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2020 Third-Highest Year on Record for Antisemitic Incidents in Pennsylvania

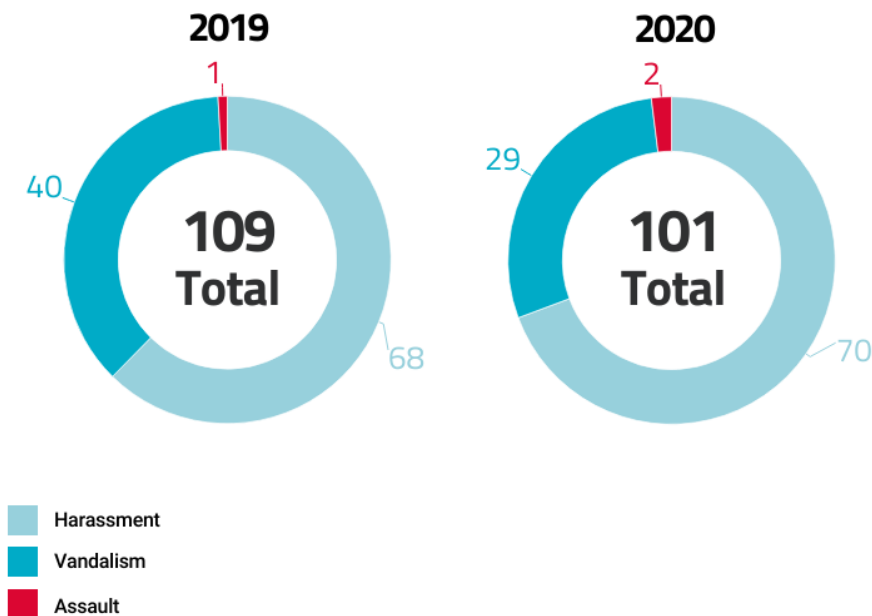
April 27, 2021



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In 2020, Pennsylvania experienced the third-highest number of antisemitic incidents recorded in the Commonwealth since tracking began in 1979, according to [new data](#) from ADL (the Anti-Defamation League).

Antisemitic Incidents in Pennsylvania are ▼ 7% from 2019 to 2020



ADL

ADL recorded 101 antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania in its 2020 *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*. While a slight decrease from the 109 incidents recorded in 2019, antisemitic incidents in 2020 remained near historic highs and were 55 percent higher than the Commonwealth's annual average of 64 incidents a year.

For the second year in a row, Pennsylvania had the fifth-highest number of antisemitic incidents in the nation, behind only New York (336), New Jersey (295), California (289) and Florida (127).

Incident Breakdown

The ADL Audit includes both criminal and non-criminal acts of harassment and intimidation, including distribution of hate propaganda, threats and slurs.

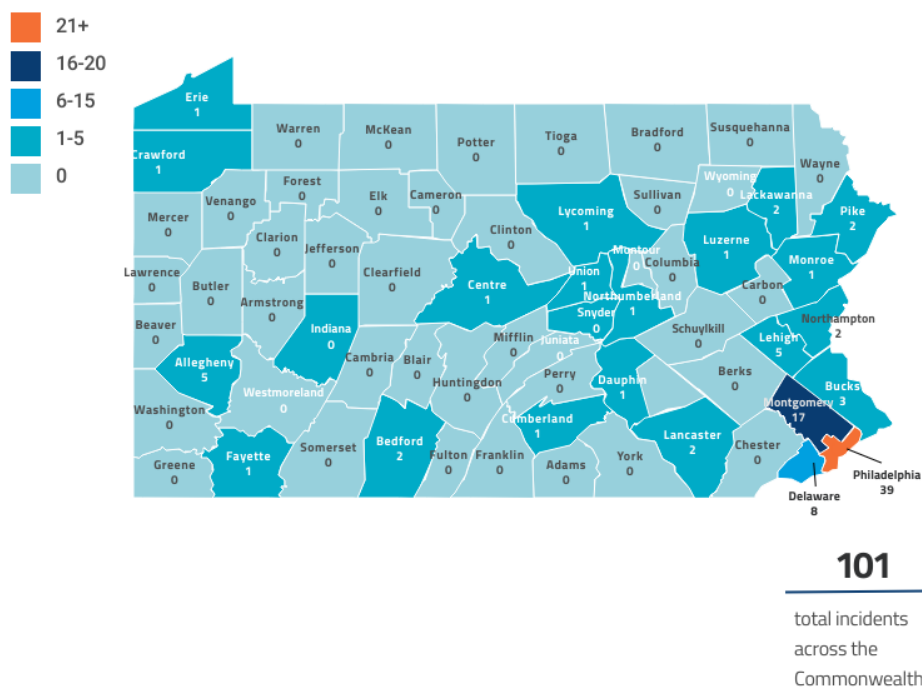
The Audit classifies incidents into three categories: harassment, vandalism and assault. Of the total incidents reported in Pennsylvania in 2020:

