Antisemitism Barometer 2020

Companion Paper:
Initial Report on Modifications to the Questionnaire

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1. Introduction

This is a report on the new questionnaire used in the survey carried out in December for the 2020 Antisemitism Barometer, which was commissioned from YouGov by the author of this report with funding from Campaign Against Antisemitism. The new questionnaire consists of 12 items, collectively referred to as the Generalised Antisemitism, or GeAs scale. These 12 items are equally divided between two subscales, referred to as the Judeophobic Antisemitism, or JpAs scale, and the Antizionist Antisemitism, or AzAs scale. In this report, these scale items will be evaluated both using measures of internal consistency associated with classical test theory and through comparison with the findings of a separate survey which Campaign Against Antisemitism commissioned from YouGov in August. A more detailed analysis using item response theory will be published separately.

The six items of the JpAs subscale represent what is sometimes called 'classic' antisemitism. They are adapted from the seven statements used by Campaign Against Antisemitism in Antisemitism Barometer surveys carried out in August or September of each year from 2016-2019 (CAA 2017, 2019). The least-correlated item was dropped to produce the even number of six. One item was then reversed in meaning to produce a balance of three positively-coded and three reverse-coded items. Although scales with a balance of positively-coded and reverse-coded items are harder to develop (because reverse-coded items often correlate weakly with other items), they usefully eliminate acquiescence bias (i.e. the tendency of survey respondents to agree), and as such are particularly desirable when measuring the prevalence of controversial attitudes. The six items of the AzAs subscale are adapted from those developed from Allington and Hirsh (2019), which were used in the 2019 Antisemitism Barometer survey (see Allington 2019). One item was dropped and replaced with another in order to increase face validity of the scales: the original was well-correlated with the remaining items, but taken in isolation had a less obvious relationship with antisemitism.

Combining the two subscales into a single scale was an innovation made on two grounds. Firstly, a strong tradition of existing empirical work has clearly established that negative attitudes to Israel predict negative attitudes to Jews *qua* Jews (for the first such study, see Frindte, Wettig, and Wammetsberger 2005; for the one with the greatest geographical reach, see Kaplan and Small 2006; for the most rigorous, see Staetsky 2020). This strongly suggests that the two are, at the very least, quite closely related. Secondly, the examples contained within the International Holocaust Remembrance Association Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA 2016) clearly imply that antisemitism may be expressed equally well in statements about Jews *qua* Jews and in statements about Israel. The IHRA Definition was formally adopted by the UK government in December 2016, and by the Scottish and Welsh Governments in June 2017, with the then-Home Secretary specifically stating that 'it gives examples of the kind of behaviours which, depending on the circumstances, could constitute anti-Semitism' (Torrance 2018). As for the European Commission, it has not formally adopted the Definition, but 'acknowledges [its] importance … as a guiding tool for better identifying and addressing [antisemitism]' (Schinas 2020). Given this level of acceptance for the IHRA Definition, it is clearly desirable to have a

measure of antisemitism which includes antisemitic attitudes as expressed in relation to Israel.

2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire items analysed in this document are presented in Table 1. In the December wave, items JpAs 1-3 and AzAs 1-3 were reverse-coded. In the August wave, items JpAs 1 and 3 and AzAs 1 and 3 were reverse-coded. AzAs 2 was excluded from the comparisons below as it had no equivalent in the August wave. There was also one further item in the August wave (and in Antisemitism Barometer surveys carried out in previous years) which was excluded from the December wave because it correlated with the other items slightly less strongly. It is not included in table 1, nor in in any of the analyses presented here.

Answer options were also changed between the two waves. In keeping with the Barometer surveys carried out between 2007 and 2019, the August wave provided respondents with the answer options 'Definitely not true', 'Probably not true', 'Probably true', and 'Definitely true', with 'Don't know' also available, in JpAs 1-2 and 4-6, and 'Strongly disagree', 'Tend to disagree', 'Tend to agree', and 'Strongly agree', with 'Don't know' again available, in JpAs 3; in keeping with the 2019 Barometer, the latter set of options were also used for AzAs 1 and 3-6. For the August wave, these two sets of answer options were replaced with a single set of answer options: 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Agree', and 'Strongly agree'. These answer options were chosen because they have effectively become

Table 1: Questionnaire items (August and December)

