

Analyzing Trends in U.S. Hate Crime Legislation

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Background

Context

- Hate crime laws address bias-motivated crimes.
- U.S. legislation has expanded over time in response to social movements and increased recognition of bias-motivated offenses.

Shortcomings

- Statutes are complex and difficult to interpret.
- No centralized, comprehensive database of state hate crime laws.
- Limited accessibility limits trend analysis and policy research.

Purpose

- Develop a comprehensive database with key statutory features to support research, policy analysis, and public understanding.

Research Question: What is the extent of hate crime protections in each state?



Methods

- Hate crime legislation from 46 states and Washington, D.C.
- ~2,550 statutes reviewed (1991-2025, where available).
- Five-month review and classification of hate crime laws.
- Tracked changes and patterns in legislation across states, over time.

Results

- Certain protected groups appear more frequently than others (race, religion, national origin).
- States differ in statutory structure (stand-alone vs. sentence enhancements)
- Legislative coding phase is substantially complete.
 - Additional states and updated statutes may be incorporated.
- Database development and full statistical analysis ongoing.

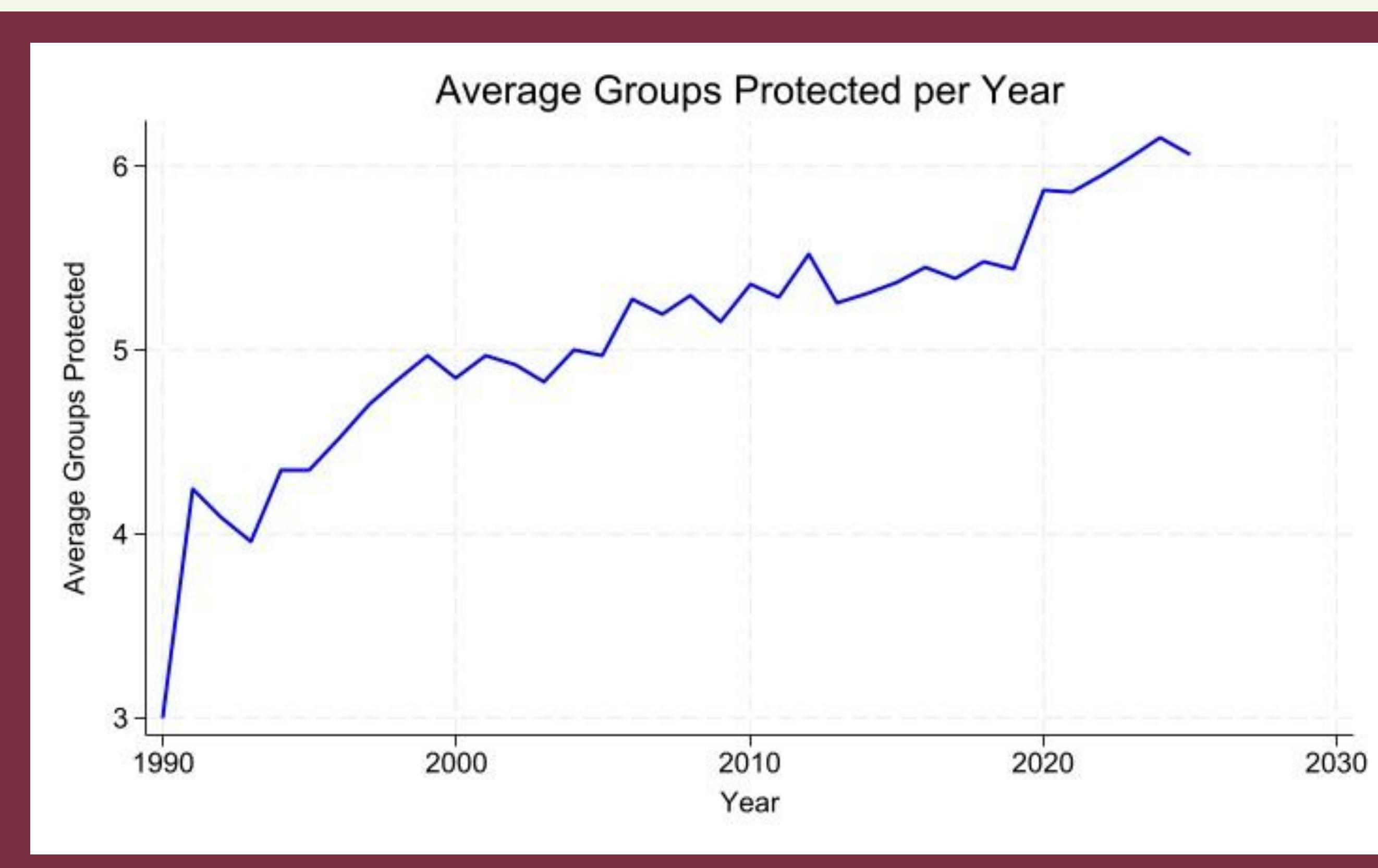


Figure 1. Average number of groups protected by hate crime laws in the US (1991-present)

Discussion

- Preliminary findings suggest an expansion in the number of protected groups included in state hate crime laws since 1991.
- Variation still persists in structure and scope of protections.
 - Aligns with broader scholarship noting incremental but uneven development of hate crime legislation nationwide (Jenness, 2007).

Strengths

- Large legislative sample, longitudinal scope, systematic and standardized coding framework

Limitations

- Data limited to 1991-present; some states had additional gaps in availability
- Coding constrained to predefined Qualtrics categories; certain statutory nuances may not have been captured

Future Considerations

- Incorporate federal statutes for more comprehensive comparison.
- Develop publically accessible, searchable database.
- Utilize dataset for policy studies and comparative legal research.

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	Included	Not Included
Race	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Color	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National Origin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender Identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 2. Parameters included in Qualtrics survey to classify protected groups