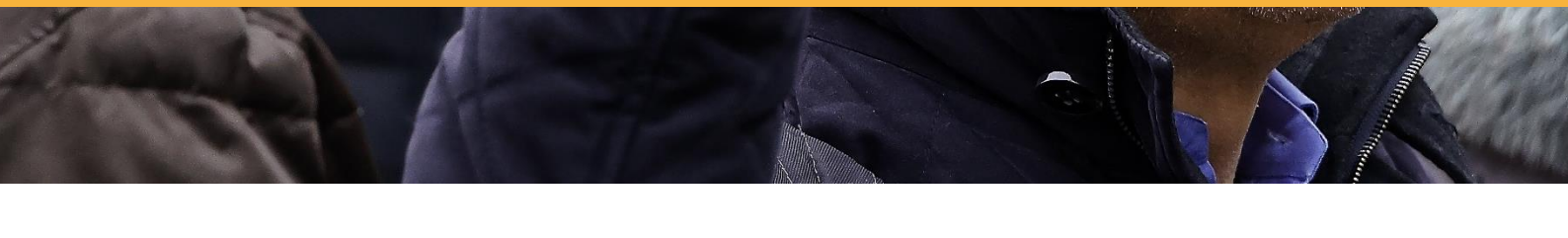




Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7: What do the data tell us, and what more do we still need to know?

Dr Jonathan Boyd

September 2024



Policy paper

Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7: What do the data tell us, and what more do we still need to know?

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/ In this report

- We conduct a detailed assessment of data on antisemitism in the UK and Europe since the attacks on Israel on October 7 2023, to determine how the situation in Israel, Gaza, and the wider Middle East is affecting Jewish life.
- We probe the data on reported antisemitic incidents from several countries to compare international trends and find clear evidence of a common and dramatic spike in the final quarter of 2023.
- We assess the accuracy of antisemitic incident data and demonstrate how the figures most commonly quoted significantly underestimate the number of incidents happening in reality.
- We demonstrate that more stable research methods are needed to determine whether overall levels of antisemitism and specific manifestations of it are increasing, decreasing or stable over time.
- We draw on key Jewish population survey data from JPR and the European Union to show how levels of concern about antisemitism are increasing over time among Jews and show which parts of the Jewish population are most affected by it.
- We introduce the concept of ‘ambient antisemitism’ into our analysis to demonstrate that Jews are sensing that the contexts in which they live have become more alienating and hostile since October 7, even if they have not personally experienced an antisemitic incident themselves.
- We explore how social and political attitudes about Israelis and Palestinians have evolved in the past years. We also identify critical distinctions by age and political leaning, which we anticipate will play a significant role in shaping public discourse about Israel in the coming years.
- We argue that much better research methods are required to accurately assess the general population’s attitudes to Jews and Israel and Jewish people’s perceptions and experiences of antisemitism.
- We explain that major research initiatives of these kinds are now well-established and funded across the European Union. However, since the United Kingdom withdrew from the EU, it is no longer included in this work. We call on the UK Government and philanthropic community to plug this critical gap as a matter of urgency.
- We highlight the importance of other key areas of research required today, including the impact of traditional and social media on attitudes towards Jews and the efficacy of educational initiatives designed to combat antisemitism.

/ Introduction

As much as we are able to follow events online in an interconnected 24/7 world, data providing reliable empirical assessments of what is occurring inevitably take some time to be gathered, analysed and released. Even now, close to a year on from the horrors of the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7 2023, information remains patchy, so we only have a partial picture of how the atrocities committed on that day, and the subsequent war in Gaza have affected Jewish life elsewhere. Given the anxieties and concerns that exist among many Jews today, a long-term lack of investment in high-quality multi-faceted research capable of making empirically accurate and policy-relevant assessments of Jewish community realities is an issue that urgently needs to be addressed in the post-October 7 world.

Yet the patchy empirical information that is available is important to assess and share. In this paper, we do that, drawing on multiple sources particularly from our vantage point in the United Kingdom, but with a close eye on a broader Diaspora perspective, notably in Europe. We explore four main questions:

- 1) what is the evidence to demonstrate that the October 7 attacks precipitated a significant spike in antisemitic incidents around the world?;
- 2) what factors play a role in any increase in antisemitism observed?;
- 3) how have Jews been affected by the attacks, the ensuing war in Gaza, and public reaction to them?;
- 4) how have the attacks, and reaction to them, affected wider public opinion?

Much of the data shared relates to the situation in the United Kingdom, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the situation is likely to be similar elsewhere, particularly in Western countries with sizeable Jewish populations.

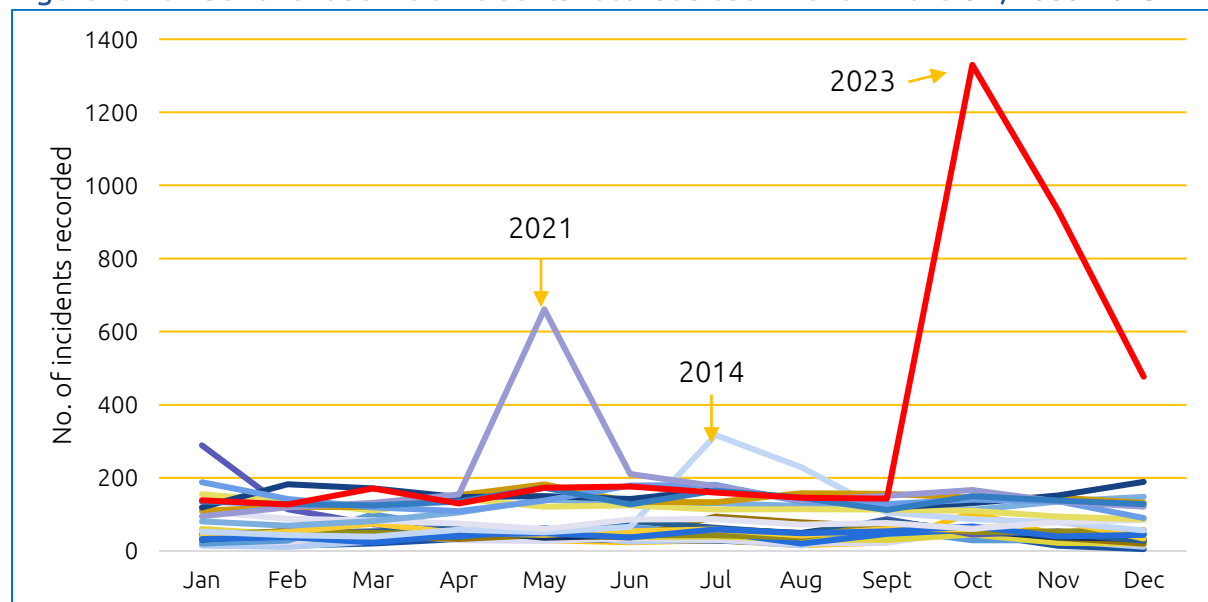
This paper was originally constructed as evidence the Institute for Jewish Policy Research was invited to present to the European Commission and Government of Israel at the 15th EU-Israel High-Level Seminar on combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism in Brussels in May 2024. It has been updated since then and draws also on work prepared by JPR for the joint Association for Israel Studies/European Association for Israel Studies annual conference, held in Prague in early July, and on some of the most recent data coming out of the JPR Jewish Current Affairs Survey, conducted in June and July 2024 among the Jewish population of the UK.

/ Antisemitic incidents

In seeking to measure antisemitism, the data that have become the most readily available and frequently referenced in recent years are those that enumerate and assess direct incidents. These data draw on administrative processes recording antisemitic incidents that are reported to an organisation – typically the police and/or a Jewish community body undertaking this work. In brief, an individual experiencing an incident notifies such a body, which then records the details (e.g. date, location, nature of offence, perpetrator, accompanying evidence, etc.) and, in some instances, provides support to the victim. The body then collates information from multiple incidents and publishes details accordingly.

One of the world's leading bodies undertaking such work is the Community Security Trust (CST) in the United Kingdom. It has done so since the 1980s, and Figure 1 below provides a picture of the number of incidents it has recorded every month in the 24 years between January 2000 and December 2023.

Figure 1. Number of antisemitic incidents recorded each month in the UK, 2000-2023



Data: Community Security Trust (www.thecst.org.uk/research/cst-publications).

Each of the lines across the bottom of the chart represents a different year between 2000 and 2023, and each one captures the number of incidents the CST recorded each month in each of those years. One can quickly see that these are all typically sub-200 in most instances. Closer examination of the data reveals that the number has been increasing over time, but it is impossible to determine the extent to which that is due to factors such as improved reporting processes prompting changes in reporting rates among victims (e.g. ease of reporting, public awareness of the need to report, knowledge of how to report, etc.), or to an actual objective increase in the number of incidents occurring. Nevertheless, the three spikes highlighted – in July 2014, May 2021, and most recently in the last quarter of 2023 – stand out clearly, and all three coincide directly with the outbreak of major military conflagrations between Israel and Palestinian forces in and around the Gaza Strip.¹

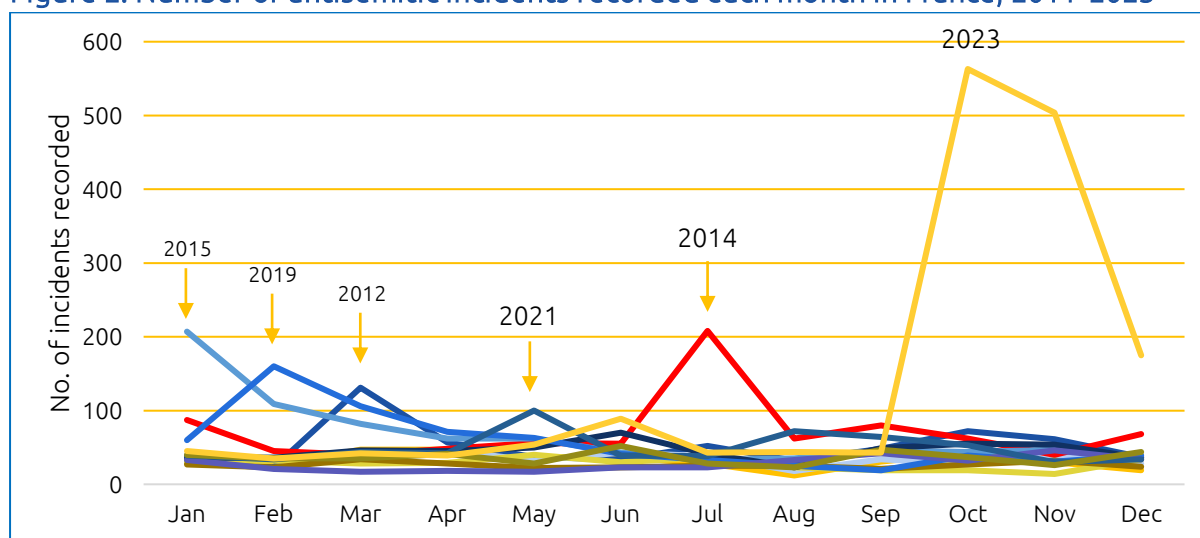
¹ These were Operation Protective Edge (July 2014); Operation Guardian of the Walls (May 2021); and the Israel-Hamas War (2023). A fourth spike, in January 2009 coinciding with Operation Cast Lead, a similar conflagration in Gaza, can also be seen.

What quickly becomes apparent is that antisemitic incidents appear to spike in the UK at these times – something about the events taking place in Gaza spills over onto the streets of the United Kingdom, and has a direct impact on Jews living there. We will return to the question of what prompts this reaction later on.

However, at this stage, it is important to note that the post-7 October 2023 period stands out more than any other. The spike at this time is higher than any other previously recorded, and it lasts for longer. Moreover, recent CST data providing incident counts for the first six months of 2024 show that they have remained at an unusually elevated level during that period too, as the war in Gaza has continued.² Indeed, with the exception of the 661 incidents that were recorded in May 2021 (during the conflagration that took place in Gaza at that time), every monthly count recorded by the CST in the nine months following the October 7 attacks was higher than any monthly count recorded since the beginning of 2015. And even though their post-October 2023 counts are on an overall downward trajectory over that period (not shown), quite clearly something unprecedented appears to be going on.

Similar data, drawing on similar processes, is also available for other countries. It is helpful to consider parallel data from France, generated by the Service de Protection de la communauté Juive (SPCJ), which have similarly been available by month over the course of several years.

Figure 2. Number of antisemitic incidents recorded each month in France, 2011-2023



Data: Service de Protection de la communauté Juive data (www.spcj.org)

In France, we see the same three spikes as in the UK – in 2014, 2021 and 2023 (shown in bold) – although in this case, the 2014 spike is considerably higher than the 2021 one (the reverse of the case in the UK) for reasons that require further consideration. Nevertheless, the two sources share the scale and duration of the 2023 spike – both countries clearly observed unprecedented and lasting spikes in reported antisemitic incidents in the post-7 October 2023 period.

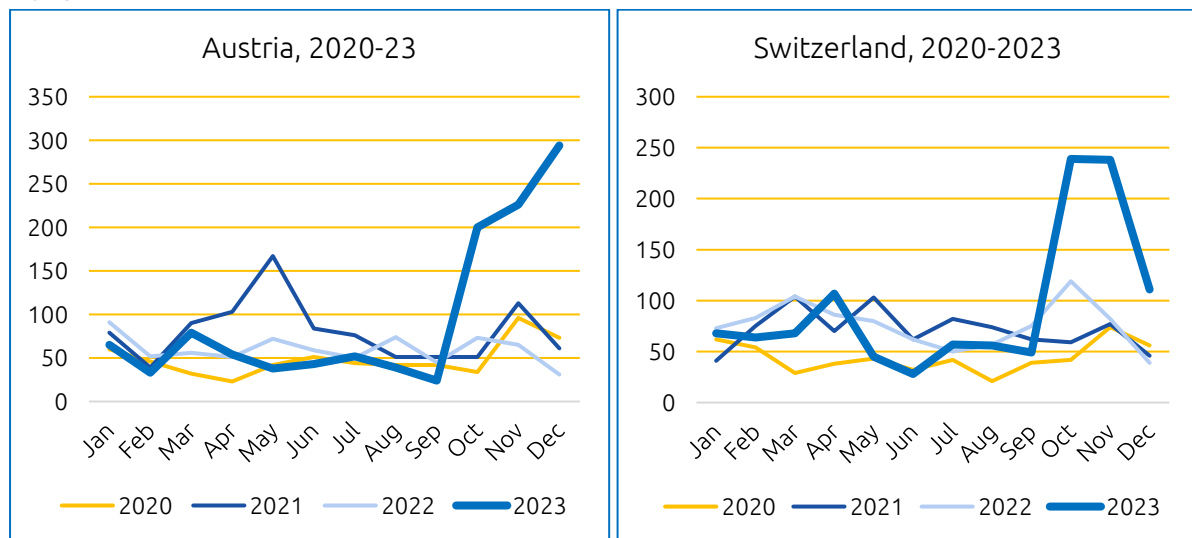
² See: Community Security Trust, *Antisemitic incidents: January-June 2024*. Available at: <https://cst.org.uk/research/cst-publications/antisemitic-incidents-report-january-june-2024>.

