World Jewish Population, 2000

THE WORLD'S JEWISH POPULATION was estimated at 13.2 million at the beginning of the year 2000, an increase of nearly 100,000 over the previous two-year period.

The present volume of the AJYB carries a detailed article about contemporary demographic trends among world Jewry and population projections for the period 2000–2080.[1] Therefore instead of the customary detailed overview of current Jewish population developments only a brief summary is given here. The following tables provide an update of the data available about the size of Jewish population and its share of the total population in each country. While the population estimates presented in previous volumes of the *American Jewish Year Book* referred to December 31 of the year preceding by two the date of publication,[2] the current estimates refer to January 1 of the current year of publication. Since this attempt to present the most recent possible picture entails a shorter span of time for evaluation and correction of the available information, the margin of inaccuracy is somewhat greater than in previous years. As in the past, we provide revised estimates for the previous date so as to ensure a better base for comparisons with the more recent figures. Corrections of the latest estimates, if needed, will be presented in future volumes of the AJYB. It should be emphasized, in any case, that the elaboration of a worldwide set of estimates for the Jewish populations of the various countries is beset with difficulties and uncertainties, all the more so at a time of enhanced international migration. Thus the analyst has to come to terms with the paradox of the *permanently provisional* character of Jewish population estimates.

Definitions

A major problem with Jewish population estimates periodically circulated is a lack of coherence and uniformity in the definition of "Jewish." Often, the problem of defining the Jewish population is not even addressed. The following estimates of Jewish population distribution in each continent and country (tables 1–7 below) consistently aim at the concept of *core* Jewish population.

We define as the *core Jewish population* all those who, when asked, identify

[1]Sergio DellaPergola, Uzi Rebhun, Mark Tolts, "Prospecting the Jewish Future: Population Projections, 2000–2080," above, pp. 103–46.

[2]The previous estimates as of December 31, 1997 (or January 1, 1998) were published in AJYB 1999, vol. 99, pp. 543–80.

themselves as Jews; or, if the respondent is a different person in the same household, are identified by him/her as Jews. This is an intentionally comprehensive and pragmatic approach. Such definition of a person as a Jew, reflecting *subjective* feelings, broadly overlaps but does not necessarily coincide with Halakhah (rabbinic law) or other normatively binding definitions. It does *not* depend on any measure of that person's Jewish commitment or behavior—in terms of religiosity, beliefs, knowledge, communal affiliation, or otherwise. The *core* Jewish population includes all those who converted to Judaism by any procedure, or joined the Jewish group informally, and declare themselves to be Jewish. It excludes those of Jewish descent who formally adopted another religion, as well as other individuals who did not convert out but currently refuse to acknowledge their Jewish identification.

Two additional operative concepts must be considered in the study of Jewish population. The *extended Jewish population* includes the sum of (a) the *core* Jewish population and (b) all other persons of Jewish parentage who are *not* Jews currently (or at the time of investigation). These non-Jews with Jewish background, as far as they can be ascertained, include: (a) persons who have themselves adopted another religion, even though they may claim still to be Jews ethnically; (b) other persons with Jewish parentage who disclaim to be Jews. It is customary in sociodemographic surveys to consider the religioethnic identification of parents. Some censuses, however, do ask about more distant ancestry. The *enlarged Jewish population*, in addition to all those who belong in the *extended* Jewish population, also includes all of the respective further non-Jewish household members (spouses, children, etc.). For both conceptual and practical reasons, this definition does not include any other non-Jewish relatives living elsewhere in exclusively non-Jewish households.

The Law of Return, Israel's distinctive legal framework for the acceptance and absorption of new immigrants, awards Jewish new immigrants immediate citizenship and other civil rights. According to the current, amended version of the Law of Return, a Jew is any person born to a Jewish mother, or converted to Judaism (regardless of denomination). By decision of Israel's Supreme Court, conversion from Judaism, as in the case of some ethnic Jews who currently identify with another religion, entails loss of eligibility for Law of Return purposes. The law extends its provisions to all current Jews and to their Jewish or non-Jewish spouses, children, and grandchildren, as well as to the spouses of such children and grandchildren. As a result of its three-generation time perspective and lateral extension, the Law of Return applies to a population significantly wider than *core, extended,* and *enlarged* Jewish populations as defined above. It is actually quite difficult to estimate what the total size of the *Law of Return* population could be.

