Antisemitism in America:

A Problem Without a Policy?

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Aggregation note: Analysis in this brief relies on FBI data on individual hate crimes from 1991 to 2020. This brief aggregates this data in numerous ways, including by: hate crime bias (Figure 2), offense type (4, 14), states (5, 8, ,9, 10, 11, and 12), census regions (6, 7), year (3, and in combination with other aggregations throughout), and additional forms.

To the casual observer of history, bleak episodes of violence and discrimination against Jewish communities may seem to have occurred in a distant past. With more than 75 years having passed since the Holocaust, Jews live in relative safety and comfort across the globe – and yet, they continue to feel the brunt of antisemitism that has terrorized past generations.

Measuring antisemitism in the United States using FBI data on hate crimes committed against Jews reveals a clear trend: Antisemitic acts have escalated over the past decade, achieving an all-time high in 2019.¹ Despite the persistence of antisemitism over decades and more recent intensification, state and federal policymakers have offered few solutions to combat this form of hate and discrimination. State-based efforts to counter antisemitism – namely, by imposing heftier punishments on hate crime perpetrators and mandating Holocaust education in public schools – have failed to counter this growing threat. To reverse this trend, federal and state lawmakers must consider new policies that address the rising threat of white supremacists and other hate-based ideologies, as well as expand efforts to combat property-related crimes and reduce incidence in the American Northeast.

The Problem: Antisemitism Today

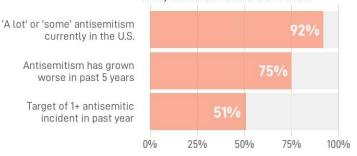
Widespread belief among American Jews of growing antisemitism: According to a 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center, nearly all American Jews (see Figure 1) believe there exists "a lot" (45 percent) or "some" (47) antisemitism in the United States presently, and 75 percent believe the issue has escalated in the past five years.² Further, the research found 51% of Jews "experienced at least one form of anti-Semitism [sic] in the past year," from witnessing vandalism, to enduring epithets, to experiencing physical attacks or online harassment.³

Disproportionately targeted: Jews represent a small fraction of the American populace; the American Jewish Population Project estimates 7.6 million Americans, or about 2.4 percent, identify as Jewish.⁴

Yet, as Figure 2 shows, FBI data reveal nearly 1 in 12 hate crime victims in 2020 were the target of an anti-Jewish hate crime. Of crimes targeting individuals for their religion, more than half these victims were Jewish or believed to be Jewish by the perpetrator.

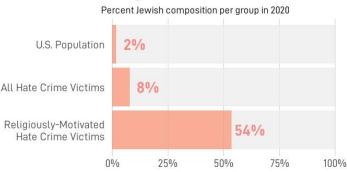
Figure 1 Antisemitism remains a persistent issue for U.S. Jewish community in 2020

Survey of American Jews: Share who said:



Source: 'Jewish Americans in 2020'. Pew Research Center

Figure 2 Jewish citizens are overrepresented among hate crime victims



Source: FBI Data Crime Data Explorer, Steinhardt Social Research Institute American Jewish Population Project

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Crime Data Explorer," accessed July 1, 2022, https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/home.

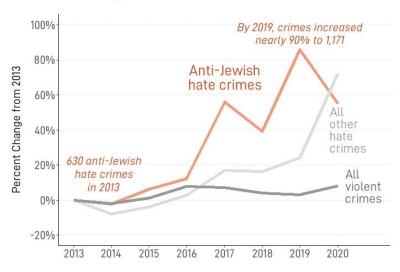
² Alan Cooperman, Becka A. Alper, Anna Schiller, "Jewish Americans in 2020," Pew Research Center, May 11, 2021: 121.

³ Ibid, 127.

⁴ Leonard Saxe et al, "American Jewish Population Estimates 2020: Summary & Highlights," *American Jewish Population Project*, March 2021, https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/documents/2020/JewishPopulationDataBrief2020.pdf.

