ASECA

AUSTRALIA'S SPECIAL ENVOY TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism in Australia

Findings of research commissioned by Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism

November 2025

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Antisemitism erodes and is contrary to values that define Australia: fairness, freedom and mutual respect. It is a hatred that manifests in harmful words, and can lead to violent deeds, undermining the basic right to live free of discrimination and hate, and attacking the very foundations of a thriving democracy. As such, it poses a threat not just to Jewish Australians, but to our entire nation.

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Background and purpose

In the context of rising concerns regarding antisemitism in Australia, particularly following the events of 7 October 2023, Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism (ASECA) commissioned a two-part research program to understand prevalent sentiments towards the Australian Jewish community among the Australian population generally.

Part A of the research program employed a quantitative online survey with a nationally representative sample of 2,185 non-Jewish Australians aged 18+. The survey was designed to gauge community attitudes and sentiment towards the Australian Jewish community and the extent of antisemitism in Australia.

Following a preliminary review of the responses in Part A, Part B involved a qualitative exploration of attitudes among young Australians aged 16–34, and students in particular, drawing out their views and lived experiences in relation to the Australian Jewish community.

A finding from Part A indicated that the 18–34 age group and student sub-cohort exhibited lower positive sentiment and willingness for social closeness with Jewish Australians compared with other age groups; and that they perceived the Jewish community as less aligned with their values and as having a coloniser identity.

These findings informed the design and sampling for Part B, which posited that the attitudes of 18–34s, and students in particular, are influenced by a perceived parallel and broader socio-political narrative concerning colonialism. Resultantly, Part B was designed as a qualitative study using a focus group method.

Part A: Quantitative online survey

Purpose and objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- Measure willingness for social closeness, and capture current perceptions, behavioural impacts and emotional responses
    - Quantify the overall level of social closeness and the sentiments and emotional responses of the Australian population towards the Jewish community compared with the other reference groups in this study.
    - Gather insights into the current perceptions, experiences, and beliefs held across the Australian population regarding the Jewish community, compared with the reference communities in this study.
    - Understand the specific emotions each cultural group evokes among Australians.
- Measure prevalence and intensity of antisemitic attitudes among non-Jewish Australians, and gather insight into how knowledgeable Australians are about the Jewish community
    - Quantify the overall level of support or antipathy among the Australian population towards the Jewish community, broader Australia's ability to recognise antisemitism and whether it discriminates antisemitism from political or humanitarian activism.

- Understand whether antisemitism is viewed as an issue or not.
- Determine the level of Generalised Antisemitism, Judeophobic Antisemitism and Antizionist Antisemitism within the Australian population.

Measuring antisemitic attitudes

The research takes as its starting point the Generalised Antisemitism Scale. This is a widely respected scale for measuring antisemitic attitudes and for comparing findings of different surveys about antisemitic attitudes. The Generalised Antisemitism Scale brings together two subscales: the Judeophobic Antisemitism Subscale and the Antizionist Antsemitism Subscale.

These both test attitudes that would be regarded as antisemitic according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition.

