

Inclusive Employers

Tackling Contemporary Antisemitism



Introduction

Traditional Anti-Jewish racism is commonly known as antisemitism and is a form of racism against the Jewish people, although the two phrases can be used interchangeably.

Antisemitism can be defined as discrimination, prejudice, or hostility against Jews. History shows that increased racism against Jewish people often reflects growing extremism or divisions within society. Antisemitism is often called the oldest form of hate and it has persisted for thousands of years.

No organisation is immune from antisemitism and all organisations need to work at identifying and addressing it. All employers have the legal and moral obligation to protect their Jewish employees and members of staff as per the Equality Act 2010.

This guide explains more about Jewish people and antisemitism, as well as how to tackle antisemitism within the workplace.

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This guide contains information on the Holocaust, harassment, and discrimination. Inclusion is the underlying objective of this guide which aims to raise awareness of the impact and nature of antisemitism. Whilst reading, it is important to acknowledge that faith, belief, and racism are emotive subjects.

The guide refers to complex and painful contemporary geopolitical events and conversations. The objective is not to offer an opinion on these, but to examine how they might impact colleagues in the workplace.

We hope you find this resource package useful. Questions, comments, and feedback are always welcome by contacting us on 020 803 0689 or info@inclusiveemployers.co.uk

1. The Jewish People

The Jewish people/Jews are an ethnoreligious group, this means that historically they were united by a common religious and ethnic background. This guide will use the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Jewish people’ interchangeably. In the UK, both Jews and Sikhs are recognised as ethnoreligious groups and are therefore covered by the Equality Act (2010) under both the ‘religion and belief’ and ‘race/ethnicity’ protected characteristics.

Research shows that Jewish ethnicity is [indigenous to the Middle East](#), but Jews faced [expulsion](#) by the Babylonians and then the Romans ‘Before the Common Era’ (BCE) and then further expulsions from the Middle East between 1919 and 1948 CE. After fleeing to Europe and the African continent, Jews were expelled from various parts of the world including [England](#) in 1290, [Portugal](#) in 1496, [Russia](#) in 1910, [Jordan](#) in 1949, [Algeria](#) in 1962 and [Yemen](#) in 2021. This is in addition to the stripping of their rights and the mass murder of over 6 million Jews in the Nazi controlled and allied territories during [World War Two](#).

Historically, Hebrew is the [Jewish language](#) however, Yiddish, Ladino, or Judeo-Greek may also have been spoken by Jewish communities in the past and by some Jewish communities today. Nowadays, the first language spoken by the majority of Jews will be the native language of their country of birth/residence and outside of Israel, many Jews will not be able to speak Hebrew.

Judaism is the Jewish faith, however not all Jews follow Judaism. Jewish people are incredibly diverse in terms of their Jewish identity and ethnicity, with Black Jews making up a significant part of the [Israeli](#) and [American](#) Jewish populations. Equally, as being Jewish is an ethnicity, it is important to avoid assumptions that light-skinned Jews will self-identify as white as they may feel their Jewish ethnicity is a better descriptor of their race/ethnicity. If

collecting diversity data in your organisation, it is good practice to include 'Jewish' under both the religion/belief and race/ethnicity categories.

You can find out more about the Jewish people and Judaism in our [Judaism Factsheet](#).

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2. What is Antisemitism?

Defining Antisemitism (Anti-Jewish Racism)

Anti-Jewish racism is more commonly known as antisemitism and is a form of racism against Jewish people. The two phrases can be used interchangeably but for the purposes of this guide, the term ‘antisemitism’ will be used, as it is more widely understood in this context. If the term ‘antisemitism’ is used within an organisation (such as for communications) it is important to spell it without the hyphen. Using the hyphen perpetuates the concept of ‘Semitism’ which is rooted in pseudo-scientific Nazi ideology on racial classification.

Antisemitism can be defined as discrimination, prejudice, or hostility, against Jews or Jewish institutions. It consists of anti-Jewish beliefs, attitudes, actions, or systemic conditions. It includes negative beliefs and feelings about Jews, hostile behaviour directed against Jews and conditions that discriminate against Jews or impede their ability to participate as equals in political, religious, cultural, economic, or social life.

Antisemitism is often called the oldest form of hate as it has persisted for thousands of years and despite numerous attempts to wipe out antisemitism from society, it has continued to grow and take on new forms.

