



COMUNIDADE ISRAELITA DE LISBOA
הקהילה היהודית בליסבון

PRESS RELEASE

UNPRECEDENTED STUDY REVEALS STRONG LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND IDENTIFIES FACTORS THAT MAY FAVOUR THE GROWTH OF ANTISEMITISM IN PORTUGAL

- The study “*Social Distance and Tolerance in Portugal: the place of the Jewish Community – conceptual literacy, antisemitism, religious tolerance and comparison with other social groups in Portugal*” conducted interviews with 1,200 residents in Mainland Portugal and the Autonomous Regions, aged 18 or older.
- Most Portuguese people distinguish between Jews and the State of Israel, and reject its collective responsibility for the conflict in the Middle East, but almost half admit that events in Israel affect the image of Jews in general.
- Only 3% of Portuguese people claim to know the Jewish community well, while 52% believe it is already the target of online hate speech and 55% consider Holocaust education in schools to be insufficient.

Lisbon, June 19, 2026 – Portuguese society continues to show high levels of religious tolerance and a generally favourable perception of the Jewish community. However, the profound lack of knowledge about the Jewish reality in Portugal, the persistence of some stereotypes, and the growing influence of international polarization create conditions that may favour the worsening of antisemitism in the future if efforts in education, literacy, and social outreach are not made.

These are some of the main conclusions of the national study “*Social Distance and Tolerance in Portugal: the place of the Jewish Community – conceptual literacy, antisemitism, religious tolerance and comparison with other social groups in Portugal*”, carried out by Pitagórica at the request of the Jewish Community of Lisbon (CIL), with a representative sample of 1,200 Portuguese people, from the Mainland and Islands, aged 18 or over.

Developed in an international context marked by the worsening tensions in the Middle East, the increase in polarization in the public sphere and the growing cultural diversity of Portuguese society, this exhaustive study sought to rigorously assess how the Portuguese perceive the Jewish community, distinguishing this perception from positions regarding the State of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



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This distinction is fundamental and necessary because the Jewish Community of Lisbon (Comunidade Israelita de Lisboa, literally, Israelite Community of Lisbon) is not, contrary to what the name seems to indicate, a community composed of citizens of Israel. The term "Israelite" has appeared in the Community's name since its formal establishment (1912), long before the founding of the State of Israel (1948). The designation "Israelite" is, therefore, a religious expression referring to Judaism and not to a national dimension, as is the case when referring to an Angolan, French, or Italian community to indicate that it is composed of citizens of those States. Throughout this more than a century of existence, CIL has been integrated by Jews of other nationalities, mostly European, and has experienced remarkable growth during the Second World War when Lisbon became a safe haven for many thousands of Jews fleeing the horrors of the Holocaust. Many settled in Portugal, and their children and grandchildren, already born in Portugal, some during the previous political regime, others in Democracy, are today proud and full members of this religious Community.

The study in question also analysed the population's attitudes towards other communities present in Portugal — including Roma (Gypsy), Muslims, Brazilians, African communities, people from South Asia, Chinese, Ukrainian refugees, expatriates, and digital nomads — allowing for contextualization of the results obtained and identifying not only what is specific to the Jewish reality, but also elements that reflect broader trends in Portuguese society.

In addition to measuring levels of acceptance, social closeness, and perceived contribution to the country, the study assessed factors associated with antisemitism, religious tolerance, the circulation of stereotypes, literacy about Judaism, and the influence of the current geopolitical situation on the attitudes of Portuguese public opinion.

According to **David Joffe Botelho**, President of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community of Lisbon, *"the objective of this independent study was to produce a robust and comparable diagnosis of the place of the Jewish community in Portuguese society, identifying protective factors, vulnerabilities and trends relevant to the development of education, communication and prejudice prevention strategies,"* since, adds the leader, *"Portuguese political leaders have not given due attention to this issue, and the urgent adoption of a national strategy, aligned with the European strategy, is necessary to combat antisemitism and promote Jewish life."*

Additionally, he also states, *"our goal was to have a comparative portrait with other social and religious realities, so the study, beyond the specific dimension related to antisemitism, can be used by those in government to design and implement public policies based on concrete and measurable data and not on mere perceptions."*



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The results of the study show that Portugal continues to be a society largely favourable to coexistence between different cultures and religions. About 68% of Portuguese people say they feel comfortable living with people of cultures or religions different from their own, while 92% believe that Portugal should accept cultural and religious diversity as long as the country's fundamental values are respected. At the same time, 94% defend freedom of religious practice for all religious denominations, as long as they respect Portuguese law.