Key findings

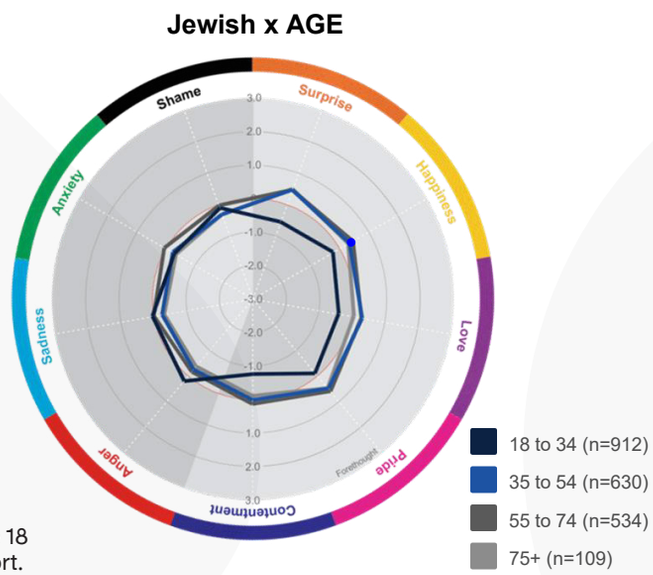
Community sentiment

Overall, the emotional and attitudinal sentiment toward the Jewish community is positive, with this being consistent across most age groups and states. Among the 35–54 and 55–74 age groups, the Jewish community elicits generally positive emotions—such as surprise, happiness, love, pride, and contentment.

However, younger Australians stand out as an exception. Of all age groups, 18–35-year-olds express the most negative emotional responses towards the Jewish community.

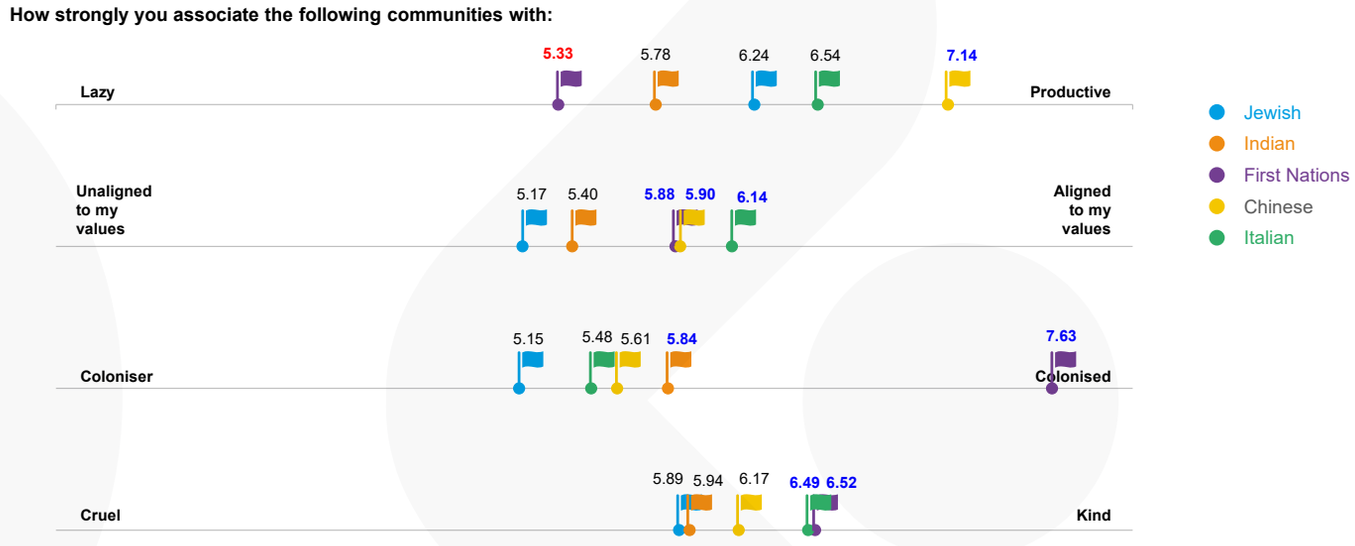
Emotions response:
Jewish community

Effect sizing was conducted to determine the substantive significance (effect) of the mean differences between the age groups. A blue marker indicates that the improvement in the other age group result was substantial from the 18 to 34 result. This instance was for the 75+ cohort.



The 18-35 cohort records lower warmth, comfort, and trust, and higher associations of the Jewish community with cruelty, colonialism, and being "unaligned with my values." When asked about five multicultural communities, 18–35s rated the Jewish community least favourably overall.

Among students, the Jewish community was perceived as the most colonising of all the communities; correspondingly they were seen as least aligned to the cohort's values.



Note: Effect sizing was conducted to determine the substantive significance (effect) of the mean differences between the Jewish community and other community groups. Blue indicates that the improvement in the other community group result was substantial, and red indicates a substantial decrease.