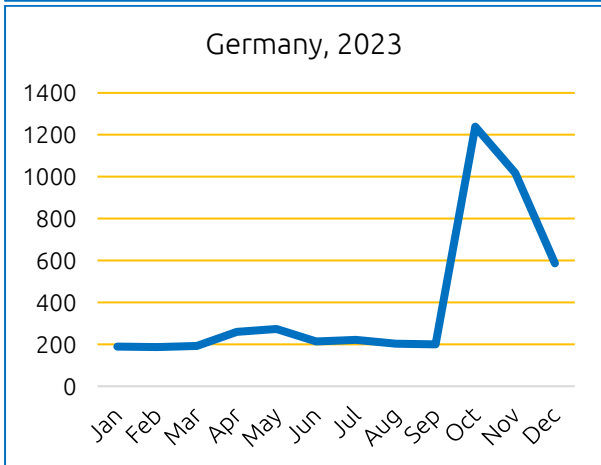
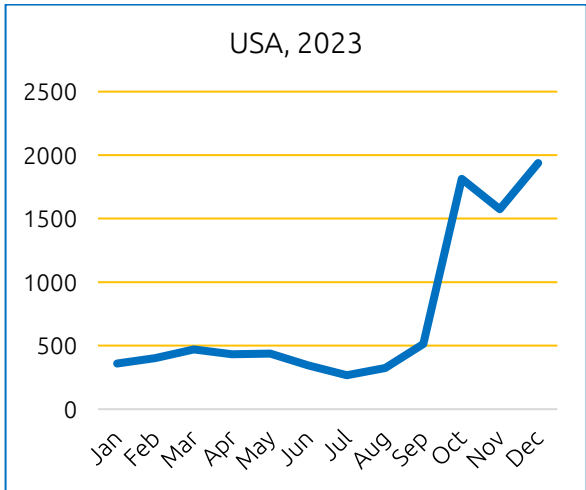
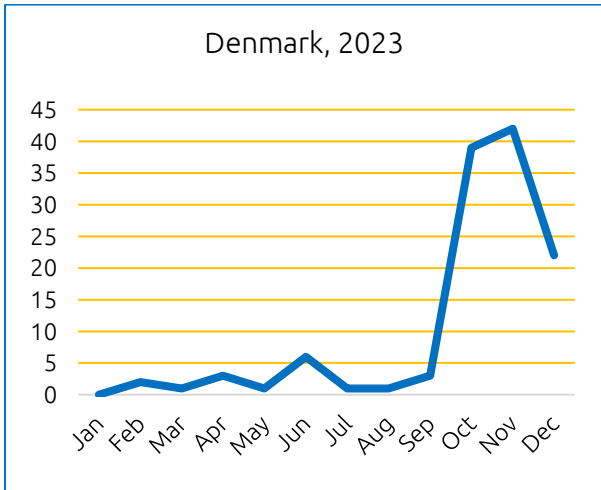
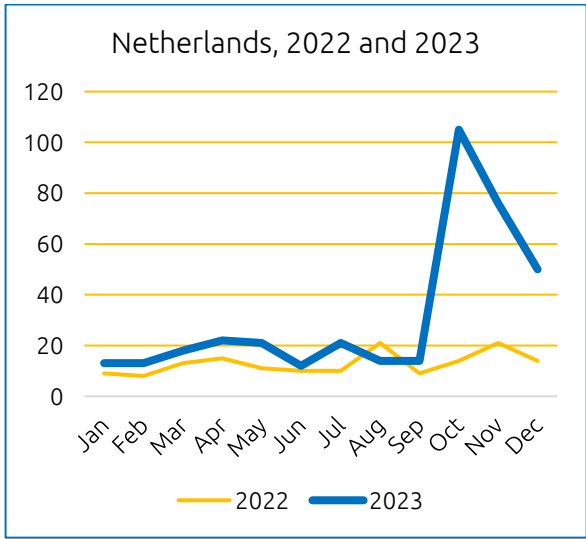
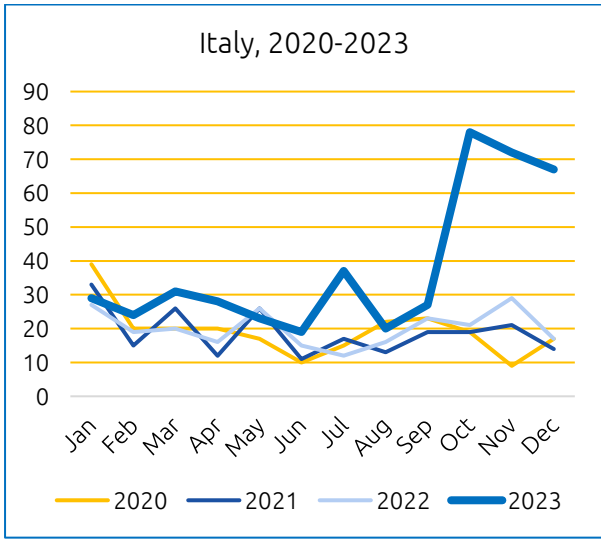
Together, these two sources show the clear relationship between conflagrations in Israel/Gaza and antisemitism levels in the UK and France. However, the French data add an additional dimension to our understanding. Beyond the three moments in 2014, 2021 and 2023, they also show three further spikes – in March 2012, January 2015 and February 2019. No such flare-up occurred in Gaza at these times, so something else must have prompted them instead. We will return to this issue a little later.

Equivalent data from other countries around the world are arguably less insightful, but they nevertheless help to reinforce the observed trend of the post-October 7 moment (see Figure 3). Historical data are not as widely available as in France and the UK, but the charts below – covering Austria, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United States and Germany for between one and four of the years between 2020 and 2023 – all show the same dramatic spike in antisemitic incidents in the immediate post-7 October 2023 period. This is striking because these countries differ from one another in many respects – culturally, politically, linguistically and indeed in terms of the size and prominence of their Jewish populations – yet we observe essentially the identical phenomenon everywhere.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on Israel on October 7, a dramatic increase in verbal and, in some cases physical, assaults on Jews appears to have occurred in many places where Jews live.

Figure 3. Number of antisemitic incidents recorded each month in various countries, 2020-2023





Data: IKW Antisemitismus meldestelle (Austria); CIDI (Netherlands); SIG (Switzerland); Osservatorio Antisemitismo – CDEC (Italy); Akvah (Denmark); ADL (USA); Bundesverband RIAS e. V. (Germany). Note that the number of incidents in each country differs significantly (see y-axis), not least because the size of the Jewish populations living in these countries are so different.

The pattern seen over the last three months of 2023 may be important too. With some exceptions, the peak month was October; the figures for November and December remain extraordinarily high, but they tend to fall off a little in several places nonetheless. Austria is the main exception – incident numbers climb from October to November to December – as are Denmark and the US which saw peaks in November and December respectively, but in most cases, the prime reaction was in October.

It is important to understand why these differences occur, and if indeed they reflect objective reality. As discussed later in this paper, they may not as these data are based on incidents that are reported, rather than all incidents that occur irrespective of whether they are reported or not. Whilst hypotheses exist to explain growth or decline, it is difficult to know with any degree of certainty. Notwithstanding these nuances, the fundamental point from these data should be clear: the counts in October, November and December are all exceptional everywhere – with few exceptions, they show the three highest monthly counts ever recorded.

/ Can these data be trusted as credible sources?

Whilst all of these data sources point to the same conclusion, we should consider the extent to which they capture the objective realities of antisemitism in each country over time, before deliberating further on their meaning. In brief, are they credible?

As with any data source, one has to consider where the data come from, who was responsible for collecting it, how it was gathered, and how it was verified. When one does this, it soon becomes apparent that the figures quoted in antisemitic incident data almost certainly constitute the thin end of the wedge – a mere fraction of all incidents that occur.

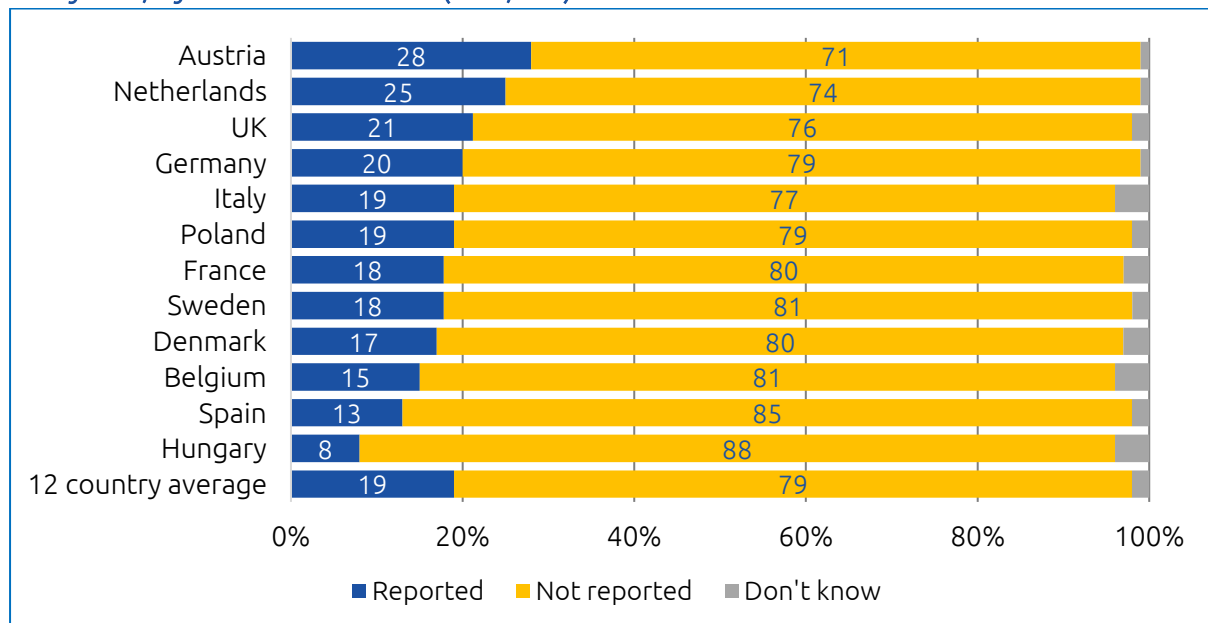
There are several reasons for this. First, as mentioned previously, these data only capture those incidents that have been reported to the recording agencies in each country. And, critically, most incidents – particularly those involving harassment as opposed to more serious cases of physical assaults or vandalism – are never reported to any authority.

We know this from Jewish population surveys, where a random sample of respondents is asked, first, if they experienced an incident of any kind in a given period, and second, if so, whether they reported it. The research team at JPR first pioneered this work for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) over a decade ago, and data from the 2018 FRA survey conducted by a JPR-Ipsos team demonstrates that, across Europe, about four in five of all antisemitic harassment incidents go unreported (see 12-country average in Figure 4).³

³ See: FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2018). *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism. Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, p.56. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union (Publications Office).

The follow-up FRA survey, from 2023, indicates that this situation may have improved a little since then – it found that 28% of online or offline antisemitic harassment were reported across Europe – but even assuming that advance, it is clear that the vast majority of cases are still not being captured in incident data.⁴

Figure 4. Reporting of the most serious incident of antisemitic harassment in the previous five years, by EU Member State (N=6,486)



Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2018 survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU. Question: [Out of respondents who experienced some form of antisemitic harassment in the past five years] *Did you or anyone else report this incident to the police or to any other organisation?*

The reasons for non-reporting are known from the same source too. Most victims feel that “nothing would change” if they reported it, or that it was “inconvenient/too much trouble” to do so, or that the specific incident was “not serious enough.” Other reasons given include not knowing how or where to report it, or because they “took care of it” themselves. Additional issues, such as a lack of trust in the police or fear of reprisals are less common.

Second, to reinforce the point that antisemitic incident data commonly constitute significant undercounts, it is important to note that the FRA data in Figure 4 is based on the proportions who report an incident to “the police or any other organisation.” When an incident occurs, a number of the already small proportion who report what happened to them is conveyed to other bodies that are not set up to monitor or report on antisemitism. For example, victims or witnesses may opt to report an incident to an authority in the workplace, university or school, and not go to the police or a communal monitoring body such as the CST or SPCJ. Such incidents will not make their way into these types of statistics, so they are not reflected in the counts.

⁴ See: FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2024). *Jewish people’s experiences and perceptions of antisemitism*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p.85. Note that it is unclear to the author at this stage whether empirically meaningful comparisons can be drawn between the 2018 and 2023 FRA surveys, as the underlying data for the more recent survey are not yet available.

There is a third reason to think that numbers may be undercounted in antisemitic incident data, although more work is required to fully test this – namely, that is because it is becoming increasingly difficult to spot an antisemitic incident when it occurs. We see this particularly clearly in some of the research undertaken about antisemitism online. One of the more groundbreaking studies in this area in recent years – the ‘Decoding Antisemitism’ project based at the Technical University Berlin – demonstrates how antisemitic discourse and language is constantly evolving.⁵ In their reports, the researchers note that a variety of different approaches are being used online to reference Jews and Israel, including semiotic markers, puns, allusions, and indirect speech acts. These include numerous examples: writing someone’s name in three sets of brackets (((name))); using a watermelon icon; writing the word Israel with a dollar sign (I\$rael); making allusions, such as “globalists with curls” or calling for someone to “give Soros a shower”; posting messages such as “the Austrian artist was right” or “Fourth Reich Rising”; or simply asking provocative questions such as “Who owns the British media?” These are all reasonably clear coded messages to those familiar with antisemitism, but are far less so to those unschooled in it.

But critically, there are many more examples that are considerably more opaque. Among these are “109/110” – referencing the supposed 109 cases of Jews being expelled from particular countries or regions in history, and calling now for a 110th – and visual images of ballpoint pens, in a coded reference to the long-discredited claim that Anne Frank’s diary is a forgery because part of it was supposedly written in ballpoint pen ink that wasn’t widely available until the 1950s.

