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Published online: 03 Feb 2026.

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The securitized synagogue: antisemitism, security, and Jewish places of worship in contemporary Europe

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines safety perceptions among Jewish minorities at European places of worship (PoWs) between October 2023 and April 2024. The study utilizes PROTONE survey data from Belgium (N = 571), Germany (N = 734), Spain (N = 1198), and Italy (N = 895), specifically comparing 79 Jewish and 3,318 non-Jewish respondents. Qualitative components include 43 interviews with faith leaders (including 16 Rabbis) and five focus groups conducted in Brussels, Berlin, Rome, and Madrid. Grounded in postsecularism, vulnerability assessment models, and securitization theories, the research explores how threats and security measures shape feelings of insecurity. Key findings indicate that violent attacks and property damage strongly predict perceived unsafety. Comparative analysis reveals that Jewish respondents perceive significantly higher levels of anti-Semitic hostility and hate crimes than non-Jewish groups perceive regarding their own communities. While positive community and authority relations marginally mitigate fear, structural vulnerabilities like outdated infrastructure persist. Attitudes toward security vary; CCTV is universally accepted, but armed guards raise concerns about carization. Generational differences appear, with younger Jewish individuals reporting notably higher anxiety and avoidance behaviors. The study contextualizes these findings within broader socio-cultural and political processes, highlighting the dual role of Jewish PoWs as essential and sacred sites for spiritual fulfillment and robust local communal resilience.

Introduction

The sanctity and safety of places of worship (PoWs) have been increasingly compromised in recent decades, transforming havens of tranquillity, community, and spiritual nourishment into potential targets of violence and hatred.

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This trend is particularly alarming for Jewish minorities in Europe, given their long history of persecution and ongoing experiences of anti-Semitism. Jewish groups in Europe routinely report heightened levels of fear and avoidance behaviours due to increased threats against synagogues and other communal spaces. In this context, understanding the perceptions of safety and insecurity among Jewish minorities becomes a critical sociological endeavour. To achieve these aims, the study addresses three research questions: first, how Jewish minorities perceive safety and insecurity at their PoWs; second, the extent to which community relations and security measures shape these perceptions; and third, whether significant regional variations exist in safety perceptions among Jewish minorities.

Safety perceptions are not merely subjective feelings but are deeply embedded in social structures, cultural narratives, and historical contexts. For religious minorities, the perception of safety at places of worship is shaped by both external threats and internal dynamics. External threats include violent attacks, property damage, and ideological hostility, while internal dynamics encompass community relations, security measures, and congregational practices. These factors interact in intricate ways, influencing how individuals experience and respond to risks.[1] In examining these interactions, we gain insights into the broader socio-cultural and political processes that underpin religious minority experiences in contemporary Europe. Jewish communities, in particular, face unique challenges due to their historical marginalization and current exposure to mounting anti-Semitic sentiments. Recent data indicate that anti-Semitism is on the rise across Europe, with Greece, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania reporting the highest levels of hostility.[2] While Germany has experienced numerous anti-Semitic attacks, it paradoxically ranks lower in terms of perceived anti-Semitism, suggesting a disjuncture between objective threats and subjective experiences.

The paper categorizes threats to Jewish PoWs into physical, ideological, and structural components. Physical threats encompass violent attacks, vandalism, arson, and burglary, which have become alarmingly frequent in several EU member states. For instance, OSCE/ODHIR's Hate Crime Data[3] reveals that 51% of hate crimes in Europe target religious communities, with synagogues being disproportionately affected. Ideological threats stem from anti-Semitic sentiments propagated through media, online platforms, and public discourse. These ideologies often conflate Jewish identity with broader geopolitical issues, exacerbating tensions and legitimizing violence against Jewish communities.[4] Structural vulnerabilities further compound these threats. Many synagogues, especially those built before World War II, lack integrated security systems and are ill-equipped to handle modern-day risks. Additionally, the open-door policies characteristic of many PoWs, in particular churches and mosques, renders them susceptible to breaches by hostile actors. As noted by Wo[5], the combination of decreased social control capabilities and high foot

traffic in PoWs contributes to their classification as "soft targets." Addressing these vulnerabilities requires a comprehensive approach that balances physical protection with the preservation of spiritual meaning.

The interplay between secularism and religiosity adds another layer of complexity to the issue of PoW security. Secularism, as a principle of statecraft, aims to separate religion from civic life, ensuring equal treatment of all faiths and none. However, secularism can also evolve into an ideology that generates tensions when confronted with religious diversity.[6] Secularism as state ideology trickles down to institutions, specifically security institutions, that view PoWs as spaces separated from daily "secular" life and therefore need special intervention like protection of (in the case of synagogues) or from (in the case of mosques). It also has effects on the perceptions of the general public on PoWs, especially PoWs of minority religions, that results in exceptionalising these spaces and further alienating them. In highly secularized societies, such as France and Belgium, Muslims and Jewish groups often feel excluded or stigmatized, leading to increased vulnerability and mistrust. For example, France's anti-separatism bill, passed in 2021, imposes stricter regulations on mosques and Islamic organizations, fuelling fears of over-securitization and discrimination. Similarly, Jewish communities in Europe face growing concerns about their place in an increasingly secular society, which places further pressures on existing minority faith groups, in particular Muslim and Jewish communities. Pew Research Center[7] highlights that while most Europeans would accept Jews as neighbours; however, younger generations of Jews are more likely to avoid certain areas due to perceived dangers. This generational shift reflects a broader pattern of declining trust and increasing anxiety among Jewish populations. Moreover, the securitization of synagogues, characterized by armed guards, CCTV cameras, and restricted access, can inadvertently reinforce feelings of alienation and isolation. Thus, securing PoWs must go beyond mere physical protections to address underlying socio-cultural dynamics.

In contrast to traditional secularization theories predicting the decline of religion, post-secularism posits that religion remains a potent force in public life.[8] This resurgence is evident in the persistence of religious identities and practices despite widespread societal secularization. Post-secular theory helps explain why religious communities continue to invest in PoWs as central institutions for social cohesion, cultural preservation, and spiritual fulfilment. Synagogues, in particular, serve multiple functions beyond worship, including education, social services, and community organizing. Protecting these spaces is therefore essential not only for safeguarding individual safety but also for preserving the collective well-being of Jewish communities who view synagogues as one of the only places, apart from their own homes, as safe to practice their religion. However, the post-secular framework also highlights the potential for conflict when religious and secular values clash. For example, debates

over the construction of new synagogues or the implementation of security measures often reflect deeper anxieties about national identity, migration, and multiculturalism. These tensions are exacerbated by the normalization of anti-Semitic attitudes in some quarters, where discriminatory behaviours are rationalized as expressions of secular principles.[9] Understanding these dynamics necessitates a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates insights from sociology, anthropology, and political science.

