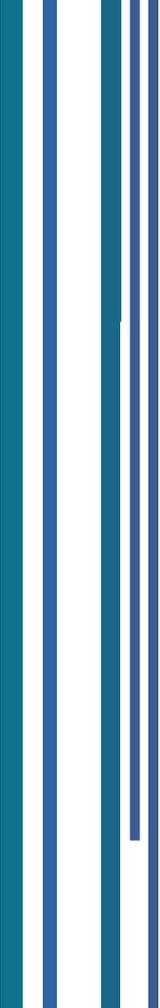




Identity à la Carte

Research on Jewish Identities,
participation and affiliation in
five Eastern European countries



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participation and affiliation in five
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Foreword

You have in your hands or on your screen the result of a long process—both ideological and practical—that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and its European research arm, the JDC International Centre for Community Development at Oxford (JDC-ICCD) embarked upon years ago.

This survey's ideological origins lie in the firm belief among European Jews—and especially those of Eastern and Central Europe—that a new generation seeks self-expression in myriad ways. In the era of post-Berlin Wall modernity, young and not-so-young Jews are developing a profile distinct from that of Jews who grew up during the Cold War.

Our objective was to identify this/these identity/identities, to analyze their boundaries and to extract the most relevant information for the public, and—most importantly—for community policy makers.

Jewish communities throughout the world are central to JDC's concerns. This is no different in Europe. The practical aspect of this survey is precisely in the application of the knowledge contained within these pages to the policymaking and planning processes of Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere. While the research conducted by the JDC-ICCD at Oxford will be disseminated and debated, it will also be applied to and inform the JDC's community development mission. Namely: assisting community leaders in creating better programmes for the people they serve, including younger generations.

Alberto Senderey

President

JDC International Centre for Community Development

Regional Director

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Europe and Latin America

Much has been written since the British historian Bernard Wasserstein predicted in the mid-1990s a “vanishing Diaspora” for Europe.¹ Evidence has shown that European Jewish identity—and therefore European Jewish life—has undergone a decisive reawakening in the post-communist paradigm. Even if, from a demographic perspective, European Judaism continues to show worrisome signs of weakness, it is undeniable that, from an ethno-cultural point of view, Jewish life behind the ex-Iron Curtain has gone through a continuous process of renewal and revitalization. In fact, scholars and observers rapidly captured this process of Jewish renaissance. It has consequently been identified as an “ethno-religious revivalism”, or—as defined by Hungarian sociologist Victor Karady—an unprecedented “promethean historical moment,” and the geo-political scene that unfolded after the fall of communism, for the first time in almost 80 years, has become propitious to greater freedom in identity options and construction.²

Over 20 years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and yet there is still a looming need for accurate and updated information on Jewish populations in Central and Eastern Europe. The mass of scholarly work depicting the “renewal” of Central and Eastern European Jewish identity suddenly lacks critical and accurate information about what is actually happening in those countries’ real Jewish milieu. What is the exact picture of Jewish life, communal engagement and expectations of Jews living in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Romania? What are the commonalities and divergences of Jewish identity in this region? Can we affirm that a Jewish Eastern Europe is definitively integrated with its Western counterparts? These are some of the questions that this research aimed to answer. Indeed, *Identity à la carte* is an attempt to update our perceptions of Jewish life in this region, 20 years after the collapse of communism. Moreover, we are very proud to say that *Identity à la carte* has become the most important survey of Jewish identity in Eastern Europe of recent times.

One of JDC’s goals, ever since its Europe office established the JDC International Centre for Community Development, has been to combine academic research based on up-to-date social sciences methods with the aim of generating relevant knowledge and policy for Europe’s Jewish communities. In publishing this survey’s findings we hope to have achieved this goal, which lies at the very core of our Centre.

Marcelo Dimentstein

Operations Director

JDC International Centre for Community Development

1. Wasserstein, Bernard (1996), *The Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton.

2. Karady, Victor (2006), “Jewish Identity in Post-Communist East Central Europe”, *Monitor ZSA, Ljubljana*, vol. VI, no. 1-2, pp. 92-105.

1. Executive Summary¹

I. Research Objective, Sampling

Between autumn 2008 and November 2009, we conducted a questionnaire survey of the urban Jewish population, aged 18-60 years, in five countries on behalf of the JDC International Centre for Community Development. The empirical part of the research was carried out by the IPSOS Social Research Institute through its global network. The Institute's staff conducted face-to-face, hour-long interviews based on a standardised questionnaire.

The main objective of the study was to offer a reliable, in-depth and comparable database to Jewish community and lay leaders, community professionals and JDC field workers, providing much-needed insight into their populations. The survey is also central to the ICCD's goal of projecting future scenarios and influencing strategic change in the area of community development.

During the survey the planned number of interviews was largely achieved, with 200 interviews conducted in Bulgaria, 405 in Hungary, 276 in Latvia, 190 in Poland, and 199 in Romania. Most of the interviews were conducted in the capital cities of the five countries. The snowball method was used to develop a sample. Due to the limits of the sampling technique, the sample could not be representative of the Jewish population in the countries under study. The actual sample differs in an important aspect from the expected sample: in each country, and especially in Romania, Poland and Bulgaria, the number of interviewees connected in some way with organised Jewish life (affiliated respondents) was much higher than the expected rate (33%). Those conducting the interviews found that in those particular countries non-affiliated Jews—even when they exist in large numbers—could not be reached for the purposes of the survey, as they have no links to the Jewish community. As concerns the survey's initial objectives, this means that in those countries the various outreach programmes targeting non-affiliated groups are likely to encounter extreme difficulty.

Due to the peculiar features of the sample (and for other reasons, notably: differences in the willingness to be interviewed among groups of varying degrees of affiliation with the Jewish community, as well as the response bias induced by the theme of the interview) the research findings will undoubtedly reflect a stronger Jewish identification than that actually prevailing in the sampled populations.

II. Demographics, Social and Economic Status

In view of the sampling technique, conclusions cannot be drawn from the demographic data concerning the Jewish population as a whole in the countries studied. A striking feature of the surveyed population in each country is the high rate of cohabitation (10%–23%) and the low number of children, which indicate long-term population decrease.

In all five countries, the education level of the population under study is very high, with corresponding levels of spousal education. Intergenerational mobility is low due to the fact that many in the parental generation also have higher educational qualifications; certain data (relating to Poland, Latvia and—based on earlier surveys—Hungary) show that educational mobility has peaked and that the percentage of young people obtaining college or university degrees is lower than it was in the preceding generation.

The occupational structure of respondents corresponds with the educational data: there is a high percentage of high-status groups and a low percentage of low-status groups; the Bulgarian and Latvian samples have relatively low status compared with the other samples.

The financial circumstances of respondents in the various samples reflect their status: in general, there is a high provision of consumer durables (the level is somewhat lower in Romania than elsewhere), while new communication devices (computers, Internet, mobile phones) are to be found in practically every household (even in Romania); respondents in each country apart from Latvia consider their living standards to be higher than average as compared to the country's population.

Most of the population under study seems to belong to the middle or upper middle strata in the various countries; probably lower status and poorer groups within the Jewish population are to be found among the older age groups, which were excluded from the sample.

¹ The following document is an abridged version of the survey's final report written by Prof. András Kovács and Dr. Ildiko Barna entitled "Identity à la carte. Research on Jewish identities, participation and affiliation in five European countries. Analysis of survey data." It is possible that the executive report provides information that is not fully developed during the text of the report due to editorial decisions. If you are interested in reading the full version, please contact us at contact@jdc-iccd.org.

III. Ethno-Religious Background

In our research, relatives of a respondent (grandparents, parents, partners, and children) were regarded as Jewish if the respondent him/herself considered them as such. We created an ethno-religious homogeneity index based on indicators for the four grandparents. Respondents with four Jewish grandparents were placed in the “homogeneous” group; those with one non-Jewish grandparent were placed in the “partly homogeneous” group; and those with at most two Jewish grandparents were placed in the “mixed” group. Respondents with homogeneous backgrounds formed the largest share in the Latvian sample (52%) and the lowest share in the Polish sample (15%). The rate was 44% in Hungary, 38% in Romania, and 29% in Bulgaria. The rate of mixed marriages among respondents was the same as that among the parents’ generation in Bulgaria and Hungary, while it was higher in Latvia and Romania and lower in Poland.

IV. Religious and Ethno-Cultural Ties

Respondents’ upbringing tended to be intensely Jewish in Bulgaria and the least Jewish in Poland. The absence of a Jewish upbringing was most frequent in Poland and Hungary; in all five countries Jewishness tended to manifest itself in the form of ethno-cultural markers rather than observance of religious practices. Religious ties were strongest in Romania and weakest in Hungary. A strong revival of traditional practices can be observed in today’s family; this trend is strongest in Poland and Hungary—in the field of religious practices in the former and in the sphere of ethno-cultural markers in the latter. The regular practice of religion is most frequent today in Poland and Romania; in Romania this is a consequence of the continuity of religious practice, while in Poland it is clearly the result of a religious revival.

Revival of tradition is a universal phenomenon, but its content varies by country; in Bulgaria revival is observed less in the religious sphere than in the increased use of ethno-cultural markers, while in Hungary both trends are present: older people are more likely to revive the religious tradition, while younger people tend to revive ethno-cultural practices; in Poland both trends are strong.

In each country a strikingly high percentage of respondents’ children (41%–70%) participate in Jewish education.

V. Identity and Assimilation

Approximately one-fifth of respondents indicated that their Jewishness was concealed from them in the childhood family. This phenomenon was particularly common in Poland (36%) and in Hungary (29%). The percentage of those who were raised Jewish from birth is highest in the Bulgarian and Romanian samples.

In examining emotional attachment to Jewishness, we found that identification was most intense in Romania and least intense in Latvia. In the other sampled countries approximately one-fifth of respondents felt strongly Jewish, while for 15%–25% being Jewish was not particularly important.

Comparing the intensity of Jewish and national identification, we found that dual identification is common. National identity was ranked behind Jewish identity by fewer than 30% of respondents in Poland and Hungary and less than half of respondents in Romania and Bulgaria. In all five countries the Jewish identification of respondents is stronger than national identification, but the differences are small—indeed, in Poland the difference is negligible. When evaluating the responses in Latvia, one should take into account the fact that many Jews living in present-day Latvia are immigrants from other parts of the former Soviet Union. When we compared affiliated and non-affiliated respondents, we found that the Jewish identity of non-affiliated respondents is not necessarily weaker than that of affiliated respondents, but the intensity of their national identification is usually stronger.

In all sampled countries, Jewish identity is more important to respondents now than it was in their childhood; this strengthening of Jewish identification was greatest in Poland and Hungary.

Birth, culture, family, and values were consistently identified as the primary sources of Jewish identity. In Hungary these are the only important sources of Jewish identity; the significance of all other factors is far below the average. In Bulgaria and Romania religion often features among the selected factors, while being a member of a nation is an important factor in Latvia and Poland, and ethnic awareness is significant in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania. Israel’s role as an identity factor is significant for more than half of respondents in each country with the exception of Hungary. Anti-Semitism, meanwhile, plays a relatively minor role in the formation of Jewish identity throughout the sampled countries.

Regarding the substantial elements of Jewish identity: in each country factors connected with historical memory and the feeling of being part of the Jewish people are dominant; the religious tradition, participation in organised Jewish life, and the relationship with Israel are relatively less important. Observing Jewish practices is considered a stronger element of identity throughout the sampled countries than participation in the life of organised Jewish religious communities, which is considered an important identity factor only in Romania and, to a lesser extent, Poland. Participation in non-religious communal activities is more important than participation in religious life in all sampled countries. Marrying a Jewish spouse is not considered an important identity factor in any sample countries with the exception of Romania.

In terms of what people think about mixed marriages, the same picture develops in all of the examined countries: an increase in the number of mixed marriages is not supported anywhere, though mixed marriages are not specifically opposed. With the exception of Romania, a large proportion of respondents in all sampled countries (48%–55%) think that mixed marriages do not threaten the continued existence of the Jewish people.

The responses to questions concerning respondents' friends show that at least one in three (57% in Hungary) live their private lives almost exclusively in a Jewish milieu.

VI. Relationship with Israel

A significant proportion of respondents have close relatives in Israel; the percentage is particularly high in Latvia (59%) and in Romania (50%) and lowest in Hungary (20%). A majority of respondents—more than three quarters—have been to Israel; many of them have made multiple visits.

A significant number of respondents—more than half of them—have thought about making aliyah (the percentage is lowest in Hungary, at 44%). 15–20% of respondents are currently thinking of making aliyah; only in Romania is the percentage higher than this (22%). The most cited reason is a cultural-ethnic connection, with respondents often mentioning that they feel at home in Israel. Economic motives are also relatively important, though less so in Hungary and Poland. Religious and ideological (Zionist) motives for making aliyah are relatively less significant, and the perceived importance of anti-Semitism is slight—the proportion of respondents citing this as a reason was highest in Hungary (28%).

Respondents view the significance of Israel for the Diaspora communities as being the provision of security. Opinions differ as to whether Israel is truly the spiritual centre of the Jewish people or a real homeland: respondents in the Romanian, Polish and Latvian samples are more likely to support this position, while those in the Hungarian sample are less likely to do so.

Respondents largely agree that all Jews should visit Israel from time to time, but those in the Hungarian and Polish samples are far less likely to agree that all Jews have a responsibility to support Israel; with the exception of those in the Bulgarian sample, respondents generally think that European and Israeli Jews are culturally very distant.

The responses to the political questions reveal that a large majority of Jews living in the sampled countries support Israeli policy on the Palestinian issue and do not believe that it has harmful consequences for European Jews. Moreover, most respondents do not think that the policy alienates Jews from Israel.

VII. Relationship between Jews and Non-Jews

A significant percentage of respondents have personally witnessed verbal anti-Semitic abuse, with the highest proportion in Bulgaria (60%) and Poland (50%) and the lowest in Latvia (21%). The percentage of respondents that reported having been subjected to physical attacks is low everywhere (1%–5%). Respondents in the Hungarian sample were particularly likely to have perceived anti-Semitism in the public domain (radio, TV, press, and politics), while Latvian respondents were the least likely to have done so. Hungarian respondents were also most likely to have perceived a recent increase in anti-Semitism, and it is this group in particular that fears that the trend will continue. In seeming contradiction, however, the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Hungary appears to be relatively tension free, based on respondents' answers to questions concerning various aspects of the relationship with non-Jewish society; respondents in both the Polish sample and the Romanian sample indicated stronger feelings of exclusion and greater distance from non-Jews than did respondents in the Hungarian sample. The probable explanation is that, whereas in Hungary manifestations of anti-Semitism have recently become more frequent in the public domain, in other countries such manifestations are more likely to be present in everyday life.

Respondents in all the countries think that more should be taught in schools about the persecution of the Jews. With the exception of Latvia, nowhere do respondents believe that talking about the Holocaust provokes conflicts with non-Jewish society. Even so, only in Bulgaria and Romania do a majority of respondents think that the Holocaust should be the main focus of Jewish consciousness. A majority of respondents in Hungary and Poland—and to a lesser extent in Romania—think that people who cast doubt on the Holocaust should be prosecuted.

VIII. Participation and Commitment

The responses to questions measuring the knowledge levels of respondents indicate surprisingly widespread knowledge of a Jewish language (Hebrew: 15%-31%; Yiddish: 5%-22%). These figures are probably exaggerated.

Respondents in each of the countries are very likely to be interested in Jewish history and culture; they show the least interest in Jewish literature and anti-Semitism/Holocaust issues.

Among the various sources of knowledge, self-education and the family were identified in each country as the top two factors, while Jewish institutional education was attributed less significance in all sampled countries.

Concerning their knowledge of Jewish issues, a majority of respondents in each country, apart from Latvia, think they have sufficient knowledge of Jewish issues—and certainly enough to make their way through Jewish life. Even so, they would like to know more.

