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| Espace Francophone

The perception of Jews and others in the Brussels-Capital Region

Analysis of the survey conducted
in the Brussels-Capital Region

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INSTITUT
JONATHAS

POUR ÉVITER QUE LE PASSÉ SOIT NOTRE FUTUR



Established in March 2024 following the massacres of 7 October and their repercussions in Europe, the Institut Jonathas is a centre for research and action against antisemitism and all that promotes it in Belgium.

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Institut Jonathas



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Joël Kotek

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February 2026

**“What we do not see is what concerns us most”
(Lacan)**

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SUMMARY

In February 2026, the Institut Jonathas published the results of a third survey on anti-Semitism, this time focusing on Brussels. This study was intended to consolidate and validate two previous surveys. The results clearly converge: contemporary anti-Semitism cannot be considered marginal, residual or strictly circumstantial. Far from having disappeared, classic anti-Jewish prejudices persist, are being reconfigured and are now linked to clearly identifiable political, religious, generational and ideological factors. Although they are frequently linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they are not limited to it and are part of a more global vision of otherness.

Methodology and analytical framework

The survey was conducted by IPSOS from 2 to 6 July 2025 among 600 residents of the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgians, dual nationals and foreigners), using a methodology comparable to that of traditional political polls. The sample respects gender and age quotas and, without claiming to be perfectly representative – particularly due to the relative under-representation of Muslim Brussels residents – it remains statistically robust for analysing attitudes and differences between population segments.

The questionnaire comprises 26 questions and around 100 items relating to representations of 'the Other' (Jews, women, LGBTQIA+ people), attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conspiracy theories and certain factual knowledge. In order to limit self-reporting bias, the study favours an indirect approach, distinguishing between "prejudicial antisemitism" (adherence to classic stereotypes) and "aggressive antisemitism" (tolerance or justification of hostile acts targeting Jews or Jewish places under political cover).

Nearly one in two respondents (49%) consider anti-Semitism to be a problem that concerns society as a whole, compared to 20% who believe it only concerns Jews. This civic awareness, which is weaker than in France, nevertheless coexists with a worrying trivialisation of stereotypical representations, even among respondents who describe themselves as progressive or anti-racist. The study does not aim to label "the people of Brussels" as anti-Semitic – a sociologically inappropriate category – but to measure the spread of anti-Jewish tropes and the significant differences between groups.

Persistence of classic anti-Semitic tropes

The results highlight the high resilience of stereotypes inherited from religious, political and conspiracy traditions. These representations are often expressed as obvious truths, which encourages their trivialisation, particularly in digital spaces.

For example, 40% of respondents believe that Jews control finance and banking; 25% hold them responsible for economic crises; and 22% consider that Belgian Jews are "not really Belgians like everyone else". The most widely shared trope remains that of "Jewish solidarity": 70% of respondents

believe that Jews are "very close-knit". In total, more than half of the items tested were endorsed by at least one-third of the sample, a sign of the structural spread of prejudice.

While anti-Semitic opinions are found across all social and political groups, they are significantly more intense in certain segments structured around three main poles:

- political extremes, both on the right and on the left (particularly among PTB supporters)
- the younger generations;
- certain groups defined by ethno-religious factors, in particular Muslim Brussels residents and, to a lesser extent, practising Catholics.

The study emphasises the need not to essentialise these groups. Belgian Islam, in particular, is pluralistic and heterogeneous. Nevertheless, the differences observed remain statistically robust and recurrent.

Religion, conservatism and conspiracy theories

The data confirms the existence of a "religion effect" already highlighted by several European surveys. Muslim respondents show significantly higher levels of agreement with certain anti-Jewish stereotypes: 56% believe that Jews are too present in the media and politics (compared to 31% of the sample as a whole) and 51% hold them responsible for many economic crises.

These representations are part of a broader socio-political ethos characterised by moral conservatism and distrust of the principles of equality. For example, nearly half of Muslim respondents believe that a woman must obey her husband, only 31% are in favour of adoption by same-sex couples, and more than 50% subscribe to conspiracy theories such as the denial of the moon landing.

Politicisation of anti-Semitism

Politicisation appears to be a major structuring factor. The study shows that anti-Semitism is no longer the preserve of the far right. Several distinct pockets exist today, particularly on the left. Among far-right supporters, 69% believe that Jews exploit the Holocaust and 72% believe they exploit anti-Semitism for their own interests. But certain representations are also very present among PTB supporters: 33% consider Jews to be an "unassimilable race", and less than one in two consider it anti-Semitic to tag a Jewish place in protest against Israel.

A worrying tolerance of aggression

The most alarming aspect is the potential trivialisation of such acts. A significant proportion of respondents do not consider behaviours such as the tagging of a synagogue (), insulting or threatening a Jew believed to be a Zionist during a demonstration or on social media to be anti-Semitic. Overall, 22% of respondents consider these acts to be legitimate, acceptable or understandable, a proportion that rises to over 40% among supporters of extreme political views.

Generational divide and accusatory reversal

Contrary to popular belief, younger generations appear to be more susceptible to several anti-Semitic tropes than their elders. In a fragmented and poorly contextualised information environment, extreme analogies play a central role: nearly 40% of 18-35 year olds believe that "Israelis behave like Nazis" and a similar proportion consider that the Holocaust is exploited by Jews to defend Israel. These comparisons function as mechanisms of accusatory reversal, minimising the history of anti-Semitism while legitimising hostility presented as moral.

Anti-Semitism and conservative ethos

The survey highlights a structural link between anti-Semitism and conservative values. The "conservative ethos" index constructed for the study shows that the more a segment adheres to a hierarchical, patriarchal and religious worldview, the greater the propensity to adhere to anti-Jewish representations. Anti-Semitism, conspiracy theories and rejection of Enlightenment principles thus tend to reinforce each other.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the Institut Jonathas calls for a collective response combining normative clarification, prevention, education and responsibility on the part of political and media mediators. In particular, it advocates for the formalisation of the IHRA working definition in order to better identify certain forms of radical anti-Zionism when they reactivate anti-Semitic patterns, without hindering legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. Finally, the report emphasises the need to strengthen historical education and digital literacy, as well as to increase vigilance in the face of growing tolerance for symbolic and physical attacks.

1. Introduction



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Since 7 October 2023, anti-Semitic acts have multiplied in Belgium, raising questions about the scale and nature of the phenomenon. How do Belgians perceive Jews, anti-Semitism and the conflict in the Middle East? How much of the population currently harbours anti-Semitic prejudices? What are the origins of these prejudices and which segments of the population are most exposed? Is anti-Semitic hatred really making a comeback, is it structural, "instrumentalised" or largely contextual, i.e. correlated with the upheavals of the Gaza conflict?

In order to shed light on these questions and make a rigorous diagnosis, the Institut Jonathas, in association with ISGAP Espace Francophone, has launched its third opinion poll on the image of Jews in Belgium.¹ For this survey co-directed by the Institut Jonathas and ISGAP, IPSOS used a methodology and panel based on the methodology used for political surveys. The fieldwork was carried out by IPSOS online from 2 July to 6 July 2025 among 600 Brussels residents aged 18 and over. The maximum margin of error, for a percentage of 50% and a confidence level of 95%, is +/- 4.0. The analysis and interpretation of the results were carried out by the Institut Jonathas.

The aim of this opinion poll conducted in the Brussels-Capital Region is twofold: on the one hand, to expand on the 2024 results, which revealed (contrary to expectations) that Brussels residents were more prone to anti-Semitic prejudices than their Walloon and even Flemish compatriots; on the other hand, to broaden the focus by asking Brussels residents about their perceptions of Jews, but also about their opinions on gender relations, LGBTQIA+ people, conspiracy theories and topics such as the death penalty and the place of religion in society. This extension makes it possible to test the hypothesis of correlations between the rejection of Jews and other forms of rejection of *the Other* (women, sexual minorities), and to identify any common drivers of these attitudes.

¹ An initial survey, co-led by IFOP-France in 2020, focused on 1,674 French-speaking high school students in Brussels. A second survey, conducted by IPSOS in May 2024, questioned a representative sample of 1,000 Belgians from the three regions of the Kingdom.

1.2. Belgium's denial of anti-Semitism

A long series of anti-Semitic attacks has been targeting Jews in Belgium for nearly twenty years, while the country remains in denial. More than in any other country in the European Union, Belgium is currently in a state of omerta. Since 1945, with a few exceptions, anti-Semitism has been downplayed by academia, politicians and the media.² This code of silence was recently highlighted by the Golem collective in a recent opinion piece.³ Even the massacre at the Jewish Museum in 2014 did not provoke a real outcry at the time.

Yet everyone knows that only Jewish institutions – including nurseries and youth movements – remain under daily police protection. According to progressive circles in Belgium, anti-Semitism is merely a rhetorical tool designed to shield Israel from criticism and discredit anti-capitalist leaders by branding them with the infamous label of anti-Semitism. This thesis is relayed in Belgium by anti-Zionist Jewish groups such as AJAB,⁴ and *the Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium* (UPJB). It should be noted that the UPJB itself deemed it wise to reinforce security at its headquarters after the anti-Semitic attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels, with the help of funds from *the Central Israelite Consistory of Belgium*. To each their own contradictions and armoured doors.

The prevailing denial does not only concern politicians or anti-Zionist circles: it also permeates academic institutions, even though the social sciences are at the forefront of the fight against all forms of racism. In Belgium, universities remain largely closed to the study of "the longest hatred", to borrow the expression coined by British historian Robert Wistrich.⁵ Yet everything suggests that anti-Semitism is anything but residual, circumstantial or even "ordinary" ("micro-aggressions"), as the daily newspaper *Le Soir* tends to portray it.⁶

1.2.1. An upsurge in anti-Semitism

In relative and even absolute terms, Belgian Jews have been the primary target of racist incidents (not discrimination) recorded in Belgium over the past fifteen years.⁷ Figures compiled by both *Antisémitisme.be* and UNIA, the inter-federal agency responsible for combating discrimination, confirm a sharp increase in reports of antisemitism since 2001. In 2023, *Antisémitisme.be* verified 117 anti-Semitic acts, an increase of 250% compared to 2022 and a further increase of 10% in 2024, the highest number since records began in 2001. The 2024 data reveal a concentration of anti-Semitic incidents that is more significant in Flanders (54%) than in Brussels (27%). The rest of the incidents concern Wallonia, which has a maximum of only 2,000 Jews (2%), while 14% relate to various incidents (particularly on the internet) without a specific location but linked to Belgium. In the Flemish metropolis,

² Louis Dominé, "Anti-Semitism in Belgium": "My partner explained to me that she feared for the reputation of our medical practice because of my profile," *La Libre-Belgique*, 18 October 2025.

³ "Call to fight anti-Semitism in Belgium: when will we see action?", Golem, *Le Soir*, 12 January 2026.

⁴ AJAB (Alliance of Anti-Zionist Jews in Belgium).

⁵ Robert Wistrich, *Antisemitism, the longest hatred*, Pantheon, London, 1992.

⁶ Lorraine Kihl, "You look like Anne Frank without having taken a shower": a deep dive into everyday anti-Semitism, *Le Soir*, 18 November 2025.

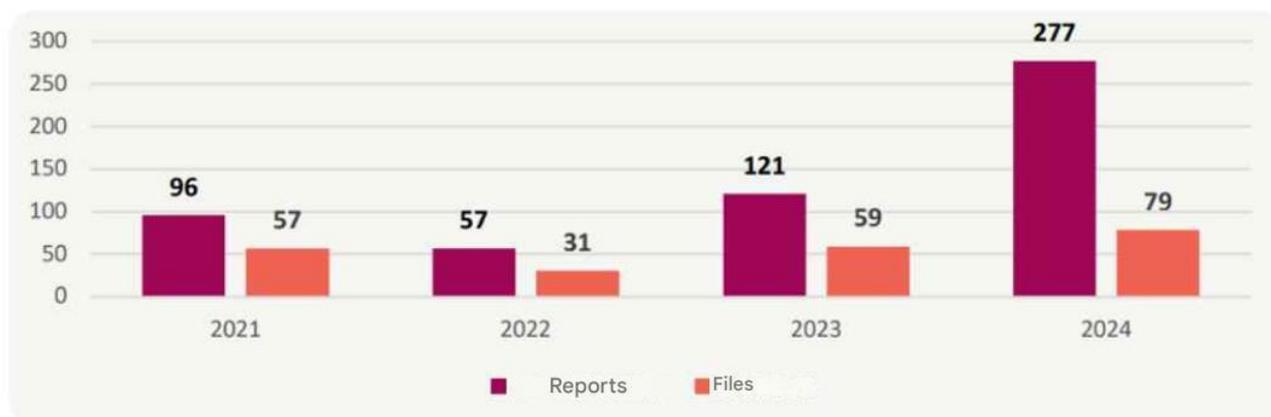
⁷ The attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels was only the tip of the iceberg. Since the 1980s, several anti-Semitic attacks have targeted the Belgian Jewish community. In 1980, members of a Palestinian commando threw grenades at a group of Jewish children in Antwerp. A 15-year-old French boy was killed. Two members of Fatah were arrested and one of them was exchanged in 1990 for a Belgian family taken hostage in Lebanon. Also in Antwerp, a car exploded in October 1981, killing two people. The following year, in 1982, an armed man opened fire at the entrance to the Great Synagogue in Brussels. Four people were wounded in the attack. In 2002, the synagogue in Charleroi was machine-gunned and, in the same year, places of worship were attacked in Antwerp and Anderlecht, in the suburbs of Brussels. Not to mention the 1989 assassination of Dr Joseph Wybran, then president of the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organisations in Belgium (CCOJB), the Belgian equivalent of the CRIF, according to *Le Monde's* correspondent in Brussels, by a commando led by a Belgian-Moroccan, Abdelkader Belliraj.

cases of physical and verbal violence have increased significantly, with 59 acts recorded in 2024, compared to 28 in 2023. Logically, these are concentrated in the Flemish metropolis, given the visibility of members of the Hasidic community. In Brussels, the majority of incidents reported relate more to damage to property (graffiti, stickers, posters), accounting for more than 50% of the incidents recorded in the central region of the country.

When it comes to antisemitism, hate speech remains the category with the highest number of reports year after year. The number of reports of antisemitic comments on the internet and social media is very high, but the actual number is impossible to calculate and it is not always possible to establish a formal link with Belgium. Cyber hate (in all its forms: websites, blogs, emails, discussion forums, but especially social media) remains, as in most previous years, the primary vehicle for antisemitism. Holocaust denial (whether the denial of the Jewish genocide, but especially the approval and justification of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis) is constantly on the rise.

UNIA, for its part, recorded a total of 277 reports of alleged anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial out of a total of 2,168 reports, 79 of which led to the opening of a case file; this is also an unprecedented increase.

Reports and cases opened for anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial - trends over the last four years



These figures are impressive when one considers that reports of antisemitism account for nearly 12% of all reports involving so-called "racial" criteria⁸

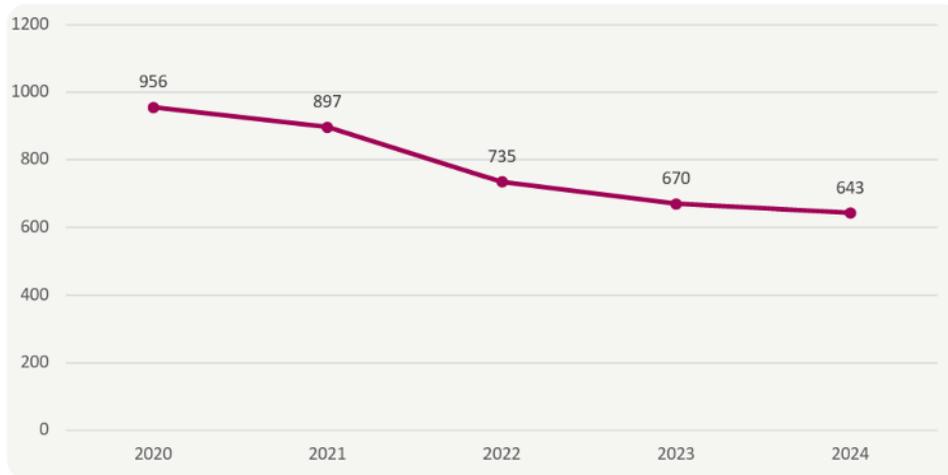
These statistics are all the more striking when one considers that

- Jews make up only 0.25% of the total Belgian population;
- All reports for racial criteria, except anti-Semitism, have been steadily declining in recent years⁹ as confirmed here by this other graph from UNIA.

⁸ Report-figures-2024_FR_final.pdf, UNIA, page 77.

⁹ In May 2016, sociologist Jan Hertogen arrived at a much higher figure of 781,887 Muslims, or 7% of the country's total population. We have opted for a low estimate, which is the one given in the census of Muslim populations in different countries around the world, published on 27 January 2011 by the *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* department of the *Pew Research Center*. According to the Pew Research Center, Belgium has 640,000 Muslims (6%).

"Racial" criteria: change in the number of cases opened for "racial" criteria



While anti-Semitic violence is on the rise in Belgium, reports of racism are declining.¹⁰

- The inter-federal agency for combating racism (UNIA) does not take into account the anti-Semitic dimension of radical anti-Zionism as defined by the IHRA, the intergovernmental organisation of reference for Holocaust remembrance.¹¹ Paradoxically, however, it seems to be more attentive to pro-Israeli discourse deemed "offensive".



Multiple Reports in 2024

- The largest number (357 reports) concerned certain remarks made by politician Georges-Louis Bouchez on Radio Judaica in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- In the same context, we also received 82 reports concerning the highly controversial column by writer Herman Brusselmans on www.humo.be. Following this, we received 43 reports expressing dissatisfaction with Unia for opening a case on these matters.
- We also received multiple reports concerning remarks considered Islamophobic in a video published by the Jean-Gol Centre and on social media by Vlaams Belang MP Britt Huybrechts.
- Finally, we also received multiple reports relating to the issue of digital inequality, more specifically concerning the LIDL-plus customer card and the SNCB multi-trip card, which can only be obtained online

UNIA recorded 357 reports targeting comments made by the MR president on Radio Judaica about Operation Beeper against Hezbollah, compared to 83 reports relating to columnist Herman Brusselmans' call for the murder of Jews, which was contested by 43 hostile reports!

In addition to a decrease in racist incidents, UNIA notes in its report a marked decline in reports related to philosophical or religious beliefs: only 158 cases were opened in 2024. It should be noted that, in this

¹⁰ UNIA report, *Ibidem*, page 74.

¹¹ <https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/proposition-definition-antisemitisme-ihra-2021> (The Muslim community in [Belgium](https://www.unia.be/fr/connaissances-recommandations/proposition-definition-antisemitisme-ihra-2021)).

register, the vast majority of reports concern the ban on wearing religious symbols. Of the 137 cases relating to Islam, 80 concern the outward expression of faith in the form of symbols, mainly the wearing of headscarves.

Clearly, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim reports do not follow the same logic. A significant proportion of complaints of "Islamophobia" relate to situations of so-called symbolic violence (restriction, stigmatisation or exclusion linked to religious symbols), while anti-Semitic incidents appear to be less symbolic and more directly violent, particularly in Antwerp. Even more worrying is the fact that, in recent years, Belgian Jews have been exposed to explicit and open discrimination. For example, a Brussels medical practice stated on its website that it refused to treat Jewish patients. Advertisements for student accommodation on social media openly exclude "Zionists".

1.2.2. Anti-Semitism: a topical issue

Despite real gentrification and supposed symbolic "whitening", Jews remain suspect in the eyes of many of their fellow citizens, as confirmed by the data from our survey. Yesterday's scapegoats remain today's scapegoats – with the bitter irony that their attackers are not always those whom our researchers and journalists would like to denounce. Today, it is Belgians of the Muslim faith who constitute the segment of the Belgian population most susceptible to anti-Semitic prejudices and tropes. The result of a strange mixture of negative representations inherited from Islam, jealousy of the unbearable success of former dhimmis and hatred of Israel, anti-Semitic background noise is particularly widespread among populations of Arab-Muslim origin.

Needless to say, the seventeen people murdered since 2006 in France and Belgium because they were (supposedly) Jewish were killed by radicalised young Muslims, from Merah to Coulibaly to Nemmouche¹². This reality is the blind spot of our media and research institutes, which focus on classic far-right anti-Semitism, which, it is true, has lost none of its vigour. The second blind spot of our media and social science researchers is left-wing anti-Semitism, which is nevertheless enjoying a resurgence. This is certainly what is shown by the third study conducted by the Institut Jonathas and CEESAG on the image of Jews, this time in the Brussels region (n.600).

¹² In Belgium, physical and verbal attacks on Jews, particularly Orthodox Jews in Antwerp, are much more likely to be carried out by young Muslims than by the Flemish or Polish far right (see 'antisemitisme.be' or the reports and data from *The Centre for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry*. <https://cst.tau.ac.il/>)

2. Third survey Jonathas/Ceesag



2. Third Jonathas/Ceesag

2.1. Survey methodology

2.1.1. Who are our respondents?

From 2 to 6 July 2025, IPSOS surveyed 600 people using the methodology and panel used for political polls (see appendix). Although the sample is not strictly representative in terms of ethnic and religious diversity, it meets strict criteria in terms of gender (50% women and 50% men) and age (e.g. 10% are aged between 18 and 24). It includes Belgians, dual nationals and foreigners. IPSOS weighted the responses of each of the 600 respondents to reflect the demographic weight of each of the 19 municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region (calculations based on Statbel data). Without claiming to be perfectly representative, the selected sample is a solid and meaningful snapshot of the population that makes up the capital of the Belgian state. As in previous surveys, we also recorded respondents' declared political orientation and religious or philosophical affiliation. The breakdown for each criterion and the methodology are detailed in the appendix.

The questionnaire partly reproduces the sets of questions already used in our first two studies – the first conducted under the supervision of Claude Javeau, professor emeritus at the ULB – as well as wording borrowed from the Fondapol/AJC and IFOP/CRIF surveys. The aim is to enable reliable comparisons and to confirm or refute the results of existing European research on the factors explaining antisemitism.

2.1.2. How can we assess anti-Semitism in public opinion in 2025?

The 600 respondents answered an online multiple-choice questionnaire on representations of the Other (mainly Jews, but also, for comparison purposes, women, LGBTQI+ people, Black people, etc.) as well as other items that could shed light on the respondents' opinions (general knowledge, impacts of the Middle East conflict, etc.). In total, there were around 100 statements.

2.1.2.1 One hundred statements divided into 26 questions

Asking the question "Are you anti-Semitic?" directly would be of very limited value. It should be remembered that anti-Semitism differs from other forms of hatred in that it not only assigns Jews to inferiority, but perceives them as harmful or unduly "superior", fuelling less contempt than fear, jealousy and, ultimately, responses of exclusion or even elimination. We have therefore chosen to capture this perception through indirect means. Since the Holocaust, few people openly declare themselves to be anti-Semitic; the public norm is rather to affirm a firm rejection of all forms of anti-Semitism and racism.

- Following on from FONDAPOL's analysis of anti-Semitism in France, our analysis distinguishes between two types of anti-Semitism: **anti-Semitism based on prejudice and anti-Semitism based on aggression**, which combines these same representations but adds the validation of (symbolic or physical) acts against Jewish people or places.
- Finally, because this is a survey on representations – including negative ones – of the Other, our questionnaire (around 100 items) deliberately includes divisive statements, such as: "Jews want to control the world".
- The statistical processing of the data was carried out by IPSOS, one of Europe's leading opinion polling organisations.

2.1.2.2 "Prejudicial anti-Semitism" vs. "aggressive anti-Semitism"

To go beyond the (rare) self-declaration of an anti-Semitic identity, our survey was inspired by the latest Fondapol/AJC study, which proposes an indirect approach to anti-Semitism by using a set of formulations that distinguish between "prejudicial anti-Semitism" and "aggressive anti-Semitism" (items testing the acceptability, legitimacy or rejection of hostile acts against places of worship or Jewish people under the pretext of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). And here the results are divisive.

Only

- 61% of respondents believe that, in the context of the Israeli-Gaza conflict, tagging a synagogue is anti-Semitic.
- 53% believe that threatening or insulting a Jew who is presumed to be a Zionist during a demonstration is anti-Semitic.
- 51% believe that threatening or insulting a Jew who is perceived to be a Zionist on social media is anti-Semitic (32% of 18-24 year olds compared to 72% of those aged 65+).

2.1.2.3 Prejudicial anti-Semitism: 15 basic statements

Prejudicial anti-Semitism consists of negative opinions and accusatory attributions (power, money, influence, duplicity, etc.). We have included the fifteen stereotypical questions covering a range of well-known and major anti-Semitic prejudices that appeared in our previous survey.

"Here are some statements about Jews. For each one, would you say it is completely true, somewhat true, somewhat false or completely false?"

