



JDC International Centre for
Community Development

Machon Kehilot
Engaging Israeli communities in the Diaspora

The Israeli-European Diaspora

A survey about Israelis living in Europe

December 2017



The Israeli-European Diaspora

A survey about Israelis living in Europe

December 2017

Principal Researchers

Marcelo Dimentstein

Reut Kaplan

Research Partners

Nir Geva

Keren Friedman

Graphic Designer

Shani Sofer

Linguistic Editor

Debbie Green-Knoller

We thank Yehonatan Almog for his useful and wise advice.

Copyright© JDC-ICCD, 2017

All Rights Reserved© No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from the publisher.



Table of Contents

page

5	List of Figures and Tables
7	Foreword
9	Executive Summary
12	Introduction
14	1. Sociodemographic Data
19	2. Patterns of Participation in Communities and Social Networks
20	a. Israeli and Hebrew-Speaking Networks
25	b. Jewish Communities
33	3. Raising Children
38	4. Experience of Life in Europe
40	Conclusion

List of Figures and Tables

page

14	Figure 1. Country of residence
15	Figure 2. Residency status
15	Figure 3. Marital status
16	Figure 4. Occupation
17	Figure 5. Education
17	Figure 6. Jewish identity
18	Figure 7. Languages spoken at home
20	Figure 8. Degree of participation in an organized Israeli community
21	Figure 9. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed
21	Table 1. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed; by language spoken at home
21	Table 2. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed; by country of residence
22	Table 3. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed; by marital status
22	Figure 10. Degree of participation in related events
23	Figure 11. "To what degree do the following factors hamper the existence of an organized and active Israeli community in your area?"
24	Figure 12. "To what degree do the following elements constitute an important component in the communal life of Israelis outside of Israel?"
24	Table 4. "To what degree do the following elements constitute an important component in the communal life of Israelis outside of Israel?", by language spoken at home
25	Figure 13. "Do you currently participate (to any degree) in the local Jewish community or in any other Jewish initiative in your city or country of residence?"
25	Figure 14. Activity (to any degree) in organized Israeli and Jewish communities
26	Figure 15. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by gender
26	Figure 16. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; respondents with or without children
26	Figure 17. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by language spoken at home
27	Figure 18. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by country of residence
27	Figure 19. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by period of residence in current country
28	Figure 20. Factors explaining lack of participation in Jewish community
29	Table 5. Factors explaining lack of participation in Jewish community; by main language spoken at home
30	Figure 21. "To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?"
30	Table 6. "To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?"; by language spoken at home
31	Table 7. "To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?"; by marital status

page

31	Figure 22. "To what degree do you participate in the following?"
32	Figure 23. Reasons for participation in Jewish community activities
32	Figure 24. Participation in local Jewish community activities and events
33	Figure 25. "How would you describe the relationship between Israelis living in your area and the local Jewish community?"
34	Figure 26. Do your children participate in any Israeli education frameworks?
34	Figure 27. Do your children participate in any Jewish education frameworks?
35	Figure 28. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"
35	Table 8. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"; by language spoken at home
36	Table 9. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"; by country of residence
37	Table 10. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"; by education profile
38	Figure 29. "To what degree are you satisfied with the following elements of life in your country of residence?"
38	Table 11. "To what degree are you satisfied with the following elements of life in your country of residence?"; by country of residence
39	Figure 30. Origin of closest friends in current area of residence

Foreword

At JDC-ICCD, we are committed to understanding the trends emerging among Jewish communities across the continent, especially as they contribute to the community's development, resilience capacity, and sense of self. In the course of our work, the issue of Israelis living in European countries is one that has increasingly come to our attention, as their numbers and profile have grown. Estimates put the number of Israeli citizens now living in Europe at around 100,000. Many of these are here only temporarily, as students, diplomats, or on short-term work postings. But many others have begun to put down roots and make these countries their home.

We sense that this growing population offers a tremendous opportunity for those of us concerned with the future of European Jewry, not just in terms of the potential scope for new activities and engagement offered by this demographic shift, but also for developing new ways of thinking about Jewish religious and national identity, about the nature and function of Jewish communities, and about the relationship between Jews in Israel and those living elsewhere.

Solid empirical data is the basis for informed community planning and decision making, and thus we embarked on this study to hear first-hand from Israelis living in Europe about their relationships with other Israelis, with local Jewish communities, with the countries in which they have settled, and to learn about their needs and desires in this context. In partnership with Machon Kehilot—a grass-roots organization established by Israelis living in Europe—we were able to collect full responses to an extensive questionnaire from close to 900 Israelis.

We believe that the findings of the study will be of interest and of use to local Jewish communities in Europe, European Jewish organizations, Israelis living in Europe, and to organizations worldwide engaged in Jewish and Israeli life. We hope that it can help all of us think more creatively about how to make the most of this opportunity, and how to ensure that Jewish life continues to flourish in Europe, in Israel, and around the globe. We would be delighted to hear your thoughts on the report and its conclusions, at marcelodi@jdc.org.

Marcelo Dimentstein

Operations Director,
JDC-ICCD

Reut Kaplan

Researcher,
JDC-ICCD

As we support local leaders and activists in the formation of organized Israeli communities in various cities throughout Europe, we are encouraged by the valuable contribution of this research to the realization of our vision and mission. Moreover, we are content that the survey's findings confirm our view that there is a significant demand for secular, pluralistic, Hebrew-speaking communities in Europe, which will fulfill, first and foremost, the need for a sense of belonging as well as the need for social connection. These communities will enable their members to nurture together their Jewish-Israeli identity and culture, and to transmit them from generation to generation.

We at Machon Kehilot anticipate that the emerging Israeli communities in Europe will eventually become pillars of European Jewry, and will operate alongside the existing Jewish communities, inspiring them with new ideas and concepts.

Finally, we wish to thank the teams at JDC-ICCD for their hard work and cooperation, as well as for dedicating substantial resources to the study of this important topic.

Nir Geva

Chairman of the Board,
Machon Kehilot

Keren Friedman

Managing Director,
Machon Kehilot

Executive Summary

Background and demographics

During April and May 2017, JDC-ICCD, in partnership with Mahon Kehilot, conducted an open, online survey among Israeli citizens living in Europe. The goal of the survey was to examine the participation of Israelis living in Europe within their own social networks and in local Jewish communities. In total, 2,125 responses were collected, of which 890 full responses were taken for further analysis.

The survey sample spans 27 European countries. The most highly-represented countries are Germany (21.5%), the Netherlands (14.6%), and the United Kingdom (12.8%). Most of the respondents are married (80%) and in their thirties and forties. They have an academic degree and have been living outside of Israel for an average of 10 years, and in their current country of residence for an average of 9 years. Some three-quarters (73.8%) of the population surveyed enjoy a secure residency status, holding either citizenship (30.7%) or permanent resident status (20.4%) in the country in which they are resident, citizenship of another European Union country (18.2%) or having a spouse who is a citizen of their country of residence (4.5%).

When asked about their identity, by far the most commonly-selected affiliations were secular (73%), Israeli (59%), and Jewish (38%). Conversely, respondents were reluctant to select other more “denominational” identities such as traditional/Masorti, modern Orthodox, Haredi, and national religious, among others. In this respect, the data seem to confirm the idea that the great majority of Israelis living in Europe are secular, non-observant Jews—very much members of the “secular tribe” described by President Rivlin in his recent analysis of Israeli society¹.

Given the demographic similarities we found between our sample and those of previous studies on the same population², we can assert with a fair degree of confidence that our sample provides the largest, most up-to-date, and most representative picture of Israelis living in Europe today.

What were the main findings of the survey?

The prevailing wisdom has been that Israelis living abroad tend to form their own enclaves, and socialize largely within their own Israeli, Hebrew-speaking circles. To some extent, this study confirms this assumption, as respondents reported the existence of active Israeli networks or Hebrew-speaking communal frameworks in at least 24 countries. Moreover, for those without a community nearby, more than half (54%) expressed a large or very large desire to participate in activities held by such a community if it were established.

These Israeli networks tend to cater mainly to Israelis who have children and have been settled in their country of residence for several years. The networks are used by respondents primarily as “social hubs” for Hebrew-speakers and their families (which very often include non-Israeli/non-Jewish members). And, where they exist, organized communal frameworks create places where European-born children can learn and become socialized in Hebrew; where Israeli culture and secular Jewish identity can be nurtured and transmitted; and, last but not least, where a sense of belonging, social connection and mutual support can be found. On the other hand, respondents are less interested in the use of these networks or communities to advocate publicly in favor of Israel.

However, we should avoid the inclination to perceive these Israelis as solely socializing among themselves in closed Hebrew-speaking enclaves. Israelis living in Europe take part also in wider networks, sometimes very international and cosmopolitan, developing friendships and connections with both local people and other émigrés or “expats”. When asked about their circles of friends, almost half the respondents (49%) reported having local non-Jews among their circle of friends, and a third (34%) reported friendships with non-Jews from other parts of the world (that is, other expats, or members of other “Diasporas”). Another important fact is that only 55% reported speaking Hebrew at home, meaning that the remaining 45% have a partner who is not a Hebrew speaker.

1 Rivlin, R. (2015). *President Reuven Rivlin Address to the 15th Annual Herzliya Conference*. Retrieved from http://www.president.gov.il/English/ThePresident/Speeches/Pages/news_070615_01.aspx

2 See: Rebhun, U. (2014). Immigrant Acculturation and Transnationalism: Israelis in the United States and Europe Compared. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(3), 613–635; and Lev Ari, L. (2013). Multiple Ethnic Identities among Israeli Immigrants in Europe. *International Journal of Jewish Education Research* 5–6.

And what about the relationship that the respondents have vis-à-vis local Jewish life?

The picture that emerges from the survey challenges, to some degree, the common representation of Israelis being largely alienated from local Jewish life, and suggests instead a more nuanced perspective. While it is true that a substantial degree of detachment was found, a large number of respondents (45%) informed that they currently participate, “to any degree”, in their local Jewish community or in any other Jewish initiative which takes place in their city or country of residence.

Interestingly, the expression “to any degree” encompasses a range of meanings. When examining in more detail the types of events Israelis choose to participate in, we see that the answers are fairly evenly-distributed among a range of activities, including Passover Seder nights or Rosh Hashanah dinners (34%), cultural events or activities dealing with Jewish topics (32%), cultural activities and events at the local Jewish community center (31%), Shabbat dinners with friends (31%), and even dinners and programs at local Chabad Houses (27%). Thus, their pattern of participation cannot be characterized as an “affiliation”; Israelis in Europe clearly do participate in local Jewish life, on a more “pick-and-choose” basis. They are consumers of certain services or events, without becoming members of the organized Jewish communities.

Among those who do not participate in local Jewish life, the main reason behind their lack of involvement was the perceived religious nature of the Jewish experience offered by local Jewish communities (62% of respondents marked this as having a large or very large degree of influence), as opposed to their own largely secular Jewish identity. Two other factors selected by a sizeable minority are: simply not feeling the need to belong to any Jewish community (42%); and never having been approached by or invited to join a community (33%).

Likewise, when asked about what would encourage them to participate in local Jewish life, the answer chosen more strongly than any other was “activities for secular Jews”, with more than two-thirds (68%) saying that this would encourage them to a large or very large degree to participate. The next two activities considered most influential were cultural events (58%) and activities in Hebrew (56%). Respondents who speak languages other than Hebrew at home rated the community’s willingness to accept non-Jewish family members as being far more important than did respondents who speak only Hebrew.

Regardless of whether they participate in the local Jewish community, our respondents were asked to describe the relationship between Israelis living in their area and the local Jewish community. A multitude of 43% selected responses indicating no substantial engagement, either

“indifference” (11%), or “no real connection between the vast majority of Israelis in the area and the Jewish community” (32%). Only a fifth (20%) feel that the relationship is, at large, one of cooperation and goodwill, while a similar percentage offered no response at all.

Finally, we asked our respondents about their lives in Europe, and their hopes for their children’s identity and heritage. Overall, they reported a largely positive experience of living in Europe, with the prominent exception of how living abroad affects their relationships with family and friends in Israel. They are especially happy with their quality of life, the availability and quality of higher education, and access to culture. They are mostly satisfied with the economic situation in the countries they inhabit. The aspects of life they rank lowest are the political situation and the social situation in those countries. Interestingly, Israelis living in Italy are the least satisfied, reporting far lower levels of satisfaction with the economic situation, the political situation, and the social situation, as well as being far less optimistic about their children’s prospects.

