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# Is It Really That Bad? Antisemitic Experiences Among Jewish Mental Health Professionals

Micah Brosbe, Caroline Kaufman, & Elizabeth Getzoff Testa

Special thanks to Karen Dimentstein, Danielle Guttman-Lapin, & Tali Rasooli

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**Dr. Micah  
Brosbe**



**Dr. Caroline  
Kaufman**



**Dr. Elizabeth  
Getzoff Testa**



# How We Came to Work Together

- 2021:
  - The Society of Pediatric Psychology formed a Jewish Affinity Group
- Early 2023:
  - Asked to contribute to *Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology's* special issue on religion and spirituality
  - Opportunity to educate the field





# Researchers' Perspective

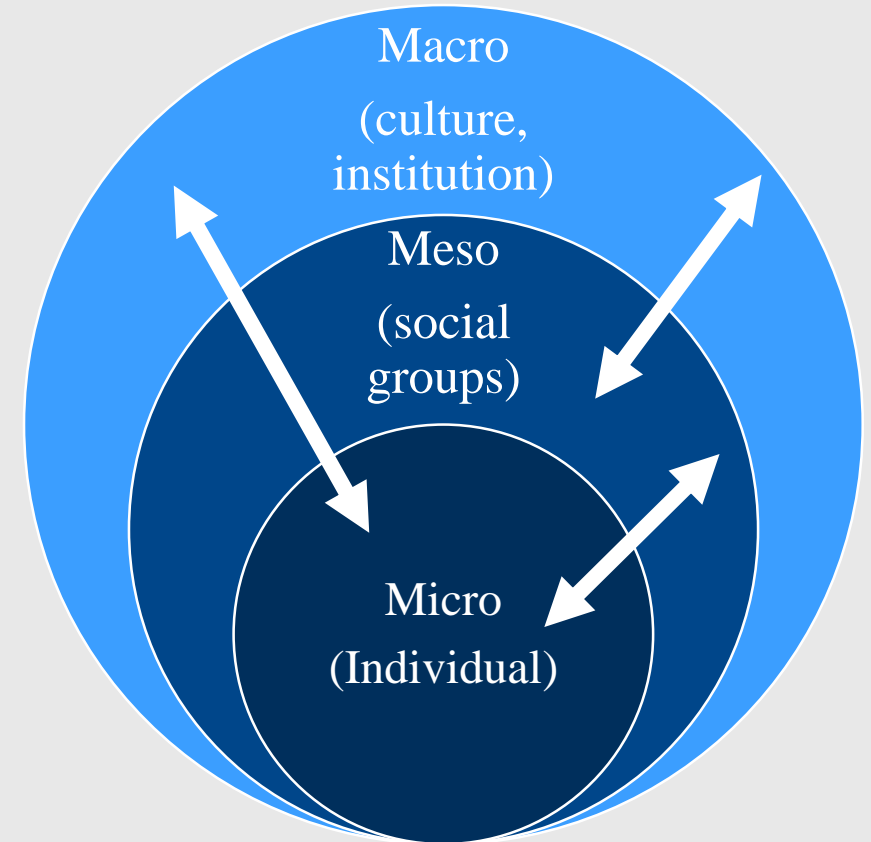
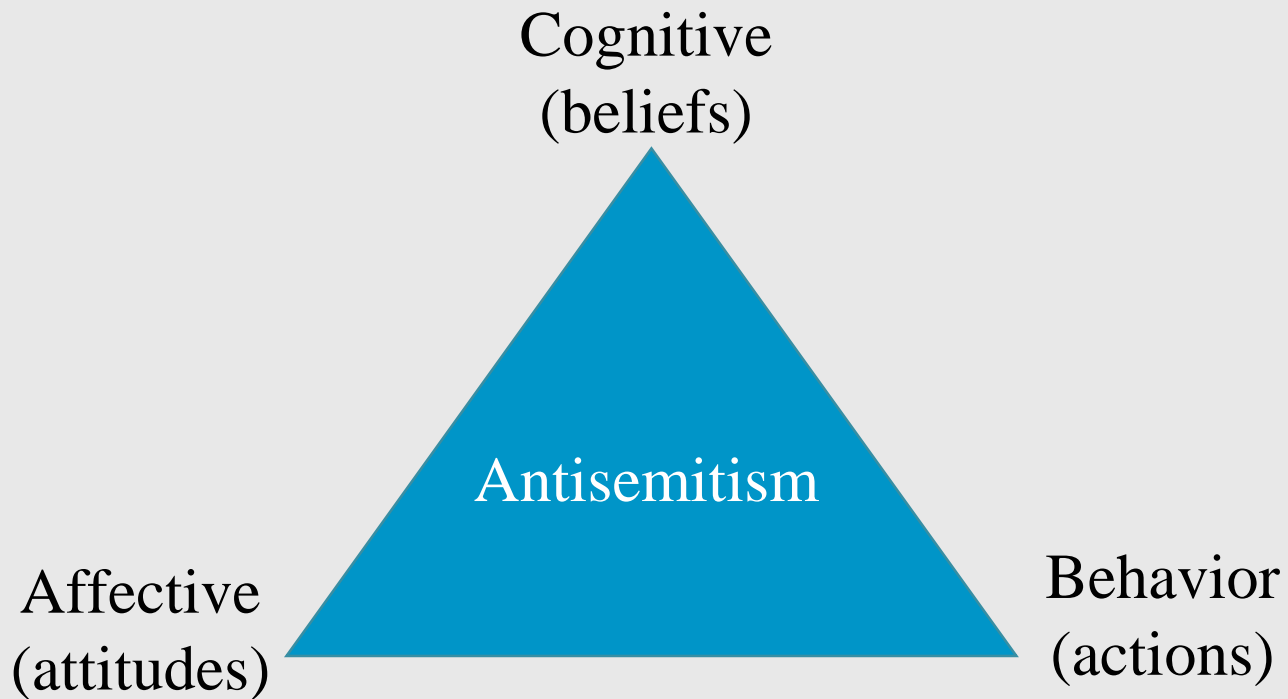
“Antisemitism works by increasingly restricting spaces where Jews can feel welcome and comfortable, until there are none left”

-Einat Wilf

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# Definition(s) of Antisemitism

“...hostile beliefs toward Jews as a collective manifested in individuals as attitudes, in culture as myth, ideology, folklore and imagery, and in actions—social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against Jews, and collective or state violence—which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews” (Fein, 1987, p. 3).