Antisemitic Libels

Throughout history, antisemitism has often mutated and taken on different forms depending on the socio-political climate at the time. However, across both historical and modern manifestations, antisemitism often falls into one of four libels:

Blood

The blood libel is the oldest antisemitic libel and finds its origins in the false accusation that Jews killed Jesus Christ (this is sometimes called ‘deicide’), a claim that has been discredited by historians and Christian leaders. As Christianity became the dominant religion throughout the Western World, Jews were targeted by the Church as they were unwilling to convert to Christianity and were blamed for the death of Christ.

The blood libel has changed over time ranging in false accusations that Jews kill children for their blood and that Israel purposely kills Palestinian children for their organs.

Economic

The economic libel originated in the 18th century. Jews maintained their religious and social customs and were often forced to live away from the general population. At this time, Jews were barred from all professions except for money-lending and this helped to create the myth that Jews are wealthy and obsessed with money.

Contemporary accusations relating to the economic libel include conspiracy theories involving world banking and that Jews are disloyal and sneaky.

Racial

The Racial libel perpetuates the myth that Jews are an inherently inferior race and often portrays Jewish physical characteristics in inhumane and offensive ways. In the Middle Ages, Jews were persecuted by the Christian majority including blaming them for the Black Plague and depicting Jews with horns.

The idea of 'Jewish blood' being dirty and threatening the rest of the population was at the core of Nazi ideology on race. Throughout Europe and the Middle East, Jews were denied their basic human rights and faced violent rampages. Across Europe, concentration camps were built, and millions of Jews were killed. In total over six million Jews were murdered as a consequence of Nazi persecution and the Holocaust. More than eighty years later, European Jewry has still not returned to pre-Holocaust numbers.

Whilst racial libel is most famously associated with racist Nazi ideology concerning the 'perfect race', today it can be found in stereotypical representations of Jewish people in the media and the claim that Jews are not an ethnic minority.

Conspiracy

The origins of the conspiracy libel are not absolutely clear, but it is likely that the publication of the hoax 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' helped to plant the idea of a conspiracy concerning Jewish world domination into modern minds.

In the early 1900's, a [hoax document called 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion'](#) was published supposedly showing plans for Jewish world domination. Even though it was a proven forgery, it was quickly translated into multiple languages and distributed across the world. Jews were accused of using their supposed money and power to take over the world. Despite it being a hoax, the 'Protocols' continue to be distributed around the world today.

False accusations under conspiracy libel include Holocaust Denial, the idea that Jews control the media, and that Jews are behind all world wars.

Geopolitical

Although not considered a libel, this last area is viewed as another source of antisemitism and relates to the actions of the Israeli government and events in the Middle East. It tends to describe discussions and narratives that hold all Jews accountable for the actions and policies of the Israeli government or where debates on this topic draw on [antisemitic tropes](#).

Israel is a sovereign, democratic nation, which can be criticised in the same way as any other sovereign nation but there are times when the debate carries antisemitic undertones.

Below some examples to help distinguish what antisemitism looks like in this context:

- Accusing the Jews as people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interest of their own nations
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing [comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy](#) to that of the Nazis
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

Definitions

A number of organisations have published definitions of antisemitism with the aim of making it easier to identify, as often it can be quite subtle or institutionalised. The most

widely adopted of these is the IHRA definition and we recognise many of our members (particularly Universities and Police Forces) will have formally adopted this version.

The role of Inclusive Employers is to guide our members and raise awareness of the issues and the impacts on colleagues in the workplace, rather than to instruct.

From our own experience, it is understood how multi-faceted, emotive, and complex this debate can be, and that it is probable that colleagues in your organisation will hold a wide spectrum of perspectives on the subject. If you choose to adopt a definition, you should do so after broad consultation with staff and keep this under review. However, the most important focus for organisations is to educate colleagues on the nature of antisemitism and provide pathways for issues of concern to be raised.

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3. Modern Antisemitism

The [Community Security Trust \(CST\)](#) has been recording antisemitic incidents since the 1980s. In their [2021 report](#), the highest ever annual total of antisemitic incidents was recorded, which was 2,255 incidents (an increase of 34% on 2020 and 24% higher than 2019). Antisemitism is widely under-reported, and the true figure is likely to be higher.

