MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT ON BIAS INCIDENTS

MARCH 1, 2024

Prepared by
The Policy and Planning Division

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

We in Montgomery County are not immune to the trends in bias-related incidents that have expanded here, in the country and, indeed, around the world. The current war in the Middle East has only accelerated the trends that started with the 2016 election.

As we work to build our multicultural county with understanding, inclusion, and compassion, these incidents continue to be a blight on our County.

In the report, we have made the necessary, if unfortunate, decision to break out incidents in the schools from those occurring more generally. This change is due to MCPS changing its policy on which incidents to report, resulting in a clearer picture of the situation within the schools. The school system now reports all bias-related incidents, regardless of whether a criminal offense was committed.

In 2023, there were 464 reported bias incidents. Of those, 284, or 61%, were school related. Of that total, 119, or 42%, were directed at individuals and 165, 58%, were directed at the school grounds or school property. Of the 284 school-related incidents, 90 involved the image of the swastika.

Vandalism and graffiti accounted for 105 incidents, 64%. Most were motivated by religion and race. All 75 incidents motivated by religion were anti-Jewish, while 25 of 27 were anti-Black. More incidents took place in middle schools, followed by high schools and elementary schools.

In the past few months, community groups and faith organizations have attempted to instruct students about how to recognize bias, such as antisemitism, and what to do about it. However, we should also be listening to students to try to determine the influences that led them to commit these acts and whether they recognize that such acts are not simply pranks but are instead hurtful deeds.

Overall, combining the reports from schools and community-based incidents, the trend is dispiriting. In 2022, we reported 156 incidents, an increase of more than 20% from 2021. It was, until now, the highest number of incidents reported, recognizing that reporting processes and definitions have changed over time.

In 2023, 44% of bias-related incidents were related to race, with 30% of those anti-Black. Similarly, 44% were motivated by religion, with 41% of those directed against the Jewish religion.

Also last year, there were 180 community-related incidents, 68% higher than in 2022. The highest number occurred in November, the first full month after the October 7 Hamas attack against Israel and subsequent Israeli response. There were 28 incidents reported that month, with an increase in incidents committed against individuals and religious organizations compared with the rest of the year.

The Department takes these acts seriously and I urge everyone to report bias-related incidents. We are committed to upholding the civil and human rights of all of our residents.

Marcus G. Jones
Chief of Police

HISTORY

In 1990, Congress passed the Hate Crime Statistics Act and, as a result, the F.B.I. Uniform Crime Reporting (U.C.R.) Program created a hate-crime data collection system to comply with this mandate. Lawmakers amended the Hate Crime Statistics Act with the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to include bias against persons with disabilities. Finally, in 2009, Congress passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, and the U.C.R. program expanded its data collection categories for race and ethnicity and began accepting data on crimes motivated by gender and gender identity bias in 2013. The Montgomery County Police Department voluntarily reports statistics to this program.

Defining a Hate Crime

For the purposes of collecting statistics, Congress has defined a hate crime as a "committed criminal offense that is motivated in whole or in part, by the offender's bias(es) against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity." Hate itself is not a crime—and the FBI is mindful of protecting freedom of speech and other civil liberties.
Retrieved from www.fbi.gov

Matthew Shepard & James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 (18 U.S.C. § 249)

This statute gives the FBI authority to investigate violent hate crimes, including violence directed at gay, lesbian, bisexual, and the transgender community.

HATE CRIME STATISTICS ACT
AS AMENDED, 28 U.S.C §534

§ "[Sec. 1.] (a) This Act may be cited as the 'Hate Crime Statistics Act.'

(b)   (1) Under the authority of section 534 of title 28, United States Code, the Attorney General shall acquire data, for each calendar year, about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, including where appropriate the crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter; forcible rape; aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation; arson; and destruction, damage or vandalism of property.

 "(2) The Attorney General shall establish guidelines for the collection of such data, including the necessary evidence and criteria that must be present for a finding of manifest prejudice and procedures for carrying out the purposes of this section.

 "(3) Nothing in this section creates a cause of action or a right to bring an action, including an action

"Sec. 2. (a) Congress finds that—
 "(1) the American family life is the foundation of American Society,
 "(2) Federal policy should encourage the well-being, financial security, and health of the American family,
 "(3) schools should not de-emphasize the critical value of American family life.

"(b) Nothing in this Act shall be construed, nor shall any funds appropriated to carry out the purpose of the Act be used, to promote or encourage homosexuality."

INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County Police Department's Annual Report on Bias Incidents is a compilation that provides statistical data about all of the incidents and criminal offenses that may be motivated by an offender's bias against a race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. In Maryland, Public Safety Article §2-307 adds homelessness to the list of protected classes and tasks all law enforcement agencies in the state to provide the Maryland State Police (M.S.P.) with information related to bias-motivated incidents.

In 2020, Section 10-304 of the Criminal Law Article was amended to include the 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law, which states physical assaults and destruction of property "motivated either in whole or substantial part" by hate bias against one of the protected classes. A second bill added Section 10-305.1 of the Criminal Law Article, which prohibits affixing or inscribing an item or symbol of hate, including an actual or depicted noose or swastika, on real or personal property that is publicly or privately owned without the express permission of the owner or occupant with the intent to threaten or intimidate any person or group of persons.

In 2021, the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, Pub. L. 117-13 was signed into law, which "addresses hate crimes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular emphasis on the increase in violence against Asian Americans." The bill requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to expedite the review of reported hate crimes related to COVID-19 and to enable greater accessibility for the reporting of hate crimes at both the local and state levels.

The Montgomery County Police Department voluntarily reports offense data to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) under the Uniform Crime Reporting (U.C.R.) program's Hate Crime Statistics program. Hate crimes are not separate, distinct crimes but rather traditional offenses motivated by the offender's bias. Under the FBI UCR program, hate crime reporting applies to the following offenses: homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, simple assault, intimidation, destruction/damage/vandalism of property, and human trafficking (commercial sex acts and involuntary servitude).

The mere fact that the offender is biased against the victim does not mean that a hate crime occurred. Rather, the offender's *criminal* act must have been motivated, in whole or in part, by their bias against a race, ethnicity, religion, sex, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or homelessness. Motivation is subjective; therefore, in most incidents, it is difficult to know with any degree of certainty whether a crime resulted from an offender's bias. The comments and/or actions of an offender (if known) are the most significant factors determining whether an incident is motivated by bias or hate.

The Montgomery County Police Department recognizes the impact of bias and hate on an individual or a community. It records all incidents in which bias is present. In 2023, the department recorded 464 bias incidents, including two Takoma Park incidents (the Montgomery County Police Department does not report Takoma Park incidents to the state or F.B.I. This is a 195% increase over the 157 incidents reported in 2022. The reason for the significant increase is discussed on the next page. The state and federal governments track and report these incidents differently. As a result, the department's documented events are generally higher than those reported at the state and federal levels. It is important to note that the F.B.I. only reports hate crimes; it does not track bias incidents.

Due to differences in reporting at the local, state, and federal levels illustrated above and changes made internally, there is little comparative data available. Readers are cautioned against simplifying comparisons between multiple years, data, and/or other reports from agencies that might utilize different reporting methodologies. Furthermore, many bias incidents go unreported due to fear or embarrassment, making it difficult to track incidents accurately and establish trends.

While many bias incidents may not constitute criminal acts, the MCPD understands that acts demonstrating and depicting bias do profoundly impact the community and may lead to criminal acts. Montgomery County residents are encouraged to report all incidents, including non-criminal events, which may single out someone because of their perceived race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical handicap, or homelessness. This will allow the department to quantify resource needs and direct resources to areas where they will be most effective. Likewise, other community organizations will be better able to respond to the needs of victims.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Overall, bias incidents increased nearly 200% since 2022. This dramatic increase is largely due to a change in reporting procedures within the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system. To enhance communication, cooperation, and transparency between agencies, MCPS now reports all bias/hate incidents regardless of whether or not a criminal offense was committed.

It is important to note that the increase does not necessarily mean that more incidents are occurring within schools; it simply means that more incidents are now being reported to the police. Because of the changes implemented, the bias data within this year's report cannot be compared directly to prior years' data. Instead, the following report will provide a separate analysis of school-related and community-related incidents to provide a more comprehensive analysis. School-related incidents account for 61% (284) of all bias events reported in 2023.