Approximately one-quarter of respondents in Bulgaria, Hungary and Latvia and two-thirds of respondents in Poland and Romania stated that they were members of a Jewish religious community. Among the various international Jewish organisations, the JDC is universally known, and the two other most frequently cited organisations are Sochnut and Chabad. The JDC's work is viewed very favourably in each country apart from Hungary—where the evaluation is favourable but less so than elsewhere; in general Sochnut and Chabad are also favourably evaluated (though Sochnut received a more negative appraisal in Romania).

The participation of respondents in the work of the various Jewish organisations varies according to country: it is highest in Romania and Poland (80% and 70%), somewhat lower in Bulgaria (65%), and lowest in Latvia and Hungary (45% and 40%). This is of course another consequence of sample composition. In Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, many respondents are active in several organisations, but this is less true in Latvia and Romania.

At least a third of respondents—more than half of them in Poland and Romania—are more involved in Jewish life now than they were five years ago. Moreover, a quarter to a third of respondents would like to be more active in the future, although a majority of respondents in each country agree that someone can be a good Jew without participating in organised Jewish life. The percentage of respondents who are not really interested in participating in organised Jewish life is highest in Hungary (31%) and lowest in Romania (6%); in the other sampled countries it is 10%-20%.

Among factors hindering participation, a majority of respondents in each country mentioned lack of time. A far smaller proportion cited problems in the operation of

Jewish organisations. Even so, a relatively large number of respondents in the Bulgarian, Latvian and Romanian samples mentioned the limited choice of programmes, while respondents in the Hungarian and Polish samples noted their dissatisfaction with Jewish leadership. Among factors leading to greater involvement, respondents in all sampled countries said they would be more active if they could cooperate with people similar to them or of a similar age, if there were more opportunities to meet Jews from other countries, and if the organisations provided more study opportunities. In Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania a relatively large number of respondents would welcome more entertaining programmes, while respondents in Poland and Romania consider it important that organisations show a greater willingness to compromise on religious issues.

Respondents believe that the Jewish organisations generally offer adequate support for the elderly and for children and teenagers. In contrast, they think that not enough attention is given to singles and people in crisis. In the view of respondents, Jewish organisations give priority to cultural programmes and education, but do not regard the political representation of Jewish interests and, in some countries, advocacy for Israel as particularly important.

In each country (apart from Hungary) demographic trends (the shrinking number of Jews, low childbirth) were identified as the greatest challenges facing the Jewish people. In Hungary, anti-Semitism featured as a principal challenge. Major problems identified in all sampled countries include both a decline of Jewish knowledge and the weakness of Jewish organisations. Mixed marriages are considered a challenge of medium gravity for the future of the Jewish people and anti-Semitism features as an important factor only in Hungary. Only in Romania is poverty viewed as one of the more serious threats to the community.

Respondents in each country consider an increase in the activity of Jewish congregations and lay organisations to be the most important factor for securing the future of the Jewish people. They also think it important that the Jewish organisations admit all people who define themselves as Jewish, considering flexibility important in the interpretation of religious rules. In general, respondents do not consider a reduction in the number of mixed marriages as important for the future of the Jewish people and emigration features in last place in all sampled countries as a guarantee of the future of the Jewish people.

Respondents are generally optimistic about the future of the Jewish people in Europe and responses attest to the existence of a European Jewish identity. In each country a majority of respondents think that their country's Jewish community will survive. In this respect, respondents in Romania are the most pessimistic. While a relatively large

2. Sample

2.1 Sampling Method

Snowball sampling was used during the research. The sampling frame comprised residents of the five sampled countries' capital cities (and, in Poland and Romania, residents of some of the larger cities) aged 18-55 and active to varying degrees in Jewish public life.

The expected sample size in each country (with the exception of Hungary) was 200; in Hungary it was 400. Three variables were used to control the sample distribution: gender, age group and affiliation. Respondents were considered affiliated if they met at least one of the following conditions:

- Membership in a Jewish organisation
- Active participation in a Jewish organisation
- Attendance at a Jewish school
- Membership in an organised Jewish religious community

The initial contacts were set in each country with a view to ensuring that sample distribution based on the above variables was as close as possible to the expected percentages in the final sample.

2.2 Actual Sample

The expected sample size was achieved in Bulgaria (n = 200), Hungary (n = 405) and Latvia (n = 276). Indeed, in the case of the latter two—in particular Latvia—it was exceeded. In Romania, the number of respondents was just one short of the expected number (n = 199). Ten respondents had to be removed from the Polish sample because they fell outside the designated age group (n = 190).

Certain compromises were made during sampling. In some of the countries, additional towns had to be included and/or the age limit was raised to 60 years. However, the biggest compromises were made in relation to distribution by affiliation.

In the following figures we present the sample and expected distributions in the various dimensions. The gender and age group distributions correspond more closely to the expected distributions than do the distributions by affiliation.

Figure 1

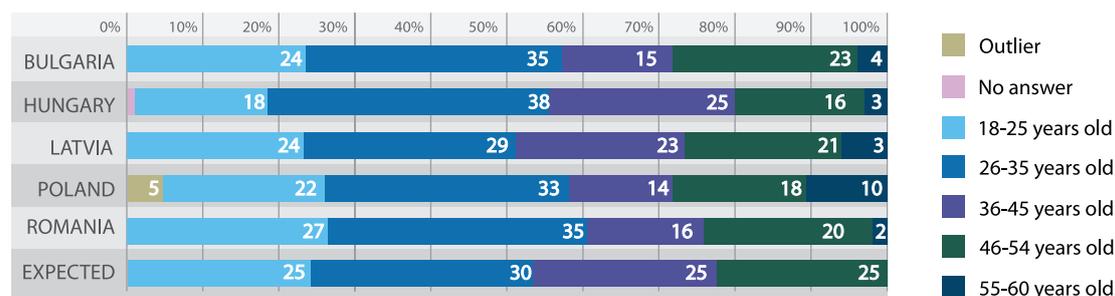
Gender distribution of samples in the various countries and the expected distribution (%)
(n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 200; RO = 199)



Regarding age group distribution, it should be noted that the age group of two respondents in Hungary is unknown. In Poland, 10 respondents were aged over 60. The latter were excluded from our subsequent analysis.

Figure 2

Age group distribution of samples in the various countries and the expected distribution (%)²
 (n: BG = 200; H = 406; LV = 276; PL = 200; RO = 199)

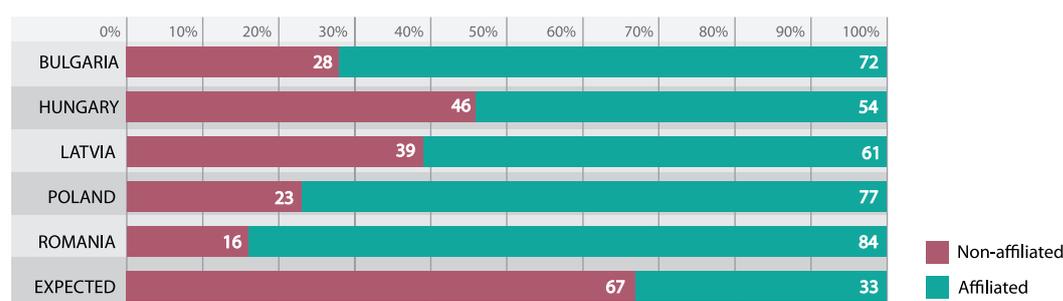


The figure below shows important differences between sampled countries in terms of affiliation. In each country the number of affiliated persons included in the sample was greater than had been expected. A probable explanation for this is that during such research there is always a greater participation by respondents who are “embedded” in the Jewish community. We also see large differences between the countries. The share of non-affiliated respondents is highest in the Hungarian sample (46%) and lowest in the Romanian sample (16%). These discrepancies are very likely due to differences among Jewish communities in the sampled countries.

It should be noted that the issues under research are likely to be closely affected by the degree of affiliation of respondents. This means that a high percentage of affiliated respondents will tend to determine the overall picture we receive in various countries.

Figure 3

Distribution by affiliation of samples in the various countries and the expected distribution (%) (n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 200; RO = 199)



2 The survey took place in 2008-2009. 2009 was taken as the base year when calculating the age of respondents regardless of when the survey was conducted.

3. Demographics

In this part of the study we do not mention gender and age group distribution because—having controlled for these variables during sampling—they do not describe the Jewish communities in the various countries.

3.1 Marital Status

Marital status data is influenced by respondent age (18-60). Consequently, the ratio of people living alone is high while the percentages of divorced and, in particular, widowed respondents are low. Table 1 shows that the percentage of cohabiting people is below average in the Bulgarian and Latvian samples, while the opposite is true in the Hungarian sample. In addition, there is an overrepresentation of married people in the Latvian sample and of divorced people in the Polish sample.

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Living alone	45	39	33	38	44
Married	40	30	47	31	38
Cohabiting	10	23	12	19	14
Divorced	5	7	6	10	3
Widowed	1	1	2	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 1

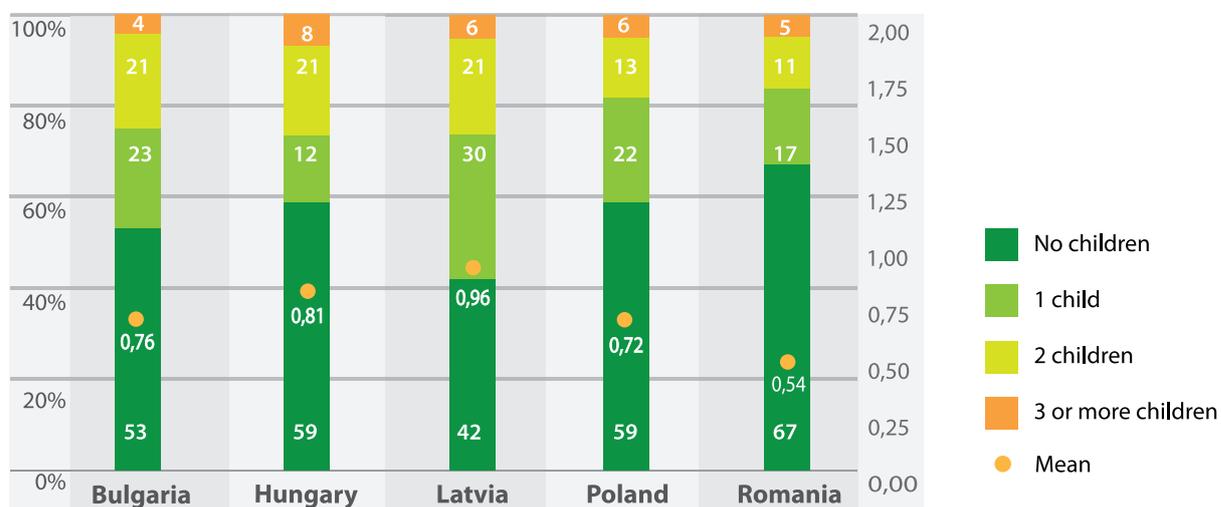
Marital status by country (%)
(n: BG = 200; H = 402; LV = 276;
PL = 186; RO = 194)

3.2 Number of children

On average, respondents in the Latvian sample have the most children with Romanian respondents reporting the fewest. The percentage of childless people is lowest in the Latvian sample (42%) and highest in the Romanian sample (67%). The percentage of families with three or more children is roughly similar in all the countries. Two-child families are higher than the overall average among Jews living in Bulgaria, Hungary and Latvia. In the latter, however, a particular feature of the Jewish community is the high percentage of single-child families.

Figure 4

Number of children by country (% and average)
(n: BG = 200; H = 402; LV = 275; PL = 190; RO = 198)



4. Social and Economic Status

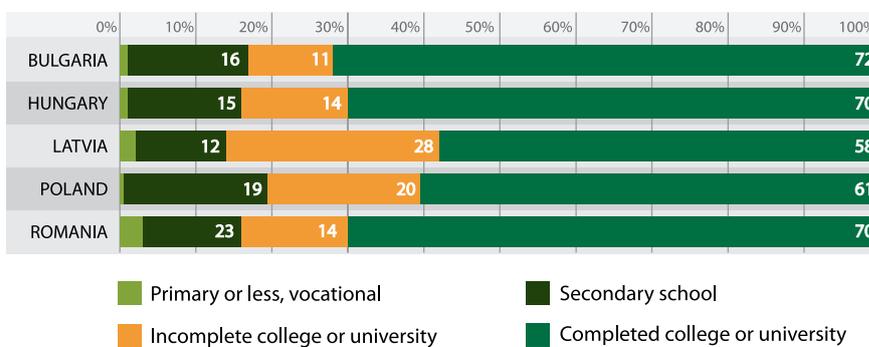
4.1 Education

In general, the Jewish populations in the sampled countries were highly educated. On the one hand this reflects the traditionally high status of education among Jews. In our case, however, the trend is strengthened by the age of the respondents, since young people are on average even more highly educated. The percentage with a completed higher education is as high as 70% in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. It is also relatively high in Latvia and Poland, but in those countries we found many respondents who had started but not completed college or university.³

Figure 5

Highest educational qualification by country (%)

(n: BG = 200; H = 404; LV = 276; PL = 188; RO = 198)

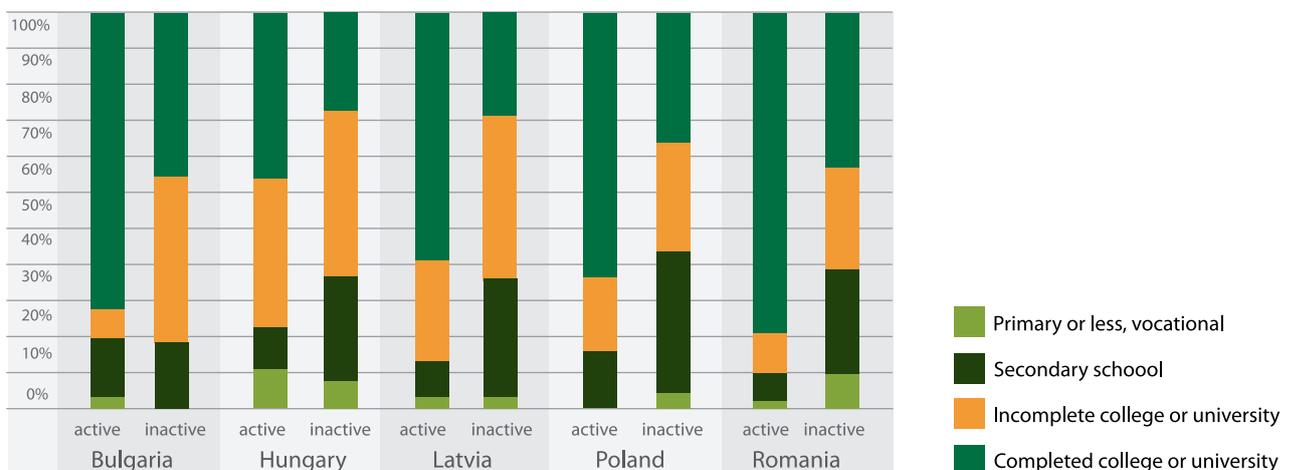


In each country we found a significantly higher number of college or university graduates among the economically active population—principally because of their age—than among the inactive population.

Figure 6

Highest educational qualification by country and economic activity (%)

(n: BG = 200; H = 404; LV = 276; PL = 187; RO = 197)



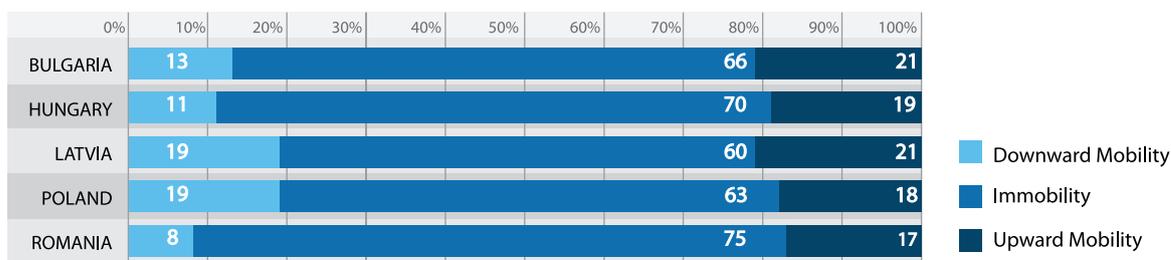
³ Interestingly, in these countries it is not only among the youngest age groups that the percentage of such respondents is high.