Harassment: There were 70 harassment incidents, a 3 percent increase over the previous year. ADL defines harassment as cases in which one or more Jews reported feeling targeted or threatened by antisemitic language or acts.

Vandalism: There were 29 vandalism incidents, a 28 percent decrease over the previous year. ADL defines vandalism as cases in which property was damaged in a manner that harmed or intimidated Jews. [Swastikas](#), which are generally interpreted as symbols of antisemitic hatred, were present in 76 percent of these incidents.

Assault: There were 2 assault incidents, an increase from 1 in 2019. ADL defines assaults as cases in which individuals were physically targeted with violence accompanied by evidence of antisemitic animus.

Antisemitic Incidents in Pennsylvania in 2020 by County



ADL

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

As it did with so many aspects of Americans' lives in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic significantly impacted antisemitic attitudes and manifestations last year. ADL's [Center on Extremism](#) tracked the proliferation of [antisemitic conspiracy theories](#) around the origins of the virus, government restrictions, [vaccines](#) and other aspects of the pandemic. These hateful ideas fueled much of the antisemitic rhetoric and acts in the Commonwealth last year.

Perhaps unsurprising, many in-person locations experienced a decline in antisemitic incidents as schools and businesses closed and people isolated from others. ADL recorded drops in incidents at residences, businesses and public areas of 43%, 18% and 14%, respectively. Pandemic restrictions may have

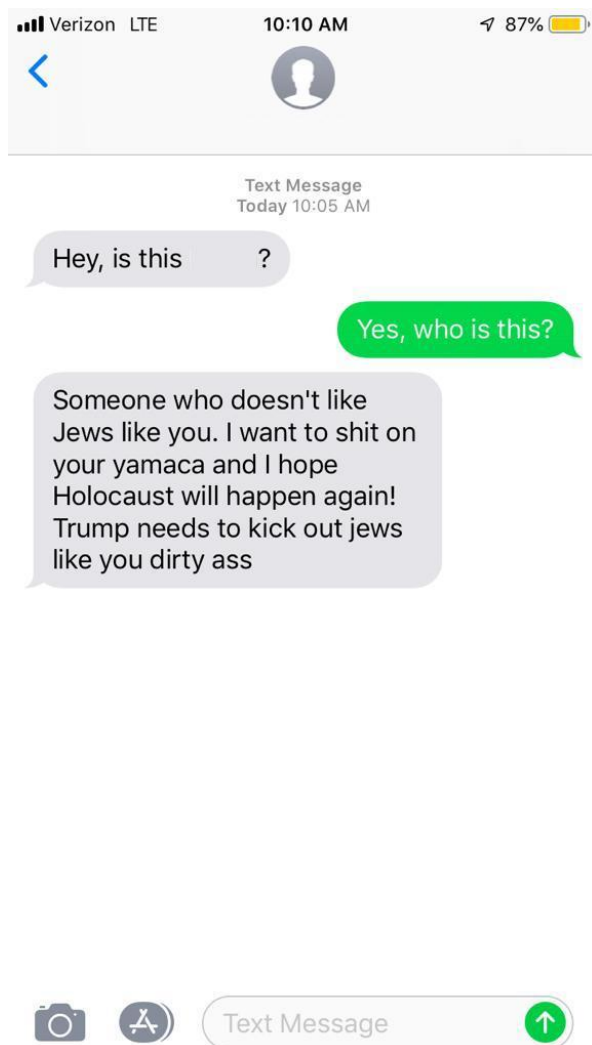
been partially responsible for the significant decrease in vandalism incidents at these and other in-person locations across the Commonwealth.