1. *Belgian Jews are not really Belgians like everyone else.*
2. *Jews are a race that cannot be assimilated into Europe.*
3. *Jews are, on average, richer than Belgians.*
4. *There are too many Jews in Belgium.*
5. *Jews are very close-knit.*
6. *Jews are responsible for the death of Christ.*
7. *Jews are often more intelligent than average.*
8. *Jews are too present in the media and politics.*
9. *Jews are responsible for many economic crises.*
10. *Jews are overly present in the financial and banking sectors.*
11. *Jews often consider themselves superior to others.*
12. *Jews have very powerful lobbies operating at the highest levels in Belgium.*
13. *Jews use the Holocaust and the genocide they suffered to defend their interests.*
14. *Jews use anti-Semitism to defend their interests.*
15. *Jews are doing to Palestinians what the Germans did to them.*

2.1.2.4 Aggressive anti-Semitism: three statements

Aggressive anti-Semitism combines these same representations but adds the validation of acting out (symbolically or physically) against Jewish people or places; hence our choice to combine these three more specific items.

"What do you think of the following behaviours? Do you consider these behaviours to be legitimate, acceptable, understandable or anti-Semitic?"

- Tagging a synagogue or Jewish place to show opposition to Israel.
- Threatening or pushing Jewish people during a demonstration or public gathering on the grounds that they are Zionists.
- Insulting or threatening someone on social media on the grounds that they are Zionist.

2.1.2.5 Additional statements: knowledge, values (sexism, homophobia)

In order to objectively assess the state of anti-Semitism and the image of Jews in Brussels, we added indicators to our basic questionnaire designed to identify people who are susceptible to anti-Semitic prejudice and, above all, to contextualise them. These additional questions are part of a broader framework covering a range of general prejudices related to racism and anti-Semitism (ethnicity, sexism and homophobia), supplemented by questions on general knowledge.

2.1.2.6 Criticism of the State of Israel: a current sign of anti-Semitism

Assessing the state of anti-Semitism in Brussels public opinion in 2024 also means looking at the effects of the war that has been raging between Israel and Hamas since October 2023, following the genocidal attack on 7 October. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the Israeli-Gaza conflict occupies a

central place in Belgian public debate. It is obviously impossible to ignore its repercussions on Belgian society.

One may or may not feel antipathy towards Jews, Black people or North Africans, but this is not enough to make the respondent anti-Semitic or racist per se. On the other hand, when the possible answers include 'neither sympathy nor antipathy' and 'I don't know' and the respondent chooses to answer 'rather antipathy', they are expressing *at the very least* a hostility that may be a sign or indicator of anti-Semitism or racism. In the same vein, and even more so after the massacres of 7 October, when one responds that one has "some sympathy" for the members of Hamas, one is choosing to express sympathy for a terrorist and murderous movement, whose charter and leaders call for the destruction of the State of Israel.

Similarly, when asked about the outcome one would like to see to *the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has been going on for several decades"* and when choosing, from among the five answers proposed, "*a Palestinian state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, dominated by Arabs*", one is also expressing a desire to see the only state of the Jewish people disappear. This is anti-Semitism. Obviously, it is absolutely not our intention to consider any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic. In line with the work of *the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)*,¹³ and in particular its working definition of antisemitism, adopted by some 30 European and North American states and nearly 1,200 international organisations (European Commission, European Parliament) and associations (UK Labour Party), our study distinguishes between:

- What is anti-Semitic, such as "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination", "the Nazification of Israel", "double standards" or calls to replace Israel with a Palestinian state "from the river to the sea";
- From what is not anti-Semitic, such as "criticising Israel as one would criticise any other state", supporting the Palestinian people and the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, or opposing Benjamin Netanyahu and his supremacist allies.

This set of questions, comprising nearly a hundred statements, is reinforced by the construction of two indices that will enable us to draw up a more accurate picture not only of attitudes towards Jews but also towards modernity. These two indices will enable us to determine more precisely the main areas of anti-Semitic over-representation.

2.1.3. An index of anti-Semitic penetration

Based on a model developed by Fondapol/AJC, we have constructed an index of anti-Semitism penetration in major sociological categories (age, gender, religion, political orientation, etc.).¹⁴ Our index is the average of unambiguously anti-Semitic responses to 22 questions selected from the 46 statements in the questionnaire relating to Jews, anti-Semitism or Israel (list in appendix). This average provides a comparative level of anti-Semitism for each category, making it possible to identify the segments where it is most prevalent. (see appendix)

¹³ Definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, adopted by the European Institutions and by many Member States, including Belgium (Senate vote on 10 December 2018).

¹⁴ <https://www.fondapol.org/etude/radiographie-de-lantisemitisme-en-france-2/>

2.1.4. An index of the penetration of a conservative ethos

Given the scope of our questionnaire, which also covers the values stated by respondents, we have devised a second index measuring the degree of penetration of conservatism (see appendix).

Are negative attitudes towards Jews, women and LGBTQIA+ people correlated?

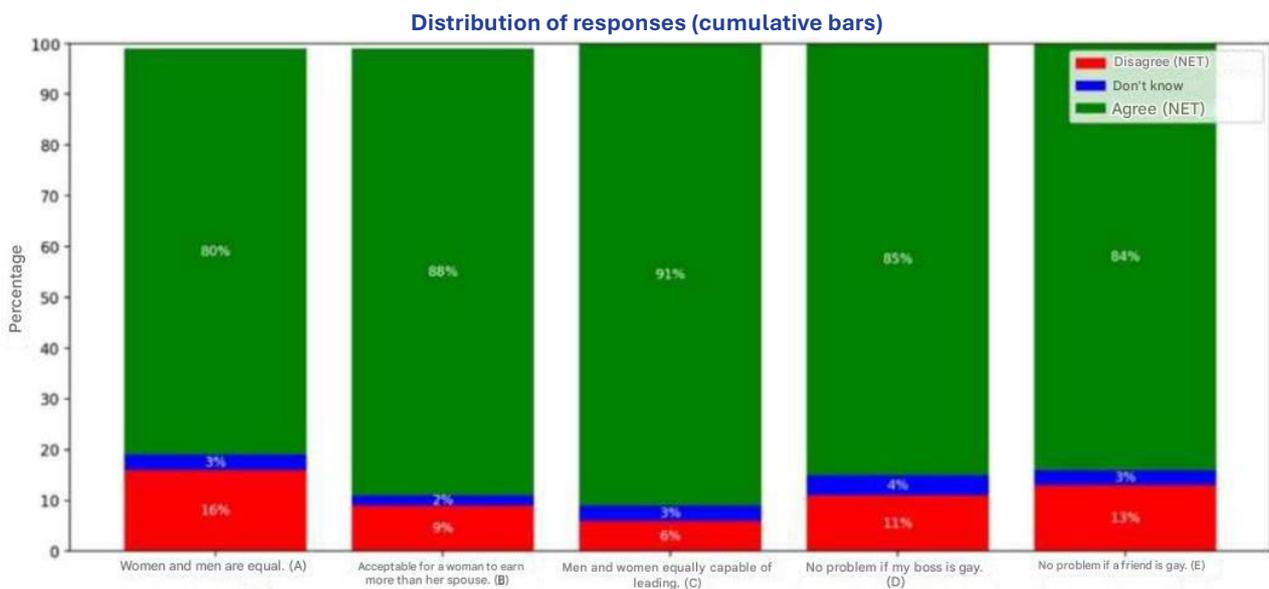
3. What our data reveals about the people of Brussels



3. What our data reveals about the people of Brussels

3.1. First observation: A population open to others, but with strong anti-Semitic prejudices

Overall, our study reveals that Brussels respondents seem to embrace the norms of cultural liberalism as defined by Gérard Grunberg and Étienne Schweisguth. According to these two authors, the "norms of cultural liberalism" refer to a coherent set of values that place individual autonomy, tolerance and equality at the centre, as opposed to traditional norms of authority, sexual morality and ethnocentrism. They translate into acceptance of changes in social mores (contraception, abortion, cohabitation, divorce, recognition of homosexuality, families based on individual fulfilment rather than on the institution), through assertive universalism and, originally, through a questioning of traditional authorities (the Church, the army, the police, hierarchy).



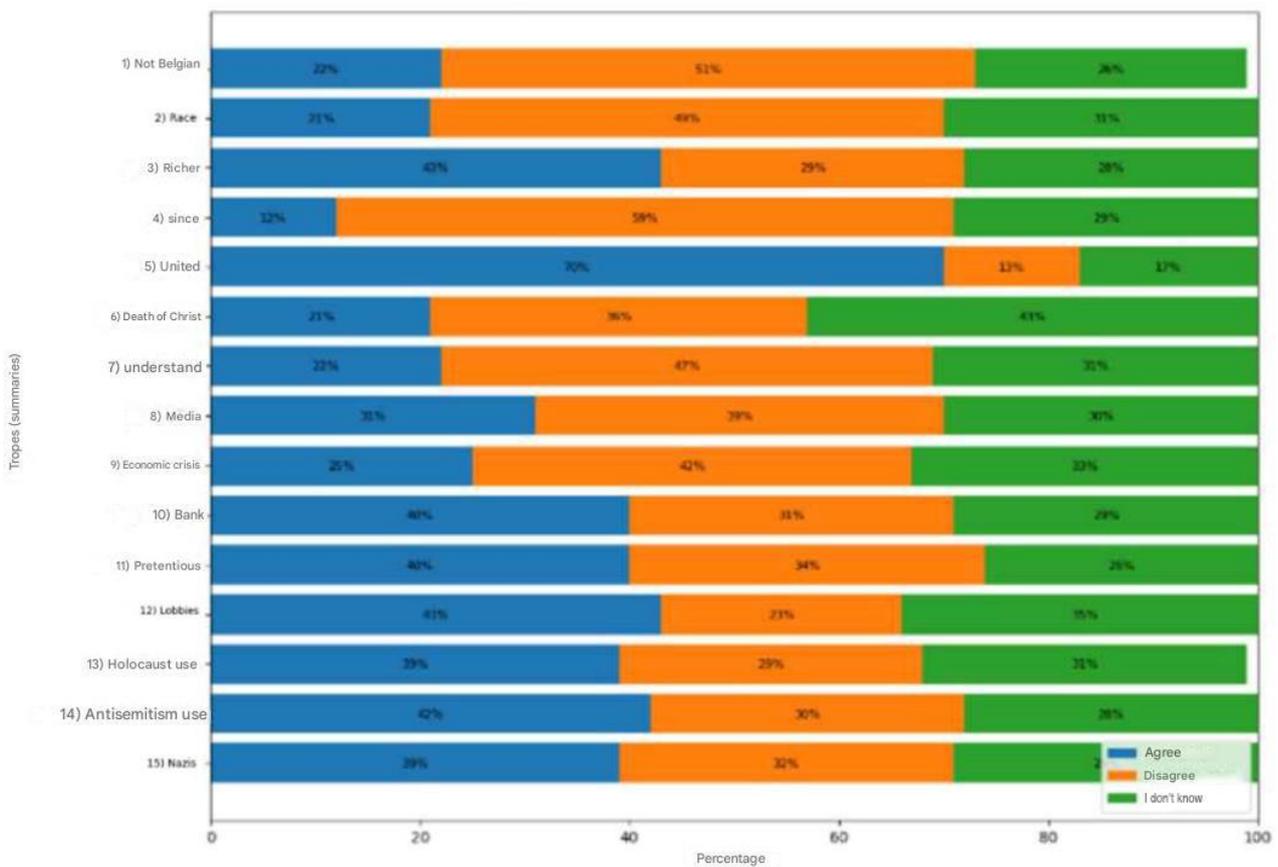
When it comes to values, very few respondents were undecided (NSP). When it comes to anti-Semitic tropes, however, the situation is quite different, as we shall see.

Nevertheless, our study highlights a population in Brussels that continues to harbour anti-Semitic stereotypes "inherited from the past" that are religious, political or conspiracy-based in nature. These tropes are sometimes expressed without apparent animosity, as if they were "obvious". This makes them all the more likely to be trivialised, particularly in digital spaces where repetition, viral circulation and closed communities reinforce their naturalisation. Despite denials in principle, it is therefore for ly clear that anti-Semitic prejudices are far from having disappeared. What is striking, first and foremost, is the surprising persistence of traditional stereotypes: while Jews represent less than 0.25% of the Belgian

population, they are perceived by 31% of those surveyed as dominating the media and finance. Such motives distinguish anti-Semitism from ordinary racism: they refer not only to othering, but to an accusation structured around the idea of occult and disproportionate power.

It should be noted that we asked the 600 respondents to give their opinion on the veracity of fifteen anti-Semitic prejudices. Eight of these fifteen tropes are considered true by at least one-third of respondents. Conversely, only two statements are rejected by a small majority: 49% believe that Jews do not constitute an "unassimilable race," and 59% believe that there are not "too many Jews" in Belgium. Anti-Jewish prejudices are therefore far from marginal, especially when non-responses are taken into account. In this case, the reality becomes even clearer: for nine out of fifteen tropes, the image of Jews appears, overall, to be more negative than positive.

15 tropes: breakdown Agree / Disagree / Don't know (in %)



The full titles of the questions are on the inside back cover.

- 21% of respondents in Brussels consider Jews to be an unassimilable race or responsible for the death of Christ. For these two questions, the non-response rate is over 30%.
- 22% believe that they are not Belgians like everyone else,
- 25% hold them responsible for economic crises: a classic anti-Semitic trope.
- 39% believe that "Jews" are doing to Palestinians what the Nazis did to them
- 40% believe that they control the financial and banking sectors,
- **70% of respondents** (compared to only 13% and 17% NSP) believe that Jews are "very close-knit". This is the most widespread prejudice among Brussels residents towards Jews.

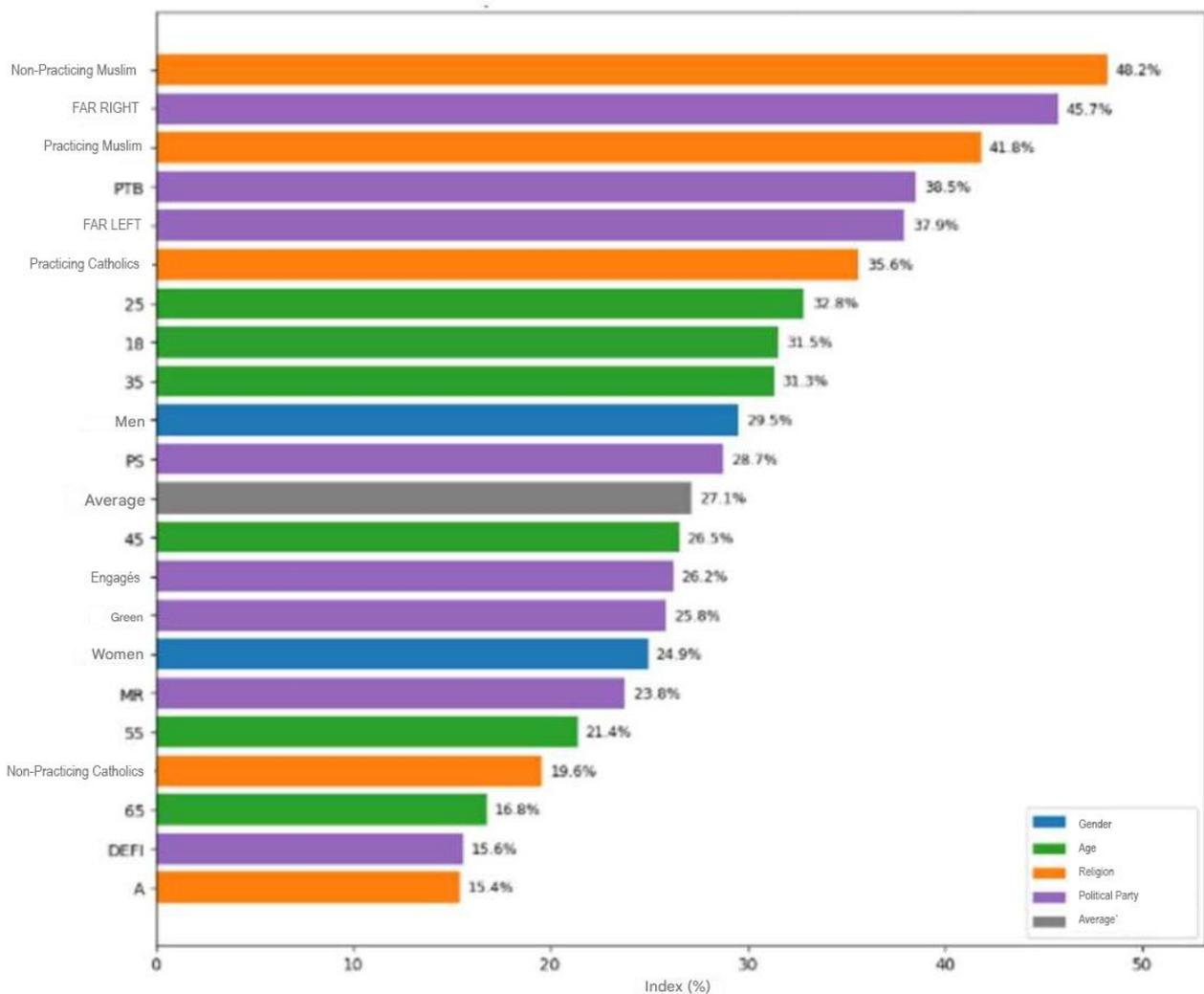
3.1.1. "Index of anti-Semitism penetration"

Among our Brussels respondents, the overall index is 27.1%, which is about 10 points higher than the index in France calculated by AJC/Fondapol for almost identical items.¹⁵ The Islam effect largely explains this index, but it is not the only factor. It rises to 35.6% for practising Catholics. If we consider only non-Muslim Brussels residents (n. 493), the index remains high: it is only 23.6%.

For a significant proportion of Brussels residents, Judaism remains difficult to identify, even suspicious.

3.1.2. Five segments of the Brussels population overexposed to anti-Semitic prejudice

Index of anti-Semitism penetration (in descending order)



Our results reveal a population in which anti-Semitic opinions remain prevalent among the Brussels population and are particularly intense in five segments.

¹⁵ <https://www.fondapol.org/etude/radiographie-de-lantisemitisme-en-france-2/>

- Practising Muslims (MP) and, even more so, non-practising Muslims (MNP) in Brussels
- Far-right sympathisers
- Far-left sympathisers
- Brussels Catholics who are practising only (CP)
- The younger generations (Generation Z and Millennials)

We will return to this in the following points.

3.1.3. Old and new tropisms

The anti-myth,¹⁶ and/or trope of Jewish separatism remains deeply rooted in the Western psyche. However, the entire history of Jews in the diaspora demonstrates their astonishing capacity for integration, even to the point of total and complete assimilation. The adage "*two Jews, three opinions*" illustrates well the differences that exist both in Israel and within Jewish communities around the world. One need only think of the divisions that exist among Belgian Jews, between religious and secular, Zionists and anti-Zionists, not to mention the conflicts between different Zionist factions.

When it comes to more contemporary tropes,

- 42% of Brussels residents believe that Jews use anti-Semitism and
- 39% believe that Jews use the Holocaust to serve their own interests.

Another marker of secondary anti-Semitism, if ever there was one,

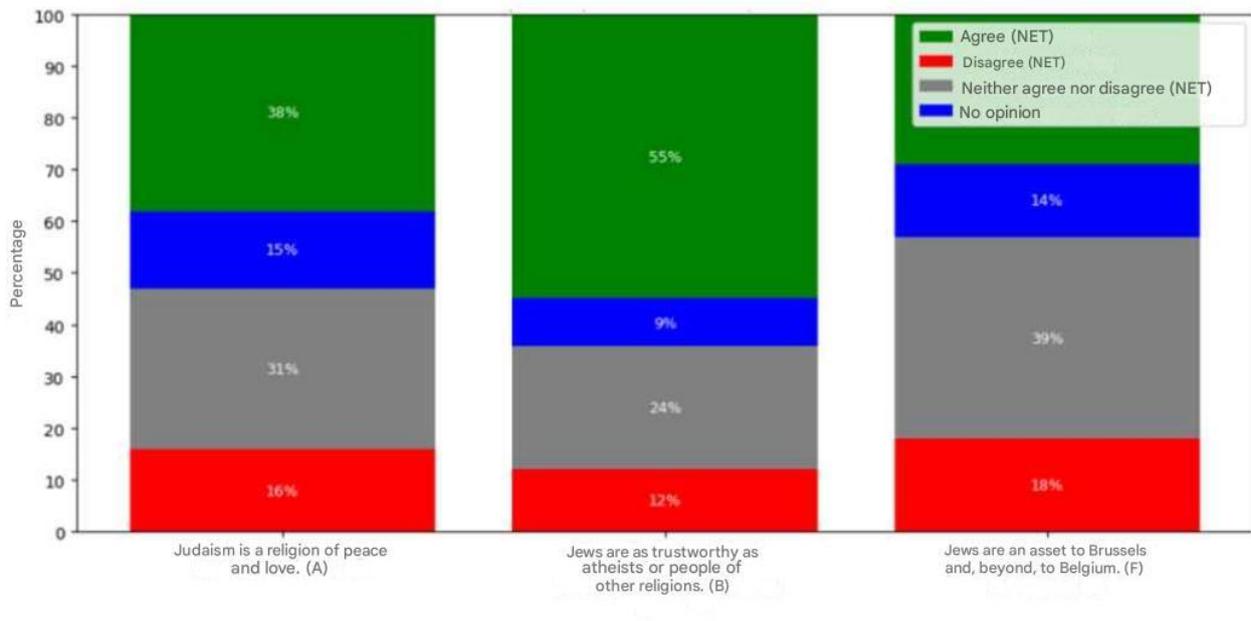
- 39% believe that **Jews (not Israelis)** behave like Nazis towards Palestinians.

Overall, the image of Jews and Judaism is not very positive:

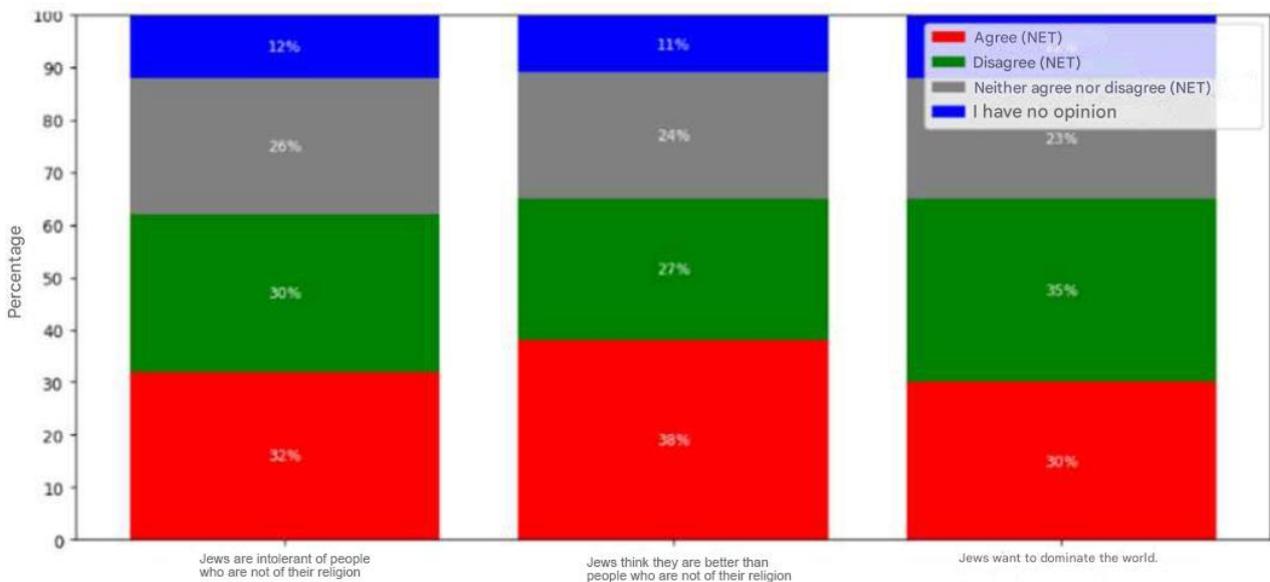
- 38% of respondents think that Jews consider themselves better than people who are not of their religion,
- and 32% believe that they are intolerant of people of other religions.

¹⁶ A concept synonymous with prejudice or trope coined by historian Marie-Anne Matard Bonucci to refer to negative myths specifically relating to Jews.

