

Jewish Israelis' Attitudes Toward Christians and Christianity: A Survey

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ROSSING CENTER
FOR EDUCATION AND DIALOGUE

מרכז רוסינג
לחינוך ולדיאלוג
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About the Rossing Center:

The Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue is an interreligious organization based in Jerusalem that promotes a shared society founded on peace, justice, and equality for all religious, ethnic, and national groups. Through education, encounter, research, and consulting, the Rossing Center fosters improved relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land. Established in 2004, the Center addresses the complexities of interreligious, multicultural, and bi-national communities, encouraging its beneficiaries to drive change in knowledge, perception, and behavior through diverse educational and dialogical initiatives.

Preface:

In September 2025, a quantitative survey was conducted among a representative sample of 500 Jewish citizens of Israel. The sample was constructed according to commonly used demographic distributions within Israeli Jewish society, including levels of religiosity, gender, political orientation, and age groups. The survey aimed to systematically examine the attitudes of Jews in Israel toward Christianity and Christians, both within the local Israeli socio-political and cultural context and in broader contexts extending beyond the Israeli arena.

The survey explored general perceptions of the Christian religion and its symbols, attitudes toward Christians living in Israel as well as toward Christians outside the local context, and the degree of familiarity and exposure to Christians and to Christianity. In addition, it examined respondents' willingness for social proximity, their openness to learning about Christianity, and their interest in becoming acquainted with its sacred texts.

Further sections of the survey addressed attitudes toward Arab Christian citizens of Israel, perceptions regarding the appropriate scope of religious freedom and freedom of conscience for Christians in the state, and views toward Christian clergy and institutions operating in Israel. The survey also examined attitudes toward Christians integrated into Jewish-Israeli society, including those serving in the Israel Defense Forces and individuals eligible for citizenship under the Law of Return.

Terminology:

The analysis considers variations in attitudes across levels of religiosity, a standard categorization

used in surveys of Jewish-Israeli society. Jewish Israelis are typically divided into four primary groups based on religious identity and lifestyle: **Hiloni (secular)** – approximately 43% of the population – who generally lead a modern Western lifestyle while maintaining cultural ties to Jewish tradition; **Masorti (traditional)** – about 35% – who combine participation in modern life with selective adherence to Jewish rituals; **Dati (religious/Modern Orthodox)** – around 12% – who observe Jewish law (halakha) while remaining integrated in the institutions and workforce of the modern state; and **Haredi (ultra-Orthodox)** – roughly 11% – a highly conservative community characterized by intensive Torah study and relatively segregated communal life.

Main findings:

Attitudes toward Christianity and Christians cannot be understood solely through the lens of minority rights discourse, social tolerance, or willingness to engage in social proximity. Rather, they are embedded in the complex relationship between Judaism and Christianity that has developed over nearly two millennia. While this relationship has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, primarily within the Christian institutional sphere, changes within the religious Jewish world have been more limited. Consequently, attitudes toward Christianity and Christians in Israel continue to reflect deep religious perceptions, including concerns about missionary activity and religious influence, theological views by some who regard Christianity as idolatry from which Jews should distance themselves, and broader trends of rising Jewish nationalism and social insularity.

At the same time, recent years have seen a notable increase in exposure to Christianity and to Christians. This exposure is no longer mediated solely through formal educational frameworks, such as history, art, or civics classes in schools, but increasingly occurs through diverse channels of communication. These include international media, television content distributed through global platforms such as Netflix, the activity of social media influencers, and the growing mobility of Israelis traveling abroad for tourism, employment, and extended stays. These processes create more frequent and multidimensional forms of everyday contact with Christianity and Christian communities, fostering curiosity and interest across different age groups and levels of religiosity, including among those who identify as religious or ultra-Orthodox.

The present survey—consistent with the findings of a previous survey conducted in 2008 by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research in collaboration with the Rossing Center under the leadership of Dr. Amnon Ramon¹—demonstrates a clear pattern: as the level of religiosity among respondents increases, so too do levels of discomfort toward Christianity, negative attitude, reluctance toward social proximity, decreased concern for equality, and lower willingness to engage in learning, openness, or tolerance. In several questions, these tendencies appear even more pronounced than in the findings of the 2008 survey.

A key finding concerns the Masorti (traditional) sector. In many cases, the attitudes of Masorti respondents resemble those of the religious group, although they tend to be somewhat more positive toward Christians and Christianity. In certain questions, however, the gap between Masorti and religious respondents becomes more pronounced, with the attitudes of the religious group closely resembling those of the Haredi population.

Analysis of political orientation reveals a strong correlation between religiosity and political

¹ Amnon Ramon, *Christianity and Christians in the Jewish State: Israeli Policy toward the Churches and Christian Communities (1948-2018)*, trans. Shaul Vardi (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2021), pp. 278-299.

positioning. Overall, 63.1% of respondents identified their political views as ranging from “very right-wing” to “center-right.” When disaggregated by religiosity, these positions characterize approximately 75.6% of Masorti respondents, 94.6% of religious respondents, and 81.8% of Haredi respondents. The Haredi group also recorded the highest proportion of respondents identifying as “very right-wing” (19.1%). Consequently, findings associated with religiosity largely mirror those associated with political orientation.

Across all survey findings, without exception, a consistent pattern emerges with respect to age. The data show a clear upward or downward trajectory across age groups: **the younger the respondents, the more negative their attitudes tend to be.** Younger respondents demonstrate lower levels of openness, interest, and willingness for social proximity, equality, and tolerance toward others. In many cases, a sharp shift appears between the **18–24 age group** and the next age group, although in some instances the most significant shift occurs between other adjacent cohorts. In all cases, older respondents consistently display higher levels of openness and tolerance. This pattern closely resembles the findings of the 2008 survey.

The data also indicate that there are **no major differences in the distribution of political orientations across age groups.** The proportion of respondents holding right-wing, center-right, or strongly right-wing views is broadly similar across most age groups between **18 and 64**, with a modest increase among those aged **25–34** and a noticeable decline only among those aged **65 and above.** In contrast, attitudes toward Christianity display a more consistent and linear pattern: **as age increases, negative attitudes and hostility decrease.** A combined examination of age, political orientation, and attitudes toward Christianity suggests that although political views remain relatively similar across age groups, the variation in attitudes toward Christianity reflects an independent age effect that cannot be fully explained by political orientation alone.

Finally, the data show that **level of education clearly influences attitudes toward Christians and Christianity.** As educational attainment increases, attitudes become more positive. In most cases, respondents with **secondary and post-secondary (non-academic) education** displayed very similar attitudes, while the most significant shift was observed among those with **academic (university-level) education.**

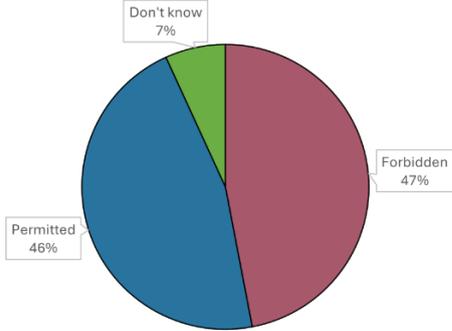
A. Attitudes toward Christianity:

The survey included several questions examining attitudes toward Christianity that reflected a range of perspectives. These included halakhic issues, such as whether it is permissible to enter churches, perceptions of Christianity as idolatry, and views regarding the degree of similarity or proximity between Christianity and Judaism. Additional questions addressed personal experiences, such as visiting a church or maintaining friendships with Christians. Responses to questions that might appear to require knowledge of Jewish law suggest that respondents were primarily expressing personal attitudes rather than demonstrating familiarity with specific halakhic rulings (traditional Jewish Orthodox law) or with the broader halakhic tradition.

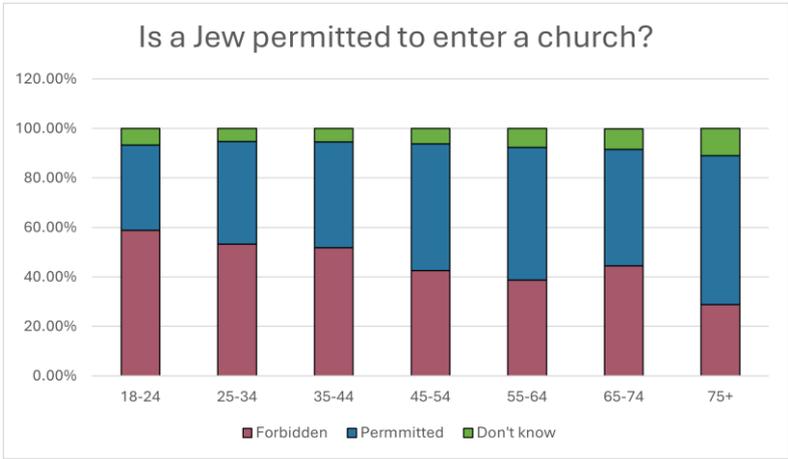
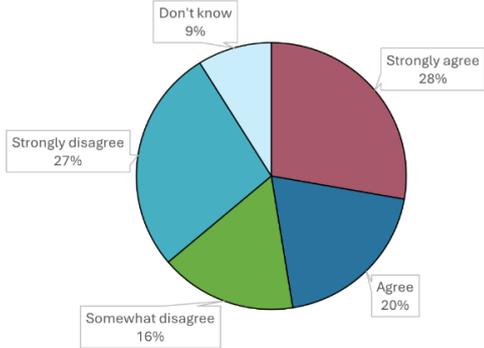
Regarding the question of whether it is permissible or forbidden to enter a church, responses were almost evenly divided. 47% of respondents stated that entering a church is forbidden, while 46% believed that it is permissible. When analyzed by age group, a clear trend emerges: the younger the respondents, the higher the proportion who believe that entering churches is forbidden.

A similar pattern emerged in response to the question of whether Christianity constitutes idolatry. The distribution of responses was nearly balanced. Approximately half of the respondents agreed with the statement that Christianity is a form of idolatry. Of these, 28% indicated that they strongly agree with the statement, while 27% indicated that they strongly disagree with it.

Is a Jew permitted to enter a church?



Do you agree or disagree with the statement: "Christianity is a religion of idolatry"?

