

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
about the Survey on North American Language and Identity (Yiddish, Hebrew)**

Dear Survey Takers,

We want to thank you all for participating in the survey and for helping us circulate it. Within the first nine days, we had over 20,000 responses. We plan to close the survey and begin analysis on July 25. Based on the comments people left at the end of the survey, we decided to post a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Prof. Sarah Bunin Benor
Prof. Steven M. Cohen
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Q: Who are you, and why are you doing this survey?

A: We are both professors at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Steven M. Cohen is a sociologist of American Jewry, and Sarah Bunin Benor is a sociolinguist who specializes in Jewish language. You can see our faculty webpages and more details about the survey here:

<http://www.huc.edu/news/08/7/language/>

Q: Where did you get your funding?

A: We do not have funding for this study. It is part of our regular faculty research.

Q: Why didn't you include English and other major immigrant languages in the list of ancestral languages?

A: Of course we realize that many immigrants to the US and Canada spoke English (as well as Italian, Mandarin, Japanese, Hindi, Fante, Khmer, Yoruba, etc.). And of course we realize that not all North Americans are descended from immigrants. For coding purposes we only needed to know whether respondents' ancestors spoke languages related to the linguistic features we are investigating. We're glad you were able to make use of the Other category to note ancestral languages that are not on the list we provided.

Q: Why was the survey so New York-centric? There are Jews in other parts of the country.

A: According to previous research, some Jews in the Midwest and elsewhere have some New York regional features in their speech. We want to find out how extensive this phenomenon is and how it relates to their familial ties to New York.

Q: Will you keep my e-mail address confidential?

A: Absolutely. We are the only ones who will see your e-mail address, and we will keep it separate from the data. We will only e-mail you according to your requests (as you noted on the survey's last page) to learn about the results or to be contacted for further questions (or both).

Q: Why didn't you include my religious group?

A: We didn't think everyone would want to look through a list of over 3 dozen religious groups. We're glad you were able to make use of the Other category.

Q: I got this survey invitation from 4 people. Obviously, you don't have a random sample. How can you make any claims?

A: We are certainly aware of the limitations of the snowball "sampling" technique, and we plan to discuss this in detail in our write-ups. We do not plan to make any grand claims about "all Jews" or "all North Americans," only about correlations among subgroups.

Q: Why didn't you ask about shlep, tshatshe, goyim, shiksa, putz, shmuck, shtup, shmegege, lox, blintzes, etc.?

A: We didn't think everyone would want to spend 2 hours taking a survey...

Q: Why didn't you ask about whether I use these words seriously or comically, whether I translate them when I use them, or which types of Jews/non-Jews I use them with?

A: We didn't think everyone would want to spend 2 hours taking a survey...

Q: Why didn't you include words from other Jewish communities, like Yemenites, Persians, Karaites, Romaniyotes, Beta Israel, etc.?

A: We didn't think everyone would want to spend 2 hours taking a survey...

Q: I am a cantor / rabbinical student / very engaged Jewish lay leader / degree holder in Jewish education / etc. Why didn't you ask about that?

A: We didn't think everyone would want to spend 2 hours taking a survey...

Q: Why did you include Arabic words like yallah and ahalan?

A: Because they're part of Israeli Hebrew and are used by some American Jews who have significant ties to Israel.

Q: When will the results be ready? Where do you plan to publish them?

A: We hope to have a general write-up ready within a few months, and we plan to submit articles on various parts of the survey to a few linguistics and Jewish studies journals.

Q: I just spent 15 minutes telling you whether I know Yiddish and Hebrew words. Now can you please tell me what they all mean?

A: We'd like to wait until the survey is over. We plan to include a glossary in our write-up.

Q: Why didn't you respond to the comment I wrote at the end of the survey?

A: We have looked through all 2700 comments, but we do not have time to address them all.

Thank you again for participating in this survey, and we look forward to seeing and sharing the results.