



Center for Research
on Prejudice

Antisemitism in Poland. Results of Polish Prejudice Survey 3

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On July 10, 2017, the Polish media published an information: Piotr Rybak, a former collaborator of Paweł Kukiz, is sentenced to three months in prison for burning a puppet of a Jew during the anti-immigrant demonstration organized in November 2015 by the National-Radical Camp (ONR) in Wrocław. Rybak, disagreeing with the verdict of the court, after leaving the courtroom said: "Żydokomuna still rules in our homeland. For the past 28 years the most important positions in our country have been occupied by the Jewish nation. They created this law and this inhumane system". This situation, though one of the most blatant, is not the only evidence that Antisemitism is still a serious social problem in Poland, even despite the small size of the Jewish community in the country. Research carried out annually by the Center for Public Opinion Research shows that the Jews are one of the most disliked nations in Poland – in a study conducted in 2016 almost 40% of the respondents expressed their reluctance toward the Jews. The aim of this report is, therefore, an in-depth analysis of attitudes toward the Jews in Poland, based on the results of the third edition of the Polish Prejudice Survey (PPS3), conducted in May 2017.

Antisemitism as a multidimensional phenomenon

Firstly, it is worth to emphasize that Antisemitism is a multidimensional phenomenon which, though in many respects similar to other forms of intergroup prejudices, has its own specific components. The research conducted in Poland shows that when speaking about Antisemitism, we can in fact distinguish three types of prejudice against the Jews: traditional Antisemitism, belief in Jewish conspiracy and secondary Antisemitism^{1 2}.

¹ Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M., Radzik, Z. (2012). Antisemitism in current Poland: economic, religious and historical aspects. *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*, 4 (2), 423-442

² Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M., Kofta, M., Wójcik, A. (2013). Harmful ideas. The structure and consequences of anti-Semitic beliefs in Poland. *Political Psychology*, 34, 821-839.

Traditional Antisemitism derives from historical anti-Judaic motives from early Christianity, related to religious premises³. It manifests itself in a belief in the myths about the Jews using Christian blood for ritual purposes and is related to the belief that contemporary Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus Christ^{4 5}.

Belief in Jewish conspiracy is a modern, non-religious form of expressing anti-Jewish prejudices. It is related to the belief that the Jews strive to gain power by excessive interference in the social life of the given country or, more broadly, the world. Conspiracy Antisemitism has two additional components: group intentionality, that is perceiving the Jews as one entity that acts together and works for common goals, and a perceived concealment of actions⁶.

Secondary Antisemitism is the most "politically correct" form of Antisemitism. It is characterized by a tendency to deny one's own anti-Jewish prejudices and to deny the historical significance of the Holocaust⁷. Individuals who present these types of attitudes believe that the Jews are themselves guilty of existence of Antisemitism and often blame the Jews for the Holocaust⁸. Lastly, one of the components of this type of attitudes is treating the

³ Krzemiński, I. (red.). (1996). Czy Polacy są antysemitami? Wyniki badania sondażowego. [Are the Poles Antisemites? The results of a survey research]. Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa.

⁴ Langmuir, G. I. (1990). *History, religion, and antisemitism*. Univ of California Press.

⁵ Tokarska-Bakir, J. (2008). *Legendy o krwi: antropologia przesądu: z cyklu Obraz osobliwy*. [Legends about the blood: anthropology of the superstition: from the quaint picture]. WAB.

⁶ Kofta, M., Sędek, G. (1992). Struktura poznawcza stereotypu etnicznego, bliskość wyborów parlamentarnych a przejawy antysemityzmu. [Cognitive structure of ethnic stereotype, closeness of parliamentary elections and manifestations of Antisemitism]. In: Z. Chlewiński, I. Kurcz (red.), *Stereotypy i uprzedzenia [Stereotypes and Prejudice]* (s. 67–86). Warsaw: Institute of Psychology PAN.

⁷ Bergmann, W. (2006). *Nicht immer als Taetervolk dastehen—Zum Phaenomen des Schuldabwehr-Antisemitismus in Deutschland* ["Not always perceived as the perpetrator"- about the phenomenon of defense against Antisemitism resulting from guilt in Germany]. W: D. Ansorge (Ed.), *Antisemitismus in Europa und in der arabischen Welt* [Antisemitism in Europe and the Arabic world]. Paderborn-Frankfurt: Bonifatius Verlag.

⁸ Imhoff, R., Banse, R. (2009). Ongoing victim suffering increases prejudice: The case of secondary antisemitism. *Psychological Science*, 1443-1447.