Due to a large emphasis placed on education and restorative justice, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office has partnered with the MCPS to provide youth training related to hate and bias events.
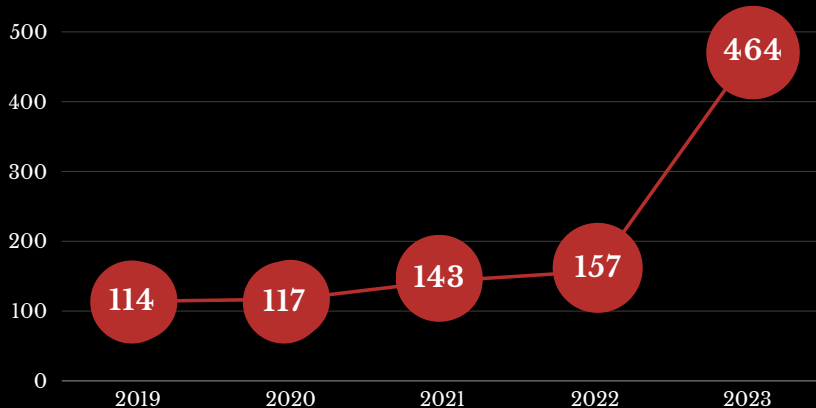
MCPS ROLE

MCPD and MCPS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Effective April 4, 2022

Offenses termed "critical incidents" on MCPS property (e.g., school buses, MCPS sponsored events including extra-curricular activities) shall be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately.

Critical incidents include (but are not limited to) Hate crime - committing any crime, including harassing a person or damaging the property of a person motivated by the victim's race, color, national origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, homelessness, or disability.

Mandatory police reporting does not mean that police will take enforcement action in every situation. However, police must be immediately notified of the incidents in the agreement.

Last Year's

NUMBERS & STATISTICS

Although 2023 data cannot be directly compared to the previous year, the two charts illustrate the distribution of bias incidents and motivation from 2022. Historically, race and religion are the two leading motivators of bias events.
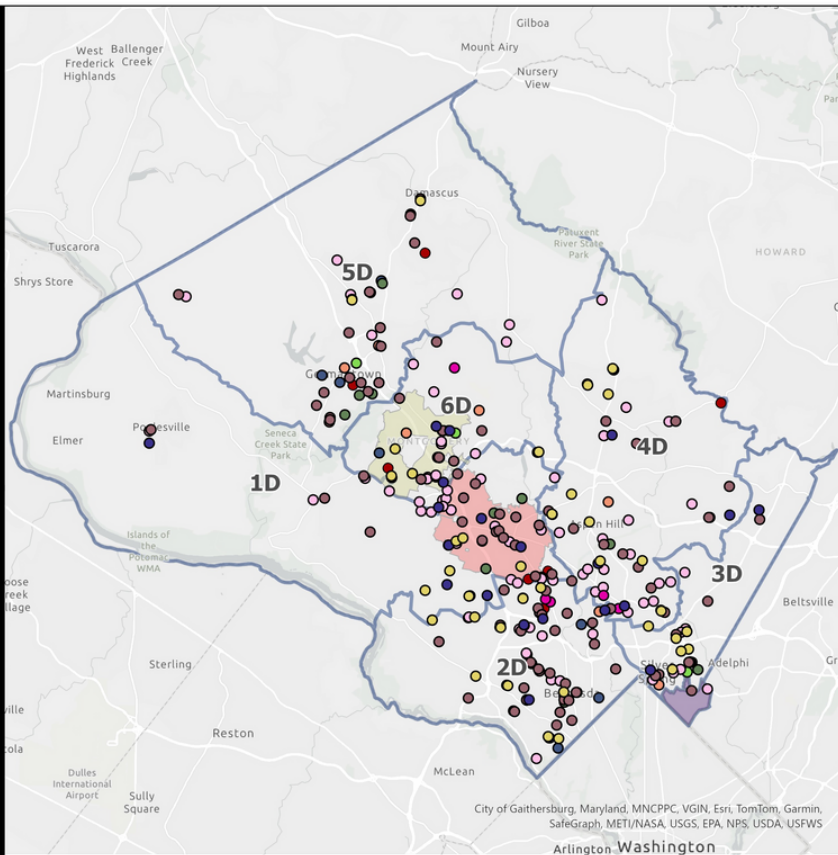

2022 Bias Incidents

2022 Bias Motivation
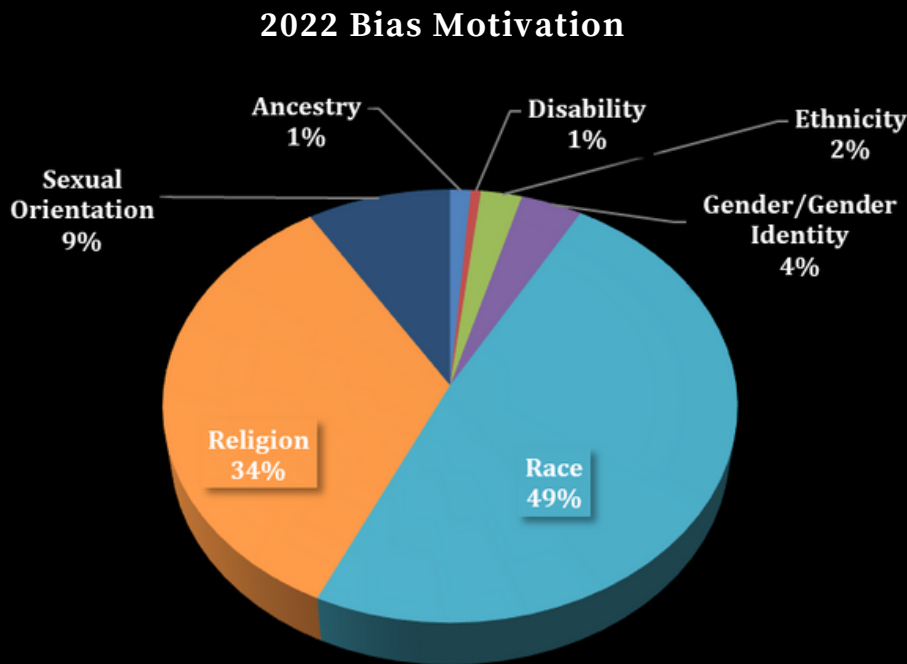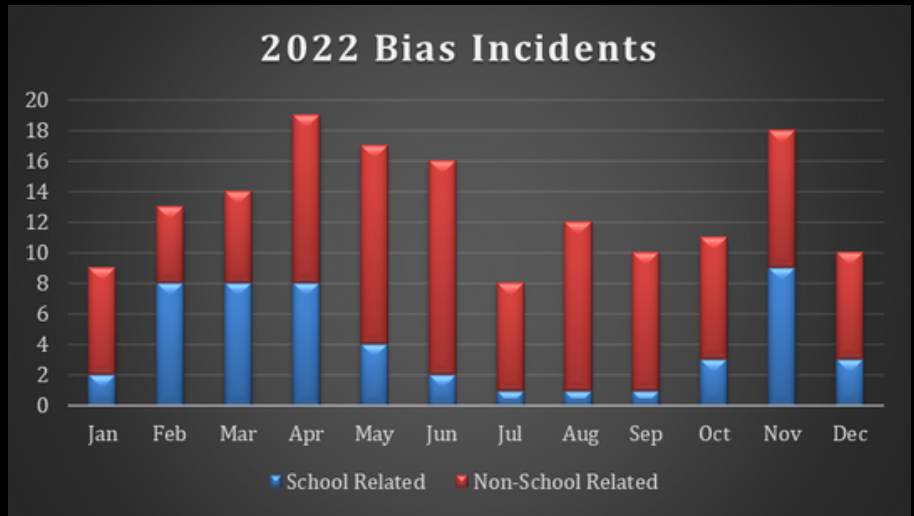
Bias Incidents

2023

Bias Incidents, by Class
- Arson
- Assault (physical)
- Assault (simple)
- Display of Noose
- Flyer Left Behind
- Physical Intimidation/Simple Assault
- Social Media
- Vandalism
- Vandalism-Motor Vehicle
- Verbal Intimidation/Simple Assault
- Written Intimidation/Simple Assault
- Other

- Gaithersburg
- Rockville
- Takoma Park

Data provided by MCPD Policy, Planning and QA Division. Created by MCPD GIS on 1/8/24.

INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

Overall, the proportion of bias incidents within each district remained consistent with those of the previous year.