Item	August text	December text
JpAs1	Jewish people can be trusted just as much as other British people in business.*	Jewish people can be trusted just as much as other British people in business.*
JpAs2	Having a connection to Israel makes Jewish people less loyal to Britain than other British people.	Jewish people are just as loyal to Britain as other British people.*
JpAs3	I am just as open to having Jewish friends as I am to having friends from other sections of British society.*	I am just as open to having Jewish friends as I am to having friends from other sections of British society.*
JpAs4	Compared to other groups, Jewish people have too much power in the media.	Compared to other groups, Jewish people have too much power in the media.
JpAs5	Jewish people talk about the Holocaust just to further their political agenda.	Jewish people talk about the Holocaust just to further their political agenda.
JpAs6	Jewish people chase money more than other people do.	Jewish people chase money more than other people do.
AzAs1	I am comfortable spending time with people who openly support Israel.*	I am comfortable spending time with people who openly support Israel.*
AzAs2	N/A	Israel has a right to exist as a homeland for the Jewish people.*
AzAs3	Israel is right to defend itself against those who want to destroy it.*	Israel is right to defend itself against those who want to destroy it.*
AzAs4	Israel and its supporters are a bad influence on our democracy.	Israel and its supporters are a bad influence on our democracy.
AzAs5	Israel can get away with anything because its supporters control the media.	Israel can get away with anything because its supporters control the media.
AzAs6	Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews.	Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews.

* Reverse-coded

standard for British opinion research organisations when using Likert-type questionnaire instruments.

In a final innovation, an alternative means of summarising findings is used here. Up until now, the Antisemitism Barometer has used a count of the number of statements agreed with (or, in the case of reverse-coded items, disagreed with) by each respondent as an index of antisemitism (the same approach is taken by Staetsky 2017). In addition to that approach, this report also takes the approach of recoding answers numerically ('Strongly disagree' = 1, 'Disagree' = 2, 'Neither agree nor disagree' = 3, 'Agree' = 4, 'Strongly agree' = 5, or vice versa for reverse-coded items) and calculating the mean. This is the standard approach to summarising responses to Likert items in research on values and attitudes (personality trait research more typically sums scores rather than taking an average; this makes no difference mathematically but arguably makes it harder to compare scores between scales with different numbers of items). The advantage of this approach is that it retains more information, reflecting the strength of respondents' agreement or disagreement.

For comparative purposes, the same approach was taken to the August data ('Definitely not true' or 'Strongly disagree' = 1, 'Probably not true' or 'Tend to disagree' = 2, 'Don't know' = 3, 'Probably true' or 'Tend to agree' = 4, and 'Definitely true' or 'Strongly agree' = 5, or vice versa for reverse-coded items). Coding 'Don't know' as a neutral response may be considered controversial; it is here done strictly to provide a comparison with data from the December wave.

3. Samples

Table 2 provides unweighted descriptive statistics for the August and December waves of the 2020 Antisemitism Barometer survey of the general British population. Both of these were carried out by YouGov as part of its daily Political Omnibus poll. YouGov's sampling strategy involves stratifying its recruited panel and then inviting participants at random from within each stratum. Both samples were biased towards female respondents, and there was a slight bias towards Remain voters in the December sample (in that a perfect representative sample would have included more Leave than Remain voters) and a larger bias in the same direction in the August sample. Except with regard to correlations and to measures of internal consistency (which are summaries of multiple correlations), demographic weights are used throughout the remainder of this article in order to compensate for these and other biases. The weights used were calculated by YouGov.

Table 2: Unweighted descriptive statistics, August and December waves

Wave	Fieldwork dates	n	Age (M)	Age (SD)	Female	Male	Leave	Remain
August	26-27 Aug. 2020	1646	51.6	16.7	57%	43%	40%	46%
December	16-17 Dec. 2020	1853	51.9	16.7	59%	41%	42%	42%

