



# **Fifth Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals, 2021**

**November 2021**



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## FOREWORD

With the *Fifth Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals* – conducted by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's (JDC) European research division, the International Centre for Community Development (ICCD) – we celebrate a *bar mitzvah*.

In 2008, we launched this survey project as a means to assess Jewish Europe twenty years after the fall of communism and understand the differences between Eastern and Western European Jewish communities. Thirteen years later, Jewish Europe seems to have reached a stage with more regional commonalities than differences, but, in turn, new and old challenges have arisen. While antisemitism and security rank among the largest threats in 2021, emigration is not a major consideration and cultivating young Jews is a top priority for the future. As such, the survey, conducted every three years, has become a unique tool in identifying emerging and existing trends among Europe's Jewish community leaders and professionals.

Since its inception, the survey explored many aspects and dimensions of Jewish community life. However, the 2021 iteration faced the task of including an assessment of the impact of a new and unprecedented development: the COVID-19 pandemic. This ongoing global crisis – which has affected Jewish community life and taken a heavy toll on the most vulnerable – is marked by loss of lives, lockdowns, social distancing, and economic tumult.

The survey findings reflect these trends, especially financial loss, increase in poverty, and hardship. Respondents

note that these issues are now seen as more real a threat than three years ago. The findings also show that the pandemic triggered a widespread concern among leaders about the communities' ability to generate commitment and participation. To address it, developing outreach strategies towards non-members and recruiting new volunteers were the two action-items that received the highest score when leaders were asked to rank the most immediate tasks to focus on in a post-COVID era.

Leaders seem to be aware that for Jewish life to continue to be vibrant in Europe, the act of voluntary covenant – a fundamental concept at the heart of today's Jewish communities – need to be renewed and enriched. The respondents underscore the centrality of individual participation and leadership in the development of Jewish community life. Without people who are committed, active, and passionate about working towards a vision, Jewish communities are bound to lose appeal and eventually stagnate and disappear.

This *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals* is, at the same time, a recognition, and an invitation. A recognition to all these people who give of themselves to lead towards the future of Jewish life in Europe. An invitation to continue learning and embracing change and creativity.

We thank you all for your involvement in this survey and for your tireless efforts in the community.

JDC Europe team

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jewish Europe is at a crossroad, balancing contradictory concerns and hopes for the future. European Jewish leaders are navigating the COVID-19 pandemic landscape highly concerned about rising antisemitism on the continent, but not necessarily with the idea that Europe is no longer a safe place for Jews. Added to this is an outsized desire to build their communities in numbers and participation and cultivate young Jews to achieve this end, despite generational differences on core community issues.

These are the key findings from the *Fifth Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals*, conducted in April and May 2021 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's International Centre for Community Development (JDC-ICCD).

JDC-ICCD conducts the *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders*

and *Professionals* every three or four years using the same format to identify important topics and trends. Thus, the findings of the 2021 edition have been assessed taking into account the previous surveys conducted in 2008, 2011, 2015 and 2018. The latest survey was conducted online in 10 languages and administered to 1,054 respondents in 31 countries.

This survey asked Jewish community leaders and professionals a range of questions, seeking their views on the major challenges and issues concerning European Jewish communities in 2021 and their expectations for how the situation of their communities will evolve over the next five to ten years. In addition, this edition includes a special section designed to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Jewish community life.

### Antisemitism

The 2021 edition of the *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals* shows that concern about antisemitism has reached a new

level. For the first time since the survey's inception, antisemitism has risen to the first position in the ranking of the most serious threats to the future of

**Table 1. "Over the course of the next 5 to 10 years, do you expect problems with antisemitism to..." Comparison 2008-2021.**

	2008	2011	2015	2018	2021
<i>Increase significantly</i>	16%	10%	23%	21%	28%
<i>Increase somewhat</i>	38%	39%	44%	45%	40%
<i>Remain constant</i>	34%	35%	27%	25%	27%
<i>Decrease somewhat</i>	6%	8%	2%	3%	2%
<i>Decrease significantly</i>	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%
<i>Don't know</i>	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%

Jewish life (with 71% of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale). *Combating antisemitism* was chosen as the main community priority for future years (scoring 8.8 on a 1 to 10 scale). When asked if they expect changes over the next five to ten years, respondents were pessimistic, with 68% expecting antisemitism to *increase significantly* (28%) or *somewhat* (40%). Table 1 shows that while the total percentage of respondents expecting antisemitism to increase has remained stable since 2015 (around 66 to 68%), a migration

of responses from *increase somewhat* to *increase significantly* can be observed.

It is important, however, to factor in the regional differences. Western European respondents are far more likely than Eastern Europeans to consider antisemitism a threat and report deterioration in the situation from earlier surveys. In fact, much of this uptick can be explained by the regional balance of the survey, where 8 out of 10 respondents reside in Western Europe (see section About the Sample of Respondents).

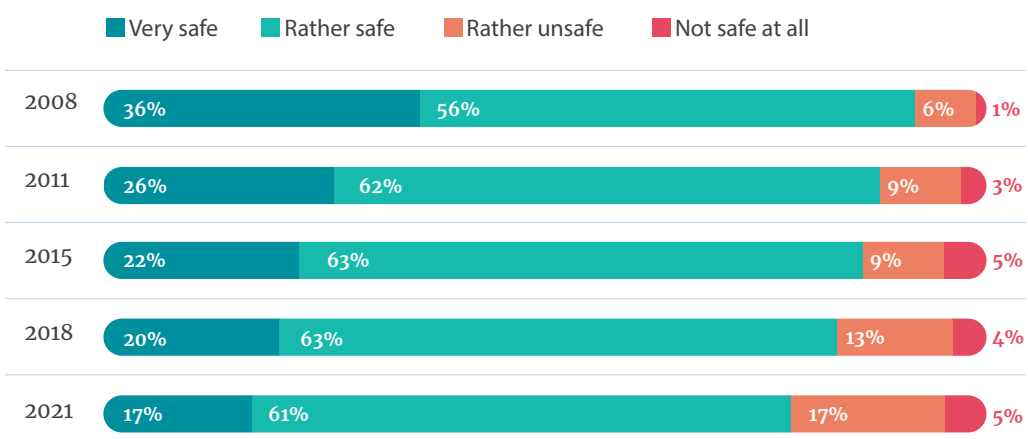
## Safety and Security

The perception that antisemitism is a growing concern, and a major threat is not necessarily coupled with the idea that Europe is no longer a safe place for Jews. Respondents were asked how safe they feel living and practising as Jews in their cities. Most European Jewish leaders feel secure, with 17% feeling *very safe* and 61% *rather safe*. Only 17% feel *rather unsafe*, and a mere 5% *not safe at all*. This relative feeling of safety might be linked to the fact that 70% of respondents believe that their national governments respond adequately to the security needs of the Jewish communities. The existence of sharp

regional differences, already apparent in 2018, was validated in 2021. Whereas 95% of those in the East feel safe in their cities, only 73% feel safe in the West.

On the other hand, slightly more than 1 in 4 from Western Europe (27%) feel unsafe in their cities, in contrast to only 5% of those in the East. It is clear that the feeling of safety has continued to erode in 2021; this was already noticeable in 2018. While in 2008, 36% felt *very safe* living as a Jew in their cities, only 17% feel that way in the current study. Likewise, *rather unsafe* rose from 6% to 17%.

**Table 2. "To what extent do you feel today it is safe to live and practise as a Jew in the city where you reside?" Comparison 2008-2021.**





## Threats to the Future of Jewish Life

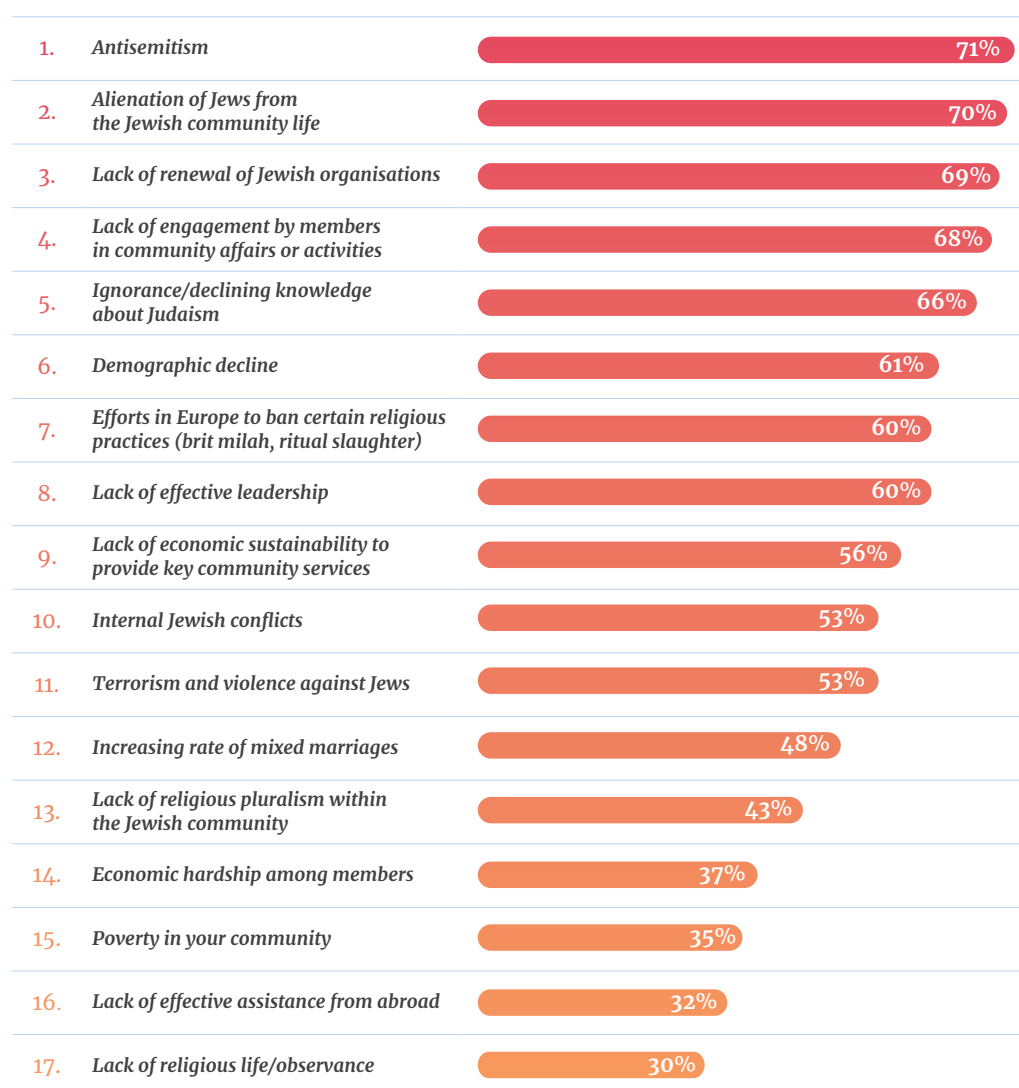
For the first time since the survey was conducted, concern about rising antisemitism is now considered the most serious threat to the future of Jewish life. Yet this *external* threat is followed by a series of perceived threats related to *internal* community issues: *alienation of Jews from Jewish community life* (70%); *lack of renewal of Jewish organisations* (69%); *lack of engagement by members in community affairs or activities* (68%); and *ignorance/declining knowledge about Judaism* (66%). Perhaps a common thread is that they are all concerned about the

continuity of Jewish communal life as a voluntary covenant. Dealing with the pandemic may have limited the ability of leaders and organisations to address these key aspects of Jewish community life.

With only a few exceptions, all threats are assessed as being more serious than in previous surveys.

*Lack of economic sustainability to provide key community services* experienced an uptick of almost 10%, increasing from 47% in 2018 to 56% in 2021. The same

**Figure 1. "Which of the following are the most serious threats to the future of Jewish life in your country?" 2021. (Percentage of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale)**



was true of *lack of effective leadership*, from 51% in 2018 to 60% in the current survey, and *internal Jewish conflicts*: 44% in previous surveys v 53% in 2021.