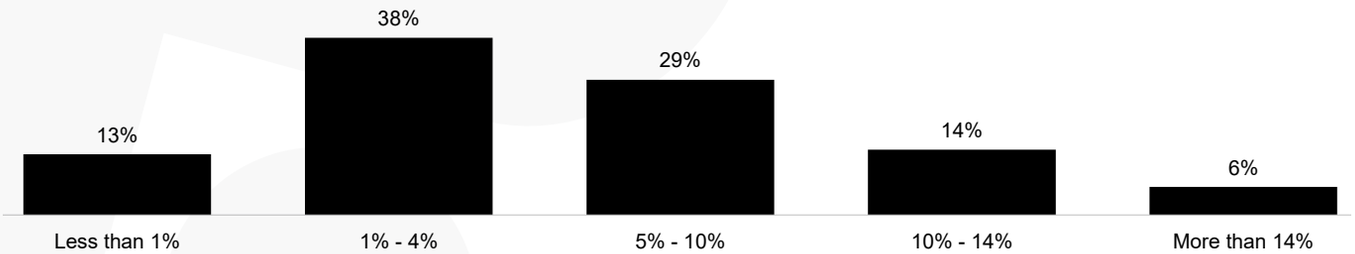
Limited knowledge about the Jewish community

Most Australians have very limited knowledge about the Jewish community.

Australians had a sense of the Jewish community's size and recognised it was a small sub-set of the overall population. This was consistent across age cohorts including students.

This sense of the Jewish community was borne out within the qualitative inquiry where participants self-assessed their familiarity with the Italian, Jewish, Indian, First Nations and Chinese communities. Participants' average self-assessment score for the Jewish community was 4.26, the lowest of all communities (The mean was 7.22, and the Italian community was the most familiar among participants, 6.5)

What proportion of the Australian population is Jewish?
(Overall)



Sample Size: Overall n= 2,185

While only 13% of Australians correctly identified that the Jewish community comprises less that 1% of the population, 20% believed it represents more than 10% of the total population.

When asked about the nature of Jewish identity, only 9% answered both questions correctly – recognising that being Jewish is identifying with an ethnic group and/or a religious group. Those who were better informed, recorded significantly lower antisemitism scores according the the Generalised Antisemitism Scale discussed below. This suggests that increasing public understanding about Jewish life can reduce antisemitic attitudes.

Antisemitism in the Australian context

Australians generally have a sense of the Jewish community and broadly support the right of Jewish Australians to speak out against hate speech. However, antisemitism is not widely recognised as a major national issue, and only a minority view it as a serious concern, even on university campuses.

Overall, antisemitism among Australians is average (according the Generalised Antisemitism Scale), with antizionist antisemitism slightly higher than Judeophobic antisemitism. The 18–34 age group, and students in particular, again show higher scores on both subscales.

When asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, 'Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews', the combined agree responses were as follows for different age groups:

Age	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-90
Strongly agree + agree	45%	42%	36%	25%	30%	30%	27%

The responses of students to the same statement were as follows:

	Full time student	Full time student - Male	Full time student - Female
1 Strongly disagree	5%	8	4%
2	10%	12	9%
1+2	15%	20%	13%**
3	23%	24%	23%
4	22%	17%	26%
5 Strongly agree	28%	32%	25%
4+5	50%	49%	49%
Prefer not to answer	12%	6%	14%**
N	284	115	163

This suggests that antizionist antisemitism is strongest among the youngest cohort and weakens in the older cohorts.

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Findings related to the Generalised Antisemitism Scale

When attitudes according to the Judeophobic Antisemitism Subscale and the Antizionist Antisemitism Subscale are compared, a statistically significant difference shows that anti-Israel sentiment is stronger than anti-Jewish sentiment, though there is overlap between the two.

