PRIMARY REVIEW 1: R. Brym, *A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario's K-12 Schools*, 2025

Overall assessment: The manuscript suffers from opaque methodology with substantial limitations that remain largely unacknowledged by the author, leading to fundamental errors in the study's conclusions. Most notably, the study treats non-witness reporting of antisemitism as objective fact and makes authoritative statements based on non-probability statistics—exemplified by the fact that 9 out of 10 of the studies "key findings" rely on the authoritative presentation of precise statistical percentages. As such, the conclusions should be treated as suspect, including the assertion that Jewish students in Ontario's public K–12 school system are "frequently ostracized, isolated, and assaulted" (R. Brym, Antisemitism in Ontario's K-12 System, pg. 12) and that more Jewish parents would move their children to private schools if public funding were available. The unarticulated role of various marketing agencies, Israel-affiliated Jewish organizations and Debora Lyons, former Canadian ambassador to Israel, raises concerns about methodological transparency and whether the evidentiary rigour expected of government-supported research has been met.

In sum, generalized claims about the broader Jewish population using unrepresentative survey data are inaccurate and constitute misleading research that can contribute to dangerous fearmongering, making Jewish Canadians feel less safe and welcome in public schools without reliable evidence.

Comment 1: Technical note on various versions of this study

1.1 Multiple versions and their differences

- Two versions of this work were found with nearly the same publication date in mid July 2025. It is clear that each version was derived from the same survey, but some differences between them are notable.
    - Version 1: "Antisemitism in Ontario's K-12 Schools" is hosted on the Government of Canada webpage under "Multiculturalism>Canada, the Holocaust and combatting antisemitism>Antisemitism in Canada https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/canada-holocaust/antisemitism/antisemitism-ontario-schools.html#a8a (2025-07-15)
    - Version 2: "A Survey on Antisemitism in Ontario's K–12 Schools" in Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes, vol. 41, 2025,

https://cjs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cjs/article/view/40434/36683 (2025-07-14).

- There is a lack of clarity regarding the involvement and roles of external organizations in survey administration.
    - Version 2 identifies Jason Zweig (Canadian Viewpoint) as the contact responsible for managing the survey. While this information is missing from Version 1, neither version outlines Canadian Viewpoint's specific roles (or the roles of other Marketing firms that appeared to have participated).
    - 23 other individuals are acknowledged in Version 2 for contributing to the work "in many ways large and small". These details should be presented in the methodology section along with what those roles were. For example, representatives from two additional market research firms (Goldfarb Intelligence Marketing and Magnet Strategy Group) are included, but their specific contributions are not described, making it unclear whether they participated in survey design, recruitment, administration, data analysis, or other aspects of the study.

1.2 Institutional sponsorship and potential conflicts of interest

- Because neither the specific contributions of these individuals and organizations nor any potential competing interests are disclosed, readers cannot assess the extent to which they influenced study design, participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or preparation of the manuscript.
- Institutional sponsorship, funding sources, commissioning arrangements, contractual relationships, organizational affiliations, institutional mandates or commissioning objectives, and potential conflicts of interest should be explicitly disclosed.
- Both versions indicate the involvement of the Office of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism. During the study period, the Office was headed by Debora Lyons (October 2023–August 2025), former Canadian ambassador to Israel (2016–2020). Apparent bias is revealed in Version 2, where it is revealingly stated that Ms. Lyons "...understood the need for a study like this..." (Version 2, pg 14). The role of Ms. Lyons and her directorate should be considered as a potential source of political bias, motivating this work.

- Many of the 23 previously mentioned contributors are also affiliated with organizations that actively engage in pro-Israel public advocacy. These include: the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and several of its federated chapters, Hillel, and the Jewish National Fund (JNF). This again raises further questions about bias about, and political motivation to, specifically in characterizing criticism of Israel as antisemitic.

Comment 2: Lack of methodological transparency undermines assessments and limits reproducibility.