# Antisemitism within the Mental Health Profession

## Antisemitism in the Field of Mental Health



by Yehudis Litvak June 15, 2025 12 min read

Jewish mental health professionals are facing blacklists, harassment and exclusion.

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## The Abandonment of Jewish Therapists: Antisemitism in the Mental Health Field

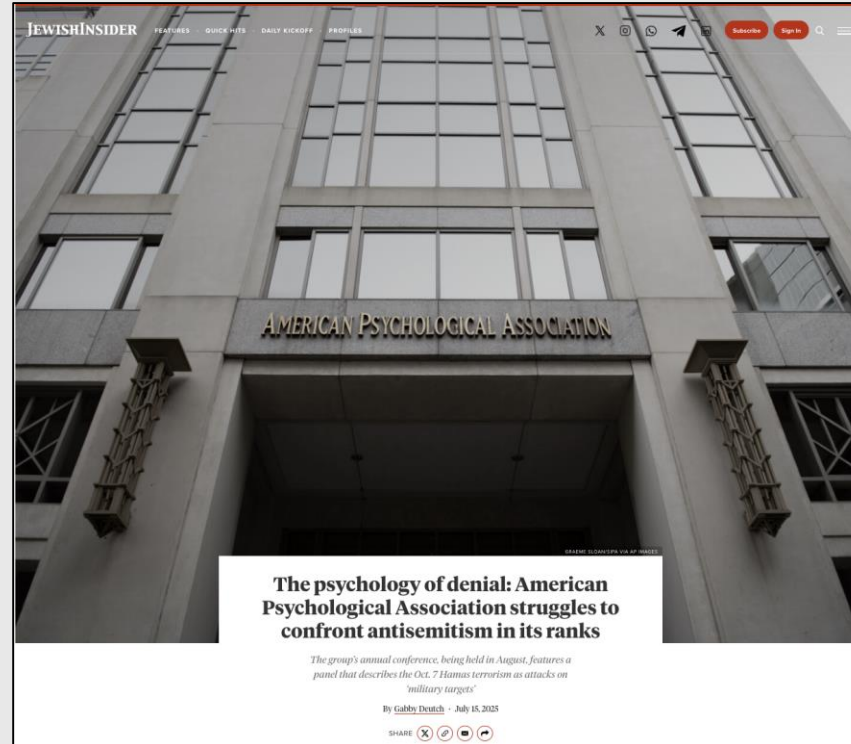
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Israeli flag and memorial stickers for hostages and those killed on October 7, 2023, at the Nova Festival site in Re'im, Israel. (Photo: Daniel Balva)



### APA PsycArticles: Journal Article

## The American Psychological Association and antisemitism: Toward equity, diversity, and inclusion.

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Walker, L. E. A., Cole, E., Friedman, S. L., Rom-Rymer, B., Steinberg, A., & Warshaw, S. (2025). The American Psychological Association and antisemitism: Toward equity, diversity, and inclusion. *American Psychologist, 80*(1), 106–119. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001369>

Antisemitism [Add Topic +](#)

## America's mental health field is overrun with antisemitism. It's dangerous. | Opinion

*If Zionism is being treated as a mental disorder, how can Jews expect fair treatment? Worse still, this antisemitism is being taught to future clinicians, spreading bias even further.*

**Kenneth L. Marcus** Opinion contributor

July 17, 2025, 5:04 a.m. ET



Jerusalem Post / Diaspora / Antisemitism

## Academics pen letter condemning American Psychological Association antisemitism

Signed by thousands of professionals, the letter condemns the American Psychological Association for failing to tackle antisemitism.

# The Current Study

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## Widening the Tent: Jewish Inclusivity, Antisemitism, and Recommendations for Action in Pediatric Psychology

Elizabeth Getzoff Testa<sup>1</sup>, Jamie A. Becker<sup>2</sup>, Micah S. Brosbe<sup>3</sup>, Aria E. Fiat<sup>4</sup>,  
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et al., 2023). For example, an emphasis on community and sense of kinship can provide spaces for Jews to facilitate a sense of unity and mutual belonging. In addition, the tendency to search for meaning and purpose for suffering and make commensurate attributions has been a collective method of coping with adversity.

Many Jewish pediatric psychologists view their work in promoting health equity and reducing suffering for their patients as an expression of these values. *Tzedakah* means justice as it refers to the Jewish value of righteousness and charitable giving as a moral obligation to society's most vulnerable (Kolatch, 2007). Similarly, *tikkun olam*, literally translated as



# The Current Study

Exploratory, cross-sectional study examining antisemitic experiences & professional impact(s) among Jewish mental health professionals in North America

## Research Questions:

- What is the prevalence, nature, and impact of antisemitic experiences of Jewish mental health professionals in a work context?
- Do these experiences vary by personal, professional, and Jewish demographics?
- How does Jewish identity interface with professional identity?

