
SEVEN STATEMENTS ABOUT THE NATURE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN HUNGARY

An analysis by Political Capital Institute
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POLITICAL CAPITAL
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In recent years there has been a rise in domestic and international public discourse regarding anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Hungary. However, the conversation includes simultaneously both banal understatements and hysterical overstatements, neither helpful. The analysis that follows¹ lays out the facts about Hungarian anti-Semitism in help inform the discussion. Our statements are based on earlier polling by other institutions and Political Capital's own research: representative research (CAWI, N=1,000) conducted via the Internet in July, 2013, and a survey based on in personal questionnaires (CAPI) conducted in June 2014, using a representative sample of 1,000 people nationwide. These data show:

1. Anti-Semitism is not a one-dimensional phenomenon.

Political and journalistic discourse necessarily simplifies the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, making it seem like a one-dimensional attitude. However, in its psychological influence, and myriad ways of expression, there is no other prejudice as heterogenous and diverse as anti-Semitism. In our present study, we examined anti-Semitism in two dimensions. We measured the more archaic, adverse, open, and emotional, "visceral" repudiation with a question used earlier by András Kovács ("How much sympathy/antipathy do you have towards the following racial/ethnic minorities – Jews?"). The more modern, more cognitive anti-Semitism typically manifests itself as the conspiracy stereotype against Jews who are seen as the "invisible" manipulators behind certain events. The conspiratorial stereotypes are measured with a six-statement scale devised by Polish researchers² (see the items in table 3. Example: "Jews often act in secret, behind the scenes"). **According to recent research³, Jewish conspiracy theories are the most dangerous form of anti-Semitism, leading to the strongest discrimination against Jews. And unfortunately, this is a more widespread form of anti-Semitism in Hungary than the more archaic forms.**

2. Anti-Semitism is divisive.

Unlike anti-Roma attitudes, which are practically a norm in Hungarian society and shared by most political groups, as shown by our earlier research⁴, anti-Semitism is a much more divisive issue. Our 2013 surveys found that of all minority groups, attitudes towards Jews are the most polarized. We find a considerable percentage of anti-Semites and philosemites at the same time. The rate of those who do not sympathize with the Jews at all was high (20%). At the same time, nearly 13% were completely sympathetic towards Jews.

1 This updates an the analysis that we presented at the Tom Lantos Institute conference last year in the Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament, then at a conference on anti-Semitism, and also published in the Szombat weekly.

2 Bilewicz, M.; Krzeminski, I. (2010). Anti-Semitism in Poland and Ukraine: The Belief in Jewish Control as a Mechanism of Scapegoating. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, Vol 4, No 2.

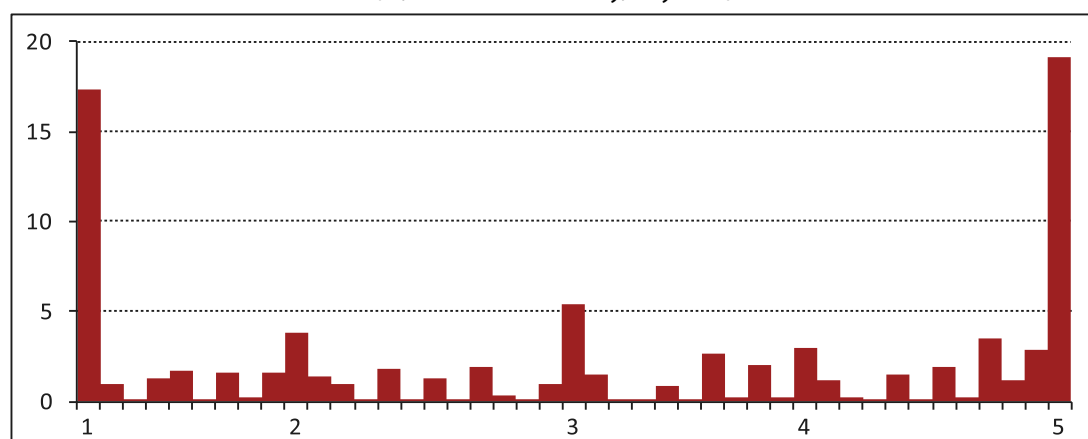
3 Michal Bilewicz, Mikołaj Winiewski, Mirosław Kofta, Adrian Wójcik: Harmful Ideas, The Structure and Consequences of Anti-Semitic Beliefs in Poland. *Political Psychology*, Volume 34, Issue 6, pages 821–839, December 2013. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/pops.12024/abstract>

4 Anikó Bernát, Attila Juhász, Péter Krekó, Csaba Molnár (2013): The Roots of Radicalism and Anti-Roma Attitude among the Supporters of the Extreme Right. In: Tamás Kolosi and István György Tóth (ed.): *Social Report 2012*. Budapest: TÁRKI: pg. 355–376.