Overwhelmingly, Israelis in Europe hope that their children grow up to be Hebrew-speaking (85% said that this was important to them to a large or very large degree), while acquiring universal and humanistic values ranked even higher (92%). Almost two-thirds (65%) emphasized the importance of nurturing their children’s Israeli and Jewish identity. The lowest, albeit representing a majority of the sample, scores were given to instilling Jewish values and culture (60%) and to strengthening connection to Jewish traditions and heritage (57%). It should be noted that only 14% reported that their children attend Jewish day schools; given the aforementioned interest in children learning to speak Hebrew, this would seem to indicate a need for supplementary Hebrew-speaking education frameworks.

What are the main lessons and questions for Jewish communities, and organizations committed to Jewish life in Europe?

“How can we bring more Israelis into our communities?” This question is frequently heard among Jewish communal lay and professional leaders, who see that the growing presence of Israelis in their own cities does not necessarily mean growing numbers in their communities.

The primary recommendation would be to acknowledge the existence of Israeli networks, which seem to be important reference points for reaching Israelis in Europe. In fact, the existence of these Israeli communities, and the fact that they are widespread across Europe, seem to suggest that Jewish communities and organizations should work to build fruitful and mutually-beneficial relationships with self-organized Israeli networks, rather than seeking to engage individual Israelis in their own activities. These relationships need to be based on an honest commitment to exploring, respecting, and celebrating differences and commonalities, and would involve creating joint programs and shared celebrations.

Secondly, the barriers to the involvement of Israelis in Jewish communities are not all particular to this population. Indeed, we can see many similarities in attitudes and patterns of behavior between Israelis and local young Jewish adults—specifically, in their sense of alienation from organized Jewish life, which they experience as unappealing, irrelevant to their lives, overly-focused on religious practices and identity, and excluding toward non-Jewish partners. Yet both of these groups are actively seeking meaningful social connections with other Jews/Israeli, and they have no desire to reject or discard their Jewish/Israel identity. In this sense, engaging with organized Israeli networks and communities could hold the key to overcoming these barriers, and be a tremendous asset for Jewish communities’ efforts to maintain relevancy and vibrancy, and to develop programs and activities based on secular Jewish identity and on the ever-evolving Israeli culture.

On this note, the fact that our survey indicates that about half of the Israelis living in Europe have a non-Jewish partner poses a significant question for Jewish communities and institutions: Are we willing to be open to non-traditional, alternative models of Jewish households, and if so, how should we include them? This is a challenge these communities are already facing in relation to the native Jewish population. It is perhaps a bigger challenge when considering the Israeli community.

This survey raises two more questions regarding Jewish communities and institutions seeking to engage with Israelis. The first concerns leadership and representation. Given that European Jewry is highly organized, with a top-down structure, while Israelis’ networks are more grassroots, bottom-up

organizations, how can Israelis best be represented in local or regional decision-making, and how can their voices be heard?

The second question has to do with necessary expertise: Are there specific tools, knowledge, and capabilities that communities and organizations need in order to reach out to Israeli groups, in the same way that these have been developed for focused engagement efforts with other groups, such as young adults? In other words, could any of them be transferable and how can they be acquired? This question has particular implications for organizations that provide leadership training, including JDC-ICCD.

Introduction

In some respects, the “Israeli diaspora” in Europe (as elsewhere around the globe) shares common features with diasporas of other countries, as they face the challenge of making a new life in another culture, in a different language, while at the same time maintaining some form of relationship—emotional, cultural, familial, economic—with the land of their birth. Yet their situation is also unique, in that they face an encounter with a parallel “Jewish diaspora” in the countries in which they settle—local, native-born citizens who also identify as Jews, and affiliate (or not) with established Jewish communities and organizations. These Jews are, at one and the same time, “locals” with whom the Israelis might want to assimilate; a minority that has chosen to separate itself from the overall collective, at least to some extent; and fellow Jews with whom Israelis might be considered to have a natural affinity.

This highly-complex “dual diaspora” experience raises a number of questions:

Do Israeli émigrés organize themselves like other diaspora groups, by creating social networks, educational frameworks, cultural events, and the like? How do they experience their lives in Europe, in terms of various economic, social, and political aspects? What is the nature of their relationship with local Jewish communities and local Jewish life in general? What would they like it to be? And how do they navigate the complex web of identities they experience and are faced with—Israeli, Jewish, local, and European?

This study has been conducted, in partnership with Machon Kehilot in order to answer these questions by surveying Israelis* who are resident in countries throughout Europe. Our aim was to provide hard data that can support informed decision making, for European Jewish organizations, local community leadership, Israeli organizations, and others. We also believe that our findings may provide an informative basis for researchers looking to expand our understanding of the Israeli diaspora around the world.

Methodology

We created an online survey in Hebrew that was distributed by Machon Kehilot via Facebook groups used by Israelis living in Europe. The survey was also shared via other networks of Israelis to which JDC-ICCD has access.

A total of 2,125 responses were received to the survey out of which 1,235 were incomplete; most of these respondents only completed less than a quarter of the entire questionnaire. Fully-completed questionnaires were received from 890 respondents, spanning 27 European countries. The findings presented in this report are drawn from these 890 completed questionnaires, although it is worth noting that there was a good fit between the partial respondents and those who completed the questionnaire, in terms of sociodemographic profile and opinions.

* Although this survey was open to all Israelis, our perspective was Jewish oriented and did not address other religions or nationalities directly.

The sociodemographic characteristics of our sample were very similar to those found by Rebhun³, who collected data from Israelis living in Europe and the United States, and even more so to those found by Lev Ari⁴, whose sample included only Israelis living in Europe. Overall, the estimated number of Israelis living in Europe is around 100,000, so that our sample constitutes approximately 1% of the total. This being the case, and given the demographic similarities we found between our sample and those of other studies, we can assert with a fair degree of confidence that our sample provides the largest, most up-to-date, and most representative picture of Israelis living in Europe today.

The questionnaire contained some 35 questions and sub-questions, some of them multiple choice (in many cases, with multiple responses allowed, such as “Which languages do you speak at home?”), and others using a Likert scale with responses ranged from 1 (=not at all) to 5 (=to a very large degree). We also offered participants to respond in their own words, in order to elicit some qualitative data and round out the picture provided by the closed-ended questions. The questions were organized under the following headings:

- Israeli communities and connections with other Hebrew speakers in your area
- Connection with local Jewish life
- Children and family
- Relationship with the local environment
- General Background

Our findings are presented below in four sections:

1. Sociodemographic data
2. Patterns of participation in communities and social networks
3. Raising children
4. Experience of life in Europe

³Rebhun, U. (2014). Immigrant Acculturation and Transnationalism: Israelis in the United States and Europe Compared. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 53(3), 613–635.

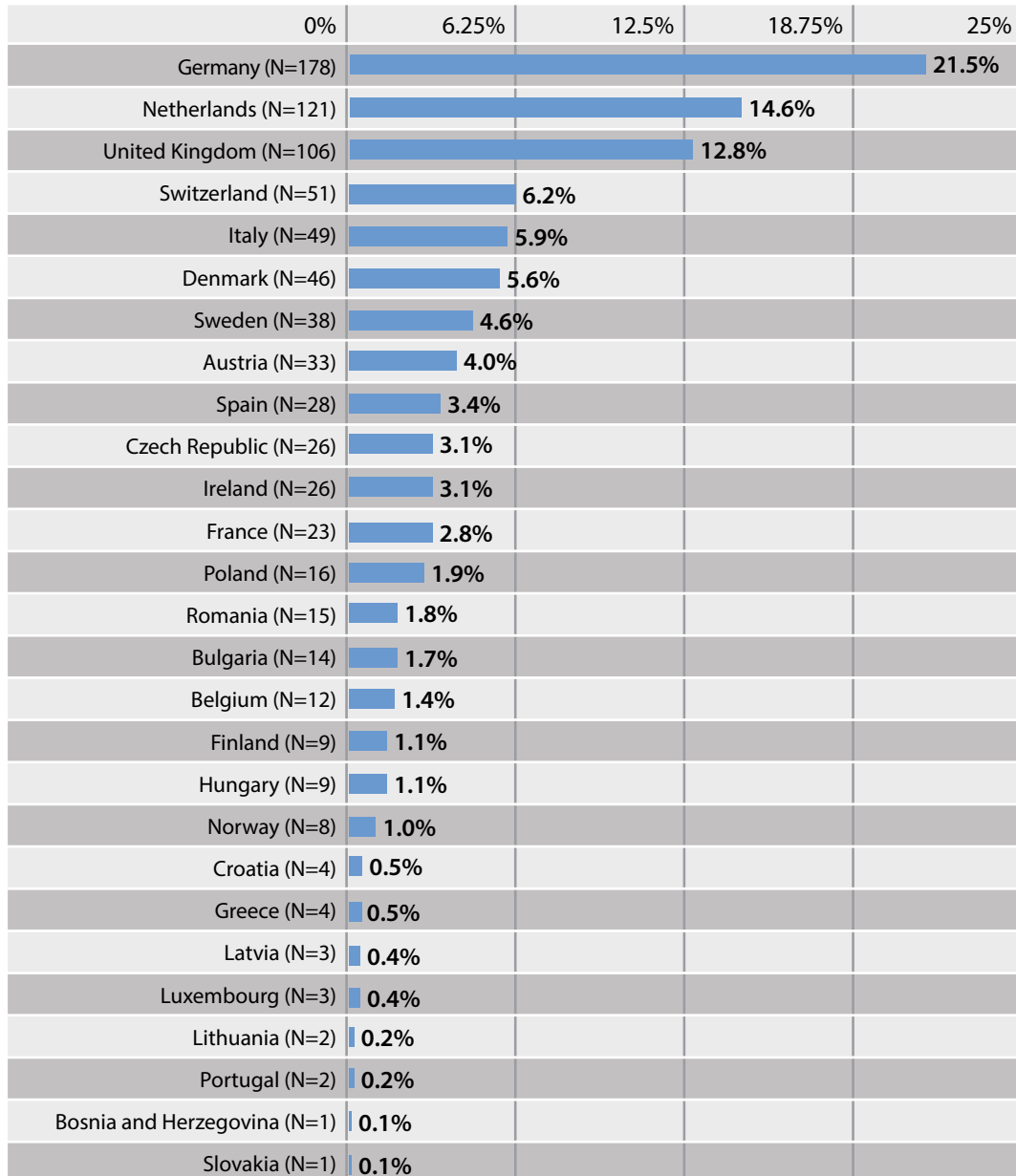
⁴Lev Ari, L. (2013). Multiple Ethnic Identities among Israeli Immigrants in Europe. *International Journal of Jewish Education Research*, 5–6.

1. Sociodemographic Data

Location

The survey sample (890 respondents in total) spans 27 different European countries. The most-highly represented countries are Germany (21.5%), the Netherlands (14.6%), and the United Kingdom (12.8%). Figure 1 below displays the full geographical distribution of respondents.

Figure 1. Country of residence



The average length of time that respondents have been living outside of Israel was found to be 10 years, and the average length of time they have been living in their current country of residence was 9 years.

Age

The average age of the sample is 40, with a standard deviation of 10.2. The majority of the sample therefore lies in the 29–55 age bracket.

Gender

There were more female respondents (57%) than male respondents (42%).

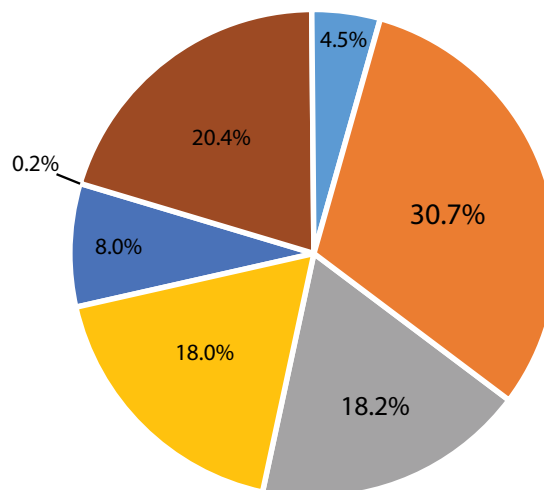
Country of Birth

A large majority (85%) of the respondents were born in Israel, although all the respondents identified as Israeli and answered the questionnaire in Hebrew.

Residency Status

Almost three-quarters (73.8%) of the population surveyed enjoy a very secure residency status: either holding citizenship of the country in which they are resident (30.7%) or having permanent resident status in it (20.4%); holding citizenship of another European Union country (18.2%); or having a spouse who is a citizen of their country of residence (4.5%). Another quarter of the respondents hold temporary visas enabling them to work in a specific job (18%) or study (8%).

