

SOVIET IMMIGRANTS' JEWISH IDENTITY IS STUDIED

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Body

Most **Soviet Jewish immigrants** in New York City have been in the United States five years or more, are becoming American citizens, live in apartments in Brooklyn or Queens with or near their parents or in-laws, are 30 to 50 years old and have one child.

This is a partial profile that emerges from a recent **study** by the Federation of **Jewish** Philanthropies. It is based, in part, on interviews with 233 **immigrant** families in the spring and early summer of 1984.

Federation officials began the research because of concern by American Jews that Communism had destroyed Judaism in the **Soviet** Union and that the **Soviet Jewish immigrants** here did not identify as Jews.

But the major conclusion of the **study** was that "**Soviet Jewish immigrants** possess a strong and positive **Jewish** identity and wish to participate with their children in American **Jewish** life."

The **study**'s goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy to encourage **Jewish** identification and affiliation among the almost 50,000 **Soviet Jewish immigrants** in New York City.

The **study** found that two-thirds of those interviewed had adequate or better competence in English, were employed and had household incomes of \$15,000 or more. The **study** noted that income was consistently under-reported by the **immigrants**.

High Level of Education

Most of the emigres are from large cities in the western republics of the **Soviet** Union and have attained a high level of education. Sixty percent have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree and 66 percent have worked in the **Soviet** Union as engineers, scientists, artists and in other status occupations, according to the **study**.

About 70 percent have some knowledge of Yiddish, even though there are no formal courses of Yiddish **study** in the **Soviet** Union.

A Russian-speaking urban anthropologist, Fran Baskin, acted as **study** director.

The report was presented by Dr. Seymour P. Lachman, chairman of the federation's subcommittee on services to new **Jewish immigrants**, at the general assembly of the Council of **Jewish** Federations in Washington on Nov. 15. The council represents more than 200 **Jewish** philanthropic organizations in the United States and Canada.

Dr. Lachman, university dean of the City University of New York, is a former chairman of the Coalition to Free **Soviet** Jews.

Personal interviews, which lasted an hour and a half in the **immigrants'** homes, dealt with their feelings about Judaism, their impressions of **Jewish** places and programs and their expressed **Jewish** interests and needs.

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Specific Findings

The Federation also conducted intensive discussions with representatives of 19 agencies in the city that provide a range of services to the immigrants.

The study found that in identifying strongly as Jews, 87 percent profess a tie with Israel, and about 25 percent relate to Judaism in a religious context.

Between 85 percent and 95 percent show a favorable attitude toward Jewish symbols, such as a synagogue, but seeing a Hasidic Jew drew favorable responses from only 33 percent because the image of the Hasidic Jews is used in anti-Semitic propaganda in the Soviet Union.

The study also revealed that 91 percent said they felt more Jewish when confronted with anti-Semitism.

The study also found that the immigrants were unaccustomed to making Jewishness public and did not have a tradition of joining organizations but indicated a desire to be involved with the broader Jewish community.

They also have a strong commitment to their children being Jewish, with 84 percent preferring that their children marry other Jews.

In feedback discussions of the first draft, the immigrants and a group of agency representatives agreed with the recommendations.

These recommendations include educating the immigrants about the American Jewish community and addressing their stated needs, including programs focusing on Jewish history and culture and Israel.

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