



Online antisemitism in the public debate on Facebook

An analysis into the prevalence of online antisemitism in the public debate on Facebook in Denmark and how it manifests.

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JØDISK
INFORMATION
CENTER



Nordic
Safe Cities



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Introduction

#AMOS

– the alliance against online antisemitism

Social media is increasingly a bigger part of our lives. It creates global connections which enable the sharing of ideas across cultures and fosters a greater sense of unity. It gives voice to a diverse range of perspectives and enables a broader understanding of the world. However, social media also enables and amplifies the spread of prejudices and hateful attitudes, posing a serious threat to cohesion and tolerance in our society.

The initiative #AMOS has been created to strengthen the prevention of online antisemitism. Equipping young people to confront online antisemitism and extremism requires targeted education. That's precisely the aim of the #AMOS initiative and this analysis.

With the launch of this analysis, online antisemitism in the broader online debate in Denmark is mapped for the first time. The analysis provides in-depth insights into how antisemitism manifests itself in mainstream discussions on social media platforms where most Danes engage.

It is crucial to understand that antisemitism is a phenomenon that has evolved over millennia. It has shifted in form and expression, making it important for new generations to grasp how this hatred presents itself today and the potential danger of it.

The vision of the #AMOS initiative extends beyond merely identifying and understanding antisemitism.

We aim to establish an alliance across institutions and organisations nationwide in Denmark. An alliance that works together to take action and create change, turning social media into a space where dialogue prevails over hate. We strive to create an innovative project that paves the way for combatting hate against minorities in the online public debate.

The #AMOS initiative comprises four partner organisations: Nordic Safe Cities and The Jewish Information Center are involved in developing preventive work, collaborative initiatives, and contributions, as well as coordinating qualified contextual knowledge. Analyse & Tal and Common Consultancy are responsible for the analysis and report. #AMOS is funded by the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces.

We would like to thank all involved parties for their dedication and support for this crucial initiative and invite organisations who wish to join in addressing and countering antisemitism to collaborate with us.

We hope you find this report and results valuable.



Nanna Amer,
Project manager,
The Jewish Information Center



Jeppe Albers,
Director,
Nordic Safe Cities

Antisemitism is ever-present in the online debate

This analysis is the first in Denmark to uncover online antisemitism in the comments sections of official Facebook pages belonging to national politicians and media outlets. With a basis of over 45 million comments from the past two years*, and leveraging the assistance of GPT-4, we have identified and analysed instances of antisemitic expressions.

Facebook indisputably stands as the most favoured social media platform among Danes**. Numerous Danish media outlets and politicians maintain active Facebook pages where citizens engage in discussions with politicians, the media, and each other. In short, a significant portion of what could be viewed as the mainstream public debate in Denmark unfolds on the platform.

The comments sections on Danish media and politicians' Facebook pages therefore form the data for this analysis. The analysis reveals how and when antisemitism emerges in the broad public debate on Facebook, providing in-depth insights into the characteristics of antisemitism within these comments sections. The aim is to generate new knowledge about online antisemitism in Denmark, which can be utilized in preventive efforts to bolster resilience against online antisemitism and hatred towards minorities.

In this analysis, online antisemitism is particularly evident through prejudices and hatred directed at Jews as a collective group. The analysis is based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism from 2016.

The conclusion is clear: when discussions involve Jews, antisemitism is often lurking underneath. Prejudices, hatred, conspiracy theories, and misinformation are integral parts of the public debate on Facebook. Thus, antisemitism is not confined solely to extreme groups and peripheral environments but also surfaces on mainstream platforms where most Danes engage.

The analysis can attest to the fact that antisemitism and hatred towards minorities on social media are pressing issues that demand our attention.

* The data collection period is from 25.05.2021 to 25.05.2023

** 84% of all Danes between 16 and 74 years old are on Facebook. Source: Statistics Denmark 2023: Use of IT in the population 2023. Link: www.dst.dk/nyt/46771



Main Results

#1 Antisemitism is widespread in the public Danish debate on Facebook

When Jews and the Jewish community are specifically mentioned in comments on Danish politicians' and media outlets' Facebook pages from May 2021 to May 2023, every tenth comment contains an antisemitic statement.

The proportion of antisemitic comments shows that online antisemitism is indeed a real issue on social media in Denmark. Concurrently, the results of the analysis also demonstrate that antisemitism is not confined to closed online environments with limited Danish participation or unmoderated platforms. Antisemitism openly exists in the broad public debate on Facebook.