Holocaust as a tool by which the Jews fight for compensations and gain an advantage over other groups⁹.

In the Polish Prejudice Survey 3 – a study conducted on a representative sample of Poles (N = 1019) – respondents were asked about all three types of Antisemitic attitudes. Not only did we want to answer the question about the structure of anti-Jewish prejudices in Poland, but also to analyze the changes of those attitudes over time, comparing the results of PPS3 to the results of previous editions of the Polish Prejudice Survey, conducted in 2013 and 2009. Additionally, the respondents were asked about their contact with the Jews and about their acceptance of the Jews in their social environment.

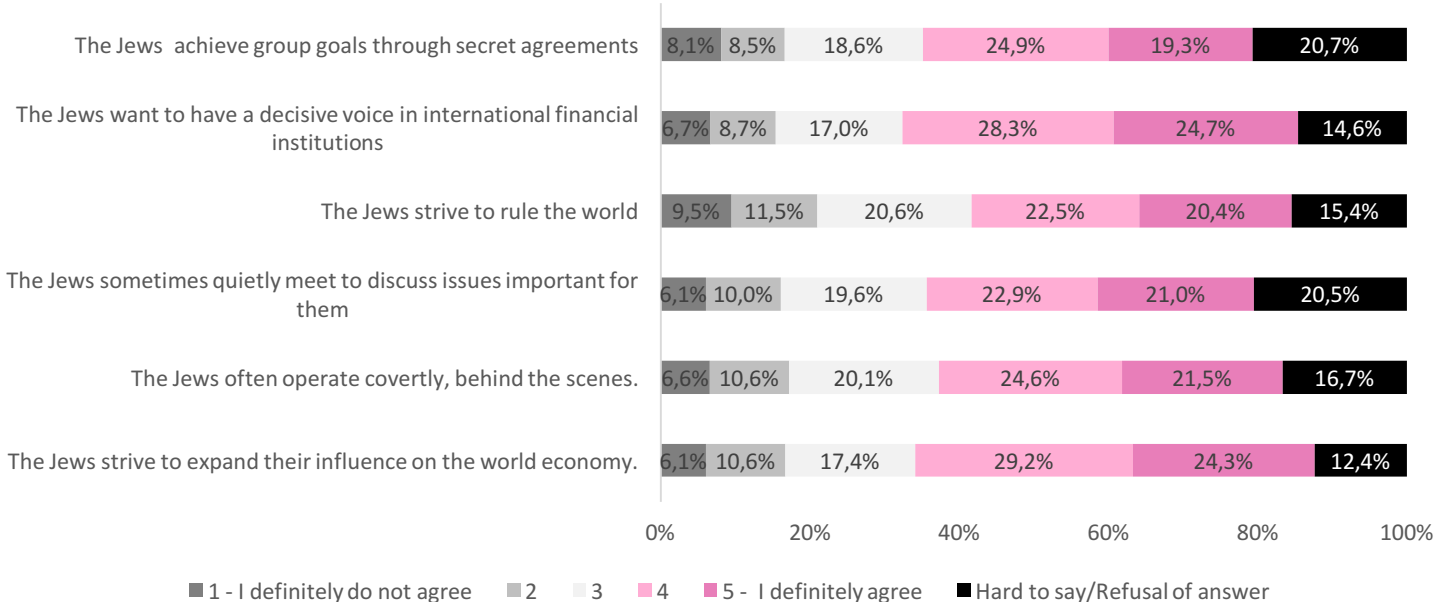
Antisemitism in Poland

In order to measure anti-Jewish attitudes, a number of questions and statements were presented to the participants of the study, asking them to respond to them on a 5-point scale, where 1 meant "*definitely disagree*" and 5 – "*strongly agree*". Two questions measured traditional Antisemitism: the first of them concerned the matter of responsibility of contemporary Jews for the death of Jesus Christ, whereas the second was related to the belief that in the past the Jews kidnapped children for ritual purposes. Statements such as "The Jews often operate covertly, behind the scenes" were the determinants of the belief in Jewish conspiracy. This subscale was made up of six statements, and the maximum value that the respondents could get there equaled 30. Statements such as "The Jews spread the view that the Poles are Antisemites" were treated as a measurement of secondary Antisemitism. This subscale was formed out of four items and the maximum value that the respondents could

⁹ Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M., Kofta, M., Wójcik, A. (2013). Harmful ideas. The structure and consequences of anti-Semitic beliefs in Poland. *Political Psychology*, 34, 821-839.