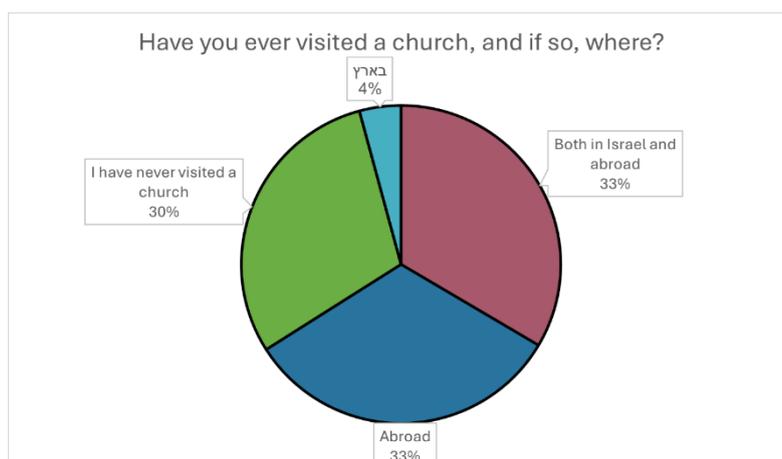


In response to the question of whether respondents had visited churches, 33% reported that they had entered churches either in Israel or abroad, 32% indicated that they had visited churches only abroad, and 30% stated that they had never visited a church. These findings appear to reflect the fact that over recent decades, international travel has become an integral part of the social practices of most Israelis. As many Israelis visit countries with strong Christian cultural traditions, a noticeable level of curiosity and interest has developed among visitors regarding Christian-related ceremonies and public festivities, including events such as carnivals and Christmas markets.

Among respondents who indicated that they had never visited a church, it is relevant to ask whether this reflects a lack of interest or avoidance for religious reasons. The gap between those who stated that Jews are forbidden to enter churches and those who reported never having visited a church suggests that many individuals are aware of the religious prohibition but nevertheless enter churches.

In comparison with a survey conducted in 2008, the 2025 survey shows an increase of approximately 10% in the proportion of respondents who believe that entering churches is forbidden. However, the proportion of respondents who reported that they had never visited a church remained similar in

both surveys.

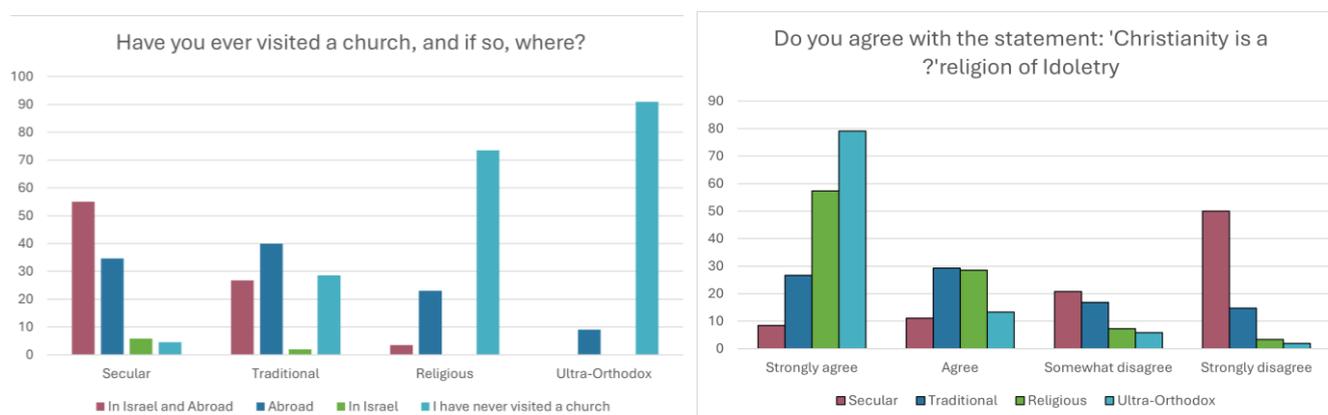


An examination of the findings by level of religiosity reveals a clear and consistent pattern: the higher the level of religiosity, the greater the proportion of respondents who believe that it is forbidden for Jews to enter a church. Thus, 96% of Haredi respondents and 86% of religious respondents stated that entering churches is forbidden, compared with 18% of secular respondents.

This pattern is reinforced in perceptions of Christianity as idolatry. Among Haredi respondents, a particularly high level of agreement was recorded with the claim that Christianity constitutes idolatry, with 79% agreeing that it is a form of idolatry. By comparison, among religious respondents, only 57% expressed a similar view, while among secular respondents, the proportion is much lower, at only 8.5%.

Significant differences between groups are also evident with regard to actual experiences of visiting churches. Among Haredi respondents, 9.1% indicated that they had visited a church, but only outside Israel, compared with 23% of religious respondents who reported visiting churches. In contrast, among secular respondents, the proportion of visitors is particularly high, and only 4.5% stated that they had never visited a church.

When the data are compared according to political preference, it appears that voters identifying with the center-left are more likely to hold the view that entering churches is permissible, compared with voters on the political right.

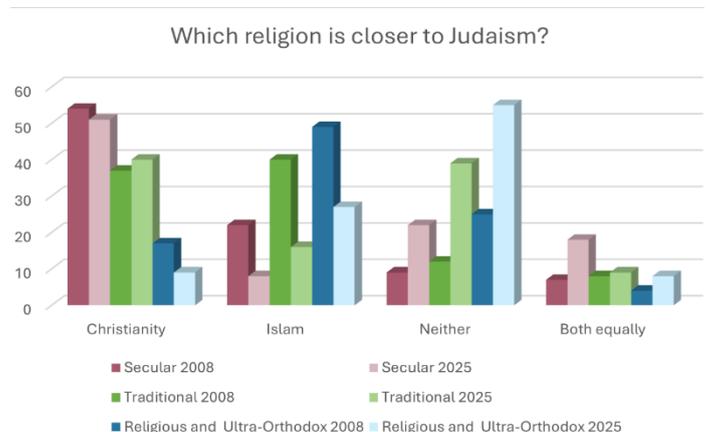
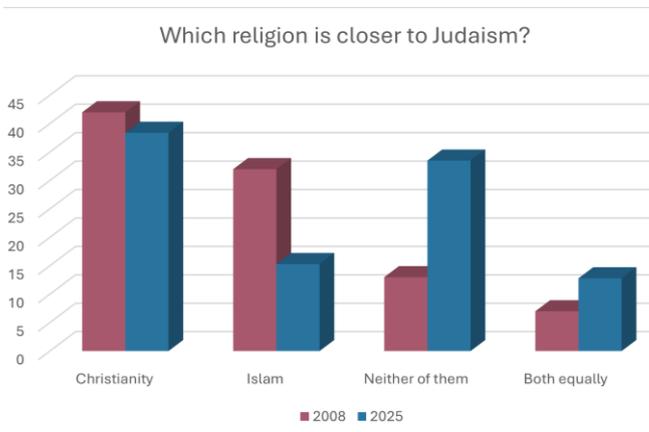
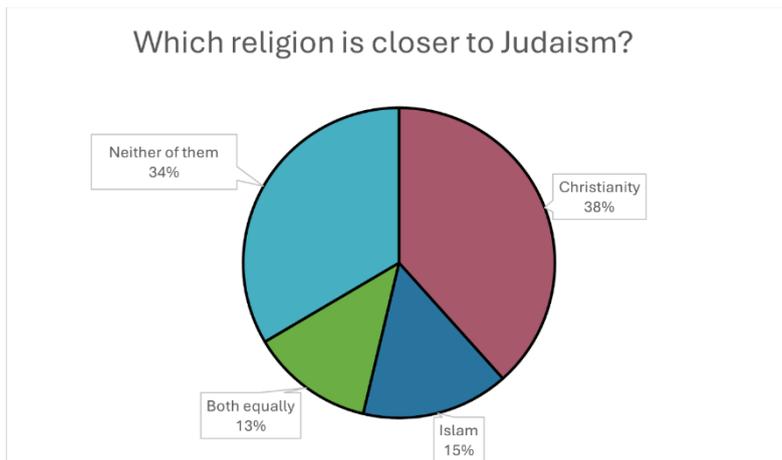


Another question, which might ostensibly be interpreted as a question of halakhic knowledge but in practice primarily reflects an attitudinal position, asked: "In your opinion, which religion is closer to Judaism?" Among the overall sample, 38.4% of respondents identified Christianity as closer to Judaism, 15.3% identified Islam, 33.5% responded that neither religion is close to Judaism, and 12.8%

believed that both religions are equally close.

Among religious and Haredi respondents, 27% indicated that Islam is closer to Judaism, a response that reflects a halakhic perception recognizing a theological and legal affinity between Judaism and Islam. Comparison with the 2008 survey data indicates a shift in response patterns, expressed in a growing tendency to distance Judaism from both religions. While in the 2008 survey, only 13% responded that neither religion is close to Judaism, this proportion increased substantially in the current survey. At the same time, the data reflect the influence of contemporary political realities and the linkage between the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the religious dimension of relations between Jews and Muslims. In 2008, 32% of respondents indicated that Islam is closer to Judaism, a figure that has declined by approximately half in the present survey.

The selection of Christianity as the religion closer to Judaism appears to reflect, to a considerable extent, an affinity with the Western Christian world. By contrast, Islam is often associated in the minds of respondents with Arab and Middle Eastern culture, which many perceive as being in ongoing conflict with the State of Israel. Accordingly, responses to this question do not necessarily reflect grounded theological or historical knowledge, but rather express broader social and political attitudes.

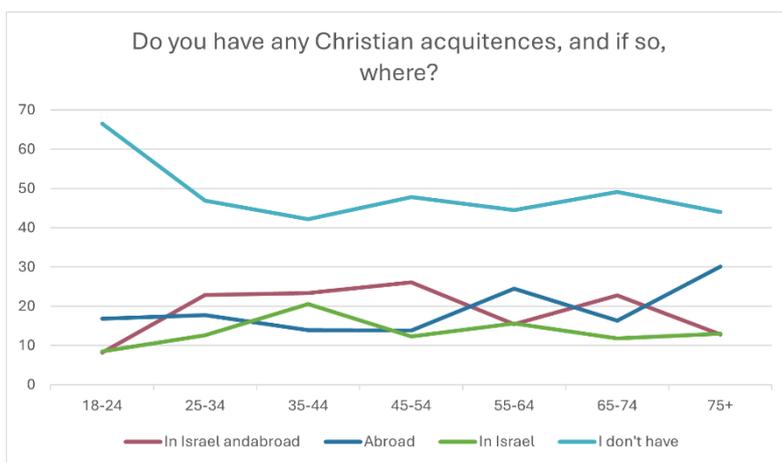
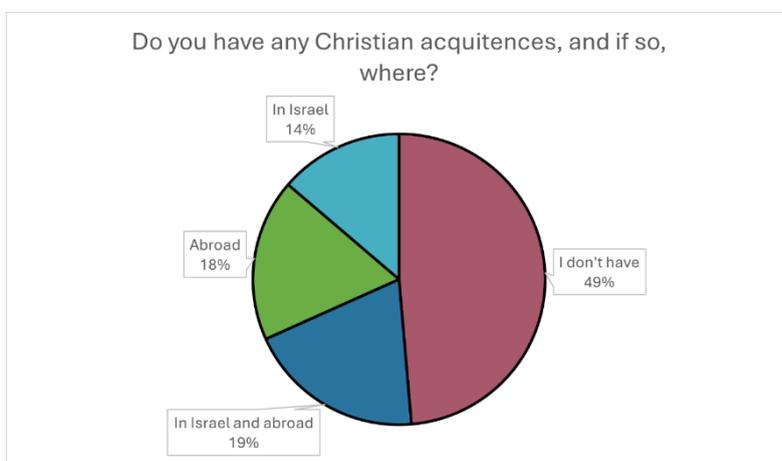


In response to the question of whether participants have Christian acquaintances, comparison with

the 2008 data indicates a growing level of acquaintance with Christians among respondents. At the same time, there has been a slight increase in the number of participants who reported having Christian acquaintances only in Israel. Approximately 50% of respondents indicated that they have Christian acquaintances in Israel and or abroad.

