

# The apartheid contention and calls for a boycott

## Examining hostility towards Israel in Great Britain

David Graham and Jonathan Boyd / January 2019

### 1 / Introduction

The nexus between medieval and modern anti-Jewish tropes and the ways in which Zionism, the State of Israel and the actions of its government are questioned, criticised or condemned, have become central to understanding and defining contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. Medieval ideas (such as the canard of blood libel), and late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas (such as the trope that Jews are biologically and racially inferior to other racial groups) are now widely regarded as antisemitic in civilised political discourse. However, contemporary myths, especially those pertaining to Israel (such as the accusation that Israel is deliberately trying to wipe out the Palestinian population, or that Israel is the cause of all the troubles in the Middle East) hold rather more currency. Of course, Israel is a nation state and, like any other nation state, it is, and should be, open to criticism and held to account for its policies and actions. But the challenge arises in determining where to draw the line between legitimate criticism and outright antisemitism; where to identify the point at which robust political discourse slips into hate speech, and normative political behaviour becomes discriminatory or racist.

This issue is being played out in numerous contexts across the world today, from university campuses to the United Nations, from the pages of newspapers to posts on social media. Tensions erupt regularly, both within and beyond the Jewish community, and certainly many Jews and non-Jews living both within and outside Israel consider certain claims by Israel's detractors to be antisemitic. However, as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism states, such claims are not always so – the overall context in which they are made has a bearing on how they should be interpreted.<sup>1</sup>

Thus each case is different, and should be judged on its own terms. Yet it is possible to explore the extent to which people who believe certain hostile claims about Israel simultaneously believe particular tropes about Jews. Whilst this paper is not an attempt to legislate where the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and hate speech should be placed, it does explore the relationship between the likelihood of people holding these views about Israel and holding incontrovertibly anti-Jewish views at the same time. Using data from a representative sample of British people, this paper examines two such claims about Israel to illustrate the problem.

1 The working definition of antisemitism produced by the IHRA outlines eleven examples that "could [be antisemitic], taking into account the overall context." See [www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism) viewed 14/09/2018. The IHRA definition has been widely adopted by governments and political parties across the world to guide their work.

The first is the contention that Israel is an ‘apartheid state’ – i.e. that it has a *de facto* or legally enshrined and racially determined system of segregation and discrimination, enforced by Jews on non-Jews (but especially Israeli Arabs and Palestinians), that has parallels with the system enforced by whites on blacks in South Africa between 1948 and 1994. This analogy has been used in various quarters for some time, especially by strong critics of Israel. The second contention is that Israel should be subject to a boycott, as advanced by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS), a Palestinian-inspired global campaign established in 2005 calling for an economic and cultural boycott of Israel as a mechanism to achieve the political aspirations of the Palestinian people. Whilst these two claims are ostensibly independent, they are habitually intertwined in anti-Israel discourse,<sup>2</sup> not least because one of the principal tools used to fight the South African apartheid system was international, state-sponsored sanctions.

Some empirical evidence that these contentions are considered offensive and antisemitic in the eyes of many Jews was revealed in a 2012 survey about Jewish people’s perceptions and experiences of antisemitism, which found that two out of three British Jews (67%) would consider a non-Jewish person who endorsed a boycott of Israeli goods and products to be either ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ antisemitic.<sup>3</sup> Although equivalent data are not available regarding Jewish people’s feelings towards the accusation that Israel is an apartheid state, it is reasonable to assume that a majority of Jews would also consider such a person to be similarly antisemitic, given that such claims are often made in tandem.

The data for the present analysis have been taken from a nationally representative sample of 4,005 people in Great Britain aged sixteen and above, carried out by JPR, in partnership with the Community Security Trust and the research company, Ipsos MORI, between October 2016 and February 2017. Half of the sample was gathered in face-to-face interviews and half was gathered online, using an online panel maintained by Ipsos MORI. For a detailed description of the original survey methodology and its key findings, see JPR’s report, *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain*, by Daniel Staetsky.<sup>4</sup>



**21% believe, to some extent, that Israel is an apartheid state: 10% feel that people should boycott Israeli goods and products**

Respondents to the survey were presented with a list of twelve randomly ordered statements about the State of Israel and Israelis, some of which were designed to resemble common antisemitic tropes, such as Israel being exploitative and overly powerful (see box on page 3). The question read, “*And now I’d like to show you some statements that people have made about Israel. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree about each one.*” As stated above, two of the statements that followed form the focus of this paper: “*People should boycott Israeli goods and products*” and “*Israel is an apartheid state.*” The response options offered were: ‘Strongly agree’; ‘Tend to agree’; ‘Neither agree nor disagree’; ‘Tend to disagree’; ‘Strongly disagree’; ‘Don’t know’; and ‘Prefer not to say.’

2 For example, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign claims inspiration from ‘the South African anti-apartheid movement’ (<https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>) viewed 13/09/2018.

3 See Figure 10, p.17 of: Staetsky, L.D. and Boyd, J. (2014). *The Exceptional Case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*, London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. The question asked: “And in your opinion, would you consider a non-Jewish person to be antisemitic if he or she:” followed by six randomised options, one of which was “Supports boycotts of Israeli goods/products”.

4 See Methodology section (pp.67–82) of: Staetsky, L.D. (2017). *Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain: A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, London. Note the data in the present analysis are unweighted since the sample is considered to be representative.

