Germany and Israel today

Between stability and tension

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Foreword

Stephan Vopel

Due to its history, Germany bears a special responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel. As a result, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, like many other individuals and organizations, has long been committed to strengthening German-Israeli relations. In the past decades, an extensive network has developed to promote dialogue and cooperation between the two countries in a wide range of areas, such as education, science, culture, civil society, politics and business.

The environment in which these relations exist today has changed dramatically, however. The terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, the war in Gaza and the waves of antisemitic rhetoric and violence in Germany and many other parts of the world are putting German-Israeli relations to the test. The repercussions extend far beyond Israel, having exposed social tensions and political polarization in Germany as well. The heatedly debated topics include solidarity and human rights, moral obligations and a realpolitik based on security considerations.

These changed conditions have also shaped this expanded study, with which the Bertelsmann Stiftung is continuing its series of in-depth analyses of German-Israeli perceptions and attitudes, following studies in 2007, 2013 and 2021. The present study builds on the compact evaluation published in May 2025. Its more detailed analysis includes all the surveyed items, providing a comprehensive and nuanced picture of German and Israeli viewpoints. While the findings for Israel show continued high levels of trust in Germany, understanding of Israel is declining in Germany – not least in response to the war, but also as an expression of broader social alienation.

At the same time, it is clear that although the foundation underlying these relations is stable, it can no longer be taken for granted. Efforts to commemorate the past are no longer enough to sustain the relationship. They must be combined with political education, critical reflection and an open, respectful dialogue on the present and future of the countries' bilateral relations.

Our study shows that relations between Germany and Israel are now more ambivalent than ever – but also that they benefit from resilient structures capable of sustaining them. It is this tension between closeness and contrast that provides an opportunity to rethink and reshape the relationship.

We would like to thank the study's authors Jenny Hestermann, Lutz Ickstadt and Magnus Wagner for analyzing and evaluating the results, as well as polytix strategic research in Germany and New Wave Research in Israel for conducting the surveys. We extend our special thanks to Prof. Dan Diner for his afterword, which offers a clear yet sensitive analysis of the current discursive shifts shaping German perceptions of Israel.

May this study help to sharpen mutual perceptions in these challenging times – and draw attention to what, regardless of the tensions, unites most people in both countries: the common pursuit of democracy, freedom, security and understanding.

Introduction

Relations between Germany and Israel are unique. Shaped by the memory of the Shoah and driven by the desire to draw practical conclusions for the present day, they are considered "special." But what does this uniqueness mean in 2025? Have the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023 and Israel's subsequent war against Hamas in Gaza left their mark on the countries' bilateral relations? How do Germans and Israelis view each other now? What expectations and images shape their relationship? And which responsibilities arise as a result, in a time of growing geopolitical tensions and social polarization?

Based on a representative survey carried out in both countries, our latest study on how Israelis and Germans perceive each other provides revealing insights into these and other issues, including how both societies see themselves politically, the role of history for the present, expectations of Germany's Middle East policy, and perceptions of antisemitism and international responsibility.

With this study, the Bertelsmann Stiftung continues its long-standing series of empirical analyses examining German-Israeli relations and their development. The study is being published at a time when the war triggered by the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the war's aftermath continue to shape relations between Germany and Israel. Even beyond the immediate events of the war, political debates, social controversies, and public perceptions in both countries have undergone lasting changes. In Germany and Israel, questions of solidarity and criticism, historical responsibility, security and human rights are being discussed more intensely and controversially than ever before. German-Israeli relations are thus not only facing a short-term test, but are in a phase of long-term realignment – which is all the more reason to take a closer look, re-examine mutual perceptions and engage in critical self-examination.

Overall, our findings paint an ambivalent picture: On the one hand, broad support for democracy in both countries provides a reliable common foundation; on the other, satisfaction with democracy's practical implementation is waning, especially in Israel.

And even though the memory of the Holocaust remains a lasting point of reference for both countries, the expectations associated with it are drifting apart. This is evident both in the question of whether Germany has a special responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel, and in the form this responsibility takes. In Israel, expectations are generally much more concrete and tied to Israel itself while, in Germany, what the younger generation in particular infers from the Holocaust is a more general responsibility for universal human rights.

When it comes to assessing antisemitism in German society, opinions in the two countries differ. In Germany, this problem is seen as less significant, and the prevailing view is that German politicians are already doing enough to ensure the safety of Jewish people. Israelis view the situation much more critically, a perspective more in line with the reality that antisemitic crimes have increased in Germany.

A more in-depth analysis of the findings in both countries yields informative insights. As expected, differences between Jewish and Arab respondents play a particularly important role in Israel, as the latter have no familial or biographical connections to the Holocaust. In Germany, differences between the country's eastern and western regions are not the relevant factor, as might be expected, but rather age, political affiliation and gender. Men are much more likely to assume that Jews in Germany live in safety and that politicians are doing enough to ensure this is the case. They feel there is less discrimination and hold more traditionally antisemitic views. The rise in antisemitic attitudes among young people is particularly alarming. Such attitudes are most prevalent among AfD[1] voters and least common among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens.

These empirical findings and the trends that have become evident since our last survey are food for thought and debate. In emotionally charged times, they can help clarify the situation by giving it a more objective framework. Ideally, they can help us reflect on what has been achieved in German-Israeli relations so far. They can also help us answer the question of how we, Germans and Israelis, want to shape – and how we can shape – our relationship responsibly in the future.

How the study is designed

In this study, we examine differences in attitudes based on socio-demographic factors and political viewpoints. We have taken into account the specific characteristics of each society: For the German sample, we differentiated according to age, gender, level of formal education, and place of residence in eastern or western Germany. We also differentiated between supporters of the parties represented in the Bundestag, Germany's parliament: CDU/CSU, AfD, SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, and The Left.

In the Israeli sample, age and gender were considered, along with whether a respondent is a member of the country's Jewish or Arab population. Within the Jewish population, we also distinguished between different forms of religiosity. To do this, we based our analysis on the Jewish respondents' self-assessment of their religious attitudes as secular, traditional, religious or ultra-Orthodox. Israeli society is structured to a considerable extent along these religious lines, even if the boundaries are not always clearly defined. We therefore provide a brief overview below of the most important groups to which we refer in this study.[2]

Secular (Hilonim) – approximately 45 percent; generally no religious practice, Jewish laws are not considered binding; see themselves as part of a modern, Western-influenced society; politically often located in the center or on the liberal side of the political spectrum; predominantly of Ashkenazi descent.

Traditional (Masortim) – approximately 33 percent; follow religious practices selectively, such as observing holidays, but are less strict about everyday rules; serve as a bridge between secular and religious groups; often politically right-wing or center-right; frequently of Sephardic/Mizrahi descent.

Religious (Datiim) – approximately 12 percent; consider Jewish laws to be binding, but combine religious practice with involvement in secular areas (e.g. education, employment); strong link between Judaism and Zionism; nationalist religious movement influences settlement activities in particular; strongly represented politically in nationalist religious parties (e.g. HaTzionut HaDatit).

1 The abbreviations used in this study for Germany's political parties are: CDU – Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union); CSU – Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union); SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party); and AfD – Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany).

2 Percentages refer to Israel's Jewish population (as of 2022).

Ultra-Orthodox (Haredim) – approximately 10 percent; strict observance of Halakha (Jewish law), autonomous school systems and institutions; separation from secular influences and widespread rejection of Zionist principles underlying the state, even though political parties benefit greatly from state funding; affiliated politically primarily with Shas (Sephardic) and United Torah Judaism (Ashkenazi).

When it comes to party affiliation, we differentiated between supporters of the four largest parties in Israel's Knesset, since only here were sufficient sample sizes available.[3] The study therefore includes findings for the governing parties Likud and HaTzionut HaDatit (including Otzma Yehudit) as well as the opposition parties Yesh Atid and HaMahane HaMamlakhti. Below, we provide a brief overview of these four main parties.

Likud – conservative nationalist party; one of Israel's dominant political forces for decades, currently forms the government. Its main focus is on security policy, economic liberalism and traditional national values.

HaTzionut HaDatit ("Religious Zionism") – alliance of nationalist religious parties; strongly linked to the settlement movement in the West Bank. Emphasizes national identity, religion and security.

Yesh Atid ("There Is a Future") – centrist-liberal party founded by Yair Lapid. Focus on modernization, civil rights, social justice and pragmatic foreign policy.

HaMahane HaMamlakhti ("State Camp") – center-right alliance led by Benny Gantz and Gideon Sa'ar. Emphasizes security-oriented policies, institutional stability and pragmatic governance.

3 The parties were selected on the basis of a sample size of n ≥ 99, which promises robust results. Consequently, parties belonging to other camps in Israeli politics are not represented in this selection. These include the ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, the Arab party Ra'am, and parties on the left of the political spectrum, such as HaDemokratim and Hadash-Ta'al.

The migration history of Jewish families also makes a difference in Israel, as European (Ashkenazi) or Arab (Sephardic[4]) origins still influence social position and political representation in various parties. However, due to the lack of clear distinctions between the two groups and the prioritization of other issues, this factor has been omitted from the study.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected by pollytix strategic research gmbh on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, a task carried out in Israel by the partner institute New Wave. While the data were collected entirely online in Germany (CAWI: Computer-Assisted Web Interview), a hybrid model of online and telephone interviews was used in Israel (CAWI and CATI: Computer Assisted Telephone Interview).

A total of 1,346 people were surveyed in Germany and 1,367 in Israel. In Germany, eligible voters aged 18 and over were included; in Israel, the resident population aged 18 and over served as the basis for the study. The survey took place between February 24 and March 25, 2025.

To ensure the findings are representative, the data were weighted according to official statistics. The maximum statistical margin of error is ± 2.7 percentage points for the German sample and ± 2.6 percentage points for the Israeli sample, with a 95-percent confidence interval for each.

We have included some questions from previous surveys in the present study to make ongoing trends comprehensible; others have been added to reflect current social and political developments in the bilateral relationship.

4 Sephardic Jews originally came from the Iberian Peninsula. After their expulsion at the end of the 15th century, they settled mainly in the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. There is therefore some overlap with the term Mizrahim, which refers primarily to Jews from the Arab world in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Attitudes towards democracy

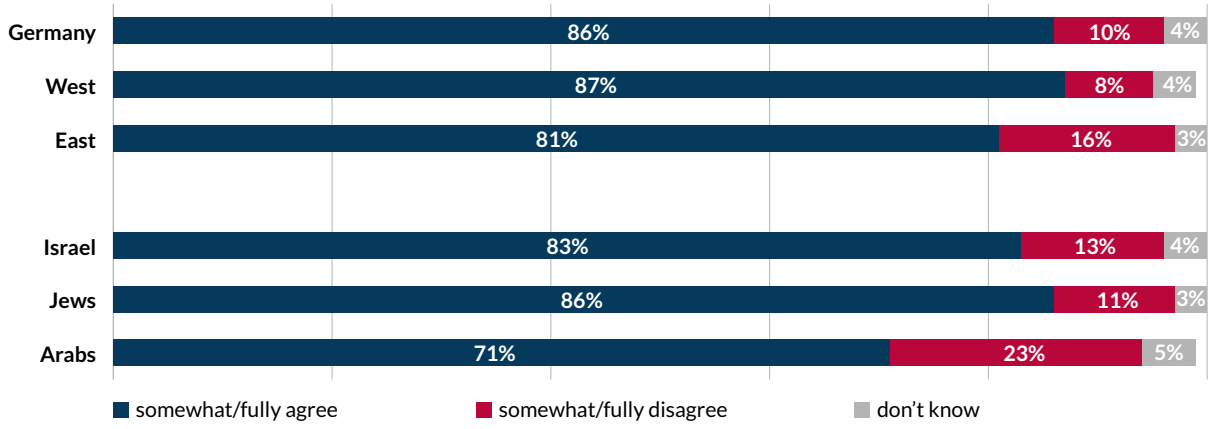
For about a decade now, democracies around the world have been under increasing pressure – due to external authoritarian influences and internal political dynamics. Right-wing populist and far-right parties are gaining support in many European countries; as a result, several states – including Israel – have seen fierce disputes over the independence of the judiciary. The Covid pandemic had a profound impact on people's everyday lives and led to growing mistrust of government. At the same time, public debate has increasingly shifted to the digital sphere, especially to social media, where echo chambers have eroded shared perceptions of reality. In light of these overlapping crises, we wanted to know how people in Germany and Israel view democracy as a form of government and how satisfied they are with it.

Democracy as a form of government

First, we asked about basic attitudes towards democracy as a form of government. Here, agreement rates are very high in both countries (Fig. 1): In Germany, 86 percent of respondents say that democracy is the best form of government, with a similarly high level of agreement in Israel, at 83 percent. However, there has been a slight decline in both countries since 2021 – by two percentage points in Germany and by as much as six percentage points in Israel.

Support for democracy varies between different demographic groups and reflects different experiences: In Germany, approval of democracy is particularly high among those over the age of 60 (90 percent) and among respondents with a higher level of education (93 percent).

Figure 1 | **Is democracy the best form of government?**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the statement: "Democracy is the best form of government." Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

There are only slight differences between eastern and western Germany (81 and 87 percent, respectively). This is remarkable, given that political socialization in the two regions after 1949 was fundamentally different – with the German Democratic Republic home to state socialism in the east and the Federal Republic of Germany having a democratic culture in the west.

The slightly lower agreement rate in Germany's new eastern states is linked to the stronger support for the AfD in this area: While more than 85 percent of CDU/CSU, SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, and The Left party voters see democracy as the best form of government, the agreement rate among AfD voters is significantly lower, at 75 percent. However, this discrepancy suggests differences in the assessment of democracy as a form of government rather than a fundamental repudiation of democracy per se.

In Israel, differences in attitudes between Jewish and Arab Israelis are particularly striking. Among Jewish Israelis, approval of democracy as the best form of government is significantly higher (86 percent) than among Arab Israelis (71 percent). However, since our last survey in 2021, both figures have fallen and the gap between them has widened. At that time, 84 percent of Arabs and 91 percent of Jews still considered democracy to be the best form of government. The 13-percentage-point drop in approval among Arab Israelis is probably also related to changes in the political balance of power: While the Arab party Ra'am was still part of an eight-party coalition government in 2021, openly anti-Arab parties have participated in the current governing coalition since the end of 2022. This would suggest that perceptions of the present political situation also influence more fundamental attitudes towards democracy.

Compared to less religious Jews, support for democracy as a form of government is lowest in ultra-Orthodox circles; nevertheless, at 67 percent, support here is remarkably high, given that the ultra-Orthodox traditionally reject the idea of a man-made state, as opposed to one promised by God. In addition, this religious group strictly rejects inclusion in universal conscription, thereby opposing an obligation that otherwise applies to all citizens.

When it comes to party affiliation, it is striking that support for democracy as the best form of government is particularly high among supporters of Likud, Yesh Atid and HaMahane HaMamlakhti – the parties that can be classified as centrist – where it ranges from 92 to 95 percent, closely followed, at 88 percent, by those who support the nationalist religious party HaTzionut HaDatit. Here, too, the responses apparently reflect an assessment of the prevailing political situation – something that is particularly evident in the low agreement rates among Arab and left-wing voters.

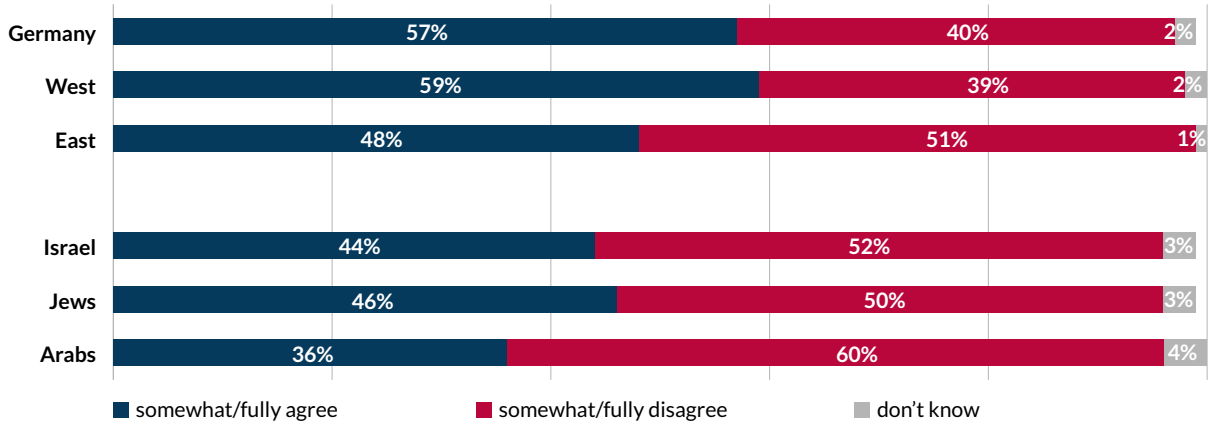
Satisfaction with democracy in practice

Compared to the fundamental approval of democracy as a form of government, satisfaction with its concrete implementation is significantly lower in both countries (Fig. 2, page 11). In Germany, 57 percent say they are satisfied with democracy as it currently exists. This is a significant decline from 2021, when 66 percent expressed the same sentiment. In Israel, satisfaction is even lower. Here, 44 percent of respondents say they are satisfied, also a sharp decline from the 52 percent recorded in the 2021 survey.

In Germany, the findings for party affiliation are similar to those for approval of democracy as the best form of government: Supporters of the CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens are very satisfied with democracy as it currently exists (71 to 84 percent), while supporters of The Left party are significantly less satisfied (56 percent). The most dissatisfied are AfD voters, at 20 percent – which is in line with how the party sees itself, i.e. as fundamentally questioning the political system.

In Israel, the pattern here is also somewhat similar to the responses to democracy as a form of government. Arab Israelis are particularly dissatisfied

Figure 2 | **Satisfaction with democracy**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the statement: "All in all, I am satisfied with democracy as it exists in Germany/ Israel." Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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with democracy as it currently exists (60 percent), while just under half of Jewish Israelis (46 percent) are satisfied. When broken down by religiosity, the picture changes: Groups that strongly endorse democracy as a form of government are often dissatisfied with its practical implementation in Israel – and vice versa. Only 37 percent of secular Jews and 47 percent of traditional Jews say they are satisfied with today's democracy. Yet despite lower agreement that democracy is the best form of government, religious Jews mostly have a positive view of current democratic practice, at 58 percent. Ultra-Orthodox Jews are an exception here, since the degree to which they express fundamental agreement is largely equivalent to their satisfaction with how democracy is being implemented in practice (61 percent). Here, too, as with religious Jews as a whole, the composition of the governing coalition, which is historically new in its current form, most likely plays a role. The ultra-Orthodox parties are strongly represented in it through Shas and United Torah Judaism and, along with the presence of HaTzionut HaDatit, a greater emphasis is being placed on the state of Israel's Jewish religious identity. This aspect has always been part of social debates between secular and religious Jews – for example, in the disputes over civil marriage, public transportation on Shabbat, or building settlements in the West Bank.

Clear differences also emerge depending on party affiliation: Only among supporters of the ruling Likud party does a majority express satisfaction with the current state of democracy. Satisfaction is lower among voters of other parties (40 to 42 percent). The main reasons for this could be the controversial judicial reform, the war in Gaza, and the influence of the far-right party HaTzionut HaDatit under Bezalel Smotrich as part of the ruling government.

The results reveal broad support for democracy as a form of government in both countries. However, it is also clear that satisfaction with its current implementation is low. This is particularly true in Israel. Differences there can mainly be found between the country's Jewish and Arab populations as well as between religious and secular groups, while in Germany attitudes vary more by age, education and party affiliation. Overall, the findings suggest that different social groups increasingly have different views about whether or not democracy works.

