



In hiding? Multifaceted reactions of German Jews to the threat of antisemitism

Heiko Beyer, Niklas Herrberg, Melanie Reddig & Bjarne Goldkuhle

To cite this article: Heiko Beyer, Niklas Herrberg, Melanie Reddig & Bjarne Goldkuhle (05 Nov 2024): In hiding? Multifaceted reactions of German Jews to the threat of antisemitism, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2024.2417971](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2417971)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2417971>



Published online: 05 Nov 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



In hiding? Multifaceted reactions of German Jews to the threat of antisemitism

Heiko Beyer, Niklas Herrberg, Melanie Reddig and Bjarne Goldkuhle

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates reactions of Jews to the perceived risk of antisemitic incidents in Germany by using a mixed-methods design. First, findings from qualitative interviews with 21 German Jews are presented: They perceive Jewishness as a stigmatized identity which 'spoils' everyday interactions, often simply because it is linked to the 'weight' of German history. We derive two analytical types of reaction to perceptions of stigmatization: defensive efforts to hide one's Jewish identity and intervening engagement to actively combat antisemitism. In the second part of the paper, we report the findings of a quantitative survey of 295 Jews living in Germany to answer the question who chooses which type of reaction. Especially the characteristics of the area where Jews live and the specifics of their Jewish identity are important correlates for explaining variance in their reactions.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 August 2023
Accepted 11 October 2024

KEYWORDS

Anti-Semitism; Jewish studies; stigma; hate crime

Since 7 October 2023, antisemitic hate crimes and discourse in North America and Europe have surged (Freedman and Hirsh 2024). In Germany, the focus of our study, officially registered antisemitic hate crimes increased by 95.53% in 2023 compared to 2022 (Bundeskriminalamt 2024). This rise is concerning as antisemitic incidents have continuously multiplied over the last decade (Statista 2023).¹ The right-wing terrorist attack on a synagogue in Halle in 2019 was the most violent attempt on Jewish life in Germany since World War II.

Understanding the effects of rising antisemitic violence, particularly how Jews react to experienced and perceived antisemitism, requires not only data collection on antisemitic attitudes and crime rates but also consideration of the perspectives of those affected. While such studies are rare, recent research, particularly in the U.S., has begun focusing on individuals directly impacted by antisemitic resentment and violence.

Rebhun (2014), using data from the American National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000/2001, found that experiences of antisemitism were more prevalent among younger, less-educated, American-born individuals. While acquaintance with other Jews mitigated antisemitism's impact, religious affiliation and devotion to Israel were positively associated with such experiences. Respondents who were younger and highly educated perceived antisemitism as less of a problem, whereas being female, U.S.-born, and living in states with sizable Jewish populations increased perceptions of antisemitism. Antisemitic experiences strongly influenced individual perceptions of antisemitism.

Kremelberg and Dashefsky (2016), also using NJPS 2000/2001 data, found that, apart from income, denomination, and synagogue involvement, living in the U.S. South significantly influenced antisemitic experiences, especially for nonsynagogue members. Similarly, Cohen (2010) found antisemitism to be a significant issue for individuals with strong Jewish identities, older age, and lower incomes, particularly in states with higher antisemitic incident rates.

Wright et al. (2021) studied Jewish students at American universities between 2017 and 2019, noting increased concern about antisemitism, particularly among liberal Jews, without higher rates of personal experiences. Leets (2002) explored American students' responses to antisemitic hate speech, finding emotional distress as the main consequence, with assertive and withdrawn responses nearly split evenly. And Scheitle et al. (2023), using the American Experiences with Religious Discrimination Study (ERDS), found that Jewish and Muslim adults report greater fears of religious hate crime victimization than Christian adults, irrespective of personal experiences.

In Europe, surveys by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) of the European Union provide valuable data on Jewish perceptions, experiences, and antisemitism's consequences. DellaPergola (2019) compared FRA 2018 data with the Anti-Defamation League 2013 survey, highlighting a distinction between cognitive and experiential perceptions of antisemitism, with cognitive perceptions more frequently reported across all 12 countries studied.

Beyer and Liebe (2020) analyzed FRA data for Germany, finding that 7% of 1,225 respondents experienced violence or vandalism, and 44% faced harassment in the past five years due to their Jewish identity. Those identifiable as Jews through symbols were particularly affected, and a positive correlation existed between personal antisemitic hate crime experiences and avoiding certain places for safety concerns. Living in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods decreased harassment and violence likelihood.

Zick et al. (2017) conducted one of the first comprehensive studies on German Jews' perceptions of antisemitism, using quantitative and qualitative interviews to reveal widespread concerns about overt and covert antisemitism, experienced both online and offline. Coping mechanisms included hiding Jewishness in public, self-blaming, or ignoring accounts of antisemitism.

Further national and federal studies (e.g. Reimer-Gordinskaya and Tzschiesche 2020; RIAS 2020) analyze threat perceptions, interpretations, and behavioral consequences of antisemitism, including experiences of Jews in schools (Chernivsky and Lorenz 2020). Jews report encountering various forms of antisemitism from the radical right, radical left, political Islam, and mainstream society. Many emphasize the increasing relevance of Israel-related antisemitism, evident in verbal and physical assaults during demonstrations in Germany. Protests against COVID-19 protective measures have also led to confrontations with antisemitic conspiracy theories and Holocaust relativization (RIAS 2023).

In Germany, Jewish life remains overshadowed by the Shoah. Between 56% (2018) and 62% (2012) of respondents in the Decker et al. (2022, 69) trend survey agreed that current problems should be prioritized over events from 70 years ago.² Between 36% (2018) and 43% (2012) agreed with the statement that reparation demands against Germany often benefit a 'Holocaust industry' rather than victims. While Holocaust denial is punishable by law in Germany, Holocaust relativization and 'trivialization' (Wetzel 2017) are

prevalent in public discourse, particularly among right-wing activists and parties like the AfD, whose former leader Alexander Gauland called ‘Hitler and the Nazis nothing but a flyspeck in the over 1000 years of successful German history’ in a 2018 speech. Relativizing comparisons of the Holocaust, such as PETA’s ‘the Holocaust on your plate’ campaign (Wetzel 2017, 320), have sparked public debates about the Holocaust’s status in current German memory politics.

Given the persistent historical influence of the Holocaust in contemporary German society, our overarching research question is: How do German Jews cope with antisemitism threats in light of their remembrance of the Holocaust?

Analyzing perceptions of memory politics and political culture in Germany is crucial for understanding antisemitism experiences and reactions. Although the Holocaust occurred decades ago, it continues to impact Jews’ experiences today. While current violence cannot be reduced to the past, Jews emphasize its continued importance in various respects. Antisemitism in Germany today must be understood as a post-National Socialist experience, linked to Nazi antisemitism in many ways. In the first part of this study, we address this aspect in detail through an analysis of qualitative interviews with Jews from across Germany. We demonstrate that manifest Shoah-related antisemitism is not the only concern for the interviewees. Instead, they frequently highlight the latent presence of the German past, which has the potential to ‘spoil’ interactions (a term referring to Erving Goffman’s stigma theory) between Jews and non-Jews. Nevertheless, simply forgetting the past is considered neither possible nor morally appropriate.

Against this historical backdrop, we examine today’s experiences of marginalization and their consequences in a second study. Here, we connect to current quantitatively oriented research on Jews’ perspectives on antisemitism by presenting results from a quantitative survey (n = 295) conducted on Jews living in Germany. We investigate two different types of preemptive actions, defensive or intervening, and answer the question of who tends to choose which strategies. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies.