Indeed, because the discourse is constantly evolving, Jews themselves may not recognise the more subtle signs even when a comment is laced with deep antisemitic sentiment. As such antisemitic ‘creativity’ evolves and is widely and rapidly disseminated via social media, it is challenging enough for monitoring agencies to keep up, never mind organisations or companies with no expertise in the area. Indeed, many Jews themselves will not necessarily identify the more obscure signals, thereby reducing the chances that they will report them. All of these factors suggest that the numbers of incidents being recorded in these types of incident reports constitute significant undercounts. But are there any forces that might pull the counts in the opposite direction – i.e. towards *overcounting*, and thereby overstating, the problem?

Perhaps the strongest argument in this respect is that reporting agencies may be drawing the boundaries too broadly around what constitutes antisemitism, thereby veering into territory that includes incidents that may be offensive or upsetting, but are not antisemitic. This issue has been the focus of much political debate in recent years, particularly when considering incidents involving discourse about Israel, and it commonly focuses on the legitimacy, or not, of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.⁶ The claim made by dissenters is that anti-Israel or anti-Zionist statements are rarely, if ever, antisemitic – they rather constitute harsh, perhaps offensive, but nonetheless legitimate criticism of Israeli political or military conduct.

⁵ See: Becker, M. et. al. (2024). *Decoding antisemitism: An AI-driven study on hate speech and imagery online*. Discourse report 6. Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin.

⁶ See: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

The opposing argument is that these types of statements or expressions often are antisemitic, and certainly can be, depending on the particular context. The truth is that there is considerable complexity here – to observe the difficulty, one only has to consider the comparative cases of, first, a ‘Free Palestine’ slogan, and second, a ‘Globalise the Intifada’ slogan, being variously daubed on (a) a synagogue; (b) an Israeli consulate building; and (c) a non-descript wall in a neighbourhood in which few, if any, Jews live, by (1) an apolitical teenager, (2) an extreme right-wing or left-wing activist, or (3) an individual with a history of Islamist sympathies.

Jews themselves differ on these slogans – recent JPR data demonstrate that far more British Jews consider the statement ‘globalise the intifada’ to be antisemitic than the statement ‘free Palestine,’ but there are also important contextual distinctions here, and the boundaries between racism and political activism are sometimes blurred. The agencies determining which incidents to include or exclude in their reports have to make these types of calls, so their figures are inevitably shaped in some way by the procedures they put in place to manage this.

Critics of their work will likely dismiss it as flawed in this respect, but it is worth noting that the Community Security Trust, at least, engages with this issue in two key ways. First, not all incidents reported to the CST are included in its published annual counts. In its 2023 report for example, the CST only included 4,103 of the 6,288 incidents reported to it; the remaining 2,185 (35% of the total reported) were excluded because “...upon investigation, they did not evidence antisemitic motivation, language or targeting.”

This is an important detail. It means that a potential victim thinks or believes they have experienced or witnessed an antisemitic incident to a sufficient extent to report it, but that the evidence they bring to bear is insufficient for the monitoring agency to confirm it.

This doesn't necessarily mean that these incidents are not antisemitic; it rather indicates that the monitoring agency is using its judgement in every case, which inevitably introduces a degree of subjectivity into the endeavour – depending on its judgement, it could be raising or lowering the bar to entry too far. Without in-depth scrutiny of each set of data it is impossible to say, but the fact that so many cases are excluded in the CST's case should bring a degree of confidence in its data; at the very least, it demonstrates that the organisation is deeply conscious of this definitional issue, and applies its best judgement to each case.⁷

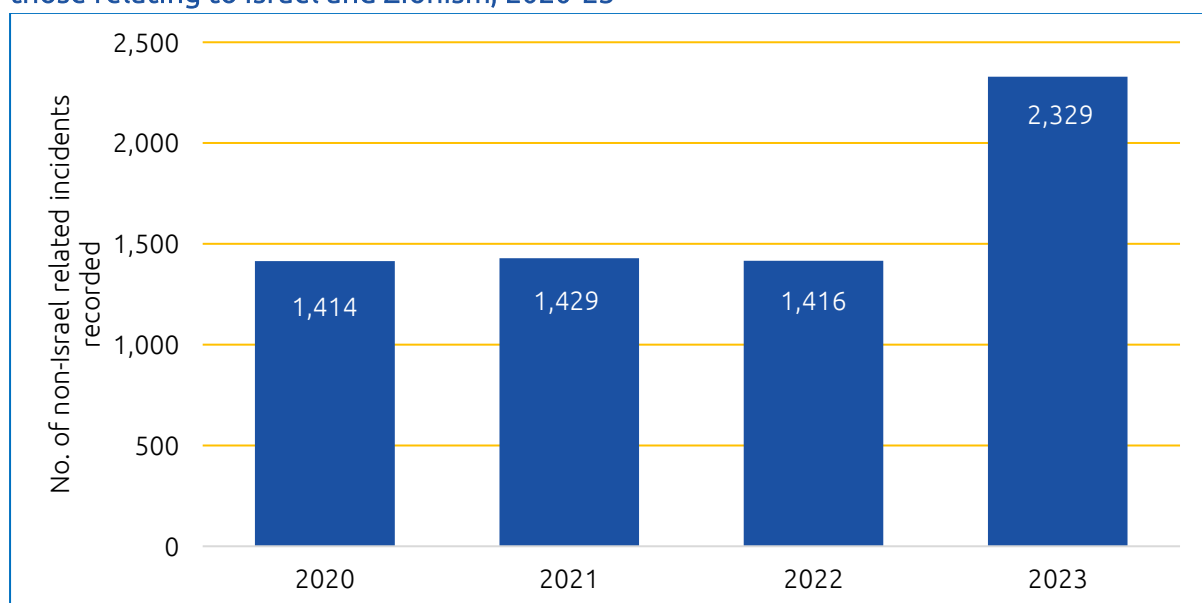
Second, in its most recent annual reports, the CST records how many incidents it includes involved references to Israel. In so doing, it demonstrates that in the recent spike years of 2021 and 2023 an unusually high proportion of the incidents they recorded were Israel-related in some way – the figures for 2021 and 2023 were 27% and 43% respectively, compared to 15% for 2020 and 2022.

⁷ It is worth noting that the CST points to the value of unverified and excluded cases, noting that many “involve suspicious activity or possible hostile reconnaissance at Jewish locations,” so still “play an important role in CST's provision of protection to the community.” Moreover, they note that the psychological effect on those reporting any incident, verified or not, can still be deeply disconcerting.

Putting aside the issue of whether these incidents were or were not antisemitic, the simple identification and quantification of them allows for a valuable statistical exercise. If, experimentally, we remove them, and only include those incidents that in no way reference Israel or Zionism, we can effectively clean the dataset of this issue, and arguably make our assessment more objectively. When we do this, we see a fairly flat trend over 2020-2022, but still a dramatic spike in 2023 (Figure 5).

Analysing the data in this way allows for a considerable part of any subjectivity related to anti-Israel or anti-Zionist statements to be removed, and based on this, it remains reasonable to assume that the 2023 spikes shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 are genuine, and not related solely to an outpouring of non-antisemitic anti-Israel political sentiment.

Figure 5. Number of incidents reported by the Community Security Trust (UK), excluding those relating to Israel and Zionism, 2020-23



Note: The proportion and numbers of of Israel-related incidents in each year were as follows. 2020: 1,628 incidents in total, minus 254 Israel-related incidents (15.2% of total); 2021: 2,255 incidents in total, minus 826 Israel-related incidents (36.6% of total); 2022: 1,662 incidents in total, minus 246 Israel-related incidents (14.8% of total); 2023: 4,103 incidents in total, minus 1774 Israel-related incidents (43.2% of total).

In sum, whilst there are several reasons to query antisemitic incident data, both from the perspective that they may underestimate or overestimate reality, the most fundamental take away – that a significant spike in antisemitism occurred in the immediate post-7 October 2023 period – is almost certainly empirically sound. However, the fact that such a high proportion of incidents that take place are either not reported at all, or are reported to an authority that doesn't collate the data or feed it into a reporting body, strongly suggests that the figures recorded in official incident data constitute significant undercounts.

Indeed, this conclusion has been noted in no uncertain terms by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in a recent report, *Antisemitism in 2022*, where the authors note: “Currently, inadequate recording combined with low reporting rates contributes to a gross underestimation of the extent, nature and characteristics of antisemitism in the EU. This, in turn, limits the ability of policymakers and other stakeholders at the local, national and international levels to take measures and implement courses of action to combat antisemitism effectively and decisively or to assess the effectiveness of existing policies.”⁸

This conclusion should in no way serve to undermine the fundamental value of the exercise of collecting incident data. While imperfect, such data still provide valuable insights into the scope and nature of antisemitism and serve multiple purposes, including analytical insight, incident understanding, victim support and, indeed, bringing public attention to the issue. Yet given the immense challenges concerning antisemitism today, it is essential to understand that the systems used to gather these data are fundamentally unstable – small changes in any areas (e.g. awareness raising, reporting systems, inclusion and exclusion criteria, personnel responsible for monitoring, etc.) will always make comparisons between counts recorded in one year and the next unsteady.⁹ To more accurately measure the scale and extent of antisemitism, and particularly to determine any genuine changes over time, a more stable system that is not subject to such fluctuations is required.

/ The importance of population survey data

The most accurate way to measure changes in the scale and nature of antisemitism over time is to use Jewish population surveys – essentially the equivalent of national crime surveys that are undertaken in many countries – as these draw on full samples of Jewish populations, as opposed to just those who experience and report an incident.

In recent years, as JPR has significantly enhanced its capacity to conduct such surveys of the Jewish populations of the UK, and as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has begun to monitor Jewish opinion and experience across Europe, we have been able to develop a better sense of how many antisemitic incidents may actually be occurring each year, irrespective of whether or not they are reported, or to whom. The results of this type of analysis demonstrate more clearly than ever before that the figures being reported by monitoring agencies constitute, in fact, a small proportion of what is actually occurring.

This is critical work, not least because antisemitic incident data are rarely, if ever, put into the context of Jewish population data as a whole. Indeed, if they were, it is likely that they would actually serve to *diminish* the issue of antisemitism rather than highlight it, even in the context of the unprecedented figures reported for the last few months of 2023.

⁸ See: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). *Antisemitism in 2022. Overview of antisemitic incidents recorded in the EU*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.

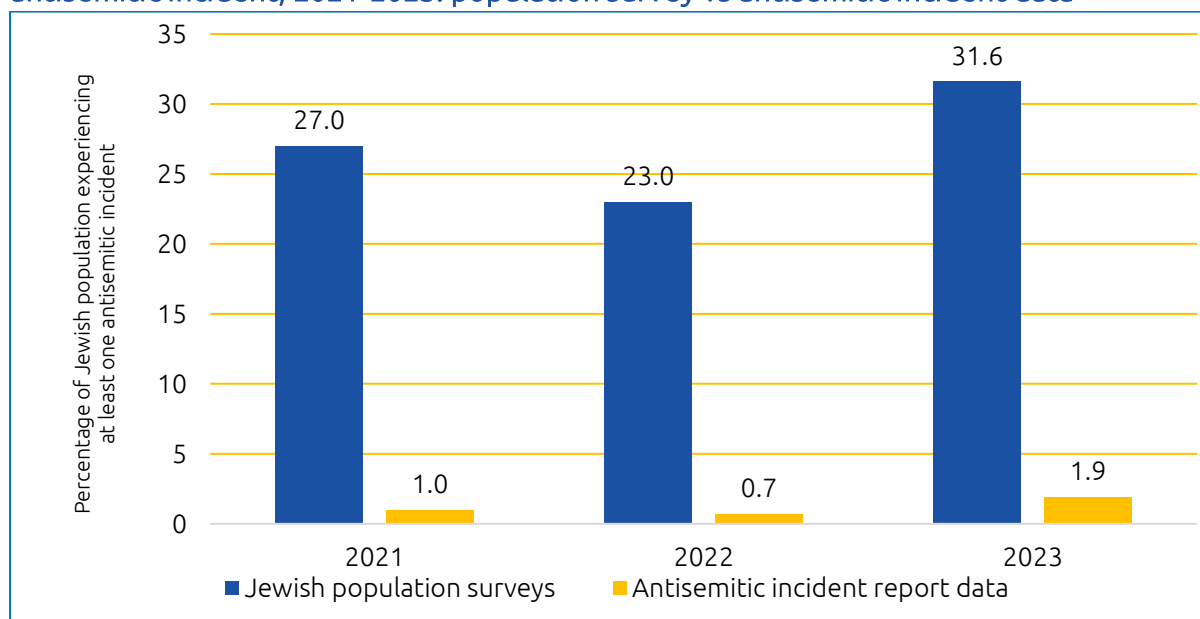
⁹ This issue is by no means unique to antisemitism; it extends to incident data on any type of crime. The UK Statistics Authority has noted that “statistics based on police recorded crime data... do not meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics” and that “police recorded crime figures do not currently provide reliable trends in hate crime.” See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023#section3>.

Why? The 4,103 incidents that were reported and verified by the CST in the UK in 2023 *sounds like* a very high number, particularly when compared to equivalent counts for previous years. But when put into the context of the adult (16 years-plus) UK Jewish population as a whole, which we can minimally estimate at about 221,000,¹⁰ it constitutes just 1.9% of the total. The implication is that 98.1% of adult British Jews *did not* experience an antisemitic incident in 2023. Indeed, the 1.9% estimate is an optimal measure, not least because it assumes that every one of those 4,103 reported incidents happened to separate and distinct individuals, and it is not unreasonable to assume that some people will have experienced and reported more than one incident within a given year.

However, by asking a random sample of the UK Jewish population if they experienced an antisemitic incident within a given time frame, we gain a much more accurate and stable assessment of the extent to which incidents are occurring. Figure 6 shows the results of three surveys undertaken in recent years, in which a sample of adult British Jews was asked whether they had experienced an antisemitic incident of any kind in calendar years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Figure 6. Percentages of the total UK Jewish population experiencing some type of antisemitic incident, 2021-2023: population survey vs antisemitic incident data



Sources: 2021/22: JPR research panel wave 3, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=4,891 (note that data for 2022 exclude any incidents that may have occurred in the last few weeks of the calendar year as data were gathered between November 16 and December 23); 2023: Survation, telephone and online, residents of Great Britain aged 18+ who are religiously or culturally Jewish, n=790 (note that data exclude any incidents that may have occurred in the last few weeks of the calendar year as data were gathered between 6 and 27 November). Note also that proportions from Jewish population surveys apply to the adult Jewish population only; proportions in antisemitic incident report data include incidents involving children. The samples gathered in each of the surveys have been weighted by age, sex, geography and denomination to make them optimally representative of the Jewish population of the UK as a whole.

