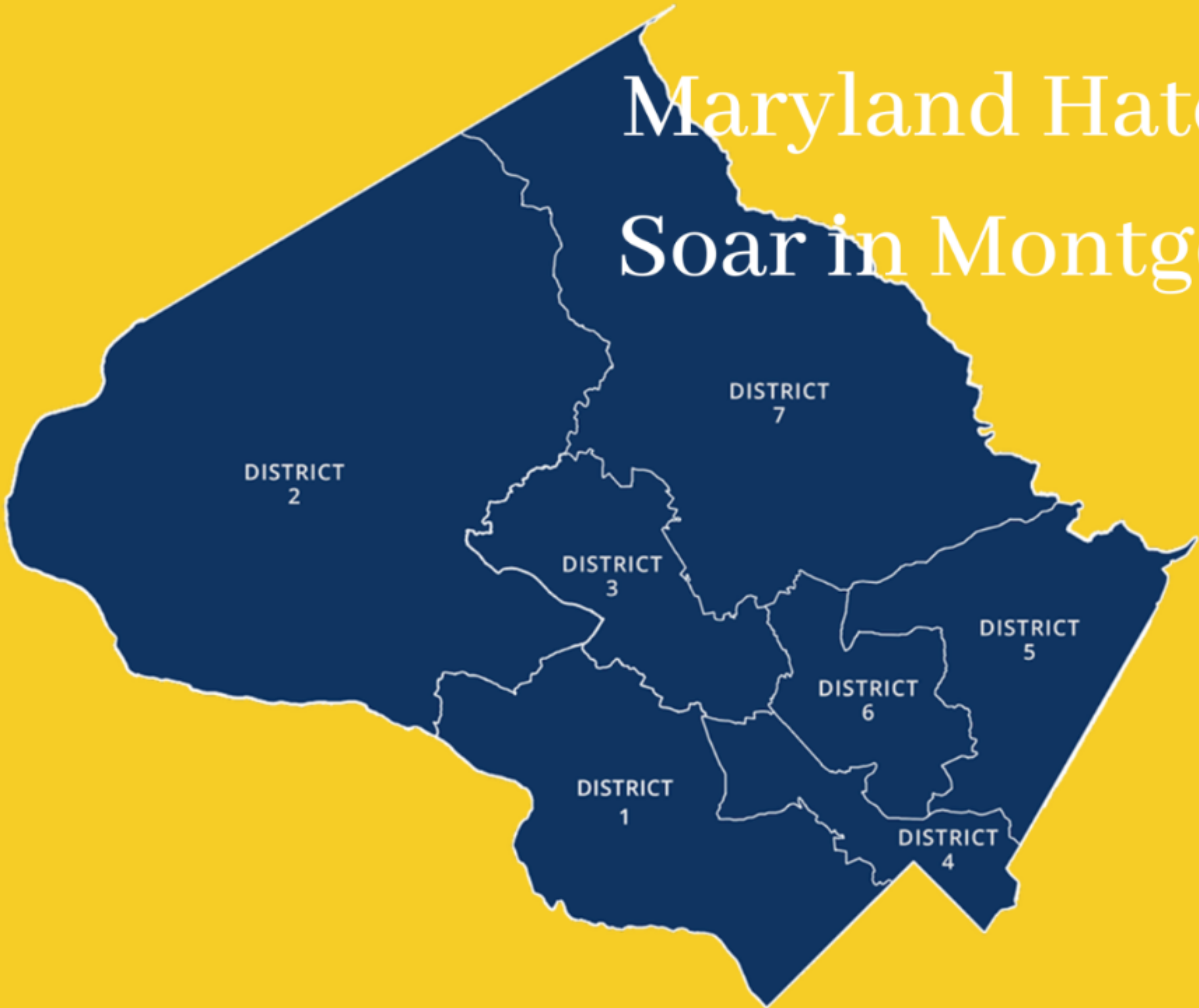