An analysis of the data by age group shows a notable increase in acquaintance with Christians beginning already in the 25–34 age group, which may reflect exposure to the international labor market or travel abroad. In the 35–44 age group, a moderate increase was recorded in the number of respondents reporting acquaintances with Christians in Israel. This may reflect greater interaction with local Christians, Christian migrant workers employed as caregivers, or Christians originating from the former Soviet Union who identify as such, whether they immigrated to Israel or were born in the country.

According to the breakdown by religious self-identification, familiarity with Christians declines as the level of religiosity increases. While 33% of secular respondents reported that they do not know any Christians, the corresponding figure among Haredi respondents is 79.7%.



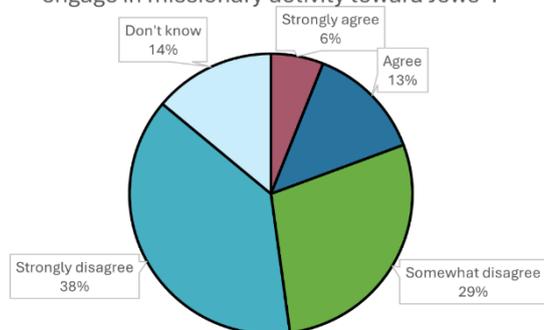
B. Teaching about Christianity

As part of the survey, participants were asked whether they agree with the statement: “Most Christians engage in missionary activity toward Jews.”² Approximately two thirds of respondents

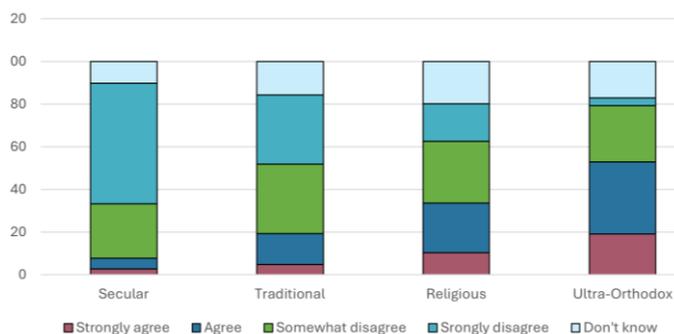
² Jewish attitudes in Israel toward Christianity and Christians are shaped to a considerable extent by the long and complex history of Jewish–Christian relations in the Western world, by enduring theological disagreements between the two religions,

disagreed with this statement, while nearly one in five expressed agreement with it. As the level of religiosity increases, agreement with the statement also increases. Among Haredi respondents, only 30% rejected the claim that most Christians are missionaries, 52.8% agreed with it, and 17.1% indicated that they did not know.

Do you agree with the statement "Most Christians engage in missionary activity toward Jews"?



Do you agree with the statement "Most Christians engage in missionary activity toward Jews"?



The question of including instruction about Christianity in the curriculum of Jewish schools was another issue examined in the survey. Although 70% of respondents reported having visited churches and 43% do not consider Christianity to be idolatry, the proportion of Israelis who support teaching about Christianity in schools is considerably lower.³ The survey distinguished between two separate questions: whether schools should teach about Christianity in general, and whether they should teach about the New Testament.

Overall, 38% of respondents agreed that schools should teach about Christianity, yet only 7% indicated strong agreement. In contrast, 55% disagreed with the idea, including 38.5% who strongly disagreed. Support declines even further regarding instruction about the New Testament: only 18% expressed agreement, while 74% opposed including it in the curriculum. Even among respondents who defined themselves as secular, about one-third believed that Christianity should not be taught about in schools, and approximately 60% opposed teaching about the New Testament.

Analysis by level of education indicates that respondents with academic education show greater willingness to support teaching about Christianity or about the New Testament compared with respondents with lower levels of education. Nevertheless, even within this group, strong support remains limited. Fewer than 10% expressed strong agreement with teaching about Christianity, and fewer than 5% strongly supported teaching about the New Testament.

Concerning teaching about Christianity in schools, no significant differences were found across age groups in the overall levels of agreement or disagreement. However, differences emerge in the intensity of attitudes. Among younger respondents, the proportion of those who **strongly disagree** with teaching about Christianity is higher. With increasing age, attitudes become more moderate: the

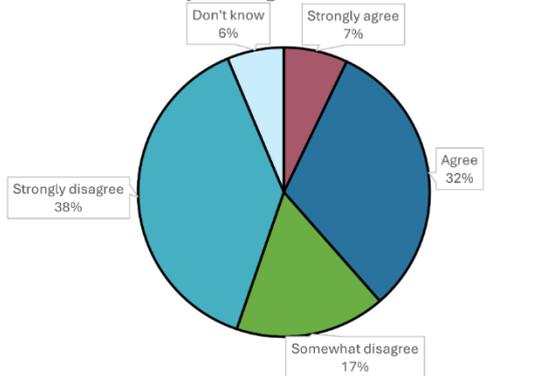
and by historical and contemporary concerns regarding Christian missionary activity directed toward Jews. For general discussions of the historical and theological background of Christian missionary activity directed toward Jews and the sensitivities it has generated in Jewish-Christian relations, see Edward Kessler, "Christian Mission and the Jewish People," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mission Studies*, ed. Kirsteen Kim, Knud Jørgensen, Alison Fitchett-Climenhaga, and Kwok Pui-lan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), chap. 31. For further discussion of the Israeli context, see Amnon Ramon, *Christians and Christianity in the Jewish State* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2019).

³ More about religious education in the Israeli education system and education about Christianity in Ramon, Orit, Inés Gabel, and Varda Wasserman. *Jesus Was a Jew: Presenting Christians and Christianity in Israeli State Education*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020.

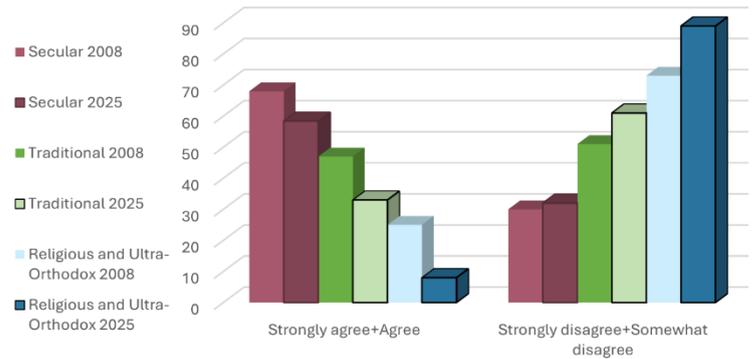
proportion of “strongly disagree” responses declines, while the share of respondents selecting “somewhat disagree” increases.

Comparison with the 2008 survey indicates a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents who believe that Christianity or the New Testament should not be taught within the education system. In 2008, 54% of respondents believed that schools should teach about Christianity, and 37% believed that they should teach about the New Testament.

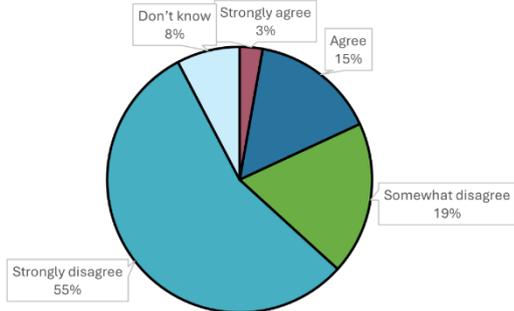
Should Christianity be taught about in schools in Israel?



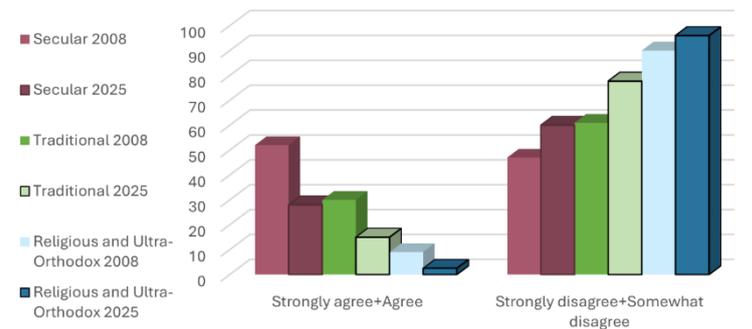
Should Christianity be taught about in schools in Israel?



Should the New Testament be taught about in schools in Israel?

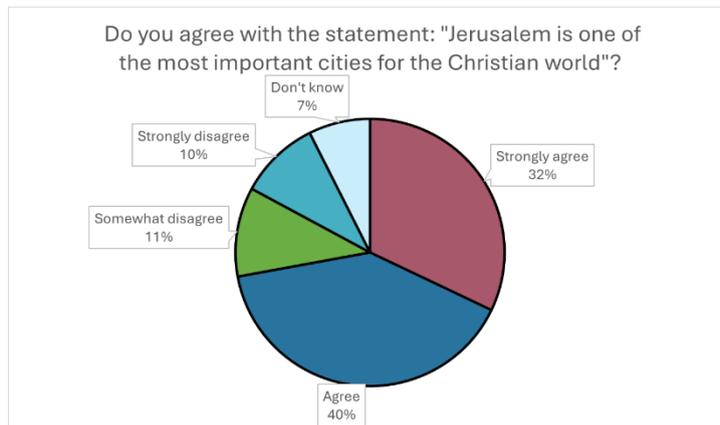


Should the New Testament be taught about in schools in Israel?



Another survey question examined respondents’ perceptions of the status of Jerusalem in the Christian world, a question that may appear to test knowledge but largely reflects underlying attitudes. Respondents were asked whether they agree with the statement that Jerusalem is one of the most important cities for the Christian world. 72% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 20% disagreed. Lower levels of agreement were recorded among younger respondents, particularly those aged 18–34, compared with the other age groups.

