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Antisemitism among Muslims in Germany

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Antisemitism is a long-standing, yet recently escalating threat to Jews and social cohesion in general. While there are intense public debates on Muslim antisemitism, there is very little systematic research based on large-scale, representative data. We fill this gap by analysing approximately 8,500 respondents included in the German Integrationsbarometer 2020 survey. Our results demonstrate that antisemitism is significantly higher among Muslims compared to Christian or religiously unaffiliated respondents, and among immigrants from Turkey and the Middle East & North Africa compared to other groups. About 35 per cent of Muslims strongly agreed with classical antisemitic statements. Deeper analyses reveal that antisemitism is particularly high among Muslims who are very religious or less educated. On the other hand, antisemitism is much lower among Muslims who are less religious or highly educated. We find only limited support for the impact of the time since migration on the antisemitism levels of Muslims. The findings are robust to various operationalizations of classical antisemitism and modelling choices. We discuss the theoretical as well as political implications of our findings.

Introduction

Antisemitism continues to manifest in various forms, perpetuating prejudice and hostility toward Jews. Recently, the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the resulting war against Hamas in Gaza were accompanied by skyrocketing levels of antisemitic incidents around the globe. However, antisemitism was prevalent before October 7 and has deeply entrenched historical roots, particularly in Germany, the country of the Holocaust (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012; Longerich, 2021). In Germany, antisemitism is underscored not only by the alarming frequency of anti-Jewish hate crimes but also by the conflation of antisemitic attitudes and assaults (Zick et al., 2017; Bundesverband RIAS e.V., 2023).

After October 7, the public vividly discussed the role of Muslim antisemitism due to Islamist protests expressing sympathy for the October 7 attacks in many Western societies (Wernicke, 2023). However, research indicates that antisemitism among Muslims was already prevalent before the attacks (Koopmans, 2015; Weinberg, 2020; Scholz, 2021). This aligns with the finding that many Jews experienced antisemitic assaults, the majority of which were perpetrated by Muslims (Zick et al., 2017), and viewed this problem on the rise (Feldman, 2018). This so-called Muslim or Islamic antisemitism is often associated with migration waves of people from the Middle East and Muslim countries where antisemitism is widespread (Jikeli, 2015b), and is consequential for European societies as well due to the growing Muslim segments in many Western societies (Pew Research Center, 2017).

In contrast to the intense public debates and victim reports, there is relatively little empirical quantitative research on the relationship between immigration, religion, and antisemitism. Whereas the literature covers studies that monitor antisemitism in Germany (Liebig, 2023; Bergmann et al., 2024), the body of literature examining antisemitism among religious groups in general and Muslims in particular is rather limited. The few existing studies analysing Muslim antisemitism either remain descriptive (Jikeli, 2015a; Scholz, 2021;

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Friedrichs and Storz, 2022), intermingle nonresponse and non-antisemitic answers and lack a native reference group (Babka von Gostomski, 2021), combine antisemitism with other types of outgroup hostilities (Koopmans, 2015), or focus on students (Hinz et al., 2024). A notable exception is the study of Fischer and Wetzels (2024), published in German, which reported high levels of antisemitism, particularly among fundamentalist Muslims. We add to this research by systematically analysing the drivers of strong antisemitism among religious and migrant groups. No social group is a monolithic block, making it crucial to identify where and under what conditions antisemitism is prevalent, which is important for designing targeted interventions. We bridge this gap by, first, measuring the prevalence of high agreement to classical antisemitic statements among Muslims, Christians, and the religiously unaffiliated in Germany. Second, we analyse the heterogeneity of antisemitism within these groups. To this end, we utilize data from the Integrationsbarometer 2020, a representative population survey of people with and without a migration background in Germany (Wittlif et al., 2020).

In this paper, we focus on classical antisemitism, which has led to violence for many centuries. Moreover, our interest is strong manifestations of antisemitism, as they are most likely to translate into antisemitic behaviour like insulting, physical violence, and other types of hate crimes. We begin by defining antisemitism and developing hypotheses based on its roots in Germany as well as the Islamic world. Our findings suggest that strong classical antisemitism is significantly higher among Muslims compared to Christian or religiously unaffiliated respondents, particularly among very religious or less educated Muslims. We conclude by discussing the theoretical as well as political implications.

Defining antisemitism

Adorno, (1969) described antisemitism as the 'rumour about the Jews', consisting of stereotypes and myths that attribute sinister qualities to Jews, reinforcing their portrayal as a fundamental threat to societal and personal identities, and resulting in bullying, discrimination, expulsion, murder, and genocide. Bergmann et al. (2024) provide some examples of the image of the ultimate Jew as the murderer of Jesus or the Jewish world conspiracy as religious and secular myths, respectively. Other definitions of antisemitism range from 'a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews […]' (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) to 'discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews' (Jerusalem Declaration). Scholarly debate on the correct definition of antisemitism notwithstanding (Ullrich et al., 2024), classical antisemitism, which we analyse in this paper, is agreed upon and operationalized similarly almost universally (Jikeli, 2015a; Friedrichs and Storz, 2022; Bergmann et al., 2024; Fischer and Wetzels, 2024).

Antisemitism occupies a unique position compared to other forms of resentment, such as racism or anti-immigration attitudes. The latter two describe the phenomenon that racialized minorities and migrants are viewed as threatening because they are foreign and inferior. For example, migrants may be imagined as lazy and a burden to the welfare state (Eger and Breznau, 2017), as threatening cultural homogeneity (Davidov et al., 2019), or as undermining public security (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2017). Jews, on the other hand, are imagined as a more fundamental threat to one's own identity. Not in the racist sense of social inferiority, but as superior, as the ultimate 'other' and evil—a notion that was also strongly integrated into National-Socialist ideology (Weiss, 2019). Thus, classical antisemitism is captured by the belief that Jews have too much influence in the world, that Jews are attributed with an ominous power to control the world, and that they are perceived as never being able to belong to the collective. It is a specific resentment, a kind of dark resource for coping with a fundamental sense of threat (Decker et al., 2022). There are other types of antisemitism, such as secondary, post-holocaust, Israel-related, or guilt-deflection antisemitism (e.g. see Bergmann and Erb, 1986; Bergmann, 2021). As we examine classical antisemitism, however, discussing these other forms in more depth is beyond the scope of this paper.

Christian and modern Western European antisemitism

Antisemitism in Western Europe has historically been shaped by a combination of religious and non-religious elements. While traditional Christian anti-Judaism played a role in the formation of antisemitic beliefs over the centuries, the emergence of modern antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries was largely driven by secular, nationalist, and economic narratives rather than direct religious doctrine. Many leading antisemitic figures in 19th-century Germany were not devout Christians but justified their hostility toward Jews on racial, economic, and political grounds. However, the distinction between racial and religious antisemitism was often porous and adaptable, with overlaps that blurred the boundaries between these two forms (Heschel, 2011).

During the National-Socialist era, antisemitic propaganda drew on a variety of sources, including longstanding stereotypes that had been perpetuated in Christian contexts. Christian clergy frequently echoed narratives propagated by the Nazis, including depictions of Jews

as 'parasitic' capitalists or as a communist threat—or, at the very least, often refrained from publicly condemning the regime (Ericksen and Heschel, 2004) The Nazis, in turn, appropriated traditional Christian motifs, such as the demonization of Jews as the murderers of Christ and the dichotomy between 'materialistic' Judaism and 'spiritual' Christianity (Munson, 2018). However, antisemitism at that time was not primarily a religious phenomenon but rather a racialized and conspiracy-theoretical ideology propagated by the Nazi regime.

