



May 20, 2026

## Wisconsin 2025 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents Sees Single-Highest Increase in History

### WHAT IS THE AUDIT?

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation conducts an annual audit of reported antisemitic incidents occurring in Wisconsin, whether committed by individuals residing in Wisconsin, or are directed towards Wisconsin residents or institutions. Information from the audit is used to help respond appropriately, to inform elected officials, and to assist educational institutions, community agencies, and the media in recognizing and responding to the dangers of antisemitism towards the Jewish communities throughout Wisconsin.

### 2025 AUDIT NUMBERS – THE HIGHEST ON RECORD

In 2024, the JCRC documented 95 antisemitic incidents statewide, marking the first decrease annually since 2015. In 2025, by contrast, **174 antisemitic incidents were recorded — the single highest annual total on record**. This sharp increase marks 2025 as a statistically distinct year and signals a troubling shift in both the scale and nature of antisemitism. This represents a 923% increase since 2015.

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**There were 174 confirmed antisemitic incidents in 2025.**

**This is an 83% increase from 95 confirmed incidents in 2024.**

**Since 2015, incidents have risen 923%.**

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# LESSONS FROM THE 2025 AUDIT

1. Anti-Israel/Anti-Zionism framing is the dominant ideological anchor, appearing in a majority of all incidents. Offenders are not distinguishing between support for Israel as the Jewish homeland and opinions about political and military decisions made by the State. Jews who live outside of Israel, including throughout Wisconsin, are being targeted with hateful words, harassment, and sometimes violence, based on the perpetrators’ misdirected blame of political and military decisions made by the Israeli government. We analyze the important distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel and when that criticism is utilized to mask antisemitism on page 6 of this report.
2. Holocaust inversion and Nazi comparisons increased in frequency. When individuals or organizations use Holocaust analogies with anything not relating to the Holocaust, they desecrate the memories of survivors, those murdered in the Holocaust, those who risked their lives to protect Jews, and the liberators.
3. Online antisemitism appears to be at an all-time high level; far too often, hateful rhetoric is often followed by hateful actions.
4. Even with higher reporting, this data almost certainly underrepresents lived experience, where individuals impacted may be scared to report incidents of concern, fear retaliation, or are unsure where to turn for help.
5. These patterns point to normalization of antisemitic behavior and represent a shift from largely symbolic or generalized antisemitism toward personal and institutional targeting that disrupts daily Jewish life.

