



Center for Research  
on Prejudice

# Antisemitism in Poland 2013: Research Report based on Polish Prejudice Survey II

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## Attitudes toward Jews in Poland

The question of antisemitism remains a persistent problem in contemporary Poland, despite the small size of the local Jewish community. This phenomenon is often called „antisemitism without Jews”. Longitudinal studies conducted by Polish Public Opinion Research Center suggest that Jews are one of the most disliked minorities in Poland: about 30% of Poles openly declare aversion towards people with Jewish origins and this trend seems to remain constant. Most recent opinion poll by the Center for Research on Prejudice, University of Warsaw, found that: about 12% of Poles would not accept to work with a person of Jewish nationality, about 14% of Poles would not accept a person of Jewish nationality as a neighbor, about 24% of Poles would not accept the marriage of their relative with the person of Jewish nationality. However, according to the studies up to 90% of Poles do not know personally any single Jewish person.

## Three components of the antisemitism

More recent sociological research on antisemitism in Poland distinguishes two forms of antisemitism: the traditional and the modern. While traditional antisemitism is based on historical anti-Judaic motives of early Christianity, such as the concept of Jewish deicide or the blood-libel accusation, modern antisemitism is based on a belief in Jewish conspiracy, i.e. that Jews have excessive power in the society, that Jews have control over international banking and the media, or that Jews realize their plans in a secret way. German researchers suggest that the third form of antisemitism – secondary antisemitism – is equally important. Secondary antisemitism is the belief that Jews are abusing the history of the Holocaust and that Jews themselves are responsible for the antisemitism.

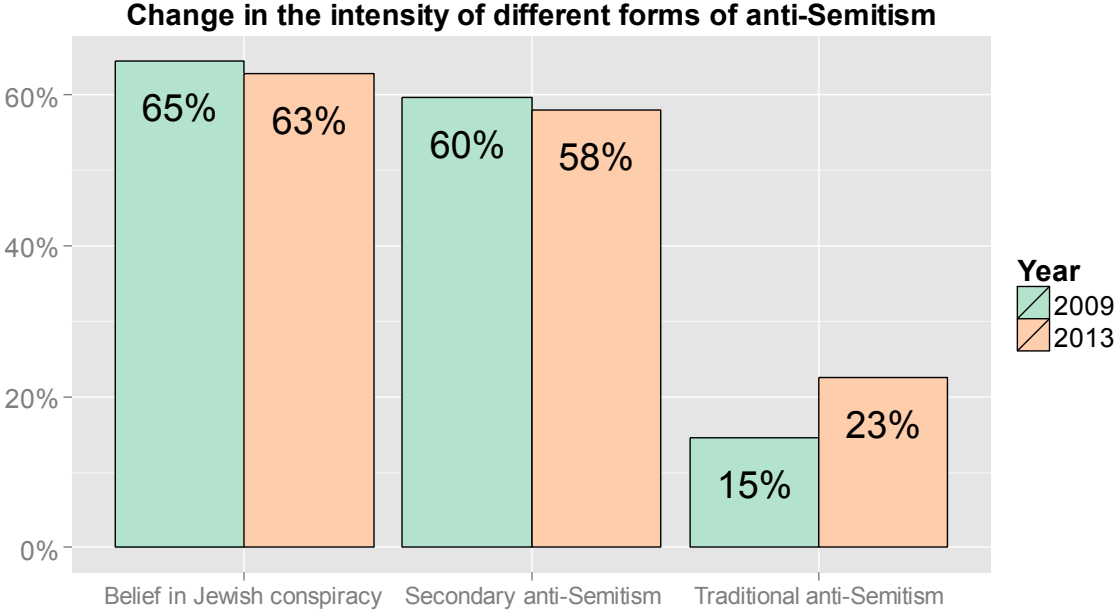
In two studies conducted in 2009 (N=979) and 2013 (N=965) on representative samples of adult Polish citizens we tried to assess the extent to which contemporary Poles share those three forms of antisemitism. We also had an opportunity to observe whether antisemitic beliefs of Poles change in time.

