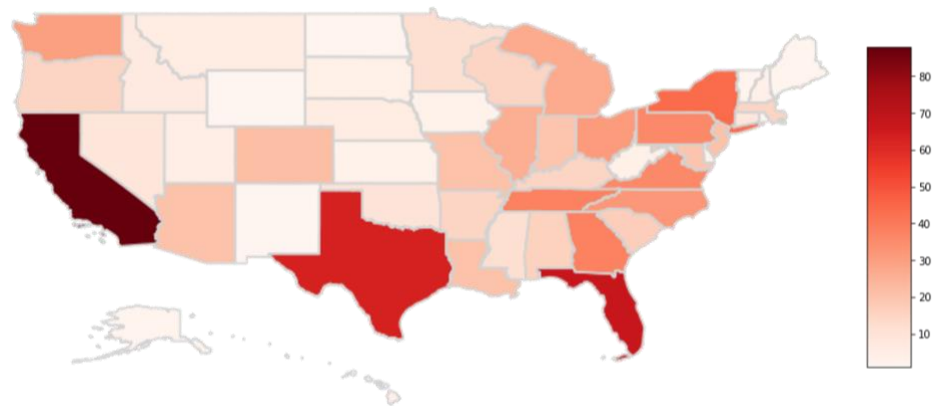
Source: Southern Poverty Law Center

Looking at the number of total hate groups at the state level, Figure 3 shows that states like California, Texas, and Florida have more hate groups than other states, this may be because they are also the most populous states. Therefore, if we control for population, Figure 4 shows that the Northeast and Southwest regions have a relatively high number of hate groups per million people. However, when we only analyze anti-immigrant hate groups per million people, some states like Arizona, Colorado, Virginia, Maryland, and Oregon have the highest number of anti-immigrant hate groups per million people, followed by high-populated states such as California, Texas and Florida (Figure 5).

In this sense, one way to support the multiple efforts that seek to protect the immigrant community is by following up on these hate groups since many of them have the power to influence the social, cultural and political development of the United States. Particularly in regions such as the South, Northwest and the Middle East, it is important to investigate the anti-immigrant hate groups which have the greatest presence.

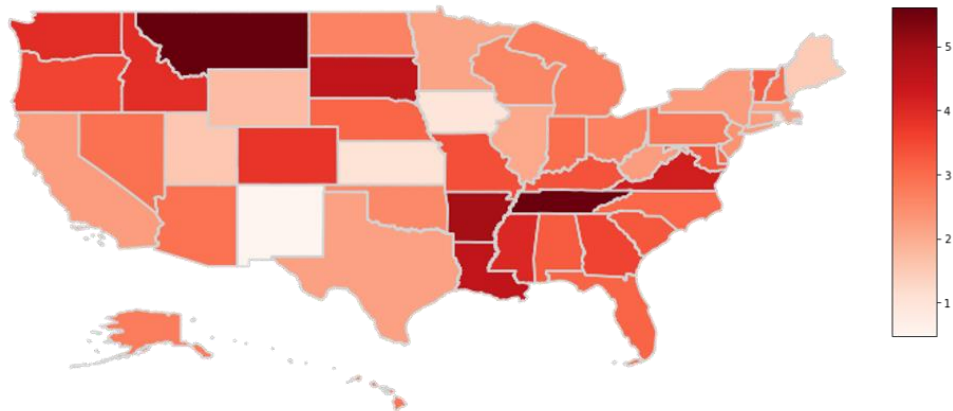
⁷ Black separatists believe that the answer to white racism is to form separate institutions, or even a separate nation, for blacks. Most forms of black separatism are strongly anti-white, anti-Semitic, and anti-LGBTQ. Unlike white nationalist groups, they have no influence in politics, much less in the White House.