4.2 Social Mobility

For the purposes of our survey, social mobility is understood to mean the relationship between a respondent’s highest educational qualification and that of his father. Evidently, the percentage of immobile people is high everywhere, which is particularly noteworthy since in each country respondents are generally highly educated, as we have already demonstrated. This means that in many cases a high level of education was achieved not only by the respondents but also by their parents, a generation earlier. Compared with the other countries, the Latvian and Polish samples have a high percentage of respondents whose educational qualifications are lower than those of their parents. Interestingly, the upwardly mobile share is about the same in all samples.

Figure 7

Social mobility by country (%) (n: BG = 163; H = 346; LV = 223; PL = 152; RO = 162)



Base: respondents aged over 23⁴

4.3 Economic Activity

The percentage of economically active people varies among the sampled countries: it is highest in the Bulgarian sample (91%) and lowest in the Romanian sample (75%). In the Hungarian and Polish samples it is around 80%, while in the Latvian sample it is 86%. Students account for most of the inactive.

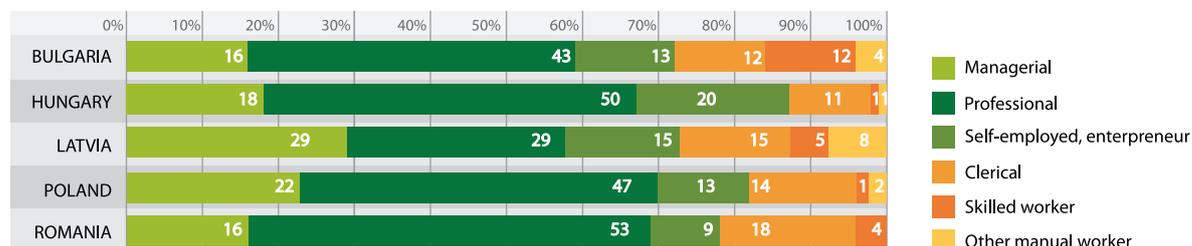
Position in the employment structure is strongly influenced by the above-described level of education. The managerial and professional ratio is high in each sample, while the percentage of manual workers is relatively low. Beyond this general trend, however, are some differences. The share of high-status employment groups is lower in the Bulgarian and Latvian samples, where the percentage of manual workers is higher. In the Bulgarian sample the share of skilled workers is particularly high (12%). The self-employed and entrepreneurs account for one-fifth of the Hungarian sample, but just 9% of the Romanian sample.

⁴ Excluded from analysis are those who could not yet have qualified because of their age.

Figure 8

Employment and economic activity by country (%)

(n: BG = 194; H = 354; LV = 267; PL = 167; RO = 169)



Base: Respondents who are currently or who used to be economically active

4.4 Income and Financial Status

Rather than examine income data of doubtful validity and comparability, we looked at ownership of household appliances and capital assets as well as other measurable factors that serve as indicators of income and financial status.

The high social status of respondents is evident in the material dimension too. The high propensity for Jewish households to own consumer durables is especially striking when it comes to hi-tech products and services including personal computers, mobile phones, and digital cameras and, in particular, having home Internet access. Comparing the sampled countries, we find that only the Romanian sample has, on average, a lower income and financial status. Interestingly, when we asked respondents to place the income and financial status of their household on a scale of 1-10, with 1 representing the worst status and 10 the best, respondents in each country estimated, on average, the figure at around 6; only Jewish respondents in Latvia chose a lower score, on average.

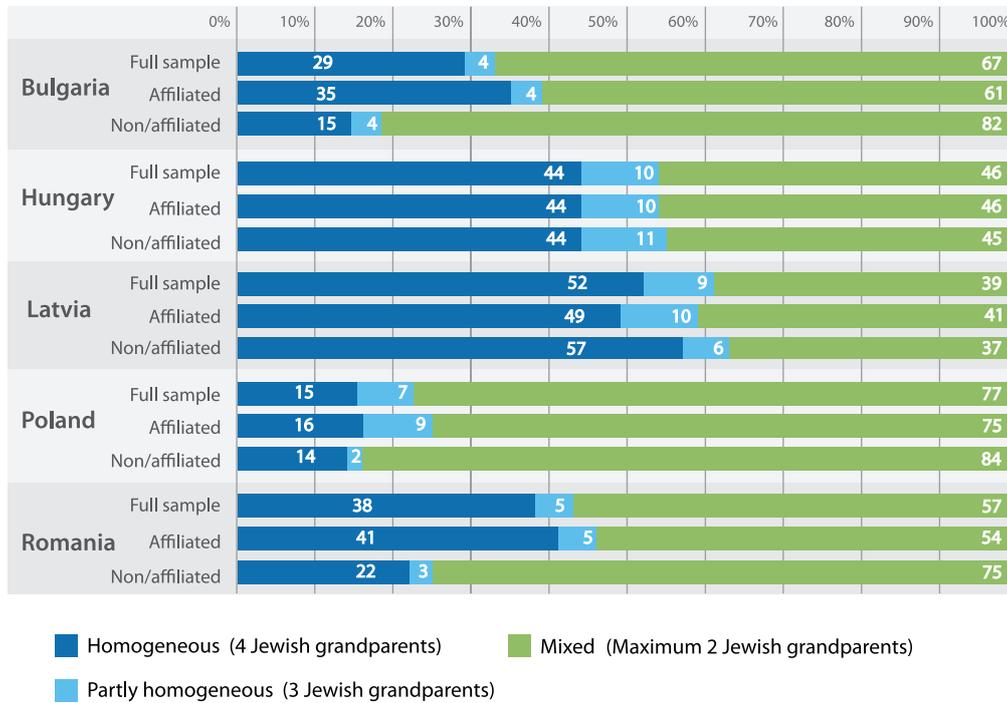
5. Ancestry

Religious and ethnic background is one of the most challenging issues in studies on Jews because ancestry and religious identity often do not overlap. In our research we applied the criterion of self-identification, whereby we considered the respondent and his/her relatives (grandparents, parents, partner, children) to be Jewish if s/he considered him/herself as such. Moreover we placed no conditions on the criteria for classification. First, we asked a respondent whether s/he and his/her relatives were Jewish. Then we inquired whether they had converted to Christianity or to another religion or whether they had been converts to Judaism.

An index of ethno-religious homogeneity was developed based on the indicators for the four grandparents. In the “homogeneous” group we placed respondents who claimed to have four Jewish grandparents. Respondents with three Jewish grandparents were placed in the “partly homogeneous” group. The “mixed” group comprised those with a maximum of two Jewish grandparents.

Figure 9

Ethno-religious homogeneity in the full sample and by affiliation, by country (%)
 (n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)



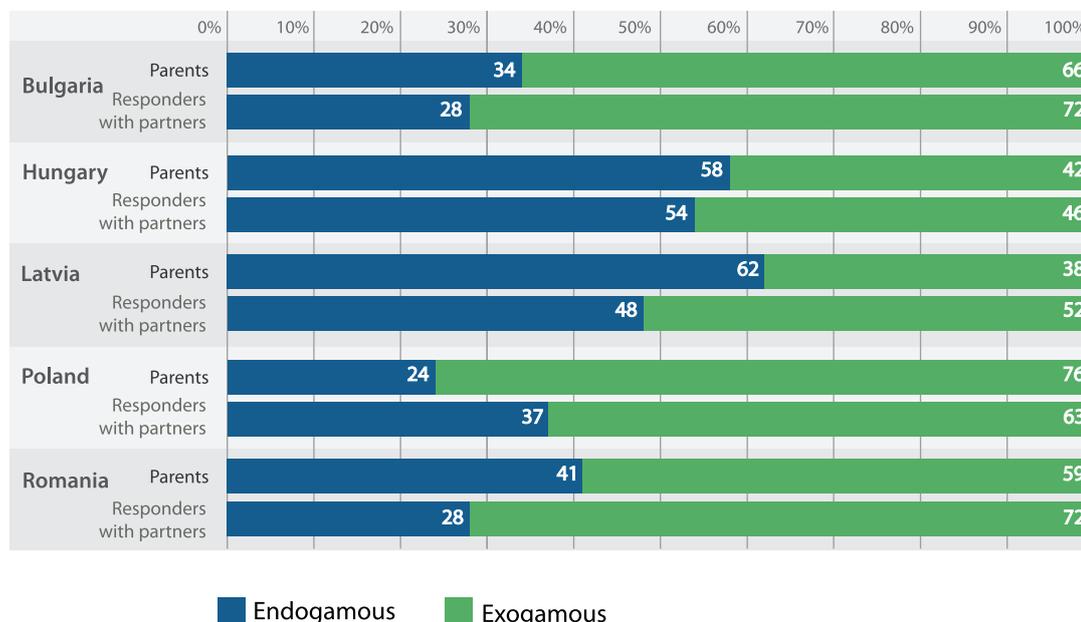
As Figure 9 shows, there are significant differences between the sampled countries. The Latvian sample is at one end of the spectrum: 52% of respondents have a homogeneous background. The Polish sample is at the other extreme: just 15% have a homogeneous background. The percentages of respondents with mixed backgrounds reflect these figures: 39% in the former sample and 77% in the latter. The “in-between” countries can be ranked in descending order as follows: Hungary (percentage of respondents with a homogeneous background: 44%), Romania (38%) and Bulgaria (29%). Affiliated and non-affiliated respondents differ in this respect in the Bulgarian and Romanian samples: in both cases respondents with homogeneous backgrounds are more numerous among the affiliated, while those with mixed backgrounds are more numerous among the non-affiliated.

We also examined marriage practice among respondents and their parents and present the percentage of homogamous marriages. Comparing marital homogeneity in the parents’ generation, we find that the countries rank in the same order. Marital homogeneity in the respondents’ generation is generally lower: in the Hungarian and Bulgarian samples the difference is minimal, but we find a substantial decrease in the Latvian and Romanian samples. Interestingly, in the Polish sample, where the level of homogamy among the parents’ generation was very low (24%), a substantial increase can be observed in the respondents’ generation (38%).

Figure 10

Marital endogamy in the parents' and respondents' generations by country (%)

(n: BG = 200; 97 H = 399; 202 LV = 276; 162 PL = 173; 86 RO = 198; 101)



Comparing marital endogamy in the parents' generation, we find that the countries rank in the same order as in terms of ethno-religious homogeneity. Marital endogamy in the respondents' generation is generally lower: in the Hungarian and Bulgarian samples the difference among generations is minimal, but we find a substantial decrease in the Latvian and Romanian samples. Interestingly, in the Polish sample, where the level of endogamy among the parents' generation was very low (24%), a substantial increase is found in the respondents' generation (37%).

Regarding conversions, the percentage of converts to Christianity is very low among both the grandparents' generation and the parents' generation in all countries except Hungary and Poland. The former presents relatively high percentages among both grandparents' (23%) and parents' generations (12%) and the latter 21% and 14% respectively. This phenomenon's origins seem to be in historical conditions. During the time of persecutions, many Jews converted to increase their chances of survival.

Poland, on the other hand, presents high rates of conversions to Judaism: 18% of respondents and 6% of their partners had converted to Judaism.

6. Religious Observance and Ethno-Cultural Traditions

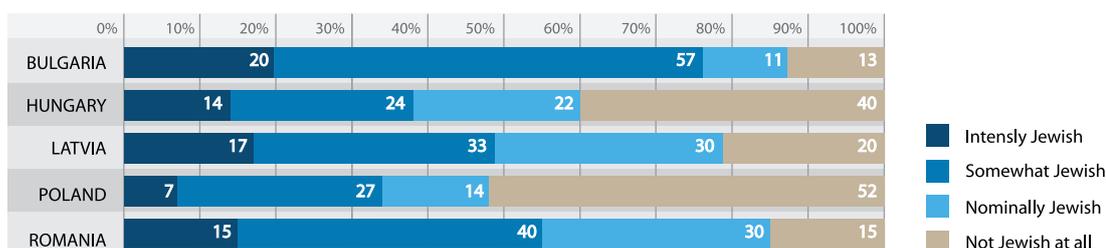
In this section of our study we class respondents based on their religious observance and ethno-cultural ties. We seek to characterise their childhoods and their present lives. Regarding the former, we examine upbringing and identify observed religious customs. We compare the latter with current practice. We divided the customs and practices into two categories, with expressly religious customs being the first type. They are as follows: (regular) synagogue attendance, Sabbath observance, lighting of Sabbath candles, keeping kosher. We placed other customs in the second category; although derived from religion, they serve in many cases as mere ethno-cultural markers. Using these variables we then established aggregate indices measuring how many customs are kept by a respondent. The aggregate indices were used to characterise adherence to religious and ethno-cultural practices, enabling us to describe changes between childhood and adulthood. Mention is also made of respondents' current synagogue attendance practice. Finally, we analyzed the levels of synagogue attendance.

6.1 Upbringing

The diagram below clearly shows a substantial difference between the sampled countries in terms of the Jewish atmosphere of the respondents' childhood family. At one end of the spectrum we find Hungary and Poland. Here—and especially in Poland—a relatively small percentage of respondents had a Jewish upbringing. In both countries the upbringing of a high percentage of respondents was not Jewish at all. A similar distribution is observed in the Latvian and Romanian samples. At the other extreme stands the Bulgarian sample, where the upbringing of just one in four respondents was not Jewish at all or only nominally Jewish.

Figure 11

Upbringing by country (%) (n: BG = 200; H = 404; LV = 276; PL = 188; RO = 196)



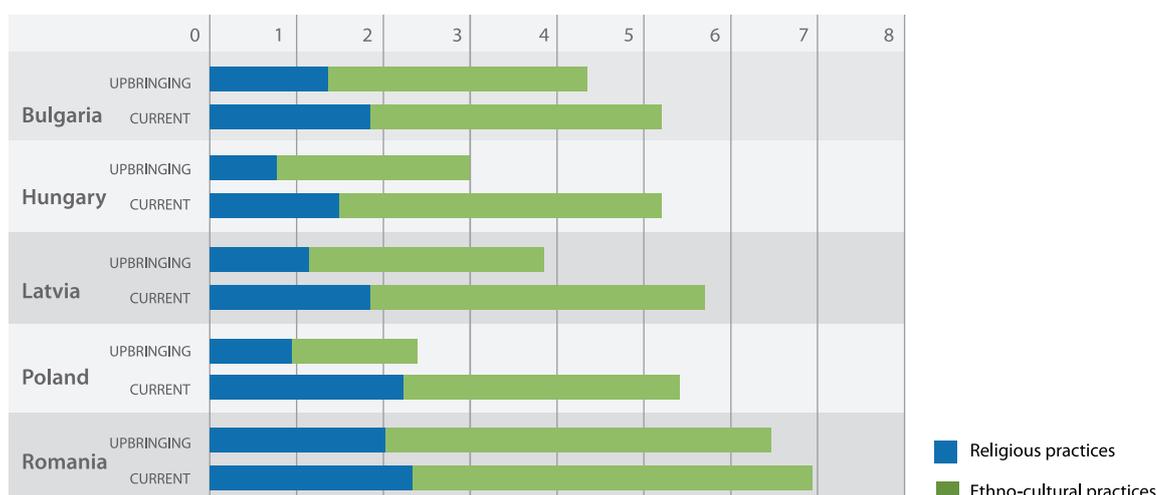
In Bulgaria and Hungary, Jewish upbringing did not manifest great religiosity. A negligible percentage of respondents' parents were expressly religious. In Hungary, for example, three-quarters of fathers and two-thirds of mothers were described as being not at all religious. In Latvia, Poland and Romania, although parents tended not to be religious, responses indicate that neither were they completely secular: in Latvia half of the fathers and 40% of the mothers were described as being "somewhat religious", whereas in Poland these figures are 27% for the fathers and 33% for the mothers and in Romania 21% and 24% respectively.

