

8 Ideological, economic and social attitudes

As a means of gauging the level of Jewish integration, we compared the viewpoints of Jews and non-Jews on issues such as liberalism, conservatism, xenophobia and anomie, as well as on what constitutes 'left' and 'right' in politics. Table 32 compares the responses of the Jewish sample with the views of educated non-Jews on several key social and political issues.¹³ Respondents were asked to register their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements.

The distribution of opinions shows that Jews in general tended to adopt far more liberal attitudes than the ambient population, except on the issue of legalizing prostitution. There were conspicuous differences between Jews and non-Jews in 3 out of the 7 statements; on these the two groups were at opposite extremes. Among the non-Jewish population in general, the better-educated had more liberal opinions regarding capital punishment, drug abuse and homosexuality; nevertheless, their attitudes were still a good deal more conservative than those of the Jews. These findings tally with the results of other surveys of Jewish populations.

On economic issues, Jewish opinions were more liberal than those of the population as a whole. Jews were more likely to favour a market economy and were more willing to accept its consequences than was the general population (Table 33).

With regard to joining the EU, Jews supported a strong representation of Hungarian interests. The representation of the interests of ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries was less important to Jews than to non-Jews.

The next group of responses evaluates attitudes towards other ethnic minority groups, and highlight the degree of xenophobia within the Jewish sample.

In general, Jews were less averse to other ethnic minorities in Hungary than the population at large. As the average values show, Jews were positively disposed towards three of the minority groups, Blacks, ethnic Germans and Chinese, whereas the non-Jewish sample had a positive attitude only towards ethnic Germans. Comparing Jews with better-educated Budapest respondents, the greatest

Table 32: Jewish and non-Jewish world-views (%)

Statement	Agree to some extent			Disagree to some extent		
	Jews	non-Jews		Jews	non-Jews	
		I	II		I	II
Abortions should be more strictly controlled.	11	26	28	83	66	67
The entry of refugees should be restricted.	29	70	74	65	26	22
Prostitution should be legalized.	33	31	39	58	64	57
Capital punishment should be introduced for the most serious crimes.	49	84	75	46	13	24
I have an aversion to Gypsies.	23	50	49	70	47	48
Homosexuality should be condemned.	16	63	48	78	29	45
Drug abuse should be punished by imprisonment.	24	55	39	70	39	59

I: the total non-Jewish population (N = 1,500); II: the population of Budapest holding at least a secondary school diploma (N = 152)

¹³ The source of data about the non-Jewish population is a national survey carried out by the Gallup/Hungary Institute in 1995; the size of the sample was 1,500.

Table 33: Attitudes relating to economic and national interests (average scores*)

Statement	Jews	Non-Jews I	Non-Jews II
We should accept that some citizens must live in need if we are to have economic development.	2.28	2.10	2.22
The free market economy should be restricted in Hungary.	2.52	3.16	3.21
The interests of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries should be more firmly represented.	2.61	3.28	3.31
Private property should be the dominant feature of the economy.	3.21	2.95	3.30
No Hungarian interests should be sacrificed for EU membership.	3.24	-	-
Income differences should be reduced.	3.71	4.22	3.81

*Scores on a scale of 1–5: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

I: the total non-Jewish population (N = 1,500), II: the population of Budapest holding at least a secondary school diploma (N = 152)

differences related to Gypsies and Blacks. The attitudes of the Jews were more positive, even though the prevailing attitude towards the Gypsies was rather negative among Jews as well. The smallest difference between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians was in their attitude towards Arabs.

Typical social and political attitudes of the Jewish population

Though we have noted the differences in the social and political attitudes of Jewish respondents and better-educated non-Jews in Budapest, our hypothesis was that there were marked differences within the Jewish population itself. To ascertain these differences, we used a statistical analysis to identify eight attitudes. By looking at the presence or lack of

Table 34: Attitudes of Jews and non-Jews towards ethnic minorities in Hungary (average scores*)

Ethnic minority	Jews	Non-Jews I	Non-Jews II
Blacks	5.94	4.19	4.47
Ethnic Germans	5.38	5.41	5.96
Chinese	5.34	4.24	4.37
Romanians	4.81	3.58	3.60
Gypsies	4.60	2.98	3.05
Arabs	3.95	3.83	3.71
Mean average	5.00	4.06	4.19

*Scores on a scale of 1–9: 1 = extremely unsympathetic, 9 = extremely sympathetic