German-Israeli relations today

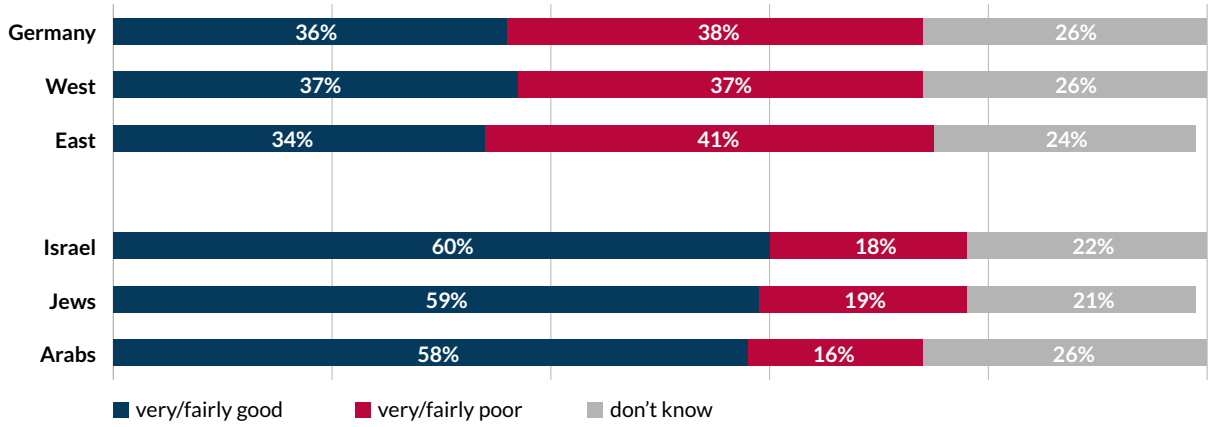
At official events, speakers often emphasize the special friendship between Germany and Israel – one based on shared values, historical responsibility and close partnership. But how do ordinary citizens in both countries view the relationship, and how do they perceive the other country?

Mutual perceptions

Our survey shows that the majority of Israelis have a positive attitude towards Germany (Fig. 3), with 60 percent of respondents in Israel saying they have a "fairly good" or "very good" opinion of Germany. Conversely, the situation is significantly less favorable, with only 36 percent of Germans having a positive opinion of Israel. Compared to 2021, it is clear that attitudes in both countries have become somewhat more negative: In Israel, the share of those with a positive opinion of Germany has fallen by three percentage points, while the figure for Germans who view Israel favorably has decreased by ten percentage points. The differences must undoubtedly be seen in the context of the public debate surrounding the war in Gaza since October 2023.

For both – the rather positive image of Germany in Israel and the more critical image of Israel in Germany – clear differences can be observed between social groups, particularly in terms of age and party affiliation.

Figure 3 | **How Israelis and Germans perceive each other**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question (asked of the respective country): "What do you think in general about Israel/Germany today? Do you have a very good, a fairly good, a fairly poor or a very poor opinion of Israel/Germany?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

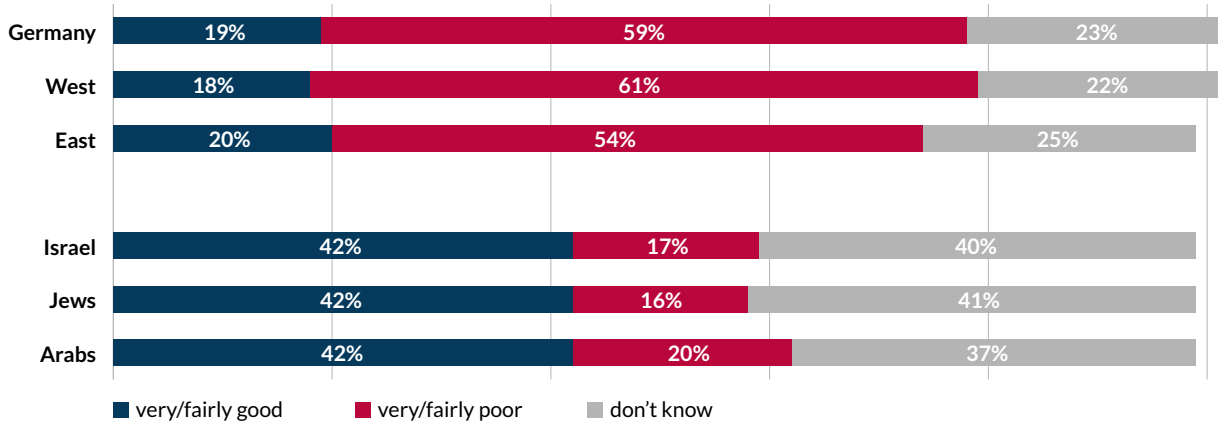
In Germany, 42 percent of people aged 60 and over have a fairly good or very good opinion of Israel, while only 31 percent among those under 40 feel this way. Opinions also differ according to party affiliation: CDU/CSU voters are most likely to express positive views of Israel (46 percent), followed by SPD (45 percent) and Alliance 90/The Greens (41 percent) voters. Among supporters of The Left party and the AfD, on the other hand, just under half have a rather or fairly poor opinion of Israel. Overall, the majority of those in the center of German society continue to have a positive attitude towards Israel, while the political fringes, which have grown stronger since the 2025 national election, take a much more critical stance.

In Israel, differences are particularly evident between genders and, again, between religious affiliations. While 65 percent of men have a fairly good or very good opinion of Germany, only 55 percent of women feel the same. Secular Jews are most likely to express positive views about Germany (66 percent), followed by religious (62 percent), traditional (58 percent) and ultra-Orthodox (45 percent) respondents. Possible explanations range from professional and academic connections to Europe to a more intercultural socialization among secular Jews.

A similar picture emerges with regard to the respective governments, although the differences between German and Israeli perceptions are even more pronounced here (Fig. 4). A majority of German respondents (59 percent) have a negative opinion of the Israeli government (2021: 43 percent). In contrast, significantly more Israeli respondents have a positive (42 percent) than a negative (17 percent) opinion of the current German government. Nevertheless, a comparison over time shows that skepticism towards the German government has increased significantly, as 55 percent of Israelis still had a positive view in 2021. Now, 40 percent say they do not know what they think about the German government.

While there are no significant differences in Germany based on gender and party affiliation, social differences in Israel are more pronounced: Arab Israelis are more likely to have a fairly poor or very poor opinion of the German government (20 percent) than Jewish Israelis (16 percent). The differences are even more pronounced when it comes to religious affiliation, with only 12 percent of secular Jews expressing a negative opinion of Germany's government, while one in three ultra-Orthodox respondents has a fairly poor or very poor opinion.

Figure 4 | **How Israelis and Germans perceive the other country's government**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question (asked of the respective country): "What do you think in general about the government of Israel/Germany today? Do you have a very good, a fairly good, a fairly poor or a very poor opinion of the current government of Israel/Germany?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

Perceptions of German-Israeli relations

Despite this skepticism towards each other's government, the more general German-Israeli relationship is viewed positively in both countries (Fig. 5), something we surveyed for the first time in this poll. The findings show that 51 percent of German respondents and 77 percent of Israeli respondents rate the relationship between the two countries as fairly good or very good.

In Germany, differences are particularly evident in terms of gender and age, with men (59 percent) more likely to view German-Israeli relations positively than women (43 percent), and people over the age of 60 (62 percent) having a significantly better opinion than those under the age of 40 (40 percent). In addition, a majority of CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens voters (63 to 66 percent) view German-Israeli relations positively. The Left party voters (42 percent) and especially those who support the AfD (34 percent) view the relationship more negatively. The groups that have a poorer overall image of Israel also tend to view German-Israeli relations more critically.

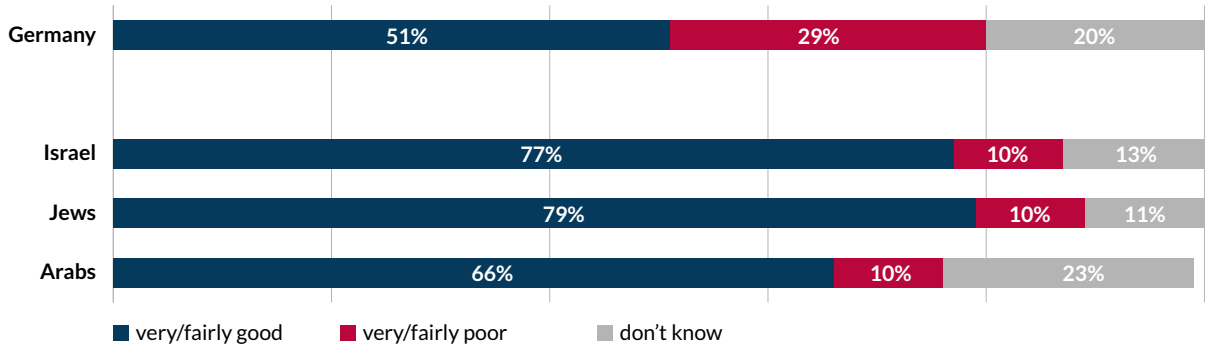
The differences discussed above are evident in Israel, too, with Jewish respondents viewing German-Israeli relations significantly more positively (79 percent) than Arab respondents (at a comparatively high 66 percent). Among the Jewish cohort, secular (83 percent) and religious (81 percent) respondents stand out as having particularly positive attitudes. Among voters for the governing coalition and the centrist opposition party led by Benny Gantz, the picture is consistently very positive, with agreement rates ranging from 80 percent (HaTzionut HaDatit) to 92 percent (HaMahane HaMamlakhti).

This suggests that assessments of German-Israeli relations run less along religious lines and are influenced more by party politics.

We also asked what significance German-Israeli relations should have. Here, a clear discrepancy becomes apparent: While only 29 percent of Germans attach particular importance to these relations, three-quarters (75 percent) of Israelis do so (Fig. 6, page 15).

Gender and age once again play a key role in Germany, where men are more likely than women (33 percent to 24 percent, respectively) to believe that German-Israeli relations should be given special importance, as are those over the age of 60 (34 percent) compared to younger respondents (22 percent). A look at party affiliation shows that only supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens are more likely to

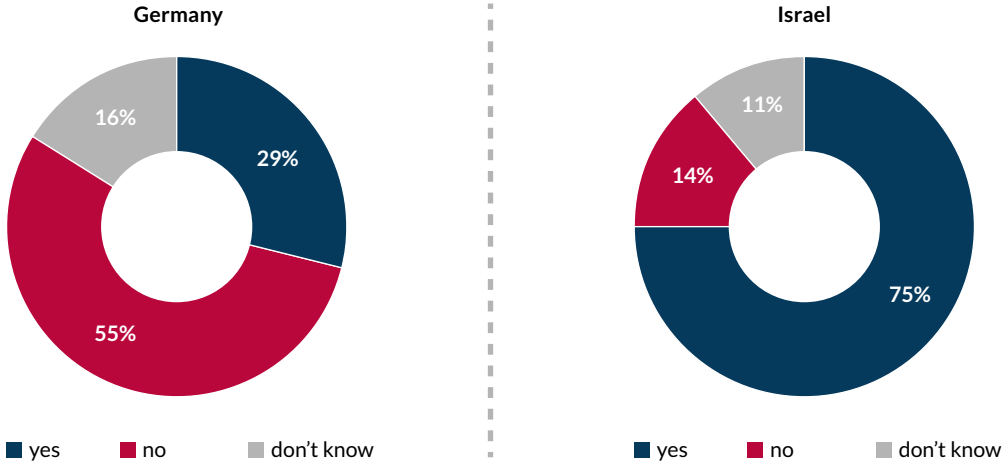
Figure 5 | **German-Israeli relations**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "How would you assess German-Israeli relations at present?"
Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

Figure 6 | **Significance of German-Israeli relations**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Should relations with Israel have a special significance for Germany compared to other countries?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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be in favor of granting the two countries' relations special importance (48 percent) than against it (37 percent). SPD voters are divided between endorsing (43 percent) and opposing it (46 percent). The majority of The Left party (51 percent) and AfD (69 percent) voters reject giving German-Israeli relations a special significance. Among CDU/CSU supporters, a majority (55 percent) also reject this view – a result that is somewhat inconsistent with the traditional attitudes associated with this party.

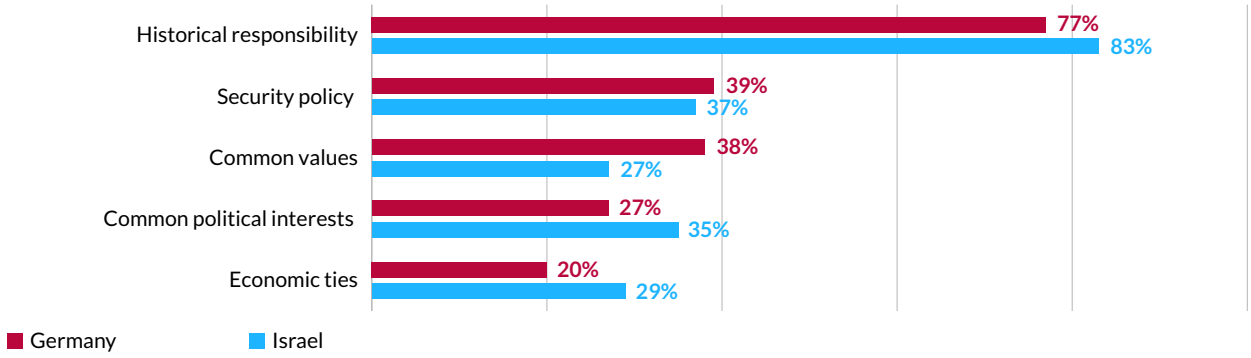
In Israel, too, men (79 percent) are slightly more likely than women (72 percent) to say that Germany's relations with Israel should have a special significance. The difference between Jewish and Arab Israelis is particularly striking, with 83 percent of the former emphasizing the relations' special significance, and only 43 percent of the latter doing so. With regard to Jewish religiosity, the findings show that non-secular Jews in particular (85 to 91 percent) are in favor of Israel having a special place in Germany's foreign relations.

In light of the findings on the previous questions, it can be concluded that the majority of secular Jews have a positive image of Germany and German-Israeli relations and are less inclined to believe that they should be given special importance. It is primarily the religious and traditional groups that call for Israel to be given special importance in German foreign policy. In terms of party affiliation, the picture here is also very consistent, with agreement rates ranging from 81 percent (Yesh Atid) to 89 percent (Likud).

Despite differing expectations and assessments in both countries, the rationale for according German-Israeli relations special significance derives from a common understanding (Fig. 7, page 16): In both countries, the most frequently cited reason is Germany's historical responsibility towards Israel as a Jewish state. Among those surveyed who endorse the relationship's special importance, 77 percent (Germany) and 83 percent (Israel) attribute this to Germany's past and thus its responsibility for the Holocaust.

Security policy aspects are the second most-cited reason in both countries (39 percent in Germany, 37 percent in Israel). The two are clearly linked, as remembrance of the Holocaust means more than just (self-)critical reflection on the past. It also

Figure 7 | **Reasons for the special significance of German-Israeli relations**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Why should relations with Israel have a special significance?" Excluded responses: "none of the above" and "don't know." Multiple responses possible; percentages therefore do not total 100.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel) who say that relations with Israel should have a special significance for Germany compared to other countries (Germany n = 365, Israel n = 943); weighted results; own depiction.

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provides an inherent motive for taking action, insofar as this remembrance is linked to a specifically German responsibility for Israel's security. Opinions differ more widely on other possible reasons for the special significance of German-Israeli relations: In Germany, 38 percent note the countries' shared values, while in Israel, shared political interests (35 percent) and the economic importance of the countries' relationship (29 percent) receive greater emphasis.

There are hardly any differences here when party affiliation is considered. In Germany, all voter groups cite historical responsibility towards Israel as the primary reason. The range extends from 61 percent (AfD) to 91 percent (Alliance 90/The Greens). Once again, it is supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens – more than those of the CDU/CSU, which is traditionally considered a pro-Israel party – who endorse the importance of good relations with Israel as part of Germany's culture of remembrance. There is also broad agreement on this point in Israel, where, depending on party affiliation, between 86 percent (HaTzionut HaDatit) and 91 percent (HaMahane HaMamlakhti) agree.

As a result, historical responsibility remains a central point of reference in both countries, across party lines in Germany and across almost all political camps in Israel. Differences have less to do with acknowledgement than emphasis: In Germany, the focus is on the culture of remembrance and on values, while in Israel, more pragmatic motives such as security and economic interests prevail.

Beyond these fundamentally positive attitudes, however, initial cracks in the countries' special relationship are beginning to show. While in Israel there is still a strong awareness of Germany's historical responsibility, this attitude is losing importance in Germany, which is particularly evident among younger respondents and when looking at voting patterns. Factors contributing to this development might include discussions about arms supplies, Palestinian protests in German cities and at its universities, and the German government's stance on the war in Gaza. It is striking that in 2025, only slightly more than a quarter of German respondents consider relations with Israel to be particularly important. This raises the question of how important the memory of the Holocaust still is in German society today.

Remembering the Holocaust, commemoration and responsibility

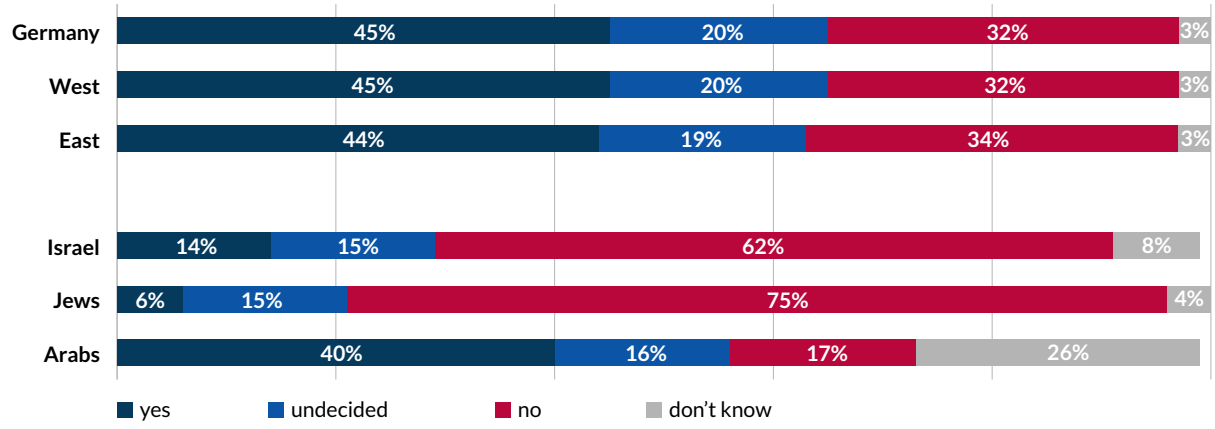
There is no doubt that German-Israeli relations have been significantly shaped by the memory of the Holocaust and the political and social convictions that have grown out of it. Should this continue to be the case in the future, or will future generations in Germany and Israel want a relationship that is less influenced by this past? This section focuses on the connections between the past, present and future.

Significance of the Nazi past for politics and relations

Markedly more people in Israel attach importance to this memory than in Germany (Fig. 8). This is also confirmed by the question of whether it is time to draw a line under the past. While only around one in three people in Germany (32 percent) reject this idea, almost twice as many do so in Israel (62 percent).

The German survey reveals differences based on education in particular. Among respondents with a low level of education, only 25 percent refuse to draw a line under the past and the Holocaust, while among those with more education, the figure is 41 percent. Party affiliation also plays a role, with 63 percent of

Figure 8 | **We should leave the past behind. Yes or no?**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Today, almost 80 years after the end of the Second World War, we should stop talking so much about the persecution of Jews under the Nazis and finally leave the past behind. Do you think that is true, yes or no?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

AfD voters in favor of leaving the past behind, and only 14 percent of Alliance 90/The Greens voters agreeing this is the right thing to do.