Figure 3. Number of Hate Groups by State in 2019



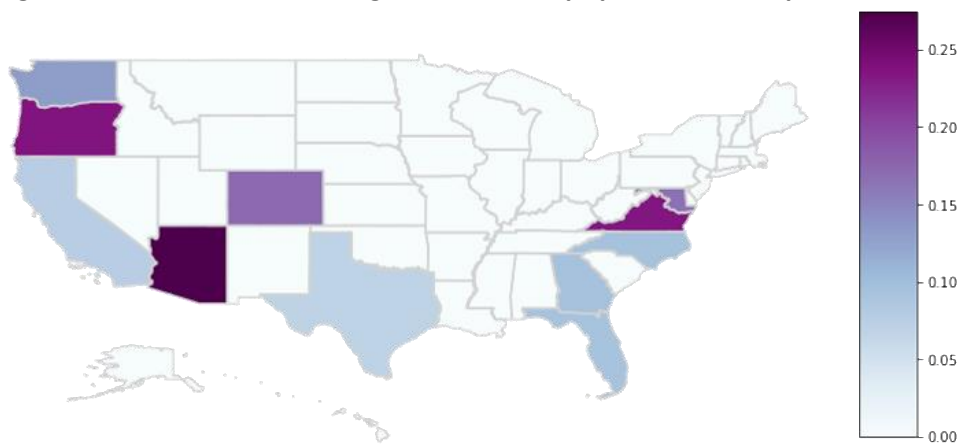
Source: Southern Poverty Law Center

Figure 4. Number of Hate Groups per Million People in 2019



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center and US Census Bureau Estimates

Figure 5. Number of Anti-Immigrant Hate Groups per Million People in 2019



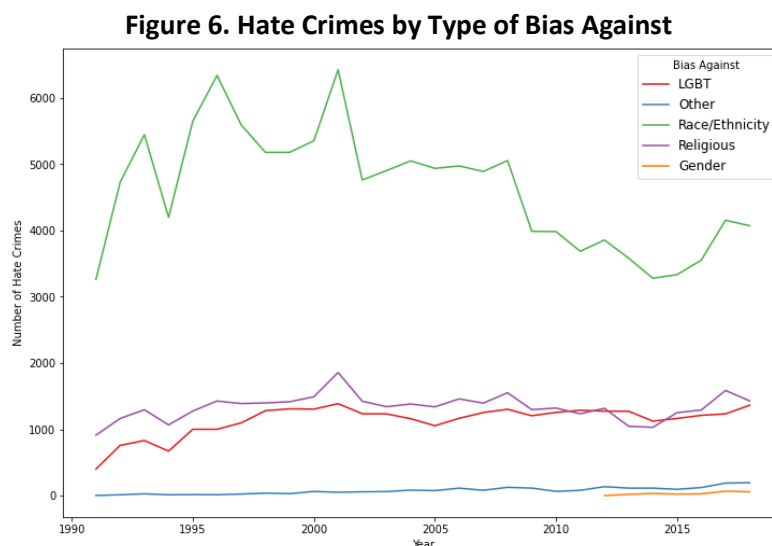
Source: Southern Poverty Law Center and US Census Bureau Estimates

Hate Crimes in the U.S.

Another way we can assess anti-immigrant sentiment is by looking at hate crimes towards the immigrant community. A hate crime refers to crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation or other motives.

The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) provides data on hate crimes specifying the motivation of crime (e.g. anti-Hispanic, anti-Semitic, anti-black, etc.), however, it is worth noting that these reports may be highly underestimating the real number of hate crimes (See: Pezzella et al. (2019)⁸). Additionally, we don't have information about whether the victim is a citizen or an immigrant, so, the analysis assumes that several categories in the hate crime data such as anti-Hispanic, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim or anti-Arab have an anti-immigrant motivation.

Figure 6 shows the evolution of the number of hate crimes by type of motivation or bias against it. Since 1990, race or ethnicity bias is the most predominant motivation of hate crimes in the U.S., which is not surprising as most of the hate groups formed in the U.S. are based on race ideologies (e.g. white supremacy, neo-Nazi). In less proportion of the total hate crimes, religious and LGBT are other groups highly affected by hate crimes.