The 2nd and 4th Districts experienced the highest reported bias incidents, with 115 and 92, respectively. These two districts account for 45% of the total reported incidents in 2023, a 5% decrease from the 50% combined total in 2022.
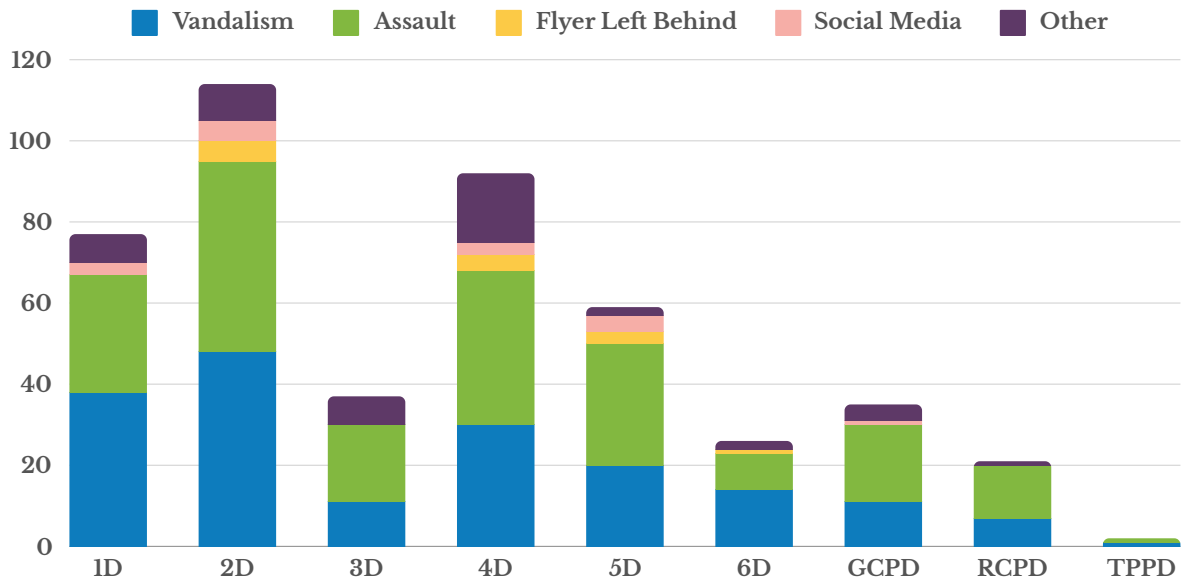
COUNTY OVERVIEW 2023

The charts above provide an overview of bias incidents throughout the county and the types of incidents per district. A more detailed breakdown of bias motivation and bias type is provided in the charts on the next two pages.

BIAS MOTIVATION

44%
Race / Ethnicity

- 30% Anti-Black
- 5% Anti-Asian
- 4% Anti-Hispanic
- 2% Anti-White
- 2% Anti-Multi-Racial
- 1% Anti-Arab

44%
Religion

- 41% Anti-Jewish
- 2% Anti-Islamic
- <1% Anti-Catholic
- <1% Anti-Other Christian

0%
Ancestry

<1%
Disability

- <1% Anti-Mental Disability
- <1% Anti-Physical Disability

10%
Sexual Orientation

- 7% Anti-Homosexual
- 2% Anti-Male Homosexual
- 1% Anti-Female Homosexual

2%
Gender/Gender Identity

- 2% Anti-Transgender
- <1% Anti-Gender Non-Conforming

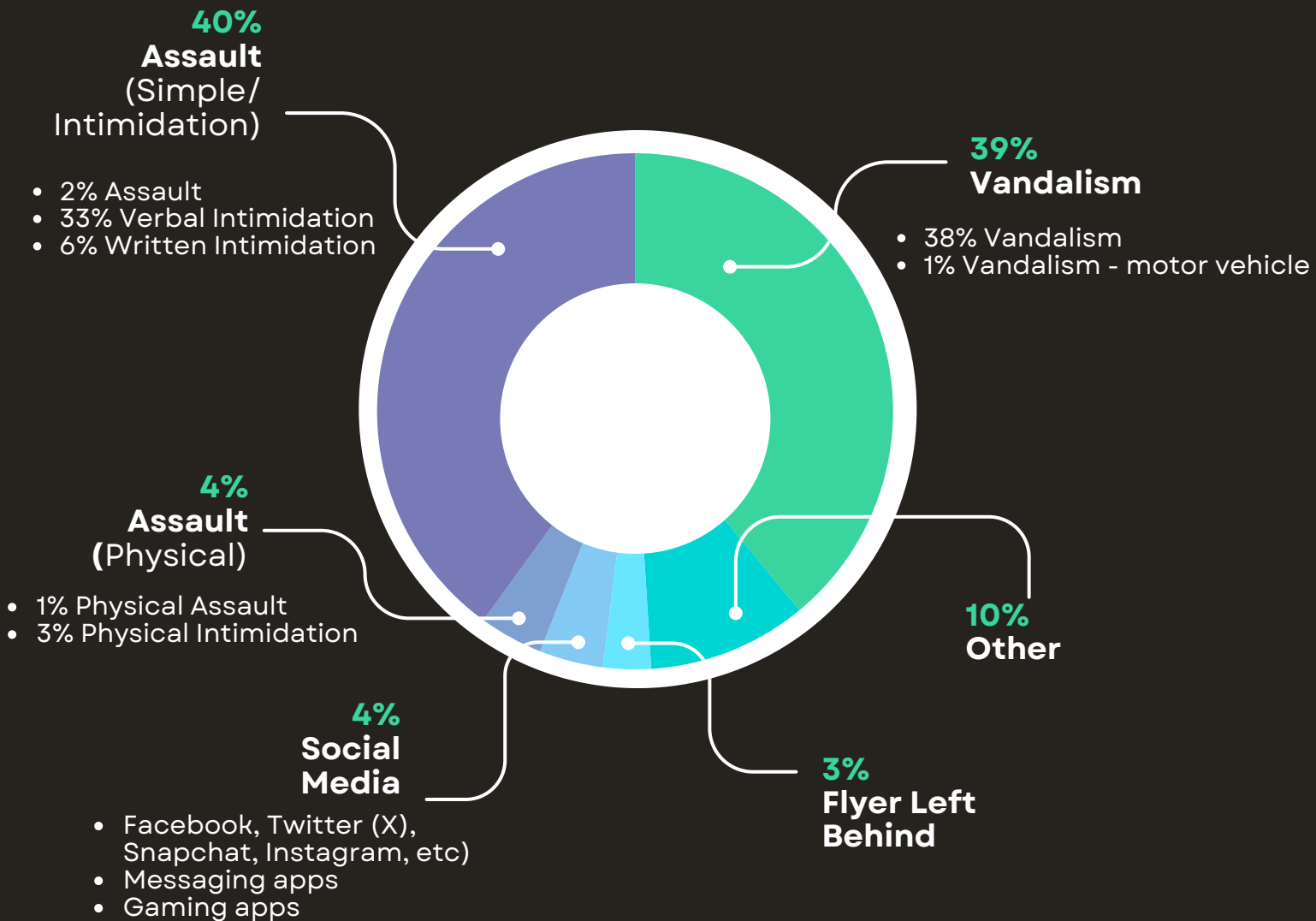Montgomery County proudly consists of a diverse racial community, with 53% of its residents identifying as non-white. Census data indicates that over 1.05 million people reside in Montgomery County, and its population continues to increase and become more diverse.

Forty-seven of the 464 total bias incidents recorded in 2023 reflected multiple bias motivations. Religion and race continue to be the primary bias motivators (203 and 183 incidents, respectively), then sexual orientation (47 incidents) and ethnicity (22 incidents). Gender bias was a motivation in eight incidents, and one incident involved disability.

The statistics presented in the chart above will be further analyzed in the following sections of this report and broken down into community-related and school-related incidents.

