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MIGRATION AS A POTENTIAL DRIVER OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE UK

An Analysis of Available Data

Daniel Allington



THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
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INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM AND POLICY

Oxford • Cambridge • New York • Jerusalem • Toronto • Rome

www.isgap.org

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* Daniel Allington is Reader in Social Analytics at King's College London, Deputy Editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, and a Senior Associate Fellow of the Counter Extremism Group. He has written extensively on antisemitism and extremism, with publications including the ground-breaking open access book, *Islamist Antisemitism: A Neglected Hate* (Counter Extremism Group, 2025). As well as working in the university and think-tank worlds, Allington has provided research, advice, and training to many UK government agencies and civil society organizations.

1. Introduction

The UK is a low-antisemitism country.¹ This may be seen, for example, from the 2025 edition of the ADL Global 100: Index of Antisemitism survey, in which members of representative samples of adult residents of 103 different countries were asked which of a series of eleven anti-semitic statements they considered to be either “definitely” or “probably” true.² In the UK, the percentage of individuals agreeing with six or more of those statements—which the ADL treats as an index of the level of antisemitism within a country’s population—was just 12%, as compared to a mean of 44% across the countries surveyed. Indeed, just eight of the 103 countries surveyed appeared to have lower proportions of residents with such elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes, namely Denmark, Finland, Germany, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

It will be observed that every single one of these other low-antisemitism countries is located either in Western Europe (like the UK) or North America and that all of them were historically Christian nations with Protestant majorities (like the UK). Countries elsewhere in the world—and countries within the aforementioned two regions but with historical Catholic or Orthodox Christian majorities—were placed more highly in this lamentable league table. This trend comes closest to being bucked by France—historically Catholic but long committed to the principle of *laïcité*—which effectively achieved the same score as the UK, at 13%. By contrast, every single one of the ten most antisemitic countries or territories, namely Kuwait, Gaza and the West Bank, Indonesia, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, and Egypt, has a majority-Muslim population, and all but Indonesia are located in the Middle East and North Africa. In survey samples from all of these countries, the proportion of individuals agreeing with six or more of the ADL’s eleven statements was at least 84%. This is all the more remarkable given that only traditional European stereotypes were included in the ADL’s questionnaire (see appendix for the full list). That is, no account was taken of “new” (or Israel-related) antisemitic tropes, such as the idea that Israel is committing a genocide of Palestinian Arabs,³ nor of older

antisemitic beliefs originating outside the historically Christian world, such as the idea that Muslims must kill Jews on or before the Day of Judgment.⁴

In short, the findings of the ADL Global 100 survey suggest that the world now contains two internally contiguous “Jew-hospitable” regions outside Israel, essentially comprising the historically Protestant parts of North America and Western Europe, plus France, with antisemitic attitudes elsewhere being more normalized, particularly in the Muslim world, and—above all—in the Middle East and North Africa. An obvious implication of this finding is that, except insofar as they originate in a small handful of culturally similar places, migratory flows to the UK will tend to raise the proportion of highly antisemitic individuals in that country, much as an influx of seawater will tend to raise the salinity of a freshwater lake.

The question of *how much* the proportion will have been raised or lowered by migrants from any particular country will depend (a) upon the number who made the journey; (b) upon the ratio between the proportions of highly antisemitic individuals in that country and in the UK; and (c) on the propensity of migrants to abandon or retain social attitudes from their country of origin once settled in their new national home. Because the last of these three contributory factors is unknown, no definitive estimate is possible. However, it may be worth considering the first two in order to establish the *plausibility* of the idea of a notable foreign-born contingent among the UK’s hardcore antisemites.

The UK’s Annual Population Survey publishes estimates of the number of the country’s long-term residents from each of the 60 most common countries for overseas-born UK residents to originate in.⁵ If it is reasonable to assume that migrants in the UK are as likely as their source-country compatriots to hold elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes, one may combine these data sources with ADL Global 100 figures to estimate the contribution that migration could *potentially* have made to the prevalence of “old” antisemitic attitudes in the UK. This calculation will not reveal the *actual* proportion of UK residents with elevated levels of such attitudes to have been born overseas, but it may provide a ballpark estimate, given the assumption above. If that estimate is deemed

low, it could perhaps be regarded as grounds for dismissing concerns about migration as a driver of antisemitism. If that estimate is deemed high, it would not in itself prove those concerns justified, but it would at least argue for their plausibility.