Accuracy Rating

We provide separate figures for each country with approximately 100 or more resident *core* Jews. Residual estimates of Jews living in other smaller communi-

ties supplement some of the continental totals. For each of the reported countries, the four columns in tables 2–6 provide an estimate of mid-year 2000 total population,[3] the estimated January 1, 2000, Jewish population, the proportion of Jews per 1,000 of total population, and a rating of the accuracy of the Jewish population estimate.

There is wide variation in the quality of the Jewish population estimates for different countries. For many Diaspora countries it would be best to indicate a range (minimum-maximum) rather than a definite figure for the number of Jews. It would be confusing, however, for the reader to be confronted with a long list of ranges; this would also complicate the regional and world totals. The figures actually indicated for most of the Diaspora communities should be understood as being the central value of the plausible range of the respective core Jewish populations. The relative magnitude of this range varies inversely to the accuracy of the estimate.

The three main elements that affect the accuracy of each estimate are the nature and quality of the base data, the recency of the base data, and the method of updating. A simple code combining these elements is used to provide a general evaluation of the reliability of the Jewish population figures reported in the detailed tables below. The code indicates different quality levels of the reported estimates: (A) Base figure derived from countrywide census or relatively reliable Jewish population survey; updated on the basis of full or partial information on Jewish population movements in the respective country during the intervening period. (B) Base figure derived from less accurate but recent countrywide Jewish population investigation; partial information on population movements in the intervening period. (C) Base figure derived from less recent sources, and/or unsatisfactory or partial coverage of Jewish population in the particular country; updating according to demographic information illustrative of regional demographic trends. (D) Base figure essentially speculative; no reliable updating procedure. In categories (A), (B), and (C), the year in which the country's base figure or important partial updates were obtained is also stated. For countries whose Jewish population estimate of end 1997-beginning 1998 was not only updated but also revised in the light of improved information, the sign "X" is appended to the accuracy rating.

One additional tool for updating Jewish population estimates is provided by a new set of demographic projections developed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.[4] Such projections extrapolate the most likely observed or expected trends out of a Jewish population baseline assessed by sex and detailed age-groups as of end-year 1995. Even where detailed information on the dynamics of

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[3]For general population data see United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects, The 1998 Revision*, Vol. I: *Comprehensive Tables* (New York, 1999).

[4]See note 1 above.

Jewish population change is not immediately available, the powerful connection that generally exists between age composition of a population and the respective vital and migration movements helps to provide plausible scenarios of the developments bound to occur in the short term. In the absence of better data, we used indications from these projections to refine the estimates for 2000 as against previous years. On the other hand, projections are clearly limited by a definite and comparatively limited set of assumptions and need to be periodically updated in the light of actual demographic developments.

World Jewish Population Size

Table 1 gives an overall picture of Jewish population for January 1, 2000, as compared to January 1, 1998. For 1998 the originally published estimates are presented along with somewhat revised figures that take into account, retrospectively, the corrections made for certain countries in the light of improved information. These corrections resulted in a net increase of the 1998 world Jewry's estimated size by 3,400. This change resulted from upward corrections for Belarus (+10,500), Moldova (+1,500), India (+2,100), Australia (+500), and New Zealand (+300); and downward corrections for Venezuela (-1,000) and South Africa (-10,500).

The size of world Jewry at the beginning of 2000 is estimated at 13,191,500, or about 2.2 per 1,000 of the world's total population of 6.055 billions in 2000. According to the revised figures, between 1998 and 2000 the Jewish population grew by an estimated 93,800 people, or about +0.4 percent per year. Despite all the imperfections in the estimates, world Jewry continued to be close to "zero population growth," with the natural increase in Israel overcompensating for demographic decline in the Diaspora. Another factor affecting Jewish population size in recent years is the renewed interest in Judaism among persons who had not previously revealed their Jewish identification, as well as an increased number of conversions to Judaism among new immigrants in Israel.