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# Procedure

## Eligibility:

- Self-identify as Jewish
- Mental health professional or trainee

## Recruitment (11/2024-01/2025):

- Advertisement across mental health professional listservs and social media pages
  - Jewish Therapist Collective
  - Association of Jewish Psychologists
  - Society of Pediatric Psychology Jewish Affinity Group
  - Psychologists Against Antisemitism
  - Snowball sampling

# Measures

Construct	Measure
Demographics	Individual items
Jewish identity	American Jewish Identity Scales (religious and cultural subscales) & Additional Survey Questions
Experiences of antisemitism	Individual items (e.g., “Please indicate any experiences with antisemitism in a professional context”)
Experiences of antisemitism	Antisemitism-related stress inventory
Impact(s) of antisemitism	“In what ways, if any, has antisemitism appeared to impact career development or satisfaction?”



# Results



# Personal Demographics

$n = 218$

## Gender

- 75% cisgender woman
- 22% cisgender man
- 1% non-binary
- 1% transgender

## Race/Ethnicity\*

- 67% White/European American
- 67% “ethnically Jewish”
- 1% Black/African American
- 3% Latinx
- 3% other

## Sexual Orientation

- 80% straight
- 9% bisexual
- 5% gay
- 2% other
- 2% pansexual
- 1% lesbian
- 1% asexual

## Political Ideology

- 48% center left
- 20% centrist
- 18% far left/progressive
- 9% center right
- 5% unsure/prefer not to answer
- 0% far right

\*Opportunity to choose multiple categories

# Professional Demographics

Career Stage	Discipline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 75% licensed</li><li>• 10% in training</li><li>• 15% other</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 54% clinical psychology</li><li>• 19% social work</li><li>• 27% other</li></ul>
Setting	Activities*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 57% private practice</li><li>• 15% academic medical center</li><li>• 9% university department</li><li>• 19% other</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 91% clinical care</li><li>• 41% administrative</li><li>• 51% training/supervision</li><li>• 30% teaching</li><li>• 29% research</li></ul>

\*Opportunity to report multiple categories

# Jewish Characteristics

## Lineage

- 95% Jew by birth
- 4% Jew by choice
- 1% other

## Denomination

- 29% Reform
- 21% Conservative
- 15% Orthodox
- 16% secular
- 19% other

## Ethnicity

- 93% Ashkenazi
- 9% Sephardic
- 3% Mizrahi
- 5% Jew by choice

## Connection to Israel

- 77% emotional connection
- 51% has served in IDF or close with service member
- 60% friends living there
- 52% family living there
- 9% Israeli citizens

## Connection to Zionism

- 64% strongly agree
- 19% somewhat agree
- 9% neither agree nor disagree
- 4% somewhat disagree
- 4% strongly disagree

\*Opportunity to choose multiple categories

# Jewish Values & Professional Identity

AGREE TO SOMEWHAT AGREE

**81%**

“My professional values in my field are informed by my Jewish values.”

AGREE TO SOMEWHAT AGREE

**67%**

“My Jewish values/identity are a part of what drew me to my field.”

AGREE TO SOMEWHAT AGREE

**70%**

“My knowledge of, background in, and experience with my field enhance the meaning I find in Jewish life.”

AGREE TO SOMEWHAT AGREE

**64%**

“My professional identity is an extension of my Jewish identity.”

DISAGREE TO SOMEWHAT DISAGREE

**89%**

“Judaism and Jewishness do NOT have much positive to offer my field.”

AGREE TO SOMEWHAT AGREE

**46%**

“I view my Judaism/Jewishness as separate from my career.”

# Associated Variables

## **Variables NOT associated:**

- (Most) personal demographics
- Professional demographics
- Jewish ethnicity
- Reported experiences with antisemitic comments (weak)

## **Variables YES associated:**

- Political affiliation
- Jewish demographics
- Antisemitism related distress
- Career impacts
- Jewish cultural and religious identity

# Theme 1: Ethics, Justice, Tikkun Olam

“My Jewish values are directly related to tikkun olam, which is a large part of my professional identity. I see my professional work as a key component to my own efforts to repair the world, which is an extension of my Jewish values.”

“The value of the individual demonstrates a Jewish and professional value.”

“I believe the values of Tikkun Olam and the idea that humans were created in God’s image can inform my commitment to honoring the dignity of each person I work with.”

“I believe the core value of respect and dignity for other people is the foundation of all fields that involve providing care to those struggling with mental health and mental illness.”

# Theme 2: Jewish Contributions

“Many of the foundational methods of clinical care have been created by Jewish people, so to say they are separate or influenced by something other than Jewishness would be a disservice to not only the creators of therapeutic methodologies but to the implementation and care that is provided.”

# Theme 3: Scholarship, Education, Critical Thinking

“A Jewish value of open and respectful argument or discussion is one which likely informs my professional conversations as we grapple with complex cases.”

“Therapy is rooted in questioning and reframing, looking for different understanding of things.”

