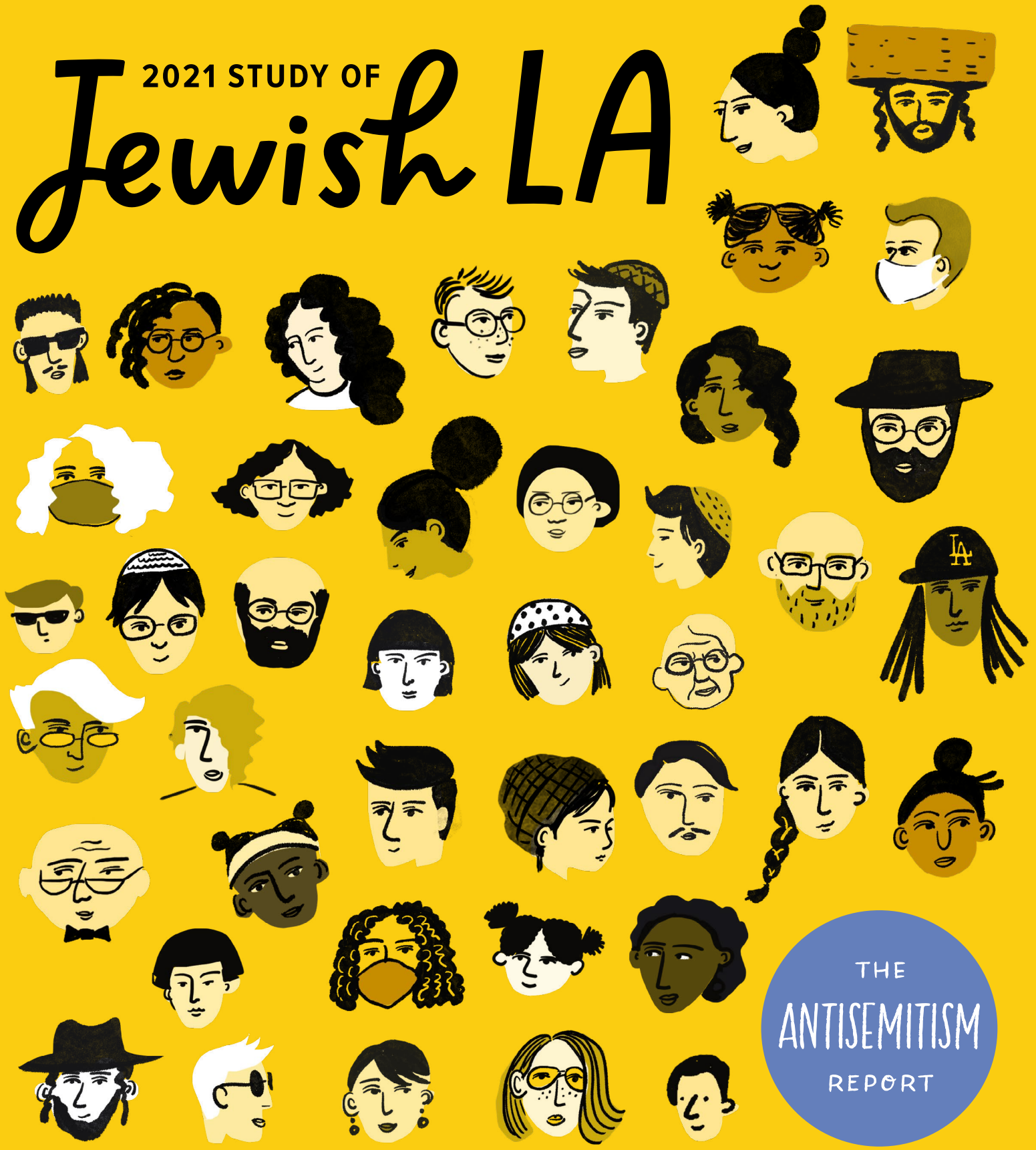


2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA



THE
ANTISEMITISM
REPORT

Brandeis

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COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES

NORC at the University of Chicago

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS)
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2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago

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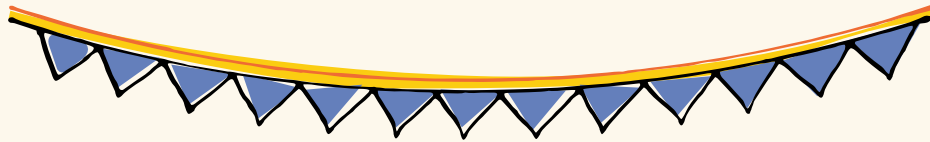


