

# Sources of Jewish Population Data: Present and Future

## Preliminary Inventory of Jewish Population Data Sources; Countries with 1,000 Jews or More, 1988

Sergio DellaPergola

| Country                | Estimated<br>Jewish<br>population <sup>a</sup> | Jews p.<br>1,000<br>total<br>pop. | Accu-<br>racy<br>rating <sup>b</sup> | Last<br>census/<br>pop.<br>rgstr. | Last<br>national<br>Jewish<br>survey | Good<br>master<br>list | Jewish<br>vital<br>stats. <sup>c</sup> |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>North America</b>   |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                        |                                        |
| Canada                 | 310,000                                        | 11.9                              | B                                    | 1986                              |                                      |                        | M                                      |
| United States          | 5,700,000                                      | 23.1                              | C                                    |                                   | 1970-71                              |                        |                                        |
| <b>Central America</b> |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                        |                                        |
| Costa Rica             | 2,000                                          | 0.7                               | C                                    |                                   |                                      | V                      |                                        |
| Mexico                 | 35,000                                         | 0.4                               | C                                    | 1980                              |                                      | V                      |                                        |
| Panama                 | 3,800                                          | 1.6                               | D                                    |                                   | 1960                                 |                        |                                        |
| Puerto Rico            | 1,500                                          | 0.4                               | C                                    |                                   |                                      |                        |                                        |
| <b>South America</b>   |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                        |                                        |
| Argentina              | 220,000                                        | 6.9                               | C                                    | 1960                              |                                      | V                      | DM                                     |
| Brazil                 | 100,000                                        | 0.7                               | C                                    | 1980                              | 1968                                 | V                      |                                        |
| Chile                  | 15,000                                         | 1.2                               | C                                    | 1970                              | 1982                                 | V                      | D                                      |
| Colombia               | 6,500                                          | 0.2                               | C                                    |                                   | 1977                                 | V                      |                                        |
| Peru                   | 3,500                                          | 0.2                               | B                                    |                                   |                                      | V                      | D                                      |
| Uruguay                | 24,500                                         | 8.0                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      | V                      | D                                      |
| Venezuela              | 20,000                                         | 1.1                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      | V                      | D                                      |

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>European Community</b>         |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Belgium                           | 31,800                                         | 3.2                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Denmark                           | 6,500                                          | 1.3                               | C                                    |                                   | 1968                                 |                                  | BDM                                    |
| France                            | 530,000                                        | 9.5                               | C                                    |                                   | 1972-78                              |                                  | DM                                     |
| Germany, F.R.                     | 33,000                                         | 0.5                               | B                                    | 1987                              | 1988                                 | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Great Britain                     | 322,000                                        | 5.6                               | B                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Greece                            | 4,900                                          | 0.5                               | B                                    |                                   |                                      | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Ireland                           | 1,900                                          | 0.5                               | B                                    | 1986                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Italy                             | 31,500                                         | 0.5                               | B                                    |                                   | 1986                                 | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Netherlands                       | 25,800                                         | 1.7                               | C                                    | 1971                              | 1966                                 | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Spain                             | 12,000                                         | 0.3                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| <b>Other Western Europe</b>       |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Austria                           | 6,300                                          | 0.8                               | A                                    | 1981                              |                                      | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Finland                           | 1,300                                          | 0.3                               | A                                    | 1987                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Norway                            | 1,000                                          | 0.2                               | A                                    | 1987                              |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Sweden                            | 15,000                                         | 1.8                               | C                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Switzerland                       | 19,000                                         | 2.9                               | B                                    | 1980                              |                                      | (V)                              | BDM                                    |
| <b>Eastern Europe and Balkans</b> |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Bulgaria                          | 3,100                                          | 0.3                               | D                                    | 1965                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Czechoslovakia                    | 8,000                                          | 0.5                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Hungary                           | 58,500                                         | 5.5                               | D                                    | 1949                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Poland                            | 4,200                                          | 0.1                               | D                                    |                                   | 1960-61                              |                                  |                                        |
| Romania                           | 20,000                                         | 0.9                               | B                                    | 1977                              | 1988                                 | V                                |                                        |
| Turkey <sup>d</sup>               | 20,000                                         | 0.4                               | B                                    | 1965                              | 1988                                 | V                                | BDM                                    |
| USSR <sup>d</sup>                 | 1,435,000                                      | 5.1                               | B                                    | 1989                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Yugoslavia                        | 4,600                                          | 0.2                               | C                                    | 1981                              | 1986                                 | V                                |                                        |

