

# JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY: Facts, Outlook, Challenges

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Is there a global Jewish demographic crisis? Will there be a Jewish Diaspora in the year 2100? Will the State of Israel have a Jewish majority by 2050?

These and similar questions have recently emerged with renewed emphasis in scientific and public discourse about changing Jewish population trends at the dawn of the 21st century. New population estimates from several large Jewish communities in the United States, Europe and Latin America indicate a declining course related in part to large scale migration, but more substantially to growing assimilation, outmarriage, low birth rates and ageing.

A negative balance of Jewish births and deaths now prevails in most Jewish communities worldwide with the prominent exception of Israel. More frequent choice of marriage partners from outside the Jewish community is associated with growing percentages of children not raised Jewishly. The consequent erosion of the younger generation has produced a steady process of Jewish ageing, in turn associated with higher death rates and a population decrease. Additional major consequences of ongoing family and cultural changes are the blurring of identification boundaries and growing complexities in defining the Jewish collective. In Israel, the balance of Jewish and non-Jewish demographic trends produces a population equation critically related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

These demographic issues intensely affect the shifting location of major centers of cultural influence and the prevalence of harmony or tensions within contemporary Jewish society. Demography also crucially affects the nature of relationships between Jews and the outside

world, namely the weight of Jewish communities facing competition with other groups or the majority in society.

The strategic build-up of demographic patterns among world Jewry calls for urgent assessment, policy formulations and well-considered decision making aimed at reversing or moderating negative trends, and stimulating positive development. Main issues for policy evaluation and intervention touch upon Jewish identification, family patterns, socioeconomic change and the implications of demography for Israel's standing in a prolonged situation of military and political conflict.

The *Institute for Jewish People Policy Planning* aims to provide policy analyses and operational suggestions urgently needed by decision-makers concerned with the facts, outlook and challenges of Jewish population trends.

### EMERGING TRENDS AT THE DAWN OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

There may be fewer Jews in the world than commonly thought, and if the current demographic trends continue unchanged, there might be even fewer in the future. At the beginning of 2003, world Jewry was estimated at just about 13 million against 11 million in 1945 after the Shoah. It took 13 years to add one million Jews after the tragic human losses of World War II, but the subsequent 44 years were not sufficient to add another million. Since 1970, the world Jewish population practically stands at *zero population growth* with a total growth of about 2% (or 0.06% annually), as against an increase of over 70% (1.7% annually) in the world's total population (see Table 1). The relative weight of Jews among the world's total inhabitants steadily diminished and currently corresponds to 2.1 per 1000 of world population (one Jew for every 480 people on earth).

**TABLE 1. WORLD JEWISH AND TOTAL POPULATION, 1945-2002**

Year	Jewish Population		World Population		Jews per 1000
	Thousands	% Change	Millions	% Change	
1945	11,000	-	2,350	-	4.7
1970	12,645	15.0	3,637	54.8	3.5
2002	12,900	2.0	6,215	70.9	2.1

**Source:** DellaPergola (2002); United Nations (2001); Population Reference Bureau (2002).

These estimates reflect a concept of core *Jewish population* inclusive of people who in censuses or surveys say they are Jewish, or do not express a definite identificational preference but are of Jewish parentage and do not have another religious identification. It should be noted that this is not an *Halakhic* definitional criterion, though it broadly overlaps it. This is a very loose definition and does not imply any specific Jewish knowledge, belief, behavior or affiliation. Being enumerated in the core Jewish population only requires the willingness not to deny one's own Jewish origin or belonging, no matter how expressed.

The Jewish population defined through such empirical and clearly not normative criteria stands at the core of a more complex and extended configuration. Indeed, the 13 million Jews estimated worldwide at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are intimately connected to several more millions of people. Some of the latter have Jewish origins or family connections but are not currently Jewish, whether because they changed their own identification, or are the non-Jewish children of intermarried parents or are non-Jewish members in intermarried households. Jewish and non-Jewish mates in these households share and mutually affect each other's daily life experience, social and economic concerns and cultural environment.