Jews and Judaism: positive items



Jews and Judaism: negative items



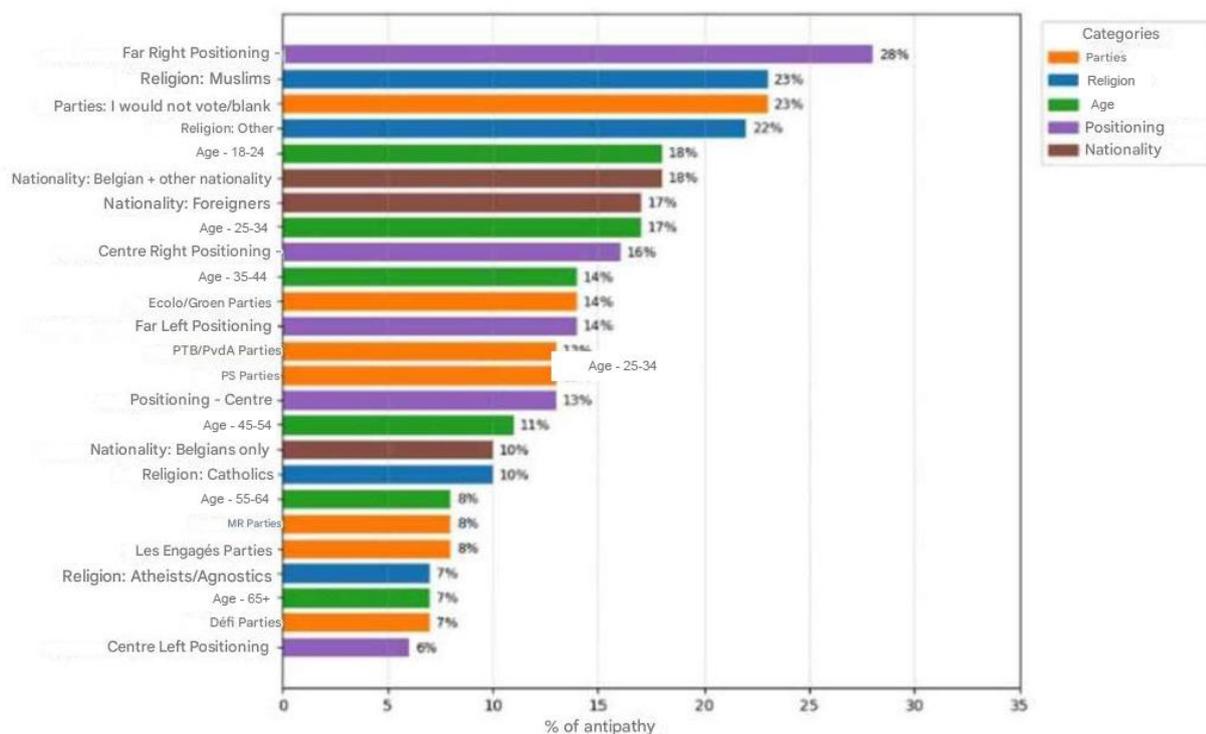
While 38% of respondents believe that Judaism is a religion of peace and love, 42% believe this of Islam and 55% of Christianity. Yet Jews have never organised a single *croissade* (crusade)¹⁷ in the name of their faith. Similarly, while 30% of respondents believe that Jews want to dominate the world (42% for Muslims), only 14% believe this about Christians. Only 35% of respondents reject the idea that Jews aspire to conquer the world, an absurd idea if ever there was one, considering that there are only 16 million Jews in the world compared to 4 billion Christians and Muslims. It is clearly ignorance that prevails. Prejudices concerning money, finance and power – perceived as occult and hidden – come second.

¹⁷ "Croissade": combination of *croissade* (crusade) and *croissant* (crescent) to refer to the expansion of Islam under the banner of the crescent moon.

These results reflect a mindset in which anti-Semitic prejudices are expressed without apparent animosity, as if they were obvious truths, shared by all and not open to question. This is worrying because the persistence of prejudice provides fertile ground for anti-Semitic speech and actions, particularly on social media.

Many people who make such comments do not seem to be aware that they are conveying anti-Semitic clichés that are as absurd as they are recurrent. Jews do not "control" any media in Belgium except for Regards (CCLJ) and Radio Judaïca. However, if they were to be told that their words are anti-Semitic, they would probably defend themselves, as writer Herman Brusselmans and choreographer Thierry Smits did in similar situations.¹⁸ What is certain is that our society, regardless of the Jewish question, remains very susceptible to urban conspiracy myths.

Antipathy towards Jews - GLOBAL (all categories)



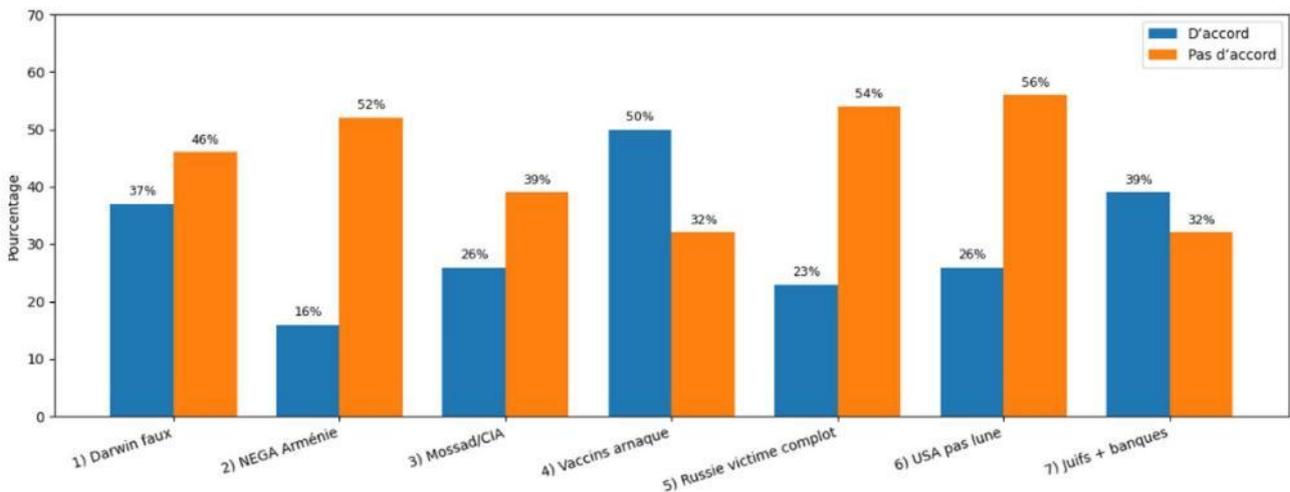
3.1.4. The incredible vigour of conspiracy theories

Perhaps most alarming of all our findings is the prevalence of conspiracy theories that are far from being limited to Jews alone. More than a quarter of respondents (26%) believe that 9/11 was a conspiracy hatched by the CIA and the Israeli Mossad,

- 50% of respondents believe that the pharmaceutical industry and governments are lying about the harmfulness of vaccines;
- 23% believe that Russia is the victim of a NATO conspiracy;
- 26% believe that Americans never landed on the moon;
- 35% of respondents dispute or doubt the theory of evolution.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the Flemish writer Brusselmans expressed in a mainstream weekly magazine his desire to stab every Jew he met in the street, and that the choreographer Smits described the majority of Jews as fascist exterminators in a post.

Brussels residents who are very receptive to conspiracy theories: Agree vs Disagree (in %)



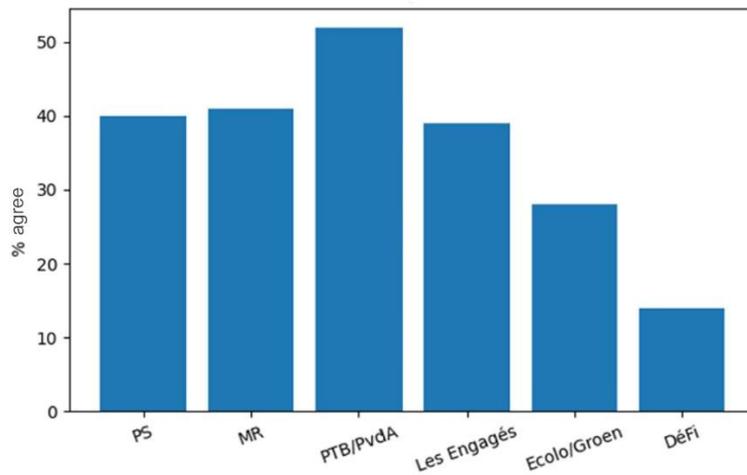
Questions (summarised)

We note that 39% of Brussels respondents share the absurd belief that Jews control central banks, a belief shared by both far-right and far-left sympathisers, compared to only 32% who do not believe this. It should be noted that this anti-Semitic trope is shared across the political spectrum.



The "very progressive" lawyer Jean-Marie Dermagne, a supporter of the Chinese and Russian regimes, posted an anti-Semitic article on his Facebook page that had been published on Alain Soral's neo-Nazi website "Egalité et Réconciliation" (Equality and Reconciliation). Its author, Joe-Le-Corbeau, has been convicted of anti-Semitism.

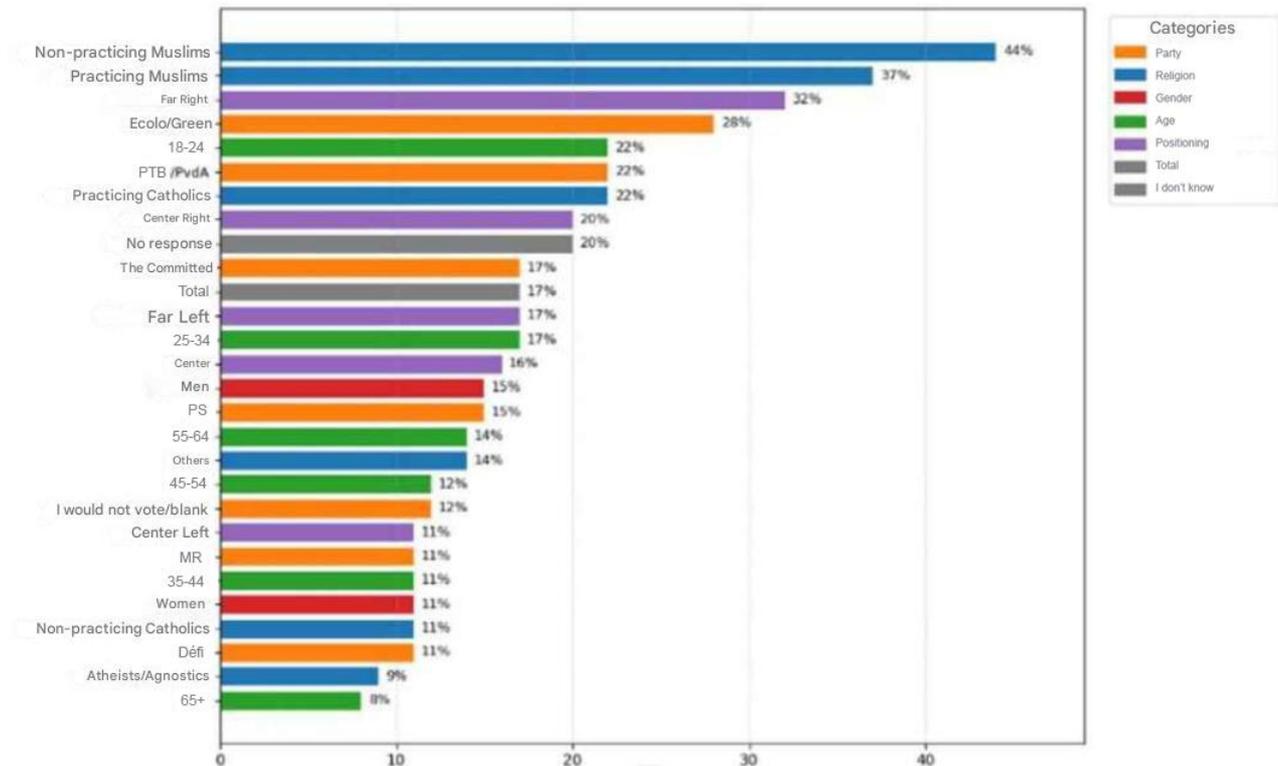
"Jews control the majority of central banks" (by political party)



The following data is equally worrying:

- 16% of those surveyed doubt the reality of the Armenian genocide (31% don't know)
- 18% believe that "Hitler's negative side is exaggerated" (10% don't know).

Agreement with: "The denial of the Armenian genocide"



3.1.5. A distrust of Jews that is as obvious as it is repressed

There is no doubt that anti-Semitism is a central feature of conspiracy theories. As we have already pointed out, these prejudices are often expressed in a naive manner: mistrust of Jews is denied, concealed and repressed. Thus, supporters of the Maoist PTB party express significantly more sympathy towards Jews than antipathy (31% sympathy versus 13% antipathy), which is even two points higher than MR supporters. Nevertheless, Brussels residents who identify as left-wing and especially far-left appear to be the most susceptible to anti-Semitic tropes (see below).

3.1.6. "Aggressive anti-Semitism"

Our study also highlights the rise of aggressive anti-Semitism, which can be described as tolerance for hostile acts against places of worship or people who are not Israeli but Jewish, under the pretext of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here too, the results are divisive.

Only

- 61% of respondents believe that tagging a synagogue because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is antisemitic. It should be noted that only 47% of PTB supporters think so;
- 53% consider threatening or insulting a Jew for being a Zionist during a demonstration to be anti-Semitic (only 26% of Muslim respondents think so);
- 51% consider threatening or insulting a Jew who is believed to be a Zionist on social media (15% of 18-24 year olds compared to 72% of those aged 65+) to be anti-Semitic.

3.1.7. A striking indicator: marital "mixophobia"

Among other notable findings, the survey reveals an explicit refusal to consider a Jewish or Muslim partner among a significant proportion of respondents. 27% of all respondents say they cannot imagine having a Jewish partner. This refusal to consider a Jewish partner rises to 46% among Muslim respondents and 38% among 18-24 year olds, compared to 13% among those aged 65+. This type of indicator, directly linked to social intimacy, is a strong marker of distance, even rejection.

While 38% of our respondents would not consider marrying a Muslim partner, the image of Islam appears mixed.

- On the one hand, 42% of respondents believe Islam to be a religion of peace and love (vs. 22%), and 54% believe that Muslims are as trustworthy as atheists and other believers (vs. 18%).
- On the other hand, negative assessments are no less prevalent: only 28% of respondents (compared to 33%) believe that Muslims are an asset to the city of Brussels (one point less than Jews at 29%). And only 19% of respondents (compared to 41%) believe that Muslims should be able to practise their faith at work and at university.

This *mistrust* could be explained by the process of re-Islamisation that is growing within the Muslim community.

3.1.8. Dechristianisation vs. re-Islamisation

Our survey highlights the acceleration of secularisation in Belgium. Although our sample includes more Catholics (38%) than atheists or agnostics (28%), it includes more "cultural" Catholics (62%) than practising Catholics (33%), in contrast to Brussels Muslims, 68% of whom claim to be practising. The decline of religion is therefore well underway. Let us not forget that the majority of atheists and agnostics are mostly of Catholic origin. Muslim populations appear to be bucking this strong trend, despite their clearly stated political leanings towards the left (PTB 27% and PS 26%).¹⁹ These two opposing trends were recently highlighted in a study conducted last November by IFOP.²⁰

As Thomas Legrand points out in *Libération* in an article with the evocative title "Young Muslims on the slippery slope... like everyone else", the study finds that French Muslims (7% of the population) appear to be increasingly religious and strict (*Libération*, 25 November 2025). The Muslims surveyed report a strong attachment to religion, particularly among young people (87% of 15-24 year olds say they are "religious"), as well as a marked increase in religious practices (daily prayer: 62%; mosque on Fridays: 35%; Ramadan "the whole month": 73%, and even more among the youngest). The wearing of the veil is declining among older women but increasing sharply (45%) among teenage girls and young women. The study also highlights a tightening of certain norms (co-education/orthopraxy) and the not insignificant presence of attitudes favourable to political Islamism, which are more prevalent among young people.

Like this French survey, our own study highlights this divide within the Brussels population. It appears that the factors driving secularisation in mainstream society are, at the very least, suspended among young people from non-European migrant backgrounds who have been socialised in Belgium. It should be noted, however, that the youngest Catholics (aged 18-24) are more practising than their immediate elders. To be continued?

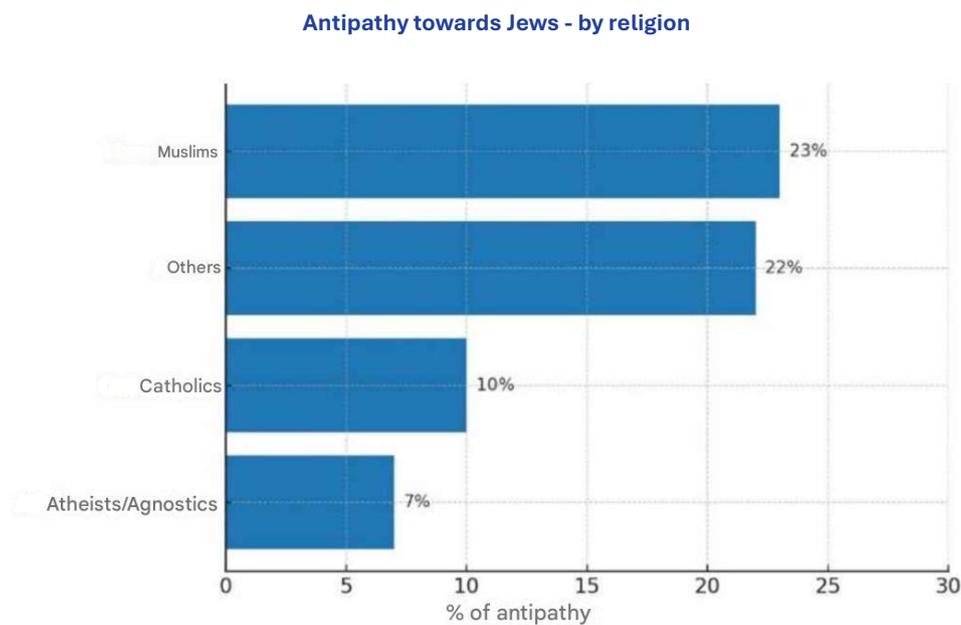
¹⁹ In 2016, in his study for the Montaigne Foundation, political scientist Hakim El Karoui had already noted the radicalisation of a section of Muslim youth: while a quarter of adult French Muslims say they are close to a "secessionist" and "fundamentalist" Islam, this proportion rises to 50% among 15-25 year olds. Hakim El Karoui, *Un Islam français est possible*, report by the Institut Montaigne, Institut Montaigne, Paris, September 2016, page 16.

²⁰ *Écran de Veille* magazine, *Overview of the relationship between Islam and Islamism among Muslims in France [part 1]*, 13 November 2025, study conducted by IFOP and carried out by telephone from 8 August to 2 September 2025 among a sample of 1,005 people of the Muslim faith, taken from a representative national sample of 14,244 people aged 15 and over residing in metropolitan France.

3.2. Second observation: the influence of religion

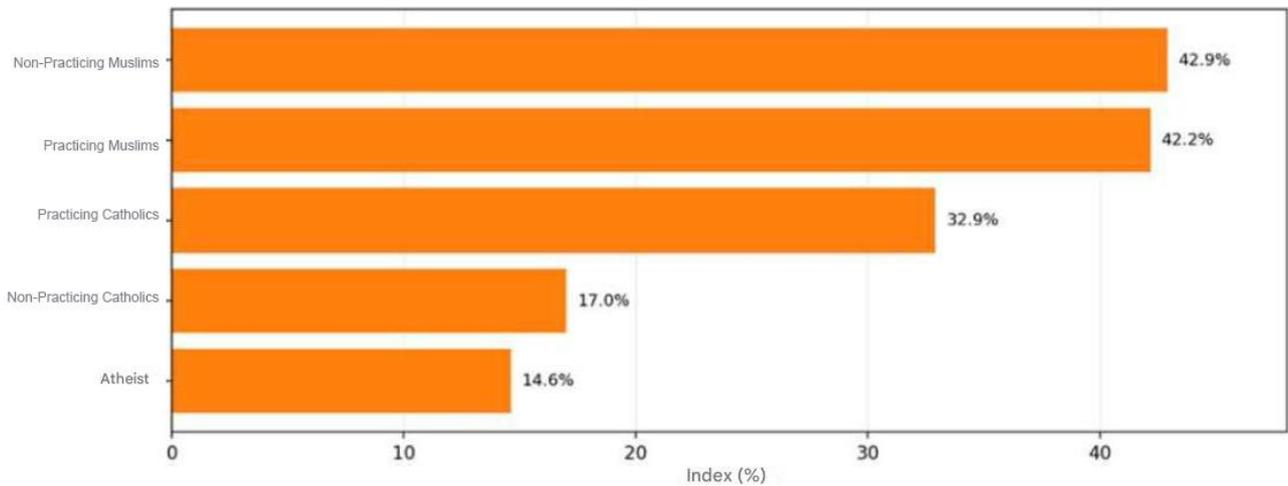
Our study confirms the analyses of our two previous surveys (2020 and 2024), as well as those conducted in Europe in recent years, both on the secularisation of Belgians of Catholic origin and on the 'religion effect'. Our study shows that anti-Semitic, sexist and homophobic attitudes vary greatly depending on religious beliefs. It appears that cultural and religious attitudes are more important factors than socio-economic ones.

The prevalence of anti-Semitic, homophobic and sexist representations is higher among practising Catholics and all Muslim respondents, both practising and non-practising.



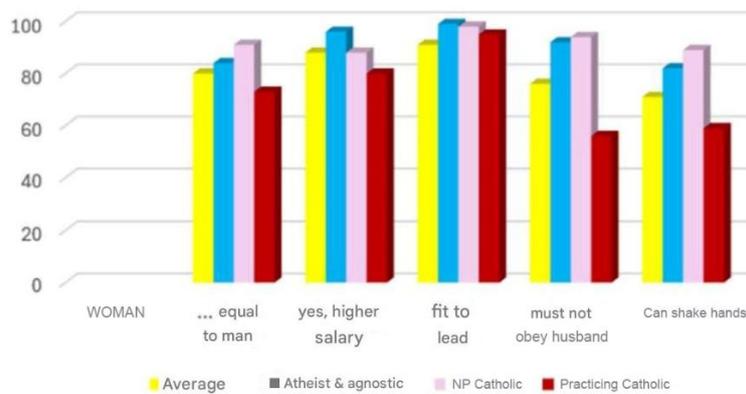
For 27% of practising Muslims (PM) and 34% of non-practising Muslims (NPM), as well as 32% of practising Catholics (compared to 22% of non-practising Catholics), Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus. However, Islamic tradition teaches that the prophet Isa (Jesus) was not crucified, but spared by God. It should be noted that NPMs share this belief more than PMs, which explains why anti-Semitism is as much a cultural phenomenon as it is a religious one. This observation is clearly evident in the conservative ethos index that we developed specifically for our survey.

Conservative Ethos Index - Religion (descending order)

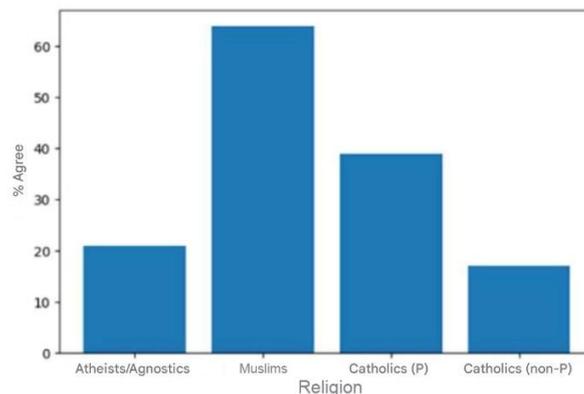


On the other hand, our results highlight that "cultural" Catholics, i.e. non-practising Catholics, differ significantly from their practising co-religionists: their relationship with otherness is closer to that of atheists and agnostics, as evidenced here by the difference in opinion between CP and CNP regarding their relationship with women and Jews.

Gender equality and practising and non-practising Catholics



"Jews control the majority of central banks" (by religion)



3.2.1. The Catholicism effect

Thus, when it comes to Catholics, it is those who define themselves as practising who continue to share, albeit quietly, certain anti-Jewish tropes. Although not identical or as pronounced, their representations of Jews are similar in several respects to those observed among Muslim respondents. Our survey corroborates the findings of research conducted by Mark Elchardus (VUB) and Dominique Reynié (FONDAPOL), both of whom have highlighted the persistence of a Catholic movement – now in the minority – that remains steeped in pre-conciliar anti-Jewish dogma.²¹ We recall the open letter from Mgr Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp, to his "Jewish friends", contrasting the vengeful God of the Jews with the loving God of Christians.²²

The theology of rejection (the idea that God's covenant with the Jewish people has come to an end) and/or the reproaches levelled at Jews concerning the crucifixion of Jesus are still, for many Christians, an obvious source of antipathy towards Jews and Israel, as a recent study conducted in Ireland has just confirmed. This research, conducted by Motti Inbari (UNC Pembroke) and Kirill Bumin (Boston University/Metropolitan College), based on 1,014 adult Catholics in Ireland, concludes that religious narratives play an important role in certain anti-Jewish and anti-Israel attitudes, with levels more pronounced among Catholics than among Protestants.

