

Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism

Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU

Factsheet – Belgium

'Antisemitic thoughts that slowly enter everyday "acceptable" thinking is the biggest danger for me. There will always be someone who will let it go further and when it becomes to crude or hard to ignore, it'll be too late.' (Man, 55–59 years old, Belgium)

'I am really scared about the safety of my child who goes to a Jewish school. Every day I ask myself if I should send him to school somewhere else.' (Woman, 30–34 years old, Belgium)

'I wear a chain with a Star of David, but I don't wear it consciously in public, because I try to avoid antisemitic reactions that way.' (Woman, 16–19 years old, Belgium)

'Discrimination is sadly also very present in daily life, e.g. when shopping, or in services, or when having contractors do jobs. And truly, at every occasion when dealing with non-Jews, 50-60% of all cases are a result of antisemitism.' (Man, 45–49 years old, Belgium)

The survey in a nutshell

The report presents the main findings of FRA's second survey on Jewish people's experiences and perceptions of hate crime, discrimination and antisemitism. It analyses data from the responses of 16,395 self-identified Jewish people in 12 EU Member States – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These Member States are home to over 96 % of the EU's estimated Jewish population.

The survey was open to individuals aged 16 years and over who consider themselves Jewish – based on religion, culture, upbringing, ethnicity, parentage or any other reason – and who, at the time of the survey, were living in one of the survey countries. The largest samples were obtained from the two countries which, according to estimates, have the largest Jewish populations in the EU – France (3,869 respondents) and the United Kingdom (4,731 respondents). Samples over 1,000 respondents were obtained in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. For the remaining seven countries, the sample sizes ranged from 400 to 800 respondents.

In Belgium, 785 respondents filled in the online survey.

Selected results for Belgium

Manifestations of antisemitism

- According to the survey findings, 86 % of the respondents in Belgium consider antisemitism to be a very big or a fairly big problem in their country (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 85 %)
- 87 % of the respondents in Belgium consider antisemitism has increased over the past 5 years (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 89 %)
- 84 % of the respondents in Belgium consider racism to be a very big or a fairly big problem in their country (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 84 %)

- 50 % of the respondents in Belgium consider intolerance towards Muslims to be a very big or a fairly big problem in their country (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 57 %), and 69 % of the respondents in Belgium consider intolerance towards Muslims has increased over the past 5 years (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 72 %)
- A large majority of respondents in Belgium (92 %) consider antisemitism expressed online as a problem in the country (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 89 %)
- A large majority of respondents in Belgium (88 %) believe that antisemitism online has increased over the past five years (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 88 %)
- Most survey respondents in Belgium say they are regularly exposed to negative statements about Jews. A large majority of respondents in Belgium (83 %) identify the internet as the most common forum for negative statements (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 80 %). The most frequent comment made by non-Jewish people in Belgium is according to the respondents the statement: *Israelis behave "like Nazis" towards the Palestinians* (64 %)

Safety and security – in Belgium

- One third of the respondents (55 %) worry about becoming a victim of an antisemitic verbal insult or harassment in the next 12 months, while one fourth (41 %) worry about being physically attacked in that same period (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 47 % and 40 %, respectively)
- Nearly half of the respondents (48 %) at least sometimes wear, carry or display items that could identify them as Jewish. Of those respondents who at least sometimes carry or display such items, two thirds (67 %) at least occasionally avoid doing so (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 49 % and 71 %, respectively)
- Nearly one third of the respondents have considered emigrating (42 %) in the past five years because they did not feel safe as a Jew in Belgium (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 38 %)
- A majority of respondents (72 %) believe that the Belgian government's efforts to combat antisemitism are not effective. Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of the respondents (75 %) positively assess the Belgian government's efforts to ensure the security needs of the Jewish communities (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 70 % and 54 %, respectively)
- 88 % of the respondents said that the Arab-Israeli conflict impacts their feeling of safety in Belgium (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 69%)

Violence against Jews: experiences of harassment

- Half of the respondents in Belgium (51 %) experienced some form of antisemitic harassment in the five years before the survey. More than one third (39 %) encountered such harassment in the 12 months before the survey (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 39 % and 28 %, respectively).
- Comments made in person, and offensive gestures or inappropriate staring, are the most common forms of antisemitic harassment personally experienced by respondents – 25 % and 26 %, respectively, of the respondents in Belgium said they were faced with these forms of harassment in the 12 months before the survey. 12 % said that antisemitic offensive comments were posted on the internet (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 18 %, 16 % and 10 %, respectively).
- When asked to describe the perpetrator of the most serious incident of antisemitic harassment experienced in the five years before the survey – to the extent possible and based on their perceptions – in Belgium, respondents in 38 % of the cases identified the perpetrator as someone they do not know, 34 % – as someone with Muslim extremist views, 24 % – teenager or group of teenagers (averages in the 12 surveyed countries: 31 %, 30 % and 15 %, respectively).

Reporting

- The majority of respondents in Belgium (81 %) who experienced antisemitic harassment in the five years before the survey did not report the most serious incident to the police or to any other organisation (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 79 %)
- In 12 surveyed countries, almost half (48 %) of the respondents who did not report the most serious incident to the police said that nothing would have changed had they done so. A similar proportion (43 %) of respondents did not consider the incident to be serious enough.

Rights awareness

- The majority of respondents in Belgium are aware of legislation that forbids discrimination based on ethnic origin or religion – 80 % of the respondents indicated knowing about antidiscrimination law when applying for a job (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 87 %)
- In Belgium, the majority of respondents (70 %) are aware of legislation that forbids denial or trivialisation of the Holocaust (average in the 12 surveyed countries: 65 %).