We found similar distribution with the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories: almost 20 percent of those surveyed reject them completely, while almost 20 percent support them (see figure 1 below). This is important because it implies that political and social movements to combat anti-Semitism can have a considerable social and political support – much more than movements against the more widespread and less divisive anti-Roma sentiment.

Fig. 1: Conspiracy theories about Jews: distribution of responses

(%, source: CAWI survey, July 2013)



Frequencies of responses on the 1 (disagree strongly) – 5 (agree strongly) scale. Respondents with a score of 1 completely reject these theories, while respondents with a score of 5 strongly agree with them.

3. The majority of Hungarian citizens are not anti-Semitic.

It is widely believed in Hungary and beyond⁵ that anti-Semitism is a dominant attitude shared by a majority of Hungarians. However, looking at the figures on both the open antipathy toward Jews and “conspiratorial anti-Semitism,” this statement is obviously false. According to the latest research by András Kovács and the Action and Protection Foundation (TEV)⁶, the rate of openly anti-Semitic people (those who find Jews repulsive) does not exceed a quarter of the society (in 2011, it was 24%, in 2013, 21%). According to our survey in July, 2013⁷, 28% of the respondents are not sympathetic to Jews, while 34% find them sympathetic (See fig. 2). Of course, the wording of the questions by pollsters can partially determine the results, and different forms of anti-Semitism have different levels of support. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories clearly have stronger pull on Hungarian society. Conspiratorial anti-Jewish stereotypes were found in 28% of the overall sample and 30% among regular internet users. But still, the majority tends to reject them (See fig. 3). The ratio of anti-Semites in Hungary is no higher than observed in Poland, for example⁸.

5 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/hungary/10037188/Inside-the-far-Right-stronghold-where-Hungarian-Jews-fear-for-the-future.html>

6 Anti-Semitic prejudice in contemporary Hungarian society http://tev.hu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/median_report_2013_eng2.pdf

7 The results are representative of the regular internet user community in Hungary, so cannot be compared to the research by András Kovács – see detailed methodology below.

8 The results are not directly comparable here because of the different samples, but the results are indicative. Other international comparisons have yielded similar results: previous studies by Andreas Zick and his colleagues (2011) showed that in Poland, the level of anti-semitism rather higher than in Hungary (that came second in the ranking). <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf>

Fig. 2: Prejudices towards Jews among party sympathizers
(%, source: CAWI survey, July 2013)