The following examples indicate the extent of variation of core and enlarged Jewish populations in selected countries. Note that the criteria followed in the ensuing comparisons were not uniform. In the Russian Republic in 2001, the Jewish population was estimated at 275,000 and the enlarged population including all non-Jewish members in the respective households was estimated at 520,000, a difference of 89%. In the United States in 2001, based on both National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) and American Jewish Identity Survey (AJIS), a core Jewish population of 5,300,000 was part of an enlarged population estimated at 9.2 to 10 million, a difference of 74% to 89% - including households with persons of Jewish origin but no current Jew. In the Netherlands, a 2000 survey found 30,000 Jews by matrilineal descent and another 13,000 by patrilineal descent, a 43% difference. In Brazil, according to the 1991 census, the reported Jewish population of 86,000 was part of an enlarged population of 117,000 in Jewish households, a difference of 36%. In France, according to a 2002 survey, 500,000 Jews had at least another 75,000 non-Jewish household members, a 15% difference. In Israel at the end of 2001, 5,025,000 Jews lived together with 275,000 non-Jewish family members, mostly in families that had immigrated from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) under the law of Return, a difference of 5%.

The gap between the number of individuals covered by the enlarged and core definitions tended to increase together with growing rates of intermarriage, and in some cases an increase in the enlarged population could be noted along with reduction of the respective core. An estimate of

the total number of people eligible for the Law of Return would be even higher, as it would also incorporate non-Jewish grandchildren of Jews and their spouses.

According to new demographic studies, world Jewish population estimates reflect a downward revision in the population estimates in the two largest Jewish communities out of Israel, the United States and France. In both countries, the Jewish population around 2001 was reassessed to be about 5% less than it was in 1990 (see Table 2). In the United States, the previous total of 5.5 million in 1990 was expected to have grown to 5.7 million due to continuing Jewish immigration from East Europe, Latin America, South Africa and the Middle East. Instead, two new studies found a lower result: 5.35 million according to AJIS, and 5.3 million according to preliminary NJPS data. There were therefore *300,000 to 400,000 fewer people identifying as core Jews in the United States*, than previously expected.

**TABLE 2. JEWISH POPULATION ESTIMATES IN SELECTED COUNTRIES**

Country	Year	Jewish Population	Year	Jewish Population	% Change
USA	1990	5,515,000	2001	5,300,000	-4
Canada	1991	369,565 <sup>a</sup>	2001	348,605 <sup>a</sup>	-6
Brazil	1981	94,000	1991	87,000	-7
France	1990	525,000	2002	500,000	-5
Ukraine	1989	487,300	2001	103,600	-79
Germany	1990	27,711	2002	93,326	+237
Australia	1991	74,200	2001	83,500	+13
Israel	1990	3,717,100	2002	5,025,000	+35

<sup>a</sup> Jews by ethnicity.

**Source:** UJC (2002), Statistics Canada (2001), Decol (1999), Cohen (2002), Ukraine Goskomstat (2002), Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle (2002), Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001), Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2002).

In France, a new study in 2002 found 500,000 core Jews, 25,000 fewer than had been estimated in 1990. In several other countries, Jewish population decline has been a rule for several years. In Brazil, a community that has been doing comparatively well, the last two published national censuses indicated a decline in the number of Jews, from 94,000 in 1981 to 87,000 in 1991. In Canada, based on the ethnicity variable in the 2001 census, the previous longstanding trend of Jewish population growth came to an end, and actual decline appeared versus 1991 along with a substantial decline in single Jewish ethnicity declarations and an increase in multiple ethnic identities. Australia was one of the few countries where continuing immigration produced a Jewish population increase.