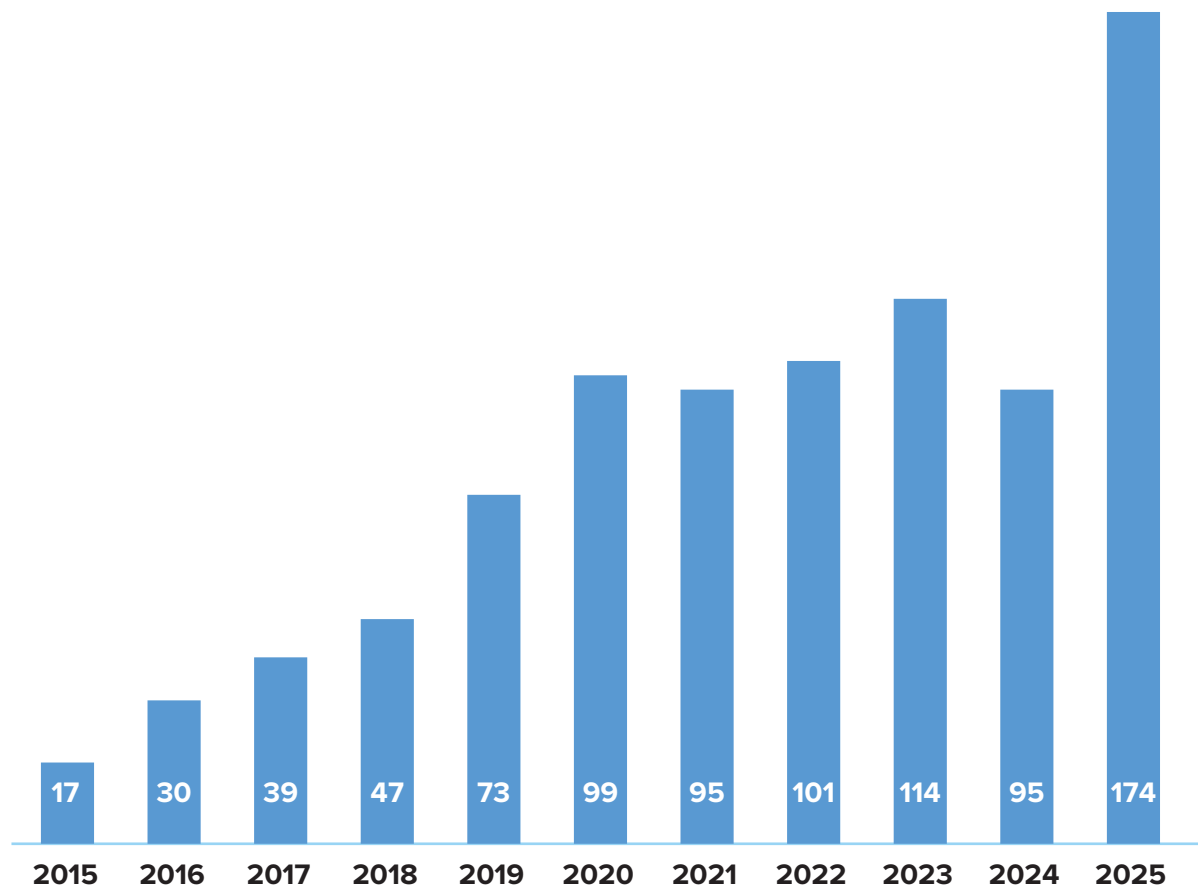
Comparing antisemitic incidents in 2024 and 2025 reveals more than a rise in numbers — it demonstrates a significant escalation in severity, targeting, and impact on Jewish life in Wisconsin.\*

| CATEGORY                                    | 2024 | 2025 | CHANGE             |
|---|------|------|--------------------|
| <b>Verbal &amp; Written Expression</b>      | 44   | 117  | <b>+73 (+166%)</b> |
| <b>Anti-Israel / Anti-Zionist sentiment</b> | 73   | 101  | +28 (+38%)         |
| <b>Holocaust / Nazi references</b>          | 44   | 64   | +20 (+45%)         |
| <b>Jewish institutions targeted</b>         | 21   | 23   | +2 (+10%)          |

*\* Note that in the chart above, many incidents fall within more than one category; some incidents include many different antisemitic messages but are uniformly reported as a single incident.*

## HISTORICAL TRENDLINE

The following chart shows the changes in reported antisemitic behaviors and incidents over time.



*NOTE: Our audits are a snapshot of REPORTED activity across the state — it does not represent all antisemitic activity. We know that many members of the Jewish community and allies choose not to report allegations of antisemitism due to personal fear, misunderstanding the process, not knowing how to report, or feeling as if it won't make a difference.*

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**A glossary and an explanation of the audit process are included  
at the end of this report.**

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## **Wisconsin saw a clear and concerning shift between 2024 and 2025, including:**

### **36% of Incidents Involved Holocaust Distortion and Imagery (+45%)**

- Holocaust distortion included 64 incidents (36% of all incidents), frequently overlapping with Israel-related content.
- The use of the swastika — a Nazi symbol used as an expression of hatred — was found in 17 of the incidents (10% of all incidents).
- This category increased 45% compared to the 2024 data.

### **13% of Incidents Target Jewish Organizations (+10%)**

- 23 Jewish organizations were targeted with antisemitism (13% of incidents). This is an increase of two additional incidents compared to the 2024 data.