BIAS TYPE

40%
Assault
(Simple/
Intimidation)

- 2% Assault
- 33% Verbal Intimidation
- 6% Written Intimidation

39%
Vandalism

- 38% Vandalism
- 1% Vandalism - motor vehicle

4%
Assault
(Physical)

- 1% Physical Assault
- 3% Physical Intimidation

10%
Other

4%
Social
Media

- Facebook, Twitter (X), Snapchat, Instagram, etc)
- Messaging apps
- Gaming apps

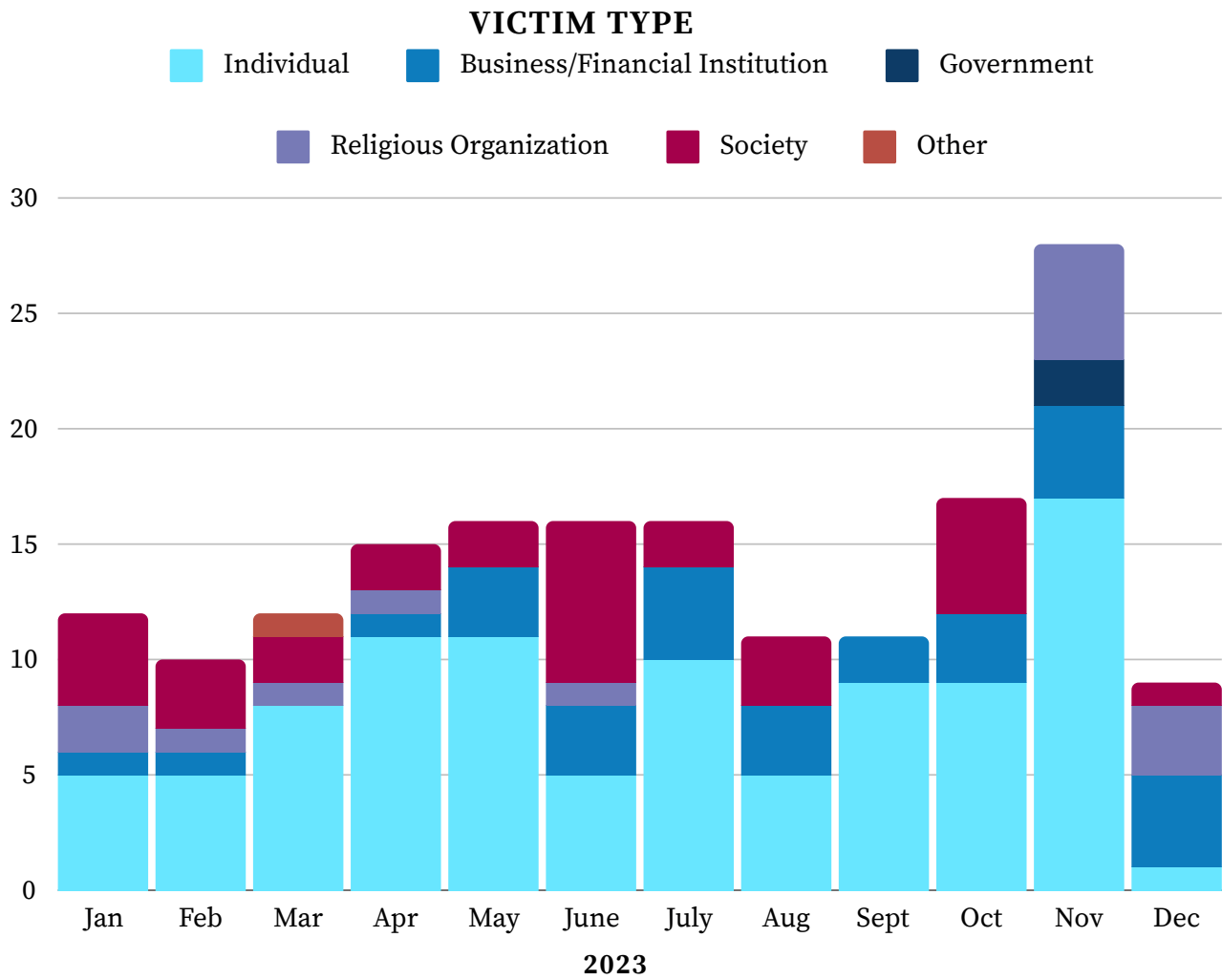**3%**
Flyer Left
Behind

For statistical purposes, bias incidents are classified into additional separate and distinct categories from offense classifications.

Approximately 40% of all bias incidents involved some form of intimidation, with verbal intimidation being the most prevalent (33%). Written intimidation typically involves electronic mail, letters, or phone text messages. Due to the rise in the use of virtual platforms, a separate category represented as *Social Media* was created to capture additional forms of written communication.

Vandalism was the second most frequent bias incident reported (38%). Of the 175 incidents of vandalism, 95 (54%) included the image of a swastika.

The statistics presented in the chart above will be further analyzed in the following sections of this report and broken down into community-related and school-related incidents.

VICTIM TYPE

- Individual
- Business/Financial Institution
- Government
- Religious Organization
- Society
- Other

2023

Community statistics exclude all incidents in which a school or student was the victim. School-related incidents are addressed in the next section of this report.

COMMUNITY STATISTICS

In 2023, there were 180 community-related bias incidents. 68% more than in 2022 (107).

Of the 180 incidents, 103 were committed against individuals (57%), 20 of which had multiple victims. Overall, there were 133 individual victims.
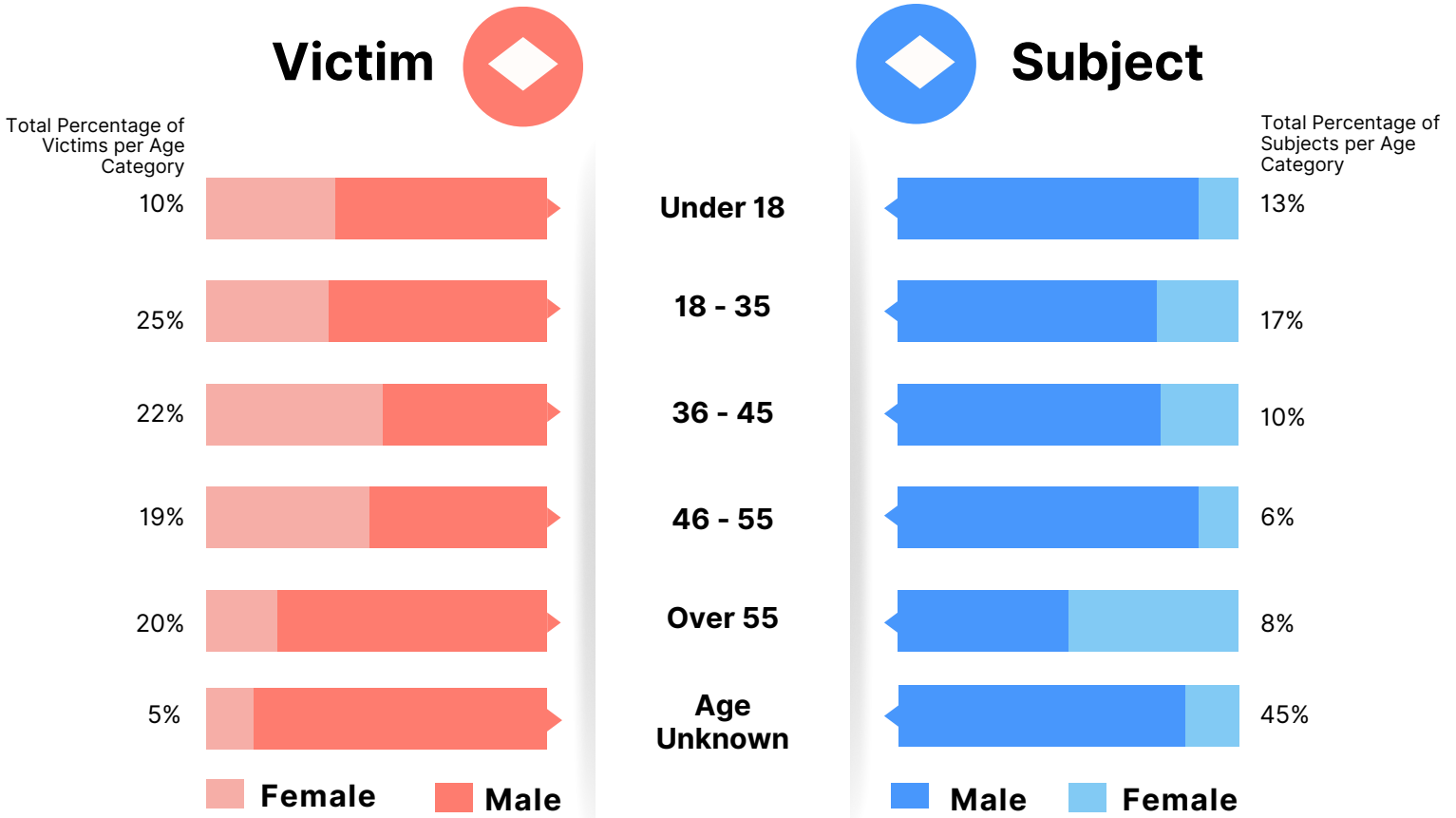
The remaining incidents were committed against society (31, 17%), business/financial institutions (29, 16%), religious organizations (14, 8%), and government entities (2, 1%).