*Poverty in your community*, though not one of the top threats, has grown steadily over the years, from 10% in 2008 to 35% in 2021. This year, we added *economic*

*hardship among members* (37%) in light of the difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

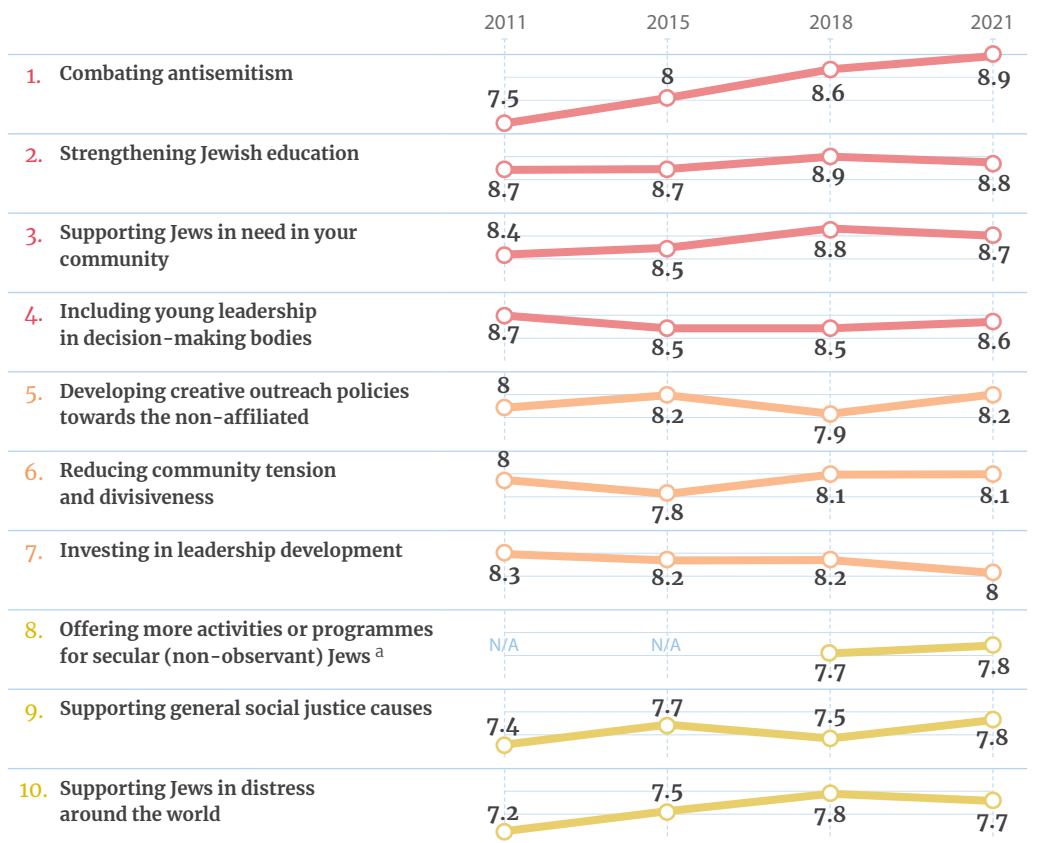
Another newly added item was *efforts in Europe to ban certain religious practices (brit milah, ritual slaughter)*, and the results (60%) showed that this is a matter of concern.

### Future Priorities for Jewish Communities

When asked about the communal causes that need to be prioritised over the next five to ten years, Jewish community leaders focused their attention on combating antisemitism and assuring communal continuity. In order of importance, their highest priorities were *combating antisemitism, strengthening Jewish education, supporting Jews in need in your community, including young*

*leadership in decision-making bodies and developing creative outreach policies towards the non-affiliated*. For the first time since the survey's inception in 2008, *combating antisemitism* now ranks at the top of the communal priorities. Also, *developing creative outreach policies towards the non-affiliated* rose from the seventh position in 2018 to the fifth in 2021.

Figure 2. Top ten community priorities. (On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “not a priority at all” and 10 means “a top priority”.) Comparison 2011-2021.



a. Item introduced in the 2018 survey

## The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Jewish Community Life

The 2021 *Survey of European Jewish Leaders and Professionals* was carried out a little more than one year after the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of lockdown and social distancing measures. The survey included questions about the impact of the pandemic on different aspects of Jewish community life.

Not surprisingly, the pandemic affected Jewish institutions financially. 61% of respondents stated that their organisation had incurred *financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic* (36% answered *yes, definitely* and a further 25% *yes, although they were minor*). There were indeed regional differences: more than half of Eastern European respondents (56%) answered *yes, definitely*, versus 30% in Western Europe.

How have Jewish institutions performed during the COVID-19 crisis? Overall, the respondents' (self-) evaluation was positive. The item that received the

highest score was *maintaining ongoing communication with community members*, with 80% of respondents giving the highest scores. It was followed by *shifting services and programmes online* (77%), *providing support and care to community members in need* (76%), *assessment of community members' needs* (70%) and *strategies and actions to ensure financial sustainability of your institution* (66%). The item that received the lowest score was *connecting with/engaging new people in your activities* (48%). Interestingly, organisations did not seem to capitalise on shifting programmes online to attract the less engaged.

When asked about the most urgent organisational tasks in light of the COVID-19 pandemic when thinking ahead, respondents gave the highest scores to two related action items that speak about the desire to maximise the involvement of the local Jewish people. These included *developing outreach strategies towards non-*

Figure 3. "Thinking ahead, what actions will your institution/organisation need to prioritise?" Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means 'less a priority' and 10 means 'urgent priority:'



members/new target groups (7.4) and recruiting new volunteers (7.3). Other important priorities were investing in leadership development (7.1), improving

communications with members (6.9), supporting members in need (6.9) and rethinking overall community dynamics (6.7).

### Jewish Status Issues

Issues regarding membership criteria and policies towards intermarried families are important concerns in all communities. The overall tendency is to be inclusive and accommodating rather than exclusive and strict. 72% agreed that *including intermarried families in Jewish community life is a critical factor for the survival of our community*, and 82% considered that *the community should put in place suitable spaces or programmes to better integrate intermarried families*. Attitudes on community membership varied

according to the region and Jewish denomination. Eastern European respondents tended to favour more inclusive policies, whereas Western Europeans were inclined towards a Halakhic policy.

Most respondents were pessimistic about the future of Jewish status issues in their communities. 40% expect these issues to become *more problematic*, and 14% believe *they will pose a danger to the continuity of the existing Jewish community*.

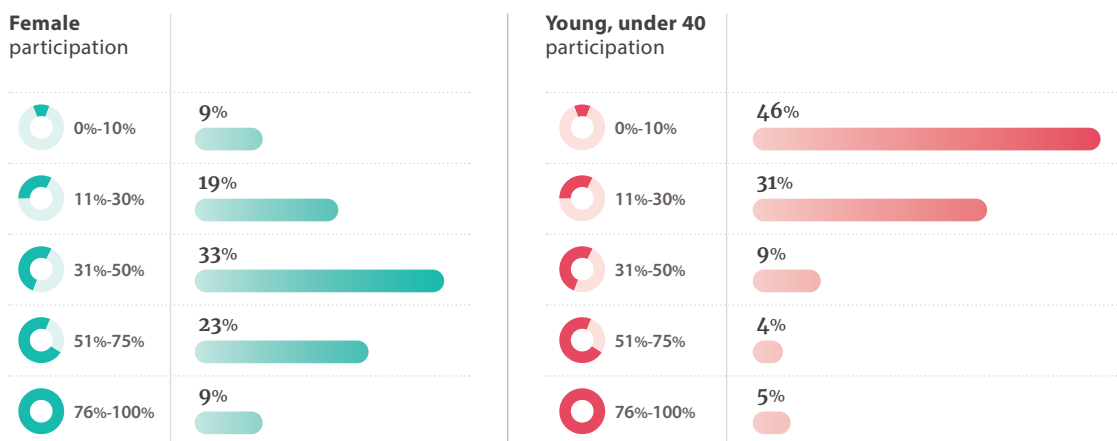
### Gender Balance and Inclusion of Young People in Decision-Making Bodies

The responses to the question regarding the percentage of female participation in their organisation’s boards of directors were roughly divided into thirds: 27% of respondents said that women comprise between 51% and 100% of the board of directors, 33% indicated that the female

presence is between 31% and 50%, and 32% stated that the presence of women on the board of directors is 30% or lower.

When analysing the presence of younger people on boards of directors, a very different picture emerges. Almost half

Figure 4. “What percentage of your organisation’s/institution’s board of directors is...?”



of the respondents (46%) reported that individuals under the age of 40 account for between 0% and 10%, and a further 31% indicated that younger people comprise between 11% and 30%. Only 9% stated that younger people made up 51% or more of their organisations'

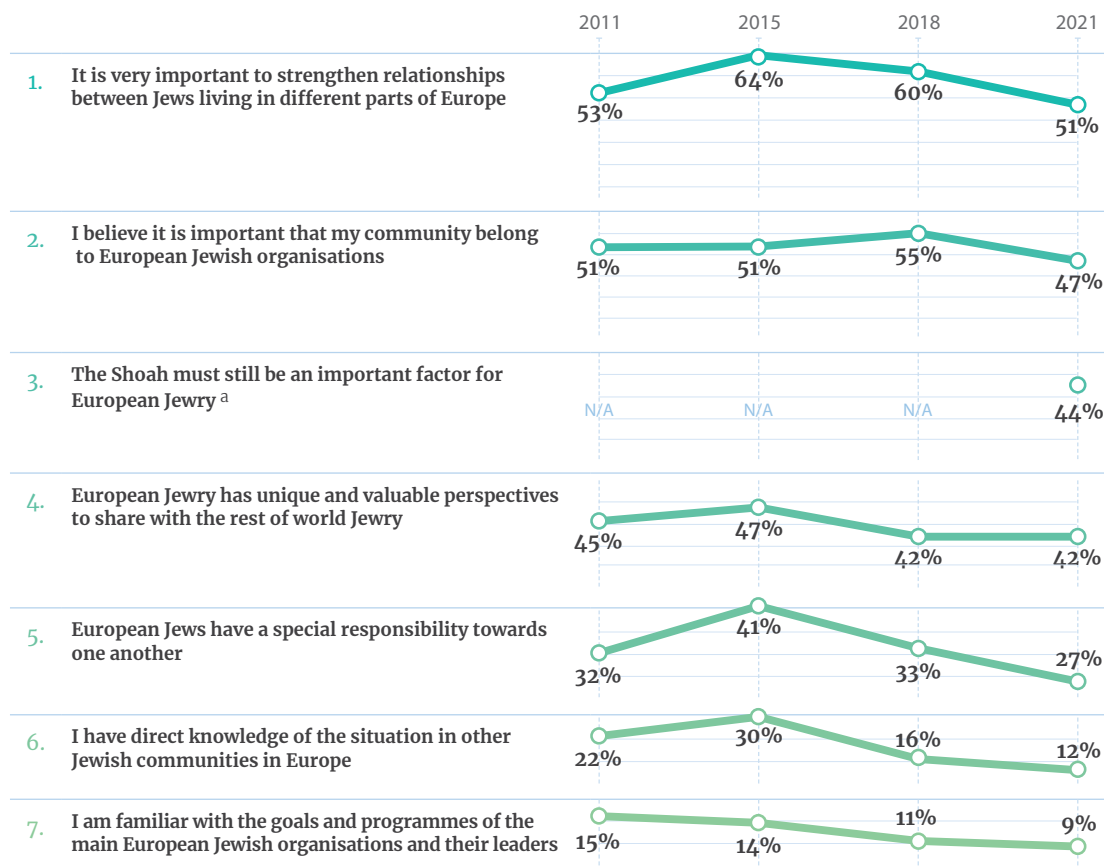
boards of directors. This appears to reflect the questionable appeal that established Jewish community life has for younger people and indicates that Jewish institutions need to work harder to bring a younger generation of leaders on board.

## Europe

Europe is popular among respondents both as a Jewish and a general political project. There is a desire to strengthen relationships among Jewish communities and belong to European Jewish organisations, particularly in Eastern Europe. However, evidence shows that certain statements about Europe and its Jews generate less enthusiasm among respondents than previous surveys. Most answers show a decrease in the *strongly agree* response

category. Leaders admit they have little direct knowledge of other Jewish communities in Europe and accept that there is little real integration. Are Jewish leaders optimistic about the future? European Jewish leaders seemed almost equally divided between optimists and pessimists as 47% of the leaders *strongly agreed* or *rather agreed* with the statement *the future of European Jewry is vibrant and positive*, and 52% with *I am optimistic about the future of Europe*.

Figure 5. Statements about European Jewish communities. Strong agreement only. Comparison 2011-2021.



a. Item introduced in the 2021 survey

## Israel

The evidence shows that support for Israel seems to have gained strength among Jewish leaders in Europe since 2018. The 2021 survey findings go in the same direction, although this may also reflect the sample's characteristics. 66% agreed with *I support Israel fully, regardless of how its government behaves*. The statement appears to be less divisive than previous surveys (48% in 2015 and 57% in 2011). The same is true of *I am sometimes ashamed of the actions of the Israeli government*, agreed to by only 39% of respondents, compared to 48% in 2011.

The survey also replicated the 2011, 2015 and 2018 findings which found overwhelming agreement (81%) that *Jewish communities should provide opportunities for members to share different opinions and points of view on Israel and its policies*. There was also

a strong consensus (81%) that *events in Israel sometimes lead to an increase of antisemitism in my country*. This observation may be linked with the 70% agreement that *the media in my country regularly portrays Israel in a bad light*. Here again, there was a sharp regional divide, with 82% of those in the West viewing the media as hostile towards Israel but only 26% of those in the East.

Likewise, Western Europeans (10%) reported more often than Eastern Europeans (4%) that community divisiveness towards Israel was a problem. In the same vein, 33% of Eastern Europeans reported no divisiveness compared to only 15% of Western Europeans.

Support for Israel looks somewhat different when using the lens of age, as the following section shows.

## Young Leaders

A generational gap is becoming apparent, especially concerning three main topics: Israel, antisemitism and optimism.

Younger respondents aged 40 or less are less supportive of Israel. For example, the level of agreement differs by age group regarding certain statements about Israel: *Israel is critical to sustaining Jewish life in Europe* was agreed to by 66% of respondents aged 40 or less compared to 78% of those aged 41 to 55 and 86% of those aged 55 and older. The same is true of *I support Israel fully, regardless of how its government behaves* (51% v 65% v 71%) and of *all Jews have a responsibility to support Israel* (60% v 72% v 80%). Perhaps more significantly, for respondents up to 40

years old, *supporting the State of Israel* was considered the least important community priority out of 18 items presented.

