

6 Identity

The assessment of how respondents defined their personal identity was approached from several angles. As demonstrated in Table 15, one approach was to present respondents with five statements defining themselves in terms of being *Hungarian, Jewish* or *European*, asking them to select the one with which they most closely identified.

These statements, shown in Table 15, were designed to explore the most frequently encountered identity issue for diaspora Jews: the degree to which they identify both with the general population and with Jewry. At one extreme is someone with a strong Jewish identity who considers his/her Hungarian identity to be incidental: 'I am a Jew who happens to live in

Hungary.' At the opposite extreme is the individual who rejects any Jewish identity whatsoever: 'I am Hungarian.' All things considered, the majority of respondents, both in their first as well as their second choice, provided answers that suggested a sense of dual identity: they mostly chose 'I am a Hungarian of Jewish religion/origin', and somewhat less frequently 'I am both Jewish and Hungarian'. These two answers accounted for more than 50 per cent of all responses.

There was also a second set of statements aimed at measuring the intensity of respondents' sense of Jewish identity (see Table 16 and Figure 7). Here, too, we asked the interviewees to select the statement that best represented how they felt.

Table 15: Respondents' sense of identity, by ethno-religious origin (%)

Statements	Full sample		Ethno-religious origins*		
	Highest ranking (N=2,015)	Second highest ranking (N=1,964)	Homogeneous	Partly homogeneous	Mixed
I am a Jew who happens to live in Hungary.	23	16	45	50	28
I am both Hungarian and Jewish.	24	24	51	48	48
I am a Hungarian of Jewish religion/origin.	30	25	61	53	46
I am a European citizen.	12	22	34	40	45
I am Hungarian.	13	10	20	19	40

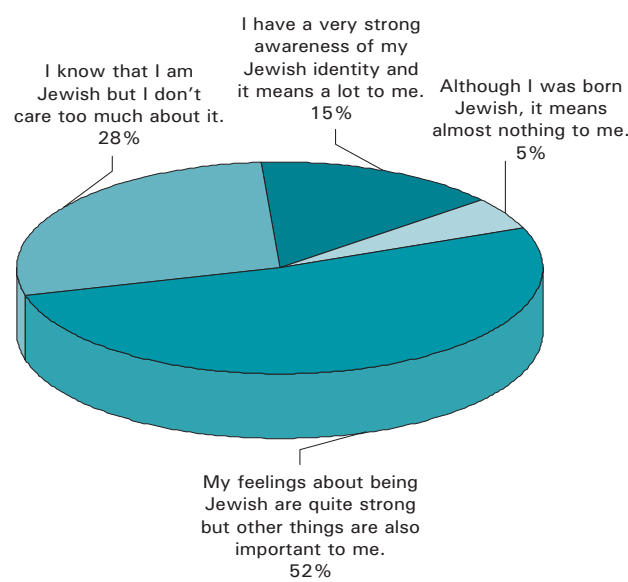
* These figures represent highest and second highest rankings taken together.

Table 16: Intensity of respondents' sense of Jewish identity, by ethno-religious origin* (%)

Statements	Full sample	Homogeneous	Partly homogeneous	Mixed
I have a very strong awareness of my Jewish identity and it means a lot to me.	15	17	13	10
My feelings about being Jewish are quite strong but other things are also important to me.	52	54	51	45
I know that I am Jewish but I don't care too much about it.	28	25	31	36
Although I was born Jewish, it means almost nothing to me.	5	4	5	9
Total	100	100	100	100
N	1,924	1,399	109	416

* Only valid responses are included here: answers such as 'I don't know' or no response at all made up 5 per cent of all responses.

Figure 7: Intensity of respondents' sense of Jewish identity



The responses to the series of statements shown in Table 16 and Figure 7 suggest that 33 per cent of the sample felt a weak sense of Jewish identity, and 15 per cent felt a strong one. The picture that emerges shows that responses to the two series of statements are closely related.

Respondents who selected either of the two statements representing the extremes of the spectrum in the first question about identity usually selected a correspondingly extreme statement in the second question. Forty-six per cent of those who characterized themselves as having a very strong sense of being Jewish also chose the statement 'I am a Jew who happens to live in Hungary' in the first question. The correlation of responses from the opposite extreme was even more

pronounced. Of those for whom being Jewish 'means almost nothing', 52 per cent chose the statement 'I am Hungarian' in the first question; 20 per cent chose 'I am a European citizen'; and 4 per cent chose 'I am a Jew who happens to live in Hungary'.

Specific features of Jewish identity

The survey included ten questions designed to analyse particular features of respondents' sense of Jewish identity. They were asked to assess what significance each of the listed features had for them, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest significance. Table 18 shows the averages calculated from the sample's answers according to the three categories of ethno-religious origins.