A clear relationship also emerges between the level of religiosity and the degree of agreement with the statement. As religiosity increases, agreement with the claim that Jerusalem is one of the most important cities for the Christian world declines. Among Haredi respondents, opinions were nearly evenly divided, with 44% agreeing with the statement. In contrast, agreement was substantially higher among secular respondents, 86% of whom agreed that Jerusalem holds such importance for Christians.



These findings suggest that the question of Jerusalem’s importance to Christians is not perceived primarily as a matter of knowledge or familiarity with Christian holy sites, but rather as an expression of an ideological position that seeks to shape a symbolic reality in which the city is not understood as being shared or contested by other religious traditions.

In the 2008 survey, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement that Jerusalem is a central city for the Christian world. Despite the slight difference in wording, comparison of the responses indicates a significant increase in the level of agreement in 2025, across all religious groups, regarding Jerusalem as one of the most important cities in the Christian world.

2008 Do you agree or disagree that Jerusalem is a central city for the Christian world? 2025 Do you agree with the statement that Jerusalem is one of the most important cities in the Christian world?						
	Secular 2008	Secular 2025	Traditional 2008	Traditional 2025	Religious and ultra- Orthodox 2008	Religious and ultra- Orthodox 2025
Strongly agree+ agree	66%	86%	39%	69%	28%	48%
Strongly disagree + somewhat disagree	31%	10%	57%	22%	67%	48%

C. Changes in Jewish-Christian relations⁴

In the survey we conducted in 2008, we examined the awareness of Jews in Israel regarding changes

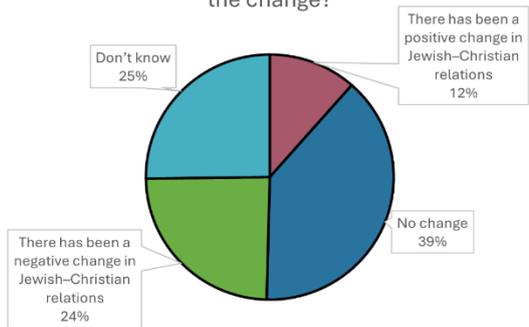
⁴ Over the past two years, many practitioners engaged in interreligious dialogue have found it difficult to sustain their regular activities. This challenge is largely linked to the war in Gaza following the Hamas attack on communities near the Gaza border on October 7, which deepened tensions among different religious communities in relation to developments in Israel and Palestine. In many cases, interreligious initiatives were suspended, while in others, dialogue continued in a more limited form. Criticism expressed by some Christian institutions regarding Israeli government policy, together with concerns about rising antisemitic incidents, has also influenced Israeli public attitudes and perceptions of Christian positions toward Israel and Jews.

in the Catholic Church’s position toward Jews, particularly since the promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate* declaration, whose 60th anniversary is marked this year. At that time, 40% of respondents assessed the Catholic Church’s attitude toward Jews as positive, while a similar proportion viewed it as negative. At the same time, 58% indicated that the Church’s attitude toward Jews had improved during the fifty years preceding the survey, including 20% who reported a significant improvement, whereas only 3% pointed to a deterioration.

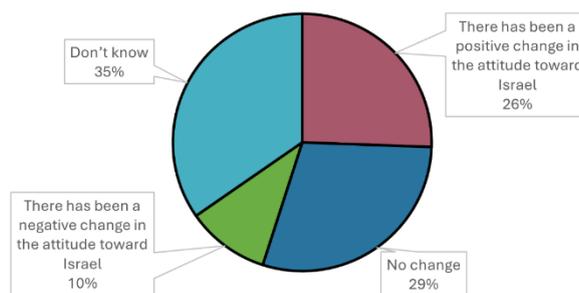
In contrast, the present survey indicates a decline in how Jews in Israel perceive Christian attitudes toward them. This finding was examined through two questions: one addressing Jewish–Christian relations in general following the events of October 7, and another focusing on the attitudes of Evangelical Christian Zionists toward Israel. Regarding the general question, only 11% of respondents believed that relations between Jews and Christians had improved since October 7, while 25% of Israeli Jews believed that relations had worsened. Religious and traditional respondents were somewhat more likely than average to report improvement, whereas higher proportions of secular and Haredi respondents indicated deterioration. Because the question did not distinguish between different Christian denominations, familiarity with the Evangelical Christian Zionist world, which expressed support for Israel and its government during the war, as well as the relationships cultivated by some religious communities with Evangelical Christians, may have influenced respondents’ views.

This interpretation is further supported by responses to the question that specifically addressed the attitudes of Evangelical Christian Zionists toward Israel since October 7. Here as well, traditional and religious respondents were more likely to report an improvement and less likely to report deterioration compared with secular and Haredi respondents. Overall, 25% of respondents indicated that the attitudes of Evangelical Christian Zionists toward Israel had improved, 10% reported a deterioration, and 35% stated that they did not know.

In your opinion, has there been a change in Jewish–Christian relations since October 7th, and if so, what is the change?



In your opinion, has there been a change in the attitude of Evangelical Christian Zionists toward Israel since October 7th, and if so, what is the change?



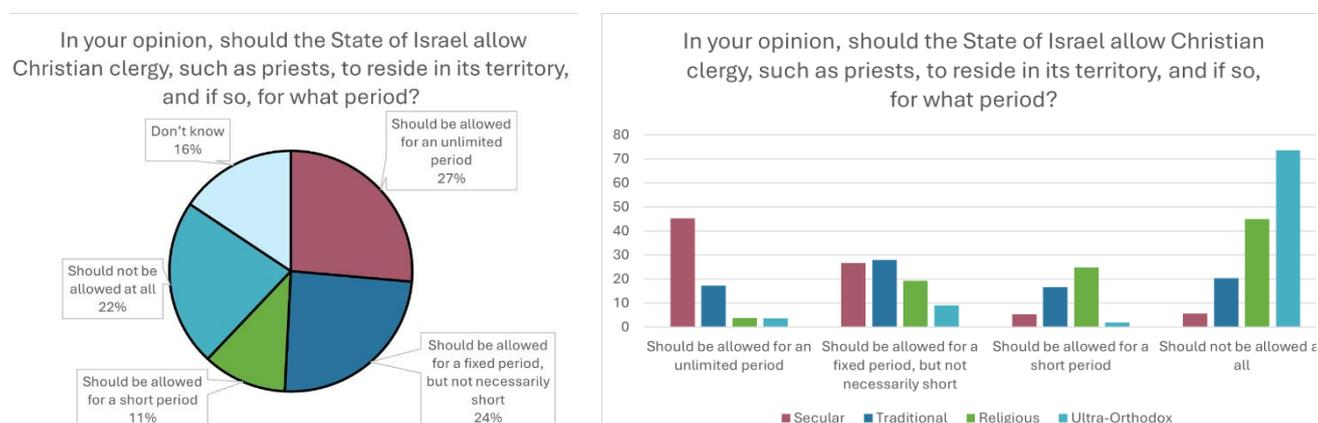
D. The Appropriate Policy of the Authorities toward Christians in Israel

Approximately 2,700 Christian clergy currently reside in the State of Israel, the majority of whom are not Israeli citizens. Israel allows non-citizen clergy to reside in the country through a residence permit, the A/3 clergy visa, which is granted for a period of up to one year or longer and can be renewed. This visa allows residence in Israel without conferring residency rights and without a formal limit on the number of renewals. For citizens of certain countries, its issuance is subject to security approval. In addition, churches also employ local clergy who hold Israeli citizenship or permanent

residency.⁵

The survey sought to examine the attitudes of Jewish Israelis regarding the conduct of state authorities toward Christian clergy living in the country. In response to the question of whether the State of Israel should allow Christian clergy to reside within its territory, 61% of respondents stated that the state should indeed permit clergy to live in Israel. However, only slightly more than one quarter believed that clergy should be allowed to reside for an unlimited period, while 11% supported allowing residence only for a limited and short period. By contrast, 22% of respondents stated that Christian clergy should not be allowed to reside in the country at all.

In this context, very significant differences were found according to the respondents' level of religiosity. Among Haredi respondents, 73.6% believed that clergy should not be allowed to reside in Israel under any circumstances, compared with 45% among religious respondents, while among secular respondents, this proportion drops to only 5.7%.



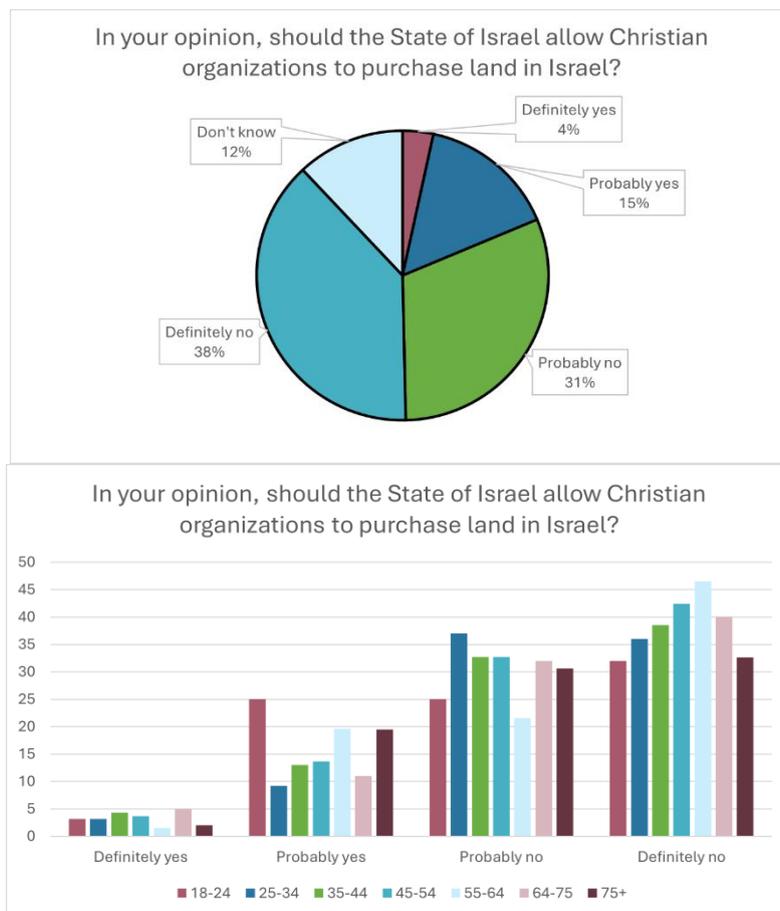
Another survey question examined public attitudes toward the possibility of Christian institutions purchasing land in Israel. It is important to note that the question did not specify the purpose of such purchases, whether for the construction of churches, residential buildings, educational institutions, or hospitals. Nor did it clarify the identity of the potential buyers, that is, whether they were clergy, foreign Christian organizations, or local Christian institutions.