6.2 Adherence to Religious and Ethno-Cultural Practices in the Childhood Family and in Current Family

The following figure shows the average number of religious and ethno-cultural traditions kept in the childhood family and the current family. The sampled countries exhibit clear differences. It is important to note, however, that the differences are significantly greater in the case of the childhood family. Here, the Romanian sample preserved the greatest number of traditions, followed by the Bulgarian sample. As far as religious traditions are concerned, we observe no substantial differences among the remaining three countries. Adherence to ethno-cultural traditions is more typical of the Hungarian and Latvian samples than of the Polish sample. As far as the current family is concerned, only the exceptionally high averages in the Romanian sample stand out.

Figure 12

Religious and ethno-cultural practices in the **childhood family** and **current family** by country, aggregate index (average) (n: BG=200; H=405; LV=276; PL=190; RO=199)



The figure 13 shows the same data analyzed among the members of the various ethno-religious groups (homogenous, partly homogeneous and mixed).⁵ Figure 13 shows the aggregate index of practices in childhood family and Figure 14 presents the aggregate index for the current family. There is a clear trend: the more homogeneous a respondent’s background, the greater his or her adherence to religious and ethno-cultural traditions—both in the childhood and the current family. **Bulgaria**, for example, closely follows the trend of respondents with homogeneous backgrounds adhering to a greater number of religious and ethno-cultural practices, both in the childhood family and in their adult families. In most cases, respondents with partly homogeneous or mixed backgrounds differ less from each other and the relative position is not clear.

In **Hungary**, regarding expressly religious traditions practiced in the current family, the various ethno-religious groups do not differ. All other samples show differences between these groups. As concerns religious traditions, they featured less in the childhood family among respondents with mixed backgrounds. In the case of ethno-cultural traditions, the more homogeneous the family background, the more likely the respondent is to practice such traditions—in both the childhood and the current families.

⁵ See pages 17-18

The only difference among the various ethno-religious groups in **Latvia** is the extent of adherence to ethno-cultural markers. Regarding both upbringing and the current family, one can state that there is no difference between respondents with homogeneous backgrounds and those with partly homogeneous backgrounds. Respondents with mixed backgrounds, however, typically keep fewer ethno-cultural traditions.

The sample from **Poland**, on the other hand, expressed differences according to ethno-religious group. The greatest differences can be observed in the case of the childhood family: the more homogeneous a respondent’s family background, the more likely the family was to preserve various traditions – both religious and ethno-cultural practices. As concerns the current family, we find an interesting correlation, both for the religious and ethno-cultural markers: respondents with partly homogeneous backgrounds typically preserve more traditions. In the case of religious traditions, those with homogeneous and mixed backgrounds do not differ from each other; in the case of ethno-cultural traditions, the former typically preserve more of such traditions.

Examining the aggregate indexes of **Romania**, we find that the principal difference lies between the various age groups. Both for the childhood and the current family, it is the oldest age group that keeps the greatest number of religious traditions. As concerns current family, the younger a person is, the less likely s/he is to preserve such traditions. The trend is not as distinctly observed in the case of the childhood family. The difference between the childhood family and current family is most distinctly a function of respondent age where observance of religious traditions is concerned. We find that the difference is the greatest in the case of the middle age groups. Members of the various ethno-religious groups on average keep the same number of religious traditions in the current family. They differ in all other respects, however.

Figure 13

Religious traditions and ethno-cultural practices in the **childhood family** in the various ethno-religious groups by country; aggregate index
(n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)

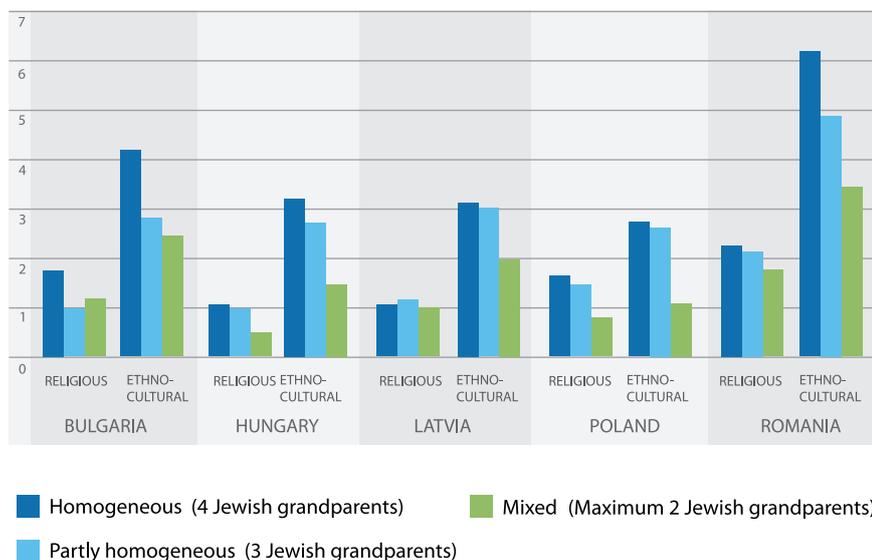
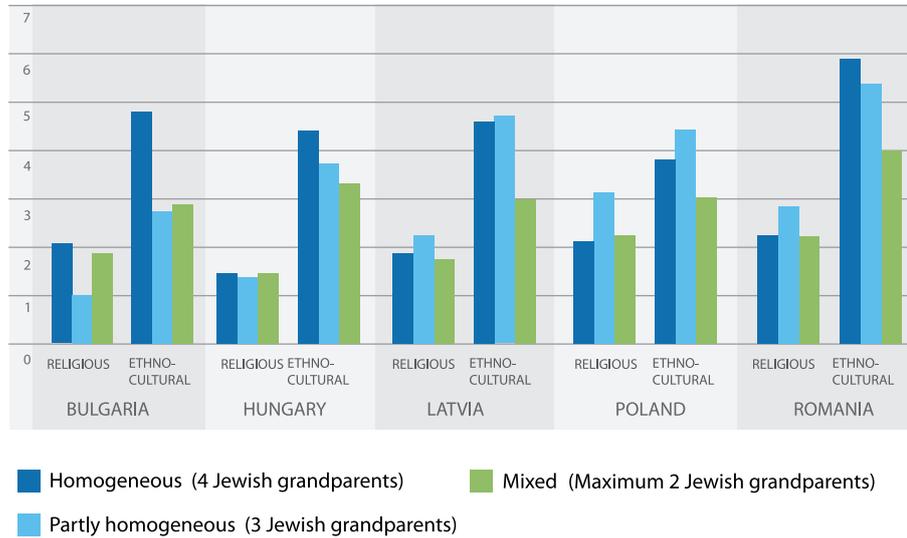


Figure 14

Religious traditions and ethno-cultural practices in the **current family** in the various ethno-religious groups by country, aggregate index (n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)

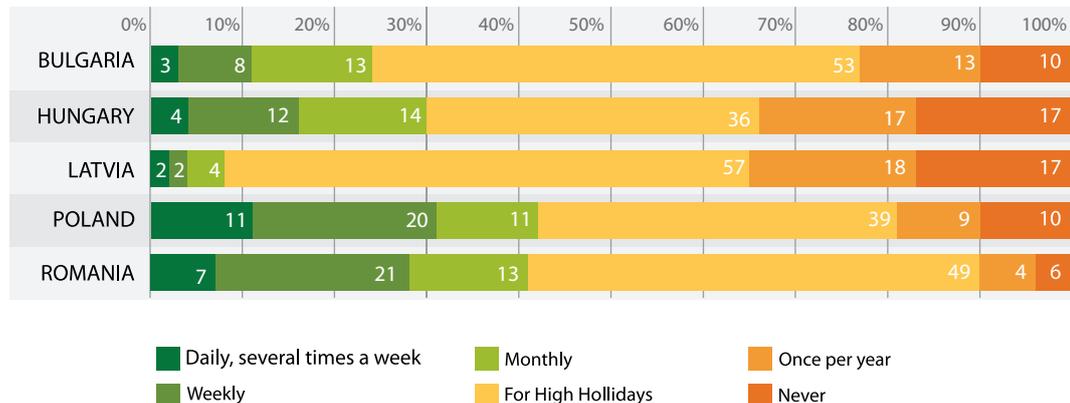


6.3 Synagogue Attendance

The figure below shows a clear difference between respondents in the various samples in terms of synagogue attendance. Most striking is the Latvian sample's low frequency of attendance. The Polish and Romanian samples are characterised by a similar frequency of attendance, albeit the former has a higher percentage of respondents who never attend or who attend just once per year. A feature of the Bulgarian sample is that many respondents attend only at the bigger festivals, although a relatively large number attend more frequently, unlike in the Latvian sample. The Hungarian sample is rather polarised.

Figure 15

Synagogue attendance of respondents by country (%) (n: BG = 200; H = 402; LV = 275; PL = 187; RO = 199)



7. Substantial Features of Jewish Identity

In the course of the research we approached the question of identity from several perspectives. Considering that Jewishness was established in this research through self-description, we were interested in determining how respondents perceive Jewish identity. Participants were also asked to assess their subjective relationship with Judaism as compared with their childhood. In the second part of this section we examine what respondents associate with Jewish identity. Subsequently, we examine attitudes towards mixed marriages. The section concludes with an analysis of the exclusivity of social networks.

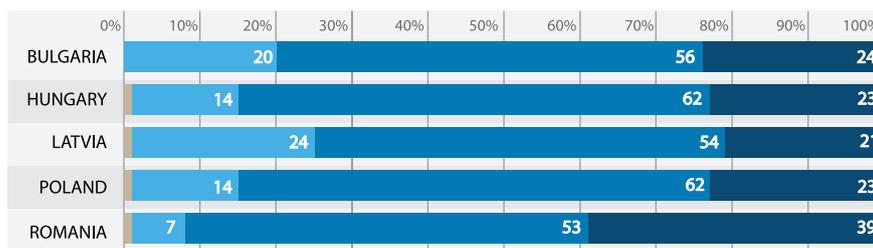
7.1 Perceptions of Jewishness

In the figure below we see that most respondents born Jewish, felt Jewish. In the Latvian sample there is a higher percentage of those who are aware of their Jewishness but do not think about it very much. Respondents who are extremely conscious of being Jewish are overrepresented in the Romanian sample.

Figure 16

Perceptions of Jewishness by country (%)

(n: BG = 199; H = 393; LV = 275; PL = 181; RO = 184)



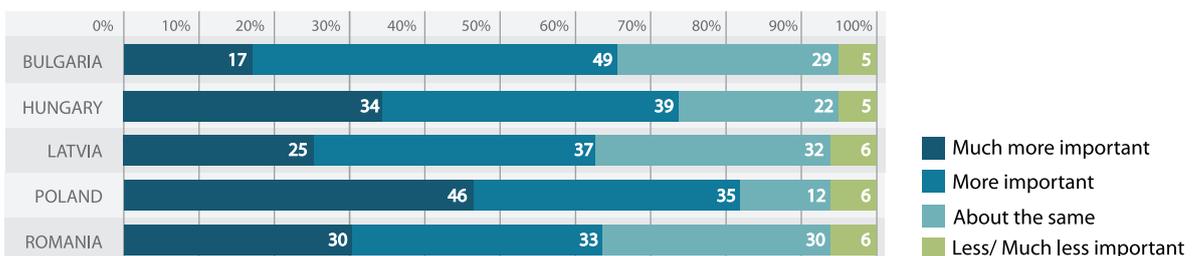
- "I feel extremely conscious of being Jewish and it is very important for me"
- "I feel quite strongly Jewish but I'm equally conscious of other things"
- "I am aware of my Jewishness but I do not think about it very much"
- "Although I was born Jewish I do not think of myself as being Jewish"

As the figure below shows, respondents in the various countries differ significantly in terms of how the importance of their Jewishness has changed since childhood. In the Polish sample we find a very high percentage of respondents whose Jewishness is now much more important than it was in childhood, and in the Bulgarian sample a high percentage whose Jewishness is now more important. Those for whom the importance of their Jewishness is about the same are overrepresented in the Latvian sample.

Figure 17

"Compared to how you felt as a child, how important is your Jewishness to you now?"

by country (%) (n: BG = 199; H = 405; LV = 275; PL = 185; RO = 197)



- Much more important
- More important
- About the same
- Less/ Much less important

7.2 “What does it mean to be Jewish?”

To the question “What does it mean to be Jewish?” respondents in all countries tended to choose—understandably—the statements saying they were Jewish by birth or by family (both statements around 82% in average). Interestingly, a high proportion of respondents (with the exception of Hungary) also indicated that Jewish identity was a conscious choice. Culture and values were identified as important factors, but education was selected by relatively few respondents, with Romania as an exception (72%). A reactive identity based on anti-Semitism or the memory of the Holocaust was characteristic of a smaller number of respondents—but still more than half the sample in the case of the Holocaust, as is the case with Poland, where 75% of respondents responded affirmatively to that question. In **Bulgaria**, many agreed that being Jewish was membership in an ethnic group (85%), while far fewer thought of it as membership in a national group (31%). Regarding the question of identity as, in some way, a reaction to anti-Semitism, **Hungary** is the only country where such an option appears rarely among respondents (23%). Jewish self-identification problems are reflected in the responses: relatively little mention was made to ethnic aspects (32%), national links (28%), or religion (20%).

In **Latvia** the role of the Holocaust (60%) and anti-Semitism (54%) in fostering identity is relatively large. For many respondents in the Latvian sample, being Jewish means belonging to a nation (74%). For smaller numbers it means membership in an ethnic group (54%) or a religion (51%). 58% of respondents attached importance to the relationship with Israel.

A distinctive feature of the sample from **Poland** is that 79% considered the relationship with other Jews in the world important. The selection of the Holocaust (75%) and anti-Semitism (67%) is indicative of the strength of reactive identity. Roughly the same numbers attached importance to membership of an ethnic group (68%) and belonging to a nation (69%).

In **Romania**, the high scores received by almost all the factors represent the most striking feature. Examining the self-identification aspects, we find that membership of an ethnic group (76%) and a religion (74%) are important factors, while belonging to a nation (61%) is less important in relative terms. The relationship with Israel (70%) is important to many respondents in the Romanian sample.

Table 2

What does it mean to be Jewish?

Distribution of responses in the full sample by country (%)

To be Jewish	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
By birth	87	73	84	82	85
By culture	80	68	74	79	83
By family	86	77	76	83	87
In relation to the Holocaust	57	45	60	75	60
By choice	78	29	68	73	67
By education	21	14	24	28	72
By religion	60	20	51	48	74
By values	75	65	72	70	78
By being a member of a nation	31	28	74	68	61
By being a member of an ethnic group	85	32	54	69	76
In relation to Israel	63	38	58	57	70
In reaction to anti-Semitism	55	23	54	67	42
In relation to other Jews in the world	69	44	59	79	58

The table 3 shows the differences among countries in the importance given to various elements of identity. In **Bulgaria** the most important factors are feeling part of the Jewish people (4.37), awareness of Jewish history and Jewish forebears (4.22), Jewish culture (4.21), and close relations with other Jews (4.05). Interestingly, the latter does not necessarily mean marrying a Jewish spouse, which received a fairly low score (2.67). Traditional religiosity (3.28) and participation in Jewish religious activities (2.88) are pushed into the background. Participation in Jewish communal activities (3.83) is not one of the major factors. Awareness of Jewish persecution is of medium importance in developing identity (3.95), although the significance of this factor is greater among respondents with homogeneous backgrounds. There is a difference between affiliated and non-affiliated respondents in terms of their assessment of elements of identity relating to Jewish community life. Affiliated respondents attach greater importance to close relationships with other Jews, to marrying a Jewish spouse, to feeling like a part of the Jewish people, to observing Jewish practices, and to participating in Jewish religious and communal activities.

