

World Jewish Population

STUDENTS DEALING with world Jewish population statistics have long been aware of the difficulty at arriving at an accurate figure based on reliable data. The world figure can obviously only be as good as the component statistics supplied for individual countries by local bodies; under present circumstances, it is well nigh impossible to ascertain with any considerable degree of accuracy the numbers of Jews residing in various countries. This is true even with regard to areas where general census figures are reliable, for there is always the possibility that numbers of Jews have, for various technical reasons, been included among the non-Jewish population. In some countries the official census contains no indication of religious affiliation. The present estimates should therefore be considered as the nearest approximation, subject to continuous revision in the light of new data.

Procedure

To secure the estimates presented in this survey, the author used data obtained from censuses, local registrations, and evaluations by local bodies. In addition, special inquiries were sent to thirty-eight selected central communal bodies in thirty-eight countries with Jewish populations; these countries were selected as the first group to be approached in a continuing inquiry, which, it is hoped, will ultimately yield a better picture of the world Jewish population. As of the date of writing (November 1955), seventeen responses had been received at the office of the AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK.¹

The inquiries sent to central local communal bodies requested the following data: (a) the current estimate of the number of Jews in the respective country, indicating nationals and refugees; (b) the source of this information (i.e., census, communal registration, estimate, etc.); (c) where the figure was an estimate, the method used to arrive at the given figure; and (d) a breakdown of the Jewish population by principal cities.

Despite the difficulties inherent in this sort of inquiry and the limited response, the data obtained will undoubtedly help in the construction of a better estimate of the number of Jews in various countries of the world.

Responses

Most of the figures obtained from local communal bodies came from communal registrations for religious purposes or were estimates. The local or

¹ Figures supplied by respondents to the questionnaire are identified in the tables. The author wishes to acknowledge with thanks the help given him in preparing the questionnaire by the late L. Hersh of Geneva University, Nathan Glazer, Ben B. Seligman, Morris Fine, and Jacob Sloan.

ganizations used available lists of synagogue members, registered members of various Jewish organizations, and informed personal guesses. Sometimes, the reported estimates gave little or no indication of the numbers of unattached Jews. Thus, the figure obtained from Portugal (723) had to be adjusted after correspondence with local officials in that country, since it was clear that the figure given covered only members of the Jewish community. The same was true with respect to France, the response from the communal body in that country indicating that there was nothing to back up the low estimate of 250,000 Jews for the whole country. The estimate for Great Britain was based on the marriages and death rates method, the registers of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, respectively, providing the data. Figures for Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland were based on census data supplemented by local estimates.

It must be made clear that a general evaluation of the estimates obtained through our inquiry will have to await the completion of the whole survey, in order to take into account responses not yet received from those bodies to which questionnaires have been sent and those to which it will be sent in the course of the second part of the survey. Whatever the shortcomings of the estimates obtained, at the present time no other source (and no other means), are available to provide better estimates.²

Total World Jewish Population, by Continents

It is estimated that the world Jewish population in 1955 stood at about 11,908,000, with more than 6,000,000, or 51 per cent, of the total residing in North and South America. Over 3,442,000, or 28.9 per cent, were living in Europe. Asia, including Israel, accounted for about 1,684,000, or 14.1 per cent; 660,750 and 58,250 were found in Africa and Australia-New Zealand, respectively.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF JEWISH POPULATION
BY CONTINENTS

<i>Continent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Europe (incl Asiatic Soviet Union and Turkey)	3,442,627	28.9
America (North and South)	6,062,362	51.0
Asia	1,684,454	14.1
Africa	660,750	5.5
Australia and New Zealand	58,250	0.5
TOTAL	11,908,443	100.0

Europe

It is estimated that there were in Europe in 1955 about 3,442,000 Jews, with 2,000,000 living in the Soviet Union and over 400,000 in Soviet satellite

² The author wishes to express his thanks to all the Jewish central communal bodies in various countries without whose cooperation this survey would not have been possible. The full list of such organizations will be reported subsequently.

counries. It must be emphasized that there was no way of ascertaining the exact number of Jews residing in the Soviet Union. This is a matter of considerable difference of opinion, with some writers estimating the number at nearer 1,800,000. It is, however, worth mentioning that there has been a substantial increase in the general population in the Soviet Union, and there is no reason to believe that the Jewish community there did not in some measure reflect this increase.

There were about 950,000 Jews in Western Europe, with 450,000 in England and 300,000 in Metropolitan France.

North and South America

Over 6,000,000 Jews were living in the Western Hemisphere, about 230,000 in Canada and some 5,200,000 in the United States. The figure for the United States is the approximate figure given by students of Jewish population in this country (see p. 119). The fact that the Jewish community in the United States has passed the 5,000,000 figure is apparently now accepted by all researchers.

