



# Archive Services - Report Explanation

## Scope of Phase 2 Reports

Each report for Phase 2 is for a single family line.

## Scans

We provide scanned copies of original archive documents. These often follow the main report as it can take considerable time to obtain them. These scans are images of the archive record books with the pages of information that have been translated for the Phase 2 Report.

## Documents that are checked

Censuses and civil records are the widest "databases" of that time, but they are not the only sources we check - we also check documents such as these:

- Tax inspector's logs/lists (also really important and informative)
- Taxpayer lists (different types of taxes - real estate tax, state tax etc.)
- Family lists
- Voter lists (elections to City Councils, Prayer Boards, Rabbi etc.)
- Real estate owner lists
- Cases of issuing foreign passports
- Military service conscription (draft) lists
- Many cases regarding military service (fine collections from those who avoided military service, petitions to re-examine someone, police searches for people who avoided service and many other cases).

Sets of documents and information found often differ from one document to another - different cities have different records. For example, there are many Family Lists for Brest - more than for any other city in Belarus - but they have almost no civil records (birth/death/marriage etc).

## Dates

The dates in brackets next to a name (e.g. "Berka (1847)") relate to the years when that person lived.

- If there is only one date it is the date of birth

- If there are two dates it is the date of birth and death respectively.
- If the dates contain a "/" it means it is not known exactly which year a person was born or died.

## Calendars

The Gregorian calendar was introduced on 14th Feb 1918 and the Julian Calendar was used before this. A Julian date will be a few days behind the Gregorian date. Some documents may also contain dates according to the Jewish (Hebrew) calendar.

## Locations

It may be the case that people were registered in a different location from where they lived. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Jews had to be assigned to a Jewish community within the [Pale of Settlement](#), but some lived outside the Pale without permission in order to avoid taxation
- In order not to be drafted for military service
  - Some families registered the births of their male children in synagogues in a distant shtetl in another governance. This ensured that these boys were not mentioned in the draft lists where they lived and so were not drafted for military service.

Therefore, in some cases, even checking all the documents in a city would not find any trace of a person who spent maybe many years living in that city.

## Names across generations

There may be many people with the same names across the generations, a number is included after every person listed in the report so that the chain can be followed in order to create a family tree.

For example:

- Girsh Loshinker (1)
- Itska (2), son of Girsh
- Leib (3)
- Girsh Itskovich Lashker/Loshinker (4)

Therefore Girsh(1) is the father of Itska and Girsh(4) is the son of Iska.

## Names and different spelling

Our reports usually contain various spellings of first and last names. This is not a mistake or a misprint as we provide all records as they are spelt in the original documents.

Preserved documents were compiled a long while ago, at a time when many people were illiterate and were sometimes unable to spell their own names. These documents were compiled by clerks, who wrote a person's name as it was pronounced. Also, Jewish names often had various spellings.

Therefore a person could have different first and last names even in the same document. For example, there could be a first name of Skhary, Skharia or Zkharia and a last name of Lurie, Luriy, Lyuria.

## Women in records

Women were not normally mentioned in the index to documents. They were only listed on the pages that contain information about their male relatives.

As an example, if we are looking for Ivan Cohen, then we look initially for Cohens, then we look for Ivans among them. We may then find that the index for "lists of householders of the city of XYZ, 1873" contains information about I Cohen on page 10. When we go to page 10, we see "I Cohen, householder, age 46, lives on 20 ABC St, wooden house and a barn. Family members : wife Ida, age 40, children: Michel age 15, Sara, age 20."

It is much easier to check documents that have an index. Unfortunately most of the documents have no indexes and many of them were drawn up without any order, so our archivist checks them page by page, trying to find information about people listed in the request. People with a surname that starts with "A" (Abramov) may appear on the last page, and with a "Z" (Zalamnov) surname could be on the second page. Male members were usually spelt with big or bold letters like "# 32 **Ivan Cohen**" with their family members listed below. Women were never listed separately - they were listed only with their spouses, fathers and rarely as mothers with their sons or as sisters for their brothers.

Therefore, archivists go through these types of documents looking for male members listed as the "main" person (fathers/householders/taxpayers).

Some documents (mostly old ones - before 1820-1840) do not contain female family members at all. For example, voter's lists, military service conscription lists etc.

This is the reason why we never recommend going ahead when a request contains female members only.

*Updated August 2021*