**The 12 statements about Israel that were tested in the original survey, with proportions who said they ‘Tend to agree’ or ‘Strongly agree’ shown in brackets**

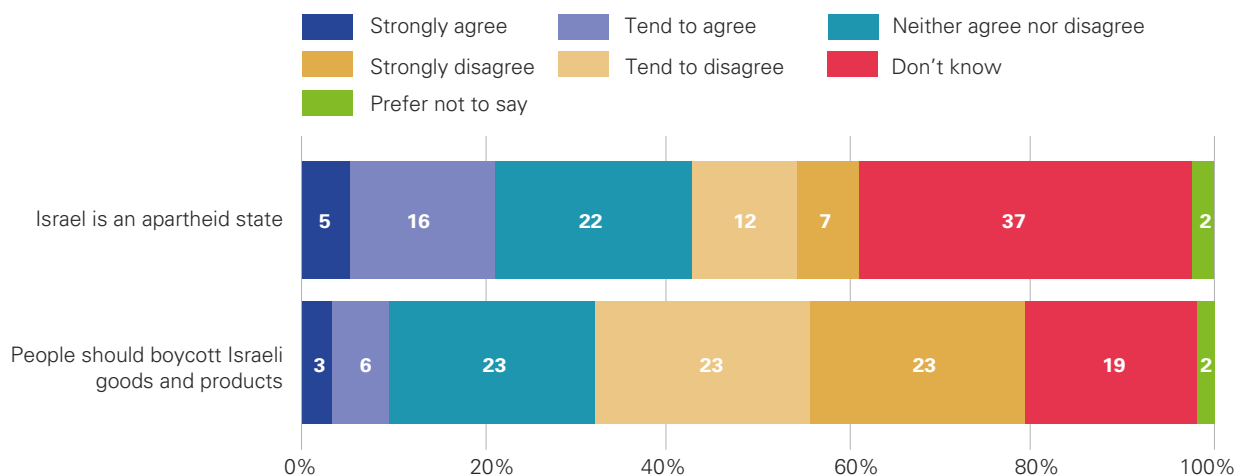
- Israel is committing mass murder in Palestine (24%)
- Israel is deliberately trying to wipe out the Palestinian population (23%)
- Israel is an apartheid state (21%)
- The interests of Israel are at odds with the interests of the rest of the world (18%)
- Israel has too much control over global affairs (17%)
- Israel exploits Holocaust victimhood for its own purposes (13%)
- Israel is the cause of all the troubles in the Middle East (10%)
- People should boycott Israeli goods and products (10%)
- Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East (25% disagree)
- The State of Israel makes a positive contribution to global society (15% disagree)
- The State of Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish People (12% disagree)
- The State of Israel has every right to exist (5% disagree)

**2 / Topline findings**

The proportion of respondents who said they ‘Strongly agree’ that “Israel is an apartheid state” is small (5%), although adding those who said they ‘Tend to agree’ with this claim increases the proportion to more than one in five (21%). Asked whether “People should boycott Israeli goods and products,” just 3% said that they ‘Strongly agree’ with the idea, with a total of one in ten (10%) agreeing to at least some extent. Almost five times as many people disagreed (47%) than agreed (10%) with the notion of a boycott (see Figure 1).

Thus, British people are more than twice as likely to contend that Israel is an apartheid state than they are to believe it should be boycotted, but levels of agreement and disagreement with the apartheid contention are similar to each other. However, it is also important to note that very high proportions of people reported ‘Don’t know’ in relation to each statement. Such responses should not necessarily be conflated with a non-committal view as, theoretically, this would have been captured by the middle-ground response category ‘Neither

**Figure 1. Responses to the two statements: ‘Israel is an apartheid state’ and ‘People should boycott Israeli goods and products’**



agree nor disagree.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, almost two out of five (37%) people found that they were unable to offer a view as to whether or not they believe Israel to be an apartheid state. A lower, though by the standards of similar surveys, still high proportion of almost one in five (19%) said they did not know whether or not Israel should be boycotted. In sum, many people are simply unable to offer an opinion on these two contentions, though that is more likely to be the case for the apartheid claim than the boycott one.



### Many people are simply unable to offer an opinion on either the apartheid claim or the boycott contention

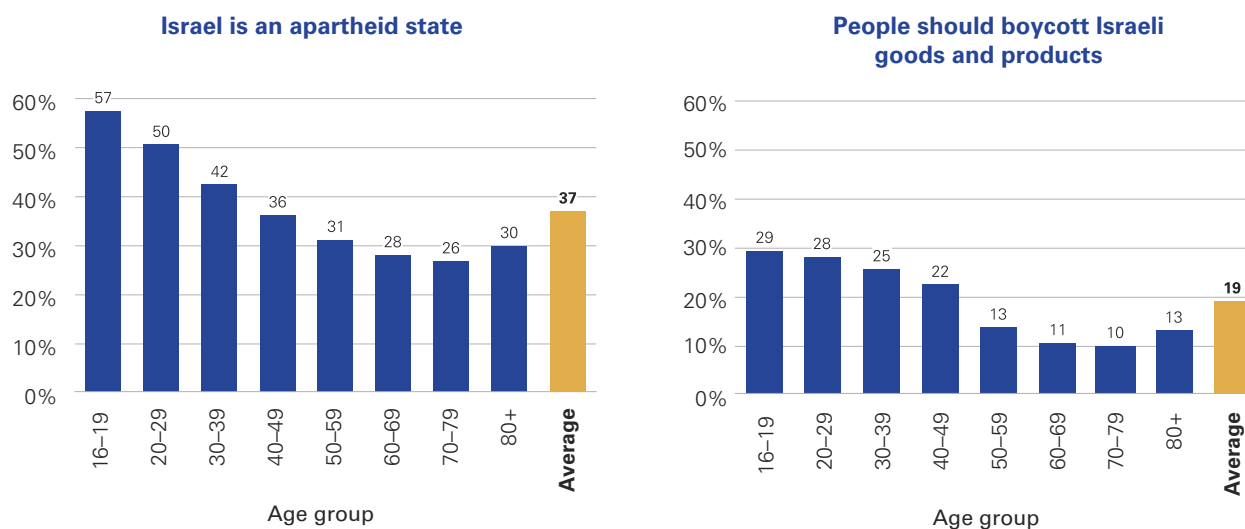
The remainder of this paper focuses on investigating the differences between those who agree and those who disagree with these two statements. Do people who believe Israel is an apartheid state and those who support a boycott differ in any substantive ways from those who do not, including in their general attitudes towards Jews? However, given the large size of the groups who responded 'Don't know' to these questions, the study begins by examining those who were unable to offer an opinion, not because they were torn about which side of each argument to come down on, but because they could not answer the question, presumably due to a lack of knowledge or information to draw upon to make a judgement, be that equivocal or otherwise.