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| <b>Asia</b>    |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Hong Kong      | 1,000                                          | 0.2                               | C                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| India          | 5,000                                          | 0.0                               | B                                    | 1981                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Iran           | 20,000                                         | 0.4                               | D                                    | 1976                              |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Israel         | 3,659,500                                      | 817.3                             | A                                    | 1988                              |                                      | V                                | BDM                                    |
| Japan          | 1,000                                          | 0.0                               | C                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Syria          | 4,000                                          | 0.4                               | D                                    | 1960                              |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Yemen          | 1,000                                          | 0.1                               | D                                    |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| <b>Africa</b>  |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Ethiopia       | 12,000                                         | 0.2                               | D                                    |                                   | 1976                                 |                                  |                                        |
| Morocco        | 10,000                                         | 0.4                               | D                                    | 1970                              |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| South Africa   | 114,000                                        | 3.4                               | C                                    | 1980                              | 1974                                 |                                  | DM                                     |
| Tunisia        | 2,500                                          | 0.3                               | D                                    | 1956                              |                                      |                                  | BDM                                    |
| Zimbabwe       | 1,100                                          | 0.1                               | B                                    |                                   |                                      | V                                |                                        |
| <b>Oceania</b> |                                                |                                   |                                      |                                   |                                      |                                  |                                        |
| Australia      | 85,000                                         | 5.1                               | C                                    | 1986                              |                                      |                                  | D                                      |
| New Zealand    | 4,500                                          | 1.4                               | C                                    | 1981                              |                                      |                                  |                                        |

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from: U.O. Schmelz and S. DellaPergola, "World Jewish Population, 1988" in D. Singer and R. Seldin (eds.), *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 90, 1990, pp. 514-532.

<sup>b</sup> Ranked from A = accurate, to D = conjectural.

<sup>c</sup> B = births; D = deaths; M = marriages.

<sup>d</sup> Including Asian regions.

## Toward a Survey of World Jewry in the 1990s

**Peter Friedman**

From both research and planning perspectives, it is essential that researchers and planners address the following issues before agreeing to undertake such a survey.

### **Clarification of objectives**

Clarification of objectives will determine the kinds of methodology, resources and analysis. Is the purpose limited to better demographic estimates or also to assist national and local communities better plan to meet the welfare/educational needs of their Jewish populations? Are we to serve a single or multiple constituencies, e.g. international, national and/or local demographers, lay leaders, communal professionals, etc.?

### **Methodologies and Data**

Do we use a single or multi-methodological approach (e.g. a census where appropriate, but supplemented by survey data or survey approach where feasible)? If we are surveying national constituencies, there is a need for comparable core data, essential for international comparisons, and unique national data essential for national/regional/local planning.

### **Timing and Resources**

Is 1990 feasible for an international, much less national surveys? Who is to provide the financial resources necessary to carry out the survey? Is it expected to come from an international source or from national bodies? In some cases, if the latter, national bodies may need additional resources from an international body. Is there a need for financial assistance? If so, who provides it?

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Whose responsibility – international, national or specific researchers/planners? Will it be a collective interpretation or primary interpretation with different points of view where appropriate? Who will have access to the data and under what conditions?