It may also be informative to consider the potential contribution specifically made by unauthorized migration. Numbers of irregular migrants from each country are harder to establish, but an estimate may be approached by combining existing estimates for the total number of illegal immigrants in the UK with proportions of detected illegal entrants from each known country of origin, which may themselves be calculated from official data (at the time of writing, the most up-to-date data related to the period from the first quarter of 2018 until the third quarter of 2025).⁶ Combining these figures with the ADL Global 100 index score for each country of origin may similarly enable ballpark estimates of the contribution that illegal immigration could potentially have made to the UK's population of committed antisemites—again, on the assumption that migrants from a country will tend to carry that country's social attitudes with them.

With regard to this core assumption, it is worth drawing attention to L. Daniel Staetsky's 2017 finding that, in the UK, the odds of harboring at least mild antisemitic attitudes are at least doubled by birth outside the country, even after controlling for the effects of political attitudes and demographic variables.⁷ With regard to demographic variables, the same study found religion to be particularly important, with the odds of holding antisemitic attitudes being 2.45 times higher among Muslims than among non-Muslims (again after controls, including for overseas birth).⁸ In other words, migrants and UK-born Muslims (most of whom are likely to be children and grandchildren of migrants) were found to be more likely to hold antisemitic attitudes than UK-born non-Muslims, with migrant Muslims being found to be more likely still to hold such attitudes: findings that have found support in at least one much more recent study.⁹ Staetsky's findings suggest that antisemitic attitudes may be heritable from one generation to the next, such that the children and grandchildren of migrants may make a distinct contribution to levels of antisemitism in the UK, additional to that of migrants themselves. How-

ever, the potential presence of second- and third-generation migrants among highly antisemitic UK-born individuals has been ignored in the calculations made in this paper.

2. Estimated numbers of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes among long-term UK residents born outside the UK

In 2021, there were estimated to be 9.6 million residents in the UK who were born overseas.¹⁰ Figure 1 shows the proportion of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes, as estimated in the reported findings of the ADL Global 100 survey, for the top ten countries of birth for overseas-born UK residents. No percentage is available for Pakistan, because no ADL survey appears to have been conducted there, but it might plausibly be assumed to be similar to that estimated for Bangladesh. It is

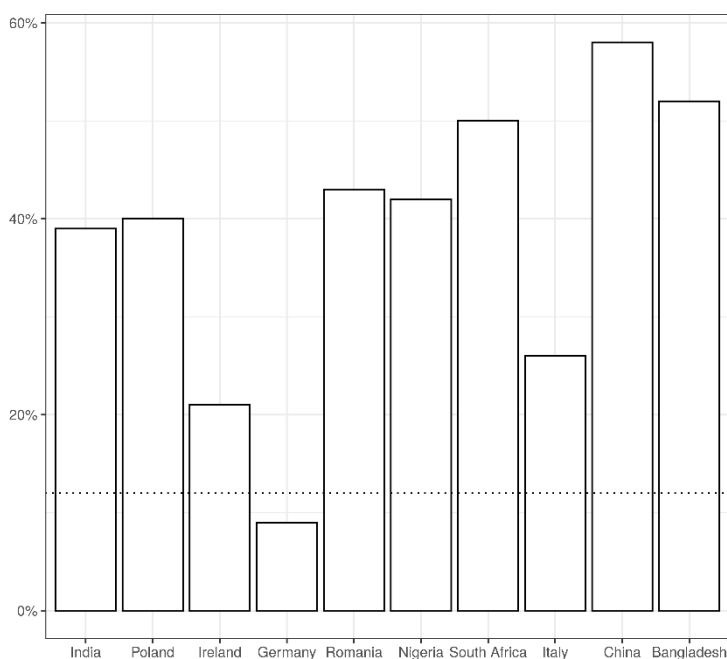


Figure 1: Estimated percentage of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes among residents of the top 10 countries of birth for UK-resident migrants for which an estimate is available, according to the 2025 ADL Global 100 survey (dotted line indicates estimated UK percentage).