4. Responses to individual items

Figure 1 shows the coded responses to all items (with reverse coding where appropriate). The neutral option in the December version of the questionnaire was in almost all cases more popular than its equivalent in the August version. It should also be noted that the reworded JpAs 2 received fewer 'problematic' responses, although we cannot know whether this was due to the reversed wording or the non-mention of Israel.
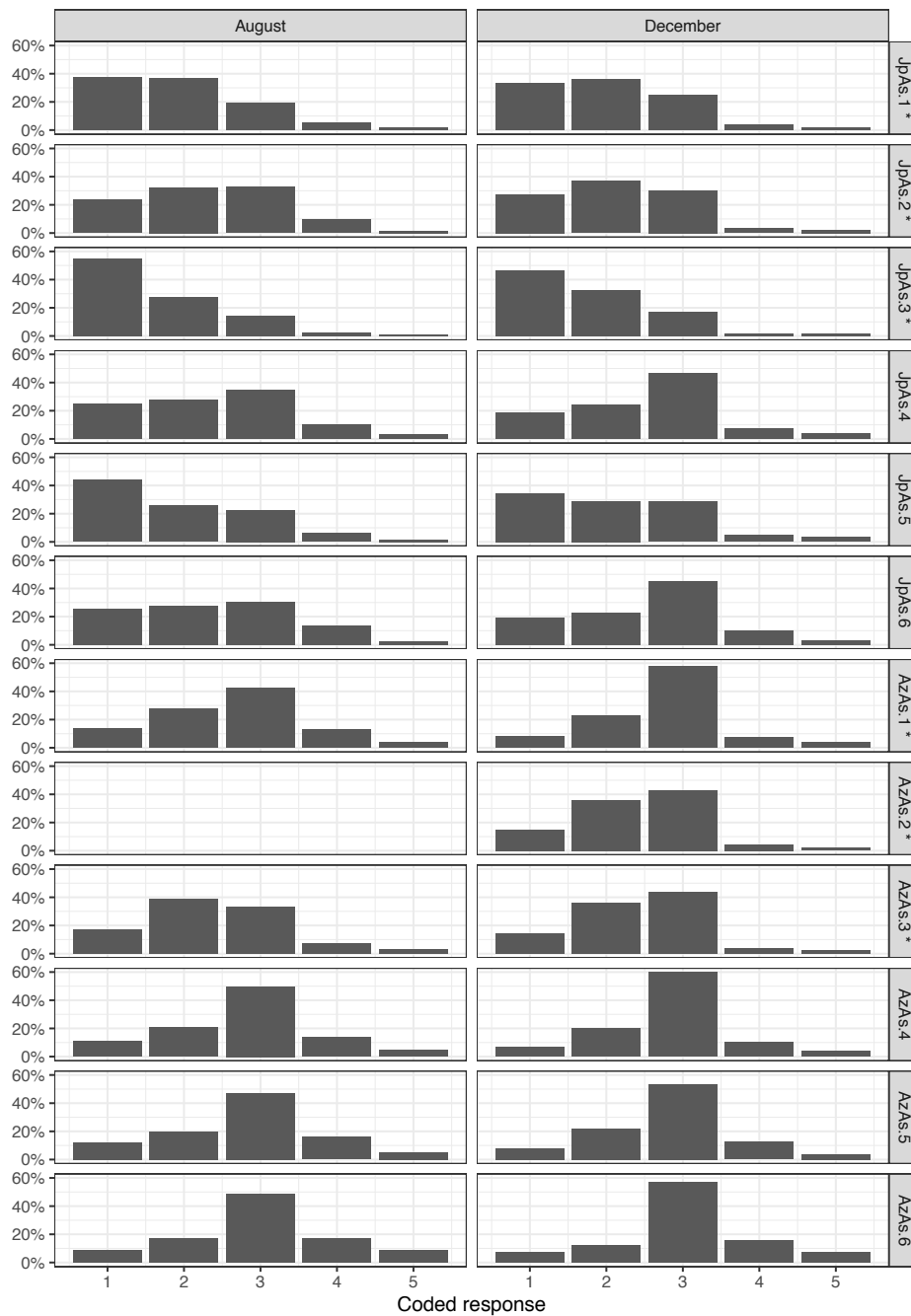

Figure 1: Coded responses to individual items (Reverse-coded except for JpAs 2 in August)*

5. Internal consistency and item-mean correlations for new measurements

A confirmatory analysis of the factor structure of the GeAs scale, based on the principles of Item Response Theory, is forthcoming. However, an analysis of internal consistency on the basis of Classical Test Theory is provided here for purposes of comparison with other studies, which have likewise used Classical Test Theory to evaluate the scales they used. For the GeAs scale as a whole, Guttman's lambda 6 was 0.90 and Cronbach's alpha was 0.90. This would usually be regarded as a very good level of internal consistency.