CST identified that antisemitism sharply rose at the start of the Israel-Hamas war in May 2021, with a [300% increase in incidents](#) in May and June alone. After fighting ended, reports of antisemitism did not decline at the same rate and continued to contribute to an unprecedented number of antisemitic attacks in the UK. [Jewish school children and teachers are particular targets](#) and in [2021 there was also a 78% increase in physical violence](#) against Jewish people in the UK.

Research from [ResumeBuilder.com](#) from the US in 2022 also found that:

- 26% of hiring manager say they are less likely to move forward with Jewish applicants; top reason for negative bias is the belief Jews have too much power and control
- 23% say they want fewer Jews in their industry
- 17% say leadership have told them not to hire Jews

The level of antisemitism [witnessed online](#) indicates that there is now an established culture of overt antisemitism, more prevalent than it has been for decades. This increase is part of a global upward trend in antisemitism including [mass shootings](#) across the US, Europe, and Israel.

Globally, antisemitism is present in almost every country with over [1.09 billion people](#) in the world harbouring antisemitic attitudes. A report by the American Jewish Committee in 2021,

found Covid-19 conspiracy theories and the Israel-Hamas war of May 2021 to be major contributors to the global rise in antisemitism.

In the same year, the [Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021](#) from Tel Aviv University found:

- Antisemitic hate incidents in the US have doubled in the past twelve months
- In Canada, there was a 40-year high in physical violence against Jews
- France recorded a 74% increase in antisemitic incidents compared to 2020
- German police recorded a 49% increase in antisemitic attacks since 2019

Antisemitism is a problem for all parts of the political spectrum from [left](#) to [right](#) and anti-racist movements often avoid inclusion of anti-Jewish racism.

In 2022, many Jewish schools, shops, and places of worship, have [armed guards](#) and their own security. Alarming as antisemitism continues to grow around the world, Jews are often not being trusted to call out antisemitism when they experience it, and are often not considered an ethnic minority, despite making up 0.44% of the UK population.

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4. Tacking Antisemitism in the workplace

No organisation is immune from antisemitism and all organisations need to work at identifying and addressing it. Below are some key steps organisations can take to address antisemitism in the workplace.

Abiding by the Equality Act

All employers have the legal and moral obligation to protect their Jewish employees and members of staff as per the Equality Act 2010. As explored in this guide, Jews in the UK are recognised as ethnoreligious groups and are therefore covered by the Equality Act under both the ‘religion and belief’ and ‘race/ethnicity’ protected characteristics.

Ensure that antisemitism is taken seriously, and that policies provide a strong foundation for Jewish employees to feel protected and safe to report acts of discrimination.

Other considerations include:

- Providing an overview of the key types of faith discrimination for your HR, I&D, policy and decision makers to help them understand key concepts and issues
- Awareness training for staff and managers
- Referring to the ‘Judaism’ factsheet, ‘Religion & Belief in the Workplace’ guide, and ‘Anti-Racism toolkit’ provided by Inclusive Employers for additional support

Understanding the nature of antisemitism in context

While the Equality Act 2010 should underpin all policies and decision-making processes, the Act itself does not offer much detail on what constitutes antisemitism. It is therefore

important for organisations to become familiar with the forms and examples of antisemitism included in this guide. These can be used alongside the law-binding Equality Act 2010, to support the rights of their Jewish employees, help colleagues identify when instances of antisemitism have occurred and support conversations around antisemitism.

Organisations may want to consult with staff to come up with a set of examples and once agreed, this can support disciplinary and grievance processes, student conduct processes (if in education), or be used as a training tool to support staff in identifying and reporting antisemitism.

Please note: As mentioned above, discussions on this topic may be difficult for colleagues. Many Jewish staff and others are likely to feel a strong connection to the subject matter and so any conversations need to be handled safely and with care.

A set of examples will also help empower non-Jewish staff to become inclusion allies in tackling racism and instil confidence in Jewish staff and service users/customers that the organisation is taking concrete steps to address antisemitism. As with all other forms of racism and faith discrimination, the reported experiences of those impacted should be listened to and appropriate action taken.