### 3 / Examining the 'Don't knows'

It is all too easy in heated debates about complex political matters to forget, or even dismiss, the fact that not everyone has an opinion, perhaps because they are uninterested in the issue under discussion or because they lack the information or knowledge to take a position. As noted, the proportions of British people reporting 'Don't know' are particularly high, especially regarding the apartheid state contention (Figure 1).

Such high levels of non-response among British people have been indicated elsewhere with respect to Israel attitudes,<sup>6</sup> and in the present analysis, they demand further investigation. First, we find that 'Don't know' is *not a random response*.<sup>7</sup> Demographically, for both statements, the younger the respondents are, the more likely they are to report 'Don't know.' Regarding the apartheid statement, well over half (57%) of those aged 16 to 19 report 'Don't know' compared with just over a quarter (27%) of those aged 70 and above (Figure 2). A second demographic difference is observed between men and women: women are far more likely to report 'Don't know' than men, again in relation to both statements. Whilst 28% of men do not have an opinion as to whether Israel is an apartheid state, this is the case for 45% of women. Similarly, 14% of men do not have an opinion about boycotting Israel, compared with 23% of women. This gender divergence most likely reflects psychological and sociological differences between the willingness of men and women to openly express political attitudes, as has been noted elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

- 5 Some studies have shown that neutral options may be chosen by respondents who wish to avoid reporting 'Don't know' and thereby admitting their ignorance. This possibility is discussed below. See Sturgis P, Roberts C, and Smith P 2014 'Middle Alternatives Revisited: How the neither/nor Response Acts as a Way of Saying "I Don't Know"?' *Sociological Methods & Research*, Vol 43(1) 15–38.
- 6 When asked about their 'feelings towards Israel,' 63% of a nationally representative sample of British university students reported having 'No feelings either way.' However, an equivocal, midway option was not offered in this survey. See Graham, D. and Boyd, J. (2011). *Home and away: Jewish journeys towards independence: Key findings from the 2011 National Jewish Student Survey*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.46.
- 7 Despite some findings to the contrary (Sturgis et. al., 2014, op. cit.), the same cannot be said for neutral responses in this instance. Whilst it cannot be ruled out that some respondents chose the neutral response to avoid reporting 'Don't know' (note half the sample was conducted by face-to-face interviews), a cursory analysis of neutral respondents suggests that on average, they *do* differ in profile to those reporting 'Don't know' in terms of age, sex and education.
- 8 Atkeson, L.R. and Rapoport, R.B. 2003 The more things change the more they stay the same: Examining gender differences in political attitude expression, 1952–2000 *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Winter 2003, Vol. 67 Issue 4, pp.495–521.

**Figure 2. Proportion responding 'Don't know' to each statement by age**

There are also important differences depending on respondents' educational background. Higher levels of educational achievement are associated with a lower likelihood of reporting 'Don't know' to both statements, implying that levels of knowledge are a likely factor. For example, regarding the apartheid statement, among those (aged 25 and above) with no formal qualifications, 42% had no opinion ('Don't know') compared with 24% of those with Masters level qualifications or above. Less surprising, though no doubt related, is the finding that self-assessed levels of knowledge about "the term 'Zionism'" are also directly related to the likelihood of reporting 'Don't know': the less people say they know about Zionism, the more likely they are to report 'Don't know' to both statements.

Finally, why might so many more people report 'Don't know' to the apartheid state contention than the Israel boycott contention? One possible explanation lies in relation to people's understanding of the key terms in each statement: 'apartheid' and 'boycott.' Whilst *boycott* is commonly used in everyday parlance, *apartheid* is a somewhat esoteric political term. Also, choosing to support or oppose a boycott (whatever the cause may be) does not necessarily presuppose or demand much knowledge; a choice can be based on little more than personal perceptions of good and bad. But the same cannot be said of labelling a political system

apartheid which, presumably, requires some level of understanding not only about the meaning of the term but also about whether it is applicable to a particular case.

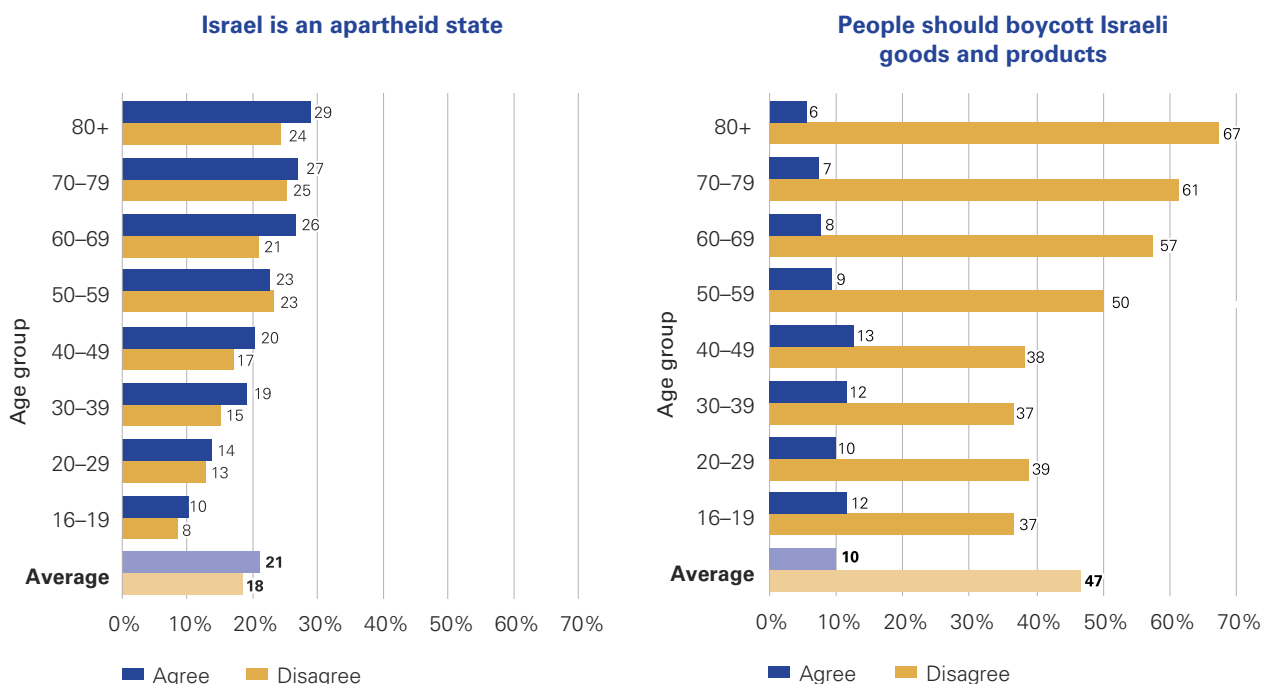
In sum, a large proportion of respondents chose not to offer, or could not offer, an opinion concerning either contention. Yet such a 'Don't know' response is not random. It is far more likely to occur among women than men, among younger people than older people, and among the less educated than the more educated. This suggests that knowledge, or a lack of knowledge, of the situation in Israel is a key factor in reporting an opinion, although a psychological component is likely also involved.