Among the results reported, about one-third of respondents believe that Jews still talk too much about what happened to them during the Holocaust; 36% think they have too much power in business; nearly 31% agree with the idea that they only care about their own and are hated because of their behaviour; and 49% say that Jews in Ireland are more loyal to Israel than to their own country. It should be noted that these opinions are expressed in a country with virtually no Jewish population.²³ Ireland has a Jewish population of around 2,700 out of a total population of 5.7 million, or 0.05%. It seems clear that religious differences are central to the interpretation: the discrepancies are partly due to pre-existing theological beliefs and social environment factors, particularly related to age.

Another example, perhaps even more revealing of the prevalence of pre-conciliar representations within the Church, is the very recent canonisation, last September, of Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager who died at the age of 15. Often referred to as "the saint of the Internet" or "God's influencer" because of his use of the web, this young Catholic became known for building a website dedicated to "Eucharistic miracles," *i.e.*, accounts of the desecration of hosts historically attributed to Jews. In his exhibition and on his website, the "Eucharistic miracle of Brussels" occupies a prominent place. It tells how "desecrators" stole communion wafers, pierced them with knives, and "living blood" flowed from them. As in his account of the miracle of Les Billettes (Paris, 1290), Carlo Acutis repeats accusatory legends in which those responsible are explicitly identified as Jews (), while conveniently replacing them with "non-believers" or "desecrators". The substitution is transparent: even if the word "Jew" disappears, the

²¹ With regard to France, the authors of the FONDAPOL report already noted that 22% of practising Catholics said that there were too many Jews in France (compared to 16% of all respondents); Similarly, 10% of practising Catholics said that when they learn that someone is Jewish, they dislike them (compared to 3% on average). Dominique Reynié, Antisemitism in French public opinion. New Insights, Paris, Fondapol, 2014; ID., "Let's Talk About Anti-Semitism Without Willful Blindness," *Le Monde*, 12 December 2014. Thus, a former activist of the CDH, the equivalent of the UDI in France, saw fit to revive (and validate) in a popular book the absurd and deleterious myth of the Jewish desecration of the host in Brussels in 1370. It should be remembered that this false accusation led to the burning at the stake of some twenty Jews, who had been tortured beforehand, and then to the expulsion of the Jews from Brabant, obviously after the confiscation of their property.

²² "Mgr Bonny writes in the Flemish media: 'Jewish friends, I can no longer remain silent'", *Cathobel*, 9 November 2023.

²³ Christian anti-Semitism in Ireland worthy of the "Middle Ages", *The Times of Israel*, 29 November 2025.

narrative structure remains that of a sacrilegious crime attributed to a demonised Other, and this Other, historically, is precisely the Jew.



*The miracle of Brussels: the treacherous Jews and desecrators of the host.
Detail of a stained glass window in St Michel Ste Gudule Cathedral in Brussels.*

Yet this watered-down version of an anti-Semitic myth, presented without historical caveats, is disseminated worldwide, including in Belgium, even in certain Catholic parishes and schools, for example in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert in 2020. This canonisation is a reminder, if one were needed, of the persistence of traces of an anti-Jewish ethos in part of the Catholic world. There is no doubt that the rejection of Israel – understood in both the broad sense (the Jews) and the strict sense (the State) – is strongly correlated with the religious background of the respondents; this is particularly evident among Muslim Brussels residents.²⁴

3.2.2. The undeniable Islam effect

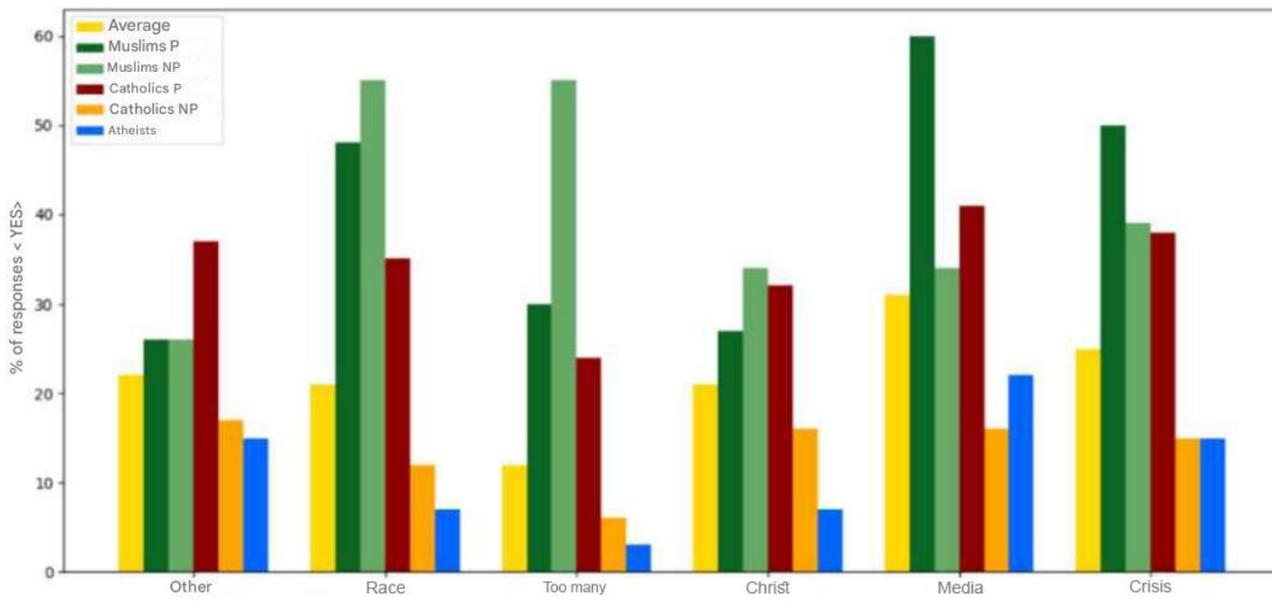
Our study clearly supports the ethno-religious and culturalist analysis put forward by several recent European academic surveys, all of which highlight an "Islamic effect" in the pejorative representation of Jews but also of the Other, particularly LGBT people. Negative prejudices towards Jews are certainly not unique to Muslims, but they appear to be particularly widespread among Brussels residents of this faith. As Günther Jikeli, a German sociologist and professor at Indiana University, puts it, "despite all the denial surrounding it, the truth is that there is a specific form of Muslim anti-Semitism, just as there is a specific form of Christian anti-Semitism".²⁵ Without attempting to quantify hostility towards Jews, our data shows that Muslim respondents are about three times more likely than non-believers to share anti-

²⁴ It is unfortunate that the Golem collective, in its latest opinion piece dated 12 January 2026, ignored this reality of specific Arab-Muslim anti-Semitism. In Europe, the most serious anti-Semitic violence does not come from the radical right, but from "sensitive neighbourhoods".

²⁵ Gunther Jikeli, "Anti-Semitism among Muslims extends beyond radical Islamists," *Le Monde*, 24 April 2018.

Semitic prejudices, all other things being equal (educational background, gender, field of study, degree of religiosity).

The effect of religion through six anti-Semitic tropes

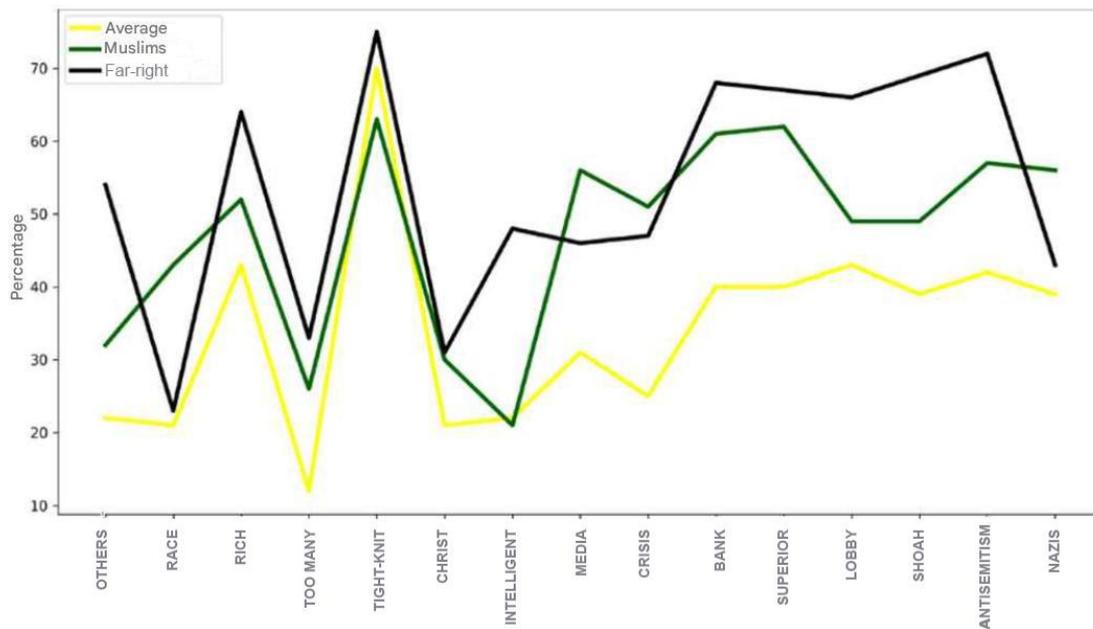


Muslims in Brussels stand out for the prevalence of their anti-Jewish prejudices.

In general, on all items relating to Jews, Muslim respondents display significantly more negative perceptions than the rest of the sample. This is due to an underlying anti-Semitism combining negative perceptions of Islamic origin and animosity towards Israel, to which are added Christian tropes such as deicide. Thus, 56% of Muslim respondents, compared to 31% of the general population (+25 points), believe that "Jews are too present in the media and politics". 62% think that "Jews consider themselves superior to others" (compared to 40% of Brussels residents in general, a difference of 20 points). Finally, 51% of Muslims surveyed believe that "Jews are responsible for many economic crises", compared to 25% of Brussels residents as a whole (a difference of +26 points).

As we have pointed out, anti-Semitic prejudices affect both practising and non-practising Muslims, unlike Catholics. Thus, 71% of MNP compared to 54% of MP believe that Jews exploit anti-Semitism to serve their own interests, 75% of MNP (compared to 50% of MP) believe that Jews control the banking and financial sectors, and 34% consider Jews to be deicides, compared to 27% of MP.

The far right and Brussels Muslims: the image of Jews



Prejudices against Jews are above the Brussels average in 13 out of 15 tropes. When it comes to the trope of "Jews sticking together", only 60% of Brussels Muslims believe this, compared to an average of 70%. Muslims are by far the group in which anti-Semitic opinions are most widespread, mirroring the curves of the far right and sometimes exceeding them, particularly on the issue of "Jews as a race that cannot be assimilated into Europe".

There are also very significant differences compared to Brussels residents as a whole in responses related to the Middle East, particularly on markers of sympathy for Hamas and the desire for Israel to disappear in favour of a single Palestinian state ("from the river to the sea").

With regard to Muslim Brussels residents...

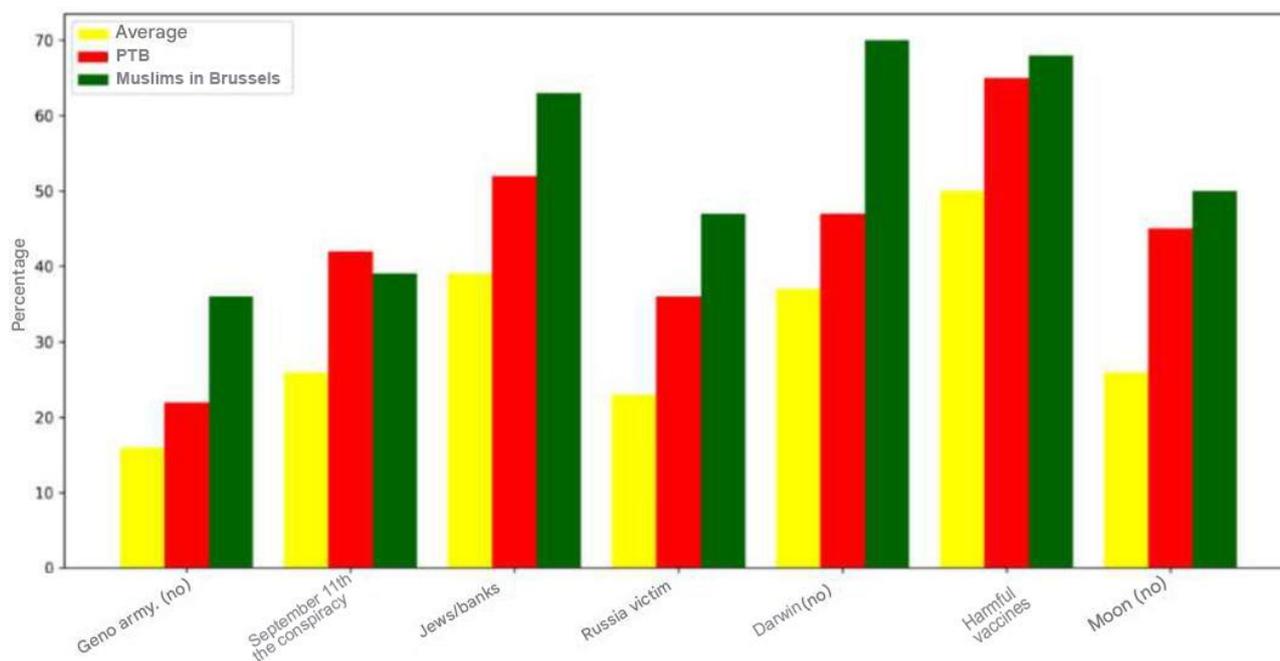
- 27% consider Hamas to be a terrorist movement (average 55%)
- 30% believe that Hitler's negative side is exaggerated (m. 18%)
- 36% believe that Jews are not a people but a religion (average 26%)
- 45% believe that Jews do not have the right to their own state (m. 15%)
- 46% believe that the massacres of 7 October were exaggerated (average 16%)
- 61% believe that Israel is a racist and illegitimate state (average 28%)
- 63% attach great importance to their party's position on Gaza (average 27%)

Only 25% of Muslim respondents feel sympathy for the victims of 7 October (average 51%) and 37% of them approve of the idea of replacing Israel with an Arab state stretching from the sea to the Jordan River. It should be noted that only a quarter of Muslims in Brussels are in favour of a two-state solution (average 45%).

These opinions were gathered in July 2025. There is little doubt that they are partly linked to the war between Hamas and Israel, but this alone does not fully explain them. They must also be understood in the context of a broader socio-political ethos that goes far beyond the Israeli-Palestinian context alone. Muslims in Brussels appear to be much more susceptible to conspiracy theories.

3.2.3. Anti-Semitism, sexism and conservative ethos

Conspiracy theories: PTB and Brussels Muslims



Muslims in Brussels, along with PTB supporters, exceed the general average.

When it comes to conspiracy theories, we naturally think of the study by sociologist Éric Marlière, who observes a stronger attraction to conspiracy theories among Muslims. The researcher notes that among the "young people from the suburbs" he interviewed at length, there is a symbiosis between feelings of injustice and a conspiratorial view:

"These young people, because they are Arabs and Muslims (for the most part), see themselves as the 'new enemies from within', as opposed to the Jewish minority, who are perceived as rich, dominant and manipulative. (...) Conspiracy theories allow these accusations to be synthesised and given a global interpretation, based on a simple idea: a small minority of powerful people (dominators and exploiters) profit from the misery of the majority ("us", the victims of the conspiracy of the powerful). This is the standard answer to the question "Who benefits from the crime?"²⁶

In the same vein, Belgian-Moroccan comedian and secular activist Sam Touzani writes:

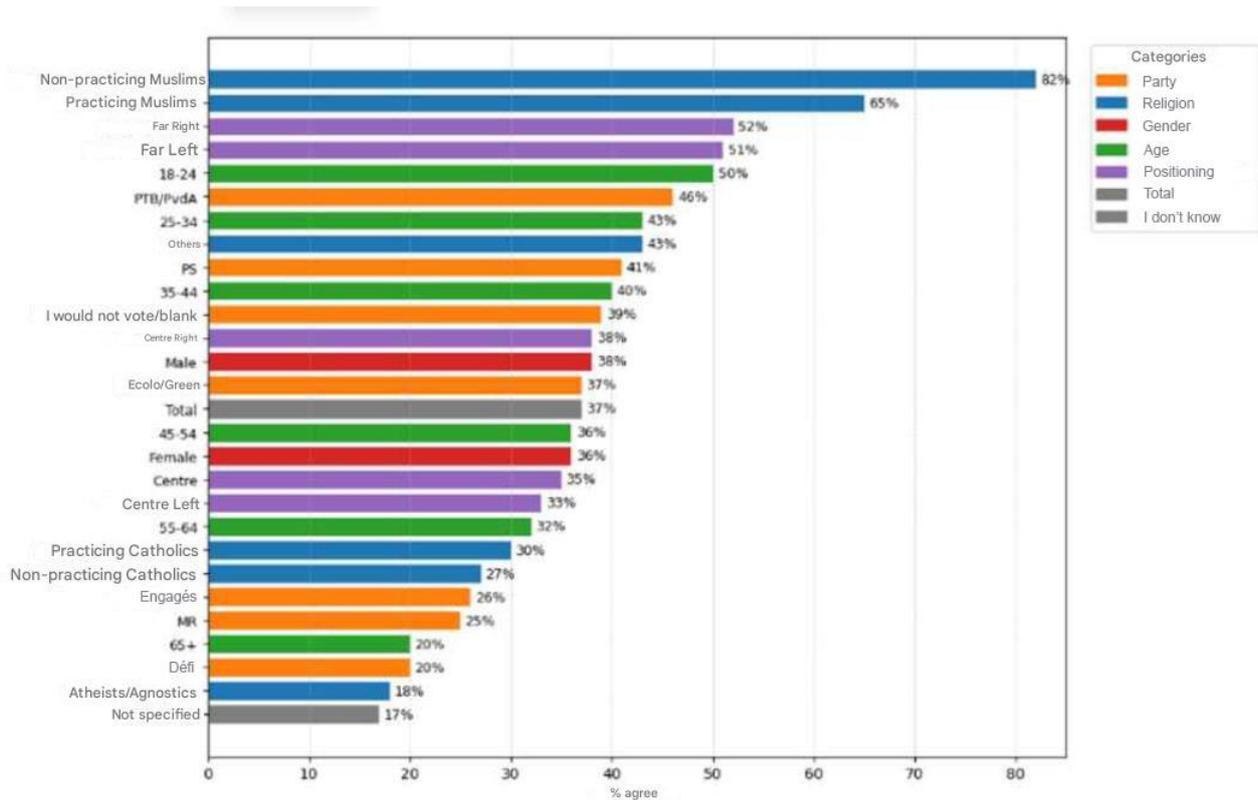
"The conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism can only be understood through the theory of a global conspiracy, to explain what seems incomprehensible. The universal scapegoat remains the Jew. (...) Those obsessed with Israel and Jews have completely hijacked the debate and isolated those who, like me, advocate nuance. It

²⁶ Éric Marlière, *France has abandoned us! The feeling of injustice among young people in the suburbs*, Fayard, 2008, p. 135.

*is probably because I myself have seen hatred grow around me that I have become a defender of memory. Today, I use laughter in my shows to take the heat out of the debate.*²⁷

Conspiracy theories, "unassimilable race", stereotypes of power and money: a wide range of anti-Semitic markers are thus taken up by a significant proportion of Muslim respondents in Brussels.

Agreement with: "The theory of evolution is not credible"



3.2.4. Conservative ethos vs cultural liberalism

The troubled relationship with Jews is only the tip of the iceberg. In representations that have no immediate – or even distant – connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is striking to note that Arab-Muslim respondents express clearly conservative, even reactionary, positions. Our study reveals that, among Brussels residents of the Muslim faith, the rejection of racism and social injustice goes hand in hand with a stronger than average attachment to gender role differentiation, normative heterosexuality and the centrality of religion in social life. This profile distinguishes them from the "classic" cultural liberalism of the left-wing middle classes.

In terms of values, people who identify as Muslim often remain socialised in conservative family and religious circles that are hostile to homosexuality, feminism (understood as a challenge to gender roles),

²⁷ "Anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism: the same struggle," interview by Perla Brener, *Regards*, Brussels, 2 November 2012.

strict secularism and, above all, marked by structural and trivialised anti-Semitism, readily reclassified as simple "anti-Zionism". Hence the paradox: a vigorous rejection of racism when it targets them – or targets other minorities perceived as allies – but little or no rejection of anti-Semitism, which remains largely invisible and/or considered legitimate when it takes the form of criticism of Israel. Voting for the left is thus less an expression of support for the whole libertarian "package" than a strategic and symbolic choice: to ally oneself with the camp considered most hostile to the far right and racism, even if it means being at odds, or even in outright disagreement, with that camp on secularism, feminism or LGBTQIA+ rights. This observation is consistent with several European surveys, including the one conducted in September 2019 by IFOP for the Jean Jaurès Foundation and *Le Point* magazine. We could echo the comments of Ismail Ferhat, senior lecturer at the University of Picardie Jules Verne and researcher affiliated with the CAREF laboratory:

"The survey highlights a crucial point (p. 7 of the survey) that has already been identified by other studies (notably by academics Vincent Tiberj, Gilles Kepel, Nassira Guenif and Éric Macé). This is the greater religious rigour and moral conservatism among certain young people from Muslim backgrounds, particularly males, compared to the rest of their age group. This trend contrasts with the overall trend in French society, where religious practice and identification tend to be inversely proportional to age. While perfectly legitimate – this is not about making value judgements or awarding certificates of progressiveness – this more religious and conservative sensibility concerns an age group (15-24 years old) that is demographically most likely to still be in school or training."²⁸

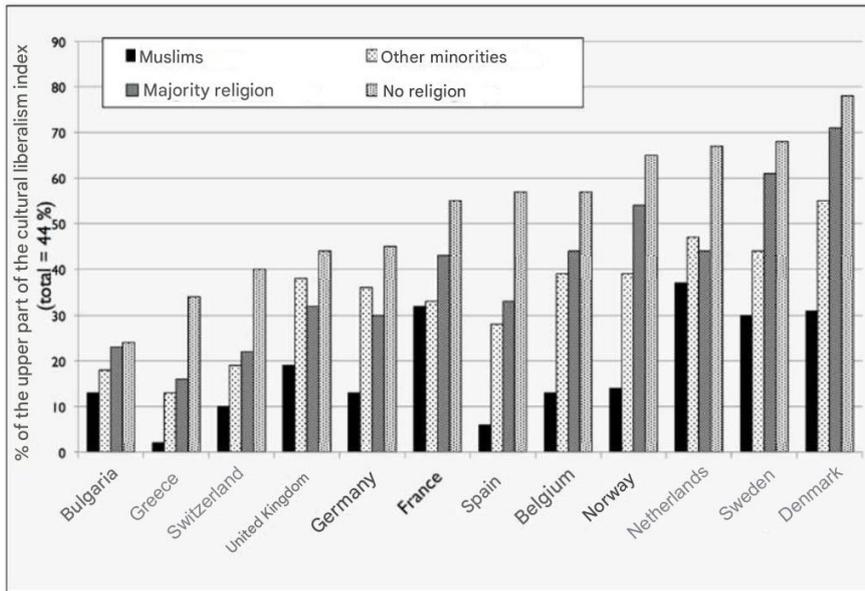
A sign of the "return to roots" dynamic at work in global Islam is the stance taken on Darwinism: 63% of MPs and, curiously, 82% of non-practising Muslims in Brussels (MNP) oppose or question the validity of Darwin's theory, in other words, they favour a religious interpretation of science rather than a scientific interpretation of the sacred text. This statistical data is consistent with the conclusions of several European studies, such as that of Dutch sociologist Ruud Koopman²⁹, which revealed that only 6% of the most assertive Muslim students (83% of his sample) believed in Darwin's theory.³⁰ It should be noted that the extensive survey conducted by Vincent Tournier also highlighted a prevalence of conservatism among Muslims at the European level.

²⁸ Ismail Fehrat, *Thirty years after the Creil affair: a study of French Muslims*. <https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/trente-ans-apres-l-affaire-de-creil-etude-aupres-des-francais-musulmans>.

²⁹ Ruud Koopmans, "Religious fundamentalism and out-group hostility among Muslims and Christians in Western Europe", paper presented at the 20th International Conference of Europeanists, Amsterdam 2013, available at www.wzb.eu.

³⁰ Vincent Tournier's statistics show that European citizens of the Muslim faith hold more conservative views on social issues, beyond the fact that their attitudes tend to follow certain characteristics of the population of their country of residence. Vincent Tournier, *Portraits des musulmans d'Europe : unité dans la diversité* (Portraits of Muslims in Europe: unity in diversity), Fondapol, Paris, 2016, 72 pages. <https://www.fondapol.org/etude/vincent-tournier-portrait-des-musulmans-deurope-unite-dans-la-diversite>.