The most important factors for respondents in the **Hungarian** sample are the memory of the past (4.11) and culture (4.02). Additional important factors are close relations with other Jews (3.65) and feeling part of the Jewish people (3.58). As is the case of the Bulgarian sample, the former does not mean that marrying a Jewish spouse is important to respondents, as that element received a low score (2.83). Awareness of Jewish persecution and memory of the Holocaust are factors of medium importance (3.54). Jewish communal activities (3.00) are more important to respondents than participation in Jewish religious activities (2.13), but in neither case is the score particularly high. Regarding the latter, one should also note that respondents do not consider observing Jewish practices to be important (2.45). Among the various ethno-religious groups the only difference concerns the importance of a Jewish spouse, which is greater among respondents with homogeneous backgrounds.

For affiliated respondents all elements are generally more important than for non-affiliated respondents with two exceptions: awareness of the past and awareness of Jewish persecution. On these issues, both groups share the same opinion.

In **Latvia** the table 3 shows that among the various substantial features of Jewish identity the most important factors are feeling part of the Jewish people (4.26) and awareness of Jewish history and Jewish forebears (4.06). Awareness of Jewish persecution is an additional major factor in fostering identity (3.99). Lower but still significant scores were received by such categories as pride felt for great Jewish personalities and achievements (3.88) and interest and familiarity with Jewish culture (3.87). The communal dimension of identity is important for many, but this tended to be interpreted as close relations with other Jews (3.72) rather than participation in Jewish communal activities (3.04). Respondents consider religion to be a less significant factor in fostering identity. Once again we identified several factors that were particularly important to respondents with partly homogeneous backgrounds, such as feeling part of the Jewish people, participation in Jewish communal activities, and marrying a Jewish spouse.

In general terms, almost all the factors are more important to affiliated respondents than to non-affiliated respondents. There are three notable exceptions: feeling close to Israel, awareness of Jewish persecution, and pride felt for great Jewish personalities and achievements. Concerning the first two, there is no difference in opinion between the two groups, while in the case of the latter the score was higher for non-affiliated respondents.

In the **Polish** sample the most important factors are awareness of Jewish history and forebears (4.44), culture (4.19), and awareness of Jewish persecution and the memory of the past (3.94). The communal dimension of identity is also emphasised, both as feeling part of the Jewish people (3.94) and maintaining close relations with other Jews (3.91). For respondents in the Polish sample, communal life (3.79) is more important than participation in Jewish religious activities (3.15). In connection with the latter's low score one should note that even fewer regard the observance of Jewish practices as important (2.80). The only significant difference between affiliated and non-affiliated respondents relates to their judgment of participation in Jewish religious activities: they were most important to respondents with partly homogeneous backgrounds.

In general, one may state that almost all elements are more important to affiliated respondents than they are to the non-affiliated. There is just one exception: awareness of Jewish persecution and the memory of the past are equally important to both groups.

In **Romania**, once again, scores are strikingly high for all the items. The table below shows that among the various substantial features of Jewish identity the most important factors for respondents in the Romanian sample are awareness of Jewish history and Jewish forebears (4.61), culture (4.42), feeling part of the Jewish people (4.32), and awareness of Jewish persecution (4.31). Interestingly, although many regarded themselves as Jews because of their religious convictions, religion was given relatively less significance here (3.53). Jewish communal life (3.87) is somewhat more important for respondents than participation in Jewish religious activities (3.69), but the difference is not great. Several differences can be observed between affiliated and non-affiliated respondents. Keeping alive the memory of the past, culture, marrying a Jewish spouse, pride felt for great Jewish personalities and achievements were more important to respondents with homogeneous and partly homogeneous backgrounds than they were to those with mixed backgrounds. Interestingly, feeling part of the Jewish people received higher scores among respondents with homogeneous backgrounds and among those with mixed backgrounds.

Almost all the elements were more important to affiliated respondents than they were to the non-affiliated. However, there were three exceptions: Jewish culture, awareness of Jewish persecution, and pride felt for great Jewish personalities and achievements. Concerning these factors, the two groups thought alike.

Table 3

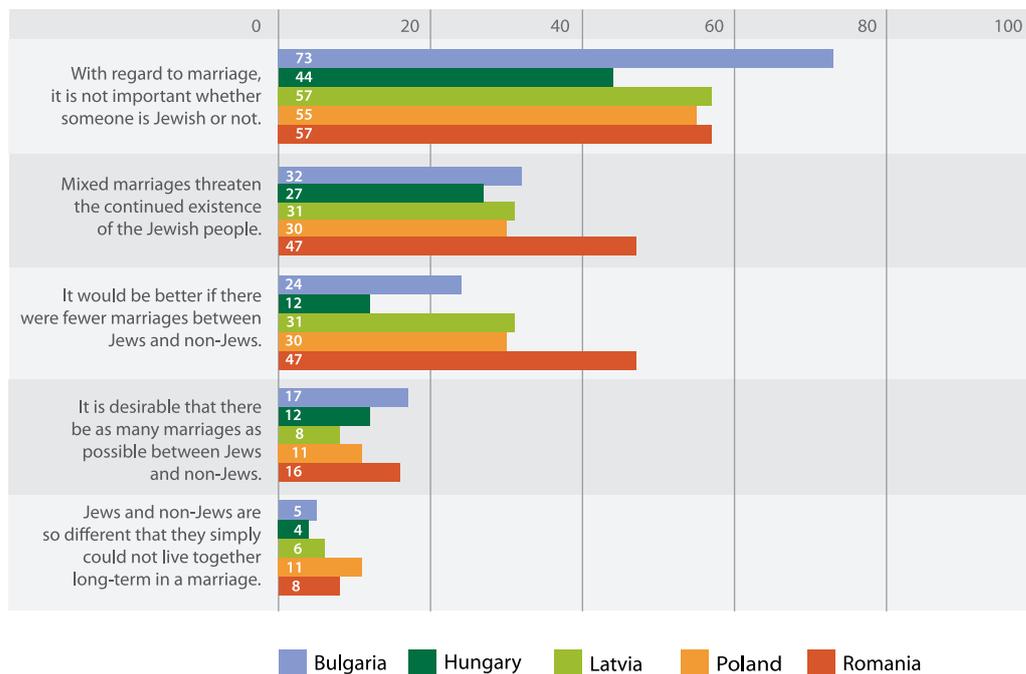
Importance attached by respondents to various elements of identity.
Responses in the full sample by country (average; on scale from 1-5)

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Observing Jewish practices	3.28	2.45	3.03	2.80	3.53
Awareness of Jewish history and Jewish forebears	4.22	4.11	4.06	4.44	4.61
Interest and familiarity with Jewish culture	4.21	4.02	3.87	4.19	4.42
Close relations with other Jews	4.05	3.65	3.72	3.91	4.08
Marrying a Jewish spouse	2.67	2.83	2.82	2.70	3.12
Feeling close to Israel	3.42	2.84	3.13	2.69	3.93
Awareness of Jewish persecution and the memory of the past	4.03	3.54	3.99	3.94	4.31
Pride felt for great Jewish personalities and achieve	3.95	2.97	3.88	3.59	4.24
Participation in Jewish religious activities	2.88	2.13	2.56	3.15	3.69
Participation in Jewish communal activities	3.83	3.00	3.04	3.79	3.87
Feeling part of the Jewish people	4.37	3.58	4.26	3.94	4.32

7.3 Opinions about Mixed Marriages

A striking majority in all countries disagree with the statement: “Jews and non-Jews are so different that they simply could not live together long-term in a marriage.” Most agree that with regard to marriage, it is not important whether someone is Jewish or not. Responses show that most people do not oppose mixed marriages; nevertheless around a third of them in each country (and almost 50% in Romania) believe that mixed marriages threaten the continued existence of the Jewish people.

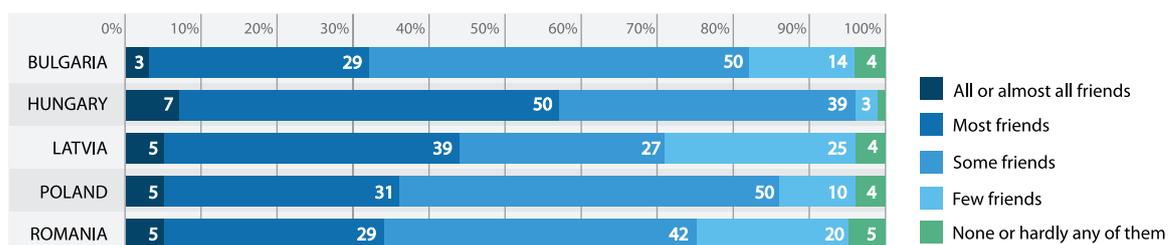
Figure 18
Opinions about mixed marriages by country expressed in agreement (%)
(n: BG = 195; H = 357; LV = 247; PL = 169; RO = 169)



7.4 Circle of Friends

A large difference between respondents in the sampled countries may be observed in the composition of the circle of friends. A closed circle of friends is particularly characteristic of the Hungarian sample; it is less characteristic among respondents in the Romanian and Latvian samples—particularly in the latter.

Figure 19
Proportion of Jews among the friends of the respondents by country (%)
(n: BG = 200; H = 392; LV = 276; PL = 187; RO = 195)



8. Relationship towards Israel

In this section we first examine respondent relationships with Israel. We present the family and other respondent ties, asking how often they have been to Israel, who organised the trips, and whether respondents have considered or are presently considering making aliyah. As far as making aliyah is concerned, we also investigate the reasons for such a decision. Thereafter we inquire into respondents' attitudes towards Israel. Through thematic clusters, we examine respondents' views on issues related to Israel. These factor groups address the following topics:

- Israel as a source of security, a real homeland and spiritual centre
- Responsibility of Jews towards Israel
- The relationship between Israel and Jews living in the country in question
- View of Israel's policies

We then characterise the respondent attitudes⁶ towards Israel. This indicator measures principally the extent to which respondents think of Israel as a source of security, a Jewish centre, and a country that Jews have a responsibility to support.

8.1 Making Aliyah

The figures corresponding to the considerations of respondents in making aliyah are very similar from country to country (Fig. 20). Once again, **Romania** presents the highest proportions in at least two categories: those who are now considering making aliyah (22%) and those who have already considered it (52%). **Hungary**, on the contrary, shows the highest rates among those who never considered making aliyah (56%). Another interesting figure is the 10% of respondents in the **Bulgarian** sample who declared they did aliyah in the past, came back and are not now considering it.

In the **Latvian** sample we find a significantly larger number of respondents with close relatives, distant relatives and friends living in Israel. As far as distant relatives and friends living in Israel are concerned, the percentage of respondents with such relatives and friends is higher in the **Bulgarian** and **Romanian** samples. Compared with the other sampled countries, Hungarian respondents clearly have fewer such ties.

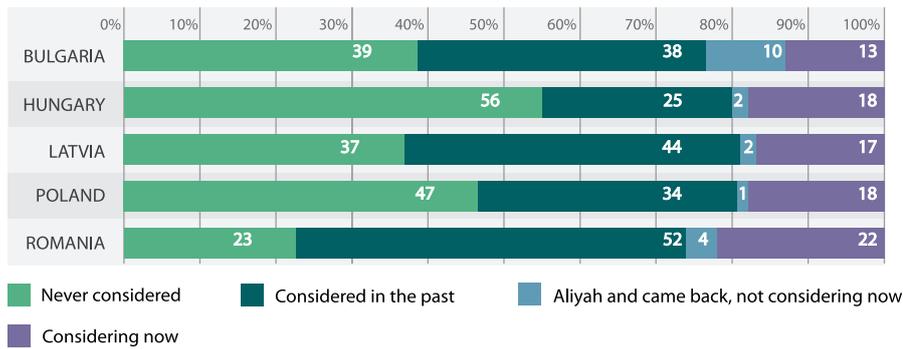
We found no difference between the sampled countries in terms of the percentage of respondents who have been to Israel. Still, respondents in the Latvian sample were significantly less likely than average to have taken part in a trip to Israel run by a Jewish organisation.

In the Hungarian sample those who have never considered making aliyah are overrepresented, while in the Latvian and Romanian samples those who have considered this option in the past are overrepresented. The percentage of those who did migrate to Israel but then returned is highest in the Bulgarian sample.

6 We created a complex indicator based on the above variables.

Figure 20

Aliyah by country (%) (n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)



The table below shows the reasons for considering aliyah among those who declared having thought about making aliyah at some point of their lives. In **Bulgaria**, two-thirds of respondents who have considered making aliyah did so because of the economic situation in their country. Many mentioned cultural/ethnic ties (54%) and that they feel at home in Israel (47%). In this light, it is interesting that only 28% of respondents mentioned Zionist convictions. Very few mentioned difficulties experienced by Jews or anti-Semitism. In **Hungary**, two-thirds of respondents considered making aliyah because they simply feel at home there. In many cases, however, this is not linked with a Zionist conviction, which was mentioned as a reason for migration by only 37% of those considering making aliyah. Cultural and ethnic ties also played an important role. Other reasons are mentioned to a lesser extent. In **Latvia**, respondents that have considered making aliyah noted three main reasons for migration. 63% mentioned cultural/ethnic ties. Almost half of respondents simply feel at home in Israel, while a similar proportion thought about making aliyah due to the economic situation in Latvia. In **Poland**, cultural and national ties are an important reason for considering aliyah. Other reasons mentioned are less important. They are not examined here, in part because no more than 81 respondents are involved. Finally in Romania, respondents selected a variety of reasons for making aliyah. The most important ones are cultural/ethnic ties, the economic situation in **Romania**, and the fact that they feel at home in Israel. A desire to preserve Jewish identity was a consideration for almost half of respondents.

Table 4

Reasons for considering aliyah by country (%) (BG=117; H=175; LV=160; PL=81; RO=136)

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Economic situation in my country	67	22	47	20	52
Cultural/ethnic connection	54	61	63	73	66
I simply feel at home there	47	65	48	42	54
To preserve the identity of my family	31	20	25	41	46
Zionist conviction	28	37	26	43	36
Economic assistance Israel offers to immigrants	28	17	19	14	27
Family/parents living in Israel	21	15	22	14	22
Religious conviction	10	14	16	28	32
Difficulties of living a Jewish life in my country	5	18	16	34	26
Anti-Semitism in my country	4	28	18	24	15

Base: Those who have thought about making aliyah at some time

Regardless of these considerations about making aliyah, another phenomenon worth noting is the “fluid” relationship that exists between participants and Israel. Due to relatives or friends living in Israel, studies, or a decision to make aliyah followed by a return, or simply on holiday, between 75 and 85% of all respondents have been to Israel. More than two-thirds visited the country several times—between 4 or 5 times on average. Half of the participants (65% Bulgaria and 67% in Latvia) have travelled to Israel with a Jewish organisation.

8.2 Opinions on Israel

We examined respondents’ views on issues related to Israel by dividing our questions among four thematic clusters: Israel as a source of security, a real homeland and spiritual centre; Responsibility of Jews towards Israel; The relationship between Israel and Jews living in the country in question; View of Israel’s policies. All respondents strongly agree with the statement referring to Israel as a source of security (Table 5). In **Bulgaria, Latvia** and **Romania** respondents are more likely to describe Israel as a spiritual centre and a real homeland for the Jewish people, while in **Hungary** and in Poland opinions over those issues tend to be more divided. Understandably, many of the respondents in all sampled countries agree that someone can just as easily be a good Jew in Europe as in Israel and that all Jews should visit Israel from time to time. However, opinions differ when talking about the responsibility that all Jews have to support Israel.

International agreement among respondents is also very strong in that they all tend to support Israel’s policies: they think that Israel absolutely has a right to exist and they do not have a negative view of Israel’s treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict or of the Palestinian issue.

In **Bulgaria, Hungary,** and **Poland** respondents clearly do not think that Jews in their countries and Jews in Israel share a common destiny, while in **Latvia** and in respondents only moderately agree with that statement. Related to this last item, in all sampled countries there is a perception of distance between the culture of Israelis and the culture of Jews living in Europe.