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The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

Recommended citation: Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L., Bankier-Karp, A., Boxer, M., Seeskin, Z.H., & Dutwin, D. (2022). 2021 Study of Jewish LA: The Antisemitism Report. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html

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PREFACE

This is one of a series of reports describing findings from the 2021 Study of Jewish LA. The study was conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. For an introduction to the study, along with additional reports and material, visit www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html or studyofjewishla.org

JEWISH POPULATION ESTIMATES OF LA, 2021

JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	294,200
PEOPLE IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	737,900
NON-JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	173,800
JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	564,700
ADULTS	
JEWISH	462,900
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	143,900
CHILDREN	
JEWISH	101,800
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	29,900

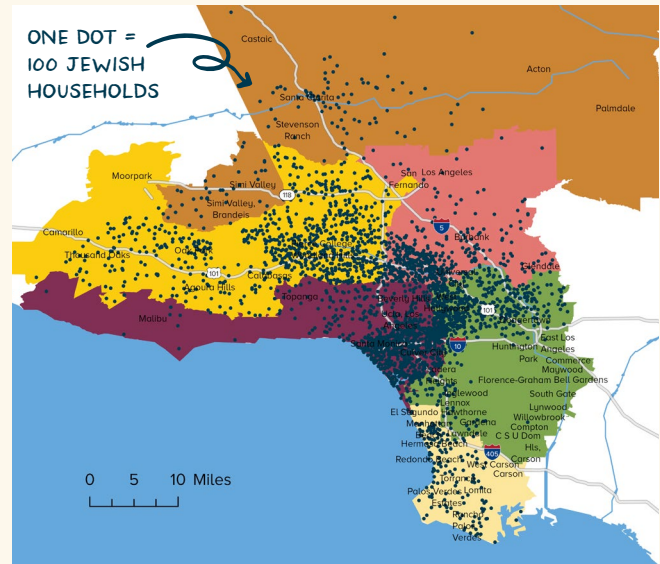
Note: Numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

How many Jewish people in Los Angeles?

As of 2021, it is estimated that the Los Angeles catchment area is the home to nearly 300,000 Jewish households. These households include almost 740,000 individuals, of whom 564,700 are Jewish.

For this study, Jewish individuals are those who identify as Jewish, whether by religion or ethnicity, and who either have a Jewish parent or converted to Judaism. Jewish households are any households that include at least one Jewish adult.

MAP OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN LA



PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH REGION:

4% NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS	26% WEST VALLEY
15% EAST VALLEY	24% CENTRAL/METRO/MID
26% WESTSIDE	5% SOUTH BAY

What are the boundaries of Jewish LA?

The Los Angeles Jewish community encompasses all cities and neighborhoods

- East from the coastline
- West from Silver Lake/Downtown/the 710 freeway
- North from San Pedro, including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys.

For analysis purposes, this report divides the community into six regions: West Valley, East Valley, Westside, Central/Metro/Mid, South Bay, and the North County Valleys.

Index of Jewish Engagement

Jewish life is complex and multidimensional and includes cultural and religious behaviors that are practiced at home, with friends and family, as well as with formal and informal organizations and institutions. Jewish engagement is associated with attitudes, such as feelings of attachment to the Jewish people, and with beliefs, such as valuing social justice.

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA uses a typology of patterns of Jewish engagement as one of its primary analytic tools for understanding Jewish life in LA. LA Jews were categorized into five groups using a statistical analysis (latent class analysis) of levels of participation across 20 different Jewish behaviors, including ritual and cultural behaviors. The names of the five groups reflect the primary ways in which each group engages in Jewish life. This typology is unique to the LA Jewish community and is used throughout this report to highlight the diversity of expressions of Jewish life.

Overview of Methodology

This study is based on analysis of a rich set of data collected from 3,767 eligible households between June and September 2021. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in the Los Angeles catchment area (see map). The study design integrated an Address Based Sample (ABS) with known households on Jewish organizational lists. Households were contacted by mail, email, and telephone and invited to complete the survey online or by telephone. Responses were statistically weighted to represent all LA Jewish households. The response rates for the main sample were 11.2% unweighted and 10.2% weighted (see Technical Appendix for details).