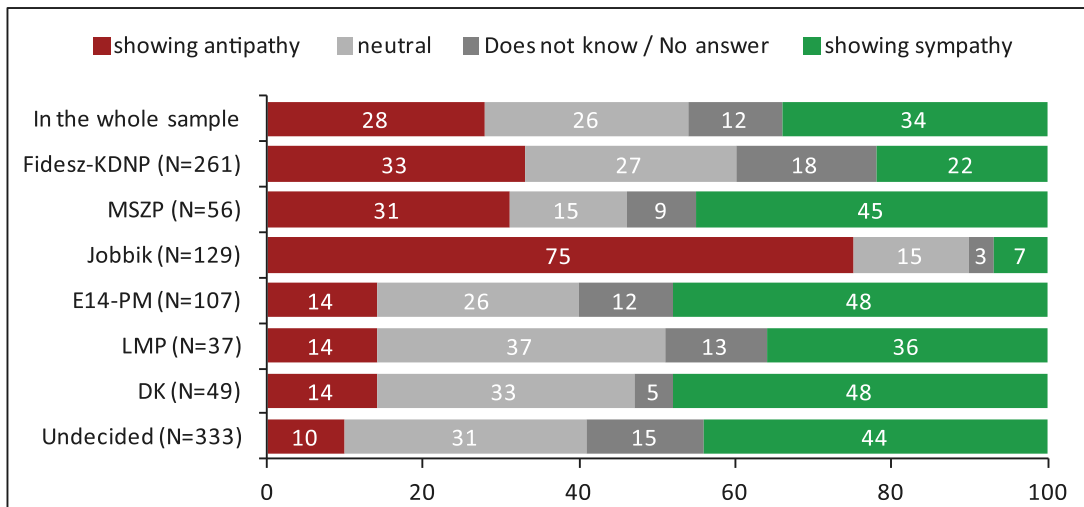
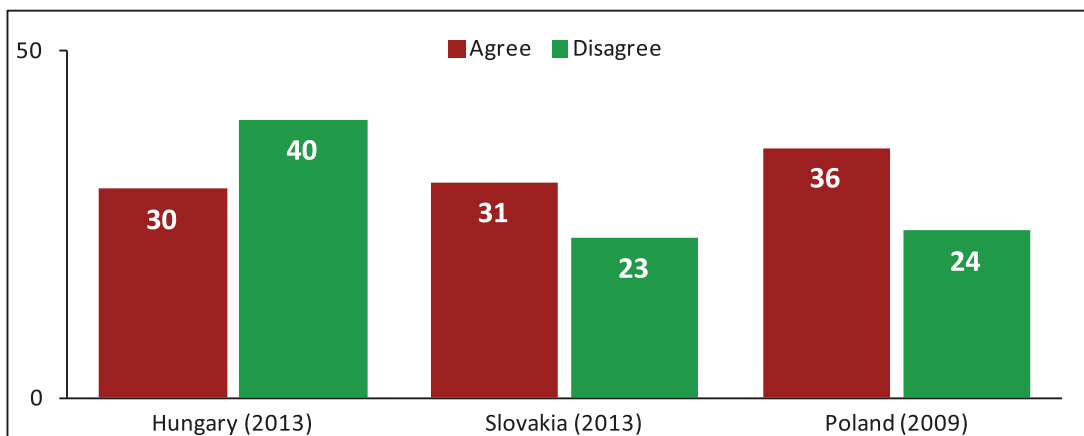


Fig. 3: Agreement with the statement “Jews seek to rule the World”

(% of answers among all respondents, source: Political Capital Institute [HU], Center for Research on Prejudice [PL], Institute for Public Affairs [SK])



Anti-Semitism is widespread in all the segments of society, but with notable differences.

Contrary to popular views, anti-Semitism is stronger among those with a better financial background. (Fig. 5.) Our 2014 research shows that anti-Semitism is not the “opium of the poor”, the dominant attitude of those in the worst financial situation — just the opposite. Those who say they “make ends meet” or “have some savings” are more susceptible to anti-Semitic voices than the worse-off groups (those who report being indebted or having used up their savings). This may be because those who feel they have something to lose have bigger fears that they project onto Jews.

Other than income, which is a strong factor, the effect of different socio-demographic factors does not seem to be deterministic. There is no significant difference among the relevant groups in Hungarian society regarding gender, or education. The lack of correlation is becoming extremely important in the latter case: higher education does not seem to be a cure against anti-Semitism, and highly educated groups could also see Jewish World Conspiracy behind everything. It also reveals that **the Hungarian educational system fails to reduce anti-Semitism.**

The **regional differences are significant, but not very strong predictors of anti-Semitism.** Beliefs in anti-Jewish conspiracy theories are the strongest in the least developed areas, Northern Hungary and in the northern Great Plains – and Jobbik is strongest in these regions. At the same time, we can find lower levels of anti-Semitism in rural areas than in Budapest, where the majority of the Jews live (see the results of our regression model in the methodological appendix).

