

Submission to the Chakrabarti Inquiry on behalf of the ESRC Party Members Project, 3 June 2016

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This submission focuses on two issues which we believe are important for the Inquiry to take account of. One is contextual, the other is more specific to the party and its members, and we have original survey research, conducted for [our ESRC-funded party members project](#) by YouGov on both issues.

The contextual issue is the extent to which antisemitism impacts and influences Labour and other voters. The specific issue is the extent to which antisemitism exists among Labour's grassroots members and the extent to which those members regard it as a problem.

Context: antisemitism and UK voters

Understandably, the main focus of the Inquiry is on Labour as a membership organization. However, context is important. What about those who simply support the Party and, indeed, what about the country as a whole? Is there much evidence to suggest that Labour *voters* and Britain in general has a problem with Jews, at least when it comes to politics?

The answer would seem to be no – although things are far from perfect. In fact, less than one in ten voters think that Jews have too much influence in Britain and two-thirds would be happy with a Jewish Prime Minister. But that does, of course, mean that a minority aren't as open minded as they could or should be.

Those figures come from [a survey of 1,694 adults, weighted and representative of all GB adults, carried out for us at the beginning of May by YouGov](#).

More precisely, just seven per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'Jews have too much influence in this country', a drop of three percentage points [since 2014](#) when we last asked the same question.

Meanwhile, 65 per cent of voters said that a Jewish Prime Minister would be as acceptable as a member of any other faith – an increase of three percentage points since 2014. In party terms Lib Dem voters are the most likely (81 per cent) to agree with that statement, followed by Labour voters (74 per cent), Tory voters (67 per cent). Only UKIP voters (51 per cent) were noticeably less likely to agree.

The vast majority of respondents, 83 per cent, said that knowing a party leader was Jewish would make no difference to their voting intentions. Just six per cent of voters said it would make them less likely to vote for that party – although this rises to 13 per cent among UKIP voters.

These party differences may have something to do, at least in part, with familiarity. Lib Dem voters are most likely (40 per cent) to say they have Jewish friends,

acquaintances or work colleagues – followed by Labour voters (37 per cent), Tory voters (36 per cent), and UKIP voters (24 per cent).

Perhaps not surprisingly, age and to some extent social class difference make a difference: broadly speaking, younger people and ABC1 voters seem to be more open-minded. But there also seems to be some regional variation in attitudes: Londoners seem a little less likely than voters living elsewhere in the UK to accept the idea of a British Jew becoming Prime Minister.

A majority, 57 per cent, of respondents living in the capital agreed that a Jewish Prime Minister would be as acceptable as a member of any other faith. But that was a lower proportion than elsewhere. Voters in the rest of southern England are the most accepting of the idea (69 per cent), followed by voters in the north (65 per cent), the Midlands and Wales (65 per cent), and Scotland (64 per cent). Some may conclude that the difference may be accounted for by the higher presence of certain ethnic minority communities in London which are hostile to Jews. However, this would be to jump to conclusions: the subsamples are simply not big enough to pronounce on whether this is or isn't the case.

It is also important not to fall into the error of thinking that all of those who do not declare that a Jewish Prime Minister would be acceptable would necessarily regard one as *unacceptable* or, by the same token, that those who do not express their disagreement with the idea that Jews have too much influence in Britain necessarily think that they have. In fact, fairly substantial minorities on both of these questions declare either that they don't know or that they neither agree nor disagree. On the other hand, the fact that, for instance, 35 per cent of people say they neither agree nor disagree that Jews have too much influence will understandably be seen by some as worrying in and of itself.

More generally, there is some evidence that the recent controversy over antisemitism in the Labour Party may have heightened awareness of perceived discrimination. Asked about the level of prejudice against Jews in the UK, 29 per cent of all voters said there is 'a great deal or a fair amount' – an increase of five percentage points since 2014. While nearly one in two (48 per cent) feel that Jews face little or no discrimination, that figure is down six percentage points from when we asked the same question a year ago.

So voters reckon there is discrimination out there, but most of them don't seem themselves to be swayed by prejudice, at least when it comes to politics. There are variations of course, and pockets of intolerance persist among some voters – particularly (but not exclusively) among those inclined to support UKIP – and perhaps (but only perhaps, at least on our figures) among some minority communities. We now turn from context to specifics – from Labour (and other) voters to Labour members (and registered supporters).

Labour grassroots members and antisemitism

YouGov, this time for *The Times*, surveyed 1031 Labour Party members between 9 and 11 May 2016. The two most important questions asked about antisemitism related to how big a problem members saw it as. The answers were as follows:

Thinking about antisemitism in political parties, which of these statements comes closer to your view?

Antisemitism is a bigger problem in the Labour Party than other parties: **5%**
Antisemitism is a problem in Labour but no worse than in other parties: **47%**
Antisemitism is not a problem in Labour but is a problem in other parties: **16%**
Anti-Semitism is not a problem in the Labour party or any other party: **22%**
Don't know: **9%**

Thinking about the stories in the press over the last few weeks about Labour and antisemitism, which of these statements comes closer to your view?