## Observed changes in the last years

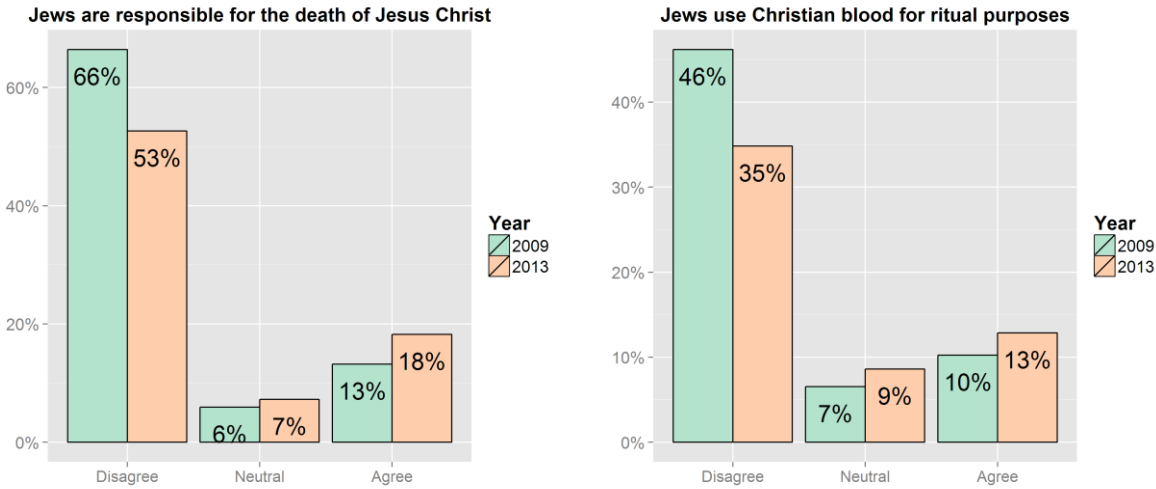
To measure traditional antisemitism we used statements such as: *Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus Christ* or *Jews use Christian blood for ritual purposes*. Modern antisemitism was measured by statements such as *Jews abuse our feelings of guilt* or *Jews want to receive reparations from Poles for what Germans did to them*. Finally, beliefs in Jewish conspiracy included statements such as *Jews achieve their collective goals by secret agreements* or *Jews would like to rule the world*. For each statement participant had to decide whether they agree, disagree or are neutral.

Our results suggest that in both studies (2009 and 2013) the majority of Poles followed the beliefs in Jewish conspiracy and the modern form of antisemitism (see Figure 1), we did not observe significant change in time of these two forms of antisemitism. 23% of adult Poles surveyed in 2013 expressed traditional antisemitism – this form of antisemitism was observed more often in smaller towns and villages than in the big cities. What is interesting, comparing the results of both surveys, we found that the level of traditional antisemitism increased from 2009 to 2013. Figure 2 presents a deeper insight in a nature of the change – Poles in 2013 were less likely to disagree with the beliefs about Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ or that Jews use Christian blood for ritual purposes. Seeking for possible predictors of this change one could account for a similar change in religiosity of Poles – many sociological writers describe traditional antisemitism as having deep roots in Christianity. However results of our study (as well as by other Polish researchers) suggest that the religiosity of Poles actually decreased, e.g. in 2009 57% of Poles declared attending to church at least once a week and in 2013 this number dropped to 53%. In fact, our analyses suggest that religiosity is a very weak predictor of any kind of antisemitic beliefs,

explaining only 1% of its variance – in other words, antisemitism is equally common among both believers and non-believers.



**Figure 1. Percentage of Poles agreeing with three types of antisemitic statements (belief in Jewish conspiracy, secondary antisemitism and traditional antisemitism) in 2009 and 2013.**



**Figure 2. Response frequency to statements included in traditional antisemitism scale in 2009 and 2013**

# Antisemitism and anti-Israelism

In our most recent study (Polish Prejudice Survey II, 2013) we included another component of antisemitism: extreme forms of anti-Israelism. This newly developed scale included statements about political actions of contemporary Israel. Figure 3 presents percentages of responses to each of these statements. These results suggest that the scale of harsh Israel-criticism in Poland is considerably high – a phenomenon which seems unrepresented in Polish political life.

