



# Antisemitic attitudes in Sweden

A comparison between 2020 and 2025

# Summary

**T**he Living History Forum has been commissioned by the Swedish government to conduct a national study of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs among the general population. This study describes the prevalence of such attitudes and analyses whether they have changed over time. It also considers the association between antisemitic attitudes and various background variables.

## About the study

The study is a longitudinal analysis that compares two surveys conducted in 2020 and 2025, which used largely the same questions, though with the addition of further questions informed by developments in the field. A large part of the questionnaire was identical or similar to other studies of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs.

The 2025 survey was conducted by Statistics Sweden (SCB) on behalf of the Living History Forum. The sample was 30,258 people from the general public aged 18–74, of whom 6,789 responded to the questionnaire (22.4 per cent). The data was weighted to ensure the sample was representative of the population. The 2020 survey was conducted by Novus.

The questionnaire statements were mostly about attitudes and beliefs about Jews. Respondents

were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The study has analysed three types of antisemitism: social distance from Jews; classic and Holocaust-related antisemitic beliefs; and Israel-related antisemitism. Each reflects different dimensions of antisemitic thinking and can encompass both cognitive and emotional components.

Statements reflecting all three types of antisemitism have been compiled into three indices: an index of social distance; a multidimensional antisemitism index measuring classic and Holocaust-related attitudes and beliefs; and an index of Israel-related antisemitism. The study has also considered the public's views about the harassment of Jews and specific conspiracy theories.

By analysing the responses to individual statements, the various indices, and the relation to background variables, as well as the strength and diffusion of antisemitic attitudes, the study provides a general picture of the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes in Sweden and the changes between 2020 and 2025. It follows that the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes in the population is not summarised in any single measure in this report.

The key findings of the report are summarised below.

## Increase in antisemitic attitudes and beliefs

The results show a negative shift in the Swedish population's attitudes to Jews between 2020 and 2025. It involved both an increase in the proportion of respondents who agreed with antisemitic statements and a decrease in the proportion who disagreed. The change encompassed all three types of antisemitism – social distance from Jews; classic and Holocaust-related antisemitism; and Israel-related antisemitism – measured at both points in time, in a clear departure from the trend observed in an earlier study by Living History Forum, which found a decline in antisemitic attitudes between 2005 and 2020.

The increase in the proportion of respondents who agreed with antisemitic statements was limited but consistent. The most significant change was that fewer respondents unequivocally distanced themselves from such statements. For all three antisemitism indices, there was a shift away from responses that 'Strongly disagree' to 'Neither agree nor disagree', which can partly be interpreted as increased ambivalence or acceptance of antisemitic views.

### Increased social distance from Jews

Social distance refers to social distance from and antipathy to Jews. This was gauged by asking whether respondents would accept a Jew as an employer, neighbour, or family member. It was also gauged with the statement 'It would be totally fine for a Jew to be prime minister of Sweden'.

In 2025 a large majority – between 83 and 90 per cent – gave a positive response about having a Jew as a neighbour, employer, or family member. Compared to 2020, however, that proportion had fallen, while the proportion who gave a negative answer increased slightly. A majority also gave a positive response about the idea of a Jew as prime minister. However, the proportion who strongly

agreed had decreased by 9 percentage points since 2020, from 50 per cent to 41 per cent. In 2025, 14 per cent gave a negative response about having a Jew as prime minister.

### Fewer disagree with classic and Holocaust-related antisemitism

Classic antisemitic tropes include believing that Jews as a group have power and influence over politics, the media, and the economy. These tropes also encompass conspiratorial beliefs and form the core of myths depicting Jewish conspiracies.

The results for 2025 show that between 13 and 21 per cent strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with statements expressing beliefs about Jewish power and influence. Compared to 2020, the proportion had slightly increased for several statements. Yet, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of people who disagreed. For the statements 'The Jews have great influence over the media' and 'The Jews control US foreign policy' the decrease was 14 percentage points.

There was a similar shift in responses to the two statements about antisemitism in contexts related to the Holocaust. In 2025, 12 and 14 per cent respectively gave a positive answer to those statements, a slight increase compared to 2020. The proportion of respondents who disagreed decreased significantly: the decrease was 11 percentage points for the statement 'The Jews exploit the Nazis' extermination of the Jews (the Holocaust) for economic and political purposes'.