### **18% of Incidents Targeted Members of the Jewish Community (+14%)**

- There were 32 instances in the category of threats/assaults/violence (18% of incidents). This is up from 29 incidents in 2024. Individuals who were visibly Jewish — through religious dress, Jewish symbols, or participation in Jewish communal life — were more often singled out.

### **55% of Incidents Took Place on Social Media (+188%)**

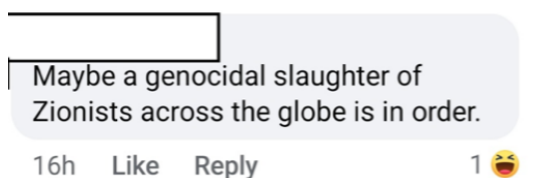
- The majority of antisemitism incidents — 95 (55% of the total) — were via social media and other online sites. That is almost three times the 33 incidents recorded in the same category in 2024.

### **11% of Incidents Took Place in Schools/Colleges (-37%)**

- The total number of reported antisemitic incidents for 2025 is 8 incidents in K-12 schools and 11 incidents in post-secondary schools. The 2024 audit recorded 10 incidents in K-12 schools and 20 incidents in post-secondary schools. Based on our ongoing communications with both school administrators statewide as well as Jewish families, we know that many incidents in school settings are not reported out of fear of retribution, perceived social ramifications, or have become so commonplace that they are not taken seriously.
- The fact that we have been receiving requests for increased training in contemporary antisemitism, as well as how to create safer learning environments for Jewish students, reveals the underlying challenges many schools in Wisconsin are facing.

## EXAMPLES OF ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS FROM 2025

- Holocaust/Nazi-related posts include:
  - *Zionism is greater than Nazism. Make Israel Palestine again. Jews over there [Israel] are the “new nazis.”*
- Jewish institutional incidents include:
  - A perpetrator cutting off the head of a rabbit and throwing its bloody carcass on the doorsteps of a Jewish organization; the perpetrator reported that he chose that location because it was the closest Jewish organization to his home.
- Examples of Jewish community members being targeted include:
  - Jewish children and adults walking to synagogue and having antisemitic comments yelled at them.
  - Perpetrators driving by homes portraying support for Israel and honking and/or yelling antisemitic comments.
- Incidents taking place on social media platforms include:
  - Responses to posts about the Israel-Gaza war such as in the screenshot below, where the original source was not antisemitic, but the responses to the post were antisemitic.



- The following incident occurred at a K-12 school:
  - During lunchtime, a student asked the other students at their lunch table if anyone was Jewish. When the other students said no, the student responded, *“oh good, I want to shoot Jewish people.”*
- The following is an incident that occurred at a college:
  - Various antisemitic and anti-Israel stickers were placed on the campus. The stickers read: “Sinwar Lives,” accompanied by an inverted red triangle; “Oct. 7th,” with an image of a paraglider; “P.F.L.P.” (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine); “Zionism Nazi;” “Death to Israel.”
- A Jewish business received the following email:
  - *Subject: Death to Israel*  
*All you kikes should GET OUT of Milwaukee. You ought to be ashamed of what Israel is doing. Disgusting warmongers all of you filthy money grubbing animals.*

- A pro-immigrant rally included many people holding anti-Israel signs. Members of the Jewish community who wanted to show support for immigrant communities did not feel safe participating in the rally because they felt those holding the anti-Israel signs created an environment that targeted Jewish people.

Each of these instances, especially if not taken seriously by the school or campus, creates a hostile environment for Jewish students and their families, worried that the hateful words could be followed by hateful actions.

## ANTI-ISRAEL/ANTI-ZIONIST INCIDENTS

**58% of all incidents recorded in the 2025 Wisconsin audit involve anti-Israel and/or anti-Zionist “collective blame” sentiment as the motivating thought behind the antisemitism.**

**101 of the 174 incidents** included in this year’s audit are motivated by anti-Israel/anti-Zionist sentiment. Anti-Israel sentiment ranges from criticism of government policies to the rejection of Israel’s existence as a Jewish state. Anti-Zionism is the opposition to Zionism, the movement for Jewish self-determination and statehood in their ancestral homeland.