The number of Jews in Israel rose from 4,701,600 at the beginning of 1998 to 4,882,000 in 2000, an increase of 180,400 people, or a 1.9-percent yearly average. In contrast, the estimated Jewish population in the Diaspora declined from 8,394,600 (according to the revised figures) to 8,309,500—a decrease of 85,100 people, or -0.5 percent per year. These changes primarily reflect the continuing Jewish emigration from the former USSR (FSU). In 1998, the estimated Israel-Diaspora net migratory balance amounted to a gain of about 29,200 Jews for Israel,[5] and a higher net migration gain was estimated for 1999 following increased immigration from Russia and other parts of the FSU. Internal demographic evo-

[5]Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 1999*, vol. 50 (Jerusalem, 1999), and unpublished data.

lution (births, deaths, and conversions) produced a further two-year growth of over 110,000 among the Jewish population in Israel, and a further loss of about 20,000 in the Diaspora. The latter estimates allow for cases of accession or "return" to Judaism observed in connection with migration from Eastern Europe and Ethiopia made possible by comprehensive provisions of the Israeli Law of Return (see above).

About half of the world's Jews reside in the Americas, with 46 percent in North America. Over 37 percent live in Asia, including the Asian republics of the former USSR (but not the Asian parts of the Russian Federation and Turkey)—most of them in Israel. Europe, including the Asian territories of the Russian Federation and Turkey, accounts for 12 percent of the total. Less than 2 percent of the world's Jews live in Africa and Oceania. Among the major geographical regions listed in table 1, the number of Jews in Israel—and, consequently, in total Asia—increased between 1998 and 2000. Moderate Jewish population gains were also estimated for the 15-country European Union (mostly reflecting migration from the FSU to Germany), and Oceania. The number of Jews in North America was estimated to be stable, pending the reassessment expected from the new National Jewish Population Survey. Central and South America, Eastern Europe, Asian countries outside of Israel, and Africa (particularly South Africa) sustained visible decreases in Jewish population size.

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TABLE 1. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION, BY CONTINENTS AND MAJOR GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS, 1998 AND 2000

Region	1998[a]			2000[b]		Yearly % Change
	Original Abs. N.	Revised Abs. N.	Revised Percent[c]	Abs. N.	Percent[c]	1998–2000[d]
World	13,092,800	13,096,200	100.0	13,191,500	100.0	0.4
Diaspora	8,391,200	8,394,600	64.1	8,309,500	63.0	–0.5
Israel	4,701,600	4,701,600	35.9	4,882,000	37.0	1.9
America, Total	6,490,400	6,489,400	49.5	6,483,900	49.2	–0.1
North[e]	6,062,000	6,062,000	46.3	6,062,000	46.0	0.0
Central	52,900	52,900	0.4	52,800	0.4	–0.1
South	375,500	374,500	2.9	369,100	2.8	–0.9
Europe, Total	1,637,400	1,649,400	12.6	1,583,000	12.0	–2.0
European Union	1,018,300	1,018,300	7.8	1,026,700	7.8	0.4
Other West	19,900	19,900	0.2	19,900	0.2	0.0
Former USSR[f]	499,200	511,200	3.9	438,100	3.3	–7.5
Other East and Balkans[f]	100,000	100,000	0.8	98,300	0.7	–0.9
Asia, Total	4,762,500	4,764,600	36.4	4,932,900	37.4	1.8
Israel	4,701,600	4,701,600	35.3	4,882,6000	37.0	1.9
Former USSR[f]	41,100	41,100	0.3	30,000	0.2	–14.6
Other[f]	19,800	21,900	0.2	20,900	0.2	–2.3
Africa, Total	102,400	91,900	0.7	89,800	0.7	–1.1
North[g]	7,800	7,800	0.1	7,700	0.1	–0.6
South[h]	94,600	84,100	0.6	82,100	0.6	–1.2
Oceania[i]	100,100	100,900	0.8	101,900	0.8	0.5

[a]January 1. The data were originally published as of December 31, 1997.
[b]January 1.
[c]Minor discrepancies due to rounding.
[d]Two-year period.
[e]U.S.A. and Canada.
[f]The Asian regions of Russia and Turkey are included in Europe.
[g]Including Ethiopia.
[h]South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other sub-Saharan countries.
[i]Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

TABLE 2. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE AMERICAS, 1/1/2000