The 10 percent of antisemitic comments refer to those remaining on the pages after moderation by both Facebook and the page administrators. Hence, it must be assumed that the proportion of antisemitic expressions written in comments on these Facebook pages is even higher.



1 out of 10
comments about jews are
antisemitic

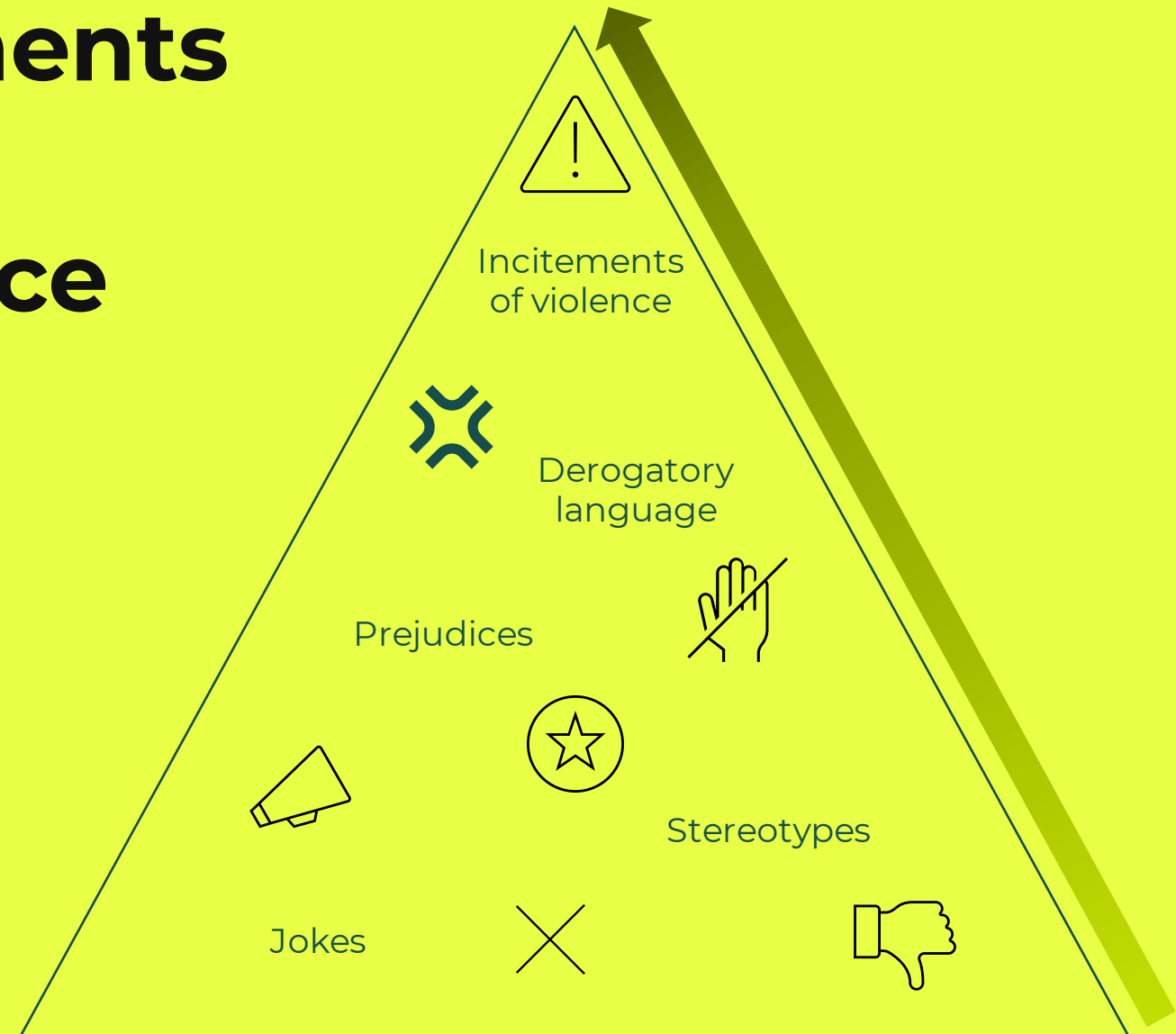
#2 Antisemitic comments range from jokes to incitements of violence

Antisemitic comments on politicians' and media outlets' Facebook pages vary in content and expression, as well as in severity.

These antisemitic expressions largely rely on well-known prejudices and negative stereotypes about Jews. The stereotypes are manifested through derogatory remarks about Jews and by using 'Jew' as an insult or mockery to undermine and disparage others.