The impact of the German past: Results of in-depth interviews

Surprisingly, previous victimization research on Jewish experiences with antisemitism in Germany often neglects the historical context of the National Socialist past. Based on psychological and depth-hermeneutic approaches, which mainly reconstruct individual case histories in their historical embeddedness (Ottmüller 2011; Moré 2013; Eisemann 2021), the following elaboration presents the results of a comparative analysis from the passages of 21 interviews with Jews³ about their experiences with antisemitism in today’s Germany. These problem-centered interviews are based on a guideline, which endeavors to provide interviewees with as much freedom as possible in their narration but to narrow the focus of the topic at the same time. The stimulus ‘What does being Jewish in Germany mean to you personally?’ was particularly relevant to the role of Germany’s past, although the interviewees addressed the relevance of history on their own initiative at various points throughout the interviews.⁴ Given that we are focusing on the exploration of meaning, we do not seek a comprehensive explanation of the different perspectives’

biographical origin in our qualitative study. However, we do selectively include socio-demographic information in the analysis, insofar as it is addressed in the accounts of the respective interviewees themselves.

We conducted the sampling and data analysis based on Grounded Theory, which is conducive to exploratory approaches. The insights we gained in the course of interpreting the first interviews were used to select further interviewees, who in turn provided additional perspectives for continuing the analysis. The aim was to develop a typologically differentiated picture regarding the role of the National Socialist past of Germany and its relevance for Jews living in Germany today. In particular, we focus on the influence which the remembrance of the Holocaust has for their everyday interactions. To this end, we attempted to include different perspectives of Jews. During sampling we contrasted gender, migration experience, place of residence in Germany, educational background and age. We also sought to contact both Jews who are members of a Jewish community and Jews who are not. All interview requests stated that we were 'looking for people who are willing to talk to us about their everyday experiences of antisemitism in an interview' (see Appendix). Accordingly, all interviewees were in a position to talk about their experiences of antisemitism. However, we did not seek a sociogenetical explanation of the backgrounds of the interviewees' experiences, but restricted ourselves to elaborating on the variations in experiencing and interpreting the current role of the National Socialist past. To analyze key passages, we draw not only from common coding procedures of Grounded Theory but, especially, also from microscopic analysis (Strauss 2004). This involves sequentially discussing and interpreting selected passages collectively within the research team and successively contrasting the results with comparable passages.

Our analysis led to the following conclusion: the past can become part of everyday life for Jews in various ways. Obviously, this can take place through confrontation with antisemitism, which refers to the Shoah and National Socialism. However, the presence of the past today extends far beyond this confrontation. Jews living in Germany find themselves in a contradictory situation regarding their daily life and its normality: On the one hand, it is still morally imperative that the atrocities are not forgotten. For Jews, it is also hardly even possible to forget. Therefore, Jewish life in Germany may never be entirely normal again. At the same time, however, the memory of the Shoah conflicts with the desire for complete normality of Jewish life in Germany. Especially in interactions with non-Jews, Jews experience that the consciousness of the Holocaust can quickly disrupt interactions because non-Jews tend to reduce the Jewish identity to a passive victimhood status. It is this aporia which constitutes what we denote 'the weight of history'. To put it in the terminology of Erving Goffman's stigma theory (1986): The presence of the Holocaust, either as continuing antisemitic resentment or as a passive identity frame of victimhood can 'spoil' interactions and even one's Jewish identity as such. The stigma management in everyday situations is thus located on a continuum of actions, with hiding or becoming symbolically 'invisible' constituting one end of the scale, and consciously emphasizing one's own agency as a Jew on the other end. In the following sections, we will discuss these findings in more detail using selected interview passages.

The confrontation with antisemitism related to the National Socialist past

An area in which Germany's National Socialist past immediately becomes relevant for our interviewees involves the confrontation with antisemitism that they directly relate to the Shoah and National Socialism. One interviewee described for example that on his way to a synagogue an 'older gentleman' (Interview 6) shouted at him 'you shitty Jew, you shitty Jew, who do you think you are? What are you doing?' and continued with stating 'take him to Auschwitz, take him to Auschwitz, to a gas chamber'. Besides the actual confrontation with an unmistakably antisemitic statement, the interviewee points out the relevance of the behavior of uninvolved bystanders. The antisemitism was not contradicted by others; the interviewee is disappointed that there were no acts of solidarity. The threat of extermination, which is communicatively linked to the mass murder that has already taken place, is reactivated by the passivity of the uninvolved bystanders.

Another interviewee described a reference to Hitler in the context of antisemitic threats. While visiting a café and talking Hebrew with his mother, he experienced that a man at a neighboring table tried to engage him and his mother in a conversation. During this attempt the man referred to Joseph Goebbels and displayed a 'suggestive Hitler mustache' while praising Hitler as a 'good man' (Interview 4) and threatened the interviewee and his mother, that he 'is watching them'.

In addition, the interviewees reported experiencing the relativization of the persecution of Jews, especially during protests about the protective measures against COVID-19.

And apart from that, I find that Covid is now making its presence felt. At the bus stops, for example, I've seen Stars of David, and it says, 'Stop — unvaccinated people not wanted.' And that somehow Corona and the unvaccinated are associated with the Holocaust, which is absolutely antisemitic. (Interviewee 8)

Another interviewee refers to a demonstration directed against the measures to combat the virus, where a 'young girl' gave a speech in which she compared herself to Anne Frank. The interviewee considers this comparison as an unmistakable relativization and trivialization of the past. Protesters wearing a yellow 'Jewish star' were considered likewise equally despicable, considering the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

The contradictory situation of Jews living in Germany

The presence of Germany's National Socialist past in the everyday life of German Jews leads to a contradictory situation. A passage from interview 16 can exemplify this:

Well, I would wish that especially after the victims and the perpetrators are now all dead, after there are no more eyewitnesses, after there is also no longer the feeling from the Jewish side that he or she was a concentration camp guard, or even just the father was a concentration camp guard, that Jewish life in this country, as in the United States or in France, becomes more and more a part of normal culture. That's not entirely possible (...) because the Holocaust was a unique, unparalleled, unbelievable crime against humanity that will certainly not go away, not even in people's minds. That is also an essential part of the self-image of the post-National Socialist, new German Republic. That also remains. That, that remains. That is why Jewish life in this country will never become as normal as I would like it to be. (Interviewee 16)

The interviewee emphasizes the desire for normal life as a Jew living in Germany, which is not any longer overshadowed by the National Socialist past, now that the directly involved perpetrators and victims, as well as their descendants, have died. However, the Shoah as a historical fact that will not disappear from consciousness so quickly makes this normality impossible. Furthermore, the monstrosity of the acts implies that this would not be morally appropriate either. In the face of an unchangeable history, only an approximation to the unattainable ideal of normality is possible.

The intertwining of the desire for normality and the necessity of remembering a past impossible to normalize even affects the simple usage of the word 'Jew', since the term carries a certain connotation in German society:

But of course, the feeling that you are somehow different is always there. The word Jew alone already has a certain heaviness to it. The word itself is always somehow, yes, I can pronounce (that), so it's almost like a kind of distance to the word itself that is always built up. (Interview 5)

The interviewee goes on to talk about the tension between normality and the awareness of history. As a 'descendant of survivors' (interview 5), the Shoah is already a 'big topic' (ibid.) in her everyday life. However, it is also important for her to show non-Jews that she is 'no different from most other people' (ibid.), except for her Jewish family history.

In the next two sections, we will address both sides of this conflicting tension. First, we will discuss the relevance and moral necessity of continuous remembrance of the Shoah. Then we move on to discuss how awareness of the Shoah is also a problem for successful everyday interaction.

