Jews in the Netherlands in the 2020s

Fifty years of stability and 'Israelisation'

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to positively influence Jewish life. Its European Jewish Demography Unit exists to generate demographic data and analysis to support Jewish community planning and development throughout the continent.

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/ Contents

Preface and acknowledgements 2

Key findings 3

Introduction 5

1 Jews in the Netherlands: demographic and socioeconomic realities 8

2 Jewish identity 32

Conclusions 57

Methodological appendix: estimates of the size of the Jewish population in the Netherlands and its components of growth 63

/ Preface and acknowledgements

This research stands on the shoulders of giants. Several large-scale studies of Jews in the Netherlands have been conducted over the past sixty years or so. A foundational study of the post-Holocaust Dutch Jewish demography and society was carried out in the mid-1960s. Two other studies, conceived as updates, were conducted at the turn of the twenty-first century (1999) and then a decade later (2009). A study of Israelis in the Netherlands took place in the mid-1990s. These studies came about because of a meeting of minds between analysts and policymakers in the Dutch Jewish community and demographic experts outside the community. The initiative and sponsorship of the studies were shared by the Jewish Social Work Foundation/Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW) and the Committee for Demography of Jews in the Netherlands. Professionally, the studies were carried out by experts in demography and social statistics at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES). The focus of all studies was both on estimating the size and sociodemographic characteristics of the Dutch Jewish population and documenting the patterns of its Jewish identity. The present study, also sponsored by the JMW and carried out this time by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), can be seen as a continuation of this strand of research and of an honourable tradition of self-study and self-reflection in which the Dutch Jewish community has been engaging in the post-Holocaust era.

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/ Key findings

- During the 2020s, the 'core' Jewish population of the Netherlands is estimated to be about 35,000. This is a mid-point of a 29,000–41,000 range, where the true size of the Dutch Jewish population is very likely to be situated. This number has remained stable at least since the 1960s. The 'core Jewish population' consists of people who would explicitly identify themselves as Jews when asked, for example, in a census or a survey. This is not identical to the definition of Jewishness under Jewish law (*halacha*) but is close to it.

- There are more Jews in the Netherlands than previously thought. The latest figure (35,000) represents an upward correction to the accepted estimate published until recently in the *American Jewish Year Book*, which is a key reference text for global Jewish population accounts.

- According to the Israeli Law of Return, which allows a person to emigrate to Israel and apply for Israeli citizenship, the estimated eligible population in the Netherlands might be as high as 65,000. The Law of Return applies to Jews, children and grandchildren of Jews, and all respective spouses, regardless of their current Jewish status.

- The core Jewish population constitutes 0.2% of the total population of the Netherlands, a very small group compared to other similar subpopulations. The total population with Jewish connections (the core and the non-core components) comes to 0.4%. For context, close to 50% of Dutch people have no religious denomination, 35%–40% are Christian, and 6%–8% are Muslim.

- The natural balance of Dutch Jews is negative: the population experiences more deaths than births and cannot grow on its own. Nevertheless, the Dutch Jewish population is growing slowly as a result of one single factor: migration. This situation is not very different from that of the Dutch population as a whole. Assuming no change in the trend of migration, the core Jewish population of the Netherlands could reach 36,000–37,000 by the mid-2030s.

- Close to 50% of all Dutch Jews reside in North Holland, mostly in Greater Amsterdam. Only 17% of the Dutch population as a whole lives in that location. This pattern of a concentration of the Dutch Jewish population in and around Amsterdam has long been a feature of Dutch Jewish history.

- A majority of Dutch Jewish adults is university educated (75%). This proportion is 1.6 times higher than among the total adult population of the Netherlands (45%).

- Jewish women in Netherlands have an average of 1.2 to 1.3 children in their lifetime, lower than the equivalent figure for Dutch women in general (1.5–1.6 children per woman).

- Jews born in Israel constitute about 20% of the Jews in the Netherlands today. The population with a direct connection to Israel, including those born in the Netherlands but with at least one parent born in Israel, comes to about one third of the Dutch Jewish population.

- The proportion of Dutch Jews born outside of the Netherlands is higher than the equivalent figure among the Dutch population as a whole, and is expected to increase. The Dutch Jewish population has been going through a process of 'Israelisation' for a while, and this is expected to continue.

- Close to 50% of Dutch Jews identify as Ashkenazi, 15% as Sephardi and 25% as 'Mixed', i.e. Ashkenazi and Sephardi.

- A plurality of Dutch Jews (about 50%) self-identify with the Centre-Right in political terms, a quarter or so are centrists, and another quarter are Centre-Left. This situation is not very different from the Dutch electorate as a whole.

- Dutch Jews are one of the most secularised European Jewish communities. Only about 20% identify as 'Orthodox' or 'Traditional' in religious terms. The largest group (about 40%) identify as 'Just Jewish', without a clear religious or Jewish denominational label.

- A minority of Jews circumcise their male newborn babies (about 25%) and bury their dead according to the Jewish customs (about one third). Only about 20% are officially affiliated with a Jewish religious body.

- Approximately 10%–20% are fully religiously observant. About 60% of partnered Dutch Jews are married to someone who is not Jewish. About 13% of all Jewish children of compulsory school age in the Netherlands attend Jewish schools. Compared to other Jewish communities around the world, these levels are very low.

- Levels of religiosity among Dutch Jews, when measured by frequency of attendance at religious services (14% attend weekly or more often), are very similar to those observed in the Dutch population as a whole.

- 'Remembering the Holocaust' and 'combating antisemitism' are viewed as 'very important' parts of Jewish identity by 80%–85% of Dutch Jews, while only 25% of them view 'belief in God' in this way.

/ Introduction

Jews came to Europe from the Land of Israel and the neighbouring areas of the Middle East in antiquity, when significant parts of Europe were controlled by the Roman Empire. Western Europe acquired Jewish populations by 1000CE, as written sources from that period testify. The first area of Jewish settlement in this part of Europe was the territory that became known as 'Ashkenaz', a vast swath of land stretching from today's north of France to the south of Germany. Areas adjacent to the original Ashkenaz, including lands that would eventually constitute the Netherlands and Belgium, also began to receive Jews around that time. Therefore, the history of a Jewish presence in the Netherlands covers a timespan close to a millennium. However, the history of a coherent recognisable community is shorter than that – about 500 years or so.

Historically, economic prosperity and religious tolerance made the Netherlands attractive to Jews. The foundational stones of the Dutch Jewish community, as we know it today, were laid in the sixteenth century, when Jews settled in the country after fleeing persecution from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century, forming the core of the Dutch Sephardic community. Waves of Jewish migrants from the German lands and the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth also began to arrive from the seventeenth century onwards, pushed by political instability in both regions (the Thirty Years War and the Khmelnytsky uprising, respectively), thereby forming the core of the Dutch Ashkenazi community. A detailed historical account of the evolution of the Jewish presence in the Netherlands can be found in the entries for 'the Netherlands' and 'Amsterdam' in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, as well as in many other sources.[1] We do not intend to replicate them here, and instead turn to more recent times.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Jewish population of the Netherlands was estimated at about 104,000. It grew to about 120,000 towards 1933. In 1941, the Nazi authorities formally registered the presence of about 161,000 persons with at least one Jewish grandparent, and 145,000 people who would be considered as Jews[2] according to Jewish law.[3] Part of the growth during the mid-and late 1930s could be attributed to the immigration of Jews from Germany following the consolidation of the Nazi regime there and the subsequent persecution of Jews. Close to 70% (102,000–107,000) of Dutch Jews died in the Holocaust. A very high percentage of Jews dying in the Holocaust out of the total Jewish population of a country is by no means unique to the Netherlands. Similar and higher proportions of victims were observed in many places in Eastern Europe. But the consequences of the Shoah were harsher in the Netherlands than any other

1 Encyclopaedia Judaica, second edition. 2007. Editor in Chief: Fred Skolnik. Thomson Gale (Farmington Hills, USA) in association with Keter Publishing House (Jerusalem, Israel).

2 Jewish law (*halacha*) defines as Jewish: (1) a person born to a Jewish mother; or (2) a person who converted to Judaism according to Jewish law.

3 See: (1) *American Jewish Year Book*, 1907. 1907 Jewish statistics: US and world; (2) Ruppin, A. 1934. *Jews in the modern world*. London: Macmillan, p. 26; (3) Boekman, E.1936. *Demografie van de Joden in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Hertzberger; (4) Van Imhoff, E., Van Solinge, H. and Flim, Bert Jan. 2001. A reconstruction of size and composition of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the Netherlands, 1945; *Population Research and Policy Review* 20 (6), p.462.

country in western Europe.[4] The fact that the country had a very advanced population registration system that could clearly identify Jews living in the Netherlands and that could be put to the use of the Nazis by Dutch administrators, was key to this outcome. Similar developments also happened in Germany, France, and Italy.

In light of these realities, it is not surprising that the earliest official post-war estimates of the Dutch Jewish population size were deemed unreliable; surviving Jews were highly apprehensive about censuses and registrations systems. The 1947 Population Census of the Netherlands indicated the presence of only about 14,000 Jews, although other more reliable estimates indicate that the real number was probably two to three times higher.[5] The Jewish community of the Netherlands picked up where the national statistical system left off, and from the mid-1950s till today, the demographic task of evaluating the size and characteristics of Dutch Jews has consistently been coordinated by the Jewish community, which has recruited demographic experts for this purpose. In total, four comprehensive sociodemographic studies of Dutch Jews were conducted between 1954 and 2009.[6] The current report is the fifth project in this series, continuing the tradition.

The realities of Jewish life evolve, as do the realities of scientific work. Methods used in past studies of Dutch Jews, i.e. direct surveys of the Jewish population, can no longer be applied in 2024 in a straightforward manner. Consequently, this new study builds on a multi-phase, eclectic approach to existing sources of information, trying to build a picture of the Dutch Jewish population by integrating different signals sent by various data sources. First, it closely examines the administrative data generated by different Jewish communal bodies. To enable that, we conducted a census of Jewish communities in the Netherlands in 2023, modelled on synagogue membership surveys previously carried out in Great Britain, Belgium and Austria, and we approached Dutch Jewish schools to request data on the numbers of pupils in each one. Second, we drew on recent population surveys in the Netherlands (i.e. surveys in the Netherlands that ask a question about respondents' religion). Third, we considered the results of the demographic estimations inherited from earlier studies of Dutch Jews. Finally, we analysed data from a survey of Jews in the European Union, conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 12 EU countries in 2018, which includes a sample of 1,202 respondents in the Netherlands. We relate to this as the 'FRA 2018 survey' in the rest of the report. The survey included a set of questions on the sociodemographic characteristics and Jewish identity of Dutch Jews, which provide a detailed view of the religious and cultural aspects of the Jewish life of the Dutch Jewish

4 Griffioen, P. and Zeller, R. 2018. The Netherlands: the greatest number of Jewish victims in Western Europe. Anne Frank House 2018.

5 (1) The Netherlands During the Holocaust | Historical Background (yadvashem.org); (2) A reconstruction of size and composition of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the Netherlands, 1945. *Population Research and Policy Review* 20 (6). The second of these papers contains two estimates for 1945 using different methods: 34,379 and 49,652. The mid-point between these estimates is 42,000.

6 Publications summarising previous studies are: (1) Van Imhoff, E., Van Solinge, H. and Flim, Bert Jan. 2001. Commissie voor Demografie der Joden in Nederland. 1961. *De Joden in Nederland na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Een demografische analyse*. Amsterdam: Joachimsthal. (2) Van Praag, Ph. 1971. *Demografie van der Joden in Nederland* (NIDI report 1) Den Haag: NIDI. (3) Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom*. Amsterdam: Aksant. (4) Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB.

population.[7] The integrated picture arising from all of these different sources shows the size and composition of the Dutch Jewish population with a degree of precision and detail that are, in our view, unprecedented.

Where possible, the current study remains 'in dialogue' with the previous ones, while trying to update the data series and insights arising from them. The 'integrationist' approach practised here is more developed than previously. At the same time, and in contrast to previous studies of the Dutch Jewish population, this study firmly embeds Dutch Jewry in the context of other Jewish communities, drawing numerous comparisons with Jews across the Diaspora and in Israel. In this way, our approach to Jewish demography is comparativist. To fully understand Jews in any context, one needs to examine their situation alongside other population groups – both Jews and non-Jews. We do so consistently, wherever possible.

In the next sections we present an overview of contemporary demography and the socioeconomic conditions of Jews in the Netherlands.[8] This is followed by a section on the Jewish identity of Dutch Jews. The last section considers all of the major findings and draws some policy lessons from the results of our investigation.

7 In preparing this publication data from the publicly available FRA 2018 survey are used (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7491).

8 The technical part of this work and all aspects of its methodology can be found in the Methodological appendix.

1 / Jews in the Netherlands: demographic and socioeconomic realities

How many Jews are there in the Netherlands?

The first reliable post-war estimates of the size of the Jewish population of the Netherlands were made in the mid-1960s and were based on the statistical study conducted by the Dutch Jewish community at the time. The size of the Dutch Jewish population was estimated then at about 34,000. Very similar numbers were found by two other communally sponsored studies in 2000 and 2009, and almost sixty years after the first study, the number remains very similar: we estimate that about 35,000 Jews reside in the Netherlands in the early 2020s (approximately in 2020–2023).[9] These estimates relate to the core Jewish population, i.e. people who self-identify as Jews when asked, for example, in a survey or a census. This definition is quite close to the definition of Jewishness based on Jewish law (*halacha*), although not identical to it. *Halacha* defines someone as Jewish if they were born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism according to Jewish law.[10] In real-life situations when social research on Jews is conducted, it is difficult at times to enforce the *halachic* definition in its pure form and a definition relying on the core Jewish population is accepted as a substitute.

We fully acknowledge that other definitions of Jewishness exist, but also note that defining Jews in terms closely aligned with *halacha* commands the broadest consensus across the Jewish world and is comparable across different countries and times. In the context of quantitative social research, the core definition is the most straightforward to use, and the one that can be most readily compared to other global estimates of Jewish populations published, for example, in the 'World Jewish Population' section of the *American Jewish Year Book*. Analyses and results reported in this chapter that are dedicated to the demography of Dutch Jews, work mostly on the *halachic* definition unless otherwise stated. At the same time, we are acutely conscious of the complexities of Jewish life and the fact that non-core populations (e.g. non-Jewish partners, spouses or children/grandchildren of Jews) may be important in various ways for policy makers concerned with Jews, so we also show some estimates relating specifically to these populations. Moreover, the chapter on Jewish identity, which follows, implements a more 'relaxed' version of the *halachic* definition. To be clear, our work on Jewish identity still relates to the core Jewish population, but some of the sources used to study the identity

9 See Methodological appendix for derivation of this figure.

10 In practice, the definitions of the 'core Jewish population' and the '*halachic* Jewish population' are very close in many, although not all, Jewish contexts. In the context of the Netherlands, one can be quite certain of this based on evidence gained from the FRA 2018 survey which demonstrates that a high proportion of self-identifying Jews (above 80%) are halachically Jewish.

of Dutch Jews, most notably social surveys of this population, are more liberal when it comes to the inclusion of people who sit close to, but nonetheless outside of the 'core'.

In assessing the state of the statistics and demography of the Jewish population in the Netherlands during the postwar period, the first observation is the absence of any reliable census data or population registers for Jews. Lacking these sources, all communally sponsored studies have relied on a variety of other data sources, including demographic estimations, surveys of Dutch Jews and administrative statistics of Jewish communities. However, over time, estimation methods have matured, and today, the levels of confidence among scholars of the numerical realities of Dutch Jews are at the highest they have ever been, certainly since the end of the Second World War. This is true both of the number of Jews in the Netherlands and of the short- and medium-term numerical trajectory of the population. The Jewish population of the Netherlands today is, in high probability, slowly growing.

The most recent estimate of the number of Dutch Jews is the midpoint in a range of 29,000–41,000. This is, again, according to the core definition. We highlight the range of figures because in the work which we outline in this report, each of the different sources used to estimate the size of the Dutch Jewish population suggests a somewhat different number. This, in itself, is not surprising, as none of the sources and assumptions used for estimation are ideal, and all come with uncertainties and somewhat different inclusions and exclusions. Using a range of figures is a way to combine the different insights, or signals, arising from different sources. Still, ending up with a numerical range of the kind presented above is reassuring, since all of the independent sources we have examined suggest numbers that are ultimately comparable in scale. Although greater precision is not possible today and the adoption of the midpoint in this publication is a pragmatically driven decision, the limits of the range presented above can be utilised for different policy purposes. It is also quite certain that figures outside the 29,000–41,000 limits should be considered unlikely. The new midpoint estimate is an upward revision of the number of Dutch Jews: the figure for 1 January 2023, presented in the 'World Jewish Population' chapter in the American Year Book (AJYB), produced annually by Sergio DellaPergola, is 29,700.[11] Thus, the 35,000 estimate represents an upward correction of over 5,000 versus the 2023 AJYB estimate.

In the period between 2020 and 2023, the total population of the Netherlands stood at 17.6 million.[12] Jews constituted about 0.2% of the total population of the country, a proportion somewhat lower than in the mid-1960s (0.3%). In absolute terms (population size) and in relative terms (as a proportion of total population), the Jewish population of the Netherlands is, by and large, similar to the Jewish population of neighbouring Belgium. However, while the Dutch Jewish population has remained stable or grown a little since the 1960s, the Belgian Jewish population has declined over the same period.[13]

It must be remembered that the 35,000 estimate relates to the *core Jewish population*, i.e. people who would self-identify as Jews when asked, for example, in a survey

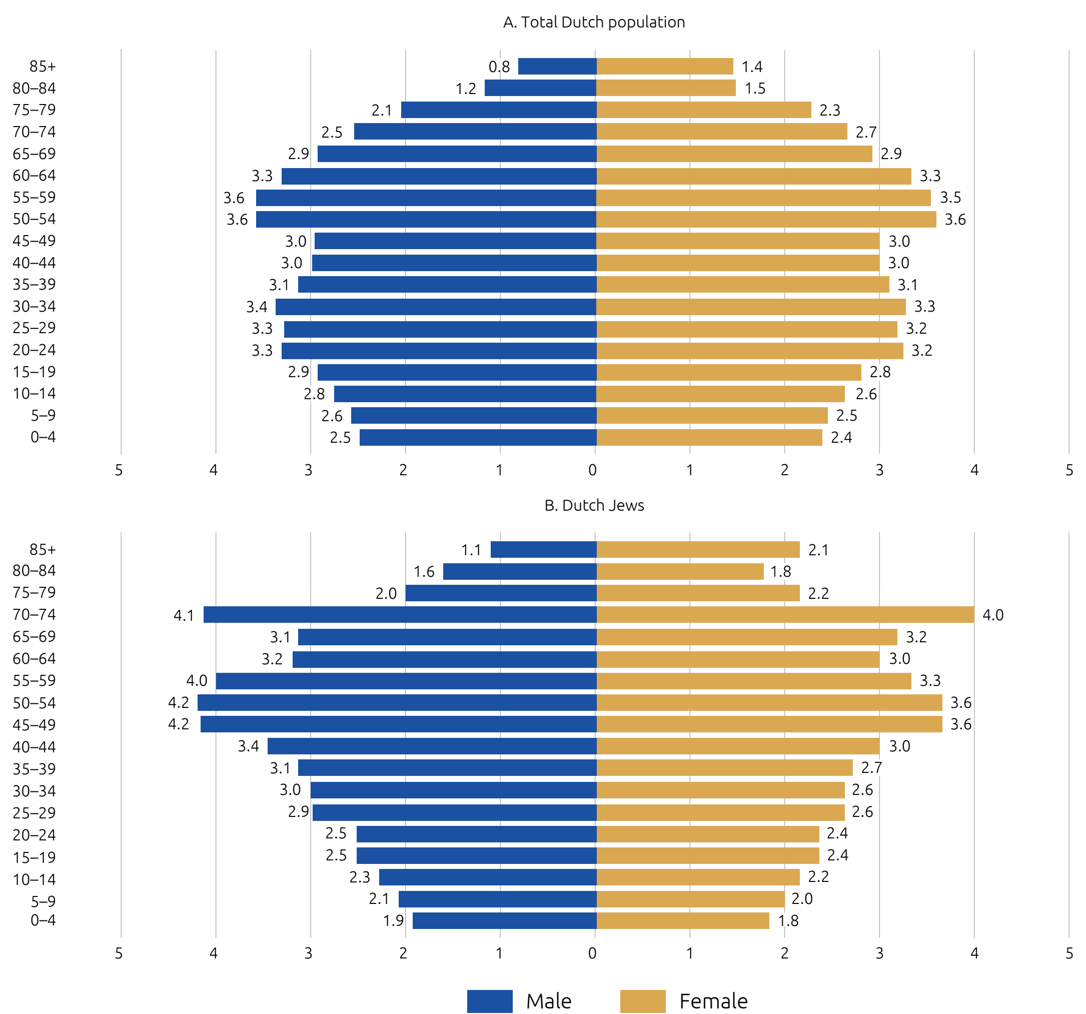
11 See: DellaPergola, S. 2023. 'World Jewish population, 2022.' *American Jewish Year Book 2022*. Cham: Springer.

12 The population of the Netherlands as a whole is sourced from: (1) StatLine – Population dynamics; month and year (cbs.nl); and (2) StatLine – Population; Key figures (cbs.nl).

13 For comparison, see: Staetsky, L. D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

or a census. However, there are other ways to define the limits of the Jewish population. For example, for policy purposes there may be significant interest in the population of: (a) those who are reported as partly Jewish or are not currently Jewish but have a Jewish parent (e.g. a Jewish father); (b) grandchildren of Jews; and (c) non-Jews related to Jews by family ties who are entitled to settle in Israel under the provisions of the Israeli Law of Return. We estimate that all these segments combined (the non-core component) come to about 30,000. This brings the total population with Jewish connections (the core and the non-core components) to about 65,000 (0.4% of the Dutch population).[14]

Figure 1. Age and sex structures of Dutch Jews and general population of the Netherlands, ca. 2020, %



Source: (1) Jews: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB, p. 170; (2) Dutch population: StatLine – Population; sex, age and nationality, 1 January (cbs.nl).

14 This calculation is grounded in the assessment of the different shares of the part-Jewish and non-Jewish population related to Jews, undertaken by Sergio DellaPergola. See: DellaPergola, S. 2023. 'World Jewish population, 2022.' *American Jewish Year Book* 2022. Cham: Springer. The total number of "mother-Jews" (i.e. those with a Jewish mother) and "father-Jews" (i.e. those with a Jewish father but non-Jewish mother) that were reported by Hanna van Solinge and Carlo van Praag (54,000) did not account for the segments of grandchildren of Jews and non-Jewish family members and so it is not directly comparable to the newly produced number of 65,000. 65,000 should be understood as a replacement of the old estimate of 54,000 but with the caveat that the two numbers cannot be compared directly.

Jews are clearly a very small minority in the Netherlands. When examining them alongside other groups defined by religion, the largest group in the Netherlands today is people without a religious denomination (close to 50%). Christians form about one third of the population (probably 35%–40%); and Muslims constitute about 6%–8% of the population.[15] The basic features of the Dutch religious landscape are not projected to change very fundamentally over the next twenty-five years or so: Christians are expected to remain a significant minority, while the unaffiliated will remain the largest group. The Muslim population is expected to grow to about 10%. The age and sex structure of Dutch Jews is shown in Figure 1, in the form of a population pyramid.

A population pyramid is a graphic description of the age and sex structure of a population. It shows the sizes of different age groups, with the youngest situated at the bottom and the oldest at the top, for males and females separately. Until recently, historical populations and many populations in the developing world had a typical pyramidal look, with the bottom of the pyramid being visibly wider than the middle. The widening of the structure at the bottom signified that the children's population was more numerous than the parents' population, situated in the middle of the pyramid.

Today, many population pyramids in the West look more like a candle flame or a kite (if not a mushroom) than a pyramid, and the Dutch population is no exception (Panel A, Figure 1). Its base is narrow relative to the middle, indicating that the number of children born in the population is smaller than in their parents' generation. Its top part is as wide as the middle, apart from the oldest ages. This happens due to the joint impact of two factors: (1) a gradual drop in fertility and birth rates that occurred in the past; and (2) a significant decline in mortality that began a while ago and still continues today. As a result, while not many children are born into the population, the older age bands die off at a slower rate.

Numerically, the grandparent age groups are similar to, or a little larger than the parent age groups, so these groups are not being numerically replaced by their children. Indeed, under-replacement fertility has been observed in the Netherlands since the early 1970s. The pyramid of Dutch Jews (Panel B, Figure 1) has even more extreme characteristics, with a very narrow base and an evolving kite shape. The narrow base and the heavy top indicate that this is a declining population: the generation of today's parents is not being replaced through fertility.

Does this mean that the Dutch Jewish population as a whole is declining? That would certainly be the conclusion if growth depended exclusively on the balance of births and deaths. However, as we will show shortly, there is another important component that impacts on growth that the population pyramid cannot reflect: migration. The lack of natural growth in the Dutch Jewish population is real enough, yet the population is not declining today because migration intervenes in a way that compensates for population losses caused by low fertility and an aged population structure.

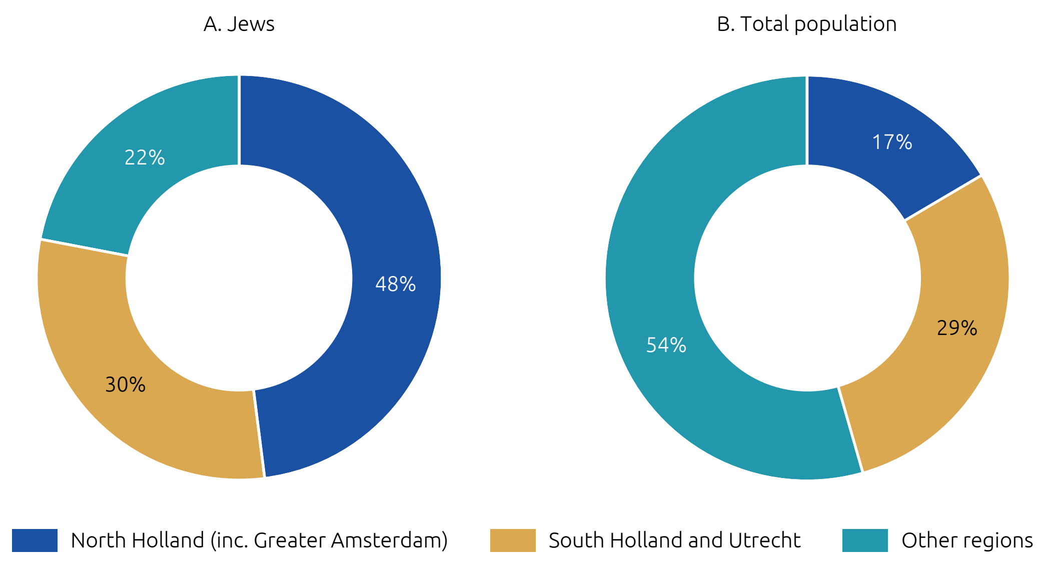
Where do Dutch Jews live?

Today, about half of all Jews in the Netherlands live in the province of North Holland (about 17,000, or 48% of the total Jewish population), mainly in and around the

15 This religious makeup has been reconstructed on the basis of: (1) Central Bureau of Statistics, Netherlands. Religious involvement in the Netherlands. 3. Developments in Religious Engagement | CBS; and (2) Pew Research Center. Religious Composition by Country, 2010–2050 | Pew Research Center.

region of Greater Amsterdam. A further third lives in and around the large urban centres of Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (administratively included in the provinces of South Holland and Utrecht). The remaining 20% or so are scattered throughout other regions of the Netherlands (Figure 2). This fundamental picture, in proportionate terms, has not changed for the past two hundred years or so.[16]

Figure 2. Jewish and total population of the Netherlands, by location, around 2020



Source: (1) Jews: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2019. 'Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States. Technical Report.' (2) Total population: Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands.

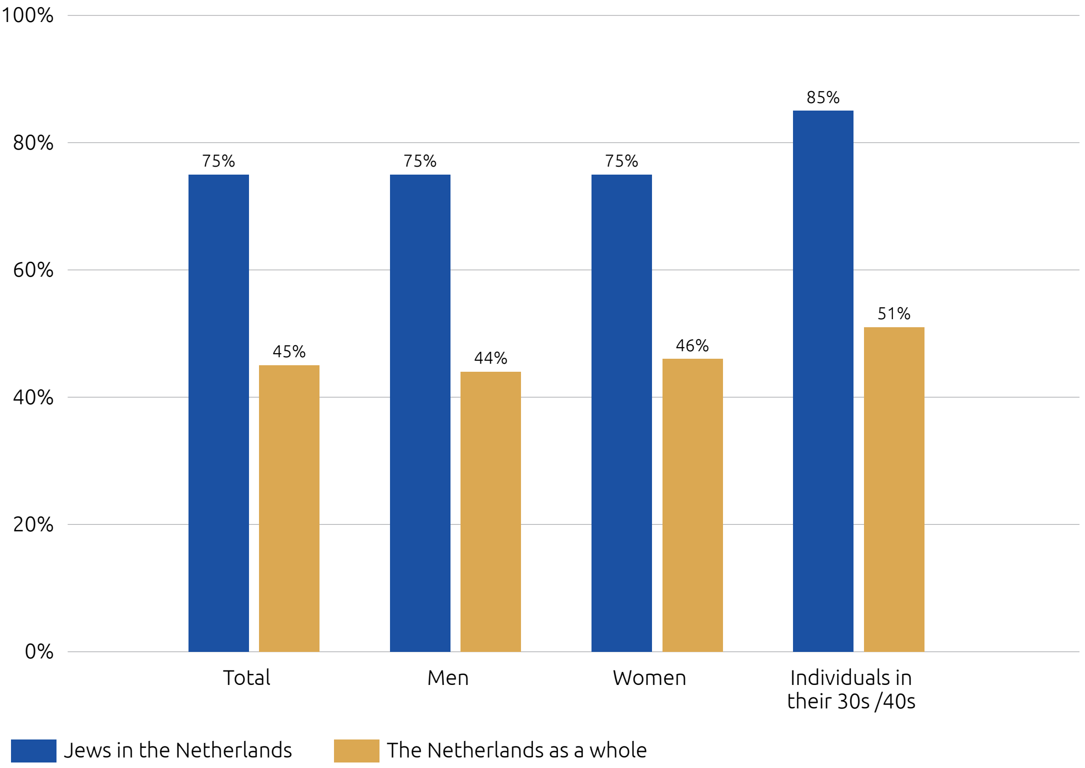
Being strongly concentrated in major metropolitan areas and/or capital cities is a situation which Dutch Jews share with many other European Jewish populations. Jews of the United Kingdom, France, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Belgium and Spain also follow this pattern to varying degrees. However, in their preference for metropolitan life, Dutch Jews differ significantly from the total population of the Netherlands: whilst almost 50% of Jews live in the region of North Holland, mostly in and around Amsterdam, less than 20% of the total population lives there.