	Judeophobic	Antizionist	Variance
Male	2.52	2.60	0.08
Female	2.24	2.62	**0.38****
Age			
18-24	2.55	**3.04**	**0.49****
25-34	2.47	**2.92**	**0.45****
35-44	2.50	2.75	0.25
45-54	2.37	2.52	0.15
Education			
Non-Graduate	2.33	2.53	0.20
Graduate	2.44	2.71	0.27
Student	2.57	**3.07**	**0.50****
Religion			
Christian	2.26	2.39	0.13
Islam (n33)	3.31	**3.79**	**0.48****
Hindu (n42)	2.50	2.71	0.21

The data also reveal that:

- Graduates have significantly higher antisemitism scores across the board than non-graduates, and students record the highest scores across all scales of any group in the population.
- Christians record relatively low antisemitism scores, whereas those identifying as Muslim record higher scores.
- Those without religion exhibit higher antisemitism scores across all scales, suggesting that lack of religious affiliation may correlate with weaker familiarity or empathy toward Jewish identity.

This pattern reinforces the role of education and information in reducing antisemitic attitudes: respondents who were better informed about the Jewish population and the nature of Jewish identity recorded significantly lower antisemitism scores.

Part B: Qualitative focus groups

The qualitative component (Part B) found that young Australians often blur distinctions between Jewish identity, Zionism, and the Israeli government, relying heavily on social media for information and frequently interpreting events through a settler–colonial framework.

The focus groups included people under the age of 34 and had a special focus on students. Key findings are as follows.

The Jewish-Israel identity nexus: a limited understanding

Across all 13 focus groups, discussions about Jewish people and antisemitism consistently led to references to Israel and the current conflict.

Participants revealed that these topics are deeply interconnected in their thinking. However, a crucial and consistent distinction emerged: participants did not perceive Jewish individuals as collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. Rather, the participants frame Israel itself as the source of contention, not the Jewish people as a group.

The association between Jewish people and Israel stemmed largely from general awareness—via education (religious, history), media, and cultural references—that Israel is a Jewish-majority state with religious and historical significance for Judaism.

Role of social media as main source of news

Reliance on social media rather than mainstream media was clearly the case, especially for participants aged 16–18 – contributing to shallow performative engagement.

Most students were suspicious of the mainstream media, seeing it as supporting one side or the other and taking a binary approach being either pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian. They believed that social media provided a broader perspective.

However, the superficiality of social media helps to reinforce stereotypes about Jews, which are shaped from an early age. Many did acknowledge that there were problems of social media promoting antisemitism. They referred to mini clips from South Park portraying Jewish characters in a degrading fashion and also referred to Tik Tok as perpetuating antisemitism.

Entrenched views and generational openness

Most participants—regardless of whether they expressed empathy, antipathy, or indifference toward antisemitism or Israel—were generally resistant to changing their views.

These perspectives were deeply rooted in prior learning and life experience, shaped by a combination of formal education, social and traditional media exposure, and personal networks including family and friends. Participants' current positions tended to align closely with their broader value systems, reinforcing a sense of certainty and stability in their beliefs.

However, an important generational distinction emerged: high school students demonstrated a noticeably greater openness to learning. Compared to older participants, they showed more curiosity and receptiveness to expanding their understanding of Jewish people, Judaism, Israel, and the current Middle East conflict.

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Enduring stereotypes and the normalisation of cultural tropes

Across all demographic groups, participants expressed a range of longstanding stereotypes about Jewish people.

These primarily centred on associations with wealth, business acumen, and professional success. These perceptions were frequently couched in positive terms or as compliments and were often framed as the result of Jewish cultural attributes such as discipline, work ethic, and a cultural emphasis on achievement. While the tone of these stereotypes was not hostile, they nonetheless reflect a pattern of essentialising Jewish identity and othering Jewish individuals which can make space for or contribute to broader prejudicial narratives.

A belief also emerged that Jewish individuals have disproportionate influence in the media, a perception that was accepted with little challenge and frequently repeated as common knowledge. This reliance on stereotypes reduces the sense of complexity and contributes to antisemitic attitudes. At the same time, they do see Jews as being loyal to Australia, a positive attribute, so that the concept of Jewish loyalty did not emerge in the focus group interviews.