## 4 / Who is for and who is against?

### Age, sex, education, knowledge

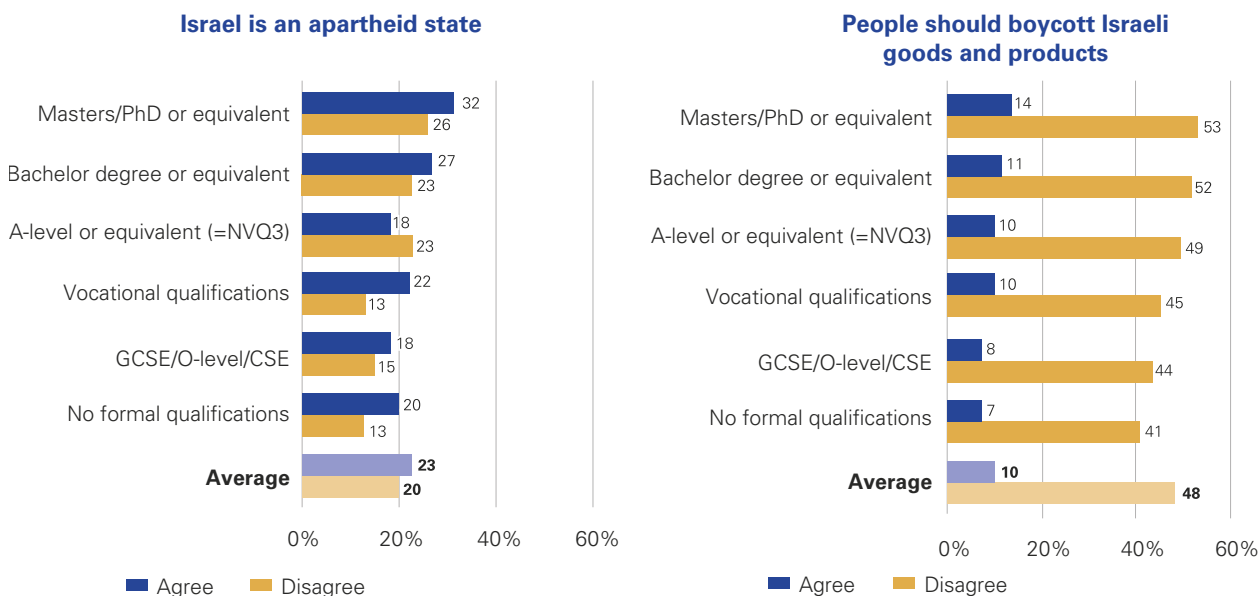
So, who are those people with crystallised opinions on Israel? Whilst we have seen that age corresponds to whether or not a person holds an opinion of any kind, to what extent does it correspond to the *nature* of that opinion? Regarding the apartheid claim, the answer is that age is *not* a factor (Figure 3). The relative balance between support and opposition to the apartheid contention is constant with age – agreement is slightly ahead of disagreement for almost all age cohorts. The main trend is that the

**Figure 3. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement by age group\***



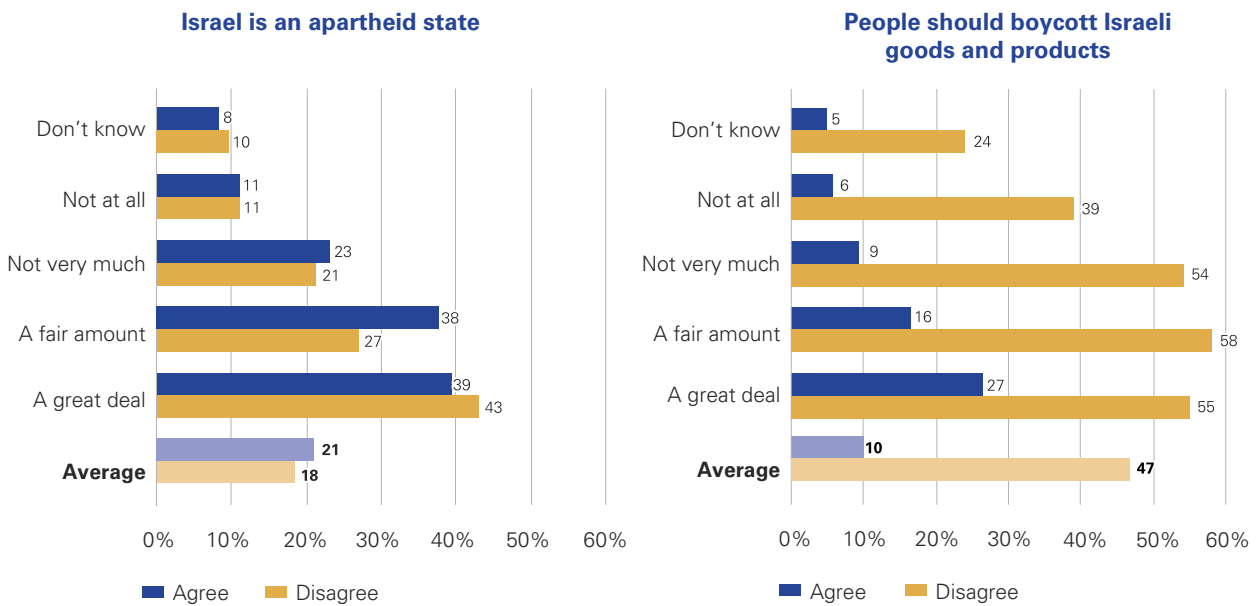
\* Agree = Strongly agree + Tend to agree, Disagree = Strongly disagree + Tend to disagree; the remainder (not shown) = 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'.