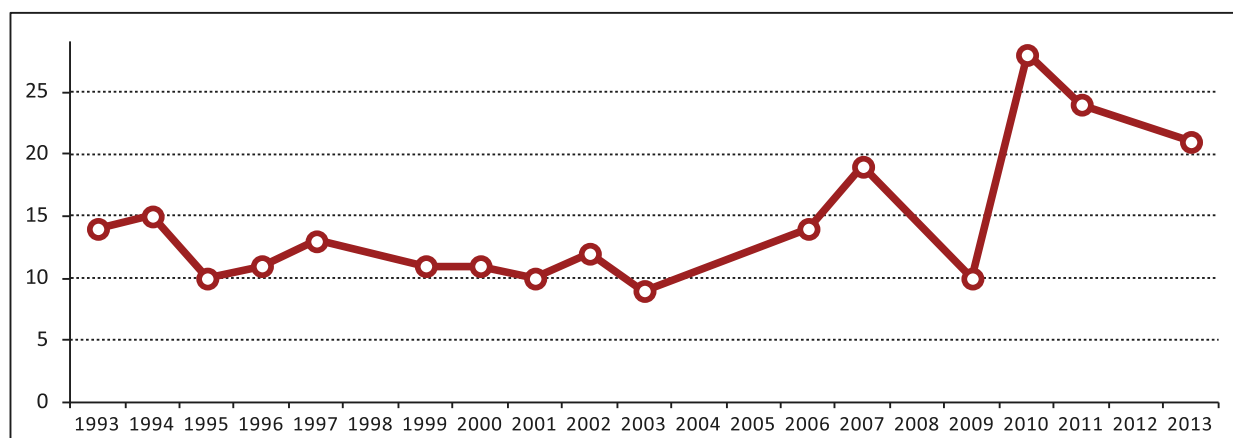
Antipathy towards Jews — at least according to the 2013 internet sample⁹ — decreases with age, **we can find more anti-Semites in the young age groups.** Although one-third of the age group between 18 and 39 find Jews repulsive, less than one-sixth of those over 60 share this opinion. This is in line with the fact that youngsters are overrepresented among the voters of Jobbik. Right-wing radicalism building on anti-Semitism seems to have serious strategic reserves in Hungary. Anti-Semitism may be starting to be a “fashion trend,” perhaps because of its ability to provoke. This may be a more general phenomenon that goes beyond the borders of Hungary, as the popularity and spread of the infamous anti-Semitic hand gesture, the “quenelle” originating from France¹⁰.

4. In recent years anti-Semitism has grown significantly in Hungary.

We know from the research of András Kovács¹¹ that since the end of the first decade of the new millennium, antipathy against the Jews increased, as did the number of extreme, in some cases discriminatory, anti-Semites. The percentage of those who found Jews repulsive was between 9% and 14% from 1993 to 2006. In 2010, the figure was 28% while in 2011 it was 24% and in 2013 21%. But even with this decreasing trend in the last four years, the number of anti-Semites is more than double the 9% level found in 2003¹². (see fig. 4)

Fig. 4: Antipathy against the Jews in Hungary

(%, source: researches of András Kovács)



9 And in line with the findings of a previous study on the Facebook-supporters of Jobbik: <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/populismineuropehungary>

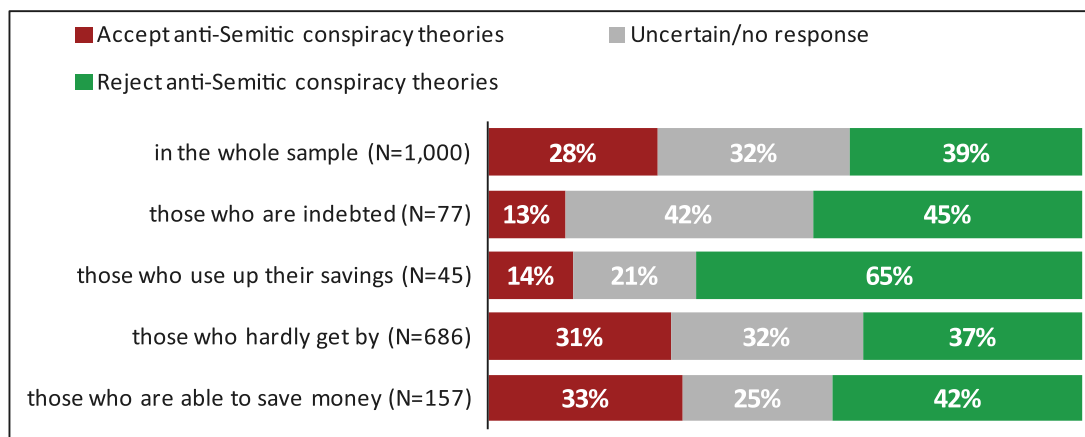
10 Marley Morris- Peter Kreko: The conspiracy mindset in Europe. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/marley-morris-p%C3%A9ter-krek%C3%B3/conspiratorial-mindset-in-europe>

11 Anti-Semitic language has become legitimized in public discourse. Szombat, January 4, 2012. <http://www.szombat.org/politika/4338-az-antiszemita-nyelv-legitimme-valt-a-kozbeszedben>

12 Anti-Defamation League research also show growing trends in anti-Semitism.

Fig. 5: Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and financial situation

(based on the average of responses to the 6 questions, according to the financial situation of households. Source: CAPI survey, June 2014)