Gendered patterns in attitudes and expression

Clear gender-based differences emerged across the focus groups, particularly among high school participants.

In the high school cohorts, male students were more frequently embedded in peer environments where casual racist and antisemitic humour was normalised, including dialogue or behaviours targeting Jewish individuals. In such cases, these expressions were described as social humour and banter. Across age cohorts, male participants were more likely than females to spontaneously reference enduring stereotypes when discussing Jewish people.

These associations appeared more top-of-mind among men. In contrast, female participants - across all age cohorts - consistently demonstrated greater empathy and emotional sensitivity toward all sides including both Jewish individuals in Australia and the Palestinian community involved in the conflict. They were notably less likely to express or endorse racist or antisemitic humour, and less inclined to rely on stereotypical portrayals of Jewish people.

Significant knowledge gaps and misunderstandings of Zionism and settler colonialism

The data revealed that many participants expressed disinterest and indifference about the conflict, resulting in both knowledge gaps and misinformation.

Participants often presented over simplified analogies, such as comparing the Israel-Palestinian conflict with Australia's colonial history leading to reductive compassion to avoid a deeper engagement with the topic. Thus, many participants expressed support for Jewish communities while also criticising the actions of the Israeli state.

They differentiated between Judaism, as a religion, and Zionism, as a political movement which they associated with colonialism and so could be condemned. There was a trend among participants towards polarisation, justifying antisemitism based on an anti-Israel = anti-colonialisation rhetoric. These participants see Israel as the oppressor in the conflict, ignoring the actions and ideology of Hamas.

They associate Zionism as a settler colonial movement with dispossession as their main framework. Overall, a basic but fragmented interest was displayed with participants often relying on oversimplified analogies and fragmented information. This illustrated that participants lacked knowledge, even though they claimed that they had the knowledge. This confidence may be due to their reliance on social media as their main source of information.

Navigating complexity: understanding the connections between Zionism and Judaism

The topic of antisemitism—particularly as it intersects with views on Israel and the Israel–Palestine conflict—is highly nuanced and contextually sensitive.

Most participants expressed a lack of understanding of the importance of the historical links of Jews to the 'Land of Israel' and the connections between Judaism, Jewish identity and Zionism for most Jewish Australians. Only a few expressed a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish connection to the land, with reference to Ancient Israel.

Overall, there was a lack of understanding of the integral nature of this connection to the Land of Israel in Jewish traditional religious beliefs, Jewish ritual, contemporary Jewish identity and the strong family connections of Australian Jews to Israel.

Key findings from the research project as a whole

General sentiment towards the Australian Jewish community

The research showed that, overall, Australians hold a positive sentiment towards the Jewish community, with the community rated second only to Italians in terms of willingness to share social closeness. Positive sentiment included perceptions of productivity and high levels of education, with these being widely acknowledged, albeit accompanied by views of the Australian Jewish community as somewhat insular.

The community's economic success, strong intra-community ties, and visibility in banking, business, and professional domains were highlighted. Vocational stereotypes usually positive but sometimes judgmental, were persistent and, in most cases, went unchallenged; however, open hostility towards the Australian Jewish community was rare.

Antisemitism and political activism

The research found that Australians can broadly identify classic antisemitism, but most do not perceive it as a major social problem. The quantitative findings indicated a difference in attitudes among students, with a slightly higher tendency towards negative sentiment related to anti-Zionist antisemitism compared to the broader population.

Qualitative findings provided further context for this, reinforcing that the 18—34 Gen Pop and student cohorts tended to differentiate between what they view as legitimate activism—for instance, criticism of the Israeli government's current actions or criticism of Zionism—and antisemitism, firmly believing that the former does not equate with antisemitism, and that such protest is justified.

