

Report On The Survey Of Jewish
Film Festival, 1996

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This report outlines the aims, methodology and results of a survey carried out for the arts, media and culture task group of Jewish Continuity, on people attending the Jewish Film Festival in June 1996. The arts, media and culture task group within Jewish Continuity aims to contribute to the overall process of Jewish Continuity through the promotion and support of Jewish Arts and Cultural events. Such events are viewed as potential "gateways" into the community for those with an otherwise limited involvement in it. However, there is currently insufficient information into who attends such events and what success they have in reaching people on the margins of the community. The task group therefore decided to begin a programme of research into Jewish Arts and Cultural events. This programme would involve Jewish Continuity carrying out surveys at major Jewish events, the results of which would be shared with the organisations involved.

The programme was named the "Jewish Cultural Events Survey" and was begun with a survey at Jewish Book Week in March 1996. A report on the survey is available elsewhere. The experience at Jewish Book Week allowed certain methodological refinements to be made before the survey at the Jewish Film Festival.

The survey aimed to answer the following questions:

- Who comes to the Jewish Film Festival? In particular what are the levels of Jewish observance, identification and commitment of those who attend? Are those Jews who attend "on the margins" of the community?
- Where did those who attend hear about the event?
- Are particular films during the festival more likely to attract a particular audience? [i.e. is it possible to target specific events at specific sections of the Jewish population]

Although the survey was carried out principally for Jewish Continuity, it was hoped that answering these questions would produce information of use to the Jewish Film Festival.

The Method¹

The only way to obtain an accurate survey is to ensure that everyone in a particular population is questioned, or a pre-determined percentage of that population is sampled. It is not enough to simply make questionnaires available as efforts have to be made to ensure that everyone who is eligible actively accepts or refuses one. Ideally, everyone attending the festival would have been given a questionnaire. However, it was impractical to do this so it was decided to give a questionnaire to everyone attending a *sample* of films showing at the festival.

The only way to obtain a sample of films representative of the entire festival was to pick what is known as a random sample. The organisers had allowed us access to six out of forty nine films. Six films were chosen by a method detailed in the appendix. The scientific basis of the method enables us to generalise from this small sample to the audience of the film festival as a whole. The only threat to validity and reliability was that we were obliged to exclude one of these six events due to it falling on Shabbat². Instead an extra event was chosen to which occasional comparisons will be made later on.

A questionnaire based on the one used at Jewish Book Week was designed. It is shown in appendix B and was designed to be as short and easy to complete as possible. Staff were employed to put a questionnaire and a pen on every seat in the auditorium during an event. A member of the film festival staff encouraged the audience to complete the questionnaires in a short talk before the film. Once the film finished, the questionnaires were either deposited in boxes near the entrance, or given to a staff member.

The method appeared to be successful. One hundred and fifty six responses were received from the three hundred attending the five events, giving a total response rate of 52%. This compares fairly well with the response rate achieved on national government surveys. There was no reason to expect a "biased response" (where one section of the audience was more likely to refuse co-operation) as there were few complaints. It seemed that response fell at when there were more people in the auditorium. We can therefore be confident that the data that is analysed in subsequent sections, fairly represents the audience for the Jewish Film Festival as a whole.

¹ A more technical methodological discussion is given in the appendix.

² Jewish Continuity is not able to commission work to be done on the Sabbath.

Characteristics of the Jewish Film Festival audience

56% of the audience were Jewish. This perhaps low figure can be partially explained by a number of factors, The festival is not marketed principally to the Jewish community but seeks to appeal to cinema fans in general. That the festival runs over Shabbat and takes place in a non-Jewish venue also helps to account for the fact that the audience is not dominated by Jews.

The first section of the data presented here concerns the "Jewish characteristics" of the Jews in the audience alone. Throughout the analysis, data concerning the Jews is compared to the characteristics of the Jewish community as a whole. The source for the comparative data on the Jewish population is the JPR 1995 Survey of Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews and is published by permission.