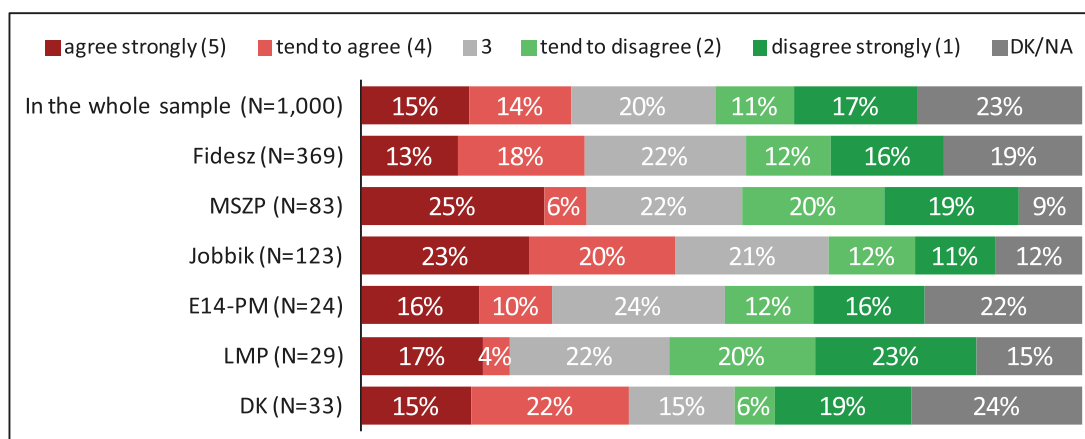


5. Anti-Semitism is politically sensitive.

There are considerable differences in anti-Semitism among party supporter groups. The fact that anti-Semitism is a politically induced phenomenon is well seen from the figures below (Fig. 6 and 7). **Three quarters of Internet users supporting Jobbik reported antipathy towards Jews, while only about one-third of those in the socialist and Fidesz camps did.** The strongest agreement with secret Jewish conspiracies was also found among Jobbik supporters.

Fig. 6: “Jews seek to rule the world”

(proportion of those who agree, according to party preferences. Source: CAPI survey, June 2014)



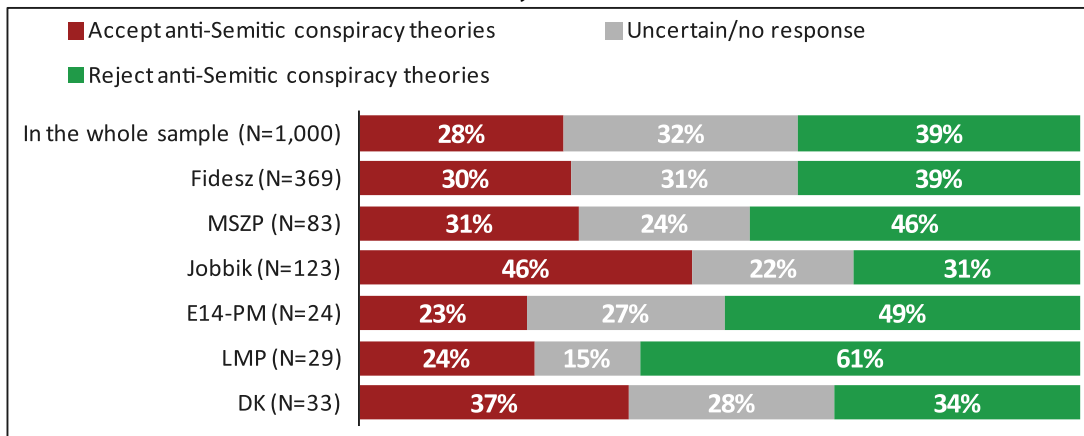
Among Jobbik supporters, 43% fully or strongly believe in the Jewish aspiration for world power, while among Fidesz and MSZP votes, this proportion is 31%. It is even lower among the voters of E14-PM (26%) and LMP (21%).

Creating a scale of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories¹³, we see that **among the supporters of Jobbik, 46% of the respondents tend to believe in conspiracy theories on Jews, while 31% tend to reject these theories.** Although in the voting camp of Jobbik, **anti-Semitism is still a major cohesive power, not every Jobbik supporter is anti-Semitic.** Among MSZP and Fidesz supporters, an almost identical ratio (31 and 30%) tend to agree with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

¹³ Based on the six questions, see in the appendix.