notable that only one of the ten countries—Germany—has a smaller proportion of residents that are estimated to hold what the ADL considers to be an elevated level of antisemitic attitudes than the UK on the basis of these survey findings. Germany’s presence in the list is an anomaly, as it appears likely that many UK residents originating within that country will not have been migrants in the usual sense, but children of British military personnel stationed there during the Cold War. Because it was not possible to distinguish this category of British nationals from German migrants, Germany has not been excluded from the analysis conducted here, although it is acknowledged that its presence may potentially incline the findings towards an underestimate of migrant anti-semitism in the UK by exaggerating the true level of migration from one of the world’s small handful of other low-antisemitism countries.

Figure 2 shows the (estimated) absolute numbers of UK residents from each of the top ten countries of birth for migrants resident in that

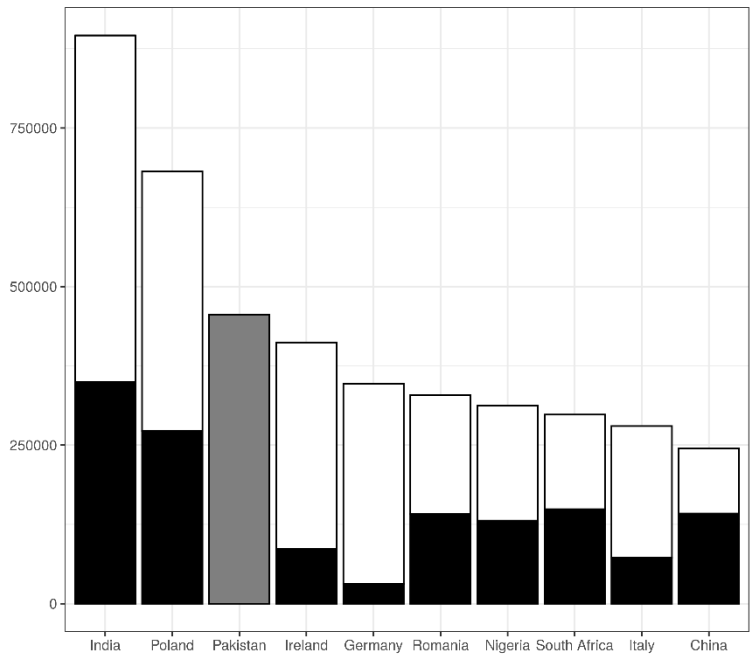


Figure 2: Estimated numbers of UK-resident migrants with and without elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes (according to the ADL’s definition) by country of birth, top 10 countries of birth for UK-resident migrants (black = elevated, white = not elevated, grey = no estimate possible).

country, with and without elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes. Taking into account all of the top 60 countries for which an ADL index score is available, 35% of long-term UK residents born outside the UK would be assumed to hold elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes. To put this into perspective, it would mean that UK residents born outside the UK are 2.95 times more likely to hold such attitudes than members of the wider UK-resident population.

Given a total of 9.6 million foreign-born UK residents, 35% amounts to 3.4 million individuals—which implies that migrants could plausibly account for about 46% of the UK’s population of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes (as defined by the ADL), despite accounting for only about 15% of the country’s overall population. What proportion of the remaining 54% might plausibly be accounted for by children and grandchildren of migrants must here be left an open question, but it is unlikely to be zero.

3. Estimated numbers of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes among irregular entrants to the UK

The above has shown that, despite accounting only for a small proportion of the UK’s overall population, migrants might plausibly account for a large proportion of that country’s population of individuals with entrenched antisemitic views, because of the much higher incidence of elevated levels of antisemitism in the countries from which UK-resident migrants predominantly originate. It is now worth considering whether a similarly disproportionate contribution might plausibly be made by the sub-population of migrants who entered the UK illegally.