For the JpAs sub-scale, Guttman's lambda 6 was 0.88 and Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 (for comparison, a study using the earlier version of the same questionnaire found a lambda 6 of 0.87, Allington 2019, 9; a study using a longer questionnaire found an alpha of 0.82, Staetsky 2017, 7). For the AzAs sub-scale, Guttman's lambda 6 was 0.83 and Cronbach's alpha was also 0.83 (for comparison, a study using an earlier version of the questionnaire found a lambda 6 of 0.87, Allington 2019, 9; moreover, a study using a longer questionnaire found an alpha of 0.79, Staetsky 2017, 33).

Item-mean correlations were calculated both in relation to all 12 items treated as a single scale and in relation to each of the two six-item subscales. These are presented in Table 3. As we see, all items were correlated in the expected direction (i.e. positive for the positively-keyed items and negative for the reverse-coded items), not only with the mean of the overall scale, but also with the mean of each of the subscales. That is, the JpAs items correlated positively or negatively (as expected), not only with the mean of the JpAs scale and the GeAs scale, but also (albeit more weakly) with the mean of the AzAs scale, while the AzAs items correlated positively or negatively (as expected), not only with the mean of the AzAs scale and the GeAs scale, but also (albeit more weakly) with the mean of the JpAs scale.

Table 3: Item-mean rank-order correlations, GeAs scale and both subscales

Item	GeAs	JpAs	AzAs
JpAs.1 *	0.74	0.84	0.33
JpAs.2 *	0.71	0.80	0.34
JpAs.3 *	0.67	0.77	0.28
JpAs.4	0.70	0.79	0.34
JpAs.5	0.72	0.81	0.33
JpAs.6	0.62	0.75	0.24
AzAs.1 *	0.53	0.26	0.69
AzAs.2 *	0.58	0.32	0.71
AzAs.3 *	0.48	0.19	0.69
AzAs.4	0.61	0.34	0.73
AzAs.5	0.61	0.38	0.68
AzAs.6	0.52	0.25	0.67

* Reverse coded

6. Correlation between sub-scales

The product-moment coefficient of correlation was used as a two-tailed test of association between the two sub-scales. JpAs score was positively correlated with AzAs score, $r(1851) = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.38, 0.46]. That is, the more strongly respondents disagreed with AzAs 1-3 and agreed with AzAs 4-6, the more strongly they tended to disagree with JpAs 1-3 and to agree with JpAs 4-6. JpAs total was positively correlated with AzAs total, $r(1851) = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.37, 0.45]. That is, the more statements respondents disagreed with among JpAs 1-3 and the more statements they agreed with among JpAs 4-6, the more statements they tended to disagree with among AzAs 1-3 and the more statements they tended to agree with among AzAs 4-6.

The correlation of 0.44 found using an earlier version of the questionnaire and a similar sample (Allington 2019, 10) falls within the 95% confidence interval (that is, it is variation of the level that we would expect given the use of random sampling even had the two questionnaires been identical), while the correlation of 0.48 found using a longer questionnaire and a different sampling strategy falls just outside it (Staetsky 2017, 35). (N.B. Each of the latter studies used total numbers of statements agreed or disagreed with as an index of antisemitism.)

7. Levels of antisemitism: December wave

Table 4 shows mean scores, mean totals, and percentage of respondents with one or more potentially antisemitic attitudes for the December wave of the Barometer survey (i.e. JpAs 1-6 and AzAs 1-6 were all used). Figure 2 shows distributions of scores while Figure 3 shows distributions of totals (note that the maximum total number of agreements / disagreements was 12 for the combined scale, i.e. GeAs, and 6 for each of the subscales, i.e. JpAs and AzAs). It is clear from Table 4 that AzAs attitudes are more common than JpAs attitudes, but that there is considerable overlap between those who hold each (as we would expect, given the correlation between them).

Comparison of Figure 2 and Figure 3 reveals an important pattern which is missed by focus on total numbers of agreements or disagreements only. This is that while it is rare to be in overall agreement with all statements included in the scale, there are very substantial numbers of respondents who are in a position of only mild disagreement, or even overall neutrality, with the scale as a whole. This is especially true with regard to the AzAs subscale, but is also true with regard to the JpAs scale: fewer than 14% of respondents were in an overall position of strong disagreement with all six JpAs statements, while more than 20% were in an overall position of approximate neutrality.