The importance of remembering

Several interviewees consider the continuous remembrance of the Shoah to be important. For example, a Jewish woman who emphasizes her emigration from Ukraine describes her joy upon learning that German schools teach about National Socialist crimes:

(T)hirty years ago, as I said, I was in eleventh grade in Kyiv and not a single teacher ever said anything about the Holocaust, specifically about the Holocaust in school now. And that's why it was a big difference for me in Germany, and I was very grateful as a Jew. (Interview 14)

Another interviewee emphasizes the importance of raising awareness among non-Jewish Germans about the Shoah and its continuing relevance for Jews. Non-Jews should understand the sensitivity that the topic has for the descendants of the survivors, the persecuted and the murdered. Even if it was 'fifty, sixty or seventy, eighty years ago' (Interview 15) for people who 'lost their grandfather or uncles and aunts in the Holocaust, it may not be so easy' (ibid.).

The remembrance of the Shoah also remains crucial for the interviewees in combating and tabooing antisemitism. The possible fading of memory would also be highly problematic insofar as it could encourage the resurgence of antisemitism. An interviewee describes the constant need for 'immunization' (Interview 19) against antisemitism. While this was possible immediately after the Shoah, the willingness 'not to endure certain positions' is at risk to fade away over time, because the shock 'has now been overcome biographically and generationally'.

The weight of German history and its spoiling of identities

But simultaneously, the analysis indicates that the lasting memory of the Shoah influences the normality of current Jewish life in Germany because non-Jews frequently encounter Jews with substantial insecurity. Everyday situations between Jews and non-Jews are at risk of falling out of the normality of everyday life against the background of the diffuse awareness of the Shoah. Some Jews find it particularly problematic that they are quickly reduced to being Jewish, whereby being Jewish and being a victim quickly become one and the same for non-Jews.

As soon as an interaction partner identifies a person as Jewish, he or she may start associating the Jewish alter ego with the National Socialist past. This not only can cause deep insecurity for the non-Jewish interaction partner, but of course vice versa affects Jews. With reference to Erving Goffman (1986), this can be understood as an experience of stigmatization.⁵ A stigma can arise when an individual deviates from a socially ascribed norm. The experiences of stigmatization are based on the possession of an attribute 'of a less desirable kind' (Goffman 1986, 3). He emphasizes the extensiveness of a 'discrediting effect' (Goffman 1986, 3) as an important marker for stigmatization, which can 'spoil' not only a minor aspect of one's everyday life but affect the whole identity of an individual. Jews are confronted with stigmatizing behavioral expectations and assumptions regarding their (family) background through the historical context and only perceived as victims or victim-descendants. Being perceived as a pitiable victim is connected to a loss of status that is not necessarily based on the devaluation of Jews as inferior but rather on the negation of agency. While being Jewish without being perceived as Jewish by others constitutes a potentially discreditable social identity, a recognizable Jewish identity via symbols or language can be conceptualized as a discredited social identity. Goffman uses the Magen David as an example for such 'stigma symbols' (Goffman 1986, 108–109). Nevertheless, it is important here to bear in mind that a positive reference to one's Jewishness does not need to be about reversing a negative stigma. The Star of David can be a stigmatizing signifier in one scenario but also a prestige symbol in another or for other people (Goffman 1986). As such, a person may intend to use symbols to express their identification with Judaism in terms of culture, religion, or national identity and not only resisting a stigmatizing perspective but simply refusing to base their expression on the inversion of a stigma.

The experiences of Jews with stigmatization often involve being reduced to their identity as Holocaust victims or as descendants of victims. Simply put, being Jewish is equated with being a victim:

I think this is often directly linked to the expectation that there are also victims in one's own family. That is, victims of the Shoah, and, so to speak, the understanding of the other person that his or her ancestors murdered my supposed ancestors, and the reality is, of course, much more complex. So, in my family there are perpetrators, and, at the same time, it is also the case in many families, and especially there is again the post-Soviet, which actually also makes up the vast majority of Jews today, completely different, a completely different understanding that one was not liberated, but was a member of the allied armies, which liberated. (Interviewee 7)

The interviewee refers here to the current Jewish community in Germany, which is shaped by migration. Of the approximately 225,000 Jews in Germany, the vast majority

have a connection to the former Soviet Union, as many Jews migrated to Germany after its collapse. In this regard, some interviewees highlight their Soviet family background as cause for a connection to German history that is not limited to the experience of having been a victim but rather a liberator. Similarly, interviewee 6 remarks that his ancestors were ‘in the Red Army when Berlin was liberated’ (Interview 6).

Another interviewee experiences that non-Jews often do not know how to react to a Jew because the interaction is immediately interpreted as a constellation between perpetrator and victim:

But when you say that in Germany, it’s always like oh, you’re the first Jew I’ve met, and you are immediately associated with the Holocaust. I’ve had many Germans apologize to me, even though I said, ‘you don’t have to apologize for anything.’ They immediately said, ‘oh God, I’m so sorry.’ That’s why in Germany (...) they ask things straight away and then say, ‘oh; did your family die in the Holocaust?’ (Interviewee 11)

The association of Jews with victimhood is related to the stigmatizing expectation that a Jew should also fit into the role of a passive victim. This expectation obscures the real behavior of Jews in the twenty-first century in Germany in favor of a stereotypical image. The non-Jewish Other imagines a clichéd figure of a Jew living in a constant state of grief, sadness, and nostalgia, which does not exist as such in reality.

However, trying to forget or relativize the Holocaust to escape potential stigmatization is considered impossible for most Jews. Refusing to be reduced to the status of a victim does not mean that the Shoah and the awareness of history are irrelevant. For Jews living in Germany, the Holocaust continues to exert an important impact, to the extent that they are living in the ‘country of the perpetrators’ (Interviewee 1). When asked what it means to be Jewish in Germany, one interviewee replied as follows:

It’s definitely not easy, I would say. I myself am in the third generation after the Shoah. I am a descendant of survivors, of all my grandparents, and that alone is a big topic for me in my everyday life, and exactly, it is not a matter of course for me to be Jewish in Germany. (Interviewee 5)

The past also creates a sense of living among people who do not necessarily feel closely connected to the Jewish religion, culture, or community. One interviewee, for example, describes how she feels much ‘closer to Christian culture than to Jewish culture’ (Interviewee 2). She then goes on to add that she nevertheless also feels connected to Judaism, as her ‘mother was in a concentration camp’ (Interviewee 2). The experiences of persecution and extermination passed down through her family establish an awareness of belonging and sense of connection.

Even if the past in general or the family history in particular are relevant for one’s identity, non-Jewish society should acknowledge the complexity of Jewish identifications in today’s Germany. The recognition of the suffering does not have to be restricted to pure pity alone – it can also be a source of pride because one’s family did not allow itself to be beaten down:

I don’t really want to have an identity that is appealing to suffering or is based on suffering. Instead, I find it more appealing to be able to carry an identity with pride, so to speak, and yes, then I also think somehow that I’m also proud that this terrible family history turned out so well, or that these family members who experienced it were simply so strong and survived it at all and made it possible for me to have a life like that. (Interviewee 18)

Potential reactions to the experienced 'weight of German history'

From all this the question arises of how Jews respond to this contradictory situation. We differentiate between two extremes, with a continuum of nuanced, and at times even contradictory, reactions lying in between. On the one hand, several ways of coping by becoming 'invisible' as a Jew are available. The questions of whether to 'display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where' emerge (Goffman 1986, 43). Therefore, addressing the stigmatization of being Jewish frequently implies the consideration when to conceal one's Jewishness or to withdraw from situations in which one has been 'exposed' and feels threatened. Jews are under constant pressure to control potential compromising information about one's identity. This scenario can go along with the establishment of routines of invisibilization (Zick et al. 2017; Stein 2009). On the other hand, some Jews react to stigmatization by emphasizing their agency. For example, they decide to become more politically engaged or show and articulate their Jewish identity.

Invisibility and withdrawal are closely linked to being forced into the passive victim role. One interviewee described this aspect using the metaphor of the 'invisibility cap' (Interviewee 2) under which she has lived for many years. Another interviewee states she would wear her star of David only underneath her shirt (see Interview 12), while interviewee 6 describes wearing sometimes a helmet above his kippah.