**Figure 4. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement by level of educational achievement\***



\* Agree = Strongly agree + Tend to agree, Disagree = Strongly disagree + Tend to disagree; the remainder (not shown) = 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'. The data relate only to all those aged 25 and above.

**Figure 5. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement by responses to the question “How much, if at all, do you know about the term ‘Zionism?’”\***



\* Agree = Strongly agree + Tend to agree, Disagree = Strongly disagree + Tend to disagree; the remainder (not shown) = 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'.

older one is, the greater the likelihood of having an opinion on the apartheid claim becomes, be it for or against. By contrast, the boycott statement evinces a strong and increasing likelihood of *disagreement* with age, although the pattern only sets in from the late forties onwards.

Regarding gender, there is very little difference between the attitudes of male and female respondents to both statements, once 'Don't know' responses are controlled for.

### **Educational attainment impacts the likelihood of having an opinion but not what the opinion actually is**

Similar response patterns are exhibited with respect to increasing levels of education. The more educated are no different from the less educated with respect to whether they believe Israel is an apartheid state or whether they support a boycott. The higher the educational

level attained, the more likely people are to express an opinion, but education does *not* appear to impact upon what that opinion is likely to be (Figure 4). In each case, the greater the level of education, the greater the likelihood respondents agree or disagree with the two statements. This relationship is more pronounced regarding the boycott contention but is nevertheless also evident for the apartheid one. This suggests that education does not necessarily inform one's position in any particular way on either statement.

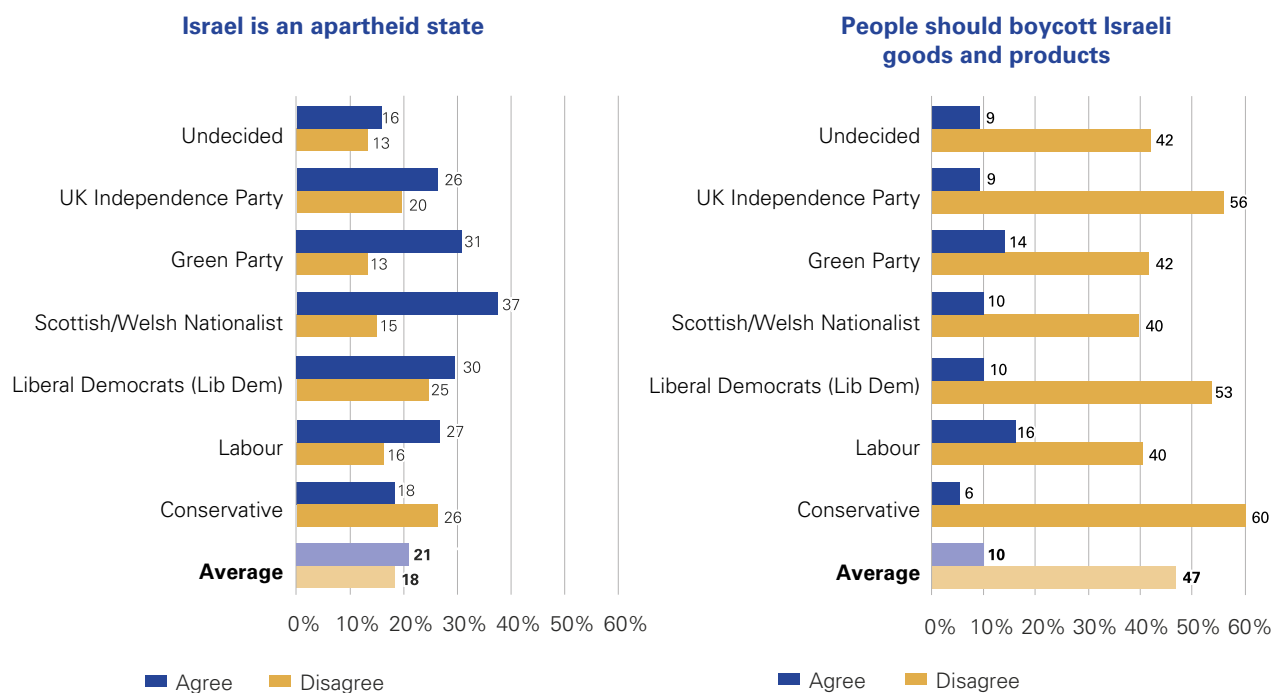
As with education, so too with (self-assessed) levels of knowledge about Zionism: the more knowledge people claim to have about the topic, the more likely it is that they feel able to express an opinion. But in each case, and at each knowledge level, the relative differences between the agree and disagree proportions are fairly static or else show no clear relationship.

### **Politics, ethnicity, religion**

In stark contrast to age, sex, education and knowledge, attitudes to the apartheid and boycott contentions are strongly associated with a person's UK political orientation. Of all



**Figure 6. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement based on voting intentions “if there were a General Election tomorrow”\***



\* Agree = Strongly agree + Tend to agree, Disagree = Strongly disagree + Tend to disagree; the remainder (not shown) = 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'. Note a small number of (non-voting) 16 and 17 year-olds are included in these figures.

the parties, only (centre-right) Conservative supporters are more likely to *disagree* (26%) with the apartheid state contention than they are to agree with it (18%). By contrast, (centre-left) Labour supporters are rather more likely to agree with it than Conservative supporters (27%), although higher levels can be found among the supporters of other political parties: Liberal Democrats (30%), Greens (31%) and especially Scottish/Welsh Nationalists (37%) (Figure 6).

However, in terms of endorsing a boycott of Israel – which is supported overall by 10% of people – this is the case for 16% of Labour supporters, the highest of any political grouping, and indeed, almost three times the level of support among Conservatives (6%), the latter being the group most likely to disagree with the notion (60%). Nevertheless, even Labour supporters are more than twice as likely to disagree with the idea (40%) than to agree with it (16%).