November had the highest number of incidents per month (28) and showed an increase in incidents committed against individuals and religious organizations compared to the rest of the year. This increase is likely attributed to current political and faith-based disharmony worldwide.

Sixty-seven (67) incidents involved vandalism of property (37%), 34 of which were antisemitic in nature, and four contained references to white supremacy.

AGE DEMOGRAPHIC CHART

COMMUNITY

Victim ◆

◆ Subject

Total Percentage of Victims per Age Category

10%	Under 18
25%	18 - 35
22%	36 - 45
19%	46 - 55
20%	Over 55
5%	Age Unknown

Total Percentage of Subjects per Age Category

Under 18	13%
18 - 35	17%
36 - 45	10%
46 - 55	6%
Over 55	8%
Age Unknown	45%

Female   **Male**

Male   **Female**

For statisitcal purposes, all persons (including transgender) are documented as the gender they were assigned at birth, as opposed to the gender to which they currently identify.

Amongst those cases where specific individuals were victims (133 victims total), there were 57 female and 76 male victims.

Of the individual victims identified, 8 (10%) were under 18 and were not at school or identified as students at the time of the incidents.
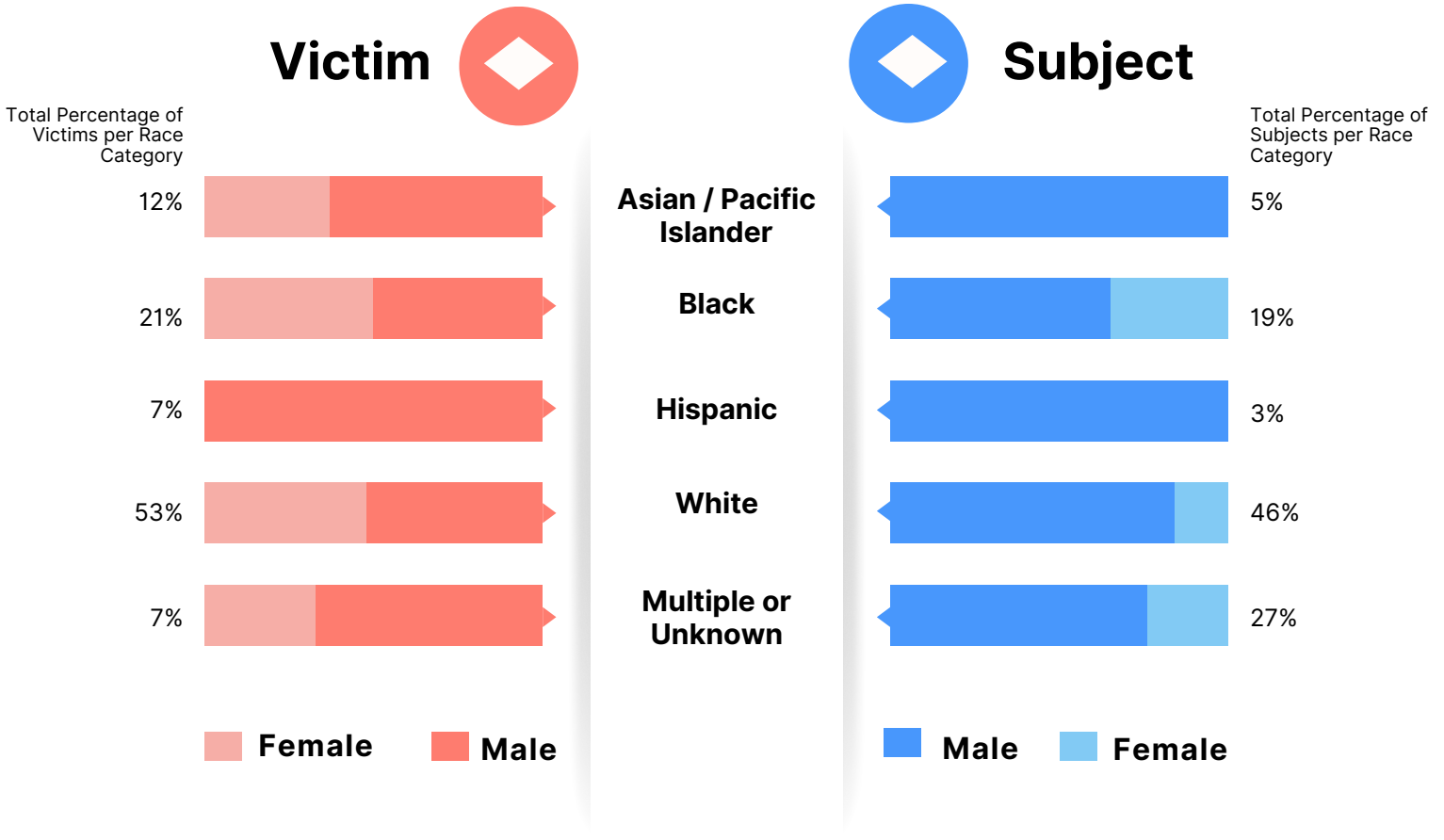
Over half the victims in the 36-45 age group were female, while the over-55 age group had predominately male victims. These age groups represented 22% and 20%, respectively, of total victims.

It is often very difficult to identify suspects of bias incidents, as many incidents occur without any witnesses present. In contrast, others occur without the victim present, such as in bias-motivated graffiti or vandalism. In 2023, victims could provide suspect information for 58 incidents and partial suspect information in 36 additional incidents. The total number of subjects was 124, with 99 male, 19 female, and 6 of unknown gender.

Males represented the majority of offenders within each age group. However, females represented 50% of identified offenders over 50.

RACE / ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHIC CHART   COMMUNITY

Victim ◆   ◆ Subject

Total Percentage of Victims per Race Category

Total Percentage of Subjects per Race Category

Victim	Race Category	Subject
12%	Asian / Pacific Islander	5%
21%	Black	19%
7%	Hispanic	3%
53%	White	46%
7%	Multiple or Unknown	27%

■ **Female**   ■ **Male**   ■ **Male**   ■ **Female**

In 2023, 53% of victims identified as White, while only 21% as Black. It is important to distinguish that although several incidents involve the widely used yet derogatory term for persons of color, victims described as Black were also victims of incidents that involved anti-homosexual and anti-religion (Jewish) factors.

Both Black and White victims had an equal distribution of male and female victims. Asian and Hispanic victims were predominately male.

Historically, the MCPD has recorded more White offenders involved in bias-related incidents than any other race/ethnicity. This was consistent in 2023, and within all racial categories, offenders were largely male.

It is important to note that some individuals may identify as more than one race. Such cases are captured in the multiple or unknown category. Additionally, some victims or subjects may decline to provide demographic information when interviewed, resulting in only partially recorded information. This may occur when individuals are interviewed over the telephone or are unable to provide proper identification.

NOTABLE ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

In 2023, among individual victims, verbal intimidation was the most frequent type of bias incident reported (29%), followed by written intimidation and simple assault, 7% and 3 %, respectively.

Twelve incidents (7%) involved physical assault/intimidation, with a total of 14 victims (12 male, two female) and 18 subjects (15 male, three female).

A total of 15 subjects were arrested (12 males, three females), closing out eleven cases. There were three verified hate crimes, which resulted in two of these arrests. Of the eleven cases, 6 (55%) involved race as the primary motivator.

Contrary to previous years, there were zero incidents of using a noose to intimidate. In 2020, Maryland House Bill 5 (HB0005) was enacted, making it illegal to place an item or symbol, such as a noose, intending to threaten or intimidate.

In 2023, the MCPD investigated reports of bomb threats against two businesses, one religious organization, and one individual. Two of the unrelated incidents involved a subject making threats against various locations within Montgomery County as well as in other states. Both incidents were anti-religious (Jewish) motivated.