Educational institutions experienced similar trends, though pre-pandemic incident data suggest that levels of antisemitism in schools remained at elevated levels in 2020. In January and February, ADL tracked twice as many antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania schools as compared to the same period in 2019, but those numbers dropped as educational institutions switched to remote learning. ADL recorded 10 incidents at K-12 non-Jewish schools in 2020, down 23% from 13 in 2019, but half of those incidents occurred in just the first two months of the year. Similarly, ADL logged 4 incidents at colleges and universities in 2020, down 70% from 13 in 2019, even though the number of incidents before campuses closed remained comparable to the same time period the previous year.

By contrast, Jewish institutions were targeted at a significantly higher rate in 2020 across the Commonwealth. ADL recorded 22 antisemitic incidents at Jewish institutions, including synagogues, Jewish community centers, retirement homes and schools. This was a 120% increase from 10 in 2019 and the second year in a row that incidents more-than-doubled.

Online antisemitic incidents also skyrocketed in 2020 as people spent more time in virtual spaces. ADL tracked a near-tripling in antisemitic incidents online, from 5 to 14. The pandemic inspired the development of a new tactic in antisemitic harassment known as [Zoombombing](#), in which malicious actors intentionally disrupt virtual meetings with graphic or hateful messages. Pennsylvania experienced 10 antisemitic Zoombombing incidents in 2020, 7 of which specifically targeted Jewish institutions.

For the purposes of the Audit, ADL counts instances in which individuals report having been the direct targets of online antisemitic harassment,



including on social media. It does not include antisemitic rhetoric without a specific target, which ADL's [Center on Technology and Society](#) works to track and expose alongside other forms of online hate.

Extremists and Antisemitism

Extremists continued to act on their hateful ideologies in 2020. Known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology were responsible for 16 antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania. While the number of extremist-related antisemitic incidents was down 33% in 2020, they made up 16% of the total number of incidents in the

Commonwealth.

Of the 16 extremist incidents in Pennsylvania, 13 were white supremacist propaganda distributions featuring antisemitic content or targeting Jewish individuals or institutions. These incidents were part of a [record-breaking amount of white supremacist propaganda](#) that ADL tracked in the region last year.



Select Pennsylvania Incidents

Below is a small sampling of antisemitic incidents in eastern Pennsylvania recorded by ADL in 2020. The full list of incidents can be accessed on ADL's interactive H.E.A.T. (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism) Map, found at www.adl.org/heat-map.

January: The coach of a youth hockey team called 10-year-old Jewish players “dirty Jews” in the handshake line. (Northampton County)

January: The white supremacist symbols “1488” and SS bolts were written in a bathroom at a supermarket. (Northumberland County)

January: A man entered a kosher market in Northeast Philadelphia shouting antisemitic remarks and making threatening gestures. (Philadelphia County)

February: A Jewish Community Center received a bomb threat via email. (Lackawanna County)

March: A Jewish woman received harassing antisemitic direct messages from an individual who called her a “kike” and a “dirty Jew-loving whore.” (Montgomery County)

March: A swastika and a message that read “DIE RAT DIE WERE COMIN” were found spray-painted on two residence halls and the Student Memorial Center at Millersville University. (Lancaster County)

April: In a Facebook comment to another user, a woman blamed “rich Jews in NY” for overburdening Philadelphia hospitals with coronavirus patients. (Delaware County)

May: A Jewish woman received a message over Facebook stating, “OK Jew, go back to your blood drinking religious practices.” (Philadelphia County)

May: Two Jewish professors at Susquehanna University received threatening antisemitic voicemails. (Susquehanna County)

May: The American Red Cross building and two nearby sites in Center City were vandalized with swastika graffiti. (Philadelphia County)