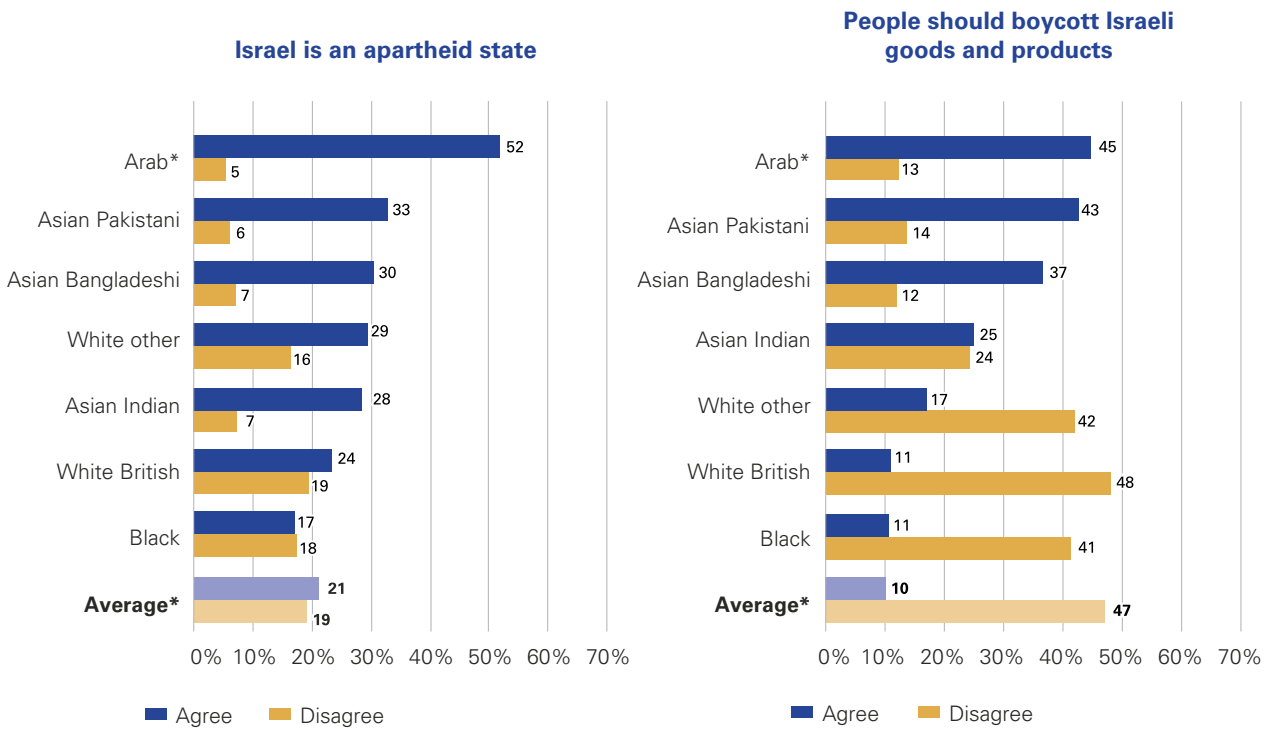
Attitudes are also sensitive to respondents' self-defined ethnic group. Arab respondents are the most likely to agree with both the apartheid and boycott contentions about Israel but particularly the apartheid claim, with more than half (52%) in agreement, far ahead of even the next biggest group – Pakistanis at 33% (Figure 7).<sup>9</sup> All Asian groups are far more likely to agree than to disagree with the claim that Israel is an apartheid state, including those with Indian (i.e. minority-Muslim) ethnicity.<sup>10</sup> In only one group – Black – does disagreement outscore agreement, albeit by a single percentage point. This basic pattern is repeated with respect to the boycott contention. Whilst all Asian groups are more likely to agree than disagree with it, the Indian group is clearly less predisposed to agree than either the Pakistani or the Bangladeshi groups. By contrast, White and Black groups are far more likely to disagree than agree that Israel should be boycotted.

9 The ethnic groups examined in this study are based on categories used in the 2011 Census of England and Wales. See: [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11).

10 In the 2011 Census of England and Wales, 14% of people with Indian ethnicity were Muslim (Office for National Statistics).

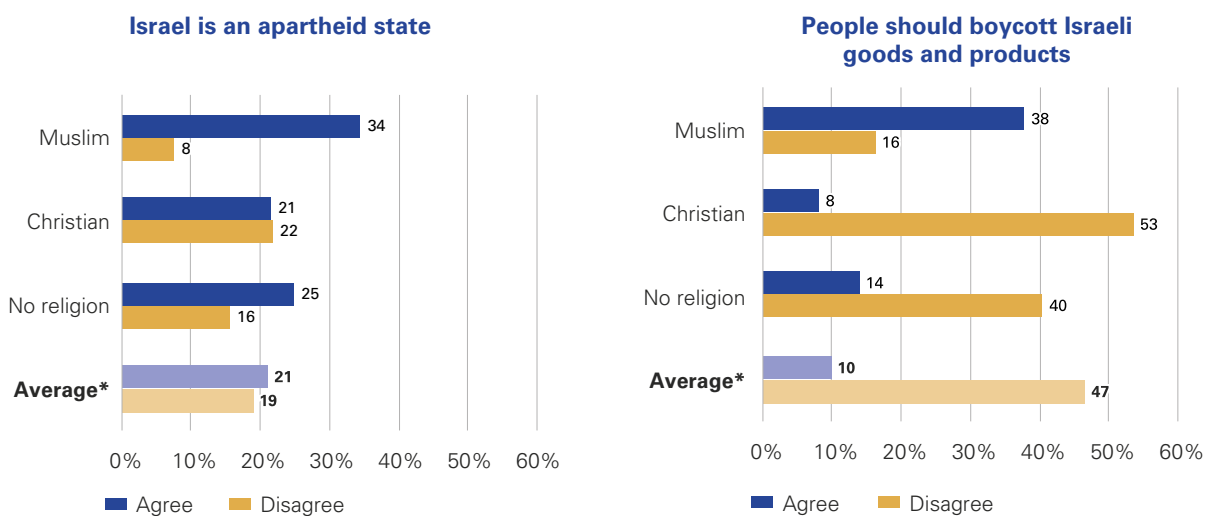


**Figure 7. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement by ethnic group (N=5,466)\***



\* Agree = Strongly agree + Tend to agree, Disagree = Strongly disagree + Tend to disagree; the remainder (not shown) responded by stating 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'. A booster sample is included in these data to ensure coverage of minority groups and groups with far left and far right views (see footnote 12). Note that just 56 respondents described their ethnic group as 'Arab' so these proportions are less statistically significant and should be treated as indicative only. Results shown for 'Average' figures are based on the nationally representative sample, N = 4,005.