Years of escalation: FBI hate crime data affirm the widespread belief among American Jews of an escalation in recent years. In 2013, the United States achieved a 22-year low in the number of reported anti-Jewish offenses, with 630 crimes. Yet, as Figure 3 depicts, subsequent years saw sharp increases, with 2019 seeing the highest quantity on record, nearly doubling the 2013 low at 1,171 crimes. According to the Anti-Defamation League, which has tracked antisemitic occurrences in the United States since 1979, 2019⁵ and 2021⁶ represented the years with the highest number of such incidents, soaring to 2,107 and 2,717 cases, respectively.

Figure 3 Growth in antisemitic hate crimes outpace violent crimes nationwide Percent change in crime relative to 2013



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer

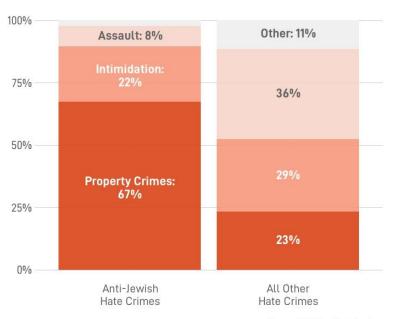
Targeting Jewish properties: The Jewish community is especially susceptible to crimes relating to property damage and vandalism. Whereas 29% of all hate crimes from 2016 to 2020 were property crimes, 67% of crimes committed against Jews or those perceived as Jewish were property-related (see Figure 4). Further, while property crimes decreased from 2013 to 2020 nationwide by 28%, anti-Jewish property crimes *increased* by 34% over this same period. ⁷

Antisemitic hate crimes occur in numerous settings, with a plurality of known cases taking place at personal residences, accounting for 19% of all anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2020. Other targets of high frequency include elementary schools (peaking at 13% of all antisemitic crimes in 2019), universities, and synagogues.⁸

Figure 4

U.S. Jewish community especially vulnerable to vandalism & other property crimes

Share of hate crimes, 2016-2020, by offense type



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer

⁵ "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019," Anti-Defamation League, May 3, 2022, https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2019.

⁶ "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2021," Anti-Defamation League, May 3, 2022, https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2021.

^{7 &}quot;Crime Data Explorer."

⁸ Ibid.

Concentration in the American Northeast:

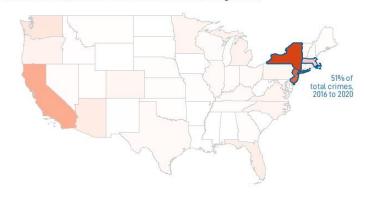
Antisemitic hate crimes occur throughout the United States, with 46 of the 48 continental states reporting at least one crime from 2016 to 2020. However, as Figure 5 shows, a majority of crimes are concentrated in a single census region: the Northeast, accounting for 61% of total crimes in these five years. Within the region, crimes from just three states – New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts – account for half the country's anti-Jewish crimes. The Northeast further leads the Southeast, West, and Midwest in percent growth, escalating 46% from 2015 to 2020 (see Figure 6).9

The concentration of America's Jewish population in the Northeast, which accounts for 47% of the

Figure 5

Antisemitic hate crimes concentrated largely in N.Y., N.J., and Mass.

Total anti-Jewish hate crimes from 2016 through 2020



Hate Crimes, 2016 through 2020

300 600 900 1200

Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer Note: Alaska, D.C., and Hawaii not included

2020 U.S. population,¹⁰ does not alone explain the region's high rate of antisemitic hate crimes. As **Figure 7** demonstrates, the Northeast experienced 1.8 hate crimes per 10,000 Jewish residents in 2020 – surpassing the West (1.2), Midwest (0.8), and South (0.5). In percent change since 2015, the Northeast's antisemitic hate crime rate grew 40%, while the Midwest grew 56%. Despite a smaller percent growth relative to the Midwest, the Northeast's high rate of crimes should alert local policymakers to the prevalence of antisemitism within these states.