2.1 Sampling strategy and representativeness

- Recruitment exclusively through some "synagogues or other Jewish organizations" systematically excludes less-affiliated Jewish families. Indeed, the manuscript itself acknowledges that respondents are substantially more connected to organized Jewish life than Ontario Jews generally.
- The names and response rates among the 257 contacted organizations are not reported. Without information on how many organizations distributed the survey, how many families received it, or how many chose not to participate, the extent of nonresponse bias cannot be assessed. Neither can readers determine how responses were distributed among the partner organizations, and if responses were overrepresented from a small number of organizations.
- The sample overrepresents Ottawa and underrepresents Toronto.
- Self-selection bias is likely, particularly because individuals experiencing severe incidents may have greater motivation to respond. Yet the only contemplation about the potential effects on survey response rates are that fear of participating in an anonymous survey may have depressed participation.
- In violation of textbook rules on sampling practice, the author repeatedly generalizes from this non-probability sample to broader claims about Ontario schools. In Version 1, this is characterized by:

> "The survey is based on a non-probability sample of Jewish adults in Ontario that roughly reflects the characteristics of the approximately two-thirds of Ontario's Jewish adults who are relatively well connected to the province's Jewish community insofar as they are

members of a synagogue or other Jewish organization," (Version 2, pg. 26).

But there is no justification to know even "roughly" if this is true. At least in Version 1, the author openly admits that this assertion is merely his "belief," (pg. 26). This pivot to his subjective opinion is not quantitatively justified and further demonstrates that conclusions are based on core population estimates that are built on the author's own subjectivity and confirmation biases. As examples, 9 out of 10 "Key findings" (Version 2, pg. 15) are based on the authoritative use of statistics, inappropriate to a non-probability study.

- These foundational rules are laid out explicitly in Chapter 6 ("The Logic of Sampling") in Earl Babbie's standard methodological text, *Fundamentals of Social Research* (5th edition), which is a leading textbook used for teaching methods including in the author's home department at the University of Toronto. Babbie underscores that selecting available subjects from pre-existing organizational lists introduces severe self-selection bias. This renders any broader statistical generalizations or population estimates mathematically invalid, as a non-probability study does not permit the calculation of a margin of error under standard social science inquiry rules. That the author should know this and at the same time repeatedly violates these basic tenets is concerning.

2.2 Opaque interview procedures and recruitment materials

- Although a list of 257 Ontario Jewish organizations and their liaisons was compiled and used for recruitment, neither the list nor the recruitment materials are included.
- The manuscript describes multiple rounds of contact (emails, reminders, and telephone calls) but provides no details regarding their content. Greater transparency regarding researcher-participant-liaison interactions is required to improve reproducibility and allow readers to assess potential sources of bias.
- The report states that 14 responses were obtained through 35-minute "semi-structured" interviews. However, no transcripts, question formats, interview protocols or selection criteria are provided. As a result, it is impossible to assess the extent to which author or market research agency bias may have influenced the findings, or whether participants were volunteers, selected by the author,

nominated by participating organizations, recruited because of particular experiences, or interviewed in any official representative capacity.

2.3 Bias in contextual framing

- Inappropriately framing the motivation and scope of the study, the author constructs a highly subjective contextual picture that reveals a profound confirmation bias long before introducing his primary survey data: “one cannot reasonably doubt that antisemitism is a growing problem and that incidents are typically undercounted, often ignored, and sometimes abetted by teachers, principals, and school board trustees” (Version 2, pg. 26). However, a strict evaluation of the text in the preceding sections demonstrates that this severe indictment is completely unsupported by any non-allegorical or quantitative evidence. Additionally, the author completely ignores the critical socioeconomic power dynamics and community networks that dictate the generation of reporting data in the first place as well as their differential impact (Lareau, 2011; Horvat et al., 2003).
- Despite appearing in a peer-reviewed journal, Version 2 employs more allegories, first-person references, editorialization, and rhetorical and biased terminology (e.g., "indoctrinated", “Jewish Nakba”), or one-sided terminology (e.g., “vigorous Israeli peace movement,” for example, without any mention of Palestinian support for peace). This reliance on rhetoric-heavy language violates baseline textbook standards of scientific objectivity and value-neutral inquiry.