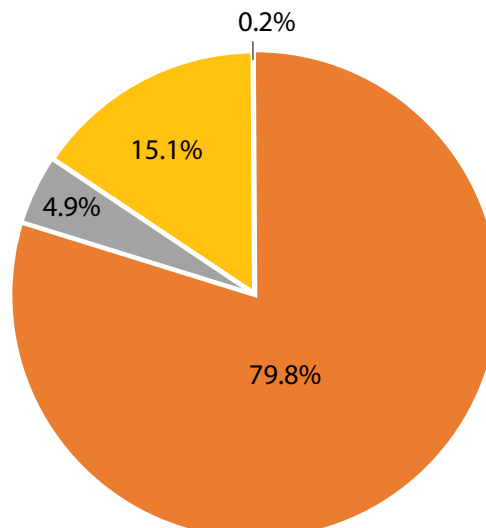
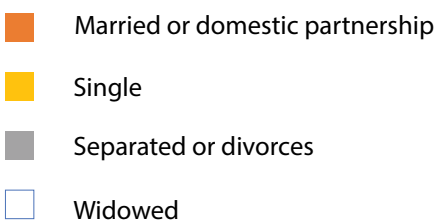
Figure 2. Residency status



Marital Status

The great majority of the respondents are married or in a domestic partnership (79.8%), with only 15.1% identifying as single, and 4.9% as separated or divorced.

Figure 3. Marital status

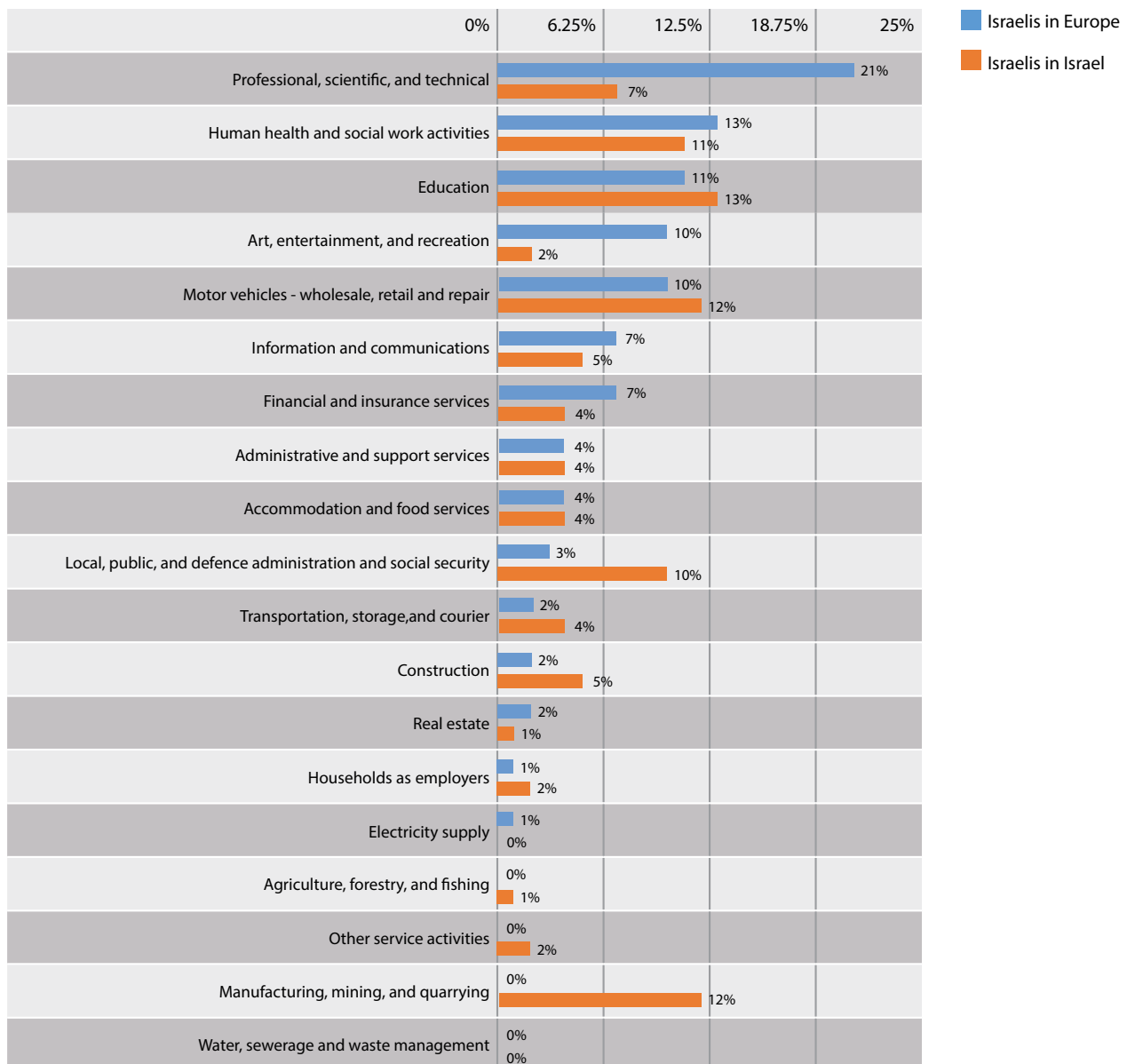


Occupation

The respondents' occupations are fairly evenly distributed among a diverse range of fields, with no single area being particularly dominant. The largest groupings of occupations are professional, scientific, and technical fields (21.2%), Human health and social work activities (13.4%), and education (11.4%).

We compared our findings with data on occupations in Israel, taken from Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics figures for 2015⁵, and found a couple of major differences between the two locations. While only 7.2% of Israelis in Israel are employed in professional, scientific, and technical fields, the figure for Israelis living in Europe is almost three times higher, at 21.2%. And while in Israel, those working in the arts and the entertainment and recreation industries constitute only 1.9% of the employment market, among Israelis living in Europe this figure leaps five-fold to 10.3%. It would seem that employment opportunities in these areas are significantly greater in Europe than in Israel, or that these professions are perhaps more "portable," and enable a more successful migration to Europe.

Figure 4. Occupation



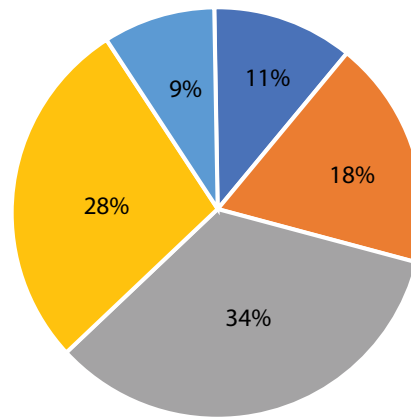
⁵See : http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton67/st12_12x.pdf

Education

Close to three-quarters of the respondents have an academic qualification, with 34% holding a bachelor's degree, 28% a master's degree, and 11% a doctorate or equivalent.

Figure 5. Education

- Non- academic higher education
- Doctorate or MD
- High school
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's degree

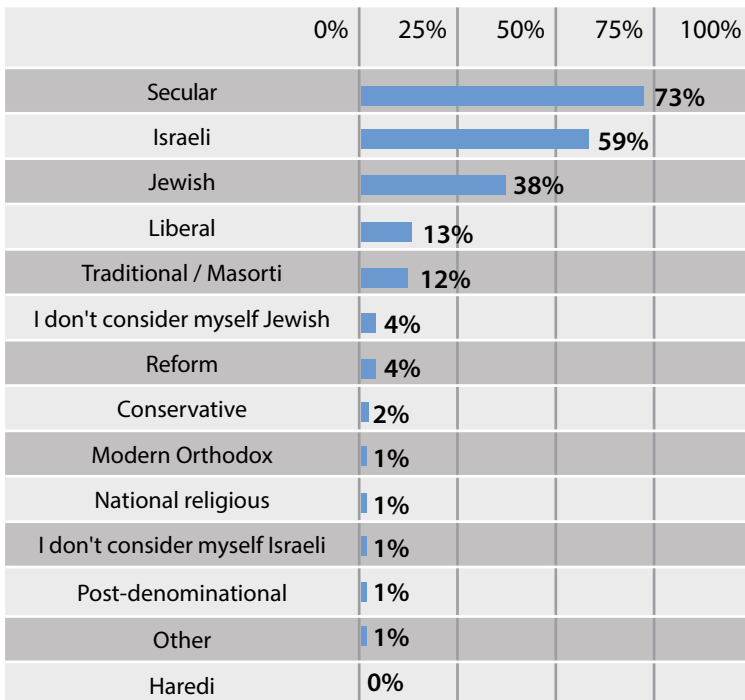


Jewish Identity

We asked respondents to choose from a list of adjectives those terms that describe their identity in terms of Jewish affiliation, with multiple responses permitted.

By far the most commonly-selected identity affiliations were those of secular (73%), Israeli (59%), and Jewish (38%), findings that are consistent with previous surveys. While 12% defined themselves as traditional/Masorti, and 13% selected "Liberal", less than 5% chose to identify with any of the main religious denominations (Reform, Conservative, national religious, modern Orthodox, or Haredi). These findings are also consistent with those of previous surveys.

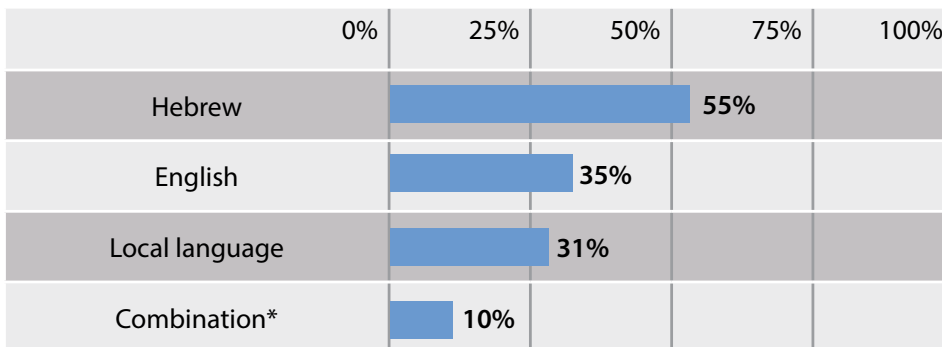
Figure 6. Jewish identity
Multiple responses permitted



Languages Spoken at Home

This question was intended to serve as a proxy for helping us understand whether or not the respondents are married to a non-Israeli or non-Jew, as well as to evaluate the importance of language. Again, multiple responses were permitted, to allow for the fact that families may use more than one language in daily life. We found that Hebrew is spoken at home by the majority of respondents (55%), while around a third each speak the local language (31%) and/or English (35%). A tenth of the respondents (10%) reported speaking a mixture of languages at home

Figure 7. Languages spoken at home
Multiple responses permitted



* Selected response: "I speak Hebrew with my children, they speak the local language among themselves and with my partner, and my partner and I speak English."

Conclusion

Thus overall, the sample of this study can be broadly characterized as containing mostly married Israelis in their thirties and forties, with an academic education, who have been living in Europe for nine or ten years on average, have a stable residency arrangement (European citizenship or similar), identify as being secular, Israeli, and Jewish, and speak Hebrew at home to some degree.

It is very possible that this sample is not fully representative of the gamut of Israelis in Europe, leaning as it does towards families who have lived for a considerable number of years in their country of residence, and away from younger Israelis living in Europe for a short period of time, such as students or employees on short-term work relocations. However, for the purposes of this report—which aims to examine the participation of Israelis in Europe in their own social networks and in local Jewish communities, with a view to considering how interaction between Israelis and these frameworks might be increased over time—this sample is very much the target population whose views and behavior we were interested in learning about.

2. Patterns of Participation in Communities and Social Networks

Overview

We asked respondents to describe their existing levels of participation in and engagement with, Israeli social networks and local Jewish communities, and to rate the extent to which they would be interested in engaging with each.

We found that Israeli networks are fairly widespread throughout Europe, with respondents in all 27 countries reporting the existence of Israeli networks with which they have some form of connection and close to two-thirds (64%) saying that there was an organized and active Israeli community in their area. For sure, not all these “communities” and “networks” are alike—they range from being less to more formally organized, and involve different levels of activity. And given that the survey did not specify what it meant by “community” or “network”, those who said that there was an Israeli community nearby may well have been referring to very diverse types of “communities” and “networks”. We must therefore be somewhat cautious when making conclusions about how widespread and active these networks are.