Antisemitism in postwar Germany

After the Holocaust, Germany's official relationship with Jews involved significant efforts to confront its Nazi past and address antisemitism, including reparations and Holocaust education. Despite these continuing efforts, Bergmann et al. (2024) recently showed that antisemitism is still prevalent in both East and West Germany. Accordingly, most Jews in Germany have experienced discrimination and devaluation (Zick et al., 2017; Feldman, 2018). Unsurprisingly, native Germans adhering to far-right ideology have been highly inclined to hold antisemitic attitudes (Schmidt, Iser and Heyder, 2011; Decker et al., 2022; Zick, Küpper and Mokros, 2023).

However, antisemitism is a widespread phenomenon across diverse social, religious, and economic groups. Recent research has shown that antisemitism is on the rise among the German population in general (Zick *et al.*, 2023). The urgency of addressing the growing antisemitism emerging from the very core of society has led to several recent studies that examined the relationship between antisemitic attitudes and various sociodemographic characteristics (e. g. Bergmann, 2021; Öztürk and Pickel, 2021; Hinz et al., 2024).

Muslim antisemitism

There are three roots to Muslim antisemitism: the first is religious, the second is connected to the European antisemitism of the 19th century, and the third is related to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The religious aspect is rooted in Islamic anti-Judaism. Under the rule of Islam, Jews were historically considered Dhimmis, which implied fewer rights and additional taxes but also legal protection. Such religious roots can still have relevance for practicing Muslims today (Scholz, 2024). Moreover, religious antisemitism is connected to a dogmatic and fundamentalist interpretation of religion (Koopmans, 2015). Although the rigid interpretation of one's religion exists in other religious communities as well, fundamentalist views are more prevalent among Muslims than Christians according to Koopmans (2015).

The second type of Muslim antisemitism relates to the influence of antisemitic German National-Socialist propaganda in the Arab world (Küntzel, 2005; Herf, 2009; Arnold *et al.*, 2024). Between 1939 and 1945, Nazi Germany distributed millions of printed items throughout the Arab world (Herf, 2009) and broadcasted its antisemitic propaganda in Arabic to countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Küntzel, 2005) to appeal to Arabs and Muslims to join the Axis powers during WWII. On the level of the political elites, Nazi Germany collaborated at various points with several Arab leaders, with many Arab nationalists viewing Germany as an ally against the British colonizers (Küntzel, 2005). Most prominent is the Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, who met with Hitler on several occasions to discuss the fight against the establishment of a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine (Herf, 2014). Accordingly, there were pogroms against Jews living in the Arab world even before the establishment of the state of Israel, including the Farhud, a violent pogrom against the Jewish community in Baghdad, Iraq (June 1-2, 1941), where at least 180 Jews were killed and more injured (E. Black, 2010). Thus, while most Muslims were not actively involved in the Holocaust, antisemitic tropes found their way into Arab societies, and National Socialist ideology remains widespread in the Muslim world even today (Arnold *et al.*, 2024).

Third, antisemitism can be a result of the rejection of Israel as a Jewish state. This rejection can be amplified in times of increased conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, research on Jihadist terrorism indicates that the perception of injustice and related emotions such as grievances or anger can fuel hatred and violence against the perceived perpetrators (Stern, 2003; Silke, 2008). This perception may be particularly pronounced regarding Israel, as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can evoke feelings of injustice and serve as a symbol of Western dominance in global politics for many Muslims (Zhirkov *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, escalations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict resulted in increases in antisemitic sentiments among Muslims (Brettfeld and Wetzels, 2022), although such effects might be relatively short-lived (Jacobs et al., 2011). At the same time, it is important to note that the act of inferring from events in the Middle East to all Jews is in itself an antisemitic mechanism because it unfairly holds Jewish people collectively responsible for actions or policies of specific governments or groups (Schwarz-Friesel, 2019). The current study focuses on classical antisemitism rather than attitudes toward Israel.

In line with these theoretical considerations, a few existing studies have shown that antisemitism is indeed relatively widespread among Muslims in Germany. Fischer & Wetzels (2024) recently showed

that Muslims not only hold high levels of antisemitism in general, but also that their antisemitism increased between 2021 and 2023, a trend not observed among non-Muslim immigrants or natives. This finding is mirrored by Jikeli (2015a), who reports that antisemitism was more widespread among Muslims compared to other groups in nine European countries, and by Öztürk & Pickel (2021), who show that while antisemitism among Muslims in Germany is higher than among Christians, it is lower than among Muslims from predominantly Islamic countries. Analysing university students' attitudes after the October 7 attacks in Israel by Hamas, Hinz *et al.*, (2024) shows that antisemitism was significantly higher among Muslim students compared to Christian students or those without religious affiliation. From a migration perspective, the study of Friedrichs and Storz (2022) indicates that German immigrants from Turkey were much more likely to agree with antisemitic tropes. Similarly, Babka von Gostomski (2021) demonstrates that immigrants from Turkey, and to a lesser extent from Romania or Poland, agreed significantly more with antisemitic statements. The descriptive overview of Scholz (2021) shows that similar patterns can be found in other European countries, too. Beyond Europe, Nyhan & Zeitzoff, (2018) report that belief in antisemitic conspiracy theories is widespread as well as connected to anti-Jewish attitudes in the MENA region. Based on the historical, cultural, and political roots of Muslim and Middle Eastern antisemitism, we hypothesize:

- H1a: Antisemitism is higher among Muslims compared to Christians or unaffiliated individuals.
- H1b: Antisemitism is higher among immigrants from the MENA region compared to native Germans or other immigrant groups.

However, we have reason to assume that the effects of religious denomination on antisemitism vary with certain characteristics.

Existing research has consistently shown that *the level* of religiosity is related to antisemitism. Many of these studies focussed on the role of religious fundamentalism, an extreme form of religiosity. Fischer and Wetzels (2024) demonstrate that religious fundamentalism was connected to higher rates of antisemitism among both Muslims and Christians, but collective religious practice (frequent mosque attendance) was connected with antisemitism only among Muslims (also see Öztürk and Pickel, 2021). Jikeli (2015a) reports a similar pattern, with fundamentalist interpretations of Islam predicting antisemitism among Muslims in nine European countries. According to Koopmans (2015), religious fundamentalism was associated with hostility toward several outgroups, including Jews. While this was also the case for Christians, religious fundamentalism was much more widespread among Sunni Muslims. Based on these considerations, we hypothesize the following moderation:

- H2: Antisemitism increases with the level of religiosity, which is particularly pronounced for Muslims compared to other religious groups.

In Western societies, education has been shown to correlate with more tolerance and positive attitudes toward out-groups in general (e.g. Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Velásquez and Eger, 2022) and antisemitism in particular (Nyhan *et al.*, 2024). Indeed, the study of Hinz *et al.*, (2024) indicates that, even in the highly politicized context of the Gaza war in December 2023, students in Germany were less antisemitic than the broader German population. The tolerance-enhancing effect of education should be particularly potent for those with higher baseline levels of antisemitism. We thus expect another moderation, namely that:

- H3: Antisemitism among Muslims decreases with higher education.

