

# Antisemitism in Secondary Education - Summary of the survey research

On behalf of the Anne Frank House, research firm Panteia conducted research on antisemitic incidents in secondary schools in the Netherlands. This was a repeat of the research on antisemitic incidents in secondary schools that Panteia conducted for the Anne Frank House in 2013.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it is also a partial repeat of Research voor Beleid's 2004 research on aggression and violence in schools.<sup>2,3</sup>

In an online survey, we asked secondary school teachers about their own experiences of antisemitic incidents in and around their schools. This gave us an insight into the extent, nature, and background characteristics of these antisemitic incidents. To allow for comparison with the previous two surveys, we kept the questions in this survey largely the same.

A total of 432 respondents completed the survey. This is a significant drop compared to the 937 teachers who completed the survey in 2012. Nevertheless, the response rate justifies making representative statements about the extent, nature, and background characteristics of antisemitism in secondary education.

In this summary, we list the key findings from the survey.

## Comparison with 2013: more antisemitism in secondary schools

The results of this survey were compared with the results of the 2013 survey. The main conclusions:

- Antisemitism as witnessed by secondary school teachers has increased slightly: from 35% in 2013 to 42% in the past year. However, this does not mean that antisemitism in secondary schools has actually increased. Expressions of antisemitism may also have become more visible, or teachers may have become better at recognising it and are more likely to report it. The result is significant nonetheless because it is outside the survey's margin of error (5%).
- Reported insults in the context of football have decreased from 40% in 2013 to 36% in 2022. At the same time, insults in the context of the conflict in the Middle East have increased from 20% in 2013 to 29% in 2022.
- Incidents without specific context and graffiti with swastikas increased slightly (17% in 2022 v 14% in 2013).
- In employment-oriented schools and vmbo/mavo, there is an increase in the frequency of hurtful remarks about Jews or remarks trivialising the Holocaust. In 2013, 42% of teachers in employment-oriented schools witnessed this; by 2022, more than half of the teacher reported incidents like these. At vmbo basis/kader, the percentage increased from 39% to 51% and at vmbo g/tl/mavo from 34% to 44%.
- The relative overrepresentation of perpetrators from a Dutch-Moroccan background has increased substantially. In 2013, one in ten offenders came from a Moroccan-Dutch background, according to their teachers, and in 2022 this number had gone up to one in five.

## Mainly slurs against Jews as a group

Teachers witnessed various types of antisemitic incidents over the past year. In most cases, these were general slurs and insults about Jews as a group; the insults were less often directed at a specific student or teacher. The teachers did not witness any physical violence between students. There was, however, one teacher who was targeted because he was Jewish or perceived to be: he was physically attacked, and his belongings were defaced, damaged, or vandalised. Students sometimes used 'Jew' as a term of abuse, regardless of the other's background, Jewish or not. About a third of teachers witnessed this one or more times over the past year.

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<sup>1</sup> Panteia. Antisemitisme in het voortgezet onderwijs. 2013. <https://www.annefrank.org/en/about-us/research/social-research/research-on-antisemitism/antisemitism-secondary-schools/>

<sup>2</sup> Research voor Beleid. Agressie en geweld in het onderwijs. 2004. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29240-5-b2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The research periods covered the previous school year, 2011/2012 and 2002/2003, respectively.

### **No significant increase in downplaying or denying Holocaust**

Nearly one in seven respondents said they witnessed students downplaying or denying the Holocaust in the past year. This is virtually the same as the percentage of teachers who witnessed this in 2012 (11%).

### **Perpetrator characteristics tied to the nature of the incident**

We also asked about the characteristics of the most recent incident. In nearly two-thirds of the most recent cases, the perpetrators came from Western backgrounds. This is not surprising, given the ethnic composition of the total student population.

Nonetheless, students from a Dutch-Moroccan ethnic background are overrepresented within the offender population. According to the respondents, about one-fifth of the perpetrators were of Dutch-Moroccan origin, while about 4% of all secondary school students are of Dutch-Moroccan origin. Moreover, their share has risen sharply since the 2013 survey (10%). The percentage of perpetrators of Turkish-Dutch origin fell from 8% in the 2013 survey to 5% last year.

### **Football and the situation in the Middle East**

Football appears to be the most common context in which students insulted Jews as a group. More than one-third (36%) of all respondents referred to the context of football. This percentage is dropping, however, as in 2013, 2 in 5 teachers identified football as the most common context. On the other hand, just under one in three teachers (29%) see events in the Middle East as the background to the insults. This percentage increased: in 2013, one in five teachers said this was the background to the insults.

Moreover, it appears that the students insulting Jews in the context of football are more often from Western backgrounds. Insults in the context of the Middle East conflict, on the other hand, are more often associated with students from Dutch-Moroccan or Dutch-Turkish backgrounds. Finally, it is noteworthy that the so-called antisemitic plots that were linked to the corona pandemic rarely played a role in the insults.

### **More incidents in employment-oriented education and vmbo than in havo/vwo**

Antisemitism occurs at all levels, from employment-oriented education ('Praktijkonderwijs') to pre-university education. Yet we see relatively more incidents at employment-oriented schools and vmbo (pre-vocational schools). In employment-oriented schools, teachers report more antisemitic incidents that are inspired by football-related events than in the other tracks. At havo and vwo schools (preparing students for higher education), international events and political or religious rallies in the Netherlands are more likely to fuel antisemitic incidents.

### **Slight increase in incidents in schools with relatively high numbers of students from Dutch-Turkish or Dutch-Moroccan backgrounds**

Teachers working at schools with relatively high numbers of students from Dutch-Moroccan or Dutch-Turkish backgrounds report a relatively high number of antisemitic incidents. Incidentally, this finding does not mean that the perpetrators necessarily come from Dutch-Moroccan or Dutch-Turkish backgrounds. However, there is a correlation between the frequency of incidents and the proportion of students from a Dutch-Moroccan or Dutch-Turkish background at the school.

### **Slightly fewer incidents at general special schools and schools for rare denominations**

In general special schools and schools for rare denominations<sup>4</sup>, antisemitic incidents are slightly less frequent than in other denominational schools.

### **Need for education on combatting discrimination**

The survey shows that, in general, teachers value information and lessons on the Holocaust, antisemitism and discrimination, and good manners and religious freedom. There also appears to be a need for additional training in these areas, mainly on preventing or addressing discrimination in general. Two in five teachers

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<sup>4</sup> This category contains a large number of schools for relatively rare denominations and includes anthroposophical, Dutch Reformed, Islamic, Jewish Orthodox schools. There is one Islamic school and one Jewish Orthodox school in the Netherlands.

would like to learn more; this is exactly the same percentage as in 2013. As for providing lessons on the Holocaust, 16% of teachers applied for additional information or training. In 2013, this was one in five teachers.

The full report (in Dutch) can be found at

<https://www.annefrank.org/antisemitisme-vo>