This study examines the perceptions of safety and insecurity among Jewish minorities at PoWs using survey data gathered through the European-Commission funded PROTONE project. The primary objectives are to analyse how these communities perceive safety and insecurity, identify the key factors influencing such perceptions, including experiences of threats, community relations, and implemented security measures, and explore regional differences in safety perceptions based on city size and population density. Through answering these questions, this research seeks to contribute to the expanding literature on PoW protection and provide actionable policy recommendations that balance enhancing the security of Jewish PoWs with preserving their openness and accessibility to congregants and the broader community.

Our analysis draws on data from the PROTONE study, supplemented by theoretical insights from relevant academic literature. The dataset includes responses from 82 Jewish participants and sixteen interviewees who identified as Hasidic, Ashkenazi, Reform, or Other. Key survey variables examined include perceived unsafety, experiences of violent attacks, damage to property, community relations, and attitudes toward security measures. Statistical techniques employed include descriptive statistics, mediation analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM), robust regression, and chi-square tests. Theoretical grounding for our analysis comes from works on post-secularism, vulnerability assessment models (VAM), and ethnographic methods. Post-secularism provides a lens through which to examine the intersection of religious and secular values in shaping safety perceptions.[10] VAM offers a systematic approach to identifying and mitigating risks associated with PoWs.[11] Ethnographic methods, though not directly applied here, inform our understanding of contextual factors shaping these perceptions. The VAM serves as a foundational tool for analysing the security needs of PoWs. Created by DG HOME[12], the VAM identifies both structural and behavioural factors contributing to the vulnerability of sacred spaces. Structural factors include building design, location, and accessibility, while behavioural factors encompass congregational practices and preparedness for emergencies. Applying the VAM to Jewish PoWs reveals that older synagogues, often located in urban centres, face heightened risks due to outdated infrastructure and limited integration of modern security technologies. Furthermore, the open-door policy characteristic of some synagogues increases their susceptibility to breaches by hostile actors.[13]

Regional differences in safety perceptions among Jewish minorities also warrant exploration. While large cities may offer greater anonymity and protection through sheer numbers, smaller towns and rural areas often expose congregants to heightened visibility and vulnerability. Additionally, national identity plays a significant role, with Jewish respondents who have immigrated to Europe due to political violence in non-European countries report higher levels of vigilance compared to Jewish groups who primarily identify as European and have resided in Europe for longer periods of time.[14] Security measures implemented at Jewish PoWs range from CCTV cameras to armed guards, reflecting varying degrees of securitization, with attitudes toward these measures reveal mixed sentiments, with some respondents welcoming enhanced protection and others expressing concerns about its impact on congregational life. Scheitle and Ulmer[15] argue that striking a balance between security and openness is crucial, as excessive securitization risks transforming sacred spaces into "armed encampments" that alienate worshippers. Positive community relations, characterized by collaboration with local authorities and neighbouring businesses, can mitigate these effects by fostering trust and cooperation.

The protection of Jewish PoWs extends beyond immediate safety concerns, touching on broader issues of social cohesion and interfaith dialogue. In an era marked by rising polarization and intolerance, safeguarding these spaces becomes a statement of inclusivity and respect for diversity. Moreover, the experiences of Jewish communities offer valuable lessons for other religious minorities navigating similar challenges. In promoting evidence-based strategies and fostering mutual understanding, policymakers and stakeholders can create environments where all faiths coexist harmoniously.

Theoretical development

Antisemitism in Europe has deep historical roots, characterized by recurring hostility and persecution spanning two millennia.[16] This long-standing issue encompasses cultural, legal, and physical forms of discrimination against Jewish communities.[17] Despite a decline in explicit antisemitic attitudes after World War II, underlying prejudices have persisted, influencing contemporary European society.[18] The transmission of antisemitic stereotypes occurs through an "authorising re-writing," where older source material is referenced, and emotions such as fear and anxiety are exploited to perpetuate harmful narratives.[19] These historical continuities highlight the resilience of antisemitism, even in modern times, making it essential to address its enduring presence.

In the twenty-first century, antisemitism in Europe has seen a concerning resurgence, alarming both Jewish communities and the broader public.[20] This rise transcends traditional political boundaries, affecting individuals across the political spectrum, including far-right groups, political leftists, and

radical Islamist extremists.[21] A notable trend is the emergence of "new" or Israel-derived antisemitism, wherein negative opinions about Israel correlate with increased victimisation of Jewish people.[22] Such manifestations underscore the evolving nature of antisemitism, which continues to adapt while retaining core elements from its historical origins. However, the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism remains contested. Critics argue that anti-Zionism serves as a guise for contemporary antisemitism, critiquing Israeli policies while reinforcing prejudiced views of Jewish communities.[23] Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany exemplify this phenomenon, functioning as tools to defame Israel and relativize German guilt without directly invoking historical parallels.[24] However, some scholars caution against conflating legitimate criticism of Israeli policies with antisemitism.[25] Distinguishing between genuine critique and disguised hatred is crucial for addressing the nuances of modern antisemitism effectively.[26]

Victimisation and fear among European Jewish publics stem from various individual and country-level factors. Younger Jewish people, those who feel more visible due to religious practices or appearance, and those identifying strongly with Israel face higher risks of victimisation.[27] At the national level, countries with larger Muslim populations and widespread negative opinions about Israel report greater incidents of antisemitism. Fear is exacerbated by prior experiences of victimisation, perceived threats, and recent fatal attacks targeting Jewish individuals or institutions.[28] Modern information technology plays a significant role in amplifying antisemitic sentiments. According to Mayerhofer and Lange[29], the internet facilitates the normalization of Jew-hatred by transforming extreme views into widely accepted opinions. Social media platforms serve as conduits for spreading misinformation and hate speech, enabling global networks of antisemitism to flourish unchecked. For instance, comparisons likening Israel to Nazi Germany circulate online, further entrenching divisive rhetoric.[30] The digital sphere thus acts as both a catalyst and a reflection of contemporary antisemitism's reach and intensity.

Post-secularism provides a critical lens through which to examine the resurgence of religion in public life amidst widespread societal secularization. Unlike traditional secularization theories, which predict the decline of religious influence, post-secularism posits that religion remains a potent force shaping social structures and individual identities.[31] Jürgen Habermas argues that "religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernisation is losing ground".[32] In highly secularized societies, this tension manifests as ideological conflict when religious communities seek recognition or accommodation within civic frameworks. For Jewish minorities in Europe, post-secularism highlights their dual position as both inheritors of a long history of marginalization and participants in contemporary debates about religious diversity.[33] Secular policies can evolve into ideologies that generate tensions when

confronted with religious pluralism. For example, French anti-separatism laws aimed at curbing political Islam have inadvertently stigmatized Muslim and Jewish communities by framing them as threats to national identity. These legislative interventions underscore the importance of distinguishing between statecraft, separation of religion and state, and secular ideology, which may delegitimise religious expression in public spaces. Moreover, post-secular theory helps explain why Jewish PoWs continue to serve multiple functions beyond worship, including education, social services, and cultural preservation. That is, synagogues, in particular, are sites where congregants negotiate their identities as religious adherents and citizens of secular states.[34] The persistence of anti-Semitism in Europe further complicates this negotiation, forcing Jewish communities to adopt heightened security measures while maintaining openness to surrounding neighbourhoods. As noted by Lipstadt[35], attending services has become an act of courage for many Jewish people due to pervasive fears of violence and discrimination.