The invisibility of Jews in public involves a demarcation between in-group and out-group. Within one's group, one can be visible without the threat of encountering situations in which the German past deforms the interaction. In-group interactions allow for a less rigid stigma management and create an environment where one is 'properly understood' (Interviewee 5). The in-group, consisting for example of family members or Jewish friends, is perceived as a place of retreat:

But I don't have to worry about that when I somehow talk about my feelings here as a Jew. So, it's simply important to me, and also, as a Jew who has a strong connection to Israel, and I have to be careful with whom I talk about it, and that's not always the case. (Interviewee 5)

When it comes to deciding between defensive or intervening reactions, a more or less strong burden often plays a role – one is forced to deal with situations in which a self-determined way of acting is usually prevented by external imperatives. In one interview passage, for example, an interviewee refers to the treatment of a Jewish professor who was publicly visible as a Jew and was attacked, then defended himself against this attack:

And that is not only the case in [Metropolis 1], that is the tendency throughout Germany, that one wants to make oneself invisible, and this professor from New York simply behaved as he felt and as safe as he felt and was attacked, and I also think it's good that he fought back, (...) the whole thing nevertheless ensured that it came to the attention of the public. After all, hiding all the time is something Jews used to do, which did not save them from extermination. (Interviewee 2)

The behavior of the professor is presented as a positive counterimage to the strategy of the interviewee of hiding in Germany. It challenged antisemitic routines by creating public visibility for the problem. The interviewee explicitly placed this scenario in the context of the historical experience of the Shoah. Withdrawal and hiding appear as

ineffective strategies against violence, and the intervening reaction is legitimized against the historical background of antisemitic persecution.

The past of the National Socialists' antisemitism can still be an important topic for Jews, although potential stigmatization constrains freedom of action. An interviewee reflects on the fear of being unable to adequately react. The desire for a more effective response sometimes corresponds with a lack of trust in oneself to adequately react:

I don't have the confidence to react. In case I were to hear any remarks, I wouldn't have the self-confidence to find the right reaction at that moment. (Interviewee 12)

This notion can lead to a considerable ambivalence to the extent that the interviewees also feel obliged to actively respond and to not let everything go unchallenged:

I think it depends very much on how you feel, and so somehow, when you have the feeling that you feel safe, that you can somehow address things and have the strength for it, then yes, but I lack it. Right now, at least. (Interviewee 5)

However, we also interviewed respondents for whom the history of the persecution of the Jews evokes a reaction of emphasizing their agency. An interviewee who often differentiates between his experiences in the Soviet Union and his experiences in Germany after emigration emphasizes that he never hides as a Jew. Although he does not wear Jewish symbols and is, thus, invisible in public, he makes no secret of his Jewish identity. In contrast to the Soviet Union, where being Jewish was noted in the passport and was subject to state discrimination, he now has the freedom in Germany to become an active member of the Jewish community:

Here in western democratic countries, of course, this is anonymized. If you don't want to, then nobody finds out who you are, yes, but I have never made a secret of it, and for me Judaism is first and foremost history, and my family was also affected by the persecution of Jews during the Second World War, and of course, the stories about it have also shaped me, and so in Germany, in [city 1 in state 1], I quickly became a member of the Jewish community and am also active in the life of the community and of course I react very sensitively to antisemitic incidents or conflicts between Israel and Palestinians. (Interviewee 10)

His direct experience in the Soviet Union overlays the persecution of the Jews by the Germans, which also affected his family. The central point of the comparison of experience is between the illiberal Soviet Union and free western democracies. In this manner, the feeling of being forced into a spoiled interaction does not occur. Although he feels shaped by his family history, which leads to an emphasis on his agency and him expressing his alertness toward antisemitism, this scenario does not lead to a feeling of unease, but to the intention to fight antisemitism.

The emphasis on one's agency can also be linked to a critique of the instrumentalization of Jews. They are part of society and actively engaged in shaping it. As previously discussed, the National Socialist past can be interpreted as a history not only of Jewish victimization but also of active participation in the victory over National Socialism. The interviewee who states that his grandfather helped liberate Berlin as a member of the Red Army does not directly place himself in the tradition of the military struggle against Nazi Germany. However, he emphasizes that he is also actively involved in improving circumstances in Germany to a certain degree. This confrontation with

history does not lead to a defensive position but to a strategy of openly countering anti-semitic stigmatization:

And I have the feeling that political parties like to instrumentalize Jews. I am not a decorative piece (...) or just something to show off. I am a human being. I am part of this society. I'm politically active in the sense that I'm not necessarily in a party, but I'm committed to change and educating myself. (Interviewee 6)

Defensive or intervening actions? Results from a quantitative survey

We have seen that German Jews link their stigmatization experiences ambivalently to the history of the Shoa. On the one hand, the memory of the Holocaust clouds normal life and 'spoils' everyday situations because Jews are confronted with outright antisemitism, including National Socialist tropes and images, but sometimes also just due to well-intentioned questions about their family history. On the other hand, repressing the memory of the Holocaust is not an option for Jews living in Germany today, because remembering the past is considered essential for preventing the reoccurrence of the Holocaust.

How do German Jews live with this conundrum? The qualitative interviews revealed two types of prospective actions: defensiveness (i.e. literally or figuratively hiding) or intervention (i.e. fighting back). In the remainder of this paper we will address the heterogeneity of the Jewish-German population when it comes to deciding which of these types of actions to take. We will consider three dimensions of characteristics that could be important in that regard: (1) previous experiences with antisemitism either online or offline, (2) the level and subjective definitions of Jewish identity, and (3) the specifics of the area of residence (political and religious composition, urbanity).

Mapping the heterogeneity of prospective stigmatization prevention

- (1) Both our in-depth interviews and extant hate crime research (Hagerlid 2021; Jackson and Gouseti 2016; Scheitle et al. 2023) indicate that previous experiences of violence and harassment can lead to greater fear of future hate crimes. It would thus be a logical consequence that Jews who report such experiences, especially in the offline world, will try to hide their Jewishness, either by avoiding 'stigma symbols' (Goffman 1986, 108) like the Magen David or by not telling others that they are Jewish. They also might consider moving, either within the country or between countries. But an intervening approach to coping with previous experiences has also been observed in prior studies on crime victimization (Bateson 2012), and it might be possible that especially online harassment, which can be avoided less easily, leads to intervening behavior like political engagement.
- (2) We saw that the interviewees in our qualitative study talked about different definitions and manifestations of their Jewish identity. In some cases, the interviewees expressed great confidence in telling others about their Jewishness, others were more reluctant to do so, because this might lead to 'spoiling' of social interactions or even being antisemitically harassed. A literature review on the general mechanism of 'Concealable Stigmatized Identities (CSIs)' by Quinn and Earnshaw (2011) suggests that stigmatized identities are often masked in social interactions

because individuals anticipate stigma, even if they themselves have not experienced stigmatization personally. A mediating variable in the specific case of Jewish identity seems to be the relevance of remembering the Holocaust for one's Jewish identity. If remembering the Holocaust is considered very important for one's Jewishness, individuals will most likely rather choose an intervening strategy than hiding their Jewishness.

- (3) Finally, we expect to find different behavioral strategies depending on the areas where Jews live. Both, Beyer and Liebe (2020) and Zick et al. (2017) found that Jews' experiences with antisemitism in Germany and fears of future victimization are primarily related to two groups: the radical right and religiously fundamental Muslims. We thus expect to find higher degrees of defensive actions like hiding stigma symbols, keeping silent about one's Jewishness or even considering moving away from areas where, at least according to the respondent's perception, the proportions of these two groups are rather high. Urbanity could also play a role, since Beyer and Liebe (2020) reported that Jews in urban areas were significantly more afraid than those in non-urban areas to become a victim of antisemitic harassment in the next twelve months. Hence, we suspect to see more protective behavior by urban Jews.