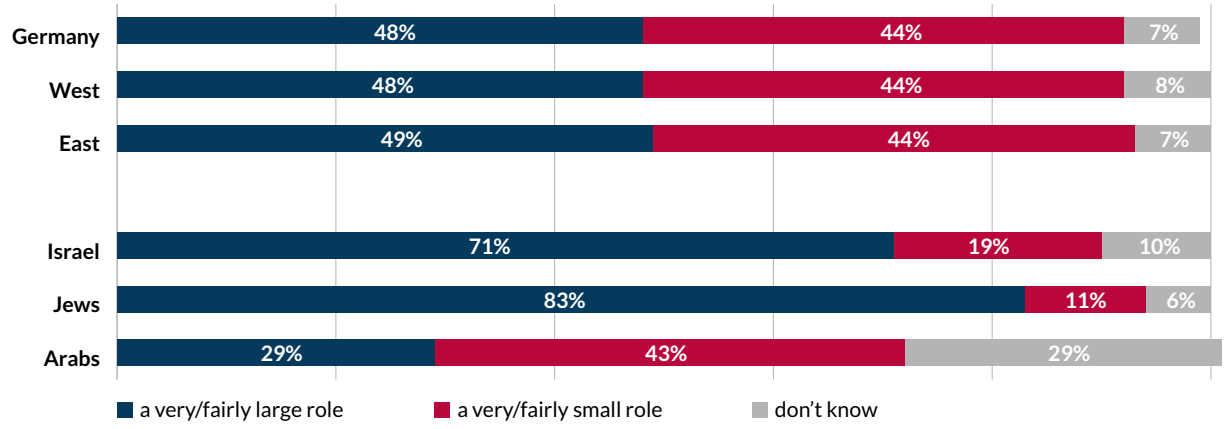
It is clear that the memory of the Holocaust is a central point of reference, especially for Jewish Israelis, while it plays a lesser role for Arab Israelis, who have had no historical experience of it themselves. While 75 percent of Israel's Jewish citizens are against leaving the past behind, only 17 percent of Arab Israelis feel this way. Of the Arab Israelis surveyed, 40 percent even expressly advocate drawing a line under the Nazi past. Within Israel's Jewish population, attitudes vary according to religious orientation. Religious and ultra-Orthodox respondents clearly reject drawing a line under the past, at 85 and 86 percent, respectively, while among traditional and secular Jews the figure is 70 percent. The fact that around 30 percent of people in these groups are undecided or in favor of the idea also has to do with the fact that the term "drawing a line under the past" has a different meaning in Israel than it does in Germany. In Israel, it is more often interpreted as a call to put a greater focus on taking responsibility for shaping the present and the future. In Germany, on the other hand, it is associated with a departure from how the Federal Republic has defined itself since 1945 – a difference that illustrates the central role that the culture of remembrance plays in German attitudes.

Should this remembrance continue to play a major role in German politics in the future? Support for this idea has risen slightly in Germany (Fig. 9), where a relative majority of 48 percent want commemorating the Holocaust to play a fairly or very large role, up from 43 percent in 2021. In Israel, the figure is 71 percent, seven percentage points higher than in 2021 – further proof that "drawing a line under the past" is interpreted differently there.

In Germany, respondents with a high level of education are more prone, at 56 percent, to say that remembering the Holocaust should play a major role in German politics. Age is also a factor: At 52 percent, respondents under 40 are the most likely to feel it is important to commemorate the Holocaust in the political context.

In terms of political affiliation, it is again supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (72 percent) and The Left party (71 percent) who most often endorse the Ho-

Figure 9 | **Significance of the memory of the Holocaust for German politics**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Should the memory of the Holocaust play a very large, fairly large, fairly small or very small role in current and future German politics?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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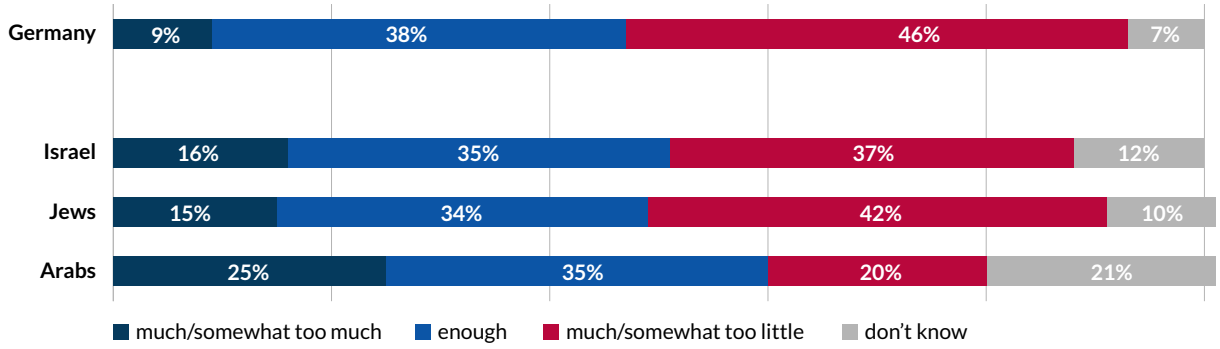
locaust playing a fairly or very large role in German politics. At 26 percent, AfD voters are least likely to agree with this idea.

In Israel, Jewish respondents, at 83 percent, are significantly more likely than Arab respondents, at 29 percent, to say that remembrance of the Holocaust should play a fairly or very large role in German politics. For 43 percent of Arab Israelis, it should play a fairly or very small role. Especially in religious (89 percent) and ultra-Orthodox (93 percent) circles, the majority of respondents expect the memory of the Holocaust to remain central to German politics. The greatest support for a strong culture of remembrance comes from HaTzionut HaDatit voters, at 90 percent. The lowest level can be found among supporters of Yesh Atid (74 percent: remembrance should play a fairly/very large role; 20 percent: a fairly/very small role). The results underscore the importance for Israel's Jewish population of Germany's ongoing remembrance of the Holocaust – presumably also out of concern that demands for realigning Germany's policy towards Israel, as have been expressed more frequently recently, could gain momentum.

The Holocaust as a subject in school

The memory of the Holocaust continues to be seen by large parts of both societies as an important part of bilateral relations. However, as the historical events recede further into the past, it is becoming increasingly challenging to convey the culture of remembrance to the younger generation. We therefore asked respondents whether they believed that schoolchildren learn enough about the Holocaust. The picture is similar in both countries (Fig. 10). In Germany, 46 percent (2021: 43 percent) of respondents feel that schoolchildren learn little or far too little about the Holocaust. Only 9 percent believe that this topic is covered too much or far too much, while slightly more than one-third assume that the history of the Holocaust is sufficiently covered in the classroom. The results thus contradict the frequently expressed idea that German schools teach "too much" about the Holocaust. Instead, it appears that only a small minority of respondents feel this way. In Israel, the picture is mixed, with 37 percent believing that students learn too little about the Holocaust, and 35 percent considering what is taught to be sufficient.

Figure 10 | **Learning about the Holocaust**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you think that school students in Germany/Israel learn much/somewhat too much, enough, much/somewhat too little about the Holocaust?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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In Germany, women (48 percent) are more likely than men (43 percent) to feel that Holocaust education in schools is insufficient. However, the difference between the generations is more pronounced, in that more than half of those surveyed over the age of 60 (53 percent) believe that students are not taught enough about the Holocaust in German schools, while those under 40 are least likely to feel this way, at 41 percent.

Party affiliation also paints a clear picture: Among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens, 66 percent are in favor of teaching students more about the Holocaust, followed by supporters of The Left party (57 percent), the SPD (54 percent) and the CDU/CSU (49 percent). In contrast, 44 percent of AfD voters believe that students already learn enough about the Holocaust.

In Israel, Jewish respondents in particular express the view that students learn too little about the Holocaust (42 percent), while 20 percent of Arab respondents feel this way. A quarter of Arab respondents even consider the topic to be covered too extensively in the classroom. These differences are not surprising, as the Holocaust is a central part of Jewish family histories, something that is not the case for Arab Israelis. At the same time, the differences also reflect everyday reality, since the Holocaust is firmly anchored in the curricula of Jewish schools, while it plays only a minor role in Arab schools.

There are only minor differences between age groups in Israel: 40 percent of respondents over the age of 60 believe that students learn too little about the Holocaust, while among younger people, the proportion is barely lower, at 38 percent. In line with the importance of the culture of remembrance discussed above, differences are also evident based on religious affiliation, with religious Jews in particular saying they consider Holocaust education to be inadequate in Israeli schools. Among the ultra-Orthodox, the figure is 56 percent, followed by religious and traditional Jews, at 45 percent each. The proportion is lowest among secular Jews, at 34 percent.

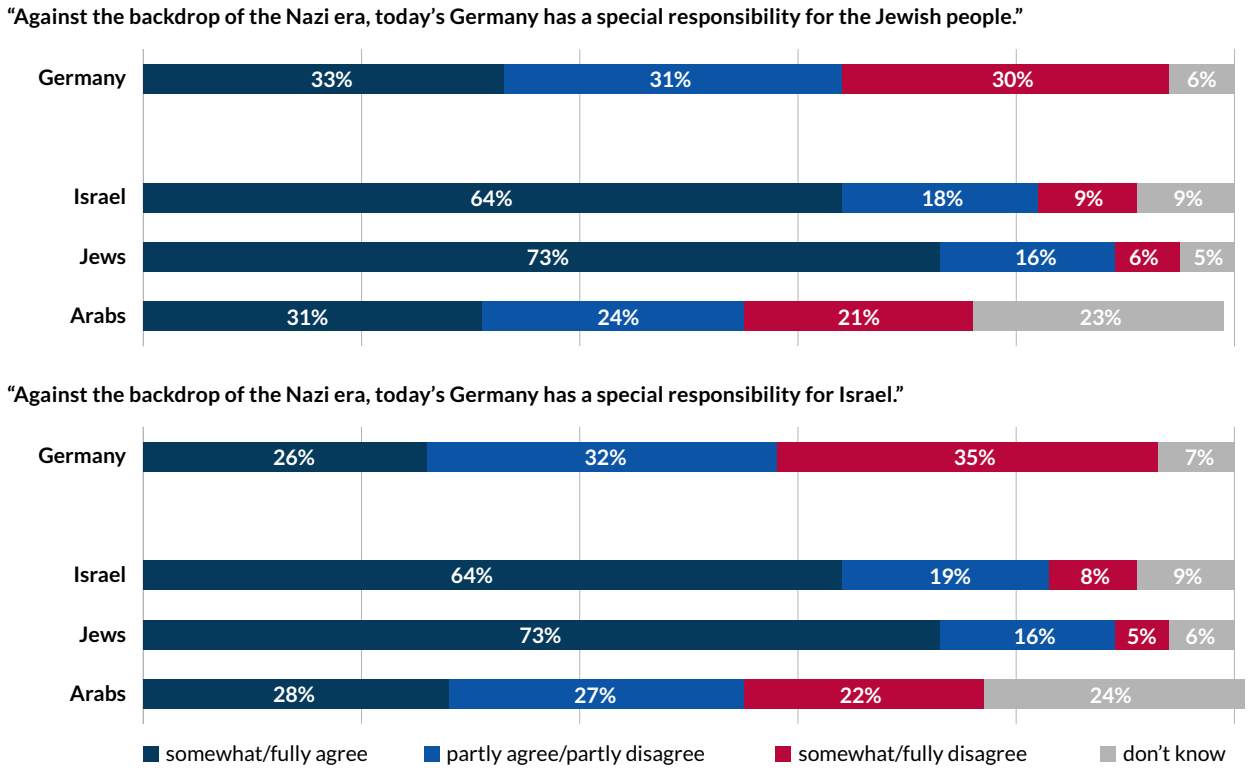
Germany's responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel

The question of teaching history in schools also touches on another fundamental issue: What are the consequences of remembering the crimes committed by the Nazis? Does it mean Germany bears a special responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel? On this question, too, opinions in Israel and Germany differ (Fig. 11, page 21), with 64 percent of Israelis holding the view that Germany does in fact have a special responsibility for both the Jewish people and the state of Israel. Among Germans, only around a third believe such a responsibility towards the Jewish people exists, while the figure for the state of Israel is even lower, at around a quarter.

In Germany, differences can be seen primarily along demographic lines, such as age, educational level and gender. Respondents over 60 are more likely (37 percent) to see a special German responsibility towards the Jewish people than respondents under 40 (29 percent). At the same time, the latter are also less likely to feel a responsibility exists towards the state of Israel (23 percent) than older respondents (30 percent). Education also plays a role, as respondents with a higher level of education are more likely to see a special responsibility towards the Jewish people (40 percent) and the state of Israel (33 percent) than those with less education (31 percent and 24 percent, respectively).

With regard to political affiliation, a familiar pattern emerges: Supporters of the Alliance 90/The Greens are most likely to say Germany has a special responsibility for the Jewish people and state of Israel (55 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Agreement with this idea is lowest among AfD voters, only 16 percent of whom see a special responsibility for the Jewish people or, at 12 percent, for the state of Israel. The response by supporters of The Left party is remarkable, especially in view of the debates critical of Israel taking place on the left end of the political spectrum: 45 percent agree Germany has a responsibility towards the Jewish people and 40 percent say a

Figure 11 | **Responsibility of today's Germany for the Jewish people and Israel**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the above statements. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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responsibility exists towards the state of Israel. This puts them in second place behind Alliance 90/The Greens voters for both statements.

As above, the results here also show that in Israel, a clear majority of Jewish respondents (73 percent) believe that Germany has a special responsibility towards the Jewish people. Among Arab respondents, only a minority (31 percent) share this view, but the figure is still remarkably high. A similar pattern can be seen with regard to Germany having a responsibility towards the state of Israel, with 73 percent of Jewish respondents saying this is the case, compared to only 28 percent of Arab respondents. One change is striking compared to the findings from 2021: Among Jewish Israelis, the proportion of those who see Germany as having a responsibility towards the Jewish people has risen by eight percentage points; when it comes to responsibility towards the state of Israel, the increase is as high as ten percentage points. The opposite trend can be observed among the Arab population, since the share of those who attribute a special responsibility to Germany for the Jewish people has fallen by four percentage points – and by as much as nine percentage points when it comes to having a responsibility towards the state of Israel. This shift is also likely related to Germany's support for Israel after October 7 and during the war in Gaza.

Within the Jewish population, ultra-Orthodox Jews (83 percent) are once again most likely to agree that Germany bears a special responsibility towards the Jewish people, followed by religious Jews (76 percent). The latter also evince the greatest agreement with Germany's having a responsibility for the state

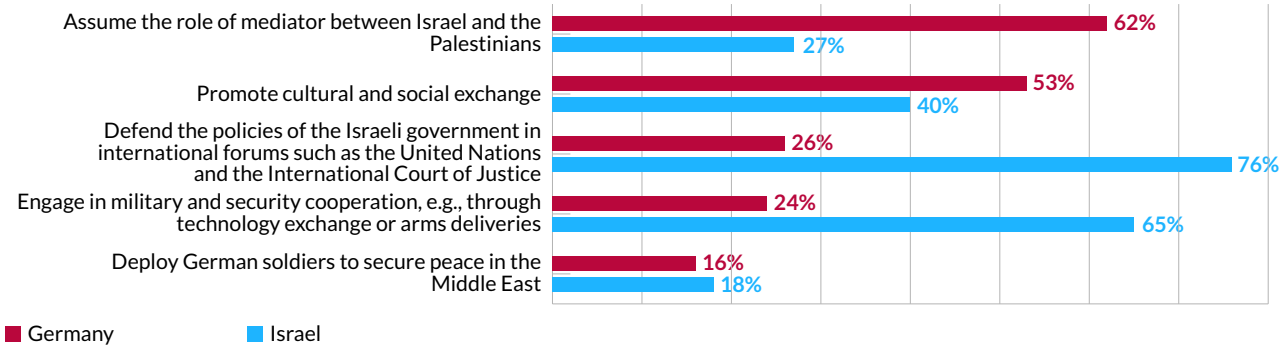
of Israel, at 84 percent, followed by ultra-Orthodox Jews, at 75 percent. Age differences and party affiliation play hardly any role in Israel. There are only minor differences between religious groups, while secular Jews express lower levels of agreement overall.

To further differentiate, we then asked how Germany can best fulfill its (widely perceived) responsibility towards the Jewish people and Israel. Here, opinions in Germany and Israel diverge (Fig. 12), with German respondents seeing the role of the Federal Republic primarily as one of mediating between Israel and the Palestinians (62 percent) and of promoting cultural and social exchange (53 percent). For respondents in Israel, Germany's primary responsibility is to defend the Israeli government in international forums such as the International Court of Justice (76 percent) and to engage in military and security cooperation (65 percent). In Germany, however, only about one in four respondents supports these two aspects, a relatively low level of support.

There are clear differences in Germany based on party affiliation, with more than half of CDU/CSU, SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, and The Left party voters supporting Germany taking on a mediating role in the Middle East conflict. A majority of CDU/CSU and Alliance 90/The Greens voters are also in favor of the country promoting cultural and social exchange – the second priority among Germans. These forms of demonstrating responsibility are only supported by just over one-third of AfD voters.

In contrast, Israeli respondents are largely in agreement across party lines, with 82 to 85 percent of voters from all parties saying they feel it is important for Germany to defend Israeli policy on the international stage, followed by engagement in military and security cooperation, at 67 to 70 percent. Differences only become apparent in the areas prioritized by German respondents: 44 percent of Yesh Atid voters and 45 percent of HaMahane HaMamlakhti voters endorse Germany's mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while this position finds little support among Likud (17 percent) and HaTzionut HaDatit (9 percent) voters. The situation is similar when it comes to cultural and social exchange: Around half of the supporters of the two opposition parties endorse this form of taking responsibility, while the figure is only 41 percent among Likud voters and only 28 percent among HaTzionut HaDatit voters.

Figure 12 | **How can Germany fulfill its responsibility?**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "You said that, in light of its Nazi past, Germany has a special responsibility towards the Jewish people and/or Israel. How should Germany fulfill this responsibility?" Excluded responses: "other," "none of the above" and "don't know." Multiple responses possible; percentages therefore do not total 100.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel) who believe Germany has a special responsibility towards the Jewish people/the state of Israel (Germany n = 478, Israel n = 894); weighted results; own depiction.

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These differing priorities reveal that expectations in the two countries are not identical. Many Israelis want concrete security policy support in the present, including backing on the international stage. The German approach, on the other hand, is more strongly oriented towards the historical narrative of reconciliation that emerged in the early Federal Republic as a result of Adenauer's policies and the influence of church initiatives – a narrative that, from the mid-1960s onwards, focused on mediation, cultural exchange and promoting peace in the Middle East. This narrative is primarily normative in nature and accounts for Israel's current geopolitical realities and interests only to a limited extent.

Responsibility for human rights

In addition to giving rise to Germany's special responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel, the history of the Holocaust provides universal lessons on the validity of and commitment to human rights. How is this responsibility viewed by people in Germany and Israel in times of growing global tensions and increasing migration?