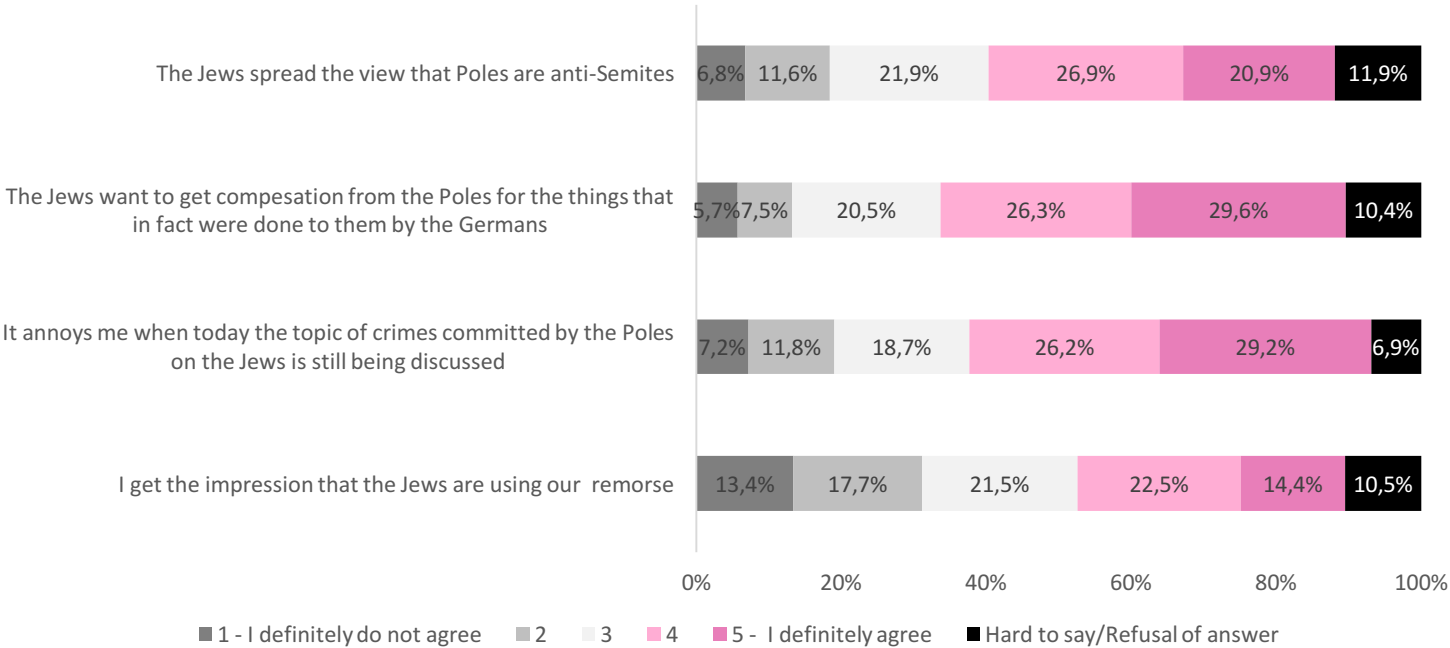
get there equaled 20. Graphs 1,2 and 3 present the percentage distribution of answers to the questions on each of the scales.

Belief in Jewish conspiracy



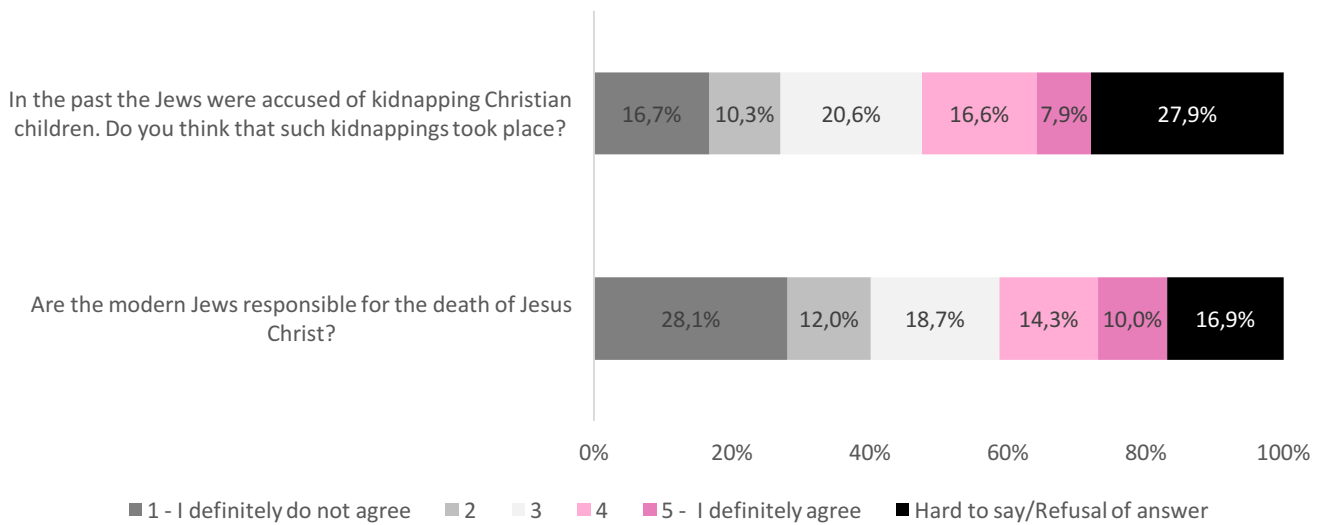
Graph 1. Percentage distribution of answers to six questions on the scale of conspiracy Antisemitism