Figure 6

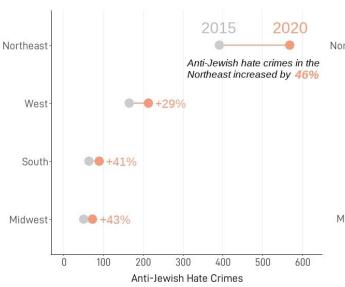
Every census region experienced increases in anti-Jewish hate crimes

Growth in antisemitic hate crimes per census region, 2015 to 2020

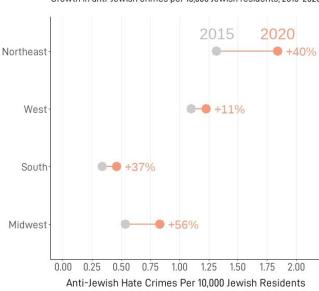
Figure 7

When adjusted for population, Northeast states still surpass other regions

Growth in anti-Jewish crimes per 10,000 Jewish residents, 2015-2020



Source: FBI Crime Data Tracker, Steinhardt Social Research Institute American Jewish Population Project



Source: FBI Crime Data Tracker, Steinhardt Social Research Institute American Jewish Population Project

⁹ "Crime Data Explorer."

¹⁰ Saxe, 2.

Inadequacy of State Hate Crime Laws

Analyzing differences in state-based approaches to combatting antisemitism can help determine the most effective strategies. However, antisemitism-specific policies are sparse and tend to involve broad resolutions condemning antisemitism, as well as mandating Holocaust education in public schools — a policy this brief will analyze.

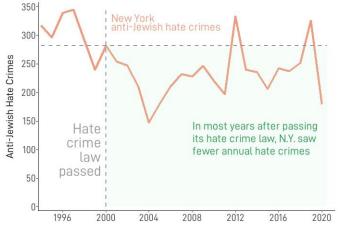
More generally, states have advanced policies combatting crimes committed due to hatred of protected characteristics. As of 2022, 46 states – all but Arkansas, Indiana, South Carolina, and Wyoming – have enacted enhanced sentencing for those who target victims for their real or perceived religion, race, or ethnicity. These deterrence-based policies ensure hate crime perpetrators receive harsher penalties should the state prove the crime was the result of prejudice. 12

Fewer hate crimes after passing hate crime laws: The FBI crime data demonstrate declines in many states' antisemitic hate crimes once they passed these enhanced sentencing reforms. For instance, New York saw 282 anti-Jewish crimes in 2000, the year the state legislature passed the Hate Crimes Act. As Figure 8 shows, crimes steadily decreased through 2004 and remained below the 2000-level in most subsequent years. However, 2012 and 2019 saw higher crime levels than 2000, and just once from 2000 to 2020 did annual levels fall below 150. While decreases in crime may be attributable to the hate crime law, New York Jews continued facing antisemitism at rates of at least 1 act per 10,000 throughout this period.¹³

This trend of diminished hate crimes following enhanced sentencing reform is evident across other states, as Figure 9 portrays. In the five of the six states with the highest levels of anti-Jewish crimes in the years they enacted reform – New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, and Florida – crimes steadily decreased for at least four years, while Massachusetts saw declines four years after enacting its law. Like New York, these states saw fewer anti-Jewish crimes in most of the years following these reforms.

Figure 8

N.Y. anti-Jewish hate crimes declined after passing enhanced sentencing, though subsequent years experienced spikes

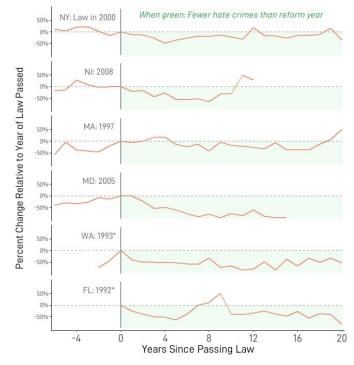


Source: FBI Crime Data Tracker

Figure 9

Many states saw drops in anti-Jewish hate crimes after passing enhanced sentencing

Percent change in anti-Jewish hate crimes relative to year when hate crime law passed



Source: FBI Data Crime Explorer, Anti-Defamation League Hate Crime Map

*Hate crime data missing prior 1991

^{11 &}quot;ADL Hate Crime Map," Anti-Defamation League, https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-to-track-hate/hate-crime-map.

