

Workplace Antisemitism

A joint report from



**BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS**

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REPORT: Workplace Antisemitism

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a joint survey issued by The Board of Deputies of British Jews, The Jewish Leadership Council, and Work Avenue.

The survey ran from 26th November 2024 to 8th January 2025 and garnered 427 responses. The intention of this research is to collate anecdotal evidence of the workplace experience of UK Jewry in a post-7th October 2023 world. The data presented is not statistically weighted, nor is it claiming to be scientifically representative, but it is a collection of the real life experiences of a minority group who - as this survey has found - feel both vulnerable and unsupported in the workplace. We would welcome the commissioning of further/academic research on this subject.

In brief, this survey found patterns of exclusion, indifference and, in some cases, hostility experienced by Jews at work and in their Trade Unions in the UK. Whilst some respondents reported acts of empathy from individual colleagues or managers, reporting of structural efforts to address workplace antisemitism or to even acknowledge the need for specifically tailored inclusion initiatives were absent.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted online using a self-completion format, and responses were anonymous unless participants chose to self-identify in open-text questions. The survey included a mix of multiple-choice, Likert-scale and optional open-text questions to capture both quantitative data and qualitative experiences.

Quantitative responses were analysed for frequency, distribution, and correlation (e.g. by gender, age & sector). Open-text responses were thematically coded to establish recurring issues and sentiments.

As the survey relies on self-reporting and voluntary participation, it may introduce response bias or over/under-representation of certain sectors or perspectives.

KEY FINDINGS

Since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023, 64% of Jewish employees surveyed experienced antisemitism from co-workers or clients in some form. Whilst many incidents were infrequent, about 1 in 9 respondents faced antisemitic harassment regularly (frequently/very frequently). This indicates a widespread issue affecting Jewish professionals across industries.

Antisemitic remarks were most often encountered during direct in person conversations or overheard conversations. A large number of incidents took place digitally, via emails or messaging apps (WhatsApp/text). Social media played a role in workplace antisemitism too, suggesting that the problem is not solely limited to in-person workplace interactions but occurs when personal and professional lives mix. To that end, responses indicated that Jewish employees were likely to change who they interacted with some colleagues based on what they shared on social media about the conflict.

Jewish women reported more workplace antisemitism than their male counterparts, both in frequency and likelihood. Being one of few Jews in a workplace often meant hearing more negative or hostile remarks. This difference highlights how being multiply minoritised in the workplace can increase vulnerability to bigotry.

Half of employers did not make any public statement about the conflict and, even amongst those that did, many statements were perceived as unsupportive by Jewish staff. This points to a significant gap in leadership response during a time when Jewish employees were feeling anxious and targeted. Whilst diversity training is common, antisemitism-specific training is rare – only 15% reported their EDI training covers antisemitism. This lack of education may well contribute to instances of antisemitism based on ignorance, as well as a failure to recognise antisemitic incidents when they occur.

A noteworthy minority (around 12% of all respondents, or 28% of union members) experienced antisemitism within their trade unions. Some described union meetings or communications that became uncomfortable or hostile for Jewish members. This trend is important as it extends the concern beyond the immediate workplace and into the wider world of work, suggesting that antisemitism surged in multiple spheres of working life post-7th October.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey collected 427 responses. Respondents were fairly distributed across adult age groups, with the largest cohorts being ages 45–54 (about 24% of respondents) and 35–44 (23%). Younger professionals were fewer in number (only 12 respondents were 16–24). In terms of gender, approximately 55% of respondents identified as female, 44% male, and about 1% chose Other.

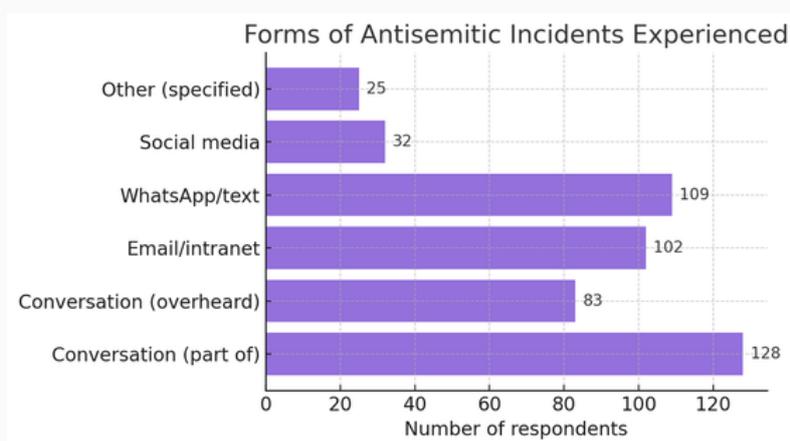
Participants came from a wide range of industries. The most common sector was Healthcare (92 respondents, ~22%), followed by Law (40 respondents, ~9%), Public Services/Administration (31, ~7%), and Charity/Non-profit (30, ~7%). Other fields included Education (e.g., 21 in Schools, 21 in Higher Education), Finance/Accountancy (~21 combined), IT (11), Media (11), Marketing (10), amongst others.