The findings indicate that 70% of respondents believed that the state should not allow Christian institutions to purchase land in Israel, including 38% who stated that they were "certain" that such purchases should not be permitted. By contrast, 19% of respondents believed that Christian institutions should be allowed to purchase land, and only 3.4% indicated that they were certain of this position.

In this question, the distribution of responses differed from the typical pattern observed across age groups. Among the youngest respondents, aged 18–24, 28% indicated that Christian institutions should be allowed to purchase land, while the proportion of opponents in this group was 15% lower than in the overall sample. By contrast, among older age groups, particularly those aged 44–64, a higher proportion of respondents indicated that they were certain the state should not permit land

⁵ According to data published by the Israel Population and Immigration Authority, in 2024 there were 2,296 clergy in Israel holding an A/3 clergy visa, alongside additional clergy who hold permanent resident status and students. The report also notes a 33% decrease in the number of A/3 visa holders compared with 2023. See Israel Population and Immigration Authority, *Summary Report 2024*, Table 2 (Hebrew), https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/summary_2024_report/he/summary2024.pdf

purchases by Christian institutions.



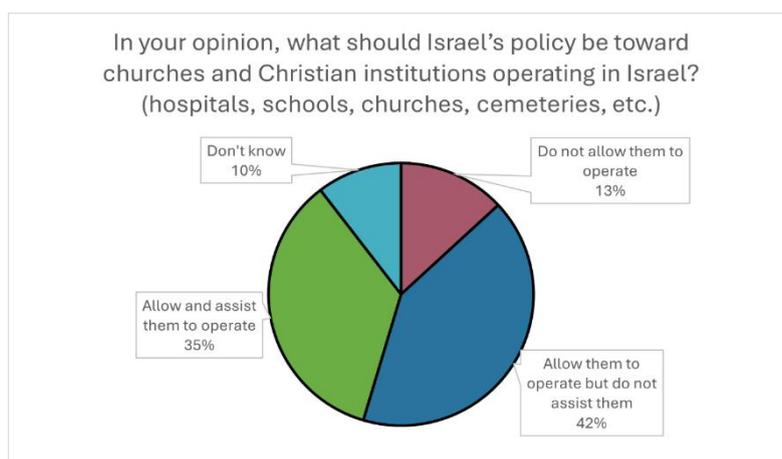
Church institutions in Israel provide a range of services to both their communities and the broader public. These include religious activities, youth and community programs, as well as educational, medical, and social welfare institutions. Churches operate Arabic-language schools classified as “recognized but unofficial,” which follow the Ministry of Education curriculum and receive partial state funding, serving both Christian and Muslim citizens of Israel.

Christian institutions also run hospitals, hospices, and facilities for people with disabilities that serve the general public. Through these activities, they provide complementary and at times alternative services to those offered by the state in the fields of education, health, and social welfare, and therefore operate under the supervision and limited funding frameworks of the relevant government ministries. In addition, churches provide services to pilgrims, including accommodation, meals, and spiritual support.

Respondents’ answers to the question, “In your opinion, what should be Israel’s policy toward churches and Christian institutions operating in the State of Israel?” indicate that a majority of Israeli Jews, 76%, believe that these institutions should be allowed to operate. Within this group, responses were almost evenly divided between those who believe that the state should both allow and support their activities and those who believe that they should be allowed to operate but without state support. A relatively small minority, 13%, believed that these institutions should not be allowed to operate at all; however, this proportion rises to 43% among the Haredi population. Among religious and Haredi respondents, support for providing state assistance to such institutions is particularly low,

amounting to only a few percentage points.

In comparison with the 2008 survey, a moderate trend of improvement can be observed. The proportion of respondents who believe that the activities of Christian institutions should be restricted has declined, with some respondents shifting toward supporting the continued existence of these institutions without state support. This shift appears across all religious groups and may be associated with increased exposure to the activities of Christian institutions that provide services to the broader population.



A fundamental question concerning the relationship between the state and its Christian citizens addressed the issue of protecting freedom of religion and conscience. Israel's Declaration of Independence states that "The State of Israel ... it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience."⁶ Repeated rulings of the Israeli Supreme Court have established that freedom of religion and conscience is encompassed within the rights protected by Israel Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.⁷ Against this background, the survey examined the attitudes of Jewish Israelis toward the freedom of religion and conscience of Christian citizens, specifically whether they believe the state is obligated to guarantee this freedom.

The data indicate that 33% of Jews in Israel strongly agree with the statement, "The State of Israel must guarantee freedom of religion and conscience for its Christian citizens," while an additional 40% reported that they somewhat agree with this statement. By contrast, 20% of the respondents do not agree that the state is obligated to guarantee freedom of religion and conscience for its Christian citizens.

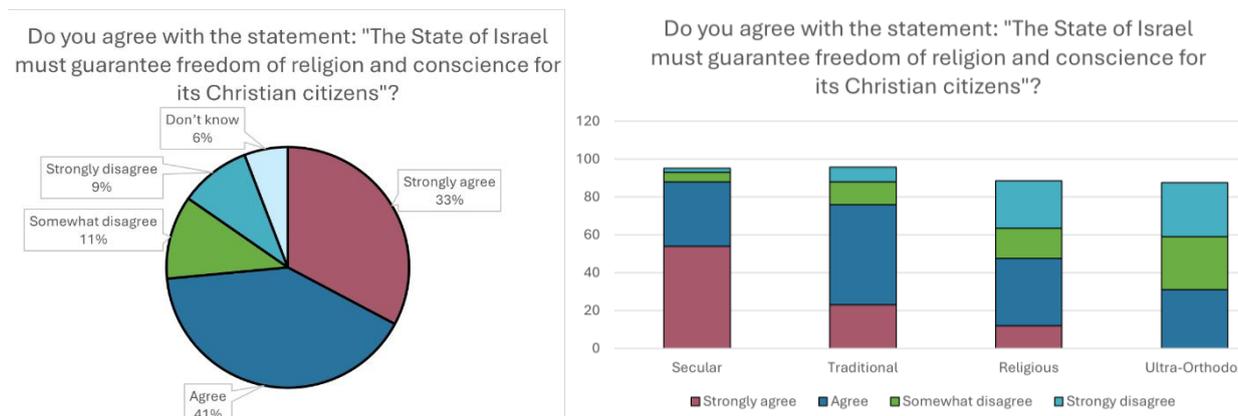
Breakdown by level of religiosity reveals substantial differences. Among religious respondents, 41.5% reported that they either strongly disagree or somewhat disagree that the state is obligated to guarantee freedom of religion and conscience for Christian citizens. Among Haredi respondents, this proportion rises to 57%. These findings are similar to those of a parallel survey conducted in 2008 and indicate a relatively stable pattern of public attitudes over time.

However, a comparison between respondents who were aged 18–29 in 2008 and the same cohort today, now aged 35–44, shows an increase in the proportion who believe that the state is obligated to protect the freedom of religion and conscience of Christians. When they were younger, their views

⁶ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx>

⁷ <https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawLiberty.pdf>

were almost identical to those currently held by respondents aged 18–24.



E. Attitudes of Jewish Israelis toward the Christian Population in Israel (Non-Arab)

The survey sought to examine the level of public sensitivity toward Christian symbols and toward everyday encounters with Christians. In particular, it aimed to assess the extent to which phenomena such as spitting at clergy, whether motivated by religious considerations or by nationalist sentiments, reflect attitudes prevalent within the broader public ⁸.

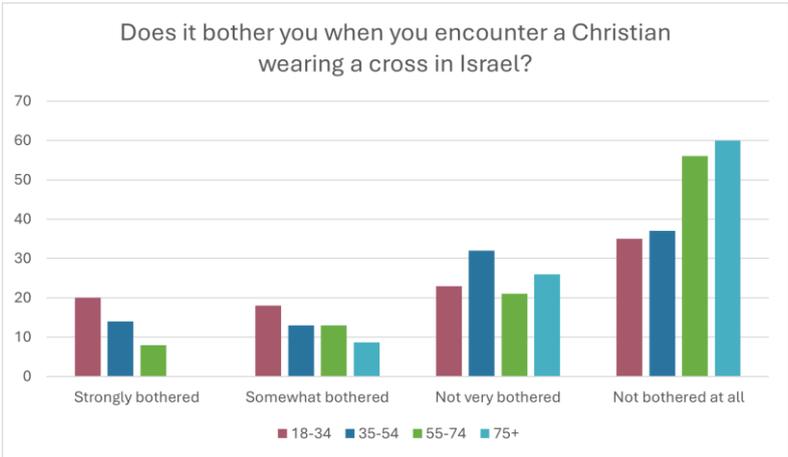
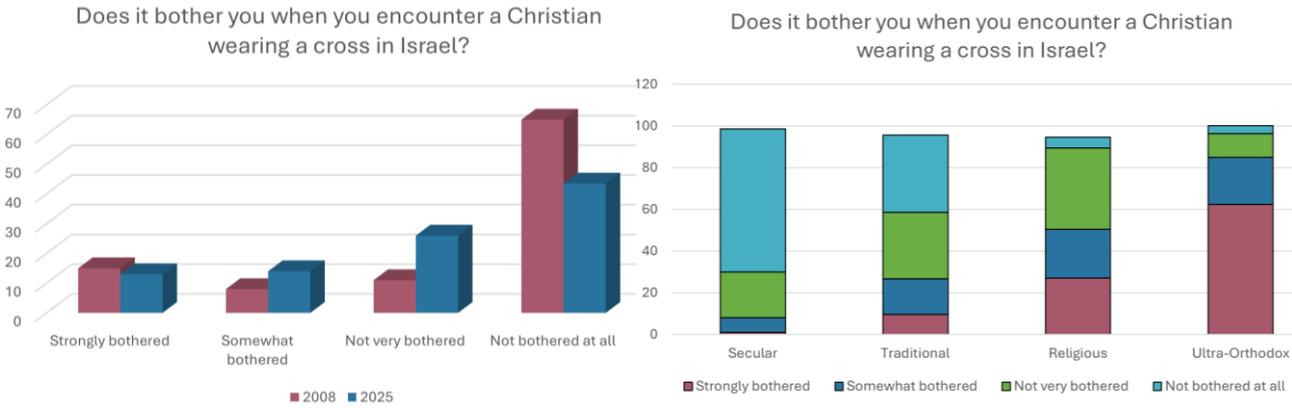
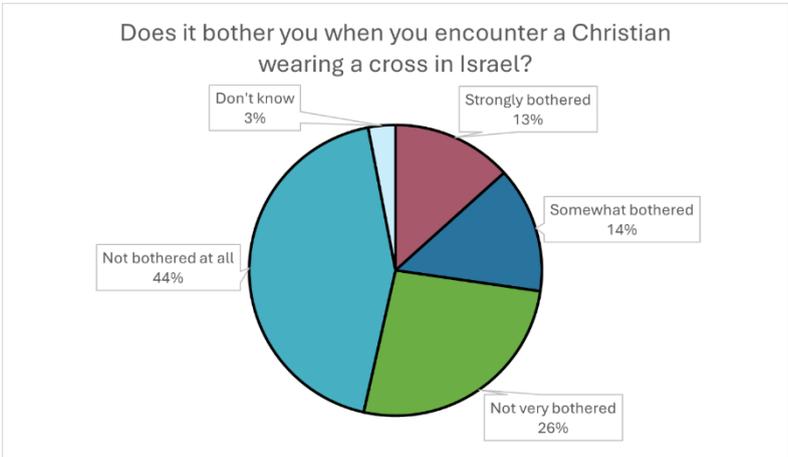
According to the survey data, 70% of Jews in Israel report no discomfort when encountering a Christian wearing a cross in public. By contrast, 13.3% of respondents reported that they are strongly bothered by such an encounter. A breakdown by level of religiosity reveals sharp differences: among religious respondents, 25% reported that they are strongly bothered, while among Haredi respondents the proportion rises to 62.3%.