^{12 &}quot;Hate Crime Laws: The ADL Approach," Anti-Defamation League, 2019, https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2022-05/hate-crime-laws-the-adl-approach.pdf.

¹³ Using the Jewish American Population Project's 2012 Jewish population estimate for New York – the earliest year of data available – New York's rate of anti-Jewish hate crimes per 10,000 Jewish residents equals 1.7. See Elizabeth Tighe et al, "American Jewish Population Estimates: 2012," *American Jewish Population Project*, September 2013, https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/documents/2013/AmJewishPopEst2012.pdf.

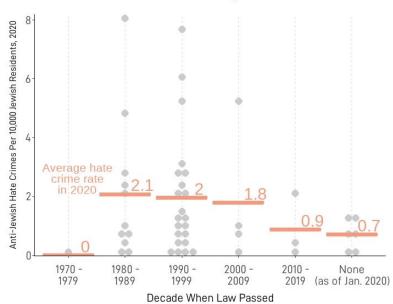
Longstanding hate crime laws not correlated with better outcomes in 2020: Whereas policymakers may assume states with longstanding hate crime policies have lower rates of antisemitism today - perhaps because these states had more time to realize the laws' deterrence power – hate crime data reveal the opposite trend. In fact, states without these laws were among the states with the lowest rates of anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2020 – suggesting a marginal or potentially diminishing impact of these laws over time.

As Figure 10 shows, states with older policies in fact experienced higher rates of anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2020 relative to states without such policies. States with policies enacted in the 1980s, on average, experienced 2.1 crimes per 10,000 Jews in 2020; the "no-law" states – the aforementioned states, plus Georgia and Utah – averaged a rate of just 0.7. Accordingly, while

Figure 10

States without hate crime laws had lower rates of antisemitic crimes in 2020

States' 2020 rates of antisemitic hate crimes by decade of hate crime law



Source: FBI, ADL, American Jewish Population Project Not included: AK, AZ, DC, HI, VA

hate crime laws may help states reduce their incidence of antisemitic acts in the short term, policymakers should not rely on these generic policies as the sole means to curb antisemitism in the long run.

Inadequacy of Mandatory Holocaust Education

As of 2022, 23 states have passed laws that require their public schools to provide instruction on the Holocaust. Of these, 11 states have passed such policies since 2020. As states have raced to mandate Holocaust education in recent years, state policymakers have cited the escalation of antisemitism as a key justification for these measures:

- Bill sponsor Oregon State Senator Rob Wagner noted: "I remember looking at my kids, after many of the incidents of racism and anti-Semitism [sic] in Lake Oswego, and thinking, 'We need to prioritize a culture change.'"

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- Upon signing 2021 legislation, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers wrote, "This bill will affect generations of kids in our state and bring increased awareness, and recognition in our schools to the tragedies of the Holocaust, the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism [sic] to this day, and hopefully cultivate a generation that is more compassionate, more empathetic, and more inclusive."¹⁵
- Arizona Governor Doug Ducey explained when signing this legislation in 2021, "Tragedies like [the Holocaust] must never be allowed to happen again. This bill is a step in the right direction to fight antisemitism in our state, but our work is far from over. We have seen a rise in crimes against individuals in several communities, and we must do more to prevent any additional harm and suffering."¹⁶

¹⁴ Eli Rosenberg, "Oregon schools will be required to teach about the Holocaust. A 14-year-old helped make it happen," *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/05/29/oregon-schools-will-be-required-teach-about-holocaust-year-old-made-it-happen/.

¹⁵ Scott Bauer, "Wisconsin schools required to teach Holocaust under law," AP News, April 28, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-education-wisconsin-united-states-anti-semitism-01bf2ff44833cb57d29a1271d504dc75.

¹⁶ Office of the Governor Doug Ducey, "Governor Ducey Signs Holocaust Education Bill," July 9, 2021, https://azgovernor.gov/governor/news/2021/07/governor-ducey-signs-holocaust-education-bill.