Thirteen of the 180 reported incidents involved more than one bias type, with religion and race being the most common combination (9 incidents). Nearly half of these incidents involved biased-based language or symbols in the form of vandalism or graffiti.
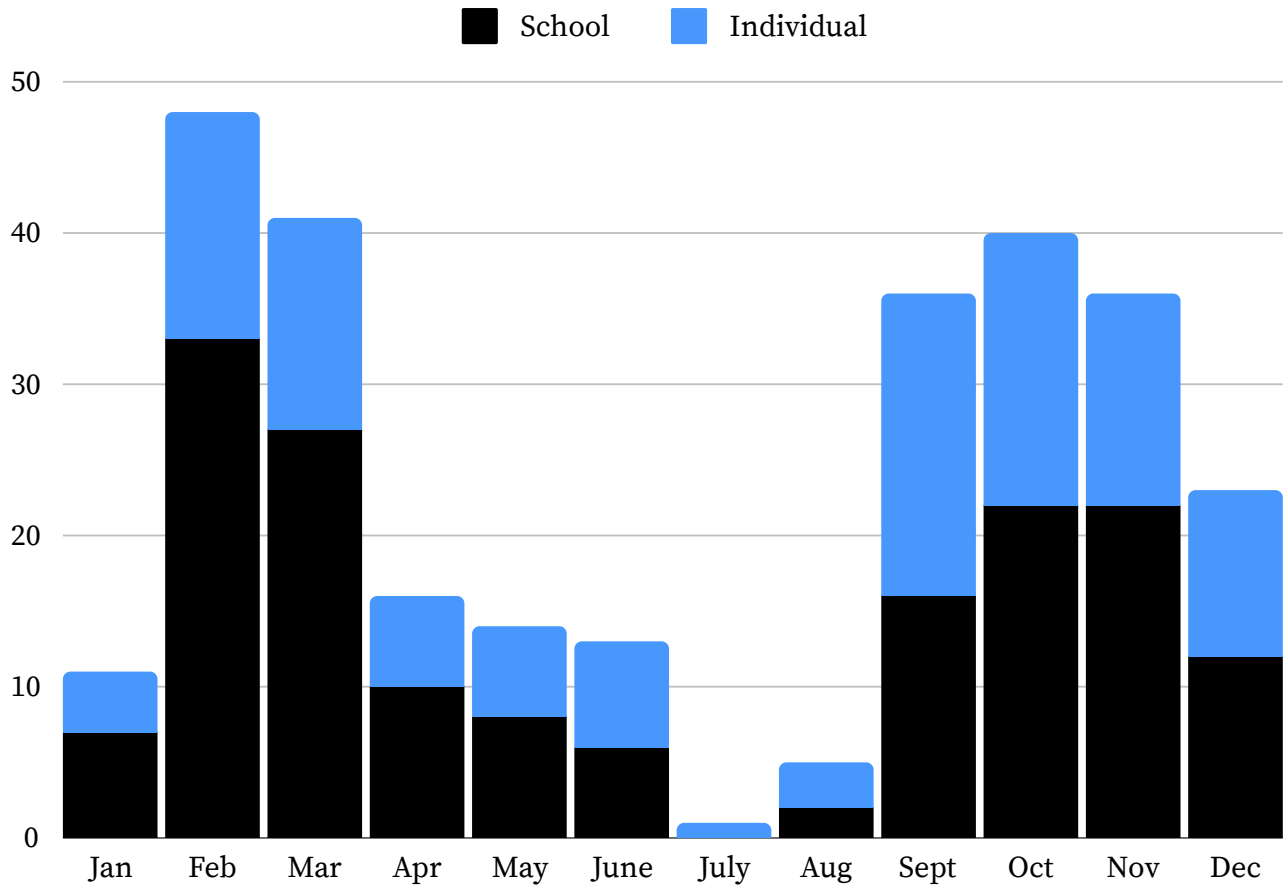
School refers to physical property or items belonging to a school, including school grounds and buses.
Individual refers to persons associated with the school such as students and teachers.

SCHOOL-RELATED STATISTICS

In 2023, there were 284 school-related bias incidents, which averages 1.6 incidents per school day. Of the victims, 42% (119) were individuals, and 58% (165) were incidents in which the school grounds or property were impacted.
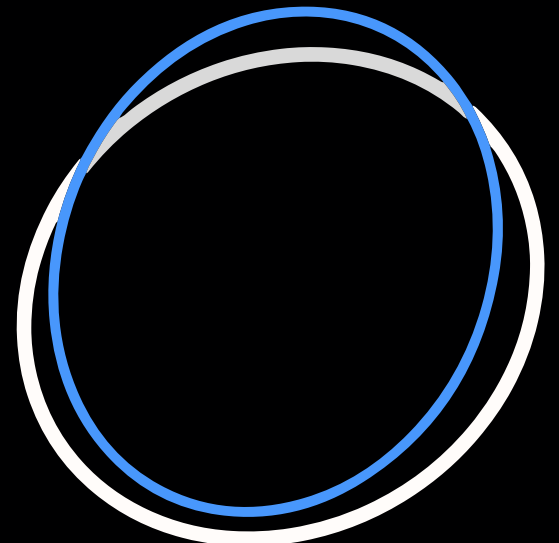
The <u>Montgomery County Public School System</u> has over 200 schools within the county:
- Elementary (grades preK-5): 137
- Middle (grades 6-8): 40
- High (grades 9-12): 27
- Special Schools: 5
- Alternative Programs: 1
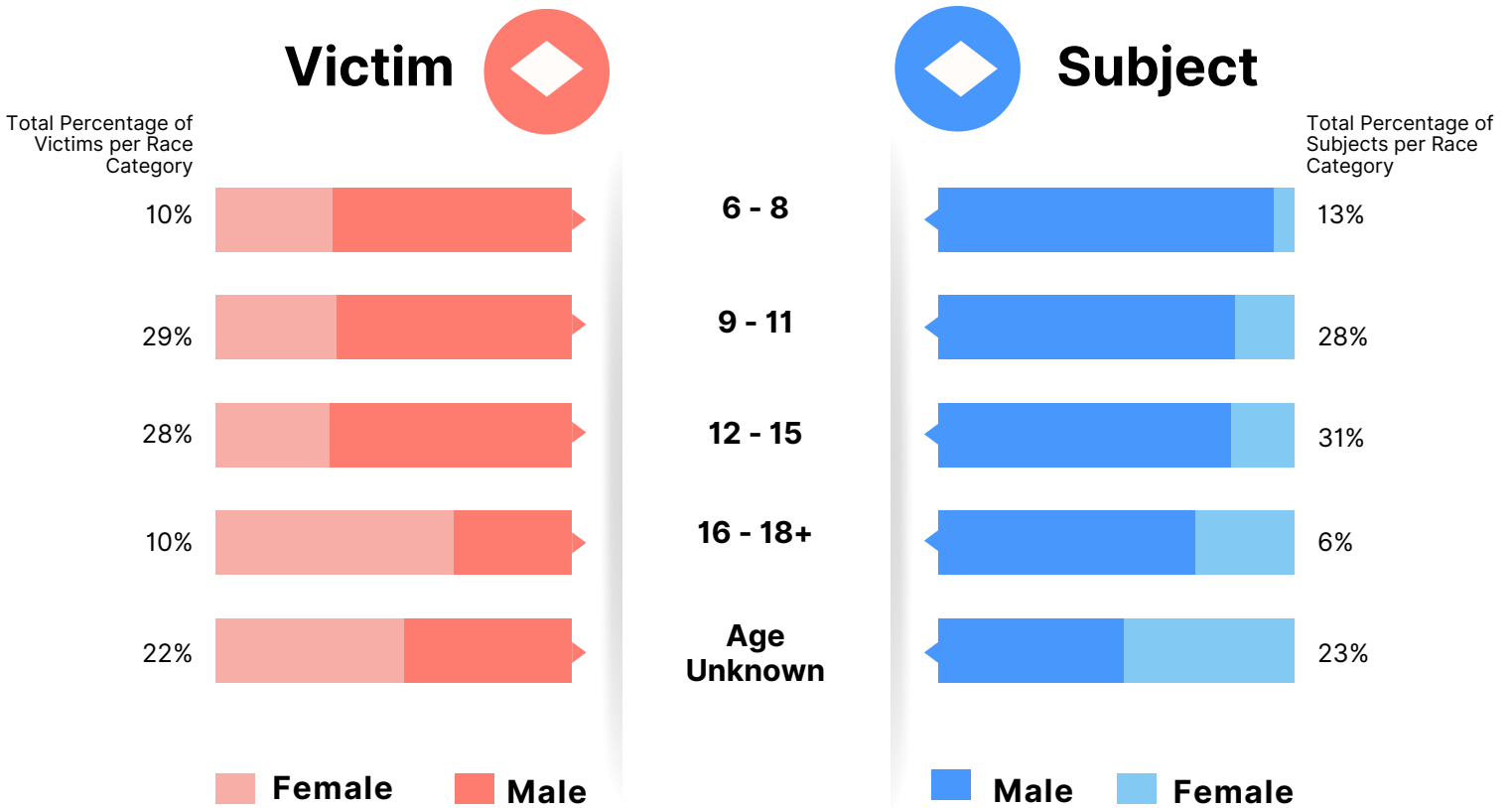- Early Childhood Learning Centers: 2
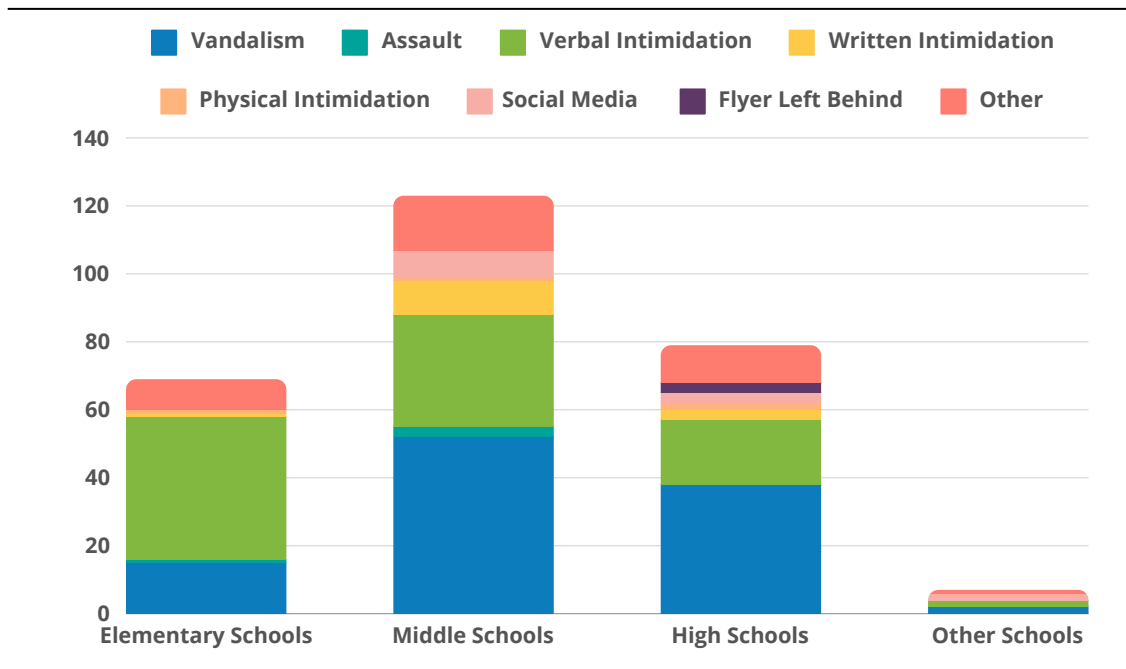
Vandalism/graffiti accounted for 64% (105) of incidents impacting school property, with the majority occurring in middle schools, and was motivated predominantly by religion and race. All 75 incidents motivated by religion were anti-Jewish, and 25 of the 27 incidents motivated by race were anti-Black. This is consistent with previous years in which racial slurs, swastikas, and other antisemitic phrases/statements were predominant. Anti-homosexual phrases and images are also frequently reported.