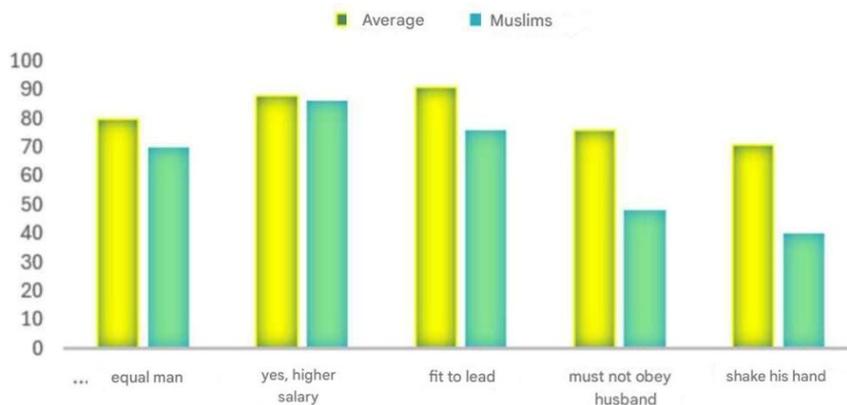
Cultural liberalism



Vincent Tournier's statistics show that European citizens of the Muslim faith appear to hold more conservative views on social issues, even though their attitudes tend to follow the characteristics of the population of their country of residence.³¹

When it comes to gender equality, the weight of patriarchy is still evident:

Gender equality



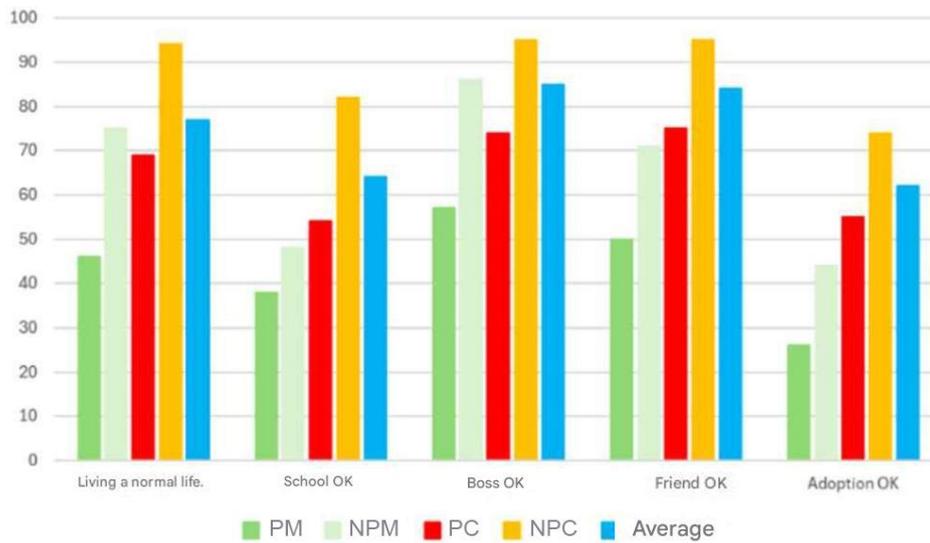
Women and men are equal. It is perfectly acceptable for a woman to earn more money than her spouse. Men and women are equally capable of leadership. In a couple, the woman must obey her husband. At work, it is perfectly acceptable for a man to refuse to shake hands with women.

While 46% of Muslims would not consider marrying a Jewish partner (average 27%), 39% would not consider marrying a Christian partner, 31% would not consider marrying an Asian or Black partner, and

³¹ See the study by Nadia Henni-Moulai, *Portrait of Muslims in France: a diverse community*, FONDAPOL, June 2016.

51% would not consider marrying an atheist. It should be noted that 38% of respondents would not consider marrying a Muslim, which is significant given that 18% of our sample were Muslim. When it comes to attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people, both practising and non-practising Muslims in Brussels also stand out from their fellow citizens, with the sole exception of practising Catholics.

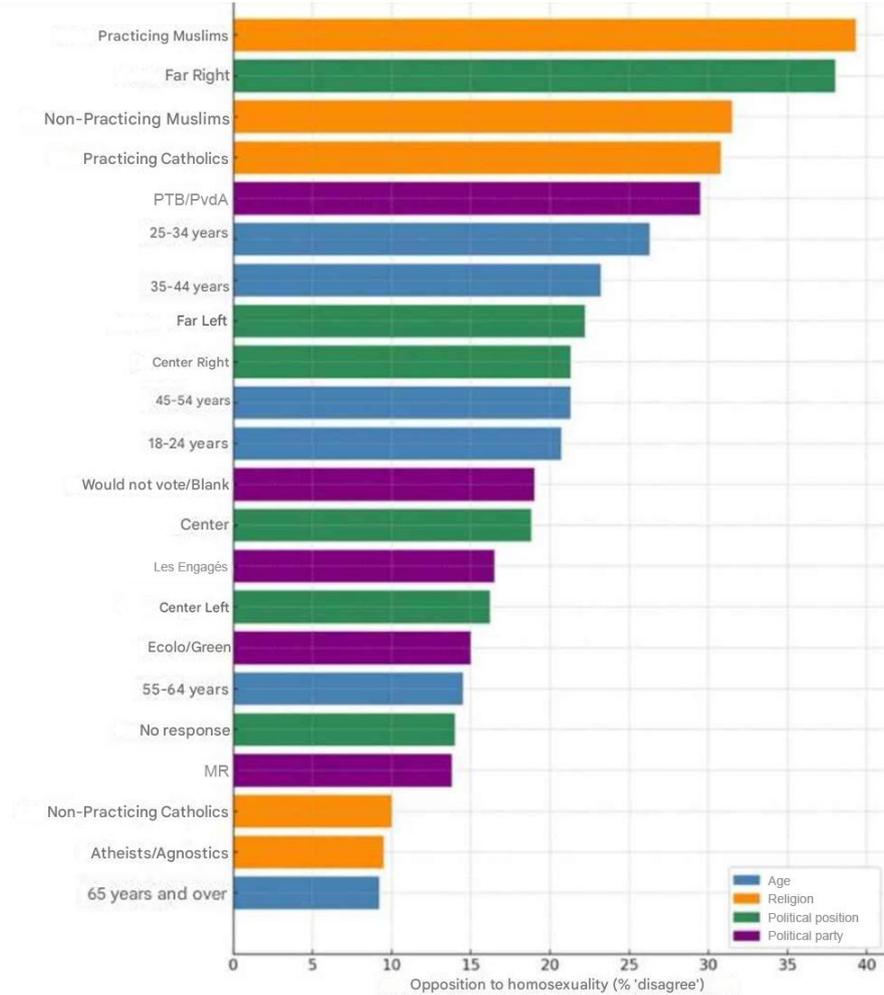
Relationship with LGBTQIA+ people: practising Muslims (PM) and non-practising Muslims (NPM), Practising Catholics (PC) and non-practising Catholics (NPC)



Only 50% of Brussels Muslims believe that LGBT people can live as they wish, 39% believe that schools should teach respect for them, 29% believe it is normal for the state to allow them to marry, and 64% would accept a homosexual leader. 56% have no problem if they discover that a friend is homosexual; 31% are in favour of same-sex adoption. Non-practising Catholics are more open to others than the average.

The contrast between those who identify as Muslim and the rest of the population is striking.

Overall ranking of opposition to homosexuality



As a June 2019 survey by the Jasmin Foundation in association with Dilcrah pointed out, the combined hatred of Jews and homosexuals is not coincidental.³² In this survey, 63% of Muslims consider homosexuality to be "a disease" or "a perversion", compared to 14% of Catholics and 10% of atheists. As early as 1949, *Prophets of Deceit*, the fifth volume in the *Studies in Prejudice* series edited by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, showed that anti-Semitism was often part of a set of other stereotypes, targeting in particular Black people, Japanese people and, of course, women.³³

3.2.5. A conservative, if not reactionary, ethos

While logically, the sympathy of Brussels residents of the Muslim faith towards Israelis is low (24%), it is also low towards Ukraine (22%, -16 points below the average) but not towards Russia (30%, +15 points), China (38%, +16 points) and, of course, the Islamic Republic of Iran (34%, +20 points). It should also be noted that 36% of Muslims deny or doubt the Armenian genocide.

³² *The French view of homosexuality and the place of LGBT people in society*, OBSERVATOIRE DES LGBTPHOBIES, IFOP survey for the Jasmin & Dilcrah Foundation, Paris, 2019.

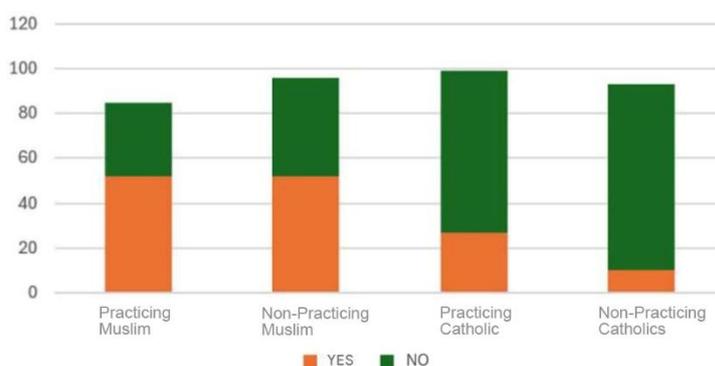
³³ Leo Lowenthal, Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*, *Studies in Prejudice*, vol. 5. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1949.

The disparagement of Jews appears to be a key symptom of a more global, individual or collective imbalance, even if the tragic events in Gaza may amplify its expression. What connection, indeed, is there between the war in Gaza and mistrust of women, homosexuals, Armenians or Ukrainians? This cluster of hostilities suggests less a circumstantial reaction than a common set of dispositions: an anxious relationship with otherness, conspiracy theories, moral and political hierarchies, often backed by conservative and patriarchal norms.

The idea is not to blame Islam. The Catholic world was hostile to Jews until the liberating revolution of the Second Vatican Council. The Holocaust cannot be understood without this teaching of contempt that made Jews enemies of God.

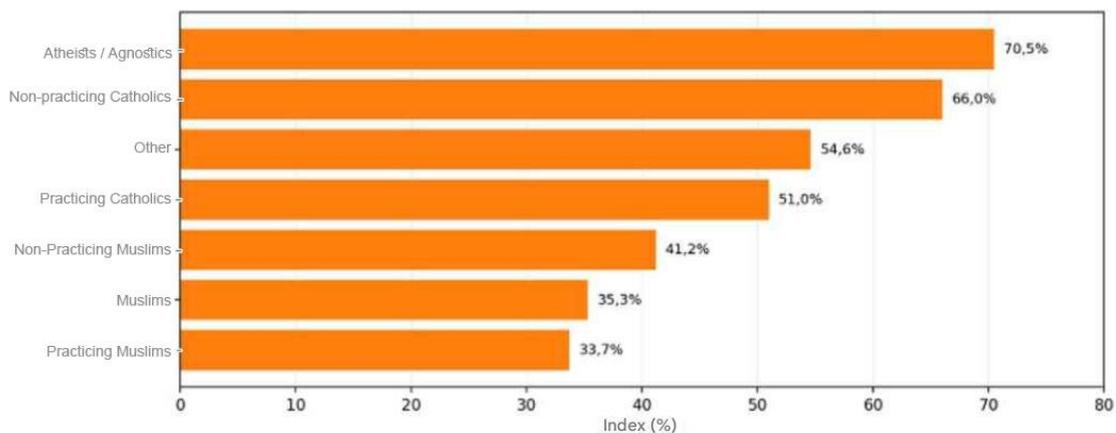
Moreover, on the relationship between religion and the state, our study highlights a particular relationship that the majority of Muslims – and, to a lesser extent, a fraction of Catholics – still maintain with religious norms. We asked the 430 Brussels residents who declared themselves to be religious whether they considered that the law of their religion should take precedence over that of the state.

Overall ranking of opposition to homosexuality



The results, consistent with several recent studies, are unequivocal: a small majority of Muslim respondents (52%) believe that Islamic law takes precedence over Belgian law.

Liberal ethos index – Religion/practice (descending order)



3.2.6. Caution: over-representation, but no essentialisation

It is obviously important not to view Brussels Muslims as a uniform group, without family, religious, national, regional or cultural variations depending on their areas of origin. Nor should they be essentialised or attributed with a common trait of anti-Semitism, just as it would be absurd to claim that all Brussels residents under the age of 35 or who identify as far-right or far-left are hostile to Jews. Our survey only highlights significant statistical differences: prevalences that concern certain segments of the community or, more precisely, the various Muslim communities within Belgian society.

Belgian Islam is pluralistic. Many Muslims do not engage in anti-Semitic or even anti-Zionist rhetoric. In general, the relationship between Iranians and Kurds and Israel is far from negative. Furthermore, friendships have developed over the years between Jews and secular Muslims. Our data show that a significant proportion of respondents who identify as Muslim share, with the far right and certain fringes of the radical left, strongly structured anti-Jewish representations, particularly around recurring themes such as conspiracy theories, supposed wealth, etc.

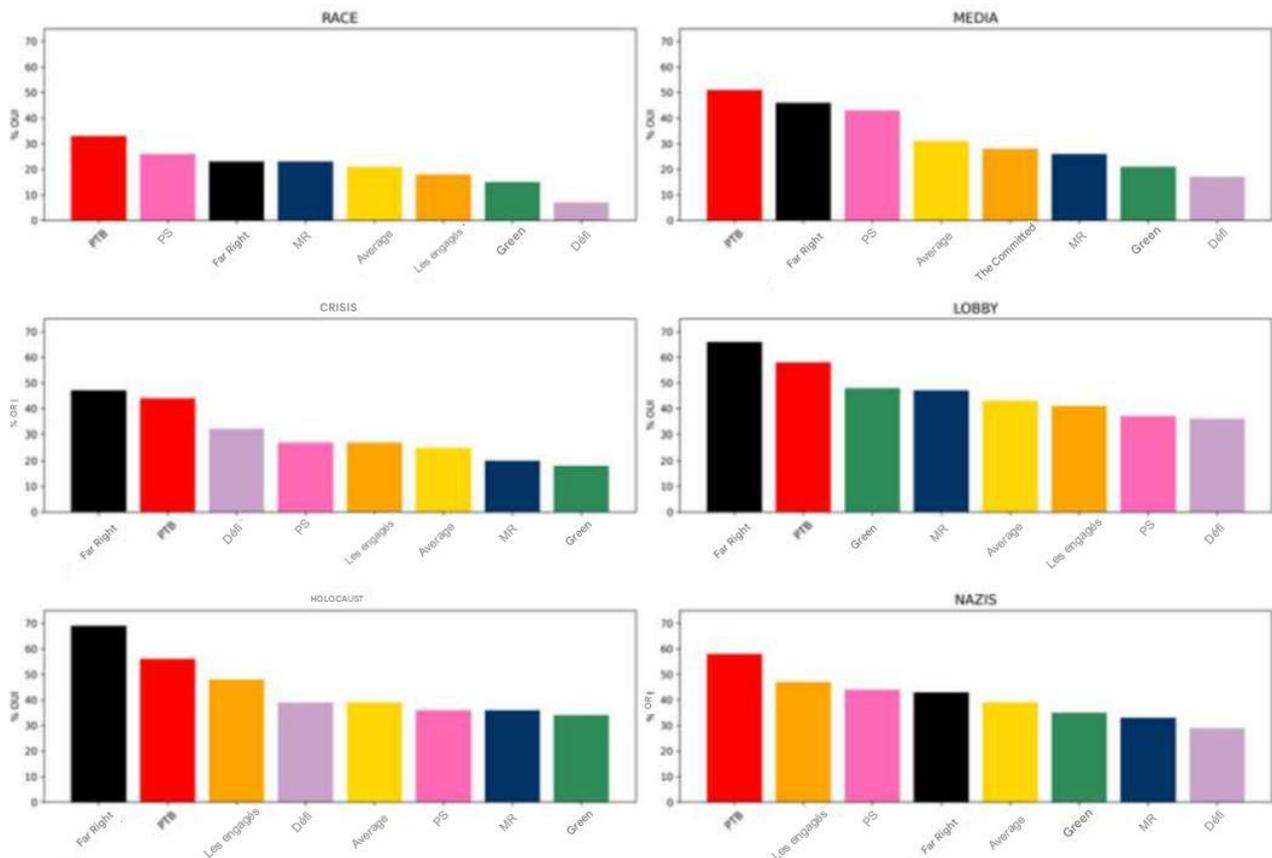
Clearly, mistrust of Jews cannot be reduced to religious factors alone. It is also part of a tradition specific to certain political cultures, on the right but also on the left. The drivers of anti-Semitism are also eminently political.

3.3. Third observation: the influence of politics

3.3.1. Global and syncretic anti-Semitism

Politicisation – i.e. identifying with a political party – is clearly a factor in anti-Semitic prejudice: while markers of anti-Semitism are present among a section of the Belgian population that is far from marginal or "residual", they are over-represented in two specific segments, namely people on the far right (levels 9 and 10 on the IPSOS scale, see introduction) and people on the far left (levels 1 and 2 on the same scale), although the proportions and intensity vary. Whether we like it or not, contemporary anti-Semitism is syncretic. While it has hardly changed, it has simply broadened its "clientele".

Political impact through six anti-Semitic tropes (order of magnitude per trope)



It is clear that the radical right has by no means erased its anti-Semitic tendencies. More surprising, however, is the PTB's second place in this ranking of anti-Semitic tropes, which is sure to astonish some observers.

3.3.2. Anti-Semitic roots in the far right

When asked whether people close to the far right still harbour anti-Semitic prejudices, the answer is unequivocal. Far-right sympathisers constitute the partisan world where xenophobia and racism are by far at their highest levels. Contrary to certain preconceived ideas, these circles have by no means renounced negative stereotypes about Jews: the results of our survey confirm this, echoing the growing

trivialisation and promotion of hate speech within the global radical right. From Germany to the United States, hatred of Jews remains prevalent.³⁴ In the United States, anti-Semitism is on the rise, with Nick Fuentes no longer hesitating to invoke the blessings of Adolf Hitler. Conspiracy theories are at the heart of the beliefs of the American and French ultra-right. This is evidenced by the hallucinatory, mind-boggling and "anti-Zionist" caricatures of Joe Le Corbeau and David Dees.



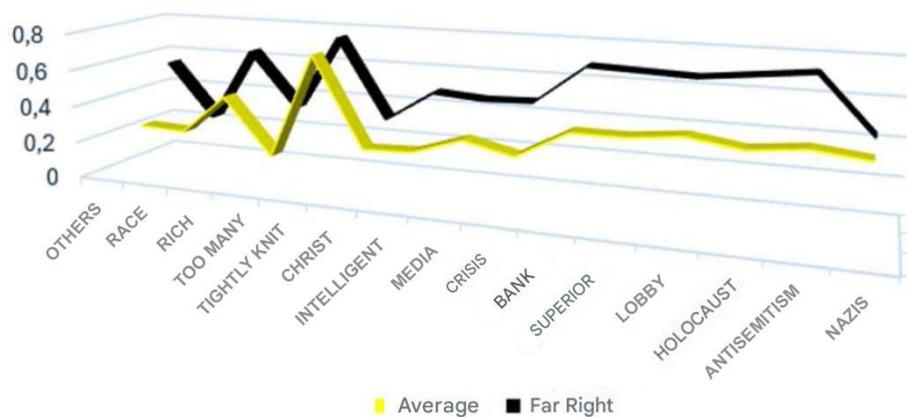
Anti-Semitism is at the heart of the Soralian far-right sphere, as evidenced by the hundreds of drawings by Jo le Corbeau.



According to American supremacists, the "Zionists" (not the Jews!), backed by the Freemasons and stateless finance (Rothschild Bank), are working to bring about the genocide of white people through African and Arab immigration. (See Dees.com).

³⁴ In Germany, the overwhelming majority of anti-Semitic violence is perpetrated by the far right.

Political impact through six anti-Semitic tropes (order of magnitude per trope)



Adherence to anti-Semitic prejudices among Brussels residents who position themselves on the far right compared to Belgians as a whole

In Belgium, too, the figure of the Jew perceived as harmful, drawing his power from money and contributing to the misfortune of the "real people", persists within the radical right, leading 33% of its supporters to say that "there are too many Jews in Belgium", 47% that they control the banking and financial sector, and 46% that they control the media. It is equally logical that far-right respondents stand out in terms of secondary anti-Semitism, i.e. the particular resentment linked to guilt over the Holocaust:³⁵ 69% believe that Jews use the Holocaust and 72% believe that Jews use anti-Semitism "to serve their interests", while 43% believe that **Jews** behave like Nazis.

On the far right, too, the Palestinian cause can serve as both an ideological compass and a rallying point. It is in this sense that we see less antipathy towards Palestinians (16%) than towards Israelis (28%) among far-right sympathisers. Even when it comes to Jews (as opposed to Israelis), antipathy (28%) outweighs sympathy (19%). Thirty-eight per cent of far-right supporters believe that Israel is a colonial, racist and illegitimate state, while 48% believe that Holocaust commemorations take up too much space. This shows the weight of secondary anti-Semitism.

3.3.2.1 Far-right Palestinianism

In Belgium, too, far-right rhetoric is resurfacing with unabashed brutality. Calls for hatred, and sometimes even violence, are on the rise. And, under the guise of the "Palestinian cause", some are reviving an old reflex of designation: making Jews legitimate targets. One example of this is a Belgian man who, under the convenient pseudonym "Jean-Albert de Chimay", engages in openly anti-Semitic rhetoric. Under the guise of anti-Zionism, of course.

³⁵ Guilt-based (or secondary) anti-Semitism: Western societies' troubled relationship with the Holocaust, but also with their colonial past, leads them to characterise Israel as a genocidal and colonial state. Paradox: born out of the decolonisation of Jews from the East and West, Israel is presented as the paragon of European colonisation.



Jean-Albert de Chimay

3 h · 🌐



C'est du jamais vu dans l'histoire contemporaine, ce que ces saloperies de juifs osent faire dans un pays où ils ne sont même pas chez eux. Il faut des frappes nucléaires sur l'entité d'invasion juive génocidaire et d'abord des menaces de frappes incessantes sur ces fils de pute venus d'Europe de l'Est comme Zelinsky, Tusk, Kallas ou Orban jusqu'à leur élimination complète de la région !!

Palestinianism is flourishing among the most hardline elements of the far right. The Palestinian cause is thus being mobilised by figures as diverse as Alain Escada (Civitas), Emmanuel Colbrant (Chrétien.be) and Chris Van Langenhove (Schild & Vrienden).



Two anti-Semitic posts from Chrétiens.be

In the case of this former Vlaams Belang politician, his defence of Palestine can be analysed as a rebranding operation without any ideological renunciation: the window dressing has changed, but the mechanics remain the same. In an article in *Apache* dated 10 November 2023, Van Langenhove presents himself as empathetic towards the Palestinians:

"To show the Palestinians that it is unacceptable to kill thousands of innocent civilians, Israel will now kill tens of thousands of innocent people and starve two million more. Can we really still claim to have the moral high ground?"

The passage is interesting not only for its content, but also for its function. It acts as a moral passport: a signal of respectability and openness towards a newly targeted audience, young people from immigrant backgrounds, Muslim audiences, etc., with a view to capturing and forming an identity-based coalition. However, in the *Schild & Vrienden* case, for which the far-right leader was convicted twice (appeal ruling of 20 June 2025), the core of the conviction was not an "isolated slip-up", but a veritable ecosystem: semi-closed spaces (private groups accessible by invitation) where anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying messages and memes are repeatedly circulated, presented "under the guise of humour". The

factual basis refers to content that mocks the Holocaust, including mocking references to the camps and ridiculing the gas chambers, all wrapped up in the rhetoric of digital irony: *"it was just for laughs"*. From this perspective, the public display of a "pro-Palestinian" register must be understood as a tool for discursive penetration: it allows access to audiences that are a priori resistant to the far right, while maintaining, in the background, the invariants of an anti-Jewish imaginary reactivated by the culture of sarcasm and transgression.

While the far right remains an undeniable factor in hostility towards Jews, other forms of anti-Jewish hatred are gaining ground today. On the left, reviving the discourse of the ultra-left at the end of the century, intellectuals and politicians are also placing Jewish finance (Rothschild) at the heart of capitalist evil.³⁶

3.3.3. Anchoring on the left

Our survey shows that mistrust and hostility towards Jews are no longer the preserve of the far right, but that there are now several other hotbeds of anti-Semitism, particularly within the radical left. It is not surprising that a higher proportion of far-right Brussels residents share anti-Semitic prejudices than the average. One might assume, however, that Brussels residents on the far left, who often position themselves as progressive and committed to equality, would be better protected against such prejudices and therefore less inclined to adhere to anti-Semitic stereotypes. Yet this is not the case.

In a paradox that is only apparent, given the history of the radical left and the Jews, many progressives come to share anti-Semitic tropes while claiming to be anti-racist. This can be explained by the fact that anti-Semitism cannot be reduced to racism but stems from another logic, a much older worldview dating back to the origins of Christianity, which associated Jews with money, notably through the myth of Judas, and then with the practice of usury imposed by the Church. In the 19th century, the radical left amplified this association, notably with the myth of "Jewish finance" embodied by the Rothschild family.