Since World War II, about 4.7 million Jews were involved in international migration: 1.9 million between 1948 and 1968; 1 million between 1969 and 1988; and 1.8 million between 1989 and 2002. Israel received 63% of the total migrants, while 37% went to the main Western countries. Large-scale emigration explains the drastic drop in Jewish populations in the Former Soviet Union, such as in the Russian Republic and Ukraine, and in Muslim countries. Between 1970 and 2002, the number of Jews declined by 78% in the European parts of the Former Soviet Union, by 90% in the Asian parts of the FSU, 91% in North Africa, 36% in Southern Africa, and 20% in Latin America. Declining or stagnating Jewish populations are explained in some countries primarily by a steady outflow of Jewish emigrants, as in the case of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), South Africa and or Argentina.

But in addition to geographical mobility, the balance of Jewish births and deaths (vital change) and of Jewish neophytes and assimilation (identificational change) appears to be clearly in the negative (see Table 3). For example, in the Russian Republic in 2000, about 8,000 recorded Jews died, versus only 600 recorded Jewish births. In the United Kingdom in 2000, about 3,800 Jews died versus 2,600 Jewish births. In Germany, a community that experienced a three-fold population increase due to the significant inflow of new immigrants from the FSU. 117 Jewish births were recorded in 2001 versus 990 Jewish deaths.

**TABLE 3. JEWISH Vital Statistics in Selected Countries**

Country and Year	Births	Deaths	Difference
<b>RUSSIAN REPUBLIC</b>			
1988	3,710 <sup>a</sup>	13,826	-10,116
2000	613 <sup>b</sup>	8,218	-7,605
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>			
1991	3,200	4,500	-1,300
2000	2,647	3,791	-1,144
<b>GERMANY</b>			
1990	109	431	-322
2001	117	990	-873
<b>ISRAEL</b>			
1990	73,851	25,759	45,092
2001	91,230	32,708	58,522

<sup>a</sup> Births to Jewish mothers, of which 2,148 to non-Jewish fathers. Assuming as many births to Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, the total births would be 5,858.

<sup>b</sup> Births to Jewish mothers, of which 444 to non-Jewish fathers. Assuming as many births to Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, the total births would be 1,057.

**Source:** Tolts (2002), Schmool (2002), Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle (2002), Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2002).

*Low Jewish birth rates and population ageing* are enhanced by *high and continually increasing frequencies of out-marriage* (see Table 4). In Russia during the 1990s, about 70% of Jewish women and 80% of Jewish men married non-Jewish partners. In the United States, and in several medium-size European Jewish communities, the frequency probably was above 50%. In France and the UK, it was above 40%.

The percentage of children of out-marriages that were raised as Jewish during the early 1990s was about 20% in both the United States and the Russian Republic. The compound effect of low birth rates, non-identification with Judaism of many children of out-marriages, and ageing clearly explains the population erosion just outlined. A further factor of Jewish population erosion likely to emerge from recent demographic studies is the disenchantment and disaffiliation among large sections of the younger adult Jewish population - comparatively more frequent among the outmarried and possibly also associated with less desire to have children.

**TABLE 4. RECENT JEWISH OUT-MARRIAGE RATES**

<b>Year of Marriage</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>France 2002</b>	<b>Russia 1994</b>
1985-1989	52% (NJPS)	30-39	37%	66%
1990-2001	51% (AJIS)	20-29	40%	78%

**Source:** Mayer et al. (2002), Kosmin et al. (1991), Cohen (2002), Goskomstat (1994).

Israel offers the only real exception to these recessive demographic trends. Steady immigration produced a near doubling of Israel's Jewish population between 1970 and 2002, and was reinforced by significant Jewish natural increase. In 1990, 73,900 Jewish births and 25,800 Jewish deaths produced a natural increase of 45,100. In 2001, 91,200 Jews were born and 32,700 died in Israel, producing a net increase of 58,500. Community is an important intervening factor in Jewish fertility trends in Israel, resulting in larger families than among Jews who moved to other countries. The phenomenon of assimilation and the consequent identificational loss of Jewish children is not statistically significant in Israel. As a consequence, in recent years Jewish population increase in Israel more or less compensated for Jewish population decline in the Diaspora. At the beginning of 2003, Israel's Jewish population (5.1 million) constituted about 40% of the world's total.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF JEWISH POPULATION TRENDS**

