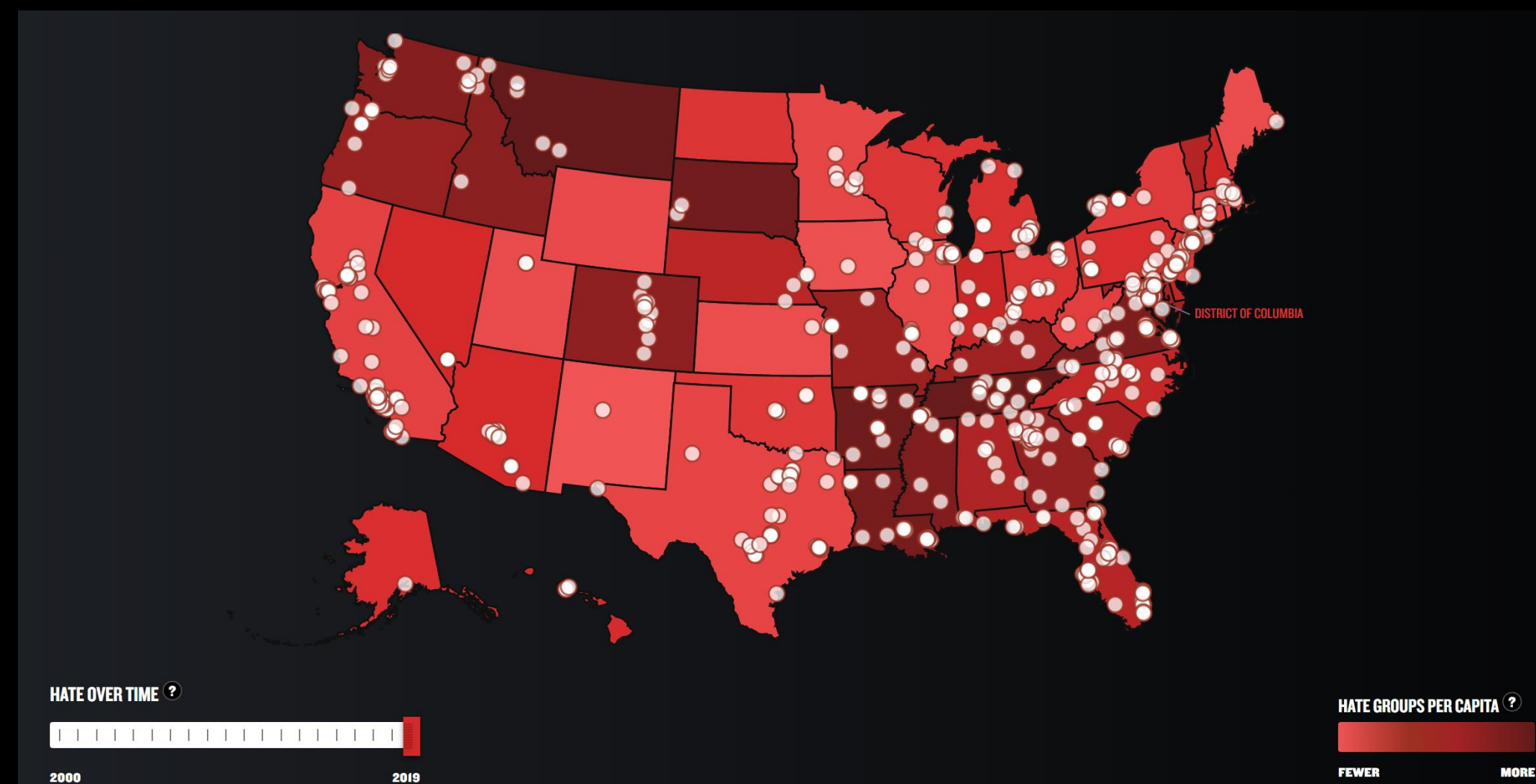


### ABSTRACT

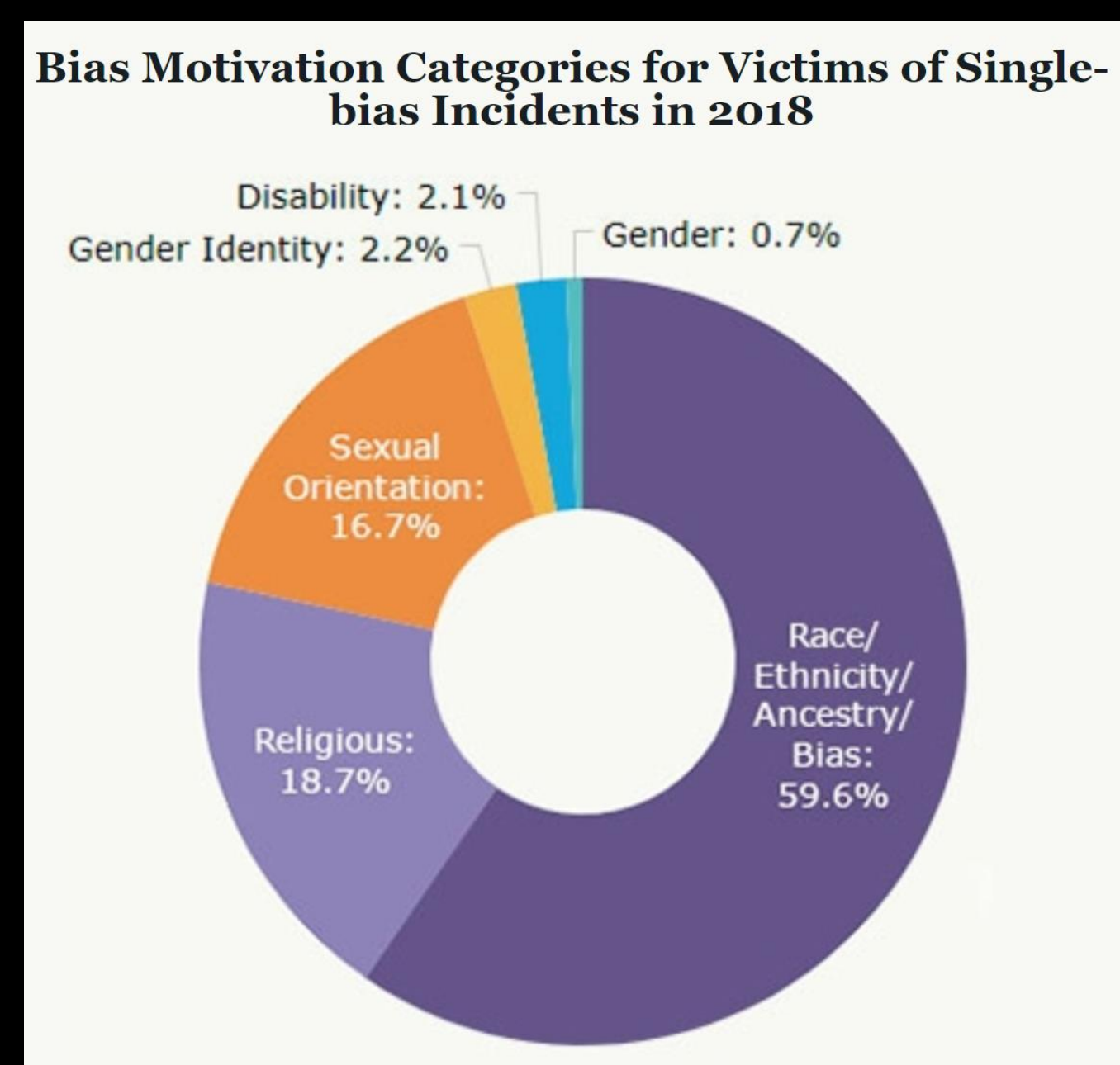
In light of the media toxicity of the recent presidential political process in the United States, it is imperative to recognize and understand the direct impact such negativity has on the health of our democracy. Political manipulation of fear in media promotes a dynamic wherein internal emotional reactions overwhelm both internal and external intellectual consideration, thus legitimizing, unleashing and exacerbating an unassailable marginalization mentality. By looking at President Trump's public iterations that target non-white Americans, the psychology of fear, and the hate Americans start to develop towards immigrants because of the manipulation, not only can we better understand this trend, but also begin building effective tools to combat these political ploys and restore democratic conventions of thought and conversation to the American public. Considering Anat Shenker's research on the inefficacy of using fear to combat fear and Gina Roussos' research on how fear makes people react irrationally, we can see how the gridlock of public political discourse only appears to be solidifying. Therefore the explicit use of emotive anchors as entry points for intellectual responses by responsible members of the media, in direct opposition to the traditional 'objectiveness' of the journalistic field, may set a standard by which both politicians and citizens may resume in a single "conversation" rather than two, loud competing monologues.