Younger respondents also feel less threatened by antisemitism, although they too do consider it important. 60% of younger respondents considered antisemitism a very serious threat compared to 65% of those between 41 and 55 and 77% of those aged 55 and older. The same is true of terrorism and violence against Jews with 36%, 46% and 60%, respectively.

Last but not least, younger respondents clearly show more optimism towards the future of both Europe and its Jews. The statement *I am optimistic about the*

*future of Europe* was agreed to by 61% of those under 40 years old compared to 52% and 50% of the older age groups. Furthermore, *the future of European Jewry is vibrant and positive* obtained 64% agreement compared to 45% and 43% of the older age groups. It is striking that younger respondents' optimism towards Jews and Europe is inverted compared

to older respondents. Unlike the overall results of the survey, where respondents are slightly more optimistic about the future of Europe and less about that of its Jews (52% v 47%), those aged up to 40 are more optimistic about European Jewry than they are about Europe (64% v 61%).

## Key Trends since 2008

Five surveys over the last thirteen years provide a unique pool of data for investigating the evolution of European Jewish leaders' opinions and thoughts. This will be the subject of a special report to be released soon. As noted in previous reports, there are consistent patterns over time across multiple issues, which validate the reliability of the earlier survey results. This feature is striking, bearing in mind that the sample sizes of the surveys have varied over time, as have the numbers and proportions of respondents from the different countries. This suggests that a stable European Jewish community consensus has emerged on many issues and opinions.

Among those aspects that show remarkable stability is concern about issues related to the continuity and sustainability of the Jewish community as a proactive, voluntary covenant. This includes, among other things, the need to strengthen Jewish education, the need to develop outreach policies towards the non-affiliated and the need to invest in leadership development, but also the imperative to include younger generations in decision-making bodies. Even when asked in the context of how the COVID-19 crisis has affected the communities and what the immediate tasks would be in post-pandemic times, leaders emphasised the need to

maximise the involvement of the local Jewish people as the first and most important action to undertake. This is a powerful indicator that leaders are well aware that the most precious asset of their communities is their members. Without them and their active engagement, the whole communal building would be in peril.

The opinion is quite stable on issues pertaining to Jewish status and communal policies towards intermarried families, with respondents showing themselves to be relatively inclusive and rejecting the idea of remaining neutral. Concern about the increasing intermarriage rate is real but systematically ranks below the top ten threats assessed as more serious.

However, there are also dramatic shifts, the most important being the sustained increase over the years in concern about antisemitism as a real threat for European Jews, which leads to an erosion of respondents' feeling of safety in their cities. Even if there is a sharp regional divide between East and West, this concern has been growing consistently over the years across Europe. The demographic decline also seems to have moved to a more central place in the leaders' thinking, and poverty as a community threat has become more important to them over the years.

## About the Sample of Respondents

Compared with previous surveys, the 2021 survey presents a more significant number of respondents (a total of 1,054) and a larger percentage of respondents residing in Western Europe (79%), particularly in France (N=295) and, to a lesser degree, in Germany (N=169). The reason for this is that in both these countries, the national community organisation/federation — the *Fonds Social Juif Unifié* and the *Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland* — have partnered with JDC-ICCD to reach a larger number of respondents. Thus, they can use robust national samples providing reliable and up-to-date information for their policymaking. In addition, the current sample is more balanced in terms of gender: the proportion of women respondents was 42% in 2021, while in previous surveys, it was approximately 32% to 35%. The sample was skewed to the older generation, with 55% over 55 years of age and only 17% under 40. Regarding denominational affiliation, 37% identified as *Orthodox*, while 26% identified as *Masorti, Liberal or Reform*, and 37% as *non-religious secular or cultural Jews*. In terms of their personal outlook, 56% regarded themselves as *religious* and 44% as *secular*. The statistical analysis underscores the predictive unreliability of characteristics such as gender, age and denomination among the leaders of European Jewish communities with regard to most opinions on community priorities and organisation. However, the region (Eastern/Western Europe) is a predictive

factor on issues regarding antisemitism and safety, and age is predictive on issues regarding Israel and optimism towards the future.

For the purposes of gathering the sample of respondents for this survey, we considered that the following roles fulfilled the criteria for being “leaders” and “community professionals”: presidents and chairs of nationwide umbrella organisations or federations; presidents and executive directors of private Jewish foundations, charities and other privately funded initiatives; presidents and main representatives of Jewish communities organised at a city level; executive directors and programme coordinators, as well as current and former board members of Jewish organisations; directors and executive directors of Jewish agencies or departments dealing with Jewish social welfare; directors and programme coordinators of Jewish educational bodies and departments at Jewish federations or communities; principals of Jewish schools; prominent Jewish informal educators, including rabbis; directors and programme coordinators of youth departments at Jewish federations or communities; directors and executive directors of Jewish Community Centres (JCCs); staff responsible for programming at non-institutionalised Jewish initiatives; prominent young activists; influential Jewish media entrepreneurs; and significant donors to the communities.



## I. Community Priorities and Threats

One of the primary goals of the *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals* is to identify the major priorities and challenges facing European Jewish communities today. Additionally, the survey examines

the perceptions these leaders and professionals hold about the most serious issues and threats regarding the future of Jewish life in their respective countries.

### Future Priorities

Respondents were asked to rate 18 community causes in terms of their priority, ranging from 1 (not a priority at all) to 10 (top priority) (Figure 6). The highest priorities in 2021 (scoring 8 or more) were: *combating antisemitism* (8.9), *strengthening Jewish education* (8.8), *supporting Jews in need in your community* (8.7), *including young leadership in decision-making bodies* (8.6), *developing creative outreach policies towards the non-affiliated* (8.2), *reducing community tension and divisiveness* (8.1) and *investing in leadership development* (8).

“Banning Brit milah is one of the most controversial forms of antisemitism.”

(Jewish activist, Latvia)

The overall ranking of the priorities has hardly changed since 2011. However, the significant change related to *combating antisemitism*, which for the first time is now the top-ranked priority, is noteworthy. In fact, *combating antisemitism* has steadily increased in priority over the years, rising from the

“Antisemitism has entered mainstream politics and has become far more acceptable.”

(Lay leader, UK)

seventh position in 2011 to the third in 2018 and the first in the current survey. This reflects a (seemingly continuously) growing concern, particularly in Western Europe. Also, *developing creative outreach policies towards the non-affiliated* rose from the seventh position in 2018 to the fifth in 2021.

There was no change among the lowest-ranked priorities. However, all of them received higher scores than in previous surveys. Among the less prioritised items, *functioning as a pressure group in national politics* (6.9) saw the most important increase, especially among the Western European respondents. *Encouraging the use of communal space for open debate about current issues concerning general society* seems more important now (7.4 v 6.8 in 2018).

Various subgroups rated the community causes differently from the respondents overall. Age played a role here, with respondents aged 55 and older considering a number of priorities to be more important than the other age groups, these include: *combating antisemitism* (9 v 8.3 among the up to 40 age group), *developing creative outreach policies towards the non-affiliated* (8.3 v 7.8), *supporting general social justice causes* (7.9 v 7.2), *supporting Jews in distress around the world* (7.9 v 7.3) and *developing an effective policy on intermarriage* (7.1 v 6.4). The age gap pertaining to *supporting the State of Israel*

is noteworthy: among respondents aged 55 and older, this item received a score of 7.8 versus 6 among those aged up to 40 (almost a 2-point gap). Furthermore, *supporting the State of Israel* is the item

that received the lowest score among the youngest respondents. A clear age sequence can be established for some items, with the middle-aged group located in the centre.

**Figure 6. Community causes.** “Please indicate the extent to which you think it should be prioritised in the next 5 to 10 years.” Responses on a scale of 1 to 10 for 2011-2021.



a. Item introduced in the 2015 survey

As for differences according to gender, female respondents gave higher scores to priorities related to improving internal and external relations and, in consequence, community resilience, such as *strengthening interfaith relations* (7.2 v 6.8 among male respondents); *reducing community tension and divisiveness* (8.3 v 7.9) and *supporting general justice causes* (8.1 v 7.5).

“Communities should function – but for this, community members also have to do something – participate, take responsibility, show through an active contribution that the community is important to them.”

(Rabbi, Germany)

There are few regional differences between East and West. This may suggest that in many aspects (although not in all of them), the gap between the realities of Jewish communities in Eastern and Western Europe is either becoming narrower or no longer exists. Eastern European respondents gave more emphasis to *offering more activities or programmes for secular (non-observant) Jews* (8.3 v 7.6 in Western Europe) and *developing Jewish arts and culture* (8 v 7.4). Western Europeans

placed more importance on *supporting the State of Israel* (7.5 v 7) and, especially, on *functioning as a pressure group in national politics* (7.1 v 6).

There is an overall consensus among Jewish denominations, although – predictably – a few “partisan” items. For example, *strengthening Jewish religious life* (7.8) and *supporting the State of Israel* (7.5) were rated higher by the Orthodox. *Encouraging internal pluralism* (8) received the highest priority from the Masorti/Liberal/Reform (which we abbreviate as MLR). *Encouraging the use of communal spaces for open debate about current issues concerning general society* (7.6) and *offering more activities or programmes for secular Jews* (8.2) obtained the highest scores among cultural Jews. Still, interestingly, this last item was given rather high scores by the Orthodox (7.3) and the MLR (7.6) as well. There were few differences between community professionals and lay leaders depending on their roles in the community. The former gave more importance to *investing in leadership development* (8.3 v 7.8), while the latter put emphasis on *supporting the State of Israel* (7.6 v 6.8).

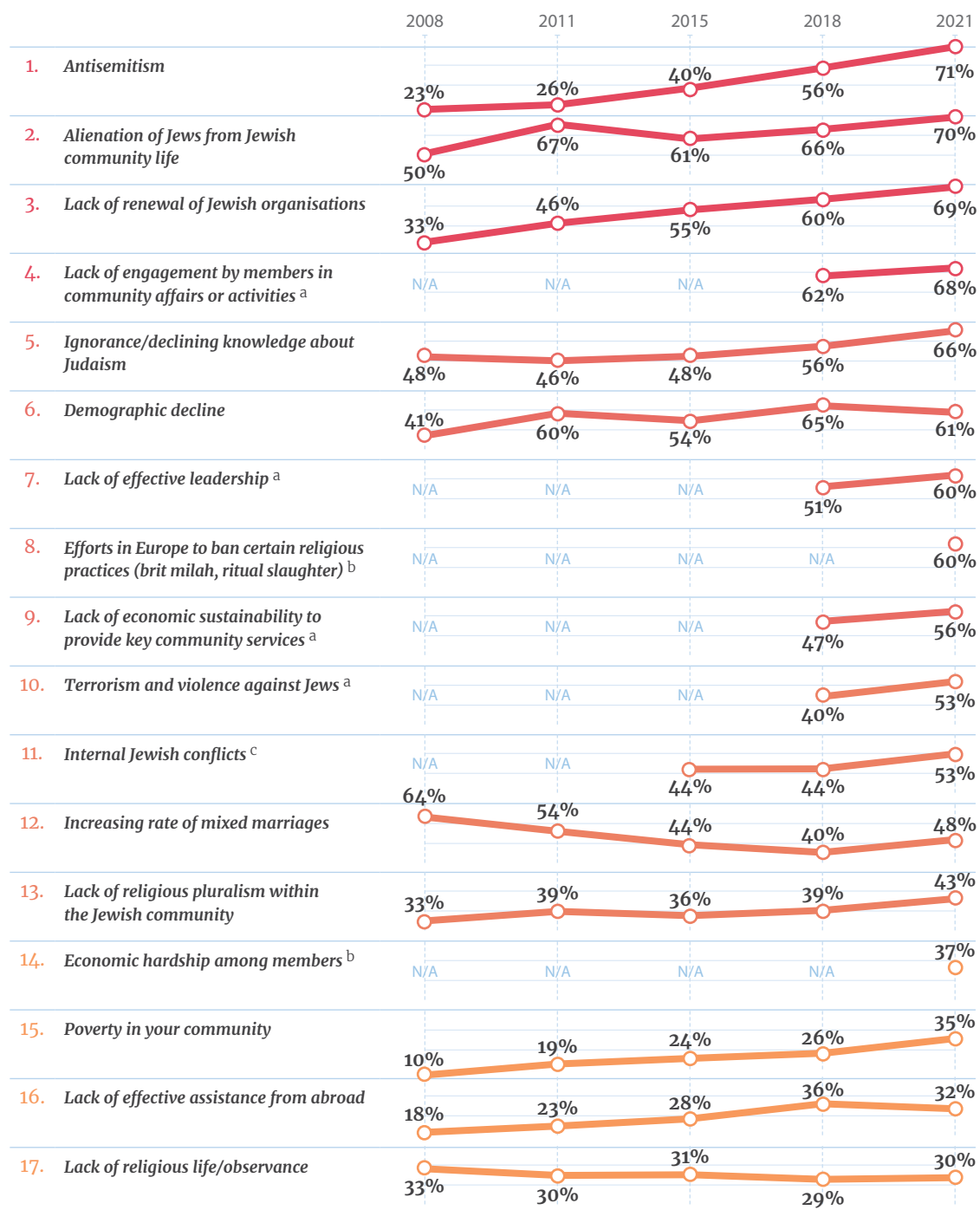
## Threats to the Future of Jewish Life

The respondents were asked to rate 17 items that could be viewed as serious threats to the future of Jewish life in their country, both internal and external to the community, on a 5-point scale where 1 indicated *not a threat at all* and 5 *a very serious threat*. Figure 7 shows that the most alarming issue rated as a *very serious threat* by a majority of leaders in 2021 (measured by the percentage of respondents who gave a score of 4 or 5) is *antisemitism* (71%). This item rose to the first position, a dramatic uptick from previous surveys. As we shall see in this

and the following sections, much has to do with the regional balance (Eastern v Western Europe) and the number of respondents per country in the current survey.