Table 4: Mean scores, mean total antisemitic attitudes, and percentage with one or more antisemitic attitudes, GeAs scale and both subscales

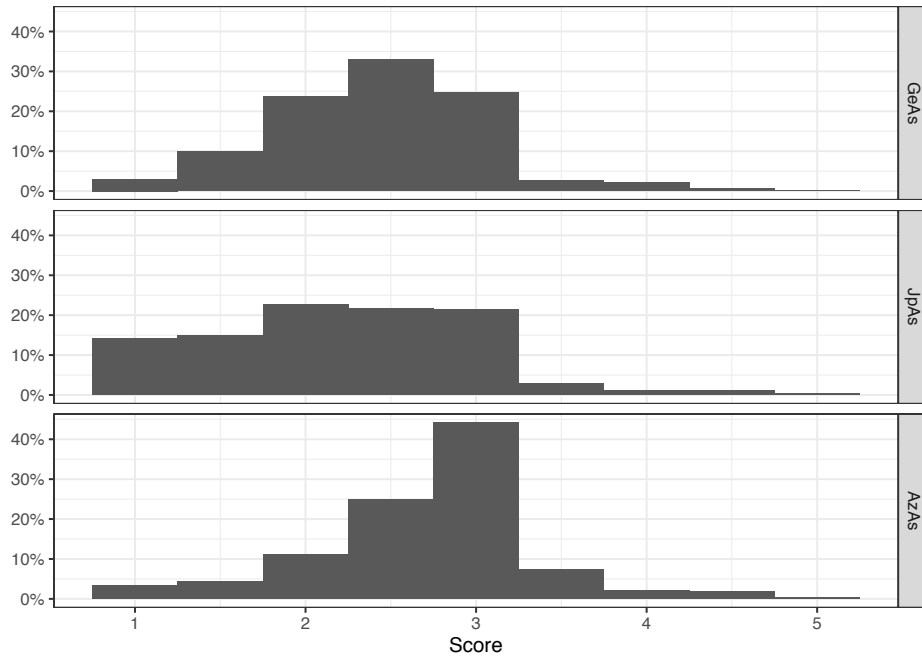| Measure	M (score)	SD (score)	M (total)	SD (total)	1+ attitudes
GeAs	2.5	0.6	1.2	3.9	45%
JpAs	2.2	0.8	0.5	1.1	24%
AzAs	2.7	0.7	0.8	1.8	35%

Figure 2: Weighted percentages of respondents by scores for all items, December wave
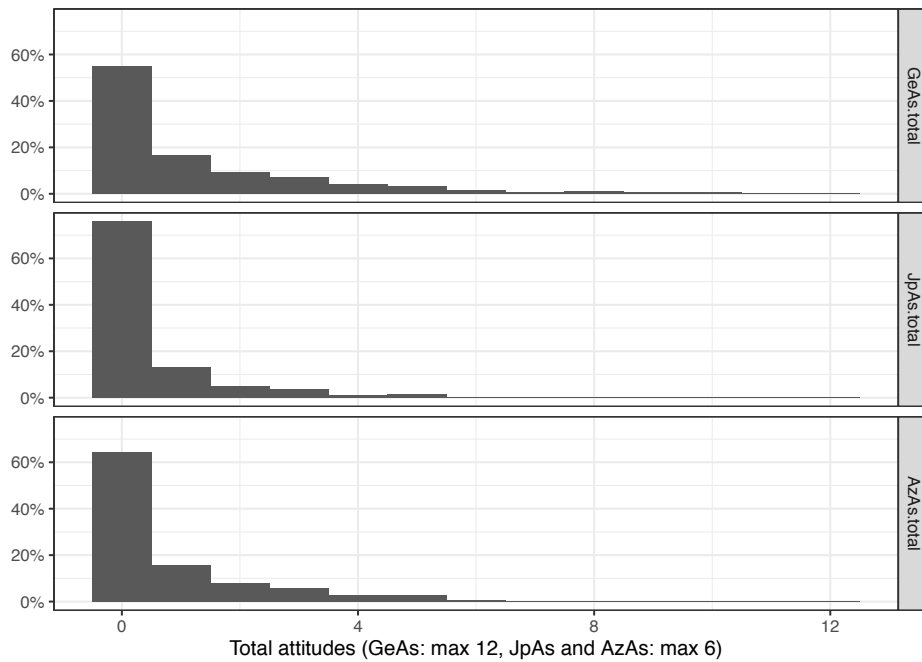

Figure 3: Weighted percentages of respondents by total number of agreements (or, for reverse-coded items, disagreements) with all items, December wave