Estimates of the UK’s total population of unauthorized migrants range from 595,000 to 745,000, exceeding those for any other European country aside from Germany,¹¹ whose population is significantly larger than that of the UK. This would suggest that such migrants might constitute roughly 1% of the country’s estimated long-term population as of 2021–2022. As it would be unwarranted to assume that people illegally present in the UK will have been adequately represented in surveys, it is

impossible to pronounce definitively on the question of whether highly antisemitic members of this population should be considered to be included in the total number of UK residents estimated to hold elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes (on the basis of the findings of the ADL Global 100 survey). However, that number (and its corresponding percentage) will continue to be referenced as a benchmark.

Analysis of official data indicates that 255,709 individuals were detected entering the UK illegally from the first quarter of 2018 to the third quarter of 2025, of which 4,360 were recorded detections at British ports, 29,445 were inadequately documented air arrivals, 36,656 were recorded detections in the UK, and 185,248 were small boat arrivals, the latter comprising 72% of the total.¹² Other illegal migrants will have entered the country undetected, and a proportion of detected and undetected irregular entrants will have since left the country, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. However, breaking down detections by country of origin will provide an idea of the likely national makeup of the UK's total population of unauthorized migrants, which, combined with the published findings of the ADL Global 100 survey, may in turn facilitate an estimate of absolute numbers of such migrants likely to hold elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes.

Figure 3 shows the estimated proportions of residents with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes for the top ten countries of origin for irregular entrants to the UK for which an ADL index score is available. This excludes detected irregular migrants from countries for which no ADL estimates are available—notably Afghanistan (30,581), Eritrea (25,051), Albania (21,350), Syria (16,601), Somalia (5,149), Ethiopia (4,573), Yemen (3,504), and Sri Lanka (2,589). Detected irregular migrants from each of these countries outnumber detected irregular migrants from the tenth most frequent country of origin for which an ADL survey was conducted, namely Libya (1,758). Also excluded are those migrants who declared themselves to be stateless (3,685) or whose nationality is unknown (3,343). Nevertheless, Figure 3 gives an idea of the very high levels of antisemitism in many of the countries from which illegal migrants have recently tended to arrive. Indeed, the mean antisemitism index score for the top ten sources of illegal immigration for which such a score is available

is 69% higher than that for the top ten countries of origin for UK residents born outside the UK, with all having estimated proportions of residents with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes that are between 2.25 and 8.08 times higher than in the UK. This is to say that, as compared to migrants in general, irregular migrants tend to hail from countries where anti-semitic views are *even more* widespread.

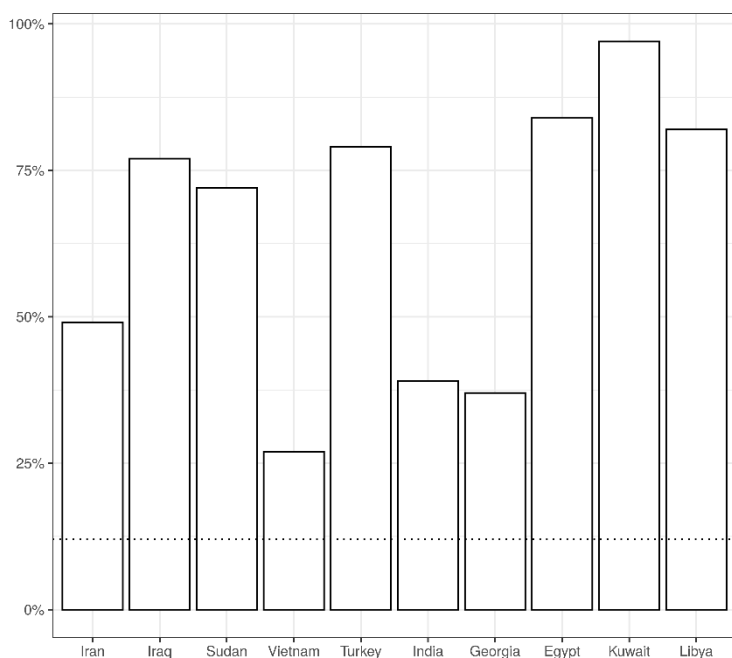


Figure 3: Estimated percentage of individuals with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes among residents of the top 10 sources of detected irregular entrance to the UK for which an estimate is available, according to the 2025 ADL Global 100 survey (dotted line indicates UK percentage).