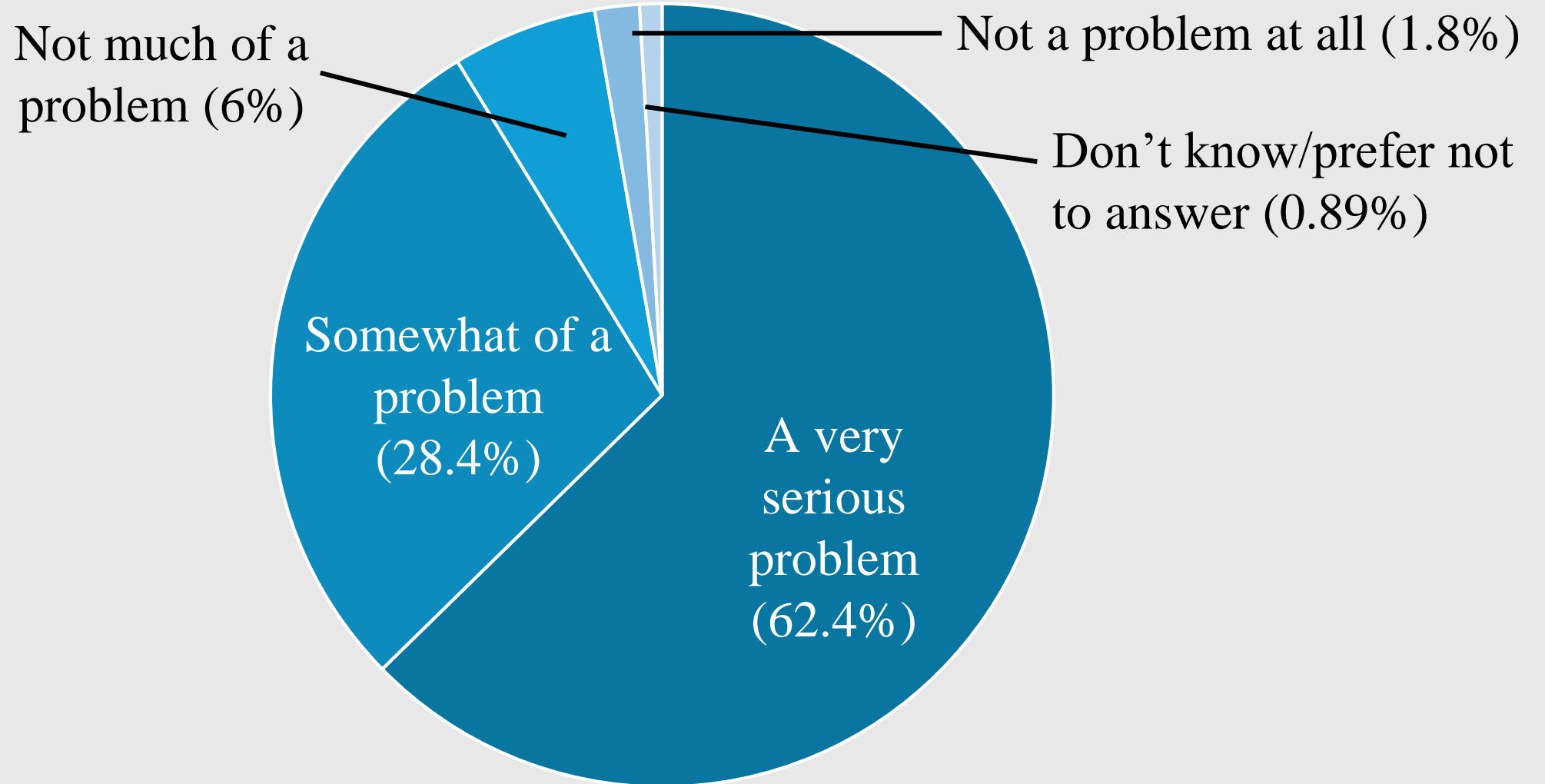
# Theme 4: Trauma and Meaning Through Suffering

“My mother was a Holocaust survivor. My mission in life is to reduce human suffering.”

“I have come to see my Jewishness as a force that challenges me to bear witness and to sit with my patients in their suffering; I think it is my Jewishness that compels me to not look away.”