June: A synagogue’s Shabbat prayer services on Zoom were disrupted by unknown participants who told worshipers “Death to the Jews” and drew swastikas on the screen. (Lehigh County)

June: Jewish teenagers at a Jewish-led protest in support of Black Lives Matter were harassed by a passerby who shouted “Go back to Germany” and “Heil Hitler.” (Montgomery County)

July: Members of the [National Socialist Movement](#), a neo-Nazi group, marched through Brandon Park carrying flags with swastikas during their national meeting. At one point, one of the members made a speech

in which he stated, "The fucking swastika is beautiful, it's timeless," and a member of the crowd was heard shouting, "Fuck the Jew." (Lycoming County)

July: A sign outside a synagogue was vandalized with a drawing of a swastika and the messages "Long live Hitler" and "Jews are scum." (Philadelphia County)

August: A synagogue was vandalized with spray-painted swastika graffiti. (Cumberland County)

August: A restroom at a convenience store was vandalized with swastika drawings. (Dauphin County)

September: A synagogue's Rosh Hashana services on Zoom were disrupted by an unknown participant who wrote to the congregants, "I'm going to rape the shit out of your Jewish ass." (Montgomery County)

September: Swastika graffiti was found spray-painted on two road signs. (Union County)

October: During a Black Lives Matter protest, three Jewish men were verbally harassed and physically assaulted by protesters who called them the "[Synagogue of Satan](#)" and "Amalek." (Philadelphia County)

November: A large swastika was found traced into the soil outside an elementary school. (Chester County)

November: [Patriot Front](#), a white supremacist group, distributed propaganda including a sticker that read: "Just say 'No' to [ZOG](#)," an antisemitic acronym that stands for "Zionist Occupied Government". (Monroe County)

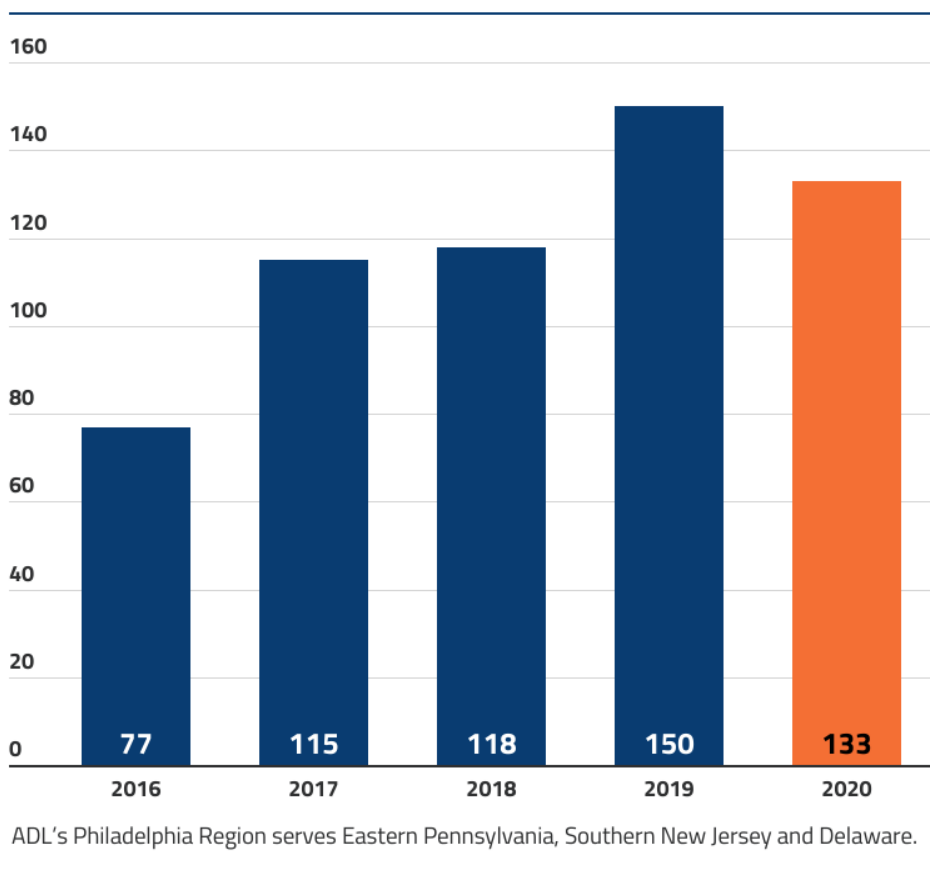
December: A Jewish man and woman were attacked by a passerby on the street who charged at them and shouted, "You are fucking Jews, aren't you? I'm going to fucking kill you!" (Philadelphia County)