2.4 Circular definitions and classification defects

- The definition and classification of antisemitic incidents as incidents (“that parents and their children consider antisemitic”, Version 2, pg 15) represent a critical methodological weakness due to the absence of independent validation, consideration of alternative interpretations of reported events, or any distinction between verified incidents and subjective perceptions. Accepting this definition of antisemitism without the considerations above reduces it to a circular definition, one that inherently assumes the conclusion that this study is meant to objectively test.
- Because the veracity of reported antisemitic incidents is not independently evaluated all such incidents should be referred to as “perceived antisemitic incidents by proxy reporters”. This flaw introduces severe validity issues, particularly given that

definitions of contemporary slurs and symbols are highly contested. For example, prominent civil rights and human rights monitoring organizations have documented numerous instances where school administrations and parent advocacy groups aggressively labeled the display of Palestinian cultural symbols, such as the traditional keffiyeh, as acts of antisemitic aggression, even though international bodies explicitly categorize them as legitimate, protected markers of cultural identity and political speech (Amnesty International, 2025; BCCLA, 2025; Just Peace Advocates, 2025). By uncritically accepting a proxy reporter's subjective perception as a hard, objective count of structural hate, the author violates baseline textbook standards of measurement quality and data validity.

2.5 Reliance on parental proxy reports

- Another fundamental flaw is the complete lack of discussion regarding the gap between surveying parents and measuring the actual, firsthand school experiences of their children. The study relies on proxy reports from parents, even though over 70% of incidents involve students in Grades 7–12 who may have reasonably been able to provide first-hand accounts of their experiences.
- The only thought that the author has on this point is that "[Parents reported that s]ome children insisted that their parents not report an antisemitic incident, fearing it would become public, and they would consequently become the target of increased harassment or bullying," (i.e., Version 2, page 45) but this narrative focus bypasses the statistical reality of proxy data. This framework inherently leaves the door wide open for adult editorialization, converting firsthand peer-to-peer dynamics into second-hand interpretations shaped by parental biases.

2.6 Omission of Key Institutional Stakeholders

- The study relies exclusively on reports from parents recruited through Jewish organizations, to discuss incidents involving their children which they "consider antisemitic". However, the author makes no effort to cross-reference or determine the objective veracity of these parental proxy reports; inputs from students, teachers, teachers' unions, principals, school boards/trustees, disciplinary records are missing entirely. By treating unverified, second-hand anecdotes and

non-probability statistics as statistical fact, the study lacks any empirical baseline, further deepening the purely subjective nature of the final report.

2.7 Other limitations of the survey design

- Closed-ended survey design was used for all quantitative aspects of this survey. This study tool has inherent limitations, including but not limited to researcher-imposed framing effects, constrained response categories. Additionally, subjective interpretation of labels by the respondents may occur. These limitations are particularly critical in a politically charged research area and should have been explicitly incorporated into the interpretation of results rather than presented as absolute metrics
- The study reported 781 antisemitic incidents through 599 surveys responses, but it remains unclear how a survey response names more than one incident.

2.8 Treatment of open-ended responses

- There is a single mention of an "open-ended" question under 5.1 Victim Reactions ("Some 221 parents elected to add details in their own words in the open-ended part of the question."). The report also refers elsewhere to 315 "other" responses regarding what made incidents antisemitic and 179 additional "other" occurrences describing what happened during incidents. However, only under 5.2 School Reactions does a table explicitly include an "other" option ("Miscellaneous other"), which accounts for 14.6% of responses within the reported total of 100% (Version 2, Table 8 pg. 46).
- In contrast, the response categories shown in all other tabulated answer responses already sum to 100%, leaving it unclear how an "other" option could have existed for those questions, whether or why such responses may have been excluded from the tabulated percentages, or how they were incorporated into the analysis.
- Beyond the lack of clarity regarding open-ended responses themselves, no explanation is given regarding (i) which survey items included open-ended or "other" options, (ii) how many respondents used them across the questionnaire, or (iii) how those responses informed the report. If these comments were intended only to provide illustrative examples, that should be stated explicitly. If they

contributed to the study's quantitative findings, the report should describe how they were reviewed and summarized. In the absence of any such explanation, the incorporation of qualitative material is neither transparent nor reproducible, and the examples presented in the report necessarily reflect undocumented subjective choices by the researcher.

