

Debate Pack  
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# Jewish communities and the potential merits of a British Jewish History Month

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# 1

## Background

On Thursday 11 January 2024, there will be debate in the House of Commons Chamber on the topic of “Jewish communities and the potential merits of a British Jewish History Month”. MPs will debate the motion “That this House calls for the creation of a British Jewish History Month.” The debate will be led by Nickie Aiken MP.

The topic for this debate was decided by [the Backbench Business Committee on 28 November 2023](#). The MPs Nickie Aiken, Sally-Ann Hart and Kirsten Oswald made a joint application.

## 1.1

### The Jewish population in the UK

Figures on the Jewish population by religion as well as ethnicity are available from the 2011 and 2021 Censuses. The religion question is voluntary. A person’s religion is self-defined regardless of whether they practise their religion or not. A person’s ethnicity is also self-defined in the census.

#### The Jewish population in England and Wales

2021 Census results showed that the proportion of the population that identified as Jewish (both for their ethnicity and religion) in England and Wales remained unchanged at 0.5% (287,000 in 2021 v 272,000 in 2011).<sup>1</sup>

Over half the Jewish population (53.6%) in England and Wales lives in London also forming 1.7% of population. The second largest Jewish population was in the East of England (15.1%) followed by the North West (12%).

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has provided [analysis of the Jewish population in England and Wales](#) looking at demographics, location, educational attainment, housing status and health among other things.

The analysis noted that most people identified as Jewish through their religion only (76%), though 6% (16,030 out of 287,360 people) did so through their ethnicity only. The proportion of the population that identified as Jewish through their ethnicity only in the 2011 Census was 3%. The proportion in the 2021 Census who identified as Jewish for both their religion and ethnicity was 18% (52,165) compared with 9% in 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS, [Jewish identity, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

The Commons Library has also produced a [dashboard](#) with 2021 Census figures for the religion question by constituency and neighbourhood in England and Wales. It also provides figures from the 2011 Census.

## Jewish population in Northern Ireland

Figures from the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland showed that the number of people identifying as Jewish in the [religion question was 439](#). The ethnicity question [showed that 62 people identified as Jewish](#).

## Jewish population in Scotland

Figures from the 2022 Census in Scotland on religion will not be published until 2024. Figures from the 2011 Census showed that just under 6,000 people identified as Jewish through the religion question only. 812 people identified as Jewish in the ethnic group question of which 219 did not identify as Jewish in the religion question.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Scotland's Census 2021, Ethnic Group and Religion update](#), p13

## 2

## Press articles

The following is a selection of news and media article relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

### [MPs to debate call for the establishment of a British Jewish History Month](#)

Jewish News

2 January 2024

### [Heritage project to research wider stories of Jewish Welsh communities](#)

Jewish News

27 November 2023

### [Turning Over the Stones of England's Lost Jewish Past](#)

New York Times (sub needed)

21 April 2023

### [Jewish heritage centre plan for Norwich as it reflects on its past](#)

BBC

29 June 2023

### [Closure of London's Jewish Museum 'leaves Jews at risk of being stereotyped'](#)

Jewish Chronicle

8 June 2023

[London and Winchester: A tale of two British Jewish communities](#)

Jewish Post

16 September 2023

[900-year-old Ashkenazi DNA 'shines new light on British Jewish history'](#)

Jewish News

30 August 2022

[Life in North London's 'little Israel' home to one of the UK's largest Jewish communities](#)

My London

24 July 2023

[UK reveals £3m boost to protect Jewish community](#)

The National

12 October 2023

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# Parliamentary Material

## Chanukah

14 Dec 2023 | 5973

**Asked by:** Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has taken recent steps with local authorities to help ensure that the Jewish community is able to publicly celebrate Hanukkah.

**Answering member:** Simon Hoare **Department:** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

I hope Jewish people across the country are able to celebrate Chanukah, and that local authorities stand in unity with their Jewish communities so that they can celebrate safely. The Secretary of State recently wished the Jewish community a happy Chanukah and made clear that this Government will do all that it can to uphold the freedom and security of Jewish people here in the UK and beyond.

## Community Relations: Religion

**Asked by:** Julian Knight

12 Sep 2023 | 195515

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to foster inter-faith dialogue and collaboration with other religious communities.

**Answering member:** Andrew Selous **Department:** Church Commissioners

Parish ministry is at the heart of Church of England ministry and mission, including in areas that are religiously diverse.