Secondary Antisemitism



Graph 2. Percentage distribution of answers to four questions on the scale of secondary Antisemitism

Traditional Antisemitism



Graph 3. Percentage distribution of answers to two questions on the scale of traditional Antisemitism

The prevalence of traditional anti-Jewish attitudes in Poland is relatively small – around 24% of the respondents agreed (at least to a certain degree) with one and or the other question on the scale, and the mean of the scale – $M = 2.65$; $SD = 1.32$ – was definitely below the middle point of the scale¹⁰. The prevalence of conspiracy and secondary Antisemitism in Poland is greater than of traditional Antisemitism and the percentage of respondents, who agreed (at least to some degree) with individual statements on a scale can serve as an evidence for that. For secondary Antisemitism, the percentage of people who agreed with the statements on the scale varied from 37% up to 56%, depending on the question, whereas in the case of the belief in Jewish conspiracy between 43% up to 53.5%. The greater popularity of these two types of attitudes is also evident in the differences in the means for the scales. For the scale of secondary Antisemitism, the mean equaled $M = 3.47$; $SD = 1.05$, and was significantly higher both from the middle point of the scale and from the mean for the scale

¹⁰ $t(880) = -7,98, p = 0,00$

of traditional Antisemitism¹¹. Similarly, the mean for the scale of the belief in Jewish conspiracy – $M = 3,50$; $SD = 1,11$ was significantly higher both from the middle point of the scale and from the mean for the scale of traditional Antisemitism¹².

It is worth to noting, however, that all three types of Antisemitism are interrelated, with the strongest positive correlation between the belief in Jewish conspiracy scale and secondary Antisemitism scale¹³, and slightly lower positive correlation in the case of traditional anti-Jewish prejudices scale and two other forms of Antisemitism¹⁴. In other words, those who declare that they believe the Jews want to take over the world are also more likely to claim that Jews themselves are to blame for the Holocaust and the existence of Antisemitism in general, and that contemporary Jews should be burdened with responsibility for killing Jesus Christ.

When it comes to the common demographic characteristics of people who manifest anti-Jewish attitudes, the results of PPS3 show that variables playing statistically significant, yet small role are: level of education, age and – in the case of secondary and conspiracy Antisemitism – the amount of income. Older, less wealthy and less educated people are more likely to express Antisemitic attitudes. These findings are consistent with the results on the relationship between demographic variables and Antisemitic prejudice, obtained previously

¹¹ For the middle point of the scale $t(978) = 13,93$; $p = 0,00$; for the traditional Antisemitism $t(978) = 24,53$, $p = 0,00$

¹² For the middle point of the scale $t(938) = 13,77$; $p = 0,00$; for the traditional Antisemitism $t(938) = 23,55$, $p = 0,00$

¹³ $r = 0,72$; $p < 0,001$

¹⁴ $r = 0,33$; $p < 0,001$ when it comes to secondary Antisemitism; $r = 0,41$; $p < 0,001$ when it comes to the belief in Jewish conspiracy

by the researchers¹⁵. It is worth pointing out, though, that the correlations for each of the socio-demographic variables with Antisemitic attitudes were not high¹⁶.

The results of the survey also show that Antisemitism in Poland is rather the domain of people who declare themselves as right-wingers. In the case of traditional anti-Jewish prejudices, the correlation between the declared political views, measured on a scale from 1 - *definitely left-wing* to 7 - *definitely right-wing*, was positive and relatively low, while in the case of the other two forms of Antisemitism, the correlation was positive and average¹⁷.