2.9 Integration of qualitative and quantitative responses

- The report combines quantitative tabulations with interview material, open-ended responses, and illustrative examples without explaining how these different forms of evidence were integrated into the analysis. For example, the relative weight of open-ended responses vs. survey responses is not explained.
- Without a transparent mixed-methods integration framework, this practice allows the researcher to selectively use qualitative anecdotes to artificially substantiate non-probability-based statistical tables, which seems to have been employed extensively in Version 2.

Comment 3: Unsubstantiated extrapolation, contextual bias, and lack of evidentiary support

3.1 Population-level extrapolations

- In Version 1 of this paper, the researcher "estimates" that the incidents were experienced by "at least 10% of Ontario's roughly 30,000 Jewish school-age children". This is an inappropriate detail to add; The basis for this estimate is insufficiently explained, the calculations supporting it are missing.

3.2 Lack of evidentiary support for claims regarding institutional responsibility

- The claim that "Nearly one in six antisemitic incidents were initiated or approved by a teacher or involve a school-sanctioned activity" is based on incidents unverified proxy definitions as detailed in Section 2.3. As a result of the lack of triangulation or investigation of alternative perspectives the analysis uncritically accepts proxy respondents' characterizations at face value, undermining the study's conclusions about institutional negligence.

- The term "reported" is used throughout the manuscript to refer to incidents reported to the researcher through the survey, but there is no explicit statement that this is the same number of incidents reported to school officials. This distinction is particularly important in statements such as: "It categorizes 781 responses to the question: 'What did your child's school do about the incident?... In 49 percent of cases, school authorities did not investigate the reported incident.'" The wording suggests that all 781 incidents had been reported to the school, yet this appears doubtful, as the figure 781 is the total number of survey-reported incidents and the manuscript does not explicitly state that all such incidents were brought to the attention of school authorities. Indeed, other passages imply that some incidents were never reported to schools, for example: "...some parents believe that reporting the incident would fail to elicit meaningful action from the school...". In the current context, the work can be interpreted as overstating the negligence by school authorities.

3.3 Failure to achieve stated research objectives

- Severe methodological deficiencies prevent the manuscript from meeting its stated objective of moving beyond "anecdotal reports" to objectively examine "the prevalence, nature, and impact of antisemitic incidents" (Version 1, Executive Summary).
- To meet these goals, the study would have required
    i. direct student accounts, especially given that most (>70%) reported incidents involve children in Grades 7–12;
    ii. stakeholder corroboration, engaging teachers, principals, and school officials, to contextualize or corroborate reported events;
    iii. objective verification, explicitly distinguishing between respondents' subjective perception and an independently validated incident;
    iv. longitudinal trend baselines or reliable external secondary sources to substantiate claims regarding an increase in prevalence over time; and
    v. methodological transparency, consistently carrying forward data limitations when interpreting findings and assigning institutional responsibility.
- Without such measures, the survey primarily documents parental perceptions and experiences rather than establishing the prevalence and characteristics of verified antisemitic incidents across the school system. Therefore, it does not achieve its

stated objective of moving beyond anecdotal reports. Rather, it masks them behind non-probability statistics.

3.4 No acknowledgement of methodological limitations carried into interpretation

- Inclusion of measurement uncertainties, statistical significance and methodological constraints should have tempered the strength and scope of the claims that are advanced throughout the paper. Given the significant methodological limitations in this work, generalizations to the population are misleading and inaccurate.
- The author does not account for inherent methodological limitations of closed-ended questions, the use of proxy reports, subjective definitions, etc. into their own analysis and conclusions.
- Statistics are presented as definitive facts, meaning that the author has made the fatal error in overstating what their data can support.

Comment 4: References are incomplete, indicating a lack of seriousness and attention to detail expected from peer reviewed and government commissioned study:

- As outlined above, the work lacks a critical literature evaluation of its own assumptions regarding contrasting interpretations or frameworks, which are normally considered in a balanced treatment of complex sociological issues.
- Version 1 citations are much fewer in number and contain approximately 66% self-citations among the six cited research studies.
- The author and journal's expected commitment to rigour are further undermined by frequent typographical errors or inconsistencies in Version 2 (references 4, 5, 7, 25, 26, 34, 40, 43, 47, 52, 53, and 54), as well containing several identical (repeated) citations, accounting for more than 20% of references in Version 2.