The VAM offers a systematic approach to identifying structural and behavioural factors contributing to the vulnerability of PoWs. Developed by DG HOME[36], the VAM emphasizes the need for tailored interventions based on specific risks faced by each religious community. Structural vulnerabilities include outdated infrastructure, limited integration of modern security systems, and multiple entrances that increase susceptibility to breaches. Behavioural vulnerabilities encompass congregational practices, such as open-door policies, that prioritize inclusivity over protection. In the context of Jewish synagogues, the VAM reveals several critical challenges. First, older synagogues often lack integrated security features, such as fortified doors and windows, making it difficult to introduce new technologies without disrupting sacred spaces.[37] Second, the combination of decreased social control capabilities and high foot traffic renders synagogues soft targets for attackers.[38] Despite these challenges, Jewish communities have developed robust plans against various forms of attack, including car bombs and snipers, though funding constraints remain a significant barrier. Recent adaptations to the VAM incorporate ethnographic methods to capture granular understandings of congregational needs and neighbourhood dynamics. Ethnographic research conducted as part of the PROTONE project aims to document how protective measures impact congregants' relationships with their faith and surrounding communities.[39] For example, Scheitle and Ulmer[40] found that while faith leaders were willing to implement security measures, attendees expressed concerns about transforming sacred spaces into armed encampments. Such findings highlight the delicate balance required between ensuring safety and preserving spiritual meaning.

Securitization refers to the process by which issues are framed as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures.[41] In the case of Jewish PoWs, securitization has taken two primary forms: physical protection and legal recognition. Physical protection includes hiring private guards, installing CCTV

cameras, and restricting access during religious festivals. Legal recognition involves advocating for stronger hate crime legislation and increased funding for security infrastructure. However, excessive securitization risks alienating congregants and reinforcing stereotypes about religious minorities as vulnerable elements in society.[42] One notable example of successful securitization comes from Germany, where federal and municipal governments collaborate to protect Jewish institutions during major holidays like Yom Kippur. North-Rhine Westphalia's agreement with the Jewish community includes an annual budget of €3 million for doors, cameras, and panic rooms. Similarly, the UK Home Office allocated £15 million for safeguarding synagogues and schools, emphasizing alarm systems and counter-terrorism training.[43] While these initiatives enhance immediate safety, they also raise questions about financial sustainability and unintended consequences. Over-securitization may lead to reduced attendance, particularly among younger cohorts who perceive synagogues as intimidating or unwelcoming.[44] Furthermore, reliance on external agencies, such as police or military forces, can exacerbate feelings of isolation and surveillance. On the one hand, measures can increment a sense of isolation from the external world, on the other hand, it doesn't necessarily invoke surveillance, as it is often perceived positively by Jewish communities. In Belgium, the replacement of military personnel with local police was welcomed by some Jewish leaders but criticized by others who feared diminished protection. These examples illustrate the complexity of balancing security needs with communal well-being.

Traditional analyses of terrorism often focus on organized groups with clear ideological objectives. However, recent trends highlight a shift toward post-organisational terrorism, characterized by decentralized actors, loose networks, small cells, and lone individuals, radicalized through online ecosystems.[45] These actors often blend ideologies from disparate sources, complicating counterterrorism efforts. For example, incel culture, a misogynistic movement, has increasingly intersected with right-wing extremism, creating hybrid threats that resist conventional categorization.[46] Attacks against Jewish communities exemplify this complexity. Jewish PoWs and synagogues are frequently targeted as symbols of Jewish identity, reflecting broader socio-political tensions. The 2019 Halle synagogue attack in Germany, where the perpetrator live-streamed his assault after being radicalized primarily online, underscores how digital platforms amplify extremist rhetoric and normalize violence against religious minorities.[47] Such incidents align with patterns of anti-Semitism fuelled by nationalist ideologies and far-right online propaganda, which remain a persistent threat to Jewish populations.[48] The ideological drivers of terrorism also transcend binary secular-religious divides. Monica Martinelli[49] notes that secularism encompasses diverse interpretations, from atheism to laicism, each interacting differently with religious traditions. In post-secular societies, secular ideologies can paradoxically incite hostility when perceived as encroaching

on religious worldviews. Meanwhile, conflicts at the intersection of political and religious ideologies manifest in varied forms. For instance, debates over abortion rights in Poland have led to vandalism of Catholic churches, illustrating how clashes over ideological freedoms can escalate into violence.[50]

Positive community relations play a vital role in mitigating feelings of unsafety among Jewish congregants. Places of worship function as hubs of social capital, fostering ties between congregants and neighbouring residents while bridging divides between local authorities and civil society organizations.[51] Research by Wo[52] demonstrates that PoWs contribute positively to neighbourhood cohesion by providing welfare services, organizing cultural events, and promoting interfaith dialogue. However, these benefits depend on mutual appreciation and cooperation between religious communities and their surroundings. Data from the Bertelsmann Foundation[53] reveal stark disparities in acceptance rates for Muslim and Jewish groups as neighbours across European countries. While 88% of Europeans would accept Jewish people as neighbours, only 83% extend the same courtesy to Muslims. Notably, Austrian respondents exhibit lower acceptance rates for Muslims compared to other groups, highlighting regional variations in tolerance levels. These findings align with broader trends documented by the Pew Research Centre[54], which show that familiarity with religious minorities correlates positively with acceptance rates. Efforts to enhance social capital must therefore address both tangible barriers, such as language differences, and intangible ones, like cultural misunderstandings. Ethnographic studies offer valuable insights into the everyday interactions between PoWs and their environments. Building on works in the fields of critical geography and anthropology, the study incorporates the everyday affective dynamics of navigating security structures and the accumulated effects on citizenship and belonging.

Security culture refers to the attitudes and behaviours adopted by religious communities in response to increased threats. Key components include situational awareness, risk assessment, and implementation of protective measures. As discussed earlier, Jewish synagogues have largely abandoned open-door policies in favour of vetting procedures and restricted access. While necessary for immediate safety, these changes pose challenges to long-term sustainability and inclusivity. Scheitle and Ulmer[55] identify three main challenges associated with developing effective security cultures: sustaining openness, attracting newcomers, and ensuring funding continuity. Sustaining openness involves maintaining accessibility for visitors while implementing safeguards against potential threats. Attracting newcomers requires balancing visibility with discretion, as outreach activities may draw unwanted attention from hostile actors. Ensuring funding continuity demands collaboration between religious communities, local governments, and international organizations, given the resource-intensive nature of modern security systems. An additional concern is the potential for securitization to alter congregational behaviour and weaken community

bonds. Max Samson's[56] analysis of Chicago congregations shows how security issues became proxies for broader societal anxieties, rendering PoWs increasingly private entities focused on self-protection. To mitigate these effects, researchers recommend involving neighbourhood residents in security planning processes and encouraging transparent communication between faith leaders and stakeholders.[57]

Finally, any discussion of Jewish PoW security must consider the intersectionality of race, religion, and gender. Discrimination against Jewish men and women wearing visible markers of identity, such as headscarves or modest clothing, is less frequently reported than anti-Muslim incidents but nonetheless significant.[58] Moreover, generational shifts in threat perception suggest that younger Jewish individuals feel less secure than their elders, possibly due to increased exposure to online harassment and global geopolitical tensions.[59] Gender dynamics also influence how security measures are implemented and received. Although similar data on Jewish synagogues are scarce, anecdotal evidence suggests that women's voices are under-represented in decision-making processes related to security.