Concern about antisemitism is followed by a series of perceived threats related to *internal* community issues: *alienation of Jews from Jewish community life* (70%), *lack of renewal of Jewish organisations* (69%), *lack of engagement by members in community affairs or activities* (68%) and *ignorance/declining knowledge*

Figure 7. “Which of the following are the most serious threats to the future of Jewish life in your country?” (Percentage of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale). Comparison 2008-2021.



a. Item introduced in the 2018 survey b. Item introduced in the 2021 survey c. Item introduced in the 2015 survey

about Judaism (66%). There is perhaps a common thread between them, namely that they are all related to the concern about continuity of Jewish communal life as a voluntary covenant. In general, and with a few exceptions, all threats were assessed as more serious than

previous surveys. *Demographic decline* (61%) continues to be considered an important threat. *Lack of economic sustainability to provide key community services* experienced an uptick of almost 10%, rising from 47% in 2018 to 56% in 2021. The same is true for *lack of effective*

*leadership*, increasing from 51% in 2018 to 60% in the current survey, and *internal Jewish conflicts* (44% in previous surveys v 53% in 2021). The *increasing rate of mixed marriages* (48%), while

“Many people do not feel represented by communities as an organisational form of Jewish life; there are few offers for people who do not define their Jewishness religiously [...] A real inclusion of young people, people from the LGBTQ community and patrilineal Jews rarely takes place. This makes the communities increasingly unattractive and requires other initiatives that establish themselves apart from life in the communities.”

(Lay leader, Germany)

considered as a more serious threat than in 2018, remains excluded from the 10 most serious threats. *Poverty in your community*, though not one of the top threats, has shown steady growth over the years. In connection to this, we shall also mention *economic hardship among members* (37%), an item newly added this year given the difficulties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Another new item was *efforts in Europe to ban certain religious practices (brit milah, ritual slaughter)* (60%), and results show that, in effect, this is a matter of concern.

“New forms of poverty threaten the members of the community: young people, single-parent families as well as families strongly impacted by the health crisis with professional activities at a standstill.”

(Lay leader, France)

In terms of regional differences, Western European respondents clearly assess a certain set of threats more seriously. The widest gaps are all related to *external threats: terrorism and violence against Jews* (62% in the West v 21% in the East), *efforts in Europe to ban certain religious practices* (68% v 30%) and *antisemitism* (77% v 50%). Other

measurable differences were *lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community* (46% v 33%), *lack of effective leadership* (62% v 53%) and *lack of renewal of Jewish organisations* (71% v 63%). Eastern European respondents assessed only one threat as more serious: *lack of effective assistance from Jewish organisations abroad* (41% in the East v 29% in the West).

There are few significant differences between Jewish denominations aside from those one could consider predictable. For Orthodox Jews, *efforts in Europe to ban certain religious practices* is a more serious threat than for MLR and cultural Jews (72% v 52% and 50% respectively). Still, the fact that half of the other two groups assessed such efforts as an important threat demonstrates that far from affecting only observant Jews, the issue indicates how threatened and fragile the state of religious freedom on the continent is perceived. On the other hand, the *increasing rate of mixed marriages* seems to be a more distinctive concern for Orthodox Jews (66%) vis-à-vis the MLR and the cultural Jews, with 38% each. For their part, the MLR were more concerned about a *lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community* (51% v 36% among the Orthodox) and less concerned about *poverty in your community* (22% v 42% among the Orthodox and 35% among the cultural Jews) and *economic hardship among members* (26% v 40% and 38% respectively).

There are significant differences between age groups. On a general note, it can be asserted that the younger the respondent, the less concerned they are about *antisemitism, terrorism and violence against Jews, increasing rate of mixed marriages, poverty in your community* and *economic hardship among members*. Conversely,

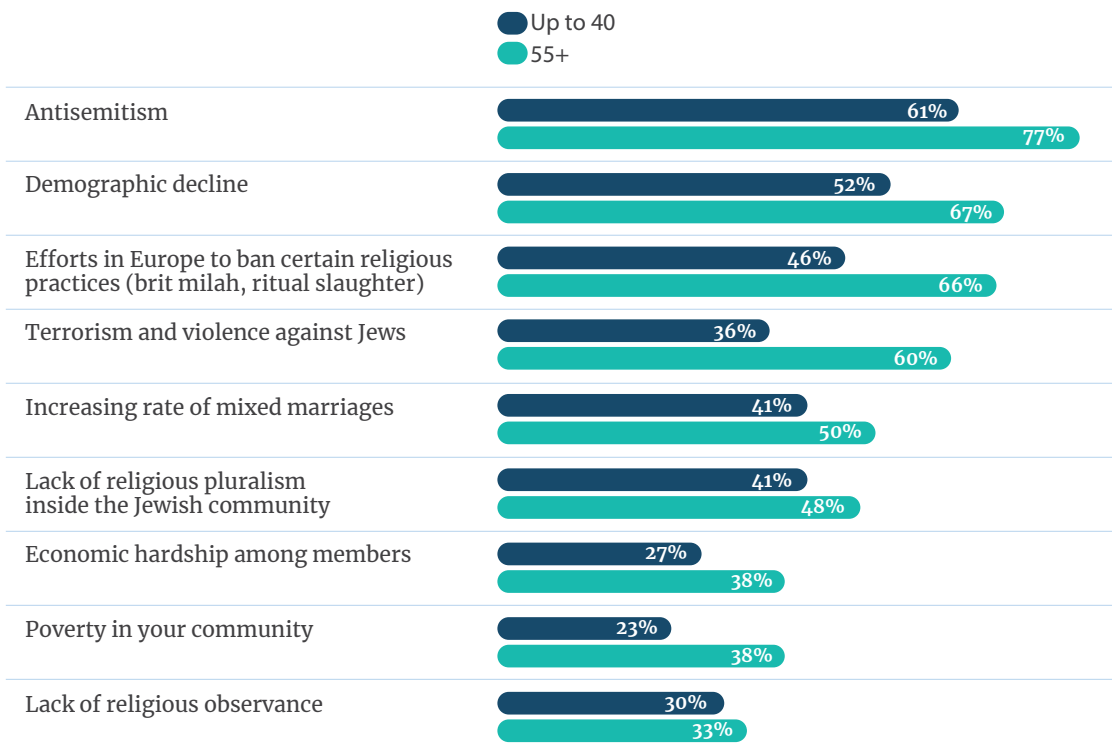
respondents aged 55 and older assess antisemitism, demographic decline, efforts in Europe to ban certain religious practices, internal Jewish conflicts, and lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community more seriously.

Male respondents are more concerned about the increasing rate of mixed marriages (53% v 40%), female respondents about antisemitism (74% v 68%) and lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community (49% v 41%). However, except for these issues, no relevant differences among gender can be observed. The same can be said about differences between lay leaders and community professionals. The only measurable difference is the increasing rate of mixed marriages, where the former sees it more as a threat than the latter (53 v 37%).

“Knowledge of Judaism, including by strongly secularised people, is essential to the sustainability of a community which has always been defined by the knowledge of its own culture.”  
(Lay leader, Belgium)

“The greatest issue in my community is lack of engagement. We are not interesting, we have nothing to offer, we do not serve our members in any way. Every one of our members has been alienated at some point for some reason. Judaism is boring, uninspiring and lacks any relevance to their modern lives today. Being a leader and being a Jewish leader are two very different things. Members should be loved, and acceptance is the key to building an inclusive Jewish community where everyone can find their way to be a Jew, on their own terms.”  
(Jewish activist, Italy)

Figure 8. “Which of the following are the most serious threats to the future of Jewish life in your country?” (Percentage of respondents giving a score of 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale). Comparison between age groups on selected items.



*“There is a need to fluidify the relationships between the different Jewish denominations, including non-observant Jews, and to make more room for community engagement in a non-religious way.”*

*(Community professional, France)*

*“The most important challenge we face is connecting Jews more deeply with Judaism, Jewish values and the community by making it more meaningful for them.”*

*(Community professional, UK)*

*“We can send our younger members or activists to as many Jewish value-based leadership development programs. But, if we don't integrate them as soon as possible into various organisations, the community will gain nothing. In fact, it will lose.”*

*(Community professional, Poland)*

## II. Internal Community Issues

### Denominational Tensions

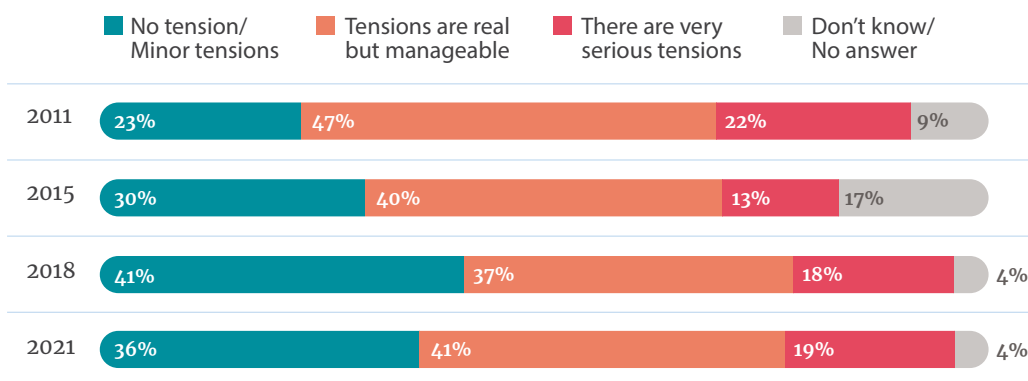
Internal community issues tend to revolve around religious or ideological differences. In order to assess the context for these differences, we must bear in mind the overall pattern of the respondents' affiliations. The respondents were distributed roughly equally: 37% Orthodox, 26% Masorti, Liberal or Reform and 37% self-defined as secular or cultural Jews. The sample was somewhat unevenly divided between those who reported a religious outlook (56%) and those who expressed a secular one (44%).

When respondents were asked to *what extent do you feel that there are tensions between different streams within your*

*community today?*, the most common response (41%) was that there are a number of problems but that these are *manageable*. The overall assessment of tensions reported in Figure 9 suggests a certain stabilisation since 2015 but with a slight upward trend of people reporting the existence of either *manageable* or *serious* denominational tensions. Those who reported either *manageable* or *serious* tensions in the community went from 53% in 2015 to 55% in 2018 and 60% in 2021.

Western Europeans, the MLR and community professionals reported more community tensions than the other subgroups.

Figure 9. "To what extent do you feel there are tensions between different denominational streams within your community today?" Comparison 2011-2021.



### Community Membership

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a battery of five statements about policies on Jewish community membership criteria. The issue no doubt tackles an even larger question: Who should be considered a Jew? The answers reported below are, of course, the aggregate for

the combined European community leaders and do not represent any community in particular. Nevertheless, they provide an interesting overview of current sentiment on these contentious questions as well as how the trend in opinion on some issues has evolved since 2008.



The five statements varied from a normative Halakhic (Jewish law) definition to a sociological or self-definition approach. Given the contentious nature of the membership issue, the *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree* response categories for 2021 are reported. Even if the overall preferences on the different policies pertaining to community membership remained unchanged from previous surveys, a certain decrease in the *strong agreement* and, conversely, an increase in the *strong disagreement* responses to certain statements suggest a shift towards a slightly more normative approach by respondents.

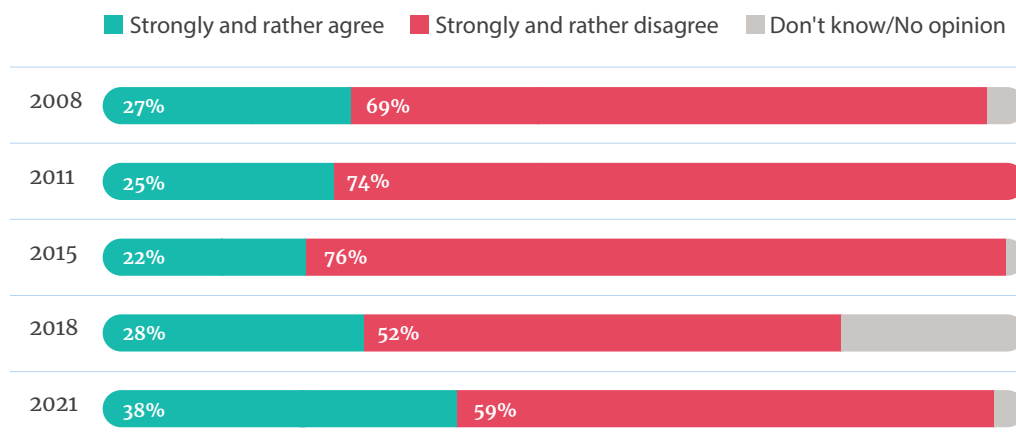
The greatest consensus was for a policy of accepting *everyone who has undergone conversion under the supervision of a rabbi from any denomination*, with 48% in *strong agreement* and 14% in *strong disagreement*. *Anyone with a Jewish father should be allowed to be a member of the community* gained 42% *strong agreement* and 15% *strong disagreement*. A policy of accepting *everyone with at least one Jewish grandparent* had 26% *strong agreement* and 25% *strong disagreement*. According to the Halakhic approach, *only those born to a Jewish mother or who have undergone an*

*Orthodox conversion* gained 22% *strong agreement* but 42% *strong disagreement*. The largest opposition was against a policy of acceptance for *everyone who considers him/herself to be Jewish*, with 12% *strong agreement* but 47% *strong disagreement*.

