

4 Religious and ethnic background

Examining the ancestry and religious backgrounds of the respondents was one of the most challenging aspects of the survey. Even when sufficient information was available, it was difficult to discern a clear-cut pattern, since ethnic lineage and religious lineage do not always coincide.

The survey collected data on the religious backgrounds of respondents' parents and grandparents. This information was 'fine-tuned' by constructing the survey questionnaire in such a way as to approach the subject of the interviewees' religious backgrounds from several possible angles. Separate questions related to each of the respondent's six immediate ancestors (two parents and four grandparents). These asked whether or not they were Jews or of Jewish origin, whether or not they were observant Jews, and whether or not they had converted to another religion.⁸

Analysis of the responses allowed us to trace the extent of religious and ethnic continuity as well as marital homogeneity (Jewish–Jewish marriages) and to chart these tendencies through succeeding generations. These data provide important information on the cohesion and structure of the Jewish population, in general terms as well as over time.

Religious and ethnic composition

An index of religious and ethnic continuity was calculated on the basis of the data that referred to each respondent's four grandparents. Under the heading of 'homogeneous' are those who reported that all four grandparents were Jewish, either on the basis of their religion or their ethnicity.⁹ The 'partly

homogeneous' group consists of those who had one non-Jewish grandparent, and the group labelled 'mixed origin' includes those who had only one or two Jewish grandparents. Figure 6 shows the results for the entire sample and Table 8 shows them broken down into specific age groups.

Figure 6: Number of respondents' Jewish grandparents

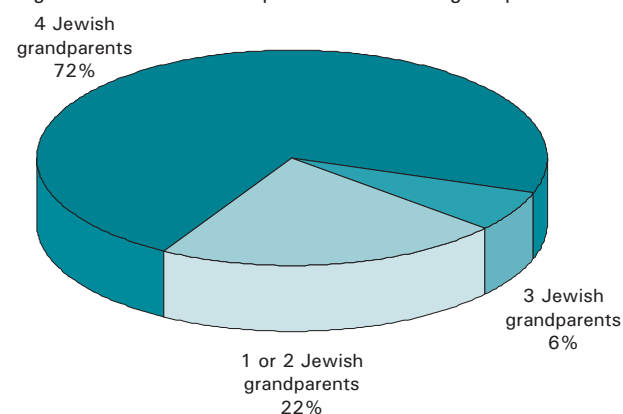


Table 8: Number of respondents' Jewish grandparents, by age group (%)

Age group	4	3	1 or 2	Total	N
18–25	40	10	50	100	254
26–35	39	13	48	100	174
36–45	56	10	34	100	241
46–55	79	6	15	100	376
56–65	84	5	11	100	262
66–75	88	1	11	100	360
76+	89	3	8	100	346
Full sample	72	6	22	100	2,013

As these illustrations show, for nearly three-quarters of the sample population, all four grandparents were Jewish. However, the proportion was much higher among the older generation and markedly lower among those aged 45 and younger. In the under-35 cohorts, the proportion of those with just one or two Jewish grandparents represented practically half of

⁸ Negative answers to the question about the Jewish origin of forebears as well as the ambiguous cases (such as those of mixed origin) were categorized as 'other'. With regard to the question on Jewish religious affiliation, the questionnaire offered the following options: 'yes', 'other religion', 'not belonging to any denomination', 'other'. For the question about conversion, the category 'other' was introduced among the optional answers, alongside 'yes' and 'no', for ambiguous cases.

⁹ 'Religiously Jewish' refers to those whose grandparents belonged to the Jewish religious community; 'ethnically Jewish' refers to those whose grandparents' parents belonged to the Jewish religious community, but who themselves did not belong to it, either because they converted or because they defined themselves as 'not belonging to any denomination'.

the entire age group, showing the sustained erosion of ethno-religious continuity in recent decades.

Exogamous marriage

The data allowed patterns of endogamy (in-marriage) and exogamy (out-marriage) to be traced among the age groups of the contemporary Jewish sample. Since the experience of men and women can differ, Tables 9a and 9b break down the marriage data by gender as well as by generation and age group.

Comparing the younger groups with the older ones, Table 9b clearly shows that the proportion of people marrying Jews has declined, a feature already hinted at in Table 8. The pattern has obviously been influenced by historical as well as demographic developments. The heavy losses

suffered during the Holocaust sharply diminished the possibility of endogamous marriages. In Budapest in 1946, for example, there were an estimated 157 Jewish women for every 100 Jewish men. At the same time, however, the rate of decline of endogamy has not been steady, and in fact seems to have stabilized at about 40–50 per cent. (It should also be noted that there are fewer data on the youngest groups as they are now marrying later.)

Comparison by gender suggests another significant phenomenon: men of the present generation tended to marry non-Jewish women more frequently than Jewish women married non-Jewish men, a widespread finding in contemporary Jewish communities.

Table 9a: Endogamy of respondents and their parents, by gender* (%)

Status	Parents	Married respondents	Married males	Married female
Endogamous	79	51	44	58
Exogamous	21	49	56	42
Total	100	100	100	100
N	1,995	1,631	768	863

Table 9b: Endogamy of respondents, by age group* (%)

Status	18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–75	76+
Endogamous	48	37	44	48	44	51	70
Exogamous	52	63	56	52	56	49	30
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	40	113	213	349	246	343	337

* Only those respondents who were at the time (or previously) married are included in these tables (i.e. cohabitees are excluded). Marriages are 'endogamous' when both partners qualify as Jewish by religion or ethnic origin. In these tables the respondent was considered Jewish if he or she had at least two Jewish grandparents. The data refer to the most recent marriage.