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics data on Jews by religion and/or ethnicity, 2021 Census. There are several reasons to believe that Jews were somewhat under-enumerated in that census, and ongoing work is being undertaken at JPR to assess this.

With minor variations, the question posed in each case was as follows: *Thinking about your experiences in [year] (i.e. between January 1 and December 31 [year]), did you personally experience any type of antisemitic incident(s) directed at you because you are Jewish?* The response options offered various possibilities, and respondents could select as many as they wished: a physical antisemitic attack; a verbal antisemitic attack; antisemitic discrimination at work or other venue or institution; antisemitic damage to your property; online antisemitic abuse or harassment directed at you personally; other type of incident(s) [write in]; none of these; and 'I am unsure if an incident I experienced was antisemitic.'

The results are illuminating. In 2021 (which included the conflagration between Israel and Hamas in May that prompted one of the spikes identified in some of the incident data shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3), 27% of all British Jewish adults said they experienced at least one of these, compared to just the 1.0% shown in antisemitic incident data for that year. The following year, the equivalent figures were 23.0% compared to 0.7%. In 2023, 31.6% of British Jewish adults said they had experienced an incident, compared to the 1.9% in incident data.

If we apply these proportions to the adult Jewish population, we can loosely estimate that the number of incidents occurring in each of these years was about 60,000 (2021), 51,000 (2022), and 70,000 (2023).¹¹ Looking at this trend over the three years, the population survey data we have appear to support the conclusion gained from incident data that antisemitic incident levels are higher in years when a flare-up in and around Gaza take place, and that the situation in 2023 was worse than previously observed.

Indeed, to further support this, it is worth noting that the most recent survey data we have available, gathered in June/July 2024 among the UK Jewish population, indicate that 33% of adult Jews in the country experienced an antisemitic incident of some kind over the previous nine months or so (i.e. in the period from 7 October 2023 up to the date on which respondents completed the survey in June/July 2024). This is higher than the proportion recorded for 2023 as a whole, yet only covers a nine-month period, so continues to support the case demonstrating an increase in antisemitism post-October 7.

At the same time, the proportionate shifts over the three years differ significantly from incident data: where the CST recorded an increase in incidents of about 150% between 2022 (1,662 incidents) and 2023 (4,103 incidents), survey data indicate about a 40% increase. Thus, whilst both sources demonstrate an increase has occurred, either (a) the recent spike is not as pronounced as antisemitic incident data suggest; and/or (b) the increase did not involve significantly more Jewish people, but rather a larger number of incidents affecting a slightly larger proportion of the Jewish population.

Why might we be seeing such a huge discrepancy between these different sources?

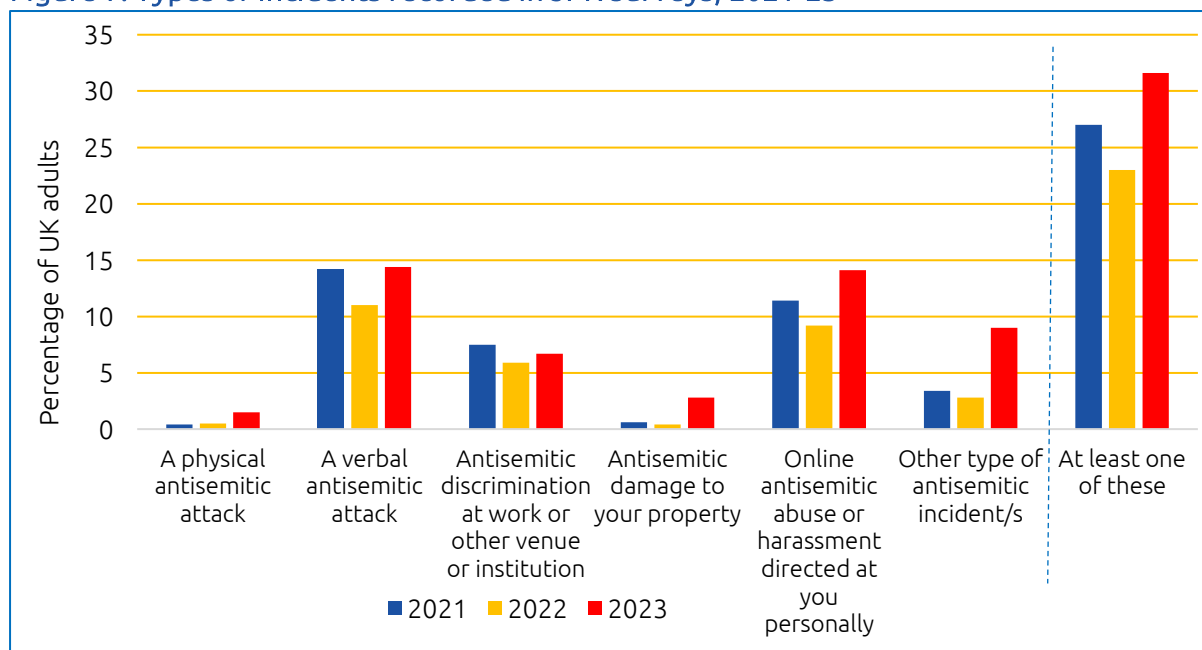
¹¹ Indeed, these are minimal estimates, as (1) they assume that each individual experienced no more than one incident, (2) they exclude cases where respondents expressed some uncertainty about whether the incident they experienced was antisemitic or not; and (3) they exclude any incidents that may have happened to minors (aged under 16 years).

Beyond the simple issue of whether incidents are reported or not, one should also consider the seriousness of the incidents being captured. It is likely that part of the disparity shown between the different data sources is due to this – respondents to a survey may record they have experienced an incident when asked in that way, but not consider reporting it to an authority because they didn't regard it as sufficiently grave at the time. Data from the aforementioned FRA 2018 survey show this clearly: 43% of those who said they had experienced an incident of antisemitic harassment said they did not report it because it was "not serious enough." So survey data appear to be picking up a much broader set of incidents, from the most serious cases of assault to the mildest examples of harassment.

What types of incidents are being captured in these population survey data? Figure 7 provides the details, and shows clearly that the two most common categories are verbal antisemitic attacks, most likely face-to-face, and online antisemitic abuse and harassment, both approximately in the 10% to 15% range in each of the three years shown. Antisemitic discrimination comes next – in the 6% to 8% range.

Interestingly, in each of these categories, the change in 2023 does not appear to be particularly stark; the more striking changes can be seen in physical assaults and vandalism, with the former increasing threefold from 2022 to 2023, and the latter sevenfold over the same period. These constitute quite significant differences when compared to CST antisemitic incident data, particularly in the case of vandalism: where survey data suggest a 600% increase in this category in 2023 over 2022, antisemitic incident data show an increase of just 150%. So whilst the overall trend seen in survey data over these three years mirrors that of antisemitic incident data, it doesn't follow in all manifestations of antisemitism – there are somewhat different trends depending upon what types of incidents are being considered.

Figure 7. Types of incidents recorded in JPR surveys, 2021-23



Sources: 2021/22: JPR research panel wave 3, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=4,891 (note that data for 2022 exclude any incidents that may have occurred in the last few weeks of the calendar year as data were gathered between November 16 and December 23); Survation, telephone and online, residents of Great Britain aged 18+ who are religiously or culturally Jewish, n=790 (note that data exclude any incidents that may have occurred in the last few weeks of the calendar year as data were gathered between 6 and 27 November).

Despite the huge discrepancies between population survey data and antisemitic incident data, it is worth noting that the proportions shown in the survey data in Figure 6 arguably constitute undercounts because they have the opposite problem to antisemitic incident data – they fail to adequately take into consideration the possibility that individuals may have experienced more than one incident.¹²

On the other hand, they may overstate the issue, as unlike in the case of antisemitic incident data, there is no way to verify whether the incidents being referenced in the minds of survey respondents were, in fact, antisemitic. While including the response option “I am unsure if an incident I experienced was antisemitic” is designed to mitigate this,¹³ the data rely on the respondent to make an accurate assessment.

A convenient, if imperfect way to adjust for this at this stage is to apply the rates for unverified incidents recorded in CST antisemitic incident data reports, which were 25.0% (2021), 27.1% (2022) and 34.8% (2023). This approach has numerous shortcomings, but for the sake of the exercise, it results in downward revisions of the estimates shown in Figure 6 for each year to 20.3%, or about 44,900 incidents (2021); 16.8%, or about 37,100 incidents (2022); and 20.6%, or about 45,500 incidents (2023).

However, after probing the data in all of these various ways, the critical points remain the same. First, the numbers of incidents being recorded in police or community statistics constitute significant undercounts. There is far more antisemitism taking place, and there are far more Jews affected, than community and/or police incident data indicate. Second, while every calculation indicates that levels of antisemitism in 2023 were higher than any previous year for which data exist, the extent to which an increase took place that year, and the nature of that increase, is far less clear than it needs to be if appropriate strategies are to be developed to tackle it.

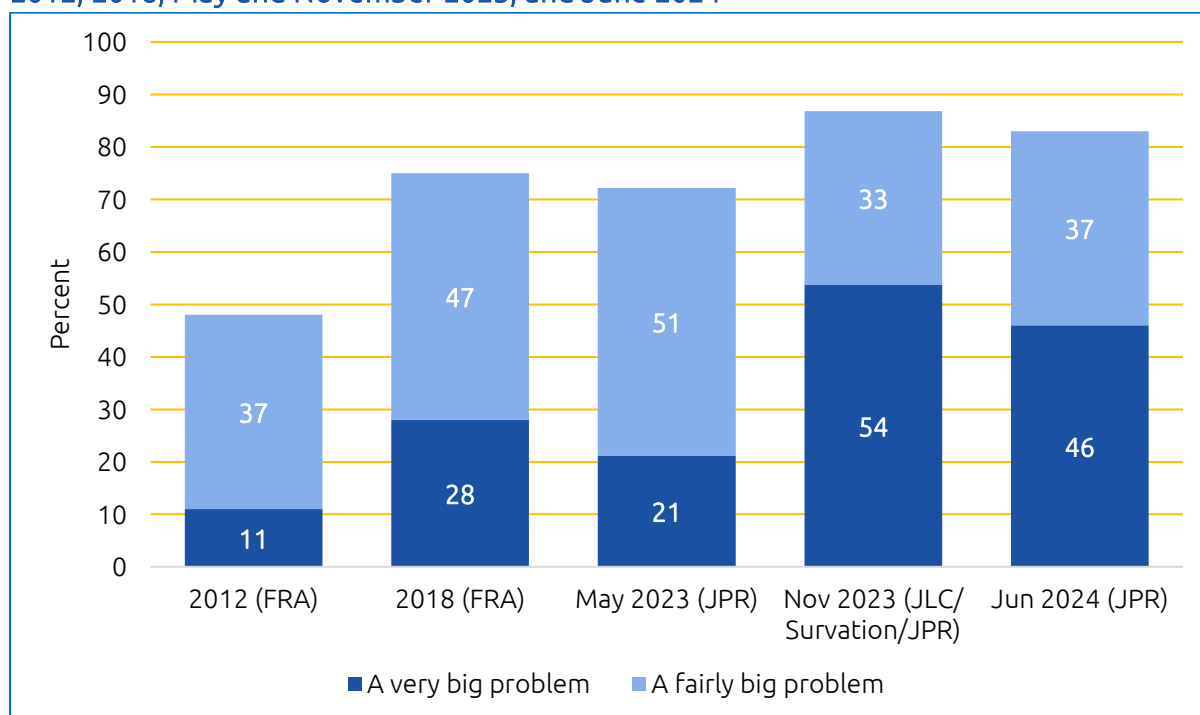
/ The impact on Jewish people’s feelings of safety and security

The fact that antisemitism is more widespread than previously understood offers some context to potentially explain why the proportion of Jews who believe that antisemitism is a problem in the UK has risen dramatically over the past decade. Five separate Jewish population surveys conducted over that period – in 2012, 2018, May 2023, November 2023 and June 2024 – demonstrate this clearly, as shown in Figure 8. The question posed in each instance was: *In your opinion, how big a problem, if at all, is antisemitism in the UK today?*, and the response options offered were: ‘a very big problem’; ‘a fairly big problem’; ‘not a very big problem’; ‘not a problem at all’; and ‘don’t know.’

¹² Jewish population surveys have the capacity to capture this information more accurately and are starting to do so.

¹³ The proportions of each sample that chose this option are: 4.6% (2021); 4.0% (2022); and 4.6% (2023).

Figure 8. The extent to which British Jews feel that antisemitism is a problem in the UK, 2012, 2018, May and November 2023, and June 2024



Note that the time gaps between these five measures are inconsistent. Sources: 2012: FRA, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=1,468; 2018: FRA, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=4,731; May 2023: JPR research panel, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=3,754; November 2023: Survation, telephone, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 18+, 6-27 November, n=790; June 2024: JPR research panel, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=4,676.

The use of consistent sampling methods, weighting, question wording and response option categories helps to ensure that the data shown are broadly comparable, although it is worth noting that the method employed in the November 2023 data differs significantly from that used in the other four surveys, and is based on a considerably smaller sample. Still, the June 2024 data which, methodologically, largely mirror those from May 2023, confirm that a significant shift in opinion has occurred over the course of the interim period, and whilst the latest results suggest a slight improvement since the very immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks, we continue to see a very high degree of concern.

To explain these data in a little more detail, the first two data points – 2012 and 2018 – come from two surveys conducted by a JPR-Ipsos team on behalf of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Both surveys were multinational studies of Jewish populations in several EU Member States, and both included the UK, as the country was still part of the EU in those years. The 2012 results showed that the UK Jewish population was comfortably the *least* likely to define antisemitism as a problem in their country at the time – the 48% who did compared favourably to the equivalent proportions found for Hungary (89%), France (85%) and Belgium (78%), and the approximately 60% found in Germany, Italy and Sweden.¹⁴

¹⁴ FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2013). *Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States: experiences and perceptions of antisemitism*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union (Publications Office), p.16.

However, by the time the FRA repeated the survey in 2018, that situation had deteriorated significantly more or less everywhere, although nowhere more so than in the UK, where it then stood at 75%. It still remained marginally better than several other countries measured at that time, but could no longer be seen as an ‘an exceptional case’:¹⁵ Spain (78%), Hungary (77%), Austria (73%), Netherlands (73%) and Italy (72%) all scored similarly.¹⁶ Closer analysis of the data demonstrated that the increase among British Jews was strongly linked to their concerns about antisemitism in politics at the time – the height of the antisemitism crisis in the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party.

