

# DISCUSSING ANTISEMITISM

## A Guide for Conversation and Reflection

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### Introduction

The ADL recorded 2,024 antisemitic incidents in 2020— a 4% decrease from 2019. Thankfully, compared with 2019, 2020 saw a 49% decrease of antisemitic assault involving 41 targeted individuals and no fatalities. Overall, a larger proportion of antisemitic incidents targeted Jewish institutions, such as synagogues, Jewish community centers and Jewish schools. With the vast majority of Jewish institutional events and activities moving online, the nature of antisemitic incidents followed suit. Of the 264 recorded incidents of harassment that targeted Jewish institutions, 114 were “Zoombombings”. Zoombombing is a practice in which virtual meetings are disrupted by graphic or threatening messages. Antisemitic Zoombombings typically involve the use of antisemitic slurs or imagery, and the specific targeting of Jewish religious or cultural services.

ADL recorded 324 antisemitic incidents attributed to known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology, representing 16% of the total number of incidents. Other incidents lack such a connection. Discussing these disturbing trends can be challenging, but these conversations are necessary. ADL’s tools and resources can help.

**Read more:** [What is “Zoombombing” and Who is Behind It? | Anti-Defamation League](#)

**Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.**

**Read more:** [Antisemitism Uncovered](#)

The Audit of Antisemitic incidents accounts for assaults, vandalism, and harassment, but we know that there are many unreported incidents of antisemitism, from “jokes” to microaggressions to insensitive comments that normalize antisemitic rhetoric. The 2,024 incidents that ADL logged in 2020 is the third highest number of incidents recorded per year since ADL began tracking incidents in 1979. . Antisemitic incidents took place across society, including on college campuses, in K-12 schools, and at Jewish institutions. The complete dataset of antisemitic incidents for 2016-2020 is available on ADL’s H.E.A.T. Map, an interactive online tool that allows users to geographically chart antisemitic incidents and extremist activity nationally and regionally.

Though some may describe antisemitism differently depending on who is spreading myths or perpetrating violence, antisemitism is an ideology and system that permeates all parts of society. All examples of antisemitism in our society relate to long held and deeply entrenched beliefs that are as inescapable as the air we all breathe. A key lesson to understanding the rise in antisemitism is acknowledging that in today’s society, everyone of us is exposed to antisemitic myths and tropes.

In order to better understand and unpack antisemitism, this guide provides a way to initiate conversations about how antisemitism impacts both the Jewish community and the United States at large and what we as ordinary people can do about it. This resource is intended to enable you to initiate conversations with the people in your life about antisemitism and other forms of hate.

## Discussion Guide

### Setting the Stage:

- Prepare yourself by reading through the ADL's 2020 Audit and consider setting [ground rules](#) to ensure a comfortable environment for conversation.
- Review relevant [definitions](#) (target, ally, aggressor, bystander, Antisemitism, prejudice and discrimination).
- Assemble some additional learning resources for your participants before and/or after your discussion. (see details below for resources and follow up opportunities).

Note: Some people who have learned about Antisemitism through Holocaust education may tend to hyperfocus on Holocaust history. It's important to remember that antisemitism did not begin or end with the Holocaust. This conversation should serve to broaden the understanding of antisemitism as a more complex and enduring ideology.

### Discussion Questions:

#### ■ Warming up

- What have you been seeing or hearing on the news, online, or in your community about antisemitism?
- Are you having conversations about antisemitism or other forms of hate with your peers, family, or co-workers? What have those conversations been like?

#### ■ Looking at data

Review some of the data points in the audit and executive summary – then answer the questions below:

- What do these numbers tell you about the trends in antisemitism today?
- What points in the data set did you find most surprising, interesting, or helpful in understanding antisemitic trends?

#### ■ Diving Deeper:

Continue to discuss the questions below:

- What is Antisemitism and who is targeted by it? Who do you think are the aggressors in antisemitic incidents?
- What concerns are you carrying about antisemitism or other forms of hate in our country and community? Who might need support when antisemitic incidents happen? What about other acts of hate?
- How is antisemitism connected to other forms of hate and prejudice and how is it distinct?
- Do you know how to identify [antisemitic \(and other forms of hate\) symbols](#) and dog whistles?
- Have you seen or heard any antisemitic remarks or symbols in your community? What about online? What has this looked like? How do you respond and/or how would be best to respond?
- In preventing and responding to antisemitism, what do you expect from... Elected local, state, and federal officials? Teachers and Community Leaders? Technology and Social Media companies? Your friends, peers, and co-workers? Yourself?
- What is important to consider in crafting responses and prevention plans to antisemitism that are inclusive of the multi-racial, multi-ethnic Jewish community?
- What questions are you holding about antisemitism or other forms of hate?

## ■ Opportunities for Follow-up & Extended Engagement:

Continue to educate yourself about antisemitism and other forms of prejudice

- Explore [Antisemitism Uncovered](#) - a comprehensive resource that provides descriptions and historical context of prevalent antisemitic myths, contemporary examples, and calls-to-action for addressing antisemitism.
- Explore the ways in which Antisemitism intersects with other forms of hate, bias, and discrimination such as anti-black racism and anti-immigrant bias.
- Gain confidence in identifying hate symbols by reviewing the [Hate Symbol Database](#).
- Familiarize yourself with ADL's [H.E.A.T. Map](#) – an interactive online tool that allows users to geographically chart antisemitic incidents and extremist activity nationally and regionally.
- Review the FBI's annual Hate Crime Statistics Act report – one of only three annual national crime reports compiled by the FBI.
- Watch this speech from Sasha Baron Cohen on the importance of social media and technology companies to improve their openness and responsiveness to issues of hate and extremism on their platform.
- Explore ADL's [Pyramid of Hate](#) to understand the importance of addressing bias and hate at all levels.
- Continue the conversation with your family and community on pressing issues and critical current events using ADL's [Table Talk](#) guides.
- Choose and read a book suggested by Jonathan Sarna or The Jewish Book Council on antisemitism.
  - Looking for suggestions for a younger audience? Check out ADL's [Books Matter](#) for a curated list of children and young adult literature.
- Plan a visit (virtual or in person) to a Holocaust memorial center or Jewish cultural site. Consider exploring institutions that educate about other forms of bias, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Muslim bias, and anti-immigrant bias. History centers that focus on slavery, the civil rights movement, women's suffrage, and more exist throughout the United States.

## Take Action

- Speak out against antisemitism and all forms of hate, prejudice, and discrimination.
- If you experience or witness an incident of bias, hatred or bigotry, report it as soon as possible.
- Urge your elected officials to hold hearings on the increase in hate crimes, domestic terrorism, and rise of extremist groups, and to improve their procedures for responding to and reporting hate crimes.
- Call on social media and technology companies to improve their openness and responsiveness to issues of hate and extremism on their platform and advocate for stronger support for victims and targets of online hate and harassment
- Advocate for legislation to ensure the Holocaust be taught in schools.
- Promote anti-bias, bullying prevention, and civics education programs in K-12 schools and advocate for antisemitism (and other forms of bias) to be addressed in school curriculum.