Table 5
Opinions concerning Israel by country (average; on scale from 1-5)
(n: BG = 190; H = 329; LV = 237; PL = 154; RO = 170)

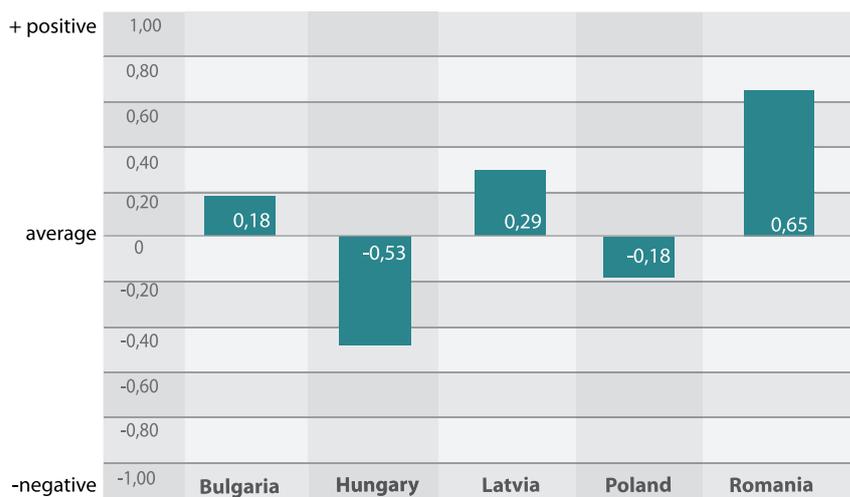
	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
SECURITY, HOMELAND, SPIRITUAL CENTRE					
The existence of Israel provides security for the Jewish people.	4.42	4.34	4.07	4.19	4.71
Israel is the spiritual centre of the Jewish people.	4.20	2.86	4.34	3.60	4.43
Israel is the real homeland of the Jewish people.	3.90	3.16	4.37	3.73	4.17
RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL JEWS					
All Jews should visit Israel from time to time.	3.90	3.46	3.88	3.59	4.44
All Jews have a responsibility to support Israel.	3.28	2.55	3.52	2.82	4.10
ISRAEL AND MY COUNTRY					
Someone can just as easily be a good Jew in Europe as in Israel.	4.09	4.69	4.83	4.51	4.61
Jews in my country and Jews in Israel share a common destiny.	2.88	2.08	3.06	2.08	2.53
The cultures of Israelis and Jews living in Europe are very distant from each other.	2.96	3.58	3.43	3.76	3.31
POLITICS					
The State of Israel absolutely has a right to exist.	4.91	4.69	4.93	4.84	4.96
The Israeli government behaves in an immoral way towards the Palestinians.	2.21	2.73	2.34	2.63	2.28
The way Israel handles the Arab-Israeli conflict is harmful for Jews here.	2.07	2.25	1.90	2.40	1.81

In the table below the attitudes towards Israel in the sampled countries were considered through an aggregate index. A score value of 0 indicates the average opinion. It is clear that respondents in the Hungarian sample are least likely to regard Israel as a source of security, as a spiritual centre, and as a country that Jews have a responsibility to support, while respondents in the Romanian sample are most likely to do so. Respondents in the Bulgarian and Latvian sample are slightly above average in this regard, while those in the Polish sample are somewhat below average.

Figure 21

Attitudes towards Israel (average)

(n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)



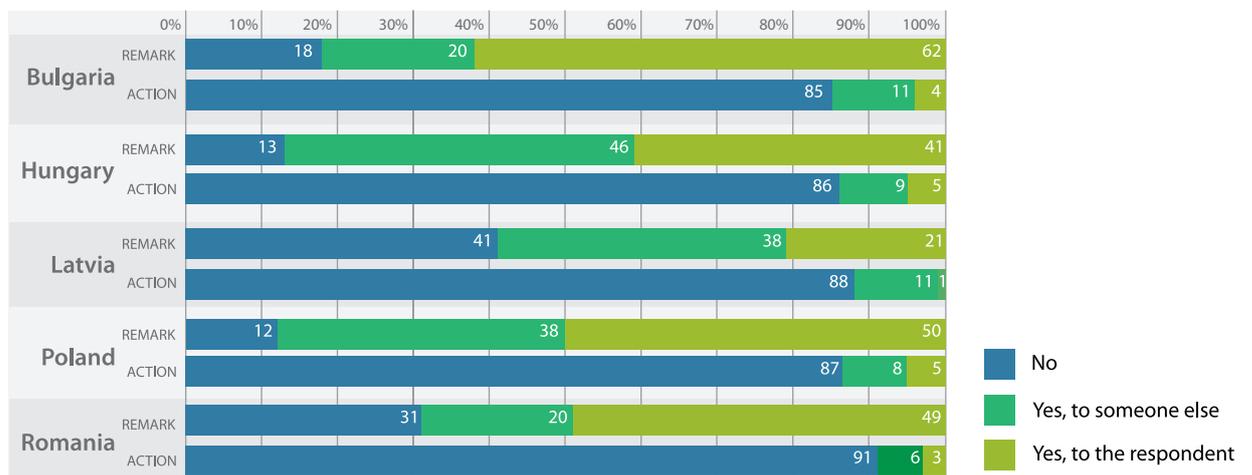
9. Anti-Semitism

The sampled countries differ in terms of incidences of verbal anti-Semitic abuse but do not in terms of the frequency of physical attacks. As regards verbal abuse in the Romanian, Polish and Bulgarian samples—particularly in the latter—a relatively large number of respondents have been subjected to such abuse, while in the Hungarian sample a relatively large proportion have witnessed such abuse. In the Latvian sample, respondents who have not experienced verbal abuse in any form are overrepresented.

Figure 22

Anti-Semitic remarks and actions by country (%)

(n: BG = 198; 198 H = 389; 404 LV = 274; 269 PL = 181; 188 RO = 195; 197)

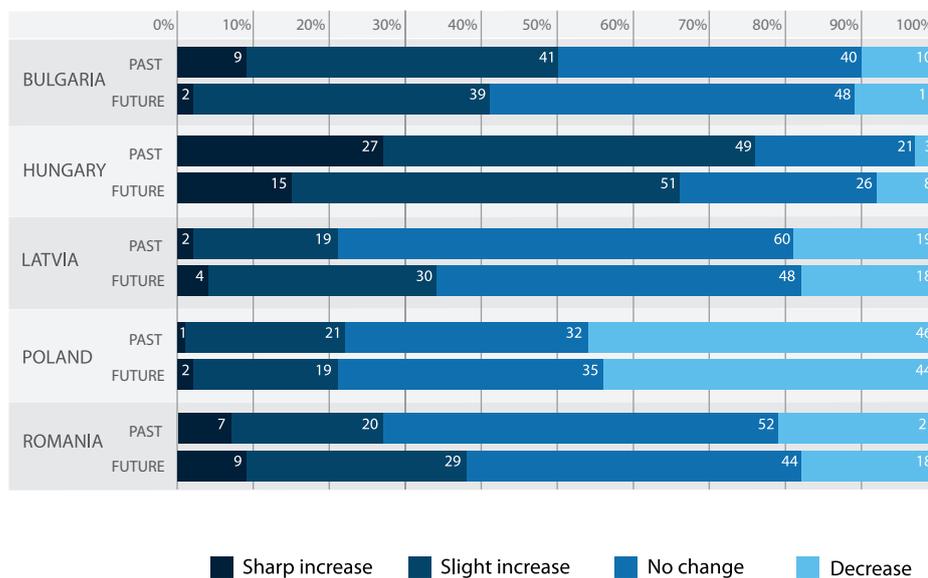


The figure below reveals a substantial difference between the sampled countries in terms of perceptions of anti-Semitism in the past and in the future. A link between past observations and future perceptions is also visible: in those countries where reduction or stagnation has been observed, predictions for the future exhibit a similar pattern, while in those countries where anti-Semitism has strengthened, the future outlook is more negative. Hungarian respondents were the most pessimistic: a large percentage of them think that anti-Semitism has increased and the forecast is also negative. Polish respondents are the most positive about both the past and the future.

Figure 23

Extent of anti-Semitism in the past and in the future by country (%)

(n: BG = 196; 191; H = 401; 380; LV = 270; 254; PL = 179; 161; RO = 190; 183)



10. Participation and Commitment

In the first part of this section we examine the respondent knowledge levels. We present their knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish, the level of interest in various topics, the sources of their knowledge of the Jewish people, and how they evaluate their own knowledge levels. Subsequently, we inquire into organisational membership. For Jewish organisations we examine several levels of involvement (familiarity, participation, and activity) presenting past and future changes, and examining how respondents evaluate themselves in this regard. We also present the frequency of the various Jewish-related activities. The section concludes with a look at opinions concerning the present functioning of the Jewish community and its future.

10.1 Knowledge Levels

10.1.1 Hebrew and Yiddish

A developed, active knowledge of Hebrew is relatively low: highest in Bulgaria (16%) and in **Romania** (14%), lowest in **Latvia** (7%) and **Poland** (6%). When asked about basic knowledge of Hebrew the figures tend to be higher, between 41% in **Poland** and 25% in **Hungary**. Knowledge of Yiddish is at a lower level: only between 1 and 4% of respondents have a developed, active knowledge of that language while 10 to 19% have a basic knowledge. In all sampled countries affiliated and non-affiliated respondents differ only in terms of their knowledge of Hebrew: a significantly higher proportion of affiliated respondents have basic knowledge of the language and far fewer of them have no knowledge of it. Hebrew and Yiddish knowledge is, however, probably reported at a much higher level than is the case in reality.

10.1.2 Assessment of their Jewish knowledge

One of the most interesting elements regarding respondents' own assessments of their Jewish knowledge is the universal desire to know more about Jewish issues. In Bulgaria and Romania, for example, 92% and 93% of respondents respectively declared they wanted to have more access to Jewish learning. In Hungary, Poland and Latvia those figures are equally high: 87% for the first two countries and 80% for Latvia. Knowledge level assessment differs from country to country. Knowledge level self-assessment in the **Latvian** sample is somewhat contradictory. Although 71% of respondents think they have no deep knowledge of Jewish issues and three-quarters of them feel they lack sufficient knowledge, 60% of the sample nevertheless rated their knowledge as good. This was probably because respondents measured their own knowledge in relation to the knowledge of those around them and knowing the basics is enough for many respondents to make their way through Jewish life. Meanwhile four-fifths of respondents would like to know more about Jewish issues.

Table 6

Statements concerning knowledge levels by country. Rather agree (%)

(n: BG = 196; H = 380; LV = 264; PL = 167; RO = 187)

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
I don't have a deep knowledge of Jewish issues.	29	27	71	38	41
Sometimes I feel I lack sufficient knowledge of Jewish issues.	82	79	76	75	66
I know the basics, and nowadays that is enough to make my way through Jewish life.	53	50	70	47	65
My knowledge is good.	69	68	60	70	80
I'd like to learn/know more about Jewish issues.	92	87	80	87	93

10.2 Involvement in Organised Jewish Life

We asked respondents if their involvement in organised Jewish life had varied to some degree in the last five years. The general picture obtained when comparing country by country is that, on one side, **Bulgaria, Hungary** and **Latvia** have around a third of respondents more involved in organised Jewish life and another third less involved. In the case of Hungary the proportion of respondents more involved is slightly higher than the ones less involved: 42% and 22% respectively. These proportions are inverted in the case of Bulgaria, where a slightly higher proportion is less involved (42%). On the other hand, **Poland** and **Romania** present a higher percentage (more than 50%) of respondents declaring more involvement in Jewish organised life than five years ago. In all countries we found that affiliated respondents were more prone to be more involved than 5 years ago (Fig. 24). When asked about their own opinions concerning involvement in Jewish life, an interesting point appears: between half and two-thirds of respondents agreed with the statement: "One can be a good Jew without participating in organised Jewish life." Other responses were selected to a minor degree, like lack of time, uninteresting programmes and negative opinions towards the present Jewish leadership in their communities.

Figure 24

Involvement in Jewish life compared to five years ago by country (%)
(n: BG = 200; H = 402; LV = 274; PL = 186; RO = 196)

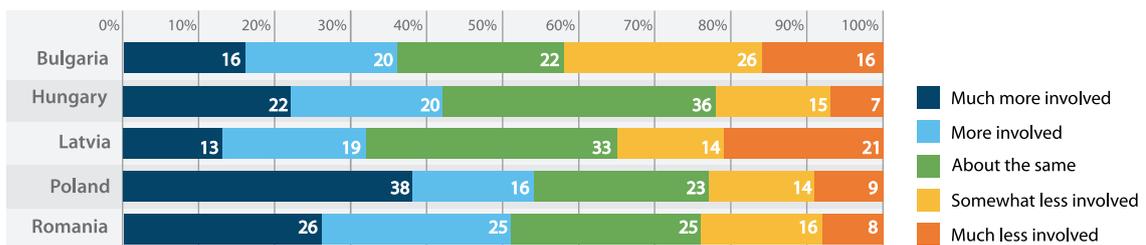
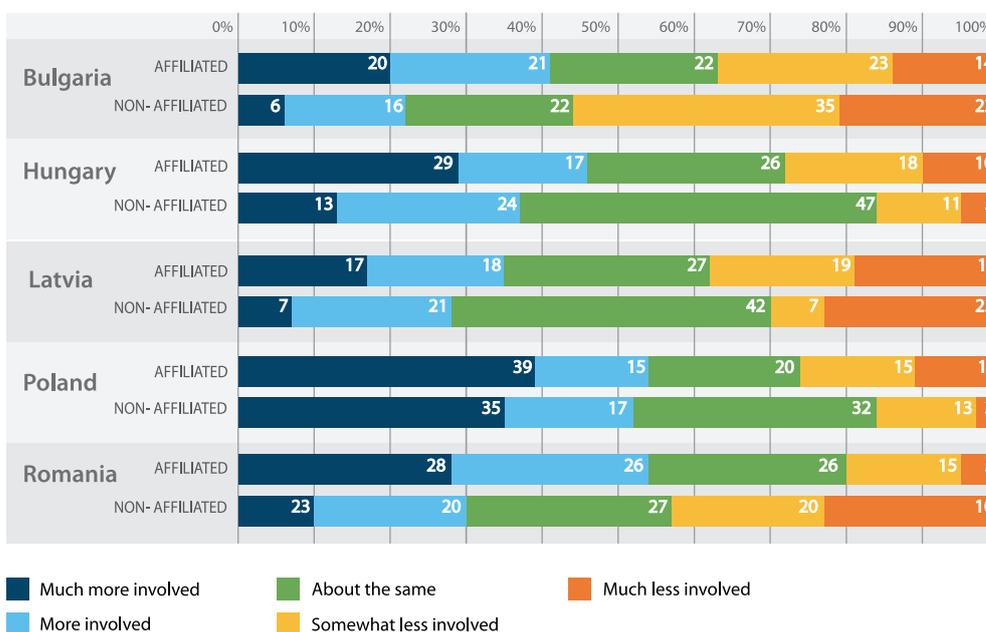


Figure 25

Involvement in Jewish life compared to five years ago by country, affiliated and non-affiliated (%)
(n: BG = 200; H = 402; LV = 274; PL = 186; RO = 196)



We asked respondents whether they thought changes in the Jewish organisations would lead them to become more involved in Jewish community life.⁷ Respondents in all countries agreed in mentioning changes in six areas that would or could increase their involvement. Most chose the following (listed in order of preference):

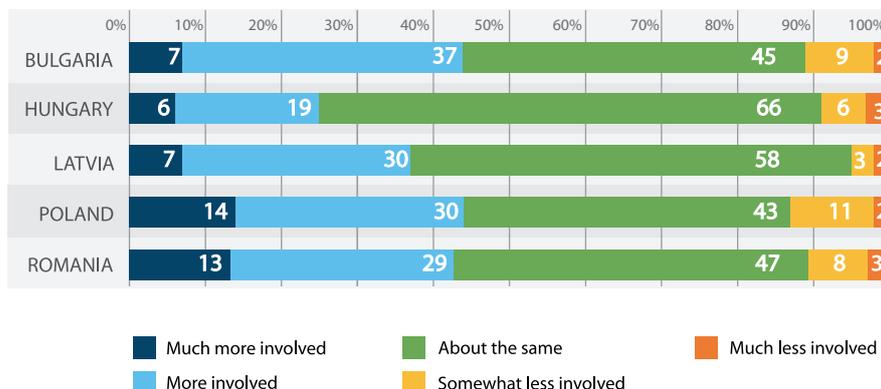
- Would attract more people like you.
- Would attract more people in your age group.
- Would help me meet people from other Jewish communities.
- Would offer more educational possibilities.
- Would offer more entertaining events.
- Would focus more on issues of general interest, rather than on strictly Jewish ones.
- Would be more pluralistic on religious issues.
- Would be more open to intermarried couples and families.