Figure 4 shows the number of detected irregular migrants from the ten most frequent countries of origin, with estimated numbers of individuals with and without elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes. If we assume irregular migrants to be typical of other residents of their countries of origin with regard to their likelihood of holding elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes, then, among the 132,649 detected irregular entrants from countries of origin for which an ADL index score is available, we would expect to find about 61% with such attitudes. This would imply

that illegal immigrants are 1.72 times more likely to hold elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes than non-UK-born UK residents in general, and 5.08 times more likely to hold such attitudes than members of the general population.

Given the aforementioned estimated total of 595,000–745,000 unauthorized migrants in the UK, these calculations would suggest that the

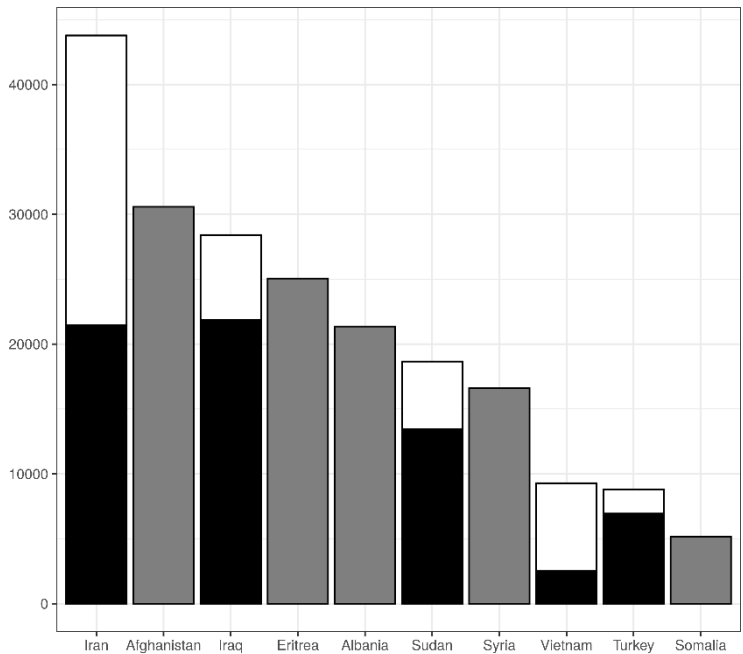


Figure 4: Estimated numbers of detected irregular entrants to the UK with and without elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes (according to the ADL’s definition) by country of origin, top 10 sources of detected irregular entrance to the UK (black = elevated, white = not elevated, grey = no estimate possible).

country is currently home to somewhere between 363,000 and 455,000 unauthorized migrants with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes. To put this into perspective, it implies that, while illegal immigrants constitute only about 1% of the country’s population, they might account for roughly 5%–6% of its population of people with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes, on the (admittedly doubtful) assumption that they will have been proportionately represented within the ADL survey sample for the UK. (Rejection of that assumption would open up the possibility

that the number of people with such attitudes in the UK has been underestimated due to difficulties in surveying people who have entered the country illegally.) To think about it another way, the UK's population of illegal immigrants with elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes might be estimated to be 31%–64% larger than its population of Jews (as estimated by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research).¹³

4. Discussion

This study has found that—absent some unspecified mechanism causing antisemitic attitudes to be shed on or after arrival in the UK—it would be reasonable to expect that just under half of adult UK residents with elevated levels of “old” antisemitic attitudes might have been born overseas, with unauthorized migrants constituting a disproportionately large proportion thereof.

However, the calculations involved may in fact *underestimate* the extent to which antisemitic attitudes have been imported to the UK. As admitted in the Introduction, no account has been taken of “new” antisemitic attitudes, with at least one peer-reviewed study suggesting that such attitudes may also be concentrated among members of migrant communities.¹⁴ Moreover, while it would seem reasonable to assume that traditional anti-Jewish prejudices originating in the Middle East and North Africa might be more prevalent among members of groups also originating in that region than among members of the UK population more generally, such prejudices were not measured in the ADL Global 100 survey (indeed, there currently appears to be no published instrument for measuring them at all).¹⁵ Lastly, this study has nothing to say about individuals born in the UK to parents or grandparents from overseas. If social attitudes are heritable, then it would be reasonable to expect that *well over half* of adult UK residents with elevated levels of “old” antisemitic attitudes might be members of migrant communities, whether or not those individuals personally entered the UK as migrants.