### Fewer distance themselves from Israel-related antisemitism

Criticism of Israel's policies is not in itself antisemitism, but antisemitic tropes and attitudes are found in contexts related to the State of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The proportion of respondents who agreed with several of the statements in both 2020 and

2025 increased slightly, while fewer disagreed. For example, the proportion who disagreed with the statement ‘Swedish Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Sweden’ fell from 38 per cent in 2020 to 22 per cent in 2025.

For the statement ‘Because of Israel’s policies I increasingly dislike Jews’ the 2025 proportion was similar to 2020: in 2025, 6 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and 69 per cent disagreed to varying degrees. The 2025 survey also included the statement ‘Given Israel’s policies, I can understand why some people dislike Jews’: 26 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 35 per cent disagreed to varying degrees.

### **Changes in attitudes between 2020 and 2025**

A detailed regression analysis shows that the mean level of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs in the Swedish population increased between 2020 and 2025. The negative shift in attitudes to Jews included both increased agreement with antisemitic statements and decreased rejection of such statements. For the multidimensional antisemitism index (which included classic and Holocaust-related attitudes and beliefs) and the index measuring Israel-related antisemitism, the increase amounted to 15 per cent over the same period. The corresponding increase for the index measuring social distance – antipathy and social distance from Jews – was 16 per cent.

When controlling for background variables such as gender, age, education, place of birth, place of residence, religious affiliation, and position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the increase persists, even when differences in the respondents’ background characteristics are taken into account. The observed increase cannot solely be explained by changes in individual variables, but rather reflects a more general shift in Swedish public attitudes.

## Intensity and diffusion of antisemitic attitudes

As in the 2020 study, an ‘elastic approach’ was taken to the analysis of the 2025 results, which captures the intensity of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs, and so gives a fuller picture of their varying strength among the Swedish public. The method makes it possible to describe attitudes and beliefs in terms of the extent of their strength and range in the population.

Antisemitic attitudes are considered strong in intensity when respondents agreed with more than half the statements in an index. They are considered weaker in intensity when respondents agreed with two or more statements but no more than half in an index. Agreement with only one statement is not categorised as an antisemitic attitude, but may indicate latent antisemitic views.

### Stronger anti-Jewish attitudes

The results for the social distance index show that just over 80 per cent did not express any social distance from Jews. Yet 4 per cent held anti-Jewish attitudes that were stronger in intensity, which was twice the figure in 2020. The proportion who held anti-Jewish attitudes that were weaker in intensity also increased. The proportion of respondents who agreed with none or one of the statements decreased, marking a shift from less to more agreement between 2020 and 2025.

67 per cent of respondents did not agree with any of the statements in the multidimensional antisemitism index of classic and Holocaust-related antisemitic attitudes, against 15 per cent with antisemitic attitudes that were weaker in intensity and 7 per cent with antisemitic attitudes that were stronger in intensity. Compared to 2020, the proportion with antisemitic and strongly antisemitic attitudes increased, while the proportion who did not agree with any of the statements remained largely unchanged.

Just under 60 per cent did not agree with any of the statements in the index for Israel-related antisemitism, while 12 per cent had antisemitic attitudes that were weaker in intensity and 6 per cent had antisemitic attitudes that were stronger in intensity. Compared to 2020, the proportion who agreed with a single statement increased, while the proportion who did not agree with any statement decreased. Taken together, the findings for Israel-related antisemitism show a clear shift towards more agreement, with the change being more pronounced than in the other indices.

Compared to 2020, the 2025 results show a general shift towards greater agreement with antisemitic statements.

### Maximal diffusion

The elastic analysis also makes it possible to estimate the maximal diffusion of antisemitic beliefs in the population. The calculation is based on all responses that agreed with at least one statement in each index.

It should be noted that the maximal diffusion is not a measure of the proportion of people with antisemitic attitudes, but is rather an estimate of the proportion where Jews and others might encounter antisemitic attitudes and beliefs. An estimate of this kind is particularly relevant when interpreting the findings about Swedish Jews’ experiences of antisemitism.

The results indicate that the diffusion varies by the type of antisemitism in question. For social distance from Jews, the maximal diffusion in 2025 was 18 per cent, while the corresponding diffusion for classic and Holocaust-related attitudes in the population was 33 per cent and for Israel-related antisemitic attitudes 43 per cent.

It should be borne in mind that people who hold antisemitic views are not necessarily open about it. Yet, however unintentional or lacking in hostile intent, even isolated instances when

antisemitic views are expressed can be offensive and cause distress.

### **Antisemitic attitudes and views about the harassment of Jews**

An important addition in 2025 was the analysis of respondents' views about the antisemitic harassment of Jews. The results show that a large majority thought the harassment of Jews was indefensible; however, there was also a minority who to varying degrees justified or relativised anti-Jewish harassment, for example by pointing to the State of Israel's policies.