### **Additional items**

There is a need for the group gathered to develop a mutually agreed upon research agenda. There is need for development of an international data bank which goes beyond the collection of completed reports, and includes “raw data” and service information where possible.

Finally, forum participants should develop and continue the formal and informal linkages established as a result of the conference.

## **1990 Survey of World Jewish Population – Building an Action Agenda**

**Steven Huberman**

This paper explored the community planning needs of United States Jewry. The types and priorities of data were evaluated. Reference was made to the past experience with Jewish Federations's use of survey data. New emerging organizational needs were reviewed.

In particular, the following topics were included in the presentation:

1. Successful uses of demographic data.
2. Making the transition from classic population studies to need assessment.
3. Top priorities for more research data
  - a. Jewish identity and affiliation
  - b. Jewish education
  - c. Financial and human resources development
  - d. At-risk constituents such as the elderly, immigrants, developmentally disabled, and the near-poor.
4. How to overcome technical and administrative impediments to research utilization.

Research financed by the Jewish community must be action oriented. Systematic inquiry should be designed to promote constructive social change. Utility is the litmus test. In order to do this, research data has to be translated into policy and program recommendations.

Establishing the partnership between researchers, planners and program staff was the overarching theme unifying this paper.

## **Ensuring Statistical Data on American Jewry**

**Bruce A. Phillips**

There are two levels at which the statistical data on American Jewry can be ensured: the organizational and the methodological. By the organizational level I specifically mean the local community where Jewish statistical data is funded and produced. Despite the increasing

prestige accorded to demographic studies, there is no guarantee that new communities will undertake such research or that communities which have sponsored research will repeat it. It is important, then, to understand the reasons that communities decide to undertake demographic studies so as to foster a climate in the Federation world which is favorable to demographic studies and social research. On the basis of my own experience with community level demographic studies, I see five major reasons why local Federations conduct this research.

1. A community is facing some sort of major allocation of capital funds (such as a Jewish Community Center) and wants to be sure that there is really a need for such and expenditure and/or that it is being planned correctly.
2. To gain a sense of control over the allocation process. The scope of Federation activities has expanded, but the real dollars raised (adjusting for inflation) have not. Thus communities turn to population studies as a tool for setting priorities among allocations.
3. Communities which have experienced rapid growth (particularly in the West and South) use population studies to assess the extent and impact of that growth.
4. As campaign planning becomes more sophisticated in the use of "marketing," Federations turn to populations studies as a tool to identify and describe potential pockets of new givers.
5. Community population studies enhance the prestige of the local Federation as the "central Jewish address" in the community, and the study itself can be a useful tool for community building and organizational development.

Researchers and community planners ought to discuss the "background" issues of demographic studies so as to elaborate our understanding of how a community population study comes to be, and what we can all do to create a more favorable climate toward Jewish social research.

Methodologically, a number of "loose ends" still remain to be addressed. The first is the problem of "DJN" samples vs. true probability samples. The former are much less expensive in dollar terms, but we are still not sure of scientific "cost" represented by missed or underrepresented populations (e.g. mixed and conversionary marriages). A second is some uniform definition (or uniform typology) by which to count the Jewish population. In Houston, for example, I

used five categories: born Jew or convert to Judaism, non-Jewish spouse of Jew, child (under 18) of one non-Jewish parent raised as Jew, child of one non-Jewish parent raised as nothing, and child of one non-Jewish parent raised as Christian. Third, we have no Jewish counterpart to the impressive literature in survey research on the impact of question wording and survey design. Of particular interest to Jewish social researchers ought to be the issue of socially desirable responses. For example, to what extent do respondents over-represent the extent of their Jewish involvements, and which kinds of Jews are the most likely to do so.

## **Ensuring Statistical Information on Jewish Populations**

**Barry A. Kosmin**

The Jewish community is a complex operation in most diaspora communities. It involves expenditure on services of millions of dollars, employing thousands of personnel, with an immense investment in buildings and plant. All this requires in the last fifth of the 20th century a highly sophisticated system of management and planning if resources are to be used effectively.