When asked about their engagement over the next five years, the picture that unfolds shows comparable percentages in all countries. **Poland** and **Romania** are the countries with the highest figures in terms of future involvement. **Bulgaria** and **Latvia** stand slightly behind, while **Hungary** shows the lowest percentages (Fig. 26). In this case, there are no remarkable differences in any country among affiliated and non-affiliated, except in Romania, where a larger decrease in the level of involvement is expected among non-affiliated respondents.

Figure 26

Involvement in Jewish life over the **next five years** by country (%)

(n: BG = 193; H = 390; LV = 254; PL = 168; RO = 188)



⁷ It should be noted that answering “no” does not necessary mean that the change will not lead the respondent to become more involved, but also that the respondent does not expect, along the given dimension, change from the Jewish organisations.

10.2.1 Assessment of Jewish community

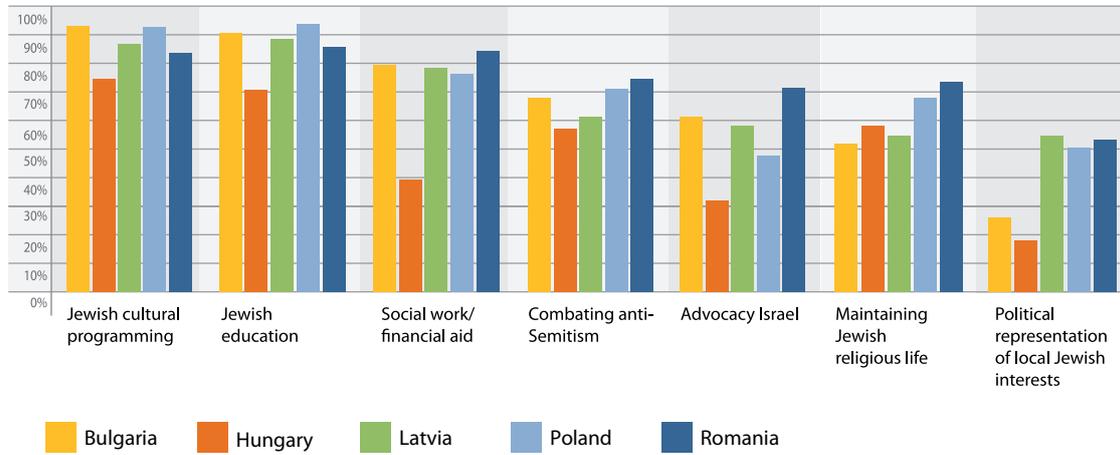
When it comes to assessing the Jewish community, respondents offer a quite heterogeneous picture depending on their country. **Bulgarian** respondents are most likely to think that Jewish organisations offer adequate support, opportunities and programmes to the various age groups in need. They evaluated support for people in difficulty as fair. Single people, as a group, feel they can least rely upon Jewish organizations, but even here the evaluation was not particularly poor. **Hungarian** respondents are most likely to think that Jewish organisations offer adequate support, opportunities, and programmes to children, teenagers, and the elderly. The evaluation is worse when it comes to offering adequate support to young adults and families. Respondents think that inadequate support is offered to people in difficulty and to singles. It should be noted that many respondents in the Hungarian sample were unable or unwilling to answer these questions: less than half of them responded to all the questions. Respondents in the **Latvian** sample were not particularly satisfied with the support, opportunities and programmes provided by Jewish organisations to any of the groups listed. They are most likely to regard support as satisfactory in the case of children, teenagers and the elderly, but even here less than a third of respondents think the level of support is good. Among the various groups facing difficulty, respondents think that those in material need can count on the most support, while people in serious crisis receive very little support. It should be noted that many respondents could answer only some of these questions or none at all. **Polish** respondents were not particularly satisfied with the support, opportunities and programmes provided by Jewish organisations to any of the groups listed. They are most likely to regard support as satisfactory in the case of elderly people and children and teenagers, but the level of support is evaluated positively by just over half of respondents in the case of elderly people and by just under half of respondents in the case of children and teenagers. Among the various groups facing difficulty, respondents think that those in material need can count on some support, while people in serious crisis receive very little support. Jewish organisations in Poland offer the least support and fewest opportunities to single people, in the opinion of Polish respondents. It should be noted that many respondents were unable to answer these questions. In **Romania**, respondents are most likely to think that Jewish organisations offer adequate support, opportunities and programmes to elderly people and children and teenagers. The evaluation is worse with regard to support offered to young adults and people in material need. It seems respondents think that the Jewish organisations in Romania give scant attention to singles, families, and people in serious crisis.

Respondents in all countries are most likely to think that Jewish institutions give priority to Jewish cultural programming and Jewish education. They believe another focus is social work and financial aid. Advocacy for Israel received a medium score value. In **Bulgaria** and in **Hungary** only a small percentage of respondents think that Jewish institutions in their countries give priority to the political representation of local Jewish interests, while in **Latvia**, **Poland** and **Romania** those percentages tend to be higher.

Curiously, when we asked respondents to identify the most and second-most important activities on the list, respondents' expectations largely mirrored the same ranking: they consider cultural and educational activities important. Responses also show a high regard for social work and financial assistance.

Figure 27

In your view, to what extent do Jewish institutions give priority to the following? (%)
 (n: BG = 200; H = 405; LV = 276; PL = 190; RO = 199)



10.2.2 Challenges and Threats

Bulgarian, Latvian, Polish and Romanian respondents greatly fear the shrinking number of Jews. They think this is a consequence of low childbirth and alienation from Jewish community life rather than emigration or the rate of mixed marriages. The weakness of Jewish organisations received a medium evaluation, compared to the rest. Anti-Semitism is least likely to be regarded as a challenge, except in **Hungary** where respondents clearly regard anti-Semitism as the greatest challenge facing the Jewish community. This is not surprising, since, as we noted above, three-quarters of them have perceived strong or moderate growth in anti-Semitism during the past five years.

Older respondents view low childbirth and the shrinking number of Jews more seriously, while for younger respondents a more serious challenge is the lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community. The shrinking number of Jews and the rate of mixed marriages are more serious challenges for affiliated respondents.

In **Latvia**, respondents also view poverty in the community as a serious threat, while in **Poland** younger people in particular perceive emigration as a serious challenge. For affiliated respondents, low childbirth and the shrinking number of Jews are the most serious challenges, while for the non-affiliated the most serious challenge is anti-Semitism.

Table 7

Evaluation of the gravity of various challenges by country (average; on scale from 1-5)
(n: BG = 186; H = 306; LV = 217; PL = 153; RO = 175)

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Shrinking number of Jews	3.97	3.33	3.85	3.55	4.55
Alienation of Jews from Jewish community life	3.87	3.46	3.39	3.96	3.97
Low childbirth	3.76	3.13	3.68	4.01	4.42
The decline of Jewish knowledge	3.70	3.53	3.73	3.39	4.14
Weakness of Jewish organisations	3.47	3.34	3.39	3.51	3.66
Emigration	3.32	2.17	3.18	3.33	3.38
Rate of mixed marriages	3.19	2.60	3.14	3.21	3.41
The lack of religious life	3.12	2.86	2.88	3.16	3.63
Lack of effective assistance from abroad	3.08	2.45	3.22	2.75	3.53
Lack of religious pluralism inside the Jewish community	2.88	3.18	2.91	3.34	2.97
Poverty of the community	2.73	2.43	3.38	2.58	3.71
Anti-Semitism	2.70	3.54	3.13	2.97	3.31

When asked about the importance of various factors for securing the future of the Jewish people we found that respondents in all countries agreed that an increase in the activity of Jewish organisations, the encouragement of Jewish culture and a greater willingness of Jewish organisations to admit all who define themselves as Jewish were the most important factors. A relatively large number of respondents also think that there should be less rigidity of religious commandments and prohibitions. Lower scores were received by the factors pertaining to emigration, exclusiveness, and religiosity.

Table 8

Importance of various factors for securing the future of the Jewish people by country
(average; on scale from 1-5) (n: BG = 196; H = 359; LV = 252; PL = 172; RO = 181)

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Latvia	Poland	Romania
Jewish organisations becoming more active	4.48	3.93	4.22	4.22	4.41
Encouragement of Jewish culture	4.47	4.34	4.07	4.49	4.47
Jewish organisations being more willing to admit all who define themselves as Jewish	3.79	4.23	3.94	3.54	3.57
Less rigidity of religious commandments and prohibitions	3.06	3.21	3.48	3.09	3.55
Jews should marry Jews	2.72	2.39	2.73	3.04	3.07
Jews should settle in Israel	2.56	1.71	2.24	2.26	2.58
Widespread strict observance of religious practices	2.28	2.00	1.98	2.25	2.67
Jews should emigrate to larger communities in Europe	2.01	1.55	1.99	1.87	1.90
Jews should emigrate to the United States	1.63	1.33	1.72	1.42	1.68

10.2.3 Being European

Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents think that joining the EU was favourable for Jews and that Europe is a safe place for Jews today. Many agree that European Jews differ greatly from Israeli and American Jews. Neither group thinks that the Jewish community will disappear or that European Jews with a strong Jewish identity will end up either in Israel or in the United States. They do not feel that events in Israel tend to alienate Jews in Bulgaria from the Jewish state.

Latvian respondents do not think that joining the EU was favourable for Jews in that country although they think of Europe as a safe place for Jews today. The disappearance of the Jewish community in Latvia and the departure of Jews with a strong Jewish identity are, in their view, unlikely to occur.

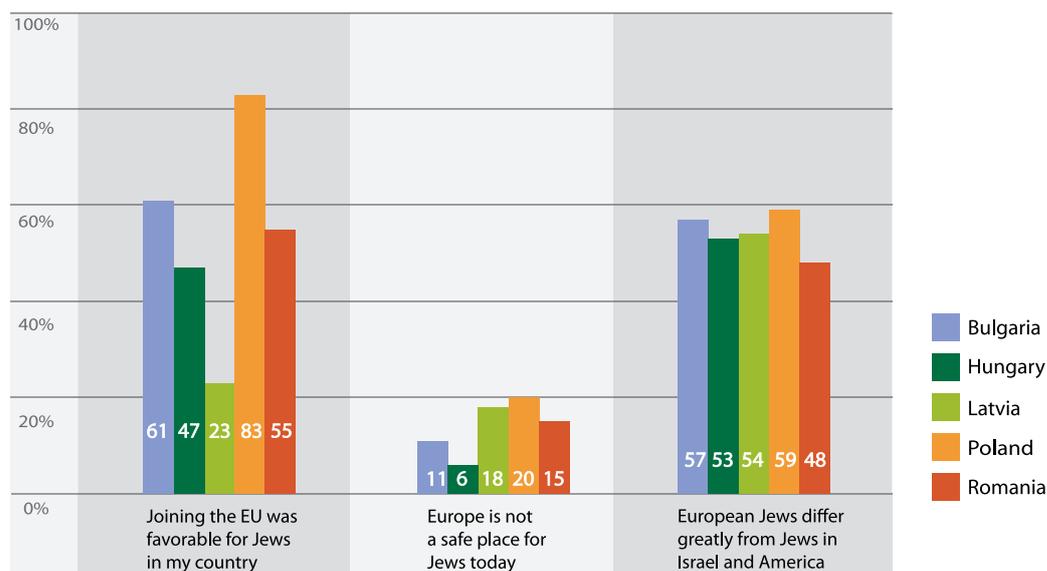
Polish respondents almost uniformly agree that joining the EU was favourable for Jews in Poland, but fewer of them think that Europe is a safe place for Jews today. A quarter of respondents think that in a few decades the Jewish community in Poland will cease to exist, and almost half of them think that Jews with a strong Jewish identity will end up either in Israel or in the United States, although many of them also think that European Jews differ greatly from Jews in Israel and America.

Respondents in the **Romanian** sample differ greatly in their opinions. Half of respondents think that joining the EU was favourable for Jews in Romania and 61% feel that Europe is a safe place for Jews. 41% of respondents think that in a few decades the Jewish community in Romania will cease to exist, while 31% believe that European Jews with a strong Jewish identity will end up either in Israel or in the United States.

Younger respondents see a greater difference between European Jews and Jews in Israel and America. They are also more likely to think that events in Israel alienate Jews in Romania from the Jewish state. Affiliated and non-affiliated respondents do not differ in their judgment of these statements.

Figure 28

Agreement with various statements relating to the Jewish community and Europe by country (%)



It is possible to attest the existence of a “European Jewish identity”, although this always appears as a second choice for the respondents. As shown in table 9 respondents in all countries regard themselves either as being Jews living in a given country or as having a dual identity, “I am both Latvian, Romanian, etc. and Jewish”. The “European identity” is chosen more frequently when facing a second round of answers.

Table 9

Which of the following statements express your idea of your identity? (%)

	Bulgaria		Hungary		Latvia		Poland		Romania	
	Highest Ranking	Second Highest Ranking								
I am a Jew living in [Latvia, etc.]	38	31	29	17	67	19	20	21	45	16
I am [Latvian, etc.]	5	7	5	8	5	4	5	6	2	6
I am a [Latvian, etc.] of the Jewish religion	4	13	11	10	3	8	11	12	17	18
I am both [Latvian, etc.] and Jewish	49	21	43	24	46	42	54	21	28	29
I am a European citizen	4	28	12	41	36	33	10	40	8	31
n	200	192	405	375	275	234	186	176	197	184

11. Comments on JDC *Identity à la Carte* Report by academic advisors

Chris Kooyman*

Who's who?

As stated in the study, the interviewees are not an at-random representation of the Jewish population in the investigated countries: people connected with the Jewish community are over-represented. So what is the real proportion of the affiliated Jews in the total Jewish population in Eastern Europe?

Discussing the results of the study it might be helpful to keep in mind the situation in Holland, where the high rate of assimilation might be comparable with Eastern Europe.

Roughly, affiliated Jews (members of Jewish organisations, etc) with a strong Jewish bond account there for at most 30% of the Jewish population; also 30% for the non-affiliated Jews with a quite strong Jewish bond and another 30% at least for non-affiliated Jews with a weak bond; 10% has no bond at all.

Yes, I do. (What do I do?)

Jewry has long considered mixed marriage a curse. And there can be no misunderstanding: children with two Jewish parents have a stronger Jewish identity than children with only one Jewish parent. This is even more the case for Jews with Jewish partners. In the present study, however, marrying a Jewish spouse is almost never considered an important identity factor. Also, a large proportion of respondents think that mixed marriages don't threaten the continued existence of the Jewish people. Demographic trends, rather—and especially shrinking numbers—were identified as the greatest challenge.

One sees in this paradox a great challenge for Eastern European Jewry (and not only for them): a mixed marriage family is an increase in the number of Jews, provided they choose the Jewish side.

Es is schwer zu sein a yid vs. Identity à la carte

Freely choosing for or against Jewishness has once again become a plausible, existential question for Eastern European Jews after centuries of being forced or born into their decisions. And again a paradox reveals itself in the study: for a (very) remarkable percentage of the respondents (and for non-affiliated Jews probably even higher) their Jewish origins were concealed from them during childhood. Also notable is the high percentage of respondents who report having personally experienced anti-Semitism. On the other hand, even taking into consideration the bias of the more "Jewish" Jews, it's nonetheless remarkable that respondents' Jewish identity is stronger than their national identity. Anti-Semitism, it is also noteworthy to add, plays a relatively minor role in the formation of their Jewish identity. This is very different from the example of Holland, where the Second World War and anti-Semitism are the strongest triggers for Jewish consciousness.