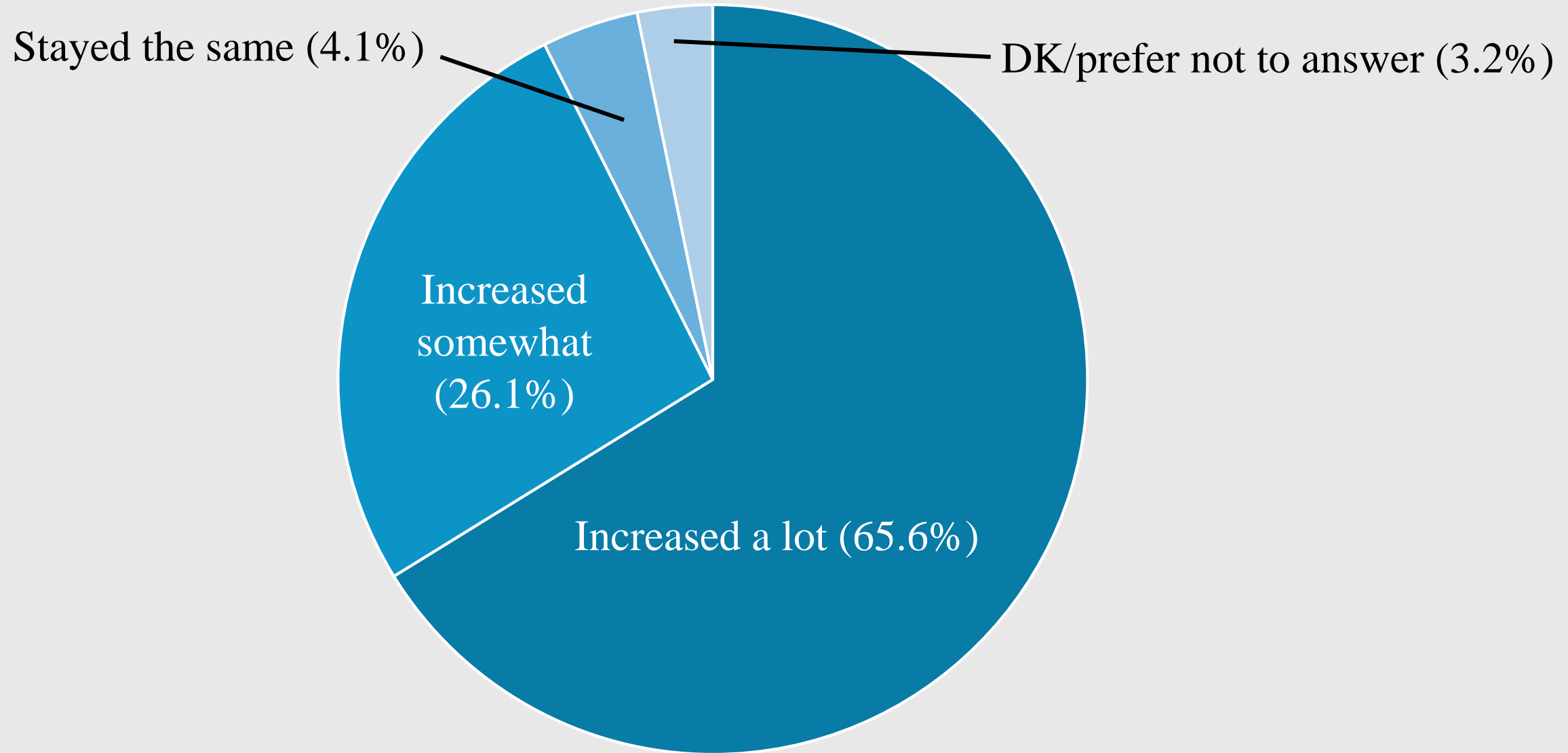
# Perceptions of Antisemitism

How much of a problem, if at all, is antisemitism in your field today?



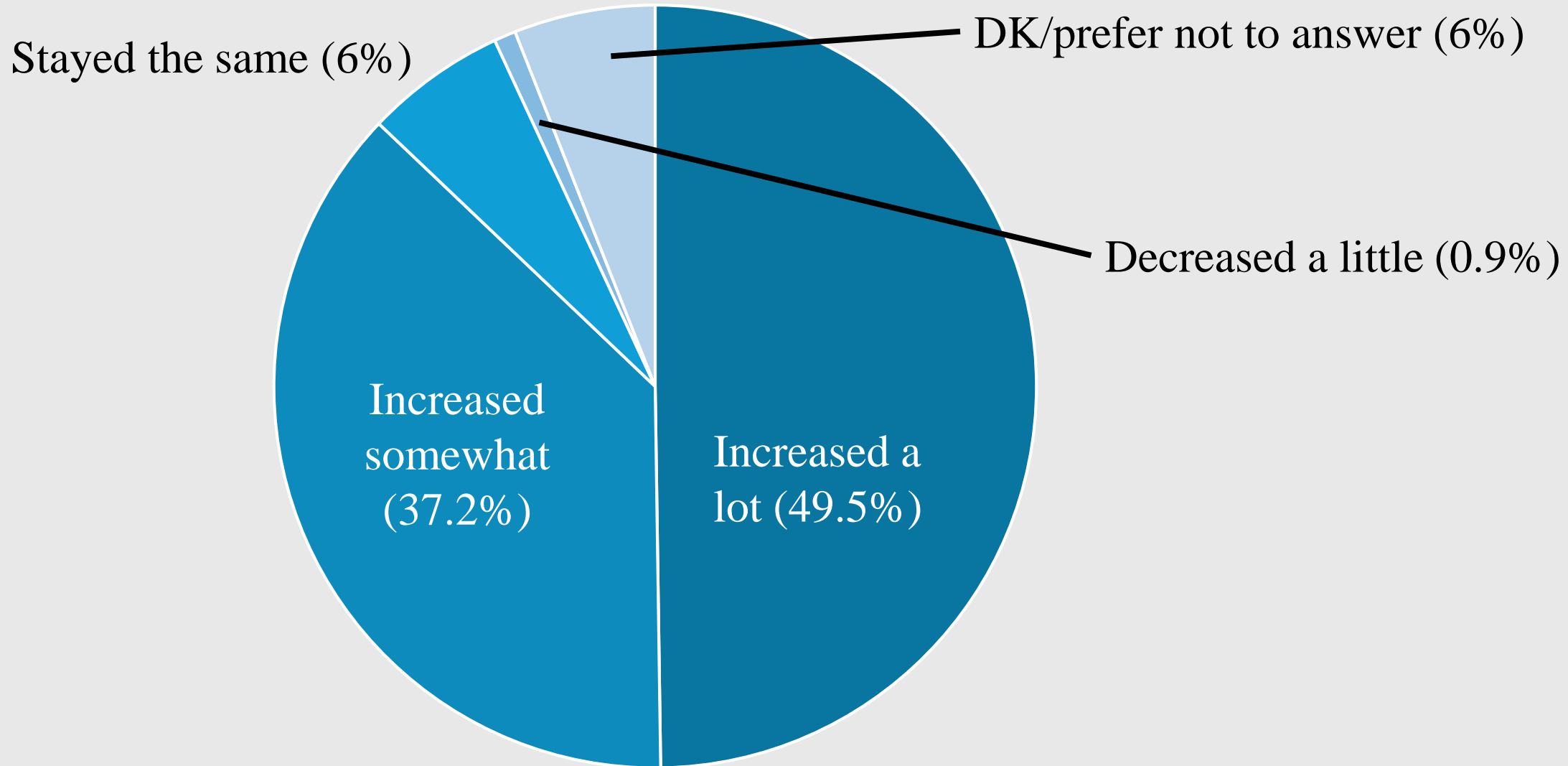
# Perceptions of Antisemitism

In the past year, antisemitism has...



