UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

Knowledge and understandings of the Holocaust

Rebecca Hale, Andy Pearce, Luisa Nienhaus and Eleni Karayianni

Research Digest 2 Two decades of research informing classroom practice in Holocaust education

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Published in Great Britain in 2026

UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

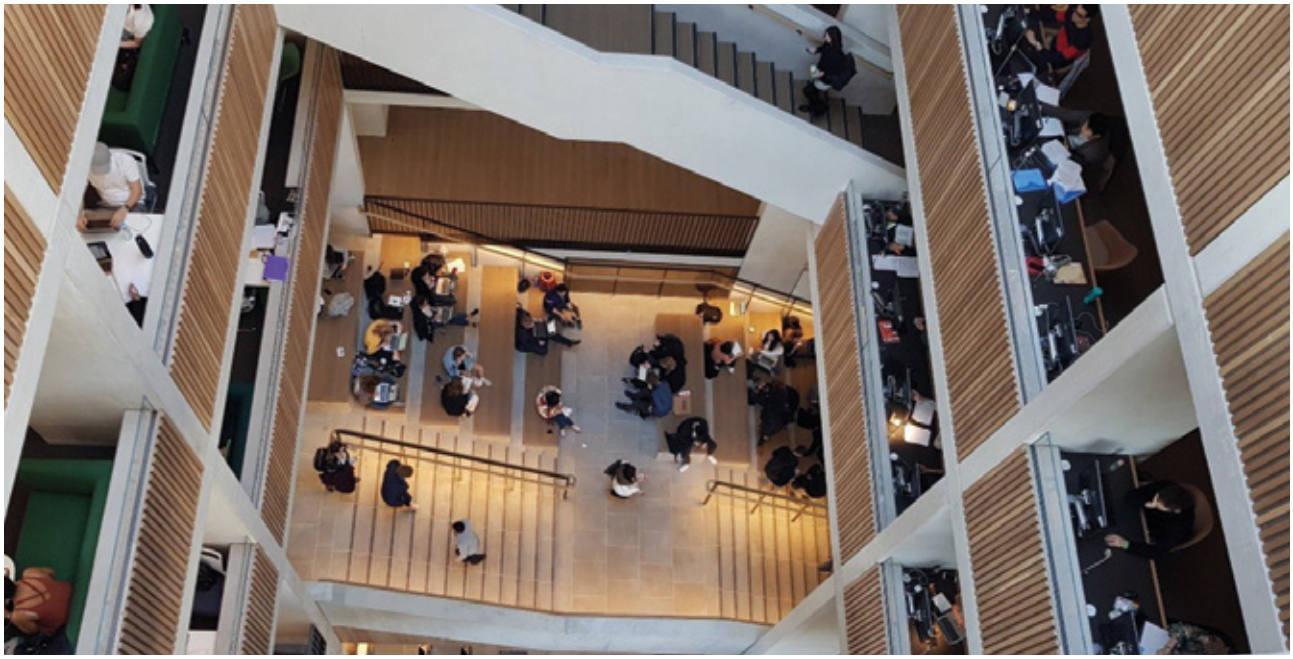
UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AL
United Kingdom

British Library
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A CIP record is available
in the British Library

ISBN 978-1-7392422-4-4

Cover image: Photograph by by Alejandro Lopex, UCL Media Services, 2024



About the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

The UCL Centre for Holocaust Education is the world leader for research-informed teacher and student education. Its high impact programmes deepen knowledge and understanding of the genocide and powerfully explore its significance.

The Centre operates at the frontier of Holocaust education nationally and internationally, inspiring and empowering thousands of teachers every year. Teachers who engage with our landmark research, our innovative professional development courses, and our cutting-edge materials, acquire the confidence and expertise to tackle this complex history within the classroom. In turn, the Centre helps millions of students develop the knowledge and skills required to understand the Holocaust and confront the related and continued threats posed by extremism, prejudice and antisemitism today.

Acknowledgments

We are very grateful to the students and teachers who participated in this research. This includes those who took part in the Centre's most recent study in 2024/25, and all those who have contributed their time and insights to our research since 2008. It is only through working with schools that we can understand the constantly evolving considerations and challenges they encounter when teaching and learning about the Holocaust. This collaborative engagement enables us to develop professional development programmes and resources that are responsive to classroom needs. Senior leaders, teachers and students are fundamental to the work we do, and we continue to be extremely appreciative of them for supporting us in so many ways.

Special thanks are due to Pears Foundation for its long-term funding and support. We are particularly grateful to Sir Trevor Pears CMG and Amy Braier for their guidance and insights which enrich our work and enhance the impact of our programmes on teaching practice and students' knowledge. In addition, we are grateful to the Department for Education for also continuing to robustly support the work of the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education.

Photographs by Olivia Hemingway, 2011.

Introduction

This document is a digest of data gathered from four groundbreaking research studies conducted by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education between 2008 and 2025. It draws on research with teachers and students in England, giving combined participant totals of over 3,000 teachers and 12,000 students. Cumulatively, these national studies represent the most sustained, in-depth empirical research conducted anywhere in the world into how the Holocaust is taught and learnt about in schools.

This digest, the second in a series, is thematically focused on the knowledge and understandings that students and teachers have of the Holocaust. The Centre's research has revealed a host of challenges that teachers and students encounter when teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Foremost among these is uncertainty over just what 'the Holocaust' was: what happened, to whom, where, when, and why. This research digest grapples with some of these issues. It should be read in conjunction with the Centre's first research digest, 'Understanding attitudes, behaviours and actions during the Holocaust' (Hale et al., 2025).

When examining knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, it is necessary to strike a delicate balance. On the one hand, it is unrealistic to expect either teachers or students to possess encyclopaedic historical knowledge and understanding. All periods of history are complex and complicated, with depths and nuances that are, commonly, in a continuing state of being shaped by ongoing research and scholarship. That means knowledge and understanding is not static and cannot ever be complete. In the case of the Holocaust – which is a history that traverses many years, many square miles of space, involved millions of people and was carried out in a broader context of global warfare – this is particularly true. These realities mean we have to taper what we expect teachers and students to know. But that does not mean we should dispense with expectations altogether. On the other hand, then, it is reasonable and realistic to expect that teachers and students have, or will develop over a period of study, a body of knowledge and understanding that is rigorous and robust. Indeed, having this core substantive knowledge and conceptual understanding is in fact essential, for it enables them to provide legitimate and historically accurate answers to the foundational questions of why, what, who, where, when and how. Having this ability is critical for teachers and students, as it allows them to then access many of the moral, ethical, and philosophical questions raised by the Holocaust. Similarly, a secure body of knowledge and understanding helps teachers and students to recognise instances of mis- and disinformation about the Holocaust, as well as identify occurrences of denial and distortion.

All of which throws the findings presented in this digest into ever sharper relief. As is demonstrated in the pages that follow, whilst there have been some positive developments in terms of teachers and students' knowledge and understandings of the Holocaust in recent years, several significant problems and troubling trends remain clearly in evidence. And these findings are made but more acute by the broader context. More than 80 years on from the end of the Second World War, teaching and learning about the Holocaust is taking place at a time of dramatic societal change and upheaval, unprecedented technological revolution, global historical events, and acute anxiety. Understandings of what the past is, what happened there, and what it can (and should) be used for, are increasingly contested. Meanwhile, how the past is known about has come under growing assault by the growth of misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theory. A key element in these developments has been the acceleration of students' encounters with Holocaust-related content online. This is very much a live issue, but some insights into this matter have been collated through the Centre's most recent research study and are duly presented in this digest.

Ongoing challenges in Holocaust education

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust is a challenging enterprise. Partly this is because the history of the Holocaust is complex; in terms of what happened, where, when, how, and involving whom. Partly it is because of the essential nature of what actually took place; in the sense of the brutality of what occurred, what was destroyed, its scale, its scope, and the implications of these realities. These specific aspects of the Holocaust make teaching and learning about it challenging. But the challenges of Holocaust education also come from the reality that any educational activity is complicated and not straightforward.

Across the Centre's research studies this intersection between specific and generic challenges has been in evidence. For instance, the Centre's 2009 study of teaching trends, perspectives and practices (see Figure 1) found generic issues, such as pressures on curriculum time, had direct impact upon teachers' approaches to curriculum content (Pettigrew et al., 2009). Then, the Centre's 2016 study (Foster et al., 2016) into what students know and understand about the Holocaust (see Figure 1), documented how a sector-wide shift towards a condensed Key Stage 3 further compounded this particular challenge at the same time as raising new issues related to age appropriateness, emotional maturity, and levels of contextual knowledge about the historical period of the Holocaust. These issues were further highlighted by teachers in the Centre's 2023 study (Hale et al., 2023), with insufficient curriculum time one of the most frequently cited challenges they encountered. Almost half of teachers reported difficulties associated with teaching the Holocaust to students in Years 7 and 8 as part of a two-year Key Stage 3 programme.