We have argued above that there is also a migration-specific component to Muslim antisemitism in Germany. Acculturation theories suggest that immigrants in liberal democracies tend to adjust their identity, values, and norms to those of the social majority through processes of de- and resocialization (Alba and Nee, 1997; White et al., 2008). Thus, immigrants' economic, social, and political integration can lead to a convergence of migrants' and natives' attitudes, even when individuals arrive in adulthood from culturally and politically distant countries (Doerschler, 2006; White, 2016). Exposure to information related to the Holocaust and antisemitism through German schools, media, or interpersonal contact, as well as a fading reference to origin-specific antisemitism, may all contribute to a decrease of initially high levels of antisemitic attitudes among some immigrant groups. Thus, our final moderation hypothesis is:

- H4: Antisemitism among Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants decreases with increasing time since migration.

Data

For the empirical analysis, we use data from the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration's (SVR) Integrationsbarometer wave 2020 (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration [SVR], 2021), a

representative survey of individuals with and without a migration background in Germany conducted between November 2019 and August 2020 using computer-assisted telephone interviews.[1] The surveys were administered in German, English, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi. While there are no official data on the distribution of Muslims in Germany, the 2020 Integrationsbarometer used a robust analysis of the 2018 Microcensus for their sampling, offering high-quality data, which is comparable to similar studies (e. g., Pupeter *et al.*, 2015, 2019). Comparing the data to the most recent projection on Muslims in Germany by Stichs (2016) demonstrates a distribution that closely aligns, lending support to the representativeness of the sample (see Figure A1 in the Supplementary Materials). Moderate differences, such as a slightly lower proportion of Turks and a higher share of Muslims from the MENA region, reflect the growing diversity within the Muslim community in Germany, significantly influenced by the large influx of asylum seekers from 2015 onwards.

The sampling universe included Germans and non-Germans aged 15 and older. A disproportionate stratified random sample of 15,095 respondents was drawn using the 2019 ADM (Arbeitskreis Deutscher Markt- und Sozialforschungsinstitute e.V.) dual-frame framework, with four subsamples (fixed-line, mobile, standard and international tariffs, and onomastic criteria) designed to ensure random-based interviews, minimum cases for key migrant groups, and even distribution across the field period and federal states. The response rate was 10.4 per cent, influenced by screening for origin groups (positive rate: 24.5 per cent) at the start of interviews (see Wittlif et al., 2020). After excluding Jewish respondents and cases with missing values, our final analysis sample includes 8,486 respondents.[2]

Classical antisemitism

Our study focuses on classical antisemitism. We follow a common operationalization of this type of antisemitism (Friedrichs and Storz, 2022; Liebig, 2023; Bergmann et al., 2024) assessed by the following two items: 'Jews have too much influence in the world' and 'Jews are not entirely innocent of their persecution'. Both items were measured on 4-point scales ranging from 0 (*do not agree*) to 3 (*fully agree*). Our main interest is *strong* antisemitism, as this form is most likely to translate into antisemitic behaviour like insulting, violence, and other types of hate crimes. Thus, we generated a binary variable measuring *strong antisemitism*, defined as full agreement to either of the two items (i.e. the highest category of either variable). We examine potential differences across other operationalizations in our robustness checks.

Explanatory variables

Our key predictor is *religious denomination*, measured by four categories: Unaffiliated (reference), Christian, Muslim, and Other. We measured the individual *level of religiosity* with the item 'Regardless of whether you belong to a religious community, how religious would you consider yourself to be?', with response options ranging from 1 (*not at all religious*) to 4 (*very religious*). Note that this question was presented independently of religious denomination, acknowledging that individuals can be religious without formally belonging to a specific denomination. We grouped respondents' country of *origin* into six regions: Germany (reference), Europe (North & West), Europe (South & East), Turkey, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Other. We kept Turkey as a separate category due to its ambivalent status between Asia and Europe, and since a sufficiently large number of respondents originated from Turkey. We calculated the years since migration as the difference between the date of the survey and the year of migration in increments of 10 years. Finally, we categorized the variable education into low (up to lower secondary), medium (intermediate secondary), and high (upper secondary and higher) education as provided by the SVR (Wittlif et al., 2020, pp. 28–29), dropping respondents who were still attending school.

Control variables

We follow Fischer and Wetzels (2024), who use gender and age as control variables, and Koopmans (2015), who controls for employment status. In addition, we control for total household monthly net income (transformed using the natural logarithm) and German citizenship.[3] We add control variables in a stepwise procedure to ensure that our results are not driven by suppression effects.

Method

We model the probability that an individual holds a strongly antisemitic attitude as a function of religious denomination and the other explanatory variables, accounting for the control variables listed above, employing linear probability models (see robustness checks for other modelling choices). We estimated the main effects of religious denomination and region of origin on strong antisemitism to test Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Subsequently, we model the interaction effects of religious denomination with individual religiosity and with education to test our Hypotheses 2 and 3. To test Hypothesis 4, we interact religious denomination and years since migration based on the sample of immigrants. We utilized the programming language R, version 4.4.0 (R Core Team, 2024), for data cleaning and

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	Mean (share)	Standard deviation	Minimum value	Maximum value
Dependent Variable				
Strong Antisemitism	9.5%	0.293	0	1
Explanatory Variables				
Religion				
Unaffiliated	38%			
Christian	50.3%			
Muslim	10.5%			
Other	1.2%			
Religiosity				
Not religious	26.9%			
Rather not religious	22.2%			
Rather religious	39.3%			
Very religious	11.6%			
Area of Origin				
German Natives	65.5%			
Europe (North & West)	2.8%			
Europe (South & East)	16.2%			
Turkey	4%			
MENA	2.9%			
Other	8.5%			
German Citizenship (total sample)	80.5%	0.396	0	1
German Citizenship (excl. native Germans)	47.9%	0.5	0	1
Years since migration (excl. native Germans)	2.455	1.703	0	8.2
Education				
Low	19.1%			
Medium	32.7%			
High	48.2%			
Control Variables				
Log(income)	7.909	0.664	4.787	11.156
Employment Status				
In training	3.5%			
Employed	62.1%			
Retired	26.2%			
Not employed	8.2%			
Age	50.578	16.715	15	96
Female (male as reference)	48%	0.5	0	1

statistical analysis, and the sjPlot package (Lüdecke, 2024) for visualization.

Results

Descriptive overview

As Table 1 shows, about half of the participants in our sample were Christian, 10.5 per cent were Muslim, and 38 per cent reported no religious denomination. The 'other' category was selected by 1.2 per cent of respondents and was almost equally composed of Hindus, Buddhists, and other denominations (mostly Yezidis). Splitting this category is unfortunately not feasible due to its low number of respondents. Most respondents stated to be 'rather' religious (39.3 per cent). Analyses within groups showed that Muslims indicated being somewhat more religious, with a mean of 2.95 on the 4-point scale, compared to Christians, with a mean

of 2.74 (others: 2.65, unaffiliated: 1.66). About two-thirds of respondents were born in Germany, four per cent were born in Turkey, and 2.9 per cent originated from the MENA region.

Overall, about 9.5 per cent of respondents harboured strongly antisemitic attitudes according to our operationalization, as Table 1 demonstrates. Such strong levels of antisemitism were clearly most present among Muslims in our sample. Specifically, the average probability of holding such attitudes was as high as 35.4 per cent among Muslims (see Figure 1). Religiously unaffiliated individuals were least likely to hold antisemitic attitudes (6.1 per cent). Relatively high values of strong antisemitism (19.6 per cent) were found for the group of respondents who indicated a different religious denomination than Christianity or Islam ('other'). However, given that this group was small and consisted of various denominations, we are cautious in interpreting this finding and omitting this category from the figures.