In order to identify the majority opinion, we need to include the *rather agree* responses in the analysis. When these are added, the most popular criteria for community membership are after having *undergone conversion under the supervision of a rabbi from any denomination* (75%), having a *Jewish father* (71%) and *one Jewish grandparent* (54%).

Attitudes on community membership varied according to region and Jewish denomination, which was predictable. Eastern European respondents tended to favour more inclusive policies (*Jewish father* received *strongly agree* or *rather agree* from 90% in the East v 66% in the West; *Jewish grandfather* 85% v 45%), whereas Western Europeans favoured a more normative Halakhic policy (45% v 21%). As shown in Figure 10, agreement with the statement *only those born to a Jewish mother or converted under Orthodox supervision should be allowed*

Figure 10. Responses to the statement: "Only those born to a Jewish mother or who have undergone an Orthodox conversion should be allowed to become a member of the community." Comparison 2008-2021.



to become a member of the community, which reflects the Halakhic approach, was at 38%, its highest level since surveying began in 2008. At this point, readers should bear in mind that there have been changes in the sample in

each survey, especially between those conducted in 2018 and 2021, in terms of the numbers and proportions of respondents from the various countries as well as their identification with the various Jewish denominations.

## Communal Policy on Intermarriage and the Intermarried

What should be the communal policy on intermarriage and the education of the children of intermarried couples? Eight approaches to this issue were offered for *agreement* or *disagreement*. There was a consensus that communities needed a policy, with 74% of respondents opposing the proposition that their community *remain neutral, i.e. there should be no communal policy on intermarriage*. Respondents seem to differentiate between a civil notion of community membership – in which they showed a more inclusive approach – and religious rituals such as weddings and conversion. As a result, 69% agreed, and 31% disagreed with the statement that *intermarried couples should be allowed to become members of your community*. The tendency to favour inclusion was confirmed when 88% disagreed with the statement *I strongly support excluding intermarried couples from community membership*. Consequently, 82% agreed that their community should put in place suitable

*spaces or programmes in order to better integrate intermarried families*. This is probably because 72% agreed with the statement *including intermarried families in Jewish community life is critical for the survival of our community*. The most widely held opinion, agreed to by 86%, was that *all children of intermarried couples, whether from a Jewish mother or father, should be accepted into Jewish schools*. This result is surprising given the results below and the sizable Orthodox segment supporting the Halakhic view.

There was division regarding marriages per se, with a majority of 55% disagreeing with the statement that *intermarried couples should be allowed to have a Jewish wedding ceremony in your community*, while 45% supported the idea. There was a similar split on the proposition that *non-Jewish spouses should be actively encouraged to convert to Judaism*, with 49% supporting the idea while 51% opposed.

## Future Expectations on Jewish Status Issues

Respondents were asked whether they thought Jewish status issues in their communities would become more or less problematic over the next five to ten years. Most were pessimistic, with 40% expecting Jewish status issues to become more problematic with 14% believing they will *pose a danger to the continuity of the existing*

*Jewish community*. Pessimism was at approximately the same levels as in 2011, when it stood at 56%. The 6% who thought these issues would become less problematic is evidence that only a minimal amount of optimism exists among the respondents; this is even more pronounced than in previous iterations of the survey (9% in 2018 and

2015 and 10% in 2011). The remaining 40% of respondents expected little change from the present.

It is worth noting that there are no statistically significant differences in the assessments of the problem of Jewish status in terms of profession, role in

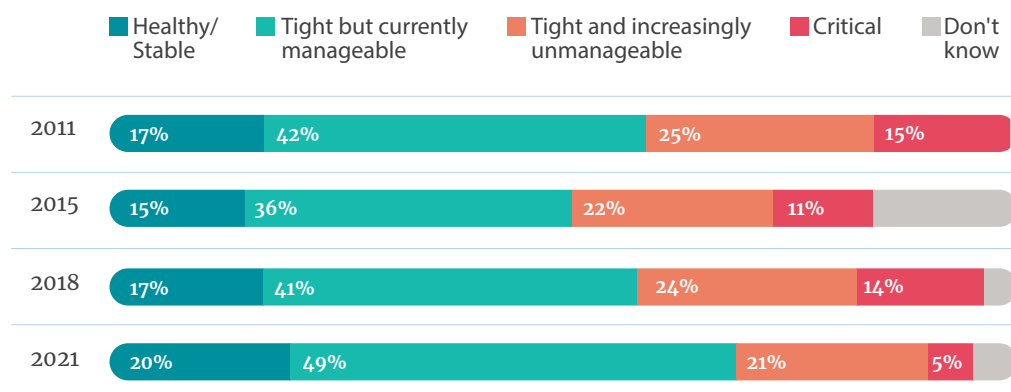
the community, age group or gender. However, a regional difference suggests the problem is greater in Western European communities since 56% of Western Europeans indicated the two pessimistic options as opposed to only 46% of Eastern Europeans.

### III. Financial Situation and Funding

This year, for the first time, respondents were asked not only to assess the financial situation of their communities in general but also that of their organisations in particular. Questions designed to understand the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were also added to the questionnaire. The image offered by the findings of the survey is ambivalent. While a majority of respondents reported that, overall, both their communities and organisations are in fairly decent financial shape, 61% do state that their organisations incurred financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic (more on this below).

The respondents' assessment of the current financial situation of the communities showed a predominance of a *tight but currently manageable* situation (49%), as in 2018. A further 20% considered it *healthy*. The percentage of respondents reporting a *healthy* or *manageable* financial situation overall saw an increase compared with the previous surveys (Figure 11). Unlike previous surveys, respondents from Western Europe were more likely to respond that their community's financial situation is *healthy* or *stable* than those from Eastern Europe (22% v 12%), which could be directly linked with the period of economic uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 11. "How would you characterise your community's overall financial situation at present?" Comparison 2011-2021.



Interestingly, respondents tended to assess the financial situation of their organisations more positively than that of the general community. 50% described the financial reality as *tight but currently manageable*, and 30% as

*healthy*. Just 4% said it was *critical*. We can only imagine here that while the assessment of the general community relies to a greater extent on a perception, that of the respondent's organisation can be based on first-hand information.

## The Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

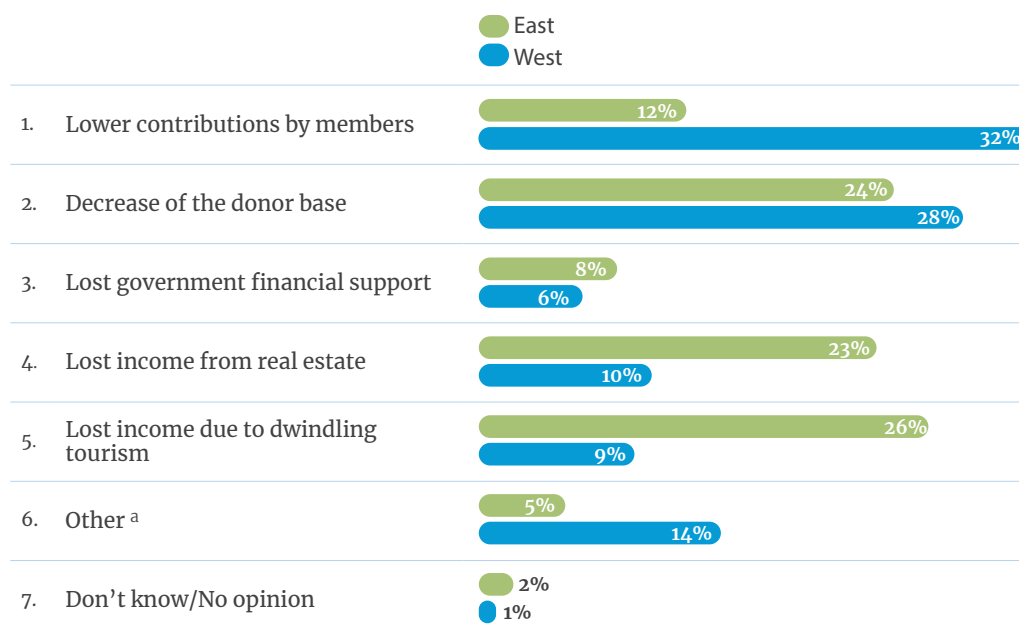
The survey inquired about the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the lockdown and social distancing measures introduced across Europe, for the financial realities of the Jewish organisations. Responding to the question, *did your organisation/institution incur any financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic?*, 36% answered

“The loss of tourism was reflected in a significant reduction in community income. Communities need to find new ways of funding, and members will also need to contribute more to the running of the community.”

(Rabbi, Czech Republic)

*yes, definitely*, and a further 25% *yes, although they were minor*. 15% of respondents thought it was *too soon to tell*, while 13% said *no*. There are indeed sharp regional differences: more than half of Eastern European respondents (56%) answered *yes, definitely*, versus 30% in Western Europe. When asked about the sources of those losses, Eastern Europeans identified three main sources: *dwindling tourism* (28%), *decrease of the donor base* (24%), and *lost income from real estate* (23%), whereas Western Europeans attributed the loss of income mainly to *lower contributions by members* (32%) and *decrease of the donor base* (28%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12. “How would you characterise your community’s overall financial situation at present?” Comparison 2011-2021.



a. Mostly due to income loss as a result of cancelled events/programmes

Respondents tended to be somewhat pessimistic about the community in general but more optimistic about their organisations in their expectations for the next five to ten years: while 39% expected the general financial situation

of the community to *deteriorate somewhat or significantly* and, 25% expected it to *improve somewhat or significantly*, 30% expected the financial situation of their organisations to *deteriorate somewhat or significantly*

and 32% to *improve somewhat or significantly*. Interestingly, there were regional differences concerning expectations, with 41% of those in the West compared with 32% of those in the

East adopting pessimistic expectations concerning the Jewish community. (31% v 26% regarding the respondents' organisations).

## IV. The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Jewish Community Life

One of the main goals of the *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals* is to gauge the many aspects and dimensions constituting Jewish community life on the continent from the perspective of its leaders and top professionals. The 2021 edition

“Thanks to technology, our institution was able to reach out to new audiences and new human resources and skills outside the traditional geographic area of the community.”

(Lay leader, France)

of the survey, the fifth iteration since its inception in 2008, faced the task of including a new and unexpected dimension affecting Jewish life: the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because the fieldwork phase of the 2021 *Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals*

took place just over one year after the advent of the pandemic and, with it, the introduction of lockdown and social distancing measures, a special section in the questionnaire was introduced in order to bring some understanding of their impact on Jewish organisations, at least to date. The questions included topics such as leaders' assessments of their organisations' performance during the COVID-19 crisis, the degree to which organisations showed preparedness and responsiveness, opinions on actions to be undertaken immediately following the pandemic, and, last but not least, how the pandemic affected respondents on a personal level. Leaders were asked to draw on their first-hand knowledge of their organisations (rather than on the community as a whole) as we hoped to obtain the most up-to-date and accurate information.

### Organisational Performance

Using a scale where 1 meant *very poor* and 5 *very good*, survey respondents were asked to evaluate the performance of their organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic in the following areas: *assessing needs and providing care to members in need, maintaining ongoing communication with members, shifting programmes and services online, strategies and actions to ensure the financial sustainability of the organisation* and *connecting with/engaging new people in activities*.

Overall, the leaders' (self-)evaluation was positive. The item with the highest score was *maintaining ongoing communication with community members*, with 80% of respondents

giving scores of 4 or 5. It is followed by *shifting services and programmes online* (77%), *providing support and care to community members in need* (76%), *assessment of community members' needs* (70%) and *strategies and actions to ensure financial sustainability of your institution* (66%). The item with the lowest score was *connecting with/engaging new people in your activities* (48%).

Few significant differences emerge and only with respect to region and community role. Eastern European respondents gave higher scores than Western Europeans to *providing support and care to community members in need* (81% v 75%) and to *connecting with/*

*engaging new people in your activities* (56% v 45%) and lower scores to *strategies and actions to ensure financial sustainability of your institution* (57% v 68%).

Community professionals tended to give higher scores than lay leaders to

*shifting services and programmes online* (83% v 76%), *strategies and actions to ensure the financial sustainability of your institution* (72% v 64%) and *connecting with/engaging new people in your activities* (55% v 44%).

## Preparedness and Ability to Respond

The COVID-19 section of the survey questionnaire included a series of questions designed to understand organisational readiness: the extent to which an organisation was prepared to face challenges due to crises and emergencies. In fact, many communities and institutions established emergency management teams because of the COVID-19 crisis. In response to the question, *does your organisation/institution have an emergency management team?* 51% answered *yes* and 40% *no*, whereas 8% of respondents *didn't know*.

Another question sought to explore the degree to which the COVID-19 crisis prompted Jewish organisations to work with non-Jewish/government agencies. 42% stated *yes, same as always*, and a further 21% said *yes, more*. 12%

responded affirmatively but *to a lesser degree*. 15% said *no, never*.

*“A functioning crisis management makes the work much easier. Communication channels must be clearly defined in crisis situations (language regulations; channels of information; transparency).”*

*(Community professional, Germany)*

Finally, 77% of respondents said their organisations had launched new community initiatives (mainly online). That may be why 66% stated that their organisations *were able to attract people who are not usually involved* (49% in a *limited way* and 17% in a *significant way*).