Regional Incidents

ADL's Philadelphia Regional Office saw high levels of antisemitic activity throughout its entire area of service, which includes the 37 counties in eastern Pennsylvania, 7 counties in southern New Jersey and the entire state of Delaware. In 2020, ADL recorded 130 incidents in this region, the second-highest level of the last six years, including 90 incidents in eastern Pennsylvania, 34 incidents in southern New Jersey and 9 incidents in Delaware.

Antisemitic Incidents in ADL's Philadelphia Region 2016-2020



Of the 101 antisemitic incidents across Pennsylvania, 89% took place in 19 counties in eastern Pennsylvania, with the largest number of incidents occurring in Philadelphia County (39), Montgomery County (19) and Lehigh County (5).

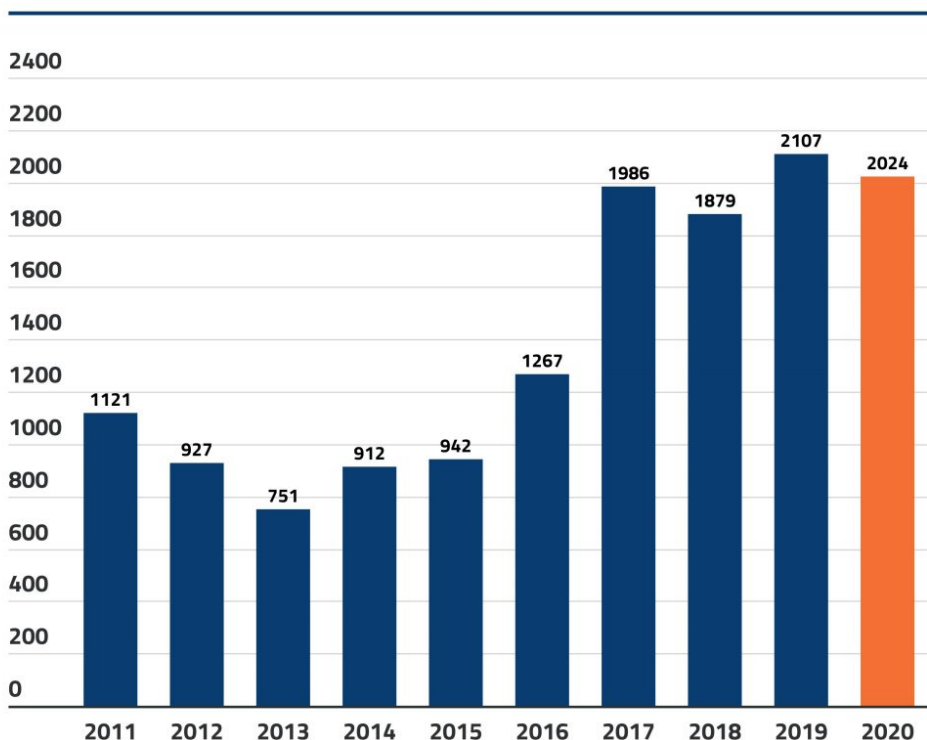
National Incidents

In 2020, regional antisemitic incidents mirrored national trends. Nationwide, antisemitic incidents remained at historically high levels last year, with a total of 2,024 reported incidents. While national antisemitic incidents declined by 4 percent after hitting an all-time high in 2019, 2020 was the third-highest year for incidents against American Jews on record. There were

incidents reported in every state except Hawaii, North Dakota and Wyoming. The Audit found there were, on average, nearly six antisemitic incidents in the U.S. for every day last year.