8. Comparison of measurement instruments: August and December

Table 5 and Table 6 show mean scores, mean totals, and percentage of respondents with one or more potentially antisemitic attitudes for the August and December waves of the Barometer survey, for comparable items in the JpAs and AzAs scales respectively (it is not possible to construct a combined measure for both waves without excluding one JpAs item, as there were more JpAs than AzAs items in August). This means that all items of the December JpAs scale were included, including JpAs 2 (whose wording changed between the two waves to produce a reverse-coded item), as well as both versions of AzAs items 1 and 3-6 (AzAs 2 was absent from the August wave). Figure 4 and Figure 6 show distributions of scores for the same JpAs and AzAs items (respectively) in both waves, and Figure 5 and Figure 7 show distributions of totals for the same JpAs and AzAs items (respectively) in both waves.

If we assume that actual levels of antisemitism are unlikely to have shifted to any great extent between August and December 2020, any differences between these measurements may be attributed to (a) sampling error, and (b) changes to the questionnaire itself. For both JpAs and AzAs subscales, mean scores were virtually unchanged between the two waves, while mean totals and the percentage of respondents with one or more potentially antisemitic attitudes were lower in December than in August.

The fact that the change only affected calculations relating to totals reduces the plausibility of sampling error as an explanation for the change in total agreements (or disagreements). Given that the items being compared were themselves unchanged in the AzAs scale, it seems plausible that the discrepancy was caused by changes to the response options, as might for example happen if respondents who were unsure about their answers were more inclined to select 'Neither agree nor disagree' than 'Don't know'. Inspection of figures 3 and 5 will confirm that a slightly greater proportion of respondents did indeed fall in the middle of the scale, although inspection of figures 3-6 confirms that the overall 'shapes' of all four distributions (i.e. both score and total for both JpAs and AzAs) remained very similar to that described above.

Table 5: Mean scores, mean total potentially antisemitic attitudes, and percentage with one or more antisemitic attitudes, both versions of JpAs items 1-6

Wave	n	M (score)	SD (score)	M (total)	SD (total)	1+ attitudes
August	1646	2.1	0.7	0.6	1.2	31%
December	1853	2.2	0.8	0.5	1.1	24%

Table 6: Mean scores, mean total potentially antisemitic attitudes, and percentage with one or more antisemitic attitudes, both versions of AzAs items 1 and 3-6 only

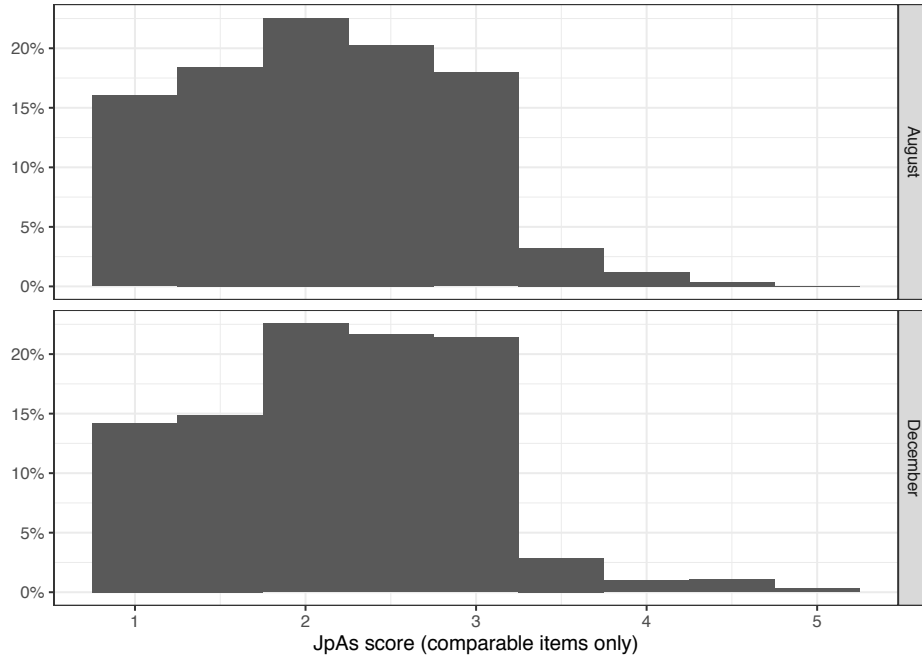| Wave	n	M (score)	SD (score)	M (total)	SD (total)	1+ attitudes
August	1646	2.7	0.7	0.9	1.9	41%
December	1853	2.8	0.7	0.7	1.4	35%