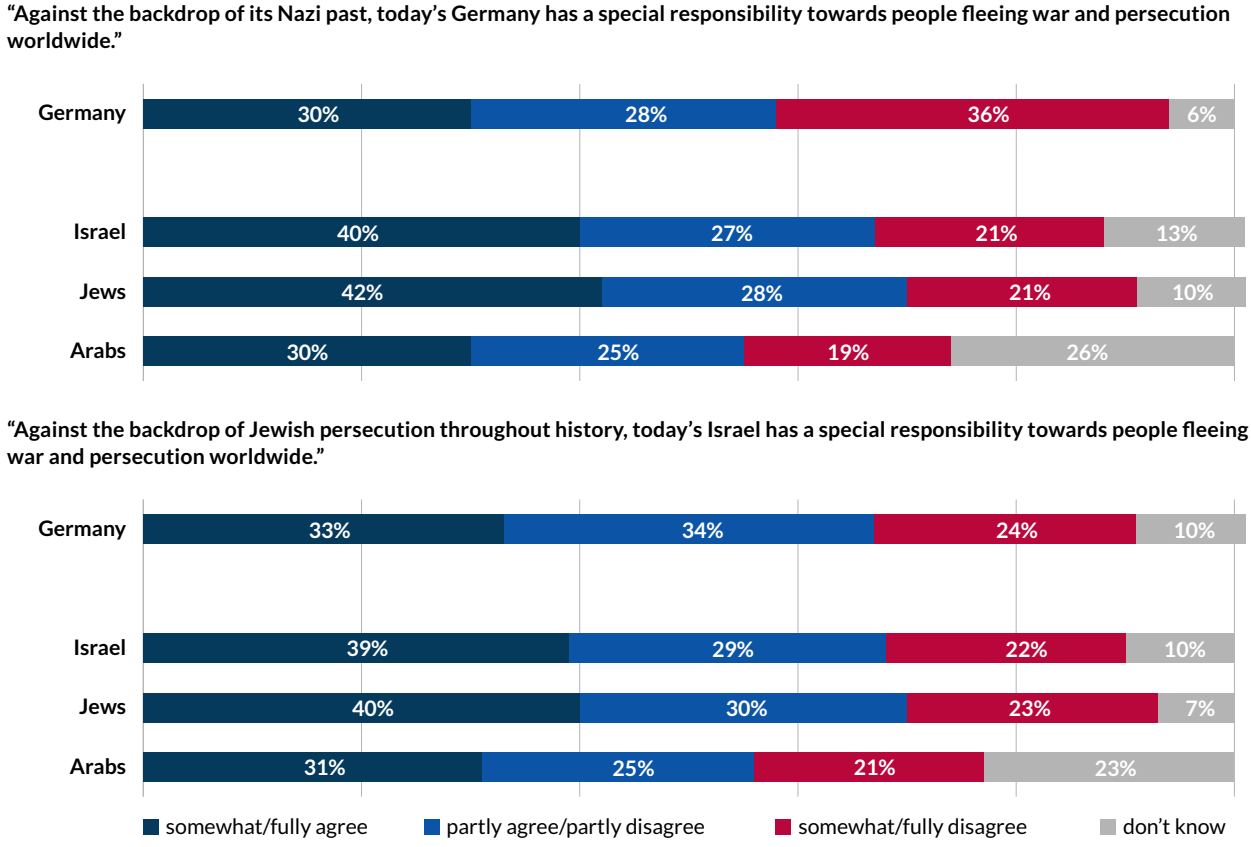
Compared to 2021, fewer respondents in both countries believe that the German or Israeli state has a responsibility towards refugees (Fig. 13, page 24). The findings show that 30 percent of respondents in Germany (2021: 34 percent) and 40 percent in Israel (2021: 47 percent) believe Germany has such a responsibility. The situation is similar with regard to Israel's responsibility for people affected by war and persecution, with 33 percent of German respondents (2021: 38 percent) and 39 percent of Israeli respondents (2021: 44 percent) believing this responsibility exists. The high share of undecided votes is striking, as more than a quarter of respondents in both countries answered "partly agree/partly disagree." This position is particularly common in Germany with regard to Israel's responsibility, with around a third (34 percent) saying they are undecided.

In Germany, there is also a clear divide along political lines. Among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens, 60 percent endorse the idea of Germany having a special responsibility for refugees worldwide, while around half of The Left party voters agree, compared to 30 percent and 40 percent of CDU/CSU and SPD voters, respectively. Among AfD supporters, on the other hand, only 12 percent say such a responsibility exists, while more than half reject this idea. The situation is similar when it comes to the question of Israeli responsibility, although the figures do not diverge as much here. Once again, supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens show the highest level of agreement, at 55 percent, while agreement among AfD voters remains lowest, at 17 percent.

In Israel, agreement depends heavily on the religious identity of those surveyed. Traditionally minded Jews are most likely to believe that Germany has a duty to help refugees (47 percent), followed by secular Jews (42 percent) and religious Jews (41 percent). Ultra-Orthodox Jews are the least likely to agree, at 34 percent. The situation is similar with regard to Israel's having a responsibility for refugees worldwide: 46 percent of traditionally minded Jews endorse this idea, followed by 39 percent of secular Jews and 38 percent of ultra-Orthodox Jews. Among religious Jews, only 31 percent say this is the case. However, when viewed by party affiliation, the picture in Israel is largely uniform, with around half of voters saying that Germany has a special responsibility towards refugees. Similar levels of agreement can be found among supporters of opposition parties, such as Yesh Atid and HaMahane HaMamlakhti, when they are asked about Israel's responsibility. Fewer supporters of the right-wing governing parties agree that such a responsibility exists, with 43 percent of Likud voters saying this is the case, compared to 30 percent of HaTzionut HaDatit voters.

The memory of the Holocaust remains a central frame of reference for both Germans and Israelis, but it is having an increasingly asymmetrical impact on the two societies. While many Israelis continue to attach great importance to coming to terms with the Nazi past and have concrete political expectations of Germany as a result, historical awareness is more

Figure 13 | **Responsibility for people fleeing war and persecution worldwide**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the above statements. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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fragmented in Germany, where younger respondents very often emphasize the general significance of the Holocaust and the lessons it holds for politics today, but are less likely to feel it gives rise to a specific responsibility for the Jewish people and the state of Israel. The result is a growing discrepancy between the Israeli desire for solidarity based on history and the German tendency to derive universal lessons from the past, such as a commitment to human rights and international law. This tendency also aligns with a more critical attitude towards Israeli policy and a stronger focus on the Middle East conflict.

Attitudes towards the Middle East conflict

The terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and Israel's subsequent war against Hamas in Gaza marked a dramatic turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – one that has had far-reaching consequences for Germany, too. The assault and its aftermath sparked debates in Germany about how the country should position itself in the war and which side should be shown solidarity; it also raised questions about what is and is not antisemitism. Since the war's outbreak, public discourse in Germany has intensified noticeably, and the Middle East conflict has been discussed very emotionally in schools, at political protests and on social media.

Support from Germany's government

The survey's findings show that, in Germany as in Israel, people have the impression that the German government supports the Israelis more than the Palestinians (Fig. 14, page 26). In Germany, however, this assessment is much more widespread, and has become more prevalent, increasing from 38 percent of respondents in 2021 to 47 percent in 2025. In Israel, around one-fifth of those surveyed felt this was the case in 2021; in 2025, 35 percent see one-sided support for the Israelis.

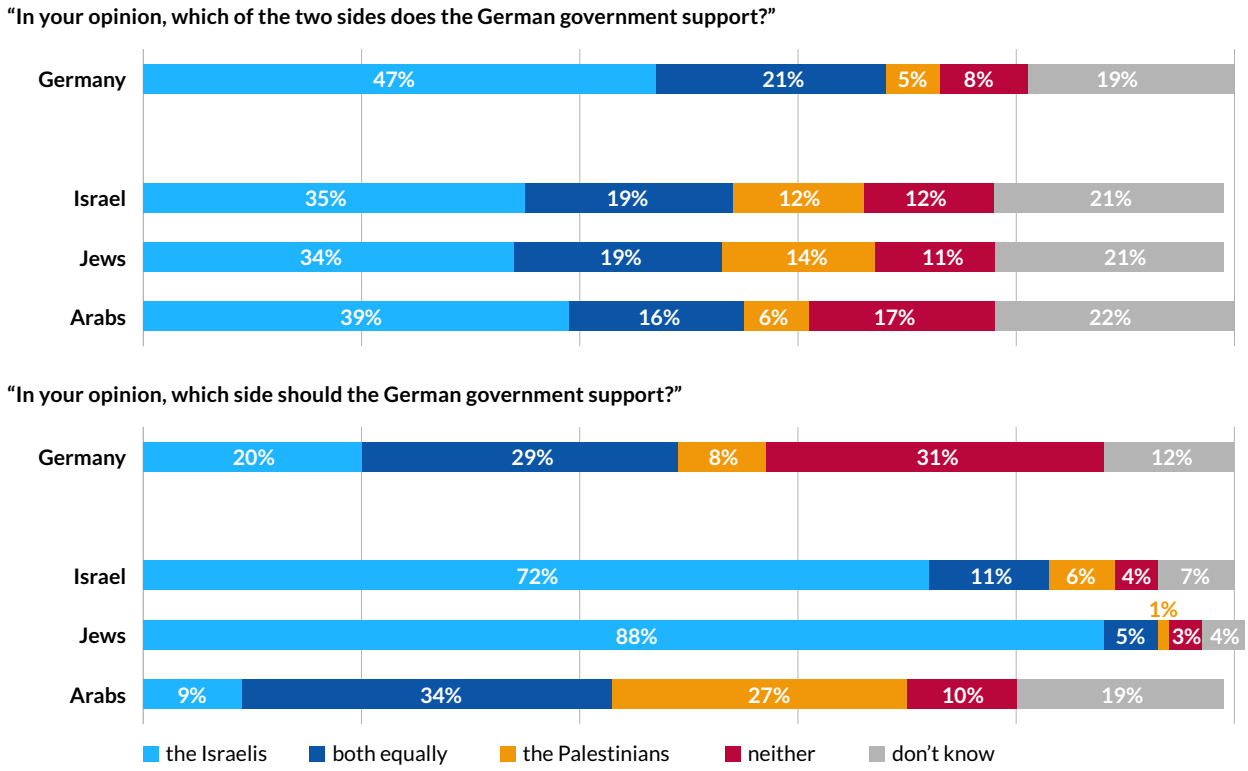
But how does the perceived support differ from the desired support? Compared to 2021, more respondents in Germany in 2025 were in favor of supporting only one of the two parties to the conflict. While 12 percent were in favor of supporting Israel in 2021, that figure has now risen to 20 percent. Support for the Palestinians also rose in the same period, but only by three percentage points to 8 percent. At the same time, the share of those who would like to see balanced support for both sides has fallen significantly – from 41 percent in 2021 to 29 percent now. In Israel, the desire for unilateral support for the Israeli side has grown from 61 percent to 72 percent over the same period, while 11 percent of Israelis want support for both sides, down from 19 percent in 2021.

In Germany, the age of the respondent is particularly important: Although the current support provided by the German government is most frequently perceived as pro-Israeli in all age groups, this view is least common among younger respondents (under 40 years of age), at 38 percent. It is also striking that only in this age group is the desire to mainly support one side – either the Israelis (13 percent) or the Palestinians (14 percent) – virtually equal. Despite these differences, it is clear across all age groups that the majority of respondents would like to see either balanced support for both sides or no support for either.

The situation is similar with regard to party affiliation: Balanced support for both Israelis and Palestinians receives the greatest endorsement across all political parties – with the exception of the AfD. At 51 percent, the majority of AfD voters are in favor of the German government not supporting either side. The lowest level of support for assisting only Israel comes from supporters of The Left party (11 percent). At 23 percent, they are also the most likely to favor greater assistance for the Palestinians.

In Israel, there are particularly clear differences between the Jewish and Arab populations when it comes to how support from the German government is perceived. While, compared to 2021, more respon-

Figure 14 | **German government's support for Israeli or Palestinian side**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the above questions. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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dents in both groups now feel Israel is the primary recipient of support, this figure is currently higher among Arabs, at 39 percent (2021: 31 percent), than among Jews, at 34 percent (2021: 17 percent). The difference is even more striking when it comes to perceived support for Palestinians: While 14 percent of Jewish Israelis believe that Palestinians receive the most support, only 6 percent of Arab Israelis hold this view.

In addition to ethnicity, perceptions in Israel are also influenced by gender and religiosity, with men (43 percent) significantly more likely to perceive support for Israel than women (29 percent). Among secular Jews, the figure is 44 percent, which is higher than among non-secular Jews, of whom between 23 and 32 percent feel there is greater support for Israel, depending on their level of religiosity. Religious Jews (24 percent) and ultra-Orthodox Jews (27 percent) are the most likely to perceive greater support for Palestinians. This dynamic is reminiscent of the discussion in the previous section, where secular Israelis rated German support comparatively positively – in contrast to religious groups, who would like to see more engagement. Political affiliation also shapes perceptions and especially depends on proximity to the government versus the opposition. Supporters of Yesh Atid (45 percent) and HaMahane HaMamlakhti (40 percent) are more likely to say there is support for Israel, than Likud (33 percent) and HaTzionut HaDatit (23 percent) voters are. The latter are also more likely to perceive support for the Palestinians (16 and 22 percent, respectively).

The subsequent question about desired, rather than perceived support partially confirms these findings.

Here, too, there is a significant divide between the Jewish and Arab populations. A clear majority of Jewish Israelis (88 percent) want to see support for Israel, while only 9 percent of Arab Israelis are in favor of this. Since 2021, the desire for unilateral support for the Israelis has increased in both groups – by 11 percentage points among Jews and by 3 percentage points among Arabs. However, 34 percent of Arab Israelis (2021: 41 percent) would like to see equal support for both sides of the conflict, compared to only 5 percent of Jewish Israelis (2021: 12 percent). And while 27 percent of Arab Israelis are in favor of supporting the Palestinians, there is virtually no support for this among Israel's Jewish population (1 percent).

The fact that only 27 percent of Arab Israelis endorse unilateral support for the Palestinians should be understood as an expression of their social integration in Israel and their political and social distance from the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza – a finding that is often overlooked internationally.

An analysis based on political affiliation reveals broad consensus in Israel, with around 90 percent of all voter groups saying they want the German government to support the Israelis first and foremost.[5]

The clear discrepancy between the perception of Germany's pro-Israel stance and the desire for even stronger support shows that many Jewish Israelis consider Germany's commitment to date to be insufficient. In light of the previous question, it can also be assumed that groups close to the government and religious respondents in particular expect Germany to show greater commitment to Israel.

Political perspectives

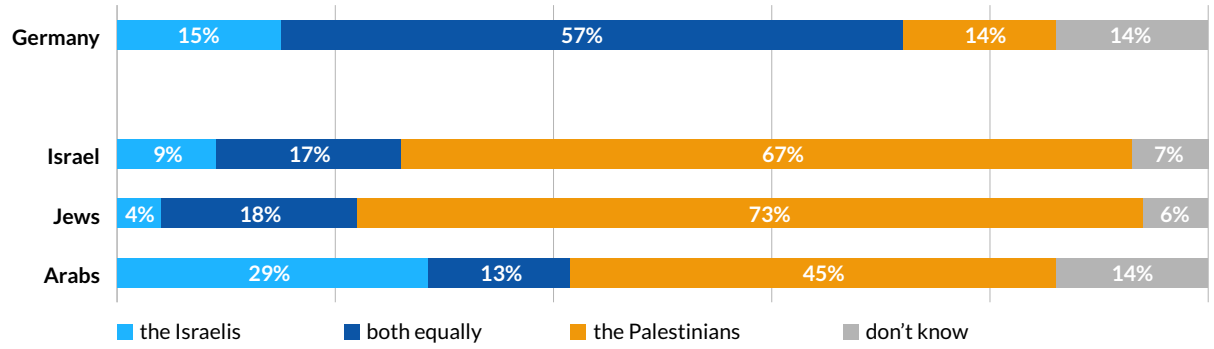
As far as a willingness to compromise in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, opinion in Germany has remained relatively stable compared to 2021. A clear majority of respondents want both sides to concede equally (Fig. 15, page 28). There has been a notable shift, however: The share of those in favor of the Palestinians giving in has doubled to 14 percent, rising to the level of those who demand the same of the Israelis, at 15 percent. The results in Israel, a country at war, are hardly surprising. Here, the desire for Palestinians to concede rose by 12 percentage points to 67 percent – which is mainly due to the 14-percentage-point increase in support for this view among Jews. Yet even among Arab Israelis, a relative majority of 45 percent are in favor of the Palestinians giving in more.

An analysis by party affiliation confirms the picture described above for Germany: Supporters across the country's various political parties would like to see concessions in the Middle East conflict made equally by Israelis and Palestinians. However, it is striking that supporters of The Left party and Alliance 90/The Greens are the most likely to expect greater concessions from the Israeli side (24 percent and 21 percent, respectively). In contrast, CDU/CSU and AfD voters tend to see the Palestinians as being the side that should give in more (18 percent and 17 percent, respectively).

In Israel, this question is answered differently depending on whether one leans towards the ruling or opposition parties. Supporters of Likud and HaTzionut HaDatit are significantly more likely (82 and 87 percent, respectively) to feel that the Palestinians must make concessions than are Yesh Atid (56 percent) and HaMahane HaMamlakhti (63 percent) voters. This reflects current Israeli government policy, which primarily calls for concessions from the Palestinian side. It is noteworthy that even among Arab Israelis, a relative majority is in favor of concessions from the Palestinians – once again demonstrating the strong integration of Arab respondents into Israeli society.

5 It should be noted here that parties with a predominantly Arab and left-wing voter base are not represented. Individuals who vote for these parties are likely to be more strongly in favor of unilateral support for the Palestinian side and significantly less supportive of the Israelis.

Figure 15 | **Making concessions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "In your opinion, who should concede more in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Israelis, the Palestinians, or both equally?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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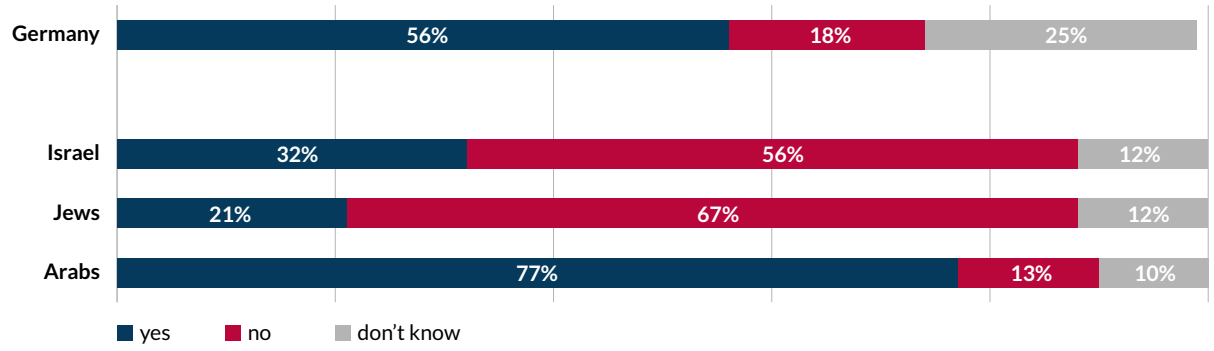
The two-state solution is seen by many as the key political prospect for peacefully resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a solution the German government also continues to support. According to our findings, the German public's attitude towards the two-state solution remains largely stable: It continues to be supported by a majority of 56 percent, similar to 2021 (Fig. 16, page 29). In Israel, support for the two-state solution has declined significantly over the same period, from 44 percent to 32 percent. This reflects the fact that since October 7, 2023, moderate and left-wing Israelis in particular have expressed fundamental doubts about the feasibility of a two-state solution. However, given the shock in Israel resulting from the terrorist attack by Hamas, the decline in the level of agreement for this solution seems relatively moderate.

Differences in opinion in Germany are also apparent by age, education and gender. People over 60 are more likely to support the two-state solution, at 65 percent, than people under 40, at only 44 percent. Similarly, people with higher levels of education, at 67 percent, are more likely to support this solution than those with less education, at 48 percent. The age difference can be explained historically, as older respondents experienced the two-state solution as a realistic option, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. There are also gender-specific differences: While 66 percent of men support the two-state solution, only 48 percent of women endorse it. Moreover, around a third of women express uncertainty about this issue ("don't know"), making them significantly more likely to do so than men (16 percent).

Most supporters of the two-state solution are found among Alliance 90/The Greens voters (78 percent), followed by the SPD (65 percent). Support for the two-state solution is lowest among AfD voters (44 percent). At the same time, this group also shows the strongest opposition (27 percent).

When it comes to attitudes in Israel towards the two-state solution, clear differences exist based on ethnicity. Among Jewish Israelis, support for this option has fallen from 37 percent in 2021 to just 21 percent. During the same period, support among Arab Israelis increased by eight percentage points to 77 percent. Support is particularly low among Jewish religious groups. While 36 percent of secular Jews support a two-state solution, the figure is only 13 percent among traditionally minded Jews, 10 percent among religious Jews, and 5 percent among the ultra-Orthodox. These results show that Israel's more religiously oriented groups tend to be more nationalist and conservative than secular groups.

