

# Executive Summary

## Background

There has been a sharp rise in the number of reported antisemitic incidents in New Zealand in the past few years. At the same time, the growth of social media has amplified antisemitic attitudes and given a platform to more extreme racial hatred towards Jewish people. More recently, misinformation around the pandemic has fuelled online conspiracy theories and led to a marked increase in circulating antisemitic memes to levels not seen in New Zealand for many decades.

But is this the voice of a loud but small minority? What do most New Zealanders really think about Jewish people? And with Jewish people making up just 0.2 percent of New Zealanders – fewer than 10,000 people according to the 2018 Census – do most New Zealanders even know a Jew?

New Zealanders were last surveyed about antisemitic views in 2014. This 2021 survey\*, supported with funding from the Ministry of Ethnic Communities, represents an extension to that work.

Just over one thousand (1,017) New Zealanders over the age of 18 were questioned and had 18 internationally recognised statements put to them to measure the level of their antisemitic views.

For the purposes of the survey, antisemitism was defined in accordance with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition. The statements were divided into classical antisemitic tropes, for example “Jews have too much control over the global media”, and statements reflecting more modern antisemitism and its conflation with Zionophobia (or anti-Israel sentiment, distinct from potentially valid criticism of Israel), for example “Israeli Government policies are similar to those of the Nazi regime”.

## Overall findings

The Survey of Antisemitism in New Zealand 2021 found concerning levels of antisemitic sentiment which may be influenced to a greater or lesser degree by one of the following forms of antisemitism:

- **Classical antisemitism** that has a deep historical basis in religious discrimination and victimisation.
- **Right-wing and nationalistic antisemitism** based on racial theory such as white supremacy and involving a variety of antisemitic conspiracy theories and tropes.
- **Jihadist inspired antisemitism.**
- **Left-wing antisemitism** which has emerged more recently and often manifests as Zionophobia.

---

\* The survey was conducted online between 4 August and 7 August 2021 by Curia Research in accordance with the Research Association of New Zealand Code of Practice and the International Chamber of Commerce/ European Society for Opinion and Market Research Code on Market and Social Research. The results were audited by Dr Catherine Bentham. It is considered unlikely that conducting the survey online unfairly biased the results given that 94% of New Zealanders have Internet access.

Although one negative view alone does not identify the core values of an individual, a significant number hold multiple negative views which has concerning implications, **63% of New Zealanders surveyed agree with at least one antisemitic view and 6% hold nine or more antisemitic views** out of the 18 questions posed to expose antisemitic views.

This table identifies the 18 questions and the answers as a percentage of those surveyed:

Statement	Antisemitic	Don't know	Not antisemitic
<b>Classical antisemitism</b>			
Jews have too much power in international financial markets	17%	52%	32%
Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust	19%	37%	44%
Jews have too much control over the global media	10%	44%	46%
Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind	13%	35%	52%
Jews in NZ are more loyal to Israel than to New Zealand	15%	54%	31%
Kiwi Jews make a positive contribution to NZ society	6%	36%	58%
A New Zealand Jew is just as Kiwi as any other New Zealander	6%	25%	69%
The Jews brought the Holocaust on themselves	6%	20%	74%
<b>Anti-Israel antisemitism</b>			
The State of Israel has every right to exist as a majority Jewish state	7%	48%	44%
Israel is an apartheid state	21%	62%	17%
People should boycott Israeli goods and products	11%	44%	45%
Israel is committing mass murder	21%	52%	27%
Israel makes a positive contribution to global society	11%	58%	32%
Israeli government policies are similar to those of the Nazi regime	12%	57%	31%
Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East	20%	66%	14%
<b>Other antisemitism</b>			
All societies should fear Zionists	11%	50%	40%
Jews have White privilege	14%	50%	36%
Jews are indigenous to Israel	16%	60%	23%

## Classical and anti-Israel antisemitism

Twenty one percent of New Zealanders held two or more classical antisemitic views (out of eight questions), and 25% held two or more Zionophobic views (out of seven).