Further, Holocaust education requirements have earned popularity among numerous domestic and international institutions. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced guidelines for "addressing anti-Semitism [sic] through education" in 2018,¹⁷ while the ADL lists "Educate about antisemitism" as among the key ways to address this domestic threat.¹⁸

No clear link between reduced antisemitism and law passage: Despite the positive intentions of state policymakers to reduce antisemitic incidents through increasing Holocaust education, hate crime data reveal the introduction of such education requirements fail to associate with declines in antisemitism.

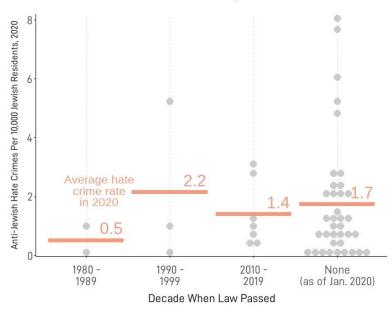
To assess the impact of these laws, this analysis considers the long-term impact on reducing the incidence of antisemitism. Since education requirements target youth, policymakers may not expect such policies to have an immediate impact crime; of the more than 4,700 anti-Jewish hate crimes reported from 2016 to 2020, the FBI data indicate just 226 cases, or about 5 percent, involved one or more juvenile offenders, suggesting adults were almost always the perpetrators of these crimes. Accordingly, this analysis considers whether states with longstanding policies, beginning with California's 1985 law, saw lower rates of anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2020 relative to states with younger policies, as well as states with no such education requirements during this period.

When categorizing each state by the decade of its law's passage, the data reveal no meaningful difference in the states' 2020 anti-Jewish hate crime rates between states with older policies (passed from 1980 to 1999) and those with younger ones (2010 to 2019). The five states with the oldest policies - California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York – averaged 1.5 hate crimes per 10,000 Jews in 2020. This narrowly outpaced the average hate crime rate among states with younger policies, amounting to 1.4. As Figure 11 shows, the 37 states with no laws as of January 2020 varied widely in their 2020 crime rates, with numerous states, such as Alabama, Iowa, New Mexico, and South Carolina, reporting a rate of 0 crimes. On average, states without a Holocaust education mandate saw 1.7 crimes per 10,000 Jews – only slightly surpassing the average antisemitism rates of states with policies passed during the 2010s.

Figure 11

Longstanding Holocaust education requirements not associated with lower antisemitism rates

States' 2020 rates of antisemitic hate crimes by decade of education law



Source: FBI, ADL, American Jewish Population Project Not included: AK, DC, HI

 $^{^{17}\, \}text{UNESCO}, \text{``Addressing antisemitism through education,''} \, \text{https://en.unesco.org/preventing-violent-extremism/education/antisemitismhfs7.} \, \text{'`Addressing antisemitism through education,''} \, \text{'`Addressing antisemitismhfs7.} \, \text{'`Addressing antisemitis$

^{18 &}quot;Fight Antisemitism," Anti-Defamation League, https://www.adl.org/what-we-do/fight-antisemitism.

¹⁹ FBI Crime Data Explorer.

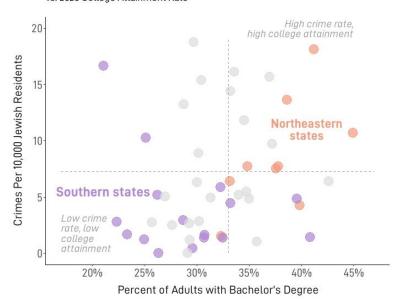
Education reform a weak policy tool for fighting antisemitism: Further research may reveal why states with Holocaust education requirements did not necessarily observe better antisemitism outcomes in 2020. One potential explanation challenges an assumption many policymakers and observers may share: increasing a society's education will decrease anti-Jewish hate. The 2021 working paper, "Education and Anti-Semitism," confronts this widespread belief; through a survey constructed to test for antisemitism among highly-educated Americans, the authors found, "Respondents with higher education levels are more likely than those with lower education levels to apply a double-standard unfavorable towards Jews."20

State data on antisemitic hate crime rates fail to find a clear correlation between education and antisemitism – and, if anything, the data reveal a counterintuitive trend. Using a state's share of