Social distance

The data regarding the social distance toward the people of Jewish origin is also noteworthy. Respondents of the survey were asked to declare, on a 4-point scale, where 1 meant "*I would definitely not accept*" and 4 - "*I would definitely accept*", whether they would be willing to accept a Jewish person in their workplace, as a neighbor and as a family member (through marriage).

The results show that the Poles would rather not have a problem with accepting people of Jewish origin as their co-workers and neighbors – in both cases around 60% of the participants of the study would not have anything against that situation. However, when it comes to accepting a Jewish person as a family member, here only less than 40% of the respondents would be willing to do so.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that over 85% of the respondents declared that they do not know any Jew personally. In this context, the occurrence of such strong

¹⁵ Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M., Kofta, M., Wójcik, A. (2013). Harmful ideas. The structure and consequences of anti-Semitic beliefs in Poland. *Political Psychology*, 34, 821-839.

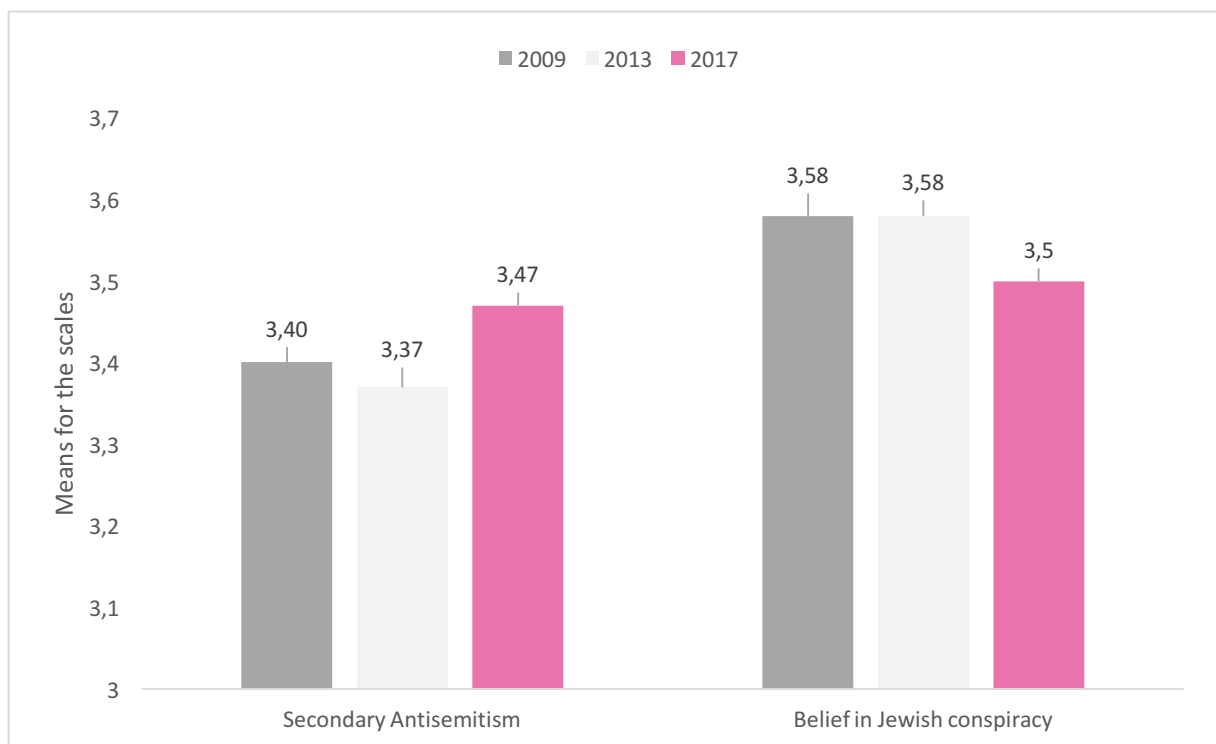
¹⁶ They were not higher than $r = 0,25$, so they did not explain more than 5% of the variance

¹⁷ For traditional Antisemitism $r = 0,22$; $p < 0,001$. For the belief in Jewish conspiracy $r = 0,32$; $p < 0,001$, for secondary Antisemitism $r = 0,31$; $p < 0,001$.

negative attitudes toward the representatives of this group could be seen as surprising, but this phenomenon is not new to the researchers of Antisemitism. In the literature of the subject it has been described as "Antisemitism without the Jews"¹⁸.