The 2005 report [\*Presence and Engagement: the church's task in a multi Faith society\*](#) gave special attention to the role of the parish church in areas where there was a high proportion of people from other religions. Following this the [Presence and Engagement](#) programme aims to support and resource the Church of England in its engagement serving all religious communities: 'loving, serving and witnessing to people of all faiths in the name of Christ, and being enriched and renewed in our own faith by doing so'. This vision is put into practice by the Presence & Engagement Programme, the Presence & Engagement Task Group, and a network of Diocesan Inter Faith Advisers.

The Presence and Engagement programme enables clergy and lay people to act with confidence and sensitivity at times of tension across religious boundaries, including times when global politics impacts local relations. Support provided includes theological resources, for example, [\*Gods Unfailing Word\*](#), which was published in 2019 and informs and educates Anglicans about the Christian-Jewish relationship, with the aim of better dialogue and stronger relationships between Christian and Jewish communities. These resources are also used in ongoing work with theological colleges to assist in the training of new priests.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is Patron of both the [\*Council of Christians and Jews\*](#) (CCJ) and the [\*Christian Muslim Forum\*](#). Both organisations are actively working at national and grassroots levels to boost dialogue, understanding and collaboration between different religions.

[\*In Good Faith\*](#) is a national initiative co-sponsored by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi, which has been promoting dialogue and collaboration between Anglican priests and Orthodox rabbis since 2016.

The Church of England has a network of Inter Faith Advisers in most regions across England, who work to model, encourage and resource the development of positive relationships between different religious communities locally. Examples include building relationships through Church/Mosque Twinning partnerships, or collaborating on local foodbanks, as well as putting on educational programmes for clergy and lay people in the diocese. Two notable examples are:

- The [\*St Philips Centre\*](#) in Leicester. A unique initiative that for over a decade has been working within the Christian community and across wider society, enabling ‘communities and individuals to encounter one another in meaningful ways, to build understanding and trust’. It is leading efforts across the region to ensure religion and belief are harnessed for the good of all.
- [\*FNC in Birmingham\*](#) helps churches in their engagement with people of other faiths, whether through mission, evangelism, dialogue or social action, and is part of [\*The Church of England’s Presence and Engagement Programme\*](#). The [\*Birmingham Conversations\*](#) are an example of an FNC initiative which creates safe space for people of all faiths and none to discuss issues of faith and public life.

The Coronation of King Charles III included participation by other faith representatives for the first time, a very public affirmation of the national role of the Church of England in serving all religious communities.

[\*nJews: Iran\*](#)

**Asked by:** Christian Wakeford

14 Mar 2023 | 161448

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral statement on Security Threat to UK-Based Journalists of 20 February 2023, Official Report columns 49-51, what steps she is taking to help protect the safety of the Jewish community.

**Answering member:** Tom Tugendhat | **Department:** Home Office

We take any threat to the UK-based Jewish community extremely seriously. As the Security Minister said in this House on 20 February, we are taking significant steps to address the activities of the Iranian regime and its operatives in the UK – whether those activities are threatening the Jewish community or any individuals or organisations in this country. However, the community should be alert but not alarmed.

In April 2022, the then Home Secretary announced continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for 2022-23 (for £14 million) which provides protective security measures at various Jewish community sites. In November we circulated protective security messaging to charity Community Security Trust to help keep the Jewish community aware of the threat posed by Iran, and signpost towards the government's online security advice hubs.

More broadly, we take a proactive approach to countering the most acute forms of state-directed physical threats to individuals in the UK. Working through our police forces – both national and regional – as well as the agencies that support them, we seek to identify those communities and individuals who may be most at risk, and to provide them with the right protective security guidance, and other measures where appropriate.

### [National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Lee of Trafford

24 Mar 2023 | HL6409

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will list the bodies who are supportive of the planned siting of the Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens.

**Answering member:** Baroness Scott of Bybrook | **Department:** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities



The proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre at Victoria Tower Gardens has cross-party support and the endorsement of every living Prime Minister.

As an indication of wider support 31 oral representations were made in favour of the proposal at the 2020 public inquiry, including from Holocaust survivors and their families, Rt Hon David Cameron, Rt Hon Gordon Brown, the Chief Rabbi, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Archbishop of Canterbury, academics, educators and others. A full list of witnesses is available from the Planning Inspector's Report on the Gov.UK website. More than 3,000 individuals expressed their support through the local community engagement exercise run by the Big Ideas community interest company.

### Jews

**Asked by:** Ruth Jones

07 Mar 2023 | 153983

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has taken recent steps with the Welsh Government to raise awareness of the contribution made by the Jewish community in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

**Answering member:** Dehenna Davison | **Department:** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Faith and Belief is a devolved matter. This department engages regularly with the Welsh Government on a variety of matters.