The two major Jewish population centers in the United States and Israel now jointly comprise some 80% of world Jewry. After ten years of rapid growth, Israel's Jewish population passed the

important 5 million mark in 2001 and in 2003, at 5.1 million, it continued to approach the size of US Jewry (as noted, about 5.3 million). The total amount and geographical distribution of World Jewry's available resources and creative ability are deeply affected by these demographic trends.

The location of Jews on the world map increasingly corresponds to the ranking of countries by the Index of Human Development, an international measure of the quality of life, published annually by the United Nations Development Programme. Over 90% of world Jewry now live in the top 20% of countries, in North America, Western Europe and Israel. Israel was ranked 22nd among 190 nations until 2000, but prolonged security tensions and economic recession risk caused a decrease in Israel's ranking.

Sharp ups and downs in the volume and direction of Jewish international migration were stimulated by the major geopolitical changes of the 1990s. The volume of *aliyah* to some extent reflects value-oriented motivations, but its frequency is primarily related to the standards of living and political situations of the countries of origin of migrants. As further proof, the frequency of emigration from Israel closely matches the frequency of *aliyah* from countries of a socioeconomic level similar to Israel's.

Jews are increasingly urban, well educated and economically specialized. Well above 50% of world Jewry now live in six major metropolitan areas, in and around New York, Los Angeles, and Southern Florida in the United States, and in and around Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa in Israel. Much of the blue-collar Jewish labor force in Israel has been replaced by Arab or foreign labor. The profile of Israel's Jewish labor force has thus become more similar to the socio-economic characteristics of Jews in the Diaspora, but it also has become more dependent on the availability of non-Jewish workers. At the macroeconomic level, Israel's economy has been negatively affected by international markets, confirming the strong relationship that exists between globalization and changes in Jewish society. These changes have powerfully affected Jewish demographic trends.

Recent changes in Jewish identification are both a consequence of broader social and cultural change, and a cause for a wide array of processes within the Jewish community. *Jewish identification* tends to become *more diverse and pluralistic* and *less focused on a common set of basic values*. Identification has tended to shift from more religious to more secular, from ethnic to cultural, from community oriented to more individualistic or universalistic. Demographic trends tend to reflect such internal differences. Preserving coherence and solidarity within world Jewry is not a lesser concern than the challenge of Jewish identification and continuity.



Population projections are not reliable prophecies, but they may help to better grasp the longer-term implications of a continuation of current trends. Obviously, projections several tens of years ahead cannot be considered more than speculative. However, the past record of projections over a 10 or 20 years span indicates that they are likely to portray actual trends with reasonable accuracy. World Jewish population size is expected to remain relatively stable, assuming the main current features of international migration and family formation continue unchanged (see Table 5).

**TABLE 5. JEWISH POPULATION PROJECTIONS<sup>a</sup>, BY MAJOR REGIONS, 2010-2050 - THOUSANDS<sup>b</sup>**

<b>Region</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2050</b>
<b>MEDIUM FERTILITY ASSUMPTION</b>			
<b>Total World</b>	<b>13,428</b>	<b>13,847</b>	<b>14,480</b>
Diaspora	7,863	7,619	6,251
Israel	5,565	6,228	8,230
North America	6,065	5,980	5,036
Latin America	394	364	277
Europe	1,084	1,030	795
FSU	163	62	2
Asia, Africa, Oceania	196	183	141
<i>% in Israel<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>45.0</i>	<i>56.8</i>
<i>% in North America<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>44.9</i>	<i>43.2</i>	<i>34.8</i>
<i>% in other countries<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>13.7</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>8.4</i>
<b>HIGHER FERTILITY ASSUMPTION</b>			
<b>Total World</b>	<b>13,916</b>	<b>14,698</b>	<b>17,286</b>
Diaspora	8,140	8,084	7,544
Israel	5,777	6,614	9,741
<i>% in Israel<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>41.5</i>	<i>45.0</i>	<i>56.4</i>
<b>LOWER FERTILITY ASSUMPTION</b>			
<b>Total World</b>	<b>12,935</b>	<b>13,002</b>	<b>12,026</b>
Diaspora	7,586	7,161	5,153
Israel	5,349	5,841	6,873
<i>% in Israel<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>44.9</i>	<i>57.2</i>