³⁶ François Ruffin, *Ce pays que tu ne connais pas* (This country you don't know), Les Arènes, Paris 2019.

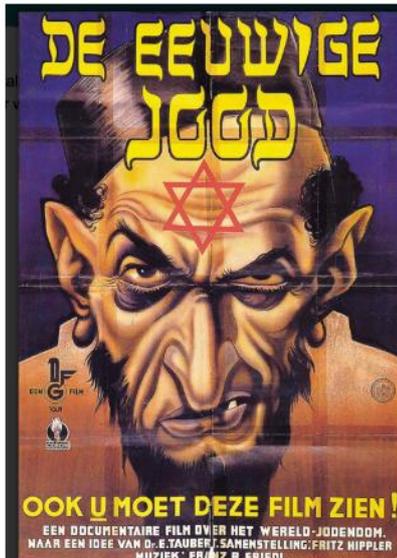


USSR, 1951 (*Arumamop* ('Agitator', Soviet magazine) no. 12, June 1971). At its peak, the USSR exploited anti-Zionism by drawing on representations and codes derived from left-wing anti-Semitic imagery.

The far left is obsessed with the Rothschilds. On 6 November 2023, in a post on the Médiapart website entitled "The cloak of untouchability!", Michelle Tirone, an activist who claims to be close to LFI, refers to Nicole Goldschmidt, Vincent Bolloré's maternal grandmother, as "descended from an old Ashkenazi Jewish family," meaning the Rothschilds. The writings of Proudhon and even the young Karl Marx, despite his Jewish origins, bear witness to a marked anti-Semitism on the left. The horror of the Holocaust temporarily erased the memory of this popular and/or revolutionary anti-Semitism. But only for a time, which is now over.

We might also mention the gaffe by Gérard Filoche, former representative of the left wing of the French Socialist Party, who in November 2017 tweeted an anti-Jewish-capitalist photomontage taken from Alain Soral's far-right website *Égalité et réconciliation*. It showed Emmanuel Macron with his arms raised in front of a globe, one arm wrapped in a Nazi-style armband adorned with a dollar sign instead of a swastika. The image was set against a backdrop of American and Israeli flags and photos of businessman Patrick Drahi, banker Jacob Rothschild and economist Jacques Attali, three well-known Jewish figures, and emblazoned with the slogan "Marching towards global chaos". Although Filoche was ultimately acquitted, he was nonetheless expelled from the Socialist Party.

The porosity between the far right and the far left is no coincidence. A telling example is La France Insoumise's poster campaign "against the far right", which targets Cyril Hanouna in a surprising way, to say the least. Although he is certainly a controversial media personality, it is difficult to justify portraying him as a symbol of a "fascist" threat and stigmatising him with imagery borrowed from Nazi iconography. This approach, with its codes and undertones, contributes to anti-Semitic sentiment: Cyril Hanouna, it should be noted, is Jewish, which gives this staging a particular and problematic significance.



When La France Insoumise (LFI) revives anti-Semitic codes: April 1941 (Antwerp) – March 2025 (Paris). Why choose the figure of a Jew (Cyril Hanouna) to denounce the French far right, and what's more, in the guise of the eternal Jew? The poster was removed without the slightest apology.

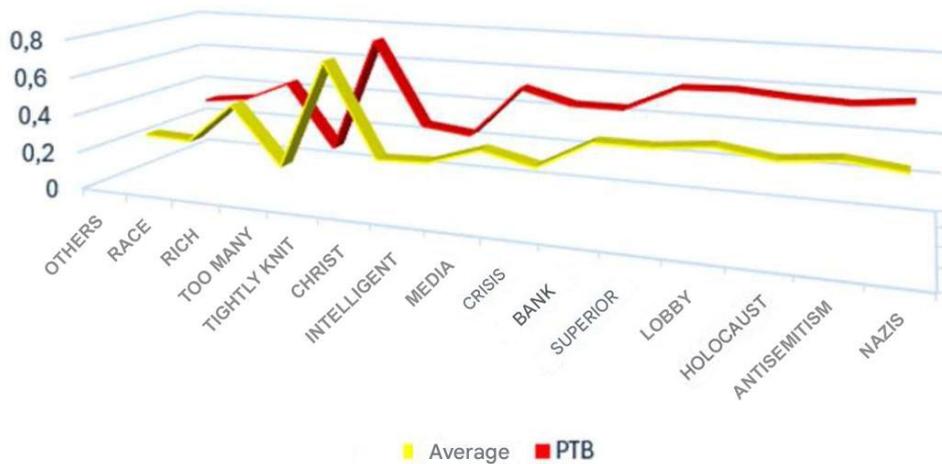
In Belgium, far-left activists are reviving the anti-Semitic refrains of their forefathers under the guise of the "Palestinian cause", following the example of PTB sympathiser Jean-Marie Dermagne.



Under the guise of anti-Zionism, the former president of the Dinant Bar Association is replaying the fable of the Jewish people as deicides. Jesus is presented as a victim of Jewish fanaticism and, better still, as a stranger to the Jews, as if the Galileans were not Jewish? April 2024 and June 2023.

This may explain why PTB supporters in Brussels have a much higher prevalence of anti-Semitic tropes than the average Brussels respondent, in the case of 13 out of 15 anti-Semitic prejudices. Thus, 33% of PTB supporters (compared to 23% on the far right) consider Jews to be a "race that cannot be assimilated into Europe".

Anti-Semitic tropes and PTB supporters

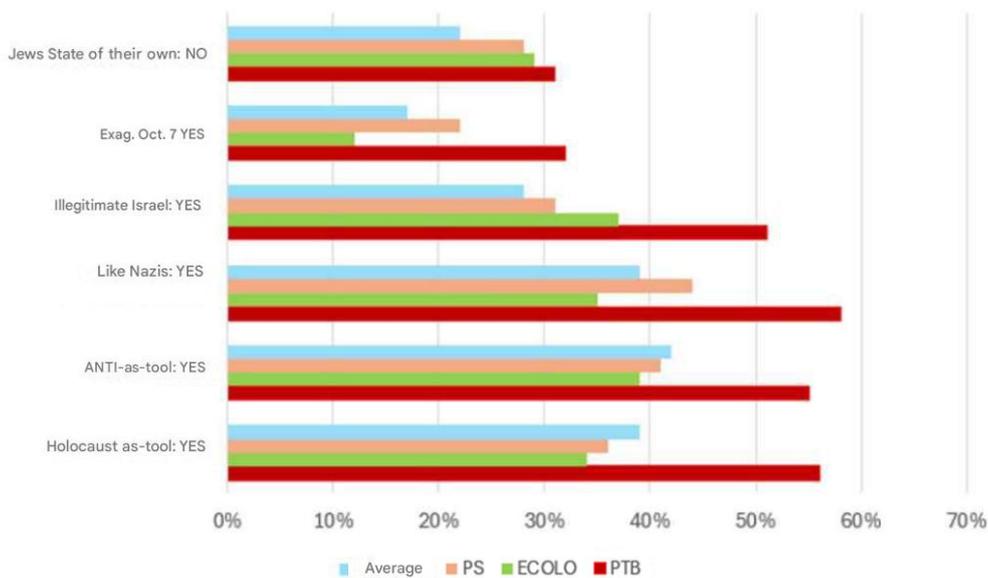


The full titles of the questions are on page 3^o of the cover.

3.3.3.1. Anti-Semitism and Palestinianism on the far left

As with the radical right, the question of Israel's legitimacy is raised by the far left, but also by a significant proportion of PS and Ecolo supporters. While Ecolo supporters on the left are the least susceptible to traditional anti-Semitic tropes, with two major exceptions,³⁷ they are distinguished by a more pronounced hostility towards Israel. A similar trend can be observed among PS supporters, but to a lesser extent.

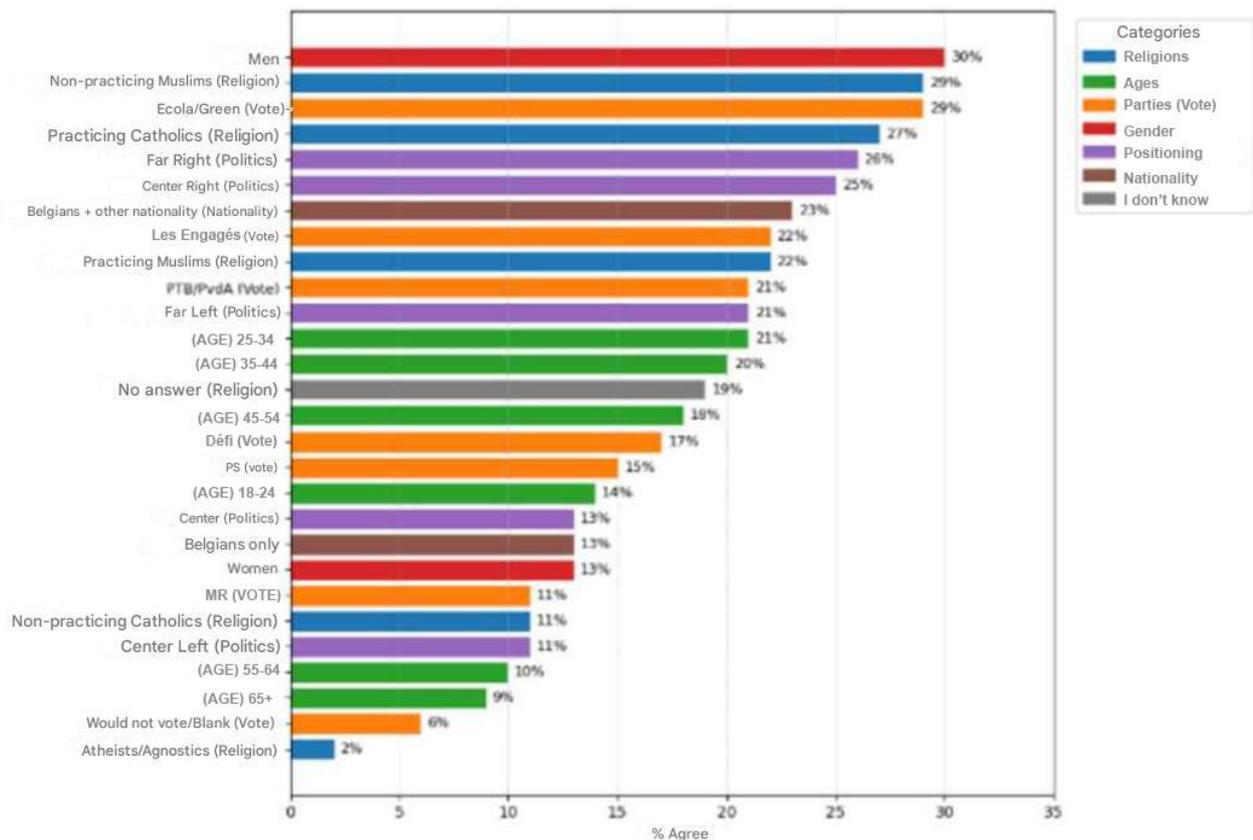
On the left: Israel in the firing line



³⁷ 48% of environmentalists believe in the existence of a powerful Jewish lobby in Belgium.

58% of PTB supporters, 44% of PS supporters and 35% of Ecolo supporters believe that "the Jews are doing to the Palestinians what the Germans did to them". The idea underlying this belief, which, it should be noted, is shared by all those surveyed (MR 36%, Engagés 48%, Défi 48%), is twofold: on the one hand, to minimise the importance of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism and, on the other hand, to portray Israel as a genocidal state, in short, unworthy of a place among the nations. Radical anti-Zionism is the new avatar of centuries-old anti-Semitism.

Agreement with the idea that Jews are responsible for the death of Christ (%)



Nearly a third of Ecolo/Groen supporters still hold Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, more than supporters of the far right

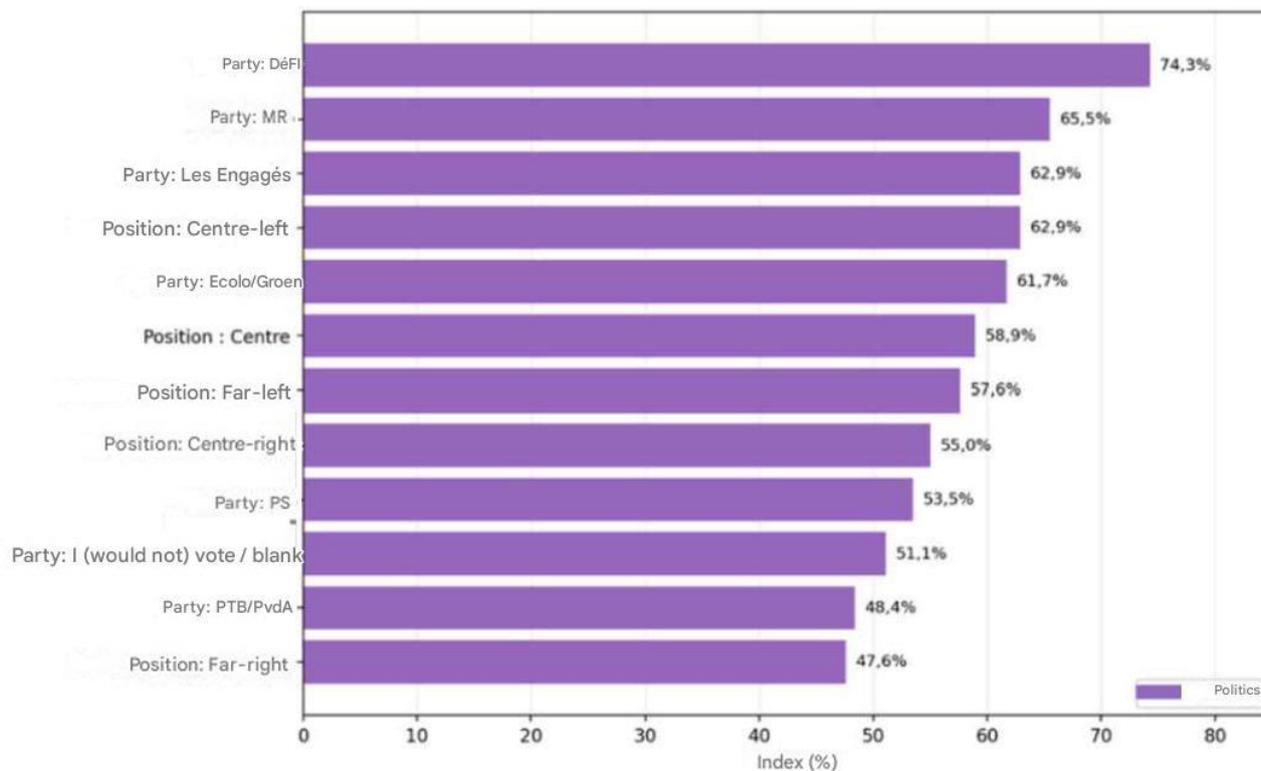
3.3.3.2. Corollary: electoral anti-Semitism on the left

As our survey highlights, Brussels residents of the Muslim faith do not identify with the norms of cultural liberalism that have historically structured the left-wing electorate. Their massive support for left-wing parties is based less on an adherence to libertarian values in terms of morals, gender or sexuality than on a rejection of the discrimination they feel they are victims of, the denunciation of racism and police violence, and the centrality of the Palestinian cause, which has become the unifying marker of the entire Belgian left.

The left-wing parties – PS, Ecolo and, in particular, the PTB – have thus gradually adapted their discourse and priorities to this Arab-Muslim electorate. This desire to appeal to this electorate explains the

hardening of criticism of Israel, sometimes bordering on dubious or even anti-Semitic rhetoric, and, at the same time, increased caution on culturally divisive issues related to gender, secularism, religious practices and even mobility. It is in this context that we must understand the PTB's (but also the PS and Ecolo's) support for ritual slaughter and its opposition to the *Good Move* car plan, which is purely an electoral calculation. The same logic is evident in an often ambiguous caution on certain issues of morals and gender, as well as in a generally permissive approach to the wearing of the veil.

Liberal ethos index – Political orientation (descending order)



The MR and, above all, Défi have a lower conservative ethos index than Ecolo, the PS and the PTB. The Marxist party's index is similar to that of the far right.

In this regard, we recall an exchange in November 2023 between PTB president Raoul Hedebouw and RTL journalist Martin Buxant, who asked him about the ban on the abaya in French-speaking schools. The PTB president replied bluntly:

"I have no problem with that, from the age of 8–9 onwards. The choice can be a private one."

This position prompted a strong reaction from the president of the Brussels party DéFI.

On peut donc, en 2023, se prétendre marxiste et trouver normal que des fillettes de 8 ans portent le voile. Le communautarisme emporte décidément tout. Même les valeurs révolutionnaires et de lutte contre les aliénations. Le naufrage du PTB est total.

How should we interpret the *collapse* of the PTB, to use the expression of the president of a centrist Brussels party? Our study highlights a clear decline among PTB supporters in indicators of openness to others. It remains to be understood what the reasons for this are: is it an ideological legacy (the historically ambivalent relationship of certain communist movements to homosexuality),³⁸ a strategic adjustment aimed at capturing part of the Muslim electorate in Brussels, the radicalism of anti-Zionism that has become an identity marker, or more simply the sociology of its electorate? In any case, our data indicate that nearly a third (34%) of PTB supporters in our panel are Muslim.

This factor must play a role, but it does not fully explain the situation: according to our measurements, the PS appears to be significantly more open to otherness, even though it is the preferred party of around 27% of our Muslim respondents. In other words, the religious variable is not enough; rather, it is the combination of discursive positioning, electoral coalitions and militant culture that seems to structure this differential.



The radical pro-veil left, as exemplified by Jean-Marie Dermagne, who did not devote a single post to the Iranian tragedy.

Broadly speaking, the Western left displays strong cultural liberalism (LGBT rights, feminism, anti-racism, critical secularism) in its texts and public discourse. However, this official norm coexists with three tensions. First, an ambiguous doctrinal heritage: historical Soviet communism was very conservative on sexual issues (repression of homosexuality, cult of the "healthy" family), and certain small ultra-left organisations) continue to view LGBT and gender struggles as "bourgeois identity deviations" distracting from the class struggle, which fuels openly hostile positions towards LGBT rights

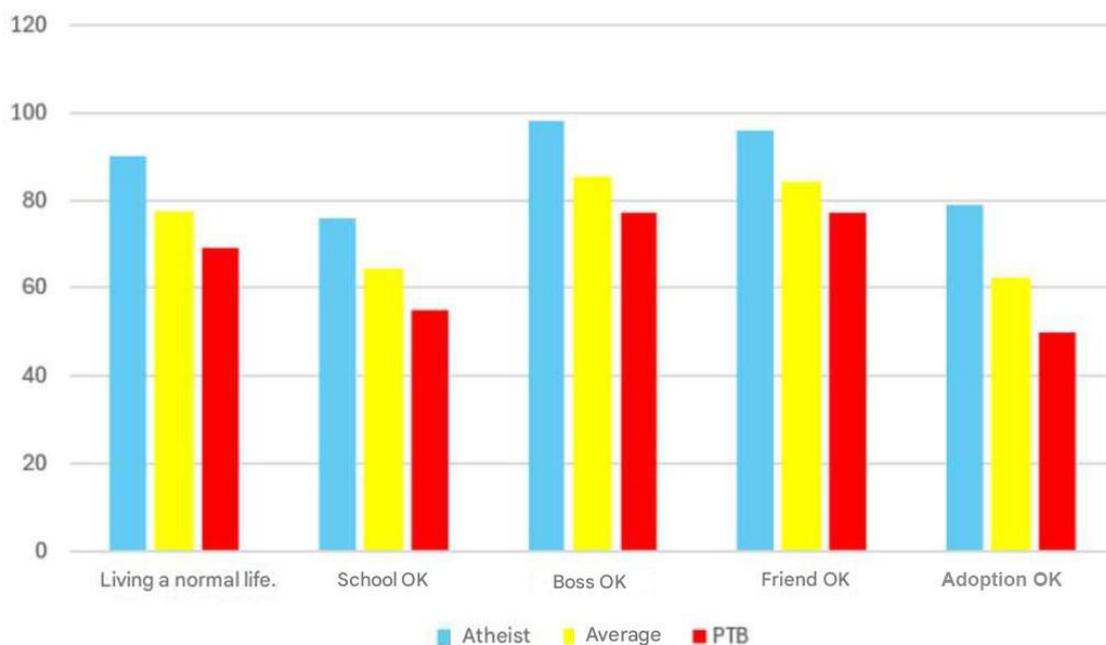
³⁸ For example, Rustam Alexander, "Soviet Legal and Criminological Debates on the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality" (1965–75), *Slavic Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Spring 2018), pp. 30-52 (23 pages), Cambridge University Press.

in segments of the radical left, as can be seen in certain parties or small groups, particularly in Central Europe. Secondly, there is a sociological tension: the far left and the more mainstream left seek to bring together a diverse electorate – highly libertarian activists from city centres, more traditional workers and young people from immigrant backgrounds who are more conservative in their attitudes – and must therefore constantly arbitrate between a "Pride" discourse and social bases for which homosexuality or certain forms of feminism remain problematic.

This translates less into an explicit rejection of LGBT rights than into silence, euphemisms or a shift in focus to socio-economic issues alone. Finally, there are local tactical calculations: in cities such as Brussels or Antwerp, progressive parties whose official programmes are very clearly pro-LGBT and committed to Pride marches may be tempted to emphasise anti-racism, the Palestinian cause and the defence of public services in strongly Muslim neighbourhoods rather than marriage for all or medically assisted reproduction, so as not to alienate a religiously conservative electorate.

We are therefore not dealing with a far left that is broadly "anti-homosexual", but with a space where a very assertive cultural liberalism among militant elites and in texts coexists with tactical compromises and pockets of real conservatism, inherited from both authoritarian communist traditions and the sociology of new electoral strongholds.

Liberal ethos index – Political orientation (descending order)



When it comes to LGBTQIA+ issues, PTB supporters are well below average

It is in this spirit of conciliation with certain Islamist circles that we must understand the door-to-door canvassing and solicitation carried out in and around certain Antwerp mosques by Jos D'Haese, a leading figure in the local PVDA/PTB during the last municipal elections. The episode was widely interpreted as further evidence of a strategy to win over and then consolidate an electorate that has

become central in certain areas such as Antwerp and Brussels. Images, initially broadcast by Flemish far-right networks, also circulated on social media platforms, showing D'Haese campaigning in a mosque. Whatever the intentions of those who broadcast these images and however they were staged, the episode sheds light on a more general political fact: the exploitation of the Israeli-Palestinian question for electoral purposes. And it is working very well.

As we have just pointed out, 34% of our Muslim respondents, conservative as they may be, are seduced by the siren song of the Maoist party. This detour via the PTB highlights the fact that radical opposition to Israel and Zionism is not unique to the PTB. It also exists, in various forms, within the PS, Ecolo and even Les Engagés. When you think about it, all enmities and contradictions disappear in the face of a common enemy, yesterday the Jew, today the Zionist.

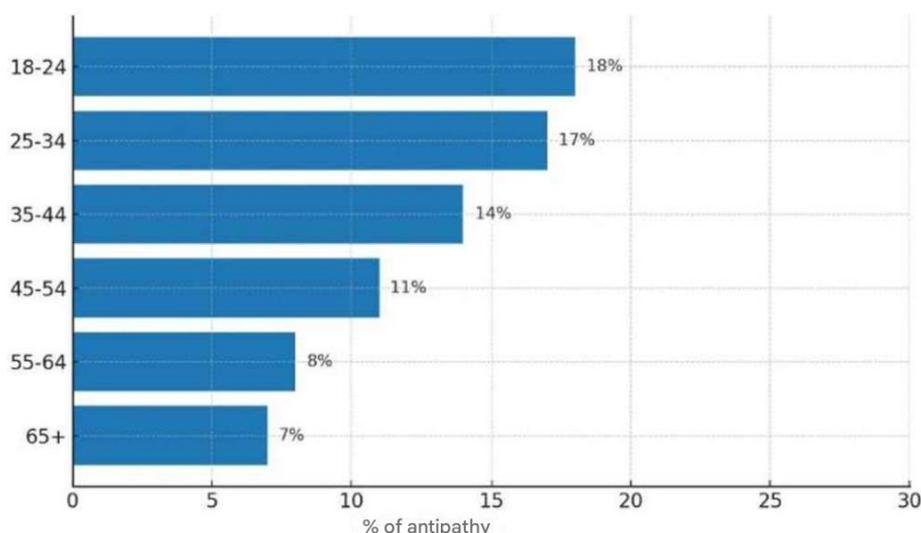
3.4. Fourth observation: young people are more prone to anti-Semitic prejudices than their elders

3.4.1. The age of extremism and lack of knowledge

Our study highlights a clear generational divide. Contrary to popular belief, young people appear to be significantly more prone to anti-Semitic prejudices than their elders. The gap is sometimes very marked. Several indicators converge and lead to a key finding: the "age" factor is one of the major determinants of the attitudes measured. Generation Z (1995-2015) and, to a lesser extent, millennials (1981-1994) certainly cultivate a number of anti-Semitic tropes, often exceeding their elders in percentage terms.