Indeed, Jews in the UK were more concerned about antisemitism in politics in the UK than any other Jewish population in Europe was concerned about the equivalent issue in their countries at that time.¹⁷ The shift in this regard between 2012 and 2018 was particularly striking: whereas 34% of British Jews said antisemitism was a problem in politics in the UK in 2012, 84% said so in 2018.¹⁸

In May 2023, JPR sponsored and ran its own version of the FRA survey in the UK in order to ensure that the FRA data series for the UK was not lost as a result of the country’s withdrawal for the EU and its subsequent exclusion from EU research exercises. By that time, the political context had changed: Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party had been defeated in the 2019 General Election and Sir Keir Starmer had taken over the Labour leadership. Nevertheless, we found that the proportion feeling that antisemitism was a problem in the UK had only fallen slightly – from 75% to 72% – and given the 2%-3% confidence intervals around both figures, Jewish community feelings, in this respect at least, seemed to indicate that little had changed.¹⁹

However, the November 2023 findings were of a different order. At that time, just weeks after the October 7 attacks in Israel, and in the midst of the previously-discussed spike in antisemitic incidents, a Survation survey sponsored by the Jewish Leadership Council and analysed by JPR found that 87% of British Jews perceived antisemitism to be a problem in the UK, the highest proportion ever recorded. Moreover, the proportion defining it as ‘a very big problem’ also jumped substantially, from 21% just prior to October 7, to 54% afterwards. Comparing this measure to the reading gained at the height of the Corbyn era (2018 data) indicates that twice as many British Jews defined antisemitism as a ‘very big’ problem in the UK in November 2023 as did just five years earlier.

¹⁵ See: Staetsky, L. D. and Boyd, J. *The exceptional case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

¹⁶ FRA 2018, op. cit.

¹⁷ The particular concern was about antisemitism in the Labour Party, led at the time by Jeremy Corbyn, which was subsequently condemned for “a culture within the party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it,” following an enquiry by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. See: EHRC report: ‘Investigation into antisemitism in the Labour Party’, October 2020: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/investigation-into-antisemitism-in-the-labour-party.pdf>.

¹⁸ FRA 2013 (op. cit., p.19), and FRA 2018 (op. cit., p.22).

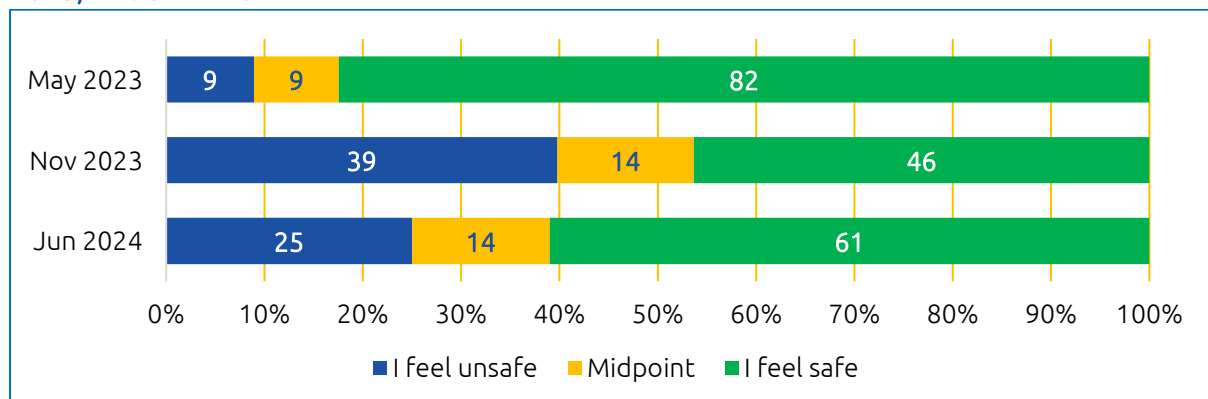
¹⁹ That said, the proportion identifying antisemitism as a problem in political life did fall back more substantially, from 84% in 2018 to 70% in 2023, yet still remained much higher than the equivalent count from 2012 (34%).

Several months on – looking at the results from the JPR Jewish Current Affairs Survey conducted in mid-2024 – we see little improvement on November 2023. A small shift may have occurred, but given the methodological differences between the November 2023 and June 2024 surveys, we shouldn't read too much into that. About half continues to believe that antisemitism is a 'very big' problem in the UK, and most of the remainder maintains that it is a 'fairly big' one.

Another indicator of the change in perceptions that occurred quickly immediately post-October 7 can be seen in other comparative data gathered either side of the Hamas attacks. In JPR's May 2023 survey, British Jews were asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'I feel safe as a Jewish person living in the UK today' using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = very unsafe, and 10 = very safe. That question was first replicated in the November 2023 survey to assess change. The results, shown in Figure 9, are another indicator of the dramatic shift that occurred, with the proportions situating themselves at the unsafe end of the scale (scores 0-4) rising from 9% to 39%, and the proportions at the safe end (scores 6-10) falling from 82% to 46%.

Whilst they had fallen back slightly by the time of the June 2024 survey, which asked the same question again, the change from mid-2023 to mid-2024 (the most methodologically robust comparison) remains evident, climbing from a situation in which one in ten felt unsafe to one in four just a year later.

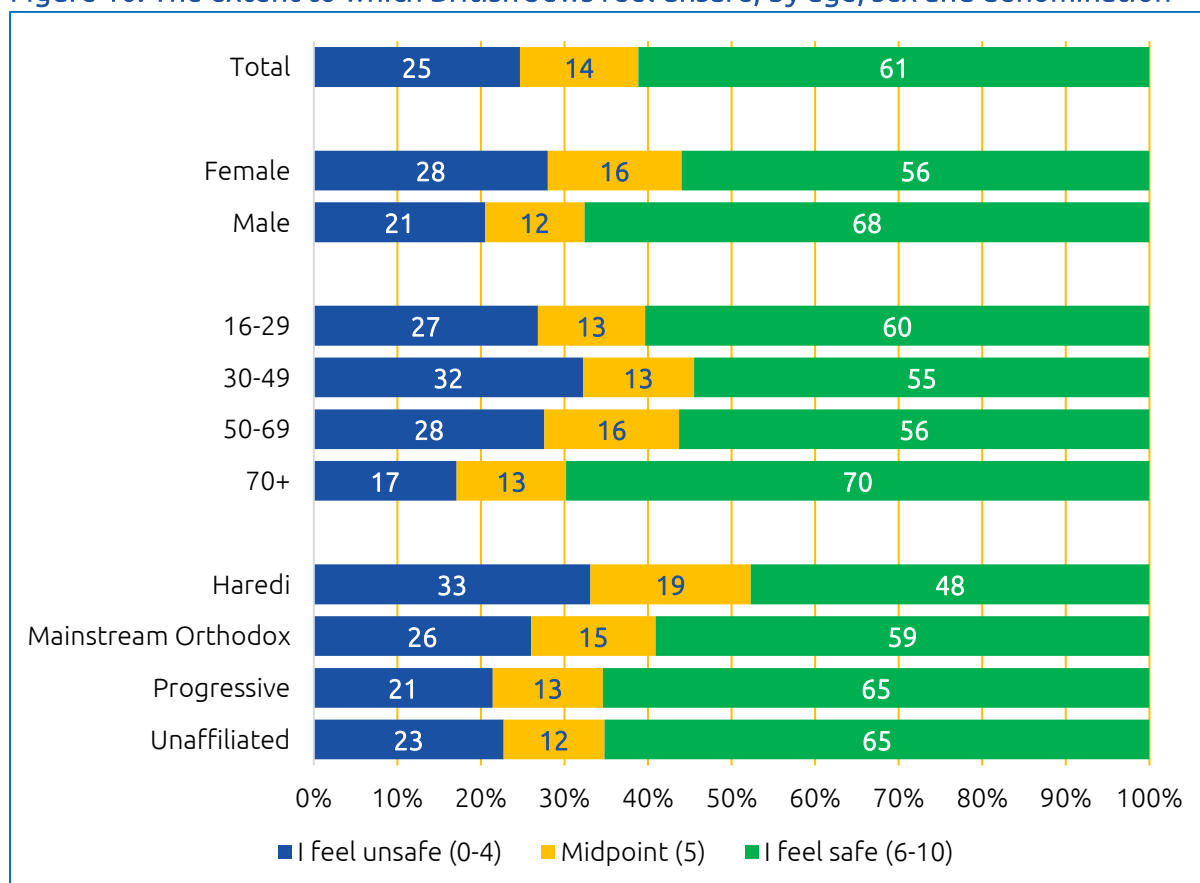
Figure 9. The extent to which British Jews feel safe living in the UK: May 2023, November 2023, and June 2024



Sources: May 2023 – JPR research panel wave 4, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=3,754; November 2023 – Survation, telephone, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 18+, 6-27 November, n=790; June 2024 – JPR research panel wave 6, online, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16+, n=4,676.

Importantly, we can also discern from the same June 2024 source which parts of the Jewish population were more likely to feel unsafe, with women, those aged in the 30-49 bracket, and the more Orthodox (and therefore more identifiably Jewish) standing out (Figure 10).

Figure 10. The extent to which British Jews feel unsafe, by age, sex and denomination



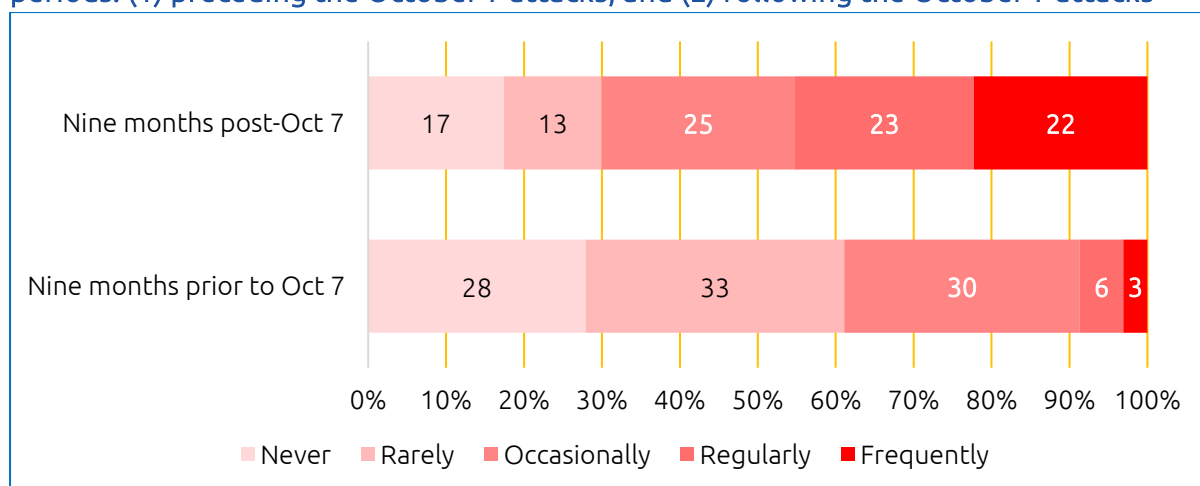
Data from JPR research panel, wave 6 (June/July 2024). n=4,676.

When we consider these findings from recent survey data, the fundamental claim that a sea-change has occurred, both in perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews following the October 7 attacks, is only strengthened. But critically, the results also add depth and context to incident data, and indeed a sense check. The results shared in this paper barely scratch the surface of what survey data can add to our understanding, and fundamentally, the regular exercise of constructing and running such surveys, if undertaken professionally, helps both social scientists and policy specialists to accurately determine where gaps in knowledge, and therefore policy, exist.

The survey JPR conducted in June/July 2024, that focuses on the October 7 attacks and antisemitism in the UK, is a case in point. Given public reaction to the attacks and the subsequent war in Gaza, the research team queried whether the very ways in which antisemitism has been measured to date are even fit for purpose any more. The emphasis on incidents – i.e. physical, verbal, written or online assaults on the individual or small group – fail to capture the real-life effects on Jews of what might be termed ‘ambient’ antisemitism – defaced or torn-down posters, stickers, media reports, online comments, public demonstrations, etc. that, whether strictly antisemitic or not, create an overarching environment that many Jews find uncomfortable, offensive, alienating, frightening or downright hostile. This matters deeply because it relates to the larger concept of quality of life, and developing accurate ways to measure it is arguably of even greater importance today than the regular monitoring of incidents.

An experimental attempt was made to investigate this in the JPR 2024 survey, and the results can be seen in Figure 11. The darker the shade, the more common the experience of ambient antisemitism. As can be seen when comparing the top bar (post-October 7) with the bottom one (pre-October 7), a clear shift has occurred in this respect: about 45% said they had experienced antisemitism around them ‘frequently’ or ‘regularly’ in the nine months following October 7, compared to fewer than 10% in the nine months prior to it.

Figure 11. Experiences of ‘ambient’ antisemitism among Jews in the UK in two nine-month periods: (1) preceding the October 7 attacks; and (2) following the October 7 attacks



Question: *Have you had any experiences that you considered to be antisemitic that were not directed at you personally: in 2023 before the October 7th attacks; in 2023 after the October 7th attacks; in 2024 to the present [note: approximately June/July].* Data from JPR research panel wave 6 (June/July 2024), n=4,676.

If policymakers operating at the communal or governmental levels are to be able to make credible and policy-useful assessments of the scale and nature of antisemitism today, having access to these types of survey data is critical. At present, it is worth noting that neither the organised UK Jewish community nor the British Government invests in them at all, and there has been no tangible reaction whatsoever from either to the post-Brexit reality that such data, while still systematically collected across the EU at its expense, no longer are in the UK. Given the self-evident concerns of British Jews, this seems to us to be an issue that requires immediate and urgent attention.

/ What has prompted the increase in incidents and concern?

On the face of the evidence presented thus far, it seems clear that the October 7 attacks and the subsequent war in Gaza have prompted an unprecedented spike in antisemitism and equally unprecedented levels of insecurity and concern among Jews. Yet the question of *why* this has occurred is rather more thorny. For some, events in Israel and Gaza have uncovered and unleashed a whirlwind of antisemitic sentiment that has both defamed Israel and prompted significant sectors of society to express deep hostility to Jews. For others, Israeli government and military reaction to the attacks has fallen short of international legal and humanitarian standards, so condemnation of Israel, and possibly of Jews who support it, is not only legitimate, but morally essential. Can the data unpack which of these positions is more credible?