The full national report can be found at <https://www.adl.org/audit2020>.

Antisemitic Incidents: U.S. Over the Last Decade | 2011-2020



How ADL is Responding

ADL pursues a comprehensive approach to addressing antisemitic incidents and behavior. ADL is the largest [anti-bias educator](#) in the United States, annually teaching hundreds of thousands of youth and adults to challenge antisemitism and other forms of bias in themselves and others. ADL is a leading partner to [law enforcement](#) across the nation, helping over 10,000 law enforcement officers each year better prevent and respond to hate crimes and [extremism](#). ADL is a tireless champion of [civil rights](#) for all, advocating at

the federal, state and local levels for better prevention and response to antisemitism and all forms of hate.

In the Philadelphia region, ADL works diligently to combat antisemitism and other forms of bias through investigation, advocacy and education. The coronavirus pandemic did not slow down ADL's work to fight antisemitism and all forms of hate across eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware in 2020:

ADL Philadelphia educated over 600 law enforcement professionals on extremism, hate crimes and managing implicit bias, and provided investigative assistance in over 100 extremism-related cases in the region.

ADL impacted over 100,000 students in the region through its [No Place for Hate®](#) and [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE®](#) Institute bias and bullying prevention programs, in addition to training hundreds of additional students and educators through our [antisemitism](#) and [Holocaust education](#) programs.

ADL Philadelphia supported victims of antisemitism and other forms of bias, built diverse coalitions and worked with dozens of schools, campuses, workplaces and other institutions while responding to nearly 400 requests for assistance.

ADL Philadelphia piloted a new [partnership](#) with the Urban League of Philadelphia to build stronger relations between the African American and American Jewish communities and advocate around issues of mutual concern. The partnership [expanded](#) nation-wide thanks to the success of the Philadelphia regional pilot.

More information about ADL's important work to combat hate in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware in 2020 can be found

in our annual [impact report](#).

ADL Policy Recommendations

In response to the historic rise in antisemitic incidents over the past few years, ADL has made the following policy recommendations:

Public officials and civic leaders must use their bully pulpits to speak out against antisemitism and all forms of hate and extremism.

The Pennsylvania Legislature should hold hearings on the high levels of hate crimes, the rise of extremist groups and proliferation of their propaganda, and support legislation that improves responses to hate crimes and domestic terror.

Pennsylvania should increase funding for non-profit security grants for synagogues and other houses of worship, schools and community centers.

Policymakers should support efforts to provide law enforcement officials with the tools and training they need to prevent and effectively respond to hate crimes. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies should also improve their procedures for responding to and reporting hate crimes.

School districts should promote bias and bullying prevention and Holocaust education programs in elementary and secondary schools. Elected officials in Pennsylvania should help incentivize and equip schools to adopt effective anti-bias policies and programs.

University leadership should respond firmly and forcefully to antisemitic acts on campus, including incidents that target Jewish students because of their actual or perceived support of the state of Israel.

In response to the rising threat of domestic extremism in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection at our nation's Capitol, ADL

recently announced the [PROTECT](#) and [REPAIR](#) plans outlining a whole-of-society approach to address this pernicious threat in person and online.

ADL's Audit of Antisemitic Incidents

Compiled using information provided by victims, law enforcement and community leaders, and evaluated by ADL's professional staff, the ADL Audit provides a regular snapshot of one specific aspect of a nationwide problem while identifying possible trends or changes in the types of activity reported. This information assists ADL in developing and enhancing its programs to counter and prevent the spread of antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.

The Audit offers one method to examine how American Jews encounter antisemitism, but a full understanding of antisemitism in the U.S. requires other forms of analysis as well, including but not limited to public opinion polling, assessments of online antisemitism and examinations of extremist activity, all of which ADL offers in other reports, such as [ADL Global 100](#), [Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2020](#), [Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2020](#), the [2021 Survey on Jewish Americans' Experiences with Antisemitism](#) and the [ADL Survey of American Attitudes Toward Jews](#). For a broader examination of antisemitism, see ADL's resource, [Antisemitism Uncovered](#).

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