

Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Norway 2017

Questions and answers:

1. Why does the Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities (CHM) conduct surveys like these on attitudes towards minority groups?

Population surveys on attitudes towards minorities constitute an important tool for bringing to light hostile attitudes between groups in the population and for aiding efforts to combat such attitudes. Repeating the same surveys at regular intervals makes it possible to follow trends in attitudes over time. The minorities themselves are often underrepresented in surveys like these, so separate surveys are needed to gain knowledge about the minorities' own experiences and attitudes. The new survey is intended to encourage self-reflection, understanding and awareness in a society characterised by ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

2. Why does the CHM's survey distinguish between three different types (or dimensions) of attitudes?

Whereas many attitude surveys focus solely on the cognitive dimension of attitudes, in other words on stereotypes ("prejudices"), this survey draws distinctions between different dimensions to take into account the fact that attitudes are complex. In addition to prejudices, the survey examines negative feelings (dislike (the affective dimension)) and social distance (respondents' views about having different groups as neighbours or in their circle of friends). The three dimensions are to some extent independent of each other; for example, someone with stereotypical ideas about Muslims can still have a good relationship with his Muslim neighbour. Drawing distinctions between the respective dimensions gives us a better picture of what types of attitudes the respondents have; for example, whether prejudiced views also include negative feelings or a desire for social distance. Prejudices are normally found to be more widespread than the other two dimensions, and this also proved to be the case in our survey.

3. The extent of antisemitism in the Norwegian population between 2011 and 2017 has decreased. What are the possible reasons for this decrease?

The trend appears to be moving in a positive direction. The results show a decrease in the extent of antisemitism in the Norwegian population in terms of prejudice, social distance and dislike. People's attitudes are influenced by a number of factors; for example, education, age and gender are important factors. Regarding attitudes towards Jews and Muslims, the results of our survey also show that xenophobia and opinions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict play a role. However, our analyses show that the decrease in antisemitic attitudes cannot be attributed to changes in any of these factors. The most likely explanation for the decrease may be wider public attention and greater

awareness of antisemitism as a problem in Norwegian society in recent years. This finding is consistent with similar trends internationally.

4. Why do Jews in Norway nonetheless regard antisemitism as a serious and escalating problem in society?

Attitudes and actions are not the same thing. The decrease shown in CHM's survey applies to the extent of antisemitic attitudes in the Norwegian population. We did not survey acts of antisemitism, the capacity of radical groups to act, or the threat level to which Jews in Norway are exposed. The perception of antisemitism as a serious and escalating problem may be explained by issues such as terrorism, antisemitism on the internet or experiences of everyday discrimination. The most alarming finding, however, is the justification of violence and harassment against Jews based on Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. Several factors suggest that opinions on the Middle East conflict also play a decisive role in Norway. The fact that the Jewish minority perceives antisemitism as a growing problem in Norwegian society may also be due to Israel-derived antisemitism.

5. How are attitudes towards Jews and Muslims related to opinions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?

European surveys have shown that the number of antisemitic incidents increases when the Israeli–Palestinian conflict intensifies. The results from the current survey show how attitudes towards both Jews and Muslims in Norway are related to opinions on the conflict. The lowest levels of antisemitism were found among respondents who were not xenophobic and who support Israel, and the highest levels of antisemitism among respondents who were highly xenophobic and who support the Palestinians. The lowest levels of Islamophobic attitudes were found among respondents who were not xenophobic and who support the Palestinians, and the highest levels of Islamophobic attitudes among respondents who were highly xenophobic and who support Israel.

6. Who exhibits the most negative attitudes towards and Muslims?

Islamophobic attitudes and antisemitic attitudes are more widespread among men, older respondents, and respondents without higher education than they are among women, younger respondents and respondents with higher education. The same pattern is found among the Muslim respondents regarding attitudes towards Jews. Strong xenophobic attitudes are closely linked to high levels of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the population. However, opinions on the Middle-East conflict differentiate the respondents as follows: the highest levels of Islamophobia were exhibited by those who support Israel while the highest levels of antisemitism were exhibited by those who support the Palestinians.