# Perceptions of Antisemitism

In the past 5 years, antisemitism has...



# Perceptions of Antisemitism

**73%**

believe Jews are  
less secure in the  
field

**91%**

believe  
antisemitism is  
taken less  
seriously

**39%**

reported  
antisemitic  
harassment in at  
least one context

**74%**

experience  
negative  
comments about  
Jews/Judaism

**90%**

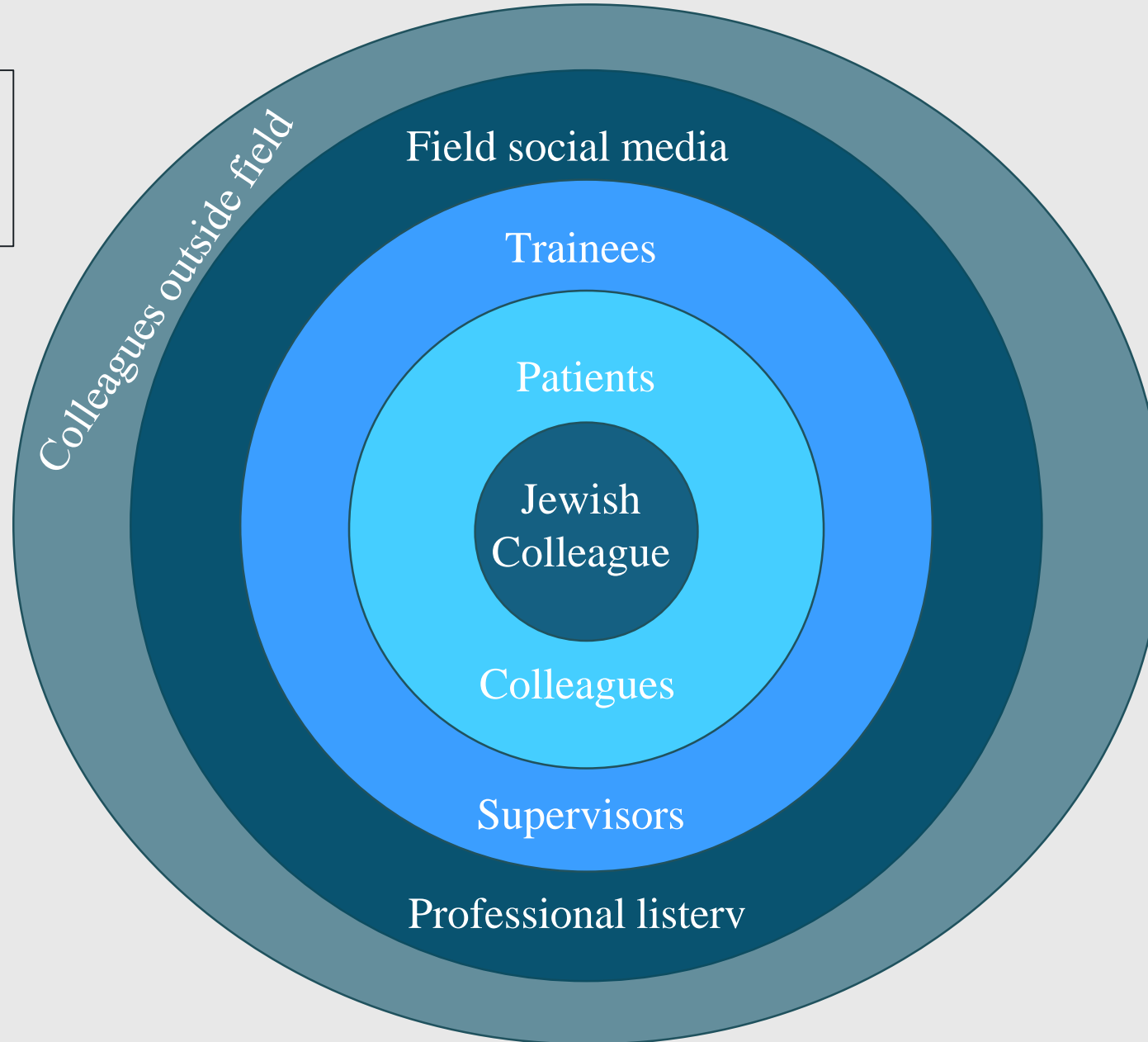
experience  
negative  
comments about  
Israel/Zionism