16 Historical data can be found in: (1) Stoutenbeek, J. 1984. Een demografische beschrijving van de joden in Nederland. In J. H. Museum (Ed.), *De Mediene: de gescheidenis van het joodse leven in de nederlandse provincie* (pp. 21–32). Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum. (2) Van Praag, P. (1971). *Demografie van de joden in Nederland* Publicaties van het Nederlands Interuniversitair Demografisch Instituut Den Haag: NIDI. (3) Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom.* Amsterdam: Aksant.

Educational profile and economic wellbeing

Across the Diaspora today, Jews are concentrated in the top educational groups. There is relatively little variation in this respect between different Jewish communities and Dutch Jews very much fit into this pattern. Most adult Jews are university-educated (75%), and the proportion of Dutch Jews with a university education is 1.6 times higher than the total population of the Netherlands (45%). This is true of men and women. The pattern also holds good among the youngest age groups: the gap in education between Jews and non-Jews is not attenuated across generations (Figure 3). As an aside, equal shares of men and women are university-educated, both among Jews and in the total population. A very similar situation was shown in previous research on the educational levels of Dutch Jews.[17]

Figure 3. Jewish and total population in the Netherlands with university level of education, around 2020, %

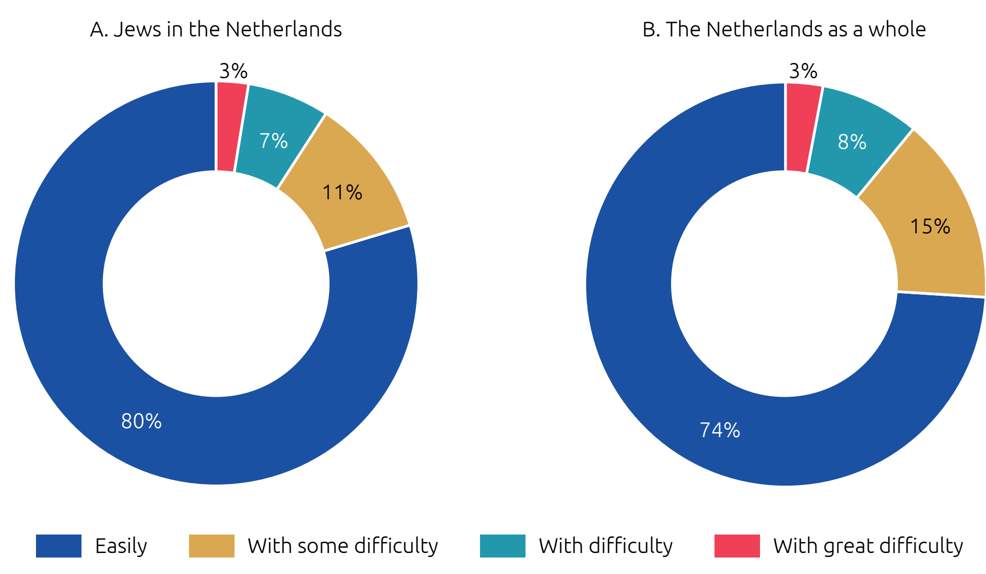


Note: (1) Unless otherwise stated, data for Jews are for ages 30–69 years, and for the Dutch population as a whole for ages 25–64 years. (2) University level education is defined using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) codes 5–8.
Source: (1) Jews: the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) The Netherlands as a whole: OECD.Stat database. Educational attainment and labour-force status.

17 See: (1) Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom*. Amsterdam: Aksant. (2) Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB.

Differences in educational levels often translate into differences in levels of material prosperity. However, Dutch Jews and the general Dutch population subjectively assess their economic wellbeing rather similarly, despite the differences in their educational levels. In total, 21% of Dutch Jews and 26% of the Dutch population said that they have some difficulty making ends meet. Levels of extreme deprivation, as indicated by having great difficulty in making ends meet, are at a level of 3% in both populations (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Subjective economic wellbeing of Jews in the Netherlands: the ability to make ends meet, around 2020, %



Note: The exact question asked: 'Thinking of your household's total income, is your household able to make ends meet?'. Data for the Netherlands as a whole is the average of years 2017–2019.
Source: (1) Jews: the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).
(2) The Netherlands as a whole: Eurostat. 2022. Inability to make ends meet – EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES09__custom_3021044].

Political orientation

The first thing to note about the political preferences of Jews across the Diaspora is that they are imperfectly documented and understood. Suffice it to say that, first, the political preferences of Jews partly reflect their socioeconomic position and partly their cultural orientation and minority status. No method exists at present that allows us to separate out these different influences. Second, across the Jewish Diaspora and within a particular country, there is no single political orientation, let alone a voting pattern. Jews are present on the political Left, the political Right and in the Centre. Having said that, it appears that in many contexts, perhaps most, Jews in the twenty-first century typically prefer centrist, rather than radical political positions or parties. Third, Jews often maintain more cosmopolitan orientations, which may go hand-in-hand with pro-EU attitudes, than those found among the general population. These qualities are all present among Jews in the Netherlands.

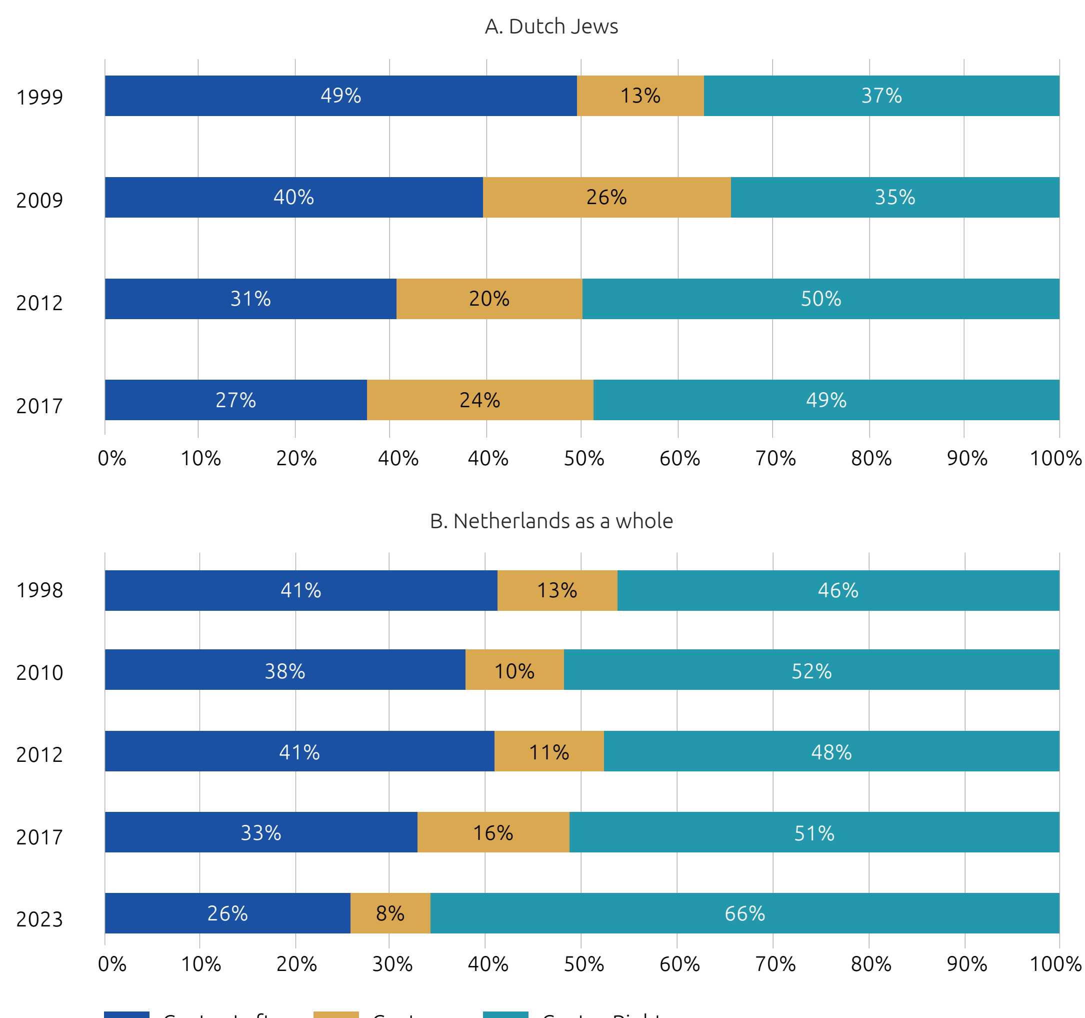
Our data on patterns of voting/voting intentions of Dutch Jews cover the period of 1999–2017.[18] At the beginning of that period, Dutch Jews had a solid Centre-Left plurality, around 50%. However, at the end of it, they had a similarly unambiguous Centre-Right plurality (Figure 5). This process was not very different from what happened in the Netherlands as a whole, although the general Dutch population was less decisively left-leaning at the start of the period than Dutch Jews were. Whether or not this reflects a trend that will continue into the future, or is more of a temporary phenomenon, remains to be seen.

Examining the detail of the political processes affecting both Jews and non-Jews in the Netherlands reveals the following (Figure 6). PvdA (the socialist democratic Labour Party) has been the left-of-centre political force that has been most attractive to Dutch Jews (15%–30%, at different times, figures rounded). PvdA has been followed by some distance by Democrats 66 (D66, a centrist social liberal party, at about 10%–15%) and by the Green Party (GL), with 5%–10%. The far-left Socialist Party (SP) has only attracted about 3% of the Jewish electorate. PvdA and GL, two clearly left-leaning parties, have lost their popularity both with Dutch Jews and with the Dutch electorate as a whole over the past two decades. In 2023, PvdA and GL joined ranks achieving, in combination, fewer votes than PvdA achieved alone a decade ago.

The levels of support for the centrist D66 have been mostly stable throughout this time, both among Jews and among the Dutch population as a whole. Perhaps the most interesting development on the left and centre part of the Dutch political map has been the rise of Jewish support for the somewhat socially conservative Christian Union (CU): rising from a level of about 1% in 1999–2009 to about 15% towards the end of the 2010s. Nothing of this kind happened in the Dutch electorate as a whole.

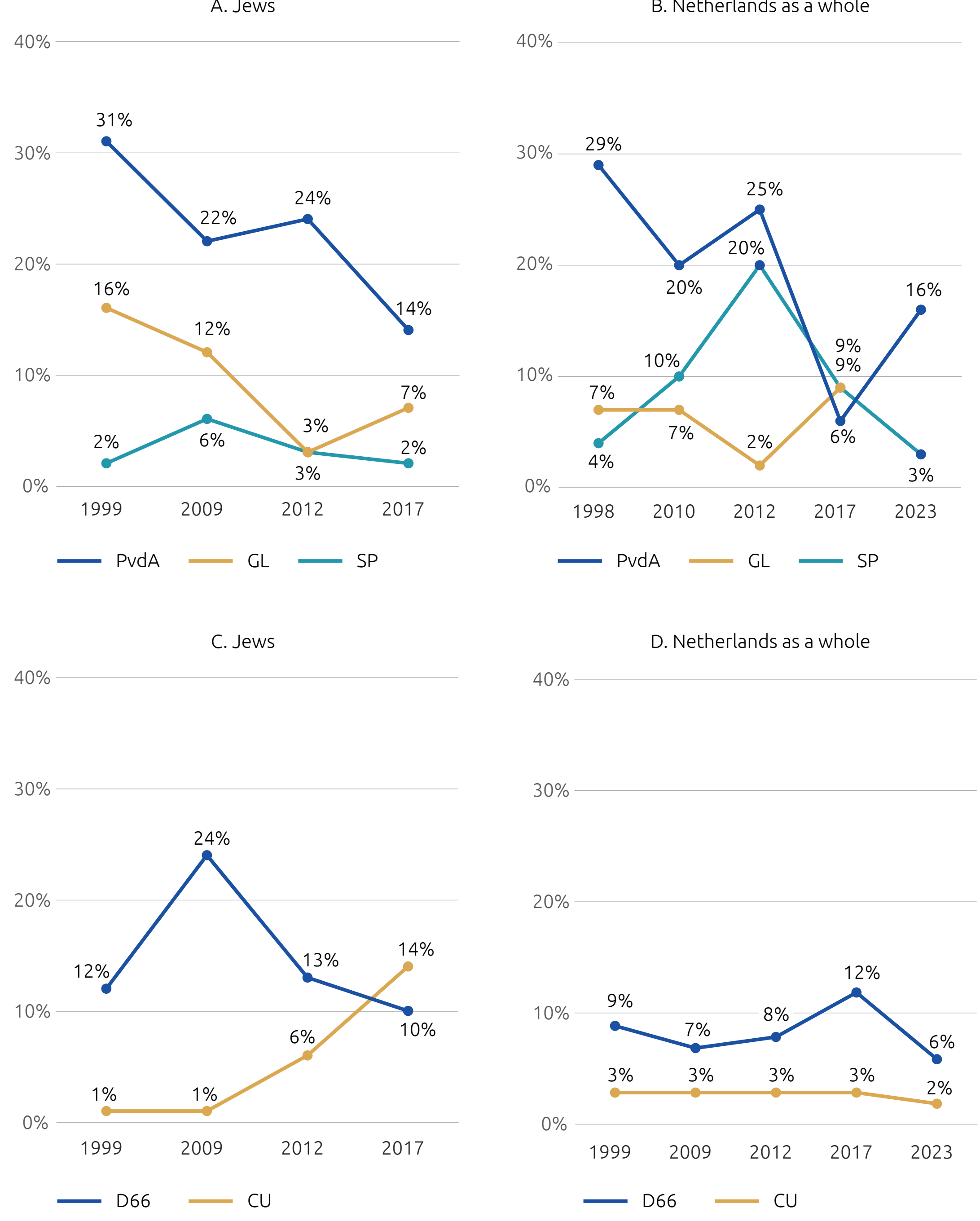
18 The data on patterns of political affiliation of Dutch Jews in this section come from a combination of sources. Data for 1999 and 2009 come from the surveys of Dutch Jews featured in: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB. Data for 2012 and 2017 come from survey conducted by the Dutch research agency Kieskompas and Dutch Jewish newspaper Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad (NIW). Composition of the 2017 NIW/Kieskompas survey sample was examined in detail and found to be reflective of the basic demographics and Jewish identity characteristics of Dutch Jews. In particular, the age and sex structure and patterns of religious/cultural affiliation of the 2017 NIW/Kieskompas sample align well with the previously mentioned 1999 and 2009 surveys of Dutch Jews and with the weighted 2018 FRA survey of Dutch Jews. Therefore, in our view, the results on Jewish patterns of voting are broadly comparable across these surveys.

Figure 5. Political preferences of Dutch Jews and general population of the Netherlands, %



Note: (1) Jews in 1999–2009: the survey question asked 'which political party or a group you most strong identify with?'; (2) Jews in 2012: the question asked 'Which political party did you vote for in the previous House of Representatives elections in 2012?'; (3) Jews in 2017: the question asked: 'Which political party would you vote for if there were House of Representatives elections today?'; (4) All survey-based data on Jews exclude respondents who did not vote, did not know how they would vote or did not remember how they voted, or refused to provide an answer: 17% in 1999 (total number of valid observations=860); 22% in 2009 (total number of valid observations=520); 13% in 2012 (total number of valid observations=584); and 20% in 2017 (total number of valid observations=540). Percentages are based on those respondents who unambiguously described their voting behaviour in the past elections or voting intentions with respect to the next one. (5) All data for Netherlands as a whole are based on the actual election results for parties that managed to win seats. (6) Parties classified as Centre-Left in this presentation are: PvdA (the socialist democratic Labour Party), Green Party (GL), Socialist party (SP), Party for the Animals (PvdD), 50plus and DENK. Parties classified as Centre are: D66 and Christian Union (CU). Parties classified as Centre-Right are: VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), CDA (the Christian Democratic Appeal), PVV (Party for Freedom), and SGP (the Reformed Political Party).
Source: Dutch Jews: (1) 1999–2009: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB, p. 35, (2) 2012–2017: Kieskompas BV (Election Compass) survey of Dutch Jews, 2017. Netherlands as a whole: (1) 1998 Dutch general election – Wikipedia , (2) 2010 Dutch general election – Wikipedia, (3) 2012 Dutch general election – Wikipedia, (4) 2017 Dutch general election – Wikipedia, (5) 2023 Dutch general election – Wikipedia.

Figure 6. Support for the left, centre-left and centrist political forces among Dutch Jews and general population of the Netherlands, %



Note: (1) See notes to the previous figure for details of derivation and sources. (2) PvdA and GL merged in 2023 election. (3) D66 and CU are political forces that are difficult to categorise as they have complex sets of views and agendas. On this basis they were classified as centrist.

When it comes to right-wing preferences, Dutch Jews have tended to prefer centre-right political positions throughout the period covered here (Figure 7). The centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) has attracted the largest share, albeit a diminishing one, of Dutch Jewish voters situated right-of-centre (across the entire period, 20%–35% of Jewish voters, rounded figures). Both the level and the trajectory of Jewish support for VVD have been similar to the general population of the Netherlands. Overall, support for the VVD has fallen over the period shown, although it has been through ups and downs throughout. Over the past decade or so, their place on the Dutch political map appears to have been increasingly occupied by political parties displaying stronger right-wing views. This is true of Jews and non-Jews alike.

The most interesting feature of the period covered here on the right side of the Dutch political map has been a notable increase in Jewish support for the nationalist Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, rising from a level of about 1% in 1999–2009 to above 10% towards the end of the 2010s. This emerging support for PVV, specifically, is what explains the shift from the predominantly centre-left to centre-right overall political predisposition among Dutch Jews. Support for PVV has also been on the rise among the Dutch electorate as a whole: having first appeared on the scene with about 5% of votes in 2006, it began to garner 10%–15% between 2010 and 2021, before securing a record-high level of 23% of the votes in the 2023 national election. It is not clear if this growth trend will continue over time, or if is mirrored in any way among Dutch Jews, as existing data only go up to 2017; regular surveying of Jewish political preferences would be needed to make sense of the ways in which Dutch Jews understand their political interests.

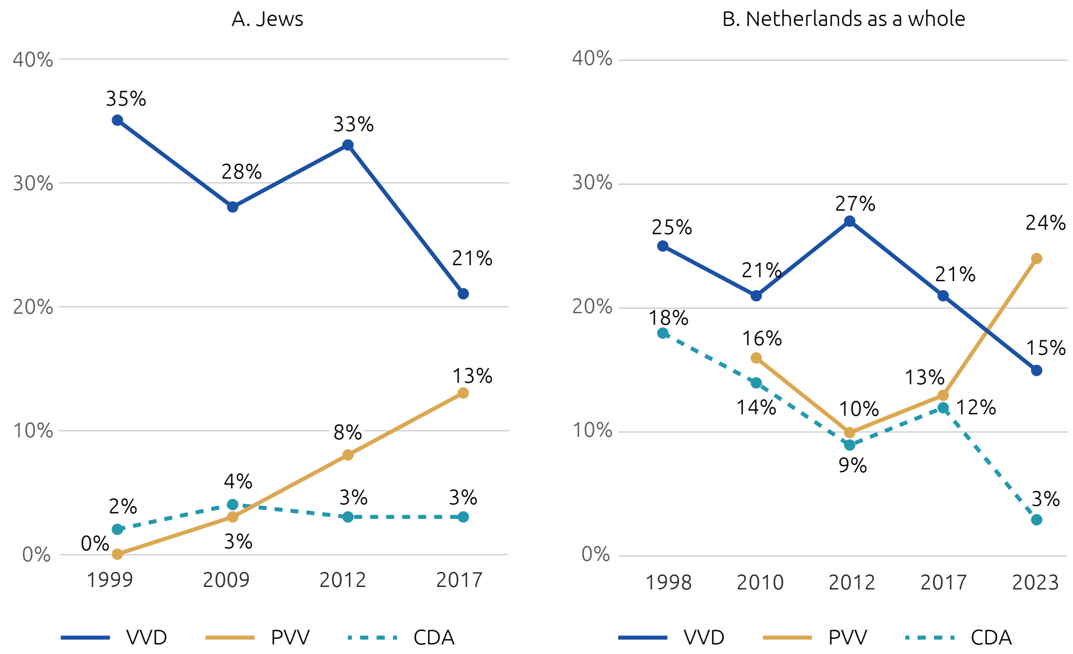
To summarise: in broad strokes, the political situation of Dutch Jews resembles the situation of the Dutch population as a whole, albeit with some specific features. Like the rest of the Dutch electorate, Dutch Jews seem to have drifted rightwards. Yet, centrist forces appear to be rather more dominant among Jews than the wider population (the relatively high and stable performance of D66 among Jews is one example of this, as is the increase in popularity of CU). Nonetheless, the attractiveness of right-wing parties appears to be growing. In brief, looking across the political spectrum of the Netherlands on both the political right and on the political left, the Jewish electorate follows its own path, albeit subtly.

It is worth noting that, when examined in comparison to other selected Jewish communities, Dutch Jews appear somewhat distinct too. American Jews, the largest Diaspora community, strongly lean in a centre-left direction: over 70% of them identify with the left-leaning Democratic Party.[19] This situation has been consistently observed since the end of the Second World War and is not very likely to change dramatically. Since the 1990s, British Jews have alternated between the centre-right (the Conservative

19 (1) American Jewish Committee 2020 Survey of American Jewish Opinion; (2) Weisberg, H. 2020. 'The presidential voting of American Jews', *American Jewish Year Book 2019*.

Party) and centre-left (Labour) orientations, yet even the highest levels of their alignment with Labour since the 1990s were lower than the level of Jewish American pro-Democrat leaning. Most recently, more strongly right-wing political leanings have been documented among British Jews, albeit at a level lower than in society as a whole.[20] Thus politically, Dutch Jews are closer to British than American Jews.

Figure 7. Support for the right and centre-right political forces among Dutch Jews and general population of the Netherlands, %



Note: See notes to the previous figure for details of derivation and sources.

Apart from American and British Jews, we do not possess good comparators for Dutch Jews when it comes to political leanings. The FRA 2018 survey of European Jews fell short of exploring this issue, as did the 2023 one, an issue that ought to be reconsidered in future surveys in the series. The popularity of political parties in the general public, across Europe and in the Netherlands, has changed since 2000, and indeed changes all the time. Europe in the 2020s appears to be increasingly characterised by growing populism and a rise of centre-right and far-right parties,[21] so some changes may have occurred among Jewish electorates elsewhere on the continent. Are European Jews moving politically in the same direction as the rest of Europe? This is a critical question for understanding the future of Europe and its Jews.

20 (1) Survation. 2016. Jewish Chronicle poll 04/05/2016. Full-Tables-JC-Poll-030516SPCH-1c0d0h8.pdf (survation.com); (2) Staetsky, Daniel. 2019. How British Jews vote and why they vote this way, The Times of Israel, 5 September 2019; (3) Results of the 2021 Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) communicated to the author by the team at the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), The University of Manchester. (4) Lessof, C. and Boyd, J. 2024. *Jewish voting intentions on the eve of the 2024 UK General Election*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

21 Europe swings right – and reshapes the EU – POLITICO.

The attachments Dutch Jews feel to the Netherlands, the EU and Israel

The question of the extent to which Dutch Jews feel attached to the Netherlands and other national and transnational entities has been well documented recently, for the first time. In the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in Europe, respondents were asked about the strength of their attachment to the country in which they live, as well as to Israel and to the European Union.

The findings are interesting (Figure 8). First, invited to situate themselves on a four-point scale running from 'Not at all attached' (weakest attachment) to 'Very attached' (strongest attachment), just under half (about 45%) of the general population of the Netherlands say they feel very attached to their country. In this respect the Dutch population is not very different from certain other Western or Southern European populations. As will be shown shortly, in Belgium, Spain, Italy and the UK, for example, approximately one-third and one half of the general population feels similarly strongly attached to their country.[22] This situation stands in contrast to the attachment to country levels among the general populations of Eastern Europe, which are considerably higher.

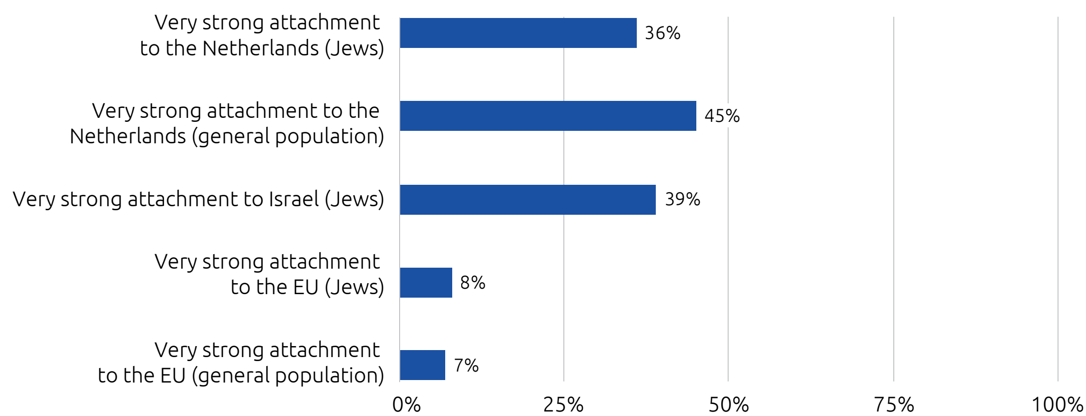
It seems that Dutch Jews are rather similar to the general Dutch population in this respect – 36% say they feel 'very strongly attached' on a five-point scale. While this may look like a lower level, one should note that the scale used to assess the attachment levels of Dutch Jews to the Netherlands was different (a five-point attachment scale in contrast to the four-point scale), with the result that the levels of attachment of Dutch Jews are likely somewhat understated compared to the general population. Third, the two populations both score much lower, and very similarly, in terms of 'very strong' attachment to the European Union (7%–8%).

Finally, about 40% of Dutch Jews have a 'very strong' sense of attachment to Israel; a similar proportion to those who have a very strong sense of attachment to the Netherlands. Indeed, the feelings of strong attachment to the Netherlands and Israel co-exist in the mind and soul of this community. In this, Dutch Jews are rather similar to other Jewish communities in Western Europe (Figure 9). Note, that this 'state of balance', i.e. equal or nearly equal attachment to their country and Israel, is also observed among Jews in France and Sweden.

Note further that the situation of Dutch Jews is very different from German and Austrian Jews. In these two countries, levels of Jewish attachment to Israel clearly dominates over attachment to country, probably because both have large Jewish population of relatively recent immigrants. Dutch Jews are also very different from Polish and Hungarian Jews among whom attachment to country dominates over attachment to Israel. Evidently, in this regard, as in many other political respects, there is no single pattern which all Jews follow. Jewish patterns of attachment are simultaneously influenced by several factors: whether a country's political culture encourages a strong sense of national belonging; how Jews understand their place in a country as a minority, at present and historically; the relationship between the particular country and Israel, and the role Israel plays in a country's Jewish community; and the degree of rootedness of the Jewish community in a given country. In this final respect, it should be remembered that many Jewish communities in Europe today contain large proportions of first-generation migrants.

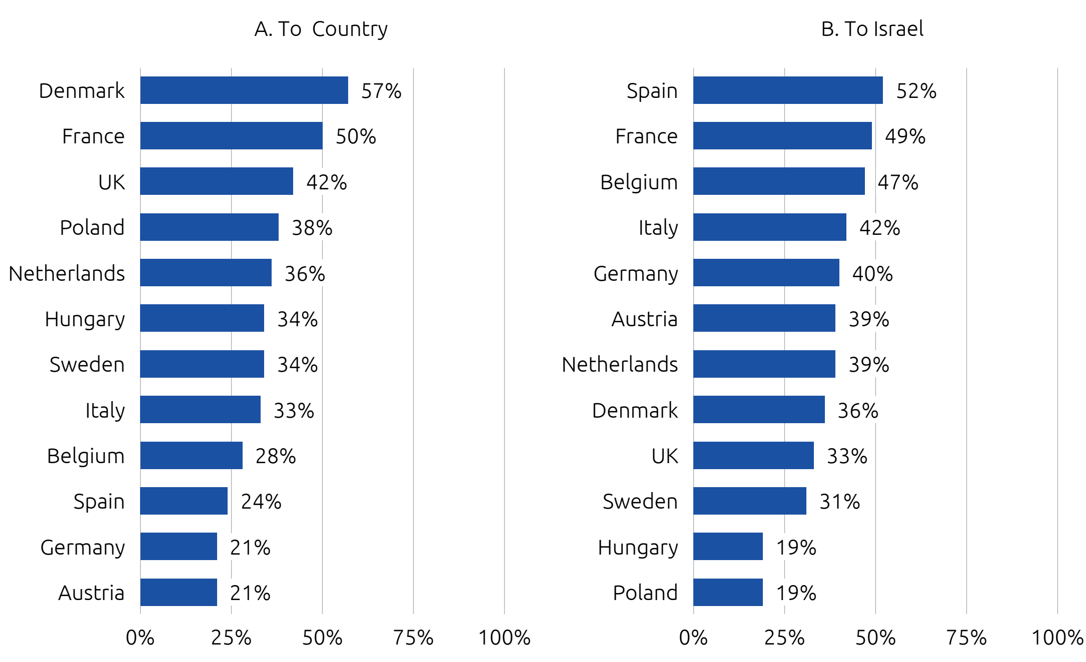
22 Eurobarometer survey 2018 (GESIS Study ID ZA6963).