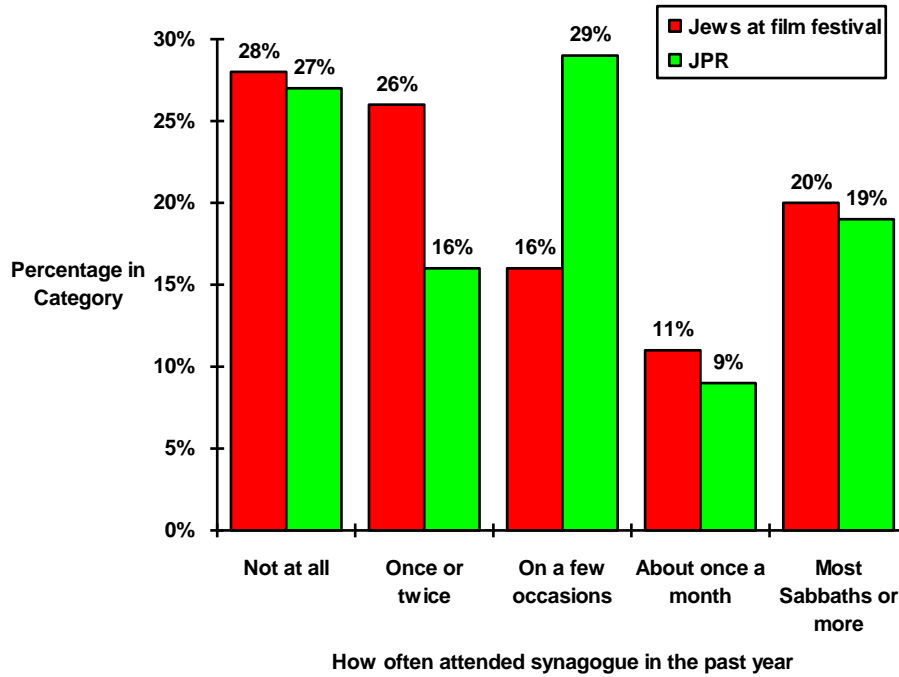
1) The Jewish audience

Jews attending the film festival are considerably more likely to be secular (non-practising) or progressive Jews than traditional or strictly orthodox³ and are more likely to be secular or progressive compared to Jews in the community as a whole:



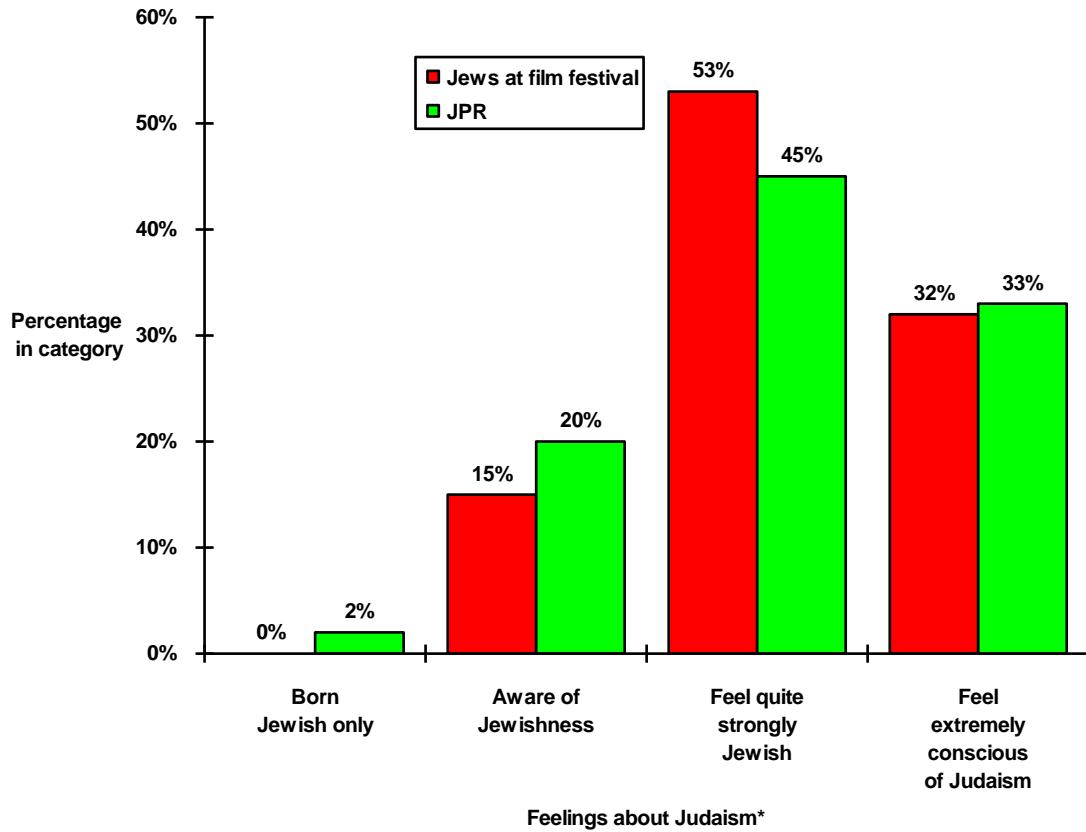
However, when examining the data on synagogue attendance the picture becomes more complicated:

³ The question asking about synagogue membership was not analysed as it was badly worded and produced untrustworthy data.