Turning to the immigrant group in our sample, strongly agreeing to antisemitic statements also varied considerably by the geographic region of origin. Whereas such attitudes were prevalent among immigrants from the MENA region (29.2 per cent), they were very high among Turkish immigrants, with about half of all Turkish respondents strongly agreeing to either of the two items (see Figure 2). Although considerably lower, strong antisemitism was nonetheless reported relatively frequently by immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (14.4 per cent). 5.3 per cent of the native Germans in the sample strongly agreed with at least one antisemitic item. Finally, strong antisemitism was the weakest among immigrants from Western and Northern Europe, with only 3.2 per cent strongly agreeing with either item. We do not interpret the 'other' category due to its heterogeneous composition. Figures 1 and 2 look similar when examining the sample before listwise deletion (see Figure A2 in the Supplementary Materials).

Regression models

Table 2 presents the results of our multivariate analyses. Hypothesis 1a stated that antisemitism is higher among Muslims. Model M1 in Table 2 shows that the probability of holding strong antisemitic attitudes was indeed clearly higher for Muslims: Compared to unaffiliated respondents, the probability of Muslims being

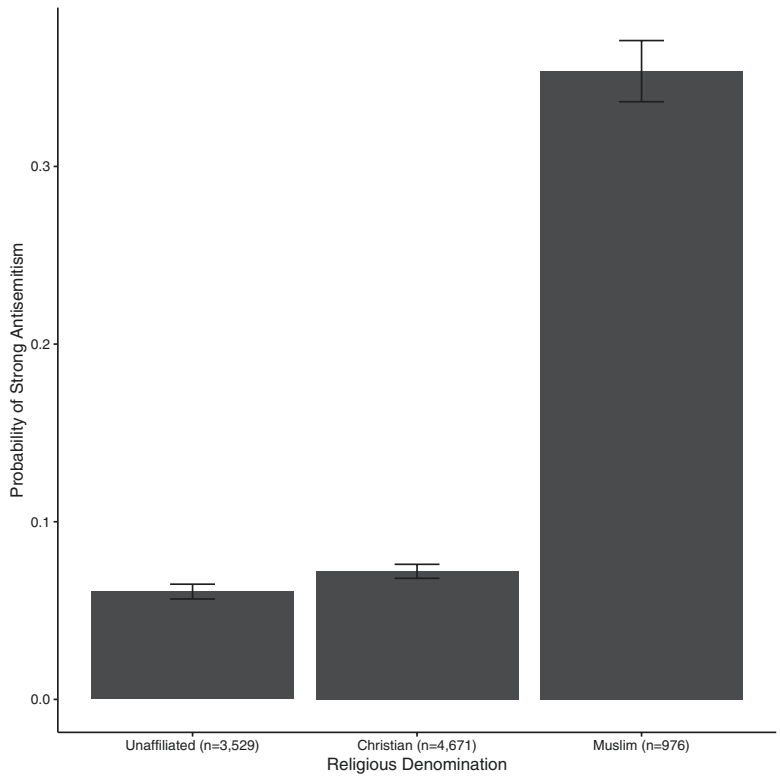

Figure 1 Probability of strong antisemitism by religious denomination

Note: Mean and standard error of the mean; other religions (n = 112) omitted from the plot for clarity.

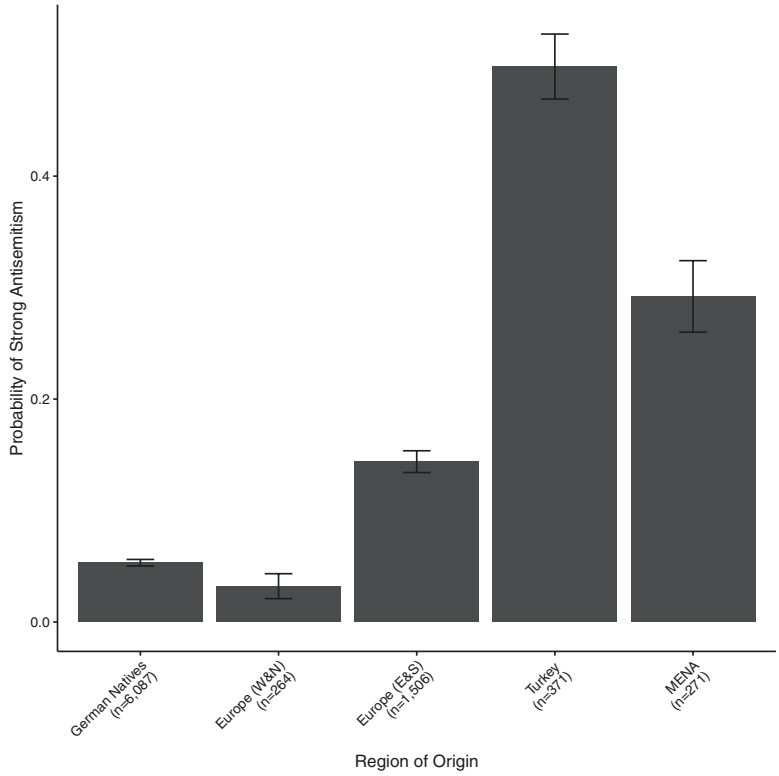

Figure 2 Probability of strong antisemitism by region of birth

Note: Mean and standard error of the mean; Europe (W&N) = Western and Northern Europe; Europe (E&S) = Eastern and Southern Europe; MENA = Middle East and North Africa. Other origins (n = 789) omitted from the plot for clarity.

antisemitic was 29.3 percentage points higher (95 per cent confidence interval [CI]: 0.27-0.31). There is no statistically significant difference between Christians and unaffiliated individuals in our sample.

In model M2, we add the other theoretically relevant predictors. We are particularly interested in the effect of region of origin, as our Hypothesis 1b assumes that antisemitism is higher among immigrants from the MENA region. M2 shows that this is the case: Compared to native Germans, immigrants from MENA were about 12 percentage points more likely to hold strongly antisemitic attitudes, net of the other variables in the model (95 per cent CI: 0.08 – 0.16). However, we see that the largest difference relates to the group of Turkish immigrants. Strikingly, compared to native Germans, the effect of originating from Turkey is more than twice as large (95 per cent CI: 0.23 – 0.31) as the effect of originating from the MENA region. Compared to M1, the difference between Muslims and the religiously unaffiliated is halved (95 per cent CI: 0.11 – 0.17) in M2. Deeper analyses, not shown here, reveal that this is primarily caused by the strong impact of the region of origin variable.

This picture remains largely stable when adding the socioeconomic and demographic control variables in model M3.[4] As the coefficient of being Muslim in Table 2 reduces from 0.29 in M1 to 0.15 in M3, about half of the difference in antisemitism between Muslims and unaffiliated individuals is explained by compositional differences between these two groups. This also implies, however, that about half of the difference seems robust to these confounding factors. Furthermore, even net of control variables, the difference between Muslims and the unaffiliated remained substantively large and statistically significant, with a 95 per cent confidence interval ranging between 12 and 18 per cent. For Christians, the difference to unaffiliated respondents was small and not statistically significant in any of our models. Model M4 replicates model M3 for immigrants only, adding the years since migration variable. The overall pattern remains consistent also when looking at immigrants only, while the time since migration significantly reduced the probability of antisemitism on average.