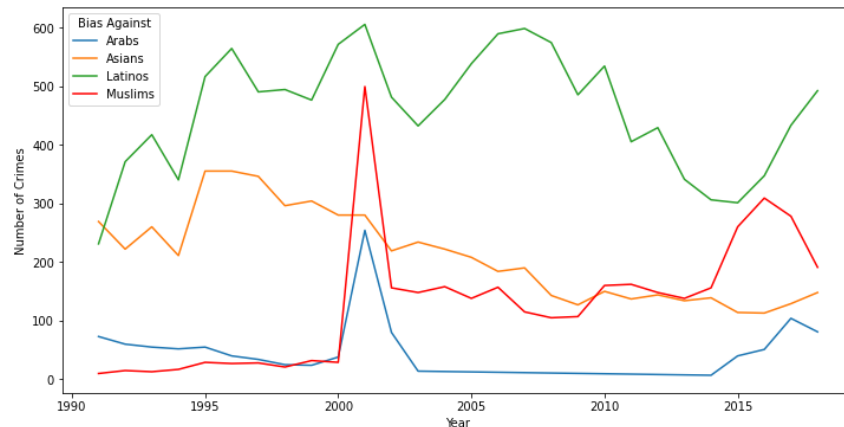
Source: Uniform Crime Report

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, we can observe a spike in hate crimes against race/ethnic groups and religious groups. If we break down these categories and only look at anti-Muslim or anti-Arab motivations

⁸ Pezzella, F. Fetzer, M. & Keller, T. (2019) [The Dark Figure of Hate Crime Underreporting](#). American Behavioral Scientist.

in hate crimes, the spike is more evident (Figure 7). Moreover, in the last 4 years, there has been a significant increase in hate crimes towards Latin or Hispanic individuals. If we assume that hate crime offenders perceive as an immigrant or alien from U.S. specific races or ethnicities such as Asian, Hispanic and Arab individuals and religious groups such as Muslim individuals, then, we can state that hate crimes with an anti-immigrant motivation have shown a significant rise in the last years.

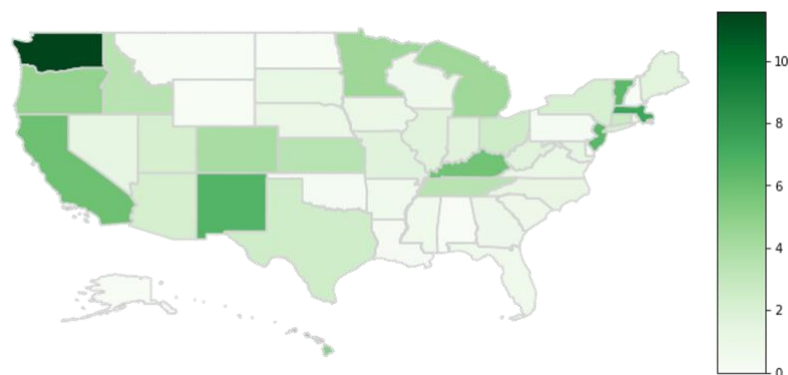
Figure 7. Hate Crimes Against Latinos, Asians, Arabs and Muslims



Source: Uniform Crime Report

As mentioned before, the UCR doesn't specify if the victim of the hate crime is an immigrant or a citizen, there is only information about the bias or motivation for the hate crime (i.e. anti-Latino, anti-black, anti-Jewish, anti-gay, etc.). In this sense, we aggregated the number of anti-Latino, anti-Asian, anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-Hindu, and anti-Sikh into an **anti-immigrant category**. Figure 8 shows the number of these crimes by state between 2013-2018. States such as Washington, Massachusetts, North Dakota, and Kentucky have a high level of anti-immigrant hate crimes per million people