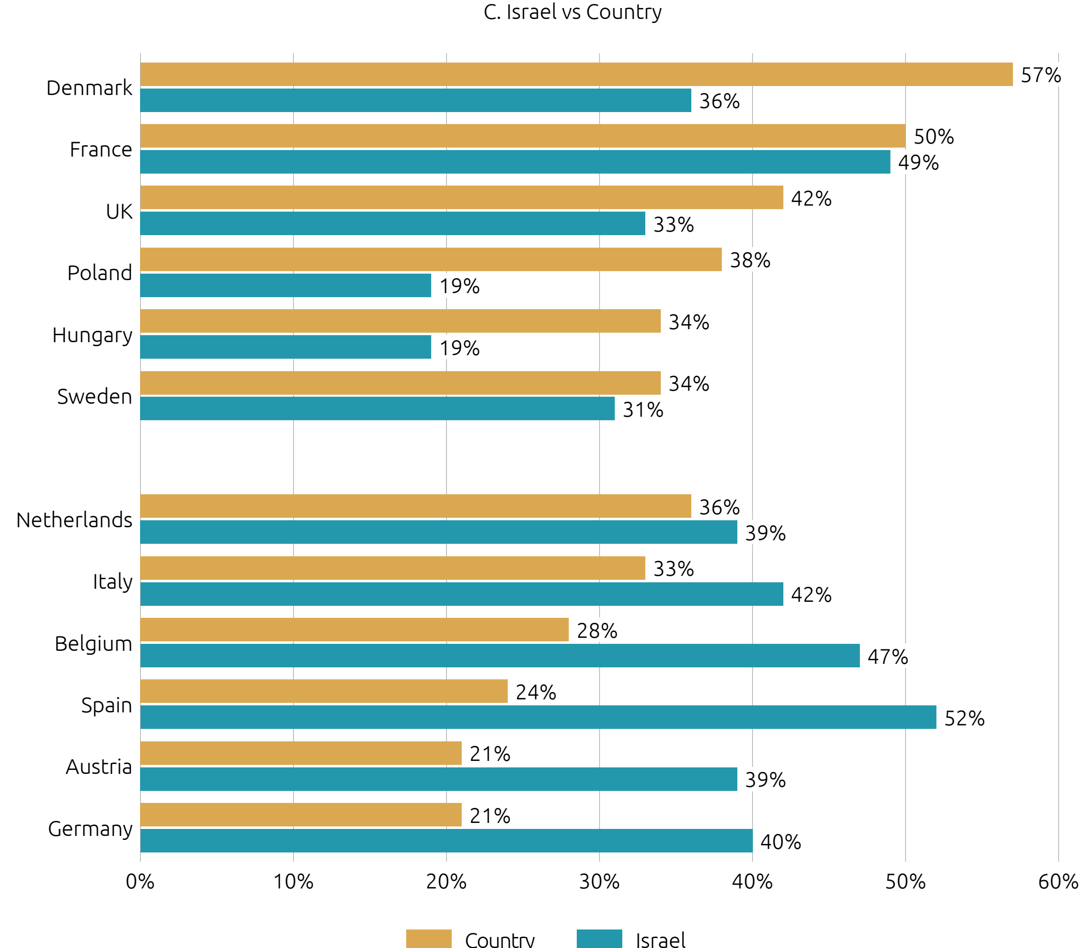
Figure 8. Attachment of Dutch Jews to the Netherlands, the European Union, and Israel 2018 (% 'very strongly attached')



Note: (1) Question formulation in the 2018 FRA survey (Jews): 'People may feel different levels of attachment to their region, to the country where they live, or to the European Union. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 equals 'not at all attached' and 5 'very strongly attached', to what extent do you feel attached to each of the following? A. The Netherlands, B. The region where you live, C. The European Union, D. Israel. The question on attachment in the Eurobarometer survey (non-Jews) featured a response schedule with four categories: 'very attached', 'fairly attached', 'not very attached', 'not at all attached'. (2) The 2018 FRA version of the five-point response scale has a middle category which often attracts people who are unsure how to respond. When these people are forced to choose the non-neutral categories, most of them (though not all) would select non-extreme categories, such as 'Fairly attached' or 'Not very attached'; however, the extreme categories may also grow proportionately. This means that the 2018 FRA survey response category 'very strongly attached' (Jewish) is expected to underestimate strong attachment to the Netherlands compared to the Eurobarometer surveys (non-Jewish).
Source: DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L. D. 2021. *The Jewish identities of European Jews: what, why and how.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Data for Jews appearing in this publication are based on FRA 2018 survey (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). Data for non-Jews are based on: Eurobarometer survey 2018 (GESIS Study ID ZA6963).

Figure 9. Attachment of Jews to country and Israel, 2018 (% 'very strongly attached')





Source: DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L. D. 2021. *The Jewish identities of European Jews: what, why and how.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Data are based on FRA 2018 survey (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

Diversity of origins: Dutch-born, Israel-born, Ashkenazi and Sephardi

Country of birth: Israelis and other foreign-born

Most Dutch Jews (about 60%–70%) were born in the Netherlands, yet a significant minority (30%–40%) was foreign-born. About 20% of all Jews in the Netherlands were born in Israel (7,000). The proportion of foreign-born reported here is both higher than previously thought and higher than in the total Dutch population (16%).[23] Indeed, the proportion of Israelis in the local Jewish population in the Netherlands is among the highest in Europe, when compared to other Jewish populations. For comparison, the proportion of Israel-born Jews is in the range of 2%–10% in the Jewish populations of France, UK and Germany – the three largest Jewish communities in Europe. These data draw on several sources, including official statistics on the foreign-born population in the Netherlands produced by the Dutch statistical authority, and the FRA 2018 survey of Dutch Jews.[24]

There are several ways in which the label of 'Israeli' can be applied. One is to apply it to everyone who was born in Israel, as above. However, clearly, the population with some type of Israeli background is larger than that. Those born in Israel are part of it, about 60% to be precise, according to official statistics produced by the Dutch statistical authority, but the remainder (40%) is comprised of children with at least one Israeli parent. In 2023, the first and the second group came to about 7,000 and 4,600, respectively, totalling 11,600 persons with an Israeli background among Dutch Jews, which is about one third of the total core Jewish population of the Netherlands.[25] Henceforth, we will use the terms 'population with Israeli background' and 'Israel-connected population' interchangeably to denote this total group. As Figure 10 shows, the numbers relating to both components of the Israel-connected population are the highest they have ever been, and they have doubled over the course of the last quarter of a century or so. Figure 10 also shows that the increase has not been uniform over those years: the number of Israel-born increased between the mid-1990s and 2004 (approximately), before stabilising at around 5,000 for a decade (2005–2015), before starting to increase again from 2016 onwards.

Most Israelis hold Dutch citizenship: in 2023, only 2,000 Israelis (17%) were in possession of Israeli citizenship alone.[26] A majority of Israelis (83%) have dual citizenship.

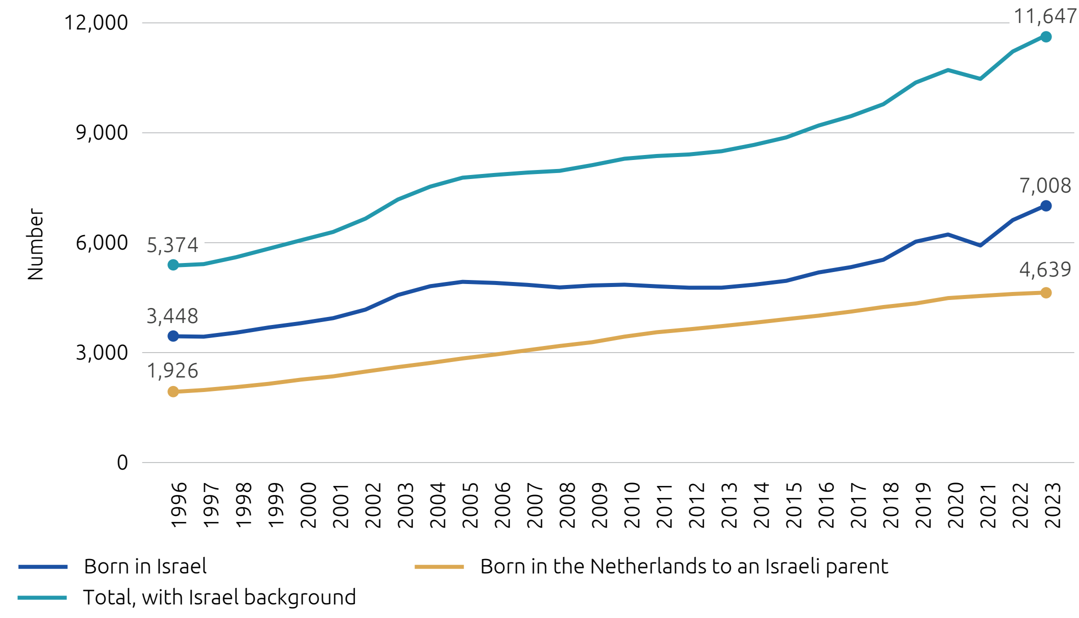
23 Sources: (1) Proportion of foreign-born in the total population of the Netherlands and the number of Israel-born: StatLine – Population; gender, age, country of origin and country of birth (parents), 1 Jan (cbs.nl). (2) The FRA 2018 survey (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (3) data from Dutch Jewish schools.

24 Previously, the proportion of foreign-born among Jews in the Netherlands was estimated at 20%. (See: DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, D.L. 2020. *Jews in Europe at the turn of the millennium: population trends and estimates*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, pp.42–43).

25 The numbers reported here relate to 1 January 2023. Yet this is a dynamic picture. While this publication as going through editing, new statistics on Israelis in the Netherlands became available. The scale of Israeli population numbers remains unchanged, but it is worth noting that on 1 January 2024, the Israel-born population came to 7,700 and the population of children born to at least one Israeli parent to 4,750. Source: StatLine – Population on the first of the month; gender, age, country of origin (cbs.nl).

26 Source: StatLine – Population; sex, age and nationality, 1 January; 1995–2023 (cbs.nl).

Figure 10. Persons with Israeli background in the Netherlands, 1996–2023



Note: Up to, and including the year 2021, the Dutch statistical authority identified foreign-born as people born abroad with at least one parent also born abroad. That definition resulted in a certain undercount of foreigners. From 2022 onwards a different, more straightforward classification system was adopted: a foreigner was defined as anyone born abroad, without additional conditions. Thus the counts of Israel-born individuals pre- and post-2022 are not based on an identical definition, but they are still comparable. The upward trend can be seen in data based on the 'old' definition and is independent of the definitional changes.
Source: (1) StatLine – Population; Gender, LFT, Generation and MigrationBackground, 1 Jan; 1996–2022 (cbs.nl); (2) StatLine – Population; gender, age, country of origin and country of birth (parents), 1 Jan (cbs.nl).

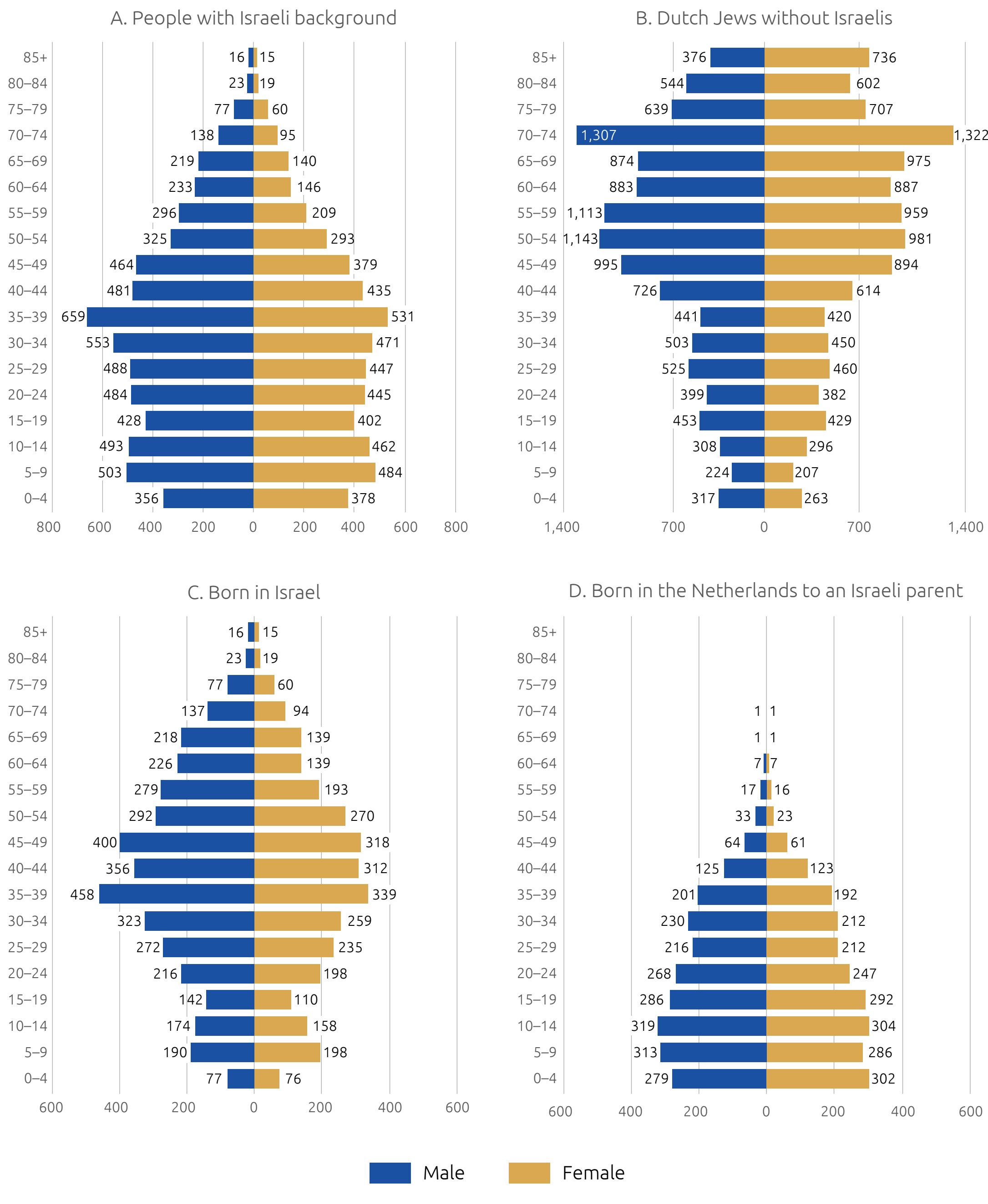
In line with the previous studies, the total number of 11,600 people with an Israeli background in 2023 can be considered a minimal estimate.[27] By definition, this figure excludes those who immigrated to the Netherlands from Israel but were *not* born there, because it is based on their country of birth/parents' country of birth. Nevertheless, this group is likely to be small – a few hundred or so – so its exclusion does not compromise the overarching picture of the scale of the Israeli population in the Netherlands.

The age and sex structure of Israelis in the Netherlands is shown in detail in Figure 11. Panel A shows a relatively young age pyramid, with the bottom being visibly wider than the top: children (aged 0–14 years) form 23% of the population. This shape is conducive to population growth or, at the very least, stability. Without Israelis (Panel B), the age structure of Dutch Jews is that of a declining population. This pyramid is top-heavy and looks more like a kite than a pyramid. The young cohorts at the bottom of the pyramid are very small – about half the size of the older cohorts: children aged 0–14 years constitute just 8% of this population as a whole. Panels C and D show the components of the Israeli population. Israeli immigrants to the Netherlands (Panel C) have an age structure typical of a migrant population. Those aged 25–50 years are especially prominent, constituting close to 50% of the Israel-born population, whereas the share

27 See, for example: (1) Kooyman, C. and Almagor, J. 1996. *Israelis in Holland. Amsterdam*: JMW, and (2) Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009.* Diemen: AMB, pp. 176–178.

of these age groups in the total population of Dutch Jews, for example, is around 30%. As indicated by previous studies, Israelis migrate mostly as part of the process of partnership formation (marriage) and for the purpose of personal development – for example, to pursue study or career opportunities. Thus, an age structure with a strong concentration in the late 20s, 30s and 40s is to be expected; these are precisely the ages when partnerships are built and professional development peaks. Panel D shows a very different age pyramid, very bottom-heavy, consisting predominantly of young people. These are the children of Israel-born immigrants.

Figure 11. Age and sex structures of Israelis in the Netherlands and Dutch Jews circa 2020 (number)



Source: (1) Persons with Israeli background (1 January 2023): StatLine – Population; gender, age, country of origin and country of birth (parents), 1 Jan (cbs.nl), (2) Dutch Jews (1 January 2020): Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB, p. 170.

Israelis play an important role in maintaining the size of the Dutch Jewish population. They do so, as is evident from the data examined so far, in two ways. First, the number of Israeli immigrants has been growing since the mid-1990s, and especially rapidly since 2015. The process of immigration simply adds to the Jewish population of the Netherlands. It has been noted above that Israelis in the Netherlands are a highly mobile population. Many Israelis do not come to settle in the Netherlands for good; they come and go instead in a movement that can be described as 'churning'. Yet an increase in the stock of Israelis is happening, which is evidence of the fact that more and more Israelis are choosing to remain in the Netherlands for longer periods, if not for life. Second, Israeli immigrants include a high proportion of people of childbearing age. The very presence of these people means that Israelis enhance Dutch Jewish fertility. It is uncertain whether or not Israeli fertility in the Netherlands, expressed as the average number of children per woman, is higher than the fertility of the non-Israeli Dutch Jewish population. However, this does not need to be the case. A significant representation of people of childbearing age is a sufficient enhancing factor in itself when it comes to fertility. About 120 children are born to an Israeli parent in the Netherlands every year, which constitutes about 40% of all Dutch Jewish children born annually – a significant boost.

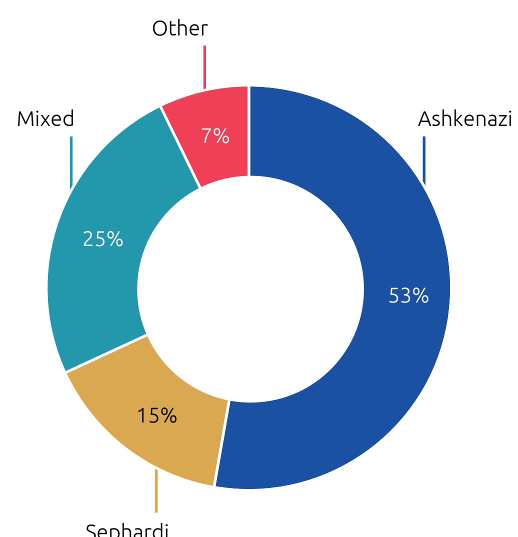
The presence of Israelis, alongside other foreigners, is one significant point to note for policymakers working in the Dutch Jewish community. This non-Dutch imported element has clearly been increasing among Dutch Jews. This raises many policy questions regarding the integration of different Jewish subcommunities in the Netherlands and whether any changes and, possibly, increases in demand for certain services, are expected. Given that the Israel-connected population is young, the compositional change among Dutch Jews can be expected to be felt first in matters related to the communal educational infrastructure, e.g. Jewish schools. We return to this matter in the section on Jewish schools later in this report, as well as in the concluding chapter.

Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews

Ashkenazi Jews and Jews of mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi origin constitute over three-quarters of Dutch Jews (78%). Sephardi Jews are also quite strong numerically, at 15%. The remaining 'Other' Jews – likely a group containing a mix of Mizrahi Jews who do not identify as Sephardi, Jews who are unsure about their origins, and converts to Judaism – form a small minority of 7% (Figure 12). Note that the group of mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi Jews (25%) is larger in size than the group of exclusively Sephardi Jews (15%). This is another piece of evidence that shows the intense mixing between Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi Jews that is taking place in Israel and across the Jewish Diaspora.[28]

28 See: (1) Bensimon, D. and DellaPergola, S. 1984. *La population juive de France: socio-démographie et identité*. Jerusalem: The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, p. 124–128. (2) Okun, B.S. 2004. 'Insight into ethnic flux: marriage patterns among Jews of mixed ancestry in Israel'. *Demography*, 41, 1, 173–187. (3) Staetsky, L.D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Figure 12. Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in the Netherlands, around 2020, %



Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

In the popular mind, European Jewry is commonly perceived as largely Ashkenazi. After all, Europe is where Ashkenazi Jewry formed as a distinct Jewish subgroup. Yet while this perception is not entirely wrong, it misses a certain nuance. Some countries of Southern and Western Europe have significant proportions of Sephardi, or, at least, non-Ashkenazi populations. Notably, in France, Spain and Italy, 30%–50% of Jews identify as Sephardi and, depending on the country, an additional 15%–50% identify as mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi. This stands in contrast to, for example, Germany, Sweden and Hungary, representing here Eastern, Central and Northern Europe, where Sephardim only constitute 2%–6% of Jews.[29] The Dutch Jewish community occupies a unique position between these two poles of the spectrum.

It is interesting to place these numbers in a historical perspective. Although the Sephardi community is correctly seen as the 'originator' of Dutch Jewry (its settlement in Amsterdam on the cusp of the sixteenth century preceded the Ashkenazi settlement), Sephardim actually became a minority among Jews in the Netherlands in the early eighteenth century. To give one example, Sephardi Jews probably formed about 50% of all Jews in Amsterdam at the end of the seventeenth century, 12% around the mid-nineteenth century (close to their percentage today), and just 7% of all Jews in the city in the 1930s.[30] Therefore, the Sephardi segment today is arguably at quite a high point, proportionately, in the history of Dutch Jews. This reverse trend may be explained by the arrival of Israelis in the second half of the twentieth century, a group that is expected to contain some Sephardi Jews.

29 Source: The FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

30 See: (1) Encyclopaedia Judaica, second edition. 2007. Editor in Chief: Fred Skolnik. Thomson Gale (Farmington Hills, USA) in association with Keter Publishing House (Jerusalem, Israel), Volume 2, p. 116. (2) Israel, J. 2021. The republic of the United Netherlands until about 1750: demography and economic activity, in J.C.H. Bloom et al., *Reappraising the history of the Jews in the Netherlands. Liverpool University Press.*

Fertility, mortality, immigration and population growth of Jews in the Netherlands[31]

The period between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries was a time of modernisation in Europe. In demographic terms, this was the time of the 'demographic transition,' when major pandemics subsided and medical knowledge spread, affecting the ways in which people behaved. At a later stage, effective clinical medicine appeared. People started living longer lives, and fertility fell from the previously high levels required to guarantee population growth, to new low levels, commensurate with high longevity. Demographers today recognise that Jews were at the vanguard of the demographic transition, i.e. they were among the first populations in which increases in longevity and falls in fertility were historically observed. Today, Diaspora Jewish populations still display the most advanced demographic characteristics.

There is no way today to measure Dutch Jewish fertility directly. For this to happen, a full count of births occurring in the Dutch Jewish community would be needed, and this is not available. However, we have sound reasons to believe that Jewish fertility in the Netherlands is rather low, and certainly below the level required for population replacement in a long-term perspective (which is about two children per woman). We can surmise this because Dutch fertility in general is low: around the year 2020, the total fertility rate (TFR) of Dutch women was estimated at 1.5–1.6 children per woman – and because highly educated subgroups in a population, such as Jews, tend to have relatively low fertility. Based on the socioeconomic and educational standing of Jews in the Diaspora and their long-term pattern of low fertility, it is reasonable to assume that the TFR of Dutch Jews is about 20% lower than the TFR of the Dutch population as a whole, i.e. 1.2–1.3 children per woman, very far from replacement level.

The mortality of Dutch Jews is also likely to be low. That is to say, Dutch Jews are expected to have a lower risk of death at each age, compared to the total population of the Netherlands. Just as with fertility, mortality is not directly measurable because full statistics of Jewish deaths in the Netherlands are unavailable. However, again, Dutch Jews are a well-educated group, a characteristic normally associated with a comparatively low risk of death – relative to others – at any age. Based on the existing estimates of Jewish mortality in other countries in the Diaspora (e.g. Austria, Belgium and the UK), it is safe to assume that adult Dutch Jewish mortality is about 30% lower than the mortality of the Dutch population as a whole, and close to, albeit probably still lower than, the mortality of Israeli Jews. In 2021, on average, a Jewish man in Israel could expect to live 81 years, under the prevailing rates of mortality there, and a Jewish woman there could expect to live 85 years. These are probably the minimal estimates of Dutch Jewish life expectancy. For comparison: the life expectancy of Dutch men and women in general was about 80 years and 83 years, respectively, at the same time.

Fertility and mortality, working in tandem, shape population size and its trajectory. If the number of births is higher than the number of deaths, the population can grow as a result of the positive 'natural balance' that exists. If the number of births is lower than the number of deaths, the population is bound to decline due to the negative natural balance. Of course, migration can change all that: it can either enhance the effects of the natural

31 See Methodological appendix for full information on underlying analyses and the sources supporting the evaluation presented in this section.

growth or decline, or work in the opposite direction and counterbalance them. This is an important consideration in the Dutch Jewish case to which we will return shortly.

We maintain that the natural balance of Dutch Jews today is negative: the number of births in this population is smaller than the number of deaths. This is a result of a combination of low fertility, experienced by the Dutch Jewish population for a long time, and low mortality, which has also persisted for a while, causing considerable ageing. Today, not only is the number of children per woman in this population low, but the number of women of childbearing age is low too. The population pyramid (Figure 11) shows this well. This creates a low fertility trap: even if fertility per woman were to increase for Jews, an increase in births to the levels sufficient for population replacement may not follow, at least not immediately. This is so simply because the number of women of reproductive age is rather small. At the same time, due to advanced ageing, Dutch Jews have a relatively high number of deaths, even though the risk of death at any age is low in this population. For the number of deaths in any population, the concentration of people in old age groups matters, as well as the actual risk of death. Populations with a lot of elderly people tend to have a lot of deaths despite the low risks of death at each age. The final result, the balance of births and deaths, is a net outcome of the levels of fertility, mortality and the population structure. An aged population structure, for example, can counterbalance the impact of low mortality and raise the number of deaths in a population.

Our calculations show that the total number of births in the Jewish population of the Netherlands was about 230 around the year 2020, while the number of deaths was closer to 290. With the number of deaths being larger than the number of births, the population is bound to decline in the absence of migration. For comparison: the natural balance of the Dutch population as a whole hovered around zero in the years 2021–2023.[32] By contrast, the negative natural balance of Dutch Jews is a phenomenon that has certainly persisted over the last decade, and quite possibly for longer than that. Still, we conclude that the Dutch Jewish population has been growing for the past decade and has grown, or at least remained stable in size, since the late 1960s. This has happened due to migration – i.e. the number of immigrants from abroad joining the Dutch Jewish community has been higher than the number of emigrants leaving the community to a variety of foreign destinations.

Information on the migration of Dutch Jews is imperfect but still provides some useful indications. The Dutch statistical authority collects statistics on this issue, and specifically on the outmigration of people born in Israel and their children irrespective of their place of birth. These data (Panel A, Figure 13) indicate that in most years since the mid-1990s, and in fact, going back all the way to the 1950s, the migration balance for the Israel-born and their children was positive. More recently, since 2013, it is strongly positive. In fact, about 200 people per year have been added to the Dutch Jewish population as a result of the migration of Israelis. Clearly, this number has the capacity to 'compensate' Dutch Jews for the losses incurred by the negative natural balance, and indeed, even generate some growth.

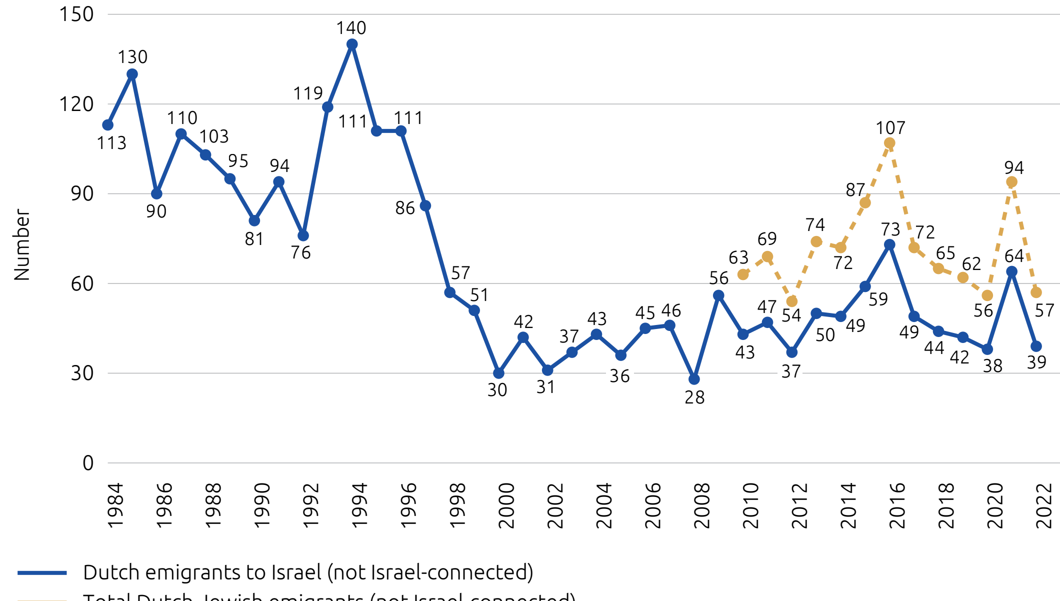
32 Source of the natural balance in the Netherlands as a whole: StatLine – Bevolking, huishoudens en bevolkingsontwikkeling; vanaf 1899 (cbs.nl).

Figure 13. Dutch Jews: immigration to and emigration from the Netherlands

A. Immigration to and emigration from the Netherlands
of Israel-connected Dutch Jews (Israel-born and their children)

Number
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
798
726 724
659
644
669
636
573
588
506
489
486
480
478
461 473
461
460
449
444
445
441
440
440
431
419
422
425
451
404 396
403
400
372
356
386
371 364
438
379
395
388
370
385
331
306
319
320
295
276
253
240
1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022
Immigration
Emigration

B. Emigration from the Netherlands of Jews not connected with Israel



Note: Panel B. About 68% of those Dutch Jewish respondents in the FRA 2018 survey who planned to emigrate indicated that their preferred destination was Israel. Combining this insight with the data from the Israeli statistical authority suggests that the total volume of this migration flow in the 2000s would be 66 people (45*100/68), on average per year. This is shown by the broken line.
Source: (1) Israel-born immigrants and emigrants, and their children: StatLine – Population change; migration background and generation; 1996–2021 (cbs.nl), and StatLine – Population change; Country of origin and country of birth (parents) (cbs.nl). (2) Jews not connected with Israel: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel.