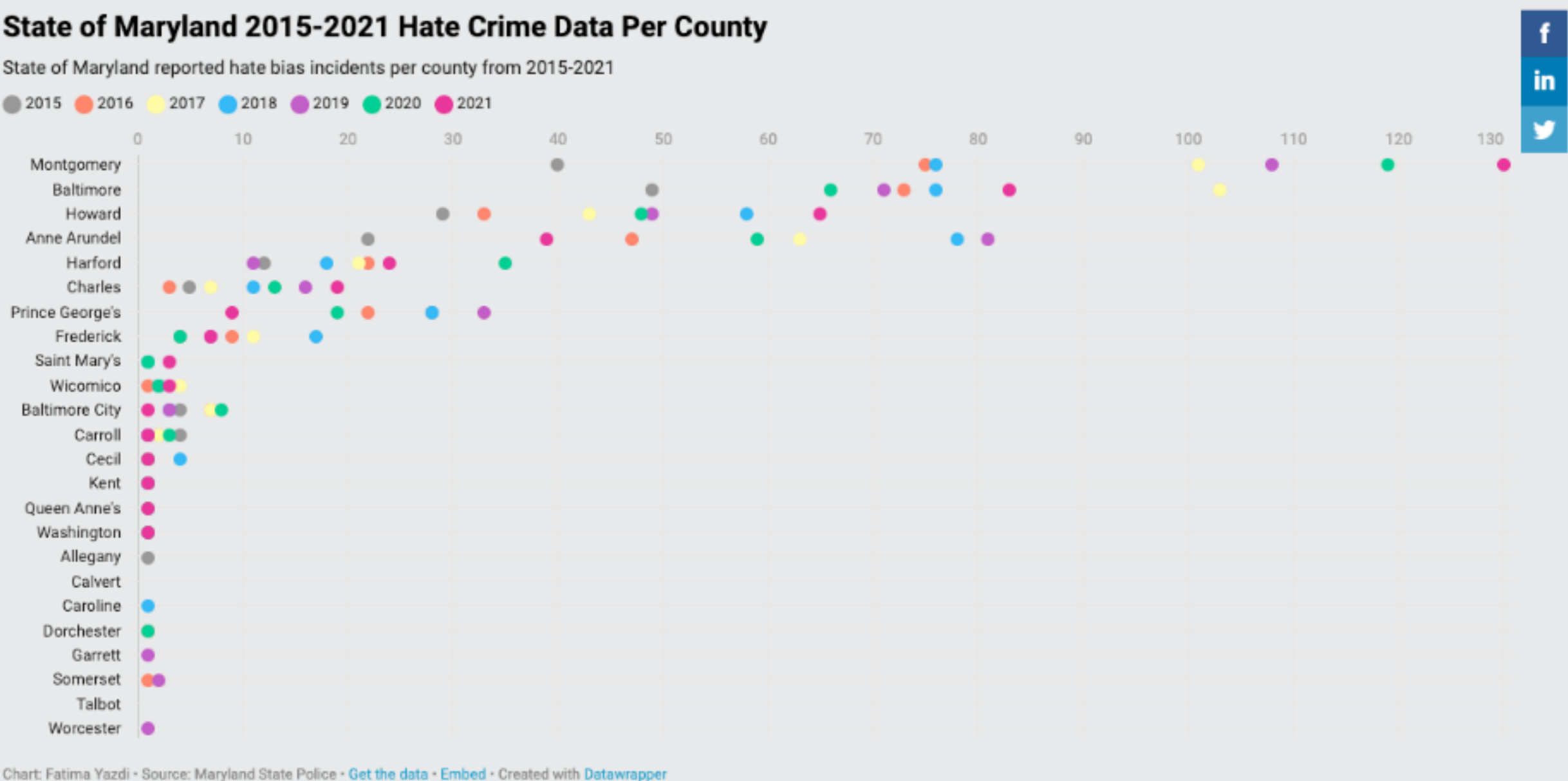