# Experiences of Antisemitism

**Supervisors:**  
**9.6%**

**Colleagues  
outside  
field: 32.6%**

**Colleagues:**  
**44.5%**



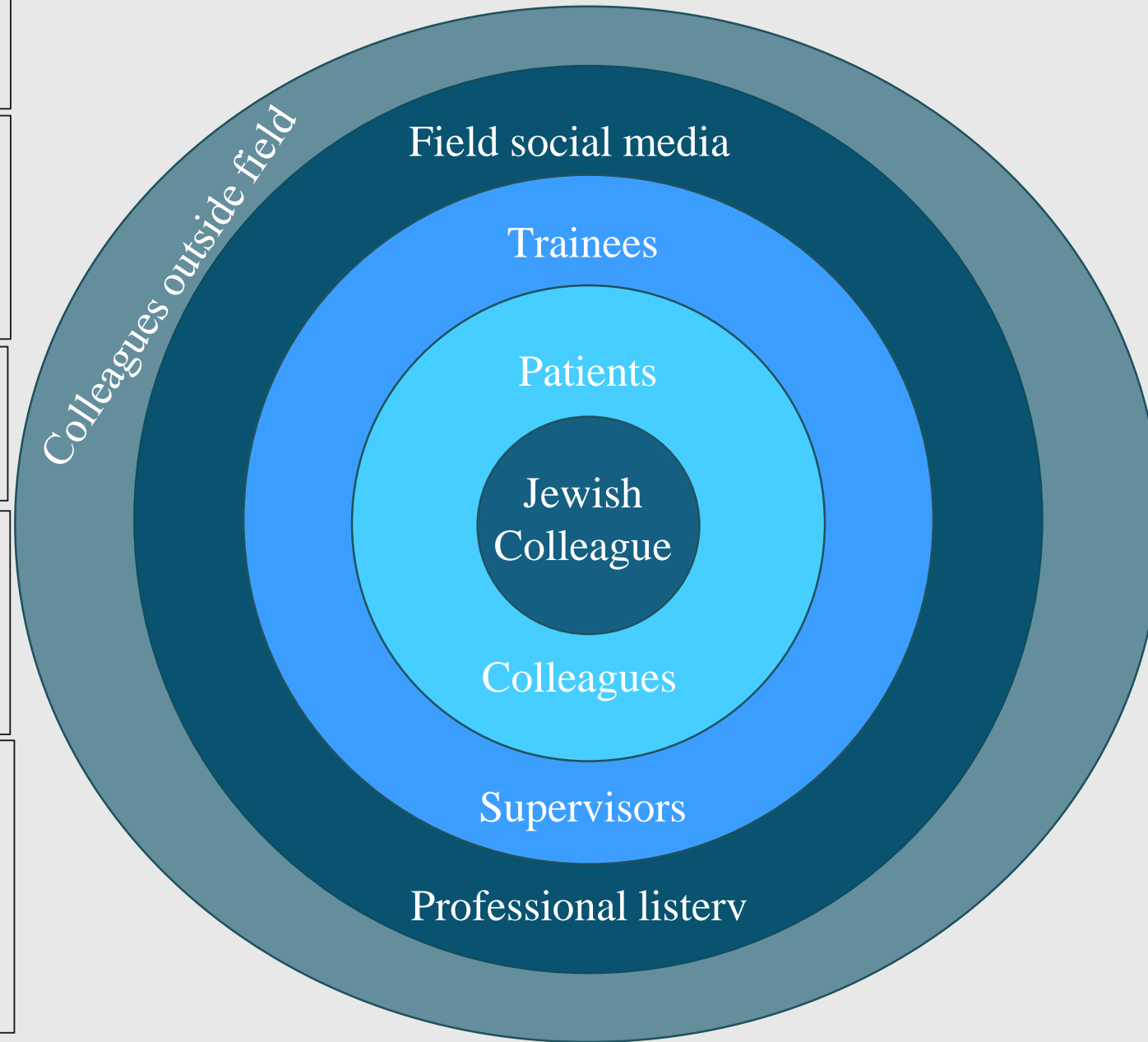
**Patients:**  
**61%**

**Listservs:**  
**47.7%**

**Social  
Media:**  
**46.8%**

**Trainees:**  
**2.3%**

# Impacts of Antisemitism



**Blocked organizations: 11%**

**Harmed relationships: 52.8%**

**Excluded from leadership: 5%**

**Excluded conferences (no intent): 21.1%**

**Consider withdrawing membership: 45%**

**Increased anxiety: 73.9%**

**Abrupt termination: 14.7%**

**Referrals blocked: 7.8%**

**Excluded conferences (intent): 13.8%**

**Blocked listerv: 12.8%**

**Resigned: 23.4%**

# Qualitative Data

**Classic  
Antisemitism**

**Delegitimization  
of Zionism**

Bias against Jews or Judaism, lack of inclusion of Jews or acknowledgement of Judaism as a religious or ethnic identity, and microaggressions

“In graduate school being penalized for missing class for [Jewish] holidays and being told I wasn’t committed to my education”

“DEI office refusing to take action to increase safety for students and faculty following blatant acts of [antisemitic vandalism]”

# Qualitative Data

This included exposure to inflammatory language about Zionism or Israel's legitimacy (e.g., "settler colonialism," "Zionism is evil" or "racist," "baby-killers") or erasure of Israel altogether

**Classic  
Antisemitism**

**Delegitimization  
of Zionism**

Dismissal of the atrocities of October 7th massacre as propaganda and denial of the rapes of women and murdering of children

Being told that they would "never treat a Jew or Israeli" and another was told that "the Jewish star and Israeli flag are too triggering.

# Qualitative Data

**Classic  
Antisemitism**

**Delegitimization  
of Zionism**

**Impact on  
Career**

**Coping**

“I feel alienated from my colleagues and the professional organizations I have been so dedicated to serving and supporting. I am so exhausted, devastated, scared, and heartbroken...it is hard for me to work at my peak productivity.”

“I no longer feel welcome in [professional organization] and there are clients who dropped out of treatment when they found out I was Jewish.”

# Qualitative Data



“...provide support and services to others, to volunteer my time, and to call attention to what is happening. I have tried this year to be kinder to myself when I am exhausted, sad, scared, and overwhelmed.”