Although some survey responses were likely influenced by the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, the questions were designed to provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish engagement groups and primary activities of each group



23%

MINIMALLY INVOLVED

Few Jewish activities



27%

HOLIDAY

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, occasionally mark Shabbat



16%

COMMUNAL

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, High Holiday services, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, partake in Jewish books/TV/music



16%

RITUAL

Passover seder, Hanukkah candles, High Holiday services, mark Shabbat regularly, follow some Kosher rules, donate to Jewish causes, half are congregation members



17%

IMMERSED

All holidays, mark Shabbat weekly, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, read Jewish publications, most are congregation members

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

AS YOU READ THIS REPORT, KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

TERMS: Unless otherwise specified, references to “all Jewish adults” or “all Jewish households” refer to Jewish adults and Jewish households in Los Angeles.

Throughout this report, the term “couples” includes those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together. Unless otherwise specified, “children” refers to minor children under age 18.

RESPONSES: Information in this report is based on over 3,700 survey responses. Responses to survey questions are often subjective and reflect respondents’ interpretation of survey questions. Data presented in this report reflect an estimate of the distribution of responses to a particular question if every member of the community had been interviewed.

ESTIMATES: Because estimates are based on a probability survey, no one estimate should be considered an exact measurement. As a guideline, the reader should assume that all estimates have a range of plus or minus five points; therefore, reported differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not necessarily reflect true differences in the population.

When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%. When there are insufficient respondents in a particular subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.

QUOTES in this report may have been edited for clarity and to protect privacy. While representing an individual experience, the quotes illustrate the themes identified in the numeric data.

COMPARISONS ACROSS SUBGROUPS: When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups, we are 95% confident that at least some of the differences in estimates reflect actual differences and are not just the result of random chance. However, even in cases where there are statistically significant differences in a full set of responses, it is unlikely that there are statistically significant differences between every pair of numbers. As noted above, as a rule of thumb, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

DIFFERENCES THAT ARE NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT are indicated in this report by gray text in tables. This means that even though the numbers are different, these differences are the result of random chance and are not meaningful.



Each report brings a fresh analysis of the data in the hope of stimulating community members to ask new questions, engage in strategy conversations, and consider the implications for our community. These thematic reports are intended to act as a starting point and designed to spark curiosity.”

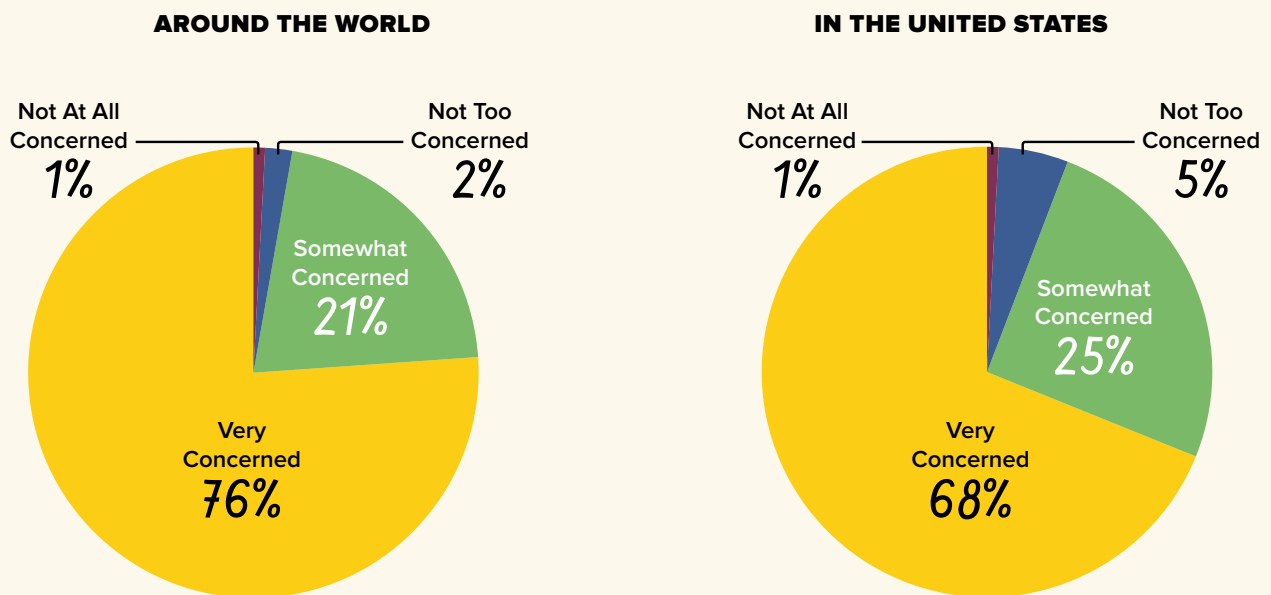
RABBI NOAH FARKAS, PRESIDENT AND CEO
JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