- 25% of 18-24 year olds and 26% of 25-35 year olds consider Jews to be a race that cannot be assimilated into Europe (12% of 65+ year olds).
- 17% of 18-24 year olds and 15% of 25-35 year olds believe there are too many Jews (7% of those aged 65+).
- 19% of 18-24 year olds and 26% of 25-35 year olds believe that Jews killed Christ (14% of those aged 65+).
- 21% of 18-24 year olds and 32% of 25-35 year olds believe that Jews are responsible for economic crises (15% of those aged 65+).
- 34% of 18-24 year olds and 52% of 25-35 year olds believe that Jews control most central banks (25% of those aged 65+). It should be noted that Jews do not control any central banks, apart from the Bank of Israel.
- 39% of 18-24 year olds and 44% of 25-35 year olds believe that **Jews** are doing to Palestinians what the Nazis did to them (25%, 65+).

Antipathy towards Jews – by age

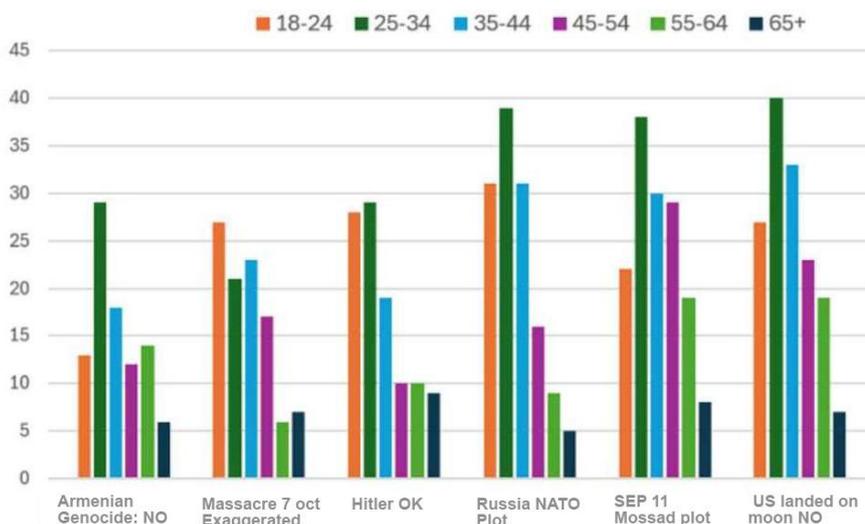


Our results are in line with several European studies showing a stronger prevalence of conspiracy theories among young people. These include the 2018 European study conducted among 12,000 young people in 12 countries by the Network Against Violent Radicalisation in Cities³⁹ and the recent

³⁹ Bécuwe, Goudet & Tsoulos-Malakoudi, *Survey report "European youth and radicalisation leading to violence"* (PRACTICES, H2020 GA 740072).

FONDAPOL survey.⁴⁰ Socialised in a hyperconnected world (internet, smartphones, social networks), they are exposed to an accelerated circulation of polarising, emotional and often poorly contextualised content, which makes them susceptible to conspiracy theories.

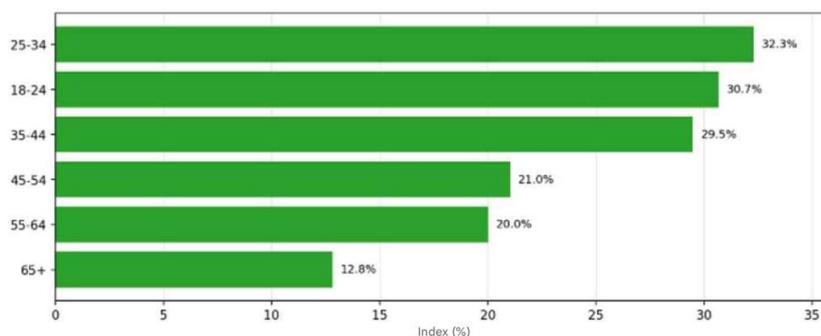
Conspiracy theories: a tendency among younger people



There is a clear divide between those under and over 45. Is the work of history in vain?

Often described as particularly attentive to social, environmental and human rights issues, Generation Z appears to be particularly susceptible to fake news and conspiracy theories. Another equally worrying finding concerns their level of historical knowledge: when asked about facts rather than values, the number of respondents who say they have "no opinion" skyrockets. In this context, the combination of a fragile historical background, heavy exposure to social media and information that is often consumed "out of context" encourages extreme analogies and accusatory reversals. Part of this generational difference can undoubtedly also be explained by a structural effect. In our sample, Brussels residents who identify as Muslim are overrepresented in the younger age groups: only 1% of them are over 65. Last but not least, and somewhat surprisingly, our conservative ethos index indicates that younger people are much more conservative than their elders. This should make readers pause.

Conservative ethos index - age (descending order)



⁴⁰ Op.cit. 2024.

3.5. Fifth observation: aggressive anti-Semitism on the rise

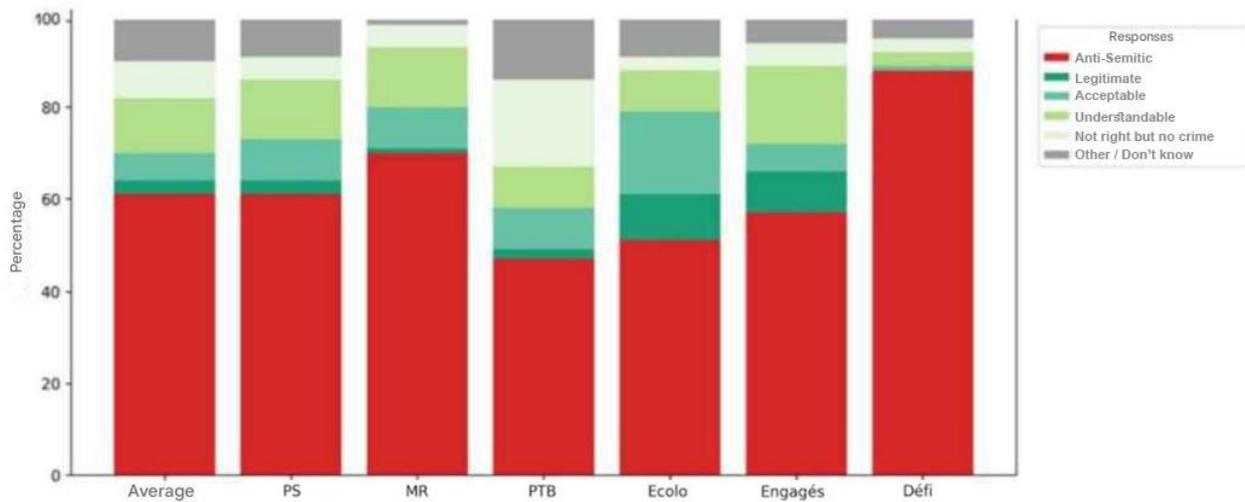
The acceptance of acts that can be classified as anti-Semitic aggression, such as *"threatening or insulting a Jewish person because they are supposedly Zionist"*, is considered legitimate, acceptable or understandable by 22% of Brussels residents, 45% of far-right sympathisers and 39% of far-left sympathisers. This opinion is no longer just a matter of perception; it is reflected in practice. As a result, it is now not uncommon to see Jewish people threatened at most feminist or LGBT demonstrations before being escorted away by the police. This was notably the case in Brussels on 8 March 2024 during the women's rights demonstration. In Nora Bussigny's seminal work, Viviane Teitelbaum gives a chilling account:

"The procession sets off, but very quickly we are violently jostled. Having been hit on the shoulder in the melee, my arm hurts terribly. I think it's just the crowd pushing until I hear the cries of a woman from my party, who is Muslim. In a panic, she suddenly screams at me, 'LEAVE! QUICK! THERE'S NOT A SECOND TO LOSE!' It is at this precise moment that I notice that our Jewish feminist procession is surrounded by men who look threatening, who are shouting in our faces and closing in on us as if they want to crush us." The women miraculously managed to escape, and Viviane, her shoulder aching, learned from her Arabic-speaking friend who had alerted her that the men had shouted this command in Arabic when they saw them: "They are Zionists, surround them." After a complaint was filed, a police investigation was launched. According to several sources, the men were members of the Samidoun group, whose European president resides in Brussels.⁴¹

The following year, during the same march, Viviane Teitelbaum had to be escorted out of the procession by police officers. While the most left-wing respondents in our study proved to be particularly susceptible to so-called **prejudicial anti-Semitism**, they were also susceptible to **aggressive anti-Semitism**, including Ecolo supporters, who are otherwise not very sensitive to traditional anti-Semitic tropes.

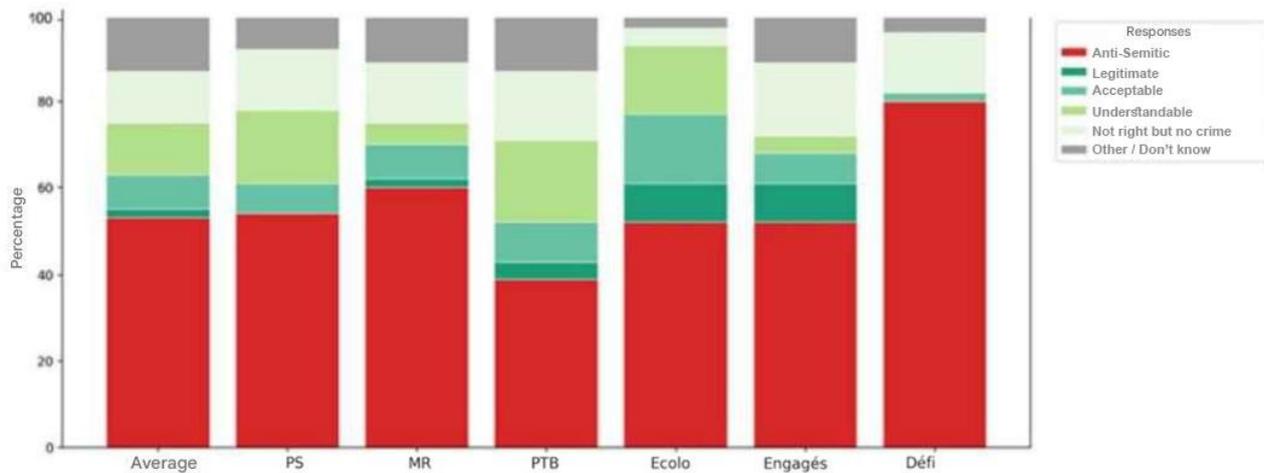
⁴¹ Nora Bussigny, *Les Nouveaux antisémites*, Albin Michel, 2025, p. 46.

Tagging a Jewish public place: "anti-Semitic" vs. justifications (detail)



Many Brussels residents, albeit a minority, justify in one way or another that it is acceptable to tag a Jewish public place because of the Israeli-Gaza conflict.

Only 47% of PTB supporters and 51% of Ecolo supporters believe that tagging a Jewish place to show opposition to Israel is anti-Semitic.



Threatening or insulting a Zionist Jew: many Brussels residents believe that it is acceptable to threaten a Jew because of their support for Israel.

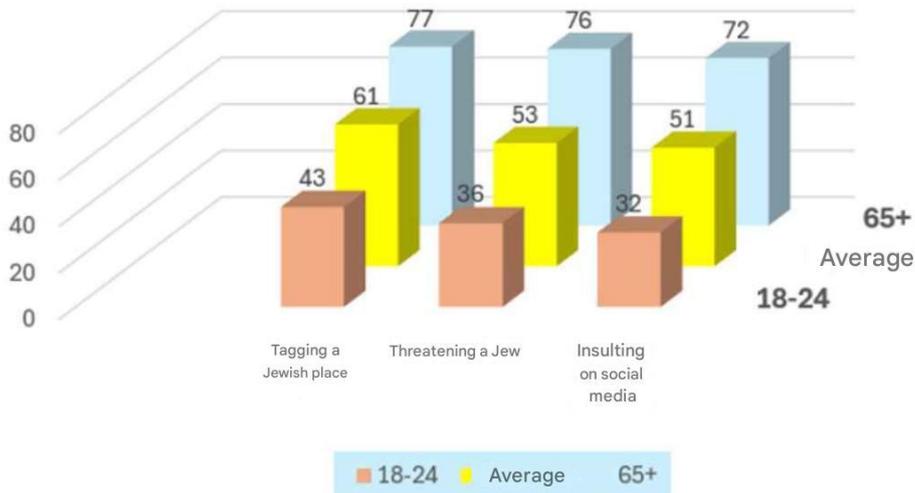
Only 52% of Ecolo supporters and 39% of PTB supporters believe that threatening or insulting a Jew because they are supposedly Zionist is anti-Semitic. Even fewer believe this to be the case when it comes to threats or insults on social media (PTB, 35% and Ecolo 49%).

Threatening, insulting on social media	Average	PS	MR	PTB	Ecolo	Engagés	Défi
Anti-Semitic	51	43	64	35	49	57	84
Legitimate	4	3	2	6	6	8	0
Acceptable	7	12	4	3	22	1	0
Understandable	14	22	6	23	12	12	1
Not good but not a crime	12	9	15	15	8	12	7
TOTAL	37	46	27	47	48	33	8

22% of Ecolo supporters justify threats against Zionist Jews on social media

This worrying finding also concerns the younger generations, where misinformation combined with susceptibility to conspiracy theories is a factor in the rise of aggressive anti-Semitism.

Aggressive anti-Semitism: 18/24 and 65+



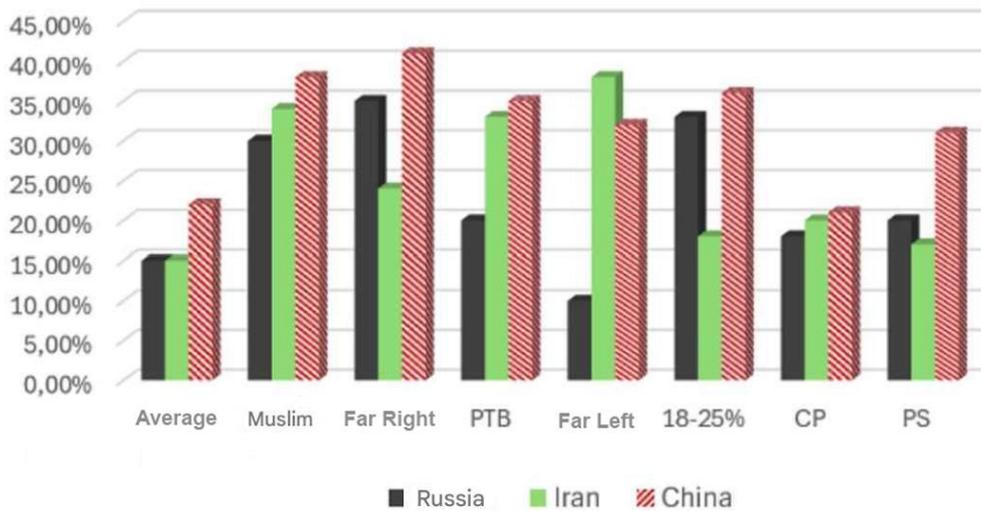
Clearly, age acts as an amplifying factor for certain biases already identified in other segments, particularly among respondents on the far right and left, those of the Muslim faith and the younger generations. In the name of "good".

There is a real risk of aggressive anti-Semitism becoming normalised. The repetition of anti-Semitic comments or acts can, in fact, encourage a form of habituation and contribute to the trivialisation of violence against Jews.

3.6. Sixth observation: anti-Semitism as a Cold War issue

It should be noted that respondents who express sympathy for Russia, China or the Islamic Republic are more likely than the rest of the panel to hold anti-Semitic prejudices.

Sympathy for Russia, Iran, China



A significant proportion of those who oppose Israel in the name of human rights support regimes that trample on those rights.

This ideological congruence is clearly evident among PTB supporters, 18-25 year olds and Muslims, as illustrated by hundreds of posts on Jean-Marie Dermagne's Facebook page.





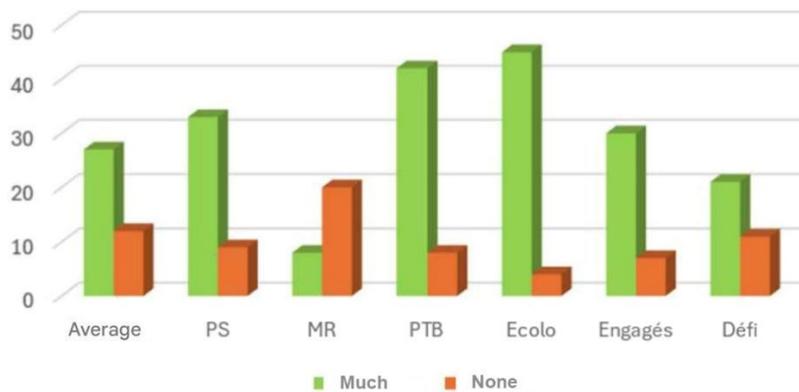
Love for Palestine goes hand in hand with love for Russia, China and Iran. Hatred of Israel correlates with hatred of Ukraine and India.

While their opposition to Israel is often expressed in the name of human rights, it also has ideological roots: it is part of a tradition of denouncing Zionism and hostility towards Israel, formerly espoused by the USSR and communist China. The PTB's radical rejection of Israel is also reflected in its complicit silence on the situation of the Uighurs in China.

3.7. Seventh finding: Israel's tarnished image

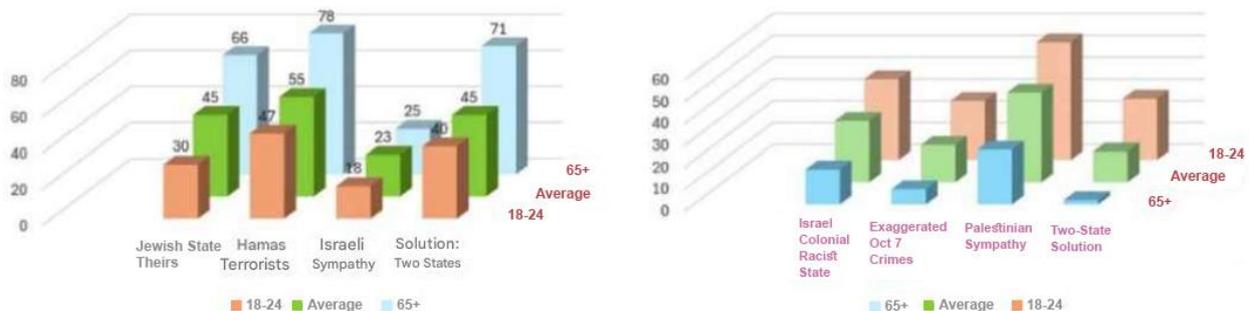
Another finding of our investigation, which was conducted at the height of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, is the undeniably damaged image of Israel. Israel is on the verge of becoming the "Jew of Nations", in short, an illegitimate state to be wiped off the map. Clearly, the policies pursued by the current Israeli government are damaging Israel's image. This tragic conflict, which followed the genocidal events of 7 October, has undoubtedly tarnished the image of the State of Israel and, by extension, that of the Jewish people. While the "no conflation" approach worked well (and fortunately so) for Muslims after the various Islamist attacks committed from New York to Paris, via Brussels, this is not the case for Jews, who are more than ever identified with the State of Israel. It is indeed the Jews who are being targeted by Brusselmanns, Smits, Dermagne and even "de Chimay", these new anti-Semites in the name of Good. The Palestinian question, to the exclusion of all others (Iranian, Kurdish, Cypriot, Uyghur, Sudanese or even Tibetan), has become the cause of all causes. From New York to Brussels.

Importance of the party's position on the conflict for voters
(Only, Very much and Not at all)

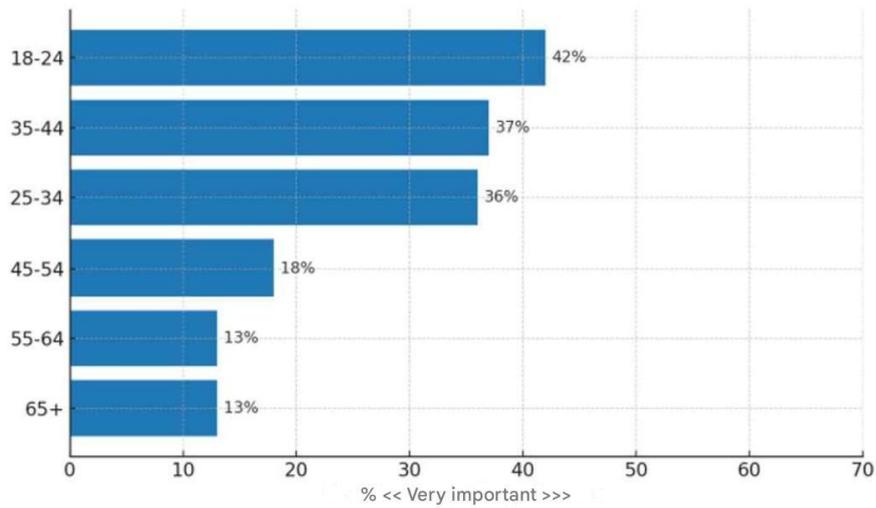


What is certain is that this interest in the Palestinian question is not about to collapse, given the generational gap.

Israel-Palestine through a generational lens I and II



The Palestinian question – by age (Very important)



"Palestinianism", this new secular religion of modern times, is not about to collapse in the climate of disorientation that Europe and Belgium are currently experiencing. Israelis may lament this, but the fact remains that the future of the Jewish state seems to be linked to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside it. At the risk of the worst.

4. Conclusion



4. Conclusion: a call for political vigilance

4.1. A climate of anti-Semitism?

The aim of our study was to validate the two previous surveys. The results obtained are unambiguous: not only have traditional anti-Semitic prejudices not disappeared, but they seem to have been reconfigured, enriched and sometimes reinforced by the addition of new representations that are just as harmful and irrational. Added to these new representations is an increasingly commonplace form of aggressive anti-Semitism. Does this mean that we should conclude that "the people of Brussels" are anti-Semitic? Such a generalisation is not analytically relevant: it essentialises a heterogeneous population and confuses the presence of stereotypes in the social sphere with a collective trait.

Moreover, a majority of respondents (49%) consider that "anti-Semitism is a problem that concerns society as a whole", compared to 20% who see it as "a problem that concerns only Jews and does not concern society as a whole". This difference attests, at the very least, to the existence of a widely shared normative horizon, where anti-Semitism is perceived as an issue of civic cohesion, rather than a community affair. Jews are merely the canaries in the coal mine, heralding the worst.

4.1.1. The mystery of anti-Semitism remains

Nevertheless, despite results attesting to the attachment of a large part of the Brussels population to cultural liberalism, the study highlights the persistence, eighty years after the Holocaust, of what must be called, for lack of a better term, the "mystery of anti-Semitism". How else can we understand the prevalence of prejudices against Jews that are both so persistent and so obviously absurd? Although Jews represent only about 0.24% of the Belgian population and 1.35% of Brussels residents, they are still identified by a significant proportion of their fellow citizens as key players in the media and financial sectors.

Even more striking is the fact that, even though Jews are numerically marginal and largely absent from most positions of power in Belgium, including in the media and financial sectors, they continue to haunt the social imagination to an extent that defies understanding. This asymmetry between sociological reality and fantastical constructs reminds us that anti-Semitism cannot be reduced to racism or xenophobia. To quote Jean-Paul Sartre, it is an irrational passion, but one that is useful in the sense that it provides a convenient, readily available and immediately mobilisable ideal type of culprit.

4.1.2. A deeply ambivalent observation

Our results paint a picture of a Brussels population in which anti-Semitic opinions remain significantly present, but whose intensity is particularly concentrated in five segments:

- Muslims in Brussels;
- Far-right sympathisers;
- Far-left sympathisers;
- Practising Catholics in Brussels (as opposed to non-practising Catholics);
- Generation Z and millennials.

The same tropes and stereotypes are thus deployed in the imagination of respondents who claim to be either radical right-wing or radical left-wing, or who claim to be practising a structured religion. It should be noted that supporters of the radical right and the PTB appear in our material as the Brussels residents among whom the circulation of anti-Semitic tropes is most pronounced. For a long time, specialists in anti-Semitism have emphasised the plural, global and syncretic nature of contemporary Judeophobia: it aggregates heterogeneous matrices, borrows from distinct registers, and recomposes itself according to context.

4.1.3. Putting an end to the denial of Muslim anti-Semitism

Our study confirms the conclusions of our two previous surveys as well as those of a series of European investigations—from Germany to France—establishing the weight of religious factors in the formation and transmission of anti-Jewish representations. It highlights the greater exposure of Muslim Brussels residents to anti-Semitic stereotypes and representations. This observation must be formulated with rigour: Muslim populations are a heterogeneous group, and it would be not only wrong but politically dangerous to essentialise them or assign them to any kind of "anti-Semitic residence". Doctrinal currents, social trajectories, relationships with practice, migration histories, links with countries of origin: nothing in Islam in Belgium allows for a uniform interpretation.