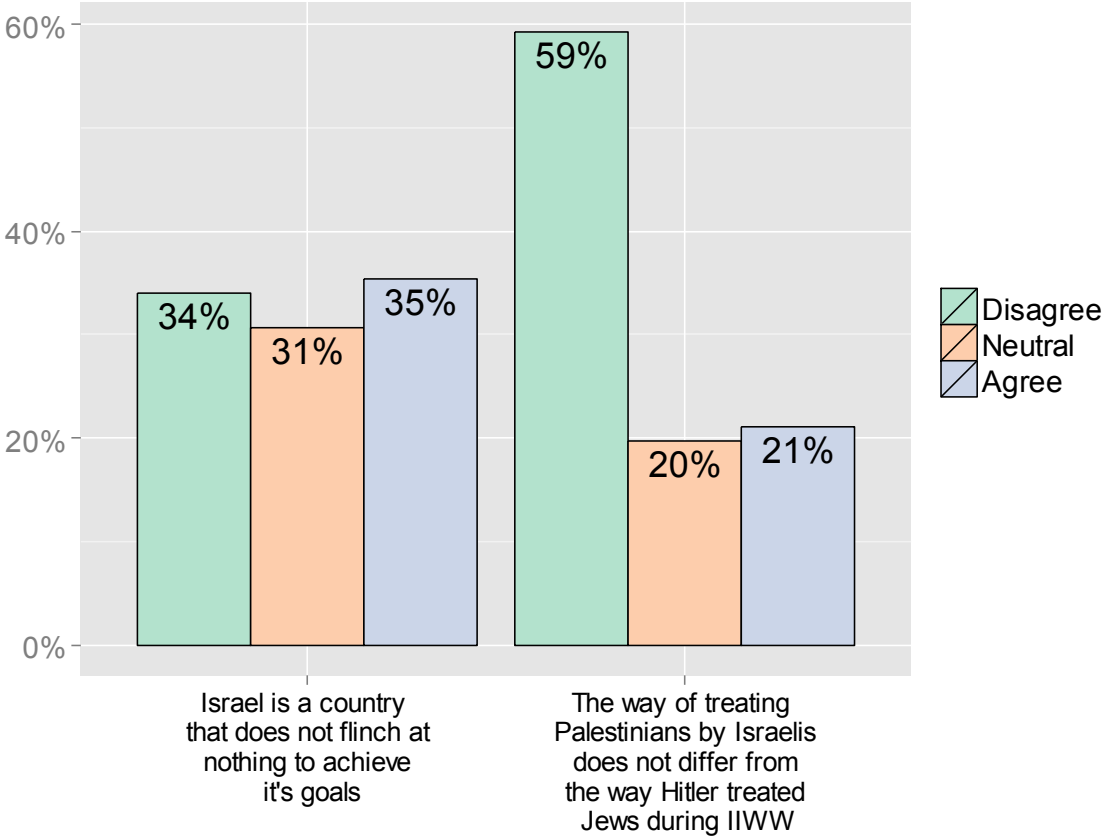


Figure 3. Response frequency to statements concerned on evaluation of political situation and decions of Israel's government.

## Summary

The general level of antisemitic prejudice in Poland is considerably constant. Among three forms of antisemitism (traditional antisemitism, secondary antisemitism, belief in Jewish conspiracy), only on the measures of traditional antisemitism we observed slight increase from 2009 to 2013. All three forms of antisemitism were unrelated to religiosity – we did not observe strong correlations neither with church attendance, nor with self-declared religiosity. Antisemitism was strongly related to general authoritarian political attitudes (right-wing authoritarianism: a mix of conventionalism, submission to authorities and aggression against deviants and outgroups). It is also related to victimhood-based national identification (perception of Poles as more victimized than other ethnic groups). In 2013 we assessed also the level of anti-Israeli prejudice. We found that more than 20% of Poles agrees with antisemitic comparison of Israel with the Nazi Germany – and such harsh forms of anti-Israelism are equally shared by Poles of right-wing and left-wing orientation. In the same study we measured also other forms of prejudice, targeting other ethnic and social groups. It is important to note that current attitudes of Poles toward some other minority groups – such as Roma people and immigrants from Chechnya, as well as towards gay people – is much more negative than towards Jews.