This table shows that a sense of religious belonging seemed to be much less important than that of ethno-cultural belonging. Traditional religious practice and attachment to religious-communal institutions contributed much less to respondents' sense of Jewish identity than a desire to preserve the memory of their forebears or their awareness of a shared history. A need to remember the Holocaust and other persecutions was especially important. Whereas tradition was important for the older generation, historical, cultural or subjective matters were more important for the young, although the generational differences were not marked. Though the general pattern was similar across the various ethno-religious origin categories, all of the listed features of Jewish identity elicited a more positive response from the 'homogeneous' group than from the 'partly homogeneous' or 'mixed' groups. In particular, a feeling of closeness to Israel and a desire to marry someone Jewish were stronger components of identity for the members of the 'homogeneous' group than for the other two.

Table 17: Intensity of feelings about being Jewish* (%)

Statements	Feel very strongly	Feel quite strongly	Don't care much about it	Means almost nothing
I am a Jew who happens to live in Hungary.	46	26	11	4
I am both Hungarian and Jewish.	20	29	21	8
I am a Hungarian of Jewish religion/origin.	30	31	28	17
I am a European citizen.	3	9	18	20
I am Hungarian.	1	5	22	52
N	284	941	504	94

*Figures based on respondents' first choice of statement.

Table 18: Features of Jewish identity, by ethno-religious origin (average scores*)

From the point of view of belonging to the Jewish people, how important is each of the following to you?	Full sample	Homogeneous	Partly homogeneous	Mixed
Awareness of the persecution of the Jews/ memory of the Holocaust	4.47	4.57	4.18	4.22
Awareness of Jewish history and Jewish forebears	4.09	4.17	3.85	3.92
Feeling part of the Jewish people	4.00	4.11	3.87	3.69
Interest in and familiarity with Jewish culture	3.98	4.01	3.84	3.90
Awareness of great Jewish individuals and achievements	3.68	3.77	3.42	3.45
Close relations with other Jews	3.45	3.50	3.33	3.30
Feeling close to Israel	3.24	3.40	2.96	2.77
Marrying a Jewish spouse	2.73	2.89	2.59	2.24
Observing Jewish practices	2.26	2.28	2.19	2.21
Participating in Jewish communal activities	2.01	2.06	1.89	1.89

*Scores on a scale of 1–5: 5 = very important, 1 = not at all important

Attitudes towards Israel

One feature of Jewish identity is the multifaceted relationship of Jews with Israel. Most respondents had personal ties to Israel or had visited the country: 73 per cent had relatives or friends in Israel and 53 per cent of them had been there, some of them several times. The proportion of those who had visited Israel was significantly higher among the young, and was highest in the youngest age cohort (18–25).

Against this background of strong personal links to Israel, the survey examined both the cognitive and emotional attitudes towards the Jewish state held by Hungarian Jews. We asked respondents to evaluate five basic statements about Israel on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). At first glance, it appears that their attitudes were strongly related to personal contacts—relatives and friends—as well as to the degree or form of

Table 19a: Attitudes towards Israel* (average scores and %)

Statement	N	Average	1	2	3	4	5
The existence of Israel gives Jews a sense of security.	1,970	4.52	3	2	8	13	74
The Jewish people can be proud of Israel.	1,956	4.40	2	5	10	18	65
Israel is the spiritual centre of the Jews.	1,945	3.62	10	11	22	20	37
Israel is the real home of the Jews.	1,939	3.34	17	14	22	14	33
Zionists exaggerate the significance of Israel.	1,783	3.22	19	11	23	22	25

Table 19b: Attitudes towards Israel,* by age group

Statement	18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–75	76+
The existence of Israel gives Jews a sense of security.	4.37	4.25	4.56	4.53	4.59	4.61	4.56
The Jewish people can be proud of Israel.	4.00	4.07	4.20	4.43	4.60	4.64	4.57
Israel is the spiritual centre of the Jews.	3.10	3.13	3.43	3.56	3.97	3.85	3.97
Israel is the real home of the Jews.	3.08	3.13	3.26	3.22	3.36	3.49	3.68
Zionists exaggerate the significance of Israel.	3.48	3.21	3.15	3.30	3.16	3.10	3.13

*Scores on a scale of 1–5: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Jewish identity felt personally. Tables 19a and 19b show the responses to these statements, according to the age of respondents, since age was the most decisive factor among the variables investigated.