Figure 16 | **Support for a two-state solution**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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The picture is similar when party affiliation is considered. Among supporters of Likud (9 percent) and HaTzionut HaDatit (6 percent), there is hardly any support for the two-state solution; at the same time, rejection is particularly pronounced in these groups, at 84 and 92 percent, respectively. Support is significantly higher among voters for Yesh Atid (46 percent) and HaMahane HaMamlakhti (40 percent). These political differences also reflect deeper socio-cultural divisions, as nationalist religious parties in the government camp largely represent an ethno-nationalist perspective that fundamentally rules out a two-state solution – for example, HaTzionut HaDatit with its program of annexing "Judea and Samaria." In contrast, centrist and secular parties such as Yesh Atid and HaMahane HaMamlakhti focus on the separation of religion and state, on democratic institutions and on a social contract that includes minorities.

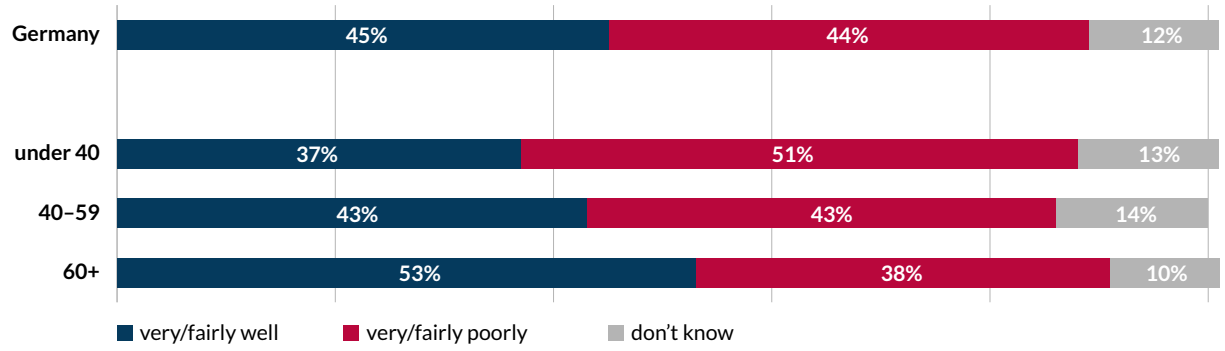
Finally, age also plays a role in attitudes towards the two-state solution in Israel, with 36 percent of those over 60 supporting it, compared to only 29 percent of those under 40. This shows the influence of political socialization, as many older people witnessed the Oslo processes and experienced the associated hopes for peace in the Middle East.

Perceptions of media coverage

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only shapes the political reality on the ground, but is also an integral part of media coverage and public debate in Germany. For the first time in this series of studies, we asked people in Germany if they feel they have been well informed about the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the German media (Fig. 17, page 30). As the results show, the group that believes it is well informed is roughly equal in size to the one that feels poorly informed. Differences can again be seen according to age, education and gender. It is particularly striking that the majority of respondents under the age of 40 (51 percent) feel poorly informed. Among young women, only 25 percent feel well informed, compared to 48 percent of young men. The level of education also plays a role: Respondents with more education are more likely to feel well informed (51 percent) than those with less education (40 percent).

To a large degree, reporting on the Middle East has focused in recent years on the war in Gaza. In Germany, 44 percent of respondents perceive media coverage of the situation in Gaza as too biased in favor of Israel (Fig. 18, page 30). Only a quarter consider it to be balanced. This configuration of opinions is evident across all age groups – although, at

Figure 17 | **Self-assessment of awareness of Israeli-Palestinian conflict**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "How well do you feel informed by the German media about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

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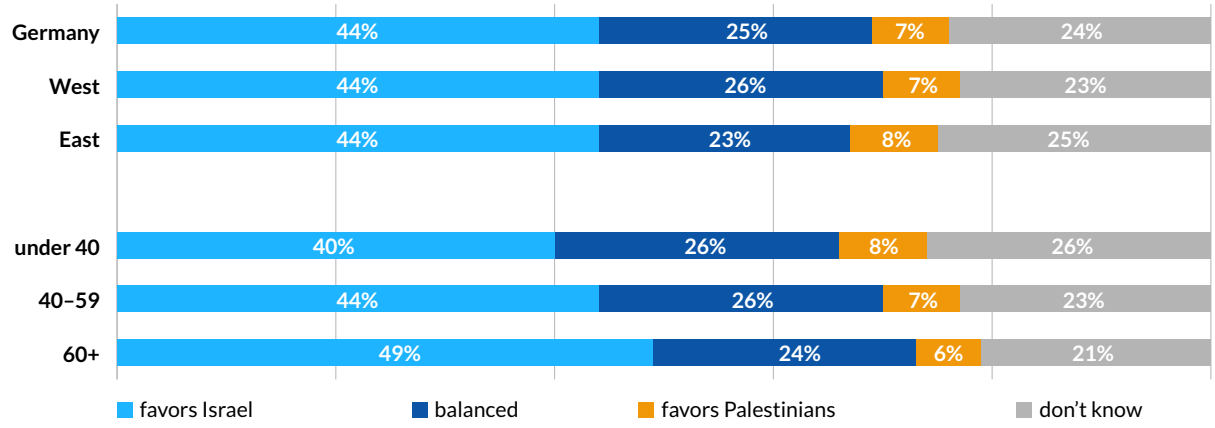
Figure 18 | **Balance of German media coverage of Gaza**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "In your opinion, is German media coverage of the situation in Gaza balanced?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

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40 percent, respondents under the age of 40 are the least likely to perceive excessive bias in favor of Israel.

An interesting correlation can be seen here with the previous question on being well or poorly informed: 63 percent of respondents who feel that German reportage is too biased in favor of the Palestinians also feel fairly poorly or very poorly informed by the media. Conversely, 67 percent of those who perceive a bias in favor of Israel feel they are fairly well or very well informed.

This correlation is also reflected in political affiliation. CDU/CSU voters – who most often feel well informed – are the most likely, at 57 percent, to believe that media reports generally favor Israel. Relatively few people across all political parties say that the

media favor the Palestinian side in their reporting. At 14 percent, AfD voters – who most often feel poorly informed – are the most likely to say media reports favor the Palestinians.

Legitimacy of criticizing Israel

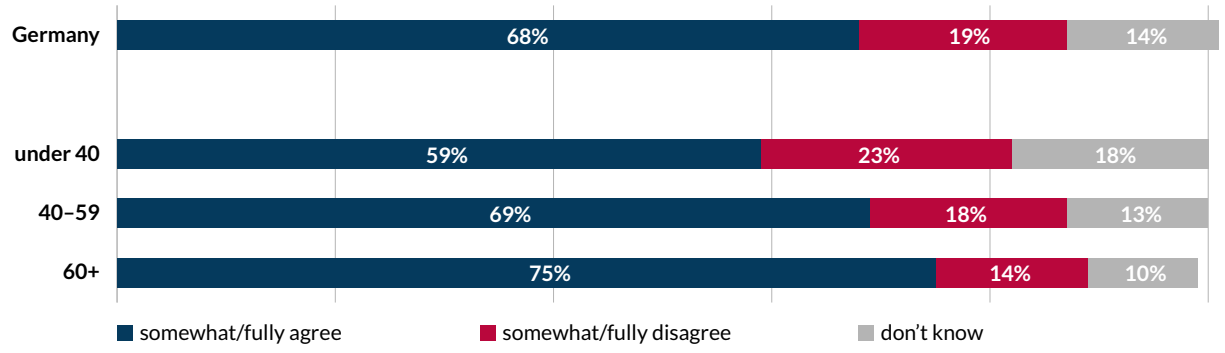
The war in Gaza has not only been heavily covered by the media, it has also led to an increase in anti-Israel sentiment among the German public. It is difficult to determine whether and to what extent this is linked to antisemitism, partly because there are different definitions of what antisemitism is. Nevertheless, in order to assess how widespread anti-Israel – and thus potentially antisemitic – attitudes are among the public, for the first time in this series of studies, we surveyed how Germans feel about criticism of the Israeli government's policies and about Palestinian protests.

A majority of 68 percent of the German public considers it legitimate to criticize the policies of the Israeli government (Fig. 19). A closer look yields a more detailed picture, as 75 percent of men consider criticism of Israeli policy legitimate, compared to 61 percent of women. Similarly, older people are more likely to believe that the Israeli government's actions can be criticized, as 75 percent of those over 60 say this is the case, compared to only 59 percent of those under 40. Endorsement of such criticism also varies according to educational attainment, with 75 percent of more highly educated respondents saying it is legitimate to criticize Israeli policy, compared to 63 percent of those with less education.

Criticism of the Israeli government's policies is considered legitimate across all party lines. Endorsement is particularly strong among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (79 percent), the SPD (76 percent), The Left party (73 percent), and the CDU/CSU (72 percent). A smaller share, but still a majority of AfD voters (59 percent) agree that such criticism is legitimate.

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since October 7 has also had an impact on the everyday lives of many people in Germany. The conflict is a topic of discussion on social media, in schools and at universities. Numerous demonstrations and other protests – often organized by Palestinian groups – have denounced the actions of the Israeli military in Gaza. For the first time in this series of studies, we therefore asked whether people in Germany consider peaceful protests by Palestinians on German streets to be legitimate. At 58 percent, a slight majority of respondents agree with this view (Fig. 20, page 32). Just under a third do not feel it is the case, however.

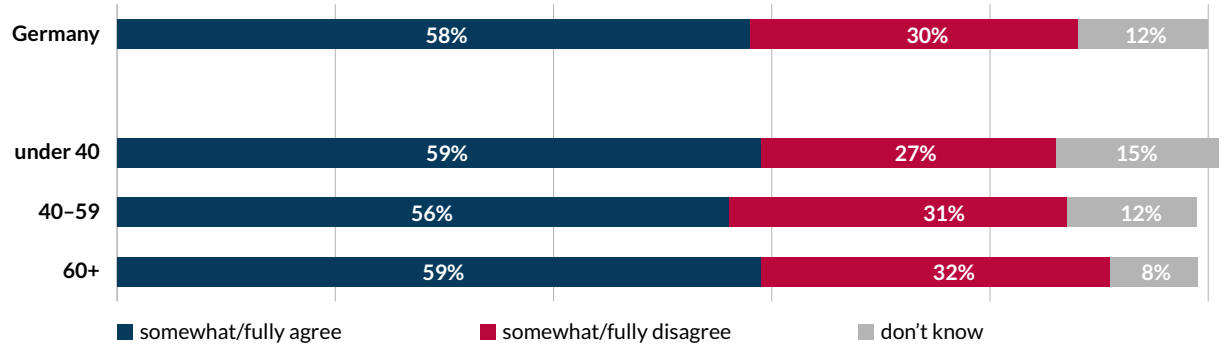
Figure 19 | **Legitimacy of criticizing the Israeli government**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the statement: "It is legitimate for people in Germany to criticize the Israeli government's policies." Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

Figure 20 | **Legitimacy of Palestinian protests**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the statement: "It is legitimate for Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully in Germany for their rights." Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

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There are clear differences according to level of education: While more than two-thirds (70 percent) of highly educated respondents consider peaceful protests to be legitimate, only about one in two of those with less education agree.

This mostly positive attitude can also be seen when the findings are examined by party affiliation, but differences exist all the same. Among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens, a particularly high share (86 percent) believe that peaceful Palestinian protests are legitimate, followed by supporters of The Left party (77 percent), the SPD (71 percent) and – at a considerable distance – the CDU/CSU (61 percent). The situation is different among AfD supporters, where around half (52 percent) do not consider peaceful protests by Palestinians to be legitimate, and more than a quarter consider them "not at all" legitimate. This is probably due more to an anti-immigration stance than to a rejection of the democratic right to assemble and demonstrate.

Overall, most people in Germany consider peaceful protests for Palestinian rights to be legitimate, with significant differences depending on education, party affiliation and basic political viewpoints.

Jews and antisemitism in Germany

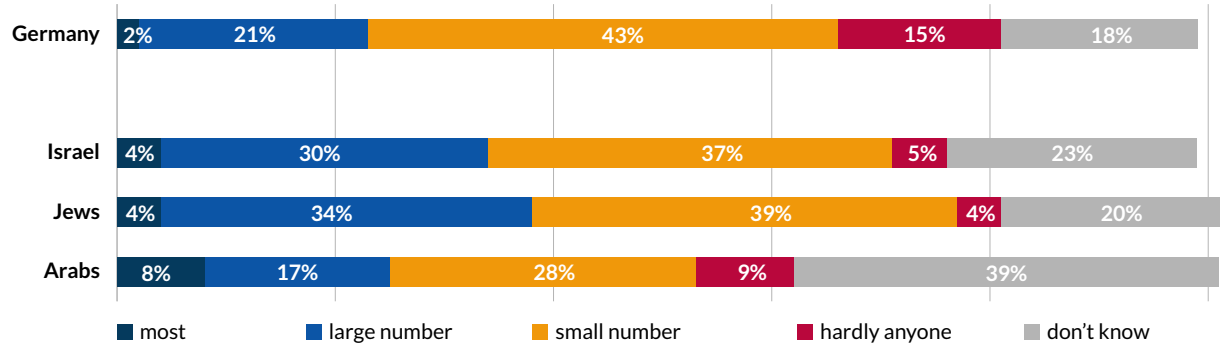
Having already examined two relevant points of reference for both countries – the memory of the Holocaust, as well as the Middle East conflict – and how they are perceived, we will now take a detailed look at views on antisemitism in Germany, from both a German and an Israeli perspective.

Before we analyze antisemitic attitudes in depth, let us first look at perceptions about it. How do Israeli and German respondents assess the current social climate in Germany with regard to antisemitism? Do they see it as a growing problem? Finally, we will examine the degree to which German and Israeli respondents believe Jews in Germany are affected by antisemitism and how they assess the political responses designed to combat it.

Perceptions of antisemitism

The findings show that 23 percent of respondents in Germany feel a large number or most people in the country have negative attitudes towards Jews (Fig. 21). This is an increase of five percentage points compared to 2021. In Israel, the trend is moving in the opposite direction: In 2021, 40 percent believed that Germans were largely hostile towards Jews, compared to 34 percent in 2025. However, Jewish Israelis are slightly more likely to assume that Germans hold antisemitic views, at 38 percent (down six percentage points), while only 25 percent of Arab Israelis believe this to be the case (unchanged from the last survey).

Figure 21 | **Attitudes in Germany towards Jews**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "How do you view the general attitude of Germans towards Jews? Do most, a large number, a small number, or does hardly anyone have a negative attitude towards Jews?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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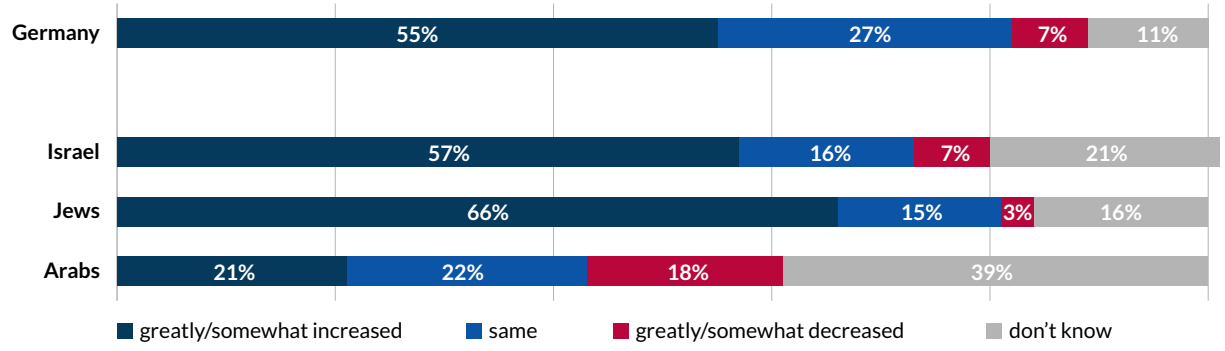
The positive trend in Israel is remarkable in light of the alarming rise in antisemitic crimes in Germany and Europe since October 7, 2023. One explanation for this may be the strong domestic focus maintained by many Israeli media outlets, as international incidents, including antisemitic ones, are usually only covered in detail in Haaretz or Times of Israel. Both have a very small reach. The perceived support for Israel by the German government could also play a role, possibly leading to the assumption that Germans have a positive attitude towards Jews. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Israeli opinions about Germans having antisemitic attitudes are generally more critical than those expressed by Germans about themselves.

In Germany, there are slight differences between the sexes. Men are more likely to believe that many people in Germany have negative attitudes towards Jews, while just under a quarter of women do not want to express an opinion on this subject. In terms of party affiliation, the democratic parties exhibit similar tendencies, with around a quarter of supporters of the CDU/CSU, SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, and The Left party believing that a large number or the majority of people in Germany have negative attitudes towards Jews. Among AfD voters, the figure is only around one-sixth, while 62 percent say that hardly anyone or only a small number of people hold unfavorable views of Jews.

In Israel, women (39 percent) are more likely than men (30 percent) to believe that the Germans have unfavorable views of Jews. And while only a third of secular Jews assume this is the case, the figure is significantly higher among traditional (39 percent), religious (45 percent) and ultra-Orthodox (44 percent) Jews. Supporters of HaTzionut HaDatit (52 percent) and HaMahane HaMamlakhti (48 percent) in particular believe that Germans are largely hostile towards Jews. Among Likud and Yesh Atid voters, the figures are only 41 and 37 percent, respectively. What is striking is the higher figure among HaMahane HaMamlakhti voters compared to Likud voters – something that contrasts with other findings which have shown that right-wing groups are especially critical of Germany. One possible explanation lies in growing disappointment with the European response to October 7, which weighs more heavily on liberal Zionist groups than on right-wing voters who are more security-oriented and less concerned with international support.

A majority of Germans (55 percent) and Israelis (57 percent) agree that antisemitism in Germany has increased somewhat or significantly over the past five

Figure 22 | **Change in antisemitism in Germany**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you believe that antisemitism, i.e. hostility towards Jews, has increased, remained the same or decreased in Germany over the last five years?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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years (Fig. 22, page 34). These figures have risen slightly in both countries compared to 2021, when 52 percent of German and 51 percent of Israeli respondents believed that antisemitism had increased.

In Germany, one difference based on age is particularly striking: While two-thirds of respondents aged 60 and over (66 percent) perceive an increase in antisemitism, only 46 percent of those under 40 do so. Alliance 90/The Greens voters in particular believe that antisemitism has gained support in the last five years (74 percent); a narrow majority of CDU/CSU, SPD and The Left party voters also think so (59, 57 and 56 percent, respectively). AfD voters are less likely to say there has been an increase (45 percent), and one in six say they have no clear opinion on the matter. The high sensitivity to antisemitism among Alliance 90/The Greens voters may have less to do with the party's being situated on the more "progressive" end of the political spectrum than with the above-average level of education among its supporters.

In Israel, there are clear differences between Jewish and Arab respondents once again, with two-thirds of Jewish Israelis (66 percent) believing that antisemitism has increased in Germany, while only one in five of the Arab population shares this view. Among Jews, assessments also vary depending on religious orientation. While 56 percent of traditionally minded Jews perceive an increase in antisemitism, the figure is significantly higher among secular (69 percent), religious (75 percent) and ultra-Orthodox Jews (71 percent).

The view that antisemitism has increased in Germany is particularly widespread among supporters of HaMahane HaMamlakhti (80 percent), followed by Yesh Atid (69 percent), HaTzionut HaDatit (67 percent) and Likud (60 percent) voters. This is consistent with the assumption outlined above that liberal Zionist voters in particular are sensitive to antisemitic tendencies in Germany – possibly because they continue to see themselves, despite increasing alienation, as part of a shared Western value system.