Comparison with data from the 2008 survey does not show a significant shift in the overall distribution between the categories bothered and not bothered. However, a change can be observed in the intensity of attitudes. Across all groups, responses shifted from more extreme positions toward more moderate ones, moving from not bothered at all to not very bothered. This trend appears both among secular respondents and among Haredi respondents. At the same time, even among groups generally associated with relatively liberal positions, notable levels of discomfort were recorded: 10% of center-left voters and 15% of respondents with academic education indicated that they are somewhat bothered when seeing a Christian wearing a cross in public.

In addition, an age-based analysis shows that younger respondents, aged 18–34, expressed higher

⁸ The harassment of Christians and attacks on Christian institutions and symbols have received increasing public and scholarly attention in recent years, in light of a noticeable rise both in the number of incidents and in their severity. It should be noted, however, that the systematic collection of data on these incidents began only in 2023 and remains limited, and therefore does not necessarily reflect the full scope of the phenomenon. Analyses presented in reports published by the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue have identified connections between the political climate, a broader rise in levels of violence across various public spheres, the limited effectiveness of law enforcement and authorities in addressing the issue, all of which contribute to the increase in such incidents.

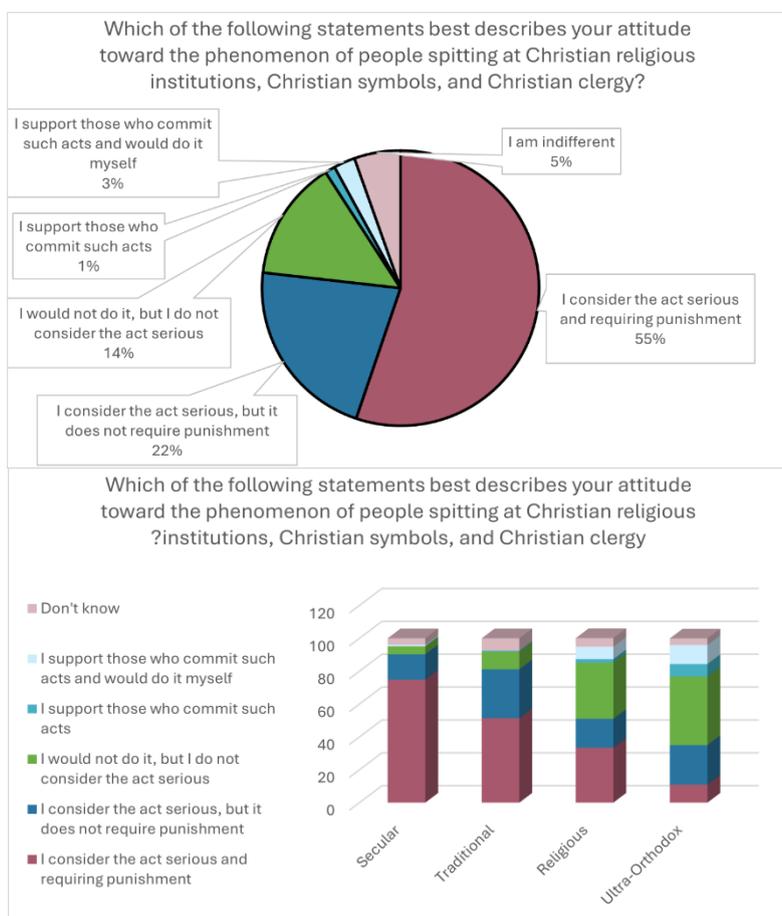
levels of discomfort with the wearing of a cross compared with older age groups. A cohort comparison between respondents aged 18–29 in 2008 and the same group today, now aged 35–44, indicates an increase in religious tolerance over time. When they were younger, 45% reported that seeing a cross bothered them, while 52% reported that it did not bother them. Today, among the same cohort aged 35–44, only 27% report that it bothers them, while 68% report that it does **not** bother them. This finding suggests that religious tolerance tends to increase with age.



The survey examined the attitudes of Jewish Israelis toward the phenomenon of spitting at Christians. The findings indicate that more than half of Jewish respondents in Israel regard the act as serious and believe it should be punishable. An additional 22% consider it a serious act but one that does not warrant punishment. At the same time, 14% of respondents stated that it is not a serious act, although they would not engage in it themselves. In addition, 4% of Jews in Israel expressed support for those who spit at Christians, and some of them reported that they themselves engage in such behavior. A further 5% indicated that the issue does not concern them, either because they have not formed a clear opinion or because they are indifferent to the phenomenon.

A report published by the Rossing Center⁹ found that all identified perpetrators display a religious appearance and primarily belong to Haredi and Hardal (Haredi-nationalist religious) communities. This pattern is also reflected in the survey data. Among Haredi respondents, 20% expressed support for the phenomenon, and 12% reported that they themselves would spit. In addition, 8% of Haredim expressed support for those who carry out such acts, while only 11% view spitting as a serious act that requires punishment. Among religious respondents, 9% expressed support for the phenomenon, whereas no active support was recorded among traditional or secular respondents. Nevertheless, only 50% of traditional respondents and 33% of religious respondents view the phenomenon as a serious act requiring punishment.

An analysis by age group suggests that the survey findings reflect patterns observed in practice, where the phenomenon appears more common among younger individuals. Thus, more than one in ten respondents in the 18–24 age group either expressed support for the phenomenon or reported that they themselves would spit. Finally, a clear difference in attitudes emerges along political lines: 68% of center-left voters consider spitting a serious act that requires punishment, compared with only 48% of right-wing voters.



In the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union arrived in Israel. The gap between the Law of Return, which allows immigration to Israel for anyone with a Jewish grandparent, and the system of registration in the population registry, which follows Orthodox halakhic criteria based solely on maternal descent, led many immigrants to register as having “without religion.” This category also included many non-Jewish spouses of immigrants. Today, more

⁹ The annual report for 2024 <https://rossingcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Web-Harrasment-christians-in-jlem-report-ENG-2024.pdf>

than half a million citizens in Israel are registered as “without religion.” It is likely that some among them are Christian believers and may maintain a Christian way of life. Over the years, individuals who were previously registered as “without religion,” or even as Jews, have begun to express their Christian identity more openly and publicly.

The 2008 survey examined Jewish attitudes in Israel toward Christians who immigrated from the former Soviet Union. In the current survey, however, attitudes are examined toward Christians integrated into Jewish–Israeli society without reference to their origin in the former Soviet Union, reflecting the fact that many now belong to the second and third generations of immigrants.

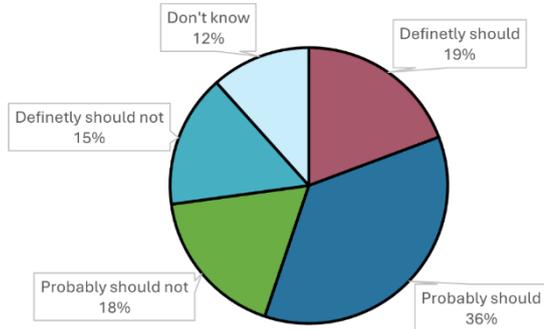
The findings of the current survey indicate that about 33% of Jews in Israel believe that Christians who immigrated under the Law of Return should not be allowed to hold Christian religious ceremonies in Israel. Among religious and Haredi respondents, about 64% and 75%, respectively, hold this view. Significant differences also appear according to political orientation: while only 43% of right-wing voters believe that Christians should be allowed to conduct religious ceremonies, this proportion rises to 76% among left-wing voters. A comparison between responses given by individuals aged 18–29 in 2008 and their responses today, now aged 35–44, shows an increase in religious tolerance. In 2008, 52% believed that immigrants from the former Soviet Union who defined themselves as Christians should not be allowed to conduct religious worship, whereas among the same cohort today this proportion has declined to 39%.

Regarding the question of whether the Israel Defense Forces should allow soldiers who identify as Christians to swear their oath on the New Testament,¹⁰ a question with practical implications for freedom of religion within the military framework, the overall data show a similar pattern. About half of the respondents believe this should be allowed, while 31% oppose it. Compared with the 2008 data, there is no substantial change in overall public attitudes. However, a slight decline is observed in the level of general opposition, alongside a moderate increase among traditional and secular respondents supporting freedom of worship and the option of swearing on the New Testament instead of the Hebrew Bible. The relatively broad level of support on this issue suggests a growing willingness within the Jewish public in Israel to allow a degree of religious flexibility within the framework of military service.¹¹

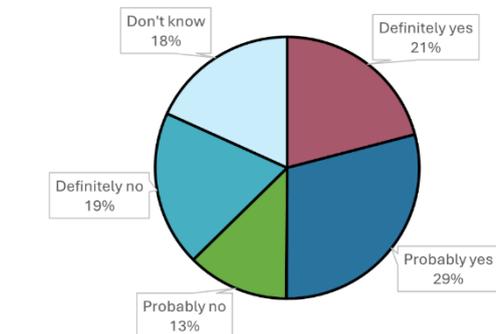
¹⁰Since the early years of the Israel Defence Forces, the practice has gradually become institutionalized whereby the Military Rabbinate provides units with copies of the Hebrew Bible for Jewish soldiers participating in oath ceremonies. In the 1990s, as the religious composition of the army became more diverse, New Testaments began to be distributed to Christian soldiers during the ceremony, Qur’ans to Muslim soldiers, and a medal bearing an image or engraving of the Tomb of Jethro (Nabi Shu’ayb) to Druze soldiers. <https://heb.hartman.org.il/religion-in-idf-swearing-in/> (Hebrew)

¹¹The question refers specifically to the New Testament. According to testimonies from soldiers, in many cases, the military provides a book containing only the New Testament. At times, however, soldiers request a volume that includes both the Old and the New Testaments together.