Job seniority also varied. About 27% of respondents were in intermediate or senior staff roles (non-managerial experienced staff), and 26% held executive or senior management positions. Mid-level managers comprised ~19%, junior managers ~10%, and entry-level positions ~8%. A small number (2%) selected “Other” and described roles like consultants or self-employed professionals.

The vast majority (over 85%) work in non-Jewish organisations (362 respondents in non-Jewish workplaces, plus 27 self-employed with mostly non-Jewish clients). Only 16 respondents (about 4%) work in Jewish organizations or schools, and a handful are self-employed with mostly Jewish clients (3 respondents). A few others described unique settings (e.g., NHS teams, local government) under “Other.” This means most insights reflect experiences in environments where Jews are in the minority.

ANTISEMITISM IN THE WORKPLACE

When asked “Since 7th October 2023, how often have you experienced antisemitism from colleagues or clients?”, responses indicate that antisemitism in the workplace is alarmingly common. Over 60% of respondents reported some form of antisemitism in this period. Specifically, 36% answered “Never”, meaning no incidents, whilst the remaining 64% experienced at least one incident (to varying degrees). About 26% said it occurred “Rarely” and 26% “Occasionally”, suggesting intermittent issues. More troubling, a combined 11% experienced antisemitic behaviour “Frequently” (8%) or “Very frequently” (3.5%) since October 2023. These figures highlight that whilst a third of respondents saw no antisemitism at work, a significant majority did encounter it — and more than one in ten faced it on a regular basis.



Respondents who experienced workplace antisemitism described how these incidents occurred. In-person conversations were most common: 128 people reported antisemitic remarks in conversations they were directly part of, and 83 heard such remarks in conversations they overheard. Electronic communications were also a major channel – antisemitic content was experienced via internal communications by 102 respondents, and through WhatsApp or text messages by 109 respondents. Fewer incidents were reported on social media (32 cases involving colleagues). 25 respondents selected “Other” and specified various contexts (for example, a few mentioned comments from clients).

Many respondents provided qualitative descriptions of these incidents. Common themes included derogatory remarks about Jewish people or Israel made in meetings or casual office talk, offensive jokes or stereotypes, and hostile messages in group chats.

EDI TRAINING & PUBLIC STATEMENTS

The survey explored two key workplace responses to antisemitism: EDI training and public statements about the Israel-Hamas war.

Just over half of the respondents (52%) said their workplace offers mandatory EDI training but without specific content on antisemitism. Only 15% indicated their training includes antisemitism as a topic. Meanwhile, 25% reported that no compulsory EDI training is offered at all in their workplace, and about 9% were unsure or provided other answers. This suggests that whilst diversity training is common, targeted education about antisemitism is relatively rare (only about one in seven workplaces). The lack of antisemitism-focused training could mean many colleagues and managers are ill-equipped to recognise or respond to anti-Jewish bias.

Respondents were asked if their employer released a statement about the 7th October attacks or the ensuing Israel-Hamas War. About 50% said “Yes” – their organisation issued some statement on these events. However, 39% reported no statement was made by their employer. The remaining 11% answered “Other,” often clarifying that they weren’t aware of any statement or that only a vague or indirect mention was made. Therefore, roughly half of workplaces remained publicly silent on the conflict, at least in the eyes of employees. Amongst those that did speak out, the content and tone of statements likely varied widely.

Those whose companies made statements (and even some whose did not) rated how supportive they felt these messages were to Jewish employees on a scale from 1 (not at all supportive) to 10 (completely supportive). The responses skewed low – the median rating was just 2 out of 10, and the average was 3.5. In fact, nearly 48% of all respondents gave a rating of 1, essentially indicating that their workplace’s communication (or lack thereof) felt “not at all supportive.” By contrast, only about 8% of respondents rated it a full 10. The rest were scattered in between (for example, 11% gave a neutral 5/10). This wide distribution shows that while a few workplaces handled their communications excellently in the eyes of Jewish staff, many others offered little comfort. Silence or insufficient responses were interpreted by almost half of respondents as a sign of zero support. It’s a striking indicator that, from the employees’ perspective, most organisations failed to make Jewish staff feel truly supported during this crisis.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

Survey respondents described a lack of structured workplace support following 7th October 2023. Although respondents reported individual expressions of empathy, institutional responses were often described as absent or insufficient.