Attitudes and Experiences of Antisemitism

Jews in LA have overlapping values and attitudes about many aspects of Jewish life, as well as shared concerns. Nearly all Jewish adults in Los Angeles express a concern about antisemitism. Three quarters are very concerned about antisemitism around the world, and nearly 70% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States. Nearly one-in-five Jewish adults in LA indicated that they personally experienced antisemitism in the previous year. Almost half of Jewish adults list combating antisemitism as one of their top causes when asked about volunteering and philanthropy.¹

CONCERN ABOUT ANTISEMITISM






Percent of Jewish adults



¹ See "2021 Study of Jewish LA: Jewish Activities and Organizations Report" for the full list of philanthropic causes.

The level of concern about antisemitism is similar across all Jewish engagement groups, although antisemitism around the world is slightly less of a worry for those who are in the Minimally Involved group. Jewish adults in the Communal and Immersed groups include the largest proportions reporting personal experiences of antisemitism, with more than one quarter of each group indicating that they personally experienced antisemitism in the past year. Descriptions of these experiences can be found later in this report.

CONCERN ABOUT ANTISEMITISM BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

	VERY CONCERNED, UNITED STATES	VERY CONCERNED, AROUND THE WORLD	PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST YEAR
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	68%	76%	18%
 MINIMALLY INVOLVED	64%	64%	10%
 HOLIDAY	68%	76%	11%
 COMMUNAL	72%	79%	26%
 RITUAL	59%	73%	18%
 IMMERSED	70%	79%	31%

Concern about antisemitism is higher among older Jewish adults than younger Jews, but the majority of all age groups express worry about this topic. Interestingly, younger Jewish adults reported having had more personal experiences of antisemitism compared to their older counterparts. Among Jewish adults of all ages who have personally experienced antisemitism, the vast majority are very concerned about both US and worldwide antisemitism.

CONCERN ABOUT ANTISEMITISM BY AGE

	VERY CONCERNED, UNITED STATES	VERY CONCERNED, AROUND THE WORLD	PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST YEAR
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	68%	76%	18%
22-30	53%	63%	32%
31-40	60%	65%	25%
41-54	60%	66%	13%
55-64	74%	82%	16%
65-74	75%	83%	10%
75+	73%	83%	9%

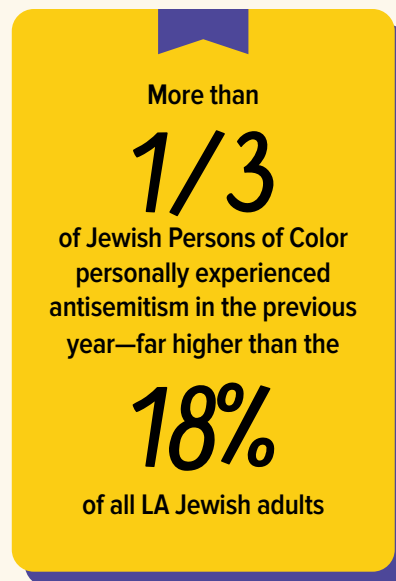
Younger Jewish adults reported having had more personal experiences of antisemitism compared to their older counterparts

Jewish adults in the East Valley and in the South Bay reported greater concern about antisemitism, both in the United States and around the world, compared to residents of other regions. However, there are no significant differences in personal experiences of antisemitism. As discussed below, the majority of antisemitic experiences that are reported occur online, and consequently are not limited by geography.

CONCERN ABOUT ANTISEMITISM BY REGION

	VERY CONCERNED, UNITED STATES	VERY CONCERNED, AROUND THE WORLD	PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST YEAR
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	68%	76%	18%
WEST VALLEY	72%	78%	21%
EAST VALLEY	74%	83%	18%
WESTSIDE	64%	74%	15%
CENTRAL/METRO/MID	59%	66%	18%
SOUTH BAY	82%	87%	12%
NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS	56%	60%	23%

As noted above, reported experiences of antisemitism differed by age and Jewish engagement. In addition to these variations, it is noteworthy that more than one third of Jewish Persons of Color personally experienced antisemitism in the previous year—far higher than the 18% of all LA Jewish adults.