Our inquiry has brought about changes in the estimates previously given for two Latin American countries. According to local information, the Jewish population in Chile stood at 30,000 (instead of 40,000), and the Jewish community in Uruguay numbered 50,000, rather than the 40,000 indicated in the summary for Volume 56.

There were no reliable new figures for Argentina, and the estimate given for that country was still 360,000.

Asia and Australia

Out of about 1,684,000 Jews in Asia, 1,550,000, or over 92 per cent, were in Israel. The only other considerable Jewish settlements in Asia were in Iran, which had some 80,000, and India, with over 21,000 Jews.

According to official figures, the total population of Israel as of May 1, 1955, was 1,745,577, including 1,550,958 Jews and 194,169 others.³ No changes were reported in Jewish population estimates for Australia and New Zealand.

Africa

It is as yet impossible to evaluate the actual population changes that have taken place in French North Africa, particularly in Morocco, as a result of the continuing migration from that area to Israel. It was reported that over 15,000 Jews left Morocco during the period from January through July 1955 and that this number was expected to rise considerably by the end of 1955.

At this writing (November 1955), Morocco (240,000 Jews) was still the largest Jewish center in North Africa, with Algeria (140,000) occupying second place.

No changes have been reported from the Union of South Africa, where the Jewish community of 110,000 was the only sizable settlement outside the Moslem area.

³ *Statistical Bulletin of Israel*, Vol. VI, No. 7, July 1955, Jerusalem, Israel.

Countries With Largest Jewish Population

There were no changes in the order of size among the countries with largest Jewish populations, the three largest—the United States, the Soviet Union, and Israel—continuing to occupy first, second, and third place, respectively. Aside from these three countries, no Jewish community passed the 500,000 mark, and only six others had a Jewish population ranging from 225,000 (Rumania) to 450,000 (England).

It is worthy of mention that with the obvious exception of Israel, the ratio of Jewish to total population in the countries of the world is below 5 per cent and in some countries is less than 1 per 1,000.

Selected Cities

Table 8, which presents Jewish population in selected cities, is based largely on data obtained through our inquiry. Although incomplete and lacking a unifying principle, the data will serve a useful purpose.

TABLE 2
ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN EUROPE,
BY COUNTRIES^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>General Population</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Albania	1,175,000	300	0.0
Austria	6,969,000	10,077 ^x	0.1
Belgium	8,819,000	40,000	0.5
Bulgaria	7,500,000	6,500	0.1
Czechoslovakia	12,948,000	17,000	0.1
Denmark	4,406,000	6,500 ^x	0.1
England	50,785,000	450,000 ^x	0.9
Finland	4,238,000	1,752 ^x	0.0
France	43,300,000	300,000 ^x	0.7
Germany	69,685,000	23,000	0.0
Gibraltar	22,500	650	2.9
Greece	7,900,000	7,000	0.1
Hungary	9,808,000	140,000	1.4
Irish Free State	2,933,000	5,400	0.2
Italy	47,665,000	34,400	0.1
Luxembourg	306,000	1,000 ^x	0.3
Netherlands	10,747,000	25,000	0.2
Norway	3,392,000	1,000 ^x	0.0
Poland	26,500,000	45,000	0.2
Portugal	8,765,000	2,000 ^x	0.0
Rumania	17,150,000	225,000	1.3
Soviet Union	216,000,000	2,000,000 ^b	0.9
Spain	28,976,000	3,000	0.0
Sweden	7,260,000	12,500 ^x	0.2
Switzerland	4,978,000	19,048 ^x	0.4
Turkey	23,447,000	60,000 ^x	0.3
Yugoslavia	17,550,000	6,500 ^x	0.0
TOTAL	643,224,500	3,442,627	0.5

^a Data on general population were taken from the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* published by the Statistical Office of the United Nations, November 1955, Vol. IX, No. 11, United Nations, New York. They represent census figures or available estimates, mostly for 1953 and 1954. Where necessary, use was made also of other sources, including local publications.

^b Including Asiatic regions of the Soviet Union and Turkey.

^x The symbol "x" following figures on Jewish population in this and subsequent tables indicates that the figure was obtained through inquiry sent to the central Jewish communal body of the country.

TABLE 3
ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN NORTH AND
SOUTH AMERICA, BY COUNTRIES^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>General Population</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Canada	15,601,000	230,000	1.5
United States	165,248,000	5,200,000	3.1
TOTAL NORTH AMERICA	180,849,000	5,430,000	3.0
Argentina	19,110,000	360,000	1.9
Bolivia	3,162,000	2,700	0.1
Brazil	58,456,000	120,000	0.2
Chile	6,560,000	30,000*	0.5
Colombia	12,657,000	9,000	0.1
Costa Rica	951,000	1,500	0.2
Cuba	5,471,000	11,000	0.2
Curacao	148,000	1,000	0.7
Dominican Republic	2,404,000	600	0.0
Dutch Guiana	223,000	1,000	0.4
British Guiana	472,000	130	0.0
Ecuador	3,567,000	2,000	0.1
El Salvador	2,122,000	200	0.0
Guatemala	3,149,000	1,000	0.0
Haiti	3,112,000	200	0.0
Honduras	1,608,000	150	0.0
Jamaica	1,487,000	2,200	0.1
Mexico	28,849,000	25,632*	0.1
Nicaragua	1,202,000	150	0.0
Panama	886,000	2,500	0.3
Paraguay	1,565,000	3,000	0.2
Peru	9,396,000	3,000	0.0
Trinidad	698,000	400	0.1
Uruguay	2,525,000	50,000*	2.0
Venezuela	5,774,000	5,000	0.1
TOTAL SOUTH AMERICA	175,554,000	632,362	0.4
GRAND TOTAL	356,403,000	6,062,362	1.7