In your opinion, should Christians who immigrated to Israel under the Law of Return be allowed to hold Christian religious ceremonies in the country?



In your opinion, should the IDF allow soldiers who identify as Christians to take their oath on the New Testament instead of the Hebrew Bible?



F. Attitudes toward Arab Christians

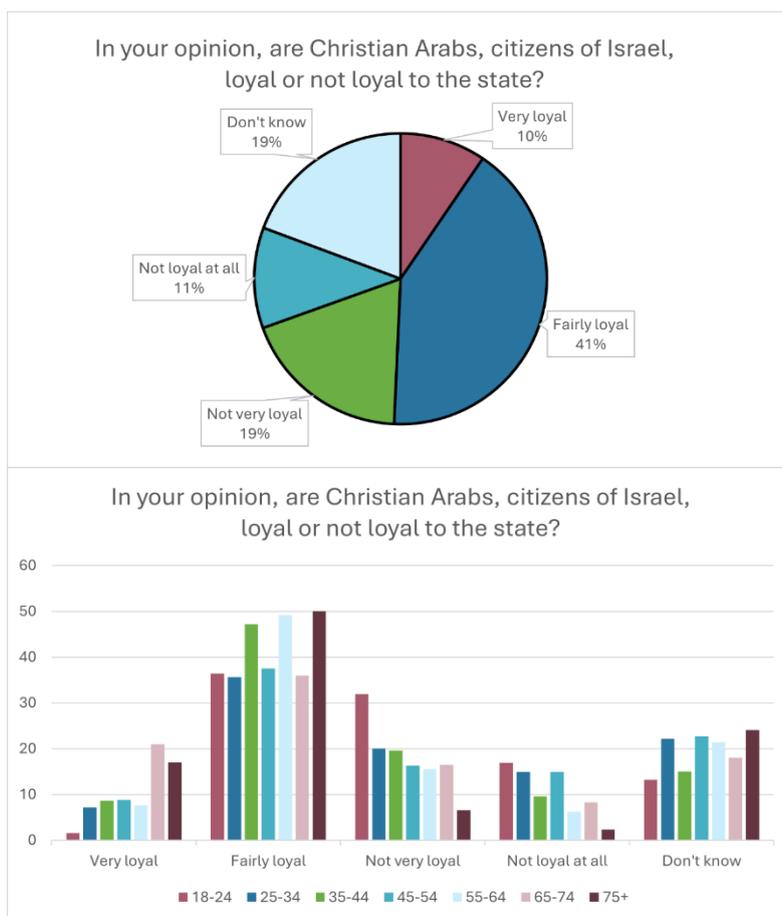
Several questions in the survey focused on Jewish attitudes in Israel toward Arab Christians, citizens of the State of Israel as well as residents of East Jerusalem.¹² According to data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, approximately 141,000 Arab Christians currently live in Israel. Most reside in the Galilee, in mixed localities inhabited by Christians and Muslims, as well as in cities such as Nof HaGalil, Acre, Haifa, Ramla, Lod, and Jerusalem, cities characterized by varying degrees of social integration among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim populations. It should be noted that Palestinian Christians residing in Jerusalem are not citizens of the state but hold permanent resident status. While numerous surveys have examined Jewish public attitudes toward Arabs in general, this study sought to focus specifically on attitudes toward Arab Christians.

The findings indicate that approximately half of Jewish respondents believe that Arab Christians are loyal to the State of Israel. However, only 10% respondents consider them to be very loyal, while the remainder characterize their loyalty as “fairly loyal.” Conversely, one in ten respondents believes that Arab Christians are not loyal at all. Nearly 20% of respondents selected the option “I do not know,” a response that may reflect unfamiliarity, uncertainty, or a lack of interest in the issue.

Among the youngest age group, respondents aged 18–24, lower levels of trust are evident, consistent with patterns observed in other questions in the survey. In this case, not only is the proportion of respondents who believe that Arab Christians are not loyal to the state significantly higher than the overall average, 49% in this age group compared with 30% in the overall sample, but the proportion selecting the “I do not know” response is relatively low. This finding suggests that younger respondents tend to adopt more decisive positions. At the same time, a longitudinal comparison indicates a moderation of attitudes over time. In 2008, among respondents aged 18–29, only 37% viewed Arab Christians as loyal to the state, while 60% believed they were not loyal. Today, when the same cohort falls within the 35–44 age group, the proportion viewing Arab Christians as loyal has risen to 55%, while the share who believe they are not loyal has declined to 29%. This shift indicates

¹² The survey refers to Arab Christians who are citizens of Israel (often also described as Palestinian citizens of Israel or “1948 Arabs”). For consistency, the term “Arab Christians” used in the questionnaire is retained throughout the analysis, without implying a preference for any particular identity. Residents of East Jerusalem generally hold permanent residency status rather than citizenship, although a minority have obtained Israeli citizenship, and many identify as Palestinians from Jerusalem.

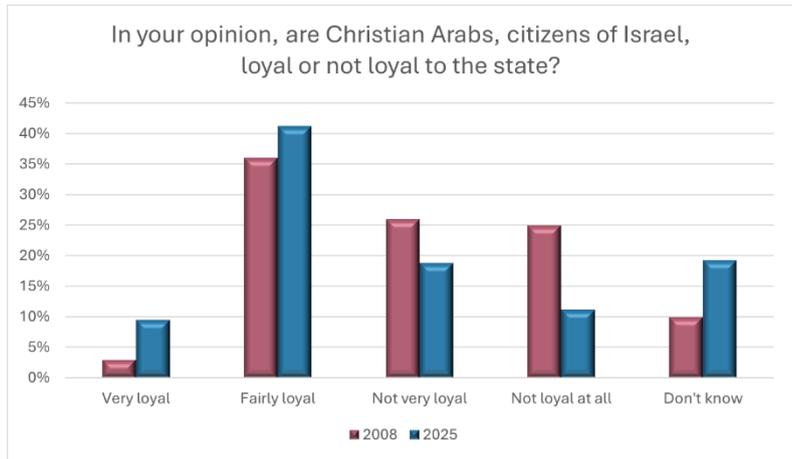
an increase in trust over time.



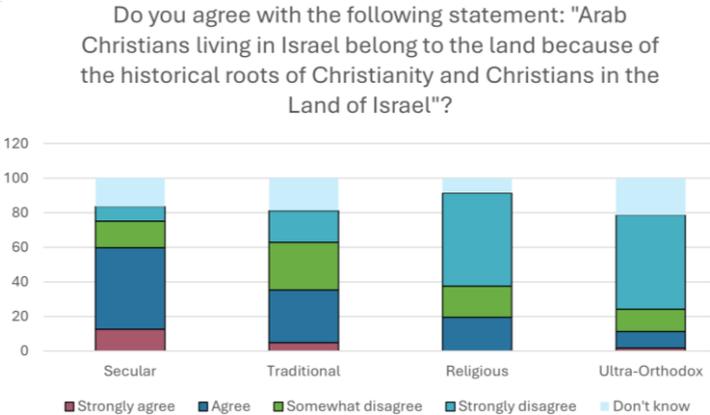
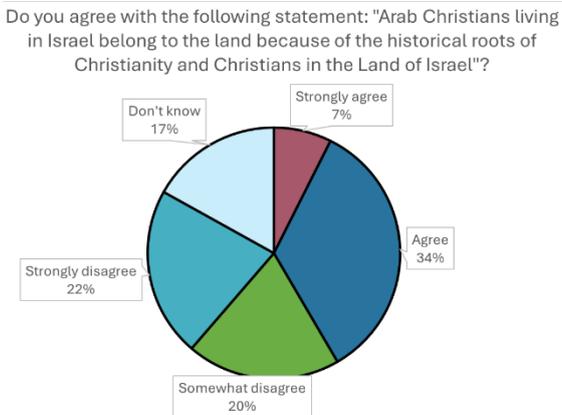
Compared with data from 2008, a positive and significant shift is evident in Jewish attitudes toward Arab Christians in Israel. This change is reflected in an increase in the proportion of respondents who believe that Arab Christians are loyal to the state. The share of respondents expressing this view rose from 39% in 2008 to 50% in the current survey. At the same time, the proportion of Jews who perceived Arab Christians as a disloyal group declined—from approximately half of the respondents in 2008 to only 30% in the current survey.

Substantial differences between the two surveys are evident across all religious groups. Among religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews, the proportion who believed that Arab Christians are not loyal to the state declined from 68% in 2008 to 45% in 2025. Among secular Jews, an even sharper decrease was recorded, from 41% to 17.7%.

These findings may reflect, on the one hand, an increase in familiarity with and awareness of the Arab Christian population in Israel, and a growing acceptance of this group as part of Israel’s civil society.



However, the picture becomes more complex when examining responses to an additional question: “Do you agree with the following statement: 'Arab Christians living in Israel belong to the land because of the historical roots of Christianity and Christians in the Land of Israel’? Only 7.4% of respondents indicated that they strongly agree with this statement, and among the religious and ultra-Orthodox public not a single respondent expressed full agreement. Nevertheless, 34% of respondents in the overall sample indicated that they “somewhat agree” with the statement. When analyzed by age, a particularly notable finding emerges: 25% of the respondents aged 75 and above selected the response “I do not know.” This result points to a degree of uncertainty or distance regarding the question of the historical roots and collective identity of Arab Christians in Israel.



It is interesting to compare these findings with data from a general survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute in 2025.¹³ In this survey, Jewish respondents in Israel were asked whether an Arab citizen of Israel who sees himself as an integral part of the Palestinian people can nevertheless be a loyal citizen of the state. The findings indicate that 2.8% of respondents believed that this is “certainly possible,” while 13.2% stated that it is “possible.” In contrast, 24.6% indicated that they do not believe this is possible, and 54.5% responded that it is not possible at all.¹⁴

In the **Israeli Democracy Index**, the researchers note that following the events of October 7 there has been a marked deterioration in the attitudes of both Jews and Arabs regarding the possibility of a complex identity that combines civic loyalty with Palestinian national belonging. Within the Jewish

¹³Hermann, Tamar; Yohanan, Lior; Kaplan, Yaron; Spoznikov, Inna; Orly,. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2025*. Jerusalem: Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, Israel Democracy Institute, 2025). Available at: https://en.idi.org.il/media/30427/the-israeli-democracy-index-2025-full-english-version.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁴ See also p. 26

public, the decline in the proportion of those who believe that such a complex identity is possible continued in 2025 as well. This finding points to a deepening polarization and a hardening of attitudes in the context of majority–minority relations in Israel.

