



**Jewish Community
Relations Council**
MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

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Wisconsin 2024 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation conducts an annual audit of antisemitic incidents across Wisconsin. Our annual audit includes events that occur in Wisconsin, are committed by individuals residing in Wisconsin, or are directed towards Wisconsin residents or institutions. All incidents have been corroborated.

Allegations of antisemitic incidents and/or security concerns for Jewish individuals or Jewish organizations can be submitted via an [online form](https://MilwaukeeJewish.org/report-incident) (MilwaukeeJewish.org/report-incident), by [emailing](mailto:Security@JewishSecurityWI.org) (Security@JewishSecurityWI.org), or by calling our security team at 414-967-SAFE.

Defining Antisemitism

We define antisemitism as hatred toward anyone who is Jewish, identifies as Jewish, is perceived as Jewish, or belongs to a Jewish household, regardless of an individual's self-identification within the Jewish community.

While disagreeing with Israeli policies or politics is not considered antisemitic, anti-Israel and anti-Zionist incidents involving words or actions that deny Israel's right to exist as the Jewish homeland, deny Jews the right to self-determination, and/or blame any or all Jews for decisions made by the Israeli government are deemed antisemitic in intention and impact.

Other examples of antisemitism include distorting the Holocaust — specifically minimizing, downplaying, or denying that the Holocaust occurred, comparing the Holocaust to other events, or erasing the Jewish identity of the victims, as well as the misuse and weaponization of the term "genocide" to exploit trauma experienced by the Jewish people.

One in three (33%) American Jews report being the personal target of antisemitism — in person or virtually — at least once over the past year. Among those who experienced antisemitism, a significant majority (78%) indicated that they did not report it, with over half (54%) expressing doubt that anything would be done about it.

-American Jewish Committee (AJC) 2024 State of Antisemitism Report

It is critical to note that we can only maintain information submitted to us. We know that many members of the Jewish community and their allies choose not to report allegations of antisemitism. Sometimes the lack of reporting stems from fear of becoming a target; at other times, it is because individuals do not understand that this information is essential in helping our Jewish Federation respond to antisemitic incidents. Recently, there has been a significant rise in antisemitic incidents, causing some people to feel numb and overlook the value of reporting. Additionally, some individuals refrain from reporting incidents of concern because they do not know how to do so.

Underreporting is evident in Milwaukee

- In the Fall of 2024, a meeting of Wisconsin Jewish high school students found that 11 of the 12 present had experienced antisemitism in the last year, ranging from anti-Zionist rhetoric by a teacher to bullying on social media by their peers. **Not one of the students reported the incidents they experienced.** In discussions with several Jewish teen leaders, they noted that the two main reasons for not reporting incidents were fear of retribution if any teacher was involved and that incidents are occurring so frequently that they no longer think it is important to report them.
- The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) surveyed the needs of Wisconsin educators regarding Holocaust and genocide education, with 106 educators participating statewide. The survey provided insight into issues of antisemitism concerning educators. Over one in five educators (22.6%) reported an increase in incidents of antisemitism within their schools or districts. Among those who observed an uptick, 83.3% specified Holocaust-related imagery such as swastikas, while others encountered antisemitic tropes (54.2%), Holocaust comparisons or denials (33.3%), and various other incidents (20.8%). **These statistics alone demonstrate that we are not hearing about all incidents of concern that occur in educational settings.**

We know our numbers never totally represent incidents throughout the state – they only represent a portion of what is occurring.

American Jewish Committee (AJC) 2024 State of Antisemitism Report

For the first time in the six-year history of [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America Report](https://www.ajc.org/antisemitismreport2024) (AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2024), a majority of American Jews — 56% — report changing their behavior out of fear of antisemitism, a sharp increase from 38% in 2022 to 46% in 2023. Forty percent of American Jews say they have avoided publicly displaying things that might identify them as a Jew out of fear of antisemitism, up from 26% in 2023.

One in three (33%) American Jews report being the personal target of antisemitism — in person or virtually — at least once over the past year. Among those who experienced antisemitism, a significant majority (78%) indicated that they did not report it, with over half (54%) expressing doubt that anything would be done about it.

And, for the first time, the 2024 survey asked Jewish adults whether, in the past five years, they have considered leaving their home in the United States due to antisemitism. Thirteen percent said yes, and 24% of Orthodox Jews responded affirmatively.