The Centre's research studies have also illuminated particular issues and challenges that have emerged out of established practices and approaches. For example, the Centre's 2016 exploration of what 10,000 students knew and understood about the Holocaust revealed that the majority of young people possessed troubling knowledge gaps, held problematic understandings, and frequently adopted misconceptions which were prevalent within wider society. Whilst this situation was the product of a confluence of factors, an important consideration was the prevalence of the belief that the aim of teaching about the Holocaust was to combat intolerance, and to 'learn' its 'lessons'. In both the 2009 and 2023 studies, we found broad consensus among teachers over these aims, whilst the idea of there being moral and civic 'lessons' of the Holocaust has much currency in British culture. Importantly, however, the research suggested that the pursuit of these aims translates into less comprehensive study of the historical details of the Holocaust in the classroom.

In accounting for these trends, it is necessary to acknowledge the challenges that have arisen from the way that the Holocaust is framed within the National Curriculum in England. Since 1991 the Holocaust has been a named topic within the National Curriculum for history. This has meant it is regarded as statutory, compulsory content, that all school students should learn about. However, at no point over the past 35 years has there been clarity within the curriculum about what content should be covered, how it should be taught, or even what the purpose of teaching and learning about the Holocaust actually is. Whilst some might see this as a welcome absence of prescription, the reality is many teachers want more guidance and support on how they should teach a subject that is inherently challenging. This truth is further compounded by the Centre's research in 2023 showing that not all teachers tasked with delivering Holocaust education, had received specialist professional development; either in training or in service.

The long-standing presence of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum has undoubtedly made a positive contribution to increasing general knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust within British society. Equally, the nature of that knowledge and the condition of that understanding is at least in part a reflection of the type of Holocaust education the past generation of school students have received. With that in mind, an emerging challenge to ensuring teaching and learning about the Holocaust is of a consistently high quality in all schools, has been broader trends and pressures in the education sector. In terms of the former, the acceleration of academisation in England has created a situation where the majority of schools are not, in fact, currently required to teach about the Holocaust – by virtue of them being part of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) or Single-Academy Trusts (SATs), which do not have to follow the National Curriculum.

As to the latter, an intensification of recruitment and retention issues in schools, heightened workload, the availability of staff to cover lessons, and depleting school finances have all combined to create major obstacles for teacher professional development. Thus, the ability and opportunity for teachers to receive evidence-based training in Holocaust education has been curtailed.

In addition to these longstanding barriers to effective Holocaust education, the long-term impact of the pandemic continues, including students making slower progress than expected, experiencing mental health issues and struggling with socio-emotional skills (Major et al., 2024; SIMS, 2023). Moreover, recent research has found 13–14-year-olds spend an average of four hours online, with 40.0% of this time spent on Snapchat, 13.0% spent on YouTube and 9.0% spent on TikTok (Ofcom, 2025). With so much time spent on these platforms, students are undoubtedly exposed to misinformation and disinformation. Students may encounter common misconceptions about the historical details of the Holocaust, including some of the misconceptions discussed in this digest. Even more worrying, is the potential for them to come across antisemitic content, Holocaust denial and distortion (see UNESCO, 2022).

In light of all these realities, the scale and nature of the challenges that teachers encounter when teaching about the Holocaust is stark. Collectively, these issues point towards the need to urgently reflect on Holocaust education today and what has and has not changed in the last two decades. This needs to happen from all quarters, including schools, academia, policymakers and Holocaust education organisations. These issues are not insurmountable; rather, they should galvanise all parties to reimagine Holocaust education in response to these issues. Importantly, action must begin from the starting point of being research-informed about what is taking place in classrooms across the country; exploring the evidence provided by the teachers who are doing the teaching, and the students who are learning about this subject.

Photograph by Alejandro Lopex, UCL Media Services, 2024

National studies by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

The UCL Centre for Holocaust Education has conducted four national studies. Two studies – published in 2009 and 2023 – looked at teaching practice. Two studies –published in 2016 and 2025 – looked at students' knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust and their experiences of learning about this history.

Teaching about the Holocaust in English secondary schools: An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice

Pettigrew et al., (2009)

holocausteducation.org.uk

- This was a mixed-methods study to explore teaching aims, content, pedagogy, assessment, curriculum planning, teachers' knowledge and understanding, and their training experiences.
- An online survey was completed by 2,108 teachers across England.
- 1,038 of the teachers had taught about the Holocaust in the three years before completing the survey – it is the data from this subsample that are used in this digest.
- Within this subsample, 57% of teachers principally taught about the Holocaust in history, and 27% in religious education.
- Group interviews with 68 teachers in 24 schools were also conducted.

What do students know and understand about the Holocaust? Evidence from English secondary schools

Foster et al., (2016)

holocausteducation.org.uk

- This was a mixed-methods study to explore students' historical knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust, where and when they had learnt about the Holocaust in school, where they encountered the Holocaust outside school (e.g. in films) and students' attitudes about learning about the Holocaust.
- Over 900 secondary school students took part in pilot studies which informed the study design and survey questions.
- A survey was completed by 7,952 secondary school students from 74 schools across England.
- Additionally, 49 focus groups with a total of 244 students from 17 schools were conducted. Focus groups were organised by themes, including 24 groups focused solely on knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust.
- Across the study a mix of students who had and had not learnt about the Holocaust in school took part.

Figure 1 Summary of national studies conducted by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

Continuity and Change: Ten years of teaching about the Holocaust in England's secondary schools

Hale et al., (2023)

holocausteducation.org.uk

- This was a mixed-methods study to explore teaching aims, content, pedagogy, assessment, curriculum planning, teachers' knowledge and understanding, and their training experiences.
- This study also compared teaching practice in 2019/20 with teaching practice a decade earlier, drawing on data from the Centre's first teacher study by Pettigrew and colleagues.
- An online survey was completed by 964 teachers who had taught about the Holocaust in the three years before completing the survey.
- 68% of the teachers principally taught about the Holocaust in history, almost 17% in religious education.
- Additionally, 49 interviews with 134 teachers in 45 schools (mix of individual and group interviews) were conducted.

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust 80 years on: A study of student knowledge and understanding in England (2025)

holocausteducation.org.uk/research/80-years/

- This was a mixed-methods study to explore students' historical knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust, where and when they had learnt about the Holocaust in school, where they encountered the Holocaust outside school (e.g. in films), what content about the Holocaust they had encountered online and how much trust they had in different sources of information.
- The study also compared students' knowledge and learning experiences in 2024/25 with students a decade earlier, drawing on data from the Centre's 2016 student study.
- A survey was completed by 2,778 secondary school students from 21 schools across England.
- A teacher in each school was invited to complete a survey about how the Holocaust was taught in their school - 17 schools out of 21 provided this information.
- Ten focus group discussions were conducted with students across six schools.
- Only students who had learnt about the Holocaust in school participated in this survey.
- The majority of students (83.9%) were in Years 8 or 9. For this reason, comparisons between the 2016 and 2024/25 findings are based on data from Years 8 and 9 only to ensure more valid comparisons.

Caption: Alfred and Trudi Brosan sit back-to-back on a bench in the yard of their cottage in Hainbach. Circa 1928 – 1935, Austria.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archive #58486. Courtesy of Alfred Brosan. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Caption: The Oestermann children relax on a beach, 1936, Denmark.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archive #42106. Courtesy of Richard Oestermann. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Research findings

This section of the digest presents findings that give insight into what teachers and students know and understand about the Holocaust, and what happened during it. The areas explored include:

- Collective conceptions of the Holocaust
- Knowledge about the victims of the Holocaust
- Notions about where and when the Holocaust took place

Trends in knowledge and understanding over time are also explored. However, it is important to note that the Centre's national studies were not longitudinal studies where the same participants were tracked over time. Furthermore, the participants within each study were not connected to each other. For example, the students in the 2025 study were not taught by the teachers in the 2023 study. Despite these considerations and the passage of time between the studies, the findings can be meaningfully linked; they collectively tell a compelling story about how teaching and learning about the Holocaust has developed over time and the aspects that have remained unchanged.

Collective conceptions of the Holocaust

Latest findings

The 2025 student research showed:

- When students were asked to briefly describe what the Holocaust was, almost all of them referenced victim(s) and action(s). The actions were typically framed in terms of what the victims were subjected to.
- In contrast to 2016, students in 2025 were less likely to cite perpetrator(s) but more likely to cite how many people they thought were murdered.