In this context, it is instructive to compare these findings with a survey conducted by the **Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue** in December 2024 among Arab/Palestinian Christians, which examined their perceptions of acceptance within Jewish society in Israel. The findings indicate that one-third of the respondents reported that they feel Jewish society accepts Arab/Palestinian Christians as part of Israeli society, while another third stated that they do not experience such social acceptance. A similar distribution was found with regard to the level of agreement with the statement: “I feel that my identity as an Arab/Palestinian Christian affects my access to employment opportunities and professional advancement within the state or within institutions associated with the state.” This finding reflects a perception of complex identity and experiences that combine elements of inclusion alongside feelings of exclusion in professional contexts and in interactions with state institutions¹⁵.

The issue of emigration from Israel is a matter of concern for both Jewish society and Arab/Palestinian society, particularly for the Christian population.¹⁶ In a survey we conducted in December 2024 among Arab Christians, 32% of respondents indicated that they are considering emigrating from Israel. The primary reasons cited were a decline in their sense of personal security and the prevailing socio-political realities. Against the background of these findings, Jews in Israel were asked what they believe should be the appropriate position of the Israeli government regarding the emigration of Arab Christians from the country. The data indicate that 25% of respondents believe that the state should take action to encourage emigration, while 19% believe that steps should be taken to reduce the phenomenon. In contrast, 41% of respondents think that the state should refrain from adopting any position or taking action on the matter.

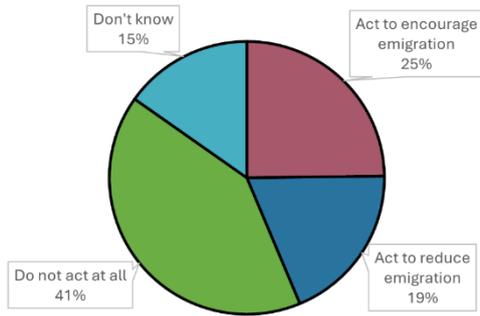
A breakdown by religious identity shows that among the religious and ultra-Orthodox public, half of the respondents or more believe that the state should act to encourage emigration. This finding points to significant differences in public perceptions regarding the state’s responsibility and the social and national implications of emigration.

Young adults aged 18–24 constitute the age group with the highest proportion of respondents who believe that the state should act to reduce emigration, compared with all other age groups. Compared with a similar question asked in 2008, there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of respondents supporting action to reduce emigration. This finding is consistent with the improvement observed in Jewish society’s perception of Arab Christian citizens of Israel and with the more positive attitudes toward them in recent years.

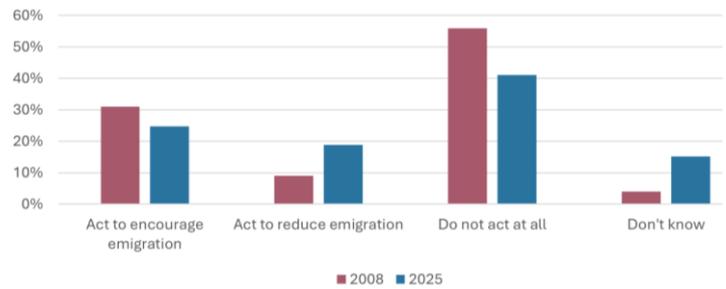
¹⁵ <https://rossingcenter.org/survey-among-local-christians-in-israel-and-east-jerusalem/>

¹⁶ The migration of Arab Christians is associated with a wider range of opportunities, partly due to their close connections with the Christian world and the presence of many relatives in diaspora communities.

In recent years, there has been a phenomenon of Christian Arabs emigrating from Israel abroad. In your opinion, what should the position of the Israeli government be?



In recent years, there has been a phenomenon of Christian Arabs emigrating from Israel abroad. In your opinion, what should the position of the Israeli government be?



Finally, we sought to compare the way Arab Christians who are citizens of Israel define their own identity with the way Jews in Israel perceive how Arab Christians define their identity. Since the interviews were conducted in different languages, no significance was attributed to the order of words in the identity definitions provided.

The findings indicate that among the Jewish public as well, Christian identity is perceived as the dominant component of Arab Christians' identity, with 72% of Jewish respondents identifying it as a central element of their identity. At the same time, a small gap was found between the degree of Palestinian identification expressed by Arab Christians themselves and the way Jews perceive their identification as Palestinians.

Identity	Survey among Jews in September 2025	Survey among Arab/Palestinian Christians December 2024
Arab-Christian	39.1%	34%
Israeli-Christian	16.5%	23%
Christian	9.2%	7%
Palestinian Christian	8.1%	13%
Israel	4.7%	האופציה לא ניתנה
Palestinian	3.4%	9%
Arab	2.6%	11%
Local identity	The option was not given	4%
Don't know	16.4%	The option was not given

Conclusions

The survey indicates that attitudes toward Christianity and Christians in Israel cannot be reduced merely to questions of tolerance or willingness to recognize minority rights. Rather, they are rooted in deeper historical, theological, and political layers that shape how the Jewish public perceives Christianity and its place in the local context. In this regard, education emerges as a particularly significant variable: as levels of education increase—especially in the case of higher academic education—there is a greater tendency toward openness, curiosity, and interest in Christianity and Christians. This pattern suggests that critical thinking and broader familiarity with cultural and religious worlds contribute to the reduction of prejudice.

At the same time, one of the most consistent and striking findings concerns the role of age. The younger the respondents, the more negative their attitudes tend to be. Younger respondents demonstrate less willingness for social proximity, less interest, and lower levels of openness toward equality and tolerance. This finding points to a concerning generational gap that may be related to limited exposure to Christianity within the education system and in the public sphere, and in some cases also to exposure to distorted or inflammatory content on social media rather than to informed and mediated knowledge.

At the same time, Israeli society appears to exhibit a gap between principled support for individual rights and freedom of religion and conscience, and reservations when Christianity is perceived as having broader public influence or a significant institutional presence. In other words, while there is a willingness to accept Christians as citizens and individuals entitled to protection and religious freedom, caution—and at times opposition—emerges when the discussion shifts from the individual level to the public and state sphere.

Nevertheless, spaces of social acceptance can also be identified. Most of the public is not troubled by Christian symbols in the public sphere, such as the wearing of a cross, although a significant group still expresses discomfort, particularly among younger respondents and those with stronger religious identification. In this context, another important finding is the existence of a relatively broad consensus against incidents of spitting toward Christians and clergy. The majority of respondents view this behavior as serious and, in some cases, as warranting punishment. This positions public opposition to the phenomenon as a potential leverage point for social and institutional action, since emphasizing the issue in public discourse may help generate broader delegitimization of such acts and reduce their prevalence, especially given the harm they cause to the local Christian community and to Israel's international image.

Within the broader framework of majority–minority relations, the survey also points to an improvement in attitudes toward Arab Christians and an increased recognition of their loyalty to the state, a trend that is evident when compared with the past. However, this improvement is accompanied by a degree of complexity. Younger respondents tend to hold more decisive—and at times more suspicious—views regarding the loyalty of Arab Christians, positions that are not necessarily grounded in in-depth knowledge but rather in social and political perceptions and identities. In addition, the Jewish public tends to perceive the identity of Arab Christians primarily through a religious lens—as “Christian Arabs”—and less frequently as part of a broader Arab identity or Palestinian identification. This illustrates how perceptions of minority groups are shaped by the categories to which the majority gives priority.

Finally, one of the most decisive axes for understanding the findings is the relationship between religious identity and political orientation. As levels of religiosity increase, attitudes toward Christianity and Christians tend to become more negative, more distant, and more suspicious, often reflecting concerns about missionary activity, theological reservations, and a desire to preserve clear boundaries of collective identity. This trend is further reinforced as political orientation shifts toward

the right. In this context, it is important to note that if the presence of individuals with strong religious identities continues to grow within centers of power and public institutions, this may have cumulative implications for policy, public discourse, and the degree of legitimacy afforded to Christian presence in Israel. Accordingly, understanding these social dynamics is not merely descriptive; it also provides a basis for considering educational, public, and institutional initiatives that could promote a more inclusive civic space, while reducing violent fringe phenomena and strengthening norms of mutual respect and freedom of religion.

Policy Recommendations

- 1. Early educational exposure to Christianity as part of civic education for tolerance**
Since younger respondents demonstrate greater social distance and lower levels of familiarity, it is recommended to incorporate components of basic knowledge about Christianity—both in Israel and globally—into educational curricula. These may include historical background, cultural traditions, local Christian communities, and significant sites. Such content should be framed as civic and cultural knowledge rather than as religious instruction.
- 2. Distinguishing between “learning about” and “teaching the”**
Given the relatively high level of resistance to teaching Christianity and the New Testament, it is advisable to begin with content that is not perceived as theologically threatening—such as basic concepts, Christian holidays, local history, and the social contributions of Christian institutions. Over time, this approach may help build public trust and strengthen pedagogical capacity.
- 3. Developing digital literacy and addressing online incitement**
As young people are often exposed to information through social media platforms, it is important to expand educational programs that promote critical thinking, the identification of disinformation, and an understanding of the mechanisms of incitement. Such initiatives can help address negative attitudes that are not grounded in substantive knowledge.
- 4. Leveraging the public consensus against spitting incidents for civic and institutional action**
It is recommended to highlight the survey findings in public and media discourse in order to clarify that such behavior represents a marginal phenomenon that does not reflect the views of the majority. At the same time, consistent law enforcement, official condemnation, and targeted training programs for educators and local authorities should be encouraged.
- 5. Strengthening direct familiarity with Christians in Israel**
Since personal acquaintance is associated with reduced hostility—and the lack of such familiarity is particularly pronounced in certain groups—it is recommended to promote initiatives such as student encounters, municipal projects, and guided visits to Christian sites. These activities can help reduce stereotyping and foster greater interest and understanding.

Methodology:

The survey was conducted in September 2025 by Midgam. It had been Almost 2 years since the 7th of October attack and the war in Gaza, which had created broad tensions between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

The survey included a sample of 500 Jewish respondents, the possible error rate ranges between $\pm 5.5\%$.

The database preparation process was carefully done to ensure that the study sample represents the target group. The sample was randomly selected considering age, gender, religious affiliation, education and political orientation.

The sample included 216 Secular Jews, 175 Traditional, 56 Religious (Dati), and 52 Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) . It included 240 males and 259 females.



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