Official U.S. Government Data Sources for Homeland Security, Terrorism, Crime, and Immigration Research

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Purpose

This document identifies official United States government sources for researching domestic terrorism, political violence, crime, cybersecurity, immigration, and national security. The purpose is to prioritize government data and reports over privately maintained research datasets and to support comparisons of definitions, reporting practices, classifications, and conclusions.

Government sources should also be evaluated critically. Federal agencies use specific definitions, reporting requirements, and collection methods. An official government publication is an authoritative source for what that agency reports, but it does not automatically establish that a dataset is complete or free from methodological limitations.

1. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

FBI Crime Data Explorer

Official website: https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/

Provides crime statistics reported by participating law enforcement agencies. Relevant subjects include violent crime, property crime, hate crime, and other recorded offenses.

FBI Hate Crime Statistics

Official website: https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics

Provides official hate crime statistics and related reporting information. These records can help examine offenses involving bias, but hate crime data do not encompass all political violence, intimidation, or terrorism.

Research questions:

- How are offenses categorized and counted?
- What proportion of law enforcement agencies submit reports?
- How have reported offenses changed over time?
- Are comparable offenses being classified consistently?
- ***Is there a difference between reported numbers and actual numbers?***
- ***Who is doing the majority of the reporting and do they have political motive or bias?***

2. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

DHS Homeland Threat Assessment

Official website: https://www.dhs.gov/

Published assessment document for fiscal year 2025: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/24_0930_ia_24-320-ia-publication-2025-hta-final-30sep24-508.pdf

The assessment addresses homeland security threats, including domestic and foreign terrorism, transnational criminal organizations, border security, and cyber threats.

This is an intelligence assessment rather than a comprehensive incident-level dataset. Its findings should be considered alongside underlying records, other federal reports, and documented methodological limitations.

DHS Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHSS)

Official website: https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics

Provides federal statistical information on immigration and other homeland security subjects.

Research questions:

- What threat categories does DHS prioritize?
- What evidence supports its assessments?
- Which threats are quantified and which are described qualitatively?
- What limitations or gaps does DHS disclose?

3. Government Accountability Office (GAO)

GAO Domestic Terrorism Report

Official report: https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107030

The Government Accountability Office evaluates federal programs, oversight, and accountability. Its work is useful for identifying weaknesses in federal data collection, reporting, coordination, and implementation.

GAO official website: https://www.gao.gov/

GAO is particularly relevant when assessing whether federal agencies have consistent data, clearly defined responsibilities, and reliable methods for evaluating domestic terrorism threats.

Research questions:

- Have federal agencies implemented their stated strategies?
- Are agencies collecting comparable information?
- What reporting gaps have independent federal auditors identified?

- Are recommendations being implemented and verified?

4. Data.gov: Federal Open Data Portal

Official website: https://data.gov/

Data.gov provides a searchable portal for datasets published by federal agencies.

Suggested search terms include:

- Domestic terrorism
- Violent crime
- Hate crime
- Cybercrime
- Foreign influence
- Immigration enforcement
- Border security
- Critical infrastructure
- Transnational organized crime

Researchers should verify the originating agency, publication date, methodology, and update schedule of each dataset.

5. DHS Office of Homeland Security Statistics: Immigration Data

Immigration statistics topic page

Official website: https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration

Yearbook of Immigration Statistics

Official website: https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook

The Yearbook provides statistical tables covering immigration-related subjects, including apprehensions, removals, returns, refugee admissions, and other immigration categories.

These records can help establish what the government reports about immigration flows and enforcement. They should not be used to infer criminality or national security risk from immigration status alone.

Research questions:

- How many apprehensions, removals, and returns were recorded?
- What definitions apply to each category?

- How do annual totals change?
- Which figures represent individuals, encounters, proceedings, or completed enforcement actions?

6. Evaluating Federal Domestic Terrorism Reporting

Federal domestic terrorism reporting has faced coordination and data consistency challenges. The FBI and DHS have used different collection methods and reporting practices, which complicates comparisons across agencies and years.

Official government sources should be consulted for the status of joint assessments and any subsequently published reports.

FBI: https://www.fbi.gov/

DHS: https://www.dhs.gov/

GAO: https://www.gao.gov/

Researchers should distinguish between the date a report was published, the period its data cover, and the date on which an agency last updated its findings. A recent publication may rely on older data, while a report still under development cannot be treated as an available final assessment.

7. Recommended Method for Comparing Datasets

To determine whether a dataset presents a skewed picture of political violence or national security threats, compare its methods against official sources using the following criteria.

1. **Definitions:** Determine exactly what qualifies as terrorism, extremism, political violence, hate crime, cybercrime, or organized criminal activity.
2. **Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** Identify which incidents, perpetrators, organizations, and attempted offenses are included or excluded.
3. **Time periods:** Compare equivalent dates and full reporting periods rather than comparing partial years with complete years.
4. **Units of measurement:** Distinguish individuals, incidents, attacks, fatalities, injuries, arrests, prosecutions, convictions, and disrupted plots.
5. **Ideological classification:** Determine how political or ideological motivations are established and whether the same standards are applied across categories.
6. **Reporting completeness:** Examine missing data, agency participation, geographic coverage, and changes in reporting requirements.
7. **Reproducibility:** Determine whether the underlying records, methodology, and coding rules are sufficiently documented for independent review.

8. **Conclusions:** Evaluate whether the report's conclusions are proportionate to the data and whether the authors acknowledge limitations.

Conclusion

A rigorous homeland security investigation should compare multiple official government sources rather than rely on a single private dataset or an isolated report. The FBI provides crime statistics, DHS publishes threat assessments and immigration statistics, GAO audits federal oversight and data practices, and Data.gov offers access to datasets across government agencies.

The objective is to establish what the evidence supports, ***identify gaps, errors and inconsistencies***, and distinguish documented findings from assumptions. Applying the same standards to comparable incidents and categories is essential for a credible assessment of threats to American civilians and national security.