Wisconsin’s numbers are very similar to the national information. The Anti-Defamation League’s 2025 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents in the United States found that 45% of the 6,274 incidents they tracked — a total of 2,847 incidents — had elements related to Israel or Zionism.

**Let’s be straight** — choosing to disagree with Israeli policies, politics, and/or military decisions does not make someone’s intention antisemitic. However, blaming all Jews for Israeli politics or military decisions is antisemitic because it treats Jews as “collectively responsible” for the actions of a state and its government.

### WHY “COLLECTIVE BLAME” IS ANTISEMITIC:

- **Collective guilt / collective responsibility:** Assigning blame to people because they are Jewish, not because of any action they took. Holding individuals accountable for the actions or policies of a government is bigotry.
- **Erases Jewish diversity:** Jews hold a wide range of political views on Israel (including strong criticism). “All Jews support X” is a stereotype that flattens a diverse community into a monolith.
- **Uses Jewish identity as a proxy for a political position:** When someone assumes Jews “represent Israel” or must answer for Israel, they’re treating Jewishness as inherently political and suspect, similar to “dual loyalty” tropes historically used against Jews.

- **Leads to harassment of Jews and Jewish institutions unrelated to policy:** Multiple instances of antisemitism in this country can be attributed to perpetrators who disagree with decisions made by the Israeli government. Targeting synagogues, Jewish schools, Jewish businesses, or visibly Jewish individuals over Israeli state actions is discrimination based on identity, not political critique.
- **Double standard in group-blame:** Criticizing a government is normal; blaming a whole diaspora for that government's actions is not. When that logic is applied to Jews, it aligns with longstanding antisemitic ideas about Jews as a global, coordinated force.

## THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

Over the last year, the JCRC worked to help pass into law the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism for the State of Wisconsin. IHRA defines antisemitism as a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. It does not prohibit or criminalize criticism of Israel. It includes both rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals, their property, and Jewish institutions.

The IHRA definition is a **tool for identifying antisemitic bias when enforcing existing anti-discrimination and hate-crime laws**. It is accompanied by examples that illustrate how antisemitism appears today — from classic conspiracy theories to rhetoric that denies Jewish people the right to self-determination. It also includes an important safeguard: criticism of Israel, similar to that leveled against any other country, cannot be regarded as antisemitic.

The IHRA definition does not prohibit criticism of Israel, political activism, or personal expression. It only provides context for identifying antisemitic intent when evaluating acts that already violate existing laws or policies.

- Under the IHRA definition, individuals remain free to express their views — including strong criticism of the Israeli government, its leaders, or its policies — just as they would be free to criticize any other country. Examples of protected expression include:
  - Displaying a bumper sticker or yard sign supporting Palestinian rights or criticizing Israeli policies.
  - Participating in peaceful protests or demonstrations related to the Israel–Palestine conflict.

- Advocating for political, economic, or academic positions regarding the region, such as supporting or opposing boycotts.
- Engaging in open classroom discussions or publishing scholarly critiques of Israeli or Palestinian leadership.

These examples illustrate the bill’s core safeguard: speech and belief are fully protected. The IHRA definition is only considered when determining whether an act crosses into harassment, vandalism, discrimination, or violence motivated by antisemitic bias.

## RESPONDING TO ANTISEMITISM

The Anti-Defamation League’s [2025 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#) in the United States recorded a total of 6,274 incidents of antisemitic harassment, vandalism, and assault. The 2025 incidents were lower than the 2024 incidents recorded but represent the third-highest year on record since the Anti-Defamation League began tracking them in 1979.

