

YES, BUT...*

Antisemitism and the limits
of workplace inclusion

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Executive Summary

Background

This research builds on Pearn Kandola's 2024 study of antisemitism and Islamophobia at work. That research showed that there had been a nearly 50% increase in antisemitism in workplaces since 7th October 2023. Many Jewish participants felt misunderstood by their organisations, uncertain that concerns would be recognised and increasingly reluctant to speak openly about their identity at work.

In June 2026, Pearn Kandola held *Antisemitism at Work Week*: a series of webinars exploring antisemitism in workplaces. The response from Jewish attendees was striking, with several describing the lack of responsiveness of their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) teams to issues relating to antisemitism.

This led to a wider question: are such experiences isolated, or do they reflect a broader pattern?

The survey results of more than 1,000 Jewish employees revealed that:



87.0% agreed that their organisation expressed a clear commitment to tackling racism and discrimination.



83.0% agreed that their organisation's DEI function was visibly active on racism and discrimination.

However, the survey also revealed misgivings about the way antisemitism was addressed and, because of this, the impact it had on being able to share experiences of antisemitism:



75.5% agreed that their organisation's DEI approach was not consistent in its response to antisemitism.



70.8% agreed that they had avoided raising concerns about antisemitism because they were unsure how those concerns would be received.



Only 15.9% said they felt able to raise concerns about antisemitism.

The interviews identified the ways in which organisations and their DEI functions can fail to address antisemitism, some of which included:

- **Denial:** Antisemitism can be denied directly, but also through silence, omission, and failure to act.
- **Reversal:** The person raising concerns of antisemitism is repositioned as the problem, wrongdoer or self-interested party.
- **Liberal arguments about merit and fairness:** Perceived Jewish status, success, or representation used to imply that Jewish people do not experience racism or require inclusion support.
- **Deracialisation:** Antisemitism is reframed as an international political issue, a religious matter, generic hatred or an interpersonal disagreement. Race is removed from consideration.
- **Distancing by seeing antisemitism as not typical:** Incidents of antisemitism and Jewish inclusion positioned as peripheral, and attributable to an individual personality.
- **Distancing by inaction:** Organisations acknowledge concerns without taking responsibility for action.
- **Positive self-presentation of the organisation or of the individuals themselves:** Organisation presents itself as committed to inclusion. DEI teams see themselves as the upholders of fairness and representation in organisations. Because of this positive view of themselves, they feel their motives should not be questioned.
- **Trivialisation:** Antisemitism, Jewish safety and Jewish participation are treated as low priority.

The conclusions of the research are:

1. **DEI practices and assumptions** can prevent antisemitism from being recognised.
2. **Many Jewish employees are experiencing exclusion** (including harassment, intimidation and lack of empathy) by their DEI functions, which in turn exacerbates their identity threat
3. **This is more than an issue of psychological safety and includes organisational listening.** It requires the ability to understand what employees are saying in its proper context and to make a judgement about what needs to happen next. An employee should not have to prove the legitimacy of their identity, educate those receiving the concern or repeatedly explain why an experience matters before it is recognised.
4. **Not to assume expertise in antisemitism in the DEI function.** Some of the approaches in the DEI function use a framework centred on power, privilege and oppression. Use of these frameworks makes it harder to recognise Jewish vulnerability because of stereotypes about influence or success.
5. **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** can provide an insight into a group’s ‘lived experience’. However, they have also blocked action on antisemitism.
6. **Silence is a rational conclusion for Jewish employees** when faced with a function that is not willing to listen without judgement on their experiences.

The recommendations are:

- 1 Reappraise the Purpose and Practice of DEI**
Senior leaders should scrutinise DEI with the same seriousness applied to other professional functions. Leaders need to review the DEI team’s actions to tackle antisemitism. Reviews will need to consult with DEI teams but should not be led by them.
- 2 Redefine Expertise Within DEI**
Commitment to equality is essential, but it is not a substitute for deep professional knowledge. In the short term it is essential that the DEI teams themselves recognise and educate themselves on antisemitism and the way it is manifested not only in organisations but within their own function.
- 3 Separate Representation from Inclusion**
Representation is one important measure of equality of opportunity, but it should not be treated as the principal measure of inclusion. Those working in the DEI function are as likely as anyone else to hold stereotypical views that Jews are overrepresented in senior leadership and are influential, and so this is a reason why antisemitism does not require action.
- 4 Clarify the Role of Employee Resource Groups**
ERGs may provide valuable insight, connection and support. However, organisations should not treat ERGs as expert advisory bodies or delegate complex decisions to them. Leaders need to retain accountability for decisions and for ensuring access to appropriate professional expertise.
- 5 Build Organisational Listening Into DEI**
Organisations should treat listening as a core inclusion capability, rather than a by-product of engagement activity. Jews in organisations have spoken up and made their views and concerns known. However, many ways were found to discount, ignore and minimise what they were told. Organisational listening should be an important capability to be developed for those working in DEI.
- 6 Introduce Reflexive Practice Into DEI**
DEI functions should be expected to examine their own assumptions as carefully as they encourage others to. Reflexive practice should include structured opportunities for DEI teams and leaders to ask questions about their practice, using antisemitism as a potential case study to examine their methods, models (explicit and implicit) and assumptions (explicit and implicit).

This is not about undermining DEI. It is about strengthening it. A profession concerned with reducing bias must recognise its own capacity for bias and build systems that reduce its influence.

Introduction

Background

The Hamas attack on Israel on 7th October 2023 and the conflict that followed marked a significant shift in the experience of many Jewish people in Britain. Physical and verbal attacks against Jews increased sharply in society, which raised important questions about how organisations understood and responded to concerns relating to antisemitism.