The study finds a clear association between antisemitic attitudes and a propensity to justify the harassment of Jews. The stronger the antisemitic beliefs, the more likely the respondents would also give justifications for harassment, especially when it came to Israel-related antisemitism, where even the weakest intensity of antisemitism was associated with a greater acceptance of the harassment of Jews.

### **Attitudes and background variables**

The analysis of background variables shows that antisemitic attitudes in the Swedish population in 2025 covaried with several individual background variables and value-related factors. The analysis uses reference categories – a group with which other groups are compared.

The results for 2025 together show that antisemitic attitudes and beliefs were present in various sections of the population, albeit to varying degrees depending on the type of antisemitism, and more widespread in some sections of the population than others. This does not imply that the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes was limited to those groups, however.

#### **Age, gender, and education matter**

It was consistently the case that higher age relates to higher levels of antisemitic attitudes, and similarly higher levels of education is associated with lower levels of social distance and antipathy to Jews. Gender was also significant: in 2025, women were consistently less likely than men to hold

antisemitic attitudes.

### **Background, religious affiliation, and friendships matter**

Swedish-born respondents with two foreign-born parents, those born in the EU or the rest of Europe but outside the Nordic region, and those born in Africa, Asia, or MENA (Middle East and North Africa) exhibited higher levels of classic and Holocaust-related antisemitism compared to Swedish-born respondents with two Swedish-born parents. Of those born outside Europe, the association was particularly clear for respondents born in MENA or Asia.

There was a greater likelihood of social distance and antipathy to Jews among those born outside Europe (with the exception of North and South America) than Swedish-born respondents with two Swedish-born parents.

Muslims had on average significantly higher levels of antisemitic attitudes compared to the reference category of people with no religious affiliation. For Christians and people of other faiths there was no difference compared to the reference category.

Having a Jewish friend was a consistent factor linked to lower levels of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs.

### **Conspiracy theories, personal values, and party preferences**

The 2025 results show that patterns of values and attitudes are associated with antisemitic attitudes, the relationship with conspiratorial thinking and right-wing authoritarian attitudes being particularly distinct. Negative views about immigrants, sexism, and left-wing authoritarian attitudes also relate to higher levels of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs.

The results also found an association between party preference and antisemitic attitudes. Re-

spondents who sympathised with the Sweden Democrats or ‘other parties’ outside Parliament had a significantly greater propensity to hold antisemitic beliefs than those who sympathised with the reference category (the Social Democrats). Yet the results also indicate that party preference was linked to the attitudes and values indices, which explains more when all the factors are taken into account.

For obvious reasons, the results linking antisemitic attitudes and party preferences should not be confused with potential problems relating to antisemitism in specific political parties.

### **Position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict**

Regarding the respondents’ sympathies in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the results show a significantly lower propensity to hold antisemitic attitudes among those who primarily sympathised with Israel or sympathised with both Israel and Palestine. Respondents who primarily sympathised with Palestine were more likely to hold Israel-related antisemitic attitudes compared to the reference category (in this case, respondents who answered ‘Don’t know’).

### **Reasons for the increase**

The study shows that there has been a negative shift in antisemitic attitudes between 2020 and 2025. The reasons for the change are difficult to determine, but it is a reasonable assumption that it was because of a combination of factors. It seems likely to be linked to the rise in antisemitism observed in Europe following Hamas’s terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Israel–Gaza War, and which has also been observed in Sweden.

However, it is not known when attitudes began to change. Even before October 2023, a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

(FRA) survey found that a majority of Swedish Jews reported antisemitism had increased in the preceding five years.

Another factor to be taken into account is the importance of social media in spreading, amplifying, and normalising anti-Jewish content. Further, consideration should be given to antisemitism's function as a tool for political mobilisation, particularly against a background of geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts, societal change, and economic crisis. In such circumstances, antisemitic conspiracy theories offer simplified, false 'explanations' of complex events – a process helped by an information environment where disinformation and conspiratorial propaganda are widespread.

## **Further studies**

For a more comprehensive understanding of antisemitism as a changing social problem, the results of attitude surveys must be complemented with studies of different facets of the issues. Hence the importance of analyses of the trends in hate crimes and incidents, the spread of antisemitic content on social media, the presence and function of antisemitism in specific political and religiopolitical sections of society, and Jews' exposure to antisemitism and its consequences.