Trends over time

The Centre has long advocated that there are certain key aspects of the Holocaust that students need to know about, if they are to fully understand its significance. This requires the identification of an essential body of knowledge that all students should possess. But it also needs clear understanding of what students already know, or rather, what they think they know. Importantly, the Centre's research and ongoing work with teachers has highlighted that even when students are learning about the Holocaust for the first time within secondary school, they have typically already encountered the Holocaust in other places. This includes at primary school, in conversations with friends and family, in books, television programmes and films, and in online content. Inevitably, these sources of information will have influenced their perceived knowledge of what happened during the Holocaust, their actual knowledge, and their beliefs and attitudes in relation to this history and the meanings they take from it. Consequently, the 2025 study – as in 2016 – sought to explore students' awareness of the Holocaust in the broadest terms. Back in 2016, this territory was framed in the following way:

> *...the concern is not so much with the precise factual content that individual students were able or not to demonstrate, but rather with overarching patterns and shared frameworks for understanding. It is these patterns and framings that are characterised as students' collective conceptions of the Holocaust.*
> Foster et al., (2016, p. 38)

To scope out this terrain, the approach used in 2016 was applied to 2025. Students were asked: 'Please can you describe in one or two sentences what you think the Holocaust was?' The question did not ask students to outline everything they knew about the Holocaust; instead, they were asked to provide only a short description. Therefore, rather than measuring if students knew specific things about the Holocaust, the question gave insight into what was at the forefront of students' thinking, and what they prioritised when summarising what the Holocaust was. This enabled exploration of the most frequently shared conceptions of the Holocaust.

On average, students' responses in 2025 were 18 words in length, with the longest response being 130 words. This compared to an average word length of 21.1 words (maximum 138 words) in the 2016 study. The following examples illustrate how students in 2025 typically answered this question.

'The holocaust was Jewish people were placed in death camps and ghettos and were controlled by Hitler'

'where millions of jews were taken to concentration camps to be killed during the second world war'

'The holocaust was a mass genocide of Jewish homosexual gypsies disable people and many more who were killed brutally at a concentration camp by toxic gas'

'the holocaust was the mass extermination of jews in europe.'

'The Holocaust was a mass genocide of Jewish people. Millions of people were killed.'

'the evil plan for hitler to kill all the Jews'

'The period of time where Jewish people were persecuted by the Nazis and then subjected to a mass genocide.'

'the holocaust was a period of time where the germans had control over poland and jewish people had to live in ghettos, bad conditions no hygiene and were starved and where lots of jews where murdered'

'the holocaust was a terrible time period for Jews as they were tortured and many were killed by nazis. they were very hated and blamed for things that they didnt do.'

'The Holocaust was the mass genocide of millions of Jews in Nazi Germany'

In 2016, analysis looked at the form that students' descriptions took, developing a coding framework that recorded whether students referred to any of the following:[1]

- Named or otherwise identified **victims** of the Holocaust.
- Named or otherwise identified **perpetrators** of the Holocaust.
- Specific **actions** undertaken during the Holocaust.
- An indication of the **scale** of the Holocaust.
- A **timeframe** for the Holocaust.
- Any indication of a possible **cause** of the Holocaust.

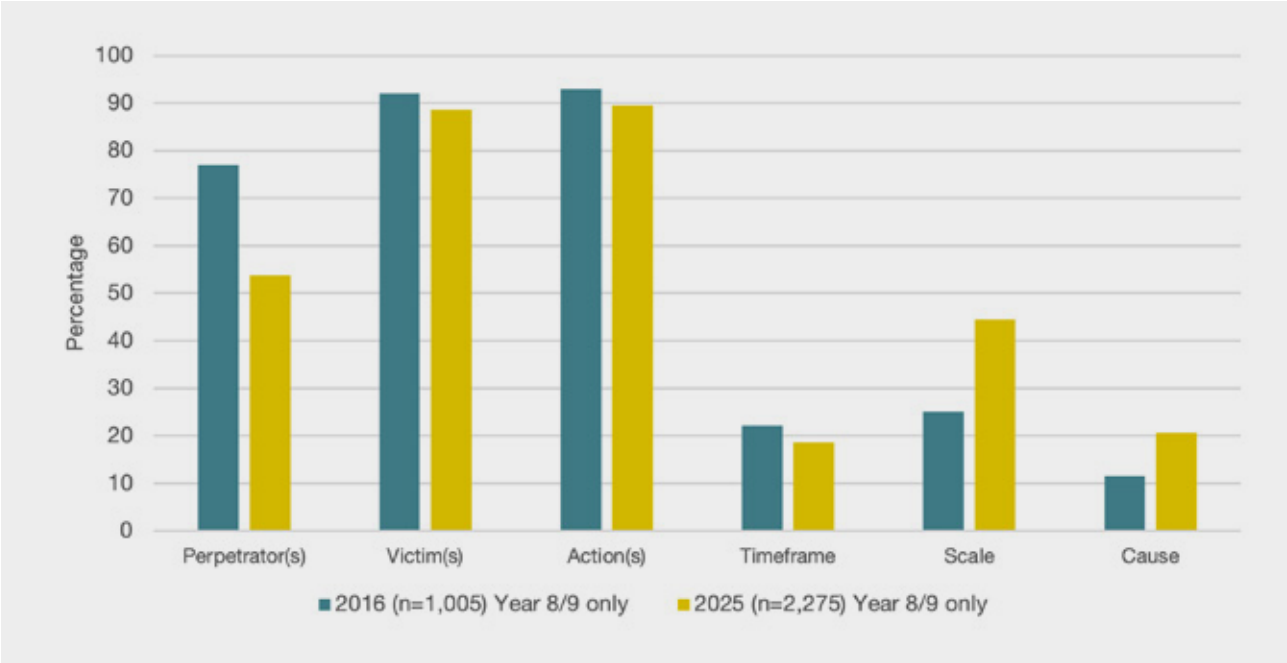
In 2016, a subsample of 2,987 responses were coded. Within this, 1,005 responses were from Year 8 and 9 students who had learnt about the Holocaust in school. In 2025, all responses to this question were analysed using the same framework developed in 2016. The results for both studies are presented in Figure 2. [2]

Across both studies, almost all students referred to victim(s) and action(s), with the latter typically framed in terms of what the victims were subjected to. In 2025, actions included 'genocide', 'killed', 'murdered' and put into 'concentration and/or death camps'. Most students (79.0%) cited Jews as a victim group, with other victim groups mentioned to a much lesser extent. For example, only around 7.0% of students cited disabled people. This contrasts with data presented in the next section (see page 13) which outlines students' responses to the question 'Who were the victims of the Holocaust?' When answering that question,

1 For further information about the analysis, see Foster et al., (2016, pg. 44).

2 Please note that where comparisons in historical knowledge are made between the 2016 and 2025 studies, only data for students in Years 8 and 9 are presented to enable valid comparisons between studies (see Figure 1 for further information).

Figure 2
'Mapping' the form of students' descriptions of the Holocaust (percentage of students), by study



students widely cited other victim groups. In 2025 there was, therefore, an apparent contradiction between two different, yet related, questions. For the one exploring collective conceptions of the Holocaust, students prioritised Jewish people. Whereas for the other question looking at the victims of the Holocaust, Jewish people were not predominant.

This seeming contradiction between the responses collected for two related questions also occurred in 2016. The trend may have emerged in both studies because Jewish people very firmly occupy a central position in students' collective conceptions of the Holocaust. However, when probed further, as in the question outlined in the next section, students' confusion about the distinctive experiences of different groups under the Nazi regime and tendency to use the Holocaust as a catch-all term for all victim groups surfaces.

This consistency across the two studies was juxtaposed against a significant change. This is how in 2016, students were more likely to cite perpetrators (77.0% did this) compared to 2025 when just over half of students did this (53.8%). The 2025 survey did not explore why this trend occurred, but the Centre's research with teachers in 2009 found a dominance of the 'perpetrator narrative' when teaching about the Holocaust. In the years after 2009, educators became increasingly aware of the common tendency to inappropriately emphasise the actions of the perpetrators over those of the victims. Continuing professional development (CPD) resources were duly developed by the sector to redress the balance and place greater emphasis on victim perspectives and experiences more broadly, including pre-war Jewish life, forms of resistance and case studies. However, change would not occur overnight, and the 2016 student research can be viewed as capturing a development in motion. That is particularly likely given that since 2009 the imperative of committing teaching time to 'pre-war Jewish life' and the experience of the victims have become axiomatic within the field of Holocaust education. Certainly, the Centre's 2023 study of teaching practices evidenced this shift in what teachers were doing in classrooms.