This research builds on Pearn Kandola's 2024 study of antisemitism and Islamophobia at work. That research showed that there had been a nearly 50% increase in antisemitism in workplaces. Many Jewish participants felt misunderstood by their organisations, uncertain that concerns would be recognised and increasingly reluctant to speak openly about their identity at work.

In May 2026, Pearn Kandola held *Antisemitism at Work Week*: a series of webinars exploring antisemitism in workplaces, the impact it has on Jewish employees and how organisations can respond. The response from Jewish attendees was striking, with many welcoming the fact that antisemitism was being addressed directly as a workplace issue. At the same time, several described the lack of responsiveness of their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) teams to issues relating to antisemitism.

This led to a wider question: are such experiences isolated, or do they reflect a broader pattern?

This report shows the survey results of more than 1,000 Jewish employees, together with interviews which enabled issues and personal experiences to be explored in greater depth.

This report describes the approach to gathering the data, the results, the conclusions and recommendations.

Approach

Our sample

The quantitative element of the research was a national survey of

1,002

Jewish employees working across the UK. Participants represented a wide range of sectors, occupations, organisational levels and backgrounds.

The qualitative element comprised **in-depth interviews** with Jewish employees from a range of organisations and sectors, with many of the participants working in DEI teams themselves or been involved with inclusion initiatives. The interviews provide context, helping to explain the patterns seen in the survey and show why many had lost confidence in their DEI functions.

All of the interview participants are based in Britain. The majority worked for British organisations. However, some interviewees worked for large US multinationals and their experiences relate to dealing with American DEI teams.

Survey Findings

1. Organisational Commitment to Tackling Racism

Most respondents recognised that their organisations publicly value inclusion.

87% agreed that their organisation expressed a clear commitment to tackling racism and discrimination.

83% agreed that their organisation's DEI function was visibly active on racism and discrimination.

Respondents do not view their organisations as indifferent to discrimination. Many work in organisations with established DEI functions, where there are visible initiatives and clear public commitments to fairness.

Most respondents believe they work for organisations that see tackling discrimination and exclusion as important.

Inclusion has become an established part of organisational life and employers recognise the importance of creating fair and respectful workplaces.

2. A Gap Between Commitment and Practice

While respondents recognised organisational commitments to inclusion, many did not believe those commitments were applied consistently to antisemitism.

60.5% agreed that antisemitism receives less attention from their organisation's DEI function than other forms of racism or discrimination.

72.7% agreed that they had noticed a gap between their organisation's public commitment to DEI and its response to antisemitism.

75.5% agreed that their organisation's DEI approach was not consistent in its response to antisemitism.

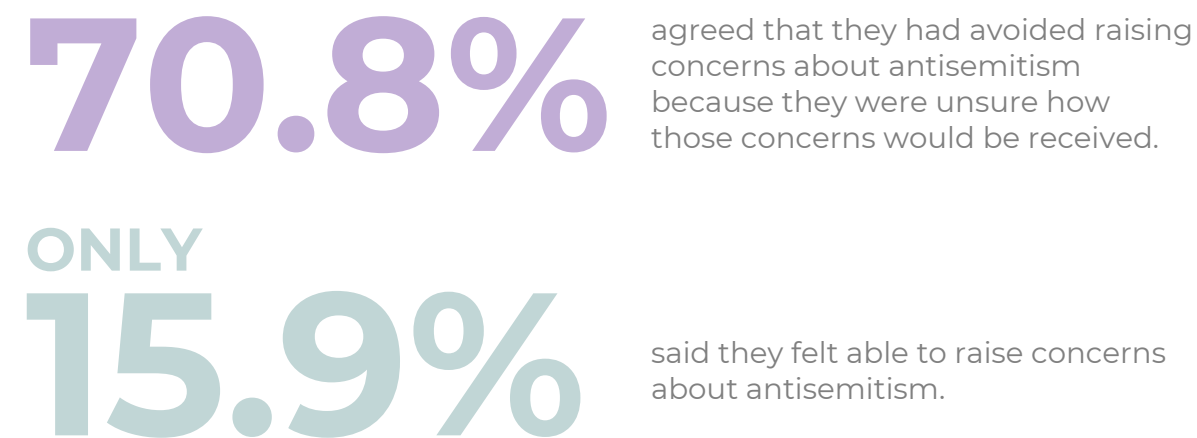
These findings suggest that, for many Jewish employees, the issue is not whether organisations have policies, campaigns or reporting mechanisms. It is whether this commitment to racial equality applies equally when antisemitism is involved.

However, the survey strongly suggests that many Jewish employees, despite organisations' public activity and profile on DEI, see inconsistency in the application of the policies to antisemitism and less commitment to addressing it.

To have trust in the relevant DEI policies and procedures, employees need to believe that the organisation will take their concerns seriously and will act fairly in considering them.

3. Low Confidence-Low Reporting

The survey indicates that inconsistency in organisational responses is affecting employee behaviour.



This has important implications for leaders. Organisations often treat the number of formal complaints as an indicator of the prevalence of a problem. Yet low reporting does not necessarily indicate low incidence. It may instead indicate that employees have concluded that speaking up will not lead to meaningful action or even understanding.

Lack of reporting is not an event but a cycle. Reporting begins before an employee approaches a manager, HR or a DEI team member. People will make an evaluation of whether *it is worthwhile to speak*. If employees lack confidence in the likely response, the reporting process ends before it starts. If they speak up and are rebuffed or ignored, the likelihood of reporting in the future will be reduced.

A lack of formal complaints should therefore not automatically be interpreted as a sign that there is no problem. Instead, the results appear to indicate that Jewish employees are instead recognising the futility of speaking up.

Only one in six of Jewish respondents feel able to raise concerns about antisemitism in the workplace - an extremely low number.

4. The Central Challenge Is Organisational Listening

Taken together, the survey findings point to a wider issue: organisational listening.

Organisational listening is more than providing channels for employees to speak. It is the capability and motivation to receive, interpret and act on employee information in ways that enhance understanding and decision-making.