Sample

Data for this study were collected from May 2022 to February 2023 via an online survey of Jews living in Germany. A total of 370 individuals participated, with 295 completing the questionnaire. Field access involved a multi-stage process: 36 randomly selected Jewish communities in Germany were asked to email survey invitations to randomly selected members. The two-step random selection aimed to ensure sample representativeness. In parallel, the Jewish Scholarship Organization ELES distributed the survey via email to current and former scholarship holders to include non-community members. Due to low community response rates and incomplete email lists, we expanded the community sample to all Jewish communities and institutions in Germany and an incentive was introduced (a lottery with every tenth participant winning 100 euros). We also placed an advertisement in the online edition of the *Jüdische Allgemeine* for the last two study months. The survey was available in German, English, and Russian.⁶

The sample is not representative of the Jewish population in Germany due to unknown mechanisms of self-selection. Compared to official statistical data on members of Jewish communities (ZWST 2024) in Germany, the sample is somewhat younger, while the gender distribution is almost identical. Since our sample also includes individuals who are not registered with Jewish communities, the inference population exceeds the members of Jewish communities. There are no socio-demographic data on the total population of the 225,000 Jews (DellaPergola 2021) living in Germany (approximately half of whom are organized in Jewish communities, including the Union of Progressive Jews; Mediendienst Integration 2024; Statista 2024). This means that no statistical weighting of the descriptive measures can be performed.

Non-random samples are common in social science minority research. They offer advantages (as Turban et al. 2023 suggest) despite potentially producing biased

descriptive measures due to self-selection: their cost-benefit ratio is better than simple random selections with low probabilities, specific questionnaires yield more valid measures than general population surveys, and diverse recruitment methods reach non-community Jews. As no sampling list of the total population exists, random samples would have to use 'screen-outs', leading to very high costs. Despite non-random sample advantages and random sample disadvantages in minority surveys, univariate results may deviate from total population distributions. Multivariate results are less affected due to socio-demographic control.

Our sample consists of 45% of individuals who identify as male and to 55% who identify as female. Ages range from 6.6% aged 18–21 to 2% over 80 years. The mean of completed education years is 15.57. Politically active left-wing and right-wing perceptions (scale 1 = left to 10 = right) average 4.29 ($s = 1.70$), with only 0.8% choosing 9 or 10. About 70% live in large cities; 73.9% are Jewish community members, with 78.1% in West Germany, 11.2% in East Germany, and 10.7% in Berlin. For non-members, state of residence was not recorded.

Findings

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables. To measure potential reactions to experiences of antisemitism, we asked the respondents: 'Which of the following actions will you take in the future to protect yourself and your family from antisemitism?' The response categories for *defensive* actions are (a) refraining from being visibly Jewish, (b) avoiding telling others that one is Jewish, (c) moving to another place within the country, or (d) emigrating. We combined the last two categories into one variable that represents intentions to move. An *intervening* way to act would be (e) *getting politically involved*.

We found that 42.7% ($SD = 49.6$; $n = 295$) and 32.2% ($SD = 46.8$; $n = 295$) of the respondents would refrain from wearing Jewish symbols or 'keep[ing] quiet about [one's] Jewishness', respectively. Moreover, 12.9% ($SD = 33.6$; $n = 295$) reported that they would move within Germany or leave the country. Intentions to get politically involved were reported by 32.0% ($SD = 47.0$; $n = 295$).

As mentioned earlier, these descriptive results are not representative for the German-Jewish population as a whole. However, we can use the data to determine which personal and contextual variables are correlated with each type of reaction and whether those relationships are similar or differ across the types. There are two assumptions underlying this strategy: Firstly, we presume that the effects we measure in the sample can also be found in the Jewish-German population. In order to justify this assumption, let us reconsider the sampling design and survey mode. The fraction of the Jewish population which we did not reach with our survey consists of relatively older individuals with comparatively lower levels of education (as online access is primarily correlated with age, and the ELES respondents are generally younger, and because the latter, as well as the readers of the online edition of the *Jüdische Allgemeine*, tend to be highly educated). Since we control for age and education, the relationships we will report are independent of those characteristics.

A second frequently made assumption related to multiple regression analysis regards the causal structure as indicated by the terms 'independent' and 'dependent' variables.



Table 1. Overview of variables.

Variables	Wording	n	Mean	SD	min	max
<i>Dependent variables: Intentions to act</i>						
Experiences of Jewish symbols	'Which of the following actions will you take in the future to protect yourself and your family from antisemitism?' (a) 'I will refrain from being visible as Jewish (e.g., wearing a kippah and the Star of David).' (b) 'I will keep quiet about my Jewishness.' (c) 'I will move within Germany.' (d) 'I will emigrate to another country.' (e) 'I am going to get politically involved.'	295	0.427	0.496	0	1
Avoidance of telling Moving	'Within the last 10 years, how many times were you verbally threatened or insulted because you are Jewish?' (a) in the Internet or by e-mail. (b) at home or in the immediate vicinity of my home, (c) in a public place (e.g., street, subway, supermarket, and café), (d) in a public authority, (e) at my workplace, (f) at the university, (g) at the university, (h) at a Jewish venue (e.g., a synagogue), (i) at friends' or acquaintances' homes.	295 295	0.322 0.129	0.468 0.336	0 0	1 1
Engagement		295	0.320	0.470	0	1
<i>Experiences with antisemitism</i>						
Online Harassment		289	0.190	0.393	0	1
Offline Harassment		289	0.474	0.500	0	1
<i>Identity</i>						
Religiosity	'On a scale of 1 to 10, how religious would you describe yourself if 1 means "not at all religious" and 10 means "very religious"?'	292	4.620	2.623	1	10
Jewish identity	'Some Jews feel more connected to Judaism and some less. How about you? How strongly do you feel Jewish?' [1=not at all, 2=rather little, 3=partly, 4=rather strongly, 5=very strongly].	295	4.200	0.883	1	5
Importance of Holocaust remembrance	'To what extent are the following aspects important for your personal Jewish identity? Holocaust remembrance' [1=not at all, 2=rather little, 3=partly, 4=rather strongly, 5=very strongly].	294	3.990	1.104	1	5
<i>Area of residence</i>	'And how high do you estimate the share of the following groups in your region (city or county)?' [1=very low, 2=rather low, 3=medium, 4=rather high, 5=very high]					
Area: right	(a) 'politically active right-wing.'	264	2.758	1.051	1	5
Area: left	(b) 'politically active left-wing.'	265	3.219	1.103	1	5
Area: Christian	(c) 'religiously active Christians.'	266	2.602	1.031	1	5
Area: Muslim	(d) 'religiously active Muslims.'	271	3.402	1.035	1	5
City	'Which is most applicable to where you live?: Big city or suburb of a big city.'	295	0.763	0.426	0	1
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age	'To which age group do you belong?' [1=18–21, 2=22–30, 3=31–40, 4=41–50, 5=51–60, 6=61–70, 7=71–80, 8=81 or older].	342	3.942	1.866	1	8
Female	'What is your gender?' [1=female].	213	0.394	0.490	0	1
Education	Recorded categorical variable [in years].	284	15.567	2.797	8	20
Household income	OECD Square root scale of monthly household income [in Euro].	256	2,250	1,631	223	11,000

Since our data is neither longitudinal nor experimental, the findings should not be considered as proof of a causal relationship. However, the wording of our ‘dependent’ variables literally refers to actions in the future (‘I will ...’) whereas our ‘independent’ variables ask for past experiences (‘within the last 10 years, were you ...’), for identity characteristics (religiosity, Jewishness, Holocaust remembrance), for socio-demographic data (age, gender, education, income), or for (subjective) characteristics of the current place of residence. For that matter, at least for some of the relationships the theoretical assumption of the ‘independent’ variables contributing to the causation of the ‘dependent’ ones is much more plausible than the other way around. This being said, we nonetheless will avoid causal terminology.

