



News

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U.S. JEWISH POPULATION FAIRLY STABLE OVER DECADE, ACCORDING TO RESULTS OF NATIONAL JEWISH POPULATION SURVEY 2000-01

Older, Better Educated, More Diverse Community

NEW YORK – Tuesday, October 8, 2002 - The Jewish population in the United States has remained relatively stable over the past decade, declining five percent, according to a new comprehensive survey released today. At the same time, the survey found, the American Jewish community continues to be somewhat older, better educated and still more diverse than what it was a decade ago or when compared to all Americans.

These findings and others are part of the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, sponsored by the United Jewish Communities (UJC), the umbrella organization representing local Jewish federations and communities throughout North America. UJC contacted over 177,000 randomly selected Americans, interviewing over 9,000 of them, both Jews and non-Jews.

UJC's National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) shows a U.S. Jewish population of 5.2 million, slightly below the 5.5 million found in 1990. For this comparison, the NJPS employed a definition of being Jewish comparable to that of the 1990 survey.

"The American Jewish population is more or less the same, in overall numbers, as it was a decade ago," said Mandell L. Berman, UJC's Chairman for NJPS. "But not only is the Jewish population aging, young Jews are waiting longer to have fewer children."

The survey is, by far, the largest and most comprehensive ever conducted of American Jews.

"The NJPS reveals a treasure trove of powerfully relevant information that will keep researchers, communal leaders and professionals engaged for years," said Steven M. Cohen, consultant to UJC on NJPS 2000-01, sociologist of American Jewry and professor at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. "Its large sample size, scientific rigor and detailed information on Jewish identity, Jewish education, philanthropic behavior, aging and health issues - among so many others - will undoubtedly enrich the thinking of the Jewish federation movement and all of organized Jewry in America."

"Using state-of-the-art research and technology, our team went to unprecedented lengths to present the broadest picture yet of the American Jewish community," said Stephen H. Hoffman, UJC President and CEO.

Among the survey's key findings: (Editors note: See accompanying graphics)

Age

The Jewish population is aging, compared to 1990, and is substantially older than that of the total U.S. population.

- The median age of American Jews increased from 37 in 1990 to 41 in 2000. The median for men is slightly lower than that of women (40 versus 42). The median age of the total U.S. population is 35.

- Adults age 18 and older are 81% of the Jewish population; children 17 and younger are 19%. The percentage of children has slightly declined from 21% a decade ago. Proportionately, there are fewer children in the Jewish population than children in the total U.S. population (26%).
- The percentage of adults 65 and older in the Jewish population has increased from 17% in 1990 to 19% today. There are more female than male adults in this age group (54% vs. 46%). Proportionately, there are also considerably more Jewish adults 65 and older than is the case in the total U.S. population (12%).
- 9% of the Jewish population is 75 or over, as compared to 6% of the total U.S. population.

Gender

The Jewish population is well balanced by gender.

- 49% of American Jews are male, 51% female, the same as the total U.S. population. There was no change in gender distribution among Jews from 1990.

Marital Status

The marital status of Jews is also similar to that of non-Jews.

- Over half (54%) of Jewish adults 18 years of age and older are currently married and a quarter (26%) single, never married. Among the total U.S. population 18 and older, a slightly higher percentage (57%) are married and a slightly lower percentage (24%) are single, never married.
- In addition, 9% of Jewish adults are divorced, 4% separated and 7% widowed. The parallel numbers for the total U.S. population are virtually the same (10%, 2% and 7%, respectively).
- Proportionately, there are more single Jewish men than women (30% vs. 22%) and more Jewish widows than widowers (10% vs. 4%).
- 59% of Jewish adults have been married once, 13% twice and 2% three or more times.

Fertility

Fertility, along with mortality and migration, is one of the major demographic factors determining the size of the Jewish population. Jews are having fewer children than the number required for the population to remain stable. Additionally, younger Jewish women compared to the total U.S. female population are delaying their childbearing.

- Jewish women who are now approaching the end of their childbearing years, ages 40-44, have had approximately 1.8 children, which is below the replacement level of 2.1.
- 52% of Jewish women ages 30-34 have not had any children compared to 27% of all American women.

National Origin

- The overwhelming majority of adult Jews were born in the U.S. (85%). The percentage of adult Jews born outside the U.S. (15%) is slightly higher than the comparable percentage of foreign-born adults in the total U.S. population (13%).
- Among Jews born outside the U.S., the largest group is from the former Soviet Union (44%), particularly the Ukraine (20%) and Russia (13%). A tenth were born each in Israel and Germany.

Regional Distribution

Jews are dispersed across the country, but their regional distribution differs markedly from that of non-Jews. There has been very little change in the regional distribution of Jews since 1990. (See *Map 1*) However, mobility of native-born Jews has been very substantial over their lifetimes.