The survey results show that organisations can have strong policies, active DEI initiatives and have expressed public commitment and still fail to understand the experiences of some employees. If people do not believe their concerns will be recognised or handled fairly, they will share less information.

This creates a potentially very concerning paradox. As employees become less willing to report concerns, organisations may become more confident that few problems exist.

The challenge, therefore, is not only to encourage employees to speak. It is to demonstrate that the organisation can understand what employees say and respond credibly when they do. In this case, Jewish employees and colleagues do not feel listened to and consequently feel excluded even in organisations which are otherwise active in inclusion.

Interview Findings

Why Confidence Breaks Down

The survey identified widespread concern about organisational responses to antisemitism, particularly the perceived gap between commitments to race equality and the response to antisemitism.

The interviews add depth to the survey findings. Participants' accounts help explain why some Jewish employees question whether organisations' DEI functions will recognise and respond effectively to antisemitism.

The interviews explored participants' experiences and why many had lost confidence in organisational and DEI responses. The interviewees came from a variety of sectors and backgrounds. While all interview participants were based in the UK, some worked for American multinationals and the experiences they described involved interactions with DEI teams based in the US.

The interview analysis is in two parts. The first looks at the ways in which organisations, and the DEI function in particular has responded to concerns about antisemitism. Research has identified numerous ways in which organisations can fail to address racism effectively, and this framework is used to examine the way that antisemitism has been dealt with.

The second part of the analysis looks at the themes that cut across the interviews, highlighting aspects of people's experiences not covered by organisational responses.

Part One: Organisational Responses

Research has identified several ways in which organisations can fail to address racism. This framework is used to examine the responses to antisemitism.

The devices used:

- **Denial:** Antisemitism can be denied directly, but also through silence, omission, and failure to act.
- **Reversal:** The person raising concerns of antisemitism is repositioned as the problem, wrongdoer or self-interested party.
- **Presenting views as reasonable:** Stating reasons such as complexity, sensitivity and need for balance for not taking action.
- **Liberal arguments about merit and fairness:** Perceived Jewish status, success or representation used to imply that Jewish people do not experience racism or require inclusion support.
- **Deracialisation:** Race and racism are not seen as relevant. Antisemitism is reframed as an international political issue, a religious matter, generic hatred or an interpersonal disagreement.
- **Distancing by seeing antisemitism as not typical:** Incidents of antisemitism and Jewish inclusion positioned as peripheral, and attributable to an individual personality.
- **Distancing by inaction:** Organisations acknowledge concerns without taking responsibility for action.
- **Positive self-presentation of the organisation or of the individuals themselves:** Organisation presents itself as committed to inclusion. DEI teams see themselves as the upholders of fairness and representation in organisations.
- **Trivialisation:** Antisemitism, Jewish safety and Jewish participation are treated as low priority.
- **Marginalisation:** The perpetrator is seen as uniquely prejudiced and not typical of others.
- **Empathising with the perpetrator:** The intentions, political identity, rights, reputation or comfort of the person challenged take precedence over the complainant's.
- **Apologising without accepting responsibility:** Recognition, concern and empathy, expressed but without accepting accountability, providing remedies, or demonstrating learning.

Rhetorical Device	Examples
Denial Antisemitism can be denied directly, but also through silence, omission, and failure to take action. Treating antisemitic material solely as a ‘free speech’ issue. Failing to recognise Jewish ethnicity because it is seen as a faith and religious issue. Workplace experiences are ignored and not listened to. Prevents antisemitism from being addressed as an organisational DEI issue.	Antisemitism was not believed to exist or was not regarded as a legitimate DEI concern. Holocaust Memorial Day being marked without reference to Jews. Silence from the organisation after 7th October 2023 and other serious incidents. A senior leader saying when being told about antisemitism in organisation, “I’m glad there’s no problem like that here.” Posts judged not to breach policy because they referred to Israelis rather than Jews. Antisemitism described as “minor” by the DEI team and so a Jewish ERG not considered necessary.
Reversal The person raising antisemitism is repositioned as the problem, alleged wrongdoer or self-interested party. This makes the perpetrator the victim and the victim the perpetrator. Motives and intentions of Jews brought into question.	Jewish people raising concerns with DEI teams described as powerful, influential, oppressive or self-interested. A person suggesting establishing a Jewish ERG dismissed as “sounding a bit entitled” by the Global Director of DEI. Questioning Jewish facilitator’s suitability to lead antisemitism education: in one organisation Global Director of DEI said in an email it was ‘too risky’; in another that the session would ‘lack objectivity’. People making concerns known then being reported and being investigated themselves. A Global Director of DEI responded from a Jewish employee to a request to address antisemitism saying “It’s not just about you.” DEI team resisting calls to take action on antisemitism as these were coming from senior leaders who were Jewish-even though there was no evidence for this. Individual examples involving Jewish people being prejudiced used to avoid addressing wider antisemitism. Jewish staff’s motives were questioned and Jewish stereotypes could be treated as isolated incidents rather than part of a broader pattern. Conversely, some individual Jews were seen as behaving with ill intent. Criticisms of Jewish self-interest used to discredit their wider concerns.