In Table 2 we report the average marginal effects (AME) of binary logistic regression models. The first relationship we test is the one between previous experiences of harassment and prospective actions to prevent victimization. We expect to find a positive correlation between the two because previously attacked individuals are more sensitive to become victimized again as many criminology studies show (Hagerlid 2021; Jackson and Gouseti 2016; Scheitle et al. 2023). 19.0% of the respondents reported that they

Table 2. Binary logistic regression models of reactions to antisemitism.

	Will Avoid Symbols	Will Avoid Telling	Will Move	Political engagement
<i>Experiences with antisemitism</i>				
Offline harassment (1 = yes)	-0.05 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.10)	0.09 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.10)
Online harassment (1 = yes)	-0.01 (0.12)	-0.09 (0.11)	0.04 (0.08)	0.10 (0.11)
<i>Identity</i>				
Importance Holocaust remembrance (1 = not at all; 5 = very strongly)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.06 [†] (0.04)
Jewish identity (1 = low; 5 = high)	0.06 (0.05)	0.08 [†] (0.04)	0.02 (0.02)	0.05 (0.05)
Religiosity (1 = low; 10 = high)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.04* (0.02)
<i>Area of residence</i>				
Area right (1 = low prop.; 5 = high prop)	0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.05* (0.02)	0.06 (0.04)
Area left (1 = low prop.; 5 = high prop)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.04)
Area Christians (1 = low prop.; 5 = high prop)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.04)
Area Muslims (1 = low prop.; 5 = high prop)	0.10* (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.04)
Big city (1 = yes)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.15 (0.11)	0.11 (0.07)	0.19 [†] (0.11)
<i>Controls</i>				
Age (1 = 18–21; 8=>80)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.08* (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)
Income (in Euro, OECD sq.r scale)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 [†] (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Education (in years)	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
Female (1 = yes)	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.15 (0.10)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.11)
Log Likelihood	-82.23	-74.18	-25.71	-78.98
AIC	194.47	178.37	81.42	187.96
BIC	237.94	221.84	124.89	231.42
N	134	134	134	134

Notes: Average marginal effects; standard errors enclosed in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; [†] $p < 0.1$.

had been antisemitically harassed within the last ten years online (via email or in the Internet in general), and 47.4% experienced harassment offline (Table 1). Table 2 shows that these respondents, however, did not significantly differ from those without personal experiences of harassment in regard to future prevention measures – at least if we control for other factors in the multivariate model (however, the bivariate regression effect of offline harassment and intentions to move is significant). An explanation for this null finding could be that individuals who have experienced antisemitism indirectly, either via stories related by friends and family or via media reports, are similarly protective to those who have been personally harassed since hate crime research has highlighted that attacks on members of a minority group are intended to send ‘messages’ to the other group members and are meant to intimidate them (Farrell and Lockwood 2023).

We will now turn to the dimension of Jewish identity. Based on the ‘Concealable Stigmatized Identities (CSIs)’ research (Quinn and Earnshaw 2011) we suspected that individuals with a strong Jewish identity will consider hiding this identity because they anticipate being stigmatized. Indeed we see a significant ($p \leq 0.1$) effect on the probability of telling others about one’s Jewishness. The probability increases by 8% on average per unit on the identity scale. If Holocaust remembrance is a big part of that identity (applies to 42.9%; $n = 294$), the respondents decided for an intervening strategy. The increase in the probability of becoming politically involved increases by 6% on average per unit on the Holocaust remembrance scale. Religious individuals, on the other hand, are less likely to become politically involved. This probability decreases by 4% on average per scale unit. An intuitive interpretation of this finding could be that highly religious Jews will most likely prefer in-group interaction and avoid political discussions with the majority society.

Finally, we also found significant effects of the social context. Note that the context was measured via respondents’ subjective perceptions, not objective measures. We asked the respondents how they perceived the area they live in regarding urbanity, political climate, and religious composition (see Table 1 for the question wording). Those characteristics, of course, are not mutually exclusive, and in the multiple regression model the correlation between them is controlled for (there is no multicollinearity): Jews residing in comparatively right-leaning cities or counties were more inclined to leave their current home and relocate (an increase in probability by 5%). Especially respondents living in areas with a comparatively high proportion of religiously active Muslims intended to avoid revealing their Jewish identity in the future (an increase in probability by 10% and 12%). In contrast, those living in urban areas are more likely to opt for an intervening reaction to antisemitism.

In all of these findings, differences in the socio-demographic characteristics we added to the regression model are controlled for: Young respondents in particular plan on hiding their Jewishness by not telling others. This tendency may be a sign that the young generation especially suffers from the *spoiling* of everyday situations in the sense that was previously discussed. The same applies to highly educated individuals who are more likely to hide their identity. Income exerts a negative effect on physical displacement reactions, which most likely indicates that individuals in the high-income strata live in safer areas: an additional €1,000 weighted monthly household income decreases the probability of relocation by an impressive 130% ($AME = -0.0013$). The respondents’ gender had no significant effect.

Discussion and conclusion

This study's major question was how Jews in Germany cope with the 'weight of German history' and antisemitic threats. Two action types emerged from qualitative interviews: defensiveness (not revealing identity or moving) and intervention (addressing Holocaust and antisemitism manifestations). Survey data indicate that personal antisemitic harassment experiences are less explanatory for response type differences than residence area characteristics and Jewish identity salience, particularly Holocaust remembrance, which is positively linked to political involvement intentions.

Our mixed-method study infers that no typical Jewish way of addressing antisemitism exists. Instead, the perceptions, interpretations, and coping strategies range from withdrawal and displacement to political antisemitism combat. Perceiving Jews as mere victims fails to acknowledge active and confident strategies for managing Jewish identity against antisemitism.

These insights support existing research and exceed previous studies by focusing on coping with antisemitism. Cohen (2010) demonstrated Jewish identity strength as a key antisemitism experience factor. This study further elaborates that Jewish identity influences antisemitism responses. The area of residence is relevant not only for antisemitism experiences (Kremelberg and Dashefsky 2016) but also for antisemitism response strategies. The qualitative study demonstrates that not only immediate antisemitism experience is relevant but also everyday struggles with German historical and social contexts.

Using a mixed-methods study, we illuminate both German Jews' narratives and interpretations and quantitatively estimate group heterogeneity. This approach addresses methodological shortcomings by adding detail to numbers and painting a broader picture with a heterogeneous sample while reconstructing narrative structures about German history's impact. However, mixed-methods studies have challenges like linking narrative interviews and survey responses. Our exploratory sequential design (Creswell 2014) first analyzes qualitative material, then constructs a typology for the quantitative survey. This design is common in research fields lacking comprehensive study. However, the systematization of the coping behavior covariates was also derived from hate crime and antisemitism research, not exclusively qualitative findings.

The qualitative study is limited to elaborating different Jewish experience and understanding aspects, not quantifying statement frequencies about the National Socialist past. The contrast-rich sample indicates central interpretation varieties could be reconstructed, with typological representativeness claimed not implying quantifiable representativeness.

The quantitative study's limitations include non-representative data and lack of causal relationship testing. Although to be interpreted with caution our findings remain robust for two reasons: the sample is heterogeneous and age and education bias is controlled for. Random selection surveys of small subgroup populations (Jews make up 0.3% of Germany's population) are nearly impossible without significant funding. Statistical weighting was not an option due to lack of Jewish population census data. So only replication studies can validate our findings. Causality, on the other hand, was addressed through dependent variable wording, referring to future actions, and independent variables addressing current states or past experiences. Of course, respondents could project their behavioral intentions (e.g. leaving the country in the near future) on past experiences, and we emphasize that the relationship between personal beliefs, preferences,

experiences and behavioral intentions are often much more dynamic than a single study (even a longitudinal one) can detect. ‘Dependent’ variables can become ‘independent’ variables in the future, one’s identity and preference for a certain area of residence can be changed by past behavioral decisions. The only solution to map this dynamic is, again, more research, preferably longitudinal or experimental.