The Dutch statistical authority does not collect data on the migration of Jews who are not Israel-connected. However, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics carefully monitors Jewish migration to Israel, which is a very significant segment of the migration of the

'not-Israel-connected' Dutch Jewish population – i.e. those not born in Israel or the child of someone who was. These data (Panel B, Figure 13) teach us that in the 2000s, on average, about 45 Dutch Jews (born in the Netherlands and not connected to Israel), settled in Israel every year. Bearing in mind that some Jews migrate to places other than Israel, the total volume of this specific Jewish migration flow out of the Netherlands can be estimated at about 70 per year.[33] As an aside, the total volume of emigration to Israel from the Netherlands has not changed much over the past quarter of a century, notwithstanding various political and economic developments in the Netherlands, and it is also considerably lower than it was in the 1980s and the 1990s. In this respect, the Dutch Jewish migration pattern is similar to the equivalent patterns in Britain, Sweden and Germany, but very different from those seen in France and Belgium, where unprecedentedly high levels of Jewish emigration were noted in the early twenty-first century. As recent research on Jewish migration has made clear, a pattern of stability is usually an indicator of good political and economic circumstances. As a rule, both historically and recently, Jews are rather quick to react to a deterioration in political and economic conditions; indeed, Jewish migration can be taken as a signal of wider social upheaval. Nothing of this kind has happened in the Netherlands since the Second World War, including in recent years.[34]

The migration flow operating in the opposite direction (i.e. Dutch Jews returning from Israel and Jews from elsewhere in the world choosing to settle in the Netherlands) cannot be estimated; these data simply do not exist. However, it is certain that any such flow will help to increase the Jewish population of the Netherlands and/or counterbalance the outgoing flow. Given the level of socioeconomic development of the Netherlands, its international atmosphere and the widespread use of the English language, it can be safely assumed that there is at least some level of migration of Jews into the Netherlands. In sum, irrespective of the assumptions, the Dutch Jewish population is on a trajectory of growth. We estimate that it is currently growing at a rate of about 4 per 1,000 per year, and minimally, at a rate of about 2 per 1,000 per year. For comparison, the population of the Netherlands as a whole is currently growing at a rate of 6 per 1,000 per year.[35]

Summary

Our investigation of Dutch Jewish demographic realities has revealed several important, and innovative findings. The negative natural balance is not an entirely new finding. Previous research, conducted around the year 2010, also pointed in this direction. The same applies to the observation about the migration of Israelis.[36] However, the overall evaluation of all sources of growth, including the migration of Dutch Jews who are not connected to Israel, and the ability to state confidently on this basis that Dutch Jewry is growing due to migration, is an important new finding in this study. Additionally, it is now clear in a way that was not clear previously that in essentials, though not in detail, the pattern of growth and change in the Dutch Jewish population resembles the population of the Netherlands as a whole. Both Jews and the total population are growing primarily due to migration rather than to natural balance, and both Jews and the total population are diversifying internally, with an ongoing increase of the foreign-born element.

33 See Note to the previous figure.
34 Staetsky, Daniel. 2023. *Jewish migration today: what it may mean for Europe*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.
35 The Methodological appendix should be consulted for provenance of these figures and methods of calculation.
36 See, in particular: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB.

2 / Jewish identity

There is such a thing as a 'Jewish identity spectrum'. One can be 'more' or 'less' Jewish. This gradient and this thinking in terms of a spectrum can be applied in various ways: to actual religiosity as an inner feeling; religious and ritualistic behaviour; knowledge of and interest in Judaism and/or Jewish culture; membership of Jewish organisations; cultural and familial involvement with Jews and non-Jews; and simple awareness of being Jewish. In this section, we present a variety of measures of Jewishness and compare the Dutch Jewish community to other Jewish communities. These various measures convey one consistent message: Dutch Jews are one of the most secularised Jewish communities in Europe and the Jewish Diaspora as a whole.

Jewish origin and Jewish parents

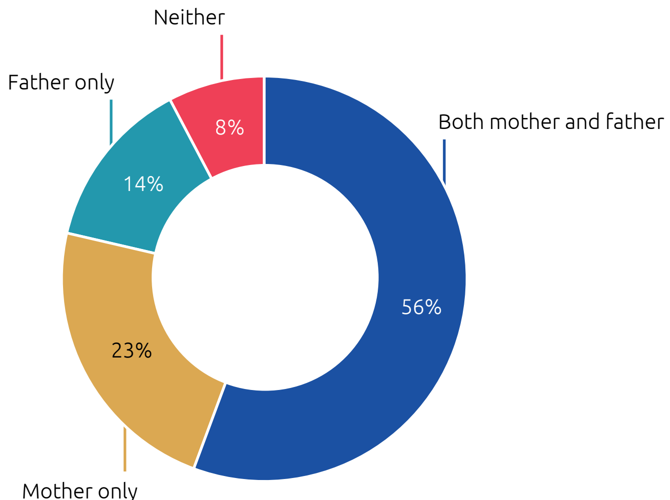
Jewish parentage is a matter of great importance in Jewish culture. First, it is foundational for membership of religious communities. The very understanding of 'Who is a Jew?' depends on the question of parentage. Globally, membership of Orthodox Jewish communities is limited to people born to a Jewish mother or those who converted to Judaism according to Jewish law. This is known as the 'matrilineal' principle of Judaism. Criteria of membership of non-Orthodox streams of Judaism (also known as Progressive, Reform and/or Liberal) vary across communities and countries. In the specific context of Progressive Judaism in the Netherlands, a Jew is someone who was born to a Jewish mother or who converted to Judaism under the auspices of any rabbinical court acknowledged or recognised by the religious authorities of Progressive Judaism. Individuals with only a Jewish father are recognised as having a special bond with Judaism but are not accepted as full Jews without a special confirmation process. In this regard, Progressive Judaism in the Netherlands is more conservative than progressive streams in some countries, especially the USA, where having a Jewish father (i.e. a patrilineal descent) is a sufficient condition for Jewish status. It is better aligned with other, more conservative, progressive streams, such as Reform Judaism in Canada.[37]

However, there is a broader meaning to Jewish parentage – it is not just a criterion of membership in a religious community. Parentage is a measure of continuity. It indicates the extent to which Jews today derive from the Jews of yesterday, or, expressed differently, the extent to which the experiences and memories of the past are carried forward into the present.

37 This principle is explicitly stated by the Alliance for Progressive Judaism/Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom, Membership – the Alliance for Progressive Judaism (verbond.eu). The principle contrasts significantly with the principle stated by the American Reform Movement: Patrilineal descent | Reform Judaism, and is closer to the one maintained by the Canadian Reform Movement, The Canadian Way | Reform Judaism.

The vast majority of Jews in the Netherlands today have at least one Jewish parent (92%). Nearly 80% have a Jewish mother and 56% have two Jewish parents. Converts constitute a small minority of Dutch Jews (8%) (Figure 14). Two conclusions are immediately evident. First, in the Netherlands as elsewhere, we have firm evidence that some of the offspring of marriages of Jews with non-Jews remain Jewish. This is important as there is a vast literature on intermarriage, and both in the Netherlands and elsewhere around the world, it is shown to be a correlate of a weaker Jewish identity.[38] Intermarried individuals tend to be more distant, on average, from the Jewish community, culture and faith than those who are in-married, and their children also tend to be more distant, on average, than children of in-married parents. However, there are many exceptions; indeed, 37% of the Dutch Jewish population today is comprised of Jews with either a non-Jewish mother or a non-Jewish father.[39] Second, the presence of converts, an external force counterbalancing the departure of Jews from Judaism, is significant. These realities, it must be added, have not changed significantly in the last twenty-five years.[40]

Figure 14. Jews in the Netherlands: types of Jewish origin, %



Note: The category 'Neither' includes a small proportion of people who said 'Don't Know'.
Source: Authors' calculations on the basis of the FRA 2018 survey (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

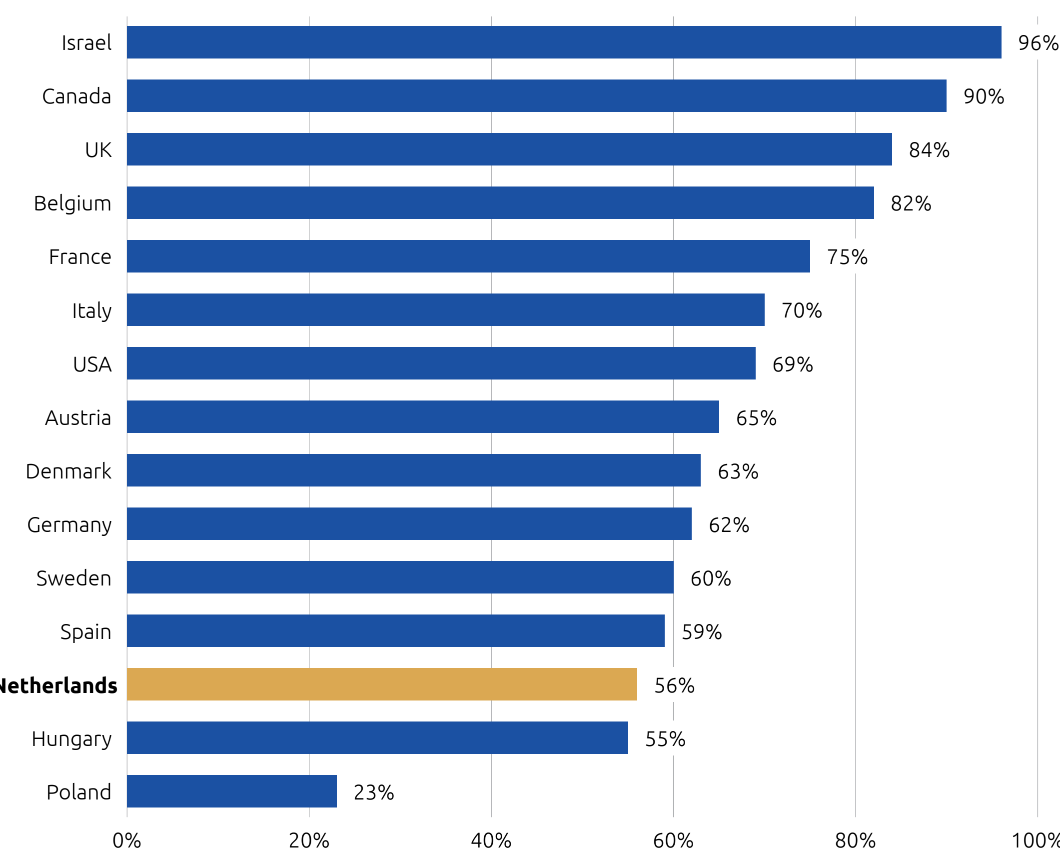
Embedding Dutch Jews into a larger framework of Jewish communities is instructive (Figure 15).

38 This has been shown, using a variety of measures, in the following report on the state of European Jewry: DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L.D. *Jewish identities of European Jews: what, why and how.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

39 This point aligns well with a previous study of children of intermarried couples: Tanenbaum, B. and R. Kooyman. 2014. 'Jewish feelings, Jewish practice?' Oxford: JDC International Centre for Community Development (JDC-ICCD).

40 This statement is based on a comparison with earlier studies: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009.* Diemen: AMB, p.30.

Figure 15. % with both Jewish parents in the Netherlands, in comparison to selected Jewish populations



Source: (1) For the Netherlands and all European comparators: the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) Canada: Brym, R., Neuman, J., and Lenton, R. 2019. *2018 survey of Jews in Canada*, p.33. (3) USA: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020*, p.107. (4) Israel: Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*, topline results, p.139.

In comparative terms, the proportion of people with two Jewish parents is smaller in the Netherlands (56%) than in most countries of Western Europe, Canada and the USA. It is closer to the levels observed in some Eastern European countries, such as Hungary. This situation is a legacy of many years of intermarriage in a Jewish community, and acceptance and integration of the offspring of intermarried couples. Interestingly, the highest proportion of Jews with two Jewish parents is found in Israel, in some English-speaking countries (the UK and Canada) and in Belgium, a close neighbour of the Netherlands, which has the largest proportion of haredi (strictly Orthodox) Jews of any country in the world. This is the first, but not the last, appearance of the international 'Jewish identity spectrum' that features Eastern European countries at the bottom, and Israel, Canada, UK and Belgium at the top. This is also the first, but not the last, appearance of the Netherlands lying closer to the bottom end.

Religious life, its various shades and colours

There are numerous aspects of human behaviour and the inner world that come under the umbrella of religious life. In part, religious life is organised: religious organisations tend to have structures of official affiliation and to keep records of membership. Through examination of these records, scholars can tell the story of organised religion. Another part of religious life takes place at the family or personal level and expresses itself in

participating in religious rituals and self-definition. Here, no official records exist, naturally, and population surveys are required to capture the prevalence of religious practices. Finally, there are matters of faith, or actual belief. This information also does not lend itself to any kind of official recording, but it can also be collected in surveys. In our research on the Dutch Jewish community, we benefited from access to several sources and, consequently, it is possible to paint a rich picture of the religiosity, and indeed the irreligiosity, of Dutch Jews. Below, we use information received from Jewish religious organisations operating in the Netherlands, supplemented with information from the FRA 2018 survey respondents in the Netherlands.

When it comes to religious affiliation, religious behaviour and religiosity, Dutch Jews consistently feature in the lower part of the global and European Jewish spectrum, yet fit well into the national Dutch picture. It is worth remembering that the Netherlands as a whole is one of the least religious countries in Western Europe. A majority of the adult Dutch population (about 60%) does not identify with any religious creed today, and this trend is strengthening. For comparison, the equivalent figure for Western Europe as a whole is about 30%–35%.[41] And it is not just affiliation from a religious creed that is low in the Netherlands. The Pew Research Center 'index of religious commitment', which is based on multiple measures (attendance at religious services, prayer, belief in God and the importance of religion in one's life), identifies the Netherlands as a country with one of the lowest levels of religious commitment in Western Europe.[42] This degree of distancing from religiosity makes the Netherlands something of an island of secularism in Europe. A lack of religious affiliation and low levels of overall religious commitment are common in Scandinavian countries and in Belgium too, and the Netherlands fits into that family of nations. However, when it comes to explicit religious disaffiliation as a feature of identity, namely, an unwillingness to self-identify as a 'Christian', the 'closest neighbour' of the Netherlands is actually the Czech Republic, situated in Eastern Europe. While high levels of secularism in Eastern Europe can be seen in part as a result of government-sponsored 'social engineering' – i.e. officially imposed secularism under the Communist regimes – Dutch secularism is rather the result of organic development inside Dutch society and culture.

Membership of Jewish religious organisations

Around the year 2022, the official membership statistics of Jewish religious communities across the Netherlands indicated that about 23% of Dutch Jews are affiliated to a religious community. 'Affiliation' here should not be understood as regular or even occasional attendance of synagogue services; it rather relates solely to formal membership, as reflected in the records kept by the religious communities. 'Affiliation' also does not capture membership of a Jewish club or group of no religious character. This assessment of the level of affiliation is based on the facts that: (1) all Jewish communities in the Netherlands in combination reported the presence of 8,000 Jewish individuals on their

41 See (1) Statistics Netherlands. 2022. Almost 6 in 10 Dutch people do not have a religious affiliation. Almost 6 in 10 Dutch people do not have a religious affiliation (cbs.nl). (2) Pew Research Center. 2018. *Being Christian in Western Europe*. (3) Pew Research Center. 2017. Religious belief and national belonging in Central and Eastern Europe.

42 Pew Research Center. 2018. *Being Christian in Western Europe*, p. 101. Characterisation of the weakly religious nature of Dutch society here is based on the studies conducted by Pew Research Institute in 2017. It is confirmed by the independent assessment of the latest round (10) of the European Social Survey/ESS (2020–2022), conducted by the author of this report. For details about the ESS: Data and Documentation | European Social Survey (ESS).

registers; and (2) there are about 35,000 Jews living in the Netherlands at this time. This total of 8,000 includes the combined number of affiliates with the Dutch Israelite Religious community (an Orthodox body), the Portuguese Israelite Religious Community (an Orthodox body of Jews of Sephardic descent), the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, and several small independent communities associated with the progressive stream in Judaism.[43] A majority of these affiliated Jews (about two in three) are affiliated with the Orthodox bodies. Reform communities combined account for about one-third of all affiliated Jews.

The most remarkable aspect of this reality is gradual decline in affiliation (Table 1). Whereas the basic distribution of affiliated Jews across the religious streams has not changed significantly over the past quarter of a century, the total membership of Jewish religious organisations appears lower, in proportionate terms, in 2022 (23%) than at any point previously (above 30%). Because the data were collected somewhat differently at the last point in time compared to the past, caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, but the trend of decline in affiliation is discernible, nevertheless.

Table 1. Membership of religious organisations among Dutch Jews, %

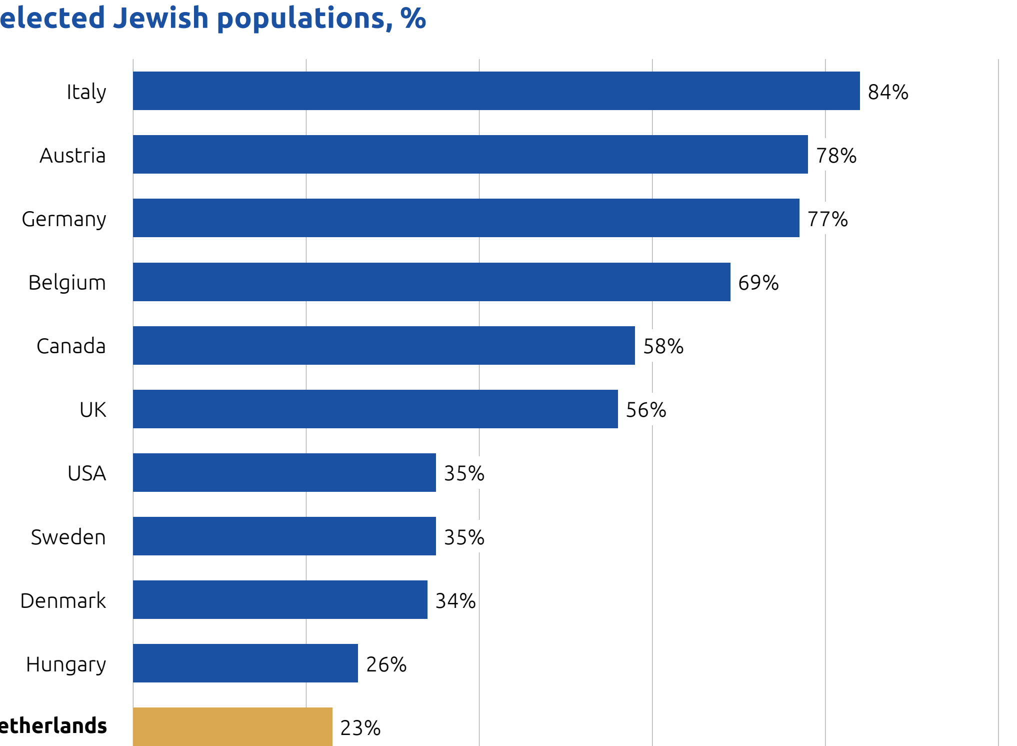
Membership	1999	2009	Around 2022
Orthodox religious communities	20	22	15
Reform religious communities	11	12	8
Non-members	69	66	77
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: (1) Years 1999 and 2009: Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom*. Amsterdam: Aksant, p.31. (2) Communal membership survey conducted in the Dutch Jewish community during 2023 for the purpose of this project.

Dutch Jewish affiliation levels are among the lowest both in Europe and in the Jewish Diaspora in general (Figure 16). In Europe, we only find similar levels in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (e.g. Hungary), with the latter representing a geopolitical space with a significant and lasting impact of enforced secularism.

43 The listed bodies names in Dutch are: (1) Nederlands Israelitisch Kerkgenootschap (NIK), Portugees Israelietische Gemeente (PIG), Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom.

Figure 16. Affiliation to a synagogue in the Netherlands, in comparison to selected Jewish populations, %



Note: Affiliation levels are best understood as the percentage of adult Jews or Jewish households affiliated to a Jewish communal body (either a synagogue or an umbrella body incorporating several communities/synagogues). Although calculations are preformed somewhat differently in different communities, taking into account the various peculiarities of affiliation structures, all country-specific data presented here are comparable.
Source: For the Netherlands: census of the Jewish religious communities in the Netherlands, conducted by the author specifically as a part of the project leading to publication of this report. For comparators: (1) Austria: Staetsky, L.D. and DellaPergola, S. 2020. *Jews in Austria: a demographic and social portrait*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.37. (2) Belgium: Staetsky, L.D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.22. (3) Denmark, Germany, Italy and Sweden: DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L. D. 2020. *Jews in Europe at the turn of the Millennium: population trends and estimates*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.20. (4) Canada: Brym, R., Neuman, J., and Lenton, R. 2019. *2018 survey of Jews in Canada*, p.24. (5) Hungary: Kovács, A. and Barna, I. 2018. *Zsidok es zsidosag magyarorszagon 2017-ben*. Egy zsociologiai kutatas eredmenyei. Budapest: Szombat, p.181. (6) UK: Casale Mashiah, D. and Boyd, J. 2017. *Synagogue membership in the United Kingdom in 2016*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.8. (7) USA: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020*, p.82. and Pew Research Center. 2013. *A portrait of Jewish Americans*, p.60.

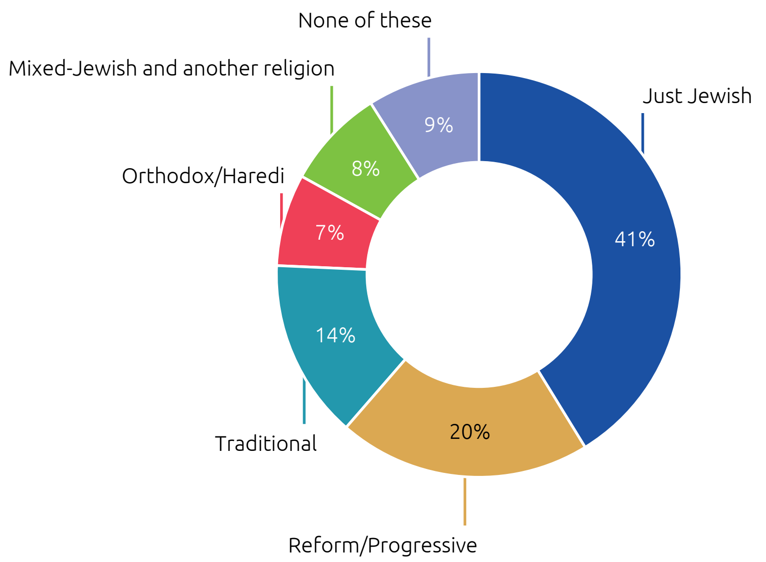
Religious, and irreligious, self-definition

The FRA 2018 survey respondents in the Netherlands were shown a list of categories of Jewish identity and asked to identify themselves according to that list. The exact question read: 'Which of the following comes closest to describing your current Jewish identity?', with seven response options presented: 'Traditional'; 'Reform/Progressive'; 'Orthodox (e.g. would not turn on a light on Sabbath)'; 'Haredi (strictly-Orthodox)'; 'Just Jewish'; 'Mixed – I am both Jewish and another religion'; 'None of these'.

Like most European Jewish populations, Dutch Jewry is not completely dominated by a single religious self-definition or a lifestyle. It is rather broken down into multiple, unequally sized groups. Strikingly, it has a majority of people (58%) who do not subscribe to strict Jewish denominational terms: instead, they choose to identify as 'Just Jewish' (41%), 'Mixed' (8%, both Jewish and other religion) or nothing at all (9%). (Figure 17).

This feature, especially when seen alongside the very low level of affiliation, helps to consolidate an understanding of Dutch Jewry as a rather secular, or at least weakly religious community, a topic to which we will return. It is also important to note that, as with affiliation, the fundamental picture of the self-described identity of Dutch Jews has changed very little since 1999, as the sources from that period testify.[44]

Figure 17. Self-described identity of the Jewish population in the Netherlands, %



Note: Data relate to adult Jewish population.
Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). See text for the exact formulation of the question and response options.

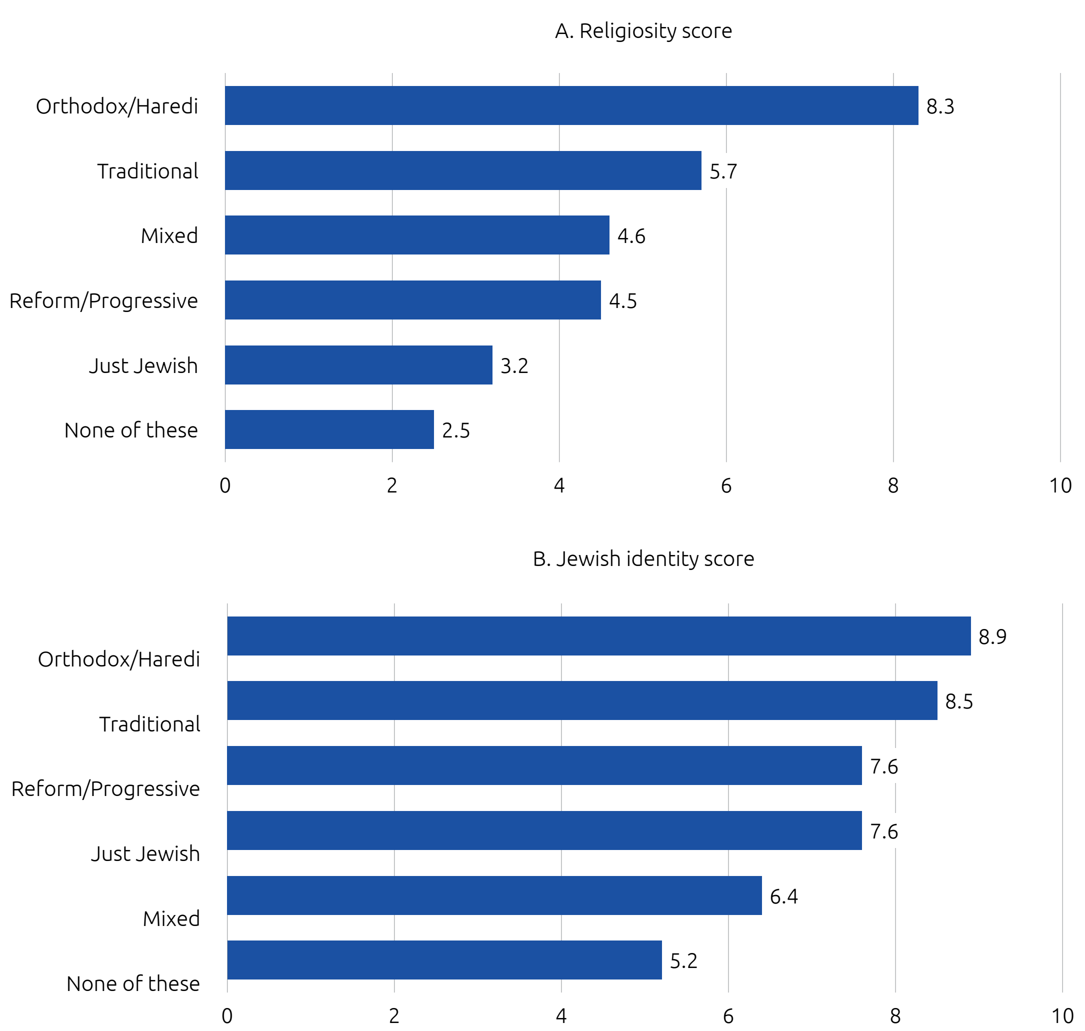
Some of the identity categories shown in Figure 17 are intuitively clear: 'Orthodox/Haredi', for example, is understood as a marker of relatively high religiosity. Others are less so. The exact meaning of 'Traditional', for example, as well as the exact meaning of 'Just Jewish' are not too clear. What are the actual levels of religiosity associated with these categories? Some further insights are made possible by the fact that the FRA 2018 survey included separate questions on strength of religiosity and Jewish identity. Respondents were offered a scale of one to ten and asked to indicate how religious they were on that scale, with ten being strongly religious. They were also asked how strong their Jewish identity was, using an identical scale. Incidentally, the analysis has shown that there is only a moderate correlation between religiosity and Jewish identity: weak religiosity is not automatically translated into weak Jewish identity, for example.

As one might expect, Haredi and Orthodox Jews possess the highest religiosity scores, above 8 on the scale running from 1–10 (Figure 18, panel A). They are followed, at some distance, by the 'Traditional' (score of about 6, rounded). Those self-identifying as 'Just Jewish' as well as those who did not meaningfully identify with any of the categories

44 See: (1) Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom*. Amsterdam: Aksant. (2) Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009.* Diemen: AMB.

('None of these') are the least religious categories (scores in the range 2–3). Reform/Progressive are situated between these two poles (4.5). However, these different groups are much closer to each other when it comes to Jewish identity than they are in relation to religiosity (Figure 18, panel B). Haredi and Orthodox Jews remain the groups with the highest Jewish identity scores, almost 9, but the Jewish identity score of the 'Traditional' is only slightly lower, at 8.5, and Reform/Progressive Jews and the 'Just Jewish' follow these two groups but not by as much distance as they did with respect to religiosity, with a Jewish identity score of about 7.5 each (rounded). Mixed and 'None of these' have the lowest scores, below 7.