Data and policies

Often Jewish experiences of racism are undermined or not included as part of wider anti-racism work. Check through policies and procedures to assess if they reflect Jewish experiences. For example, does the organisation's bullying and harassment policy specifically call out antisemitism as a form of racism? Consider how staff or customers/service-users can report antisemitism safely and consider anonymous reporting tools if appropriate.

As this guide explains, Jews are an ethnoreligious group, so when collecting diversity monitoring data, include 'Jewish' under both the 'religion/belief' and 'race/ethnicity' categories.

Improved representation of Jewish people

Better representation of Jewish people within an organisation will help to tackle the myths, stereotypes, and libels about Jewish people and their experiences. Whilst Jews may have a

shared faith (if they practice) and ethnicity, they are hugely diverse so this should be reflected within the workplace. It is also important to avoid relying solely on the negative experiences of Jewish people to inform and educate the workplace.

Author Ben M. Freeman has recently created 'The Tevye Test' for the 'Creative Community for Peace' which could be a useful tool if the organisation is reviewing how it represents Jewish people within the workplace. Whilst it is designed for use in the media, it can be used in marketing materials, inclusion and diversity training, and as a way of reviewing the inclusion of the Jewish experience across all organisation activities.

This tool takes a similar approach to the Bechdel Test for the representation of women in the media, and the Riz test for the representation of Muslims. This can be accessed here: [Creative Community for Peace website](#).

Understanding Jewish lives

It is important to make sure that Jewish people are represented and thought about in everyday practice. As a starting point, it is helpful to understand how many Jewish people work in the organisation amending staff diversity monitoring questions will help to capture this. Make sure that 'Jewish' is an option under both the religion/belief and race/ethnicity categories. Bear in mind that historically, due to intergenerational trauma from the Holocaust and the ongoing rise in antisemitism, Jews are less likely to be public about their identity, so figures may only represent a small proportion of the Jewish people within an organisation.

Refer to the [Diversity Calendar](#) to ensure the organisation is aware of important Jewish dates and avoid planning events or meetings at these times. Some Jewish people will want to leave work early on Fridays for Shabbat, so bear this in mind when planning meetings.

The [Judaism Factsheet](#) should support organisations to learn more about the Jewish experience. The factsheet includes information on food restrictions, holidays and festivals, ethics, and the history of Judaism as a faith.

Jewish staff may feel particularly vulnerable or upset during periods of increased tensions in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, or around Jewish memorial days and events. Be

mindful of this and be vigilant of antisemitism. Make clear the organisation's stance, how incidents can be reported, and educate staff on faith, belief, and racism in the workplace.

Take antisemitism seriously

It may seem obvious, but an organisation should always take antisemitism seriously. Often antisemitism is undermined or excused and is allowed to flourish. Unfortunately, this has been the case for many public sector organisations, such as universities and student societies, as well as political parties and broadcasters. This has a huge impact not only on the growth of antisemitism in society but on the mental and physical health and safety of Jewish people.

In order to take antisemitism seriously, many staff may need to reflect on their biases and preconceptions of Jewish people. This could be achieved through the training and resources offered by Inclusive Employers and the other resources and platforms referenced in this guide.

Your organisation may wish to demonstrate its commitment via a public-facing statement on its website, communicating the organisation's stance on antisemitism (for both internal employers and external customers/partners), its commitment to tackling it internally, and the steps the organisation is taking.

Facilitating good relations between different groups

Racism and intolerance connected to faith and religion are topics that many feel uncomfortable talking about - partly due to the sensitive nature and fear of causing offense. Equally, asking others about their opinions on these sensitive topics can risk being intrusive, patronising, or indeed ignorant.

However, a critical way to facilitate respect and understanding at work is through carefully managed dialogue; particularly on topics where divisions can stop individuals from connecting with each other, or that are having a significant societal impact for people around the world and may be triggering or upsetting for colleagues. Creating opportunities to learn about and share knowledge, experiences, and understandings of these topics in a safe and well-managed way will aid this.

Exploring issues that lie at the heart of individual or group identities can be very challenging, so conversations need to be approached with care and respect. Nevertheless, encouraging discussion and engagement between groups can be highly beneficial, because it allows the diverse experiences and opinions to be explored, and common ground to be identified.

An emphasis on shared history and parallel experiences promotes tolerance and understanding, while not denying the separate identities of each group. Potential tensions can be explored without directly confronting issues that may lead to argument or hostility.

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