Figure 4: Weighted percentages of respondents by JpAs score in the August and December waves (JpAs 1-6 only)
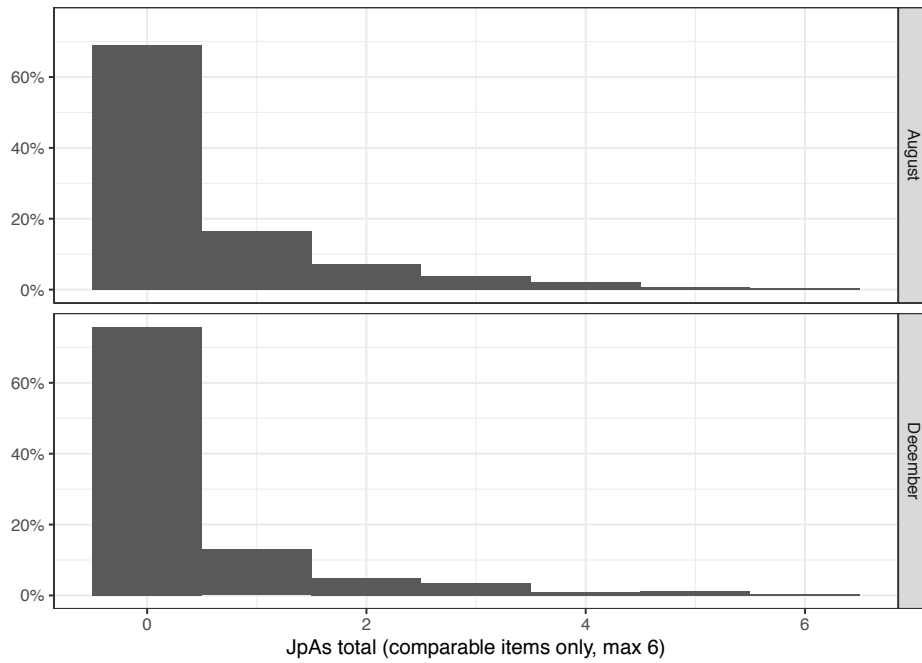

Figure 5: Weighted percentages of respondents by total number of agreements (or, for reverse-coded items, disagreements) with JpAs items 1-6
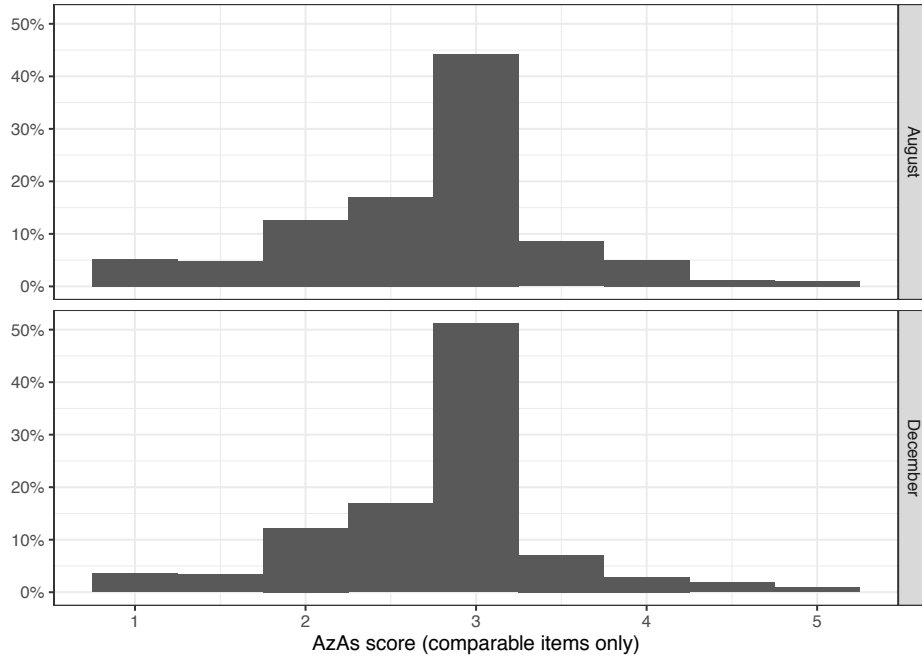
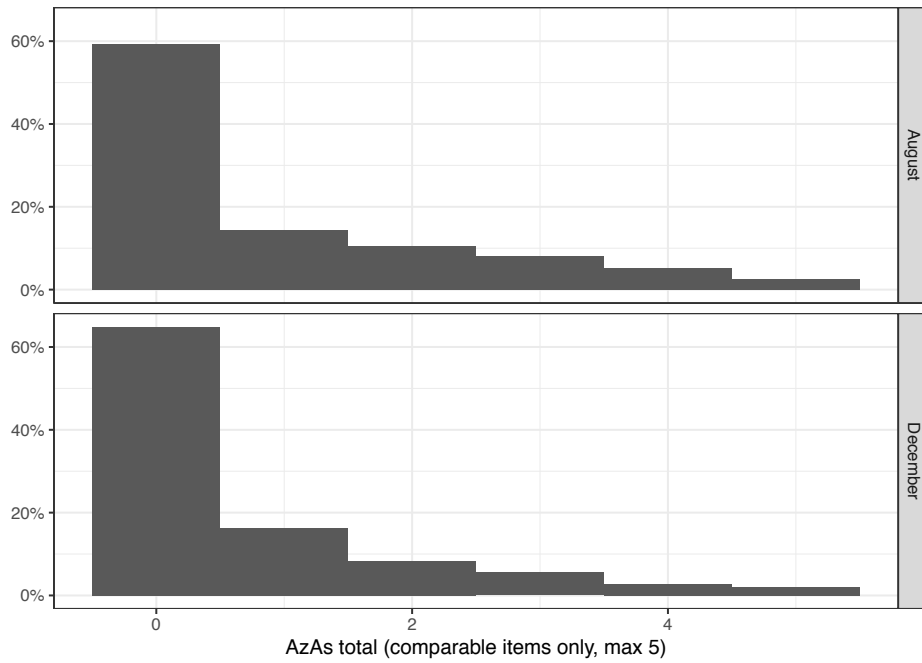*Figure 6: Weighted percentages of respondents by AzAs score in the August and December waves (AzAs 1 and 3-6 only)*