Yet whilst it is welcome that students are learning more about who Jewish people were and the lives they led before the Holocaust, there are wider considerations. It is, of course, not possible to teach everything, and in order to create space in curricula to explore Jewish people and their lives something unavoidably has to be reduced or omitted. The Centre's 2023 research did indicate that teachers were covering more content compared to a decade earlier, however, this requires decisions related to depth-breadth trade-offs, and the level of detail with which individual topics were taught was unclear. Thus, there is a potential risk that time spent learning about who the perpetrators were has been reduced. Certainly, the 2025 student study shows young people have muddled notions about why the Holocaust happened, the role of complicity across society and the decisions and actions of culpable individuals, groups and organisations across Europe (for further information see the first research digest (Hale et al., 2025)). It is also notable that compared to 2016, more students in 2025 referred to the scale of the Holocaust, in terms of the number of people killed. This could also be connected to an increasing focus on the experience of victims since 2009.

Top photograph by Emile Holba, 2014
Bottom photograph by Olivia Hemingway, 2011

Knowledge about the victims of the Holocaust

Latest findings

The 2025 student research showed:

- Almost all students (91.8%) recognised that Jewish people were victims of the Holocaust.
- Overall, 33.7% of students identified Jews as the only victims of the Holocaust, while 58.1% cited Jews alongside other victim groups such as disabled people, homosexuals and Roma and Sinti.
- Just 10.0% of students correctly identified that in 1933, less than 1% of the German population was Jewish. Compared to 6.3% in 2016, this represented a negligible increase in knowledge.
- Almost three-quarters of students knew that 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, which showed students' knowledge in this area had improved compared to 10 years before when 56.8% of them cited 6 million.
- Only 13.7% of students in 2025 knew that about 90% of Jewish children living in Nazi controlled Europe were murdered.

Trends over time

In 2016, students were asked the open-ended question 'Who were the victims of the Holocaust?' The responses were analysed, with the codes derived from students' answers – an approach known as inductive coding. The same question was used in the 2025 study and analysed using the coding framework developed in 2016.

Table 1 presents the data from Year 8 and 9 students in the 2016 and 2025 studies. The data shows that in 2016, over half of students (55.6%) cited Jews as the sole victims of the Holocaust, and 38.7% cited Jews plus other named victim groups. In contrast, in 2025, students were less likely to cite Jews as the sole victims of the Holocaust, with a third doing this. Instead, compared to 2016, students were more likely to cite Jews plus other named victim groups (58.1%).

The move to more inclusive descriptions of the victims of the Holocaust suggests that in recent years understanding about the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust has decreased. Instead, 'the Holocaust' appears to be seen as a catch-all phrase used to describe or refer to a shared or common set of experiences. This overlooks the totality of Nazi anti-Jewish policy – that the Nazis planned to kill every person from this group. It is also evidence of students' apparent inability to understand how and why different groups were persecuted and murdered. As highlighted by Foster et al., (2016, p. 106):

> *Each victim, whether German trade unionist, Polish priest, Lithuanian Jew, Soviet Prisoner of War or other, is surely entitled to the uniqueness of their own death. Lumping these people all together as 'Holocaust victims' blurs important differences, submerges each person into a vague and faceless mass, and does a disservice not only to the people in the past but also to our students who are denied an understanding of the complexity and diversity of that history.*

Table 1
Percentage of students, by study, giving each answer in response to the question 'Who were the victims of the Holocaust?'

	2016 (n=2,736) Year 8/9 only	2025 (n=2,148) Year 8/9 only
Jews, Jewish people etc	55.6	33.7
Jews and other victim groups	38.7	58.1
Reference to any other victim group(s) without reference to Jews	0.9	1.7
Inaccurate answer	3.6	2.3
Accurate and/or relevant answer not outlined above	1.2	4.2

Where students named victim groups other than Jews, these were also coded. In 2016, the most frequently cited groups were homosexuals (60.8%), disabled people (52.5%), Roma and Sinti (35.9%) and Black people (23.7%). Applying the same coding framework in 2025 revealed broad similarity in the prevalence of these groups being identified: disabled people (58.5%), homosexuals (53.4%), Roma and Sinti (36.5%) and Black people (19.5%). Additionally, in 2025, students cited other groups not widely mentioned in 2016. This included LGBTQ+ (13.0%) and political opponents such as those supporting communism and those opposed to Nazi views (13.3%). Overall, of the students citing Jews and other victim groups, 22.7% named one other victim group, 27.3% named two groups and 29.5% named three groups.

As mentioned above, the Centre's 2009 research with teachers found that at the time, teachers were more likely to focus on perpetrator-oriented narratives rather than explore victims' responses to persecution and genocide. They tended to include content about the persecution of Jews in the 1930s and what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Other key aspects of the Holocaust, including the pre-war lives of Jewish people and important stages in the development of the genocide (for example, the Einsatzgruppen, Wannsee Conference and Operation Reinhard) were often not included. Based on data collected a decade later, Hale et al., (2023) reported an expansion of content in teachers' Holocaust schemes of learning, with more coverage of topics such as Jewish social and cultural life before 1933, the Einsatzgruppen and the Wannsee Conference.

Given these changes in teaching approaches, it is arguably surprising that some areas of students' knowledge have not changed substantially over time. For example, in 2016, only 6.3% of students correctly identified that in 1933, less than 1% of the German population was Jewish. In 2025, this had only increased slightly with 10.0% of students answering, 'less than 1%'. Instead, in both studies, students tended to greatly overestimate the pre-war population of Germany as shown in Figure 3.

Focus groups conducted in the 2016 study revealed that many students thought there were 'lots' of Jews in Germany. This notion was sometimes linked to worrying suppositions about how the size of the Jewish population might have been a causal factor for hostility towards Jews. This included comments about Jews contributing to 'overcrowding' in Germany and overpopulating 'the thoroughbred German' (see Foster et al., 2016, p. 127). It should be noted that Foster and colleagues emphasised that these comments did not appear to be indicative of students having malevolent views. But they do illustrate the type of conclusions that students draw when they have knowledge gaps or misconceptions.

It might be logical to expect students to have more knowledge in this area in recent years given the increased focus on pre-war Jewish life in Holocaust education curricula. However, the Centre's research with teachers has shown many teachers also have misconceptions about the size of the pre-war Jewish population in Germany. In 2009, a quarter of teachers (25.2%) indicated that fewer than 1% of the population was Jewish. Teacher knowledge improved in the following decade with 45.0% of teachers answering this question correctly (Hale et al., 2023). While this was an encouraging development, the pace of change in teachers' knowledge across the decade was not replicated across the student studies. Moreover, despite improvements in teachers' knowledge,

Figure 3
Responses to the question 'In 1933, what percentage of the German population was Jewish?', by study