Labour has a problem with antisemitism and it is right that the media report on it: **10%**
Labour has a problem with antisemitism but it is being used by the press and Jeremy Corbyn's opponents to attack him: **35%**
Labour does not have a problem with antisemitism and it has been created by the press and Jeremy Corbyn's opponents to attack him: **49%**
None of these: **3%**
Don't know: **3%**

These figures suggest that the party membership is split, with almost half (45 per cent) acknowledging the Party has an antisemitism problem and half (49 per cent) denying that it's the case. They also suggest that there is an overwhelming majority of members (84 per cent) who, whether they think there is a problem or not, believe that it has been exploited by the media or enemies of the leadership.

Our survey, conducted for us by YouGov slightly later and over a slightly longer period in May 2016, involved 2026 people, the majority of whom were full members but some of whom were £3 supporters. The difference is that all those in our survey had joined the Party *after* the general election. This gives us a particular insight to 'new members' and gives us slightly bigger sub-samples, demographic and otherwise.

We asked two questions relevant to the Inquiry and include the results in an appendix to this submission. The first related to the perceptions in which *The Times* was also interested. The second to prejudices in general, tapping into them using a question used in the long-running European Values Survey.

On the question of whether there was or wasn't an antisemitism problem in the Party, the answers from the sample as a whole ran as follows:

There has been quite a lot of news coverage recently about antisemitism in the Labour Party. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

It is a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needs to take urgent action to address: **9%**
It is a genuine problem, but its extent is being deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel: **32%**
It is not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel: **55%**

None of these: **1%**
Don't know: **3%**

It is clear from these figures that very few (just 10%) of Labour's post-2015 General election members are inclined to see antisemitism as a serious problem that needs addressing urgently. A third (32 per cent) do see it as a genuine problem but think it is being deliberately exaggerated. But a clear majority (55 per cent) do not see antisemitism as a serious problem at all and believe it is being hyped either to damage the party and its leader or to stifle criticism of Israel. Taken together, and irrespective of whether they think it is a genuine problem, nearly nine out of ten of Labour's 'new members' think antisemitism has been exploited either by the Party's (and/or the Party leadership's) opponents and/or by those wishing to stifle criticism of Israel.

Looking more closely at the results, it is clear that those who joined the Party (and/or upgraded their registration as supporters to full membership) during or after the leadership contest – those, in other words, who are most likely to be fans of Mr Corbyn and the direction in which he is taking the Party – are significantly less likely to see antisemitism as a problem and significantly more likely to see it as a problem whipped up by his (and Labour's) enemies and by supporters of Israel. Among those who converted their £3 registration to membership, nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) believe 'antisemitism is not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel'. The figures for those who joined during the leadership contest and those who joined after it are 61 and 67 per cent respectively.

Interestingly, those who are £3 registered supporters seem less inclined than average (48 per cent) to take this view, raising the possibility (but only the possibility) that some of them may have been put off converting their membership by the controversy.

What is also noticeable, in view of previous comments about the capital, is that the view that 'antisemitism is not a serious problem at all' is less likely to be shared by new members in the capital than it is elsewhere (45 per cent in London vs. 58 per cent in the rest of the South, Midlands and Wales, and the North - and 47% in Scotland), suggesting the possibility (but again only the possibility) that they have experienced it in their own CLPs.

The other very marked difference revolves around age. Some 62 per cent of Labour's post GE2015 membership who are aged between 50 and 64 believe that 'antisemitism is not a serious problem at all,' but only 31 per cent of those aged between 18 and 25 share that view. Why that is, we cannot say for sure: it may have something to do with older 'new members' having a long tradition of ambivalence or even antipathy towards Israel, but that is just one of a number of speculative explanations.

Interestingly, if we perform further analysis and break down the answers to the first question according to whether or not members and £3 supporters said they'd vote for Jeremy Corbyn if there were another leadership contest, we see that the problem

might have its roots in factional politics. More than two thirds (69 per cent) of those who would vote for Corbyn think antisemitism is not a serious problem at all, whereas two thirds (67 per cent) of those who would vote for whoever stood against Jeremy Corbyn think antisemitism is a serious and genuine problem. Those that would make up their mind depending on who the other candidates were in this putative leadership contest are split down the the middle.

What we can say, moving on to the second question we asked which is relevant to the Inquiry, however, is that Labour's post-GE2015 membership does not appear to be essentially prejudiced against Jews as measured by the European Values Survey indicator we used. As even the briefest of looks at the question in the appendix, which asks about who respondents would object to having as neighbours, barely any Labour members or registered supporters (one per cent) would have a problem with Jews. This contrasts with 81 per cent who would prefer not to live next door to right-wing extremists and 69 per cent who would have a problem with drug addicts.

Of course, especially given the salience of the story, it may well be that members and supporters who would, in fact, prefer not to have Jews as neighbours were masking their true feelings. What was interesting was that this was not the case when it came to their feelings about other ethnic/religious minorities: some 4 per cent admitted they wouldn't want Muslims as neighbours and a very striking 25 per cent said the same about Gypsies/Roma. Given the Inquiry wants to look at other forms of racism, this may be worth noting.