The perception of the Jewish community also appears among the most favourable of the set of communities evaluated. Almost half of those interviewed consider the contribution of Jews to the development of Portugal to be positive, placing the Jewish community above several other groups analysed and far from the levels of rejection attributed to other communities. Only 4% of Portuguese people identify Jews as one of the most discriminated communities in Portugal.

Despite this overall positive assessment, the study reveals a central fact: **most Portuguese people know very little about the Jewish community.**

Only 3% claim to know a lot or everything about the Jewish community in Portugal, while 75% admit to knowing little or nothing. This is one of the most relevant results of the study, since the **Jewish community appears simultaneously among the best evaluated and among the least known by the Portuguese.**

A more direct reading of these data allows us to infer that this combination reveals a relationship marked more by distance and abstraction than by rejection. The perception is overall positive, but it is often based on limited knowledge and reduced contact with the Portuguese Jewish reality.

This lack of knowledge extends to fundamental concepts. Although most have heard of antisemitism, 19% have never heard of the term, and only 40% correctly identify antisemitism as hostility or prejudice against Jews. Regarding the concept of Zionism, the lack of knowledge is also evident: 40% of Portuguese claim not to know the term.

The study also identifies weaknesses in historical literacy. More than half of Portuguese people (55%) believe that the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews during Nazism are little or not at all addressed in Portuguese schools.

The results also show that for 59% of Portuguese people **it is important to distinguish between Jews as a community in Portugal and the State of Israel**, with 88% recognizing that a person can be both Portuguese and Jewish.

About half (49%) believe that recent events in Israel damage the image of Jews in general, but the vast majority (80%) disagree that Jews outside of Israel should be held responsible for the actions of the Israeli government.



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This is a significant piece of data that should be valued and continuously cultivated by the authorities.

The study also identifies signs of the persistence of some classic stereotypes associated with antisemitism. Among several statements frequently disseminated on social media, the ideas that "*Jews have a lot of economic power*" or "*a lot of influence in politics and international media*" garner the highest level of agreement (40% and 41% respectively).

At the same time, the digital environment emerges as the main space of vulnerability identified by the Portuguese.

Despite limited knowledge, half of those surveyed (52%) believe that the Community is targeted by attacks, insults, or hate speech on social media or the internet; 37% indicate that it suffers property vandalism, and 30% point to physical assaults.

Regarding the likelihood of future occurrences of these incidents, 52% consider it likely that attacks or hate speech will take place online, 34% expect vandalism, and 31% foresee physical assaults.

The main risk factors identified are hate speech on social media (46%) and religious extremism (35%).

An important finding is that 67% are unaware that the Lisbon Synagogue currently requires permanent police presence for security reasons.

The data suggests that many Portuguese people recognize the abstract existence of threats directed at the Jewish community, but are unaware of the concrete way in which these threats translate into Portuguese reality.

Portuguese people (90%) are unaware of the existence of a European Strategy to Combat Antisemitism and Promote Jewish Life, 99% do not know that the National Coordinator of this European Strategy is João Taborda da Gama, and 75% do not know which ministerial portfolio, nor the minister, is responsible for combating antisemitism.

For the Board of the Lisbon Jewish Community, the results point to a clear conclusion: **Portugal does not currently show signs of structural rejection of the Jewish community, but it brings together several factors that, historically, tend to favour the growth of prejudice when they are not countered by the action of public authorities with regard to knowledge, social contact and quality information.**

The study identifies three particularly relevant signs.

Firstly, a large majority of Portuguese people distinguish the Jewish community from the State of Israel, but almost half admit that events in the Middle East influence the image of Jews in general.



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Secondly, the Jewish community benefits from a globally positive perception despite being largely unknown by the Portuguese population.

Finally, there is recognition of the existence of hate speech and threats directed at the Jewish community, but a limited understanding of the concrete dimension of the risks that justify the protection measures currently in place.

In a context where 72% of Portuguese people believe that tensions between different social and cultural groups have increased in recent years, the study allows to conclude that the main challenge for the future is not to combat a widespread rejection of the Jewish community, a rejection that fortunately does not exist, **but to prevent ignorance, international polarization, and the circulation of stereotypes from creating conditions favourable to the growth of antisemitism.**

Technical Data

The study was conducted by Pitagórica – Market Research and Studies, through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), with a representative sample of 1,200 residents in mainland Portugal and the Autonomous Regions, aged 18 or over. Data collection took place between May 15 and June 4, 2026, and focused on a reference population of 9,011,878 adult residents. The maximum margin of error associated with the sample is $\pm 2.89\%$, for a confidence level of 95.5%.