This survey found there is a relationship between those holding Zionophobic views and those who hold classical antisemitic views. It shows the more extreme anti-Israel sentiment someone has, the more classical antisemitic tropes they will believe in, and vice versa. For example, there is only a 25% chance that someone who holds four classical antisemitic views will hold no anti-Israel antisemitic views, and only a 29% chance that someone who holds four anti-Israel antisemitic views will hold no classical antisemitic views. This is consistent with a United Kingdom study which also showed a clear empirical link between the two forms of antisemitism.

Many New Zealanders do not admit to a view on Israel. Of those that do, most respect the view that Israel has the right to exist as a majority Jewish state and do not support trade boycotts. However, Nazi, apartheid, and mass murder memes have been much more pervasive.

## **Political leanings**

The survey data shows some evidence of the emergence of left-wing antisemitism.

New Zealanders who voted for the Act Party and the National Party, and those with no politics, were significantly less likely to hold many of the anti-Israel views when compared with Labour voters.

The highest number of Zionophobic views were held by Green Party voters. New Zealanders who voted for NZ First, and those with no politics or who refused to say who they voted for, were significantly less likely to hold a large number of classical antisemitic views when compared with Labour and Green voters.

The recent global emergence of left-wing associated antisemitism creates a particular paradox. While most forms of discrimination are unacceptable in “progressive” thinking, antisemitism does not seem to count as racism because Jews can be accused of “white privilege”, despite Jews being indigenous to the Levant and often of colour, and latent hatred can be hidden under a cloak of Zionophobia.

## **The ‘don’t knows’**

Overall, 95.9% of New Zealanders were unsure about at least one question, and 43.5% were unsure about nine or more of the 18 statements.

The large percentages of “don’t knows” may obscure some attitudes that did not want to be declared. But irrespective, it shows the need for education about the Holocaust and geopolitical history, and highlights the huge potential for unaware people to be captured by extremists and online racial hatred.

## **Warmth toward Jews**

While there are some significant proportions of New Zealanders holding antisemitic views, there is also a high level of warmth toward Jews, in general.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, warmth increases when people personally know a member of a particular ethnic or religious group. Similarly, people who are more likely to be warm are also more likely to know members of different ethnic and religious groups.

A surprising result was that almost one third (32%) of New Zealanders said they knew a Jewish person. This compares to 88% who knew an Asian, almost a half (47%) knew a Muslim and just over one quarter (28%) knew a Buddhist. Knowledge of people from these latter groups are likely to represent their relative populations in New Zealand.

## The Holocaust

One aspect of antisemitism is Holocaust denial or distortion. Closely associated with this is a lack of understanding of what occurred during the Holocaust.

Of those surveyed only 42% could correctly identify the number of Jewish people killed in the Holocaust: six million. Almost one fifth, or 17%, of New Zealanders said they knew virtually nothing about the Holocaust.

These results mirror a 2019 poll by the Auckland Holocaust Memorial Trust which found only 43% of New Zealanders knew six million Jewish people were murdered in the Holocaust.

This shows the importance of Holocaust education in New Zealand. As Winston Churchill famously quoted: “those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it”.

## A final word

The last comprehensive survey of antisemitic feeling among New Zealanders was in 2014, when the Anti-Defamation League undertook a worldwide survey. At that time, 14% of New Zealanders answered “probably true” to a majority of the antisemitic stereotypes tested.

When compared question for question with those that were also asked in 2014, this survey shows little change in racist sentiment towards Jewish people. However, with many of those questions not having a “don’t know” option, it is not possible to conclude that antisemitism in New Zealand is falling.

New Zealand is facing a period of anxiety, instability and anger over the pandemic, economic conditions and geopolitical instability. In this context, a rise in antisemitic incidents and tropes can be anticipated. When societal cohesion breaks down or is at risk, or a society wishes to assign blame, history suggests antisemitic attitudes and events will increase. With 10% of New Zealanders holding seven or more antisemitic views, we cannot afford to be complacent.