Figure 18. Religiosity and Jewish identity among Jews in the Netherlands, by denomination

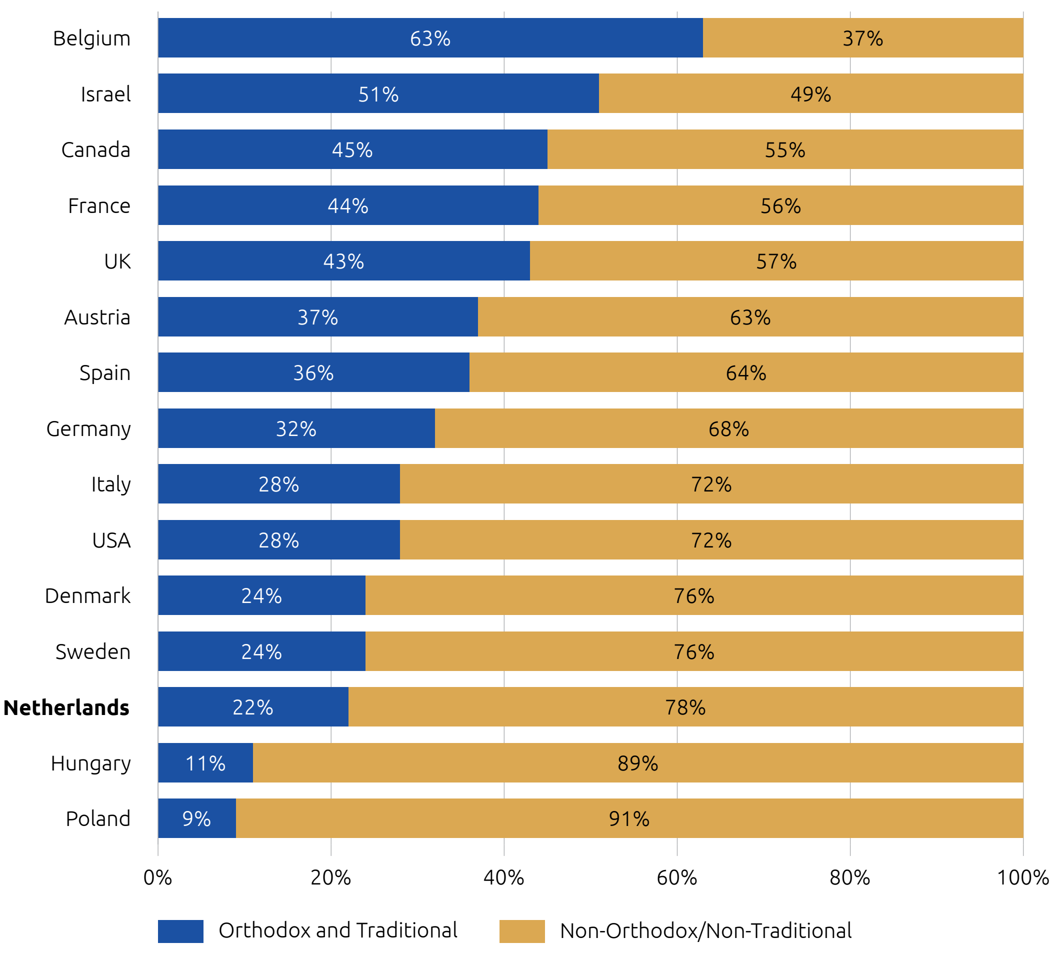


Note: (1) See text for the exact formulation of the question and response options. (2) Group-specific numbers (unweighted): Orthodox/Haredi=94, Traditional=201, Reform/Progressive=389, Just Jewish=389, Mixed=60, None of these=69.
Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

Figure 19 places Dutch Jews in context; it shows their positioning in the family of global Jewish populations, with respect to the proportion of people self-identifying as either Orthodox, including strictly Orthodox, or Traditional. About 20% of Dutch Jews describe themselves in these terms, and this level, just like the level of identification, is close to

Scandinavian and Eastern European countries. By contrast, it is a long way from the level observed in Israel, for example, and in some other more traditional Jewish communities, such as neighbouring Belgium, as well as the UK, France and Canada. The polarity observed in this instance, with the more traditional/religious pole represented by Israel, Belgium, Canada, France and UK, and the less traditional by Scandinavian countries, Eastern Europe and, at times, the USA, is a rather stable feature of the global picture of Jewish identity, with relatively little sensitivity to the exact measure used to capture it.

Figure 19. Percentage of Orthodox and Traditional Jews in the Netherlands, in comparison to selected Jewish populations

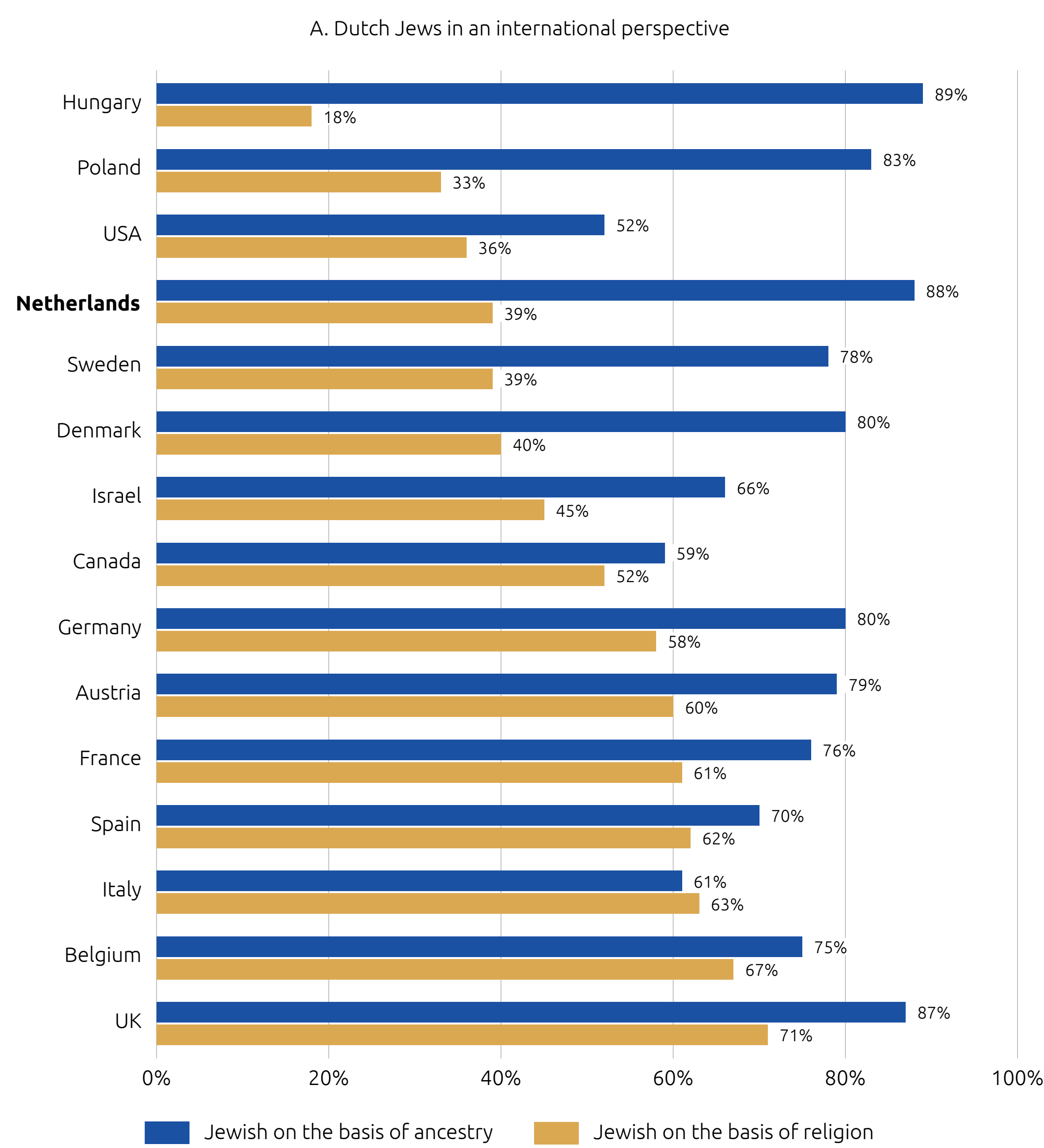


Note: (1) Data relate to adult Jewish population. (2) Strictly Orthodox/Haredi are combined with Orthodox. Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491); see text for the exact formulation of the question and response options. Outside of Europe a question was asked slightly differently but the responses are put into a broadly comparable form. For comparators: (1) for all European comparators: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) Canada: Brym, R., Neuman, J., and Lenton, R. 2019. *2018 survey of Jews in Canada*, p.23. (3) USA: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020*, p.9. and Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*, p.48. (4) Israel: Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*, p.48.

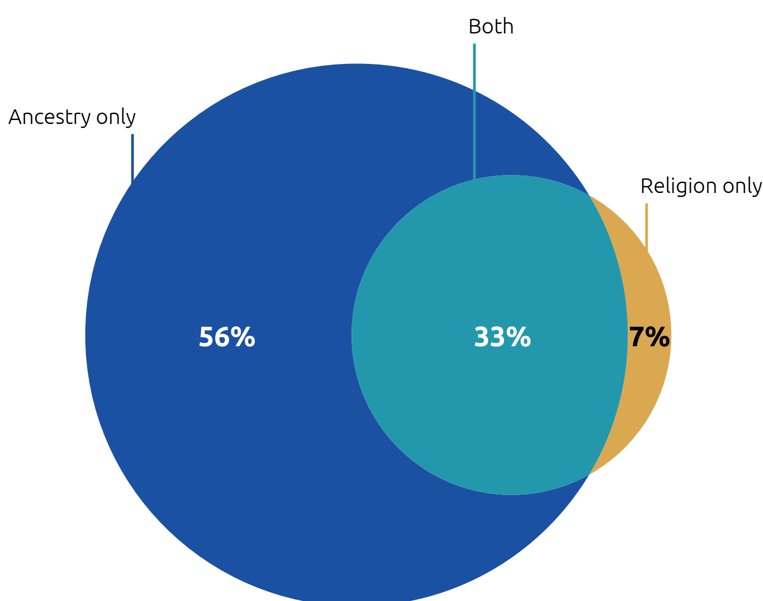
Arguably, there is little surprise in the fact that a large majority of Dutch Jews see their Jewishness as based on ancestry rather than religion. When asked in the FRA 2018 survey 'On what basis would you say you are Jewish?' with an option to choose any number of categories from a list containing religion, ethnicity, parentage, heritage, culture, upbringing or 'something else', 89% of Dutch Jews chose categories that can

be understood as ancestry-based (i.e. parentage, upbringing or ethnicity), either alongside religion or separately from it. That said, some respondents chose religion as a basis of their identity, but it is clear that this, even alongside other identity bases, was a much less popular choice: only 39% of Dutch Jews mentioned it explicitly (Figure 20, Panel A). In that, as in other patterns of self-definition shown above, they are much closer to Eastern European, Northern European and American Jews than, for example, to Western and Southern European Jewish communities.

Figure 20. Self-definition of Dutch Jews: ancestry versus religion based Jewish identity



B. Jews in the Netherlands: ancestry versus religion-based Jewish identity



Note: See text for the exact formulation of the question and response options. Ancestry-based identity in Europe is defined as Jewish identity based on parentage, upbringing or ethnicity (any number or combination of these categories). Religion-based identity in Europe is defined as Jewish identity based on religion. Outside of Europe a question was asked slightly differently but the responses are put into a broadly comparable form. About 5% of Dutch Jews chose neither ancestry nor religion as a basis of their Jewish identity. Data relate to the adult Jewish population.
Source: For the Netherlands and all European comparators: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) Canada: data extracted from the dataset of *2018 survey of Jews in Canada*. (3) USA: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020*, p.63. (4) Israel: Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*. Survey topline results.

Figure 20, Panel B presents the overlap between the ancestry-based and religion-based definitions and provides further nuance. Ancestry and religion coexist as bases of identity in about a third of Dutch Jews, whilst for 56%, being Jewish is solely about ancestry. Only 7% see religion as the sole base of their Jewish identity.

Observance of Jewish practices and selected Jewish behaviours among Dutch Jews

This section explores the ways in which Jews behave, rather than think of themselves, in relation to different aspects of Jewish religiosity and culture. We begin with some of Judaism's major life cycle rituals, particularly those marking the points at which Jewish individuals enter and exit life. In Judaism, the birth of a baby boy is commonly followed by a circumcision ceremony on the eighth day of the boy's life, provided the infant is in good health. A baby boy is also officially named on this occasion. The birth of a baby girl is often marked by a celebration, prayers and a naming ceremony. These take place close to a girl's birth but are not as carefully timed as a circumcision ceremony for a baby boy. Circumcisions of Jewish baby boys are commonly performed by a traditional practitioner, a *mohel*, who may or may not also be a medical doctor. In the Netherlands, as in other countries, records of circumcisions are kept by the practitioners themselves and/or by their professional umbrella bodies. On the basis of these records, we can conclude

that in the years 2020–2023, about 27% of male Jewish newborns in the Netherlands were circumcised.[45]

A certain degree of undercounting of circumcisions is possible. Our estimate is based on records of circumcisions by practitioners based in the Netherlands, and some Jewish families may simply use a medical facility instead of a traditional practitioner, or invite a practitioner from neighbouring Belgium, the UK or other locations. However, in our assessment, this only happens in a small number of cases. While there is no way of adjusting the number to account for the possible undercount, it is clear that such an adjustment would not change the fundamental conclusion: only a minority of Jews in the Netherland adhere to the practice of circumcision these days. This stands in strong contrast to Jews in Austria and Belgium, for example, where this practice is close to universal. It is much lower still than even among the mainstream (i.e. non-haredi) Jewish communities of Belgium (such as in Brussels) and the United Kingdom, where around 80% of male Jewish infants are circumcised. It is more in line with the levels of uptake of circumcision seen in certain Jewish communities of Northern and Eastern Europe.[46]

Jewish burial too is highly ritualistic. Special burial societies (*hevra kadisha*) operate alongside all official Jewish communities, and they handle the bodies of the dead in accordance with Jewish law in all matters related to prayer, washing and dressing of the body and the timing of burial. They too keep records of their activities, and these records were accessed and analysed in the course of preparing this report. Our analysis leads to the conclusion that 35% of all deceased Jews in the Netherlands have a formal Jewish burial.[47] This proportion is lower than in other Western European Jewish populations and more in line with the figures observed in Eastern Europe.

Beyond these two life cycle events, we can also examine other Jewish religious and cultural practices. Bearing in mind the split nature of Dutch Jewry and the numerical dominance of the secular component, we deliberately choose to show the prevalence of all such practices for the entire spectrum of Jewish identity categories: from Orthodox to 'Just Jewish'. Those who did not choose any category of religious identity (we refer to them here as 'Nones') are combined with the Just Jewish. Our analysis of the life cycle events above could not draw distinctions by degree of religiosity due to the nature of the data, but this is possible with respect to other aspects of ritual practice since the

45 The numbers underlying this assessment were communicated by the Nederlands Israelitisch Kerkgenootschap and Portugees Israelietische Gemeente, for the circumcision practitioners operating under their wings, and a *mohel* operating for the Dutch Reform community. In total, there are 32 circumcision per year across these communities, as an average of 2020–2022. The annual number of male births among Dutch Jews can be estimated at 117, at the same time (see: Methodological appendix).

46 For the comparative picture with the UK and Belgium, see: (1) Staetsky, L. Daniel and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *A demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (2) Casale Mashiah, D. 2018. *Vital statistics of the UK Jewish population: births and deaths*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Scope of circumcisions in Northern and Eastern Europe: Staetsky, Daniel. Limitations of tolerance? Circumcision of Jewish male infants and kosher slaughter in Europe today. Presentation at the Woolf Institute conference 'Faith, trust and relationships', 15–16 November 2022.

47 The numbers for this estimation were communicated by all existing Jewish burial societies operating in the Netherlands (both Orthodox and Reform). In total, there are 102 deaths per year across these communities, as an average of 2020–2022. The annual number of deaths among Dutch Jews can be estimated at 293, at the same time (See: Methodological Appendix). For a comparison of the scope of uptake of Jewish burial see: Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2024. COVID-19 mortality among Jews in 2020: a global overview and lessons taught about the Jewish longevity advantage. *Journal of Biosocial Science* 56 (1): 15–35.

analysis is based on the FRA 2018 survey of Dutch Jews that documented Jewish identity categories in detail.

The most observed Jewish practice of those investigated among Dutch Jews is attending/conducting a Passover Seder (Figure 21, Panel A), something that is done in all or most years by about 60% of them. The least observed practice is strict observance of the rules of Shabbat: fewer than 10% of Dutch Jews adhere to these rules in full. On all practices, the gap in observance between the least and the most religious Jews is very significant: on average about forty percentage units. With respect to the observance of most practices, Reform/Progressive Jews are situated between the Orthodox/Traditional and the Just Jewish.

There is a visible distance in the prevalence between the more and the less demanding Jewish practices, with the less demanding ones (e.g. attending a Seder, lighting Shabbat candles) being more prevalent than the more demanding ones (e.g. not switching on lights on the Sabbath). This finding is not unique to Dutch Jews and has been widely observed in other Jewish communities. It follows the economic logic: time spent on any activity is an economic asset. That time could always be used for other activities, and it will be, if these activities are considered more useful or pleasurable. The less time spent on, or sacrificed for a ritual, the easier it is to adhere to it. In this way, the less frequently-occurring rituals in the annual calendar (e.g. attending a Seder and fasting on Yom Kippur) enjoy greater adherence than the more frequently-occurring rituals which are integral to lifestyle, such as eating kosher food, attending a synagogue weekly or strict observance of Shabbat. The observance of the latter requires greater religious faith that 'overrules' the fundamentally economic, time-related, calculations that people make mostly unconsciously.[48]

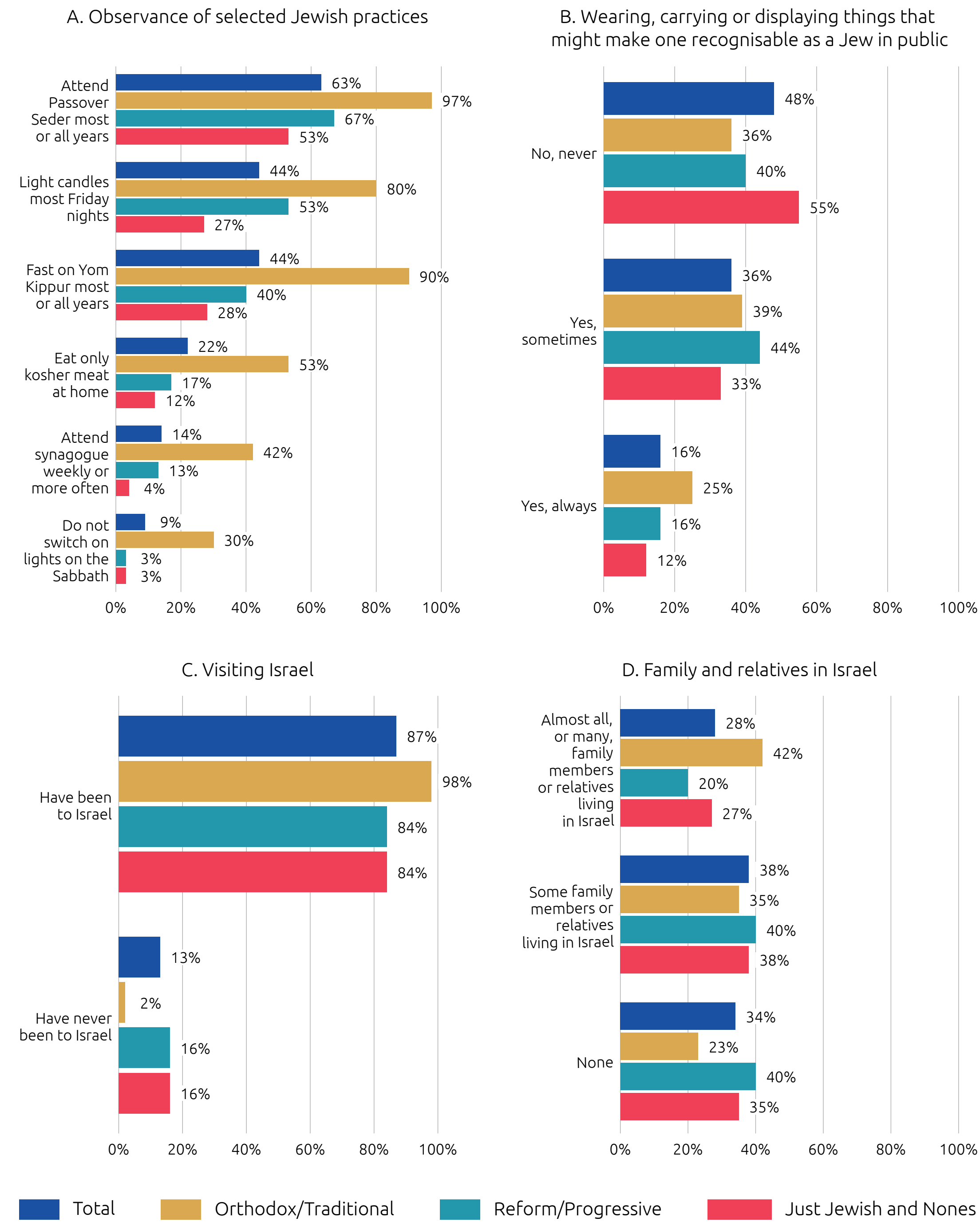
When it comes to Jewish behaviour beyond the narrow confines of religious practice (Figure 21, Panels B–D), the gap between the least and most religious Dutch Jews diminishes. For example, about half of Dutch Jews display some recognisable Jewish items when in public (e.g. a *Magen David* – Star of David – necklace or similar) at least sometimes, and for Jews self-identifying as Orthodox or Traditional the figure is 64%, compared to 60% for Reform/Progressive and 45% for those who identify as Just Jewish or Nones. Similarly, when it comes to visiting Israel, a very large majority of Dutch Jews has done so, close to 90%, and while this includes close to 100% of the Orthodox/Traditional, it also includes about 80% of the Just Jewish and Nones. Note further that about 75% of the Orthodox/Traditional and 65% of the Just Jewish or Nones have at least some family members or relatives living in Israel. The emerging understanding at this point is that while the most and least secular Dutch Jews are very different when it comes to purely religious behaviour, they are much more similar with regards to aspects of Jewish culture and sense of connection with other Jews.

Figure 22 presents adherence to Jewish practice and Jewish behaviours across Jewish communities, with available data. The different communities are hierarchically arranged,

48 An exposition of economic logic supporting religious choices is eloquently made by Carmel Chiswick, a leading expert in the field. The understanding of the roots of observance informed by economic thinking could be very helpful to communal work, particularly if aimed at increasing and retaining membership of Jewish organisations and the choice of activities offered. See: Chiswick, C. 2014. *Judaism in transition: how economic choices shape religious tradition*. Stanford University Press.

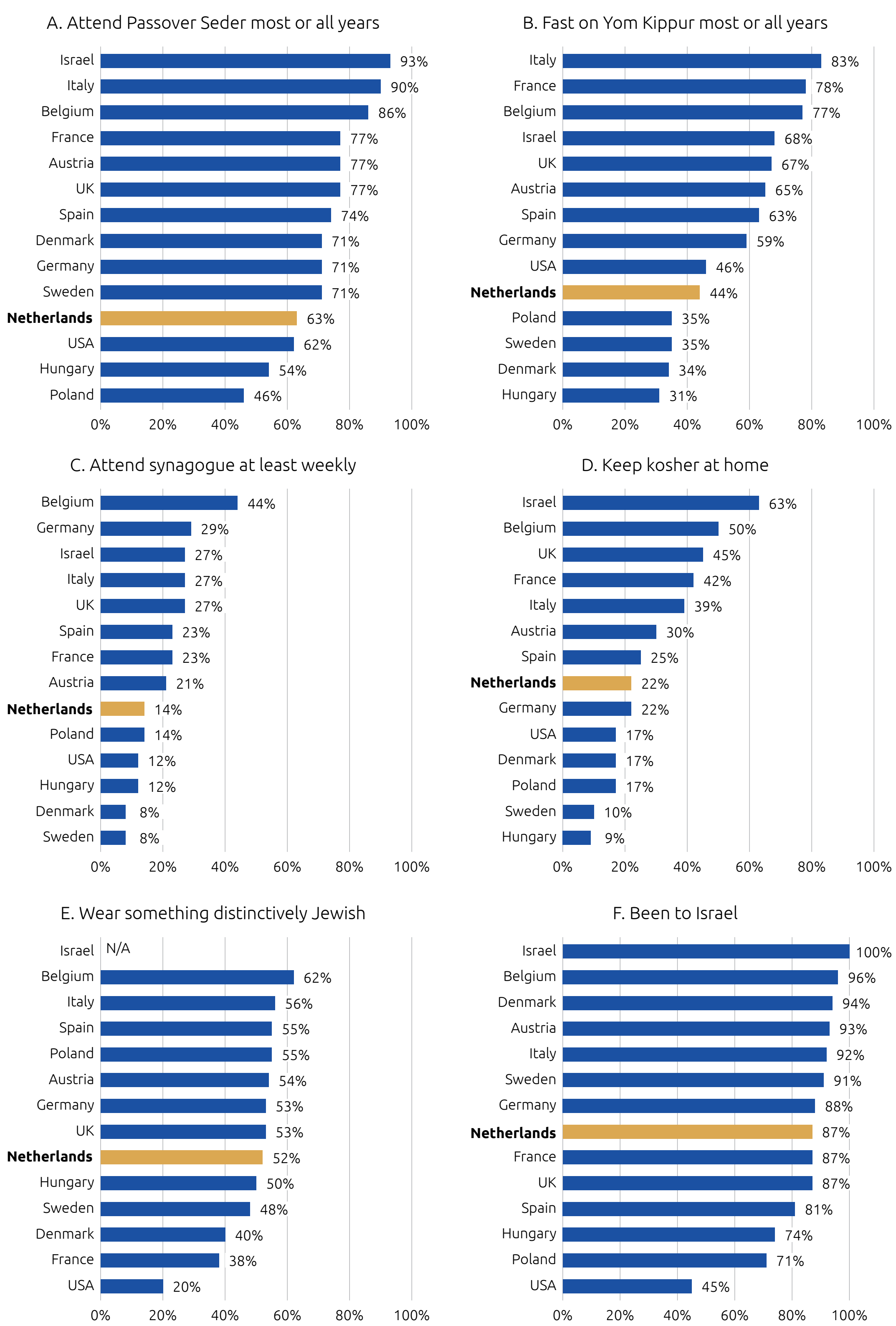
with those exhibiting the highest prevalence of each practice appearing at the top. In relation to each type of Jewish behaviour, Dutch Jews are situated towards the bottom end of each panel. Their adherence to Jewish practice is relatively low, and fits in, once again, with Scandinavian and Eastern European Jewish communities, and, at times, with American Jews.

Figure 21. Observance of Jewish practices and other types of Jewish behaviour among Dutch Jews



Group-specific numbers (unweighted): Orthodox/Haredi=94, Traditional=201, Reform/Progressive=389, Just Jewish=389, Mixed=60, None of these=69. Data relate to the adult Jewish population.
Category 'None' in Panel D includes a small number of respondents who answered 'Do not know'.
Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

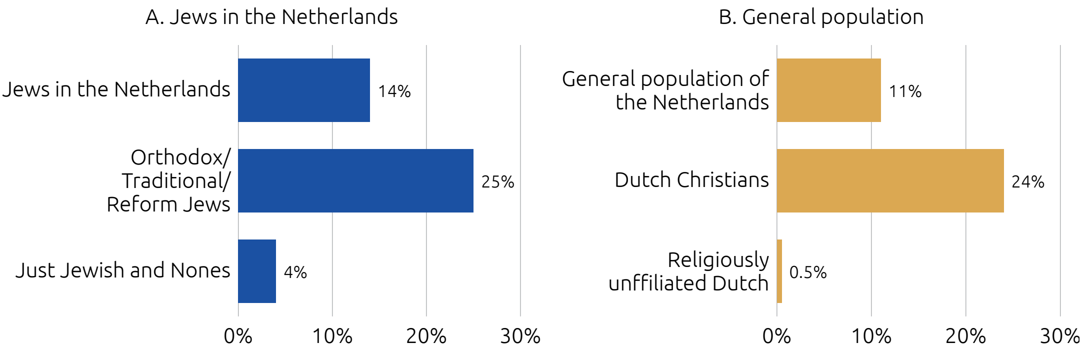
Figure 22. Jewish practices and other types of Jewish behaviour: Dutch Jews versus other Jews



Source: (1) for the Netherlands and all European comparators: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) USA: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020*. In addition: Pew Research Center. 2021. *Jewish Americans in 2020. Survey topline results*. (3) Israel: Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*. Survey topline results.

The only variable on which a direct comparison can be drawn between Dutch Jews and the general population of the Netherlands is attendance at religious services. This comparison shows a remarkable similarity between Jews and non-Jews: while the level of attendance of religious services among the less traditional/religious component in both groups is in the approximate range of 0%–5%, it is about 25% for the more traditional/religious component (Figure 23).