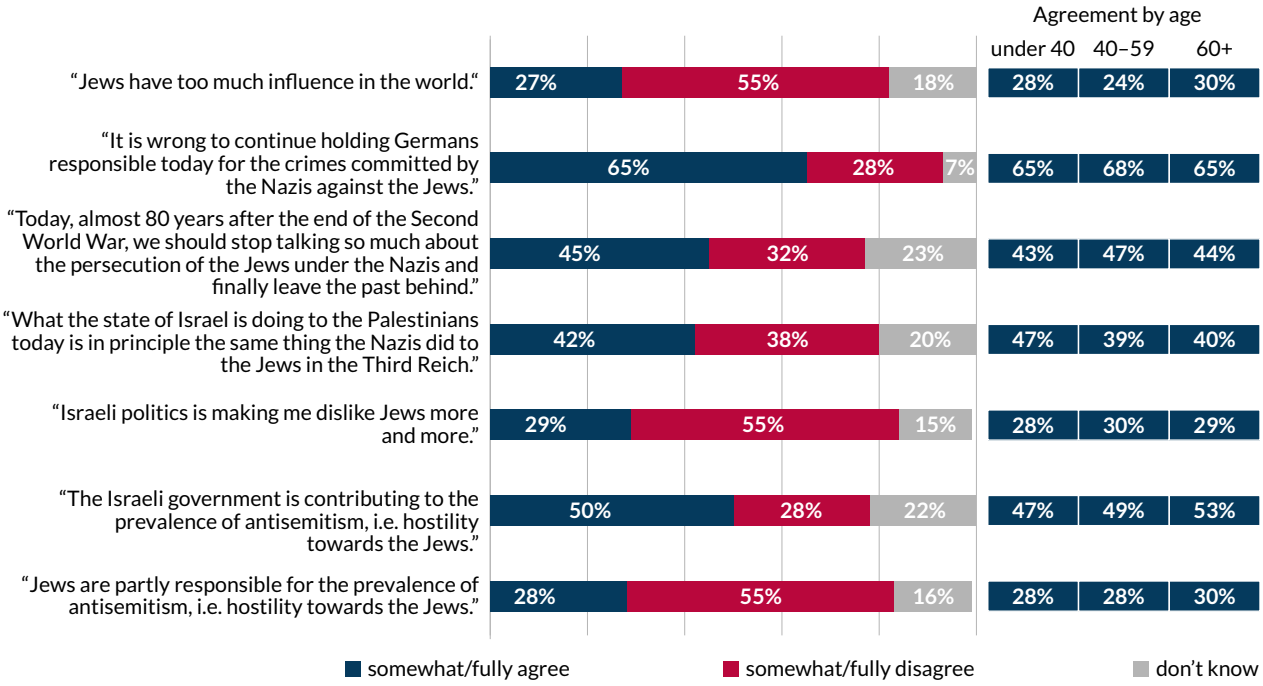
Overall, the majority of people in Germany and Israel feel that antisemitic attacks in Europe and the US are a growing problem, especially since October 7, 2023. That parts of the Israeli public are less aware of the increasing antisemitism in Germany can most likely be ascribed to the inward focus of many Israeli media outlets and the resulting limited attention given to developments in Europe. Older respondents in Germany and religious Jews in Israel are especially aware of the spread of antisemitism. Among AfD voters, there is generally less awareness of this development than among supporters of all other parties.

Antisemitic attitudes

So much for how people perceive the situation – but what is the actual state of affairs when it comes to antisemitism in Germany? To find out, as in previous studies in this series, we asked the survey's respondents about their own attitudes towards this topic. Antisemitism is generally described as an assortment of stereotypical and derogatory beliefs and tropes that express hostility towards Jews. A distinction must be made here between three types of antisemitism: classic, secondary (e.g. denial of historical events or a reversal of perpetrator and victim roles) and Israel-related. In order to assess the prevalence of antisemitism in Germany, we posed a number of questions to gain an understanding of these different tendencies (Fig. 23, page 36). Our study does not claim to capture antisemitic attitudes in Germany in all their complexity. Nevertheless, our findings show that, compared to 2021, Israel-related antisemitism in particular has increased. At the same time, attitudes vary significantly in light of socio-demographic background and political affiliation.

Overall, 36 percent of respondents in Germany agreed with at least four of the statements relating to antisemitism, thus endorsing more than half of the viewpoints surveyed. This means that over a third have clearly antisemitic attitudes. Moreover, 24 percent of the respondents agreed with at least

Figure 23 | **Antisemitic attitudes in Germany**



Percentages represent the frequency of responses to the above statements. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Different possible responses than those shown here were used for the statement "Today, almost 80 years after the end of the Second World War, we should stop talking so much about the persecution of the Jews under the Nazis and finally leave the past behind. Do you think that is true, yes or no?" "No" was assigned here to "somewhat/fully disagree"; "yes" was assigned to "somewhat/fully agree." The answers "don't know" and "undecided" were assigned to "don't know." For an exact breakdown, see Fig. 8, page 17.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

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five of the statements and 7 percent even agreed with all of them.

The statement "Jews have too much influence in the world" is a key assertion used for measuring traditional antisemitism – one that met with more agreement in 2025 (27 percent) than in 2021 (24 percent). The biggest increase can be found in the under-40 age group, where, at 28 percent, the level of agreement is now twice what it was in 2021. With that, the under-40s have now reached the levels of the other age groups. Significant differences can be seen here based on gender and education. Men agree with the statement significantly more often (32 percent) than women (23 percent). Moreover, men under the age of 40 are the most likely to agree (36 percent), while women in this age group are the least likely to do so (20 percent). At 33 percent, agreement with this statement is particularly high among respondents with a low level of education.

Secondary antisemitism is primarily expressed through a defensive attitude towards remembering the Shoah and towards the responsibility associated with it. In the current survey, 65 percent of respondents agree with the statement "It is wrong to continue holding Germans responsible today for the crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews." Compared to 2021, this is a decrease of four percentage points. In eastern Germany, the decline is particularly pronounced, at ten percentage points. Here, too, a clear correlation with education level is evident: 72 percent of those with a low level of education agree with the statement, but only 61 percent of the more highly educated do. Slightly fewer people now also think it is right to draw a line under the

Nazi past. In 2021, 49 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, compared to 45 percent today. Once again, the decline from 51 to 44 percent in eastern Germany is particularly pronounced. Moreover, agreement with this statement is significantly higher among the less educated, at 52 percent, than among the more highly educated, at 38 percent.

Israel-related antisemitism has increased significantly. For example, 42 percent of respondents agree with the statement "What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is in principle the same thing the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich" – an increase of seven percentage points compared to 2021. Moreover, 29 percent of respondents say that Israeli politics is making them increasingly dislike Jews (2021: 21 percent). Agreement with both statements has risen particularly sharply among young people, with 47 percent of those under 40 agreeing with the statement comparing Israel to the Nazis (up 11 percentage points), while agreement with the second statement doubled in this cohort to 28 percent. The level of education also plays a major role: at 46 percent, respondents with a lower level of education agree more often with the statement asserting an equivalence between Israel and the Nazis than do those with a higher level of education, at 40 percent. They are also more likely to agree with the statement that Israeli politics is making them dislike Jews more and more (34 percent) compared to more highly educated respondents (27 percent).

There is a significant correlation between antisemitic attitudes and political affiliation. Traditional antisemitism is particularly widespread among AfD voters, 37 percent of whom agree with the statement "Jews have too much influence in the world." Among voters of the (former) mainstream parties CDU/CSU and SPD, the agreement rate is 31 percent and 30 percent, respectively, while among supporters of The Left party it is 21 percent. The least agreement by far can be found among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens, at just 8 percent. One interesting aspect is the shift that has taken place in traditional antisemitic attitudes according to party affiliation since 2021: While more supporters of the SPD (2021: 20 percent) and The Left party (2021: 12 percent) now agree with the statement, agreement among supporters of the AfD (2021: 48 percent) and Alliance 90/The Greens (2021: 14 percent) has declined. Among CDU/CSU voters, agreement with the statement has remained roughly the same (30 percent). The decline in traditional antisemitic attitudes among AfD voters can probably be explained less by a change in attitude among that cohort than by a change in its composition. Between 2021 and 2025, the party gained a significant number of new voters, mainly from the group of people who previously did not vote and from supporters of the CDU/CSU and FDP. Conversely, the decline in agreement rates among Alliance 90/The Greens voters is likely due to the fact that, during the same period, the party's supporters became a more concentrated group of urban, educated, values-oriented individuals who clearly reject antisemitic attitudes.

AfD voters (79 percent) were again the most likely to agree with the statement "It is wrong to continue holding Germans responsible today for the crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews," followed by supporters of the CDU/CSU (71 percent) and SPD (64 percent). By far the lowest level of approval was again seen among Alliance 90/The Greens voters (39 percent).

There are also clear differences between the parties' supporters when it comes to Israel-related antisemitism. The statement "What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is in principle the same thing the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich" is endorsed most often by supporters of The Left party (53 percent), followed by AfD voters (43 percent). Agreement is lowest among supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (39 percent).

A differentiated picture emerges for the statement "Israeli politics is making me dislike Jews more and more": AfD voters agree with it the most, at 37 percent, while supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens agree the least, at 17 percent. Among supporters of The Left party, the rate of agreement is 23 percent – significantly lower than with the previous state-

ment. This suggests that the discourse criticizing Israel in light of the war in Gaza has not necessarily led to a generalized rejection of Jews as a whole. The divergent reactions to the "anti-Israel" and "anti-Jewish" statements may also reflect the current discussion in left-wing circles about anti-racist and antisemitic attitudes.

The findings clearly show that antisemitic attitudes in Germany differ according to socio-demographic factors and political convictions. Traditional antisemitism is particularly prevalent among younger men and people with less education. Secondary and Israel-related antisemitism are also widespread among the less educated. An especially alarming development is the increase in antisemitic attitudes among young people.

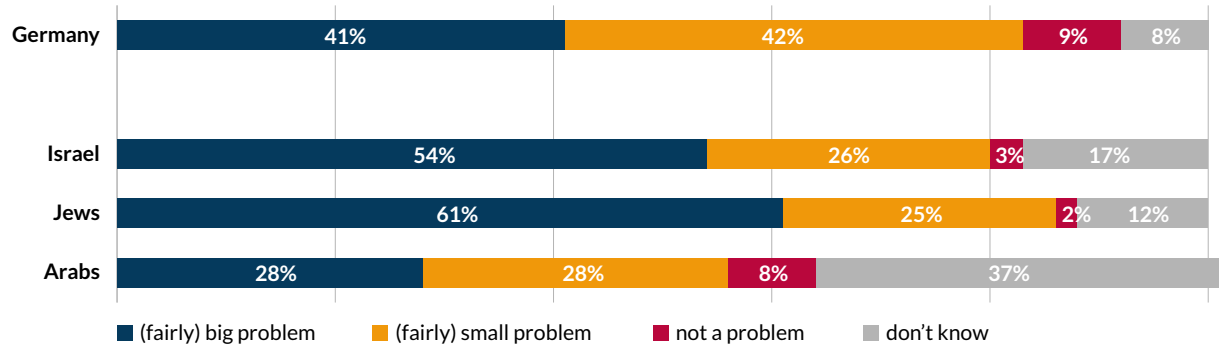
Antisemitism as a social problem and the impact on Jewish people

These findings raise the question of whether antisemitism is perceived in Germany as a serious problem that affects society as a whole and poses a concrete danger to the Jewish community. To answer it, we examined whether respondents believe that Jews in Germany are subject to discrimination and threats to their safety.

There are clear differences between Germany and Israel in terms of respondents' perceptions of antisemitism as a social problem in Germany (Fig. 24). In Germany, 51 percent of respondents consider it to be a (relatively) small problem or not a problem at all, while in Israel, 54 percent perceive antisemitism in Germany as a (relatively) big problem. These figures have remained largely stable since 2021, although in Germany, the share of those who consider antisemitism to be a (relatively) small problem is seven percentage points higher than in 2021. At the same time, the share of those who do not perceive antisemitism as a problem at all has increased by three percentage points. In addition, twice as many respondents are now undecided (8 percent). In Israel, there have been only minor changes compared to 2021, including an increase of four percentage points in the share of undecided respondents.

In Germany, older age groups tend to perceive the problem as more serious. While 37 percent of respondents under the age of 40 consider antisemitism to be a (relatively) big problem, the figure rises to 46 percent among those over 60. Party affiliation also makes a significant difference: 61 percent of Alliance 90/The Greens voters see antisemitism as a (relatively) big problem, compared to 49 percent of SPD voters, 42 percent of The Left party voters and only 40 percent of CDU/CSU voters. The com-

Figure 24 | **Antisemitism as a social problem**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you believe that antisemitism, i.e. hostility towards Jews, is a (fairly) big, (fairly) small, or not a problem in Germany?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

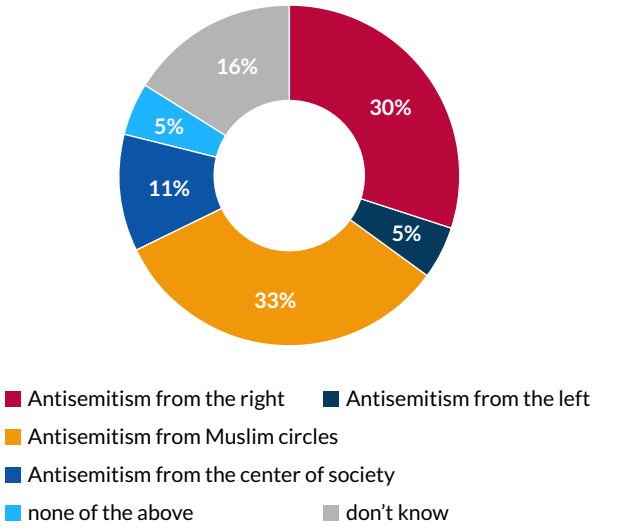
paratively low perception of the problem among conservative voters is surprising given the stance taken by the CDU/CSU. There is a particularly low perception of the problem among AfD voters, with only 31 percent considering antisemitism to be a (relatively) big problem, and one in five seeing no problem at all.

In Israel, it is primarily Jewish respondents who consider antisemitism in Germany to be a serious problem (61 percent). Among Arab Israelis, 28 percent assume that it is a (relatively) big problem in Germany. This is a comparatively high figure, considering that the issue only affects the Jewish experience historically, biographically and politically. In addition, a good third of Arab respondents (37 percent) are undecided. The differences according to party affiliation are less pronounced in Israel, with supporters of HaTzionut HaDatit (71 percent) most frequently seeing it as a (relatively) big problem, followed by HaMahane HaMamlakhti (68 percent), Yesh Atid (62 percent), and Likud (59 percent) voters. The fact that there is almost a consensus here across all ideological differences demonstrates how formative the collective Jewish experience is on this point.

The current debate in Germany focuses on the social groups from which antisemitism largely originates and which pose a threat to Jewish life. These debates are often ideologically charged and are sometimes driven by racist and Islamophobic motives. Against this background, for the first time in this series of studies, we asked German respondents which forms of antisemitism they perceive as the greatest threat in Germany.

Overall, antisemitism from Muslim circles (33 percent) and antisemitism from the right (30 percent) are most frequently cited (Fig. 25). Antisemitism from society's mainstream is considered a threat by 11 percent of respondents, and antisemitism from the left by only 5 percent. A look at current statistics shows that antisemitism from the right in particular is underestimated, as it makes up the largest share of such offenses: 3,016 of a total of 6,236 crimes (48

Figure 25 | **Forms of antisemitism**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Which form of antisemitism poses the greatest threat in Germany?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany); weighted results; own depiction.

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percent).[6] This is followed by antisemitic crimes motivated by foreign ideologies, at 1,940 cases (31 percent), a category that includes crimes related to the Middle East conflict. There were also 685 instances of antisemitic crimes motivated by Islamism or fundamentalism, meaning that crimes clearly attributable to Muslim circles account for 11 percent of the total. It should be noted that Islamist-motivated crimes can also be included in the category "foreign ideologies" (31 percent).

Perceptions of antisemitic threats vary considerably depending on party affiliation, with Alliance 90/The Greens (52 percent), SPD (43 percent) and The Left party (40 percent) voters seeing antisemitism from the right as the main danger. In contrast, supporters of the AfD (50 percent) and the CDU/CSU (38 percent) perceive antisemitism from Muslim circles as the greatest threat. Across all parties, antisemitism from the center or the left is rarely mentioned. How-

6 https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/866547/umfrage/polizeilich-erfasste-antisemitische-delikte-in-deutschland-nach-bereichen/

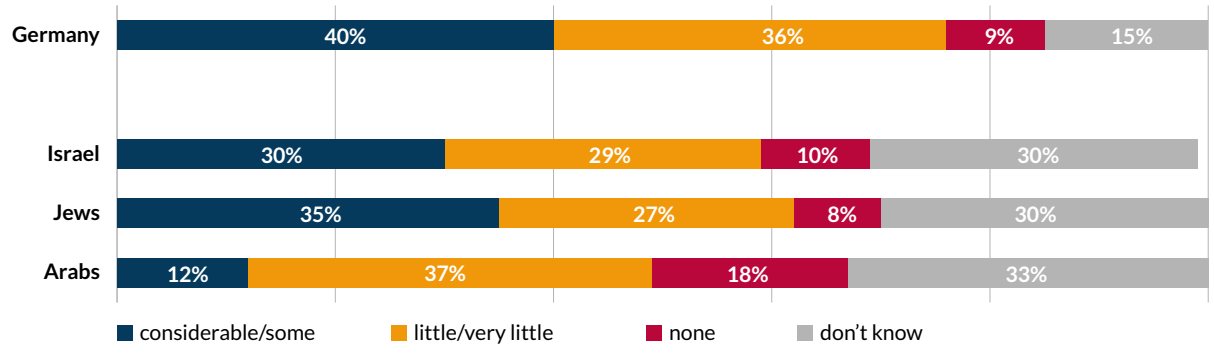
ever, supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens are more likely to perceive antisemitism from the center (16 percent) and supporters of AfD antisemitism from the left (9 percent) as the greatest threat.

The majority of respondents in both countries are convinced that Jews are discriminated against in Germany (Fig. 26). While around three-quarters (76 percent) of respondents in Germany say Jews face considerable or some discrimination, the figure in Israel is 59 percent – although the share of undecided respondents is significantly higher there (30 percent versus 15 percent). Here, too, one possible reason is that many people in Israel are not familiar with the situation in Germany and rarely follow international media. Since 2021, the share of respondents who believe that Jews face discrimination has fallen in both countries, by six percentage points in Germany and seven percentage points in Israel. In both countries, the share of those who say there is considerable discrimination is roughly equal to the share of those who perceive little discrimination. In Germany, 40 percent of respondents believe that Jews face considerable discrimination, while 30 percent (35 percent of Jews) share this assessment in Israel.

In Germany, opinions differ only slightly by gender. Among women, the share of those who perceive considerable discrimination is higher (42 percent) than among men (38 percent). The majority of men believe that Jews are discriminated against to a lesser extent or not at all (52 percent). Party affiliation also plays a role: Supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (57 percent), the SPD (49 percent), and The Left party (47 percent) are more likely to assume that there is significant discrimination, while supporters of the AfD (50 percent) and the CDU/CSU (51 percent) largely feel there is little or none. It is striking that supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens are comparatively more likely to believe that Jews in Germany face significant discrimination as, in the public debate, this viewpoint has been attributed more to the CDU.

The socio-demographic differences in Israel are to some extent more pronounced. Women (33 percent) are more likely than men (27 percent) to believe that Jews in Germany are subject to considerable discrimination. Around one-third of respondents under the age of 60 assume that there is significant discrimination, while only 21 percent of those over the age of 60 believe this to be the case. Younger respondents therefore seem to be more aware of the problem, possibly because they tend to lean towards the current government in their voting behavior.