7. How widespread are antisemitism and Islamophobia in Norway compared with other European countries?

The extent of antisemitism in Norway is similar to that in other countries in northern Europe, and as such are relatively small by European standards. The decrease in antisemitic prejudice between 2011 and 2017 that emerges in our survey is also seen in other European countries, though it varies considerably between countries. As in other European countries, the results from Norway show that antisemitic prejudice in the Muslim sample is more widespread than in the population sample. At the same time, the distance between the general population and Muslims is smaller than that found in other European studies. With respect to Jewish experiences of antisemitism, the results from the Norwegian survey are close to the average for the largest EU study when it comes to the question of whether respondents avoid showing their religious affiliation. However, they seem to be lower than average regarding the question of experiences of discrimination. The extent of Islamophobia in the population can generally be said to be the same as or slightly lower than the average for Europe, though again, this varies considerably between countries. The results show that the extent of Islamophobia among the Jewish respondents is far smaller than in the general population, particularly with regard to prejudice against Muslims. Muslim respondents reported more often having experienced discrimination than did Jewish respondents, though less often than the average reported in the most recent EU study on this subject conducted in 2017.

8. How does the survey define antisemitism and Islamophobia?

Antisemitism can be defined as hostile attitudes towards and acts directed against Jews or anyone perceived as "Jewish" based on specific images of Jews. These images have a long history in Europe, and cover a broad spectrum of ideas, some of them self-contradictory. A common feature is the way in which Jews collectively are attributed inherent (primarily) negative traits. Certain basic themes are recurrent, such as belief in the idea that Jews represent a foreign and hostile element in a community, and that they pose a threat to society. Islamophobia can be defined as widespread prejudice, acts and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate against people because they are – or are assumed to be – Muslim.

Negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims are rooted in different historical periods, such as the religiously inspired enemy images of the Middle Ages and the colonial portrayals of Muslims as an inferior race. Nevertheless, the scope of this phenomenon has grown considerably in recent decades.

There are many differences between antisemitism and Islamophobia. Examples of such differences include antisemitism's deep historical roots and its role in the persecutions that culminated in the genocide of the European Jews during World War II. The content of some prejudicial constructs also display clear differences. Nevertheless, some parallels can be found throughout history; for example, in the fear of a minority having a hidden agenda to take over society. A structural feature common

to both antisemitic and Islamophobic ideas is the tendency to attribute Jews and Muslims with inherently negative traits. The current survey shows that antisemitism and Islamophobia are related through their connection with xenophobia.

9. What does it mean to say that antisemitism and Islamophobia are phenomena with more similarities than differences?

The results of the survey show how antisemitism and Islamophobia are related phenomena in that those who exhibit prejudice against and dislike of foreigners also score high on negative attitudes towards Jews and Muslims. The likelihood of scoring high on Islamophobia is also far greater for respondents who score high on antisemitism than for respondents who score low, and a high score on Islamophobia increases rather than reduces the likelihood of holding antisemitic attitudes. Antisemitism and Islamophobia are also related in that the prejudices in both cases attribute Jews and Muslims collective negative traits. Certain ideas also share some common features; for example, antisemitic and Islamophobic thinking both incorporate ideas of how minorities are disloyal or want to take control of society.

10. What are indices, and why were they used in the analyses in the survey?

Determining the extent of negative attitudes in a population group is no easy task. In any survey, the distribution of responses to a specific question will depend not only on the subject matter but also on the wording and the response options provided. It is therefore expedient to use multiple questions with varied content and form, and analyse the overall pattern of the responses. This can be done by constructing indices that combine multiple questions with related content. Using multiple questions provides more reliable measurements because it reduces the impact of random errors. It also produces more valid measurements of complex features that cannot be captured by a single question. We therefore constructed indices for each of the three dimensions of attitudes (cognitive, affective, and social distance) and then combined them in an overall index.