<sup>a</sup> Assuming age-specific Jewish international migration and fertility levels as of late 1990s, and fertility variation.

<sup>b</sup> Projection baseline: 1995. Minor discrepancies due to rounding.

<sup>c</sup> Out of world total.

**Source:** DellaPergola, Rebhun, Tolts (2000).



Under the higher assumption of a very minor increase in Jewish fertility (+0.4 of a child), world Jewish population might recover its size preceding World War II. Under the lower assumption of a similarly minor Jewish fertility decrease (-0.4 of a child), Jewish population would diminish to its level in the 1950s. In longer term prospective, different levels of fertility and assimilation can make *a difference of nearly one million more or one million less* Jews globally by 2020, and *over 2.5 million more or 2.5 million less* by 2050.

Jewish fertility in the Diaspora is lower than among the total population in many countries. Low fertility is the main determinant of population ageing, which in turn tends to create a surplus of Jewish deaths over births and a very skewed age composition. Crucial differences already exist in age composition in Israel and in the Diaspora (see Table 6). Israel holds one half of all Jewish children below 15, and will substantially increase its share in the future. Jewish communities in the Diaspora comprise a disproportionate share of the Jewish elderly. Different ongoing demographic patterns stand behind Israel's growing share of world Jewry, and may lead after 2030 to a majority of all Jews living in Israel.

**TABLE 6. PERCENT OF WORLD JEWISH POPULATION AGED 0-14 AND 65+, 2000-2050 - MEDIUM PROJECTION**

Region	2000		2020		2050	
	0-14	65+	0-14	65+	0-14	65+
Total World	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Israel	48.4	27.3	59.2	31.5	71.5	43.0
North America	40.4	48.6	32.6	52.5	23.1	45.3
Other Countries	11.3	24.2	8.2	15.9	5.4	11.7

**Source:** DellaPergola, Rebhun, Tolts (2000).

Jewish demography is also deeply intertwined with *the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*. Jewish fertility is not low in Israel, but fertility among Muslims in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, is significantly higher. Both Jews and non-Jews in Israel and in the territories have more children than would be expected in a population of equivalent socioeconomic development, possibly also as a value-oriented choice in a situation of prolonged conflict. Differential demographic growth of Jews and Palestinians will determine the amount of each group's representation in the make-up of the total population in Israel and the territories, and *who holds the majority* and *what majority* out of the total population between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. According to different geographical boundaries, Jews in the State of Israel might constitute a minority of the total population already by 2010, or might preserve a substantial majority by 2050 (see Table 7).

**TABLE 7. PERCENT OF JEWS<sup>a</sup> IN THE TOTAL POPULATION OF ISRAEL AND THE TERRITORIES WEST OF THE JORDAN, 2000-2050 - MEDIUM PROJECTIONS<sup>b</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Israel with Territories</b>	<b>Israel without Territories</b>
2000	55	81
2010	51	79
2020	47	77
2050	37	74

<sup>a</sup> Including non-Jewish immigrants from Former Soviet Union. Not including foreign workers and illegal residents.

<sup>b</sup> Assuming gradual decline of Palestinian fertility to equalize Jewish fertility by 2050.