The truth is, to assess this empirically, much more work is required, including large-scale and detailed studies of public opinion. And again, the UK falls desperately short on this count, certainly when compared to the European Union. At the present time, the European Commission is undertaking a major study of public attitudes towards Jews and Israel in all 27 EU Member States, in what is likely to be the largest and most extensive survey of its kind ever undertaken in Europe, and the first in a long-term series. The study, which is being conducted by a joint JPR-Ipsos team, is a three-year project costing about €1m, and stands at the heart of the European Commission strategy for combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. But again, the UK is excluded from this survey following its withdrawal from the European Union, and again, the UK Government has singularly failed to date to establish an equivalent research programme for Britain. This is surely unacceptable given the clear evidence demonstrating just how concerned many Jews feel.

Nevertheless, the data outlined thus far, alongside other sources, do allow us the benefit of some insights. First, we should note that antisemitism appears to spike whenever a conflagration occurs in or around Gaza – certainly incident data at the time of recent flare-ups demonstrate that clearly, particularly post-October 7, and survey data largely support that claim. But the cause of such spikes could be prompted variously by (1) anger at Israeli military action that is projected onto Jews elsewhere; (2) deep-set, ideological antisemitic sentiment that is triggered in some way by events; and/or (3) simple ignorance and foolishness. Moreover, individuals acting in a fashion perceived to be antisemitic are commonly reacting to something – perhaps a media report, a social media posting or discussion, an online video or meme – so a question inevitably rises about the extent to which those creating such content are in any way culpable.

One of the most important insights that several researchers have now demonstrated is that a hostile reaction to Israel, and indeed Jews, occurred more or less instantaneously after news of the October 7 attacks first began to filter out, before Israel had reacted in any way whatsoever to them, whether proportionately or not. In its 2023 report on antisemitic incidents, the CST noted that “the speed at which antisemites mobilised in the UK following the Hamas attack shows that, initially at least, the significant increase in anti-Jewish hate was, if anything, a celebration of the Hamas massacre by people whose own hatred was emboldened and, in their minds, legitimised by the brutality enacted on civilians in southern Israel. The first incident inspired by the Hamas attack was reported to CST at 12:55pm on October 7, when a vehicle drove past a synagogue in Hertfordshire with a Palestinian flag attached, windows wound down and an occupant shaking their fist in the air towards the synagogue.”²⁰

²⁰ Community Security Trust *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023*, p.4. See: [https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%202023.1707834969.pdf).

Similarly, the SPCJ in France recorded a daily average of 2.6 incidents in the five days between October 2 and 6; the equivalent figure climbed to 26.8 in the following five days between October 7 and 11. In its 2023 report, the SPCJ notes that “the upsurge began on October 7, coinciding with the surprise attack by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and PLFP. On that day, antisemitic acts increased by over 700% compared to the daily average observed over the years (16 acts recorded).”²¹ Moreover, speaking in July 2024 on the podcast, *Call Me Back*, Jonathan Greenblat, the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League which monitors antisemitism in the United States and worldwide, similarly recalled ADL analysts reporting “a lot of celebration” online among far-left, far-right, Islamist and other political activist groups as early as the morning of Saturday October 7 2023. He also described a “sort of ebullience, joy” among many, including groups not typically associated with extremist anti-Jewish sentiment, such as the Chicago chapter of Black Lives Matter which publicly tweeted hand glider emojis on that day.²²

The aforementioned analysis of online antisemitism in the UK, France and Germany conducted by the ‘Decoding Antisemitism’ project at the Technical University Berlin, reaches much the same conclusion, but in a more empirical manner. In its particularly insightful analysis which covers sentiment in the UK, France and Germany, it found that “Antisemitic content posted in the first week following the attacks (7–13 October) represents a turning point in antisemitic online communication, characterised by *open celebration and affirmation of violence* [my emphasis] inflicted on Israeli civilians by Hamas. In the UK corpus, on average 27% of antisemitic comments affirmed the attacks; in the French data, it was a staggering 55%. By contrast, the German corpora prominently featured the antisemitic concept of Israel’s sole guilt for the conflict (29.6% of all antisemitic comments), pinning responsibility for the October 7 attacks on Israel itself.”²³

Focusing specifically on October 7-10, the authors conclude that “by far the most frequently expressed form of antisemitism [in the UK] was the affirmation and even outright celebration of the Hamas attacks”;²⁴ and “direct or indirect affirmation of violence carried out by Hamas represented by far the most prominent form of antisemitism [in France].”²⁵

This theme – the celebration of the brutal and heinous attacks – was not seen to anywhere near the same extent in the first few days of the Israel-Hamas conflagration in 2021. The only conclusion we can draw is that significant proportions of those expressing antisemitic sentiment in the immediate aftermath of the 2023 attacks thoroughly enjoyed, revelled in and celebrated the murder, rape and incineration of Israelis.

²¹ See: <https://www.spcj.org/antis%C3%A9mitisme/figures-for-antisemitism-france-2023>. As previously noted, the claim that “antisemitic incidents increased” should be qualified – it is based on the numbers of incidents being reported, not on a more objective assessment. Nevertheless, the finding is compelling given similar findings in other data sources.

²² See: Dan Senor, ‘Call Me Back’, Wednesday 10 July 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/2h98vux8>. The use of hand glider emojis and symbols is another example of a coded reference, in this instance to some of the Hamas terrorists parachuting across the Gaza border into Israel on 7 October 2023 (see footnote 5).

²³ Becker, et. al. (2024), *Decoding Antisemitism*, op. cit., p.6.

²⁴ Ibid., p.14.

²⁵ Ibid., p.16.

As if to reinforce what may lie beneath this attitude, it is instructive to note that SPCJ data from France show significant spikes in reported antisemitic incidents at times when no major conflagration was occurring in Israel or Gaza (see Figure 2). The spike seen there in March 2012 coincided with a murderous attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse, in which three Jewish children and their Jewish teacher were murdered by the Islamist extremist, Mohammed Merah. The January 2015 spike coincided with the Islamist terrorist attack by Saïd and Chérif Kouachi on the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris, in which 12 people were murdered and 11 injured, and the subsequent attack on a Parisian kosher supermarket by another Islamist terrorist, Amedy Coulibaly, who murdered four Jews there and took several others hostage. The February 2019 spike was somewhat different – no Islamist terrorist murder took place – but it did coincide with a well-publicised event involving Alain Finkielkraut, the French Jewish essayist and social commentator, who had his life threatened by a French convert to Islam when he chanced upon him on the street in the context of the ‘yellow vest’ protests which were taking place at that time.

With no particular events in Israel or Gaza acting as direct prompts for these incidents, and with all three involving highly aggressive acts by Muslims, one has to contemplate the possibility that spikes in aggression towards European Jews do not occur simply in direct reaction to Israeli military action against the Palestinians, but also because of deep ideological antipathy towards Jews. There is considerable evidence of such hostility among significant parts of the Muslim population, notably but far from exclusively in both France and the UK,²⁶ and it seems this can be triggered quite easily, whether in celebration of an attack by Islamist extremists, or in the context of broader political volatility. In simple terms, there can be little doubt that at least part of the hostility being expressed towards Israel and Jews at different times is fuelled not by legitimate political opinion, but by blatant anti-Jewish racism. The need to measure and analyse such sentiment, in an objective, thorough and consistent manner, ought to be self-evident.

Beyond this claim of underlying ideological hatred towards Israel and Jews, others have pointed the finger of blame at the media for helping to fan the flames of hatred. Indeed, in its 2023 report, the SPCJ in France says this explicitly when discussing the spikes in antisemitic incidents observed at different points in time, as seen in Figure 2. It writes: “This pattern was previously observed after the 2012 attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse (nearly 200% increase) and the 2015 Hypercacher attack (almost 300% increase). In the light of these three episodes, a surprising and worrying phenomenon emerges: *media coverage of the massacre of Jews leads to an increase in antisemitic acts*” [their emphasis].²⁷

²⁶ See: Staetsky, D. (2017). *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Dominique Reynié, (2014). *L’antisémitisme dans l’opinion publique française: Nouveaux éclairages*. Paris: Fondapol; Jikeli, Günther (2015). *Antisemitic Attitudes among Muslims in Europe: A Survey Review*. New York: ISGAP.

²⁷ Service de Protection de le Commanauté Juive (SPCJ), *2023 Rapport sur l’antisémitisme en France*, p.49. See: <https://www.spcj.org/nos-publications/rapport-antis%C3%A9mitisme-2023>.

Drawing such a direct line between a trigger and a reaction is notoriously complex. There are some indicators of this – for example, one of the highest daily counts recorded by SPCJ in the month after the October 7 attacks was on 17 October 2023, the day much of the world’s media was quick to condemn Israel for supposedly killing and injuring hundreds of Palestinians in a massive air strike on the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City. Such reports and casualty counts were subsequently found by senior governmental or military authorities in the US, UK, Canada, France and Italy and several other independent sources to be bogus; the incident itself was caused not by an Israeli missile attack, but rather by Islamic Jihad misfiring a rocket aimed at Israel from within Gaza.

Yet the damage in terms of the antisemitic reaction had already been done. It took *Le Monde* eight days to say that they “were not cautious enough” in their initial claim that the Israeli army was responsible for the explosion; the BBC was only marginally faster to go from its October 17 claim that “it’s hard to see what else this could be... other than an Israeli airstrike,” to its October 23 apology that they were “wrong to speculate in this way.” The *New York Times* initial coverage and subsequent apology followed a similar timeline.

That said, the SPCJ recorded similarly high counts of antisemitic incidents on other specific days in the first month after the October 7, and no such obvious link can be made. So it seems that inaccurate and irresponsible reporting by the media can prompt spikes in antisemitic incidents, but other trigger factors are also significant. To uncover what these are, and when and why they are most potent, requires research work conducted with that very specific question in mind, something that, to the best of my knowledge, has yet to be undertaken in any kind of systematic way. However, one can certainly hypothesise about what might induce antisemitic actions and reactions, and any number of possibilities exist, including local trigger events (such as those seen in France in 2012 and 2015), demonstrations, political statements, media reports, social media campaigns, or deliberate, exploitative, ideological and strategic attempts to undermine Jewish life by bad actors.

The role of social media deserves particular mention. Jews have consistently alluded to this – already in 2012 the FRA survey found that Jews across Europe identified the internet to be the space in which they were most likely to say antisemitism was a problem, and they expressed the same sentiment with even greater emphasis in the FRA surveys of 2018 and 2023.²⁸ Yet the ease with which hostility towards any minority can be stirred up today should be clear to even the most casual observer; Jews are far from the only minority experiencing racist sentiment and experiences. And whilst many factors may be involved in creating a context in which such hostility towards minorities or ‘others’ exists, it is difficult to look far beyond the profound changes that have taken place in information technology over the past decade or so.

Addressing antisemitism requires the development of serious national and international policy on the limits of freedom of speech and the duties and obligations of the individual in an era of unfettered communications.

²⁸ FRA 2013, op. cit., found that 75% of Jews across the eight countries surveyed considered antisemitism on the internet to be a problem; FRA 2018, op. cit., found an equivalent proportion of 89% across the twelve countries surveyed, and FRA 2024, op. cit., found 92% across the thirteen countries surveyed.

/ How is the conflict affecting broader public opinion?

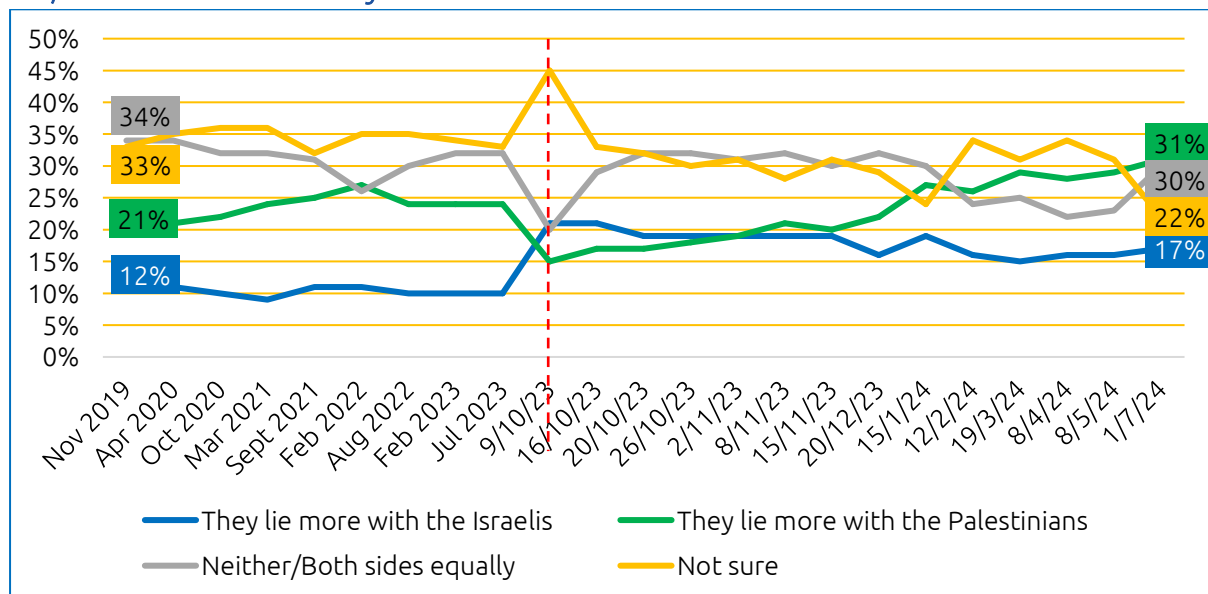
The volatility many Jews have experienced since the October 7 attacks and how aspects of the war in Gaza have been reported in the media and discussed online, create a sense among many Jews that society is becoming increasingly hostile. But is this true?

Again, a lack of investment in the research required to carefully, objectively and systematically measure public opinion limits the ability of policymakers and researchers to make an accurate assessment. Yet some data do exist, and they provide some valuable indicators.

One of the more intriguing data sources has been generated by YouGov, as part of its ongoing work monitoring public opinion more generally. It has been measuring public sympathy towards Israelis and Palestinians biannually for several years, but it stepped up its work in this area in the UK in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks to track opinion much more regularly. The result is that we now have a uniquely detailed picture of how British public opinion has evolved over the course of the war.

Figure 12 tells the story by drawing on 22 separate surveys – nine from before the October 7 attacks, and thirteen since then. The first nine, conducted biannually between November 2019 and July 2023 (i.e. prior to the October 7 attacks), reveal what appears to be a fairly stable picture, with pro-Palestinian sympathy in the range of 21%-27% (average: 24%), and pro-Israeli sympathy notably lower in the range of 9%-12% (average: 10%). Those saying their sympathies lay with ‘neither’ side or ‘both sides equally’ averaged 31% (range 26%-34%), and those with no opinion averaged 34% (range 32%-36%). It is possible that there was more volatility between the data points shown, perhaps particularly around the May 2021 flare-up in Gaza, but if that was the case, these data do not allow us to see it.