Methods

This section outlines the study's mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observations, and a structured survey to explore safety perceptions, security needs, and community dynamics among Jewish communities in Europe. The research aimed to understand the roles of faith leaders, the history of attacks on places of worship (PoWs), existing security cultures, and attitudes toward protective measures. The study conducted 43 in-depth interviews with faith leaders and representatives from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities across Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain between October 2023 and March 2024. In Belgium, eight leaders were interviewed, two Jewish, two Christian, and four Muslim. Germany saw six interviews, evenly split among the three faiths: two Jewish, three Muslim, and two Christian. Italy hosted 14 interviews, four Jewish, five Muslim, and five Christian, while Spain also had 14 interviews, including four Jewish, four Muslim, and six Christian leaders. Gender representation was predominantly male, with only eight female participants out of 43 faith leaders.

Five focus groups complemented the interviews, engaging participants in discussions about identity, religious expression, and the impacts of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Christian sentiments. These groups were held in Brussels, Rome, Berlin, and Madrid. For example, Madrid hosted two sessions: one with seven participants (two Jewish, three Muslim, two Christian) and another with six evenly divided among the faiths. Ethnographic activities, including guided visits, field observations, and photo documentation, enriched the qualitative data. Participants discussed their roles in fostering community

resilience, historical and recent attacks on PoWs, and existing security practices. They also explored how state authorities could enhance safety and the broader implications of securitization on congregants' well-being.

A structured survey was developed as part of the PROTONE project to harmonize diversity and enhance PoW protection through evidence-based research. Designed in consultation with religious leaders, security experts, and policymakers, the survey combined Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights. It explored demographic characteristics, perceptions of safety, experiences of threats, community relations, and attitudes toward security measures. Key areas of inquiry included feelings of unsafety at PoWs, avoidance behaviours due to perceived threats, specific incidents of violence or harassment (such as violent attacks, property damage, and online harassment), relationships with surrounding communities and local authorities, the presence and acceptance of security measures (like CCTV cameras and armed protection), and suggestions for additional threats or innovative solutions.

The survey was administered online to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. For the comparative quantitative analysis presented in this paper, the dataset was filtered to include only respondents from Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Italy, resulting in a sample of N = 3397 participants. Within this four-country sample, respondents were categorized based on their religious denomination. N = 79 respondents identified with Jewish denominations (Hasidic, Ashkenazi, Reform, or Other Jewish), while N = 3318 respondents identified with other denominations (e.g. Christian, Muslim) or reported no religion. This paper compares the perspectives of these two groups (Jewish vs. non-Jewish) on key variables, including perceived community negativity, perception of the community being a target of hate crime, perceived tensions against religious minorities, and agreement with unequal religious rights. The analysis also controlled for demographic and attitudinal factors such as country, religiosity identification, gender, age group, education level, and income level.

Data analysis employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating several statistical techniques to explore the survey data. Descriptive statistics were utilised to summarize central tendencies and variability in key metrics, both overall within the filtered four-country sample (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy; N≈3397) and specifically comparing Jewish (N = 79) and non-Jewish (N = 3318) respondents on measures including perceived community negativity, perceived hate crime targeting, perceived societal tensions against minorities, and agreement with unequal religious rights. Inferential tests (t-tests or Wilcoxon rank-sum tests) were used to formally assess differences in these perspectives between the Jewish and non-Jewish groups within these countries. Furthermore, logistic regression modelling was employed to identify predictors associated with holding specific attitudes (e.g. perceiving high tension or

agreeing with unequal rights, using dichotomized outcomes), examining the independent contribution of identifying as Jewish while controlling for country, demographic factors (age, gender, education, income), and religiosity.

The broader study context, as described elsewhere in this paper, also incorporated correlation analysis to examine relationships between continuous variables, mediation modelling to test the influence of community relations on the link between threat experiences and safety perceptions, and structural equation modelling (SEM) to explore hypothesized relationships among latent constructs, including threats, community relations, and safety perceptions. Robust regression techniques addressed potential outliers in specific models, and chi-square tests analysed associations between key categorical variables, such as religious denomination and safety concerns.

Despite its strengths, the study faced limitations. The small sample size of Jewish restricted the ability to detect subtle effects or generalize findings. Self-reported data introduced potential biases, and the cross-sectional design precluded causal inferences. Geographic coverage was limited, with underrepresentation of certain regions, and the focus on Jewish communities excluded perspectives from other religious minorities in in this paper although the wider project was concerned with all Abrahamic faith traditions. Conceptual overlap between variables, such as experiences of violent attacks and property damage, required careful interpretation to avoid multicollinearity issues. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Questions were framed neutrally to minimize distress, and skip options were provided for sensitive topics. Responses were anonymized to protect individual privacy.

Analysis

The perception of safety among Jewish respondents is a central focus of this study. On average, respondents reported moderate levels of perceived unsafety (Mean = 2.96, SD = 1.35). This suggests that while most individuals do not feel overwhelmingly unsafe, there is significant variability in how different congregants perceive risks at their PoWs. Younger Jewish groups (ages 18–30) tend to report higher levels of unsafety compared to older cohorts (ages 45+), aligning with previous research indicating generational shifts in threat perception. As one rabbi in Madrid noted, "I don't even question myself if I feel safe inside the synagogue … You try to forget [the noise] and concentrate on prayers. You couldn't live if you felt insecure there". This quote underscores the normalized anxiety experienced by attending services, reflecting a broader trend of heightened vigilance. A Jewish participant in Rome added another layer to this discussion: "After October 7th, this woman laments that the daily life of Jewish people has been dramatically changed, and her perception of private security has shifted. Now she hides symbols that demonstrate her identity".

Such accounts highlight the enduring legacy of antisemitic attacks and their lasting impact on community security measures. The intersectionality of regional, national, and global events influencing local security dynamics cannot be overstated.

Experiences of threats were measured using variables capturing violent attacks and property damage. Frequency tables show that approximately one-third of respondents experienced rare or occasional incidents of violence, while nearly half reported instances of property damage. These findings corroborate broader trends documented by OSCE/ODHIR[60], which indicate that synagogues face fewer violent assaults compared to mosques but experience higher rates of vandalism. A rabbi in Brussels recounted an incident involving arson: "The original door was made of wood, I'm told, and it was set on fire by a Molotov cocktail. Words like 'death to the Jews' were sprayed on parts of the building". Such accounts reveal the persistent threat posed by anti-Semitic acts.