The statements that characterized Israel as a source of security or reassurance met with general approval. However, the notion that Israel was the national or even the cultural centre of the Jewish people produced a less clear-cut result: 57 per cent agreed that Israel was the 'spiritual centre' of the Jews and 47 per cent that Israel was the 'real home of the Jews'. The distribution of opinions was greatly influenced by education. Those with the highest levels of education displayed the most doubt about Israel being 'the real home of the Jews' (Table 20): among those with a university degree, only 36 per cent of respondents agreed with this statement compared with 67 per cent of those with a primary school education.

Opinions about Zionism differed particularly by age group, with the young being more critical. The differences between the groups organized according to level of education were less marked (Table 21).

Moving away from cognitive attitudes towards Israel and considering purely emotional ones, Table 22 shows the relationship between emotional attachment to Israel and age. Respondents chose from one of the four statements shown in the table.

Very few respondents expressed a negative attitude towards Israel. Even though no strongly negative attitudes were revealed in any age group, among the four oldest age cohorts, a 'strong attachment' was more prevalent than 'no special feelings'. Interestingly, this tendency was reversed for the young, who had the highest level of neutral or negative feelings towards the Jewish state.

Table 20: Response to the statement 'Israel is the real home of the Jews', by educational level (%)

Response	Primary school	Vocational school (szakiskola)	Secondary school (gimnázium)	College degree	University degree	Total
Strongly disagree	5	7	16	15	22	17
Disagree	10	11	13	14	16	14
Neither agree nor disagree	18	14	21	24	26	22
Agree	15	12	17	12	13	14
Strongly agree	52	56	33	35	23	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	199	84	652	340	642	1,916

Table 21: Response to the statement 'Zionists exaggerate the significance of Israel', by educational level (%)

Response	Primary school	Vocational school (szakiskola)	Secondary school (gimnázium)	College degree	University degree	Total
Strongly disagree	18	21	16	22	21	19
Disagree	9	11	11	13	10	11
Neither agree nor disagree	33	18	24	22	21	23
Agree	19	15	25	18	23	22
Strongly agree	21	34	24	25	25	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	166	71	604	321	617	1,779

Figure 8: Emotional attachment to Israel

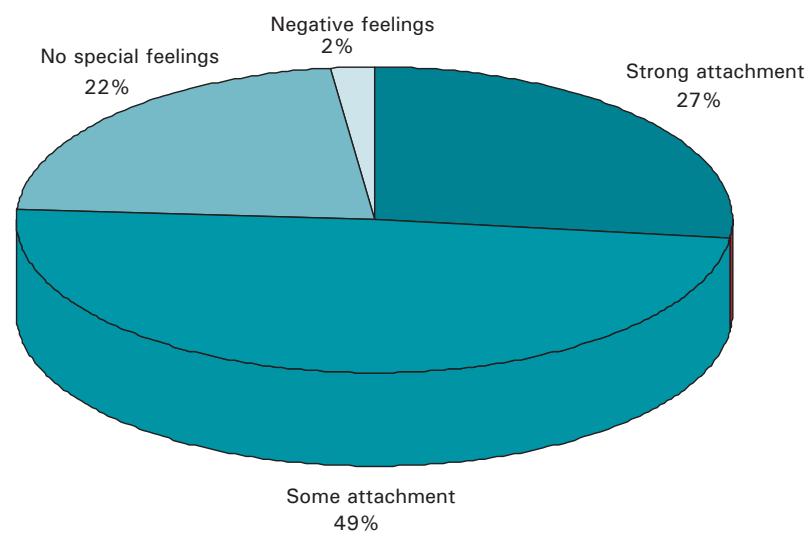


Table 22: Emotional attachment to Israel, by age group (%)*

Statement	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76+
I feel a strong attachment to Israel.	27	22	21	21	28	32	32	30
I feel some attachment to Israel.	49	44	43	49	51	51	51	47
I have no special feelings about Israel.	22	30	32	29	20	16	15	21
If anything, I have negative feelings about Israel.	2	4	4	1	1	1	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	1,961	252	169	234	364	256	346	337

* 'Other' and 'Don't know' responses totalled 2 per cent; the table excludes these.

Fifteen per cent of the total sample said that they had considered emigrating to Israel; in the case of the most flexible group (the 18-25 age cohort), less than 20 per cent had considered such a move.

However, even fewer respondents (12 per cent) had considered emigrating to a country other than Israel (Table 23). Among the youngest age group responses to these two indicators were practically the same.

Table 23: Attitudes towards emigration to a country other than Israel (%)

Have you considered emigrating to a country other than Israel?	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76+
Never	69	46	66	61	66	75	79	81
It has occurred to me	19	34	21	24	20	16	10	11
Yes	12	19	12	15	14	9	10	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	1,986	252	169	240	372	245	359	340