To illustrate our results, we predict the probability of two hypothetical respondents based on model M3. A native-born Christian man of average age, who is

Table 2 Linear probability models predicting strong classical antisemitism

	M1: Religious denomination	M3: Explanatory variables	M3: Control variables	M4: Immigrants only
Religious denomination				
Unaffiliated	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*
Christian	0.011	0.003	0.003	0.011
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.019)
Muslim	0.293 ***	0.142 ***	0.150 ***	0.121 ***
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.028)
Other	0.135 ***	0.093 **	0.091 **	0.092
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.051)
Religiosity				
Not religious	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*
Rather not religious		-0.019 *	-0.016	-0.046 *
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.022)
Rather religious		-0.005	-0.001	-0.007
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.021)
Very religious		0.038 **	0.041 ***	0.131 ***
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.028)
Region of origin				
German Natives		*Reference*	*Reference*	
Europe (W&N)		-0.043 *	-0.042 *	*Reference*
		(0.019)	(0.019)	
Europe (E&S)		0.055 ***	0.054 ***	0.083 **
		(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.026)
Turkey		0.271 ***	0.258 ***	0.321 ***
		(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.037)
MENA		0.118 ***	0.099 ***	0.138 ***
		(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.038)
Other		0.051 ***	0.046 ***	0.067 *
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.029)
Education				
Low		*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*
Medium		-0.022 *	-0.009	0.032
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.020)
High		-0.063 ***	-0.040 ***	-0.017
		(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.019)
Citizenship		-0.058 ***	-0.054 ***	-0.021
		(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.017)
Years since migration				-0.021 **
				(0.007)
Control Variables				
Log(income)			-0.028 ***	-0.042 ***
			(0.005)	(0.012)
Employment status				
In training		*Reference*	*Reference*	*Reference*
Employed			0.026	0.066
			(0.018)	(0.040)

Table 2. Continued

	M1: Religious denomination	M3: Explanatory variables	M3: Control variables	M4: Immigrants only
Retired			0.022	0.034
			(0.021)	(0.048)
Not employed			0.040 *	0.061
			(0.020)	(0.044)
Age			0.001 **	0.002 **
			(0.000)	(0.001)
Female			-0.035 ***	-0.056 ***
			(0.006)	(0.015)
Intercept	0.061 ***	0.145 ***	0.300 ***	0.289 **
	(0.005)	(0.014)	(0.043)	(0.105)
Observations	8,486	8,486	8,486	2,657

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

very religious, has medium income and education and German citizenship, and is employed has a predicted probability of being very antisemitic of about 12 per cent. In contrast, a Muslim immigrant from Turkey, who holds otherwise identical values, has a predicted probability of strong antisemitism of over 53 per cent. This demonstrates that origin and religion are the two most important predictors of antisemitism in our model.

These findings provide clear support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b: Antisemitism is significantly higher among Muslims (H1a) and immigrants from the MENA region (H2b). Somewhat unexpectedly, however, we found that antisemitism is even larger among Turkish immigrants compared to those from the MENA region. We return to this finding in the discussion.

Thus far, we tested for average differences in antisemitism between denomination and origin groups. Hypotheses 2 to 4 postulated that these differences vary by the level of religiosity, education, and years since migration, respectively. In the following, we will inspect these moderation effects. For illustration, we will predict the probabilities for hypothetical respondents who are very religious and from the MENA region, holding other variables constant or at the reference category (unless stated otherwise).

Hypothesis 2 stated that antisemitism among Muslims increases with the *level of religiosity*. Interacting religious denomination and individual religiosity while holding all other variables of the model constant confirms this hypothesis while showing some interesting heterogeneity across the religious groups, as Figure 3 demonstrates (the full model IA1 can be found in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials). A hypothetical Muslim immigrant from the MENA region, who is very religious, has a predicted probability of strong antisemitism of 44 per cent according to the model (circle markers in Figure 3). If the same person were Christian, the predicted probability reduces to 18 per cent. If the same hypothetical Muslim immigrant profile would be rather religious or not religious, the model predicts a 30 per cent probability of holding a strongly antisemitic attitude (triangle and plus markers in Figure 3). Interestingly, however, the role of religiosity for Muslims is not linear: If the same Muslim immigrant is rather not religious, the predicted probability significantly reduces to merely 18 per cent (square marker), which is about the same level this hypothetical person would have if they were Christian or unaffiliated. In sum, these findings provide support for our second hypothesis, with the rather non-religious Muslims as an outlier group.

Our third hypothesis posited that antisemitism among Muslims decreased with *higher education*. Interacting the level of education with the religious denomination shows that education indeed plays a key moderating role, as shown in Figure 4 (based on model IA2 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials). Hypothetically, a very religious Muslim immigrant from the MENA region has a predicted probability of strong antisemitism of 36 and 41 percent when holding low or medium education, respectively (circles and triangles in Figure 4). In contrast, if the same immigrant had higher education, the level of antisemitism drops to 27 per cent (square marker). Interestingly, education only plays a marginal role for unaffiliated and Christian respondents, with each level reducing the probability of being strongly antisemitic by roughly one to four percentage points. The fact that highly educated Muslims were significantly less antisemitic supports our third hypothesis.

Finally, our fourth hypothesis stated that spending more time in Germany reduces antisemitic attitudes among Muslim immigrants. To test this, we interact the number of years since migration and the religious denomination of immigrants (see model IA3 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials). Note that this implies that this model analyses immigrants only. We observe a statistically significant but substantively rather small main effect of years since migration for Christian immigrants, with each decade lowering the probability of strong antisemitism by approximately two percentage points (95 per cent CI: -0.04 to -0.01, $p = 0.002$). For Muslim immigrants, however, the main effect of years since migration is not statistically significant (95 per cent CI: -0.03 – 0.01, p = 0.430). At the same time, the interaction terms of years since migration and religious denomination are themselves not statistically significant (see model IA3 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials). Figure Figure 5 illustrates this: The slope for Christian immigrants is statistically significantly different from zero (black line), while the slope for Muslims is not (dashed line). Yet, the two slopes are not significantly different from each other. Thus, while time since migration slightly reduces antisemitism for some immigrant groups, this does not seem to be the case for Muslims, which largely refutes H4.

Robustness checks

We ran several robustness checks and plausibility tests for our findings to account for different operationalizations and potential social desirability. The results of these tests are summarized in Figure 6; the underlying models are in Table A2 in the Supplementary Materials.