^a See footnote ^a Table 2.

* See footnote * Table 2.

TABLE 4
ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN ASIA,
BY COUNTRIES^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>General Population</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Aden	730,000	800	0.1
Afghanistan	12,000,000	4,000	0.0
Burma	19,242,000	1,500	0.0
Cyprus	514,000	170	0.0
China	463,493,000	1,000	0.0
Indonesia	81,100,000	1,200	0.0
French Indo-China	27,030,000	1,500	0.0
India	304,333,000	21,126*	0.0
Iran	20,720,000	80,000	0.4
Iraq	4,948,000	6,000	0.1
Israel	1,745,577	1,550,958	88.9
Japan	88,200,000	2,200	0.0
Lebanon	1,383,000	6,000	0.4
Pakistan	75,040,000	400	0.0
Philippines	21,440,000	300*	0.0
Singapore	1,168,000	800	0.1
Syria	3,670,000	3,000	0.1
Yemen	3,500,000	3,500	0.1
TOTAL	1,130,256,577	1,684,454	0.1

* See footnote ^a Table 2.

* See footnote * Table 2.

TABLE 5
ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN AFRICA,
BY COUNTRIES^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>General Population</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Abyssinia	15,000,000	12,000	0.1
Algeria	9,370,000	140,000	1.5
Belgian Congo	12,317,000	2,000	0.0
Egypt	23,240,000	40,000	0.2
Kenya	5,947,000	1,000	0.0
Libya	1,072,000	3,750	0.3
Morocco (incl. Tangiers)	9,591,000	240,000	2.5
Northern Rhodesia	2,128,000	1,500	0.1
Southern Rhodesia	2,399,000	5,500	0.2
Tunisia	3,231,000	105,000	3.2
Union of South Africa	13,393,000	110,000	0.8
TOTAL	97,688,000	660,750	0.7

^a See footnote ^a Table 2.

TABLE 6

ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN AUSTRALIA AND
NEW ZEALAND^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>General Population</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Australia	9,201,000	53,750	0.6
New Zealand	2,093,000	4,500	0.2
TOTAL	11,294,000	58,250	0.5

^a See footnote ^a Table 2.

TABLE 7

COUNTRIES WITH LARGEST JEWISH
POPULATION

<i>Country</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>
United States	5,200,000
Soviet Union	2,000,000
Israel	1,550,958
England	450,000 [*]
Argentina	360,000
France	300,000
Morocco	240,000
Canada	230,000
Rumania	225,000

^{*} See footnote ^{*}, Table 2.

TABLE 8

ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION,
SELECTED CITIES^a

<i>City</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>
Abo	355 [*]
Amsterdam	14,000
Ankara	1,000 [*]
Antwerp	12,000
Athens	4,000
Basel	2,471 [*]
Belgrade	1,451 [*]
Berlin	6,000
Bern	792 [*]
Bordeaux	5,000
Boras	300 [*]
Bombay	18,126 [*]
Brussels	20,000
Calcutta	2,500 [*]
Cochin	500 [*]

TABLE 8 (Continued)

<i>City</i>	<i>Jewish Population</i>
Cairo	20,000
Casablanca	65,000
Florence	1,500
Geneva	2,642*
Glasgow	13,400*
Haifa	154,000
Helsinki	1,333*
Istanbul	50,000*
Ismir	5,000*
Jerusalem	143,000
Johannesburg	50,000
La Paz	3,500
Leeds	2,500*
London (Greater)	280,000*
Manchester	31,000*
Manila	300*
Marrakech	18,500
Melbourne	25,000
Milan	6,000
Montreal	92,000
Novi-Sad	286*
Oslo	620*
Paris	175,000
Rio de Janeiro	45,000
Rome	12,000
São Paulo	40,000
Santiago	25,000*
Sarajevo	1,038*
Stockholm	6,000*
Subotica	404*
Sydney	22,000
Teheran	30,000
Tel Aviv	350,000
Toronto	74,500
Trieste	1,500
Valparaiso	2,000
Vienna	9,230*
Warsaw	5,000
Zagreb	1,286*
Zurich	6,169*

* Mostly for 1953-54.

* See footnote * Table 2.

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