Jews attending the film festival are just as likely or more likely than the community as a whole to attend synagogue not at all or once or twice a year *or* about once a month or most Sabbaths. They are much less likely however to attend synagogues on a few occasions per year. This suggests a somewhat polarised Jewish audience of Jews who are either religiously uncommitted or very committed:

The situation regarding feelings of Jewishness is less complex:

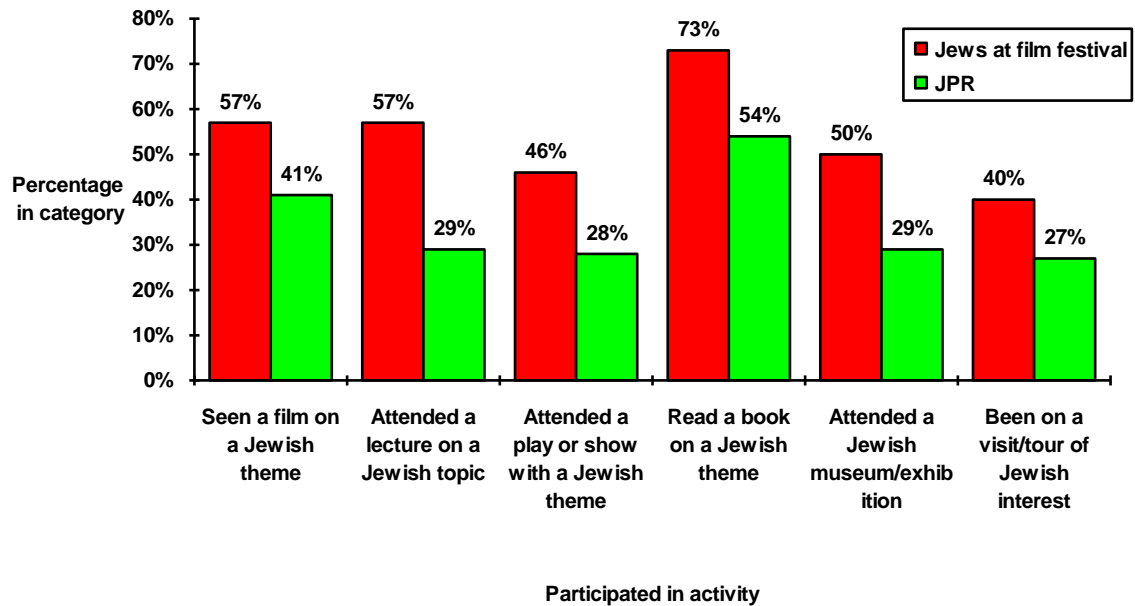


* The full responses are given in appendix B, question 7.

It seems that Jews attending the film festival in this respect mirror the Jewish community as a whole reasonably closely although they are somewhat more likely to feel quite strongly Jewish and less likely simply to feel aware of their Jewishness.

2) Participation in Jewish activities and previous attendance at the film festival

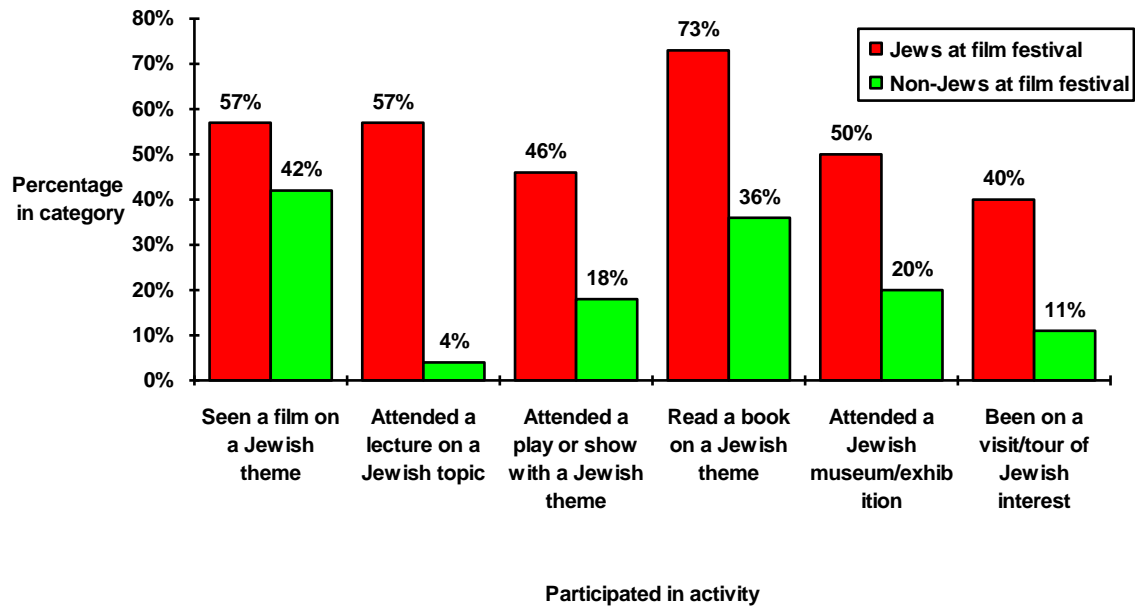
Perhaps unsurprisingly, 95% of Jews attending the film festival had participated in some sort of Jewish activity in the previous 12 months, compared to 72% of the community as a whole. The statistics for participation in Jewish activities are as follows:



