



2015-2025

RACE-BASED HATE CRIMES IN BRANT

Media Analysis

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Race-Based Hate Crimes in Brant (2015-2025)

Context:

Brantford is a city located in Southwestern Ontario, situated along the Grand River. Brantford is surrounded geographically by Brant County, which operates as an independent municipality, consisting of Burford, Burtch, Onondaga & Middleport, Cainsville, Cathcart, Muir, & New Durham, Fairfield Plan, Falkland, Glen Morris & Harrisburg, Harley & Kelvin, Mount. Pleasant, Oakhill, Paris, Scotland & Oakland, and St. George (Communities, 2023). Brant encompasses both the geographic areas of Brantford and the County of Brant (Rojas et al., 2023).

According to 2021 census data, the population of Brant is 144,162, of which 104,688 reside with the City of Brantford (Rojas et al., 2023). In Brant, 4.8% of the population identifies as Indigenous, higher than the provincial average, while 12.8% identify as members of visible minority groups, significantly lower than that of Ontario overall (Rojas et al., 2023). The median after-tax household income was reported as \$71,000 in Brantford and \$92,000 in the County of Brant (Rojas et al., 2023). For individuals aged 15 and older, the median after-tax personal income was \$35,600 in Brantford and \$40,400 in the County of Brant (Rojas et al., 2023). Brant reported an unemployment rate of 11.4%, which was below the provincial average of 12.2% (Rojas et al., 2023). Lastly, 11.4% of individuals between 25 and 64 years of age had no diploma, certificate, or degree, which is higher than Ontario's average of 8.8% (Rojas et al., 2023).

Research Purpose and Method:

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to compile and analyze instances of race-based hate crimes in Brant, published in news and social media outlets. Hate crimes are defined as "...a criminal violation motivated by hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, or any other similar factor" (UCR, 2022, as cited in Ndegawa & McDonald, 2023). For the purpose of this research, only race-based hate crimes will be analyzed. Race-based hate crimes will include any instance of physical, verbal, or visual forms of hate motivated by race, national or ethnic origin, that include discriminatory, derogatory, and vulgar language, which may constitute a criminal violation or incitement of hate.

Specifically, our analysis identifies and examines themes and narratives amongst identified media publications of hate crime in order to understand the ways in which hate crime is both present in the community and presented to the community.

Method:

A range of news and social media outlets were selected for this analysis. Local media outlets included The Expositor, The Sputnik, BrantBeacon, Ground News, City of Brantford News, County of Brant News, Brant Blog, and BScene. News outlets from nearby cities were also considered, such as CP24 and the Hamilton Spectator. Social media platforms identified were X(Twitter), Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook, with accounts suggested by our community partner, such as United Against Hate Brantford.

Method Continued...

The ProQuest Database was initially used to generate results from news outlets spanning from 2015 to 2025, using the following keywords: racist, racism, racial, slur(s), hate crime, crime, hate attack, attack, vandalism, threat(s), violent, discrimination, motivated, newcomers, refugees, immigrants, international students, Muslim, Asian, Black, Sikh and Brantford/Brant. Further searches were conducted through each outlet individually, using the same keywords and date range. In total, **15 hate crime incidents** were identified, coded, and analyzed.

Findings:

Incidents and Time Frame:

This media analysis identified 15 race-based hate crime incidents in Brant between 2015 and 2025, with 14 reported by media outlets and one shared on Reddit. These included three incidents each from 2019 and 2020, two each from 2018, 2023, and 2025; and one each from 2021, 2022, and 2024. In total, the 15 incidents were reported in a total of 36 articles, including 34 from news outlets and two from Reddit.

Table 1

Timeline of Incidents

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
# Of incidents	0	0	0	2	3	3	1	1	2	1	2

Police Reported Hate Crime vs. Media Coverage:

During the time period of 2015 to 2023, the police reported a total of 85 hate crime incidents (Statistics Canada, 2024). A significant discrepancy was observed between the number of hate crime incidents reported by the media and those documented in official police statistics, indicating that the majority of hate crimes do not receive media attention. This gap may be attributed to factors such as incidents not being classified as hate crimes at the time of reporting or the media outlets' selective reporting practices. However, it is also important to note that the 15 incidents identified in this analysis may not correspond to any of the 85 police reported incidents, as the incidents may not have been officially categorized as a hate crime or formally documented by law enforcement.

Furthermore, the official statistics note a sharp increase in officially reported hate crimes from 2021 to 2022. While we initially expected that the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to a spike in hate crimes from 2019 to 2020, this trend was not evident in either the official statistics or media coverage.

Communities Targeted:

The 15 identified hate crime incidents targeted a range of communities including Black (4), Indigenous (1), South Asian (1) Muslim (1), Middle Eastern (1), Jewish (2), Migrant workers during COVID-19 (1), and incidents linked to white supremacy or "White Lives Matter" rhetoric (2). Additionally, there were incidents where the target individual or community was unknown (2).

Communities Targeted Continued...

Furthermore, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals were targeted in conjunction with an aforementioned incident involving the Black community, while “immigrants” were targeted alongside an incident that also involved the Jewish population.

Themes:

Vandalism

Seven incidents of vandalism were identified, with six of these incidents reporting some form of vandalism that displayed or promoted race-based hate. Vandalism in these media sources included graffiti, posters, and stickers found on both public and private property in Brantford.

Three examples of private-property graffiti were likely targeting the owners or users of the property, as their messages matched racial identities or incited stereotypes. For instance, a Mosque in Brantford was graffitied with hateful messages that said, “go back to Arabia, you’re not welcome here” (Noah, 2018). Two other instances saw a Black woman’s car vandalized with “I hate Black people” in a spree of reported graffiti in different Brantford neighbourhoods, and a Black family cleaning racist graffiti from their fence (Expositor Staff, 2022; Gamble, 2020).