Personal Experiences of Antisemitism

The majority of reported antisemitic experiences involve offenses that could be described as microaggressions, stereotypes, slights, or “jokes.” Many antisemitic experiences included comments made in public or online forums or those overheard in conversations, rather than offenses targeted directly at the respondent.

There is no single definition of what constitutes antisemitism. For this study, the interpretation of particular statements or actions as antisemitic was left to the determination of respondents. In this section, we analyze the descriptions of antisemitic experiences that respondents provided in the survey.

on the setting, severity, and content. Many comments did not provide enough detail to be classified, and we report only the most frequent categories of responses. **Note that for write-in text responses, we do not report weighted percentages, but the actual number of responses.**

Among the nearly 600 respondents who reported that they personally experienced antisemitism, over 500 provided further details about those experiences. These responses were classified based

Over 300 respondents described being the direct target of antisemitism (“direct”). For 180 respondents, the antisemitism was not directed at them specifically (“indirect”).

DIRECT AND INDIRECT ANTISEMITIC EXPERIENCES

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	EXAMPLES
Direct	305	<p><i>“When a neighbor found out I was Jewish, she went on a rant to me about how cold and rude Jewish people in the neighborhood are.”</i></p> <p><i>“On two different occasions on dates, I experienced blatant antisemitism. One time, the guy scoffed at my work in the non-profit Jewish communal sector asking incredulously, ‘What do you all need more resources for, you have all the money in the world?’ Another time a guy was sharing about his roommate’s tipping habits and said, ‘He’s just that stereotypical cheap Jew, ya know?’ I was shell shocked. The date ended there.”</i></p>
Indirect	180	<p><i>“Reading about it in the press makes me feel like it’s directed against my family and I as well.”</i></p> <p><i>“Someone I’m around quite often made a disparaging remark about Jews, not knowing that I am Jewish.”</i></p> <p><i>“Just people making comments without knowing I was Jewish that they wouldn’t have made if they knew.”</i></p>

The severity of the experiences was also categorized: 176 respondents shared experiences coded as “mild,” 134 as “moderate,” and 87 as “intense.”

SEVERITY OF ANTISEMITIC EXPERIENCE

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	EXAMPLES
Mild (offenses that could be described as microaggressions, stereotypes, slights, or “jokes”)	134	<p>“Target of Jewish jokes not meant in a harmful way, but I felt insulted.”</p> <p>“A neighbor made a comment that I think was meant to be a joke about ‘sneaky Jews.’”</p> <p>“Conversations where people tell me they know Jews control Hollywood/business/banks/etc.”</p>
Moderate	176	<p>“A coworker used ‘Jewish’ as a derogatory term when speaking about me.”</p>
Intense (physical violence or threats)	87	<p>“I have been yelled at and honked at while walking on Friday night by drivers passing by.”</p> <p>“I was with my daughter when a group of antisemites were hunting for Jews in Sherman Oaks. It was awful. She had to lock the door to her [place of business]. Thank goodness her neighbor came to warn her that a group of people were on the hunt.”</p>

Respondents reported experiencing antisemitism in a variety of settings, both public and private. Among the settings that could be classified, the most common was online and on social media.

The most common setting for antisemitism is online and on social media

SETTING OF ANTISEMITIC EXPERIENCE

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	EXAMPLES
Online and Social Media	103	<p>“You can’t post anything Jewish-related to social media, not even a Shabbat photo, without getting a DM or comment about how you’re an apartheid-sympathizer.”</p> <p>“A Zoom meeting was hacked, and antisemitic words and images were written all over the screen.”</p>
In Public	88	<p>“I felt very uncomfortable with a sign over the freeway denouncing Jews. While I wasn’t necessarily targeted, I felt attacked and uncomfortable in my hometown.”</p>
Work/School	70	<p>“In the workplace, I posted a blue square on internal social media standing in solidarity against antisemitism ... This was flagged as offensive.”</p> <p>“When working with my finance department at work, a colleague told me that my attention to detail on budgets was because I was Jewish.”</p> <p>“My daughter had an incident at school with another student making antisemitic remarks directed at her, which was difficult for her to endure.”</p>
Family or Friends	30	<p>“A close friend of mine told me I was ‘too Jewish to be friends with.’”</p>
At/Near Home	26	<p>“Somebody took our mezuzah and hung a swastika sign on the hallway wall.”</p> <p>“The Nation of Islam continues to leave antisemitic newspapers and pamphlets on my door each week.”</p>

The content and format of the antisemitic experiences described by respondents varied widely. By format, the largest number of cases could be categorized as harassment and discrimination (107), microaggressions and “jokes” (69), assaults and threats (28), and vandalism (24).