Verbal intimidation was the most frequent bias incident committed against an individual (82 incidents, 106 victims, 94 subjects). Seven incidents involved various forms of bullying, including two recurring situations, both resulting in an arrest. Other forms of intimidation included threats or biased-based language through group chats, emails, and social media interactions between students. In elementary schools, various incidents involved students teasing each other using slang or other terms of which younger children may not fully comprehend the offensive nature or connotation.

AGE DEMOGRAPHIC CHART　　　　　　　　　　SCHOOL

Victim ◆　　　　　◆ Subject

Total Percentage of Victims per Race Category

	Victim			Subject	Total Percentage of Subjects per Race Category
10%		6 - 8			13%
29%		9 - 11			28%
28%		12 - 15			31%
10%		16 - 18+			6%
22%		Age Unknown			23%

Female　**Male**　　　　　　**Male**　**Female**

Due to sensitivity regarding age, some police reports intentionally withheld the victim and/or the subject's demographic or personal information although known to police or school personnel.

For statisitcal purposes, all persons (including transgender) are documented as the gender they were assigned at birth, as opposed to the gender to which they currently identify.

In 2023, there were 147 victims, 87 male, 51 female, and 9 of unknown gender. The 16-18 age group was expanded to include two adult victims over the age of 18.

Individuals ages 9-15 represented a combined total of 56% of all victims. Of the 119 incidents involving individuals, 17 involved multiple victims.

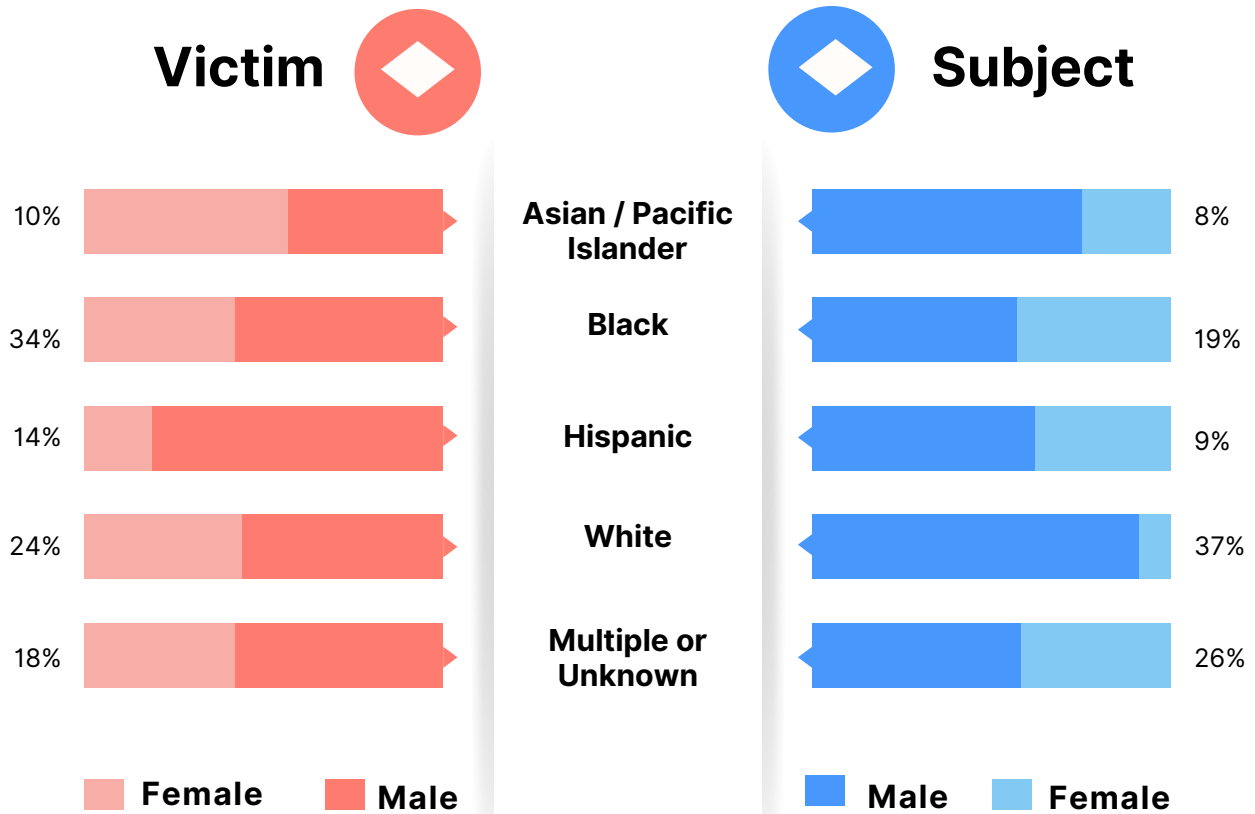Victims were predominately male; however, females comprised 67% of the 16-18+ age group.

Of the 145 subjects, 110 were male (76%), 28 were female (19%), and seven were of unknown gender (5%).

Consistent with the victims, subjects in the 9-15 combined age bracket comprised 59% of all subjects.

Sixteen (16) of the 119 incidents involved multiple subjects, ten involving some intimidation towards the victims.

RACE / ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHIC CHART   SCHOOL

Victim ◆   ◆ **Subject**

	Victim		Subject
Asian / Pacific Islander	10%		8%
Black	34%		19%
Hispanic	14%		9%
White	24%		37%
Multiple or Unknown	18%		26%

Female   Male   Male   Female

Due to sensitivity regarding age, some police reports intentionally withheld the victim and/or the subject's demographic or personal information although known to police or school personnel.