- There was a decrease in incidents of harassment and vandalism, but physical assaults were higher than ever before. There was an average of 17 such incidents a day in 2025, compared to an average of eight incidents daily between 2020 and 2022.
- Of particular concern, 32 antisemitic assaults involved a deadly weapon — up from 23 incidents in 2024. In seven of these incidents, the victims were targeted for their real or perceived support for Israel.

Key findings from the American Jewish Committee’s [The State of Antisemitism in America 2025](#) emphasize the need for the JCRC to continue to monitor and publish information regarding antisemitism throughout the state.

- **91% of American Jews say they feel less safe** as a Jewish person in the United States due to violent attacks in the past year.
- **78% of American Jews say they feel less safe** as a Jewish person in the U.S. because of October 7, 2023.
- **More than half (55%) of American Jews say they changed their behavior** in the past year out of fear of antisemitism.
- **86% of American Jews say antisemitism has increased** in the U.S. since October 7.
- **Almost one-third (31%) of American Jews say they have been the personal target** of antisemitism at least once over the last year.

When antisemitism is allowed to flourish, members of the Jewish community **and their allies** increasingly feel that their environment is not only unwelcoming but potentially dangerous for them and their loved ones.

We've been effectively responding to antisemitism for nearly 125 years. It requires education, advocacy, and legislative efforts, and it necessitates building and maintaining relationships with elected officials, interfaith leaders, educators, law enforcement professionals, and other community leaders.

### Working together to fight antisemitism:

- **The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC)** brings critical Holocaust education and genocide training to nearly 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.
- **J-Hub: An Institute for K-12 Jewish Resources** brings together the expertise of several MJF programs, including Jewish Museum Milwaukee, Coalition for Jewish Learning, HERC, and JCRC to promote safe learning environments for all students and to provide support, lesson plans and resources for teaching about Jewish identity and culture in public school ecosystems.
- **Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)** works to enhance and increase critical relationships proactively and reactively by building allies through advocacy as well as working with the Wisconsin Jewish Conference on legislative issues impacting the Jewish community.
- **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.

# GLOSSARY and PROCESS

## 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.

Antisemitic activity includes overt acts or expressions of anti-Jewish bigotry and hostility. Incidents can be non-criminal or criminal. We categorize antisemitism as follows:

**DISCRIMINATION:** Employment, education, housing, or organizational membership. If substantiated, these actions should be considered as civil rights violations.

**EXPRESSION:** Written or verbal communication by groups or individuals, including public, elected, or religious figures. This includes publicly or privately directed letters, phone conversations, articles, speeches, email, social media, web publications, or other Internet communications. Expression often falls under free speech and is not criminal; if the expression includes direct threats, it can elevate the incident to criminal activity (to be confirmed by law enforcement officials).

**HARASSMENT, THREATS, AND ASSAULTS:** Directed at individuals or institutions. Harassment and threats will not always be considered criminal by law enforcement officials; some incidents may fall under free speech.

**HATE GROUP ACTIVITY:** Rallies, recruitment, and other activities organized or sponsored by groups including well-known extremist groups, or groups created over a particular issue or incident.

**VANDALISM:** Desecration, vandalism, graffiti, or other activity damaging property in some way. Vandalism acts are criminal.

## PROCESS FOR ANNUAL AUDIT OF ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS

Allegations of antisemitic incidents and/or security concerns for Jewish individuals or Jewish organizations are submitted:

- via an online form ([MilwaukeeJewish.org/report-incident](https://MilwaukeeJewish.org/report-incident))
- by emailing ([Security@JewishSecurityWI.org](mailto:Security@JewishSecurityWI.org))
- or by calling our security team at 414-967-SAFE. JCRC works closely with the Wisconsin Jewish Security Network (WJSN) when alleged antisemitism also presents a concern of physical safety to any member of the Jewish community or Jewish organization.

The JCRC Antisemitism Task Force (Task Force) meets multiple times during the year to review each incident to determine if they believe it should be included in the annual audit. The Task Force has developed guidelines to determine inclusion or exclusion in the audit.

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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.*



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