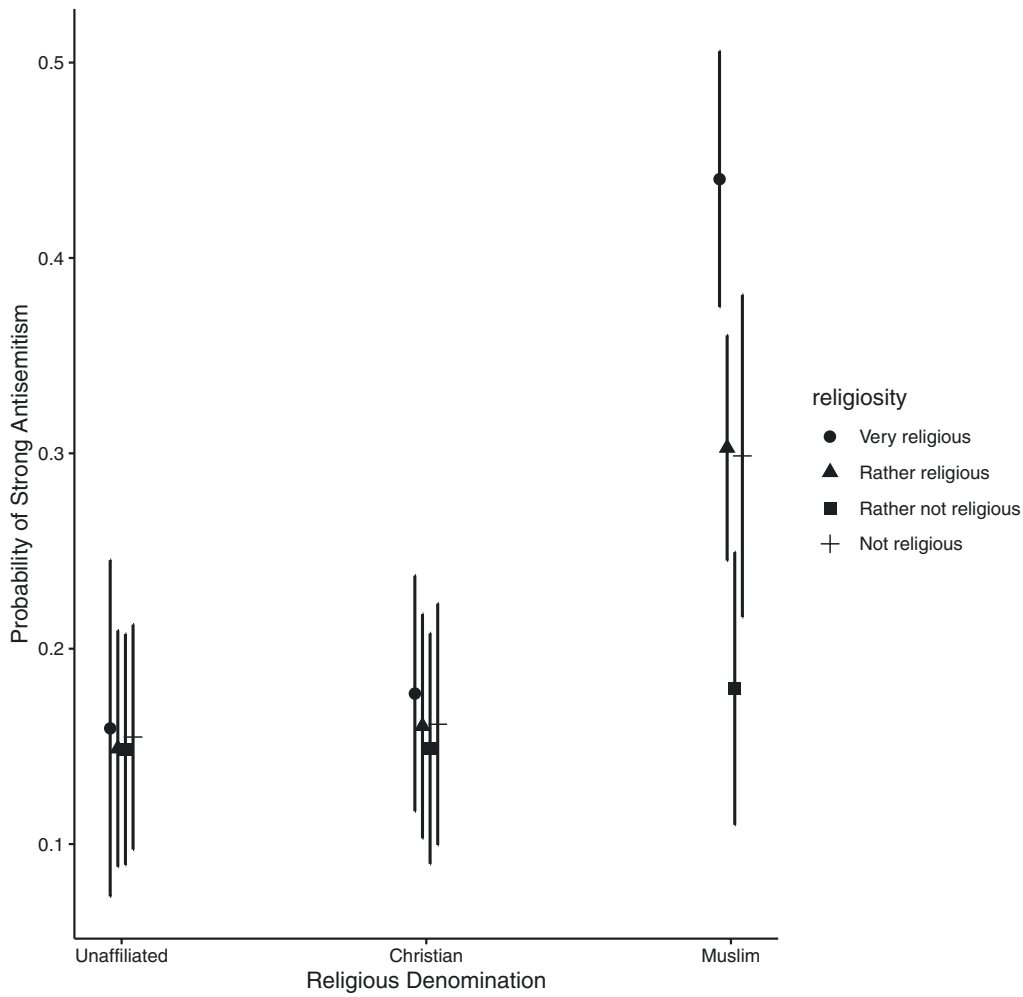

Figure 3 Religious denomination and antisemitism by level of religiosity for hypothetical immigrants from the MENA region
Note: Based on model IA1 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials.

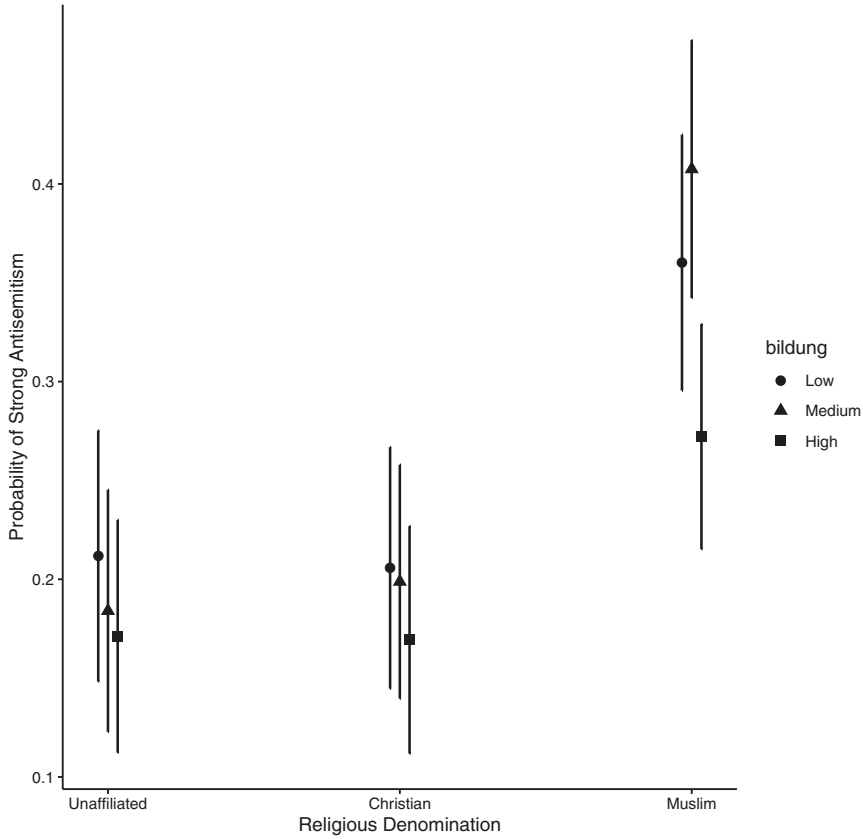

Figure 4 Religious denomination and antisemitism by education for hypothetical immigrants from the MENA region who are very religious

Note: Based on model IA2 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials.

First, we argued that strong antisemitism has the highest social and political relevance. Therefore, we created a dummy variable indicating if respondents were strongly antisemitic or not. Yet, one might be interested in the linear effects on the continuous 7-point antisemitism scale. To examine whether our choice affected the results, we calculated a sum score of the two antisemitism items and standardized it to range from 0 to 1. Model R1 confirms that this alternative operationalization leads to the same conclusion: After including our control variables, antisemitism was approximately 11.7 per cent higher for Muslims compared to unaffiliated respondents (95 per cent CI: 0.09 – 0.14).

Second, we analysed both items separately in models R2 and R3. For comparison, we again estimated the probability that respondents strongly agreed with the respective item. Interestingly, the effect was stronger for the item 'Jews have too much influence in the world' than for 'Jews not entirely innocent of their persecution'. While the probability of Muslims fully agreeing that Jews are not entirely innocent of their persecution was four percentage points higher compared to the unaffiliated (95 per cent CI: 0.02 – 0.06), the difference amounted to 12.5 percentage points for maximum agreement with the statement that Jews have too much influence in the world (95 per cent CI: 0.10 – 0.15). One might explain this through social desirability bias: Publicly voicing that 'Jews hold too much power' is widely considered taboo in German society after the Shoah. Migrants from other, particularly non-European, societies might not have this strong social norm. Strikingly, however, agreement with the statement 'Jews have too much influence in the world' was *stronger* than with the statement 'Jews not entirely innocent of their persecution'. While 7.4 per cent of all respondents, on average, completely agreed with the former statement, only 3.2 per cent fully agreed with the latter. This is true within *all* religious groups, as Table A3 in the Supplementary Materials shows.