Figure 26 | **Discrimination against Jews in Germany**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you think Jews in Germany face considerable/some, little/very little or no discrimination?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

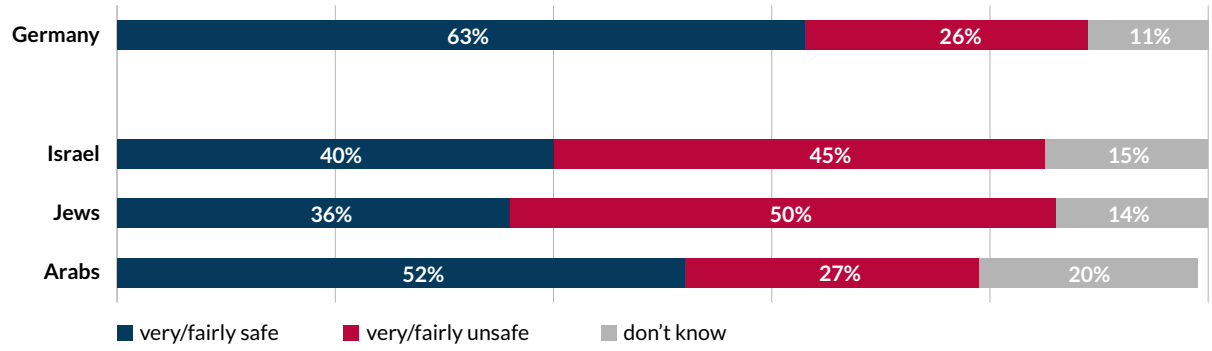
While 35 percent of Jewish Israelis assume that there is significant discrimination, only 12 percent of Arab Israelis share this view; a majority of the latter (55 percent) believe that Jews in Germany experience little or no discrimination. Among Jewish Israelis, there is a correlation between religious orientation and the perception of discrimination. While 29 percent of secular Jews assume that there is considerable discrimination, the figure is markedly higher among traditional (38 percent), religious (40 percent) and ultra-Orthodox (37 percent) Jews. Political affiliation also plays a role, with significant discrimination more frequently perceived by supporters of the ruling parties Likud (44 percent) and HaTzionut HaDatit (43 percent) than by those of the opposition parties Yesh Atid (34 percent) and HaMahane HaMamlakhti (35 percent).

Antisemitism not only leads to discrimination, but also poses a very real threat to Jewish life in Germany. We therefore wanted to ask respondents in Germany and Israel how safe they believe Jewish people are in Germany.

In Germany itself, the picture is predominantly optimistic (Fig. 27): 63 percent of respondents believe that Jews are fairly or very safe in the country (2021: 65 percent). The slight decline of two percentage points contrasts with the de facto increase in the need to protect Jewish institutions since October 7 and the rise in antisemitic incidents in Germany. The situation is viewed much more critically in Israel, where 45 percent of respondents believe that Jewish life in Germany is somewhat or very unsafe (2021: 43 percent). It is striking that awareness of this insecurity has increased among Arab Israelis in particular, with the share of those who feel this way rising to 27 percent from 15 percent in 2021. This is likely related to the increasing international attention that the issue of Jewish security has received since October 7.

In Germany, differences are particularly evident in terms of gender and educational attainment. Men are much more likely than women to feel Jews are safe in Germany (71 percent and 55 percent, respectively). The higher the level of education, the more frequently respondents rate Jewish life in Germany as safe, with 68 percent of higher-educated individuals sharing this view while only 57 percent of the less educated do. Party affiliation also influences perceptions: The majority of SPD (69 percent), CDU/CSU (67 percent), Alliance 90/The Greens (65 percent) and The Left party (60 percent) voters consider Jews to be safe in Germany. Agreement among AfD voters is lower (54 percent). It is also striking that the share of undecided voters is highest among AfD supporters (15 percent). The lower rate of agreement on this issue among AfD voters is most likely

Figure 27 | **Safety of Jews in Germany**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you think Jews in Germany are safe?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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related to a pronounced distrust of state institutions, a strong emphasis on the "antisemitism of others" and ambivalent attitudes towards Jewish people and Israel. This combination of factors leads to a more skeptical perception of how safe society is overall while also explaining the above-average number of undecided voters in this group.

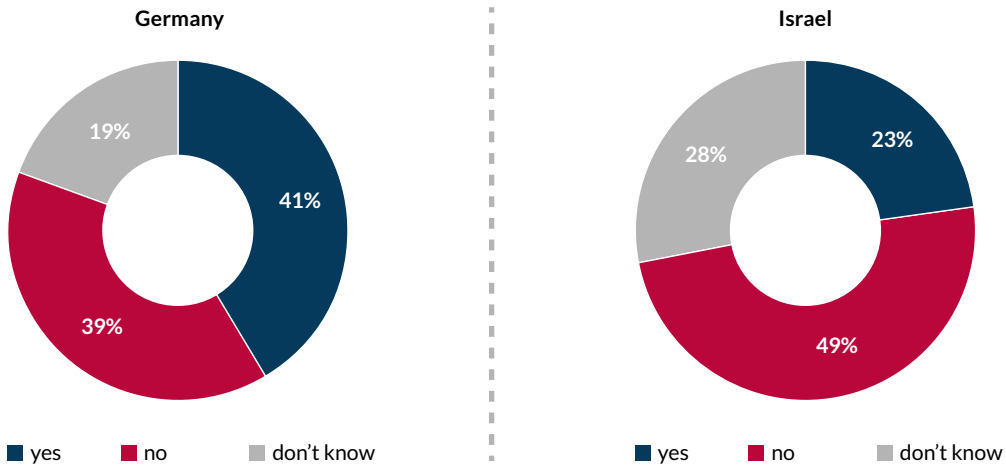
Opinions also differ significantly in Israel. Men (48 percent) are far more likely than women (33 percent) to believe that Jews live safely in Germany. The difference between Jewish and Arab Israelis is particularly striking: While 50 percent of Jewish Israelis consider life in Germany to be unsafe for Jews, only 27 percent of Arab Israelis share this view. Secular Jews are the only group in which a relative majority of 43 percent assume that the situation is safe. In contrast, a majority of traditional (58 percent), religious (57 percent) and ultra-Orthodox (53 percent) Jews believe that life in Germany is somewhat or even very unsafe for Jews. An analysis by party affiliation also reveals a difference, with supporters of the governing parties more likely to view the situation in Germany as unsafe than supporters of the opposition parties. The spectrum ranges from HaTzionut HaDatit (61 percent) and Likud (60 percent) to HaMahane HaMamlakhti (50 percent) and Yesh Atid (45 percent). This is likely due to the Likud camp's stronger focus on security policy.

Assessment of policy measures

Are German policymakers doing enough to counter antisemitic attitudes and protect Jewish people from being attacked? We asked respondents in both countries for their viewpoints on this issue as well.

Opinion in Germany is divided when it comes to combating antisemitic attitudes (Fig. 28), as 41 percent of respondents believe that the measures taken so far are sufficient, while 39 percent expect policymakers to make a greater effort. In Israel, the assessment is more critical. Just under half of respondents (49 percent) would like to see Germany take stronger action against antisemitic attitudes, while only 23 percent consider the measures implemented so far to be sufficient. There have been only minor shifts in opinion on this issue since 2021, but the number of undecided respondents has risen slightly – by two percentage points in Germany and four in Israel.

Figure 28 | **Combating antisemitic attitudes**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you think German politicians are doing enough to combat antisemitic attitudes?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

In Germany, gender and education are the main factors influencing how people feel here, with almost half of men (48 percent) saying they consider the measures taken so far to combat antisemitic attitudes to be sufficient, and only 36 percent of women saying this is the case. This corresponds with the finding that women are more likely to say Jews are not safe living in Germany. In addition, respondents with a low level of education are less likely to consider German policy measures sufficient than those with a medium or high level (38 percent and 44 percent, respectively). The responses also vary by party affiliation, with CDU/CSU (51 percent), SPD (46 percent) and AfD (41 percent) voters predominantly satisfied with the measures taken so far. In contrast, supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (53 percent) and The Left party (48 percent) emphasize that more needs to be done to combat antisemitic attitudes.

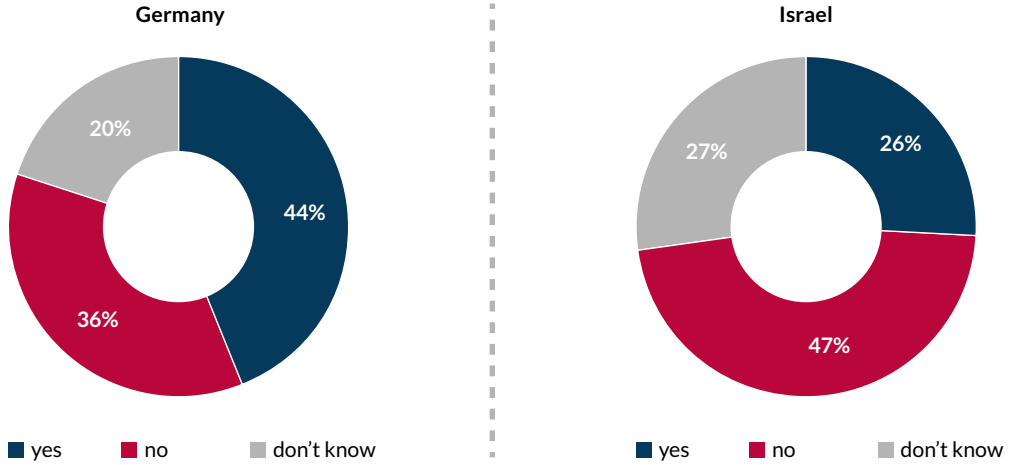
As with other issues, there are clear differences in Israel based on socio-demographic characteristics. Men (30 percent) are more likely than women (16 percent) to believe that Germany is already doing enough to combat antisemitic attitudes. The majority of Israelis under the age of 40 (53 percent) would like to see German politicians take stronger action against antisemitism, while the figure for respondents over 60 is only 45 percent. The difference between Jewish and Arab Israelis is most pronounced: While 59 percent of Jewish Israelis believe that German politicians are not doing enough to combat antisemitic attitudes, only 14 percent of Arab Israelis share this view. Conversely, 50 percent of Arab Israelis consider the measures taken so far to be sufficient, compared to only 15 percent of Jewish Israelis. There are also striking differences within the Jewish population, as Jews from secular circles are less likely (52 percent) to believe that German policymakers are too inactive than traditional (57 percent), ultra-Orthodox (67 percent) and religious (73 percent) Jews. Opinion is relatively homogeneous when it comes to party preference: Supporters of HaMahane HaMamlakhti are the least likely to believe that German politicians are not doing enough (60 percent), while this perception is most widespread among HaTzionut HaDatit voters (69 percent). Overall, it can be said that opinions in Israel vary primarily by gender, religiosity and age, and between Jewish and Arab Israelis.

A similar picture emerges when it comes to protecting Jews against attacks (Fig. 29, page 44). In Germany, a majority of respondents believe that German politicians are already doing enough to ensure the safety of Jewish people (44 percent). In Israel, the perception is more critical, with just under half (47 percent) saying German policymakers should be doing more.

Once again, gender-related differences are striking in Germany: 52 percent of men believe that German politicians are doing enough to protect Jews from being attacked. Women are clearly divided on this issue, with 37 percent considering the measures to be sufficient, and 39 percent saying they are not. Party affiliation also influences opinions and exhibits a similar pattern to the one seen in efforts to combat antisemitic attitudes, as the majority of CDU/CSU (52 percent), SPD (52 percent), and AfD (42 percent) voters consider the measures taken so far to be sufficient. In contrast, supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens (46 percent) and The Left party (44 percent) are more likely to call for greater effort on the part of Germany's policymakers.

Similar to the previous question, clear differences can be seen among Israeli respondents based on gender and age: Men (32 percent) are more likely than women (21 percent) to believe that Germany is already doing enough to combat antisemitic attacks. Israelis under the age of 40 in particular would like to see greater effort on the part of German politicians, with a majority of 51 percent holding this view, compared to only 43 percent of those over the age of 60. Once again, the gap between the Jewish and Arab populations is particularly wide: While 56 percent of Jewish Israelis expect more effort from German policymakers, only 12 percent of Arab Israelis do. Conversely, 54 percent of Arab Israelis consider the measures taken so far to be sufficient, compared to only 19 percent of Jewish Israelis. Religious orientation also has a significant

Figure 29 | **Protection from attacks**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "Do you think German politicians are doing enough to prevent Jews from being attacked?" Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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influence on perceptions here: Secular Jews are least likely to believe that German politicians should do more (51 percent), while the highest figure can be found among ultra-Orthodox Jews (69 percent). The perception that there is too little protection for Jews in Germany is widespread across party lines. This viewpoint is most prevalent among supporters of HaTzionut HaDatit (66 percent) and least common among Yesh Atid voters (56 percent).

Interpreting the findings

Antisemitism is perceived as a growing problem in all population groups, both in Israel and in Germany. At the same time, hostility towards Jews is seen as a marginal phenomenon affecting the extreme fringes of society rather than the center. Our findings show that this is not the case, as up to a third of respondents agree with statements expressing traditional antisemitism, and up to half agree with statements expressing Israel-related antisemitism. Moreover, up to two-thirds endorse statements expressing secondary antisemitism.

This reality is reflected neither in the public's perceptions nor in the practical actions taken by policymakers. Less than half of those surveyed view antisemitism as a (fairly) serious problem, an assessment that has not changed since 2021. At the same time, there is less awareness of the discrimination Jews face. The security situation is seen as unchanged, even though the number of antisemitic crimes and acts of violence has risen significantly in recent years. A relative majority of respondents also consider the political efforts made to date to combat antisemitic attitudes and protect Jews in Germany to be sufficient – something that is inconsistent with the fact that security at Jewish institutions, such as kindergartens, schools and synagogues, has had to be massively increased since October 7, 2023.

Certain groups stand out in our analyses. Men consistently express less uncertainty when responding to our questions on antisemitism (see Fig. 23, page 36), although they hold more pronounced (traditionally) antisemitic views and see less need for protective measures. Women, on the other hand, perceive more acutely both the discrimination Jews in Germany face and their need for security; women also expect more to be done in this area.

Older respondents also perceive more clearly the increase in antisemitism in Germany and have a greater awareness of the problem than younger respondents. Antisemitic attitudes have become more prevalent among under-40-year-olds since 2021, particularly attitudes reflective of Israel-related and traditional antisemitism. This is particularly evident among young men, who exhibit both the greatest prevalence of antisemitic attitudes and the most limited awareness of the problem.

Although respondents with higher levels of education exhibit less antisemitism across all the aspects surveyed, this is not reflected in a greater concern about antisemitic tendencies or a more sensitive perception of the threats Jews in Germany face. In fact, better-educated respondents are more likely on average to consider existing political measures to be sufficient.

With regard to party affiliation, one aspect that must be noted is the striking polarization between the AfD and other political parties. Antisemitic attitudes are most prevalent among supporters of the AfD, while Alliance 90/The Greens voters rank lowest for all forms of antisemitism. Supporters of the CDU/CSU and SPD are in the middle of the pack, with some showing an upward trend compared to 2021. There has also been a particular increase in agreement with statements critical of Israel among The Left party voters, the party that, in its own ranks, has most clearly promoted the genocide debate in connection with the war in Gaza. There is no evidence, however, that this attitude translates into a blanket rejection of Jews in Germany. In addition to having the most pronounced antisemitic attitudes, AfD voters also have little awareness of the prevalence of antisemitism and the discrimination Jews in Germany face.

The findings show that antisemitism is seen as less of an issue in precisely those places where antisemitic attitudes are most common. This asymmetry indicates a deeper social imbalance: Many people only recognize antisemitism when it does not affect them personally. This suggests that the efforts to translate the moral demands of Germany's culture of remembrance into lasting social sensitivity have not proven sufficiently successful.

Perceptions of German-Israeli cooperation

As in the past, we asked about how people perceive the cooperative efforts between Germany and Israel.

The attitudes in both countries differ significantly here (Fig. 30). In Germany, 40 percent of respondents believe that the current level of cooperation is sufficient, while 24 percent would like to see it expanded. In Israel, on the other hand, only 16 percent of respondents say there is sufficient cooperation; a clear majority of 68 percent are in favor of more.

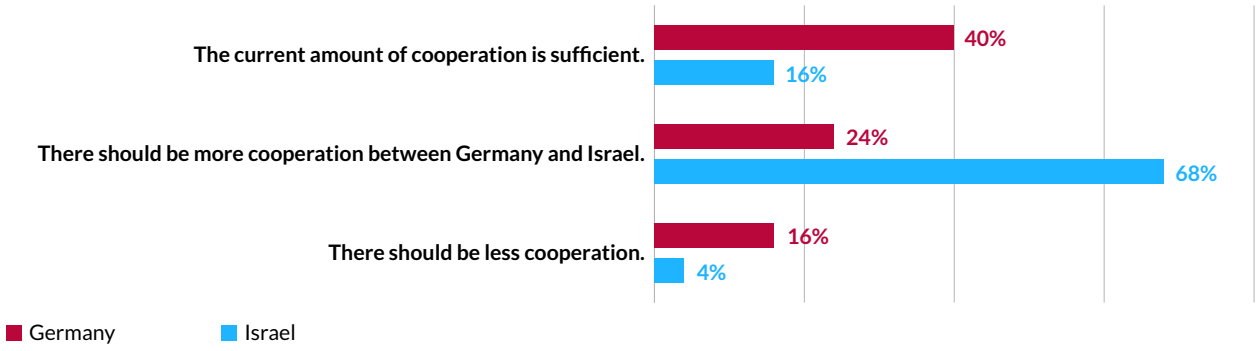
It is striking that almost one in four respondents in Germany under the age of 40 (23 percent) would like to see less cooperation, while this is true for only one in ten of those over 60.

Although most voters across party lines consider the current level of German-Israeli cooperation to be sufficient, party-specific tendencies are evident: 37 percent of Alliance 90/The Greens voters are in favor of expanding cooperation, an above-average figure. In contrast, 29 percent of AfD voters want less cooperation – the highest figure for this viewpoint among all party affiliations.

In Israel, clear differences exist between Jewish and Arab citizens. While 76 percent of Jewish respondents are in favor of closer cooperation with Germany, only 34 percent of Arabs are. A relative majority of Arab respondents (38 percent) feel the current level of cooperation is sufficient. Differences are also apparent between governing and opposition parties: Supporters of HaMahane HaMamlakhti (88 percent) and Yesh Atid (85 percent) in particular would like to see cooperation expanded. A lower share, but still a majority of Likud (79 percent) and HaTzionut HaDatit (68 percent) voters also want this.

We also asked which areas of German-Israeli cooperation were considered particularly important

Figure 30 | **Outlook for German-Israeli cooperation**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "When it comes to German-Israeli cooperation, what would you recommend?" Excluded response: "don't know."

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

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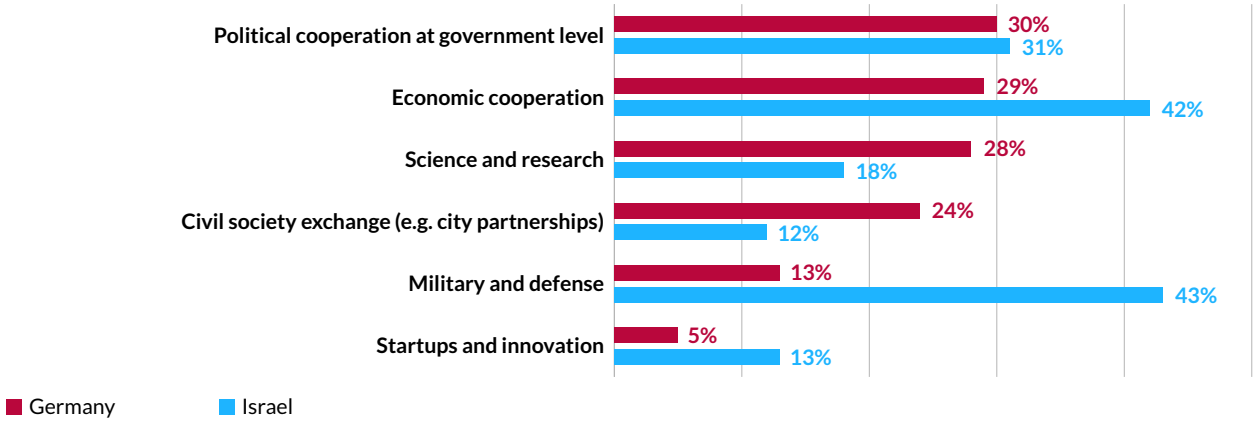
(Fig. 31). Respondents were able to select two fields from several options. In both countries, around a third of respondents named political cooperation at government level as one of the most important areas. The Israelis also see economic cooperation together with cooperation on military and defense as particularly important. The situation is different in Germany, where science and research along with civil society exchange are prioritized more frequently than in Israel.