Figure 7: Weighted percentages of respondents by total number of agreements (or, for reverse-coded items, disagreements) with AzAs items 1 and 3-6

9. Recommendations

Comparison between the August and December waves of the Antisemitism Barometer survey suggests that the new questionnaire provides an adequate replacement for the previous one. Moreover, the new questionnaire has two unique advantages as an instrument for the measurement of antisemitism. Firstly, it gives equal weight to the newer, Israel-related forms of antisemitism highlighted by the widely-accepted IHRA Definition. Secondly, it contains equal numbers of positively- and reverse-coded items. Although full analysis of its factor structure is forthcoming, measures of internal consistency consistent with classical test theory (presented above) have been found to be very good indeed.

It has been observed that the total number of agreements with positively-coded items (i.e. choice of 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' as opposed to all other response options) or disagreements with negatively-coded items (i.e. choice of 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' as opposed to all other response options) were lower for directly comparable items. The conjecture that lower rates of agreement and disagreement resulted from the greater attractiveness of 'Neither agree nor disagree' as opposed to 'Don't know' would require an experimental approach to investigate (for example, A/B testing of a questionnaire). On the other hand, this point may be moot, as, given the increase in the total number of items from seven to 12, total numbers of agreements and disagreements for the 'old' and 'new' versions of the survey would no longer be comparable regardless.

As to the question of whether to summarise results by counting numbers of agreements / disagreements or by recoding numerically, this is likely to depend on context: the interpretation of a count is more intuitive ('45% of British adults hold one or more potentially antisemitic attitudes', etc), but, as noted above, a score from 1.0 to 5.0 captures more information about how strongly attitudes are held or rejected; moreover, it may perhaps more robust to changes in the form of the questionnaire. Moving from one approach to the other might cause confusion, so it might in some contexts be advisable to use both, particularly as the use of the mean score will help to show continuity. In discussing findings with regard to individual questionnaire items, it might be helpful to discuss not only the proportion agreeing or disagreeing, but also the neutral proportion, both because this is problematic in its own right and to avoid giving the false impression that levels of specific attitudes in Britain have substantially changed between August and December of the same year.[1]

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[1] That they could have changed to such an extent is possible but unlikely, and – given the change in answer options – the survey findings do not in themselves constitute evidence either way.

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