Rhetorical Device	Examples
Presenting views as reasonable Arguments made about complexity, balance, neutrality, fairness and resource constraints can make inaction appear reasonable or even unavoidable. Specific concerns about antisemitism seen as politically suspect, disproportionate or too difficult to address.	Antisemitic or exclusionary language excused as expressing support for Palestinians. Individuals in DEI described themselves as anti-racist, compassionate or politically neutral-so they see themselves as trustworthy on inclusion. Implicitly provided a contrast to their Jewish colleagues. The situation in Gaza is upsetting, and it is difficult to discuss antisemitism in the workplace. Specific work on antisemitism characterised as too political, too sensitive or not the right time. Organisations referred to the complexity of the issues, competing priorities, resource constraints, or the need for caution: antisemitism was “a difficult subject”; “there are a lot of things to prioritise”; “we don’t have ERGs based on religion”; and it can be a case of “one minority against another” while being “risk averse.”
Liberal arguments: meritocratic, fair Perceived Jewish status, success or representation used to imply that Jewish people do not experience racism or require inclusion support. Fairness arguments suggest that attention to antisemitism would be disproportionate, so specific needs remain unaddressed.	Jewish people were described as White, wealthy, successful, well represented or influential. They do not experience discrimination or exclusion. Inclusion seen as an issue of representation and inaccurate statements in a DEI team meeting that there were already a lot of leaders who were Jewish, so there was no need to take action. Perceived access to senior roles, elite institutions or social status was used to question whether Jews needed DEI attention. Distributive-fairness argument used: because antisemitism was seen as receiving government attention, organisational resources should focus elsewhere. Discussion on tackling antisemitism dismissed because there were too many leaders who are Jewish and so they were seen to be behind calls for action. Unwillingness to take action as it might be seen as unfair: “We can’t move everything just for one group”. Call from a DEI team for more Muslim leaders so that the arguments were balanced.

Rhetorical Device	Examples
Deracialisation Antisemitism is reframed as an international political issue, a religious matter, generic hatred or an interpersonal disagreement. Failure to appreciate or accept the ethnic and racial aspects, or to understand the history of antisemitism means that it is excluded from mainstream race equality and DEI practice.	Judaism was often treated primarily as religion rather than also as ethnicity, culture, ancestry and peoplehood. Jewish ERGs not allowed because the organisation did not allow faith-based groups. Initiatives which start out to address antisemitism but after consulting with ERGs decided against this. Decision made to have a session instead on “hate”. This eventually came to nothing. Responses that focus on “what’s going on in Israel” rather than antisemitism affecting Jewish people in the UK and their organisation. Terms of reference for an investigation into antisemitism did not recognise Jews as an ethnic minority.
Distancing by seeing antisemitism as “not typical” Incidents of antisemitism and Jewish inclusion positioned as peripheral, and attributable to an individual personality. This distances the DEI function from having to address this.	Antisemitism seen as too sensitive, political, niche, complex or difficult for normal DEI work. Seen as an issue for Jewish employees or a Jewish ERG rather than for the organisation as a whole. Government attention presented as a reason it could fall outside organisational priorities. Jewish needs described as ‘minor’ by one DEI Director. Number of Jews in the organisation compared numerically with people who play chess by DEI director.
Distancing by action: inaction, delay, delegation and containment Organisations acknowledge concerns without taking responsibility for action. Inaction, delay, delegation, externalisation, moving the complainant and symbolic responses contain the issue rather than addressing it.	Organisations reportedly failed to respond to concerns, delayed action, delegated decisions to ERGs, declined to hold forums, ignored requests for Jewish events or support, and offered generic rather than specific education. One DEI Director acknowledged antisemitism and identity concealment, but “nothing actually happened.” In another case, responsibility was externalised because government activity was said to be sufficient. Complainant about antisemitism moved rather than the manager. Meaningful action followed only after sustained escalation.

Rhetorical Device	Examples
Positive self-presentation Organisation presents itself as committed to inclusion. General equality credentials, representation initiatives and public statements are used to present a credible organisational image used to mask gaps in recognition, learning, accountability and action on antisemitism.	Organisations and DEI professionals were described as anti-racist, compassionate and committed to equality. Some highlighted work on minority representation, wider ERG activity or previous racial justice commitments while failing to address antisemitism. Minority ERG event sought Jewish representation at an event on racism but there was no mention of Jews or antisemitism; a possible antisemitism session was raised but not followed through. Other organisations made public statements that “never led to any action.” DEI teams see themselves as the upholders of fairness and representation in organisations while failing to listen to the concerns of their Jewish colleagues. ERGs seen as a positive initiative by organisations yet they are able to veto action to tackle antisemitism.
Trivialisation Antisemitism, Jewish safety and Jewish participation are treated as low priority or not seen as significant to require action.	Antisemitism was treated as less urgent than other priorities, as something that could be addressed later, or as not deserving sympathy because Jewish people were viewed as successful. Requests for events, support or education were reportedly met with silence, lack of planning or no budget.
Marginalisation: “bad apple” Typically, this occurs where the perpetrator is seen as uniquely prejudiced and not typical of others. Locating alleged antisemitism in a rogue individual can prevent scrutiny of the organisational culture, systems and leadership decisions that enabled it.	Antisemitic managers described as “an a****ole”, another as someone whom “you’ll never change”, and another as a ‘difficult character’.

Rhetorical Device	Examples
Empathise with perpetrator The intentions, political identity, rights, reputation or comfort of the person challenged take precedence over the complainant’s safety, health, workplace participation and experience of harm.	Greater attention was sometimes given to whether an accused person saw themselves as antisemitic, anti-racist or supportive of Palestinians than to the impact on their Jewish colleagues. An investigation into antisemitism emphasised a manager’s right to freedom of speech. Person who brought a grievance against their manager (the Deputy Director of Inclusion) was asked whether they wanted to speak with him, failing to acknowledge the distress that had been experienced. Little or no consideration given to the wellbeing of Jewish colleagues and the difficulty they have in raising issues.
Apologising without accepting responsibility Recognition, concern and empathy, expressed but without accepting accountability, providing remedies, or demonstrating learning.	DEI leaders expressing concern, acknowledging initially the difficulty of someone bringing issues of antisemitism to light, saying they were “taking it seriously”, but no follow-up action. After a difficult meeting with the global DEI team, where the individual felt attacked for raising antisemitism as something that needed to be a priority for the team. The next day the Director reached out saying that it must have been difficult being a ‘voice of the Jewish community’. Seeing this as positive and empathetic, a reply was sent with a willingness to discuss this further. The director did not respond to the suggestion. DEI leaders and ERGs expressed concern on one occasion, suggesting action but nothing further happened.