**Source:** DellaPergola (2001).

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR JEWISH POLICY PLANNING**

Facing these trends and prospects, future Jewish policy planning needs to take into account that the current and expected population trends will crucially affect the future of the Jews as a People and as individuals wherever they are. Two quite different sets of issues stand at the center of an agenda aimed at monitoring and, where possible, strengthening the global Jewish population balance sheet.

Where as in most Diaspora communities Jews confront minority status, their changing socioeconomic, political and cultural circumstances largely depend on trends and interests of the majority. The challenge is how to preserve the sense of a cohesive and meaningful Jewish community while enjoying the whole gamut of creative opportunities offered by open and non-hostile societies such as those in which Jews mostly live in major Western countries. From a demographic point of view, this implies that those who wish to be part of the Jewish way of life be persuaded that a cultural collectivity cannot survive in the long term without primary biological foundations of family and children. A related challenge is how to pierce the surface and reach those who do not bother or do not want to belong in order to revive in them a spark of historical memory and mutual responsibility, if not a sense of pride and mission.

The main challenge in Israel is how a clearly defined Jewish majority can be preserved among the total population so that the character of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state can be maintained and transmitted. Differential growth rates, population composition and territorial configurations need to be taken into account when envisaging possible solutions to the conflict. Israel's vested interest from a demographic point of view is to encourage possible, legitimate

social processes that might be conducive to reducing the existing gaps in the pace of growth and the emerging quantitative imbalances between rival ethno-religious groups. Existing interconnections between the security situation, the economy, international migration and trends affecting family patterns and the Jewish and Israeli identity of Israelis should be thoroughly examined. Likewise, the costs inherent in achieving these goals must be fully appreciated in order to develop effective long-term strategies.

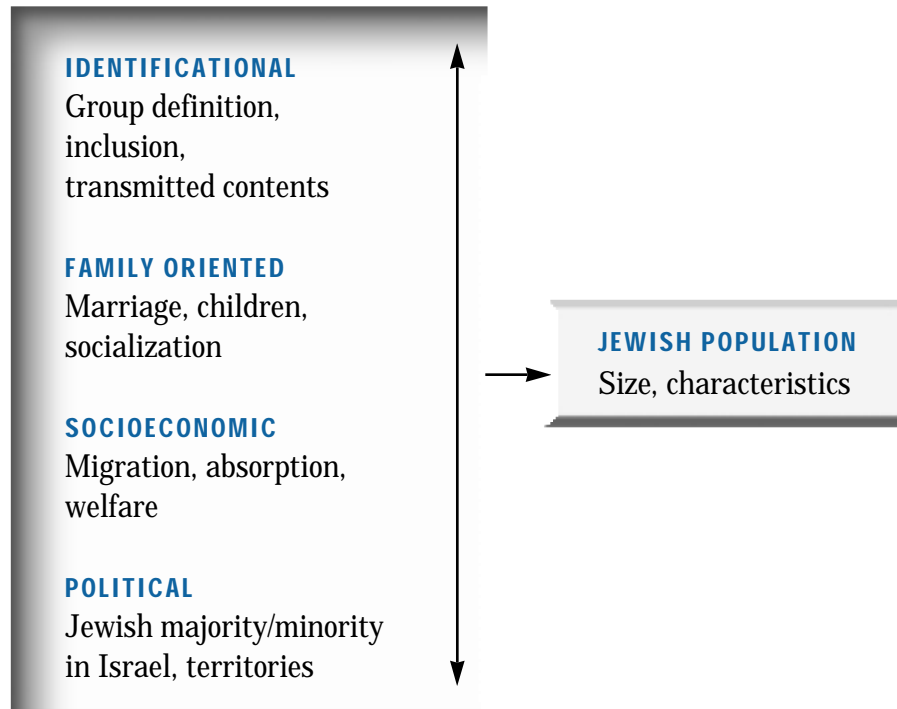
More specifically:

- *The global system* should be monitored to shed more insights into possible future Jewish migrations and the prospective growth or diminution of Jewish populations in individual countries. A better set of indicators constantly monitoring the quality of Jewish material and cultural environment in different countries might help to better forecast the future volume and direction of Jewish international migration.
- Rescue, assistance to, and resettling of *Jewish international migration* remains a central concern at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it has been over the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Understanding why *aliyah* and other Jewish migration is higher or lower than expected in certain countries is an essential prerequisite to policy planning.
- Extensive *geographical mobility* between and within major urban areas - a significant factor in Jewish community affiliation - calls for careful evaluation and planning of the territorial location of Jewish community services.
- Several decades of intensive social mobility have revolutionized the Jews' socioeconomic profile. Trends in Israel's *economy and labor force* and especially employment, welfare and equal access to resources should be monitored, as a fair distribution of resources - to the extent that this is feasible - and control of crucial productive sectors are fundamentally related to national stability. The latter is necessary if societal unrest and large scale emigration are to be prevented.
- Changes in *Jewish family patterns* are a major topic for assessment and new policy approaches. With the input of sociologists and social psychologists a serious survey should be undertaken of marriage and family related attitudes and behaviors among young unmarried adults in Israel and in the Diaspora. Facing high frequencies of intermarriage in the Diaspora, the role of child and young adult formal and informal Jewish education in shaping Jewish identification needs to be carefully evaluated.
- A critical review is needed of the prospects for affecting and sustaining *Jewish birth rates* in Israel and in the Diaspora. Policy instruments can perhaps affect the statistical equivalent of one-half of a child per family, which multiplied by millions of households over tens of years equals several millions of people. The possible role of social service, financial and value-oriented incentives in affecting fertility, particularly at medium parities such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> child, should be better understood and made available to a broad Jewish public whose social norms are still significantly family oriented.

- One important consequence of the recent family patterns is the creation of a growing pool of non-Jewish children, grandchildren and other household mates of Jews. A major policy issue relates to the question of how to bring children of *outmarried couples* into the mainstream of Jewish society, particularly in Israel. The issue should also be tackled of the possible role of relevant institutions such as Israel's Chief Rabbinate regarding the hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish Israeli immigrants mostly from the former Soviet Union but also from Ethiopia and other countries, and the modes of their incorporation within the Jewish sectors of Israeli society. If it is true that the minority tends to conform to the majority of society, while in the Diaspora it is not easy to stop Jewish identificational losses, in Israel it would probably be possible to perform much larger scale *giyur* (conversion) of those who seriously wish to join Judaism.
- Jewish communities worldwide should continue monitoring the effectiveness of their different *Jewish educational programs*, full time and part time, formal and informal, in shaping and developing an attractive and durable Jewish identity among the younger generation. New solutions should be developed for those sections of the community that would like to give their children a Jewish education but do not find in today's system programs to their liking or cannot afford the cost.
- The issue of growing *identificational gaps* within the Jewish collective along religious-non-religious and Israel-Diaspora directions calls for considerate efforts aimed at creating an enhanced sense of internal coherence and a dialogue respectful of differences. Lesser demographic gaps between sectors and more homogeneous Jewish population growth might follow.
- Demography is deeply intertwined with *the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*. Differential Jewish and Arab growth rates and population composition need to be taken into account when envisaging the conflict's continuing implications and possible political solutions. One of the considerations which should be given significant weight when determining the permanent boundaries is the requirement to preserve *a viable Jewish majority* in the State of Israel.
- It is imperative that in the evaluation of these problems and in the search for appropriate solutions, the global picture of world Jewry is of the forefront because of the *mutual dependency* and *commonality of interests* that ties together Israel and Diaspora. This is the main reason why Jewish population issues should be constantly kept under observation both on the local and on the global scale.

Figure 1 summarizes the main current Jewish population policy concerns. Future global and local Jewish population size and characteristics will depend on a variety of factors: identificational, family oriented, socioeconomic, political and cultural, each of which may directly affect the outcome while standing in mutual interaction with the others.

