

Report says anti-Semitism on the rise in Europe

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Days after a lone gunman murdered a rabbi and three children at a Jewish school in Toulouse, France, a new study reports widespread anti-Semitism in France and across Europe.

The survey, completed in January and released Tuesday by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, finds that 24 percent of the French population holds anti-Semitic views, up from 20 percent in 2009.

When asked if violence against Jews is rooted in anti-Jewish or anti-Israel sentiment, four in 10 Europeans (39 percent) responded that it was the result of anti-Jewish sentiment.

In France, 45 percent of those asked held this view, up from 39 percent in the previous survey.

"Those increases are all the more disturbing in light of the shooting attack at the Jewish school in Toulouse," said Abraham H. Foxman, ADL national director of the Monday (March 19) shootings in France.

About half a million Jews live in France, less than 1 percent of the population and the largest Jewish population in western Europe.

The survey of 5,000 Europeans across 10 countries also asked whether Jews are more loyal to Israel than their own country, wield too much power in the business world, and talk too much about the Holocaust.

The survey found particularly high levels of anti-Semitism in three nations.

"In Hungary, Spain and Poland, the numbers for anti-Semitic attitudes are literally off the charts and demand a serious response from political, civic and religious leaders," said Foxman.

-- In Spain, where Jewish civic groups say Spaniards blame their economic woes on the country's Jews, 72 percent of the population holds anti-Jewish views, compared with 64 percent in 2009.

-- In Hungary, 63 percent of the population holds anti-Semitic views, up from 47 percent in 2009.

-- In Poland, 48 percent show anti-Semitic attitudes, about the same as 2009.

By comparison, attitudes toward Jews in the United States are far more positive. The most recent ADL study, completed in October, found 15 percent of the population holds anti-Semitic views.

Still, nearly one in five Americans at the time said Jews probably have too much influence on Wall Street, a significant uptick from the previous study. As in other countries, tough economic times in the U.S foment age-old myths about Jewish control of the economy, the authors said.

About 6.5 million Jews live in the United States, about 2 percent of the population. The European survey has a margin of error of between 4.4 and 4.9 percentage points, depending on the country.