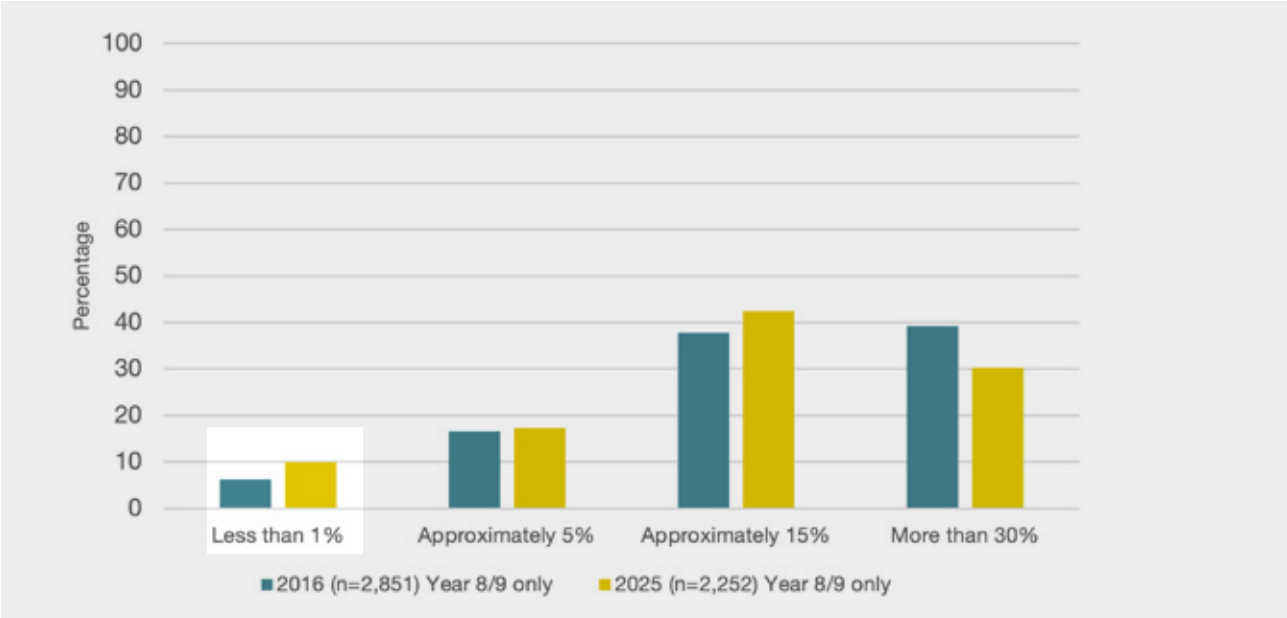
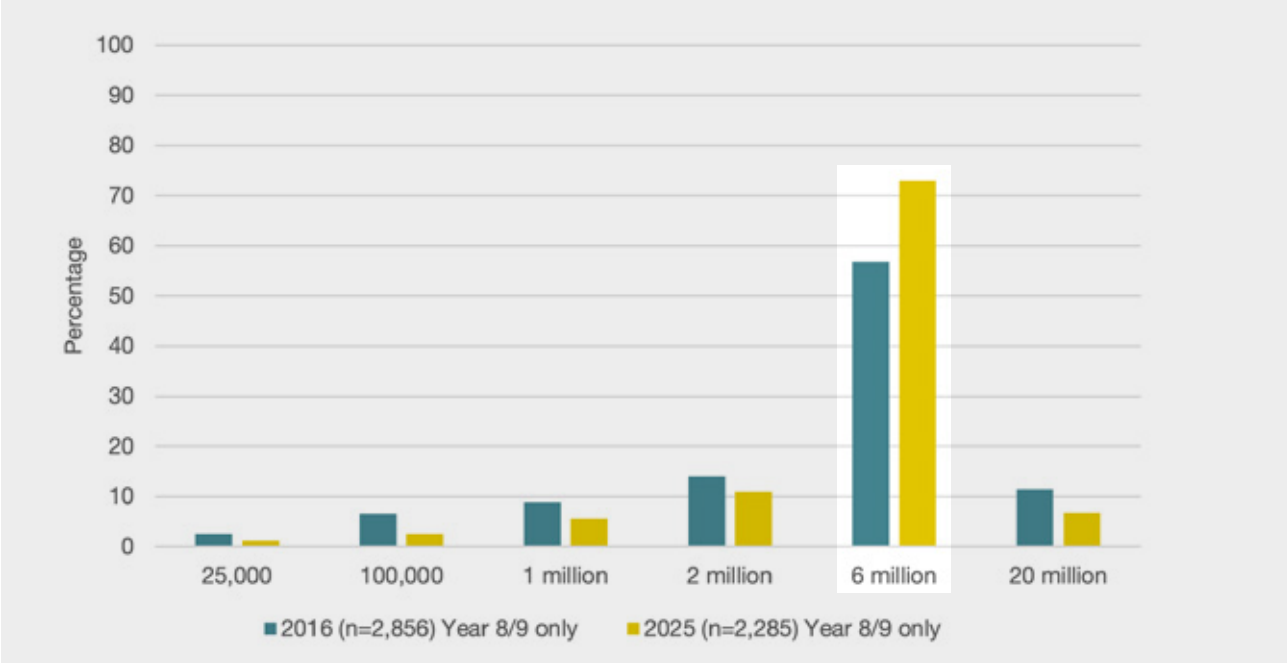


Figure 4
Responses to the question 'Approximately how many Jews in all of Europe were killed during the Holocaust?', by study



over half of them did not know about the size of the pre-war Jewish population in the 2023 research. Overall, this situation could be contributing to students' misconceptions going unnoticed and unaddressed in the classroom, and/or teachers inadvertently communicating inaccurate information to their students.

These findings are also notable because the Centre's research with teachers has shown many seek to develop students' understanding of the dangers of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping when teaching about the Holocaust. Indeed, this aim was often rated by teachers as being more important than the aim of deepening knowledge of the Second World War and twentieth century history (See Pettigrew et al., 2009 and Hale et al., 2023). Within this context, it is especially worrying that almost all students, and a sizeable proportion of teachers, did not recognise that Jews were a vulnerable minority group within Germany and by extension, also did not understand the implications of this reality for how and why the Holocaust unfolded.

In terms of students' knowledge about the scale of the Holocaust, the 2025 survey showed improvements in their knowledge. In 2016, just over half (56.8%) of Year 8 and 9 students correctly identified that 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, whereas in 2025, 73.0% answered this question correctly. Additionally, as shown in Figure 4, in 2016, almost a third of students (31.9%) greatly underestimated the number of Jews killed, and this compared to a fifth (20.2%) of students in 2025. This is an encouraging development given evidence to suggest that globally Holocaust distortion is increasing, especially online (Claims Conference, 2025; UNESCO, 2022). However, the 20.2% of students in 2025 who underestimated the scale cannot be overlooked, especially as 31.0% of these students were either fairly confident or very confident in their answer. This suggests their underestimation of the number killed reflects an embedded misconception rather students simply making an (erroneous) guess because of a knowledge gap.

Misconceptions about the scale of the Holocaust are surprising given that the students had learnt about the Holocaust in school. Recalling what has been said earlier about expectations, it is certainly the case that among the most fundamental pieces of knowledge that students should acquire from a study of the Holocaust is how many Jews were murdered. This, surely, is absolutely elemental. Yet further evidence of students' confusion about the scale of the Holocaust can be seen in their responses to the question 'Approximately what percentage of Jewish children living in Nazi controlled Europe were murdered?' The proportion of students answering this question correctly in 2025 (13.7%) decreased slightly compared to 2016 (17.4%). It could be argued that students may have learnt the figure (1.5 million children) rather than the proportion. However, for students to understand the totality of the Holocaust – the Nazi's intention to murder every Jewish man, woman and child wherever they could reach them – it is important that students grasp that the figure of 1.5 million represents almost all Jewish children in Nazi controlled Europe. As the data in both studies show, the vast majority of students had not adequately understood this striking fact.

Caption: Jews haul their belongings into the Lodz ghetto, Poland, 1940.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archive #24632. Courtesy of Moshe Zilbar. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Caption: Jews in the Warsaw ghetto awaiting their turn in the soup kitchen, Poland, 1941.

Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archive #07056. Courtesy of Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej.

Notions about where and when the Holocaust took place

Latest findings

The 2025 student research showed:

- Most students (83.3%) identified that the Holocaust took place in the 1940s, which is an improvement compared to 70.1% of students who said this in 2016.
- Only 30.2% correctly identified that the commencement of mass murder occurred after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, although this was greater than the proportion of students who knew this in 2016 (5.6%).
- Over half of students (55.9%) correctly identified Nazi-occupied Poland as the country where the largest number of Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust came from, compared to 39.9% who knew this in 2016.
- Just under half of students (47.9%) correctly identified Nazi-occupied Poland as the country in which the largest number of killings of Jewish people occurred, compared to 37.5% who knew this in 2016.

Trends over time

In order to establish a simple benchmark of chronological knowledge of the Holocaust, students were asked the question 'When did the Holocaust happen?'. The most appropriate answer was 'In the 1940s'. In 2025, most students (83.3%) selected this option, which was an improvement compared to the 70.1% of students who selected it in the 2016 study.

Clearly, this is a positive development. However, students in both studies struggled with more specific details about the chronology of the Holocaust, including when specific events took place. For example, students were asked to indicate when the Nazis began to kill millions of Jews. The question was worded slightly differently in 2025 compared to 2016, but some notable trends across the studies emerged:

- The commencement of mass murder was often linked to Hitler, with 39.9% of students in 2025 citing it beginning 'As soon as Hitler came to power'. Similarly, in the 2016 study, 43.1% cited the mass killing of Jews beginning immediately after 'Hitler's appointment as leader of Germany'.
- In both studies, around a quarter of students thought mass murder began immediately after the Second World War started (2016: 26.0%; 2025: 23.7%).
- The correct answer 'After Germany invaded the Soviet Union' was not widely known, although knowledge levels were higher in 2025 when 30.2% selected this option, compared to 2016 when 5.6% selected this answer.

The focus groups conducted in the 2016 study found that while students tended to know the Holocaust was connected to the Second World War, they could not articulate the nature of this relationship. This situation appeared to continue in 2025, given that 23.7% thought the war was the catalyst for the mass murder of Jews and 69.8% of students did not identify the invasion of the Soviet Union as a critical turning point.

In both studies, the most common response was that the Holocaust began as soon as Hitler became leader of Germany. This appears to contribute to a broader Hitler-centric view of how and why the Holocaust happened. As discussed in the first digest (Hale et al., 2025), a third of students in 2025 attributed sole responsibility for the Holocaust to Hitler. Additionally, as outlined below, a third of students thought the mass murder of Jews ended when Hitler committed suicide. Thus, for a sizeable minority of students, the timeline of the Holocaust directly maps onto the life and actions of Hitler.

It is notable that students in the 2025 study were more likely than those in the 2016 study to know that the Nazis began to kill millions of Jews after Germany invaded the Soviet Union – 30.2% of students in 2025 compared to 5.6% of students in 2016. Undoubtedly, this improvement in knowledge is positive. But that such a high percentage of students still do not know this, means it is an area where knowledge is concerningly weak. This was also found to be the case for teachers. In the Centre's 2009 research, 35.4% of teachers knew mass murder of Jews began after the invasion of the Soviet Union, and this increased to 42.0% in 2023. Thus, over half of teachers did not know this information, and this is especially striking given that two thirds of teachers in the 2023 study taught history.