# Maryland Hate Crime Rates Soar in Montgomery County

By Fatima Yazdi



Listed as 2021's 18th wealthiest county in America by Forbes, Maryland's Montgomery County is widely known for its luxury real estate, prestigious public schools and and, in recent years, hate bias incidents. The pandemic has been followed by a surge of hate against minority communities, and Maryland's most populous and diverse county is facing the effects. Since 2018, Montgomery County has consistently had the highest count of hate bias incidents--of any county-- in the state.

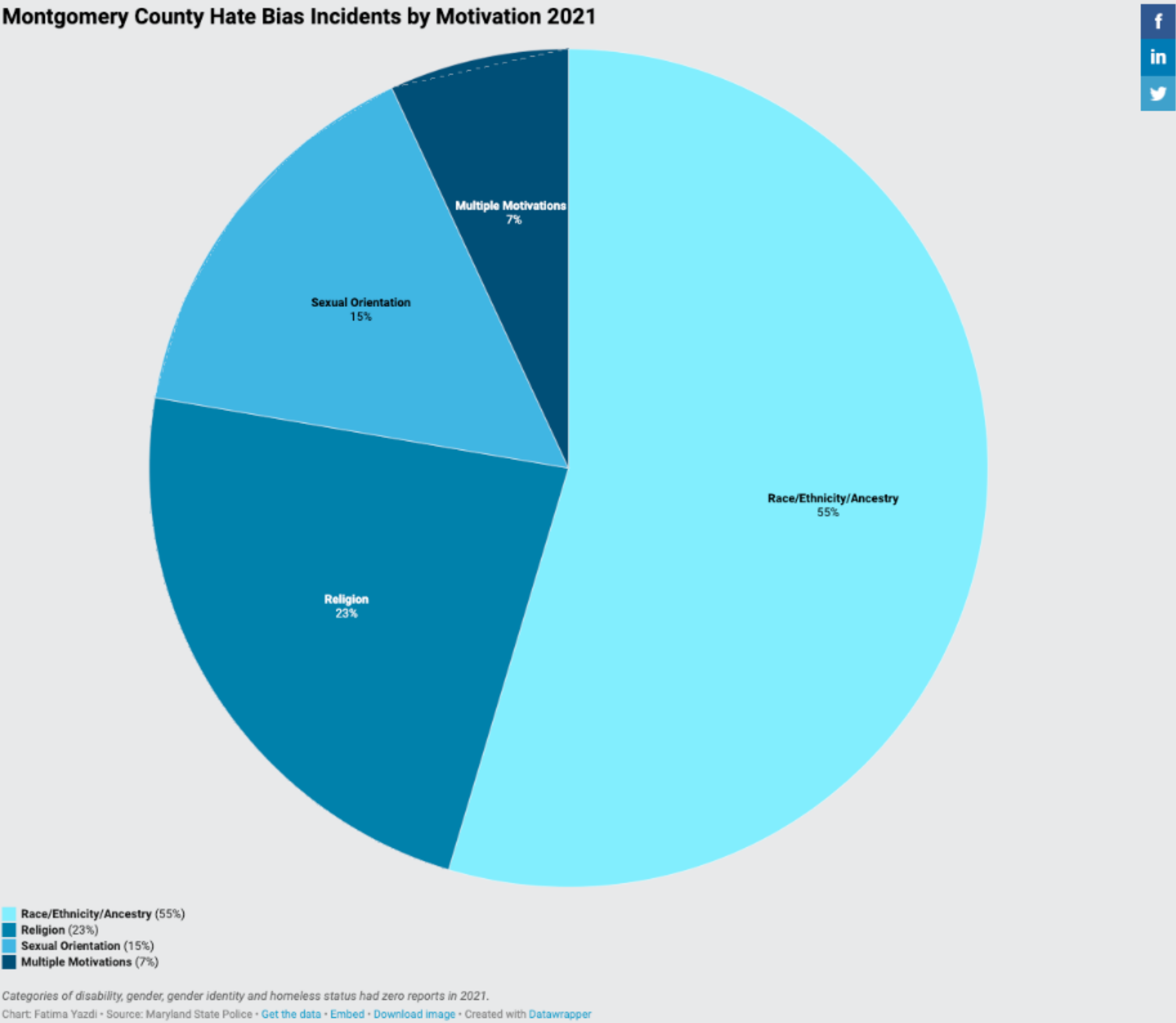


Montgomery County first experienced a spurt in hate bias incidents-- by 40%-- in 2016, the year former President Donald J. Trump was elected. Prior to 2016, Baltimore County consistently held the highest rate of incidents. There are numerous factors that might explain why Montgomery County, of all Maryland counties, has experienced a recent rise in hate crimes. Firstly, Montgomery County is the second wealthiest county in the state, with a \$117,345 median household income in 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau; the wealthiest county in the state is Howard County. According to the annual hate bias reports from 2018 through 2021, there were seven zipcodes throughout the three years that had the highest concentration of hate bias incidents. Of the seven zip codes, three of them belonged to Potomac, Bethesda and Sandy Spring, some of the wealthiest zip codes in the entire state.



A Potomac, Maryland home in the 20854 zip code, valued at \$49 million. Photo courtesy of TTR Sotheby's International Realty.

The remaining four zip codes belonged to Rockville and Silver Spring, some of the most diverse zip codes in the county and state. Both wealth and diversity likely played a defining role in the rise in hate bias incidents in these areas. Montgomery is the most diverse County in the state. As such, various groups are the subject of hate bias and hate crimes.



More than half of the hate bias incidents in 2021 were toward race, ethnicity or ancestry ('R/E/A') and nearly one-fourth were against religion. Additionally, on average, from 2019-2021, 'R/E/A' was the motivation for 68.7% of all hate bias incidents reported. Hate bias data from 2022 is not available yet. Of all the victims of reported hate bias incidents in 2021, more than one-fourth of the victims were Black, followed closely by White and Asian victims. In this case, Montgomery County follows the state trend, as Anti-Black/African American motivations compiled nearly 45% of 2021 hate bias incidents in the state. The high number of White victims in Montgomery County may be explained by the high population of Jewish residents in the County, with Montgomery County accounting for nearly half of the Jewish population in Maryland, according to the Berman Jewish Databank. This also translates in the data, as Anti-Jewish incidents have consistently been of the most common kind in the 'religion' category throughout the past seven years. With various groups being the subject of hate throughout the state and county, incidents also come in different forms.



White supremacist slogan and symbols spray painted in 2021 on the Walter Johnson high school building in the 20817 zip code of Bethesda, Maryland. This Bethesda zip code is amongst one of the flagged codes in the area with a high concentration of hate bias incidents in the recent years. Photo courtesy of Montgomery County Police.

Vandalism/malicious destruction of property compiled almost one-third of reported incidents in 2021 throughout the state. The following category is verbal intimidation, making up almost one-fourth of reported incidents. Though these reports take form in different ways against different communities, one thing remains consistent in Montgomery County: hate bias, in general, is on the rise. As such, all minority communities are vulnerable subjects to these acts.

With the recent slow return to normalcy after the pandemic, one can only wonder what 2022 and 2023 numbers might show, and what that reveals about Montgomery County.