### 940 HATE GROUPS IN THE U.S IN 2019



**Figure 1:** 55% increase in white nationalist hate groups since 2017<sup>1</sup>

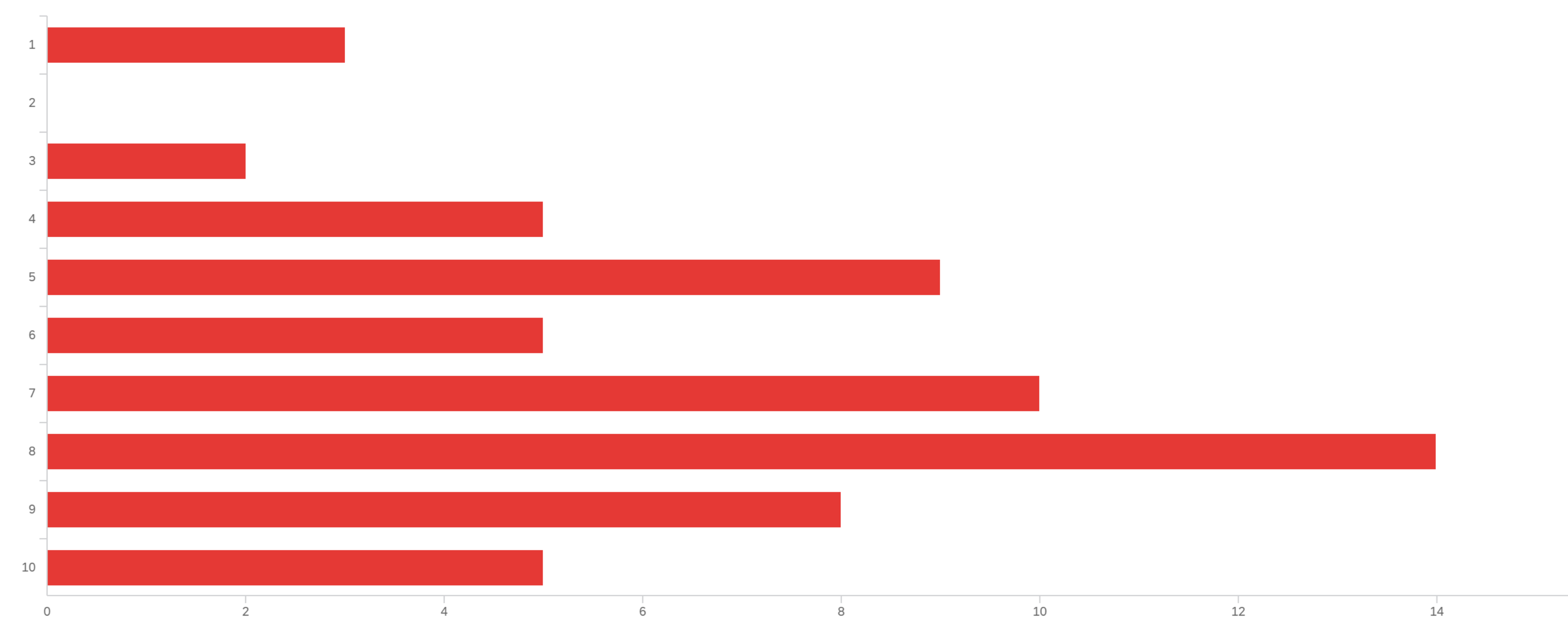
### THE MOTIVATIONS OF HATE CRIME



**Figure 2:** The majority of hate crimes are motivated by race/ethnicity/ancestry bias<sup>2</sup>

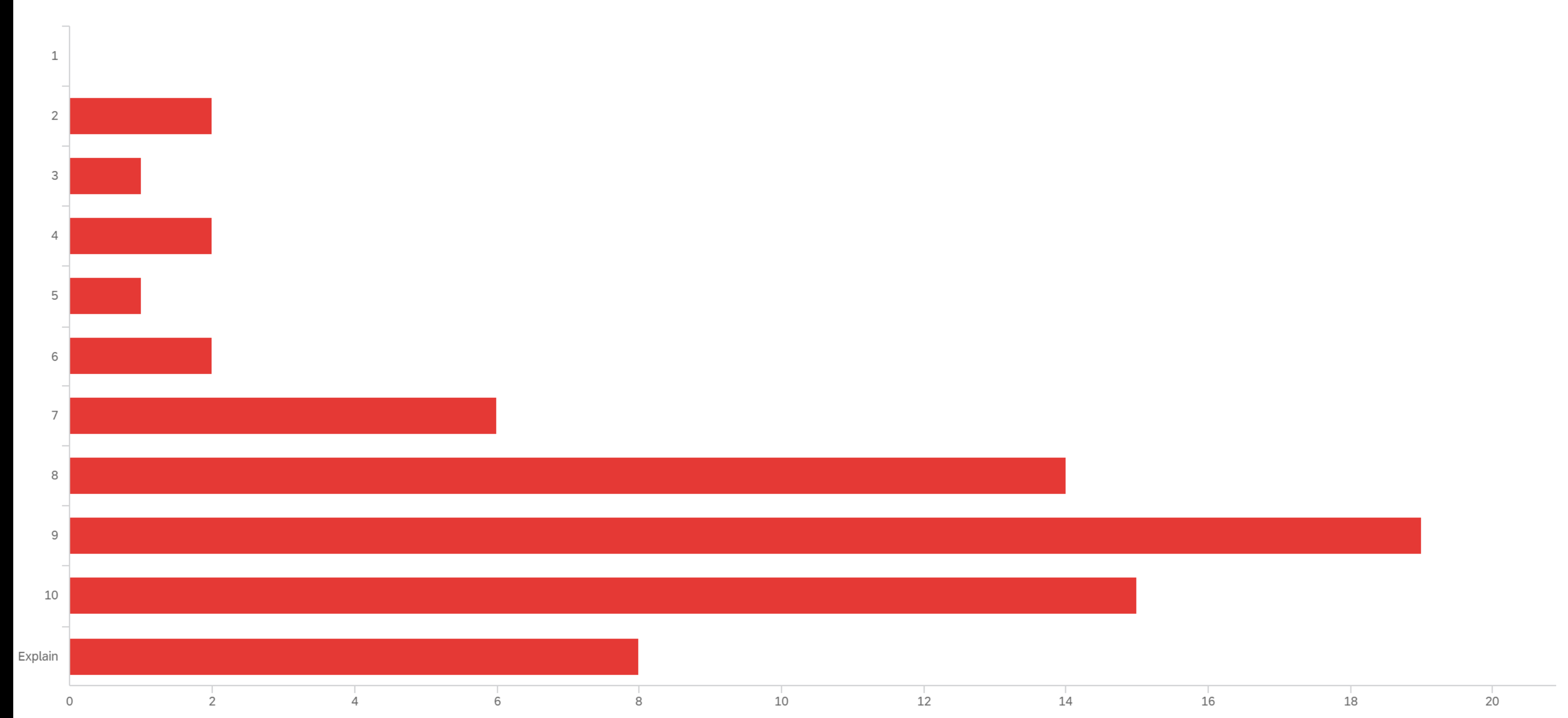
### CHANGES IN SAFETY BASED ON PERSONAL IDENTITY

How Safe Individuals Feel in the U.S. Currently (2019-2020) Based on Personal Identity



**Figure 3:** 1 = not safe and 10 = very safe

How Safe Individuals Feel in the U.S. Prior to the 2016 Presidential Election Based on Personal Identity



**Figure 4:** 1 = not safe and 10 = very safe

There has been a change in whether people feel safe in the United States due to personal identity. In the second graph, more individuals are noting that they feel safe. Note the longer x-axis to notate this change as well.