Figure 8. Anti-Immigrant Hate Crimes* per million people between 2013-2018

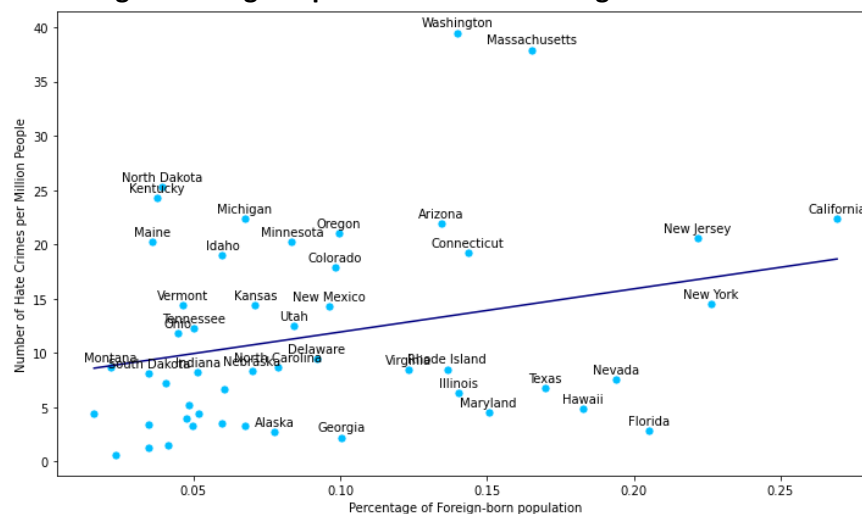


*Includes hate crimes against Latinos, Asians, Muslims, Arabs, Hindus, and Sikhs.

Source: Uniform Crime Report and US Census estimates.

We compared the percentage of foreign population in each state with the number of these hate crimes between 2013-2018 and we observed a weakly positive correlation (Figure 9). However, there is great variation between states, and some states like North Dakota and Kentucky have a relatively low percentage of foreign-born population with a relatively high number of hate crimes against immigrants per million people. So, even though the percentage of foreign population is weakly and positively related to the number of anti-immigrant hate crimes, foreign-born population is not a determinant for a state to show a high number of anti-immigrant hate crimes⁹.

Figure 9. Percentage of Foreign Population and Anti-Immigrant Hate Crimes* in 2013-2018



*Anti-Immigrant Hate Crimes includes hate crimes against Latin, Asian, Arab, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities. These crimes could be committed against immigrants or citizens, UCR does not specify this information.
Source: US Census Bureau (American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates) and Uniform Crime Report

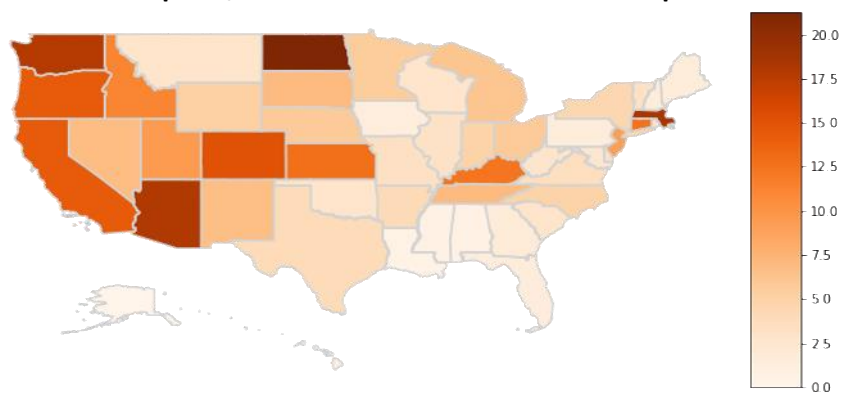
Anti-Immigrant sentiment towards the Latino Community

As shown in figure 7, in the last years there has been a significant increase in the number of hate crimes towards the Latino community. In 2018, about 40% of the Latin community in the U.S. said they have experienced discrimination, and these experiences are more likely for Hispanic individuals who are not perceived as white. These discrimination incidents included experiences such as being criticized for speaking Spanish, being told to go back to their home country, treated unfairly and being called offensive names (Lopez, M. Gonzalez, A. & Krogstad, J. (2018)).