Thus we require a proper information base on the "users and customers", i.e. the Jewish population.

### **Data Collection**

For this we must encourage data collection of all types of data, particularly where this can be done without using Jewish Voluntary Taxation, e.g..

### **National Census**

We should lobby for and encourage religious and ethnic questions. Despite fears, even in the *Sboah* there was no clear correlation between Nazi success and good records on the Jewish population.

Denmark and Bulgaria had excellent records of Jews – political actions saved Jews and censuses did not condemn them to death. The existence of official statistics on Jews in the USSR is a crucial factor in monitoring Soviet Jewish emigration and internal conditions and thus for the whole Soviet Jewry effort.

### ***Public Opinion and Market Research***

We should encourage communities to “piggy back” on such studies and utilize them. We should ask for a religious affiliation question to be included wherever practicable.

### **Data Reporting and Monitoring**

We must institute good reporting and collating systems in all Jewish communal organizations in order to monitor and effect change. A numerate and sociologically imaginative professional and lay leadership can only emerge if it is exposed to social scientific facts and arguments.

The creation of data archives and research institutes in diaspora communities such as the North American Jewish Data Bank will act as a catalyst to accomplish this. It should also be able to attract back into the Jewish community academic talent and put the Jewish agenda and concerns into the mainstream of social science and so eventually public debate.

The Jewish population is on average composed of the best educated elements in Western societies. Our organizations must be managed to reflect this fact and the contemporary “information age”. The Jewish public requires and consumes statistical information both in its operational and political systems. These data must be the most up-to-date and accurate we can obtain.

## **Analysis of Jewish Mortality: The Integrated Use of Vital Records and Community Surveys**

**Alice Goldstein**

To document the dynamics underlying Jewish population change, use of survey materials, even in conjunction with census data, is not adequate for full understanding of fertility, nuptiality or mortality. Moreover, many countries do not publish official vital statistics by religious identification. Other data sources must therefore be sought. Some communities, like Great Britain, collect information on vital events for their own constituencies, and these should be exploited even though they are biased in favor of those identified with the Jewish community. In other nations, like the United States, Jewish vital events must be identified more indirectly. In any case, the use of vital statistics on Jews is greatly enhanced if concurrent data are obtained on the base

population such as may be generated by surveys. The study of mortality among Jews in the United States is a case in point.

No published mortality data for American Jews is available from official sources; and surveys that include a question on mortality underreport deaths occurring in one-person households and include too few deaths to allow for meaningful analysis. Researchers have therefore obtained mortality data from records of Jewish cemeteries, Jewish funerals, or obituaries in the Jewish press. Such a procedure is most effective in small or medium sized communities; it may have its own biases if increasing numbers of Jews come to prefer burial under non-sectarian auspices. Once the Jewish deaths have been identified, access to official death records is often possible. These varied sources then provide a wide range of information on the decedent, including cause of death.

Several such studies have found that Jews have lower mortality at younger ages and higher mortality after age 65 than the general white population. The pattern was much more pronounced for men than women, whose mortality generally resembled that of white women. These patterns held even when socioeconomic status or place of birth were controlled. Most studies were inconclusive, however, because they lacked information on the Jewish base population. Only the analysis for Greater Providence in 1962-64 overcame this limitation by using the mortality data in conjunction with a Jewish population survey undertaken for the same period. The resulting rates and life table data provided added insights.

Jewish communities are generally characterized by an increasingly aged population. Mortality levels can therefore be expected to rise, and information on mortality, particularly by characteristics and cause of death, can be a valuable tool for community planners. With so many communities having just undertaken, or about to launch, community surveys, a very rich body of data on mortality can be generated. Such information will add an important dimension to our understanding of Jewish population dynamics.