Figure 12. Sympathies for Israelis and Palestinians among the general population of the UK, November 2019 to May 2024



Source: YouGov. The dotted red line shows the results for the survey conducted on October 9 2023, two days after the Hamas attacks. Results shown to the left of the red line are consistently spaced out approximately every six months; results shown to the right are based on surveys conducted at much smaller and more irregular intervals. Ns for each survey typically range between 1,650 and 1,800.

Then came the October 7 attacks, and survey data from just two days later show tremendous and immediate change. Sympathy for Israelis jumped from 10% to 21%, and sympathy for the Palestinians fell from 24% to 15%. Those taking neither side also fell – from 32% to 20% – and the ‘don’t knows’ jumped from 33% to 45%. In short, a dramatic realignment occurred in the immediate aftermath of the attacks: sympathy for Palestinians, previously fourteen percentage points ahead of sympathy for Israelis suddenly fell to six percentage points behind, and many of those who previously held the ‘neither side’ or ‘both sides equally’ positions, likely shifted to ‘don’t knows.’

However, the story of pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel sympathies since that point follow very different trajectories. Sympathy for Israelis has gradually fallen, from 21% on October 9, to 17% in July 2024, whereas sympathy for the Palestinians has risen, from 15% to 31% over the same period. The change has particularly occurred since the turn of the year, but the first signs of the trends could already be seen within a week or two of the initial Hamas attacks.

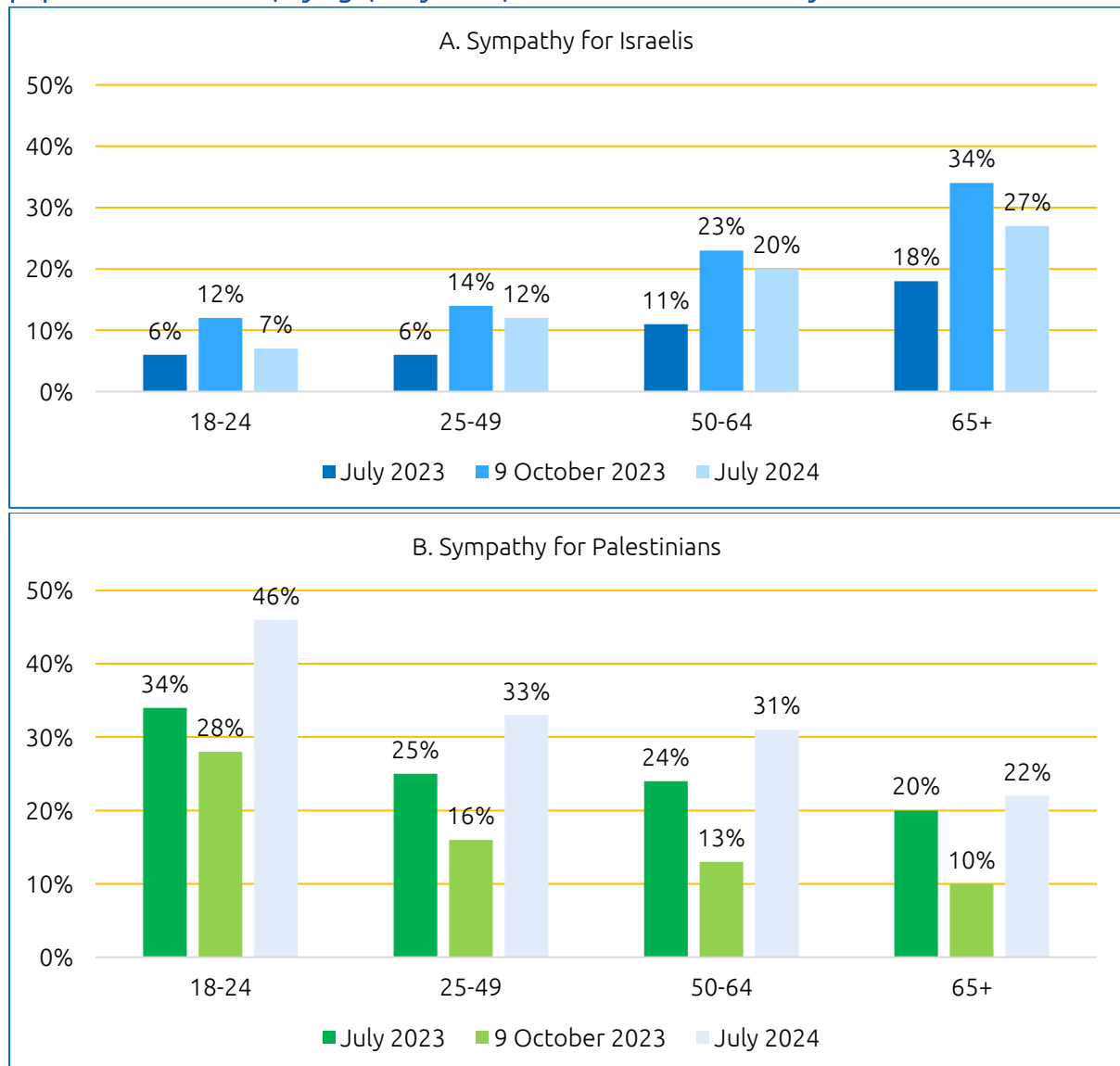
Yet importantly, in the most recent data shown, sympathy levels for both groups are higher than they were immediately prior to the attacks; both, it seems, have gained from those who previously sympathised with neither side or both equally. This suggests that views have hardened somewhat since October 7, with movement both towards the Palestinians and the Israelis, albeit more to the former than the latter.

It is important to note that these figures simply reflect the overall national picture. They become more striking when broken down, most notably by age and political leaning. With regard to the first of these – age – huge distinctions can be observed.

Figure 13 below shows three points in time by age band – two taken a year apart (in July 2023 and July 2024), and a third, in the middle, from October 9 2023, just two days after the Hamas attacks. On the one hand, the patterns in both panels for all four age bands (A = sympathy for Israelis; B = sympathy for Palestinians) show the same trend over time: a rise in sympathy for Israelis and parallel decline in sympathy for the Palestinians immediately following the October 7 attacks, followed by a decline in sympathy for Israelis and parallel rise in sympathy for the Palestinians subsequently.

Yet compared to the three older age bands shown (25-49-year-olds, 50-64-year-olds, and 65-years-old plus), young people (18-24-year-olds) are far less likely to sympathise with Israelis, and far more likely to sympathise with the Palestinians.

Figure 13. Sympathy levels towards Israelis and Palestinians among the general adult population of the UK, by age, July 2023, October 9 2023 and July 2024

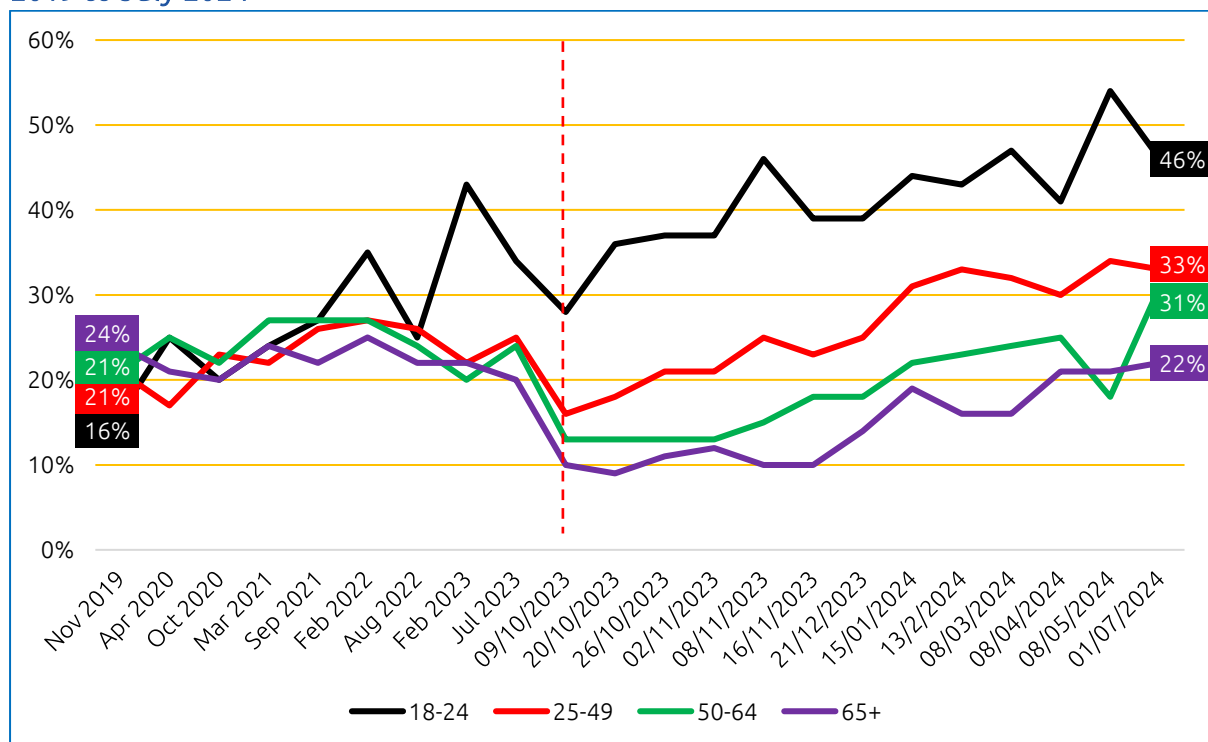


YouGov data, Ns=1,751 (Jul 2023); 2,046 (Oct 2023); 1,788 (July 2024).

Moreover, looking across the two panels in Figure 13, there are extraordinary differences between the oldest and youngest age groups: whereas in the most recent data those aged 65 and above are slightly more likely to sympathise with the Israelis than the Palestinians (27% vs 22%), 18-24-year-olds are much more likely to sympathise with the Palestinians than Israelis (46% vs 7%). Somewhat extraordinarily, 18-24-olds stand out even in the October 9 2023 data, insofar as, even at that moment in time immediately following the worst ever terrorist atrocity against Israelis, they were much more likely to sympathise with the Palestinians than Israelis (28% vs 12%).

To reinforce this point, it is worth looking at how the views of different age bands have evolved over the course of the past few years. Figure 14 below focuses exclusively on levels of sympathy for the Palestinians among the four age groups. Looking at the early part of the chart, in the 2019-21 period, there is little distinction to be drawn by age; indeed, the average levels of sympathy for all four age groups for the first five measurements (November 2019 to September 2021) are all in the range of 22%-24%. That starts to shift in 2022 and July 2023: 18-24-year-olds begin to stand out from the other three groups, with an average reading of 34% compared to 22%-25%. But it is in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks that we begin to see the lines really diverge and a clear age gradient emerge. The same is not the case with regard to sympathy for Israelis. In that case, the age gradient showing higher levels of sympathy the older the age band has been seen consistently going back to November 2019, the earliest point for which these data are available (not shown).

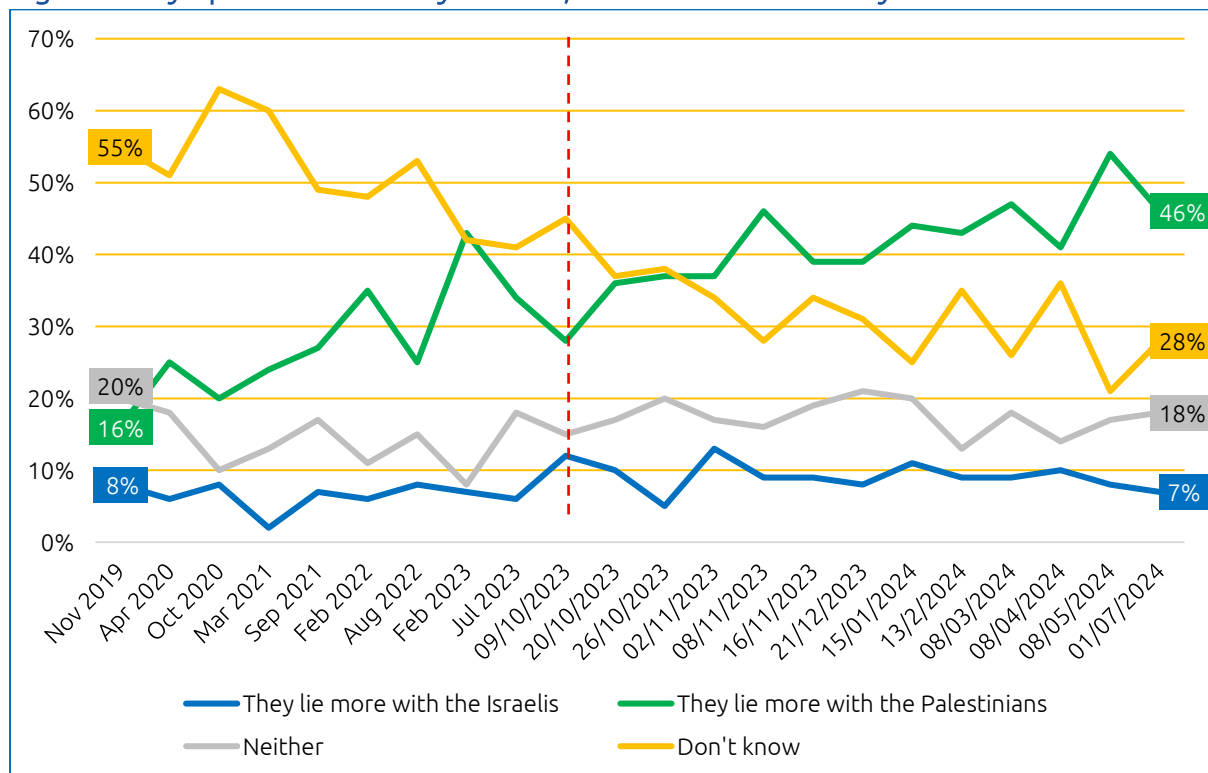
Figure 14. Levels of sympathy for the Palestinians among the UK public, by age, November 2019 to July 2024



YouGov data. Note: the dotted red line shows the results for the survey conducted on October 9 2023, two days after the Hamas attacks. Results shown to the left of the red line are consistently spaced out approximately every six months; results shown to the right are based on surveys conducted at much smaller and more irregular intervals. Ns for each survey typically range between 1,650 and 1,800.