Islam is pluralistic, and immigrant communities are even more so. Nevertheless, statistically speaking, it is in these segments that anti-Semitic tropes appear most prevalent. Our data merely observes – and does not prescribe – that a significant proportion of Muslim respondents share, with certain segments of the far right, highly structured anti-Semitic representations (conspiracy theories, fantasies of wealth, mixophobia, etc.). Without minimising the impact of the war and humanitarian disaster in Gaza, it is also important to consider, as Éric Kessler points out here, the endogenous dimension of Arab-Muslim anti-Judaism:

"Part of the Judeophobia that exists in France today must be understood as imported anti-Semitism, i.e. the transfer of an anti-Jewish tradition from the Maghreb to France through immigration."⁴²

⁴² Éric Kessler, *De l'antisémitisme en France*, Fondation Diderot, 2015, p. 17. <https://www.institutdiderot.fr/de-lantisemitisme-2/>

The remark by Magyd Cherfi, founding member of the group Zebda, illustrates in its crudeness this dissociation between politics and the socialisation of hostility:

"When I was little, we didn't like Jews. My parents were anti-Semitic, as people are in the Maghreb. The word 'Jew' in Berber is an insult. It wasn't a question of Palestine or politics, it was just the way it was. We didn't like Jews, except the ones we knew."⁴³

In the same vein, historian Georges Bensoussan has shown the intertwining of political factors (anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic propaganda), historical factors (the backdrop of "dhimmitude", the legacy of colonisation, effects of the penetration of Nazi themes) and religious factors (the presence of ambivalent images of Jews in the Koran, oscillating between valorisation and depreciation). These elements help to explain the persistence of anti-Jewish prejudices, including among new generations of immigrants, who have inevitably inherited negative interpretative frameworks. This evidence is now largely denied by the media, academic and political elites in our country. However, it was highlighted as early as 1982 by Marcel Liebman, one of the leading figures of the Belgian Marxist left. During a conference at the MRAX, the Trotskyist theorist condemned a "primitive", "traditional", "everyday" and "harmful" anti-Semitism specific to certain "Arabs in our country", an anti-Semitism that was certainly "favoured by the Arab-Israeli conflict", but not created by it:

"The last form of everyday anti-Judaism that I believe must be emphasised (...) is the hostility that is sometimes felt towards Jews among Arab immigrant workers. (...) It is unpleasant because we would like to imagine that the victims of racism are immune to this evil, but this is an illusion (...) There are (...) relatively many Arabs in our country (...) who express hatred towards Jews by resorting to such hackneyed themes as the wealth of the Jews. (...) This traditional anti-Semitism, imported into our country (...) seems to me to be particularly harmful to those who propagate it. (...) It goes without saying that this anti-Semitism (...) in Arab circles is fuelled by the fallout from the Arab-Israeli conflict."⁴⁴

Even if hostility towards Jews did not originally stem from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is clear that it is fuelled by it today, frequently drawing on it for justification — or, failing that, a moral alibi. In turn, it fuels partisan strategies that are harmful to say the least: the tactical positioning of certain progressive parties on the orthodoxy attributed to "the Arab street". There is a strong temptation to link the progress of the left to the demands of political Islam, where there are now significant reservoirs of votes. This temptation has been described as *calculated* or *tertiary anti-Semitism*,⁴⁵ an opportunistic strategy consisting of hardening the discourse against Israel in order to capture an electorate of Arab-Muslim origin, whose electoral weight is now significant from the heart of Brussels to the suburbs of Paris and Birmingham.

At the cost of a *Palestinianisation* of Belgian political life. There is no need to go into detail here about the strategies used by all progressive parties, either explicitly or implicitly, to play the hardline Islam card in order to secure votes or buy social peace on the cheap. Nor is it necessary to recall that all the

⁴³ *Le Nouvel Observateur*, no. 1942, 24–30 January 2002, p. 14 (interview by Claude Askolovitch).

⁴⁴ This text, which dates from 1982, was republished in 2009 by Aden Editions, by the Marcel Liebman Institute in the book *Figures de l'antisémitisme* (Figures of Anti-Semitism) with a preface by Jean Vogel.

⁴⁵ Joël Kotek, "Belgium, a laboratory for European anti-Semitism?" *Revue K*, Paris, 8 May 2024.

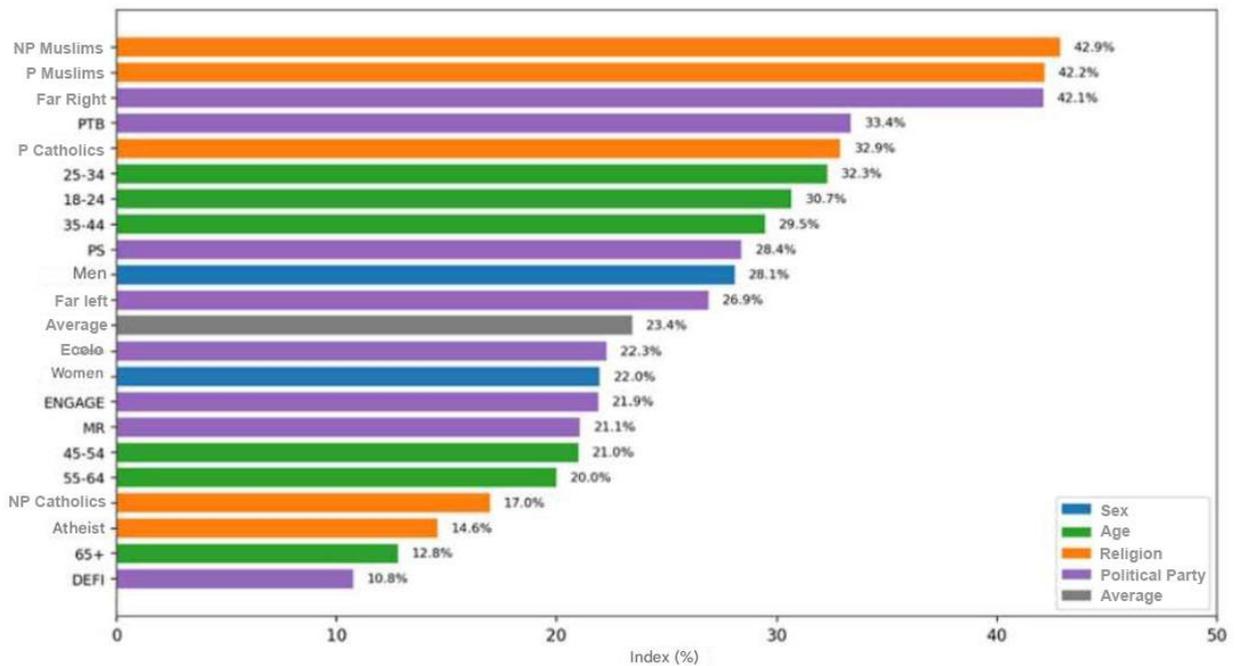
progressive parties in Brussels – including Ecolo – have refused to ban ritual slaughter. It suffices to observe, empirically, the competition between these parties to outbid each other in their anti-Israeli rhetoric, in the hope of capturing the Arab-Muslim vote.

4.1.4. Anti-Semitism and conservative ethos

Our survey clearly highlights the existence of a structural link between anti-Semitism and conservative values. The "conservative ethos" index that we constructed specifically for this study, by synthesising several attitudinal items, offers a reading of rare clarity: the more conservative, and sometimes frankly reactionary, a segment of the population is, the more likely it is to adhere to representations that are hostile to Jews and Israel. In other words, anti-Semitism is not distributed randomly. It is aggregated into a coherent set of ideological dispositions: distrust of equality, and a valorisation of traditional and religious social order.

This logic is clearly evident in our overall graph, whose hierarchy, because it challenges certain interpretative reflexes, is bound to surprise some readers. The correlation between anti-Semitism and patriarchy, in particular, is difficult to dispute. It can be seen in the statistical proximity between anti-Jewish attitudes and adherence to traditionalist gender norms: the same relationship to power, the same valuing of domination, the same rejection of the emancipatory frameworks inherited from the Enlightenment. On this point, hostility towards Jews functions less as an isolated prejudice than as one of the symptoms of a broader system: a cultural mindset that naturalises inequality and mistrusts universalist principles.

Conservative Ethos Index (descending order)



We find that the age groups and political and religious affiliations most susceptible to anti-Semitism have a high conservative ethos index.

In our Brussels sample, certain segments stand out for having a more "Enlightenment-resistant" ethos than the average: respondents who identify as Muslim, even when they say they are non-practising, practising Catholics, and, in terms of political affiliation, PTB supporters and younger people! This observation does not, of course, mean that these groups are uniformly anti-Semitic, nor that there is a mechanical causality; however, it does indicate that within these segments, conservative attitudes and anti-Jewish prejudices tend to reinforce each other more than in the rest of the population.

This is precisely what the index allows us to understand: not a moral condemnation, but the revelation of a pattern. And this pattern invites us to move beyond monocausal explanations (current events, "conflict", emotion, ignorance) and recognise that part of contemporary anti-Semitism is also rooted in a worldview that is orderly, hierarchical, ideological, even totalitarian.



The case of Jean-Dermagne can be analysed as an illustration of a paradoxical progressivism, combining an emancipatory discourse with a form of complacency towards authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia, Iran and Hamas. This reactionary stance is certainly part of the legacy of a militant culture stemming from certain political traditions of youth, whose ideological extensions sometimes lead to indulgent reinterpretations of controversial historical figures. The defence of Abbé Pierre, likened to Christ, is part of this logic in that it tends to minimise, or even excuse, now established facts of systemic violence and sexual abuse, not to mention the Abbé's involvement in pre-conciliar Catholic anti-Semitism, which is widely documented in historiography. Anti-Semitism and sexism are linked.

4.1.5. Calculated electoral anti-Semitism

Let us repeat: the fact that Muslims are now among the groups most exposed to racist discrimination in Belgium does not invalidate this observation. The fight against racism cannot be based on denying reality, in this case the existence of religiously motivated anti-Semitism. Pointing this out is not a racist act. Did the Catholic Church not, with some difficulty, recognise the "teaching of contempt" conveyed by certain readings of the Scriptures? And who would think of describing Jules Isaac, who denounced it in his day, as an "anti-Christian racist"?

The Institut Jonathas therefore calls for urgent collective action: from the state, the media, but also, and above all, from the political sphere, which is too often tempted, out of opportunism, to embrace and then amplify the identity-based tendencies of the most active minorities. Belgium is a particracy: it structurally encourages segmented electoral logic, where competition for "votes" perceived as ethnic or religious can lead to symbolic one-upmanship. In this context, Jews, but also Kurds, Armenians and Eastern Christians, have little or increasingly less influence in the economy of Brussels' political decisions.

Muslims in Brussels are not a minority "like any other" in demographic and sociological terms: Islam is already the largest declared religion in Brussels, and some predict that the capital will have a Muslim majority by 2030. Whether this is cause for concern or celebration is not the issue here; the challenge is rather to prepare for it, in particular by promoting, as far as possible, the emergence and consolidation of an "Islam of the Enlightenment", as suggested in 2011 by journalist Marie-Cécile Royen. The question primarily concerns the conditions for living together. However, for the moment, the focus is more on the "Palestinisation" of Belgian political life, on a calculated anti-Semitism that is all the more structuring given that 82% of Brussels Muslims say they consider the Palestinian question to be crucial in their voting choices.

We are also concerned about the role of mediators, particularly the media, which, while sometimes timidly denouncing anti-Semitism, at the same time contribute to a quasi-systematic darkening of the narrative surrounding Israel.

Beyond the real impasses of certain Israeli policies and the shift to the right in Israeli politics, the existence of the Jewish state remains, in the current global context, more necessary and legitimate than ever. Need we remind ourselves that Zionism was born, historically, out of the persistent refusal, in both the West and the East, to integrate Jews? While **Jews still live in Germany despite the Holocaust**, the **Arab world** has become **almost entirely judenfrei**: 99% of Jews from the East have been forced into exile, most of them to Israel. And if Israel really were the nightmare described by some media reports, how can we understand that the Zionist movement was supported by such diverse figures as Simone Weil, Yvonne Jospa, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Einstein, André Malraux, Robert Kennedy, Franz Kafka, Léon Blum, Jean-Paul Sartre, Primo Levi, Vladimir Jankélévitch, Albert Camus, Michel Foucault, Martin Luther King, Serge Gainsbourg and Émile Vandervelde?

4.2. Normative safeguards and the contemporary reconfiguration of anti-Semitism

4.2.1. The far left and anti-Semitism

Our aim is not to argue that the far left is inherently anti-Semitic. Such a generalisation would have no analytical meaning. What our data show, more modestly but more solidly, is that within our sample, PTB supporters show, on average, a higher level of adherence to anti-Semitic stereotypes and prejudices than that observed among supporters of other political parties. While this statistical result appears clear, there is no reason to label all PTB supporters as anti-Semitic. It invites us first to observe a distribution and to question its determinants.

However, it is worth examining the ideological frameworks that may fuel these anti-Jewish representations. The history of European political cultures reminds us that in the 19th century, a significant part of the radical left was prone to anti-Semitism, particularly through the association of capitalism with a supposed occult "Jewish finance". Through successive shifts, some of these tropes have been reactivated, consciously or unconsciously, by shifting to Israel, which is seen less as a state among others than as "the Jewish state", presented as criminal by nature, even hostile to humanity as a whole; Israel has simply become the Jew of nations. How else can we understand, for example, the position of **Francesca Albanese**, United Nations Special Rapporteur, when she publicly stated at a recent conference in Qatar **that "Israel is the common enemy of humanity"?**

Our point is not to claim that "anti-Zionism" and "anti-Semitism" are systematically confused. Rather, it is to remind people that excessive, irrational and obsessive criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic. The IHRA's working definition clearly states that *"criticising Israel as one would criticise any other state cannot be considered antisemitism"*. On the other hand, *"accusing Jews of conspiring against humanity and, in so doing, holding them responsible for all the world's problems"* (as Albanese suggests) is anti-Semitic, as is demanding that Israel *"adopt behaviours that are neither expected nor required of any other democratic state"*.

This double standard is found in the PTB, but also, in Belgium, within Ecolo and the PS. The intense and exclusive focus on Israel, combined with a relative indifference to other situations of mass violence or repression, such as Iran and its many civilian victims, can be interpreted, according to IHRA criteria, as an indication of discriminatory treatment, and therefore anti-Semitic, insofar as it tends to isolate the Jewish state as a privileged object of moral denunciation. This is not an automatic mechanism: it all depends on the discourse used, its motivations and its systematic nature. But the methodological point remains: asymmetry of attention, when it is repeated and becomes rigid, is a relevant signal.



On the left. On 7 February 2026, at the 17th Doha Forum, Francesca Albanèse subscribed to the oldest matrix of eschatological anti-Semitism, that of the Jew as the enemy of mankind, whose disappearance will mark the salvation of the world. Radical anti-Zionism is anti-Semitic in that it transforms the struggle against Israel into a quasi-religious conflict that calls for the necessary eradication of the only Jewish state on the planet in order to save the world. This millenarian worldview (*weltanschauung*) was that of Adolf Hitler and his dream of a thousand-year Reich.

On the right, a likely anti-Semitic montage depicting a customer at the Les Halles market, July 2024. "Humanity ceased to exist with the birth of Israel" and/or that "Israel is the enemy of humanity" is a shocking (and anti-Semitic) statement that expresses a view that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 marked a point of no return in history, leading to a loss of universal morality, compassion and fundamental humanitarian principles.

4.2.2. "Climatic" or accommodating anti-Semitism

In addition to this ideological dimension, there is also a strategic dimension. In several European countries, electoral competition encourages certain actors to invest in segments of the electorate that are considered highly mobilisable on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Examples include the PTB, but also LFI and Corbyn's *Labour Party*. Radical criticism of Israel can then serve as an identity marker, an instrument of partisan differentiation and a lever for local establishment. The risk, when this instrumentalisation is accompanied by rhetorical one-upmanship, is that it creates a framework in which Israel becomes a convenient receptacle for indignation and a variable for adjusting public debate, rather than an object analysed with the same rigour as other situations. From this perspective, arguing that the leaders of parties such as the PTB or LFI cannot be anti-Semitic because they are "left-wing" is irrelevant. Their personal opinions are irrelevant: what matters are the speeches they make and the policies they defend. A historical comparison can shed light on this reasoning without weighing it down.

Pierre Laval, head of the Vichy government, was not driven by an obsessive hatred of Jews, yet in the name of a policy of least evil, he played a central role in France's anti-Semitic policy during the Occupation. He handed over the Jews of France, including children, to the Nazi occupiers. Far from being a fanatic, his rhetoric and opportunistic policies were nonetheless anti-Semitic. The same was true of the socialist mayor of Liège, Joseph Bologne, who, patriotic though he was, willingly or unwillingly collaborated in the implementation of the Final Solution against the Jews of the Ardent City. In the case of the Holocaust, the fact that Laval and Bologne were not anti-Semitic *in themselves* does not change anything: they were handed over to the Germans in every way. These two cases illustrate a classic political mechanism: the existence of calculation, strategy and opportunism can be enough to produce dramatic effects, regardless of personal dispositions or professed convictions. Transposed to the contemporary debate, the issue is obviously not to equate incomparable contexts, but to highlight a possibility: an actor can use a group as a bargaining chip or a tool for mobilisation in the name of higher interests.

In short, our findings do not justify either prejudgement or blanket condemnation. However, they do call for vigilance. Certain ideological, discursive and electoral configurations increase the likelihood of anti-Semitic tropes circulating, including in indirect or euphemistic forms. It is precisely in order to avoid generalisations and to address the issue on the basis of data that it is important to distinguish between individuals, partisan apparatuses, traditions of thought and the harmful effects of well-understood discourse.

4.2.3. Towards necessary safeguards

The time has come to put safeguards in place. The Belgian government should formalise the working definition of the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA), which has already been adopted unanimously by the Senate with one abstention. Why? Because its definition of anti-Semitism includes certain expressions of radical anti-Zionism without criminalising legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. Criticising the Israeli government, its choices and its actions is obviously not, in itself, anti-Semitism. On the other hand, attributing a Nazi essence to Israelis, or attributing global conspiratorial intentions to "Zionism", is part of a historically documented repertoire. Similarly, calling for "the throats of all Jews encountered in the street to be slit" constitutes an anti-Semitic expression, regardless of certain judicial interpretations that are, at the very least, specious.

There is no doubt that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today provides anti-Semites with a framework of opportunity: it allows them to reactivate, under new guises, old systems of accusation that we naively believed had been permanently discredited after the Holocaust. The war in Gaza has unleashed old impulses. If the accusation of genocide is so frequently levelled, it is also because it was old, available and, for some, expected: it gives moral legitimacy to a hostility that clearly goes beyond the current events alone. The anti-Semitism that was once directed against Jews has, in some discourse, shifted to Israel, a state considered decidedly too "Jewish". The "all against Israel" sentiment aggregates heterogeneous anger and frustration in a context of civilisational and societal fractures ; it acts as an identity cement, capable of reuniting the collective around a common hostility. For this reason alone, it seems urgent to defuse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as much as possible in order to stem the current wave of anti-Semitism, which threatens to overwhelm what remains of the diaspora. Stem, only: the obsession with Jews is too structural, too instrumental, too gratifying to disappear. Anti-Semitism is, to quote Léon Pinsker, a demonopathy, an individual and collective psychosis, whose forms change, but whose social function and symbolic effectiveness, unfortunately, will not disappear anytime soon.

5. Annexes



5. Appendices

5.1. Items used for the anti-Semitism penetration index

Table – Questions and items selected

Questions	Answers
<i>Which of these two opinions do you feel closest to?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anti-Semitism is solely a problem for Jews and does not concern society as a whole- Tagging a synagogue or Jewish business to show opposition to Israel.
<i>Could you envisage or could you have envisaged marrying someone from a different culture to your own?</i>	<i>Yes, but not with a Jewish person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- For each of the following behaviours, would you say it is acceptable, unacceptable but understandable, or never acceptable?- Personally, do you feel sympathy, antipathy, or neither sympathy nor antipathy towards Israel?	<i>Antipathy</i>
<i>For each of the following statements, do you think it is completely true / somewhat true / somewhat false / completely false?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The CIA and Mossad jointly organised the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001.- The massacres committed by Hamas on 7 October have been greatly exaggerated.- Belgian Jews are complicit in what Israel is doing to the Palestinians.
<i>Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Israel and Zionism?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jews use the Holocaust and the genocide they suffered to defend their interests.- Jews use anti-Semitism to defend their interests.- Jews are doing to Palestinians what the Germans did to them.- Jews are a race that cannot be assimilated into Europe.- Jews are responsible for the death of Christ.- Belgian Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Belgium.- The Holocaust was used by Jews to justify the creation of the State of Israel.- The creation of Israel is the result of a racist enterprise.- Belgian Jews are responsible for the policies pursued by Israel.
<i>For each of these categories or groups of people, tell me whether you feel sympathy, antipathy, or neither sympathy nor antipathy towards them.</i>	<i>Jews: antipathy</i>
<i>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jews are wealthier than the average Belgian.

- Jews today use their status as victims of the Nazi genocide during the Second World War to their own advantage.
- Jews have too much power in the economy and finance.
- Jews have too much power in the media.
- Jews have too much power in politics.
- Jews are responsible for many economic crises.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for several decades. How would you like to see this conflict resolved?

A Palestinian state stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River

Around six million Jews were killed by the Nazis during the Second World War. How do you view this?

- As one tragedy among many.
- As an exaggeration; there were deaths, but far fewer than is claimed.
- As a fabrication; none of this ever happened.

5.2. The index of penetration of a conservative ethos

Given the scope of our questionnaire, which also covers the values stated by respondents, we have constructed a second index measuring the degree of penetration of conservatism.

Questions	Answers
<i>Men and women are equally capable of leadership</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<i>In a relationship, women should obey their husbands.</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>At work, it is perfectly acceptable for a man to refuse to shake hands with women.</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Schools should teach pupils to accept LGBTQIA+ people.</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<i>It is normal for the state to allow same-sex marriage.</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<i>Two people of the same sex living as a couple should be able to adopt children...</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<i>Sympathy or antipathy towards Russia</i>	<i>Sympathy</i>
<i>Sympathy or antipathy towards Iran</i>	<i>Sympathy</i>
<i>The theory of evolution, which states that humans are descended from apes, has not been scientifically proven</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Governments and the pharmaceutical industry are hiding the dangers of vaccines.</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Russia is the victim of a NATO conspiracy.</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>The Americans never walked on the moon.</i>	<i>Agreed</i>
<i>The laws of my religion are more important than the laws of Belgium.</i>	<i>Agreed</i>
<i>For or against the death penalty?</i>	<i>In favour</i>
<i>Marriage to someone from a different culture, but not to someone from Asia</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Marriage to someone from a different culture, but not to someone who is black</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Atheists are intolerant of people who have a religion.</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Atheists want to rule the world, particularly through Freemasonry.</i>	<i>Agree</i>

“Here are some statements about Jews.

For each one, would you say it is completely true, somewhat true, somewhat false, or completely false?”

- 1. Belgian Jews are not really Belgians like everyone else.**
- 2. Jews are a race that cannot be assimilated into Europe.**
- 3. Jews are, on average, wealthier than Belgians.**
- 4. There are too many Jews in Belgium.**
- 5. Jews are very close-knit.**
- 6. Jews are responsible for the death of Christ.**
- 7. Jews are often more intelligent than average.**
- 8. Jews are too present in the media and politics.**
- 9. Jews are responsible for many economic crises.**
- 10. Jews are too present in the financial and banking sectors.**
- 11. Jews often consider themselves superior to others.**
- 12. Jews have very powerful lobbies operating at the highest level in Belgium.**
- 13. Jews use the Holocaust and the genocide they suffered to defend their interests.**
- 14. Jews use anti-Semitism to defend their interests.**
- 15. Jews are doing to the Palestinians what the Germans did to them.**

Since 7 October 2023, anti-Semitic acts have multiplied in Belgium, raising questions about the scale and nature of the phenomenon. How do Belgians perceive Jews, anti-Semitism and the conflict in the Middle East? How much of the population currently harbours anti-Semitic prejudices? What are the origins of these prejudices and which segments of the population are most exposed? Is anti-Semitic hatred really back, structural, 'instrumentalised' or largely contextual, i.e. correlated with the upheavals of the Gaza conflict?

In order to shed light on these questions and make a rigorous diagnosis, the Jonathas Institute is launching a series of opinion polls on a scale never before seen in Belgium. This study focuses specifically on the Brussels-Capital Region. Its objective is twofold: on the one hand, to examine in greater depth the results of 2024, which revealed (contrary to expectations) that Brussels residents were more prone to anti-Semitic prejudices than their Walloon and even Flemish compatriots; on the other hand, to broaden the focus by asking Brussels residents about their perceptions of Jews, but also about their opinions on gender relations, LGBTQIA+ people, conspiracy theories and topics such as the death penalty and the place of religion in society.

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