**Figure 8. Proportion responding agree/disagree to each statement by religion (N=5,466)\***



\* See note to Figure 7.

Although respondents were also asked to identify their religion in the survey, only three groups, Christian, Muslim<sup>11</sup> and those with ‘No Religion,’ contained enough responses to be analytically valuable. The religion results are in broad agreement with those for ethnic group: Muslim respondents are not only far more likely to agree than to disagree with both contentions, they are also more likely to agree with them than both the Christian and the No Religion groups (Figure 8).

### Anti-Jewish sentiment

As noted in the introduction, many Jews are likely to consider people who express these types of criticisms about Israel to be antisemitic. But to what extent is the general population’s attitudes towards these two contentions associated with an actual anti-Jewish predisposition? In other words, is the majority-Jewish view – namely, that non-Jewish people who agree with these contentions are ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ antisemitic – correct? To examine this empirically, it was necessary to operationalise the term ‘antisemitism,’ i.e. to develop a way of measuring the concept. This was achieved by means of gathering data recording responses to a set of common anti-*Jewish* tropes generally considered by Jews to be antisemitic and to use these to create a scale of anti-Jewish sentiment

(see box).<sup>12</sup> The more negative items a person agrees with (in bold in the box below), the more anti-Jewish they are deemed to be. (Note that, for analytical purposes, none of the anti-Jewish tropes used in the scale relates to Israel.)



### Among British people, agreement with either of the two Israel contentions positively correlates with anti-Jewish sentiment

The results are plotted in Figure 9. As we have seen, people are more likely to agree with the contention that Israel is an apartheid state than they are to agree with the contention that it should be boycotted, including those who hold no anti-Jewish sentiments (None) but excluding those who hold the highest number (six or more). Moreover, it is equally apparent that a relationship exists between British people’s agreement with each of the two key contentions and their predisposition towards anti-Jewish sentiment – as one scale increases, so does the other. We have previously referred to this as a graduated or ‘elastic’<sup>13</sup> relationship – the greater the level of anti-Jewish feeling, the greater the likelihood of agreement with the two contentions about Israel. However, the relationship is more

#### The statements about Jews that were used to operationalise the term ‘antisemitism,’ with proportions who said they ‘Tend to agree’ or ‘Strongly agree’ shown in brackets

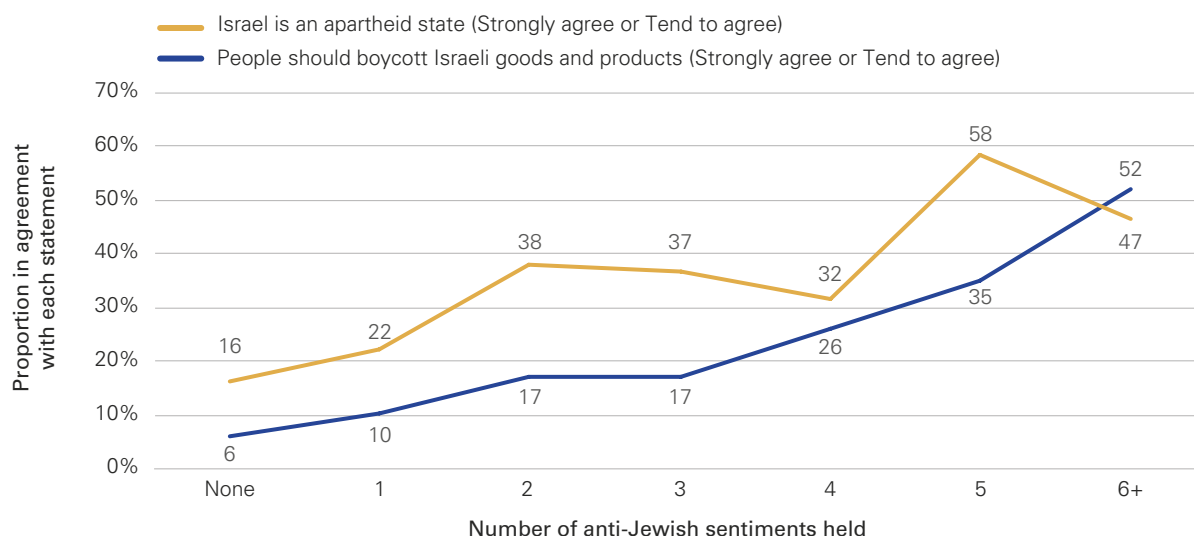
- **Jews think they are better than other people (13%)**
- **The interests of Jews in Britain are very different from the interests of the rest of the population (12%)**
- **Jews get rich at the expense of others (12%)**
- **Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes (10%)**
- **Jews have too much power in Britain (8%)**
- A British Jew is just as British as any other person (5% disagree)
- British Jews make a positive contribution to British society (4% disagree)
- **The Holocaust has been exaggerated (3%)**
- **The Holocaust is a myth (2%)**

11 The Muslim population was deliberately oversampled as part of the booster stage of this survey. For details, see: Staetsky (2017), op. cit. p.67.

12 For example, surveys indicate that most British Jews consider Holocaust denial and Holocaust trivialisation to be antisemitic. Similarly, accusations that British Jews have ‘too much power’ in British politics or the media or economy were also considered antisemitic by the majority of Jews. See: Staetsky (2017), op. cit. pp.21–22.

13 The term used by Staetsky (2017), op. cit.

**Figure 9. Relationship between agreement with apartheid and boycott contentions and number of anti-Jewish sentiments held**



consistent (or stronger) with respect to the boycott contention than the apartheid one.