## **Jewish Population Data in France**

**Michel Louis Levy**

I'd like to speak to you of a very strange population, the French Jews. A French Jew doesn't speak Hebrew, he doesn't speak yiddish, he

doesn't speak English, he speaks the second language (after Yiddish) of the immigrants to Israel, who came from Morocco: he speaks French, as I do.

Another extraordinary characteristic of French Jews is their ability to pass unnoticed, even by themselves. French Jewry apparently numbers over 500,000, the fourth largest Jewish community in the world, after Israel, the USA, and the USSR. Yet no French demographer or statistician exists who is competent to describe the French Jewish community. We had to wait for Doris Bensimon, a sociologist, and Sergio DellaPergola who came from Israel, in order to begin to have a few serious ideas. I personally am a demographer, but I can acquaint you with no survey. My only research of a religious nature, apart from the article I published on this investigation, concerned Catholic marriages in France! And it was as a private individual that I founded the Jewish Genealogical Circle of France three years ago, a circle which now has over 200 members.

Nonetheless, I shall try to explain briefly how to my mind the ideology of French Jewry differs from that of Jews in other countries, a fact which may in some way affect the organization of a possible survey of them. What I am going to say will hardly be "scientific", but subjective, based to a great extent on my experience as an Askenazi from Alsace with a Sephardi wife from Egypt.

French Jews are very proud and very conscious of belonging to a country which gave the world the Bill of Rights and which was the first country to emancipate its Jews. Even if their families arrived in France well after the French Revolution, which is generally the case, even if they suffered from the Shoah and from the dishonorable conduct of the so-called French Occupation Authorities, which shamefully helped to send 70,000 to the death camps, most French Jews, affected by the secular education they have received and their entire environment, consider that they belong to two chosen peoples, a fact which can annoy those who are less fortunate!

The Jews in other countries, in particular Israeli and American Jews, see this attitude as naive, and cite the antisemitism demonstrated by French society, during the Dreyfus Affair on the one hand, and before and during World War II on the other. This is not the place to deal with this characteristic, fully discussed by Bernard-Henri Levy in *L'ideologie francaise*. Notwithstanding, naive or otherwise, French Jews see these weighty episodes as trials out of which good has come: just as vaccinations strengthen the health of a vulnerable person, these trials have consolidated the choice of secular values which France made in the period of the Enlightenment. One proof of this progress is, for

instance, that the Constitution of the 5th Republic refers explicitly and for the first time to the Bill of Rights, and the Constitutional Assembly issues decrees founded on this Bill. I remind you that this text, which is a part of French positive law, guarantees freedom of worship, does not designate any particular religion, but in the Introduction cites God as the supreme authority.

Thus there is an official religion in France, which is more than a simple "deism", and which is founded on the respect for the Law, and for the language in which it is written. This explains why the Jews feel at home in France, and compatriots of those citizens who respect this shared religion. They feel "assimilated" to these compatriots, but not "like" them.

In this symposium and in the parallel symposium, I have heard assimilation denounced insistently as the great evil, which will annihilate the Jews; there are even those who, without respect for the martyrs who fell to the Nazis, speak of a "gentle genocide". My family has been assimilated for ten generations, and yet I am here, and no one has the right to say that I am not a Jew. On the other hand, I do not mind being considered a "Marrano", who respects the various institutions of my country, such as its language, or its holidays, and anything which does not seem to contradict what I understand of the Torah, the most important thing being in my opinion to transmit this to my children.

When I speak of the Law, and the Torah, I think I have laid my finger on a characteristic of French Jews, at least Askenazi Jews, who are more concerned with the text than with its commentaries. From this point of view, French Jews are to Jewry what Protestants are to Christianity, advocating a return to the Scriptures. For instance, as regards a census, note should be taken of how tradition interprets the census carried out by Moses at the beginning of *Bamidbar*, and that carried out by David, at the end of Samuel II.

