Distribution of ideological hate groups (total no. in 2016):

▲ Neo-Nazi (99)   ▲ Neo-Confederate (43)

▲ Anti-LGBT (52)   ▲ Anti-Muslim (101)

▲ Racist Skinhead (78)   ▲ Christian Identity (21)

▲ Ku Klux Klan (130)   ▲ Black Separatist (193)

▲ White Nationalist (100)   ▲ Other (100)

Northeast
West   Midwest
South

Reference map

Population

Hate Groups
per 1,000,000 people

- above 5
- above 2.5 to 5
- 2.5 and below

Cartogram showing states resized according to the total number of hate groups. States with 5 groups and more are labelled.

CARTOGRAMS

UNITED HATES

BY BENJAMIN HENNIG

Hate and extremism have gained wider attention with the rise in populism and populist politics. The election of Donald Trump was also in part attributed to his rhetoric connecting to far-right extremism in the US. In the UK, a spike in hate crime was linked to the Brexit vote, while a considerable increase in anti-Muslim abuse has also been observed in recent years.

Describing and understanding hate crimes and groups associated with committing (or endorsing and promoting) such crimes is a complex issue and scholarly definitions are still not fully agreed upon. Dr Phyllis Gerstenfeld of CSU Stanislaus describes a hate crime as 'a criminal act which is motivated, at least in part, by the group affiliation of the victim.' John van Kesteren of Tilburg University observes that prejudice and hatred of specific social groups 'characterized by immigrant or ethnic status, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability' are therefore at the core of hate-related crimes.

Among the organisations monitoring groups that advocate hatred is the Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC) which was founded by civil rights lawyers in reaction to activities by white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Today its scope includes the activities of a broad range of US hate groups and other extremists, including the Klan, the neo-Nazi movement, neo-Confederates, racist skinheads, black separatists, anti-government militias, Christian Identity adherents and others.

Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016 has brought hate groups further into the spotlight. The SPLC attributes this to the divisive and polarising language he is using. A study undertaken in the aftermath of the presidential election indicated evidence for this 'Trump effect', with a significant number of hate incidents immediately after the election, and 37 per cent of the 1,094 investigated bias incidents referring directly to the then president-elect or using his campaign slogans.

This issue's cartogram is based on a compilation of a total of 917 hate groups that the SPLC has identified across the mainland 48 states of the USA in the year 2016. It uses 'hate group publications and websites, citizen and law enforcement reports, field sources and news reports' for its database and monitors activities such as 'criminal acts, marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafleting or publishing.'

The overall distribution of hate groups is shown in the main cartogram. Here each state is resized according to the total number of groups, overlaid by the proportion of hate groups in relation to the population distribution.

The SPLC categorises a total of 18 hate ideologies of which nine are displayed above in more detail as cartograms distorting the states by the distribution of the respective hate ideology. The colours in the smaller cartograms refer to four main regions within the USA as shown in the reference map.

This series shows that hate ideologies follow some distinct spatial patterns across the USA. The Ku Klux Klan is rarely represented in the western region, while the neo-Confederates appear even more concentrated following their ideological origins in the south. Christian Identity in contrast, an anti-Semitic and racist theology that rose in the 1980s, is in decline. Today's anti-Muslim hate groups have started emerging in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks – 2016 has seen a 197 per cent increase in numbers. The distribution of anti-Muslim hate groups is widespread, looking similar to the overall population distribution.

This picture is only part of the whole phenomenon of hate groups, which has been on a steady rise in the digital world as well. The maps give an indication of the disparate patterns that underlie these extremist views. The geography of hate in the United States is a reflection of the realities that determine the social tensions within the different parts of the country.

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