I: the total non-Jewish population (N = 1,500), II: the population of Budapest holding at least a secondary school diploma (N = 152)

these attitudes, three specific groups within the Jewish population were identified: *liberals*, *religious conservatives* and *left-wing conservatives*.¹⁴

The eight attitudes (and the statements representing them) were as follows:

- *Economic liberalism*: agreement with the statement that 'private property should be the dominant feature of the economy', disagreement with the statements that 'income differences should be reduced' and that 'the free market economy should be restricted in Hungary';
- *Trust in the rule of the law*: disagreement with the statements that 'one can become wealthy only by being dishonest' and that 'today most criminals escape legal punishment';
- *Conservative world-view*: agreement with the statement that 'abortions should be more strictly controlled', 'drug abuse should be punished by imprisonment' and that 'homosexuality should be condemned'; disagreement with the statement that 'prostitution should be legalized';

¹⁴ We used the Principal Components Analysis to determine which opinions correlated, i.e. which opinions were judged to express a similar attitude, something in common. We added the individual statements listed in the tables into the analysis. The result was eight 'opinion clusters'. The labels given to each of the eight clusters expresses the common content that might be seen as typical attitudes. On the basis of each cluster's scores on the principal components, respondents were clustered into the three attitude groups (*liberals*, *religious conservatives*, *left-wing conservatives*). For this procedure we used the quickcluster programme of SPSS.

- *Nostalgia for the socialist system*: agreement with the following statements: 'Under the socialist regime people had more hope for the future'; 'People now have less power to influence the future of the country'; 'Under the old regime it was easier to understand laws and regulations than it is now'; and 'Leaders were keener to listen to people's opinions during the Kadar regime than they are now';
- *Law and order*: agreement with the statement that the 'entry of refugees should be restricted' and that 'capital punishment should be introduced for the most serious crimes';
- *Hungarian national feeling*: agreement with the statement that 'the interests of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries should be more firmly represented' and that 'no Hungarian interests should be sacrificed for EU membership';
- *Strong religious sentiment*: measured by the level of observance of religious laws and the High Holy Days, the intensity of religious feeling and the frequency of synagogue visits;
- *Xenophobic sentiment*: measured by attitudes towards the Chinese, ethnic Germans, Gypsies, Blacks, Romanians and Arabs.

As already noted, three large, well-defined groups within the Jewish population were differentiated.

Liberals

This was the largest group of Jews, comprising about 56 per cent of the sample population. This group was termed 'liberal' because its members exhibited trust in the rule of law and supported economic liberalism. Nostalgia for the old regime, conservative feelings, a law-and-order ideology, strong national feeling and xenophobia were *not* characteristics of this group. The members of this group were not religious (about 60 per cent characterized themselves as non-religious or atheist). In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, men, residents of Budapest, the well-educated and better-off subgroups defined the profile of this group.

Religious conservatives

This group (9 per cent of the sample) comprised those who had difficulty adjusting to the post-Communist socio-economic situation. They were strongly suspicious of the rule of law and unwilling to accept economic liberalism. At the same time, they had negative rather than nostalgic feelings for the old regime. This follows logically from their strong religiosity (more than 70 per cent observed at least the High Holy Days). In this group the proportion of women, elderly people, people living in the larger towns outside Budapest, those with a lower education (up to a vocational school diploma) and poorer people was significantly above the sample average. This group comprised significantly fewer people aged between 36 and 55.

Left-wing conservatives

The third group (comprising 35 per cent of the sample), unlike the other two, was strongly nostalgic about the socialist regime. It did not believe in the rule of law, it rejected economic liberalism and espoused a strong law-and-order ideology. Its members were somewhat xenophobic and harboured anti-Gypsy feelings. These characteristics indicate that this group found the post-Communist political and economic changes difficult. People who lived in smaller urban centres, who had been educated to secondary school level only and who had below average standards of living were over-represented in this group. Significantly, this group had no members in the 18–25 age cohort. Its members were generally neutral with regard to religion: neither atheism (9 per cent) nor minimal observance (31 per cent) were characteristic of it.

These findings indicate that the *religious conservatives* had the strongest Jewish identity, with 63 per cent of this small group reporting a strong or a very strong Jewish identity. The weakest Jewish identity was found among the *left-wing conservatives*, who represented over a third of the sample; 7 per cent of this group reported that being Jewish meant 'almost nothing' to them and 27 per cent that it meant only very little. In terms of its Jewish identity, the *liberals* stood between the other two groups.