“*Having a Hebrew-speaking community has lit up our lives for the last five years. It's a wonderful, warm, supporting place.*” (Female, 42, The Netherlands)

For those without such a community nearby, more than half (54%) expressed a large or very large desire to participate in activities held by such a community if it were established. In terms of what they considered to be the main building blocks of Israeli communal life in Europe, the majority cited Hebrew-language social activities (70%), events to mark Jewish/Israeli holidays and memorial days (67%), and a sense of belonging (63%).

“*I'm in touch with certain people who are involved in the Hebrew community project in northern Italy. What they've built there in recent months is something we very much lack, and we'd love to have that kind of secular Hebrew activity here in central Italy.*” (Female, 35, Italy)

“*I feel a bit more 'at home' by participating in events like those we had in Israel, for example, Friday night meals or Memorial Day ceremonies.*” (Female, 33, Switzerland)

“*As an atheist, there's nothing for me in a community that is in any way religious. I would however be happy to be part of a non-religious Israeli community.*” (Male, 30, Baden-Baden, Germany)

In contrast with the common perception that Israelis are estranged from local Jewish life, a sizeable minority of respondents (45%) reported participating to some degree in local Jewish communities. We were interested to learn from the other 55% what the main reasons were for their lack of participation, and one stood out more than any other—Israelis feel distanced from Jewish communities by the latter's emphasis on the religious element of Jewish identity, and what they perceive as a lack of understanding or acceptance of their own identities as secular Jews (this was cited by 62% of respondents as having a large or very large degree of influence). They also referred to not feeling the need to belong to a Jewish community (42%), and the fact that they had never been approached by or invited to join a local Jewish community (33%).

“*Although I'm Jewish, I'm not at all religious, and the Jewish community is naturally very religious. Elements like the festivals are important to me, but it feels more comfortable to celebrate them with other Israelis who are also secular, as a tradition.*” (Female, 37, United Kingdom)

“I’m in favor of Jewish culture, but not religious culture.” (Male, 44, Munich, Germany)

“The Jewish community is so patronizing toward Israelis, as if they are somehow better Jews, because they are religious.” (Female, 51, Zurich, Switzerland)

“I don’t go to Jewish community events. My wife’s not Jewish, and they always ask stupid questions and act like it’s something shameful.” (Male, 35, Vienna, Austria)

“Why do I not participate in the Jewish community? Internal power struggles in the Orthodox community, a lack of acceptance (of Jews who are secular, Reform, gay, etc.), an elite of rich Germans rather than new-immigrant Israelis, stigmas against Israelis, a refusal to integrate with German society, a requirement that one have a certain political orientation toward Israel...” (Female, 36, Germany)

Accordingly, when asked to say what factors might encourage them to participate in Jewish community activities, these respondents clearly indicated the importance of activities designed for secular Jews, activities in Hebrew, and cultural events. Interestingly, even among this non-participating group, many reported that they attended events to mark Jewish holidays (28% said that they do so to a large or very large degree), and that they hold Shabbat dinners with friends (15%).

a. Israeli and Hebrew-Speaking Networks

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) reported the existence of an organized and active Israeli community in their area. These were then asked to rate the degree of their involvement with that community. Few reported participating in activities and events to a large or very large degree (17%), and fewer still (11%) reported playing a very active role.

Figure 8. Degree of participation in an organized Israeli community
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
To what degree do you play an active role in the community?		11%			
To what degree do you participate in the community's activities and events?		17%			

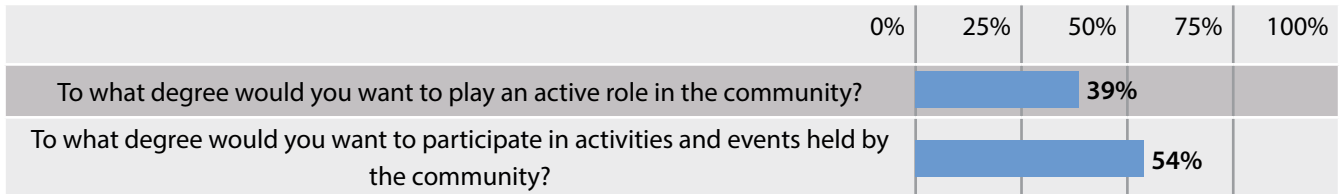
Significantly⁶ higher levels of participation and playing an active role were reported by parents than by participants without children, and by respondents who also participate in the local Jewish community. Most noticeably, younger respondents (aged 18–25) reported far lower levels of participation and activity than other age groups. In terms of gender, females reported significantly higher levels of participation in activities but not of playing an active role. There were also significant positive correlations between the average scores for these questions and both period of residence outside of Israel and period of residence in current country.

As for those respondents who reported that there was no organized and active Israeli community in their area, we wanted to find out what they thought their level of engagement would be were such networks available to them. More than half (54%) said they would want—“to a large or very large degree”—to participate in activities or events organized by such a community, and more than a third (39%) said that they would want to play an active role. It is worth noting that these figures are significantly higher than

⁶Throughout this report, the word “significant” is used to describe differences between sub-groups of the overall sample in the statistically valid sense ($p < 0.05$).

the levels of participation or activity reported in practice by participants who have an organized Israeli community in their area.

Figure 9. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"



Again, significantly higher levels of desire to participate and play an active role in an Israeli community were reported by parents than by participants without children, and by respondents who also participate in the local Jewish community. Significantly higher rates were also seen among female respondents than among males. However, no significant correlation was found between the average scores for these questions and respondents' age, number of children, period of residence outside Israel, and period of residence in current country.

The tables below present breakdowns of the data by various characteristics of the respondents: languages spoken at home, country of residence⁷, and marital status. Unsurprisingly, the results indicate a greater interest among those who speak only Hebrew than those who speak other languages, and among those who are married or in a domestic relationship (or indeed, divorced) than those who are single. Interestingly, respondents living in the Netherlands and Denmark were least enthusiastic about participating in an organized Israeli community, while the most interested were those in Germany and the UK.

Table 1. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed;
by language spoken at home
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"

	Only Hebrew	Other languages
To what degree would you want to participate in the community's activities and events?	59%	47%
To what degree would you want to play an active role in the community?	40%	33%

Table 2. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed;
by country of residence
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"

	UK	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	Switzerland	Denmark
To what degree would you want to participate in the community's activities and events?	63%	33%	63%	59%	53%	28%
To what degree would you want to play an active role in the community?	38%	30%	40%	47%	33%	21%

⁷The countries shown in this table are the six largest in terms of number of respondents in this survey.

Table 3. Desired degree of participation if an organized Israeli community existed; by marital status Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Single	Married /domestic partnership	Separated / divorced
To what degree would you want to participate in the community's activities and events?	36%	59%	60%
To what degree would you want to play an active role in the community?	21%	42%	53%

Regardless of the presence of an Israeli community, we asked the respondents about the level of their participation in various types of activities or events that have some connection with being Jewish and/or Israeli. By far and away the leading category here was found to be participation in Facebook groups of local Israelis (41%), with the next most popular being social and cultural activities organized by local Israeli groups (16%) and concerts, shows, or movies from Israel (14%). As one respondent explained:

“Facebook groups of Israelis are very welcome and very helpful, especially at the beginning, with all the difficulties of getting used to a new place.”
(Female, 40, London, United Kingdom)

Figure 10. Degree of participation in related events Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”



Next, we asked about the factors that hamper the possible success of local Israeli frameworks. The factors that stood out more than any other were a lack of access to funding (cited to a large or very large degree by 40% of respondents), a lack of professional support and expertise in community building from external organizations (35%), and a lack of necessary skills and initiative among local Israelis (30%). Some spoke about this in more detail:

“In huge cities like Berlin, you need to have activities in multiple areas of the city. You need external funds to establish things here, serious and professional organizations.” (Female, 40, Berlin, Germany)

“The main challenge is financial. The community has had real funding problems, and there's a lot of burnout because everyone is working on a volunteer basis, and no-one can devote all their time to it. If we had a proper community center and a community coordinator that would change. Not a temporary emissary from

Israel, but someone local, involved in both the Jewish community and the Israeli community, who could build bridges between the two and create long-term connections.” (Female, The Netherlands)

“Here in Stockholm, there was an attempt to organize the Israeli community, and a lot of interest in activities, but it foundered because these were private individuals leading it, and they couldn’t cope with it all. It’s a real shame, because everyone really wanted it.” (Female, 35, Stockholm, Sweden)

Figure 11. “To what degree do the following factors hamper the existence of an organized and active Israeli community in your area?”

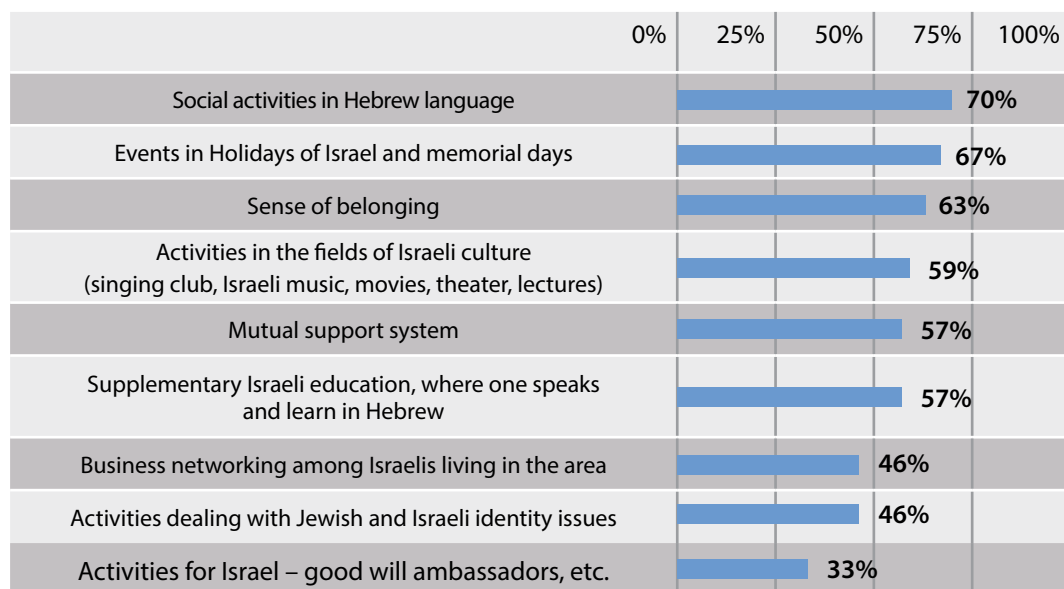
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Lack of financial support from external bodies for operating a community for local Israelis			40%		
Lack of support from an organization with experience in building Israeli communities in other places			35%		
Lack of initiative or necessary organizational skills among local Israelis			30%		
There are not enough Israelis living in my area to justify forming a community			25%		
Local Israelis are not interested in creating a communal framework			24%		
Tensions and divisions among groups of Israelis, making it difficult to convene around shared social and cultural aspects			18%		
The Israelis where I live are dispersed over too wide an area			18%		
Lack of motivation to be part of Israel-related activity			17%		
Political divisions regarding the State of Israel, its government, and its policies			14%		
Local Israelis want to assimilate into local society, rather than preserve their Israeli and Jewish identity			14%		
Previous unsuccessful attempts to establish communal activities for Israelis in the area			11%		
Many Israelis have partners and children who do not speak Hebrew well			11%		
Antisemitism and a sense of insecurity at being in places identified with Jews			4%		

We also wanted to know more about what Israelis living in Europe consider to be the main building blocks of Israeli communal life outside Israel. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we found that Hebrew-language social activities (70%), events held to mark Jewish/Israeli holidays and memorial days (67%), and a sense of belonging (63%) were considered the most important elements.

Figure 12. “To what degree do the following elements constitute an important component in the communal life of Israelis outside of Israel?”

Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”



When we broke down the data by those who speak only Hebrew at home and those who speak other languages (and thus, presumably, live with a non-Israeli partner), we found a much greater interest among the Hebrew-speakers in Hebrew-language social activities, Israeli culture, and Hebrew-language supplementary education, as shown in the figure below.