For statisitcal purposes, all persons (including transgender) are documented as the gender they were assigned at birth, as opposed to the gender to which they currently identify.

Of the 147 victims, 50 (34%) identified as Black, and 36 (24%) identified as White, both with nearly equal proportions of male and female victims. Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander victims represented 14% (21) and 10% (14) of victims, respectively.

Sixty-six (66) incidents involved some form of intimidation in which race was the primary motivator.

Three incidents involved derogatory racial slurs used by subjects towards victims of the same race or ethnicity.

Among the 145 subjects, 54 (37%) identified as White, 28 (19%) as Black, 13 (9%) as Hispanic, and 12 (8%) as Asian/Pacific Islander.

NOTABLE ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

Per the MOU between MCPS and the Police, parties agree that "*The vast majority of student misconduct is best addressed through classroom and in-school strategies that maintain a positive learning environment and allow students to learn from their mistakes, correct any harm that results from their behavior, and restore relationships disrupted by their conduct.*" As a result of the MOU, these incidents are handled as teachable moments when possible.

In 2023, a trend resurfaced in which students create and distribute "passes," allowing others to use racial slurs or derogatory terms towards others for a day. Two such incidents occurred in December of 2023. In 2019, a similar incident occurred at a Montgomery County high school, which resulted in the suspension of several students.

Of the 284 school-related bias incidents reported, 90 incidents (32%) involved the image of a swastika, and five incidents included the display of the Hitler salute.

In some cases, verbal harassment does escalate into physical altercations. There were six incidents of physical assault among students (7 victims, 15 subjects) in 2023. Two juvenile arrests were made due to repeated incidents of verbal harassment and physical assault.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Montgomery County is a diverse yet inclusive community that does not tolerate hatred. Throughout the county, efforts are made to educate and engage the community in matters that foster understanding while repudiating ignorance. The Montgomery County Office of Human Rights helps create a culture of service and a climate of fairness and inclusion at the county government's highest levels. It promotes trust and inclusiveness amongst minority communities through outreach and engagement, such as through the Committee on Hate/Violence, an advisory group that educates residents about bias/hate and promotes respect for cultural and social diversity.

Other organizations, such as the Faith Community Advisory Council, a part of the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), work hard to ensure the County Executive is well-informed and able to respond effectively to the needs and concerns of faith communities throughout the county.

It is also important for the police department to work closely within the community to confront hatred and overcome the fear and mistrust that may exist since bias crimes are more likely to create or exacerbate tension or conflict. Communication and interaction are often key factors in preventing tension or restoring peace. Every interaction with the public is an opportunity to build relationships and trust with the community. The department's Public Information Office helps prevent increased tension throughout the community by informing the public about each incident and including information about the offenders and the law-enforcement response. The MCPD Community Engagement Division (CED) oversees community and school resource officers. It ensures that investigative follow-up, victim assistance (when applicable), and collaboration are provided in all bias-motivated events to immediately mitigate bias in the community.

In 2023, the MCPD attended 355 community events. Residents can view a list of community events via this Virtual Calendar. Montgomery County police officers and command staff attended 148 (42%) public safety events, including crime awareness and prevention events. MCPD was also present at various townhall-style events and training/prevention programs and engaged with community groups that could potentially be victims of a bias-motivated incident, or that may already be concerned or in fear because of national and worldwide events (i.e., African American and Hispanic committees, faith communities, etc.

Although many community organizations seek to promote acceptance and respect and build relationships with those of different religious, racial, and other backgrounds, creating a more just and balanced community, many opportunities remain to combat bias and stereotypes that lead to bias incidents. Timely and accurate reporting can significantly increase the likelihood of restoring peace, stability, and understanding and alleviating fear, suspicion, and anger. That is why the MCPD encourages all community members and organizations to report any incident in which some perceived bias element is present. The MCPD is committed to ensuring equity, opportunity, and inclusion for all people of Montgomery County, Maryland. Hate and prejudice have a profound impact on our community, and no one should live in fear. The MCPD will not tolerate intolerance, exclusion, indifference, or open intimidation and asks that everyone report any incident of bias or hate crime.

SUMMARY

Bias incidents may disproportionately impact their victims more than other types of incidents. Furthermore, these incidents also have more serious side effects on society. A bias incident not only impacts an individual victim but can affect an entire group to whom the individual belongs, resulting in increased isolation, stress, and vulnerability. Timely and effective police response can have a very positive and lasting impact on the police and various communities' relationships, influencing other public safety aspects.

Anyone who believes a bias/hate crime has occurred is requested to call 301-279-8000 or dial 911 in an emergency to report the incident to the MCPD immediately. The Montgomery County Office of Human Rights can also be contacted at 240-777-8450, even if callers do not have any information on the suspects and no physical injury or property damage. Callers should not destroy evidence of the crime; police may want to examine or keep any relevant letters, emails, or voicemails. Evidence of vandalism should not be cleaned up until the police arrive and investigate, which may also include taking photographs. The department's Victim Assistance Coordinators, available at each district station, can direct victims to other resources and put them in contact with human rights organizations. If callers would like more information about preventing bias incidents, contact the Community Engagement Division Director, who can coordinate the department's community services resources or direct callers to the most appropriate resource for their needs.

The Montgomery County Police Department receives numerous reports involving inappropriate activity conducted through social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, etc.), including bullying and other threatening behavior that displays indifference, discrimination, and hatred towards both specific individuals and groups of people. Although subjects of all ages perpetuate this, the MCPD frequently receives reports of social media improprieties involving middle and high school students.

Parents: while monitoring all children's activities is not possible, there are things parents can do to prevent cyberbullying and protect their children from harmful digital behavior:
•Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior, content, and applications.
•Monitor social media sites, applications, and browsing history.
•Follow or friend your teen on social media sites or have another trusted adult do so.
•Know your child's user names and passwords for email and social media.
•Review or reset your child's phone location and privacy settings.

Parents who want to protect their children from cyberbullying, harmful digital behavior, and exposure to adult content can use parental controls and monitoring software, such as Bark, Qustodio, or WebWatcher, to help set up less invasive systems.

Montgomery County residents are encouraged to call their district station and speak to a Community Services Officer for strategies to prevent cyberbullying or visit StopBullying.gov for tips on recognizing it.

APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OF 2023 BIAS INCIDENTS

Below is a summary of significant and verified bias incidents in 2023.

A fast-food restaurant was vandalized by a subject who poured motor oil over various parts of the restaurant and threatened to burn down the building if the business did not fire employees of certain Latino groups. The subject was charged with:
-CR 6-301**MAL DESTR PROP VALUE $1,000+**
-CR 10-305(2)**RACE/RELIG HARAS: ANIMOS: INST**
-CR 10-305.1**USE HATE ITEM/SYMBOL**

The victim was in her vehicle when the subject made a derogatory comment referencing the victim's religion and proceeded to damage the victim's car. The subject was charged with:
1 count of Disorderly Conduct CR 10 - 201(c)(2) CJIS Code 2-0050
One count of Malicious Destruction of Property CR 6-301 CJIS Code 3-4025
One count of Race/Relig. Crime: Person/Group CR 10-304(1) CJIS Code 1-0437

A high school student victim had been repeatedly harassed and bullied by another student regarding the victim's sexual orientation. Multiple incidents had been reported to the school and police. The subject was ultimately charged with:
CR 3-803 HARASS; A COURSE OF CONDUCT 1_0191

A church was the victim of two vandalism incidents, both involving damage to a Pride flag and a Black Lives Matter flag displayed in front of the church. One incident resulted in a juvenile arrest. The subject was charged with Malicious Destruction of Property valued under $1000. The subject was referred to the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS).

Elementary school students were distributing "passes" on the playground, allowing other students to use a racial slur. Many students offered the passes were offended and reported the incident to school authorities. In a separate incident, at a different school, school authorities were alerted to a plan by 5th-grade students to create "passes" to use racial slurs and other derogatory terms across various racial and ethnic groups. All students involved were of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

A business reported two incidents of arson in which Israeli flags had been burned. The business displays flags representing multiple nations, and only the Israeli flags were damaged.

Follow the Montgomery County Police on Facebook and X (aka Twitter).

Montgomery County Police Department District Stations

1st District – Rockville   240-773-6070
2nd District – Bethesda   240-773-6700
3rd District – Silver Spring   240-773-6800
4th District – Wheaton   240-773-5500
5th District – Germantown   240-773-6200
6th District – Montgomery Village 240-773-5700

Questions may be directed to MCP.PolicyandPlanning@montgomerycountymd.gov.