Students appeared to have greater knowledge about why the Nazi organised mass murder of Jewish people ended. As mentioned, in 2025, 35.5% thought it was because Hitler committed suicide. However, most students (57.4%) correctly identified that mass murder ended when the Allied armies liberated the lands controlled by the Nazis where the Holocaust was taking place. This compared to 44.6% of students who selected the correct answer in 2016, when the same proportion of students incorrectly thought it was because Hitler committed suicide (44.0%).

In terms of where the Holocaust took place, students demonstrated greater understanding in 2025 compared to students in 2016. In both studies, students were asked (a) which country the largest number of Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust came from, and (b) in which country the largest number of killings of Jewish people actually took place. In both instances, the correct answer was Nazi-occupied Poland, but it was common for students in both studies to erroneously select Germany. Additionally, as shown in Table 2, a trend across the 2016 and 2025 studies was students demonstrating higher accuracy on the question about where the largest number of Jews came from compared to where the largest number of killings took place.

In some ways, the centrality of Germany in students' notions about what happened during the Holocaust is unsurprising; given that most students overestimated how many Jews lived in Germany during the 1930s and the Hitler-centric view of responsibility adopted by many students. On the other hand, the findings are surprising because teachers have sound knowledge in this area. In 2009, 81.0% of teachers knew Nazi-controlled Poland was the country where the largest number of Jewish people murdered came from, and only 5.9% said Germany. In 2025, 85.7% correctly identified Nazi-controlled Poland, with just 3.0% selecting Germany.

Consequently, teachers' knowledge has evidently not transferred to students. It is unclear why this might be the case, but it may be this is an embedded misconception among some students which is stubbornly resistant to change.

In 2025, of the students who answered that Germany was the country where the largest number of Jews came from, 62.6% were fairly or very confident they had provided the correct answer. Similarly, out of the students who thought Germany was the country in which the largest number of killings occurred, 55.6% of them were fairly or very confident in their answer. Overall, these students may have been less receptive to learning about how geographically significant Nazi-occupied Poland was in relation to the Holocaust.

The student survey also included a question to establish if students knew what Nazi ghettos were. Knowledge in this aspect of the Holocaust is important because while ghettos were not killing sites, they were significant spaces in the geography (and history) of the Holocaust, given the scale of suffering and death that happened within them. In 2016, 62.6% of students correctly identified that ghettos were 'places where Jews were forced to live, in order to separate them from the rest of the population'. Accuracy on this question had increased in 2025, with 83.1% answering the question correctly. In focus groups conducted by Foster et al., (2016), students were able to describe the features of ghettos and characteristics of living within them. However, the focus groups also served to reiterate students' misconceptions about the geography of the Holocaust with students not always recognising that nearly all Jews in occupied Poland were forcibly segregated into ghettos, instead some students surmised that this happened in Germany.

Table 2
The percentage of students who correctly identified 'Poland' and incorrectly identified 'Germany' for the questions about where the most Jews murdered came from and where the largest number of killings took place

	Which country did the largest number of Jewish people murdered come from?[1]	Where did the largest number of killings of Jewish people actually take place?[2]
2016 Data		
Poland	39.9	37.5
Germany	49.3	54.5
2025 Data		
Poland	55.9	47.9
Germany	30.0	36.5

1 Full question wording: During the Second World War, the countries listed below were allied with, influenced, or controlled by the Nazis. Which country did the largest number of Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust come from?

2 Full wording of question: Out of the countries allied with, influenced, or controlled by the Nazis, where did the largest number of killings of Jewish people actually take place?

Students' encounters with Holocaust-related content online

This digest has focused on research findings related to students' knowledge about what happened during the Holocaust, and while knowledge has improved in the last decade, students still have numerous knowledge gaps and misconceptions. Of course, unsound knowledge and understanding have always been problematic but it is even more concerning in recent years with the proliferation of online misinformation and disinformation which risks reinforcing existing misconceptions or creating entirely new fallacies about the Holocaust.

The first research digest based on data collected for the Centre's 2025 study (Hale et al., 2025), presented survey findings related to students' engagement with online content. In sum, it reported that:

- When deliberately searching for information about the Holocaust, YouTube was the most frequently used platform by 36.3% of students in Years 8 to 13, followed by TikTok, used by 26.9% of students.
- Over half of students (59.4%) had come across online content about the Holocaust when they had *not* been searching for it.
- Within the subsample of students who had inadvertently come across Holocaust-related content online, the majority of them (66.4%) reported this happening on TikTok, 36.9% said it happened on YouTube and 19.1% said it happened on Instagram.

The survey also found that almost two-thirds of students (62.1%) in Years 8 to 13 had little or no trust in AI chatbots such as ChatGPT. Moreover, the majority of students (86.1%) had not used an AI chatbot to learn about the Holocaust.

The 2025 survey did not include questions about the nature of Holocaust-related content that students had encountered online, either intentionally or inadvertently. However, this was explored in ten focus groups conducted with a total of 58 students across six schools. A teacher was present in each focus group and occasionally contributed to the conversation. Whilst focus group discussions covered a range of topics such as students' historical knowledge about the Holocaust and where they had learnt about the Holocaust within school, there were also instances where conversations about online content took place. This has provided emerging insights about some of the problematic material that students were exposed to, their perceptions of the legitimacy of information posted on different social media and video sharing platforms, and the important role of learning about the Holocaust in school.

In terms of problematic content, students across the focus groups alluded to content which was insensitive and/or inaccurate. None of the students referenced seeing Holocaust distortion and/or denial, so it was unclear if they had encountered this sort of material. Even so, it was apparent that problematic material about the Holocaust was quickly and easily discoverable. Examples included manifestly inaccurate historical information and user-generated content designed solely for clickbait. Additionally, students in one focus group described videos of gameplay footage (unrelated to the Holocaust) with a voiceover talking about the Holocaust. Students surmised this sort of content is created to give information about the Holocaust in a format that is intended to maintain viewers' interest and thus, prolong the time they spend watching the video:

> ***Christopher:*** *So, basically, the person will just have like a video, like a screen record of them playing [a block puzzle game], so, that will be there and then they'll just be like talking about [the Holocaust] at the same time. But at the same time, you're watching them play [the game], because I know I do that because I love [the game].*
>
> ***Teacher****: The video has nothing to do with the sound, is that what you're saying? The sound is about the Holocaust, and the video is about the game?*
>
> ***Jenny:*** *Yes, yeah, yes.*
>
> ***Christoper:*** *It's for, like, attention, it's not really for entertainment...To grab your attention and keep you on the video and learn about the Holocaust. And they do subtitles on the game, so you don't click off. Because if it was just subtitles, it would be boring.*
>
> ***Laura:*** *You'd scroll.*
>
> ***Teacher****: Okay. If it was subtitled, you'd scroll?*
>
> ***Christoper:*** *If it was just [subtitles], [but] because they had the gameplay, people stayed more.*
>
> **Excerpts from a longer conversation on this topic with Year 9 students, North West**

Some students also described being drawn into 'random' content about the Holocaust like this, acknowledging how the algorithm continually pushed content of this nature.

> *I've done it a lot of times, I've found just, like, a random video, before it has been the Holocaust, and I ended up searching it on TikTok, and I ended up like, scrolling, watching loads of videos.*
>
> **Timothy, Year 10 student, West Midlands**

In terms of the legitimacy of online information, there was consensus among students that content on TikTok was unreliable and typically could not be trusted. This was mainly articulated in terms of how quickly and easily anyone could post a video onto TikTok without its accuracy being verified, and this included AI-generated content. Therefore, students reasoned that longer form content that required lots of effort and/or looked professional was more likely to be trustworthy. Consequently, YouTube was generally considered to be a reliable information source. Wikipedia was also cited by a few students as a trusted source.

> *I prefer watching the long form videos because...on Tik Tok, I don't have it, but I know that there's short videos on and you don't really know if it's that true and also because you're not searching exactly what, you can scroll and then it's just a random video pops up. So, I think it's better to learn it on YouTube.*
>
> **Penny, Year 10 student, North East**

> *I was going to say if you search up things about the Holocaust, especially on TikTok, or Twitter or Instagram, I don't know, I feel there are always going to be people online saying it's fake or saying false things. So, for when you want to learn about the Holocaust you should use say Wikipedia or Google or something more reliable. I feel like social media, people just chat rubbish on social media. So, it's not that, I mean obviously, there will be reliable things, but in my opinion, in my experience, not really.*
>
> **Amara, Year 9 student, London**

> *For like that YouTube thing, I think it's more reliable because people take the time and effort to make that video. These videos and editing can take days to make and produce. But with TikTok, it takes about half an hour to upload.*
>
> **Miles, Year 9 student, North West**

While there is reliable content on YouTube and reputable organisations upload content onto this platform, disinformation does circulate on YouTube, but students did not acknowledge this reality. Their general assumptions about the accuracy of content on YouTube is especially worrying considering the findings of a survey by Duffy and Dacombe (2023). Their survey showed that 40-50% of (adult) respondents who endorsed conspiracy theories, got their news from YouTube and TikTok.