## Most Urgent Organisational Tasks

Leaders were given a list of 10 action items and were asked: *thinking ahead, what actions will your institution/organisation need to prioritise? Use a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “less a priority” and 10 “urgent priority”.*

As Figure 13 shows, the two action items that received the highest scores were related and speak about the desire to maximise the involvement of the local

Jewish people: *developing outreach strategies towards non-members/new target groups* received a score of 7.4 and *recruiting new volunteers*, 7.3. Other important priorities were *investing in leadership development* (7.1), *improving communications with members* (6.9), *supporting members in need* (6.9) and *rethinking overall community dynamics* (6.7). Other items were given lower priority: *rethinking*



“How to identify people who are isolated and in need?”

How to integrate young people in solidarity actions?

How to maintain fundraising for the association without face-to-face events?”

(Lay leader, France)

overall programming of your institution/organisation (6.5), improving dialogue/creating partnerships with other Jewish institutions in the city (6.5), reconsidering the organisation’s financial model (6.3) and reconsidering internal decision-

making processes, including the role of boards and that of general assemblies (5.8).

Interestingly, despite the variety of Jewish organisations’ missions, goals and sizes, there was overall consensus across different backgrounds and subgroups. The only differences were regional. Eastern European leaders gave higher scores to *supporting members in need* (7.4 v 6.8), *reconsidering the organisation’s financial model* (7.3 v 6.1) and *reconsidering internal decision-making processes* (6.3 v 5.7).

Figure 13. “Thinking ahead, what actions will your institution/organisation need to prioritise? Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means ‘less a priority’ and 10 means ‘urgent priority’”

1.	Developing outreach strategies towards non-members/new target groups	7.4
2.	Recruiting new volunteers	7.3
3.	Investing in leadership development	7.1
4.	Improving communications with members	6.9
5.	Supporting members in need	6.9
6.	Rethinking overall community dynamics	6.7
7.	Rethinking overall programming of your institution/organisation	6.5
8.	Improving dialogue/creating partnerships with other Jewish institutions in the city	6.5
9.	Reconsidering the organisation’s financial model	6.4
10.	Reconsidering internal decision-making processes, including the role of boards and general assemblies	5.8

## Personal Situation

Lay leaders of Jewish communities, community professionals, rabbis, educators, and volunteers were all, without exception, affected by the crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey offered the opportunity for those who wished to respond about the

impact of the pandemic in three areas of their personal lives: financial situation, physical and psychological well-being, and their relationships with members of their households. In all three domains, one year after the pandemic began, the response *no changes* was predominant.

However, 42% of respondents said that their physical and psychological well-being *has gotten worse* (3% *a lot worse*). This could reflect the burden placed on those leaders who already held their leadership positions when the pandemic began. Although there may well be other explanations too. 22% said the same about their financial situation, and only 10% considered that the relationships with the members of their households had worsened. In fact, 1 out of 4 (25%) said they actually improved,

*“It seems to me that many people during the pandemic appreciated the role of the community in their lives and missed the regular course of a common Jewish life. In my opinion, the challenge for Jewish institutions will be to maintain this enthusiasm and attachment once we are able to balance the virtual and real life of the community.”*

*(Community professional, Poland)*

presumably thanks to spending more time with their loved ones.

## V. Safety, Security and Emigration

Respondents' perceptions of antisemitism as a real threat likely reflect the reality of rising antisemitism over the past eight or nine years. The terrorist attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions in various places in Europe in recent years appear to have caused European Jewish leaders to move security issues and concern about antisemitism to the top of their communities' agendas.

The 2018 survey attests to that shift, and the current survey only confirms it. Still, most respondents answered the question *to what extent do you feel it is safe to live and practise as a Jew in your community today?* by stating that they do feel secure, with 78% reporting *feeling safe* (17% *very safe* and 61% *rather safe*). Only 17% felt *rather unsafe*, and a mere 6% *not safe at all*.

### Personal Safety

When adopting a longer perspective, however, the surveys reveal growing unease regarding safety. Since 2008 there has been a 19% decrease in people who feel *very safe* in their cities, although the response for *rather safe* remains constant. The concern is widespread as there are no statistically significant differences in the responses to the question between or within the socio-demographic groups (age, gender), denomination or office in the community. The fact that “visible” Jews in public, such as the Orthodox, do not feel more vulnerable is worth noting.

The existence of sharp regional differences, already apparent in 2018,

was validated in 2021. Whereas 95% of those in the East felt *safe* in their cities, only 73% of those in the West did. On the other hand, slightly more than one in four from Western Europe (27%) felt *unsafe* in their cities, compared to only 5% in the East. Previous reports have pointed out that this regional variation on issues concerning personal safety and perception of antisemitism, which is evident elsewhere in the current survey, is noteworthy and of historical significance for Jews in Europe. It is a reversal of the situation whereby the “West” was regarded as more welcoming and safer for Jews over the past two centuries, than the “East.”

### Future Expectations of Antisemitism

When asked if they expected changes in the frequency of problems stemming from antisemitism over the next five to ten years, the tendency was to be pessimistic. 28% expect antisemitism to *increase significantly*, and 40% expect it to *increase somewhat*. This represents an increase of those saying it will *increase significantly* (22% in 2018) and a decrease of those saying it

will *increase somewhat* (47% in 2018). Still, we found in both surveys that overall, 68% of respondents expect an increase of whatever kind. 27% expect antisemitism to *remain constant*. Only a tiny minority of 2% expect it to *decrease somewhat or significantly*. These results are almost the same as in 2018. Again, opinions are the same across socio-demographic groups. However, a

significant regional difference emerged concerning expectations of increasing antisemitism, with those in Western

Europe considerably more pessimistic (74%) than those in the East (53%).

## Government Response

Respondents were asked: *Do you think the government of your country responds adequately to the security needs of Jewish communities?* Three out of four respondents thought their government did so, with 27% indicating *yes, definitely* and 44% *yes, probably*. Only 9% responded *no, definitely not*, and 21% *no, probably not*. While no subgroup variations emerged for this question, it

is interesting to note that there is a regional difference. This attests to the perception that the antisemitism present in Europe today is not state-sponsored antisemitism; instead, its origins lie in society in general. At the same time, some politicians have helped create a political climate in which they and others have become less hesitant to use antisemitic tropes in their rhetoric.

## Emergency Preparedness

Respondents were asked to report to *what degree is your community prepared to deal with an emergency situation?* The responses varied considerably. 43% thought they were prepared to a *very large/large degree*, 40% to a *moderate degree* and 13% to a *small degree*, while

4% considered their community *was not prepared at all*. Whereas 46% of leaders in the West believed their communities to be prepared to a *very large/large degree*, only 31% considered this was the case in the East.

## Emigration

There were two types of questions about emigration. One was personal and specific, and the other concerned the Jewish population of the respondent's country in general. The personal question was *in the past five years, have you considered emigrating from your country because you don't feel safe living there as a Jew?*<sup>1</sup> The vast majority, 67%, had not considered emigrating. Only 3% had made *active preparations*, and 20% had *considered emigrating but had not yet done this*. A tiny minority of 2% said they had emigrated but had returned

to Europe, while 8% preferred not to answer the question. The percentage of respondents considering emigrating is almost the same as in 2018 (21%). However, the percentage of those who had not considered leaving Europe declined from 76% in 2018 to 67% in the current survey. Western Europeans are about three times more likely to consider emigrating than Eastern Europeans: 26% v 9%. Younger respondents are more likely to consider emigration: 29% among the age group up to 40 v 20-21% among the older groups.

<sup>1</sup> This question was deliberately taken from the Second Fundamental Rights Agency survey on discrimination and hate crimes against Jews in order to gain a comparative perspective.

The 23% who responded that they were preparing for or considering emigration were then asked *to which country?* Almost two-thirds (62%) chose Israel, 23% North America (13% the US and 10% Canada) and 7% another country in the European Union. There were age variations on this issue as Israel was favoured by 77% of older respondents (55+) v 46% among those aged up to 40, who preferred the US (22%). Regional variations were also significant and very telling. Israel was the chosen destination of 66% of Western Europeans v 33% of Eastern Europeans. Conversely, 26% of Eastern Europeans chose another country in the EU v only 4% of Western Europeans. Orthodox Jews (76%) were more likely to consider Israel than the MLR and the cultural Jews; nonetheless, 50% of both groups chose the Jewish State.

The question *do you expect an increase of Jewish emigration from your country?*, divided the sample. 48% responded no, 43% responded *yes, limited*, and 9% *yes, significant* – exactly the same numbers as in 2018. Those who replied *yes* were then asked what they thought were *the main reasons for Jews to emigrate*. *Antisemitism* emerged as the most important reason with 36% (22% in 2018), corresponding to the increasing concern about antisemitism, described above. The other options were *searching for a richer Jewish life* (24%), *searching for better professional opportunities* (18%) and *financial reasons* (15%).

The respondents' assessment of the preferred destination of local Jews, in general, differed somewhat from their pattern of choices: 49% thought it would be Israel, 30% North America, 11% elsewhere in the European Union, 7% the UK and 3% other countries.

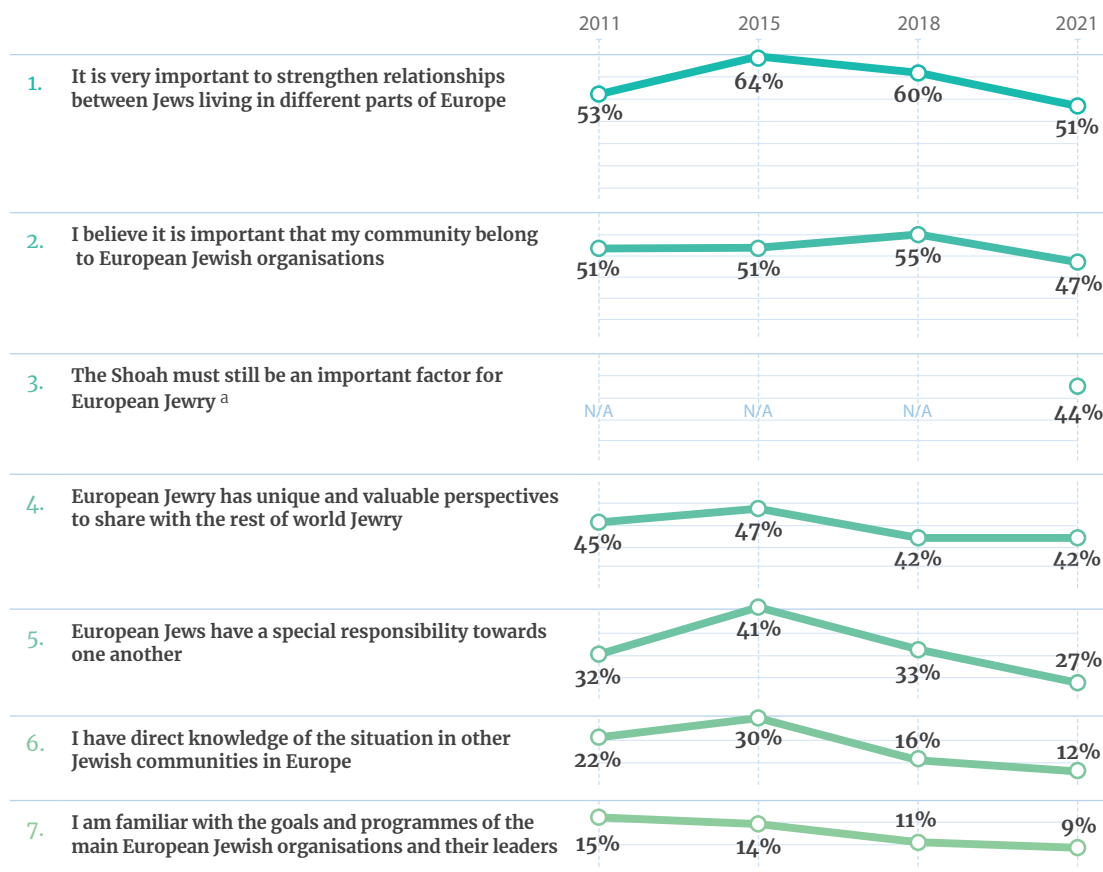
## VI. Europe

The respondents were offered nine statements concerning attitudes towards Europe and the place of Jewish communities within Europe. A majority of respondents *agreed* with most statements, with a tendency to concentrate their answers in the *rather agree* response category. Consequently, to obtain a more differentiated analysis, we focused on the *strongly agree* response category. Even if the rank order of strong agreement with the statements was very similar for all the surveys, as shown in Figure 14, the evidence indicates that most statements lost support among respondents, with most answers showing a decrease in the

*strongly agree* response category. Still, Europe continues to be popular both as a Jewish and a general political project.

In 2021 the statement related to Jewish unity gained a majority and an increasing level of *strongly agree* responses: *It is very important to strengthen relationships between Jews living in different parts of Europe* (51%). This was followed by *I believe it is important that my community belong to European Jewish organisations* (47%). This year a new statement was added: *the Shoah must still be an important factor for European Jewry* (44% strong agreement).

Figure 14. Responses on statements about European Jewry are expressed in the strongly agree response category (%). Comparison 2011-2021.



a. Item introduced in the 2021 survey

Jewish solidarity and European Jewish identity were also supported strongly: *European Jewry has unique and valuable perspectives to share with the rest of World Jewry* (42% strongly agree). There has been a decrease since 2015 in the sentiment that *European Jews have a special responsibility towards one another* (27% strongly agree, down from 41% in 2015).