* Chris Kooyman is a Dutch sociologist and staff researcher with JMW (Jewish Social Services, Holland). He has participated in and published several socio-demographic studies about Israeli (1996) and Russian Jews in Holland (1997), as well as the Jewish community in Holland (2000 + 2010).

“Doctors, doctors, our sons are becoming doctors...” (Jewish folk poetry)

Not only sons, but also the daughters of the elder generations in Eastern Europe have reached such a high level of education that the upward mobility of their children has not only reached a plateau but is in some cases falling. This might be an interesting trend, worthy of future study. For the moment, the high education level and the relatively high living standards of Jews in Eastern Europe in addition to the richness of Judaism (Jewish traditions rather than observance of religious practices) could make a Jewish partner more attractive to non-Jewish potential partners and, in the event of a mixed marriage, might help the mixed couple opt for Jewish identity.

“Always look on the Jewish side of life...” (loosely adapted from the Monty Python...)

In a mixed marriage, identification with the Jewish side is, as we know, more strongly fostered by the Jewish partner. In this light, respondent optimism about the small influence of mixed marriages might reflect more their own family lives than a balanced judgment of the general situation. Regardless, whether we like it or not, the future—and not only in Eastern Europe—will be one of a high percentage of mixed marriages (for the youngest generation in Holland this is already above 70%). It might be a certain consolation that (again: in Holland) not less than 30% of the non-Jewish partners encourage the “Jewishness” of their partner! Still, this means 70% do not encourage that identification and the big challenge here is how to influence mixed marriage couples to opt for the Jewish side of life!

Miscellaneous

Given that Jewish identity is very stable, it's interesting to see that almost half of respondents are more involved in Jewish life now than they were 5 years ago. This draws the conclusion that Jewish identity is more important than it was in their childhood (maybe due to the fact that a child takes for granted questions of identity?). In any event, this does not match the strikingly high percentage of respondent children who participate in Jewish education.

A dramatically high percentage of respondent children participate in Jewish education. And this even though more than 20% of respondents report that their families concealed their Jewish origins from them during childhood. This provocative paradox begs explanation.

Half of respondents think that the Shoah should be the main focus of Jewish consciousness while showing minimal interest in Shoah issues. This might be described as typical of prescribed behaviours: good for everyone but the prescriber?

Israel's role as an identity factor is significant for [only!] more than half of the respondents. On the other hand it becomes clear from other indicators that Israel is, for most respondents, very important. This contradiction cannot be explained by differences per age group, as opinion on and experiences with Israel are quite homogenous.

Barry A. Kosmin*

The successful completion of this research project can be regarded as a minor academic triumph. It needs to be recognized that this type of multi-national and multi-lingual research is a complicated organizational challenge. In addition, anyone who has tried to survey respondents in small Central and Eastern European Jewish communities knows how difficult it is to get co-operation and usable responses from potential respondents.

My commentary will go beyond the descriptive approach of the actual report to offer a more explanatory model of the findings. Rather than dwell on each national situation, we need to focus on general trends that can guide future policies. The title of the report—“Identity à la carte”—underscores the reality of the contemporary Jewish condition in these five European nations. As a result of 20th century upheavals, each country has a checkered and tragic history that complicates current social reality. There have been many breaks and discontinuities in the transmission of Jewish identity and culture across the generations. In addition, each community is a mere shadow of what it was, both demographically and organizationally. Nevertheless, the ability of Jews to adapt collectively to the new political realities of Eastern Europe and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by their newfound liberty in a free market economy and society emerges quite clearly. The new European Union of the 21st century is a consumerist and individualistic environment. Consequently, one can generalize that in each country these Jews have spread themselves over the full range of the spectrum of possible Jewish religious and ideological positions and lifestyles. They are also voluntary members of their communities—not quite Jews by choice, though certainly “choosing Jews.” The survey results show that these Jews are indeed picking and choosing from the wide menu of Jewish cultural artifacts and identities that have been produced over thousands of years in various contexts.

Individualism and autonomy undermine traditionalism, authority and solidarity, so the lack of consensus in belief, belonging and behavior revealed in the report is not surprising. The Roman Catholic Church in America, which is also under assault from similar contemporary trends, uses the term “cafeteria Catholicism” to describe the new situation it faces, whereby its adherents decide for themselves which religious rituals and practices they will follow and which they will ignore, irrespective of the Church’s theological dicta. The authority of the Catholic priests in America and of the Orthodox rabbinate and the Halakhah in Europe is increasingly questioned and often ignored. In the Jewish case, this is not surprising given the historical discontinuities among European Jewry and the economic, political and social climate that now exists in Europe. It is unlikely that an unquestioned rabbinical authority can be restored. The revival of “ethno-religious” traditions, highlighted in the study, was to be expected given the new access opportunities to Judaism and Jewish culture, but this should not be interpreted as an acceptance of traditional authority. It is also unlikely, given the reported range of opinion and lifestyles among Jews, that a new communal consensus or agreement on group norms will be adopted or could be imposed. Many of “sub-identities” and small groupings emerge instead.

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The challenge of diversity and of each Jew “making Shabbat for him/herself,” or creating their own Shulchan Aruch, is further complicated by the small numbers in each country. Organizations and services require a critical mass of members and participants. The data suggests that much of the unhappiness with Jewish communal bodies relates to their weakness, which is itself caused by the lack of viable numbers. The same applies to perceived problems in communal leadership and personnel. Because sufficient cadres of leaders are absent, a multiplicity of small, weak organizations will be the pattern. This admission of the consequences of observed demographic weakness and decline, if not fully articulated by the respondents, is behind the majority sentiment to be inclusive about recruitment into the Jewish community and to adopt a wide definition of Jewish identity. A preference for open access and liberal attitudes towards intermarriage is a natural and expected socio-psychological outcome.

The reality of organizational limitations lies behind the finding that family and social networks are the most important parts of Jewish identity and culture. Formal communal ties and participation will tend to be episodic and event-orientated in these circumstances. This tendency towards privatization is reinforced by the technological revolution (note the buy-in recorded in the data) and feelings of being “time poor.” This is a common finding across contemporary urban populations in advanced economies, particularly among well-educated and professional classes. There is a realization that small Jewish communities do not have and cannot support the infrastructure or personnel to offer large numbers of activities. Thus the organizational challenge is somehow to create larger economies of scale. Again, the finding that there is support for a “European” Jewish identity and community is not surprising. Combination and co-operation across national boundaries are obvious organizational solutions. The key is to decide what services are local or can only be delivered locally and what can be “federalized” and offered from a distance. Here the findings suggest a welcoming response. There is recognition of homogenizing trends across the continent in economics, language use (Hebrew and English), and common formative and cultural experiences (day schools, trips to Israel). There is a general acceptance that these communities need to be less parochial, and less historically and nationally minded.

The findings on opinions towards Israel fit a common, regional pattern. A screening process produced these respondents; they have universally opted against going on aliyah. One should therefore expect a high degree of Zionism. On the other hand, they have many relatives and friends who did emigrate (though this is less often the case in the Hungarian sample) which translates into close family and personal ties to Israel and, more importantly, to many Israelis. To use a sporting analogy: Israel is their team. They cheer for it and loyally support it against its adversaries. Given the history of Eastern Europe, they might be expected to be less politically progressive and less “utopian” than Western European Jews of similar educational and class backgrounds. Nor are Jews from these five countries much affected by significant Muslim immigration and the accompanying contemporary forms of anti-Zionism. The anti-Semitism they meet and fear is of the historic European variety of anti-Jewish prejudice. Unlike in Western Europe, Israel is not a burden or a big political problem for them as individuals or for their communities.

Erik H. Cohen*

Components of Jewish identity in Eastern Europe (and beyond): A multi-dimensional analysis

One of the most important features of this research endeavor led by András Kovács is its international scope. This is surprisingly rare. Most studies focus on the Jewish population in one country, and even anthologies bringing such studies together in one volume do not provide the straight comparability of data achieved in this survey. Two series of studies that did take an international perspective, interestingly, both deal with Jewish education, formal (DellaPergola & Schmelz, 1989)¹ and informal (Cohen, E.H., 2008a).²

The current research makes a significant contribution to the literature on Jewish life in contemporary Eastern Europe (Gitelman, Kosmin & Kovács, 2003; Graham, 2004; Wasserstein, 1996, among others). The interviews conducted with 1,270 Jews in five countries provide a detailed picture of Jewish life among those affiliated with their local Jewish community (for logistical reasons it was difficult for the researchers to reach peripheral or unaffiliated Jews). The parallel questions posed to each interviewee allow for a comparison of the extent and style of Jewish identity and community participation.

I would like to elaborate the international comparison by offering some new analysis of the data. There is a wealth of data in the report—far too much to be considered in this brief contribution. I will focus on one section of the survey: a question related to the ‘components of Jewish identity.’ Since nearly identical question series have been included in many of my own previous studies of Jews around the world, the possibility for international comparison is rich, indeed.

The distribution data on components of identity (see chapter 7) provide valuable information about the ways in which Jews formulate and perceive their Jewish identity. The percentage of respondents in each country who chose from among the 13 ‘ways of being Jewish’ confirmed, in selecting components of their identities, the existence of a multiplicity of ‘styles’ of expressing Judaism. For example, being Jewish ‘by birth’ and ‘by family’ were the most commonly chosen for all five surveyed countries. Importantly, this has also been the case for every study population to receive this question—youth from dozens of Diaspora countries (Cohen, E.H. 2008a) and Israel (2008b) and Jewish adults in France (in the press) have highlighted the strong basis of kinship in Jewish identity. On the other hand, a wide range (in this study and the others) in the percentage consider themselves Jewish by religion or in relation to Israel, thus expressing very differing experiences of kinship.

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1 For evident reasons, this survey conducted before the fall of the USSR did not include Eastern European countries. The analysis in DellaPergola & Schmelz’s (1989) chapter is based on data from research reports published by the Institute for Contemporary Jewry: Himmelfarb & Della Pergola (1982); DellaPergola & Genuth, (1983), Genuth, DellaPergola & Dubb (1985).

2 These studies follow Dushkin’s (1971) pioneering works on Jewish education in the Diaspora.

These findings are enlightening, but it is difficult if not impossible to gain a holistic view of the data and the structural relationships between the 13 components of Jewish identity by looking at a distribution table. By graphically representing the whole data at once it becomes possible to get a holistic view of the ways Jewish identity is perceived and constructed among the surveyed populations. The method used here, called M-POSAC³ creates profiles of respondents based on their responses to selected variables (in this case the 13 components of Jewish identity). The M-POSAC computer program identifies which variables are most effective in distinguishing between profiles. These variables (usually two or three) are used as axes. Profiles are plotted along these axes.

Table 1 shows the correlation between each component of identity along three axes. The highest correlations for each are indicated in bold. For Axis 1 the component ‘Jewish in reaction to anti-Semitism’ correlates perfectly and the component ‘in relation to the Shoah (Holocaust)’ nearly perfectly (.98). Thus this axis can be understood as representing the role of anti-Semitism in Jewish identity. Axis 2 correlates highly with the components of family and education, and may be seen as representing the home environment. Three items correlate perfectly with Axis 3: religion, values and relation to Israel. This axis represents Jewish values.

COMPONENT	axis 1	axis 2	axis 3
1 Birth	.62	.51	.97
2 Culture	.44	.91	.94
3 Family	.04	.96	.86
4 Shoah	.98	.68	.23
5 Choice	.92	.58	.85
6 Education	-.22	.95	.93
7 Religion	.32	.78	1.00
8 Values	.16	.70	1.00
9 Nation	.87	.14	.31
10 Ethnic group	.50	.78	.92
11 Israel	.42	.79	1.00
12 Anti-Semitism	1.00	.28	.30
13 Jewish people	.95	.57	.28

Table 1
Correlations of components of Jewish identity along three axes

Table 2
National sub-populations and the three axes of Jewish identity

National population	axis 1 (Anti-Semitism)	axis 2 (Family environment)	axis 3 (Jewish values)
Bulgaria	50.00	50.00	66.67
Hungary	16.67	33.33	16.67
Latvia	66.67	16.67	50.00
Poland	83.33	66.67	33.33
Romania	33.33	83.33	83.33

Next, the coordinates of the five sub-populations along these three axes were calculated as shown in Table 2. In each case, the coordinate closest to the ‘strong’ or ‘positive’ end of the axis is shown in bold. Accordingly, it may be said that the Romanian Jews have the ‘strongest’ level of Jewish identity and the Hungarian Jews the ‘weakest.’

This finding is borne out by various data from other parts of the report. To give only a few examples: the Romanian respondents were most likely to say they belonged to a Jewish youth organization (57%); the Hungarians were the least likely (33%). Similarly, 65% of the Romanians said they currently light Shabbat candles, compared to 41% of the Hungarians (see chapter 6).

While not every questionnaire item follows this precise pattern, we nevertheless see that the analysis of the responses to the components of identity is not purely abstract, but is borne out by the behavior and background of the interviewees.

³ As space does not permit an explanation of the method, I refer the reader to Amar, 1995, 2005, Levy, 1994.

These correlations can be more clearly perceived by plotting the populations along the three axes, as shown in Figure 1. The position of the Romanian respondents, for example, is close to the ‘strong’ end of axes 2 (family) and 3 (values) and close to the ‘weak’ of axis 1 (anti-Semitism), representing its correlation with each as given in the table above. Poland is close to the ‘strong’ end of axis 1 (anti-Semitism); Hungary is close to the ‘weak’ end of all three axes and so on.

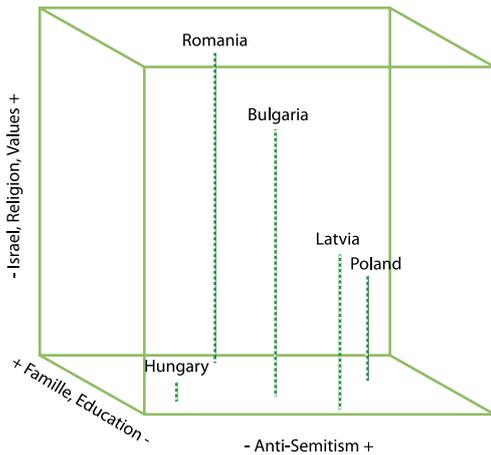


Figure 1
Three-dimensional representation of the five surveyed populations in the structure of Jewish identity components

From this brief analysis, we may draw several preliminary conclusions and identify some questions and directions for future research. Clearly, despite the relatively similar socio-political contexts of these five Eastern-European ex-communist countries, the Jewish populations of each display a distinctive pattern of Jewish identity components. Further research is needed to uncover the reasons behind these significant differences—which may reflect a wide variety of factors such as the specific histories, cultures, and educational systems of each of the five nations and their Jewish populations.

It is exceedingly difficult to apply findings from one population of Jews to another; even among those commonly lumped into a single category such as “Eastern European.”⁴ At the same time, there are some large patterns common to Jews in vastly different social contexts (such as the almost universal affirmation of being “Jewish by birth”). This reinforces the vital importance of comparative international surveys such as this one. It may be hoped that future surveys will include a greater number of Jewish populations. Including Jews of Western European countries would give a far broader picture of Jewish life and identity in contemporary Europe.

The analysis raises some interesting observations and questions about various types of collectives to which Jews may be affiliated: the Jewish people or ethnic group, the nation of Israel, the non-Jewish nation in which one lives, the local Jewish community in one’s country, and so on. The analysis gives some clues towards perspectives on these types of collectives. Referring back to table 2, we see that those who indicated they are Jewish by ethnic group are most strongly correlated with the Jewish values axis. Those who identified themselves as Jewish in relation to other Jews were most strongly correlated with the anti-Semitism axis. It seems that the rationale between these correlations and the meanings attached to the various types of collectives deserves further study.

4. In a previous similar analysis I found differences between French Jews born in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria (Cohen, E.H. in press).

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