Figure 23. Attendance of religious services among Jews and the general population of the Netherlands, % attending every week or more often



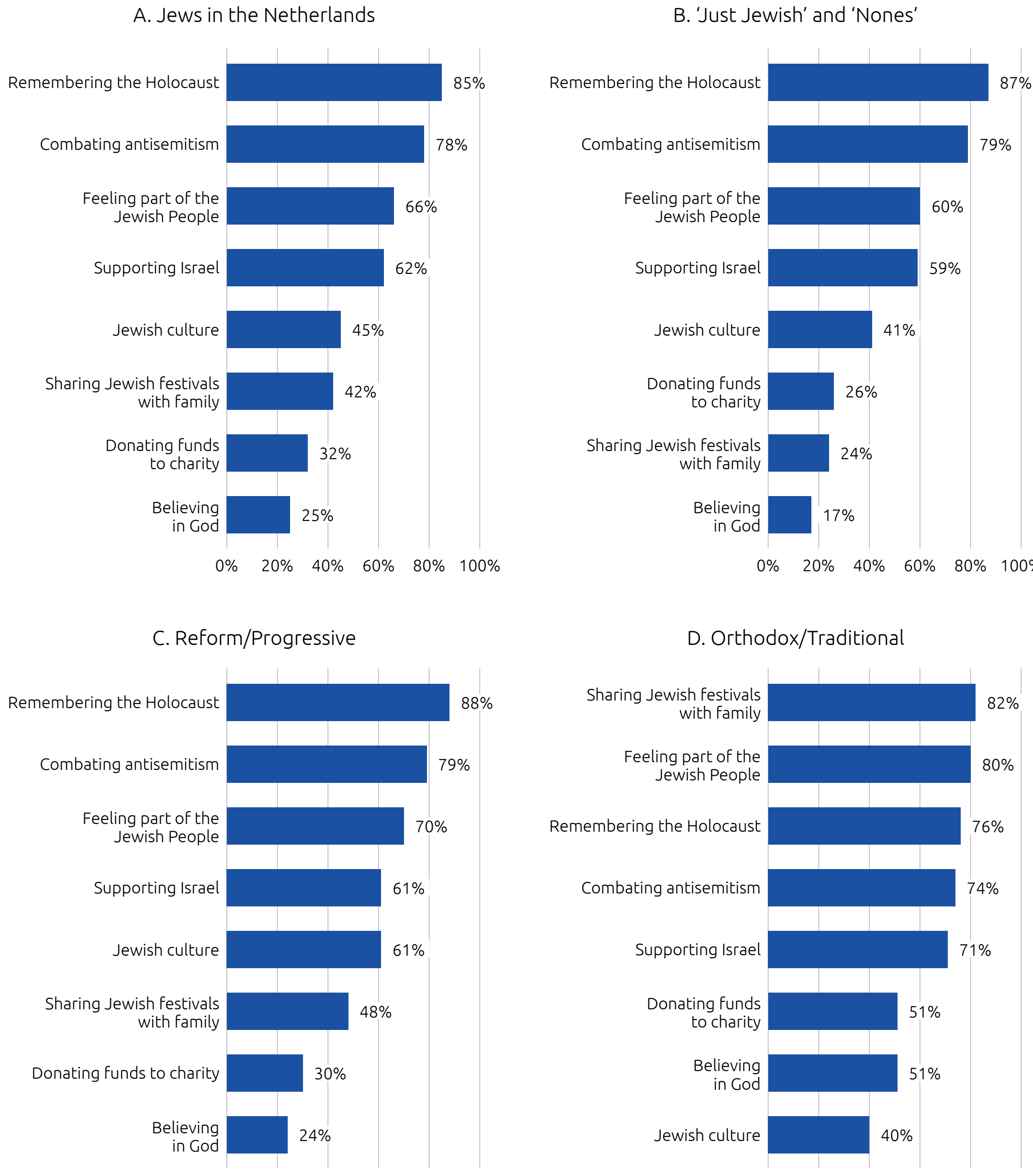
Source: Jews: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). General population: Pew Research Center. 2018. *Being Christian in Western Europe*. Topline survey results.

Aspects of Jewishness important to Dutch Jews

What matters most to Dutch Jews when it comes to their Jewishness beyond the conventional labels (such as Reform or Orthodox) and beyond specific religious behaviour (such as membership of a synagogue or keeping kosher)? In the FRA 2018 survey of Dutch Jews, respondents were also asked about the importance of certain aspects of Jewishness to their Jewish identity, such as belief in God, sharing Jewish festivals with family, supporting Israel, Jewish culture, combating antisemitism, remembering the Holocaust, donating funds to charity and feeling part of the Jewish People.

'Remembering the Holocaust' and 'combating antisemitism' were the most important aspects for the Dutch Jewish population as a whole. Each of these aspects was 'very important' for 78%–85% of Dutch Jews. 'Feeling part of the Jewish People' came second and was understood as 'very important' by close to 70%. 'Supporting Israel' was 'very important' for about 60%. 'Belief in God', though not unimportant in absolute terms, was deemed 'very important' by about a quarter of Dutch Jews. The difference between those who identify as Orthodox/Traditional and the rest (Reform/Progressive, Just Jewish and religious 'Nones') is particularly interesting. For the Orthodox/Traditional, aspects related to family life and Jewish peoplehood are the most important: over 80% think that 'celebrating Jewish festivals with their families' and 'feeling part of the Jewish People' are very important, while around 75% think this about 'remembering the Holocaust' and 'combating antisemitism'. All aspects of Jewishness are judged as 'very important' by a larger proportion of Orthodox/Traditional compared to the rest. Still, religious belief is close to the bottom of the list, even for this more religiously observant group (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Items 'very important' for Dutch Jewish identity, around 2020, %



Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

Key Jewish rituals

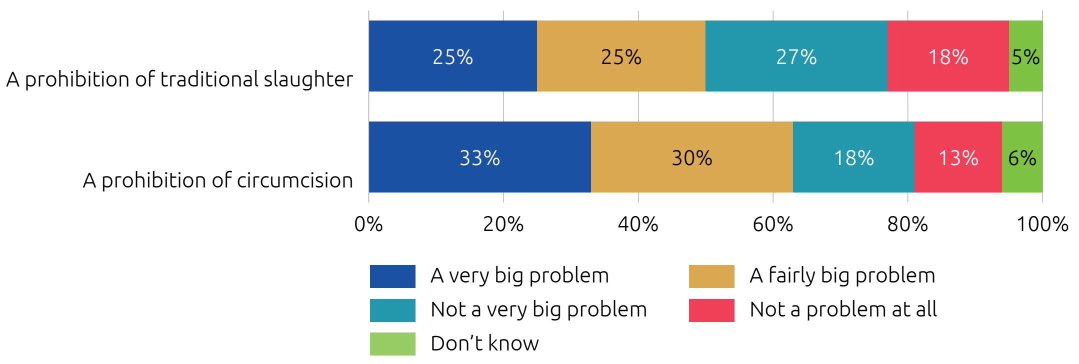
These patterns closely resemble hierarchies of aspects of Jewish identity observed elsewhere, both in Israel and the Diaspora. The prominence of Holocaust remembrance has sometimes been labelled as part of the 'civil religion' of Jewish communities.[49] It serves as a sound basis of Jewish identity, not least due to its role as a form of 'glue'

49 See Wistrich, R. 1997. 'Israel, the Diaspora and the Holocaust trauma'. *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (2), 191–199, and references therein for elaboration of the concept of civil religion. For hierarchies of aspects of Jewish identity in other communities see: (1) DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L. D. 2021. *The Jewish identities of European Jews: what, why and how*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (2) Pew Research Center. 2013. *A portrait of Jewish Americans*. (3) Pew Research Center. 2016. *Israel's religiously divided society*.

that strengthens the connection between different Jewish communities in different countries, as well as between various segments of the community in the same country. The lower importance of religiosity is also a recurring finding across communities. Similarly, support for Israel and feeling part of the Jewish People do not quite qualify as a 'civil religion' across different Diaspora communities but they 'come second' after that and, as a rule, appear more important than different aspects of religiosity.

The status of certain key Jewish rituals in the eyes of Dutch Jews is interesting. The circumcision of male infants (*brit milah*) and the traditional slaughter of animals for food (kosher slaughter or *shechita*) are under public scrutiny in parts of Europe. Significant measures against one or both practices have either been implemented or are being deliberated in Scandinavian countries and in Belgium. The Netherlands has not been affected by these developments to the same degree, but about 60% of Dutch adults consider the circumcision of male infants to be a violation of human rights and 50% think that kosher slaughter is a form of animal cruelty.[50] However, a significant proportion of Dutch Jews would consider legal prohibitions of these practices problematic, as shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25. Opinion of Dutch Jews about the potential ban of certain religious Jewish rituals in the Netherlands



Note: The exact question asked: 'How much of a problem, if at all, would the following be for you as a Jew?'
Source: The FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).

One in four Dutch Jews would view a prohibition of kosher slaughter as a 'very big' problem, and even more – one in three – would think this about a prohibition of circumcision. These percentages are quite closely aligned with the proportions of Dutch Jews keeping these rituals, but an additional quarter to a third of Dutch Jews would consider any such bans to be a 'fairly big' problem. Thus, in total, 50%–60% of Dutch Jews would view such bans as problematic. Presumably, a significant part of the Jewish population for whom these rituals may not be personally important still view banning them as either politically, religiously or culturally undermining.

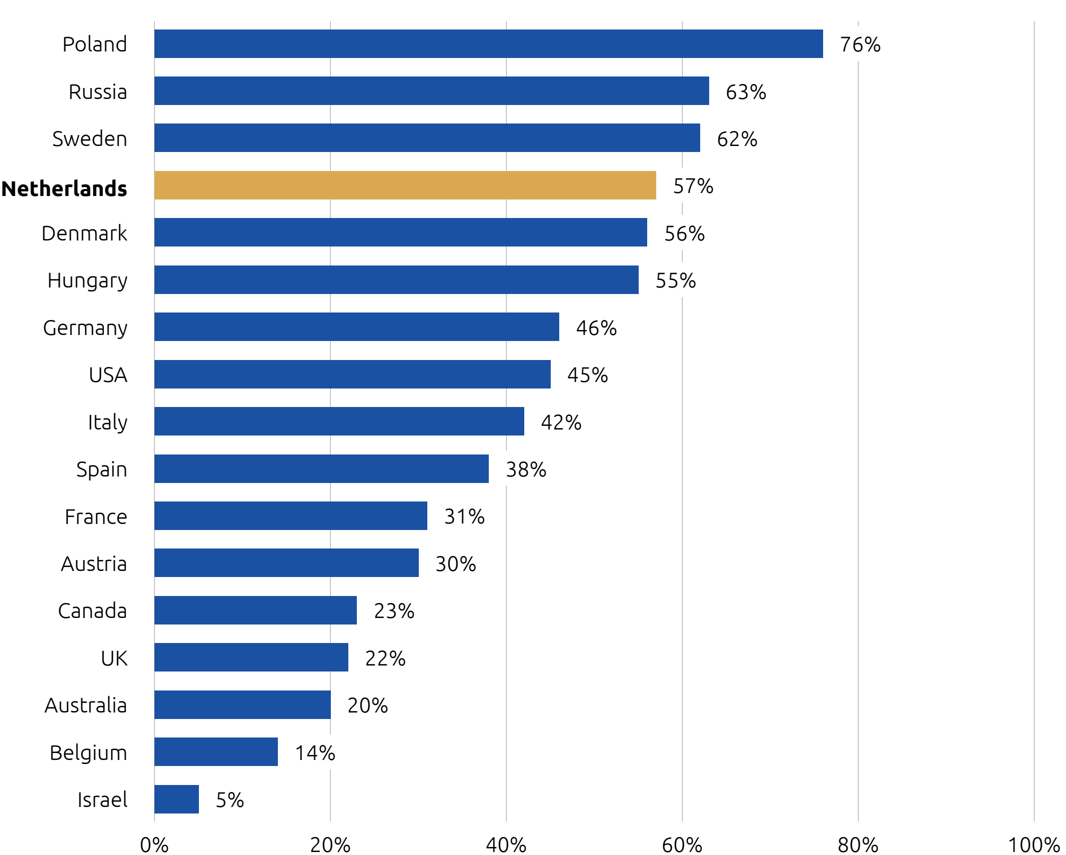
50 Szazadveg. 2020. Europa Projekt. Adatfelveteleu27+Norvegia, svajc, Nagy-Britannia.

Intermarriage

A majority of adult Dutch Jews are married (about 55%) or live with a registered partner. About one in four is single (27%), 12% are divorced and 5% are widowed. Today, the majority of Dutch Jews who are either married or in a partnership, have a non-Jewish partner (57%). In comparative terms, this is a high proportion and puts Dutch Jews well above the level of intermarriage observed across the Jewish Diaspora as a whole, where 42% are married to non-Jews.[51] Detailed comparisons reveal that Dutch Jews belong among the group of Jewish communities with especially high levels of intermarriage, notably those in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (Figure 26).

Due to the significant research projects carried out among Dutch Jews in the past, we know something about the trend in intermarriage over time, not just about the current situation. Comparing the level of intermarriage today with equivalent levels registered in the past, shows stability at a high level: the prevalence of intermarriage has remained at around 55%–60% (an approximate range) for almost two decades (Figure 27).

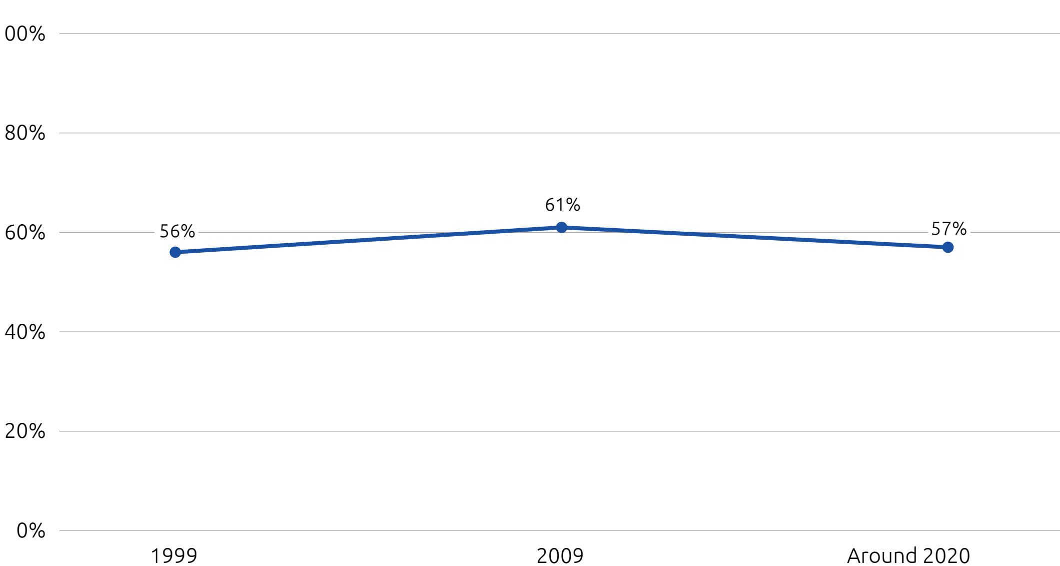
Figure 26. Proportion of persons with non-Jewish partner/spouse among Jews in the Netherlands and selected countries, around 2020, %



Source: Staetsky. D. 2023. *Intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews: the global situation and its meaning*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

51 Data for the proportion married is from: the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). Data for Jewish Diaspora as a whole is taken from: Staetsky. D. 2023. *Intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews: the global situation and its meaning*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.4.

Figure 27. Proportion of persons with a non-Jewish partner/spouse among Jews in the Netherlands, 1999–2020



Source: (1) Years 1999 and 2009: Van Solinge, H. and de Vries, M. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000: demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom.* Amsterdam: Aksant, p.39. (2) Around 2020: Staetsky. D. 2023. *Intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews: the global situation and its meaning.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Dutch Jewish men and women are not significantly different from each other when it comes to the prevalence of intermarriage. However, the situation among different age groups is more striking: among Jews aged 50 and above, 60% are intermarried; among those below the age of 50, the percentage of intermarried is actually a little lower – about 50%. The strongest contrast with respect to intermarriage is observed in relation to those who identify as Orthodox or Traditional and the rest (e.g. Reform/Progressive, Just Jewish, Mixed). Only 13% of those Dutch Jews who are Orthodox or Traditional are married to non-Jews, while among the rest about 70% are. In this regard, Dutch Jews are very similar to other Jews in Europe and the United States.[52]

Low intermarriage among more traditional Jewish circles is hardly an unexpected finding. However, the gradient observed by age is somewhat surprising, especially in light of the commonly held perception that intermarriage tends to be higher among younger people than older ones. The explanation, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, can be found in the religious composition of the young ages. These younger groups simply have a relatively high share of Traditional and Orthodox Jews, and this 'suppresses' the levels of intermarriage among them. This situation has developed due to the persistence of relatively high fertility among Traditional and Orthodox circles. On average, religious Jewish women in the Netherlands have 2.0–2.5 children per woman in their lifetime, whereas non-religious Jewish women have just 1.0–1.5.[53] The relatively high fertility among the Orthodox and Traditional translates itself into a younger age structure of this group and, subsequently, its greater representation among young Jews in the

52 For comparison, see: Staetsky. D. 2023. *Intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews: the global situation and its meaning.* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p. 8.

53 See: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009.* Diemen: AMB, p.41.

Netherlands compared to older ones. The FRA 2018 survey of Dutch Jews[54] collected plenty of information about Jewish people's sociodemographic characteristics and patterns of intermarriage. Working with these data, it was possible to experimentally exclude the Orthodox and Traditional segments from the analysis to evaluate their impact on indicators of intermarriage. Looking collectively just at those Jews who identify as Reform/Progressive, 'Just Jewish' or 'Mixed', the young age groups among them appear to have slightly higher levels of intermarriage (just above 70%) than old age groups (below 70%).

Jewish schools

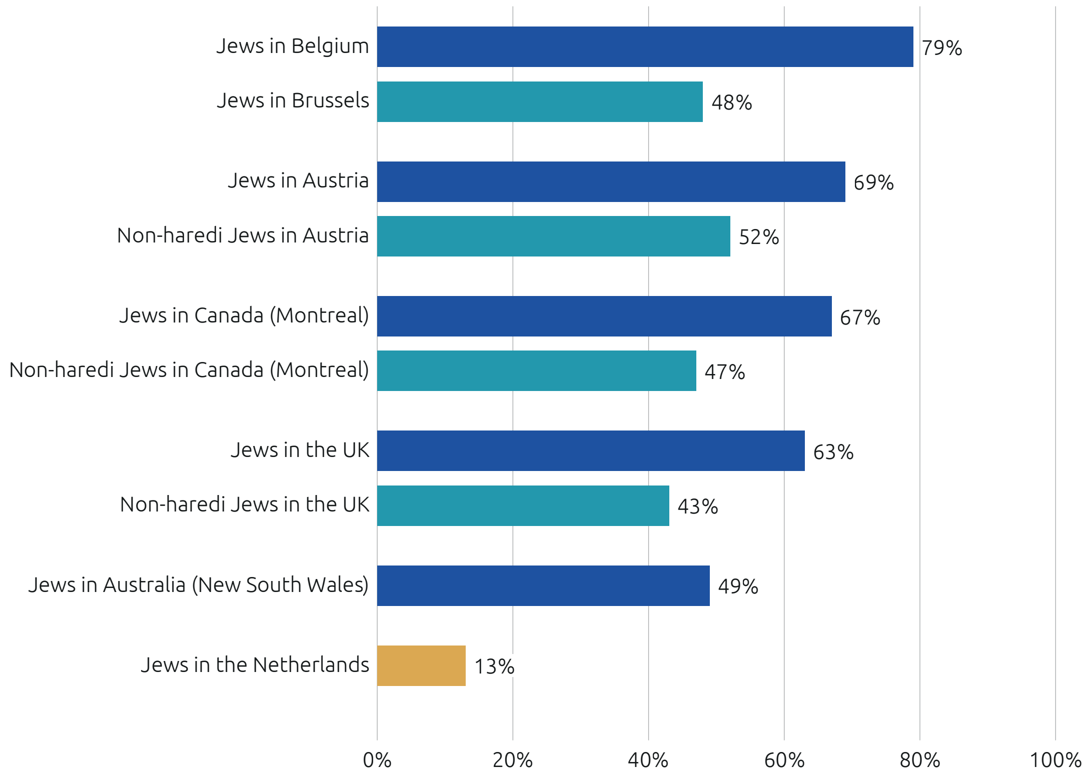
The Netherlands has a well-developed government-funded system of religious schools. In the school year 2022/23, for example, over 50% of pupils across the primary and secondary educational stages were educated in Christian Protestant or Catholic schools.[55] This is a remarkable situation given the secular nature of the Netherlands as a state and its highly secularised society.

Three Jewish schools operate in the Netherlands today, all in Amsterdam: Rosj Pina (a primary school for ages 4/5–11/12 years), Maimonides (a secondary/high school for ages 12/13–17/18 years) and Cheider (both primary and secondary facilities). All three schools only accept children who are defined as Jews according to *halacha* (Jewish law). Compared to Rosj Pina and Maimonides, Cheider has a greater religious component in its curriculum and a relatively strong religious ethos. In addition to these three schools, there are also two Jewish nurseries (early childhood facilities), both in Amsterdam.[56]

In the school year 2022/23, about 600 children attended all three schools combined, of whom about 400 were at the primary level. It follows that, across the mandatory school age range (4/5–17/18 years), about 13% of Jewish children in the Netherlands are in Jewish schools. 17% of primary school-age Jewish children attend a Jewish school, compared to 10% of secondary school-age Jewish children. These uptake levels are considerably lower than in other Jewish communities with available data (Figure 28). Given the highly secularised nature of Dutch Jewry, it is appropriate to draw our international comparisons with the non-haredi segments of other Jewish populations because non-haredi Jews in the Diaspora, as a rule, have lower levels of uptake of Jewish schools (in the approximate range of 40%–50%) than haredi Jews, where uptake is universal (i.e. 100%). However, even when we draw our comparisons in this way, Dutch Jews are about three to four times less likely to attend a Jewish school than the average uptake levels among non-haredi Jews in other parts of Europe.

54 See: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).
55 StatLine – Educational institutions; size, type, philosophical basis (cbs.nl).
56 Source of school data: administration of Rosj Pina, Maimonides and Cheider schools.

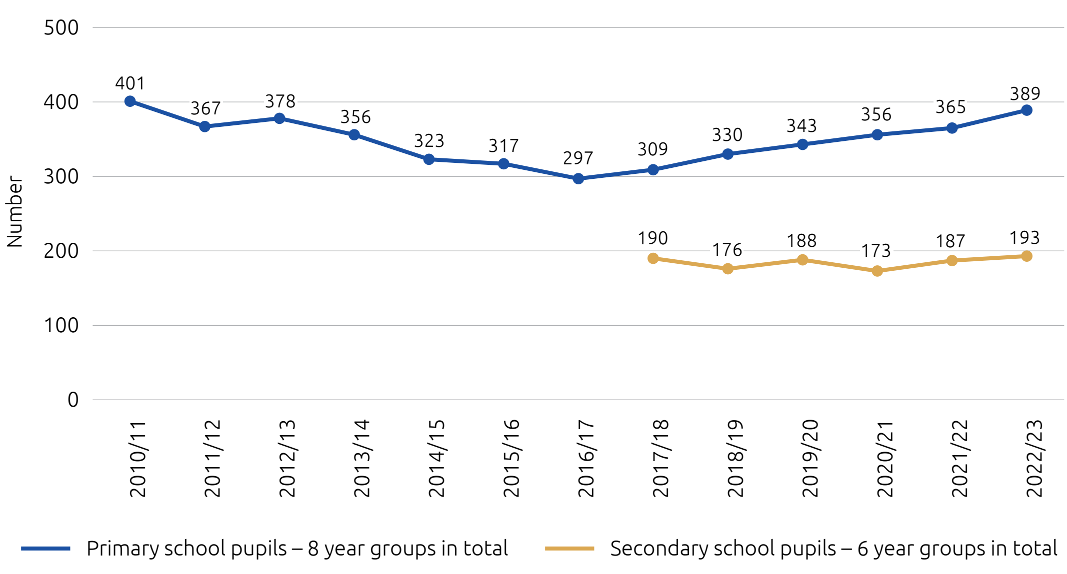
Figure 28. Uptake of Jewish schools by Jewish children in the Netherlands and selected Jewish populations, %



Note: In the Netherlands, the estimates are for ages 4/5 years to 17/18 years (mandatory school age in the Netherlands); in Belgium, the estimates relate to ages 6/7 years to 17/18 years (mandatory school age in Belgium); in Austria, the estimates reflect the situation at ages 6/7 years to 14/15 years (mandatory school age in Austria); in relation to other countries, an attempt has been made to present the estimates that are maximally comparable to the Belgian estimates: in the UK the figures relate to children aged 4–17 years, in Canada – to children aged 6–12 years (elementary school), in Australia – to children aged 5 to 12 years (primary school).
Sources: (1) the Netherlands – calculations on the basis of data communicated by administrators of Jewish schools in the Netherlands and author's estimates of population size; (2) Belgium – calculations on the basis of the FRA 2018 survey, administrative records of the Jewish community, vital statistics and data on Jewish schools in Belgium (see: Staetsky, L.D. and S. Della Pergola. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research); (3) Austria – calculations on the basis of the data on Jewish births in the Austrian vital registration system, administrative records of the Federation of Austrian Jewish Communities and Jewish schools in Vienna (see: Staetsky, L.D. and S. DellaPergola. 2020. *Jews in Austria: a demographic and social portrait*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research); (4) Canada – figures for Canada have been communicated by Charles Shahar, Chief Researcher for Federation CJA, and they are estimates based on Census data and statistics on Jewish schools; (5) UK – Staetsky, L. D. and Boyd, J. 2016. *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: numbers, trends and policy issues*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.11; (6) Australia (state of New South Wales, a home to 41% of the Australian Jewish population) – Graham, D. 2014. *The Jewish population of New South Wales. Key findings from the 2001 Census*. JCA, p.43.

The number of pupils in Jewish schools in Amsterdam has remained stable over the past twelve years or so (Figure 29). This is very clear from the trend in the number of pupils at the primary stage. The secondary stage is less well-documented, but the picture is likely similar there. This long-term stability can be subdivided into two sub-periods: a decline in the number of pupils between 2011 and 2016, followed by an increase from 2016–2023. The increase in 2016–2023 was driven, by and large, by an increase in pupils at the primary stage. The number of pupils in the primary stage increased by about 30% over the past six years; in the secondary stage it increased by only 2%.

Figure 29. Number of pupils in Jewish schools in the Netherlands, %



Source: administrators of Jewish schools in Amsterdam.

Changes in numbers of pupils, increases and decreases alike, often pose a problem for policymakers working in the area of educational provision. In the event of an increase, the questions that are often asked are: should the school infrastructure (classes etc.) expand? Should new schools be opened? For how long will the increase last? These questions are impossible to answer without some insight into the underlying reasons behind an increase. For example, these could include: an actual growth in the number of children belonging to certain birth cohorts due to increases in fertility of Dutch Jewish women; an increase in the popularity of Jewish schooling, or decrease in the popularity of non-Jewish schooling (due to dissatisfaction with the quality of secular education or anxiety about antisemitism, for example); or, alternatively, an increase in immigration of Jews to the Netherlands from other countries. To complicate things further, a combination of several factors may be present. What is driving the increase in this particular case?

Data shared by one of the Dutch Jewish schools shows an almost two-fold increase in the number of Israel-born primary school children in the last six years or so. Today, almost a third of all Jewish primary school children in the school are Israel-born. The number of children born outside of the Netherlands but not in Israel has also seen a two-fold growth. At the same time, the number of Jewish primary school children born in the Netherlands grew by about 20%. As an aside, in 2022, a few children of refugees from Ukraine joined the primary school sector, yet their number remained low, so the increase in the numbers of foreign-born Jewish children outside of Israel is not wholly related to the arrival of refugees from the war zone. This picture is very telling. Migration seems to drive the increase in school numbers. It is also reasonable to hypothesise that migration may be partly responsible for the increase in the number of locally born Jewish children. If more Jewish migrants of childbearing ages settle in the Netherlands, these migrants are expected not just to bring children with them but also to have children in the Netherlands.

It is possible, of course, that not just the sheer number of Jewish children in the population increased, but the popularity of Jewish schools did too, i.e. that a greater *proportion* of Jewish children (locally born or foreign-born, or both) and/or their parents prefer Jewish to non-Jewish schools, compared to the past. We cannot be certain about what is happening with the uptake. A more detailed and separate investigation of this matter can and should be launched, assuming there are good enough reasons to do so from the point of view of policymakers involved in the educational provision for the Jewish community of the Netherlands.[57] Yet, even without such an investigation, it is quite clear that migration on its own could be a sufficient explanation for the growth in the number of primary school children we can see, that may be carried into an increase at the secondary level. Further support for this claim can be found in the fact that an increase in the number of Israel-born children at the primary educational stage is similar in timing to the increase in the total number of Israel-born children observable in the official statistics published by the Dutch statistical authority.[58]

Finally, it is worth considering what is known about the motivations behind parental educational choices among Dutch Jews, and in particular, the choice they make between Jewish and non-Jewish schools for their children.

The FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands explored why parents chose a Jewish or a non-Jewish school for their children. The majority of parents choosing a Jewish school (above 80%) said they did so to instil a strong Jewish identity in their children. A much smaller proportion (about a third) cited academic standards in Jewish schools as a motivation. In that respect, Dutch Jewish parents were quite similar to Jewish parents in other European countries.

For those Dutch Jewish parents who chose a non-Jewish school for their children, academic standards were also rather marginal (Figure 30). Instead, they highlighted a preference for educating their children in an environment that was not exclusively Jewish, in addition to simple convenience (i.e. that a local non-Jewish school was most readily available) as their leading reasons, with close to 50% of parents mentioning both of these motives. The preference for a non-Jewish school environment has been cited as an equally central reason for Jewish parents across Europe who have chosen a non-Jewish school for their children. Convenience, on the other hand, is somewhat more central for Dutch Jewish parents (about 50% mentioned that as a factor) than across Europe (about 35%).[59] This may signal untapped potential in the Netherlands: it is possible that Jewish families living too far away from the existing Jewish schools might have chosen a Jewish school if one was available in their vicinity. However, one should be cautious about reading too much into this at this stage; a much more in-depth

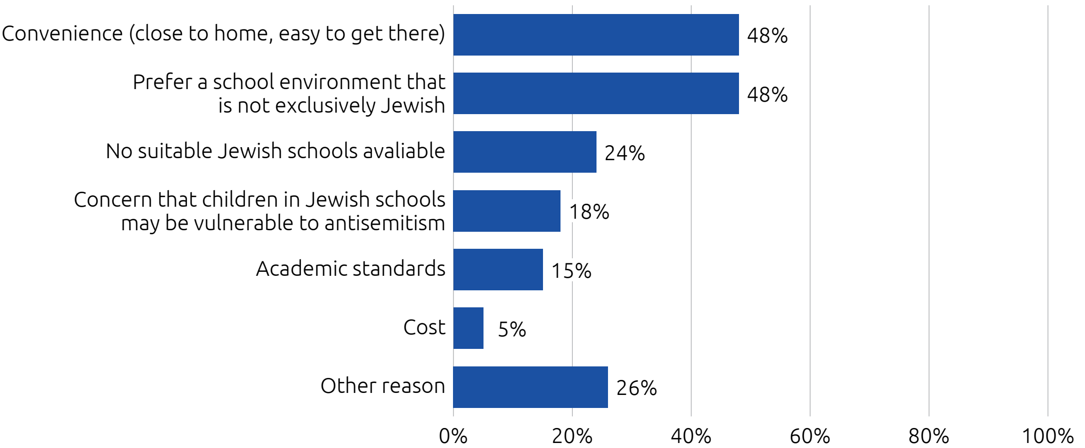
57 Investigations of this kind have been conducted in the context of Jewish communities in Britain and Austria, with clear benefits for educational planning. For the situation in Britain, see: (1) Staetsky. L.D. and Boyd, J. 2017. *Will my child get a place? An assessment of supply and demand of Jewish secondary school places in London and surrounding areas*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; and (2) Staetsky, L.D. 2019. *Projections of demand for places in state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

58 See chapter on Israel-connected population above.

59 Data for the Netherlands: the FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). Data for other countries of Europe can be found in: Boyd, J. 2023. *A Jewish or a non-Jewish school: what lies behind parents' decisions about how to educate their children*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

investigation of supply and demand would be needed to determine whether a new school or schools should be built. Nevertheless, this insight may be valuable: at the very least, it should trigger a Jewish communal discussion about whether the expansion of Jewish educational facilities is desirable or feasible.