Most participants stated that their familiarity with or direct knowledge of Jewish communities in other countries and organisations was weak. This trend

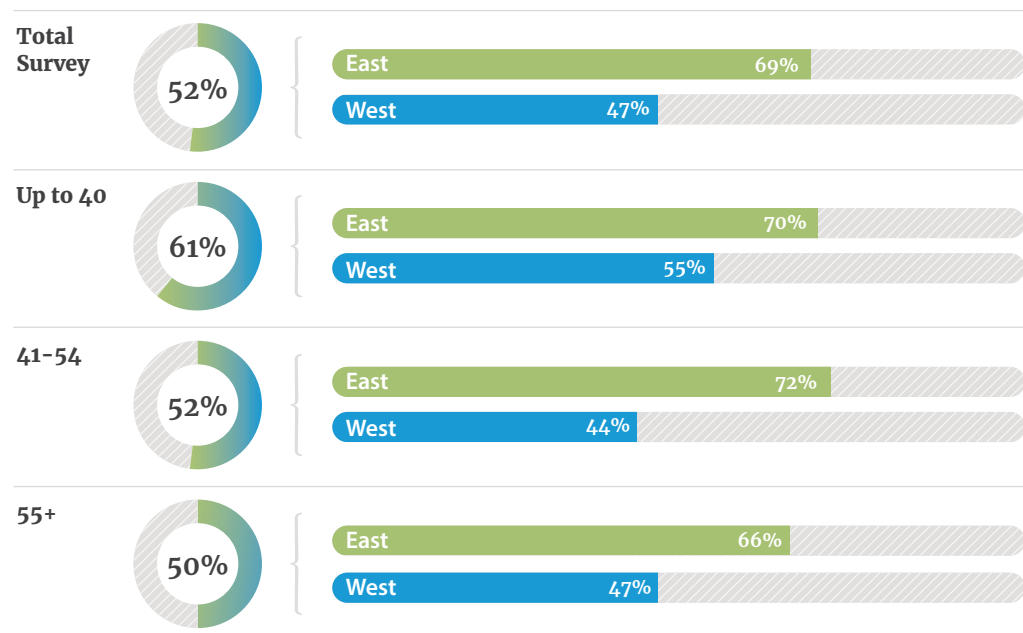
has been downwards since 2011: *I have direct knowledge of the situation in other Jewish communities in Europe* (12% v 22% strongly agree). In addition, few believed they were *familiar with the goals and programmes of the main European Jewish organisations and their leaders* (9% strongly agree). Those living in the East were in *stronger agreement* than those in the West regarding the two following statements: *I believe it is important that my community belong to European Jewish organisations* (65% v 42%) and *European Jewry has unique and valuable perspectives to share with the rest of World Jewry* (52% v 38%).

## Optimism about the Future

The survey included two questions to assess the degrees of optimism about the future of European Jewry and the European project itself. These were, *I am optimistic about the future of Europe*, and *the future of European Jewry is vibrant and positive*. Concerning the future of the European project, European Jews

seemed almost equally divided between optimists (*strongly/rather agree* 52%) and pessimists (*strongly/rather disagree* 48%). There was more optimism in the East (69%) than in the West (47%). The young (61%) were more optimistic than the middle-aged (52%) and older age cohorts (50%).

Figure 15. Optimism about the future of Europe: Comparison East v West, by age group.



Likewise, 47% of the responses to the statement *the future of European Jewry is vibrant and positive* were *strongly/rather agree*. Again, there was more optimism

in the East (56%) than in the West (44%). The younger cohorts (64%) were more optimistic than the middle-aged (45%) and older age cohorts (43%).



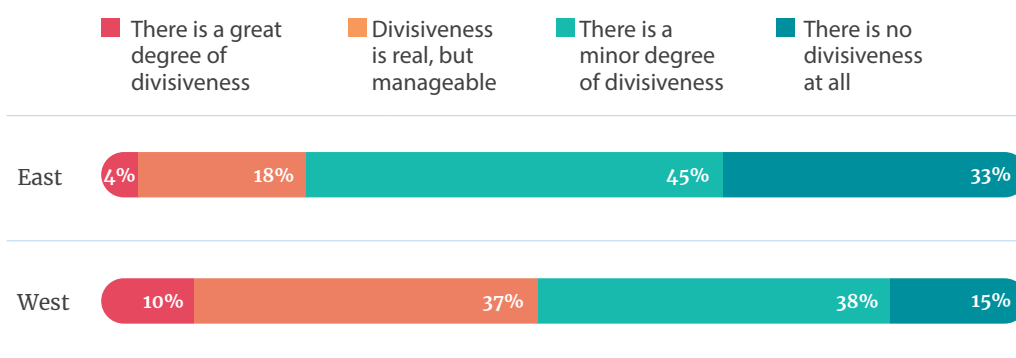
## VII. Israel

European Jewish leaders are increasingly engaged with how they and their members relate to the State of Israel. Israel was once an obvious and inspiring central topic in the identity and programme of European Jewry. Still, the trend in recent years shows that this issue is increasingly challenged, complex and even contentious, as events in the Middle East continue to reverberate through Europe.

Respondents were asked: *to what extent do you feel there is divisiveness over Israel within your community today?* Overall, only 9% reported a *great degree of divisiveness*, while 19% reported *there is no divisiveness at all*. A majority of

responses were concentrated on *there is a minor degree of divisiveness over Israel* (39%), and *divisiveness is real but manageable* (33%). The only significant differences according to subgroups were regional and denominational. Like previous surveys, Western Europeans reported that community divisiveness (Figure 16) was much more of a problem than Eastern European leaders, with 10% stating that *there was a great degree of divisiveness over Israel* in Western communities compared to only 4% in the East. Conversely, 78% of respondents in Eastern Europe reported *minor or no divisiveness at all* compared to 53% of those in the West.

Figure 16. "To what extent do you feel there is divisiveness over Israel within your community today?" East v West 2021, in percent.



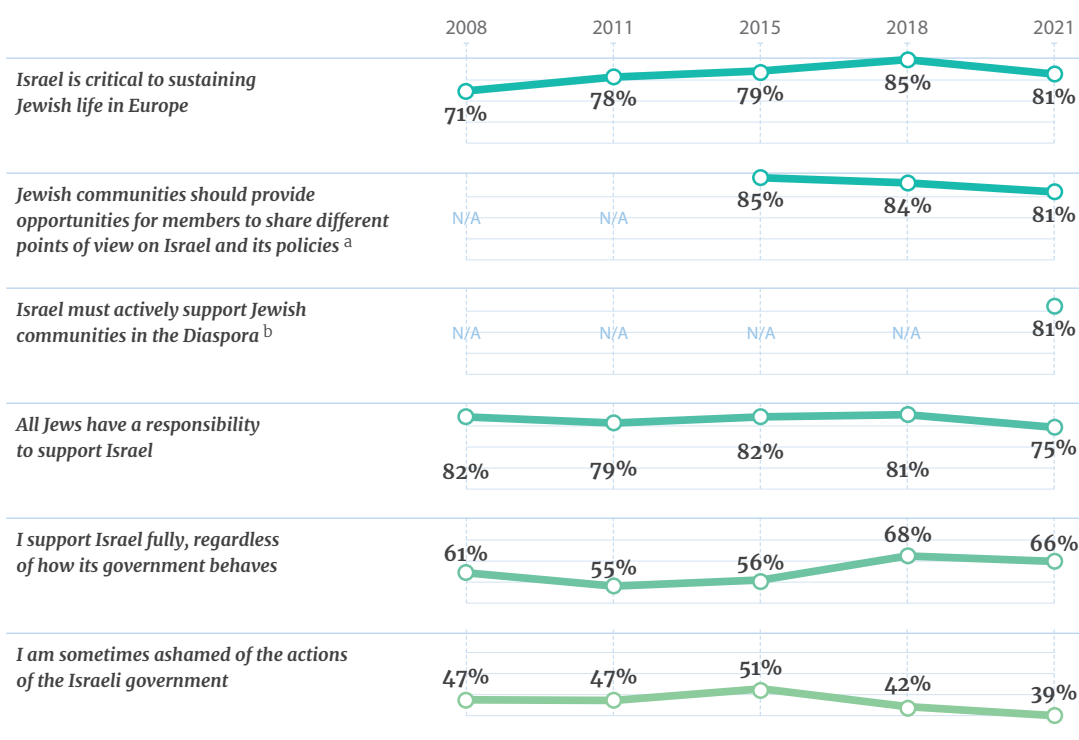
Though issues involving Israel are contentious, there was a strong consensus about the need to provide space for open political debate about Israel within the communities. This is an issue where the communities themselves have jurisdiction. The survey replicated the 2011, 2015 and 2018 findings of overwhelming agreement (35% *strongly agree* and 46% *rather agree*) that *Jewish communities should provide opportunities for members to*

*share different opinions and points of view on Israel and its policies*. There was also a strong consensus of 81% that *events in Israel sometimes lead to an increase of antisemitism in my country* (44% *strongly agree* and 37% *rather agree*). This observation may be linked with the 70% agreement with the statement *the media in my country regularly portrays Israel in a bad light*. Here again, there was a sharp regional divide, as we shall see below.

Since 2018 the evidence has shown that support for Israel seems to have gained strength among Jewish leaders in Europe. The 2021 survey confirmed this trend. 66% agreed with *I support Israel fully, regardless of how its government behaves*. The statement appears to be less divisive now than previous surveys (48% in 2015 and 57% in 2011).

The same was true of *I am sometimes ashamed of the actions of the Israeli government*, agreed to by only 39% of respondents, compared to 48% in 2011. The five surveys permit monitoring trends among European Jewish leaders' attitudes towards Israel as expressed in six survey items (Figure 17).

**Figure 17. Responses to selected items related to Israel: "To what extent do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements about Israel?" Strongly agree and rather agree. Comparison 2008-2021.**



a. Item introduced in the 2015 survey b. Item introduced in the 2021 survey

Even where some minimal changes are noticeable between the surveys, these do not alter the otherwise stable way in which respondents tend to agree with each of the statements offered. A consistently strongly held opinion was the 75% agreement in 2021 (47% strongly agree; 29% rather agree) with the proposition that *someone can just as easily be a good Jew in Europe as they can in Israel*. There was also strong and increased agreement (81%) with the statement *Israel is critical to sustaining*

*Jewish life in Europe* (46% strongly agree and 35% rather agree).

The overall tenor of opinion on political issues produces a sympathetic pro-Israel majority, but levels of support and criticism vary considerably according to the context and wording offered. There was an 83% agreement with the statement *all Jews have a responsibility to support Israel*. A newly added statement in the 2021 survey asked respondents to express their opinions about the

reverse situation, Israel's responsibilities towards the Diaspora communities: *Israel must actively support Jewish communities in the Diaspora* received 78% agreement (39% *strongly agree* and 39% *rather agree*). Support in both directions seems key to understanding the relationship between Europe and Israel.

The statistical analysis shows that age is an important factor regarding the relationship between respondents' background characteristics and their opinions concerning Israel. The young were slightly less enthusiastic supporters of Israel than the older generation. The same is true of professionals when compared with lay leaders. Gender largely fails to predict differences in reactions towards the battery of statements regarding Israel. The exception was that men (*rather* and *strongly*) *agreed* more than women that *Israel must actively support Jewish communities in the Diaspora* (82% v 70%). Women agreed more strongly that *someone can just as easily be a good Jew in Europe as they can in Israel* (53% v 43%).

Broken down by denomination, the Orthodox has a slight tendency to be more supportive and less critical of Israel. Orthodox Jews were more likely

to offer unconditional support for Israel *regardless of how its government behaves* (78%), compared with the MLR (64%) or cultural Jews (58%). Orthodox Jews (28%) were also less likely to be *ashamed* than the cultural Jews (44%) and the MLR, where almost half of this subgroup (49%) was *sometimes ashamed* of the Israeli government's actions. Again, the largest and most significant difference on this item was regional, with Western Europeans tending to be more certain than Easterners that they could be *as good a Jew in Europe as they can in Israel* (83% v 50%). However, with regards to other statements, historical differences tend to be less pronounced in 2021. For example, whereas in previous surveys, Western Europeans were more likely to be *ashamed* (48% v 41%), this no longer seemed to be the case (40% in both groups). In contrast, the amount of hostility in the media and antisemitism caused by events in Israel were rated lower by those in the East. The statement *the media in my country regularly portrays Israel in a bad light* obtained a much higher score in the West than in the East (82% v 26%). The gap was particularly wide related to the highest rating (*strongly agree*) for the statement *events in Israel sometimes lead to an increase in antisemitism in my country* (50% in the West v 19% in the East).