Table 4. “To what degree do the following elements constitute an important component in the communal life of Israelis outside of Israel?”, by language spoken at home

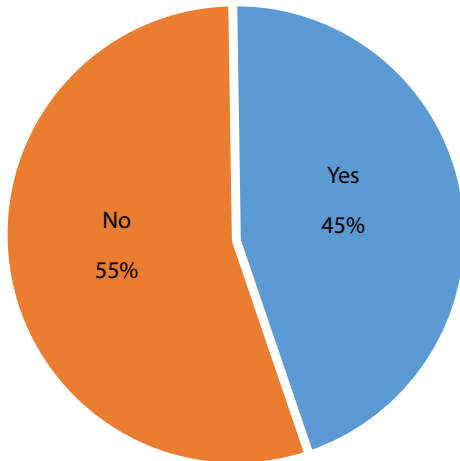
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Only Hebrew	Other languages
Social activities conducted in Hebrew	79%	62%
Israeli culture activities (singing clubs, Israeli music, movies, theater, lectures)	64%	55%
Supplementary education frameworks held in Hebrew	61%	54%
Events to mark Jewish/Israeli holidays and memorial days	31%	35%
Activities on subjects connected to Jewish and Israeli identity	45%	43%
Activities for Israel – goodwill ambassadors, etc.	32%	29%
Business networking among Israelis living in the area	48%	43%
Mutual support systems	64%	51%
Sense of belonging	70%	55%

b. Jewish Communities

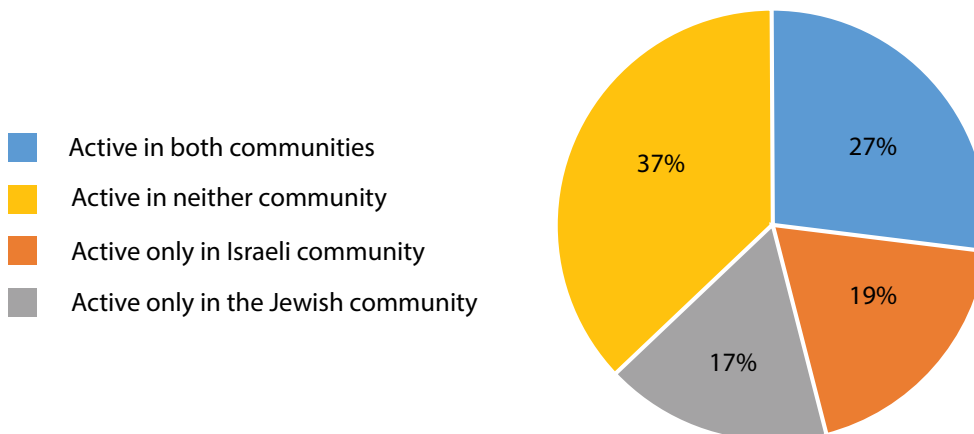
Moving on from exploring the connections between Israelis living in Europe, and their attitudes and behaviors regarding organized Israeli communities and activities, we asked about their participation in their local Jewish communities.

Figure 13. “Do you currently participate (to any degree) in the local Jewish community or in any other Jewish initiative in your city or country of residence?”

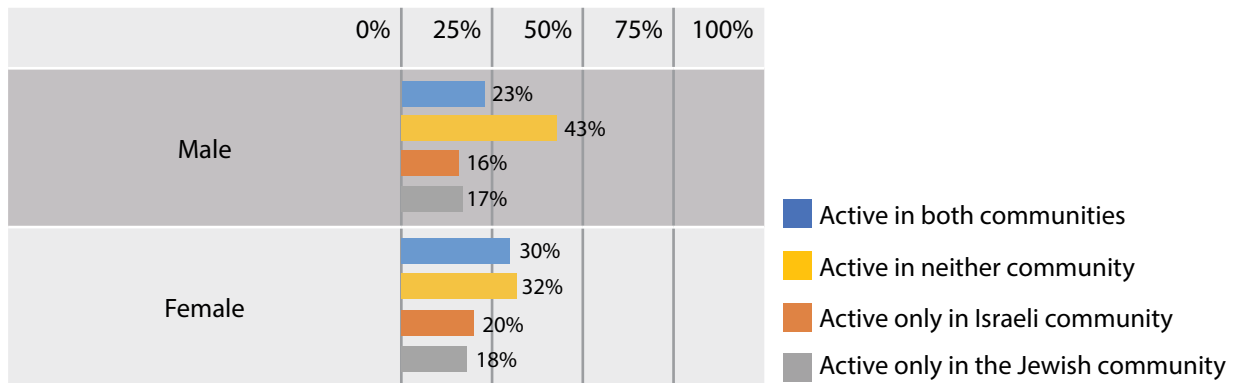


We then cross-referenced our results to produce a picture of Israelis' participation in local Jewish and Israeli frameworks. We found that just under two-thirds (63%) reported being active to some degree in one framework or the other, or both.

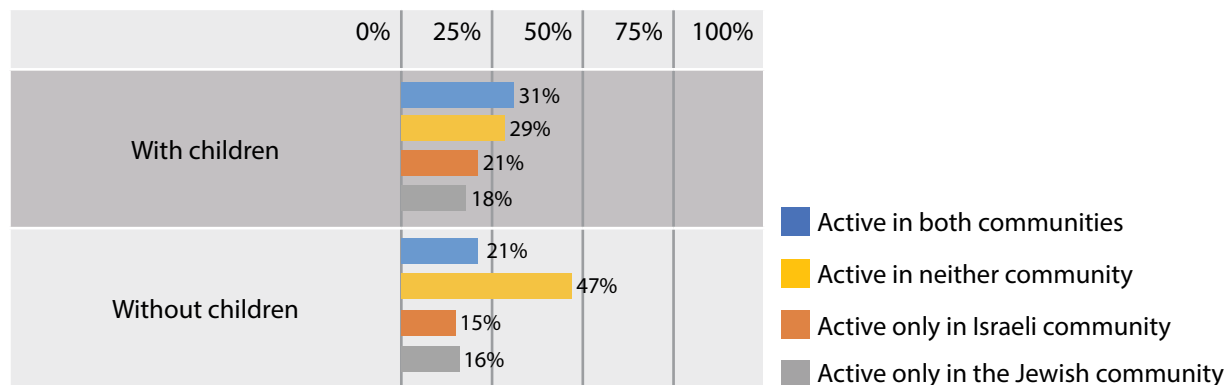
Figure 14. Activity (to any degree) in organized Israeli and Jewish communities



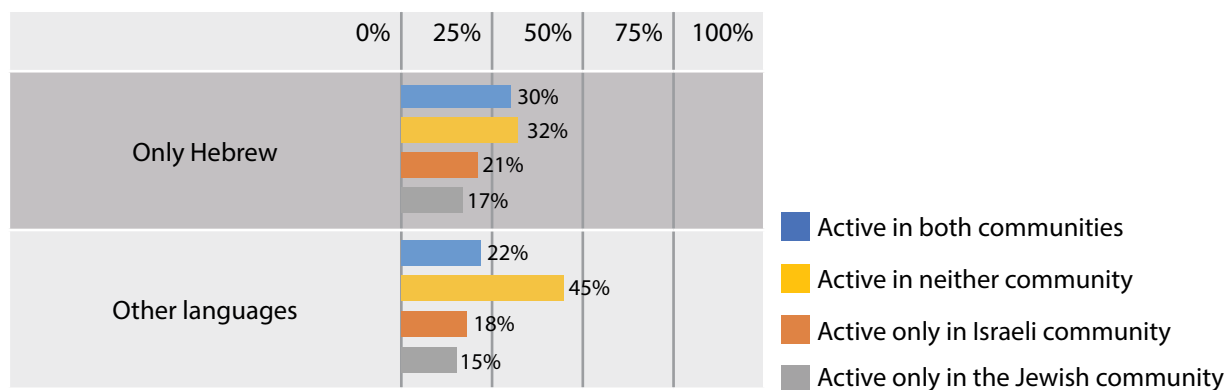
We analyzed these four groups, looking in more detail at gender, whether or not they have children, the language spoken at home, their country of residence, and the period of time for which they have been living in their current country of residence. We found that higher proportion of males (43%) than females (32%) are not active in either community.

Figure 15. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by gender


In a similar vein, we found that almost half of respondents with no children (47%) are not active in either community, compared with only 29% of those who do have children. Conversely, 31% of the latter group are active in both communities, as opposed to only 21% of the former.

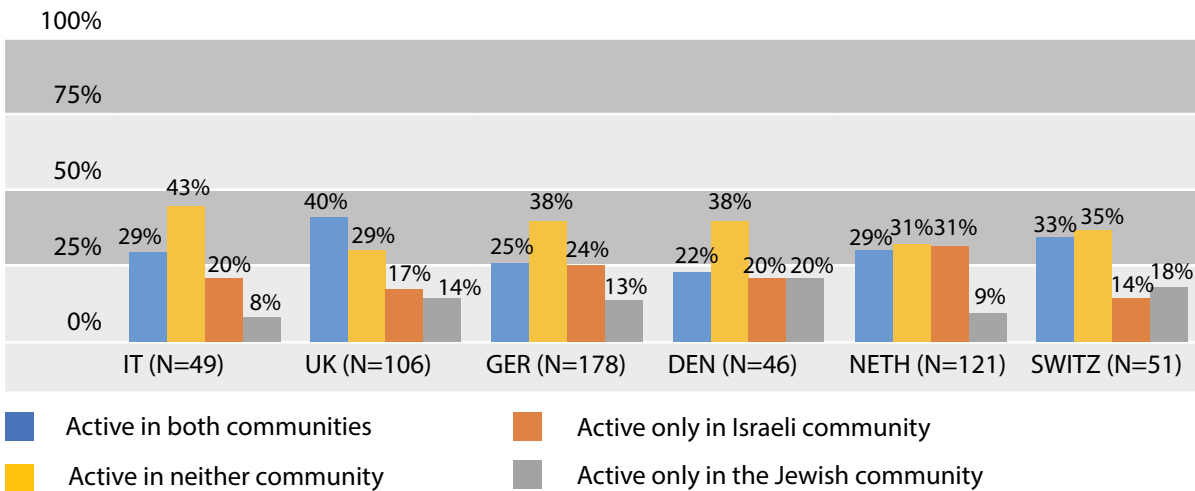
Figure 16. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; respondents with or without children


A similar picture was obtained when comparing between those respondents who speak only Hebrew at home with those who speak other languages (and thus who, presumably, have a non-Israeli spouse). Among the former group, 30% are active in both communities and 32% are active in neither; among the latter, only 22% are active in both, and 45% are active in neither.

Figure 17. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by language spoken at home


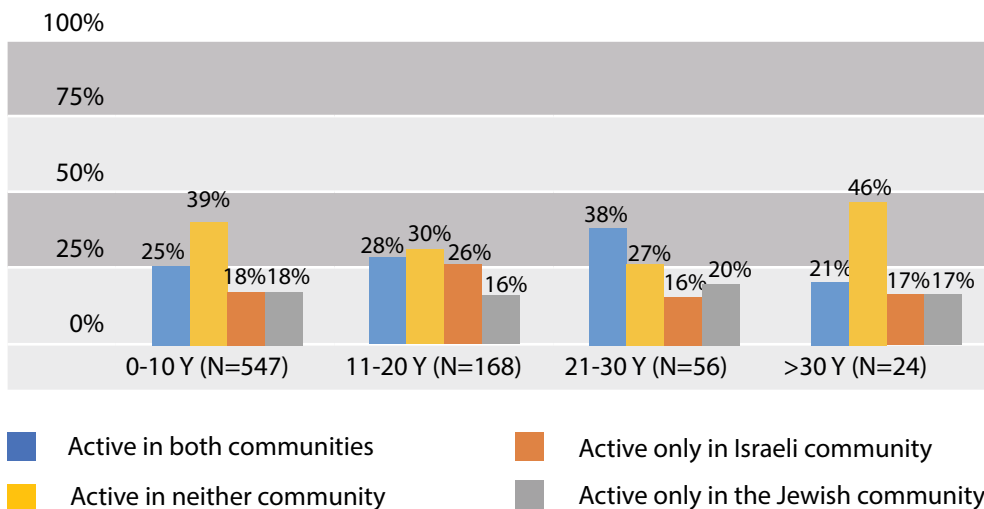
Looking at the data by country of residence, we see a particularly high rate of participation in neither community in Italy (43%), while fully 40% of Israelis living in the United Kingdom reported being active in both Jewish and Israeli communities. The rate of participation only in Israeli communities is highest in the Netherlands (31%), resulting in a relatively low ratio of those who do not participate at all.