Part Two: Additional Themes

The analysis shows how the arguments used by people in organisations to explain why the issue of racism does not need to be followed up are used by DEI teams to excuse inaction. Other themes also emerged from the interviews beyond the use of the framework.

Jewish Identity: Faith and Ethnicity

A theme from the interviews describes Jewish identity as more than a matter of religion. For many, it includes ethnicity, culture, family history and a sense of belonging to a wider community.

This matters when considering antisemitism. Jewish people can be targeted whether they are religiously observant or secular, and whether or not they wear clothing or symbols which indicate their faith. Antisemitism may be expressed through assumptions about someone’s name, family background, appearance, culture or ancestry. It involves assumptions that Jews share the same political views, have particular connections to Israel, or should be held responsible for the actions of others.

One interviewee captured this difficulty clearly: “We are treated as a race but not acknowledged as a race.” Jews have often been treated as a racial group by those who hold antisemitic views. Yet Jewish identity is not always understood in this way within DEI work.

When those working in DEI treat Judaism only as a religion, it leaves out the racial, ethnic and cultural aspects of Jewish identity.

A workplace approach that focuses only on religious expression may be important, but it is not enough on its own. (It should also be noted that there were examples of Jewish holidays being ignored by organisations while celebrating others). One practical implication of this is that it is more likely to miss antisemitism that appears through stereotypes, comments about names or appearance, assumptions about political beliefs, or the expectation that Jewish colleagues should explain or defend events happening thousands of miles away.

Israel, Zionism and Antisemitism

Across all interviews, there was a clear distinction between criticism of Israel and antisemitism. Interviewees felt that people should be able to discuss Israeli government policy, the war and Palestinian rights. Supporting Palestinian safety and rights is not incompatible with recognising antisemitism.

The difficulty arises when organisations, especially those in the DEI function, treat Jewish concerns only through the lens of Israel and Palestine, or when people feel they must choose between supporting one group and taking prejudice against another seriously.

The interviews also included reports of overt hostility (including vandalism of property outside of work), exclusion, abuse, online targeting and security concerns.

Within organisations, the DEI function, by failing to act becomes a major part of the problem rather than providing solutions.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs, support groups and affinity networks have become a popular initiative within organisations. They are increasingly seen as a symbol of an organisation's commitment to DEI. At their best they give people a place to share concerns and support one another, particularly when events outside the organisation are distressing.

One consistent theme was the difficulty Jewish employees had in establishing Jewish ERGs, resistance often coming from those working in DEI. Arguments given by DEI teams included: the number of Jews working in the organisation was too small to warrant a separate group; the organisation does not have faith-based ERGs; and, to make it much more personal, the Jewish person asking was 'entitled'.

There were also examples of DEI teams consulting with ERGs as to whether to run sessions on antisemitism. ERGs as well as senior DEI officials even questioned whether it would be wise to even have Jewish facilitators. This is a particularly striking observation, as it will be highly unlikely that any other ERG would have a session looking at 'lived experience' without having a facilitator from that group. In every case where this consultation occurred, the response from the ERGs was not to run it.

Ironically, having an ERG for Jewish employees also served as a convenient smoke screen for organisations.

When concerns about antisemitism are raised, one of the most common responses is "yes but we have a Jewish ERG", the issue of antisemitism therefore is seen, by those working in the DEI function, as being one that is relevant for Jewish employees only and can be contained within.

Consistent Recognition and Inclusion

The interviews point to concerns (also present in the survey) about inconsistent organisational responses. When organisations respond visibly to some events impacting particular groups but remain silent about antisemitism, the silence is a signal that this matters less. For the interviewees, the issue is not that support for other groups should be reduced. It is that organisations should apply the same care and attention when Jewish colleagues are affected by external events which lead to increased prejudice and fear. It leads to antisemitism being treated as separate from, or less relevant to, anti-racism work.

Small numbers of Jewish employees do not mean that the risk is small. Lack of complaints may hide the fact that people feel isolated, unsure about disclosing their identity or overlooked in existing inclusion activity.

Fear, Visibility and Safety

Across the interviews, Jewish people described becoming more careful about when and how they reveal their identity. This included concerns about mentioning Judaism, taking part in cultural events, raising concerns about exclusion or even using their correct name, e.g. when registering for and signing in to a conference.

Participants described worries about the safety of their children, increased security in their communities, abuse online and in public spaces. These experiences create a constant awareness of risk, even where there has been no direct antisemitic comment in a particular workplace.

The impact is not limited to whether someone makes a formal complaint. It affects whether people feel able to join a network, contribute to DEI conversations, ask for support or take part in community life without being viewed critically or suspect.

When people fear negative consequences for speaking up, particularly where those handling concerns also have influence over their work or progression, they choose to stay quiet or withdraw.

Organisations cannot control every risk in the wider world, but they can take practical steps to make their own settings safer. But they do need to understand that the threat that Jews experience in society has an impact on their wellbeing. Recognition of this stress and encouraging colleagues to be mindful of this is something that all organisations can do, but few appear to have done.

Privilege Framing and Antisemitic Tropes

Across the interviews, there was concern that Jewish people are stereotypically seen as successful, wealthy, powerful and influential. Because of these stereotypes, Jews were felt to be not affected seriously by prejudice. Indeed, the stereotypical views meant that they were more likely to be seen as responsible for racism rather than victims of it, especially as many are white.

This makes complaints about antisemitism appear less credible and less deserving of attention. This way of thinking repeats and replicates long-standing antisemitic ideas about Jewish wealth, power, control and influence. When stereotypical attitudes about Jews are expressed by people working in DEI they carry more weight because they are seen as more neutral, coming from the people whose job it is to ensure inclusion.