Figure 30. Reasons for choosing a non-Jewish school for their children, as reported by parents in the Dutch Jewish community, %



Note: More than one response per respondent was possible.
Source: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). Unweighted number of parents: 209.

/ Conclusions

This report and the research project underlying it – both sponsored by the Dutch Jewish community and the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe – bring to light a very significant volume of information. The potential uses of the findings are boundless, and the same applies to the lines of future development of this body of knowledge. The key findings outlined at the beginning of the report provide a brief account of the central empirical results. We will not return to these specific findings here. Their users, policymakers and scholars alike, are invited to examine them and think about the way to benefit from them in pursuing concrete lines of investigation or policy.

Instead, here, we choose to highlight four overarching and, arguably most consequential, analytical and policy lessons:

The Dutch Jewish population is slowly growing. Or, at the very least, it is not declining. One can be reasonably certain that the number of Dutch Jews today (around 35,000) is very close to the number that existed in the mid-1960s, when the first reliable post-Holocaust population counts were produced. The reason for this stability over time is that a very significant influx of Israeli immigrants has helped to offset the losses caused by ageing, low fertility and assimilation. Without the arrival of these Israelis, the Jewish population of the Netherlands would be steadily declining and ageing. However, if we define the Jewish population differently, and include not only the 'core' (self-identifying) Jews, but also people with Jewish connections (e.g. partial Jews, non-Jewish family members and all those to whom the Israeli Law of Return applies), the total count is situated somewhere around 65,000. Dutch Jews are an example of a typical Western population with low fertility and advanced ageing. These characteristics are more pronounced among Dutch Jews than in the population of the Netherlands as a whole. Such an aged population with such low fertility cannot grow, simply because deaths in such a population outnumber births. The only factor that prevents numerical decline and, in high probability, induces growth in the Dutch Jewish population, is migration. Israelis and other Jews are choosing the Netherlands as a place to settle and build their lives, and that counterbalances the forces of natural decline – low fertility and ageing. Israelis add people to the population, technically speaking, but also bring people to the Netherlands at key stages of the family-building process. Children born to the new arrivals from Israel further enhance the size of the Dutch Jewish population.

There is a special analytical reason to highlight the reality of growth, or non-decline. Demographically, European Jewry has been in decline since the 1940s. This is an undeniable numerical fact. The Holocaust delivered a devastating blow to European Jewish populations and subsequent political developments were not conducive to stabilisation or growth. The mass departure of Jews from Europe to Israel after its establishment in 1948 took place between the late 1940s and the early twenty-first century in several waves. Jewish fertility declined, alongside the fertility of other European populations. As the historian, Bernard Wasserstein, noted in the mid-1990s,

"*The demographic outlook for Jews in all the major Diaspora centres is bleak… A realistic demographic projection for European Jewry over the next few decades must therefore envisage continued steep decline… The dissolution of European Jewry is not situated at some point in a hypothetical future. The process is taking place before our eyes…*"[60] Europe's Jewish population declined from 9.5 million Jews in 1939, to 3.8 million Jews in 1945, to 3.2 million in 1970, to 1.3 million around 2020.[61] Indeed, the overall European picture looks a lot like dissolution. Yet the case of the Dutch Jewish community calls for greater attention to the heterogeneity of the European Jewish demographic experience. European Jewry is in decline as the figures above testify, but Dutch Jewry is not, despite the unfavourable natural balance.

Recent work conducted by the European Jewish Demography Unit at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research has revealed other stable or growing Jewish communities in Europe: Austria, Belgium and the UK.[62] However, these communities all host significant strictly Orthodox (Haredi) and traditional Jewish populations. Haredi rates of growth are very high, around 3.5%–4% per year, and they propel forward the Jewish populations of those countries as a whole. This is not the case in the Netherlands. The stability, or growth, of Dutch Jewry is due to a newly documented force in the European context – migration, and, in particular, migration of Israelis. Indeed, it would probably be more correct to re-label the ongoing European Jewish demographic experience as a re-configuration rather than simply a dissolution, to account for the reality of stable and growing Jewish communities, such as the one in the Netherlands. Parenthetically, it is worth noting that demographic stability or growth does not necessarily equate to stability or growth in the richness of Jewish identity. Many indicators of Jewish identity in the Netherlands (e.g. religiosity, attending Jewish schools, membership of Jewish organisations) point to very weak levels of involvement compared to other European countries.

Of course, migration is not an entirely newly documented contributing force in European Jewish history. Historically, Jews first arrived in Europe as a result of migration from the Land of Israel, travelling in large part through the Apennine peninsula and then spreading through Western, Central, Northern and Eastern Europe. With the advance of modernity (approximately, the end of the nineteenth century) Europe became an exporter of people to the Americas, a movement in which Jews played an important role. However, more recently, Jews migrated into Europe. The British Jewish community was effectively re-established in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century through arrivals from Eastern Europe. Something similar happened to the post-Holocaust French Jewish community that was shaped critically by arrivals from North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. German Jewry was re-established in the 1990s as a result of the arrival of Jews from the countries of the former Soviet Union. The novelty in the Dutch

60 The origin of the quote: Wasserstein, B. 1996. *Vanishing Diaspora: the Jews in Europe since 1945*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. pp. 282–283. Wasserstein's numbers, in fact, originate from: DellaPergola, S. 1993. *Jews in the European Community: Sociodemographic Trends and Challenges*. AJYB, 93, 25–82.

61 DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L. Daniel. *Jews in European at the turn of the Millennium: population trends and estimates*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, p.14.

62 (1) Staetsky, L.D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (2) Staetsky, L.D. and S. DellaPergola. 2020. *Jews in Austria: a demographic and social portrait*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (3) Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2024. A 'demographic hybrid': haredi demography in the early 21st century, volume edited by David Myers and Nechumi Malovicki-Yaffe, *New Trends in the Study of Haredi Culture and Society* (purdue.edu).

case is that the migration of Jews into Europe has been happening on a much smaller scale, yet is able to sustain and rejuvenate a community that might otherwise have been destined to decline and disappear. This does not undermine the narrative of decline of European Jewry as a whole. That process is real enough. Yet the Dutch case indicates that this narrative should be more qualified and nuanced than it is at present.

The number of Israelis living in the Netherlands is large, and is increasing to the point where it is appropriate to say that the Dutch Jewish population is undergoing 'Israelisation'. In a historical perspective, this is unprecedented today, both in absolute and relative terms. Today, there are about 12,000 Israel-connected Jews in the Netherlands, forming over a third of all Dutch Jews. Moreover, the Israel-born population is relatively young. It is unclear whether or not its fertility (as in the number of children per woman) is higher than the fertility of locally born Jews, due to its young age structure, but Israel-born Jews represent a significant engine of growth for the Dutch Jewish community. Only 7,000 of the total number of Israel-connected Jews were born in Israel; the remainder (around 5,000) are children born to Israeli parents already living in the Netherlands. About four in ten Jewish babies born in the Netherlands are born to an Israeli parent. As one might expect, across the Dutch Jewish community the impact of Israelis is felt most in those places that are connected with children, such as schools. Should the number of Israelis rise, the number of children in Jewish schools and nurseries may react quickly. As things stand today, the number of pupils in some Dutch Jewish schools is growing, and this is significantly linked to the presence of Israelis in the population. It also ought to be remembered that Israeli immigrants may not be connected with all avenues of the Dutch Jewish community. Their presence in synagogues may be less felt than it is in schools. This issue requires further research.

Exploring the Israel-Diaspora relationship in his book from the mid-1990s, *Vanishing Diaspora*, Bernard Wasserstein wrote: "*What of Israel? Can this new Jewish world, having been called into existence, redress the balance of the old? The Israeli demographer, Sergio DellaPergola, has argued that ' just as the Jews of the Diaspora at the moment support their brethren in Israel, we can foresee a time when the Israelis will come to the support of their brethren [in the Diaspora] in order to prevent their cultural extinction. The intricate mechanism that might achieve the desired equilibrium remains, however, to be designed.*'"[63] Thirty years later, the demographic aspects of an 'intricate mechanism' that he imagined – the immigration of Israelis – have 'hatched'. Several factors could impact on the willingness of Israelis to come to, and stay in, the Netherlands in the future, including the economic situation in the country and the opportunities that it presents, the increasing Islamic presence in the major cities as a result of Muslim immigration, and the political stability of the country. The economic situation in Israel may also have an impact.

Since its establishment as a modern state, Israel has grown. 'Aliyah' – migration from the Diaspora to Israel – is only a small part of the story. From 1948 to the end of 2022, immigration contributed 37% of the population growth among Jews; the remainder (63%) came as a result of natural increase.[64] In 2022, about 80% of Israeli Jews were born in Israel. All this is a testimony to a high natural balance that has persisted throughout Israeli history. The total fertility rate of Jewish women in Israel stood slightly above the

63 Wasserstein, B. 1996. *Vanishing Diaspora: the Jews in Europe since 1945*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. p.287. DellaPergola's interview appeared in: *Tribune Juive*, 10 February 1994.

64 Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 74 (2023), Tables 2.12, 2.8, 2.41.

mark of 3 children per woman between 2010 and 2020, and was still just short of 3 in 2023. The Netherlands and other countries of Western Europe could boast these levels of fertility in the 1960s, but not since. Israel has developed a strong economy integrated into the Western economy. Culturally, it is significantly involved in the Anglosphere. These factors – high natural growth and its involvement in the Western economy – are both meaningful in their own right. Israel can afford to 'lend' part of its population growth to Diaspora communities. Population loss on this scale (say, 200 per year, in the direction of the Netherlands) is very 'affordable' and practically imperceptible for Israel, but such numbers constitute a considerable addition to small Jewish populations in Europe that are no longer able to grow naturally due to low fertility and advanced ageing. The Netherlands in general, and its Jewish community, have gone through the process of 'internationalisation'[65] and the English language is used widely and naturally by many. It is only to be expected that such an environment will attract Israelis, who would find the prospect of living in a version of an Anglosphere quite appealing.

Some European Jewish populations were re-established in the second half of the twentieth century, as we noted above. It is too early to make a sweeping statement about the role of Israeli immigration at a continental level, but it is not too early to hypothesise that some small Jewish populations in Europe will gradually re-establish themselves, and change their composition, due to the arrival of Israelis. Due to their small size and negative natural balance, these populations do not need much to achieve this. Jewish demography may be on the brink of a new reality, where Israel helps to sustain the Diaspora, sharing with it some of its spectacular growth.

Dutch Jews are mostly secular, just like the Netherlands as a whole. A minority of Dutch Jews (one in five) is affiliated to a religious organisation. A similar proportion explicitly identifies as 'Traditional' or Orthodox. Only one in four or so chooses to circumcise their sons and one in three opts for a Jewish burial. An even smaller proportion of Dutch Jews (10%–15%) attends synagogue weekly or keeps religious traditions meticulously. The degree of Dutch Jewish secularism is rather remarkable. Similar levels of observance, or, rather, non-observance, can only be seen among Jews in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia and, with respect to some indicators, in the United States. There seem to be two paths to rather radical secularisation among both Jews and non-Jews. The Eastern European pattern – an imposed, at least initially, secularism under the socialist regimes – and the Northern pattern – an organic, voluntary one. Dutch Jewry fits into the latter pattern.

This, in itself, is not an entirely novel realisation as secularism has been a strong feature of Dutch Jewry for decades, although the level at which it is now documented is arguably unprecedented in detail. We choose not to point to any specific policy lessons at the Jewish communal level that are based on this point, as this is an issue for the Dutch Jewish community to reflect upon. However, at an analytical level, there is a ready lesson. In many European countries today, there is great interest in the changing ethnic and religious composition of societies. Large-scale studies, such as the survey on social cohesion and wellbeing (SSCW) in the Netherlands, are deployed for this purpose where, alongside multiple other questions, respondents are asked about their religion. Statistics of religious composition of societies are then compiled on the basis of these surveys. The mostly

65 The point on 'internationalisation' was contributed by Ruben Vis, a secretary-general of the Nederlands Israelitisch Kerkgenootschap (NIK), in an interview with the author, given in May 2023.

secular outlook of Dutch Jews means surveying them via a religion question is bound to result in an undercount. Some Jewish respondents who see themselves strictly in ethnic, secular, rather than religious terms may not identify as Jews in surveys in response to a question on religion. A more effective way of asking about Jewishness in a survey is to ask about Jewish ethnicity, something that has been done in some surveys outside the Netherlands.

It is of interest to note that some significant parts of the Jewish world are undergoing desecularisation as a result of demographic change, in strong contrast to the Netherlands. One example is the Jewish population of Antwerp in Belgium, which has a haredi majority, so much so that haredim form over a third of Jews in Belgium as a whole. This is a new situation. In the 1960s, the haredi population of Antwerp constituted just 16% of all Jews in that city and only 5% of all Jews in Belgium. The change that has occurred since then is, for all purposes, a demographic and social revolution. Similar processes of desecularisation, albeit with less spectacular results, have affected Jews in the United Kingdom and Israel.[66]

The level of certainty about the demographic realities of Dutch Jews today is very high, at least in relation to the past, present and the medium-term future. The Dutch Jewish community possesses a proud tradition of self-reflection and research. Over the years, since its re-establishment after the Holocaust, it has initiated and sponsored several research projects and cooperated with, or recruited, demographic experts for that purpose. Its readiness to allocate resources for demographic and social research has paid off over time. The more recent projects built on the earlier ones and, as a result, the level of certainty today about the number and characteristics of Jews in the Netherlands, as well as about the numerical trajectory of this population, is at its highest ever. This is a remarkable state of affairs, especially given the fact that information on Jews cannot be derived from the national census of the Netherlands.

As time goes on, some types of information become easier to obtain and handle. The Dutch statistical authority makes available detailed distributions of foreign-born populations, including Israelis, both Israel-born and their children. Dutch educational authorities and Dutch Jewish schools keep records of the numbers of Jewish students. Jewish communal bodies keep records of membership, Jewish burials and circumcisions. The European Agency for Fundamental Rights carries out periodic surveys of Jews in Europe, including the Netherlands. Previous attempts to estimate the demographic characteristics of Dutch Jewry have been written up in several volumes and can be consulted. All these types of data have been made available to us in the course of working on this project. Our insights derive from reading signals arising from these different sources. We recommend that the leadership of the Dutch Jewish community sponsors another landmark estimation of the Jewish population in the Netherlands along the lines offered here in a decade from now, again involving demographic experts. Between now and then, data on Israelis kept by the Dutch statistical authority and data from Jewish schools can be consulted to gauge the key numerical developments of the Dutch Jewish community. The growth of the Dutch Jewish community, should it continue, is expected

66 See (1) Belgium: Staetsky, L.D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (2) Staetsky, L. Daniel. *Haredi Jews around the world: population trends and estimates*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

to be directly observable in data on Israelis and data from Jewish schools, available on an annual basis.

This report has covered considerable ground. Even more has been left out. In our choice of topics to cover we were guided both by considerations of policy relevance and continuity. The Dutch Jewish community has been researched in the past and our goal was to extend and consolidate this body of research. It is recommended that Dutch Jewish communal bodies, policymakers and leaders think of other, more specific and narrowly defined domains and policy areas, and consider sponsoring specific lines of research to support them. The opportunities opened up by the existing data are wide. Detailed analysis of the state of the young and the old in the community, for example, is entirely possible. For research in these areas to be of genuine value, it ought to be guided by specific questions. The same applies to the question of how Dutch Jews perceive and experience antisemitism, and how they feel about their place and sense of security in Dutch society. Ample materials exist on this subject and are waiting to be explored in full. They too are best explored with concrete agendas in mind. As Rabbi Tarfon reminds us: *"It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it."*[67]

67 Pirkei Avot, 2.16. https://www.sefaria.org.

/ Methodological appendix: Estimates of the size of the Jewish population in the Netherlands and its components of growth

Section 1. Estimates of the size of the Jewish population in the Netherlands

An overview of sources

Since 1960, national censuses of the Netherlands have not included questions on religion and/or ethnicity allowing Jews to identify as such. Today, Dutch censuses rely on administrative records of the population held by municipalities, and these records do not contain information on religion or ethnicity. The methodology used in censuses in the past was different. A traditional census, based on a door-to-door count of the population and discontinued in the 1970s, collected data on religion. However, reporting of Jewish religion was unsatisfactory at that time due to the extremely negative role that population registration played in assisting the execution of the mass murder programme of Dutch Jews during the German occupation of the Netherlands. As a result, during the entire post-Holocaust era, indirect methods were needed to estimate the number and characteristics of Jews in the country.

To manage this, the Dutch Jewish community initiated several significant research projects over the years, employing the services of demographic experts to estimate the size of the Dutch Jewish population. The most noteworthy of these were the Jewish communal census of 1966 and later evaluations undertaken around 2000 and 2009. These projects included: (1) surveys of Dutch Jews; (2) applications of demographic estimation; (3) the mining of the population registration data available via the Dutch statistical authority (especially in relation to the Israeli immigrant population); and (4) the examination of administrative records pertaining to Dutch Jews, such as the results of the MAROR-gelden project. More information on these projects is presented below.

Part of the role of this report was to construct a new set of estimates of the size and characteristics of the Dutch Jewish population. To do so, we followed several paths. First, we performed detailed re-examinations of previous estimation projects, their sources, assumptions and conclusions, with the benefit of hindsight and some new data. A large part of the analysis that follows deals with that.

Second, entirely new data sources were explored and used for estimation. For example, the Netherlands has Jewish schools. Jewish schools and the educational authorities in the Netherlands maintain detailed records of the number of children, by age/educational stage. Knowing the number of Jewish children in Jewish schools and the share of these children out of the total number of Jewish children allows for the reconstruction of the entire population size, using certain assumptions about the age distribution of a given population. This approach has been used successfully in the past, in Jewish and non-Jewish contexts, both to correct for deficiencies of other sources and to generate entirely new estimates.[68]

Finally, a number of national and international surveys conducted across Europe in recent years have included a question on religion – for example, the European Social Survey and surveys on social cohesion and wellbeing in the Netherlands. These reflect a growing interest in religious diversity. They are also valuable attempts to compensate for the loss of information on religion from population censuses, following the switch from traditional to administrative, register-based censuses in some European countries, including the Netherlands. It must be noted that national sample sizes produced by these surveys are often inadequate to estimate small minority populations accurately. Nevertheless, we have examined them in detail, to benefit at least somewhat from the insights that may arise from them.

In addition to these sources, we have also used the Dutch sample from the multinational 2018 survey of Jewish people's perceptions and experiences of antisemitism, conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The Dutch survey sample included 1,202 observations. Here and throughout the report, it is referred to as the FRA 2018 survey, or FRA 2018 for short. FRA 2018 included questions on Jewish demography and Jewish identity. This information allows for assumptions to be made, such as the uptake of Jewish schools among Jews in the Netherlands, while working with other sources of data.

Figure 1A presents a picture of the main sources used for the estimation of the population size and characteristics of Jews in the Netherlands in this project. Each source was used, in its own way, either to produce an independent estimate or to complement another source used for this purpose. The final estimate then arises from the signals sent by different sources.

68 See: (1) Anderson, B. and Silver, B. 1985. 'Estimating census undercount from school enrolment data: and application to the Soviet censuses of 1959 and 1970,' *Demography* 22 (2): 289–308; (2) Staetsky, L. D. and Boyd, J. 2016. *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: numbers, trends and policy issues*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; (3) Staetsky, L. D. and DellaPergola, S. 2022. *Jews in Belgium: a demographic and social portrait of two Jewish populations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; (4) Staetsky, Daniel. 2022. Haredi Jews around the world: population trends and estimates. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Figure 1A. The Jewish population in the Netherlands circa 2020: sources of estimation

The FRA 2018 survey: methodological information

The 2018 FRA survey of Jews was conducted by JPR, working in partnership with the multinational research and consulting firm, Ipsos. JPR was responsible for managing the data collection process and the post-fieldwork quality evaluation of the survey. The survey collected a vast array of information about the sociodemographic characteristics of Jews and their Jewish identity. In this report we present these data, describing the Dutch Jewish community in detail. We also use these data to calibrate other sources of sociodemographic information about the Dutch Jewish community.

The 2018 survey was an opt-in online survey that ran over a period of seven weeks in May and June 2018. The online questionnaire accommodated several delivery modes: laptop, computer, tablet and smartphone. Eligible participants were all self-identifying Jews, aged 16 or over, and resident in one of the survey countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The questionnaire could be accessed via an open web link that was publicised through extensive advertising by Jewish organisations, media outlets and social networks, across the entire spectrum of religious lifestyles. Participants reached in this way were then encouraged to share the link to access the survey with other Jews known to them, e.g. acquaintances, friends and colleagues. Thus, the resultant sample of 1,202 Dutch Jewish respondents is best understood as a convenience sample.

Given the nature of the sample used in FRA 2018, it is important that its reliability is properly understood. The extent to which the Dutch Jewish sample is representative of the Dutch Jewish population cannot be exactly determined. Still, we consider it sufficiently reliable as a source of information about the Jewish identity of Jews in the Netherlands on the basis of the following considerations:

1. Past experience teaches us that convenience samples of the kind produced by the 2018 FRA survey are somewhat selective: they tend to underrepresent both very assimilated and unaffiliated Jews, and strictly Orthodox Jews, for two different reasons. The very assimilated and unaffiliated may not be reachable for a survey distributed by Jewish organisations, and even for the referral chains starting in such organisations, because they are simply too distant from Jewish life. By contrast, the strictly Orthodox are reachable through community channels but, as a rule, have a weaker online presence than others. Both groups were under-represented in the FRA survey in several countries with well documented patterns of Jewish affiliation and religious makeup (e.g. Austria, France, Poland, the UK), although in others with strongly centralised systems of community membership (e.g. Italy and Germany), correspondence to benchmarks was considerably better. In the Netherlands, the presence of the strictly Orthodox Jews is minimal, and the only focus of concern was to adequately represent the very assimilated segments. Because the composition of all country-specific European Jewish samples could be compared to sociodemographic benchmarks of the Jewish populations, specifically with respect to sex, age and Jewish identity, weights could be developed to redress the sample. For Dutch Jews, good benchmarks were available based on past research on Dutch Jews, in particular, research projects run in 1999 and 2009. All analyses in this report utilising the 2018 FRA survey use weights to ensure its better alignment with Jewish population characteristics.

2. In the Dutch case, it should be noted that adjustment with weights tended to reduce the proportion of Jews observing various religious practices. For example, with respect to the level of regular attendance at a Passover seder, the unweighted figure for the Netherlands is 76%, while applying compositional weights reduces the level of attendance to 63%. Concerning regular fasting on Yom Kippur, the respective figures are 58% and 44%. With respect to weekly synagogue attendance the figures are 26% and 14%, respectively. The intermarried constituted 40% among all married Dutch Jews in the unweighted sample and 57% in the weighted sample. Nevertheless, even after weighting, the sample may be overstating the levels of ritual observance and some other measures relating to involvement in Jewish life due to a still undercounted presence of the most assimilated and unaffiliated Jews. On the basis of our previous work, we suggest that the reader bears in mind the possibility of such an overstatement by about 5%–10%. However, such an overstatement does not apply when examining the results by subgroups of the Jewish population defined by levels of religiosity and observance (e.g. Orthodox, Reform/Progressive, Traditional) – the recorded results are considerably less affected by such overestimation, if at all. The overestimation at the level of the whole sample stems mostly from the compositional effect, i.e. the depressed presence of the most assimilated/unaffiliated.

3. The main Dutch Jewish organisations involved in distributing the survey to their members/affiliates/subscribers were: JMW-Dutch National Welfare Organisation of Jews in Netherlands; NIK – an umbrella organisation of Jewish communities in the Netherlands; Liberal synagogues in Amsterdam and across the Netherlands; Esnoga – the Portuguese community of Amsterdam; Nieuw Israelitietisch Weekblad – a Dutch Jewish newspaper and a media portal; and the Dutch Union of Jewish Students. We estimate that across all involved organisations, invitations to participate with links to the survey were sent to about 15,000 email addresses. This assessment is based on estimates made by the various organisations involved of the sizes of their own databases. There is a possibility of an overlap between the email lists used by different organisations, so 15,000 represents the maximal number of persons reached; the actual number is almost certainly lower, but it cannot be estimated. 30,000 Jews in the Netherlands are estimated to be aged 16 years and over, meaning that the maximal reach of the survey could be as high as 50% of adult Dutch Jews. It would also mean that about 4% of eligible Dutch Jews responded to the 2018 FRA survey (1,202/30,000*100). Self-evidently, the survey reached the entire religious and social spectrum of Dutch Jews.

4. Although the organisational route of distributing the survey was dominant, it was not exclusive. Informal referrals played a significant role. 60% of the respondents said that they were invited to participate in the survey by an email from an organisation or online network, 20% said that someone told them about it or sent them a link, and about 9% said that they found out about the survey somewhere else but did not provide a specific source (multiple responses were possible). This testifies to the potentially significant exposure of the survey to the Jewish population beyond the 'inner' circle of those most closely involved in Jewish organisational life. We relate to the sample as a hybrid. In our view, the sample represents: (a) the organised Jewish community, including the members, affiliates and subscribers to various Jewish communities, organisations and media outlets; and (b) those who are not part of the organised

Jewish community but who encircle its members and affiliates at a reachable distance, and are connected to the organised community through family and other social or organisational networks.

In preparing this publication, data from the publicly available FRA 2018 are used (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7491). The publicly available FRA 2018 dataset does not identify separate geographical locations in the Netherlands. All location-specific information here, in exhibits and in text, is based on the results of an independent exercise of data collection from synagogues, schools and administrative sources pertaining to Jews in the Netherlands. The exercise was conducted by JPR in 2021. Insights from the exercise, as reported, were then integrated into the work with the publicly available FRA 2018 dataset. That allowed the derivation of all location-specific figures.

Re-evaluation of previous estimations

Since the mid-1950s, the Jewish community of the Netherlands has initiated several estimation projects aimed at understanding the size and structure of the Dutch Jewish population. The first project was carried out in 1954; the second in 1966. The latter, which eventually became foundational for Dutch Jewish statistics, established that, at the time, 29,000–30,000 Jews lived in the Netherlands. The estimate relied on the administrative statistics of Jewish communities across the country and municipal population registers. A degree of underestimation was suspected, particularly with respect to Jews unaffiliated to religious communities and Jews living outside of Amsterdam, The Hague or Rotterdam. Subsequent research, conducted in the early 2000s, clarified the possible scope of the underestimation, and enabled the researchers to update the estimate and re-base all subsequent estimates as well (Van Imhoff, Van Solinge and Flim 2001, Van Praag 1971).

As an important aside, the earliest studies of the Dutch Jewish population, as well as those that followed, produced the central estimate – the number of Jews closely aligned with what is understood as the 'core Jewish population' – as well as estimates of the size of populations that are linked to Jews, for example through marriage or other familial connections. The 'core Jewish population' is comprised of people who explicitly identify themselves as Jews when asked, for example, in a census or a survey. This is not identical to the definition of Jewishness under Jewish law, or *halacha* (which defines a Jew as a person born to a Jewish mother, or a convert to Judaism according to Jewish law), but it is close to it. For example, 82% of self-identifying Jews in the 2018 FRA survey reported having a Jewish mother. The pure *halachic* definition, though not always perfectly enforceable in the context of demographic research, nevertheless commands the broadest consensus across the Jewish world and is comparable across different countries and times. Most importantly, it can be compared to the global multi-annual estimates of Jewish populations published in the 'World Jewish Population' section of the *American Jewish Year Book*. Analyses and results reported here mostly work with this definition (or, to be precise, the more enforceable 'core Jewish population' version of it) on these grounds. In the main body of the report, we also show additional estimates, relating to non-core populations connected to Jews, namely, people with a Jewish parent who may not consider themselves to be Jewish and/or may not be considered as such by others; non-Jewish family members; and all those qualifying for immigration to Israel under its current Law of Return. This is done with reference to the complexities of Jewish life and admitting explicitly that non-core populations may be important in various ways for policymakers concerned with Jews and Jewish life. This methodology is also aligned with the methodology of the *American Jewish Year Book*.

The results of the 1966 study became a cornerstone upon which later estimations were built. Over thirty years later, in 2000, a new estimate of the number of Dutch Jews was created. This was done by means of demographic estimation, i.e. the application of birth and death rates of the Dutch population, adjusted to align with the realities of Jewish demography, to the base number of Jews indicated by the 1966 study. In particular, Jewish mortality and Jewish fertility were assumed to be lower than in the total population of the Netherlands and closer to the more educated and affluent segments of it. The results showed that between 1966 and 2000, the size of the Dutch Jewish population changed relatively little: 28,000–31,000 lived in the Netherlands on 1 January 2000. The conclusion *at that time* was that, allowing for the uncertainties of the initial undercount, the Jewish population of the Netherlands basically remained stable over that period. If there was a decline in the number of Dutch Jews in the last three decades of the twentieth century, it would have been, at most, at a level of 5% (Van Imhoff, Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2001).

The most recent estimation project prior to this one, carried out in 2009, involved a significant re-examination of the base number from 1966, as well as assumptions about fertility and mortality, to progress and update the population count of Jews to the early twenty-first century. That demographic work was assisted by the fact that a major project to compensate Dutch Jewish Holocaust survivors for their losses (MAROR-gelden) was implemented in the early 2000s, which required surviving Jewish claimants to register for it. That process resulted in the creation of a database of Dutch Jews independent of the number suggested by the demographic estimation projects described above. Comparisons between the number of MAROR registrants around the year 2000 and independent demographic estimates of Jews at that point in time indicated that the Jewish population had been underestimated (1) at the base (1966), as suspected, and (2) in the entire period of 1966–2000, due to the adoption of a mortality schedule that was too high for this population. This realisation enabled both a confident revision of the base number of Jews in 1966 and a change in assumptions about mortality from that point onwards (in particular, the adoption of a set of lower death rates for Jews). In addition, new information on migration from Israel and the age composition of migrants, produced by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, became available to researchers involved in the 2009 estimation project. Examination of this information led to an understanding that migration was becoming an increasingly important factor of population growth among Dutch Jews in the twenty-first century. First, as more Israeli migrants came to the Netherlands than left the country, migration contributed to the numerical growth of the Dutch Jewish population. Second, being young, this migrant population contributed to fertility. A detailed summary of considerations and revisions is presented by Van Solinge and Van Praag (2010), in the appendices.