Nationally, we recognise the contribution our faith and belief groups make. We remain committed to celebrating and promoting their contribution across the whole of the UK.

Officials engage regularly with the Church Urban Fund.

### Judaism: Festivals and Special Occasions

**Asked by:** Rachael Maskell

31 Jan 2022 | 109283

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to ensure that local authorities seek to celebrate and

commemorate the history, recent and historical, of Judaism within their areas.

**Answering member:** Eddie Hughes **Department:** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

I would encourage all local authorities to celebrate and commemorate Judaism and to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by the Jewish community in their area.

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) recently launched a new resource to enrich teaching and learning about the Holocaust. The new website, [WWW.UKHOLocaustMAP.ORG.UK](http://WWW.UKHOLocaustMAP.ORG.UK) will help communities across the country learn about their local connections to the Holocaust, Jewish refugees and British responses to Nazism.

### Northern Ireland: Jewish Community

**Asked by:** Lord Dodds of Duncairn

14 July 2021 | House of Lords | 813 cc1830-1834

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the concerns expressed by the Jewish community in Northern Ireland about its future as a result of the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

### Holocaust Memorial Bill

A Bill to make provision for expenditure by the Secretary of State and the removal of restrictions in respect of certain land for or in connection with the construction of a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

The Bill has had its Commons First Reading and Second Reading. A date for the Select Committee Stage is yet to be announced.

The [Select Committee on the Holocaust Memorial Bill](#) has been set up to oversee the Bill's petitioning period. The Committee provides individuals and bodies directly and specially affected by the Bill with the opportunity to object to the Bill's specific provisions and to seek its amendment.

### Speaker's Statement

15 Dec 2022 | 724 cc1205-6

Statement on the 80th anniversary of the reading to the House of a Declaration issued by the wartime allies condemning the treatment of the Jewish people by the Nazis in occupied Europe. The House observed a minute's silence.

### 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht and antisemitism

EDM 33 (session 2023-24)

09 Nov 2023

Patricia Gibson

That this House commemorates the victims of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), a destructive campaign of violence against Jewish people, on its 85th anniversary; understands that, throughout the night of 9-10 November 1938, the Nazi Party targeted synagogues and Jewish prayer rooms across Germany, with over 1,400 burned or badly damaged, 7,500 Jewish businesses across Germany and Austria vandalised, and at least 91 people murdered, with a further 30,000 Jewish men being arrested and taken to concentration camps, where many more died; further understands that this was followed by hundreds of suicides in the Jewish community and mass emigration; recognises the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany's relaunched campaign, ItStartedWithWords, highlighting that the Holocaust did not start with camps, ghettos and deportations, but with words of hate; understands this campaign's importance in view of the growing prevalence of Holocaust denial and hate speech towards Jews; notes concerning reports that more than 1,000 anti-Semitic incidents have taken place across the UK since Hama's terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023, the highest 28-day total recorded since the Community Security Trust began tracking attacks in 1984, and a 537% increase over the same period in 2022; recognises the resilience of Holocaust survivors who continue to highlight the barbaric actions that took place during the Second World War, particularly following the unacceptable rise in antisemitism recently; and continues to remember the 6 million Jewish people and others targeted due to ethnicity, religion, political beliefs and sexual orientation who were victims of Nazi persecution.

### Anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street

EDM 964 (session 2019-21)

05 Oct 2020

Apsana Begum

That this House marks the 84th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street on 4 October when in 1936, Oswald Mosley and members of the British Union of Fascists were blocked from marching through East London by the Jewish community, trade unionists, socialists and others; recognises the continuing importance of the Battle of Cable Street in inspiring communities uniting together in solidarity in the fight against the far right; pays tribute to the rich cultural and political history of the Jewish community in East London; and reaffirms its commitment to the fight against racism, fascism and antisemitism.

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# Further reading

### [Board of Deputies of British Jews](#)

The Board of Deputies of British Jews is the voice of the British Jewish Community, the first port of call for the Government, the media and others seeking to understand Jewish community interests and concerns.

The Board of Deputies is the only democratically elected, cross-communal, representative body in the Jewish community. It comprises over 300 deputies directly elected by the synagogues and communal organisations they represent, from congregations to youth movements, and social welfare charities to regional councils.

### [The UK Holocaust Map](#)

The UK Holocaust Map is an initiative of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) and the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities.

### [UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation](#)

The United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial is the UK's national establishment for remembrance of the Holocaust. It is dedicated to the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust and all other victims of the Nazis and their collaborators.

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