The interviews suggest that some approaches to race create a hierarchy of who is seen as deserving of empathy. In this framing, groups thought to be more successful or closer to power are seen as less affected by racism. This can lead to Jewish people being met with less sympathy when they raise concerns. As one person said: 'It is ok to criticise those higher in the hierarchy, but not those who are lower.' In other words, racism works in one direction - from the top down. Criticising those who are seen to be lower in the racial hierarchy does not fit this perspective and so is not welcomed.

Organisations need to recognise that stereotypes about Jewish wealth and influence is not neutral or objective commentary: it is part of the harm itself.

The Emotional Context After 7th October

The interviews highlight the shock and distress many Jewish colleagues experienced immediately after 7th October. Some had relatives or friends who had been killed, kidnapped or injured.

Returning to ordinary workplace conversations immediately afterwards, on the 8th and 9th October, felt isolating, particularly when colleagues did not recognise what had happened or the impact it was having.

This context helps explain why silence, generic statements or a lack of acknowledgement can feel significant. People wanted the scale of the loss, fear and distress to be recognised. A simple, thoughtful response can help people feel seen and supported at a time when they may be struggling to take part in work as usual.

The Burden of Raising Concerns: The Double Bind

The interviews show that, when those working in DEI do not respond to accounts of antisemitism, Jewish employees can feel they have to take on the work themselves.

For some, this meant explaining antisemitism to colleagues, speaking for a wider Jewish community, pushing for action, raising safety concerns or even becoming the public face of the issue. For many, this is neither a role they wanted nor felt prepared to take on. It can come alongside an already demanding job and at a time when they may be worried for their own safety or wellbeing and that of their family.

This creates a particular double bind for Jewish employees. They may be expected to explain antisemitism and identify what needs to change, while at the same time their account of what they have experienced is treated as partial, political or unreliable. The result is both an unfair burden and a lack of trust.

Raising concerns can also carry a personal cost, including pressure on their mental health, damage to career opportunities and anxiety about the effect on their families. Experiences such as being moved to a different role, being publicly challenged, subject to a countercomplaint or left without clear information can discourage people from speaking up. The intimidation felt by one interviewee when discussing antisemitism with the global DEI team colleagues has had long-lasting wellbeing and mental health impacts.

Organisations should not rely on Jewish employees to identify problems, educate others or lead the response. They need to take responsibility for understanding antisemitism, providing safe ways to report concerns, supporting those who raise them, and acting fairly and transparently.

Conclusions

DEI Practice Can Prevent Antisemitism from being recognised

The principal conclusion of this research is not that organisations should abandon diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). It is that current DEI practice can prevent organisations from recognising and acting on antisemitism.

Where those working in the DEI function hold antisemitic stereotypes and tropes, they contribute to antisemitism being minimised, reframed or overlooked.

These stereotypes and tropes have a long history and have often been used to justify hostility towards Jewish communities. The concern was not just that the stereotypes were being repeated but that they were seen as neutral observations, and not as antisemitic.

Most survey respondents recognised that their organisations were committed to tackling discrimination. Yet many did not believe that antisemitism received the same attention, understanding or consistency as other forms of prejudice. The interviews explain why. Participants described limited knowledge of antisemitism, persistent stereotypes about Jewish influence and privilege, narrow frameworks for interpreting discrimination, and consultation being used in place of clear action.

The issue is not simply that DEI functions sometimes fail to respond. DEI can shape how concerns are understood before a decision about action is made. When Jewish people are viewed primarily through assumptions of power, privilege, wealth and influence, their vulnerability can be discounted. Concerns about antisemitism can then be reframed as political disagreement, competing perspectives or a general issue of hate, rather than recognised as antisemitism.

Antisemitism presents a particular challenge because it combines hostility toward Jews with stereotypes of power, wealth, competence and influence. A DEI approach that understands discrimination primarily as something experienced by groups perceived to lack power or privilege cannot be relied upon to recognise antisemitism. In these circumstances, the function intended to identify and address discrimination will not only be a barrier to action but an amplifier of exclusion.

This is not a claim that all DEI practitioners are indifferent to antisemitism, or that their intentions are harmful. It is, however, a judgement about DEI practice and its consequences. DEI functions should be held to the same standard as any other professional function: their methods, knowledge base, expertise and outcomes must be open to challenge.

The implications extend beyond Jewish employees. A DEI methodology that leans heavily on a simplistic identity-based model will necessarily overlook experiences that do not fit that model. When this happens, inclusion becomes selective.

Identity Threat and the Gatekeeping Role of DEI

For Jewish employees, the issue is not only whether an overt antisemitic incident occurs at work. It is whether they feel that being Jewish is understood and safe to express.

When antisemitism is minimised or misunderstood, it can create what psychologists describe as *identity threat*: a sense that a significant part of who someone is may be questioned, misrepresented or treated as less deserving of protection. This does not always follow one serious incident. It can build over time, through comments, assumptions and the response, or lack of one, when concerns are raised.

Many people who were interviewed had become more reluctant to mention their Jewish identity, avoided conversations that they expected would become uncomfortable or decided against raising a concern because they did not trust that it would be understood. This was one of the clearest findings from the survey.

Some felt pressure to explain that antisemitism is more than overt abuse, others that they had to defend the legitimacy of their concern before it was taken seriously. The result is that Jewish employees are having to manage carefully their identity at work, a process which is tiring with identifiable impact on psychological wellbeing. Not surprisingly, this has been found to affect people's performance. The reason for this is that the organisation will have failed to provide an environment in which Jewish employees feel secure and included.

DEI teams obviously have an especially important role here. They are often the first people asked to make sense of a concern about identity or discrimination. Their interpretation can determine whether the concern is recognised as antisemitism and taken forward, or treated instead as a difficult political issue, a disagreement between colleagues, something outside the organisation's remit or maybe that they have better things to be working on.