Violent attacks remain infrequent but highly impactful, often leaving long-lasting psychological scars. Property damage, however, affects nearly half of the surveyed synagogues and serves as a constant reminder of potential threats. The presence of suspicious individuals is frequently noted, suggesting ongoing concerns about surveillance and monitoring. Logistic regression models reveal that violent attacks and property damage significantly predict feelings of unsafety. For example, respondents who have witnessed or experienced such incidents express greater support for stringent protective measures, even if these compromise traditional openness. As another rabbi in Madrid reflected, "But every time there is a conflict, we know it. We will be, we will have Nazi symbols in our synagogues. We will be called Jews. Our children will have problems at school. It's a fact and we accept it. We know it's like this. We cannot change the people. We just can adapt to the situations we are living". This statement illustrates the intersectionality of external conflicts and localized insecurities within Jewish communities.

Comparative perspectives

To further understand the specific position of Jewish communities, we compared the perspectives of Jewish respondents (N = 79) with non-Jewish respondents (N = 3318) within the filtered sample from Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Italy. This comparison focused on perceptions of the respondents' own religious community and general attitudes towards minorities.

The descriptive data (Table 1) and subsequent statistical tests revealed significant differences between the groups. Jewish respondents reported significantly higher average scores than non-Jewish respondents on perceiving their own community is viewed negatively (Mean 3.32 vs 2.54, t(82.2) = −5.43, $p <$ 0.001) and perceiving their community is a target of hate crime (Mean 3.43 vs 2.55, t(82.1) = −6.16, $p <$ 0.001). This stark contrast underscores the

Table 1. Comparison of mean scores on key perception variables by identity group.

Variable Description (1-5 Scale)	Non-Jewish (N = 3318)	Jewish (N = 79)	t-value
Community Perceived Negatively	2.54	3.32	−5.43***
Community Target of Hate Crime	2.55	3.43	−6.16***
Perceive Tensions vs. Minorities	3.05	3.58	−3.62***
Agree with Unequal Religious Rights	3.00	3.63	−4.53***

Note: Results are based on Welch Two Sample t-tests. Significance levels: *** "$p < 0.001$". Higher means indicate higher agreement.

heightened sense of specific threat and social hostility perceived by the Jewish participants relative to how other groups perceive threats towards their own communities. This can also be seen from Figure 1 below.

Furthermore, Jewish respondents perceived significantly higher levels of general tension against religious minorities in their area compared to non-Jewish respondents (Mean 3.58 vs 3.05, $t(81.5) = −3.62$, $p < 0.001$). Interestingly, Jewish respondents also showed significantly higher agreement with the statement that some religious communities should have more rights than others (Mean 3.63 vs 3.00, $t(82.7) = −4.53$, $p < 0.001$). While seemingly counter-intuitive, this finding may reflect a desire for specific state recognition or protection based on perceived vulnerability, differing frameworks regarding state-religion relations, or views related to group particularity, rather than necessarily advocating for fewer rights for other groups. This warrants careful consideration and potentially further investigation.
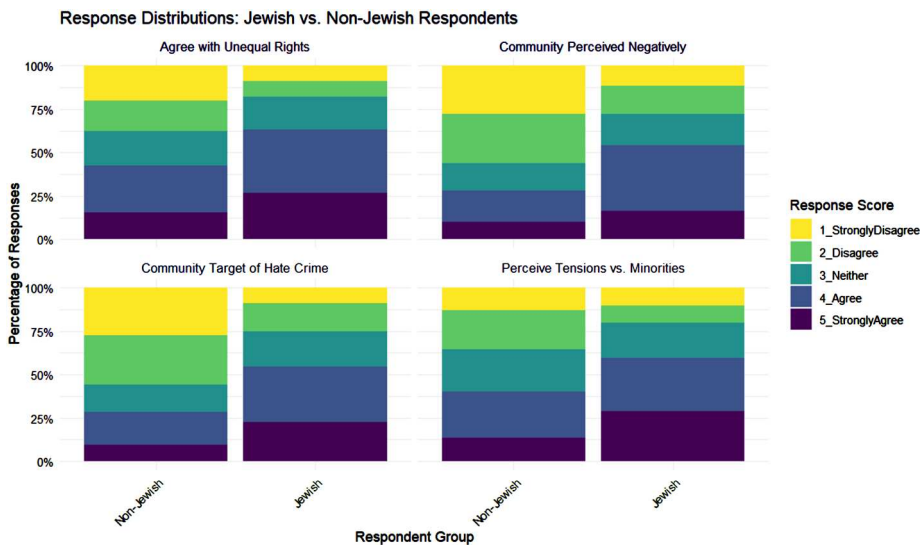
Figure 1. Percentage distribution of responses to key attitude and perception questions.

Note: Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of responses across a five point Likert scale, which ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree, regarding four specific attitudinal variables: perceptions of unequal rights, community negativity, hate crime targeting, and societal tensions. Analytically, the data compare non Jewish respondents (N = 3,318) and Jewish respondents (N = 79) residing in Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Italy. Each segment within the bars represents the percentage of participants within the respective group who selected a particular response score, which facilitates a visual assessment of the divergent agreement patterns between the two populations.

To assess whether these differences persist after accounting for other factors, logistic regression models were employed, using identifying as Jewish as a predictor, while controlling for country, religiosity, gender, age, education, and income.

The regression results in Table 2 confirmed that, even after controlling for these covariates, identifying as Jewish remained a statistically significant predictor. Compared to non-Jewish respondents, Jewish respondents had significantly higher odds of perceiving high tensions against religious minorities (OR ≈ 1.68, $p = 0.032$) and significantly higher odds of agreeing strongly that some religious communities should have more rights (OR ≈ 1.78, $p = 0.020$). This indicates that the distinct perspectives observed are associated with Jewish identity itself, beyond the influence of the other measured demographic and attitudinal factors within this sample.

Community relations and security

Measures Jewish communities navigate a delicate balance between maintaining religious openness and ensuring safety, often confronting the harsh reality of targeted threats. As one rabbi in Madrid poignantly reflects:

> Nobody is going to tell me not to go to my synagogue. So, if it's not a safe place, I will say it's my problem, but I will go. I have the freedom to go to my synagogue if it's not safe, OK? I will not change that, and that's the case of 90% of the Jews. We care, of course we care, we have families, we have friends, we have children. But you know it's the fact. I don't even question myself if I feel safe inside the synagogue. It is true that sometimes I look at the screen, if I hear some noises. Cause it's a reflex act, you know, to look at the screen. If there is a problem or is someone going to enter. Having said that. You try to forget it and concentrate on prayers and yeah, you cannot be thinking of it because you wouldn't be living. I could not live if I would feel insecure inside the synagogue.

This quote encapsulates the resilience of Jewish congregants, who prioritize communal and spiritual continuity even amid security concerns. Synagogues

Table 2. Logistic regression models predicting high perception of tension and support for unequal rights.