Conclusion

Context isn't everything but it matters. Political prejudice against Jews in Britain isn't widespread but it hasn't altogether gone away, although it is not particularly high, it should be said, among Labour voters, especially when compared to those voters who favour UKIP.

Labour's members and registered supporters (as opposed to those who simply express an intention to vote for it) do not appear (if we take their answers at face values) as a group to be essentially anti-Semitic – at least in the sense, say, of not wanting to live near Jewish people.

However, they are noticeably disinclined to think that the Party has a problem with antisemitism, and even many of those who do, believe it has been got up by the media, critics of Mr Corbyn and perhaps friends of Israel.

The disinclination to think there is a problem that needs addressing, and the inclination to think it is being exploited by enemies, is especially strong among those who joined the party after the general election. But it is even stronger among those who are presumably the biggest fans of the current leadership. It is, however, weaker among younger than among middle-aged and older members and supporters.

All of this means that, should the Inquiry find that antisemitism is a serious problem that needs dealing with rapidly, the Party will have a huge internal as well as external communication task on its hands.

Appendix

T. Bale, P. Webb & M. Poletti, ESRC Party Members Project, *Labour Party post-GE2015 Members and Supporters Survey*, May 2016

	Membership Type				Membership length			
	Total	Full Member	Was £3 - Now Member	ALL POST GE2015 MEMBERS	£3	Before Leadership Election	During Leadership Election	After Leadership Election
Unweighted Sample	2026	876	280	1156	870	393	344	399

There has been quite a lot of news coverage recently about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

It is a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needs to take urgent action to address	9	7	1	5	13	10	4	2
It is a genuine problem, but its extent is being deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel	32	33	26	31	33	33	33	28
It is not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel	55	57	72	61	48	54	61	67
None of these	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
Don't know	3	2	1	2	5	2	2	2

On this list are various groups of people. Could you please tell us any that you would NOT, generally speaking, like to have as neighbours? (Tick as many as apply)

Right wing extremists	81	81	85	82	79	80	80	86
Drug addicts	69	68	63	67	72	68	68	66
Heavy drinkers	56	55	51	54	59	55	53	54
Emotionally unstable people	27	23	27	24	31	22	27	24
People with a criminal record	25	23	22	23	28	27	19	22
Gypsies	25	22	19	21	31	22	19	22
People with large families	20	19	19	19	22	19	18	19
Committed Christians	16	15	16	15	17	11	19	17
Left wing extremists	14	12	10	12	17	12	13	10
Muslims	4	3	2	3	5	3	2	4
Immigrants/foreign workers	4	3	3	3	5	3	3	3
People of a different race	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
Gay people	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1
Jews	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1
None of these	8	9	8	9	7	8	11	8

Unweighted Sample

Total	Gender		Age				Social Grade				Region				
	Male	Female	18-24	25-49	50-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE	London	Rest of South	Midlands / Wales	North	Scotland
2026	1030	996	121	690	701	497	999	529	162	263	342	677	376	544	87

There has been quite a lot of news coverage recently about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

It is a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needs to take urgent action to address	9	10	7	10	8	9	10	10	7	6	8	13	7	7	8	14
It is a genuine problem, but its extent is being deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel	32	30	34	55	37	25	28	32	36	26	30	38	30	30	31	39
It is not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel	55	56	55	31	50	62	59	54	54	62	57	45	58	58	58	47
None of these	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0
Don't know	3	3	4	2	4	3	2	3	3	5	4	3	4	3	2	0

On this list are various groups of people. Could you please tell us any that you would NOT, generally speaking, like to have as neighbours? (Tick as many as apply)

Right wing extremists	81	78	83	83	83	78	81	82	81	77	74	77	83	81	80	76
Drug addicts	69	68	70	60	67	70	73	70	67	70	67	65	70	67	71	71
Heavy drinkers	56	53	58	51	50	57	64	57	54	55	56	54	59	54	55	51
Emotionally unstable people	27	30	24	19	25	28	31	29	25	27	27	27	28	24	28	25
People with a criminal record	25	26	25	29	24	26	25	25	25	30	25	27	25	26	24	26
Gypsies	25	29	21	26	24	27	25	24	26	28	25	22	26	24	28	24
People with large families	20	22	18	12	19	23	20	21	19	21	22	20	21	18	21	17
Committed Christians	16	18	15	12	15	17	17	16	16	17	18	15	19	16	15	16
Left wing extremists	14	16	12	11	13	12	18	15	12	12	14	13	13	13	15	18
Muslims	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	7	5	2	4	5	4	5
Immigrants/foreign workers	4	4	3	2	3	5	5	3	3	6	7	1	4	5	5	6
People of a different race	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Gay people	1	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	2
Jews	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
None of these	8	9	7	7	8	8	8	7	8	7	13	11	6	7	8	11