That makes DEI a potential route to action, but also a potential barrier. If a team lacks confidence, knowledge or interest about antisemitism, it may be unable to recognise the significance of what a Jewish employee is reporting. If its framework assumes that discrimination is experienced only by groups seen as lacking power, stereotypes about Jewish influence or privilege can make Jewish vulnerability harder to see.

DEI teams do not need to become experts in every aspect of Jewish life or politics. They do, however, need to recognise that inclusion cannot be applied selectively. If a particular group of employees feel they must manage, minimise or conceal an important part of their identity when at work, then that is an inclusion issue.

Psychological Safety Needs Organisational Listening

The research supports the importance of psychological safety but suggests that it is not enough on its own. Employees may feel able to speak and still lose confidence if they believe their concerns will not be understood, taken seriously or acted upon. A confidential reporting route, a listening session or an invitation to share experiences can create an opportunity to speak; it does not in itself demonstrate that the organisation is listening.

For Jewish employees, this distinction is especially important. A concern about antisemitism may be raised only after considerable hesitation, particularly where an employee expects their experience to be denied, minimised, trivialised or deracialised. The types of responses that the interviewees experienced only confirms the concern that their identity, and the prejudice they have experienced, do not fit comfortably within the organisation's understanding of inclusion.

Organisational listening requires more than empathy.

It requires the ability to understand what employees are saying in its proper context and to make a judgement about what needs to happen next. An employee should not have to prove the legitimacy of their identity, educate those receiving the concern or repeatedly explain why an experience matters before it is recognised. Nor should consultation become a substitute for responsibility. Listening has value only when it informs decisions.

Organisations should therefore assess not only whether employees have channels through which to raise concerns, but whether they can show that employee information is:

- **Received seriously**, with employees treated respectfully and without assumptions about their motives.
- **Interpreted accurately**, including an understanding of the particular form antisemitism can take.
- **Connected to wider evidence**, such as employee feedback and relevant external context.
- **Translated into proportionate, timely, and accountable action**, with clear ownership for decisions and communication about what will happen next.
- **Used to improve future decisions**, so that similar concerns are recognised more confidently and handled more consistently.

Psychological safety asks whether people feel able to speak. Organisational listening asks what happens once they do. Both are necessary, but the second determines whether speaking up leads to greater trust or further withdrawal.

The central question is therefore not simply whether employees are speaking, because in this research they have. It is whether the organisation learns equally from everyone who does. If some concerns are readily recognised and converted into action while others are met with uncertainty, delay or reframing, people notice. In these circumstances, talking about psychological safety risks sounding hypocritical because only some people will feel heard and seen.

Organisational listening extends the established concept of psychological safety. Psychological safety concerns whether employees feel able to raise concerns without fear of embarrassment, rejection or punishment. That remains essential. However, employees also need to believe that speaking will have influence.

Expertise Cannot Be Assumed

Many organisations rely on DEI practitioners and increasingly (and somewhat bizarrely) on ERGs when responding to complex equality issues. Participants questioned whether this reliance is always justified.

A commitment to fairness does not, by itself, confer expertise in antisemitism, employment law, organisational psychology or the history and contemporary expression of prejudice. Nor does 'lived experience' of one form of discrimination automatically equip someone to interpret all others.

For some, the difficulty was compounded by a perception that parts of the DEI profession use a framework centred on power, privilege and oppression. This framework makes it easier to recognise the vulnerability of groups viewed as disadvantaged. These same frameworks however also make it harder to recognise Jewish vulnerability because of stereotypes about influence or success.

This frame can be extended further to a consideration of racial hierarchies. The racial hierarchy used by some DEI teams and practitioners has Jews at the top, which further reinforces the argument that antisemitism is not worthy of their attention.

The fact that many Jews are white makes it hard for some people to accept that Jews could be victims of racism. Indeed, the framework means that they are more likely to be viewed as the perpetrators of racism.

In one organisation, the participant asked the Director of DEI why they had not said anything about antisemitism on a day when Jews were murdered in the UK. She replied she had been busy - working on the DEI strategy. Not only had there been no acknowledgement of the attacks, it was also clear that antisemitism was not going to be part of the strategy either.

Participants did not object, per se, to consultation with ERGs. They objected where consultation appeared to substitute for leadership to delay or avoid having to make a decision.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have been allowed to block action on antisemitism

ERGs may, possibly, provide insight into employees' experience. They should not, however, be treated as substitutes for specialist knowledge or independent organisational judgement. There is absolutely no reason to think that being a member of an ERG somehow makes someone qualified to decide whether action should be taken on antisemitism. Especially because membership of an ERG does not make anyone immune to antisemitism.

Responsibility for decisions about discrimination should remain with senior leaders, supported by appropriately qualified and educated advisers. Consultation should inform those decisions, not replace them.

Silence Is Often a Rational Conclusion

Participants did not usually describe staying silent because they lacked courage. Many had previously spoken to managers, HR teams, DEI functions or colleagues. Their silence developed after they concluded that the organisation was unlikely to understand what they were trying to communicate.

There were feelings of futility about speaking up. It is best understood as a cycle where responses to previous attempts to make concerns heard determine whether people speak up in future. One participant described putting in the suggestion box the idea that there could be a menorah displayed in the reception area at Hanukkah, alongside the Christmas tree. When there was no response to this, the person went to the HR business partner and put the suggestion to her. The HRBP then took this idea to the DEI team. The interviewee heard nothing back directly but later learned that the menorah had been placed in a private room, and the only people who were informed of this were members of the Jewish ERG.

Where concerns are repeatedly reframed, delayed or dismissed, employees may conclude that the emotional effort of reporting is not worthwhile. Organisational listening therefore becomes a precondition for employee voice. By the time an organisation notices that employees have stopped speaking, confidence may already have been lost.

