Antisemitism has dramatically increased across the world.

Commensurately, antisemitism has also risen across the games industry. Many Jewish game developers have been unable to speak up, and if they do, they are met with continued antisemitism. This is especially true online where misinformation is shared and corrections are met with resistance without considering the effect this has on Jews in the games industry. In this roundtable, we shared our experiences of antisemitism from our industry and came up with solutions to combat it.

Who Are The Jews?
The Jewish people are an ethnic group descended from the ancient Israelites. Jews all over the world share a common nation of origin, common sets of ancestry, traditions, language, history, society, religion, and social treatment. Jews as an ethnic group can be further defined in self-identifying cultural groups such as Ashkenazi, Beta Israel, Bene Israel, Mizrahi, Sephardic, and more due to 2,800 years of diaspora (in Hebrew, we use גָּלוּת gālūṯ, which is more closely defined in English as “exile”) in which there was some mixing with local populations. Despite assimilation, Jews overall still maintain traditions and language that is unique to the Jewish people.
“The dichotomy between religion and culture doesn’t really exist. Every religious attribute is filled with culture; every cultural act filled with religiosity. Synagogues themselves are great centers of Jewish culture. After all, what is life really about? Food, relationships, enrichment... So is Jewish life. So many of our traditions inherently contain aspects of culture. Look at the Passover Seder—it’s essentially great theater. Jewish education and religiosity bereft of culture is not as interesting.”

– Gary Tobin, founder of the Institute of Jewish & Community Research (IJCR)

**Religion:** Some Jews practice a shared [ethnic religion](#) called Judaism. Not all Jews practice Judaism, but anyone who practices Judaism will need to complete a rigorous conversion process to be adopted into the Jewish community and considered a Jew by law. Globally, there are different denominations of Judaism stemming from rabbinic and non-rabbinic movements.

Jewish culture and Judaism are closely intertwined, but it is possible to participate in Jewish culture in a secular way.

**Where Are The Jews?**
As of 2023, there are approximately [16,783,100 Jewish people](#) around the world.

The worldwide Jewish population in just 2023 is barely overtaking the population numbers pre-Holocaust (שואה) (1931 - 1945).
As of 2023, around half of the population of Israel and the West Bank combined is Jewish, however the majority of that population lives in Israel proper with just over half a million Israeli civilians (overwhelmingly Jewish) live in the West Bank.

As of 2023, almost half of the world’s Jewish population resides in the United States, while nearly an equal portion resides in Israel and the West Bank.
The Spelling of Antisemitic vs. anti-Semitic

The term "Semitic" initially referred to languages of Middle Eastern origin when introduced in 1781, devoid of connotations regarding people. German journalist Wilhelm Marr, in 1879, coined “Antisemitismus” to denote hatred towards the Jewish "race," imbuing the term with racial and pseudo-scientific implications.

What Is Antisemitism?

Some countries with the largest employers of video game professionals have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism: Canada, United Kingdom, United States. Other countries with large video game publishing company headquarters that have adopted this definition are France, Israel, Sweden, and South Korea. This definition is mentioned first as it is a common government adopted definition.

The non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism as defined by the IHRA is “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” IHRA Definition includes 11 examples of antisemitism, 7 of which focus on the State of Israel.

The Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism (JDA) created their own definition of antisemitism in response to the IHRA, calling their definition “unclear and widely open” and “there is a widely-felt need for clarity on the limits of legitimate political speech and action concerning Zionism, Israel, and Palestine”. Their definition is “Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish).” Their guide includes examples on Israel and Palestine that are antisemitic and examples that are not.

“While antisemitic incidents most directly and intensely affect the Jewish community, antisemitism threatens all of us. Antisemitic conspiracy theories fuel other forms of hatred, discrimination, and bias—including discrimination against other religious minorities, racism, sexism, and anti-LGBTQI+ hate. Antisemitism seeks to divide Americans from one another, erodes trust in government and nongovernmental institutions, and undermines our democracy.”

- Biden-Harris Administration Releases First-Ever U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism
The Anti-Defamation League has this definition along with their guide of antisemitic tropes: The belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.

Grasping the diverse definitions of antisemitism is essential for addressing discrimination against Jewish communities. While 43 UN member states have adopted the IHRA definition, there are alternative perspectives to consider. Each definition offers unique insights into identifying and combating prejudice against Jews, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches in confronting antisemitic attitudes and behaviors.

“Antisemitism is not merely opposition to a broad group of ‘Semitics’ or an idea called ‘Semitism,’ but is, without question, bigotry that specifically targets Jews.”

- Carly Gammill, director of the StandWithUs Center for Combating Antisemitism
Antisemitism in the Games Industry
This year at the Game Developers Conference, we provided our community with a space to report antisemitism they had experienced in the games industry. The games industry, like most tech and entertainment industries, has become more diverse and inclusive despite our problems in the past. However, the industry is not immune to extremism. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) says “far-left antisemitism nonetheless has a significant and pernicious impact on Jewish communities, stoking an increase in harassment, abuse and threats against Jews. 21% of the perpetrators of antisemitic harassment were described as ‘left-wing’. " Antisemitism is largely ignored in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) education.

One morning of GDC, a conversation was had where an individual in a lead role did not recognize Jews as a marginalized community.
Marginalized groups are “placed in a position of little or no importance, influence, or power.” In contexts where Jews are overlooked as a marginalized group, a distinct form of antisemitism can manifest, portraying Jews as possessing an unspeakable and excessive amount of control and power globally. Jews have historically been excluded from “normal” society, and today are often excluded from “inclusive” spaces, even after the Holocaust. As one example, Jews in the United States were also affected by redlining: properties located in neighborhoods containing Jewish residents were riskier and deeds prohibited Jewish occupancy in gentile suburbs in cities like Baltimore.