Changes over time

One of the reasons for which we asked the respondents of PPS3 about their attitudes toward the Jews was the ability to analyze the changes of anti-Jewish prejudice over time. Graph 4 shows the differences in the means for the scales of secondary and conspiracy Antisemitism in the years 2009, 2013, 2017.

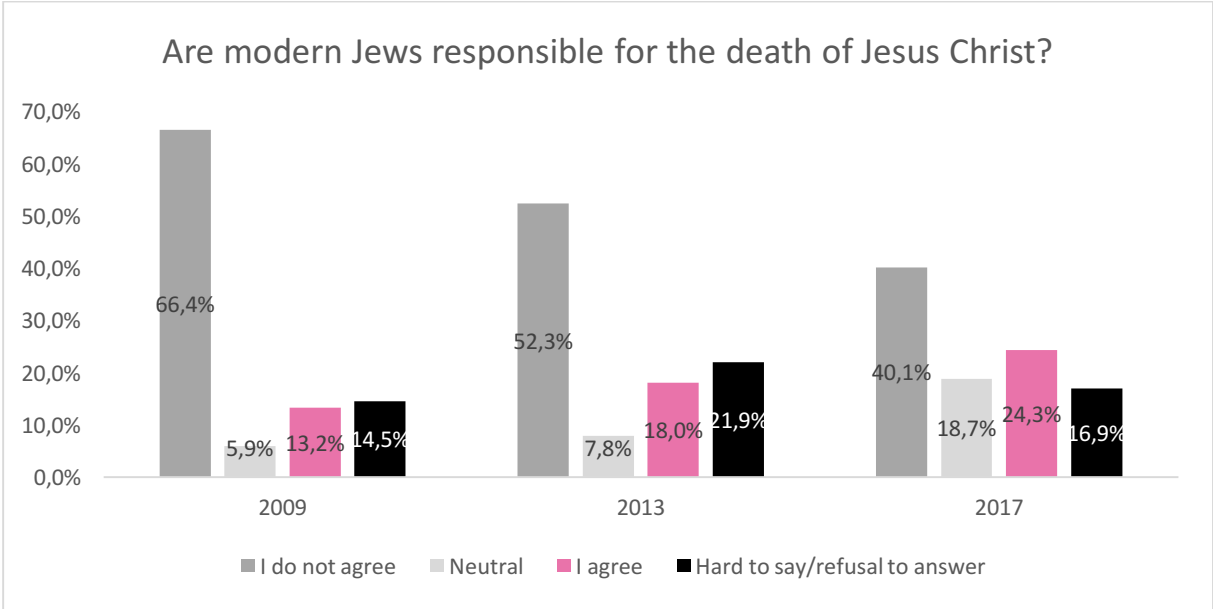


Graph 4. Differences in means for the scales of secondary and conspiracy Antisemitism in the years 2009, 2013 and 2017.

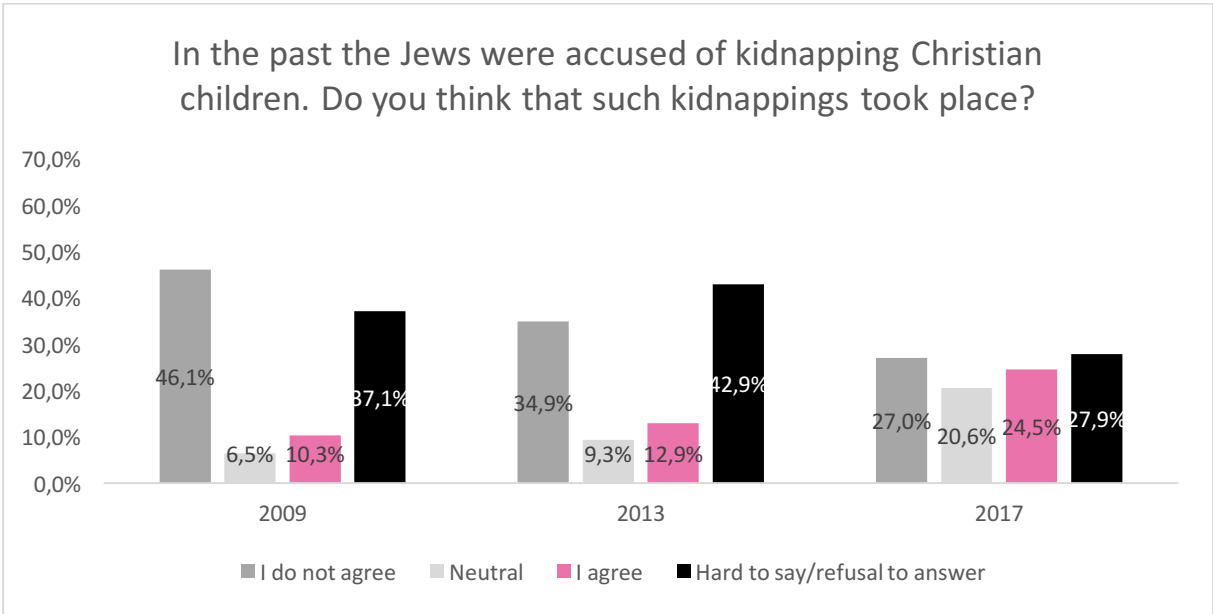
The results show that the differences in means both in the case of secondary Antisemitism and the belief in Jewish conspiracy are not statistically significant, which means that the prevalence of these two types of attitudes in Poland is relatively stable over time.