Fig. 7: Proportion of supporters of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories

(based on the averages of responses to the 6 questions, according to the financial situation of households. Source: CAPI survey, June 2014)

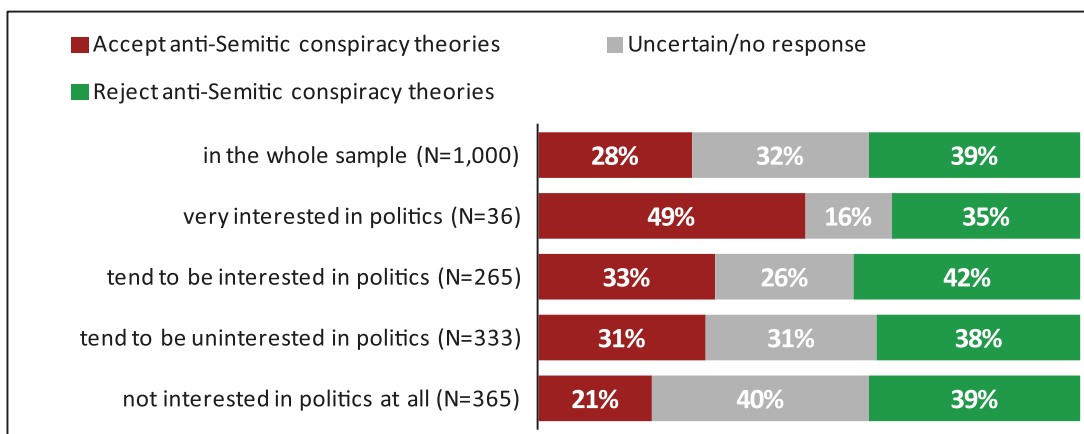


Polish¹⁴ and Hungarian¹⁵ researchers have shown that anti-Jewish attitudes and conspiratorially stereotyping become more intense during election years. This underscores the influence of political public discourse on election campaigns, as well as the fears, during periods of political change, that a group, such as the Jews, could gain “illegitimate” political control.

Furthermore, it seems that political interest in general goes hand in hand with stronger conspiracy theories. We can find the highest number of conspiratorial anti-Semites in the small group of those who report a great interest in politics. As interest in politics lessens, conspiratorial anti-Semitism decreases. Among those who are not interested in politics at all, only every fifth person subscribes to anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. (see fig. 8)

Fig. 8: Proportion of those who accept or reject anti-Semitic conspiracy theories

(based on the averages of responses to the 6 questions, according to political interest. Source: CAPI survey, June 2014)



14 <http://mesharpe.metapress.com/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,2,3;journal,38,42;linkingpublicationresults,1:110910,1>

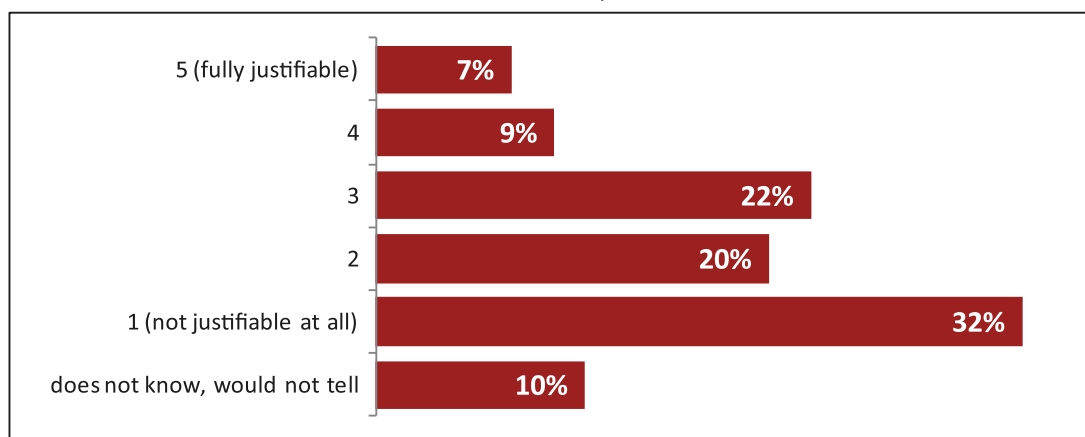
15 András Kovács, quoted above

6. The most important threat posed by anti-Semitism is not violence.

Anti-Semitism does not manifest itself in everyday personal relations, and fortunately — unlike in some Western European countries, such as Belgium and France — the anti-Semitic hate incidents are sporadic and rare in Hungary.¹⁶ On the contrary, anti-Roma attitudes are present among the citizens' daily conflicts bearing the risks of ethnic violence. While 16 percent of the Hungarians say they think violence against the Jews would be justifiable, this ratio is 29 percent in the case of the Roma. (see fig. 9)

Fig. 9: How justifiable is violent action against Jews?