This being said, we believe our study stands out for its mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative narratives with quantitative data, enriching understanding and highlighting Jewish community resilience and agency against adversity. No singular way to confront antisemitism exists; instead, a spectrum of actions reflects Jewish identity and experience complexity.

In light of the recent Hamas terror attacks and rising antisemitic incidents across Europe and North America, this research gains significance. These events remind us of the urgent need for focused antisemitism research, crucial for developing countermeasures and fostering resilience and solidarity within Jewish communities. Addressing contemporary challenges is imperative for safeguarding the future and promoting a more inclusive society.

Notes

1. The annual numbers of antisemitic incidents are based on reports from the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, which include officially logged ‘politically-motivated crimes’ recorded by the police. These reports rely on ‘crime incident reporting data’, noting that not all incidents are reported. The numbers must be compared across years and other hate crime types. For instance, the police registered 5,164 ‘antisemitic’ cases, 1,464 ‘Islamophobic’ cases, 1,499 related to sexual orientation, and 15,087 ‘xenophobic’ cases. These numbers should be interpreted cautiously due to the subjective categorization by police.
2. Original German wording of the items: ‘Wir sollten uns lieber gegenwärtigen Problemen widmen als Ereignissen, die mehr als 70 Jahre vergangen sind’. and ‘Reparationsforderungen an Deutschland nutzen oft garnicht den Opfern, sondern einer Holocaust-Industrie von findigen Anwälten’.
3. Additional socio-demographic information is available in the Appendix.
4. The complete guideline can be found in the Appendix.
5. This does not necessarily have to be an (intended) devaluation of Jews per se. Stereotypical idealization in the form of philosemitism can also contribute to stigmatization. Regarding the remembrance of the Nazi atrocities in German media, see for example Dekel (2022).
6. 89.5% (n = 331) of the respondents completed the survey in German, 5.9% (n = 22) in Russian, and 4.6% (n = 17) in English. A translation into Hebrew was not undertaken due to the cost involved and the consideration that the overwhelming majority of Israeli migrants, who would primarily be addressed through a Hebrew version of the questionnaire, possess sufficient English proficiency.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung [Grant Number 01UG2034].

References

- Bateson, R. 2012. "Crime Victimization and Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 570–87. doi:10.1017/S0003055412000299.
- Beyer, H., and U. Liebe. 2020. "Diskriminierungserfahrungen und Bedrohungswahrnehmungen von in Deutschland lebenden Juden." *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 4 (1): 127–48. doi:10.1007/s41682-020-00056-8.
- Bundeskriminalamt. 2024. Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2023 Politisch motivierte Kriminalität. Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat.
- Chernivsky, M., and F. Lorenz. 2020. *Antisemitismus im Kontext Schule – Deutungen und Umgangsweisen von Lehrer*innen an Berliner Schulen*. Berlin: Kompetenzzentrum für Prävention und Empowerment.
- Cohen, J. E. 2010. "Perceptions of Anti-Semitism among American Jews, 2000–05, A Survey Analysis." *Political Psychology* 31 (1): 85–107. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00746.x.
- Creswell, J. W. 2014. *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Decker, O., J. Kiess, A. Heller, and E. Brähler. 2022. *Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten: neue Herausforderungen - alte Reaktionen?* Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2022. Psychosozial-Verlag.
- Dekel, I. 2022. "Philosemitism in Contemporary German Media." *Media, Culture & Society* 44 (4): 746–763. doi:10.1177/01634437211060193.
- DellaPergola, S. 2019. "Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism in the European Union: A New Structural Look." 2018 Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism - ACTA 40(2).
- DellaPergola, S. 2021. "World Jewish Population, 2021." In *The American Jewish Year Book*, edited by A. Dashefsky and I. M. Sheskin, 313–412. Cham: Springer.
- Eisemann, J. 2021. "Antisemitismuserfahrungen bei Nachkommen von Überlebenden der Shoah - Tiefenhermeneutische Beleuchtungen eines blinden Flecks der Forschung." In *Gesellschaft unter Spannung. Verhandlungen des 40. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie 2020*, edited by B. Blätzel-Mink, 1–10.
- Farrell, A., and S. Lockwood. 2023. "Addressing Hate Crime in the 21st Century: Trends, Threats, and Opportunities for Intervention." *Annual Review of Criminology* 6 (1): 107–30. doi:10.1146/annurev-criminol-030920-091908.
- Freedman, R., and D. Hirsh. 2024. *Responses to 7 October: Antisemitic Discourse*. New York: Routledge.
- Goffman, E. 1986. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Hagerlid, M. 2021. "Swedish Women's Experiences of Misogynistic Hate Crimes: The Impact of Victimization on Fear of Crime." *Feminist Criminology* 16 (4): 504–25. doi:10.1177/1557085120957731.
- Jackson, J., and I. Gouseti. 2016. "Threatened by Violence: Affective and Cognitive Reactions to Violent Victimization." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31 (18): 2987–3016. doi:10.1177/0886260515584336.
- Kremelberg, D., and A. Dashefsky. 2016. "Targets of Out-Group Hostility in the Contemporary United States: Individual- and Community-Level Factors Associated with the Experience of Anti-Semitism Among American Jews." *Contemporary Jewry* 36:243–264. doi:10.1007/s12397-016-9173-6.
- Leets, L. 2002. "Experiencing Hate Speech: Perceptions and Responses to Anti-Semitism and Antigay Speech." *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (2): 341–361. doi:10.1111/1540-4560.00264.
- Mediendienst Integration. 2024. Judentum in Deutschland. Retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://mediendienst-integration.de/gruppen/judentum.html>.
- Moré, A. 2013. "Die unbewusste Weitergabe von Traumata und Schuldverstrickungen an nachfolgende Generationen." *Journal für Psychologie* 21 (2): 1–34.
- Ottmüller, U. 2011. "Transgenerationale und Erinnerungspolitische Nachwirkungen der NS-Massenmorde." *Paragrana* 20 (1): 164–175. doi:10.1524/para.2011.0014.