To understand more about the evolution of the sympathies of the youngest age group, their overall responses to the sympathies question across time are shown in Figure 15. Two lines remain more or less steady throughout the period shown: sympathy levels for Israelis, which stay around the 8% mark consistently, and the 'neither/both' position, which fluctuates a little more but is always within a few percentage points of 16%. By contrast, sympathy levels for the Palestinians climb dramatically, as has already been shown, rising from 16% in November 2019 to 46% in July 2024, while those who 'don't know' fall, from 55% in November 2019 to 28% in July 2024. What seems to have happened since the October 7 attacks is that many 18-24-year-olds who previously had no view on the issue, have clearly tied their colours to the Palestinian mast.

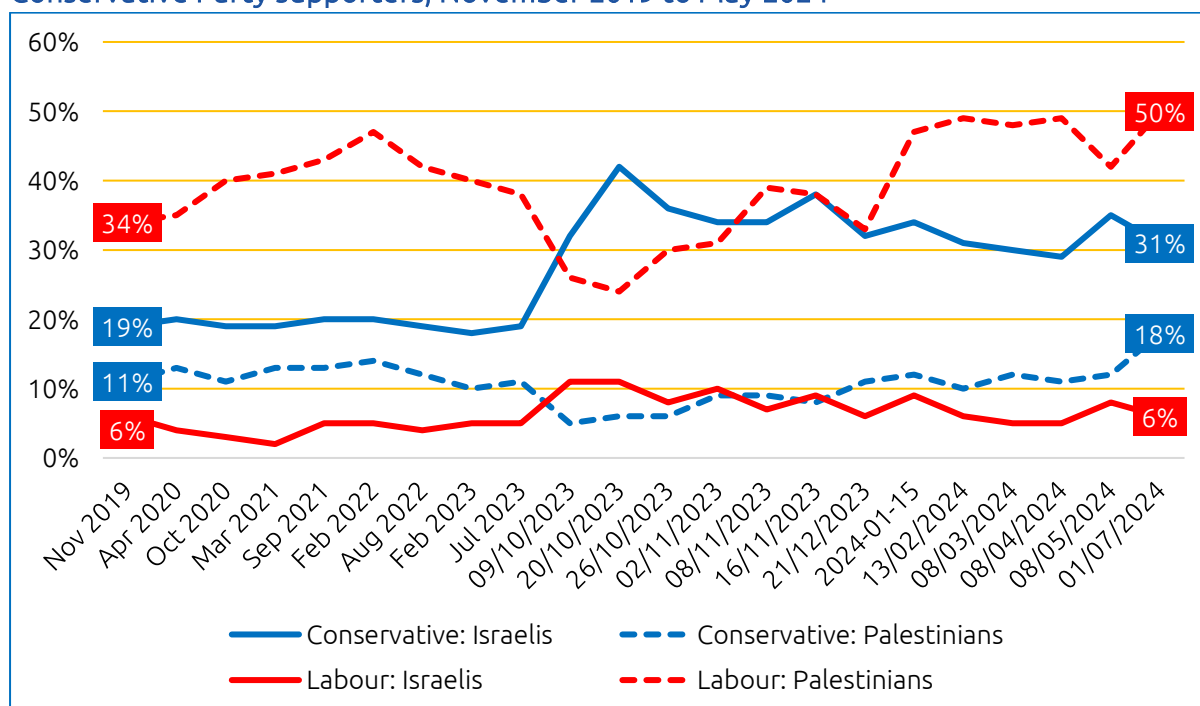
Figure 15. Sympathies of 18-24-year-olds, November 2019 to July 2024



YouGov data. Note: the dotted red line shows the results for the survey conducted on October 9 2023, two days after the Hamas attacks. Results shown to the left of the red line are consistently spaced out approximately every six months; results shown to the right are based on surveys conducted at much smaller and more irregular intervals. Ns for each survey typically range between 1,650 and 1,800.

In addition to age, it is also worth analysing the YouGov data by political leaning. Figure 16 shows the results of the 22 different surveys conducted between November 2019 and July 2024, by party politics, measured at different points either by how individual respondents voted in the 2019 General Election, or by how they might vote if an election was carried out 'tomorrow.' While these are different ways of assessing political leaning, they are sufficiently similar to allow us to create an indicative time series picture.

Figure 16. Levels of sympathy for Israelis and Palestinians among UK Labour Party and Conservative Party supporters, November 2019 to May 2024



YouGov data. Ns for each survey typically range between 1,650 and 1,800.

Focusing first on the two blue lines (Conservative supporters), one can see that they are far more likely to sympathise with Israelis (solid blue line) than with Palestinians (dotted blue line), and that the distinction is much more pronounced since the October 7 attacks than it was prior to them, although it is showing signs of narrowing again over time. By contrast, Labour supporters (red lines) are consistently more likely to sympathise with the Palestinians (dotted red line) than with the Israelis (solid red line), and despite a brief narrowing (but not fundamentally changing) of these positions in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks, the distinction is clear, pronounced, and growing over time. Indeed, these party-political distinctions are so distinct that Conservative supporters are actually *more likely* to sympathise with the Palestinians than Labour supporters are to sympathise with Israelis, and *less likely* to sympathise with Israelis than Labour supporters are to sympathise with Palestinians.

Importantly, none of these data or insights relate directly to antisemitism. Mere sympathy for the Palestinians is not, of course, an indicator of antisemitic sentiment. Yet as discussed previously, part of any anxiety Jews feel has long been affected by the wider context in which they live – the extent to which the social, cultural and political environment feels supportive of, at odds with, or indeed indifferent to, Jewish community concerns and sensibilities.

Jewish quality of life tends to thrive in Diaspora communities when the Jewish and national narratives are aligned – when many of the fundamental values held by both are broadly shared or, at least, perceived to be. It becomes vulnerable when those values diverge – when national sentiment conflicts with, or has limited space for, Jewish feelings, beliefs and ideals. High levels of sympathy for Palestinians alongside low levels of sympathy for Israel, irrespective of the underlying motives, disrupts this alignment, and can create a context that feels uncomfortable to many Jews, even hostile.

That is not to suggest to Jewish people's sympathies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are singular – on the contrary, considerable distinctions exist – but most Jews have significant ties with Israel so have a strong tendency to sympathise with it to some degree. Close to nine in ten British Jews have been to Israel at least once, eight in ten have at least some close friends or family living there, and a similar proportion feels at least somewhat attached to the country; only about one in ten feels no attachment at all.²⁹ Moreover, about half say that 'supporting Israel' is a very important part of their Jewishness, suggesting that, for them, Israel is not simply a country over 2,000 miles away, but also a part of themselves. Thus, when it is attacked, they feel attacked.

One can see signs of the dissonance Jews are feeling in recent data. For example, whilst the vast majority of British Jews believe that pro-Palestinian demonstrations should be allowed in Britain, two-thirds will avoid city centres when such demonstrations are taking place, because they do not feel safe as Jews.³⁰ They want to uphold democratic norms, yet they know that public expressions of sympathy for Palestinians can fuel intimidating or even violent behaviour, and can prompt calls for legal, political and economic sanctions against Israel that can feel personally threatening and a portent of doom. Survey data are also starting to pick up heightened levels of anxiety among Jews, and a small but notable shift in their propensity to be thinking about emigrating to Israel.³¹ As already noted, the very way in which antisemitism is measured is beginning to be questioned by social scientists as Jews sense these types of changes around them – the newfound need to measure 'ambient' antisemitism, as shown in Figure 11, is part of this shift.

The notion that there is a relationship between anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment has been proven empirically, giving clear credence to the common Jewish intuition that any signs of the former are likely to affect the latter.³² And the fact there is so much contentiousness here – exemplified by the often-volatile and even hateful discussions about the IHRA definition of antisemitism, particularly in academia – only serves to exacerbate Jewish feelings of vulnerability and anxiety; accusations of gaslighting feel profoundly alienating. The evidence, imperfect and incomplete as it may be, demonstrates very clearly: levels of antisemitism increased after the October 7 attacks; antisemitism is far more widespread that incident data indicate; and the wider environment in which Jews live feels notably more hostile since October 7 than it did previously.

²⁹ Unpublished JPR Current Affairs Survey data, June/July 2024, self-identifying Jews living in the UK aged 16 or above; n=4,641. See: Boyd, J. (2024). *A year after October 7: British Jewish views on Israel, antisemitism and Jewish life*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (forthcoming).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See: Staetsky, D. (2017). *Antisemitism in Great Britain*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

/ Summary and conclusions

The October 7 2023 attack on Israel was by far and away the worst terrorist atrocity the country has ever experienced. It prompted the Israeli government to unleash a war against Hamas in Gaza that continues to date, and has taken a tremendous toll on both Palestinians and Israelis. At the same time, it has significantly affected the lives of many Jews around the world.

In this analysis, we have focused on some of its effects on Jews in the UK and elsewhere by drawing on data from multiple sources to make an objective assessment. In so doing, we acknowledge the limitations of the data; indeed, one of the most critical findings from this study is that there is insufficient research of suitable quality and accuracy to make comprehensive, reliable and ongoing assessments of Jewish community realities.

A sharper and more systematic programme of research is required, focused on informing understanding of the most important policy questions, if data are to be used to more effectively shape communal and governmental policy on how best to combat antisemitism.

At the very least, this needs to include regular independently-conducted surveys of Jewish people's perceptions and experiences of antisemitism (as are currently conducted periodically by the FRA in some EU Member States), and similarly independent in-depth surveys of attitudes towards Jews and Israel, both among the general population of key countries, and the most important subpopulations therein (as is now conducted periodically across the EU by the European Commission). These need to be part of a governmental strategy to understand and tackle antisemitism, as they are in the EU.

Through scrutiny of data from Jewish population surveys and antisemitic incident counts, this paper demonstrates that there has been a significant uptick in levels of antisemitism in many parts of the world in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks. That uptick is directly related to those attacks and the subsequent war in Gaza; this phenomenon has been seen repeatedly in similar conflagrations in the past but has reached higher levels than seen in the past, insofar as data exist. Whilst the scale and nature of that uptick is contested, the fact of it is empirically genuine – any claims that antisemitic incident data reflect a surge in legitimate criticism of Israeli political or military activity rather than an increase in anti-Jewish harassment or violence are false.

This report has also found that the number of antisemitic incidents reported in incident data constitute a small fraction of the incidents that are taking place. This is for various reasons, most notably reporting rates, but also inconsistencies in whether and to whom incidents are reported, and the ability of Jews themselves to recognise antisemitism when they see it, as it is expressed by bad actors in increasingly opaque ways to avoid detection by authorities.

Equally importantly, the common tendency to utilise antisemitic incident data to quantitatively measure changes in levels of antisemitism over time, is shown to be flawed. While these data can provide possible indicators of change, the systems used to record incidents are simply too unstable to be used for this purpose. This is the case with crime data more generally: police recorded crime figures are not designated as official national statistics in the UK precisely because they do not provide reliable trends in hate crime.

Professionally-run population surveys provide a much more stable means of assessing change over time, yet at present, there is no serious investment being made in this work in the context of antisemitism in the UK, a rather surprising fact given the degree of concern that exists about the issue today. The situation is considerably better in Europe, where the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights runs regular studies in multiple EU Member States to generate this type of data.

Survey data analysed for this report demonstrate that the rise in incidents and the broader context in which Jews find themselves since October 7 have significantly heightened Jewish people's feelings of insecurity. Indeed, this contextual factor is prompting researchers to reconsider how to measure antisemitism today, and to introduce assessments in population surveys of the levels of 'ambient' antisemitism (e.g. defaced or torn-down posters, stickers, media reports, online comments, public demonstrations, etc.) that, whether strictly antisemitic or not, may contribute to a general milieu that feels frightening, alienating or hostile.

Evidence presented here demonstrates that British Jews are experiencing this with much greater frequency than they were prior to the October 7 attacks, and that it is having an adverse effect on their sense of safety as Jews in the country. The factors that contribute to those feelings of insecurity range from blatant antisemitism – notably the open celebration of the October 7 massacre of Israeli civilians in its immediate aftermath – to strong tendencies to sympathise with Palestinians over Israelis, particularly among young adults and Labour Party supporters. While such sympathies are not an indicator of antisemitic sentiment, if expressed in particular ways they can leave Jews feeling misunderstood, vulnerable and unsafe in their own countries.

Many questions remain about the factors that fuel anti-Jewish sentiment, and indeed about where to draw the line between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel. It is clear from existing research that vehement, ideological hostility towards Jews exists, but this needs to be more accurately and consistently measured and understood if policy is to be developed to address it. Better and more consistent methods are also required to understand how traditional and social media may be contributing to or fuelling antisemitic sentiment and action, and what policies are needed in these realms to minimise threats to Jews.

In the final analysis, in our assessment, we are beginning to see clear signs of the types of both direct and ambient antisemitism that cause heightened levels of anxiety and concern among Jews and can significantly affect their quality of life in the countries in which they live. This is being fuelled not only by the situation in Israel, Gaza and the wider Middle East, but also by social and political reaction to it and a deeper, more threatening, ideological hatred of Jews that is being given oxygen as a result.

These observations need to be monitored much more carefully and systematically by high-quality research bodies capable of making accurate and objective assessments. Significant gaps in such research exist at present, including:

- regular surveys of Jews to accurately assess their perceptions and experiences of antisemitism, in the UK and other countries excluded from FRA studies;
- regular surveys of the general population and key subgroups within it to accurately measure antisemitic sentiment in society, in the UK and other countries excluded from European Commission studies;
- regular studies of traditional and social media to measure antisemitic ideation and expression in society and how this affects Jewish life; and
- independent evaluative studies of initiatives designed to combat antisemitism in society to assess their effectiveness and increase their impact.

In the meantime, the findings contained herein should also raise critical larger questions for local, national and international governmental bodies as well as wider civil society, about how to set adequate limits on public discourse and how to engender a more robust sense of individual responsibility for any ideas expressed. Failure to address these issues in effective policy initiatives will, in our assessment, exacerbate Jewish feelings of anxiety and concern, and further damage their quality of life in Western democratic societies that, in recent decades, have been among the most tolerant and accommodating environments Jews have ever known.

/ About the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to positively influence Jewish life. Web: www.jpr.org.uk.

/ About the author

Dr Jonathan Boyd is Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Associate Research Fellow at University College London and a former Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Institute in Israel. A specialist in contemporary Jewish life and antisemitism with expertise in the study of Jews in the UK and across Europe, he is a Board member of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry, and a regular columnist in the Jewish press. He was the academic director for the 2012 and 2018 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) studies of Jewish perceptions and experiences of antisemitism, and is currently Project Director for the first ever European Commission survey of antisemitic attitudes across the EU. He holds a doctorate in education from the University of Nottingham, and an MA and BA in modern Jewish history from University College London.

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