**FIGURE 1. ILLUSTRATIONS OF MAIN JEWISH POPULATION POLICY CONCERNS**



### WHAT NEXT

With all the uncertainties and unknowns of the contemporary global scene, and their predictable or unpredictable consequences for Jews, it is clear that World Jewry face several serious demographic problems which may undermine its long-term viability. As demographic policies take effect only after a number of years, the momentum of current trends will generate more of the same for several more years. Facing the continuing consequences of current Jewish population changes, it is plausible to speak of an emergency which calls for immediate action, both to reverse dangerous trends and to take compensatory measures. Policy interventions may directly aim at the specific processes and trends outlined herein, or may take alternative paths such as upgrading quality as a set-off to decreasing quantity. Available data are adequate for identifying some of the urgently needed measures, while in some cases new policy oriented research is needed.

The *Initiative on Jewish Demography* and the *Institute for Jewish People Policy Planning* intend to provide deeper insights on the causes and consequences of Jewish population trends. Meetings such as the *International Conference on Jewish Demography* held in Jerusalem in December 2002, further consultations between academics, professionals, policy planners and interested laypersons, and collaboration with the Israel Governments' *Public Council on Demography* and other international and national Jewish organizations, will hopefully lead to the formulation of policy suggestions urgently needed by decision makers. Jewish demography will play a central role in the definition not only of *how many* but, more significantly, of *where and what the Jews will be* in the future.

Jewish population changes should be prominently kept in mind and incorporated in any serious effort to develop coherent policies that will sustain the Jewish People facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Findings and interpretations from fresh and systematic research on Jewish demographic, socioeconomic and identificational change will provide alternative scenarios serving as a solid basis for policy recommendations to be presented in forthcoming papers of the *Institute for Jewish People Policy Planning*.

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The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute was established by the Jewish Agency for Israel in 2002, as an independent non-profit organization. The Institute will examine the challenges, threats and opportunities facing the Jewish people, and that may guarantee Jewish continuity and prosperity, in an effort to develop a strategic process for global Jewish policy planning. Dynamics will be evaluated by mapping main trends among the Jewish people. It will strengthen the interface between policy planning and policy making, through agenda setting, developing and analyzing policy options.

Among the projects to be in process in 2003:

- The Annual Estimate of the Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People.
- Initiative on Jewish Demography - Current and Expected Trends and Policy Implications.
- Improving the standing of the Jewish people in emerging superpowers, without biblical tradition.
- Jewish people crisis management.
- Analysis of the implications of the Iraq war and the new geo-political situation on the Jewish people.

The Institute will advance Jewish leadership policy discourse by publishing policy papers and preparing background material for decision makers. The "Alert Paper" on the demographic situation is the second in a series of documents examining the threats, challenges and opportunities facing the Jewish people. In addition, the Institute will cultivate policy professionals who focus on Jewish people affairs, in an effort to help build up strategic thinking and policy planning capacities among the Jewish people.

**Sergio DellaPergola**, Professor at The Hebrew University's Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry is also heading the Demographic Project at the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.

DellaPergola, born in Italy, 1942, lives in Israel since 1966, is an internationally known specialist on the demography of Jewish communities worldwide, namely in Western Europe, North and Latin America, and Israel. He has worked on Jewish historical demography, the Jewish family, Jewish migration and absorption in Israel and the Western countries, Jewish population projections, and quantitative aspects of Jewish education. On these topics he has published numerous books and monographs and over one hundred papers.

He lectured at over 40 universities and research centers worldwide. He is a senior consultant to numerous major Israeli and international organizations. In 1999 he won the Marshall Sklare Award for distinguished achievement from the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry.





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## ALERT PAPER

# JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY

## Facts, Outlook, Challenges

There may be fewer Jews in the world than commonly thought, and if the current demographic trends continue unchanged, there might be even fewer in the future.

by Prof. Sergio DellaPergola

**No.2**

June 2003