Figure 12

More educated states often have higher antisemitic hate crime rates

By State: Anti-Jewish Hate Crime Rate, 2016 through 2020, vs. 2020 College Attainment Rate



Source: FBI Crime Data Tracker, U.S. Department of Education Note: Alaska, D.C., and Hawaii not included

adults with Bachelor's degrees as a proxy for the state's education level, Figure 12 demonstrates Northeastern states not only have higher education rates, but further experienced higher rates of antisemitism relative to other states. Southern states represent the opposite trend; possessing lower education rates, these states had among the lowest rates of antisemitism during the 2016-2020 period. While the data certainly does not assert antisemitism grows *because* education increases, policymakers should be wary of using education reform as a primary policy tool to fight antisemitism.

Policy Solutions: Addressing Motivations and Highest-Risk Targets

As enhanced sentencing and mandatory Holocaust education have inadequately confronted the growing threat of antisemitism to the American Jewish community, state and federal policymakers must consider new ways to curb the escalation. In particular, federal lawmakers should consider preventative policies that address the rise of white supremacy in the United States and other hate-based ideologies. Further, state and local governments — especially in the American Northeast — must realize the elevated threat within their neighborhoods and enhance security measures to protect Jewish people and properties.

Rise of white supremacy: Numerous voices from academia to journalism to politics have argued white supremacists and violent extremists have emboldened their activities over the past decade. This emboldening poses a direct threat to Jewish communities throughout the United States. In recent years, ideology-motivated antisemitic attacks have included:

²⁰ Jay P. Greene, Albert Cheng, and Ian Kingsbury, "Education and Anti-Semitism," *Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications* (2021): https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub/121/.

- Overland Park, KS, 2014: A neo-Nazi murdered three civilians, targeting a Jewish retirement center and a Jewish community center.²¹
- Pittsburgh, PA, 2018: In the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, a white supremacist killed eleven members
 of Tree of Life Synagogue.²²
- **Poway, CA, 2019:** Blaming Jews for a "planned genocide of the human race," a white supremacist murdered one and injured three people at the Chabad of Poway synagogue.²³

According to ADL's data on antisemitic incidents, virtually all U.S. incidents since 2016 in which ideology-based motivations were reported involved white supremacists.²⁴ As Figure 13 demonstrates, the role of white supremacists has skyrocketed in recent years – comprising 3 percent of reported antisemitic incidents in 2017 and increasing to 22 percent in 2021.

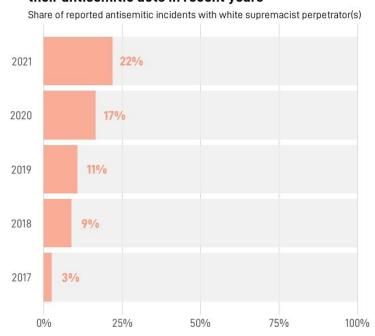
While most antisemitic incidents were not affiliated with any ideology, the growing role of white supremacists may account for at least some of the recent escalation in antisemitic acts.

Accordingly, federal policymakers should consider measures to prevent and combat white supremacist activity:

1. Strengthen reporting on motivations:

Despite the public attention on white supremacist activity, comprehensive data on the role of white supremacists in perpetrating hate crimes against Jews and other communities are scarce. In documenting hate crimes, the FBI reports several aspects of each case, such as location and bias (anti-Jewish, anti-Black, etc.); yet, to better understand the role of hate-based ideologies, the FBI must report the motivations of perpetrators, so lawmakers can tailor policies based on these motivating factors. Such efforts can

Figure 13 White supremacists have escalated their antisemitic acts in recent years



Anti-Defamation League H.E.A.T. Map (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism)

further extend beyond hate crimes; presently, no public national database exists to track domestic terrorism activities. By funding a nationwide database and requiring states to report these incidents, federal law enforcement can more effectively track cross-state activities and combat extremist networks.

2. Criminalize domestic terrorism: Today, no federal statute explicitly criminalizes acts of domestic terrorism.²⁵ By approving a law that provides federal law enforcement the authority to investigate U.S. citizens suspected of possessing extremist beliefs and intending to commit antisemitic violence or other hate-motivated acts, federal law enforcement can be better prepared to prevent these occurrences and protect the U.S. Jewish community.