Vandalism Continued...

Vandalism based hate crimes in the media also included promotion of white supremacy. For example, students and staff from North Park Collegiate school in Brantford were reported to have found posters and stickers promoting “White Lives Matter” and “Make children White again” on school property and surrounding areas; some posters even included URL addresses on them, likely to websites with similar content (Ruby, 2025). Similarly, a student-written article from the Sputnik reported signs around the YCMA/ Laurier Brantford campus promoting a white supremacist group known as the Proud Boys (Rai, 2020).

While a majority of these incidents were framed as a problem, two of the incidents included moments of community unity. The graffiti at the Mosque inspired a community event of solidarity, which saw the presence of regular Mosque attendees, community members and municipal politicians (Noah, 2018), while the family whose fence was graffitied received help from the police and neighbours in cleaning the fence (Gamble, 2020).

Hate Speech

Eight incidents of hate speech were identified, with four of these reported to be posted online. Hate speech included the use of slurs accompanied by derogatory or vulgar language, and/or threats of harm or death. The four in-person incidents were committed in public, occurring between people who were unknown to each other. For instance, a drunk driver repeatedly called his arresting officer a slur while threatening to have his friends shoot him at the police station (Gamble, 2019). Another incident involved a cyclist being threatened by an unidentified male on a dirt bike "...ma[king] racially charged threats..." and causing damage to the bicycle (Expositor Staff, 2023).

The four online incidents saw a range of targeted communities, including Jewish, Black, migrant workers and the LGBTQIA2S+ communities. Hate speech online was reported in the form of posted videos, comments, and a picture of hate speech. One incident with posted videos included hours of content from one man, inciting antisemitism and promoting violence (Ball, 2023).

Social media comments were posted allegedly by citizens in Brantford targeting migrant workers for the spread of COVID-19 while they were quarantined in the city (Expositor Staff, 2020a; Expositor Staff, 2020b), as well as a Brant councillor commenting a slur to describe someone from the Middle East (Marion, 2018). Lastly, a photo posted by Toronto City News displayed a group of teenage boys gathered around a table with a Black racial slur on written on it and one of the boys holding a cake with a slur for a white gay man; these boys were later identified as students from Assumption College in Brantford (Ruby, 2019).

Media Narrative:

Media narratives are structured stories or interpretive frameworks employed by news and entertainment media to present and frame events, issues, or individuals (Molina-Perez et al., 2024). These narratives are constructed through the selective use of language, visuals, and facts to align a news story with the preferred perspective of the media outlet (Molina-Perez et al., 2024). By highlighting certain viewpoints while downplaying others, media narratives play a critical role in shaping public perceptions, influencing opinions, and informing societal attitudes and discourse (Molina-Perez et al., 2024).

Of the 15 news articles published, the most common media narrative, which was present in seven of the articles, framed racism in the community as not welcome and highlighted the community's collective denouncement of hateful acts. This framing included strong public statements such as "This does not represent Brantford", and "Unacceptable in our communities" expressed by an Iman after a Brantford Mosque was vandalized and by a school official after white supremacy stickers were found at a school in Brant County, respectively (Gamble, 2018; Ruby, 2025). Similarly, law enforcement were quoted in the articles affirming "There is no room in our community for these types of hateful acts" and "[the police work] diligently to provide a safe and inclusive community for all of Brantford's residents." (Gamble, 2018; Expositor staff, 2023). These statements highlighted efforts to foster safety, inclusivity, and support for all members of the community, framing the community as unified in rejecting hatred.

Repeated Reporting:

During data collection, there were instances in which certain stories were repeated by several print media sources, or between social media and print media. Nine of the 16 incidents analyzed were reported by at least two forms of media. In comparing incidents that were reported multiple times against those only reported once, the most common occurrences were instances that were easily visible to the public outside of reporting, and severity of the act. For example, four of the incidents were vandalism cases that were examined and were placed in public areas, such as a mosque, a former residential school, and streets throughout Brantford. In terms of severity, these acts included property damage and/or slurs or hate symbols. In comparison to vandalism promoting white supremacy rhetoric, those incidents were easily removable (e.g., stickers and posters) while the other incidents were more destructive (e.g., graffiti and destruction of a memorial). Moreover, three examples showcased public incitement of hate; two were social media posting or comments involving hate speech, while one was incitement of hatred during a municipal political event.

Limitations:

An important limitation of this analysis is its sole reliance on publicly available content from news outlets or social media platforms. Incidents that may have been shared on private or restricted social media accounts are not included, which could result in an underrepresentation of the full scope of race-based hate crimes in Brant.

Limitations Continued...

Additionally, the lack of detailed information in the media content regarding the legal outcomes of hate crime or hateful acts is another limitation. Of the 15 incidents reviewed, only two incidents were reported to have resulted in charges. In one case, the accused was charged with inciting hatred, while in the other, the specific charges were not clearly stated. In the remaining 13 incidents, either no charges were mentioned, or the investigations were still ongoing. This underscores the challenges in tracking hate crime cases as they progress through the criminal justice system and reflects the significant discretion law enforcement has in determining whether an incident is classified as a hate crime.

Key Takeaways:

- Between 2015 and 2023, 15 race-based hate crime incidents were identified in news articles and on social media
- There was a significant underrepresentation of hate crimes in the media compared to official police statistics (15 vs. 85).
- A notable increase in reported hate crimes occurred between 2021 to 2022.
- The most common types of hate crimes included vandalism and hate speech.
- A wide range of communities were targeted by hate crimes, with the Black community experiencing the highest number of incidents (4).
- Media coverage commonly emphasized a narrative of a collective community rejecting hatred

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