⁹ The relation between foreign population and anti-immigrant hate crimes shows to be weakly positive, however, it is worth noting that the number of hate crimes is highly underreported, and this number could be higher for undocumented immigrant communities that fear to be deported.

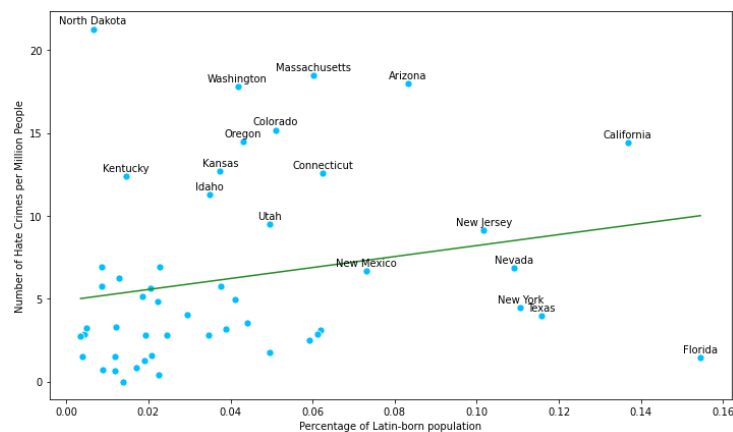
Using hate crime data as a way to measure discrimination towards Latinos, we mapped hate crimes against Hispanics per million people between 2013-2018. Figure 10 shows that several western states, such as California, Washington, and Arizona, have a high level of crime per million people. North Dakota and Massachusetts also show high levels of hate crimes against Latinos. It is worth noting that California and Arizona are states whose population has a high proportion of Latinos. Therefore, we assessed the relationship between the percentage of the Latino population with the number of hate crimes against Latinos in each state between 2013-2018. In figure 11, we can observe a slightly positive correlation, although with considerable variation.

Figure 10. Anti-Hispanic/Latino Hate Crimes Per Million People in 2013-2018



Source: Uniform Crime Report and US Census Bureau Estimates

Figure 11. Percentage of Latin-born population and Anti-Latino Hate Crimes in 2013-2018

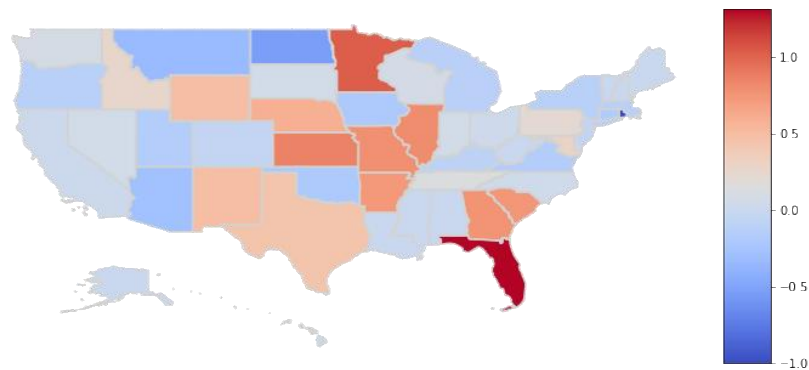


Source: US Census Bureau (American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates) and Uniform Crime Report

Finally, to assess how hate crimes against Latinos have evolved in recent years, we compute the average annual change of these hate crimes between 2015 and 2018 in each state. Figure 12 shows that several states such as Florida, Minnesota and Kansas show a significant (and worrying) increase in hate crimes

against Latinos, followed by Illinois, Missouri and Georgia. Therefore, it is suggested to study thoroughly the situation of each state and to keep pushing for an inclusive agenda that promotes diversity and protects immigrants.

Figure 12. Annual Average Change of Anti-Latino Hate Crimes between 2015-2018



Source: Uniform Crime Report

Anti-immigrant sentiment in times of COVID-19

The current pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) represents an unprecedented global challenge. The outbreak of the pandemic began in December 2019, when the first cases were identified in Wuhan, China. Studies indicate that, by the end of the year, this disease had already quietly spread across Europe¹⁰. It was not until the end of January when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the existence of public health risk of international concern. Until August 2020, more than 20 million people have been infected and more than 700 thousand people have died from this disease.