¹⁸ Cooper, L. (2000). Anti-Semitism without Jews. In *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle* (pp. 224-235). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

However, things look differently when it comes to traditional Antisemitism. Graphs 5 and 6 show the percentage distribution of answers for both questions on the scale of traditional Antisemitism in 2009, 2013 and 2017.



Graph 5. Percentage distribution of the answers to the first question on the scale of traditional Antisemitism in the years 2009, 2013 and 2017.



Graph 6. Percentage distribution of the answers to the second question on the scale of traditional Antisemitism in the years 2009, 2013 and 2017.

Due to the fact that the scale of the answers for questions measuring traditional Antisemitism was different in the years 2009 and 2013 than in 2017 (in the former years the respondents were asked to give answers on a 7-point scale, in the latter on a 5-point scale), in order to compare the prevalence of this type of attitudes, we decided to look at the percentage distributions of answers to both questions. As the graphs above show, it seems that the level of popularity of traditional Antisemitism in Poland has been gradually rising for the last several years. For example, in 2009 a little over 13% of the respondents agreed with the first statement regarding the responsibility of contemporary Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, whereas in 2017 this number was over 10 percentage points higher.

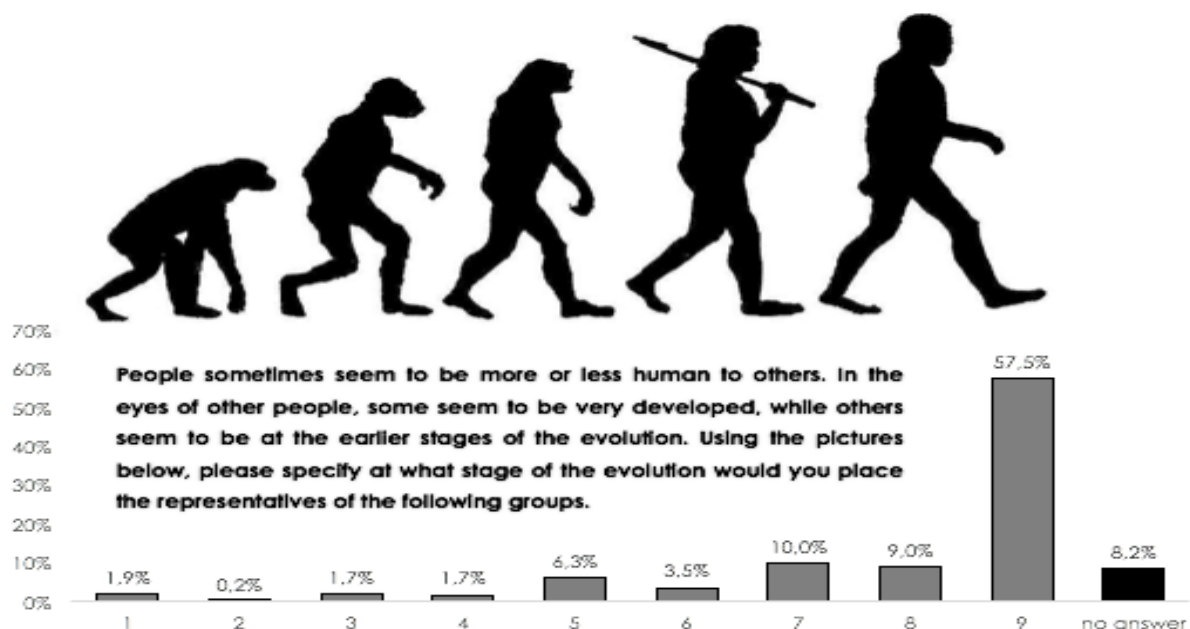
Open (blatant) dehumanization

The latest Polish Prejudice Survey was largely dedicated to the issue of support for intergroup violence. By intergroup violence we mean all of those events, during which the representatives of some group (social, ethnic, religious, etc.), on the behalf of their own group, commit acts of violence against the representatives of another group. To give an example: taxi drivers destroying the cars of a competitive transport company, a brawl between the fans of two football teams, hooligans beating up the sailors and, in extreme cases, ethnic cleansing or genocide. In the literature regarding the factors influencing the emergence of collective violence, the role of dehumanization (certain extent of denial of humanity to the victims) is underlined¹⁹. Much contemporary research regarding dehumanization was based on the measurement of very subtle indicators of this phenomenon, i.e. on denying members of other

¹⁹ Kelman, H. G. (1973). Violence without moral restraint: Reflections on the dehumanization of victims and victimizers. *Journal of social issues*, 29(4), 25-61; Staub, E. (1989). *The roots of evil: The origins of genocide and other group violence*. Cambridge University Press.

groups the ability to experience complex emotions (e.g. melancholy)²⁰. However, the changes in the public discourse in the recent years – i.e. the increasingly frequent use of dehumanization rhetoric towards representatives of various groups – have led the researchers to revise their current position. A recent publication by Nour Kteily²¹ and colleagues describes research conducted in three different countries using an open measure of dehumanization, based on a well-known graphical representation of evolution. These studies show that this measure is a good predictor of prejudice and support for violence (torture and violence in retaliation).