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating
Canada	31,147,000	362,000	11.6	B 1996
United States	278,357,000	5,700,000	20.5	B 1990
Total North America[a]	309,631,000	6,062,000	19.6	
Bahamas	307,000	300	1.0	D
Costa Rica	4,023,000	2,500	0.6	C 1993
Cuba	11,201,000	600	0.1	C 1990
Dominican Republic	8,495,000	100	0.0	D
El Salvador	6,276,000	100	0.0	C 1993
Guatemala	11,385,000	1,000	0.1	B 1993
Jamaica	2,583,000	300	0.1	A 1995
Mexico	98,881,000	40,500	0.4	B 1991
Netherlands Antilles	320,000	300	0.9	B 1995
Panama	2,856,000	5,000	1.8	C 1990
Puerto Rico	3,869,000	1,500	0.4	C 1990
Virgin Islands	114,000	300	2.6	C 1986
Other	23,051,000	300	0.0	D
Total Central America	173,361,000	52,800	0.3	
Argentina	37,032,000	200,000	5.4	C 1990
Bolivia	8,239,000	700	0.1	B 1990
Brazil	170,115,000	98,000	0.6	B 1991
Chile	15,211,000	21,000	1.4	A 1995
Colombia	42,321,000	3,800	0.1	C 1996
Ecuador	12,646,000	900	0.1	C 1985
Paraguay	5,496,000	900	0.2	B 1997
Peru	25,662,000	2,800	0.1	C 1993
Suriname	417,000	200	0.5	B 1986
Uruguay	3,337,000	22,800	6.8	C 1993
Venezuela	24,170,000	18,000	0.7	B 1999X
Total South America[a]	345,782,000	369,100	1.1	
Total	828,774,000	6,483,900	7.8	

[a]Including countries not listed separately.

TABLE 3. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN EUROPE, 1/1/2000

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating
Austria	8,211,000	9,000	1.1	C 1995
Belgium	10,161,000	31,700	3.1	C 1987
Denmark	5,293,000	6,400	1.2	C 1990
Finland	5,176,000	1,100	0.2	B 1999
France[a]	59,114,000	521,000	8.8	C 1990
Germany	82,220,000	92,000	1.1	B 1999
Greece	10,645,000	4,500	0.4	B 1995
Ireland	3,730,000	1,000	0.3	B 1993
Italy	57,298,000	29,600	0.5	B 1995
Luxembourg	431,000	600	1.4	B 1990
Netherlands	15,786,000	26,500	1.7	C 1995
Portugal	9,875,000	300	0.0	C 1999
Spain	39,630,000	12,000	0.3	D
Sweden	8,910,000	15,000	1.7	C 1990
United Kingdom	59,062,000	276,000	4.7	B 1995
Total European Union	375,542,000	1,026,700	2.7	
Gibraltar	25,000	600	24.0	B 1991
Norway	4,465,000	1,200	0.3	B 1995
Switzerland	7,386,000	18,000	2.4	A 1990
Other	852,000	100	0.1	D
Total other West Europe	12,728,000	19,900	1.6	
Belarus	10,236,000	26,600	2.6	B 1999 X
Estonia	1,327,000	2,000	1.5	C 1997
Latvia	2,357,000	8,600	3.6	C 1997
Lithuania	3,670,000	4,400	1.2	C 1997
Moldova	4,380,000	6,500	1.5	B 1999 X
Russia[b]	146,934,000	290,000	2.0	B 1997
Ukraine	50,456,000	100,000	2.0	C 1997
Total former USSR in Europe	219,360,000	438,100	2.0	

TABLE 3.—*(Continued)*

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3,972,000	300	0.1	C 1996
Bulgaria	8,225,000	2,600	0.3	B 1992
Croatia	4,473,000	1,300	0.3	C 1996
Czech Republic	10,244,000	2,800	0.3	B 1998
Hungary	10,036,000	52,000	5.2	D
Macedonia (FYR)	2,024,000	100	0.0	C 1996
Poland	38,765,000	3,500	0.1	D
Romania	22,327,000	11,500	0.5	B 1997
Slovakia	5,387,000	3,300	0.6	D
Slovenia	1,986,000	100	0.1	C 1996
Turkey[b]	66,591,000	19,000	0.3	C 1996
Yugoslavia[c]	10,600,000	1,800	0.2	C 1996
Total other East Europe and Balkans[d]	187,743,000	98,300	0.5	
Total	795,373,000	1,583,000	2.0	

[a]Including Monaco.
[b]Including Asian regions.
[c]Serbia and Montenegro.
[d]Including Albania.