The pandemic has not only had health and economic consequences, but also social consequences. Among them, it stands out the increase in xenophobia and racism against the Chinese community, as well as other Asian communities. Not only in the United States, but in several countries such as Italy, Australia, the United Kingdom, among others, there have been attacks such as vandalism, verbal and physical violence against people of Asian origin. In particular, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit have been a bridge for racist attacks, as well as for the spread of misinformation about the virus, which has caused prejudice and discrimination towards the Asian community (Croucher et al. (2020)). Since April

¹⁰ See: [Coronavirus was already in Italy by December, waste water study finds](#). June 2020. BBC.

2020, a coalition of Asian Americans¹¹ created a platform to report hate incidents called STOP AAPI HATE. From that date until the end of July 2020, they have received more than 2,000 reports of incidents of discrimination related to the pandemic.

Likewise, various government leaders have taken up racist rhetoric against China. At the beginning of the pandemic, President Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo used the terms "Chinese virus" and "Wuhan virus" to refer to COVID-19, which promoted greater prejudice and anti-Asian sentiments in the United States (Vang (2020)). In this context, political parties have taken advantage of prejudices about the pandemic to criminalize foreigners and promote anti-immigrant policies. With the strong immigration restrictions that have been implemented at the border, more than 41,000 people have been deported without the opportunity to request asylum. Furthermore, immigrant detention centers continue to lack adequate public health protections, which is why more than 20 thousand people who are in these centers face high health risks.

Finally, documented immigrants have also been affected by an anti-immigrant agenda. The Trump administration has temporarily suspended the granting of H-1B visas with the justification of protecting the jobs of Americans during the pandemic. However, several companies in the United States have shown their opposition to this policy since it damages the recruitment of talent in sectors of the economy with great labor needs. The Executive Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Thomas J. Donohue, stated that: "restrictive changes in our nation's immigration system will slow growth and reduce job creation". Additionally, in July 2020, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) decided not to grant visas to incoming foreign students at universities that only offer their classes remotely.

In this sense, the administration of President Trump continues to be characterized by an anti-immigrant agenda led by Stephen Miller, a White House counselor, who indicated that this strategy (referring to the current restrictive immigration labor policies) is part of a long-term vision¹².

Increase in Cases in the South Border of the U.S. and the rise of discrimination towards immigrants at the border

¹¹ Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON)

¹² Panduranga, H. (April 2020). [Trump Is Using Covid-19 as a Cloak for Pushing His Anti-Immigrant Agenda.](#)

In mid-June 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases in the United States began to increase dramatically, and the increase was most noticeable in states such as California, Arizona, Texas, and Florida. By mid-July of 2020, the United States reached a record not seen at the time, of more than 70,000 cases per day. In particular, counties near the United States-Mexico border, as well as counties in Florida, had high rates of contagion per 10,000 habitants¹³. In this regard, the conservative media speculated that illegal and legal immigration was the biggest contributor to the rise of COVID-19 cases in the southern United States. Likewise, White House sources mentioned that this increase could be caused by the transit of immigrant workers with special visas at the border¹⁴.

Additionally, an article published by the Center for Immigration Studies (labeled as a hate group by SPLC), highlighted that Mexicans, as well as Central Americans, entered the United States illegally and consequently due to the pandemic, made use of hospitals in the southern U.S.¹⁵. The article defends this argument fundamentally with two premises: 1) that, in Arizona and Texas, certain hospitals in counties that are predominantly Hispanic had a high hospital occupancy, as well as a high level of deaths from COVID-19 and 2) that the hospitals and the government in Mexico are not responding efficiently to the situation, and, consequently, Mexicans cross the border to use the hospitals in the United States. The first premise may not have any relationship with recent events of immigration mobility (which are minimal given the partial closure of borders). In non-border states such as Illinois and New Orleans, as well as in the rest of the United States, it is also observed that individuals from Hispanic and African American communities tend to present higher risks of infection and death from COVID-19. In fact, studies indicate that the populations most vulnerable to COVID-19 are precisely the Hispanic and African American community due to their socioeconomic position and the inequality that permeates the U.S.¹⁶. For the second premise, the article does not offer evidence to show that Mexicans are saturating hospitals in the southern United States.