Predictor	Model 1: High Tension B (SE)	Model 1: OR	Model 2: Unequal Rights B (SE)	Model 2: OR
(Intercept)	−1.330 (0.551)*	0.264	−1.453 (0.547)**	0.234
Germany	0.037 (0.118)	1.037	−0.090 (0.119)	1.094
Spain	−0.396 (0.110)***	0.673	−0.332 (0.109)**	0.718
Italy	−0.588 (0.121)***	0.555	−0.836 (0.121)***	0.434
Jewish Identity	0.520 (0.242)*	1.682	0.574 (0.248)*	1.776
Religiosity	0.201 (0.080)*	1.223	0.302 (0.080)***	1.353
Female	−0.032 (0.076)	0.968	−0.133 (0.076)	0.876
Age: 45-65	−0.867 (0.103)***	0.420	−0.665 (0.102)***	0.514
Age: 65+	−1.183 (0.209)***	0.306	−1.079 (0.205)***	0.340
Education	0.577 (0.252)*	1.780	0.144 (0.247)	1.155
Income	0.715 (0.317)*	2.045	0.803 (0.319)*	2.232

Note: Reference categories: Country = Belgium, Identity = Non-Jewish, Gender = Male, Age = 18-30. Odds Ratio (OR) indicates the exponential of the coefficient.

transcend their role as mere places of worship, functioning as vital hubs for education and community cohesion. A rabbi in Berlin elaborates:

> So we are renting out a place. We have our mobile, our Mishkan. This is the place where we put the Torah. And people are coming there. Actually, everything else we do here, OK. So prayers there, but it's like but the other things, learning and so on, are happening here.

This underscores the synagogue's dual purpose: sustaining religious practice while fostering cultural and educational bonds critical to Jewish identity. Security measures remain a contentious yet necessary aspect of synagogue life. CCTV cameras, armed protection, and restricted access are common, but perceptions vary sharply. State-provided security personnel, such as uniformed police officers, receive moderate endorsement, whereas heavily militarized guards, equipped with long guns or tactical gear, are often viewed as intimidating. Community-led security teams, perceived as less confrontational, tend to garner greater acceptance. A rabbi in Madrid starkly summarizes this reality: "Being a Jew means having two police cars in [front of] each synagogue. For every single meeting that we do, that's the fact. Plus private security." This normalization of high-security environments reflects both adaptations to threats and the desire to preserve communal spaces.

Closure policies, while intended to enhance safety, risk undermining the openness integral to religious practice. Positive relations with local authorities and neighbouring communities marginally improve safety perceptions (Means = 3.65 and 3.82, respectively), though significant dissatisfaction persists. Respondents reporting heightened insecurity often advocate for stricter measures, even if these inadvertently alienate younger congregants. The broader socio-political climate further complicates these dynamics. A Jewish participant in Rome observes:

> It's a challenge to have a dialogue, and it's very difficult now after October 7th, especially because the situation is terrible, but at the same time in Italy antisemitism has started again, maybe little but it's still there. And I am hearing people, who never spoke about the Jewish, after October 7th started to talk about the Jewish religion and the religious community. This highlights how external crises, such as geopolitical tensions, amplify antisemitic rhetoric and strain interfaith relations.

Regional differences: uniformity amid diversity

Regional variations in safety perceptions were analysed using Kruskal–Wallis tests and post-hoc pairwise comparisons. Contrary to expectations, no significant differences in perceived unsafety emerged across city sizes, despite larger urban centres often being labelled "soft targets" due to dense populations and visibility. Notably, Israeli respondents residing in the EU reported heightened vigilance and awareness of potential threats. This likely reflects not only historical experiences of conflict but also contemporary exposure to

antisemitism linked to geopolitical tensions surrounding Israel, which often spills over into diaspora communities.

A rabbi in Berlin highlighted cultural priorities shaping communal resilience: "No, it's like we are following the tradition of that. We don't actually need a building because, originally, what we need, according to our history, is 10 people [for a minyan] with the Torah, you know, the books of worship. Then you already have a community." This statement underscores how Jewish communities prioritize communal cohesion over physical infrastructure, emphasizing adaptability and shared identity as cornerstones of security.

National identity further influences safety perceptions. British and Swiss national Jewish individuals residing in these four countries, for instance, express distinct levels of concern compared to their Israeli counterparts, reflecting differing socio-political contexts. Gender disparities also emerge: female respondents report greater personal safety concerns, though robust security measures can mitigate these anxieties. *Generational and Gender Dynamics* Demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and national identity, significantly shape safety perceptions within Jewish communities. Younger respondents (ages 18–30) express heightened anxiety about attending religious services, aligning with findings from the FRA[61] on generational disparities in threat sensitivity. Female respondents similarly report greater concerns about verbal harassment and intimidation, though robust security measures can partially mitigate these fears. Regression models confirm that demographic factors interact dynamically with personal threat experiences to influence perceptions of safety.

Evolving inclusivity practices further complicate communal identity and security priorities. A rabbi in Brussels reflects on this shift: "Religious attitudes and beliefs, I don't think, have evolved much. I think our openness towards inclusive Judaism has introduced an openness towards LGBTQI+ people, people of colour, and people who are perhaps on the margins … of the Jewish world, as it were." This emphasis on inclusivity highlights how younger generations and marginalized groups reshape communal norms, potentially altering safety dynamics as communities diversify.

Israeli Jewish groups, particularly those with direct or familial ties to conflict-prone regions, demonstrate stronger alignment with proactive security strategies. Their approaches are informed by historical and ongoing geopolitical tensions, which prioritize vigilance and pre-emptive measures. Global events, such as the October 7th attacks in Israel, also exert profound localized impacts. A rabbi in Berlin notes: "When we are there, well, the police are also there. Especially now, after the 7th of October, we have 3 policemen by the guard. And there are two cars."

This illustrates how international crises reverberate in diaspora communities, prompting immediate escalations in security protocols and reinforcing the interplay between global tensions and local safety practices.

Unpacking compound relationships

To analyse the interplay between variables, we employed a range of statistical techniques. As presented above, descriptive statistics and inferential tests (t-tests/Wilcoxon tests) were used to compare Jewish and Non-Jewish perspectives, while logistic regression modelling identified predictors of specific attitudes, including the role of Jewish identity. Additionally, the broader study utilised mediation analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM), robust regression, and chi-square tests. Mediation modelling tested whether community relations mediated the relationship between experiences of threats and perceived unsafety. Results indicate limited mediating effects, suggesting that structural vulnerabilities dominate individual perceptions.

"And there is no relation. Just those, well, we don't enter the synagogue with the kippah, so people initially do not know that that's the synagogue. Of course, if you live in the street, you will know it because people, this is Spain. I mean, we know everything we like to chat and to tell. What happens in every single corner […] We are very closed to community regarding the non-Jewish people," explained a rabbi in Madrid. This highlights the importance of understanding contextual factors influencing both internal cohesion and external interactions. This self-censorship is both an individual process and a collective one, creating a double idea of security. moreover, it also testifies the importance of relations with the surroundings.