- Quinn, Diane M., and Valerie A. Earnshaw. 2011. "Understanding Concealable Stigmatized Identities: The Role of Identity in Psychological, Physical, and Behavioral Outcomes." *Social Issues and Policy Review* 5 (1): 160–90. doi:10.1111/j.1751-2409.2011.01029.x.
- Rebhun, U. 2014. "Correlates of Experiences and Perceptions of Anti-Semitism Among Jews in the United States." *Social Science Research* 47:44–60. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.03.007.
- Reimer-Gordinskaya, K., and S. Tzschiesche. 2020. Antisemitismus Heterogenität Allianzen: Jüdische Perspektiven auf Herausforderungen der Berliner Zivilgesellschaft.
- RIAS - Recherche- und Informationsstellen Antisemitismus. 2020. Jüdische Perspektiven auf Antisemitismus in Sachsen-Anhalt und den Terroranschlag in Halle. Germany: RIAS.
- RIAS - Recherche- und Informationsstellen Antisemitismus. 2023. Jüdische Perspektiven auf Antisemitismus in Deutschland 2017–2020. Germany: RIAS.
- Scheitle, Christopher, Bianca Mabute-Louie, Jauhara Ferguson, Emily Hawkins, and Elaine Howard Ecklund. 2023. "„Fear of Religious Hate Crime Victimization and the Residual Effects of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia“." *Social Forces* 101 (4): 2059–86. doi:10.1093/sf/soac100.
- Statista. 2023. Number of Anti-Semitic Offences Recorded by the Police in Germany 2001–2022. Accessed July 16, 2024 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/961796/anti-semitic-offences-recorded-by-the-police-in-germany/>.
- Statista. 2024. Anzahl der Juden in Deutschland seit dem Jahr 2003. Accessed July 16, 2024 from <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1232/umfrage/anzahl-der-juden-in-deutschland-seit-dem-jahr-2003/>.
- Stein, A. 2009. "As Far as They Knew I Came from France": Stigma, Passing, and Not Speaking About the Holocaust." *Symbolic Interaction* 32 (1): 44–60. doi:10.1525/si.2009.32.1.44.
- Strauss, A. L. 2004. "Analysis Through Microscopic Examination." *Sozialer Sinn* 2:169–176.
- Turban, J. L., A. N. Almazan, S. L. Reisner, and A. S. Keuroghlian. 2023. "The Importance of Non-Probability Samples in Minority Health Research: Lessons Learned from Studies of Transgender and Gender Diverse Mental Health." *Transgender Health* 8 (4): 302–306. <http://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2021.0132>.
- Wetzel, Juliane. 2017. "Soft Denial in Different Political and Social Areas on the Web." In *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, edited by A. McElligott, and J. Herf, 305–31. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Wright, G., S. Volodarsky, S. Hecht, and L. Saxe. 2021. "Trends in Jewish Young Adult Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism in America from 2017 to 2019." *Contemporary Jewry* 41 (2): 461–481. doi:10.1007/s12397-021-09354-6.
- Zick, A., A. Hövermann, S. Jensen, J. Bernstein, and N. Perl. 2017. *Ein Studienbericht für den Expertenrat Antisemitismus*. Bielefeld: University Bielefeld, Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence.
- ZWST. 2024. Mitgliederstatistik 2023 Der Jüdischen Gemeinden und Landesverbände in Deutschland. Frankfurt/M.: Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (ZWST)

Appendix

Appendix 1: Guideline for conducting the problem-centered interviews.

Narrative beginning

- What does being Jewish mean to you personally?
- And what does being Jewish in Germany mean to you?

Experiences in everyday life

- When do you encounter antisemitism most often in your everyday life?
 - o Have you recently experienced antisemitism in your everyday life? If so, would you tell me about it?
 - o What do you think was the (ideological) background there?
 - o Are there other incidents that have particularly remained in your memory?
 - o Can you remember when antisemitism first became relevant in your life?
 - o Which events have particularly affected you?
 - o Are there certain places where you experience antisemitism more frequently?
 - o In your view, are there groups that are more likely to be inclined towards antisemitism than others?
 - o What kind of person was that?
 - o Do you have any experience of antisemitism from Muslims?
 - o If so, do you see any differences here to other experiences you have had with antisemitism?
 - o Has your everyday life changed in terms of antisemitism in recent years?
 - o Do you think that your gender, origin or profession has an influence on your experience of antisemitism?

Experience and communication with peer group

- Do your friends, acquaintances and family have similar experiences with antisemitism?
 - o Do you talk to family, friends or acquaintances about your experiences with antisemitism? If so, what do they often talk about?
 - o Have you heard friends, family or acquaintances talking about antisemitism at school? What was said?

Motives of the perpetrators

- What kind of people do you think the perpetrators are?
 - o How much does it matter to you why the perpetrators act the way they do?
 - o Do you think that Muslim perpetrators have special motives?
 - o What do friends, family and acquaintances think about this?

Understanding antisemitism in general

- What do you consider to be antisemitism?
 - o And what do you consider to be Islamic antisemitism?
 - o Have you ever encountered 'Israel-related antisemitism', what do you think about it?
 - o In your opinion, has antisemitism changed in recent years?
 - o Do you think that your friends, acquaintances or family have a similar understanding of antisemitism?
 - o Do you see any similarities and/or differences between antisemitism and racism?

How society deals with antisemitism

- How do you think German society currently deals with antisemitism?
 - o Which events in Germany have particularly stayed in your memory? How did you think these events were handled?
 - o Has society's response to antisemitism changed for you in recent years?
 - o How do you perceive the media coverage of antisemitism in Germany?
 - o Do you think that antisemitism is played down in Germany?
 - o Do you think that other groups in Germany receive more attention than Jews?
 - o Do you think that the existing discrimination against Muslims has a similar quality?
 - o In your opinion, what is the connection between the conflict in the Middle East and antisemitism?

Relationship with Muslims

- How would you describe the relationship between Jews and Muslims in Germany?
 - What are your personal experiences?
 - What positive experiences have remained in your memory in particular?

- Have you ever come into contact with Islamic organizations?
- If yes, what experiences have you had here?
- (How do you view the contact?)
- Does the experience of being in contact with individual Muslims differ here?

Intentions to act

- Could you tell us how you deal with antisemitism in your everyday life?
- Are there things that you specifically avoid in your everyday life?
- Are there things you have to do specifically because of antisemitism?
- How do friends, acquaintances and your family deal with antisemitism?
- Is there a difference to your situation?
- If so, what is it?
- Are you thinking about relocating, changing schools or even emigrating?
- What events or developments would have to occur for this to happen?
- What do you do to make yourself feel better after an antisemitic experience?

Expectations towards authorities and society

- What do you expect in Germany when it comes to dealing with antisemitism?
- What do you expect from the authorities?
- What do you expect from society?
- What do you expect from the German media?
- What do you expect from science?
- To what extent do you trust German authorities in dealing with antisemitism?
- Have you ever experienced antisemitism from the German authorities?
- What do you think politicians should do about antisemitism?
- What do you think about the debates on 'imported antisemitism'?
- Who best represents the interests of the Jews?
- What other political issues are important to you?
- If you could decide in person, what should be done to combat antisemitism?

Ending

- What do you think non-Jewish people find difficult to understand about antisemitism?
 - What do you think about the future?
 - Many topics have already been addressed by us: What other things are important to you to address when it comes to antisemitism?- Do you want to give any closing remarks?
-

Appendix 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees.

	Gender	Age	Educational level	Migration experience	Place of residence	Place of residence	Paranthood	Marital status
Interview 1	Female	66-75	Degree from a university	Poland	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 2	Female	56-65	Degree from a university	Czechoslovakia	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 3	Male	18-25	A-levels	Ukraine	Large city	Berlin	No	Not married
Interview 4	Male	26-35	Degree from a university	Israel	Large city	Berlin	Yes	Not married
Interview 5	Female	26-35	Degree from a university	-	Large city	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 6	Male	18-25	A-levels	Israel	Large city	Berlin	No	Not married
Interview 7	Male	18-25	Degree from a university	-	Large city	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 8	Female	18-25	A-levels	Ukraine	Large city	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 9	Female	18-25	A-levels	Israel	City	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 10	Male	56-65	Secondary school certificate	USSR	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Divorced
Interview 11	Female	Over 75	Degree from a university	UK	City	former West Germany	No	Married
Interview 12	Non-binary	18-25	Secondary school certificate	Poland	Small city	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 13	Female	46-55	Degree from a university	Russia	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 14	Female	56-65	Degree from a university	Ukraine	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 15	Male	36-45	Degree from a university	-	City	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 16	Male	66-75	Degree from a university	-	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Married
Interview 17	Male	46-55	Secondary school certificate	-	City	former East Germany	Yes	Divorced
Interview 18	Male	26-35	A-levels	-	City	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 19	Male	56-75	Degree from a university	-	Large city	former West Germany	Yes	Not married
Interview 20	Female	Over 75	Degree from a university	-	Large city	former West Germany	No	Not married
Interview 21	Female	18-25	No degree	-	Large city	former East Germany	No	Not married