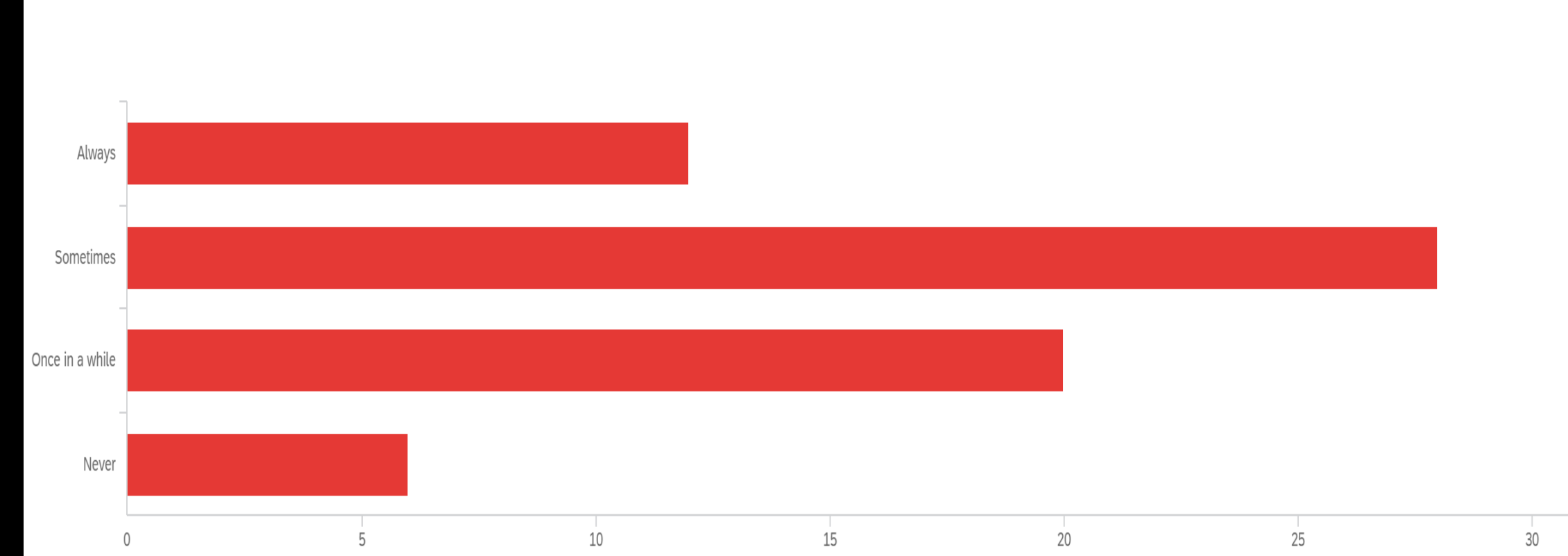
Figures 3, 4, and 5 represents data that was collected from the survey I conducted online via Qualtrics this year titled "Political Rhetoric." There were 80 respondents total with numbers of responses varying per question answered. This data was created with approval from the IRB and results were collected at the end of the 2019 fall semester and into the 2020 spring semester. Respondents are kept anonymous.

### SOURCES

1. "Hate Map." *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 9 Apr. 2020, [www.splcenter.org/hate-map](http://www.splcenter.org/hate-map).
2. "Hate Crime Statistics." *The United States Department of Justice*, 23 Nov. 2019, [www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics](http://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics).
3. Dang, Cindy. "Political Rhetoric with Amy Hollyfield." 13 Feb. 2020.

### A POOR MEDIA DIET

How Often Consumers Consult 3+ Sources Upon Hearing a News Topic for the First Time



**Figure 5:** Less than half of the participants always consulted 3+ sources when learning about a new topic.

### AMY HOLLYFIELD

Amy Hollyfield works for the *Tampa Bay Times* as an editor who also runs the news department for the city. She is an experienced journalist with 28 years of experience in the field and has been with the *Tampa Bay Times* for 23 years. Amy believes that being a woman in the field of journalism creates a unique identity, but it also leads to consumers attacking her on social media, which she notes seem like an increasing feature for her job recently.

When asked about political rhetoric and its impact on increasing violence, Amy does not think that this is unique to this time period, but rather a consistent trend. She says that what is unique to our times today is that we have access to news 24/7 with the rise of social media. As a result, Amy stressed partaking in a **"well balanced media diet."** This means learning from different news outlets rather than your default option. She notes that without a steady diet, consumers are not as well aware as they should be about different issues.<sup>3</sup> Upon hearing this perspective Amy brought to me, I can compare this balanced media diet that Amy recommends in comparison to Figure 5 above. More consumers need to regulate and improve their media diet.

### A NEW DIRECTION

After my interview with Amy Hollyfield and talking to other media professionals, I learned about an underlying issue that could take this exploration further. When interviewing Amy directly, there seemed to be a lack of opinion with regards to politics. She did not want to make assumptions, given her job position. While talking to other professionals, my faculty adviser, Dr. Michael Meinhardt also noticed that these professionals were hesitant to partake in the interview as well as make bold claims while being recorded. As a result, we think that there is an underlying issue at hand where **the media is being manipulated as well**. Since the media is being manipulated, we as a society have started to lose faith in the truth of the media. This may explain why consumers are so hesitant to consult multiple outlets for their own information. Further exploration into this new theory would need to be explored rather than focusing on the rhetoric that causes hate crimes.