Third, the results reported above reveal that immigrants from Turkey had a particularly high probability of holding strongly antisemitic attitudes. Importantly,

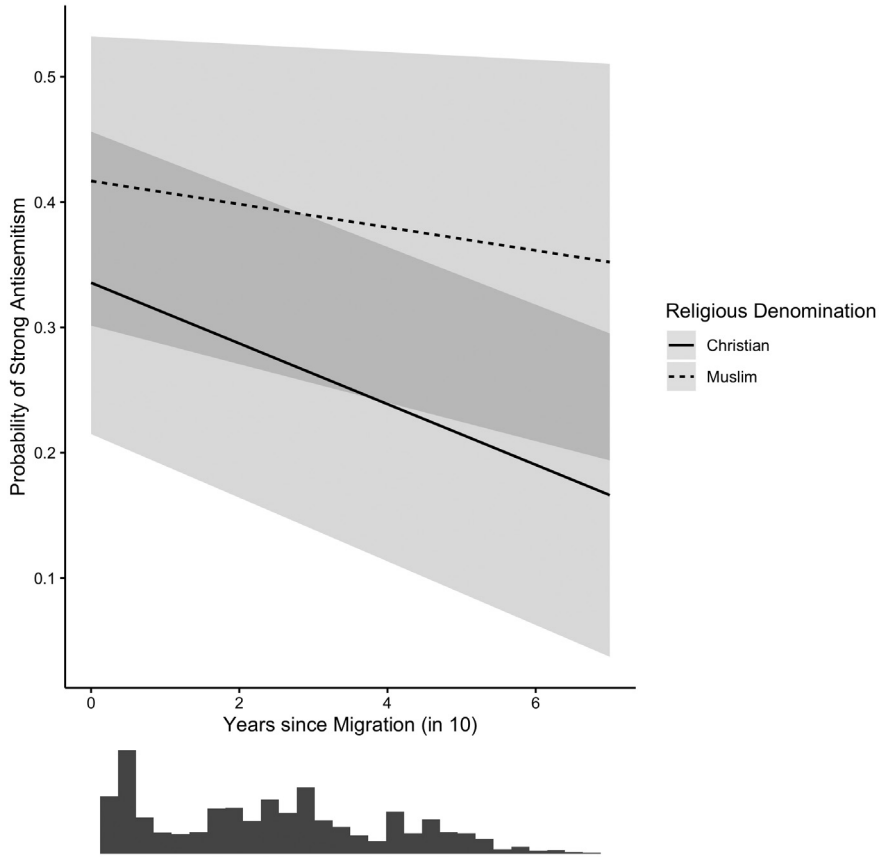

Figure 5 Religious denomination and antisemitism by years since migration for hypothetical immigrants from MENA region who are very religious

Note: Based on model IA3 in Table A1 in the Supplementary Materials.

85.2 per cent of the immigrants from Turkey were also Muslim. To ensure that the effect of religious denomination was not purely driven by Turkish immigrants, we re-estimated the model excluding respondents from Turkey in model R4. Figure 6 indicates that this hardly influenced our results: Without Turkish immigrants, the probability of Muslims holding strong antisemitic attitudes was 15.5 percentage points higher compared to unaffiliated individuals (95 per cent CI: 0.13 – 0.18). This was almost identical to the effect we reported in our main analysis in model M3 of Table 2.

Fourth, as mentioned, social desirability could play an important role for native German respondents. Due to historical continuities, Germans should be less likely to strongly and publicly agree to classical antisemitism. To tackle this, we excluded German natives without immigration background from the data and re-estimated the model. R5 confirms that our results remain largely stable: Without German natives, the probability of Muslims strongly agreeing with classical antisemitism was 14.2 percentage points higher compared to the unaffiliated respondents (95 per cent CI: 0.10 – 0.18). While this is slightly smaller than the difference we report in our main analysis, the difference between these models is marginal. Strikingly, this was even true when looking at German natives without a migration background *only*. Even in this case, Muslims had a higher probability of 18.8 percentage points compared to nonreligious respondents to be antisemitic, as model R6 demonstrates, although the confidence intervals are large due to the low number of observations (95 per cent CI: 0.06 – 0.32).

Fifth, we estimated linear probability models for our binary outcome. Re-estimating our models with logistic regression leads to the same conclusions: The odds of high antisemitism were 3.2 times larger for Muslims compared to unaffiliated individuals (95 per cent CI: 2.31 – 4.31). R7 in Figure 6 presents the average marginal effects of this model. Thus, our conclusions do not depend on the link function.

Sixth, our data included about 12 per cent nonresponse to the antisemitism items. To address this,

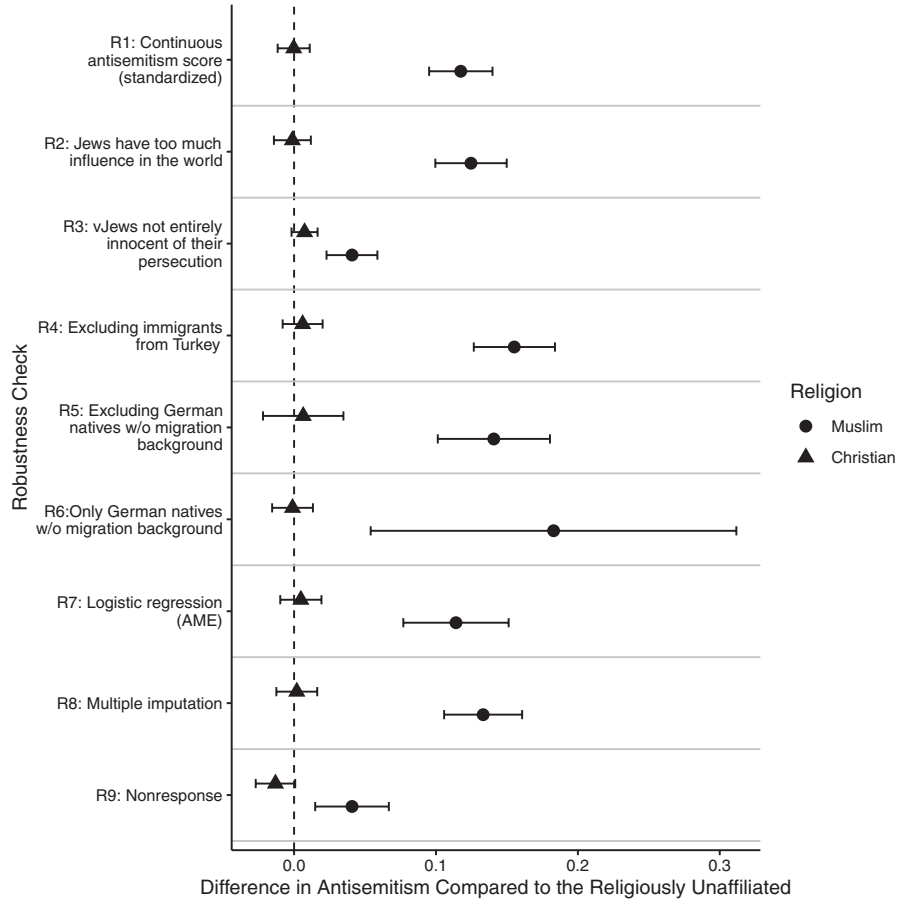

Figure 6 Robustness checks

Note: See Table A2 in the Supplementary Materials for the full models; other religions omitted from the plot for clarity.

we employed the bootstrap expectation–maximization algorithm for multiple imputation, provided by Honaker et al. (2011), instead of using listwise deletion for these variables. This procedure led to highly similar results, as indicated by model R8 (results of all five rounds of imputation are shown in Figure A3 in the Supplementary Materials). Similarly, omitting income, the variable with most nonresponse, from the model does not change any of the conclusions.

Finally, nonresponse could be a subtle indicator of antisemitism, assuming that antisemitic respondents were less inclined to share their opinions with the interviewer. Although this remains speculation, we modelled the probability of not responding to either of the two antisemitism items. Analyzing this probability of nonresponse, R9 reveals that Muslims were 4.1 percentage points more likely to *not* respond to one of these items compared to unaffiliated respondents (95 per cent CI: 0.01 – 0.07).