The Jews at the film festival were considerably more likely to participate in all these activities than the Jewish community as a whole. That only 57% had seen a film on a Jewish topic in the last year indicates two things. Firstly the relative scarcity of Jewish film in British theatres and television. Secondly (and more importantly) it suggests that many in the Jewish audience were not interested in Jewish cinema *per se* but attended the Jewish Film Festival as part of a lifestyle of participation in Jewish activities. This is further confirmed by the fact that only 51% had been to the film festival before and only 55% had pre-booked their tickets

3) Non-Jewish participation in Jewish activities and previous attendance at the film festival

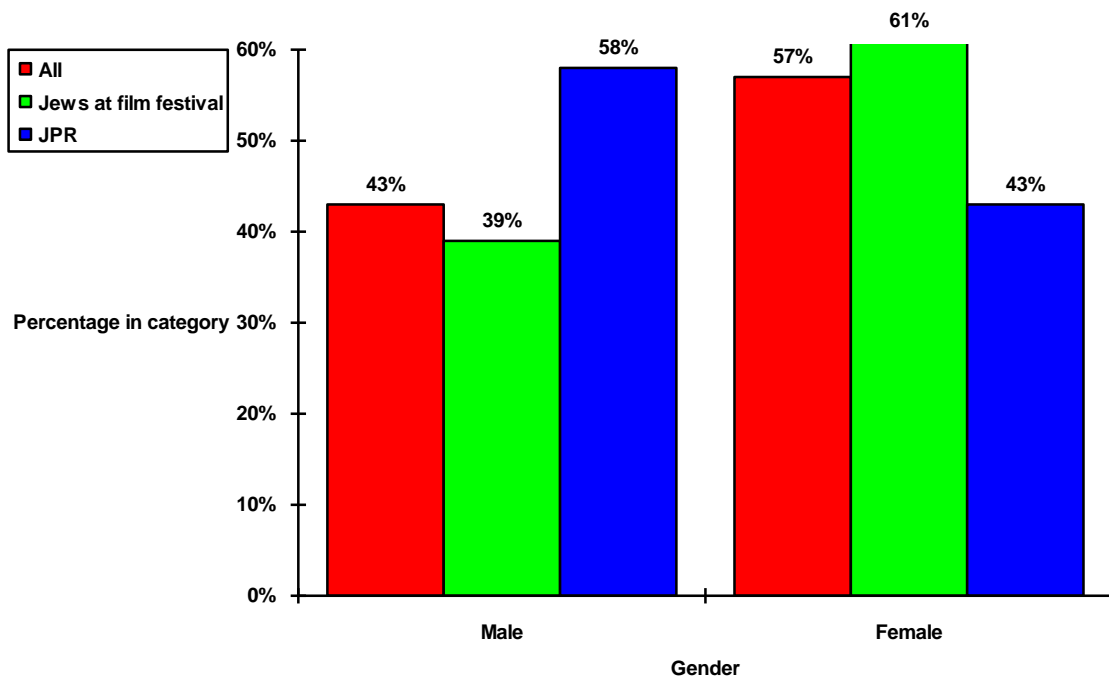
Although non-Jews were not analysed as a separate group in the systematic way the Jews were, a repetition of the above analysis for the non-Jews produced some intriguing results. 68% had participated in some kind of Jewish activity over the last year. More specifically:



Non-Jews had participated significantly in all the above activities with the exception of attending lectures or visits of Jewish interest, albeit on a lesser level to the Jews. Some of this can be explained as the activities of non-Jews partners of Jews. However, considerable numbers had seen a film on a Jewish theme (42%) or read a book of Jewish interest (36%). This suggests that a proportion of the non-Jews were people with a genuine interest in Jewish art and culture.