Although nearly half (45%) of respondents described receiving some level of support (194 of 427), it was often limited to personal expressions of empathy rather than tangible change. Following the brutal murder of George Floyd in 2020 and Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it has become a norm for employers to release statements and offer tailored support packages for their employees who may be affected by geopolitical events, be that through tailored or increased EAPs (Employee Assistance Programmes) or proactive and transparent company-wide communications. Contrastingly, our respondents highlighted that any support offered was either private or "Israel-based colleagues were sent an email from leadership but not the Jews in the diaspora".

83 respondents reported overhearing antisemitic comments at work, whereas 128 directly experienced perceived antisemitic comments in conversations. Examples included colleagues referring to Jewish staff as 'Zionists' in a derogatory manner and comments dismissing concerns about antisemitism as overreactions.

"A receptionist walked past me on Oct 10th [2023] and said I don't feel sorry for you Jews you kill Muslim babies at Passover"

In terms of support from colleagues or management after experiencing antisemitism, the survey invited respondents to share their experiences. Many skipped this (indicating they either did not seek support or did not feel comfortable describing it), but a few did write about it. Amongst those, some reported positive support – e.g. sympathetic managers or co-workers who intervened – whereas others experienced indifference or even further insensitivity. One theme was that formal complaint mechanisms often weren't used, either due to fear of repercussions or belief that it wouldn't help.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

Employers often did not acknowledge Jewish employees' specific concerns, making it difficult for staff to feel safe or valued.

“Only one member of staff has ever asked me about how I am feeling. No one else has ever checked in with me. I have thought about saying something but haven't done.”

“My close friend at work has been very supportive and advised me to report incidents, although I chose not to do so because I feel this would lead to targeting by a group of colleagues who regularly and loudly discuss Middle East politics at work and I believe would take any complaint about my experiences as a political statement and implicit support for Israeli policy.”

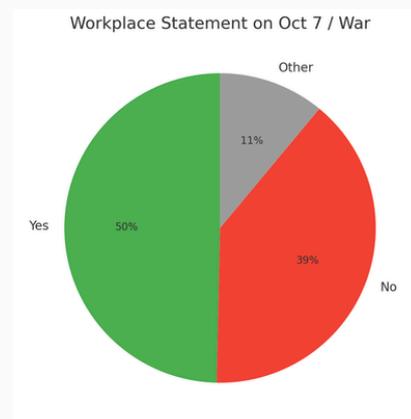
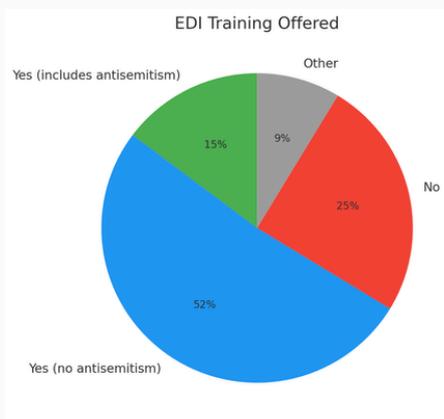
No respondents mentioned workplace policies or initiatives specifically designed to protect Jewish staff.

Healthcare settings were reported as showing ‘indifference’ to Jewish concerns, with many respondents highlighting they felt that Jews were overlooked in D&I discussions.

“the Race Training we'd received as being inadequate because antisemitism was not [sic] included as racism”

BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR

Healthcare workers often highlighted institutional apathy towards antisemitism and issues around political symbols in the workplace.



TRADE UNIONS

The survey also asked about experiences of antisemitism within trade unions. Jewish workers overwhelmingly described trade unions as spaces where antisemitism was not only present but institutionalised. Amongst those who answered “Are you a member of a trade union, and if so, have you experienced antisemitism in it?”:

- 56% (240 individuals) said “I am not a member of a trade union.”
- Of the ~187 respondents who are union members, 52 (approximately 28%) reported “Yes, they have experienced antisemitism in their union.
- 119 union members (64%) responded “No”, they had not encountered antisemitism in that context.
- A small group (16 people, ~9% of members) answered “Other,” often elaborating that they were unsure or had limited union involvement.