Overall, there are undoubtedly things to be concerned about in the Centre's 2025 focus group discussions. Clearly, students were seeing a range of inaccurate, insensitive and/or troubling content. This sort of material can undermine the seriousness of the history, is disrespectful to the victims, survivors and their families, creates and/or reinforces misconceptions, cultivates division, and in the most dangerous forms can fuel antisemitism and extremism. Consequently, it is something for everyone to be cognisant of and striving to tackle, with education playing a key role. Therefore, it was encouraging that the young people in this study appeared to understand the proliferation of inaccurate or troubling material presented online, especially in user- or AI- generated content on platforms such as TikTok. And it was particularly reassuring that students drew on what they had learnt at school to help them determine the legitimacy of online information. For example:

> *The amount of effort that's put inside this video because everything is hand drawn and everything so I'm just like this person would not hand draw this if all facts were lies. And from what I do know when getting taught in school, most of the facts are the same.*
>
> **Lizzie, Year 10 student, North East.**

> *I'll look through my [school] history book, and at the same time, I also look at the channel and think, is this just one random guy putting stuff onto his YouTube page, or is it like an association?*
>
> **Richard, Year 9 student, North West.**

As described in the first digest (see Hale et al., 2025), this highlights the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers within the field of Holocaust education. In particular, it demonstrates that CPD which is high quality, sustained over time, research informed, impactful and delivered by experts who mentor teachers, such as the programmes offered by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, are fundamental. Teachers who are knowledgeable and confident when teaching about the Holocaust are better equipped to develop their students' knowledge and understanding. At a time when inaccurate, contradictory, divisive, emotive and confusing information proliferates – both online and offline – this has never been more critical.

Photograph by Olivia Hemingway, 2014

Top photograph by Olivia Hemingway, 2014
Bottom photograph by Alejandro Lopex, UCL Media Services, 2024

Supporting teaching and learning

Why knowledge in these areas matters

Informed by years of research exploring the prevalence and impact of misconceptions, the Centre's approach to Holocaust education places emphasis on the importance of robust content knowledge and key conceptual frameworks. With this understanding, teachers and students become equipped to engage in critical reflection and challenge the myths and misconceptions about the Holocaust.

The Centre's research with students has shown ongoing knowledge gaps and confusion about what happened during the Holocaust. This includes misconceptions about the experiences of different groups persecuted and killed by the Nazis. Many students believe that anyone who was perceived as 'different' was targeted. This needs to be redressed, not only because it is historically inaccurate, but because greater differentiation of Nazi victim groups means their experiences within this history are told. Sound knowledge in this area means that students will recognise the policies against different victim groups and how these policies were connected, in turn enriching students' understanding of the broader system of violence and mass murder under the Nazi regime.

Relatedly, students need to understand that Jews were targeted by the Nazis for continent-wide genocide. In tandem, students must be able to recognise the falsity and scurrilous nature of Nazi propaganda. As demonstrated by Foster et al., (2016), when knowledge gaps exist and misconceptions prevail, students seek to connect the dots and risk creating rudimentary suppositions that are often not only erroneous but potentially harmful.

An important aspect of Holocaust education is to meaningfully communicate to students what was lost during the Holocaust. They should learn about the vibrancy of pre-war Jewish life and the diversity of Jewish communities across Europe that existed before they were almost entirely destroyed in the Holocaust. Undoubtedly, it is critical for students to know the scale of the Holocaust and that 6 million Jews were murdered, especially now that Holocaust denial and distortion is easily discoverable online. However, the victims must not be seen as a passive mass and instead recognised as individual people who responded as best they could to the unfolding genocide.

Understanding the scale of the Holocaust also includes understanding the geographic range of the Holocaust, including how geographically significant Nazi-occupied Poland was in relation to the Holocaust. Without this knowledge the significance of the genocide and devastation across Europe will not be recognised. Indeed, when students are able to identify the geographic range of the Holocaust, it can support them in understanding that Hitler was not solely responsible for the Holocaust, and that organisations, groups and individuals in countries beyond Germany played a crucial role in enabling the persecution and genocide (see Hale et al., 2025 for more information).

Additionally, students' knowledge is enriched when they recognise the Holocaust as a process that developed and became radicalised over time. Sound chronological knowledge enables students to grapple with questions about how the Holocaust unfolded and appreciate the complexity of this history. They can identify that there were key turning points in this history where the situation escalated and other individuals, groups and countries became involved.

Teaching recommendations

The Centre's experience of working with over 34,000 teachers to date has shown teaching about the Holocaust is complex. The research outlined in this briefing highlights the need for teaching that embraces the complexities of the Holocaust and reflects the diversity of Jewish experiences and responses, while also conveying the vast scope and scale of the genocide. Key to addressing these issues are well-planned lessons underpinned by carefully considered pedagogy which:

- **Recognise the diversity of pre-war Jewish life** – everyday lives, religious and cultural practices, languages, cultural contributions and more – so that students understand that the Holocaust destroyed real people and communities with deep histories across Europe. This is also essential for challenging common stereotypes and misconceptions about Jews, the size of their communities, their socio-economic status, and their beliefs.

- **Teach about the varied experiences of persecution** so that students recognise the Holocaust not as a monolithic event but as a process with key phases, events and turning points.
- **Include the geographical diversity of persecution**, showing how experiences differed across Europe and beyond. This helps students see the Holocaust as a transnational event affecting communities in varied ways.
- **Use a range of Jewish voices and sources** — including diaries, testimonies, family histories, photographs, and artwork — so that students encounter multiple perspectives and understand that there was no single Jewish experience.
- **Use a timeline to show how the persecution unfolded**, referring to key events and different spaces of persecution (for example, Nuremberg laws, November pogrom, concentration camps, ghettos, mass shootings and death camps). This helps students grasp the progressive and radicalising nature of anti-Jewish **policies** and the **totality** of the perpetrators' intentions.
- **Highlight Jewish agency**, enabling students to see Jews not as passive victims but as individuals who demonstrated remarkable resilience and humanity through spiritual and armed resistance, as well as through mutual aid.
- **Examine the long history of anti-Jewish discrimination** and the specific features of Nazi antisemitism so that the history is explored in its full context and students avoid oversimplified explanations of the Holocaust.
- **Include postwar Jewish experiences**, such as life in displaced persons camps, efforts to rebuild shattered communities, the pursuit of justice and the long-term impact on survivors and their families. This helps students understand that the Holocaust did not end in 1945.

Photograph by Alejandro Lopex, UCL Media Services, 2024

Putting research into practice

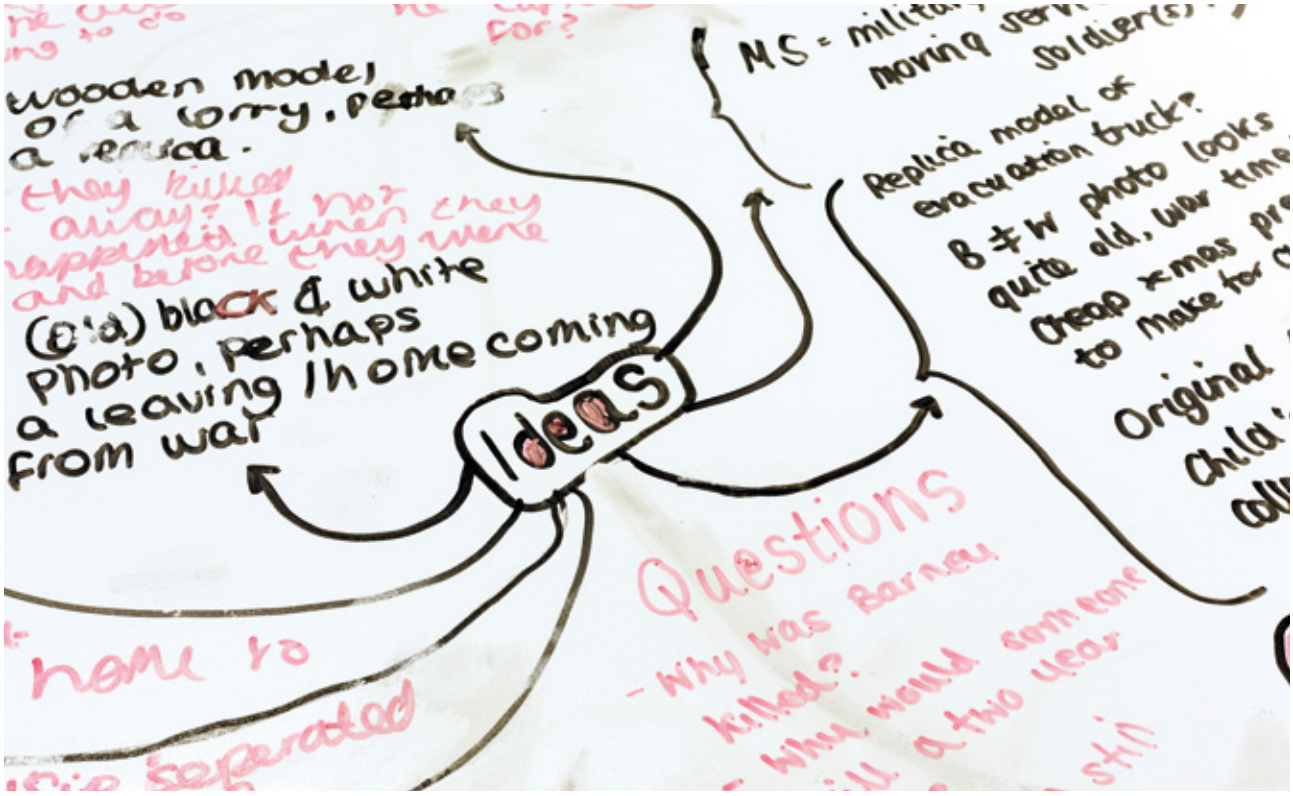
The Centre works closely with schools to support them in drawing on the research to inform and develop their teaching practice. Some examples are presented below.