SEM integrated latent constructs representing threats, community relations, and safety perceptions, revealed that threats significantly influence perceived unsafety ($\beta = 0.847$, $p < 0.001$), while community relations contribute marginally ($\beta = 0.280$, $p = 0.094$). Robust regression addressed potential outliers when predicting perceived unsafety based on independent variables such as violent attacks and property damage. Significant predictors include violent attacks ($\beta = 0.329$, SE = 0.132, t = 2.485, $p = 0.015$) and property damage ($\beta = 0.276$, SE = 0.125, t = 2.215, $p = 0.029$). Chi-square tests examined associations between categorical variables, such as religious denomination and perceived unsafety, revealing uniformity across denominations. These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of safety perceptions among Jewish minorities at PoWs, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to protection.

Vulnerability assessment model (VAM): synthesising structural and behavioural insights

The VAM framework guided our analysis of structural and behavioural vulnerabilities at Jewish PoWs. Structural vulnerabilities include outdated infrastructure, multiple entrances, and limited integration of modern security systems. Behavioural vulnerabilities stem from open-door policies and congregational practices prioritizing inclusivity over protection. "Our synagogues were destroyed during the war … Some are apartments turned into synagogues.

Being a museum is not their purpose," commented a Jewish participant in Rome. This quote highlights the unique challenges faced by older synagogues, many of which lack the architectural design necessary for modern security protocols. Synagogues equipped with CCTV systems report lower rates of property damage, though violent attacks persist. Transitioning to more secure facilities remains a key challenge for many communities.

Discussion

The study reveals that perceived unsafety among Jewish respondents is moderately high, with younger individuals (ages 18–30) exhibiting greater anxiety compared to older cohorts. This aligns with the post-secular perspective advanced by Casanova and Habermas[62], which highlights religion's persistent role in shaping societal dynamics despite widespread secularization. Synagogues serve multiple functions beyond worship, including education and cultural preservation, underscoring their importance for communal identity. However, the findings also reflect tensions inherent in post-secular societies where secular ideologies can generate hostility toward religious groups. As noted by Jiménez Lobeira[63], secularism evolves into an ideology when confronted with religious pluralism, exacerbating divisions rather than fostering inclusivity. The lack of significant regional variations in perceived unsafety challenges assumptions derived from the VAM. While urban centres were expected to exhibit higher levels of vulnerability due to greater visibility and foot traffic, structural vulnerabilities such as outdated infrastructure and behavioural factors like open-door policies dominate perceptions regardless of geographic location. These findings resonate with Scheitle and Ulmer's[64] argument that congregants often resist transforming sacred spaces into "armed encampments," fearing it undermines spiritual meaning.

Community relations play a marginal role in mitigating feelings of unsafety. Positive relationships with surrounding communities and local authorities contribute marginally to perceived safety, highlighting the limitations of social capital in addressing structural vulnerabilities. Strained community relations may stem from broader societal anxieties about religious diversity and migration flows.[65] Efforts to strengthen these ties must go beyond superficial engagement, addressing deeper ideological tensions and fostering mutual appreciation. Programmes promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange could help bridge divides, ensuring that synagogues remain integral parts of their neighbourhoods. The mixed reception of security measures reflects tensions between protection and spiritual experience. Congregants welcome certain measures (e.g. CCTV cameras) while resisting others (e.g. armed guards), echoing Samson's[66] observation that security issues become proxies for broader debates about the place of religious groups in society. Over-securitization risks alienating worshippers and reinforcing stereotypes about

religious minorities as vulnerable elements requiring external intervention. To balance effectiveness with congregational comfort, security measures must involve input from diverse stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, civil society groups, and municipal authorities.

Regional differences in safety perceptions were analysed using Kruskal–Wallis tests and post-hoc pairwise comparisons. Contrary to expectations based on prior literature, no significant variation in perceived unsafety was found across all the cities, despite larger cities often being considered "soft targets" due to high foot traffic and diverse populations. National contexts profoundly influence safety perceptions and responses. For example, Germany's state-led initiatives, such as deploying police officers during religious festivals, demonstrate proactive engagement with Jewish communities' security needs. However, bureaucratic hurdles and federal administrative structures complicate funding allocations and implementation timelines. Conversely, anti-separatism laws in France aimed at curbing political Islam disproportionately affect Muslim communities but also contribute to generalized suspicion of religious minorities, including Jewish groups. Such policies risk alienating already marginalized groups and undermining social cohesion. The UK's Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme exemplifies inclusive approaches to safeguarding all faiths, though resource allocation remains a challenge.

Generational differences in safety perceptions warrant special attention, reflecting normalized fears of anti-Semitism compounded by online harassment and exposure to global conflicts via social media. This normalization of hostility diminishes trust in institutional responses and perpetuates cycles of avoidance and isolation. The digital dimension amplifies hatred against Jewish communities, creating virtual echo chambers that reinforce negative stereotypes. Addressing this requires coordinated efforts to monitor and counter extremist content, as outlined in the Christchurch Call to Action.[67] Additionally, younger Jewish groups appear more receptive to modern technologies like CCTV systems, whereas older cohorts prioritize maintaining traditional practices. This generational divide necessitates ongoing dialogue between faith leaders and attendees to ensure measures are culturally sensitive and effective. National contexts further complicate these dynamics, with Israeli Jewish groups demonstrating stronger alignment with proactive security strategies shaped by historical experiences of conflict.

Demographic variables, age, gender, and ethnic identity, significantly shape safety perceptions among Jewish communities in Europe. Younger individuals exhibit heightened sensitivity to verbal harassment, likely influenced by prolonged exposure to online environments rife with incendiary rhetoric. Female respondents similarly report elevated safety concerns, echoing patterns observed in studies of Muslim women's experiences of hate crimes. Israeli Jewish groups residing in Europe demonstrate distinct security strategies rooted in historical conflict exposure and ethnic identity, rather than

nationality alone. This underscores the need for culturally nuanced approaches to protecting PoWs. Intersectionality further complicates these dynamics: women often navigate PoWs and public spaces by minimizing visibility to avoid harassment, while Israeli Jewish groups integrate securitized practices shaped by decades of geopolitical tension. Such overlapping identities challenge monolithic categorisations of religious-minority experiences.