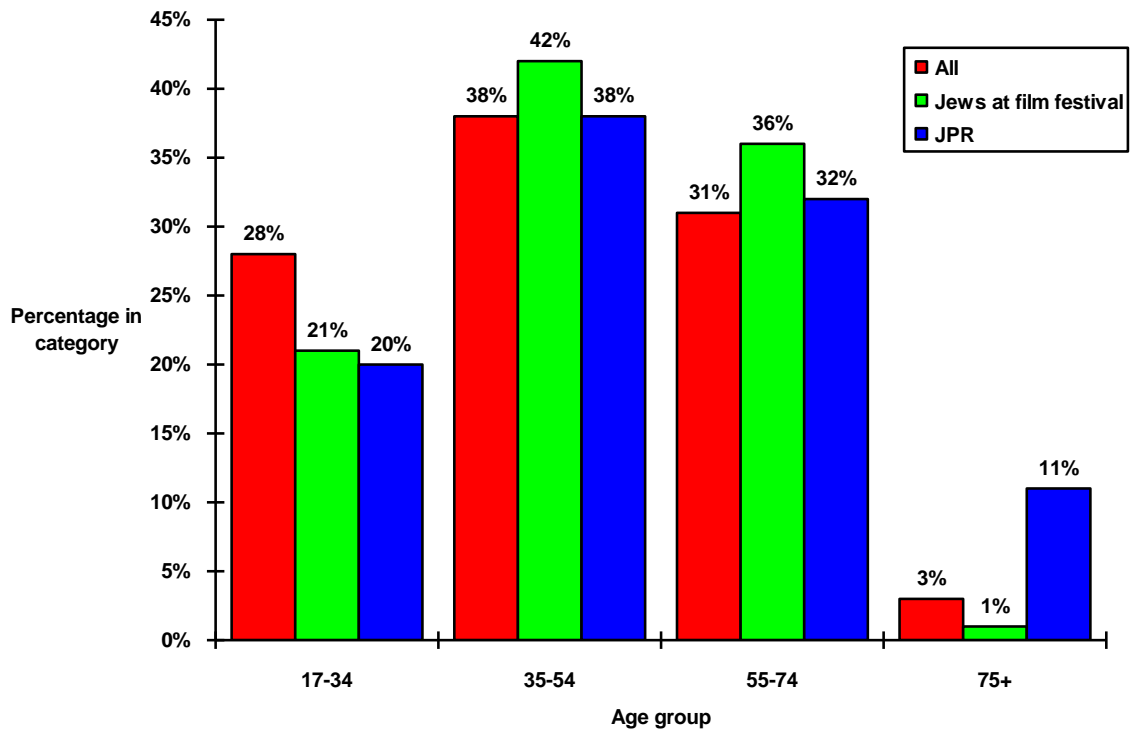
Having said all this it is equally likely that large numbers of the non-Jews attended the festival "by mistake" as film lovers who looked through a listings magazine or the NFT programme and found a film they thought interesting that just happened to be part of the festival. That 64% of the non-Jews had pre-booked their tickets as opposed to 55% of the non-Jews is probably more the result of a different attitude to cinema going than a greater prior interest in the film festival.

4) Gender



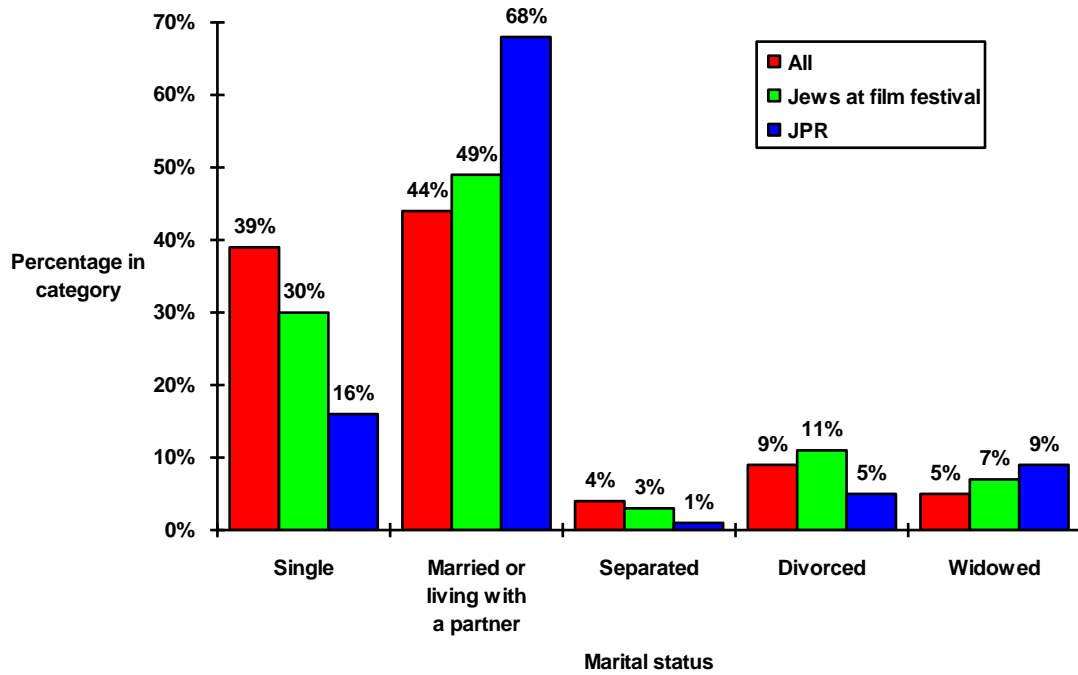
The film festival audience was markedly more female than male with the Jewish section even more unbalanced. This is the reverse of the situation in the community as a whole which has somewhat more men than women. One reason for this imbalance *may* be that a number of film festival events took place in the afternoon when *some* women will be less likely to be in work.

5) Age and marital status



The Jews at the film festival were fairly similar in age profile to the community as a whole but slightly younger, mainly due to the lack of over 75 year olds at the film festival. As a sub-section of the entire film festival audience however, the Jews were somewhat older in age profile with less 17 to 34 year olds.