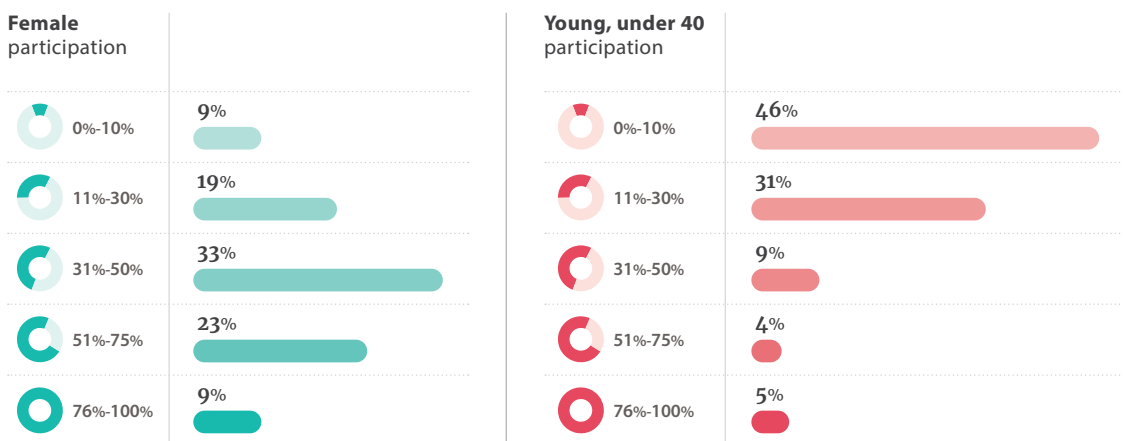
## VIII. Governance: Inclusion of Women and Young Adults in Decision-Making Bodies

In the analysis of the gender and generational perspective in the current and previous profiles of the survey, what stands out is the tendency for European Jewish leaders to be predominantly male and aged 55 and older even though the 2021 sample shows a more balanced gender distribution with 42% female and 58% male respondents. Jewish communities are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of including women and young adults in decision-making bodies.

Against this background, the 2021 survey included two questions about gender and generational participation in community decision-making bodies: *what percentage of your organisation/institution's Board of Directors is female?*, and *what percentage of people on*

*your organisation/institution's Board of Directors are under 40 years old?* Figure 18 shows that the responses to the question about women's participation on the board of directors are roughly divided into thirds: 27% of respondents said that women accounted for more than 51% of the board of directors, 33% stated that they comprised between 31 and 50% of it. Another third of respondents (32%) indicated that women on the board of directors were 30% or lower. Female respondents were more likely to report higher participation of women in the board of directors, with 40% saying they comprise between 51 and 100%. In contrast, only 18% of male respondents reported female participation of 51% or more. No other measurable differences were found among subgroups.

Figure 18. "What percentage of your organisation's/institution's board of directors is...?"



The analysis of younger people's presence on boards of directors yields a very different picture. Almost half of the respondents (46%) reported participation ranging between 0% and 10%, and a further 31% indicated that younger people accounted for

between 11% and 30%. Only 9% stated that younger people made up 51% or more of the board of directors of their organisations. 20% of respondents aged 40 or less said that their age group's participation on boards is between 51% and 100%. This appears to reflect the

questionable appeal that established Jewish community life has for younger people and to indicate that Jewish institutions need to work harder to bring a younger generation of leaders on board.

The survey included more questions regarding governance and future planning. An analysis of these findings will be published in a separate report.

## IX. Profile of Respondents

Table 3. Country of residence 2008-2021.

	2008	2011	2015	2018	2021
<i>Austria</i>	2	5	7	6	18
<i>Belgium</i>	17	14	9	30	35
<i>Bosnia and Herz.</i>	3	2	3	16	8
<i>Bulgaria</i>	6	4	17	21	15
<i>Croatia</i>	3	2	7	9	9
<i>Czech Republic</i>	10	12	9	34	24
<i>Denmark</i>	3	3	2	8	34
<i>Estonia</i>	5	4	2	7	9
<i>Finland</i>	2	1	3	5	8
<i>France</i>	33	48	34	134	295
<i>Germany</i>	23	24	27	114	169
<i>Greece</i>	3	6	7	24	19
<i>Hungary</i>	18	10	19	43	43
<i>Ireland</i>	0	0	0	0	4
<i>Italy</i>	11	21	13	96	89
<i>Latvia</i>	7	7	5	12	10
<i>Lithuania</i>	8	9	3	6	8
<i>Luxembourg</i>	1	2	2	3	0
<i>Macedonia</i>	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Montenegro</i>	0	0	0	0	5
<i>Netherlands</i>	11	10	11	43	19
<i>Norway</i>	1	2	0	5	4
<i>Poland</i>	0	0	0	27	24
<i>Portugal</i>	1	2	1	3	2
<i>Romania</i>	7	12	20	65	40
<i>Serbia</i>	3	4	2	19	7
<i>Slovakia</i>	4	8	9	21	22
<i>Spain</i>	7	12	19	40	36
<i>Sweden</i>	11	12	7	10	7
<i>Switzerland</i>	7	17	14	17	20
<i>Turkey</i>	10	18	7	23	7
<i>United Kingdom</i>	25	47	32	52	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>1054</b>

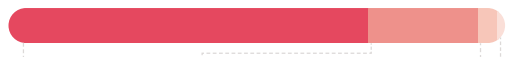
Table 3 shows that the countries with the largest numbers of participants were: France (295), Germany (169), Italy (89), and the UK (63). The overall profile of the respondents in terms of country of residence in the current survey is somewhat skewed towards Western European communities. This is due to the increase in participation in France and Germany (see below **Differences between...**) along with other countries such as Denmark and Austria. In addition, participation in Belgium, the UK, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland remain stable compared to 2018. Hence, the

proportion of respondents from the three large communities of France, the United Kingdom and Germany, where the vast majority of European Jews live, comprises 50% of all respondents. Overall, 79% of the European Jewish community leaders and professionals participating in the survey live in Western Europe and 21% in Eastern Europe in 2021. The overall response rate was 60.6%; the highest response rates to the survey – over 80% – come from the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, and Latvia.

Figure 19. Distribution of respondents by Jewish denomination, 2021 (left) and comparison of Jewish denominations, 2008-2021 (right).

#### Distribution of Respondents by Jewish Denomination, 2021

##### Orthodox | N=327



237  
Modern Orthodox

72  
Orthodox

14  
Chabad

3  
Charedi

##### Masorti, Liberal, Reform | N=223



109  
Conservative/  
Masorti

107  
Liberal/  
Reform

7  
Post/Multi-  
Denominational

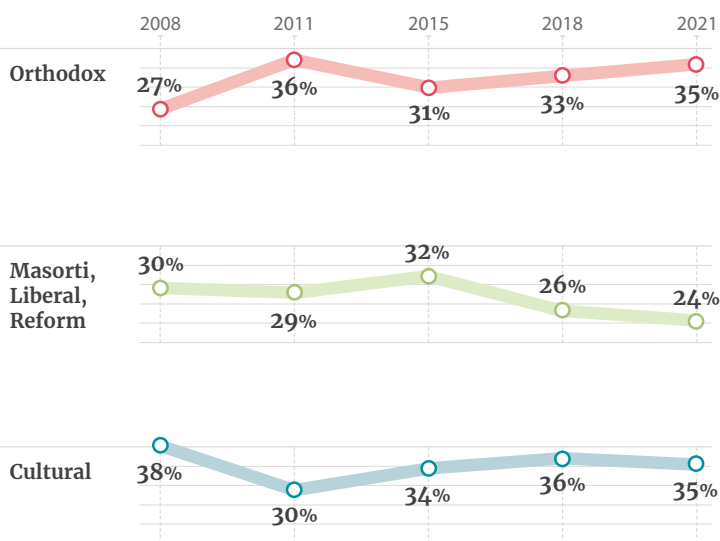
##### Cultural | N=325



105  
Secular

220  
Just Jewish

#### Comparison of Jewish Denominations, 2008-2021



Survey respondents were free to choose the questions they answered, and some did not report on their denominational affiliation (Figure 19, left). Among the 935 individuals who did report this information in 2021, 35% self-identified as belonging to some type of Orthodoxy, 26% as belonging to Masorti, Liberal or Reform denominational streams, and 35% as cultural Jews (secular and “just Jewish”). Figure 19 (right) shows that the overall religious profile

of the survey respondents has seen little variation over the five surveys conducted to date, despite the changes in national profile and sample size. However, while the percentage of MLR and cultural respondents has remained unchanged (at least since 2018), there has been a slight increase in Orthodox respondents and a slight decrease in MLR. This corresponds with the fact that the 2021 respondents appeared slightly more religious when asked how they

regarded themselves in terms of their own personal “outlook” rather than just their membership or “belonging”. This more psychological measure revealed the participants’ “outlook” as being *religious* (18%), *somewhat religious* (38%), *somewhat secular* (25%) and *secular* (19%).

The majority of participants (56%) were elected or appointed lay leaders in the Jewish community in their countries, while 29% described themselves as working as community professionals and 5% as religious leaders. A further 10% identified as community volunteers or “Jewish entrepreneurs”, meaning that they lead independent grassroots projects or programmes.

Like the previous surveys, the 2021 survey allows us to analyse the responses

to questions with continuous, ordinal categories (i.e. excluding statements and propositions) for subgroups within the sample. These subgroups are stratified based on their background characteristics (when the respondent provided said characteristics), such as gender (male or female), age or generation (up to 40 years old, 41 to 54 or 55 and older), region (Eastern or Western Europe) and denomination (Orthodox, MLR or cultural Jews). In addition, where relevant, analysis is provided by role in the community (lay leader or community professional). This process makes it possible to probe the pattern of responses according to these subgroups of respondents and to test and report valid, reliable, statistically significant differences.<sup>2</sup>

## Denomination

Respondents who self-identified according to their religion or ideology were classified into three groups: Orthodox synagogue members (N=327), Masorti, Liberal, Reform (MLR) synagogue members (N=223) and cultural Jews, i.e., religiously unaffiliated (N=325), to permit investigation of differences between denominations.

## Gender

The responses from self-reporting male participants (N=541) and female participants (N=399) were probed for substantial differences in their approaches to community life and issues.

## Age

The participants who self-identified by age were categorized into three age groups: under 40 years of age (N=158), between 41 and 54 years old (N=252) and 55 years and older (N=505).

## Region

The participants were divided into an Eastern European group (N=225) and a Western European group (N=829). The Eastern region comprises Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. The countries in the Western European region are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of the analysis, subgroups of the respondents were defined by age group, gender, and residence in Western or Eastern Europe. For these subgroups statistical analysis was conducted by comparisons of the current survey to its four previous waves in 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018. The analysis included comparing the average score of different items in the questionnaire between the above-mentioned subgroups over the years of the survey. The statistical tests used were t-test, one-way ANOVA and chi-square test, depending on the kind of data in hand. Statistical significance of the results is reported when p-value is below 0.05 (confidence at least 95%).



Given the different histories of Western and Eastern Europe, regional differences persist and emerge in the profiles of the respondents from the two regions. There is a slight difference between the regions in terms of gender, with 44% female respondents in Western Europe versus 38% in Eastern Europe. However, Eastern European leaders are considerably younger, with 27% under 40 compared to only 15% in that age group in Western communities. Correspondingly, Western European leaders are older, with 60% over 55 years of age compared to only 39% among Eastern European leaders. Religious

Judaism is stronger in the West. In terms of religious denomination, Western leaders are more Orthodox (42% v 20%), slightly less likely to be Masorti, Liberal, Reform Jews (26% v 29%) but much less likely to identify as cultural Jews than those from the East (33% v 52%). Western respondents are older and more religiously oriented than those living in the East must be factored into any conclusions where regional differences emerge in the analysis. Conversely, apparent denominational and age differences may be due to regional factors.

## Differences Between the 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018 and 2021 Respondents

Any assessment of changes in the priorities and opinions of European leaders over the past ten years must consider the differences between the five surveys' participants. Compared to the earlier surveys, the main differences in 2021 include a larger sample overall and a larger percentage of respondents residing in Western Europe, particularly in France and, to a lesser degree, in Germany. The explanation for this is that in both these countries, the national community organisation/federation — the *Fonds Social Juif Unifié* and the *Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland* — has partnered with JDC-ICCD to reach

a larger number of respondents. Thus, they can use robust national samples providing reliable and up-to-date information for their policymaking.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the current sample is more balanced in terms of gender: the proportion of women respondents was 42% in 2021, while in previous surveys, it was approximately 32% to 35%. The samples have become older with each successive survey, with those over 55 years of age comprising 35% in 2008, 43% in 2011, 50% in 2015, 53% in 2018 and 55% in 2021.

<sup>3</sup> In the current 2021 sample, the leaders from Western Europe, particularly from France and Germany, appear to be overrepresented. Despite this, we decided not to perform weighting of the sample, for the following reasons:

a. An accurate weighting requires knowing the size of the survey's target population of Jewish community leaders and professionals, by country. Unfortunately, this information was not directly available. Theoretically, this number could be deduced from the size of the Jewish population in each country, under assumption of a uniform ratio between the number of leaders and the size of the community. However, this assumption would contradict the fact that these ratios vary markedly across the countries.

b. The need to compare the findings of the 2021 survey with those of the previous surveys also made the weighting of the 2021 sample undesirable. All four previous waves of the Survey of European Jewish Community Leaders and Professionals were not weighted. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency, continuity, and comparability, the current 2021 sample was not weighted either.

**The JDC-International Centre for Community Development (JDC-ICCD)** is the independent European research and evaluation unit of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Founded in 2005, JDC-ICCD is devoted to providing an in-depth perspective on the phenomena of the Jewish community, identity, and social welfare. Through applied research, JDC-ICCD analyses ongoing trends and changes in the Jewish world while measuring and evaluating the impact of community initiatives in the field. The Centre generates meaningful and scientifically constructed data that can influence decision-making processes for Jewish communities and other stakeholders, including JDC, across Europe.

[www.jdc-iccd.org](http://www.jdc-iccd.org)