However, comments can also carry an ironic tone or appear as jokes. We also encounter instances where antisemitism is expressed through comparisons that trivialise the Holocaust. Although these comments may be interpreted as less serious, they can contribute to normalising and excusing more severe expressions. From a preventative perspective, it is therefore crucial to focus on them as well.

Within the comments sections, we also observe that more severe expressions involving the demonization of and calls for violence against Jews are allowed to remain after moderation.



#3 Conspiracy theories are an integral part of antisemitism

A particular characteristic of antisemitism is that the group targeted by the hatred is perceived as a powerful and privileged elite. This theme reoccurs across many antisemitic expressions, creating a specific dynamic in which classic myths about Jewish power and control are woven into current debates, forming the basis for conspiracy theories.

In comments sections on politicians' and media's Facebook pages, Jews are accused of being responsible for problems including wars and crises - ranging from the killing of Jesus to the spread of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Similarly, both global and national institutions and media (e.g., TV2) are accused of being governed and controlled by Jews.

Among the antisemitic conspiracy theories found in the comment threads, there are also elements of far-right extremist thinking, portraying Jews as enemies to be defeated. Additionally, there are occasional comments denying the existence or scale of the Holocaust.

” *It's American Jews behind it. They want to ruin Europe and provoke war with Russia.*

” *Moreover, I believe media support should be abolished. All media are Jewish-owned.*

” *Democracy is an illusion created by Jews. Denmark is occupied by Jews. Fight back white man.*

#4 Antisemitism emerges in a variety of topics of discussion

Over the past two years, several political issues and news stories have sparked intense online debates, paving the way for antisemitic remarks in the comments sections on Facebook.

Upon closer examination of these antisemitic remarks, it becomes evident that a significant portion arises in discussions concerning Jewish tradition and faith, including male circumcision, as well as the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Simultaneously, the analysis shows that antisemitic expressions are not solely limited to these subjects but also arise in debates regarding topics such as the handling of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

As antisemitic remarks spread across different discussions, it creates an opening for classic prejudices and conspiracies about Jews to weave into current debates and take on new life.



Male circumcision

War in Ukraine

Israel-Palestine
conflict

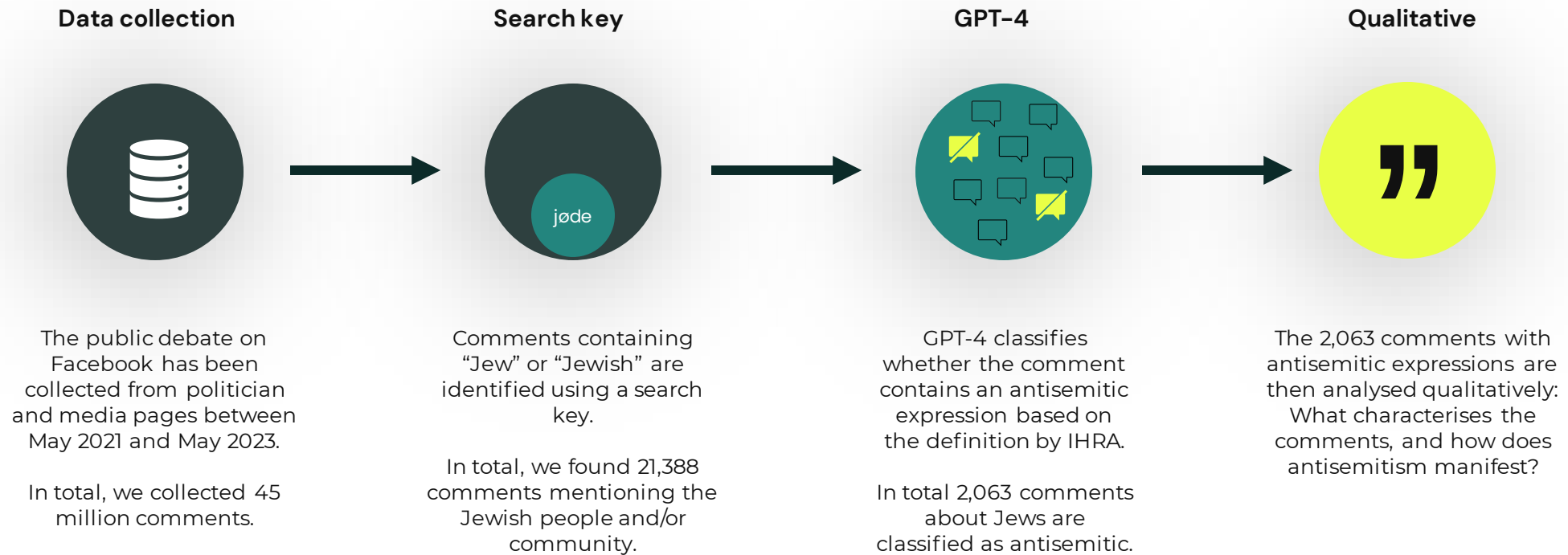
Discussions about
Jewish tradition,
culture, and faith