Once again, party affiliation plays a role. Political cooperation at government level is cited particularly frequently by SPD (42 percent) and CDU/CSU (35 percent) voters as important. Supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens, on the other hand, place particular emphasis on civil society exchange and cooperation in science and research, at 44 percent each. Civil society exchange is also a priority for supporters of The Left party, with 41 percent viewing it as an important form of partnership. AfD voters, almost a third of whom are in favor of less cooperation between Germany and Israel, most frequently give the answer "don't know" (32 percent), followed by economic cooperation (30 percent).

Close cooperation in the areas of military and defense is supported by 53 percent of Jewish respondents, compared to only 6 percent of Arab respondents. Arab Israelis, on the other hand, attach the greatest importance to close economic ties, at 53 percent. This area is also relevant for Jewish Israelis, however, with 40 percent saying it is important. There is broad agreement across party lines: The most significant issue for all voters is cooperation in the area of military and defense. For supporters of the ruling parties HaTzionut HaDatit and Likud, cooperation at government level ranks second (43 and 40 percent, respectively). Supporters of the opposition parties Yesh Atid and HaMahane HaMamlakhti cite economic cooperation as the second most important issue (47 and 44 percent, respectively).

The differing priorities in both countries point to a continuing asymmetry in the basic understanding of the German-Israeli relationship, which was already evident in the section on German-Israeli relations (see pages 12 ff.): While Germans continue to focus on understanding through shared values, dialogue and symbolic proximity, Israelis take a more functional view of cooperation, emphasizing secu-

Figure 31 | **Most important areas of German-Israeli cooperation**



Percentages represent the frequency of answers to the question: "In which two areas do you feel Germany and Israel should cooperate particularly closely?" Excluded response: "don't know." Multiple responses were possible (maximum of two); percentages therefore do not total 100.

Basis: All respondents (Germany/Israel); weighted results; own depiction.

rity issues and economic interests. This difference is not new as, even in the early days of the countries' bilateral relations, the German need for reconciliation was countered by the Israeli expectation that the partnership must prove itself first and foremost in practical terms.

Conclusion

Stephan Vopel

Sixty years after the establishment of diplomatic relations, Germany and Israel are closer than ever politically, economically and socially. At the same time, however, the foundation underlying the countries' special relationship has become more fragile. As our study shows, how people view key issues differs significantly in German and Israeli society. It is remarkable that – as was also seen in the previous study – hardly any differences exist between respondents in eastern and western Germany. Despite different historical experiences in dealing with the Nazi past and the state of Israel, there are broad similarities in how people in both parts of the country perceive key issues and in their attitudes towards those issues.

The situation is different when it comes to bilateral relations: While the majority of Israelis view Germany and its government positively, Germans are increasingly critical of Israel – especially of its current government.

At the same time, Germany's historical responsibility is interpreted differently by both sides. For a large majority of Israelis, this responsibility applies equally to the Jewish people and the state of Israel. In Germany, on the other hand, this responsibility is increasingly understood in more abstract terms: Many younger Germans affirm the significance of the Shoah for the present, but tend to draw universal lessons from it for preserving human rights and international law, rather than a specific responsibility for the Jewish people or the state of Israel. On the one hand, this universalization of remembrance is an expression of an internalized historical consciousness; on the other, it harbors the danger of any concrete political responsibility towards Israel receding into the background.

Another of our study's findings, moreover, is a cause for concern, namely that antisemitism remains a pressing problem for German society. The survey's results clearly show that hostility towards Jews continues to exist in its various forms and also occurs among different social groups and in all political camps – albeit to varying degrees. While in some cases fewer people endorse statements expressing secondary antisemitism, Israel-related antisemitism is on the rise – especially among young people.

The shifts that our study reveals impact both the social climate and the foundations of the German-Israeli relationship. After all, understanding historical responsibility, remembering the Shoah, and exhibiting solidarity with the state of Israel while being able to express criticism are essential pillars of this relationship. The question of how this remembrance can be carried into the future and filled with new life is of fundamental importance for the further development of German-Israeli relations.

Despite all the current challenges, it should be noted that the basis for understanding and cooperation between the two countries remains intact. The mutual acceptance of democracy, the great trust that Israelis place in Germany, and the broad acceptance in Germany of the importance of its historical responsibility provide a solid foundation for a shared future.

Nevertheless, the developments described above call for clear and decisive political responses, which must be implemented on several levels:

1. **Promoting political education and an awareness of historical responsibility:** More must be done to remember the Shoah and convey its significance – especially among the younger generation – for how the Federal Republic of Germany defines itself. For this generation, references to "das Volk der Täter" (the nation of perpetrators) and the importance of assuming historical responsibility have become more tenuous than ever due to immigration, among other factors. Efforts to remember the past must therefore not be limited to rituals, they must be concrete and offer diverse possibilities for identification and political guidance – in order to promote democracy and human rights while combating all forms of antisemitism.

2. **Combating antisemitism on a broad scale:** A holistic approach is needed that takes all forms of antisemitism seriously in equal measure: right-wing, left-wing, Islamic, post-colonial and Israel-related. The fight against antisemitism must not be instrumentalized, neither to deny the legitimacy of justified criticism of Israel, nor to conceal one's own animosities, for example towards Muslims.

3. **Exhibiting solidarity with Israel in a way that allows for criticism:** Germany's oft-cited raison d'état must be redeemed in concrete terms by exhibiting solidarity without forgoing the possibility of expressing criticism. This means that Israel's right to exist and its security are non-negotiable. At the same time, it cannot mean ignoring questionable developments in Israeli domestic or foreign policy. Where a deep connection exists, there necessarily arises the duty to provide support that allows for criticism.

4. **Strengthening civil society relations:** Political and media polarization must not lead to a neglect of interpersonal relations. Exchange programs, joint educational and research projects, and direct interactions between young people foster a vibrant relationship as well as understanding and greater trust, even in times of conflict.

5. **Creating a clear European policy for the Middle East:** Germany should advocate in the EU for a coherent Middle East policy that is based on international and human rights and that is also realistic in terms of security. Such a policy must acknowledge both Israel's security needs and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. In this way, trust can be (re)established and a more just and peaceful order sought.

Today more than ever, a conscious, reflective and forward-looking approach must be taken to German-Israeli relations. This means not papering over differences, but openly acknowledging them. Such an approach is what will allow the special relationship that has resulted from historical events to become the credible promise of a better future.

Tectonic shifts

Drilling into the historical depths of how Germans view Israel

Dan Diner

The following reflections complement the quantitative surveys on German-Israeli relations and on the specifically German relationship to Judaism today by providing a qualitative in-depth analysis. As the analysis shows, several problem areas emerge that are difficult to distinguish from each other.

At the level of everyday phenomena, the focus will be on discourses about Israel in Germany that are closely related to the war in Gaza. These discourses correlate to the changes revealed in this study's data – for example, the fact that the share of Germans who view Israel positively has fallen to 36 percent, while 60 percent of Israelis continue to view Germany positively. It is striking that this deterioration of sympathy towards Israel is particularly evident among younger people. This says quite a bit about what the future might bring.

This constellation – profound changes in the image of Israel in Germany and a fairly stable perception of Germany in Israel – suggests that we should limit ourselves here to how Germans view Israel. In addition, the traditional divisions within Israeli society (not least the gap between Jewish nationalist religious groups, on the one hand, and Arab Israelis, on the other) show that absolute figures about "Israelis" have limited explanatory value.

The impact of collective consciousness

To begin, it should be noted that the observed tectonic shifts in the image of Israel are not exclusive to Germany and the changing sentiments there. Rather, these shifts are having a global impact, although special circumstances apply in and for Germany.

These circumstances can be traced back to what is commonly referred to as "history" or "the past," i.e. the Nazi era and the Holocaust. In light of this historically special relationship with "the Jews," the image of Israel made evident by the study should be considered an indicator of and seismograph for deeper tectonic shifts, both in politics and everyday life. With that, the survey's subject extends, in terms of its significance, far beyond its concrete factual perimeter.

If the elements that shape the image Germans have of Israel could be isolated from each other, the following questions would arise: the question of the political role played by the raison d'état rhetoric; the question of the relationship between genocide and the Holocaust, and of antisemitism and hostility towards the Jews; the question of memory and remembrance; and the question of Germany's evolving self-image ("identity"). Although closely intertwined, these elements each display striking particularities. In the following, it is important to consider both their interconnectedness and their specific points of consolidation.

Finally, it should be noted that what is being considered here is primarily public discourse, i.e. the discussion of the Israel-Palestine question and the Middle East conflict, and not the reality of these issues. Admittedly, it is difficult to separate the two entirely, although it should be attempted as a matter of methodology. The real issue, then, is how underlying tendencies in the collective consciousness converge to form this broader nexus of issues pertaining to the image Germans have of Israel.

Raison d'état – a multifaceted term

When, on March 18, 2008, then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, used the phrase "Israel's security as part of Germany's raison d'état," it was impossible to foresee the degree of commotion to which this relatively abstract and declaratory statement would give rise after a hiatus of almost two decades. The phrase seems to be stirring public opinion in Germany in a lasting way – and this as a result of widespread rejection of Israel's war in Gaza. After all, raison d'état conveys more than just a casual declaration of sympathy for Israel. Rather, it is a definitive expression of partisanship – a stance that apparently obliges the German people to side with the Jewish state and stand by it in all circumstances, right or wrong!

On closer inspection, raison d'état proves to be far more multifaceted than might appear at first glance. In fact, the term, in its original meaning, evinces some troubling characteristics: It refers to a categorical obligation, even a compulsion, to submit to a higher interest, namely the prevailing "raison," or "reason" of the state, or, more precisely, of state action; in other words, to everything that serves the interests of the state and to which one is expected to subordinate oneself. In short, raison d'état is characterized by a superior, even burdensome rationality. This can be as difficult to bear as it is unwillingly borne.

Looking back on German-Israeli relations, it is striking that in their early years they did not exactly arouse overwhelming enthusiasm among the German public – not in the West, and certainly not in East Germany, which was openly hostile towards Israel. The decision to make "reparations" to the State of Israel and the Jewish people, as contractually guaranteed in the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952, was met with an equally restrained response. With the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Israel in 1965, this first phase of German-Israeli relations came to an end. The task at hand was to combine elements of so-called "moral politics" with those of Realpolitik. What was striking, however, was that even the moral justification followed Realpolitik considerations. In the event, Chancellor Adenauer was unable to mobilize a parliamentary majority in his party or his coalition for the ratification of the reparations agreement, and was forced to seek support from the Social Democratic opposition.

In 1965, in an almost surprise move, Chancellor Erhard pushed through the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bonn and Jerusalem, effectively bypassing opponents of the plan within his own camp. The skeptics justified their reservations by citing the Hallstein Doctrine – that is, they feared the consequences of a subsequent Arab recognition of East Germany.

To reiterate, Realpolitik and "moral politics" were, when it came to German-Israeli relations, closely intertwined from the start. The Reparations Agreement, or Israel Agreement as it was called, was part of West Germany's early offensive for integrating itself into the West and thus an essential element in its policy for gaining sovereignty. In other words, it was part of the raison d'état at the time. The Adenauer government saw the agreement as a visible means of signaling to the West the country's moral rehabilitation, even if, in promoting the pact domestically, classic antisemitic tropes – such as references to a purported "power of the Jews" (Adenauer) – were deployed. And since joining the West was unquestionably the predominant raison d'état, the relationship with Israel and "the Jews" was considered a relevant building block in the strategic and political architecture of Western integration.

In contrast, when Chancellor Merkel used the phrase "Israel's security as part of Germany's raison d'état," it arose completely unforced from the precepts of a moral politics occasioned by the then-burgeoning debates about commemorating the Holocaust. Such an attitude was new, especially since the "commemoration of the Holocaust" did not really commence until the end of the 1970s – despite the Nazi war

crimes trials that began in the late 1950s with the Ulm Einsatzgruppen trial, reaching their peak with the Auschwitz trial of 1963–65.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the commemoration discourse escalated, becoming increasingly institutionalized within the realm of cultural policy. At the time, debates associated with signifiers such as "memory" and "remembrance" acquired a kind of official political connotation and began to serve as an unwritten preamble to the constitution, so to speak. The address given by then German President Weizsäcker on May 8, 1985, is considered the public spark that ignited these debates.

The unification of the two German states in 1989/90 was to have different consequences for the politics of remembrance. Life in East Germany proved rather resistant to what would later be deemed a "culture of history and memory." In any case, it was unable to offer an organic, independent experience comparable to the one that had shaped the old Federal Republic, with its genuine moral-political conflicts, scandals and controversies. And even if its significance was considered exaggerated, the phrase "Israel's security as part of Germany's raison d'état" as expressed by Chancellor Merkel in the Knesset did indeed seem belatedly remedial.

Meanwhile, current developments between the Rhine and the Oder suggest the emergence of tendencies that could call into question the hard-won Westernization that is understood as the country's raison d'état. And this quite apart from the massive geopolitical upheavals that are shaking the very concept of the transatlantic West. It can hardly be denied that the war in Gaza has further fueled such trends in Germany since 2023, at least as far as attitudes towards Israel and "the Jews" are concerned.

Talk of genocide

Germany's "raison d'état" vis-à-vis Israel and "the Jews" is predicated on the memory of the Holocaust. The war in Gaza – the actual Israeli warfare and, even more so, the Israeli warfare presented in the media – is increasingly being labeled "genocide." Whether the violence exercised by the Israeli armed forces against Hamas and the "collateral damage" to the Palestinian population, accepted willingly or less willingly, actually constituted acts of genocide in the legal sense, or rather war crimes and crimes against humanity, will have to be adjudicated by the courts. This is not the issue here. What must be addressed here is the shifting awareness of Israel and "the Jews" that has accompanied these events. Currently, an attitude is spreading worldwide that is little inclined towards the Jews, an attitude that goes far beyond protest appropriate to the matter at hand. Rather, it seems intent on unequivocally accusing the Jewish state and thus "the Jews" of the crime of genocide – at any rate, to brand them with the mark of Cain, as it were, for the crime of crimes. This circumstance reveals that deeper layers are being activated here in which historical and theological aspects are intertwined.

First, let us look at the historical aspect, specifically the legal history and thus the background to what led to the neologism "genocide" in 1944. The initial legal efforts began in the 1930s, prompted by the so-called "Armenian massacre" committed in 1915. Following the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany against European Jews, these efforts ultimately culminated in the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948. It should be noted that Raphael Lemkin, the Jewish-Polish lawyer who resolutely pursued international recognition of genocide as a criminal offense, ultimately refrained from placing at the center of the new definition those characteristics specific to the Holocaust – namely, extermination for the sake of extermination alone. Instead, he referenced Nazi Germany's "Master Plan for the East," which was, again, less about the total annihilation characteristic of the Holocaust and more

about what the Nazis had envisaged for the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe: the extermination of one-third of the population, the enslavement of another third, and the abduction and "Germanization" of the remaining third, made up primarily of children.

Although the Genocide Convention was prompted by the Holocaust – the Nazis' "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" – the definition of genocide already allowed, even in its nascent state, for collective crimes of lesser intensity. This may have been due to the need for universal acceptance, but also to the fact that the significance of the Holocaust in its totality had not yet been truly understood. In Nuremberg, too, the "Final Solution" did not appear as a distinct charge on the criminal agenda. The result was ultimately paradoxical: Although the legal definition of genocide drew its historical legitimacy largely from the horrors of the Holocaust, it subsequently became detached from it. And in its current use within the politics of memory, it can even be turned against it. Yet the Holocaust, measured empirically and according to the legal definition of genocide, was a total, absolute genocide. That it is deprived of its status as such in public discourse through comparative narratives is likely due to the degree of emotional heatedness that ensues in the transition from historical-legal arguments to reactions permeated by theological-political considerations.

What is meant here is not theology in the truest sense of the word, but rather theologically recognizable inflections within a discourse that presents itself as purely political. In other words, an unacknowledged transfer of theological form and religious metaphor into political speech. This includes the indignation that insists on labeling the – certainly condemnable – actions of the Israeli military unequivocally as genocide and having this demand confirmed through public rituals as incontrovertible truth. A truth thus asserted demands a confession – one which, in its intensity, corresponds to that of a profession of faith.

The suspicion thus arises that such states of agitation stem less from horror at the suffering of the Palestinians than from the fact that their suffering is caused by Jews. This pattern aligns with traditional theological images of "the Jews." And while the violence perpetrated by the Israeli military is ascribed the quality of genocide, the Jewish side perceives this accusation as equating it with the Holocaust and rejects it with indignation. The discourse on truth that this has triggered and the degree of agitation mobilized in the process are reminiscent of traditional theological disputes. The singularity of the Holocaust is contrasted here with a multitude of genocides, whereby talk of the singularity of the Holocaust is taken to imply a supposed Jewish chosenness. Meanwhile, the forcefulness of the exclamation "It *is* genocide!" seems, in its form, to correspond to the call for a profession of faith that "Jesus *is* the Christ!"

The relationship to "the Jews" – a seismograph

A political discourse that places Israel and "the Jews" at its center cannot be free of the theological influences that preceded it. This is inherent in its "nature" – that is to say, in the presence of "the Jews" within the Christian canon. It should be noted that this says little about the real conflict in Israel/Palestine, but all the more about the character of the discourse surrounding the conflict. It is therefore not surprising that this discourse is accompanied by a surge of anti-Jewish resentment. This does not even require crossing the threshold into an ideologically formed antisemitism. Resentment is difficult to grasp, has the consistency of mildew and appears in complex composites, rarely in its pure form.

The relationship with "the Jews" is like a shibboleth, a distinguishing mark. Only time will tell whether the war in Gaza will lead to a new level of antisemitic sentiment. There is more at stake, however. In view of the profound political changes taking place not just in Europe but worldwide, much is in flux.
It would seem that, in Germany, the Federal Repub-

lic's old political party system is being called into question. This will change the relationship to "history" – that is, to "the past" and thus also to "the Jews." This trend need not lead to catastrophic upheavals analogous to those of the first half of the 20th century. Much instead calls to mind the 19th century. This, at least, is what the shifting contours of "politics writ large" currently suggest. Some of this also applies to the Jewish state, which means that the increasingly dominant politics there are – only seemingly paradoxically – seeking proximity to groups and parties abroad that have not traditionally been particularly well disposed towards "the Jews." And this entirely aligns with the vision of Theodor Herzl, the visionary and ideological founder of the Jewish state, who at the turn of the century wrote in his diary (cynically or sarcastically) that "the antisemites … [will be] our most reliable friends and the antisemitic countries our allies …"

These trends emerge from the empirical findings of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's study on German-Israeli relations. They make it clear that the study's subject involves more than just the constantly fluctuating relationship between two states or their citizens. German-Israeli relations are like a magnifying glass in which major shifts and transformations can be observed. They also impose a special responsibility on all those who deal with German-Jewish relations and the image of "the Jews" – a responsibility that also pertains to what is meant by historical awareness and political judgment. In this respect, the subject of the study is an indicator of, and seismograph for, upheavals that extend far beyond the subject itself.

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