As the author of a recent study observes, immigration has brought many benefits to European countries but has also come with under-acknowledged costs—such as increased jihadist terrorism,¹⁶ with migrants

having been involved in 45% of all Islamist terror plots in Europe during the ten-year period ending in May 2025.¹⁷ Terror attacks are exceptional events. But this paper argues for the plausibility of a wider cost that should also be borne in mind: unless migrants leave behind the typical beliefs and prejudices of the societies from which they come, immigration will tend to entail the importation of social attitudes. (It may, of course, be that migrants *do* in fact leave such beliefs and prejudices behind. But, without convincing evidence that this is so, the prudent assumption would be that they do not.)

Although attitudes toward Jews are the focus of the current study, attitudes toward other groups might also be imported through migratory flows. For example, it appears plausible that specific groups of migrants might be found to hold attitudes toward women and sexual minorities, as well as toward people of other ethnic, religious, or ethno-religious groups, that are strongly at variance from those held by typical members of the general British population. If those attitudes are illiberal, the effect could potentially be to reactivate social problems that had seemed to be approaching resolution, or even to create social problems that would otherwise not have existed. As this paper has shown, the concentration of individuals holding hateful beliefs about a specific group may be so much greater in one country than another that the transfer even of relatively small numbers of people between the two could plausibly have a substantial impact on the attitudinal weather faced by members of that group and thus (perhaps) on their fortunes and security in the destination country.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that such potential social costs be taken into account in immigration policy. While this paper was in press, Islamic State supporter Abdul Ballout's lethal attack on a Pride event in Berlin prompted philosopher Peter Boghossian to argue that political leaders in the West face a choice between, on the one hand, the position that "all immigration from populations whose belief distributions include a violent tail" should be banned on the grounds that "no downstream benefit justifies the recurring murder of [a country's own] citizens," and, on the other hand, the alternative position that "the occasional massacre of gay people is worth it."¹⁸ (The names of various potential target groups can here be substituted for Boghossian's "gay people," just as

various negative outcomes, unnecessary to list here, could be substituted for “occasional massacre.” Jews, too, are a frequent target of violence – including terrorist violence – from members of migrant communities.¹⁹⁾

Deliberately provocative though Boghossian’s formulation of the latter position is, it is the more likely of the two for western governments to adopt: complete elimination of risk is rarely a realistic policy goal. However, acceptance of a non-zero level of risk does not necessarily imply resignation to the most extreme levels of risk. Once it is accepted that migration may potentially have social costs, whether in terms of specific forms of violence or simply in terms of a growth in attitudes deemed socially corrosive, how might governments fulfill their responsibility to mitigate those costs?

There are diverse means by which such mitigation might potentially be achieved. Violence and other forms of crime should of course be dealt with through the penal system: that should go without saying (although a component of Boghossian’s above-quoted argument is the implication that it very often does not). But much could be done upstream of that point, and other approaches will in any case be necessary with regard to problems falling below the criminal threshold. For example, if it is considered desirable to preserve particular aspects of a destination country’s culture (such as traditions of sexual and religious tolerance), migrants from countries or communities that have strong relevant cultural similarities or historical links to the destination country could be prioritized above migrants from countries or communities that do not. Furthermore, it could be required that the decision to accept or reject specific migrants or categories of migrant be made with reference to rigorous assessments of risk with regard to groups already present within the destination country (Jews, women, homosexuals, etc.). Perhaps most importantly, efforts could also be made to facilitate the cultural assimilation of migrants permitted to settle. Indeed, evidence of assimilation could be demanded as a condition of residence.

What should be off the table, however, is any pretense that migration is known *a priori* to be cost-free, whether for the host society as a whole or for specific groups within it (which ultimately amounts to the same thing). That is something to be demonstrated, rather than assumed.