Maladaptive coping (substance)

# Qualitative Data

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“Professor intentionally left out the chapter of Jews from the multicultural class”

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Experiencing non-Jews “educating” Jews about antisemitism

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“Students and faculty in the department who spoke out about experiences of antisemitism were vilified, ostracized, and, in some cases, subjected to punishment”

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“On several occasions, non-Jewish faculty claimed to be more knowledgeable about what constitutes antisemitism than their Jewish students and colleagues”

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Several described being “kicked out” of consultation groups, colleagues cutting ties, & being “blacklisted” from referrals



# Discussion



# Conclusions



Strong Jewish identity among participants

Overlap is associated with other aspects of Jewish engagement

Not associated with antisemitic experiences, but is associated with impact from antisemitism

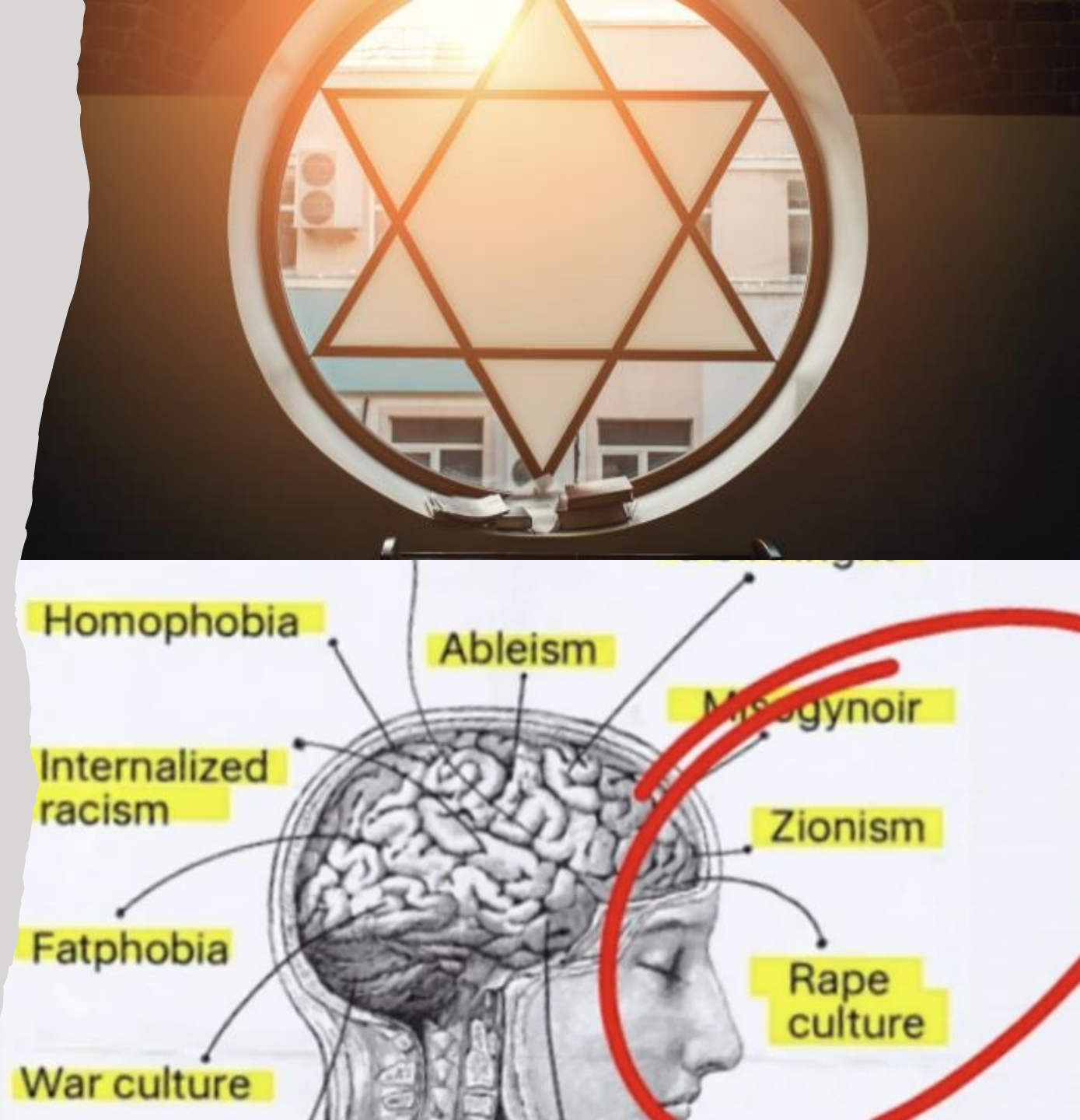
# Antisemitism as a Problem in the Field

- High exposure to antisemitic experiences
  - Erasure
  - Exclusion
  - Stigmatization
- Consistent with reports among:
  - Jewish social workers
  - Jewish medical professionals
- Multidimensional impacts
  - Professional
  - Personal
  - Emotional
- The impact remains unknown



# Zionism as an Aspect of Jewish Identity

- Zionism and Israel are relevant aspects of Jewish identity
  - Personal connection to Zionism
  - Personal connection to Israel
- Where does this leave professional psychology?
  - How to expand understanding of Jewish identity?



# Limitations

Sample size

Recruitment via Jewish-oriented professional organizations and social media

Exploratory

Pro bono research effort

# Future Directions

- Any future work requires **major** funding
- Measurement:
  - Experiences of antisemitism specific to psychology
  - Professional impact(s)
- Development and evaluation of interventions
- Support services







# Researcher's Perspective

“The purpose of Judaism is not to fight antisemitism. We fight antisemitism so we can focus on the purpose of Judaism.”

--Rabbi David Bashevkin

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# Thank You & Questions

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# Researcher's Perspective

“This is how to deal with crisis. Wrestle with it, refusing to let it go until it blesses you, until you emerge stronger, better or wiser than you were before. To be a Jew is not to accept defeat. That is the meaning of faith.”

-Rabbi Johnathan Sacks

# Citations

Brosbe, M. S., Kaufman, C. C., Getzoff Testa, E., Dimentstein, K., Guttman-Lapin, D., & Rasooli, T. (2026). Is it really that bad? Antisemitic experiences among Jewish mental health professionals. *American Psychologist*. Advance online publication.  
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