In 2024, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) tabulated 9,354 antisemitic incidents across the United States. This represents a 5% increase from the 8,873 incidents recorded in 2023, a 344% increase over the past five years and an 893% increase over the past 10 years. It is the highest number on record since ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents 46 years ago.
([ADL.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2024](https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2024))

Anti-Israel/Anti-Zionism Related Activity

For the second consecutive year, there was a notable increase in antisemitic incidents that utilized language against Zionism or Israel as a guise for antisemitism. Language that shifts from criticism of the state of Israel, akin to how one would criticize any other state, to blaming all Jews for the actions of the Israeli government or holding Israel to a different standard than other nations, is deemed antisemitic.

Locally and nationally, we have seen the implementation of a litmus test – asking members of the Jewish community if they are “pro” or “anti” Zionist in order to allow them to be part of a community, programs, or discussions. Most American Jews do feel a strong connection to the State of Israel in some way, whether or not they agree with any Israeli policy or decision. These litmus tests create an environment where they are unable to represent their authentic Jewish identity.

In a [2019-2020 Pew Research Center survey](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/u-s-jews-connections-with-and-attitudes-toward-israel/) (PewResearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/u-s-jews-connections-with-and-attitudes-toward-israel), 82% of Jewish adults in the United States said caring about Israel is an essential or important part of what being Jewish means to them. Roughly six-in-ten said they have a lot or some in common with Jews in Israel (60%), that they are very or somewhat emotionally attached to Israel (58%), and that they follow news about Israel very or somewhat closely (57%).

There were 73 local incidents related to Israel/Zionism, marking an increase of 192% from 25 incidents in 2023. Except for 2022, these incidents have been on the rise since 2015. Most of the incidents in 2024 referenced Gaza and/or utilized phrases such as “genocide” and/or “from the river to the sea,” a phrase used by those who do not believe Israel has the right to be the Jewish homeland and call for its elimination from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

- Graffiti on the breakwater wall at McKinley Marina stating, “Zionism can burn in hell”, “Zionism = White Supremacy = Terrorism” and “Zionism is Terrorism.”
- A mural featuring a swastika overlaying a Star of David was placed on a building in Milwaukee. It included the statement, “The irony of becoming what you once hated.”
- A Jewish teenager was told to remove a sticker of an Israeli flag from her phone. She was then sent harassing messages and graphic images of children and teens in Israel being brutalized, starved, and held at gunpoint.

Holocaust/Nazi References

There were 44 incidents involving Holocaust/Nazi references in 2024, reflecting a 7.3% increase from 41 incidents in 2023. Holocaust/Nazi references include Holocaust denial, the minimization of the Holocaust, or the use of Nazi and Holocaust-related terminology. Allegations of genocide against Israel concerning its military actions in the Israel-Hamas war, as well as claims that Jews are responsible for genocide, were also included in this category in 2024.

- Comments on the Facebook page of Jewish Museum Milwaukee comparing Zionists to Nazis.
- Students from an opposing team yelled “Hitler” at players from a Jewish school during a basketball game.
- Students took and shared a homecoming picture in which they were making a “Heil Hitler salute.”

Harassment/Threat/Assault

There was a decrease in Harassment/Threats/Assaults. The 29 incidents under this category reflect a decrease from 2023. This number is still more than twice the number of incidents in 2022 and significantly higher than 2020 or 2021.

- Harassment of UW-Milwaukee Hillel students occurred during the student organization fair. This included the distribution of fake Hillel flyers accusing the organization of supporting genocide in Gaza.
- A Jewish resident of Milwaukee was warned to “Watch your back” and informed that they were on a “local watch list.”
- A Jewish household received a letter stating, “Hamas coming.”

Jewish Institutions Targeted

There were 21 incidents directly targeting Jewish institutions in 2024. This was down from 32 incidents in 2023 but still significantly higher than the 6 incidents in 2022. Incidents impacted synagogues, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Jewish schools, Hillels, and other identifiably Jewish organizations.

- A bomb threat was called into a synagogue.
- Voicemail received by Jewish Social Services in Madison stating “you should kill yourself you big nosed kike. F*** you.”
- Voicemail message received by the Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle including references to Gaza and the Jewish community as murderers.