This means about 12% of all survey respondents have faced antisemitism in a union setting – a notable figure given that not everyone is union-affiliated.

Several who experienced such issues provided examples: for instance, one respondent wrote about hostile rhetoric in the National Education Union (NEU), “I am (unfortunately) a member of the NEU. There is an expectation that you must agree with a particular stance on Israel or risk being ostracised”, and another described the “relentless focus on Israel” in the UCU, which created an uncomfortable environment on campus for staff. Jewish union members reported feeling that their unions disproportionately focused on anti-Israel activism, leaving Jewish members feeling vulnerable.

Fifteen respondents left their unions due to a perceived lack of psychological safety or appropriate/relevant representation. However, 34 respondents reported feeling unable to leave their unions due to a lack of viable alternatives. Whilst some found their unions unhelpful, one respondent reported a positive experience, indicating that union engagement may depend on local leadership.

CONCLUSION

This survey confirms that antisemitism is an entrenched and largely unchallenged issue in many workplaces. It also points to a troubling increase in antisemitism in UK workplaces following the events of 7th October 2023. Jewish employees across various ages, genders, industries, and positions reported experiencing everything from offhand insensitive comments to frequent hostile encounters.

Jewish employees face barriers to inclusion at multiple levels, from inadequate employer support to hostile union environments. Unfortunately, a number of Trade Unions have forgotten that their role of representing and supporting their members in the workplace includes Jews. Even where antisemitism is not overt, the absence of meaningful action has left many employees disillusioned.

Critically, our data highlights that organisations must foster more supportive environments for their Jewish staff, which includes educating employees about antisemitism, responding proactively to incidents, and taking visible, supportive stances during crises that affect the Jewish community. Whilst some workplaces and colleagues have shown strong support (as evidenced by the minority of very positive experiences), many others have fallen short, leaving Jewish employees feeling isolated or unheard. These findings underscore the need for targeted action in diversity and inclusion efforts to address antisemitism as a specific concern in the workplace climate.

Without structural reform – both within workplaces and across professional networks – Jewish employees will continue to navigate careers in environments where their concerns are marginalised.

We continue to engage at all necessary levels across the political spectrum and the world of work to ensure that employers support their Jewish employees in line with the Equality Act (2010) and relevant Public Sector Equality Duties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is crucial that organisations adequately cater for their Jewish staff and as such must ensure that “Jewish” is included as an ethnicity (as well as a religion) in demographic data collection.
2. Employers should acknowledge that there are different accommodations required to fully include Jewish employees, as outlined in the Board of Deputies’ Employer’s Guide to Judaism.
3. Employers must explicitly include the IHRA Working Definition of antisemitism in EDI policy, ensuring Jewish concerns are addressed.
4. Organisations must develop formal processes for reporting antisemitism, providing Jewish employees with safe channels to raise concerns.
5. Senior Management can support their Jewish colleagues by offering to act as a Senior Sponsor of a Jewish Staff Network, with guidance available in The Board of Deputies’ Employer’s Guide to Judaism. The Board of Deputies has a dedicated member of staff tasked with supporting Jewish Staff Networks.
6. Leadership teams must commit to meaningful engagement with Jewish staff, and mainstream Jewish communal organisations where relevant, including consultation on policy changes and workplace responses to antisemitism.
7. Workplaces should review internal communications and social media policies to ensure antisemitism is not tolerated in professional spaces.
8. Trade Unions should adopt clear policies against antisemitism, ensuring Jewish members are represented fairly and protected from hostility.
9. We encourage employers (and where appropriate, Jewish employees) to engage with the JLC’s Cultivating Allies scheme, which offers a number of different ways in which antisemitism within the workplace might be addressed, and where Jewish employees can be made to feel more comfortable within their workplace environments.
10. Jewish employees can access Work Avenue’s dedicated In-work support team for any advice and guidance which they may require.
11. The Board of Deputies and The Jewish Leadership Council are able to advise on good practices, as well as provide recommendations for Jewish EDI practitioners and other experts to deliver trainings.

CONTACTS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTACTS

Queries relating to The Board of Deputies of British Jews programming can be directed to info@bod.org.uk

Queries relating to Jewish Leadership Council programming can be directed to forgethefuture@thejlc.org

Queries relating to Work Avenue programming can be directed to 020 8371 3280 or www.theworkavenue.org.uk

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