The trend of increases in COVID-19 cases in the South was consequent to the multiple opening policies in Florida, Arizona, Texas, and California. However, hate groups like the Center for Immigration Studies will seek the opportunity to blame and criminalize immigrants. For this reason, it is essential to develop and

¹³ See [US-COVID-Atlas](#)

¹⁴ [White House Sources Reveal Recent COVID Spike at Southern Border Was Caused by Legal Immigrants](#). July 2020. Revolver.

¹⁵ [New Influx of Covid-19 Patients Floods U.S. Border State Hospitals](#). June 2020.

¹⁶ See: [The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus. July 2020](#). The New York Times. & [What Do Coronavirus Racial Disparities Look Like State By State?](#) NPR

promote information based on data and robust analysis that eliminates prejudices (e.g. accusations against Asian people for bringing the virus or against undocumented immigrants for infecting the South) and false premises which seek to recriminate the immigrant community.

Final Thoughts and Conclusion

Hate groups with anti-immigrant ideologies have grown significantly in the United States, and, consequently, their influence on political and social development. These groups can promote physical or verbal violence towards immigrant communities, or they can influence immigration policies and institutions in the United States, as is the case of organizations such as "State Legislators for Legal Immigration" or "Federation for American Immigration Reform. (FAIR) ", who have close ties to members of the federal administration in charge of US immigration policy. For this reason, we study hate groups, particularly those with an anti-immigrant ideology, and their evolution to date. Most of the anti-immigrant groups are found in highly populated states like California, Texas, and Florida that also have high percentages of immigrants. Also, by controlling for population, we identify that states such as Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and Virginia have a high number of anti-immigrant hate groups per million population. In this sense, one way to support the multiple efforts that seek to protect the immigrant community is by following up on these hate groups since many of them have the power to influence the social, cultural, and political development of the United States.

We also studied the evolution of hate crimes in the United States. In this analysis, we assume that crimes against the Latino, Asian, Muslim or Arab community have an anti-immigrant motivation. In the last 5 years, we have noticed a steady increase in these crimes, particularly against the Latino community. Furthermore, although we found a weakly positive relationship between the percentage of foreign population and the number of hate crimes by state, there was lot of variation, so it was not significant. These results are also similar when we focus only on anti-Latino crimes and the percentage of the population of Hispanic origin. Therefore, we conclude that a high level of the foreign-born population is not a determining factor for a state to display a high number of hate crimes against immigrants. Finally, we mapped the number of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino hate crimes in the United States and again, states like Washington and Arizona stand out for a high level of anti-immigrant hate crimes per million population, as well as Massachusetts, and North Dakota. For this reason, it is necessary to monitor the situation of each of these states to raise awareness and promote inclusion and cultural diversity, as well as the protection of the human rights of immigrants.

In the face with social phenomena that deteriorate the economic and social environments, such as economic recessions, geopolitical conflicts, and globalization, and in the absence of a culture of inclusion and diversity, ideologies of hatred and anti-immigrant sentiments emerge to recriminate migrants from said situations. Currently, the world is facing a global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, and in the face of this, anti-immigrant rhetoric, as well as physical and verbal violence against immigrants, especially against the Asian community, has arisen. Social platforms have been a bridge for racist attacks, as well as for the spread of misinformation about the virus, which has caused prejudice and discrimination towards said community. Likewise, anti-immigrant hate groups and conservative political parties have taken advantage of these prejudices to criminalize foreigners and promote anti-immigrant policies. For this reason, it is essential the participation and cooperation of governments and civil organizations in the fight against the anti-immigrant sentiment through the study, analysis, and development of public policies that protect the human rights of immigrants and promote inclusion and cultural diversity.

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