TYPE OF ANTISEMITIC EXPERIENCE

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	EXAMPLES
Harassment and Discrimination	107	<i>“Not being given time off from school for holidays.”</i>
Microaggressions and “Jokes”	69	<i>“Being around people and places that assume everyone is Christian.”</i>
General	62	<i>“People start speaking negatively about Jewish people not knowing I’m half Jewish.”</i>
Family or Friends	28	<i>“People scream slurs at me from cars and generally threaten me. This frequently occurs on Shabbat.”</i>
Vandalism	24	<i>“I saw synagogues and businesses with graffiti ‘Free Palestine’ and ‘Kill the Jews.’”</i>

CONTENT OF ANTISEMITIC EXPERIENCES

Of comments that described the content of the antisemitic messages, 24 were related to the Holocaust and Holocaust denial, such as, “People have said to me: ‘The Holocaust couldn’t have happened; that is too many people.’” Another 24 comments could be characterized as references to Jewish stereotypes, such as, “Family members who are not Jewish described Jews as greedy.”

The largest share of comments (79) were related to Israel or views about Israel.

At the time of the Israeli and Palestinian/Hamas conflict, a very good friend of mine avoided me and wouldn’t talk to me.

On a progressive professional [Facebook] group of which I am a member, viewpoints in support of Israel (or explaining how/why condemnation of Israel feels threatening to Jews) were silenced.

I feel the anti-Israel demonstrations which I witnessed recently had an antisemitic component, even if concealed, as did the anti-Israel remarks I saw all over the internet... [Antisemitism] does manifest in my ongoing fear to speak out, especially about Israel, and affected my personal health and well-being, as my mental state suffered during the recent Gaza conflict.

Around the time of the survey in 2021, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), the largest Los Angeles teachers’ union (and the nation’s second largest teachers’ union), considered a resolution supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. Several respondents referred to this situation as the context for their experiences of antisemitism, as in the following responses:

My former union, UTLA, has been taken over by pro-Palestinian activists. I have been told that Israel is an apartheid state. This is very painful to me.

[Antisemitic remarks are] all over the media and social media, UTLA targeting Israel and determined to brainwash LAUSD [Los Angeles Unified School District] students.

CONCLUSION:

Confronting Antisemitism

In the wake of violent attacks targeting synagogues and Jewish establishments across the country, it is not surprising that most Jewish Angelenos are very concerned about antisemitism, regardless of their level of Jewish engagement. Their concern is reflected in their actions: Almost half of LA Jewish adults list combating antisemitism as one of their top causes when asked about volunteering and philanthropy.

Fortunately, most LA Jews do not personally experience antisemitism. The majority of antisemitic experiences reported are not severe or violent, primarily include microaggressions and stereotypes, and appear online or on social media. However, a significant minority of LA Jewish adults are concerned that their Jewish identity makes them a target for negative comments, and nearly 100 respondents reported physical violence or threats.

Although traditional forms and expressions of antisemitism abound, the largest single share of antisemitic statements reported by respondents were those directed toward Israel and its supporters. These statements often blur the distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitic messages, creating additional challenges in how to respond appropriately.

The concern about antisemitism is shared by Jews throughout the United States. Almost half of Jews nationally say that there is a lot of antisemitism in the United States, and three quarters say that antisemitism has increased in the past five years. The presence of antisemitism, however, has not yet had a significant impact on participation in Jewish life: Just 5% of Jews nationally say that they did not participate in Jewish life because of safety concerns.²

A resurgence of antisemitism, abroad and at home, is troubling. As a community-wide concern, its presence calls for a communal response. Public forums and community action campaigns can serve to support those who feel vulnerable and to educate and potentially deter those who might engage in destructive activities. As a multidimensional social problem, antisemitism requires a response on multiple fronts—educational, advocacy, and research.

²Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”