TABLE 4. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN ASIA, 1/1/2000

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating	
Israel[a]	6,201,000	4,882,000	787.3	A 2000	
Azerbaijan	7,734,000	6,000	0.8	C 1997	
Georgia	4,968,000	6,000	1.2	C 1997	
Kazakhstan	16,223,000	7,000	0.4	C 1997	
Kyrgyzstan	4,699,000	2,000	0.4	C 1997	
Tajikistan	6,188,000	1,200	0.2	C 1997	
Turkmenistan	4,459,000	800	0.2	C 1997	
Uzbekistan	24,318,000	7,000	0.3	C 1997	
Total former USSR in Asia[b]	72,109,000	30,000	0.4		
China[c]	1,284,485,000	1,000	0.0	D	
India	1,013,662,000	5,500	0.0	B 1996	X
Iran	67,702,000	12,000	0.2	C 1986	
Iraq	23,115,000	100	0.0	C 1997	
Japan	126,714,000	1,000	0.0	C 1993	
Korea, South	46,844,000	100	0.0	C 1988	
Philippines	75,967,000	100	0.0	C	
Singapore	3,567,000	300	0.1	B 1990	
Syria	16,125,000	100	0.0	C 1995	
Thailand	61,399,000	200	0.0	C 1988	
Yemen	18,112,000	200	0.0	B 1995	
Other	799,957,000	300	0.0	D	
Total other Asia	3,537,649,000	20,900	0.0		
Total	3,615,959,000	4,932,900	1.4		

[a]Total population of Israel: end 1999.
[b]Including Armenia. Not including Turkey and Asian regions of Russian Federation.
[c]Including Hong Kong.

TABLE 5. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN AFRICA, 1/1/2000

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating
Egypt	68,470,000	200	0.0	C 1993
Ethiopia	62,565,000	100	0.0	C 1998
Morocco	28,351,000	5,800	0.2	B 1995
Tunisia	9,586,000	1,500	0.2	B 1995
Other	67,158,000	100	0.0	D
Total North Africa	236,130,000	7,700	0.0	
Botswana	1,622,000	100	0.1	B 1993
Congo D.R.	51,654,000	300	0.0	B 1993
Kenya	30,080,000	400	0.0	B 1990
Namibia	1,726,000	100	0.1	B 1993
Nigeria	111,606,000	100	0.0	D
South Africa	40,377,000	80,000	2.0	B 1999 X
Zimbabwe	11,669,000	800	0.1	B 1993
Other	299,581,000	300	0.0	D
Total other Africa	548,315,000	82,100	0.1	
Total	784,445,000	89,800	0.1	

TABLE 6. ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN OCEANIA, 1/1/2000

Country	Total Population	Jewish Population	Jews per 1,000 Population	Accuracy Rating
Australia	18,886,000	97,000	5.1	B 1996 X
New Zealand	3,862,000	4,800	1.2	A 1996 X
Other	7,645,000	100	0.0	D
Total	30,393,000	101,900	3.4	

TABLE 7. COUNTRIES WITH LARGEST JEWISH POPULATIONS, 1/1/2000

Rank	Country	Jewish Population	% of Total Jewish Population: In the World %	In the World Cumulative %	In the Diaspora %	In the Diaspora Cumulative %
1	United States	5,700,000	43.2	43.2	68.6	68.6
2	Israel	4,882,000	37.0	80.2	=	=
3	France	521,000	3.9	84.1	6.3	74.8
4	Canada	362,000	2.7	86.9	4.4	79.2
5	Russia	290,000	2.2	89.1	3.5	82.7
6	United Kingdom	276,000	2.1	91.2	3.3	86.0
7	Argentina	200,000	1.5	92.7	2.4	88.4
8	Ukraine	100,000	0.8	93.4	1.2	89.6
9	Brazil	98,000	0.7	94.2	1.2	90.8
10	Australia	97,000	0.7	94.9	1.2	91.9
11	Germany	92,000	0.7	95.6	1.1	93.1
12	South Africa	80,000	0.6	96.3	1.0	94.1
13	Hungary	52,000	0.4	96.7	0.6	94.7
14	Mexico	40,500	0.3	97.0	0.5	95.2
15	Belgium	31,700	0.2	97.2	0.4	95.6