- The Jewish population is skewed to the Northeast (43%), where proportionately more than twice as many Jews as non-Jews (19%) reside. The region containing the fewest Jews is the Midwest, where the proportion of Jews (13%) is almost half that of non-Jews (23%). Jews are also proportionately underrepresented in the South (22% versus 35% for non-Jews). The only region in which Jews are in equal proportion to non-Jews is the West (22% Jews versus 23% non-Jews).
- 38% of U.S.-born adult Jews live in a different region of the country than the one in which they were born. Among these native-born adults, there has been movement from the Northeast (-16%) and Midwest (-4%) to the South (+13%) and West (+8%). (See *Map 2*)

Households

- The Jewish population resides in 2.9 million households. More than 6.7 million people live in these households.
- The average number of people in Jewish households is 2.3, down from 2.5 in 1990, and less than that in current non-Jewish households (2.6).
- Less than a third (30%) of Jewish households contain one person, over a third (38%) have two, over a tenth have three (13%) or four (12%), and 8% have five or more people. Among non-Jews, there are fewer single-person households (26%) and more multi-person households (four people = 14%, five or more people = 11%).

Education

The Jewish population is very well educated.

- A quarter (24%) of Jewish adults 18 years of age and older has received a graduate degree, and 55% have earned at least a bachelor's degree. This represents a slight increase of 1% and 4%, respectively, since 1990. The current comparable numbers for non-Jews are 5% and 28%. Jewish men are more likely than Jewish women to have received at least a bachelor's degree (59% vs. 50%) as well as a graduate degree (27% vs. 21%).

Employment

- The majority (62%) of Jews is employed full or part time, as was the case in 1990 (61%). More Jewish men than women are employed (68% vs. 56%). Twenty one percent of adult Jews are retired, an increase since 1990 (16%) and a higher proportion than that of non-Jews (16%).
- The majority of employed Jews (59%) work in management, business and professional/technical positions, compared to fewer non-Jews (46%). The plurality of Jews are in professional/technical positions (41%), noticeably more than is the case among non-Jews (30%). Among employed Jews, men and women are equally likely to work in management, business and professional/technical positions (60% vs. 59%).

Household Income

- The median household income of the Jewish population is about \$50,000, which is higher than the approximately \$42,000 median for all U.S. households reported by the Census Bureau.
- A fifth (19%) of all Jewish households are low income, defined as \$25,000 or less per year, compared to 29% among all U.S. households.

The new data reveal considerable diversity within this broadly defined Jewish population. Information on various segments, as well as data on Jewish behaviors and attitudes explored in NJPS 2000-01, will be released at UJC's annual meeting, the General Assembly, in Philadelphia November 20-22.

Interviewing for UJC's National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 was conducted between August 2000 and August 2001. In total, approximately 4,500 Jewish respondents were interviewed, more than double the comparable group interviewed in 1990. Participants qualified on the basis of Jewish religion, parentage, upbringing and self-identification. More than 600 other Americans with varying levels of Jewish background were also surveyed. When all of these people are considered, including those practicing another religion, the total number of Americans with Jewish backgrounds rises to 6.9 million people. They live in 3.6 million households, which have a total of 9 million people, both Jews and non-Jews.

The NJPS questionnaire covered an extensive range of topics including ethnic identification, cultural practices, religious beliefs and behaviors, Israel, philanthropy and Jewish education, as well as many demographic characteristics. This state-of-the-art research is the most extensive social scientific survey ever conducted of the American Jewish population. In addition, over 4,000 non-Jewish respondents were interviewed, using a shorter questionnaire in a parallel study, called the National Survey of Religion and Ethnicity, in order to estimate the size of the Jewish population.

To conduct this research, more than 5 million phone calls were made to 1.3 million telephone numbers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The methodology included making up to 8 calls to complete an interview at each telephone number. Within each contacted household one adult was randomly selected. On average, approximately 1,300 dialings were made to locate and then complete an interview with each Jewish respondent. The entire sample was contacted through random digit dialing. As a result of the rigorous sampling and interviewing techniques, the data from this study are completely representative of all segments of the American Jewish population.

The United Jewish Communities Research Department directed this project in collaboration with its National Technical Advisory Committee, a distinguished group of academicians and federation professionals. RoperASW, a leading global marketing research and consulting firm with headquarters in New York, conducted the fieldwork.

The data file will be available for use by data analysts in Spring, 2003, through the Mandell L. Berman Institute-North American Jewish Data Bank. The Data Bank is a joint project of United Jewish Communities and the City University of New York Graduate Center, and is located at the Graduate Center.

United Jewish Communities (UJC) represents 156 Jewish Federations and 400 independent communities across North America. Through the UJA Federation Campaign, UJC provides life-saving and life-enhancing humanitarian assistance to those in need, and translates Jewish values into social action on behalf of millions of Jews in hundreds of communities in North America, in towns and villages throughout Israel, in the former Soviet Union, and 60 countries around the world. Through the Israel Emergency Campaign, UJC and the Jewish Federations of North America are providing economic, social, human welfare and other types of support to Israelis and victims of terror as they strive to lead normal lives during a period of extreme difficulty.