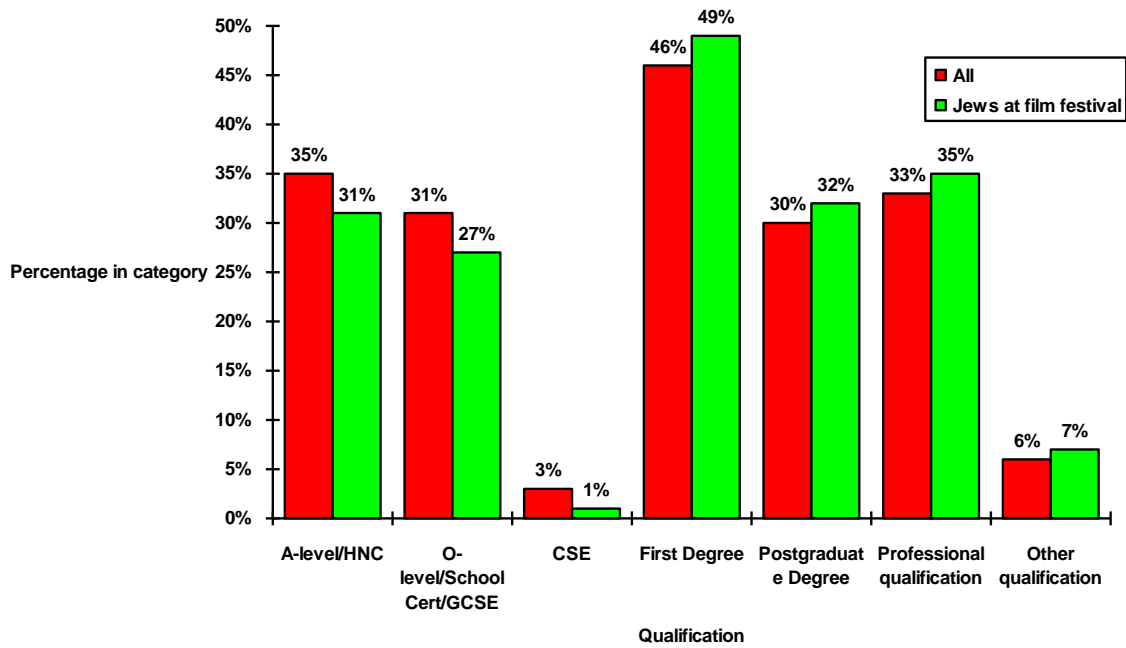
The situation with marital status is as follows:



The Jews at the film festival were thus much more likely to be single than Jews in the community as a whole.

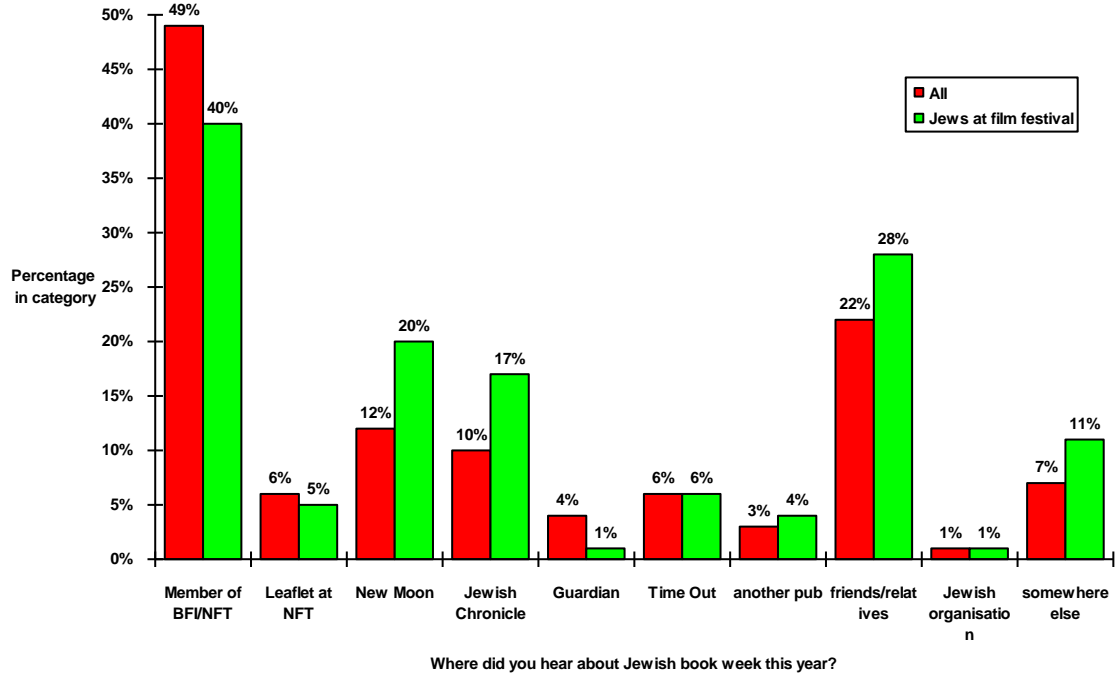
6) Academic qualifications

90% of people attending had some sort of academic qualification and 88% of Jews. As the following graph shows, the film festival audience was a highly educated one with little difference between the Jews and the overall audience:



NB: This question asked respondents to name all the qualifications they had, not just the highest one achieved.