Figure 18. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by country of residence



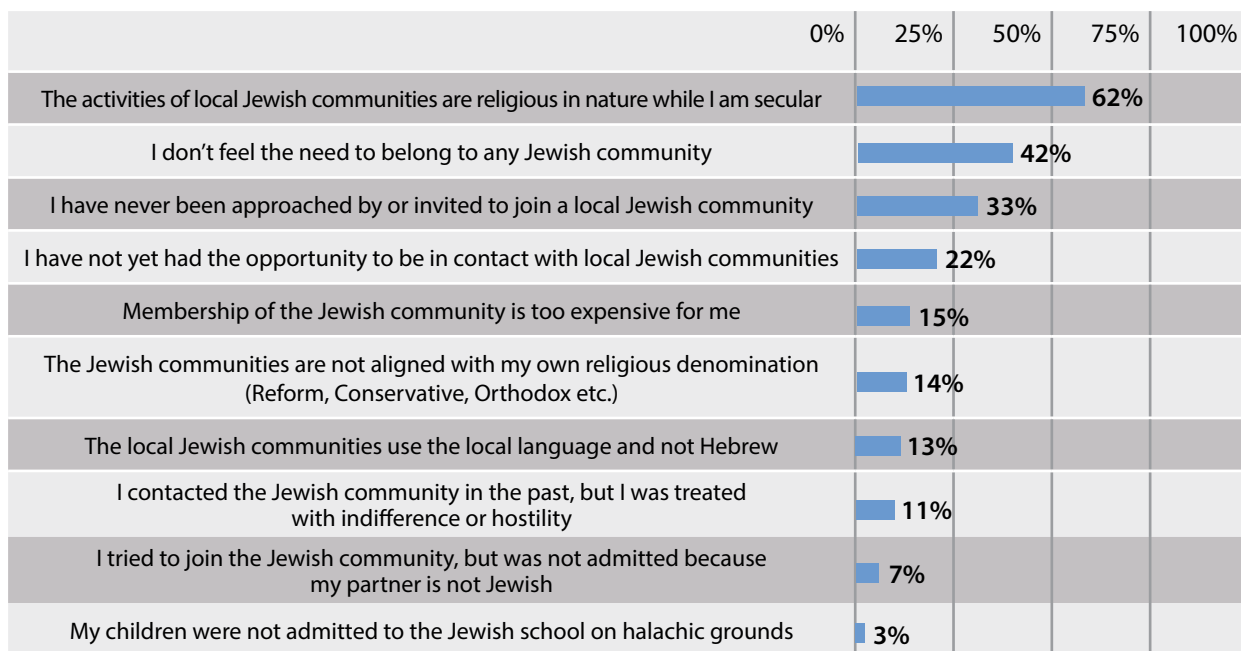
Finally, examining the length of time that respondents have lived in their current country of residence reveals that the highest rates of participation are found among those resident between 11 and 20 years, and between 21 and 30 years. Among those resident for over 30 years, almost half (46%) reported not being active in either community.

Figure 19. Activity (to any degree) in Israeli and Jewish communities; by period of residence in current country



Having reviewed the data of these four groups in detail, we will now look more deeply at those respondents who reported having no involvement in the Jewish community. We asked them the reasons behind their lack of involvement, and found that the most influential factor by some distance was the perceived religious nature of the Jewish experience offered by local Jewish communities (cited by 62% of respondents as having a large or very large degree of influence), as opposed to the largely secular nature of these Israelis' Jewish identity. Two other factors selected by a sizeable minority were simply not feeling the need to belong to any Jewish community (42%), and never having been approached by or invited to join a community (33%).

Figure 20. Factors explaining lack of participation in Jewish community
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"



When we broke down these responses by language spoken at home, we found two subjects on which the two groups displayed sizeable differences. Those who spoke only Hebrew at home cited the fact that Jewish communities are not Hebrew speaking as being a major factor more than three times as much as did those who speak other languages (22% versus 7%); while those who speak other languages at home selected not being admitted to the Jewish community due to having a non-Jewish partner more than three times as much as did the Hebrew speakers (9% to 3%).

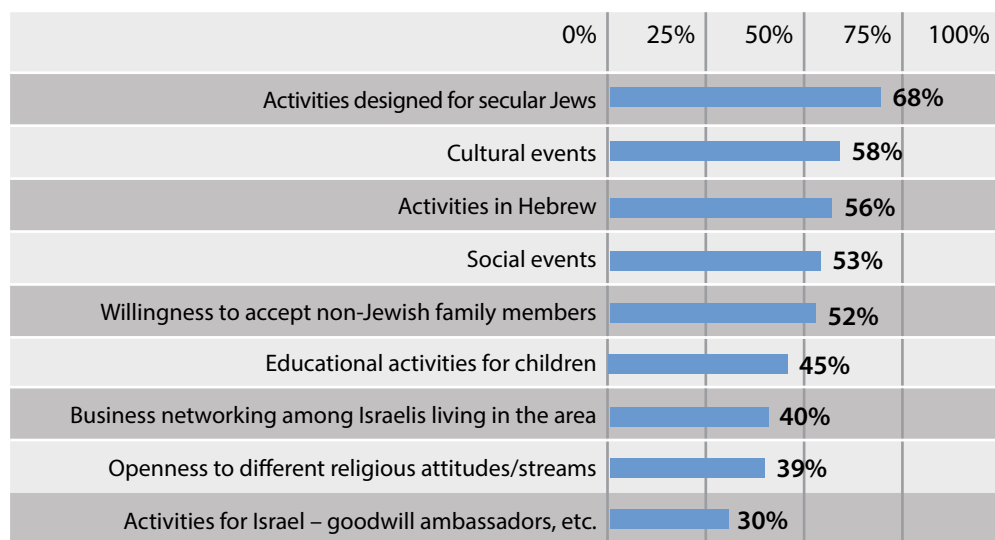
Table 5. Factors explaining lack of participation in Jewish community; by main language spoken at home
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Only Hebrew	Other languages
The fact that the local Jewish communities in my area are operating in the local language and not in Hebrew	22%	7%
I had no opportunity to encounter local Jews communities	21%	24%
The activities of local Jewish communities are not relevant and not appealing to me, because they deal with Judaism and traditions from the religious-belief aspects, and are distance form my cultural world since I am secular	59%	63%
The Jewish communities do not belong to my religious stream (example: I am an orthodox and the community is reform)	12%	15%
The cost of the Jewish community membership is too expensive for me	17%	14%
I was never reached out and was invited to join to any of the Jewish communities	34%	32%
I tried to approach the Jewish community in the past, but I was treated with indifference or hostility	9%	12%
I tried to join the Jewish community, but was not admitted because my partner is not Jewish	3%	9%
My kids were not admitted to the Jewish school on Halachic grounds	2%	4%
I don't feel the need to belong to any Jewish community	41%	42%

We asked these Israelis who do not participate in the local Jewish community to think about what might encourage them to do so. The answer chosen more enthusiastically than any other was “activities for secular Jews,” with more than two-thirds (68%) saying that this would encourage them to a large or very large degree to participate. The next two activities considered most influential were cultural events (58%) and activities in Hebrew (56%).

Figure 21. “To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?”

Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”



Breaking down these responses by language spoken at home, we found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that respondents who speak languages other than Hebrew rated the community’s willingness to accept non-Jewish family members as being far more important than did respondents who speak only Hebrew.

Table 6. “To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?”; by language spoken at home

Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Only Hebrew	Other languages
Openness to different religious attitudes/streams	35%	42%
Willingness to accept family members that are not Jewish	36%	60%
Activities designed for secular Jews	64%	68%
Activities in Hebrew	60%	52%
Cultural events	59%	54%
Educational activities for children	49%	39%
Social events	54%	51%
Activities for Israel – goodwill ambassadors, etc.	29%	28%
Business networking among Israelis living in the area	40%	40%

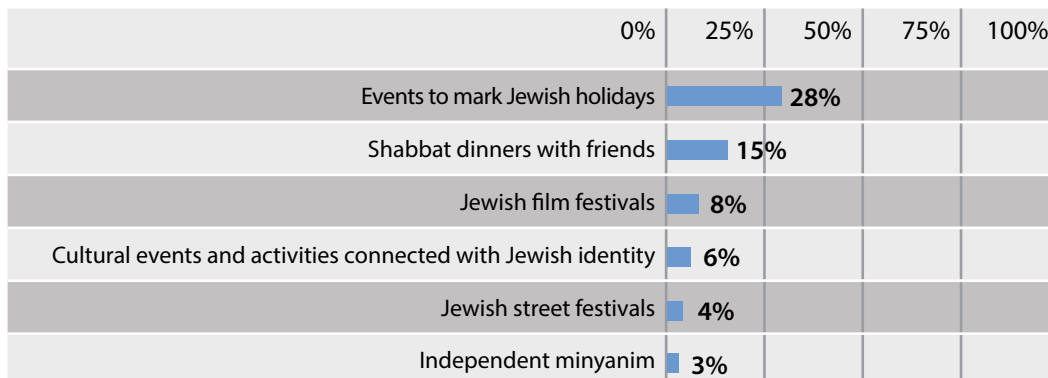
Looking at marital status, we found a marked difference between single respondents and those who are married or in a domestic partnership, with the latter providing a higher rating for all the factors suggested as encouraging participation in the local Jewish community. Ratings were also higher among separated or divorced respondents.

Table 7. “To what degree would each of the following factors encourage you to participate in activities of the local Jewish community?”; by marital status
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Single	Married / domestic partnership	Separated / divorced
Openness to different religious attitudes/streams	32%	41%	38%
Willingness to accept family members that are not Jewish	42%	52%	71%
Activities designed for secular Jews	56%	71%	63%
Activities in Hebrew	41%	60%	50%
Cultural events	49%	59%	81%
Educational activities for children	15%	53%	29%
Social events	49%	55%	50%
Activities for Israel – goodwill ambassadors, etc.	26%	31%	35%
Business networking among Israelis living in the area	29%	41%	53%

Staying with the group of respondents who reported not being involved in their local Jewish community, we asked them about related activities in which they do participate. Scores were not especially high for any of the categories, with the largest positive responses being for events to mark Jewish holidays (28% said they participate in these to a large or very large degree) and Shabbat dinners with friends (15%).

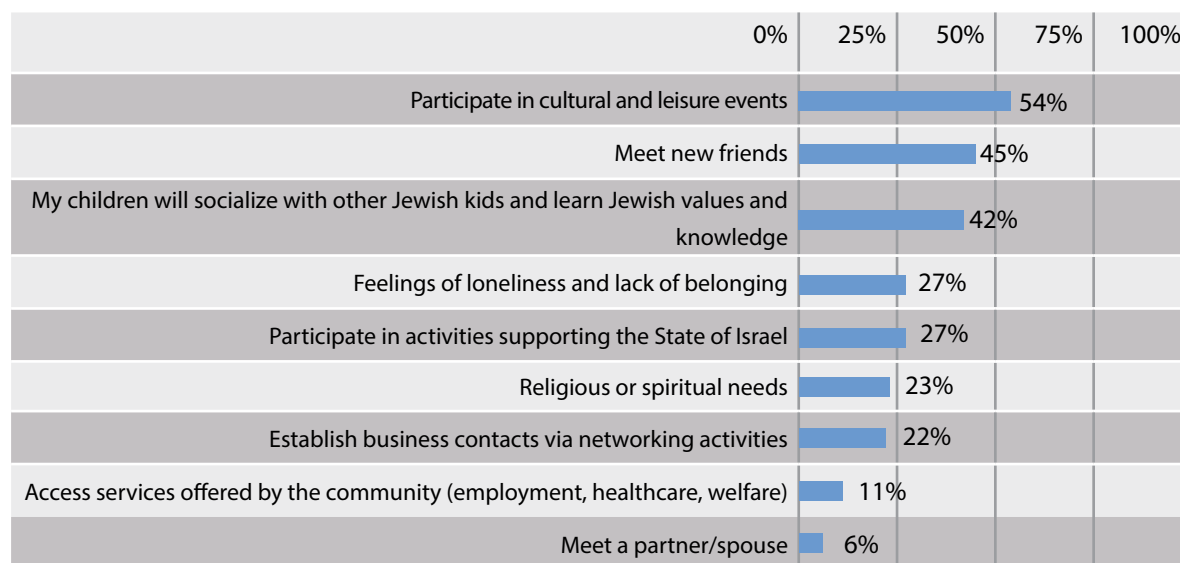
Figure 22. “To what degree do you participate in the following?”
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”



Respondents who speak Hebrew at home participate in Shabbat dinners and events to mark Jewish holidays more than those who speak other languages, while respondents with children participate more in events to mark Jewish holidays and activities related to Jewish identity than those without children.