COVID-19



Method and Data
Foundation

Summary of the research design





Extent of Online Antisemitism in the Public debate on Facebook in Denmark

All comments



One in ten comments are antisemitic when Jews are mentioned in the public debate

In the public debate on Danish politicians' and media's Facebook pages over the past two years, we've observed 21,388 comments where the words "Jew" or "Jewish" explicitly appear.

Among these 21,388 comments, 2,063 of them contain antisemitic remarks. This means that on average, every tenth comment discussing the Jewish people or community can be characterised as antisemitic.

Generally, it is rare for Jews to be directly mentioned in comment threads on politicians' and media's Facebook pages, as it constitutes only 21,388 comments out of more than 45 million comments. However, when the comments directly involve or mention Jews, it's often from an antisemitic perspective. This means that if one participates in certain public debates and conversations on Facebook, one will likely encounter attacks and hateful comments directed towards Jews in the comments sections.

6 ways antisemitism is expressed in comments on Facebook

Humour and irony camouflaging antisemitic remarks

Jew-hatred, 🙄 Won't it stop by itself
with those gas prices? 🤔

Why do Jews have such big noses? 😏😏
- because air is free! 😏😏😏👉

It's pure Jewish number-magic

I've given my children Jewish names.
They don't ever have to lift a finger 😏

I look at others' fireworks because I've
become a stingy little Jew 😏

Speak of the Jew 😏

"Jew" as an insult and mockery

Can't stand looking at that little Jew shit

Jew prices!!

Disgusting little Jew snake.

What the hell kind of Jew are you to
listen to

They jew, just like the politicians
□ □ □ 🤢🤢🤢🤢

Fucking Jew temperature weather

Like a bunch of Jews in the litter box

You sound like a Jew

Demonisation and incitement of violence against Jews

People should soon turn against the vile
Jews.

Thinking that there's a reason Hitler
went so aggressively against that
people.

Jews are our enemies.

The Nazis fought against the evil of the
Jews

Denmark is occupied by Jews fight back
white man

Ohhhhh the poor Jews! They have
always been... 🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢 for the
world.

6 ways antisemitism is expressed in comments on Facebook

Negative stereotypes about Jews' appearance, morals, and loyalty

Big nose. Is she actually Jewish?

Jews steal, it's a fact!

Aren't they usually quite stingy, those Jews?

Why are Jews like you always so prone to lying so much?

Jews always cry.

Now the Jew is getting even richer.

Betrayed by a Jew... hmm, where have we heard that before? 🤔🤔

That's how Jews are. They don't have any allegiance to any countries.

Myths and prejudices about Jews as a powerful elite

Media, Hollywood, banks, etc. All Jews' crap.

The Jews have enormous power here in Denmark.

The owner of the national bank is a Jew named rotchild, all big corporations are Jewish-owned, the media is owned by Jews.

Isn't it usually the Jews that control the market, and they are well-known for following the money?

It's true that all banks and the WEF are owned by Jews?

Moreover, I believe media support should be abolished. All media is Jewish-owned.

Only Jews can escape prison.

Hatred towards Jews and conspiracy theories go hand in hand

Jews are behind everything. Covid, the pride flag, the war in Ukraine, and the list goes on.

The entire Holocaust is staged to pave the way for the Jews' ultimate goal - an independent Jewish state.

Denmark doesn't exist anymore. We are occupied by globalist Jews.

Jews ARE evil. They're behind all wars in the last 100 years. They invented Marxism, which has cost over 100 million lives.

It was the Jews who killed Jesus and those behind Bolshevism; likewise, they're behind multiculturalism in Europe.

Arabs and Africans are just pawns controlled by the Jew. The number one problem is the Jew and their agenda.