(%, source: CAPI survey, June 2014)



Anti-Semitism serves a symbolic and ideological function in Hungary, which means that political tools could be effective in reducing it. It is indisputable that in certain cases, the government takes a political risk when it categorically condemns anti-Semitism, as it did in the Gyöngyösi affair¹⁷ or at the Jewish World Congress conference in Hungary¹⁸, given the high “demand” in the Fidesz camp for certain types of anti-Semitism. Inconsistent statements and measures, though, can nullify these efforts. Some steps and measures by the government, (e.g. the WWII memorial case¹⁹, electing Tamás Sneider, the ex-skinhead Jobbik MEP, for deputy speaker of Parliament²⁰, not dismissing the leader of Veritas Institute after his Holocaust-relativizing remarks²¹, or nominating an openly anti-Semitic opinion-leader to ambassador of Hungary²² (who finally did not accept the nomination) have rightfully upset a Jewish community very sensitive to symbolic gestures, as well as their sympathizers. At the same time, the gestures towards anti-Semites steps bring no political advantage and are counter-productive, as the extreme right is more vehement and successful at appealing to hard-core anti-Semites unsatisfied with simply using coded messages, but requiring a much larger dose of open anti-Semitism.

¹⁶ Anti-Semitic incidents in Hungary, 2012. http://antisemitism.org.il/webfm_send/57

¹⁷ Gyöngyösi recommended in 2012 in the Hungarian Parliament to make a list of the politicians with Jewish origin See for example: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/27/marton-gyongyosi-jew-list_n_2196744.html

¹⁸ Speech by Viktor Orbán at the World Jewish Congress <http://ferenckumin.tumblr.com/post/49758100381/speech-by-viktor-orban-at-the-world-jewish-congress>

¹⁹ <http://www.politics.hu/20140720/government-makes-midnight-move-to-finish-controversial-wwii-memorial-following-court-decision/>

²⁰ http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/14692/former_skinhead_elected_deputy_speaker_of_hungary_s_legislature

²¹ <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content.aspx?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=8776547&ct=13604013>

²² <http://www.jta.org/2014/07/23/news-opinion/world/nominee-as-hungarian-envoy-to-italy-called-raging-anti-semite>

Fidesz will be unable to satisfy these voters, as shown by the much higher levels of anti-Semitism among Jobbik voters and the best- ever results (21% on the party list) of Jobbik in the April, 2014 national parliamentary elections.

We cannot say that anti-Semitism has become the official policy in Hungary. But symbolic and “lurking” anti-Semitic messages coming from opinion-leaders of the right-wing camp sometimes serve as tools for the conscious provocation of the political opposition and intellectuals.²³ The reluctance of the leading politicians to distance themselves from these statements clearly does not help reduce anti-Semitism.

7. The major victims of anti-Semitism in Hungary are not the Jews.

The 1930s are not back. The physical and financial security of the Jews in Hungary is, fortunately, not in danger. The goal of contemporary Hungarian (and also for example, Polish) anti-Semitism is not primarily fuelling violence and direct discrimination, but the creation of a biased and self-justifying ideological explanation for all of society’s ills: historical traumas, domestic conflicts, ethnic tensions, economic crises, and deteriorating living conditions. **Anti-Semitism is not the opiate of the poor, but the opiate of the nation. It removes the responsibility for the country’s problems from the leadership and citizens of that country,** and blames all problems on a global Jewish conspiracy. This makes society more closed, more arrogant and more paranoid, and prevents it from learning from the political and historical mistakes of the past. Furthermore, Hungarian anti-Semites can and do label as “Jew” many others with whom they fundamentally disagree. This includes political opponents, both on the centre left- and the right side of the political spectrum, regardless of they have any Jewish origin, identity or religious affiliation. Therefore, the entire national community suffers from anti-Semitism.