During a night-time executive event at GDC, a conversation was had where an individual explained their reason for not liking an expensive building was because of “greedy jews”.
Labeling Jews as “greedy” perpetuates a damaging stereotype rooted in historical antisemitic tropes. This characterization falsely portrays Jews as solely driven by material gain, echoing age-old prejudices that have fueled discrimination, persecution, and economic marginalization throughout history.

An individual, presumably a follower of Jesus, told their Jewish coworker “You killed my savior.”
This falls under the trope of deicide used to justify violence against the Jewish people for 2,000 years. Additionally, historians and Christian leaders agreed that this is an unsupported claim.
Multiple Jewish game developers cited October 7th as a catalyst for hiding their ethnicity in the workplace due to the derision of their coworkers. Unintentional and indirect communications against Jews that demean and/or insult Jewish identity and heritage is an antisemitic microaggression.

Jewish-Israeli game developers expressed fear at the idea of moving out of Israel for academic or career opportunities due to global antisemitism and antisemitism in the industry. Recorded incidents of antisemitism have risen across the globe.

- ADL press release from January 1, 2024: In the three months since the Oct. 7 massacre in Israel, U.S. antisemitic incidents have skyrocketed, reaching a total of 3,291* incidents between Oct. 7 and Jan. 7, more than they recorded in 2021 and were on track to be ahead of 2023.
- Polls in Europe show 10% of Europeans have unfavorable views of Jews, with that number rising to 15% in Poland and 19% (one in five people) in Hungary. The survey’s go on to show increased numbers of people believing certain antisemitic tropes about Jews apart from the unfavorable view.
- In Asia, 22% of adults said “mostly true” when surveyed on antisemitic stereotypes; 540 million people in this region harbor antisemitic attitudes.

A AAA-studio’s team had team events for different history months, but refused to do an event for Jewish American Heritage Month (sometimes referred to as Jewish History Monday) because “that’s religious,” despite holding events for the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter. Jewish American Heritage Month celebrates the ethnic aspects of Jewish identity and history, as well as religious Judaism by recognizing “more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture.”

An individual told their Jewish-Israeli coworker they should remove their experience with the Israeli Defense Force from their LinkedIn profile due to the attitudes of others. Israel has conscription laws for both male and female Jewish citizens of Israel, and all discharged citizens remain eligible to be called up for reserve duty until the age of 40 on average. There are very few exceptions. Again, Jewish Israeli IDF service is non-voluntary. Additionally, which branch one serves in may not be a choice.

- If an individual’s prejudice extends beyond disagreement with specific Israeli policies to a general condemnation of Jewish people who are forced to serve and recorded the role on their LinkedIn profile, it would be considered antisemitism.
“Jews cannot fight antisemitism alone. The victim cannot cure the crime. The hated cannot cure the hate. It would be the greatest mistake for Jews to believe that they can fight it alone. The only people who can successfully combat antisemitism are those active in the cultures that harbour it.”

- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture

Combatting Antisemitism
*Notes actions both Jews and allies can take.

When speaking about the conflict and war, past and present, be aware of the different groups that are hurting and speak with empathy.*

Familiarize yourself with your company’s policy on bullying and harassment. Report antisemitic comments and incidents to HR.*

In professional spaces, be aware of the different backgrounds of others.*

Confront instigators with kindness and curiosity. Assume ignorance before assuming maliciousness. Ask questions with a genuine interest in hearing the answer.*

Normalizing and representing Jewishness:
- Share your participation and experience in Jewish culture.
- Speak openly about your experiences when in a safe environment.

When appropriate, Jews should record “Jewish” on surveys concerning ethnicity.
- There is an obvious historical reason that this is unpopular.

The room was split on how to address antisemitic attitudes stemming from an abhorrence of Israeli policy when it came to including Israeli military experience on LinkedIn or a resume.
- Some said to remove it if you’re looking for work due to the attitudes of others and needing to “survive” the system we live in.
- Some said to keep it because it will assist in keeping you from being hired at an antisemitic workplace.
The leadership of the IGDA Jewish Game Developers SIG promises to continue our work bringing awareness to the ongoing issue of antisemitism and focus on the power of games as tools for healing and empathy around conflict.

- On February 8th, we hosted *Games for Healing and Empathy Around Conflict* with Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib and Luc Bernard.
- On March 27th, we hosted *Antisemitism in Gaming* with experts on antisemitism.

We encourage our community and our allies to speak out against antisemitism through educating and sharing resources. Stay up to date on current events and read updates about past events when investigations are held.

**Further Reading from Game Developers on Antisemitism in the Games Industry**
- [GDC 2024: Dealing with Antisemitism in the Games Industry by Sam Glassenberg](#)
- [Confronting Antisemitism in the Gaming Industry by Amiad Fredman, MD](#)

**Other Sources for Education on Antisemitism**
- [American Jewish Committee](#) on Antisemitism
- [Online Antisemitism Research Reports by Cyberwell](#) and [Report Antisemitic Content to Cyberwell](#)
- [Shine A Light](#) On Antisemitism In Gaming
- [Pride and Prejudice: Educational Resources on Anti-Semitism by The Jewish Education Project](#)
- [Resources to Address and Challenge Antisemitism from the ADL](#)
- [Resources for Countering Antisemitism by Stroum Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Washington](#)
- [Combating Antisemitism by the European Commision](#)
- [Resources on Antisemitism by World Jewish Congress](#)