Therefore, described measure of dehumanization was used in PPS3. We asked this question in regards to the representatives of several social and ethnic groups, including the Jews. Graph 7 presents the full instruction and distribution of the answers to the question about the stages of development (dehumanization) of the Jews.



Graph 7. Dehumanization of the Jews. Percentage distribution of the answers for the question about the stages of evolution of people of Jewish origin.

²⁰ Leyens, J. P., Paladino, P. M., Rodriguez-Torres, R., Vaes, J., Demoulin, S., Rodriguez-Perez, A., & Gaunt, R. (2000). The emotional side of prejudice: The attribution of secondary emotions to ingroups and outgroups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4(2), 186-197.

²¹ Kteily, N., Bruneau, E., Waytz, A., & Cotterill, S. (2015). The ascent of man: Theoretical and empirical evidence for blatant dehumanization. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 109(5), 901.

The results show that a bit over 34% of the respondents at least to some degree denies the humanity to the Jews. Further analyzes showed that dehumanization of the Jews is related to demographic characteristics only to a small extent – only having higher education was slightly related to less dehumanization²². The worldview indicators were also rather unrelated to dehumanization. It turned out that only the people who are more involved in religious practices are a little more likely to deny the Jews their humanity²³, but, interestingly, we did not observe such a relationship in the case of a variable measuring the perception of oneself as a believer. Among the three forms of Antisemitism, traditional prejudices turned out to be relatively strongly correlated with dehumanization²⁴, while in the case of secondary and conspiracy Antisemitism we did not observe any relation.

We can conclude, therefore, that around one third of the Poles at least to a certain degree denies the humanity to the Jews. This phenomenon is largely connected with traditional Antisemitic prejudices and, to a much lesser extent, with the formalized religiosity.

Summary

The results of the third edition of the Polish Prejudice Survey show that Antisemitism is still a serious social problem in Poland. Moreover, looking at the results of the survey, one can come to the conclusion that this problem is getting even more serious, especially when it comes to the traditional anti-Jewish attitudes. Compared to the results of the survey in 2009 and 2013, we noticed a significant increase in the percentage of people who agree with statements regarding the responsibility of contemporary Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the statements referring to kidnapping of children for ritual purposes. The results

²² $r = 0,08, p = 0,013$

²³ $r = -0,11, p = 0,002$

²⁴ $r = -0,28, p < 0,001$

also point to the relationship between traditional prejudices and the dehumanization of the Jews. Considering the fact that these attitudes are getting stronger and that dehumanization processes are related to the support for violence towards the dehumanized groups, these results are alarming.

At the same time, the results of the survey suggest that the prevalence of secondary antisemitism and the belief in Jewish conspiracy in Poland remains stable. The results of the study also show that all types of antisemitism are slightly related to the level of education, age and political views of the respondents – less educated, older people, who declare their political views as more "right-wing" are more likely to express antisemitic attitudes.