We do not find a sizable or statistically significant difference between Christians and religiously unaffiliated respondents in any of these models (with the exception that Christians were significantly more likely to respond).

In sum, the robustness checks boost our confidence that the findings we reported in our main analysis were not primarily driven by individual outlier groups, the operationalization of the dependent variable, the link function, or social desirability.

Summary and discussion

Recently, and especially after October 7, 2023, and the related protests in many Western countries, the public vividly debated the issues of antisemitism, particularly among Muslims and immigrants (Wernicke, 2023; Siggelkow, 2024). In contrast to the strong public interest in the topic, there have been only very

few empirical studies based on representative data to examine whether and to what extent immigrants in Germany in general and Muslims in particular are indeed more antisemitic than other residents. We filled this gap utilizing data from a large sample of about 8,500 respondents from the Integrationsbarometer 2020, a representative population survey of people with and without a migration background in Germany, provided by the Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration (SVR) (2021).

Our findings showed that, first, strong levels of classical antisemitism were particularly high among Muslims and immigrants from Turkey and, to a lesser degree, from the Middle Eastern and North African countries. While about 35 per cent of Muslims held strong antisemitic attitudes, this was true for 29 per cent of immigrants from the MENA region and about half of immigrants from Turkey. About half of the differences between Muslims and religiously unaffiliated respondents were explained by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Further analyses revealed significant heterogeneity within these groups: Strong antisemitism was most widespread among very religious Muslims and those with lower education. On the other hand, higher education clearly lowers antisemitism among Muslims, and there was even no significant difference between Muslims who were rather not religious compared to Christians or unaffiliated respondents. This proved that the relationship between religion or immigrant status and antisemitism is by no means deterministic. While antisemitism among Christian immigrants weakened with the length of stay in Germany, we found that the years since migration do not significantly reduce antisemitism among Muslim immigrants.

While these findings largely confirmed our theoretical predictions, there were a few findings we did not expect, and that might inspire future research. First, the fact that antisemitism among Muslim immigrants is not significantly reduced with the time spent in Germany speaks against the idea of acculturation. This might be because adaptation to different political contexts can be difficult or because of resistance to integration (Black, 1987; Sears and Funk, 1999). More research is needed to understand these mechanisms better. Second, the high levels of antisemitism among nonreligious, secular Muslims were unexpected. This suggests that, in addition to religious sources, there are other drivers of antisemitism that future research might want to examine. Third, we did not expect to find the highest levels of antisemitism among Turkish immigrants. One explanation of this could be the impact of religious organizations such as Milli Görüş, which is the largest Islamic organization in Europe and originates from Turkey. The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution indicates that 'anti-Semitic attitudes are clearly evident […] in the statements of […] some Milli Görüş functionaries' (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023). Such rhetoric may contribute to the negative perception of Jews among religious Turks in Germany. Additionally, the strong anti-Israel stance taken by Erdogan could further fuel antisemitic attitudes among Turkish immigrants. Erdogan regularly positioned himself as a defender of the Palestinians, which may appeal to Turkish migrants who support him or consume AKP-aligned Turkish media that often spread antisemitic narratives (Karmon and Barak, 2018; Öneren-Özbek, 2024). Research on European natives has shown that elite rhetoric shapes anti-immigrant attitudes (Schmidt-Catran and Czymara, 2023). Future research may want to test the impact of religious elite rhetoric on hostile attitudes and behaviour toward other outgroups in general, and antisemitism in particular.

Our study is not without limitations. First, we identified three explanations for Muslim antisemitism: religious traditions, the influence of German National-Socialist propaganda, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These mechanisms overlap; for instance, classical antisemitic stereotypes are often invoked in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Schmidt *et al.*, 2011; Schwarz-Friesel, 2019). Unfortunately, the data do not include measures that would allow testing these mechanisms separately. Thus, we cannot theoretically or empirically disentangle their individual effects. Furthermore, our study also did not explore nuances of religiosity (Kollar and Fleischmann, 2022) or religious fundamentalism, key predictors of outgroup attitudes in general (Hunsberger and Jackson, 2005; Koopmans, 2015; Kanol, 2021), and antisemitism in particular (Fischer and Wetzels, 2024). Second, our data predates the escalation of antisemitism observed since October 7, 2023 (Siggelkow, 2024), particularly among Muslims (Wernicke, 2023), suggesting that the levels we report likely underestimate the current situation. Given similar trends in countries like France and the United Kingdom (Taylor, 2023), there is little reason to assume that average levels of antisemitism among Muslims are lower elsewhere in Europe. At the same time, variations among Muslim communities within and across European societies underscore the importance of gathering cross-national data to examine these patterns more thoroughly. Third, while social desirability among native Germans does not affect our finding that strong antisemitism is prevalent among many Muslims, it may exaggerate differences between religious and migrant groups vis-à-vis native Germans. However, our findings remained consistent when excluding native Germans. Future studies may consider methods to directly address social

desirability, such as list experiments. Finally, given the prevalence of antisemitic hate speech on social media (see Schwarz-Friesel, 2019), analysing the role of online networks in spreading such hatred remains crucial, as exemplified by the Decoding Antisemitism project (Becker *et al.*, 2024).

Notwithstanding these limitations, our study systematically examined differences in antisemitic sentiments among Muslim and non-Muslim immigrant and native groups in Germany. Indeed, a religious and centuries-old devaluation of Jews exists in both Christianity and Islam (Arnold *et al.*, 2024). These religious traditions pose a danger to Jews. Our study shows that, whereas antisemitism among Christians, religiously unaffiliated individuals, and natives in Germany should not be neglected (Voigtländer and Voth, 2015; Zick *et al.*, 2023), it is particularly prevalent among Muslims and immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa and Turkey. Like any kind of group hostility, such antisemitic attitudes endanger peaceful coexistence in diverse, pluralistic societies. In this respect, we second Fischer and Wetzels' (2024) conclusion that promoting the visibility of liberal reform movements within the Muslim community and their participation in the public discourse seems relevant. Similarly, national education programs addressing antisemitism critically (Nyhan *et al.*, 2024) and combating antisemitic propaganda in origin countries can play a key role in reducing antisemitism.

Notes

1 The data are available from the Research Data Center Ruhr (https://www.rwi-essen.de/en/research-advice/further/research-data-center-ruhr-fdz).
2 To ensure that listwise deletion did not bias the results, we also used multiple imputation via the bootstrap expectation–maximization algorithm of Honaker and colleagues (2011). Our robustness checks show that this procedure yielded similar results, with mean score deviations below 3.6 per cent.
3 Migrants with less pronounced antisemitic attitudes are more likely to naturalize, but including or excluding this variable does not affect our conclusions.
4 Note that the results are similar also when controlling for the variable indicating whether respondents have parents who were not born in Germany.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

Acknowledgements

We presented prior versions of the study at the 2024 meeting of the American Sociological Association, the GESIS Research Day 2024, and the Fachtagung 'Antisemitismus in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft' at DeZim Berlin. We thank all the discussants there as well as Lisa Trierweiler for proofreading. Eldad Davidov would like to thank the University of Zurich Research Priority Program Social Networks for their support during work on this study.

Data Availability

The data underlying this study are available from the Forschungsdatenzentrum Ruhr (FDZ) of the RWI - Leibniz Institute for Economic Research by permission at https://doi.org/10.7807/SVR_INT.v3. Supplemental materials and code to reproduce the analysis are available on the Open Science Framework at https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/EQNW4.

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