As part of our work on the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education Beacon School Programme, our Year 9 students complete a survey before and after teaching our scheme of work. The results are analysed, and the lessons are framed around students' misconceptions. We have found that knowledge has improved year on year.

Thanks to our work with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, our curriculum is not only based on developing a chronological understanding of antisemitism over time and a geographical understanding of where the Holocaust took place; we are also committed to looking beyond the statistics and instead exploring the rich and diverse lives that Jewish people lived before the Holocaust. The CPD that the Centre offers is rooted in research and pedagogy and has been used in each lesson. Ultimately, the purpose is to discover lost identities and to understand how they lived, as well as the incredible communities and individuals who were lost. Addressing misconceptions allows students to pause and reflect on their own values, their place in humanity, and their sense of agency.

My work with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education and other organisations has ignited a lifelong commitment to Holocaust education and although new misconceptions emerge every year, the centre works tirelessly to adapt and ensure that all students receive a rich education delivered by passionate teachers.

Michelle Deacon-Adams, Head of History and Classical Civilisations, Insignis Academy Trust, Sir William Ramsay School, Buckinghamshire.



Photograph by Emile Holba, 2014

We have been a UCL Centre for Holocaust Education Beacon School for several years and the way we deliver lessons around the Holocaust is much better and deeper compared to what was delivered previously.

The CPD and support from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education has enabled us to look at the Holocaust from a much wider perspective, looking at what life was like for Jewish communities before the Holocaust. Pupils engage much more with this approach rather than a simplistic perpetrator narrative. Exploring pre-war Jewish life also enables the pupils to understand that Jewish people were not only living in Germany but across Europe.

Pupils learn that throughout history, antisemitism has been a constant but has presented itself in different forms and different places. Pupils move away from looking at it from a Second World War context to something much bigger, that is not specific to Hitler and the Nazis.

The textbooks provided by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education have been a great support and colleagues who draw on the textbooks find them extremely useful as they support the pupils and themselves with difficult concepts.

Rhys Davies, Teacher of History, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Coventry.

Informed by our work with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, we believe it is very important to tackle students' misconceptions about the Holocaust, especially given the rise of antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion. This is even more important with how heavily students now rely on social media as a source of information. We encourage discussions on misconceptions, and we have included a lesson on Holocaust denial/ distortion into the scheme of work so that students are aware that it is current and ongoing, including in the UK, hopefully making them better informed when they come across it themselves.

We have used the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education research as a way of assessing our schemes of work – amending them where necessary. We now include more emphasis on pre-war Jewish life, specifically focusing on Jewish lives in relation to religious practices and assimilation into German society. We have amended the scheme of work to place less emphasis on just the role of the camps by looking at a wider range of victim experiences in different contexts so that students don't see Auschwitz as the archetype for the Holocaust. The history department has also developed a couple of lessons about the Einsatzgruppen which is taught in year 9.

Vanessa Favali, Teacher of Psychology, St Laurence School, Wiltshire.

How the Centre supports teachers

The knowledge gaps and misconceptions discussed in this digest highlight the complexity of teaching and learning about the Holocaust. For students, the Holocaust is a challenging subject to grapple with – both cognitively and emotionally. It raises profoundly difficult and uncomfortable questions about the human condition. For teachers supporting students through this complex learning experience, specialist Holocaust education professional development can help them to develop their own knowledge, confidence and pedagogical approaches, which in turn, positively impact on students' knowledge and understanding.

The UCL Centre for Holocaust Education's professional development programme for teachers is informed by almost two decades of research. It includes age-appropriate resources, pedagogical innovation and active, thought-provoking enquiry. The Centre is also creating a bank of short self-guided CPD courses, exploring key educational issues that are encountered when teaching about the Holocaust. To access the full portfolio of courses, teaching materials, reports and books, see the Centre's website: https://holocausteducation.org.uk/

Resources that are especially relevant to the issues discussed in this digest are highlighted here.

Authentic Encounters with the Holocaust: A starting point for teachers (Self-guided online course)

This free 45-minute course seeks to answer the question "How do I start a scheme of learning on the Holocaust?" The course uses the tried-and-tested Key Stage 3 lesson 'Authentic encounters: how can original artefacts enrich our understanding of the Holocaust?' to demonstrate the Centre's pedagogical approach. It offers a starting point for introducing students to the Holocaust using authentic material and avoiding traumatic images, focusing on the personal story of one Jewish family. After completing the course, teachers receive a copy of the 'Authentic encounters: how can original artefacts enrich our understanding of the Holocaust?' materials for use in their own classroom. It is envisioned as a starting point for teachers new to teaching, new to teaching the Holocaust or new to working with the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education. See: Authentic Encounters with the Holocaust: A starting point for teachers – Centre for Holocaust Education

Jewish life in Warsaw before the Holocaust

Many of the victims of the Holocaust were Polish Jews (3 million victims) and 90% of Nazi-occupied Poland's Jewish population were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Second World War. The history of Poland's Jews is an integral part of the history of Poland. In this lesson, students examine the important contributions that Warsaw's Jewish community made to Poland's cultural, political and social life before the Holocaust. They explore the diversity that existed within this community and recognise that there was no one way to be Jewish in Warsaw before the Holocaust. In exploring the cultural history of this large community, teachers will understand what was lost in the Holocaust. Entire communities disappeared because of the Holocaust, communities filled with individuals each with their own invaluable contributions to make to the cultural life of Poland. See: Jewish life in Warsaw before the Holocaust – Centre for Holocaust Education

What happened to the Jews of Europe?

In this lesson, students approach fundamental questions about what 'the Holocaust' was through the lives of individuals from the time. Students develop knowledge and understanding of how different minority groups were treated during the period of the Nazi regime, so as to recognise similarities and differences in policies. Students can understand that the policies enacted against Jewish people had distinctive characteristics. The lesson also reinforces chronological understanding of key developments in the experiences of those groups targeted by the Nazis and their collaborators. During the lesson, students build a timeline, actively constructing the historical context that these people found themselves within, and in the process enter into a profound and meaningful learning experience. See: What happened to the Jews of Europe? – Centre for Holocaust Education

School textbook: Understanding the Holocaust: How and why did it happen?

The Centre's textbook is the only research-informed school textbook on the Holocaust in the world. Published by Hodder Education, the textbook has been specifically designed for use at Key Stage 3. It was written in direct response to the findings of the Centre's 2016 research into students' knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust. Accompanying guidance material is also available online. Teachers can acquire a free class set of textbooks by completing a self-guided, online CPD course. See: The Holocaust Education KS3 textbook – Centre for Holocaust Education

Photograph by Olivia Hemingway, 2011

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The UCL Centre for Holocaust Education is part of the UCL Institute of Education and was developed in partnership with Pears Foundation. The Centre works in partnership with Pears Foundation who, together with the Department for Education, have provided principal funding to the Centre since 2008.

UCL Centre for Holocaust Education

UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AL
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7612 6437

Email: holocaust@ucl.ac.uk

Website: holocausteducation.org.uk

ISBN 978-1-7392422-4-4

Pears Foundation

Department for Education