Appendix: ADL Global 100 Index Questions²⁰

A country's ADL Global 100 Index score represents the percentage of respondents who answered "definitely true" or "probably true" to six or more of the following eleven negative stereotypes about Jews:

- Jews' loyalty is only to Israel.
- Jews have too much power in the business world.
- Jews have a lot of irritating faults.
- Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.
- Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind.
- Jews have too much control over global affairs.
- Jews have too much control over the country's government.
- Jews think they are better than other people.
- Jews have too much control over the media.
- Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars.
- People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave.

Notes

- ¹ L. Daniel Staetsky, “The Left, the Right, Christians, Muslims and Detractors of Israel: Who Is Antisemitic in Great Britain in the Early 21st Century?,” *Contemporary Jewry* 40 (2020): 284, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-020-09335-1>.
- ² Anti-Defamation League, “The ADL Global 100: Index of Antisemitism,” January 1, 2025, <https://www.adl.org/adl-global-100-index-antisemitism>.
- ³ For a comprehensive debunking of this accusation, see John Strawson, “Israel, Genocide, and Gaza: The Law and Politics of an Accusation,” *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 9, no. 1, <https://doi.org/10.26613/jca/9.1.204>.
- ⁴ Daniel Allington, *Islamist Antisemitism: A Neglected Hate* (Counter Extremism Group, 2025), 16, 46, 55, <https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/CEG-Islamist-Antisemitism-A-Neglected-Hate.pdf>.
- ⁵ Office for National Statistics (UK), “Population [of the UK] by Country of Birth and Nationality: July 2020 to June 2021,” September 25, 2021, Table 1.3, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunited-kingdombycountryofbirthandnationality/july2020tojune2021>.
- ⁶ Jack Cooper, “Immigration System Statistics, Year Ending September 2025: Irregular Migration—Detailed Datasets,” Data_Irr_D01, UK Home Office, November 27, 2025, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/691af504d140bbbaa59a2875/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-dataset-sep-2025.xlsx> (accessed January 14, 2026; as of publication, this URL redirects to a different file).
- ⁷ Staetsky, “The Left, the Right, Christians,” 279.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.
- ⁹ Daniel Allington, “Antisemitic Attitudes and Anti-Jewish Crime in the UK: Longitudinal Trends, Demographic Predictors, and Policy Implications,” *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 9, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.26613/jca/9.1.201>.
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- ¹¹ Mihnea Cuibus and Peter William Walsh, “Unauthorised Migration in the UK,” Migration Observatory, University of Oxford, January 21, 2025, accessed January 14, 2026, Figure 3, <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/unauthorised-migration-in-the-uk/>.
- ¹² Cooper, “Immigration System Statistics.”
- ¹³ David Graham and Jonathan Boyd, *Jews in Britain in 2021: First Results from the Census of England and Wales* (Institute for Jewish Policy Research,

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- ¹⁴ Allington, “Antisemitic Attitudes.”
 - ¹⁵ Allington, *Islamist Antisemitism*, 24–49, 54, 55–56, 79.
 - ¹⁶ Simon Cottee, *Europe’s Jihadi Migrants: Mapping Migrant Involvement in Jihadi Terrorism in Europe (2015-2025)* (Danube Institute, May 2026), 13, <https://danubeinstitute.hu/en/research/europe-s-jihadi-migrants-mapping-migrant-involvement-in-jihadi-terrorism-in-europe-2015-2025>.
 - ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vi.
 - ¹⁸ Peter Boghossian, “Is the Occasional Massacre of Gay People Worth It to Have More Muslims in Your Society?,” *Peter Boghossian*, Substack, August 6, 2026, <https://boghossian.substack.com/p/is-the-occasional-massacre-of-gay>.
 - ¹⁹ Allington, “Antisemitic Attitudes,” 1–5, 8.
 - ²⁰ “ADL Global 100: Index of Antisemitism: 46% of Adult Population Harbor Antisemitic Attitudes,” posted January 14, 2025, by Anti-Defamation League, YouTube, at 18:43–20:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twAVkOAWGww>.

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