Antisemitism arises especially in specific debates

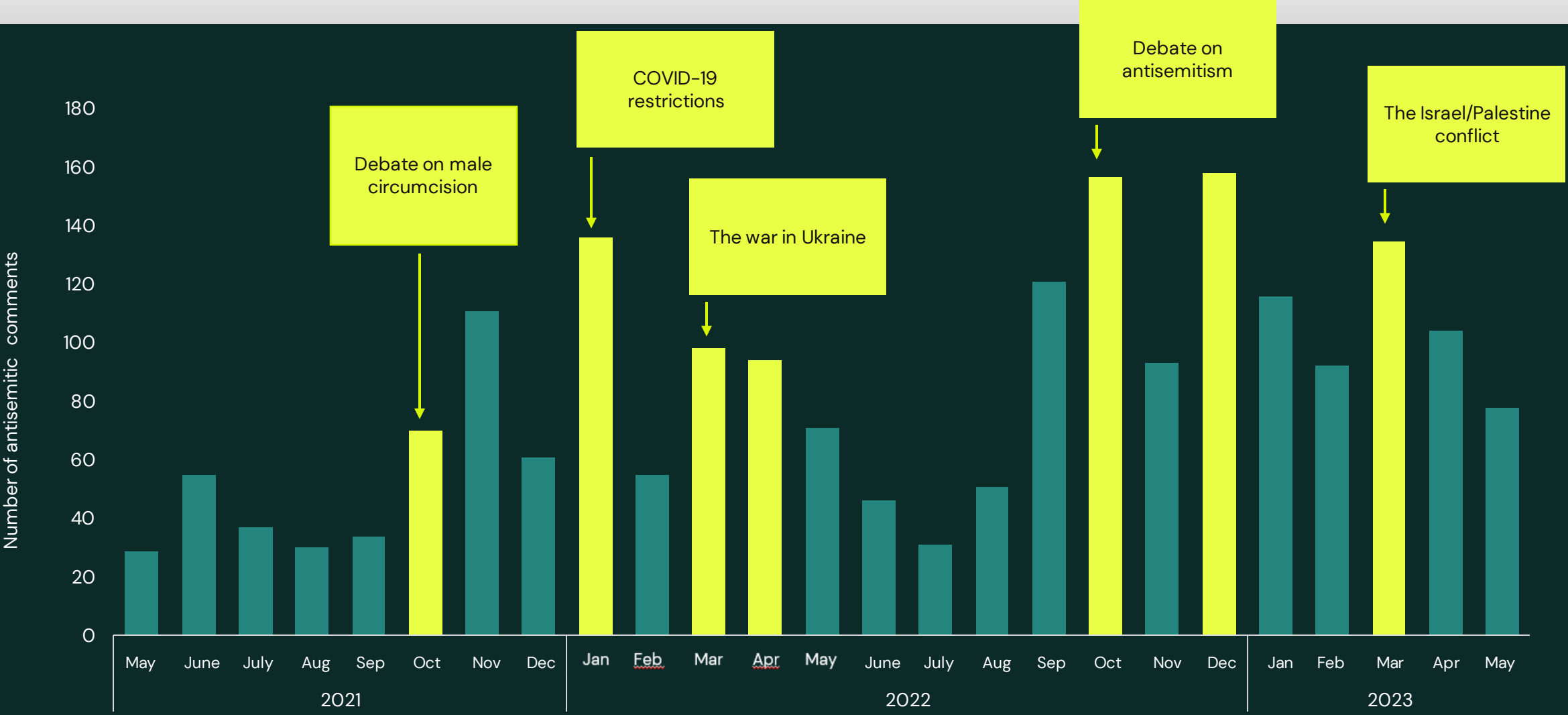
To gain deeper insight into the topics prompting antisemitic remarks in the comments sections of politicians' and media outlets' Facebook pages, we conducted a qualitative analysis of fluctuations in antisemitic comments.

As depicted in the graph on the following page, certain topics and debates notably foster a greater number of antisemitic comments.

We've observed that antisemitic expressions thrive notably in discussions regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, the conflict in Ukraine, male circumcision, discussions on COVID-19 restrictions, as well as Jewish traditions and faith. These themes don't encompass all antisemitic comments during the period but represent the most prevalent subjects and stories linked to the antisemitic comments.



Number of antisemitic topics in relation to specific topics in public debate



The team behind the report:

From Analyse & Tal

Maj Baltzarsen, Partner
Niels Ørbæk Chemnitz, Partner
Asger Neesgaard Sand, Partner

From Common Consultancy

Emilie Raaschou Dylander, Analyst
Eske Vinther-Jensen, Partner

Design

Cecilie Astrupgaard, Analyse & Tal