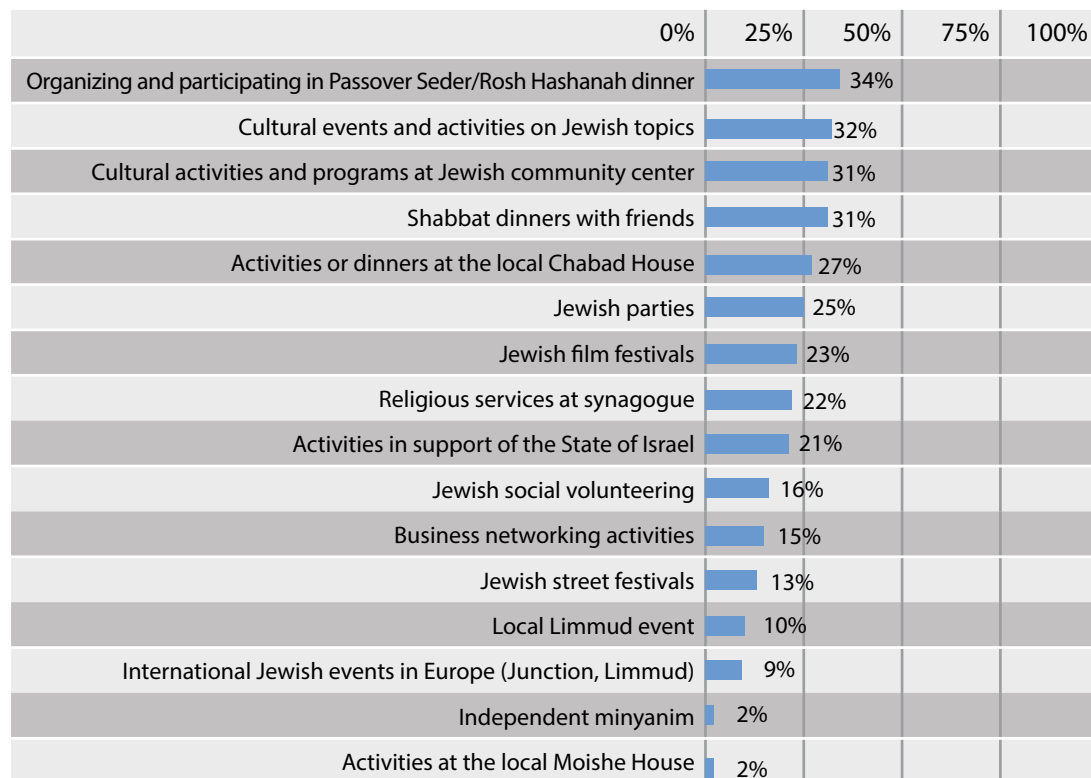
Turning to those respondents who **do** participate in their local Jewish community, we were interested in their motivations for doing so. A majority cited their desire to participate in cultural and leisure events (54%), while large minorities referred to wanting to meet new friends, and wanting their children to socialize with other Jewish children and acquire Jewish knowledge and values.

Figure 23. Reasons for participation in Jewish community activities
Multiple responses permitted



We also asked for some more detail about the types of event in which they choose to participate. The answers were fairly evenly distributed, with around one-third citing Passover Seder nights or Rosh Hashanah dinners (34%), cultural events or activities on Jewish topics (32%), cultural activities and events at the local Jewish community center (31%), and Shabbat dinners with friends (31%).

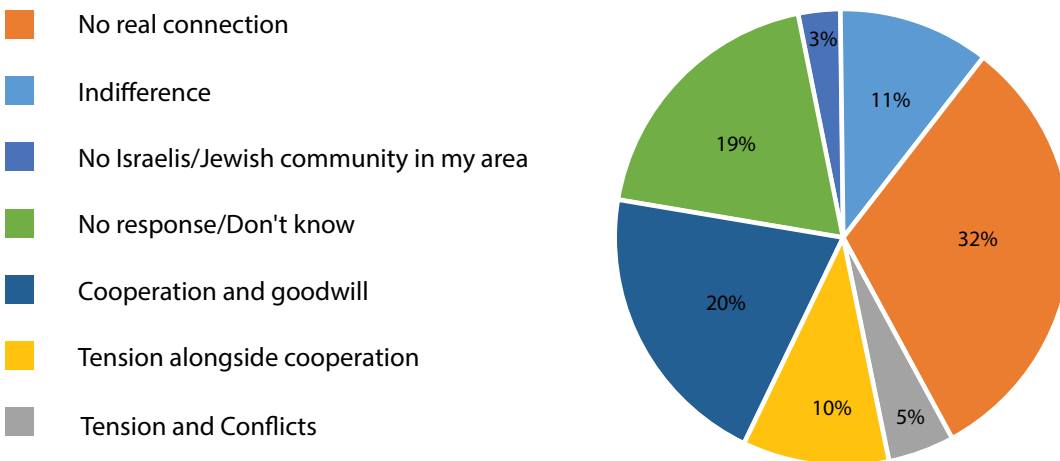
Figure 24. Participation in local Jewish community activities and events
Multiple responses permitted



Regardless of whether or not they participate in the local Jewish community, we asked all our respondents to describe the relationship between Israelis living in their area and

the local Jewish community. A plurality selected responses indicating no substantial engagement, either “indifference” (11%), or “no real connection between the vast majority of Israelis in the area and the Jewish community” (32%). Only a fifth (20%) feel that the relationship is largely one of cooperation and goodwill, while a similar proportion offered no response at all.

Figure 25. “How would you describe the relationship between Israelis living in your area and the local Jewish community?”



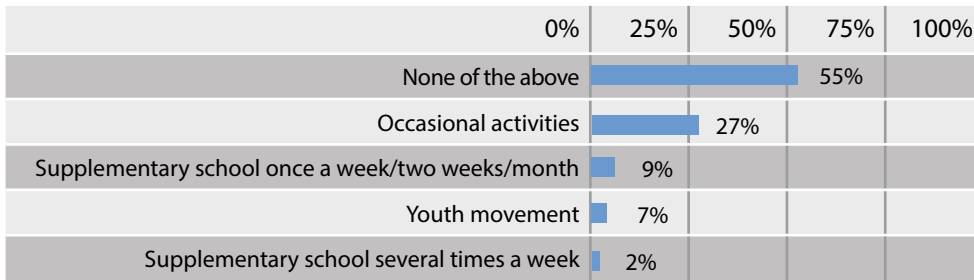
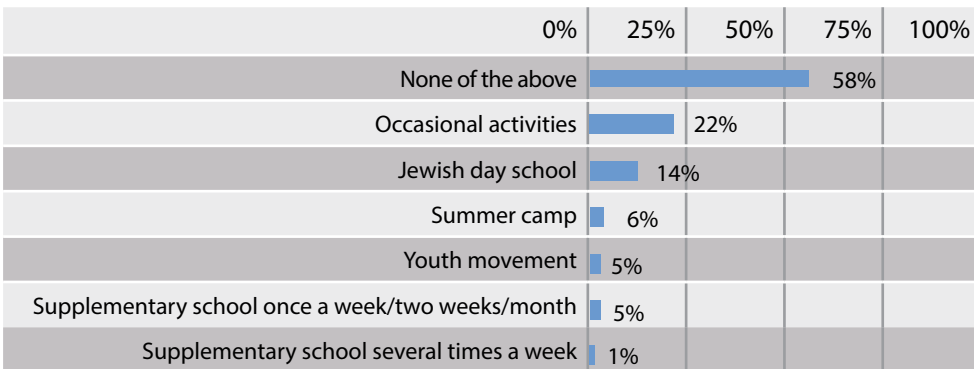
3. Raising Children

“I think that joining a community happens when you have kids and you want to connect them to their Jewish and Israeli identity.” (Female, 31, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

“My daughter is 18 months old, and now I’m starting to look for connections with other Israelis, mainly so that she’ll have other opportunities to learn Hebrew. Because I’m secular, and not really interested in political action for Israel, my focus is entirely social/cultural, and I wouldn’t be interested in activities that strengthen Jewish (as opposed to Israeli) identity, or that have a political orientation.” (Male, 35, Bonn, Germany)

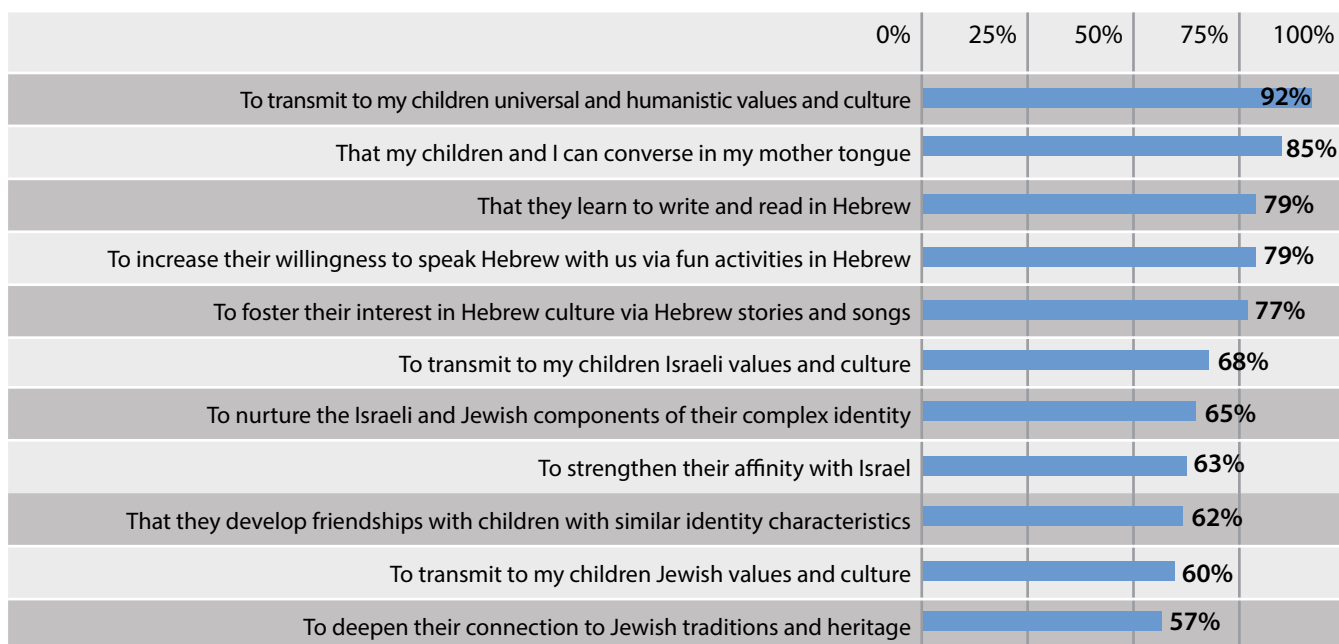
We wanted to know more about the values that Israelis living in Europe seek to transmit to their children, the education they give them, and their hopes for their children’s identity as they grow up. We found that while the bulk of the respondents do not send their children to any Israeli or Jewish educational frameworks on a regular basis, **it is very important to them that their children grow up speaking, reading, and writing Hebrew and are familiar with Israeli culture, and (to a slightly lesser extent) that they have a developed sense of their own Israeli and Jewish identities.**

More than half the participants (60%) have children under the age of 18. The average number of children per family is 1.91, while the average age of the children is 7.9. When we asked about Israeli and Jewish education frameworks, we found a clear majority in each case whose children do not participate at all—55% in the case of Israeli education, and 58% in the case of Jewish education. Just over a quarter (27%) reported occasional participation in Israeli education, and just over a fifth (22%) said that their children are occasional participants in supplementary Jewish education. Only 14% reported that their children attend Jewish day schools; an overwhelming majority—86%—reported that their children do not attend Jewish day schools.

Figure 26. Do your children participate in any Israeli education frameworks?
Multiple responses permitted

Figure 27. Do your children participate in any Jewish education frameworks?
Multiple responses permitted


Next, we inquired about the hopes of Israelis living in Europe for their children's identity and heritage. We found that our respondents overwhelmingly hope that their children grow up to be Hebrew-speaking (85% said that this was important to them to a large or very large degree), and similarly enthusiastic responses were recorded for activities that encourage their children to speak, read, and write Hebrew. Close to two-thirds (65%) consider it important to a large or very large degree to nurture their children's Israeli and Jewish identity. The lowest scores were for transmitting Jewish values and culture (60%) and nurturing a connection to Jewish traditions and heritage (57%), although it is worth noting that these shares still represent a majority of the sample. The highest-rated desire (92%) was transmitting universal and humanistic values.

Figure 28. “How important to you are the following goals for your children?”
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”



We then broke down these responses by language spoken at home, country of residence, and education.

Among respondents who speak languages other than Hebrew at home (and thus, we assume, have a non-Israeli spouse), we found that although the scores were still high, they were noticeably lower than among those who speak only Hebrew.