7) Where people heard about book week



As well as being more likely to hear about the film festival from the Jewish media and from friends and relatives, the Jews were less likely to hear about it from the BFI or NFT.

Exploring the data in more detail

1) Where did different sorts of people hear about the Jewish Film Festival?

The small size of the sample made it difficult to find significant correlations between the type of person attending and where they heard about the event. Most of the results that were found were fairly predictable with relatively weak correlations:

- People hearing about the festival through their membership of the BFI/NFT were less likely to be Jewish. Moreover, more practising and observant Jews were even less likely to be members.
- People hearing about the event from the Jewish media were unsurprisingly more likely to be Jewish and more practising Jews even more so. Women were slightly more likely to hear about the festival in this way.
- Men were more likely to hear about the festival from a non-Jewish publication.

2) Do different events at different times attract different sorts of people⁴?

Evidence about this is only fragmentary. Comparing the audiences of the different events within the sample did not produce any statistically significant differences as their sizes were too small for separate analyses. However, the sample data could be compared with data obtained from an extra film surveyed that did yield a large sample. This was a documentary film on the Kindertransports called "My Knees Were Jumping". The audience for this event was more likely to be Jewish with an older age profile than the main sample. In other words a film featuring reminiscences from elderly Jews attracted a similar audience. Whether other films attracted a "appropriate" audiences cannot be known from the data available.

3) What sort of people had been to the festival before?

People who had been to the festival in previous years were:

- More likely to possess a first degree.
- More likely to have participated in other Jewish activities in the last 12 months (this is true of Jews and non-Jews).
- More likely to be members of the BFI/NFT.
- Less likely to be Jewish.

4) Why do different sorts of people attend the Jewish Film Festival?

⁴ The study excluded any events deliberately targeted at a particular group.

The most difficult question to answer is whether people attend the Jewish Film Festival principally because it is an event on a Jewish theme, or because they are "film buffs". One might expect that the Jews in the audience would be more likely to fall into the former category and the non-Jews into the latter. There is evidence for this, compounded by the fact that more observant Jews were less likely to be members of the BFI than more secular Jews. However the non-Jews had participated in Jewish activities in relatively large numbers and many Jews were members of the BFI. Whilst the audience probably is split between film buffs and "Judeophiles", the distinction is not clear cut and does not occur along simple "ethnic" lines.

For all its diversity, the film festival audience is largely made up of educated people interested in arts and cultural events. The Jewish content of the festival acts as a major point of interest for most but the interest is unlikely to be in the Jewish content alone except for more orthodox Jews.

Conclusions

1) The method used was satisfactory, although some possible technical improvements are mentioned in the appendix and a larger sample would have been helpful. A good response rate was achieved and the data yielded thought-provoking findings.

2) The Jewish Film Festival audience is Jewish in the majority, although not overwhelmingly so. The Jews attending are identifying Jews who participate in other Jewish activities, although they may not be practising Jews in the traditional sense.

The Jewish Film Festival attracts disproportionate numbers of younger, single, unobservant Jews - those commonly considered "on the margins". Having said that, they are also strongly identified and involved in Jewish arts and cultural events. Moreover, the festival also attracts orthodox, older Jews.

3) Other research done by Jewish Continuity suggests that young single Jews respond negatively to Jewish events that are perceived to be too close to the communal establishment. Another negative view is of events with a "hidden agenda", where the event itself matters only to snare people into orthodoxy. Perhaps the reason why the Jewish Film Festival attracts young single Jews in larger numbers is that it does not hold these negative connotations. It is located at a non-communal venue and is positioned as part of a more general arts and film culture as much as part of Jewish culture.

This does not mean however that the Jewish Film Festival can be seen as a "tool" for outreach work. Not all young single Jews respond positively to arts and cultural events. What the research can teach those involved in outreach is that events like the Film Festival are successful as they are not simply about Jewish themes - the Jewish Film Festival is as much about films as it is about Judaism.

Appendix A - Technical Details

The Sample

The decision to use random sampling was a difficult one. With access given only to six events there was a danger that the full spread of times and types of films would not be covered - both possibly significant factors in audience behaviour. However, there was no alternative that would allow generalisations about the whole festival to be drawn. The other option was to purposively choose six films to survey on particular criteria and then compare across cases. The problem here was that there was no guarantee of high attendances or response rates - comparisons could not be made between very small samples.