The study contributes to theory building in several ways. First, it affirms the relevance of post-secularism as a lens through which to examine religious-minority experiences in Europe. Synagogues occupy liminal positions between public and private spheres, embodying "new publics" that disrupt established secular imaginaries. Understanding these disruptions requires moving beyond binary distinctions between secularism and religiosity to analyse hybridized ideologies and fluctuating identities. For instance, the conflation of anti-Semitism with broader geopolitical issues demonstrates how religious hostilities intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as xenophobia and racism. Post-secular theory provides tools to unpack these complexities, revealing how secular ideologies themselves can generate hostility when perceived as incompatible with religious worldviews. Second, the VAM framework proves instrumental in identifying structural and behavioural vulnerabilities at Jewish PoWs. Older buildings lacking integrated security systems and open-door policies increasing foot traffic emerge as critical risk factors. Through incorporating granular data from ethnographic research, future iterations of the VAM could better capture the lived experiences of congregants and surrounding communities. Furthermore, the VAM highlights the interconnectedness of PoWs and their neighbourhoods, suggesting that securing one necessitates protecting the other. For example, vandalism near synagogues often spills into adjacent areas, creating atmospheres of fear and mistrust. Third, the study advances the concept of security culture by documenting how congregants negotiate competing demands for safety and spiritual fulfilment. Situational awareness, vetting procedures, and visual deterrents (e.g. locks, cameras) represent adaptive behaviours developed in response to rising threats. However, these adaptations sometimes conflict with traditional values, necessitating ongoing dialogue between faith leaders and attendees. A notable contribution is the identification of generational differences in security preferences.

The findings carry important practical implications for policymakers, religious leaders, and community members seeking to enhance the security of Jewish PoWs. Key recommendations, as discussed in the interviews and focus groups, include prioritizing targeted interventions, such as physical barriers, emergency response protocols, and community training programmes. Installing panic buttons and developing crisis management plans could empower congregants to respond swiftly to incidents. Strengthening community relations through joint events, educational programmes, and outreach

activities fosters positive relationships between synagogues and surrounding neighbourhoods. Developing customized solutions that balance protection with spiritual experience, such as training security personnel to dress in non-military outfits and engage respectfully with congregants, reduces feelings of intimidation and alienation. Overcoming barriers to reporting hate crimes by simplifying procedures and raising awareness about available support services is crucial. Initiatives like the EU-funded SOAR (Strengthening the Security and Resilience of At-Risk Religious Sites and Communities) project provide valuable templates for improving data collection and analysis. Finally, facilitating dialogue and collaboration between Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities shares best practices and builds solidarity, amplifying calls for increased funding and legislative reforms.

Conclusion

This study has systematically examined the multifaceted issue of safety perceptions among Jewish communities in Europe, focusing on their PoWs. Through a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observations, and a structured survey, the research has shed light on the complex interplay of threats, community relations, and security measures. The analysis reveals that violent attacks and property damage remain the strongest predictors of perceived unsafety, overshadowing other factors like community relations or security attitudes. Generational and demographic differences further complicate these dynamics, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to protection.

The findings affirm the relevance of post-secularism as a framework for understanding religious-minority experiences in Europe. Synagogues serve multiple functions beyond worship, including education, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. Protecting these spaces is essential not only for physical safety but also for preserving communal identity and well-being. However, the resurgence of religion in public life sometimes generates tension when confronted with secular ideologies, particularly those conflating religious expression with extremism or political dissent. Efforts to harmonize religious and secular values must move beyond binary distinctions toward inclusive frameworks that respect pluralism and diversity. The VAM has proven instrumental in identifying structural and behavioural vulnerabilities at Jewish PoWs. Older synagogues with multiple entrances and limited integration of modern security systems remain susceptible to breaches. The behavioural dimension of the VAM, such as the open-door policy characteristic of many synagogues in central districts with high foot traffic, reinforces why these spaces are classified as "soft targets." Practical applications of the VAM include risk assessments tailored to specific PoWs, crisis management plans, and stakeholder cooperation. Faith leaders and security stakeholders must collaborate to

identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies addressing immediate risks while minimizing disruptions to congregational life.

Congregants' attitudes toward security measures reflect evolving definitions of security culture across generations. While faith leaders prioritize safety, attendees often resist changes that compromise traditional openness and inclusivity. This tension underscores the importance of involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure measures are perceived favourably and implemented effectively. Generational disparities in security preferences emerge clearly, with younger Jewish groups welcoming technologies like CCTV systems while resisting restrictions on access or expression. Future initiatives must acknowledge these dynamics, offering flexible solutions adaptable to changing needs and expectations. The PROTONE project emphasizes the importance of multi-religious cooperation in enhancing responses to threats against PoWs. When sharing best practices and coordinating resources, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities can build resilience and promote tolerance. Commonalities exist in terms of structural vulnerabilities and behavioural adaptations, offering opportunities for knowledge exchange and resource pooling. Ethnographic methods offer valuable complements to quantitative analyses by capturing lived experiences and affective dimensions of security. Applying such approaches to Jewish synagogues could illuminate how securitization affects congregants' relationships with their faith and neighbouring communities.

Government policies and societal attitudes play crucial roles in enabling attacks against PoWs. Restrictive legislation targeting Islam in countries like Austria and France exacerbates divisions and fosters mistrust among religious communities. Underreporting of hate crimes due to bureaucratic hurdles or normalized fears further complicates efforts to track and respond to emerging trends. Addressing these enabling factors requires systemic reforms addressing legal frameworks, institutional practices, and public discourse. Simplifying reporting mechanisms and raising awareness about available support services could encourage victims to come forward, providing accurate data for evidence-based policymaking. Promoting narratives of coexistence and mutual respect counters divisive rhetoric perpetuating cycles of hostility and violence. Advances in technology present both opportunities and challenges for PoW protection. Drones, encrypted messaging apps, and online platforms expand attackers' capabilities while complicating detection and response efforts. Conversely, these same technologies offer tools for enhancing security through remote monitoring, real-time alerts, and digital training programmes. Implementing advanced technologies requires careful consideration of ethical and practical implications. Ensuring compliance with GDPR regulations protects privacy rights while maintaining transparency about data usage. Collaborative projects involving tech companies, law enforcement agencies, and religious communities could develop innovative solutions addressing emerging threats while respecting congregational autonomy.

Protective measures must consider both short-term efficacy and long-term sustainability. Immediate responses such as deploying police officers or installing barriers provide temporary relief but fail to address root causes of hostility. Long-term strategies focus on education, dialogue, and capacity-building, empowering communities to resist radicalization and foster inclusivity. Encouraging regular attendance despite fears of attack demands creative solutions combining physical protections with psychological reassurance. Initiatives promoting resilience and solidarity within congregations counteract normalization of hostility, reaffirming the sanctity and accessibility of PoWs. Limited budgets constrain efforts to implement comprehensive security systems at Jewish PoWs. Recent allocations by governments in Germany, the UK, and Switzerland demonstrate commitment to safeguarding these spaces, but decentralization complicates coordination and resource distribution. Public-private partnerships could alleviate financial burdens, leveraging government resources alongside community contributions. Developing standardized guidelines for funding allocation ensures transparency and accountability while prioritizing high-risk areas.

In conclusion, this study contributes meaningful evidence to ongoing efforts to safeguard Jewish PoWs and promote religious harmony in Europe. As a result of integrating quantitative metrics and qualitative insights with theoretical insights, the research offers a foundation for informed policymaking and community engagement. Future endeavours must build upon these findings, expanding scope and depth to address the multifaceted challenges facing religious minorities in contemporary Europe. Together, these efforts will safeguard sacred spaces while promoting peace, tolerance, and inclusivity across diverse societies.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

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