Recommendations

1. Reappraise the Purpose and Practice of DEI

Senior leaders should scrutinise DEI with the same seriousness applied to other professional functions. Leaders need to review the DEI team's actions to tackle antisemitism. The review will need to include the DEI team but should not be led by it. The defensive reactions to minimising antisemitism and organisations are likely to be reflected in their responses to such a review.

The review also needs to ask broader questions of the DEI function.

Boards and executive teams should ask:

- What understanding of prejudice informs our DEI strategy?
- What evidence supports our interventions?
- Which issues receive sustained attention, and why?
- How do we know that all protected groups experience our approach as fair?
- What safeguards challenge the assumptions and potential biases of those responsible for DEI?

DEI should not be understood primarily as advocacy for particular groups or as ownership of demographic targets. Its purpose should be to strengthen the organisation's ability to understand human difference, recognise prejudice in all its forms and create systems experienced as fair by everyone.

2. Redefine Expertise Within DEI

Commitment to equality is essential, but it is not a substitute for professional knowledge. The DEI function operates with a particular frame of reference when tackling issues of discrimination and exclusion. This approach is responsible for the inaction on antisemitism. It is clear that the expertise required to have a function that looks at inclusion for all groups, rather than advocating for some, is lacking.

Organisations should expect DEI practitioners to have, or to develop, broad expertise in:

- The psychology of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.
- Organisational culture and employee voice.
- Social identity, intergroup relations and identity threat.
- Employment law and fair organisational practice.
- Research methods and evidence-based decision-making.
- The distinct histories and contemporary manifestations of different forms of prejudice, including antisemitism.

Recruitment and development should assess more than passion, advocacy or lived experience. Organisations should also examine candidates' understanding of evidence, their ability to evaluate competing explanations and their willingness to challenge their own assumptions.

In the short term it is essential that the teams themselves recognise and educate themselves on antisemitism and the way it manifests itself, not only within the organisation but also within their own function.

3. Separate Representation from Inclusion

Representation is one important measure of equality of opportunity. However, it should not be treated as the principal measure of inclusion.

It is clear from the research that people in the DEI function are as likely as anyone else to hold the stereotypical view that Jews are overrepresented in senior leadership and are influential. That is another reason for them not to address antisemitism as an issue. Even if this is the case, it shows how issues of representation are seen as synonymous with those of inclusion. Jewish employees and colleagues are experiencing exclusion, stereotyping, and identity threat. These are separate from issues of representation, but for too many DEI teams they are seen as being one and the same thing.

Useful questions to ask Jewish employees include:

- Trust in the reporting processes?
- Whether concerns of antisemitism and exclusion are treated with the same level of concern as other forms of racism?
- Whether they feel their concerns will be understood?

4. Clarify the Role of Employee Resource Groups

ERGs may provide valuable insight, connection and support. They might help organisations identify emerging concerns and understand whether initiatives are being experienced as intended.

However, organisations should not treat ERGs as expert advisory bodies or delegate complex decisions to them. ERGs should not be expected to:

- Determine whether antisemitism is an issue.
- Determine organisational policy on antisemitism.
- Resolve conflicts between protected groups.
- Provide definitive interpretations of complex legal, political or psychological issues.

These are organisational responsibilities. Leaders should consult ERGs as an important source of lived experience, while retaining accountability for decisions and ensuring access to appropriate professional expertise.

5. Build Organisational Listening Into DEI

Listening does not mean that every concern must result in the action sought by the person raising it. It means that the concern is taken seriously, accurately understood, fairly assessed and able to influence organisational judgement, with the eventual response explained transparently.

Organisations should treat listening as a core inclusion capability, rather than a by-product of engagement activity.

This requires a clear process for ensuring that concerns are:

Stage	Organisational requirement
Receive	Provide trusted, accessible routes for employees to raise concerns.
Recognise	Identify potential prejudice without requiring employees to prove its history or legitimacy unaided.
Interpret	Examine evidence fairly and avoid reflexively reframing concerns through existing assumptions.
Integrate	Connect individual reports with wider employee data, cultural indicators and previous cases.
Act	Respond proportionately, promptly and transparently.
Learn	Use findings to improve policy, capability, communication and future decision-making.

Organisations should test this capability through employee feedback, case reviews and regular examination of whether some groups experience less confidence than others.

6. Introduce Reflexive Practice Into DEI

DEI functions should be expected to examine their own assumptions as carefully as they encourage others to do.

Reflexive practice should include structured opportunities for practitioners and leaders to ask:

- Which forms of discrimination do we recognise most readily?
- Which do we find difficult to interpret?
- Which groups do we instinctively associate with vulnerability?
- Which do we associate with power or privilege?
- How might these assumptions influence our judgement?
- What evidence would challenge our current interpretation?
- Whose perspectives or expertise are missing from our decision-making?

This is not about undermining DEI. It is about strengthening it. A profession concerned with reducing bias must recognise its own capacity for bias and build systems that reduce its influence.

Final Reflection

This research identifies a serious gap between the inclusive aspirations expressed by many organisations and the experiences reported by many Jewish employees.

The evidence does not suggest that organisations should do less to address racism, discrimination or inequality affecting any group. It suggests that they must apply their commitments more consistently. Jewish employees are not seeking special treatment; they are asking to be recognised within the same principles of fairness, dignity and protection that organisations claim to uphold for everyone.

For HR, DEI and business leaders, the challenge is clear. Inclusion cannot be measured only by visible activity, representation targets or the existence of employee networks. It must also be measured by whether people believe the organisation can recognise prejudice when it occurs, understand its impact and act fairly in response.

When employees conclude that their organisation will not understand them, silence becomes a rational response. Rebuilding confidence requires more than asking employees to speak up. It requires organisations to demonstrate that they are ready to listen.

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