²¹ Lindsey Bever, "Man arrested in Kansas City shootings was reportedly a longtime Ku Klux Klan leader," *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/14/man-arrested-in-jewish-community-shootings-reportedly-longtime-ku-klux-klan-leader/.
²² Julie Turkewitz and Kevin Roose, "Who Is Robert Bowers, the Suspect in the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting?" *The New York Times*, October 27, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/robert-bowers-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooter.html.

²³ "California synagogue shooter sentenced to life in federal prison," The Jerusalem Post, December 29, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/international/article-690024.

²⁴ "ADL H.E.A.T. Map (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism)," Anti-Defamation League, https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-to-track-hate/heat-map.

²⁵Corynn Wilson, "Domestic Terrorism Should Be a Crime: Fighting White Supremacist Violence Like Congress Fought 'Animal Enterprise Terrorism,'" Houston Law Review 58 (3): 749–76, 2021: https://search-ebscohost-com.proxygw.wrlc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=149325849&site=ehost-live.

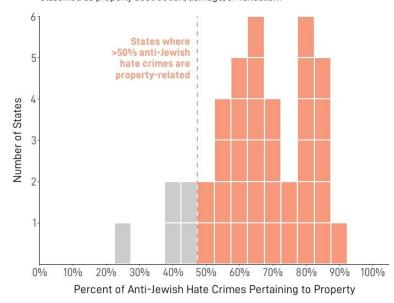
Enhanced protection of Jewish properties: As this brief overviewed, FBI hate crime data uncover a disproportionality of anti-Jewish crimes classified as property-related. The prevalence of these crimes, in which perpetrators deface, destroy, or vandalize properties due to hatred of Jews, is evident throughout the United States. As Figure 14 shows, almost every state saw at least half of its anti-Jewish hate crimes involve property damage, averaging 67 percent of states' antisemitic crimes. Common among these cases are the use of antisemitic imagery; according to the ADL data on antisemitic incidents, 32% of all reported acts since 2016 have involved the depiction of swastikas.²⁶

These observations should motivate lawmakers in states and municipalities throughout the country to take measures to protect local Jewish properties. Policy solutions to address this must include:

Figure 14

In most states, property crimes comprise the majority of antisemitic hate crimes

Distribution of states' share of anti-Jewish hate crimes, 2016 to 2020, classified as property destruction, damage, or vandalism



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer
Excluded: States with fewer than 5 crimes from 2016 to 2020

- Boosted security for Jewish communal spaces: Municipalities should work with local Jewish communities to
 ensure synagogues and other spaces have robust security measures to protect against desecration and violent
 acts. These efforts may include increasing surveillance and security personnel, tracking known perpetrators, and
 introducing neighborhood watch programs.²⁷
- 2. **Enhanced anti-vandalism techniques:** Local governments should further engage Jewish communities to design and fund vandalism-resistant properties. Following recommendations from The Urban Institute, communities may improve lighting, install landscaping around buildings, and erect security barriers to prevent these incidents.²⁸

Increasing protection in the Northeast: This brief demonstrates the pervasiveness of antisemitic hate crimes in the Northeast relative to other regions. Almost 40 percent of all anti-Jewish hate crimes in the United States, from 2016 to 2020, were property crimes in the Northeast, while 60 percent of all antisemitic crimes occurred in these states. Accordingly, advocacy efforts to combat anti-Jewish acts should emphasize the elevated risk in this region, with the greatest focus on New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Should local policymakers acknowledge their states' prominent role in the national trend of rising antisemitism, these states can lead the national effort to curb the incidence of antisemitism in the United States.

²⁶ "ADL H.E.A.T. Map."

²⁷ Michelle L. Scott, Nancy G. La Vigne, and Tobi Palmer, "Preventing Vandalism," *The Urban Institute Justice Policy Center*, 2007, https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/31256/1001192-Preventing-Vandalism.PDF.

²⁸ Ibid.

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