Table 8. “How important to you are the following goals for your children?”; by language spoken at home
Percentage responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”

	Only Hebrew	Other languages
To transmit to my children universal and humanistic values and culture	95%	89%
To transmit to my children Jewish values and culture	59%	55%
To transmit to my children Israeli values and culture	70%	60%
To increase their willingness to speak Hebrew with us via fun activities in Hebrew	79%	75%
That they learn to write and read in Hebrew	89%	67%
To deepen their connection to Jewish traditions and heritage	55%	54%
To foster their interest in Hebrew culture via Hebrew stories and songs	81%	71%
To strengthen their affinity with Israel	61%	60%
That they develop friendships with children with similar identity characteristics	58%	58%
To nurture the Israeli and Jewish components of their complex identity	64%	61%
That my children and I can converse in my mother tongue	92%	75%

Looking at country of residence, we found that respondents in Switzerland place greater importance on transmitting Jewish values and culture, while participants in Italy are particularly devoted to fostering Hebrew language and culture among their children.

Table 9. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"; by country of residence
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"

	UK	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	Switzerland	Denmark
To transmit to my children universal and humanistic values and culture	94%	94%	95%	93%	89%	89%
To transmit to my children Jewish values and culture	53%	48%	59%	64%	72%	50%
To transmit to my children Israeli values and culture	60%	59%	73%	71%	69%	51%
To increase their willingness to speak Hebrew with us via fun activities in Hebrew	78%	73%	84%	93%	80%	71%
That they learn to write and read in Hebrew	74%	73%	86%	93%	89%	55%
To deepen their connection to Jewish traditions and heritage	46%	47%	59%	64%	53%	51%
To foster their interest in Hebrew culture via Hebrew stories and songs	72%	72%	77%	93%	79%	63%
To strengthen their affinity with Israel	51%	54%	63%	64%	71%	58%
That they develop friendships with children with similar identity characteristics	50%	57%	63%	71%	65%	43%
To nurture the Israeli and Jewish components of their complex identity	60%	57%	64%	71%	70%	51%
That my children and I can converse in my mother tongue	86%	81%	84%	79%	89%	73%

Breaking down the data by respondents' education profile, we found that particularly low importance ratings among those with a doctorate or equivalent for transmitting Jewish values and culture, deepening their children's connection to Jewish traditions and heritage, strengthening their children's affinity with Israel, and for their children having friends with Israeli or Jewish backgrounds.

Table 10. "How important to you are the following goals for your children?"; by education profile
Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"

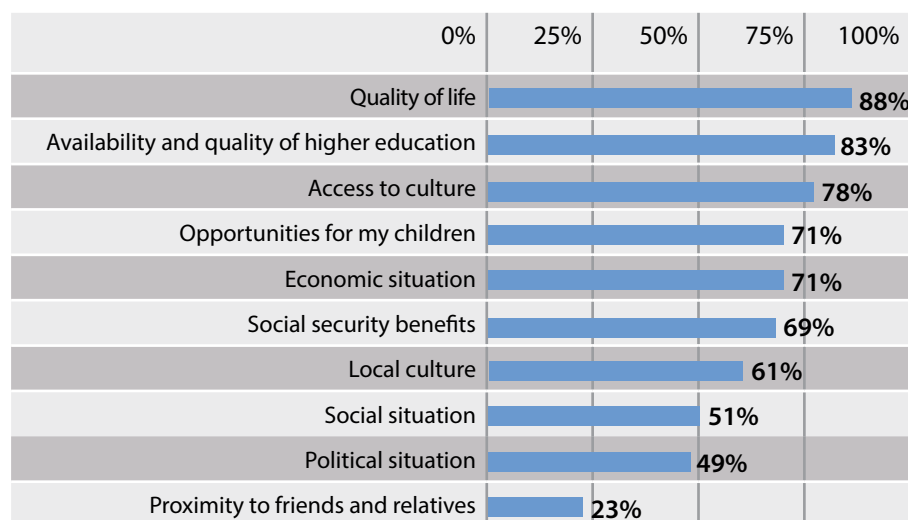
	High school	Non-academic higher education	Under- graduate	Graduate	PhD
To transmit to my children universal and humanistic values and culture	84%	89%	92%	92%	98%
To transmit to my children Jewish values and culture	62%	61%	59%	64%	40%
To transmit to my children Israeli values and culture	81%	69%	64%	69%	62%
To increase their willingness to speak Hebrew with us via fun activities in Hebrew	76%	80%	78%	80%	87%
That they learn to write and read in Hebrew	86%	73%	76%	79%	90%
To deepen their connection to Jewish traditions and heritage	64%	58%	55%	63%	37%
To foster their interest in Hebrew culture via Hebrew stories and songs	83%	76%	73%	82%	78%
To strengthen their affinity with Israel	83%	65%	60%	66%	49%
That they develop friendships with children with similar identity characteristics	69%	67%	61%	61%	48%
To nurture the Israeli and Jewish components of their complex identity	75%	65%	62%	67%	62%
That my children and I can converse in my mother tongue	84%	88%	82%	84%	88%

4. Experience of Life in Europe

Overall, the respondents reported a largely positive experience of living in Europe, with the notable exception of how it affects their relationships with family and friends in Israel. They are particularly happy with their quality of life, the availability and quality of higher education, and access to culture, and are largely satisfied with the economic situation in the countries they inhabit. The aspects of life they rank lowest are the political situation and the social situation in those countries.

Figure 29. "To what degree are you satisfied with the following elements of life in your country of residence?"

Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"



When we analyzed the responses by country of residence, we found that the highest levels of satisfaction were reported by Israelis living in Denmark, with those in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK also being largely happy with their circumstances. Noticeably, Israelis living in Italy are the least satisfied, reporting far lower levels of satisfaction with the economic situation, the political situation, and the social situation than those in other countries, as well as being far less optimistic about their children's prospects.

Table 11. "To what degree are you satisfied with the following elements of life in your country of residence?"; by country of residence

Percentage responding "to a large degree" or "to a very large degree"

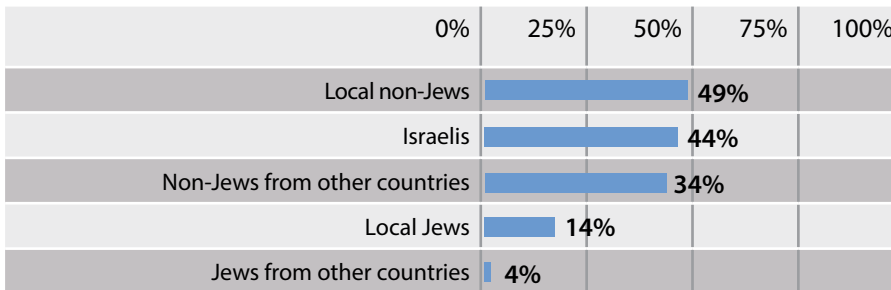
	UK	Netherlands	Germany	Italy	Switzerland	Denmark
Political situation	34%	56%	54%	21%	89%	65%
Economic situation	68%	75%	83%	20%	98%	93%
Social situation	51%	60%	47%	33%	54%	80%
Opportunities for my children	84%	79%	78%	32%	85%	93%
Local culture	75%	64%	57%	69%	46%	82%
Proximity to relatives and friends	15%	20%	17%	21%	16%	40%
Social security benefits	60%	74%	79%	41%	86%	100%
Availability and quality of higher education	81%	85%	90%	74%	90%	98%
Quality of life	84%	93%	90%	65%	98%	100%
Access to culture	84%	82%	80%	65%	66%	93%

Interestingly, respondents who do not participate in the local Jewish community reported being significantly happier with the social situation than those who do, while respondents who have access to a nearby Israeli community are significantly more satisfied than those who don't with the political situation, their quality of life, and their access to culture.

Friendship Circles

We asked the respondents to identify the groups of people with whom they tend to socialize. Multiple responses were permitted. Almost half (49%) reported having local non-Jews among their circle of friends, closely followed by a large minority (44%) who maintain friendships with Israelis. A smaller proportion (34%) cited non-Jews from other parts of the world (that is, other émigrés or “expats”, or members of other “diasporas”), and only a small minority said they count local Jews (14%) or Jews from other parts of the world (4%) in their friendship circles.

Figure 30. Origin of closest friends in current area of residence
Multiple responses permitted



Several respondents spoke about their active desire to integrate with non-Jews and non-Israelis, as an integral part of their assimilation into local or European society:

“The Israelis I know aren’t busy trying to connect to other Israelis but to develop a sense of belonging to the non-Israeli, non-Jewish community, the natural community in which they now live. This is what concerns me and all the people around me I’ve met—being able to connect with a community that is culturally different, and to create a new identity as a European Israeli.” (Female, 36, Paris, France)

“We chose to be here in order to feel that we belong here, not somewhere else.” (Male, 41, Berlin, Germany)

Conclusion

Our study reached a large sample of Israelis living in Europe—close to 900 complete responses, of an estimated total population of 100,000. Moreover, the characteristics of our sample—mainly Israelis in their thirties and forties, with children, having lived nine or ten years in Europe, with a stable residency status—are very much those of the Israeli population in Europe we sought to better understand. These are not transient groups of students, diplomats, or employees on short-term work relocations, but people who are putting down roots, raising families, developing careers, and building relationships with a variety of social circles. These are the Israelis about whom we need to know more in order to understand the opportunities and challenges they present for Jewish life in Europe and beyond.

We found, first and foremost, that Israelis living in some cities in Europe have built and are engaged with diverse forms of Israeli and Hebrew-speaking social networks, not just online, but also in some places comprising real-world educational, social, cultural, and communal frameworks and activities. Where these do not yet exist, our respondents indicated a strong interest to participate and be active in such networks if they were to be established.

We also found that, in contrast to common conceptions, Israelis do engage with local Jewish communities, but in a very specific manner—as consumers of particular events or services that answer their needs, rather than as active community participants or members. The respondents gave three main reasons for their lack of engagement with Jewish communities: the predominant focus of the communities on the religious aspect of Jewish identity, which Israelis feel, does not recognize their own secular Jewish identity, the Israelis' own lack of desire for involvement, and the absence of serious outreach efforts by the Jewish communities towards local Israelis.

Several conclusions arise from these findings. First, it would appear that the long-term presence of large groups of Israelis in countries across Europe is now an established fact. There are, it would seem, thousands of Israelis who have chosen to make their homes and strike roots in Europe, and there is no reason to believe that this trend will not continue. This phenomenon creates opportunities and challenges for organizations and communities involved in Jewish life across Europe, and indeed, around the world.

Second, overwhelmingly these Israelis identify themselves as being secular, Israeli, and Jewish. They seek interaction with other Israelis, because their Israeli identity is an important part of their own sense of self (and, they hope, will be a large part of their children's identity), and they have a need to connect with others who share the same language, culture, and heritage, although not exclusively. They are not intrinsically opposed to engaging with local Jewish communities, but they do have a keen sense of difference from them in terms of their own secular, Hebrew-speaking Jewishness, and feel that the Jewish communities lack the will or the ability to engage with them on their own terms. There is thus much that could be done by Jewish (and Israeli) organizations to help meet the needs of Israelis living in Europe.

Efforts to engage with these individuals should begin with the networks they have already built for themselves. The guiding question should be: What needs are fulfilled by creating their own networks, and how can we help support and expand these networks to better meet those needs? As stated, our findings indicate that these needs revolve around cultural interests, common language, and a sense of shared belonging, as well as a desire to transmit Israeli and Hebrew identity elements to the next generation.

Thus, for local Jewish communities seeking to engage with Israelis, the question is not “how to bring Israelis into our community?”, but rather: “What are the areas of common interest that we share, and how can we help each other meet our needs and our goals?”.

Beyond these ideas for practitioners, we also believe that our findings invite further research. In particular, we would welcome more in-depth, qualitative research into these Israelis’ perception of their own hybrid identity: What precisely do they understand by the terms “Jewish”, “Israeli”, “secular”, and so on, in terms of beliefs, values, and practices? And what is their national self-perception now—for example, do they see themselves as Israelis living in Germany, or Germans originally from Israel? In addition, we estimate that there is much to be learned by qualitative research into their motivations and goals, via such questions as: Why have you chosen to live in Europe rather than Israel? Where do you see yourselves in the long term? What are your hopes for your children, in terms of where they live, their nationality, and their identity?

Further, we think that these findings also indicate an opportunity for conducting research into European Jewish communities and their perceptions of local Israelis and their networks. Such research would provide more insight into how local Jewish communities understand the challenges and opportunities presented by Israelis living in Europe.

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

<http://www.jdc-iccd.org>

Machon Kehilot supports and advises local leaders and activists seeking to establish communal frameworks for Israelis and Hebrew speakers in their regions, and helps them develop and implement plans that enhance community resilience.

<http://kehilot.wixsite.com/about-us/kehilot-institute>