Hate Group Activity

There were 6 incidents of hate group activity reported in 2024. This reflects a 57% decrease from 2023. Hate group activity tends to overlap across populations. This can be seen in the widespread use of symbols reflecting racism, homophobia and antisemitism in hate group flyers and activities.

- Swastika on the outside of a building on a university campus by a known hate group.
- The hate group Goyim Defense League, who put the name “GoyimTV” on hate flyers distributed across various communities and referencing antisemitic conspiracies. The Goyim Defense League is a loose network of individuals connected by their virulent antisemitism. The group includes five or six primary organizers/public figures, dozens of supporters, and thousands of online followers.
- Flyer shared referencing “New Order” with a Milwaukee address on the flyer. New Order is a neo-Nazi group based in Milwaukee that calls members “heirs” of Adolf Hitler who support an all-white society.

Wisconsin’s 2024 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents includes 95 reported and corroborated incidents, reflecting a 20% decrease from 2023, but it still indicates a continued level of concern since 2015.

Total antisemitic incidents reported and confirmed since 2015:

2015 – 17	2018 - 47	2021 - 95	2024 - 95
2016 – 30	2019 - 73	2022 – 101	
2017 – 39	2020 - 99	2023 - 114	

Although reporting has decreased by 20% since last year, Wisconsin’s reported antisemitic incidents still reflect a cumulative increase of 459% since tracking began in 2015.

Audit Findings by Category:

- Anti-Israel/Anti-Zionist (192% increase – up from 25 in 2023 to 73 in 2024)
- Holocaust/Nazi References (7.3% increase – up from 41 in 2023 to 44 in 2024)
- Harassment/Threats/Assaults (42% decrease – down from 50 in 2023 to 29 in 2024)
- Jewish Institutions Targeted (34% decrease – down from 32 in 2023 to 21 in 2024)
- Conspiracy Theories (64% decrease – down from 25 in 2023 to 9 in 2024)
- Expression (2.3% increase – up from 43 in 2023 to 44 in 2024)

Responding to Antisemitism

Many individuals want to believe that any single action – rally, protest, letter writing campaign – will be “the answer” to ending antisemitism. We wish that were true, but we know it is not. Effectively responding to antisemitism is a marathon; it requires education, advocacy, and legislative efforts. It necessitates building and maintaining relationships with elected officials, interfaith leaders, educators, law enforcement professionals, and other community leaders. It takes hundreds of conversations to help people learn more about the Jewish community — the blessings and the issues of concern. Additionally, it requires a willingness to learn from others about their communities to build real allies.

MJF has been engaged in this marathon for over 100 years.

- The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust and Education Resource Center (HERC) brings critical Holocaust education and genocide training to over 400 school districts throughout the state, and partners with K-12 superintendents, educators, families, and communities to educate on the history of antisemitism and contemporary manifestations.
- Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) works to enhance and increase critical relationships proactively and reactively by building allies through advocacy and working with the Wisconsin Jewish Conference on legislative issues impacting the Jewish community. The JCRC also maintains a statewide antisemitic audit to help MJF ascertain where and what type of incidents require our focus throughout the year.
- The Wisconsin Jewish Security Network (WJSN) is dedicated to ensuring the safety and preparedness of Wisconsin's Jewish community through proactive risk assessments, crisis management, and security training. It oversees protective operations for Jewish organizations across the state, including schools, synagogues, camps, and community centers, while coordinating with law enforcement and national security partners. Additionally, WJSN monitors and addresses emerging threats, providing resources and expertise to mitigate risks and enhance community resilience.

We have built the infrastructure to respond to antisemitism in our community. This annual audit provides an important partial snapshot of antisemitic incidents throughout the state; we use this information to help us determine when and how to best respond to issues of concern through our many relationships with elected officials, law enforcement professionals, media sources, and community leaders.

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The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation envisions a just community that reflects American and Jewish values. The mission is to speak as the representative of the Jewish community on issues of public affairs and public policy by convening and mobilizing the Jewish community through education, advocacy, social justice, and support for Israel.

The JCRC conducts an annual audit of antisemitic incidents in Wisconsin to maintain accurate and consistent reporting, evaluate trends, educate the public, and empower individuals to help stop the spread of antisemitism and all forms of hate.