The final step in this analysis is to understand where the apartheid and boycott contentions sit vis-à-vis other contentious statements about Israel. To test this, the other ten statements about Israel included in the survey were also examined. Of these, six were negative and four were positive and each was designed to capture common anti-Israel sentiment circulating in political discourse at the time of the survey.

To allow for direct comparisons to be made between the anti-Jewish sentiment scale and each anti-Israel statement and, thereby, to contextualise the apartheid and boycott contentions, correlation coefficients were calculated. In brief, the closer the values are to +1 or -1, the stronger the relationship is between each statement about Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment; the closer they are to 0, the weaker the relationship.<sup>14</sup> The positive association between agreement with the apartheid and boycott contentions and anti-Jewish sentiment is reflected in the coefficients, as indeed is the

stronger relationship with the boycott contention ( $\rho = .37$ ) than the apartheid one ( $\rho = .23$ ).<sup>15</sup>

However, compared with the other Israel statements, even the boycott contention is relatively low on the list of correlates with the anti-Jewish sentiment scale. The strongest association is with the statement "Israel exploits Holocaust victimhood for its own purposes" ( $\rho = .57$ ), a correlation which considerably exceeds that of the boycott contention (see Table 1). Further, four other statements about Israel also exhibit stronger statistical associations, with three of these reflecting accusations about Israel being exploitative and nefarious. By contrast, the weakest levels of correlation are with three of the positively worded statements, as well as the apartheid contention, possibly reflecting greater levels of ignorance or uncertainty about these ideas.

This final part of the analysis has sought to establish how likely it is that non-Jews who contend Israel is an apartheid state and/or should be boycotted, *also* harbour anti-Jewish

14 We see that negative values apply to positively worded statements, such as "The State of Israel has every right to exist." In these instances, the correlation coefficient is negative because we are interested in *disagreement* with these sentiments rather than agreement.

15 Spearman's rho ( $\rho$ ) significant at  $p < .01$ . See note to Table 1.

**Table 1. Relationship between the anti-Jewish sentiment scale and agreement with various statements about Israel\***

Anti-Israel/Pro-Israel statement	Correlation coefficient (ρ) <sup>^</sup>	
Israel exploits Holocaust victimhood for its own purposes	.57	<p>Stronger association with anti-Jewish sentiment</p> <p>Weaker association with anti-Jewish sentiment</p>
Israel is the cause of all the troubles in the Middle East	.49	
The interests of Israelis are at odds with the interests of the rest of the world	.46	
The State of Israel has every right to exist	-.42	
Israel has too much control over global affairs	.41	
<b>People should boycott Israeli goods and products</b>	.37	
Israel is deliberately trying to wipe out the Palestinian population	.35	
Israel is committing mass murder in Palestine	.30	
The State of Israel makes a positive contribution to global society	-.27	
<b>Israel is an apartheid state</b>	.23	
The State of Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish People	-.18	
Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East	-.03	

\* Blue text indicates positive phrasing of statements in the questionnaire, hence negative coefficients have been observed. ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Prefer not to say’ responses have been excluded in these calculations. ‘Agreement’ is the combined total of ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Tend to agree’ responses.

<sup>^</sup> The closer to 1.0 (or -1.0), the stronger the Spearman’s rho (ρ) correlation between anti-Jewish sentiment and each statement.

A coefficient of .0 means there is no relationship. All coefficients shown are statistically significant (p < .01).

sentiment. We have taken it as a given that most Jews *interpret* all the negative statements tested as antisemitic. And whilst it would be wrong to regard agreement with either the apartheid or boycott statements as being anti-Jewish under *all* circumstances,<sup>16</sup> the fact remains that agreement with either statement positively correlates with anti-Jewish sentiment. And although certain other Israel statements correlate more strongly, the association with

the boycott statement can still be considered strong, and the association with the apartheid statement whilst weaker, is nevertheless, clearly evident. It is, therefore, scientifically reasonable to conclude that when such claims are made about Israel by non-Jews, there is a relatively high likelihood that they are being made by someone who is also predisposed towards anti-Jewish feeling, thereby indicating antisemitic feeling, motive or intent.

16 Op. cit. As stated in IHRA working definition of antisemitism. See Footnote 1.

## 5 / Summary

This brief assessment finds that most non-Jewish people in Great Britain either oppose or else have no clear view about claims that Israel is an apartheid state and/or should be boycotted. The minority – arguably a significant minority – that endorses these claims, is twice as likely to contend that Israel is an apartheid state (21%) than to endorse the idea of a boycott of the country (10%). It was also noted that almost two out of five people (37%) report ‘Don’t know’ with regards to the apartheid contention, reflecting a widespread lack of understanding (as opposed to equivocation) on this issue.



**Agreement with the idea of an Israel boycott is a stronger marker and predictor of underlying antisemitism than is agreement with the apartheid contention, but both positively correlate with anti-Jewish sentiment**

The attitudes of British people towards the apartheid contention bear little relation to age, sex, or education, and of these, their attitudes to the boycott contention are only sensitive to age – perhaps reflecting decreasing levels of interest in activism or changing political predisposition as

people age.<sup>17</sup> This, however, is in stark contrast to political leaning as well as ethnic and religious identity, which are strongly associated with attitudes towards both contentions.

It was also empirically demonstrated that the greater the level of anti-Jewish sentiment held by members of the British public, the more likely they are to agree with the idea of boycotting Israel. This is also the case for the apartheid contention, although here, the relationship is weaker. This suggests that those who do hold opinions on these issues do not necessarily view apartheid and boycott as being two sides of the same coin, despite their frequent conflation in anti-Israel discourse. Of the two, agreement with an Israel boycott is a stronger marker and predictor of underlying antisemitism than is agreement with the apartheid contention.

Finally, placing the apartheid and boycott claims in the context of other statements about Israel shows that those who harbour anti-Jewish sentiment are rather more likely to believe contentions that Israel is exploitative, overly powerful and the cause of many ills than they are to believe that it should be boycotted or that it is an apartheid state. Nevertheless, agreement with either the apartheid or boycott contentions tends to align with antisemitic feeling.

17 Older people are more likely to vote Conservative and Conservative supporters are less likely to support a boycott.

## / Authors

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** 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.

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