In sum, insights and data accumulated by the 2009 study allowed for a retrospective re-estimation of the size of the Dutch Jewish population for the years 1966–2000, and a prospective estimation for 2010–2020. The new set of figures (below) indicated that the Dutch Jewish population was growing very slowly in the second half of the twentieth century and was expected to continue to grow, even somewhat faster, in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century.

Table 1A. Number of Jews in the Netherlands: summary of the 2009 revised estimation project

Year/Number	1966 (1 Jan)	2000 (1 Jan)	2010 (1 Jan)	2020 (1 Jan)
Number of Jews in the Netherlands (original rounded)	About 34,000	35,665	36,924	38,255

Such were the conclusions reached in 2009. Part of the mission of the present project, carried out in the course of 2023, was to re-examine these conclusions with the benefit of hindsight. Does the methodology conceived on the cusp of 2010 still appear reasonable today? Are there new developments in data since that time that support the original thinking of 2010, or contradict it? Can the estimate for 2020, generated in 2009, be accepted today? Below, each component of the demographic estimation is discussed in turn, conclusions are formulated, and the way forward is outlined.

Sources on the 1966 estimation project
Van Imhoff, E., H, Van Solinge, B.J. Flim. 2001. 'A reconstruction of the size and composition of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the Netherlands, 1945 '. *Population Research and Policy Review* 20: 457–481.

Van Praag, Ph. 1971. *Demografie van der Joden in Nederland*. Assen: Van Gorcum. (Demography of the Jews in the Netherlands-in Dutch).

Sources of the 2000 estimation project
Van Imhoff, E., A.C, Liefbroer, E. Dourleijn. 2001. Het aantal der Joden in Nederland. In: Van Solinge, H. and M. de Vries (eds.), *De Joden in Nederland anno 2000. Demografisch profiel en binding aan het Jodendom*. Amsterdam: Aksant, pp. 90–104.

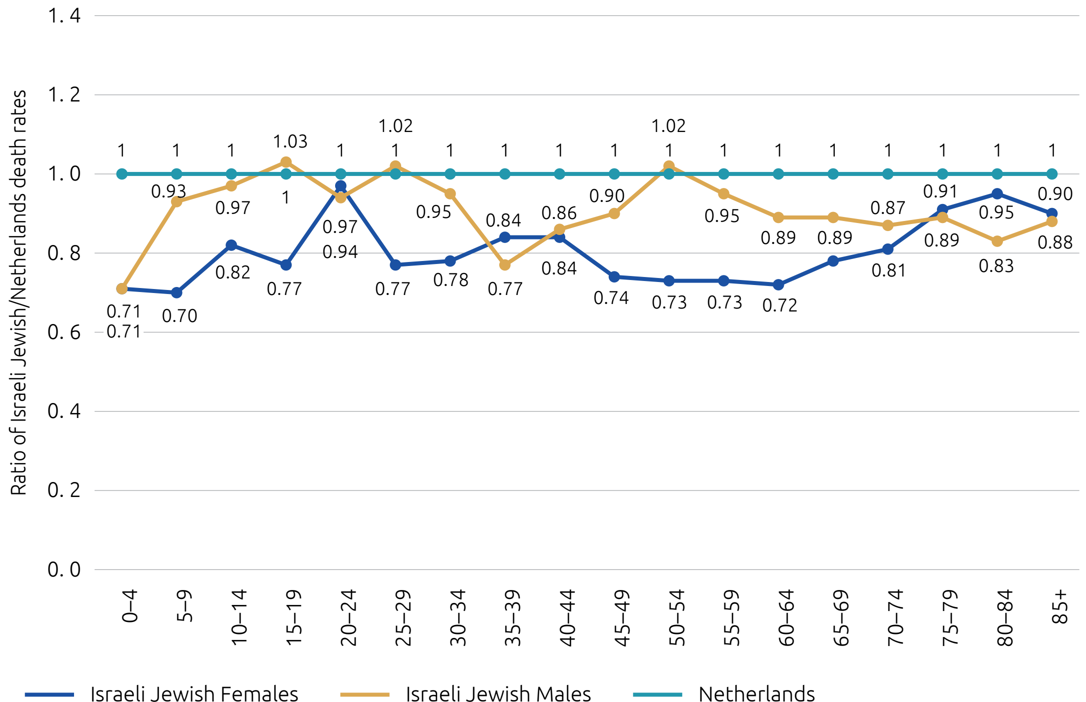
Sources of the 2009 estimation project
Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB.

Mortality

The most recent understanding, underlying the estimations performed in 2009, is that Dutch Jewish mortality is about 30% lower than the mortality of the total population of the Netherlands. Such an assumption was based on the fact that Dutch Jews were a low mortality population, given their high socioeconomic status. Relatively low mortality was also indicated by consideration of the MAROR estimates.

This assessment is reasonable. It is well supported by the findings in other Diaspora Jewish communities (Staetsky 2011, 2021). The mortality of British Jews was shown to be 25%–30% lower than the mortality of the British population as a whole. British Jewish mortality was also found to be lower than the mortality of Jews in Israel. Figure 2A shows the relationship between Dutch and Israeli Jewish mortality, where the latter is shown to be about 10%–20% lower than the former. Dutch Jewish mortality can reasonably be expected to be even lower.

Figure 2A. Ratio of Israeli Jewish to Dutch deaths rates, 2015–2017



It is reasonable to use the mortality rate of the total population of the Netherlands, 'discounted' by 30%, for population projections of the Dutch Jewish population in the foreseeable future.

Sources on mortality

Israeli Jewish mortality: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. 2022. *Statistical Abstract of Israel 73*.

Dutch mortality: (1) Human Mortality Database. November 2023. Mortality in the Netherlands. (2) StatLine. CBS Open data StatLine. Mortality, Key data.

Assessments of Diaspora Jewish mortality:

1. Staetsky, L. D. 2021. 'Elevated Jewish mortality from coronavirus in England and Wales: an epidemiological and demographic detective story'. *Contemporary Jewry* 41 (1): 207–228.

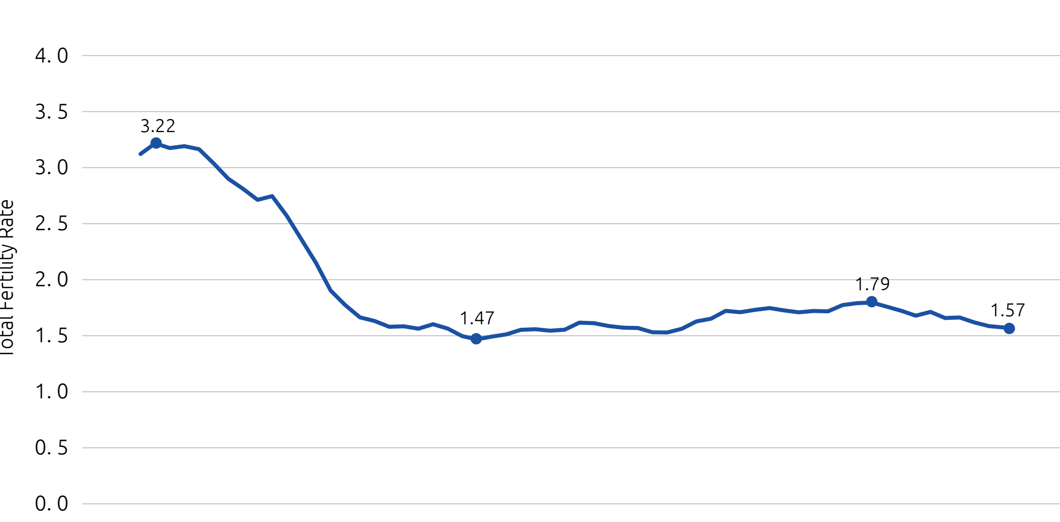
2. Staetsky, L. D. 2011. 'Mortality of British Jews at the turn of the 20th century in comparative perspective'. *European Journal of Population* 27: 361–385.

Assumptions in earlier estimations: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. De Joden in Nederland anno 2009. Diemen: AMB.

Fertility

The understanding underlying the estimations performed in 2009 is that Dutch Jewish fertility is about 20% lower than the fertility of the total population of the Netherlands. Translated into the realities of Dutch fertility around the year 2020 (TFR at around 1.57, Figure 3A), would mean that Jewish TFR is around 1.26 children per woman. Jewish women are highly educated, and highly educated women in Western populations tend to have relatively low fertility. This assumption seems reasonable with respect to the past.

Figure 3A. Total fertility rate of the Netherlands



It is possible that Israel-born women in the Netherlands have somewhat higher fertility. The proportion of Israelis in the Dutch population has been on the rise, and today, women born in Israel, according to the records kept by Statistics Netherlands, constitute about 23% of all Dutch Jewish women aged 15–49 years. Statistics Netherlands provides detailed counts of population by age and sex for those: (1) born in Israel; and (2) born in the Netherlands to at least one Israel-born parent. It also provides counts of vital events – births and deaths – for these populations. This makes an indirect estimation of the fertility of Israel-born women possible. We experimented with the application of different levels of fertility to the age structure of Israel-born women in the Netherlands. These experiments indicate that Israeli fertility may be close to 1.4 children per woman – still very low, but a little higher than the fertility of non-Israel born Jewish women (about 1.2 children per woman, a figure calculated on the assumption that the total Dutch Jewish fertility is around 1.26, and the proportion of Israel-born women aged 15–49 years is around 23%). Looking ahead, a gradual increase in the proportion of Israel-born women in the Dutch Jewish population is expected. Still, if the fertility of these women remains at 1.4 children per woman, the increase in proportion (even to the levels of 33%–43%) will not cause a substantial increase in Dutch Jewish fertility. It is recommended that this assumption is tested again with data in about ten years from now. In the meantime, it is safe to assume that Dutch Jewish fertility is about 20% lower than the total fertility in the Netherlands.

Sources on fertility
Age and sex distributions of persons born in Israel and those with at least one Israeli parent in the Netherlands: StatLine – Population; Gender, LFT, Generation and MigrationBackground, 1 Jan; 1996–2022 (cbs.nl) and StatLine – Population; gender, age, country of origin and country of birth (parents), 1 Jan (cbs.nl).

Births to women born in Israel: StatLine – Bevolkingsontwikkeling; migratieachtergrond en generatie; 1996–2021 (cbs.nl) and StatLine – Population change; Country of origin and country of birth (parents) (cbs.nl).

Age and sex distributions and fertility of Dutch women: Human Fertility Database, November 2023.

Assumptions in earlier estimations: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB.

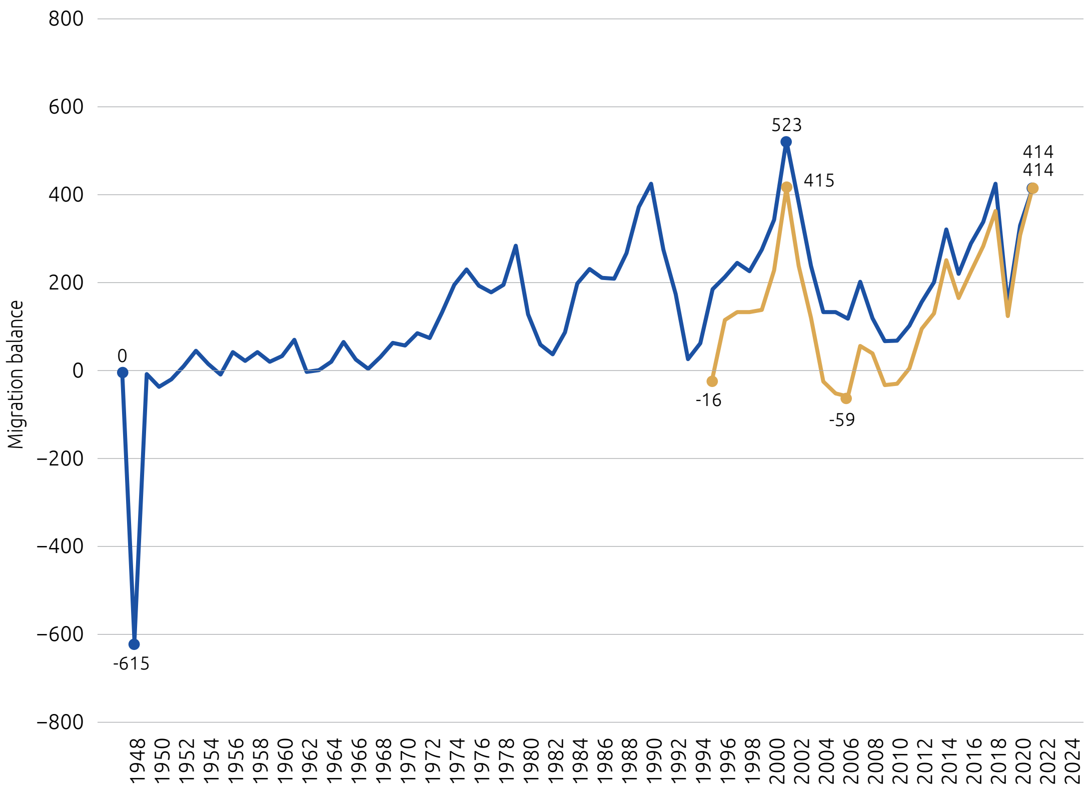
Migration

The 2009 estimation project highlighted the migration of Israelis (those born in Israel) as a significant factor in the growth of the Dutch Jewish population. This was due to: (1) the positive migration balance in itself; and (2) the young age structure of Israeli migrants, which is conducive to high fertility. The migration balance of Israelis was positive for most of the period since 1966, and it increased further in the last decade or so.

The previous assumptions about the scope of the annual migration balance of the Israel-born, used by the 2009 estimation project, adopted a migration balance of around 213 per year, on average, for 1995–2020 (Van Solinge and Van Praag 2010, p. 156). We found that, in fact, the migration balance of the Israel-born was probably lower than that. This is because emigration figures underlying the decision to adopt a migration balance of 213 per annum may have excluded the unreported emigration of the Israel-born. Adjusted emigration figures are now published by the statistical authority of the Netherlands. These emigration figures take into account the balance of administrative corrections to population records that are applied to correct for the unexplained and unreported departures of individuals from the population records of local authorities in the Netherlands. In our view, the migration balance of the Israel-born from 1995 till 2020 stood at about 120 per annum, not 213. This conclusion was reached on the basis of: (a) our re-estimation of the migration balance using immigration and emigration figures (migration flows) corrected for administrative adjustments; and (b) our estimation of the migration balance based on year-on-year differences between stocks of the Israel-born population (stock figures incorporate administrative adjustments). A higher migration balance, in excess of 200, is observed from 2015 onwards, but this is a recent development that does not significantly impact on the estimates for 1995–2020.

Figure 4A shows that the adjusted balance figures are lower than the unadjusted figures for nearly every year since comparative records began (in the mid-1990s).

Figure 4A. Migration balance between the Netherlands and Israel, for people born in Israel



Balance calculated from migration flows without admin corrections
Balance calculated from migration flows WITH admin corrections

Source: (1) Data on immigration and emigration of Israel born, 1996–2021: CBS-Netherlands, Statline, StatLine – Population change; migration background and generation; 1996–2021 (cbs.nl). (2) Data on immigration and emigration of Israel born, 2022: CBS-Netherlands, Statline, StatLine – Bevolkingsontwikkeling; herkomstland en geboorteland (ouders) (cbs.nl). (3) Historical data on migration balance (1948–1995): communicated by Dr Hanna Van Solinge. (4) Data on population stocks of Israelis in the Netherlands: CBS-Netherlands, Statline StatLine – Population; Gender, LFT, Generation and MigrationBackground, 1 Jan; 1996–2022 (cbs.nl) (years 1996–2021) and StatLine – Population; gender, age, country of origin and country of birth (parents), 1 Jan (cbs.nl) (years 2022–2023).

It is worth noting that previous estimation exercises did not relate to the migration of Dutch Jews without an Israeli connection (i.e. estimates only related to Jews who were either born in Israel themselves or were children of a parent born in Israel). This assumes a zero-migration balance with respect to that type of migration (i.e. that the inflow and outflow of such migrants are equal in size). We do not have firm empirical grounds to maintain that this type of migration balance stands at zero. Data on the annual immigration of Dutch Jews to Israel are held by the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel. Between 1995–2020, about 45 people moved from the Netherlands to Israel annually. FRA 2018 indicated that Dutch Jews intending to migrate specifically to Israel constituted 68% of the total number of Dutch Jews without an Israeli connection who intended to migrate. Therefore, in total, the annual emigration flow of such Dutch Jews is likely to be about 66 people per annum. Return migration, as well as immigration of Jews to the Netherlands from all over the world, exists, but it cannot be estimated

at present. Clearly, the loss of 66 people per annum would be partly compensated by these types of immigration. In the absence of better information, we are prepared to assume a zero-migration balance for this group. The number of 66 per year can be treated as an indication of the *maximal* level of annual overestimation of the Dutch Jewish population. Applied over a decade, such a number would result in an overestimation on a scale of about 660 (unadjusted for births and deaths to this group). While this possibility should be born in mind, we do not propose any correction. With available information, assuming zero migration seems a safer option.

In contrast, the overestimation of a migration balance of Israel-born Jews is something that does require a correction. The assumption of an annual migration balance of +213, rather than +120, for the period 1995–2020 would have resulted in an accumulated overestimate of about 2,300 in 2020. Therefore, we suggest reducing the number produced by the 2009 estimation project for 2020 by about 2,300. A backward correction, for years 2000 and 2010, is smaller, yet still perceptible (Table 2A).

Table 2A. Number of Jews in the Netherlands: original and revised numbers of the 2009 estimation project

Year/Number	1966 (1 Jan)	2000 (1 Jan)	2010 (1 Jan)	2020 (1 Jan)
2009 estimation project: Number of Jews in the Netherlands (original)	34,000	35,665	36,924	38,255
Number of Jews in the Netherlands (revised, based on the 2009 estimation project)	34,000	35,168	35,349	35,919

Based on close examination of the 2009 estimation project and the new data, we reach conclusions that are similar in essentials to those reached by the team of experts in 2009, yet they may be different in some details. Since the mid-1960s, and over the course of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the Dutch Jewish population grew very slightly. Our assessment of that growth is a little more modest compared to the 2009 estimation project, and our estimates for the actual number of Jews in the Netherlands is somewhat lower. However, our evaluation of the numerical scale of the Jewish presence and the population trajectory are no different.

Estimation of population size based on Jewish schools data

Three Jewish schools currently operate in Amsterdam: Cheider Amsterdam (primary and secondary school), Rosj Pina (primary) and Maimonides (secondary). All schools implement acceptance criteria based on the Jewish *halachic* definition. The number of pupils in the primary educational stage in the years 2017–2022 stood at 340–370. Parenthetically, the trend since the school year 2016/2017 has been a continuous increase in numbers. The primary educational stage in the Netherlands encompasses eight year-groups of children aged 4/5–11/12 years.

The FRA 2018 survey of Dutch Jews (1,202 observations) indicated that 18% of Jewish parents with school age children in the Netherlands had children in a Jewish school. However, the FRA 2018 survey is a communal survey of Jews rather than a survey of the Dutch Jewish population. Due to the way the survey was distributed to potential respondents (starting with Jewish organisations and followed by a referral process), the most assimilated or least involved Jews may be underrepresented by it.

Adjustments used to rectify the underrepresentation (survey weights) may or may not be entirely sufficient to correct for the potential bias. We should allow for the possibility that the real uptake of Jewish school may be lower than 18%, for example (for the sake of creating a range) 5% lower, at about 13%.

It follows that, working with the original 18% level of uptake, estimated, as noted, at 340–370 pupils, the total size of the eight year-groups (4/5–11/12 years) is 1,888–2,055 (calculated as: 340*100/18=1,888 and 370*100/18=2,055). Working with a 13% level of uptake, it is 2,615–2,846 (calculated as: 340*100/13=2,615 and 370*100/13=2,846).

Age groups 4/5–11/12 years (eight year-groups) have been estimated to form about 7% of the total Jewish population in the Netherlands. For comparison, in 2021, in the total populations of Germany and the Netherlands, two low-fertility European populations, these age groups constituted 7.5%–8.5%. It follows that the total size of the Jewish population in the Netherlands around 2020 was: (1) in the range 29,000–32,000 (calculated as 1,888*100/7=29,046 and 2,055*100/7=31,615, rounded for convenience); or (2) in the range of 37,000–41,000 (calculated as 2,615 *100/7=37,357 and 2,846*100/7=40,657, rounded for convenience.

Sources
Numbers of pupils in Jewish schools: (1) Bestuurder Stichting Joodse Scholengemeenschap JBO. (2) administration of Cheider Amsterdam.

Proportion of ages 4/5–11/12 years in total population: (1) Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB. (2) Eurostat. Population on 1 January by age and sex, 2021 [DEMO_PJAN__custom_6455582].

Proportion of parents with children in Jewish schools: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7491).

National and international surveys of the Dutch population

In Europe and in the West in general, there is significant analytical and policy interest in documenting the religious and ethnic composition of the population. Numerous population surveys are conducted to this effect. However, much of this work is of limited use for gauging the number of Jews; in Europe and in the Netherlands in particular, Jews constitute a very small proportion of the population as a whole, and consequently, surveys produce only small samples of them. To complicate things further, a question on religion may not be ideal for capturing the number of Jews, as a matter of principle, simply because a significant proportion of Jews perceive themselves as an ethnic rather than a religious group.

In the Netherlands, the survey on social cohesion and wellbeing (SSCW) is a national study that includes a question on religion. Administered by Statistics Netherlands, it has an annual sample of about 7,500 respondents and is an established source of information on the religious composition of the country. About 15 respondents on average self-identify as Jews in response to the religion question each year, suggesting

that Jews constitute 0.2% of population of the Netherlands (about 34,000, an average number over a 2012–2022 time span). The survey does not present an option of reporting Jewishness as an ethnic category rather than as a religion.

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a multi-country European survey, focusing mostly on the social and political attitudes of the populations. National samples are obtained by random probability sampling, and it has been conducted seven times in the Netherlands between 2008 and 2020, with an average of 1,700 respondents reached on each occasion. Respondents could identify as Jewish in response to a religion question in each round, but respondents who identified as people without a religion, a majority of the sample, did not have another option to register their Jewishness. In the studies conducted between 2008 and 2020, an average Dutch sample of 1,700 respondents featured only two Jews by religion, on average. Accumulating data from several annual samples boosts the numbers, in the Dutch case, to 14 Jewish respondents in a multiannual sample of 12,000 (0.12% of the total population numbering about 17,000,000, i.e. about 20,000, calculated as: 17,000,000*0.12/100).

It is certain that some Jews exist among those who declared having no religion, simply because Jewishness is perceived by many Dutch Jews as an ethnicity or an ancestry, as opposed to a religion. At the same time, the exact extent of this is unclear. Arguably, some non-religious Jews (i.e. those who prefer to identify as Jews based on ethnicity or ancestry) may have used the religion category simply in the absence of other choices. Yet, fundamentally, the very low numbers of Jews picked up by the SSCW and ESS is a serious and irresolvable problem: the numbers in both cases, and especially so in ESS, are unstable and have a wide margin of error.

To sum up, surveys of the Dutch population are of relatively little value for assessing the true number of Dutch Jews. These surveys pick up too few Jews, and this problem is only exacerbated by the uncertainty as to how many Jews are actually captured by the religion question, rather than a question on ethnicity, in a highly secularised society. The way to increase the usefulness of the surveys, and especially the SSCW, for the specific goal of estimating the Jewish population would be to: (1) significantly increase the survey sample sizes, making them 5–10 times larger; and (2) allow ethnic Jewish identification alongside the religious one. For now, based on the surveys, we remain within the very broad range of 20,000–34,000. These figures can be used merely as a signal of the possible scope of Jewish existence in the Netherlands, but they are unsuitable for many policy uses where precision matters.

Sources
Total population size of the Netherlands: World Population Prospects. 2022. UN Population Division Data Portal. Interactive access to global demographic indicators. Home Page | Data Portal (un.org).

The European Social Survey (ESS): European Social Survey | European Social Survey (ESS). Datasets for years 2008–2020 downloaded from the portal.

Proportion of Jews identifying as Jews by religion and ancestry: FRA 2018 survey of Jews in the Netherlands (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7491).

The Netherlands survey on social cohesion and wellbeing (SSCW). (1) Methodology: Social cohesion and well-being (cbs.nl); (2) Results: 3. Developments in religious engagement (cbs.nl); (3) correspondence with Statistics Netherlands, August–October 2023.

A summary of estimation attempts for 2020

Our conclusion, on the basis of all estimates considered, is that the size of the Dutch Jewish population around the year 2020 was in the range of 29,000–41,000 (Table 3A). Greater precision is not possible, but adopting the limits of this range and the midway figure can, and perhaps, should be considered for different policy purposes. Any figures outside the proposed 29,000–41,000 limits should be considered highly unlikely.

Table 3A. Number of Jews in the Netherlands under different estimation methods

Method	Method 1 (administrative sources and demographic estimation)	Method 2 (schools data)	Method 3 (surveys of the national population)
Number	36,000	29,000–41,000	34,000
Sources used	(1) Communal census of Dutch Jews in 1966; (2) mortality, fertility and migration schedules in the late 20th/early 21st centuries; (3) MAROR project counts	(1) Jewish school enrolment in the Netherlands; (2) age structure of the Dutch Jewish population (3) the FRA 2018 survey	A survey of social cohesion and wellbeing in the Netherlands

Section 2. Components of change in the Jewish population in the Netherlands

Taking into account the previous estimation projects and the new demographic resources available for the study of the Dutch Jewish population, the components of change in this population can be estimated as follows (Table 4A).

1. Births: age-specific birth rates following the observed age-structure of the fertility schedule in the Netherlands (TFR 1.58, average of years 2018–2019) are used, yet the rates are 'discounted' on the assumption that the Dutch Jewish TFR is at a level of 1.26 children per woman. This is in line with the previous understanding that Dutch Jewish fertility is about 20% lower than the fertility of the total population of the Netherlands.

2. Deaths: age-specific death rates following the observed age-structure of the mortality schedule in the Netherlands are used; yet the level of Dutch Jewish mortality is assumed to be about 30% lower than the mortality of the total population of the Netherlands (this is in line with the previous understanding).

3. Migration balance 1: average balance for 2013–2022, relating to the Israel-born population and children with Israel-born parents.

4. Migration balance 2: average number for 1995–2021: Dutch Jewish non-Israeli migrants from the Netherlands to Israel, a complementary number to the one estimated at the previous step. This is estimated on the basis of the statistics of migration from the Netherlands to Israel and the FRA 2018 survey, with the latter providing an indication about the level of migration of Dutch Jews to destinations other than Israel.

5. Fertility, mortality and migration schedules as per above are applied to the population size of 35,000 (midpoint of 29,000–41,000), and the Dutch Jewish age and sex structure proposed by the projections for 2020 made as part of the 2009 estimation project.

Table 4A. Components of change in the Jewish population in the Netherlands, around year 2020

	Annual births	Annual deaths	Balance of births and deaths	Annual migration balance 1 (Israel-born and children with Israel-born parents)	Annual migration balance 2 (the rest of Dutch Jews, excluded from balance 1)	Annual rate of increase per 1,000
Estimates for Dutch Jewish population	232	293	-61	201	NA, assumed zero; (maximal possible: -66)	4
Netherlands as a whole*						6
Jews in Israel**						14

*Data for the Netherlands as a whole come from: Statistics Netherlands, StatLine, StatLine – Bevolking; kerncijfers, 1950–2022 (cbs.nl), average of 2017–2019 presented, to avoid the impact of atypically low growth in the year of the global coronavirus pandemic (2020). **Data for Israeli Jews are from: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2020*, Table 2.12.

Conclusions

1. The natural balance of the Dutch Jewish population is negative. Deaths are more numerous than births and, in the absence of migration, the population would be destined to decline.

2. At the same time, the migration balance of the Dutch Jewish population is positive: the number of arrivals is greater than the number of departures. Although this is only certain regarding the segment of the population connected to Israel (i.e. the Israel-born and those with an Israel-born parent), different assumptions regarding the migration balance of other segments do not make much difference. It is very likely that around the year 2020, the Dutch Jewish population grew by about 140 annually (about 4.0 per 1,000 per annum).

3. Under the extreme assumption that the migration balance of the other population segment (i.e. those not connected to Israel), is negative, then the growth is more moderate but still present. The maximal size of the emigration flow can be estimated at 66 persons per annum (see text above). Deducting this from 140 leads to the conclusion that around the year 2020, the Dutch Jewish population still grew by 74 people (around 2.1 per 1,000 per annum).

4. Looking forward, should the growth rate of 2–4 per 1,000 per annum continue into the future, the Dutch Jewish population would reach the 36,000–37,000 range in the mid-2030s.

Sources

Age and sex distributions and fertility of Dutch women: Human Fertility Database, November 2023.

Mortality of Dutch population: Human Mortality Database, November 2023.

Age and sex structure of Dutch Jews in 2020: Van Solinge, H. and Van Praag, C. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009*. Diemen: AMB, p. 170. Applied to population total of 33,000.

Migration balance for Israel-born and children with Israel-born parents is estimated on the basis of (migration balance 1): (1) immigration and emigration, 1996–2021: CBS-Netherlands, Statline, StatLine – Population change; migration background and generation; 1996–2021 (cbs.nl). (2) immigration and emigration, 2022: CBS-Netherlands, Statline, StatLine – Bevolkingsontwikkeling; herkomstland en geboorteland (ouders) (cbs.nl).

Migration balance for the rest (migration balance 2): (1) immigration to Israel: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. (2) estimate of migration to other destinations based on: FRA 2018 survey, GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7491.

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