This was particularly evident amongst those who expressed strongly held beliefs regarding the State of Israel, the current actions of the Israeli government, and Zionism. Their attitudes were shaped by the actions of the Israeli government, which they consistently noted were disproportionate responses or, in some cases, colonial narratives. In either case, these individuals experience a values misalignment, which underpins the strength of their beliefs. Despite this, some students described a 'thin line' between anti-Zionist activism and antisemitism, highlighting how easily anti-Zionist activism can tip into antisemitism.

The research confirmed that Australians consistently draw a distinction between the Australian Jewish community and the actions of the Israeli government. The large majority do not hold local Jewish communities collectively responsible for Israel's policies, despite many linking Jewish identity with Israel.

Durable stereotypes and knowledge gaps

The research revealed enduring stereotypes around Jewish wealth, business success, influence and media power. Mostly, these appeared benign and those centred on wealth or business success were often framed as complimentary but remain damaging for their ability to other the Australian Jewish community, particularly within a context of knowledge gaps and a lack of familiarity with the community.

Participants of all ages—especially young adults with no direct connection to members of the Australian Jewish community—displayed some knowledge gaps about the complexity of antisemitism and in understanding what constitutes Jewish identity, with confusion around the role of religion, ethnicity, culture, and politics within this.

Social and traditional media played a key role in shaping perceptions. And openness to learning was highest among high school students (aged 16–18), who displayed greater curiosity and lower baseline knowledge.

Disengagement and media influence

In some cases, research participants reported disengagement and emotional distance from issues involving the Australian Jewish community or the current Israel–Palestine conflict, unless directly affected. Additionally, there was a sentiment of discomfort or reluctance to participate in debate, with concerns that under informed views might lead to misinterpretation or unintended offence.

While quantitative measures showed Australians were comfortable with media reporting on antisemitism, the qualitative inquiry revealed widespread scepticism towards traditional media and a high reliance on social media among younger cohorts.

Overarching conclusions and recommendations

The research affirms that antisemitism in Australia is not monolithic but complex, influenced by ignorance, misinformation, and ideological narratives.

- Younger Australians (18–35) display lower positive sentiment and higher antisemitism scores than other age groups.
- Knowledge gaps are widespread, with only a small proportion of Australians able to accurately describe the Jewish population or identity.
- Education, familiarity, and accurate information demonstrably reduce antisemitic attitudes.
- Tailored, age-specific interventions are needed: curiosity-based education for high school students, and critical-thinking and discourse frameworks for university cohorts.
- Addressing 'soft' antisemitism, including stereotypes, coded language, and casual prejudice, remains essential.

A complex, nuanced landscape

The research affirms that antisemitism in Australia is not monolithic but multifaceted, shaped by media, social context, and individual experience. While outright hostility is rare, 'softer' forms of prejudice persist.

Tailored, age-specific approaches

There is a need for tailored interventions that are audience specific. High school students require basic, curiosity-driven education. University and adult cohorts need frameworks that facilitate dialogue, critical thinking, and resilience against polarisation.

Addressing subtle antisemitism

Attention is needed to tackle pervasive stereotypes, coded language, and the normalisation of casual prejudice. This includes challenging the essentialising and othering effects of positive stereotypes, as well as clarifying the boundaries between political activism and hate speech.

Media and information literacy

There is a dual challenge of distrust in traditional media and the influence of social media and popular culture. Interventions that navigate complex narratives and recognise misinformation are required.

Bridging the knowledge gap

There is a critical need for social education that contextualises Jewish history, identity, and diversity, dismantling uniform representations and fostering empathy, to make Jewish identity more accessible and break down barriers of indifference and perceptions of insularity.

Promoting balanced discourse and policy

Australians separate criticism of the Israeli government from antisemitism, with many holding strong opinions, especially those who are critical of the Israeli government's recent actions. Because these views are often firmly held, it is important that interventions support activism and protest that respect the dignity, safety, and peaceful expression of all communities.

Overall, the data underscore that antisemitism in Australia is often rooted in ignorance rather than hostility, and that increasing Australians' understanding of Jewish history, identity, and community life can measurably reduce prejudice.

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ASECA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and to their Elders past and present.