This feeling of great fortune, "*glücklich wie Gott in Franckreich*", explains several of the socio-demographic characteristics of French Jews. Firstly, there has been little emigration and French Jews form only a small proportion of immigrants to Israel. When they have the choice, they choose France, as did most of my ancestors in Alsace in 1870, and more recently almost all the Jews of Algeria, most of the Jews of Tunisia, and a large proportion of the Jews of Morocco, a part of whom as I said at the beginning, came to speak French in Israel.

Another characteristic is that French Jews give very little money to their community organizations. The French in general, and the Jews in particular, are very satisfied at present by the non-denominational

organization of the public hospitals, the National Insurance Institute, and public schooling. These institutions are financed by taxes and social security payments, and the French are not accustomed to pay for them directly. So they are astonished and reticent when they are asked to contribute to the organization of religious practice, Talmudei-Torah and charity. As a consequence the Jewish organizations are very poor.

This is an important factor with regard to the organization of any survey of the Jews of France. Those who organized the previous survey, and Sergio DellaPergola and Doris Bensimon will support me on this, did not know who to entrust it to: the Consistoire, the Fonds Social, the Jewish Agency, the University? The same problem remains for the next survey.

What must be done to make possible the organization in 1990 of a quality survey of French Jewry? I think that, to begin with, the work already done and which we are discussing here must be publicized. French translations of the papers we have heard, and for instance of the questionnaire of the large Israeli survey, and of documents on Israeli and Diaspora communities, would certainly interest a large public in France, not just a Jewish public, and would make people more curious to learn as much about the French community.

But this curiosity, and we come back to the secular aspect here, cannot be one-sided. It would be vital, even if this seems utopic, not to limit the survey to the Jews. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that in order to ensure that a survey of Jewish observance in France be well received, it should be part of a large-scale survey on all the religious behaviours, comprehending all the denominations, including Roman Catholicism, the major religion in France. A large part of this survey inevitably will be the yearly breakdown of rites of passage, birth (baptism and circumcision), puberty (communion and bar-mitzva), marriage and death. The INED, where I work, has extensive experience on the one hand in historic demography, based on the examination of some of the parochial registries preserved over the centuries, and on the other hand in the demography of Third World countries, based on the far from complete censuses and statistics of the civil register. These specialities I think have many analogies with that of interpreting the registers of contemporary parishes and communities. I shall attempt to convince my colleagues of this.

## **Demographic Statistics on the Jews in Israel**

**U.O. Schmelz**

Copious and fairly accurate statistics are available on Israel's population, invariably specifying the Jewish majority amongst them. They have all been compiled and published, often in considerable detail, by the Central Bureau of Statistics (with the exception of fertility surveys mentioned below).

*Size and Composition of Population:* national censuses of 1948, 1961, 1972 and 1983; current updating estimates on the population, country-wide and for individual localities, derived from data files for the various factors of change; household statistics from Labor Force Surveys (collected through household interviews).

*Vital Statistics:* Current statistics of marriages, divorces, births and deaths; retrospective information from censuses and surveys; data on diagnoses of discharged hospital patients. Special fertility surveys were conducted by various researchers of the Hebrew University in 1959–1960, 1973–1975 and 1987.

*Internal Migrations:* Statistics of changes of residence notified to the Population Register; retrospective information from censuses.

*External Migrations:* Current statistics of immigrants; retrospective information on immigrants, and on some of their characteristics in the countries of origin, from censuses and surveys; longitudinal household interview surveys on absorption of new immigrants; emigration estimates.

*Other Population Statistics:* Educational; cultural (incl. use of Hebrew and other languages); labor force characteristics; housing; living conditions.

The next population census in Israel will be held only in 1994, since the last one was taken in 1983. Yet Israel will be amply able to match from current updating statistics most of the information that is expected to be collected in the international round of Jewish sample surveys around 1990. In addition, attitudes and behaviors of Israel's Jews in specifically Jewish matters as well as aspects of their Israeli identity will be explored in a special survey.