Our argument, though, is that it is a mistake to overreact anti-Semitism. This is especially so because the consequences are constant fear among the Jewish community and emigration. According to a survey of the Fundamental Right Agency, half of the Hungarian Jews want to leave the country because they do not feel safe²⁴. Of course, we should not minimize the anguish caused by public displays of anti-Semitism. **Even so, overreaction to anti-Semitic gestures and statements, if they result in Hungarian Jews leaving the country, will only result in the victory of the anti-Semites. The intimidation and emigration of Jews are exactly the goals they want to achieve.**

The responsibility for reducing anti-Semitism, on the other hand, is mostly — but not exclusively — in the hand of politicians. The high volatility of anti-Semitism (see figure 4) shows that these attitudes are sensitive to the political environment. **United gestures against anti-Semitism from moderate politicians²⁵, more attempts to reduce and prevent prejudices and anti-Semitism in schools and universities, and obvious gestures instead of double standards in condemning anti-Semitism would clearly help to reduce the threat posed to the wellbeing of the nation by the political exploitation of anti-Semitism. And it seems to be the easier task; the most dangerous prejudice in Hungary, anti-Romaism, seem to be even more difficult to combat.**

²³ See Zsolt Bayer’s articles for example.

²⁴ Jewish people’s experiences of discrimination and hate crime in European Union Member States <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/euantisem2013.pdf>

²⁵ As we could see for example in the end of 2012, after Márton Gyöngyösi’s “listing” speech”- but this case unfortunately remained exceptional.

Methodological Annex

Summary about the polling and the sample

2013

The first research (N=1000) was based on an online survey by Tárki Social Research Institute between July 4 and 17, 2013. The database included Hungarians over age 18, categorized by sex, age, education and type of settlement, who regularly use the Internet. When comparing this internet-representative survey to the adult population as a whole, young people are obviously overrepresented. As for the highest education, there is a significant difference in the distribution of the sample (see table below). Based on earlier research, both background variables strongly influence the opinions related to anti-Semitism. According to these, age differences can rather increase, while differences in education can decrease the proportions regarding anti-Semitism in the present sample. It is also important (and that is why this question is worth looking into on the Internet sample) that as most of the discussions about anti-Semitism are on the Internet, anti-Semitism can be more frequent among those using the Internet (as suggested by the results as well).

Table 1: The demographic distribution of the adult population and the adult population using the Internet

(percentages based on the data by Central Statistical Office (KSH), and the three-month combined Omnibusz database of Tárki)

	Adult population	Adult population using the Internet
Gender		
Male	46.6	47.8
Female	53.4	52.2
Age		
18-39	39.7	57.6
40-59	34.0	33.6
60+	26.4	8.9
Education		
Primary	57.3	9.8
Secondary	29.1	70.2
University	13.6	20.0
Type of settlement		
Budapest	17.9	21
City	49.0	51
Village	33.2	29

2014

The second survey was conducted by Ipsos for of Political Capital based on a 1,000-member sample, in-person poll in June, 2014. The sample represents Hungarians over the age of 18 based on sex, age, education and type of settlement. The statistical margin of error is +/- 3.1 points. In the whole sample, the proportion of party preference is the following: Fidesz (36.9%), Jobbik (12.3%), MSZP (8.3%), DK (3.3%), LMP (2.9%), Együtt-PM (2.4%).

Linear regression model – summary

Dependent variable: *anti-Semitic conspiracy scale* (mean of answers on a 1-5 scale)

Independent variables: *gender, age, highest level of education, type of community, region, financial situation, party preference, political interest.*

Variables that are not significant predictors: *gender, age, highest level of education.*

Table 2: Significant background variables in the linear regression model

financial situation	
	standardized β
those who makes ends meet	+0.194
those who are able to save money	+0.133
party preference	
those who would vote for Jobbik	+0.126
type of community	
those who lives in villages	-0.161
region	
those who are living in the Southern Great Plane region	-0.135
those who are living in Northern Hungary region	+0.087
political interest	
those who tend not to be interested in politics	+0.113

Table 3: Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories: items of the scale

(Bilewicz, M.; Krzeminski, I. (2010). *Proportion of responses, source: CAPI survey, June 2014*)

	Disagree strongly	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Agree strongly	DK/NA
Jews tend to extent their influence on the global economy.	15	12	21	16	15	22
Jews often operate in secret, behind the scene.	15	13	22	13	11	26
Jews sometimes meet secretly to discuss issues important to them.	16	13	19	12	9	30
Jews seek to dominate the World.	17	11	20	14	15	23
Jews want to have a decisive voice in international financial institutions.	14	12	20	15	16	23
Jews achieve their group goals by plotting secret agreements.	16	13	20	13	10	27