Once the decision to use random sampling was made, the next task was to design the sample frame from which the sample would be drawn. It was decided to exclude gala performances, educational and children's events and films on non-Jewish themes. This resulted in ten films out of 39 being excluded. This meant a smaller sample fraction and a more homogeneous sample frame. The frame was structured in day, time and alphabetical order. This is known as "implicit stratification" and it ensured that the sample was fairly spread throughout the days and times available. The sample of six was then picked in the standard fashion.

Once the film festival and survey had begun, it was decided that the one film taking place during Shabbat could not be surveyed. The sample was therefore reduced to five. An additional film was surveyed instead but was not added to the sample and is treated in the report as a separate case.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is shown in appendix B. It consists of a short preamble, 12 questions and a tear-off address slip. The address slip was designed to obtain addresses for a prize draw and clear wordings ensured respondents were aware that questionnaires were not linked up to addresses. The prize draw was used as an incentive to complete the questionnaire and was completed by half of the respondents. The code of conduct of the Market Research Society and the requirements of the data protection act were taken into account. The questionnaire was designed to be as short as possible so as to ensure that everyone attending completed one before entering the event. All the questions are fixed-choice to aid in fast completion.

Below the preamble are a set of boxes to be marked up by the event staff according to the day on which the survey was taking place.

Questions 1 to 3 are the only questions specifically about the Jewish Film Festival. The first was included to help indicate whether there is a hard-core audience who attends every year. The second was designed to provide information that could be compared against a reliable external source for weighting purposes but in the end this was not done. The third question lists possible places where respondents might have heard about the event and was designed in consultation with the organisers of the film festival. When connected to demographic information, the

question was designed to help in targeting future advertising. An open-ended option was added at the end of question 3 in case any option was not listed.

Question 4 was taken from the JPR survey and investigates involvement in Jewish arts and cultural events. Respondents could tick all that applied, allowing for the subsequent development of scales during the analysis procedure. In addition, its previous use in a large-scale sample survey of the entire community allows for the comparison of the Jewish Film Festival audience with the Jewish community as a whole.

Question 5 is a filter for questions 6 to 8. The questionnaire treats anyone considering themselves to be Jewish to be Jewish. There are many definitions of Judaism and this one was used due to its simplicity and its breadth. In addition, it is also the definition used in the previous Jewish surveys from which 4 questionnaires on the survey are taken (4, 6, 7 and 8). Questions 6, 7 and 8 have been shown in factor analysis to be good predictors of three elements of Jewish identity. Question 6 measures levels of religious practice, question 7 measures Jewish ethnic identification and 8 measures religious identification. Like question 4, these questions were imported with virtually no changes to ensure full comparability with existing data⁵. Questions 6-8 provide a simple mechanism to split the sample into different kinds of Jews - from secular, non-practising Jews to the strictly orthodox.

Questions 9 to 12 ask for standard demographic information to be answered by everyone and are adapted from previous surveys.

Taken together, these 12 questions were designed so as to gather the maximum amount of information from respondents in an extremely short space of time and without antagonising anyone. Data from the questionnaires can be used to analyse what sort of people respondents are, how this affects when they attend and how the Jewish Film Festival fits into an overall Jewish life-style.

⁵ The exception was question 8 which had a "Just Jewish" option which was removed. Factor analysis had shown this option to be unnecessary.

The Analysis

A count of everyone in the auditorium for each sampled event enabled response rates to be calculated. The total response rate was a respectable 52%. Two events attracted extremely low numbers - 12 and 5 people - where almost everyone completed a questionnaire. Of the other events, response rates ranged between 41% and 52%. This partially replicates the finding at Jewish Book Week that response rates decrease when events become busier. At the busier events various mishaps may also have lowered response. At one film attended by 150 people the short talk encouraging people to fill in the questionnaire was not given and only 76 people responded. Another two of the busier films overran resulting in congestion at the exits with people trying to get into the auditorium as others were leaving. This meant that the event staff could less effectively collect questionnaires and encourage people to fill them in. Despite these problems there is no evidence of some kind of non-response bias and it would seem that non-response is caused by factors external to the survey.

The returned questionnaires were entered into SPSS. Frequency counts were then run and the data "cleaned" for keying and other errors. There appeared to be no questions that attracted a disproportionate amount of non-response. Rather, non-response varied between 5 and 15% for every question.

The analysis consists of frequency counts, where possible compared to data on the entire Jewish community drawn from the JPR survey and crosstabulations. Only the results of significant crosstabulations are reported ($p < 0.05$). The small sample size made it difficult to produce many significant crosstabulations, particularly when controlling for other variables. It was particularly difficult to answer the questions whether different events attracted different types of people.

To conclude, the method and questionnaire seemed to be on the whole satisfactory, the only problem was the sample size. The sample is large enough and picked according to a scientific method and this enables conclusions to be drawn about the entire film festival. However, with a larger sample of events, more complex analyses could be carried out and conclusions drawn could be even more confident.

Appendix B - The Questionnaire